

Statements by Sculptors

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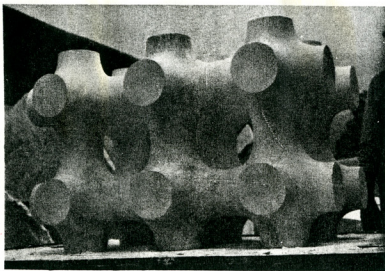
WINTER 1975/76

TONY SMITH

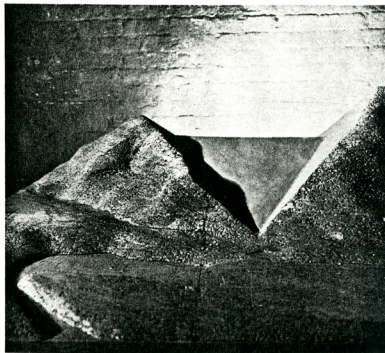
Unrealized projects are always present, and in any attempt at a summary (particularly at this time of year) they rattle around a bit: the church, the Roosevelt Memorial, *Round Mountain Cut*, *Hubris*, *Lunar Ammo Dump*, and the granite-paved, downtown, square, city block for Minneapolis are as valid as they ever were.

The model for *Round Mountain Cut* will be cast in bronze, and this straightforward scheme will thus assume a Surrealist character not intended in the original conception. Mock-ups of *Hubris*, and two related pieces, *81 More*, and *Five by Five*, will be shown at several museums in northern Europe during the spring and summer next year. I shall be forced to build a private model of the Minneapolis square, framed with a symbolic sidewalk, so that real people (become giants because of the reduced scale of the pavement itself) can trace out vectors in an imaginary polis. The array of prisms for *Lunar Ammo Dump* cannot be reduced, and requires the actual siting on Walter Netsch's Chicago Circle Campus to make sense.

Current work follows several tracks. Besides three very large and more or less typical structures now being fabricated, others take directions established in the last few years. There are studies already carved, or now being carved, in Carrara marble at Pietrasanta. These are derived from Fermi surfaces, and although conforming to modular grids, their aspects are more voluptuous than those of previous work. These pieces are intended for indoors, both for convenience



Tony Smith, study for a Fermi surface, 1973.



Tony Smith, *Round Mountain Cut*, 1968.

in analysis and for protection from our corrosive atmosphere. They are, therefore, of domestic size, not much more than a meter in their smallest dimension, so that they can be taken through doors and not overload the floors. One of these sculptures, which is being carved now, began as a plasticene model about 6' x 6' x 9'. This was cast in bronze in 1973. In the summer of the following year it was enlarged about seven times in plaster. It is now being cut in stone. Eventually it will be made of inflated vinyl 56' x 56' x 84'. This enormous size is required so that people can walk under the arches in order to experience the interior with a minimal awareness of the outer environment.

A similar array of units based on the three axes of cubes assembled in two tiers of six each uses straight lines and flat planes instead of the curved Fermi surfaces. The units came from a sort of three-dimensional cross with an open center which I did many years ago. The replication of this unit in a grid is similar to the structure of one of the sponges. A version in which the cubes are 32" on a side, giving overall dimensions of 64" x 64" x 96", is being cast in bronze in Pietrasanta. A large version in steel, about 32' high, will be fabricated in this country.

About two dozen pieces are being cut at this time from South African black granite. These are about three feet long and are composed of flat surfaces. They are not, however, structured by crystal lattices. They are made by joining con-

gruent planes of regular solids or parts of solids. These sculptures are extremely simple, almost featureless, and reveal nothing but their positions, except through long exposure.

These pieces came about because of dissatisfaction with earlier works when placed in architectural settings. The geometrical character of these earlier sculptures seemed most compatible in landscaped areas, on lawns, against trees, in situations where their large, simple and clear planes were seen in contrast to the open spaces, or the smaller grain and irregular patterns, of nature. But in my hands the crystal lattices tended to produce linear forms which emphasized silhouettes and openings when they were placed in more urban environments. What was plastic in suburbia, became graphic in the city. Angles in these configurations created a visual static when seen in relation to the columns and spandrels of contemporary buildings.

I wanted to make the new work so condensed that it compelled attention, not only to its position in the general environment, but to a focus, a magnetic center, or a center of gravity, within itself. These low-lying, huddled structures have been based on economical relationships of planes and masses with emphasis on the material substance rather than the surrounding or interwoven space.

Many paper maquettes were made in developing these exercises, and from these about two dozen were selected as models in masonite to be used as patterns in cutting the granite. But, as their number increased, they appeared to lose some of the weight which had been intended. They were made twice, and then three times their original size. It is the last group which is now being cut in stone.

A longer range, probably final, project was suggested by the Philadelphia College of Art show of labyrinths. I shall first make a corrugated cardboard structure similar to the fabrications for Expo '70 in Osaka and the Art and Technology show in Los Angeles. But the cave-like configuration is not suited to public places, or to the attendance of large crowds. So I want to create a maze from the same components but for a smaller space (in Chicago, spring '76). This would be an experiment on the way to a large walk-through, and crawl-through, curved-surface structure in topological space, and modeled on the enveloping and enclosed volumes of the labyrinth of the ear. The material would be translucent plastic formed in three-dimensional approximations of Klein surfaces. It would rest in a semi-depressed area somewhat like that of the crypt in the Vierzeheiligen.

Tony Smith won the Distinguished Teacher of Art Award presented by the CAA last year.