

Francis Bacon / Henry Moore: Flesh and Bone

12 September 2013 - 19 January 2014



This major exhibition brings together works by two giants of 20th-century western art renowned for creating unforgettable images of the human figure.

Despite working in different media, Bacon and Moore were exhibited together from the end of the Second World War into the 1960s. This new exhibition aims to bring a fresh perspective to Francis Bacon and Henry Moore, highlighting important shared influences, experiences and themes in their work.

This is a charging exhibition but FREE for booked school groups and for under 18s.

To book a group visit please contact the Education Department:
education.service@ashmus.ox.ac.uk
t: 01865 278015

Themes to explore in the exhibition

The Figure

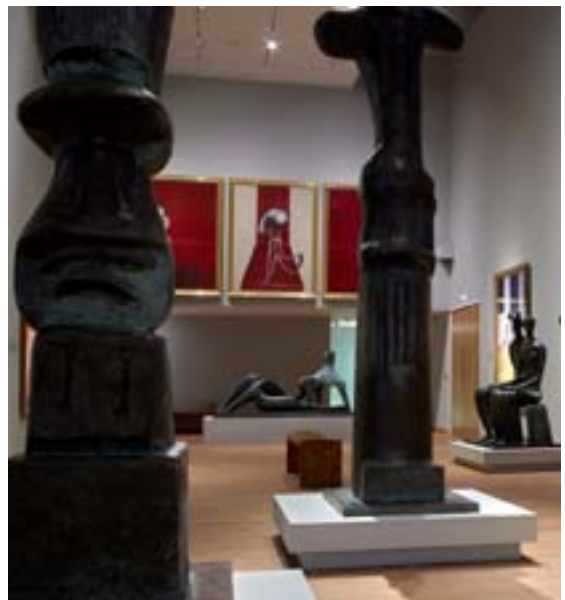
- Moore's sculpture takes bone as the starting point. His figures are based on anatomy. **Fallen Warrior (1956-7)** captures the last moments of a soldier writhing on the ground. Bronze sculpture is skeletal - muted colours make it heavy, static.
- Bacon toyed with the idea of being a sculptor - his earlier works sculpt paint to give a 3D effect. His paintings start from the flesh and work their way in. **Portrait of Henrietta Moraes (1963)** shows a woman, seated on a bed. She's fleshy, the paint has been used to slide over the flesh of her legs and torso, and the whole thing has movement and twists. Paint is transparent, like a membrane. Colours are vivid, bright, dynamic.
- Different approaches, but similar themes. In both, a single figure is on a plinth, isolated. A soldier dying alone, a woman trapped in a room.

War

- Both Moore and Bacon served in World War Two - Moore as an official war artist (see some of his drawings of people sheltering in air shelters), Bacon as an Air Raid Warden.
- After the war both became figurative artists. Both responded to the horrors of the war... but in different ways. Bacon's **Head II (1949)** is reminiscent of images from Nazi death camps.

Space

- Moore's chosen medium was bronze - heavy, enduring, monolithic. His works are designed to be seen in a landscape, experienced outside and seen from distance, to be walked around. See: **Reclining Figure: Festival (1951)**
- Bacon's subjects are enclosed in restricted spaces. He insisted on glass in front of his paintings so the viewer would see his reflection, creating an ambiguous space. The viewer is trapped with the subject - claustrophobic. See: **Lying Figure in a Mirror (1971)**



Religion

- After the horrors and brutality of war both men became atheists. The crucifixion was a recurring theme for both artists. In the crucifixion both men saw an example of suffering and man's inhumanity to man.
- Bacon's **Second Version of Triptych 1944 (1988)**, showing 3 figures at cross - baying animals, blinded victims, bound trapped - is shocking. The images are as shocking as crucifixion and war - this triptych 'screams'.
- By contrast **Moore's Crucifixion I, II and III (1982)** work is much gentler. His interest is in crucifixion as a universal and enduring symbol of suffering and dignity.

History

- Both artists were interested in the great artists of the past whom they collected and studied. They both admired Michelangelo, Rodin and Picasso.
- Both artists travelled to see the art of the past - Moore to Greece, and Bacon to Egypt. Both men liked re interpreting the past. Bacon's **Study from Portrait of Pope Innocent X (1965)** is a direct reinterpretation of the Spanish painter Velasquez's work.
- Bacon collected and worked a lot from photos, he especially liked the work of **Edward Muybridge**. He always framed his paintings in gold classical frames.
- Moore collected photos of the great masters, drew them and then developed his own monolithic style referring to the great regal figures of Greece, Rome and Egypt.