



The Henry Moore Foundation: gift of the artist 1977

Oval with Points

Catalogue Number

LH 596 cast 0

Artwork Type

Sculpture

Date

1968-70

Dimensions

artwork: 332 cm base: 10 × 279 × 144.5 cm pedestal: 285 × 150 × 30 cm weight uncased: 2400 kg case: 385 × 297 × 183 cm

Medium

bronze

Signature

stamped Moore, 0/6

Ownership

More Information

Casting a dramatic silhouette and bulging with energy, this monumental sculpture is one of Moore's most iconic works and one of the most successful abstract forms that he explored at the end of the 1960s. At this time, Moore was at the height of his international fame, and a surge of public commissions for diverse settings challenged him to become increasingly inventive in his approach. His work from this period is characterised by dynamic forms and a playful approach to mass and void. Other casts of Oval With Points are sited in both urban and rural settings worldwide, in Hong Kong, America, Germany and Saudi Arabia. Oval with Points is one of a number of works featuring points that almost touch. Here, two points grow inward from the exterior mass, straining towards each other but failing to meet, creating a dynamic tension. The smooth and sinuous encircling form serves to highlight the dangerous angularity of the points, which divide its interior space into two unequal voids. The larger void rests in the lower half of the sculpture, the smaller space hovers above. Though empty space, the relationship between the voids seems to stabilise the sculpture and bring a sense of organic harmony to the forms. The origins of Oval with Points can be seen in Three Points of 1939-40 (LH 211), which itself can be traced to drawings of the same period (HMF 1476 and HMF 1496). The form, however, also recalls objects from Moore's collection of natural forms, including a small hollowed-out stone with two points that almost touch and an elephant skull acquired in Kenya by the distinguished biologist Sir Julian Huxley and his wife, Juliette. Moore cited various sources and influences for his interest in pointed forms: '...this pointing has an emotional or physical action in it where things are just about to touch but don't. There is some anticipation of this action. Michelangelo used the same theme in his fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, of God creating Adam, in which the forefinger of God's hand is just about to touch and give life to Adam. It is also like the points in the sparking plug of a car, where the spark has to jump across the gap between the points. There is a very beautiful early French painting (Gabrielle d'Estrées with her sister in the bath), where one sister is just about to touch the nipple of the other. I used this sense of anticipation first in the Three Points of 1940, but there are other, later works where one form is nearly making contact with the other. It is very important that the points do not actually touch. There has to be a gap.' [1] [1] Gemma Levine, *With Henry Moore: The Artist at Work*, photographed by Gemma Levine, Sidgwick and Jackson, London 1978, pp.28-9.