

There's more to Moore than his monumental sculptures

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Large Two Forms (1966–69), Henry Moore. Reproduced by permission of The Henry Moore Foundation. Photo © Jonty Wilde

In 1950 Henry Moore produced several drawings for the book *A Land* (1951) by Jacquetta Hawkes. In this **highly poetic**, almost unclassifiable study, Hawkes used **'the two sciences of geology and archaeology'** for purposes **altogether unscientific**, weaving them into a **romanticised, mythologised vision** of the British landscape in which the Palaeolithic overlapped with the present, and the human subject merged with their surrounding environment. Hawkes' vision resonated strongly with the work of artists such as Moore and

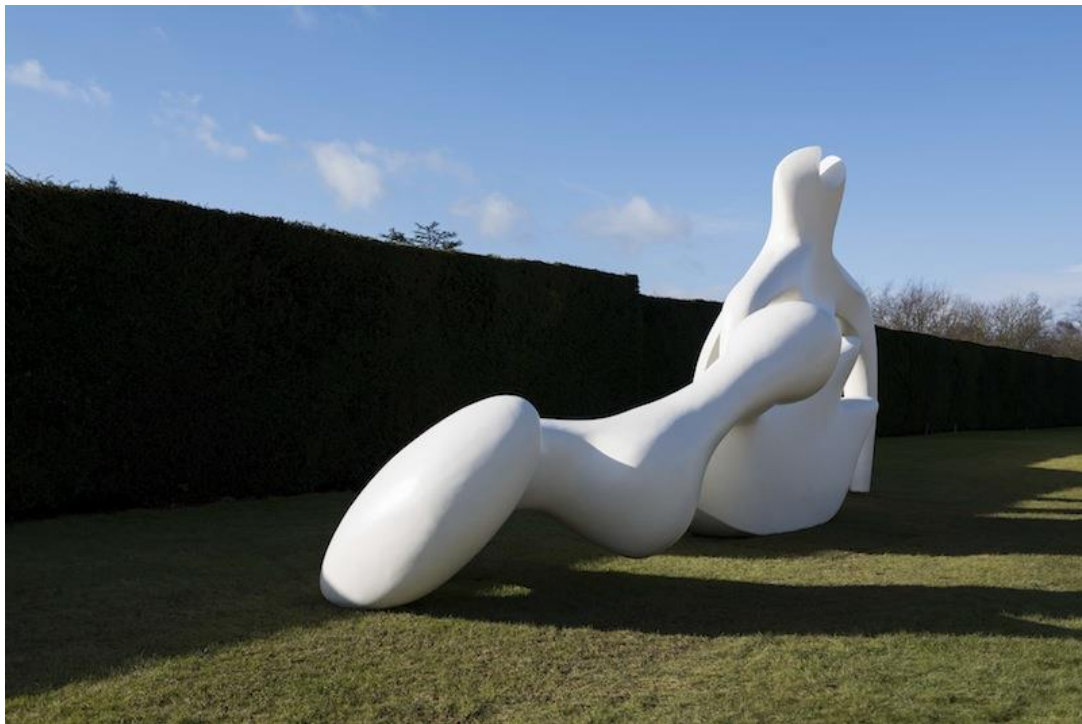
Hepworth, who found inspiration for their sculptural fusion of landscape and figure in the standing stones of sites like Avebury and Stonehenge, while the painter Paul Nash sought 'equivalents for the megaliths' in his 1935 painting of that name.



'Upright Motive No.1: Glenkiln Cross'; 'Upright Motive No.2'; 'Upright Motive No.7' (1955-56), Henry Moore. Photo © Jonty Wilde, Courtesy Tate

Two of Moore's drawings for A Land provide the conceptual kernel of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park's exhibition. In one, Illustration for A Land: His Lines Follow Life Back into Stone, Moore presents three levels of representation, moving from **abstracted biomorphic shapes** at the top of the page to a recognisably female figure reclining at the bottom, translating an idea into **concrete** form while alluding to the **organic 'life'** pulsing beneath sculptural materials. The **wax relief** used on the figures **glows** through the **overlying wash and watercolour like bone, coral, fossils and shells**. These forms, as 'Back to A Land' demonstrates, were constant reference points for Moore, and they encourage a **fresh perspective** on his understanding of land as **fragmented, sediment**, composed of **tiny conglomerate particles** and **organisms** rather than a **single navigable totality**.

Moore's fascination with **bone** and **shell** as materials that are at once **architectonic** and **malleable**, simultaneously **brittle** and **soft**, is underlined by the '**project room**' which adjoins the three main rooms of the exhibition. This space brings together selected source materials from Moore's studios at Perry Green, displaying them in a series of vitrines. In one, a **whale's vertebrae** lies like an **enlarged sycamore-propeller** next to a box of jumbled-together bones and shells; elsewhere a **piece of fossil** has migrated into a **box of pens and pencils**.





In turn, the shapes of these items migrate into Moore's drawings. Displayed in the same gallery as Moore's illustrations for *A Land* (which

is one of the most fascinating rooms in the exhibition), several drawings show Moore **tracing out the whorls** and **concavities of shells and bones** with his **pencil**. Then, in ***Ideas for Sculpture and Transformation of Bones (1932)***, the lines of **individual elements** start to **overlap** and **create new hybrids**, the contours of which remain visible in many of the sculptures nearby. **Bones, fossils and shells** also fascinated Moore because of **their connection with stratification and underground existence**. 'Back to A Land' makes the point that Moore's **conceptualisation** of landscape was **fundamentally vertical rather than horizontal**, linking his famous tube-shelter drawings produced during the London Blitz to his studies of Welsh miners creeping through mineral darkness. The two sites of tube shelter and mine, together with that of the cave, merge to create the subterranean landscape mapped by 'Back to a Land' and presented here as a formative influence on Moore's sculptural imagination.



**Tube Shelter
Perspective
1941**

Henry Moore

**Dimensions:
483 x 438 mm**

Not from the article- taken from the Tate website to demonstrate the connection to Henry Moore's sculptures.

In taking this thematic approach, the Yorkshire Sculpture Park exhibition traces Moore's experimentation across multiple media rather than just sculptural production.

As a result, it shows how Moore's work might be understood to have reconceptualised sculpture itself as an inherently diversified practice. Alongside Moore's familiar reclining figures in green

bronze, there are strange finds like the drawing Map of 1981, a combination of **watercolour, wash, chalk and shaky ball-point pen**, in which a telephone-**conversation doodle** becomes a **miniature geography**. The curators have also included several large-scale plaster maquettes alongside cast bronzes, making an implicit link between Moore's fascination with the **metamorphic qualities of organic materials** and **his own working processes**.

One aspect of the exhibition that calls for greater contextualisation is Moore's engagement with **African, Asian and Latin American sculptural forms**.

Moore **undeniably** looked to these works from a **primarily formal perspective**, but the **deeply primitivistic** way of **thinking** that allowed him to do so

complicates the understanding of 'land' offered here. This is particularly so given the **colonial context in which Moore was working, and**

the legacies of that colonisation into the present. Displaying the 'Non-

Western' items from Moore's collection, such as an **Eskimo whalebone figure next to his shells and stones** might be true to his vision of **global sculpture**, but it arguably

glosses over the tensions

between **cultural exchange** and

appropriation that inform the **role played by 'land' in constructions of identity**.

The general success of the exhibition, however, lies in its movement away from Moore's figures and large-scale bronzes, which can start to feel a little ubiquitous, particularly after Moore upped the volume – **physical and numeric** – of his sculptures in the **1950s and '60s** in response to multiple public commissions. **'Back to A Land'** instead offers a **granular view** of his **wider sculptural practice**, and is all the **more intriguing** for this shift in focus.

'Henry Moore: Back to A Land' is at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park until 6 September.

Stratification – the arrangement or classification of something in different groups.

Primitivistic- primitivism - a belief that it is best to live simply and in a natural environment.

Ubiquitous- present, appearing or found everywhere