San Fernando Valley State College

SCULPTURE PROTOTYPES FOR OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

An abstract submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sculpture

By

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ABSTRACT

SCULPTURE PROTOTYPES FOR OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

It is my intention to create sculpture with qualities of three-dimensional form and surface coloration that employ non-conventional approaches to the traditional medium of clay. In the past, the use of glaze as a surface decoration with muted earth tones was considered the accepted means to enhance the pottery clay form. The application of both high-color paint and high-color low-fire glaze to the surface of low-fired clay are the sole methods of surface treatment decoration. The clay forms used for the sculptures are entirely non-functional and relate to numerous organic forms found in nature; particularly the anthropomorphic, biomorphic forms which are functional in a life-giving manner. The shapes relate to sexual, growing, breathing and moving parts of the biomorphic world.
CHAPTER II
DEVELOPMENT OF THEME: PROCESSES

I call these clay objects landscapes which are fantasy environments. There are two groups of landscapes which differ slightly in form but radically in construction and scale: Swivelscapes and September Landscapes.

The Swivelscapes (refer to Figure 1, view A and B) are clay structures approximately ten inches high with a circumference of approximately ten to fourteen inches in diameter. They are mounted on small masonite boxes with concealed ball bearings enabling them to rotate. These boxes serve to elevate the sculptures from six to twelve inches. The clay landscape is then epoxied to the top surface of the masonite box which enables easy and secure mobility of the sculpture as a total unit.

The September Landscapes (refer to Figure 2) differ from the Swivelscapes in several ways: (1) the clay forms are disconnected rather than held together as a total unit on a common slab; (2) the forms and their painted base are larger in size; and (3) the total sculpture is fixed in space and must be walked around in order to be viewed from all sides.

The September Landscapes, six in number, are approximately twelve to twenty-four inches square, and between fourteen and sixteen inches high.

The Swivelscapes (Figures 3 and 4) consist of thrown
(on the potter's wheel) and modeled clay units resting and totally secured to the clay slab which is the ground upon which the forms are then built.

The clay, after totally drying to a bone dry state, is bisqued (first fired) and then the process of decoration is begun with the application of a low-fire glaze on specific areas. It is then fired again to adhere the glaze to the surface of the clay. The final surfacing of the forms is completed with the application of paint on remaining unglazed areas. In Figure 5, the Swivelscape shown is glazed only in the yellow area. All the other surfaces are painted for the completion of the surface total.

The September Landscapes are modeled forms taken from the Swivelscapes and enlarged. The boxes on which they rest are plywood, primed and painted with pastel shades of latex paint. The clay parts are surfaced with low-fire glaze and spray painted. In some cases, I used Candy Apple paint (refer to Figure 6) which is a high-gloss transparent automobile lacquer.

The parts of the September Landscapes, after having been sprayed and glazed are glued to the plywood surface. An additional decorative method used on the plywood base was a dotting technique with paint that suggested the outline of the shadows of the clay forms. I was interested in the way three-dimensional forms projected their
shadows on a two-dimensional surface.

CHAPTER III
DEVELOPMENT OF THEME: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Numerous problems arose with the use of vinyl acrylic automotive paint. The porous surface of the fired clay was sealed with a primer for vinyl paint and later the vinyl paint was applied in layers up to three coats until a smooth, high-gloss surface resulted.

Chipping and cracking of the painted surface was noticed about one week later. Pieces of paint peeled off. A different base coat was used, but the results were the same. All the chipped paint was removed with vinyl acrylic paint thinner in order to experiment with lacquers and enamels. Lacquers produced similarly poor results. Enamels were the choice for the final solution and worked flawlessly. The surface of the clay was coated with a sealer and then the paint was applied both by brush and by spraying from a pressurized can. The enamel adhered smoothly to the surface of the clay body with high gloss and high color.

CHAPTER IV
DEVELOPMENT OF THEME: TRANSITION

These landscape forms of clay suggested a need for larger scale which would increase physical participation by the viewer. The scale that I desired could not be achieved by the use of clay with safety because clay
constructed in larger scale has too many handling difficulties. When it is in the process of being constructed, there is little problem; but when it is drying, it is very brittle and fragile. Also, in moving a large structure of clay there is a heavy mortality rate, not only in handling, but in firing. A sculpture that gets into the kiln in one piece may be fired and come out in twenty pieces. Thicker areas of solid clay may have tiny air bubbles that cause bursting when heat gets trapped inside. The density of water still in the clay body may cause the ware to explode if the kiln is fired the least bit too fast. The ware cannot withstand the pressure of the intense heat to the water content still in the clay.

Because of these difficulties, I began experimenting with various polyurethane foam materials in order to satisfy my need for larger scale. I constructed sewn canvas boxes for use as forms to contain the foam.

I call these new forms the Soft and Hard Series and the Soft Series. The Soft and Hard Series consists of the canvas box form and the rigid polyurethane foam (Figures 7 and 8). The Soft Series consists of gold vinyl material stuffed like pillows and sewn together the same way as the Soft and Hard Series.

CHAPTER V

ADDITIONAL PROCESSES

In the Soft and Hard Series, I cut out parts of heavy
canvas to be constructed in one horizontal rectangle and five vertical box forms (Figures 9 and 10). These were sewn together inside out on the sewing machine. Then they were turned right side out and stuffed with bits of soft foam.

The next step was mixing the parts of the liquid polyurethane foam together quickly and pouring it into the canvas form. The foam sets up within three to five minutes, depending on the weather conditions. The oozing and running and uncontrolled movement of the foam determined the final result of the form.

There were additional pourings over previous foam already hardened. The reason for this was the desire to paint various colors on the hardened foam and the delineation of the layers served as a perfect vehicle for the paint.

After a day of curing the foam, I applied the paint to both the canvas form and to the foam. I used acrylic automotive paint and enamel. There were no problems with the vinyl acrylic paint on polyurethane foam or canvas.

The forms in the Soft and Hard Series were more highly decorated than the gold vinyl Soft Series. The Soft and Hard Series were more rigid because of the nature of the box form itself. The Soft Series were purposely made to have assymetrical shapes. The whole feeling was one of freedom with a random quality of parts to be placed
and selected in space by the viewer.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

I achieved the result most desired within the ceramic medium and the attainment of surface quality using low-fire glaze and paint. I feel that the two decorative media, together, yield exciting textural as well as coloristic combinations. One enhances the other. The glaze, when fired, gives a built-up surface quality while the paint, as colorful and as intense as it may be, still remains rather flat in texture.

The natural transition that occurred with my desire for larger scale also resulted in a change of media. The facility of constructing materials such as canvas and soft vinyl allowed me to achieve this increase in scale. The results were more immediate because of the qualities of the materials used. The next step in the processes of my work will become increasingly involved with still larger scale. These landscapes that exist relate to life-size environments which will be seen as playgrounds for children and adults.
Figure 3 - SWIVELSCAPE
Figure 4 - SWIVELSCAPE
Figure 6
CANDY APPLE SWIVELSCAPE
Figure 7
SOFT AND HARD SERIES
Figure 9
SOFT AND HARD SERIES

Figure 10
SOFT AND HARD SERIES