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One hundred years of sculpture at the Bruce

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Sculpture and people have one thing in common: We take up physical



"Cement Worker" by Duane Hanson.
(contributed photo)

space. That means we connect to and look at sculpture differently than we view paintings or photographs, by taking in the three dimensions of volume, surface and form. Sculpture of the past 100 years creates for us a more intricate, unique connection with its diverse genres, and now a sampling of this can be seen in the Bruce Museum's new show, "Innovations in the Third Dimension: Sculpture of Our Time."

The show, which opened yesterday and runs through May 24, features 45 pieces culled from local collections and curated by Nancy Hall-Duncan, Bruce Museum senior curator of art.

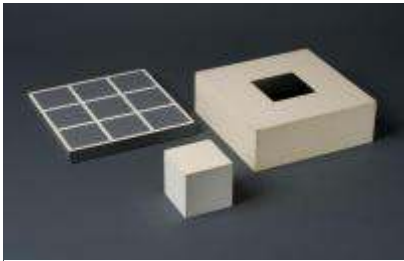
"It was my challenge to make something coherent from what's available from these various collections," says Hall-Duncan. "The interesting thing about 20th-century sculpture is everything has changed. Artists were predominately creating work out of marble or bronze, but this was blown apart by all the different techniques and materials."

A clear trajectory of how sculptors depict the human body is seen here with Auguste Rodin's enraptured embrace "The Kiss" (an 1889 later bronze cast); Henry Moore's cool, flowing "Reclining Mother and Child" (a working model) that wraps in and around negative space; Duane Hanson's chillingly real "Cement Worker"; and the energized angularity of "Capoeira Dancers" by Keith Haring.



"Capoeira Dancers" by Keith Haring.
(contributed photo)

"The point is that you (the viewer) can make all kinds of different discoveries of how artists related to each other," explains Hall-Duncan. "This show is not linear -- it zigzags around and is open-ended for the viewer to discover the many different ways of approaching sculpture. It's not meant to be a survey; it's meant to be fun."



Untitled by Sol LeWitt (contributed photo)

Breaking away from the traditional bronze and marble loosened things up and sculptors were free to play with space. José de Rivera's "Construction #21 A" is a lithe, singular gold swirl of motorized wire, Alexander Calder's metal triangular base in "Untitled" seems weightless as it supports small shimmering mobiles.

The electric light in Isamu Noguchi's concrete ceiling hanging "Lunar" could be one astronomer's sun in a microcosmic universe.

Later works in the show are more socially relevant.

"Almost every piece has some sort of value of the time in which it was made," says Hall-Duncan. "You can't divorce the work from the moment in which it was conceived."



"Nana with Serpent" by Phalie Niki de Saint. (contributed photo)

A piece by Ashley Bickerton uses blue chemical, coral, Cheez Doodles and broken glass.

"This environmentally concerned piece has an aesthetic value and a very pointed spin on the endangered environment," says Hall-Duncan, adding that the Green Movement has inspired other pieces in the show such as work by Charles Long that uses river sludge.

Using found objects re-creates our relationship to commonplace materials. "Black Zag E" by Louise Nevelson is a weighty assemblage of wood and Formica with a rich, textural density; John Chamberlain welds crushed automobile parts for his large, solid work.

The famous pop-art, stainless steel reconfigured letters of "Love," by Robert Indiana emblemizes a human emotion, and what we consume is singled out and re-realized in Claes Oldenburg's "Soft Pay-Telephone," Robert Gober's "Cat Litter" and Liza Lou's "Joy and Comet."

"Everything about the medium has become much more exciting and radically new," says Hall-Duncan. "More work is controversial."



August Rodin's "The Kiss" is one of the works on view in "Innovations in the Third Dimension: Sculpture of Our Time" at the Bruce Museum. (contributed photo)

The new technological frontier follows found objects and mass consumerism. Greeting museum guests is "Ganymede" by Robert Whitman, which projects video and computer-generated images on a circular surface four feet across the front entryway.

"It's amazing," says Hall-Duncan. "You couldn't have done this piece 20 years ago."

Buttressing the show is the "Monday Art History Lecture Series" on a wide range of sculpture genres that runs through March

and the Film Series "Artists in 3-D" showing films on sculpture in April and May.

"Innovations in the Third Dimension: Sculpture of Our Time" is on view through May 24 at The Bruce Museum, 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich. Call 869-0376 or www.brucemuseum.org