



A sheet from the history of sculpture

**Djabborov Dilshod
Turdikulovich**

Lecturer at the Department of "Distance Education in Natural and Exact Sciences" Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute.

ABSTRACT

A sculpture is a three-dimensional, human-made object selected for special recognition as art. Every culture since the beginning of human existence has sculpted objects that have lasted hundreds or even thousands of years. Sculpture as a three dimensional object is different from other art in that it is also tactile and allows even the blind to experience it. As intelligence develops the human ability to use the materials of the external world develop.

Keywords:

Sculpture, Human-Made, Culture, Renaissance, Realism, [Marble](#), [Limestone](#), [Porphyry](#).

The diversity of materials used to create sculpture are unparalleled in the art world. The history of sculpture began focused on the materials used and as man progressed, the focus included ideas and values that man put into these three-dimensional objects. It began with objects from distant civilizations created out of crude clay or stone, something that could be chipped away with primitive tools. With the invention of fire came pottery and utensils as well as objects used for worship. Later on iron and other metals, precious or otherwise, were being forged into shapes and in the Greek period came very sophisticated carvings of the human form that later Renaissance artists envied and tried to emulate. As the materials evolved so did the sensibilities. We find that giant Buddhas, Sphinxes, the Colossus of Rhodes, deities or mythological creatures, busts of great men and women were created that inspired feelings of awe and wonder. When the Mannerists came along at the end of the [Renaissance](#) they pushed exaggeration and contrast to great limits with elongated forms that emphasized going beyond human limits of flesh and blood. After periods of strict [Realism](#), especially for public works, came Romantics, Rodin, etc., and then Surrealists, Duchamp, etc.,

who liked the use of everyday objects. Moderns who wanted to get back to basics; e.g., Moore, Zadkine and Picasso, with abstract form. Pop artists like Oldenburg turned the everyday into icons and now with the swift advance of the sciences and technology almost anything is possible. To a certain degree the history of sculpture parallels that of painting especially in terms of subject matter, from the Lascau [cave paintings](#), Aboriginal and Indian rock pictures of spirits, down through all the historical art movements. These two disciplines have also fused at different times and we find painters (Da Vinci, Picasso) and sculptors (Michaelangelo, Rodin) excelling at both. Throughout human history sculptures have been created that became objects of art with a permanence unlike other art. Works have been produced in durable and frequently expensive materials, primarily; [bronze](#) and stone such as [marble](#), [limestone](#), [porphyry](#), and [granite](#). Less frequently precious materials such as [gold](#), [silver](#), [jade](#), and [ivory](#) were usually used for chryselephantine works. Common materials used for sculpture that made for wider consumption included materials like woods such as [oak](#), box and lime, ceramics like terracotta, and [cast](#) metals such as pewter and

spelter. Sculptors often build small preliminary works called maquettes that are made of ephemeral materials such as plaster of Paris, wax, [clay](#) and even plasticine. Henry Moore's enormous pieces usually started out as small plaster or plasticine maquettes.

Contemporary materials. Most traditional sculpture materials are still in wide use today, but advancements in technology have broadened the range of materials. Materials now include [glass](#) and [sand](#), [aluminum](#), [polymers](#) and many synthetic materials like liquid crystals. In today's film and theater industries it is common for sculptors to carve large statuary from blocks of polystyrene. Although not durable, it is light and can be cut easily with a hot wire. Some sculptures are multimedia in that they have form and produce sound. Many artists use video and/or computers in their sculptures. Computers and motors can be used in sculptures, leading to works that may be classified as [robotic](#). Some sculptors are using 3D modeling software and rapid prototyping systems to realize form in plastic polymers. Sculptors are also using CNC (Computer Numerical Control) mills to mill out stone and clay in creating works that can be visualized virtually and manifested physically.

Sculptors are constantly searching for new ways to make art with new materials. Blood, dead animals, and body fluids are some of the more unusual choices for modern sculptors. Andy Goldsworthy is known for his use of almost entirely natural materials in natural settings and for creating sculpture more ephemeral than is typical. Jim Gary used automobile parts, tools, machine parts, and hardware in many of his sculptures as well as stained glass. [Pablo Picasso](#) used bicycle handlebars as bulls' horns. Marcel Duchamp used a bicycle wheel impaled on a bar stool as one of his ready-made (found) objects. In his late writings, [Joan Miró](#) even proposed that some day sculptures might be made of gases.^[1]

Common forms

Common forms of sculpture are:

- **Bust**, a representation of a person from the chest (torso) up.
- **Equestrian** sculpture, typically showing a significant person on horseback.
- **Free-standing** sculpture, sculpture that is surrounded on all sides, except the base, by space. It is also known as sculpture "in the round."
- **Fountain**, in which the sculpture is designed with moving water.
- **"In the round"**: designed by the sculptor to be viewed from any angle.
- **Jewelry**
- **Mobile** (See also Calder's Stables.)
- **Relief**: sculpture still attached to a background, standing out from the ground in "High Relief" or "Low Relief" (bas relief)
- **Site-Specific Art**
- **Statue**

Asian. Many different forms of sculpture were in use in many different regions of Asia, often based in the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism. A great deal of Cambodian Hindu sculpture is preserved at Angkor ^[2], however organized looting destroyed many sites around the country. In Thailand, sculptures were exclusively of [Buddha](#). Many Thai sculptures or temples are gilded, and on occasion enriched with inlays.

India. The first sculptures in India date back to the [Indus Valley civilization](#), where stone and bronze carvings have been discovered. It is the home of the earliest instances of sculpture in the world. Later, as [Hinduism](#), [Buddhism](#) and [Jainism](#) developed, India produced some of the most intricate bronzes in the world, as well as unrivaled temple carvings. Some huge shrines, as the one at Ellora^[3] were carved out of solid rock, making them the largest and most intricate sculptures in the world. During the 2nd to 1st century B.C.E. in far northern [India](#), in what is now southern [Afghanistan](#) and northern [Pakistan](#), sculptures included

episodes of the Buddha's life and teachings. Although India had a long sculptural tradition, the Buddha was always represented only symbolically and not in human form before this time. This may be because [Gandharan](#) Buddhist sculpture in modern Afghanistan displays [Greek](#) and [Persian](#) artistic influence. Artistically, the Gandharan school has contributed wavy hair, drapery on both shoulders, shoes and sandals, acanthus leaf decorations, etc. The pink sandstone sculptures of Mathura evolved during the Gupta period (4th to 6th century) a high level of execution finesse and modeling delicacy. Newer sculptures in [Afghanistan](#), in stucco, or clay, display very strong blending of Indian post-Gupta mannerism, with Hellenistic or even Greco-Roman, influences. Meanwhile, elsewhere in India, less anatomically accurate styles of human representation evolved, leading to the classical style that the world is now familiar with and contributing to Buddhist and Hindu sculpture throughout Asia.

China. Modern skilled Chinese artisans can trace their roots back to artifacts dating as early as 10,000 B.C.E. However, the bulk of sculpture displayed in European museums come from only a few, historical periods. The first period of interest is the [Zhou Dynasty](#) (1050-771 B.C.E.), which is known for a variety of intricate cast bronze vessels. The next period of interest is the [Han Dynasty](#) (206 B.C.E. - 220 C.E.)—beginning with the spectacular Terracotta, army. This was assembled for the tomb of the first Emperor of the brief Chin dynasty that preceded it. (Qin Shi Huang) in 210–209 B.C.E.) Tombs excavated from the Han period have revealed many figures that are, vigorous, direct, and appealing, even 2000 years later. The period considered to be China's golden age is the [Tang Dynasty](#). (This coincides with what in Europe is sometimes called "The Dark Ages"). Decorative figures like those shown below became very popular in 20th Century Euro-American culture. They were made available in bulk, as warlords in the Chinese civil wars exported them to raise cash. Considered especially desirable, and profound, were the Buddhist

sculptures. Many of these, often monumental and begun in the Sui Dynasty, inspired by the Indian art of the Gupta period, are considered treasures of the art world. Following the Tang, Western interest in Chinese artifacts declines dramatically, except for ornamental furnishings and jade objects. Pottery from the Tang period stands out for its free and easy feeling. Chinese sculpture has no nudes—other than figures made for medical training or practice—and little portraiture. The only place where sculptural portraiture was pursued was in the monasteries. Almost nothing, other than jewelry, jade, or pottery is collected by art museums after the [Ming Dynasty](#) ended in the late seventeenth century—and absolutely no sculpture of artistic merit has come from the tumultuous twentieth century. However, there were schools of Soviet-influenced social realist sculpture early in the Communist regime but as the century turned, Chinese craftsmen began to dominate commercial genres (collector plates, figurines, toys, etc) whilst avant garde Chinese artists participated in the Euro-American enterprise of contemporary art.

References.

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2. On sculpture in the Royal Academy Schools, see Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 28–36.
3. Edmund Gosse, 'The New Sculpture' [pt 4], *Art Journal* (October 1894): 306–11, at 306.
4. Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982); Beattie, *New Sculpture*.
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