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Sculpture

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Notwithstanding the fact that sculpture is entrusted with the representation of gods, heroes, heads of state and athlete-heroes, and that works of sculpture occupy prominent spaces in virtually every community, Western philosophical aesthetics has given the art relatively little attention. Few philosophers have discussed it, and such efforts as there have been seem incommensurate with the important roles accorded the art by religion, the state and other arts.

This essay will, in a preliminary way, consider two possible paths to the development of a philosophy of sculpture. The first is that offered by philosophy itself, and the thoughts of philosophers from Lessing to Goodman will be reviewed. The other is that offered by the history and practice of sculpture itself, where problems of philosophical interest arise, as sculpture is seen in its cultural context. My aim, beyond drawing attention to philosophical questions, is to make some broad suggestions as to how to address them.

Sculpture is characterized in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as "the art of representing observed or imagined objects in solid materials and in three dimensions." Representation in this context refers to the interpretive recreation in a medium such as stone of the natural appearance or ideal features of objects, or of ideas in the mind corresponding to these features. Understood in this traditional sense, sculpture is one of the oldest artforms, clearly embracing artifacts found in the caves of prehistoric groups as well as objects produced in all subsequent cultures. At the same time, suggestive evidence of the

power of sculpture is its use, or prohibition, by various religions. While several animistic religions accord sculpture a central role in religious practices, the major monotheistic religions, including Judaism, Islam, and some groupings within Christianity, ban as idolatry the making of sculptures based on the human body or other living creatures.

Philosophical questions
Neglect of sculpture

Why has sculpture been neglected by philosophers? Many reasons might be offered to account for this neglect. It is perhaps not accidental that both sculpture and dance, the two arts most neglected by philosophers, happen to be those most closely linked to the human body. Francis Sparshott's analysis of the reasons for the neglect of dance in aesthetics may provide some insight into the corresponding neglect of sculpture, although not all of the circumstances are parallel. Among the possible reasons given for neglect of dance are its lack of a repertory of stock problems and themes, the lack of a secure place for dance in the systems of the fine arts, and Puritanism with respects to arts based on the body (Sparshott 1988: 3-82).

The situation with sculpture is somewhat different with respect to the first two issues. There are certain themes that appear early and regularly in writings on sculpture: for example sculpture as a representational art, the identification of sculpture with three-dimensional arts and solid materials, its relation to painting and architecture, and public uses of sculpture. Also, sculpture does appear in the most important classifications of the arts (Hegel 1975, Kristeller 1965) but is often in the shadow of architecture and painting. The influence of Puritanism is another matter. One crucial difference is that the actual physical sensuous body which appears centrally in the performance of dance appears only as a representation in sculpture, and is less likely than nude dancing to evoke puritanical concerns over public displays of sexuality. In any event, the puritanical issue in itself would not be sufficient to account for the low profile of sculpture in philosophy, but when coupled with the low priority of the physical body, in comparison with the spiritual soul and the rational mind in classical and modern philosophy, this factor cannot be entirely discounted.

Martin cites three reasons for neglect of sculpture: doubts about the autonomy of sculpture, the vast range and complexity of sculpture

(relief versus in the round, figure versus machine, space versus light and so on), and the influence of perceptual theories that favor visual properties of paintings over the tactile properties of sculpture (Martin 1966: 5-12). It is true that doubts about the autonomy of sculpture may have contributed to its neglect. However, Martin's argument concerning the range and complexity of sculpture is less compelling, for the same argument could be applied to music, painting, and other arts whose developments are scarcely less complex. Similarly the perceptual argument is lacking in force, as it assumes that the primary perceptual issue with the apprehension of sculpture is its tactile dimension. I would contend, however, that sculpture is both visual art and tactile art, and that sculpture is experienced primarily though the visual sense, as are the other visual arts. This is not to say that there are no important differences in the way we perceive sculpture with three-dimensional and kinetic properties as opposed to paintings consisting of figures and color markings on a plane. Rather, it is only to argue that visual perception is the main access to sculpture, except in the unusual cases where touch is permitted or when it is required for the visually impaired.

Perhaps the strongest explanation for the neglect of sculpture in recent times is the claim that sculpture is not regarded as a stable concept with fixed boundaries. The variety of forms and materials found in sculpture, especially in the twentieth century, and the openness of sculpture to interaction with other arts, support this claim. But although these factors might contribute to the neglect of sculpture in the second half of the twentieth century, they do not fully account for philosophy's neglect of sculpture. Moreover this argument over the instability of the concept of sculpture suggests an opportunity for analytic philosophical work on the concept sculpture, rather than a reason for its continued neglect.

Finally, it may be that an artform so accessible in public spaces and everyday life does not initially appear to warrant extensive analysis by philosophers. In most urban environments, as well as in smaller cities and towns, people regularly encounter sculptures. In many instances the sculptures are associated not with the fine arts but with utilitarian purposes in civic and religious life. Similarly, souvenir replicas of sculptures, which are common in everyday experience, are not typically considered fine art, and certain everyday manufactured objects appear not to differ from machine-inspired and minimalist

sculptures. All of these considerations direct attention away from sculpture as a fine art, and may thus contribute to the neglect of sculpture by philosophers. In any event, the neglect of sculpture warrants further reflection.

Definition of sculpture

The definition used here refers to the general properties of sculpture that enable one to identify, classify and establish sculpture as different and separate from natural objects, craft items, and the products of other conceptual enterprises, such as science. Our initial definition of sculpture (as the art of representing observed or imagined objects in solid materials and in three dimensions) already represents a condensed definition. At once it gives an account of sculptures as a particular type of object and distinguishes sculpture from non-art objects. For example, as an art, sculpture represents a practice in which the treatment of materials differs from their use in non-art contexts. In sculpture, natural or fabricated materials are acted upon by an artist who physically or conceptually alters them, producing aesthetic or conceptual changes that are reflected in our experiences and uses of them. This transformation of the raw material into a particular type of cultural object endows it with symbolic meaning and locates it in the art world, where a network of practices and institutions exists to make and interpret the work and make it available to a wider public. The meaning of sculpture thus derives from its being altered by an art practice with a history and context of interpretation, within which individuals may engage the work for purposes of enjoyment and understanding as well as for its utility. This is what distinguishes sculpture from non-art. Apart from its connection to an art practice, none of the other features of the definition apply uniquely to sculpture. For instance, mirror images are representational without being art works and, similarly, tree trunks are composed of solid materials and are also three-dimensional objects but are not considered sculptures.

The next stage in the theory of sculpture is to classify it in relation to the other fine arts. Again, the features named in our initial definition tell us some things about the common features sculpture shares with other arts as well as their relative differences. As a representational art, at least in important stages of its development,

sculpture is in the company of painting, print making, poetry and, to a lesser degree, music and dance which are sometimes representational. However, none of these other arts are at once representational, in solid materials, and three dimensional, or at least not in the same way as sculpture. And they may differ in their means of representation, as we shall see. Hence our initial definition provides a useful beginning with respect to a theory of sculpture. This initial definition will require modification as the purposes of sculpture change and as the medium expands to include kinetic and light sculptures and to fabrication techniques that go beyond casting and carving.

Early writers

In order to pursue the discussion of a theory of sculpture in relation to the other arts, it will be necessary to survey briefly the efforts of philosophers to address this subject. Few philosophers have set out directly, to provide a theory, but their fragmentary discussions of sculpture do point in this direction. According to Kristeller, sculpture was first recognized in the eighteenth century (from the perspective of Western aesthetics) as one of the five major arts that most writers and thinkers, as well as other knowledgeable members of the general public, agreed constituted the "irreducible nucleus of the modern system of the arts" (Kristeller 1965: 165-227).

Among the nineteenth-century philosophers to consider sculpture were Gotthold Lessing, G. W. F. Hegel and Arthur Schopenhauer. Their main concerns were the delineation of sculpture's own characteristics and functions and the comparison of sculpture to the other arts, especially to architecture and painting. Thus, the eighteenth-century writer Lessing in his *Laocoön* (1957) asserted that the essence of sculpture is its concern with static bodies comprising an inert mass in space. It follows that sculpture consists of a free-standing mass surrounded by or placed in space. According to Lessing, sculpture can be identified as spatial art distinct from such temporal arts as poetry and drama, which represent action and passion. However, this does not mean that time is irrelevant to sculpture, for minimally time applies, in the sense that time was invested by the sculptor in making the work, and in the fact that it endures through time. Rather, Lessing's view is that time is not essential to sculpture, and that sculpture is not capable of representing the duration of actions, but only a single frozen moment.

Hegel, writing in the first half of the nineteenth century, also included sculpture in his classification of the major arts (Hegel 1975: II, 701-91). For Hegel, sculpture, like painting, music, and poetry, had as its function the expression of spirit or mind. In particular, Hegel found in sculpture the ideal medium for what he described as the classical stage, one of the three (symbolic, classical, romantic) metaphysical and historical stages that he discerned in the unfolding of art in all cultures. For Hegel, the classical stage of art is marked by a harmonious fusion of idea and material, and he found sculpture especially suited to expressing the form of the human figure. However, he found sculpture less able than painting, music, and poetry to express the subtle particularities of thought and feeling that give meaning to art. Sculpture is thus placed near the bottom of Hegel's hierarchical classification of the fine arts, just above architecture, but below painting, music, and poetry.

Schopenhauer (1977: III, 193-9) views Greek sculpture as the norm for representing the human form. He identifies beauty and grace as its main features, in contrast to the art of painting where expression, passion, and character are the chief concerns. Exposure to nude forms provides the artist experience necessary to objectify ideal form in sculpture. Perfect beauty and grace demanded of sculpture are a product of an a priori notion of beauty that exists latent in the mind and is activated through the artist's perception and judgment of the details of actual nude bodies. Schopenhauer identifies sculpture with the affirmation of the will to live, whereas he views painting as its negation. The result is that ugly faces and emaciated bodies are deemed suitable subjects for paintings, but not for sculpture, where beauty is demanded.

Lessing, Hegel, and Schopenhauer each contributed to our understanding of sculpture and its place in aesthetics. Lessing drew attention to space as a key element in understanding sculpture. The main difficulty with Lessing's view is that it excludes mobiles and other forms of kinetic sculpture. Hegel found in the human body the highest form provided by nature as well as the *natural* form most suited to the expression of inner thoughts and feelings. He thus helped to explain why the human body was a primary subject for sculpture. His views offer a link between the prominence of the body in classical Greek sculpture and in the work of Auguste Rodin. By shifting the emphasis from representation, or imitation of nature, to expression of inner

states, Hegel prepared the way for Rodin's revolutionary approach to the human figure. Schopenhauer drew attention to certain aesthetic properties of sculpture (beauty and grace). His attempt to impose seemingly arbitrary differences between the subject matters appropriate to sculpture and painting respectively, however, would lead to needless downgrading of sculpture as a medium suitable for depicting the ugly sides of life.

Twentieth-century writers

Except for the occasional mention, mostly in discussions focusing on painting or architecture, sculpture has received little attention from philosophers in the twentieth century (Dewey 1987: 232-4, Greene 1940: 82-96, Read 1956, Weiss 1961: 85-91, Martin 1966, Goodman 1967: 19, 20, 120). Two of these writers, Dewey and Goodman, suggest possible questions for developing a philosophy of sculpture today.

Dewey

Dewey does not treat sculpture as a separate subject; however, it is possible to sketch a partial view of a philosophy of sculpture by drawing upon isolated passages from *Art As Experience* (1987). It is important to note that Dewey departs from the view of Lessing, Hegel and Schopenhauer that ancient Greek sculpture is the sole or primary model for the aesthetics of sculpture. The use of flattened or rounded planes in Greek sculpture as a means of expressing the human figure, admirable in itself, may obscure the perception of the best in Egyptian sculpture, which is based on the relation of larger masses, or of African sculpture with its sharp angularities, or of modern sculpture, which is based upon rhythms of light generated from continually broken surfaces (Dewey 1987: 170). Reliance on one model, he says, tends to create insensitivity to the broad range of possible forms and rhythms found in other types of sculpture. Dewey's important observation is especially welcome in an era of increasing sensitivity to cultural differences in artistic expression.

Dewey's main contributions to the theory of sculpture are to question the past efforts to define the arts as separate classes, and to replace the idea of representation with that of expression. He cautions us that any hard and fast definition aimed at rigid classification runs counter to historical developments, insofar as sculpture was for a part

of its history an organic component of architecture. Thus he argues that the division of the arts as either space or time arts ignores the fact that space and time affect each other reciprocally in the experience of art. If sculpture were characterized merely as an art of space, this would, Dewey argues, deny to sculpture rhythm, which he regards as a fundamental element in aesthetic experience.

For Dewey, a sculpture is not complete until it is perceived as an aesthetic object into which temporal as well as spatial properties enter. This does not provide a basis for classifying sculpture in relation to the other arts. Yet Dewey recognized that sculptors, like artists in all fields, have tended to develop their medium so as to differentiate it from others, resulting in the production of free standing sculptures (Dewey 1987: 222). He agrees that each medium has its own efficacy and value. Nevertheless Dewey argues that, instead of forming discrete entities, art media, including sculpture, represent a continuum that allows us to distinguish one from another without saying precisely where one begins and the other ends. As one way to understand the differences, Dewey divided media loosely into a spectrum of automatic arts and shaping arts. Automatic arts, such as dancing and singing, rely directly and to a greater extent on the human body-mind and are associated with spontaneity. Shaping arts also rely on bodily movements, but these are used in sculpture to manipulate instruments of technology necessary to express imaginative and emotional values through external materials. The shaping arts must also absorb the life-giving energies of the automatic in the process. These broad categories allow for intermediate forms such as relief sculptures, and for transitions and mutual influences, such as architecture and sculpture. Thus Dewey avoids both a compartmentalization of the arts and running the arts all together.

Dewey's comparison of sculpture and architecture concentrates on the expressive and social values of each. He doubts that sculpture apart from architecture will achieve great aesthetic heights, despite the tendency of sculpture in the modern age to develop independently. Both rely on unity of expressiveness and purpose to achieve complementary aims. Yet he assigns to each a characteristic effect. Architecture draws upon a wide range of materials from nearly natural ones such as bricks and steel to entirely man-made materials, and expresses most completely the stability and endurance of existence. Sculpture's effect is grounded in the memorial. Whereas "buildings

enter into and shape life directly, sculpture specializes in reminding us of heroism, devotion, and achievements of the past" (Dewey 1987: 232). Architecture, he says, draws its meanings from the collective human life, while "sculpture expresses life in its individualized forms" (ibid.: 233).

Dewey replaces representation with expression as the preferred mode of characterizing sculpture. He finds representation tied to fixed and unchanging ideal forms harking back to Plato and Aristotle unsuitable to deal with the novelty and individualized forms of sculpture in modern times. For Dewey sculpture is expressive when the material is employed in a process that fuses inner experience with objective conditions, giving both a form that they did not previously possess. He does not deny that some sculptures are able to function as representations, but argues rather that expression more adequately characterizes the process and experience involved in making and interpreting sculptures. Moreover, by dislodging the ancient Greek ideal of representational sculpture and extending it to include expressive Egyptian, African and modern sculpture, Dewey must expand sculpture's aesthetic base from representation to expression.

Goodman

In his *Languages of Art* (1967) Goodman proposes a fresh approach to the classification of the art media, based in part on his analysis of the arts as representational and expressive symbol systems and his distinction between autographic and allographic arts. Applying his critique of the copy theory of pictorial representation to sculpture, Goodman argues that the sculptor undertakes a subtle translation of the subject based on its orientation, distance, and lighting as well as the artist's knowledge, training, habits and concerns. The result is not duplication or realism (Goodman 1967: 19-20).

Representation is a matter of classifying or characterizing objects rather than creating an illusion. It is a creative process of inventing symbols rather than copying. Viewed in this light, sculptural representation depends upon the application of labels according to the symbol system in which the sculpture is being interpreted. As analyzed by Goodman, representation and expression are not necessarily incompatible; rather they are simply different, possibly complementary types of symbolism. If the principal feature of a representation is to denote what it refers to by moving from the symbol to its referent, the

main requirement of expression is literally or metaphorically to possess the features it symbolizes. Hence, a sculpture of Napoleon may refer to Napoleon or to any number of things, depending on the symbol system. On the other hand, a sculpture can only express a feeling when the feeling is an actual or metaphorical property of the symbol, as the attitude of arrogant, self-confidence is expressed in Rodin's bronze *Study for Balzac Monument* (1893). If it is metaphorical, the feeling is transferred from an exterior source. Hence one advantage of Goodman's characterization of representation and expression in sculpture is that it embraces a greater diversity of sculpture, including works from virtually all cultures and styles, figurative or abstract.

Thus far, Goodman's theory of symbols, properly fleshed out, would identify sculpture as a type of symbolism within the arts. It might also aid in differentiating sculpture from architecture or painting, by inviting a close scrutiny of the types of symbolic properties and relationships that occur in representative works proposed for inclusion in the respective media. Goodman's distinction between autographic and allographic arts offers additional clarification. An art medium is autographic "if and only if the distinction between original and forgery is significant" (Goodman 1976: 113), or when its symbol system lacks a notational system. Conversely, an art medium is allographic when the difference between originals and forgeries does not matter, or when the artform allows for a notational system. None of the properties of autographic works can be dismissed as contingent or insignificant; thus, variations in an autographic work would result in significant differences in the experience of a knowledgeable viewer.

Seen in this light, sculpture both carved and cast is deemed autographic, along with paintings and artists' prints. With cast sculptures, multiples from the same mold, when created under conditions specified by the artist, are accepted as originals capable of being forged. Multiple casts from the same mold, similarly to multiples in a set of prints from the same plate, are thus multi-stage arts where the multiple copies are all deemed original works. Thus Goodman argues that variations in an autographic work would result in significant differences in the experience of a knowledgeable viewer, placing sculpture and painting in the same category as the autographic arts.

The relation between sculpture and architecture is more complex, however, as architecture is assigned to the allographic arts

because buildings conform to the architect's plans and specifications much as a musical performance complies to a score. According to Goodman, the distinction between sculpture and architecture is that sculpture belongs to the autographic arts, whereas architecture is an allographic art.

A further implication of Goodman's views for the ontology of sculpture is that the identity of a sculpture consists of its symbolic properties. Goodman would likely acknowledge that symbols have physical as well as conceptual dimensions, and he does not deny the physical properties of sculpture. Nevertheless, his view of sculpture represents a major shift from those who would define the essence of sculpture as three-dimensional solid materials whose main features are physical mass, volume, or light.

Sculpture as an independent art

This brief analysis of philosophers' views on sculpture allows for some tentative conclusions concerning the autonomy of sculpture as an art in its own right, independent of its connections to architecture and painting. By locating sculpture in the eighteenth-century classification of the five major arts, Kristeller advanced the case for its independence. The fact that architecture does not appear in the list would raise doubts about any thoughts of sculpture's being dependent for its identity on architecture. Hegel is ambivalent on this point. He also lists sculpture as one of the major fine arts in his classification system, and locates sculpture above architecture in his hierarchical classification of the arts. However, he also states that sculpture can never actually exist apart from architecture. Perhaps he has in mind the model of classical Greek sculpture, where statues functioned primarily in the contexts provided by temples or other public buildings and theaters. It may be simply that Hegel's remarks here apply to placement within architectural environments, but not to sculpture's standing as an independent art. Hence, Hegel's remarks on the subordination of sculpture to architecture cannot be taken literally. Dewey's doubts about the future of sculpture apart from architecture appear to be unfounded given the continued vitality of free sculpture that continues to be produced. His arguments point to the possibilities of collaboration between sculpture and architecture rather than to the denial of successful independent sculpture.

With respect to painting, there is hardly a question of sculpture's being subsumed under painting. The focus is mainly on features that distinguish sculpture and painting and the question of rank in the respective systems of the arts, where painting is generally ranked above sculpture by Hegel and others. Key differences are two-dimensional plane surfaces of paintings versus three-dimensional aspects of sculpture, the greater capacity of painting to represent actions, and differences in materials and in compositional elements (for example line, color, and shape in painting versus mass, volume, and light in sculpture).

The arguments for sculpture as an independent art begin with the fact that the sculpture is nearly always made by an artist working in a different artistic practice from the architect's practice. Goodman's classification of sculpture as an autographic art and architecture as allographic helps to make clear the independence of sculpture by highlighting significant differences between the two. One interesting point to note is that the status of sculpture has never been called into question by advances in technology, or by the invention of new media such as photography, which led many to pronounce the death of painting. Sculpture is an independent artform even while it has frequently functioned in collaboration with these other artforms.

Sculpture as a public art

One of sculpture's most important characteristics is its public nature. It is not necessary to argue in support of this point that all sculpture is public, as there are at least some clear-cut instances, such as personal portraits, that qualify as belonging to the private sphere. However, it may well be true that, more so than other artforms, with the exception of architecture, sculpture exists as a type of public art in the public sphere. Sculpture, however, differs from architecture in its public function, as it is not intended to provide shelter or to compartmentalize space for functional needs, as does architecture. Unlike music, poetry, theater or painting, where the audience has a choice to turn off the source, public sculpture persists in a fixed and determined space that does not permit its audience a choice of whether or not to experience it when visiting the space. For instance, when attached to the architecture of public buildings or located in major plazas or parts, sculpture is accessible to all people using the environment.

The concept of public space implies a public sphere. Both notions are in need of clarification. One problem with the terms 'public' and 'public sphere' is that they have a history of considerable fluidity and diversity in meaning, depending on political and local settings. For instance, the public sphere in a monarchy might refer to property ownership and control of the reigning monarch, whereas in a democracy ownership and access reside in the hands of the people, or a representative government acting on their behalf. Within such entities there exist different segments of society characterized variously as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or the ruling class and the working class, each with differing interests and some shared interests. Add to these broad categories the media, interest groups, political parties, government bureaucracies and the legal system, all of which help define the public sphere. Moreover, differing and perhaps competing interests in the public sphere can lead to very different requirements for public sculpture. One only had to visit Moscow or Saint Petersburg and view the massive piles of discarded sculptures of former party heroes just after the Communist government was toppled to appreciate this point. From the list of various interests that might comprise or influence the public sphere, it can be anticipated that public art from time to time will be called upon to serve various publics which comprise the public sphere.

Given these complexities, how might a philosopher begin to address the issue of public sculpture? The first task might be to investigate the distinction between public and private spheres as this distinction applies to sculpture. Ultimately, it may turn out that whatever is private is dependent on the public sphere and vice versa; however, it is useful for our purposes to assume that these notions indicate some important differences. In general, 'private' refers to the sphere of individuals and families, whereas 'public' refers to the sphere in which all stakeholders in a community have an interest and are entitled to some say, either directly or by proxy. Hence commissioning a portrait for the enjoyment of one's self and family or friends does not as such count as public art. A decision of the United States Congress or an agency of the government to commission a sculpture to honor the soldiers lost in the Vietnam War would result in a case of public sculpture.

The next consideration is to look at the particular role of the artist in public sculpture. First, the sculptor who is charged with

making a public sculpture is acting in the name of the community. One important role of public sculpture has been to create images that mythologize history. Operating in a utopian mode, public sculpture might aim at fostering unity among people by idealizing the sentiments of the community or focusing on areas of common agreement. In the past, heroic sculptures featuring beloved national figures were used to instill feelings of patriotism and national unity. However, in an age of anti-heroism a different approach is called for. One of the most successful anti-heroic sculptures is the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial designed by Maya Linn and located on the mall in Washington, D. C. Here it was necessary to address conflicting sentiments including the feelings of unappreciated soldiers and the public's divided views over an unpopular war. Despite an initial public outcry, the Memorial has become an embracing symbol of "national mourning and reconciliation" as well as a "critical parody, reversing the usual role of war monuments" (Mitchell 1992: 3). It has managed to satisfy the needs of many diverse groups, resulting in a stream of visitors who often participate in the memorial by leaving gifts honoring the soldiers named on the wall.

As the contemporary mood has changed, there is increasing interest in the critical function of public sculpture. Public sculpture is a type of symbolic intervention and it often confronts history, politics and society, forcing a reexamination of painful moments in history. In 1988, Hans Haacke contributed the work, *Und ihr haht gesiegt (And You Were Victorious After All),* to an exhibition initiated by the citizens of Graz, Austria. The exhibition was intended to challenge artists to "confront history, politics and society" and to remind the citizens of Nazi atrocities fifty years earlier. Haacke's sculpture re-created the Nazi draping of the *Column of the Virgin Mary,* located in Graz, and carried the inscription, "And You were Victorious After All." Haacke's commissioned work was destroyed by a Neo-Nazi fire bomber shortly after it was installed. The sculptor's work generated an extreme reaction, suggesting that it evoked powerful and unresolved feelings carried forth from the Nazi era concerning which there was no consensus (Causey 1998: 219).

Such incidents raise broader questions concerning the sculptor's role in creating public sculpture. The artist may be placed in a unique and problematic role in creating public sculpture. Should the artist simply absorb and represent the views of the community through non-

controversial images? Or is the role of the sculptor to assume the position of social critic and proceed accordingly? Forcing the sculptor to become a spokesperson or a commentator for the community on significant and sensitive aesthetic, political and social issues has become increasingly problematic in culturally diverse, ideologically driven, advanced technological societies. This is notably the case in an environment where substantial doubt exists whether artists have the necessary knowledge or wisdom to dispense truth, and where interpretations of history shift rapidly with changes in ideology. From the artist's perspective there is the risk of becoming an instrument of propaganda for the state or one of the many interest groups comprising the community.

This calls for a rethinking of the processes guiding the creation of public sculpture to allow greater community participation. It suggests that public sculpture is not about artists working in isolation to make beautiful sculpture according to a personal aesthetic, or about artists and the state collaborating to impose certain aesthetic or political views on the people. Richard Serra's *Titled Arc* (1981), created for the Federal Plaza in New York, was a failed attempt to impose an aesthetic statement in conflict with aesthetic interests of the community (Weyersgraf-Serra and Buskirk 1988). After a lengthy court battle, the twelve-foot steel wall was removed in 1989. The artist's arguments that the site-specific sculpture was a critical work in his career and that it gave shape to the featureless space of the plaza did not prevail over citizens' objections to its intrusiveness. Ironically, despite its removal, the public debate surrounding the *Titled Arc* incident heightened public involvement in the process of creating public sculpture in significant ways. It initiated thoughtful and passionate dialogue involving artists, representatives of the government, the legal system and the public, and forced them to confront how public sculpture can accommodate the competing interests of the artist, the community and the state.

One approach intended to address the need for community participation in public sculpture is Joseph Beuys's social sculpture. A major shift in thinking about public sculpture was required when Beuys advanced his concept of social sculpture with *7000 Oaks* at Documenta in Kassel, Germany in 1982. The work began with "seven thousand large basalt stones arranged in a triangular pile pointing to a single oak tree" (North 1992: 11). Beuys then called for individuals or

organizations to purchase the stones, replacing each stone with a person, to enable planting of seven thousand trees in Kassel. This process resulted in extending the sculptural object into a process action, or perhaps in replacing the sculptural object by the audience. The radical shift toward community involvement in Beuys's work and that of other late twentieth-century sculptors transfers the focus of public sculpture from the objects generated and the inner resources of the sculptor's mind to the audience's experience and actions. The audience through its experience and participation in effect *becomes* the sculpture.

There is one more question that might interest philosophers today: what is the relation of public sculpture to mass art? Public sculpture has some features of mass art as defined by Noël Carroll (1998): it is produced for, and consumed by, many people and brings aesthetic experience to a mass audience; it is class indifferent; is readily accessible with minimum effort to large numbers of people. Moreover, public sculpture, in its most successful forms at least, shares with mass art a distrust of the avant-garde. Historically, public sculpture encounters problems with its audience when it veers toward the avant-garde. This depends on the context and may not be so in every case, as the Beuys work would indicate. Public sculpture differs from other types of mass art such as movies, television, and rock and roll music which exist as multiple instances deriving from mass technologies of production and distribution (Carroll 1998: 185-211). I conclude that public sculpture shares with mass art important features, but it fails to satisfy Carroll's requirements of being a multiple instance or type art work produced and distributed by a mass technology.

What, then, has become of our initial definition of sculpture as the art of representing observed or imagined objects in solid material and in three dimensions? It would appear that the definition remains useful for traditional sculpture through most of history. However, it is necessary to modify the definition to include recent developments where expression supersedes representation, and new concepts and materials emerge. Social sculpture requires a new look at representation. For instance, is there a sense in which social sculpture can be representational? It does not resemble or copy, but it can refer to ideas in a broad sense. Social sculpture does not preclude the use of solid materials, but the main focus has shifted from these materials to

social and political actions. To the extent that social action is three-dimensional, this feature still applies to contemporary practices in sculpture, but three-dimensional art now embraces actions in social space as well as physical space. The temporal dimension is of particular significance in public sculpture, as it can involve history as well as thought and actions in real time. Philosophers may wish to ponder the implications of these changes for the theory of sculpture.

See also Pragmatism, Pictorial representation, Art and emotion, Architecture, Painting, High versus low art.

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Further reading

Hughs, A. and Ranfft, E. (eds) (1997) *Sculpture and its Reproductions,* New York: Reaktion. (An analysis of problems of reproduction in sculpture from classical to contemporary times.)

Krauss, R. (1977) *Passages in Modern Sculpture,* New York: Viking. (An analysis of critical and philosophical issues in modern sculpture.)

Noguchi, I. (1994) *Noguchi: Essays and Conversations,* New York: Abrams. (Artist's reflections on the meaning of sculpture, sculpture gardens and sculpture in theater.)