

OSBORNE SAMUEL

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

HENRY MOORE (1898-1986)



Three Female Figures, 1949

29 x 23.5 cms
(11.40 x 9.24 in)
P.O.A.

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Pencil, crayon, ink & gouache on paper
Signed & dated lower right, inscribed 'Lithograph'
upper centre
(Reference: HMF2436a)

Provenance

The Leicester Galleries, London, where purchased by Sir Eric
Maclagan, May 1951.
Thence by family descent.

Exhibited

The Leicester Galleries, London, New Bronzes and Drawings
by Henry Moore , 1951, cat.no.41

Henry Moore's vast graphic output echoed the work ethic that guided an equally prolific production of sculpture. Arguably his greatest, and certainly most famous, drawing series was the Italianate Shelter Drawings, documentary yet imaginatively improvised line and wash studies based on the sleeping families taking refuge from the wartime blitz on London Underground platforms.

The war also presaged the coal miner drawings with their Barbizon-like labour postures and dramatic subterranean

chiaroscuro. Then, with the return of peace and the birth of an only child, Mary, in 1946, Moore continued to develop Madonna and Child or Family Group themes, subjects that again touched a popular nerve in the optimistic, if austere, post-war climate of social reconstruction.

The animated Three Female Figures contains a cryptic, interactive narrative while continuing the draped or blanketed

surface rhythms of the dormant shelter figures. Moore's drawings, with their characteristic bony textures, segmented sections and undulating lines used to describe weight, bulk and volume, are quintessentially those of a sculptor. The dramatic shading and highlighting further emphasises the play of light on solid form. The drawing was chosen as the basis for one of Moore's earliest lithographs to be published by Cowell of Ipswich. The project was never realised and only a few trial proofs are known to exist.

This mixed media drawing has the vividly modelled weight of a painting and the trio of female figures resemble the post-war classicism of his sculpture. A major show at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1946) and his winning first prize at the Venice Biennale (1948) set him on course for spectacular international success.

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