



off-white medium weight wove

Signature

unsigned, undated

Inscriptions

verso inscription: pencil u.c. Henry Moore /Drawings for reclining Figure /(Carving)/3 gns.

Ownership

Kunstmuseum Bern, Bequest of Cornelius Gurlitt 2014

More Information

In spring 1931, shortly before the opening of Moore's second one-man show at the Leicester Galleries, he was visited in his London studio by Dr Max Sauerlandt (1880-1934), head of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg. Sauerlandt was a passionate supporter of modern art, dedicated to enriching Hamburg's art collection. By this time, he had made a number of important acquisitions of works by German Expressionists including Emil Nolde, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Erich Heckel, as well as young and lesser-known artists. On his visit to Moore's studio, Sauerlandt bought eight items – a small ironstone head in profile (LH 88a) and seven drawings, all for the price of £20 15s. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Sauerlandt was sacked from his role at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe. All modern art was considered 'degenerate' by the National Socialist (Nazi) party and in 1937 they oversaw a purge of modern art from German museums. Moore's ironstone head and drawings (except Seated Figure Studies c.1931, HMF 880a, which escaped confiscation) disappeared, and were presumed to have been destroyed. In February 2012, German authorities investigating possible tax evasion raided the Munich apartment of Cornelius Gurlitt and made a remarkable discovery. The apartment contained over 1,400 artworks by artists including Pablo Picasso, Edvard Munch, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Henri Matisse and Paul Klee. The collection was seized on suspicion of being looted during the Nazi era, in part because Cornelius's father, Hildebrand, was an important dealer known to have traded in confiscated art. On 6th May 2014, Cornelius Gurlitt died. In his will, he named a museum in Switzerland, the Kunstmuseum Bern, as his sole heir. The bequest stipulated that the museum carry out provenance research into his collection and make restitution as appropriate. Kunstmuseum Bern accepted the bequest, appointing a provenance research team to attempt to identify the rightful owners of looted works. Only one work in Gurlitt's collection was thought to be by a British artist – a small watercolour sketch attributed to Henry Moore. In 2018 the Henry Moore Foundation's Review Panel agreed that the work is one of the seven drawings purchased by Sauerlandt in 1931 and lost for more than eighty years. The investigation into the work was the subject of an episode of the BBC television programme, 'Fake or Fortune?', first broadcast on 26th August 2018. Documentation uncovered by the BBC confirmed that the work was one of those seized by the Nazis in August 1937 as part of the Degenerate Art Confiscations. Additional research confirmed that it was subsequently purchased by Hildebrand Gurlitt in 1940 and remained in his collection until his death in 1956 when it passed to his son, Cornelius. The work features ten sketches of reclining figures and two of mothers with children, executed in combinations of ink, watercolour and pencil, with blue and brown washes to suggest volume. The figures are naturalistic but simplified, their heavy-limbs rendered in fluid strokes. The sketches are at different levels of completion and show Moore experimenting with the idea of the reclining figure, sometimes drawing variations on top of one another. The pose of the

Ideas for Sculpture: Mother and Child and Reclining Figures

Catalogue Number

HMF 745a

Artwork Type

Drawing

Date

c.1929

Dimensions

paper: 293 x 312 mm

Medium

ink, wash, watercolour, pencil, collaged figures

Paper Support

reclining figures, with knees raised, upper bodies turned and supported on their elbows, is reminiscent of the Mexican sculptures of chacmool that inspired Moore's lifelong fascination with the reclining figure theme. The subject matter reflects Moore's sculptural concerns in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1928-29 he completed *West Wind* (LH 58), a Portland stone relief for the new headquarters of London Transport at St James's Park Station, and his first public commission, which shows a horizontal female figure as if in motion. Although the figures in this work are in static poses, they recall Moore's extensive preparatory sketches for the commission that helped to galvanise his obsession with the reclining figure motif. The boxes drawn around several figures suggest that Moore was thinking about the outer reaches of the form and its possible containment within a block of stone. Similarities can also be seen between the reclining figures in *Ideas for Sculpture* and sculptures made around the same time, including the brown Hornton stone *Reclining Figure* 1929 (LH 59) and green Hornton *Reclining Woman* 1930 (LH 84). Infrared photography has revealed further mother and child and reclining figure sketches on the verso. The simplicity of the mother and child sketches suggests that they are rapid recordings of ideas flashing through the artist's mind. The work is a collage of three pieces of paper with one small cut-out section. It is possible that the collage was arranged by Irina Radetzky whom Moore married in July 1929. In the early years of their marriage Irina arranged and mounted several of Moore's drawings, enlivening the mounts with her own geometrical designs in pen and ink (see HMF 688, HMF 690 and HMF 731). *Ideas for Sculpture: Mother and Child and Reclining Figures* is a valuable addition to the catalogue raisonné of Moore's work, made all the more remarkable through the story of its disappearance and subsequent rediscovery.