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The Surprising Role of COLOR in Sculpture

Interview with Egyptian
sculptor-scientist, Prof. Dr.
Aly El-Sohby

The Evocative Figures of Kathy Venter

Internationally recognized for
her life-size figurative sculptures

Life Casting Kiwi Style

The work of New Zealand
Artists Brent & Shirley Cairns



Making Wire End Tools

Bruner Barrie
continues his story of
sculpture tools

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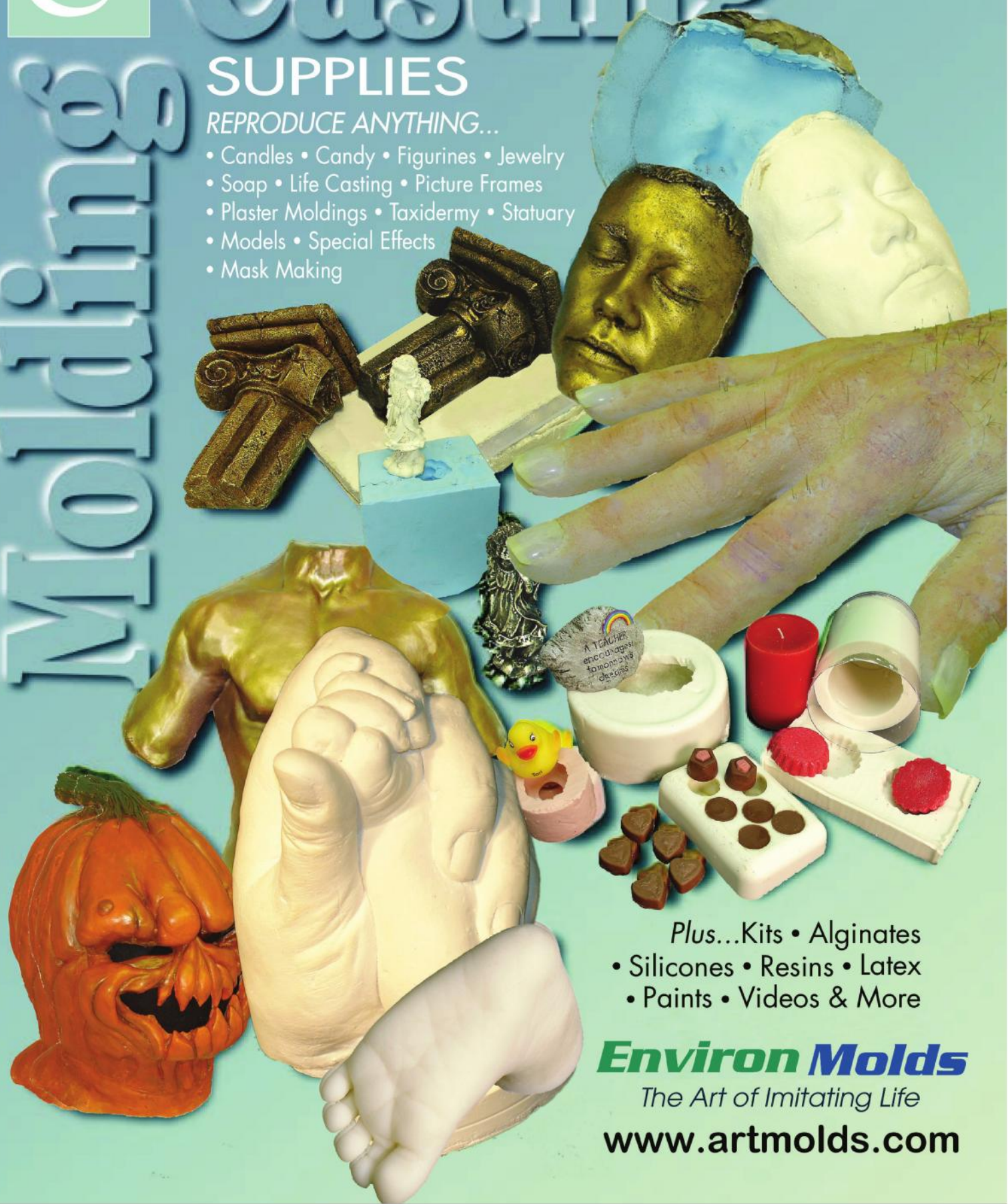
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By Ed McCormick

The Surprising Role of **COLOR** in Sculpture



THE EGYPTIAN SCULPTOR, Prof. Dr. Aly Abdul Rahman Aly Soliman El-Sohby is known throughout the Middle East for his intriguing contemporary colorful sculptures. Born in Cairo in 1956, Dr. Aly El-Sohby had a penchant for art even as a child.

He began experimenting with and adding color to his sculpture in 1977. Shortly thereafter, in 1979, he began teaching art and sculpture as a Teacher of Art Education at the Egyptian Ministry of Education, where he taught until 1990.

Presently he is Professor of Sculpture, as a member of the Faculty of Specific Education at the renowned Ain Shams University in Cairo, Egypt. This same prestigious university was honored by the recent appointment of Prof. Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, Professor, Department of Tourism Guidance as Minister of Antiquities replacing Zahi Hawass, the former minister. Hawass had received widespread publicity internationally, and was the subject of a reality television series in the United States.

Dr. Aly El-Sohby. is not just an artist and sculptor, he is also a scientist specializing in the study of colors, publishing numerous



papers on subjects of both artistic and scientific value, included among them several papers exploring color in art. He received his PhD in Art Education, majoring in sculpture from Helwan University in 1991. Since that time he has received numerous artistic awards and has been celebrated for his scientific research in the field of modern and contemporary sculpture.

His current series of sculptures can be classified into portraits, birds, serial sculpture and abstracts; all incorporating color. Though Dr. El-Sohby claims his English suffers, he was able to disprove it here by providing cogent details to *ArtMolds Journal* on his use of and reasoning for the variety of colors in his work; this in spite of the current unrest in Cairo which has also affected his day-to-day academic routine at Ain Shams University.

Dr. El-Sohby explains, "I use various colors in my sculpture to control the external characteristics of the piece. The color becomes the texture instead of the material's surface. This approach provides me with a focused attention for colorful sculptural modeling with a freedom that is not constrained by the single tonality of contemporary materials. I believe my use of color to express texture may represent a unique phenomenon in the history of sculpture that only contemporary sculpture allows.

"While the use of just a single color tone contributes greatly to the general form of my sculpture—giving unity to the figure—the use of varying tones of the same color increases the aesthetic linkage to the elements of the composition. I often use more than one color in my sculptures to separate these elements into a more complex composition. The colors thus divide up the sculpture into focus points to the extent that such elements would seem as if they were individual units. This technique enhances the overall form, building different parallel contrasts of hues.

"It is equally important to me that I play with colors and tones in order to produce various textural effects to emphasize the surfaces, highlight a sense of natural shadow and light, and to increase the extension of the expressive power of the sculpture itself. In doing so,

the colors introduce a sense of peculiarity and mystery in my work.

"Color also adds dimensions to the sculpture. I use a similar technique that two-dimensional painters use in their creation of optical illusion effects in paintings, where distant things appear close and vice versa. Color is used as an expressive value that highlights and emphasizes the power expressed in the sculptured work on the mass, size and space of the sculpture."

Though Dr. El-Sohby describes his motivations for his use of color in his sculpture, his modeling of shape cannot be ignored. In his portrait series he slices and dissects his pieces and then reassembles them in an abstract fashion which provides a new way to view them. His portrait assemblages are in fact a dichotomy as he seems to combine humor with a sense of seriousness depending on the viewer's angle. His colors emphasize the elements by adding a brightness to the interior faces, which stand in contrast to the more muted color of the exterior surfaces.

Dr. El-Sohby describes his strict color methodology, "I add color utilizing a mathematical formula in my series of serial and colored sculptural forms. My mathematical formulas incorporate the recurrence of forms and colors using ratios.

I developed the mathematical method while experimenting over time. This system is fundamental to uniting of the relationships between elements."

Though his portraits are normally comprised of polychrome resin, Dr. El-Sohby also relies on other materials to create his artistic contrasts. He explains, "The selection of the raw material of which the sculpture is made plays an indispensable role in achieving the end result. Materials such as wood, copper and polyester mixed with colors impact the way the finished piece is viewed in space

on the one hand, and treatment of the surface materials on the other hand. This is because each material selected has its own characteristic and expressive potential.

"For example, in addition to the raw surface, there are treatments that can be applied to wood to deepen or alter the natural coloration



or to highlight it. The use of highly polished copper, as well, would result in light reflection on the surface of the sculpture, showing brightness of color that helps in creating a dual effect of a real form and its reflection. In addition, the use of color in sculptures, whether by painting or mixing colors, causes a unity to the sculpture emphasizing the inner surface of such work."

Dr. El-Sohby describes his method for adding colors, "A single color can be employed on the surface of polyester in colored sculptures to unify it and connect its elements. This makes use of the light reflections on the work which in turn creates different tones. It also adds a sense of movement between light and shadow."

Once his sculptural form is complete and the surface is polished, Dr. El-Sohby adds a single color to it. The color is used to unify the sculpture and emphasize the importance of coloration on its surface. The polishing creates a surface reflection which varies the color when viewed from different angles. The method tends to link the sculptural surfaces, emphasizing both shape and surface. Though the sculpture is one unit, this color addition tends to enhance the elements of sculpture, creating unity between its components. Consequently, there is more color variation, even with just a single color, due to reflected light. The reflections create different hues from the same color and the reflection combines differently with the surface shadows and light depending on what raw material is used.

Dr. El-Sohby



explains this phenomenon, "The light on most sculptures falls on its surfaces from the outside. However, the light on the colored sculptural structures emanates from the inside out, giving a sense of interior illumination to the sculpture due to coloring. This combines with the exterior light source to give it a unique play of shadow and reflection – leading to a peculiar sense of strangeness and mystery in the colored sculpture.

"Metal surfaces can be modified for color, too. As an example, a bronze surface can accept colorful patinas through heating and chemical treatment to give it a permanent coloration. Also, a bronze surface can be polished to create a metallic sheen. It is a very different effect from the unpolished surface

of the same material. Polishing leads to reflections which will take on the ambient colors of the surface's surroundings.

"It is possible that by polishing, bronze could convey an effect similar to an inner glow. Such reflections can enrich a sculpture. Polishing of a surface highlights its natural color -- it allows light reflections and adds brightness to its surface.

"My sculptural forms are characterized by the line on which the colors are drawn. Such lines become an important issue by varying shadows which in turn becomes an integral part of the sculpture. My colorations also optically increase the size of the sculpture which would appear smaller if it remained monochromatic. By adding contrast between convex and concave forms, color produces extraordinary vitality."

Dr. El-Sohby is currently preparing for a new exhibition of his colorful art of portraiture which he promises will be created from a new and different perspective. You can visit his website here:
<http://galleryalyelsohby.weebly.com/>

Exhibitions

1- The International Eighth Salon of Portrait Ismailia 27/12/2012 until 15/1/2013 (Guest of Honor)

2- Middle East International Salon of Fine Arts - at Cairo Atelier – 15 - 21-7-2012.

3 - The Annual Fifty - Forth Salon of Cairo Atelier - "Colored Sculpture" – 5 - 17-5-2002.

4- The Fifth Annual Salon of Small Art Work "Colored Sculpture" - Center of Akhenaton Galleries – Displayed from 12-1-2002 until 1-2-2002.

5- The Fifty Third Annual Salon of Cairo Atelier - "Colored Sculpture" - Displayed from 29-4-2001 until 19-5-2001.

6- The Third Annual Salon of Small Art Work - "Colored Sculpture" - Center Of Akhenaton Galleries - Displayed from 17-12-1999 until 20-1-2000.

7- The Exhibition of Plastic Arts about "The Nile Is Our Past, Present And Future" For The Purpose of

Celebrating "Wafaa El Nile" [The Nile Gratitude] in, "El Nile Lobby" of Meridian – from 25/8/1993

8- The Forty Third Annual Exhibition of the Plastic Art in the Exhibition Hall of Faculty of Art Education in 1992.

9- The Second Exhibition of "Youth Salon" at the Opera House in 1990.

10 - The Twenty Fourth (24th) Exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts' Lovers in 1984.

11 -The Twenty Second Exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts' Lovers in 1982.

12- The Twenty First Exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts' Lovers in 1981.

13 - The Annual Exhibition Number (32) Of the Plastic Arts in 1980.

14- The Twentieth (20th) Exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts' Lovers in 1980.

15- The Nineteenth (19th) Exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts'

Lovers in 1979.

16- The Eighteenth (18th) Exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts' Lovers in 1978.

17- The Exhibition of (15th) of May for Plastic Arts in 1978.

18- A Private Exhibition in the Faculty of Art Education in 1978.

19- The Seventeenth (17th) Exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts' Lovers In 1977.

20- A Collective Exhibition at Helwan University in 1977.

21- The Exhibition of the (15th) of May for Plastic Arts in 1977.

