

# Intricate Details in the world of Sculpture

**Rajesh Kumar Sharma**

Assistant Professor, Department of sculpture, College of Art, Chandigarh.

This article is about the details of Sculpture. Sculpture is all about details, techniques, forms and procedures. In this article, we will have a small go through with these techniques and explain them in the most simpler and easy way subjected with few examples as well. The Article is written by Mr. Rajesh Kumar Sharma, assistant Professor, department of sculpture College of Art, Chandigarh.

## TECHNIQUES OF SCULPTURE

There are basically two types of techniques in sculpture which is subtractive or addition process. These two processes are far most the most assertive and important in the field of sculpture. No sculpting, carving, chiseling, molding can be done without in the involvement of any of the two. Many a times both can be used together to form the sculpture completely.

### SUBTRACTIVE PROCESS

**Subtractive sculpture is the oldest form of sculpture and involves removing material, as in wood carving or stone sculpture, to create a finished work. This method is based on a very simple principle that is when artist remove or carve out by chiseling, cutting or chipping away an existing block or lump, which are not required, in order to obtain the desired form and structure.**

Carving is a subtractive process, whereby material is systematically eliminated from the outside surface in to a finished sculpture. Subtractive sculpture is by far the most technically difficult and due to the nature of the medium is the most restrictive in expression. In this process the sculptor eventually began to compose and shapes a dummy or small form of the sculpture, usually called a 'Maquette', made out of clay before actual carving. As in this process once a particular part is removed, it can't be put back. And then uses a variety of mechanical devices to transfer the block into the three dimensional sculpture. Finally, the raw shaped block is then finished by the sculptor himself.

**Mostly the mediums used for subtractive process are stone, wood, ivory, bones, plaster, the rmocol or Sholapith which is the milky-white sponge-wood which is carved into delicate and beautiful objects of art especially in west-Bengal.** Now as far to view some examples of subtractive process, we would sit- back and just recall so many examples from the ones we have already discussed in this episode like for instance the Ravana shaking mount kailash, seated Budha, Trimurti from elephanta, khajurao sculptures, David, Venus of willendorf and etc, are examples of subtractive process.

### ADDITIVE PROCESS

This process is totally in contrast to the subtractive method, **as the artists here build up their own form by adding the material to the sculpture, to obtain the finished and desired form. In this process one can add as well as subtract according to their need and will. This flexibility allows the artist great freedom, expression, and experimentation.** Further we may categorize additive process in three main processes that is:

1. **Modeling process**
2. **Casting process**
3. **Assemblage or connstructive process**

- **Modeling process-** Any material which is soft or malleable such as clay, wax, plaster or papier-mâché, that can be molded can be used for this process. Frequently the modeling material has limited structural strength and could need the support of an armature.
- **Casting process-** In this process, the sculpture that are cast are made from liquid or molten material, poured in a particular mold made out of plaster, wax or rubber etc. and then it is to cool down, and

**accordingly when the mould is allowed to cool, thereby hardening the metal, then the casted sculpture takes its desired shape.** Dancing girl, and the seals from the harrapan period, Natraja from the chola period are some of the best suited examples of bronze casting additive process, and to go in a bit of details all the above three examples they are made by lost wax process. The detailed procedure of different casting would be discussed in the further episodes on casting and its techniques.

- **Assemblage or constructive process:** The third additive process is assemblage or construction. In which, the artists bring together different materials, to construct and create the desired form or sculpture. **Assemblage involves the transformation of traditionally non-artistic objects and materials into sculpture through combining or constructing techniques such as gluing or welding.** Typically an assemblage does not disguise the original objects and it's used, rather it either tries to show them in a new light, or forms a figurative sculpture from the collection of shapes. Pablo Picasso pioneered the technique of assemblage, constructing works partly or entirely of "found" objects, both natural and man-made. Thus we can say, the origin of this art form dates to the cubist constructions of Picasso. The 'Bull's Head' (1942), 'Crane'- 1951-1952 and 'Guitars'- 1912-1914 are some of the most interesting work of his in this particular style.

### DISPLAY OF SCULPTURES

There is a wide range of freestanding or relief sculptures embodied human, divine, and mythological or abstract constructive manipulation, are often seen displayed in Public spaces- including, temples, gateways, gardens, museums, galleries or other buildings. Sculpture also lives because we can interact with it. The play of sunlight or the fall of moon light or by an artificial light source helps the sculpture to communicate an attitude and express its intense feelings. **Display of outdoors or indoor sculptures requires, well organized planning for installation, structural issues, lightning factors, ground managements, and later to preserve requires long-term maintenance systems.**

The display of indoor or outdoor sculptures also depends on the materials and mediums of the sculpture. Let's view the works of Indian sculptor 'Mrinalini Mukherjee', who creatively knots braids of stained jute and ropes to shape up her conceptual sculpture. Or work of another sculptor in Berkeley, California, 'Aimée Baldwin' who has gained her expertise to, create her stunningly detailed birds out of crepe paper and papier-mâché. Her bird sculptures are as lifelike as the best models in a natural history museum.

**So, the sculptures made by biodegradable materials like paper, glass, terracotta, ceramics, rubber, jute, fiber, wax, plaster, wood or metals like iron, if kept in contact with the outer environment, can damage its existence. Thus indoor display placement is preferred for them. Even rare, metal- antiques or precious Gold, silver, jade or ivory sculptures or miniature sculptures also demand indoor and intricate display.** The appeal of the sculptures, source of lightning and appropriate spacing affects the overall impact of the sculpture.

**While outdoor display of sculptures could be made out of materials as stone, cement, bronze, stainless steel, lead, cast iron, zinc, fiber-glass etc.** the sculptures made by Ramkinkar Baij the 'Santhal family' placed in Santiniketan. And Henry Moore's 'King and Queen' displayed at Glenkiln Sculpture Park in south-west Scotland marks the best examples of outdoor sculpture display. Open-air sculpture in the public realm symbolizes, historic value, and is influential on the aesthetic quality. Many a times we observe the single figure statue, attracts greater personality significance. And particularly more when it is presented in a more effective and powerful manner, by usually raising them quite above its surroundings by means of a pedestal, and is placed in the most advantageous light by a suitable background. By these means the statue becomes a monument, in which the characteristic traits to immortalize their bold characteristics with greater aesthetic charm.

But we have seen the physical erosion of stone carvings, rooting of wood, resting of iron and fading or peeling of the paints involves heavy loss of historical information and aesthetic quality of sculptures. Strong views of conservation for outdoor sculpture have led to fresh ideas and new perspectives. For example, Even the option of removing iconic sculptures to safer conditions indoors in was done in 1910, when the original Michelangelo's David carved in 1873 was moved indoors, and a replica was placed in Florence's Piazza della Signoria.

We must understand that even solid structured material become vulnerable when placed outdoors. Thus, **we must realize the essentiality of regular maintenance programme and require the implementation of a long-term conservation strategy with collaboration of art historians, conservation scientists, engineers, fabricators, and the sculptors to insure the protection of outdoor sculpture.**

**Modern and contemporary art have added a number of non-traditional forms of sculpture, including: Sound sculpture, Light sculpture, Kinetic sculpture, involving aspects of physical motion, Land art and Site-specific public art.** Some sculpture, such as ice sculpture, sand sculpture, butter sculpture and gas sculpture, is deliberately short-lived. Recent sculptors have used stained glass, tools, machine parts, hardware and consumer packaging to use in their works. While, "Installation art" and their practising artist uses sculptural materials and other media to show their views and experiences through their art work keeping in mind the particular space of area.