

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

HENRY MOORE OM CH

Castleford 1898 - 1986 Much Hadham

Ref: BP 80

Small maquette no.2 for Reclining figure



Signed and numbered on the side of the base: *Moore 1/9*

Bronze with a brown patina: 4 ½ x 9 ¼ x 3 ½ in / 11.4 x 23.5 x 8.9 cm

On a wooden base: 1 ½ x 10 x 4 ¼ in / 3.8 x 25.4 x 10.8 cm

Conceived in 1950 and cast at Fiorini in 1965 in a numbered edition of 9
plus one artist's copy

LH 292b

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Provenance:

Marlborough Fine Art, London;
Maurice & Muriel Fulton, acquired from the above in June 1965

Exhibited:

London, Marlborough Fine Art, *Henry Moore*, July-August 1965, no.3, illus., as *Maquette for Reclining Figure (2nd version) Festival Figure 1951*
The University of Chicago, *Chicago's Homage to Henry Moore, An Exhibition of Sculpture and Drawings by Henry Moore*, December 1967, no.108, as *Reclining Figure*, another cast
London, South Bank Centre, *Henry Moore: Sketch-Models and Working-Models*, 1990-91, no.12, fig.1, another cast
Perry Green, Henry Moore Foundation, *Henry Moore: War and Utility*, 1st April 2001-30th September 2002, another cast
Perry Green, Henry Moore Foundation, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester and Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, *Henry Moore Textiles*, 2008-2010, another cast

Literature:

Alan Bowness (ed.), *Henry Moore, Complete Sculpture, 1949-1954*, Vol. II, Lund Humphries, London, 1986, p.32, no.292b, another cast illus. p.33
John Hedgecoe, *A Monumental Vision: The Sculpture of Henry Moore*, Collins & Brown, London 1998, no.275, another cast illus. p.214

Other casts of this sculpture are at The Henry Moore Foundation and the Palm Springs Art Museum, California.

This striking bronze is a maquette for one of Moore's most significant sculptures, the large *Reclining figure: Festival*, 1951 (LH 293, in an edition of 5+1), commissioned by the Arts Council for the Festival of Britain (casts of which are in the collections of the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh and the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris). Though the Arts Council originally requested a family group, Moore envisaged a reclining figure from a drawing in 1950, which developed into one of the most powerful works of his career and his first life-sized reclining bronze. For the artist, the sculpture's profundity lay in the progression of his stylistic development: "The "Festival Reclining Figure" is perhaps my first sculpture where the space and form are completely dependent on and inseparable from each other. I had reached the stage where I wanted my sculpture to be truly three-dimensional. In my earliest use of holes in sculpture, the holes were features in themselves. Now the space and the form are so naturally fused that they are one."¹

The integration of space and form which Moore achieved in this work was largely a result of the use of bronze which enabled him to open up the sculpture in a way impossible in wood or stone. The full-size figure also signifies a change in the artist's working methods, being one of the

¹ The artist cited in John Hedgecoe and Henry Moore, *Henry Spencer Moore*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1968, p.188.

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first post-war sculptures made from a plaster working model, rather than terracotta or clay. From this time, plaster was Moore's preferred modelling medium.² Bronze as a material allowed Moore the 'freedom to explore the relationship between mass and space more radically than he could within the confines of stone and wood. In these materials holes are opened up consciously, with the shape around the hole often being restricted by the size and shape of the block. In bronze there are no such restrictions.'³

The conception of the figure as a public work with no fixed location (due to the temporary nature of the exhibition) may have provoked the assertive independence of the piece with spectacular views created within the work rather than against which it would be seen. Looking lengthways through the sculpture's elegant interior, the balance between sinuous form and space recalls Moore's enduring fascination for caves. As Moore continued to strive for more expansive three-dimensionality in his works, the creation of these maquettes slowly replaced his sketches and drawings as the initial stages for larger works. The maquettes were a way in which Moore could experiment with the relationship between form and space in his sculptures and find the balance between both so that one was not more important than the other. As the artist stated, 'Now that I work with a maquette, I can turn it over, hold it, look at it from underneath, from above, and the smaller it is in a way the more do you do this turning...I think now that in working with maquettes, my sculpture is more truly dimensional.'⁴

Though the Reclining figure was a familiar theme in Moore's work, the original title *Genesis (Reclining figure)*, 1950-51, suggests the site of the sculpture also played an important part in its conception. Robert Burstow writes, 'The thematic significance of his opened-out, skeletal figure only becomes apparent when we realize that it was placed, as even Philip James noted, 'adjacent to "The Origins of the Land" on the South Bank site', and that Moore had recently illustrated a popular book on British geology, *A Land*, written for the Festival by his friend Jacquetta Hawkes (the Festival's archaeological advisor), which, like the South Bank, represented Britain as a kind of skeletal landscape from which the modern, industrial world had evolved. Indeed, having abandoned the theme of 'The Family' (subsequently taken over by Epstein), Moore had sought the Festival Committee's permission to adopt the theme of 'Genesis', and his figure's position next to the Land of Britain pavilion, with sections devoted to 'The Earth in Labour' and 'The Last Sixty Million Years' suggests that its taut forms were intended to evoke a simultaneously ancient and modern Earth Mother.'⁵

One of the most prominently displayed pieces of sculpture, this public commission and the exhibitions which accompanied it, demonstrate Moore's towering reputation at the time. Julian Stallabrass writes: 'His pre-eminent status in Britain was well indicated by the solo exhibition devoted to his work held at the Tate Gallery in 1951, timed to coincide with the Festival of Britain. It was considered fitting that a celebration of the nation's achievements should be accompanied, not by a survey of modern British art, but simply by an exhibition of the country's

² See Anita Feldman & Malcolm Woodward, *Henry Moore: Plasters*, exh. cat., Royal Academy of Arts, London 2011, p.54.

³ Manfred Fath, Claude Allemand-Cosneau and David Mitchinson (eds.), *Henry Moore, From the Inside Out*, Prestel, Munich 1996, p.118.

⁴ The artist cited in E. Steingraber, *Henry Moore Maquettes*, Munich, 1978, p.55.

⁵ Robert Burstow, 'Modern Sculpture in the South Bank Townscape', in E Harwood and A Powers (ed.), *Festival of Britain*, Twentieth Century Architecture, The Twentieth Century Society, no.5, London 2001, p.104.

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greatest living artist.⁶ In addition to the Tate retrospective, a smaller show of his more recent work was held at the Leicester Galleries.

Following its display on the South Bank for the Festival of Britain, the Arts Council loaned the over-life-sized sculpture to Leeds City Art Gallery for ten years. It is now on permanent loan to the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁶ Julian Stallabrass, 'The Mother and Child Theme in the Work of Henry Moore' in *Henry Moore: Mutter und Kind / Mother and Child*, Henry Moore Foundation, Much Hadam 1992, p.14.

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