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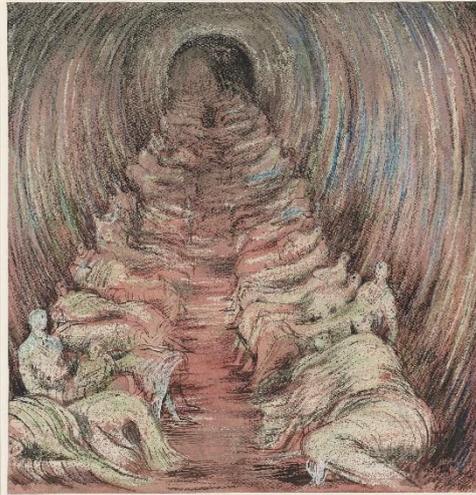
CHRISTIE'S EXHIBITION *HENRY MOORE: THE SHAPE OF THINGS* NOW ON VIEW UNTIL 12 APRIL 2019



Henry Moore: The Shape of Things, Christie's King Street, Open until 12 April 2019

London – Christie's presents *Henry Moore: The Shape of Things*, an exhibition at King Street of over 30 artworks tracing the four key thematic concerns that defined Henry Moore's prolific and deeply influential career. One of Britain's best-known artists, Moore radically redefined the boundaries of sculpture. Working in bronze, stone and wood, as well as creating a large body of drawings and works on paper, Moore constantly sought to challenge traditional artistic conventions in his art as he explored the aesthetic potential of form and space, figuration and abstraction, as well as internal and external states. The human figure was predominantly the site of exploration for Moore, from the poignant visions of humanity witnessed in the *Shelter Drawings*, to the undulating forms of the reclining figures and the tender evocations of maternity in the 'Mother and Child' works. A parallel concern for the artist was organic forms and the endless shapes and spaces created in the natural world. *Henry Moore: The Shape of Things* encapsulates this extraordinary diversity found in Moore's art.

Throughout his career, Moore had 'an absolute obsession' with the reclining figure. Not only did this theme serve as an endlessly adaptable subject for formal experimentation, it also allowed Moore to explore the synergy between the landscape and the human body, as well as the relationship between figuration and abstraction. In *Reclining Figure: Blanket*, the forms of the figure have been abstracted to become organic and fluid, recalling Jean Arp's investigations into plastic form. The sculpture also appears to preempt the imagery of the sleeping bodies that Moore recorded in his war-time shelter drawings in the London Underground.



In September 1940, on the fifth day of the London Blitz, Moore was forced to take shelter at the underground station at Belsize Park. Upon descending to the platform, he witnessed hundreds of people taking shelter during the intense bombing of the city. Profoundly affected by what he saw, Moore continued to return to these makeshift shelters, making notes and sketches before returning home at dawn and creating drawings from memory (he also used press photographs for inspiration). Featuring often-abstracted bodies rendered in a variety of media, the resulting works, collectively titled *Shelter Drawings*, present deeply poignant visions of humanity. From intimate vignettes of family groups, to panoramic vistas featuring hordes of people huddled together in the overcrowded tunnels, these works saw Moore achieve widespread acclaim. *Tube Shelter Perspective* (illustrated left) from 1941 was included in the 1946 exhibition of Henry Moore's work at MoMA in New York and in recent years was on loan to the Hepworth Wakefield.

Like the reclining figure, the 'Mother and Child' theme is central to Moore's art and occupied his imagination throughout his career. Rich in art historical precedents and filled with iconographic meaning, this universal subject also offered Moore the opportunity to experiment with the physical relationships between two figures within a single work. The subject of 'Mother and Child' first appeared in Moore's work dating from the early 1920s. Carved in 1923, *Two Heads: Mother and Child* is the earliest recorded abstract carving of this important subject. *Mother and Child: Petal Skirt* depicts a seated figure with child where the folds of the mother's skirt recall the rolling landscape, echoing his reclining figure motif. The family group provided Moore the opportunity to develop his observations, furthering his exploration of the spatial dynamics created by people. A rare 1947 plaster, *Family Group* (illustrated right), highlights the tender, nurturing familial bond and emulates the natural world.



Moore had always delighted in the found objects and detritus of the natural world; he was an avid collector of fossils, bones, shells, driftwood and pebbles and used these organic forms as the basis for his sculpture. Inspired by the shapes and structures of these pieces, their surfaces or the rhythms that characterise their formation, Moore integrated these various characteristics into his work. In this way, he imbued his often-abstract works with a powerful energy and vigour. While many pieces are reminiscent of the landscape, some of his works appear like fragments of bones or vertebrae. *Working Model for Locking Piece* (illustrated below, right) was based on bone fragments and like his mother and child and family group sculptures, the sculpture lays bare the relationships that exist between forms in the same way that they do between figures. Other sculptures, exemplified by *Working Model for Oval with Points* (illustrated below, left), have the smooth hollows and indentations reminiscent of the time-worn surfaces of rocks or stones.



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