

The voice of marvin puryear



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Puryear The Voice of Marvin Puryear The Works of Puryear Demonstrate His Own Experiences In a Manner That Reflects His Own Background and His Reaction to Occurrences, Historic and Otherwise.

In this paper, I will argue that Marvin Puryear's sculptures are the direct result of his desire to create in form, an object that appealed to his senses rather than education. An inexhaustible artist, Puryear noted early in life that his creations were completely "hands on". His sculptures are clearly based upon his desire to create that which appealed to his senses in some way. There is also a theme of social justice in his creations, but the creations do not appear to be the genesis of formal education, rather, they are moments in time that are captured in his sculptures, the inspiration being his emotional reaction to that element (whether it be direct or indirect) that affected him.

For example, the "Ladder for Booker T. Washington" is the product of Puryear's reaction to the plight of Washington. It is clearly an emotional reaction in that we see how the climb to success is long, difficult and indeed unjust for most and especially Afro-Americans. The ladder appears endless, and begins wide at the bottom while narrowing at the top. Notably the steps are uneven which would symbolize the potholes encountered by Washington. Notably there are no direct rivets in the piece which leads to the logical conclusion that this piece is not a time line which is something that would naturally result from influence of formal education. Rather it is based on Puryear's perception of Washington's journey. Further, it is clear that as the top of the ladder narrows, the climber (meaning the viewer) would be compelled to ask "Is this climb to the top attainable" Which begs the question "Would Puryear be inspired to create a piece based upon the

stunning election of Barrak Obama". One could hazard a guess that perhaps, like Washington, Puryear would admit that Obama also climbed to the top. Additionally, Puryear draws on his direct experiences. He has a fascination with music and archery. His way of expressing those interests was not to try to sport, but to create the object of the sport itself. For example, he notes " If I became interested in archery, I made the bows and arrows; if I became interested in music, I made the guitar" (Benezra 140). Again, this statement by Puryear reinforces the premise that his sculptures are not the result of hard line education. If they were, then he would have mastered playing the instrument or the sport of archery rather than creating his own original vessel.

The deception that can only be called Puryear is his ability to take the simple concept (Such as the Old Mole) and craft a vision without all of the trendy accoutrements that we see so often in modern art today. This too is the result of his emotional reaction to that which he experienced, rather than the formal education he received. Another example of what I view as a reactive piece is " Untitled". The body of the object is open, free and seemingly transparent. However the face of the object appears to have the expression of recovering from a horrid event, yet knowing that there is still more. Simply stated, the face is heavy, as if carrying some sort of burden, while the body is completely unaffected. This too demonstrates pure emotion. As the saying goes " I can tell by your face something is wrong."

In conclusion, a review of Marvin Puryear's pieces, demonstrate that interpretation can be found in emotion. Accordingly, it is clear that Marvin Puryear's sculptures are the direct result of his desire to create in form, an object that appealed to his senses or emotions rather than education.

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