

In the name of the father

Mary Moore, the only child of Henry Moore, swung with the arty 1960s crowd, but was always aware of her future responsibilities to her father's legacy. Interview by Naomi West. Photograph by Ellen Nolan

Above Mary Moore, aged six, with her father, Henry Moore, and his sculpture 'Standing Figure' (1950), at their house in Much Hadham in 1952. **Right** Mary Moore near her home in London

My mother always used to say, "We sacrifice everything for art", says Mary Moore, the only child of the late sculptor Henry Moore, in her distinctive resounding tones. 'It was kind-of a joke, but it was true that every day was designed in order to achieve as much art as could be achieved. We didn't resent it, but it took up every minute.'

Mary Moore, now 58, is a small, spry woman with her father's broad features topped by tawny bobbed hair. Sitting in the front room of her red-brick Hammersmith townhouse, wearing a brown 1950s skirt decorated with brightly coloured amphoras, she is reflecting that 'art' is still taking up a large proportion of her time.

For the past two years, she has been engaged with the Henry Moore Foundation in the long process of restoring Hoglands – the home near the Hertfordshire village of Much Hadham where she grew up and where her father lived and worked for 46 years. They intend to carefully recreate each room as it was. Moore has so far inventoried 2,000 items, from Degas sculptures to Sellotape tins filled with pencils. It is hoped that the house will open to the public by summer 2007.

'The house was totally opposite to an English floral, Colefax and Fowler look. My mother loved cactuses – she had over 300. She used furnishing fabrics with a spiky print that my father designed for [the now defunct textile company] Asher in yellows, browns, black and whites. She had a bright yellow carpet which she guarded with her life.'

But the principal reason Moore has agreed to be interviewed is another of her projects – the eponymous vintage-clothing shop she has recently opened in west London. The entire stock is taken from her own well-preserved second-hand wardrobe of clothes, which she began collecting in the mid-1960s from antique markets such as Chelsea's Antiquarius, and from visits to Los Angeles and San Francisco. 'Everyone connected with music or magazines or art was wearing vintage then. We wore 1940s silk evening dresses to go shopping down Bond Street – it was a look,' she says.

Inside the small boutique wallpapered with a red-and-black poppy print from the Cole and Son archive, the rails are filled with a mix of curios and beauties – in sizes ranging from 8 to 12, and priced from £50 to £1,000. There is a shift dress covered with brown zebras, a pair of plastic peep-toe shoes painted with impressionistic flowers, a burnt-orange 1940s velvet gown, and a knee-length dress the colour of a collared dove, set with slender lace panels. Every Saturday, Moore mans the shop herself. 'I get a real buzz from it,' she says.

When Mary was born in 1946, her father was 47, and her Russian mother, Irina, 39. The couple had met at the Royal College of Art, where Henry taught and Irina was studying painting, and had married in 1929. Their keenly awaited child completed a tight family unit at Hoglands. The intimacy and warmth with which Moore describes her 'incredibly generous father', the son of a Yorkshire miner, is equalled by a sheer fascination for her 'distant, almost absent' mother. 'I would like to write a book about her,' she says.

Irina Radetzky was born to the beautiful and restless Barbara, 'a truly horrific character', who abandoned Irina aged six to be brought up by her grandmother in Kiev. During the Revolution they sheltered in a deaf and dumb school, often going without food. When Irina was 11 her grandmother died of cancer. 'My mother told me how she buried



her grandmother in a sheet,' Moore remembers. Barbara, at the time romantically involved with a British Army officer, eventually sent for Irina, who went to live with her step-grandparents in London.

Moore explains matter-of-factly that her father was 'both father and mother to me, in a way. My mother was physically extremely undemonstrative. She almost shrunk from caresses. She was like a cat, half-wild because she had had no mother at all. I remember her actually sitting and eating tins of condensed milk, which I think was because she'd had that experience of starvation.'

Despite Henry Moore's growing fame and success, domestic life was well-regulated: 'breakfast, elevenses, lunch, tea and supper'. Irina had given up her painting years before, to devote herself to Henry's career. Always impeccably dressed herself, Irina would sew Mary and her teddies matching outfits. The family holidayed each year in Broadstairs until 1956, then at Forte dei Marmi on the Tuscan coast, where Mary still spends every August with her children, Gus, Jane and Henry. Their home at Much Hadham was full of pets – cats, a dog, a budgie, guinea pigs and sometimes sick animals, like the baby hedgehog injured by a pitchfork which Irina nursed back to health by feeding it milk from an ink dropper.

Their rural idyll was frequently punctuated by visits from friends, celebrities and art-world luminaries. Mary recalls one afternoon when the art collector Peggy Guggenheim visited for tea. 'She must have been over 80, and she was wearing a pair of shorts and gold stack-heeled sandals. She had on her arm a young Italian gigolo who was carrying this kind of whoopee cushion for her to sit on. I remember being absolutely gobsmacked, and my mother commenting afterwards what a hell of a time he must be having,' Moore laughs throatily.

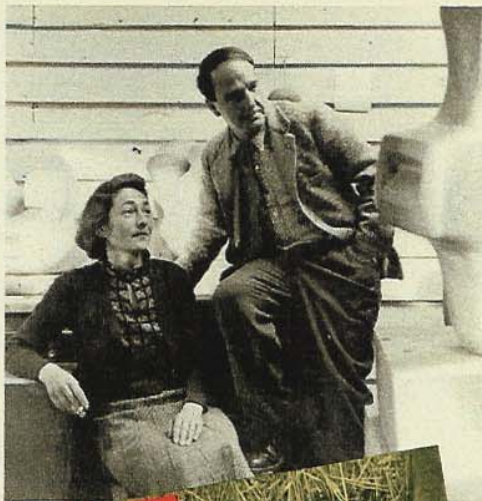
As an only child, Mary was treated like an adult, included in grown-up conversations, and allowed to go 'wherever I wanted. They let me go on the

Boyfriends would be subjected to a Henry Moore-devised test that was almost impossible to pass. 'They were asked their top 10 favourite artists, while we would sit there seeing if they measured up'

Aldermaston CND march.' In her teens she was sent to board at Cranbourne Chase ('we wore our grey skirts short and tight, with fishnet stockings and long sloppy sweaters for a beatnik look'), and then studied for her A-levels at two London cram-mers – at one AS Byatt was her much-admired English tutor. During that period she lived with her parents' friends, the poet Stephen Spender and his wife, Natasha, and also studied life drawing at the Slade School of Fine Art.

'I had a very hard time at the Slade,' she says. Boys would invite me on dates and then take great pleasure in not turning up just to be able to say that they'd stood me up. I was completely naive and always went to every date, never suspecting anyone could have such a motive.' Those art-student boyfriends who did bother with Mary enough to get invited to Hoglands would be subjected to a Henry Moore-devised test which was almost impossible to pass. 'If a new boyfriend came for supper, he would be asked for his top 10 favourite artists, while we would all sit there seeing if he would measure up. My father's top 10 were the greats – Giotto, Cimabue, Rembrandt, Michelangelo... I can't remember them all, but Leonardo da Vinci didn't make it, nor did Picasso.'

After graduating in English from St Anne's



Top Henry Moore and his wife, Irina, in 1943.

Above a 'Picture Post' cover showing father and daughter in 1948. **Below** Mary in 1965



College, Oxford, Moore hung out in London for a spell, handpainting silk shirts for the fashionable Beauchamp Place boutique Deborah and Clare. 'I really wanted to be a cinematographer, but I don't think I had the guts to do it. I sort of fiddled around at the edge of movies,' she remembers. Her father was friends with a Hollywood executive, Taft Schreiber, who arranged for her to be an observer on a film being made in New Mexico. It was *Easy Rider*. 'I was only there for a very short time – suddenly Taft realised he'd sent me totally where he shouldn't send a friend's daughter and got me back.' Instead she ended up at Billy Wilder's elbow watching the making of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* at Pinewood.

During this time, Mary began to take on the public role usually filled by an artist's wife, as a gregarious stand-in for her gregarious father at exhibitions he could not attend. 'I did it because my mother didn't like doing it – although I did it rather badly. I probably drank too much, I probably went off with the wrong guy at the end of the evening, which you're totally not meant to do.'

Despite her bohemian party-girl reputation (she was the girlfriend of the Liverpool poet Brian Patten for a spell and illustrated some of his books), Moore says that she always 'had a tremendous sense that I was the only child and that the responsibility for this legacy could rest on me'.

By 1976, along with her American husband Raymond Danowski, whom she met while he was working for the art dealer Wildenstein's, she had developed the idea that her father should establish a charitable foundation. Such an institution would preserve his body of work, and keep his sculpture park and lands intact, as well as providing support for sculpture in general.

Henry Moore gave the foundation hundreds of his sculptures, maquettes, drawings and lithographs, and, with Irina, donated some of his properties and land. The proceeds from works he created thereafter would go to fund the foundation. But the process of creating the foundation became as complex and unwieldy as 'turning a massive liner around in the middle of the ocean,' Mary says. 'There weren't other foundations in England; we didn't have a template to follow. There were conflicts of interest, because the idea of a foundation meant many things to many people.'

For Lord Goodman, the influential lawyer who devised how the foundation would operate and who became a chairman, it had the potential to be a second Arts Council, a major source of funding for British fine art at a time when Thatcher's government was cutting back.

As the still-prolific 78-year-old Henry Moore had to become a £25,000-a-year salaried employee of a subsidiary company of the foundation, his working life was completely changed. 'My father had been his own man. He had been able to give away anything he wanted to anyone. For him and all his employees it was very tough – suddenly he could not write a cheque to buy a piece of stone or a bag of plaster. Every day there was something which had to be done differently.'

One of effects of the foundation – the reduction of Moore's considerable tax burden – became the focus of press reports, but Mary counters that this was not the main aim. 'We did it because we truly believed what we were doing was for the greater good. My mother was dragged into it screaming. I gave up my inheritance. But we did it for art.'

To add to the complications, Moore was pregnant with her first child, Gus, while they

were setting up the foundation – he was born days after it officially came into being in early 1977. ‘Gus was my physiological priority, which rather took my brain away. I would be going to meetings with lawyers in between feeding him,’ she recalls.

Although she resigned as a trustee in 1980 (when she moved with her husband to Cape Town, where she had two more children, Jane and Henry), her tenacity in protecting her father’s legacy has perhaps grown even stronger since. Following her father’s death in 1986 and her mother’s in 1989, the foundation came up with ambitious plans to build extra galleries and a study centre on the land at Much Hadham. Moore was strongly opposed to the idea. ‘I remembered my father saying how much he had learned from visiting Rodin’s studio, which was left as it was. I took a very archaeological and academic point of view – that you just leave exactly what was there before, and that will speak to future generations.’

This argument coincided with another dispute between Moore and the foundation over the ownership of a substantial number of his works – she claimed that the artist’s copies of sculptures that he had produced since 1977 belonged to his personal estate rather than the Henry Moore Foundation. The lengthy, messy dispute was reported blow-by-blow in the press under headlines like ‘What a carve up!’ and ‘A daughter’s rights, or wrongs?’

By the mid-1990s, Moore explains, ‘the two things together had caused a great deal of bitterness, which I regret. The foundation’s building project at Much Hadham didn’t end up happening; and we lost the other case over the artist’s copies and I had to pay the costs. It was a very difficult time, because at that moment my husband left me.’

Eight years later, Moore has gone a long way



Henry Moore became a grandfather for the first time when Mary gave birth to Gus in 1977

towards overcoming what arts commentators described in 1996 as ‘irreparable animosity’ between her and the Henry Moore Foundation.

‘I hope that I’ve become a much nicer person, a much more courageous person and a much more competent person because of what I’ve had to do.’

Moore’s three children, now grown-ups, are all away from home at present – Gus, 27, is an actor in New York, Jane, 23, is on a post-university gap year in Australia and New Zealand, and Henry, 19, is a drummer at music college in Boston who plays in a punk band called Tellison. Moore is still married to Danowski, but they remain separated.

Mary has described the development of her relationship with her father as he grew older as ‘a kind of King Lear story’. The wounding blow to her father was her move to South Africa in 1980. ‘That really broke my parents’ hearts,’ she says. Her father hated being separated from Mary and his adored new grandson Gus, whom he had sketched repeatedly as a baby. Henry Moore also held strong anti-apartheid views and would not have

dreamt of living in South Africa. ‘I didn’t particularly want to go,’ Mary now says, ‘but Raymond did and I was committed to my family.’ (Danowski, a book collector who has recently donated the largest ever individual collection of English language poetry to the library of Emory University, was involved in arranging numerous donations of books to schools and libraries in South Africa.)

Mary and her father did not see each other again until 1983, when Moore’s health sharply deteriorated. By 1985 she had moved back to England permanently, and encouraged her father to continue to sketch and model in Plasticine from his bed at Hoglands. ‘He kept drawing until his last flickers. But by then he had become “institutionalised” – the idea of him as an individual and an artist became fused with the idea of him as an institution. That enormous change had weakened him, knocked the wind out of his sails.’

Mary Moore still gets visibly upset at the thought of her father’s work being ill-served. ‘If I see one of his sculptures and the condition or the patina is bad, like the one outside the Houses of Parliament, I actually feel ill because I know he would feel it badly,’ she says emphatically.

However, she is girlishly thrilled about her part in preserving the home which she inherited, and which is now owned by the foundation. ‘Hopefully we will be able to put my mother’s gardens back – she created an intimate garden near the house with smaller sculptures, two fantastic herbaceous borders, and lavender beds. The scale of everything increased as you went out into the fields where the big sculptures are,’ she says. ‘Hopefully there are very exciting and beautiful things to come.’

Mary Moore’s shop is at 5 Clarendon Cross, London W11 (020-7229 5678)