

SARA AYRES AND ELETTRA CARBONE (eds.):

Sculpture and the Nordic Region.

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This very interesting volume, covering a wide range of topics from early modern to the present across the Nordic region, is an important addition to the growing scholarship on sculpture and its politics. The editors, Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone, have two commendable polemical aims. First, they insist on the necessity of including the Nordic region in histories of sculpture. Nordic culture is generally overlooked in art historical work, where sculpture receives little of the attention that even painting receives, and in fields such as Scandinavian studies, sculpture is similarly marginalised. Second, they ask us to consider sculpture in terms of movement rather than stasis; to attend to the ways in which sculpture moves, physically and conceptually, and how this generates and transforms meaning. Mobility has, of course, been much discussed in recent years in a range of disciplines, and Ayres and Carbone use Stephen Greenblatt's conception of cultural mobility as their starting point. Not all the essays engage with mobility in such a theoretical manner, but there is nevertheless something valuable to be learned from each of them.

The first four essays, which deal with early modern and eighteenth-century examples, tend towards a more literal understanding of mobility, exploring the movement of sculptors and sculptures to and from the Nordic region. Linda Hinnens offers an overview of Sweden from the seventeenth century to c.1800, and traces a shift from a time when the sculptural had to be imported into Sweden from elsewhere, to the emergence of Sergel and a fully-fledged Swedish sculpture, which could thence move back into Europe. Important here is the

implicit consideration of centre and periphery, the fact that we are not dealing with one-way traffic from, say, the Netherlands or Rome, but with a more complex multi-centred network. This is also borne out in Cynthia Osiecki's essay, which considers Flemish sculptors bringing a tradition of stone carving to the Swedish court in the sixteenth century. Her focus is on production and style, and, with more space, would surely have said more about the wider field of cultural and political relations that enabled sculptural mobility. What she does point out, though, is that once Flemish sculptural practice had reached Sweden, it then spread across the Baltic. Thus, networks were not fixed, but constantly in motion, around pivotal points such as Stockholm. Kristoffer Neville, in his case study of a Nuremburg bronze fountain made for Frederik II's Kronborg, and Francesco Reddolini, in his about Italian sculpture in early-eighteenth-century Copenhagen, both focus on the political iconographies of sculpture. In these examples, the movement of sculpture is inseparable from political, diplomatic and trade connections. All these essays offer absorbing details of court culture in early modern Denmark and Sweden, and the shifting networks in which they are embedded.

Thorvaldsen, the greatest of Nordic sculptors, is the subject of the essays by Carbone, C. Claire Thomson, and Tabea Schindler, all of whom deploy rather more ambitious conceptions of mobility. Carbone's addresses the remediation of Thorvaldsen's work in textual accounts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and is an especially interesting contribution. In dealing with an important aspect of Thorvaldsen's career and work, she explores the interlocking of two forms of mobility: geographical movement, onto which is mapped the mobility from object to text. Intermediality emerges too in Thomson's fascinating essay about Thorvaldsen, film and body culture in the 1920s and 1930s. Thomson examines three initiatives taken by Sigurd Schulz, the director of Thorvaldsens Museum, between 1932 and 1963: the use of the museum for physical culture classes in the 1930s, the commissioning of a film by Carl Dreyer in 1949, and screenings of films in the museum in the 1950s. Like Carbone, Thomson is interested in how other cultural forms serve as an alternative forum for the display and animation of sculpture. Schindler's essay treads

more familiar ground, dealing as it does with Thorvaldsens Museum. Nonetheless, this is a rich account of the museum's eclecticism and the ability of the culture of sculpture to *represent* mobility; or, perhaps, to represent certain mobilities and to occlude others. While the Thorvaldsen bibliography is extensive, these essays are very welcome additions. Thinking about the great sculptor's reputation, which was also highly mobile, is to pose the question of Thorvaldsen's continued significance as the cultural hero of Danish identity, and the continued use of the sculptor and his work in the physical and political spaces of Denmark.

Concerns about historical legacy are at the heart of Marjorie Trusted's account of how plaster casts of medieval Norwegian and Swedish sculpture made their way to the V&A cast courts in the nineteenth century. Trusted's essay reminds us that sculpture is a reproductive art, and thus mobile in that the sculptural work is often a series of copies, replicas, versions, re-imaginings, and remediations. Moreover, the discussion of medieval Scandinavia as part of the most extensive modern cast collection in the world opens up the question of temporal mobility, the movement between past and present in the reproduction and display of sculpture. This question underpins Liisa Lindgren's examination of sculptures made for the Finnish parliament building in the 1920s. In attempting to create a sculpture for the new nation, artists synthesised tradition and modernity in order to represent both history and the future.

Together, these essays reveal the research task that confronts us: to understand the use of sculpture in the crafting of Nordic histories from the nineteenth century to the present. Indeed, this as yet unwritten history emerges in many of the essays, through the iconography of dynasty, the use of sculpture in public space, the meanings bestowed by sculpture on and in civic buildings, or the collection and display of sculpture as a means of constructing a Nordic *Oldtid*.

The final essay brings this history to the contemporary world. Reflecting on the nature of sculptural monument in the post-war city, Ayres compares two monuments: Ivor Roberts-Jones's *Winston Churchill* (1975) in Oslo and A. K. Dolven's *The Finnish Untuned Bell* (2011), a memorial to painter Helene Schjerfbeck, in Helsinki. Here,

the politics of sculpture is destabilised, as public statuary is no longer considered the pinnacle of historical memory and ideas of nation sit uneasily with the traditional aesthetic of the public monument. Ayres discusses what she calls the 'semiotic mobility' of the monuments, the ways in which their meanings change with the passing of time. While much of the literature dealing with the global stars of contemporary Nordic sculpture, such as Dahn Vo and Elmgreen & Dragset, is written as art criticism rather than art history, Ayres demonstrates the need to locate contemporary work in longer cultural histories.

All in all, then, this volume is to be warmly welcomed. The individual case studies are a pleasure to read, and the book as a whole serves as a modest call to arms. Unlike many edited collections, the book is more than the sum of its parts. Sculpture needs to be written into Nordic studies, and the Nordic needs to be written into sculpture studies. This book points the way forward in a convincing and productive manner.

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