

# Henry Moore's Old Flo and Canary Wharf



Who was  
Henry Moore?



What was his  
inspiration?



Why was Old Flo  
in east London?



Other public art to  
see in Canary Wharf





# She's back!

One of east London's most famous residents is back – and on display in Canary Wharf, Tower Hamlets

Although this sculpture's name is Draped Seated Woman, most local people know her as Old Flo.

Created by Henry Moore, she is world-famous and has had a really interesting life. This book tells the story of:

- What inspired Henry Moore to create her
- Where she was first displayed and what people thought
- How she went to Yorkshire... and stayed for 20 years
- And much, much more!



Here at Canary Wharf, we are proud to display Draped Seated Woman for all to see. This important sculpture is

on loan from Tower Hamlets Council – we are looking after her until 2022. Please come and visit her again and again!

2 Henry Moore's Old Flo and Canary Wharf

## Henry Moore

### A great artist's life

Henry Moore is one of Britain's most famous artists and his sculptures now sell for millions of pounds

#### 1 Early days

Henry Moore was born in 1898, in Castleford in Yorkshire. He loved art but his father, a coal miner, thought it would be difficult to earn a living as an artist. So, he encouraged his son to become a schoolteacher. Moore really didn't like it!

Aged 18, Moore joined the army to fight in World War One. Many colleagues and friends lost their lives. Moore himself was injured in a gas attack in 1917. When the war ended, he applied for a grant to go to Leeds School of Art. He was accepted in 1919 and could finally follow his childhood dream of becoming an artist. He worked



Henry Moore, in 1928, working on West Wind for London Underground's new headquarters

hard and finished the two-year drawing course in just one year.

Moore went on to further studies at the Royal College of Art in London and soon became known as a modern, daring sculptor. In 1928, he was asked to create carved stonework for the exterior of the new London Underground headquarters. It was his first paid commission and you can still see it today.



In 1943, Henry Moore was asked by a news team to re-enact how he discovered people using tube stations as bomb shelters

#### 2 Growing fame... and war

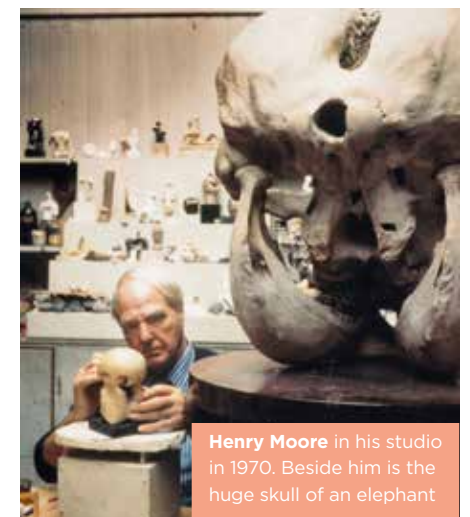
In 1928, Moore met Irina Radetsky – a year later, they married. Meanwhile, his reputation as an influential and challenging artist continued to grow, right up to the point when World War Two broke out in 1939.

In 1940, Moore discovered Londoners were using tube stations as emergency bomb shelters. His drawings of families sheltering near train tracks were very powerful and furthered his reputation as an artist.

#### 3 International fame

Shortly after World War Two, some of Moore's sculptures were shown in America and Italy – they created huge interest. Before long, he was one of the world's most famous artists. Today, his works can be found in most major cities.

Moore died in 1986, aged 88, at his home in Perry Green, Hertfordshire. Visitors there can see his studio as he left it, and admire many of his works in a beautiful countryside setting.



Henry Moore in his studio in 1970. Beside him is the huge skull of an elephant

#### Moore's art

Henry Moore's most famous sculptures depict human bodies, especially those of women. These artworks don't reproduce the human form exactly but use shapes that suggest it. This is often referred to as abstract art.

Moore took inspiration from the world around him, from such objects as stones, twigs, bones and skulls. He is also known for the "holes" or empty spaces in



Reclining Figure, 1959-64, made from elm wood

his work. He once explained, "The hole connects one side to the other, making it immediately more three-dimensional. A hole can itself have as much shape meaning as a solid mass."

Henry Moore's Old Flo and Canary Wharf 3





Londoners using a tube station in 1940 to shelter from a bombing raid

# Where did the idea come from?

In September 1940, during World War Two, British cities were bombed almost daily. This time was known as the Blitz. London faced huge damage and loss of life

One night, Henry Moore and his wife were returning home by London Underground. They found the platform packed with men, women and children, sheltering from air raids above. Families were huddled together, wrapped up to keep warm.

When he got home, Moore drew the scene from memory. Over the following nights, he



Shelter Scene: Two Seated Figures (1941) by Henry Moore

returned repeatedly to observe the sheltering Londoners, and drew many more scenes.

The works of art, known as The Shelter Drawings, were very popular. They demonstrated how Londoners were defiant in the face of the bombing raids.

Do the poses of those sheltering families and the way their clothes wrap their bodies seem familiar? These elements can also be seen in Draped Seated Woman - even though Moore didn't start sculpting her for another 16 years.

Moore said: "I have never seen so many reclining figures... Children, fast asleep, with the trains roaring past only a couple of yards away"

## From sketch to sculpture

How Henry Moore created Draped Seated Woman

### Step 1 - Drawing

Early in his career, Moore drew rough sketches before starting a sculpture. They helped him think how an artwork might look. These sketches (right) are from 1953 to 1956. They show Moore is considering a seated figure. They are unusual as, by this time, Moore had stopped making sketches and would instead work immediately on a maquette (see Step 2).



Draped Seated Woman in Canary Wharf on a cold winter's day



Henry Moore considers a new sculpture; Figure Studies (1953-56)

### Step 2 - Maquette

Artists often make a small model of a sculpture before starting a full-sized artwork. This is known as a maquette. In 1956, Moore made a maquette of a seated figure by creating an internal wire frame and then applying layer after layer of plaster. As the plaster dried, he moulded it into the desired shape. Finally, when the plaster had set, he used his tools to add details to the face and other parts of the figure. This maquette is about 15cm wide.



### Step 3 - Working model

When Moore was happy with a maquette, he would create a slightly larger working model. This was also made from plaster but was built over a stronger wire frame, known as an armature. At this stage, Moore changed small details such as the folds of the clothes and positions of the arms, until it was exactly as he wanted. He also liked to photograph the working model with sky or trees in the background. It helped him visualise what the full-sized sculpture would look like.



Henry Moore makes adjustments to the working model of Draped Seated Woman

### Step 4 - Full-sized

It was time to make a full-sized version - it measured over 2m tall. This was also built around an armature, though one now made from wood and wire. It was covered in scrim, a bandage-like material coated in dried plaster. This required wetting before being put in position. Further plaster was spread with a trowel. Moore applied finishing touches with chisels, files and sandpaper.



### Step 5 - Finished work in bronze

In 1958, the full-sized model was sent to a specialist foundry in Paris. Their task was to use the full-sized model to create a small number of bronze casts, through a process called lost-wax casting.

First, a wax copy was made of the full-sized model. This was then repeatedly coated with a sand-like substance known as slurry, until there was a good, thick coating all over the wax.

Next, the slurry-covered model was placed in a very hot kiln. The high temperatures hardened the slurry. At the same time, the wax melted and drained away through special openings. All that was left was a hard, empty shell in the shape of Draped Seated Woman.

Due to the large size of this sculpture, the next stage was carried out in sections. To cast a section, very hot, liquid bronze was poured into one part of the hard shell, and left to cool.

When the bronze had set, the shell was broken away to reveal the moulding. All the bronze pieces were welded together and any visible joins smoothed

away. It was now a complete sculpture... but not yet finished.

Moore explained why: "I like working on all my bronzes after they come back from the foundry."

He applied chemicals to get exactly the right colour and finish on the surface (known as the patina). Moore felt it was only when he had got the patina right that the sculpture was complete.



Henry Moore visits a foundry to inspect the cast of one of his sculptures



# Art for the people

## Draped Seated Woman was bought with the idea of bringing great art to the general public

In the 1950s, London was still recovering from World War Two. More than 1.2 million homes had been damaged and bomb craters could be found in most of the capital's neighbourhoods. Many children used abandoned bomb sites as playgrounds!

The London County Council (LCC), which ran the capital, was slowly rebuilding the city, with new schools, housing estates, parks and libraries.

As well as organising the repair of old buildings and the construction of new ones, the LCC wanted to lift Londoners' spirits. One of the ways the LCC aimed to do this was by giving



Children playing on a bomb site in 1950s London

everyone the chance to enjoy art without having to visit a gallery.

So, in 1956, the LCC launched the Patronage of the Arts Scheme. The idea was to buy or commission art and then place it in public spaces so that it could be enjoyed by everyone. The scheme ran for nine years.

In 1961, as part of the scheme, the LCC asked Henry Moore if

he would provide a sculpture. He suggested Draped Seated Woman and agreed to sell the work of art for a significantly reduced price of £7000.

It was a lot of money at the time and is equivalent to about £150,000 today. But, given the sculpture is now worth around £18 million, maybe that wasn't such a bad deal!



Henry Moore, at his home in Perry Green, adjusting the sculpture's pedestal

## Rain pain

As well as being a great artist, Henry Moore also had to be very practical. For example, on Draped Seated Woman he realised, "This big, draped seated figure was going to be shown out of doors and this created the problem that the folds in the drapery could collect dirt and leaves and pockets of water."

It didn't defeat him. "I solved it by making a drainage tunnel through the drapery folds between the legs." This ensured any rain which did fall on the sculpture just flowed away.

# Lucky London!

London still displays some of the works of art purchased by the LCC. And there are other Henry Moore sculptures to check out, too!



**Draped Seated Woman**  
Henry Moore, 1957-8  
Canary Wharf



# Going up

## In post-war Britain, tower blocks were on the rise

After World War Two, London faced a severe housing problem. Many homes had been destroyed in bombing raids during the conflict. Plus, poorly built Victorian houses with little real sanitation were a health hazard. For example, many houses lacked a bathroom and only had an outside toilet.

## Planners believed tower blocks were the answer

As the tower blocks were so tall, they could house many people, while using only a small area of land. This left room at ground level for the creation of new public spaces and parks. One such development was



The Stifford Estate offered Stepney locals a new way of living that was a welcome change

the Stifford Estate, near Mile End Road. The LCC started construction in 1959 and progressed quickly. They had finished three tower blocks by

1961. The three towers were each 17 floors high and held 97 flats. They overlooked a new, open green space, which was named Stepney Green.

# Old Flo settles in

## Draped Seated Woman sat at the heart of the Stifford Estate

Although Henry Moore and the LCC reached agreement about the sale in early 1962, it wasn't until 8 June of that year that Draped Seated Woman was placed in her east London home on the Stifford Estate. The official unveiling was on 25 June – but not everyone was impressed...

## “Is this monstrosity supposed to represent Womanhood?”

Those were the words of one outraged Stepney resident, writing to a local newspaper. However, before long, Draped Seated Woman was just part of everyday Stifford Estate life. Children played around her, and whole families posed for photos in front of her.

The sculpture's official title was still a bit of a mouthful – and she was soon known by other names, such as Gladys and Big Bertha.

## There was one nickname that really stuck, though – Old Flo

To everyone who lived on the Stifford Estate, that's who the



sculpture Draped Seated Woman really was: strong, dependable, and ever-present Old Flo. Henry Moore avoided being drawn into any debate about his sculpture. Instead, he preferred to work at his studio in Perry Green. Over the next decade or so, Moore's reputation continued to grow, with his distinctive art being shown all over the world. Including, of course, in Stepney.



# On show

## The LCC believed that these new homes should feature lots of new art

The LCC commissioned murals, mosaics and other artworks. The idea was that they would improve and inspire the lives of those who lived there. As residents entered the towers, they were greeted by murals created by Tony Hollaway. He also made mosaics displayed inside the buildings.

## Moore's Draped Seated Woman was to be placed on a raised grass mound

This mound was just outside the tower block known as Wickham House. This was to be the “public gallery” where all could enjoy the work of one of Britain's greatest artists.



Artist Tony Hollaway works on the design for a mural



The finished mural in place at Wickham House, Stifford Estate



No sir!

In 1951, Moore turned down a chance to be honoured by the Queen, refusing a knighthood. He was worried that being “Sir Henry Moore” might affect his work and relationships with other artists. He explained in a letter, “Such a title might tend to cut me off from fellow artists whose work has aims similar to mine.”

Eleven years later, in July 1962, it was Old Flo who was honoured by the Queen instead – when Elizabeth II came to Stepney and officially opened the Stifford Estate.



# Memories of Old Flo

Draped Seated Woman was more than just a sculpture, she was part of people's lives – as these Stepney residents recall

“When we were very young, we affectionately **called her Mummy**. We would sit beside Old Flo – **carefree, chatting and laughing**”

*Ninette Sacco*



“Here's my cousin Terry and me, **sitting on Old Flo** in the 60s. It brings back many **happy memories**”

*Laurence Lewis*

A piece of **my childhood**  
I will **never forget**

*Elizabeth Moss*

“I remember **playing on Old Flo** when I was a boy in the late 60s. **Happy times!**”

*Terry Davidson*

In my **Stepney** youth, we called her **The Fat Lady!**

*Joan Keating*

“If we were ordering a cab, we would say, **'Pick us up by Old Flo'**. That was like the pickup point! She was a **good old girl**”

*Louisa Sullivan*

“I walked past Old Flo every Saturday as a child on the way to shopping at Watney Market. **I know every wrinkle of her dress**. It was **such a privilege** to have got to know a sculpture so well”

*Andrea Cunningham*

“She was such a big part of my childhood. Every time I looked out of my bedroom window, there she was: **ugly, beautiful, enchanting and terrifying**”

*Diane Hassall-Mead*

“She was opposite my nan's house, so **I grew up playing around her**”

*Michelle Hallett*





# Coming down



Over time, the Stifford Estate began to feel less modern and new. And living high up could have its problems

One ex-resident said that, as a girl, if she was playing outside and an ice cream van pulled up, she would run to her flat to ask her parents if she could have money for an ice cream. The trouble was, she lived on the 16th floor: "By the time we came down again, the van would have pulled away. We would be very disappointed."

Sometimes the lifts in the towers were broken, parts of the area became run down and buildings were

vandalised. Many people realised they no longer enjoyed living there.

So, in 1997, less than 40 years after the towers were built, all residents – including Old Flo – were moved out. It was time for a new beginning for the area.

The towers were demolished, low-level housing was built instead and some of the neighbourhood was landscaped to create Stepney Green Park.

Tower Hamlets' Stifford Estate was no more.

**Even Old Flo suffered and had graffiti scrawled on her**

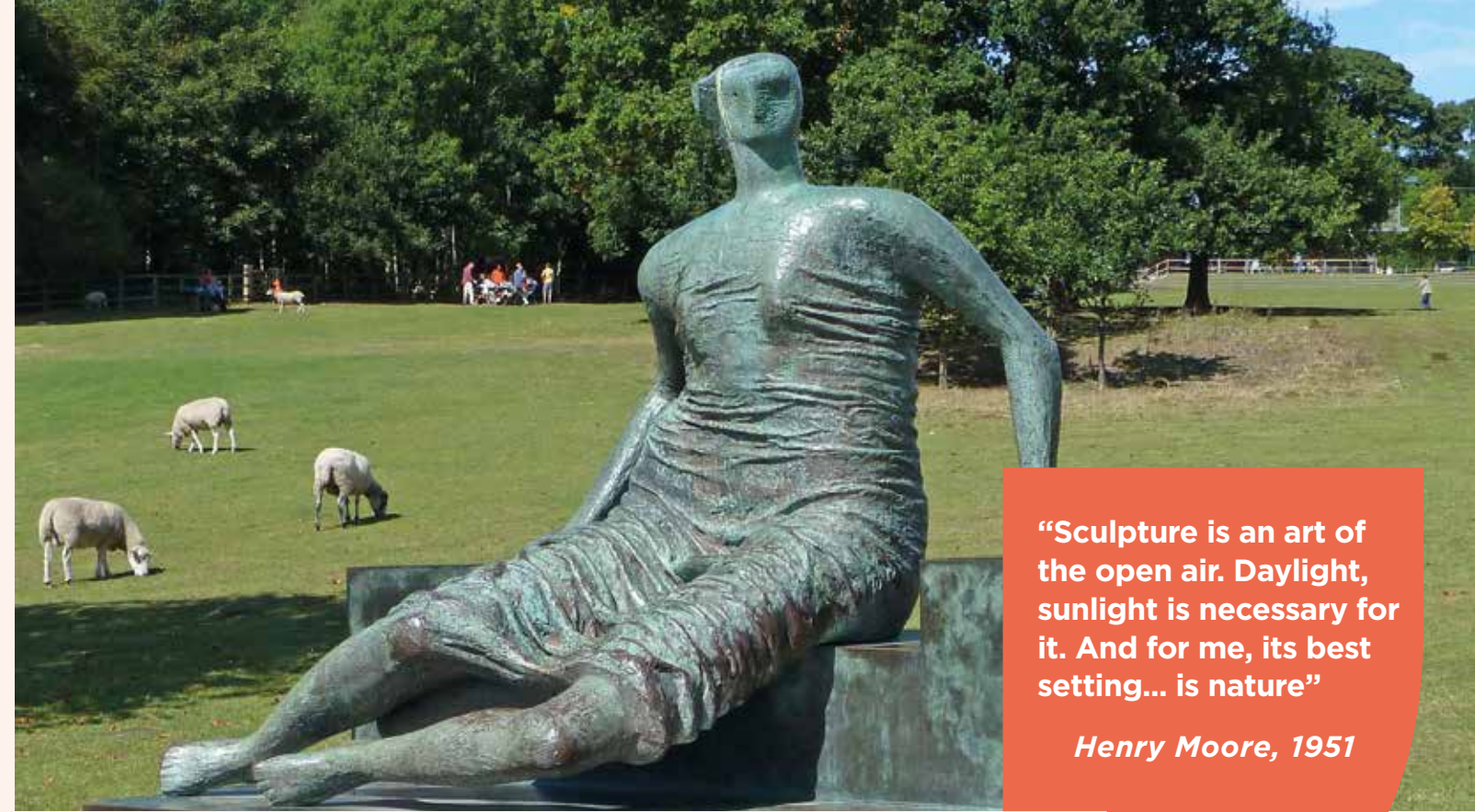


# Travelling north

After the demolition of the Stifford Estate, Old Flo was moved to Yorkshire Sculpture Park for safekeeping – some 200 miles away

In fact, it was not the first time Old Flo had visited this award-winning open-air gallery, set in rolling hills in the north of England. For a short time in 1987, she had been on display as part of a Henry Moore exhibition – not that the Stifford Estate residents were happy about it.

One local complained: "We got a letter from the council on Monday evening and then at 6.30 the next morning they took her away like thieves in the night." However, the concern was misplaced. Once the four-month exhibition was over, Old Flo returned to her usual position.



"Sculpture is an art of the open air. Daylight, sunlight is necessary for it. And for me, its best setting... is nature"

Henry Moore, 1951

But in 1997, as the Stifford Estate's tower blocks came down, Old Flo once more headed north to Yorkshire Sculpture Park. This time, with no set date for return.

While there, she faded from east Londoners' memories and

instead became one of the most popular sculptures in the park.

By 2012, half a million people came to admire her every year. Many of those visitors never realised Draped Seated Woman was originally an East End girl.

# Not for sale!

After 15 years of a quiet, country life, in 2012 Old Flo suddenly found herself back in the news

That year, the then mayor of Tower Hamlets proposed to sell the sculpture to raise money for local community needs. At the time, it was estimated to be worth £18-22 million.

The mayor's decision created huge debate. Some people thought it was right to sell art to pay for services for local people. Many others strongly disagreed. Questions about Old Flo were even asked in the Houses of Parliament.

Local artists staged protests, some of them dressing up as Old Flo and posing outside the council offices (see right).

Another group organised a legal challenge, asking:

**"Who owned the sculpture – was it Tower Hamlets or someone else?"**

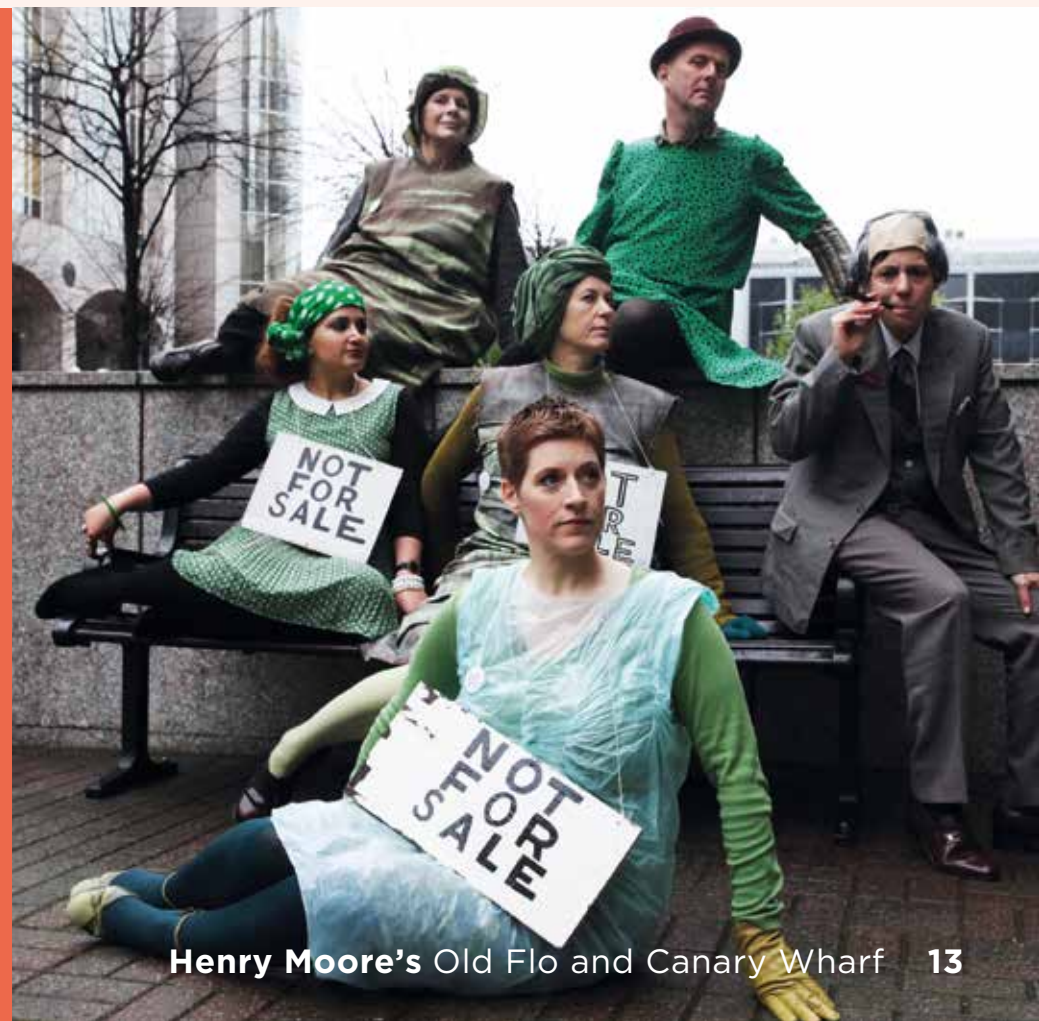
After all, if Tower Hamlets didn't own Draped Seated Woman, how could they sell it?

Three years later, a court decided Old Flo did, in fact, belong to Tower Hamlets Council. So, if the council wanted, they could sell it.

However, at about the same time in 2015, Tower Hamlets elected a new mayor, John Biggs. He declared he would not let the sculpture be sold. It was just too important.

What's more, he promised to bring Draped Seated Woman back to the borough.

After 18 years, it seemed Old Flo was finally coming home.







# Back in town!

## After 20 years away, Old Flo returned to east London

East Londoners were delighted by the decision in 2015 to bring Draped Seated Woman back to Tower Hamlets. But where would she go? During the two decades that Old Flo was in Yorkshire, her old neighbourhood had changed. Her previous home of the Stifford Estate no longer existed, so the sculpture couldn't return there.

Also, Old Flo was now valued at over £18 million. In the recent past, other works of art in public places, including bronze sculptures by Henry Moore, had been stolen. So, it was clear she needed to be somewhere

with good 24-hour security.

At the time, Tower Hamlets Council had no location of its own that was suitable, so the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs, offered local businesses and museums and others the chance to look after her. "Her considerable value means we have to find her a secure home for the next five years," he explained.

Several organisations submitted proposals to look after Old Flo. After much thought, Canary Wharf Group was selected.

**"I am delighted to have her back in the East End where she belongs"**

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

**"It is very well located," said Mayor John Biggs.**

**"This is a public place and anyone can come here 24 hours a day."**

So, until 2022, this loved, well-travelled East End woman, who has seen so much, will call Canary Wharf her home.



Old Flo appeared serene and calm in the Yorkshire countryside. But a move back to London was on the cards



In September 2017, Old Flo was carefully lifted onto a lorry, and wrapped in protective material. Her return home had started



The sculpture was given a thorough clean by a specialist restorer before beginning her 200-mile trip to Canary Wharf



The first date to place her in Canary Wharf was abandoned due to gale-force winds. Days later, conditions were just right



Her return was welcomed by John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets. "It's reconnecting the old and the new," he said

**"We are honoured to have been asked to look after this well-loved artwork on behalf of the people of the borough"**



Sir George Iacobescu,  
Chairman and CEO,  
Canary Wharf  
Group





# Old Flo's six sisters

Most of Henry Moore's sculptures of people were of women – the female form fascinated him

One of the advantages of casting a sculpture (see pages 4-5) is that you can create a number of versions of the same work of art

Seven casts were made of Draped Seated Woman – Old Flo is Cast Two. Cast Zero is on display just a few miles upriver, in London's Tate Britain gallery. The other versions can be found all round the world.

Although each cast of Draped Seated Woman might look the

same at a distance, they are all slightly different.

The surface finish, or patina, of the bronze will vary according to where the sculpture is kept, if it's indoors or outdoors, and the climate. Also, they are all displayed on different sorts of pedestals.



## Cast Zero

*Tate Britain, London*

This is the artist's edition which Henry Moore kept for himself. It weighs 1.6 tonnes – that's about the same weight as a family car! In 1978, Henry Moore gave 36 other sculptures to the Tate, as well as maquettes and drawings.



## Cast One

*Kunst- und Museumsverein Wuppertal, Germany*

The locals didn't really like her when she was first displayed. In fact, someone poured tar over her and stuck feathers on! Times have changed and she is now a much-loved resident of Wuppertal.



## Cast Three

*The Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium*

This group of museums is located in the country's capital city, Brussels. This cast of Draped Seated Woman is one of four works by Henry Moore that the museums hold.



## Cast Four

*Yale University Art Gallery, USA*

This cast holds a special memory for Bill Clinton, ex-President of the USA, and his wife Hillary. On their first date at university, Hillary sat in the cast's lap as she and Bill talked. She stayed there the whole evening, just chatting!



## Cast Five

*National Gallery of Victoria, Australia*

When this edition arrived in Melbourne in 1960, it was announced as "an historic event of great importance" for Australia. The gallery called it "the finest piece of sculpture in this country."



## Cast Six

*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel*

Cast Six is one of the first sights visitors see on arriving at the university. In this picture (above), Henry Moore can be seen taking a photo of the cast, just after she was unveiled for the first time.

# Art for all

There's public art everywhere you look at Canary Wharf

Henry Moore's Draped Seated Woman is probably the most famous work of art on display on the Canary Wharf estate. But it's not the only one.

In fact, there are more than 70 other pieces of great art that anyone who works in, lives in or visits Canary Wharf can admire for free.

Canary Wharf Group displays public art because the company believe art creates a better environment for everyone.



Maps with the locations of the works of art can be found in Canary Wharf and on the Canary Wharf Group website. There is one version for adults and another for children.

[canarywharf.com/arts-events/art-on-the-estate/](http://canarywharf.com/arts-events/art-on-the-estate/)



## Couple on Seat (1984) By Lynn Chadwick

Chadwick began his career drawing building plans for architects but took up sculpture in his 30s. He was influenced by Henry Moore and produced many pieces of human figures in different positions.



## Winter Lights

Every year in early January, Canary Wharf hosts an incredible public festival that celebrates the best of light technology and art. Some of the work in previous years was so popular, it is now permanently located in Canary Wharf.



## Fortuna (2016)

*By Helaine Blumenfeld*

Canary Wharf Group asked the artist to create a sculpture especially for the estate. She named it after the Roman goddess of luck and hopes it will "inspire all those living or working here, or just passing by".



## Something new!

Every few weeks, there's a new exhibition of art in the lobby of the office building One Canada Square (home to Canary Wharf Group). There have been displays of fantastic glassware, thought-provoking modern art, iconic photographs and more.



# Your space!

Has Draped Seated Woman inspired you?  
Why not try some of the methods its creator,  
Henry Moore, used to produce his work?

## Drawing based on a sketch

Henry Moore always carried a sketchbook wherever he went. He would make rough sketches, as well as add notes, so that he could remember exactly what he saw. Later on, he would create a finished drawing, using the sketches and notes as a guide.



Sketches Henry Moore made of Londoners using tube stations to shelter from the Blitz: **Underground Sheltering 1940-41**



The finished drawing: **Tube Shelter Perspective 1941**

Why not do some quick sketches of something that inspires you? Later on, you can use the sketches to create a finished drawing here!

## Photographing a model against a skyline

Henry Moore liked to take photos of his work to record its progress. But he also used photography to help him visualise how a full-sized sculpture would look. To do this he would photograph a model or maquette from below, with trees or a field behind it to give an illusion of greater size.



This lead maquette for **Reclining Figure 1938** is actually only 33cm long

## Found objects

Henry Moore took inspiration from the world around him. When he was out walking in the countryside or at a beach, he would collect natural objects, such as pebbles, bark and animal bones, and take them home with him. These are known as “found objects”. Moore would study found objects to help him come up with ideas for sculptures.



It’s easy to see how Moore’s sculpture, called **Animal Head 1951**, could have been inspired by both a pebble and an animal’s skull

Have a look in your school bag and take out some of your things – such as a rubber, key ring or just scrunched-up scrap paper. Look at your “found objects”. Do their shapes make you think of something else? That could be the start of a great art project!

You could use your phone to take a picture of a small object against the Canary Wharf skyline. Print it out and stick it in here!

**Photos:** All photographs of Henry Moore works reproduced by permission of The Henry Moore Foundation.  
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**Henry Moore** is one of Britain's most famous artists.  
This book tells the story of one of his sculptures,  
**Draped Seated Woman**



**Henry Moore**  
– the sculptor  
and his  
work



**A firm  
friend for  
the people  
of Stepney**



**A new  
beginning in  
Canary Wharf,  
Tower  
Hamlets**

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Published by Canary Wharf Group Plc. Written and designed for Canary Wharf Group Plc by B3 Creative Ltd. [www.b3creative.com](http://www.b3creative.com)

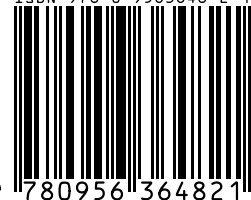
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ISBN 978-0-9563648-2-1



9 780956 364821

ISBN 978-0-9563648-2-1  
£4.99 RRP