

# Introduction to the world of Sculpture

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This article is about the introduction to the world of Sculpture, where we talk about the devastating arena of sculpture, sculpture is yet another and an important aspect and part of Fine Arts. In this article, we will have a small ride into the world of sculpture, from its meaning, definition, and from when can we trace the significance of Sculpture. The Article is written by Mr. Rajesh Kumar Sharma, assistant Professor, department of sculpture College of Art, Chandigarh.

## MEANING OF SCULPTURE

Sculpture is another interesting form of art, with a very slight difference, from painting, photography, print making, etc. And this slight difference is just the addition of new dimension to the art work. This new dimension is the height of the form, making it stand out of the other art works. Hence, we can say **sculpture is a three dimensional piece of art work having length, breadth and height, which we can feel, touch and see from every angle and side.** The word sculpture has its roots from the French word "sculptura" which basically means to carve or cut out of stone. Now this Latin meaning of sculpture is thought upon and has been taken in a much larger and bigger sense as **sculpture is now seen as the pure form of art of graving, and carving, the act of forming a figure or an object by cutting a particular material. Sculpture is also initiated to the work of modelling, casting or assembling.** The artist who are involved in making sculptures are called 'sculptor'. So, according to the need and imagination of sculptor, the objects like stone or wood are carved or cut either in 'round' or in 'relief' and sometimes also in 'intaglio', which we would study in brief with appropriate examples, later in this episode.

## TRACES OF SCULPTURE

As I recall, very recently, I went on an educational trip, where we went to many a places like khajurao, konark, sarnath, ellora and elephanta and also the sculptures in mahaballi puram, where we watched many art works, basically sculptures. There, Paintings were very occasionally seen and that to nearly extinguished under the heavy environmental threats. And, at the end of the tour, we all realized we basically saw sculptures to remember with, say in temples, or museums, or monuments, or architecture. Thus, we may see that **sculptures, elaborates the greatest traces of the cultural, mental, political or social heritage of the particular time period.**

From long we have been seeing, one of the most common purposes of Sculpture created, usually as an expression associated with religion or politics. **Cult images are common in many cultures, where animals with the human figure, are the earliest subjects for sculpture, and have always been popular, sometimes realistic, but often imaginary.** If we talk about the very much pre historic times, then a simple depiction of 'mother goddess' is different many civilization, where there basic concept is worshiping her as the symbol of femininity, earth, and fertility but, the characterization and ideology is totally different.

To clarify this let's examine, for example, the mother goddess of Harappa civilization, is related to the religious belief, and is worshiped as the goddess of mother hood, agriculture and the divinity of the nature. The figure is semi-nude with big breasts and slim waist indicating to the beauty of femininity. Responding to the common humans- tendency, that whenever we intend to give a person, some added importance, we seldom honour them by giving them a crown or by giving garlands, and she is ornamented with a neck piece and a belt. And probably thus this terracotta figure, is shown ornamented with a neck piece and a belt and she is made to wear an extra big head gear or we can say a crown which leads us to assume that the figure has some extra ordinary importance.

While, on the other hand, the Venus of willendorf, which is also portrayed as mother goddess shown nude with huge breasts and ovum as a symbol of fertility, or to say the "Lady of Auxerre", at the Louvre Museum in Paris depicts an archaic Greek goddess, who is shown wearing a long skirt, and a cape, with her right hand on her breast so as to show sign of worshiping and fertility, while her captivating smile, symbols of health and vitality. These are three different sculptures which were made to portray the mother goddess; these sculptures also clearly depict the mentality, emotional values and social culture of that particular period.

As fine art has its origin from the pre historic times, so is the origin of sculptures. **One of the first sculptures in the history of art is seen in the 24,000 BC in Austria, it's an 11 inch stone sculpture, Venus of willendorf.** As discussed a little before, it's a sculpture of a feminine figure, plump with large breasts, and lower abdomen pointing towards the femininity and fertility of the women. It's not a realistic sculpture but an exaggerated projection of a female figure indicating to fertility or pregnancy. She has no visible face and her head is covered with may be strands of her hair or a head gear. Her identity is not shown as she is portrayed as a mother goddess and holds a universal beauty, not very specific to any particular identity. She has no feet and her hands are folded over her chest. This figure is carved out of limestone and is looked upon as the beauty of femininity and fertility.

Now, **to look upon the history of India**, let's go back to the civilization of **the Indus valley at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, at about 2500 BC.** **There different sculptures were found to be created in different mediums and techniques. Clay, terracotta, ceramics, stone, bronze and other metals were used in this period and the sculptures had immense quality of perfection and an amazing piece of artwork.** Different casting and baking techniques like lost wax process for bronze sculptures and terracotta process for the clay sculptures were discovered to be done. These sculptures didn't just reach the heights of technique- perfection but also to the subject matter. Mohenjo- Daro period is well known for its sculptures, seals, pottery and toys. Seals, which were used as the currency of the period and were made in copper, bronze, led and tin with outstanding work of metallurgy.

Coming to the details we have already discussed about the "mother goddess" of this civilization, earlier in this episode while taking the examples of mother goddess in different civilizations. Another great example of this period is, dancing girl, which we have again discussed in our first episode of 'introduction to the world of art', and now to recall, we would say, that **the dancing girl measures just 4.3 inch (10.8 centimeters) in height, shows the expression of perfect attitude and grace**, irrespective of she wears no clothes. This nude female figure at the same time shows the fine skills of metal casting and artistic refinery.

**It projects perfect mettle-casting in, early 2500 BC** with so much accuracy... well that's what is called the passion and compassion of art. The figure have few highlights on to her, such as style of hair, as the bun made by the girl is very classy, in her left hand she is wearing bangles to almost her shoulders. Coming to her posture, the figure is shown very thin and very very rhythmic in character, critics say that this girl is about to or has finished her dancing. She stands in a relaxed, calm and resting position with her right hand on her waist and her left hand on her left thigh. This sculpture was made in bronze with method of lost wax process.

To study the history there comes up to be many amazing factors, where we wonder to find how the thinking of the sculptors and architects, proved so scientifically correct. The brilliancy of their thinking, creativity, and knowledge is shown in so many art works in India. Like for instance **if we see an example of the wheel of the sun-god temple, carved at konarak. This temple is situated in Orissa and was approximately made in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.** The wheel, we are going to talk about is one of the wheels of the chariot of lord surya, (Sun God).

**By looking at the art piece we come to know the amount of concentration, dedication and artistic skills which were needed to make such minute decorative and conceptualized work.** There are in about 12 wheels of the chariot with same identical pattern, but with different decorative details. These wheels were also used to known, to show the exact timing. It is worth watching how the local guides, easily available there, claims of these wheels depicting the correct time, they would ask you to hold a pen and to insert its tip in the hub or the center of the wheel. And the fallen shadow of the pen, in the sunlight from sunrise to sunset, gives us the accurate time. It also gives us the correct second, and it totally matches with the time in our watches or mobiles. Isn't this a masterpiece?

**Imagine how hard and difficult was this sculpture to come into existence through pieces of rough natural stone, as just one wrong stroke to sculpt a dot could turn the whole sculpture wrong or meaningless.** The wheel has 8 spokes from the centre to the outer circle, or the ring. These spokes takes a diamond shape while coming towards the hub, where in the centre of the diamond shape lies a small description of the time cycle and what a man actually does in that particular time period. The outer ring is carved with floral motif, animal figures, with creepers added on to it. And the platform at which the wheel is kept is decorated by stylized plants, animal-figures like elephants in different poses, postures and sizes.

To make us understand how the social thinking could have inspired the observation and dedication of the sculptors towards their work. We move to view the outer boundaries of the Konarak temple, where we can see how well, a man's day to day life is shown with lot of particularities. More to surprise us, were the depiction of few female figures wearing very stylized



shoes, which in today's world we call heels. And also the way a 21<sup>st</sup> century young ladies hold their hand bag, is stylistically sculpted in Konarak temple.

So now, I can say, that art and life goes hand in hand, and that to in the three and four dimensional art concerned with the presence of volume, mass, form, texture, rhythm, tone, play of light and shade, colour and its contours.