

DEVELOPMENT OF A PERSONAL EXPRESSION
IN SCULPTURAL FORM

by

JAMES EDWARD HAGAN

B. S., Kansas State University, 1950

B. A., Kansas State University, 1966

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Art

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1968

Approved by:


Major Professor

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Grateful acknowledgment is extended to Professor John Vogt for his assistance by thoughtful criticism during construction of those works presented, and his help on the development of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

The courses taken by the writer for partial qualification for the Master of Arts degree in art with a major emphasis on sculpture are as follows:

Studio Courses

Sculpture III	12 hours
Advance Sculpture Composition	<u>12 hours</u>
Total studio credit hours	24

Art History Courses

Renaissance Art History	3 hours
Twentieth Century Art History	<u>3 hours</u>
Total history credit hours	6

Research

Research in Art	2 hours
Total research credit hours	<u>2</u>
Total credit hours	32

Twenty-four hours were credited for studio work creating pieces of sculpture. Six hours were credited for class room work studying art forms from the past and the present. Two hours were credited for the writing of this paper.

A Master's Report rather than a thesis, was selected as the most appropriate form for presentation of the studio work completed. The writer believes that the major emphasis for the acquisition of a Master's Degree in studio art should be on the work which is created in the studio. This work is supported by the knowledge acquired in the classroom. Of minor emphasis is the thesis or paper written after these art works are completed.

The justification or validation as art, of those works which are presented is not the function of the artist; rather, such efforts are in the realm of the critic, the philosopher, the psychologist, and the art historian. The work itself is the thesis!

As a result of this belief the writer offers this paper for the function of pictorially reproducing some of those pieces developed during the period of studio work. Description serves to explain materials and methods employed and minor critical evaluation is employed to demonstrate continuity between those pieces presented.

STUDIO ACTIVITY

The writer was accepted into the Graduate School in January of 1966. From that time to the present, work has been completed in various sculptural media, including:

Direct Plaster

Cast Polyester

Cast Stone

Carved Limestone

Fired Ceramics

Welded and Brazed Steel.

In most cases the above materials were combined with wood or stone to create bases and supportive structures.

The work in welded and brazed steel comprised the majority of sculpture pieces completed during this period and became the major direction. Pieces selected for representation and discussion in this paper are from this group.

The writer selected light gauge, low carbon steel for a media. Light gauge steel is easily shaped to various forms and a low carbon content facilitates the welding process.

Oxy-acetylene welding was selected for the construction of this steel. Steel has a latitude of qualities under this process which ranges from the plasticity of clay to the structural rigidity seen in the skeleton of a skyscraper.

Oxy-acetylene welding is a process for joining metal wherein acetylene gas is mixed with oxygen, forced through a small apertured torch tip, ignited and introduced as a flame to the surface being welded.

Pressures and volume may be varied through gauged controls on the gas tanks and by valve adjustments on the torch itself. The changing of torch tip apertures and control adjustments vary the size and structure of the flame introduced.

Temperatures up to an estimated 6300 degrees may be reached at the torch tip, far exceeding the melting point of steel. By this method, two parts to be joined are heated rapidly at their juncture until the juncture is in a molten liquid state. At this point molecular fusion occurs between the two parts. Additional metal may be added at the molten state through the introduction of metal in the form of welding rod or wire.

Brazing is the introduction of an alloy of lower melting temperature than the parent metal (in this case, steel) which will fuse to the surface of the parent metal at a given heat range. Generally, a flux is used to clean the surface of the parent metal for good bonding. In the sculpture presented, brazing was introduced primarily for decorative effect and occasionally for technical reasons. Bronze brazing rod was used to give a bronze-gold surface color.

The forms that were developed came naturally as a result of working with the material selected and the welding processes used to join them. Each of the pieces presented was constructed directly, without a drawn plan or model. Idea sketches and

thought were combined prior to the start of a piece. The initial idea was conceived as to size and construction prior to starting the actual work, but modified as the work progressed in accordance with the dictates of the growing form.

There was great latitude for change and evolvement in this construction process. By using small pieces, one welded to the next, each area was developed slowly to completion. In some instances an entire section was constructed but appeared unsatisfactory. All or part of that section was cut from the major structure, reworked and repositioned to make the major structure feel "visually right."

SELECTED WORKS

EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

"American Gothic"

29 3/4" high, welded steel and wire, cross
is partially brazed, limestone base

This was the first work completed in welded steel. Plates and pieces lent themselves readily to the development of an architectural form. The addition of wire rod and the burning out of areas embellished the basic structure, adding a visual interest that to the writer is an important part of the form itself.

These forms with 1860-1910 American architectural embellishments, were carried forward to later pieces. The structural concept developed in this piece was applied to five pieces presented herein.



EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

"The Elevator"

25" high, base approximately 24" by 30",
welded steel, limestone base

In this work, the size of the pieces joined are smaller, adding to the visual interest of the constructed surface. The use of small strips and pieces in the construction of given surface areas with variation between these areas, became important in later pieces. The total construction is tied closely to representational form. The writer feels this construction leans too much toward model making rather than projecting a feeling of sculpture. Emotional content is an important area of consideration in the writer's work, but is not adequately projected by this piece.

PLATE II



EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

"Fish"

23 1/2" by 53 1/2"

Head, tail, fins and bone structure are brazed steel of bronze color with a carbon blackened steel side of steel rings. The fish construction is mounted on a burlap and wood frame.

Originally, this piece was approached as a free standing sculpture. During construction however, the visual combination of both sides in steel rings and the brazed bone structure, became too confusing in pattern formation. One side was eliminated and the piece was mounted as a shadow sculpture against an off-white burlap background.

To the writer, this piece is interesting and decorative; but, like "The Elevator" described previously, it does not move beyond this interesting and decorative state.

PLATE III



EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

"Emma"

24" high, welded steel, wood base

This figure was built from steel plates, hammered while hot into basic forms and welded together to form a hollow structure. Weld bead was built up over this base until the final form was reached.

The writer is fairly well pleased with this effort. It is felt that the piece stands as a successful sculptural construction.

PLATE IV



EXPLANATION OF PLATES V AND VI

"Enigma"

69 3/4" high, welded plate and wire, wood base

Architectural form was used to create an environment.

The figure (Detail, Plate VI) was introduced within this environment. The figure was constructed by adding weld bead to a wire frame.

The use of stairway and rail patterns and the uniting of environment with figures of occupancy is used in the remaining two pieces illustrated.

PLATE V



PLATE VI (DETAIL OF PLATE V)



EXPLANATION OF PLATES VII, VIII, IX, AND X

"Brass Bed"

92" high, welded and brazed steel, wood
base approximately 24" by 18"

Three figures occupy this structure, (Detail
Plates IX, X). Brazing is used only on the bed structure,
(Detail Plate IX).

This construction is also felt to be fairly
successful. The visual pathways created by myriad doors
and stairways combine with architectural decorative
embellishments to create visual interest beyond the severe
basic form. The figures occupy parts of this environment.

PLATE VII

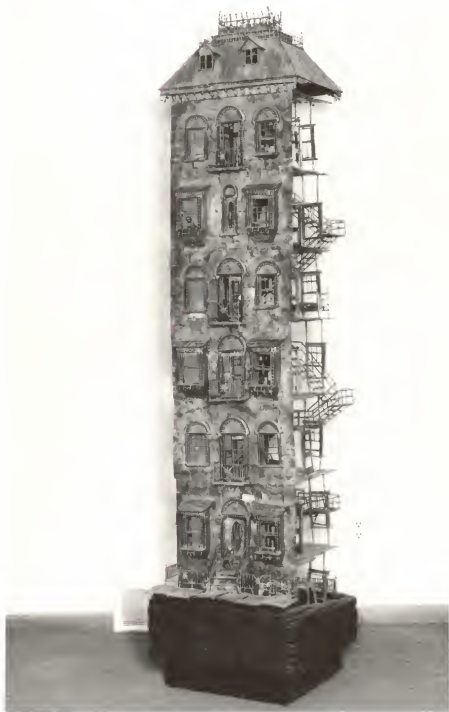


PLATE VIII



PLATE IX (DETAIL OF PLATE VII)



PLATE X (DETAILS OF PLATE VII)



EXPLANATION OF PLATES XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, AND XVI

"Summer House"

95" high, welded steel, wood and cast stone base

This work combines most of the elements introduced in prior pieces. (Detail Plate XIII) An additional idea was added, that of combining tunnel forms with rail, ladders and stairways.

The tunnel forms are open so the viewer sees through the tunnels to open space beyond the sculpture.

Three figures occupy this structure, (Detail Plates XIV, XV, XVI). Two of these figures can be seen from more than a single side of this construction by looking through the tunnel structures; one figure is photographed in this manner, (Detail Plate XVI).

It is felt that this piece is the most successful of those pieces presented.

PLATE XI



PLATE XII



PLATE XIII (DETAIL OF PLATE XI)



PLATE XIV (DETAILS OF PLATE XI)



PLATE XV (DETAILS OF PLATE XII)

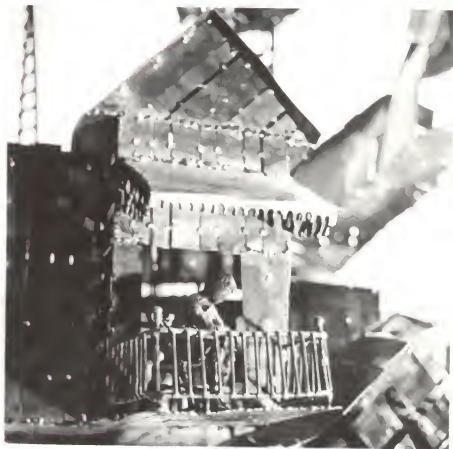


PLATE XVI (DETAIL OF PLATE XI)



CONCLUSION

The writer has presented works which were honestly produced. Those forms developed were of a personal nature; developed as they appear as personal statements. The works presented were not created to adapt to current vogue or expediency to match the art criteria of a given group. The writer feels they exist as art.

to be nobody-but-yourself--
in a world which is doing its best,
night and day,
to make you everybody else--
means to fight the hardest battle
which any human being can fight;
and never stop fighting.

E. E. Cummings--letter 1955

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Courses taken by the writer include:

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2 hours of Research in Art

A Master's Report rather than a thesis was selected as the most appropriate form for presentation of the studio work completed.

The writer believes the justification or validation of these works as art is not the function of the artist.

The report is offered as a means of pictorially reproducing some of those pieces developed during the period of studio work with description serving to explain the materials and methods used. Minor critical evaluation is offered only to explain continuity between the works.

The writer worked in several sculptural media with the majority of work in oxy-acetylene welded steel constructions. These are pictorially presented in the paper.

The writer concludes that these are personal works which were honestly produced, without an attempt to match current vogue or the art criteria of a given group.