

Questions and Answers

There is going to be a lot of " I," but it is to emphasize that it is my own experience only.

1.) How do you look at the model while you sculpt?

I have been told several ways to approach the model. I was initially taught to find the profiles like Rodin did. You constantly move the stand around the model. When I did the Summer program at the Florence Academy of Art they taught us to keep the stand next to the model for 30 minutes and constantly walk back 10 feet to look at our piece from a distance. This would be done every few minutes. And then one class had us standing on ladders to look at the model from all angles. Is there a method you use? How often do you step back?

Everything they made you do in Florence is right. Good routine.

When I look at the model I don't sculpt.

I look.

**I fall in love every time all over again
with the knee
with an ankle
an elbow or belly button.**

**I walk around the model
very close to it
to sense the presence of the volume
the temperature of the attitude.**

**I see tiny me walking the landscape of the form
observing the smallest changes in volumes,
highs, lows ...**

then I go back and sculpt.

I turn the sculpture constantly.

**The hand is always trying to catch up with an eye
when it does — it is only for a breath of air.**

**If the eyes and hands
are at the same place
at the same time
you are late!**

**The minute your fingers deliver
your eyes are already gone to another place
and the table is turned.**

Don't make yourself look like Charlie Chaplin on assembly line.

2.) Do you sculpt what you know or what you see? One sculptor told me you sculpt 90% of what you know and 10% what you see. I told this to another sculptor who told me you sculpt what you feel. Sometimes I get confused. Sometimes the models have strange body parts and I know it usually isn't like that, but it is what I see.

***"It is impossible to do a thing the way I see it because the closer I get the more differently I see."* Alberto Giacometti**

When working with a model:

We sculpt what we think we see because we think we know.

What a penumbra!

**I am not interested in what I know.
Don't want to know what I see.
Strange unknown unseen is my hunt.
Confused?!
Great stage to start looking.**

**Don't name things and parts
Sculpt them!**

**Parts - look at the word
it is some but not all.**

**Only in combination with others
it will make up the whole.**

Arm is not an arm until you call it an arm

... sometimes it is just a scratch on the torso...

Sometimes you have to lose the part to see the whole.



When working on your own (without the model):

**it is liquid ...
mixture of feelings,
mood, experiences, physical condition, time strain, memories and associations
boiled down to one essence and shot out through a tiny exit
as a waterjet cutter,
only hundreds of gallons at once.**

3.) On unfinished pieces, are there parts which should always be there?
After studying Michelangelo I noticed on all his unfinished pieces he always had the torso there. Sometimes it is just the torso and head coming out of the stone. If I am trying to sculpt a suggestion, what are the basic parts I always need to have.

**I don't think one can sculpt in parts count required.
Everything is a symbol
and the whole is the symbol of the suggestion.
What parts are there in the end is the result not a reason.**





4.) Choosing a pose? As I study more masters I see the same poses again and again. Michelangelo's "Crouching Boy" turns into Rodin's "Crouching Woman" which turns into Zuniga's Crouching Woman. Should we follow the masters or try to find our own poses? Or should we follow nature?

Rodin was not afraid why would you?

I don't think it is a choice - it is the necessity.

The sculptor indwells the form and that creates the pose.

One should trust himself and not afraid to look like somebody else.

5.) Who should we copy?

I remember you told me every sculptor should copy Rodin's Balzac. What are some masters we should copy that we can learn the most from.

Balzac's head! for the monument - have to be specific.
(original plaster is in the www.musee-rodin.fr/)

You should copy every single sculpture you love.

Drawit, Sculptit, Suckitdry!

There is no better teacher.

I grew up in a "classical academic" education system.

I loved to copy greeks, romans, egyptians, italian renaissance.

"I've been fifty thousand times to the Louvre. I have copied everything in drawing, trying to understand." Alberto Giacometti

6.) What are the 5 biggest mistakes sculptors make?
What mistakes do you see sculptors making again and again?

Zero density of emotions per cubic inch of sculpture
Lethargic "talk" in clay — should sculpt
Describing in clay what they see — that is not sculpting
No understanding of depth nor scale
Blind love of their sculpture and its surface

7.) How do you stay in the moment?

Sometimes while sculpting from a model I get distracted. I will take out my calipers and check some things or get annoyed that it is too hot. Then I realize that I have lost the energy of modeling the figure. Are there things you do to stay in the moment?

If you get distracted — you haven't been in the moment yet.

When you are in — you're in — you get "distracted "when you're done.

Focus dammit!

Here is another way to look at it:

**... it is a long hard work, it takes a long time to do it,
there is nothing wrong with being distracted - as long as you know it,
no reason to be fussy about it:**

stepped out ?

...

now step back in!

What I do to protect myself:

- 1. I have to know that I have nothing planned for this day in order for me to start the work.**
- 2. I start a lot of them around 4-5 o'clock in the morning; by the time the family gets up - I am over the hill.**
- 3. If I was too lazy to get up - I will have to go to the plan #1.**
- 4. If I planned and got started and got distracted (you don't want to be the one) - I take it as the signal to stop and walk away without much thought.**
- 5. I'll be back.**

8.) How do you look at a finished piece?

I know some sculptors put their pieces away for a long time. Others hold candles up the piece and walk around. And George Carlson even made something that slowly rotates the piece so he can look at all angles. Are there methods you use to see the piece with fresh eyes?

**I don't look at the finished piece.
It is done, its over, past!**

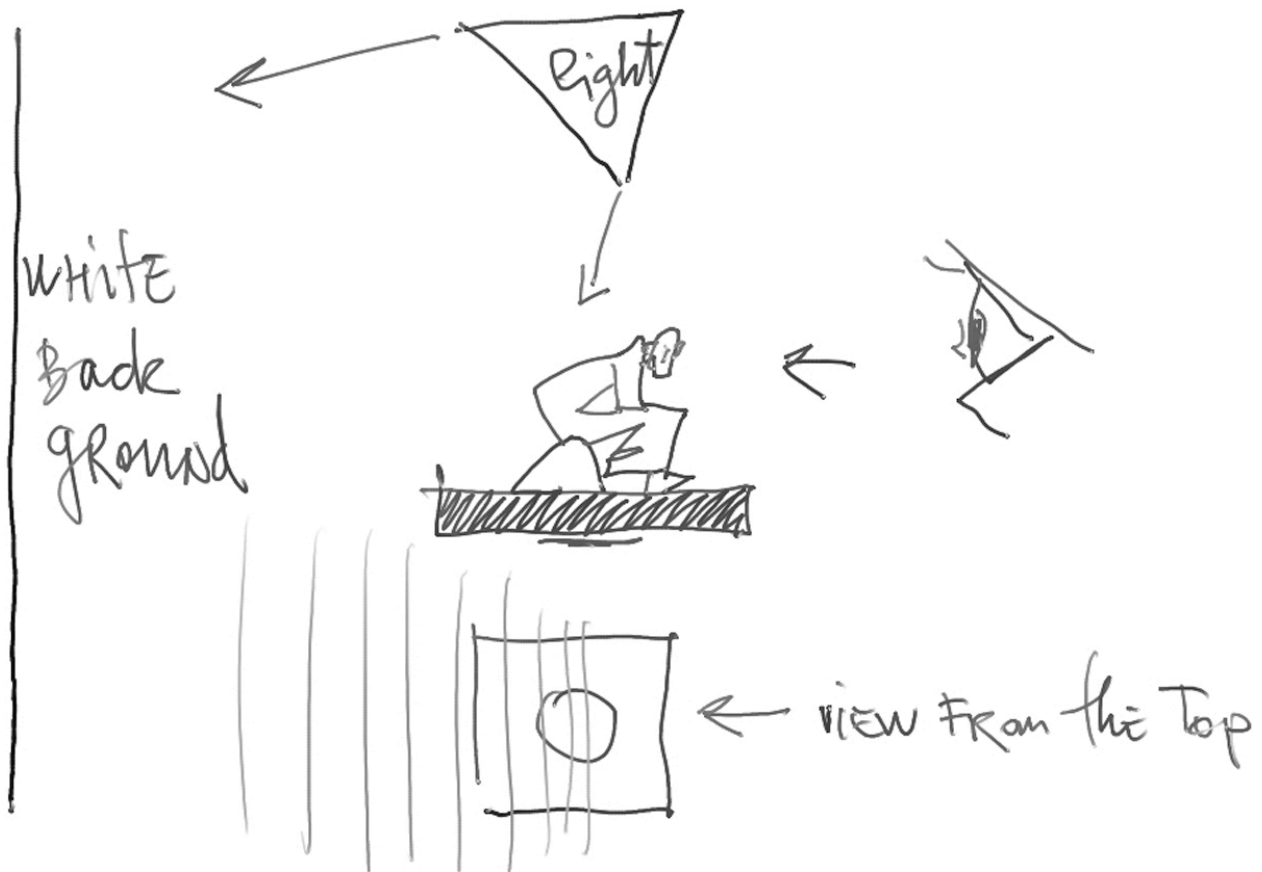
It takes a long look to be finished.

I sculpt with as much ambient light as I can.

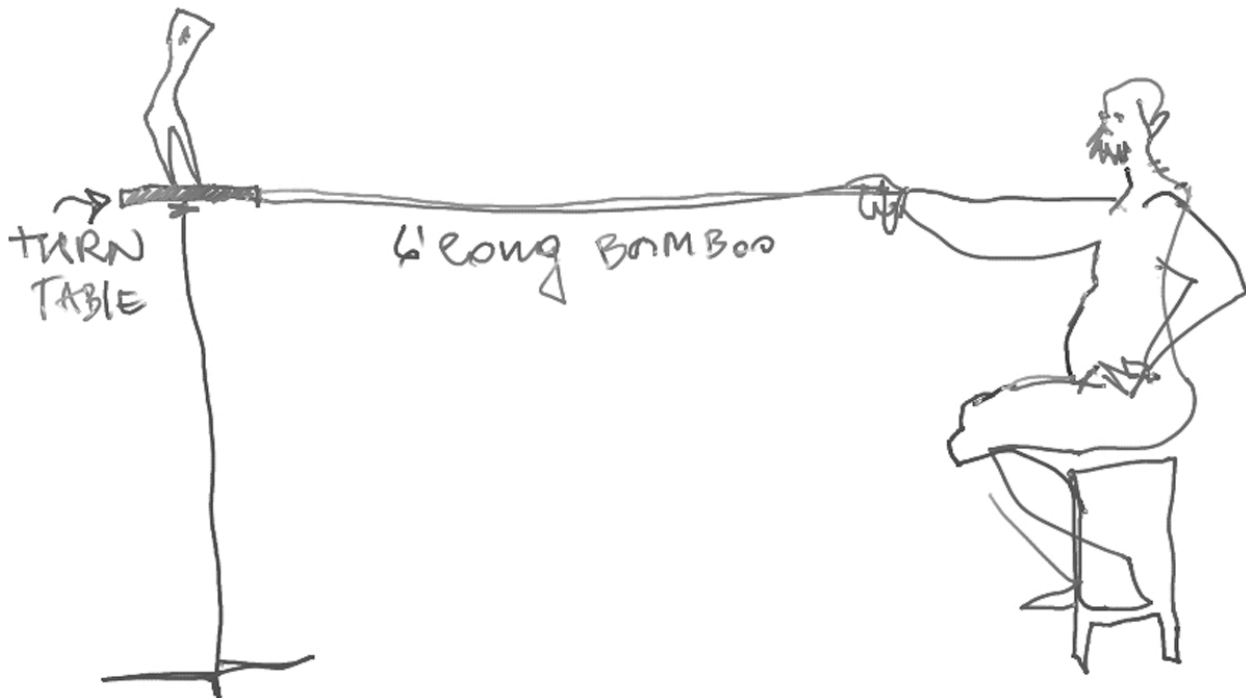
I like sculpting in low light.

When I light the working space, I light the space not the sculpting table or sculpture.

I direct the source of light into the ceiling or behind the sculpture in order for the light to bounce and diffuse around the work.



I take time to look and to see the work with 6-foot stick



**I look from all directions.
There is no front view until you look from there.
Where you are there is the front,
unless it is a site defined future view point.
I put my work outside (for scale check)
I keep it covered.
I keep it long.
I like them aged,
... like scotch.**

9.) The problem with sculpture. With a painting you see a specific angle. Yet with sculpture the viewer can look at all angles and some are better than others. So here is the problem. Are there tricks we can do as sculptors to better guide the viewer?

**Some angles are better to photograph than others.
But in life every angle, every side of the sculpture should be different not better than previous. If the "angle" doesn't work – it is a compositional mistake. The angle likely has nothing to do with it.**

**I like to pull a viewer by making sculpture unpredictable in the upcoming view.
"to pull" - there is always something else should be seen behind the edge of the sculpture.**

You have to create the scale of depth, a pass way for the eye of the viewer to go over the landscape of your sculpture.

10.) How important is drawing to a sculptor? I have heard some sculptors say they can't draw but they can sculpt very well. Others have told me that unless you know how to draw you will never be a good sculptor. How important is drawing?

**Drawing is a hearing aid for the artist to hear the world speaking.
It is language of the indescribable.
The most direct lean means of expressing idea.**

**The best drawings do imply,
that some ideas cannot be expressed in words or any other form.**

**Drawings are like fairy tales,
magical and scary.**

**Sculptor must draw.
And draw well!**

**What is to "draw well"? — To draw all the time.
A drawing should not have the value in the eyes of the drawer,
it is merely a mumble with yourself,
not meant for anybody else.**

**It is a wander through space,
inside the form,
outside of it.**

It is one seductive pleasure.



11.) Some sculptors form the idea of the composition in their mind long before they touch the clay. Then continually work on this idea by making many small models until it comes to a solution. The idea and meaning of the piece is very important to them. I read that someone asked Rodin what one of his sculptures meant. Rodin said it doesn't really have to mean anything, you don't need a story. The Age of Bronze comes to mind. So my question is what role does the narrative or story telling play when you are working on a piece? Does the story or the shapes you create guide you?

This is two parts question:

- 1. forming of the composition**
- 2. meaning of the composition**

" ... one can see usually in sculpture only a very poor "story" ". L. Moholy-Nagy.

- 1. Narrative does not exist for me — too many words.**

**I try to come up with one word and not pronounce it — scared to spill
then I look for the entrance
then I take the poison and indulge myself in digesting it
then one of us dies — me or poison
when it happens I sculpt
or not...
I don't sculpt sketches — I sculpt finals.
If I miss, I throw them out,
... but that is just me.**

- 2. I agree with Rodin.**

**For me the story is a fuel, nothing more — it burns on a way to the one word.
Aftertaste - that's what matters.**

The particularly "meaning" you started with does not always survives to the end. The one you end up with doesn't matter much, it is always in the eye of the beholder.

**The minute you leave your work — it is not yours anymore.
You are not in charge,
neither of the viewer's mind or their point of view.
Let it go, move on.**

**A story never guides me, only jump starts me, then "form" takes over
... form doesn't guide...
... composing the whole does...**

**It is very difficult to dissect my own process...
If I would know – I would never fail**



