

# The Changes in the Themes and Materials of Sculptures from the Sculptor's Creative Methods

Wanxia Zhang\*

Jingdezhen Ceramic University, Jingdezhen, China

\*Corresponding author

**Abstract:** *The development of modern sculpture seems to be moving towards abstract expression, and then this abstraction is not only reflected in the form of sculpture, but in the inner spirit of sculpture, that is, the abstraction of the theme. Since the Renaissance, European creativity in sculpture has been extremely poor, and it was not until Auguste Rodin that he opened up new themes and materials for sculpture. It attempts to analyze the change of modern sculpture from the creative methods of three sculptors including Rodin.*

**Keywords:** *Modern sculpture, Themes and materials, Form of sculpture*

## 1. Introduction

At the beginning of modern sculpture, Rodin made sculptures out of clay, and his theme was completely self-created. He got rid of the traditional theme mode and expressed the sculpture itself as the theme. This behavior and innovation opened the way for modern sculpture. After that, many sculptors and even painters made breakthroughs in the theme and materials of sculpture.

## 2. Rodin

### 2.1. The sculpture art background of the Rodinian era

Auguste Rodin lived in the era when Impressionist painters were popular. The maturity of Rodin's sculpture art developed with the modern school of painting and was influenced by the modern school of painting.

Because since the Renaissance, painting has become the mainstream way of art, and sculpture has formed about six inherent classics, which greatly limits the creativity of sculpture itself. At the same time, sculpture has gradually developed into a kind of art serving salon art. "plaything". The development of the Renaissance in science, technology and economy has promoted the artistic value and technical realization of painting, while sculpture has always been unable to achieve the richest effects in a simple way like painting; especially the perspective method in painting. The use of stencils has created a rich space for depth. As a result, the development of sculpture into the 19th century has always followed the aesthetic standards of painting, becoming a slave to the painting standards since the Renaissance. Thus, in the 19th century, the art of sculpture did not support the development of rigorous aesthetic intentions, which allowed the artistic and spiritual value of sculpture to be ignored.

### 2.2. Rodin's breakthrough in traditional sculpture

Rodin's sculpture broke this pattern. He tried to find exhausted themes and wanted to show them again. Rodin felt that he had a duty to restore the traditional value of the theme of sculpture art. Rodin honed his level of sculpture with his own knowledge. He was self-taught. It was in this way that he could make a breakthrough in the solidified model of salon sculpture. Rodin's first major work, "The Age of Bronze", is controversial because of its apparent challenge to the academy and because there seems to be no precedent for the sculpture itself, and nothing is known about Rodin's preparations and efforts for it.

In fact, the pose of "The Bronze Age" is based on the classic image, and despite its lack of appearance, it is extremely vivid, because it carries a new sculptural language: firstly, the sculptor is responsible for every aspect of his work, and secondly, the sculptural structure is related to the human body. Fall in love

for the first point, Rodin for clay, Rodin is to use the body near the sculptures, each place of clay controls the formation of the trace is the theme of the sculpture itself, as his perception of clay: soft slow without structure material, is essentially a passive activities through his hands and fingers to shape, but has great potential; For the second point, it is the concept of "the human body is sculpture, and sculpture is the human body" that Rodin has re-recognized in the sculpture field.

Both of these make "The Age of Bronze" so unconventional for its time, with no decorative details, no accessories, no classic storyline, no classical implication -- the sculpture itself is the theme, the body itself is the theme. Rodin pioneered a form of sculpture, or a language of sculpture, in a way that feels like a direct "unfinished" model of the human body. Since then, modern sculpture began to emerge, and a sculpture theme emerged that broke away from the traditional model. However, with his insistence on clay materials and his renewed focus on the human body, Rodin should not be seen as a sculptor who broke with the past, but as one who upgraded his ways of shaping from long-forgotten traditional methods.

### 3. Brancusi

#### 3.1. Brancusi's use of engraving

Constantine Brancusi was drawn to Paris by Rodin's fame, worked for a short time in Rodin's studio, and then left Rodin to create sculptures that were the opposite of Rodin. He was not the first to rebel against Rodin. However, like Rodin, he has a sense of mission for sculpture, and thus inherits the essence of Rodin's sculpture.

Brancusi realized that at the heart of Rodin's work lies a relationship with materials that implies a final form without natural or particular external constraints. Therefore, Rodin's sculptures develop outward, beyond the boundaries of the sculpture's own form, and extend to the viewer's world, forming a kind of "publicity". For this "publicity", Brancusi has a new understanding and a new sculptural method. In contrast to Brancusi's achievement of engraving as a determining factor in sculpture, Rodin ignored and misused it.

Rodin's moulding, no matter how private the subject, must result in a public, outward, Gestalt generality. Brancusi, on the other hand, is private, individual, independent, condensed and quiet in a sculptural way. Because the technique of carving is to do subtraction, it must first have a limited material and theme. Through subtraction, traces are left on the material, and the spatial illusion formed visually and mentally is between the material itself, the original complete part and the final between sculptural forms. Therefore, Brancusi tends to work within certain constraints, expressing it in a clear and simple way of engraving.

#### 3.2. The wood of Brancusi

When Brancusi made "The Prayer" in 1907, he broke away from Rodin. He continued Rodin's idea that material determines form without worrying about violating the integrity of the figure. Many of Brancusi's works share the same title as Rodin's, suggesting that he inherited rather than subverted Rodin, and that he gradually reexamined the way the portrait was created. The Kiss (1907), however, represents his use of the subject of the portrait and the way he dealt with the stone in the future, symbolizing the break with the past and the beginning of his own style; Later "Prometheus" and "Birds in the Air" gradually show his confidence in the treatment of marble, and his expression of his lack of obsession with the subject of the human figure. For Brancusi, who was looking for more precise structures, marble was no longer enough.

Wood provides the richest plastic form for Brancusi's style. He found that the structure of the wood itself is the connection provides a material, and no longer need to follow the evolution of the human body structure coupling traditional way, it broke the integration of form, can go to from the perspective of a more natural shape more precise structure, and brown library west began to use wood material, and he also stimulates the production of the cubism.

The use of wood, both radical and natural, sheds preconceived notions. Initially brown library west combination of using wood sculpture, until the production of "witch" that he found the ideal form: use natural split wood, which is the natural joint block, to replace the traditional Mosaic block, and thus become the theme of the sculpture, the combination of this form can not affected by the style and decoration.

#### 4. Matisse

##### 4.1. A painting sculptor

Henri Matisse's work is not very impressive at first glance. His sculpture works are few, and most of them are small pieces. No matter the subject matter, material or atmosphere, they are obviously the type of traditional sculpture. Like Brancusi, Matisse also made sculptures within certain restrictions. .

Matisse is described as a painter and sculptor whose ambition was indeed to create masterpieces in painting. Matisse struggled to adapt to working in three dimensions, and his sculptures had a painting aesthetic and immanence. Matisse's attitude towards sculpture is different from that of Rodin and Brancusi. He does not have a sense of anxiety and mission towards sculpture, but thinks in three-dimensional space for the interest and breakthrough of painting. Matisse was a sculptor both traditional and radical, and his handling of the relationship between material and subject seems the same as Rodin, because he respects tradition and he needs precedent to guide him. As a painter, Matisse's painting career is more than ten years, and there are enough master works for him to develop a basic model, but in the field of sculpture, there is only Rodin.

However, Matisse is different from Rodin. Rodin has mastered the properties of clay through years of practice, and he consciously molds in the process of sculpture; while Matisse does not have the foundation of sculpture techniques, he is not familiar with the properties of materials, and he does not have enough Skills, do not care about these, some of his sculptures are a direct and pure experience of volume. In addition, Matisse had the mature idea in mind of replacing the explicit characterization of details with a comprehensive overall structure. Therefore, for Rodin's "sculpture is the human body", Matisse believed that "sculpture is architecture".

##### 4.2. The abstract volume

No matter how abstract Rodin's sculptures are, we can always be aware of the anatomy within them, and then identify those lumps of unknown meaning through our own knowledge; Matisse's sculptures are not, the composition of which is a homogeneous mass The random combination of clumps does not follow the structure of the human body, nor does it emphasize muscle tissue, but is purely based on an aesthetic understanding and the consideration of the size of each part.

Because Matisse was a painter who wanted to "completely control his own mind", his approach to sculpture volume was different from that of Rodin and Brancusi, who regarded volume as a substance, and they were committed to Expressed in the material and creative process, Matisse just distributed the volume reasonably, and deliberately removed the uniqueness of each part to make it look unified. This kind of experience about volume is very abstract, and it comes more from the intuition and thought of a painter, rather than from the control of materials.

Matisse's "Back" series is his attempt as a painter to create relief monuments. Like paintings, they have only one side, and Matisse's use of reliefs is to create spatial depth through "illusion", making the picture more vivid. The form is real and palpable, but in fact the effect is still painterly. The tension between the two forms of sculpture and painting gives the work its strength.

#### 5. Conclusion

Since Rodin, modern sculpture has broken through the theme and materials of traditional sculpture. After the development of subsequent sculptors, it has become more diversified, and it has been integrated with painting and even objects, and sculpture has truly entered into abstract creation. . However, for modern art, whether it is sculpture or painting, its unlimited content expansion is not an absolute good thing, so it is of great significance to pay attention to the development of modern sculpture.

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