

THE EVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF SCULPTURE IN PERFORMING ARTS: AN APPRAISAL

By

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Abstract

Sculpture has existed as a landmark, architectural embellishment, cultural symbol, and independent aesthetic object. The traditional notion of sculpture seems to be a point from which subsequent modification and usage evolved. The ideology that art should be a form of expression that stimulates individual senses and emotions is not far from the truth that sculpture is an incredibly versatile and tactile art form, which allows artists to convey their ideas and feelings through their creative will and ingenuity. This paper explores the evolutionary role of sculpture in the performing arts. The opening section presents a brief definition of terms. Subsequent subheadings discuss sculpture as a branch of the visual arts, the place of sculpture in art, and the last section reveals the evolutionary role of sculpture in the performing arts. A conclusion and recommendations were raised about the potential of integrating sculpture and the performing arts.

Keywords: Sculpture, Performing Arts, Art

Introduction

The role of art generally in the shaping of our society cannot be overemphasised. Art encourages community cohesion and reduces isolation. Sculpture makes us aware of the world and how we influence and react to each other. The value of sculpture as a fraction of the whole body of art is too great to quantify. Sculpture not only showcases the creativity of an individual artist but could be used as a tool to educate the audience and art lovers on the possible gap it has filled in the performing arts domain. Sculpture is a tangible representation of human creativity, reflecting our values, beliefs, and emotions in three-dimensional form. Whether monumental, ultimate, abstract, or representational, sculpture offers a unique and powerful means of expression that engages and inspires audiences through generations. According to Brian (2019), sculpture demands practice and questions our relationship to objects. It is an act of thinking with things and considering the distinction between thoughts and things, subjects and objects. Kojusotito and Adefdaju (2022) assert that the production of art objects involves fabrications from raw material turned to ecstasy.

He stressed further that material artists depend solely on manipulating things around them to achieve their innermost conception, while performing art involves the use of humans as its main material to achieve the conception from the playwright's standpoint, without the performer's intention. The performing arts encompass acting, singing, dancing, music, dialogue, narration, or recitation, but may also include puppetry or Pantomime. The synergy between sculpture and performing arts suggests new visual possibilities when combined. Both sectors of art, when properly managed, can weave their concepts and styles together to create a performance art rendition, which can arise from the reciprocal influences of interactive sculpture, dance or drama.

In this paper, the authors have come to terms that innovation and experimentation are core aspects of artistic expression; therefore, giving kudos to the new paradigm shift by Quora posits that creative performing arts (CPA) is the integration of visual and performing art forms. The peculiarity between visual and performing arts, on the other hand, lies in the fact that both the sculptor and the performer require an audience to thrive.

According to Quora (2025), contemporary sculptures blend different art forms, incorporating technology, performance, and interactive elements, thus expanding the definition of sculpture. Wezley (2025) affirms that performers can use other art media to dynamically enhance or express a work.

Definition of Terms

Art: There are as many ways to define art as there are humans on planet earth, and each definition is influenced by the unique perspective of that individual, as well as by their personality and character. Finding a suitable definition of art is no easy task, and it has been the subject of much inquiry throughout artistic expression. According to Zachary (2017), art is seen as a creative phenomenon which changes constantly, not just insofar as it is being created continually, but also in the very meaning of “art”.

In the past, art has been variously defined as imitation or representation (Plato, 1955), as a medium for the transmission of feelings (Tolstoy, 1995), as intuitive expression (Croce, 1920), and as significant form (Bell, 1914). Some of the first theorists regarding art focus on the ability art has to represent the world around us—Kripper (1997) defined art as a deliberate, disciplined process. Lisa, M. (2024) affirms that there is no universal definition of visual art. However, a consensus has emerged that art is the conscious creation of something beautiful or meaningful using skill and imagination.

In the context of this paper, art is specifically observed in purposive, i.e., serving a purpose, and/or purposeful, i.e., involving conscious human will, process, and experience using media, movement, and language in a way that the individual or group finds beautiful and meaningful.

Sculpture: Several attempts have been made to define the term sculpture, and the quest for a better definition is still ongoing. Sculpture is a unique art form that involves the creation of three-dimensional objects that occupy physical space. According to Leonard (2025), sculpture is an artistic form in which hard or Plastic materials are worked into three-dimensional art objects. The design may be embodied in freestanding objects, in reliefs on surfaces, or in the environment, ranging from tableaux to contexts that envelop spectators. Omar (2023) asserts that sculpture is a unique art form

that involves the creation of three-dimensional objects that occupy space. Omer further stressed that the meaning of sculpture is not limited to its relation to space and its making process.

In the context of this paper, sculpture is seen as more than just a beautiful object with mass, space, and height; it helps us learn about ancient civilizations and understand history.

Performing Arts: Performing arts are a creative form of art performed by individuals or groups that use their voices, bodies, or inanimate objects to convey artistic expression in front of a live audience. It includes a range of disciplines such as theatre, dance, and music (Meruelo Family Centre for Career Development, 2025). Oxford Learner's Dictionary.com (2022) defines performing art as art such as music, dance and drama which are performed for an audience. According to Harsman (2018), the performing arts are art forms that involve the presence/their body, face, voice, movement, and actions as their principal medium and means of expression. In the context of this paper, performing arts are distinct from the visual forms. However, acting, poetry, music, dance, painting, and sculpture are a few exceptions to the arts that are incorporated into performing arts. It is a time-based art form that frequently involves a live performance to an audience or spectators such as on the street. More often than not, it is an experience rather than an artifact.

The Role of Sculpture in Art

Sculpture has been essential to the growth of art and culture and can make significant contributions to the socio-economic advancement of a place. Sculptures have the potential to contribute significantly to the growth of art, in general, according to Edem and Chile (2023). Sculpture can be used as a tool for cultural diplomacy, promoting Nigeria's cultural heritage and identity on the global stage. Marget, D. Elzbita, P. Wojciech, D. and Mariusz, S. (2016) posit that Sculpture is a feature of garden design that has the potential to be of particular impact. They stressed that Sculptures have been a common feature during all periods of civilisation and across all cultures in the world. Sculpture about other kind of art is considered to be the art that move closely approaches that being of the things that it presents (Eftychia, S. 2011). Solvangantiques.com (2005) asserts that Sculpture is more than mere decorative art, as an art genre, it finds diverse use in the

expression of politics, culture, history, religion, rituals and commemorative tributes.

The importance of Sculpture in society remains as symbolism. Sculpture allows the viewers to look through, over, under, or directly into a Sculpture rather than using a flat painted canvas hung up on a wall. It allows onlookers to walk around the life-like form to capture different angles or gain a fresh perspective (Solvengantiques.com, 2003). Opined that the place of sculpture in societies from specific eras sheds light on the humanities and societal aspects in others that prompt us to think, reflect, consider, and empathise with others in our world. Sculptural forms, whether bronzed busts, sensational statues, or intricate stone carvings, reflect realistic images and ideas of past societies. According to Rockandtools.com (2021), sculptors need to create original and fascinating works of art, as well as recreate and portray figures, characters, objects, people, and animals. These figures may be fully realistic representation or they may be entirely abstract, depicting the artist's vision of a specific aspect.

The Role of Sculpture in Performing Arts

Sculptures often reflect the identity and heritage of communities, commemorating historical events, figures, and traditions that connect to the past. According to Roberto (2025), sculptures have a historical role in making genuine, in solid matter, respect for gods, imagined beasts, religious icons, special things, or notable persons. Sculpture and its stillness both put the point on a particular moment, mark it, make it special among the other sculptures, together with space, both creating the context for the emotional moments. Sculpture is a great pretender; a fabrication that points to our needs for storytelling and artifice. Sculpture networks ideas, articulates subjectivities, and creates communities. Sculpture reflects its place in completing the gaps in the performing arena. It negotiates material facts with competing interwoven fictions.

A sculpture may draw upon what already exists in the endless variety of natural and artificial forms, or it may be an art of pure invention. It has been used to express a vast range of human emotions and feelings, from the most tender and delicate to the most violent and ecstatic. Sculptors conceive, design, and shape three-dimensional forms to communicate

impressions and ideas by carving or modelling materials, such as wood, bronze, stone, clay, fibreglass, wax, plaster, polyester, and metal, or assembling found and manufactured materials. By extension, some sculpture combines various materials to create mixed-media displays called installations, which have a foothold on the performing arts scene.

The performing arts are an umbrella term which covers disciplines not limited to music, dance and drama but also sculpture. Bothering on the nature of this discipline, which has to do with performance; performance involves some elements such as time, space, the performer's body or presence in a medium and the relationship between the performer and the audience. It is at the point of 'space' that the role of sculpture is quite pronounced. Human figures and other sculpture objects or pieces can be used in the place of real humans to portray or play the role of stillness or character impersonation to capture the many emotions and intentions of the play in specific settings and spaces of performing arts.

Conclusion

Artists are breaking boundaries and redefining their roles in the 21st Century. They are blending disciplines, conducting research, and collaborating with other fields of endeavour in academia. Performing art is first and foremost an interdisciplinary practice that can use any material or medium from any field, such as music, dance, literature and by extension the visual arts. Art practitioners and performers have overlooked the inclusion and contributions of other experts in the field of art, or particularly the field of sculpture, to the use of quacks; as a result, they limit the thorough production of master plays. The lack of synergy between sculpture and performing arts has resulted to a deep sense of underrated symbiotic relationships that could have supported world-class productions in films, drama, and in other fields of performing arts. Sculpture as a unique discipline, holds a place in the performing arts as it can be used to express a vast range of human emotions and feelings from the most tender and delicate to the most violent and ecstatic.

Recommendations

1. This paper recommends that the performing arts should be viewed as an integral part of the learning process and encouraged in class

or studio instruction, allowing students to experiment with alternative learning methods and gain valuable experience.

2. It is also recommended that, since performing arts are a form of creative activity performed in front of an audience, they provide an opportunity for synergy with any sculptor or puppeteer with a particular interest in the mutual interdisciplinary blend.

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