CHAPTER 13 - SCULPTURE

All of the media we have looked at so far – drawing, printmaking, painting, and photography – are generally considered two-dimensional media. With sculpture, which is a three-dimensional medium, we will examine the relationship the art has to the time and space we ourselves occupy.

- Sculpture is one of the oldest and most enduring of all the arts. We will look at different types of sculpture: carving, modeling, casting, construction/assemblage, installation art, and earthworks.
- All of the different types of sculpture are made using two different processes: the subtractive process and is the additive process.
- No matter what type of sculpture, what process used, or what the sculpture is made out of, there are four basic ways that we experience sculpture: as relief, in the round, as environment, and as performance art.

Definitions:
- The subtractive process is when the sculptor begins with a mass of material that is larger than the finished work. The sculptor must remove material, or “subtract” it, until the piece is in its final form. Carving is a subtractive process.
- The additive process is when the sculptor builds the work, “adding” material as he/she moves along. Modeling, construction, and assemblage are additive processes. Casting has additive aspects, and may also have subtractive ones. Earthworks also frequently use both. Installation is essentially additive, changing and transforming a space by adding new elements, including the live human body.
- Relief sculpture is meant to be seen from one side only. This means it is frontal, or meant to be viewed from the front. It is very often used to decorate architecture.
  - Low relief describes a sculpture where the figures and objects remain attached to a background plane and project off of it by less than one-half their normal depth.
  - High relief describes a sculpture where the figures or objects remain attached to a flat background plane and project off of it by at least one-half of their normal depth.
- A frieze is a sculptural band, often decorating architecture.
- Sculpture-in-the-round, as opposed to relief, is sculpture that requires no wall support and that can be experienced from all sides. It demands movement: the viewer must move around the piece to see it in completion.
- Environment sculpture is a sculptural space that is large enough for the viewer to move around in. It is simply when sculpture creates an environment around you.
  - Sculpture in the round may be a 3D object that can be observed anywhere (ex: a statue that can be moved from place to place), but often sculpture is created for a specific location. This form of site-specific sculpture utilizes the surrounding area to complete the content of the piece. (Ex: Tilted Arc by Richard Serra.)
  - Installation sculpture is environment sculpture that is indoors.
  - Earthwork sculpture is environment sculpture that is outdoors.
- Performance art has been especially popular since the 1960s. Performance art includes not only the physical space, but the human activity in it. It is a participatory art form, relying on the activity of artist and audience to complete.
- **Carving** is a subtractive process in which the material being carved is chipped, gouged, or hammered away from the solid, raw block of material. Wood and stone are two of the most common carving materials.

- **Contrapposto** is the pose of the human body when the hips and legs are turned in opposition to the shoulders and chest, creating a *counter-positioning* of the body.

- **Modeling,** in sculpture, is the shaping of some plastic material, such as clay or plaster. (Plastic is used here as an adjective, meaning a material that is capable of adapting to varying conditions.)
  - **Ceramics:** any work that is made out of clay.
  - **Firing** refers to “baking” ceramics to a high temperature to allow the material to become hard and waterproof.
  - **A kiln** is the special oven used for firing ceramics.

- **Casting** is a process where a liquid or molten material is poured into a mold, and allowed to harden. It is an invention of the Bronze Age (beginning around 2500 BCE). The process works similar to a gelatin mold. You pour gelatin into a mold, and let it harden. When you pop the gelatin out, it holds the shape of the dish it was in.
  - **Lost-wax Casting Process:** A method of casting hollow objects. This saves metal and allows the sculpture to be less heavy. The method was perfected by the Greeks.

- **Assemblage** is the process of bringing individual objects or pieces together from a larger whole. As a process, assemblage is more often associated with the transformation of common materials into art, in which the artist, rather than forming all of the parts that are put together, finds the parts in the world.