The French-born artist Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915) moved from Paris to London in 1911 with his companion the Polish author Sophie Brzeska, whose surname he added to his own. In the following three and a half years he played an important role in the development of modern sculpture in this country, collaborating with figures such as Ezra Pound and Roger Fry. In the summer of 1914 Gaudier-Brzeska volunteered for the French army, and was killed in action the following year, aged twenty-three.

In the two decades that followed, Gaudier-Brzeska’s life and work was celebrated in three books, each of which created a different image of the artist and his work.

In 1916 Ezra Pound championed him as a Vorticist in Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir. In 1930 H.S. Ede, who in 1927 had acquired most of Gaudier-Brzeska’s surviving work, published a biography of the sculptor emphasising his personal relationship with Sophie. Entitled A Life of Gaudier-Brzeska, the book was re-issued a year later as Savage Messiah. In 1933 Horace Brodzky, a close friend of the artist, wrote another biography as a corrective to these earlier publications. The mythologisation of Gaudier-Brzeska continued into the early 1970s when he became the subject of a feature film, also called Savage Messiah, directed by Ken Russell.

Savage Messiah: The Creation of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska investigates the changing art historical and biographical presentation of Gaudier-Brzeska’s life and art through the display of books, as well as ephemera from Russell’s film, shown in the company of the portraits Gaudier-Brzeska made of Pound and Brodzky. At the centre of this display is the manuscript version of Ede’s book, which is now in the Henry Moore Institute Archive.
List of works:

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska 1891–1915
Self-portrait
c. 1912
Ink on paper
Private collection

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska 1891–1915
Study for Head of Ezra Pound
1914
Brush and ink on paper
Courtesy Kettle’s Yard, University of Cambridge

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska 1891–1915
Portrait of Horace Brodzky
1913
Bronze
Courtesy Leeds Museums and Galleries (Art Gallery)

MGM / Russ-Arts
Publicity stills from Ken Russell’s film
Savage Messiah
1972
Colour photographs
Private collection

MGM / Russ-Arts
Poster advertising Ken Russell’s film
Savage Messiah
1972
Private collection

MGM / Russ-Arts
Publicity stills from Ken Russell’s film
Savage Messiah
1972
Black and white photographs
Private collection

Case in the centre of the room:

H.S. Ede 1895–1990
Manuscript for The Life of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska
1929
Courtesy Leeds Museums and Galleries (Henry Moore Institute Archive)
In long wall case from left to right:

Ezra Pound 1885–1972
*Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*
London: John Lane
1916
Henry Moore Institute Library

H.S. Ede 1895–1990
*A Life of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska*
London: William Heinemann
1930
Henry Moore Institute Library

A selection of editions of H.S. Ede’s *Savage Messiah* published between 1931 and 1987
William Heinemann (London, 1931),
The Literary Guild (New York, 1931),
Alfred A. Knopf (New York, 1941),
Abacus / Sphere Books (London, 1972),
Gordon Fraser (London, 1979),
Gordon Fraser (London, 1987, reprint)
Henry Moore Institute Library

S. W. Hayter 1901–1988
*Henri Gaudier-Brzeska: Medallion*
1967
Copper
No. 21/150
Private collection

The Henry Moore Institute is a world-recognised centre for the study of sculpture in the heart of Leeds. An award-winning exhibitions venue, research centre, library and sculpture archive, the Institute hosts a year-round programme of exhibitions, conferences and lectures, as well as developing research and publications, to expand the understanding and scholarship of historical and contemporary sculpture. The Institute is a part of The Henry Moore Foundation, which was set up by Moore in 1977 to encourage appreciation of the visual arts, especially sculpture.

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