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Author(s): Seymour Lipton

Source: *College Art Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Autumn, 1949), pp. 52-54

Published by: [College Art Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/773089>

Accessed: 26/10/2011 18:15

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## EXPERIENCE AND SCULPTURAL FORM

*By Seymour Lipton*

I FEEL my work grows from the web of my entire experience. The traditions of art concern me, the formal aspects of the visual world; man as an individual and social being, the dynamics of historical flow, the anatomy of the body and of the mind. They concern me in their tensional interplay with the problems of sculpture. For me, reality is a moving tensional order of things, and art is the spiritual plastic embodiment of this reality. It is this that the artist must seek to personalize through plastic means if he wishes to express the dramatic or lyric excitement of the world.

For me, a bronze urn of ancient China is impressive not only because its form is a pure song, but also because this song is carried a few thousand years from people who lived, loved and were sad. In addition to its geometrical directness of form, the wooden African fetish stands hidden in the dark recesses of a hut of individual fear and social ritual. There is a quintessence of form in these objects. They may be and are enjoyed in isolated purity, but they are also in substantial tension with their human origins. I like to believe my work flows from the play and counterplay of all such wanderings of thought and feeling. My own concern has been to develop a sculptural world infused with an energy and intensity of experience around such elements in the world of today.

For those interested in the development of energy in art and more particularly in sculpture, the subject of tensions will have an appeal. On a biological level we find that life in general is an aggregate of tensions. It is generally true that in any drive, one side engenders attention to its polar opposite. There are all kinds of such polar limits in the life of man,—strife and peace, good and evil—as well as such esthetic limits as form and content, romanticism and classicism. These are some of the many ambivalences bringing about the pulls that are possible in the lives of men and works of art.

The drive I have felt these past few years is toward an organization of many such varied polar opposites. I have looked for an interplay of tensions: of lines, planes, forms, spaces and suggested meanings to develop energy, and to evoke the mystery of reality. To attain impact, all this must grow as a materialization in the physical medium out of concretely felt, thought about, and sharply observed aspects of reality.

Of course explanations of the how and why of an artist's work are frequently too pat. Often they are rationalizations to cover obscure motives

and origins. This is especially true about the creative researches around the problems of materials and forms where chance is a frequent factor, but I like to believe I am aware of certain broad directions in my work.

On an instinctive level, I explore new worlds of three-dimensional form, making drawings and small plasticene models preparatory to finished work. This is a withdrawal into a subjective, imaginative and almost automatic world of formal invention and discovery. It is a reaching for formal equivalents to the substance of experience. It is also a realm of free play of forms for the sake of form. It is not an anarchic world, however, because it is guided somewhat unconsciously by the compass of previous experience.

In all my outward reachings, the concern is for the tensions of man's world along biological and social levels. This somewhat involved story of a sculptor's diary is a sort of coalescence of the dream and substance of life. The nexus, the bridge between the realm of pure form and the realm of man and ideas, is never broken. The interplay between the many ironies, hopes, and failures provides the creative pressure toward an active equilibrium of forces.

The drive is toward finding sculptural structures that stem from the deep animal make-up of man's being, and when finished have their own reason of being. A sculpture must have the distance and dignity it is entitled to as an object in nature, but for me it must also have a closeness to the spirit of man. Out of the growth of my previous experience, I have found the paleolithic, the ancient bones of man, and the modern bones of man and animal, the beaks of birds, swords and prows of ships, the battlements of feudal warriors. These and other concrete realities have been worked together in varied ways with a feeling for discovery of new forms and yet with a respectful eye on the traditions of the past in sculpture. Whatever forms develop, the feeling is toward exploiting the uniqueness of sculpture as a medium, although the overtones of other media are felt as allied moods.

New structures grow out of horns, cranial and pelvic cavities, and musical instruments, not obviously but as suggested formal evocations. These interpenetrate and develop into three-dimensional conceptions. I have an emotional predilection for sharp, jutting, discontinuous lines, forms and masses, and I feel a demonic character in such forms apart from any symbolic meaning. I look to these forms to charge a mood congruent with the complex world today for I believe they have a sanctity of experience with their own emotional impact. Still for me, this is not enough. Symbolism is necessary to intensify the mood, generally along indirect, implied lines. Forms and mean-

ings emerge as sculptural existences whether the conception be dramatic or lyric.

The external anatomy of the human figure which has been the special province of sculptors in the past has inherent limitations of expression which sculptors have willingly accepted. Although a mass audience will develop only slowly for the newer conceptions of this medium in the twentieth century, I have faith in the soundness guiding the contemporary approach to sculpture. It has a new vantage point, a new perspective of the same world of man. This is true whether the sculpture comes up with a lyric purity of forms telling man's story of a serene peace or whether it comes up with a dramatic surge of power. I believe people will come to understand the fresher adventures in this art as well as continue to appreciate the significant works of the human figure such as in the Archaic Greek, the Romanesque, and the African. These two broad approaches to sculpture are not in conflict, but genuinely compatible views of the world. I dare to believe that the newer sculptural realms offer a more varied field for achievement, for the sculptor is beginning to catch up with the painter who has always enjoyed a wider scope of imagery and expression.

## THE FUNCTION OF THE DEALER

*By Edith G. Halpert*

**W**HAT is the function of the dealer? In a mercantile sense, a dealer is someone in trade who exchanges merchandise at a profit to himself. If alert, he studies the market, buys cheap and sells high, with no sentimental consideration for the sources or public involved, and no consciousness of social responsibilities. This pattern is consistent in all businesses, except art.

Is art a business? If you are speaking of the art department of Gimble's, it is. If you deal in old masters or highly publicized Europeans, it is. If you traffic in fakes, or follow the trends of public awareness, or speculate stock market-wise, art is a business. But if you are a dealer in contemporary American art, I wonder. We do not buy cheap and sell high. We do not buy at all, and find it extremely hard to sell. We have the name but not the gain. And what a name! Thomas Craven called us racketeers. For years we were accused of exploiting the artists, fleecing the buyer, confusing the public. Only in recent years have the artists and public learned to make distinctions, to separate the good from the bad. For in art, unlike the mercantile field, there is no fixed pattern.