



Shelter Drawing (Mother and child with reclining figures)

Henry Moore

Not on display

Title/Description: Shelter Drawing (Mother and child with reclining figures)

Artist/Maker: Henry Moore

Born: 1941

Object Type: Drawing

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

Measurements: Unframed: (h. 310 x w. 240 x d. 1 mm) Framed: (h. 517 x w. 436 x d. 53 mm)

Accession Number: 96

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

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Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

The divergent figures in this drawing demonstrate how Moore's shelter drawings both stem from, and translate into, his sculptures. The drawing represents each of Moore's primary subjects: the mother and child, the reclining figure, seated figures and family groups.

Despite the similarities in subject matter and form between his sculpture and his drawings, Moore's drawings during the war were the first real break between the two media. They were no longer studies, or training, for his sculpture. As Herbert Read wrote, 'the drawing can exist in its own rights, more cursive, more colourful, and more dramatic'. [1] Moore experimented with the wax resist technique and colour in his shelter drawings, which were inspired by the scenes of people sheltering in the London Underground during the Blitz. In this drawing the sense of foreboding is heightened by the dark-grey wash emanating from the centre of the page. The contrasting washes – rose-pink at the bottom half of the page and grey at the top – give the suggestion of a horizon line and perspective in an otherwise indecipherable setting.

Alan Wilkinson describes the drapery in another of Moore's shelter drawings as creating 'an external

shell protecting the internal forms within'. [2] This is true of this mother and child, for whom the blanket creates a protective cocoon. In this way they are linked to Moore's later sculptural series of Internal/External forms, which he saw as a development from the mother and child being composed of two complementary forms: one large, one small; one protective, one protected.

A sense of helpless despair is expressed in each of the figures. The mother looks pensively out of the picture frame. The reclining figure to her left stretches in ennui. The figure above her crawls away from the unseen danger. Moore himself described this unseen violence and its effect on the inhabitants of the Underground: 'They were cut off from what was happening up above, but they were aware of it. There was tension in the air. They were a bit like the chorus in a Greek drama telling us about the violence we don't actually witness.' [3]

Tania Moore, September 2020

[1] Herbert Read, *Henry Moore: Sculpture and Drawings* (London: Lund Humphries and Zwemmer, 1944), p.xxxvi.

[2] Alan Wilkinson, *The Drawings of Henry Moore* (London and Ontario: Tate and the Art Gallery of Ontario, 1977), p.34.

[3] Moore in Alan Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), p.261.

Exhibitions

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

'Bill Brandt / Henry Moore', The Hepworth Wakefield, UK, 7/2/2020 - 1/11/2020

'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 William Ohly at the Berkeley Galleries in 1944.

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