

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

HENRY MOORE OM CH

Castleford 1898 - 1986 Much Hadham

Ref: BR 26

*Reclining figure (Maquette for Memorial figure, Dartington Hall)*



Signed on the back of the base lower right: *Moore H*  
Bronze with a green patina: 4 x 7 x 3 in / 10.2 x 17.8 x 7.6 cm  
On a slate base:  $7\frac{3}{4}$  x  $19\frac{3}{4}$  x  $3\frac{3}{4}$  in / 19.7 x 49.5 x 9.5 cm  
Conceived in terracotta in 1945 and cast *circa* 1945-46 in an  
unnumbered edition of 7  
LH 242

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## *Provenance:*

Leicester Galleries, London  
Private collection, UK, acquired at the 1946 exhibition

## *Exhibited:*

London, Leicester Galleries, *Living Irish Art: New Sculpture and Drawings by Henry Moore*, October 1946, no.3  
London, Tate Gallery, *Sculpture and Drawings by Henry Moore*, Arts Council of Great Britain held on the occasion of The Festival of Britain, 2<sup>nd</sup> May-29<sup>th</sup> July 1951, pl.12b, cat. no.164, as *Reclining Figure (Maquette for a sculpture in stone)*, terracotta

## *Literature:*

John Russell, *Henry Moore*, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London 1968, illus., p.98, another cast David Sylvester (ed.), *Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings 1921-1948*, vol.I, Lund Humphries, London 1990, p.15, no.242, terracotta illus.

Another cast of this *Reclining figure* is at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>1</sup> This bronze is one of several maquettes made in preparation for the almost life-sized *Memorial Figure* [LH 262] carved in Horton stone, although it differs from the finished work in the arrangement of dress and the position of the feet.

When Henry Moore was commissioned by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst to carve a memorial to his friend Christopher Martin, the Artistic Director at Dartington Hall, the reclining figure with its stability and sense of repose suggested itself as the most appropriate arrangement, Moore stating that, 'It fits in with my belief that sculpture should be permanent, should last for eternity.'<sup>2</sup> Moore and Martin had met during the War (perhaps through Sir Kenneth Clark) when Moore became a member of the Visual Arts Group associated with the Arts Enquiry, a study of how the arts were organised in England and Wales which Martin initiated and ran. Martin came to Dartington Hall in 1934 to bring some administrative and financial order to the various arts activities there and to prepare for the introduction of the Ballet Jooss, the Jooss-Leder Dance School and the Michael Chekhov Theatre School. After his untimely death, Dorothy Elmhirst wrote: 'During the years 1935 to 1939 the Courtyard at Dartington Hall was the centre of an intense life, created largely by young people from Europe and America coming together in this corner of England to work and study. The personality that held it all together, the mind that maintained order and gave direction, and the heart that added human meaning to it all, was Chris Martin's.'<sup>3</sup> Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst purchased the neglected fourteenth century Dartington estate in 1925, where they created the 'Dartington Experiment', restoring the estate

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Elmhirst purchased two small models/bronzes of the *Reclining figure* from Moore to give to her daughter and husband for Christmas in 1947. Letters are held in the Devon Heritage Centre.

<sup>2</sup> The artist cited in Philip James, *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, MacDonald, London 1966, p.264.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Kate Caddy's biography of Christopher Martin on the Dartington Estate website:  
<https://www.dartington.org/about/dartington-our-history/people/christopher-martin>

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buildings and setting up farming, forestry, educational and cultural projects. The experiment was formalised in 1932 with the creation of The Dartington Hall Trust, which oversaw the Elmhursts' charitable work. Dartington drew artists, architects, writers, philosophers and musicians from around the world, including Igor Stravinsky, Benjamin Britten, TE Lawrence ('Lawrence of Arabia'), Bernard Leach, Walter Gropius, Moholy Nagy, George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, HG Wells, Yehudi Menuhin, Ben Nicholson and Aldous Huxley, creating an exceptional centre of creative activity.<sup>4</sup>

Moore discovered the perfect setting for the reclining figure in the grounds of Dartington Hall and held it in mind as he created the maquettes to produce a work of sculpture in absolute harmony with the landscape loved by Martin: 'The figure is a memorial to a friend who loved the quiet mellowness of this Devonshire landscape. It is situated at the top of a rise, and when one stands near it and takes in the shape of it in relation to the vista one becomes aware that the raised knee repeats or echoes the gentle roll of the landscape. I wanted it to convey a sense of permanent tranquillity, a sense of being from which the stir and fret of human ways had been withdrawn, and all the time I was working on it I was very much aware that I was making a memorial to go into an English scene that is itself a memorial to many generations of men who have engaged in a subtle collaboration with the land.'<sup>5</sup> The drapery covering the recumbent woman also suggests the swelling forms of the Devonshire landscape, its deep folds likened by Moore, 'with the form of mountains, which are the crinkled skin of the earth.'<sup>6</sup> Richard Cork suggests that the sculpture may also represent a memorial to Moore's mother, who died the year before he started work on the commission.<sup>7</sup>

The naturalistic style of this piece and the final sculpture recalls the dignified poise of the Northampton *Madonna and Child*, 1943–44. For the critic, John Russell, 'Only once did Moore return to the untroubled majesty of the Northampton Madonna. This was the *Memorial Figure* which he completed in 1945-6 in memory of Christopher Martin. Once or twice - in the feet, for instance, and in the emblematic treatment of the right ear - this looks back to the 'progressive' idiom of the 1930s, and of course the upraised right knee is a survival from an even earlier idiom: that of the Leeds *Reclining Figure* of 1929. What Moore would not have aimed at, at any earlier time, is the gentle flowing movement of the whole piece and the dialogue between the simplified draperies and the monumental forms beneath. Once again the head and the hands are just sufficiently characterized to quicken our interest just when the piece might have begun to seem too uniformly general in tone... Moore had reached a stage in his career at which he could pick out, one by one, the points at which a piece needed to be simplified and accentuated. The *Memorial Figure* brings to an appropriately elegiac close the series of swathed human figures, drawn or carved, which derive in part from the experience of the shelter and in part from the investigation of pure sculptural form. Like the Northampton Madonna, it presents the

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<sup>4</sup> See Dartington Heritage | 1,000 Years of History, *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> The artist cited in Philip James, *op.cit.*, 1966, p.101.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.231.

<sup>7</sup> See *Henry Moore*, exh cat, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1988, p.19.

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experience of the shelter in sublimated state ; as for the investigation of form, it is carried on discreetly and in such a way as to frighten no one. One might also infer, and some people did infer, that Moore by 1945 was like Prospero in Act V, scene 1: a once-terrifying figure who had abjured his rough magic. In no two pieces, certainly, is Moore's tender side so much in evidence.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John Russell, *Henry Moore*, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, pp.98-99.