EXPLANATIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF MY SCULPTURE

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by
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The environment in which we live is very complex and multi-faceted. My environment includes the obvious influences of the media, books, magazines, and newspapers. It also includes subjective items such as my education, where I live, the people I meet, and the religion I practice. Due to the amount of information available in this environment, I find it necessary to control the number of influences on my life and my sculpture. I react best in a stable and structured environment, which is a personality trait that has a great effect on my selection of imagery. Thus, my sculpture is a series of controlled, rationally designed images that reaffirm the formal aspects of sculpture and design.

I have changed the emphasis of my sculpture from iconographic images to configurations which function in a phenomenological way. By phenomenological I mean a concern with phenomena rather than hypothesis. Previous sculptures dealt with game like compositions in which certain materials, positions, and shape relations were given. These given images would then imply other relationships within the composition such as forms that approximate each other in shape or energy level and lines of continuation. These implications constitute the hypothesis.
The intent of my recent and present sculptures is to create a sequential order from part to part which them accumulates into a whole that is both an entity in itself and the sum of the parts. This is achieved by the repetition of a modular form positioned into spacial increments. The modular form is basically a triangular-arch-shape or "rib." The spacial increments are usually twelve inch measurements. The total image is affirmed by the visual combining of the mass, which is the "rib," and the space, which is made of twelve-inch increments. Visually this combination of mass and space is unified into a single entity by the viewers search for a stable form. "The viewer is driven toward spacial order and spacial stability, thus, optical units are condensed into compact wholes."  

This visual act of unifying similar repetitious elements into a closure as it were, enables my sculptures to be seen as parts of a whole and as a total systematic unit.

Two sculptures that are examples of this concept in its progressionary stages are titled Flex and Romyack. Both of these sculptures are depict the beginnings of what has become a generative series, and both employ the rib shape as the predominate modular element.

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The first sculpture of this generative series is the piece titled *Flex* (Plate No. 1). *Flex* is an aluminum construction consisting of fifteen ribs that sequentially taper in size from the larger rib fixed to the way, to the smaller rib at the end of the sloping spine. The spine being comprised of twelve-inch long aluminum rods that separate and maintain the ribs. The ribs also fabricated from aluminum were originally designed to support a "skin" made of nylon fabric. That is, why the ribs are perforated with holes and have the small 90° extensions on the bottoms. But during the making of this sculpture I decided to eliminate the fabric "skin" rather than obscure the rib construction. This was an instance in which during the execution of the idea the sculpture conveyed a possibility beyond my original design. My decision was rather intuitive, but, it is my perogative to decide when I can divert from my previous concept or when I believe a sculpture is complete. "Most artists sense and evolve rather than totally preconceive and execute." Of course, I design my sculptures to the point that I believe them to be total images, but, while in the process of making the piece, I try to be aware of other possibilities that might occur. It is these possibilities that lead me to work

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in a generative series.

I find working in a generative series; using one sculpture as reference to perpetuate the next, a logical way to satisfy my ideas while stimulating new concepts. If I think some quality or character in a sculpture could be improved or changed I will use the information gained from that piece to influence the design of the next piece. By doing so, each sculpture is interdependent on the previous one. The sculpture titled Romyack (Plate No. 2) was developed this way using information gained from the previous Flex piece.

Romyack consists of twenty-nine wood ribs and a spine composed of three, one inch wide lengths of rope. The ribs are spaced in twelve inch increments along the thirty foot length of the piece. The separation of materials helps to emphasize the segregation of function. The ribs made of rigid wood vary in their sequential heights, yet, maintain a calculated twelve-inch space between each. The ribs function as vertical supports for the rope. The rope on the other hand is flexible and linear in design. The three lengths of one-inch rope are juxaposed next to each other to create a single, wide, triangular shaped spine. This spine, which is a linkage between the ribs, is flexible, hence, Romyack is more versatile and able to assume many contortions, not all of which flatter its design.
After making Flex and Romyack, I decided for the sake of change to eliminate the spine or linkage between ribs and concentrate on the ribs themselves. By just dealing with the rib, I could emphasize or change the scale or energy of the piece without dealing with another element, like the spine. This concept lead to a piece titled Leviathon (Plate No. 3). Leviathon is comprised of twenty ribs which can be divided into two groups of ten. The two groups of ribs are identical in scale and the way in which they were made. There is a clear sequential order in the scale relationships between the ribs. The ribs vary in size from two feet in the center, to six and one-half feet on each end. And all twenty ribs are spaced twelve inches apart, so the overall length is twenty feet.

Visually, this sculpture is the best example of a sequential order from part to part which then accumulates into a whole that is both an entity in itself and the sum of the parts. This is due to the repetition of material, technique of assembly, the systematic division of space, and the similarity of scale. But there is a variable. The variable is how each rib reacts to pressure, on one side, the mechanical pressure of being pulled taont on the other side, the more natural pressure of gravity. The transition form the tall, taont rib
on one end, to the small rigid ribs in the center, to the relaxed spread of the horizontal ribs, is very systematic; yet, it has a sense of animation about it.

The recent sculptures I have written about depend on the "rib" shape, as a modual, to structure the existing space. This use of the modual is not a unique invention developed by me. For this modular approach to making sculpture has been a concern since the beginning of the twentieth century. Some contemporary sculptors that have done some work with modular systems are David Smith, Tony Smith, Donald Judd, and Robert Morris. The general concept for developing modular images is to use similar shapes thus minimizing the conflict of shapes, but develop other types of conflicts through material, surface, and, most importantly, through the arrangement and positioning of the moduals. David Smith's Cubi series is a good example of this modular approach to making sculpture. The Cubi series if a number of similar sculptures developed on a single theme. The theme being, to use modular form, hollow rectangular boxes, joined edge to edge, edge to plane, and partial plane to plane. The finished product being a large imposing form composed of smaller geometric moduals attached in any number of rational or irrational sequences.
Like these sculptors, I have used the modular form to retain a structure in my images, either visual or physical. Jack Burnham, in his book titled *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, writes "The concept of homogenous structure is regarded as one of the more powerful symbols of rationality," in that if the sculptor designs a structure that is based on a geometric theorem or a logical progression or sequence the sculpture appears to be rational. He continues this thought," most sculptors dealing with abstraction choose structured formats with an element of chaos. Moreover, the dialectics of art seem to demand that a sculptor make rational structures seem irrational and irrational structures appear rational." There are basically two realms of structure, one being visually structured form, the other being structural engineering for strength and stability. Though there exist a correlation between visual and structural logic little attempt has been made to emphasize the engineering aspect of sculpture. Engineering in sculpture, with few exceptions, has been a matter of visual assimilation, not function." Structure has always


been an attribute of my sculptures. But only recently have I gained an awareness and interest in space as an integral functioning part of my sculptures.

Future sculptures will be concerned with the integration of mass and space to the point at which space is delineated by the mass rather than the mass being embedded in space. This idea has been shared by many sculptors. This statement by Gabo taken from an essay he wrote for *Circle* in 1937 affirms the preceptual properties of space. "Up to now the sculptors have preferred the mass and neglected or paid very little attention to such an important component of mass as space. Space interested them only insofar as it was a spot in which volumes could be placed or projection. It had to surround masses. I consider space as an absolute sculptural element, released from any closed volume, and I represent it from inside with its own specific properties." Also Archipenko, who is generally, "credited for the first systematic rethinking of the function of space in sculpture. He helped to change the sculptural awareness of space from something totally taken for granted to a prime concern. According to Archipenko, sculpture had been thought of as shape embedded in space. Moreover, space-proper began at the outer limits of an object."

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Archipenko's contribution was to reverse this relationship, surrounding as it were, space with sculpture. This reawakening lead to the concept of perforating the mass with a hole as seen in the sculptures by Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore's reclining figures. My attention is not to put holes in my objects so as to reveal the interior and other side, but to define or delineate space with very little mass. "Form is dependent on matter in space, without space matter would not exist. Without defined matter presented in space, the reality of the sculptural idea cannot exist." My most recent sculpture titled Increments portrays my concept of, defining space using very little mass, better than any of my previous sculptures.

Increments is made of brass cable and steel rods that when assembled create a sequentially ordered delineation of a volumetric shape. This piece is hard to explain construction wise so please refer to plate numbers 4 and 5 for visual information. I believe my concept of delineated space was achieved in this sculpture, with a couple of positive attributes. One attribute being the reflective quality of the brass cable and how it effected the appearance of the piece under

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6 Ibid., p. 150.
different light conditions. The piece was assembled on a north-south axis, thus, during the period of sunrise the east side of the sculpture would be reflective while the west side would appear almost invisible and during sunset the west side would be reflective and the east side almost invisible. The sculptures appearance changed as light conditions changed which was new and interesting to me because this was my first experience with creating a strictly outdoor sculpture. Another attribute that was pleasing to me was the influence a sculpture of this size had on the viewer. The sculpture being 60' long and 5' at it's highest point not only created a large suggested volume but also a barrier. An interesting dicotomy was achieved by the sculpture (barrier) being so physical and present yet looking so much like an illusion. The sculpture created a visually penetrable but not physically penetrable barrier. The viewer was forced to walk around it even though visually it appeared as though he or she might be able to walk through it.

Increments is the largest sculpture I have made to date, and I plan to continue making large scale sculpture in the future. Large scale sculpture is more conducive to my imagery of superstructure or armature constructions because I equate superstructures to large objects such as buildings,
ships, airplanes, and other objects that depend on a arma-
ture to support their cosmetic exteriors. Due to this form
association I get more satisfaction by making a sculpture
that could compare to these objects rather than make small
structures that would appear to be models for a large struc-
ture. Alexander Caldar is an example of this idea. Caldar
made so many sculptures that were 30' and 40' large that his
small 3' and 4' sculptures appeared to be models for his
larger works. I also like the territorial conflict created
between a large sculpture and a viewer. This conflict is
often subtle but evident when a sculpture is as large or
larger than the viewer and occupies the same groundline. Where
as when a sculpture is small and presented on a base the
viewer can more easily dismiss it's presence because the sculp-
ture does not directly intrude on his or her space. The base
separates the sculpture from the viewer by presenting the
sculpture in it's own environment just as a performer on stage
is separated from the audience. What is important is that the
viewer deal with the sculpture in an objective way; seeing it
as material, and mass designed to delineate space and create
a suggested volume, not as a model of a larger version. By
controlling the scale I can leivate this tendency. The changes
my sculptures have gone through in the past year dramatizes,
at least to me, that my sculpture is not absolute, but always evolving with my attitudes and concerns. I know that I set restrictions on my imagery and materials because, for now, I feel comfortable with the restrictions, but a year from now I may not, so I'll change. Any projections in the future development of my sculpture would be speculation and premature at this time. I am still in the process of excavating my ideas and integrity.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Plate 3 LEVIATHON
Plate 5 INCREMENTS (detail)