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A reviewer for Colson Whitehead's book, "The Underground Railroad," wrote "Whitehead's writing does what writing should do: it refreshes our sense of the world. If we changed "writing" to "sculpture" the quote would read, "Whitehead's sculpture does what sculpture should do: it refreshes our sense of the world."

The brilliance of this one sentence review is its utter simplicity. It defines the undefinable and creates a solid thought within a fluid context. The sentence poses a question, and an answer. Its sparseness opens doors, and it is a gentle yet forceful reminder of the power and purpose of the arts.

Likewise, Sarah Wilson, in her catalog essay for the Turkish artist Fahrelnissa Zeid quoted Zeid as stating "you must forget what you know because what you know is what you have learned, but what you do not know is what you really are."

My sculptures start with both concept and shape. As an artist, I work with and have developed my own sense of images, and motifs, and my work has changed dramatically over the years in both scale and subject. My forms are both influenced by the history of my discipline as well as what I find unique and visually striking about the world in which I live. My ambition is to bring that personal vision and continued exploration into a larger public venue and to create engaging and powerful works of art that communicate who I am through the forms that I create.

In my sculpture, structure and form work together, creating space and balance. Size and scale are often determined by site, as well as by the function of the space. Many of the large outdoor works are influenced by the architecture of the post-industrial topography of Northwest Indiana and the South Side of Chicago, (where I lived for many years). The interior work's combine both abstract and representational forms, creating large tableaus or site-specific installations. In both cases, my work, however abstract, often draws from literal and utilitarian references. In this sense, my work although seemingly non-representational, often has very specific sources. These influences permeate rather than define the forms, as the language is attached to the space that the work occupies, as well as the ideas that create the works. In this way, the work is a fusion of sources that both reflect and absorb what I know and what I am learning as I push forward with each body of work.

My sculpture has included large scale public works as well as numerous gallery and museum exhibitions over a career that has lasted more than forty years. This breadth of experience has given me a "hands on" perspective on both the technical and aesthetic challenges of my work as a sculptor as well as testing my ideas and concepts within a public venue. The work is part of who I am yet it becomes part of the fabric of another institution or residence and finds its way into the world independent of my persona and feelings. Unlike other professions, where the experience is more temporal, the work becomes part and parcel to the architecture of the space, and its success or failure is defined by how successfully it impacts both place and audience. Also taste changes over time, and in the case of "public sculpture", one often sees the same work over a period of seasons and years. This experience somehow impacts the

viewer in unpredictable ways, as your first thought might not be your second, and living with an object creates a sustained experience that is ongoing rather than temporal. This fluidity of interpretation is at the core of the arts, as perception, taste, and attitudes change dramatically with a longer viewing of the work, and in the case of so much artwork, immediate response, is not necessarily the ultimate judge of the value of the experience. Likewise, your own response to your work is equally fluid, and work that you have forgotten or dismissed over the years can take on a life of its own in unexpected ways.

If my work draws from what I see and what I am influenced by, how I build a work is integral to how my ideas develop. My work is carved, cast, and welded. Making sculpture is labor intensive, and the building process is intertwined and influences the creative process. Although they are often two different hands, they are organically linked, and the finished sculpture has as much to do with “hand” as it does with concept, as the two mitigate each other and build on each other. Hands seem to find the “form” and this physicality has historically been at the core of the visual arts as well as at the core of my work as a sculptor.

Sequentially, sculpture begins with drawing. Starting with a pencil and a journal, drawing connects the hand to the brain. Drawing is simple, direct and intuitive. Some drawings you like better than others, yet the very essence of a drawing is not how it looks but rather what it means. In many ways, the finished sculpture is the evidence of your ideas, an end rather than a beginning. Likewise, the pages of your sketchbooks are your beginnings, and in retrospect, tell you where you have been and what you were imagining. As artists, we create our “story” and in looking back we see how our “story” has evolved and moved forward.

Next are models. Metal work is arduous and long, and projects can take years to complete. Working in simple inexpensive materials allow the quickness and brevity that are the antithesis of bronze sculpture. I often work in cardboard and foam-core, simply cutting and gluing shapes. A cast bronze sculpture is at least six months of labor, a cardboard sketch is usually an hour or two at the most. In the course of a week, I can create many models, in the course of a year I might complete six to ten mid-sized bronze sculptures. In this way, maquettes are fast and direct in helping to find the forms and images that work with both site and idea. They often let you know what you do not know, and allow for chance and improvisation. Most of the time, you have a general idea but with each body of work, you need time to understand if this is the right path as well as whether the work is of value and future promise. Models are in essence your raw ingredients and maturation as a sculptor involves using different approaches to different problems. Models are tools that help you visualize, and like sketches, the ease and expediency of making allows your imagination to flourish when developing new sculptures.

Sculptors are both builders and designers. A general direction becomes actualized into specific shapes. Large forms are carved in wood, then covered with wax or plaster, to articulate volumes. Once the carving is completed, molds need to be made of the form or forms, then another set of molds are made that are then cast into bronze sections. Once the metal casting is completed, the various sections need to be welded, filed, and colored (patinated). In this way,

sculpture combines craft and concept and has a certain “working man’s” attitude implicit in the profession. Technique follows your ideas and is inseparable from the creative process.

Unlike many sculptors that send out their work for fabrication or casting, I am largely involved in this process on all phases. Because of the technical challenges of many of the works, specific phases do involve working with other trades, and connects you with other communities’ The scale of some large- scale projects would be impossible for one person, and “working together” is a shared creative experience. The most time intensive commission, from beginning to end, had a five-year span. On all levels, patience and commitment are tested through the building process, and in this sense, the long stretches of production create an intimacy, and deeper understanding of the work. As a teacher, I often would tell my students that as a sculptor you have ten great minutes for each project. The first five are when you have the idea and the last five are when you finish.

New materials and new technology allows for different possibilities in form and structure. What we make and how we make it are defining characteristics of each generation. How these additional resources are used will impact the next generation of artists in unimaginable ways. The questions we ask ourselves as artists however are equally important in the making of sculpture, and like materials, are often generationally defined. What am I saying, how am I saying it, and has it been said before? Thoughts guide form, and although we see ourselves as unique, we are part of a community of shared ideas that are based on the values of our times. In a subjective profession, how do we know what we believe and how do we define meaning and importance to what we do as artists. These questions are at the core of contemporary visual thinking, and perhaps the single most important criteria in guiding and evaluating your work as an artist.

What we ask, also extends past our own work as artists, and like our recent experience with the controversies regarding public monuments in the United States, change with generations. We expect something different from a sculpture than for example a chair, even though both are three-dimensional objects. Likewise, the traditional historical function of sculpture is radically different today than it was a hundred years ago. The irony is that the most solid of professions can also have the most fluid definitions, as values and norms shift through time and define how we see the work and are the lens of which we understand and examine images. In this way, the past is always contemporary and the questions we ask are intrinsically linked with the sculpture, and in the broadest sense, define and contextualize how we see the object.

On a more personal level, how my sculpture is written about, also tells me a great deal about how my work is seen. If my forms are not evocative, my ideas will not resonate. Reciprocally, how my work is interpreted through reviews and essays can influence and inspire future work.

I am privileged to have been invited to this conference by Professor William Hanks. Our conversations and correspondence have spanned more than thirty-five years. With Professor Hank’s permission, I would like to share these passages regarding my work.

It is as follows:

I think of your work in these terms, the spaces and enclosures defined by structure (ever so light yet massive in its visible strength) yet always escaping the structure by shooting off along some graceful sight line into the void. That's a moment at which the lines you have created become vectors outwards and inwards and around the bends, the work hovering between the line and the movement. Gazing on the work, especially when I have been with it in body space, I am drawn in by a sort of gravity. All that visible, sometimes tensile strength becomes PULL and you fall into it" ...

Why is this work so beautiful? It creates a space, in fact it creates many. It asks gnawing questions about materiality and perception, opacity and pass-through, boundedness and limitedness, thin and thick, straight and rib boned, reflective and matte, elastic and cutting. The stretchers are stretched and the blades are unforgiving. As I look up from the screen of this note, it makes me wonder what I am seeing. The afternoon sun casts shadows. Some are blade-like in their clarity, some rubbed out at the edges and vague. But I no longer know whether they are soft edges because the leaves they trace are soft edged, or whether, like this piece, the shadow-casting edges are themselves truly blade-like but the diffusion of shadow-in-air hides this. In other words, I do not know what I am looking at. This piece is beautiful because I feel the symphonic balance of it, and the sharpness of it, at the very same time that I read it through its diffuse shadow on the wall behind it. Time, space, perception is in play, and because these are fundamental questions, I experience something fundamental. I call this beauty."

In conclusion, being an artist is both a privilege and a journey, and in looking over a lifetime of work, the questions you ask surprise you in the answers they produce, and take you to places that are unexpected. Structure and shape are at the core of my work, yet my forms as a sculptor have matured and evolved in ways that I could never have imagined. Boundaries have been challenged in both scope and image, and have extended my work as an artist. The next step is always the most interesting, as the horizon is open, and what you have been is not what you need to be, and we all hope that the best is still yet to come.

As I embark on the next passage of my career after retiring from thirty-eight years of academic life, I still ask myself the same questions that have intuitively guided my thoughts and ambitions throughout my career, "What have I contributed, what have I achieved, what have I learned, and has this sculpture, " refreshed our sense of the world".

