



A Free Course on the History of Western Art

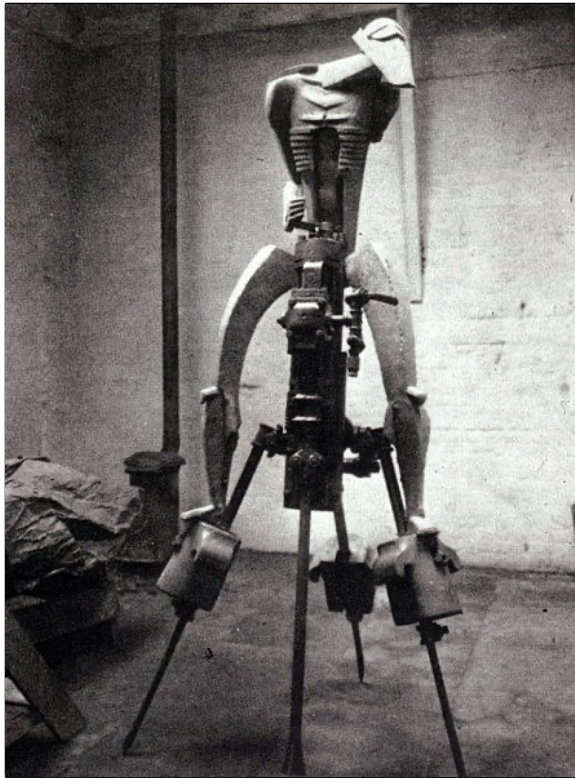
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52-02 BRITISH SCULPTURE AND HENRY MOORE

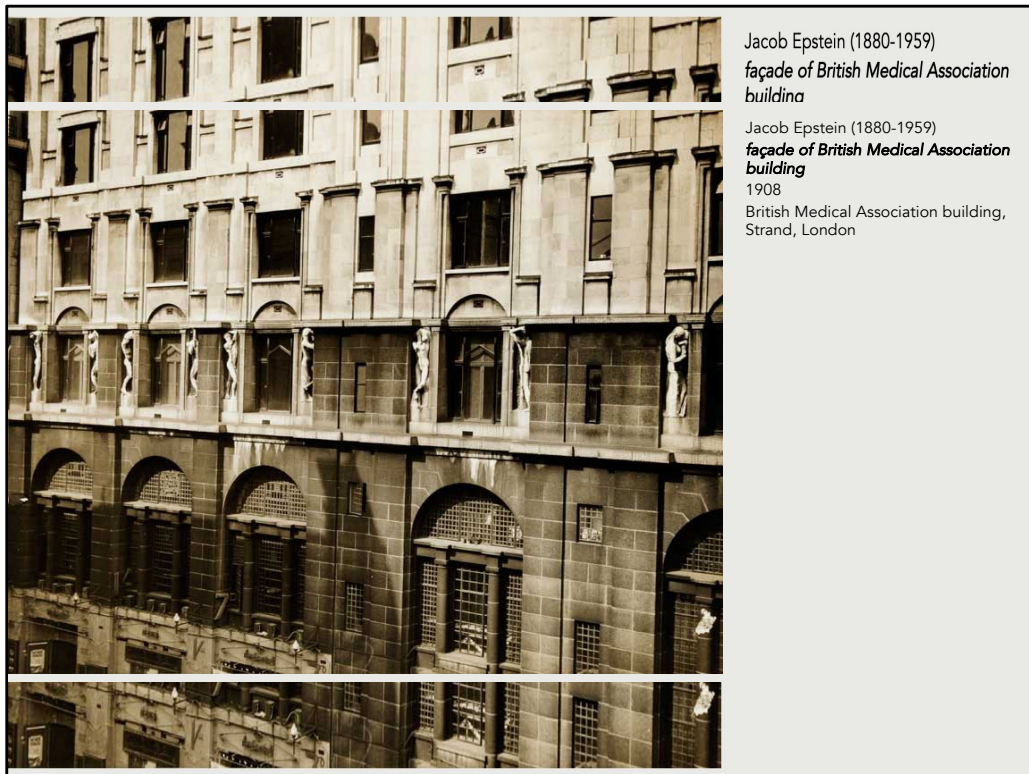
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Jacob Epstein
The Rock Drill
c. 1914
now destroyed

Laurence: write your own opening cue for 52-02 British Sculpture and Henry Moore — auto-generation failed.



Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), façade of British Medical Association building, 1908, British Medical Association building, Strand, London

We turn now to four sculptors whose work collectively redrew the boundaries of British sculpture in the first half of the twentieth century: **Jacob Epstein**, **Eric Gill**, **Henry Moore**, and **Barbara Hepworth**. Epstein was born in New York in 1880, moved to Europe in 1902, and became a British citizen in 1911. His personal life was turbulent: he had many affairs alongside his marriage to **Margaret Dunlop**, fathering five children with various women. His longest relationship was with **Kathleen Garman**, which began in 1921 and endured until his death in 1959 — Margaret shot and wounded Garman in 1923, apparently the one infidelity she refused to tolerate. Their daughter Kitty eventually married **Lucian Freud**. Epstein reacted decisively against ornate academic convention, favouring bold, massive, sometimes sexually explicit forms that drew on non-Western traditions. His first major commission, eighteen large nude figures for **Charles Holden's 1908 British Medical Association building on the Strand**, caused immediate uproar. The **Evening Standard** warned that Epstein had erected "a

form of statuary which no careful father would wish his daughter to see." Epstein himself recalled that he had started "a thirty-year war." When acid rain later dislodged fragments, the authorities simply hacked off all protruding parts — a monument to institutional vandalism still visible today.

Notes

Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) helped pioneer modern sculpture. He was born in the US, moved to Europe in 1902 (aged 22) and became a British citizen in 1911. He married Margaret Dunlop in 1906 and had many affairs and fathered five children. His longest relationship with Kathleen Garman lasted from 1921 until his death. Margaret tolerated all his affairs except that with Garman who she shot and wounded in 1923. Margaret died in 1947 and Epstein married Kathleen. Their eldest daughter, also called Kathleen or 'Kitty', married Lucien Freud.

He reacted against ornate and pretty art and often made bold, harsh and massive forms in bronze and stone. He often shocked his audience because of the explicit sexual content and his experimentation with non-Western sculptural traditions. His male nude over John Lewis's department store in Liverpool was called 'Dickie Lewis'.

His first major commission was 18 large nude sculptures made in 1908 for the façade of Charles Holden's building for the British Medical Association on The Strand (now Zimbabwe House) were initially considered shocking to Edwardian sensibilities, again mainly due to the perception that they were over-explicit sexually. In art-historical terms, however, the Strand sculptures were controversial for quite a different reason: they represented Epstein's first thoroughgoing attempt to break away from traditional European iconography in favour of elements derived from an alternative sculptural milieu – that of classical India. In the 1930s some pieces fell off the figures and they were all mutilated allegedly to protect the public but it is not clear whether it was from falling masonry or from the naked figures.

Through Epstein's 1908 figures for the façade of the new British Medical Association building in the Strand, now Zimbabwe House, the British public had its first and formative encounter with a version of Modernism. The encounter was unsettling because it took place in a street and it combined classical nudity with the eroticism of Indian sculpture.

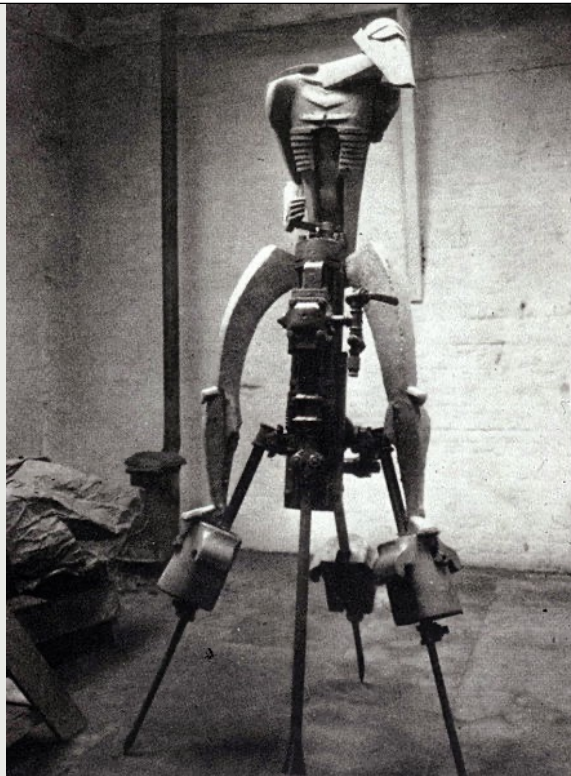
It was known that strange things had been happening in painting, but

paintings were in galleries. Sickert painted some of his Camden Town nudes in the same year. The Epstein sculptures epitomised the modern. Their stripping away of an academic veil, not the subject-matter, made the reaction to them prudish. They might have been at the back of Toynbee's and Strudwick's minds a quarter of a century later. The BMA resisted the campaign for their removal. The Evening Standard warned that Epstein had erected "a form of statuary which no careful father would wish his daughter, or no discriminating young man his fiancée, to see". Epstein wrote, 'The sculptor later wrote: 'Perhaps this was the first time in London that a decoration was not purely "decorative'.

Jacob Epstein created 18 large, nude sculptures for the British Medical Association building in London. The sculptures caused an uproar, considered too raw and sexually suggestive. Epstein described it as starting a thirty year war and when thirty years later acid rain caused part of one of the sculptures to fall of the rest immediately had all their protruding pieces hacked off. This monument to vandalism can still be seen today in the Strand.

References

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Epstein



Jacob Epstein (1880-1959)
The Rock Drill
c. 1914
now destroyed

Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), *The Rock Drill*, c. 1914, now destroyed

That thirty-year war Epstein declared found one of its most explosive early engagements in a single sculpture. Between 1913 and 1915, working within the orbit of **Vorticism**, he produced **The Rock Drill** — first shown at the **London Group exhibition in 1915**. The assembled work stood over three metres tall. A mechanised, visor-headed figure, its limbs angular, its torso plated with what read as armoured ribs, sat astride a real **Pneumatic Percussion Feed drill**, the American manufacturer's name still emblazoned on the machine. The phallic charge was unmistakable, and cradled within the abdomen was a small embryonic form — aggression and generation fused in a single body. Epstein described it himself: "I made and mounted a machine-like robot, visored, menacing, and carrying within itself its progeny, protectively ensconced." By summer 1916, with the **Battle of the Somme** and the **Battle of Verdun** consuming hundreds of thousands of lives, he dismantled it. The drill was discarded; the figure was halved; what remained was cast first in gun metal, then bronze — a single truncated torso, one arm gone. The transformation is stark. What

began as an emblem of mechanical virility became something mutilated and diminished, a monument to exactly the violence it had seemed to celebrate.

Notes

Between 1913 and 1915, Epstein was associated with the short-lived Vorticism movement and produced one of his best known sculptures The Rock Drill.

This is a photograph of The Rock Drill in its original form. This work appeared at the London Group exhibition in 1915. By the time of its second outing in summer 1916, however, he had dismantled it. He discarded the drill, dismembered the figure and cut it in half, leaving a one-armed torso which was then cast, initially in gun metal and ultimately in bronze. Epstein, it seems, took an expression of masculine aggression and then emasculated it. Obvious conclusions may be drawn from the fact that he is doing this at the time of the Battle of the Somme and the Battle of Verdun.

Epstein later said "Here is the armed, sinister figure of today and tomorrow. No Humanity, only the terrible Frankenstein's monster we have made ourselves into... later I lost my interest in machinery and discarded the drill. I cast only the upper part of the figure."

Epstein often produced controversial works which challenged taboos on what was appropriate subject matter for public artworks. He also made paintings and drawings, and often exhibited his work.

The figure is sharp-edged, its limbs square in profile, and its head is a long beak-like armoured visage. The torso has what looks like armoured ribs, and in the abdomen area is an indentation containing an embryonic form. The extraordinary thing about this mechanised abstracted human figure is that it sat on top of a real miner's rock drill, with the name of its American manufacturer emblazoned on its side. The whole assembled sculpture was over three metres tall, giving it an amazing brooding and threatening physical presence. Of course, with the enormous drill jutting out from the figure's loins, it has an extraordinary phallic power about it. Writing about the piece in his autobiography Epstein said: "I made and mounted a machine-like robot, visored, menacing, and carrying within itself its progeny, protectively ensconced." (Tate)

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/story-jacob-epsteins-rock-drill>



Jacob Epstein (1880-1959)
Tomb of Oscar Wilde
 1914
 Hopton Wood stone
 Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris

Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), Tomb of Oscar Wilde, 1914, Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris

The truncated Rock Drill torso stands as a kind of hinge in Epstein's career — from mechanical provocation toward something older and stranger. The **Tomb of Oscar Wilde**, completed in **1912** and installed at **Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris**, shows exactly that turn. This was Epstein's second major public commission. His original sketches show two young men mourning Wilde's death, but he abandoned that approach in favour of imagery drawn from Wilde's poem **The Sphinx**. Scholars including **Michael Pennington** identify this as part of what he calls Epstein's Sun Temple period — a sustained engagement with what Epstein and his close contemporary **Eric Gill** regarded as the more primal sexuality of **Egyptian and Assyrian art**. The **Winged Assyrian Bulls** in the British Museum were a direct influence on the finished form. The sculpture was carved from a single twenty-tonne block of **Hopton Wood limestone** from Derbyshire. When it arrived in France, customs officials refused to classify it as art and levied a punishing fine of a hundred and twenty pounds on the stone's value.

The nude figure's anatomy caused further scandal: Parisian officials covered it with tarpaulin, then plastered over the testicles. A bronze butterfly-shaped plaque was eventually installed in their place, and the tomb was unveiled in **August 1914** by the occultist **Aleister Crowley** — without Epstein, who refused to attend in fury.

Notes

This was Epstein's second commission. His original sketches, which he abandoned, show two young men mourning Wilde's death. new focus on Wilde's poem The Sphinx. However, a number of influences began to play on Epstein around this period, including that of fellow sculptor Eric Gill. The two artists were deeply interested in what they saw as the more primal sexuality of Indian and Egyptian art, as opposed to British art. Pennington refers to this period in the Epstein's work as the Sun Temple period and claims that, having been unable to follow this path with some of his works in Britain, Epstein transferred his new passion onto the Wilde tomb. It has also been claimed that the work was partly inspired by the Winged Assyrian Bulls in the British Museum.

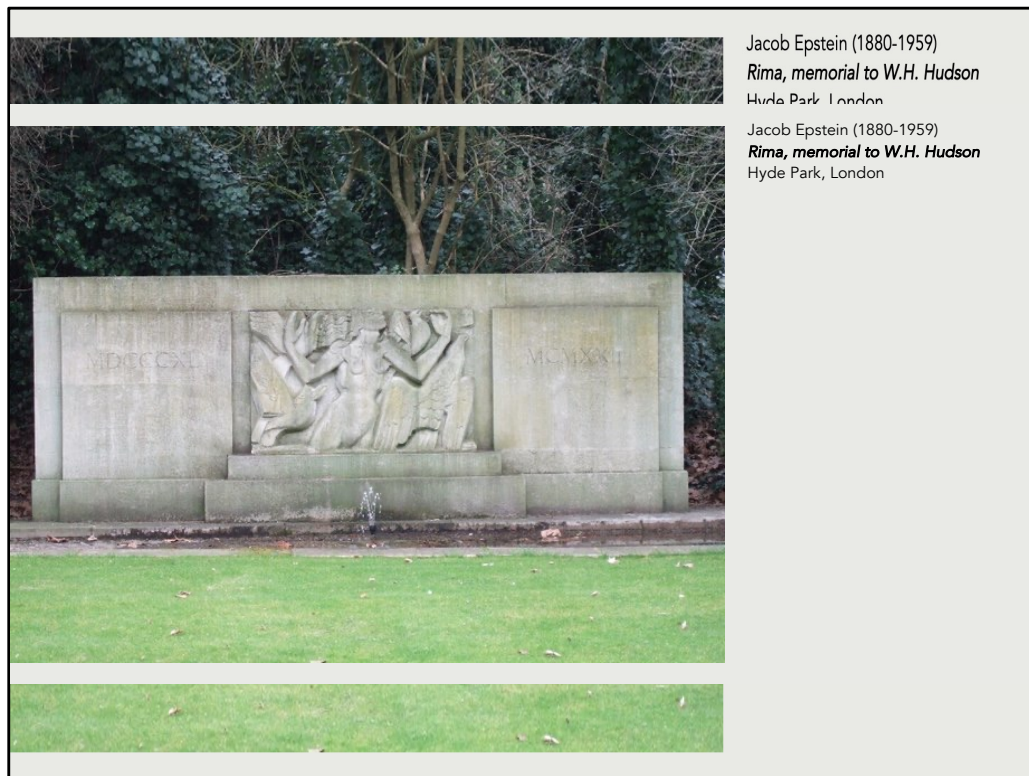
It began as a single 20 tonne block of Hopton Wood stone from Derbyshire. In Epstein's original sketches there are five figures in the headdress of the Sphinx, one with a crucifix, perhaps referring to Wilde's martyrdom and a small angel behind its ear. However, in the finished version there is just the personification of Fame being trumpeted in the Sphinx's headdress.

When it was imported into France the custom's officials rejected it as a work of art and imposed a punishing £120 for the value of the stone. The nakedness caused the Parisian officials to cover it with tarpaulin and one evening Epstein found the testicles had been covered with plaster as they were considered unusually large. Eventually a bronze plaque shaped like a butterfly was placed over the testicles and it was unveiled in August 1914 by the occultist and poet Alistair Crowley. Epstein was furious and refused to attend the opening. A few weeks later Crowley approached Epstein with the bronze butterfly round his neck and told him the tomb was now as he had intended. In 1961 the testicles were removed in an act of vandalism and in 2000 a silver replacement was made.

A tradition arose that mourners (mostly women) should apply lipstick and kiss the tomb so in 2011 a glass barrier was erected to stop the stone becoming damaged.

Notes

Hopton Wood stone is a very fine, marble-like limestone from Derbyshire, often used for tombstones.



Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), *Rima*, memorial to W.H. Hudson, Hyde Park, London

The Wilde tomb's scandal was polite by comparison with what followed in **1925**, when Epstein unveiled the **Rima memorial** in **Hyde Park** — a relief panel commissioned to honour the naturalist and author **W. H. Hudson**. Hudson had died in 1922, best known for his novel **Green Mansions**, published in 1904, in which a traveller in the Venezuelan jungle falls in love with a wild forest girl called Rima, who is more bird than human. Epstein absorbed the source material deeply, fusing elements of **African, Asian, and Polynesian art** into a relief that was sexually charged and formally radical — exactly the register that had caused trouble before, and would again. When **Stanley Baldwin** drew back the curtain, there were audible gasps from the audience. The **Morning Post** called the work "Mr Epstein's nightmare in stone" and described the sculptor as "the most famous example of a great sculptor who has sold his soul to the devil." The piece was quickly nicknamed **the Hyde Park Atrocity**, and was daubed in green paint. Epstein, characteristically, was genuinely baffled. He visited Hyde Park

repeatedly to look at the work himself, trying to understand what had provoked such fury — and, by his own account, could not see it.

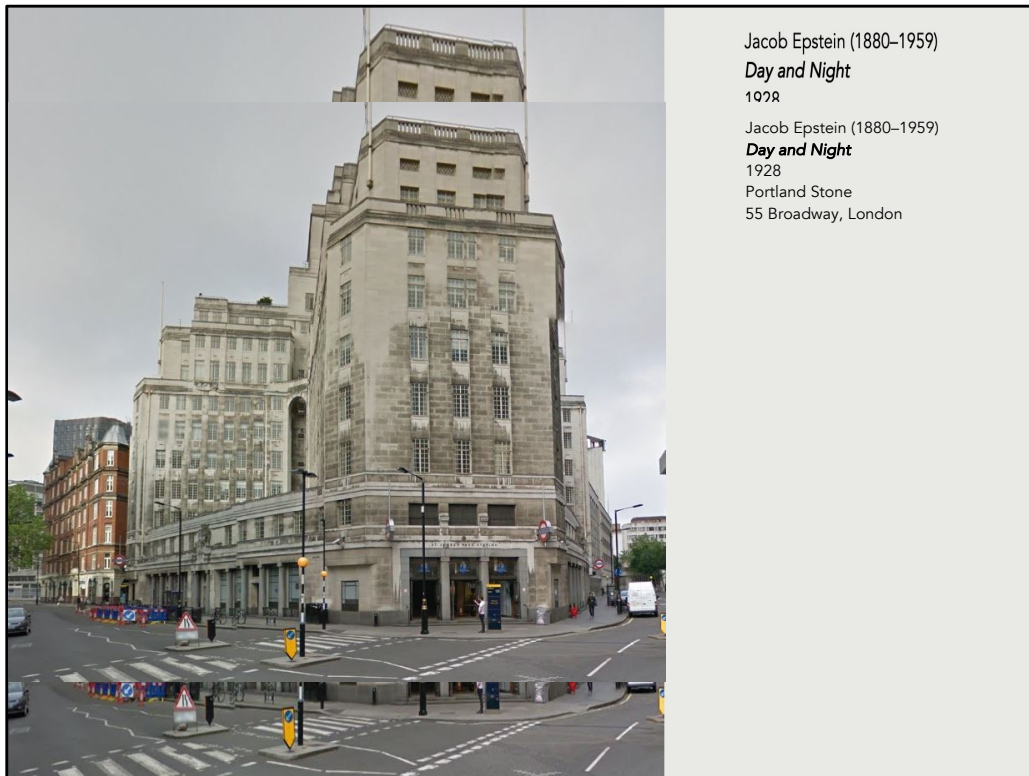
Notes

Epstein threw himself into the task. Drawing inspiration from Hudson's most famous novel, a tale of a bird girl in the jungles of Guyana called *Green Mansions* (1904), he sketched numerous designs. A traveller falls in love with the forest-dwelling girl called Rima, Epstein fused elements of African, Asian and Polynesian art to create a sexually charged, avant garde vision of the fictional heroine.

When Stanley Baldwin drew back the curtain in front of the memorial there were 'gasps of horror' from the audience. A media campaign followed that saw the *Morning Post* describe Rima – or "the Hyde Park Atrocity" as it was quickly dubbed – as "Mr Epstein's nightmare in stone", and the sculptor as "the most famous example of a great sculptor who has sold his soul to the devil". The sculpture was daubed in green paint. Epstein was baffled by all the fuss and visited Hyde Park a number of times to try to see what all the fuss was about.

Notes

William Henry Hudson (1841-1922) was an author, naturalist and ornithologist. He was a founding member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.



Jacob Epstein (1880–1959), *Day and Night*, 1928, 55 Broadway, London

The scandal of **Rima** had done nothing to dull Epstein's ambition. In **1929**, he unveiled ***Day and Night*** — two monumental reliefs carved directly into the Portland Stone facade of **55 Broadway**, the new London Underground headquarters designed by **Charles Holden**. Frank Pick, the Underground's managing director, had commissioned seven sculptors for the exterior, among them Eric Gill, Alfred Gerrard, and a then little-known **Henry Moore** — but it was Epstein's contributions that detonated the controversy. *Day* shows a seated patriarchal figure with a child gazing upward; *Night* holds a reclining form across its lap. Critics read into them suggestions of sacrifice, cannibalism, and lust. Calls mounted for the works to be physically removed. Pick, who privately admitted the sculptures were not to his personal taste, stood firm and offered his resignation rather than capitulate — an act of institutional courage rare in public patronage. The crisis was resolved by a compromise as bluntly practical as it was absurd: Epstein chiselled an inch and a half from the male child's

genitals, and the protests subsided. For Epstein, direct carving was never incidental — it was a commitment to the intelligence held within the material itself, shaped by traditions from **India, Mexico, and West Africa** rather than from the Classical canon his critics demanded.

Notes

In 1929 his sculptures Day and Night above 55 Broadway, St James's Park were considered indecent and his commissions for public works ended.

Epstein believed direct carving respected the nature of the material. Day and Night skilfully respond to the shape and grain of the Portland Stone – formidable, unwavering and assertive.

Deliberately abandoning a Classical aesthetic – Epstein found inspiration in India, Mexico, West Africa and the Pacific Islands. At a time when the primitive was linked to political anarchy his realist, avant-garde style tested conventions regarding 'suitable' subjects for public art.

In 1924 Frank Pick commissioned Charles Holden to design the new headquarters for the London Underground. As part of the art deco design Holden commissioned seven sculptors to produce works for the exterior. Epstein produced Day and Night which were unveiled in 1928. They provoked controversy and moral panic and attempted defamation ensued, campaigns were mounted to have the sculptures removed.

Frank Pick, the managing director of the London Underground, the leading force behind 55 Broadway, took full responsibility for the statues and offered to resign. (Later, he privately admitted that the statues were not to his taste – but he stood up for his artist on principal). To resolve the matter Epstein removed 1½ inches from the boy's penis and the protest died down. Pick brought about the unified, simple and timeless design of underground stations all over London. His philosophy was,

'One day the ice will descend and blot out all traces of man's works. The earth will grow cold. Nature will return to her kingdom and spread her snowy pall over the last man, and there will be nothing but barren rocks again ... Man will have disappeared from the face of the earth with the world that he had made. His day will be done. And the evening and the morning were the eighth day. Will man be able to say, "and, behold, it was very good?"'

Notes

Day depicts a seated patriarchal figure with child looking up at it. It is situated on south east facade of 55 Broadway.

Night depicts a seated figure with a reclining figure across its lap. The sculpture is located on the north east facade of 55 Broadway.

Night and Day suggest cannibalism, sacrifice and lust and opinions divided London.

55 Broadway is a Grade I listed building overlooking St. James's Park in London. It was designed by Charles Holden and built between 1927 and 1929; in 1931 the building earned him the RIBA London Architecture Medal. It was constructed as a new headquarters for the Underground Electric Railways Company of London (UERL), the main forerunner of London Underground. Upon completion, it was the tallest office block in the city. London Underground was due to vacate the building in 2015 for new headquarters, and 55 Broadway will be converted for residential use.

Commissioned artwork:

Day and Night, Jacob Epstein

North Wind, Alfred Gerrard

North Wind, Eric Gill

East Wind, Eric Gill

East Wind, Allan G. Wyon

South Wind, Eric Gill

South Wind, Eric Aumonier

West Wind, Samuel Rabinovitch

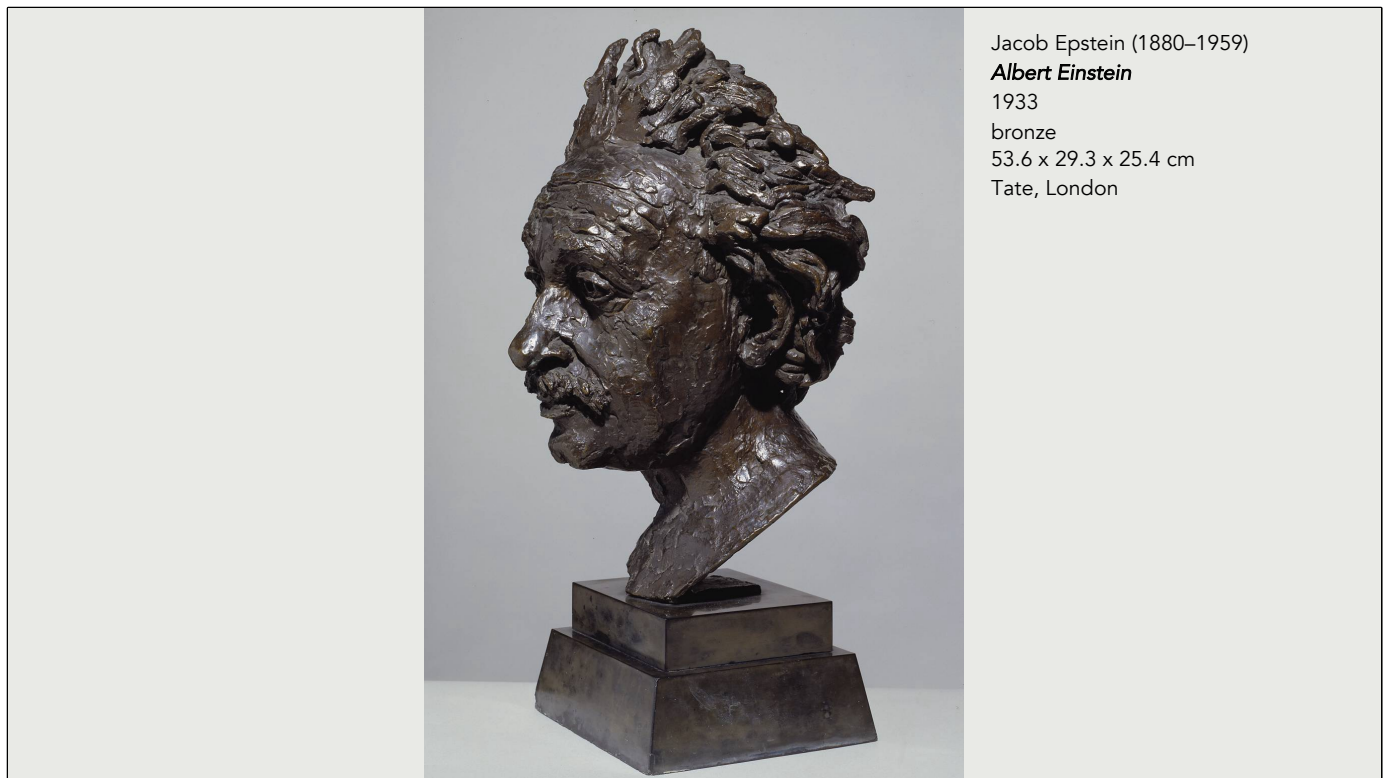
West Wind, Henry Moore

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Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)
Albert Einstein
1933
bronze
53.6 x 29.3 x 25.4 cm
Tate, London

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959), *Albert Einstein*, 1933, 53.6 x 29.3 x 25.4 cm, Tate, London

The backlash over **Day and Night** effectively closed the door on large public commissions for Epstein, and he turned increasingly to portrait busts — a form in which his directness of observation found a different kind of authority. The **Einstein bust of 1933** is among the finest of these. **Albert Einstein** had fled Nazi Germany that same year and was staying at a refugee camp in Britain when Epstein sought him out. The sittings were cut short when Einstein departed to take up his professorship at **Princeton**, leaving Epstein to complete the work from memory and drawings. What Epstein recorded in his memoir is vivid: he wrote of Einstein's "wild hair floating in the wind" and observed that "his glance contained a mixture of the humane, the humorous, and the profound — a combination that delighted me." He added that Einstein resembled "the ageing Rembrandt." That comparison is telling. Epstein was reaching not for a likeness of the physicist but for a psychological density — the same quality he admired in **Rembrandt's** late self-portraits, where age and intelligence accumulate in the surface

of the face. The bust now held in the **Tate** collection stands as evidence that Epstein's exclusion from public monuments freed rather than diminished him.

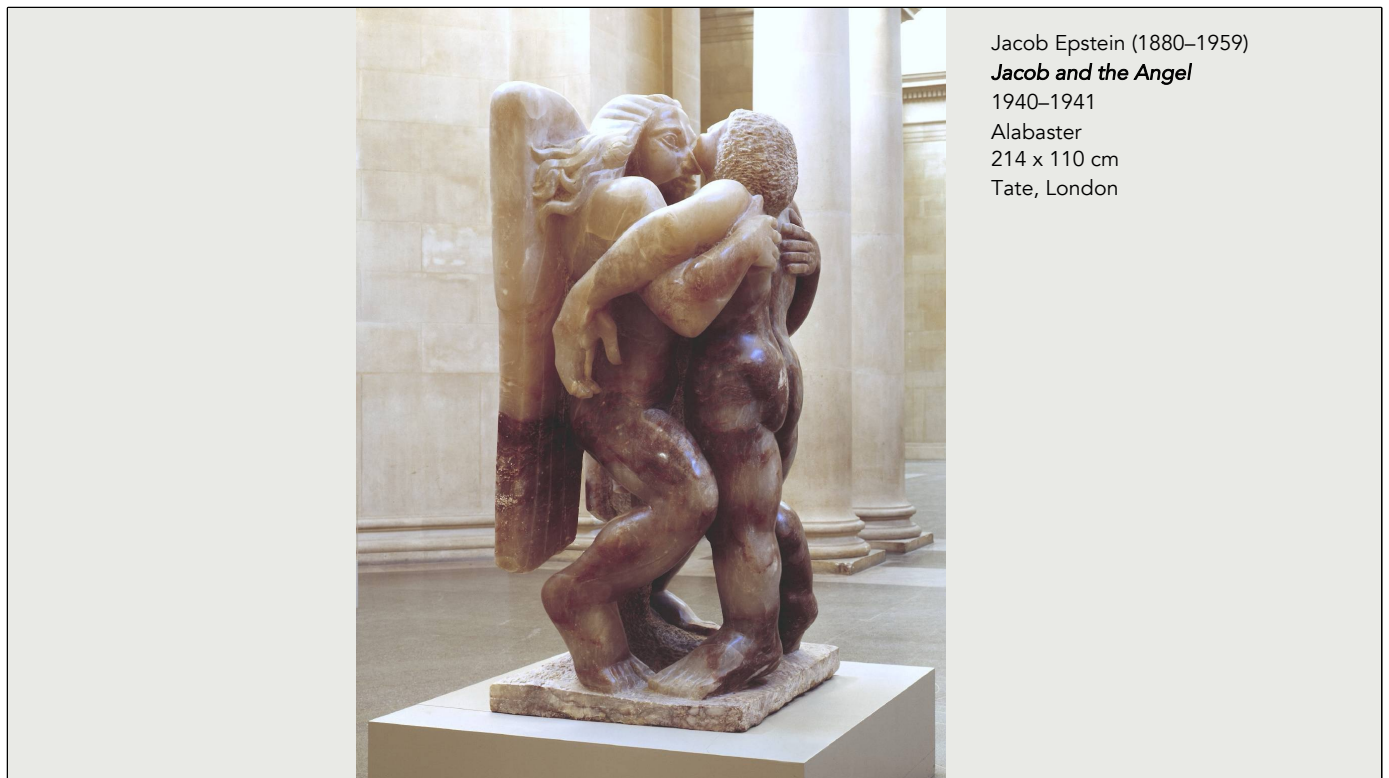
Notes

In 1929 following the controversy surrounding his sculpture Day and Night his commissions for public works ended.

He created busts of many famous people including Albert Einstein in 1933. Einstein fled Germany in 1933, and was staying in a refugee camp in Britain when Epstein made this portrait bust. However, Einstein left to take up a professorship at Princeton before it was completed. Epstein later described Einstein's 'wild hair floating in the wind' and wrote that 'his glance contained a mixture of the humane, the humorous, and the profound. This was a combination that delighted me. He resembled the ageing Rembrandt'.

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/epstein-albert-einstein-n04754>



Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)
Jacob and the Angel
1940–1941
Alabaster
214 x 110 cm
Tate, London

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959), *Jacob and the Angel*, 1940–1941, 214 x 110 cm, Tate, London

The portrait busts mark one chapter of Epstein's later career, but the monumental religious carvings mark another — and it is here that his most challenging work emerges. ***Jacob and the Angel***, completed in **1940–41** and carved in alabaster, takes its subject from Genesis chapter 32, in which Jacob wrestles through the night with an unknown assailant who reveals himself at dawn as a divine messenger. The personal resonance was not lost on contemporaries: Epstein's own first name was Jacob, and he had spent the early 1930s immersed in Genesis, producing a series of watercolours on Old Testament themes before committing the subject to stone. The carving translates that nocturnal struggle into what **Evelyn Silber** described as "a strangely ambiguous embrace between two colossal male figures" — Jacob, eyes closed and head thrown back, held in a grip that seems to squeeze the life from him. Silber noted that the interlocked forms invite the viewer to move around the work, with Jacob's back and the angel's wings readable almost abstractly. **John Rothenstein** wrote that Epstein

"seems to have tapped the mysterious source of energy that so often animates primitive sculpture, without imitating any actual features." That primitivist intensity, applied to sacred subject matter, shocked many contemporaries — and it directly shaped the younger generation, above all **Henry Moore** and **Barbara Hepworth**.

Notes

This monumental group depicts an episode from the book of Genesis (Chapter 32, verses 24-32). According to the Biblical story, Jacob was forced to wrestle with an unknown assailant through the night. In the morning his opponent blessed him because he had not abandoned the struggle, and revealed himself to be an angel and messenger from God. Jacob gave thanks saying, 'I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved'. During the early 1930s Epstein had read and re-read the book of Genesis and executed a series of unconventional water-colours on Old Testament stories. The subject of Jacob and the Angel fascinated him and may have had personal significance, not least because of the fact that Epstein's first name was Jacob.

Between the mid-1930s and 50s other works by Epstein (for example, this work *Jacob and the Angel*, 1940-41) were exhibited at freak shows and fun fairs alongside diseased body parts and Siamese twins in jars. His carving of *Rima* (1924) in Hyde Park was tarred and feathered. Epstein was too poor to protest and eventually they were displayed in Blackpool's Tussaud's. It was a time of increasing hostility towards the Jews and he received no more large-scale commissions.

Epstein's art started to be sold all over the world and he became highly influential particularly on the younger artists **Henry Moore** and **Barbara Hepworth**.

Notes

Before executing the large alabaster carving, Epstein made a watercolour entitled *Jacob Wrestling* which was included in his 1932 exhibition at the Redfern Gallery.

In the carving, the night-long struggle between Jacob and his assailant is translated into a strangely ambiguous embrace between two colossal male figures. Jacob is depicted with his eyes closed and head thrown back; the angel is holding him in a tight grasp, as if squeezing his last breath from him.

'The Herculean proportions of the figures permitted the sculptor to generalise and balance the relationship of the masses while simultaneously maintaining the impact of their embrace. True to his usual practice in carving, the primary views reflect the mass the original block, but the interlocked arms also encourage the viewer to move around it. Some areas, such as Jacob's back and the angel's wings, can be read abstractly; Epstein's habitual relish for the subtle interplay of barely perceptible asymmetries manifests itself in the rhythmic cadence of back, buttock, thigh and calf.' (Evelyn Silber, *The Sculpture of Jacob Epstein with a Complete Catalogue*, Oxford 1986, p.54)

Jacob and the Angel was completed in 1940, and can be seen as one of a group of large carvings dealing with religious themes. These included: *Behold the Man*, 1934-5 (Coventry Cathedral); *Consummation Est*, 1936 (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art) and *Adam*, 1938-9. These works showed Epstein's interest in so-called primitive sculpture. John Rothenstein later wrote how, in *Jacob and the Angel*, Epstein 'seems to have tapped the mysterious source of energy that so often animates primitive sculpture, without imitating any actual features'. (Epstein, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery 1961, [p.4]). The use of this primitivist style when dealing with religious subject matter was found shocking by many of Epstein's contemporaries.

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/epstein-jacob-and-the-angel-t07139/text-summary>



Eric Gill (1882-1940), *Mother and Child*, 1910, 62 cm tall, National Museum Wales, Cardiff

The primitivist intensity Epstein brought to religious carving did not emerge in isolation — it was part of a broader shift in British sculpture, and **Eric Gill** represents a parallel, deeply complicated figure in that same current. Gill was born in Brighton in **1882**, the eldest of twelve children, and his early training was architectural before he abandoned it in **1903** to become a calligrapher, letter-cutter, and monumental mason. He was closely associated with the **Arts and Crafts movement** and took up direct stone carving after moving to **Ditchling in Sussex** in **1907**. His **Mother and Child of 1910**, now in the National Museum Wales, shows immediately what direct carving meant for Gill: a compressed, frontal solemnity drawn from his intensive study of **Romanesque sculpture**. **Roger Fry**, reviewing Gill's first exhibition in 1911, wrote that the work showed "a piece of deep imagination" in the way Gill saw "the gesture of pressing the breast with the left hand." That responsiveness to the body's plainest, most instinctive gestures is precisely what connects Gill to the primitivist strand running

through early twentieth-century British sculpture. **Fiona MacCarthy's** biography of **1989**, drawing on Gill's own diaries, revealed a pattern of serious sexual abuse of his daughters and others — making him one of the most ethically contested figures in modern British art.

Notes

Eric Gill (1882-1940) was born in Brighton, one of 12 children and in 1897 the family moved to Chichester. He studied at Chichester Art School and in 1900 moved to London to study as an architect. In 1903 he gave up his architectural training to become a calligrapher, letter-cutter, and monumental mason. He was associated with the Arts & Crafts movement and was controversial, particularly his erotic art. In 1904 he married Ethel Moore and had three daughters and an adopted son.

His 1989 biography by Fiona MacCarthy was based on his detailed diaries and revealed his sexual activity for the first time including extramarital affairs, incest with his two eldest teenage daughters, incestuous relationships with his sisters, and sexual acts on his dog. His daughter Petra, who was alive at the time of the biography, described her father as having 'endless curiosity about sex' and that 'we just took it for granted'. The biography resulted in publicity and reassessment which resulted in a strengthened artistic reputation and a reputation as one of the twentieth century's strangest artists.

In 1907 he moved to Ditchling in Sussex where he took up direct stone carving, such as this Mother and Child (1910).

National Museum Wales, "The style of this carving reveals Gill's study of Romanesque art. Its subject may have been suggested by the birth of his daughter Joanna in February 1910. Included in the artist's first exhibition in 1911, Roger Fry wrote of it: 'has anyone ever looked more directly at the real thing and seen its pathetic animalism as Gill has? Merely to have seen what the gesture of pressing the breast with the left hand means, as he has, seems to be a piece of deep imagination'."

Eric Gill (1882-1940)
Ecstasy
1910-11
Hoptonwood stone
137.2 x 45.7 x 22.8 cm
Tate, London



Eric Gill (1882-1940), *Ecstasy*, 1910-11, 137.2 x 45.7 x 22.8 cm, Tate, London

The work that tested that primitivist directness most provocatively came in **1911**, when Gill completed **Ecstasy**, a relief showing a couple in explicit sexual union. When it was first seen, contemporaries recoiled — the subject was unmistakable. Yet the sculpture refuses to be merely scandalous. The figures emerge from the block itself, smooth-limbed and simplified, with the Egyptian flatness of hand and foot that characterises Gill's figure style. The woman's face shows not frenzy but an intense serenity, eyes closed, utterly composed. The year after, **Mother and Child of 1912** brought Gill his first substantial public recognition, confirming the range his direct carving could sustain — from the erotic to the devotional. Both works were shaped by Gill's deepening study of **Indian temple sculpture**, and he and **Epstein** discussed plans for a colossal Hindu-style monument in Sussex, a project that never materialised but shows how seriously both sculptors were thinking beyond the Western classical tradition. Gill's conversion to **Roman Catholicism in 1913** gave that spiritual searching a fixed

address, and commissions followed — reliefs for **Westminster Cathedral**, war memorials, and eventually a printing press and workshop near **High Wycombe** after **1928**, where he trained a new generation of craft-based artists.

Notes

In 1911 he produced *Ecstasy* (1911) and *Mother and Child* (1912), his first public success. Gill became fascinated with Indian temple sculpture and with his friend Epstein they planned to construct a colossal Indian-style monument in Sussex.

He became a Roman Catholic in 1913 and later opposed fascism and became a pacifist. He produced sculptures for Westminster Cathedral and several war memorials after the war.

In 1924 he moved to Wales and started a new workshop but it was too far from London so in 1928 he moved near High Wycombe and set up a printing press and took on many apprentices.

Postcardwall, 'When Gill's contemporaries first saw his sculpture *Ecstasy* they recoiled at such a vivid depiction of a couple 'fornicating'; when exhibited with *Wild Thing* at the Royal Academy, the piece is referred to in terms of its notorious subject of a couple in the ultimate embrace. Though *Ecstasy* is clearly provocative in both subject and title, it could hardly be called grotesque. It is a piece beautifully calm, encouraged by the simplicity of white stone and smooth limbs, uncomplicated by a background that does little more than provide a quiet frame. Mounting his piece on a block, or rather allowing it to emerge from it, increases the subtlety of the sculpture; the protagonists are hidden from one side and seem at one with their material. Gill's characteristic style of figure also encourages this simplicity. They are naked not only literally but also in their stripped back form — made up of simple strong limbs, Egyptian-like hands and feet, and faces that betray little individuality. However, this is not to say that they are without expression, as these characters are full of emotion; passion as the woman clings, pulling her partner towards her, yet tenderness as his head is lost in her shoulder, too close to kiss. *Ecstasy* is clearly an emotion, the experience of the sublime, yet here it is not with hot-headed obsession that it is found but with a deep and exalted calm, shown in the intense serenity of her face, eyes finally closed.'



Eric Gill (1882-1940)
North Wind
1928
Portland stone
55 Broadway, London

Eric Gill (1882-1940), *North Wind*, 1928, 55 Broadway, London

The **55 Broadway** commission of **1928 to 1929** brings together several of the figures we have been tracking. The London Electric Railway asked eight sculptors to carve wind reliefs for the headquarters building above St James's Park station — a genuinely ambitious piece of corporate patronage. Gill contributed three panels, including this one, **North Wind**, carved in **Portland stone**. The figure is stretched horizontal, hair and limbs flowing in one directional sweep, the body reduced to long clean rhythms that owe something to the Indian relief tradition Gill had spent years absorbing. It is decorative without being merely ornamental, and it holds its own at architectural scale. But it was **Jacob Epstein's** two figures, **Day** and **Night**, that drew the real storm. Night in particular — a heavy, archaic female nude cradling a sleeping child — provoked calls for removal from the press and from the building's own tenants. One director of the company threatened to resign. Epstein, characteristically, refused all concessions. The controversy confirmed what Gill's work at **Westminster Cathedral** had already suggested: that direct carving in a public, monumental register

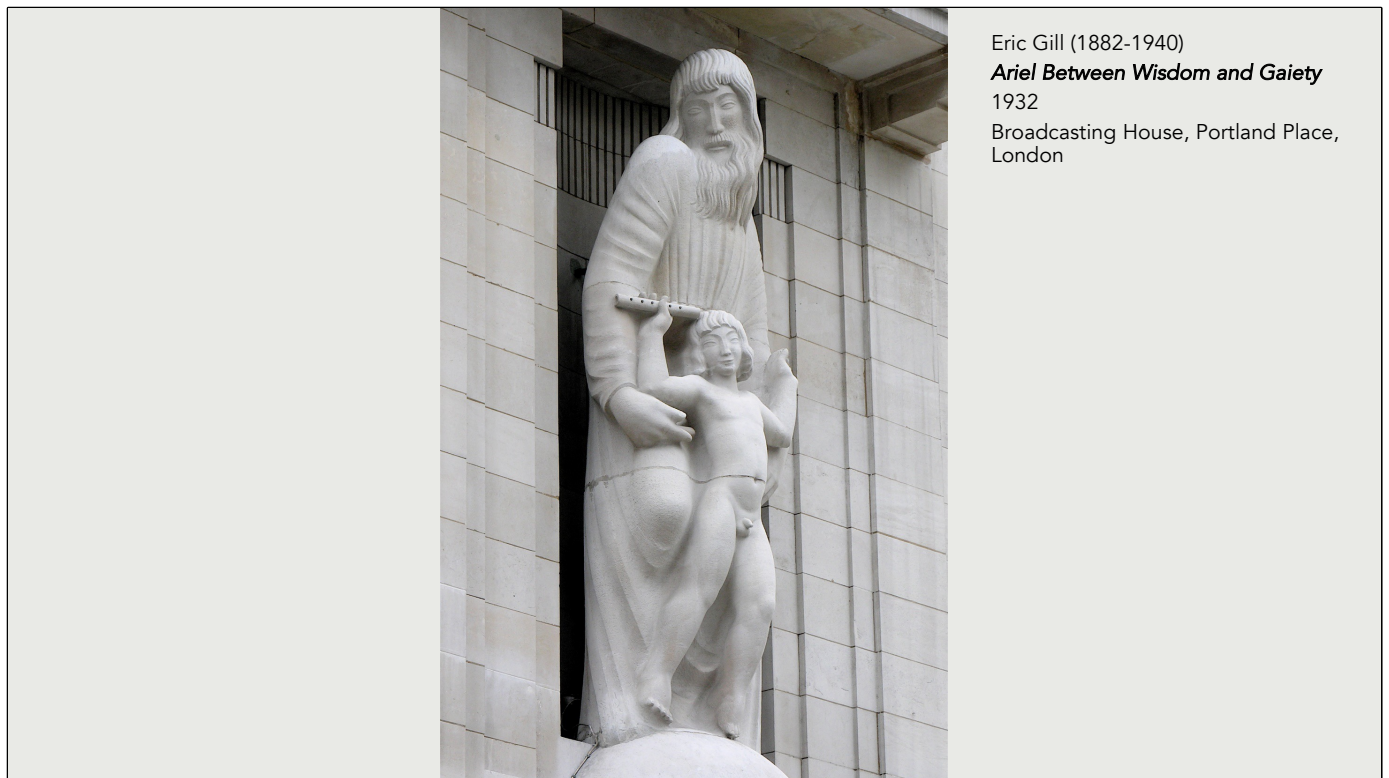
was still genuinely unsettling to a British audience, even at the end of the nineteen-twenties.

Notes

In 1928–9, Gill carved three of eight relief sculptures on the theme of winds for the London Electric Railway company (now Transport for London) at 55 Broadway, St James's.

This is North Wind in Portland stone.

Jacob Epstein's Day and Night drew most of the criticism from the London public.



Eric Gill (1882-1940)
Ariel Between Wisdom and Gaiety
 1932
 Broadcasting House, Portland Place,
 London

Eric Gill (1882-1940), *Ariel Between Wisdom and Gaiety*, 1932,
 Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London

The storm over **55 Broadway** was still fresh when Gill received his next major London commission. **Broadcasting House**, completed in **1932**, gave him the prominent sculptural programme for the **BBC's** new headquarters on Portland Place. The choice of **Prospero and Ariel** from Shakespeare's *Tempest* was conceptually neat — Prospero the scholar-magician, Ariel a spirit moving through the air, just as radio waves do — though Gill himself reportedly conceived the figures as God and Man rather than literary characters. There was controversy over the sculpture's proportions, and modifications were made before the building opened. **Gilbert Bayes** contributed additional Ariel reliefs on the exterior, and the reception area received Gill's figure of **The Sower**. The commission confirmed Gill's position as the default choice for ambitious institutional carving in Britain. His output in the nineteen-thirties was relentless. Stone reliefs for **Jerusalem** in 1934, carvings for **Queen Mary University** in 1936, work for the **Palace of Nations in Geneva** in 1938. Alongside the sculpture ran a parallel career in

typography: **Gill Sans**, **Perpetua**, and **Joanna** all date from this period, with Gill Sans adopted by the BBC, British Railways, and Penguin Books. Gill died of lung cancer in **1940**, leaving a body of work that remains genuinely difficult to separate from the man's deeply troubling private life.

Notes

The building showcases works of art, most prominently the statues of Prospero and Ariel (from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) by Eric Gill. Their choice was fitting since Prospero was a magician and scholar, and Ariel a spirit of the air, in which radio waves travel. There was, reportedly, controversy over some features of the statues when built and they were said to have been modified. They were reported to have been sculpted by Gill as God and Man, rather than Prospero and Ariel, and that there is a small carved picture of a beautiful girl on the back of Prospero. Additional carvings of Ariel are on the exterior in many bas-reliefs, some by Gill, others by Gilbert Bayes. The reception area contains a statue of *The Sower* by Gill.

In 1932, Gill produced a group of sculptures, Prospero and Ariel, and others for the BBC's Broadcasting House in London.

In 1934 he visited Jerusalem where he carved a number of stone bas reliefs. He also produced works for Queen Mary University (1936), designed the first George VI stamp (1937), Palace of Nations, Geneva (1938), a Roman Catholic church and the Art Deco Midland Hotel.

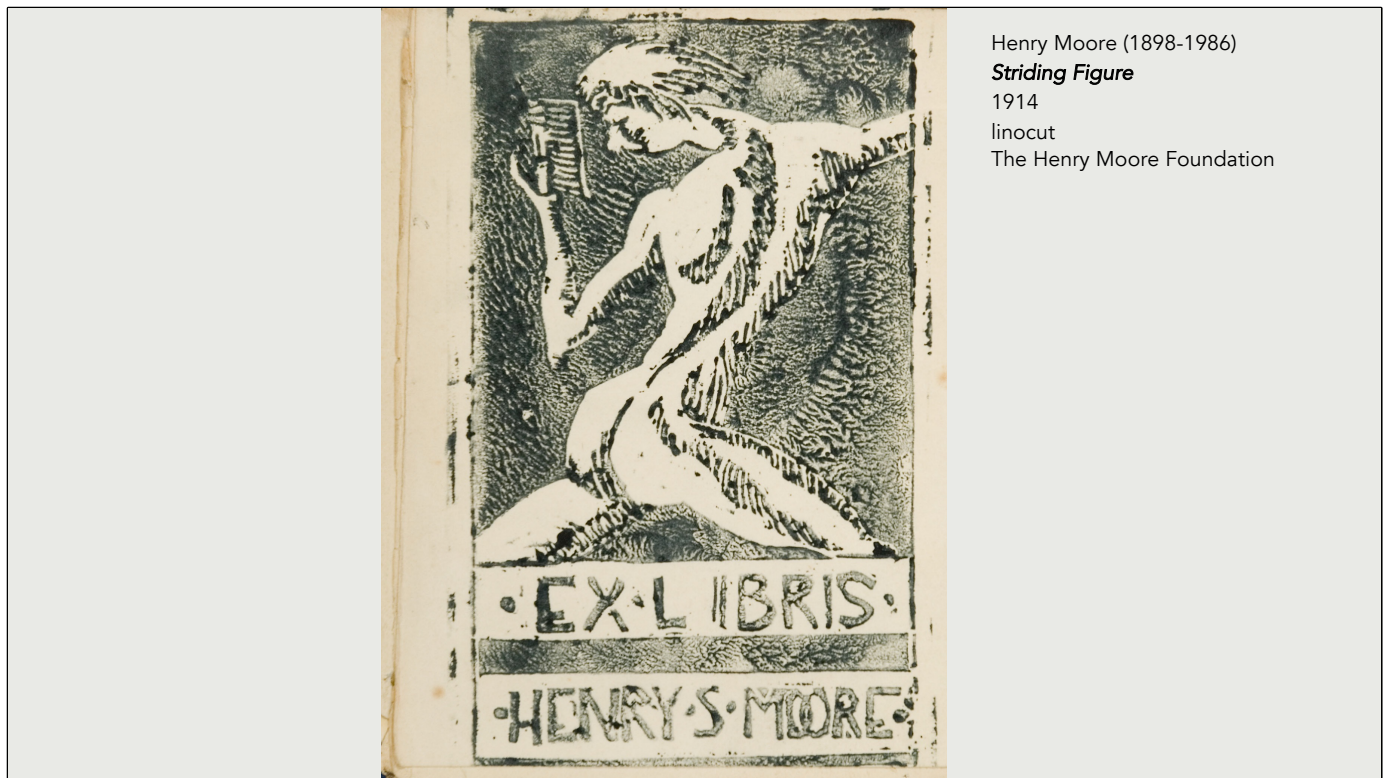
He designed many typefaces including Perpetua, Joanna and Gill Sans which was used by Penguin Books, British Railways and the BBC.

He published many essays on the relationship between art and religion and produced many erotic engravings.

He died of lung cancer in 1940.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/jul/22/art.art>



Henry Moore (1898-1986)

Striding Figure

1914

linocut

The Henry Moore Foundation

Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Striding Figure*, 1914, The Henry Moore Foundation

Where Gill remained anchored to institutional and religious patronage, **Henry Moore** represents a decisively different trajectory — one rooted not in craft tradition but in a restless engagement with form itself. Moore was born in **1898** in **Castleford, Yorkshire**, the seventh of eight children of a coalminer. The ambition came early: aged eleven, hearing at Sunday School of **Michelangelo's** achievements, he resolved to become a sculptor. His parents resisted, and the path was indirect. He trained as a pupil-teacher at Castleford Secondary School before the First World War intervened entirely. His earliest known work is a modest **bookplate** — an ex libris label pasted into a biography of **Albrecht Dürer** — which tells us something about the self-improving, literary household that shaped him. After the war he won a place at **Leeds School of Art** and then the **Royal College of Art** in London, where his real education happened not in the studios but in the galleries of the **British Museum**, studying **African** and **Mesoamerican** sculpture. Those objects taught him that the figure did not have to

imitate nature to carry emotional weight. That lesson would govern everything that followed, from his earliest **direct carvings** of the mid-nineteen-twenties through to the monumental bronzes that eventually stood in public spaces across the world.

Notes

Henry Moore was born in July 1898 in Castleford, Yorkshire, the seventh of eight children. When he was 11 he won a scholarship to Castleford Secondary School where his artistic abilities were encouraged. Moore's first-known print is a book plate mounted onto the half-title page of a biography about Albrecht Dürer.

In 1915, aged 17, he completed his student teacher training at his old school in Castleford but he felt too young to control his students.

Notes

Moore decided to become a sculptor aged 11, when hearing of Michelangelo's exploits at Sunday School. A managed to enter Castleford Grammar School but his parents were against desire to become a sculptor. The bookplate is a small label at the front of a book indicating the owner. 'Ex libris' means 'from the books of ...'.

Castleford Secondary School opened in 1906. It cost £6 a year plus 10s for textbooks and a shilling a term for the Sports Club. Fees were abolished by the Education Act of 1944. The school gradually became known as Castleford Grammar School over the next 50 years. In 1970, it became a comprehensive school and more recently an Academy.

Henry Moore (1898-1986) was an Anglo-Irish sculptor and artist the son of a Yorkshire coalminer. He was best known for his semi-abstract monumental bronze sculptures which are located around the world as public works of art.

His forms are usually abstractions of the human figure, typically depicting mother-and-child or reclining figures. Moore's works are usually suggestive of the female body, apart from a phase in the 1950s when he sculpted family groups. His forms are generally pierced or contain hollow spaces. Many interpreters liken the undulating form of his reclining figures to the landscape

and hills of his birthplace, Yorkshire.

His work can be seen around London and at Henry Moore Studios & Gardens, Dane Tree House, Perry Green, Hertfordshire SG10 6EE (near Stanstead airport). The Yorkshire Sculpture Park contains one of the largest displays of open-air bronzes by Henry Moore in Europe. Created between 1955 and 1985, the bronzes represent the peak of the artist's career when he worked on a monumental scale and particularly for the open air.

Various Forms and Features of Moore's Work

African and Mayan influence, 1925

The Year of the Hole, 1932

Stringed figures, late 1930s

Pointed figures, idea 1938, sculptures late 1960s

Helmets, first drawings from 1948, first helmet heads from 1950

Greek drapery from his visit in 1951

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Henry Moore (1898-1986)
Henry Moore with his fellow Rifles
 1916

Henry Moore (1898-1986)
Henry Moore with his fellow Rifles
 1916
 Photograph

Henry Moore (1898-1986), Henry Moore with his fellow Rifles, 1916

That ambition formed against a backdrop of extraordinary violence. Moore enlisted in **1916**, aged eighteen, with the **Winchester Civil Service Rifles**, and received his first commission almost simultaneously — a wood carving to commemorate boys from his old Castleford school leaving for the front. It is a telling coincidence: his sculptural life began literally in the shadow of war. What followed was catastrophic by any measure. At the **Battle of Cambrai** in **1917**, Moore's unit went out four hundred strong and only fifty-two returned. Moore himself was caught in a gas attack and spent the remainder of the war as a physical training instructor. The experience left its mark, though Moore spoke of it sparingly in later life. A small self-portrait in army uniform, sent in a letter to his school art teacher **Miss Gostick**, is one of the few intimate documents from this period — a young man pausing to record himself before the world changed irrevocably. That same year, **Jacob Epstein** was dismantling **The Rock Drill**, stripping away the mechanical lower body he had so defiantly exhibited in **1915**. Two artists, two responses to the same historical rupture: one destroying the machine-age

optimism of his earlier work, the other about to begin building an entirely new sculptural language from scratch.

Notes

Moore enlisted in the Winchester Civil Service Rifles in 1916 at the age of 18. He also received his first commission and "first serious wood carving" to commemorate boys from his old school leaving for war.

Moore went on to serve in World War I and was injured in a gas attack at the Battle of Cambrai in Northern France in 1917. His unit went out 400 strong and only 52 came back including Moore. He spent the rest of the war as a physical training instructor.

He sent this Self-Portrait in Army Uniform in a letter to his school art teacher, Miss Gostick.

Notes

This was the year when Epstein was dismantling his The Rock Drill.

Henry Moore (1898-1986)

Head

1918

Sycamore wood

Private collection



Henry Moore (1898-1986), Head, 1918, Private collection

Returning from war, Moore went back to Castleford briefly as a teacher before winning an ex-servicemen's grant that took him to **Leeds School of Art** in **1919**. The school created a sculpture studio specifically for him — he was the only full-time sculpture student, which meant he had his tutor entirely to himself, though he later complained the man spent that time peering over his shoulder rather than teaching. He completed the two-year drawing course in a single year. At Leeds he met **Barbara Hepworth**, and in **1921** both moved to the **Royal College of Art** on scholarships, beginning one of the most productive and competitive friendships in British art history. Moore spent long hours at the **Victoria and Albert Museum** and the **British Museum** studying what was then called primitive sculpture — Aztec, African, pre-Columbian — and it redirected his entire practice. What he rejected was the conventional academic process: modelling in clay, casting in plaster, then using a **pointing machine** to mechanically transfer the form into stone or wood. This, Moore felt, put distance between the sculptor and the material. The influence of **Brâncuși**, **Epstein**, **Gaudier-Brzeska**,

and **Frank Dobson** confirmed his alternative: **direct carving**, cutting into the block to discover the form already latent within it. The material itself becomes a collaborator.

Notes

In 1918, after the war, he returned to teach at Castleford. The following year he secured a place at Leeds School of Art with an ex-servicemen's grant and the school set up a sculpture studio specially for him. He completed the two-year drawing course in one year. He was the only full-time sculpture student so he had the tutor to himself although he later complained that his tutor spent the time looking over his shoulder. At Leeds he met Barbara Hepworth who there from 1920 to 1921 and she was to become a lifelong friendly rival.

In 1921 he received a scholarship to study sculpture at the Royal College of Art with Hepworth who was there from 1921 to 1924.

He studied 'primitive' art at the Victoria & Albert Museum and the British Museum. Both Moore and Hepworth at this stage followed the Victorian style of natural forms, landscapes and animal studies. He became dissatisfied with what he had been taught which was based on moulding in clay then cast in plaster and then the use of a largely mechanical and 'pointing' machine to reproduce it in stone or wood. His knowledge of primitive art and the influence of sculptors such as Constantin Brâncuși, Jacob Epstein, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Frank Dobson led him to the method of direct carving. Modelling is a building up process and carving is a cutting down to find the form within the solid block.

Notes

1918 was the year women won the right to vote.



Henry Moore (1898-1986)
Mother and Child
1922
Portland stone
Unknown

Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Mother and Child*, 1922, Unknown

The first **mother and child** appears here — a subject so central to Moore's thinking that it will recur across his entire career. Alongside it is **Standing Nude Girl, One Arm Raised**, now held by the **Henry Moore Foundation**, and one of the earliest examples of his combining pen, ink, chalk, and wash in a single drawing. That technical experimentation in drawing was not merely peripheral. In a **1983** interview with **Bernard Levin**, Moore stated that drawing was fundamental to both painting and sculpture — that every good artist had to be trained to see and to represent what they saw. He called it, simply, common sense. Back in London, he immersed himself in the **National Gallery** and the **British Museum**, deepening the visual education that had begun at Leeds. He was fully aware of **Cubism** and the continental avant-garde, but found himself pressing against the conservatism of the **Royal Academy**, which remained strongly hostile to modern art. Then, in **1923**, came his first significant act of patronage. **Charles Rutherston** — brother of the Royal College's principal — purchased two of Moore's carvings and invited him to Bradford to see

his extensive private collection. That visit exposed Moore to a range of European modernism he had, until then, encountered only at a distance.

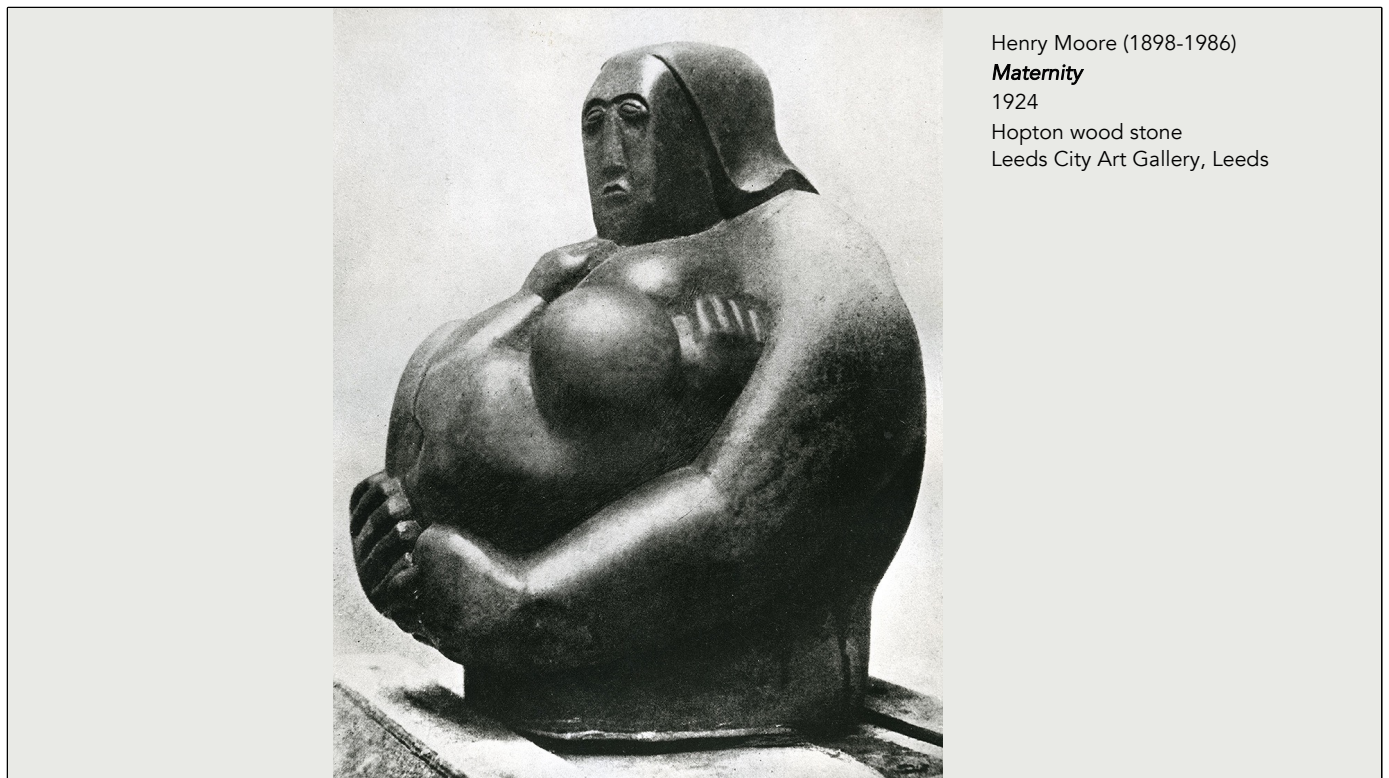
Notes

Moore's first mother and child, a theme that will preoccupy him throughout his career.

Standing Nude Girl, One Arm Raised, the Henry Moore Foundation (gift of the artist 1977). At this time, Moore begins to use experimental techniques whilst drawing from life; this is one of the earliest instances of his combination of pen, ink, chalk and wash.

Moore said in an interview by Bernard Levin in 1983 that he considered drawing fundamental to both painting and sculpture as it was essential to be trained to see and to be able to represent what one saw. He thought no good artist could possibly disagree, 'it is common sense'. When he came to London he immersed himself in the galleries, particularly the National Gallery and the British Museum. He was aware of Cubism and modern art but had to struggle against the strong reaction against modern art, particularly at the Royal Academy.

The following year, 1923, Charles Rutherston (brother of the principal of the Royal College of Art) bought two of Moore's carvings and became his first patron. He invited Moore to see his extensive collection in Bradford.



Henry Moore (1898-1986)

Maternity

1924

Hopton wood stone

Leeds City Art Gallery, Leeds

Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Maternity*, 1924, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leeds

The Rutherford visit, then, opened Moore's eyes to what European modernism looked like in person. His formal education at Leeds had given him technical grounding, and now his practice grew more assured. After graduating, Moore won a **Royal College of Art** travelling scholarship, though the journey to Italy was delayed until **1925** — he stayed on as sculpture tutor at Leeds until a replacement could be found. When he finally reached Italy, he moved through Florence and Rome absorbing **Giotto**, **Masaccio**, and the Renaissance sculptors, though he later admitted the overwhelming richness of it all produced something close to confusion rather than clarity. Returning to London, he continued as a part-time sculpture tutor at the **Royal College of Art** until **1931**, a post that gave him financial stability and time to experiment. His handling of material grew noticeably more confident through the mid-twenties. He carved increasingly in **Hopton Wood stone**, a fine-grained Derbyshire limestone prized for its density and subtle warmth — used in Westminster Abbey and the Albert Memorial,

it rewarded precisely the kind of patient, responsive carving Moore believed in. Then in **1926** he began working in **concrete**, a material that had until then belonged almost entirely to architecture, pushing its expressive possibilities into the territory of sculpture for the first time.

Notes

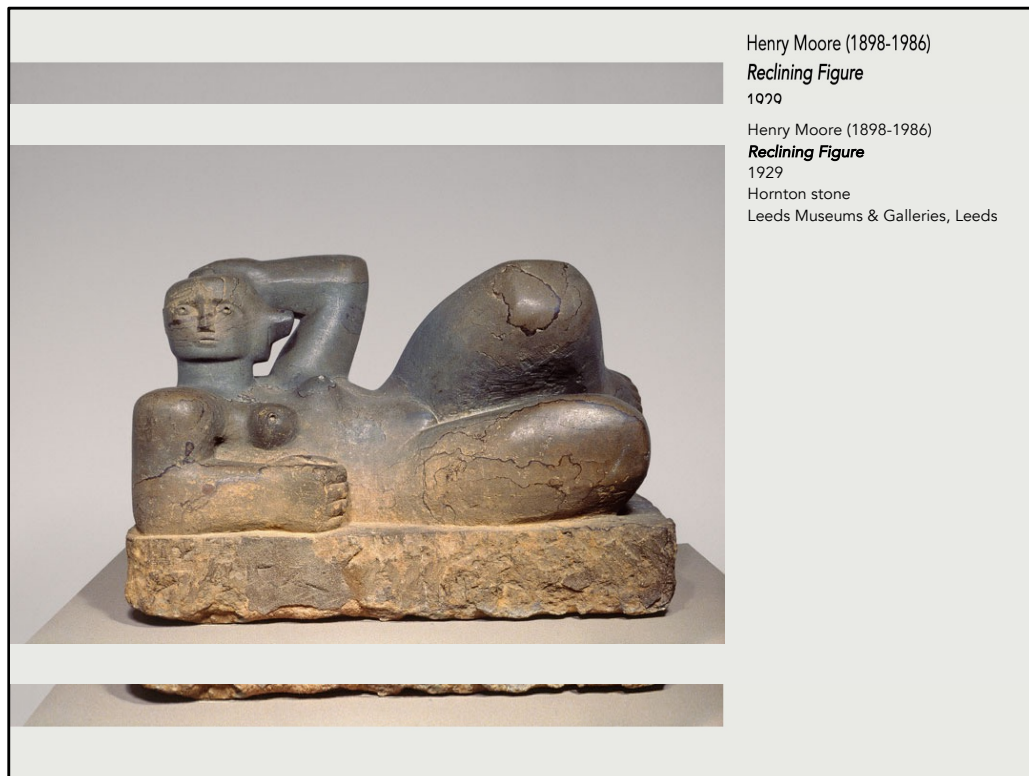
Demonstrating Moore's interests in direct carving and his more confident handling of the material.

Moore won a scholarship after graduating from Leeds to travel to Italy to see the Old Masters. His trip was delayed until 1925 as he continued as sculpture tutor until a replacement could be found. He then worked as a part-time sculpture tutor at the Royal College of Art until 1931.

In 1926 he started to create sculptures in concrete, a material that had been confined to architecture up till then.

Notes

Hopton Wood stone (sometimes Hopton-Wood stone or Hoptonwood stone) is a type of limestone quarried west of Middleton-by-Wirksworth, Derbyshire, England. Described as "very fine, almost like marble" and as "England's premier decorative stone", it is particularly suited to carving, making it popular for tombstones (including many thousands for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission), sculpture and building. Buildings and structures made using Hopton Wood stone include the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the Albert Memorial, Lichfield Cathedral, Calke Abbey, Chatsworth House and Oscar Wilde's tomb.



Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Reclining Figure*, 1929, Leeds Museums & Galleries, Leeds

The Italy visit, already described, was only half the story of that scholarship journey — because Moore also passed through Paris, and what he encountered there proved just as formative. In the **Musée du Trocadéro** he came face to face with a plaster cast of the **Mayan chacmool** from **Chichen Itza**: a reclining figure, knees raised, torso twisted, head turned at a right angle to the body. The image never left him, and the reclining figure became the central obsession of his entire career. Back in London, Moore emerged through the late twenties as a genuinely radical presence. His core conviction was that the human body, as he put it, allows one to "express more completely one's feelings about the world than in any other way." But his approach to making was equally distinctive — he rejected clay modelling and bronze casting in favour of direct carving, insisting the sculptor must hold "the solid shape, as it were, inside his head." He carved **Hornton stone**, a blue-grey Jurassic limestone that weathers to warm brown, used extensively in the Oxford colleges, giving his figures a geological

weight. Critics were largely hostile. The **Daily Mirror** in **April 1931** described his Leeds **Reclining Figure** as surpassing "in repulsiveness even that of Epstein" — a comparison that, however intended, placed Moore exactly where he belonged.

Notes

In 1925, he travelled Europe on a scholarship and saw Italy and Paris. In the Musée du Trocadéro in Paris he saw a plaster cast of the Mayan chacmool from Chichen Itza which had a profound effect on his later work. On returning to London he spent seven years teaching at the Royal College of Art.

Moore emerged in the 1920s as a radical, experimental and avant-garde figure and was rapidly established as the leading British sculptor of his generation. His principal and enduring subject was the human body, through which he believed 'one can express more completely one's feelings about the world than in any other way'.

Moore also rejected the established academic practices and insisted on direct carvings and truth to materials, influenced by sculptors like Brancusi and Epstein. He abandoned modelling in clay and casting in favour of direct carving of stone and wood. He said it was important that the sculptor "gets the solid shape, as it were, inside his head... he identifies himself with its centre of gravity." He maintained that each material had a life of its own and it was the sculptors job to respect it and reveal it.

His early sculpture was not always understood or appreciated, and revolutionary as it was, it was largely condemned by reviewers. Often his works were expressed in Epsteinian terms of primitivism and barbarism, in the *Daily Mirror* (14 April 1931) the Leeds Reclining Figure is described: 'A monstrosity at an exhibition of sculpture by Mr. Henry Moore which surpassed in repulsiveness even that of Epstein'.

Moore returned again and again to the reclining figure as a theme. He was also a fine draughtsman and his drawing of figures sheltering in the underground during World War II air raids remain some of his best received works.

His interest in landscape and nature was combined with his deep humanism placing him firmly in the tradition of British art. Moore was inspired by the

natural world and often had ideas based on the form of shells, pebbles and bones he found. His work encourages us to look at the natural world as one vast sculpture carved by natural forces.

Notes

1929 was the year of the Wall Street Crash and the start of the Great Depression.

Hornton stone is a blue/grey Jurassic limestone that oxidises to a brown/orange colour. It was used to build many of the Oxford colleges.

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Henry Moore (1898-1986)
Head and Shoulders



Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Head and Shoulders*

That hostile reception did nothing to dull Moore's growing reputation among those who mattered. His **first solo exhibition**, held at the **Warren Gallery** in London in **1928**, drew an audience that included **Jacob Epstein** and **Augustus John** — both of whom bought work. That two such commanding figures in British art collected from an exhibition most critics dismissed speaks directly to Moore's position: radical to the press, essential to his peers. By this point, the influence of **Mexican** and **African sculpture** was deepening his formal vocabulary. The compressed volumes, the refusal of naturalistic proportion, the sense of geological solidity — these qualities intensified as he absorbed pre-Columbian and African sources alongside what he had already encountered in the Trocadéro. Recognition at an institutional level followed swiftly. In **1930**, Moore exhibited **Head and Shoulders** at the **Venice Biennale**, selected alongside Epstein, Augustus John, **Wilson Steer**, and **Walter Sickert**. The company is telling: Moore, still in his early thirties, was being placed on equal footing with painters a generation his senior. The Biennale selection confirmed that however

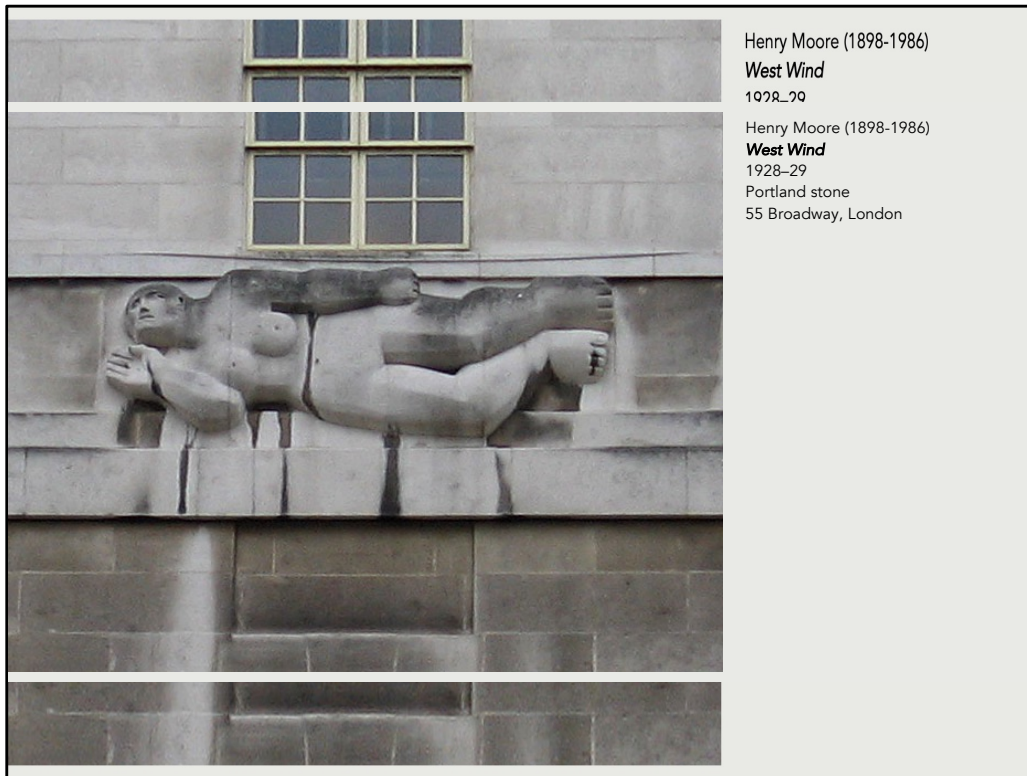
unsettling the Daily Mirror found him, the official structures of British art were beginning to take him seriously.

Notes

Described as Moore's first masterpiece by the dealer Dr Heinz Roland. At this time he started to be influenced by Mexican and African art.

In 1928, he held his first solo exhibition at Warren Gallery, London where his work was bought by Jacob Epstein and Augustus John.

Moore exhibited Head and Shoulders at the Venice Biennale in 1930 alongside Jacob Epstein and the painters Augustus John, Wilson Steer and Walter Sickert.



Henry Moore (1898-1986), *West Wind*, 1928–29, 55 Broadway, London

The **1928** commission for **55 Broadway** — the headquarters of **London Underground** above St James's Park station — marks Moore's first permanent public work, and it connects directly to the institutional recognition the Venice Biennale would confirm two years later. The architect **Charles Holden** invited several leading sculptors to carve reliefs representing the winds across the building's upper facades. Moore's contribution, **West Wind**, is carved in **Portland stone**, the white-grey Jurassic limestone quarried on the Isle of Portland in Dorset — the same material that faces St Paul's Cathedral and Buckingham Palace, carrying with it connotations of civic permanence. **Eric Gill**, A.H. Gerrard, and Samuel Rabinovich carved the remaining wind figures, while **Jacob Epstein** provided the more prominent ground-level pair, **Day and Night**, above the main entrances. It was Epstein's figures — explicitly naked, uncompromisingly modern — that provoked a newspaper campaign demanding their removal. Moore's relief, positioned high on the wall, escaped comparable fury, though its formal sources are equally ambitious: the reclining weight of the

figure recalls **Michelangelo's Medici Chapel** sculptures, while the compressed, earthbound horizontality echoes the **Mayan Chacmool**. After 1928, public commissions and exhibitions followed with regularity. The turning point had arrived.

Notes

His first public commission, *West Wind* (1928–29), was one of the eight reliefs of the 'four winds' high on the walls of London Underground's headquarters at 55 Broadway. The other 'winds' were carved by contemporary sculptors including Eric Gill with the ground-level pieces provided by Epstein.

Moore carved the statue from Portland stone and it shows the influence of Michelangelo's figures for the Medici Chapel and the Mayan Chacmool figure.

The relief is placed high on the walls of 55 Broadway, London Underground Limited's headquarters above St. James's Park tube station. The seven 'winds' on the other walls were carved by Eric Gill, A.H Gerrard and Samuel Rabinovich.

The architect Charles Holden commissioned several contemporary sculptures to decorate his art deco building. Most controversially, the pair of sculptures *Day and Night* by Jacob Epstein which sit above the two main entrances. When the building was completed in 1929 it was the graphic nakedness of Epstein's sculptures that triggered a newspaper campaign to have the sculptures removed.

1928 was a turning point for Moore. After this he received exhibited and received commissions on a regular basis.

Notes

Portland stone is a limestone from the Jurassic period quarried on the Isle of Portland, Dorset. The quarries consist of beds of white-grey limestone. It has been used extensively as a building stone throughout the British Isles, notably in major public buildings in London such as St Paul's Cathedral and Buckingham Palace.



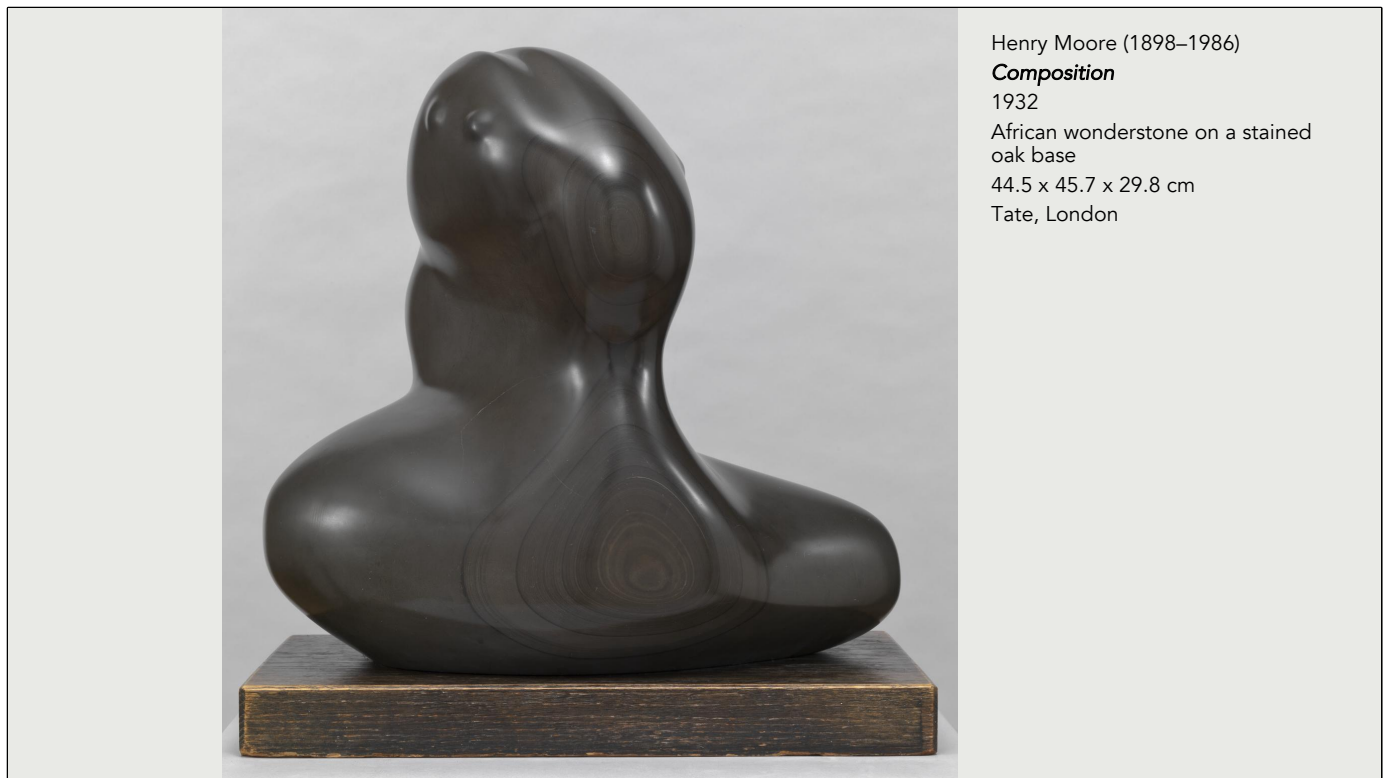
Henry Moore with his wife Irina Radetzky at their marriage, 1929

The appointment to **Royal College of Art** as sculpture instructor came in **1929**, and the terms suited Moore precisely — two days a week teaching, leaving the rest of his time free for his own work. That same year he married **Irina Radetzky**, a painting student at the College, and their early courtship is revealing: one of his first dates with her was simply inviting her to watch him carve. The studio, the material, the act of making — these were never separate from the life. The couple settled in **Hampstead**, which by the early 1930s had become one of the most concentrated communities of avant-garde artists anywhere in Britain. Their neighbours included **Barbara Hepworth** and her second husband **Ben Nicholson**, the constructivist sculptor **Naum Gabo**, the Surrealist organiser **Roland Penrose**, and the critic **Herbert Read**, who would become Moore's most important intellectual advocate. Read famously described the Hampstead circle as a nest of gentle artists, a phrase that is affectionate but also slightly misleading — the arguments about abstraction, Surrealism, and the social role of art were anything but gentle. Moore was at the centre of those debates,

and they sharpened the formal ambitions that **West Wind** had first announced.

Notes

In 1929, he was appointed as sculpture instructor at the Royal College of Art which only involved teaching two days a week. In July Moore married Irina Radetsky, a painting student at the Royal College, and they moved to Hampstead near Hepworth and her second husband Ben Nicholson, Naum Gabo, Roland Penrose, Cecil Stephenson and the art critic Herbert Read ("a nest of gentle artists"). When courting his future wife Irina, Moore took her on an early date to watch him carving.



Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Composition*, 1932, 44.5 x 45.7 x 29.8 cm, Tate, London

Those debates in Hampstead that Read called a nest of gentle artists gave Moore exactly the intellectual pressure he needed, and **1931** marks the moment that pressure began to reshape his formal language decisively. That year Moore held his second solo exhibition at the **Leicester Galleries**, and the critical reception was brutal. A press campaign, reportedly backed by colleagues at the Royal College, forced his resignation from the teaching post he had held since 1929. He moved his studio to Jasmine Cottage in Kent, and the distance from London seemed to liberate him. It was also in 1931 that **Barbara Hepworth** produced her first pierced form, and Moore seized on the void as a structural idea — the hole not as absence but as active space, a dialogue between solid and emptiness that would define his mature work. By **1932** he was Head of Sculpture at **Chelsea School of Art**. Membership of the **Seven and Five Society** drew him further into abstraction alongside Hepworth, **Ben Nicholson**, and John Piper. Visits to Paris brought him into direct contact with **Picasso**, **Giacometti**, and

Jean Arp, whose biomorphic forms clearly echo in works like the **African wonderstone** *Composition* of 1931. Those swelling, polished, globular surfaces dissolve anatomical specificity entirely — this is a head and shoulders only in the loosest imaginative sense, human feeling preserved while human anatomy is abandoned.

Notes

In 1931 Moore held his second solo exhibition at the Leicester Galleries, London and he left London for a larger studio in Jasmine Cottage, Kent. he produced his first abstract piece and he pushed the human body into near abstraction. He resigned from his teaching post at the Royal College of Art following a vicious press campaign against him backed by colleagues. 1931 was also the year that Barbara Hepworth's Pierced Form inspired his use of the abstract hole as a formal device between the solid and void.

In 1932, he became Head of Department at Chelsea School of Art which he held until WWII. Moore and Hepworth were members of the Seven and Five Society consisting of seven painters and five sculptors. By 1934 the society's general meeting was attended by Moore, Hepworth, Nicholson and Piper amongst others. Their work became steadily more abstract. During his frequent visits to Paris he met Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Jean Arp and Alberto Giacometti.

In 1933 Paul Nash founded Unit One, a modern art movement. In 1934, Moore exhibited and published a book with Unit One, co-founded with Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth in 1933 to promote modern art, architecture and design. Moore flirted with Surrealism.

In 1934 he and Irina made their only visit to Spain, visiting Altamira, Madrid, Toledo and Barcelona. He visited the cave of Altamira (which he described as the "Royal Academy of Cave Painting"), Madrid, Toledo and Pamplona. He was much affected by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

Throughout Moore's life, and in spite of his considerable wealth in later years, he remained faithful to his father's 'old Labour' left-wing politics, hence his sympathies were on the Republican side.

By 1934 Moore was becoming an established name and the first monograph on Moore's work by Herbert Read was published.

This sculpture, *Composition*, is loosely reminiscent of a portrait bust – a head and neck rising from shoulders – although these human characteristics are not represented with any anatomical accuracy. Instead the sculpture is made up of rounded globular forms that seem to melt into each other, an effect achieved by the highly-polished finish. This in turn makes the sculpture appear as though it might be soft to touch.

It is likely that it was created at Moore's studio at 11a Parkhill Road, London. A photograph of Moore working in his Parkhill Road studio taken in 1932 (pop-up) clearly shows the completed *Composition* resting on a large cuboid plinth in the left of the image.

Moore and his wife Irina had moved to their studio-cum-apartment in the summer of 1929. Their neighbours in Hampstead included the sculptors Barbara Hepworth and John Skeaping, the art critic Herbert Read, curator and collector H.S. Ede, the architect Wells Coates, and the painter and collector Roland Penrose. Although Read was to describe Hampstead's artistic community as 'a nest of gentle artists', it was in fact a competitive environment in which artists shared and challenged each others' ideas.

African wonderstone is a fine-grained sedimentary rock, which, as *Composition* demonstrates, can be smoothed and polished to a high finish. Its hardness lies between marble and alabaster. Sculpture had conventionally been done using marble or cast from bronze. Moore broke with convention early on by favouring English stones. The use of African wonderstone is unusual but once again was a break with convention.

During the 1930s he was influenced by the way in which Constructivism exposed the abstract forms of a piece and by Surrealism as it added a deep psychological insight to forms. The two strands of thought encouraged him to fragment the human form into its elements and reduce it to its essentials while still retaining its psychological insight.

His early interest in non-Western art gave his work a frontality. Later, he explored all three dimensions and this led to holes in the pieces that provided both a route through and a central point from which the figure could grow.

Constructivism

Constructivism was an artistic and architectural philosophy that originated in Russia beginning in 1913 by Vladimir Tatlin. This was a rejection of the idea of

autonomous art. He wanted 'to construct' art. The movement was in favour of art as a practice for social purposes. Constructivism had a great effect on modern art movements of the 20th century, influencing major trends such as the Bauhaus and De Stijl movements. Its influence was pervasive, with major effects upon architecture, graphic design, industrial design, theatre, film, dance, fashion and to some extent music.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/henry-moore/henry-moore-om-ch-composition-r1147465>



Henry Moore (1898-1986)
Reclining Figure
1936
Elmwood
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo

Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Reclining Figure*, 1936, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo

The Surrealist connections Moore had been building through those Paris visits crystallised in **1936**, when he joined **Paul Nash** on the organising committee of the **International Surrealist Exhibition** at the New Burlington Galleries in London. Moore showed three drawings and four sculptures, and the Leicester Galleries mounted a further solo exhibition that same year. **Roland Penrose** bought an abstract *Mother and Child* in stone in **1937** and placed it in the front garden of his Hampstead house. The local press ran a two-year campaign against it — precisely the kind of public hostility that confirmed how far Moore's work had moved from conventional taste, and how closely that taste still policed domestic space. That same year Moore visited **Picasso's** studio alongside **André Breton**, Paul Eluard, **Max Ernst**, and Giacometti, and saw **Guernica** in progress. The timing is striking: while those artists were confronting political catastrophe directly, the Nazi Party in Munich was staging the **Entartete Kunst** exhibition, branding exactly this kind of formal experimentation as degenerate. Moore's

response to crisis remained formal rather than explicitly political. His **Stringed Relief** series, begun in 1937 and drawn from mathematical models he encountered at the Science Museum, introduced taut linear tension against curved mass — the reclining figures growing more architecturally ambitious with each iteration in elmwood.

Notes

Moore and Nash were on the organising committee of the International Surrealist Exhibition, which took place at the New Burlington Galleries, London in 1936. Moore exhibited three drawings and four sculptures. Also in 1936, The Leicester Galleries, London held a solo exhibition of Moore's work.

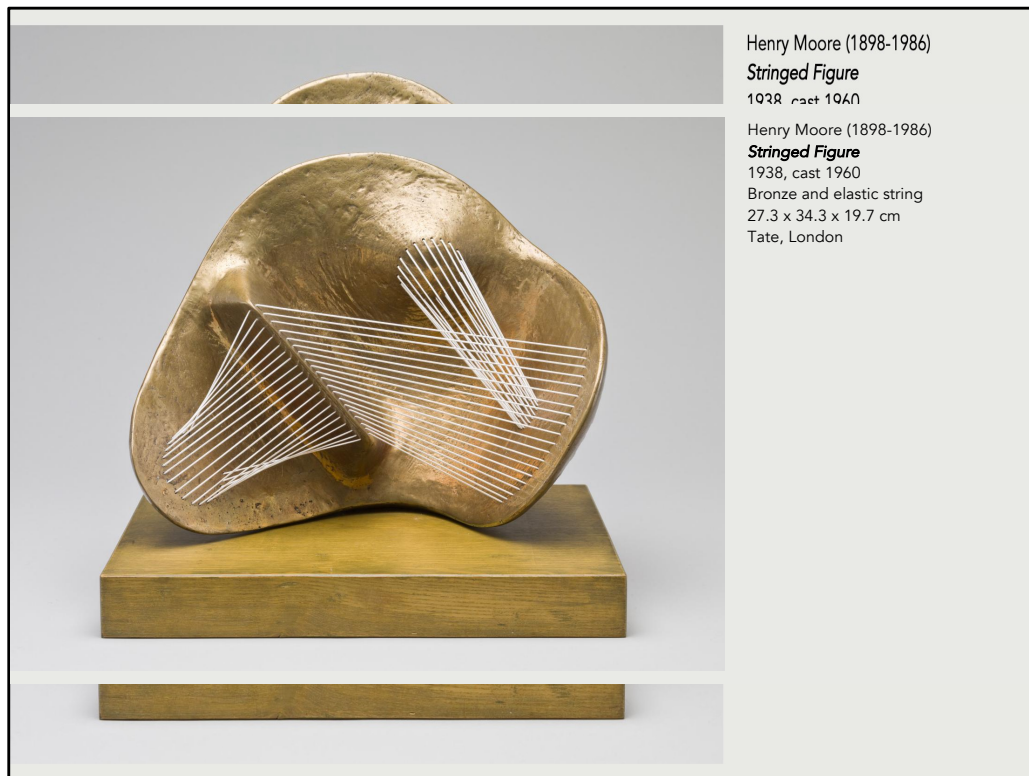
In 1937, Roland Penrose purchased an abstract 'Mother and Child' in stone from Moore that he displayed in the front garden of his house in Hampstead. The work proved controversial with other residents and the local press ran a campaign against the piece over the next two years.

Moore's Reclining Figure was the first of six major reclining figures in Elmwood.

In 1937 he visited Picasso's studio with André Breton, Paul Eluard, Max Ernst and Alberto Giacometti seeing *Guernica* in progress. Also in 1937 he produced *Stringed Relief* the first of a series of stringed sculptures inspired by mathematical models.

Notes

1937 was the year the Nazi Party held the Degenerate Art exhibition in Munich.



Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Stringed Figure*, 1938, cast 1960, 27.3 x 34.3 x 19.7 cm, Tate, London

The **Stringed Figure** series, which the previous slide traced to Moore's encounters at the Science Museum, produced some of his most technically distinctive work of the late **1930s**. The original version of this sculpture was carved in wood, and it was lost in Poland during the early war years — it has never been recovered. Moore spoke about the Science Museum models in **1968**, recalling how strings were threaded through holes in a square stone end and led to a circular end, so that a plane through the middle revealed a form halfway between the two geometries. What seized his imagination was not the mathematics but the perceptual experience: "the ability to look through the strings as with a bird cage and to see one form within another." By **1951**, writing for the **Tate catalogue**, Moore had articulated three distinct functions for the string. It contrasts in tautness with the curvilinear mass behind it. It acts as a cage rather than a wall — containing enclosed space while keeping it visible. And most importantly, it drives the eye along its own length, heightening

awareness of the space both within and around the sculpture, particularly when one set of strings is seen through another, creating what Moore called "a counterpoint of movement."

Notes

One of Moore's first stringed sculptures produced in the late 1930s.

The original idea of this sculpture was made in wood. It was lost in Poland in the early part of the war, and has never been traced.

In 1968 Moore accounted for his interest in strings:

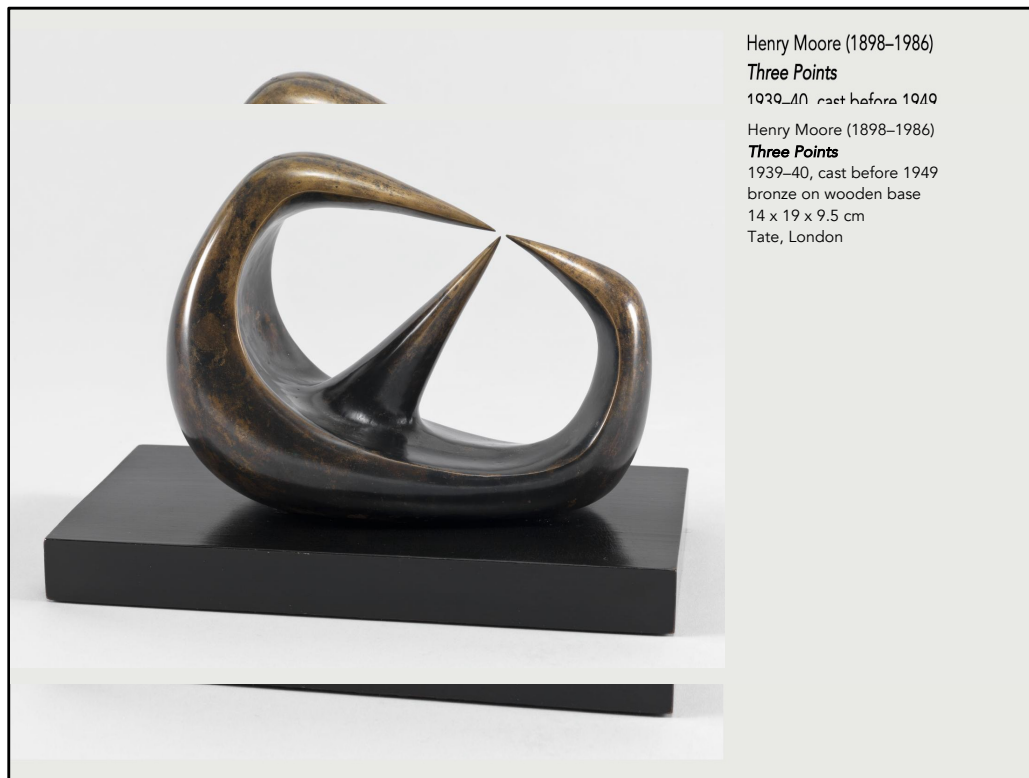
'Undoubtedly the source of my stringed figures was the Science Museum ... I was fascinated by the mathematical models I saw there, which had been made to illustrate the difference of the form that is half-way between a square and a circle. One model had a square stone end with twenty holes along each side making eighty holes in all. Through these holes strings were threaded and led to a circle with the same number of holes at the other end. A plane interposed through the middle shows the form that is halfway between a square and a circle. One end could also be twisted to produce forms that would be terribly difficult to draw on a flat surface. It wasn't the scientific study of these models but the ability to look through the strings as with a bird cage and to see one form within another which excited me.'

From a Tate catalogue in 1951:

'The function of the string or wire is three-fold. It contrasts, in its tautness, with the curvilinear contours of the mass. It establishes a barrier between the space enclosed by the sculpture's mass and the space which surrounds the sculpture – only, a barrier which, being a cage and not a wall, can contain the space on its open side while allowing it to remain visible. Above all, the string provokes movement of the spectators eye along its length and thereby increases his awareness of the space within the sculpture – especially when ... one set of strings can be seen through another, so creating a counterpoint of movement which brings to life the space around and within which the strings operate.'

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/henry-moore/henry-moore-on-ch-stringed-figure-r1146217>



Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Three Points*, 1939–40, cast before 1949, 14 x 19 x 9.5 cm, Tate, London

The counterpoint of movement that defined the **Stringed Figure** series gave way, in Moore's thinking, to an equally charged spatial idea — but one built on tension rather than enclosure. Moore first conceived of pointed forms in **1938**, though he did not develop the idea extensively until the late **1960s** and beyond. The principle is precise: the points must almost, but not quite, touch. That gap is everything. In **1978**, Moore explained it directly: "This pointing has an emotional or physical action in it where things are just about to touch but don't. There is some anticipation of this action." His reference points are revealing. He invoked **Michelangelo's** Sistine ceiling, where the finger of God reaches toward Adam without making contact — the entire drama of creation held in that fractional distance. He cited the sparking plug, where electricity must jump a gap to ignite. And he pointed to the **16th-century** French painting **Gabrielle d'Estrées et une de ses soeurs**, in which one sister's fingers hover at the other's nipple — erotic charge sustained entirely by proximity withheld. **Three Points**, made in

lead in 1940, was Moore's first full realisation of this principle. The gap, he insisted, is not an absence — it is the work's active centre.

Notes

Moore had the idea for pointed forms in 1938 although he did not use the idea extensively until the late 1960s. The points should almost but not quite touch to create a feeling of anticipation.

In 1978 Moore explained the ideas behind the composition of Three Points: 'In 1940 I made a sculpture with three points [the lead version of Three Points], because this pointing has an emotional or physical action in it where things are just about to touch but don't. There is some anticipation of this action. Michelangelo used the same theme in his fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, of God creating Adam, in which the forefinger of God's hand is just about to touch and give life to Adam. It's also like the points in the sparking plug of a car, where the spark has to jump across the gap between the points. There is a very beautiful early French painting (Gabrielle d'Estrées with her sister in the bath), where one sister is just about to touch the nipple of the other. I used this sense of anticipation first in the Three Points of 1940, but there are other, later works where one form is nearly making contact with the other. It is very important that the points do not actually touch. There has to be a gap.'

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/henry-moore/henry-moore-om-ch-three-points-r1151463>

A bronze sculpture of a reclining figure by Henry Moore, featuring a stylized, tubular form with a large, open, circular void in the center. The figure is positioned on a dark, rectangular wooden base. The sculpture is made of dark bronze and has a smooth, polished finish.

Henry Moore (1898–1986)
Reclining Figure
1939, cast 1959
bronze on a wood base
13.5 x 25.5 x 8.5 cm
Tate, London

Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Reclining Figure*, 1939, cast 1959, 13.5 x 25.5 x 8.5 cm, Tate, London

The **Three Points** principle — that charged gap between forms almost touching — connects directly to how Moore handled the body itself in the late **1930s**. During that period he was casting lead figures at home using a lost-wax process: he carved in beeswax bought from Boots, encased it in a plaster and ground-pottery shell, fired it in a kiln to pour the wax out, then melted lead in an old saucepan over a primus stove. The danger was the handle giving way under the weight. Crucially, Moore was unaware that adding a little antimony would harden the lead, so these works were vulnerable to damage by touch or collapse if dropped. By the **1950s**, with his work in serious commercial demand, he began recasting many of these figures in bronze — durable, editionable, and financially practical. The **1939** lead **Reclining Figure**, recast in bronze in **1959**, exemplifies this history. Its skeletal, tubular anatomy shows the clear influence of **Picasso** and **Giacometti**, both of whom Moore engaged with directly — he had met Giacometti at Picasso's studio in **1937**, and exhibited alongside him at

the **International Surrealism Exhibition** in London in **1936**. Gordon Onslow Ford, who owned the lead original, nicknamed it **the fire engine**, seeing water hoses where Moore saw the opened human body — liberated, as Moore put it, to experiment with form rather than carry fixed meaning.

Notes

In the 1930s Moore cast the lead figures at home using a lost wax process. He would carve the figure in beeswax that he bought from Boots in the High Street. This would be covered in plaster mixed with ground pottery and then heated in a kiln and the wax poured out. He then heated lead in an old saucepan over a primus stove in the studio and pour it into the mould. The danger was the lead would be too heavy for the saucepan handle. A disadvantage of this process was that only one copy could be made.

In the 1950s he made the decision to cast many of his lead figures in bronze. The decision was the result of many of his lead figures needing to be repaired. In the 1930s Moore was unaware of the fact that a little antimony mixed with the lead would make it hard, so his work was often damaged by touch. Also, if a lead figure was dropped it collapsed whereas a bronze figure is almost indestructible. The decision to recast his lead figures in bronze may also have been financial as by the 1950s his work was in great demand and a limited edition of small bronze figures would sell at a high price.

In 1959 Henry Moore cast this sculpture of a female reclining figure in bronze. The original version was made in lead in 1939 and, in that it represents the human body as a skeletal form, reveals the influence of Pablo Picasso and Alberto Giacometti on Moore's sculptures of the late 1930s.

Figures such as Reclining Figure were associated with the dream world of Surrealism but the owner of the original lead version, the painter Gordon Onslow Ford, said, "I do not believe that Surrealism was ever central to Moore although he sometimes showed with the Surrealists. He did not share [André] Breton's feeling that there was no other alternative in art at the time and Surrealism was the great hope. In comparison to the Surrealists – who were often amateurs trying something that couldn't have been done before, Moore came from a traditional art background and had a thorough professional training. Even at his most experimental Moore – unlike the Surrealists – has always been involved in continuing the tradition of European

man, and his changes have been humanistic changes." Ford referred to the sculpture as 'the fire engine', possibly because its arrangement of tubes and armatures reminded him of water hoses.

Moore often chose reclining figures as he considered them more stable and permanent than standing or sitting figures. He also believed that as the reclining figure was easily recognised and a common subject for a sculptor he was free to experiment with the position of the body and limbs and the way they projected into space and interacted with each other. It is clear that he did not intend his sculptures to have any specific meaning. He said,

"I want to be quite free of having to find a 'reason' for doing the Reclining Figures, and freer still of having to find a 'meaning' for them. The vital thing for an artist is to have a subject that allows [him] to try out all kinds of formal ideas – things that he doesn't yet know about for certain but wants to experiment with, as Cézanne did in this 'Bathers' series. In my case the reclining figure provides chances of that sort. The subject-matter is given. It's settled for you, and you know it and like it, so that within it, within the subject that you've done a dozen times before, you are free to invent a completely new form-idea."

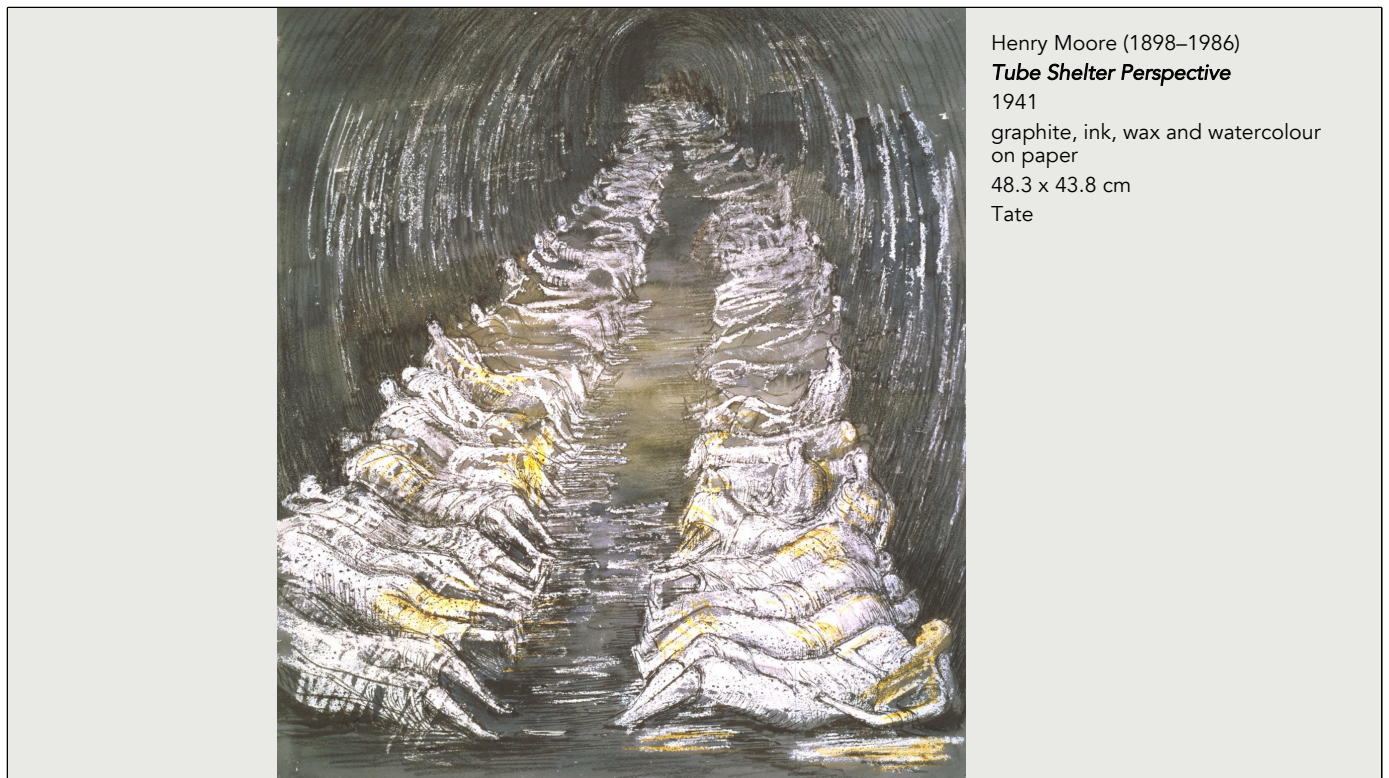
The open and linear forms of Reclining Figure may have been influenced by Pablo Picasso's fragmentation of the body in his paintings, drawings and sculptures. Moore had been aware of Picasso's work since his student days at Leeds School of Art, and in 1973 reflected that 'really all my practicing life was as a student, and as a sculptor I have been very conscious of Picasso because he dominated sculpture and painting – even sculpture as well as painting – since Cubism'.

Another source for Moore's opened bodies may have been the work of Alberto Giacometti. Moore exhibited alongside Giacometti at the International Surrealism Exhibition held at the New Burlington Galleries, London, in 1936, and had met the artist at Picasso's studio in 1937, if not before.

In his 1959 book on Moore German psychologist Eric Neumann discussed Reclining Figure as a symbol of death: 'everything fruitlike has been melted away from the woman's body, and its deathly machine-like character is very much to the fore.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/henry-moore/henry-moore-om-ch-reclining-figure-r1147452>



Henry Moore (1898–1986)

Tube Shelter Perspective

1941

graphite, ink, wax and watercolour
on paper

48.3 x 43.8 cm

Tate

Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Tube Shelter Perspective*, 1941, 48.3 x 43.8 cm, Tate

The shelter drawings emerge directly from that period of personal upheaval. When the Blitz destroyed **Henry** and **Irina Moore's** London home in **1940**, they relocated permanently to **Perry Green** in Hertfordshire, eventually buying a house called **Hoglands** — which remained Moore's home and working base for the rest of his life. It was in that same year that Moore first descended into the Underground shelters, not with sketchbook open but with an envelope in his pocket. Out of respect for the shelterers, he refused to draw them directly, instead jotting descriptive notes and returning to his studio to reconstruct the scene from memory. **Kenneth Clark**, his friend and chairman of the **War Artists' Advisory Committee**, saw the resulting drawings and formally appointed Moore as an Official War Artist. The figures Moore produced — pale, swathed, recumbent — rhyme unmistakably with his reclining sculptures. When the **Tube shelter series** was exhibited at the **National Gallery** in **1941**, the catalogue described the imagery as "a terrifying vista of recumbent

shapes, pale as all underground life tends to be pale; regimented, as only fear can regiment; helpless yet tense." The drawings travelled widely and did more than any single sculpture had yet done to establish Moore's reputation internationally, particularly in America.

Notes

Moore produced powerful drawings of Londoners sleeping in the London Underground while sheltering from the Blitz. These are now regarded as some of the finest works resulting from the War Artists' Advisory Committee (WAAC) run by Kenneth Clark. He also drew miners working underground in Yorkshire. These drawings helped boost Moore's reputation internationally, particularly in America.

In 1940 Henry and Irena's home was bombed in London and they moved out to Hertfordshire. They moved to Perry Green near Much Hadham and at first rented half of a house called 'Hoglands' before buying the whole house. This was to become Moore's home and workshop for the rest of his life despite acquiring significant wealth later in life.

Becomes an Official War Artist after showing his shelter drawings to his friend and chairman of the War Artists' Advisory Committee, Kenneth Clark. Out of sympathy for the shelterers, Moore does not make any direct sketches underground, instead taking descriptive notes on the back of an envelope before returning to his studio to draw from memory.

This picture was exhibited at the National Gallery in 1941. It was described in the catalogue as 'a terrifying vista of recumbent shapes, pale as all underground life tends to be pale; regimented, as only fear can regiment; helpless yet tense, safe yet listening, uncouth, uprooted, waiting in the tunnel for the dawn to release them. This is not the descriptive journalism of art. It is imaginative poetry of a high order.'



Henry Moore (1898–1986)

Pink and Green Sleepers

1941

pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon,
chalk, watercolour wash, pen and ink
on paper

38.1 x 55.9 cm

Tate, London

Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Pink and Green Sleepers*, 1941, 38.1 x 55.9 cm, Tate, London

That critical response from **1943** crystallises something important about how Moore's imagery was being consciously recruited into a wartime national narrative. The unnamed critic's comparison of the shelter drawings to natural phenomena — lichen on grey rock, weather-worn stone, the fiery black and red of burning coal — does more than describe a visual texture. It frames the shelterers themselves as elemental, as if the British people were literally made of the same enduring material as the landscape. This was not accidental. The **War Artists' Advisory Committee** understood that art could carry a propaganda charge without becoming a poster. Moore's recumbent figures, rendered in those distinctive greens and blues that evoke damp underground air, press tightly together in compositions that feel simultaneously claustrophobic and communal. The palette is not incidental — it reads as the actual cold, fungal atmosphere of the **London Underground**, dank and crowded. But the deeper ideological work those nature metaphors perform is to suggest that whatever force

had shaped these people was geological in its patience and strength — something that bombs simply could not extinguish. **Herbert Read**, Moore's most committed critical champion, had been making a related argument since the **1930s**: that Moore's art was rooted in an ancient, chthonic Britishness. The shelter drawings gave that claim sudden, urgent, political point.

Notes

One critic, writing in 1943, described the Shelter Drawings in terms of natural phenomena. He compared the strange colours, scratchy lines and pitted surfaces to 'lichen of grey rock, the coloured texture of weather-worn stone, the fiery black and red of igneous formations of burning coal'. Such associations between Moore's shelterers and nature supported a general propaganda message that within the British people lived an indomitable, almost elemental force which would prevail whatever the threat.

The greens and blues of the figures and the close composition evocatively portray the dank, crowded conditions of the underground.



Henry Moore (1898–1986)

Miners Pushing Tubs

1942

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon,
watercolour, wash, pen and ink

The Henry Moore Foundation, —

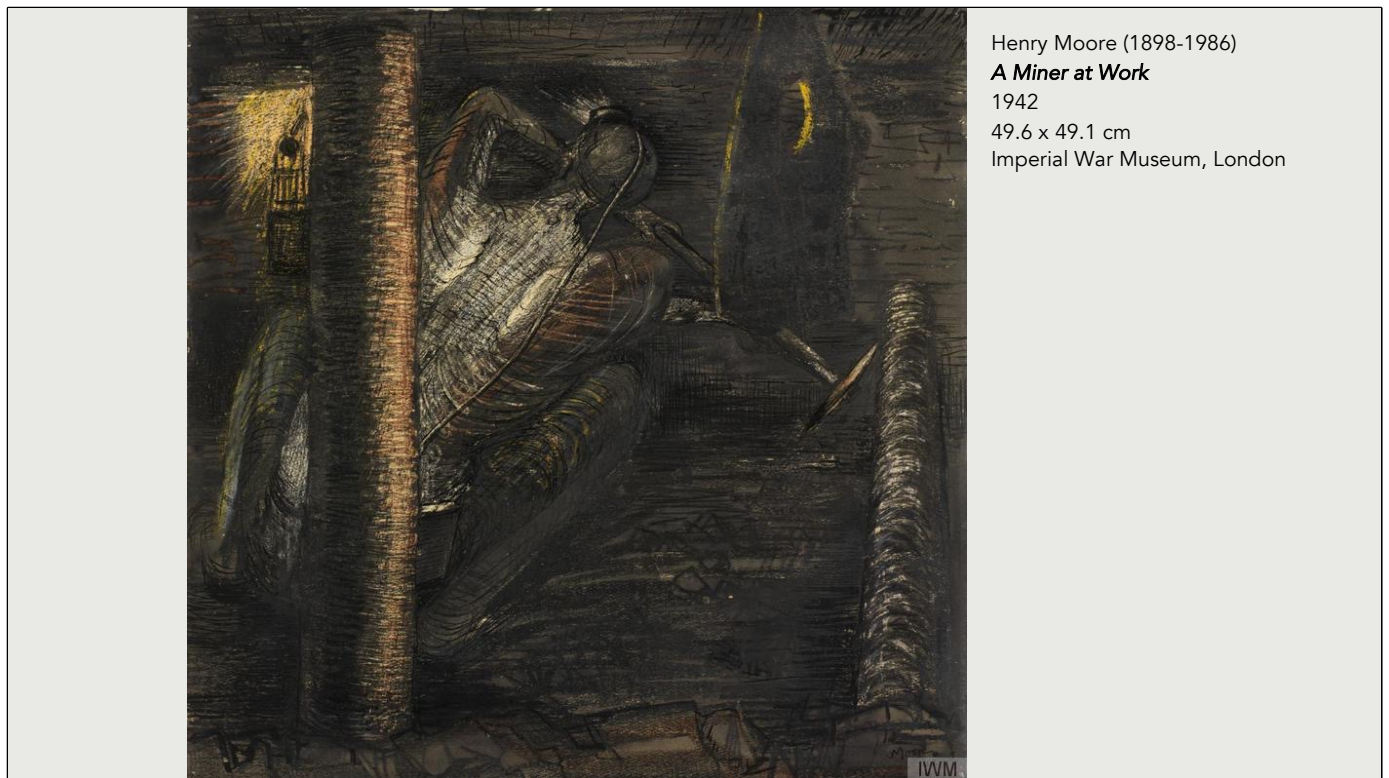
Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Miners Pushing Tubs*, 1942, The Henry Moore Foundation, —

The shelter drawings had made Moore a public figure; the coalmining commission of **1942** brought him back to his origins. Moore was born in **Castleford**, Yorkshire, the son of a miner, and his father had spent years underground in precisely the conditions he was now asked to draw. That biographical fact charges these sketchbook pages with something beyond documentary duty. Working in situ down the pit, Moore faced conditions that defeated conventional draughtsmanship. The confined spaces, the darkness held back only by lamp-light, the crouched and labouring bodies pressed against narrow seams — all of it forced a notation that is urgent and compressed. You can see in this page how the figures are wedged into the picture plane in a way that rhymes visually with the shelter drawings, yet the mood is entirely different. Where the shelterers are passive, horizontal, waiting, the miners are straining, effortful, almost fused with the rock they are cutting. **Herbert Read** saw Moore's sculpture as rooted in the earth; here the earth is literal, and Moore is drawing men who spend their

working lives inside it. The sketchbook becomes a record not just of wartime labour but of a working-class world Moore had escaped into art — one he now confronted with the full weight of his mature technique.

Notes

In 1942 Moore was commissioned by the War Artists' Advisory Committee to draw the coalminers near Castleford, where draw in situ down the mines. This is a page from his coalmining sketchbook.



Henry Moore (1898-1986), A Miner at Work, 1942, 49.6 x 49.1 cm, Imperial War Museum, London

The coalmining commission was formally arranged in **August 1941**, when the **War Artists Advisory Committee** invited Moore to document the industry at first hand. He made several visits to **Wheldale Colliery** that winter, submitting the finished drawings in **May 1942**. The original fee was a modest twenty-five guineas, but the Committee eventually purchased eight drawings for eighty guineas, recognising that what Moore had produced was far more than dutiful reportage. One consequence of this work is easy to overlook: drawing miners pushed Moore toward sustained study of the male figure, which had rarely featured in his sculpture up to that point. The straining, compressed forms he observed at the coal face began to infiltrate his three-dimensional work — bodies no longer reclining and receiving but pushing, bearing weight, occupying space with muscular resistance. Coal mining itself was a declining industry even then; output had been falling since **1913**, yet at the outbreak of war it still accounted for roughly ten per cent of all British exports, making its workforce a

subject of genuine national significance. Moore's drawings honour that significance without sentiment. The miner at the seam is almost inseparable from the rock — a visual idea that ties these works directly back to the shelter drawings, and forward into the sculptural language Moore would develop throughout the postwar decade.

Notes

Google Cultural Institute, 'At his own suggestion, Moore was commissioned in August 1941 by the War Artists Advisory Committee to make drawings of Coal Mining at Wheldale Colliery, Yorkshire, where his father had worked at the beginning of the century. Moore made a number of visits during that winter and submitted drawings in May 1942. The original commission was for 25 guineas but eight drawings were purchased for 80 guineas and a further three seem to have been added later. Drawing the male figure was a departure for Moore and lead to the inclusion of male forms in his sculpture. Although coal mining had been in decline since 1913, at the start of the Second World War it was still a large industry, accounting for 10% of all exports. The miner seems impossibly constrained at the coal face, almost inseparable from his surroundings. The subject matter is a continuation of Moore's war time subterranean interests.'



Henry Moore (1898–1986)
Family Group
1950
bronze
Barclay School, Stevenage,
Hertfordshire, England

Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Family Group*, 1950, Barclay School, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, England

The shift from the coal face to the church interior marks one of the most telling pivots in Moore's career. In **1943** the sculptor was commissioned to produce a **Madonna and Child** for **St Matthew's Church, Northampton** — the first time his mother-and-child theme, which had driven his work since the 1920s, was cast explicitly in religious terms. Moore approached it with characteristic directness: he wanted the pair to feel, in his own words, "human and dignified, and not purely decorative." Life and art converged sharply in the years that followed. His mother died in **1944**, and his only child, **Mary**, was born in **1946** to Moore and his wife **Irina**. The personal weight of those events flows directly into the **Family Group** bronzes of the late 1940s. The large-scale version eventually placed outside **Barclay School, Stevenage** in **1950** had originally been designed for **Impington Village College**, but lack of funds killed that commission. It was revived when **John Newsom**, Chief Education Officer for Stevenage, secured public art funding for the new town's schools — making this Moore's first

major postwar public bronze. Running beneath all of this is the **reclining figure**, Moore's defining form, whose increasing abstraction — pierced openings contrasting solid mass against surrounding space — charts the sculptural language he would carry into his international career.

Notes

In 1943 Moore was commissioned to produce a Madonna and Child for St. Matthew's Church in Northampton. This was the first piece that translated his mother and child theme into a religious subject.

Moore's mother died in 1944 and his first daughter was born in 1946. This led to a number of 'mother and child' compositions. His Family Group (1950) in Stevenage became his first large-scale public bronze.

In 1944 he started a family group for Harlow New town.

In 1945 he received an honorary degree from Leeds University, the first of over 20 he was to receive from all over the world.

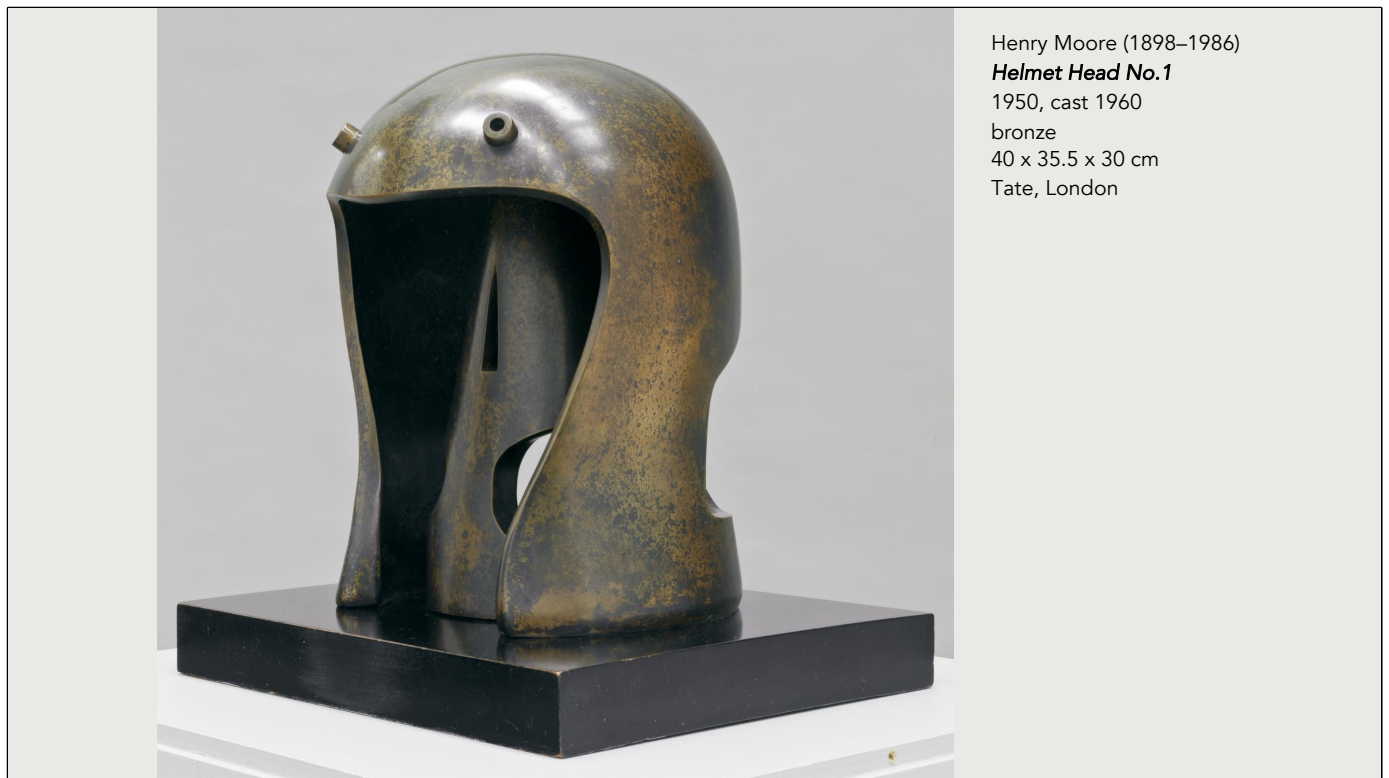
In 1946 Henry and Irena's only child, Mary, was born.

This Family Group was Moore's first large scale commission for a bronze and his first commission following the Second World war. It was originally intended for Impington Village College in Cambridge and the Family Group subject fits in with the village college philosophy of life-long education. However, after Moore had designed the maquette, Impington cancel the sculpture due to lack of funds.

The project was revived a few years later when the new town of Stevenage was being designed. The Chief Education Officer, John Newsom, persuaded the council to allocate funds for public art works at each of the new schools being built, allowing Moore to complete Family Group for the Barclay School in 1950.

Moore's signature form is a reclining figure. Moore's exploration of this form, under the influence of the Toltec-Mayan figure he had seen at the Louvre, was to lead him to increasing abstraction as he turned his thoughts towards experimentation with the elements of design. Moore's earlier reclining figures deal principally with mass, while his later ones contrast the solid elements of the sculpture with the space, not only round them but generally through them

as he pierced the forms with openings.



Henry Moore (1898–1986)
Helmet Head No.1
1950, cast 1960
bronze
40 x 35.5 x 30 cm
Tate, London

Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Helmet Head No.1*, 1950, cast 1960, 40 x 35.5 x 30 cm, Tate, London

The reclining figure and the family group both speak to Moore's preoccupation with the human body as shelter — and that idea finds its most concentrated, perhaps troubling, expression in **Helmet Head No. 1**. The bronze cast in **1960** derives from a lead original made in **1950**, and it inaugurates a series in which protection becomes an ambiguous, even sinister quality. A hollow outer shell encases a smaller interior figure, sealed within but also imprisoned by it. Most critics read the helmet series through the lens of the **Second World War**, but Moore had been formed by an earlier conflict: he served in the **Battle of Cambrai in 1917** and was evacuated after a gas attack. That experience of the body as something fragile, exposed, requiring armour, runs deep. The work grows directly from his pre-war investigations into interior and exterior forms — the pierced masses he had been developing since the early 1930s now charged with something darker. **1950** was a year of significant decisions. Moore turned down a knighthood, insisting it would change his conception of

himself and therefore of his work. The following year, a **BBC** documentary made him the first living artist to be the subject of a broadcast film, coinciding with his **Festival of Britain** commission.

Notes

This bronze sculpture was cast in 1960 from a lead version originally made in 1950. It was the first in a series of works that addressed the theme of protection through the form of a militaristic helmet. Most critics have interpreted Helmet Head No.1 with reference to the Second World War, but it may also have been informed by Moore's experiences of fighting in the trenches during the First World War.

Helmet Head No.1 developed from Moore's pre-Second World War explorations of the relationship between interior and exterior forms and the notion of the body as a protective shell.

In 1950 he turned down a knighthood as 'it would change my conception of myself, and with it the conception of my work.'

In 1950 he produced this Helmet Head, No. 1, an exploration of an internal form enclosed by an external form.

In 1951 Moore is the subject of a BBC documentary titled Henry Moore, the first ever film on a living artist, to coincide with his commission for the Festival of Britain. The Tate held their first retrospective of his work.

In 1954 he was elected a trustee of the National Gallery and held the post until 1974.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/henry-moore/henry-moore-on-ch-helmet-head-no1-r1149255>



Henry Moore (1898–1986)
Reclining Figure
1951
Painted plaster
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Reclining Figure*, 1951, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

The postwar world reframed everything Moore had been doing. The Holocaust and the atomic bomb produced in many sculptors a conviction that the medium needed to return to something pre-cultural, almost primordial — and Moore's increasingly abstract figures of the **1950s** reflect exactly that pressure. It is worth noting the shift in how piercing works in this period. His earlier figures are opened up in a conventional way: bent limbs separate from and rejoin the body. In the later, more abstract work, space drives directly through the mass itself, alternating concave and convex in a much more radical dialogue. That development runs in close parallel with **Barbara Hepworth's** sculptures, though the relationship between the two was always tangled. Hepworth reportedly first pierced a torso after misreading a review of one of Moore's early exhibitions — a productive misunderstanding, if there is such a thing. The plaster **Reclining Figure: Festival**, made in **1951** and now in the **Tate**, crystallises this approach: an abstract female form intercut with voids, existing in

several bronze casts. Moore himself resisted over-explanation. Asked why his titles were so spare, he replied: "All art should have a certain mystery and should make demands on the spectator. Giving a sculpture too explicit a title takes away part of that mystery."

Notes

After WW II the Holocaust and the atomic bomb instilled in sculptor a sense that it should return to its pre-cultural roots.

Earlier figures are pierced in a conventional manner, in which bent limbs separate from and rejoin the body. The later, more abstract figures are often penetrated by spaces directly through the body, by which means Moore explores and alternates concave and convex shapes. These more extreme piercings developed in parallel with Barbara Hepworth's sculptures. Hepworth first pierced a torso after misreading a review of one of Henry Moore's early shows. The plaster *Reclining Figure: Festival* (1951) in the Tate, is characteristic of Moore's later sculptures: an abstract female figure intercut with voids. As with much of the post-War work, there are several bronze casts of this sculpture. When Moore's niece asked why his sculptures had such simple titles, he replied,

"All art should have a certain mystery and should make demands on the spectator. Giving a sculpture or a drawing too explicit a title takes away part of that mystery so that the spectator moves on to the next object, making no effort to ponder the meaning of what he has just seen. Everyone thinks that he or she looks but they don't really, you know."



Henry Moore (1898-1986)
Draped Reclining Woman 1957–58
1957–1958
Skulpturenpark Pinakotheken,
Munich

Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Draped Reclining Woman* 1957–58, 1957–1958, Skulpturenpark Pinakotheken, Munich

That commitment to mystery did not mean withdrawal from the world — quite the opposite. Moore's trip to Greece in **1951** proved transformative. Encountering the Parthenon sculptures directly, he became absorbed by the way ancient Greek carvers used drapery not as decoration but as a structural device, the cloth pulled taut across limbs to reveal the mass and movement beneath. The **Draped Reclining Woman** of **1957 to 1958** is the clearest result: the fabric reads as a second skin, tightening over thigh and shoulder to make bodily weight more palpable, not less. This synthesis of archaic gravity and modernist abstraction made Moore the natural choice for a succession of landmark commissions. The **UNESCO headquarters** in Paris received a large reclining figure in **1958**, placing his work in a genuinely international frame. **Nuclear Energy**, installed at the **University of Chicago** in **1967**, marked the site where the first controlled nuclear reaction took place — a solemn, helmet-like bronze freighted with the same postwar reckoning the earlier work had registered more

obliquely. **Knife Edge Two Piece** arrived at College Green near the **Houses of Parliament** in **1962**, and **Large Two Forms** outside the Chancellery in **Bonn** in **1979** confirmed his stature in Germany specifically.

Notes

Following a trip to Greece in 1951 Moore was inspired by ancient Greece sculpture to adopt the use of drapery to emphasize the form of his figures.

In the 1950s he started to receive more and more important commissions including UNESCO (1958), University of Chicago (Nuclear Energy, 1967), Chicago Man Enters the Cosmos (1980). In 1962, he completed Knife Edge Two Piece for College Green near the Houses of Parliament in London and in 1979 he became known in Germany with Large Two Forms outside the Chancellery in Bonn..

References

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Draped_Reclining_Woman_1957%E2%80%9358



Henry Moore (1898–1986), *Reclining Figure*, 1963–65, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York

Those international commissions were not just prestigious — they were symptomatic of a reputation that had become genuinely extraordinary by any measure. In **1961**, Alistair Gordon wrote in the *Connoisseur* that "it is difficult for us in Britain to understand... just how much Moore is revered abroad: he is considered quite simply as the greatest living sculptor." By the end of the **1970s**, around forty exhibitions a year featured his work worldwide, and by **1977** he was paying over a million pounds a year in income tax — a figure that speaks for itself about the commercial scale his art had reached. That year he established the **Henry Moore Foundation**, channelling his wealth back into supporting the broader arts. The last three decades of his life, running from the mid-**1950s** through to his death in **1986**, saw him become the most famous and highest-earning artist Britain had ever produced, sustained by a continuous flow of large-scale public commissions across Europe, America, and beyond. Against this backdrop of triumph, one moment of personal loss stands out: in **1975**, his lifelong friend and fellow

sculptor **Barbara Hepworth** died. The two had shaped British sculpture together from its modern beginnings, and her absence marked the closing of an era.

Notes

In 1961 Alistair Gordon writes for the Connoisseur magazine "it is difficult for us in Britain to understand ... just how much Moore is revered abroad: he is considered quite simply as the greatest living sculptor."

By the end of the 1970s there were some 40 exhibitions a year featuring his work. By 1977 he was paying over a million pounds a year in income tax and he established the Henry Moore Foundation to help the arts.

The last 30 years of his life (1956 to 1986) saw him become the most famous and highest earning artist in the country. He earned his money from a continuous stream of large, prestigious sculptures around the world.

In 1975 his lifelong friend Barbara Hepworth died.



Henry Moore (1898-1986)
Large Figure in a Shelter
1985-86
bronze
City of Guernica, Spain

Henry Moore (1898-1986), *Large Figure in a Shelter*, 1985-86, City of Guernica, Spain

The mention of **Barbara Hepworth** reminds us that Moore's own end was not far behind. In his final years, his output slowed but his sense of moral purpose did not. His last completed sculptural work was presented to **Guernica**, in the Basque Country of Spain, as a direct tribute to those who died in the **Spanish Civil War** — a conflict that had haunted his generation of artists since **Picasso** produced his great painted response to the town's bombing in **1937**. That Moore chose this as his final statement says much about the political conscience that had always underpinned his humanism, even when the public image of the wealthy country-squire sculptor threatened to obscure it. He died at his home at **Perry Green** in Hertfordshire on the **31st of August 1986**, survived by his wife **Irina**, whom he had married in **1929**, their daughter **Mary**, and his grandchildren. He had lived and worked on that same Hertfordshire estate for over four decades, and it was there that the **Henry Moore Foundation** continued its work after his death, preserving both his legacy and the working landscape he had shaped

so deliberately around himself. With his passing, British sculpture lost the figure who had defined its international identity for half a century.

Notes

Moore's last sculptural work is presented to Guernica, Spain as a tribute to those who died in the Spanish Civil War.

Moore died at his home in Perry Green on 31st August 1986 survived by his wife, Irina, daughter Mary and his grandchildren.



Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975)
*Barbara Hepworth, 1925, with John
Skeaping at the British School in
Rome*
1925

Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), Barbara Hepworth, 1925, with John Skeaping at the British School in Rome, 1925

With Moore's death in 1986, British sculpture lost its dominant international voice — but that voice had never been entirely his alone. **Barbara Hepworth** had been his equal and his rival from the very beginning, and her story runs in close parallel to his throughout the twentieth century. Born in **1903** in Yorkshire, Hepworth won a scholarship to the **Leeds School of Art** in 1920, where she first encountered Moore. It was a genuinely competitive friendship, and the competition mattered: Hepworth was the first of the two to pierce a sculptural form, a gesture that would define both their careers. She described the sensation herself — "I felt the most intense pleasure in piercing the stone in order to make an abstract form and space; quite a different sensation from doing it for the purpose of realism." Moore himself acknowledged **1932** as "the year of the hole," the point at which this formal breakthrough consolidated into a shared artistic language. Both won scholarships to the **Royal College of Art**, and both made trips to Paris to study the work of the European avant-

garde. Hepworth's early career was further shaped by a **West Riding Scholarship** to Florence in 1924, and it was in Italy that she married the sculptor **John Skeaping**, returning to London in 1926 to begin carving seriously in stone.

Notes

She was born in Yorkshire to a middle-class family (her father was a civil engineer) and she won a scholarship to study at Leeds School of Art (1920-21) where she met fellow student Henry Moore (1898-1986). There was a friendly rivalry and Hepworth was the first to sculpt the pierced figures that became the hallmark of both of their works.

She won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art (1921-24) which Moore also attended. She and Moore and other students went on trips to Paris to study art.

She won a West Riding Scholarship to Florence in 1924. In 1925 she travelled to Siena with John Skeaping, the Royal Academy Prix de Rome winner and they married in Florence. They moved to Rome where Skeaping was a scholar and began to carve in stone before returning to London in 1926.

Bio:Hepworth

Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) is an English artist and sculptor and one of the few internationally significant women artists in the early and mid-twentieth century. She was born in Yorkshire to a middle-class family (her father was a civil engineer) and she won a scholarship to study at Leeds School of Art (1920-21) where she met fellow student Henry Moore (1898-1986). There was a friendly rivalry and Hepworth was the first to sculpt the pierced figures that became the hallmark of both of their works.

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She won a West Riding Scholarship to Florence in 1924. In 1925 she travelled to Siena with John Skeaping, the Royal Academy Prix de Rome winner and they married in Florence. They moved to Rome where Skeaping was a scholar and began to carve in stone before returning to London in 1926. In 1927, Hepworth and Skeating held a studio exhibition and Hepworth sold two works. They moved to Hampstead (1928 to 1939) and had a son, Paul, in

1929 but the marriage was already deteriorating. She became associated with the 'new movement', direct carving, abstraction and precise forms and she joined the London Group and the 7 & 5 Society in 1930-31. Hepworth and Moore became the leading sculptors in the 'new movement'. Henry Moore called 1932 'The Year of the Hole'. The previous year his friend and rival, Barbara Hepworth, made her first pierced form, the year she gave birth to her first child. The hole she carved became the most important formal features of much of her and Moore's later work.

Hepworth, 'I felt the most intense pleasure in piercing the stone in order to make an abstract form and space; quite a different sensation from that doing it for the purpose of realism'. Hepworth has been criticized for lacking Moore's 'tumult' (see Adrian Stokes) but he goes on to admire her serenity and the way her works 'evade disputations of power or of antagonism'. Her forms appear slow, smooth and subtle. Jeanette Winterson (Tate) describes the hole as a form of focused energy, a still point in a turning world (a reference to T. S. Eliot's poem 'Burnt Norton' one of the Four Quartets). The centuries assumption has been that objects are positive, underpin the world and are associated with energy and masculinity but space, the 'hole', is negative and associated with femininity was exploded by quantum mechanics. Quantum theory teaches us that what appear to be hard, physical objects are forms of energy whose location is subject to uncertainty.

In 1931, Hepworth met Ben Nicholson who was then married. He joined her on a holiday to Happisburgh, Norfolk. She divorced Skeaping in March 1933, gave birth to triplets with Nicholson in 1934 and married him in 1938.

Hepworth's first 'holed' sculpture, Pierced Form, was carved in 1932 and exhibited in 1934. There she revealed her move to abstraction in 1932 and 1934 epitomised by the pioneering piercing of the block and experiments in collage, photograms and prints. The couple visited the Parisian studios of Jean Arp, Constantin Brâncuși, Piet Mondrian, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. They joined Abstraction-Création, and were major figures in Paul Nash's Unit One grouping and the associated publication edited by Herbert Read (1934). After the war she was in great demand and employed assistants. Hepworth's first public commissions were for the Festival of Britain.

Contrapuntal Forms was commissioned by the Arts Council to stand on the South Bank during the Festival. Hepworth carved the two monumental figures in Irish blue limestone with the help of assistants she took on for the first time, Denis Mitchell, John Wells and Terry Frost. In 1953 the Arts Council

presented Contrapuntal Forms to the new town of Harlow in Essex. It is sited at Glebelands in Harlow.

She divorced Nicholson in 1951 and visited Greece in 1954 to try to recover from the sudden death of her son in 1953.

Hepworth was a skilled draughtsman and her work includes 80 drawings of surgical procedures and operating rooms after she struck up a friendship with the surgeon Norman Capaner in 1944. During World War II she was a leading figure in the St Ives School with Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo and she divorced Nicholson in 1951.

Her international standing was confirmed by the Grand Prix of the 1959 São Paulo Bienal, a Whitechapel exhibition and a European tour.

In 1964, she attended the unveiling of Single Form at the United Nations in New York, which was commissioned in memory of her friend Dag Hammarskjöld (pronounced 'Hammer-shold'), Secretary General of the United Nations, who was killed in 1961.

Single Form is a monumental bronze sculpture and is her largest work, and one of her most prominent public commissions, displayed since 1964 in a circular water feature that forms a traffic island at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York. A second cast was made in 1963, bought by London County Council for 6,000 guineas and installed at Battersea Park in 1964, where it remains on the south shore of the lake. It measures 3.12 by 2 by 0.25 metres.

In 1970, the art critic Edwin Mullins suggested: "it is a torso, it is a profile with an eye, it is an expanse of space in which the sun rises, it is a blade, it is a human hand ... raised flat in a sign of authority, or of salute, or as a gesture of allegiance". In 1974 the art critic Dore Ashton suggested it is a "vision of the cosmos".

Hepworth served as a Tate trustee (1965-72), donating six works in 1964 and a further nine in 1967. After a long battle with cancer she died at home in 1975, aged 72, in a horrific fire.

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<http://barbarahepworth.org.uk/>

<http://www.hepworthwakefield.org/>

Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975)
Mother and Child
1927
Hoptonwood stone
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto



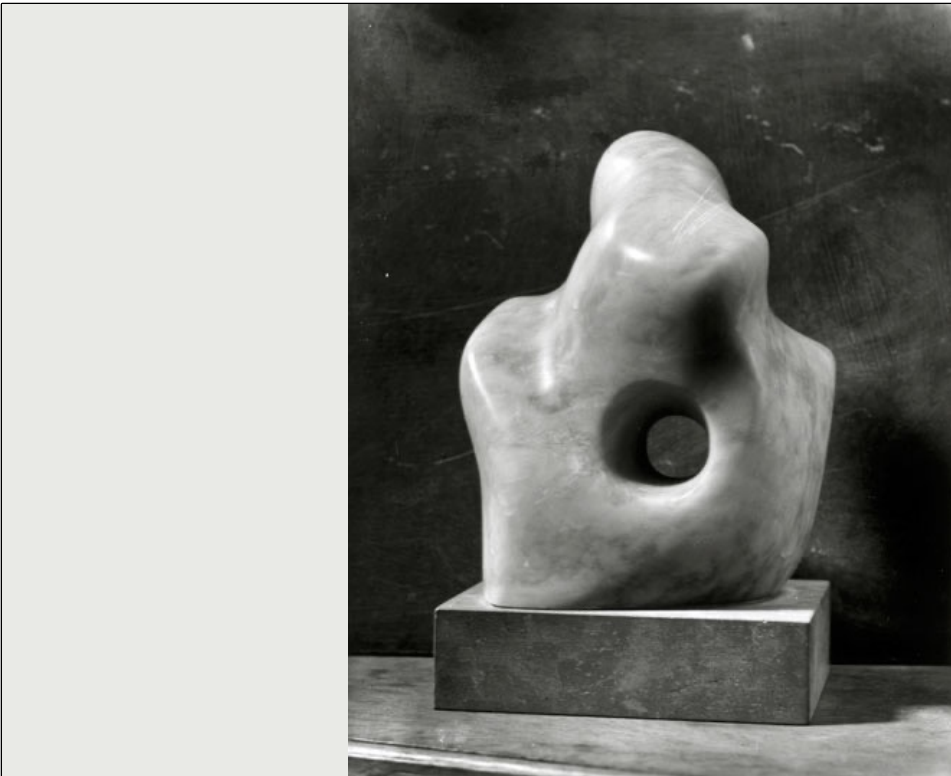
Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975), *Mother and Child*, 1927, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

That first exhibition success in 1927 gave Hepworth genuine momentum. She and Skeaping moved to Hampstead in **1928**, joining a community that would become the crucible of British modernism — Moore was already nearby, and the area drew painters, critics, and architects aligned with the European avant-garde. A son, Paul, was born in 1929, but the marriage to Skeaping was already breaking down; by the early 1930s, Hepworth had begun her relationship with the painter **Ben Nicholson**, who became her second husband and a profound creative collaborator. Professionally, these years were decisive. Hepworth committed fully to **direct carving**, working stone and wood with her own hands rather than delegating to craftsmen — a practice that carried strong ethical weight for her generation, a rejection of academic convention in favour of material truth. She joined the **London Group** and the **7 and 5 Society** in **1930** and **1931**, placing herself squarely within the circle advocating abstraction and formal precision. Alongside Moore, she emerged as the defining figure of this

new movement in British sculpture. The two were not simply contemporaries but genuine co-protagonists — their parallel commitments to abstraction and direct carving reshaping what British sculpture could be.

Notes

In 1927, Hepworth and Skeating held a studio exhibition and Hepworth sold two works. They moved to Hampstead (1928 to 1939) and had a son, Paul, in 1929 but the marriage was already deteriorating. She became associated with the 'new movement', direct carving, abstraction and precise forms and she joined the London Group and the 7 & 5 Society in 1930-31. Hepworth and Moore became the leading sculptors in the 'new movement'.



Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975)
Pierced Form
1931–1932
Lost in WWII

Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975), *Pierced Form*, 1931–1932, Lost in WWII

That parallel commitment to direct carving — which defined both Hepworth and Moore through the late 1920s — found its most radical expression in a single formal discovery: the hole. **1931** is the pivotal year. Hepworth carved her first pierced form, and she was direct about the sensation it produced: "I felt the most intense pleasure in piercing the stone in order to make an abstract form and space; quite a different sensation from that of doing it for the purpose of realism." Moore, watching the same possibilities unfold, later called **1932** "the year of the hole." Between them, they transformed a void into a positive sculptural element. The critic **Adrian Stokes** noted that Hepworth lacked Moore's tumult — but crucially, he framed that as admiration, praising her serenity and the way her works "evade disputations of power or of antagonism." Her surfaces are slow, smooth, and deliberate. The hole becomes not an absence but a concentration of energy — what Jeanette Winterson, writing for the **Tate**, calls a still point: an explicit echo of **T. S. Eliot's** "Burnt Norton"

from the Four Quartets. Hepworth and **Ben Nicholson** deepened these ideas through direct encounter, visiting the Parisian studios of **Arp, Brancusi, Mondrian, Braque, and Picasso**, joining **Abstraction-Création**, and becoming central figures in **Paul Nash's Unit One** group, with its landmark publication edited by **Herbert Read** in **1934**.

Notes

Henry Moore called 1932 'The Year of the Hole'. The previous year his friend and rival, Barbara Hepworth, made her first pierced form, the year she gave birth to her first child. The hole she carved became the most important formal features of much of her and Moore's later work.

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/hole-of-life>

Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975)

Mother and Child

1934

Cumberland alabaster on marble
base

23 x 45.5 x 18.9 cm

Tate, London



Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975), *Mother and Child*, 1934, 23 x 45.5 x 18.9 cm, Tate, London

The hole Hepworth pierced into stone carried a meaning that went well beyond formal experiment — and her ***Mother and Child***, carved in **1934**, makes that meaning explicit. The biographical pressure behind the work is direct: Hepworth gave birth to her son Paul with John Skeaping in **1929**, and in 1934 itself, she delivered triplets with Ben Nicholson. The void at the sculpture's centre is not decorative — it figures the space the child has vacated in the mother's body. Art historians including **Penelope Curtis** have examined the psychoanalytic weight of that reading, linking it to anxieties of separation that were, for Hepworth, lived rather than theoretical. Formally, the work makes two moves simultaneously: it is a **multi-part sculpture** rather than a single integrated mass, and it retains the pierced form she first used in **1931**. It remains recognisably figurative, yet the abstraction is undeniable. The material itself carries equal significance. Direct carving — the process in which no maquette guides the final form — meant that marble, stone, and wood were worked and polished to

reveal their inherent grain and colour. Hepworth and Moore drew on objects in the **British Museum** and the **Victoria and Albert Museum**, including **Neolithic** and **Cycladic** artefacts, seeking what they understood as a non-Western directness of making.

Notes

The motif of mother and child occurs frequently in her work at this time. In 1929 she gave birth to her own son Paul Skeaping and in 1934 when she carved this work she gave birth to triplets.

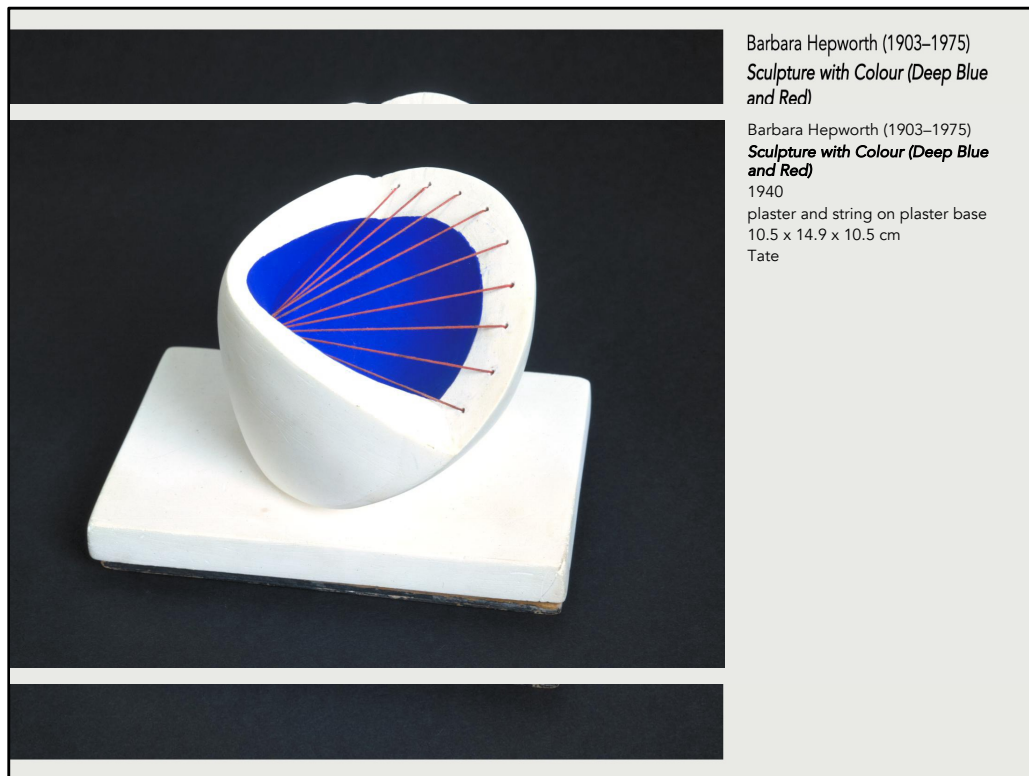
She acknowledged she was becoming more abstract in 1931 although this sculpture is clearly a mother and child. It employs two innovations. It is a multi-part sculpture rather than a single integrated sculptural mass and it has a large hole in the centre. She first used a large hole in *Pierced Form* in 1931. It was more than a formal device as it had conceptual value, signifying the vacant space in the mother's body where the child had come from. The psychoanalytic implications and the relationship of the work to her anxieties, such as that of separation, have been discussed by art historians.

"Mother and Child was produced using a sculptural practice known as direct carving. First introduced by the French artist Constantin Brancusi in 1906, the technique was further developed by Hepworth, Moore, Skeaping and the British painter and sculptor Ben Nicholson in the 1920s and 1930s. Direct carving is a process in which no models or sculptural maquettes are used to plan the work, but rather the final form of the sculpture emerges through the act of carving the material (see the discussion of Hepworth's approach to direct carving in Curtis 1994, p.15). Through this technique, these artists emphasised the inherent properties of the materials, and the marble, stone and wood that they used was rubbed and polished in order to enhance its natural texture, colours and markings. They believed that direct carving, as well as the use of simple forms and organic compositions, brought them closer to a 'primitive' or non-Western approach to making art and encouraged a sensitive and instinctive relationship to the landscape. Hepworth and Moore were inspired by objects that they studied in the collections of the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Hepworth owned some ancient artefacts, including those from the Neolithic and Cycladic eras." (Tate)

In 1935 they were instrumental in restricting the 7&5 to abstract work, thus paving the way for a fertile period of constructivism enhanced by artist refugees from totalitarian Europe (Gropius, Moholy-Nagy, Breuer, Gabo).

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hepworth-mother-and-child-t06676/text-summary>



Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975), *Sculpture with Colour (Deep Blue and Red)*, 1940, 10.5 x 14.9 x 10.5 cm, Tate

The move to **St Ives** at the very end of **1939** gave Hepworth something she had lacked since leaving London — proximity to a landscape she could feel physically. She and Nicholson settled at Dunluce in **Carbis Bay** on the twenty-seventh of December, having spent the preceding months with **Adrian Stokes** and **Margaret Mellis** after their August evacuation from the city. The conditions of wartime shaped production directly. Domestic responsibilities, no proper studio, and scarce materials meant Hepworth's output between 1939 and 1943 was limited in both scale and quantity. The small sculptures she did make were partly a commercial calculation: Nicholson had returned to landscape painting for the same reason, since the art market had nearly ceased to function. ***Sculpture with Colour (Deep Blue and Red)***, made during this period, embodies two departures simultaneously: the introduction of **strings** and the bold use of colour. The strung works invite comparison with **Henry Moore's Stringed Relief of 1937**, though Hepworth connected the device to her study of mathematical models,

saying she had examined them in Paris and London in her youth but let the idea lie dormant until she could use it emotionally rather than mathematically. The colour she attributed directly to experience: "The colour in the concavities plunged me into the depth of water, caves, of shadows deeper than the carved concavities themselves." A debt to **Mondrian**, her near-neighbour in Hampstead from **1938**, is equally plausible.

Notes

Sculpture with Colour (Deep Blue and Red) was made at Dunluce, the house in Carbis Bay, near St Ives, to which Hepworth and Nicholson had moved on 27 December 1939. Prior to that, since their evacuation from London in late August 1939, they had been staying nearby with Adrian Stokes and Margaret Mellis. The relative scarcity and small scale of Hepworth's work between 1939 and 1943 has been seen as the result of the restrictions placed upon her by domestic responsibilities, the lack of a proper studio and a shortage of materials.

Her husband Nicholson reverted to landscape motifs during the war as an attempt to produce more saleable work at a time when the art market had all but collapsed and the family's financial situation was especially precarious. Hepworth made paintings during the war that also sold relatively easily and it may be that her production of multiple small sculptures like this one was similarly aimed at ensuring sales.

The sculptures with colour embody two significant departures in Hepworth's work: her use of colour and the inclusion of strings. The latter must be compared to Henry Moore's strung works - in particular his Stringed Relief, 1937.

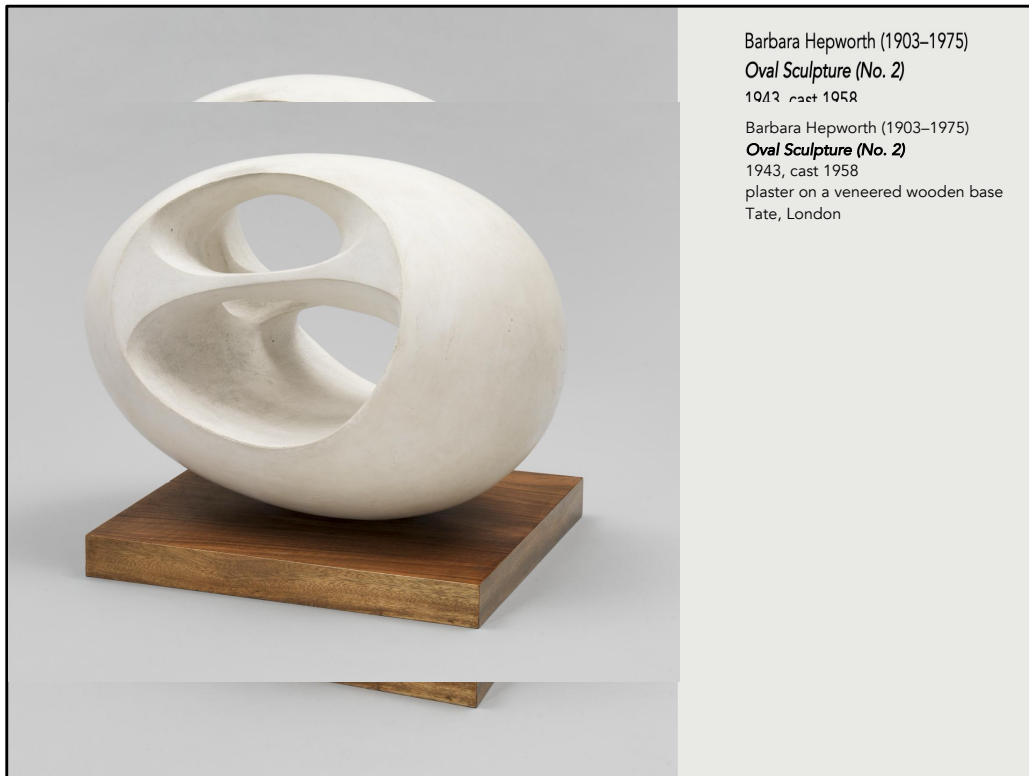
Hepworth's use of strings to her interest in mathematical models and stated, presumably drawing upon the artist's own testimony, that she had studied them 'in Paris and London in her youth but let the idea lie dormant until she could use it emotionally, not mathematically'. Their use of them for artistic purposes reflected a desire for a modernist synthesis of science and art.

Her use of bright colours is unusual and may reveal a debt to Mondrian, whom she had met in the early 1930s and who was a close neighbour in Hampstead between September 1938 and their departure the following August. She also wrote, 'The colour in the concavities plunged me into the depth of water, caves, of shadows deeper than the carved concavities

themselves. The strings were the tension I felt between myself and the sea, the wind or the hills.'

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hepworth-sculpture-with-colour-deep-blue-and-red-t03133/text-catalogue-entry>



Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975), *Oval Sculpture (No. 2)*, 1943, cast 1958, Tate, London

That debt to **Mondrian** and the emotional logic of colour carries forward into Hepworth's next major formal development — the shift from the sphere to the oval. **Oval Sculpture**, which exists in two plaster casts and four polished bronzes, evolved from drawings made in **1942** and relates directly to one of the first carvings Hepworth made after settling at Carbis Bay. The original wood began to split — seasoned timber was unobtainable during the war — so she brought in the plaster caster known as **Macx Macini**, who produced a forty-piece mould from what had seemed an impossibly complex form. The shift from circle to oval was significant. Where a sphere has a single centre, the ovoid has two, and Hepworth exploited that duality by opening the form in four places, creating a continuous interplay of interior curves. She described this herself: "The carving and piercing of such a form seems to open up an infinite variety of continuous curves in the third dimension, changing in accordance with the contours of the original ovoid." **Herbert Read** read the egg as emblematic of organic form,

citing **D'Arcy Thompson's** principle that "the egg is not an arbitrary shape; it is determined by physical laws." **Brancusi**, whose Paris studio Hepworth visited in **1933**, had already invested the ovoid with archetypal power drawn partly from the human head. **Naum Gabo** later accused Hepworth of appropriating the oval form, and the dispute permanently severed their friendship.

Notes

Tate website

In the 1930s Barbara Hepworth and her husband Ben Nicholson were members of the London-based avant-garde. Shortly before the outbreak of war they moved to Cornwall with their children. Hepworth's abstract forms, which seem akin to caves and shells, were affected by the Cornish landscape. Her response to nature was not romantic or mystical but more firmly based on actual observation. Circles and spheres had dominated her work. These were replaced by ovals which gave her sculptures two centres rather than one, complicating their interior form.

This work was originally in wood but when it began to split Hepworth called in a well-known plaster caster 'Macx' Macini. At first he thought it too difficult but agreed to produce a 40-piece mould from which two casts were made, one now in the Tate and the other in the Barbara Hepworth Museum, St. Ives. Four polished bronzes were cast the following year.

The work evolved from abstract drawings Hepworth did in 1942 and this work is based on one of the first work she carved after moving to Carbis Bay. However, during the war seasoned wood was unobtainable and she was concerned the wood she used would split, which it subsequently did.

It is an ovoid open in four places to give views of the interior. Other artists such as Naum Gabo had also used similar forms and there was some concern about mutual influence which culminated in a split between Hepworth and Gabo after he accused her of stealing the oval. Hepworth said, 'The carving and piercing of such a form seems to open up an infinite variety of continuous curves in the third dimension, changing in accordance with the contours of the original ovoid and with the degree of penetration of the material'

The ovoid form could also derive from Brancusi's use of an archetypal form derived, in part, from the human head. She saw his work in his Paris studio in 1933. Herbert Read cited the egg as an exemplar of the organic form. He

contrasted the organic approach and constructivism as two opposing forms of sculpture. Quoting D'Arcy Thompson's theory of the determination of form by natural processes, Read wrote: 'The egg is not an arbitrary shape; it is determined, as we say, by physical laws'.

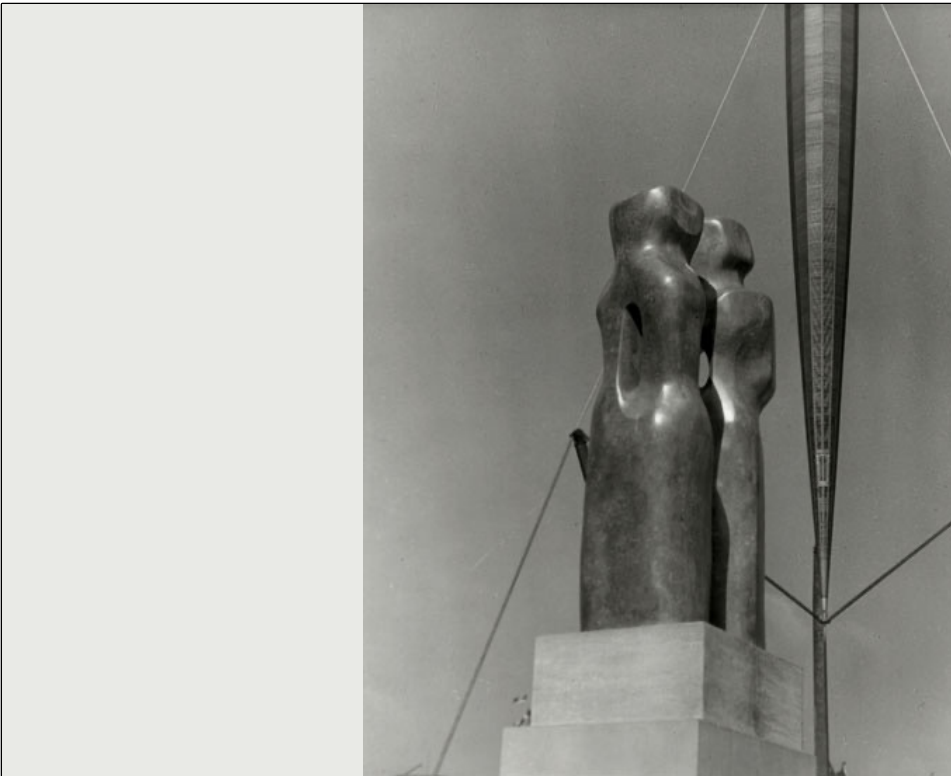
The ovoid could also derive from a scheme of symbols described by Hepworth which included 'curves, spirals ovoids - foetus erotic [sic], prenatal dream, childhood - primitive etc?' The ovoid or egg-shaped form could therefore be associated with foetus and childbirth.

In its use of an archetypal organic form to express a natural, passive process of growth, *Oval Sculpture* may be seen to establish the tenor of Hepworth's work for the subsequent few years.

Their utopian ideas were curtailed by the war and they moved to St Ives. In 1949 Hepworth established the Penwith Society of Artists with Nicholson, Peter Lanyon and others. Her contribution to the 1950 Venice Biennale was dogged by comparisons with Moore but other exhibitions helped establish her reputation.

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hepworth-oval-sculpture-no-2-t00953/text-catalogue-entry>



Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975)
Contrapuntal Forms
1950–51
Irish blue limestone
Harlow Art Trust, Harlow

Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975), *Contrapuntal Forms*, 1950–51, Harlow Art Trust, Harlow

The assistants who joined Hepworth in the late 1940s — **Denis Mitchell**, **John Wells**, and **Terry Frost** — were not simply hired hands. Each became a significant artist in his own right, and their presence in the Trewyn Studio marks the moment St Ives hardened into a genuine artistic community rather than a wartime refuge. The most visible product of this new collaborative working method was ***Contrapuntal Forms***, commissioned by the **Arts Council** for the **Festival of Britain** in **1951** and carved in Irish blue limestone at a scale Hepworth could not have achieved alone. The title signals her enduring musicality — the two upright figures set in counterpoint, each answering the other's curves. After the Festival closed, the Arts Council presented the work to the **new town of Harlow**, where it still stands at Glebelands. The same year brought her divorce from **Ben Nicholson**. Then in **1953** her son Paul was killed in a plane crash in Ghana while serving with the RAF. She travelled to **Greece** in **1954** partly to recover, and the landscape of the Cyclades deepened her feeling for stone as a material

with its own geological memory. Her international standing was confirmed by the **Grand Prix at the São Paulo Bienal** in **1959**, cementing a reputation now firmly European in reach.

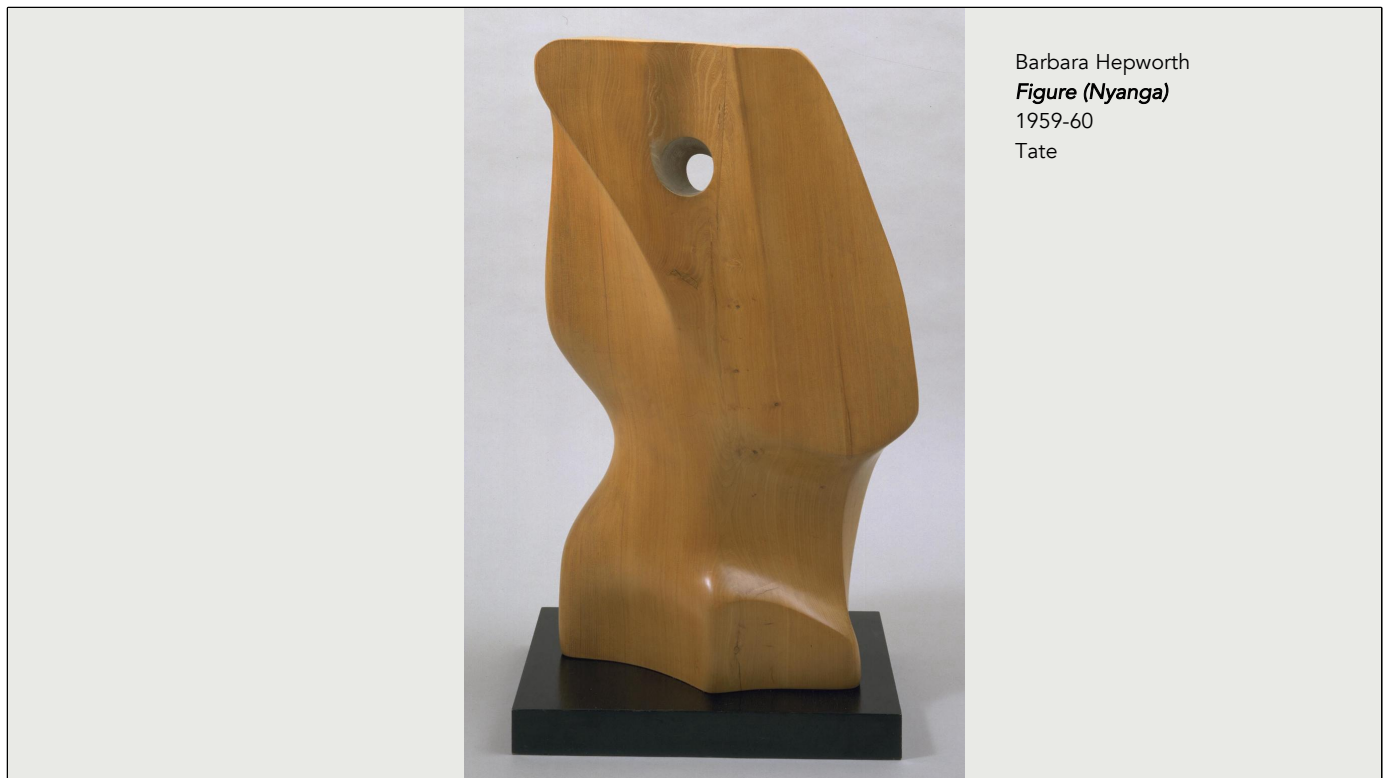
Notes

After the war she was in great demand and employed assistants. Hepworth's first public commissions were for the Festival of Britain. *Contrapuntal Forms* was commissioned by the Arts Council to stand on the South Bank during the Festival. Hepworth carved the two monumental figures in Irish blue limestone with the help of assistants she took on for the first time, Denis Mitchell, John Wells and Terry Frost. In 1953 the Arts Council presented *Contrapuntal Forms* to the new town of Harlow in Essex. It is sited at Glebelands in Harlow.

She divorced Nicholson in 1951 and visited Greece in 1954 to try to recover from the sudden death of her son in 1953.

Hepworth was a skilled draughtsman and her work includes 80 drawings of surgical procedures and operating rooms after she struck up a friendship with the surgeon Norman Capaner in 1944. During World War II she was a leading figure in the St Ives School with Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo and she divorced Nicholson in 1951.

Her international standing was confirmed by the Grand Prix of the 1959 São Paulo Bienal, a Whitechapel exhibition and a European tour.



Barbara Hepworth, *Figure (Nyanga)*, 1959-60, Tate

This is *Figure (Nyanga)* by Barbara Hepworth. It is elm on a plywood base and is a warm honey colour and a broad grain that she uses to enhance the modelling. The sculpture is called *Figure* which encourages us to read the form as a head, particularly if consider what could be a shoulder, a jaw line, an eye and a profile. The eye is accentuated by a spiral form and the interior of the hole is slightly whitened with paint to form a contrast with the main waxed surface. If the front edge is a profile, then the face is turned upwards in a pose that reminds us of religious saints looking up to heaven. I don't mean it represents a saint but that it invokes spiritual feelings. Hepworth believed that art could play a powerful role in community activity and ardently supported the United Nations as it attempted to maintain peace during the international tension of the 1950s. She saw this abstract sculpture as a response to the racial violence taking place in Africa. Hepworth said that when she was carving this sculpture she was preoccupied with 'thoughts about Africa and the United Nations', explaining that her concern for human suffering and dignity had on

occasion lent a certain poignancy to her works. Hepworth associated the sculpture retrospectively with the efforts of Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary General of the United Nations, to establish peace in Central Africa. Hammarskjöld w

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This work was linked more specifically to her sense of sorrow after the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, when South African police opened fire on demonstrators, killing 69 people. The demonstrators were objecting to 'Pass Laws' that restricted their freedom of movement. The Sharpeville massacre focused international attention on the apartheid system of racial segregation in South Africa and it initiated three decades of protest.

A few weeks later, and a thousand miles from Sharpeville, five people were killed in Nyanga [near Cape Town]. One of those killed was a young child shoot in her mother's arms. Ingrid Jonker wrote a poem in Afrikaans called 'The Child who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers at Nyanga' which starts with a line

from the Bible, 'The child is not dead', and includes the line 'The child who just wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga is everywhere'. The late Nelson Mandela read her poem at the opening of the first democratic Parliament in South Africa [on 24 May 1994]. The statue could therefore be about a single child's death but represent the universality of suffering.

Notes

Ingrid Jonker (1933-1965) wrote 'The child is not dead' following a visit to the Philippi police station to see the body of a child who had been shot dead in his mother's arms by the police in the township of Nyanga in Cape Town. It happened in the aftermath of the massacre of 69 people in Sharpeville, south of Johannesburg, on 21 March 1960. The poem starts with a line from the Bible, 'The child is not dead' (Mark 5:39, Christ says, 'The child is not dead but sleeping'). Note, The Tate website says 71 were killed at Sharpeville and other sources, including the BBC, say 69.

Apartheid is an Afrikaans word meaning 'separateness', or 'the state of being apart' and it was a system of racial segregation in South Africa enforced through legislation by the National Party, the governing party from 1948 to 1994.

Nyanga is elm on a plywood base, 90.8 x 57.1 cm, and was presented by the artist to the Tate in 1969. Such large blocks are prone to splitting and a substantial crack on the rear face has been carefully filled with matching wood.



Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975)
Single Form (Memorial)
1964
Battersea Park

Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), *Single Form (Memorial)*, 1964,
Battersea Park

In 1964, she attended the unveiling of *Single Form* at the United Nations in New York, which was commissioned in memory of her friend Dag Hammarskjöld (pronounced 'Hammer-shold'), Secretary General of the United Nations, who was killed in 1961. *Single Form* is a monumental bronze sculpture and is her largest work, and one of her most prominent public commissions, displayed since 1964 in a circular water feature that forms a traffic island at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York. A second cast was made in 1963, bought by London County Council for 6,000 guineas and installed at Battersea Park in 1964, where it remains on the south shore of the lake. It measures 3.12 by 2 by 0.25 metres. In 1970, the art critic Edwin Mullins suggested: "it is a torso, it is a profile with an eye, it is an expanse of space in which the sun rises, it is a blade, it is a human hand ... raised flat in a sign of authority, or of salute, or as a gesture of allegiance". In 1974 the art critic Dore Ashton suggested it is a "vision of the

cosmos". Hepworth served as a Tate trustee (1965-72), donating six works in 1964 and a further nine in 1967. After a long battle with cancer she died at home in 1975, aged 72, in a horrific fire. References

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_Hepworth

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