



Miner Drilling (Miner with lamp)

Henry Moore

Not on display

Title/Description: Miner Drilling (Miner with lamp)

Artist/Maker: Henry Moore

Born: 1942

Materials: Paper, Watercolour

Measurements: Unframed: (h. 275 x w. 205 x d. 1 mm) Framed: (h. 475 x w. 382 x d. 37 mm)

Inscription: signature

Accession Number: 95

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

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Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

After more than a year of creating his shelter drawings as an Official War Artist, Moore tired of the subject. This stemmed from the fact that the visual circumstances in the shelters changed, rather than Moore having exhausted its possibilities. As we know from his sculpture, the same subject could interest him throughout his career. However, by 1942, the shelters in the London Underground had become more organised – for example, with the addition of bunk beds. The scenes during the Blitz no longer offered crowds of Henry Moore-esque figures reclining directly on the floor. Given Moore's new disinclination towards the shelter subject, Herbert Read suggested a new subject: the coal miners. Moore agreed and was appointed to document the coal mines in his capacity as an Official War Artist. He drew the miners in situ underground and later described the uncanny experience:

'The thick choking dust, the noise of the coal-cutting machines and the men shoveling and pickaxing, the almost unbearable heat and the dense darkness hardly penetrated by the faint light from the miners lamps, the consciousness of being nearly a mile below ground, all made it seem at first like some terrible man-made inferno. But after the first few days I got used to it, and before the end I was taking it as naturally as the miners themselves'. [1]

His experience acknowledges the hardship of the men working in the mines, yet by indicating how

he became accustomed to the experience, he may be trying to reiterate his personal connection to the mine. He chose to document the Wheldale Colliery in Castleford, Yorkshire, where his father had worked as a pit manager when he was a child.

Moore's niece Ann Garrould recounted Moore's recollection that 'if he were to describe what hell might be like, his memory of standing at the coal-face deafened by the noise of the coal-cutting machine and covered by thick black coal dust would be a very adequate description'. [2] Illustrating this thick layer of coal dust, Moore's mining sketches are predominantly executed in black media with white wax crayon. The monochrome reflects the dark conditions and reduced visibility in which he was working.

From the shelters, Moore had opted to draw women and children, or ambiguously gendered figures in reclining or seated poses that were already found in his sculpture. However, the active male figures of the miners are not found elsewhere in Moore's oeuvre. Although he admitted, 'I discovered the male figure and the qualities of the figure in action', he countered, 'I did not find it as fruitful a subject as the shelters.' He went on to explain, 'The shelter drawings came about after first being moved by the experience of them, whereas the coal-mine drawings were more in the nature of a commission coldly approached.' [3] Moreover, Herbert Read points out the restriction in the subject itself: 'the scope is more limited, the space more restricted, with little light and no colour'. [4] It is perhaps for this reason that, for Moore, the subject was not as sustained or celebrated as his shelter drawings.

Tania Moore, September 2020

[1] John Russell (ed.), *Auden Poems, Moore Lithographs*, 1974, reprinted in Alan Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), p.265.

[2] Ann Garrould, 'Henry Moore and the Sainsbury Family' in Colin Grant (ed.), *Henry Moore at Dulwich Picture Gallery* (London: Scala Publishers Ltd, 2004), p.18.

[3] Philip James (ed.), *Henry Moore on Sculpture* (London: Macdonald, 1966), p.216.

[4] Herbert Read, *Henry Moore: Sculpture and Drawings* (London: Lund Humphries and Zwemmer, 1944), p.xxxvi.

Exhibitions

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

'War and Utility', Imperial War Museum, UK, 14/9/2006 - 25/2/2007

'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

Steven Hooper (ed.), Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, volume 1 (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1997)

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

Provenance

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury in 1957.

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