

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

HENRY MOORE OM CH
Castleford 1898 - 1986 Much Hadham

Ref: BR 27

Maquette for Figure on steps



Bronze with a brown patina: 6 ½ x 7 ¼ x 6 ½ in / 16.5 x 18.4 x 16.5 cm
Conceived in plaster and cast in 1956 at Fiorini in an unnumbered
edition of 10 plus one artist's copy
LH 426

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Provenance:

Private collection, California
James Goodman Gallery, New York
Sidney E Frank, USA

Exhibited:

Florence, Forte di Belvedere, *Mostra di Henry Moore*, 20th May-30th September 1972, no.97, another cast
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, *A Monumental Vision: Henry Moore: Sixty Years of His Art*, 1983, another cast
London, Tate Modern, *Cubism and its Legacy: The Gift of Gustav and Elly Kahnweiler*, 24th May-7th November 2004; Tate Liverpool, 21st December 2004-2nd May 2005, no.44, another cast

Literature:

Ionel Jianou, *Henry Moore*, Arted, Paris 1968, no.398, p.81
William S Lieberman, *Henry Moore: Sixty Years of His Art*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art and Thames & Hudson, New York 1983, p.124 (another cast reproduced p.83)
Alan Bowness (ed.), *Henry Moore Complete Sculpture 1955-64*, vol. 3, Lund Humphries, London 2005, no.426, p.35, another cast illus. p.34
Giorgia Bottinelli, 'Maquettes' in Jennifer Mundy (ed.), *Cubism and its Legacy: The Gift of Gustav and Elly Kahnweiler*, exh. cat., Tate Modern, London 2004, pp.84-5, another cast illus. p.85

Other casts of *Maquette for Figure on steps* are in the collections of the Tate, London,¹ the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, and the Sprengel Museum, Hannover. Casts of the large-scale sculpture, *Draped seated woman*, 1957-58, LH 428 (bronze: 184.2 x 215.9 x 145.7 cm, edition of 6+1), are in the public collections of Kunst und Museumsverein, Wuppertal, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (currently on display in Cabot Square, Canary Wharf, London); Royal Museums of Fine Art Belgium, Brussels; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

This striking small bronze is a preparatory model for the much larger *Draped seated woman*, designed to be displayed outdoors. The substantial figure sits at the top of a flight of steps, her angular head facing over her left shoulder. Her legs, bent at the knee, extend in the opposite direction, her body a gentle diagonal from toe to fingertip. Her arms reach behind her and rest on the smooth top step. She wears a sleeveless, knee-length dress whose asymmetric, crinkled folds contrast with the ordered angles of the stairs. Moore made numerous life-drawings of seated women in the 1920s and integrated architectural features into his drawings from the 1930s, however, it was not until 1955 that he examined the female figure on steps in three

¹ Henry Moore OM, CH, *Maquette for Figure on Steps* 1956 (*Henry Moore: Sculptural Process and Public Identity*) | Tate <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/henry-moore/henry-moore-om-ch-maquette-for-figure-on-steps-r1171980>

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dimensions. As Alice Correia writes with reference to the cast at the Tate, it was in May that year that the artist was approached to propose a large-scale sculpture for the new UNESCO headquarters in Paris being designed by Marcel Breuer.² Though this work was not used for the final sculpture, Moore's biographer Roger Berthoud identified *Maquette for Figure on steps* as one of eleven maquettes made between 1955 and 1956 with a female figure seated on steps, a bench or against a wall, which he referred to as 'the daughters of Unesco.'³

While the setting was a departure for Moore, the draped figure recalled an interest apparent in his earlier shelter drawings, revitalised by his visit to Greece in 1951. In the book, *Henry Moore at the British Museum*, 1981, the artist selected and discussed Greek sculpture from the museum's collection which had influenced his work, writing of a statue from the Nereid Monument, 390-380 BC: 'The drapery here is so sensitively carved that it gives the impression of light, flimsy material, wet with spray, being blown against the body by the wind. It shows how drapery can reveal the form more effectively than if the figure were nude because it can emphasise the prominent parts of the body, and falls slackly into the hollows. This is something I learned when I came to do the Shelter drawings, in which all the figures are draped. Before then I avoided using drapery because I wanted to be absolutely explicit about shapes and forms. I so admire the Greek sculptor who had the vision and the ability to make of stone something so apparently flimsy as the drapery on this figure.'⁴

Roger Cardinal suggests the seated figure of Hestia from the Parthenon's East Pediment in the British Museum may have inspired the design of *Maquette for Figure on steps*, remarking of the Greek sculpture: 'she seems poised and alert. Her robes seem to flow freely across her mature body, both shaping and shaped by massive contours. Especially relevant to our theme is the way the drapery crosses between her parted knees, which dictate a passage from rounded smoothness to disjunct fold and crumplings and back again.'⁵ Cardinal continues with reference to the Working Model for *Draped Seated Woman* (the intermediate stage between the small and large-scale sculptures): 'Lichtenstern insists that the hard ridges of the folds over the knees and shins exactly correspond to those on the marble figure of Dione from the Parthenon East Pediment and asks: "What other twentieth-century sculptor...has ever achieved such independent proximity to Pheidias?"' There remains the question of the identity of Moore's mythic figure. Is she indeed a goddess? One suggestion might be that she is Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia, whom Artemis carried away to Tauris to be her priestess: we might picture her sitting in front of the temple by the shore and dreaming of her native Greece.'⁶

² Alice Correia, 'Maquette for Figure on Steps 1956 by Henry Moore OM, CH', catalogue entry, November 2013, in *Henry Moore: Sculptural Process and Public Identity*, Tate Research Publication, 2015.

³ Roger Berthoud cited by Julie Summers, 'Working Model for Draped Seated Woman: Figure on Steps 1956', in David Mitchinson (ed.), *Celebrating Moore: Works from the Collection of the Henry Moore Foundation*, London 2006, p.253 cited in Alice Correia.

⁴ Henry Moore, *Henry Moore at the British Museum*, London 1981, p.62.

⁵ Roger Cardinal, 'Henry Moore: In the Light of Greece', in *Henry Moore: In the Light of Greece*, exh. cat., Basil and Elise Goulandris Foundation Museum of Contemporary Art, Andros 2000, p.37.

⁶ Roger Cardinal, *op.cit.*, pp.158-9.