



## Sculpture and Emotion

LI Ying<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, Beijing, China.  
 \*Corresponding author.

Received 11 July 2022; accepted 2 October 2022  
 Published online 26 December 2022

### Abstract

Sculptures carries the creators' emotions, which is the essence of the art. The expression of emotion is the most important element in a sculpture creation. Emotion is the perception of life and aggregation of various feelings. Sculpture full of real sentiments can touch the viewers' hearts. Emotion is also the driving force of sculpture creation, and the creation of sculpture beauty is the process of devoting creators' mind to impregnate ones' emotions into the art piece. The presence of emotion runs through the entire process of sculpture creation, which reflects the artists' perspective, knowledge, and concepts, generating cultural symbols and spiritually and emotionally connecting with the audiences. This kind of emotional indoctrination and feedback is exactly the charisma of sculpture. Art comes from life, and emotion is obtained from long-term life practice. The later needs to be expressed by means and methods. Only when the artists' emotion expressed through work makes the audiences understand, experience, and resonate can it be regarded as a good piece of art.

**Key words:** Cultural symbols; Sculpture; Emotion; Resonance

Li, Y. (2022). Sculpture and Emotion. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 18(4), 1-5. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/12795>  
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12795>

### 1. SCULPTURE'S FORM AND EMOTION

Sculpture is a space art and a presentation of its specific form. It is the most intuitive way to convey an idea. The shape and form of a sculpture is determined by its entity in the three-dimensional space. Whether a body can express the creators' emotion and have aesthetic value does not depend on its physical form. It is based on the objective inner vitality of the sculpture and the harmonious unity of its external physical shape and internal spirit. The physical form of sculpture has its limitations, which require its artistic language to be simple and concise and full of rhythmic changes and symbolic meanings. Therefore, the beauty of the physical form of sculpture is very important.

*The Venus of Willendorf* (Figure 1) is a round limestone sculpture made in BC. The facial feature of the character is vague, the hair is curly and evenly arranged, and its shape emphasizes the reproductive characteristics of female such as the chest and abdomen areas. Such physical form expresses the desire for human reproduction during the matriarchal clan. This piece of art is recognized by the public as the beginning of sculpture art of human being. It did not just depict and record natural phenomena and occurrences. It was the origin of sculpture and the starting of human feeling and emotion. The task of sculptors is to liberate the spirit that exists in the stone sculpture. He saw the physical form of twisted and restless human bodies and felt the freed spirits of slaves, heroes, and saints. *Resentment* by Xu Zhenglong (Figure 2) wants to express the ever-growing, metaphysical, irregular, and sharp shapes that are imprisoned in stone or other media. They want to break through all restraints and show the persistent and uninhibited personality under the quiet appearance.



**Figure 1**  
*Venus of Willendorf*



**Figure 2**  
*Resentment by Xu Zhenglong*

## 2. SCULPTURE SPACE AND EMOTION

Sculpture is a kind of art where the artists use material as a media to create and express personal thoughts and emotions in space. The concept of space is getting richer. Artists are not satisfied with the expression of pure 'shape' and 'shape and form' and are pursuing the elevation in the spiritual level. The space element of sculpture is crucial, such as the organic integration of space and time and the coordination of interaction and relation between them to

make the sculpture better displayed, leading the spiritual resonance between the sculptors and audiences.

Sculptor Henry Moore makes his sculpture more spatially sensitive through negative space such as 'holes and voids', which are his ultimate application and perfect expression of negative space in sculpture. The holes become part of the overall sculpture; they make the sculpture more layered, enrich its emotion, and make it memorable for the audience. Taking the *Reclining Figure* (Figure 3) as an example, the outer contour of the sculpture is gentle, and the human body is extremely simple and flows like a mountain. The plump form gives the sculpture a sense of strength, and the reclining posture gives it full stability. Due to the extremely simple shape, the boundaries between the inner and outer space are vague. The perfect combination of simple shape, flexible inner space, and the reclining posture gives the sculpture a harmonious rhythm of life. The stereoscopic sculpture Alexander Archipenko carved voids and hollows in the sculptures, combining the positive and negative space together. In this experimental work *The Woman Who Is Dressing* (Figure 4), voids and hollows are carved in the figure's body. It is a bold attempt to apply hollow in the sculpture. Various parts of the human body are represented using geometric shapes, according to the characteristics of a female body and Archipenko's unique perspective. The head and chest parts are carved out. The shape of the figure is formed by the continuous outline of the contour and the hollow shape defined by it. The lines of the legs concave inward instead of protruding outward. The hollow and physical shapes form a very beautiful sculpture. The inversion between the shapes seems to be influenced by the natural connection of the bones of human beings, forming a well-proportioned rhythm and suggesting a harmonious state in the movement of the figure. This very generalized body-figure sculpture leaves a deep impression on the audience. Archipenko's simple modeling techniques show the female characteristics and gives the sculpture full vitality. He inverts the concrete meanings of volume and space and gives the sculpture a purely abstractive aestheticism.



**Figure 3**  
*Reclining Figure by Henry Moore*



**Figure 4**  
*The Woman Who Is Dressing* by Alexander Archipenko

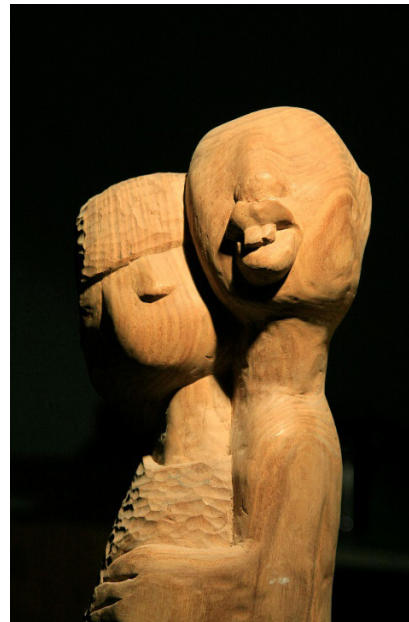
### 3. SCULPTURE MATERIAL AND EMOTION

Material is also an expression language of sculpture. Artists need to understand their characteristics to perfectly unify the physical form of the sculpture and the emotion conveyed. Materials of sculpture can be roughly divided into two kinds: natural and artificial materials. Natural materials include mud, stone, and wood; artificial materials include resin, metal, and composite materials. Sculptors need to choose the best expression of sculpture based on the theme, explore the deeper meaning of the sculpture, and analyze the language of materials. The spiritual connotation and artistic charisma brought by the sculpture to the audience fully illustrate the rich use of creative materials.

*Zhuo* by young sculpture artist Liang Jiachao (Figure 5) using white marble is a masterpiece of practical experimentation with creative materials. White marble is sparkling and translucent. Its color is white and pure and contains sparkles. It gives people a spotless and solemn beauty. Several abstractive bird shapes stand on an upward straight line. The seemingly identical shapes are different when looked closely. The white stone is used to express a sense of solitary and pride. The unique feelings of the material match the theme of harmony but different and unique perfectly. My woodcarving *The Same Song* (Figure 6) expresses sincere emotion. It used natural wood as the media. Wood is a material with vitality. Its unique texture makes people love it. The annual rings record the age of the tree and its experience. The simple figure modeling, with hidden facial features but representative nose and mouth that are hidden under the beauty of materials, imply people's most pure yet intense emotions.



**Figure 5**  
*Zhuo* by Liang Jiachao



**Figure 6**  
*The Same Song* by Li Ying

### 4. SCULPTURE COLOR AND EMOTION

Sculptors are paying more and more attention to color usage. Most sculptures are static and are made of established materials. Color usage of these materials can enrich the color of a sculpture and make it more vivid and expressive. 'Sculpture' and 'painting' complement each other. The purpose of painting and coloring on the sculpture is to make it more real and make the static sculpture more dynamic and authentic. The gods and heroes of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as painted sculpture and pottery figures of ancient Chinese caves, all use colors to make the sculptures more vivid. Many modern sculptors have drawn on the characteristics and

expressive techniques of painted sculptures, creating sculptures with novel and unique expressive effects.

In contemporary sculpture, the use of color has become a form of expression that can cause resonance and one of the characteristics of sculptures' personal creative styles. For example, *A Glass of Absinthe* by Pablo Picasso (Figure 7) was praised by Oscar Wilde to be the most poetic sculpture in the world and like a sunset. This sculptural wine glass created in 1914 expresses Picasso's emotions toward human beings. The graffiti-like colors stimulate the audiences' thoughts and emotions, endowing the colors thoughts and emotions.

Sculptures by Japanese artist Yoshimasa Tsuchiya use color to take the audiences into a world of fairy tales, such as his healing wood sculpture *Deer* (Figure 8). He is keen to endow his sculptures with 'soul' of colors. His work is pure and rustic, and concise and tranquil. The sculpture has an overall yellow and white tones with additional delicate light color changes that are perfect integrated, causing the audiences to indulge in the appreciation of the overall and details of the sculpture. The audiences are in a dialogue with the gentle creature created by Tsuchiya. The posture and spirituality of creatures have always been the theme of his creation, and his sculptures are sacred and pure.



**Figure 7**  
*A Glass of Absinthe* by Pablo Picasso

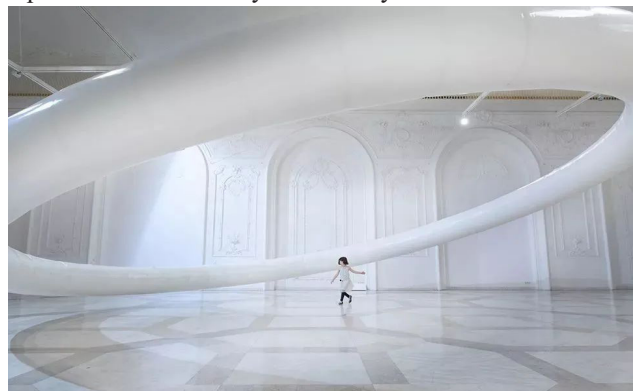


**Figure 8**  
*Deer* by Yoshimasa Tsuchiya

## 5. SCULPTURE INTERACTIVITY AND EMOTION

With the development of technology as well as the change of people's mind, many anti-traditional sound and light sculptures and sculptures with multi-dimensions and interactive experience have appeared in contemporary sculpture art. Work by the French installation artist Vincent Leroy are regarded as 'dynamic sculptures'. He uses the simplest materials to directly express poetic and pictorial feelings in his heart. *Boreal Halo* is an installation sculpture exhibited at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes in France. The 8-meter-diameter white ring occupies the entire space and rotates gently. People in the exhibition room will have the illusion of themselves moving. They gradually enter a state of meditation that is detached from reality with the ethereal and indulging music. The white decoration inside the museum reinforces the sense of weightlessness. The natural light projected from the ceiling causes blurred, dark, and moving shadows of the installation. The halo of the installation breeds ever-changing angles in the gentle and sensual movement. Time is no longer a fixed unit but stretched by the gentle circulation of the installation sculpture, allowing the audiences to experience a poetic and free atmosphere.

Similarly, his other installation work *Slow Lens* is good at using the least material and the simplest way to achieve a poetic expression. Leroy uses slightly curved translucent lenses and displays the lenses in a net form. The organically arranged circular lenses refract the surrounding into blurred fragments under a slow rotating motion, creating a sense of trance and the inability to distinguish between space and time. His work have a unique serenity and romance. The combination of light and shadow, the poetic dynamics, and low-tech industrial style is unified into a smooth rhythm. Leroy uses physics to make simple lines, blocks, and geometric shapes to move slowly. The trajectory of color movement is sculpted with a dynamic installation. He combines music, light and shadow, movement of objects, material, and color so the audiences can feel the natural passage of time and walk in a poetic world of reality and fantasy.



**Figure 9**  
*Boreal Halo* by Vincent Leroy



**Figure 10**  
*Slow Lens* by Vincent Leroy

---

## 6. CONCLUSION

Emotion is a psychological response to external stimuli. It is an attitude due to whether an objective thing satisfies one's needs, and a person's attitude toward objective things. The combination of emotion of creative ideas forms a structure. Under the mutual catalysis of various factors, the art form becomes more enriched. Emotion is presented during the entire process of sculpture creation. The life of sculpture comes from the sincere emotion of the artists. The creation process is an artist's perception and understanding of life. The main purpose of art is to serve as the reflection of human beings on themselves. It is reality and history. It is the materialized product of emotion because of the thoughts and emotions from the artists and audiences and the convergence of aesthetics. And emotion is the origin of life.

Auguste Rodin once said, "The origin of art lies in the inner truth. Shapes and colors must convey emotion." Sculpture creation is the cohesion of emotion and material, the perception of life, the aesthetic understanding of the world, and the material embodiment of cultural connotation. Art creation originates from the emotional

experience of recognizing and understanding of life, and art evokes resonance of the aesthetic subject in the form of emotion. Art produced by artists' emotion can be conveyed to the audiences, and audiences' emotion can be evoked spontaneously. This is expected by both parties.

The most important element of sculpture creation has always been emotional expression, which is the materialization process of emotion. The complexity of artists' inner emotions is fully reflected in the sculptures through 'carving' and 'sculpting'. Great emotional power is often in sculptures creation. This shows the importance of expression of emotion as an artist. The emotional expression in many sculptures is reflected in the care and thinking of one's own heart, recording the personal life and events of an artist. The sculpture language is chosen according to the theme of the creation, and the use of elements such as shape, material, color, and scene tends to be free and unconstrained. Many sculptors use sculptures to express their personal feelings and emotions. They place themselves in the mind of great emotions such as history and culture and express their inner emotional worlds. Nevertheless, we can see the differences in perspectives and emotional experiences due to the artists' nationality and sex and the historical background. There are various emotional expressions of sculpture throughout time, and the artists finally have returned to the freedom of emotional expression.

---

## REFERENCES

- Causey, A. (2014). *Sculpture since 1945* (Y. Yi, Trans). Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press.
- Moore, H. (2011). *The art collection of Henry Moore* (H. Zhang, Trans.). Beijing: Gold Wall Press.
- Xu, J. G. (2003). *Spirit and emotion*. Beijing: Commercial Press.
- Xu, Z. L. (2011). *Introduction to sculpture*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.
- Xu, Z. L., & Shi, K. M. (2013). *Anthology of sculpture art*. Guangxi Normal University Press: Guilin.