Reclining figure
Home 1200

BUCHHOLZ GALLERY

Curt Valentin

32 East 57th Street

New York, N.Y.

CATALOGUE

DRAWINGS BY HENRY MOORE

180 1. Reclining Figures (Ideas for metal sculpture), 1939
2202. Ideas for metal and wire sculptures, 1939
250 3. Reclining Figure (drawing for wood sculpture), 1939
2004. Ideas for lead reclining figures, 1939
175 5. Ideas for metal and wire constructions, 1939
175 6. Seated Figures (drawing for sculpture), 1939
150 7. Ideas for sculpture in metal and wire, 1939
Sold 8. Mother and Child (project for sculpture), 1940
175 9. Drawing, 1940
300 10. Ideas for sculpture, 1940
Sold 11. Reclining Figures (ideas for sculpture), 1940
~~12.~~ ~~Draped Standing Figures, 1940~~
300 13. Reclining Figure and Sculptural objects in Landscape, 1940
Sold 14. Seated Figures (No. 1), 1942
Sold ~~275~~ 15. Seated Figures (No. 2), 1942
275 16. Draped Standing Figures, 1942
Sold 17. Draped Reclining Figures, 1942
Sold 18. Drawing, 1942
280 19. Figures in a Setting, (No. 1), 1942
280 20. Figures in a Setting, (No. 2), 1942
Sold 280 21. Figures in a Setting, (No. 3), 1942
250 22. Two Women with Children (No. 1), 1942
Sold 300 23. Three Seated Women (Ideas for life size sculpture group), 1942
280 24. Two Women Winding Wool, 1942
260 25. Three Seated Women Winding Wool, 1942
280 26. Group of Draped Standing Figures, 1942
280 27. Group of Women, 1942
260 28. Three Figures, 1942
300 29. Three Figures in a Setting, 1942
Sold 30. Two Reclining Figures, 1942
250 31. Reclining Figures in a Hollow, 1942
275 32. Reclining Figures, 1942
Sold 280 33. Reclining Figures and Pink Rocks, 1942 Buffalo
Sold ~~270~~ 34. Reclining Figures and Red Rocks, 1942
220 35. Reclining Figures against a Bank, 1942
275 36. Two Women with Children (No. 2), 1942
Sold ~~150~~ 37. Heads, 1940
Sold 180 38. Drawing, 1941

280 —. Draped figure. 1941

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32 East 57th Street

New York, N.Y.

Reclining Nude
Item 1250

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280 24. Two Women Winding Wool, 1942
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280 26. Group of Draped Standing Figures, 1942
280 27. Group of Women, 1942
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20. Figures in a Setting, (No. 2), 1942
21. Figures in a Setting, (No. 3), 1942
22. Two Women with Children (No. 1), 1942
23. Three Seated Women (Ideas for life size sculpture group), 1942
24. Two Women Winding Wool, 1942
25. Three Seated Women Winding Wool, 1942
26. Group of Draped Standing Figures, 1942
27. Group of Women, 1942
28. Three Figures, 1942
29. Three Figures in a Setting, 1942
30. Two Reclining Figures, 1942
31. Reclining Figures in a Hollow, 1942
32. Reclining Figures, 1942
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Curt Valentin
32 East 57th Street
New York City

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From:
Art in Australia
September/November 1941

THE DRAWINGS OF

H E N R Y M O O R E

by Herbert Read

At the outbreak of war Henry Moore had established his reputation as the leading sculptor of what is generally known as the modern movement. It was being admitted, even in Paris--always unwilling to acknowledge a leader outside its city walls--that in Moore an artist had appeared whose achievement in stone, wood or metal was comparable with Picasso's in paint. It had been a harder and a slower battle: in the time it takes Henry Moore to carve one of his reclining figures, a painter like Picasso can complete fifty or even a hundred canvases. Other reasons make for difficulty--the merely physical difficulties of transporting and exhibiting sculpture; the economic difficulties of selling sculpture; the comparative rarity of the plastic sensibility required for the appreciation of sculpture. But by 1939 Henry Moore had overcome all these obstacles. The Tate Gallery had just bought one of his large groups and critics who for years had treated his work with scorn or indifference were eager to praise it.

Then came the war. Moore was living in the county of Kent, not far from Dover. He was happy there, with a good workshop for his smaller figures, and an open field in which he could hew his great blocks of stone. But the area was declared a defence zone; transport and supplies became difficult and Moore was advised to move. For a few months he worked in his London studio, but that was near an important railway line, and the bombs began to drop very near. When the windows had been blown in and some of the neighbouring houses were in ruins, Moore decided to move out into the country again. But by then it was not easy to find a cottage suitable for a sculptor. He did find a place north of London, but not a place to carve in, even if the necessary material could have been found. But there was no material; the stone was now unquarried, and wood had been "controlled"--it was war material.

In recent years, at first tentatively, and then more confidently, Moore had begun to show the public some of his working drawings. He was in the habit of evolving his ideas on paper, in coloured chalks and inks. His friends who had seen these drawings found them fascinating and urged him to exhibit them alongside the sculpture. They might help the public "to understand." They did help the public, and the critics. I have always thought that Henry Moore's drawings played the same part in the establishment of his reputation that the notes which T. S. Eliot added to THE WASTE LAND did in similar circumstances. The public had been puzzled, and was even shocked and resentful. But they were held. Then an explanation is offered to them. They think they understand. What, in effect, they see is a relation between the notes and the poetry, the drawings and the sculpture. They see the connection, but it is doubtful if the things related are in themselves any clearer.

I am not suggesting that there is a small select minority who have a better understanding. As a matter of fact, I think that the whole effort "to understand" is a mistake--it is a mistake because it is an effort, a straining after something which ought to be obvious; and it is a mistake because art cannot be explained in this rational kind of way. A work of art, whether it is a poem or a piece of

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sculpture, is "sensed," or perhaps "intuited," and though the experience which we thus receive from a work of art may have all kinds of intellectual or moral consequences, we must not put the cart before the horse and expect these consequences before we have had the experience.

But we left Henry Moore on his way back to the country. Actually, before he got there, he had a memorable experience of another kind. One evening he found himself in a tube shelter when the bombers arrived, and he was compelled to spend the whole night there, among the pathetic unorganised crowds of those early days of the war. It might have been a scene in Dante's INFERNO--

> Supin giaceva in terra alcuna gente,
> alcuna si sedea tutta raccolta,
> ed altra andava continuamente.

It made a deep impression on the sculptor, and he felt an impulse to record what he had seen. This was the first of a whole series of "shelter drawings," and as a series they form the most authentic expression of the special tragedy of this war--its direct impact on the ordinary mass of humanity, the women, children and old men of our cities.

When these drawings were first exhibited, it was said--by some sadly, by others exultingly--that Henry Moore had abandoned his modernism, his surrealism, and had returned to the ordinary naturalistic style as practised by our academicians. No statement could be so superficial, so obtuse and insensitive.

Henry Moore has surrendered nothing of his achievement, of his individual style, his "modernism." The whole meaning and substance of his past work is implicit in this new work. Any division between the new and the old is arbitrary and illogical. The most one can say, by way of describing a natural development, is that certain principles which are formerly expressed in NORMAL terms are now given a particular application. I use the word "normal" in its technical sense. The figures which Henry Moore has hitherto carved were standards or patterns--we might even say "averages"--of natural forms, the usual natural form being the human body. According to classical standards, this average, or "canon of beauty," as it was called, was a kind of composite photograph of the living organism--of flesh and bone in the case of the human figure.

This canon was often unconsciously modified by artists in the past, sometimes by fashion or mannerism (elongation of the limbs, for example), but already to some extent by the material in which the work of art was executed. Limbs, for example, were made compact with the trunk when the material was brittle (like marble), but were "free" when cast in a tough material like bronze. The line of development which Henry Moore has explored was more logical than this. He sought for what might be called a translation of norms, a transvaluation of values. The values of flesh and bone, if to be translated into stone, must be given the values of stone. Or, as I have expressed it elsewhere, "the aim of a sculptor like Henry Moore is to represent his conceptions in the forms natural to the material he is working in... By intensive research he discovers the forms natural to his materials. His whole art consists in effecting a credible compromise between these forms and the concepts of his imagination."

The reader should study the RECLINING FIGURE in lead shown in Plate A and compare it with the drawing for the same figure illustrated in Plate B. Note how the drawing shows the various aspects of the figure, and how, in the nearer and more finished figures, the group is divided into blocks and planes and lines of force (contours) which seem to seek out the physical laws which would control such a mass

IF CAST IN LEAD. Imagine the physical properties of lead--its heaviness, its viscosity, the shapes it flows into and assumes as it cools, its reaction to light. Try to imagine what form a human figure would have to assume if it had to exist, not IN lead, but AS lead. It is a difficult feat of imagination, but what is the artist but an individual who can perform difficult feats of imagination?

Now let the reader examine Plate C, one of the recent shelter drawings. Similar recumbent figures, but no longer the problem of translating them into lead. This is not a drawing for sculpture, but a drawing for its own sake. Its object is to represent a mass of human figures AS SUCH, that is to say, as flesh and bone and flowing garments. It is a different problem and, therefore, the artist gives us a different solution. The figures are more naturalistically normal, and because it is a drawing of figures in a confined space, the relation of those figures to the space and to one another has to be represented by light and shade. But why, then, it might be asked, is this drawing so unlike anyone else's drawing of the same scene? Why is it still recognisably Henry Moore's drawing and not, say, Felix Topolski's?

A complete answer to that question would take us too far into the problems of aesthetics, but it is obvious enough that one man's vision of the world is different from another's, and Henry Moore's vision, even when he is drawing directly, and not as a study for sculpture, is still a sculptor's vision. That is to say, Moore is looking at the human body, not as a surface or series of planes, but as a mass, as a form with a certain plastic composition, a definite structural form, a specific gravity.

Perhaps the greatest artist is he who combines all aspects of the object in one synthetic vision; perhaps that is why we agree in regarding Michelangelo as a supremely great artist. But I would claim that it is precisely such a synthesis that Henry Moore is attempting in his present work, and it is to the great Italian masters that we must go back for an adequate comparison. It may be difficult for the reader to accept the Michelangelesque grandeur of the figure illustrated in Plate D, but that is simply because the colossal mass of it is reduced to insignificance in a photograph.

Easier to grasp, in illustration, is the Masaccio-like grandeur and solidity of the two seated figures illustrated in Plate E, or the more delicate, but still sculpturesque quality of the mother and child in Plate H. Finally, in Plate G an earlier drawing for sculpture shows, in the middle group, an anticipation of the Masaccio-like figures of Plate H. That these simple, isolated groups do not indicate any lack of ability to control larger groups is shown in Plate F.

The shelter drawings are generally coloured, in a range of rather acid inks (green, carmine, black, orange) which are as distinctive as the more formal characteristics of the designs. The particular theme of shelter life has perhaps now been exhausted by the artist, and it remains to be seen to what other aspects of the war (or of life in general) Henry Moore will now turn. Eventually, as soon as material conditions permit, he will return to his sculpture; and that must be the desire of his admirers. For however great these drawings may be, as drawings they remain a minor art, an interlude in the career of an artist who has already shown himself a master in the most difficult, the most masculine, and the most sublime of all the plastic arts: in sculpture.

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