



stamped Moore, 0/2

Double Oval

Catalogue Number

LH 560 cast 0

Artwork Type

Sculpture

Date

1966

Dimensions

artwork: 550 cm weight uncased: 4350 kg

Medium

bronze

Signature

Ownership

The Henry Moore Foundation: acquired 1992

More Information

During the 1960s, Moore produced a series of increasingly abstract and monumental sculptures in which he explored a variety of new ideas. Works from this period include multi-part sculptures with forms that repeat or interlock, and so-called 'knife edge' works that incorporate thin, flat forms with sharp edges.[1] In Double Oval, Moore combines and develops these interests to create a work of striking originality. The characteristically understated title belies a work of considerable complexity. The sculpture comprises two arched forms which rise directly from the ground. The solid lower portion of each form acts as a counterbalance to the sweeping arch above, which leans forward and extends sideways, appearing to both cave inwards and expand outwards. This tension is further emphasised by the surface, where dark expanses of subtle texture give way to smooth, angular edges, which appear to strain against an inner force. Although the forms are not identical, they are clearly related, like vertebrae in a spinal column. Their positioning enhances this impression. Set parallel, as if in sequence, they seem poised to interlock. The intimate space that separates the forms, just large enough to walk through, enables the viewer to enter the sculpture and experience for themselves the dynamic synergy between the towering forms. Moore said that 'sculpture should be looked at from the middle outwards'[2] and it is the ovals of negative space at the centre of Double Oval that first capture the viewers' attention. As one moves around the sculpture, these giant apertures frame an ever-changing view of the landscape and glimpses of the neighbouring form, providing new and unexpected perspectives of the work and the space it inhabits. Earlier in his career, Moore acknowledged that the holes in his sculpture were made 'for their own sakes' and that sometimes the form was 'only the shell holding the hole.'[3] Subsequently, however, he attempted to make form and space inseparable, so that neither was more important than the other. In Double Oval, Moore realised this principle on a monumental scale. The interdependence of form and space is absolute, and the result is a work which brings harmony to the competing qualities of lightness and monumentality. The inspiration behind Double Oval is not documented, but it has been suggested that the idea came from a pair of scissors half submerged in a bowl of plaster.[4] Although this interpretation may seem unusual, Moore did incorporate seemingly mundane everyday objects in other works. His post-war textile designs, for example, feature safety pins, piano keys and clock hands, and his 1955 series of wall reliefs include the impressions of bolts, screws and files. However, it was natural forms that provided the inspiration for most of Moore's late works, and there is a familiar organicism in the two forms of Double Oval. The forms have the combination of lightness and strength that Moore admired in bones, which he had studied and collected since his student days.[5] He explained, 'You can feel that a bone has had some sort of use in its life; it has experienced tensions, has supported weights and has actually performed an organic function'.[6] There are three casts of Double Oval (LH 560). One is sited at Moore's former home in Perry Green, another is at The Donald M. Kendall Sculpture Garden at the PepsiCo world headquarters in New York state, and the final cast is located outside Jardine House in Hong Kong. The positioning of the two forms in relation to one another is specific to each site, thus altering slightly the impression they create.[7] [1] Christa Lichtenstern, *Henry Moore: Work-Theory-Impact*, London, 2008, p.175. [2] Unpublished notes c.1953-54, HMF archive, printed in Alan Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, Lund Humphries, Aldershot, 2002, p. 204. [3] Undated notes early 1950s (?), HMF archive, printed in Alan Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, Lund Humphries, Aldershot, 2002, pp. 204-5. [4] Clare Hillman in *Celebrating Moore*, David Mitchinson (ed.), Lund Humphries, London, 1998, pp. 284-5. [5]

Statement 1965 quoted in Philip James (ed.), *Henry Moore on Sculpture: A Collection of the Sculptor's Writings and Spoken Words*, Macdonald, London, 1966, p. 278. [6] Henry Spencer Moore, photographed and edited by John Hedgecoe, words by Henry Moore, Nelson, London; Simon and Schuster, New York 1968, p. 75. [7] Anita Feldman, *Suzanne Eustace, Moore at Kew*, Kew Publishing, London, 2007, p. 60.