



Portrait bust of Lisa Sainsbury

Jacob Epstein

On display

Title/Description: Portrait bust of Lisa Sainsbury

Artist/Maker: Jacob Epstein

Born: 1939

Measurements: h. 455 x w. 220 x d. 220 mm

Accession Number: RLS 7

Historic Period: 20th century

Credit Line: Bequeathed by Lady Sainsbury, 2014

By the end of the 1930s, Epstein's position as the most advanced sculptor in Britain had been occupied by others, most notably Henry Moore, but he continued to consolidate his position as the pre-eminent portrait sculptor, commissioned by individuals as different as the Emperor Haile Selassie and the playwright J. B. Priestley. His style for such work was by no means conventional for the time, and many of his portrait busts were greeted with derision, but he invariably achieved great likeness and life. To work in portraiture in the twentieth century was no mean task in itself, and it may well be that Epstein's undoubted achievement in this area will outlast his more topically controversial work in stone.

This bust of Lisa Sainsbury is restrained in manner and nicely contrasts the smooth skin with the tight coiffure. The mouth is slightly open, as if in speech, a device that Epstein used sparingly, but always to great effect. The forehead, in particular, is sensitively modelled and, here and there across the face, unobtrusive flecks of plaster were left, which when cast in bronze enliven the features.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) pp. 223-224.

Provenance

Commissioned by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury in 1939.

Bequeathed to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 2014.
