

HENRY MOORE (1898-1986) THE WARRIOR WITH SHIELD 1954 BRONZE



The idea for The Warrior came to me at the end of 1952 or very early in 1953. It was evolved from a pebble I found on the seashore in the summer of 1952, and which reminded me of the stump of a leg, amputated at the hip. Just as Leonardo says somewhere in his notebooks that a painter can find a battle scene in the lichen marks on a wall, so this gave me the start of The Warrior idea. First I added the body, leg and one arm and it became a wounded warrior, but at first the figure was reclining. A day or two later I added a shield and altered its position and arrangement into a seated figure and so it changed from an inactive pose into a figure which, though wounded, is still defiant... The head has a blunted and bull-like power but also a sort of dumb animal acceptance and forbearance of pain... The figure may be emotionally connected (as one critic has suggested) with one's feelings and thoughts about England during the crucial and early part of the last war. The position of the shield and its angle gives protection from above. The distance of the shield from the body and the rectangular shape of the space enclosed between the inside surface of the shield and the concave front of the body is important... Except for a short period when I did coal-mining drawings as a war artist, nearly all my figure sculpture and drawings, since being a student, has been of the female, except for the Family Groups, but there the man was part of the group . . . This sculpture is the first single and separate male figure that I have done in sculpture and carrying it out in its final large scale was almost like the discovery of a new subject matter; the bony, edgy, tense forms were a great excitement to make... Like the bronze Draped Reclining Figure of 1952-3 I think The Warrior has some Greek influence, not consciously wished for but perhaps the result of my visit to Athens and other parts of Greece in 1951.

Moore was a sculptor with few themes, but a multitude of resonance. The motif of mother and child, along with the reclining figure, was one that obsessed and intrigued Moore throughout his life. Intrigued by the organic and natural, Moore was ultimately bewitched by the human figure, and his sculptural quest into human form was both mystical and spiritual. He strove to depict the inner essence of his subject and presence, or, as he put it, 'vitality'. Here, he is demonstrably an artist in supreme control, able to deliver the most intense and gratifying aesthetic experience, imbued with an intellectual and spiritual depth.

His favourite piece Mother and child, 1931 is a unique and individual statement. Last sold for over a million pounds (1.6 M \$)

Early life

Moore was born in [Castleford, West Yorkshire](#), England, to Mary Baker and Raymond Spencer Moore. His mining engineer father was of Irish origin and became under-manager of the Wheldale [colliery](#) in Castleford. He was an autodidact with an interest in music and literature. Determined that his sons would not work in the mines, he saw formal education as the route to their advancement.^[3] Henry was the seventh of eight children in a family that often struggled with poverty. He attended infant and elementary schools in Castleford, where he began modelling in [clay](#) and [carving in wood](#). He decided to become a sculptor when he was eleven after hearing of [Michelangelo's](#) achievements.

The same year a teacher noticed his talent and interest in [medieval sculpture](#) and granted him a scholarship to [Castleford Secondary School](#),^[4] which several of his siblings had attended. His art teacher broadened his knowledge of art, and, with her encouragement, he determined to make art his career; first by sitting for examinations for a scholarship to the local art college.

Despite his early promise, Moore's parents had been against him training as a sculptor, a vocation they considered manual labour with few career prospects. After a brief introduction as a student teacher, Moore became a teacher at the school he had attended. Upon turning eighteen, Moore was called to the army. He was the youngest man in the [Prince of Wales's Own Civil Service Rifles](#) regiment, and was injured in 1917 in a [gas attack](#) during the [Battle of Cambrai](#).^[5] After recovering in hospital, he saw out the remainder of the war as a [physical training](#) instructor. In stark contrast to many of his contemporaries, Moore's wartime experience was largely untroubled. He recalled later, "for me the war passed in a romantic haze of trying to be a hero."^[6]

After the war Moore received an ex-serviceman's grant to continue his education, and in 1919 he became the first student of sculpture at the Leeds School of Art (now [Leeds College of Art](#)), which set up a sculpture studio especially for him. At the college, he met [Barbara Hepworth](#), a fellow student who would also become a well-known British sculptor, and began a friendship that lasted for many years. In 1921, Moore won a scholarship to study at the [Royal College of Art](#) in London, where his friend Hepworth had gone the year before. While in London, Moore extended his knowledge of [primitive art](#) and sculpture, studying the [ethnographic](#) collections at the [Victoria and Albert Museum](#) and the [British Museum](#).

The early sculptures of both Moore and Hepworth follow the standard romantic [Victorian](#) style, and include natural forms, landscapes and figurative modelling of animals. Moore later became uncomfortable with classically derived ideals; his later familiarity with primitivism and the influence of sculptors such as [Constantin Brâncuși](#), [Jacob Epstein](#) and [Frank Dobson](#) led him to the method of [direct carving](#), in which imperfections in the material and marks left by tools became part of the finished sculpture. Having adopted this technique, Moore was in conflict with academic tutors who did not appreciate such a modern approach.

Adult life

In 1924, Moore won a six-month travelling scholarship which he spent in [Northern Italy](#) studying the great works of [Michelangelo](#), [Giotto di Bondone](#), [Giovanni Pisano](#) and several other [Old Masters](#). During this period he also visited Paris, took advantage of the timed-sketching classes at the [Académie Colarossi](#), and viewed, in the [Louvre](#), a plaster cast of a [Toltec-Maya](#) sculptural form, the [Chac Mool](#). The reclining figure was to have a profound effect upon Moore's work, becoming the primary motif of his sculpture

In 1932, Moore took up a post as the Head of the Department of Sculpture at the [Chelsea School of Art](#).^[12] Artistically, Moore, Hepworth and other members of the [Seven and Five Society](#) would develop steadily more abstract work,^[13] partly influenced by their frequent trips to Paris and their contact with leading

progressive artists, notably [Pablo Picasso](#), [George Braque](#), [Jean Arp](#) and [Alberto Giacometti](#).

Became one of world's most renowned sculptor. Many public commissions (UNESCO etc..) very popular in US. Set up in Leeds England the Henry Moore Foundation which promotes sculpture worldwide.

Technique

The aftermath of [World War II](#), [The Holocaust](#), and the age of the atomic bomb instilled in his sculpture of the mid-1940s a sense that art should return to its pre-cultural and pre-rational origins.

After the Second World War, Moore's bronzes took on their larger scale, which was particularly suited for public art commissions. As a matter of practicality, he largely abandoned direct carving, and took on several assistants to help produce the larger forms based on maquettes. By the end of the 1940s, he produced sculptures increasingly by modelling, working out the shape in plaster before casting the final work in bronze using the [lost wax](#) technique

This work and the Fallen Warrior owe something to his visit to Greece in 1951, when he saw the cities of Athens, Mycenae, and Delphi for the first time. Most of his sculpture since the war was in bronze, though he had not altogether stopped carving in wood and stone. Furthermore, even when the sculptures were cast in bronze, they were not modeled in clay but built up initially in plaster over a wire and wood armature. Moore always liked to work like a carver, cutting and scraping and chiseling the surfaces with a carver's tools.

About our piece - Warrior with Shield

- First of his male sculptures (until then mainly mother and child and reclining female figures_ cast in an edition of eleven (Others : Basilica San Lorenzo Florence, Birmingham England, Ontario),

- Made at a time when although very successful he was being subjected to significant critique - his work not always accepted .. several commissions by cities for public sculpture received very negative reviews. Moore even became ill following poor reception of some of his work- in addition arguments with trustees of Tate in Britain.

-Preoccupation with simplifying and abstracting the figure -expressing universal truths beyond the physical world - In his words : "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 - My sculpture is becoming less representational , less an outward visual copy....but only because I believe that in this way I can present the Human psychological content of my work with greatest directness and intensity."

Moore sculpted this warrior with an intimacy that suggests deep personal experience. Indeed, Moore was impacted by both World Wars. Hired by the British government in 1941 to serve as an Official War Artist, he captured the images of human suffering on the streets and in the shelters of London.

- The cost of war is all too apparent here. There are the limbs or lack thereof. Look at the warrior's ribcage. He's plainly hungry. War has robbed him of nourishment.

- Look at the raised shield - the man has been wounded - a leg amputated. His body has recovered enough to continue living, the war should be over for him , but it never ends - he is still fighting . Something a little Monty Pythonesque in this statue (if you are familiar with the fighting knight...I can still bite you...) may bring a lighter tone to the conversation if necessary. Relevance today with all the soldiers coming back from war with PTSD. In appearance they are fine , but they bear the wounds internally and are still fighting...

- Does not glorify the war : look at the face of the warrior - more of a dumb animals face, bullish forbearance in H.M's words. ALmost like a deformed leprosy? Also think of link with Picasso's work. H.M knew and admired Picasso. Think Guernica.
- Henry Moore stresses the importance of "holes" - look at negative space between the shield and the stomach... unifies the piece.
- Choice of material - bronze long lasting, wood for base a reminder of H.M's origins in Yorkshire and link with coal mines? wood used as structure in coal mines..

Criticism of Henry Moore

Seen by some as being too bland... HE became very famous and vary familiar to most people through the number of his pieces in public spaces... accused of becoming like Muzak in supermarket... yet his work was very radical when it was produced.

Questions :

What adjectives spring to mind when you see this sculpture?

How has the body recovered/adapted from the wounds of war?

What emotions does this evoke in you ?

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How would you describe the face of the warrior?

What does the raised shield tell you about the warrior's attitude?

Appropriate tours :

War and peace

Modern Sculpture influenced by Mycenaean, African and Aztec art

I am using it on my Made in America tour - as whilst not an American piece - it symbolizes the influence and the role of America in the two World Wars and the impact of Vietnam and later wars on the American Psyche.

Links and bibliography

http://www.minneapolis.va.gov/features/Honoring_the_Warrior.asp

file in docent office

Wikipedia

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/391533/Henry-Moore/4997/Later-years>

Interesting article on a modern interpretation of Henry Moore's Warrior plus zebra mussel infestation... <http://www.canadianart.ca/online/reviews/2008/03/27/simon-starling/>