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Do sculptures contain hidden meanings? Can sculptures be interpreted differently than they are? How does religion often play into sculpture? Did artists like Michelangelo leave hidden meanings in his sculptures?

To provide context to why I will be writing about this topic of sculpture hidden meaning. Is that sculpture is seen everywhere is different cultures, societies and can represent many different areas. From the standing of a person in a hierarchy or a depiction of a deity or simply to immortalise someone of significance. I want to be able to demonstrate that sculpture is not only a physical form but something that can hold a deeper meaning. And analyse whether or not it was an intentional meaning or simply someones interpretation of the sculpture and its form.

Sculpture its literal meaning is an art of making a three or two dimensional abstract form or representative, especially when carved using stone or wood or by using a casting materials such as metal or plaster. By exploring various artists who have sculpted like Michelangelo, Guillaume and Joseph Geefs. I hope to see how if interpreting materials differently does this affect the meaning of the sculpture and if so was this maybe intended.

Sculpture itself may be symbolic on many number of level. Sculptures may convey conventional symbols such as an insignia of some kind or some type of family crest. The most simple kind of sculptured symbol is that of story that is given a humanised counterpart, through sculpture. Some examples of personification is of cardinal virtues such as prudence (dome of the Royal society of Edinburgh), fortitude (fortitude, Bambaia, V&A), temperance (temperance 1583-84, Giovanni Caccini), and justice (Queen Victorias memorial) and even theological values are personified such as faith, charity and hope. And even the arts victories, the church, seasons and agriculture and industry are shown in sculpture form. They are often given as a symbolic object that signifies something, such as the sickle for agriculture and the hammer for industry. These personifications were abundant in the medieval era and renaissance period. And many sculptures contained animals which for example an owl which was the emblem of Athens was a symbol of wisdom, these are still frequently like the British Lion and the American eagle. A majority of sculptures are integrated or even linked with other works and even in other mediums. With reliefs in particular serving as decoration for a large range of personal, domestic and sacred artefacts, these range from mass produced plastic Jacobean linenfold reproductions and the earliest Egyptian cosmetic palettes of civilisation. The main uses of large scale sculpture was in relationship to architecture. It would either be used as an exterior fabric or as a interior of the building itself. It could also be placed near or even against the building. Sculpture in relation to buildings and being part of a townscape was seen to be of a considerable importance. In a more traditional sense they were used to provide a focal point as a meeting place for marketplaces and town squares, this also seems to be a tradition that many planners are taking into account today. Sculpture has also been commonly used as a decorative aspect to gardens and parks. Garden sculptures are usually intended to help to provide an atmosphere to the space. The sculptures themselves may be set under trees or behind foliage to give the viewer a little surprise and something to delight about.

Fountains are also intended to provide enjoyment and give a combination of light, sound, movement and sculptural imagery. Sculptural imagery in great fountains contain all these and combined create a richly imaginative sculpture, much like the many depictions of Neptune in fountains around Italy. Sculpture it self is an ideal medium as it is very durable. Many of the worlds most popular sculptures are created to save someones memory or an event. These commemorative sculptures can sometimes include tombstones, tombs, plaques, memorial columns, sarcophagi and triumphal columns. Portraiture can also serve as a

memorial. One of the most widespread and familiar sculptures is coins. Coins have been produced for more than over 2,500 years and these can be considered as miniature works of art and can be seen to contain historically invaluable and more often than not an artistically brilliant portrait heads and some are symbolic devices. Another small scale high quality art is medals.

Religion in relation to the human race is some that we as a race regard as a sacred, holy, divine or as a something spiritual. It is also sometimes considered as a way for people to deal with ultimate concerns that they face within their lives such as their fate after death. In a lot of traditions the relation between the concerns are manifested in ones relationship and attitudes towards gods and spirits. With the manifestations being a more human form or a natural form of religion. These are expressed in the terms of ones relationship with and or attitudes towards the broad human community or even with the natural world. In may of todays religions some textures are deemed to be spiritual and people become enamoured with the moral or spiritual authority it gives them. Worshippers or believers often can perform a type of devotion in the form of prayer, meditation or with some type of rituals, or form of worship and with participation in these religious action are among the most consistent element to the religious life. The English term religion has no equivalent word in many other different languages. For instance many burial practices are more often called customs and have a very different from other ways they are done. Burials happened as early as Neanderthals. How much has burial change from then? There are a multitude of burial customs and some cultures have very different conceptions of death and life. For example ancient Egyptians embalmed their dead and remove all their organs except the heart and buried them with their worldly possessions in order for them to be used in the afterlife. Although this was more commonly done with pharaohs and high ranking officials. Other cultures perform secondary burials where they bury their dead and exhume them at a later date and then either rebury the corpse or simply bury the bones much like the Peruvian Chachapoya people did with the bones of their ancestors being placed in earthen states.

Both angels and demons are commonly seen as a benevolent or malevolent spiritual characters that mediate between realms. Though the history of many religions there are various degrees of belief for these spiritual beings. This being as they hold the 'powers' to mediate between the realms whether it be sacred or hold place. They govern over the time, space and cause an affect. Those beings considered to be of the benevolent charter are seen

as angels in Islam, Christianity and Judaism and those entities seen as malevolent are proclaimed to be demons. These are common states that are crafted like Guillaume Geefs, Lucifer of Liege. In other traditions these are seen as intermediate figures and aren't categorised but they may also be good and evil in other circumstances. The word angel itself points towards a function or status that is for the beings cosmic hierarchy rather than showing something of the essence of nature. This is very popular in western religions. Hence why they have a specific reverence in what they complete rather than what they actually are. This also leads on to them receiving the essence or inheritance from their relationship to the essences original source this being a deity of some kind or a higher being than them. Because of western culture itself angels themselves have been given their own individual identities that can often surpass their functional relationships to holy action that they perform for the world. The popular feeding to the world of the image of an angel has given them this divinity.

Demons are commonly referred to as an evil spirit, the term used originally meant that of a spiritual being that influenced someones character. Socrates spoke of his own demons as a spirit and later on said it inspired him to speak the truth. The term demon was then gradually applied to things such as lesser spirits that came from the supernatural realm that put pressures on humans to perform actions that weren't in the benefit of the human being. This very dominant perception has weighted its favour in that of malevolence and that which is evil and mischievous. In many non literate societies that have a form of religion, spiritual beings are viewed as either good or evil according to what circumstances that community sees themselves as having. This allows them to not be seen as a malevolent being in these instances of religion. The different spiritual beings have differences though their positions as different entities viewed as benevolent and malevolent in time are reversed. In the Indo-Iranian (ancient religion) which evened into early Zoroastrianism and also early Hinduism reflected onto the Vedas (ancient hymns). In the religion of Zoroastrianism the being called a Daevas were viewed as the malevolent being. But in the complete opposite their opposites the Devas were viewed in Hinduism as gods. This is similar in Zoroastrianism's Ahuras they were good 'lords', but in Hinduism the opposite was viewed as the evil lords.

History as a discipline is the study of chronological records of events that have affected a nation or people in general, this is based on a critical assessment of data and other materials and usually presents with an explanation that includes the causes. Friedrich Nietzsche an influential German philosopher who was known for his writings on the topic of good and evil,

not only this but the concept of the 'super man'. And also the end of religion in the modern society. In the nineteenth century which seemed to be a great year for history in not only Europe but also in Germany where Nietzsche was from. The country led itself in historical research at the time. History is seen to have a prestige and with this Nietzsche saw this as a threat to the vitality of life, which became an epicentre for his philosophy. He worried that would be too tempted by the past events and with this didn't see people living their lives themselves. In one essay he wrote he asked the reader to consider the life of cows, focusing on how they live in the present they are an unspoiled animal with no anxiety's over what the future holds for them. They could be considered much like children, who themselves have no real history yet and with this would be ultimately happy to know for themselves what history was. Nietzsche identified three different types of history, they were critical, monumental and antiquarian. Each of these different history categories had their own different uses and also its downsides. And with this brought the fact that with each of these they needed to be brought together into harmony with all of them together they saw a better chance at serving a purpose rather than putting a shackle on what life was. Monumental history is a history that uses the past events to inspire us to possibly attempt to do great things. But however this history does have its drawbacks. As with the focus on grand things such as grand ideals of the heroic it can often obscure the mundane in history. By definition antiquarian history is simply history for the sake of nothing but itself. It's the study of the past not because of anything in particular to us but simply to entertain ourselves with the lost worlds that lives through us. The advantages that antiquarian history has is that it gives people a sense of tradition, teaching them about the country that they are from and also a sense of home. The downside to it though gives people the excuse to hold onto the past and become narrow minded and suspicious about anything they deem to be foreign or remotely different to what they expect. Critical history is more of a history suited to the scholars of the world more than it is suited to the museums and other popular histories. It allows you to engage with the past in order to find out its mysteries. Nietzsche himself thought that this critical type of history was one that was above all the others and saw people as to be too enamoured with the facts for their own good. By severing the myth of both antiquarian and monumental history myth critical history destroyed everything that we identify with the past as individuals. It made people ultimately feel old and confused. With this in mind, Nietzsche's Philosophy looked at the true meaning of values and there ultimate significance to the way we exist as humans. And given that there

are no absolute values that truly exist, in his ultimate world view and that there must be another means to mature the evolution of vales.

The words history, sculpture and religion and led me to the question (above) because they stem from an interest which has many different avenues to explore. Sculpture which is the main interest has given me many different categories that I could ultimately explore. From the media, techniques used, cultural significance, and even the history behind them. This is how I am looking to research the world of sculpture and how it can be more than just a piece of art work that someone views for no more than seventeen seconds. It can be a piece that may hold many meanings. And with many classical sculptures they have a religious aspect to them with many of them having a biblical meaning like Michelangelo's Pietà, the sculpture Mary and Jesus after his crucifixion. This in itself is a cartoon of great emotion and faith with its elegant depiction of Mary cradling Jesus. With the sculpture it was intended for the French Cardinal Jean De Billheres as a memorable piece that would make sure he was remembered after he died. It was also moved to St Peters Basilica, it was carved from one piece Carrara marble and was the only piece of work that Michelangelo signed. It is this history that I am looking at with the added mystery of things such as is Mary actual sculpted as Mary Magdalene and not Christ mother Mary. With research into these three topics I can combine them as many significant sculptures are historical in nature and have a religious basis and many classical artists have used religion as there main staple of artistic expression through the various commissions they have received. With this in mind I hope to conclude my question by its ultimate explanation providing and avenue for others to explore and learn to enjoy.

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