

The Courtauld

Henry Moore

Shadows on the Wall

8 June – 22 Sep 2024

Gilbert and Ildiko Butler Drawings Gallery

During the Blitz, from September 1940 to May 1941, crowds of people sought refuge in London's Underground stations to escape the nightly bombardments by the German Air Force. Moved by what he saw there and in other makeshift shelters, the sculptor Henry Moore (1898- 1986) documented these scenes in hundreds of haunting sketches known as the Shelter Drawings. *Shadows on the Wall* investigates the artist's fascination with the curved brick walls and cavernous tunnels of those spaces, taking these drawings as a point of departure for interpreting some of his post-war drawings and sculpture.

In the drawings on display, we see that Moore's attention was absorbed as much by the spatial drama of the shelters as by the human drama of strangers forced to huddle together. The artist's interest in representing the confining spaces and brick walls of the shelters was further developed in the wartime sketches he made in the Yorkshire coalmines and in his illustrations for a play, *The Rescue*.

This new visual vocabulary informed some of his most individual post-war sculpture, particularly in its relation to architecture. Two striking examples of this are Moore's designs for a wall relief on a new building in Rotterdam, the Bouwcentrum, and the small bronze maquette featuring a figure seated in front of a wall, relating to the commission for the UNESCO building in Paris.

Shadows on the Wall is presented in collaboration with the Henry Moore Foundation.

The programme of displays in the Drawings Gallery is generously supported by the International Music and Art Foundation, with additional support from James Bartos.

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From an initial concept developed by Penelope Curtis, and curated with Alexandra Gerstein and Ketty Gottardo.

Henry Moore

**Study for 'Shelterers in the Tube'; and
Women and Children with Bundles**

1940-41

Pencil, wax crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink, opaque watercolour

In the autumn of 1940, Londoners endured 57 consecutive nights of German bombardments. At the height of these aerial raids, approximately 100,000 of the capital's residents sought refuge in the tunnels and stations of the Underground and other makeshift shelters. Henry Moore would later recall, 'I was fascinated by the sight of people camping out deep under the ground I had never seen so many rows of reclining figures.'

In the London Underground shelters, the artist took notes of what he saw; he did not sketch in the tunnels out of respect for the people seeking refuge there. Back in his studio, he would create more finished drawings based on memory and on the notes he took.

The Henry Moore Foundation: gift of Irina Moore, 1977

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné numbers: HMF 1630; HMF 1631

Henry Moore

Underground Sheltering

1940-41

Pencil, pen and black ink, watercolour

By December 1940, Moore had begun to contribute drawings to the War Artists' Advisory Committee. Headed by Sir Kenneth Clark, then director of London's National Gallery, the committee's aim was to create a complete record of Britain during the war and to offer artists much-needed financial support.

Many of Moore's Shelter sketchbook pages are divided into multiple vignettes, not unlike the story pages of a magazine. The artist would later extract individual scenes and make larger, more finished drawings for wartime public exhibitions.

The British Museum, London: bequeathed by Lady Jane Clark, 1977

1977,0402.13.21

Henry Moore

Tube Shelter Perspective

1941

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour

Tube Shelter Perspective epitomises Moore's inventive drawing technique. The artist used wax crayon over a composition loosely drawn in pencil, on top of which he applied watercolour to create striking visual effects.

Moore recalled: 'it was a sort of magic to see the watercolour run off the parts that had a surface of wax.' Here, the ghostly figures and the white accents on the vaulted tunnel result from those underlying lines of wax crayon, which become visible only after watercolour is applied over them.

The Henry Moore Foundation: gift of the artist, 1977

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: HMF 1774

Henry Moore

**Woman seated with Hands in Lap; and
Woman Holding Her Right Hand to Her Face**

1940-41

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink

Based on nightly visits to the Tilbury warehouse in the East End of London, these two drawings, more than any other in this exhibition, emphasize the sense of confinement people experienced in the shelters.

The lines on the walls in *Woman Holding Her Right Hand to Her Face* render the compressed space even more claustrophobic. Moore chose to show only the figure's upper body, which appears boxed into an unnaturally small and oppressive space.

The British Museum, London: bequeathed by Lady Jane Clark, 1977

1977,0402.13.44

1977,0402.13.51

Henry Moore

**Half-Length Standing Woman in Front of a Wall; and
Woman Seated against Bomb-Scarred Wall**

1940-41

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink

These drawings are part of a series Moore based on his observations at the Tilbury warehouse shelter in the East End of London. Many focus on individuals, mainly women, sitting in front of dilapidated brick walls. *Woman seated against Bomb-Scarred Wall* seems to refer to those moments when he would 'come onto the street in the early hours of the morning after a big raid.'

Moore described these drawings as 'contrasts of opposites', pitting ordinary life against the abrupt violence of the Blitz. Yet the effect of these drawings is in fact one of similarity. The women are rendered in similar tones to the bricks and almost blend into the walls. Was the artist suggesting a correlation between the bomb-scarred walls and the psychologically scarred bodies, also victims of the war?

The British Museum, London: bequeathed by Lady Jane Clark, 1977

1977,0402.13.50

1977,0402.13.49

Henry Moore

**Seven Figures in a Shelter; and
Four Shelterers**

1940-41

Wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink

Clusters of draped and shrouded figures, either seated on benches or lying on the floor, populate the pages of Henry Moore's sketchbooks.

These drawings relate to the late Victorian warehouse of the Tilbury and Southend Railway in the East End of London, which functioned as a makeshift shelter during the Blitz. Conditions were deeply unsanitary; it had only two running taps and regularly housed as many as 10,000 people during the raids. An unofficial committee was set up to run the place, each bay having its own shelter marshal. Evidence of this organisation is seen in these two drawings, with notices pasted onto the walls. The numbers of each bay and the rules, such as 'no smoking', are painted directly onto the walls.

The British Museum, London: bequeathed by Lady Jane Clark, 1977

1977,0402.13.36

1977,0402.13.39

Henry Moore

Basement Shelter

1940-41

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink

The Henry Moore Foundation: gift of Irina Moore, 1977

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: HMF 1690

Henry Moore

Four Sleeping Children and Two Lying Figures

1940-41

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink

The British Museum, London: bequeathed by Lady Jane Clark, 1977

1977,0402.13.60

Of all the figures in the Shelter Drawings, sleepers are the most frequently represented. Moore was fascinated by how perfect strangers managed to sleep together in such tight spaces. These sketches of the Tilbury warehouse shelter show the enclosed, almost cell-like bays of that otherwise vast space. In *Four sleeping Children, and two lying Figures*, the huddled mass of blanketed forms mirrors the pattern of brickwork of the walls.

The writer George Orwell noted the nightly arrival of crowds at the London Underground at the beginning of the Blitz: 'People are to be seen every night about dusk queuing up at the doors of the shelters with their bedding.'

Henry Moore

Miners Going Along Tunnel

1942

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink

During the winter of 1942, Moore was commissioned to make drawings of the coal mines at Wheldale Colliery in Castleford, where his own father had worked. He described the claustrophobic tunnels as 'some terrible manmade inferno'. That sketching campaign led to the creation of over 150 drawings capturing the dark atmosphere of the mines.

Whilst these works have received less critical attention than the Shelter Drawings made in the previous year, they pursue Moore's research by focusing on the confining physical spaces of the mines.

The Henry Moore Foundation: gift of the artist, 1977

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: HMF 1947

Henry Moore

Phemius and Telemachus (recto)

Odysseus in the Naiad's Cave (verso)

1944

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink

In this double-sided drawing, Henry Moore sketched ideas for two different episodes of *The Rescue* (1945), a melodrama by the playwright Edward Sackville-West. On one side of the sheet, Moore laid out four vignettes depicting the poet Phemius with Telemachus, the son of the story's main protagonist, shown holding a spear.

For the book, Moore revised the lower left sketch. He integrated the Greek temple standing on a hill in the background and brought forward the figures so that they dominate the foreground and are framed against a brick wall.

On the back of the sheet, Moore sketched two distinct ideas to illustrate *Odysseus in the Naiad's Cave*. On the long journey to reach Ithaca, his homeland, Odysseus is abandoned asleep on its shores, near the cave of the Naiads. The sketch at left was the one chosen for the publication, with the sea appearing behind the rocks.

Both the sleeping Odysseus and the shape of the cave in the right-hand drawing recall the sleepers and the subterranean world of the London Underground shelters, as well as that of the coal mines. Both environments had a profound impact on Moore's work in those years.

The Henry Moore Foundation: acquired in memory of Lord Rayne

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: HMF 2289

Edward Sackville-West (1901-1965)

The Rescue. A Melodrama for Broadcasting based on Homer's Odyssey, 1945

with six illustrations by Henry Moore

The Rescue by Edward Sackville-West was first performed on BBC radio in November 1943. Over three million people tuned in to listen. An orchestral score by Benjamin Britten accompanied the play.

When the text was published, Henry Moore provided drawings to illustrate some of the scenes. One of these, *The Shadow on the Wall*, shows the profile of a man against a brick wall. It is the profile of the protagonist Odysseus, incised by his wife Penelope onto a wall 'so that the grey stone showed through the whitening where she had scratched it.' In this image, the masonry wall dominates the lightly drawn profile.

Based on the last books of Homer's epic poem the *Odyssey* (around 800-700 BCE), *The Rescue* recounts Odysseus's return to his homeland, the Mediterranean island of Ithaca. With soldiers away fighting on the front, the theme of homecoming in *The Rescue* resonated strongly with its audience of mostly women and civilians.

The Courtauld Gallery archive

Henry Moore

Seated Woman

1948

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and grey ink

Moore continued his exploration of figures against walls in later drawings such as this one, which stands out for its size and the boldness of its composition.

Placed against a thickly painted wall, the commanding figure appears as if it emerged from the fabric of the wall, enveloped in drapery made of intersecting colour lines. This brick-like pattern emphasises the figure's sculptural presence.

Henry Moore Family Collection

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: HMF 2489

Henry Moore

Four Figures in a Setting

1948

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour and opaque watercolour, pen and black ink

In this work, Moore reflects on an earlier group of drawings showing figures standing in enclosed spaces.

Here, in a series of cell-like rooms, with blind windows and with no doors in sight, four figures cast dark shadows on the looming walls. They resemble actors frozen on a stage. The inherent theatricality of this image was further developed in the sculptural maquettes Moore produced for the UNESCO project in Paris.

The Henry Moore Foundation, acquired 2011

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: HMF 2485

Henry Moore

Figures in an Art Gallery

1943

Wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink

After his studio in London was bombarded, Henry Moore could no longer work on large sculptures, and began instead to devote himself to drawing. In this work, the artist centres the composition around one of his earlier sculptural ideas, placed on a pedestal. In the foreground. Its internal form shows the mould cavities of the bronze casting process.

The helmet-shaped form inside the cavity evokes Moore's fascination with antique and Renaissance helmets. His interest in these shapes began in the 1930s, when visits to the Wallace Collection in London inspired him to create several bronze helmet heads.

Private collection

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: HMF 2161

Henry Moore and the Bouwcentrum Extension, Rotterdam (1955)

In 1954, Henry Moore received the most unusual commission of his career to date. He was invited by the Association of the Dutch Brick Industry to design a wall relief for a new architectural complex, the Bouwcentrum, or Building Centre, in Rotterdam. The city was experiencing a post-war building boom and the Bouwcentrum was founded to educate professionals about new materials and processes.

Moore was given an exceptional level of freedom for the design. The only stipulation was that the material had to be brick. The result is a work of great originality: a wall relief which is both fully integrated into the façade, and yet stylistically independent of it.

The strange bodily forms that seem to emerge from within the brick wall can be related in many ways to Moore's Shelter Drawings. There is an uncanny visual parallel between the Bouwcentrum relief and the images of rows of blanketed sleepers where the figures seem to become one with the brick wall. Even the grouting of the brick seems to echo the lines of some of Moore's drawings from the later 1940s.

Henry Moore

Ideas for Wall Reliefs

1954-56

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured crayon, watercolour, pen and black ink and black felt-tipped pen

This is the first known sketch relating to the Bouwcentrum commission. In the designs at the top of the sheet, Moore used simpler shapes and emphasized the colour red—a nod to the red Dutch bricks he selected for the project.

In the larger sketch at the bottom, which is the closest to his final design, the shapes have become biomorphic. Here, the artist established how forms would be framed by horizontal and vertical lines, some of which intersect. This is further detailed in his final plaster maquette, also included in this exhibition.

The Henry Moore Foundation: gift of the artist, 1977

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: HMF 2862

Wall Relief: Maquette No. 9; and

Wall Relief: Maquette No. 1

1955

Plaster with surface colour

After exploring on paper his initial ideas for the Bouwcentrum extension, Moore created a group of ten plaster maquettes to experiment with various solutions. He took organic or other found objects, made impressions of them in clay, and then poured plaster over the clay to create the reliefs. *Maquette no. 9* features organic forms in isolation, while the final relief, *Maquette no. 1*, combines these with more unusual items, such as screws, nails and tools from the construction industry.

This design is Moore's most original response to an architectural commission. As he stated in a lecture in 1952: 'Ideally the work of art should be a focus round which the harmony of the whole building revolves- inseparable from the design, structurally coherent and aesthetically essential.'

The Henry Moore Foundation: gift of the artist, 1977

Henry Moore catalogue raisonné numbers: LH 373 plaster ; LH 365

Henry Moore

Draped Seated Figure against a Curved Wall

1956-57

Bronze

Cast by Fiorini, London

Cast H of 12 (plus an artist's cast)

In 1955 Henry Moore was invited to create a sculpture for one of the most prestigious post-war architectural projects, the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris. UNESCO was founded immediately after the Second World War to promote peace through international cooperation. As the artist wrote to a friend: 'It's not going to be an easy commission.'

Moore filled many sketchbooks with figures in various attitudes and then worked through his ideas in a series of plaster maquettes which he cast in bronze. In these, he experimented with placing figures in pictorial settings, seated on benches or steps and against walls like this one. Moore's attention to the settings in the Shelter Drawings is echoed in this maquette in the textured and curved wall which playfully incorporates the façade of the building itself.

In the end, the artist chose a simpler and more abstract reclining figure carved out of white travertine marble.

The Syndicate of The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.

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Inv. M.4- 1960 | Henry Moore catalogue raisonné number: LH 423