

Barbara Hepworth

1903 - 1975



Dame Jocelyn Barbara Hepworth DBE was an English artist and sculptor. She was part of the modernism movement – a group who wanted to experiment with new techniques and draw attention to the process involved in making a work of art. She is one of the most famous women artists and is known all over the world. She is known for her modern sculptures, made from materials such as stone, wood, and bronze.

Jocelyn Barbara Hepworth was born on January 10, 1903 in Wakefield, Yorkshire. She attended Wakefield Girls High School and won a scholarship to study at Leeds School of Art from 1920. Here she met her fellow student, the now famous artist Henry Moore. They became friends as well as rivals. In 1921 she won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art and studied there until 1924.

Hepworth traveled to Italy, where she met and married sculptor John Skeaping. She learned how to carve marble from master sculptor Giovanni Ardini. Then, she returned to London with her husband, and they had a son, Paul. In 1933, she traveled to France with Ben Nicholson, where they visited the studios of lots of artists, such as Pablo Picasso. Hepworth married Ben Nicholson in 1938 and had triplets.

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Hepworth and her family moved to St Ives in Cornwall. She enjoyed working in the open air and space. She began to make more work in bronze and used her garden to view her work outdoors.

Hepworth was also very skilled at drawing. After her daughter was hospitalized in 1944, she became friends with a surgeon. She was invited to view surgical procedures and produced nearly eighty drawings of operating rooms in chalk, ink, and pencil. She was fascinated by the similarities between surgeons and artists.

In 1960, Hepworth bought a cinema and dance studio that was across the street from her studio. She used this new space to create her large-scale sculptures. She also began to experiment with a printing method called lithography, producing several sets of prints in the 1970s.

Hepworth lived and worked in St. Ives until she died in an accidental fire at her studios in 1975, at the age of 72. People can visit Trewyn Studio, which is still as she left it, with the workshop full of her tools, equipment, and materials. The garden is full of some of her favorite sculptures.



Photos courtesy of russellsmith (@flickr.com) - granted under creative commons licence - attribution