

DIALECTICAL DIALOGUES IN POST MODERN SCULPTURE

By

Theophilus Kwesi Mensah
(B.Ed.) Picture Making

A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
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MASTER OF FINE ART (MFA SCULPTURE)
Faculty of Art, College of Art and Social Sciences

© June, 2009, *Department of Painting and sculpture*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the MFA and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

THEOPHILUS KWESI MENSAH

(PG1121307)

.....

.....

(Candidate)

Signature

Date

Certified by:

MR. EDWIN KWESI BODJAWAH

.....

.....

(Supervisor)

Signature

Date

Certified by:

MR. GODFRED ANNUM

.....

.....

(Head of Department)

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

Exhuming medieval spatial metaphors, the study expounds how these concepts Vis a Vis current thought, have informed and thus negotiated formal aesthetic dialogue over the centuries. Through experimental praxis this research openly confronts the noble media, the oversubscribed frontal alignment of the narrative, the pedestal and the preferred figure in the expression of commemorative and allegorical ideas with an interactive narrative which employs the use of found media (ready-mades) to a new aesthetic end.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To God be the glory and honour for granting me the wisdom, knowledge and strength to be able to bring this project to a successful end. Sincere gratitude is extended to Mr. Edwin Kwesi Bodjawah my research supervisor for his devotion, dedication and meticulous guidance during the rendition and documentation of this project. I am also grateful to the sculpture lecturers in my department who contributed and influenced me more than words can describe.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Sculpture is derived from the Latin word (sculpere “to carve”). It is a term used to describe three-dimensional art concerned with the organization of masses and volumes. The two principal types have traditionally been freestanding sculpture in the round and relief sculpture. Historians have long established that earliest sculpted object, cut from stone, ivory, bone or horn dates back from about 27,000 to 32,000 years ago. Contrary wise, findings have also shown that prehistoric Africans were carving objects from stone even before the year 2000s.

Art critics over the years have wondered and asked about the nature of sculpture and how this unique experience of art could be defined. If in this 21st century we are still asking the same question, it is because this unique art form of sculpture keeps on taken forms, which its contemporary viewer finds difficult to assimilate because of his pre-conceived ideas of what should constitute a work of sculpture. Critic have always argued whether there is a difference between a temporal event and a static object and, if so, what impact this difference has on the construction of the art forms concerned with them.

By the 1930s, this sense of an expected antagonism between an art of time and an art of space had become a basic starting point from which to assess the unique accomplishment of sculpture (Krauss 1981).

As a result in the last decades, rather amazing things have come not to only contend the traditional landmark of sculpture but also to reshape it. Different philosophical

beliefs and ideologies have contended each other, all in a quest to claim supremacy. Sculpture thus has ceased to become a stasis but rather an organic entity with a life of its own. Relying on various accounts of seasoned art critics, this research seeks to trace the metamorphosis of this ever-expanding concept, hoping to come to terms with its current state in a five-chapter essay.

In chapter, one the researcher attempts to give a background of what has transpired in history with respect to the ever-changing face of sculpture, which leads us to Chapter two, where the researcher verifies through a review of related literature and works of artist, to make a case, with comparable models that have come about, not only in history, but in recent times. Having had a fair idea of occurrences, the researcher begins this project with an experimental praxis in Chapter Four which opens up the terrain for a discussion. Since it is not the objective of this research to claim absoluteness, the researcher seeks for Goodwill in Chapter Five with the hope that more opportunities would be created for sculptors to transgress and trespass.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A journey through the narratives in Ghana reveals not only a persistent preference for the human figure and traditional media (stone, cement wood clay etc.) in expressing commemorative sculptures and allegorical ideas but also a dutiful devotion to the object in total disregard of its context. Again, most commemorative narrative in Ghana are erected on pedestals and rendered frontally which do not go only to suggest that the work is finished, but also that, meaning is monosemic. This approach has over the years not only narrowed the construction of meaning but it has also degenerated into a methodic or mechanical approach to the construction of the narrative.

However one finds conspicuously evident an abundance of discarded and found medium which have had former lives and thus fraught with in-context vernacular qualities which could be explored by sculptors to new aesthetic ends which would also not only leave the narratives in a mutating state but also meaning would be subjective and relative to the on looker.

Ostensibly, as a 'jigsaw puzzle' rooted in not only phenomenology and formalism, the research seeks to explore how pole ideologies have informed and influenced not only the configuration of the narratives but also their appreciation.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To question the omniscient gaze and absolute meaning which a rational device like frontality renders on the narrative.
2. To make non-figurative commemorative sculptures using found media that would rout the viewer's ability to possess it either physically or intellectually.
3. To write a project report on the rendition process of the project.

JUSTIFICATION OF OBJECTIVES

1. This will aid the study in ascertaining other ways of perceiving works based on phenomenology.
2. This will help bring some flexibility into the rendition and interpretation of commemorative and allegorical ideas given them a polysemic aura.
3. This will serve as a source of reference for future research.

FACILITIES ACCESSED

KNUST MAIN LIBRARY.

COLLEGE OF ART LIBRARY (KNUST)

BALME LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.

CENTER FOR NATIONAL CULTURE MAIN LIBRARY KUMASI AND
ACCRA.

MASTER OF FINE ART STUDIO, KNUST, KUMASI.

THE WORLD WIDE WEB

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

To Rosalind E. Krauss the essence of sculpture [or the monument] is not its “simulated quality” but its ability to encapsulate an ideology which by medieval standards, relief yielded itself as the most suitable vehicle of communication (1977, P.9-10) (fig1).

It was therefore to realize the above epitomized formal effect and viewing experience why the neoclassical sculptors delineated “the human body through multiple views” (1977, p.18) manipulating the “figures in pairs and in threes, so that the front view of one figure would be available simultaneously with the back view of its mate” (1977, p.18) (as in Canova’ and Thorwaldsen Grasses), (fig 2 and 3). In which the “presentation arranges the bodies along a single, frontal plane, so that it is legible at a glance”.

In this work three figures are presented to the viewer in such a way that they allow for a synthetic vision of their totality, in one single glance. While looking at them from a fixed point of view, namely frontally, one sees all the perspective they have to offer at once. They themselves are not really moving, but to the static viewer’s eye, they suggest an illusion of dancing around one single vertical axis. This can be conceived of as a sort of ideal and absolutely stable centre, a transcendent internal core that unifies their three bodies into one.

Aimed at positing an epitomized composition, this convention informed the productions of a great number of sculptures not only during the late 18th and early

19th centuries but presently in modern day Ghana (fig 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8). However, the convention degenerates, resulting rather in a formulaic configuration of figures around a single idealized vertical axis. Dictating not only a hackneyed composition (with only a single focal point), this convention again establishes a unioocular relationship (between sculpture- viewer), offering the viewer at a single sweeping glance (an idealized locos) a tailored omniscient view of the sculpture.



Figure.1. Francois Rude: (*La Marseillaise*, 1833-36.stone, carving 504"x312",Arch of triumph, Paris.) Source: <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2005/10/13/arts/eskin.583.1.jpg>. Accessed on January 9th, 2009.



Figure 2. Antonio Canova: *The Three Graces*, 1813. Marble. Source: <http://www.creativelydifferentblinds.com/VAImagesVASculpture/TheThreeGracesantonioCanova2.aspx>. Accessed 09/12/ 2008.



Figure 3. Thorvaldsen *Three Graces*: (1821). Marble. Source: <http://www.creativelydifferentblinds.com/VAImagesVASculpture/TheThreeGracesantonioCanova2.aspx>. Accessed 09/06/ 2009.

Deeply rooted in ancient philosophy of objective and subjective universals respectively, this Modernist thought creates the conviction that, there is a single and idealized taste and culminating experience towards which reality evolves in a teleological order. Repackaged in mysticism, canons, conventions etc. one finds inherent in these devices not only a looming danger to justify arbitrary or uninformed taste (and by extension egocentric political agenda) but also the danger of propagating the idea that taste is inborn and static. In truth, issues bordering on the perpetuation and therefore celebration of taste, immortality and eternity in art for instance, have arguably held dominance for centuries.

Curator-authors Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois in a quest to redefine the boundaries of modernism and put that redefinition to use in a shake-up of the art world that will "re-deal modernism's cards, catalogues in their book '*formless*' that, "mainstream" modernism of traditional art history, essentially, the modernism of Clement Greenberg, "had to justify its existence as the search for its own essence." This "ontological enterprise" promoted a myth based on four foundational postulates: 1. *art is, or ought to be, "purely visual"*—the tactile or material "does not exist for [art] except as in-formed, made over into form"; 2. *"Pictures reveal themselves in an instant and are addressed only to the eye of the viewer"*; 3. *"being 'purely visual,' art is addressed to the subject as an erect being, far from the horizontal axis that governs the life of animals . . . Art, according to this [mainstream modernist] view, is a sublimatory [thus repressive] activity that separates the perceiver from his or her body ... [gathering] the perceiver together around the core of its ideal unity..."*; 4. *A work of*

art must have a beginning and an end—"all apparent disorder is necessarily reabsorbed in the very fact of being bounded."

An exodus through pre-historic artistic rendition on cave walls; The biographical narrations of this and other worldly existence of the Pharaohs in the ancient Egyptian tombs; the earthly reconstructions and reinterpretations of stellar and cosmic formations in such works as the pyramids and ziggurats of ancient Egypt, Sumerian and Aztec-Inca cultures, Stonehenge, Matopo ruins and the hewn-rock cathedrals of Lalibela; The condensation of total world views and philosophies of groups of people into symbolic imagery, iconography and scrip in such concepts as hieroglyphic, cuneiform and Adinkra for instance, should most probably reveal a certain inherent existential urge to assert and affirm the supposed unyielding and invincible spirit of man. This quest would however, not rest solely in so called pre-historic and ancient artistic expression, but would arguably become the driving force of classical, renaissance and modernist artistic discourse. A great deal of art makers, have sought, through the manipulation of so called noble art materials, media and technical processes, to articulate the concept of taste with their art to very persuasive ends.

Throughout the evolutionary Art periods of the West analogous notions of hybridity and syncretism have always informed strongly in the areas of sculpture, multi-media art, installation art, conceptual art and the use of media. This has followed through from the 1960s to the present, where multiculturalism, referencing, indexing and the synthesization of forms have become regular items of debate. Indeed some reactionary concerns in the local art establishment and academia, especially, would almost immediately dismiss these forms of expression as lacking serious theoretical and

traditional or historical grounds. Other sympathizers of modernist discourse might even consider contemporary artists who express in such forms, as slavish apologist to decadent, indeed escapist trend. An enquiry into several related and precedent forms presently should however indicate contrary circumstances. To prop this claim, it is essential to quote Alvin(2005, P.59), when in a conversation with Heinke Munder over the “ Representations of Africa” in *The Next Flag Project*, he says “Unknown things do exist, not knowing about a territorial or culture does not give us the right to deny it or leave it out.”(Jackson 2006)

Again one would want to back track to the later parts of the 20th century right up to the ushering in of the 21st, where several sculptors at the threshold of post-modernism, have in an attempt to posit a questioning of the status-quo, tended to offer up works that in many instances, make artistic propositions, claims and investigations into the very nature of sculpture. These artists who have been variably labeled concept, conceptual or anti-aesthetic artist, have usually pitched their stance up against the very concept of ideal taste, the legitimacy of the artist as the sole authority and creative genius and formalistic categorization of the art and its process.(Jackson 2006).

Works of such artist have always been informed by “irrational” and “primitivism” influences, the cradles of cubism, the nihilistic propensities of Dada, the materialist and almost purist extremes of minimalism the earthworks and the fluxus movements. The traditional monument and so on. These happenings in the history of art present the pole boundaries around which this project hopes to evolve using found media

which have had former lives and thus fraught with an in-context vernacular quality to express allegorical, and proverbial concepts. I must at this point stress that, in as much as this project tilts towards post-modernism I am not in any way claiming its advancement of the contemporary forms. I am simply positing an acknowledgement and appreciation of the varied and commodious tendencies that exist in contemporary praxis, advance a thought for dialogue which is relevant to contemporary concerns, and hale and hearty towards a further broadening the inexhaustible frontiers of sculpture.



Figure 4. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (1994). Bronze. *First president of Ghana*. (Life size)

Location: Old polo grounds Accra.



Figure 5. Prempeh II, Ashanti king.
Location: Adum, Kumasi



Figure 6. Otomfuo Opoku Ware II
Ashanti king, Location: Suame, Kumasi



Figure 7. Major Kobina pouring
libation, Location: Wawase Fante new town,
Kumasi

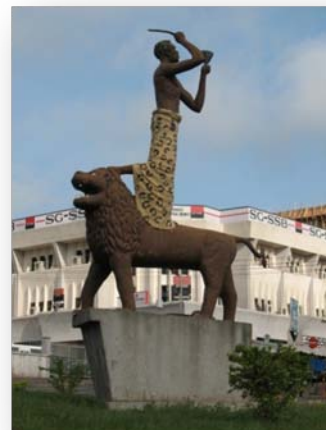


Figure 8. Man standing on a lion beating
the gongon, Location: pampaso, Kumasi

BETWEEN IDEALISM AND MATERIALISM

Art critics and analysts have argued that sculpture had its outright breaking point around the 20th century. This is the time when the figure as a subject lost its popularity. Around the same time, the pedestal also lost its place in the sculptural world all over. Before then the pedestal on one hand had enjoyed a twin status while the figure, a preferred subject for most sculptors. The pedestal in its twin status served as a transition between the material world and sculpture. On the other hand, it encompasses a split, a fracture between the two. It is this twofold, ambiguous status of the pedestal, which prompts the viewer to interpret the sculpture placed on it as a metaphor of the world, from which the work has been separated by the pedestal. The metaphor contains, after all, a resemblance between two things that differ.

When sculptors rejected the pedestal as something on which to put sculptures, a new conception of sculpture became possible. From then on, sculptures were no longer monuments that embodied an idea or a memory in a metaphorical way, based on analogy. From the moment at which the pedestal was cast aside, the sculpture began to become part of the same space as that of the viewer.

This breaking point in history launched two new trajectories for sculpture. On the one hand, sculpture *descended* into the material world in which the viewer lived as evinced in Serra's work (*matter of time*) (fig 9). The viewer's experience in time and space thus becomes the object of modern sculpture. On the other hand, though, by being removed from the pedestal, it has become possible for sculpture to *ascend* into

the idealistic world of absolute forms. Whereas the sculpture absorbs the pedestal in this second trajectory, in the first the pedestal absorbs the sculpture.

Constantine Brancusi represents, to Serra, these two trajectories in an exemplary way. With some of his works, such as *Bird in Space* (1923) (fig 10), he was seeking to evoke a Platonic realm of thought. He dealt with the problematic of the materiality of these sculptures by making them out of highly polished bronze, which made them resemble machine, made industrial products. Because of this, they become increasingly immaterial, as they seem to consist of sheer reflection.

Because Brancusi has allowed the pedestal of these works to become part of the sculpture itself, the work becomes 'detached' from its place in the world. As such, it is possible for the sculpture to become an allusion to an idealistic world of absolute thought and form. However, at the same time Brancusi has produced works that consist of nothing more than a pedestal. The sculpture has been absorbed, as it were, by its pedestal and has thereby become a lasting part of the material world. The sculpture *Caryatid* (1914) is a prime example of this.



Figure.9. Richard Serra: *A Matter of Time*. Source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1425398>. Assessed: 12/11/2008.



Figure.10. Constantin Brancusi: *Bird in Space*, Bronze. Source: http://www.chess-theory.com/images5/22721_constantin_brancusi.jpg. Assessed: 14/04/2009.

Another artist in history who also sought to challenge traditional canons in sculpture was Rodin. Intended as a parody to *The Three Graces*, Rodin configures three casts of an adjusted Adam, in a manner which according to Krauss, “spells the breakdown of the principle of spatiotemporal uniqueness that is a prerequisite of a logical narration, for doubling [or serialization] which tends to destroy the very possibility of a logical narrative sequence” she asserts;

Rodin strips away from the group the idea of composition - the idea of rhythmic arrangement of forms, the poise and the counterpoise of which are intended to reveal the latent meaning of the body. The act of simply lining up identical markers of the human form, one after the other, carries with it none of the traditional meaning of composition. In place of the intended angle/reverse-angle of Canova, Rodin imposes an unyielding, mute, bluntness on the shades. This he does in the artless almost primitive, placement of the three heads at the same level, or in the strange repetition of the identical but separate pedestals on which each member of the group stands. (1977, P.17-20)

However, Rodin’s *Three Shades* (Fig 11.) Remain frontal, and like Canova’s *Three Graces* it accedes to a single sweeping view from an ideal locus. What formal effects and viewing experience will be realized if this anti-compositional technique is employed in such a manner to allow for more than a single sweeping view.

As if to answer the above question, Carl Andre like Rodin contests the medieval concept of composition (this time) in a more radical fashion, which Bernard describes, as “is a shift from composition to arrangement”. He (Andre) thus aligns

horizontally on the floor, a number of identical industrial bricks, exploiting their intractable nature to composition (by virtue of their common design) for his argument.

In the spirit of review, Krauss points out that, not only are Andre's bricks (like *The Three Shades*) devoid of inherent meaning but also they again refer to nothing but themselves, making them difficult to be read illusionistically. She continues,

To string elements together without emphasis or logical termination is clearly to defeat the idea of a centre or a focus towards which forms point or build. One arrives at a mode of composition from which the idea of inner necessity has been removed: the idea that the explanation of a particular forms or textures on the surface of an object is looked for in its centre. In structural or abstract terms, compositional devices of minimalist deny the logical importance the interior space of forms- an interior space which the previous twentieth-sculpture had celebrated (1977, p.250).

Although Andre establishes his argument eloquently, with a resultant multi viewing experience (from aerial and four other sides), his narrative remains non-objective unlike Rodin's *Three Shades*. (Fig 11) What formal and viewing experiences will be arrived at if Andre's anti-compositional techniques (with its ensuing multi viewing facades) are negotiated with medieval compositional epitome in a single narrative?

In defying the conventions of the traditional monument, Rodin attempts answers to the above mentioned supposition by configuring the *Burgher of Calais* (fig 14.) in a

cubic form, resulting in a narrative which requires a multi-viewing experience (unlike Canova's *Three Graces*), for complete grasp of its formal elements.

Like Andre's *Lever* and *Equivalents I-VIII* (Fig12 and 13) Rodin arranges in an anti-compositional fashion, six seemingly non-related characters that seem united only by their common purpose. Subscribing perhaps to egalitarianism, he again aligns contrary to the medieval fashion, the heads of all the six burgers are on the same level (like Andres bricks) questioning the vertical structure of society which elevated one individual or group over another. In addition, the entire composition was to come together in a pleasing and solid visual whole, with every part in harmony with the rest. Interestingly, the idea of fragmentation is carried over into the completed monument. The six burghers are arranged in a seemingly unorganized grouping. The burghers were "conceived separately...and assembled afterwards". Their perceived fragmentation, however, has more to do with their separate spiritual states than with their piecemeal modeling. Rodin explains his deliberate arrangement in the following words:

But this convention has an underlining effect of making society susceptible not only to being presented with an idealized teleological account of history but would also expose society to its ripple effect of overriding subjective experience for the objective.

Rodin developed a creative process that shattered academic conventions and traditional categories of what constituted a finished work of art and accepted sculptural practice.

Far as he was concerned, his work was neither finished nor unfinished; this was a principle he derived from nature where everything was in a state of flux. Nor did he believe that it was necessary for a figure sculpture to be anatomically complete.

In deliberate opposition to tradition, Rodin's monument portrays six naturalistic figures, suffering from the mental anguish brought upon them by the contemplation of near death. They are arranged in a rectangular cubic space, creating a fragmented compilation of isolated human forms. Once destined to stand on a pedestal, the final monument, in accordance with Rodin's revised conception, the work has no pedestal. Instead, it occupies the space of the viewer, enhancing the emotional impact.

Again Appraising the impassive and detached neoclassical marble compositions which alludes to idealized forms, Rodin questions not only what a 'finished' work is, but challenges the rationally ingrained a prior epitome for constructing meaning. Rodin thus posits an antithetical paradigm to the neoclassical epitome submitting that ...meaning does not precede experience but [rather] occurs in the process of experience itself [and] it is on the surface of the work [where]... the externalization of gesture meets with the imprint of the artist's act as he shapes the work (Krauss, 1977, p.28-30).

Saving on the surface of his works evidence of the sculptures "rites of passage" (Krauss, 1977, p.28-30) Rodin demystifies not only the neoclassical teleological assertions but posits that things are in a state of flux and that the surface is not only the locus and source of creation but also the site of an unending process of constructing meaning.

“The eyes see only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.”

-Henri Bergson

"I give myself up to feverish dreams, but I do so in order to deduce new laws. In delirium, I seek multiplicity, subtlety and the eye of reason, not rash prophecies." —

Antonin Artaud

“Meaning does not precede experience but occurs rather in the process of experience itself” (Krauss, 1981, p.30)



Figure.11. Rodin: *The Three Shades*, 1880. Bronze. Accessed on June 5, 2008,
Source:http://12.151.120.44/explore/publications/pdfs/burghers/Burghers_entire_book.pdf.



Figure.12. Andre: Lever, 1996. Fire bricks, 4"×360". Installation Source:
www.tate.org.uk/.../07autumn/rider.htm



Figure.13. Carl Andre: Equivalent VIII. Firebricks 12.7x68.6x229.2cm
Source: www.tate.org.uk/.../07autumn/rider.htm.



Figure. 14. Rodin: *The Burgers of Calais*, Bronze. Accessed on June 20th, 2009, Source:<http://12.151.120.44>.

Like Rodin, Brancusi propounds series of questions that seek to answer not only, the traditional monuments idealized formal organization but also its ideology of representation. Questioning the traditional pedestal which masquerade's on one level as a passive vertical support and on another level as both a mediator and segregator of the sculpture and the world metaphorically, Brancusi rebuts the traditional notion of the sculpture as a repository of an ideology metaphorically thus bringing the sculpture to share the same space and time of the viewer. (Ernst van Alphen).

For that matter, Brancusi eliminates the traditional pedestal, immersing the sculpture directly in the environment of the viewer thus making the viewer's time and space devices wealth integrating into the sculpture. Dispensing with the ideal locus from which to experience the monument, this again demystifies the traditional notion of sculpture as an awe inspiring esoteric object, thus encouraging physical interaction as the viewer maneuvers in and around the composition. Rearranging a heterogeneous array of detachable forms in a fashion which Krauss considers "has no given rational" (1977, p.99), Brancusi defies not only the teleological configuration of the narrative but questions also the classical conception of unity of form and 'being truthful to the material'

It is known, however, that Brancusi reacted against the conventional pedestal with its hieratic function, saying, {the pedestal should be part of the sculpture, or otherwise I must do completely without it.} Goran Schildt wrote about Brancusi {The cemetery taught him not to sculpt bronze and marble cadavers, and taught him to hate pedestals}. We are then justified in asking

the question: why would Brancusi make pedestals during his whole artistic career if he hated them? The answer is simple: he was not making pedestals. The so-called pedestals were constituent parts of his completely artistic conception, as is evidenced by the fact that similar or identical figurative expressions were used for bases and for the upper part of some sculptures. (Fig 15a and 16b).

Marcel Duchamp, who is usually associated with Object-sculpture, thus employs a conglomerate of objects, playing out a dada irony and thus mocking the rationalized use of the noble material (marble). Duchamp questions not only what the nature of art is but also dissolves the barrier between art and life in total disregard of neoclassical aesthetic merits. According to Akoi-Jackson “an ultimate art object does not necessarily hold any place of prominence, rather it is the context, implications and discussions that the work posits, that are of salience” (2006, p.33).

Also analyzing the rationally entrenched neoclassical monument, which pre-designs a desired experience for its viewer, Bruce Nauman’s installation, *Corridor* rather offers the opportunity for personal interaction and thus a subjective experience. Interesting as Nauman’s installation is, it offers opportunity mainly for a solitary experience with one’s image, what formal effect and experience will be generated if Nauman’s installation is expanded to include an interaction between a group of people and an inanimate object simultaneously.



(a)



(b)

Figure. 15 (a) Source: Brancusi, Constantin - "*Young Bird*" - (Paris, 1928)
Bronze 16 x 8 1/4 x 12" (40.5 x 21 x 30.4 cm),
on three part pedestal of limestone - 9 1/4"
(23.5 cm) high, and two oak sections 23 3/4"
(60.3 cm) high (carved by the artist) and
2 7/8" (7.3 cm) high

Figure. 16. (b) Source: Brancusi, Constantin "*torso of a young man*"
(Philadelphia museum of art).wood 19" pedestal of limestone



Figure. 17. Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel to a Stool* (Readymade).
Source: www.asrlab.org/articles/why.html Assessed: 14/04/2009.



Figure. 18. Bruce Nauman, *Live-Taped Video Corridor*, 1970, video installation at the
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
Source; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/777705>. Assessed: 14/04/2009.

BETWEEN ABSTRACTION AND REPRESENTATION

The works of David Smith confronts the passive observer in a very astonishing way and this might be probably what furnished the Art critic and historian Rosalind Krauss with the lucid devise of her appraisal of Smiths metal works. Commenting on the unpredictability which abounds through the various parts in Smiths sculpture from a fixed point of view and when one walks around the works, Krauss asserts that one is sometimes led to believe that he is seeing two or three different sculptures, such that this art does not call for a supplementary imaginative projection from the spectator, in the sense that it no longer offers the synthetic possibility of constructing a stable image which subscribes to the omniscient 'gaze' and absolute meaning which a rationalist device like frontality renders on sculptures. Krauss questions the function of this "grammar of extreme visual disjuncture"

As an artist who had as one of his major motivational drives the fight for the rejection of the idea of an internal core or spinal column, a conservatism which was still at work in even the most advanced of the European constructions of the 1930's which surprisingly still prevails in how sculptures are produced here in Ghana in the 21st century. Smith's primary vision came from an instinctive refusal to construct his sculptures around a central core.

Once again we are presented with a new case of a critique in history of the Art institution's unskeptical prevailing fixation to conventions and myths of the modernist project. It is therefore less in its illusion of the organic nature of its material' than in the structural principle which generates that illusion, that Krauss

characterizes the anti-modernist (classical) sculptural tradition. That principle involves the regular submission of what one thinks of as the "superficial shell" of the visible materiality of the sculpture to a centre of projection that informs it, guides its contours, and functions as a specular double and stimulant of the consciousness of self of the perceiving subject.

And it is from this structural principle that the illusion of possession issues for the spectator and with it the enslavement of the perception of the work of art to the monosemic aesthetic of representation, and the foreclosure of materiality in the idea, and of temporality in narration. It is this same illusion of possession which leads to the exclusion of real space from the aesthetic field (as did pictorial illusionism), the real space within which the sculptural work of art is inscribed.

In his work *Blackburn* (fig 19a and 20b) Smith demonstrates this rejection of the central core and the ability of the spectator to possess the work visually and intellectually by projecting the front image of the human torso as a kind of open frame, in which all sculptural detail appears to be pushed to the peripheries of the work, leaving its interior an open void through which the eye easily passes to the space beyond. From this view the work reads as a hieratic image of the human figure, frontalized, nearly symmetrical, and non corporeal: the body reduced to a silhouette of bent steel rod (Krauss 1977p 157).

The open space, or absence of its interior, contrasts with the mechanistic steel element (cotter pins, hinge sections) that meet at points along its exterior rim.

Blackburn is completely unrevealing. It does not prepare the viewer to experience the object's other perspectives, its other sides. Prediction about those other views simply cannot occur in *Blackburn*. Smith seems to have turned his back on the obsessive concern with information we have seen in other constructed sculpture.

If the side view of *Blackburn* (fig 24) cannot be calculated from the front, this is because the side view contains a whole complex of expression which the front face of the work has both negated and disdained. From the side, the interior of the torso is noisy with figurative incident; it is filled with a clutter of metals shapes, like a shelf in a machine shop heaped with old tools and new parts. Densely packed with jagged overlay of forms, the side view gives the effect of agitated confusion, whereas from the front the torso had appeared serene and uncluttered. The relationship of head to body is different on each side as well. Instead of the frontal declaration of symmetry, there is on the side an eccentric displacement of the head that underscores the rich tension generated by the profile of the work. Confronted by the profile of *Blackburn* one feels that one is not so much seeing another view of the work, as that one is almost seeing another work. (Krauss 1977p 158).

Consequently, whether the core is hidden as in the classical work of art, where the surface of the work is not valued for itself but rather for the manner in which the heartbeats of an immaterial Being are registered upon it, or whether it is unveiled, in the name of a functionalist truth of transparency and of materials, as in the Constructivism of Gabo, whether for formal vocabulary is centripetal (the "static" containment of Michelangelo) or centri- fugal (Baroque "dynamism"), it is always a

certain notion of the centre that is at the root of traditional Western sculpture, as it is for all of the metaphysics that supports it.

As Bachelard showed, the preferred figure for Romantic and Symbolist idealism was crystalline revery. Without naming it as such, *Passages* reveals that the unavowed model of sculptural art up to Rodin had been that of crystallography. I would add that there are few sculptors who would not share Kandinsky's enthusiasm: "The crystals grow around a core-central point of crystallization. The forms of the crystal being born are ambiguous and the form which 'prevails' and maintains itself by eliminating the others is the one close to the core (the greatest central tension!). This probably becomes the crucial point of confluence, in the works of Rodin, Smith, Carl and other artists who have sought to propagate flexibility in the field of sculpture.



Figure19 (a)



Figure. 20 (b) Fig 19a and 20b David Smith: *Blackburn: Song of an Irish Blacksmith* (two views) 1950. steel and bronze, (46¼"x49¾"x24"). Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg.

COLOUR, SCULPTURE AND CONCEPTS

For one to be able to appraise a given medium for example (sculpture) it is most often than not more effective to put it side by side or incorporate it with an inherently different medium for example (painting) as opposed to exclusively examining the limits of its own boundaries.

“According to Rosalind Krauss; “over the last years rather surprising things have come to be called sculpture; narrow corridors with TV monitors at the end; large photographs documenting country hikes; mirrors placed at strange angles in ordinary room; temporal line cut into the floor of the desert”

Sculpture as a discipline has transgressed its traditional preoccupations. Today a series of heterogeneous expressions have come into the body frame of sculptures, which is gradually asserting its self as the status quo for sculptural practice today. I now single out some selected modern day sculptors who in my opinion have been instrumental in their quest to expand the frontiers of sculpture in their pursuit of syncretic and integrative approaches to sculpture making in our experience.

Undeniably experts who have followed systematically the development of artistic expressions in Africa has made observatory remarks on the versatility of the indigenous African artist to incorporate “readymade” in terms of materials (found media), visual (daily life and the environment), oral (proverbs, myths and maxims) or otherwise with such skill that the end product exhibits the shades and character of the artist.

As is vividly articulated by Hazoum  who in his bid to set up new connections with his viewers employ a conglomerate of in-context media (mainly discarded petrol canisters), exploring colour, light and form in his sculptures and photographic backdrops. (Manu 2008 p.30). (Fig 21).

Nwoga (1975) for example, observes in his essay, “Plagiarism And Authentic Creativity in West Africa” that it is not much the material being used for the telling, or retelling of tales that really matter,{since the material in question might have obtained in the public domain for millennia}, but the new process that the material is taken through. (Jackson 2006 p.20). Taken cues from the clich  of the modernist painter embodied by the likes of Jackson Pollock, artists like Franz West, Donald Judd, Serra, John chamberlain and the likes whose body of works in relation to this project offer several instances of parallel.

The alliance frontier variously on similarity, empathy, and ultimately a fondness for ready-mades and colour. Frank West directly pit against modernism’s devotion for ‘gesture’ and the repertoire of physical action of expressionist painting with his recent per formative sculpture, (la limousine bleu 2001) which was made up a brand new Mazarati sports car covered in a bath of Pepto-Bismol hued pink paint. West soiled the paradigm of the readymade sculpture by zooming Pollock’s multiple drippings into a singular gesture of mass dumping of paint. The exuberant use of colour is not an isolated example in west’s oeuvre. It is further articulated in his papier Mache sculptures (fig 22).

Minimalist sculptors also sought to exploit found objects and colour for their possibilities as an element in a repetitive structure which to Krauss 'was to as it were deconstruct the rationalist philosophy of balance {Art which was based on systems built before hand, a priori systems.} they also exploited the idea of ready-mades by considering its structural rather than its thematic implications. She continues;

The first of these implications concerns the basic units of sculpture and the discovery that certain elements, —firebricks for example — will resist the appearance of manipulation. The idea that they were not fabricated by the artist but were made instead for some other use within society at large (constructing buildings) gives to those elements a natural opacity. It will be difficult, that is, to read them illusionistically or to see them as alluding to an inner life of form. (The way eroded or chiseled rock in a sculptural context might allude to inner biological force). Instead, the firebricks remain obdurately external, as objects of use rather than vehicles of expression.

In the combination of several elements of readymade, together to form a grouping that might be called a sculptural composition. The minimalist exploited yet another implication of the readymade elements, mass production. To Krauss;

This ensures that each object will have an identical size and shape, allowing no hierarchical relationships among them. Therefore the compositional order that seem to be called for by these units are those of repetition or serial progressions: orders that are without either logically determined points of focus or internally dictated outer limits avoiding relational composition .for to string elements together without emphases or logical determination is clearly to defeat the idea of a centre or a focus towards which forms point or build. And one arrives at a mode

of composition from which the idea of inner necessity has been removed.

Colour is optical, formless and created by light, without it, painting could not exist. However, its relationship to sculpture is not so fundamental but date back so many years.

Donald Judd gave a lecture in 1993;

Some aspects of colour in general and red and black in particular: the opening line of which was (material, space, and colour are the main aspects of visual art). Judd in his presentation came to regard colour as ‘the most powerful force’ in the world of Art. (Collins 2007, p247).

In the early 1960’s Judd, painted simple wooden pieces with unmodulated cadmium red because he felt it made the forms sharper and more vibrant, later he moved from metallic automobile and motorcycle paint to a material that was already coloured Plexiglas. Which he used in a layered combination so that his use of colour never became obvious or predictable. As evinced in his work *untitled* (Plexiglas, 1990) (fig 23).

In the early 1980’s Judd began to make sculptures consisting of bolted aluminum boxes made out of thin enamel sheets of aluminum, which came in varied colours (fig24). In this work *untitled*, Judd makes a sticking uncommon colour combination because he was determined to avoid obvious harmonies or contrasts, but rather sought a multiplicity all at once.

The immaculate monochromatic surface of Judds work are matched by John McCracken's sculpture (fig25) untitled. Judd employed fabricators while Cracken did everything himself from construction to the endless polishing of the finished work. He made simple rectangular, vertical forms out of plywood which he painted a single colour and covers them with a highly polished fiberglass skin so that the form seem entirely composed of colour.



Figure.21. Romuald Hazoumé: *Roulette béninoise* (2005).
Installation materials and photograph. Source;
http://www.caacart.com/images_large/romuald-hazoume-071-g.jpg



Figure.22. Frank West (*untitled*) papier Mache. Source:
[ile:///C:/Users/pebbles/Desktop/tools/franz-west-lacm.html](file:///C:/Users/pebbles/Desktop/tools/franz-west-lacm.html)



Figure 23. Donald Judd: untitled (1990). Anodized aluminum with Plexiglas.(457.2x101.6x78.cm).10 units each.(23x101.6x78.7cm).

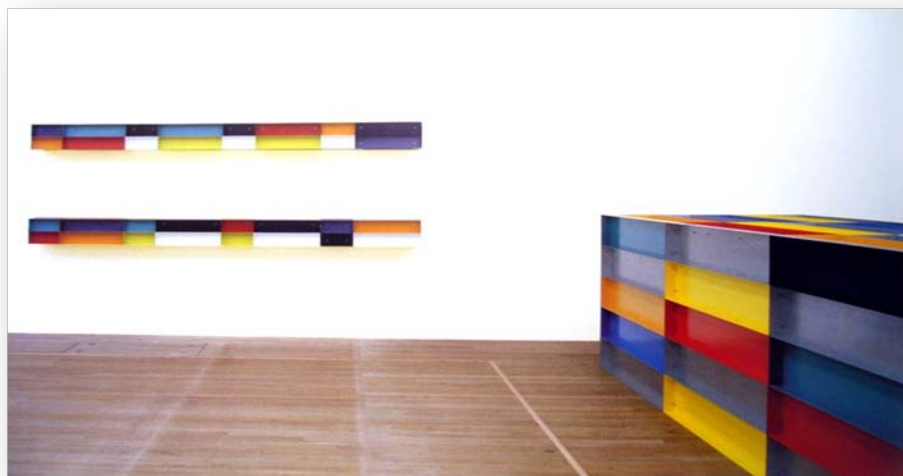


Figure.24. Donald Judd: untitled (1989).Enameled aluminum, galvanized iron. front piece (150x749x162.5cm). As installed at Fate, London.



Figure 25. John Mc Cracken: *Dimension* (2004). Polyester resin, fiberglass, plywood, front piece. (243.8x76.2x36.8cm).

The phenomenon of colour and sculpture is further articulated by the work of John Chamberlain, whose signature work are large sculptures constructed from crushed car parts covered in bright patterned colours. Although his works and Judd's do not share any resemblance, they were both searching for the same thing from their materials ; Judd sought surfaces and materials that were inherently coloured while chamberlain turned to car parts because they were basically a sheet of metals that 'already had a coat of paint on it'. Although the metal parts that chamberlain used were heavy and sometimes had jagged edges, he diverted the attention of the viewer with an inventive choreography of forms and ornamentation. In recent times he has resorted to cutting sheet metals into thin twisted strands; hundreds of this combine to form the "*privet*", "*cold to Ray/Hot to Molly*" and "*Karankawas Falls*". Fig (26a, 27b and 28c).

Anthony Caro who worked as an assistant to Henry Moore changed his style after an encounter with David Smith to making sculptures constructed out of industrial metal off cuts which he painted in bright commercially available colours disguising the reality of their heavy steel bars and girders and making them appear effortless and almost weightless, impervious to the power of gravity a stance taken by a lot of sculptors who worked in prefabricated metals. He equally turned away from the figure as evinced in his work *orangerie* (fig 29), which is made out of metal ploughshares which purchased as scraps and painted red. By painting their works which sought to draw attention from issues like weight and materials they plunged their works into the idealist illusionism and internal meaning a stance contrary to the minimalist externality of meaning.



Figure.26a. John Chamberlain: *privet* (1997) painted mild steel, chromium-plated steel.(12ft6 x 61ft6 x 3o in) Source: <http://www.thecityreview.com/s05cco2i.jpg>.

Assessed: 06/06/2009



Figure.27b. John Chamberlain: *Karankawas Falls* (2003). Painted and chromium steel, (91"x93x"29"). Source: <http://www.thecityreview.com/s05cco2i.jpg>. Assessed: 06/06/2009



Figure.28c. John Chamberlain: *"Cold to Ray/Hot to Molly*. Painted and chromium steel, (14¼"x16¾"x4½") Source: <http://www.thecityreview.com/s05cco2i.jpg>. Assessed: 06/06/2009



Figure.29. Anthony Caro: *Orangerie*.painted metal ploughshares

CHAPTER THREE

TOOLS, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Hammers: These are a tool with a heavy metal head attached to it at a 90° angle to a relatively long handle, used for breaking things or driving objects like nails into wood. It is also used to break off slag from welded objects.



Chisels: These are tool used for cutting. It has a metal blade with a sharp edge used for cutting metal, wood etc.



Rasps: These are coarse metallic abrasive with projecting teeth or rough blade used on hard surfaces like wood, metal, shoe etc to get them to desired textures, shapes or surface finishes.



Gloves: These are coverings for the hand and wrist, with separate rooms for each finger, meant to protect the hand during welding and handling. It also protects the fingers and palm from cuts.



Safety Shield and Goggles: These are special eye protective tool, with special lenses, which fits close to the face to protect the eyes from flying particles, and light rays when welding.



Anvil: This is a heavy piece of iron on which metal pieces are shaped and turned by striking blows with a hammer.



Scrap metals: Old or discarded metal or machine parts.



Vice: This is a heavy bench tool with two parts which can move together by tightening a screw so that an object can be held firmly between them while its being worked on.



Hacksaw: This is a cutting tool with a flat blade and a surrogated teeth used for cutting metals.



Measuring tape: It is a flexible line with calibrated marks on both of its sides used to determine exact distances (in centimeters, meters, feet etc) from one point to the other on surfaces.



Portable electric grinder: It is an electrically powered device with a revolving disc of an abrasive material, which rubs and thus renders surfaces to desired surface finishes.



Working boots: A type of shoe, which covers the feet to the ankle area. It also has a steel toe cover and a heavy sole that protects the feet from sharp objects like nails and fallen objects.



Electrodes: are metal rods, which serve as a filler material when melted (to their molten state) and cooled in between two metals to be joined.



Arc welder: It is an electrically powered device which burns electrode in between joints to be one when the system is closed circuited.

The Arc Welding Process utilizes the heat of an arc between a flux cored electrode and the metals to be joined. The heat of the arc melts the surface of the base metal and the end of the electrode whiles the metal melted off the electrode is transferred across the arc to the work piece, where it becomes the deposited weld metal.



Pliers: These are small pincers with long jaws for holding small objects or for bending or cutting wire.



Jigsaw: This is a machine saw with a narrow blade, used for cutting curves and shapes.



CHAPTER FOUR

EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES AND THE MAIN PROJECT

“Art is experimental or isn’t art”

Gene Youngblood

All people of all region of the planet share a fundamental human quality that transcends language, culture or social organization. This essential quality manifests its self universally in actions and reactions to dualistic events. Certain ideas can be communicated without the influence of any cultural or linguistic process. Individual human can connect by way of our humanness. One can argue that this humanness is our consciousness and that humanness is what connects us all. Taking that into consideration perhaps one of the greatest human contradictions would be that, at the same time that consciousness units us, language which is only possible because of consciousness and therefore should inform us can actually confuse us.

Despite geographic, linguistic, or cultural diversity, visual communication can be a powerful tool for overcoming language barriers. This project was conceived with the belief that a physical encounter with this body of works can facilitate and allow a visual dialogue. What Jaron Lanior would call “post-symbolic communication?”

This chapter primarily seeks to concern itself with the documentation of the rendition process of the study, and in order not to defeat the idea of an (MFA) project which is a research through practice, I would document a lot of personal experience and thought and also use a lot of picture accompanied with explanations where necessary since the literary academic style would fail to capture the spirit of a praxis based research.

My initial idea of the study was to make commemorative sculptures conceived on the premise of envisioning the act of encountering proverbs in a three-dimensional form based on my experience and how I wanted the passive observer to encounter and perceive proverbs. This line of thought influenced my initial works as shown in (fig.30 and fig.31)

The work in (fig.30) was developed out of a proverb which goes like (*aboa a }pem no, nna }pem, onfa ho d[}nyi amben.*) which literally means that an animal which is capable of knocking hard its head against its opponent may do it boldly and mercilessly even though it may have no horns. Which was followed by (fig 31) also coming out the proverb (*be bia kankabi bo wu w] no, nkawa npa ho da*) which means that where ever a millipede dies, one is sure to find lots of rings around.



Figure.30. Experiment 1



Figure.31. Experiment 2

However, a tour through commemorative sculptures in Ghana, revealed a worrying phenomenon, which seemed to endorse a single supreme experience and a tendency to propagate that there is a single universalized and absolute truth.

All over, there seemed to be a dutiful and an almost mesmeric devotion to commemorative sculpture works as ideal objects in total disregard of its context. In addition, there was a lingering preference for an idealized heroic human figure in a pyramidal composition to immortalize and celebrate their subject, raising them above the earthly trials, and suffering of ordinary human beings. In addition to this, it had to come in a pleasing and solid visual whole ascribing to the neo-classical concept of timelessness.

This worrying phenomenon later on would dramatically change my line of thought and direction as to the core or better still the focus of my project. Whether the researcher wanted to add to the methodic rendition of the monument or he wanted to really make a justifiable Art statement that would seek to highlight the over indulged neoclassical concept of idealism to as it were project it as the bench mark in the rendition of commemorative or allegorical sculptures. This is not to demean this line of practice and project another but to suggest alternate means for an endless ambiguity, dispossession of principle, a multidimensional and ever shifting, plurality and the idea of the self as relative. Which will in turn call for the sacrilege responsibility of not only questioning but also revising and redefining 'traditional landmarks' in the face of the postmodern ideology.

As a result of this, the focus of the experiments changed from the premise of envisioning the act of encountering proverbs in a three dimensional form based on my experience and how the researcher wanted the passive observer to encounter and perceive 'Fante' proverbs to a stage where the researcher sought to draw inspiration from 'Fante' proverbs to create sculptures that would not be frontal, figurative, monosemic and above all taken out of the material context of the viewer (be placed on a pedestal).

Furthermore my aim was to create sculptures that would pose a challenge to the passive viewer in his quest to possess it either physically or intellectually and question the omniscient "gaze" and absolute meaning which the rationalist devise of frontality renders on commemorative sculptures. In order to accomplish this goal of his and make a decisive move away from the traditional canons of the figure, frontality and the monosemic nature of the monument, the researcher started reviewing again the fundamental role of proverbs vis a vis their incorporation into his new line of thought.

The first experiment (1) of phase (II) of the study which I call (proverb 1) (fig 35 and 36) was inspired by the proverb. (*owu atwir baako fo nfow*) which literally means (Death is inevitable to all). This is a proverb often used during funeral and mostly disliked by 'man' because it reminds you of an inevitable journey that awaits us all. The work is a 28 feet high sculpture work made up of a spine (welded pieces of small round tubes) and the body (square pipes) which have been cut into small rectangular shapes with a length ranging from three to half an inch (3"-1/2").

The square pipes were welded to the round pipe one after the other in a seeming endless spiral form evoking a hierarchical physical encounter with movement and a social function which qualifies and specifies the significance of the proverb in question and the spiral in a revealing way bringing to mind how the spiral has been the subject of many artist in history because it incorporated within itself the notion of dialectic progression. The spiral also provided the materialist with identification in their thought with the organic world (plants growth).



(32a)



(32b)

Figure.32a and b. preparatory stage of (proverb1) (phaseII).



(33a)



(33b)

Figure.33a and b. welding stage of (proverb1) (phaseII).

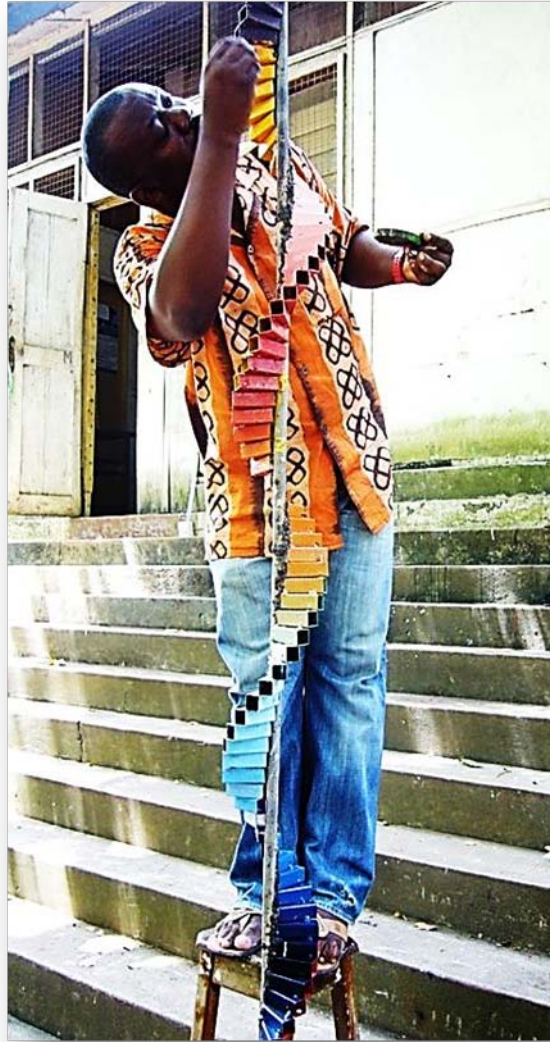


Figure. 34. Painting of (proverb1). Phase (II).



(35a)



(35b)

Figure.35a and b. (proverb1) of phase (II) before and after it was painted



(36a)



(36b)

Figure.36a and b. Angle view of (proverb1) of phase (II) before and after it was painted

After evaluating (proverb1), the researcher realized a lack of attention towards the dissolution of the central core (frontality) which was one of my aims, this led to the introduction of colour which was applied in a graded form allowing different colours to fuse into each other gently suggestive of 'life' and the various transitions and transformations that we go through till death. The colour provides the needed diversion for the eye. Not satisfied with the results, the researcher pushed further with (proverb 2) (fig37) titled (*}bera dzi adandan*), which was conceived out of the proverb (*}bera dzi adandan*) which means (life is full of ups and downs). Having gone through life and its intricacies and uncertainties our ancestors coined this proverb to serve as a reminder of the unpredictability of nature and life.

The piece is a conglomerate of off-cuts of a (60x60 and 80x80) angular bars, which are often used for bridge, and roof construction welded in the form of interlaces and locks reminiscent of the idea of a passage or a 'maze'. An idea explored by some contemporary sculptors like Nauman's (*corridors*), Morris's (*labyrinth*), Serra's (*shift*), and Smithson's (*jetty*). In their exploration of the idea of a passage these sculptors transformed sculpture from a 'stasis' idealized medium to a temporal and material one. Even though there is an element of temporality in this experiment in the form of corrosion in the metals it is not visible. Colour again is introduced to add to the confusion presented by the experiment and some areas mimic the intricacies of life.



(37a)



(37b)

Figure.37a and b. preparation and execution of (}bera dzi adan dan)



(38a)



(38b)

Figure 38a and b. (jbera dzi adan dan) before and during painting.



(39a)



(39b)

Figure 39a and b. (}bera dzi adan dan) after painting in two views.

Still probing further to see if I could find a breaking point where I could incorporate all my ideas into one single piece the idea of metal tubes or pipes came to mind. This was because, for me the tube was an all in one object which came with an enormous vernacular and in-context qualities that could be explored in diverse ways; the tube in its self provides a form, the hollow part provides space, the edge gives an outline while the outer part gives a surface. So the tube furnished me with the multiplicity that I needed to achieve my objectives. But before I embarked on my final journey I decided to try a final experiment with smaller tubes to test as it were its 'effectiveness'.

'Parliament' (fig 44.) Which is the title of my last experiment was inspired by the proverb (*etsir kur nko agyina*) which means (one person cannot go into council). In our traditional set up the seat of governance which is the palace comes with a chief who is the head and his council of elders who always went into consultation whenever they had to pass judgement on an issue or advise the chief. It is this function of the elders which led our forefathers to coin the proverb which has its English version as (*two heads are better than one*).

The experiment is made up of cylindrical tubes cut into varying lengths and sizes which has been welded together at different angles horizontally and supported vertically with a half inch rod and a base. The various tubes and the inner holes metaphorically represent individuals and their independent views. Looking at the work in general there was this feeling of multiplicity showing even without the introduction of colour. Again there is an organic appeal which greets you at the site of

the work. Horizontally, the shape and movement in the work looks like a “Snake” in motion at the same time it is reminiscent of the “Antler” of a male antelope. Pleased with the end results the final study was set in motion.



(40a)



(40b)

Figure 40a and b. Preparatory and welding stage of “*parliament*”



(41a)



(41b)

Figure 41a and b. two views of “*parliament*” unpainted



(42a)



(42b)

Figure 42a and b. Researcher painting “*parliament*



(43a)



(43b)



(43c)



(43d)

Figure 43a-d. "*Parliament*" seen from four different views.



(44a)



(44b)

Figure 44a and b. Front and back view of "*parliament.*"

CHALLENGES

After the second line of experiments, the researcher started envisioning his main project, which would seek to embody and articulate the objectives of the project. So he started with some preliminary sketches of what the researcher had in mind (fig45, and 46).

Then came the loathsome task of where to get discarded old industrial metal pipes to execute the project successfully. The researcher scavenged all over the university campus picking up any metal pipe he could find abandoned big or small the researcher also visited scrap metal dealers outside campus to buy from them. Along the line, he was introduced to a billboard construction company at Kentinkrono (GEROFIX) where he visited to request to buy their off cuts only to be turned down on the premise that he could not buy much as a student and that they preferred selling on a large scale to factories in Tema to be recycled. Some of the tubes were so heavy that, the researcher had to solicit the services of the maintenance section to convey them to my studio. Others too were mere off cuts from roadside welding shops.

The researcher thought scavenging for the pipes was the worse he could go through in the execution of this project until he started cutting the pipes into small cylindrical tubes of varying sizes. He must admit it was not easy at all having to cut these tubes manually with the hacksaw. He could only cut a few in a day and as to the number of day he used to cut all the tubes he cannot recall. The researcher sometimes had help from colleagues but it was not enough. At a point, he had to send some of the tubes outside to be cut with the machine only to be disappointed. After just one cut, the

machine broke down because the pipe was too thick for it. Most of the tubes were very old and very thick unlike the modern day once. The pipes had thicknesses ranging from (3mm to 5mm). The researcher also sometimes employed the use of the grinding machine, which came with added costs and many risks.

After going through the odious task of cutting, the researcher was presented with another task, he had never bargained for (Washing). Some of the pipes over the years had accumulated dirt on the inside so he had to get rid of them by washing which was not easy because of the nature of some of the tubes in terms of their size and the degree of rust.

When all the washing and drying was over, then came the main task of assembling the tubes by way of welding which at this point was not too clear even though the researcher had his sketch as a guide. He followed the sketch to a point but later had to fall on his intuition for the final decision as to which form the work should take. When all was set and done colour was introduced to complete the study.

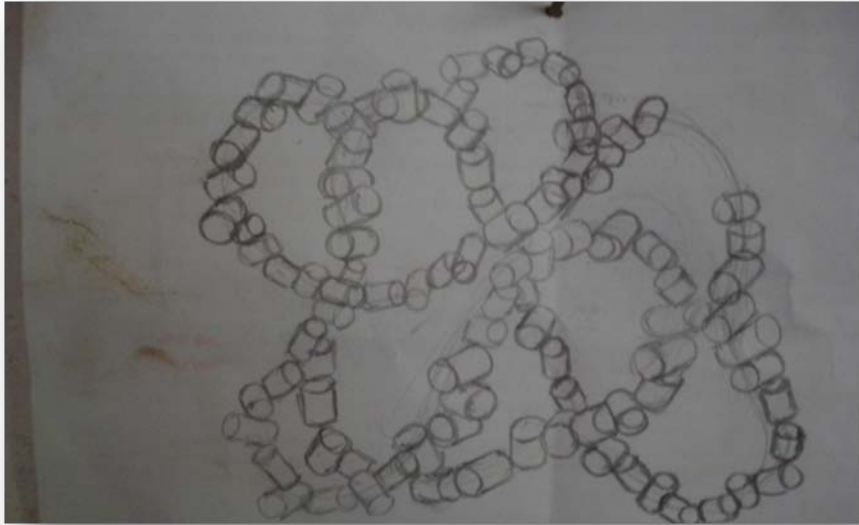


Figure 45. Preliminary sample sketch of final study

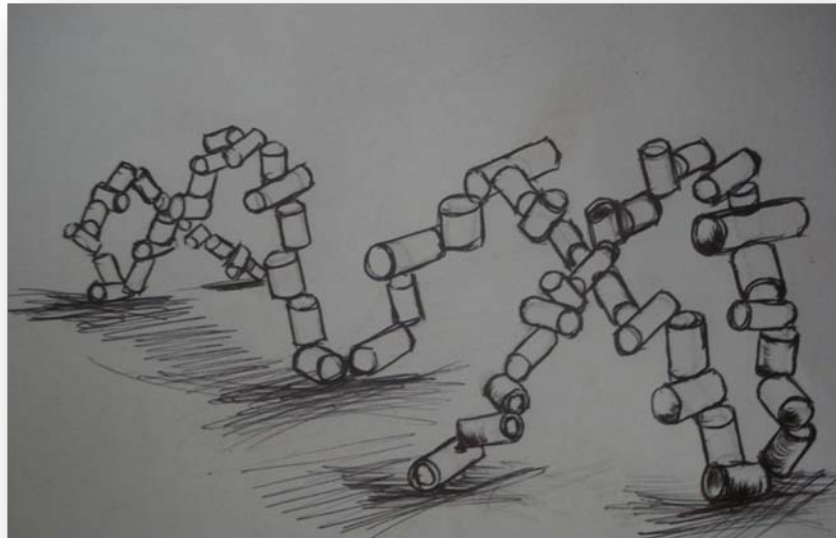


Figure 46. Preliminary sample sketch of final study



(47a)



(47b)



(47c)



(47d)



(47e)

Figure 47a - e. Preliminary assemblage of material for the commencement of main project



(48a)



(48b)

Figure 48a and b. Preliminary assemblage of material for the commencement of main project.



(49a)



(49b)

Figure 49a and b. Cutting of pipes into varied sizes for the project.



(50c)



(50d)



(50e)

Figure 50a - e. Cutting of pipes into smaller varied sizes for the project.



(51a)



(51b)



(51c)

Figure 51a - c. Cut out tubes ready to be used for project



(52a)



(52b)



(52c)

Figure 52a - c. Washing and drying of dirty tubes to get rid of grease and dirt



(53a)



(53b)

Figure 53a - b. Primary stage of final project.



(54a)



(54b)

Figure 54a-b. Welding and breaking of slag from final project



(55a)



(55b)

Figure 55a and b. Different views of project in progress



(56a)



(56b)



(56c)



(56d)

Figure 56a - d. Main project from different views.

The welding process was not only backbreaking but also, health threatening. This is because the nature of the studio did not facilitate good ventilation and illumination so the researcher had to deal with very dangerous unremitting fume and the near blinding arc rays, which emitted whenever an arc was struck (fig 57). The fumes could cause acute or chronic health effects like dizziness, unconsciousness and even death with longer exposure because the fumes plume contains solid particles from the consumables (electrodes), base metal, base metal coatings and ozone. These gasses used for shielding (argon, helium and carbon dioxide) are non-toxic, but as they are released, they displace oxygen in breathing air. The arc rays and sparks could also be dangerous and injurious to the eye and cause skin burns. As if this was not enough he also had to deal with frequent power fluctuation from the main power grid, poor wiring in the studio and an automatic power cut from the welding machine whenever it heated.

“sooner will I realize that the study was not simply about creating sculpture but it was in fact for me an aptitude test, which bordered on issues of sacrifice, patience, endurance, consistency courage and self-discipline” (Manu 2008). The construction process was very slow and demanding because of the nature of the studio. There were no side and ceiling hooks to aid the researcher in giving support to the work so he had to improvise by using nylon ropes and the burglarproof mesh on the studio windows. (Fig 58).

Along the line when he thought he had found his rhythm and was progressing steadily his attention was drawn to something very important which had crossed his mind a

couple of times but had never given it any serious thought because the researcher thought it wouldn't be a problem. The issue was how he was going to get the finished work out of the studio when it was done.

The researcher initially had in mind enlarging the entrance of his studio by removing the wooden partition that was used to divide the studios to make room for the work to be carried outside the studio. However, the day he tried doing that, the whole section of the wooden partition almost gave way and going ahead would have meant replacing the whole section of the partition with new mansonite and plywood boards, which was a cost he was not in any position to bare. Therefore, the only logical thing to do was to dismantle all that he had toiled to construct. (Fig 60) and reassemble outside. A decision, which was very difficult to take looking at workload that had already gone into the work.



(57a)



(57b)

Figure 57a and b. Dangerous arc rays emitting from the arc.



(58a)



(58b)

Figure 58a and b. Nylon rope tied to burglarproof mesh serving as support for the project.



Figure 59. An up close view of project before it was dismantled.



(60a)



(60b)



(60c)



(60d)



(60e)



(60f)

Figure 60a-f. Dismantled project being carried outside.



(61a)



(61b)



(61c)



(61d)



(61e)



(61f)

Figure 61a-f. The dismantled project being assembled outside the studio.

INTERPRETATION

Alluding to the concept of minimalism the study gives an experience of space and time in which one's visual perception cannot be separated from one bodily understanding of its presence. The focus on the entire experience generated by the work is critically articulated in response to the relatively simple cylindrical shapes it is made up of and what Fante proverb it seeks to project.

The literal shape of minimalist objects depended on the use of industrial means of production and the creation of objects based on simple geometric forms conceived in advance of their realization. The incorporation of the copy in the creation of works based on repetition or serial forms and the use of fabricated units is a quality, which was read by Rosalind Krauss as a powerful activation of exteriority and the phenomenological unfolding of the viewer's experience in time and space. (Buskirk 2005, p 22.23)

Suggestive of a cross breed of three pole ideologies materialism idealism and minimalism, one is presented with an experience generated and critically articulated by a relatively simple cylindrical objects stucked to each other in a repetitive movement reminiscent of the ideals of minimalism; which has as some of its features, the use of industrial means of production and the creation of objects based on simple geometric forms conceived in advance of their realization.

Unlike idealism and minimalism which prides themselves with well refined finished surfaces hinged on the philosophy of being true to the material, the study drifts away

from this threshold of 'purity' propagated by modernist conventions, by incorporating the rusty and scratched surfaces of the tubes into the finished work subscribing to the materialist realm of thought. Also there is an arbitrary use of colour and an irrational arrangement of tubes which defeats the idea of a rhythmic arrangement of forms. {the poise and counter poise of which are intended to reveal the latent meaning of a composition} (Krauss 1977, p. 20). The study also tried as much as possible not to follow colour harmonies and complements so as not to tow the lines of academic canons.

Looking organic in appearance the study tries to impose on the passive on looker an unyielding experience of movement, which is achieved, with the illogical arrangement of tubes and colours, which bestows on the work a lack of transparency. The painted inner part of the individual tubes do not form with each other a relationship that connotes or offer an indication clear to the meaning of the work. Instead, the repetition of the tubes, work to give an allusive feeling. In the end, one must view the study from all sides before one can appreciate it in its entirety unlike the academic style sculpture, which is presented in a single point of reference (front and back).



(62a)



(62b)

Figure 62a and b. Primary reconstruction of project outside



(63a)



(63b)

Figure 63a and b. Primary reconstruction of project outside



Figure 64. One view of unpainted final project.



Figure 65. Another view of unpainted final project.



Figure 66. A third view of unpainted final project.



Figure 67. Fourth view of unpainted final project.



(68a)



(68b)

Figure 68a and b. Painting of final project whiles my supervisor and kari look on in admiration.



(69a)



(69b)

Figure 69a and b. Up-close view of final project.



Figure 70. Up-close view of final project from different angles (untitled).



Figure 71. Up-close view of final project from different angles (untitled).



Figure 72. Up-close view of final project from different angles (untitled).



Figure 73. Upclose view of final project from different angles (untitled).



(74a)



(74b)



(74c)



(74d)

Figure 74a - d. Four different views of final project. (untitled).

DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN PROJECT

With the inner part of the study painted (suggesting a finished work) and the outer part left in its organic state (suggesting a work still in progress), the study is left in a paradoxical state incorporating ideas from the idealist and materialist divides. Again, the repetitive nature of arrangement coupled with the use of industrial material (metal pipes) confers on the study the looks of a post minimalist work, given the work a polysemic aura. However, the lack of emphasis on the surface quality alongside the arbitrary introduction of colour defeats the minimalist ideal of absolute uniform application of colour and a concentration on the overall rather than parts.

There is also a reverse in emphasis from arrangement to composition or from whole to parts, which distorts the attempt to give a clear and direct interpretation to the work, which is clearly shown by the multiplicity of parts.

Unlike Judd, Morris and Carl Andre who significantly showed reduction in the number of parts and focused on wholeness of their works, the study from different angles, gives the impression of seeing different works. The difference in the sizes of the tubes shows a kind of relationship which comes across as “regimented changeable units” which “lends themselves to relational structures” because “any part could not replace any other part as is so in Carl Andre’s (equivalents). Arrangement here is meant to imply an unprejudiced notion of the whole. Which is in consonance with composition, which usually means the adjustment of the parts that is, their size, shape, and colour to arrive

at the finished work whose exact nature and meaning is not known beforehand until one has had an encounter with the study?

SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

The choice of using 'Fante' proverbs as the principal reference for this project is informed by the supposition that the Akan topology of which Fante is a part is a rich system of insignia. In most of the Fante communities, conceptual and verbal forms of these insignia have been expressed orally with a greater degree of frequency than the visual. The visual forms, while being present, are comparatively fewer and less diversified. This largely has culminated over the years and informed the apparent predominance and privileging of such cultural matrices as linguistics and musicology in Akan anthropological research practice. Ghana is rich in a variety of ways including natural resources manpower and culture. Within the frame work of culture there is a wide range of heritage including religion, music, dance, art architecture and oral literature. Moreover, in the realm of oral literature we find the immensely rich words of stories, fables, recitation, songs, poetry and proverbs.

It is intended in this project not to focus on 'Fante' proverbs but to use it as a tool. In as much as they adorn and beautify language they could also inspire in this postmodern era of visual dialogue. As the Nigeria proverb tells, "children confer glory on a home." This is particularly the case in the oral culture of the Akans who have cultivated an extremely complicated use of language, audio and oral communication. In the Ghanaian urban cultural industry, there has

been the incorporation and the creolization of 'Fante' and for that matter Akan proverbial concepts and symbolic forms. Unfortunately the translation of their proverbial concepts into modern Ghanaian spatial, temporal, spatio-temporal and three dimensional art forms is yet to attract as much curiosity as there has been the documentation of their indigenous sources. A modernist approach in the incorporation of proverb is evident in two analogous but overlapping trends.

Firstly, there seem to be a greater consensus around the appropriation of the more secular and already obvious form and content, such as those provided by canoe and 'Asafo' flag decoration and symbolism, body decoration adornment, popular maxims and folk songs. In the second trend however, the more subtle forms and subject matter are made visible through the modern idiom like the use of adinkra symbols in textile designing, paintings Adashie (2002), painting and sculpture Akoi-Jackson(2006), and theatre (Saka Acquaye the lost fisherman). The concept of the study was developed to begin answering some fundamental questions, searching to discover hidden utilities within the common oral language of Fante proverbs that could provide new stimulation.

The study attempts to transform a person's experience as they engage in the act of interacting with the monument. This new experience offers incentives beyond physical gratification. Each of my experiments sets to challenge the participants to redefine their own perception of commemorative sculptures based on phenomenology, forcing them accepts an unconventional theme, interact with it, and contemplate their reaction to the experience. The researcher

believes commemorative sculptures, like proverbs, are a sacred cultural ritual with an intimate connection to each of our lives. His experiments attempt to revive this sacred character through re-establishing the importance instilled within the monument when encounter visually or shared with another. Through a radical change within this new format of portraying monuments, he has returned the complexity, intrigues and meaning given to this essential element of our culture as a people for anyone willing to participate.

To understand how the project works could add a new experience, the researcher began investigating the traditional use or as it were functions of proverbs in our cultural setting. A common thread throughout nearly all of our communities is a generic, “one common functional” role they all play. In order to preserve this traditional heritage of proverbs, Artists, anthropologist, traditionalist and the likes have always followed specific guidelines that allow these proverbs to be portrayed or displayed in a teleological format. Because of these modernist approach proverbs lacks the ability to offer anything other than a standard, non-conceptual interpretation, which do not provide an experience to remember or a chance to fully taste these proverbs in all of its complexity.

This small facet presents an opportunity to deconstruct these everyday sayings to create a new experience while fulfilling its original purpose. The researcher wants his audience to experience the act of encountering proverbs unlike anything that has happened to him or her before. To challenge his audience and provide a memorable experience, he began exploring the possibility of a

physical dialogue between his experiments and those who encounter them by altering the traditional fundamental use of the proverb in an attempt to create stimulation beyond oral gratification.

The study is set to test our willingness to look beyond the underlying function of proverbs and the monument. At first, these sculptures will appear normal. There will be a reluctance to interact by many people, as they question and place themselves within a context of wanting to possess the works physically and intellectually in order to interpret them. With something that appears so foreign to anything we have ever imagined, it is the hope of the researcher that, the curiosity to explore and interact with the works occurs as his audience gaze and circumnavigate them.

With opportunities to investigate our emotions and reactions to these experiences, we can begin reclaiming our sensitivity to appreciate and enjoy all that is around us. Each one of us has opportunities to venture outside of our immediate comprehension of reality to experience new and different ways of interpreting the world. As we do this, our personality, character, and frame of mind matures, generating and projecting a more encompassing perspective to those around us. Whether major or minor, these experiences etch themselves into our subconscious, further driving our curiosity to explore the unknown. Given so many unique opportunities, the need to respond to these moments when they present themselves is critical in order to find new activities that stimulate our mind.

Another major element within the conceptual evolution of my work is the need to assign meaning to the works individually. Although most of the stimulation occurs personally, observing and responding to the views of others in their quest to interpret or assign meaning to the works would heighten the entire experience. With only one participant, the energy and enthusiasm is lost, returning the state of isolation, which the researcher is attempting to undermine. The other participant is vital to re-establish the idea of community and the need to participate with other intellectuals.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

Interpretation is in fact relative; a relative interpretation is not necessarily imaginary; it is constrained only in application. As the conditions that warrant them change, so interpretations of quality change. A line of perception agreed on by a group of people is their unifying element is subject to change. In the same group in different periods, a different perception altogether may be the accepted canon around which their self-definition is carved but this should not necessarily give rise to the condemnation of the former perception because it is based on it that the new perception is derived. The study for that matter integrates in addition to its conventional materialist interests the minimalist model and thus calls for a more encompassing and pluralistic definition of the discipline of sculpture, having unveiled the non-absoluteness of any thought in history.

CONCLUSIONS

In contrast to the modernist ideologies which thrived on compartmentalization and categorization, the study sort to present sculpture not as an exclusive discipline which is governed by strict rules and regulations, but a discipline with innumerable avenues of which one could transgress and trespass. A discipline with more opportunities for possibilities. To this effect, the study incorporated alongside its conventional materialist trajectory, the post-

minimalist model. A move targeted at adding to the quest for a revival of the status quo, which to an appreciable degree has over the years projected sculpture as an immutable discipline.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Borders and boundaries exist but for me they should exist almost only as conventions, but possibly never as material entities. Perhaps for the sake of administrative contingencies categorization of ideologies and disciplines may exist however dialogue and dialectic discourses across dualistic divides, should be encouraged and considered as valid and necessary tools needed to help transcend any hostilities that there may be in the visual arts. Moreover, the results of this study seek for not only an interactive discourse but also a relative and polysemic attitude towards the object (sculpture) and the viewer.

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