



09 April 2016 - 09 October 2016

Venues

Skulpturenpark Waldfrieden, Wuppertal

Exhibition Title

2016 Wuppertal, Skulpturen Park Walfrieden, Henry Moore Plasters

More Information

These are not plaster casts; they are plaster originals ... they are the actual works that one has done with one's own hands. - Henry Moore, 1973 Best known for his monumental bronzes and stone carvings, until recently Henry Moore's plasters have been regarded as preparatory stages in his sculptural process rather

than as works of art in their own right. In fact, their scarred surfaces, on which each incised line is visible, convey a sense of immediacy and a complexity of texture that are less prominent in the highly finished bronzes, lending them a disturbing intensity. Acutely aware of the psychological and aesthetic changes that occurred in his sculptures once he cast them from plaster to bronze, Moore made some works only in plaster. At the end of his career in 1986, he explained: 'Plaster has a ghost-like unreality in contrast to the solid strength of the bronze'. Moore favoured working in plaster as it could be moulded when wet and carved when dry. With plaster he found complete freedom of form-invention; not limited to the inherent limitations of a block of stone or wood, he could open out and enlarge forms to any scale. He provided texture with files and chisels as well as dental tools and everyday objects such as cheese graters. Often plasters would be left in foundries for over a year while editions were cast and bronze dust would accumulate in the crevices of the sculptures. Moore sometimes emulated this effect by adding watercolour wash. Others were coloured using walnut crystals or clay wash. Unlike fellow sculptors who painted their sculpture, such as Barbara Hepworth, Moore felt that colour distracted from form; in these plasters the use of subtle colouring is rarely to pick out particular shapes or to imagine how they might look in bronze, but rather to give the forms an organic warmth more reflective of their origin from animal bones and other found objects. Initially many plasters were destroyed to prevent further bronzes being cast once an edition was complete, and others were damaged due to fragility or during the casting process. Over time, however, Moore increasingly retained his plasters, and gifted 57 sculptures to the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto for the creation of the Henry Moore Sculpture Center in 1974, now with a holding of more than nine hundred works. The display of this group of 30 plasters at Skulpturenpark Waldfrieden, Cragg Foundation, has particular significance because of Tony Cragg's longstanding admiration of Moore's work. As he wrote in 2008: In 1983, having just finished installing my work in a gallery in Toronto, I decided to visit the local museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario. Unsuspectingly, I entered the gallery where twenty of Henry Moore's large plaster sculptures were exhibited. This group of sculptures was a gift from Henry Moore to the AGO of the original plasters from which many of his best-known works had been cast in bronze. I immediately became engaged by these energetically carved sculptures and the vivid marks left by their shaping. A precise range of tools had left their marks, sometimes as subtle erosive agents and sometimes as a clear vocabulary of expressive gestures, equivalent to brushstrokes – the apparent looseness of these markings, however, never relinquishing the wilful control of form. Sculptural volumes result from the composition of planes (surfaces), their contours and their edges (lines) manifesting themselves on the visible periphery of the material. It is Moore's masterful control of these sculptural volumes that is the essence of his genius. The experience of looking at this group of sculptures leaves the observer in no doubt that he is in the presence of great sculptural intelligence. This may seem as obvious as saying that Mozart was musical but it was definitely for me an important experience to look at Henry Moore's work without the usual accompanying awareness of the historical importance of this iconic sculptor. - Tony Cragg quoted in Christa Lichtenstern, Henry Moore: Work-Theory-Art, London 2008, pp.7 Alongside the gallery display, Henry Moore's monumental bronze Large Interior Form (1953-54) will be on long term loan to Skulpturenpark Waldfrieden.