



Odysseus in the Cave of the Naiads

Henry Moore

Not on display

Title/Description: Odysseus in the Cave of the Naiads

Artist/Maker: Henry Moore

Born: 1944

Object Type: Drawing

Materials: Charcoal, Crayon, Ink, Paper, Pencil, Wash, Wax crayon

Measurements: Unframed: (h. 450 x w. 290 x d. 1 mm) Framed: (h. 660 x w. 485 x d. 35 mm)

Accession Number: 97

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

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Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Moore created six drawings in 1944 to illustrate Edward Sackville-West's *The Rescue*, a play for BBC Radio with music by Benjamin Britten. *The Rescue* was based on the end of Homer's *Odyssey* and recounts Odysseus' return to Ithaca and the subsequent slaying of the suitors who were competing to marry his wife Penelope. *Odysseus in the Cave of the Naiads* depicts Odysseus asleep in Ithaca, where he had been taken by the Phaeacians. The image portrays the way he is described in the play, 'with his face to the opening, so that the dawn may wake him, if the goddess wills'. [1] Although the cave may seem menacing, Odysseus had in fact been returned to safety.

This version of the drawing differs from the one illustrated in the book. In the book, the figure fills more of the composition, becoming the central focus, rather than the cave. Furthermore, the cropping shows only one edge of the cave, so the effect of the eerily receding void is eliminated. The drawing depicting the full extremities of the cave closely links this drawing to Moore's drawings of the London Underground during the Blitz, in which the sheltering figures were often dwarfed by the tunnel. The tunnels in Moore's shelter drawings are often compared to caves, but this classical subject renders the mythology of the cave literal.

Moore annotated his notebook sketch for this drawing with the description: 'on a ledge in the rock with his face to the opening of the cave, head resting on a red-brown fleece cap. He awakens and

talks to himself. Cavern at dawn - cavern some little distance from the sea. Age of Odysseus 45 - pointed beard?' [2]

The play was broadcast in 1943 and was subsequently published as text alongside Moore's drawings in 1945. The literary subject may seem unusual for Moore, but he also illustrated a number of literary volumes, including *Prometheus* (1950), *Auden Poems* (1974) and *La Poésie* (1974).

Tania Moore, September 2020

[1] 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.39.

[2] Ibid.

Exhibitions

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

Further Reading

Edward Sackville-West, *The rescue*, a melodrama for broadcasting, based on Homer's *Odyssey*. Orchestral score by Benjamin Britten, with six illustrations to the text by Henry Moore (London: Secker and Warburg, 1945)

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 Roland Browse and Delbanco in 1948.

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