

**THE COMMITMENT WITH SCULPTURE IN THE PUBLIC SPACE.
A PERSONAL TESTIMONY.**

Francisco Gazitua
Sculptor

Beyond a mere text, this narration is a personal view that summarizes a 46-year journey through the craft of sculpture. It also refers to my guild's efforts to reinstate sculpture in our country's public space and that of many cities in the world. Also, I submit fragments of an exchange of correspondence dated on *Wednesday July 27, 2011* between myself and the sculptor Sir Anthony Caro (Tony) in connection with the subject of *Public art*. This text pays homage to this dear friend and master who passed away on October 23, 2013.

I do confess that as I wrote, I felt a great admiration grow within me for my "Die Hard" craft and for my sculptor colleagues, their fortitude and consistency, not to mention their quiet working style. Admiration, also, for the place that we earned for ourselves within the visual arts, from the public space. An unprecedented growth in the past 30 years since 1980 to this day. Also increased was my love for our craft, the one that in the end gave us an independent and honest life, as well as my gratitude to those who believed in us: sponsors, entrepreneur-patrons, collectors, public and private sector art managers, creators of monumental sculpture parks and collections. Cultured architects who consider public sculpture as part of the building.

Special thanks to Galleria Artespacio as promoter of the Ciudad Empresarial collections, collaborator in the creation of the open air sculpture collections on permanent exhibition at the Lircay Campus of the University of Talca and Paseo La Pastora in the borough of Las Condes. Also, I would like to express my admiration and homage to the past, to our old statue makers, male and female, who have passed away: Nicanor Plaza, Virginio Arias and Rebecca Matte, to my masters also male and female, who inhabit the netherworld: Lily Garafulic, Marta Colvin and Samuel Roman; to the pioneers of the previous generation Castillot, Juan Egenaut, Carlos Ortúzar and Federico Assler.

Public Space

The oceans and rivers are our public space. The air where the clouds blow by is public space. The beaches and mountains are also that. It was sculptures, on the edge of the first man-made tracks about 30 or 40 thousand years ago in this space, which in the beginning was all public and which is increasingly delimited in our continent, its town and cities. In this actual reality of the cities and landscapes the people continue to ask for that mark, for that trace that the sculptor leaves behind in his/her work. The main history, and also ours, will continue to pass, but our function in the tribe remains: better than anyone, we are accumulators of materials to immobilize the time of a small or great event that the human community needs to remember. And, deeper even, sculpture will always stand as a stubborn re-connection with mankind's material side.

Our guild was always the great marker of public space, even before literature or philosophy; mankind's first cultural markings on the landscape were made by sculptors.

Sculpture began when the first ape-man placed three stones over a dead body. Way before music or poetry and much before man became man. Culture began in the continent when the first human being came to America and used three stones to mark the roads. Sculpture gives rise to public space and develops inherently with it, it evolves with it and together they create a common history.

First Steps

My first two experiences in public space were with Marta Colvin (1907-1995). Marta dedicated all her effort and talent to sculpture for public spaces. "Sculpture has forever been in contact with society and is the most social of the arts. I see it as an art of exteriors that lives the life of its time and which will ask that time what it did with that life. *Interview by Miguel Arteche published by El Mercurio in 1957* - She is undoubtedly the Chilean sculptor who erected the largest number of sculptures in important sites in Chile and abroad. To overcome the prevailing aesthetic criteria was a difficult task for the sculptor of Marta and her generation. This implied replacing statues with these new sculptures and teaching the first steps in this new art through her course at the University of Chile.

In 1970, as assistant teacher at her course in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Chile, Marta proposed that we create a great sculpture, for the poorest of the marginal shanty towns in Santiago, also, to create awareness of the Chilote myth of La Pincoya among her students; she sought to give the people living there some element of culture, a six meter tall sculpture with a half-inch iron structure taken from the unused flooring of the workshops and then laminated with copper and bronze. We welded it in place in the centre of the shanty town "square", a barren pampa without even a tree. Initially, the people thought it was the drinking water tower they had been expecting for years. It was difficult for Marta to convince them that it was a sculpture, a cultural "cornerstone" for the shanty town. The sculpture survived three days and disappeared bit by bit in less time than it took us to build it; its bronze, copper and iron neatly sold to the local junkyard owner.

The virgin of the Benedictine Abbey, in 1970, was my second experience of public sculpture. Marta went to work in her studio in Paris and left me in charge of executing a life-size stone virgin based on a small plaster model and destined for the entrance of a temple, a masterpiece of Chilean architecture. Martin Correa and Gabriel Guarda, the monks and architects suggested using a lighter material. I had to switch from

stone to wood, due to the flagstones' resistance. I worked with "what was available" the poplar wood used for the concrete moulding used in the construction of the temple walls – which was being finished at the time – after cleaning it, the wood was in perfect condition. I built the image echoing the lines marked on the concrete on the walls by the same boards. The sculpture survives to this day.

Sculpture and Public Space in an exchange of ideas with Anthony Caro.

Since 1977 I have been friends with the English sculptor Sir Anthony Caro (1924-2013). Among the many subjects we have discussed, public sculpture has been one of the most recurring topics in our meetings and conversations. Some time ago, Caro replied to a letter of mine reflecting on public space when he says: "I believe we are witnessing a series of radical changes in how sculpture in public spaces is perceived. The parks in our cities are very different to the *piazas* in Italian towns., where small fountains could dominate the space and the temples, palaces and houses in Greece or the Renaissance have been replaced by skyscrapers many storeys high. My project for Park Avenue in New York is one quarter of a mile long!

To which I replied: Dear Tony, I agree with you completely. I would like to explain to you my vision about this telling you about my experience in Chile. The centre of the city where I was born seventy years ago was the Plaza de Armas. It was also the centre of our public space. At the centre of this square were the sculptor and his statue. This square, like all squares in Latin America, measured, based on the standard for the Indies, one block by one block and the statue could not be larger than the so-called heroic scale, one third larger than life size. Including the horse, rider and base, the statue was never larger than 6 meters high and the mandatory materials were bronze or marble. But additionally to the statue, the presence of the sculptor was evidenced by the stone steps he designed and carved; in the fountain with water flowing through the mouths of sculpted figures, on the stone or cast seats where we used to sit with my grandfather; in the church bells, whose tolling used to wake me up; in the reliefs, faces and figures of all the saints; and in every high or small altar of the temple standing to one side of the square. A bit further away, in the produce market, stood the allegorical bronze sculpture of the goddess of vegetables and seven blocks away from the square were the two cemeteries and over each tomb, of each one of my dead ones there was a sculpture.

From the mid XX century onwards I was witness to the vertiginous growth of our cities. At the same time, architectural functionalism eliminated all non-structural elements from buildings. The *art-deco* movement in the 40s is the last surviving manifestation of sculpture applied to the walls of public architecture. In Chile, the best example of this is the Temple of Lourdes, by the architects Costabal and Garafulic, with sculptures by Lily Garafulic (1914-2012). At that same time, the "statuary fever" that predominated in the world begins to end during the second half of the XIX Century and the early XX century. Consequently, sculpture is cleaned of all decorativeness and sentimentality.

The schools of art of the period educated sculptors for the public space of the XIX Century city. Curricula, such as that of the University of Chile, for example, were an exact copy of those of Paris' Ecole Des Beaux Arts which in turn derived without changes from the Florentine Academy structured by Giorgio Vasari inspired by Michelangelo.

But the transition actually took place over the first fifty years of the XX Century with the advent of a total change in the dimensions and way

of thinking of the cities. In fifty years, the Plaza de Armas and the Market were displaced by multiple and enormous commercial centres and the speed of observation of reality evolved from walking or riding horseback or a horse drawn carriage to the modern and rapid automobile. Thus, the sizes and scale of sculpture had to be altered drastically. Any street lamp today is a minimum of 12 metres high. The same occurs with street advertising signs. They are over twenty metres high.

I must confess I did not understand this change in the beginning, but bit by bit I became fascinated by it. There is a great strength in this permanent movement. This new space also provides irreverence in colour, a guaranteed anonymity for sculpture among the thousands of objects of multiple materials that move in constant change, anonymity also, for the interlocutor, just one among several million.

The Nature of Sculpture in the Public Space

The gigantic changes in real space are reflected and accelerated in the virtual space. In the Internet public space, which has done so much good to culture, we practically have no space. I know that a percentage of all the arts “disappear” upon being presented over the Internet. We disappeared in 90%. We are not to be found in those places where people enter with a degree of decorum. Like poets with their texts, the musicians, the scientists and even the painters. We sculptors show mere images, descriptions, mere schematics of our work. It seems to me that the same occurs with Architecture. Together with architects and builders we participate in the process of management of the works, at the time of showing we practically disappear.

I wanted to pause in this key point, which defines the nature of sculpture itself, to delve deeper into the practical side of the same experience. The Andes

Is a sculpture made of granite measuring 4 x 4 x 1 metres and installed in Stockholm. The original rock measured 8 metres long and after cutting it weighed approximately 30 tonnes. It took us three months to dig it out of my quarry after digging a very large deep hole. I left the skin of the stone untouched, without carving because it evidenced the natural patina of many centuries of glacial effect.

I only intervened on the inside. Taking the stone from my studio to Valparaiso was an odyssey. The sculpture crossed the seas and using an immense crane, I installed it in Stockholm. The entire process took about two years. Upon photographing it, I felt how in all those tonnes of stone, the action of the glaciers on its surface and our quarry work occurred, in one second, in the lens of my camera.

For me, the result was the loss of all, or practically all that. Even the cold wind of Stockholm and the smell of the rock itself were lost. Also the mark of a million strikes with the point chisel and chisel. The option is, then, the usual one: continue to operate in the real public space knowing that in it awaits all that we lost in the virtual space. How does the poem *Cordillera de Los Andes* by Gabriela Mistral enter into the Internet? How does my sculpture *Cordillera de Los Andes* enter into the same network? The poem enters in a coating of intermediating letters and words. My sculpture enters written in stone. Paraphrasing the Bible: “It is easier for a letter to go through the eye of a needle than a stone to go through the lens of a camera.”

By not entering the Internet, where everything moves, sculpture remains alone and motionless. Standing in the town square. Waiting, as always, for the gaze of the people, human beings who, besides

navigating a computer screen have the need to walk on this earth, to meet in town squares, to buy and sell in the market. And that is where we wait.

In the virtual space of the Internet there is a mirage, vertigo for us sculptors. If we yield to it, we will have to change to another art form. A sculptor must accept that his/her relationship with people will always be archaic. One to one, no hurries. In a temporality that is almost timeless. Almost from the other side of the walls of time. Inexorably motionless. Standing in a park or at a crossroads while the other arts fly and cross the sidereal spaces and are seen by millions of human beings. This stoppage of time and place, in appearance the great weakness of sculpture is, paradoxically our greatest strength,

Sculpture has always been able to do few things and in this almost not doing lies its strength. Because, at the end of the day, not even the philosophers, musicians or filmmakers can do as little as we do.

We know, finally, that the space of the town square, the archaic-natural space, the one to one conversation surrounded by nature, with oxygen to breathe, silence or music, is the final goal, the scenario of the specifically human reunion which we strive for today: the perfect space of the future will include: its poet, as always, its musician and, at its core, its sculpture.

The Symposium as Sculptural Thinking

I sincerely believe that symposiums were at that time for me and the majority of sculptors the first step towards work at a larger scale in the landscape or city. They were the initial instances where we met to share theory and practice over a prolonged period of time. Leaving behind our work in a dialogue with the inhabitants of the place, who had attended the entire process from the carved rock, the iron, the wood to the definitive sculpture. The symposiums gave us the first tools to begin working in the streets.

I began years earlier in Europe, 1979, in stone during a symposium titled “Living Form” in Yugoslavia, today Slovenia. Later in Oxford. Finally for years in Croatia, where I founded a marble sculpture school.

There we started to look at our interlocutor in the face again: the people. At the symposia we also made first contact with cultural journalists. We began to understand that a sculpture standing in the street would always be news. We found an effective way of entering from the street to the cultural journalism spaces.

At the time of writing this I have organized fourteen symposiums. The most important of these is the First Symposium of American and Caribbean Sculpture, in Santiago, March of 1992, which took place at Centro Experimental “La Perrera Arte.” This was a great interchange of ideas guided by the curator Maria Amelia Bulhoes (Brazil) and with the participation of the sculptors Irineu Garcia (Brazil), Carlos Medina (Venezuela), José Villa Soberón (Cuba), Sebastián (Mexico), Hernán Dompé (Argentina), Carlos Lizarrurru (Basque Country), Gail Morris, (UK) among the Europeans and many Chileans, including myself and Félix Maruenda (deceased), Ximena Rodríguez, Marcela Correa, Jélica Torres, Elisa Aguirre, Paulo Rivera, Carlos Fernández, Sergio Cerón and other young artists now professionals.

What came later was an intense period of work in the public space and the permanent connection between Chilean sculptors with international sculptors. Tim Scott has been in Chile twice, attending

symposiums on steel sculpture I organized. Since then, we Chilean sculptors have participated in approximately 30 or 40 symposia in the length and breadth of America, adding several generations of young sculptors to that effort.

I conclude with the great symposium we organized at MARCO in Monterrey, Mexico, where I participated with Anthony Caro, Nina Zambrano, Tim Scott, Karen Wilkin and over 40 sculptors from America and Europe in 2009.

It is with deep satisfaction that I see today an accelerated presence of sculpture in public spaces with the creation of major collections of large-scale sculpture: Parque de las Esculturas, Ciudad Empresarial and Paseo La Pastors in Santiago, the large project of sculpture at Campus Lircay of the University of Talca and Parque Intercomunal La Reina. The pioneering initiative of the gallerist Lilly Lanz, Art-Industry installed many sculptures in the facades of industries in Santiago during the 80s and early nineties. On the other hand, as a result of almost 20 years of activity of the Nemesio Antunez Commission and FONDART over 150 sculptures are installed throughout the national territory.

Sculpture and its Materiality in the Public Space

After a few months, Anthony Caro replied to my extensive letter with the following thoughts: "On the one hand the physical dimension and materiality of sculpture is being eroded. For example, the figures of Thomas Houseago, some of which I like, incorporate flat surfaces / illusions with graphite drawings, together with the real plaster casts and negative moulds; the reflecting surfaces of Anish Kapoor or the sculptures of Matthew Monahan, which are based on and incorporate photographs, all treat physical materiality as subordinated to graphics. Possibly this was initiated by Brancusi, with the photos of his polished sculptures (which are among my least favourite, I much prefer his wooden sculptures: these are real and don't dissolve the physical). Brancusi's photos reveal his great concern for dematerialization.

On the other hand, Smith's sculpture, which follows the steel collages of Gonzales and Picasso, owes much to Cubism and in their own way, also contribute to the dematerialization of sculpture. Cubism itself flattens and breaks down solid forms. I remember having observed, together with Henry Moore the reproduction of a linear piece by Smith and commented "this is not sculpture." Plus ça change!

This is only one way of re-thinking what is going on, but I believe that what is happening everywhere is a revolution in how we conceive sculpture in the XXI Century. And what is happening may be too quick and too soon. We, however, you and I, are pushing in a more traditional direction. I don't want to lose the materiality of sculpture, its physical dimension in exchange for superficial appearance: the gaze only, no longer the materiality.

From the 1960's on, I have tried to give back to sculpture the respect it used to receive as a form of art. For this reason I did not like the cast bronze editions (Mondrian's simple paintings are not reproduced as original editions!) Instead, what I wanted was for sculpture to be contemplated in galleries with white walls just like easel paintings."

Such comments by the English master led me to once again conceive sculpture as an evolving all. This matter I discussed in another letter to Caro in the following terms: Tony, regarding this point, I am fascinated by the evolution of sculpture, the fields that other sculptors opened up, each time I travel abroad and see what is happening I feel that we

finally made it. I feel a free wind around us and a profound admiration I feel I am in the company of others who, like you, in their own way open up new fields. The work of other sculptors, so different from ours, gives me more energy to maintain my own way of doing things and forces me to engage in deeper explorations into the fields that I discover, because for good or for bad, no one makes things like ourselves, we are one more in diversity in motion.

At this point I describe to you what sculpture has come to be for me: an accumulation of mobile or motionless matter by aggregation or subtraction. Any manifestation of matter. Ice, plastic, leather, soap, steel, light, crystal, wood, rubbish, the human or animal body, among many others, manipulated by the human being, in any size or scale. Not a single word or text is added to this organized matter to explain it. An accumulation of matter with sufficient coherence and capacity to convey a truth, narrate a story or fact in a way that is understandable by other human beings. Sculpture is a language whose word is matter, all matter.

Sculpture is a material object and as such suffers the rigors of any artefact, in its original materiality it is governed by the laws and history of material things, it appears and grows against the force of gravity of the earth, it wears down and disappears. Sculpture is a word that is deployed and whose message is communicated as a counterpoint to the specific site it inhabits. It is an independent language not subject to translation into other languages and as such it does not require the assistance of any other language to be explained. Sculpture is a peer language to poetry and music that conveys its message through its own avenues: deployment, materiality, light, size, scale, weight and craftsmanship.

Sculpture is the language of sculptors; it is the art form that shows the personal journey of each sculptor that speaks on behalf of each one of us.

You also enquired about the studio space...

The Studio Space

I seek an absolute appropriation of sculpture from the beginning, from the initial wire mock-ups to the definitive models, the slow changes in scale. The basic condition for this is a very well equipped studio where I can be as noisy as I please because I have no neighbours. I am in the middle of the mountains, in a granite quarry. Here I can assemble my sculpture before installing it and if I don't like some parts of it, I replace them and begin once again with the modelling process, adding and removing, more like a sculptor than an architect, as they cannot change the building once it is finished. It is also necessary to form a team of assistants, which took me as long as the construction of the studio itself. Some of them were masters in their own right, such as Tino Sanchez, a stone cutter who I have recycled into a steel worker. The team is led by Clodomiro Ulloa, a very smart young man that I sent to be trained in welding courses and high tech cutting. The number of my assistants varies between 3 and 7 depending on the commissions. Another key figure is the driver, Mr. Roberto Caroca, who says he is capable of driving his truck through the eye of a needle (and does). There is also Roger Wholck, architect and digital draftsman; Andres Balbi, my accountant who is also an astronomer specializing in Southern hemisphere stars.

I start by producing the definitive model changing the forms along the way as the model grows in order to avoid "inflating" it from small to big. I also make changes in the definitive sculpture, which I fabricate

in my own workshop. I have never commissioned the fabrication of a sculpture from a machine shop.

In each stage I consider a small box, to the scale of the containers, whose actual size is 12m x 2.35m x 2.35m where I test one by one the pieces of the models to avoid any problems during transportation (in sculpture for public spaces “everything moves on the back of a truck”). For a long time I refused to make mock-ups because to do that is to make a sculpture before actually making it. Making a sculpture twice. It took me a long time to become used to the practice of making them. I found my early career experience as a jeweller very useful. In spite of everything, I have not found a better way of showing my work than through a scale model which, if well executed is also a way of showing the jury that at a small scale, I am at least a good craftsman. Otherwise it would be impossible for them to imagine what the sculpture would be like in its actual size.

I also fabricate the parts of the model so that they are affixed using bolts, in the same way that the actual sculpture will be anchored. After completing the definitive model, I take the models and drawings to my engineer and he draws plans and prepares a structural report that includes the foundations, quality of steel, thickness of the sheets, welding system, dosage of welding compound, ways of construction, ways of assembly, size of the parts for transportation, finishing, polishing with galvanized sanding, paint. For example, in my “Bridge of Light” walkable sculpture in Toronto I worked with two engineering firms here in Chile and three in Toronto.

Anthony Caro’s reply was prompt; here are some of its main points: “Your description of the way in which you design is very interesting and also extraordinarily similar to my own experience. I arrived at this way of working (using a 1:20 scale model, or in the case of my chapel, with a 1:10 scale model) simply through a process of trial and error. In the beginning I experienced a great difficulty in using the rods and plastic sheets and joining pieces using adhesive. It was horrible, unreal, so much more different than working directly with steel or even with plaster models as Rodin used to do. Finally, I got used to it imagining that I was four inches tall!

Public Space and Civic Sculpture

Caro’s ideas detonated in my thoughts as a sculptor a series of ideas that gave form to the following narration in reply to his thoughts: Anthony, my Toronto bridge (200mts long) stands in the neighbourhood of the CN Tower, which is half a kilometre high...and thus we will work in counterpoint with this new scenario. We must be visible. Question: Is “visible” a synonym of “big”? Is “Monumental” a synonym of big)? How big is your Park Avenue sculpture, 3 kilometres?

Tony replied, “About fifteen or twenty years ago, when I executed a couple of large sculptures I tried to work directly and in fact I used a crane, in one case at the foundry/workshop and in the other case on the placement site itself, but these were not very practical ways of executing the changes I wanted to make. I used to think that architects should take a more hands-on approach but now I think that they discovered an excellent way of working in a large scale, using diagrams and models, learning how to translate them into three-dimensional works in actual size. This meant that they had to learn a new language. Therefore, I am surprised and delighted that both you and I have found the same way of dealing with the problem that is, working on the basis of models. If we had been able to use video with a full understanding of the medium or holograms or virtual reality, I would have welcomed

them. But that way of working is possibly in the future and it is certainly a more conceptual approach.

What is clearly needed at this time is a new way of teaching, more conceptualized, working from a point of view of a totality and from there flesh out the details. This differs from the sculptor, who generally works in a more perceptive way and more in the intermediate area. This suggests that there should be a much closer relationship between the students of civic sculpture and architects whether graduate or student. I would like to know how architects deal with the sculptural and I believe that from that knowledge new suggestions will emerge as to how we should proceed ourselves. For this reason we must welcome to “designers architects and artisans” so that they can show us new points of view.

Sculpture in public spaces is born practically through its placement in places that are not consolidated and the job of the architects and sculptors is to create such spaces. The bidding conditions show photographs of barren plots of land, roundabouts, unbuilt spaces and sometimes surrounded by buildings. On the basis of this information only, we have to define the sense, size and material of the sculpture. The size of the surrounding buildings is as important as the prior historical character of the area.

There is always a competition of ideas, after a process of shortlisting, submission of models and interviews, where we come face to face with a different group of people and questions. Curators from the private sector or municipalities, business people, the owner, architects, sometimes artists, usually painters...

Adding and subtracting we are always faced with a very complex panorama where it is necessary to aim for a general idea without the precision required; we must use intuition to occasionally work on the details as we go.

The jurors for public art have a huge responsibility towards the people out on the streets, in giving them better art. Cities are increasingly becoming open air museums and the collections of some cities are terrible whereas others are excellent, only because the jurors did a good job.

Public sculpture involves practical limitations in terms of engineering, study of the foundations, etc. The commission, the bidding conditions proposed by the commissioning entities, interview, etc. Must we also become “entrepreneurs”? Probably.

Tony, I believe we must.

The change of scale demands large size in terms of materiality and major costs. Deducting the sculptor’s fees, which are meant to support us and our families during the period of execution, this includes the cost of materials, transport, labour, workshop, power, foundations and installation. Thus in the past few years I have had to share my sculpture research time with a time dedicated to medium or large scale business management, depending on the size of the sculptures. On the other hand, additionally to establishing good relations with my bank just like any businessman, I contacted public art promoters in Chile through the gallery with which we have become specialized in large scale sculpture and also abroad, coming into contact with professional “Art Consultants” linked to private enterprise. In particular, architectural firms. In my experience as a sculptor in public spaces I can say that my life of “attic sculpture” and romantic aesthetics is behind.

Public sculpture demands from us all the sensitivity and fineness of sculpture, a significant amount of time dedicated to research and long hours in the studio, hammer in hand and an intense culture in order to relate with an understanding of the social poetics of our time. But it also necessarily demands a fearless development of our entrepreneurial skills. Every time we accept executing a sculpture for public spaces we become businessmen. One example from our history, XVII Century: Bernini employed 15,000 people on a permanent basis, including quarry men and sculptors in the remodelling of counterreformation Rome.

The Public, the private and the business of producing Civic Sculpture

Conservation is another problem that concerns sculpture for public spaces. Sculpture lives on the streets and parks. Sculptors are aware of this from the onset. In history there are more impacting examples; practically all the marble sculptures of the Hellenistic were reduced to dust by the barbarian invaders who wanted lime for the building of walls, bronze for war cannons; they were saved from becoming part of among others, the collection of Pius Clementine at the Vatican simply because they remained buried for a thousand years, and today, having been disinterred they are once again the archetypes of our art.

In my particular case, I have had to change streets or parks or re-make many of my large scale sculptures because their public mutates, is constantly on the move, because it is the large house of living human beings. If we learned something of value in the XX Century, it was to de-sacralise art, we ended the "statuary" attitude of the XIX century and consequently we made sculpture a "general audience" form of art.

Sometimes we are angered by the state of some of our sculptures, sometimes we drive on another street so as not to see them, because cleaning them would demand infinite time chiselling stones to remove the marks left behind by the "vandal" or some mayor that paints them the colour of stone to erase the marks left behind by the previous one. In the end, we are mute witnesses of the dialectics vandal-mayor. The sculptures gain weight from the layers of paint to which they are subjected. In the end, the conservation and care of our art is the job of others, mainly the municipalities; shame on them if they fail to do so. We carry on working, we cannot place fences around our work; a poet, also, cannot demand the voice of a "speaker" for his poems, the sound of music shares the street and all its urban noises as counterpoint.

The truth is that in the subject of conservation, I have had a good experience abroad in Sweden, Canada or the United Kingdom and other countries, because they have very knowledgeable and strict curators. From the beginning they seek to adapt the placing and materiality of the works so that without isolating it, they can defend it from the "hooligan." For example, in Oxford they passed the following decree for the installation of sculptures on public roads: "A sculpture must withstand, additionally to its own weight, all the hooligans that may climb on it, moving at the same time to topple it and after the attack, remain standing."

In Chile my experience has also been good and I hereby extend my congratulations to the local communities and the majority of borough councils for their good conservation practices. With the exception of my sculptures of the Museo Interactivo Mirador (MIM), Rancagua and Chillan (Cariños Botados). I believe that the best thing about public space is that it is "public" and consequently it is no more and no less than the people that transit through it. If the sculpture for public spaces

is and must never cease to be "street art" then it must necessarily face the consequences of that.

Upon revising these notes on the matter, Anthony Caro replied in connection with the concepts of reference to place and placement to which all sculpture for public spaces is subject to. Caro says: "I emphasize the difference between Civic Sculpture and Sculpture as Fine Arts as having the following demands:

1. Need for a site.
2. Broad public, not the one that loves the arts.
3. The practical/engineering limitations. The study of the foundations, etc.
4. The commissioning/proposal by the commissioning entities, interview, etc. Must we become "businessmen"? Probably.
5. The approach based on models or diagrams.
6. Finances.

All these differences are indicative of how absolutely different the mentality of the *fine arts sculptor* must be from that of the *civic sculptor*. What he or she engage in demands an approach as different as the different mentality of the architect designing a family home and the architect designing an urban skyscraper.

The most important aspect of a public work is that it should declare its presence with audacity. "The fact of the same is more important than its form." See for example, standing stones in various places – Ireland, Salisbury Plain, the Orkney islands, Carnac, Bretagne, etc. Brancusi's "Infinite Column" in Targu Jiu, Romania or even the Inuit stones that constitute landmarks in a desolate landscape. Form may even subtract value from presence, particularly if it draws too much attention to its subject matter. Is this not the case of the Egyptian sculptures of Ramses II and his wife in Aswan? Do we really need these two gigantic persons? Simple carved stones would express it equally well. Perhaps we should pay less attention to what they are about and more to their size, strength and presence. Sculpture for public space is above all a landmark. It provides an element of punctuation. It says: human beings were/are here. This is very important. It cannot be a delicate flower.

Whether it is an equestrian statue, a column or a Calder sculpture in intense red, it proclaims itself and gives character to its surroundings. Moore was an expert in the setting of his sculptures. But if what we are speaking of is the art of sculpture, making a sculpture more expressive, what is important is the work itself, and not its placement. In this I am not in agreement with you, Francisco, in that sculpture belongs in the streets. I believe that sculpture must be treated as one of the fine arts. The large sculpture by Picasso in Chicago (enlarged by architects) and the large pieces by Richard Serra are appropriate for open air placement but they are exceptions to the rule. The most important rule for open air sculpture is the achievement of the correct scale, correct both in relation to the human beings that utilize the same as well as in relation to the city or the fields that already occupy the space."

To this I replied: I agree master, my aim so far has been to re-unite in my work the "Civic Sculptor" and the "Fine Arts Sculptor" as always was the case in the past, when whether in Easter Island or Florence, sculpture was always civic-fine arts.

There never was a contradiction between “Belonging in the streets” and sculpture as big art; I agree that public sculpture limits my freedom to research due to a series of factors: the immense costs in terms of time and labour demanded by a large scale piece. I admit that public sculpture is inherently conservative. It accepts a minimum percentage of small changes and no possibility of collapsing; it must necessarily comply with the same health and safety and durability requisites of any object in the public space, luminaries, street lights, etc.

New materials whose durability is untested are unusable. No sponsor would accept their use in their public space. We must be capable of overcoming this veritable jungle of limitations that “the street” imposes upon us. Added to this is the Public Art Manager, who normally sells “his artist” as a registered trademark, with a signature style, as a first class product in the market whose mere presence adds prestige. And this brand cannot change every five minutes. My internal struggle is not to repeat a formula and offer “more of the same.”

Tony, I am aware of the great devil that constantly threatens the civic sculptor, but you must admit that it is the same one that threatened sculptors throughout history, Michelangelo and Brancusi in his infinite column and all the good sculptors of the past made the synthesis between being “civic and fine arts” sculptors, emerging victorious from the battle. My personal journey in this matter has been an intense research in private collections, small scale themed collections that have provided me with a constant renewal factor.

I believe that on this point we must apply all our intelligence, alone we cannot. We are in urgent need of a severe and intelligent criticism that considers the practical conditions of management, placement and language of our street sculpture, which you call civic sculpture.

Just like in the subject of placement, my experience is one of the constant travel of my sculptures. The one in Santiago’s airport (11mts) has changed position three times and every time I have changed its shape, colour and size. *Esmeralda* (25mts) Twice changed colour and position. *Caleuche*, Puerto Montt, Chile (40 m) One change of position. *Arrau Fountain* (12mts) in Chillan, changed position twice. *Sauce del Maule*, changed position once. The constant journeying of these is not new. All the works in the Belvedere in the Vatican, independently of their original journey from Greece to Rome were transported in carts to Paris through the Alps by Napoleon as war booty. The only one of the sculptures that remained in its place was *Marcus Aurelius* in the Capitol square.

There is a lesson in the above: although sculpture may be created for a specific place, it cannot be executed with that place in mind only and here we are referring to Fine Arts Sculpture, I believe, from experience that this must have an intention, a total coherence in its discourse, a quality inherent to all works of art. In order to survive the changes in place and time, a good sculpture will, at the end of the day, generate its own place just like a book seeks for and finds its interlocutor.

A second point, more practical in nature, is that we cannot stop the growth and evolution of cities by placing our sculptures in them like nails.

I return to my intuition of movement.

The public sculpture of today’s cities, I believe, form part of a living and fast-flowing river, and I like that. Sculptures belong to us while we give birth to them and up to the date of their installation. After that they

belong to our cities in Latin America, where I live and work. They run free and irreverent towards the future. I let my sculptures go along that same stream so that they follow the same road I took upon leaving the museums, universities and avant-garde movements. The way of the street: “The master that is the street” and just like it, sovereign and free. Added to the above is the fact that from the beginning public sculpture lives in places where the price of land is extremely high. For this reason, it is always at risk of being moved to another site. This problem does not exist in parks or squares where sculpture has a guaranteed place from the beginning and for a prolonged period of time. The risk is latent in places with a high commercial value. In connection with this last point, I narrate my experience with my piece *Esmeralda* measuring 25 x 33 x 15 metres, and created for a large shopping centre in Santiago. I worked on it with reference to navigation in the Pacific Ocean and it was made to be sited in a large square measuring 200 x 150 metres. After one year it was surrounded with all manner of promotional tents for the sale of small products, commercial stands and immense signs.

I complained to the owner who very kindly explained that the approximately 800m² of land occupied exclusively by “*Esmeralda*” was worth many millions, a thousand times more than the value of the sculpture itself. Finally, in 2014 he financed its transfer to a definitive position in front of the Stadio Italiano in Santiago.

Monument: Commemoration and Statuary

“I don’t like the monument;” it is not a sculpture as great art, as fine arts. Now, however, sculpture has been “returned to the people.” A good part of it is civic and in spite it may not please us, we must accept the fact that together with our private, intimate work we must think in terms of a civic or *monumental* sculpture. What is created is often large and ugly; we must try to do better. There have been attempts with a wide repercussion to focus on the social. For example Gormley’s project *One & Other* where each person had one hour to stand on the unoccupied plinth in *Trafalgar Square*; or the siting of his figures on rooftops and other improbable but spectacular locations all over the city. But it seems to me that these omit the sculptural in favour of *the social* and it seems to me that they do not concern us except as an interesting social enterprise.”

After admiring his way of referring to the monument. I immediately replied: I agree in that it was necessary to clear the field of sculpture of so much subjugation and leaflet a-literature, of so much heroic gesture, so many moustaches, so many sabres. We had to get rid of the “statue mania” and we did. In the XX Century we all collaborated towards this cleansing and turned sculpture into a form of art that is independent of any conditioning by the commissioners of the period, this was a heroic move by your generation. Thank you Masters!

But on the other hand, I believe that in so much cleansing we lost the essence of our art, that of being a language for a “free conversation” with the public in his own space, and remained with an aseptic role, a veritable clinic outside the social dialogue.

Upon returning to the public space I realized this. I realized that the memorials continued to be built without us, many times by people with no training in the craft. One example of this is the abhorrent memorial to the victims of the earthquake we had in Chile in 2012.

I delve deeper into the rubbish heap of art history where we ourselves cast “statuary.” My impression is, after visiting our cities, Santiago, London or the conversational visits we did to the Anthropological Museum in

Mexico or the British Museum, looking at all the public sculpture they hold, is that a part of this “cadaver” enjoys a “good health.” There they are, unscathed, coherent... At some point in the XX century we sculptors lost the way, due to the vagueness of the discourse, the insistence in creative freedom, we lost the essence: the close, continuous and coherent relationship between the public, the country, culture and ourselves established since the beginning by the statue 40,000 years ago.

The public, the state or the mayor commissioned the sculpture, gathered the money and proposed the framework and conditions within which the message of the sculptor would move, the subject matter, the site, the way of being of that particular human group, in our continent, and in yours it was like that, with its history, archaeology, with this landscape resonating as a stage backdrop. This message was part of a conversation during visits to our studios in the process of gestation of the work and finally, audience and sculptor erected the sculpture in the park. Or the temple. That continuity was lost to our generation; I understood that that loss was suicidal and that the critics were right when they said sculpture had become a rhetorical art, mere craftsmanship without a message, without audience or content.

I decided to recover it my way and without shame I began to conceive my sculptures like large statues. Thus for example *Rueda del Lamarhue* is a monument to Chilean irrigation tradition. *Esmeralda* is a monument to Chile's most emblematic ship. *Aeropuerto* is a monument to air travellers. I myself proposed a monument to the navigators of the Saint Lawrence river: *Floating Barge* in Toronto, Canada.

People need to stop time through matter in order to mark a place with a social fact after which it is impossible to live without remembering. Commemoration, also, continues to be one of the pillars of street sculpture. But this is a point that no one dares touch upon due to the fear of being labelled reactionary. The first to react against operatic statuary commemoration were us, the sculptors, but you cannot deny that contemporary sculpture is born of commemoration. *The Burghers of Calais* by Auguste Rodin preserves the memory of five heroes; *Infinite Column* by Constantin Brancusi commemorates the war heroes of Romania, his birthplace. And it is the first monumental non-statuary abstract sculpture in the history of sculpture. In Rotterdam we are moved by *Monument to the destruction of the city of Rotterdam* by the Russian-French Ossip Zadkine, in remembrance of the Nazi bombing.

Ten years ago I created in Chile the *Memorial de los Detenidos Desaparecidos*. This is my most beloved sculpture and the most important place to preserve the memory of the political tragedy of 1973, which we all lived through in Chile and which we will never repeat again.

Commemoration does not end, dear Tony, what does end is the “Operatic-Romantic” aesthetics that is inherent to the same. Upon returning to the public space I realized there was another field that we had abandoned and which awaited us: Our work linked to Architecture or what some scornfully refer to as “urban furniture” are all those large objects that the architect will never be able to touch with his hand, such as fountains, staircases, floors, handrails, portals, arches and children's games, among others. For many years now, I have been revisiting this field that is so ours, where we give our talent without any concerns for the boundaries between architecture, design, illumination, landscaping and we merely address the social function of the object.

Dear Tony, I finish this letter with some ideas, wishing to broaden our conversation about our work's journey at your Camden Town studio, yours has been long, almost 70 years. We agreed that the antithesis and origins of public space is private sculpture. I don't mean by this the small format works and those in galleries or salons. I am referring to the work that necessarily produces that autistic human being, which is the sculptor, who after a dialogue with the people, in their space, after journeying backwards through all stages of sculpture to the depths of the molecular solitude of matter, makes it his home and his word.

The opposite of an actor is a sculptor.

The good sculptors we know work in total isolation. On the opposite side of public space. Their only response to humankind is through bits of matter, which every now and then get installed in some park or square. Public-Private sculpture is the mystery of which we should speak more. How has our life been walking in the opposite direction to the procession while at the same time producing work that is central to the same: the cross and the saint? How deeply private is the gestation of our public sculpture? How necessary is our life choice in contemporary society? How complementary is it to society in this century which, on the one hand is almost completely lost in artificial reality and on the other hand has as its single religion and yearning the protection of nature? How necessary is it to show our material work to a society that tries to return to the soil and doesn't know how? Our sculpture in the cities is, at the end of the day, mere presence, a bodily testimony product of personal contact with matter, of a sculptor who loved it and understood it and lived in contact with it. This understanding of matter was our life option, at the same time that it was the private dimension of public sculptures.

Years ago I ceased to have mental dialogue with interlocutors in the academic world. For years now I address the people, the street, with my sculptural message. That is where my sculpture lives with the people that over a thousand days will see them or touch them at different hours, with a different illumination. Interlocutors, those beings to whose lives we add our sculptures. Those that we call “the public,” the same people who go to the movies to see another art and communicate with it through a million images over a period of two hours but who, upon leaving, find themselves again facing our sculpture, which transmits its meaning in a single image and instant.

My dear friend's reply came soon. Dear Pancho. I agree...public art addresses a broad public, one that is not necessarily cultured. We have to see what kind of audience we have and identify their needs. “But there is guidance as to how sculptors may address this problem.” You raise a very serious pedagogical issue; in my case and I believe in yours too, we were self-taught. To this day I have not found any faculty or department that teaches the basic conditions of an art for public spaces both in terms of subject matter and of its practical conditions...

After re-reading each one of the sentences of this exchange through letters I simply wrote back:

“...Dear Master. This is only the beginning, let's continue this conversation...”

Warmest regards to Sheila.

Santiago, June, 2015