



Reclining Figures for Metal Sculpture

Henry Moore

Not on display

Title/Description: Reclining Figures for Metal Sculpture

Artist/Maker: Henry Moore

Born: 1940

Object Type: Drawing

Materials: Chalk, Ink, Paper, Pencil, Watercolour, Wax crayon

Measurements: Unframed: (h. 266 x w. 370 x d. 1 mm) Framed: (h. 459 x w. 563 x d. 37 mm)

Inscription: signature

Accession Number: 90

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

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Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Moore developed the technique of using wax relief and watercolour wash in the mid-1930s, and by the end of the decade it was a frequent feature of his works on paper. He recalled that he had come up with it only to entertain his three-year old niece, using her wax crayons. [1] He went on to explain, 'I was the first to use this technique - but I have explained it to many of my friends and it has come to be used by many English artists.' [2]

He first marked out the sculptural forms in wax crayon, before applying a watercolour wash and adding definition in chalk and ink. The interaction between the wax and the paper gives the textural impression of the bone of Moore's source material, or the plaster of his maquettes. The reclining figures have voids for chests, and slender curves to denote limbs. Moore had made some sculptures in this style in lead and bronze in 1939, but he would not make more until 1945. The curves connecting the legs in the figure on the upper right foreshadow the drapery in Moore's shelter drawings, his most celebrated works in the wax-resist technique.

The indiscriminate wash in this drawing does not give a real sense of place. Despite the lack of a horizon line or any other means of situating the figures, the relationship between the forms creates a sense of the three upper figures receding into the background. The two figures at the top left interact, as if they are placed together in real space. Scale is also ambiguous. A low sightline for each of the sculptural shapes means that they seem to loom over the viewer.

During much of the Second World War, Moore was unable to create sculpture. He could not source, or transport, the material, and did not want to begin a sculpture if he would soon have to vacate his studio. Furthermore, sculptural commissions and sales were scarce. In fact he was not to make sculpture from the outbreak of the war until 1943, when he began the maquettes for his commission for a *Madonna and Child* at St Matthew's Church in Northampton. Drawing therefore became a central part of his practice. The importance of drawing to Moore during these years is evidenced in the way his works on paper developed as he discovered the technique of wax-crayon resist, and went on to make a complex and varied group of works with it.

Tania Moore, September 2020

[1] Henry Moore, letter to E. D. Averill, 11 December 1964, reprinted in Philip James (ed.), *Henry Moore on Sculpture* (London: Macdonald, 1966), p.218.

[2] Ibid.

Exhibitions

'Henry Moore at Dulwich Picture Gallery', Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 12/5/2004 - 12/9/2004

'Bill Brandt | Henry Moore', Sainsbury Centre, UK, 3/12/2020 - 11/4/2021

Further Reading

Steven Hooper (ed.), Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, volume 1 (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1997)

Ann Garrould, Anita Feldman Bennett and Ian Dejardin, *Henry Moore at Dulwich Picture Gallery* (London: Scala Publishers, 2004)

Tania Moore, *Henry Moore: Friendships and Legacies* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre, 2020)

Provenance

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from the Leicester Galleries in 1940.

Donated to the University of East Anglia in 1973 (Sainsbury Centre).
