



Chapter 13: Sculpture

One of the oldest and most enduring of all the arts.

Elements, Forms, and Types

Sculptures uses the visual elements of **actual space** and **actual texture**.

There are three forms of sculptural space:

- relief
- in the round
- as an environment

Each type of sculpture employs two basic processes: either an additive process or a subtractive process.

- **Subtractive Process:** begins with a mass of material larger than the finished work, and removes material, or subtracts from that mass until the work achieves its finished form.
- **Additive Process:** the sculptor builds the work, adding material as the work proceeds.

Types of Sculpture

Additive

- Modeling
- Assemblage (construction)
- Earthworks

Subtractive

- Carving
- Earthworks

Sarah Sze, *Triple Point Pendulum*, 2013

This is an example of an additive work. Sze is known for densely arranged groupings of objects. She says “Improvisation is crucial. I want the work to be sort of an experience of something alive- to have this feeling that it was improvised, that way you can see decisions happening on site, the way you see a live sports event, the way you hear jazz.”



Relief

A relief is a sculpture that has three dimensional depth but is meant to be seen from only one side. It is **frontal**- meant to be viewed from the front. It's often used to decorate architecture.

There are two categories of relief:

Low Relief: the depth is very shallow (extends less than 180 degrees from the base)

High Relief: project forward from their base by at least half their depth

LOW RELIEF SCULPTURE

Title: Senwosret I led by Atum to Amun-Re

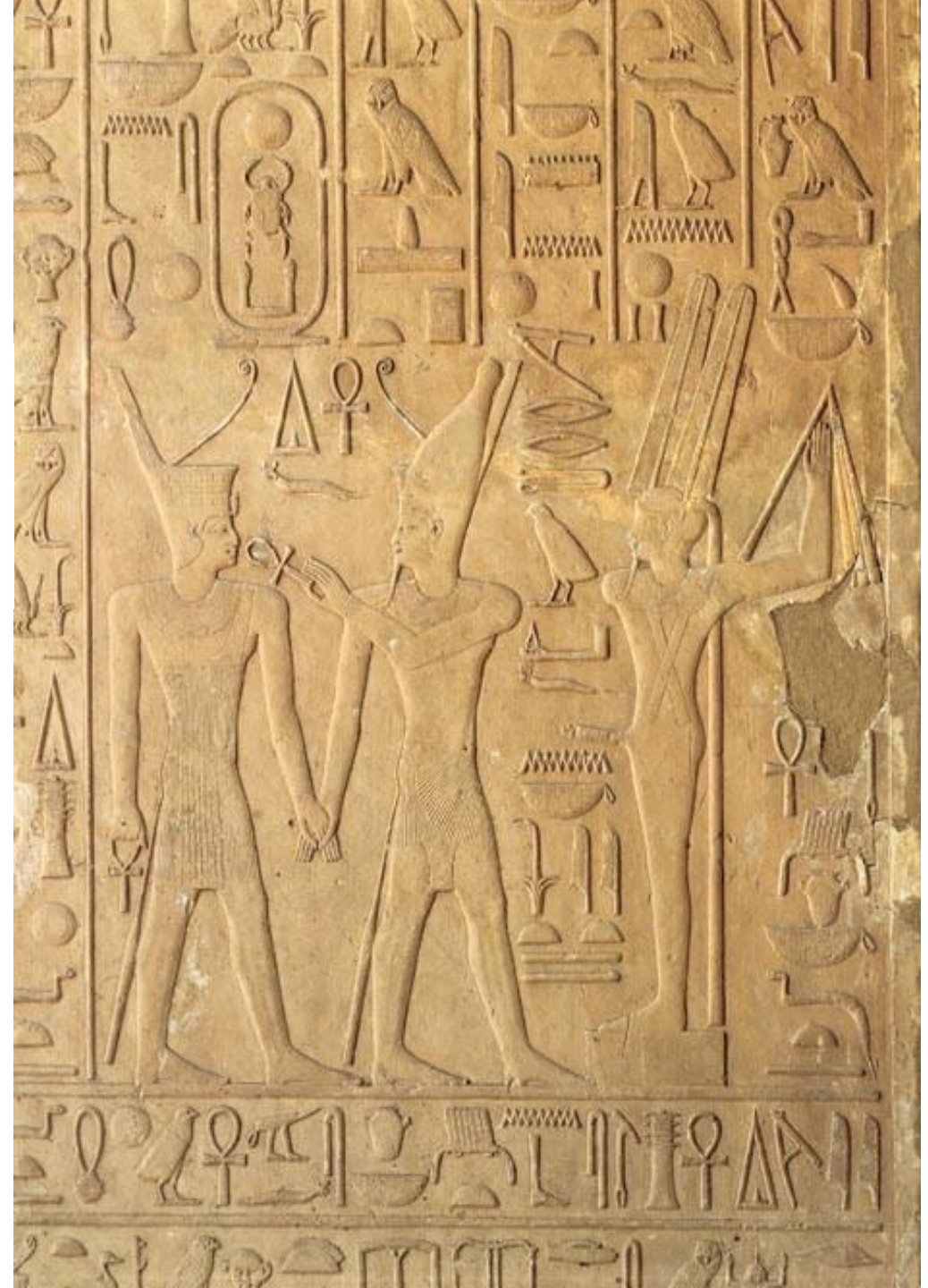
Artist: n/a

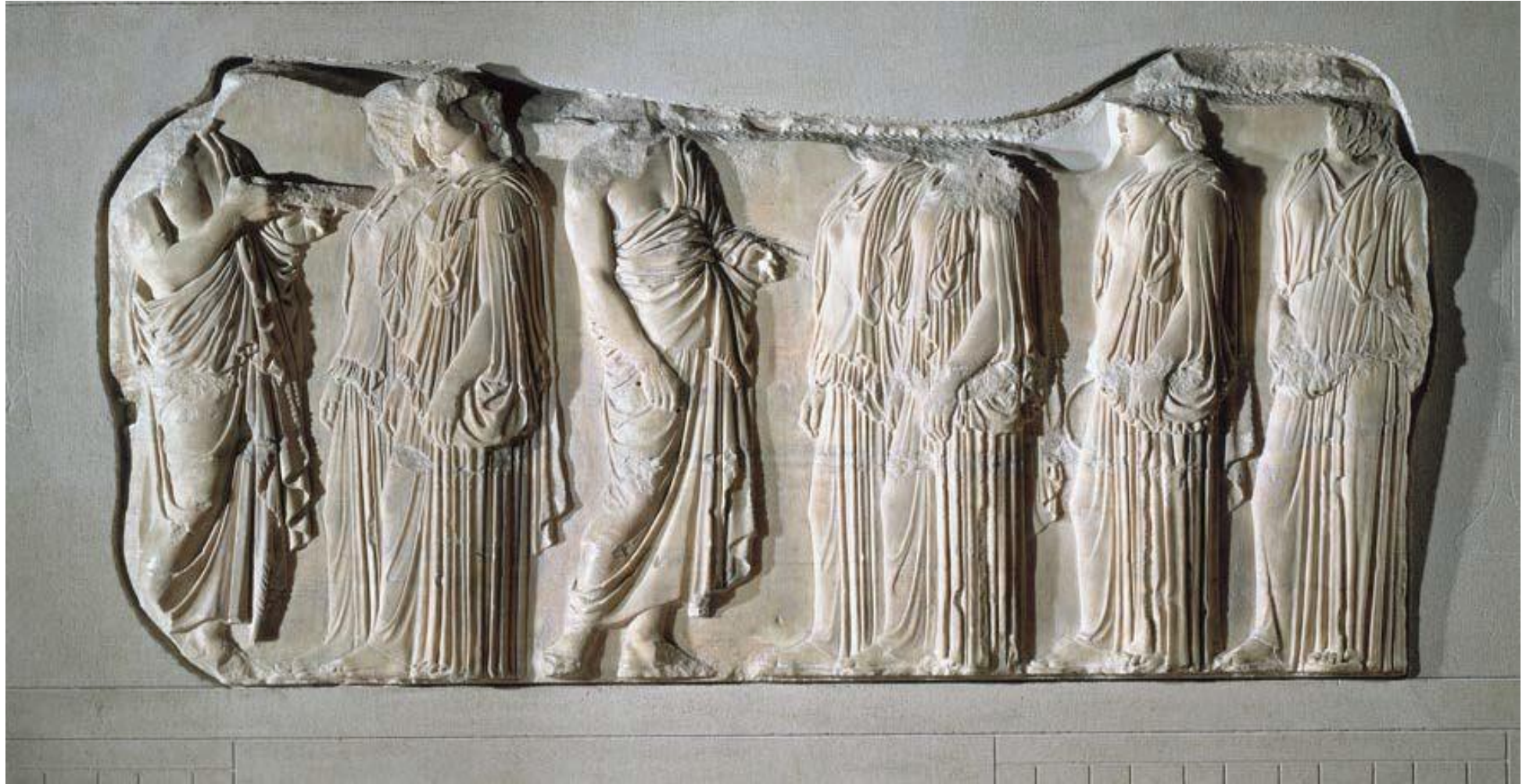
Date: c. 1930 BCE

Source/Museum: From the White Chapel at Karnak, Thebes.
Scala/Art Resource, New York.

Medium: Limestone, raised relief

Size: Height 13 ft. 6 in.





Title: Maidens and Stewards

Artist: unknown

Date: 447 – 438 BCE

Source/Museum: Fragment of the *Panathenaic Procession* from the east frieze of the Parthenon, Acropolis, Athens. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Marburg/Art Resource, New York.

Medium: Marble

Size: Height approx. 43 in.

HIGH RELIEF SCULPTURE

Title: *Atlas Bringing Herakles the Golden Apples*

Artist: unknown

Date: c. 470 – 456 BCE

Source/Museum: From the Temple of Zeus, Olympia. Archaeological Museum, Olympia. Alinari/Art Resource, New York.

Medium: Marble

Size: Height 63 in.



In-the-Round

Sculptures that are “in-the-round” are freestanding. They are meant to be seen from all sides, and the viewer must move around them.

SCULPTURE IN THE ROUND



It is impossible to capture this sculpture in a single photograph. Its figures rise in a spiral, and it changes dramatically as the viewer walks around it. The power of the sculpture comes from the horror of the story, the emotion it depicts, and its visual movement.

The story of the sculpture comes from Ancient Rome.

Title: *The Capture of the Sabine Women*

Artist: Giambologna

Date: Completed 1583



Source/Museum: Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence. Alinari/Art Resource, New York.

Medium: Marble

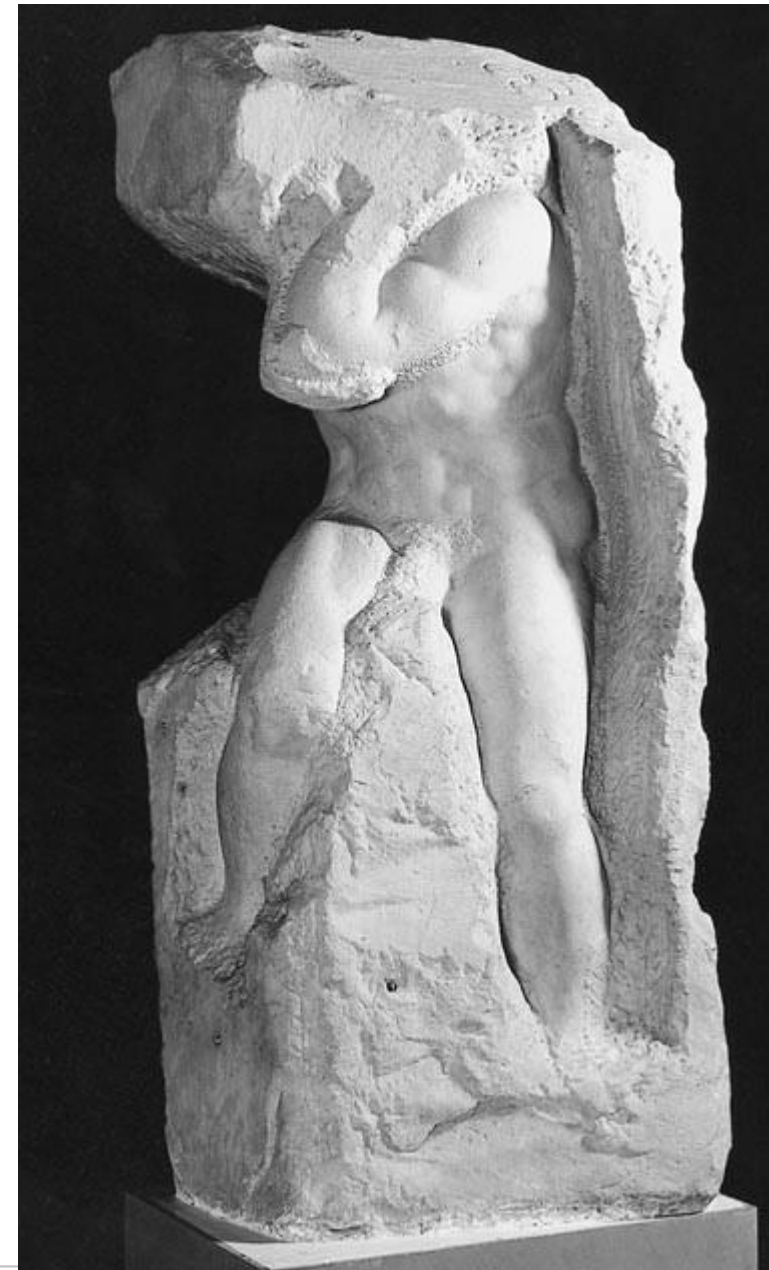
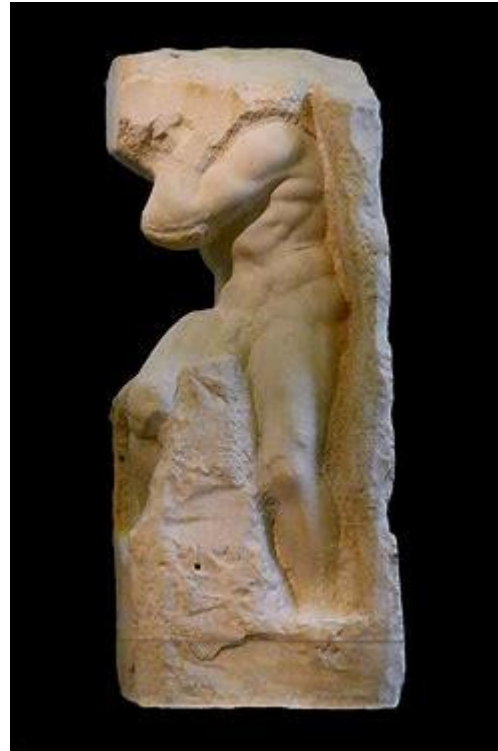
Size: Height 13 ft 6 in.



CARVING

Materials like marble, wood, stones, and shells are chipped, gouged, or hammered away from a raw block of material. Because of their permanence, stone carvings have long been associated with immortality and the afterlife.

Michelangelo, who painted the Sistine Chapel, primarily considered himself a sculptor. He believed the sculptor was a tool of God, not creating but simply revealing the powerful figures already contained in the marble.



Title: "Atlas" Slave

Artist: Michelangelo

Date: c. 1513 – 1520

Source/Museum: Accademia, Florence. Nimatallah/Art Resource, New York.

Medium: Marble

Size: 9 ft. 2 in.

MODELING

Modeled sculptures are created when a soft or malleable material (such as clay) is built up (sometimes over an armature) and shaped to create a form.



Title: *Case of Bottles*

Artist: Robert Arneson

Date: 1964

Source/Museum: Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Sheinbaum. © Estate of Robert Arneson/Licensed by VAGA, New York, New York. Courtesy of George Adams Gallery, New York.

Medium: Glazed ceramic (stoneware) and glass

Size: 10 ½ x 22 x 15 in.

An army of clay warriors guards the tomb of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, who died in 210 BC. The tomb is still under excavation near Xi'an, China.



Title: Tomb of Emperor Shih Huang Ti

Artist: unknown

Date: 221 – 206 BCE

Source/Museum: Photo: An Keren/PPS. Photo Researchers, Inc.

Medium: Painted ceramic figures

Size: Lifesize

CASTING

Sculptures that are cast are made from a material that is melted down—usually a metal—that is then poured into a mold. The mold is allowed to cool, thereby hardening the metal, usually bronze.

This process requires the artist to consider negative space as much as the positive space to create the work.



Title: *Head of an Oba*

Artist: unknown

Date: 18th century

Source/Museum: African, Nigeria, Edo, Court of Benin. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Klaus G. Perls, 1991 (1991.17.2). Photo © 1991 Metropolitan Museum of Art.

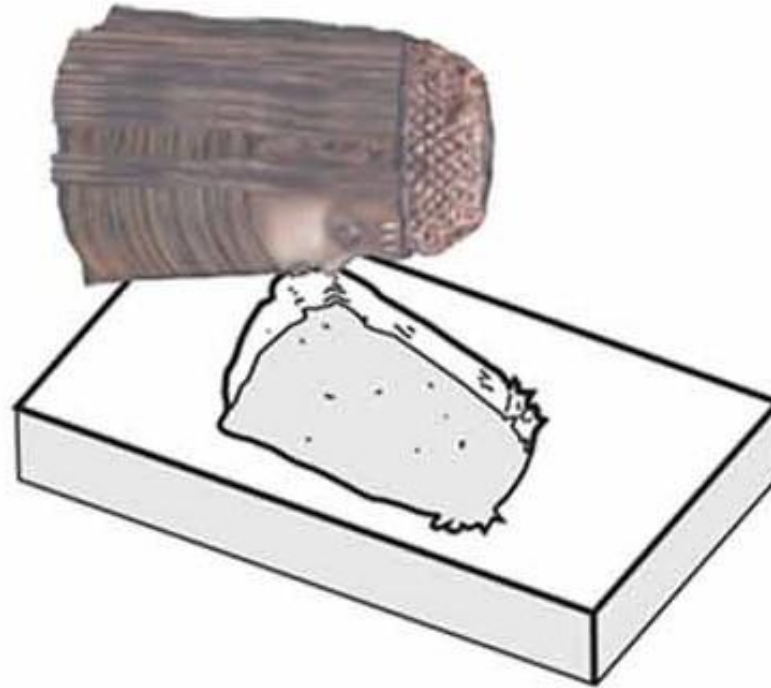
Medium: Brass and iron

Size: Height 13 1/8 in.

1.

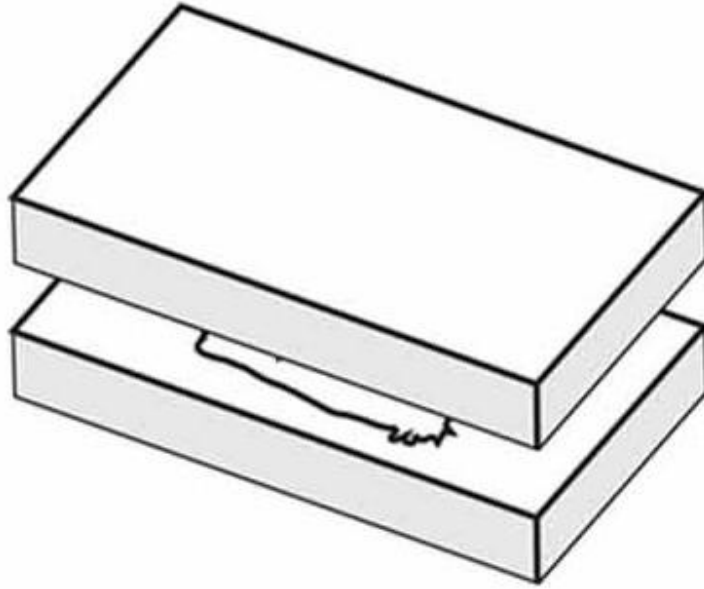


2.

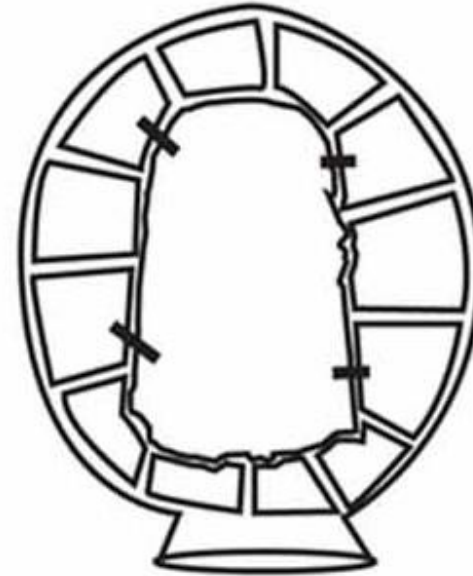


The Lost-Wax Casting Process. A positive model (1), often created with clay, is used to make a negative mold (2).

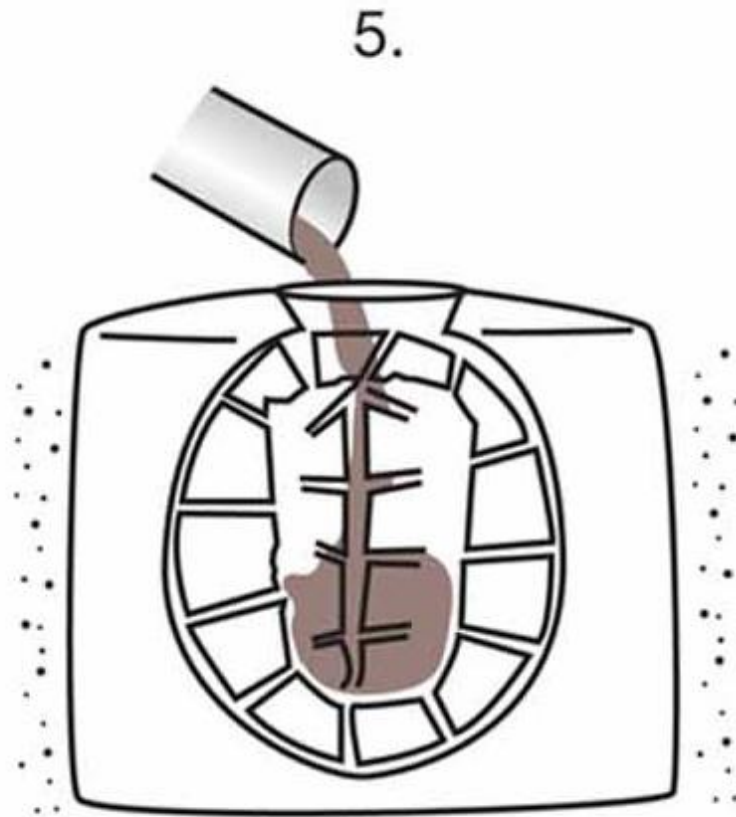
3.



4.



The Lost-Wax Casting Process. The mold is coated with wax, the wax shell is filled with a cool fireclay, and the mold is removed (3). Metal rods, to hold the shell in place, and wax rods, to vent the mold, are then added (4).



The Lost-Wax Casting Process. The whole is placed in sand, and the wax is burned out (5). Molten bronze is poured in where the wax used to be. When the bronze has hardened, the whole is removed from the sand, and the rods and vents are removed (6).

Because lost wax pieces are hollow casts, the artist can create works at a larger scale without worrying about weight.

Title: *The Burghers of Calais*

Artist: Auguste Rodin

Date: 1884 – 1885

Source/Museum: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966.66.4340.

Medium: Bronze

Size: 6 ft. 10 ½ in. x 7 ft. 11 in. x 6 ft 6 in.



Rachel Whiteread, *Water Tower*, 1998

Whiteread is known for her castings in resin and plaster of familiar objects and the spaces they surround, such as the interiors of a bathtub and a row house in London's East End, and for her ability to make people see these objects and spaces anew. *Water Tower* is a resin cast of the interior of a once-functioning cedar water tower, chosen specifically for the texture this type of wood would impart to the surface. The translucent resin captures the qualities of the surrounding sky; the sculpture's color and brightness change throughout the day and it becomes a near-invisible whisper at night. Whiteread has called this work "a jewel on the skyline of Manhattan." Soaring and ephemeral, it inspires city-dwellers and visitors alike to look again at the solid, weighty water towers they usually see without noticing.



Assemblage (construction)

Assemblage is the process of bringing individual objects or pieces together to form a larger whole. It is commonly associated with the transformation of common materials into art.

Louise Nevelson. *Sky Cathedral*. 1958.

115 x 135 x 28 in.

Sky Cathedral consists of boxes stacked against a wall, each compartment filled with wooden scraps including moldings, dowels, spindles, and furniture parts. Nevelson then covered the entire **assemblage** with black paint, both unifying the **composition** and obscuring the individual objects. She once explained her fascination with the color black: “When I fell in love with black, it contained all color. It wasn’t a negation of color. It was an acceptance. Because black encompasses all colors. Black is the most aristocratic color of all. ... You can be quiet and it contains the whole thing.”

Nevelson once said that when she began making her wall pieces in the 1950s, she couldn’t afford traditional art materials. She instead foraged in her Manhattan neighborhood for cast-off wooden objects such as architectural ornaments or baseball bat fragments.



Meret Oppenheim, *Fur Cup*, 1936

This Surrealist sculpture was inspired by a conversation between Oppenheim and artists Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar at a Paris cafe. Admiring Oppenheim's fur-covered bracelet, Picasso remarked that one could cover anything with fur, to which she replied, "Even this cup and saucer." Soon after, when asked by André Breton, Surrealism's leader, to participate in the first Surrealist exhibition dedicated to objects, Oppenheim bought a teacup, saucer, and spoon at a department store and covered them with the fur of a Chinese gazelle. In so doing, she transformed genteel items traditionally associated with feminine decorum into sensuous, sexually punning tableware.



Nkisi Figures

Many African cultures use assemblage to create objects of sacred or spiritual significance. Sculptures like this nkisi figure, made for the king and court, is composed of a variety of materials. It combines beadwork, cloth, basketry, and fiber. For the Yoruba, geometric shapes divided into smaller geometric shapes represent the cosmos. The principle of “shine” – the idea of completeness or wholeness- is created through the visual dynamism in the beadwork.



Display piece, Yoruba culture.
Early 20th century. Cloth, basketry, beads, and fiber, height 41-1/4". The British Museum, London.

Af1924,-.136. © The Trustees of the British Museum. [Fig. 12-18]

Assemblage has allowed artists the freedom to use anything and everything to create a work.

Robert Gober juxtaposes fragments of everyday life, like sinks, shoes, and hair, to create haunting sculptures that seem to exist between reality and nightmare or dreamscape.

This work is part of the Menil Collection in Houston, TX.

Title: *Untitled*

Artist: Robert Gober

Date: 1999

Source/Museum: Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift (by exchange) of Mrs. Arthur Barnwell.

Medium: Plaster, beeswax, human hair, cotton, leather, aluminum, and enamel

Size: 33 ½ x 40 x 24 in.



Installations and Earthworks

Installation art uses a variety of material in a similar way to assemblage and construction sculptures. Earthworks use the earth as material and/or environment.

The artist considers the work in a chosen environment, and creates a work meant to be seen there either permanently or temporarily. If the artist is responding to a particular place or space, it is called **site-specific**.

Nancy Rubins. *Pleasure Point*. 2006.

304 x 637 x 288 in.

Installed near the ocean at the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, this work is an assemblage of rowboats, canoes, surfboards, and jet skis. It seems to draw the sea crafts to a single point. She was inspired by a cache of boats at Pleasure Point Marina in a California resort community. The boats are transformed from functional vessels to sculpture—literally elevating them from the ocean into the space of art.



Vessels are attached to the roof with high-tension wires





Anish Kapoor, *Cloud Gate*, 2004
installed in Millenium Park, Chicago;
stainless steel, 33ft x 66 ft. 42 ft.

168 stainless steel plates welded together, weighing 100 tons; 12 arches underneath.
Kapoor wanted to make something that would engage the Chicago skyline. It reflects the buildings and sky into the work, as well as the viewer.



EARTHWORKS

Earthworks are large-scale out-of-doors environments. They have been a focus of modern sculpture since the late 1960s.

This work, *Spiral Jetty*, is a record of the geological history of the place, a landscape made by Smithson.

The spiral is a symbol found both across cultures, and in nature.

Robert Smithson. *Spiral Jetty*. April 1970.

3 1/2 ft. x 15 ft. x 1,500 ft.





aerial view, 2004



Robert Smithson. *Spiral Jetty*, as it appeared in August 2003.

Nancy Holt, an artist exploring the human perception of time and space, earth and sky, built the Sun Tunnels as a unique art project completed in 1976. The four tunnels are concrete tubes laid out in an X shape, each drilled with holes to pattern the constellations of Draco, Perseus, Columbia, and Capricorn. They are massive - nine feet high by 18 feet long. They sit in a remote valley in the Great Basin Desert, west of the Bonneville Salt Flats. Holt has said her tunnels bring the sky down to earth, with the dazzling effect of light bouncing through the tubes. Two of the tunnels align with the setting and rising sun during the summer solstice and two line up during the winter solstice.

Title: *Sun Tunnels, Great Basin Desert, Utah* (one front view)

Artist: Nancy Holt

Date: 1973 – 1976





Title: *Sun Tunnels, Great Basin Desert, Utah* (four showing)

Artist: Nancy Holt

Date: 1973 – 1976

Source/Museum: Nancy Holt/Licensed by VAGA, New York, New York. Courtesy John Weber Gallery, New York.

Medium: Four tunnels

Size: Each 18 ft. long x 9 ft. 4 in. in diameter; each axis 86 ft. long

Performance Art as Living Sculpture

Installations and earthworks are activated by the presence of human beings in the space. In performance art, the physical presence of the body in space becomes a primary concern.

Many performance artists are interested in the live human activity that goes on in space.

Some consider themselves, or other people in their work, as a live sculpture.

One of the innovators of performance art, Allan Kaprow, invented what he called “**Happenings**” in the late 1950s. He defined a Happening as “assemblages of events performed or perceived in more than one time and place... A Happening... is art but seems closer to life”.

Men and women participated in this performance. Men built a tower, and women built a nest. The men destroyed the nest while the women licked jam off of a car, and then the women destroyed the tower while the men ate the jam with bread. Eventually, the groups joined together, and the car was burned.

While the meaning of this Happening is not entirely clear, it draws attention to the violence of relationships between men and women in our society and the way in which violence can draw us together as well as drive us apart.



Title: *Household*

Artist: Allan Kaprow

Date: 1964

Source/Museum: Near Ithaca, New York. Sol Goldberg/Cornell University Photography.

Medium: Licking jam off a car hood

Size: n/a

Marina Abramovic explores what she calls “the space in between, like airports or hotel rooms, waiting rooms, or lobbies... all the spaces where you are not actually at home.” She thinks that we are most vulnerable in these spaces, and that vulnerability means that we are “completely alive”.

In this performance, Abramovic lived in three rooms inside of a gallery for 12 days, and did not eat, read, write, or speak. Ladders with butchers knives for rungs separated her from the audience. The “space in between” could not be bridged without a huge risk.



Title: *The House with the Ocean View—Nov. 22 9:54 am, 2002*

Artist: Marina Abramović

Date: November 15 – 26, 2002

Source/Museum: Sean Kelly Gallery, New York.

Medium: Living installation

Size: n/a