

Modern British Sculpture

The current market for Modern British sculpture is a truly International one, with buyers focusing mainly on the great names such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, whose work reaches multi-million-pound record prices at auction.

However, beneath these mega prices lie excellent buying opportunities at a lower level. This is particularly true for Henry Moore works which, despite a current world record of £25,000,000 for a monumental piece of sculpture in London in 2016, can still be obtained, albeit much smaller pieces, for the bargain price of £5,000!

20th century sculpture, including all the Modern British artists, was mainly produced in limited editions, all of which are backed up by reliable and well illustrated complete catalogues, so they come with built in back up as it were. Also, as the editions are often in eight or more you are in with a chance of getting another one if you get beaten at auction first time round, as rather like buses there may be another from the same edition coming along soon.... Equally with multiples you can get a real-time feel for the market and keep track of the value of your pieces via the various online auction tools. In addition to Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, I am very keen on Dame Elisabeth Frink's sculpture and I give some examples of current and historic prices for comparison below.

Henry Moore



Right at the top end of the Henry Moore sculpture market is this glorious, large 'signature' work by Henry Moore. The title is 'Reclining Figure, Festival', and was made in 1951 to celebrate the Festival of Britain. It is from an edition of five and is 231 cms wide. This piece is the current auction record holder at £25,000,000 and was sold in London in June 2016. Another from this same edition of five sold back in 2012, again in London, for £19,000,000.



On a much more affordable scale, you can find small pieces by Henry Moore which come up for auction all over the world, such was his International reputation.

Both pieces above are four inches high, from recorded limited editions and sold in 2019 for around £5,000!

'Animal Head, Open Mouth', 13 cms high, bronze, dated 1982, sold Nov 2019 in London, for £5,062

'Mother and Child', Bronze, dated 1967, five inches high, sold in the USA in 2019 for \$5,000



Barbara Hepworth



The above work by Dame Barbara Hepworth, is called 'Figure for Landscape' 1960. It sold in London in June 2014 and is the current auction record holder at £4,170,000.



There are fewer works by Hepworth available at the lower price ranges than we see with Moore, the entry level being around £20,000 to £30,000 generally.

The piece above is a very stylish 60s piece by Dame Barbara Hepworth. It's called 'Reclining Solitary Form', 1961, bronze, 9 cms wide and from an edition of 10. This particular piece was the artist's copy and is numbered 0/0 which makes it a bit special. It sold in London in Nov 2019 for £37,500.



This Hepworth is only 25.2 cms high but looks and feels much larger. It dates from 1966 and is a maquette or model for a much larger piece called 'One Eye'. This one sold in New York in 2019 for \$212,500.

Elisabeth Frink

Dame Elisabeth Frink, RA is a particular favourite with collectors and, like Moore, her work is found all over the world. However, unlike Moore, it mainly finds its way back to the UK for sale. The highest prices are for life size horses and over life size male figures. However, I have chosen a few examples of the most popular pieces depicting the British people's favourite subjects, dogs and horses!



This particularly charming Frink dog dates from 1992 and is from an edition of 8. It is called 'Study for Leonardo's Dog' and is a very manageable 23 cms high and is hugely popular. This particular one is number 6 in the edition and made £112,000 versus its £50-80,000 pre sale estimate in a London auction in January 2020. For comparison the artist's copy from this same edition made £62,500 back in 2011.



Below is another firm favourite Frink. It's known as the G.O.S. dog as it was produced in an edition of 50, to raise funds for Great Ormond Street hospital back in 1992. It is a handy 29 cms high and so sits happily on a desk. This particular one is number 10 and made £162,500 in November 2019, the estimate was £50-80,000. They don't come up for sale often as people hate to part with them!

If you had bought yours back in 2001 and 2005 they would have cost you £27,000 and £31,000 respectively.



Finally the ultimate small Frink Horse is 'Rolling Horse' from 1985. It's 42 cms long and very tactile. This one above is no five from the edition of nine and made £100,000 versus an estimate of £40-60,000 in London in January 2020. Back in 2003 and 2005 two others from the same edition, made £57,000 and £86,000 respectively, as everyone who loves horses loves this piece.