

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

HENRY MOORE OM CH

Castleford 1898 - 1986 Much Hadham

Ref: BR 24

Reclining figure



Bronze with a black patina: 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ in / 18.1 x 45.1 x 13.3cm

On a slate base: 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 in / 3.2 x 50.2 x 20.3 cm

Conceived in terracotta in 1945 and cast in an unnumbered edition of 7
LH 257

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Provenance:

Marlborough Fine Art, London, 1960

David Astor CH (1912-2001), acquired from the above, then by descent

Exhibited:

New York, The Museum of Modern Art, *Henry Moore*, 17th December 1946-16th March 1947, no.54, as *Reclining figure (No.2)* another cast; this exhibition then toured to the Art Institute of Chicago, 17th April-18th May 1947; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 18th June-August 1947

New York, Buchholz Gallery, *Henry Moore*, 6th-31st March 1951, no.16 or 18, another cast

Ohio, Columbus Museum of Art, *Henry Moore, the reclining figure*, 14th October-2nd December 1984, no.25 and 25a, illus. p.53, another cast; this exhibition travelled to Austin, Archer M Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas, 13th January-17th February 1985; Salt Lake City, Utah Museum of Art, 10th March-12th May; Oregon, Portland Art Museum, 11th June-21st July and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 22nd August-13th October 1985

London, Royal Academy of Arts, *Henry Moore*, September–December 1988, catalogue no.105, p.223, also illus. p.85, another cast

Literature:

Rudolf Arnheim, 'The Holes of Henry Moore: On the Function of Space in Sculpture', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, September 1948, vol.7, no.1, another cast illus. fig.6

Will Grohmann, *The Art of Henry Moore*, Thames & Hudson, London 1960, p.6, no.36, terracotta illus.

Herbert Read, *Henry Moore, A study of his life and work*, Thames & Hudson, London 1965, no.143, p.274, p.165 (another cast illus.)

Ionel Jianou, *Henry Moore*, Arted, Editions d'Art, Paris, 1968, no.241, p.75, pl.88 (another cast illus.)

Robert Melville, *Henry Moore, Sculpture and Drawings 1921-1969*, Thames & Hudson, London 1970, no.350 (another cast illus.)

John Hedgecoe, *A Monumental Vision: The Sculpture of Henry Moore*, Collins & Brown, London 1988, p.210, no.246 (another cast illus.)

David Sylvester (ed.), *Henry Moore Complete Sculpture 1921-48*, Vol. I, Lund Humphries, London, 1990, p.16, no.257, p.160 (another cast illus.)

Another cast of this sculpture is at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Casts of the smaller version (6 ½ in length), LH 250, are in the collections of the Henry Moore Foundation and Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee. The smaller maquette was illustrated on the front of *Henry Moore in Perspective*, a National Touring Exhibition organised by the Hayward Gallery, London, for the Arts Council of England in association with the Henry Moore Foundation in celebration of the centenary of Moore's birth in 1998.

The compositional and spatial freedom Moore experienced in the creation of the reclining figures is nowhere more apparent than in the present work. The flowing, asymmetric contours of this

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polished black bronze appear to undulate in the light as if in motion. Its curved apertures are revealed unexpectedly like eroded cavities in a sea-worn rock formation, juxtaposed with soft patches of light on the sculpture's dark surface resembling pools of water. Moore's early interest in the anthropomorphic qualities of natural forms such as pebbles, rocks and shells certainly influenced the organic development of this self-contained figure. The metamorphosis of Moore's reclining figure can be linked to his near - abstract transformation drawings of the 1930s. As Moore explained in his statement for *Unit One* in 1934: "The human figure is what interests me most deeply, but I have found principles of form and rhythm from the study of natural objects such as pebbles, rocks, bones, trees, plants, etc. Pebbles and rocks show nature's way of working stone...and principles of asymmetry...Bones have marvellous structural strength and hard tenseness of form, subtle transition of one shape into the next and great variety in section."¹ The transition from observed natural objects into biomorphic forms was also a reflection of Moore's knowledge of contemporary developments in Paris, in particular the work of Picasso and Arp. This affinity explains Moore's association with the Surrealist Movement while simultaneously exhibiting amongst the geometric abstraction of constructivist Modernism from 1933 until the outbreak of war.² In 1937, Moore wrote in *The Listener*: "The violent quarrel between the abstractionists and the surrealists seems to me quite unnecessary. All good art has contained both abstract and surrealist elements, just as it has contained both classical and romantic elements – order and surprise, intellect and imagination, conscious and unconscious. Both sides of the artist's personality must play their part."³

The sculpture also calls to mind the body of a shelterer swathed in a blanket to pass the night on a platform floor. Referring to another cast of this work in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, Susan Compton has suggested that the artist's 'direct experience of the reclining figure had been enriched by observation in the London Underground...This had led to drawings of draped figures which perhaps inspired the sensuous fluidity of the perimeter line in this sculpture. Although schematised, the figure compels response to its delicate idea of containment; its shell-like form evokes an analogy with a womb rather than with the more aggressive and bone-like formations of pre-war Reclining Figures."⁴

This sculpture was previously owned by the newspaper editor and philanthropist, David Astor (1912-2001), the third of five children of Waldorf Astor, Second Viscount Astor, and his wife Nancy née Langhorne, the first woman MP to take her seat in Parliament in 1919. Astor grew up in one of the wealthiest families in the country at Cliveden, on the Thames near Taplow, and St James's Square, London, but became renowned for his radical social conscience and inquiring mind. Astor joined *The Observer* as Foreign Editor in 1946, before becoming Editor of the paper in 1948, retiring in 1975.

¹ Henry Moore, *Unit One: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture*, edited by Herbert Read, Cassell, London 1934, cited in A. Wilkinson, *op.cit.*, p.192.

² See Christa Lichtenstern, 'Henry Moore and Surrealism', *The Burlington Magazine*, November 1981, vol. 123, no.944, pp.644-658.

³ Henry Moore, 'The Sculptor Speaks', *The Listener*, 18th August 1937, vol.18, no.449, p.338.

⁴ Cited in *Henry Moore*, exh. cat., Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1988, p.223.