

OSBORNE SAMUEL

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

HENRY MOORE (1898-1986)



Eighteen Ideas for Sculpture, 1939

27.5 x 18.8 cms
(10.81 x 7.39 in)
P.O.A.

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Pencil, wax crayon, watercolour wash, pen and ink, crayon on cream medium weight wove
Signed in ball point pen lower left 'Moore'
Inscribed in pencil upper left 'mother & child'

Provenance: Curt Valentin, New York
George Gallowhur, USA
Brigitta Bertoia, USA
Private collection, Los Angeles
William Beadleston Gallery, New York
James Kirkman, London
New Art Centre, London
Lillian Heidenberg Gallery, New York
Private Collection, USA

Literature: Herbert Read, *Moore* (Vol.1), 1944, pl152a; 1949, pl.152a
Henry Moore Complete Drawings; Volume 2 (1930-39), edited by Ann Garrould, published by
Lund Humphries, no. AG39.20; HMF 1383

This drawing and *Fourteen Ideas for Sculpture* AG39.19 originally formed part of a large sheet.
Moore gave permission for the two sections to be separated in December 1983. Moore signed
this drawing when it was separated in 1983.

Around 1937, Moore became fascinated by Fabre de Lagrange's mathematical models in the
Science Museum: beautiful objects, made in 1872 from polished brass, wood and coloured
filaments. Their aim was to demonstrate the new discipline of Descriptive Geometry, but for
Moore it was the models' structure and changing viewpoints that proved compelling – 'the
ability to look through the strings as with a bird cage and see one form within the other'.¹ Over
a three-year period, between 1937 and 1939, Moore would create around fifty sculptures in
which space is modified, or circumscribed, by taut threads.

In these two sets of drawings, originally part of a single sheet, stringed figures predominate,
proliferating and mutating serially across the paper. The shapes themselves suggest bones or
stones, worn into uncanny cavities and curvatures. Yet Moore's annotation 'Mother and Child',
at the top of *Eighteen Ideas for Sculpture*, points to a figurative origin. For Andrew Causey, such
resonances are discomfiting, suggesting forms 'poised between subhuman personages and
disabled machines'.²

1. Moore, in Henry Moore and John Hedgecoe, *Henry Spencer Moore* (Thomas Nelson, 1968), p.
105.

2. Andrew Causey, *The Drawings of Henry Moore* (Lund Humphries, 2010), p. 88.