



Bird Basket

Catalogue Number
LH 205

Artwork Type
Sculpture Carving

Date
1939

Dimensions
artwork (including base): 37.5 × 41.9 × 23.4 cm artwork (published dim check): 16 1/2 in. (41.9 cm) base: 4.5 × 38 × 23 cm case: 66 × 43 × 60 cm weight uncased: 12.3 kg weight cased: 44 kg

Medium
lignum vitae and string

Signature
unsigned

Ownership
Accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to The Henry Moore Foundation in 2002

More Information

The 1930's represented a hugely significant time for Moore's exploration in style. His early visits to Paris, the centre of Surrealism, encouraged Moore to consider developing his own surrealist style. However, Moore cannot simply be considered a surrealist because his love for abstraction and naturalism never strayed. The Bird Basket represents Moore's hybridity of styles: the biomorphic curve of the work's outer shell suggests naturalism, while the angular lines formed by the strings emphasises a more constructivist element. Moore's biographer, Roger Berthoud, stated that the series of stringed figures he created between 1937 and 1940 are the result of his visits to the Science Museum near the Royal College of Art. While examining mathematical models with juxtaposing forms, such as circles and squares, connected via string or wire thread, Moore was attracted to the tenseness and vitality these attachments conveyed. The work's name echoes the inner space defined by the string, in which sits the figure of a bird. Carved from a single piece of lignum vitae, the hardest naturally forming wood, the bird figure and basket have a very beautiful surface. At the time, Moore's favourite material to carve was stone so the lignum vitae's similarity in density enabled him to create very thin edges, demonstrated on the left-hand side.