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WILHELM, IOLA PEED. Seven Figures. (1974) Directed by: Gilbert F. Carpenter. Pp. 4.

This thesis consisted of seven pieces of sculpture, three in terra cotta, two in wax, and two in terra cotta and plaster.

This thesis was exhibited in the Weatherspoon Art Gallery of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro from May 6 through May 12, 1974.

A 35mm color transparency of each work is on file at the Walter C. Jackson Library of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Seven Figures

by

Iola P. Wilhelm

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1974

Approved by


Thesis Adviser

This thesis has been approved by the following committee
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North
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April 16 1974
Date of Examination

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CATALOGUE

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|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Mourner | Height 11½ inches | Terra cotta |
| 2. Dying Figure | Length 16 inches | Terra cotta |
| 3. Sensuous Nude | Length 12 inches | Terra cotta |
| 4. Dancer | Height 16½ inches | Wax and plaster |
| 5. Acrobat | Height 16 inches | Wax and plaster |
| 6. Figure and Sheet | Length 16 inches | Terra cotta and plaster |
| 7. Figure and sheet | Length 12½ inches | Terra cotta and plaster |

[Two slides for each title]

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My thesis show consists of seven figures, three in terra cotta, two in wax, and two in terra cotta and plaster. I work exclusively with human bodies, both male and female. I am interested in figures charged with mental and physical energy. For me, the figure in movement is most expressive of this energy. In sculpture, positioning of the body in space, and the tensions that result within the structure from this positioning, reveal the state of consciousness of the figure. I choose poses that imply the prior position and the following position of the body; the pose chosen is not credible for me as a static pose, but credible only as a state of transition from one position to another.

While maintaining the inherent unity of the figure as a figure, I elongate the body, twist it, bend the back, and otherwise adjust its anatomy and proportion to coincide with my idea of the credibility of the figure in a specific pose so that the figure carries only connotations that I accept. The power of a particular image may exist wholly in the twist of the torso; I do not believe that the head must be the dominant emotive structure. All that I would express in the figure I feel I can express with the head as a subordinate or an equal emotive structure to the limbs and torso. I believe body language to be a less deceiving form of visual communication than facial expression.

Rodin's views regarding form in depth as expressed in his own words:

Conceive form in depth.
Clearly indicate the dominant planes.

Imagine all forms as directed toward you;
 all life surges from a center,
 expands from within outwards.
 In drawing, observe relief, not outline.
 The relief determines the contour.¹

have greatly influenced me. I model the body heavily; I distort it. The emphasis on the flow and fleshiness of the body is a balance for the angularity of the pose, an aid in softening the feeling of distortion. Like Rodin, I believe that each work has a center from which it radiates. I work in whichever medium, clay or wax, that will allow my figures to reach their own equilibrium, to exist independent of armature. I must resolve problems with mass and gravity within the piece itself, without external aids. This limits the scale of the piece.

Like Rodin, I build the form so that the outside will resolve itself. Unlike Rodin, I do not manipulate the surface so that light becomes a crucial element in the perception of the piece. I work under bright, diffused light; I shellac fired clay to return to the piece the reflective qualities of wet clay, the material I shaped. I coat figures modeled in wax with hot wax to recapture the qualities of unworked wax. Both of these surfaces allow maximum perception of form as volume.

In summary, I work with the body in motion, relying on the pose more than facial expression, to create an image charged with energy. Rodin's ideas about sculpture most closely parallel my own. From this point, my work is subjective; I depict how I feel about certain

¹Herbert Read, A Concise History of Modern Sculpture, New York (Frederick A. Praeger, Inc.), 1964, p. 14.

images. I work, therefore solely from my imagination. If I need further information, I myself pose. The reality of any model cannot be as important to me as any image I conceive, regardless of whether that image has a base in reality or fantasy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Read, Herbert. A Concise History of Modern Sculpture. New York:
Frederick A. Praeger, Inc. 1964.