



Half-Figure

Catalogue Number

HMF 661

Artwork Type

Drawing

Date

1928

Dimensions

paper: 232 x 165 mm frame: 491 x 383 x 31 mm weight uncased: 1.5 kg

Medium

pen and ink, chalk, wash

Paper Support

off-white medium-weight wove

Signature

(added later) pencil l.r. Moore/28

Ownership

The Henry Moore Foundation: gift of the artist 1977

More Information

Until the mid-1930s, drawing was Moore's preferred method of working out ideas for sculpture. This work is a study for a carving in travertine marble, *Figure with Clasped Hands*, which Moore produced in 1929. Moore's sculptural thinking is clear. The figure is radically simplified and precisely defined: head, neck and shoulders are articulated in bold and uncomplicated lines and fingers are suggested by zig-zags. The face is simultaneously visible from two perspectives, in full and in profile. Areas of wash give volume to the limbs and torso and also set the figure in space. Moore's sculptural intentions are often discernible by the boxes he sketched around certain ideas, as if imagining their containment within a block of stone. In this work, the outer reaches of the form fill the boundaries of a grid containing sixteen rectangles of equal proportions. Although the grid serves a practical purpose, it also highlights the equilibrium between the forms. In this drawing, the figure's right hand rests on top of the left, but in the sculpture which followed the hands are clasped together and fingers interwoven. This distinctive pose was inspired by a sculpture of Gudea – the ruler of the Sumerian city-state of Lagash in the late third millennium BC. For Moore, the pose evoked wisdom, tenderness and a contained inner energy. It is not known for certain where Moore first encountered this sculpture but he described his enthusiasm for Sumerian sculpture in an article published in *The Listener* in June 1935. Moore explored this pose extensively in stone and cast concrete between the late 1920s and early 1930s but there are relatively few drawings on this motif, perhaps because it is more powerfully realised in three dimensions....Sylvia Cox 2019