

<b>Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, case 11 Hans Coper Monumental bottle with disc top</b>	
<b>Statement from Expert Adviser</b>	Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the bottle meets Waverley criteria one, two, and three  <b>See below</b>
<b>Statement from the Applicant</b>	Statement from the applicant referencing the three Waverley criteria. The Reviewing Committee will designate an object as a 'national treasure' if it considers that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune on one or more of the following three grounds:  a) Is it closely connected with our history and national life? b) Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance? c) Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?  <b>See below</b>
<b>Note of case hearing</b>	<b>See below</b>
<b>Press release</b>	A press release was issued by the Secretary of State on 8 December 2023: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hans-coper-bottle-at-risk-of-leaving-the-uk">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hans-coper-bottle-at-risk-of-leaving-the-uk</a>
<b>Recommended price</b>	£584,200 (plus VAT of £24,840 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution and ARR of £7,791.87)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Deferral period</b>	10 March 2024
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Deferral period</b>	
<b>Note of outcome</b>	

## **RCEWA – Hans Coper Monumental bottle with disc top**

**Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the bottle meets Waverley criteria one, two, and three.**

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### *Monumental bottle with disc top*

Stoneware, layered porcelain slips and engobes over a textured body, the neck, lip and interior with a manganese glaze

Height. 66.5 cm

Made by Hans Coper (1920–1981)

c. 1959–62

#### **Condition**

The work appears to be in excellent condition.

#### **Provenance**

Harry Fischer, commissioned directly from the artist

Henry Moore collection, gifted from the above

#### **Literature**

David Mitchinson, *Hoglands: The Home of Henry and Irina Moore*, Aldershot, 2007, illustrated pp. 89, 97, 108, 169.

#### **Comparable objects (public collections)**

A much later, slightly smaller, tall bottle of broadly similar form, made by Hans Coper in 1972, is in the Crafts Council Collection (P38).

#### **Waverley Criteria**

The item meets Waverley criteria 1, 2 and 3. (1) The provenance and commissioning of the work connects two major 20th-century artists, Hans Coper and Henry Moore, through a third pivotal art world figure, Harry Fischer. The bottle was a prominent feature in the interior scheme of Hoglands, the home of Henry Moore, and was present there throughout his life, displayed in the large sitting room where he entertained guests. Hoglands was acquired by the Henry Moore Foundation and has been open to the public since 2007. The commission is also emblematic of the transformative influence of Jewish émigrés on post-war British art. (2) The bottle is of outstanding aesthetic importance in its own right, standing as one of the finest and earliest fully-resolved examples of Coper's occasional series of monumental bottles, made in the later 1960s and early 70s. (3) It is also of exceptional significance to the study of the work of Hans Coper – which at that time was undergoing considerable development, exploring scale and relationships with architecture, including his production of monumental candlesticks for Coventry

Cathedral. It is also of significance to the understanding of Moore, though his collecting and display of art and artefacts.

## **DETAILED CASE**

This monumental stoneware bottle vase – an exceptional and early example of a signature form made by the potter Hans Coper – connects three leading figures: Coper himself, the sculptor Henry Moore, and the gallerist Harry Fischer, Moore's agent and co-founder of Marlborough Fine Art. The bottle was commissioned by Fischer from Coper as a gift to Moore and was subsequently placed prominently in the sculptor's home, Hoglands, where it remained for the rest of his life.

Hans Coper (1920–1981) is arguably the most important artist-potter to work in Britain in the 20th century. He can, together with Lucie Rie, be credited with bringing a Modern European sensibility to post-war British ceramics. He was responsive both to the contemporary world, but also – like Moore – to ancient sources, including Cycladic art. Coper can be seen to have evolved an entirely new visual language of pottery, in which ceramic forms assumed the characteristics of sculpture. Edward Lucie-Smith for example stated that 'he [Coper], Moore and Hepworth are very close both in interests and sensibility'<sup>i</sup>, while David Queensberry, Professor of Ceramics at the Royal College of Art, wrote that by the late-1960s, 'Hans's work could be placed beside the great sculptors of the twentieth century, such as Moore, Brancusi and Hepworth, and hold its own.'<sup>ii</sup> His impact on subsequent generations of ceramic artists has been profound.<sup>iii</sup>

Born in Chemnitz, Germany, to a part-Jewish family, Coper arrived in the UK in 1939 as an émigré. During the Second World War, he served in the Pioneer Corps alongside other German and Austrian refugees, including Fischer. In 1946 he found work in London with the Austrian potter and fellow émigré, Lucie Rie. With Rie's support, Coper learnt to pot, initially assisting in the production of her work, but soon producing his own work in her studio, which he shared until 1958. As early as 1950, he was showing alongside Rie as an equal in joint exhibitions at the Berkeley Galleries (until 1956).

During the 1950s, Coper continually refined the restricted range of materials and processes that he habitually employed. These typically involved the combination of black manganese pigment and white slips over a whitish stoneware body, cutting or abrading through successive layers, and exploring surface qualities and textures in a manner akin to the patination of sculpture. Increasingly, he focused on a number of signature forms, which he worked on in evolving series. Around 1958, he explored a range of distinct, upright, bottle forms, among which were the precedents for the current monumental bottle.<sup>iv</sup> The following January, Coper left Rie's studio to take up accommodation at the newly-founded Digswell Arts Trust in Hertfordshire. This marked the start of what he termed his 'architectural period', during which he carried out a number of important public commissions, above all his celebrated group of six monumental candlesticks – each 7ft high – for Coventry Cathedral, the upright disc-topped forms of which bear a relation to the current bottle.

The exact date of Fischer's commission from Coper is not known.<sup>v</sup> The catalogue for the bottle's sale at Phillips proposes a date of c.1959,<sup>vi</sup> which is plausible based on the development of comparable forms. However, an earlier reference to Moore's bottle states that it was made after he had expressed interest in Coper's Coventry Cathedral candleholders, which were installed prior to the consecration of the Cathedral on 25 May 1962.<sup>vii</sup> Given the bottle was commissioned as a Christmas present for Moore, a date of 1962 seems entirely possible. This would also align with fellow Digswell resident Peter Collingwood's recollection that Coper largely abandoned thrown work in his first two years at Digswell.<sup>viii</sup> Irrespective of its precise date, it is evident that the bottle is an exceptionally fine and early example of its type, thrown in sections, with a further coil of clay added and thrown outwards to form its distinctive horizontal disc top. Coper went on to produce a small number of monumental bottles of this form – each with variant details – with more closely dateable examples being made around 1965 and later.<sup>ix</sup> As a work, it is powerful, vigorous, and resolved, demonstrating Coper's ability to conceive forms that are immediately identifiable as his own, and to make work that functions at an architectural scale.

Coper's monumental bottle was evidently much-admired by Moore and his wife Irina, and it was given pride of place beside the French windows of the large sitting room of their home, Hoglands, at Perry Green, Hertfordshire. Completed in 1960, the large sitting room was the most important part of the house for entertaining guests, and the bottle would have been seen by the many distinguished visitors and members of the international art world that came to the house.<sup>x</sup> It can be seen in numerous photographs of the interior, often containing the stems of giant reedmace ('bulrushes') or pampas grass.<sup>xi</sup> A note from Errol Jackson who photographed it in 1983 records that 'Mrs Moore particularly liked this vase and cautioned me to be most careful when handling it.'<sup>xii</sup> It is understood that the bottle was removed from Hoglands at some point after Irina's death in 1989, and it was not present in 2004 when the house was acquired by the Henry Moore Foundation and cleared for restoration. Open to the public since 2007, Hoglands contains many artefacts, books and works of art from the Moore's personal collection, lent by the Moore family. The bottle has not, however, returned to the house.

The intimate connections between the bottle and the interior of Hoglands, and specifically to the semi-public arena of the sitting room where Moore entertained and did business, suggests a powerful link to history and national life. The importance of Hoglands has since been recognised through its restoration and opening to the public. The bottle meanwhile unites the lives of three leading figures of the British art world, two of them émigrés from Germany and Austria, this itself an important part of national life and history.<sup>xiii</sup> The bottle is an outstanding example of Coper's art, and an early exemplar of one of his signature forms. It is of importance both in aesthetic terms, and in its role in understanding the development of his practice. It is also significant to the understanding of Moore, in the context of his collection of art and artefacts, and the works he chose to surround himself with.

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<sup>i</sup> Cyril Frankel, *Modern Pots: Hans Coper, Lucie Rie & their Contemporaries* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2000), p. 18.

<sup>ii</sup> *Crafts*, 54 (1982), p. 34.

<sup>iii</sup> See for example the tributes of Elizabeth Fritsch and Alison Britton in: *Crafts*, 54 (1982), pp. 34–5.

<sup>iv</sup> Tony Birks, *Hans Coper* (Catrine, 2013), illustration, p.103.

<sup>v</sup> No mention of the commission has been found in correspondence between Moore and Fischer, or elsewhere, in the archives of the Henry Moore Foundation.

<sup>vi</sup> Phillips, *Design* (London: 26 April 2023), lot 98.

<sup>vii</sup> Margot Coatts (ed.), *Lucie Rie and Hans Coper: Potters in Parallel*, exh. cat. (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1997), note to cat. no. 14.10, p. 147. The same version of events is given by Birks, cited in note 4, p. 49.

<sup>viii</sup> *Crafts*, 54 (1982), p. 38.

<sup>ix</sup> Examples include a bottle originally exhibited at the Berkeley Galleries in 1965, formerly in the collection of Galerie Besson, see Coatts (1997), cat. no. 14.11, as cited at note 7. This bottle was sold at Bonhams, London, 4 October, 2022 in the sale *Design*, lot 41.

<sup>x</sup> David Mitchinson, *Hoglands: The Home of Henry and Irina Moore* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 15. On the many visitors, see also Andrew Causey, 'Visitors to Perry Green', pp. 89–93 in the same publication.

<sup>xi</sup> See Mitchinson (2007), cited at note 10, pp. 89, 97, 108, 169, and attached image.

<sup>xii</sup> Errol Jackson Archive, Henry Moore Foundation, notes to negatives HM690/1–12 (17 February 1983).

<sup>xiii</sup> Fischer's significance as a transformative figure of the British art world has increasingly been recognised. He played an important role in introducing modern German art to the London art market, while his collection of books subsequently donated to the V&A included the only known complete inventory of works of art removed from German museums and galleries by the Nazi regime. On Fischer, see *Brave New Visions: The émigrés who transformed the British art world* (London: Sotheby's, 2019), pp.20–1, and 'Harry Fischer: Art Dealer', biography, Ben Uri Research Unit, online: <https://www.buru.org.uk/record.php?id=667>.

## **RCEWA – Hans Coper Monumental bottle with disc top**

### **Applicant's statement**

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

### **Is the item closely connected with our history and national life?**

In our opinion, Hans Coper's Monumental bottle with disc top, circa 1959 cannot be closely connected with our history and national life. Whilst the work comes from the Henry Moore family collection and therefore links 2 important artists, it has no exhibition history in the UK and is largely undocumented. It was a domestic object that Moore lived with in his home, evident by the period image illustrated online. Moore did not commission it himself, it was commissioned by Harry Fischer, cofounder of Moore's agents, Marlborough Fine Art, and gifted to Moore.

### **Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?**

We don't believe that this particular work meets the high bar of having 'outstanding' aesthetic importance in and of itself. Although it is large in its size, it is not unusually so for works by Coper of this era. Coper was capable of making much larger pieces and therefore we wouldn't consider this to be the pinnacle of this type of work from his oeuvre. Large scaled pieces do appeal to certain people in the market, however, this does not necessarily equate to those being the most important examples in existence. We have to look at this Lot within the context of other large scaled works which were sold and left the UK. On its own, it can only be seen as a transitional object, there are more emblematic and evolved 'bottle' form examples which are more aesthetically resolved than the present work. Those also include examples where an export license was required and subsequently granted: Hans Coper Important tall bottle vase with disc, circa 1968 (sold at Bonhams London Design, Tuesday, 4th October 2022, Lot 41 – which set the world auction record for a Hans Coper at the time), Hans Coper Monumental 'Writhlington School' pot, 1972 (sold at Phillips London The Art of Fire: Selections from the Dr John P. Driscoll Collection, 10th November 2021, Lot 10), Hans Coper Bottle with disc top, circa 1972 (sold at Phillips London Design, 2nd November 2022, Lot 77) and we know of another of this type, which sold privately and was exported from the UK.

### **Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?**

Aside from perhaps the desire to historically recreate Moore's living room, the work in question, as an individual object, does not add significantly to the study of Coper as a potter or artist. We believe that there are other earlier pots made by Coper from the late 1950s which could be considered more useful pieces for public display which would give a clearer understanding and demonstration of Coper's aspiration to be considered part of the Modern British Art Movement. Such works are those which are

more graphic in their design and nature, such as: Hans Coper Important early pot, circa 1952 (sold at Phillips London Design 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023, Lot 96), Hans Coper Large bowl, circa 1955 (sold at Phillips New York Design 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021, Lot 57), Hans Coper Large dish, circa 1950 (sold at Phillips London The Art of Fire: Selections from the Dr John P. Driscoll Collection, 10th November 2021, Lot 4), Hans Coper Large bowl, circa 1955 (sold at Phillips London Design 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014, Lot 225). Furthermore, the later, more resolved, refined, sculptural works, in terms of purity of form such as those 'Cycladic' form works do more to comment on Coper's practice from this particular era.

<b>Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, note of case hearing</b>	
<b>Meeting date</b>	Wednesday 8 November 2023
<b>Object</b>	Hans Coper Monumental bottle with disc top
<b>Expert Adviser's objection</b>	<p>The Senior Curator, Ceramics and Glass 1900–now, Victoria and Albert Museum, had objected to the export of the bottle under the first, second and third Waverley criteria on the grounds that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune because it was so closely connected with our history and national life; it was of outstanding aesthetic importance and it was of outstanding significance for the study of study of the work of Hans Coper and the understanding of Moore, through his collecting and display of art and artefacts.</p> <p>The expert adviser was represented at the meeting by the Curator, Ceramics and Glass 1800-1900, Victoria and Albert Museum.</p>
<b>Committee Members &amp; Independent Assessors</b>	All of the regular eight Committee members were present and able to inspect the bottle. They were joined in person by three independent assessors, acting as temporary members of the Committee. One Committee member recused themselves from participating in the discussion and voting due to a conflict of interest.
<b>Value on the licence</b>	The value shown on the export licence application was £584,200, which represented the hammer price at auction (£460,000) plus the buyer's premium (£124,200). Artist Resale Royalty would also be payable (£7,791.87).
	<p>The applicant was informed that there was currently an interim process in place for Committee hearings. The Committee was still holding hybrid meetings but any Committee members, including the independent assessors, were required to inspect the object under consideration prior to discussing the case and voting. Any permanent Committee members or independent assessors who were not able to view the object were not able to vote.</p> <p>The applicant confirmed that the owner understood the circumstances under which an export licence might be refused.</p>
<b>VAT</b>	The applicant confirmed that the value did not include VAT and that VAT of £24,840 would be payable on the buyer's premium



	<p>in the event of a UK sale. The sale could be structured so that an eligible UK institution could reclaim the VAT.</p>
<b>Private treaty sale</b>	<p>The applicant confirmed that there would be a tax benefits from a private treaty sale to a UK institution.</p>
<b>Expert Adviser's comments</b>	<p>The expert adviser stated that they did have additions to their submission in response to the applicant's statement.</p> <p>They contested the idea that because the bottle had been gifted to Henry Moore and was used in a domestic setting, that it was not "exhibited". The bottle would have been displayed prominently in Moore's living room, a kind of public arena within his private home at Hoglands.</p> <p>They argued that this bottle represented a pivotal moment in Coper's practice, and the era in which it was made was an essential period for him as an artist. They noted that the bottle had been described as transitional and challenged this idea. They argued that it was a fully resolved piece and the earliest of its type and scale. Further, they stated that Henry Moore was at the height of his fame when the bottle was commissioned as a gift to him by Harry Fischer. They concluded that Coper would not have produced an unresolved object for such a commission.</p>
<b>Applicant's comments</b>	<p>The applicant responded to the additions by the expert adviser.</p> <p>They noted that Hans Coper was well-known for returning to forms again and again throughout his career but that the form of this bottle was not one he revisited. They reiterated that the piece was transitional and not fully resolved, citing the less-pronounced shoulders of the bottle and the disc top that was not as thin as those that he would go on to make. They stated that other, later pieces were more resolved and definitive of Coper's style.</p>
<b>Committee's discussion</b>	<p>The expert adviser and applicant retired and the Committee discussed the case.</p> <p>They agreed that the bottle was an impressive and attractive form with an extremely interesting and unique provenance. They noted that the debate around whether the piece was transitional was complex with hindsight, but that work regarded as transitional should not be demeaned as it highlighted an artist's development. They recognised that the piece should be understood within the unstable post-war era when it was made</p>

	<p>which may have contributed to Coper creating something solid and immovable. Additionally, they noted that Coper would certainly have known of Henry Moore’s significance and would have produced his best for such a revered artist.</p> <p>They noted that this was an impressive piece, particularly due to its scale, as Coper worked like an engineer, putting pieces together in sections. This piece typified his interest in aesthetic form and the intersection of architecture and sculpture.</p> <p>They concluded that this bottle represented a junction box, connecting various avenues of potential study, such as the influence on future potters, artists as collectors, and artists as teachers in the UK in the 20th century. They highlighted that very little has been written on studio ceramics of this particular period, and that the trinity of Hans Coper, Henry Moore, and Harry Fischer expressed in this object was of outstanding significance to further research on the subject. Additionally, all Coper's archives were destroyed on his death as per his wishes; therefore, objects such as this are key to understanding his significance.</p>
<p><b>Waverley Criteria</b></p>	<p>The Committee voted on whether the bottle met the Waverley criteria. Of the ten voting members, seven members voted that it met the first Waverley criterion. Ten members voted that it met the second Waverley criterion. Ten members voted that it met the third Waverley criterion. The bottle was therefore found to meet the first, second, and third Waverley criteria for its outstanding significance to the study of the work of Hans Coper and the wider interdisciplinary modern British art movement, and the understanding of Moore, through his collecting and display of art and artefacts.</p>
<p><b>Matching Offer</b></p>	<p>The Committee recommended the sum of £584,200 (plus VAT of £24,840 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution and ARR of £7,791.87) as a fair matching price.</p>
<p><b>Deferral periods</b></p>	<p>The Committee agreed to recommend to the Secretary of State that the decision on the export licence should be deferred for an initial period of three months. At the end of the first deferral period, if the Arts Council received notification of a serious intention to raise funds with a view to making an offer to purchase the bottle, the owner will have a consideration period of 15 Business Days to consider such offer(s) and to enter into an Option Agreement with the offeror(s), should they decide to</p>

	<p>do so. The Committee recommended that there should be a further deferral period of three months to commence signature of any such Option Agreement.</p>
<b>Communication of findings</b>	<p>The expert adviser and the applicant returned. The Chairman notified them of the Committee's decision on its recommendations to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The expert adviser agreed that the expert they were representing would act as champion if a decision on the licence was deferred by the Secretary of State.</p>