

The Catalogue of the Moore Collection

Alan G. Wilkinson, *The Moore Collection in the Art Gallery of Ontario*. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979, 232 pages, 236 black and white and 23 colour illustrations

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The important donation by Henry Moore has greatly intensified the significance of the Art Gallery of Ontario and soundly amplifies the weight of its modern acquisitions. The Henry Moore Gallery opened to the public in 1974 (Fig. 1). The present publication is yet another step in publicizing the content of the Moore collection at the A.G.O. Its author, Alan G. Wilkinson, curator of the Moore Centre at the A.G.O., has been engaged with Henry Moore's work since his doctoral dissertation on the artist's drawings. He has effectively demonstrated, in an exhibition of the drawings in 1977, his competence to deal with this subject. The text is introduced by a foreword (pp. 7-8), written by the director of the A.G.O., William J. Withrow. His words provide concise information regarding the history of the donation and on the content of the collection. The appearance of the publication – its large for-

mat, quality paper, twenty-three colour photographs and numerous illustrations of comparative material (183 figures) – reflects an effort to keep up with the size and distinction of the donation. In this regard, the publication displays a clear contrast to economic pressure, otherwise imposed in latter years upon scholarly writings.

It is in the foreword and the preface, rather than in its title, that the publication is designated as a catalogue. The specific purpose for which it was prepared is not stated. Most of its parts seem to imply that the publication intends to tackle a rather demanding task, that of a comprehensive catalogue of the entire Moore collection at the A.G.O. embracing both exhibited works and those sculptures, drawings and prints that are not on display.

In the first section (pp. 13-97), Wilkinson deals with seventy-three drawings. His reasons for starting with drawings rather than with sculptures are historical. The earliest Moore drawing in the collection dates to 1921 and the subsequent studies, sketches and

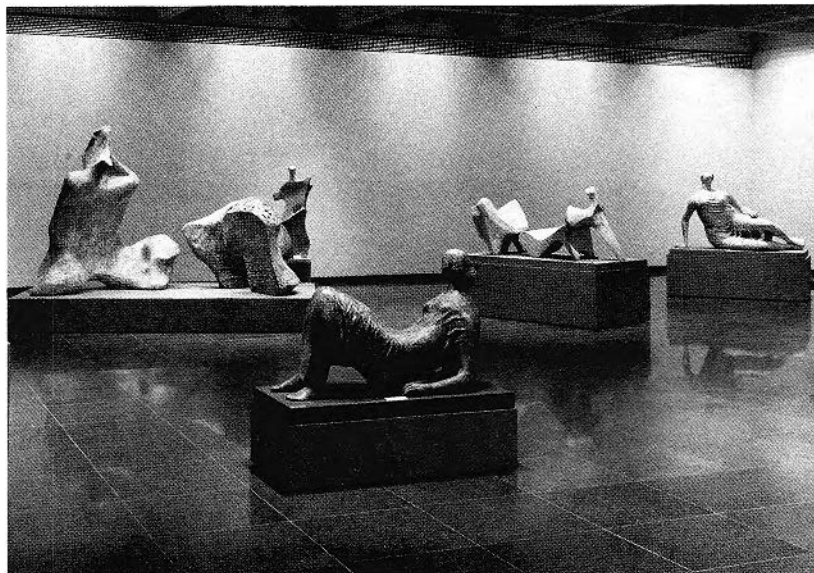


FIGURE 1. Installation view – 1974, The Henry Moore Sculpture Centre, Art Gallery of Ontario.

invenzioni are spread over a period of more than fifty years of the artist's work. On the other hand, the bulk of the gallery's sculpture holdings mainly represents the last three decades, that is, the artist's mature and late work.

Each entry is composed of both data and discussion. The length of these discussions is considerably uneven. They do, however, show Wilkinson's in-depth knowledge of the sizeable body of Moore's drawings originating from his previous study (1977). He finds effective comparisons with drawings contained in other collections as well as with cognate motives in the artist's production. The links which Wilkinson offers between the catalogued drawings and sculptures are, in most cases, convincing. In the later drawings of the 1960's and 1970's, he identifies a number of preparatory sketches for Moore's prints.

Much less plausible are the author's comments concerning the visual properties of Moore's drawings. The underpinning of Wilkinson's comparisons and references is predominantly based upon subject matter, iconographic motives, postures of the figures and typological details rather than upon the affinities of visual properties. By this I mean, he does not rely in his comparisons upon the formal analysis of the drawings in terms of the use of line, various methods of modelling, the emphasis or absence of outline. One could assume that this reflects Wilkinson's method, which may or may not be shared, yet is to be respected. However, this abstemious stance to visual properties is not consistently sustained. For instance, within the entire catalogue of drawings, there seems to be applied an underlying value scale based upon the presence or absence of these particular properties. Two drawings, designated by the catalogue as 'very beautiful' and 'beautiful' (n^{os} 47, 55), abound with a rich inner drawing which creates modelling through hatching and striation.

Moore's more austere linear drawings, those stressing the outline and honouring the shape of the block of future sculptures are designated as 'less finished' (e.g. p. 71), in contrast to the 'finished' ones (e.g. p. 63), where modelling is indicated. Yet, the former properties have long since been recognized (H. Keller, 1938-44; E. Gradman, 1943), and appreciated as substantial values of sculptor's drawings. The unusually large volume of Moore's drawings contains those accompanying various stages of a sculptor's working process as well as drawings made as autonomous works of art. Both groups require judgement by their own standards. Moreover, sculptor's working drawings, of which the A.G.O.'s Moore collection has a number of exquisite examples, regardless of whether they appear to be materially unfinished and elliptic, may be artistically complete. Without further developing this argument, allow me to refer to already recognized opinions. The problem of the *finito* and *non finito* in the arts until modern times has been extensively examined, and with much success by art historiography. Some writings on this topic (H. von Einem, J. Gantner) remain classics.

As to the catalogue data constituting the most essen-

tial part of such an endeavour, Wilkinson's entries in the drawings section, following the pattern established in his previous catalogue of Moore's drawings, have been compiled with care. However, in a comprehensive catalogue one would expect information on the properties of the paper, on the condition of the drawing and the record of the stages of the artist's work on the drawing, particularly in the case of the ones later reworked (n^{os} 5, 62).

The section on sculpture (pp. 99-218) opens with the earliest piece in the collection which dates to 1930. The section lists one hundred and twenty-six sculptures. All of them but twenty-five are gifts of the artist. They exemplify his sculptural work up to 1978 with heavy emphasis on the last three decades.

It is unclear as to why no sections are preceded by an introduction. It would eliminate duplication with the foreword in summarizing the composition and genesis of the collection which appears in the first entry (n^o 74) of the sculpture section. Also, it would unburden the entries in general and remove both the repetition and disintegration of information on the artist's working process (n^{os} 6, 31 verso, 63, 65, 105, 118), and important aspects of his artistic development (n^{os} 27, 28, 36, 142).

The composition of each entry follows the same format as that in the drawing section. In most cases, Wilkinson's basic data restate those which are contained in the previously published catalogue of Moore's sculptures (1957-1977, ed. by Sylvester, Bowness); the four volumes record more than two thirds of the A.G.O.'s sculpture holdings. The collection includes sculptures in a variety of media, both those that result in originals and those which are reproductive, for example, castings in bronze or fibreglass.

Therefore, the catalogue ought not to restate information contained in the previously cited four volume catalogue, but should address the specifics. From this viewpoint the data have a number of *lacunae*. The cast number of individual pieces within an edition is not mentioned unless it is inscribed on the exemplar itself. The same is true for the name of the foundry. The data on the location of other casts from the same edition are not consistent. Sometimes they are given (e.g. n^o 99), mostly they are incomplete (e.g. n^o 152), while sometimes they are not recorded at all (e.g. n^o 79). The surface treatment is either not referred to, such as in the case of the varying patination of bronzes, or it is spoken of only in the discussion (e.g. n^o 85).

The original plasters constitute the rare core of the collection. They include such cautiously worked pieces, with no tool marks, of which the precious miniature of the amulet-like *Maquette for Head* (Fig. 2) of 1937 (n^o 78) is one. On the other hand, there are those whose surface is coated with shellac (?) thereby attesting to the casting procedure in the foundry. Such is the case with the mighty lifesize *Draped Reclining Figure* of 1952-53 (n^o 88) (Fig. 3). Furthermore, a number of original plasters show cracks (e.g. n^o 163), or traces of repairs (e.g. n^o 123). Yet, no information on the



FIGURE 2. Henry Moore, *Maquette for Head*, 1937. Original plaster. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario (Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario).

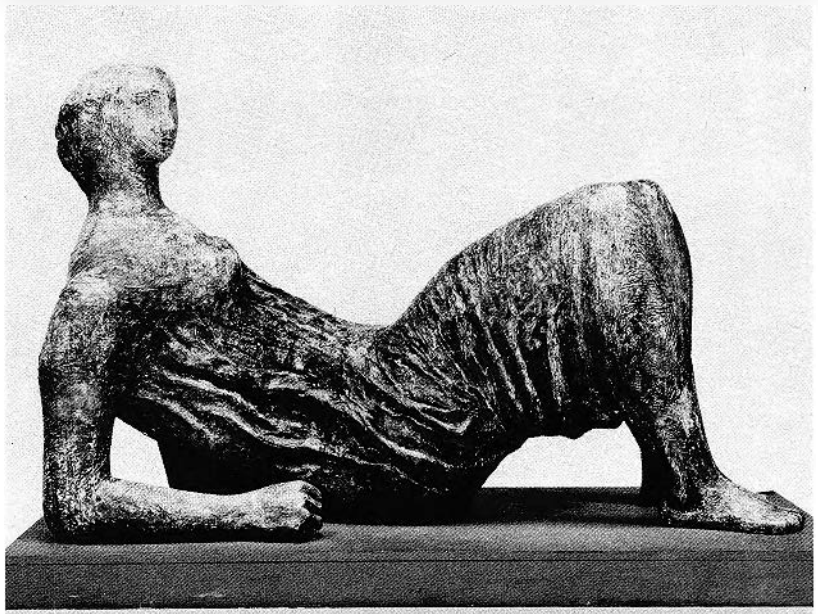


FIGURE 3. Henry Moore, *Draped Reclining Figure*, 1952-53. Original plaster. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario (Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario).

condition of the plasters is communicated in the catalogue data. At random, some of it is mentioned in the discussions of a few pieces (e.g. n^{os} 118, 185). Above all, incorrect references in Wilkinson's entries are made to the previously cited Moore catalogue. Wilkinson refers to what are in fact the entries of bronze editions rather than to the entries of the original plasters. Finally, more detailed information on the provenance of sculptures not acquired from the artist is also omitted.

The discussions on the sculptures paired with the data are, in a double sense, valuable contributions to the research on Henry Moore and his works. Wilkinson has traced a fair number of correlations both between various sculptures and between sculptures and drawings within Moore's work. Secondly, he often cites pieces of important information directly from the artist. It is most impractical that the interviews are not properly dated so that their results are effectively rendered unusable for further research. In addition to his own conversations with the artist, Wilkinson has aptly used numerous passages from Moore's statements previously published (1966). Yet, the use of the artist's verbal statements, however eloquent and articulate they may be, as it is in Henry Moore's case, has its limitations. They cannot replace or relieve, I suggest, the art historian's function.

As I have evidenced elsewhere (1968), the artist's statements, apart from giving insights into the creative act, of which Moore is an outstanding example, mainly tend to state his intentions. The art historian, on the other hand, is determined to analyse the accomplish-

ment. In my opinion, that is why the artist's verbal statements and the art historian's work complement, rather than substitute, for one another. In place of his own analytic discussions of Moore's sculpture, Wilkinson often refers to the artist's words, thus relinquishing such enticing occasions as the comparison of various perforated reliefs of the maquettes and model for the *Time-Life Screen* (n^{os} 90, 91, 92, 93). As previously mentioned, though the formal analysis may not be Wilkinson's preference, it would have been beneficial to refrain from its alternates, namely, impressions based upon trivial external resemblances (e.g. n^{os} 111, 116).

Many of Moore's sculptures housed by the A.G.O. are on display. Thus, the reader of the catalogue is able to confront the catalogue entries and the catalogue photographs with his own observations on the exhibition (Fig. 4). However, some discrepancies between the catalogue and the exhibition cause undesirable confusion. The monumental *Glenkiln Cross* of 1955-56, for instance, is a distinctly frontal piece. The display of the large original plaster shows it as such while the photographs of both the maquette and the large plaster (n^{os} 104, 196) distort the structure by an inappropriate view. On the other hand, the fine *Moon Head* of 1964 (n^o 166) is a piece that necessitates observation of both main views as well as a lengthy appreciation of the surface communicating the quality of abrasion and rubbing found in Cycladic figures. The catalogue offers both views. However, in the exhibition, the view with the *hand* is shown while the *head* is turned tightly against the wall.

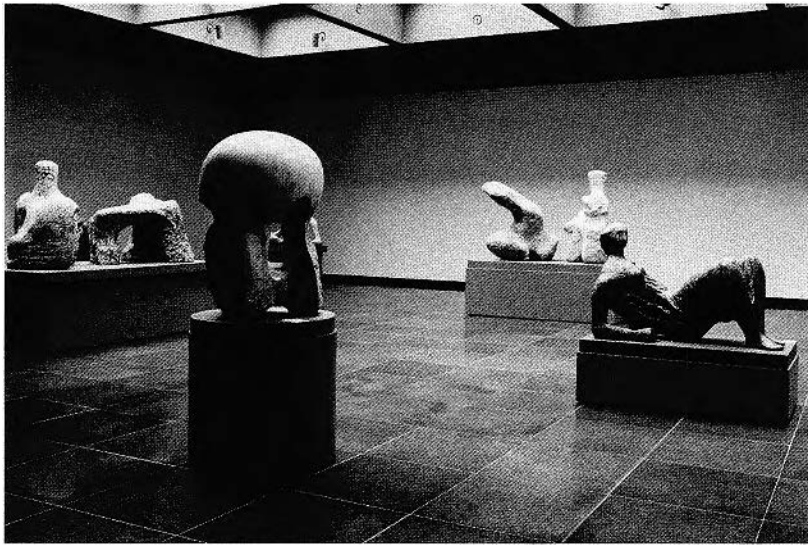


FIGURE 4. Installation view, The Henry Moore Sculpture Centre, Art Gallery of Ontario.

In his reference to the works of other artists, both contemporary and past, European and non-European, Wilkinson makes some convincing points. Such an example is his interpretation of the group *Mother and Child* of 1953 (n° 87), which he compares to an Inca vessel from Peru. As it is the role of a monograph rather than that of a catalogue to draw conclusions on the artist's place among his contemporaries and on his attitude to the past, it seems appropriate to withdraw from commenting upon less effective instances.

Without doubt, the third section of the catalogue dealing with prints (pp. 219-229) is the least successful. In its final section, the catalogue changes its scope and format and becomes a critical catalogue, or rather, a laconic guide through the graphic collection. Only thirty-seven Moore prints are included as a 'representative selection' (p. 9) of what in fact 'comprises all but two of his published prints' (p. 9). In addition, the discussions are eliminated in this section. Thus, each of the thirty-seven entries consists of a photograph and scanty data. At no time in the publication are the standards of the selection explained, nor are there any grounds mentioned for why a particular print is more representative than another. The reason for opting for a 'representative selection' rather than for a comprehensive catalogue, as is stated in Wilkinson's preface (p. 9), does not appear to be plausible either. First, Wilkinson could not avoid the repetition of the information published in the Sylvester and Bowness catalogues in the sculpture section. In the drawing section

he even repeats some of his own previously published discussions *verbatim* (e.g. pp. 22, 62). Thus, such an effort in the last section is most questionable as it renders the catalogue incongruent. Second, in the case of the prints, the same argument applies as in that of the bronzes. The outstanding Cramer-Grant-Mitchinson's *Henry Moore Catalogue of Graphic Work* (1973, 1976) does list the published editions and proofs, but the catalogue of *The Moore Collection in the Art Gallery of Ontario* is supposed to make a specific account of its own prints including all indispensable technical data. We all know how important they are for the quality and value of each print as well as for the weight of the collection.

Finally, the system of footnotes (pp. 230-231) seems questionable to me. The overwhelming majority of the notes could have been integrated into the text in one way or another and some ought to be there. Instead, I suggest, a selected bibliography would be far more serviceable.

One would wish that the recent catalogue would precipitate further publishing activities initiated by the Henry Moore Centre. The significant collection and Wilkinson's enthusiasm for, and involvement with Moore's work might be vehicles for further research projects and publications perhaps more modest in ambition than the present catalogue.

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