

**THE STUDIO PRACTICE OF JACOB EPSTEIN (1880-1959)  
AS REVEALED BY AN EXAMINATION OF SELECTED  
CONTEMPORANEOUS PHOTOGRAPHS AND A  
SELECTION OF HIS SCULPTURAL FRAGMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the studio practice of Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), via an examination of selected contemporaneous photographs of the sculptor and his studio, and a selection of his sculptural fragments. Whilst the photographs purport to 'document' Epstein's work in the studio, more accurately the images reveal a partial, highly constructed projection of Epstein's self-image. In contrast, the sculpted fragments, not only function as indexes of the sculptor's creative process, but also open up multiple lines of enquiry regarding Epstein's approach to sculpture. Additionally, the juxtaposition of two disparate sources – photographs and part-objects – which, despite their crucial differences, lend themselves to a discussion of Epstein's studio practice, also provokes discussion of Epstein's convergence and departure from many of his contemporaries. 'The studio' was central to the conceptualisation of 'the modernist sculptor.' Geoffrey Ireland's photographs of Epstein align with the modernist preoccupation with sculptural process and indexicality, and present Epstein as an archetypal modernist sculptor. 'The fragment' was also a central preoccupation for modernist sculptors. Whilst the examination of the photographs aligns Epstein with his contemporaries, discussion of his fragments reveals his departure. Epstein's figurative part-objects predominantly relate to full sculptures and are reflective of his working method, art education, deference to Rodin and veneration of ancient sculpture.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the studio practice of Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) via an examination of selected contemporaneous photographs of the sculptor and his studio, and a selection of his sculptural fragments. The majority of the photographs were taken by Geoffrey Ireland between 1955 and 1957, and are kept in the Epstein Archive at The New Art Gallery Walsall, although other images will also be discussed.<sup>1</sup> Most of the fragments, made between 1907 and 1942, are part of the Garman Ryan Collection, also housed at the Walsall gallery, but examples from elsewhere will also feature. At an elementary level, the project constitutes a juxtaposition of two disparate sources that, despite their crucial differences, lend themselves to a discussion of Epstein and his approach to sculpture.

The motivation for the research arose from a strong personal enthusiasm for Epstein's sculpture, and my experiences as curatorial assistant at The New Art Gallery Walsall, working closely with the Garman Ryan Collection and Epstein Archive, and curating exhibitions. Notably, I curated *Epstein's Rima: 'Travesty of Nature'* (4 February – 2 June 2012) which complemented the current research, not least because of its emphasis on Epstein's design process - specifically regarding the *W.H. Hudson Memorial* (1925) - and the importance of the Henry Moore Institute Archive as a resource. Importantly, Epstein's fragments, or part-objects, have not previously been studied, and the photographs have effectively remained hidden in archives. A few of Ireland's photographs were published in *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work* (1957), which was limited to 200 copies, and will be discussed alongside the photographs.<sup>2</sup>

A small number of similar photographs of Epstein by Eric Auerbach, Idar Kar, and Scaioni's studios, as well as earlier anonymous images, were included in the 2001 Henry Moore Institute exhibition, *Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera*.<sup>3</sup> Photographs of Epstein featured in the first section of the exhibition and accompanying literature, which also included a consideration of the importance of Auguste Rodin's renowned atelier. The remaining two sections focussed more on the movement towards abstraction – the mainstay of modernist scholarship. In terms, of the current research, therefore, the first section provided a valuable spring board and starting point, but because the exhibition constituted a survey of sixty images of various sculptors and their studios in France and Britain, whereas this thesis is Epstein focussed, my research ultimately diverged.

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<sup>1</sup> The Henry Moore Institute Archive contains prints of Ireland's photographs as well as a wealth of other photographs and sources that were vital for the current research.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Ireland and Laurie Lee, *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work*, London, 1957.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Feeke and Penelope Curtis (eds.), *Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera*, exh.cat., Leeds, 2001. Jon Wood curated the exhibition and wrote the introductory essay to the catalogue which was edited by Feeke and Curtis.

Furthermore, the photographs of Epstein 'at work' that were included in the exhibition, depict Epstein modelling portraits as opposed to directly carving as Henry Moore, Eric Gill and Barbara Hepworth are shown. Epstein was, of course, a skilled modeller, but this has been used as a means to segregate and chastise him, despite some of his affinities with modernist sculptors.<sup>4</sup>

Modernist discourse emphasises the move from figuration to abstraction, meaning Epstein's eschewal of abstraction has problematized his placement in it.<sup>5</sup> That Epstein was included in *Close Encounters* - a survey that culminated in the studios of abstract sculptors - constitutes a refreshing change, however, since he has been frequently omitted from modernist discourse. For example, whilst Alessandro del Puppo acknowledges that Epstein could have been included in his discussion of sculptural heads accompanying the 2010 *Modigliani: Sculptor* exhibition, Epstein was ultimately excluded.<sup>6</sup> Pertinently, this thesis considers two fundamental aspects of modernism - studio photographs and sculpted fragments – in relation to Epstein, who, save for discussion of *Rock Drill* (1913-15) (fig. 1) and the associated *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill* (1913-15) (fig. 2), which align with the story of modernism-as-abstraction, has been marginalised within modernist discourse.

In 1995, Mary Bergstein discussed the proliferation of photographs of twentieth-century artists and their studios, as 'quintessential examples of modernist artist's biography.'<sup>7</sup> In 2005, Anne Wagner also noted the centrality of the studio to the conceptualisation of the modernist sculptor.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, *Close Encounters* not only affirmed the heightened significance of the studio, but also revealed that photographs of artists and their creative spaces still have the power to captivate audiences in the twenty-first century.

The fragment as a sculptural 'type' was also central to modernist sculpture.<sup>9</sup> Perceived as Rodin's legacy – as proffered in his final fragment, *Rodin's Right Hand with Torso* (c.1917) (fig. 3) – it has been argued that 'the fragment' played a crucial role in the early twentieth-century development

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Underwood, *A Short History of English Sculpture*, London, 1933, 154. Eric Underwood implicitly chastises Epstein as 'primarily a modeller.'

<sup>5</sup> Anne Wagner, *Mother Stone: The Vitality of Modern British Sculpture*, London, 2005, 11. Wagner asserts that Epstein's 'radical renunciation of abstraction [...] soon enough consigned him to a secondary role.'

<sup>6</sup> Alessandro del Puppo, 'Post-Rodin Options for the Sculptural Head', in Gabrielle Belli, Flavio Fergonzi, and Alessandro del Puppo, (eds.), *Modigliani: Sculptor*, exh.cat, Cinisello Balsamo, 2010, 124

<sup>7</sup> Mary Bergstein, 'The Artist in his Studio: Photography, Art and the Masculine Mystique', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol.18, no.2, 1995, 50. Bergstein focusses on two publications which further support the heightened significance of the studio to modernist art: Alexander Liberman, *The Artist in his Studio*, London, 1960 and Brassai, *The Artists of My Life*, London, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Wagner (2005), 143.

<sup>9</sup> Albert Elsen, *The Partial Figure in Modern Sculpture: From Rodin to 1969*, exh.cat., Baltimore, 1969, 29.

from naturalism to abstraction.<sup>10</sup> In fact, during the 1960s and 1970s, Rodin was reappraised in this regard. Exemplified by the work of Albert Elsen, William Tucker and Leo Steinberg, the French sculptor's innumerable part-objects were reassessed as precursors to abstraction.

The 1969 Baltimore exhibition *The Partial Figure in Modern Sculpture: From Rodin to 1969*, provided a comprehensive survey of fragments from 1889 to 1969. The date of this exhibition should not detract from its significance, but Elsen's bias as the often unquestioned Rodin authority should be borne in mind. In the accompanying literature Elsen credits Rodin as having 'invented' the sculptural fragment.<sup>11</sup> More accurately, Rodin validated self-conscious part-objects as autonomous artworks.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to the current research, Elsen minimised the impact of ancient fragments on the modernist preoccupation with 'the fragment', and omitted consideration of the correlation between concurrent excavations which were unearthing sculptural remains, and the proliferation of modern part-objects.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun 'fragment' as:

A part broken off or otherwise detached from a whole; a broken piece; a (comparatively) small detached portion of anything [...] A detached, isolated, or incomplete part [...] a part remaining or still preserved when the whole is lost or destroyed [...] An extant portion of a writing or composition which as a whole is lost; also a portion of a work left uncompleted by its author; hence a part of any unfinished whole or uncompleted design.<sup>13</sup>

This definition encompasses ancient fragments - such as the world-renowned *Belvedere Torso* (fig. 4) – as parts preserved from a lost whole, and Rodin's innovative, deliberately incomplete *morceaux*. Elsen distinguished the 'partial figure' (torso) and the 'figural part' (other body part) and treated both as *pars pro toto*.<sup>14</sup> In so doing, he identified three sculptural fragments by Epstein – *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill*, *Marble Arms* (1923) (fig. 5) and *Sunita (Reclining Goddess)* (1931) (fig. 6).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 16. William Tucker and Leo Steinberg have also discussed the fragment as a precursor to abstraction. William Tucker, *The Language of Sculpture*, London, 2010 (reprint of 1974 text), 35. Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art*, Oxford, 1972, 363.

<sup>11</sup> Elsen (1969), 26.

<sup>12</sup> Steinberg (1972), 362.

<sup>13</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'fragment, n.', Second edition, 1989; online version, June 2011, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74114> [accessed 16/08/2011].

<sup>14</sup> Elsen (1969), 20

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.



Whilst these sculptures are legitimate fragments, only *Marble Arms* features in the current research along with numerous examples not considered by Elsen. Limitations of space and access to sculptures means my choice of fragments is necessarily selective. Furthermore, this thesis focuses on Epstein's studio practice, as revealed by contemporaneous photographs and sculpted part-objects. It is not, therefore, an all-encompassing account of Epstein's sculptural fragments. Moreover, my decision to exclude *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill* from the main argument is deliberate. I do, however, acknowledge the sculpture's significance and will briefly attend to it here.

The majority of Epstein's fragments are figural parts, specifically heads and hands. In contrast, many other contemporaneous sculptors – including Gill (fig. 7), Moore (fig. 8), Hepworth (fig. 9), Raymond Duchamp-Villon (fig. 10), Constantin Brancusi (fig. 11) and many more – repeatedly produced torsos. *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill* is a singularity in Epstein's oeuvre, but mainly because it aligns with the story of modernism-as-abstraction, it dominates Epstein literature. The fragmentary figure is a truncated version of *Rock Drill*. Known only through a reconstruction, the full sculpture comprises a Vorticist-inspired full-length, geometric male figure astride an actual rock drill, making it an early example of a 'readymade' that pre-dates Marcel Duchamp's work.<sup>16</sup> The horrors of the 1914-18 war, and Epstein's subsequent mental breakdown, ensured that the sculptor's ardour for machinery was short-lived.<sup>17</sup> He dismantled *Rock Drill*, removing the drill and mutilating the figure. The virile authority exuded by the monumental sculpture, glorifying technological developments and powerful modern machinery, was replaced with a disfigured male form, evocative of injured soldiers returning from the front line.<sup>18</sup>

The centrality of *Rock Drill*, and the associated *Torso* in Epstein literature, suggests that scholars have ignored Epstein's insistence that *Rock Drill* constitutes his 'experimental pre-war days of 1913.'<sup>19</sup> He reflected in 1940 that 'all this, I realised, was really child's play [...] far removed from the nature of the aesthetic experience and satisfaction that sculpture should give.'<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, in 1931, he already had expressed doubts about the merits of stylisation and 'pure form,' describing such 'laboratory work' as 'a useful point of departure, but to remain there, however much such works

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Cork, 'The Visual Arts', in Boris Ford (ed.), *Early Twentieth-Century Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History*, Cambridge, 1992, 161.

<sup>17</sup> Epstein (1940), 49.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Cork, 'Rock Drill', in Silber et al (1987), 171.

<sup>19</sup> Epstein (1940), 49.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 50. He did however counterbalance such comments with a reproduction of Ezra Pound's 1914 article published in *The Egoist*, which highly praises *Rock Drill*, as if to prove that despite turning his back on Vorticism and abstraction, he was once at the cutting edge of sculptural developments.

may be praised by a clique [...] constitutes a very barren proceeding.’<sup>21</sup> As if such comments are insufficient, those familiar with his oeuvre should observe that *Rock Drill* and the associated *Torso*, are isolated examples of Epstein’s early foray into abstraction.<sup>22</sup> Whilst these works should not be ignored, their overemphasis is misleading. *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill* is a legitimate fragment, revealing Epstein’s awareness of, and experiments with, abstracted, fragmentary torsos, which is congruent with a study of Epstein’s studio practice. However, as a rarity in his oeuvre, and given its frequent analysis elsewhere, further investigation of this fragment is unnecessary in this project.

My use of the term ‘fragment’ refers to several sculpted figural parts, made by Epstein, that predominantly relate to full sculptures. I will argue that they are an important, but overlooked, aspect of Epstein’s oeuvre that is revealing of his sculptural method. Since sculptural fragments have been primarily discussed regarding Rodin, and particularly, as a precursor to abstraction, approaching the fragment in relation to Epstein’s studio practice is unprecedented. During a brief conversation with Evelyn Silber on 26 February 2011, she undervalued the Walsall-based fragments as likely to have been cast posthumously with Kathleen Garman’s consent. Epstein’s poor record-keeping means that the exact provenance of the part-objects is unknown.<sup>23</sup> However, there are instances where Epstein is known to have deliberately created and exhibited fragments – the aforementioned *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill* and *Marble Arms*, to name only two - and there are scores of contemporaneous photographs (figs. 12-17) depicting copious fragments in Epstein’s studio.<sup>24</sup> The images, at the very least, affirm the fragments’ role in Epstein’s studio practice. Furthermore, even if Silber’s dismissive comment were to be correct, it does not negate the fragments’ significance.

When Edgar Degas died in 1917, more than 150 wax and clay sculptures were found in his studio. The artist’s executors had the figures cast in bronze and exhibited for the first time in 1921.<sup>25</sup> This

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<sup>21</sup> Arnold Haskell, *The Sculptor Speaks: Jacob Epstein to Arnold L. Haskell*, London, 1931.

<sup>22</sup> *Monitor 1: Jacob Epstein*, Broadcast 02/02/1958, BBC Archives, [www.bbc.co.uk/archive/sculptors/12813.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/sculptors/12813.shtml) [accessed 01/07/2011]. During the six minute recording, Epstein states that he views abstraction as an artistic exercise only. He elucidates that ‘what I most deplore is the great loss of any human feeling.’

<sup>23</sup> Silber (1986), 115.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Carving in marble of two arms’, *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951*, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011 [[http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/object.php?id=msib2\\_1207699024](http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/object.php?id=msib2_1207699024), accessed 03/07/2011]. The online, extensive sculpture database confirms that *Marble Arms* was exhibited at the *Exhibition of New Sculpture by Jacob Epstein* (Leicester Galleries), 1924, the record is sourced from *Catalogue of an Exhibition of New Sculpture by Jacob Epstein*, 1924, p.8 (21). *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill* was first exhibited in 1916 in the London Group summer show. Richard Cork, ‘Rock Drill,’ in Silber et al (1987), 171.

<sup>25</sup> Clare Vincent, ‘Edgar Degas (1834–1917): Bronze Sculpture’, Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004 [[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dgsb/hd\\_dgsb.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dgsb/hd_dgsb.htm) accessed 01/09/2011].

aspect of Degas' career, therefore, came to light posthumously, and whilst Degas may not have intended the objects to be exhibited (or possibly even seen), it would, perhaps, be an injustice to exclude them from his oeuvre.<sup>26</sup> Importantly, Epstein was aware of this element of Degas' work. Describing Degas as the 'greatest of all modern sculptor-painters, who has left many works used chiefly as models for his drawings, which have since been cast in bronze and commercialised,' he revealed an understanding that artworks can have a separate existence and function from the original intention of the artist.<sup>27</sup> I would, therefore, argue for the examination of Epstein's fragments as aspects of his studio practice, and as autonomous pieces of sculpture, despite their problems of exact provenance and date.

In 2009, Raquel Gilboa asserted that no new insights had been proffered regarding Epstein since the late 1980s.<sup>28</sup> Gilboa was referring to Silber's pioneering catalogue raisonnée, and the comprehensive retrospective *Jacob Epstein: Sculpture and Drawings*, staged by The Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture (now the Henry Moore Institute) in 1987.<sup>29</sup> Gilboa's 'partly academic' psycho-biographical approach to Epstein's formative years (1880-1930), discusses 'the man and his work and how the latter reflects the former,' paying particular attention to Epstein's Jewish heritage.<sup>30</sup>

Also in 2009, Epstein featured in the Royal Academy exhibition *Wild Thing: Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Gill* which sought to demonstrate that, between 1906 and 1916, the three sculptors 'transformed the face of British sculpture.'<sup>31</sup> Epstein was familiarly presented as rebel against the art establishment, and only carvings made before the 1914-18 war featured. Furthermore, the all-pervasive *Rock Drill* was central to the exhibition. As noted, I am not suggesting that *Rock Drill* and Epstein's pre-war sculptures should not be discussed, but that to present just one aspect of Epstein's work as synecdoche for his oeuvre problematically over-emphasises the sculptor's abstract 'experiments.'

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<sup>26</sup> For a compelling account of the significance of Degas' bronzes see Tucker (2010), 9-13.

<sup>27</sup> Haskell (1931), 13.

<sup>28</sup> Raquel Gilboa, *And There Was Sculpture: Jacob Epstein's Formative Years 1880-1930*, London, 2009, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Evelyn Silber, *The Sculpture of Jacob Epstein with a Complete Catalogue*, Oxford, 1986. Evelyn Silber, Terry Friedman, Elizabeth Barker, Ezio Bassani, Judith Collins, Richard Cork, Frank Felsenstein, Malcolm McLeod and Elsie Prinz, *Jacob Epstein: Sculpture and Drawings*, exh.cat., Leeds, 1987.

<sup>30</sup> Gilboa (2009), 8-10.

<sup>31</sup> Sir Nicholas Grimshaw, 'President's Foreword', in Richard Cork, *Wild Thing: Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Gill*, exh.cat., The Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2009, no page number.

In 2011, Epstein was included in another Royal Academy exhibition: *Modern British Sculpture*, and Tate Britain's *The Vorticists*.<sup>32</sup> The latter necessarily focussed on *Rock Drill*. The former constituted a survey of British Sculpture from 1908 until the 1990s, featuring photographs of Epstein's, now-destroyed, series of *Strand Statues* (1908), the infamous *Adam* (1938), and a small number of his early carvings. Although once again the exhibition privileged abstract sculpture, it included a consideration of the significance of the British Museum's collections of antiquities for early twentieth-century sculptors – including Epstein – which proved pertinent for chapter two of this thesis.

Since exhibition catalogues concerned with Epstein's pre-1914 work have dominated Epstein scholarship since the late 1980s, the current research was largely informed by the ample primary sources housed in the Leeds and Walsall archives. In particular, the copious newspaper articles concerning Epstein's turbulent reception proved invaluable to chapter one, which critically analyses selected contemporaneous photographs as projections of how an elderly Epstein wished himself and his studio practice to be perceived. Epstein was incessantly and bitterly criticised, and discriminated against as a 'foreign artist' of Jewish descent who settled in England.<sup>33</sup> His sculptures were also frequently vandalised. For example, on 7 October 1935, members of the Independent Fascist League doused Epstein's *W.H. Hudson Memorial* with erosive alkaline and defaced the carving with Swastikas and the slogan 'God Save Our King and Britain from the cancer of Judah.'<sup>34</sup> In light of the fact that Epstein's work was subjected to 'heated controversy, more so probably than that of any artist of the twentieth century', it seems apposite that he should want to leave a record that might remedy some of the allegations lobbied against him.<sup>35</sup> The photographs will, therefore, be discussed as symptomatic of Epstein's reaction to criticism.

That many of the selected photographs appear similar to earlier photographs of Rodin, his work and atelier, and that twentieth-century artists were frequently photographed in their studios – particularly between the 1930s and 1960s – suggests that Ireland's photographs constitute more than just a response to Epstein's turbulent public reception. The images will also be discussed as articulating Epstein's deference to Rodin, and aligning with the modernist preoccupation with

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<sup>32</sup> Penelope Curtis and Keith Wilson (eds.), *Modern British Sculpture*, exh.cat., The Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2011. Mark Antliff and Vivian Greene (eds.), *The Vorticists*, exh.cat., Tate Britain, London, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Underwood, (1933), 153-4. Underwood excluded Epstein as a 'foreign artist' from his survey of English sculpture.

<sup>34</sup> Copy of Metropolitan Police report 8/10/1935, from Terry Friedman's Research files, 2002.71, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>35</sup> 'Sir Jacob Epstein 1880-1959 The Monumental and Architectural Work of a Great Sculptor', *The Monumental Journal*, October 1959, 254, clipping from box BL/4/1/12, Epstein Archive, The New Art Gallery Walsall.

indexicality, whereby the importance of a given artwork was more about the act of its creation rather than the object itself.<sup>36</sup> It will be argued that Ireland's photographs present Epstein as a diligent workman, and genius artist, who 'inhabits' a transformative site, wherein he creates 'artistic life': a construction that aligns with the conceptualisation of 'the sculptor' in the modern period.<sup>37</sup>

Chapter two utilises an object-based approach to the sculptural fragments, investigating the multifaceted objects as indexes of Epstein's working method, and as reflective of his art education, his veneration of ancient sculpture, and his deference to Rodin. The objects will also be discussed in relation to the modernist preoccupation with 'the fragment' which elicits discussion of Epstein's departure from many of his contemporaries. Whereas other sculptors, who more readily aligned themselves with abstraction, consistently approached the fragment as partial but 'complete' (finished and autonomous), Epstein persistently conceptualised part-objects as parts of a whole. Moreover, Epstein frequently conceived whole figurative sculptures from fragment heads, in a backwards gestalt process that invests the part with a greater significance than the whole.<sup>38</sup> The argument is not a linear narrative of Epstein's production of fragments. It constitutes an exploration of the multiple lines of enquiry and interpretation that are opened up by the part-objects, in relation to Epstein's studio practice. Significantly, in-depth examination of several fragment heads, reveals Epstein to have been a diligent artist with an acute eye for minute detail, just as he is presented in Ireland's photographs.

As a totality, the juxtaposition of two understudied Epstein resources – contemporaneous photographs and sculptural fragments – in relation to his studio practice, provokes discussion of Epstein's convergence with, and departure from, his contemporaries. It will be argued that the photographs present a partial, highly constructed projection of Epstein's self-image, which aligns with the general conceptualisation of 'the modernist sculptor.' In contrast, the fragments, which can

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<sup>36</sup> My use of the term 'indexicality' is informed by Amelia Jones' chapter 'The "Pollockian Performative" and the Revision of the Modernist Subject'. Referring exclusively to painting, Jones discusses a shift from 'iconicity' which attributes the significance of a painting to its subject and appearance, or what it represents, to 'indexicality' which, she argues, is more about the artists 'performance' or action in actually creating the artwork. Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, London, 1998, 83-85.

<sup>37</sup> The inherent contradictions of this conceptualisation will be elucidated in the main argument and will be supported by Bergstein's, Wood's and Jones' research.

<sup>38</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun 'gestalt' as: 'A 'shape', 'configuration', or 'structure' which as an object of perception forms a specific whole or unity incapable of expression simply in terms of its parts (e.g. a melody in distinction from the notes that make it up).' Simply put, the term expresses the idea that 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.' My use of the term 'backwards gestalt' thus contrarily asserts that in the case of Epstein's fragments, the sculpted part is invested with a greater significance than the whole sculpture for which it functions synecdochically. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'gestalt, n., second edition, 1989; online version, June 2012, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77951> [accessed 20/08/2012].

be approached as actual traces of Epstein's working method, as well as articulating several other aspects of his studio practice, reveal his departure from modernist preoccupations. From all this, despite his divergent approach to sculpture, it seems that Epstein wished to be remembered as an archetypal modernist sculptor.

## **CHAPTER ONE: EPSTEIN'S STUDIO PRACTICE AS REPRESENTED IN CONTEMPORANEOUS PHOTOGRAPHS**

This chapter explores Epstein's studio practice as revealed from an examination of selected contemporaneous photographs of the sculptor, his studio and work. The majority of the photographs were taken by Ireland between 1955 and 1957.<sup>39</sup> I will also discuss the limited edition publication *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work* (1957), which combines a selection of Ireland's photographs with an introduction by Laurie Lee.<sup>40</sup> It will be argued that the photographs present a deliberate construction of Epstein and his studio practice. Rather than passively accepting the images as documentation of Epstein's working method, the photographs will be critically analysed as projections of his self-image. I will proffer possible motivations for the existence and form of the photographs, including deference to Rodin, Epstein's engagement with Giorgio Vasari's *The Life of Michelangelo* (1568), the heightened importance of process to modernist sculpture, and the incessant criticism that Epstein was subjected to throughout his career.<sup>41</sup>

It is important to attend to Rodin not least because Epstein was a great admirer of the French sculptor. Epstein's Rodinesque early work has been discussed elsewhere, in sculptural surveys such as Rudolf Wittkower's, and Epstein catalogues and monographs alike.<sup>42</sup> Epstein also frequently voiced his praise during his conversations with Arnold Haskell, declaring for example that 'Rodin is without dispute the greatest master of modern times.'<sup>43</sup> Additionally, as a student in Paris, Epstein visited Rodin in his studio on more than one occasion. The exact dates of their meetings are unknown, but a 1904 Christmas card from Rodin to Epstein suggests that their connection was already established by then.<sup>44</sup>

It is imperative to discuss the special significance accorded to Rodin's atelier following his 1900 solo exhibition at the Paris *Exposition Universelle*. Arguably, this exhibition not only assured Rodin's

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<sup>39</sup> Ireland took a huge number of photographs so my chosen examples are necessarily selective. The Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds and Epstein Archive, Walsall, contain copies of the entire series of Ireland's photographs, as well as an abundance of other important images and documents that have been invaluable to the current research.

<sup>40</sup> Ireland and Lee (1957). This publication was limited to 200 copies.

<sup>41</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *The Life of Michelangelo*, London, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, *Sculpture: Processes and Principles*, London, 1977, 267-8. It was also noted in contemporaneous literature. For example, writing in 1928, Stanley Casson described Epstein as 'the true pupil of Rodin.' Stanley Casson, *Some Modern Sculptors*, London, 1928, 115.

<sup>43</sup> Haskell (1931), 125. In this particular example, Epstein also demonstrates his awareness of Rodin's fluctuating reputation by adding; 'no change of fashion can possibly alter his position' and elucidating that he believed that Rodin's vast and varied output had negatively affected his stature.

<sup>44</sup> Box 1, Beth Lipkin 36/1988, 36.2, letters and papers of Jacob Epstein 1902-1973, EPS C1/12, 1, Henry Moore Institute Archive.

international fame, but also brought the idea of sculptural studio practice into sharp focus. Tucker asserts that the ‘fundamental modernity’ of Rodin’s work is ‘the idea of “making.”’<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, the heightened importance of sculptural process and deliberate construction of Rodin’s studio practice has potentially impacted on the photographic representations of Epstein, and contributed to the increased visibility of ‘the sculpture studio’ during the twentieth century. Between 1930 and 1960, there was a noticeable proliferation of photographs of sculptors in their studios.<sup>46</sup> This photographic ‘opening up’ of ‘the studio’ is congruent with the heightened significance of indexicality to modernist sculpture. As sculpture became more about the process of creating artworks rather than the actual objects themselves, it seems apposite that the site in which the sculptor creates should also become increasingly significant, and indeed, visible. Attending to photographs of Epstein that align with this modernist preoccupation, this chapter inserts Epstein into a history in which his presence has previously been marginalised. Even more specific to Epstein, the incessant criticism that he faced throughout his career will also be discussed as having impacted on his self-image, as projected in Ireland’s photographs. Chapter two will examine Epstein’s studio practice as revealed by selected sculptural fragments, wherein it will become apparent that the multifaceted objects are demonstrably more representative of Epstein’s working method than the photographs discussed in this chapter. Common to both the photographs and the objects, however, is an emphasis on sculptural process and an articulation of Epstein’s admiration for Rodin, and, as will be revealed in chapter two, the images also serve an important functional role in the examination of the objects.

Perhaps surprisingly, it is also pertinent to discuss the portrayal of Michelangelo in Vasari’s *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*.<sup>47</sup> It was first translated into English around the turn of the twentieth century, and Epstein and Haskell explicitly discussed Vasari’s construction of Michelangelo.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work* is demonstrably Vasarian for its deliberate construction of Epstein. As noted by David Hemsoll, an implicit aim of

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<sup>45</sup> Tucker (2010), 30 and 40.

<sup>46</sup> The literature accompanying the 2001 Henry Moore Institute exhibition *Close Encounters: The Sculptor’s Studio in the Age of the Camera*, provides an excellent survey of nineteenth and twentieth-century photographs depicting sculptors and their studios. Liberman (1960) and Brassaï (1982), also provide numerous examples of painters that were also frequently photographed in their creative spaces. Despite not being published until 1982, Brassaï’s photographs were taken between 1930 and 1960.

<sup>47</sup> Vasari’s text was translated into English and republished numerous times; for example, in 1897, 1900 and 1927. Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of Seventy of the Most Eminent Painters Sculptors and Architects*, edited and annotated in the light of recent discoveries by E.H. and E.W. Blashfield and A.A. Hopkins, London, 1897; Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of Painters Sculptors and Architects*, translated by A.B. Hinds, London, 1900; Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, London, 1927.

<sup>48</sup> Haskell (1931), vi, 124 and *passim*. In the first citation, Haskell describes Vasari as ‘the most sane and certainly the most readable of all critics’. In the second, Epstein directly refers to Vasari’s description whereby Michelangelo pretended to adjust the nose of his *David* (1501-4) by dropping marble dust on the floor to flatter a patron despite having no intention of actually altering the statue. Vasari (2006), 57-59.



Vasari's text was to praise Michelangelo and his work in such a way as to counter criticisms that had been lobbied against the Renaissance artist.<sup>49</sup> Ireland's photographs and Lee's introduction are similarly constructed so as to transform negative comments into positive aspects of the sculptor's art.<sup>50</sup> For example, Stanley Casson had previously criticised Epstein for engaging with too many sources and styles and creating too diasporic an output, whereas Lee likens Epstein's 'tremendous versatility' to Mozart.<sup>51</sup> Lee's choice of sculptures to discuss in the introduction is also revealing. *Adam*, which Lee describes as 'a figure of aspiring energy, the erect seed-bearer of his kind, striding forward to inherit the earth,' had been denounced as an indecent 'abnormality in a beautiful world' whilst infamously displayed as a side-show attraction in Blackpool (fig. 18).<sup>52</sup> Epstein's sculptures sparked considerable controversy throughout his career and, as amusingly portrayed in a contemporaneous cartoon, his very name was enough to excite consternation (fig. 19).<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, it will be argued that Ireland's photographs and the associated publication are symptomatic of Epstein's reaction to criticism.

Discussing Alexander Liberman's publication *The Artist in his Studio* (1960) - which comprises photographs of well-known twentieth-century artists in their creative spaces, most of which were taken during the 1950s - Bergstein perceptively notes that many of the photographs 'appeared more intimate and accessible than the ideas expressed in actual works of painting and sculpture.'<sup>54</sup> Since Epstein was acutely aware that his work was persistently misunderstood, and Ireland's photographs were taken during Epstein's final years, it will be argued that the images and associated book, articulate how Epstein wished himself, his art and his studio practice, to be perceived.<sup>55</sup> I will begin by discussing the construction of Epstein in selected photographs.

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<sup>49</sup> David Hemsoll, 'Introduction' to Vasari (2006), 20.

<sup>50</sup> It is not my intention to infer that any defence of an artist's work is Vasarian, but specifically, that the language employed by Lee, and the ideas conveyed in his introduction as well as some of Ireland's photographs, evoke Vasari's characterisation of Michelangelo because they flatly contradict common criticisms.

<sup>51</sup> Casson (1928), 113.

<sup>52</sup> *Northern Dispatch*, 18/07/1939, newspaper cutting, Press Cuttings, 2002/78, Press Cutting book C, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds. Additionally, *The Manchester Evening News*, 19/07/1939, announced that 'the Lancashire holiday maker who visits Blackpool without seeing *Adam* will have been there in vain, so far as impressing the people back home is concerned.' Press Cuttings, 2002/78, Press Cutting book C, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>53</sup> A copy of the cartoon is in Terry Friedman's Research Files, 2002.71, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>54</sup> Mary Bergstein, 'The Artist in his Studio: Photography, Art and the Masculine Mystique', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol.18, no.2, 1995, 45.

<sup>55</sup> Substantial portions of Haskell's text and Epstein's autobiography are concerned with countering criticism. Not only are examples of newspaper articles and various documents – both by his supporters and detractors – reproduced in the appendices of both publications, but the last five chapters of Epstein's autobiography are dedicated to his perception of his place in sculpture, despite the prejudice and criticism he faced. Furthermore, the extended version, published in 1955, includes a postscript which also articulates his disappointment and

### The Photographs: The Context of their Making and Construction of Epstein 'the Sculptor'

Between 1955 and 1957, Ireland took a substantial number of photographs of Epstein, his home, studio, work and collection of 'primitive' art.<sup>56</sup> In his introduction to *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work*, Lee casts Ireland in the guise of a stalker: 'For two years, patient as a hunter, scrupulous, tactful, sensitive and wary, Ireland stalked his subject.'<sup>57</sup> The images are thus presented as a stealthy documentary of Epstein's quotidian artistic life. Ireland's furtive surveillance is visualised in *Epstein at Home* (fig. 20) which is included in *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work*. The photograph depicts Epstein on the telephone in his home. Potentially offering the viewer 'the man' rather than 'the sculptor', the supposedly 'candid camera' nevertheless presents a construction of Epstein. Seen in the corner of the room, behind a large display cabinet containing some of his art collection, the sculptor is presented as surrounded by art even when engaged in everyday life on the telephone. Importantly, the photograph creates a sense of revealed secrets in that the photographer is constructed to appear in a unique position to gain access to Epstein's artistic life. At the left margin, the door to the room appears ajar as if Ireland has stealthily entered the room. A comparable photograph of Rodin by an unknown photographer also exists. *Rodin Seated in his Dining Room at Meudon* (1912?) (fig. 21) depicts the sculptor supposedly caught in a moment of contemplation. Though not at work, Rodin is presented as an artist who appears to 'eat, sleep and live for' his art: a partial figure looms behind him on the dining table, as he gazes out of the frame with his hand to his chin in a gesture that evokes *The Thinker* (1902).

Jane Becker concurs with Elsen that Rodin commissioned a substantial number of photographs of himself, his work and studio, and that he played an active role in the form and dissemination of the images.<sup>58</sup> Epstein's involvement with Ireland, the photographs and the associated publication is unknown, but he was not one to relinquish control easily. Regarding *Night and Day* (1928), carved for the London Underground Headquarters, Epstein complained that unauthorised photographs

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disapproval of his treatment by the art world. For example, in discussing *Lucifer* (1945) Epstein emphasised his 'appreciation of the enthusiasm shown by the provinces for my larger imaginative works compared to the indifference of the London galleries.' He was of course, referring to the fact that the statue was rejected by The Fitzwilliam Museum, The V&A Museum and the Tate Britain Gallery. Jacob Epstein, *Epstein: An Autobiography*, New York, 1963, 231.

<sup>56</sup> Ireland photographed the studio that was attached to Epstein's house as well as his temporary studio at the Royal College of Art where he had been working on sculptures that were too large to accommodate in his home studio, including *Social Consciousness* (1954) and *Christ in Majesty* (1954-5).

<sup>57</sup> Ireland and Lee (1957), no page numbers.

<sup>58</sup> Albert Elsen, *In Rodin's Studio: A Photographic Record of Sculpture in the Making*, Oxford, 1980, 14. Jane R. Becker, 'Auguste Rodin and Photography: Extending the Sculptural Idiom' in Dorothy Kosinski (ed.), *The Artist and the Camera: Degas to Picasso*, exh.cat., London, 2000, 93.

divorcing the sculptures from their architectural context and presenting them from 'an angle that was not intended,' had been published, and had negatively affected his work's reception.<sup>59</sup> Haskell also suggests that Epstein preferred to play an active role in his public image. He recounts the circumstances under which the book was written, describing having suggested to Epstein that he should write a book that would remedy misconceptions about his work.<sup>60</sup> Epstein apparently rebuffed this idea, insisting that his language was one of sculpture and matter not words, and that Haskell should write the book.<sup>61</sup> Haskell's text is thus introduced as a record of spontaneous conversations between two friends, but he also acknowledges (and complains about) 'Epstein's rigorous censorship' of the publication.<sup>62</sup> Thus, whilst Epstein's role is not conclusively known, it is plausible that he may have exercised some control over the form of the photographs and the selection of images that were published.

Epstein was seventy-five years old and nearing the end of his life when Ireland began the series of photographs. In most of the images Epstein appears as a worker-artist wearing dirty overalls, stained by sculptural endeavour, and a dirty workman's cap.<sup>63</sup> *Epstein in his Studio at the Royal College of Art* (fig. 22) also presents Epstein as overtly masculine.<sup>64</sup> The sculptor is framed by the legs of his monumental nude *Liverpool Resurgent* (1956). The triangle created by the cut-off view of the statue, situates the very prominent genitals of the male figure just above Epstein's head, in a motif that rather evokes Lee's statement that 'the eruptive vitality' of Epstein's work 'is also stamped on the figure of the man himself.'<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the depiction of the studio as a workshop, a site of manual labour, further reinforces Epstein's masculine physicality. The functional space is shown littered with bits of wood and rags. Everywhere looks dirty from the hard physical work that sculpture entails, and Epstein is shown amidst it all, absorbed in his work on a panel from the *Liverpool Reliefs* (1954). The photograph thus also illustrates Lee's description of Epstein as 'a broad-boned working figure, homely as a riveter, untouched by the professional vanities of dress and posture.'<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Haskell (1931), 47.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 Epstein insisted; 'I am a sculptor, not an author. My sculpture is a sufficient explanation in itself, and my only aim in life.' Interestingly, Rainer Maria Rilke's monograph *Rodin* (originally published 1902) opens with the famous quotation from Pomponius Gauricus' *De Sculptura* (1504): 'Writers work through words – sculptors through matter.' Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rodin*, London, 1946, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Haskell (1931), 121.

<sup>63</sup> Epstein's cap still covered with the stains of sculptural endeavour is now held in the Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>64</sup> Bergstein discusses masculinity as 'the *primo mobile* of artistic transcendence.' Bergstein (1995), 45.

<sup>65</sup> Ireland and Lee (1957), no page numbers.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

*Butterflies and Chisels* (fig. 23) presents Epstein's home studio as a workshop as well. Though the sculptor is absent, his presence is nevertheless embedded in the image. Jon Wood describes photographs that show 'traces of sculptural endeavour (debris, tools, unfinished work)' as 'a form of portraiture' even when the sculptor is not represented, and, here, Epstein's battered and dirty shoes act as his surrogate.<sup>67</sup>

Epstein has been described as a worker-artist elsewhere. In 1942 *News Review* reported that:

The sculptor lives in a conventional five storey house with a pointed roof, but the outward impression of *bourgeois* respectability vanishes when the visitor has mounted the worn steps and stands in the hall. Busts abound everywhere. In the living room they stand cheek by jowl with a loaf of bread, odd articles of food and bits of cutlery [...] Amid this prolific riot of sculptures lives balding, affable Jacob Epstein, white with stone dust, wearing old, torn working clothes and a freakish cap.<sup>68</sup>

The construction of sculptor-as-labourer is not unique to Epstein. Aside from the common, highly sexually charged perception of Rodin, contemporary commentators consistently described the French sculptor as a worker-artist: 'The man comes up to you, his clothes soiled with plaster, hesitant and timid.'<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, Rodin's studio was also described as a workman's workshop:

The studio of Auguste Rodin possesses a sincere austerity, nothing there makes a show; he has made no sacrifice to elegance. It is an atelier in the true sense of the word, in its toilsome, workman's meaning; a room which has no other purpose than the work it houses.<sup>70</sup>

Chris Stephens argues that the physical activity of sculptors was central to the general conception of sculptor and sculpture during the early twentieth century, and the significance of direct carving to modernist sculptural practice, further compounded the masculine physicality associated with the art

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<sup>67</sup> Wood in Feeke and Curtis (2001), 13.

<sup>68</sup> *News Review*, 12/02/1942, 17.

<sup>69</sup> Léon Rieter commenting in 1913, cited and translated by Wagner because the original source proved inaccessible. Anne M. Wagner, 'Rodin's Reputation', in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *Eroticism and the Body politic*, Baltimore, 1991, 97. Rilke also persistently describes Rodin as an 'earnest worker', and rather erroneously presents Rodin as entirely devoted to the mastery of his chisel. Rilke (1946), 28.

<sup>70</sup> Edward Rod, 'L'Atelier de M. Rodin', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, vol.19, 1898, 419.

form.<sup>71</sup> Ireland's photographs of Epstein thus align with the established image of the sculptor-as-labourer in the modern period. However, other photographs, also included in Ireland and Lee's publication, construct Epstein in the seemingly contradictory, but familiar guise of the artist-as-creator and genius, and therefore qualitatively different from 'ordinary man.'

*Jacob Epstein with Christ in Majesty* (fig. 24) shows Epstein next to and looking up at his monumental statue. Dwarfed by the immense sculpture that emerged from his hands but is somehow more than merely a made object, Epstein is visualised elevated to the status of genius by the implicit suggestion that an ordinary person would be incapable of producing great 'Art.' Epstein's expression of accomplishment and wonder, suggests he is both proud and in awe of his own achievement. In his rather lofty monograph, L.B. Powell upholds this construction of the sculptor as distinct from the layman, asserting that Epstein's capacity for a rather vaguely defined 'vital artistic vision' apparently 'transcends that of the ordinary individual.'<sup>72</sup> Previously the sculptor and writer Adolf von Hildebrand had also characterised 'the sculptor' as set apart from, and by implication, elevated above, the status of ordinary people in *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (1907).<sup>73</sup>

Whilst such an elevation potentially contradicts the conception of sculptor-as-worker, it was an established facet of the general construction of 'the sculptor', as arguably inaugurated by Michelangelo. Whilst Epstein (and many other sculptors) courted the familiar image of the sculptor-labourer, the need to distinguish their work from that of an artisan was also imperative, so as not to 'debase' their 'art' to the level of the applied or decorative arts. The notion of a qualitative distinction between artists and laymen was potentially established by Vasari's construction of Michelangelo as sent from God.<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, Vasari's bold opening to *The Life of Michelangelo*, which casts the Renaissance sculptor as having miraculously appeared by the grace of 'the great Ruler of Heaven' is evoked by the similarly audacious first sentence of Lee's introduction: 'Jacob

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<sup>71</sup> Chris Stephens, 'The Identity of the Sculptor 1950-75', in Penelope Curtis (ed.), *Sculpture in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Leeds, 2003, 150. Stephens highlights photographs of Moore from the 1930s that depict him wearing his characteristic checked shirt as epitomising the macho image of the modernist sculptor.

<sup>72</sup> L.B. Powell, *Jacob Epstein*, London, 1932, 109.

<sup>73</sup> Adolf von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, translated by Max Meyer and Robert Morris Ogden, London, 1907, *passim*. Chapter two of this thesis further emphasises the importance of this widely read text and demonstrates that Epstein clearly engaged with Hildebrand's ideas. See footnotes 234 and 246

<sup>74</sup> Vasari (2006), 35 and 219. Towards the end of *The Life of Michelangelo*, Vasari repeats and compounds the construction of the 'divine' Michelangelo in a rather amusing anecdote about the sculptor's funeral. When Michelangelo's body was returned to Florence, one of the friars at Santa Croce apparently opened the coffin and discovered that the corpse was miraculously showing no signs of decay, despite Michelangelo having been dead for twenty five days: 'without any bad smell, so that he seemed to be quietly sleeping. His features were almost exactly as in life [...]'

Epstein came to this country from another world.’<sup>75</sup> Lee is, of course, referring to the fact that Epstein was born in New York to Polish-Jewish parents, but the allusions to Vasari’s seminal text hardly seem coincidental. For me, Epstein’s expression of awe in *Jacob Epstein with Christ in Majesty* also connotes Vasari’s declaration that Michelangelo’s work was directly inspired by God, suggesting that the Renaissance sculptor acted as a kind of vessel for ‘divine knowledge’ on earth.<sup>76</sup> Referring to his conception of *Jacob and the Angel* (1940-1), Epstein announced: ‘I stood a puzzled man, in front of a six ton slab of English alabaster rock in my studio and wondered. Vividly there came before me that strange, mysterious Old Testament story [...]’ The sculptor thus implied that the creative impulse for the carving spontaneously came upon him as if from nowhere, and I would argue that Ireland’s photograph visualises this idea that artistic ‘vision’ can appear as miraculous as divine inspiration.

The final photograph published in Lee and Ireland’s book - *More Work Still To Do* (fig. 25) - shows Epstein contemplating the block of stone which was to be carved into the *TUC War Memorial* (1956-7) (fig. 26). The scaffolding set up around the stone block - which seems ready and waiting for Epstein to begin his artistic transformation of the material - suggests that the sculptor’s work is imminent. Although Epstein was elderly and not in good health at the time, he is presented as tirelessly dedicated to his art. The dramatic use of light and shadow heightens the theatricality of the photograph: Epstein appears undaunted by the immense task before him despite his age and health. The image illustrates Lee’s contention that ‘the very permanence of the medium [sculpture] requires permanent qualities in the artist: a love affair is not enough, only passionate, life-long and exhausting devotion will do.’<sup>77</sup> The photograph and Lee’s rousing statement again evoke Vasari’s account of Michelangelo. Vasari describes how even in old age

Michelangelo’s spirit could not rest idle, and as he was unable to paint he took a piece of marble to make four figures larger than life-size, of a Dead Christ, as a pastime, and because he said the use of the mallet kept him in health.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ireland and Lee (1957), no page numbers.

<sup>76</sup> Vasari (2006), 131-4. Vasari’s proposition that *The Last Judgement* (1536-41) was directly inspired by God is a pertinent example.

<sup>77</sup> Lee and Ireland (1957), no page numbers.

<sup>78</sup> Vasari (2006), 136.

Lee likewise declares that 'rest to Epstein, is a state of inertia, a kind of death which his nature cannot admit.'<sup>79</sup> Whilst not to suggest any formal relation, it is interesting to note that the sculpture Vasari refers to is *The Florentine Pietà* (1547-55) and Epstein's *TUC War Memorial* also took the form of a pietà. Also pertinent is the fact that Ireland photographed Epstein carving the monument, but the subsequent images were not included in the book. By concluding with the photograph *More Work Still To Do*, Ireland and Lee's publication dramatically emphasizes Epstein's ceaseless devotion to his art.

In summary, regarding their presentation of the sculptor, Ireland's photographs construct the apparently inexhaustible Epstein as both sculptor-labourer and genius artist. Whilst these conceptions are potentially mutually exclusive, they are familiar guises integral to 'the sculptor' in general, and particularly to 'the modernist sculptor.' The concept of sculpture-as-process was vitally important to modernist sculpture which privileged artworks that functioned indexically for the work of the sculptor. However, in order to distinguish art from craft, it was necessary to construct sculptor and sculpture as qualitatively distinct from the applied and decorative arts. So far I have discussed some of Ireland's images in terms of their presentation of Epstein. I will now attend to the construction of 'the studio', demonstrating that the site has been presented as the 'natural' environment for sculptor and sculpture.<sup>80</sup>

#### The Studio as the 'Natural' Environment for Sculptor and Sculpture

*Entrance to Epstein's Studio (Through Hallway)* (fig. 27) dramatically visualises the frontier between the world of the studio and everyday existence. To the left of the photograph, underneath the stairs, the door to Epstein's studio is open, revealing a cut-off view of the studio. The composition and dramatic use of light transform the studio door into a kind of portal into the world of the sculptor's creative space. Much like the rabbit hole in *Alice and Wonderland*, the door appears small, but the fragmented view of the abundance of sculptures in the studio suggests that the space behind the door is potentially limitless. In addition, although artworks are present in the mundane world outside the studio – two busts appear to the right of the photograph on a wooden cabinet in Epstein's hallway – glimpsed through the door, the plentiful sculptures appear to 'inhabit' the studio. Furthermore, whilst there is some light in the hallway, cast by the window at the top of the first flight of stairs and the decorative light that appears at the upper edge of the photograph, the partial view of the studio presents the space as bathed in light. The fragment of *Behold the Man*

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<sup>79</sup> Lee and Ireland (1957), no page numbers.

<sup>80</sup> Bergstein (1995), 49.

(1935) that can be seen through the portal-doorway appears so brilliantly white that it could even be emitting light. Everyday reality is thus contrasted with the environment of the studio and it is implicitly suggested that only the sculptor and his stalker-photographer can move freely between the two worlds.<sup>81</sup>

Brassaï's photograph *Aristide Maillol's Studio (Garden Entrance)* (1937) (fig. 28) which was subsequently published in *The Artists of My Life* (1982), appears similar, albeit less dramatic, than Ireland's image. Again, the environment of the studio is contrasted with everyday reality. Sculptures of all shapes and sizes seem to 'inhabit' the atelier in contrast to the singular bust imaged outside the studio, at the left margin. Though not as theatrical as Ireland's photograph, Brassaï's image nevertheless has a sense of spectacle to it: by depicting the garden entrance, the studio is presented as a sort of fairy-tale cottage in the woods, akin to that found by Hansel and Gretel in the Brothers Grimm story. Once again the photographer is constructed so as to appear in a privileged position, capable of revealing the secrets of the studio to the viewer.

Comparison between photographs of Epstein's and Maillol's respective studios thus reveals that Ireland's photograph is not unique. This does not, however, negate the significance of either image, but suggests that the studio as a site of sculptural endeavour was generally privileged as being distinct from mundane reality. In traversing the border between the two worlds the photographer is invested with the capacity to reveal the secrets contained within the sculptor's 'lair'.<sup>82</sup>

A photograph by an unidentified photographer appeared on the front page of *The Evening Standard*, Friday 21 August 1959 (two days after Epstein's death) (fig. 29). The accompanying headline read: 'Epstein Dead: Front Page Records the Day the Camera Caught a Moment of Genius.' The sculptor is presented as 'caught on camera' – seemingly surprised and perturbed by the spontaneous intrusion. The image and headline construct Epstein as 'inhabiting' his studio along with his companion sculptures, away from the outside world. Evocative of a wildlife documentary, it is implicitly suggested that in order to catch a glimpse of the sculptor-genius, one has to go to his studio to find him. A similar photograph depicting Alberto Giacometti in his studio (fig. 30) is included Liberman's aforementioned 1960 publication. Once again, it appears that the photographer has traversed the boundary into the creative space, wherein he has found the artist and 'captured' his image. Like Epstein, Giacometti is surrounded by his art. He looks up from his canvas, apparently shocked and disgruntled by the infiltration of his domain. The similarities between these two photographs

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<sup>81</sup> Bergstein notes the 'tacit alliance between artist and photographer.' Bergstein (1995), 49.

<sup>82</sup> Bergstein describes the studio as 'the artist's inner sanctum.' *Ibid.*, 46.



suggest that the construction of 'the studio' as being the 'natural' environment for 'the artist' was an established theme.<sup>83</sup>

Contemporaneous texts also described Epstein's studio as his indigenous habitat. Powell's rather grandiloquent monograph (1932) is a pertinent example:

To see him [Epstein] in the studio, surrounded with clay, stone and marble, with finished bronzes and casts, the floor pale with dust from hours of carving – to see him thus with his own massive figure sharing the primitive vigour of the materials and forces he uses, is to be conscious to an almost overpowering degree of the completeness, the restless enthusiasm, with which he lives for his art. No place was ever more stirringly suggestive of a single human will unconquerable in its determination to wrest from Nature her sublimest eloquences, or more daring in its assertion of mastery over elemental truths, nor [...] has any studio seemed more vitally pregnant with art.<sup>84</sup>

In the familiar myth-making language of modernist discourse, the above quotation neatly encompasses all the ideas that I have discussed so far regarding photographs of Epstein and/or his studio. To elaborate, Powell constructs Epstein as both labourer and genius. The text also describes the workspace and by implication, the sculptor (who 'inhabits' it), as covered with the stains of sculptural endeavour, which aligns with the image of the studio as a workshop for a physical, masculine, workman. But the suggestion that the sculptor's task is that of struggling with 'Nature', 'elemental truths' and the materials of sculpture, presents Epstein as genius – qualitatively distinct from 'ordinary' individuals, and artisans. Powell also presents Epstein as eternally devoted to his art, and the suggestion that to see the sculptor, one must go to the studio to find him, is also implicit in the text. Finally, the description of the studio as 'vitally pregnant with art' adds another layer to the construction of Epstein, emphasising his virility.

### The Studio as a Site of Creative Transformation

Having discussed photographs of Epstein and his studio in terms of the construction of 'the sculptor' and the studio as a site, it is now important to attend more specifically to the presentation of

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>84</sup> Powell (1932), 95.

Epstein's studio practice in selected images. Many of Ireland's photographs emphasise sculptural process by depicting unfinished sculptures in the studio. One example shows pieces of *Liverpool Resurgent* waiting to be assembled (fig. 31). This photograph emphasises the physical labour that sculpture entails; not only is it a feat to create the over-sized fragments, but their assembly will also require considerable effort. Another photograph shows a stage in the development of *Saint Michael* (1958) (fig. 32). The close-up view of the monumental sculpture reveals that Epstein added clay to the unfinished plaster. Again, in line with Wood's assertion cited earlier, although Epstein is absent from the image, his presence is suggested by the recently added clay that acts as an index of his labour.<sup>85</sup> Both photographs align with the construction of Epstein as sculptor-labourer and the studio as a productive workshop by suggesting that a sculptor's 'work is never done.'

*Unfinished Work* (fig. 33) not only emphasises sculptural process, but also constructs the studio as a transformative site. The dramatic use of light in the photograph projects the shadow of the incomplete bust onto the strange facade-like construction behind it, as if it were a living figure. This lends the image a sense of theatricality: it is as if the unfinished products of Epstein's labours 'inhabit' the studio in his absence, waiting for the sculptor to complete them. But more than this, the image has something of Frankenstein's monster about it, as if the artist will transform the inanimate object by breathing 'artistic life' into it.

Modernist discourse often described artworks as 'living', presenting the artist and their hands as fecund. For example, Powell's monograph opens with the bold declaration that Epstein 'creates artistic life'.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, Epstein insisted that sculpture 'must quiver with life.'<sup>87</sup> Epstein also accounted for his characteristic rough surface treatment by announcing that 'the rough surface breaks up the light, and accentuates the characteristics, giving life to the work.'<sup>88</sup> Accordingly, 'the studio', as a site in which such 'artistic life' is created, attains a special, almost mystical significance as a transformative site. Just as 'the sculptor' can embody both workman and genius, 'the studio' appears to be both a workshop and 'a place of enchantment' wherein mysterious transformations – that seem to transcend human understanding - of inert materials into 'living' art occur.<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke also described Rodin's sculptures as 'alive,' consistently

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<sup>85</sup> Wood in Feeke and Curtis (2001), 13.

<sup>86</sup> Powell (1932), xv.

<sup>87</sup> Haskell (1931), 61.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>89</sup> Bergstein (1995), 46. Bergstein describes 'the studio' as a 'place of enchantment [...] as well as being a workshop for the production of objects.'

referring to male figures as 'he.'<sup>90</sup> The idea of sculptural process was central to Rodin's art, and Epstein's deference to Rodin partially explains the existence and form of the photographs discussed in this section.

Numerous photographs, dating from the late 1880s and early 1900s, of Rodin's work and studio that were commissioned by Rodin from respected photographers - including Edward Steichen, Eugène Druet and Jacques-Ernest Bulloz – depict unfinished sculptures.<sup>91</sup> A pertinent example by an unidentified photographer is referred to as *Rodin's Bust of Barbey d'Aurevilly Plaster and added Clay* (1909) (fig. 34). Like Ireland's photograph of the unfinished *Saint Michael*, the image shows the French sculptor's addition of clay to the plaster as work-in-progress. In his survey of the copious photographs in the archive of the Musée Rodin, Elsen asserts that the images function similarly to a studio tour.<sup>92</sup> Widely distributed, the photographs were displayed alongside sculptures in exhibitions of Rodin's work and prints were also sold in the respective photographer's shops, and sent to dealers and patrons.<sup>93</sup>

The numerous images of unfinished sculptures in Rodin's studio emphasise sculptural process. Additionally, Rodin's atelier was also constructed as a site of creative transformation. Steichen's technically accomplished photograph *Portrait of Rodin next to The Thinker with Monument to Victor Hugo in the Background* (1902) (fig. 35) not only dramatically constructs Rodin as genius or 'great among the greatest', but also mystifies the atelier as a place of transformation.<sup>94</sup> To elaborate, in this photograph, Rodin's sculptures are more than masses of material; invested with the aforementioned notion of 'artistic life' they are his companions and his equal.

Thus, Ireland's photographs present Epstein's studio as both workshop and transformative site and Rodin's atelier was similarly constructed in photographic representations. Furthermore, Rodin's sculptural process (or 'making') was a vital aspect of his art. Since Epstein, a great admirer of the French sculptor, had visited Rodin's studio shortly after the 1900 exhibition that emphasised studio

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<sup>90</sup> Rilke (1946), *passim*. Originally published in French in 1902, this book has been frequently republished.

<sup>91</sup> Whilst Elsen's book *In Rodin's Studio* (1980), is only partly academic, noticeably lacking full references, the reproduced photographs from the Rodin Museum archive are a valuable resource for examining Rodin's studio practice.

<sup>92</sup> Elsen (1980), 20.

<sup>93</sup> Becker in Dorothy Kosinski (2000), 93.

<sup>94</sup> This was how Rodin was described by his friend and fellow artist, Claude Monet, in the introduction to the catalogue of Rodin's 1900 exhibition. Claude Monet, *Exposition de 1900; L'Oeuvre de Rodin*, Paris, 1900 reproduced in full in Ruth Butler, *Rodin in Perspective*, New Jersey, 1980, 100.

practice, it seems apposite to suggest that Epstein's deference may partially account for the existence and form of Ireland's photographs.

### Sculpture-as-Process

In addition to commissioning photographs of his work and studio, Rodin notoriously exhibited 'unfinished' work. For example, in 1897 he presented the *Plaster Monument to Victor Hugo* (fig. 36) to the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts.<sup>95</sup> The statue is noticeably a work-in-progress: the straps attaching the extended left arm to the shoulder are apparent, as is the armature that supports the hand. The French sculptor's obstinate production and exhibition of sculptural fragments also emphasised sculpture-as-process. By their very nature, fragments emphasise process by presenting what is obviously a man-made construction rather than the illusion of life (posited as the traditional aim of sculpture).<sup>96</sup> Or, as Wagner has expressed it, the part-objects are meant to be experienced as more artificial than natural, 'more made than seen.'<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, Rodin's 1900 solo exhibition arguably brought the idea of studio practice into sharp focus. This is significant for any exploration of sculptural studio practice, but particularly so for this research given Epstein's vocal appreciation of Rodin.

Rodin's exhibition deliberately coincided with the *Exposition Universelle* but was staged in a separate, purpose-built studio-cum-gallery (fig. 37).<sup>98</sup> The following year, the pavilion was dismantled and reconstructed on the site of Rodin's studio in Meudon (fig. 38) – which Epstein visited sometime between 1902 and 1904.<sup>99</sup> Whilst it was customary for successful artists to entertain visitors, Elsen asserts that, from 1900 until the sculptor's death in 1917, Rodin's was the most visited studio.<sup>100</sup> The photographs of the pavilion and its reconstruction affirm that the majority of sculptures on display were plasters. Pertinently, this medium constitutes an 'in-between' state – the intercessor between

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<sup>95</sup> Elsen (1980), 30.

<sup>96</sup> Steinberg (1972), 220.

<sup>97</sup> Wagner (1991), 220.

<sup>98</sup> Rudolf Kassner described the exhibition space: 'we are at an exhibition; yet one has the feeling of entering a workshop.' Kassner also emphasised the importance of process, saying that 'we can never forget that someone has been here and worked with the stone, that something has happened to the stone, that something has come into being from the stone.' Rudolf Kassner, 'Notes on Rodin's Sculpture', reproduced in full in Butler (1980), 102.

<sup>99</sup> The archive of le Musée Rodin contains scores of photographs of the pavilion and its reconstruction on the site of Rodin's studio in Meudon, many of which are available online. <http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/rodin/chronology-auguste-rodin/turning-point> [accessed 20/12/2011]

<sup>100</sup> Elsen (1980), 19. Contemporary commentators perpetuated the idea that in order to know Rodin and his art, it was necessary to visit him in his studio. See for example, Camille Mauclair, 'Auguste Rodin, Son Oeuvre, Son Milieu, Son Influence', *Revue Universelle*, 1901. Translated by John Anzalone and reproduced in full in Butler (1980), 109.

the initial clay or wax maquette and the final stone or bronze sculpture. The exhibition thus compounded the heightened importance of sculptural process. Rilke's second Rodin monograph (1907) further exalts the mystique of Rodin's studio.<sup>101</sup> Originally a lecture, Rilke's poetic prose is constructed as a journey to the timeless and mystical environment of the atelier.<sup>102</sup> Again, Rodin's creative process is emphasised: 'I was passing through the vast workshops, lost in thought, and I noticed that everything was in a state of growth and nothing was in a hurry.'<sup>103</sup> Thus, not only was sculptural process central to Rodin's art, but his studio was conceptualised as a transformative site.

Rodin's studio became a public arena.<sup>104</sup> Wagner asserts that contemporary commentators were obliged to visit Rodin's atelier in order to correctly 'experience' his art and that the space alone could personify the sculptor.<sup>105</sup> Of course, Rodin was not the only artist to have received visitors in his studio. However, when considered in conjunction with his persistent dissemination of photographic prints and exhibition of unfinished work, his self-conscious promotion of sculptural fragments, and his 1900 exhibition - which was deliberately staged in a purpose-built pseudo-studio and displayed objects traditionally relegated to the seclusion of the studio, only to reach the public domain upon their 'completion' - it seems apposite to contend that Rodin brought the idea of sculptural studio practice into sharp focus. By depicting Epstein, his studio, his tools, and unfinished sculptures, Ireland's photographs emphasise work-in-progress in a similar manner and are congruent with the privileging of sculptural process and transformation of the studio into a public arena, as mobilised by Rodin.

In her examination of Hans Namuth's photographs of Jackson Pollock, Amelia Jones asserts that the idea of presenting the artist in the act of creation was relatively new, dating to 1951, when Namuth's photographs were published.<sup>106</sup> Utilising semiotics, Jones describes a shift in the general conception of paintings away from 'iconicity' and towards 'indexicality,' whereby the art object serves as an index of the work of the artist.<sup>107</sup> In this context, the significance of a given artwork was, therefore, more about the act of creation than the final object. Of course, the activities of artists had been

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<sup>101</sup> Rilke, 'Rodin – Book Two', in Jon Wood, David Hulks and Alex Potts (eds.), *Modern Sculpture Reader*, Leeds, 2007, 13-22. Unlike Rodin's first monograph, I was unable to access the original text.

<sup>102</sup> Wood, Hulk and Potts (2007), 13.

<sup>103</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Rodin – Book Two,' 1907, in Wood et al (2007), 21.

<sup>104</sup> Tucker (2010), 22-23. Tucker describes Rodin's studio as a 'public theatre' and, in line with Rilke's privileging of the perpetual 'growth' of sculptures in the space, asserts that it was the unfinished, fragmentary objects that captivated audiences. It is also noteworthy that Rilke asserts that Rodin had more than one studio - perhaps as a means to maintain some form of privacy aside from the very public nature of his career. Rilke (1946), 61.

<sup>105</sup> Wagner (1991), 97.

<sup>106</sup> Jones (1998), 83-84.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

visualised before Namuth's photographs - depictions of artists at work can be found on ancient Greek vases (fig. 39) – but photography played a crucial role in 'opening up' the practice and process of art. Paintings of artists in their studio - such as Johannes Vermeer's *The Art of Painting* (c. 1666) (fig. 40) - by their nature, present what is obviously a constructed representation, but photography's association with documentary, privileges photographic representations as more 'truthful.' Thus, whilst many photographs have been deliberately staged, they are persistently thought to offer 'transparent windows to an absolutely candid truth.'<sup>108</sup> Given art history's bias towards painting over sculpture, it is perhaps unsurprising that Jones discussed the significance of indexicality to modernism exclusively in relation to paintings, but her ideas also apply to modernist sculpture. However, it is interesting to note that the heightened importance of process and shift towards indexicality appears to have occurred earlier in the history of sculpture.

### The Significance of Indexicality to Modernist Sculpture

Hildebrand privileges 'the actual process of creating a work of art' in his widely read text, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*.<sup>109</sup> He asserts that 'the technical progress and factory work of our day have led us to lose our appreciation of the manner in which a thing is made, and have caused us to value a product more for itself than as a result of some activity.'<sup>110</sup> Hildebrand, therefore, suggests that in the context of an increasingly mechanised society, art objects that function indexically for the work of the sculptor would be invested with a greater significance than so-called 'traditional' sculptures that offer the illusion of life. Crucially, to ensure a distinction between art and craft, the aforementioned elevation of the sculptor-as-genius would have been essential. Hildebrand's words thus announced the heightened importance of indexicality to modernist sculptural practice. Photographs of sculptors and their studios pertain to 'document' the process of sculpture and are, therefore, congruent with Hildebrand's emphasis on 'the actual process of creating a work of art.'

The notion of sculpture-as-process is articulated in photographic representations of Epstein's contemporaries Moore and Hepworth. The 1934 publication, *Unit One: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture* (which announced the formation of the group)

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<sup>108</sup> Bergstein (1995), 48.

<sup>109</sup> Hildebrand (1907), 15. *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* was first published in Germany in 1893 it was subsequently translated into French and English. The 1907 English translation was published under the title of *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

comprises sections written by each member accompanied by photographs.<sup>111</sup> Pertinently, images of artworks made by the painters and sculptors of the group are flanked by photographs of the artist's hands and studio, as if the significance, or even explanation, of the objects was to be found in the hands that made them and the space in which they were made. A photographic portrait of Hepworth and study of her hands follows Herbert Read's introduction (fig. 41) and a photograph of her studio is reproduced after her text (fig. 42). Notably, even in the half-length portrait, Hepworth's hands are central, and posed as if in motion, albeit an apparently gentle, caressing movement.<sup>112</sup> Photographs of Moore's sculptures are also 'introduced' and 'concluded' by images of his hands (fig. 43) and studio (fig. 44). In contrast, the buildings designed by the architects of the group are merely accompanied by photographic portraits of their author.

A photographic portrait of Epstein that similarly emphasises his hands is reproduced in Edward Schinman's catalogue of works in his collection (fig. 45).<sup>113</sup> Details of the photographer and date are unknown, but Epstein looks the same age as in Ireland's photographs. The sculptor is depicted in front of *Behold the Man* (which appears in a large number of Ireland's studio views). His hand is posed in an imitative gesture of the carving behind him. The motif not only highlights the sculptor's creative appendages, it also serves to conflate the man and his work.<sup>114</sup> Given modernism's preference for sculpture-as-process, it seems appropriate that sculptors' hands should be emphasised in photographs, since sculptors create with their hands.<sup>115</sup> Once again, however, the need to distinguish 'the sculptor' from manual workers and applied artists – who also work with their hands – is imperative. Sculptors' hands are, therefore, invested with a greater significance than 'ordinary' appendages.

Thus, photographs of sculptors' hands are common, but their creative hands are distinguishable from anatomical appendages by virtue of the fact that they are constructed as generative or fecund. As

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<sup>111</sup> Herbert Read, 'Introduction' to Herbert Read (ed.), *Unit One: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture*, London, 1934, 10. Read declares that the members of the group collectively and individually stand for a vaguely defined 'expression of a truly contemporary spirit, for that thing which is recognised as peculiarly *of to-day* in painting, sculpture and architecture.' I have chosen to focus on the photographs of Hepworth and Moore since they are of most relevance to my consideration of Epstein.

<sup>112</sup> One could undertake a feminist exploration of the photographs as reproduced in *Unit One*. Hepworth is noticeably absent in the depiction of her studio, in contrast to the authoritative presence of the male artists in their studios. Likewise, Hepworth's hands are depicted gently moulding – although it appears more as if she is caressing – round sculptural forms, in contrast to Moore's hands which are shown carving a sculpted hand with the associated tools of the trade.

<sup>113</sup> Edward P. Schinman, *Jacob Epstein: A Catalogue of the Collection of Edward P. Schinman*, New Jersey, 1970.

<sup>114</sup> Bergstein (1995), 52. Bergstein discusses the construction of 'the-man-as-his-work' in terms of 'the Vasarian conflation of art and the artist's personality.' Jones also explores the common presentation of 'artist-as-his-work' in her examination of Namuth's photographs of Pollock. Jones (1998), 66.

<sup>115</sup> In chapter two I return to this idea in relation to sculpted fragment hands.

visualised in *The Creation of Adam* (1508-12) on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and perpetuated by Vasari's construction of Michelangelo as 'divine', the biblical description whereby God modelled Adam from the earth, came to be associated with sculptural endeavour, and sculptors' hands have been invested with a special generative significance.<sup>116</sup> Ireland's photograph of Epstein carving the right hand of the *TUC War Memorial* emphasises the sculptor's hands (fig. 46). He is shown directly carving the monumental hand with no apparent model to guide him. Thus, an element of risk is involved in the task, but his skill in transforming the inert material into 'Art' is guided by his genius 'artistic vision' – which elevates him above the manual labourer or artisan.

Epstein's hands were also emphasised by contemporaneous commentators. For example, referring to the *W.H. Hudson Memorial*, Frank Rutter describes the hands of the carved figure as 'eloquent of the power and strength of a labourer and creator.'<sup>117</sup> Rutter, therefore, not only follows the principle that sculptures incite the viewer to 'look for the two hands that created them', but also describes Epstein in the aforementioned guise of labourer and genius.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, *The Liverpool Post* (10 February 1941) had reported that *Jacob and the Angel* is 'evidence that the hands of a great genius are at work in our day.'<sup>119</sup> Lee also highlights Epstein's hands, but this is discussed further in chapter two regarding Epstein's sculptures of hands.

#### The Vasarian Function of Ireland's Photographs and the Associated Publication

Having discussed photographs of Epstein and his studio as congruent with the heightened importance of sculptural process, as mobilised by Rodin, and the associated modernist preoccupation with indexicality, it is now important to consider another possible motivation for Ireland's photographs and Lee's book that is more specific to Epstein: the incessant criticism he faced throughout his career.

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<sup>116</sup> Genesis 2:7. Additionally, Hemsoll notes that Vasari's text was not actually the first instance of Michelangelo being referred to as 'divine,' and nor did Vasari reserve the term exclusively for Michelangelo. Vasari's use of 'divine' regarding Michelangelo is, however, particularly persistent. Hemsoll 'introduction' to Vasari (2006), 28-31.

<sup>117</sup> Frank Rutter, 'Epstein and Hudson: Irreconcilables in Art, Charm vs Force,' unknown Newspaper cutting from Terry Friedman's Research Files, 2002.71, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>118</sup> Rilke (1946), 2.

<sup>119</sup> *The Liverpool Post*, 10/02/1942, press cutting from, Press cuttings, 2002/78, Press cuttings book, 36.2/1998.A, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds



Powell's chapter 'Epstein in the Studio' opens with a defence of the sculptor's studio practice. He describes the sedulous perception of Epstein as a 'whirling Dervish' in the studio as 'the meanest of all the misconceptions about his work.'<sup>120</sup> Epstein was indeed persistently characterised as an artist who assaulted his audience like he assaulted his materials, as visualised in Ernest Forbes' cartoon, published in *The Sketch* (17 March 1937) (fig. 47).<sup>121</sup> There, with neither care nor concern for his audience, Epstein is presented with a dark, almost manic look on his face. The tools of his trade become weapons in his hands, poised ready to continue the assault upon the marble in front of him. Powell also insists that 'Epstein's studio, far from being a devil's workshop in which the devil goes dancing mad, is a place of infinite care in workmanship.'<sup>122</sup> Powell's defence, and Forbes' cartoon, both highlight the importance of sculpture-as-process. For Powell, to misunderstand Epstein's studio practice is to misunderstand his art, whilst, for the media, Epstein's incomprehensible and undesirable art is to be explained by his brutish approach in the studio.

There is also an undercurrent of racism in Forbes' stereotyping of Epstein. Epstein was victim to anti-Semitism throughout his career, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s. On 7 October 1935, members of the Independent Fascist League attacked Epstein's *W.H Hudson Memorial* with erosive alkaline and defaced the sculpture with Swastikas and the slogan 'God Save Our King and Britain from the Cancer of Judah.'<sup>123</sup> Eric Underwood's racist exclusion of Epstein from the publication *A Short History of English Sculpture* (1933) is another pertinent example. Underwood declares that Epstein's 'essentially oriental' ancestry and upbringing 'go far to explain his art.'<sup>124</sup> He continues by comparing Epstein to 'Holbein and van Dyck' whose 'art has gained as much from England and the English as it has given [...] But in the art of Epstein, who is primarily a modeller, there is practically nothing English.'<sup>125</sup> In stark contrast, Lee attributes 'the universality' of Epstein's art to his 'richly flavoured' childhood in the 'exotic, effervescent, immigrant crucible of East Side New York.'<sup>126</sup>

As well as articulating Epstein's deference to Rodin and alignment with the modernist concept of sculpture-as-process, Ireland's photographs can also be approached as representations of how an ageing Epstein wanted his studio practice to be perceived. Contrary to the popular conception of the

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<sup>120</sup> Powell (1932), 94.

<sup>121</sup> Ernest Forbes, 'The Confrontation: Sculptor Jacob Epstein Prepares a Fresh Problem for his Public', *The Sketch*, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1937, 259.

<sup>122</sup> Powell (1932), 94.

<sup>123</sup> Copy of Metropolitan Police report 8/10/1935 from Terry Friedman's Research files, 2002.71, The Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>124</sup> Underwood (1933), 153.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>126</sup> Lee and Ireland (1957), no page numbers.

sculptor as a wild beast in the studio, the photographs present a diligent labourer and creative genius, tirelessly dedicated to his art. Images such as *Epstein in his Studio Modelling Dr. Otto Klemperer* (1957) (fig. 48) depict the sculptor absorbed in his work, carefully studying his bust and the sitter. The photograph presents Epstein's portraits as the result of painstaking attention to detail. *Jacob Epstein and Portland Mason* (fig. 49) likewise presents Epstein's 'infinite care in workmanship' but allies it with the image of a kind-hearted family man: Epstein is again involved in his careful work whilst sharing in the delight of the young girl as she plays with modelling clay. Ida Kar's slightly earlier photograph of Epstein modelling Lord Russell (fig. 50) similarly shows sculptor and sitter at ease, seemingly enjoying each other's company. The presentation of Epstein in images such as these is a far cry from the media's defamation of Epstein as a 'socialist', 'anarchist' or 'great sculptor who has sold his soul to the devil.'<sup>127</sup>

Contemporaneous literature also acknowledged the 'unfortunate' controversy that surrounded Epstein and his work which 'blurs public vision [...] and spoils the artist's own outlook on the world.'<sup>128</sup> Casson notes the persistent denigration of Epstein in the rather ambivalent statement: 'Epstein belongs to an age when tolerance has thought it better to overwhelm an artist with garbage rather than drive him to the workhouse.'<sup>129</sup> Regarding the *W.H. Hudson Memorial* - Epstein's most controversial sculpture - even those who voiced their support for the sculptor, did so only reluctantly.<sup>130</sup> For example, Roger Fry announces:

I am not going to pretend that [the *W.H. Hudson Memorial*] has converted me into an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Epstein's sculpture, or that it causes me any profound emotional reaction, but it has certain qualities which are almost always absent from our public sculpture.<sup>131</sup>

Epstein was clearly troubled by the often extremely harsh criticism he faced, despite Lee's insistence that the sculptor was 'majestically free' from 'disenchantment' and 'bitterness.'<sup>132</sup> A large proportion of his autobiography and Haskell's text are devoted to defending his work. Both publications

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<sup>127</sup> Excerpts from the press referring to Epstein's *W.H. Hudson Memorial*. *Evening News* 26/11/1925, *The Daily Mail* 25/11/1925 and *Morning Post* 28/11/1925 respectively. Newspaper cuttings from Terry Friedman's Research files, 2002.71, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>128</sup> Kineton Parkes, *Sculpture of To-day Volume One*, London, 1921, 118.

<sup>129</sup> Casson (1928), 111.

<sup>130</sup> Epstein's relief carving sparked an unprecedented furore. Terry Friedman's research files at the Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds and a visit to the British Library National Newspaper Archives, London, revealed an overwhelming number of articles about the sculpture.

<sup>131</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Hudson Memorial', *Dial*, vol.79, 1925, 370-3, cited by Silber (1986), 45.

<sup>132</sup> Ireland and Lee (1957), no page numbers.

reproduce excerpts from contemporary literature as well as newspaper articles and letters that convey Epstein's sense of injustice, and vigorously argue against common misconceptions.<sup>133</sup> Epstein also publicly voiced his objections to allegations in the press.<sup>134</sup> Ireland's photographs and the associated book are an extension of this. In light of the incessant denigration of Epstein and his work, it seems apposite that he should want to leave a visual record of how he wished himself and his art to be perceived.

In this chapter I have discussed selected photographs of Epstein and his studio as constructions of his studio practice. The photographs present a multifaceted Epstein as diligent labourer and creative genius, who 'inhabits' a mystical, transformative workshop. The incessant and startlingly harsh criticism that Epstein was subjected to throughout his career was proffered as motivation for the existence and form of the images and *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work*, as well as an engagement with Vasari's famous construction of Michelangelo, deference to Rodin and the heightened importance of sculptural process. That photographs of Epstein can be shown to align with the modernist preoccupation of indexicality, thus inserts Epstein – who was commonly segregated as 'primarily a modeller' – into a history in which his presence has been marginalised.<sup>135</sup>

'The studio' and physical labour of the sculptor, were integral to the conception of 'the modernist sculptor.'<sup>136</sup> In line with this, it is interesting to note that shortly after Epstein's death, his wife, Kathleen Garman, proposed turning her late husband's studio into a memorial museum.<sup>137</sup> Although plans were never realised, it was suggested that Epstein's plasters should remain in his London studio so that students, artists and members of the public would be able to explore Epstein's work in the environment in which it was created.<sup>138</sup> Chapter two explores Epstein's studio practice via an

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<sup>133</sup> For example, chapter five of Epstein's autobiography, 'The Tomb of Oscar Wilde', is devoted to reproducing evidence in support of his work, defending it against criticism, and opposing the proposal to have the prominent male genitals covered by a gold plaque. Epstein (1940), 43-48.

<sup>134</sup> For example, in answer to criticism of his *W.H. Hudson Memorial*, Epstein's letter to *The Evening Standard* (6 October 1925) declares; 'I am not a German, a Bolshevik or a eugenicist. I am a sculptor.' Epstein was also often quoted as insisting 'I make sculpture, not controversy.' This quotation appeared in numerous newspapers, for example *News Review*, 12/02/1942, 17.

<sup>135</sup> Underwood (1933), 153,

<sup>136</sup> Wagner (2005), 11 and 143.

<sup>137</sup> 'An Epstein Memorial: A Proposal for the Future of the Great Sculptor's Studio', *The Sphere*, 28/11/1959, 158-159.

<sup>138</sup> Let us not forget that Rodin also left his estate to the French State, as did Epstein's friend and fellow sculptor Brancusi, who died five months before Epstein. A reconstruction of the Romanian sculptor's studio stands outside the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Elizabeth Brown referred to Brancusi's studio as his last work of art; the sculptor apparently resisted sales towards the end of his life and when he was obliged to sell a sculpture, he made a cast of the object to put in its place in his creative space. Elizabeth Brown, 'Brancusi's Photographic In-Sights', in Dorothy Kosinski (2000), 276.

examination of a selection of his sculptural fragments. In contrast to the images discussed in this chapter, as projections of how an elderly Epstein wished his studio practice to be perceived, the multifaceted part-objects will be approached as indexes of the sculptor's working method, as well as reflective of several other important aspects of his studio practice. The ideas generated by the examination of the objects diverge considerably from the discussion of the photographs, despite the fact that both resources lend themselves to an exploration of Epstein's approach to sculpture.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE FRAGMENT AND STUDIO PRACTICE

This chapter explores Epstein's studio practice via an examination of a selection of his sculptural fragments. Employing an object-based approach, the multifaceted fragmentary sculptures will be approached as indexes of Epstein's creative process, as reflective of elements of his artistic training, his deference to Rodin, veneration of ancient sculpture, and as an opportunity to discuss Epstein's departure from many of his contemporaries who also produced fragments. It will be argued that the artworks are a richer, more multifaceted resource than the photographs discussed in chapter one which purport to 'document' Epstein's studio practice, but more accurately constitute a partial reading of his self-image. Common to both the objects and the images, however, is an emphasis on process and an articulation of Epstein's admiration for Rodin. For that reason, I will begin with a brief exploration of the French sculptor's use of fragments in his studio practice, and demonstrate the similarity this has with Epstein's method of working. Discussion of Rodin need only be brief since my focus is Epstein, and since the literature concerned with Rodin's production and use of fragments is prolific.<sup>139</sup>

As well as exhibiting fragments as autonomous artworks, Elsen explains how Rodin commanded his assistants to produce a multitude of body parts which he kept in the studio as potential sources of inspiration.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, Rodin notoriously re-combined and modified elements from several sculptures to create novel amalgamations. Steinberg has convincingly demonstrated how the evolution of figural parts can be traced throughout Rodin's oeuvre, in particular, his re-use of elements from the monumental *Gates of Hell* (begun 1880).<sup>141</sup> Thus, aside from their autonomy as artworks, sculptural fragments served a functional purpose for the French sculptor, acting as a stimulus to his creative imagination. It is this use of fragments within the atelier that I now wish to examine, and propose as significant for my investigation of Epstein's studio practice.

Tucker refers to some of Rodin's fragments, including *Flying Figure* (c.1890) (fig. 51), *Head of Iris (large)* (c.1905-8) (fig. 52) and *Walking Man* (c.1907) (fig. 53), as 'by-products of public commissions' and notes that 'their home was in the studio'.<sup>142</sup> Perhaps what he meant by this is that they relate to, or even derive from, other sculptures. For example, *The Walking Man* is a mutilated and less polished

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<sup>139</sup> For a comprehensive account of Rodin's 're-use' and 'recycling' of fragments within his studio practice, see Steinberg (1972), 333-403. Also, Tucker (2010), 15-41 and Elsen (1969), 16-28.

<sup>140</sup> Albert E. Elsen, *Rodin*, New York, 1960, 174.

<sup>141</sup> Steinberg (1972), 375. Referring to Rodin's sculpture as 'constellations of interchangeable parts', Steinberg even proposes that the multitude of fragments created by Rodin mean that 'original Rodin hybrids could still be bred.'

<sup>142</sup> Tucker (2010), 22.

version of *St. John the Baptist* (1877) (fig. 54).<sup>143</sup> The development of the other fragments is more convoluted, but crucially, they all resulted from Rodin's design process for the *Monument to Victor Hugo* (1897) (fig. 55).<sup>144</sup> For me, the suggestion that the studio was the appropriate 'home' for these fragments not only refers to the fact that Rodin's atelier became an alternative public arena but also appropriately anchors the fragments in their functional role as creative stimuli.<sup>145</sup>

Numerous contemporaneous photographs of Epstein's studio – by Ireland and other photographers – confirm the abundance of sculptural fragments contained within the space. In one image, Ireland has superimposed several shelves of fragments, thereby presenting the studio as overflowing with figural parts (fig. 56). Aside from this particularly constructed image, photographs legitimately record the myriad of fragments in Epstein's studio (figs. 12-17).<sup>146</sup> The photographs also identify specific fragments that remained in the studio. Thus, whilst I contend that the part-objects are more multifaceted than the photographs in terms of studio practice, the images play an important role in the examination of the objects. The accounts of visitors to Epstein's studio affirm the images, describing the workspace as 'crammed with sculpture' such that 'every sort of head and limb at every height and angle' was 'mixed up with heaps of wood, piles of clay, stacks of old newspapers and the dust of years'.<sup>147</sup> It is now important to consider why these objects featured so heavily in Epstein's studio.

Haskell's text attests that Epstein's output was typically 'the result of long premeditation'.<sup>148</sup> Epstein himself elucidated that 'I work fast but I like to work a long time. Sometimes I will put away for a year or more and come back to them'.<sup>149</sup> This was confirmed by Epstein's son Jackie, who recalled to

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<sup>143</sup> It should be noted that the numerous casts as well as fragmentary variations of Rodin's sculptures has led to considerable confusion regarding the dates of some of his work. For example *The Walking Man* has been variously dated as c.1877-78, c.1890-95 c.1904 and c.1907. I have cited the latter date since this was the year given by Le Musée Rodin in Paris which is where I saw the sculpture. The earliest date corresponds to the full figure *St. John the Baptist* and the subsequent dates could potentially be different casts since multiples were made. This seems to echo the problems regarding the provenance of Epstein's fragments as noted at the outset of this thesis.

<sup>144</sup> *Head of Iris* originally belonged to the winged full-figure *Iris Messenger of the Gods*, conceived as part of the *Monument to Victor Hugo*. Separated from the ensemble, the female form was enlarged, re-orientated vertically and decapitated, creating *Head of Iris* and the partial figure *Iris* (c.1895), and *Flying Figure* was the result of further modification.

<sup>145</sup> Rodin's infamous *morceaux* also played a crucial part in the construction of Rodin 'the sculptor' but that is not the concern of this chapter.

<sup>146</sup> Many of Ireland's photographs are indeed deliberately staged, and present a particular view of the studio, but aside from this, they do attest to the fact that Epstein's studio contained an abundance of sculptural fragments, as do the copious other anonymous photographs.

<sup>147</sup> Emlyn Williams, *Emlyn: An Early Autobiography (1927-1935)*, London, 1976, 263.

<sup>148</sup> Haskell (1931), 113.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

Gilboa in 1998 that his father developed ideas for several sculptures concurrently, during a long period of gestation, making use of sketch pads that were scattered throughout his house.<sup>150</sup> During this process of deliberation, it seems natural that the sculptor should draw inspiration from the objects that surrounded him in his home and adjoining studio.<sup>151</sup> As well as his own collection of 'primitive' artworks whose presence was so pervasive that they appeared to inhabit the house in the sculptor's absence (fig. 57), Epstein also surrounded himself with his own work, a collection composed of unsold and uncommissioned objects, unrealised projects, and fragmentary parts (fig. 58). Evidence suggests that, like Rodin, Epstein often 'recycled' elements from previous works to form new sculptures. More specific to Epstein's practice, however, is the evidence that he consistently conceived full sculptures from busts, in a kind of backwards gestalt process that invests the part with a greater significance than the whole.

Based on visual correspondences, I propose that Epstein's portrait *Virginia Jay* (1927) (fig. 59), the fragment *St. Francis* (fig. 60) and the head of the left-most figure (known as *The Consoler*) from the monumental group *Social Consciousness* (1951-3) (fig. 61), are all related and serve as indicators of Epstein's 'recycling' of sculpture by modifying sculptural heads. Chronologically, *Virginia Jay* was made first. Unfortunately, the current whereabouts of this bust is unknown, as are any details about the sitter.<sup>152</sup> Since it is a figurative portrait, one must assume that it is, more or less, a sculpted likeness of the person it professes to represent. Whilst Epstein belligerently refused to 'flatter' sitters, he asserted that he always aimed for sculptural affinity, but conceded that 'while every detail goes to make up the portrait, the details are of varying importance [...] A man is an artist because he has the necessary judgement and skill to know what accentuation is necessary.'<sup>153</sup> Thus, the bust should be approached as Epstein's sculptural interpretation of the woman, Virginia Jay, who sat for him in 1927.

Whilst no human face is symmetrical, Epstein may have accentuated the irregularities of Jay's features, as he often did.<sup>154</sup> The left eye is lower than the right eye and the nose and mouth are not

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<sup>150</sup> Gilboa (2009), 11.

<sup>151</sup> An aim of my recently curated exhibition *Epstein's Rima: 'A Travesty of Nature'* (4 February – 2 June 2012), which displayed selected drawings from Epstein's *Rima Sketchbook* (1923), Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, was to highlight that some of the sketches are clearly directly inspired by objects from Epstein's extensive collection of 'primitive' art which surrounded him in his home and studio.

<sup>152</sup> The portrait is catalogued by Silber and Richard Buckle, *Jacob Epstein: Sculptor*, London, 1963, 426. No further information other than medium and date are provided by either author.

<sup>153</sup> Epstein (1940), 60 and 67. These examples also demonstrate Epstein upholding the distinction between a sculptor and an ordinary person, as discussed in chapter one.

<sup>154</sup> Haskell (1931), 75-76. Epstein discussed the merits of 'distortion' in art referring to Michelangelo as 'a genius and his 'distortion' is never meaningless.' Epstein's accentuation of certain features of his sitters is

perfectly aligned. The bulging eyes, blank expression, and broad, rectangular structure of the head, heightened by the straight hair, cropped to just below the mouth, give the bust a rather unattractive appearance. When compared with the vibrant *First Portrait of Kathleen* (1921) (fig. 62) or the expressive scowl of *First Portrait of Esther* (1944) (fig. 63), *Virginia Jay* appears bland and lifeless. Importantly, the bust has an air of androgyny. Without knowing what the sitter looked like it is inappropriate to comment on whether or not this is the result of Epstein's artistry, but arguably, this perhaps proved inspirational or advantageous to Epstein when transforming the female bust into the male head *St. Francis*.

According to Silber, *St. Francis* constitutes a study for a never-realised full-figure commissioned by the Countess of Berkeley.<sup>155</sup> Thus, given a commission for a full-sized statue, Epstein began the work with a fragment head. The transformation from female portrait to male sculptural head is subtle yet effective. Epstein seemingly elongated the face, making the chin more pronounced. The rectangular visage of the portrait is thus transposed into an oval facial structure. The short hair of *Virginia Jay* has been lengthened and stylised into the appearance of a hood; instead of lying flat against the head as it does in the portrait, Epstein seems to have cut around the hair line, creating a deep shadow which evokes a covering over hair. *St. Francis* is still somewhat androgynous, but on close inspection, Epstein's characteristic rough surface treatment has been heightened around the chin, resulting in the impression of facial hair (fig. 64). The lips of the religious icon are slightly parted but appear just as full as those of the portrait. The most consistent features of the two busts are the large, bulging eyes and heavy eyelids.

Photographs confirm that *St. Francis* remained in Epstein's studio (fig. 58), and I contend that the modified head was transformed once again into *The Consoler*. In this third manifestation, the face retains its oval structure but appears much thinner, almost gaunt. The hood of *St. Francis* has returned to hair as in *Virginia Jay*, but has remained shoulder length. The deep shadow which frames the religious head has been maintained, but to a lesser degree in *The Consoler*, resulting in the appearance of thicker hair than the lank locks of the portrait. The lips of *The Consoler* are parted as in *St. Francis*, but appear less plump than those found in either bust. The indications of facial hair around the chin of *St. Francis* have been further accentuated, making the beard of the over life-sized head more pronounced than merely suggested. The eyes remain consistent once again, linking all three faces.

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particularly noticeable in *First Portrait of Kathleen* (1921) (The New Art Gallery Walsall), since numerous contemporaneous photographs of Kathleen are contained within the archive, facilitating comparison.

<sup>155</sup> Silber (1986), 192.



Arguably, *St. Francis* appears as intermediary between *Virginia Jay* and *The Consoler*. Comparison between the portrait and the over-sized head is unremarkable and their affinity could go unnoticed without the intercessional stage. This re-use and modification of sculpted heads is by no means isolated in Epstein's oeuvre. Using Walsall's *St. Francis*, I have sought to demonstrate that the profusion of fragments in Epstein's studio served as creative stimuli and that he would sometimes 'recycle' sculptural heads, transforming them into new figures. I will now explore Epstein's contention that 'portraiture is fully creative' in order to further demonstrate that the sculptor consistently approached the human form as an assemblage of parts; in particular that he frequently conceived full-figures from busts, in a kind of backwards gestalt process that invests the part with a greater significance than the whole.<sup>156</sup>

### Portraiture as a Vehicle

Whilst it is debateable whether or not a portrait bust legitimately constitutes a fragment, I would contend that there are instances when they can.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, regarding Epstein, the line between portraits and fragment heads can be demarcated. Epstein may not have used the term 'fragment', but he did distinguish his portraits from other instances of sculpted likenesses. For example, referring to *Risen Christ* (1917-19), whose features were modelled on Bernard van Dieren, Epstein declared that the 'work is not a portrait, therefore, and must not be criticised as such. It embodies my own conception of Christ.'<sup>158</sup>

Epstein made three representations of van Dieren. *First Portrait of Bernard van Dieren* (1916) (fig. 65) depicts the composer aged twenty nine. One year later, Epstein modelled *Second Head of Bernard van Dieren* (1917) (fig. 66) which relates to the full-figure *Risen Christ* (1917-19) (fig. 67).<sup>159</sup> Shortly before the composer's death, Epstein made another representation of his friend (fig. 68). All three objects are strikingly different. The gap of almost twenty years between the first and third busts, combined with the knowledge that van Dieren was extremely ill during the sittings for his final portrait, may help to account for the discrepancies between the first and last sculptures, but the disparities between all three heads are still remarkable.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Haskell (1931), 67.

<sup>157</sup> Elsen (1969), 13. I contend that Elsen's indiscriminate acceptance of busts as fragments is a simplification, and, as my discussion will highlight, I propose a subtle distinction between portrait busts and fragment heads.

<sup>158</sup> Haskell (1931), 42.

<sup>159</sup> The fragment *Hands of the Risen Christ* also originates from this statue.

<sup>160</sup> Epstein (1940), 69. Epstein recalled how van Dieren 'was very ill, by turns hot and cold, and very faint.'

The inaccessibility of these heads meant I had to rely on photographic representations.<sup>161</sup> With Geraldine Johnson's warning about the 'radical distortions' created by two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional objects in mind, my discussion of the heads is necessarily brief.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, I will attend to the van Dieren heads in order to demonstrate the distinction between Epstein's portraits and fragment heads.

Buckle describes *First Portrait of Bernard van Dieren* as having 'the air of a Regency dandy.'<sup>163</sup> Van Dieren appears as a well presented, young man. The furrowed brow makes the coiffured, handsome gentleman appear deep in thought. The head has a squared forehead and brow, and a strong jaw line. In contrast to the youthful vitality of the portrait, *Second Head of Bernard van Dieren* appears sickly and emaciated. The forehead and brow are consistently square, but the eyes are sunken and the cheek bones more pronounced, giving the head a skeletal appearance. Contrary to the clean-shaven dandy, the second head has indications of unkempt facial hair. The penetrating eyes lend the face a look of scorn. Epstein recalled visiting the often ill van Dieren in his sick-bed in 1917 and stated:

Watching his head, so spiritual and worn with suffering, I thought I would like to make a marble of him. I hurried home and returned with clay and made a mask which I immediately recognised as the Christ head, with its short beard, its pitying accusing eyes and the lofty and broad brow, denoting great intellectual strength.<sup>164</sup>

Arguably, the cadaverous, reproachful face of the second head is appropriate to a representation of the recently risen Christ figure, and is highly apt for an image of the Son of God in the context of the

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<sup>161</sup> I have seen *Risen Christ* and the associated *Hands of the Risen Christ* first hand. *Second Head of Bernard van Dieren* is identical to that of the statue, but it should be acknowledged that the experience of an isolated fragment is not equivocal to familiarity with the same object attached to a body. Arguably this perhaps stems from Epstein's backwards gestalt conceptual process since the part is imbued with a greater significance than the whole. For example, the monumentality of *Hands of the Risen Christ* is noticeably diminished when seen as part of the full-figure.

<sup>162</sup> Geraldine A. Johnson, *Sculpture and Photography: Envisioning the Third Dimension*, Geraldine A. Johnson (ed.), Cambridge, 1998, 9 and 15. Johnson's text provides a comprehensive and compelling account of the long-standing, but troublesome, relationship between sculpture and photography. Photographic reproductions of sculptures should always be approached as 'visual approximations' and not merely, accepted as accurate, objective substitutions

<sup>163</sup> Buckle (1963), 82.

<sup>164</sup> Epstein (1940), 94.

First World War.<sup>165</sup> A correspondence between Epstein's statue and its context was noted at the time. Commenting on the appropriateness of *Risen Christ* in terms of the context in which it was made, John Couros' account is surprisingly astute and stands out against the usual denigration of Epstein's work. Referring to the 1914-18 war as 'the devastation of Europe, Golgotha on an immense scale, the crucifixion of civilisation' Couros urges the reader to 'imagine a Christ arising out of the entombment of a shell-torn earth; His profound reproach, His fierce anger, touched with scorn at the sight of what had be wrought by men.'<sup>166</sup>

It seems surprising that the third bust professes to represent the same man. Indeed, van Dieren was significantly older and nearing the end of his life. The skin appears much more aged and creased. Presented with neck and bare shoulders, the bust evokes Greek and Roman sculpted portraits of military men and dignitaries - such as *Basalt Bust of Germanicus* (c.14-20AD) (fig. 69) in the British Museum - thus maintaining the intellectualism embodied in the first head. Significantly, the individualised first and third busts contrast with the generalised second head. I contend that this is crucial to distinguishing Epstein's fragments from portraits: although Epstein's fragments may have been based on an individual, they are stylised representations.

I will return to this idea in relation to *Heads of the New York Madonna and Child*. Before doing so, however, *Risen Christ* also reveals Epstein's approach to physique as an assemblage of parts (fragments). Epstein recalled that he

saw the whole figure of my "Christ" in the mask. With haste I began to add the torso and the arms and the hand with the accusing finger. [...] I then set up this bust with an armature for the body. I established the length of the whole figure down to the feet.<sup>167</sup>

The sculpture thus progressed in stages, beginning with the head. The full-figure has several noticeable joins which affirm that the statue constitutes an assemblage of parts. In addition to modelling the head on van Dieren, Jacob Kramer and Cecil Gray also posed for parts of the figure.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> A 1924 survey of images of Christ noted the significance of representations of the Saviour at the time, stating that 'we [...] men and women of the twentieth century, tormented by wars [...] are wandering hither and thither without a shepherd.' Giovanni Meille, 'Introduction' to *Christ's Likeness in History and in Art*, London, 1924, no pages numbers.

<sup>166</sup> John Couros, 'Jacob Epstein Artist-Philosopher', *Studio*, vol. 79, no. 328, 1920, 176.

<sup>167</sup> Epstein (1940), 95.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

This approach to the human form as an assemblage of parts arguably reflects a crucial element of Epstein's artistic training.<sup>169</sup>

Ever since Michelangelo's time, drawing and modelling after fragmentary ancient sculptures has constituted a large proportion of a sculpture student's education.<sup>170</sup> The study of plaster casts of antique fragments and anatomical parts was still the core of the curriculum during Epstein's schooling at the École des Beaux-Arts, and the Académie Julian in Paris between 1902 and 1904. In his autobiography, Epstein briefly recalls lessons in modelling from life and drawing from Michelangelo casts.<sup>171</sup> The slightly younger sculptor Jacques Lipchitz (1891-1973), however, who also attended the École des Beaux-Arts and Académie Julian from 1909 – five years after Epstein – provides a more detailed account of his education at both institutions.<sup>172</sup> He describes lessons consisting of drawing and modelling from live models, ancient fragments and anatomical models, as well as regular trips to the Louvre 'and other museums.'<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, he describes the Académie Julian as 'smaller and more personal, although it had many of the same professors and the curriculum was not too different.'<sup>174</sup> He also speculates that the method of teaching painting and sculpture at both establishments had not changed since the eighteenth century. Albert Boime confirms that the elementary instruction offered by the École – drawing after ancient casts, live models, anatomical parts and lessons in perspective – was consistent throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries (up to 1971).<sup>175</sup> Philippe Grunhech affirms that many of the antique sculptures and casts at the École were indeed fragments.<sup>176</sup>

Thus, like many artists, Epstein's first encounter with sculptural fragments resulted from his artistic education. Crucially, central to the syllabus at the École des Beaux-Arts was the 'gradual mastery of

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<sup>169</sup> Approaching physique as an assemblage of parts that may be based on different models has a long academic history, perhaps originating from antiquity when Zeuxis advocated combining the best parts of several models to create the ideal human form. The story of Zeuxis' depiction of Venus is well documented in many art-historical texts, including Steinberg (1972), 382.

<sup>170</sup> There is a discrepancy between Giorgio Vasari's and Ascanio Condivi's account of Michelangelo's early art education – namely as to whether or not Michelangelo trained with Ghirlandaio – both authors agree, however, that the young sculptor's formative experience drawing and modelling after the antique sculptures in the gardens of Lorenzo de Medici was a crucial aspect of his early development. Ascanio Condivi, *The Life of Michelangelo*, London, 2006, 45-47. Vasari (2006), 38 and 43-5.

<sup>171</sup> Epstein (1940), 16-18.

<sup>172</sup> Jacques Lipchitz with H.H. Arnason, *My Life in Sculpture*, London, 1972.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>175</sup> Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1971, 18-19. Whilst Boime's text is concerned with painting, Lipchitz asserts that the education of painters and sculptors at the École was not significantly different. Lipchitz (1972), 4.

<sup>176</sup> Philippe Grunhech, *The Grand Prix de Rome: Paintings from the École des Beaux-Arts 1797-1863*, exh.cat., Washington, 1984, 24.

the human form' with the guiding principle that the student must 'proceed from the part to the whole.'<sup>177</sup> Arguably, therefore, the progression of *Risen Christ* – in bodily segments from the head to the feet – reflects Epstein's education in Paris. Furthermore, I contend that this approach to the human form (as an assemblage of parts) permeates Epstein's approach to the fragment as a sculptural entity. As will be discussed, numerous modernist sculptors also produced fragments, but Epstein appears to have departed significantly from those who more readily aligned themselves with abstraction, because he persistently conceptualised fragments as parts of wholes, as opposed to independent objects, irrespective of any original or implied whole. This is, of course, a simplification. By implication of their being cast separately in bronze (and posthumously displayed in a gallery) Epstein's fragments that relate to full sculptures are indeed autonomous artworks. Additionally, as will be revealed, Epstein did indeed experiment with the fragment as independent object, but he more consistently approached fragments as parts of a whole.

*Hands of the Risen Christ* (fig. 70) also originates from *Risen Christ*. Figural parts are granted a special validity by virtue of their separation from full figures.<sup>178</sup> In fact, fragments often function synecdochically for full figures. With regards to *Hands of the Risen Christ* this is certainly the case. Divorced from the over life-sized figure, the gesture of the fragment hands - which appears as a modified sign of benediction - evokes the wounded hands of Christ as visualised in historic religious images such as Dirk Bouts' *Christ Crowned with Thorns* (1470) (fig. 71). Furthermore, the vaginal appearance of the wound in the right hand introduces the notion of rebirth, with the rather phallic left index finger literally pointing the way. Thus, whilst Epstein's conceptual process began with the head, in this instance it is arguably the *Hands* that are more effectively synecdochical, because new allusions to the Crucifixion and Resurrection are explicit. Moreover, the fragment hands potentially connote far more than both the full-figure and the fragment head. As will be discussed regarding *Old Pinager's Clasped Hands*, fragment hands also function metonymically for the sculptor and reflect Epstein's admiration for Rodin – 'the sculptor of hands.'<sup>179</sup> *Hands of the Risen Christ* can also be approached as a visualisation of the divine-artistic creation conflation, as was noted in chapter one regarding photographs of sculptors' hands. The vaginal wound and phallic index finger signify human reproduction and associate it with both artistic creation and divinity. Christ's death brought about salvation - a rebirth of humanity – while sculptors create 'artistic life' with their hands, in the same way that the human reproductive organs also generate life.

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<sup>177</sup> Boime (1971), 19.

<sup>178</sup> This idea has been asserted by several Rodin scholars. See for example, Bernard Champigneulle, *Rodin*, London, 1967, 264.

<sup>179</sup> Gustave Kahn, 'Les Mains Chez Rodin', *La Plume*, 1900, 316-17, translated by John Anzalone and reproduced in full in Butler (1980), 107.

In summary, *Hands of the Risen Christ* is an autonomous fragment by virtue of its separation from *Risen Christ*, but the fact that it relates to a whole should not be ignored. In contrast to many other modernist sculptors who also produced sculpted body parts, Epstein persistently approached fragments as parts from wholes. For example, whereas Pablo Picasso's *The Arm* (1959) (fig. 72) was never attached to a body, or Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's *Torso of a Woman* (1914) (fig. 73) never had a head, arms or legs, *Second Head of Bernard van Dieren* and the associated *Hands*, though subsequently isolated, were originally conceived as parts of a full-figure. Indeed, it was from the head that the full-figure evolved. I will now present another example to bolster the contention that Epstein frequently conceived full sculptures from the part, and often 'recycled' objects from his studio to form new works, in particular by modifying sculpted heads.

Amina Peerbhoy (known as Sunita) was one of Epstein's most important early models. There are numerous representations of Sunita and her son since they lived with Epstein as in-house models between 1925 and 1931. Pertinent to this research, is the sculptor's transformation of Sunita's features into the Madonna of *The New York Madonna and Child* (fig. 74), the male Islamic Archangel *Israfel* (1931) (fig. 75) and the iconic *Lucifer* (1944) (fig. 76). I will explore these representations alongside a portrait in order to reveal Epstein's creative manipulation, and further demonstrate that the sculptor consistently approached the body as an assemblage of parts, beginning with the head in a backwards gestalt process. Silber observes that Sunita modelled for *New York Madonna* and *Lucifer* noting that 'Epstein frequently used portraiture as a vehicle for studies of feeling and experience which transcend individual identity', but omits any further comment as to how the sculptor transformed individual studies into idealised figures, and so failed to note the significance of this in terms of Epstein's studio practice.<sup>180</sup>

The New Art Gallery Walsall recently acquired a plaster of *Second Portrait of Sunita* (1925) (fig. 77) which has enabled a detailed comparison of the individualised head with the stylised features of the religious icons. From this, in the same way as I proposed that *St. Francis* can be approached as intermediary between *Virginia Jay* and *The Consoler*, I contend that *Second Portrait of Sunita* serves as interceder for *New York Madonna* and *Lucifer*. Accordingly, I will take the portrait as a baseline representation of the model and explore Epstein's manipulation of her features in the other representations.

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<sup>180</sup> Silber (1986), 39.

The Kashmiri woman was a striking six feet tall and reportedly unconventionally beautiful (in terms of the Eurocentric notion of beauty). Epstein described Sunita as being 'of that eternal Oriental type' with a magisterial magnificence.<sup>181</sup> *Second Portrait of Sunita* was uncommissioned but exhibited along with the similar *First Portrait of Sunita* (1925) at the Leicester Galleries, London, in 1926.<sup>182</sup> The bust was unsold and remained in Epstein's studio (fig. 78). Epstein began *New York Madonna and Child* the same year the portraits were exhibited. The full sculpture is in New York, but the identical decapitations *Heads of the New York Madonna and Child*, were likewise housed in the studio and eventually bequeathed to Walsall.

By smoothing Sunita's chiselled jaw, Epstein subtly changed the shape of her head; the squared appearance of the portrait has been transposed into the heart-shaped face of the Virgin (fig. 79). This modification results in more attention paid to the eyes, because they appear larger in proportion to the now-smaller face. Silber, Friedman and Buckle all comment on Sunita's dark, brooding eyes - a characteristic feature of all representations of her - and I would argue that nowhere is this more pronounced than in *The New York Madonna* and identical fragment head. Thus, whilst the eyes of the portrait and fragment are identical, they are a much more prominent feature in the religious head. Arguably, this slight adjustment is the crucial element of transformation from individual likeness, to generalised characterisation, and is entirely appropriate for a depiction of the Virgin. Epstein's Madonna pensively gazes past the viewer as if contemplating the inevitable fate of her child. As Epstein said himself, 'when I had finished the head, the model remarked that she could not possibly "look as good as I had made her." She recognised that there was something eternal and divine in it and outside herself.'<sup>183</sup>

Through a seemingly minor distortion, a recognisable study of Sunita thus transcends individuality and becomes a palpable representation of the mother of Christ. Moreover, the fragment *Heads of the New York Madonna and Child*, in isolation from the full statue, still evokes the Holy Mother and Son. Facilitated by the fact that through familiarity, observers are primed to see certain depictions of a mother and son as the religious icons - particularly those that have an air of solemnity - the fragment *Heads* function synecdochically for the statue. Furthermore, without the distraction of the full-figure, the Madonna head more effectively reveals Epstein's modifications. Epstein's backwards gestalt process whereby figures evolved from the head means that the fragment *Heads of the New*

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<sup>181</sup> Epstein (1940), 83 and 114. In the earlier extract, Epstein recalls how Sunita was mistaken for royalty once, when the taxi she was travelling in was caught in amongst a ceremonial procession.

<sup>182</sup> Silber (1986), 158. The similarities between the first and second sculpted portraits of Sunita, supports the distinction between Epstein's portraits and fragment heads. Both portrait busts can be seen in fig. 77.

<sup>183</sup> Epstein (1940), 114.

*York Madonna and Child* is invested with a greater significance than the whole, for which it functions synecdochically.

The transformation of Sunita into *Lucifer* is even more remarkable. It results from a slight alteration to an additional intermediary sculpture. *Israfel*, another uncommissioned and unsold inhabitant of Epstein's studio, was used for the head and shoulders of *Lucifer*. The only difference being the addition of indications of eyes in place of the dark voids of the Islamic angel. The transformation is again subtle but impressive; the absence of eyes in *Israfel* imbues the head with unsettling eeriness, more reminiscent of a mask than a face. In contrast, the suggestion of eyes with their downward, penetrating stare in *Lucifer* brings an appropriate look of wrath to the fallen angel.<sup>184</sup>

Though based on a female model, *Lucifer* is undeniably male. Of course, this is made unequivocally evident by the penis which is a very prominent feature of the full-figure, but it also results from more subtle modifications.<sup>185</sup> The male head is more rounded than the portrait and the Madonna head. Epstein also shortened and widened Sunita's neck. The lines and shadows around the mouth and eyes have been accentuated, combining appropriately with the furrowed brow and disgruntled stare. The wavy, shoulder-length hair is consistent with other representations of Sunita, but the hair of *New York Madonna* is swept back under a shawl, and in the portrait is tied back into a plait. *Lucifer* has several obvious joins, particularly prominent at the bottom of the torso (seen from the rear). The large feet, which are discordant with the small, delicate hands, also suggest that the sculpture progressed as an assemblage of parts, in the same way that *Risen Christ* was conceived and executed.<sup>186</sup>

The difference between the left and right profile of *Lucifer* is particularly striking. The aforementioned problematic relationship between sculpture and photography, insists that this aspect can only be fully appreciated in front of the statue, but photographs of differing views are included as an albeit imperfect illustration (fig. 80). The right profile (as one faces the figure) is remarkably more masculine than the left, which is more recognisable as Sunita (fig. 81). The

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<sup>184</sup> As was the case for so many of Epstein's sculptures, *Lucifer* had a stormy reception. The statue was offered to, and rejected by, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Tate Britain and The Victoria and Albert Museum. Finally the Lord Mayor of Birmingham and Mr. Trenchord Cox asked if Birmingham could be honoured with the gift. £4000 was reportedly paid, one of the highest prices for an Epstein at the time. Unidentified newspaper cutting, BL/4/1/3, Epstein Archive, Walsall.

<sup>185</sup> Not only are the genitals uncovered and obvious, the current display of the statue (in the Round Room at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery) on a marble plinth in addition to the integral bronze plinth, places the male genitalia at eye level for some spectators.

<sup>186</sup> Epstein may have had different models for different anatomical parts as his did for *Risen Christ*, but there are very few sources about *Lucifer*.



positioning of the eyes appears to play a significant role in this. The right eye (facing the statue) is perceptively lower than the left which means that the corresponding profiles have respectively larger, more dominating and masculine-looking foreheads, or, smaller, less prominent and more feminine foreheads. Thus, I would argue that, again, Epstein heightened the irregularities of the model's features with startling results. The Madonna and *Lucifer* are obviously modelled on Sunita, but the subtle changes to the shape of her head – thinner and heart-shaped or thicker and rounder – and to her expression, wrought by changes of emphasis on the eyes and brow, result in three sculptures that are simultaneously analogous and disparate. The disparities are most apparent in the three-quarter profile from the right (fig. 82).

This section has explored the functional role that fragments played in Epstein's studio practice. I have examined several sculptural heads as evidence that Epstein consistently conceived full-figures from studies of heads, and approached the human form as an assemblage of parts. Epstein surrounded himself with figural parts, while unsold and uncommissioned works found a home in the studio where Epstein would draw inspiration from them and often 'recycle' part-objects into new artworks. Through subtle manipulations of plastic likenesses of sitters, Epstein transformed individualised studies into stylised representations of religious figures. I have sought to elucidate Silber's elusive comment that 'Epstein frequently used portraiture as a vehicle for studies of feeling and experience which transcend individual identity'.<sup>187</sup> In contrast to the photographs analysed in chapter one, which present a deliberate construction of Epstein's studio practice, a close examination of his sculptural fragments is arguably more representative of his working methods. Interestingly, I previously asserted that Ireland's photographs of Epstein modelling sitters reflect Powell's contention that the sculptor's portraits were the result of his 'infinite care in workmanship', and here, a detailed examination of sculptural heads that reveal Epstein's subtle transformations, appears to support Powell's insistence that Epstein's output was not that of a 'whirling dervish', but a careful and diligent sculptor with an acute eye for detail.

Limitations of space means my discussion of Epstein's working method as revealed by his sculptural fragments, has been restricted to a small number of works. However, it is important to note that the van Dieren and Sunita heads are not isolated examples that reflect his backwards gestalt working method whereby full-figures evolve from fragment heads. Another pertinent example is *Jacob Kramer* (1921). The bust was to represent St. John in a never-realised deposition group and Epstein

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<sup>187</sup> Silber (1986), 39.

apparently also intended to make use of a bust of an elderly artist's model for Mary Magdalene.<sup>188</sup> Once again, Epstein began work for a monumental figurative sculpture with studies of sitters.

### The Hand and Studio Practice

In discussing sculptural fragments, it is necessary to devote attention to Rodin, since he has been characterised as pioneering the production and exhibition of decidedly 'modern' *morceaux*.<sup>189</sup> As noted, sculptural fragments have a long tradition in the history of art but from 1889 – the date that Elsen designates as Rodin's first public exhibition of a partial figure – the French sculptor's obstinate promotion of self-conscious part-objects, as autonomous sculptures, was unprecedented and proved highly influential on subsequent sculptors.<sup>190</sup> Whilst Rodin devotee Elsen cites Matisse, Lehmbruck, Brancusi 'and many more', Epstein was also clearly inspired by Rodin's production and use of sculptural fragments, as well as by the construction of Rodin's studio, as discussed in chapter one.<sup>191</sup>

Arguably, fragment hands are particularly Rodinesque, not least because in 1900 Rodin was heralded as 'the sculptor of hands'.<sup>192</sup> This conception was undoubtedly founded on his prolific output of sculpted appendages, as well as the constant reference to his own generative hands within contemporaneous literature. For example, Rilke frequently emphasises Rodin's hands, insisting that his sculptures make the viewer 'look for the two hands' that made them.<sup>193</sup> Rodin's production of sculpted hands – both monumental such as *The Cathedral* (1908), and miniature studies, some of which relate to full sculptures (figs. 83, 84) – was so copious that they potentially function metonymically for the artist.<sup>194</sup>

*Old Pinager's Clapsed Hands* (fig. 85) represents a pair of particularly gnarled, old hands. They are identical to, but cast separately from, the portrait *Old Pinager* (fig. 86). Epstein's personally selected sitter was an elderly homeless match-seller, whom Epstein retrospectively described as 'the image of abject patience [...] He accepts himself as a natural failure, and is even content to be that.'<sup>195</sup> The

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<sup>188</sup> Silber and Friedman, 'Portraits' in Silber et al (1987), 187. This bust was subsequently entitled *The Weeping Woman* (1922).

<sup>189</sup> All texts concerned with Rodin that were consulted for the current research consistently credited Rodin as the hugely influential pioneer of 'modern' fragments.

<sup>190</sup> Elsen (1969), 18.

<sup>191</sup> Elsen, (1960), 173.

<sup>192</sup> Gustave Kahn in Butler (1980), 107.

<sup>193</sup> Rilke (1946), 2.

<sup>194</sup> Wood in Feeke and Curtis (2001), 10. Wood asserts that Rodin's fragment hands 'stand *par excellence* for Rodin.'

<sup>195</sup> Epstein (1940), 87.

combination of submissive, bowed head and clasped hands clearly evokes this description. Silber and Friedman note Epstein's 'experimental use of the old man's gnarled hands as a natural plinth', but fail to observe the existence of the fragment hands which remained part of Epstein's estate until they were bequeathed to Walsall.<sup>196</sup>

Knowledge of the portrait and Epstein's characterisation of the sitter, perhaps make it seem simplistic to state that the fragment functions synecdochically for the portrait, but this does not negate the point. In isolation, the hands invite a more active participation from the spectator: they appear as a puzzle and demand a closer look.<sup>197</sup> At first sight, the impressionistic, rugged appearance of the sculpture might induce its audience to question what exactly it is that they are looking at, but once the bulbous, corpulent fingers have been recognised, and the pair of clasped hands revealed as such, thoughts of to whom they might have belonged are likely to follow. The coarse appearance of the appendages evokes aged, hard-working hands that have been exposed to the elements, and I would argue that the clasped arrangement is in itself a rather stoic gesture. Thus, even in the absence of knowledge that the fragment relates to a portrait, the hands still connote old age and physical and environmental hardship.

Aside from their synecdochical function as a substitute for whole sculptures, fragments function indexically for the work of the sculptor. The traditional aim of sculpture is the illusion of life, but fragments belligerently announce their constructed nature. Thus, fragments in general, but to an even greater extent fragment hands, connote the hands of the artist who created them. As noted, sculptors' hands are generally accorded a special significance as the fecund hands of a genius. Artists create with their hands after all, but the divine-artistic creation conflation, mystifies sculptors' hands to an even greater extent. In his introduction to *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work*, Lee emphasises Epstein's hands as functional and hardworking, but also nurturing, creative and generative: 'those powerful hands, bunched and broad as a boxer's, can strike life and light from a five-ton block of granite – but they can also reveal the heart of a flower, or shape the trembling eyelid of a girl with an exact and delicate tenderness of touch.'<sup>198</sup> Fragment hands thus function synecdochically for full figures, metonymically for the sculptor and as an index of the work of the artist.

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<sup>196</sup> Silber and Friedman, 'Portraits' in Silber et al (1987), 190.

<sup>197</sup> James Elkins, 'Why Are Our Pictures Puzzles? Some Thoughts on Writing Excessively', *New Literary History*, vol.27, no.2, 1996, 287. Elkins proposes that; 'we are inescapably attracted to pictures that appear as puzzles.' Art history privileges painting over sculpture but logically, this statement applies to sculptures as well.

<sup>198</sup> Lee and Ireland (1957), no page numbers given.

Epstein's assertion that his characteristic rough surface treatment 'breaks up the light, and accentuates the characteristics, giving life to the work'<sup>199</sup> evokes Rilke's supposition that the acquisition and appropriation of light and surface give Rodin's sculptures 'presence.'<sup>200</sup> The rough surface treatment of both sculptors' work was noted at the time. For example, in 1928 Casson declared that Rodin's 'summary treatment' started 'an unfortunate fashion' which was brought to a 'mud pie perfection' in Epstein's art.<sup>201</sup> The unpolished surface bears the marks of Epstein's hands and fingers, compounding the evocation of his physical manipulation of the clay. Just as Rodin's obstinate refusal to 'finish' some of his sculptures – for example *Flying Figure* - invites viewers to ruminate on the processes of sculpture, so too does the surface of Epstein's fragment.<sup>202</sup> Instead of encountering the virtuoso modelling of flesh over bone, the viewer is presented with what is obviously a construction, a representation of hands rather than an illusion. Thus, in the unpolished surface of *Old Pinager's Clapsed Hands*, and the very nature of figural parts, can be found a double emphasis on the handiwork of the sculptor.

The brief discussion of *Unit One* in chapter one revealed that artists' hands are persistently emphasised but, in the case of Rodin, the significance attributed to his hands (both anatomical and sculptural) is even more pronounced. Rilke's description of Rodin's sculpted appendages as 'alive' is given dramatic visual form in Druet's photographs of *Clenched Hand* (c.1885) (figs. 87, 88, 89). Draped in a blanket and seen from different viewpoints, the fragment appears to act out Rilke's theatrical prose:

Hands that rise, irritated and in wrath; hands whose five bristling fingers  
seem to bark like the jaws of a dog of Hell. Hands that walk, sleeping hands,  
and hands that are awakening [...] hands that are tired and will do no more,  
and have lain down in some corner like sick animals [...]<sup>203</sup>

Rilke's spectacular reading of Rodin's fragment hands has been repeated and compounded in subsequent literature, most notably by the often unquestioned Rodin authority Elsen, meaning that fragment hands irresistibly connote Rodin. In the same way that the French sculptor's final fragment

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<sup>199</sup> Haskell (1931), 78.

<sup>200</sup> Rilke in Wood et al (2007), 19.

<sup>201</sup> Casson (1928), 11.

<sup>202</sup> Elsen (1969), 22. The back of *Flying Figure* is 'unfinished' in the sense that the marks of sculptural tools are still evident. Traditionally, sculpture represents the illusion of life but works that defiantly announce the artistic manipulation of the medium by the sculptor assert that the antithesis can be just as engaging.

<sup>203</sup> Rilke (1946), 24-5. The section of Rilke's text devoted to discussion of Rodin's fragment hands is much longer than the excerpt cited here.

was a self-portrait in the form of a cast of his hand, Epstein likewise had his left hand cast in bronze (c. 1959) (fig. 90), which Schinman catalogued as *Self Portrait – Hand*. Epstein's fragment hands cannot, therefore, be discussed without reference to Rodin, in addition to their synecdochical, metonymical and indexical functions.

### The Relationship between Modern and Ancient Sculptural Fragments

I will now discuss a selection of Epstein's sculpted fragments as signifying his veneration of ancient sculpture. In terms of studio practice, this section will highlight Epstein's proclivity to draw inspiration from the objects around him, in particular it will demonstrate how his early experiences at the Louvre and the British Museum, and his own collection of artefacts, impacted on his art.

Epstein's reverence for ancient sculpture began during his education in Paris, where the curriculum heralded classical antiquity as the pinnacle of sculptural endeavour.<sup>204</sup> His admiration was further bolstered by his experiences at the Louvre, and later at the British Museum.<sup>205</sup> Referring to his early days in London, Epstein stated:

My aim was to perfect myself in modelling, drawing and carving, and it was at this period I visited the British Museum and whenever I had done a new piece of work, I compared it mentally with what I had seen at the Museum. [...] Early on, about 1910, I was tremendously interested in the Elgin Marbles and Greek sculpture, and later in the Egyptian rooms and the vast and wonderful collections from Polynesia and Africa.<sup>206</sup>

Epstein frequently visited the British Museum. The significance of its collections for many of his carvings, including *Adam*, has been duly noted elsewhere.<sup>207</sup> The importance of the museum as

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<sup>204</sup> Boime (1971), 20. Additionally, whilst self-consciously modernist and so-called 'academic' or 'traditionalist' sculptors shared an admiration for antiquity, modern sculptors insisted on distinguishing themselves by asserting that academic sculptors imitated classicism for purely visual effect, whilst their approach constituted an homage. Hildebrand had asserted such a distinction; Hildebrand (1907), 116-118. Epstein himself also characterised modernist and academic classicism as qualitatively different; Haskell (1931), 120 and 134.

<sup>205</sup> Epstein (1940), 15 and 21. In the first extract Epstein declares that; 'visits to the Louvre opened my eyes.' In the second, he also announces that his experiences of the British Museum proved instrumental to his decision to relocate from Paris to London in 1905.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>207</sup> Adrian Locke, 'Looking Around at Leisure: Sculptors and the British Museum', in Curtis and Wilson (2011), 84-93. Locke describes *Adam* as 'evidence of lessons learned in the British Museum'.

motivation for Epstein's own collection of ancient and archaic art has also been explored.<sup>208</sup> The potential significance of the museum's collections for Epstein's fragments – like the sculptures themselves – has, however, been overlooked.

As well as exploring some of Epstein's fragments as exemplificative of his admiration of antique sculpture, it is also important to discuss contemporaneous developments within archaeology, and the numerous, highly publicised excavations that were taking place during the modern period, which the classicist Andreas Rumpf dubbed 'the age of great excavations.'<sup>209</sup> It has been argued that the development of archaeology as an academic discipline is inextricably linked to modernity,<sup>210</sup> not least because of contemporaneous technological advances which enabled a proliferation of successful excavations.<sup>211</sup> This meant that freshly unearthed archaeological finds were flowing into museums and becoming increasingly accessible to a wider public.<sup>212</sup> Excavated objects were also entering the art market and many sculptors – including Epstein, Rodin, Antoine Boudelle, Maillol, Picasso and Lipchitz – began their own collections of ancient artefacts. Since a large proportion of the objects being uncovered were sculptures, it hardly seems surprising to suggest a correlation between the fragmentary excavated finds and the distinctly modernist preoccupation with 'the fragment' – at a most basic level, modern sculptural fragments look like excavated sculptural remnants.

Unmentioned save for a short paragraph accompanying an illustration in Buckle's monograph, Epstein's carving *Marble Arms* (fig. 91) arguably articulates the sculptor's admiration for ancient fragments.<sup>213</sup> The carving depicts two over life-sized arms, one slightly larger than the other, suggestive of a male and female form. The upturned limbs are laid out horizontally, such that the

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<sup>208</sup> Sarah MacDougall and Rachel Dickson, *Embracing the Exotic: Jacob Epstein and Dora Golding*, exh.cat., Ben Uri Gallery, London, 2006.

<sup>209</sup> Andreas Rumpf, *Archäologie*, Berlin, 1953, 92. Rumpf dubbed the period 1870-1914 as 'the age of great excavations.'

<sup>210</sup> Julian Thomas, 'Archaeology's Place in Modernity', *Modernism/Modernity*, vol.11 no.1, 2004, 17. Whilst circumstantial factors such as the rise of an affluent middle class, improvements in transport and the serendipitous exposure of buried deposits as a result of the construction of railways and canals are commonly cited as causal to the relationship between modernity and the establishment of archaeology as an academic discipline, Thomas' article compellingly demonstrates that 'modern philosophy, modern forms of political organisation and modern social practices all contributed to the developments in archaeology.'

<sup>211</sup> Professor Adolf Michaelis, *A Century of Archaeological Discoveries*, translated by Bettina Kahnweiler, London, 1908, 294.

<sup>212</sup> Robin Barber, 'Classical Art: Discovery, Research and Presentation 1890-1903', in Elizabeth Cowling and Jenifer Mundy (eds.), *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Léger, de Chirico and the New Classicism 1910-1930*, exh.cat., London, 1990, 391-2. Barber's chapter provides a comprehensive account of the huge number of catalogues, journals and archaeological surveys that were published in France, Italy, Spain and Britain between 1890 and 1903. For a detailed history of the development of the Louvre and the British Museum in terms of their respective acquisitions of antiquities, see Michaelis (1908), 13-44.

<sup>213</sup> Buckle (1963), 122-123. Silber's *Catalogue Raisonné* does include *Marble Arms* but no further details are given other than the art-historical standard: date medium and location.

smaller hand rests on the palm of the larger hand. The fragment body-parts are cut off at the top of the arm, where the ball of the shoulder would be. Significantly, the segmentation has been left roughly hewn, such that it has the appearance of an ancient fragment, broken off and preserved from a lost whole.

Buckle ventures that the carving constitutes an emulation of Rodin, which I do not refute, but, I contend that the marble is also an homage to sculptural fragments in the collection of the British Museum (figs. 92, 93).<sup>214</sup> Comparing the jagged break at the shoulder of the British Museum's *Marble Right Arm of Male Figure*, with that of *Marble Arms*, suggests that Epstein's carving was made in deference to ancient fragments. The date of Epstein's figural part, 1923, supports this since it coincides with a contemporaneous debate concerning the British Museum's policy of restoration. Epstein publicly voiced his 'astonishment and dismay' that the museum had authorised the cleaning and repairing of ancient fragments in a letter to *The Times*, 2 May 1921.<sup>215</sup> Two years later, in 1923, rather arrogantly believing that the museum 'evidently took my advice', he wrote to the newspaper once more expressing his 'great satisfaction' that the policy of restoration had been over-turned.<sup>216</sup>

That some of Epstein's sculptures referenced ancient fragments was noted at the time. Referring to Epstein's *W.H. Hudson Memorial*, the art critic for *The Times* wrote:

I have before me a photograph of an early Greek relief from what is known as the Ludovisi Throne, now in the Museo delle Terme at Rome [...] between it and Mr. Epstein's panel there is a striking general resemblance. I am not suggesting that Mr Epstein copied the Ludovisi Throne [...] but only quote it to show that [...] he has followed a good model.<sup>217</sup>

According to Buckle, Epstein later admitted having had the Greek fragment in mind when he designed the memorial.<sup>218</sup> Whilst the art critic quoted above described Epstein's deference in positive terms, others were not so appreciative of Epstein's debts to archaic art. In a letter to *The*

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<sup>214</sup> The British Museum contains a huge number of ancient and archaic sculptural fragments of various body parts, the photographs reproduced here are but two examples of fragmentary arms and hands for which images could be reproduced.

<sup>215</sup> Jacob Epstein, 'Ancient Marbles: Policy of Restoration', *The Times*, 02/05/1921, 12.

<sup>216</sup> Jacob Epstein, 'British Museum "Demeter"', *The Times*, 21/02/1923, 13.

<sup>217</sup> 'The Hudson Memorial: Views on Mr. Epstein's Panel – Conception, Treatment and Execution', *The Times*, 25/05/1925, no page number available, newspaper cutting from Terry Friedman's Research files, 2002.71, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>218</sup> Buckle (1963), 134.

*Saturday Review*, 28 November 1925, Evelyn St. Leger referred to *Rima* as Epstein's 'find', and suggested that the sculptor had dug at the site of Leonard Woolley's excavations at Ur of the Chaldees (begun 1922), and had 'brought back a fragment of ancient art [...] to test our gullibilities.'<sup>219</sup>

Vasari describes how the young Michelangelo made 'perfect copies' and counterfeits of 'old masters' and antique sculptures that could not be distinguished from originals.<sup>220</sup> Vasari states that the young sculptor 'did this to acquire the style of those whom he admired, and he sought to surpass them, thereby acquiring a great name.'<sup>221</sup> Of course, Vasari's bias in presenting a particular construction of the 'divine', genius Michelangelo, must be borne in mind, but arguably this story may have resonated with Epstein: he had read Vasari's text, been taught to admire (and indeed emulate) ancient sculpture during his art education, was exposed to freshly unearthed antique ruins in museums and newspapers, and was forming his own collection of artefacts.

The visual affinities between *Marble Arms* and ancient fragments in terms of the roughly hewn break at the top of the arms, Epstein's veneration of the collections of the British Museum, and the evidence that contemporaneous commentators publicly noted Epstein's reference to ancient fragments and recently excavated finds, suggest that Epstein's carved fragment articulates his deference to the fragmentary remains of antiquity. Interestingly, Epstein's approach to full-figures, as an assemblage of parts that begins with a stylised study of an individual, can also be related to his engagement with contemporaneous archaeological developments. The *Illustrated London News*, 9 September 1922 reported that the excavations at Ostia, the harbour city of ancient Rome, had uncovered the sculptural remains of a statue of a Flavian princess represented as the Roman Goddess Diana.<sup>222</sup> Thus, Epstein's adaption of individuals into idealised religious icons – such as Sunita represented as *Lucifer* – has a classical precedent.

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<sup>219</sup> Evelyn St. Leger 'Letter to the editor', *Saturday Review*, 28/11/1925, no page number available, newspaper cutting from Terry Friedman's Research files, 2002.71, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds. Woolley's expeditions to Ur and Ubaid on behalf of the British Museum, took place between 1922 and 1934.

<sup>220</sup> Vasari (2006), 42, 44 and 49-50. Vasari refers to drawings after old masters that Michelangelo aged 'with smoke and other things', a copy in marble of an antique faun's head, and 'a life-size sleeping Cupid' that was fraudulently sold as an antique.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>222</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 09/09/1922, 381.



Archaeological developments potentially impacted on the general resurgence of classicism in the visual arts during the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>223</sup> Furthermore, the modern preoccupation with the fragment as a sculptural type, correlates with the proliferation of excavations. Additionally, I also propose that, to a certain extent, aspects of Epstein's departure from many of his peers, and subsequent marginalisation within the history of art, can be revealed via an examination of his approach to, and production of, sculpted fragments.

### The Inherent Duality of the Sculptural Fragment

The sculptural fragment as a type comprises an inherent duality: the part-objects can be approached as representing a lost totality, or as autonomous, independent of any original or implied whole. This duplicity appears to partially reflect the early twentieth-century schism between figurative and abstract sculpture.<sup>224</sup> Arguably, those who aligned themselves more readily with abstraction approached sculpted segmentations as partial, but 'complete' (finished and autonomous). For example, Frank Dobson's *Seated Torso* (1923) (fig. 94) never had a head, hands or feet, and Brancusi's fragment head *The Muse* (1912) (fig. 95) was conceptualised independent of a body. In contrast, whilst Epstein did 'experiment' with the fragment-as-independent, evidence suggests that he more consistently conceived fragments as pieces of a whole, and frequently conceptualised the whole from the part.<sup>225</sup> Save for a few exceptions – including *Marble Arms, Romilly John* (1907) (fig. 96) and *Torso in Metal from The Rock Drill* – Epstein's fragments were not exhibited as autonomous artworks.

The bronze head *Romilly John* comprises a likeness of Augustus John's son, but is more than merely a portrait. Without referring to it as a fragment, Silber vaguely described the head as 'scarcely a

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<sup>223</sup> The 1990 Tate Britain exhibition, *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Léger, de Chirico and the New Classicism 1910-1930*, sought to demonstrate the widespread return to classicism within the visual arts during and after the First World War. Whilst the link between archaeology and modernism was not the focus of the exhibition, Barber's chapter in the extended version of the catalogue, does consider the correlation between publicised contemporaneous excavations and archaic and classically inspired modern sculpture. Steinberg also notes a link between late nineteenth-century excavated ruins and 'the torso as a type form' whilst maintaining his emphasis on Rodin as having legitimised the partial figure. Steinberg (1972), 362.

<sup>224</sup> Alessandro del Puppo opposes 'the figurative respect for the body' with abstraction's 'symbolic cult of the fragment.' Alessandro del Puppo 'Post-Rodin Options for the Sculptural Head', Gabrielle Belli, Flavio Fergonzi and Alessandro del Puppo (eds.), *Modigliani: Sculptor*, exh.cat, Cinisello Balsamo, 2010, 124. It seems that the international acclaim of British abstract sculpture from around the 1930s, has led to the erroneous assumption that figurative sculpture all but disappeared. For example, Timothy Hyman declares that; 'no-one since Rodin seemed to offer an alternative [to the amorphous figure] of real authority.' Timothy Hyman, 'Figurative Sculpture since 1960', in Sandy Nairn and Nicholas Serota (eds.), *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century*, exh.cat., White Chapel Art Gallery, London, 1981, 185.

<sup>225</sup> Haskell (1931), 131. Epstein referred to his 'experiments with abstraction' as 'laboratory work.'

portrait; Augustus John's son is the pretext for a broader sculptural statement.<sup>226</sup> Epstein's use of portraiture as a vehicle has already been discussed; what I will attend to here is the sculpture's relation to contemporaneous archaeological developments and Hildebrand's text.

Epstein's transformation of the child's hair into a stylised helmet creates a sense of dissonance: the bronze head appears simultaneously modern and archaic. In line with Michaelis' contemporaneous expansion of the term 'classical antiquities' to include Egyptian artefacts, Epstein's fragment is still indebted to ancient art, but of an Egyptian origin, rather than Greco-Roman.<sup>227</sup> In particular, the helmet-like hair evokes the formalised hair common to Egyptian figures such as the sandstone conglomerate statue of *Khaemwaset* in the British Museum (fig. 97). Epstein's personal art collection also contained several Egyptian artworks, like *Standing Male Figure* which has similarly stylised hair (fig. 98). But, the simplified, geometric appearance of *Romilly John*, that approaches abstraction, also anchors the fragment in the context of modernism. Numerous modernist sculptors produced similarly concise and simplified heads: Raymond Duchamp-Villon's *Baudelaire* (1911) (fig. 99) and Joseph Antoine Bernard's *Modern Sphinx* (1908) (fig. 100) (particularly pertinent for the allusions to ancient Egypt in the title) to name only two. Furthermore, the stylised helmet-hair of *Romilly John* also appears as a pre-cursor to Epstein's engagement with the 'machine age' during his brief association with Vorticism because of its connotations of hybrid 'machine-men' - which was to be given dramatic form in the notorious *Rock Drill*. It could even be argued that the object's deliberate artifice, in terms of its unnaturalistic appearance and the highly polished surface, connotes 'truth to materials' (but not in the usual sense of the term which generally applies to stone). As a fragment, I contend that the modern-archaic *Romilly John* reveals Epstein's engagement with contemporaneous archaeology and Hildebrand's critical text.

Michaelis' 1908 survey of archaeological advances and discoveries during the previous century concludes with a declaration of the unequivocal importance of the newly established discipline.<sup>228</sup> Amidst his detailed account of the significance of the proliferation of extensive international

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<sup>226</sup> Silber (1986), 15.

<sup>227</sup> There appears to be a degree of elasticity in the term 'classical antiquities.' The work of the eighteenth-century art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, ensured that the term generally applied to the art of ancient Greece and Rome, but, in 1908, Michaelis asserted that from the mid-nineteenth century, the developments within the field of archaeology, meant that the term was expanded to include the art of 'Asia Minor' and Egypt. Michaelis (1908), 7-13. The curators of *On Classic Ground*, as well as the contributors to the extended version of the catalogue, also acknowledge Egyptian art within the bounds of the terms 'classical', 'ancient' and 'antique.'

<sup>228</sup> Michaelis (1908), 307. In rousing, emotive language Michaelis asserts that 'the forms of artists who formally wandered about the Hades of literary tradition as pale ghosts, have had blood put into their veins by the digging and investigating archaeologists.'

excavations at the turn of the twentieth century, Michaelis asserts that the documentary evidence of archaeologists – drawings, etchings, photographs and detailed catalogues of excavated finds – made the stylistic analysis of ancient sculpture possible.<sup>229</sup> An impact of this was a subsequent emphasis on form. Michaelis is, of course, referring to ancient art, but a similar emphasis on form was also developing concurrently within contemporaneous sculpture. Regarding ancient sculpture, Michaelis proffers his opinion that ‘content and form are inseparable and one.’<sup>230</sup> Arguably, many modernist sculptors did not share Michaelis’ contention.

The increasing importance of so-called ‘significant form’ and subsequent movement towards abstraction in sculpture, must be placed within the context of formalism, as theorised by Roger Fry in 1909, and Clive Bell in 1914.<sup>231</sup> Pre-dating their critical texts, however, Hildebrand’s 1893 publication, which was translated into French in 1903, and English in 1907 and widely read by sculptors in Germany, France and England, similarly called for a movement away from subject matter and literary associations, and towards the heightened importance of what he termed ‘esthetic significance.’<sup>232</sup> It is also significant that Hildebrand referred to ancient Greek sculpture throughout his text which includes images of exemplary works. Hildebrand’s treatise thus also brought ancient sculpture into sharp focus, urging modern sculptors to look to antiquity for guidance whilst making sculpture that was reflective of their own time.<sup>233</sup> I contend that simultaneously archaic and modern appearance of *Romilly John* neatly illustrates Hildebrand’s instigation to modern sculptors.<sup>234</sup>

The examination of *Romilly John* further affirms the multifaceted nature of Epstein’s figural parts. The fragment arguably articulates Epstein’s engagement with Hildebrand and contemporaneous

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<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 301-5. The assertion that developments within archaeology at the turn of the twentieth century made the stylistic analysis of ancient art possible is upheld by Thomas who defines the newly established discipline as; ‘a technology for the extraction of data, which can be absolutely distinguished from the attribution of meaning that might be performed at a later stage by anthropologists or historians.’ Thomas (2004), 21.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>231</sup> Roger Fry, ‘An Essay in Aesthetics’, *New Quarterly*, vol.2, 1909, 171-90; Clive Bell, *Art*, London, 1928

<sup>232</sup> Hildebrand (1907), 13-14 and *passim*. Additionally, Hildebrand’s persistent emphasis on the process and materiality of sculpture, and denigration of the ‘mere imitation of Nature’, arguably played a significant role in the subsequent importance of direct carving and abstraction to modernist sculpture. Hildebrand privileges ‘direct carving in stone’ as ‘natural’ and emphasises the link with Michelangelo’s heralded ‘water-basin’ technique.

<sup>233</sup> Jon Wood, David Hulks and Alex Potts, assert that Hildebrand’s text was instantly popular amongst artists and writers and that its success was bolstered by the publication of an English translation in 1907. Wood et al (2007), 1. Additionally, regarding Modigliani’s deference to antique sculpture, Kenneth Wayne upholds the importance of Hildebrand’s writing as a ‘huge encouragement’ for modern sculptors. Kenneth Wayne, ‘Modigliani, Modern Sculpture and the Influence of Antiquity’, in Gabriella Belli et al (2010), 76 and 82-3.

<sup>234</sup> There is ample evidence to suggest that Epstein engaged with Hildebrand’s theories. For example, Hildebrand’s insistence that sculpture and architecture must always have a unity was echoed by Epstein in his discussion of *Night and Day* (1928). Hildebrand (1907), 112-3. Haskell (1931), 47.

archaeology, and is a rare example of a figural part that was not conceived as part of a whole. Interestingly, however, *Romilly John* remained in the studio and was ultimately 're-cycled' and given a full figure: the fragment was integrated into *Mother and Child Standing* (1911) (fig. 101) which also remained in the atelier until it was posthumously sold (fig. 102).

In this chapter I have explored Epstein's studio practice as revealed by a selection of his sculptural fragments. An object-based approach has enabled me to investigate the multifaceted part-objects as indexes of Epstein's creative process, and as reflective of his art education, deference to Rodin, and admiration of ancient sculpture. I have argued that, unlike many other modernist sculptors, Epstein persistently approached sculptural fragments as parts from wholes, although he did briefly experiment with the fragment-as-independent – *Marble Arms* and *Romilly John* are two isolated examples.<sup>235</sup> Thus, in contrast to the photographs discussed in chapter one, which present a constructed and partial view of Epstein's studio practice, an object-based approach is arguably more revealing of many facets of the sculptor's working method. The photographs do, however, play a role in the examination of the objects: they document which fragments remained in the atelier. Interestingly, photographs from the Epstein Archive, Walsall, reveal that Epstein 'rescued' two heads from the deliberately damaged *Strand Statues*, returning them to the sanctity of the studio (fig. 103).<sup>236</sup> Epstein lamented the destruction of his first public commission: 'anyone passing along the strand can now see, as on some antique building, the few mutilated fragments of my decoration.'<sup>237</sup> This may have some bearing on Epstein's persistent approach to fragments as parts of an absent totality. For me, the returning of the heads to the studio evokes Rilke's comment about Rodin's *Balzac* which had 'returned to the studio, rejected, and now stood there proudly, as if refusing to leave it again.'<sup>238</sup> Thus, the studio photographs not only reveal that Epstein kept two of the broken heads (something not recorded elsewhere), but also, the sculptor's protective behaviour towards the fragments is entirely congruent with the argument made in chapter one that the studio was constructed as the 'natural' environment for sculptor and sculpture.

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<sup>235</sup> *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill* is also an independent fragment but whereas *Romilly John* and *Marble Arms* were conceived independently from any implied or original full figures, it should not be forgotten that the *Torso* originally derived from a full sculpture.

<sup>236</sup> Epstein's first public commission for eighteen statues to adorn the British Medical Association building, The Strand, London, was reduced to fragments as a result of the public furore sparked by the blatant nudity of the figures. After years of controversy and petitions for the sculptures' removal followed by numerous counter appeals, in 1937, the statues were declared unsafe and any protruding parts were removed.

<sup>237</sup> Epstein (1940), 32.

<sup>238</sup> Rilke (1907) in Wood et al (2007), 21.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore Epstein's studio practice, which has not previously been investigated, via an examination of selected contemporaneous photographs of the sculptor and his studio, and a selection of his sculptural fragments, which have also never been the subject of study. At an elementary level, the project constituted a juxtaposition of two disparate sources – photographs and sculpted part-objects - that, despite their crucial differences, lend themselves to a discussion of Epstein and his sculptural method. However, whilst the resources opened up multiple lines of enquiry concerning Epstein's studio practice, the information yielded by the examination of the photographs differed significantly from the ideas elicited by the discussion of the sculptures.

The photographs purport to 'document' Epstein's studio practice, but actually present a partial, highly constructed presentation that is more representative of Epstein's self-image than his creative process. This is, of course, worthy of discussion in itself but in the context of an examination of Epstein's studio practice, the fragments potentially constitute the more fruitful resource. The multifaceted part-objects function as indexes of Epstein's working method, and reflect several aspects of his approach to sculpture. There is some crossover between the photographs and the objects, not least their emphasis on process and articulation of Epstein's deference to Rodin. Both sources also invited discussion of the significance of sculptors' hands, and the importance of Hildebrand's 1907 text, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*. Furthermore, photographs of Epstein's studio also served an important functional role in the examination of the objects. The images confirm the abundance of fragments in Epstein's studio and identify specific part-objects that remained in the space. Pertinently, without the photographs, the fact that Epstein had 'rescued' two heads from his damaged *Strand Statues* and returned them to the sanctity of the studio could have remained unknown.

Chapter one critically analysed selected photographs – most of which were taken by Ireland between 1955 and 1957 – as projections of how an elderly Epstein wished himself, his art and studio practice to be perceived. Epstein was subjected to intense and often startlingly harsh criticism throughout his career, and discriminated against on account of his being a 'foreign artist' of Jewish descent who chose to settle in England. In line with Haskell's assertion that 'to the man on the street, the very name [Epstein] is synonymous with sensation', it seems apposite that the sculptor should want to leave a record that might remedy some of the allegations lobbied against him.<sup>239</sup> The photographs and *Jacob Epstein: A Camera Study of the Sculptor at Work* were, therefore, discussed

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<sup>239</sup> Haskell (1931), ix

as symptomatic of Epstein's reaction to criticism. Importantly, Epstein was denigrated as a wild beast in the studio whose allegedly incomprehensible and undesirable art was to be accounted for by his brutish assault of his materials and audience. In contrast, Ireland's photographs present a diligent sculptor with an acute eye for detail who was tirelessly devoted to his art.

Lee's introduction is also constructed so as to outright contradict common misunderstandings. Thus, whereas Casson had previously criticised Epstein for engaging with too many sources and styles and creating too diasporic an output, Lee likens Epstein's 'tremendous versatility' to Mozart.<sup>240</sup> Underwood's survey of English sculpture excludes Epstein on the grounds that 'there is practically nothing English' about Epstein or his art, which, in Underwood's racist opinion, is to be accounted for by the sculptor's 'essentially oriental' upbringing and ancestry.<sup>241</sup> In stark contrast, Lee attributes 'the universality' of Epstein's sculpture to his 'richly flavoured' youth in the 'exotic, effervescent, immigrant crucible of East Side New York.'<sup>242</sup> Even Lee's choice of sculptures to cite in the introduction is revealing. Notably, *Adam* – which Lee describes as 'a figure of aspiring energy, the erect seed-bearer of his kind, striding forward to inherit the earth' – had been notoriously exhibited as a side-show attraction in Blackpool, ridiculed as 'gross, primitive and ugly',<sup>243</sup> and denounced as an indecent 'abnormality in a beautiful world.'<sup>244</sup> For me, Lee's construction of Epstein evoked Vasari's biography of Michelangelo, which had been recently translated into English, and evidently read by Epstein.<sup>245</sup> Hildebrand had also advocated the study of Michelangelo's work and approach to art.<sup>246</sup> Thus, whilst it may seem anachronistic to look back to the Renaissance in a study of a twentieth-century sculptor, arguably there was a resurgence of interest in Michelangelo's art at the time. It is always essential to investigate contemporaneous texts, particularly those that Epstein undoubtedly read.

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<sup>240</sup> Casson (1928), 113. Ireland and Lee (1957), no page numbers.

<sup>241</sup> Underwood (1933), 153-4.

<sup>242</sup> Ireland and Lee (1957), no page numbers.

<sup>243</sup> Marita Ross, 1939, unidentified newspaper cutting, Press Cuttings, 2002/78, Press Cutting book C, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>244</sup> *Northern Despatch*, 18/07/1939, Unidentified newspaper cutting, Press Cuttings, 2002/78, Press Cutting book C, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>245</sup> Epstein told Haskell (who refers to Vasari as 'the sanest' of art critics in his text) that 'it is only today that we are beginning to understand Michel Angelo' – a statement that is congruent with the idea that there was a resurgence of interest in the Renaissance sculptor, potentially inaugurated by the translation of Vasari and Hildebrand's heralding of Michelangelo as the preeminent sculptor of all time. Epstein frequently referred to Michelangelo and Vasari throughout his conversations with Haskell. For example, he directly quoted Vasari's description of Michelangelo having pretended to adjust *David* to flatter a patron. Haskell (1931), 142. Vasari (2006), 57-58.

<sup>246</sup> Building towards the instigation that modern sculptors should carve direct, Hildebrand heralds Michelangelo's infamous 'water-basin' carving technique - as recorded by Vasari – as the pinnacle of sculptural endeavour. Hildebrand (1907), 129. Vasari (2006), 197

As noted, Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* provided an instance of crossover between chapters one and two.<sup>247</sup> Widely read amongst sculptors, Hildebrand advocates the importance of process which may have impacted on the increased photographic visibility of the sculpture studio, as discussed in chapter one.<sup>248</sup> The text also frequently references ancient sculpture, including illustrations, thereby supporting the discussion of the heightened importance of ancient fragments to modern sculptors, advanced in chapter two.

The fact that Ireland's images are concordant with photographs of Rodin, and subsequent sculptors, suggested that Ireland's representations articulate more than Epstein's discontent concerning his public image. Indeed, the photographs also reflect Epstein's deference to Rodin, and align with the modernist preoccupation with indexicality. Furthermore, Ireland's presentation of Epstein as a diligent workman and artistic genius, who 'inhabits' a mystical, transformative site wherein he creates 'artistic life', is congruent with the conceptualisation of 'the modernist sculptor', as discussed by Bergstein and Wood regarding other twentieth-century artists.

Wagner asserts that Epstein's 'radical renunciation of abstraction [...] soon enough consigned him to a secondary role', and, save for discussion of *Rock Drill*, Epstein has frequently been omitted from modernist discourse.<sup>249</sup> The discussion of photographs of Epstein and his studio that align with images of other contemporaneous artists, thus inserted Epstein into a history in which his presence has been marginalised.<sup>250</sup> As noted in the introduction, a small number of photographs of Epstein are reproduced in *Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera*. Notably, the photographs of Epstein 'at work' show him modelling portraits, whereas his contemporaries – Moore, Hepworth and Gill – are seen directly carving. Epstein was, of course, a skilled modeller of innumerable figurative portraits and sculptures, as well as a carver of stone monuments, but his persistent championing of modelling has been used as a means to chastise and segregate him, despite some of his clear affinities with other modernist sculptors.<sup>251</sup> The situation is complicated,

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<sup>247</sup> There is ample evidence that Epstein read Hildebrand's text. For example, Hildebrand's veneration of 'primitive' art would undoubtedly have piqued Epstein's interest given his own enthusiasm for, and collection of, non-western artefacts. Hildebrand's discussion of relief carving can also be related to Epstein's directly carved relief panel for the *W.H. Hudson Memorial*. Hildebrand (1907), 88-89 and 125. Also see footnote 234.

<sup>248</sup> Hildebrand (1907), 15.

<sup>249</sup> Wagner (2005), 11.

<sup>250</sup> Limitations of space meant that only a few pertinent examples of contemporaneous photographs of other artists and their studios could be discussed. I included images of Matisse and Giacometti as well as Moore and Hepworth, but as *Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera* demonstrates, there was a proliferation of photographs of sculptors and their studios during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

<sup>251</sup> Writing in 1933, when direct carving and the doctrine of 'truth to materials' arguably reached a pinnacle, Underwood implicitly chastises Epstein as 'primarily a modeller'. Underwood (1933), 154.

however, especially since chapter two's discussion of Epstein's fragments, contrarily revealed an aspect of Epstein's departure from many of his contemporaries in terms of his approach to, and production of, sculptural fragments.

Chapter two employed an object-based approach. Epstein's multifaceted part-objects were investigated as indexes of Epstein's creative process, and as reflective of his art education, deference to Rodin and veneration of ancient sculpture. In contrast to the photographs, therefore, which offer a partial, deliberate construction of Epstein's studio practice, the objects were approached as actual traces of his working method. In-depth discussion of several fragment heads revealed Epstein's Rodinesque 'recycling' of sculptures that had remained in his studio to form new works. More specific to Epstein's practice is the evidence - as elicited by an examination of certain sculpted heads - that he often subtly modified individualised studies of sitters and transformed them into stylised depictions of religious figures. Notably, Epstein effectively transposed the features of his female model Sunita into representations of the Holy Virgin and the male fallen angel *Lucifer*. Furthermore, it was also revealed that Epstein consistently conceived figurative sculptures from studies of heads, in a backwards gestalt process that invests the part with a greater significance than the whole. Epstein's fragments were thus also shown to function synecdochically for their respective full-figures. Additionally, Epstein's fragment hands were discussed as particularly Rodinesque, and as functionally metonymically for the sculptor. Like exemplary photographs that emphasise Epstein's creative appendages, his sculpted hands similarly elicited consideration of the special, generative significance accorded to sculptors' hands in general.

Discussion of Epstein's fragments provoked consideration of his divergence from many of his contemporaries who more readily aligned themselves with abstraction. In contrast to other modernist sculptors who tended to approach part-objects as partial but 'complete' (finished and autonomous), Epstein persistently conceptualised fragments as parts of a whole. His fragments, therefore, generally relate to full-figures and are more indicative of his working method than any engagement with the modernist preoccupation with 'the fragment'. Thus, it was argued that the inherent duality of the sculptural fragment - whether the part-objects are approached as parts of a whole, or as autonomous, irrespective of any original or implied whole - appears to reflect an aspect of the early twentieth-century schism between figurative and abstract sculpture. It was, however, acknowledged that Epstein did indeed 'experiment' with the fragment-as-independent. Notably, this aspect of Epstein's studio practice was discussed without reference to the all-pervasive *Torso in Metal from the Rock Drill*. The simultaneously modern-archaic *Romilly John* elicits discussion of



Epstein's experiments with stylisation (as does *Rock Drill*) but also provokes consideration of Epstein's engagement with contemporaneous archaeology and Hildebrand's text, which *Rock Drill* and the associated *Torso*, do not. *Romilly John* was also discussed as a rarity in Epstein's oeuvre since he created the fragment head without a full-figure in mind, although ultimately the figural part was 'recycled' and given full-form in *Mother and Child Standing*.

*Rock Drill* dominates Epstein literature. Since the late 1980s, scant attention has been paid to the sculptor, save for his inclusion in a few exhibitions - predominantly concerned with his pre-1914 work - and Gilboa's psycho-biographical approach to Epstein's formative years. In line with Wagner's assertion, Epstein's eschewal of abstraction has problematized his placement within modernist sculptural history. Since *Rock Drill*, the associated *Torso*, and Epstein's early carvings align with the story of modernism-as-abstraction and direct carving, these sculptures are persistently over-emphasised. Whilst I have acknowledged that these sculptures should not be ignored, the incessant attention paid to them has eclipsed consideration of other aspects of Epstein's oeuvre.

Interestingly, the persistent conceptualisation of *Rock Drill* as the pinnacle of Epstein's career has a contemporaneous precedent.<sup>252</sup> Referring to the Vorticist sculpture in 1926, Rutter hailed Epstein as a 'great artist' who 'is not only of his age, he is ahead of it.'<sup>253</sup> Moreover, in 1921, Kinton Parkes had already noted an overemphasis on *Rock Drill*.<sup>254</sup> Paul Overy's 1973 article for *The Times* compounds the misguided, but common assumption that 'although a good deal of Epstein's later work was downright bad, his work of the pre 1914 period could match anything done anywhere at the time.'<sup>255</sup> Overy continues that 'if someone were to reconstruct the original version of "Rock Drill" it could substantially change the history of the modern movement.'<sup>256</sup> *Rock Drill* was reconstructed in 1974 by Ken Cook and Ann Christopher. Arguably, the reconstruction did not substantially alter modernist sculptural history, but significantly impacted on Epstein scholarship. On the one hand, the resurrected sculpture challenged Epstein's frequent censure as an obsolescent modeller, but on the other, it came to overshadow virtually all other aspects of his career.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> This perception of Epstein was perpetuated by the 2009 Royal Academy exhibition *Wild Thing*.

<sup>253</sup> Frank Rutter, *Evolution in Modern Art: A Study of Modern Painting 1870-1925*, London, 1926, 127.

<sup>254</sup> Parkes (1921), 120.

<sup>255</sup> Paul Overy, 'Revolutionaries and Conservatives at the Turn of the Century: Pioneers of Modern Sculpture', *The Times*, 24/07/1973, Newspaper cutting from Box 1 Beth Lipkin 36/1988, EPS E6, Henry Moore Institute Archive, Leeds.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Casson (1928), 11. Casson declares that; 'if Epstein had kept to the manner of his fine tomb of Oscar Wilde in Père Lachaise it would not have been necessary to class him with an already *démodé* romantic movement.'

Epstein's obvious deference to Rodin may have also impacted on his reputation. During the 1960s and 1970s, Rodin was reappraised by Elsen, Tucker and Steinberg as an innovative forerunner of abstract sculpture. Contemporaneous opinion of Rodin, however, varied greatly. For example, Rodin was glorified by some as 'a magician ready to create new forms in sculpture' and 'rescue' the art form from the arid sterility of the late eighteenth, and early nineteenth century.<sup>258</sup> In contrast, he was also posited as an outmoded sculptor who should, therefore, be reacted against.<sup>259</sup> In 1933, Herbert Maryon declared that 'many of our modern artists think little of Rodin.'<sup>260</sup> Additionally, Parkes had previously described the French sculptor as 'the blind who led the blind into the *cul-de-sac* of plastic realism', although he begrudgingly concluded that:

Modern Sculpture is the result of Rodin's activities and of his great mind, but if only his hands had been directed to the chisel and stone, instead so largely to the spatula and clay, modern sculpture might have to-day been advanced by a quarter of a century.<sup>261</sup>

By describing Epstein as 'the true pupil of Rodin', but adding that the younger sculptor 'only escaped from this tyranny for a brief period in 1913 and 1914', Casson not only seems to support the supposition that perceptions of Rodin may have affected Epstein's reputation, but also compounds the common emphasise on Epstein's early work.<sup>262</sup>

Thus, it would appear that Epstein has generally either been dismissed as 'primarily a modeller' - by both contemporaneous commentators such as Underwood, and subsequent writers like, for example, Overy – or, as a means to include him in modernist discourse, his early abstract 'experiments', in particular *Rock Drill*, have been overemphasised. In contrast, utilising extensive archival research, and first-hand experience with Epstein's sculptures, this thesis has discussed unstudied Epstein resources – photographs and sculpted body parts - in relation to two other established facets of modernism: the centrality of 'the studio' and preoccupation with 'the

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<sup>258</sup> Casson (1928), 5. Casson constructs Rodin in the guise of the artist who miraculously appears to 'rescue' sculpture in the same way that Vasari presents Michelangelo. Casson continues that, unlike most other artists, Rodin stood alone 'with few to guide him.' This idea of Rodin as a lone artist was repeated by Tucker who declares: 'In terms of a newly conceived independence for sculpture, Rodin must be Géricault, Delacroix and Courbet simultaneously with Manet and Cézanne'. Tucker (1972), 9.

<sup>259</sup> Though not explicitly, Hildebrand's 1907 text can be approached as anti-Rodin for its instigation to rid sculpture of theatricality and dramatic gestures – aspects of Rodin's art that Rilke had heralded as great achievements. Hildebrand, (1907), *passim*. Rilke (1946), 21.

<sup>260</sup> Herbert Maryon, *Modern Sculpture*, London, 1933, 30.

<sup>261</sup> Kineton Parks, *The Art of Carved Sculpture*, London, 1931, 52 and 192.

<sup>262</sup> Casson (1928), 115.

fragment.’ The significance of the studio site to the characterisation of ‘the modernist sculptor’ has been discussed by Bergstein, Wagner and Wood, and a few photographs of Epstein were included in the 2001 *Close Encounters* exhibition. However, the engagement with Ireland’s photographs, specifically in terms of Epstein’s projected self-image, is unique.

The sculptural fragment has been primarily discussed regarding Rodin and as a precursor to abstraction. In contrast to this thesis, Elsen’s 1969 survey of sculpted part-objects minimises the impact of ancient fragments on the modernist preoccupation with sculpted segmentations, and omits any consideration of a possible relation between modern part-objects and the concurrent excavations that were unearthing fragmentary ancient sculptures. Additionally, whilst Steinberg discusses Rodin’s proclivity to ‘recycle’ parts of sculptures to form novel amalgamations, discussion of the fragment in terms of Epstein’s studio practice is unprecedented. Furthermore, this thesis has demonstrated that ‘the fragment’ is relevant to figurative, as well as abstract sculpture. Of course, Rodin was also a figurative modeller, but, because Rodin’s part-objects also demonstrably impacted on the development from figuration to abstraction, it seems that the story of modernism-as-abstraction has appropriated the objects, emphasising their abstract qualities above all.

As a totality, the juxtaposition of contemporaneous photographs of Epstein and his studio, and a selection of his sculptural fragments, revealed that whilst the photographs purport to ‘document’ Epstein’s work in the studio, in actuality, the images reflect Epstein’s self-construction. In contrast, the objects function as traces of his method, and open up unexpectedly wide-ranging lines of enquiry regarding his approach to sculpture. This does not, however, negate the significance of the photographs, not least because their visual evidence was vital to the investigation of the objects. Ireland’s photographs, which have remained essentially hidden in archives, not only express Epstein’s reaction to his turbulent public reception, but also align with the modernist preoccupation with indexicality, and the centrality of ‘the studio’ to the conception of ‘the modernist sculptor.’ Moreover, the construction of Epstein as a diligent workman and genius artist, who had an acute eye for detail and an inexhaustible devotion to art, is congruent with the general characterisation of ‘the sculptor’ in the modern period, which suggests that despite his segregation as ‘primarily a modeller’, Epstein perhaps wanted to be perceived as an archetypal modernist sculptor.

Validated by Rodin, encouraged by Hildebrand, and heightened by contemporaneous excavations, the fragment as a sculptural type was also a central preoccupation for modernist sculptors. However, whilst the examination of the photographs aligned Epstein with his contemporaries,

discussion of the fragments revealed an aspect of his departure. Indeed, Epstein's position within modernism is not easily designated, but this does not justify his marginalisation. There are considerable lacunae in contemporary Epstein scholarship. Discussing two distinctly modernist preoccupations in relation to the often-marginalised Epstein, this thesis has attempted to fill one such gap in terms of an exploration of his studio practice. Moore acknowledged the significance of the incessant criticism that Epstein faced when he stated that because Epstein 'took the brick-bats' and 'faced the howls of derision,' younger sculptors were 'spared a great deal.'<sup>263</sup> In line with this, it seems apposite that the selected photographs examined in this thesis opened up consideration of the 'brick-bats' that were hurled at Epstein. Furthermore, the object-based approach to unstudied sculptural fragments upheld Epstein's determination to 'rest silent in my work', revealing that his sculptural fragments certainly articulate a great deal about his studio practice.<sup>264</sup> That modernist discourse seems unwilling to accept Epstein as embodying the apparently mutually exclusive characterisations of 'modeller' and 'carver', and given the ceaseless attention paid to *Rock Drill*, suggests the need for further scholarly investigation of the significance of Epstein's figurative sculptures to balance the overemphasis on his 'experiments' with abstraction.

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<sup>263</sup> Henry Moore in Philip James (ed.), *Henry Moore on Sculpture: A Collection of the Sculptor's Writings and Words*, London, 1966, 194.

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