

**SACRED SPACES, SACRED FACES:
PUBLIC ART SCULPTURE INSPIRED BY TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOURCES**

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By

Ronald Van Anderson
(Akili Ron Anderson)

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**HOWARD UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF FINE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ART**

THESIS COMMITTEE

Professor David Smedley, MFA
Chairperson

Professor Floyd Coleman, Ph.D.

Professor James Phillips, MFA

Januwa Moja, BFA

Uzikee Nelson, BS

Gwendolyn Everett, Ph.D.
Art Department Chair
Ex-Officio

Candidate: Ronald Van Anderson (Akili Ron Anderson)

Date of Defense: April 20, 2008

DEDICATION

I sincerely dedicate this thesis to my fore-parents and the generations to come, my children Akili and Ayanna, my grandchildren Isaiah and Adanna, my stepfather Archie Middleton, and most especially my parents Russell Anderson and Frances Holmes, for the gift of life, for their complete love, for their knowledge and support, and their lessons of wisdom guiding me to live life to the fullest.

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ABSTRACT

This body of work is revealed through a process to clarify and refine my 62 years of artistic and social exploration. The individual works of my thesis are designed to form a series, an integrated body of work, related in sequence, appearance and philosophical intention. It has been my endeavor to progressively learn from each of the works elements of growth, making the sequential process in which they were conceived, as important a learning chapter, as is the total body of work. I have used my knowledge of carpentry to utilize wood elements as both artistic and structural, while incorporating synthetic materials and found objects as integrated complementary forms.

A major part of my works' development has come with the use of traditional tools and materials in non-traditional ways. This point would be best illustrated by the use of the router power tool and synthetic materials, inclusive of construction adhesive, fiberglass, resin and automotive repair materials. The router tool, which is most associated with the cabinetmaking and furniture making trades, has been used to create textures and a type of incised line drawing element. The construction adhesive and automotive repair materials have allowed me to texturize, reshape, refine and combine dissimilar materials, such as the areas where the fiberglass and resin combination meet with the varying types of wood.

The completion of this graduate program will book end with my undergraduate studies (1965-1969), under the guidance and teachings of James A. Porter, Lois Jones, James L. Wells and, Ed Love my foremost influence in the area of sculpture and a major influence in life. With all the facilities of my mind and spirit, by my hand, and with the blessings of my community, my goal is to celebrate African people and culture.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION: ISSUES AND EXPLORATIONS

My return to Howard is a promise to complete my degree work, to myself, my dearly departed Mother Frances H. Anderson-Middleton and Godmother Dr. Myrtle Henry. Secondly, it is an opportunity to, produce a major body of work, focus and resolve specific ideas and concepts, and become credentialed in academia. I have returned to the early teachings of my carpenter father, Russell Anderson, to become a masterful student and learn to complete what I begin.

Howard has become both a destination to authenticate my journey, and a destiny to embolden my voice. In addition, crossing the Howard scholarship grounds has become pivotal to my legacy building goals - in as much as this process has guided me to plan and make my complete statement as a human being and leave behind a better world than what I received at birth.

Returning to Howard University, and entering the Master of Fine Arts Program as a sculpture major, marks a major turning point in regards to my artistic development and intentions. I returned in 2005, forty years after my original entrance as a 19-year-old freshman art student. In my estimation, Howard and the world are in the process of a 40-year cycle (plus or minus five years). Some have said that history repeats itself. I would agree, however, I see that statement as incomplete and over simplistic. My position is that life moves in spiral cycles. That is to say, that as life cycles there is also a progression or retrogression, as in the movement along a coiled spring. As you move around, you also move up or down. Wisdom, in the present, is resultant from the lessons of the past. I present, that many of a person's most important insights are realized at identifiable cyclic signposts; historical events, birthdays, holidays, years, decades, centuries, millennia, and yes graduations.

It is within this context of the concurrence of event and time that historians might observe or predict a cycle. I suggest that 1968 has lessons for 2008. If this is even remotely the case then I am the wiser for it, and I intend on utilizing that knowledge towards my life and my work.

My objective in producing this body of work is to reconstitute African iconic expressions in forms that blend the ancient with the future, and embolden the sons and daughters of Africa to find unity, peace and self-determination through worthy cultural expressions - ART. The study of traditional African art has revealed to me the beneficial process of establishing icons through repetitive intergenerational use, rather than adapting fads and passing fancies. The traditional use of African art was and is, to maintain a cultural foundation through established social practices, utilizing art as a motivating factor. It is my desire that this body of work be enshrined in the same way. As such, this work will be best viewed and utilized in the context of the Black community. More specifically, these works are designed to find their appropriate ceremonies performed in the context of African centered environments that are designed as sanctuaries for African and African Diaspora cultures. The values and significance of this work or any work with the before mentioned charge, can be found in the question: Is a particular work of art challenging enough to be destroyed by ones enemies or is it vital enough to be preserved by those it serves?

In my art, I seek to provide a journey from the subliminal to the sublime - to excite and even challenge the extents of human thoughts and emotions. In that regard, my work has no so-called "negative space". In artistic terminology, "negative space" is the space around and between the subject(s) of an art image. In my work, all areas of the work are subject space, designed for the viewer to travel in and out and through the work to find its rewards.

The elements of design that reflect these objectives are in the colors, rhythms and symmetry, which collectively build forms and textures that join together as one distinctive monolithic statement.

The secondary elements are those statements that intermingle, sometimes in juxtaposition to the primary form, to maintain an energy that engages the viewer to continue exploring and discovering – in particular, the textural, architectonic and biomorphic inter-relationships. The rhythmic areas of the works are reflective of African and African Diaspora music, dance and language patterns. The symmetrical elements of the works are designed to create a foundation that ultimately allows for an exploration of asymmetrical balance, a type of abstraction. Asymmetrical balance is a means of achieving the balanced results found in symmetry, with the difference of using visual weight as a means of balance, rather than mirroring an object from one side to the other.

In my process at Howard, I have been able to reference all of the areas of concentration I have worked in throughout my career – namely, printmaking, media arts, construction, theater arts, stained glass and in particular mixed media drawing and painting. Although these areas may be considered very different, many of the tools and techniques are similar and most of the aesthetic considerations are cross disciplinary.

The surface texture and coloration techniques I have used have been a major component of my process. In fact, these sculptures could be described as “painted sculptures”. The predominate color scheme is rooted in the monochromatic use of the color brown. The use of brown brings an organic character to the synthetic materials and compliments the natural color and growth patterns of the woods used. There are brief moments where the color palette has extended beyond the earth colors. In some cases the colors have been used symbolically – white for spirituality, red representing bloodline and heritage, green used for land and ones’s

cultural origin. However, the overriding theme has been to use color to subtly accentuate the attributes of the three dimensional form.

The works in this thesis program have been informed by what is sometimes called “genetic” or “blood memory”. This is an awareness of the spirit, the sub-conscious and the unconscious that rests in ones ancient history and blood line; to be discovered with a commitment of returning to the source for training and reaffirmation – it is a birth rite. I have worked all my life to develop myself as a worthy conduit, to transmit righteously moral images that serve humanity. I have studied the art of the world and specifically art forms and ceremonies out of Africa and the Diaspora. The work that I have produced here comes from an inspiring African source that is seeking a higher ground of recognition. Therefore, I have allowed the past to inspire me, but not confine me. The specific use of some traditional African icons has provided a foundation to explore new horizons. As in all pursuits, there are things and thoughts that are cherished, and things and thoughts that are better cast away. There is a danger in being open to everything. There is also a danger in always singing in key. This is a discriminating journey of culture and self. I choose to cast away evil and lies. I choose to find goodness and truth. I choose to find craftsmanship and beauty. I choose to retrain myself from relying primarily on intuition, to seeking the discipline of scholarly research and reporting.

For the past 30 years I have worked as a full time practicing artist, primarily working in leaded stained glass and painting. In this regard, artists Carolyn Davis and Givon Thompson have worked in my studio, for these many years, as friends and associates. Along the way, many artists and artist supporters have influenced and encouraged me as a man and an artist. Notably, artists Ed Love, Teixeira Nash, Dr. Jeff Donaldson, Romare Bearden, architect Robert J. Nash, writer/director Paul Carter Harrison, educator and theater director Mike Malone and

educators and social activists Dr. Acklyn Lynch, Dr. Ron Walters and Dr. Frances Cress Welsing.

The works and stellar public art careers of Valerie Maynard, Martha Jackson Jarvis and Ayokunle Odeleye have greatly encouraged me to continue my journey in the public art arena. As well, the members of Nation - African Liberation Arts Ensemble, and the Weusi and AfriCOBRA artist collectives have been instrumental in my artistic and personal development. Co-founding Nation and joining AfriCOBRA has been two of my proudest endeavors.

From time to time, I have been moved to work with activist Black artists organizations, in particular the “Golden Age of Black Art” (GABA) planning committee (Januwa Moja, Uzeeki Nelson, Marvin Sin and Akosuwa Bandele). As well as others, such as the National Conference of Artists (NCA) and Black Artists of DC (BADC), all of whose activities are centered on bringing together African American artists for mutual development. My intellectual horizons have been greatly expanded by attending and participating in the annual James A. Porter Colloquium, coordinated by artist/historian Dr. Floyd Coleman. This particular event and its scholars greatly influenced my decision to return to Howard.

In 1969 I withdrew from Howard University before earning my undergraduate degree. This was a time of social activism, inclusive of the Civil Rights, Black Power and Black Arts Movements. Howard, as an educational institution for the advancement of African Americans, in my opinion at the time, was not fully addressing the needs and aspirations of its students. I have debated, within myself over the years, the wisdom of leaving without finishing my studies. Within this reflective history, I have found a window of opportunity and destiny, to complete a journey that was detoured by youthful miscalculation. More than a correction to a reactionary decision, this graduate school process has given me a feeling of completeness and broadened my perspective and knowledge base in my ongoing career development.

CHAPTER II.

INVESTIGATIONS

My renewed academic studies at Howard University, in particular art history and African American history, in conjunction with my aesthetic resolve and hard work, have provided for a reservoir of creativity and visual evidence. This would not have occurred in my normal circle of productivity. This is to say my work has developed exponentially because of my graduate experience at Howard University. I only regret that there has not been more time in this graduate process, to expand my creative process into the areas of computer science, foreign language, mathematics, psychology and music.

My continued development as an artist is best defined by my philosophical grounding as a person. Cultural and moral imperatives are central to this process of self-definition and self-determination. To be African, ethical and skilled in my profession is my source of self pride. It is within this context that I have defined and developed myself. Creativity and spirit are two terms that are often linked in the descriptions of artists. The mind, the result of our brain activity, is the interpreter of creative stimuli. It is an overwhelming assumption that all human beings have sensations of creativity. The artist, however, *lives* for this creative stimulus. To this end, many artists profoundly rely on the spirit part of their humanity for inspiration – this writer being one of that number. The spirit informs all of our life processes. It is through the strength of our spirit that artists can find healing for the challenges of life and order, for the career distresses specific to being an artist.

The terms “soul” and “heart” are often used when referring to the “spirit”. Most of us will agree that all three terms (spirit, soul and heart) interrelate, and some may say they mean the same. My personal definitions are as follows. Spirit or spirituality is the force that allows us to travel beyond the body - before the spirit enters the body (at birth), during our physical life span and after the spirit leaves the body (our physical death).

The spirit and the soul are terms used when referring to, seeking a higher consciousness, and or, as a means for connection with God and the spirit world. The soul is the institution of the spirit within our physical life experience as human beings – a type of bridge between the physical feelings and spiritual emotions. The term heart, when it is not referring to the physical organ, is the expression of the feelings of introspection and emotion that often overshadow and or supersede our conscious mental processes.

With all these concepts in place, yet in a state of ebb and flow, this is the substance and circumstance of being an artist. In my opinion, the visual artist would be well served to avoid the traps of individualism and self-righteousness, and seek self-confidence in the sanctuary of collectivism, and find peace and creativity in the perpetuality of the spirit.

Within the spirit, there is a state of being where the artist can reach for the highest lofts, without the fear of falling. There is a place in time and space where tools and techniques are second nature, where mind and spirit can rise to guide and transform our physical existence; an existence where, past labors and the cycle of time, missteps and successes, research and intellectual exchange, allows the artist to trust feelings and emotions above plotting and probing. In this reality, making art now becomes a seamless dialogue between artist and material. This evolved conversation establishes a process for a vision quest. This quest, optimistically, prepares artists, myself as one, as healthy seers, prepared to establish images that act as signposts for an ascendant civilization.

CHAPER III.

PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISES OF THE WORK:

A. SACRED SPACES, SACRED FACES

“Sacred Spaces, Sacred Faces” are sculptural works of art I have created to embolden African spirits in a protected space. “Sacred Faces” refers to the lovingly familiar images of seen and unseen ancestors and spirits, whose wisdom and truth rest in the protection of the “Sacred Spaces”. These works have been created as temples, ready for willing souls to choose a moral grounding and an enlightened journey through life. These works are inspired and in homage to the cultures and peoples of Africa and the African Diaspora.

For this artist, cultural grounding is the source of spiritual strength and mental stability. Herein, culture is defined as the shared beliefs, customs, practices and social behavior of a particular nation of people. The term “nation” is referring to a community of people sharing the same ethnic origins based on race, common history, geography and self-definition. This is not the same as a “nation state” – defined as a community of people or peoples living in a distinct territory organized under a single government. The United States for instance is a sovereign state with multiple nations, who practice their specific cultures.

The cultures of the non-African world can be interesting and exotic. This is to say that other cultures other than one’s own can be informative, worthy of investigation and enjoyable. However, there is not enough time in one person’s life to thoroughly investigate, understand and appreciate numerous cultures. If one is to be immersed in any culture, it should first be their own. For my good health, African culture is my lifeblood, and therefore my focus. It is both euphoric and tranquilizing. It is the key piece in the puzzle of world culture. It is my source of pride and confidence.

B. PUBLIC ART SCULPTURE, INSPIRED BY TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOURCES

“Public Art”, is a new term for an ancient reality. “Public Art” is a product born out of a community to serve as an indication of civilized development; an inspiration from nature and culture and a function of humanity. “Public Art” comes as early as humankind’s first attempt to define its environment. A more descriptive term may be “Environmental Cultural Expression”.

The many varied cultures of Africa have all produced great works of art. This great history of art has instilled in me a pride of person and a constant source of visual information and inspiration for my work. A short list of such would include the following: The terracotta sculptures of the Nok culture, the beadwork of the Yoruba and the Benin bronzes, all of Nigeria. The art and architecture of the Bamana, Dogon and Senufo cultures of Mali. The Kota art of Gabon exemplified by the Kota Reliquary Figures. The Ethiopian wall paintings. The gold crafted works of the Ashanti, the wooden figures and Kente cloth of the Akan, all from Ghana. The adornment of the Masai and the Giriyama Grave Posts both of Kenya. The body painting of the Nuba in Sudan. The sculptures of the Kongo and Kuba cloth both from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Mende masks of Sierra Leone. The Zulu Beehive Houses of South Africa and the art and architecture of ancient Egypt. This list is designed to point out a small sampling of my cultural references.

Public Art is a planned permanent landmark of place and history; a monument symbolizing the cultural foundation that supports the civilized growth of its people. From the rock art and cave paintings of Algeria to Zimbabwe, to the architectural art of Mali, to the Ndebele house paintings of South Africa and Zimbabwe, to the great pyramids of Egypt, the

“Public Art” of Africa is a shared expression of community identity; an art form that is owned and acclaimed by a prideful populace.

In many cultures of the past, the artist was commissioned or assigned to produce art that proclaimed heroes, embellished buildings and celebrated events. Art was a mental, spiritual and physical utility - a required element of life that provided a means of focusing the resources, thoughts and emotions of a people. It is my position, that art in the present has the same potential and power to celebrate life and culture. In our communities where we reside, work and engage in recreation, art can again become a welcomed partner with the art of architecture and the original creation, nature. Public Art at its best, complements and enhances its environment as an emblem of stability, growth and victory of a people.

Public Art can also be a spiritual conduit, which promotes a collective conversation within humanities diversity and with God the Creator and the spirit world. Public Art is also a socio-political force and a cultural weapon that is presently underutilized by the populations that most need it.

Africa as the birthplace of humankind, culture and civilization, and the African Diaspora have been the origins of my research. My research has been inspired and inspired by the very beginnings and highest development of “Environmental Cultural Expression” (Public Art). It is within this context that visual art can find its way back to the traditional African expressions of utilizing all the arts (music, dance, theater etc.) as one unified cultural force. My thesis proposes and supports the simple notion that art, which originated in Africa’s first civilizations, is a utility of life - and as such, it has historically and is presently, being practiced profoundly and distinctively by people of African descent, as a curative agent and as a weapon of protection.

CHAPTER IV.

AESTHETICS AND MEANS OF PRODUCTION

For my purposes in these papers, I use certain aesthetic principles to examine the outward appearance of my work in direct relationship to human emotion and conditions. Within that investigation, beauty is not an essential element. What is beautiful (good-looking) in art is subjectively based on the viewers' socialization and perspective on life. The terms attractive and unattractive, in their most literal definitions, may be better terms for understanding the effect of art on the human psyche and spirit. In other words, if a viewer comes in contact with a work of art, is he or she compelled to emotionally and or intellectually invest in the work, or conversely is the viewer repelled or simply disinterested. If a work is simply pretty, then it is not necessarily, for me, aesthetically beautiful. By my standards, aesthetic success is achieved when a work is felt past its visual attributes. Does the work have a social usefulness, as well as a message? My message is revealed by utilizing the artwork as a vehicle of communication with the spirit, through human sight, and then insight. Does your heart beat faster and your mind think deeper and broader? Does the work make memories? Has the work made a difference in your life? After viewing the work, do *you* make a difference in life? In my work, I am seeking to attract people of indigenous African decent to utilize the art as a cultural mirror - a source of nourishment and grounding. In addition, I am presenting the work on the world stage as an interpreter of intellectual cultural standards, and also as an example of integrity in craftsmanship and aesthetic substance.

The beauty or more clearly the socio-political aesthetics of this work is in its effectiveness to communicate my stated objectives. I conceptualize aesthetically successful art as a bridge to truths that advance the human condition - those visual bridges utilize the elements of design, as in composition, color, texture, depth and illusion, to find a real world visual form through the fabrication process.

While in the process of fabricating, the knowledge of tools and techniques establishes craftsmanship as an equal partner to the creative conceptualization process. Within this collaboration of design and fabrication, a work of art for eternity can be found.

In regards to the fabrication process, the materials, techniques and tools are the essential elements of the equation. The primary use of wood in my work provides an obvious connection to the earth. The growth rings in the wood that I choose to accentuate provide a visual metaphoric that exemplifies the generational growth of the ancient African cosmologies, that center on respecting and utilizing nature's bounty. On the other hand, the use of modern day synthetic materials (fiberglass, resin and automotive body repair filler) provide for an expedient technology and a symbolic contrast with the past and the present - the natural and the "new age" materials.

In addition, I have utilized contrasting surface textures and spatial design elements that encourage the viewer to travel around and through the pieces, in a journey of discovery of the art object, and consequently oneself. This is all intended to heighten the viewer's imagination and broaden their visional expectations.

My production process has been carried out with traditional tools as well as highly technical new generation tools. Some of the processes are very complex, and in some cases would not have been possible without some of specialized tools.

The means of production are the techniques and procedural steps of my fabrication process. My fabrication process employs four to five steps. I begin with raw materials that have been discarded from past works and found objects in my immediate environment. Following the collection and initial arrangement of these materials, I use plywood and dimensioned lumber to sustain the initial structure. Given this process and these materials, I proceed with a dynamic design/fabrication process, (designing as I fabricate), using “Liquid Nails” construction adhesive and screws as the means for joining these materials.

This process in the construction industry is called “Design/Build. In the arts this stage would be best referred to as an additive process. Following this process, I evaluate and visually dialogue with the assembled forms and choose a bearing, and consequently a message and meaning of the piece. The next step involves either combining similarly created pieces into one piece, or beginning a subtractive process of cutting away areas that allow the piece to take on a biomorphic and/or an architectonic direction.

Following these steps, I proceed with the first sanding of the piece, and continue to texturize and form the artwork, utilizing various forms of construction adhesive, a combination of fiberglass and liquid resin and several different formulas of “Bondo” brand automotive filler. Following this step, I may choose to repeat the sequence of the above steps until I am satisfied with the results, after which I apply color. The colors in these works are obvious yet subtle. My goal has been the creation of works that will sing and vibrate, primarily utilizing the high lights and the shadows that are inherent in three-dimensional forms. Finally, I lightly sand and apply a protective coating. This process of fabrication is commonly categorized as “assemblage”.

CHAPTER V.

THE INDIVIDUAL WORKS

Herein I will reflect on each individual piece, with a statement on how the pieces have interacted in the creative process. It is important to note that some of the elements of individual pieces, (a small percentage of the work presented), were integrated into this series as a result of starting and storing ideas and items throughout my career. The following listing is in a relative chronological order of the conception of the works. In some cases, a work has been put aside before completion to go on to a new piece that has commanded my attention. I often work on multiple pieces at the same time. It is also notable to point out that towards the end of my thesis process, I have found that each of the works has the potential of parenting its own new series of works. The following listing includes the major works I have produced, for presentation during my thesis defense.

Sankofa Bird (figure 1) was inspired by the Sankofa Adinkra symbol from Ghana, West Africa. The mythical Sankofa Bird is shown moving forward while looking back. The symbol represents forward progress as it uses the lessons of the past as its guide to a successful future. This piece is primarily constructed with $\frac{3}{4}$ inch plywood, laminated to a thickness of 4 1/2 inches in most places. The imbedded faces are of solid wood and the striated textures were created utilizing “Liquid Nails” construction adhesive.

Many African Americans have adapted the Sankofa symbol as emblematic of our movement from ancient glory, through modern day travails, to future triumphs. This symbol also accentuates the fact that most social struggles are protracted across generations. Similarly, some of the pieces I have worked on at Howard had their beginnings before I entered the graduate program, and their full resolution will be found in the months and years after my graduation.

Creation (figure 2) uses the inspiration of a woman's form to celebrate all creation. The Creation sculpture received its defining parts from cut away pieces of the sculpture entitled Ancestral Beginnings. Subsequent parts were added with various dimensions of lumber and plywood. Perhaps these two works could be called a visual pun; "a play on images" - "in the Beginning there was the Creation". Creation is a freestanding wall piece that utilizes low relief elements and raised textural undulations achieved primarily with the use of the router power tool. This piece uses the top half of a barbecue grill to form the womb of the woman's abstracted figure. These first two pieces of my graduate work, (Sankofa and Creation), were designed as low relief wall sculptures. Subsequent works have evolved into works in the round.

Spirit Rocket (figure 3) is a vehicle to the spirit world. It is a visual manifestation of a delivery system for thoughts, hopes, memories and prayers. Spirit Rocket is the first in this series to combine several of the low relief wall pieces to create a freestanding three-dimensional work. This piece is made of discarded wooden scraps, lumber and "Bondo" automotive repair material. This was also the first piece where the inside area of space was defined as unseen energy, and therefore subject matter. Central to this work, inside the sacred space area is a ceramic sculpture depicting male/female balance.

Akuaba (figure 4) is designed as a community fertility symbol. One side of this form is clearly inspired from the Akuaba doll, sometimes worn by women of the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa. This small figurine is worn around the woman's waist, or prominently displayed in the home, specifically to promote fertility and consequently pregnancy. The work created here is promoting the fertility and prosperity of the African community. The reverse side of this piece features the "Sacred Space" and is intended as the guardian of the Akuaba figure. This piece is constructed of discarded fragments of past works, new lumber, fiberglass, resin and automotive repair material.

Pyramid (figure 5) is inspired from the great pyramids of ancient Kemet (Egypt). This work celebrates great monument building as a metaphor for great nation building. It is constructed solely of 8"x 8" lumber. Its inspiration came from the good fortune of receiving the discarded lumber from a major utility construction project, on the street bounding the graduate studios.

Prayers (figure 6) is a portal to send prayers and receive blessings. It is also designed for meditation, contemplation and decision-making. It celebrates the synergy of the male and female partnership in the institution of family and the continuity of life. This piece is fabricated with plywood, lumber, fiberglass and resin.

Ancestral Beginnings (figure 7) was born out of the first completed piece of my thesis series, originally entitled Beginnings. In a culture perspective, this piece represents new beginnings based on the past 500 years of struggle of the peoples and nations of Africa. This work was cut out of an old discarded table found in the sculpture studio. The table is constructed of solid wood core with a one-layer wood veneer. This sculpture incorporates the bottom of a charcoal grill as a stylized face element. The carvings of this work, using the router power tool and the painting techniques, have greatly informed subsequent works, in particular the work Creation.

This sculpture, in its expanded form, is the last completed work of my thesis. The added materials to the original form are plywood, lumber, fiberglass, resin and automotive repair material. This work is dedicated to the spirits that have lived in the human and the spirit worlds. These spirits are known to revisit the human world after their physical deaths. These are good spirits who come to communicate and guide. It is from these spirits that we find wisdom and protection.



Figure 1. Sankofa Bird (16'X 8')



Figure 2. Creation (12'X 8')



Figure 3. Spirit Rocket (8'X 3'X 3')



Figure 4. Akuaba (8'X 5'X 3')

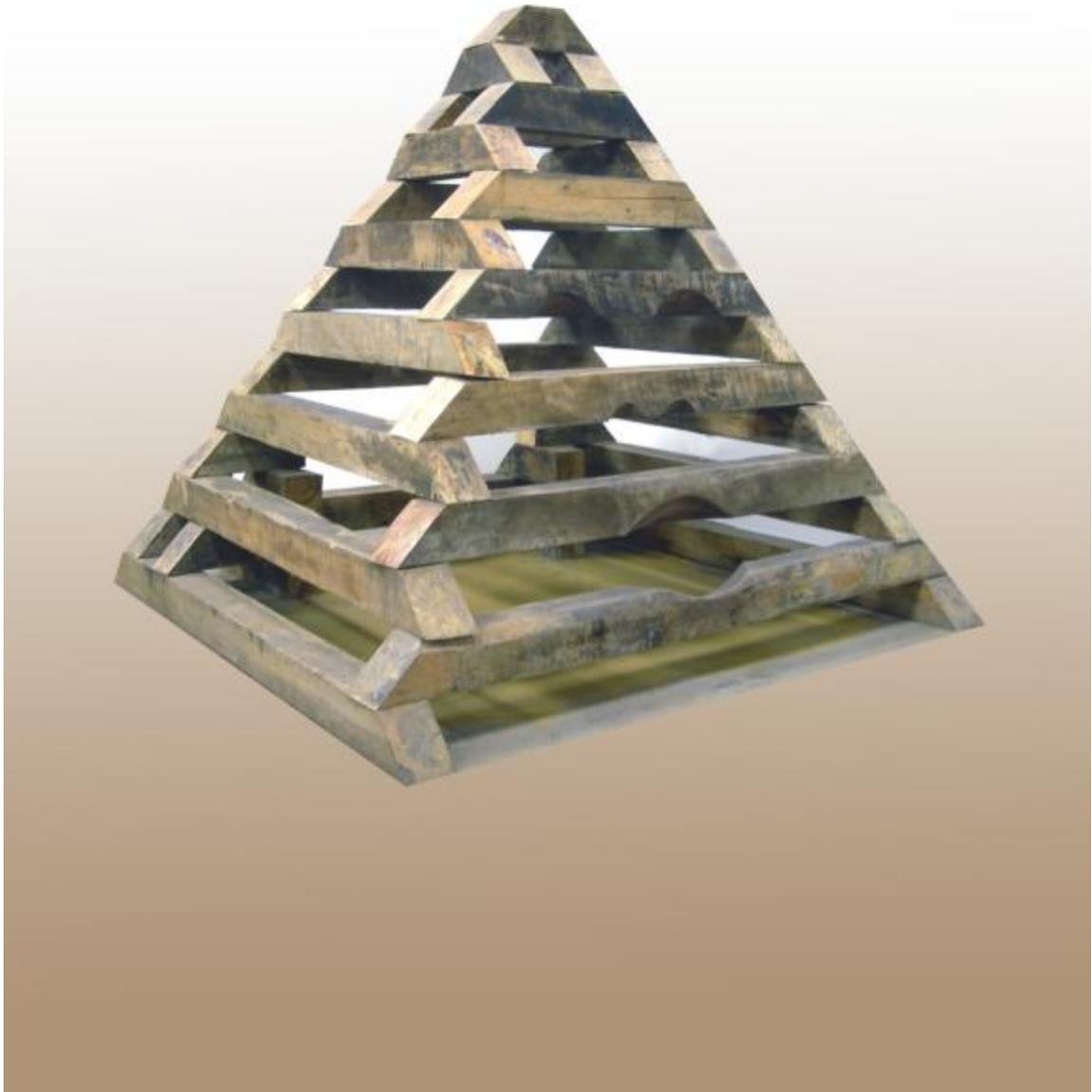


Figure 5. Pyramid (12'X 12'X 12')



Figure 6. Prayers (8'X 4'X 3')



Figure 7. Ancestral Beginnings (8'X 4'X 2')

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION

The most fundamental conclusion I have reached in my process of development at Howard University has been the synthesis and discovery of skills, philosophies and sensibilities, to actualize ideas and forms that are best expressed in three-dimensions. The foundation for this new development has been based on my construction and automotive skills background. In the construction field, these areas include carpentry, plumbing and electric skills for new building construction, building renovation and theater set construction. In the automotive field, these areas are inclusive of general automotive repairs of classic cars, with an emphasis on auto body repair, utilizing synthetic materials to form and repair metal parts. The inclusion of the tools and techniques of these trades in conjunction with my research into new tools and technologies has brought me to a new level of productivity and possibility. Over the years, I have accumulated and used these skills primarily as an adjunct for the purposes of supporting and installing my major works of art. These construction skills have now been brought in to full play as tools and techniques for creating fine art. In this regard, the parameters of my conceptualizations have been greatly expanded. This series of works I have begun at Howard represent seeds, when originally I perceived them as flowers and fruit. In this sense, the seed is as nourishing as the fruit, and as beautiful as the flower.

I have learned, in my thesis process, the usefulness and processes of integrating allied skills. I have developed new abilities to join found objects, and processed materials into large cultural expressions that will find its best usefulness in public spaces. Through research and trial and error, I have discovered specific technologies and procedures that have enabled me to process my aesthetic intensions to new horizons.

These works have been designed and built to provide spiritual sanctuaries, and specifically play a role in the positive cultural development of people of African descent. These works are best suited to stay together as a total statement. If that cannot happen, it is my desire that each work be placed in environments that celebrate the works' cultural value as well as its aesthetic achievement. That is to say that, they should be placed in African American universities, museums, sanctuaries and cultural institutions.

Visual art, in general, has been unnaturally separated from the other cultural expressions, namely writing, dance, music and theater. To correct this aberration, I would endeavor to have this work in performance venues to demonstrate the enriching power that is produced when all the African arts are combined.

This thesis is being written in support of the physical objects of art I have created. It is hoped that my reflections herein give an insight into my reasoning as an artist. As a person of African descent, I have charged myself, to use my skills, knowledge and birthright, to bear the arms of art making, and come to the aid of my people to reconstitute our culture and insure our future.

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