



Sir Jacob Epstein

Sculptor

Born: 10 November 1880

Died: 19 August 1959

ARTY FACT!

Jacob Epstein made more than 400 sculptures in metal and stone.

Sir Jacob Epstein's life

Jacob Epstein was born in New York. As a child he was often ill and he drew pictures to pass the time. When he was well again he carried on drawing, taking his sketchbook everywhere with him.

At the age of 16 he went to art college. When he got a job in a bronze foundry, he carried on going to college in the evening. He was learning to be a sculptor but for his first job, as an artist, he was asked to draw the illustrations for a book. He was paid enough money to be able to move to Paris.

In Paris, he studied at the National School of Fine Arts. He moved to London in 1905.

What makes Sir Jacob Epstein special?

Jacob's approach to sculpture was very modern. He was interested in art from Africa and Asia rather than the classical Greek and Roman statues which most sculptors admired at the time. Usually when sculptors work in stone, they try out their ideas in clay first. Jacob preferred to work directly into the stone, allowing the natural strengths and weaknesses in the stone to influence the shapes he made. People were often shocked by the pieces he made because they did not look how they expected sculptures to look.

As well as large scale stone and metal sculptures, he made portraits like the one of Paul Robeson at York Art Gallery. He sculpted these in clay and then they were cast in bronze. His portrait sculptures are almost like 3D drawings or sketches. The rough surface is very expressive and seems to be filled with movement.

WHAT CAN YOU SEE?

Can you find the portrait bust of Paul Robeson by Jacob Epstein on display in the gallery?

You can touch the sculpture.

Can you feel the shape of Epstein's fingers in the sculpture's hair?

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Who would you make a portrait sculpture of?

Try making a small sculpture of a face out of air hardening clay.