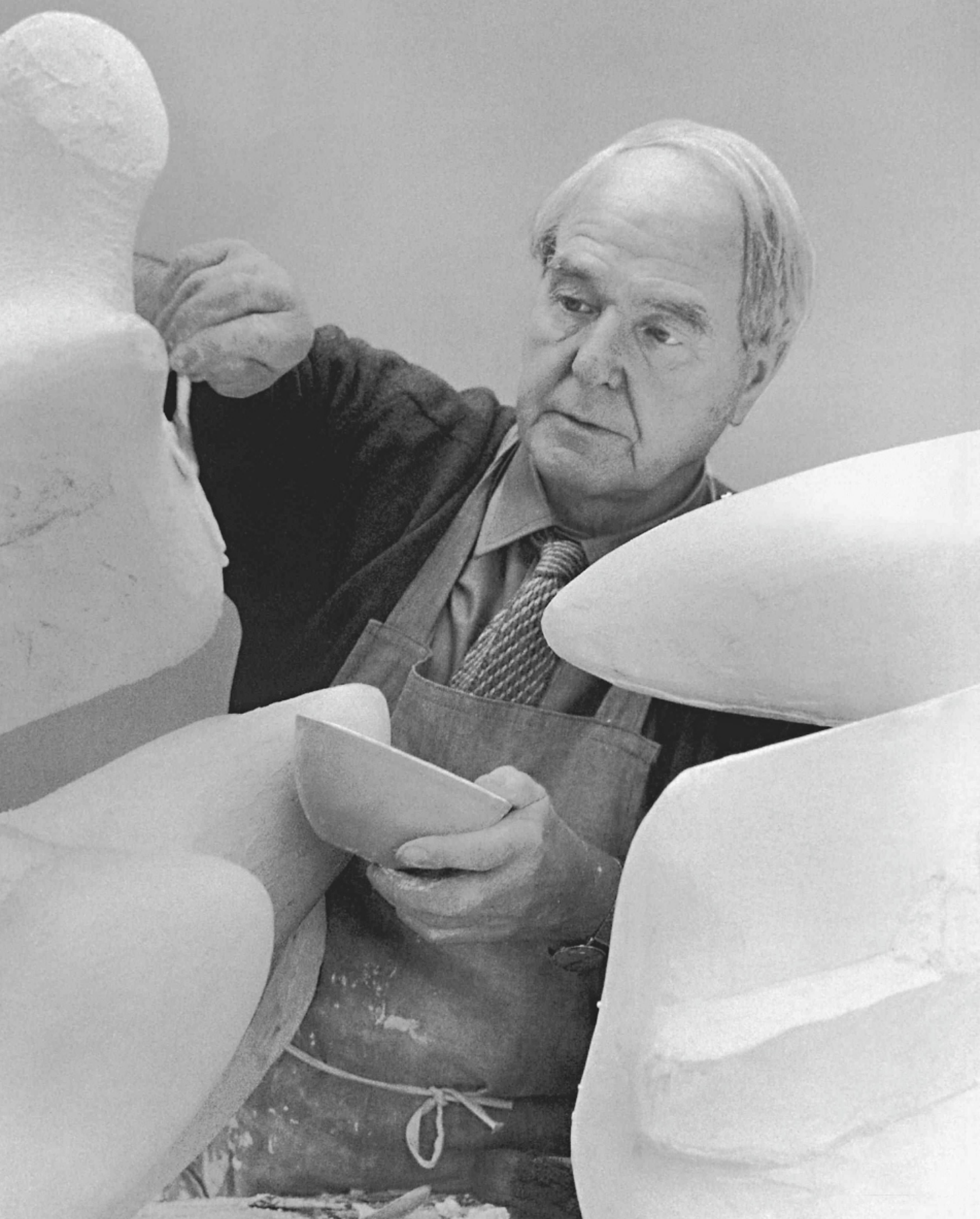






HENRY MOORE



HENRY MOORE

From the Inside Out
Plasters · Carvings · Drawings

Edited by Claude Allemand-Cosneau,
Manfred Fath and David Mitchinson

PRESTEL
MUNICH · LONDON · NEW YORK

First published in conjunction with an exhibition shown at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes (3 May – 2 September 1996), and the Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim (29 September 1996 – 12 January 1997)

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Front cover: Reclining Figure No. 7 (plate 116)

Frontispiece: Moore at work on Working Model for Two Piece Reclining Figure:

Points, 1969–70 (LH 605)

Photographic Acknowledgements: p. 200

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A member of Verlagsgruppe Random House GmbH

Neumarkter Strasse 28 · 81673 Munich

Prestel Publishing Ltd.

14-17 Wells Street

London W1T 3PD

Prestel Publishing

900 Broadway, Suite 603

New York, NY 10003

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The Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication data is available; British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data: a catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Editorial direction by Reegan Finger

Production by Frauke Kaiser

Cover design by Benjamin Wolbergs

Design and layout by Buchhaus Robert Gigler GmbH and Heinz Ross, Munich

Lithography by Design Typo Print, Ismaning

Printed and bound by DZS Grafik, d.o.o., Ljubljana

Paper: Profimatt



Verlagsgruppe Random House FSC® N001967

Printed in Slovenia

ISBN 978-3-7913-8503-7

www.prestel.com

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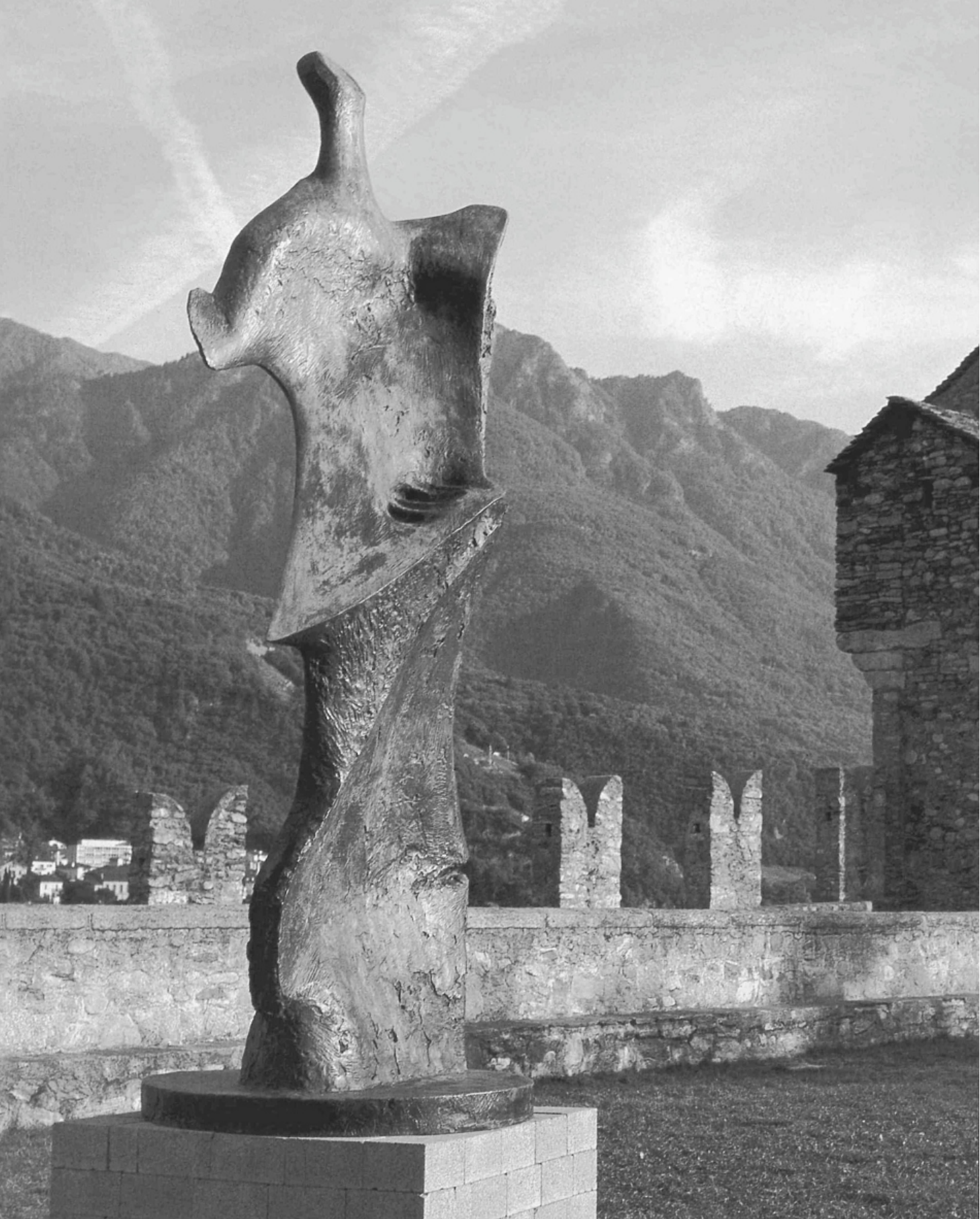
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Henry Moore: The Path to Maturity

Manfred Fath

My work is a mixture of influences and appreciation of art and my excitement and observation of nature. I think this is what all art has been.¹

Introduction

Henry Moore now ranks unchallenged as the most important British sculptor of the twentieth century, a status reflected both in the many international exhibitions of his work and in the large number of his sculptures to have been installed in museums or open-air sites. Such celebrity was, however, attained only after the Second World War, more specifically after 1948, when the artist won the Prize for Sculpture at the first post-war Venice Biennale. Without doubt, Moore is also among the few outstanding sculptors of this century to have exerted a fundamental influence on the art of the age. In adopting and further developing Jacob Epstein's engagement with 'primitive' art and with the forms of sculptural expression favoured by avant-garde artists in Paris, Moore significantly hastened the freeing of British sculpture from Classical tradition. Responding from the start to the most varied influences and stimuli, in the 1930s he developed from these a distinctive and independent formal language, characterized by the critic Herbert Read as 'vitalist'. Alongside Barbara Hepworth, Moore was the first British sculptor to attain a high international reputation. For a long time, however, his work proved controversial. Initially it was rejected because it was seen as an attack on the traditional forms of representing the human figure, as too abstract or too deformed. Later, Moore's critics found his adherence to the figure too conservative and too indebted to a specifically English Romantic tradition (a tradition of which Moore is now often seen as the most important twentieth-century representative).² This tradition endures above all in Moore's endeavour to conceive and convey the human figure as a form of

'landscape', a process through which he strives for the sort of 'poetic penetration of the world'³ characteristic of the art of Romanticism.

Using elemental forms, Moore evolved a universal visual language, by means of which he revealed new dimensions for the representation of the human figure in terms of both form and content. Through his works he bound British sculpture into developments on the Continent and, at the same time, created the preconditions for the important position it currently occupies within international art. As Ann Hindry wrote in 1988, it now appears that sculpture is the dominant medium in contemporary art in England; and Catherine Ferbos has written that, over the last fifty years, there has evolved an 'English School' of sculpture that began with Moore and Hepworth and continues with such artists as Anthony Caro and Richard Long. She sees the most important shared characteristic of English sculptors of this century as the fundamental significance of landscape to their work.⁴

Though it did not introduce any aesthetic or formal innovations, Moore's early work has often been identified with the beginnings of modern sculpture in England. The stylistic and formal basis of his contribution had been established in Paris during the first two decades of the century, by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Alexander Archipenko and Constantin Brancusi: 'Moore was not himself responsible for a single substantial technical advance which could be seen as such in the context of modern sculpture as a whole.'⁵ Moore was no pioneer of modern sculpture in the sense intended by Naum Gabo when he demanded that works of art should reflect the technologically and scientifically informed spirit of our age and its rationalism.⁶ In fact, as many of Moore's own statements show, he had very little interest in the preoccupations of the avant-garde. He was, rather, imbued with a deep humanism, and it is

Large Standing Figure: Knife Edge, 1961 (LH 482a); bronze, h. 358 cm

to this that his works give expression. He used abstract forms because he believed that he would thus be able to realize the human and spiritual content of his ideas with greater directness and intensity.⁷

Moore's oeuvre can be divided into two periods, distinguished above all by changes in his preferences regarding materials and sculptural techniques, but also by changes in his approach to form. For the works made from the mid-1920s to 1939, Moore used almost exclusively stones and pieces of wood that had been carefully selected in accordance with his eagerly repeated maxim of the time – that the sculptor's work should be guided by the spirit of the material. After the break in his work as a sculptor occasioned by the Second World War (during which, as an Official War Artist, he created his Shelter drawings),⁸ he principally produced modelled, rather than carved, sculptures for eventual casting in bronze. Of the first two hundred sculptures listed in the *catalogue raisonné* of Moore's oeuvre, only sixteen are intended for casting in bronze – a clear indication of where the artist's interests initially lay. In the works in stone and wood made between 1922 and 1939 Moore evolved both the characteristic sculptural style and the thematic repertoire to which he was to remain faithful throughout his career, however varied the forms and dimensions of his later work.

Moore's central subject was the human figure. 'There are three recurring themes in my work', he said, 'the "Mother and child" idea, the "Reclining figure" and the "Inner/Exterior forms"'. Some sculptures may combine two or all of these.⁹ He introduced an astounding degree of variety into these archetypal subjects. In the mother and child groups the emotional tenor ranges from the most intimate tenderness, through majestic dignity, to an alienating sense of aggression.¹⁰ Moore regarded his reclining figures as an aesthetic 'framework' that offered the greatest freedom in terms of both composition and space. They allowed him to create new forms: from the 1930s he identified the human figure with landscape elements or literally derived it from nature in the guise of found objects. Moore himself often referred to the importance of landscape for the creative process from which his works emerged: 'Landscape has always been for me one of the sources of my energy.'¹¹ Furthermore, he always paid great attention to the installation of his sculptures in open-air sites in order to ensure their balanced integration into the architectural environment or the landscape setting.

At the start of his career as a sculptor, Moore took his bearings from various models. Some of these he refers to in his writings; others he does not mention, although

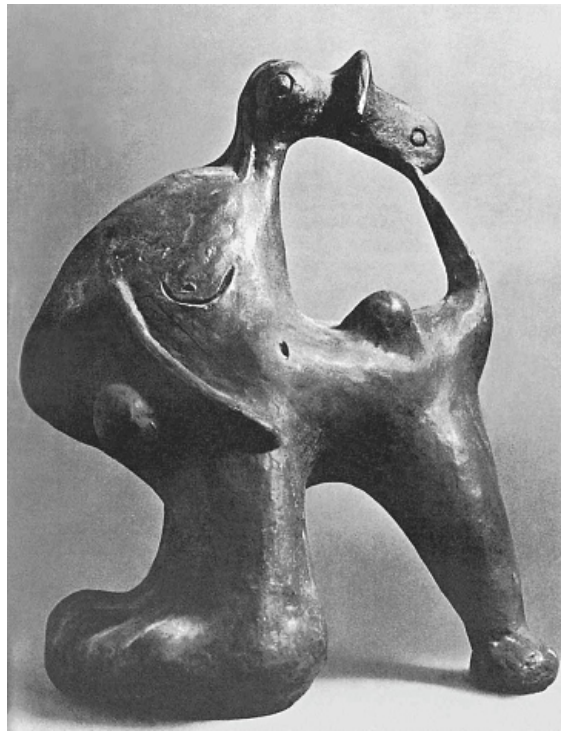


Fig. 1 Pablo Picasso, *Metamorphosis I*, 1928; bronze, h. 22.6 cm

they clearly influenced his ideas on art and his approach to form.

The International Situation

The work of Auguste Rodin is generally identified with the dawn of modern sculpture. By dissolving solid forms, firm outlines and self-contained surfaces, Rodin created figures that were made up of a continuous sequence of swellings and hollows. He was thus able to represent 'inner form' and so to reveal the essence of each piece. This aspect of Rodin's achievement influenced many sculptors in the first decades of the century. Moore stated that he had rated Rodin extremely highly, no doubt especially on account of the latter's intensive engagement with the human figure. Like Rodin, Moore evolved ever new forms of expression for the figure. It is also possible that Moore was attracted to the work of Rodin because of its formal proximity to that of Michelangelo, whom Moore had considered his most important model even before he visited Italy.¹² In Moore's reclining figures, in particular, there is evidence of his preoccupation with Michelangelo's own works of

this type.¹³ Looking back over his career, Moore later reported that at the start of his studies in Leeds he had produced sculptures in which he had taken his lead from Rodin.¹⁴ The artistic antithesis of Rodin, Aristide Maillol (a sculptor entirely committed to the Classical ideal of form), held only a passing interest for Moore. Maillol's work, with its Classically self-contained figures, never served as a model for Moore, even though, in 1922, during his first stay in Paris, he had planned to visit him.¹⁵

Of much greater significance for Moore were the Cubist and abstract tendencies to be found, from the early years of the century onwards, in the work of artists belonging to the Paris avant-garde. Picasso was the first of these to apply to sculpture the Cubist formal canon he had evolved together with Georges Braque in the context of two-dimensional work. While the sculptures Picasso produced between 1899 and 1906 were still modelled in the 'Impressionist' technique of the followers of Rodin or Medardo Rosso, from 1907 he produced sculptures in which a clear attempt was made to transfer to this medium the formal principles developed in painting. At around the same time,



Fig. 2 *Composition*, 1931 (LH 99); green Hornton stone, h. 48.3 cm; Moore Danowski Trust

André Derain produced his first expressively distorted stone sculptures, carved directly from the block. Their formal qualities reflect the artist's interest in African sculpture, a model also apparent in the sculpture made in and after 1909 by Amedeo Modigliani. Of greater importance for Moore, however, were to be the sculptures made by Picasso in the 1920s, with their distorted figures, their open volumes and their conscious incorporation of empty space as an integral compositional component. These were to prove a more lasting influence on Moore than Picasso's early Cubist works, which are reflected only in a few of Moore's early sculptures. Moore's interest in Picasso became clearer during the 1930s, a period when the latter was keenly involved in sculptural projects. A key work in this context is Picasso's *Metamorphosis I* of 1928, which has a direct bearing on Moore's *Composition* of 1931 (figs. 1, 2).

Moore was crucially impressed by the 'three-dimensionality' of Picasso's sculptures: in this he saw one of the principal concerns in any sculptor's work. In 'Notes on Sculpture' (1937) Moore added that the sculptor had to grasp form in every aspect of its spatial existence: 'He must strive continually to think of, and use, form in its full spatial completeness....He mentally visualizes a complex form *from all round itself*; he knows while he looks at one side what the other side is like; he identifies himself with its centre of gravity, its mass, its weight; he realizes its volume, as the space that the shape displaces in the air.'¹⁶ Moore believed these principles to have attained their optimum realization in Picasso's work of the late 1920s.

Moore also repeatedly alluded to the importance of Brancusi for the development of contemporary sculpture. Brancusi's approach was based on two principles: the notion of overall harmony, and truth to materials. For him, 'overall harmony' meant that the definitive shape and character of a work had to be attained through the creative engagement of the artist with his material.¹⁷ Moore saw Brancusi's particular contribution in the fact that he reduced every individual entity, through a radical process of concentration, to a definitive 'primal form', thus re-awakening a 'consciousness of form' among contemporary sculptors. Moore stated that Brancusi's championing of 'form for its own sake... was a great help for me, a sculptor twenty years his junior'. Brancusi was also important to Moore on account of his advocacy of direct carving of a stone or wood block. For very many years Moore regarded this as the only truly 'sculptural' way of working. He was fascinated by the fact that 'you begin with the block and have to find the sculpture that's inside it'.¹⁸

At the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s Hans Arp started from the same idealistic conceptions of organic form as Brancusi when he began producing his first emphatically rounded stone and wood sculptures. In his own works Moore sought, like Brancusi, 'to show the secret ways of nature'. Arp called his own sculptures *concrétions* and defined them as emerging from 'the natural process of condensation, hardening, coagulating, thickening, growing together.... Concretion is something that has grown. I wanted my work to find its humble, anonymous place in the woods, the mountains, in nature.'¹⁹

Moore, too, repeatedly alluded to the close connection between his works and natural forms. In its almost mythical bond with nature, his work reveals a close inner relationship with that of Brancusi and Arp. Herbert Read saw two determining forces at work in the sculptures of all three artists: one mythical and one vital. Of Moore he wrote: 'From the vital source comes everything represented by Arp's word "concretion" – formal coherence, dynamic rhythm, the realization of an integral mass in actual space. From the mythical source comes the mysterious life of his figures and compositions, in one word, their *magic*.'²⁰

The work of Brancusi and Arp accorded with Moore's notions of vitality and the power of expression as he defined them in his essay of 1934 for *Unit 1*:

For me a work must first have a vitality of its own. I do not mean a reflection of the vitality of life, of movement, physical action, frisking, dancing figures and so on, but that a work can have in it a pent-up energy, an intense life of its own, independent of the object it may represent. When a work has this powerful vitality we do not connect the word Beauty with it....Between beauty of expression and power of expression there is a difference of function. The first aims at pleasing the senses, the second has a spiritual vitality which for me is more moving and goes deeper than the senses. Because a work does not aim at reproducing natural appearances it is not, therefore, an escape from life – but may be a penetration into reality...an expression of the significance of life, a stimulation to greater effort in living.²¹

Another important contribution to the development of modern sculpture was made by Archipenko, though Moore himself never mentions him in his comments on sculpture. Archipenko was probably the sculptor who embraced Cubist and Futurist art most whole-heartedly and who freed sculptural form from its naturalistic ties. His early figural works are distinguished by smooth, taut volumes and by elegant forms that exude a refined

sensuality. Around 1909–10 his figural style changed, under the influence of Cubism and Futurism, from realistic illustration to Cubist construction using both concave and convex forms. A significant innovation in Archipenko's work of this period was the incorporation of negative volumes: a penetration of the principal mass was achieved by openings that were used as a constitutive element of his rendering of the figure. After 1913, and above all in 1915, in the various versions of *Woman Combing her Hair*, Archipenko produced highly innovative works in which – as a further development of Cubist formal principles – both closed and open volumes were employed as equally important formal elements. This was a stylistic principle that Moore was to adopt in his work of the early 1930s, and which was to become a fundamental feature of his approach to sculpture. In his own words: 'The first hole made through a piece of stone is a revelation. The hole connects one side to the other, making it immediately more three-dimensional. A hole can itself have as much shape-meaning as a solid mass. Sculpture in air is possible, where the stone contains only the hole, which is the intended and considered form.'²²

Moore and British Sculpture

During the course of the twentieth century, British art has produced a series of notable sculptors who have gone on to win acclaim throughout Europe. This development was initiated in the late nineteenth century with the New Sculpture movement. The founding of the Society of British Sculptors in 1904 bears witness to the new significance attached to sculpture in England at the start of the century. Sculptors were inspired by a new conception of their work and their role, which led, among other things, to a redefinition both of the importance of sculpture in relation to architecture and of the design of public monuments.²³ Although British sculpture in the early years of the century was still firmly embedded in Classical tradition – as demonstrated, above all, by many of the monuments erected around the turn of the century – the beginnings of a response to modern tendencies, particularly those emerging in Paris, could be detected in the work of certain artists.

Gradually, the representation of emotion assumed greater significance than the production of empty allegories that had been characteristic of Victorian art. In 1910 Roger Fry described the situation in England as characterized by two opposing trends: on the one hand, that of the commonplace, expressionless, representa-

tional style and, on the other, that of an expressive style emerging under the influence of Rodin.²⁴

For a number of British artists, the 1910s were marked by a search for an alternative figural language. Like Picasso and his circle in Paris, artists in England – above all Jacob Epstein and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska – sought new inspiration in the formal vocabulary of ‘primitive’, non-European and medieval art. The expressivity and originality of the resulting works were regarded as sensational and often provoked scandal.

Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska and Eric Gill were the first sculptors in England to engage seriously with the new forms for the representation of the human figure that were being evolved in Paris. In turn, these artists, who were responsible for ‘the emergence of British sculpture from a provincial academic tradition into the mainstream of modern European art’,²⁵ decisively influenced the young Henry Moore as he embarked on an artistic career in the early 1920s. It is interesting in this connection to note that two of the most important sculptors to have initiated the renewal of sculpture in England were not themselves English.

Probably the most significant innovator in British sculpture before the First World War was Jacob Epstein. The son of Russian Jewish emigrants to America, he was born in New York on 10 November 1880 and in 1902 went to Paris, where he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian. The work he produced up to around 1911 shows very clearly an approach to sculpture akin to that of the Classically imbued tradition of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, although it was not altogether uninfluenced by Rodin and by the sculpture of the Renaissance. In 1905 Epstein moved to London; he remained there for the rest of his life, in 1907 becoming a naturalized British subject. However, he always retained a critical distance towards the culture of his adopted country, in particular towards its traditionalist sculpture. His strongly expressive and idiosyncratic works, imbued with a truly modern spirit, offered a compelling alternative.

From the time of his arrival in London, Epstein was a constant visitor to the British Museum. Yet the influence of ‘primitive’ art exhibited there did not begin to appear in his work until around 1912. It then became quite obvious in the sculpture he produced between 1912 and 1915. This short period was one of the most creative and innovative phases of Epstein’s career. Like many other forward-looking artists at that time, Epstein drew inspiration from a passionate engagement with the magical and formal qualities of ‘primitive’ art, which interested him most for the rhythm of its forms, its arrangement of masses and its marked frontality.

In 1907 Epstein received a commission to provide eighteen large sculptures for the façade of the headquarters of the British Medical Association in London. In the resulting figures Epstein achieved a union of the Classical tradition and the work of Rodin²⁶ so as to convey a combination of calm and dignity, intimacy and forceful expressivity. The emphatic nudity of the figures and the explicit treatment of erotic motifs caused a storm of protest, the first evidence of that public resistance to Epstein’s work which was to endure until well into the 1930s, even though esteemed artists, critics and art historians repeatedly voiced their support for him.²⁷ ‘In the years before and just after the first world war, while he was perhaps the sculptor most admired by the perceptive, he was undoubtedly the most loathed by the philistines.’²⁸ In 1912 Epstein was described in the press as a ‘Sculptor in Revolt, who is in deadly conflict with the ideas of current sculpture’.²⁹

From 1911 to 1913 Epstein worked in Paris on a monumental tombstone for Oscar Wilde’s grave in the cemetery of Père Lachaise. His representation of the poet as a naked ‘winged daemonic angel’, derived from one of the colossal, human-headed winged beasts in the British Museum, provoked an outcry. A similar, particularly vehement dispute arose regarding the artist’s *Rima*, a figure intended for the memorial to the writer W. H. Hudson that was to be erected in Kensington Gardens, London, in 1925.³⁰ This unconventionally passionate and mystical rendering of sexuality prompted widespread shock.

During Epstein’s 1911–13 stay in Paris, he came into close contact with Brancusi and Modigliani, and the work of both was to have a strong influence on his own in the following years. At this time Modigliani was working on his elongated sculptures and drawings influenced by Baule masks, and Epstein, who saw Modigliani almost every day, became deeply interested in the Italian’s work. To Brancusi, on the other hand, Epstein owed his conviction, held firmly until well into the 1920s, of the importance of direct stone carving, of ‘retaining manual responsibility for every blow of the chisel and allowing the intrinsic character of the stone to affect the fundamental individuality of the sculpture’.³¹ Epstein’s contact with Brancusi and Modigliani thus brought about a reorientation in his own work. This, in turn, initiated the phase during which he was strongly influenced by ‘primitive’ art. Commenting on the latter, Epstein said that ‘the chief features of negro art are, its simplification and directness, the union of naturalism and design, and its striking architectural qualities’.³² Epstein’s preoccupation with ‘primitive’ art led him to practise a radical simplification and reduc-

tion of form, with the aim of achieving a heightened power of expression. This was the quality that impressed Henry Moore so deeply at the outset of his own career as a sculptor.

Epstein was, in fact, the first British sculptor to take an especially deep interest in non-European 'primitive' art, an interest reflected in the large and impressive collection of such work that he amassed over the years.³³ The qualities in Epstein's wood and stone sculptures that provoked fierce public debate – their stark expressivity and their uncompromising depiction of sexuality – were precisely those that the artist derived from his engagement with 'primitive' art. In 1913 and 1914 Epstein's sculptures and drawings focused almost exclusively on the representation of sexuality: copulation, pregnancy and birth. Nothing at all comparable is to be found in the work of other artists at this time.³⁴

In 1913 and 1914 Epstein was in contact with the Vorticist group, founded by Percy Wyndham Lewis. Building on the ideas of the Futurists, the Vorticists strove for a renewal of English art; they wished to give expression in their work to the changes in society that were creating the 'Machine Age'. They published their ideas in their own avant-garde journal, *Blast*. It was characteristic of the Vorticists that, while in theory committed to a thorough rejection of the representational, they did not altogether exclude visible reality from their works.³⁵

Epstein's short-lived interest in conveying the spirit of 'mechanization' is probably explained by his sympathy for the Vorticists' ideas. The foremost expression of this interest was found in what is probably his best known work, *Rock Drill* of 1913–15, of which only the torso survives (fig. 3).³⁶ In this work Epstein combined the mechanized figure of a worker with an industrially produced drill. The figure was prepared in a long series of studies and sketches. These draw on various 'primitive' models, which Epstein combined into a synthesis.³⁷

An increasing simplification of form characterizes the work Epstein produced after *Rock Drill*, but the direct influence of 'primitive' art lessened. With regard to subject-matter, Epstein showed particular interest in figural depictions and in portrait busts of members of his family and his contemporaries. These are distinguished by great sensitivity and psychological insight. In the lively treatment of the surfaces, heightening the effect of light and shade, Epstein here works in the tradition of Rodin, just as he was later to do in his large-scale, expressive bronze groups of religious subjects.

Henry Moore first visited Epstein in 1921, bearing a letter of introduction from Charles Rutherston,³⁸ one of the first collectors of Epstein's work. Despite the

difference in age, a close friendship developed between the two artists. Epstein frequently invited Moore to his house, where, alongside Epstein's own work, Moore was able to study the choice collection of 'primitive' and Egyptian art. Epstein soon became aware of the decisive importance that Moore would have for the future development of English sculpture. Epstein visited Moore when the latter was teaching at the Royal College of Art and began to acquire Moore's work for his own collection. In 1928 Epstein arranged for Moore to receive his first public commission – for the large relief *West Wind* (LH 58) for the London Underground headquarters at St James's Park station – and in 1931 he wrote a text for the catalogue of Moore's second one-man show. For his part, Moore spoke up for Epstein, in 1924 arguing (albeit without success) that he



Fig. 3 Jacob Epstein, *Torso from 'Rock Drill'*, 1913–15; bronze, h. 70.5 cm; Tate Gallery, London

be appointed to the vacant Chair of Sculpture at the Royal College.³⁹

The influence of Epstein's work is detectable in a number of early drawings and sculptures by Moore,⁴⁰ though Herbert Read is undoubtedly right in asserting that Epstein should be regarded here as a 'creative stimulus rather than as a model that was imitated'.⁴¹ Both artists shared a great interest in the theme of mother and child,⁴² but for Moore, Epstein was above all of significance as the first British sculptor to make a conscious effort to follow developments in France and introduce them to England.

Before his untimely death Henri Gaudier-Brzeska grappled with much the same problems as those addressed by Epstein. Despite the smallness of his oeuvre, Gaudier-Brzeska made an important contribution to the sculpture of the twentieth century.⁴³ Ezra Pound mourned the early death of an artist whom he regarded as the most talented sculptor of his age. The young Henry Moore, too, admired Gaudier-Brzeska: 'Gaudier has given us the reassuring feeling that figurative and non-figurative art could co-exist without serious danger. To myself he gave the certainty that by seeking to create along other paths than those of traditional sculpture it was possible to achieve beauty.'⁴⁴ Moore was often to refer to the importance of Gaudier-Brzeska's work for his own artistic development: 'In this man I found a fellow spirit, a man that had won his spirit through direct work on the stone.'⁴⁵

Gaudier-Brzeska, a self-taught sculptor, was born in St Jean de Braye, near Orléans, in 1891 and was killed in action on 5 June 1915. He arrived in London in 1911. Here he initially produced prints and portraits, but also modelled sculptures that, in their expressivity and their treatment of surfaces, were at first close to the work of Rodin and then, for a time, to that of Maillol, Picasso, Archipenko and Henri Matisse.⁴⁶ It was not until 1913 that Gaudier-Brzeska devoted himself entirely to sculpture.

As soon as he settled in London, the 19-year-old Gaudier-Brzeska had attempted to contact Epstein, whose work, in particular the tomb for Oscar Wilde in Paris, clearly impressed him. It was in all probability this admiration for Epstein that moved Gaudier-Brzeska to open himself to new, contemporary developments. Under Epstein's influence, he embarked on direct stone carving. This awakened his interest in 'primitive' art and this in turn drew him to the collections of the British Museum. During 1913 Gaudier-Brzeska produced his first works that reflect formal aspects of that art. From this point on, he saw his work as 'continuing the tradition of the barbaric peoples of the earth'.⁴⁷

Now committed to direct stone carving, in 1914 he wrote:

The sculpture I admire is the work of master craftsmen. Every inch of the surface is won at the point of the chisel – every stroke of the hammer is a physical and a mental effort. No more arbitrary translations of a design in any material. They are fully aware of the different qualities and possibilities of woods, stones, and metals. Epstein, whom I consider the foremost in the small number of good sculptors in Europe, lays particular stress on this. Brancusi's greatest pride is his consciousness of being an accomplished workman.⁴⁸

In 1913 Gaudier-Brzeska allied himself with the Vorticists. In June 1914 he published the prescriptive text 'Gaudier-Brzeska Vortex' in *Blast*. It opens with the words: 'Sculptural energy is a mountain. Sculptural feeling is the appreciation of masses in relation. Sculptural ability is the defining of these masses by planes.'⁴⁹ Henry Moore frequently alluded to this text when speaking, in connection with his reclining figures, of the integration of landscape and figure.

Early in 1914 Gaudier-Brzeska produced what is universally judged his most important work, the *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound* (private collection). In this piece, 91 cm in height and carved from a block of marble, he consciously refrained from providing a naturalistic record of the subject. In his biography of the artist, published in 1916, Pound wrote of it: 'He [Gaudier-Brzeska] had intended doing the bust in plaster, a most detestable medium, to which I had naturally objected. I therefore purchased the stone beforehand, not having any idea of the amount of hard work I was letting him in for. There were two solid months of sheer cutting, or perhaps that counts spare days for reforging the worn-out chisels.'⁵⁰ This monumental head is the only work by Gaudier-Brzeska that can be securely connected with specific 'primitive' models: the heads on Easter Island. Particularly striking is the 'phallic' form of the head. This was quite deliberate, as Horace Brodzky reported: '[the work's] purpose and beginnings were entirely pornographic. Both the sculptor and the sitter had decided on that. Brzeska informed me of the fact that it was to be a phallus.'⁵¹ Brodzky also quoted Pound as saying: 'Brzeska is immortalising me in a phallic column!'⁵²

When Moore moved to London in 1921, he was evidently not unaware of the work of Gaudier-Brzeska (though he appears not to have read Pound's biography until 1922) and an interest in Gaudier-Brzeska was not without impact on his early work. Gaudier-Brzeska's

allusion to truth to materials, and to the importance of the direct, and strenuously physical, 'hewing' of a sculpture out of the block, exerted a great influence on Moore's thinking until well into the 1930s. In conversation with Richard Cork, he said: 'Gaudier's writings and sculpture meant an enormous amount as well – they, and *Blast*, were a confirmation to me as a young person that everything was possible, that there were men in England full of vitality and life'.⁵³

A number of Moore's sculptures provide clear evidence that he paid very close attention to some of Gaudier-Brzeska's works. A comparison of Moore's *Torso* of 1925–26 (LH 29) with Gaudier's *Torso* of 1913, or of Moore's *Standing Woman* of 1923 with Gaudier's *Red Stone Dancer* of about 1913, reveals unmistakable similarities. The pose of *Standing Woman*, with the right arm over the head, surely reiterates that of Gaudier's dancer (figs. 4, 5).

Alongside Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska, Eric Gill and Frank Dobson were among the more advanced English sculptors of the first half of this century and thus among those whose work served to prepare the way for younger artists. Although Moore respected them both, their works did not have a lasting influence on him. Only a few of Moore's reclining figures can be compared to one in marble made by Dobson in 1924–25.

Moore always gave the impression that he received no inspiration or influence at all from the professors working at the Royal College of Art when he was a student and, later, a teacher there. However, among them were sculptors who held artistic convictions comparable to his own. Neither academic nor modernist, Leon Underwood, G. F. Watts and Gilbert Ledward, for example, shared with Moore some ideas derived from the English Romantic tradition, in particular the writings of John Ruskin.⁵⁴

Highly disparate influences were at work on British sculpture in the 1920s. Of greatest importance was the return to Classicism, originating in France, which helps to explain the vehement reaction to the works of Epstein. Alongside this development, however, there was a move towards greater expressiveness, reflected in the distortions by means of which sculptors sought to heighten the expressive power of their works. At the same time, the work of younger sculptors, and in particular that of Moore, displayed a growing interest in the most varied forms and traditions of art. These could be exploited without any sense of constraint deriving from awareness of the conventions governing them, in the interests of attaining 'significant' forms. Carving directly from the block of stone or wood – 'truth to materials' – became established as a key criterion of

truly modern sculptural art, in combination with the notion that a sculpture need have no significance or content beyond that implicit in its formal qualities. At the end of the 1920s Moore produced sculptures in which he increasingly dispensed with the exact rendering of human anatomy in favour of anthropomorphic or biomorphic forms and fragments of form. None the less, in both appearance and spatial arrangement, these still evoked the human figure.

By the mid-1920s Moore had absorbed and digested the most important influences that were to determine his later work. His sculptural output up to this time shows in what varied ways he made use of these impulses, evolving from them a distinct style of his own, in which, in the late 1920s, his earliest masterpieces were created.

'Primitive' Art and Greek Art

To an extent unequalled by almost any other artist of this century, Moore took an intense interest in the history of both European and non-European art. This is evident from his writings and from the studies he pursued, one of their principal aims being that of 'measuring' his own work against that of the past. It was within the general historical context that he found justification for, and the basis of, his own artistic activity.

For a long time, a significant part was played by examples of so-called 'primitive' art, Moore feeling himself closely connected with these on account of the directness and intensity of their emotionally expressive content, but also on account of the identity in them of form and material. In 'primitive' art he detected a 'common world language of form...apparent in them all'⁵⁵ and said of it: 'apart from its own enduring value, a knowledge of it conditions a fuller and truer appreciation of the later developments of the so-called great periods, and shows art to be a universal continuous activity with no separation between past and present.'⁵⁶ He also observed:

through the workings of instinctive sculptural sensibility, the same shapes and form relationships are used to express similar ideas at widely different places and periods in history, so that the same form-vision may be seen in a Negro and a Viking carving, a Cycladic stone figure and a Nukuoro wooden statuette. And on further familiarity with the British Museum's whole collection it eventually became clear that the realistic ideal of physical beauty in art which sprang from fifth-century