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CONCERNING SCULPTURE AND ARCHITECTURE

Art Brenner*

Abstract—An analysis of problems of modern existence related to the physical environment indicates the need for a renewed relationship between sculpture and architecture. The author explores various factors which have influenced a separation of these two art forms, among which is a misinterpretation of 'functionalism'. Economic, social and esthetic advantages as well as historical affinity are cited as reasons obliging a greater use of sculpture in the environment.

Sculpture-in-architecture is defined and the author analyses the various practical and esthetic problems confronting sculptor and architect. Functional and psychological modes of integration are discussed as generative factors for possible locations. The determining factors for size and materials are considered.

The author points to the need for sculptor and architect to work together from the inception of a project. He recognizes the problems architects have in selecting a sculptor and makes several practical recommendations.

I. INTRODUCTION

The monumental scale of modern sculpture is a recent tendency. It has quickly moved sculpture from the private to the public sector, that is toward a renewal of its relation with architecture. New expressions in both arts can be expected, for the great periods of their development have been almost always those in which they have been closely allied. Moreover, this alliance makes for a more meaningful 'public' art, which reflects the very foundations of art itself.

Are there compelling reasons for nurturing this relationship between architect and sculptor? How can they best work together? And aside from the physical fact of a sculpture, what is the nature of the sculptor's contribution?

It has been argued that modern architecture by its very nature, its functionalism and purity, has little need for sculpture. This is an unfortunate misinterpretation. Modern architects of wide recognition have expressed a very different view. For example, Walter Gropius was often held responsible for an over-rationalization of the arts, especially because of certain aspects of the Bauhaus program. Actually, he was a keen exponent of the combination of sculpture with architecture (as evidenced in many of the projects of his firm, The Architects Collaborative). He said: 'The word "functionalism" has been taken too materially . . . It meant for us embracing the psychological problems as well as

the material ones . . . Emphasis was not so much on the machine itself as on the greater use of the machine in service for human life' [1].

José Luis Sert wrote: 'Architecture today has to be more than functional; it cannot exist without a sense of plastic values.' Without them, he asserts the architect 'would produce buildings, but the buildings would not be architecture' [2]. 'Architecture and the plastic arts are not just two things that are juxtaposed', according to Le Corbusier, 'they are a solid and coherent whole . . . The body of the finished building is the expression of the three major arts in unison' [3].

The humanistic and design values suggested above are relevant to the current expansion of the scope of architectural problems. As part of this multidisciplinary activity, architects should engage sculptors as essential members of a team.

II. ARCHITECTURE, ECONOMICS, AND ENVIRONMENT

Answers to the questions I have posed must take into account economic considerations [4]. To begin with, the cost of good sculpture is relatively minor. Commissions for art work of the order of 1 per cent of the overall construction budget is allowed, for example, on public education buildings in France, in other European countries and on some federal government projects in the U.S.A.

In practice, this amount neither materially limits the architect's plans nor reduces his fee. Yet, both he and his client will benefit from the investment.

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