



Reclining Figure

Henry Moore

On display

Title/Description: Reclining Figure

Artist/Maker: Henry Moore

Born: 1956 - 1962

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Bronze

Measurements: h. 950 x w. 2440 x d. 1015 mm Uncrated weight part 1 (fig/base) 345kg Uncrated weight part 2 (plinth) 148kg Total uncrated weight: 493 kg Crated weight part 1 (fig/base) 633kg Crated weight part 2 (plinth) 370kg

Inscription: Moore 4/8 GUSS: H.NOACK BERLIN

Accession Number: 85

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

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Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Moore originally wanted to produce *Reclining Figure* in elmwood, but he could not source a large enough piece of wood. Therefore in 1956 he started working on the idea in plaster, to preserve the idea. In 1961 Moore's friends, the critic David Sylvester and the collector Robert Sainsbury, persuaded Moore to cast the plaster in bronze. According to Sainsbury, they first suggested some changes to the feet, which Moore made. [1] It was subsequently cast into an edition of eight at the Noack foundry in Berlin.

The bulbous chest and hip, in contrast to the slender limbs and waist, offer a dynamic composition. It seemingly incorporates space and form, which Moore believed he first achieved in the *Festival Reclining Figure* in 1951. This was created as an optimistic symbol for the Festival of Britain and the figure seems to sit comfortably on its forearms. In contrast, the 1956 sculpture seems to crawl, contorted on dismembered limbs, which have rough stumps where hands and feet might otherwise begin. The memory of the trauma of war is very much present in this figure. Beal even compares it to Moore's 1956 *Fallen Warrior*, both having a 'restless quality'. [2]

At almost 2.5 metres long, the plaster *Reclining Figure* was smaller than the 3 metres he hoped the wood version would be. He soon had the opportunity to create a larger work in wood when later in 1956 a local timber merchant sourced him a piece of elmwood. He thus used the plaster as a model from which to carve the form. In order to work on parts of it more easily, he stood the figure upright. He liked the dynamism of the figure, so the sculpture became *Upright Figure* (1956-60), now in the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

Tania Moore, September 2020

[1] Henry Moore, Robert Sainsbury and Steven Hooper interview, 9 October 1985, Sainsbury Research Unit Archives, p.203.

[2] Graham Beal in 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.23.

Exhibitions

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

Further Reading

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 directly from the artist in 1962.

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