



The Arch

Catalogue Number

LH 503b cast 0

Artwork Type

Sculpture

Date

1969

Dimensions

artwork: 610 cm

Medium

bronze

Signature

stamped Moore, 0/3

Ownership

The Henry Moore Foundation: acquired 1989

More Information

The Arch is one of the most dramatic examples of Moore's sculpture in the open air. Enlarged from a maquette only a few inches high, the original inspiration came from a fragment of bone. Concerned that sculpture should have a sense of monumentality and energy without appearing merely big and heavy, Moore

commented: One of the things I would like to think my sculpture has is a force, is a strength, is a life, a vitality from inside it, so that you have the sense that the form is pressing from inside trying to burst or trying to give off the strength from inside itself ... This is, perhaps, what makes me interested in bones as much as in flesh because the bone is the inner structure of all living form.[1] In 1962-63, Moore made a smaller version of this work, 2 metres high, titled Large Torso: Arch (LH 503). The title invites the viewer to see the sculpture as a human torso, albeit hollow, delineated by a shoulder-like structure. A similar skeletal structure and hollow torso are visible in Ideas for Sculpture: Transformation of Bones 1932 (HMF 962), a drawing made thirty years earlier. The drawing is one of Moore's so-called 'Transformation Drawings'; a series in which he explored the metamorphosis of bone to body. Moore's preoccupation with making form and space sculpturally inseparable originated earlier in his career in the 1920s, when he began making carvings pierced by negative space. This led Moore to a radical treatment of the human body, in which the core of a figure was often a void, as in Figure 1933-34 (LH 137), and the early elmwood reclining figures now at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo (LH 162) and the Detroit Institute of Arts (LH 210). Standing at over six metres high, The Arch could be described as the culmination of Moore's thoughts on the body as architecture. Since a visit to Stonehenge in 1921, Moore had dreamt of making sculpture which you could almost inhabit. He was aware of the relationship between The Arch and the triumphal arches of past architecture, and naturally occurring structures such as sea arches and caves. The first cast of The Arch was made in fibreglass, for installation on the roof of the Forte de Belvedere in Florence during Moore's celebrated 1972 exhibition. Overlooking the skyline of the Renaissance city, the correspondence between the work and architecture was underscored, while simultaneously announcing its organic autonomy. Both associations create a sense of the sculpture being shaped by the passage of time. These qualities appealed to I.M. Pei, who selected the first bronze cast of The Arch to stand outside the library he was designing in Columbus, Indiana. Together they combine 'technological building and organic art, and of the spirit of modernity with the forms of the eternal.'[2] Another cast was acquired by the city of Hiroshima in 1986 as a symbol of its indomitable spirit. In 1980, Moore donated a large travertine marble version of The Arch to Kensington Gardens in London, two years after his 80th birthday exhibition at the nearby Serpentine Gallery. [1] Moore quoted in Warren Forman, Five British Sculptors: Work and Talk, Grossman, New York, 1964, pp. 59, 63. [2] John Read in Celebrating Moore, David Mitchinson (ed.), Lund Humphries, London, 1998, p. 273.