

# Foreword

At some point in their career, most artists will look outside their usual references and methodologies in order to feed their creativity. Whereas in the past inspiration was widely seen as a quasi-divine, external intervention that unlocked great art and ideas, today it is considered a conscious and internalised part of the creative process, which not only opens up new ways of thinking and looking, but also positions an artist within a particular tradition.

Throughout his career, Henry Moore found inspiration in a broad range of visual sources. These could be the organic shapes of the bones, stones, seashells and driftwood that he collected for decades and amassed in his studio to create what he described as a “library of natural forms”, or it could be the work of artists he admired: from world art in the British Museum, and the sculpture of Giovanni Pisano, Michelangelo and Auguste Rodin, to the paintings of Rembrandt, J.M.W. Turner and Pablo Picasso. In so doing, Moore placed himself firmly within a canon that shaped European art from the Renaissance onwards, and which culminated with the modernist ideal of the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Despite the breadth of his sources, what Moore saw in his lifetime does not come close to the barrage of information and visual stimuli to which we are exposed today, and which is so deeply affecting the way we look and the way we think. This relentless exposure can be both beneficial and a challenge, but its sheer volume and intensity can often blur our vision and make the significance of our past harder to see. Combined with the pressure to be original and unique, this can make it especially difficult for artists to recognise their relationship with the history of art. Nick Ervinck is a notable exception, openly acknowledging the influence on his work of artists such as Moore, Hans Arp, Barbara Hepworth and Georges Vantongerloo.

Ervinck shares with Moore an interest in organic forms and a fascination with new techniques. Moore’s use of modern materials, such as polystyrene for enlarging sculpture, or felt-tipped pens and photocopies for drawing, may not seem as radical as Ervinck’s use of 3D printing. Yet, each in their own way – and making an allowance for the generational changes between Moore’s modernist formalism and the radically different idea of “making” introduced by conceptualism, which dominates much contemporary practice – the two artists are mainly concerned with pushing boundaries and creating a truly innovative language.

Ervinck’s copying and pasting of digital images into 3D software conceptually echoes Moore’s inclusion of natural objects in his maquettes. As for Moore, cross-fertilisation between different mediums and materials is important to Ervinck. Whether in photography, drawing, sculpture or printing, both artists enjoy testing ideas across a range of techniques and languages. Both are also interested in the relationship of sculpture with the space it inhabits, be it urban architecture, an art gallery or a natural landscape. This, and the associated exploration of the tensions between positive and negative space, of the dialogue between internal and external forms – quintessentially modernist concerns – animates their work with an often playful sense of wonder and joy of discovery, guiding them in the search for modern archetypes that exist somewhere between a kind of timeless biomorphism and the desire to create an art that speaks of, and to, the contemporary world.

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