

Glass and Sculpture

I remember that over 30 years ago at the end of my teens I saw a piece of sculpture by Donald Judd in a museum in Tokyo. It was so beautiful I didn't know why, that I remembered his name.

In Japan, people had not had any words corresponding to the European word ((sculpture)) till the Meiji era(1867-1912). I think there had not been any concepts like ((volume)) nor ((mass)) either. As ((volume)) and ((mass)) in Europe are concepts that belong to the culture of stone, in Japan outside of this culture, people could make statues of Buddha and ornaments without being conscious of such things. Most important things for Japanese were materials and the techniques to use them. The idea or notion of these have penetrated our bodies, and have influenced art works and industrial productions in Japan till now. I like and often see ancient ceramic works made in China, Korea and Japan. The charm of ceramic works consists of materials, textures and form related with one another, textures made by time (nature) being complexly intertwined with them too. Of course decoration and use are also important. Ceramic work is a microcosm in which various elements are integrated. Ceramics in Japan and China may be akin to books in the European culture.

I have seen sculptures, being much fascinated by their materials, textures and techniques. In face of an original archaic sculpture, I am attracted by its very soft and almost translucent surface. The surface of archaic stone sculpture is different from that of Roman. It is because they used different tools then. Archaic sculptures were carved with bronze chisels. Bronze chisels were less hard than iron chisels, so that they should be put at right angles to the surface of the stone and left microscopic cracks all over the surface. These cracks remained inside even after the surface was smoothed with abrasives. These microscopic cracks bring forth beautiful texture, which becomes related with forms.

Sculpture by Brancusi is said to be one of the origins of abstract sculpture, and is explained as such. But considering its form seeing luster on its surface (texture), the significance of the surface (texture) comes to be questioned anew. He polished his works by himself, and never painted them with anticorrosive.

The type of luster is important for his sculpture. So the pieces of bronze cast and polished after his death are completely different from his works of his own casting and polishing in life. As is well known to those who have some experience in polishing, materials vary with the conditions of polishing.

If we consider sculpture classic as that consisting of ((movements)), ((mass)) and ((volume)) integrated in its form, contemporary sculpture that started with Brancusi set them apart one another in itself. In consequence, ((significances of materials, textures and techniques)), which were not treated so important before, get reevaluated. And also the disintegration into elements makes us notice the relation between them.

Considering the ((movements)) of opaque objects, form associates with surface. In the bark of a tree, people read its growth (movements), and even imagine its potentiality to grow up. The ((movements)) read in the form and the ((potentiality of movements)) in the material get together to bring forth the ((movements in depth)). So transparency implies deprivation of the creativity from the viewer and the material.

Brancusi took away movements from the sculpture in his ((Beginning of The World)) (1920. Marble). In consequence its form visualize the ((potentiality of movements)) in the material. ((Direct cutting in the chosen material is the true road to sculpture)) said Brancusi. What is the sculpture he-speak? ((The Muse)) (1912. Marble) does not make up such united visible movements as sculpture classic has. It consists of four separate masses, each of which has ((movements)) and ((potentiality of movements)). The disposition of masses is so exquisite that the relation between them varies constantly with the visual angles. Considering its whole form as a piece of canvas, on this canvas the relation between movements, masses and volumes can be seen visualized.

Movements may be more important for glass than we think. For me, movements are of two types: actual vertical or horizontal movements, and visual depth. Movements can be divided roughly in two sorts s of mode, each of which have its rise from gravity. They are very much corporeal things and are related closely to textures (including tactility).

Though being transparent, can glass turn into material for sculpture by means of ((movements)) and ((textures))? What forms result from that?

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