

# RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

HENRY MOORE OM CH

Castleford 1898 - 1986 Much Hadham

Ref: BR 25

## *Family group*



Bronze with brown patina: 5 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 4 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in / 14.6 x 12.1 x 7 cm

On a slate base: 1 x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 3 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in / 2.5 x 14.3 x 9.2 cm

Conceived in terracotta in 1944 and cast by Fiorini in 1956

in an unnumbered edition of 9 plus one artist's copy

LH 233

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## *Provenance:*

Gallery Kasahara, Osaka, Japan;  
private collection, acquired from the above *circa* 1990

## *Exhibited:*

New York, Buchholz Gallery, *Henry Moore*, 6<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> March 1951, no.12, another cast  
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Recent Gifts: 1982*, 16<sup>th</sup> February-27<sup>th</sup> March 1983,  
no catalogue, another cast  
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Henry Moore: 60 Years of His Art*, 24<sup>th</sup> May-25<sup>th</sup>  
September 1983, p. 62, another cast  
Mountainville, NY, Storm King Art Center, *20th Century Sculpture: Selections from The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art*, 18<sup>th</sup> May-31<sup>st</sup> October 1984, another cast  
San Francisco, SFMOMA, *Elise S Haas, Building a Modern Art Collection*, 24<sup>th</sup> August-27<sup>th</sup> October  
2019, another cast  
London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, *Henry Moore at Dulwich Picture Gallery*, 12<sup>th</sup> May-12<sup>th</sup> September  
2004, no.17, terracotta

## *Literature:*

David Sylvester (ed.), *Henry Moore Complete Sculpture 1921-1948*, vol. I, Lund Humphries, London  
1990, p.14, no.233, another cast illus. p.147  
David Mitchinson, (ed.), *Henry Moore Sculpture with comments by the artist*, London 1981, no.170,  
another cast illus. p.94  
Ronny Cohen, 'New York Reviews: Stone and Sympathy,' *Art News* 82, October 1983, p.180  
Gary Tinterow et al., *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 8, Modern Europe, New York 1987,  
p.155, another cast illus. colour pl.133  
John Hedgecoe, *A Monumental Vision, The Sculpture of Henry Moore*, 1998, no.236, another cast  
illus. p.210

Other casts of *Family group* (LH 233) are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and Aberdeen Art  
Gallery.

This charming *Family group* was cast in bronze from a terracotta model made for a public  
commission for Village College, Impington, suggested by the architect Walter Gropius in the late  
1930s. The school aimed to employ the progressive educational ideas of Henry Morris, the  
Director for Education in Cambridgeshire, in particular that rural schools should provide  
facilities for parents as well as children, with space for films, plays and lectures, so as to become  
the social centre of the community. This notion of family unity was to be realised in Moore's

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sculpture.<sup>1</sup> Postponed by the advent of war, Moore returned to the idea in 1944 when the commission was temporarily revived and began making 'drawings in note book form of family groups. From these notebook drawings I made a number small of maquettes...Some of the maquettes were ideas for bronze, but most of them were for stone because for the Impington school I felt stone would be the suitable material.'<sup>2</sup> Moore developed a number of versions on the theme between the autumn of 1944 and the spring of 1945.

Moore was inspired by the family group from the early 1940s, though it has been customary to attribute his interest in the subject to the longed-for birth of his only child Mary in 1946. Following the end of the Second World War, Moore's *Family group* sculptures took on even greater significance as symbols of familial strength, protection and nurturing. The family naturally evolved from the artist's *Mother and child* theme, which had appealed to Moore because of its significance throughout the history of art, for the emotive relationship it represented and for its potential for formal development between figures.

A drawing, *Family group: mother with seated child, father with standing child*, 1944 (HMF 2233 / AG 44.60) seems directly to relate to this small sculpture, determining the positions and relationships of the four figures, as well as their description. Moore's technique is unusual in this preparatory work, foregoing initial pencil outlines for wax crayon, followed by pastel and then a light watercolour wash. The linear, monochromatic effect is powerful, dramatically capturing the fall of light and shade on the figures which Moore superbly translates into three dimensions, the smooth, dark bronze replicating the intensity of the sketch.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to other versions of the theme, the present work is more polished, the smooth brown patina occasionally revealing touches of golden bronze. The delicate features of the parents are more developed, their noses, brows and hairstyles defined. Unlike previous versions, the adults are fully clothed, although their legs are covered with a similar, horizontally striped drapery. The curving lines of the cloth echo the woman's fingers as she holds the smallest child on her lap, tying them together and wrapping the family in its protective folds. The mother's shawl recalls the shell of Moore's Internal/External Forms, which he later discussed with David Mitchinson: 'The idea of one form inside another form may owe some of its incipient beginnings to my interest at one stage when I discovered armour. I spent many hours in the Wallace Collection, in London, looking at armour. Now armour is an outside shell like the shell of a snail which is there to protect the more vulnerable forms inside, as it is in human armour which is hard and put on to protect the soft body. This has led sometimes to the idea of the Mother and

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of the commission is recalled by the artist in Philip James, *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, MacDonald, London, 1966, pp.224–229.

<sup>2</sup> The artist cited in A. Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, Lund Humphries, Aldershot 2002, p.273.

<sup>3</sup> Another drawing, *Two Seated Women with Children*, circa 1944–45, HMF 2287a / AG 44.23, from The Rescue Sketchbook, seems to show the same family group swathed in even more linear drapery.

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Child where the outer form, the mother, is protecting the inner form, the child, like a mother does protect her child.<sup>4</sup>

Moore uses the group to explore the interrelation of figures, the balance between individuality and unity. The family of four connects in a similar way to the smaller groupings, the father's hand resting on the mother's shoulder, but their association is less static, their presentation less frontal, the bench curving so that the figures are turned towards each other with their legs overlapping and interlocked. The children represent opposing states of action and inaction, one climbing up to drape its arms around its father, the other sitting quietly swaddled in its mother's lap.

The addition of a second child to this sophisticated assembly recalls the emphasis on family at the heart of the community in Moore's public commissions for progressive schools. Susan Compton suggests that Moore's concentration on the family groups, 'consolidates his move towards a wider and more humanist approach appropriate for public sculpture. Originally trained as a school teacher himself, his imagination was fired by the ideal of the extension of education to all sectors of the community.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Henry Moore in conversation with David Mitchinson, 1980 cited in Alan Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, Lund Humphries, Aldershot 2002, pp.213- 214.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Compton, *Henry Moore*, exh. cat., Royal Academy of Arts, London 1988, p.224.