

MUSEO TAMAYO

Simon Starling

(Surrey, England, 1967)

Project for a temporary public sculpture (Hiroshima), 2009

Project for a temporary public sculpture (Hiroshima) is part of Simon Starling's investigation on the work of English writer Henry Moore, during the Cold War.

The Tamayo Museum presented the piece in 2010 as part of the exposition *A place outside History*, a collective show organized by the museum's director - Magali Arriola - that analyzed the political role that artists, curators and even some institutions have played in specific moments, modifying the various historic narratives.

Henry Moore was a known sponsor of the Nuclear Disarm Campaign after World War II. Nonetheless, he accepted the commission of a public sculpture which he named *Nuclear Energy*, the same that was meant to commemorate the creation of the first self-sustained chained nuclear reactor by Enrico Fermi.

For the completion of this work, Moore sought inspiration from the concave and convex shapes from an elephant's skull. The outcome was a piece that accentuated volumes and its curves evoked death by simultaneously referencing the famous mushroom shape that an atomic blast leaves behind.

Later, the artist produced a scaled version of the work titled *Atomic Piece*, which he sold to the Museum of Hiroshima, not before causing a grand controversy.

While designing the monumental mobile titled *Project for a temporary public sculpture (Hiroshima)*, Starling looked to establish a balance between *Atomic Piece's* controversy and two more sculptures by Moore, in bronze, from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington: *Fallen Warrior* and the *Three-piece Reclining Figure No.2: Bridge Prop*, both re-scaled to half of their original size. The first, a human figure taking shelter behind a shield, opposes the abstract geometric volumes that the second figure presents, reminding us of Moore's renowned sculptures inspired by the pre-columbine *Chac Mool*.

Joseph H. Hirshhorn, the founder of the Hirshhorn Museum, was a great admirer of Moore's. He forged his fortune on the growth of uranium sales as a result of his nuclear arms race from the 50s to the 60s. With such fortune, he acquired more than 55 artworks from Moore, that later would be donated to the North American Government.

In this as in many of his artworks, Starling turns back to the established narratives in art's history. As it is a mobile from which three replicas of these sculptures are suspended, the artist highlights the fragile equilibrium between the official narratives and the true interests behind the artworks. Because of its dimensions and floating features, this artwork tends to be installed on the museum's central patio, which natural light sources allow highlighting the intrinsic vulnerability of its elements despite their monumental character.

The title refers to the conception of a provisional public sculpture that also subverts the permanence of commemorative interventions in public space, as well as the immovable aspect that is usually attributed to historical narratives.