

Small Seated Figure

HENRY MOORE (English, 1898-1986)

Provenance

Joseph Herman Hirshhorn, Washington, D.C.

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

Private collection, Switzerland

This work is recorded in the archives of the Henry Moore Foundation under no. LH 170b

Henry Moore was one of the greatest 20th-century sculptors. After the Second World War, he became Britain's best-known artist both at home and abroad. He was influenced by European Modernism and developed an abstract sculptural language, combining the human figure, particularly the female figure, with references to organic forms such as shells, pebbles and bones.

Conceived in 1936; *Small Seated Figure* was cast in 1957 in an edition of 7 plus 1 artist's proof by the Fiorini Foundry, London.

The imagery is similar in conception to many classical seated figures that Moore sculpted in the mid-1950s, however is important because it comes from a whole two decades earlier, showing the sculptors obsession with specific forms through his long career; the others being of the mother and child, the reclining figure, and the standing figure.

The 1930s was a period when Moore broke away from his art school education and became closely associated with a number of artist's groups; *Unit 1* with Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson, and also the 7&5 Group. Both these associations had links to Surrealism, and Moore regularly came into contact with the Surrealists during trips to Paris that decade, notably with Picasso (who's earlier works; of huge muscular female figures on the beaches have a very obvious link to this specific Moore sculpture).

BOWMAN SCULPTURE



Pablo Picasso, *Large Bather*, 1921, Oil on Canvas.

Moore was also involved in the organisation of The International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936: the same year as *Small Seated Figure* was conceived. During this crucial pre-war period Moore's reputation grew rapidly, leading to him being exhibited at The British Pavilion for the Venice Biennale (1930); he was also the subject of an important monograph, by Herbert Read in 1934.

Another example of *Small Seated Figure* is in The Art Gallery of Ontario. The original 1936 terracotta is in The Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven.