



**UH Arts  
+ Culture**

Presented by  
University of Hertfordshire

HENRY MOORE: DRAWING IN THE DARK – 16 DEC TO 16 APR - ST ALBANS MUSEUM + GALLERY – WESTON GALLERY

## ***Henry Moore: Drawing in the Dark***

*The largest collection of Henry Moore's coalmining drawings ever exhibited, at St Albans Museum + Gallery*



*Image: Pit Boys at Pit Head, 1942, Wakefield Permanent Art Collection. Image Courtesy of The Hepworth Wakefield.*

**(Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2022)** The largest exhibition of coalmining drawings by celebrated artist, Henry Moore, will be shown this December at St Albans Museum + Gallery - eighty years since they were completed for the War Artists' Advisory Committee (WAAC).

Moore is famous for his sculpture, particularly of women and abstract forms, and his drawings of Londoners sheltering from the blitz in 1940 are also well known. But it is often forgotten that Moore was the son of a miner from Castleford in Yorkshire, and as a war artist he developed a detailed series of drawings from sketches he made in 1942 at Wheldale Colliery where his father had worked. Moore spent one week in the mine drawing from observation and then worked from memory to create the remaining drawings, which were all completed within six months.

Curated by University of Hertfordshire Arts + Culture programme and played out within the theatre of the dark-walled, subterranean Weston Gallery of St Albans



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Museum + Gallery, the timely exhibition takes inspiration from the new book, *Drawing in the Dark* by art historian, Chris Owen.

This discrete body of work, consisting of over 100 drawings will be showcased alongside sculptures and other works-on-paper. Visitors are invited to journey from quick pencil sketches, through developmental drawings, finished pieces and finally to later works inspired by Moore's coalmining experience. Drawings from the four coalmining sketchbooks will be represented to demonstrate a range of techniques including pencil, ink and wax.

The drawings not only demonstrate the back-breaking labour which nearly 3/4 million miners endured daily, as they made their vital contribution to Britain's war effort, but they also reveal new insights into Moore's life and artistic process. This exhibition offers a unique opportunity to see the leading British Modernist sculptor afresh, through drawings, notes and a rare choice of subject matter.

**Annabel Lucas, curator at University Hertfordshire Arts Programme, says:**

*"It is thrilling to bring such a remarkable collection of drawings and sculptures by Henry Moore to St Albans. We are delighted to unite so many of the coalmining drawings to appreciate their intensity and poignancy, and to reflect on their significance within Moore's wider oeuvre. Through the pages and pages of development sketchbook drawings, the exhibition offers us new insight into the working practices of Britain's greatest modern artist and invites us to look afresh at Moore as a sculptor."*

The new book, 'Drawing in the Dark: Henry Moore's Coalmining Commission', published by Lund Humphries, explores every aspect of the WAAC's commission; from Moore's return to his childhood home and the challenges associated with 'drawing in the dark' to the significant influence of the project on Moore's later work, including the Warrior and Helmet Head sculptures, and his little-known illustrations to W.H. Auden's poetry. It features previously unpublished imagery from the Henry Moore Foundation's archives and its launch will coincide with the exhibition.

**Chris Owen, author of 'Drawing in the Dark' and former head of Cambridge School of Art at Anglia Ruskin University, says:**

*"It is hard to imagine what it must be like, to 'draw in the dark', as Henry Moore did in a Yorkshire coal mine for a week in 1940. Representing miners emerging from the dusty darkness was a real challenge. And add to that, the physical discomfort of working 1400 feet underground in conditions which Moore himself described as 'like hell'. This exhibition will reveal how Moore tackled these difficulties. The resulting drawings are both powerful and haunting."*



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## **Sebastiano Barassi, Head of Henry Moore Collections & Programmes at Henry Moore Foundation, says:**

*“The Henry Moore Foundation is delighted to support this comprehensive and long-overdue presentation of Henry Moore’s coalmining drawings. These powerful images of ‘Britain’s Underground Army’ at work express some of Moore’s deepest creative concerns. As a subject, the coalmine allowed him to indulge his fascination with black and darkness while creating images with the subtlest colourist qualities. With their rare focus on the male body and the figure in action, the coalmining drawings represent one of the highest expressions of Moore’s sympathetic gaze on humanity. As he himself reminded us, ‘without the war ... I think I would have been a far less sensitive and responsible person if I had ignored all that and went on working just as’...”*

## **Farhana Begum, Museums Business Manager, at St Albans Museums, says:**

*“We are delighted to be the first gallery to focus specifically on these remarkable drawings. It is a fantastic collaboration, and we are extremely grateful to the many lenders involved including the Henry Moore Foundation, Henry Moore family, British Museum and National Coalmining Museum.”*

Together, the exhibition and book aim to reveal the importance of this very personal project for understanding Moore's life and work. Whether you're new to Moore, a life-long fan or take an interest in coalmining and World War II, this exhibition offers discovery, excitement and contemplation.



EXHIBITION SUPPORTED BY THE HENRY MOORE FOUNDATION

**Henry Moore: Drawing in the Dark exhibition runs from 16 December 2022 to 16 April 2023 at the Museum + Gallery. Open daily 11am – 5pm.**

Find out more at: [www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk](http://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk) @stalbanmuseums

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For images, interviews or more information please contact:  
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## Notes to Editor:

### About Henry Moore

- Henry Moore is one of the most significant British sculptors of the twentieth century. He was born on 30 July 1898 in Castleford, Yorkshire, the son of a miner and the seventh of eight children.
- In 1942 Henry was commissioned by the 'War Artists' Advisory Committee' to draw a series of coal mining scenes in Wheldale Colliery, in Castleford in Yorkshire, where his father had previously worked.
- For more information, visit: <https://www.henry-moore.org/about-henry-moore>

### About UH Arts + Culture, University of Hertfordshire

- UH Arts + Culture offers a vibrant arts and cultural programme for the University of Hertfordshire's campus and local communities, working cross-arts with artists and performers.
- With a programme of exhibitions, performances, residencies and engagement projects, UH Arts + Culture delivers innovative arts and culture with associated research; offering space for artists and performers to experiment, and audiences to engage and co-produce.
- Working in collaboration with St Albans Museum + Gallery, and other key partners, UH Arts + Culture presents off-campus exhibitions and events, displaying works from around the world in new contexts.
- For more information, visit [www.uharts.co.uk](http://www.uharts.co.uk)

### About St Albans Museum + Gallery

- A state-of-the-art museum, set over 3 floors offering a vibrant schedule of changing exhibitions alongside permanent displays.
- Located in a historic Georgian building formerly the Town Hall with Assembly Room, Courtroom and Cells.
- Follow @stalbansmuseums on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for latest news and updates.
- St Albans Museums' collections comprise a wide range of artefacts relating to the development of St Albans over the centuries, from a market town to the modern City we see today.
- For more information about what is on, visit [www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/whats-on) where you can view full listings.
- St Albans Museum + Gallery is free to visit and open to the public every day 11am – 5pm.

### About Chris Owen

- Chris Owen studied History of Art at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and taught in the Cambridge University History of Art Department, before embarking on a career lecturing in further and higher education.
- After a number of academic posts, he joined Anglia Ruskin University as Head of the Cambridge School of Art in 2011. Since 2019, he has focussed on research into the history of twentieth-century British art.



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- 'Drawing in the Dark: Henry Moore's Coalmining Commission' is published by Lund Humphries, Publishers on Art, Architecture and Design since 1939. For more information visit <https://www.lundhumphries.com/products/drawing-in-the-dark>