

TRACING COMPOSITION

Fresco

CLOSE-UP:



(Scans of my Investigation Journal)

Figure 2.

In Leonardo da Vinci's mural painting, the focal point is located on Jesus's head. It is created mainly by compositional lines, namely the converging lines of linear perspective, intersecting in a single vanishing point. The viewer's eye is also led to it by leading lines of apostles' sight and hands pointing towards Jesus. It is also created by location in the centre of the painting as well as location on a tip of a pyramid created by Jesus's body. (fig.2)

Movie poster design



Damien Chazelle's *La La Land* theatrical release poster

The focal point in *La La Land*'s poster is located on the actress' dress due to location near one-third of its dimensions and also due to strong contrast of the dress's vibrant yellow with the rest of the composition, kept in a cool colour scheme. Our sight is also led by compositional lines of the actors' arms and a line tangent to the mountains in the background. As it is a movie poster the title is also in a strong compositional point - constituting a secondary focal point.

Figure 4.

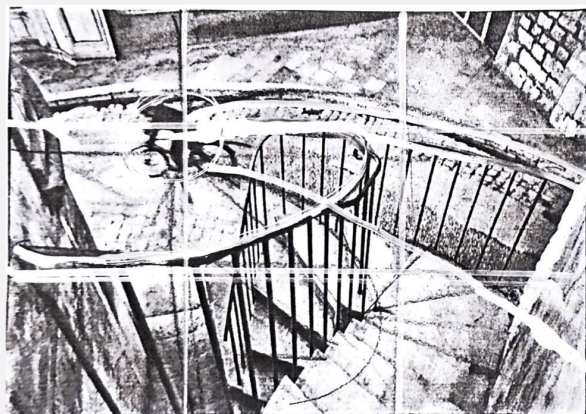
Studying compositions of masters

The very basic aspect of every work of art, regardless of the genre or technique, is its composition. Good alignment of subjects, forms or smart use of colour may result in a piece being more visually effective or conveying meanings and ideas more clearly. Studying compositions of masters in their fields allows me to better understand the common rules that make their pieces effective and implement some of that knowledge later in my own art.



Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, 1490s, tempera and gesso, Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy

Photography

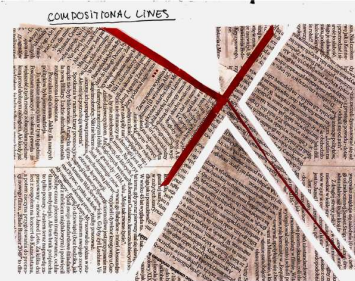
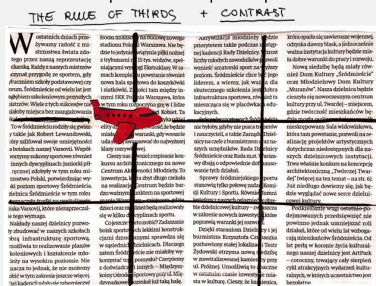


Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Hyères, France*, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper, 1932

- The focal point is attained by the rule of thirds as well as by implied lines of the curved road and the railings.
- Dynamics of the composition is obtained by the presence of a spiral and violated rule of space in front of the biker. As a result our sight is being thrown out of the frame. Also the amount of diagonal lines and the lack of perpendicular ones emphasize the feeling of motion.

Analysing Bresson's photo I came to realise that composition in street photography is largely its most important formal quality even though to great extent dependent on random factors. Such realisation started my admiration for the skill of harnessing composition in street photography.

My quick attempts to visualise some of the most important compositional principles:



Painting



Caravaggio, 'Boy with a Sheep's Head', 1603, oil on canvas, Uffizi, Florence

- There is no one clear focal point in this composition
- The positive space is aligned along a diagonal - this enforces the suspense and dynamic character of the depicted situation
- High contrast of of tonal values **Light plays a crucial role in describing the figures** to which our attention is directed
- Our sight is wandering there and back along implied lines of the Abraham's arms as well as the line of sight of the biblical character and the angel.

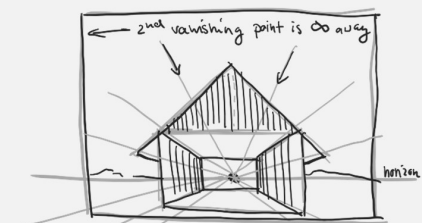
PERSPECTIVE DRAWING

Linear perspective, as developed and practiced by Renaissance masters of painting and architecture, revolutionised visual arts forever. This smart invention, deeply connected with laws of mathematics and physics allows us to depict the world as we see it on 2D surfaces. Of course perspective creates only an illusion of depth, but it is the best tool yet found and has been used consequently by some of the greatest creators for centuries.

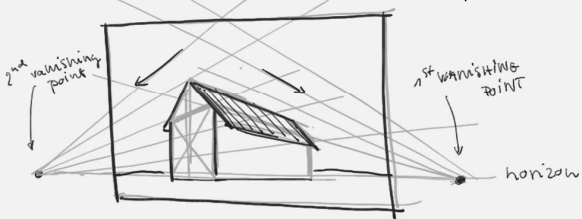
As I want to become an architect in the future the skill of visualising 3D objects seems essential, thus I decided to investigate how linear perspective really works and practice it in order to harness three-dimensional space in my own artworks.

Basic types of perspective:

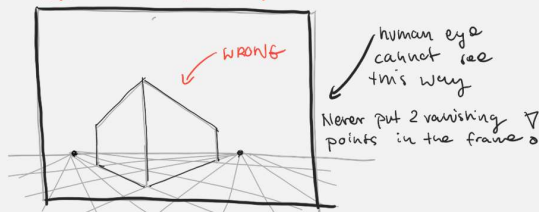
ONE-POINT PERSPECTIVE



TWO-POINT PERSPECTIVE



FAULTY PERSPECTIVE



Author's sketch

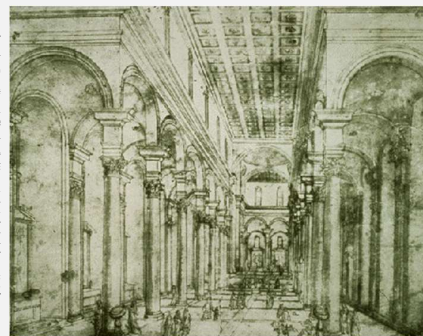
Linear perspective was already known by Ancient Greeks however was forgotten in the Middle Ages. Filippo Brunelleschi, who was an early Renaissance sculptor and architect, was the first one who revived and reformulated the rules of perspective drawing based on experiments and mathematical principles. The two types of linear perspective most extensively used by artists from 14th century are one-point and two-points perspective.

Basic rules of perspective:

- All parallel lines converge to a vanishing point on the horizon
- For simple geometry there are usually two vanishing points
- For an effective perspective (one that looks naturally for humans) only 1 vanishing point lies in the frame and the other lies on the extension of horizon beyond the frame.



Faulty medieval perspective - parallel lines converging in random directions. Wilhelm Kaltefleiter, *Męczennicy świętej Barbary*, part of the altar of St. Barbara, 1447, Wrocław

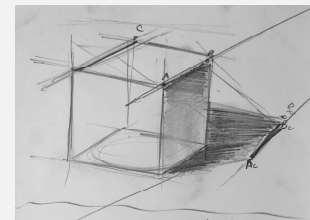


Filippo Brunelleschi, Perspective drawing for Church of Santo Spirito in Florence, 1428

Exploring perspective drawing through simple geometry

1

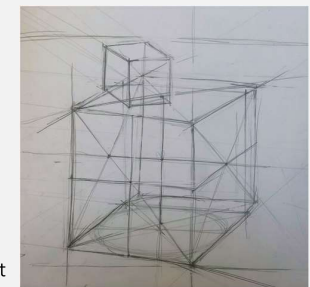
As linear perspective is ruled by mathematics initially it was crucial for me to understand that in order to draw correctly in perspective a more analytical rather than sensual approach is necessary when analysing everyday forms. That is why I started with something simple - basic geometric solids. Mastering the drawing technique in these as well as analysing relations between different solids and their interactions with light would make it easier for me to understand how to capture more complex structures in perspective later.



My early attempt at sketching a cube

2

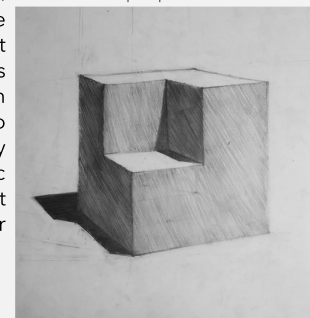
I was seriously shocked how paradoxically hard it was to sketch in perspective the most basic solid - a cube. It was due to its characteristic proportions that if violated are instantly tracked by our perception leading to frustration. Moreover sketching straight lines without a ruler was harder than it seemed so they turned wobbly.



First attempt at combining solids in perspective

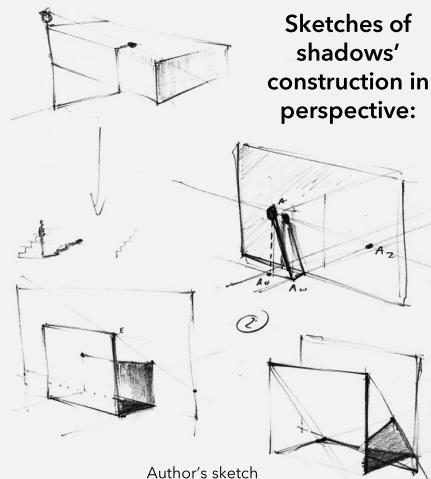
3

It was a time consuming process but eventually I started improving my uneven lines and after many trials I noticed some progress in getting the cube's proportions right. These very first experiments with sketching cubes allowed my brain to familiarise with depicting 3D space on paper. It also proved beneficial as cubes are actually matrices for every other geometric shapes one can imagine as its set proportions act as a 'reference point' for construction of others.



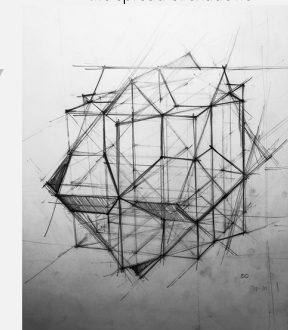
A cube with proper proportions and the spread of shadows

Sketches of shadows' construction in perspective:



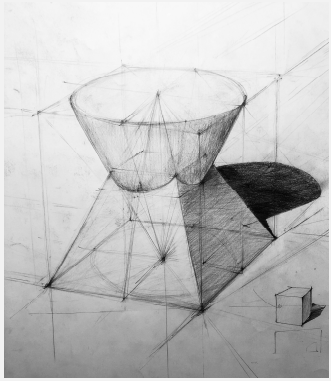
Author's sketch

Rules of perspective are also crucial to find out how any object casts a shadow and what is its shape. For that the direction and angle of light is needed. Shadows as all 3D objects are affected by perspective and thus converge. Knowing the direction of light one may also achieve realistic illusion of volume and depth by means of tonal modelling - which is much easier if we mathematically determine the properties of light.

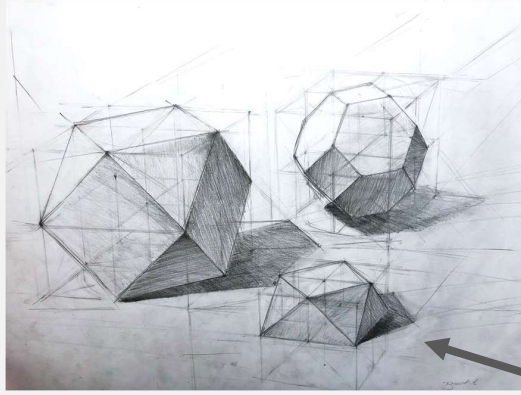


Example of a more complicated solid generated from intersecting 3 cubes

Further development of perspective drawing technique

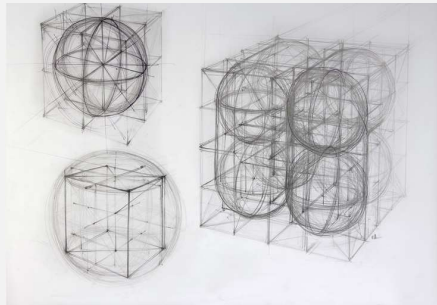


Author's sketch



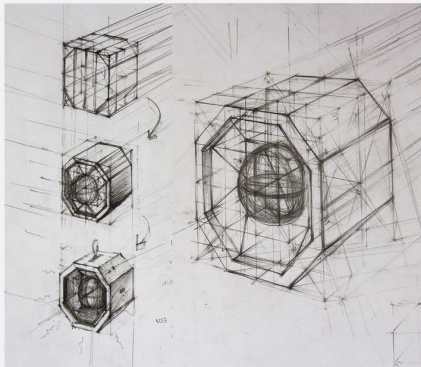
Author's sketch

My progress in drawing proportional cubes allowed me to pursue in drawing more complicated forms based on what I already knew. One of the simplest measures was to e.g. divide a cube into quarters and then connect the points marking half of its sides. Through that a more complicated new solid was created quite effortlessly which again proved to me that the early practice with drawing cubes was worth it. What I started to like in these exercises was the full awareness of how the form looks from all sides - even though it was captured from only one, being aware of how it was created and the fact that constructing in perspective allows to leave some part translucent I felt more confident.



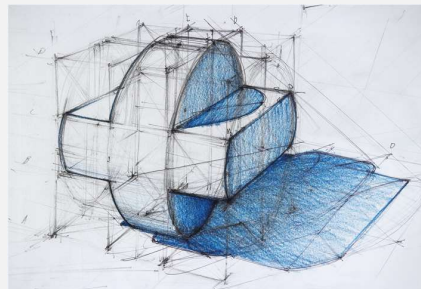
Author's sketch

I started struggling when it came to the depiction of a circle and sphere in perspective. These are extremely hard to be drawn as circles in perspective are seen as horizontal ellipses which have to be drawn by hand without any tools. To gain skill I conducted many exercises with inscribing circles into cubes which later allowed me to create even more intricate structures consisting of cylinders and spheres.



Author's sketch. Design of a wireless loudspeaker.

Feeling quite confident in these sort of geometric drawings I started thinking of how I could incorporate those very interesting structures, into product design. I still had trouble with drawing circular, more fluid forms properly, however I was very happy that I significantly improved my three-dimensional imagination which can help be throughout the VA course.



Author's sketch. Small pendant design casting shadow.

Drawing natural textures

As my primary goal was to develop techniques allowing me to visualise my own ideas for architectural designs it was also crucial to supplement the analytical perspective with the more sensual, fine-art approach. Being a little tired of the empty white plains where I set my geometric compositions I decided to exercise drawings of Nature, which is always to some extent present in architectural visualisations and perhaps is as important as the concrete geometry - adding a broader context to the designed object. I started by practicing patterns creating the allusion of natural forms such as trees and bushes in different media: pencil, black marker and a thin fineliner (A,B,C). I was not very successful in my first attempts.



Author's sketch

Later, while trying to draw a rock formation I came to a conclusion that some natural objects also have their geometry so in order to draw them in a perspective some of the ideas for form from my previous experiments can be used and supplemented with the loose lines implying texture.

Adding aerial perspective:



Author's sketch. Further attempts at aerial perspective.



My first landscape drawing in pencil



Attempt at landscape drawing in black fine liner



Landscape drawing with black marker



Author's sketch. Implementing aerial perspective.

In my initial landscape sketches what I found making them rather unconvincing was that all objects were equally contrastive and detailed, regardless of the distance from the observer. That's when I found out that aerial perspective needed to be implemented in a way that the more distanced the objects are the softer the strokes of graphite and less defined the shapes I draw should be. In such textural drawings it is crucial as it is the main factor contributing to a drawing having depth as little perspective is used.

Architectural sketches



Author's sketch



Author's sketch

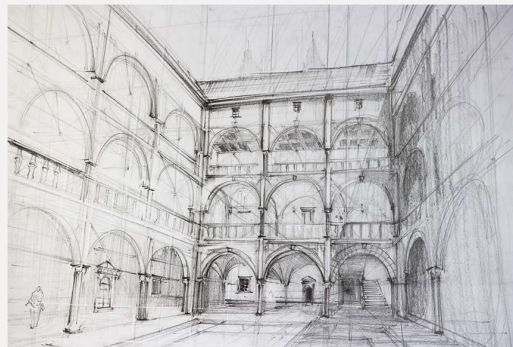


Author's sketch

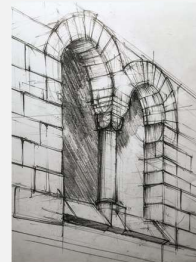
Having practiced both the principles of linear perspective on basic geometric figures as well as drawing natural forms I could finally try to visualise some of my architectural ideas. The first sketches I have made were based just on cuboids and mainly inspired by the modernist villas. I wanted to practice the collaboration of harsh linear perspective and more sensual depictions of landscape.

The new process however required finding some new textures that would correspond with the building materials used by modernists like glass and stone. Despite those challenges the final experience of creating my own visions was really satisfying - I could combine the not easily gained knowledge about constructing shadows, perspective as well as skills in drawing landscape and greenery to create visions of potentially real objects.

At this stage of my development I found drawing historical architecture much more challenging, as in contrary to the scarce geometry of modernism architecture of Renaissance or Baroque has its very characteristic elements that just as initially the proportions of a cube if faulty captured jump out of the composition causing disturbance. After few attempts on drawing historical buildings I decided to abandon it and focus more on developing my own projects.



Author's drawing of a Renaissance 'palazzo'

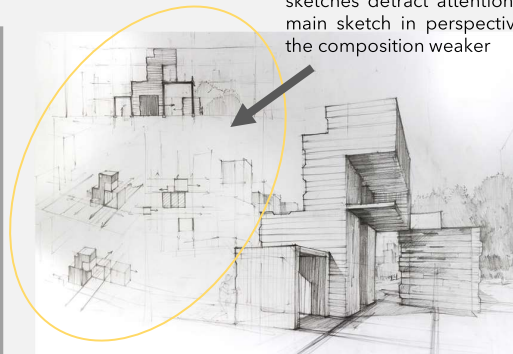


Author's sketch



Author's sketch

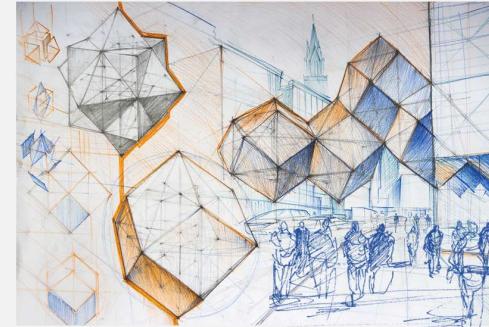
Messy alignment of conceptual sketches detract attention from the main sketch in perspective making the composition weaker



Author's sketch of a public space installation.

REFLECTION

I believe that throughout the course I not only gained much skills in creating realistic effects of depth and visualising my own ideas for architectural designs, but also developed great sensibility to space and 3D objects in general. Looking back at my initial sketches I have done some major improvements which now result in my ability to freely express myself through drawing

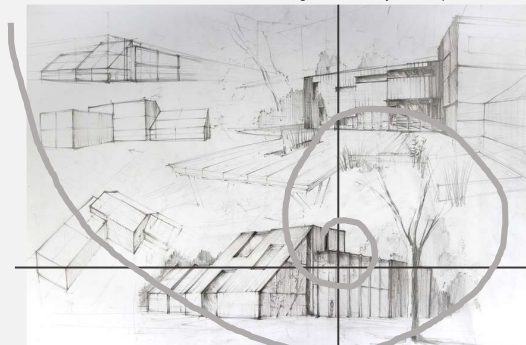


Author's sketch: conceptual design based on geometry

In my latest works I focus more on conceptual designs in which I strongly derive from the principles of geometry and do not focus so much on whether it depicts something possible to be built or not. I like the works in which simple solids combine to create almost an organic, complex clustered structures, like in my futuristic urban sketches.

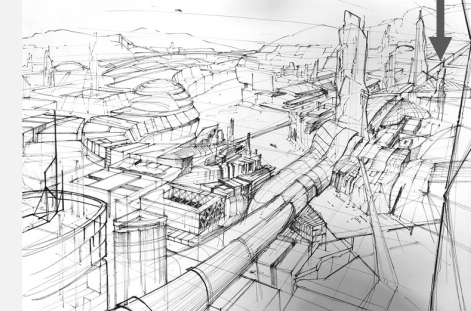
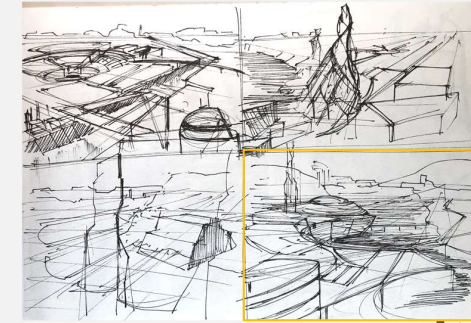
Composition:

Creating my own architectural drawings was also the moment when I could use the compositional principles observed in works of other artists. In architectural drawing good composition is essential as ultimately such works are supposed to highlight the most important aspects of one's design and usually this should be achieved by carefully selecting the focal point. Also clear presentation affects the reception of one's design.



Author's sketch. Analysis of composition

Drawing process from initial sketches to applying shades with a grey marker



Author's drawing. Future city concept.

May, 2019

STREET Photography:

WARSAW THROUGH MY LENS

At some point our supervisor encouraged me to walk around Warsaw with a camera, searching for inspirations and taking photos of things that capture my attention. During this task I also decided to experiment with my new 18-35 mm lens with constant aperture 1.8 which lets much light into the camera, so I went for a journey to the city centre around sunset, when the city gets more gloomy.

(Scans of my Investigation Journal)

The first thing I noticed is how the sun, being so low, illuminates everything in a much different way than during the day, casting interesting shadows and in some places exposing what is not visible through the day.

As it was a normal weekday what drew my attention were the people rushing probably to their homes after the whole day of hard work.



Analysis

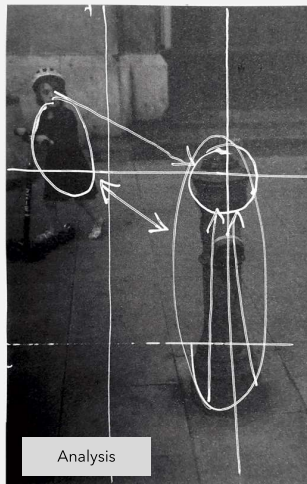
'Underpass'

What I like in this photo, which I took quite accidentally by just pushing the shutter button when the camera was lowered, is its diagonal composition. I also like the game of light and shadow and how the man, being the closest in the depth of field, is softly outlined by the harsh light coming from the surface. This photo has a sense of strong upward movement triggered by the alternating rhythm of stairs and the allocation of people along the photo's diagonal. I decided to recolour this picture in Adobe Lightroom software and make it achromatic as I wanted to stress what I liked the most which was the progression of tonal values, best visible in black & white pieces.

This picture was also taken quite accidentally, as I was studying a fire hydrant and suddenly a small girl on a scooter appeared in the frame. I knew in an instance I had to push the shutter button but only later I realised how the girl enriched the composition with her fearful face expression. What is interesting is the unique correspondence of her dress with the hydrant, being the only chromatic elements in the composition.



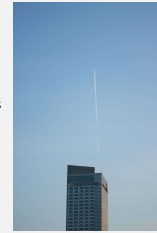
'Jeopardy'



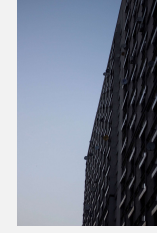
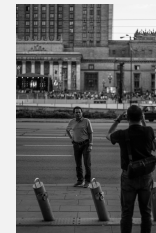
Analysis

- hydrant is the focal point due to contrast in colour values with the rest of the composition
- empowered by the use of sign of the girl
- the composition is static but there is a sense of tension between the hydrant and the girl
- the hydrant is also located in 1/3 of the composition width - according to rule of thirds
- the girl is a secondary focal point and as she is about to leave the frame she makes the composition more open

First experiments with street photography – critically analysing my own compositions



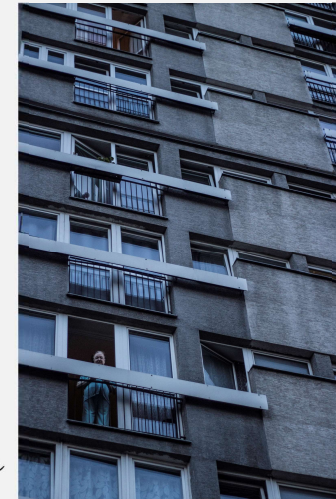
Other photos from this experience:



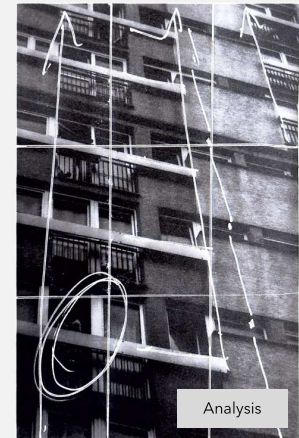
Although I approached this exercise as an avid photographer already I have never tried such spontaneous urban photoshoot as this one before and I think it was really valuable. It sensitised me to the endless number of compositions that the city generates - I learned to look at buildings, objects and bypassers in a different way than I used to. Taking photos in just the right moment brought huge satisfaction and made me more eager to repeat this sort of exploration.

I also discovered how much movement is hidden in the city - within its rhythms and constant flow of people. I like some of the unique effects the strong light of the setting sun gave, especially in the photo taken in the underpass. I would certainly like to further explore urban photography.

While taking this picture I was mainly drawn to the building by the rhythms present on its facade. But then I realised that a woman is looking at me from one of the windows. I thought this gave this composition something interesting apart from the rhythms. This woman seemed old and lovely as she was standing like that for quite a while.



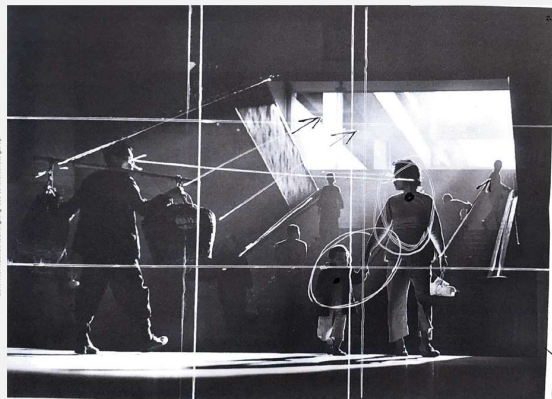
'Glance'



Analysis

INVESTIGATION INTO MASTERS OF STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

May, 2019



FAN HO (1938-2016)

Fan Ho was a Chinese photographer famous for his works shot in Hong Kong in 1950's. His photography was a very characteristic style, often making use of harsh light and contrast.

He was looking for the perfect location and then waited until the right subject appears that draws interest.

use of harsh light as a source of contrast in tonal values

Fan Ho "Quarter to Four", 1950s
 use of light as a source of depth and upward movement → the strokes of light converging to one point
 focal point created by contrast in tonal values
 use of compositional rules: rule of thirds, rule of space (location of focal point)

After my first trial with street photography I decided to investigate some of the best artists in this field whose photos I found somewhat intriguing or corresponding with what draws my own attention when 'studying cities'.

DAIDŌ MORIYAMA (1938)

Is a Japanese photographer whose works focus on the clash of traditional values with modernity in the post-war Japan.

He photographed everything that seemed somehow unique as he walked through Tokyo. In his photography, night with strong contrast with darkness as most of his pieces were night photographs.



linear perspective drawing attention to the focal point
 overexposure the picture gives it a dreamy look
 contrast of darkness and street lamp's light
 progressive rhythm of the net reflecting light pavement also attract and attracts the viewer

What all of the photographers that I have been drawn to have in common, despite creating in different periods of this medium's history, is that they all spent hours studying the same locations and waiting for the perfect shot. Even though this peculiar approach in Bresson's words would be called the *decisive moment*, each of these photographers had their own definition of this magical property of photography, which is that the secret to good photo is observing the world which sets endless number of great compositions that just have to be captured at the right instance of time.

"For me, the camera is a sketch book, an instrument of intuition and spontaneity..."

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON (1908-2004)

One of the greatest French photographers of 20th century. He is the author of the concept of "decisive moment" - so capturing a unique, transient moment in just the right time. He used a small camera, with a 50mm lens, that gave him agility in the crowd or within intimate moments. He even pointed some sharp points of his camera not to draw attention of subjects.

this composition is intriguing as it was a decisive moment of one man walking past and the other trying to follow
 our eyes are led along to the converging lines to the subject
 the man in a bowler hat is the focal point due to rule of thirds
 also the second man is located at the intersection of rule of thirds lines which makes him the second focal point
 diagonally adds dynamism



Henri Cartier-Bresson, Brussels

shadows add the compositional lines, pointing towards the subject



TRENT PARKE (1971)

An Australian photographer very connected to his home country. Money, time and capturing an instance are the most important aspects of photography for him. He believes every photo that means something to him will have an impact on somebody else.

camera is just an instrument for recording personal experience

Trent Parke, Australia, Sydney, Martin Place, 2002

as anything except this man is blurred the composition has a disturbing effect on the viewer
 his face is also in shadow giving him anonymity

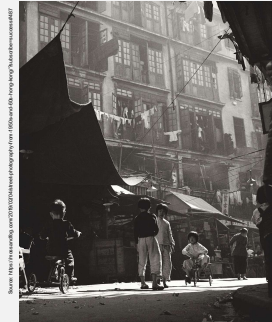
The works that I have been mostly drawn to, happened to be pieces of black & white photography. Already in my previous experience with photography I thought of making some of the photos achromatic but I did it mostly intuitively - not thinking why my eyes preferred the achromatic colour scheme- or just trying to amplify the role of light. I found that Trent Parke had a similar approach and once even said: "I am forever chasing light. Light turns the ordinary into the magical". In his compositions he often captures brightly illuminated objects surrounded by total darkness achieving phenomenal contrast with just the right exposure. I share his opinion that without the 'colour dimension' it is easier to sharpen one's senses and focus on the aspects of light and composition more.

Further experiments with street photography attempts at portrait photography

As I really liked the effects of our street photography task and as Photography was my big passion for a longer time already I decided to further develop in this medium.

Experimenting with black and white photography

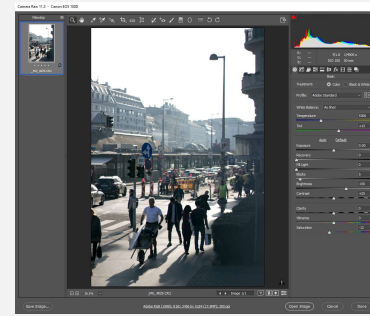
While analysing the masters of photography previously, I very much appreciated the possibilities of black and white photography and making use of harsh light as means to achieve highly contrastive and visually powerful photos. Till now I mostly did digital and colour photographs that were correctly exposed. The phenomenal effects of photographers like Fan Ho and Daido Moriyama achieved with black and white photography, encouraged me to experiment with achromatic photos more and to reinvent the way in which I expose photos, in order to look for some more interesting qualities in terms of light and composition instead of colour.



Fan Ho, Age of Innocence in Sheung Wan (童趣) Hong Kong 1950s and 60s



My photo from the first street photography task

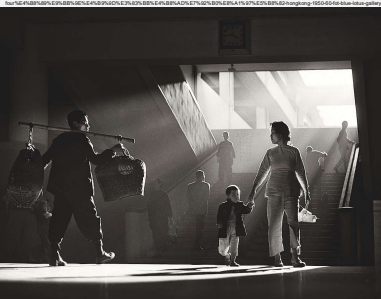


Screenshot from digital processing software

3 As these were all done on a DSLR camera I had to recolour them in postproduction. In some cases depriving the photo of colour and slightly increasing contrast instantly changed my perception of these as suddenly the focal point switched from the most vibrantly coloured objects to ones most brightly illuminated.



Frankly, I am most satisfied with the last few photos I have taken which were not portraits. I believe they have slightly more effective compositions as well as even stronger light so when transferred into achromatic ones the strong contrast is a source of enormous expression. I also got to like the photo below in which the reflection peculiarly increases the composition's depth. Perhaps the composition should have been more planned but the sheer visual effect of the reflection as well as the contrast of natural forms of the tree with the simple harsh geometry of the building made it my favourite one in this trial.



Fan Ho, Quarter to Four (三點九・中環街市-), film photography, Hong Kong 1950s



Daido Moriyama, K

As Fan Ho and Moriyama created in analogue photography their effects are quite unachievable with the digital sensor so I hope I could try to experiment with older cameras sometime in the future. For now I stucked to the gear I was already familiar with, however used a different 50mm lens with aperture 1.8 that allowed for tighter cropping when capturing objects located closely. I decided to change the lens as I observed that the effects of the studied masters of photography looked as if they used longer focal length - their compositions had often tight cropping and the characteristic for wide angle lenses deformations were not present. The 50mm is also significantly smaller making the camera look more inconspicuous which is also a feature for which Moriyama opted by using a compact camera - it helped not to spook his subjects.

1/500 sec, f/4.0, ISO 100



1/2500 sec, f/4.0, ISO 100



1/250 sec, f/1.8, ISO 200



1

Initially I didn't want to limit myself to street photography only and so I did a lot of portraits in which the harsh light played a key role. I firstly experimented with static compositions, achieved with short exposure times, that were to mimic the stability of Fan Ho's compositions.

2

Later I decided to decrease the shutter speed and try to achieve blurriness in the compositions similar to that in Moriyama's compositions where it was a source of tension and dynamism. I think I was much less successful with these attempts and I somehow preferred the clarity of my earlier portraits where the definite patches of highlights outlined the subjects in a more sculptural way



Difference in size between the two lenses



1/8 sec, f/13, ISO 100



1/100 sec, f/2.8, ISO 100



One of the last photos I have taken

1/640 sec, f/4.0, ISO 100

First attempts at analogue photography

Deeper investigation into Fan Ho

After my previous experimentation with street photography I decided to further develop my skills and try to achieve the effects I admired in Fan Ho's photographs. To find out what makes his photos that powerful visually I again analysed some of them in terms of formal qualities.

What I noticed is that his compositions usually have a clear and strong focal point which he achieves by obeying the rule of thirds. He takes his photos against a strong light which gives high contrasts and often distinctly outlines the object or person in the focal point.



Fan Ho's photos were shot with the only camera Fan Ho had through his whole life which was the Rolleiflex 3.5. I found the incredible sensitivity to light of the film and the grainy texture of the output image something unattainable with digital cameras, so I got an old analogue camera and decided to take it to my next photo trip.



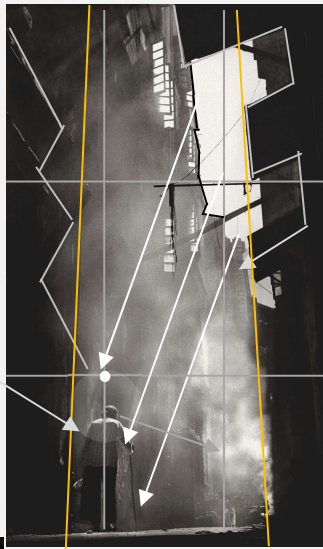
New and old camera

- 1 Initially my subjects were bypassers who had some peculiar relationship with the city's space. Only later, when I started looking at the inanimate objects I found the potential of capturing the urban forms so that to generate almost semi-abstract compositions in which expression is achieved through very strong contrast.



Fan Ho, Unidentified photo

He often uses **low viewpoint** which actually increases the upward tendency towards the skyline.



Fan Ho, Mystic Alley(秘巷)" Hong Kong 1950s and 60s

His vertical compositions are especially effective. I came to a conclusion that our eyes are led by the textures and rhythms, emphasized by the varied skyline, which are more visible in vertical compositions. They play a key role in adding dynamics to a seemingly static piece.

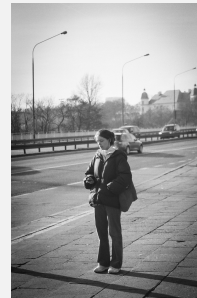


He takes advantage of the characteristics of the environment - the unclear, misty air emphasizes the streaks of light which directly hit the object of his interest.

His photographs have tremendous depth which naturally springs from the linear and aerial perspectives but also from the progressive rhythms of buildings and light streaks he tries to capture, which add an incredible inward movement.

In most of his compositions he uses shadows as negative space which acts like a natural frame. The high contrast of tonal values stressed by such a frame adds a strong expression.

- 2 I am particularly satisfied with the pieces in which a kind of tension and mystery arose as a result of high contrast, created by the harsh light, and dynamism achieved by progressive rhythm in the divisions of the architecture.



Other frames from this photoshoot



Author's photo



Author's photo

3

What I learned from this trial is not only that the pictures differ in their texture and contrast of tonal values, from ones done with the digital sensor, but also the whole experience is much different. As I knew I had only 36 frames on the film, every decision had to be more conscious. The fact that I couldn't preview a photo at first made me frustrated but later I could not wait to see the results of my trip after some time. But most importantly I couldn't make any adjustments based on the preview - I had to use my imagination even more extensively, predict every possible problem in the exposure and carefully chose the composition. This kind of workflow was something absolutely new to me and also very valuable as I started noticing things that I would have not with the digital camera - my senses sort of sharpened and the trip was more like a hunt for the right composition in just the right time and place.

EXHIBITION PIECE

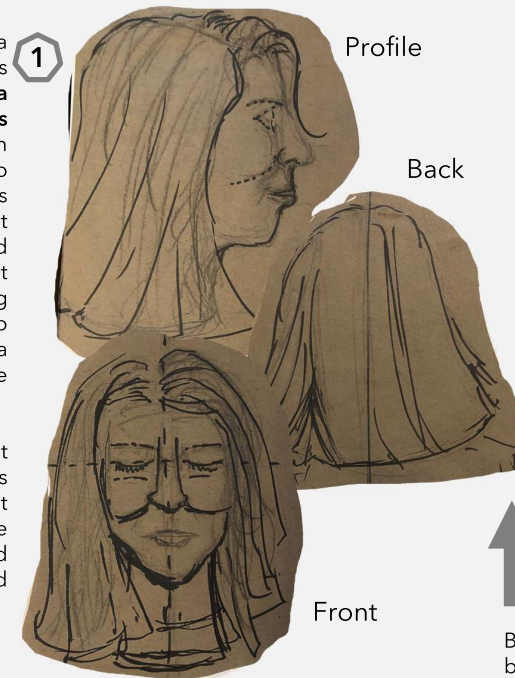


Acceleration, black & white film photography, 2019

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH A 3D MEDIUM - CLAY

Sculpting friend's head - Study of a 3D form

Analysis of my friend's head from 3 angles - sketch



After the head dried out the final result was quite realistic and I was happy how it turned out (as for the second time with clay ever). What I was perhaps most satisfied with was how the piece works well from all sides and really captures the essence of my friend's usually calm face.

Both these first experiences with clay were a kind of milestone in my creative development as I found working in 3D corresponding much more with how I like to physically, fully engage in the creative process. Sculpture allowed me to transfer my fascination with the illusion of depth and volume, that I already practiced in 2D, into reality of working with real form in space. I noticed the potential of expressing movement in space that I immediately wanted to further explore. Finally, both experimentations sparked my interest in the expressive properties of folds and curves that I achieved with slab building. My only doubt with clay was whether it is not too heavy for creating bigger sculptures in this technique, as even in works of such small scale the problem was they tended to collapse. Hence, I decided to conduct research to resolve this problem.

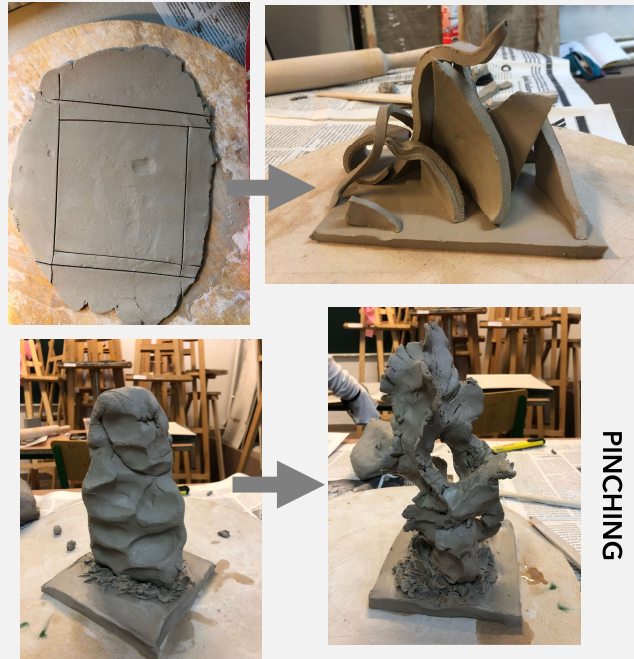


Bearing in mind the curvy shapes I achieved with bent slabs of clay in my first experimentation I decided to use this technique to express the fluid nature and natural curves of my friend's hair. I was happy with how it blended nicely with the pinched face after final smoothing of the piece.



Trying to express movement in a 3D form

On one of our VA lessons I had the opportunity to experiment with clay, which was the first three-dimensional medium I gave a try. Our simple task, in order to familiarise with the new material, was to create two small compositions expressing some form of **movement**. In this experiment I explored a few clay sculpture techniques. The pinching method I found very effective to create an expressive form with rich organic texture resembling a plant. I also very much liked the effects of slab building as it allowed to achieve a clear coherent form while folding and intertwisting smooth slabs of clay. In both pieces I was satisfied with how I managed to evoke an impression of an intricate organic movement, with two different approaches. **I found clay a medium with paradoxically great potential for expressing dynamism which contrasts with its natural heaviness.**



SLAB BUILDING

PINCHING

My first experimental abstract pieces expressing movement

What was important in that experience is that for the first time I felt really drawn to creating three-dimensional forms. I feel it was the moment when I discovered my great interest for twisted curvy shapes. Also, I found the sheer process of sculpting particularly enjoyable, as it not only allows to work with a variety of tools but also engages your entire body into the very physical interaction with a plastic material over which you have full control.

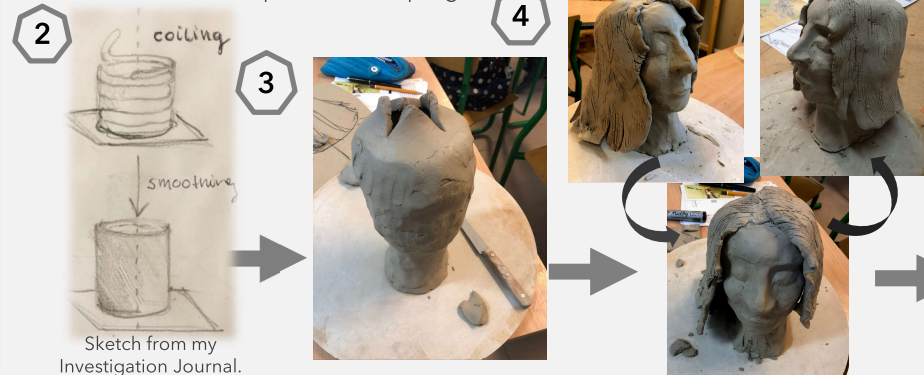
My next activity in clay was to create a figurative sculpture of our classmate's head. **The key aspect of this process was a detailed study the subject's face features through sketches.** Capturing the head from three different angles enabled me to grasp the most important aspects of the head's form from all sides. It was my first attempt at analysing a three-dimensional object and turned out really helpful as I could use it later as a type of 'project' while executing the head in clay. It really allowed me to better understand my friend's head as a whole and I must admit I came to like the process of 'thinking' through sketching.

My aim was to amplify the most characteristic face features of my friends face and slightly exaggerate her prominent cheeks and lips. That is why I did the three quick sketches in pencil and later added black marker to outline the shapes and lines I would emphasize in 3D.

Knowing which features I want to express I proceeded to clay. In the sculpting process I met the next sculpting technique based on stacking long rolls of clay on one another - coiling. It allowed to create a base for the head which had to be hollow in order not to crack while burning the clay in high temperatures.

As I was working with a 3D object I really tried to make it **look as effective as possible from every angle**. Also the clay was quickly thickening, so it required a very specific type of workflow of successively handling the form from all sides. It was a real challenge for my attention span.

The process of sculpting:



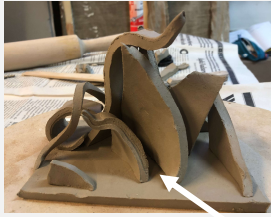
Sketch from my Investigation Journal.



The final piece after drying out

CLAY SCULPTURE: Further development

Slab building - further experiments with dynamism. Architectural inspirations



The first piece created with slab building

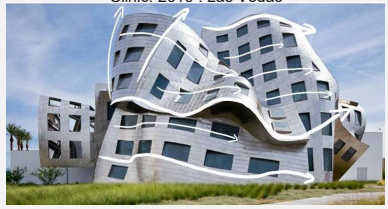
The curves and concaves of my first slab built piece instantly brought to my mind the fluid architectural forms designed by Zaha Hadid and the folds present in Frank Gehry's architecture, by which I might have been intuitively inspired. **What captivated me while analysing more of Zaha Hadid's works is how she was extremely successful in creating an illusion of actual movement of her buildings.** In comparison to Gehry's structures, which often convey the same type of flowing movement, but are very chaotic and dispersive, Hadid's designs seemed much more harmonious and preserving a balance between the intricacy of the flowing lines and simplicity of the form's final dissolution. On the other hand what I came to like in Frank Gehry's buildings is that they are not as predictable and pure, keeping eyes puzzled with lots of details.

To further develop my skills in clay sculpture I decided to further experiment. As in my previous confrontation with clay I was quite effective in creating abstract forms with slab building, expressing flowing and organic movements, initially I decided to continue with this technique. Trying to tackle the problem of the collapsing clay, I searched for an advise in a ceramics shop where I learned that in order to create more hovering, flowing and lighter forms I need a thicker clay - one with a greater content of chamotte - so that the structure wouldn't collapse.

On image analysis of movement of Heydar Aliyev Center / Zaha Hadid Architects, 2012 Baku, Azarbaijan



Analysis of movement in Frank Gehry's The Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health of the Cleveland Clinic, 2010 . Las Vegas



I started sculpting intuitive abstract compositions by aligning, almost ribbon-like, cut slabs on a platform just as I did before. Later on I started something different. I tried to cover a vertical column with clay slabs in order to achieve more complicated movements - from flowing to more swirling and upward, enhancing the illusion of lightness.

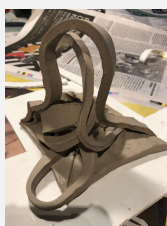
Inspired by the styles of both of these architects and interested with the flowing rhythms that can be achieved using the method of slab building I started my further experimentation. At first I tried to generally play with the new type of clay to familiarise with its strengths and weaknesses. It was generally thicker and more dense but it had a significantly different texture from the soft clay we had at school. This caused the slabs coming out grainy and porous. Trying to tackle the problem of rough texture and gently smoothing the clay with water, I could almost tangibly feel the flowing rhythms which made the whole process very enjoyable and relaxing.

I was not satisfied with the end results of this process as I felt I had overdone the pieces. The new type of clay also did not prevent the works from collapsing which much restrained the expressive curves - the heaviness of clay prevailed. However, I really admired the new type of flowing and a bit awkward twisted motion I achieved in the last vertical composition. After this study I decided to abandon the plasticity of slab building for a while and direct my attention towards movements.

The slab building exercises I made:



1



2



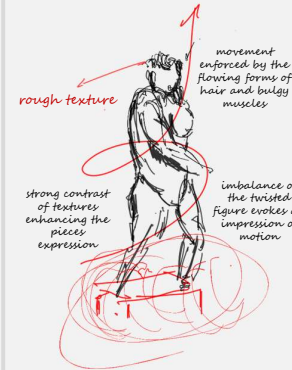
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Grasping movement of a human figure



Author's photo

Bernini, Eros and Anteros Rome, 1630, Carrara marble

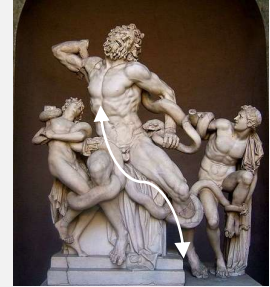


My quick sketch of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's Modello for the Fountain of the Moor, 1653, terracotta, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

The dynamism and peculiar twisted expression of the mentioned sculpture and the works of Bernini I saw in person were the main inspiration for my conceptual sketches for the next piece I was to execute. I wanted the posture to be in the same kind of twisting movement that is in some way constricted and not very obvious. That's why I decided to depict a silhouette that is kneeling and trying to disengage from some matter absorbing it.

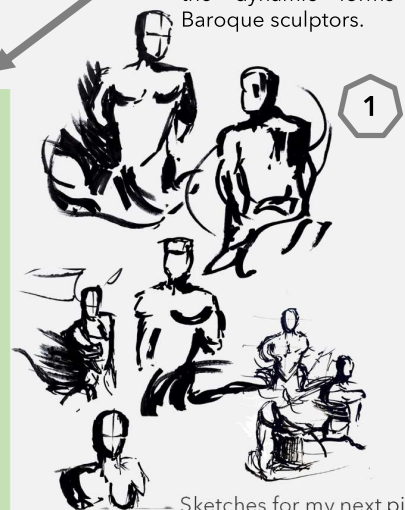
KUNST HISTORISCHES MUSEUM WIEN

Logo of the museum where Bernini's exhibition took place



Laocoön and His Sons, unknown author, 200BC-70AD, marble

His sculptures reminded me of one of the ancient Greek marble sculptures - Laocoön and His Sons - which we analysed on our early VA lessons. It happens to be one of the primary sources of inspiration for the dynamic forms of Baroque sculptors.



Sketches for my next piece inspired by Bernini

2

I started by building a core from which I started subtractive pinching and scraping off successive layers of clay with my thumb, to form the posture I sketched. **I got into the swing of pinching the clay so that it took simplified cubist shapes.** I decided to embed the body in the fluid matter that I then created using slab building.



The piece in progress



Close up on the texture achieved with mixing pinching and slab building

I really enjoyed the process of creating the piece as it was again trying something new for example by using a variety of tools and exploring the effects each of them had on the texture. At some point I even started using scissors to enhance the cubist shapes and achieve clearer cuts in the form.

What I like in this piece is the specific kind of "unfinished", crude and organic look it has, resembling a concrete structure. Also I was happy with the contrast of the cubist, more angular, body with the, rich in texture and flowing rhythms, form of the base. I would certainly like to create more sculptures using this mixture of techniques, but ones that would imitate motion to an even greater extent. I also decided to continue with contrasting smooth angular forms with flowing ones as I find it visually appealing.

3



The final piece: *Grappling man*, clay sculpture, 2019

CLAY: Simplifying human body & Impact of light on form

ALBERTINA

Logo of the museum where I saw Rodin's and Schlemmer's works



Auguste Rodin, *The Eternal Idol*, 1893, Bronze



Oskar Schlemmer, *Figure for the volkwang cycle*, 1928, oil on canvas

In Vienna I got to like the purity of expressive figures sculpted by Auguste Rodin and the way he frequently juxtaposes smooth, glossy texture of the polished bodies with the sculptures' rough bases. However, I mainly admired the expressiveness of the intricate, often unintuitive poses and the plasticity of human body he captured.

My biggest inspiration for the last piece done with entirely in clay though, were the works in which human body is more simplified and geometrized. This was on one hand a painting by Oskar Schlemmer, in which he tries to present the perfection of human body like in the Ancient Greeks; combining it with thorough analysis of how strong warm light describes it in space. On the other hand it was a sculpture by the cubist sculptor **Alexander Archipenko**. In his *Female Nude* I found its elegant, **elongated proportions and plasticity** shared with Rodin's sculptures very inspiring. The way in which Archipenko simplifies human body allows the viewer to focus on these proportions as well as on the rhythms encapsulated in the form which peculiarly interacts with light. **I studied this sculpture by conducting several sketches that were later helpful in defining proportions of my own piece.**

While creating the piece I wanted to create specific lighting conditions to see how specific directional light, similar to this on Bernini's exhibition, would influence the process at the stage of sculpting.

The main curatorial aspect of the Bernini's exhibition-scarce illumination and use of **strong directional light drew my attention towards the problematics of light and its role in creating form and influencing the viewers reception of nearly all aspects of a piece of art.** As in my previous experimentations with different media (ink, drawing, photography) light and chiaroscuro played an important role I decided to experiment with this formal aspect in my next future 3D works.

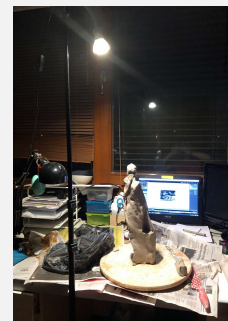


Sketch of Archipenko's *Female Nude* from my investigation journal

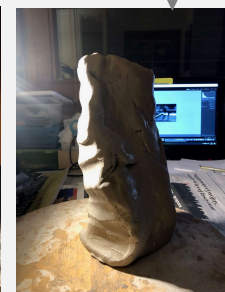
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2



1



Alexander Archipenko, *Female nude*, 1923, Bronze

Sculpting process- my dimmed studio with a directional light above

The final piece was a bit different from my previous sculptures. The female figure has very distorted and exaggerated proportions which makes it visually heavier than the previous pieces and similar to Archipenko's cubist nude. Her body seems fettered and her pose is unnatural as she tries to cover her naked body with a piece of cloth. What I liked in this piece is that it is quite intricate and mysterious in a sense it triggers thoughts about the potential reasons for the women's state or emotions.

As for the formal qualities however, **I was not satisfied with the final expression which largely differed from the dynamic lightweight structures I initially wanted to study.** Although the simplified details enable us to focus on the curves and the rhythm of the body (which is amplified by the directional light from above), its heaviness weakens the turning motion from which I wanted to base the sculpture. Finalising this piece made think of finding another medium allowing to explore 3D form in a different direction.



The final piece, clay sculpture, 2019

Abandoning clay: FINDING A NEW MEDIUM

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH PLASTER BANDAGE:



Face mask we have done with plaster gauze on VA lessons

I got the opportunity to create a face mask casting using a completely new to me medium - plaster bandage. I was stunned by how easy it is to work with, as it only requires to drench the gauze in water for a second and just minutes after it solidifies and creates a hard, thick structure of any shape.

When doing the mask I became really curious of the further possibilities of this medium and thought of other applications in my works. I saw it as a possible alternative to my main medium (up until then) - clay. I found it hard with clay to create light curvy forms in which I became increasingly interested. Even though I tried it with slab building, **the heaviness of clay and a relatively long time of hardening caused frustration as I wasn't able to convey what I imagined-** even when I was pretty close the clay tended to collapse. **That is why I started experimenting with plaster bandage as a potential medium for sculpting - it is very light in contrary to clay and hardens very quickly.**

1 STUDYING POSSIBILITIES OF PLASTER GAUZE

I needed something on which I could stretch the plaster so I used leftover wire and a few layers of cardboard as a base. I started composing the piece intuitively. At first I wanted to achieve an effect similar to this I got with slab building - I wanted to achieve a smooth and curvy architectural form with dynamics achieved by the fluidity and flowing rhythm of the curve that I appreciated in Zaha Hadid's architecture. From the moment I started working with this medium dozens of new ideas of how it could be used sparked in my head as it is very submissive and pliant. I kept adding new layers and new curvatures, so I also added more wire which turned out to be a perfect construction material.



The piece in progress with outlined curvy structure

In my early works in clay I could not freely create a light dynamic form because of the technical problem with clay's softness as well as the visual heaviness of this material.

2

But later I have noticed something captivating in places where the bandage was less taut and started folding and wrinkling. **It was the unique kind of organic and opaque texture of the bandage that drawn my attention.** It added ruggedness and lightness to the flowing form which I could not achieve with the smooth heavy slabs of clay. Also in places where the bandage started to unravel some loose strands were dangling freely adding an even more organic feeling to it, so **I started purposefully enhancing those imperfections to increase the piece's expression.** There was also something mysterious in how the curvy forms, combined with this texture and the wire skeleton, started reassembling some sort of an animal tissue or a cocoon to me.



Close up on texture



Form Study, plaster gauze on wire and carboard, 2019

3

The final piece is very different from what I created before, yet similar on the grounds of **flowing rhythms and the presence of a disturbing entangled movement which I try to study through my pieces.** The thing that varies the most and of which I am so proud is the **organic texture which works well with my curves.** I believe this experimentation was a milestone in the development of my sculptures as I found something very new, that gives me the possibility to express not only movement and shape in a very quick, effective and original way, but also I found a new feature that enhances the piece visually and creates a unique relationship of the sculpture with light and space, by making it permeable.

Source: <https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/544091198729128468/>



Heydar Aliyev Center / Zaha Hadid Architects, 2012, Baku, Azarbaijan

FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE NEW MEDIUM

ORGANIC TEXTURE AND SOFT SHAPES: Inspiration from Abakanowicz



(Close-up on texture) Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Dream II*, 2003-2007, burlap, resin



Magdalena Abakanowicz (1930-2017)

After I finished the last piece its organic texture slightly resembled to me the burlap in resin pieces by Magdalena Abakanowicz. So I decided to investigate her approach.

Abakanowicz was also interested in the possibilities of manipulating the medium she developed. Her sculptor like approach to fabric was really unique at the time she started her career. Fascinated with the coarse, organic tissue of fabrics, she took advantage of its softness, pliancy and submissiveness. I also felt a conceptual bond with her art as she preferred to work with bare hands on her sculptures, just as I do. She once said: *I shape it with my hands. My hands transmit my energy to it. By translating an idea into a shape, they will always pass on something escaping conceptualisation.*



What I also loved in this texture is its perforated, porous nature and the way in which light penetrates through it making it interact with the space in a peculiar way..



Twisted figure, plaster gauze on wire and cardboard, 2019

What I learned from that process is that the piece doesn't have to be entirely "filled" to be effective, furthermore it is very easy to overdo it. Thus, I started asking myself how impermeable an object, done with this technique, has to be in order to perceive it, on the one hand, as one possessing mass and volume, and on the other hand as one just suspended in space and interacting with it only by sieving light and casting interesting shadows but in fact being entirely transparent and "empty"... I am interested in this very relationship of the two features, a sculpture can have, and in how the texture and the entanglement of curves amplifies both sides of this juxtaposition.

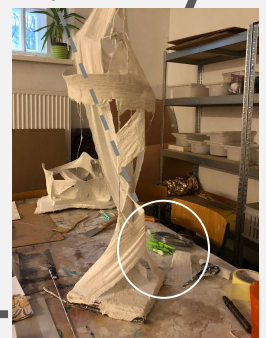
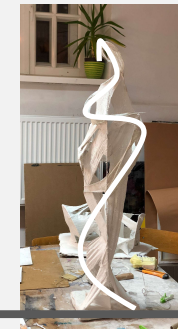
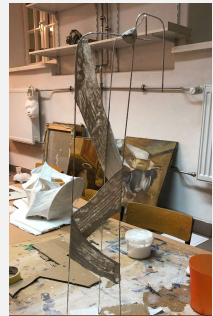
Depiction of human figure in plaster bandage and wire

As I was still familiarising with the new medium I decided to conduct some further experiments based on the figurative motives I already studied- the human figure. I wanted to expand the sculpture beyond the possibilities of clay and create something much larger and expressive. Also, this time I wanted it to be a more vertical composition and express a slight upward, more swirling type of movement, not necessarily being embedded in the architectural inspirations. I was open to what the form would suggest during the process. My aim was rather to explore new features of the technique and perhaps increase the permeability of my piece.

The idea of expressing a human figure, using the simplified language of cubist, guided me through the process of adding mass. I really like few features in particular: one being the partial permeability of the piece, second are the angular accents where the fabric bends on the wire frame



During the process I found a physical obstruction and felt a need for an assistant- as the wet bandage slithers very easily from the wire, to keep it in place in such a big format it has to be held, while being attached, on both ends. I came up with an innovation to use clothes pegs to attach it and more freely play with the sheer curvature of the fabric



EXPLORING TRANSLUCENCY AND DYNAMISM OF FORM



Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Turquoise Abakan*, sisal weaving on metal support, 1969

I started working with plaster gauze aiming to find a better medium to express movement and further explore the possibilities of achieving fluid, curvy forms with different media. However, I found an additional asset in this medium's organic, permeable texture that I wanted to enhance to increase my sculptures' expression and multiply the means of their interaction with light and space. I started looking for inspirations among artist who aimed to achieve similar effects and among those who used fabrics or textiles in a spatial context.

I found the works of Magdalena Abakanowicz and Aurèlia Muñoz really inspiring as they used weaved material in a spatial context. In both cases I like the huge scale of the pieces and the way they interact with space while being hanged and suspended in the air. The fold of the weaving captivates the viewers eye with its almost real movement. I really like the mysteriousness of the piece and their highly expressionistic nature. Though Muñoz works are abstract they resemble organic forms, seen in the natural world, like a spider's web or kind of extra-terrestrial cocoon.

I found the idea of suspending the sculpture in the air with the nylon string very beneficial for the sculpture's expression as it looks as if floating by means of its movement.



Aurèlia Muñoz, *Estel ancorat (anchored star)*, Macramé with nylon strings, 1974

My first and biggest inspiration though for several of the next pieces were the Linear Constructions in Space by the Russian constructivist artist - Naum Gabo. What captivated me in his pieces was the unbelievable awareness of form which he constructed using interesting, industrial materials such as plastic, nylon filament and steel. Gabo believed that geometric principles should be the basis for sculpture and he advocated for the use of transparent materials to define volumes of empty space instead of solid mass. I really admire how he used the nylon filament in order to create a multi-layered, permeable and curvy carcass inside a steel construction, as it gives it the very feature I am looking for in my sculptures - the combination of entanglement with transparency. I decided to use this material in my next piece to try to mimic this effect and supplement my sculptures' texture.



Naum Gabo, *Linear Construction in Space, No. 4*, steel and nylon filament, 1959

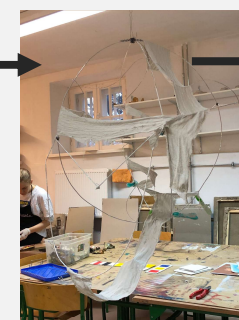
After doing the research I decided to get a Nylon string and use it for my next experimental piece with wire and plaster bandage which I imagined suspended in space this time alike Abakanowicz and Muñoz's sculptures.



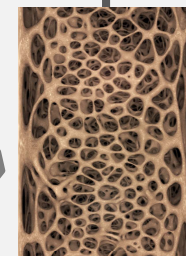
Experimental Piece -
Hanging construction:
Translucence-plaster gauze
on wire and nylon string,
2019

Experiment with hanging sculpture

1 Inspired by Gabo I wanted to create a spherical frame that could be later suspended and over which the bandage and nylon filament could be stretched. I shaped the wire in my hands into two circles and used a more ductile thin wire to bond the wires.



2 Quite intuitively, still at the stage of forming the wire, I came up with an idea to make the beanlike form I imagined in the first place, more figurative and resembling a giant skull. **Only later did I realise that this idea might have sprung subconsciously - the organic texture of the earlier sculptures already looked to me a bit like the cellular structure of human bones.**



Bone structure

4

At some stage of the process I came to a conclusion **that with further manipulation of the medium I have to develop a higher awareness of the form I am heading to.** I found out that Naum Gabo performed sketches of his sculptures to search for the desired form, and perhaps this made him as successful in achieving those incredible compositions. Although I found intuitive work very satisfying I felt I need to plan my work beforehand like I did with my clay sculpture where this gave me a better awareness of the direction of my process. Because I was satisfied only with the effect the suspension of the skull gave and not so much with its form, I decided to abandon this project and try to create a more abstract piece, related closer to Gabo's rhythmical compositions.

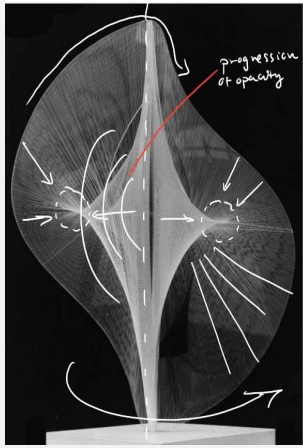


Fig. 1 My analysis of Naum Gabo's *Linear Construction in Space No. 2*, two sheets of Perspex and nylon filament strings, 1949-53

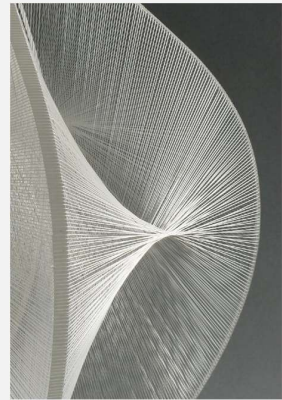


Fig. 2 Close-up on the chordal structure of the same sculpture

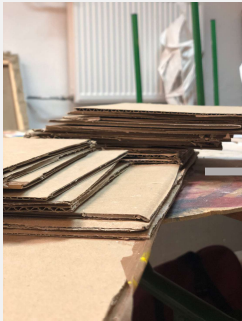


Fig. 3 Close-up on the angular cardboard base



Fig. 4 Trying out different compositions with a hessian ribbon



IMPLEMENTING Gabo's STRING SURFACES

After my experiment with the hanging skull I decided to focus more on Gabo's technique which allowed him to attain such dynamic structures. His *Linear Constructions* constitute of translucent string surfaces that are regularly organised in a peculiar manner. Thanks to that technique, he could shape forms of an undefined nature that were in macro scale fluid and curvy, yet organised by some strange geometry and radiating rhythms when seen close-up. **As I did not find the nylon strings effective in my last sculpture as they quickly lost on tautness, as well as were dominated by the more apparent surfaces of bandage, I thought of applying the string technique for stripes plaster gauze.**

I investigated that what inspired Gabo to create such forms were the mathematical models of the so called ruled surfaces he had seen in the Science Museum in London. Such surfaces are created when two parallel curves are connected by straight lines in a way that they divide segments of both curves into equal parts. This technique not only opens endless possibilities of creating concave, curvy surfaces but also **allows to play with their translucency and dynamism, which was the determinant factor for me to pursue.**



Fig. 5 Preparation of the water-plaster mixture



Fig. 6 Base + Wire outline

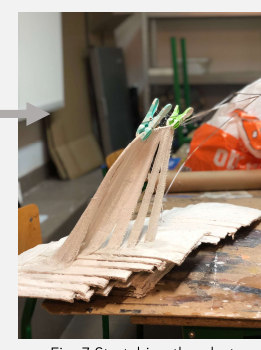


Fig. 7 Stretching the plaster gauze



Fig. 8 further process

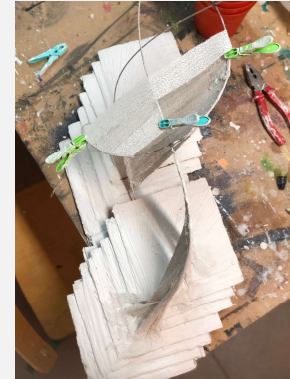


Fig. 9 further process



Fig. 10 Close up on the self-sustaining architectonics from a low view point

2 Later I attached some wire to the cardboard base and started experimenting with a hessian ribbon over it in order to find the expression of the piece that would suit my intentions. This measure helped me to imagine the final form **which was supposed to create an impression of decisive, self-perpetuating organic elongation** (Fig. 4).

1 As I aimed to make more conscious decisions throughout the process I initially just assembled a base for my next sculpture. I came up with an idea to combine even more than Gabo the geometric angular forms with a kind of organically fluid expression of the wire so I initially enforced an alternating rhythm with the cardboard base that somehow suggested me to make the piece express a slightly upward and horizontal movement (fig. 3)

3 I felt the natural, pure white expression of plaster in my previous pieces actually worked well as it allowed the eye to focus on the sheer form - its rhythmicity, texture and volume - rather than colour. Hence, I decided to stick to achromatic colour scheme for good. I got some actual plaster of Paris (fig. 3) to cover the brown cardboard base with and to achieve an effect that the plaster gauze overlay is blended with it and in a way naturally emerges from the angular shapes. Working with actual plaster was an entirely new experience for me and I was initially not sure what tools should I use. However I quickly started working with it just like with clay with my bare hands, as this gave me more control over the final texture of the base. After I covered the base with plaster I noticed it lost stiffness and under the mass of plaster, started slightly bending and losing its clear-cut form. I did not expect that to happen, however I later found it contributing to the transitional nature of the final form.

4

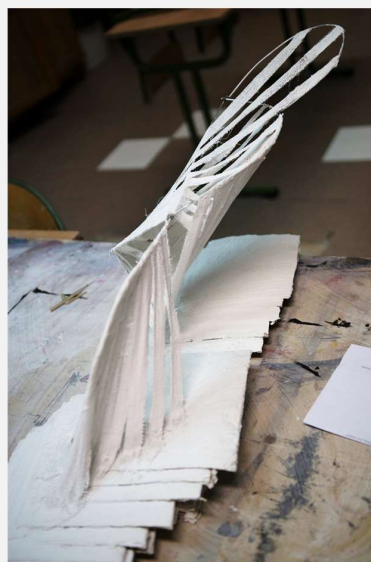
After the plaster base dried I could move on to creating the chordal surface with earlier prepared stripes of plaster gauze (fig. 7). This required patience and precision as adding more layers of bandage on wire increased its tendency to collapse. Also all stripes had to be well taut in order for the piece to have an architectural stability. I deliberately created a structure that could support itself in a seemingly imbalanced pose to create an impression of lightness and ascendance of the form and enforce its motion.

5

After I finished the piece I was very satisfied with how I managed to convey dynamism and it turned out that plaster is a great alternative to nylon strings in creating complex ruled surfaces. I also achieved my initial goal in juxtaposing the geometric angularity of the base and single stripes with the generally fluid shape of the organically looking form and its coarse texture. This piece was the first one done with plaster gauze that fully captured the kind of motion I planned beforehand and was visually effective when seen from different angles.



Dynamic construction: Transverse elongation, plaster bandage, plaster of Paris, cardboard, wire, 2020



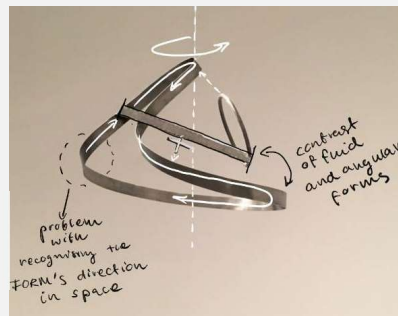
FURTHER DEVELOPMENT WITH STRING SURFACES

As I found the stringing technique highly effective for plaster gauze I decided to create more of such sculptures. In one of the next pieces I decided to combine it with the ideas of polish modernist sculptor Katarzyna Kobro. I found her suprematist works especially interesting - she often contrasted oval forms with sharp and angular lines what at first evoked a feeling of disturbance when I saw these. But later I found this measure actually working positively for the sculpture's strangely undefined expression and I particularly liked it in one of her *Hanging constructions*.

Source: <https://www.katarzynakobro.com/en/works>



Logo of the gallery where I have seen Kobro's pieces



Source: <https://www.katarzynakobro.com/en/works>

Analysis of Katarzyna Kobro's *Hanging construction no. 2*; saw blade, steal hoop, iron ring and a cross brace; 1921/22

The idea of suspending a sculpture in space was already present in some of my earlier experiments but after seeing Kobro's work I felt I haven't made a proper use of this effect and decided to make my next sculpture a hanging piece.

This time I also wanted to make my piece more minimalistic as what I felt made me less successful with my previous hanging form was that I might have overloaded it and as a result it seemed unresolved.

That is why I motivated myself to work quickly and intuitively, however bearing in mind that the final expression of the piece which is created by the string curvy surface is dependent on the mutual alignment of wires. That is why the initial phase was crucial and required most attention. I took 2 leftover pieces of wire and this time constructed a more angular frame.

I believe the final version of my piece is outstanding from the previous pieces. It works incredibly well from all angles and its form encapsulates a rapid and tapering movement. I later found the piece looking even better when exhibited in strong directional light in a dimmed space. Such light As it is suspended on just one string it spins freely casting interesting shadows the shape of which progresses with the spin adding the piece another, kinetic dimension. This piece demonstrated me that sometimes less is more and that I might be just taking a too complicated approach to express the aspects of form that interest me most.

3

The second surface I wanted to be much more twisted so that to look like another stage of movement of the first one constructed. This definitely increased the piece's dynamism.

2

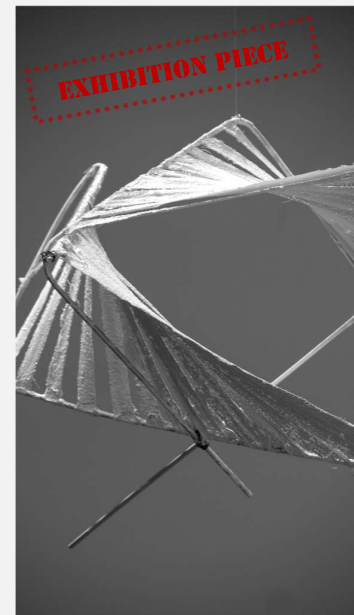
Later I chose two sides of the frame between which I started 'stringing'. I wanted this surface to increasingly loose on translucency and so the separation between stripes of plaster were gradually increased.



'Stringing' with plaster gauze



Construction of the wire outline



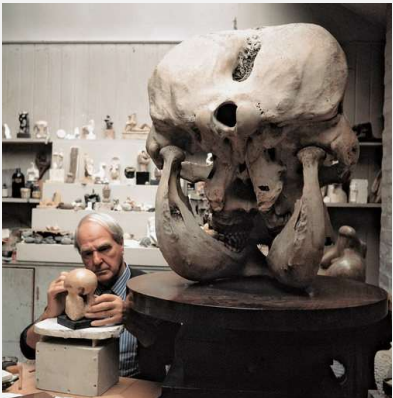
INVESTIGATION INTO HENRY MOORE'S PLASTIC FORMS: Inspirations in organic objects



Logo of the museum when I saw an exhibition Henry Moore's works

On our VA trip to Cracow I had the possibility to see some of the most prominent works of the British sculptor Henry Moore. We were advised to study their forms through quick sketches. I was fascinated with how their shape appeared different when seen from various angles. This exercise drawn my attention to one specific character of Moore's works - his strange way of deforming the human body into more general biomorphic forms and the frequently present holes and hollows, increasing the pieces' depth and forming a unique relationship of his sculpture with the surrounding space.

After my visit to the exhibition I decided to study the creative process of Henry Moore in order to find out what was his inspiration for the forms he created and what were his conceptual aims. During my investigation I encountered several works that were not connected with his trademark motive of the human body. I found these sculptures quite intriguing and even more influential as they did not resemble anything I have seen before.



Henry Moore working on the maquette for Atom Piece alongside an elephant's head at his studio

SCULPTURE

INSPIRATION: Henry Moore

Sketching sculptures with black marker - analyzing 3D forms from different angles:

Power of nature. Henry Moore in Poland

till 30.06.2019

The English sculptor Henry Moore within his own lifetime (1894-1980) was hailed as a contemporary classic. Using studies of nature as his starting point, he developed a characteristic repertoire of forms based on the contrast of convex and concave shapes, soft and broken lines. A great sense of form enabled him to imbue even small works with a monumental air. Sculpture by Moore can be found in several of the world's greatest cities, in famous sculpture parks and renowned museum collections.

Henry Moore revolutionised 20th-century sculpture by breaking its static character. The transition from realistic representation to many abstract forms, linking the mass to the space around it, fluidity of shapes - these are qualities that have come to define modernity in sculpture thanks to Moore's work.

The impact of these sculptures lies also in their union with the environment. Fast their power by walking around them, don't be afraid to squat and stand on your toes, come closer and step back. All choreographic elements are allowed (except climbing)! Look at the world through the organic piercings, play with the negative form.



Open the Groove

March, 2019



Reclining Figure. Painted Head, 1982, Henry Moore



Reclining Figure: Umbilicus, 1984, Henry Moore



He often based his sculptures on the forms of natural objects he found like stones, bones or tree roots. He was interested in the Nature's way of shaping matter. I found this approach inspiring as in my previous works I was also looking for an analogy between my sculptures and the curves and movements of organic forms.

Through his sculptures he aimed to form a relationship between the natural world and the world known to humans. What interested me is that he employed the form of simplified human body as a common 'medium' to, in fact, study the shapes and structural rhythms of landscape and natural objects as well as the negative space they contain.



Henry Moore, Atom Piece (Working Model for Nuclear Energy), bronze, 1964-5, cast 1965

Investigation of Henry Moore casted for me a new light on abstract sculpture and encouraged me to further experiment with plastic forms of organic nature that I earlier tried to explore in clay and plaster gauze. Having felt confidence in working with plaster and fabrics I decided to create my next pieces using the workflow of Moore and combining it with my previous achievements and skills in generating fluid and translucent forms using fabrics and wire.

HENRY MOORE INSPIRED SCULPTURE #1

As plaster gauze is not cheap and that easily accessible as well as it is only available in few dimensions and lengths I started considering the use of an alternative combination of cloths with some form of adhesive to make them stiff. I thought of combining a burlap/hessian ribbon, used extensively by Abakanowicz, with hide glue and wax as well as regular plaster of Paris that I used in my earlier piece. I conducted a little experiment to test which combination gives better effects and settled for the plaster as it made the burlap much harder and gave it the pure white colour which I thought better supports the reception of sheer form of my works. Thus, I decided to use plastered burlap in my next piece.



Fig. 1 Burlap stiffened with glue and with plaster.

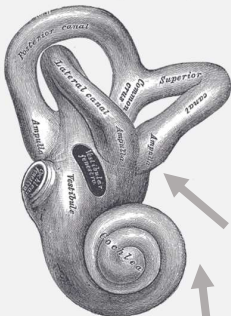


Fig. 2 Bony labyrinth scheme



Fig. 3 Early slab-built piece inspiration for my next piece



Fig. 5 Mounting wire in the clay basis



Fig. 6 Composing the curves with burlap



Fig. 8 Adding mass with liquid plaster

The sculpting process:



Fig. 9 Using the gypsum-paper cement for modelling

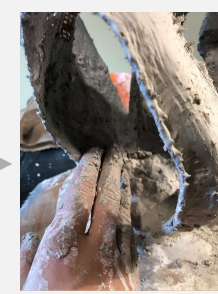


Fig. 10 The piece after first layers of plaster

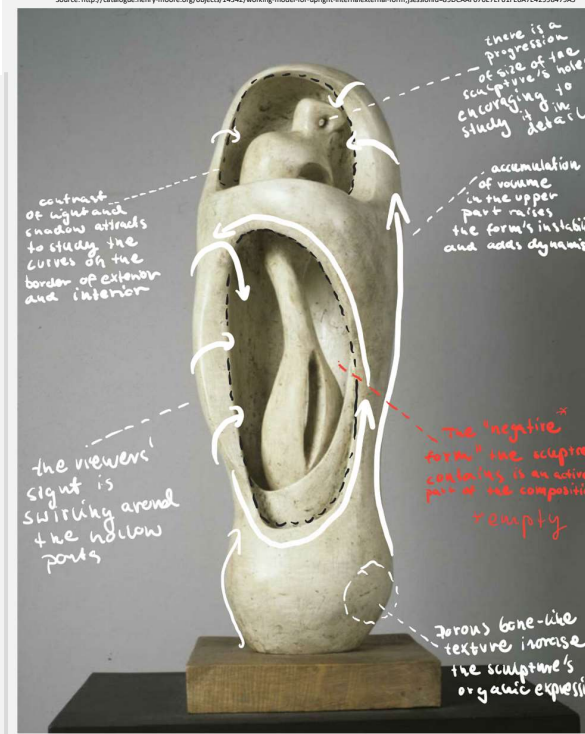


Fig. 4 Analysis of Henry Moore's *Working Model for Internal and External Forms*, 1951

In a documentary about Henry Moore I have noticed that the plaster he used for form modelling had more lumpy texture than regular plaster and so it helped him to build up the mass of a piece much quicker and more effectively than ordinarily. Thinking of how I could possibly make my process efficient I decided to mix the plaster with scraps of cellulose paper towels to achieve a similar 'cement substance' (Fig. 9). This turned out to be a great idea as such plaster became even harder was much more suitable for working with my hands. And so the long process of modelling the sculpture with my hands started. At the end I covered the sculpture with several layers of white plaster of Paris in order to give it the purist expression of my previous sculptures and smoothen a little bit the sculpture's surface. I did not want to completely refine it though, not to deprive it from the expression I admired in Moore's work.

For this next piece my biggest inspiration was also Moore's *Working Model for Internal and External Forms*. The 'negative form' of this piece seems as important as the curves of the real forms encapsulating it. I really admired how the inner, shadowed part of the sculpture acted as a focal point that traps the viewers sight in a kind of mysterious journey along the bulgy outline of the bone-like form. I decided to create a similar effect in my medium, however I wanted my form to be slightly lighter and more transparent for the viewer to be able to walk around it and see through.

Knowing that applying many layers of wet plaster on the burlap and wire carcass would impose high pressure on the overall stability of the piece, as it did with my *Dynamic construction* I decided to make a strong clay foundation for the wire to be firmly attached (Fig. 5).



Fig. 7 Cheaper constructional plaster mixture

After it dried I proceeded to composing the loop-like structure of the sculpture with burlap ribbon that was pre-soaked in a water-plaster mixture (Fig. 6). This was done in order for it to gain some tautness just after attachment. The plaster I was using here for economical reasons was a cheaper constructional grey gypsum (Fig. 7). Later I started brushing the surface of my sculpture with liquid plaster to for the piece to gain some mass (Fig. 8).



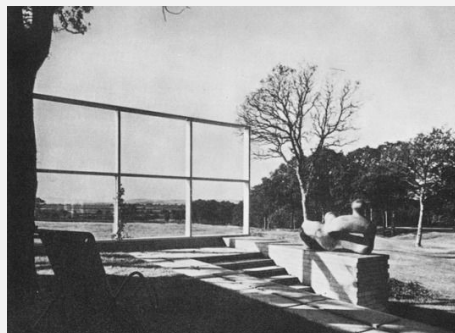
The final piece; *Elastic Form: Loops in space*, burlap, clay and wire in plaster, 2020

Although I was not fully satisfied with the final form as it did not look that effective from all angles, I was very happy that I successfully managed to further modify the technique of stiffening fabrics with plaster. I discovered the new way of enriching this material with paper which gave it hardness and allowed to work quicker and more efficiently. Playing with actual plaster gave me also more freedom than the plaster gauze to model the form with my bare hands and so I was more confident and could almost tangibly feel the flowing rhythm of the sculpture, implying it also with the movement of my hand.

I also like that I was able to fulfil my initial idea and, similarly to Moore's works, the translucent parts of my sculpture act as an active element of the composition, overturning the notions of interior and exterior and allowing the viewer to better understand the form as a whole. I believe it was a courageous new step in the development of my sculptures and I wish to create more sculptures with this variation of my technique, perhaps even further increasing their scale.

Expanding the scale of my works. H. Moore inspired piece #2

Source: <https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/512073420127494705/>



Henry Moore's *Recumbent Figure* and the landscape of East Sussex

It was the process behind Henry Moore's Reclining Figures that implemented such idea in my head. He believed in the idea that the human form can reflect all other forms, as for us it is the most basic matter - the *measuring stick for everything*.

In my last piece even though I was inspired by a particular object in the process of assembling the form I did not have a physical reference model at which I could always take a look and make more planned decisions to consciously guide myself in one direction. With increasing scale of sculptures the amount of technical tasks becomes at some point overwhelming and I feel I might be losing the sensibility for form that I have initially, at the beginning of each process. Thus this time I decided to follow Moore and firstly brainstorm in clay to enclose my ideas in small scale and later transfer them into the actual sculpture.

Initial ideas

As I became really drawn to Henry Moore's works, both on the formal and conceptual level, I planned to stick to the themes that inspire me in his works and create another piece in the burlap plaster technique.

In my next piece I decided to form a relationship between the work and the natural landscape of the Polish Jurassic Highland where I used to spend my childhood. I have a unique relationship with this place and so when I started my first plaster sculptures I almost instantly associated their white, organic texture and their curvy forms with the calcareous rock formations and the undulating landscape of the Polish Jura.



My brother and the white calcareous hills of Polish Jurassic Highland



Initial slab built abstract model, modified to resemble the human figure; clay and ductile wire

Creative process:

Fig.1 Creating the wire frame for my figure.



Fig. 3 Wrapping the wire and shaping curves of the figure with burlap



Fig. 4 The piece after first layer of plaster



Fig. 5 Supporting the collapsing piece and adding foam



Fig. 6 implying texture with further layers of plaster



Fig. 2 Henry Moore creating his *Reclining Figure* (1951) in wire and plaster (small scale model visible in the background).

Having done the model I could proceed to enlarging it. I wanted the final piece to be almost of human dimensions and so I needed a strong steel wireframe that could support the mass of burlap and many consecutive layers of wet plaster (Fig.1). I initially mounted the wire to a large sheet of cardboard that was placed on a rotating plate. By doing that I could easily approach all sides of the work from one position by simply spinning it - I found this innovation particularly helpful in assembling the form from all sides at once. Additionally, throughout the entire process I kept my small scale model close, as Henry Moore did (Fig.2), in order to get all of the proportions right. Again I used the soft burlap to build up the volume and initiate the curves and concave areas (Fig.3) that I wanted this time to resemble the structure of calcareous rocks.

Visible characteristic texture of the calcareous rocks in Polish Jura



After applying some first layers (Fig. 4) of plaster a major problem emerged as unfortunately the figure lost balance and started tilting to the back. I probably shouldn't have applied so many layers of plaster without leaving it to rest and bond for at least a day. I needed to quickly shore the figure up from below and so I used a polyurethane foam which expands in volume and quickly solidifies (Fig.5) . I was lucky I had some of it at home as it saved the sculpture from falling of the cardboard base. The texture of foam additionally supported the bulgy organic shape of my sculpture so interestingly out of a disaster a new idea to use the foam in the future sprung.

6



Fig. 7 Me applying the last layer of white plaster in a silicon glove to smooth out the texture where it was too abrupt.

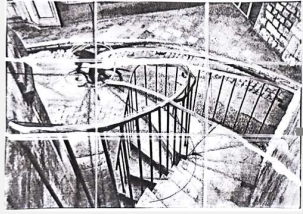
Using bigger scraps of paper in the plaster-water-cellulose cement also allowed me to imply the rock-like texture (Fig.6). Again only at the end of the process I used pure white plaster of Paris to add the already very characteristic white expression of my sculptures. This time I did not want it to be of pure white colour but to have some slight discolorations and blend unevenly with the grey plaster underneath. It supported the natural-looking texture and formed an allusion to the eroded rock formations in Jura.

At the end of the process I was really proud I managed to sculpt a piece that big, despite having some technical obstructions. The size of the anthropomorphic piece instantly captures attention and one can form a relationship with it like with living creature. The final expression of the piece however is not perfectly as I imagined it because of the unplanned 'emergency additions' of polyurethane foam which slightly changed the shape of my figure. Nevertheless I regard my work as quite successful as I think it blends the unique calcareous-like texture with the quite dynamic form that looks as if a wave was traveling through the figure. I am really hoping I could photograph the piece someday in the natural landscape of Polish Jurassic Highlands.

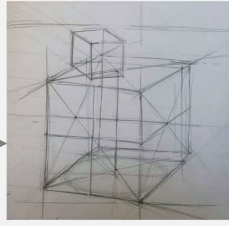


Fig 8,9 Wyzyna Krakowsko-Częstochowska / Polish Jurassic Highland, burlap, polyurethane foam, steel wire, 2020

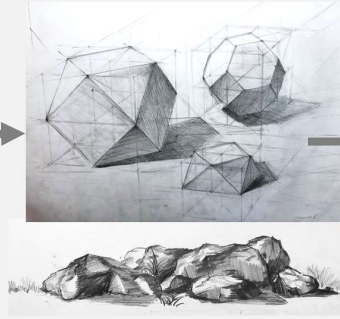
How has my art evolved? - MIND MAP



STUDY OF COMPOSITION



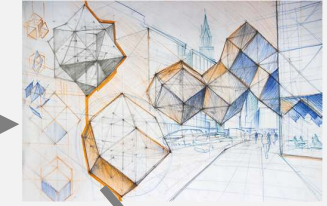
PERSPECTIVE DRAWING



Learning the technical foundations of linear perspective and practicing it extensively through geometry allowed me to develop intuition for 3D space. Simultaneous development in sensible nature drawing finally allowed me to create realistic architectural visualisations as well as conceptual drawings with strong sense of depth.



ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING



CONCEPTUAL DRAWINGS WITH USE OF GEOMETRY



DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

ACHROMATIC PHOTOGRAPHY



URBAN RHYTHMS

The study of Masters in street photography encouraged me to focus on black & white photography. I found myself influenced by the works of Fan Ho and tried to mimic his perfect compositions. Also, after initial interest in portrait photography what started to draw my attention were the structural rhythms in the city's space and a peculiar clash of organic tissues with the harsh humane geometry. The desire to achieve even greater sensibility to light and unique grainy texture finally brought me to film photography.



FILM PHOTOGRAPHY

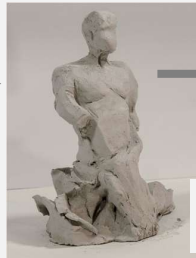


2020



CLAY SCULPTURE

DYNAMISM



THE HUMAN FIGURE

Initially, as I experimented with clay, my primary interest became the expressiveness and dynamics of human figure. However, with the introduction of a new medium I turned to lighter and more organic aesthetics that allowed me to study undefined but also dynamic forms.

Inspiration from Henry Moore founded my interest in the possibilities of merging the two roots I followed in sculpture and sensitized me to the connection between the form of human body and other natural forms.



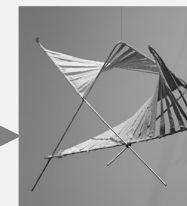
ABSTRACTION - PLASTER GAUZE



HENRY MOORE



ORGANIC VS GEOMETRIC FORM



At the same time under the influence of Gabo I started exploring the issues of space contained by a sculpture, blending his stringing technique into my own plaster gauze experiments. Hence, my initial interest in dynamism of massive figures over time evolved into the fascination with voidness and transparency.

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Screen 2

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