Sculpture Basics: How to make Successful Three Dimensional Art

Sculpture encompasses a wide range of types of media and techniques. Sculptors have to know the limitations and technical skills for not only use of tools but also how their medium works. For example, when clay will break or fail and how hot it needs to be fired so it will cure.

The process of making sculptures is time-consuming, laborious, and requires patience.

Sculptors make a choice of which type of material to use based on their design. A successful piece of work starts with a detailed sketch of at least two views of how it will look and function. Modern sculptors are only limited to their imagination to the use of their material.

**Types of Sculpture: Design Basics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Additive** (modeling, joining) | **Subtractive** (carving) |
| **Functional** (has a utilitarian purpose) | **Non-Functional** (Aesthetics) |
| **Kinetic** (it moves)  Ex. Mobiles and such | **Sculpture in the Round** (free standing form), either representational or non-representational |
| **Volume**  Defining characteristics of sculpted work, size and shape give sculpture sense of volume. | **Planes**  Two dimensional surface, ex. Piece of paper. Planes from multiple sides need to be considered for all sculpture work. |
| **Mass**  Simple form such as an egg, or pebble is a mass and has it’s own volume. More complex forms such as a human have several masses of different volumes. Space between different masses is an important consideration when grouping masses. | **Line**  Used to create a sense of movement or shape. Armatures are lines (skeletons) beneath forms to build upon. |
| **Scale**  Size of work in relation to it’s environment it important to consider. | **Surface**  Defines the character of the sculpture. Shiny surfaces reflect light and enhance features, rough textured or matte surface absorbs light, fine detail may get lost. |
| **Relief**  Only viewed from one side, ranging from low (slightly carved from the surface) or high (almost three dimensional). | **Instillation**  A group of sculptures that shapes a particular space and is more about the overall space, than the individual masses making up the space. |
| **Natural/ Temporary**  Sculptures made in nature or out of non-permanent materials. Purpose is to erode/ decay with time. | **Cast**  Sculpture made from pouring a liquid material into a mold. |

**Design Reminders\***

* You are creating an actual form. What is the intended purpose of the form?
* Sculptures have to be visually successful from all angels of view.
* There needs to be a visual flow (movement) for the viewer to ensure that they are seeing the entire space with in/ around the form.
* Sculptures have to be technically created well or it will take away from the design… unless that is the intended purpose, ex. Showing destruction.
* Safety First: you will be using a variety of sharp, dangerous, hazardous materials and tools, proceed with caution/ protection always.
* Be inspired by what is in your environment. Artwork is always more successful if it is personal to the artist, don’t try to do something like someone else, be unique!