



Willem de Kooning (b. 1904 - 1997)

Cross-Legged Figure, 1972

Cast bronze

24 by 17 by 16 inches (61 x 43.2 x 40.6 cm)



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Edition of 7 with 3 Artist Proofs

Inscribed and numbered on left foot

Provenance: Xavier Fourcade, New York
Private collection, United States
Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art, New York
Private collection, Chicago

Exhibition (other cast number):

New York, Sidney Janis Gallery, *An Exhibition by de Kooning Introducing His Sculpture and New Paintings and Pastels*, September – October 4 – November 4, 1972, no. 47 in catalogue, illustrated as *Floating Figure*

Caracas, Museum of Fine Arts, Bogota, Museum of Fine Arts, Sao Paulo, Museum of Fine Arts, Rio de Janeiro, Museum of Modern Art, Montevideo, Museum of Fine Arts, Mexico, Museum of Fine Arts, *Four Contemporary Masters* An exhibition organized and circulated by the International Council, Museum of Modern Art, April 1973-January 1974

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Toronto, Pollock Gallery, *de Kooning: Major Paintings and Sculpture*, October 18 – November 15, 1974

Minneapolis, Walker Art Center, *de Kooning - Drawings/Sculpture*, March 10 - April 21 1974; traveled to Ottawa, The National Gallery of Canada, June 7 - July 21, 1974; Washington DC, Phillips Collection, September 14 - October 27, 1974; Buffalo, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, December 3, 1974 - January 19, 1975; Houston, The Museum of Fine Arts, February 21 - April 6, 1975; St. Louis, Washington University Gallery of Art, May 30 - June 20, 1975, catalogue no 142, plate 65

Chicago, Council for Contemporary Art, April 1975

Tokyo, Fuji T.V. Gallery, *de Kooning*, September 4 – October 4, 1975, catalogue no. 38

Paris, Galerie des Arts, *Willem de Kooning*, 1975, illustrated

West Palm Beach, Norton Gallery of Art, *de Kooning: Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture 1967-1975*, An exhibition sponsored by the Mary Sisler Foundation Inc. December 10, 1975 – February 15, 1976, catalogue no. 22

Seattle, Seattle Art Museum, *de Kooning – New Works: Paintings and Sculpture*, February 4 – March 14, 1976

Greenwich Connecticut, Greenwich Arts Council *Bicentennial Exhibition of Sculpture*, June – September 1976

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum *de Kooning: Sculpture and Lithographs*, March – April 1976, catalogue no. B-16, illustrated

Austin, University of Texas *de Kooning: Lithographs, sculpture, and Painting*, October 17 – November 28, 1976

Houston, University of Houston, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery, *de Kooning – Recent Works*, January 15 – February 20th, 1977

New York, Xavier Fourcade Inc., *Works on paper, Small Format Objects – Duchamp to Heizer*, February 15 – March 19, 1977

New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, *Willem de Kooning in East Hampton*, February 10 – April 23, 1978, catalogue no. 91, p. 122

New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, Berlin, Akademie der Künste, Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne, *de Kooning: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture* December 15, 1983 – September 24, 1984, catalogue no. 271, p. 256

New York, Anthony Ralph Gallery, *Modern Drawings and Sculpture, October* – November, 1991

New York, C&M Arts, *Willem de Kooning Selected Paintings and Sculpture 1964 – 1973*, October 10 – December 2, 2000, catalogue no. 9.

New York, Pace Gallery, *The Figure: Movement and Gesture*, April 29 – July 29, 2011, pp. 44 – 45, illustrated

Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia, *Willem de Kooning l'Italia*, April 17 – September 15, 2024

Literature:

Forge, Andrew, David Sylvester, and William Tucker, photographs by Adam Bartos, *Willem de Kooning Sculpture*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, 1996, II, p. 55, no. 15.
Yard, Sally, *Willem de Kooning*, Rizzoli, New York, 1997, p. 101, Illustrated.

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Cross-Legged Figure, 1972



Defined by fervent motion and dynamic expressionism, Willem de Kooning's *Cross-Legged Figure* reflects the genesis of the artist's foray into sculpture. *Cross-Legged Figure* was completed in 1972 and included in the artist's lauded 1974 exhibition at Sidney Janis Gallery. Upon reviewing the show, the critic Carter Ratcliff said the selection "let one see for the first time the place of de Kooning's sculpture: where it stands in the flow of reinvention that constitutes his style" (C. Ratcliff, "Willem de Kooning," *Art International*, vol. 19, no. 10, December 1975, p. 14).

Cross-Legged Figure is an exemplary work from this period, whose lively, highly worked surface retains the vigor and strength of the artist's hand. Arranged along a central vertical axis, the figure appears to hover in mid-air, its legs delicately crossed while its arms and splayed fingers reach into the surrounding space. While decidedly monochrome, the sculpture's dimpled exterior brilliantly catches and deflects light as it delicately falls into the grooves and pits of the surface. During this period, de Kooning favored a wetter, more malleable clay than he had previously employed and wore thick, heavy gloves, which allowed him to twist, gouge, and forcefully knead the material. De Kooning recalled, "In some ways, clay is even better than oil. ... You can work and work on a painting, but you can't start over again with the canvas like it was before you put that first stroke down. And sometimes, in the end, it's no good, no matter what you do. But with clay, I cover it with a wet cloth and come back to it the next morning, and if I don't like what I did or I changed my mind, I can break it down and start over. It's always fresh." (W. de Kooning, 1972, quoted by M. Stevens and A. Swan, *De Kooning: An American Master*, New York, 2005, p. 545).

When *Cross-Legged Figure* was exhibited alongside de Kooning's other sculpted works from this era, critics quickly noted the relationship of de Kooning's sculpture to his painting. Writing on the 1974 Sidney Janis show, art critic Grace Glueck commented: "Seldom has 3-D work so faithfully

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mirrored that on canvas—his two nearly life-size bronzes of a man and woman, with their gnarled, turbulent surfaces full of movement, could have been plucked from the artist's paintings and dipped in metal" (G. Glueck, "Previews: Exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery," *Art in America*, vol. 60, no. 5, September/October 1972, p. 121).

Similar works to *Cross-Legged Figure* can be found in museum collections around the world, including *Cross-Legged Figure*, 1972, The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and *Cross-Legged Figure*, 1972, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.



Willem de Kooning, *Cross-Legged Figure*, 1972, The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam



Willem de Kooning, *Cross-Legged Figure*, 1972, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago