

**Museums and galleries across the country are celebrating the centenary of Henry Moore's birth this year by staging displays of the great man's work. Jennifer Lisle assesses Moore's legacy and reports on one-off plans to open his estate and former home in Hertfordshire to public view for a single day in June**



**Above: the garden. Right: Moore gets down to business. Below: The maquette studio.**



# Open Moore

The Henry Moore legacy runs deep and wide through the hearts, minds and bank accounts of the British art world. Throughout his 60-year career as a sculptor, Moore experimented with a variety of other media, including drawing, graphics, fabric design and tapestry-making. But he is most widely known and revered for his monumental outdoor sculptures – towering, semi-abstract stone and bronze sculptures of women with big shoulders and small heads, reclining on bended elbows in public parks, museums and gardens all over the world.

In the 1930s, Moore's work brought British sculpture to the attention of the international art world for the first time. Organic forms inspired and influenced by Cubism, Surrealism and the natural world, they are lauded for the way they straddle the line between abstraction and representation. As he began to make large public works, he also defined the terms for large-scale public art as a medium separate and unique from architecture.

So firm were his convictions to sustain

the tradition of British sculpture that Moore started a foundation in 1977 to fund sculptors' work. It now funds over £3m worth of projects, exhibitions and educational activities a year.

As part of a year-long centenary celebration of Moore's birth, the Henry Moore Foundation is opening Moore's large Perry Green estate to the public on 20 June. In addition to the outdoor works exhibited throughout the 70 acres, visitors can also explore Moore's various drawing, carving, and maquette studios.

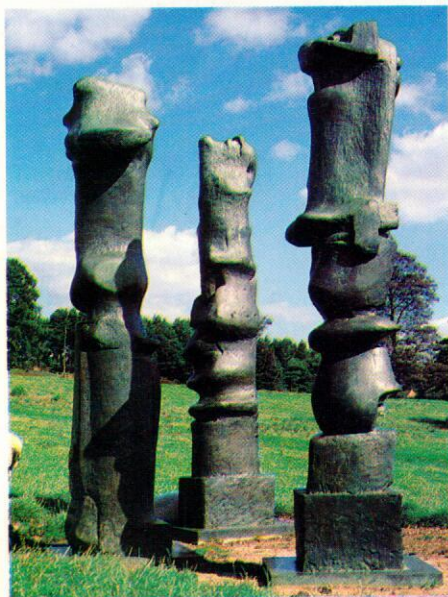
Born in Castleford, Yorkshire, in 1898, Moore moved to the estate in 1940 after his North London home was damaged by a nearby bomb. The only part Moore originally owned was the house, Hoglands, (now owned by his daughter and never open to the public), and a small rambling block of attached rooms, which served as studios. One by one, he acquired the surrounding homes and buildings and turned the estate into a kind of sculpture factory, where, with assistants, he could complete much of his

work on the premises.

Moore was not the kind of artist who experimented wildly with different subjects. Instead, he became obsessed early on with a narrow range – the reclining woman, the mother and child, the vertebrae, the knife-edge – and explored these same few themes in various forms for the rest of his life. The 29 outdoor pieces on exhibit at the estate, chosen by foundation curator David Mitchinson, present these themes in a range of sizes and media.

Although, as Mitchinson explains, 'the works have not been chosen to adhere to any formulated scheme or chronology', each of the towering, large-scale bronzes seems to stand as a physical testament to one of Moore's many thundering declarations, such as his pronouncement in 1951 that, 'In its great periods, sculpture has been an outdoor art'.

Moore insisted on complete artistic autonomy when he worked with architects, adamant that his (or any sculptor's) work stand on its own terms. Instead of conform-



**Top: 'Reclining Woman on the Hill'. Left: Moore at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park**

ing to the dictates of a building, Moore insisted that his outdoor work harmonise with its surroundings, each piece a lyric salute to the landscape.

For the exhibit, Mitchinson grouped ten works in a designated garden area, while the rest stand singularly among the property's hills, forests and fields. Although there are important works in the garden, like 'Knife-Edge Two Piece 62-65', which Moore sited so that he could view it from his window, each of the pieces has such a strong ego, it is difficult to get a feeling for them here.

It works better to see them on their own, as Moore intended. One of the more striking placements is 'Reclining Woman on the Hill', a massive piece atop the sheep field's grassy ledge. From this position, the woman's powerful stature lords over the hundreds of sheep grazing in the foregrounds. Based on an earlier 1938 version, the fragmented figure, with its spiky arms and insect legs, is a good representation of his late 30s work, a period when Moore was heavily influenced by Surrealism.

'Everyone always wants to know, did he have mistresses, what was he like?' says Michel Muller, who came from France to work for Moore in 1970 and now works restoring and conserving the foundation's collection. 'He was very diligent, like a civil servant; he came down every day and always kept the same hours. For a few weeks, he made maquettes, passed them to us, then he did drawings for a few weeks, then, on schedule, he did maquettes again. He was very English,' explains Muller.

Touring Moore's studios gives a sense of this meticulousness, since they are set up like an early Shaker village, each building designated for a separate function of Moore's artistic process. Some areas, like the maquette studio, have been preserved largely as Moore left them, so that visitors

can gaze through the same window above his desk that Moore looked through as he worked, surrounded by green fields and farm animals bleating and lowing in the distance. The shelves here are also overflowing with half-finished maquettes, bits of plaster, mounted sea-shells, and other detritus, giving the scene an eerie sense of intimacy, as if Moore had just been there.

## Events

● **Henry Moore Foundation Open Day** Perry Green, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire, 01279-843 333, Sat 20 June 12.30pm-5.30pm. Entrance and parking free.

● **Henry Moore and the National Gallery** The National Gallery Trafalgar Sq, WC2, 0171-747 2885. Charing Cross tube. 3 April-31 May. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Wed until 8pm, Sun 12 noon-6pm. Free. An intimate exhibition celebrating Moore.

● **Henry Moore at the British Museum** Great Russell St, WC1, 0171-636 1555. Russell Sq tube. 30 May-30 Sept. Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 2.30-6pm. Free. A modest tribute illustrating Moore's comment that 'nine-tenths of my understanding of sculpture came from The British Museum'.

● **Henry Moore in Perspective** National Touring Show opens at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Pavilion Gallery, Wakefield, 01924-830 302. 18 April-31 May. Daily 11am-5pm. Free. Castle Museum, Nottingham, 0115-915 5555. 6 June-19 July.