

Carved & cast: the traditional sculptors of today are using many of the same time-honored methods and materials of past centuries, but communication with the world through their works is anything but similar.

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There's no question about it: Sculpture's slice of the art market is growing, and as it does, both new and seasoned buyers are adding three-dimensional art to their collections. The category of sculpture has expanded to include works created with a host of unusual materials, but that doesn't mean the millennia-old tradition of carved or cast figures has lost any ground.

Quite the opposite is true, says Bob Chase, Jr., president of The Chase Group, an art management and art publishing company in Northbrook, Ill. "I think that when you look at something like bronze sculpture, you feel the permanence, the gravity, the weight of it," Chase says. "People respond not only to the form and the concept, but they are also drawn to the material."

As the market changes and artists evolve, sculptors are using traditional materials to convey themes ranging from the happy-go-lucky lifestyle in California's wine country to the depths of human sadness in Kosovo's refugee camps. The diversity of themes and forms in traditional sculptors' works is perhaps the most vivid testament to the strength and appeal of traditional materials.

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Sculpting for the Senses

Camie Geary-Martin, winner of the SOLO Sculpture Award at Artexpo New York 2007, sculpts in clay and casts in bronze. The Toronto sculptor's work has evolved from representational to what she describes as "a semi-abstracted contemporary use of the human form."

For Geary-Martin, encountering the sculpture is a sensual experience--for her and for the viewer. "[Working with clay] is a very tactile thing for me," she says. Once it is cast, the bronze invites viewers to interact with the sculpture. "When you touch my work, you follow my hand over the form," Geary-Martin explains. "And when that happens, a relationship forms between the sculptor, the model, the material and the viewer."

In "Kabuki," one of her trademark abstract pieces, the form leans back and seems to twist, as if prepared to uncoil at any moment. It is the essence of a moment Geary-Martin says she wants to capture. She's quick to point out the indentations made by her thumbs--evidence of the tactile nature of her work.

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