

Landmarks Guide for Adolescents



Bernard Meadows

British, born 1915

Augustus

circa 1962

Bronze

Subject: Figurative abstraction

Activity: Create a figurative abstract sculpture

Materials: Small boxes/milk or juice cartons, glue, or string

Vocabulary: Biomorphic, direct carving, figurative, imperial rule

i Introduction

Bernard Meadows was born in Great Britain and served in World War II. He was from a working-class family, and he quit school at the age of sixteen to earn money for art school. Meadows attended art school from 1934 to 1936, where he studied under the famous sculptor Henry Moore. From Moore, Meadows learned about direct carving and biomorphic formations. When Meadows was forty-five, he traveled to Florence, Italy, where he was inspired by sculptures of emperors and generals in classical armor. After seeing these sculptures, he began making his own figures clad in armor.

The title of this piece, *Augustus*, alludes to a powerful emperor who ruled Rome from 27 BCE to 14 CE. Meadows's *Augustus*, though, is bulky and awkward. The armor is cut by deep crevices, and some areas have rough edges, which imply that the man has suffered hardships. The sculpture may allude to the crumbling of the British Empire and to the state of the modern world, in which imperial rule no longer survives.

? Questions

Bernard Meadows's style is figurative but not realistic. Why do you think he chose to make his figure look the way it does?

What in Meadows's background do you think influenced him to do this sculpture?

In your opinion, what is the mood of this sculpture: dark or light? Explain your answer.

Bernard Meadows, continued



Activity

Gather small boxes, or milk or juice cartons. Create a figure or an animal sculpture by gluing or tying the boxes together. You may choose to paint your sculpture when you are done.



Look Again

The inspiration for Meadows's armored forms came from the shells of crustaceans, but the allusion was to the armor-plating of modern war vehicles. Compare Meadows's sculpture to other figurative sculptures. For instance, Lipton's *Guardian*, Butterfield's *Vermillion*, and Paolozzi's *Figure*. Can you guess what forms from nature or real life inspired these other artists?



BTW

Meadows created a series of twenty sculptures of figures clad in armor. The project took him five years.



Vocabulary

Biomorphic - Resembling or suggesting the forms of living organisms

Direct carving - A twentieth-century term used to describe a less planned approach to carving in which the sculptor carves the finished sculpture without using models, or maquettes

Figurative - Representing a figure

Imperial rule - Rule by an empire or an emperor