

Henry Moore

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
Washington, D.C.

Fifteen years since Henry Moore's death and nearly 20 since the British sculptor's last U.S. retrospective, this impressive nationally touring survey makes its last stop at the National Gallery of Art. Organized by Dorothy Kosinski, curator of European art at the Dallas Museum of Art, and David Mitchinson, of the Henry Moore Foundation, the exhibition gives special attention to the artist's early influences. In addition to the 360 objects, on view here through the 27th of this month, the wall texts and the accompanying exhibition catalogue (*Henry Moore: Sculpting the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press) do a superb job exploring connections between Moore's sculptures and key currents in early-20th-century modernism.

Coming of age in the 1920s, Moore looked to Picasso's African-inflected Cubism and Matisse's Fauvism for a fresh take on the figure. His interest in "pure" art from other cultures led him to mine the pre-Columbian treasures at the British Museum for ideas. By the late 1920s, Moore was effectively synthesizing these influences. *Mask* (1927), a half-male, half-female carved face, could be a green-stone version of a head from Picasso's *Demiselles d'Avignon* (1907) or from an ancient relief. The cast-concrete *Reclining Woman* (1927) is reminiscent of Matisse's seminal 1907 painting *The Blue Nude* but also has the blunt contours of an Aztec goddess.

One of the show's revelations is the warmth and sensuality of Moore's lesser-known wood sculptures. A small elm carving, *Family* (1935) is economical and clear—a thumb-headed father stands behind a mother who holds a lozenge-shaped baby. *Reclining Figure* (1936), a massive loopy nude, is, amazingly, made from one tree trunk. Swirling grains and the soft, nutty hues lend it an enduring, convincing, lifelike quality.

During the 1930s, the reclining nude became standard fare for Moore, and he would return to it over and over again. In a survey show it becomes tiresome. For the artist, though, it was a reliable, comfortable mode in which he could measure the accelerating changes in modern art. Most decisively, Moore used the figure to integrate the Miróesque Surrealism that provided such a fertile basis for his mature work.

Today, Moore's abstract bronze bodies have become almost synonymous with public sculpture. By investigating the many sources—abstract, surreal, primitive—that shaped his early work, this show provides a rich context in which to appreciate his familiar forms.

—Rex Weil



Henry Moore,
Reclining Woman,
1927, cast concrete,
11" x 24" x 11".
National Gallery
of Art.



Diane Burko, *Volcano
from the Air*, 2001,
oil on canvas,
60" x 84".
Locks.



Edouard Vuillard,
*Woman in a Striped
Dress*, 1895, oil on
canvas, 26" x 23".
Art Institute of
Chicago.

Diane Burko

Locks
Philadelphia
Diane Burko investigates volca-
noes with a commitment remi-
niscent of such 19th-century
Romantic landscape painters as
Frederic Edwin Church and Albert

Bierstadt. She visits volcano observatories around the world and climbs lava fields. Leaning out of the open door of a helicopter, she photographs volcanic activity from the air. Burko's "Volcano Series," shown comprehensively here for the first time, are stunning oil-on-canvas portrayals of craters in Costa Rica, Alaska, Hawaii, and southern Italy.

Stark and shadowed, *Halema'uma'u Crater #3* (2000) suggests the planet's geological infancy. On a five-by-seven-foot canvas, Burko depicts molten lava bleeding through the earth's crust, marbling the vast dark sweep of ridged stone with red, orange, and yellow rivulets, while pale steam drifts across the horizon.

Occasionally adding bits of metallic pigments to represent earth's mineral-rich ground, Burko suggests igneous materials from heavy basalt to layers of ash. With equal finesse, she records the volcanic landscape: serrated bands of mountains encircling still blue water or boiling cascades discharging plumes of steam into the atmosphere.

An almost pastel palette of yellows, blues, moss green, and muted violet dominates much of *Volcano from the Air* (2001), a painting based on a volcanic site in Italy. Vapor clouds rise from several points on the island while an irregular crater yawns in the foreground. A delicately rendered rocky coast has a fecund, primeval air.

Stromboli from the Air #2 (2001) was one of the strongest works in the show, with its panoramic view of cool green Italian mountains behind the dynamic foreground action of thick white smoke and gray-blue vapor rising from the crater.

With *Stromboli*, and all her paintings, Burko pays homage to nature's power and fierce beauty.

—Robin Rice

"Beyond the Easel"

ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
Chicago

Working during the 1890s, the artists known as the Nabis embraced the idea of painting as an integral part of interior decoration. Emphasizing harmonious color, all-over pattern, and matte surfaces, the Nabis borrowed from Japanese art, the early Italian Renaissance, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Paul Gauguin, and contemporary poster design to create grand-scale mural-like paintings and folding screens for architectural settings.

Both gorgeous and insightful, "Beyond the Easel: