



Madonna and Child

Henry Moore

Not on display**Title/Description:** Madonna and Child**Artist/Maker:** Henry Moore**Born:** 1943 - 1944**Object Type:** Sculpture**Materials:** Bronze**Measurements:** h. 155 x w. 65 x d. 85 mm**Accession Number:** 84**Historic Period:** 20th century**Production Place:** Britain, England, Europe**Copyright:** © Reproduced by permission of the Henry Moore Foundation**Credit Line:** Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Madonna and Child is cast from one of the maquettes Moore made for a commission for St Matthew's Church in Northampton, which he said was 'one of the most difficult and heart-searching sculptures that I ever tried to do'. [1] Moore's difficulty stemmed from the fact that he created the Madonna and Child only for this commission. In fact it was his first religious topic. His series of maquettes for the stone commission represented Moore's initial use of drapery in sculpture. Moreover, this particular maquette was the first of his work to be cast in bronze in an edition beyond two.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the church, Reverend Walter Hussey commissioned Moore to create the sculpture after seeing his shelter drawings at the National Gallery during the war. Moore wavered over the religious subject, saying, 'I hesitated for some time because - you can't do experiments - I mean, I am a Christian and I couldn't go and put something in a church that the average person might be offended by. So this was an attempt by me to do a sincere but an understandable piece - by the ordinary person.' [2] He therefore asked for time to explore the subject before committing to the commission. He created twelve maquettes in clay and a sketchbook (now disbanded) with around twenty-six pages of drawings, largely in wax crayon and watercolour wash with pen and ink.

Moore first had to grapple with the fundamental question of how 'religious art differs from secular art', as he went on to explain, 'the Madonna and Child should have an austerity and a nobility, and some touch of grandeur (even hieratic aloofness) which is missing in the everyday Mother and Child idea'. [3]

In this body of work, for the first time, drapery found its way into Moore's sculpture, in the terracotta maquettes and then the carved stone. Of course, the drapery suits the ecclesiastical subject matter, but it was also a new formal interest for Moore, stemming from his wartime shelter drawings.

After he had spent three months creating the maquettes, Moore asked his friends - including Sir Kenneth Clark and Herbert Read - for their opinions. They all unanimously selected the clay maquette for this cast to become the model for the final sculpture. Moore promised the maquette as a gift to both Reverend Hussey and Kenneth Clark. Although he had promised it to Hussey first, he elected to give it to Clark. To appease Reverend Hussey he offered him a cast of the maquette, although he asked him to cover the casting costs. Moore cast this and five other maquettes each in an edition of seven. They therefore became his first sculptures that he cast in multiples for commercial means, a model he soon adopted across his sculptural output.

In 1948-9 one of Moore's other maquettes for this commission became the model for a sculpture in St Peter's Church in Claydon. These were his only sculptures of the Madonna and Child, but in 1951 he returned to the subject on paper, in a small group of Surrealist 'wrapped' Madonna and Child drawings.

Tania Moore, September 2020

[1] John Hedgecoe and Henry Moore, *Henry Spencer Moore* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1968), p.159.

[2] Steven Hooper, *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection*, vol. I (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with University of East Anglia, 1997), p.li.

[3] Henry Moore, Franco Ruscoli and David Mitchinson, *Henry Moore, Sculptures, Drawings, Graphics, 1921-1981* (London and Madrid: British Council, Henry Moore Foundation, Ministerio de Cultura, 1981), p.90.

Exhibitions

'Henry Moore at Dulwich Picture Gallery', Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 12/5/2004 - 12/9/2004

'Bill Brandt / Henry Moore', The Hepworth Wakefield, UK, 7/2/2020 - 1/11/2020

'Bill Brandt | Henry Moore', Sainsbury Centre, UK, 3/12/2020 - 11/4/2021

Further Reading

Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London: Giles de la Mare, 2003)

Ann Garrould, Anita Feldman Bennett and Ian Dejardin, Henry Moore at Dulwich Picture Gallery (London: Scala Publishers, 2004)

Tania Moore, Henry Moore: Friendships and Legacies (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre, 2020)

Provenance

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from William Ohly of the Berkeley Galleries in 1945.

Donated to the University of East Anglia in 1973 (Sainsbury Centre).
