THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP
TO DIRECT CARVING IN STONE AND CONCRETE

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts

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Basis Of The Problem

This thesis is the result of a profound faith in the creative experience as a vital need of man. This need is so important to support a full life that it becomes one of the three basic qualities which can give dignity to man and raise him above the brute through art, ritual, and symbolization. Today the value of the creative experience has been overshadowed by the mistaken belief that the creative process and the machine process serve one and the same function. There is a further erroneous conviction that the latter can successfully replace the former, whereas in truth, one cannot replace the other but both must co-exist separately. This false concept has resulted partly from the development of the machine, but in a more profound sense from the development of a materialistic society as a result of the machine.

The layman cannot understand why the sculptor toils endlessly carving in stone when the machine process, from his point of view, could be applied with greater efficiency in terms of a final product. His inability
to separate the two processes has blinded him to the
essential value of the creative experience and denied
him the meaningful experience of understanding sculpture
and the other arts. This confusion has not been con-
fined to the layman. We have nearly a century of empty
sculpture bearing mute testimony to the inability of
the sculptors themselves to make this important dis-
tinction and thereby retain some of the living qualities
of their sculpture.

Because of the present state of confusion and mis-
understanding, the verification of this thesis was under-
taken by using the procedure of carving directly in
stone and concrete with the sculptor intent upon under-
standing the significance and the difference of the
creative act as compared to the reproductive process.
By carving directly in stone and concrete I have proved
to myself that the direct approach provides a greater
and more meaningful creative experience. Moreover, the
sculptures produced by the direct experience will possess
living qualities that reflect the value of the human
contribution. To the sculptor, and also to the layman
interested in the value of the arts to everyday living,
this understanding should be of vital concern.
The carving of the sculptures was basic to the writing of this thesis, but the value of any creative experience becomes interwoven with the act of doing, providing the process is under the direct control of the deer. Therefore, the carving was not undertaken as an analysis of the creative act, but as an attempt to produce sculpture of a higher quality through the use of the direct carving approach. A contribution to the understanding of direct carving as related to the creative act through the discussion of the experience undergone by the deer is the intention of this thesis.

Historical Survey

The Industrial Revolution found its way across northern Europe and to all regions of the United States exerting a great influence on all aspects of everyday living. It was the nineteenth century which first witnessed this complete revaluation of human concepts. The shift from a nomadic existence to agrarian pursuits in the Neolithic period offers the only parallel we have in history. This complete reorientation of human thought was like the nineteenth century shift from a preeminently agrarian society to a society based on the machine. We became industrial in the same manner we became agrarian in the Neolithic period. With such a sudden upheaval
of human standards came certain gains and other losses. The previous cultures with their natural and creative approach to the solving of their problems, were twisted and bent to fit the mold of the machine age. The machine actually became more important than the human needs of the people it was intended to serve.

A basic human need, the creative experience, was thought to be replaced by the machine process. The creative artisan could not compete on a practical basis of efficiency with the never ceasing production of the machine and consequently, his function misunderstood, he was, along with the artist, destined to play a minor role in society.

That the over-dominance of the machine was essentially against the grain of man was manifest in the turn to romanticism. Man, when deprived of normal creative experiences, sought expression in the reclamation of the past and compensated for his insecurity by self-assertion.

In the art of sculpture, the essential consideration of this thesis, the impact of the machine process was two-fold. In addition to a loss of creative integrity, the machine process itself was applied to carving in the form of a measuring device called the three point
compass, an apparatus which enabled a skilled workman to transfer modeled forms in clay to a finished copy in stone with amazing accuracy. With its extensive use sculpture became simply a matter of modeling and the finished work did not represent the creative efforts of a sculptor in stone, but the proficient and obedient labor of a workman torturing stone into forms which belong to clay rather than stone. This process made possible a more extensive production of sculpture, but its use and the attitude implied by its use caused the final works to lack the integrity of an original creation. The sculpture became empty and pretentious, along with a noticeable and sometimes complete absence of formal meaning and a loss of respect for the qualities of stone.

In rebellion against this profusion of "sculless" sculpture produced by the pointing machine, a small group of sculptors condemned its use and began carving directly in stone, intent upon recapturing formal expressiveness and the integrity of stone. Excited by the sensitive formal relationships of rediscovered primitive sculpture and folk art these few sculptors, together with the progressive painters, felt that if art was to be revitalized they should re-organize their concepts to emphasize the pure creativeness, the intuitive feeling,
and the formal expressiveness of the direct experience. Thus the turn of the century marked the birth of the taille direct, or direct cutting in sculpture, supported by a turn to expressionism in all the arts.

Today the art of sculpture is divided into three currents. First, there are those sculptors who argue the case of the pointing machine. Second there is the group comprising those who have realized the detrimental effects of the pointing machine and carve their own finished sculpture in stone, but persist in using a clay model as a guide. The remaining sculptors are those who condemn the pointing machine and also realize the limitations of using a clay model and choose to carve directly in stone from the beginning.

The Direct Experience

When carving directly in stone and concrete, which was the process in the case of the sculptures photographed and included as a part of this thesis, the sculptor has the best opportunity to intensify and bring to the highest level of which he is capable, his creative effort which finally determines the value of his final result. Just how the direct experience increases the level of creativity may be revealed by an attempt to
describe the process as it refers specifically to the sculptures included in this thesis.

The Bull was carved over a period of six months from a black Gabbro field stone which by its shape suggested its final form. I began with an idea that carried through the entire work, but the idea was in terms of a quality and was not visual. It remained fluid and subject to change as the work progressed. By this attitude the idea was not simply imposed upon the stone, but the stone was allowed to stimulate the sculptor and make its own contribution to the final result.

Because Gabbro is an extremely hard and resistant stone the actual carving was done with a pneumatic or air driven hammer, using short steel tools called Four Points that slowly wear the stone away instead of cutting. With these tools it is possible to work directly on the forms at right angles to a given plane or surface. This necessitates thinking in terms of sculptural volumes and their relationship to each other. The carving proceeded rather steadily, though subject to vicissitudes and reverses as contrasted to periods of intense excitement, which made for rapid progress. It seems likely that as the work approaches maturity the pitch of the creative experience would increase, but in reality the pitch
rises steadily to a certain point and then falls with the realization that one's highest hopes are never fully realized. Full realization in one's work never surrenders completely to one's efforts.

The *Standing Youth, Man's Image, and Head of a Youth* were done as an effort to use concrete as a carving medium, and thereby raise the process above one of simple casting where there is no creation. Sculpturing directly in concrete is subject to the same considerations as those described in cutting stone, but with added technical complications because of the unique process required for concrete. It is necessary to build rough forms in plasteline or clay that can be cast in concrete. The carving is done after the mold has been removed while the concrete is still wet, necessitating a short and intense carving period as compared to the carving of stone which extends over a long period of time.

I have found the procedure described above most meaningful in terms of human experience because the sculptor is continuously involved from the beginning of the work to the final realization with the experience of creating. The sculpture produced will possess those qualities which have been built into the result through the intense effort of the sculptor.
Comparison of Procedures and Conclusions

The value of direct carving compared to the use of the three point compass, or the procedure of carving from a clay model, ultimately depends upon the value of a reproduction as compared to the original creation from the hands of the sculptor and the relative importance of the material result compared to the human experience that produced it. My attitude toward these relationships in connection with the comparison of procedures and consequent conclusions is a direct result of the experience described in the previous section which was undertaken to support this written thesis.

In the case of the original reproduction relationship, it must be realized that qualities exist in the original, by nature of its being born of the direct creative experience, which are not transferrable by a reproductive process either by a machine or by the hands of the original sculptor. The original sculpture is the visual record of that creative experience undergone by the sculptor in his toil to fix his intangible idea as a concrete reality of formal meaning in the character of that original material. This implies that the material used has a directly determining quality and also that the sculptor attacks the stone attempting to sound out
its sympathetic properties rather than striving for dominance over the stone. Moreover, creation essentially exists in the direct maturation of the plastic form from the intangible idea.

This creative process is not a part of the three point compass technique which is concerned only with the faithful reproduction of a previously created image. There is no creation. Therefore, the final sculpture in this case is not an original creation. In connection with the technique of carving in stone guided by a clay model this concept of creativity has direct implication but is less condemning or contradictory than when applied to the completely reproductive process of the pointing machine. The idea that the greatest content of creativity exists in the direct or initial attempts to give the mental idea a form in space suggests that the real creative capacities were utilized in the creation of the clay model. Consequently, in terms of the original reproduction relationships the clay model is the original. Although, the sculptor remains in control and continues to operate creatively as he proceeds in stone, he is limited considerably by the image previously created and also the fact that the real change is one of medium, with an emphasis upon the final result. Reproductive
elements place the creativeness of the continued experience in stone in jeopardy. This reflects the importance of the other relationship; that of the value of the human experience as opposed to the material result. Although upon first consideration all creative experiences appear to project to the completion of the final material result, the value of that result depends directly upon the intensity of that human experience undergone to produce it.

These views on the original-reproduction and the relationships resulting from the final experience are completely realized and put into operation by the procedure of carving directly in the final medium. The emphasis upon direct carving suggests that the experience undergone is more important than the final result. If the human experience is the primary consideration the final work will possess those desirable qualities.

The direct carving approach ensures that the sculptor is concerned with the original from beginning to end. His preoccupation with the original eliminates completely any reproduction considerations and places full emphasis upon the creative experience. Through direct carving there is a definite separation of the creative experience from the reproductive process.
PLATES
PREGNANT WOMAN

Terra Cotta
WOMAN PRAYING

Marble
HEAD OF A YOUTH

Concrete
MAN'S IMAGE

Concrete
MAN'S IMAGE

Concrete
STANDING YOUTH

Concrete
STANDING YOUTH

Concrete
BULL

Black Gabbro