



Square Form with Cut

Catalogue Number

LH 598 concrete

Artwork Type

Sculpture

Date

1969

Dimensions

artwork: 139.7 cm base: 15 × 148 × 84 cm pedestal: 133 × 72 × 65 cm

Medium

cast concrete

Signature

unsigned

Ownership

The Henry Moore Foundation: acquired 1987

More Information

Square Form with Cut was realised in three vastly different scales. The original maquette (LH 597), just 20 cm high, was produced in a bronze edition of 9+1. In 1971, Moore completed Large Square Form With Cut (LH 599), a towering creation in pale marble, over 5 m tall and weighing 180 tonnes. In between the two, Moore made a version of intermediate size, which he produced in three different materials: fibreglass, black marble and concrete. The concrete version in the Foundation's collection is the last work Moore made in this material, and one of around thirty concrete sculptures he made in his lifetime.[1] Explaining his initial interest in the material in the 1920s, he said: 'At the time reinforced concrete was the new material for architecture. As I have always been interested in materials, I thought I ought to learn about the use of concrete for sculpture in case I ever wanted to connect a piece of sculpture with a concrete building.'[2] Here, Moore's choice of material enhances the work's architectural associations.[3] The full size version of this sculpture was shown at Moore's acclaimed 1972 exhibition at the Forte di Belvedere in Florence, which included almost 300 works and attracted over 345,000 visitors. Moore had loved Florence since his first visit as a student in 1925, and believed there could be no better place in the world 'for showing sculpture in the open-air, in relationship to architecture' than the Forte di Belvedere, a hillside fortress with panoramic views of the Renaissance city. He acknowledged, however, that the Belvedere's 'powerful grandeur and architectural monumentality' would make it a 'frightening competitor for any sculpture' and that the exhibition would present considerable logistical challenges.[4] Large Square Form with Cut was the largest and heaviest work shown at the Belvedere. Moore initially made a trial version in polystyrene, assembled in situ on the bastions, to test the volumetric impact of the sculpture against the Florentine skyline. To translate this monumental vision into marble, Moore enlisted the help of Italian stone merchants, Henraux. Moore had collaborated with Henraux on other ambitious carvings, and knew they could provide both the materials and technical expertise required.[5] For Large Square Form with Cut, Moore selected a pale Rio Serra marble from Henraux's quarries in the Monte Altissimo, near Carrara in Tuscany, where Michelangelo had sourced his marble. The finished work comprised 60 separate blocks of stone. The narrow archway providing access to the Belvedere meant that every block had to be craned up to the battlements individually, before being reassembled layer by layer like a stone wall. Realised on this massive scale, the work's simplified forms have the timeless immutability of a piece of architecture, while also exuding their own internal life force. The square outer form, bulging with energy, is penetrated by a giant circular aperture which frames the view beyond, connecting sculpture and landscape. The delicate equilibrium between contrasting forms, solid and void, is also marked by a sense of tension, as if one could subsume the other at any moment. The dividing cut – crisp and clinical in its execution – further activates the form, enhancing the impression that it is standing under its own internal energy. After the exhibition, the work was acquired by the city of Prato, not far from Florence, where it remains on public display. [1] Moore made his first concrete sculpture, Baby's Head (LH 35), in 1926. The subject is his niece, Mary. He modelled her head from life and made a plaster mould which he filled with concrete. [2] Henry Spencer Moore, photographed and edited by John Hedgecoe, words by Henry Moore, Nelson, London; Simon and Schuster, New York 1968, p. 58. [3] Giovanni Carandente in Celebrating Moore, David Mitchinson (ed.), Lund Humphries, London, 1998, p. 294. [4] Undated letter to Luciano Bausi, reproduced in Mostra di Henry Moore, Il Bisonte Editore/Nuovedizioni Enrico Vallecchi, Florence 1972, p.17. [5] Moore first collaborated

with Henraux on Unesco Reclining Figure 1957-58 (LH 416), a commission carved from travertine marble for the new Unesco headquarters in Paris.