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| Gaudier-Brzeska, Henri (1891–1915) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Born in St Jean-de-Braye, France, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska had a catalytic effect on the development of modernist sculpture in Britain. In 1911 he moved to London, where he produced his most significant works. At the outbreak of the First World War he enlisted in the French army and was killed in action on 5 June 1915 at the age of 23. His prolific career, while brief, is representative of the bourgeoning modernism in Britain shortly before the war. As an artist he was self-taught, taking his inspiration from a number of sources including museum collections in Paris and London, Rodin and other European modernists, and non-European artefacts. Amongst avant-garde groups, he associated most closely with the Vorticists, signing their manifesto in 1914 and contributing articles to their magazine, *Blast* (1914 and 1915). He worked across the factions of the London art world, however, and his practice was eclectic; he used whatever materials came to hand, combining the virile negrophilia of *Red Stone Dancer* with the naturalistic figuration of *Maternity* (both 1913). |
| Born in St Jean-de-Braye, France, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska had a catalytic effect on the development of modernist sculpture in Britain. In 1911 he moved to London, where he produced his most significant works. At the outbreak of the First World War he enlisted in the French army and was killed in action on 5 June 1915 at the age of 23. His prolific career, while brief, is representative of the bourgeoning modernism in Britain shortly before the war. As an artist he was self-taught, taking his inspiration from a number of sources including museum collections in Paris and London, Rodin and other European modernists, and non-European artefacts. Amongst avant-garde groups, he associated most closely with the Vorticists, signing their manifesto in 1914 and contributing articles to their magazine, *Blast* (1914 and 1915). He worked across the factions of the London art world, however, and his practice was eclectic; he used whatever materials came to hand, combining the virile negrophilia of *Red Stone Dancer* with the naturalistic figuration of *Maternity* (both 1913).  [File: redstonedancer.jpg]  Figure 1 Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, *Red Stone Dancer*, 1913  <http://arttattler.com/archivevorticists.html>  Gaudier-Brzeska was a self-conscious modernist who claimed a place amongst the European avant-garde. His check-list of ‘WE the moderns’ in volume one of *Blast* names ‘Epstein, Brancusi, Archipenko, Dunikowski, Modigliani, and myself’ as the final point in a history of the vortex that begins with ‘the mountain’ and ranges across the ancient civilisations of Europe, China, Africa, and Oceania. He was an early exponent of direct carving, the practice of working out a sculptural design directly in stone, rather than copying from a *maquette*. Carvings such as *Seated Woman* (1914) demonstrate the expressive qualities of the technique, as it responds to the weight, shape, and texture of the material. He could be uncompromising in his commitment to abstracted form, as he announced in *Blast* (1915): ‘I SHALL DERIVE MY EMOTIONS SOLELY FROM THE ARRANGEMENT OF SURFACES.’ Yet his work also responded to the many drawings that he made, rapidly and with great skill, of scenes glimpsed on the move. He could be witty – note the phallic metaphor in his *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound* (1914) – and tender, particularly in animal sculptures such as *Sleeping Fawn* (1913).  While widely unknown during his lifetime, friends, including Ezra Pound and curator Jim Ede, worked to build Gaudier-Brzeska’s reputation following his death. He has since become a central figure in the discussion of modern sculpture in Britain and the subject of numerous exhibitions and publications. |
| Further reading:  (Ede)  (Gaudier-Brzeska, Vortex (Written fro the Trenches))  (Gaudier-Brzeska, Vortex – Gaudier-Brzeska)  (Gaudier-Brzeska and Barassi, 'we the Moderns': Gaudier-brezeska and the Birth of Modern Sculpture)  (Gaudier-Brzeska and Pound, Gaudier Brzeska: A Memoir)  (Silber, Gaudier-Brzeska and Finn) |