

Henry Moore Sculpture Ride: 31st January 2023

Group leader: Niejse with help from Mary, Denise and John

The largest ever group of 18 cyclists left Brockwell Park Lido and made our way towards Kennington Park where we then made a change from our usual route and turned right into Royal Road and then into the estate to admire the first sculpture 'Two Piece Reclining Figure no. 3'. This piece was produced in 1961 and subsequently bought by the then LCC as part of a programme to improve local environments after the ravages of the Second World War.



Much discussion took place as to which body parts were represented where as well as the changes in governance of London as the LCC was abolished in 1965. The three groups spent a considerable amount of time here doing their usual 'chattering'.

After this we made our way via Ravensden Road and Milverton Street to 'I Due Amici' in Kennington Lane, where we revived ourselves, after our intellectual and physical exertions, with coffee. From there, it was quite a short route through the backstreets (Black Prince Road; Vauxhall Street; Jonathan Street; Tyler Street) to Vauxhall Park and then using the fantastic cycle route we made our way over Vauxhall Bridge and along Millbank for our second stop to admire 'Locking Piece'. This brass piece was originally installed at the Montreal Expo in 1967 and was after installed here after having previously been gifted to the Tate and then Westminster Council. Just around the corner we found the third sculpture, 'Two piece Reclining Figure no.1'. This was acquired by the Chelsea School of Art in 1959. This piece has also moved around a bit from the Tate to the Royal Academy, to Paris and finally here in 2010. Also of interest here was a donated bollard, once used by boats on the Thames.



Our route then took us to College Green where we stopped to look at one of the most popular sculptures 'Knife Edge', a gift from Moore to the nation in 1967. Apparently he liked the idea that his piece was close to Rodin's 'The Burghers of Calais'. Three pieces were made from the same cast, one was sold to the Rockefeller family and another is in Vancouver.



Off we went to see a very different piece, a relief which was commissioned for the London Underground Headquarters in Broadway. Two other notable sculptors Jacob Epstein and Eric Gill also contributed and Moore is said to have been influenced by Epstein's carvings on the British Museum.



A pleasant route around St James's Park, in front of Buckingham Palace and down the Mall took us to Marlborough Road and up to St James's Street. This enabled us to cross Piccadilly at the lights and continue up Albemarle Street to take us to New Bond Street. Once here the group was as interested in the new window displays by the well-known artist Yayoi Kusama in the Louis Vuitton shop as in the Moore sculpture! The sculpture was a screen, part of the building but not fully integrated into it so that he could sculpt on both sides. It was built for the company Time Life and once again was an expression of confidence in post-war Britain.



Our next stop was Kensington Gardens, so we cycled through various parts of Hyde Park depending on our group but all arrived to enjoy 'The Arch' and the view through to Kensington Palace. Made of travertine, 'The Arch' stands on the north bank of the Long Water and was presented to the nation in 1980 to celebrate his 80th birthday.

Lunch in the Serpentine café was welcome and then the group split, some went home via Victoria and the train and the rest made our way out of Albert Gate and down a well researched route led by Mary, to Chelsea Bridge where we took a not so well researched route led by Denise (!) to find the last piece "Three Standing Figures". Having agreed that the ride and walk through the park was worth it in itself we then came across them (with a little help from a local woman). It was a piece reminiscent of Moore's drawings of people in bomb shelters during the war. Although originally due to go to New York, it was donated to the LCC and Moore himself chose the position in the park on a small mound facing the lake. As we suspect others have done before, Jo enjoyed acquainting himself with the figures!



The new route back down by the side of the American Embassy took us on a nice quiet route back to Albert Square and home.

A big thank you to John Clements who planned the ride initially and has found even more great ways to get us around London and explore the sites. It is a real shame he was elsewhere sunning himself or swimming in the pool or sea and couldn't be with us on the day.

Attached are John's more detailed notes on the pieces we saw and details of others scattered around London which some of you may wish to visit at some point.