



Robert Michael Smith talks about the effects of technology and the Middle East on his artwork

What do your sculptures reflect?

My sculptures reflect the Self: attitudes, perceptions, expression, and the humanly limited understanding of the Universe and spirituality.

What role does nature play in your art?

Nature functions as model and muse. Despite working with digital technologies in my sculptors, from close observation of Nature it becomes an obvious solution to follow mathematical progressions, repetitions and dimensions to create bizarre alternative life forms as well as abstractions of quintessential form.

Do you enjoy working with video installations more than any other media?

Although I experience great pleasure sharing video projections, I still primarily enjoy the physicality of sculptures that I produce in traditional, tangible materials.

What materials and resources do you use in your work?

I came from a painting, printmaking and photography background, then moved on to sculpture during graduate school. I worked primarily in cast bronze as well as some cast iron work, until I started to design sculpture by computer. During the late 90s I gravitated toward the manufacture of sculpture in various materials such as foam, wax, plastics, wood, and stone. It is most enjoyable for me now to design a sculptural form in a virtual 3D program, develop a print of it, then deliver the resulting sculpture model to China to be carved.

How did teaching in the Middle East impact your work?

The immediate access to great ruins of antiquity within Jordan has certainly resonated for me as a pilgrim of cultural heritage. Interaction with many Middle Eastern artists has opened a powerful avenue of awareness towards understanding the complexities of the region's politics. This encourages my strong belief that emotionally intelligent culture can be a powerful force towards progress of peace, understanding and enlightenment.

What impact will future technology have on your art?

Technologies have been impacting the art world for quite awhile. In reference to research level technologies such as nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and so on, then I can only respond that art has always integrated advances in technology since the dawn of man. I always design for the future.

What's next?

I intend to participate in building cultural bridges between the United States and the Middle East. I have met many excellent artists from the region whose vision needs to be shared with American viewers to help expand the cultural appreciation and understanding that is essential for an improved world.