

Michael J. Hale -- Artist's Statement

I find that sculpture is the perfect outlet for my inherent need to build things. There are three primary methods for the creation of sculpture--the additive, the subtractive, and the constructive processes. I am proficient in the first two, but use them mostly as a means of attaining the third, not as end products themselves. All three require the same visualization and design skills, but for me the process of building the object, the "how" of construction is paramount. The process decisions, the multiplicity of materials available, and the actual work involved are what make it art and give it meaning.

I generally regard myself as a process artist. It is in the actual creation of the artwork where I find my own aesthetic pleasure as opposed to the viewing or display of the finished product. Although some spring full grown in my mind, my sculptures usually begin with a simple idea or single part--often something as small as a particular joint-system, a beautiful piece of wood, or the shape of a scrap of steel. The finished work grows around the original concept which often becomes a minor accent or in some cases is abandoned altogether as the artwork takes on life of its own. Sculptures tend to build themselves if the artist has the willingness and the foresight to allow them to do so. Toward this end, I believe that critiques, whether by the artist or from trusted colleagues, are a vital part of the creative process.

As stated before, some of my sculptures are fully realized prior to the beginning of construction. These are usually commissions or artworks that have particular requirements, but they easily become nothing more to me than the work involved in making them. I have more fun (Yes, enjoyment is necessary, that is why I make art) when I can stop in the middle of a work, sit back, give myself an honest critique, view what is physically there as opposed to the original concept, and have the ability to take it apart and let it follow a better direction. This allows me to become part of the process, rather than just a workman slaved to a single idea.

I tend to make objects that do not make overt political or social statements, because I want the physical object to be more important to the viewer than the idea. Formal design, method, and material are more exciting to me than thrusting a single perspective or meaning upon an artwork. My titles tend to be obscure because I want the viewer to have some part in the process as they determine what meaning, if any, the artwork has for them.