

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Henry Moore sculptures venture into great indoors for exhibition

London show of nine enormous works normally seen in open-air sites will change way artist is perceived, says Gagosian Gallery

By Alex Needham



Henry Moore's Large Two Forms, here being unloaded in Kew Gardens, will be among the works to be shown alongside their maquettes (scale models) at the Gagosian. Photograph: Graeme Robertson

From the steps of Leeds Art Gallery to the Botanic Garden in Wellington, New Zealand, the sculptures of Henry Moore are usually experienced in the open air.

Now an exhibition at London's Gagosian Gallery will show his work in a different environment – indoors. The gallery has borrowed nine huge sculptures, from sites including Kew Gardens, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Henry Moore Foundation in Perry Green, Hertfordshire, and will bring them under one roof. For some it will be the first time they have been exhibited in a gallery.

"You'll be able to see the sculptures much more viscerally and close up," said director Mark Francis. "If you see them in the English landscape it associates them with a Britishness which is part of Henry Moore, but not the whole part.

"He was a great modern artist, and an international artist, and we wanted to re-establish that context."

From the 1950s until his death in 1986, Moore created a steady stream of monumental sculptures, most of which came to rest in parks, fields and regenerated town centres all around the world. Installing six-metre-long sculptures, such as 1966's Large Two Forms, into the gallery in north London will be no easy task, though the Gagosian has experience in this area. In 2008 it exhibited three enormous works by the US artist Richard Serra.

"We built the loading dock at the back of the gallery to take the biggest Serra sculpture we thought we could get in, only to find that it didn't work," said Francis. "We had to rip the front off the building and bring them off the streets and that's what we're doing with these. We've also got to rip out the interior of the building and clear it out, but it's all planned down to the last instance."

The Moores will be shown alongside their hand-sized scale models, known as maquettes, which illustrate the way the artist transformed and enlarged his work. Though the final works were designed to be shown outdoors, Francis said Moore also discussed his work in terms of its relationship to architecture. "We feel we've been very close to the artist's intentions," he said, adding that he expected the show to be hugely popular.

However, despite their ultra-tactile surfaces, and the fact that they are usually exposed to the elements, viewers will not be allowed to touch the sculptures. "There is an injunction against touching the bronze," said Francis. "There's a great patina on them and they oxidise, but it does affect the surface. Sheep are the only things allowed to touch them."

Although the ubiquity of Moore's work may have blunted its impact, in the past few years it has been critically reappraised. A Tate retrospective two years ago was well received, while last year the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, which features several Moore works, enjoyed its highest number of visitors. Francis said that as a major British artist, Moore was ideal for a show that would run during the Olympics.

"With great artists, their reputation swings up and down a little bit depending on where their work is shown. I don't think that critically he's ever suffered a bruising decline, but after an artist dies there's the period where their reputation goes into abeyance. Then you start looking at Moore again in a fresh way and that's what we're tried to do."

• *Henry Moore: Late Large Forms will run at the Gagosian gallery from 31 May to 18 August*