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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Evelyn Franz for the Master of Fine Arts
in Sculpture presented May 26, 1976.

Title: Three-Dimensional Wall Sculpture

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

James L. Hansen, Chairman

Mary Constans

Donald P. Wilson

Manuel Isquierdo

The thesis discusses five sculptures completed during the period of study
from October 1974 to May 1976 and presented at the Department of Art and
Architecture Gallery May 26, 1976-June 11, 1976.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL WALL SCULPTURE

by

EVELYN FRANZ

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS
in
SCULPTURE

Portland State University
1976

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
II DESCRIPTION OF WORK PROCESS	3
III ANALYSIS OF THE SCULPTURES	7
IV TECHNIQUES	13
V CONCLUSION	16

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Placement gives sculpture visual emphasis. This has been considered one of the primary functions of the base: it contributes to the stature of an object giving it an air of importance and tends to remove the piece from the viewer's immediate world. It creates an aura of distance and isolation.

In my own work I, at first, supported my pieces from the base by means of a rod. Although this extension into space contributed to a sense of independence, a feeling of complete separation from the base was never accomplished. My attempt to break down the psychic barrier I feel to exist in the traditional object-viewer relationship ultimately led to the full elimination of the base and the decision to utilize the wall as a mounting surface. My basic approach to sculpture as such did not change: I continued to retain and stress the three-dimensionality of a floor-based sculpture, as opposed to a more traditional two-dimensional sculptured relief. By eliminating the implications of the picture-frame edges, characteristic of the traditional sculpture relief, and emphasizing three-dimensionality, I allowed the pieces to interact more freely in the surrounding space. The same freedom was accomplished with the elimination of the floor-supported base.

A base by itself generally is a strong geometric shape which, interacting with the sculpture, can in turn limit the sculpture's interaction with its surroundings. The base, in relationship to the viewer, often creates a podium or stage effect for the sculpture, causing a strong separation between sculpture and viewer.

Although the wall-surface still maintains the necessary supportive function of the more traditional base, I discovered that the wall is such a familiar surrounding that its familiarity deemphasizes its own presence, and so minimizes the psychological distance between object and viewer.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE SCULPTURES

"Piece of Mind" conveys the intimate impact of tactile, visual sensuousness. Its two supportive side elements protect the more sensuous, seductive center portion. The sensation of organic volume suggests a realm of natural life developed to its full identity. It appears as a piece not carved, but grown from an inner source.

As all the pieces do, "Piece of Mind" exemplifies the retention of three-dimensionality and the added individuality and self-sustaining qualities of its total separation from a base. The lack of a base gives the illusion of self-support, yet does not remove the piece from the viewer's immediate world. In fact, it amplifies an environment where observer and object are given a similar status. Without the base the sculpture functions with the casualness of the most familiar of objects.

"Continental Bye-Bye" and "Atoms Rushing to Infinity Aren't Necessarily Lost, Are They?" retain many of the basic aspects of "Piece of Mind." Both pieces are capable of self-support, yet give a growing feeling of tension and precarious positioning caused by movement stopped in space and time.

In "Continental Bye-Bye" a natural, lethargic movement up and to the right takes place, yet a noticeable downward pull is evident. It creates

Figure 1. Piece of Mind.

Figure 2. Continental Bye-Bye.

Figure 3. Continental Bye-Bye.

Figure 4. Atoms Rushing to Infinity Aren't Necessarily Lost, Are They?

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Figure 5. Piece of Mind.

Figure 6. Will-O'-the-Wisp.

Figure 7. Ding an Sich.

a tension which I stressed more in my next piece, "Atoms Rushing to Infinity Aren't Necessarily Lost, Are They?" Here the equilibrium between the downward pull and upward thrust is more apparent, and therefore more dramatic.

In working on these two pieces the nature of form and movement excited me most, along with creating the illusion of self-support, like suspended animation.

While developing my previous pieces I had the inclination to create the illusion of a number of separate elements composing a single piece. "Piece of Mind," with its three distinct elements, illustrates this tendency. Developing this idea, I decided to emphasize individual elements that were not separated by illusion, but by actual space. "Will-O'-the-Wisp" and "Ding an Sich" are the result.

My motivation was to bring together in a single space two separate pieces that have different directions and different aspects, but form a coherent entity. The form of the total piece is not confined to the two solid parts, but includes an ambient negative space. This space is integral to the total form. It establishes a dialogue between the separate components. Each piece has its own freedom, yet belongs to the same common space.

Figure 8. Will-O'-the-Wisp.

Figure 9. Ding an Sich.

CHAPTER IV

TECHNIQUES

In the development of a piece the technical problems of manifesting the initial concept in the plastic medium was my first consideration. As various forms lent themselves to different media my original ideas were influenced by the nature of the medium. I found that clay was best suited for the kind of manipulation and direction necessary during this first phase. In modeling I applied the clay to a vertical surface penetrated by dowels which supported the clay in this position. This allowed the freedom of adding and subtracting from the developing form.

After the study was completed, plaster piece-molds were taken from it. Wax was then cast into the piece-molds, resulting in a wax copy of the original clay piece. The wax, in turn, was invested in a two-piece waste-mold and melted out of the mold in a burn-out kiln. Before brushing a number of polyester resin layers onto the mold surface, it was treated with a release agent (liquid Latex). After the resin had been applied to the mold surface, it was left to cure for six to twelve hours depending on its thickness and amount of catalyst used. The thickness of the resin layers may vary from 1/8" to 3/8". Before removing the plaster-waste mold, polyurethane foam was poured into

the hollow sculpture for inner support. At this point the waste-mold was chipped away, exposing the final piece.

As a final finish the piece was sanded, polished, and sealed with a clear acrylic spray. In the case of "Continental Bye-Bye" and "Ding an Sich" further patination was obtained with additional pigments (acrylic paints).

Figure 10. Ding an Sich.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

When I began working on this wall series I was concerned about the possibilities of unforeseen limitations that this approach might have on my work. However, I was gratified to discover that working with the wall surface as vertical support permitted greater freedom and flexibility than the typical horizontal base. By eliminating a base my work acquired new individuality, since no distractions from elements not directly related to the piece and its mood interfered. I found the wall and its "elimination by familiarity" a valid way of displaying three-dimensional sculpture.

The use of polyester resin and its inherent light weight enabled me to retain the visual impact of three-dimensional shapes and their weight implications that could not easily have been wall-mounted with heavier media. This lightweight, strong medium helped expand the range of vertically-placed sculpture.