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**An Examination of the Works of Auguste Rodin and Phyllida Barlow with a
Focus Upon Tactility, Hierarchy and Scale.**

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“All these years of me and your father putting up with glitter glue is finally starting to pay off!”

Illustrations

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Introduction

This dissertation will predominantly explore the works of Auguste Rodin and Phyllida Barlow with a main focus upon the themes of tactility, hierarchy and scale. In what follows, some of the major tendencies in Western sculpture from the 19th Century onwards will be discussed. The contemporary sense of sculpture as fixed invites a closer look at its material components - this dissertation examines a selection of works by two entirely different sculptors and their signature materials and processes, exploring the material properties of the object and the imagery of the viewer, while inviting the reader to refrain from giving absolute priority to one or the other.

Sculpture has been a form of human expression, from the days of pre-industrial cultures who would chip and carve away at stone or craft figurines made from damp clay, through to the present day where artists are working with technology and everyday objects to create sculptures. Sculpture is just as important today as it has ever been, with artists working both traditionally and in avant-garde modes that challenge the limitations of medium and technique.

Although it was written in the 18th Century, Gotthold Lessing's *Laocoon* (1766) is directly concerned with the discussion of sculpture in our time. Because, in the course of his argument, Lessing feels that it is necessary to ask how the very nature of sculpture is, and to wonder how we can define the unique experience of that art. If these same questions have become even more necessary to ask, it is because the sculpture of this century has often taken forms that have made it difficult for its

contemporary to assimilate into the information they have received about the function of the plastic arts.

In her essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979), critic and art theorist, Rosalind Krauss describes how we have previously seen sculpture as a category that is traditionally restricted, not as a spectrum of possibilities that has its own internal laws, logic and rules that can be broken. She explains the logic of sculpture was inseparable from the logic of the monument in a traditional sense, and that it sat in a specific place and talked about the significance or use of that place in a symbolic language. At this point, she explains that the turning point was late 19th Century sculpture, and how the notion of the sculpture as a memorial begins to fade into something that does not need to have any specific intent. Krauss writes: [...] surprising things have come to be called sculpture.” (Krauss, 1979) Krauss goes on to explain that the interpretation of sculpture and art as a body had become more ‘elastic’ upon reflecting on the previous century. The diversification of sculpture is ever changing throughout history.

Chapter Two: Tactility

Throughout Western history an interest in duration has been reflected in the choice of solid, durable materials, such as bronze, wax, stone and marble, which are typically associated as being more traditional – perhaps suggesting that these mediums upheld the traditional notion that the durability of a sculpture expresses the eternal qualities of its subject. It is not until the 1800s when the tightly sealed

connection between lastingness and sculpture begins to crack. In his book, *Curiosités esthétiques* (1868) Poet Charles Baudelaire disparaged sculpture of his time as “boring.” (Baudelaire, 1868) Baudelaire’s dissatisfaction, which was shared by avant-garde artists of the time period, represented a turning point when thinking about the relationship between sculpture and duration. In many of Baudelaire’s essays, the *durus* quality that was once praised for countless centuries as necessary to sculpture, became negatively associated with the sculptural object. The etymological root of *duration* is the Latin, *durus* (hard, harsh, rough), perhaps suggesting that sculpture’s long-standing role had been to ‘harden’ the viewer or event into artistic permanence. Baudelaire felt that sculpture had become too rigid, unimaginative and just too concrete – as well as dry, “academic” and “cold.” (Baudelaire, 1868)

Contemporary artists work with a comprehensive range of materials that can be slightly less traditional and even ephemeral depending on each artists’ personal preference and its appropriateness to an idea or relevance. The modern, or contemporary sculptor is concerned with new forms and ideas that have significantly expanded the traditional approach to sculpture. Examination of modern works indicates a disturbance in the whole concept of the “medium.” Traditional materials and processes were considered together as the medium, as in wood-carving and bronze-casting. This concept is no longer applicable - there is no material left unconsidered and new processes such as assembly, contemporary welding and design are commonly used.

Towards the end of the 19th Century, Sculptor Auguste Rodin abandoned mythology and opted to sculpt ordinary, real-life people, starting the big change to what is now known as 'Modern' sculpture. Rodin's overtly sensual sculptures are still figurative but are less 'realistic' than that of his Italian predecessors of previous centuries, Michelangelo, for example. It could be argued that Rodin freed sculptors from the subject matter of twee, naked Goddesses. At the start of the 20th Century, Rodin's successors began to abandon a perception of realism and artists in the 20th Century such as Brancusi, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth expanded on the ideas of abstraction. Hepworth carved directly into the wood and stone and says that as a sculptor, this gave her the most satisfaction. "I am basically and primarily a carver, and the properties of stone and wood and marble have obsessed me all my life" (Currey, 2013) These modern sculptors developed stylised, abstracted figures in which the shapes within the sculpture was far more important than how the human form was depicted.

It is evident that since the 20th Century, sculpture has not conformed to the traditional techniques of modelling or carving, or to the more traditional materials such as stone, clay and bronze. Sculptors such as Phyllida Barlow have experimented and are able to use any material that they believe will serve a purpose and help create a sculpture. Sculpture simply cannot be identified by traditional techniques or materials anymore. Art and technology have run parallel to one another for a long time and now appear to be converging in many areas of the arts. "[...] Making art from life is evolving as technology opens up new ways of creating and visualising artwork." (Johnathan Yeo, 2017) Materials such as clay, bronze and plaster are primarily

associated with sculpture and are known for their tactility. The responsiveness of clay whilst being worked upon is hardly recognised and instead it is the visual sense or the outcome of a sculptural piece that is far more acclaimed. Perceptual psychologist Rudolf Arnheim writes: “Seeing may [...] become an inhibitory factor when forced upon an individual who does not use his visual experiences for creative work.” (Arnheim, 1969) Artist Johnathan Yeo, who is primarily a painter, is interested in self-portraits throughout history and has recently teamed up with Google and a software called Tilt Brush to create a sculpture of himself – this software allowed him to create the same marks and gestural brushstrokes that he would usually make in an expressive painting in a three-dimensional space thus effectively creating a painted sculpture. While Yeo embraced this technology, he had difficulties with some aspects of the software and says:

I wasn't looking at anything, I was cut off from reality, I couldn't even see my own hands. The other problem was that even when I made something I liked, there was no way of exporting it – the software wasn't designed to actually replicate something in the real world [...] I was left perplexed about what to do with this technology. (From *Virtual to Reality* with Johnathan Yeo, 2017)



Figure 1. Yeo working on his sculpture via Google's software, *Tilt Brush*. (Johnathan Yeo, 2017)

The above statement from Yeo provides grounds to believe that to an extent, an artist must 'think through their hands.' As a result, creating a sculptural piece with our hands can be seen as a way of thinking through the hands by manipulating a material such as clay. (Nimkulrat, 2012; Nicholas, 2010, p.16)

An artist is able to express what they feel whilst going through the process of creating a clay piece – using sight but also touch, while the observer is limited to just the visual sense when experiencing a sculpture. Rodin had the capability to stimulate tangible sensations, making the experience of observing his sculptural pieces feel far more complete. The demonstration of touch is evident in many of Rodin's sculptures, including *The Burghers of Calais*. "Instead of trying to smooth away evidence of the sculptural process, he often chose to retain the seams, tool marks, fingerprints, breakage, and excess deposits of the medium." (Brooklyn Museum) Rodin began to seek ways to register his own act of creating a clay sculpture – bridging the alienation from the execution of conception. He began to make his figures larger and smaller than real figures and wanted his work to bear proof that they were hand-made. Despite Rodin's attempt to move sculptural matter to increasingly controversial and new material, it is this show of reality which has often been seen as the most visible sign and generational impact on modern sculpture - the movement of Rodin's fingers as he scooped, smeared and squashed the clay are still prominent to the viewer and it is this personal touch that makes Rodin's work so movingly expressive to the modern eye – something simply unachievable by Yeo.

Rosalind Krauss put it well when she wrote, "Rodin's figures are also branded with marks that tell of their rites of passage during the modelling stage." (Krauss, 1977)

In his book *The Language of Sculpture* Scholar William Tucker demonstrates how various sculptors worked and the language that sculpture uses. He writes: "[...] it remains a surface, a skin. In Rodin, one senses the identity of external event with internal force: clay is felt as a substance, not over the surface, but through every cubic inch of volume." (Tucker, 1974)



Figure 2. Auguste Rodin, *The Burghers of Calais* (Close up) 1889

Wax as a sculptural material has allegorical resonations - the relationship of wax and the warmth of the hand has a long artistic convention, one in which wax was comprehended to resound. In an unexpected way in comparison to other malleable sculptural materials, such as clay. For instance, the mythical sculptor, Pygmalion, touches his carved "snow-white ivory" statue as it changes into a living woman, and the material all of a sudden brings out not cold ivory but rather warm wax:

grown soft, the statue yields beneath the sculptor's touch, just as Hymettian wax beneath the sun grows soft and, moulded by the thumb, takes on so many varied shapes – in fact, becomes more pliant as one plies it. (Ovid and Mandelbaum, 1993)

Ovid envisions wax as a transitional material, the stuff of transformation, somewhere between ivory and human tissue, craftsmanship and life. The physical warmth of the hand contacting and mellowing the wax turns out to be a piece of the passionate and mental warmth of affection and want that Pygmalion starts to experience at that moment towards his sculpted figure. All the more significantly, Ovid's perception that wax turns out to be "more pliant as one plies it" proposes wax's ability for correspondence and the simplicity with which the mellowed material can go into a relationship, a responsive discourse, with the artist or viewer with whom it draws in by means of touch or sight – visually or physically. Wax can take on an impression and is effectively responsive to shape. Contrast this with this conceptualisation of sculpture with the traditional notion, such as Michelangelo, hacking away at matter, working hard against the hard material in an attempt to wrestle a form out of it.

Wax's ability to soften distinguishes it from stone, bronze, and marble. These latter materials, which cannot be softened, can only be produced by carving with sharp tools. One way to soften wax is to heat it up. As a material that can change easily from solid to liquid, it is heat sensitive: a transformative medium. Wax has a much higher quality of mobility and plasticity than materials that can only be carved.

Although bronze is also a heat-sensitive sculptural material, liquefaction requires a much higher temperature than is necessary for wax to be softened. The hand of the artist softly pressing into the wax produces a heat that accelerates its transformation from a solid material to a malleable material. This is another attribute that separates wax from bronze - the latter literally cannot be worked by the hands directly.

Chapter Three: Hierarchy

This poses the question of whether technology is something that an artist can truly find valuable. Should artists consider software such as *Tilt Brush*? A lump of clay starts its journey from the earth, something so simple is able to be transformed into something so much more complex – can something created with the assistance of virtual reality be classed as a ‘sculpture?’ In his essay, *Laocoon*, Gotthold Lessing (1766) asks himself “what is sculpture?” The answer may seem plain, according to the Oxford University Press (2019), sculpture is “a work of art that is a solid figure or object made by carving or shaping wood, stone, clay, metal, etc.” In his book *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (2003), Jerrod Levison writes that he believes there are three particularly prominent candidates for what can be considered a sculpture. The first is the representation of something by means of creating a figure in the third-dimension. Secondly, he questions what exactly is sculptural representation?

Levison believes that sculptures are just as capable of representation as are pictures, words, signs and gestures – but not all of these signs are represented in the same way: representation comes in many different forms. What is distinguishing about representation by sculpture? Third, what exactly is aesthetically distinctive about sculptural art? Does it offer aesthetic satisfaction which cannot be found elsewhere and, if so, what are the special features offered for appreciation? These questions asked by Levison are interconnected but also distinct.

Lessing (1766) asserts that sculpture is an art that is concerned with the placement of bodies in space, he argues that the predominant characteristic for a sculpture or a painting is that they are static. It is this condition that disputes Yeo's attempt at a virtual reality sculpture, the relationship that is formed between the split parts of a visual object [in this case, a sculpture] are simultaneously given to the viewer: they are meant to be taken in and perceived all at once. Lessing outlines his observations in chapter 16 of *Laocoon* (1766) on the the boundaries of visual arts. He uses the terminology of epistemology. For in art, Lessing says, the way an artist perceives their object is intimately related. The visual artist perceives and imitates an object in space by arranging the material in the space. The finalised object is then perceived in the space by critics. In the first book to seriously deal with 20th Century sculpture, *In Modern Plastic Art* by Carola Giedion-Welcker (1937) is predominantly concerned with the spatial character of the sculptural engagement. Her passion for the modern accomplishments of this art form stemmed from her sense of that purity with which sculpture concentrated on the medium's spatiality – excluding any other concerns.

After several three-dimensional printed prototypes, Yeo casts his virtual reality sculpture in bronze. Whilst the outcome may be similar to that of the work of Rodin, does the end result still emanate the same sense of emotional quality? Could it be argued that Johnathan Yeo's sculpture is less subjective? Modernist art critic Michael Fried's contemporary reviews of sculpture was entirely concerned with the legitimisation of subjective feelings. Fried wrote about wanting to 'burst into blossom' or 'levitate' when viewing two pieces of Anthony Caro's sculpture for the first time. (1998) While Yeo's sculpture marks a new approach to creating sculptures, his solid marks come across as almost impersonal and clinical in contrast to Rodin's *Nijinsky* – the expressiveness, tension and shape truly represent the dynamics of the dancer's flight and motion.



Figure 3: Rodin's *Nijinsky*, 1912



Figure 4: Yeo's *Homage to Paolozzi*, 2017

Despite all these changes, there is one element that has remained consistent in sculpture and it is this that emerges as the perpetual concern of all sculptors: the creation of a three-dimensional form. Throughout the last four decades, sculptor Phyllida Barlow has created large scale sculptures and installations. Barlow uses inexpensive materials including cardboard, cement, scrim, fabric and plaster. Her striking and bold work is primarily focused on the experimentation of these everyday materials with the purpose of creating her colourful three-dimensional sculptural forms.



Figure 5. Phyllida Barlow, *Untitled*, 2018

Sculpture has traditionally been synonymous with monumentality, due to its associations with the formal and longevity of its traditional materials. The medium's

fundamental monumentalism was defined in many ways by traditional sculpture: a figural materialisation that would conserve its memory over time. Historically, sculpture has suggested permanence, almost guaranteeing to outlive its immediate audience. Contemporary sculpture with no overtly commemorative subject also conveyed these perpetual connotations. Barlow's tactile and textured forms appear almost erratic and uncertain, perhaps even unstable. The polarity of the stability and permanence of the work of Auguste Rodin and his traditional and more monumental sculptures is undeniable. As Krauss states in her essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979), the medium also shares with what she terms "the logic of the monument" in the manner in which both objects are historically seen to add meaning to their surroundings and vice versa, enabling research to "mediate between the actual site and the representational symbol." The vast majority of materials in the 19th Century were predominantly one of two materials: bronze or marble. Sculptors of the 19th Century developed their original ideas in numerous materials: clay being the first amongst them but also plaster, wax and plasticine. However, the variety of different mediums could be considered to be concealed by the dominance of the two materials [marble and bronze] they were translated into. The invariable element is the difference between the working material of the sculptor and the material of the finished sculpture.

Barlow was particularly inspired by the contemporary art movement *Arte Povera*, translating to 'poor art.' The hallmark of the movement was the experimentation of materials that went beyond clay, bronze and marble – the more traditional materials. Instead, artists opted for twigs, rags, wood, rope and paper and this really

challenged the values of traditional sculpture and the materials involved. Barlow says:

I'm not that interested in materials. I'm just interested in something that will do the job as efficiently and as expediently as possible. And that's the minimum of technical interference between myself, my enjoyment of them and what the materials are – that is the most important thing. (The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2017)

In 1976, Barlow revisited one of her works, *Shedmesh*, this led her to the notion of the temporary – or the ephemeral. Bronze, steel or marble are not incorporated anywhere in her large sculptural forms. Her work doesn't necessarily resemble what is considered a 'traditional' sculpture and instead her work favours a haphazardly placed mess. In her review of Barlow's *Cul-de-sac* exhibition at the Royal Academy, Sarah Kent writes:

This magisterial structure is highly paradoxical. Made of inadequate lengths of timber bolted together, the uprights look far too flimsy to support the weight of the canopy while, far from being ethereal and ephemeral, the "shadow" resembles solid stone. It's all smoke and mirrors, of course. What appears to be concrete is actually cement lathered onto scrim that has been stretched over lightweight materials like plywood and polystyrene. The pomposity normally associated with grand entrances is thereby subverted by this unashamedly ad hoc assemblage. (Sarah Kent, 2019)

Philosopher and art critic, Harold Rosenberg played a significant role in promoting the Italian art movement and in 1969, reviewed the book *Arte Povera* by Germano Celant in the *New Yorker*. By doing so, Rosenberg ignited an interest for the movement globally. Rosenberg described the new movement as a "de-aestheticization" movement. In his book, *The De-definition of Art: Action Art to Pop and Earthworks*, he writes:

De-aestheticized art is as self-conscious about aesthetic content as if it were ritually taboo, and *Arte Povera* [the book by Celant] extends this fear of

contamination into self-consciousness about the aesthetics of being a book [...] In addition, poverty represents for it [Arte Povera] a kind of voluntary creative detachment from society, a refusal either to adopt the traditional role of the artist or to approve art values of any sort. (Rosenberg, 1972)

So, is there a hierarchy of materials in the 21st Century, or are artists along with the viewer looking beyond the monetary value of a material such as bronze?

(Rosenberg, 1972) explains that *Arte Povera* artists proposed an artistic practice that was far more interested in the physicality and materiality of the materials from everyday life and by putting these natural and everyday materials as pieces of art in galleries, these artists were able to bring the viewer to reflect on objects that are continuously present in our everyday lives that are often overlooked or completely unnoticed. Are sculptures from artists such as Phyllida Barlow as valued as Rodin's *The Thinker*? Barlow's puzzling and awkward ensembles asks the viewer to take a hard look at what it is in relation to them - it is the complex and messy material life of her sculptures that are crucial to this. Writer and curator, Jon Wood, writes: "Gone is the smooth surface argumentation of cast bronze or plaster. Polish, shine and sheen are exchanged for matte and rough surface, as wood, cement, fabric [and] paint."

(Royal Academy, 2019) This mixed media almost appears to compete for the viewer's attention in variously fabricated forms. The monetary value of Barlow's materials seems unimportant and instead, the viewer may think about what exactly the material and visual qualities of her sculptures evoke. The human body, with its complex blends of tidy and messy, soft and hard, is quietly appealed to by these large and dominating forms: the viewer is drawn into such an experience physically.

In her book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object From 1966 to 1972*, writer and art critic, Lucy Lippard writes: “Conceptual art, for me, means work in which the idea is paramount, and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or 'dematerialized” (Lippard, 1997)

Dematerialisation could perhaps be misinterpreted to suggest that things cease to matter altogether, but while the reliance upon the skill and craft of an artist has been significantly downplayed, it was the specific character of the relationship between an artist and their ideas along with the material facts the world that were questioned in Conceptualism. In *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, Sol LeWitt writes: “When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair.” (LeWitt, 1967)

Chapter Four: Scale

Initially, it is the scale that hits the viewer: suddenly and all at once. Phyllida Barlow goes beyond the floor and walls of the gallery space, extending the gap between the ceiling and the viewer’s head. Everything up high and dominating the space feels perilous. Barlow’s sculptures are monumental and also fragile. These large forms are partially inspired by real things, but they’re never fully represented. In *Untitled: Lintelshadow* (2019) an oblong concrete slabs sits clumsily on wooden stilts, at the base there is a ‘shadow’, but it is far lumpier, more ridged and fatter than the work itself, it is also angled rather oddly. This conjures up shadows that are distorted: larger than life. Barlow is perceptive and drives her memories to an extreme, almost cartoonish territory.



Figure 6: Barlow's *Untitled: Lintelshadow* (2019) at the Royal Academy

In a discussion with Maggie Crossland, Denis Stolyarov and Patricia Smithen (2017), Barlow talks about considering the audience when creating her works and says: "It's an intimate relationship between me and the making of [...] works, and I don't think the viewer is ever there." (The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2017) The destination of Barlow's sculpture is ambiguous in every way. Her relationship with her sculptural forms has been so private and physical that they become close to her, Barlow cannot "see them for what they are." (The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2017) With her large-scale sculptural pieces, Barlow describes the whole process as "very intense and performative", it is very much a performance while making them in her studio. From start to finish, the space in which the work sits are very much considered, and Barlow says that once her equipment is gone and the large, dominating form is

sitting in a space, the work is no longer her own. It belongs to the space, the imminent audience. Barlow believes that the space and the audience are the protagonists and activate her work: thus, making it complete. Similarly, to that of Rodin, Barlow also carefully considers where her work should sit, during the discussion Barlow says that once the process of moving her work into a space begins that “something [begins] to change.” She goes on to say:

I have to make these very clear decisions about where things go, where the sightlines are, to consider the health and safety passageways; all sorts of other issues are beginning to control the work. And then as that evolves over say a ten-day install, gradually the work is changing into something else, it's becoming slowly detached from me. (The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2017)



Figure 7. People viewing Barlow's large-scale sculptural piece, *Untitled: Canvasracks*, 2019

It is the notion of using whatever material is at hand that is pivotal to Barlow's aesthetic. She prefers to work with easily-accessible, but unglamorous materials – appearing painfully aware and resistant to the gravitation of creating something

monumental or how a piece of her work would look casted in bronze. She says: “For me, sculpture is problematic. You begin with an empty space and then you try and fill it or negotiate it.” (Tate, 2013) Barlow pushes herself and her work to its limits, obliterating it and showing complete disregard for the work itself and it is this sense of volatility that sometimes intimidates – overrunning in the spaces in which she exhibits. This is quite different to Rodin’s *The Burghers of Calais*. Rodin was heavily criticised for the organisation of the six figures as he opted not to place the figures on a plinth, which was the traditional practice towards the end of the 19th century. He had pictured the piece on the ground “very low to enable the spectators to penetrate the heart of the subject [...] this way, the group becomes more familiar and plunges views deeper in the tragedy [...] of the drama.” (Rodin Works, 2004)



Figure 8. Rodin’s *The Burghers of Calais*, 1889

At Phyllida Barlow's *Cul-de-Sac* at the Royal Academy, she has caused an obstruction: the viewer is left unable to look on through into next gallery space from a certain direction due to a gigantic grey column that obstructs the gallery's exit – giving the viewer a refreshed perspective of the work. After passing through the space and approaching the end of the cul-de-sac, the spectator is forced to turn around and, for the second time, focus on Barlow's large forms, which are unsettling but also somewhat elevating with their vivid colours including red, yellow, brown and orange. *Untitled: Canvasracks* (2019) fills the entirety of the gallery space, the coalescence of billowing tarpaulin and banners protruding from colossal, grey cylinders appears confident and celebratory. In an in-conversation with art critic and London correspondent for *Artforum*, Gilda Williams, Barlow describes her work as her "private world." (2019) She talks about seeing various elements of the exhibition complimenting each other and compared her *Cul-de-Sac* exhibition to some of her previous works and how the objects sit almost in combat in the space. Barlow refers to the gallery space as a "protagonist" – equal to her work. (2019) The use of gallery space and wall height is a completely different approach to Rodin, who was considerably more modest when it came to using space to compliment his sculptures. *The Burghers of Calais*, together with many other copies, exist in several original casts – the original sculpture, created in 1889, was made to stand outside the Calais town hall. Rodin went on to make a further four more casts, one of which now stands in Victoria Tower Gardens. Rodin travelled to London to oversee the placing of the sculpture and proposed that it should be placed right in front of the Houses of Parliament. This suggestion was rejected, and the sculpture was positioned behind the Palace of Westminster. Sir Nicholas said:

Victoria Tower Garden's was not Rodin's first choice. He would've preferred to place the work at ground level at the entrance to the House of Commons. My personal preference would be to site the group at the level Rodin wishes, but the Commons entrance is unfortunately now inaccessible to the general public. (Independent, 2000)

Rodin had to create his own frame and harmonic line within which, while maintaining the human warmth and freedom of movement, the figures could be viewed naturally. Rodin may have meant that when he said: "the cube gives

expression,” (Elsen, 1960) this format provided the necessary disciplinary constraints on the extremities of the compositions, thus allowing maximum variation within the field. *The Burghers of Calais* stands at the beginning of modern public sculpture for many reasons - bridging the traditional and the modern monument. Rodin's own thoughts about how to portray the heroes echoed the competing claims of both. Today, the spectator is mindful of Rodin's expressed desire to stand at street level with the original monument, without a plinth and easily accessible to Calais' adults, children and even dogs. Rodin wanted to bring the modern monument down to earth both thematically and in terms of its form, to merge the past with the present, the dead with the living. But that wasn't his only goal, his earliest expression of it came late in the monument's history. In December 1893, the Mayor of Calais, Omer Dewavrin, sent Rodin the plans for a plinth for monument, to which Rodin replied:

The Project which you did the honour of sending me regarding the execution of the pedestal looks good, well-conceived, strong yet not heavy. However, I had at first thought of the burghers, leaving the marketplace; in the confusion of the farewells only de Saint-Pierre begins to walk in order to cut short the painful scene. I had thought that, placed very low, the ground would become more intimate and would allow the public to enter into the drama of misery and sacrifice. It might be good perhaps to have a second project from an architect, very low. (Elsen and McNamara, 1977)

In June 1895, *The Burghers of Calais* were installed at Calais, eleven years after Rodin began to work on the project. It was positioned in front of the Richelieu Garden, set on a plinth just over five feet high and enclosed by an iron fence in Gothic style. The monument which had created so much passionate controversy became the city's focal point. The composition of *The Burghers of Calais* reconciles each figure's individuality with the unity of the whole. Professor Mary Jo McNamara

observed: “Each figure is allotted the amount of space he physically and psychologically needs and no more.” (McNamara and Elsen, 1977) Therefore, according to Rainer Maria Rilke, a close friend of Rodin, he has made each burgher “live again the last concentrated moments of life.” (Rilke, 1945) As one studies each figure's gesture, one has to move counter-clockwise around the burghers to better see their movement and appreciate each other's relationship as a whole.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Through understanding more clearly the difference between the artists chosen and their various perspectives, there is strong evidence leading to a clearer awareness that the scope of what is considered to be sculpture has widened, extending the conventional boundaries of creating a form in the third-dimension which encompasses both traditional and contemporary materials and techniques. The use of materials has always gone hand in hand with technique. Towards the end of the 19th Century, transformation was the norm for sculpture. From Rodin onwards, the sculptural depiction and the very definition of the sculpture was attacked and challenged extensively. Modes such as assemblage, the reductive object and earthworks proliferated in the wake of the reconfiguration of sculpture. Rosalind Krauss (1979) famously labelled the new condition of sculpture as an “expanded field” and wrote about the diffusion and dispersal of the different mediums.

I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze, more lofty than the regal structure of the pyramids, one which neither corroding rain nor the

ungovernable North Wind can ever destroy, nor the countless series of the years, nor the flight of time.

(Horace. and Wickham, 1963)

This passage from Horace's *Odes* associates his poetry to the monument, the most unchanging and stable forms of art. Nevertheless, Horace's hyperbole actually betrays his fear that his "monument" may not last. He uses his verse cleverly to suggest that he can control, contain and manage the forces of nature that might threaten the durability of his work.

Sculpture has historically tied the artist to the chisel: a romantic illusion of direct engagement, putting aside the whole business of tools and trickery developed to help produce the work. And for good reason: a mark, attached to the object itself, was the authorship of the sculpture. No distance could be made between the work and the hand that created it. Nevertheless, this Dionysian harmony of matter and artist contrasts sharply with a plan's unerring execution. There is no plan for the sculptor: the material and the maker give each other ecstatically, and thus the emerging work is born as a sculpture. As discussed in this dissertation, there is no limit to the variety of materials appropriate for sculpture. If a sculptor favours one medium over another, he does it only for the sake of the material's surpassing tractability. Over the course of the last century, the discovery of many new materials has enriched sculptors - technical knowledge has developed working methods with many more of the more traditional materials, that could never be used without

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difficulty before, such as marble. Sculpture is very much a direct engagement and expression that is physical and tactile, whatever the medium.

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