



Reclining Figure: Angles

Catalogue Number

LH 675 cast 0

Artwork Type

Sculpture

Date

1979

Dimensions

artwork: 120 × 229.5 × 157 cm base: 11 × 230 × 157 cm pedestal:
235 × 165 × 80 cm weight uncased: 700 kg case: 257 × 185 × 165
cm weight cased: 1200 kg

Medium

bronze

Signature

stamped Moore, 0/9

Ownership

The Henry Moore Foundation: acquired 1986

More Information

Like many of Moore's late works, *Reclining Figure: Angles* is characterised by a sense of confidence and consolidation. The work pulls together diverse interests from his long career, and combines them with a distinctive twist typical of works from this period. The figure's pose has echoes of the Mesoamerican chacmool sculptures that sparked Moore's interest in the reclining figure. Like the chacmool, the figure reclines on its back, supported on its elbows with its knees raised and head turned away from the body. The combination of 'stillness and alertness'[1] that Moore so admired in the chacmool is also characteristic of his reclining figures. Unlike traditional European depictions of reclining female figures, which are usually in passive repose on their sides, Moore's female subjects are active, propping themselves up and gazing intently outwards. Moore's early interest in the reclining figure theme was in part due to practical considerations related to working in stone; a standing figure in stone would be weak at the ankles, whereas a reclining figure – which can recline on any surface - is well supported and stable.[2] He swiftly discovered, however, that the tensions, oppositions and asymmetry of the reclining figure made it an ideal subject for endless variations in form, and it became an obsession that he explored throughout his career. References to classical sculpture are also apparent in the naturalism of the figure and the drapery covering her lower portion. In the early part of his career, Moore rejected classical sculpture but following his first visit to Greece in 1951 he began incorporating drapery in his sculpture. He observed that drapery could emphasise the tension in a figure, 'for where the form pushes outwards, such as on the shoulders, the thighs, the breasts, etc., it can be pulled tight across the form (almost like a bandage), and by contrast with the crumpled slackness of the drapery which lies between the salient points, the pressure from inside is intensified.'[3] The drapery in *Reclining Figure: Angles*, minimally rendered in large, soft creases, serves to amplify the sharp angularity of her knees. *Reclining Figure: Angles* also demonstrates Moore's enduring interest in analogies between the reclining figure and landscape. The undulating curves of the female form echo the forms and rhythms of landscape, bringing to mind not only the hills and dales of Moore's Yorkshire childhood, but also the rolling countryside surrounding his home at Perry Green. Moore also saw a correspondence between the folds in drapery and mountains, which he described as 'the crinkled skin of the earth.'[4] The work's subtitle calls attention to its most distinctive characteristics. Unlike the chacmool, whose pose is symmetrical apart from the head, *Reclining Figure: Angles* is a mass of asymmetric forms and tensions. Her head is turned sharply towards the elongated expanse of her left shoulder, which juts out above a right-angled arm, visibly taking the strain of her massive torso. Her right shoulder is pulled back, raising her other arm up, horizontal to the ground. Her knees project up and out, the opposing forces between them made visible in the drapery. Further angles are introduced in her feet, breasts, nose and hair. Moore was 81 when he completed *Reclining Figure: Angles*, but there is a playfulness in her angularity, as if the artist was setting himself a challenge. Although her angles are as numerous and diverse as her influences, Moore reconciles them in a rhythmic harmony than runs through the length of the figure. [1] Alan G. Wilkinson, *The Drawings of Henry Moore*, Tate Gallery, London/Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1977, reprinted in Alan Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, Lund Humphries, Aldershot, 2002, p. 98. [2] Henry Moore quoted in J.D. Morse, 'Henry Moore Comes to America', *Magazine of Art*, Vol.40, No.3, Washington DC 1947, pp. 97-101. [3] Henry Moore quoted in

Sculpture in the Open Air: A Talk by Henry Moore on his Sculpture and its Placing in Open-Air Sites, edited by Robert Melville and recorded by the British Council 1955; typescript copy in The Henry Moore Foundation Archive, Perry Green.
[4] Ibid.