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THE THEORY OF MATERIAL AND MATERIAL REALIZATION AND THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN SCULPTURE

Twentieth-century sculpture takes its rise as a fundamental reaction against the preceding century. Among the most important and outstanding features in which these two epochs of sculpture differ, are the problems of sculptural material and the process of material realization of the sculpture. The 19th-century sculptor concluded his work with the design for the sculpture (clay model or plaster cast). The production of the sculpture was split up into two stages — the creative stage and the stage in which the sculpture was carried out — and of the two, the sculptor chose the creative stage and abandoned the actual material formulation. He relegated the practical accomplishment of the work to a specialist craftsman.¹ What, ever since the Renaissance, had been merely the preparatory work in sculpture, now in the 19th century acquired the entire character of the creative act itself. Gradually during the 20th century the sculptor again combined in his work the design and its realization. Nevertheless this reaction against the 19th century does not signify a return to the traditional workshop methods of realization as they were formed during the Renaissance, in other words, there is no return to the classical three-stage process consisting of the drawing, the three-dimensional model and the realization. The artist remains isolated in his work, alone in the sense that between him and his material there not only no longer stands the middleman — the practical craftsman, but not even mechanical work or division of labour within the workshop. The material is permitted to receive the immediate touch of the artist's individuality. In this sense the work of certain sculptors of the 20th century — especially that of Brancusi — presents a new value by offering a new meaning for the concept of originality. At the same time questions relating to material realization and completion of the work cease to be purely a matter for the technicians and acquire a philosophic and aesthetic aspect.

Questions relating to sculptural material and the part played by it in creative work, as they were formulated throughout the first half of the 20th century by the practice and theory of sculpture, opened up a whole series of problems of which some were solved simultaneously, others only in course of time. The first

¹ Problems in material realization of sculpture in the 19th century and its continuity with neo-Platonic aesthetics were at large analysed in the study on the role of the mass in sculpture (Zdenka Volavková, *Hmota v sochařství* [Material in Sculpture]. Výtvarná práce, Praha, 1962, no. 2).

is the critique of neo-Platonic aesthetics; which had been paramount in the art of the previous period, the elaborating of a new concept of the creative process and the significance of the work of art, and finally the initial application of new principles in the practical approach to sculpture.

In the second half of the 19th century there appeared in close succession the seminal works of Gottfried Semper² and Konrad Fiedler,³ who dealt critically with the state of art theory and practice up to that time. Both Semper and Fiedler are theoreticians who neither pose nor treat any fundamental aesthetic problem nor form an aesthetic system. On the other hand, their main reflections concentrate on problems whose treatment is posed or demanded by the condition of art at that time. It is also typical that both writers devote the greatest attention precisely to those questions which are bound up with the material aspect of the work of art.

Semper presents an entirely new formulation of the problem of material in art. Matter, in his reflections, has acquired the definite and purposeful character of material. The material has assumed its place as an active factor in the creative act itself. For along with the purpose of the work, it is the material qualities of the medium which, according to Semper, form the determining factors from which artistic form results. Semper's reflections are particularly concerned with architecture and artistic craftsmanship. In this field, too, his rehabilitation of artistic material and his entire theory had its most profound and lasting influence. For example in architecture it was the theoreticians of the Cubist generation⁴ who first polemized with Otto Wagner regarding precisely those elements of Wagner's conception for which he was indebted to Semper. The determination of form by factors lying beyond the personality of the artist was considered by them to be a limitation of his artistic freedom and an underrating of his part in the creative act.

Semper's theory sets out from a critique of the aesthetic doctrines which were paramount in art at the end of the 18th and during the first half of the 19th century. It is of course not only the critique of these doctrines, but also at the same time their antithesis. Schopenhauer had been convinced that "there is only one end of all the arts, the representation of the Ideas; and their essential difference lies simply in the different grades of the objectivization of will to which the Ideas that are to be represented belong. This also determines the material of the representation."⁵ If Schopenhauer distinguished between artistic perception (das Erkennen) and artistic rendering (die Darstellung), the rendering being determined by the perception, Semper reversed the significance of the two factors. At the same time he went as far as not only to consider the conception to be subordinate to the rendering, but also stated that of all the elements determining the idea, the most important were those which were furthest removed from the artist and beyond the reach of his influence.

Konrad Fiedler, a generation after Semper, did not follow up his theory. In his critique of the opinions paramount in the art of the immediately preceding

² Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten*. Vol. 1, 1861, Vol. 2, 1863. Vol. 3 not finished.

³ Konrad Fiedler, *Über die Beurteilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst*. Leipzig 1876.

⁴ Pavel Janák, In: *Styl (Praha)* II, 1910, 105. Vlastimil Hofman, In: *Umělecký měsíčník* I, 1911-1912, 129.

⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*. Translated from the German by R. B. Haldane, M. A. and J. Kemp, M. A. Vol. I. London 1907, 325.

period he took as his starting-point the aesthetics of Kant and his reflections continue to be influenced by Kant. The fundamental premise from which Fiedler starts and by means of which he endeavoured to refute the contradiction formulated by Schopenhauer between *das Erkennen* and *die Darstellung*, is the distinction formulated by Kant between nature and art.⁶ Nature appears through its influence (*wirken, agere*), the result of which is the effect (*Wirkung, effectus*), in distinction to art, which is bound up with activity, accomplishment (*Tun, facere*), whose product is the work of art (*Werk, opus*). Taking up this thought of Kant, Fiedler sees the basic problem of his reflections in the specification of the task and the meaning of activity in the artistic act. Thus according to Fiedler's theory the human actor, the artist, acquires a crucial position by means of his conscious activity. For Semper the creative act provided the path from cause to result, from purpose and material characteristics to form. In Fiedler's conception the creative act is a process resulting in the activity of the artist, by means of which the relationship between the individual elements of the spiritual and the bodily process is realized and the hitherto existing contradiction of mind and body in art is resolved.⁷

It was precisely at the point where the creative act was assigned exclusively to the intellectual sphere and considered to be completed in the field of the idea or of knowledge, that Fiedler directed his attack on the existing theoretical opinions. He considered it to be a fundamental error to perceive in "the visibly existing in art merely a symbol of the spiritual." In this way, according to his opinion, the conclusion must inevitably result that "the artist, by the fact that his activity is external, merely indicates for others by a visible and permanent means that which took shape precisely in his imagination, independent of any exterior activity. It is even possible to go further and defend the opinion that the artist, by entering upon his artistic activity, only does what he is obliged to do, since after all no exterior means is capable of reproducing the forms which have taken up their residence in his soul with all their purity and perfection."⁸

This was Fiedler's reaction not only to Schopenhauer, by whom he was very strongly influenced even although he detested him, but also to Lessing, who had taken the neo-Platonic conception of the act of the artist just at this point as far as it could go. The idea, the imagined conception signified for him creation in its entirety and was of greater value as regards the material work of art since it was "pure" art "without the dregs" which otherwise were provided in the work of art by the material. The painter Conti in the Fourth Scene of Lessing's drama *Emilia Galloti* remarks: "What a pity that we do not paint directly with our eyes! How much is lost on the long path from the eye, through the arm, into the brush! But the moment I say that I know what has been lost here and how it has been lost and why it has been lost, I am just as proud of that, in fact prouder, than I am of what I did not allow to get lost. Because from the former I recognise more than from the latter that I am really a great artist, but that my hand isn't always. Or do you think, Prince, that Raphael would not have been the greatest

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*. Herausgegeben von Dr. Benzion Kellermann. Immanuel Kants Werke, Band V. Berlin 1914, § 43, 377—378.

⁷ Konrad Fiedler, *Ueber den Ursprung der kuenstlerischen Taetigkeit*. Konrad Fiedler, *Schriften ueber Kunst*, Band 1. Muenchen 1913, 193, 195. Here, Fiedler defined several times the relationship of the imagination and the execution as being the relationship of the spirit and the body (*der Geist, die Seele, der Koerper, der Leib*).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.

artistic genius had he unfortunately been born without hands?"⁹ Fiedler on the other hand is convinced that "if people were born with their entire spiritual organism and yet without hands, this would not entail the stunting of the world of imagination . . . but on the other hand the appearance of artistic conceptions would scarcely be possible"; "Man, without the mechanical ability to create artistically, would scarcely succeed in developing those ideas, presented to him by the eye, into such as would produce art."¹⁰

The exterior activity, the artist's accomplishment in his material, according to Fiedler is not merely an equally valid aspect of the creative act, but actually its climax. He did not deny Schopenhauer's dual concept of "erkennen" and "darstellen", nor did he reverse the significance of the two elements as did Semper. On the contrary, he combined them and gave them a common denominator: the activity of the artist. For this is what participates throughout the entire process of creation both in the spiritual and the manual aspects, which are both in constant correlation so that the second of them attains "the highest possible development" first, and by its mere existence is the first to be independent of the other. The artistic act begins and ends with activity; "art has nothing to do with forms that are found ready-made prior to its activity and independent of it. Rather, the beginning and the end of artistic activity reside in the creation of forms which only thereby attain existence."¹¹

Fiedler moves from the critique of neo-Platonic theory to the specification of the role of the artist's activity in the creative act and thence to the actual visible result of the activity and to its material on the one hand, to the work of art and its form on the other. "A work of art is not an expression of something which can exist just as well without this expression. It is not an imitation of that figure as it lives within the artistic consciousness, since then the creation of a work of art would not be necessary for the artist; it is much more the artist's consciousness itself as it reaches its highest possible development in the single instance of one individual . . . In a work of art the configurative activity finds its way to an externalized completion."¹² Since the visibility of the result of the creative act is according to Fiedler an essential condition of the existence of art and "the general expressive means of this visibility is the material",¹³ the material does appear in Fiedler's reflections, even although the author never explicitly dealt with it as did Semper. The unavoidable character of the material does not split the unity of the spiritual and the bodily processes, for "from the very outset the mental processes of the artist must deal with nothing but that same substance which comes forth into visible appearance in the work of art itself."¹⁴ Nor is the form, with Fiedler, an element which would distinguish or divide the conception on the one hand from the completion of the work on the other. Form is the immediate and sole expression of the "consciousness",¹⁵ and "in a certain sense we may speak of visible form already

⁹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Emilia Galotti* (1772). Translated by Edward Dvořetzky. New York, 1962.

¹⁰ Fiedler's manuscript notes. In: K. Fiedler, *Schriften*, I. c., Band 2; *Nachlaß*, 1914, 168—169.

¹¹ Konrad Fiedler, *On Judging Works of Visual Art [Über die Beurteilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst]*. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles 1949, 48.

¹² *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³ Konrad Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung der künstlerischen Tätigkeit*. *Schriften* I, 320—321.

¹⁴ Konrad Fiedler, *On judging*, I. c., 56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55

at a point where the visibility is still limited to the process in the organs of perception and conception."¹⁶ "Art does not start from abstract thought in order to arrive at forms; rather it climbs up from the formless to the formed,"¹⁷ or in other words, "the artistic process represents an advance from chaos to clarity, from the undefined character of the inner process to the definition of the exterior expression."¹⁸

This part of his reflections, whether published or preserved only in notes, represents the farthest point to which Fiedler attained with his positive contribution to the theory of modern art then coming into being, as regards questions of the material of art and the material realization of the work of art. Only through the artist's activity — and physical activity at that — does form attain its clarity. The material is already contained in the artist's conception. Here Fiedler left his reflections on these problems. Form and substance according to his theory remained, strange to say, unconnected, without mutual relationship, just as they had been distinguished and divided in Kant's Lectures.

Fiedler, who went beyond Schopenhauer's dualism of artistic knowledge and artistic visualization, in fact arrived at another parallel pair, which although not literally expressed in his work, results from his theorizing. The dualism is that of form and the activity of the artist's hand on the one side and material and technique on the other. Form depends on the activity of the hand as on the higher stage of the artistic process conceived in the mind.¹⁹ Form is not, however, tied to a particular material. The material permits the very existence of the work of art, which is the required prerequisite of art itself. For this reason the material is already implied in the intellectual part of the artistic process. It is however only a means and prerequisite for the visibility of the work of art. The material qualities are observed only in so far as the "likeness" of a natural perceptual form, as it appears to the vision of the artist, "can be achieved in it." The material is the servant of the form, takes upon itself its appearance.²⁰ In this way the material has formed a part of the creative process, but as a passive element, subservant to and directed by the activity which is the fundamental and only definitive element of artistic creation.

However, since questions of material and its relationship to form remained open in Fiedler's theory, so too that physical, external activity carried out by hand remains split in his reflections. Where the hand participates "without the government of the intellect", where the activity of the hand is applied to material, artistic creative activity is not in question. Only where the hand serves the intellectual process is the activity of artistic value.²¹

Fiedler's theory originated in close contact with artistic practice. The painter Hans von Marees (1837—1887) and the sculptor Adolf Hildebrand (1847—1921) were close friends of Fiedler's and a series of stimuli resulted from their talks together. For this reason on more than one occasion comments appeared in literature regarding the possible mutual assumption of certain ideas.

¹⁶ Konrad Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung*, I. c., Schriften, Band 1, 322.

¹⁷ Konrad Fiedler, *On Judging*, I. c., 49.

¹⁸ Konrad Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung*, I. c., Schriften, Band 1, 323.

¹⁹ See Fiedler's manuscript notes. Schriften, Band 2, 168, and K. Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung*, I. c. Schriften, Band 1, 293.

²⁰ See K. Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung*, I. c. Schriften, Band 1, 321.

²¹ See K. Fiedler, *On Judging*, I. c., and Fiedler's manuscript notes. Schriften, Band 2, 163.

The theoretical principles which Hildebrandt pronounced in the Nineties undoubtedly took their rise in the intellectual background created by Fiedler's ideas. The disputes which at the beginning of the 20th century were carried on by Hildebrand and his circle as to the original character of his work *The Problem of Form*, and which were clearly aroused by the doubts of Heinrich Wölfflin, are today pointless. A detailed study of Hildebrand's work shows with complete conviction that it is the original work of the artist, in which perhaps from the point of view of method he may have sought the advice of his friend Fiedler. Their published correspondence also testifies to this. Nor does the work *The Problem of Form* repeat the conclusions of Fiedler as regards material and material realization of the work of art. On the contrary it is precisely in the treatment of these questions that he takes up where Fiedler left off. Here too Hildebrandt to the greatest degree departs from and differs from the work of his friend.²²

Two important ideas of Hildebrand's work are similar in character to Fiedler's. For artistic perception as well as for artistic representation Hildebrandt considers sight to be the main and decisive sense, and that in sculpture too, for the eye unifies the faculties of sight and touch. Here he sets out from Fiedler's basic requirement of the visibility of the result of the creative act. "Art does not depend on a mere knowing, but on a doing, which puts this knowledge into practice".²³ This is a further principle of Fiedler's, which Hildebrandt treats as a premise. This also determines the basic trend of his work on form, which is intended not as a purely theoretical reflection but as a handbook designed to contribute to the regeneration of the sculptor's practice.

For Hildebrandt, activity is also the main and determining factor in the rise of the work of art. By no means nature and its individual phenomena on the one hand, nor the artist and his conception on the other, but the relationship and the combination of both these premises, i.e. artistic form, is realized and determined by the artistic process. The actual form of the object is transformed by the artist's perception into perceptual form (*Gesichtsbild*), which with regard to the three-dimensional nature of the work of sculpture has in the sculptor's conception a specifically kinesthetic character. Perceptual form then receives its expression by means of its fashioning out with the hands, by means of a technical process, in solid material.²⁴ The material expresses the perceptual form, but its task does not come to an end here — in distinction to the theory of Fiedler. For not only is material the foundation for form, but it pays no tribute to the intellectual process, on the contrary, the substantial characteristics of the material faces the artist with certain objective demands. "In no case . . . is artistic ability manifest in wilfully ignoring the requirements of the material worked in."²⁵ Those artists who wish to deny this are considered by Hildebrandt to be anarchists.

The material is the active element in the origin of a sculpture and participates in the activity of the artist. For the material qualities of the material employed basically affect technical methods. And the latter are the integrating elements of the artist's method.²⁶

²² Adolf Hildebrandt, *Das Problem der Form*. First published in 1893. *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*. Translated and revised with the author's co-operation by Max Meyer and Robert Morris Ogden. New York, 1907.

²³ L. c., 15, Foreword to the third edition.

²⁴ See l. c., 32.

²⁵ L. c., 13.

²⁶ L. c., 124.

Hildebrand considered that the most appropriate and successful process in sculpture was direct cutting in stone, for in his opinion sculpture should not be an imitative art but should tend from mere imitation towards an architectonic conception. Stone and its appropriate method of execution is the parallel to this conception. The accordance of material and conception is then of fundamental significance for the successful result of the artist's activity. If these two elements are in contradiction, the conception degenerates and the process changes into mechanical work. If the demands of material and conception run parallel, the conception on the other hand is enlarged and along with the technical procedure creates a single and unitary artistic whole.

The relationship of the idea and its material representation acquires in Hildebrand's study new qualities and becomes more concrete, this being based on his dynamic interpretation of material. They form a pair which in the course of the initial development of the work, but even after this, too, throughout the artist's whole life and further work, constantly renew and develop each other in mutual correlation. For it is not until the stage of the direct carving in stone, which is the true act of visualizing, that the conception is actually being formed and developed, since it is influenced and stimulated by the technical process. And the latter is always newly enriched on the one hand by the specific qualities of the material in which the artist is working, and on the other by the previous practical experience of the artist.²⁷ In this way Hildebrand attains to form as a result dependent on this complex process. The more perfect the development of the process, the more definitive is the form.²⁸

In the theory of Hildebrand there is no distinction of form and material, on the contrary the two are unified. "In the statue the stone is no longer a stone, but continues to exist, nevertheless, as the total form of the figure."²⁹ This unity of form of the work of art includes the material by means of whose cooperation it was created.

As has already been mentioned, Hildebrand followed Fiedler in his study; primarily in his interpretation of the work of art as the real meaning of art and his discovery of the significance of activity as the guiding factor in artistic creation. However he went beyond Fiedler's theory at the point where he successfully developed certain suggestions acquired from Semper, namely in his interpretation of the active role of material.

In some respects Hildebrand's theory has its limitations. His arguments are bounded by the historical framework of the time in which they were conceived. The reconstruction of the working method of Michelangelo enabled Hildebrand to explain the main principles of the classical approach in stone-carving. However he based on this his reflections on the sculptor's working method in stone in general and from the particular features of Michelangelo's working method in sculpture deduced rules binding on the sculptor and formulated them as a norm. He determines the sculptor's situation in his work as a single spot, and holds the course of the work from the front towards the block of stone and regularly over the layers and planes to be essential, so that in his conception a stone statue is indissolubly connected with its background and approaches the character of

²⁷ See l. c., 130, 132, 135.

²⁸ See l. c., 133.

²⁹ L. c., 125.

a relief.³⁰ It was then on these conclusions that he based his interpretation of the antithesis in approach between carving in stone on the one hand and clay-modelling on the other. Clay requires a different approach from stone. In modelling, the method consists of piling up clay round a core irregularly from all sides.

Since, then, the decisive factor determining the resulting form of the work of art is the activity of the artist, Hildebrand ingeniously deduced the incompatibility of form of the modelled and the carved statue and demonstrated the absurdity of the existing practice in sculpture, whereby, ever since the beginning of classicism, the artist concluded his work with the clay model moulded in plaster. This was then transferred by the craftsman stone-cutter without change into stone. Hildebrand's entire theory then results in a practical solution intended to help contemporary sculpture out of this unhappy situation. It is necessary for the sculptor not only to carry out his sculpture himself, his activity thus determining the form of the work until its completion; but it is also necessary for him to work out the entire likeness of the statue directly in stone, for stone demands a specific approach which then results in a specific form. Thus there will result a work of full value, in which the final form is a unity of conception and material and not a work whose conception is inconsistent with its material, since the form of the clay model has been transferred to stone.

Thus Hildebrand's reflections unified simultaneously that part of the creative process which is manifested by physical activity. He joined together the design and its realization, which until then had been divided in sculpture into two different stages, on the one hand by the existence of the clay model and the stone statue, on the other by the participation of the artist and of the practical craftsman.

In practice Adolf Hildebrand did not go very far beyond the conventional borders of academic art in his sculpture. His work *Das Problem der Form* did however play a very great part in modern sculpture. From the year of its first publication, 1893, up to 1907, four German editions, one French and one American edition were published. In 1909 the main part of the book appeared in Czech translation in a Prague art periodical.

The years 1905—1909 form the period during which Hildebrand's theory began to be carried out in practice in sculpture. This was the time when the first "taillés directes" were made by the French sculptor Joseph Bernard (1866—1931), who was considered by his French contemporaries to be the reviver of direct carving in stone. German art history, however, recalls in this connection rather the putting of these principles into sculptural practice by Hildebrand himself than by Rodin.³¹

Joseph Bernard, today an entirely forgotten sculptor, was in the first decade of the 20th century one of the principle representatives of the avant-garde in sculpture, which had more or less come under the influence of Rodin and in those very years was endeavouring to free itself from this. In the second decade Bernard was a more popular artist with contemporary Parisian criticism and more often mentioned in the press than his contemporaries Maillol and Bourdelle. His work, regularly shown both at one-man exhibitions and at the Autumn Salon, had a great

³⁰ See l. c., 80—99, 127—138. Hildebrand's conclusions have been critically analysed and compared with the changing working procedures in stone in the history of sculpture by Vojtěch Volavka (*Sculptural Handwriting*. Spring Books, London, s.a. [1957], 68—70).

³¹ See Ludwig Volkman, *Vom Steinblock zur Figur*. Die Plastik, 1912, Heft 7 (München), 54—57; Robert Schmitz, *Rodin und die Fiedler-Hildebrandsche Kunsttheorie*. Inaugural-Dissertation. Bern 1929.

influence on the rising generation of sculptors. A more exact dating of the beginning of his programmatic efforts to carve directly in stone cannot so far be supported by any firmly established turning-point in his work. His biographers give the date of his first directly stone-carved statues as 1905 or the period from 1895 to 1910.³² It seems most probable that Bernard's first directly stone-carved works originated in connection with the French edition of Hildebrand's book.

A closer view of the sculpture developing in Paris in the first decade of the 20th century allows us on the one hand to assign a more exact temporal limit to the initial acceptance of the principles of direct stone-carving, and on the other allows us to realize that the new conception of the sculptor's work in his material affected the work of a very much greater number of artists. The catalogues of the official Salon in the Grand Palais and of the other Parisian exhibitions roughly up to 1907 show that the sculpture presented to the public did not in any fundamental way differ from the 19th century. Plaster casts were shown and the only works in sculptural material were a few terra cotta and wax reliefs. In 1908 Joseph Bernard had an exhibition in the Parisian gallery of A. A. Hébrard. At that time undoubtedly some of his stone-carved work was known. From 1907 he was working on the monument to Michel Servet for his native town of Vienne, also a "taille directe".

In the year 1907 there also appeared the stone statue *The Crouching Man* (Collection Louise Leiris) by André Derain. In 1909 Raymond Duchamp-Villon exhibited at the Société des artistes indépendants a stone bust of an old country-woman (n. 527) and the following year at the same exhibition there already appeared a number of sculptures carried out directly in the material. Duchamp-Villon showed the marble bust *Portrait of a Man* (n. 1585),³³ Brancusi exhibited a work with the significant title *Pierre sculptée* (n. 166) and Auguste Agero, the Spanish sculptor, who is one of the first artists of the Cubist movement, although he is a figure still unknown to history, exhibited a relief in beaten copper. In the following years up to the beginning of the War there appeared at the exhibition of the Independents stone statues by Brancusi — *Muse endormie* and *le Baiser* were exhibited in 1912 — by Agero, stone and cement sculptures by Archipenko, "bois directs" and stone statues by Zadkin and finally even a female torso carved in stone by Lehmbruck. In the same way the exhibition *Section d'Or* in 1912 offered a number of sculptures worked in the material, especially in wood and and in stone by Archipenko and Agero.

At the same time as problems relating to the new conception of material and the material realization of the work were becoming accepted by avant-garde sculpture in Paris, they were also reflected in sculpture in Prague, which at that time after the Exhibition of Rodin was an important European centre of sculpture. Here of course they were reflected in the work of only one native artist, Jan Štursa (1880—1925), who was at that time not only the strongest individuality in Czech sculpture, but who also, from the outset of his artistic career, had taken a place

³² Edouard Marye (Joseph Bernard, *Le musée vivant*, 1931, 76) states the year 1905, R. Cantinelli (*Le monument Michel Servet de Joseph Bernard*, 1932) mentions the period of 1895—1910, P. Fierens (*Le sculpteur Joseph Bernard. L'Art et les Artistes*, 1924, v. VIII, 100) assumes that the first of Bernard's "taillés directes" dates back to 1877.

³³ Volné směry, periodical of the Mánes Association of Artists (Praha), gave in 1910, the reproductions of Duchamp-Villon's wooden sculpture *Song* and of his portraits in stone close in their conception to the portraits of Joseph Bernard.

among the foremost sculptors of Europe. The first statues of Štursa directly carved in stone appeared in 1906 and were reproduced in the periodical *Volné směry* (Free Trends).

The reception of these new opinions on material and the initial revolt of modern sculpture in this field, then, took place simultaneously in Paris, where the movement had the character of a great wave engulfing the entire avant-garde, and in Prague, where it was concentrated in the work of Jan Štursa.³⁴ Naturally the practical question was not merely whether the statue would be of stone or wood instead of plaster.

The theory of direct carving in stone, without intermediary or transference from a clay model, was accepted by modern sculpture with all its consequences including those which expressed themselves strikingly in the final form of the work. The point of departure and the conclusion of Hildebrand's study were his reflections on the fact that if sculpture is to avoid simple imitativeness, it must attain an architectonic conception, whose adequate method is the direct carving in stone. What is common to the work of Bernard of the first and second decades and to Derain's *Crouching Man*, the early work of Duchamp-Villon from about 1910 and Archipenko's work up to the beginning of World War I and the two first variants of Brancusi's *Muse endormie* and *Le Baiser* is the suppression of detail, the rejection of work with imitative form, the refusal of modelling. All these works accent the total bulk which completes the shape of the statue with a firm flowing outer surface. All these works are they very opposite of the shaping and modelling, which the sculptor's slang of the time ridiculed as "coups de pouce." They are a programmatic reaction against the tradition of Rodin and Rosso, which rendered modelling the main method of sculpture. R. Duchamp-Villon commented the sculptures exhibited in 1913 at the Autumn Salon with the words: "On the whole works exhibited have in 'artistic' nature, which renders all of them unacceptable. Alas, almost all participate in the method of modelling, which is so remote to the method of sculpture."³⁵

Christian Zervos, contemporary, friend, critic and one of the first biographers of the Cubists, already saw in this architectonization and liberation from modelling the immediate preliminary phase to Cubist sculpture.³⁶ The role of the initiator in this field he assigned to Brancusi and his "search for the pure form" he saw in connection with the invasion of Negro art. The *Muse endormie* of Brancusi of 1908 was held to be the statue which, along with the *Head* of Picasso, had revolutionized Cubism. Its form, which from the generalization of the mass went on to attain the egg, was at the same time explained in the light of the Cézanne synthesis.³⁷ J. Golding says the tendency to stress the sculptural mass was a kind of collective movement of several sculptors, namely Brancusi, Agero, Archipenko and Duchamp-Villon. He assigned it to the year 1911 and noted a connection with Negro sculpture and primitive or archaic forms in general.³⁸

Alongside these streams, namely the invasion of Negro influence, primitivism and the logical development of the inspiration of Cézanne, there were also radical

³⁴ The statuary in wood by František Bílek (1872–1941), representative of symbolism in the Czech sculpture, does not belong to this context. His conception of the material has a different origin and character, similar to the art of Ernst Barlach (1870–1938).

³⁵ Montjoie, nov.–dec. 1913, no. 11–12, 14.

³⁶ Christian Zervos, *Notes sur la sculpture contemporaine*. Cahiers d'art IV, 1929, 165 ff.

³⁷ Pierre Guéguen, *La sculpture cubiste*. L'art d'aujourd'hui, 1953, 50 ff.

³⁸ John Golding, *Cubism. A history and analysis*. London 1959, 169 ff.

changes in the conception of material and a revision of the working approach, which began to be radically introduced in modern sculpture from 1907, and became for a short time the unifying medium of the joint efforts of the younger generation of sculptors and of Joseph Bernard, and provided a new formal equipment for their work. It would even seem that these material problems affected sculpture — on the contrary from painting — even much more strongly in those years than did the other mentioned; and that it was these problems which brought sculpture in a certain sense to the threshold of Cubism. The architectonic conception of the sculpture liberated the artist from imitativeness, subdued all hypertrophy of form and modelling. By means of a kind of formal asceticism it attained the fundamental: the simple volume in space. This purification of sculptural form then provided the prerequisite conditions for the analysis of mass in spatial planes, such as was made by Cubism.

The revolt of material and the revision of the method of material realization of the sculpture was by no means finished during this short period nor even reached its crisis then. The endeavour to apply direct carving in stone changed after World War I to a fully constituted movement including part of the sculpture of the Paris School. This movement formulated its theoretical opinions and manifested them at several joint exhibitions. The principles of this movement then played a large part, too, in the initial stages of modern English sculpture. The history of the revolt of material finally reaches its climax with the work of Brancusi. This long process began with the chapter telling of the new theoretical formulation of the problem of material in art, the newly explained role of the artist's hand and its activity, the discovery of new possibilities afforded by direct carving in stone and finally the way in which these principles were first applied in practice.

Translated by Jessie Kocmanová

This study is a part of the research on the theory and documents of 20th century sculpture begun in 1960 and first published in Bratislava (Czechoslovakia) in 1968 (*Sochári o sebe a svojom diele*. Bratislava 1968). Its present form, nevertheless, is the immediate result of a most welcome invitation to join the research team on aesthetics directed by Mme Liliane Brion at the Centre National de recherches scientifiques in Paris. Through the generosity of a grant by the C.N.R.S. it was possible to undertake the detailed studies on the subject in Paris during spring, 1969.

TEORIE HMOTY A HMOTNÉ REALIZACE A POČÁTKY MODERNÍHO SOCHAŘSTVÍ

Otázky materiálu a hmotné realizace procházejí v sochařství počátku 20. století velmi radikálními změnami proti minulému období. V teorii bylo jejich řešení připravováno už ve druhé polovině 19. století. Radikálně zasáhly do umělecké praxe spisy G. Sempera. Podle jeho pojetí rezultuje forma z funkce předmětu a povahy jeho materiálu. Semper obrátil ve své teorii neoplatónskou estetiku, která ovlivňovala dosavadní sochařskou praxi, v její pravý opak. C. Fiedler vycházel ve svých spisech z Kanta. Středem svých úvah učinil umělcovu činnost, která vytváří vztah mezi duchovním a tělesným procesem v umění. Hmotné vyjádření je v jeho pojetí vůdčí složkou tvůrčího aktu, od níž je závislá jeho duchovní (představová) část. Umělecká forma a látka při tom nekladou hranice mezi představu a realizaci. Fiedler předpokládá v určitém smyslu existenci viditelné formy v umělecké představě, v níž intervenuje i látka. Forma a látka však v úvahách Fiedlerových zůstávají vzájemně nespojeny stejně jako u Kanta. Látka kromě toho hraje jen úlohu

prostředku, nezbytného pro viditelnost díla. Je tedy složkou pasivní, která je řízena činností, základní a rozhodující složkou tvorby.

A. Hildebrand nevychází ve svém spise z Fiedlerových závěrů o hmotě. Jeho východiskem však je fiedlerovsko-kantovský nově osvětlený význam činnosti v tvůrčím aktu. Podle jeho pojetí je vnímané formě dáván výraz utvářením rukama, technickým postupem v určitém materiálu. Materiál je při tom složkou aktivní, neboť látkové vlastnosti ovlivňují zásadně technické metody postupu. Kámen a jemu odpovídající metoda práce vede sochařství k neimitativní a architektonické koncepci, která je podle Hildebranda cílem moderního sochařství. Látka a forma jsou činností sjednoceny v totální formu, která je jednotou obou. Hildebrand překonal Fiedlera tam, kde mohl navázat na Sempera, totiž ve svém výkladu aktivní úlohy materiálu. Jeho meze jsou však v jeho historismu a normativnosti. Michelangelův pracovní postup kodifikoval a učinil jej normou a kritériem plnocennosti sochařského postupu vůbec.

Hildebrandovy závěry o neslučitelnosti formy modelované a tesané ukázaly jako absurdní dosa-
vadní sochařskou praxi, kdy umělec končil svou práci hliněným modelem, který byl do materiálu (kamene) proveden kameníkem. Na počátku aplikace jeho koncepce sochařství a jeho hmotné realizace v praxi stojí J. Bernard a v Čechách paralelně J. Štursa. Rekonstrukce pomocí katalogů pařížských výstav z let 1907—1912 ukázala, že Bernard byl ve Francii následován velmi záhy širokým proudem sochařské současné produkce. Objevilo se, že raná přípravná fáze kubistického sochařství, usilujícího o architektonizaci a neimitativnost pomocí oproštění od modelace a zdůrazněním objemu, byla přímo stimulována zásadami přímého tesání do kamene a byla součástí hnutí, vyvolaného v život Bernardem.