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Construction-Sculpture

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CONSTRUCTION-SCULPTURE

by

KANETAKA IKEDA

A terminal project report submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

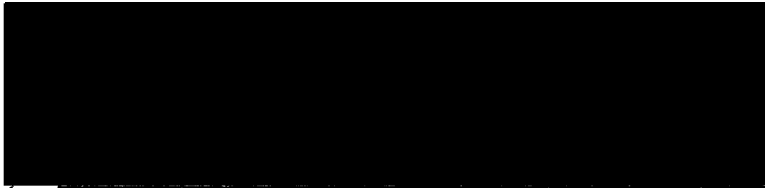
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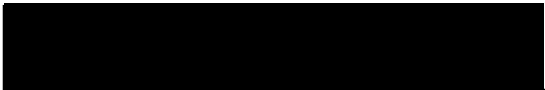
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TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

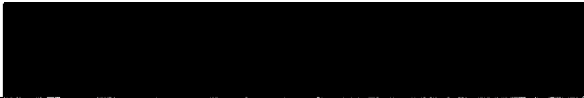
The members of the Terminal Project Committee approve
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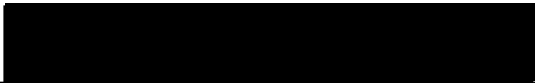


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Of Subjective Consideration

I have been interested in archaeology and astronomy since my youth. This I believe indicates my curiosity about the origin and the destiny of mankind. At a deeper level this curiosity probably reflects some awareness of man's loneliness and his need to understand his place in the universe. I feel that this need to find a belongingness in the universe is filled by those arts that carry with them a sense of timelessness, a quality that insulates one from the flow of time and currents of chaos.

Besides a sense of order and eternity, I have sought in my sculpture a feeling of serenity, nobility, warmth, and strength-- all which I believe are positive forces and are interrelated. The search for forms with these qualities led me to study the sculptures of Fourth Dynasty Egypt, High Classical Greece, and Six Dynasties China. Such statues as the seated figure of Chefren and Yumedono Kwannon imprinted memorable impressions. From them I have learned the importance of gesture, simplicity, horizontal and vertical compositions, and rigidity to create the feeling that I wanted in my sculpture. Figures 1 and 2 I believe display these qualities. In addition to these techniques, I became aware of producing a timeless feeling through a manipulation of space. The eternal presence found in the interiors of Norman Romanesque cathedrals and Le Corbusier's Ronchamp church was a source of this awareness



Figure a Chefren

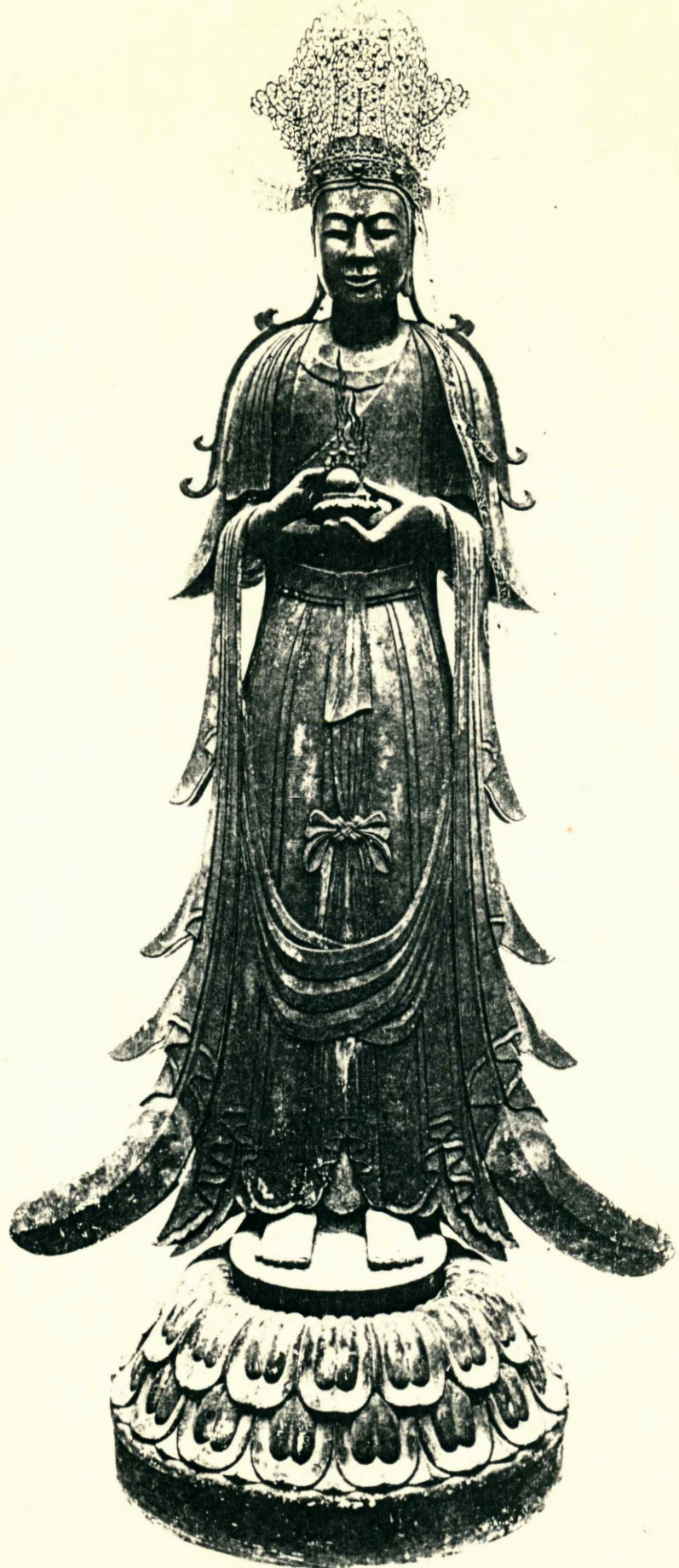




Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure c Durham Cathedral

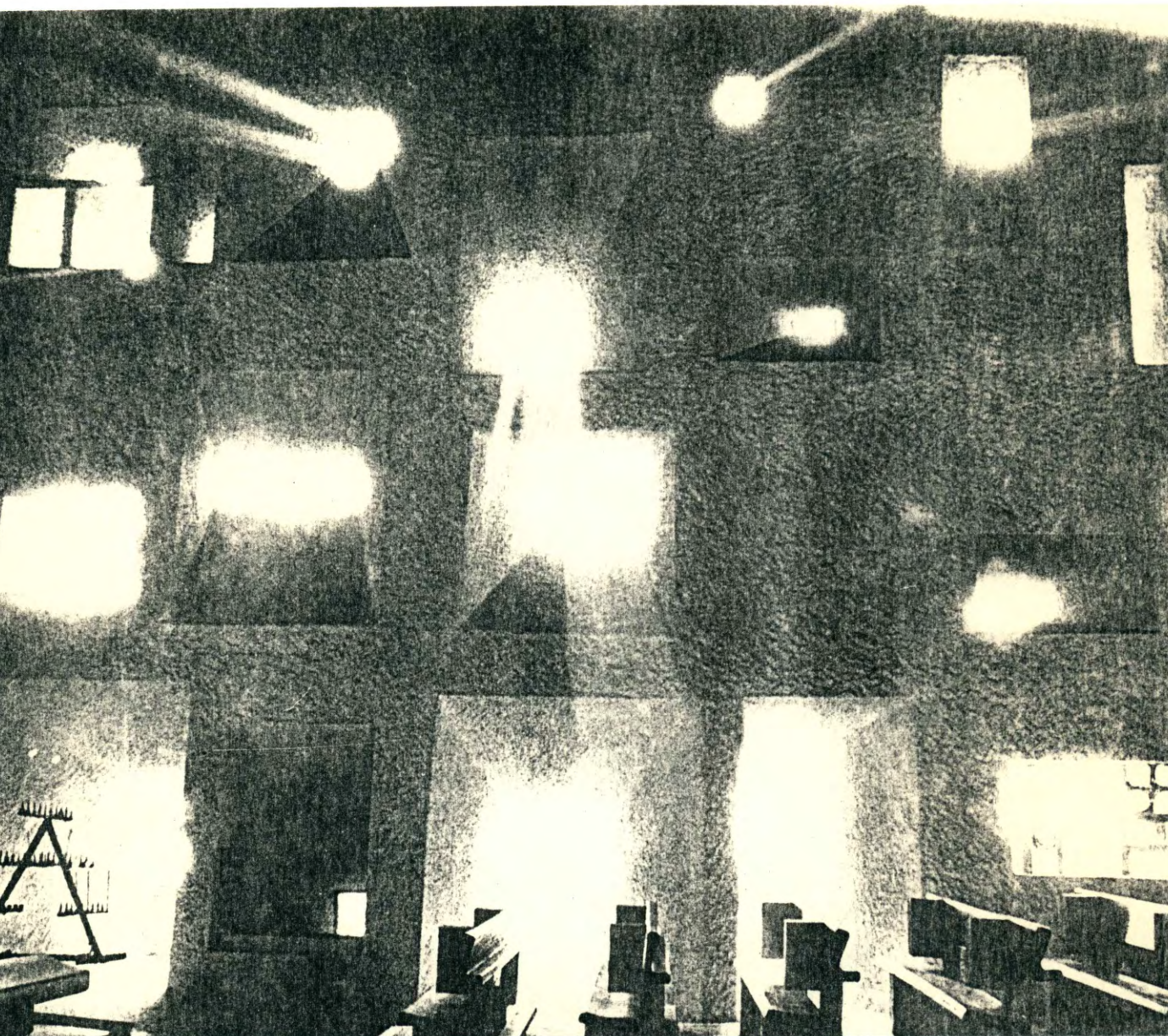


Figure d Ronchamp Chapel

and inspiration.

Later, I began to create movement in my sculptures. The sculptures were no longer rigid but were filled with animation. Although my forms are no longer earth-bound, I still seek a sense of eternity and order in my work.

Of Biographic Consideration

I first created my thin sculptural forms in wax, which coming in sheets made it natural for me to develop thin, relief-like forms. Wax is a versatile material that possesses property that enables one to carve, model, and construct. Originally, the forms were separately placed on a wax platform-- thus creating a surrealist landscape in a model scale. These pieces were cast but never finished. Then, I became interested in a new direction that appeared to me to have greater potential for expression.

During this period of my development, I was deeply interested in creating a vitalistic image in my sculpture. Consequently I was fascinated with the art of cultures such as the Late Jomon, Classical Maya, and Northwest Indian, all of which were in a stage between a barbaric and civilized state. I studied the development of Viking Art and Chinese Shang bronze motifs, and much of my knowledge of design techniques was derived from them-- particularly the use of asymmetry through the balancing of a unit by juxtaposing a detailed side with a larger but simpler one. The balancing of a linear unit with a more volumetric one, a technique found in many of my sculptures, especially in figure 3, can be found in Viking Style E and Chinese dragon motif.

As I changed my interest from depicting a form with vitalistic image to one more reflective of what I felt to



Figure 3

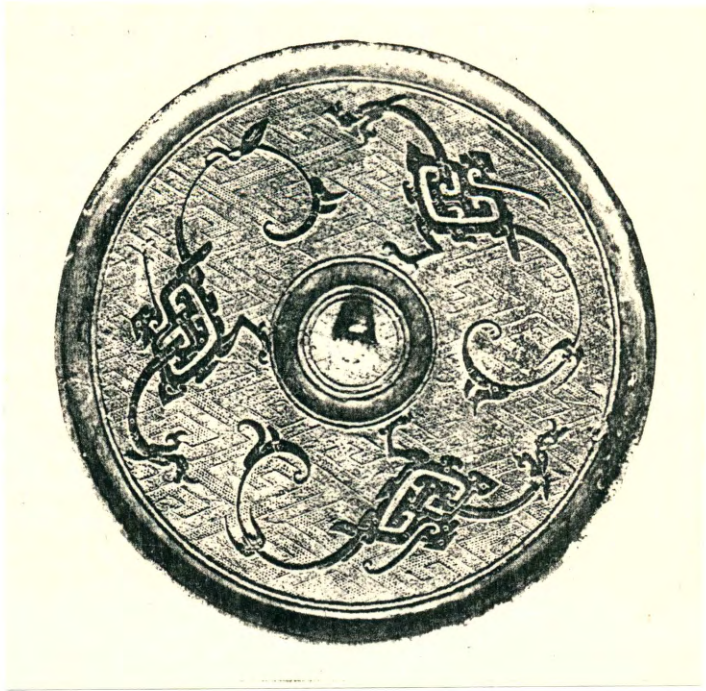


Figure e Bronze Mirror from Chou Dynasty

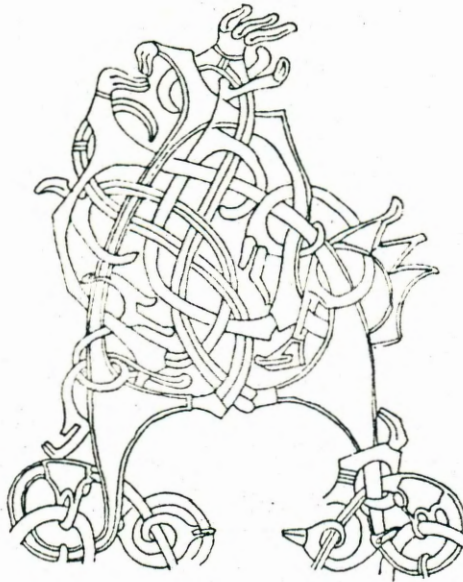


Figure f Viking Style Motif

be of eternity and order, I began to unite my pieces to form an image of man. I have also switched to wood as a medium as I felt it to be a relatively more permanent material than wax and can be enlarged without the economic and technical difficulties of bronze.

Of Design Consideration

My first major design problem since I began working on construction-sculpture was that of unity vs. variety. The tendency of my early work was to make sculptures that were formed by connecting too many pieces that were interesting in themselves. Too many detailed and irrelevant shapes destroyed the cohesive unity of the sculpture.

To solve this problem, I changed my working method; instead of making individual pieces separately and intuitively connecting them together, I made quick sculptural sketches that had overall unity from which I made individual pieces. Many unnecessary details were eliminated by this method.

In each piece, I have also reduced the number of individual components. The question was how many pieces can be used without either making the unified piece too complicated or too boring. Much thought was spent solving this problem. I remember in a speech class I once attended, the class was divided into basic task groups. These groups had a minimum membership requirement of five and maximum number of eight. Apparently the reason behind this was that with fewer than five people there could not be enough members for breadth thus, the group would not be efficient. However, if there were too many members, each member could not be represented

adequately in a meeting. I applied this idea in my own work, and since then, most of my successful pieces have consisted of five or six pieces. Whenever there were more than five pieces, there was a repetition of the same function by certain pieces. They became visually unnecessary except where extra pieces were used to emphasize the importance of particular function. Usually I placed extra pieces on a focal point of the sculpture. I have later found that this was a design principle called by the Chinese "The Rule of Five" according to which five is the basic number of objects the eye can grasp individually and without grouping them. Within the five or more component parts, I made each as different as possible from the other but with enough similarity to retain a unity among them. Among other unifying factors were the similarity of material, of thickness, of curvilinear shapes, and of the feeling of individual pieces. The variety factor included the differences in size, complexity, and shape among the components. I have avoided the contrast such as geometrical shape vs. organic shape or the use of two different material, because such a contrast, I believe, would be so strong that it would dominate everything else.

As I have stated before, in my early construction-sculptures, I tried to make each piece interesting by itself. However, this was analogous to writing a novel with climaxes throughout the story. To solve this problem, each piece was developed to be visually more interesting than others; this hierarchy

of interest prevented the eye from visual boredom, and it separated the essential element from the minor.

To unify my sculpture into a cohesive idea, I have formed an image of man. Although there were sculptures I have made such as that seen in figure 4 that followed the simplified profile shape of figure or head. More commonly, I tried to create a sense of a figure. Instead of defining arms, legs, and other individual parts of body, in figure 5 I have attempted to capture a sense of figure resting on a hammock by making use of a rhythmic horizontal process. Since there are no physical resemblances to man to identify in my sculpture it is difficult to see a figure, but the initial inspiration in this abstract form was a sense of figure at rest.

Although the frontal nature of my sculpture has created the serenity which I have sought, frontality, by its nature tended to divide the form into four sided reliefs. To avoid this, I have constructed the sculpture in such a way that the major component does not parallel the edge of the base. Instead of two angles forming a perpendicular, I have learned to vary the angles, the result of which made it possible to look at my sculptures from all angles without seeing a flat surface or total void. Figures 6 and 7 are from this period.

Prior to this latter discovery I realized that the most successful pieces that I had made enveloped a large amount of space. This variation of angles made it easier to utilize



Figure 4



figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

space because the nature of the procedure created a form that demanded that space be a part of the piece. It also made it possible to create a sense of movement. This was analogous to the situation in Classical Greece when contraposto was the technique. I got too carried away with this new knowledge, and made several sculptures that contained severe diagonal planes that became calligraphic in appearance. I realized the danger that my forms were becoming too baroque, so now I have learned to be selective in varying the angle of connection to reestablish a sense of order and eternity.

Of Future Consideration

I have in the previous pages discussed the content of my sculptures and the development of structural and visual techniques to create a sculptural form that successfully represents this content. I am now working in wood sculptures that treat bases as part of the total form. Since these are in progress, I cannot make meaningful comments on them. In addition to wood, I have also been working with bronze recently. In these, the pieces are becoming sturdier and reflect a greater consciousness of a form than a shape. Figures 8, 9, and 10, are new bronze sculptures that display these tendencies. Hopefully, this new direction helps me to add another dimension to my sculpture.



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10