

Christian Sunde – Looking back

Intro

The art of Christian Sunde is well distributed around Norway; he is a popular artist with over thirty-five successful large-scale commissions in private and public arenas. When presenting an overview of his prolific production of the last twenty-five years it is best to divide the works up into phases or categories. This allows the viewer to understand the influences upon, and connections between, these very diverse works of art. However, before defining the categories, some overall introductory statements are needed.

The vast majority of Sunde's art is site specific. He is an artist who thrives under the need to adapt his ideas and creativity to a specific physical space. A keen sense of architecture, and a genuine interest in the social content of a given setting, combine to make sculptures that often "fit-in" naturally to their surroundings.

Sunde is an artist that constantly experiments with a variety of media/materials. There is a workmanlike enjoyment into finding out how a given material can be exploited and manipulated in order to achieve its maximum potential. Be it with wood, plastic, LED lighting or metal, Sunde is a good example of a patient hard worker:

The work of art requires great patience, and above all a determined struggle against the medium. Brancusi

Much of Sunde's art has a social focus; its placing in public spaces and the humanistic themes of the work can embody many of the social democratic ideals of Norwegian society. His repeated success in the regulated procedures of Norwegian public art competitions show a contemporary artist that is addressing public issues in public space. Sunde's work is often characterized by a playful attitude, it is communicative and theatrical, and his commissions attract the attention of a public who do not normally visit art institutions. Sunde's art is simply itself and allows any spectator the freedom to admire, to reflect, to smile, or, simply to ignore.

Five main classes of production can be identified during the twenty-five years since Christian Sunde finished his education and these are;

- Organic structures – gravitropism (1993 – 2000)
- Geometric light sculptures (2000 – 2010)
- The stylised monumental head (2008 – present day)
- The veristic miniature head (2005 – present day)
- Ethnological installations (2007 – present day)

1 Organic structures – gravitropism (1993 – 2000)

At the conclusion of his university studies in 1993, Christian Sunde began a series of works entitled *Hale* (Tail) which involved carefully lit wood and cane structures being hung from the ceiling. These grew “down” from the ceiling with gravity, a root like structure held up in the air and illuminated with dramatic, shadow casting spotlights. A root is normally beyond light, it is buried in the earth and responds to gravity – gravitropism. By hanging these normally submerged objects, Sunde replaced gravity with the appearance of weightlessness. At once weighty and large, they represent a stable form of potential energy. Impractically thin and ethereal, these beautiful forms defy the forces of gravity.



Even in these early works there is a careful orchestration to the placing and illumination of these *Hale*; a baroque sense of illumination and chiaroscuro. The effects of contrasting light and shadow make a theatrical drama from a simple hanging form. These are not casually placed; they do not a suddenly drop into the world. Each work is carefully mounted to both harmonize and contrast with its setting, with each specific placing.

The 1999 commission for the *Contemplation Room* at the National hospital in Oslo (*Tårnrommet, Nytt Rikshospital*) is the highpoint of the *Hale* series. Rising seven meters upwards, the weightlessness of this elegant structure is dramatic, it seems to float in the air. Other than the sculpture’s, there is no other artificial lighting in the room, such that the sculpture is an automatic focus of attention.

The organic form reminds one of various structures from nature; a stalactite, a wasp’s hive or an icicle. All of these natural structures are built over time. A stalactite consists of calcium hanging down from the roof of a cave, formed of calcium salts deposited by dripping water. These natural structures, be they ice or salt, remind us of the passing of time. The gradual dripping of water being a natural process; time creates beautiful structures with natural patterns. There is an inevitability and unstoppable perseverance to these structures. The symbolic value of this dramatic seven-meter sculpture is very fitting in a hospital; the immediate public is often concerned with the time of waiting, of treatments and of anticipating results.

Sunde’s sculpture brings to this tall architectural space a much-needed natural form; the organic element softens and relaxes the straight edged buildings of contemporary architecture. Despite its immense size, the colour, form and lighting result in a sculpture that is peaceful and quiet. It defies gravity in an unobtrusive fashion.



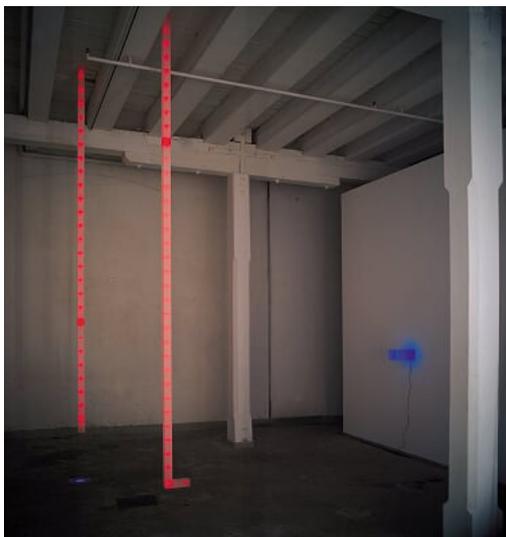
2 Geometric light sculptures (2000 – 2010)

During the early years of this century Sunde began to work with more minimalistic sculptures. He produced a series of LED sculptures that incorporated light diodes into PVC and acrylic glass constructions. The combination of lines with simple colours and simple geometric forms were in contrast to the natural icicle forms of the *Hale* series. Clearly defined geometric forms promoted a man-made look. These light sculptures pronounced a pride in clean simple shapes, whilst the simple luminous colours imitated product design and manufacture.

In these artworks Sunde showed his knowledge and appreciation of mid twentieth century international art. For example, the sculptures of the *American minimalist movement* in the 1960s represented by artists such as Sol LeWitt (1928-2007), Dan Flavin (1933-1996) and the London *New Generation* artists surrounding Anthony Caro (1924-2013) at the St. Martins school of art.



It should be remembered that the technology of lighting rapidly developed during the first years of this century. Such that the evolution from the individual spotlights of the *Hale* series to the use of LED in Sunde's geometric sculptures was a direct result of experimentation with the first colour light diode systems available. This "new" lighting gave great opportunities in combination with plastic, in addition to tremendous bulb lifetimes and thin unobtrusive wiring.

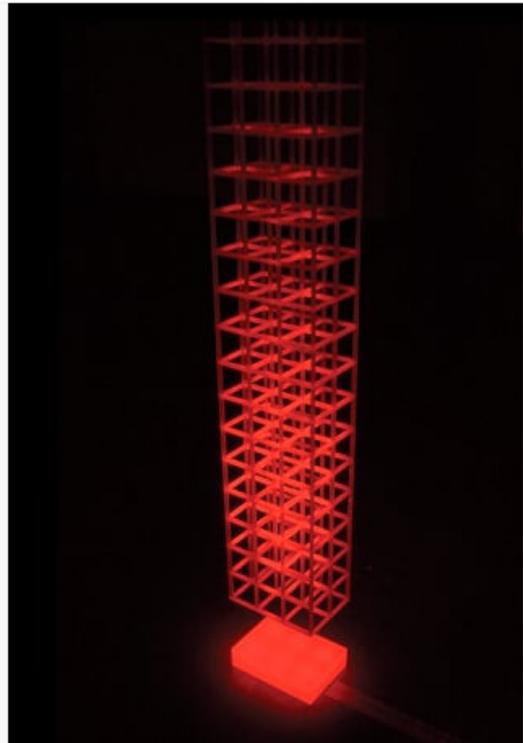


The interplay between Sunde's light installations and a specific siting is a major element in each work. These light installations play with their immediate surroundings by reflecting, echoing or extending elements of form or colour in the building. Thus, they are never minimalistic, rather these sculptures enhance the building by concentrating and illuminating sometimes unnoticed architectural elements.

Sunde uses the materials purely for their communicative element, they become a medium of architectural expression. The artist departs from the use of traditional sculptural materials such as metal or wood in favour of light diodes and plastics. In addition, these works abandon the base and pedestal - they are suspended or stand directly on the ground.

Light diodes introduce an element of spectacle or theatre into minimalist forms. The plastic forms become luminous and incandescent. Theatre is a spectator art in a different way from a traditional sculpture. Light art takes place in time and is endlessly varying due to the surrounding levels of light or shadow. Visibility ends and restarts like theatre. Observing a light process seems close to us because it occurs in our time and uses materials familiar from everyday life.

These simple plastic bars are concerned with skin, surface and internal illumination. They are not massive constructions that need attention due to their physical size. Rather the dynamic light of these thin installations attract attention due to their simple colour and a clean unassuming presence. The LEDs that are inside the plastic form emphasize the light as a component of the work itself. Plastic and light become one and attract attention in a soothing, relaxed manner. These are not spotlights of colour.



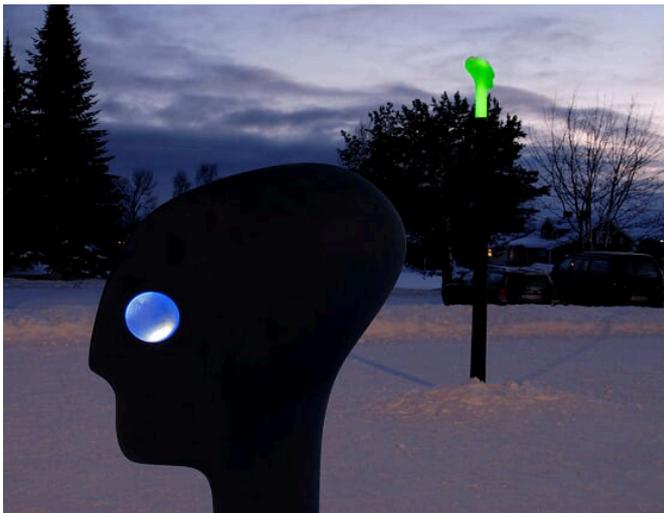
The artist remains very aware of the object as form in itself, Sunde wishes a balance to be achieved between form and illumination. He states - *If you turn off the power, they will still have form*. These "light" sculptures are minimalistic forms that aim to communicate an unsophisticated balance: A balance between the objects form and its luminosity. This balance should give a calming influence to the setting by echoing and harmonizing with the surroundings.

A public light installation can gain attention from people who often have different goals than to look at "art". Light art in public space can meet and surprise people in everyday life. Sunde's light installations, which can have aesthetic, symbolic, private or public significance, will attract attention and influence the viewers' surroundings in a predominantly calming fashion.

3 The stylised monumental head (2008 – present day)

There is an obvious challenge to making an abstraction from, or simplification of, the human head. The portrait bust is an international icon: across all continents the profile of the human face and the sculptured portrait bust are standard elements of our shared visual language. From a European standpoint, the profiles on Roman coinage and the proficiency of classical portrait sculptors are both fertile inspirations, and, somewhat intimidating predecessors.

Christian Sunde has used this icon as a starting point for a series of public sculptures. The heads are made from solid acrylic plastic and often internally illuminated with coloured LED light¹. From one commission to the next, the manner of stylizing varies depending, once again, on the social and physical placement of the project.



It is interesting to map the major sources of inspiration for these sculptures and see why they are so popular and easily accepted in the public space.

An Egyptian influence is clear. The symmetry of Sunde's sculptures and the impersonal nature of these heads resemble the drawings and sculpture of the Egyptian tombs. Similarly, the exaggerated size of eye, chin and forehead echo the simple style of the Egyptian, and other, early wall paintings.

The bust of Nefertiti has an enigmatic quality which has engendered much speculation. It is perfectly symmetrical, a vision of preternatural beauty. A beautiful harmony which is exaggerated by the eyes, the sensuality of the mouth, the hollow cheeks and a very long neck. But the sculpture is not a portrait, rather it is a stylised type representing royalty and not one individual royal.

Sunde uses this predecessor as a direct influence and repeats the clean profiles and exaggerated simplifications to mold a universal head; an androgynous everyman for the public space.

The ability to profile and mould a head so succinctly and precisely reveals that the artist has a good drawing technique. These sculptures can be viewed as a series of profiles from a multitude of angles. The ability to summarise a well-known icon may seem easy, but as the sculptor Brancusi stated:

Simplicity is at bottom complexity, and one must be weaned on its essence to understand its significance.



Christian Sunde reveals the essence of the subject with a minimum of fuss or decoration, this gives these sculptures a refreshing clarity and simplicity that suits our modern public space.



A good comparison can be made with Brancusi's Sleeping Muse (1910) which was carved from marble a century earlier than Sunde's stylised heads. Through arduous carving Brancusi managed to find simplicity in his working technique and reduced his ideas to the minimum. The muse's head lies on one side; seemingly resting peacefully, the marble's whiteness reinforces the serenity of the face. Brancusi abandoned the idea of making preparatory models for his work, instead immediately carving into the marble and allowing the art object to emerge organically. The sleeping muse visualises the essence of human calm.



In contrast to Brancusi's muse, Christian Sunde's stylised and monumental heads are often raised up and illuminated internally with clear simple colours. However, these sculptures are also calm and serene. These simplified busts use as few details as possible to portray the human condition. They portray "who we are", without arms or legs or any detailed facial expression. They have no frantic movement or sudden colour changes, rather they stand peacefully on busy roundabouts (Tinset), pedestrian shopping streets (Sandnes) or gazing out over the shifting shore of a reservoir (Drangedal).

Placed centrally in modern day life, the positioning and lighting of these sculptures is vital to their success. As mentioned earlier, light is in itself theatrical and attracts attention. These sculptures have an "organic" subtle light that gently attracts attention in our easily distracted world. As we have seen, the "stylisation" of these heads means an overlapping of styles and influences. Sunde's selectively uses predecessors to aid and abet his public sculpture.

4 The veristic miniature head (2005 – present day)

Running parallel to the stylised heads, a more intimate category of Sunde's artistic production is the veristic miniature. Veristic means extremely naturalistic, coming from the Latin *verum* – true. Veracity being the quality of being true, honest, or accurate. Sunde's miniature heads explore the maturing of the human face and the degeneration of materials. Whereas the monumental stylized heads are visible from afar and need no close examination, the miniature heads need intimate scrutiny. These are perfect exhibition works. The viewer is curiously drawn toward them since we all have an interest in the ravages of time and its effect on the human face. Aging is a universal challenge.



These peculiar miniatures grow into age and decay, they deform and fold in upon themselves. The individuality of each face is stretched to an extreme, whereby wrinkles and folds take over the form of the head. The head seems to implode into its essence. In the same way as an very old face ages inwards toward the skull, so do the creases on these miniature heads eventually overwhelm the shape of the face and skull. By using different ingredients Sunde has produced a collection of these small heads that gifts the viewer with a huge variety of ages and expressions. The effect is quite hypnotic.



The production method is fascinating. Since first experimenting with gelatine and sea grass thickening agents in 2005, Sunde's recipe of compound mixtures has been in constant development. Various mixes are poured into a mould and allowed to start drying. When at a firm gel consistency, the small head is removed from its mould and allowed to dry naturally

over a long period. The thickening starch agents vary as do the organic additives – seaweed extract, sawdust, coffee, sand, peat and soil, etc. etc. The various additives have exciting and unexpected effects on the drying process and how the head develops. A is completely organic process; eventually each individual miniature dries out such that the final art installation is stable and rock-solid. In the drying process, the artist loses control upon the look of the product.



The lengthy production time of these miniatures and the life they live before becoming a work of art is a process of controlled disorder. Sunde's alchemist workings with various recipes gives the artist prolonged and repeated excitement about the way each head ends up. Indeed, the anticipation of Sunde's creative method resembles the more long-term excitement regarding the way our human faces' show the passage of time. These works mirror the aging of the human face and its degeneration. As Sunde explained at an exhibition opening; *Denne utstillinga handler om at mi blir prega av livet og at ting forandrer seg. Det handler om forvitring, forgjengelighet og portrett. Men det er ikke noe jeg vil snakke for mye om, for da havner vi fort utpå glattisen...* (This exhibition deals with the fact that we are affected by life and that things change. It's about weathering, impermanence and portrait. But it's not something I want to talk too much about, because then we end quickly out on thin ice...)

The act of commemoratively displaying the face in a state of aging or death is far from new. The fascination with which we study these portrait busts is in fact a universal interest. The size of Sunde's sculptures allows, somehow demands, close up inspection. On first observing these miniatures in 2005, I was struck by the cleverness of the method, and it reminded me of *Brit Art* artist Mark Quinn's "Self" of 1991. A life size caste of Quinn's own head was formed from ten pints of his own blood. The blood sculpture is preserved in frozen silicon and thus reliant on an electric cooling system to survive. A new portrait caste has been taken every five years since then. As Quinn's website states:



Self 2011
2011

The sculpture series of presents a cumulative index of passing time and an ongoing self-portrait of the artist's ageing and changing self."

The idea of capturing, or literally freezing, the look of a face at a specific moment has both a scientific and artistic history. Leonardo da Vinci made studies of grotesque heads as part of his scientific research. Franz Xaver Messerschmidt is infamous for his *Character Heads* series (1770–83). This portrait busts stretch the range of human expressions to an uncomfortable extreme; face after face are pinched, wrinkled, or twisted in exaggerated

states of cheerfulness, disgust, or shock. Yet however life-like and upsetting the expressions are, they are frozen and utterly without life. Similarly, before the age of photography, death masks were made in the 18th and 19 century for celebratory, commemorative and scientific purposes. One practical use was to preserve facial features of unidentified bodies by creating death masks so that relatives of the deceased could recognize



them if they were seeking a missing person. Such macabre sights have always been fascinating for the artistic community. In the late 1880s copies of a certain death mask became very popular amongst the bohemians of Paris. Known as *L'Inconnue de la Seine*, it recorded the face of an unidentified young woman, about sixteen years old found drowned in the Seine River. A cast was made of her face and readily compared to the Mona Lisa for its enigmatic beauty.

A direct influence upon Christian Sunde's art, since his student days, are the "memorial photographs" of America and Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuriesⁱⁱⁱ. This genre depicts the somewhat macabre tradition of a family photograph that includes one, or several, recently deceased members. The deceased is posed as living, or sleeping, and especially dressed and made to look their best for the memorial photograph. In mimicking life the deceased would therefore leave a lasting social presence. The beauty of these images has a haunting effect and one must remember that the grieving family wished their loved one be remembered in the finest possible way. Sunde's attitude is similar regarding the veristic miniatures, whereby he wishes the natural and the beautiful to be prominent, rather than the morbid or the ugly.



As we have seen, the enigma of the portrait bust has a long and varied background. By making installations of miniature heads Sunde comments and adds to this tradition. He exhibits a multitude of facial expressions alongside one another in an interior setting. They form a group of peaceful and/or contorted souls; a community of serious personalities for us to view. These installations are a celebration of diversity, of withstanding, of impermanence. They are also a celebration of the portrait bust; the beauty and the peaceful nature of this artform. Sunde's veristic heads are not individual portraits, it is instead that, as Erwin Panofsky stated, the miniature:

"seeks to bring out whatever the sitter has in common with the rest of humanity".



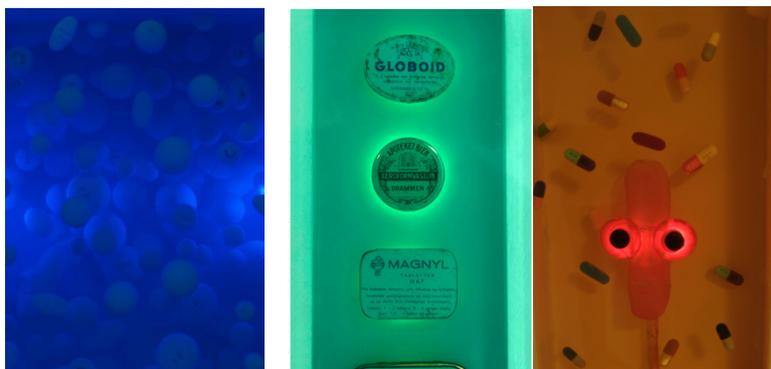
5 Ethnological installations (2007 – present day)

Sunde's ethnological installation work has its roots in two commissions at more "private" than public spaces during 2007. A canteen within Madla military training base, just outside Stavanger, is the site of a large 64-piece project. Each illuminated "picture block" tells the story of the soldier's everyday life. There is no defined narrative structure to the story, rather the row of polyester blocks each contains a carefully orchestrated collection of objects.



The method is simple, the artist was allowed fantastic access to the trainee soldiers' environment and he extracted small objects from the military base, its storage area, and beyond (charity shops, rubbish tips, toy shops, etc.). The resulting collection of items acted as a treasure chest from which 64 small 3D collages were made before being embedded in plastic. There is no distinct message to the artwork, rather it is a fascinating and often funny seemingly haphazard display of army life. More specifically, it portrays the life of young men and women within the reality and dreams of a military training. The geometry of the final installation reminds one of the geometric light installations that Sunde was also producing in 2007.

In the same year, a commission was placed within a health centre at Sunde's home town of Flekkefjord. The same method was used such that the everyday work of the health centre was portrayed in a humorous and relaxed manner. Everyday objects, particularly brightly coloured medicines, were illuminated and choreographed to provide a light-hearted version of an often serious situation.



These two modestly sized commissions show Sunde supplying a *curiosity* in an unexpected place. In neither of these spaces would the users/public expect to be confronted with contemporary art. In addition to looking good, these lightboxes act as functional objects; they are conversation pieces or "ice breakers". Whether reflecting upon a soldier's life or a health centre's functions, these permanent installations act as *curios*. A visually attractive catalyst

for conversations based on their unusualness and novelty. Perfect for social settings such as canteens and waiting rooms.

Sunde's ethnological installations are hybrids of his skills; the disciplines of lighting, storytelling, design and architecture all combine. Using an artist's eye he places simple curious objects alongside, above and below one another. Seemingly playful, the method can be put to more serious uses when placed in the public-spaces of a town centre. Local identity is vital to small communities. Our sense of belonging is enhanced by reminders of local history. A museum setting is insufficient and such institutes are often absent from small towns, so that digital and physical archives unfortunately remain unseen for most of the population. For small communities, to help prevent brain drain and to enhance good integration, it is important to enliven local narratives of history and identity.



Bryne-stones were placed in the town of Bryne in 2012. Paving slabs around the town were replaced with small artworks of exactly the same dimension. These contain various motifs or symbols that make simple readings and comments about each site in Bryne, be it a cashpoint machine or a dog walker's path. Small unobtrusive artworks lay around the town awaiting discovery and they use light, sound and heating elements to attract the observer. These ingenious small *stones* are an interesting solution to a problem occurring in contemporary society; the loss of public space for art. Public space was once closely associated with culture, but it is now more and more dominated by commerce and earning potential. Today, public space is more and more privately owned and rented. However, not all public space should be steered by commerce. Society needs a human/humane place with our marks. Sunde's integration of public sculpture *in situ* are presented in harmony with place, space and scale.

The most recent of Sunde's ethnological installations (2017) is a large-scale project in his home town. In collaboration with a private sponsor and the public sector, Sunde produced an integrated pathway in celebration of the town's 175th anniversary. *Rød løper* (Red carpet) is a walkway through a new green park designed by Sunde with coordinated lighting, sculpture and inlaid illuminated paving elements. Once again the inlaid path elements have a specific ethnological content and they tell the artist's version of the town's history. The park extends from the fjord quay up to the new cultural centre and was constructed on an old car park. In addition the walkway changes colour from red to white when program activities take place in the *Spira* building. A new green public area was created in the town centre in the course of eighteen months.



We live in gallery-orientated days, an era of transferring art from one exhibition/biennial to the next. Unfortunately, the subject of art is today rarely dictated by its' site. Is it problematic for contemporary artists to immerse themselves in a context provided by a town location? Maybe the politics that are awoken can be too critical of contemporary commercial situations, or, over nostalgic of previous eras. Therefore, many artists, such as Christian Boltanski and Jeremy Deller, confine their ethnological commentary to the gallery space^{iv}.

Integration of art in public space and genuine celebration of the place and its' people is an important social undertaking. Sunde makes his celebrations from "objet trouvé"; found objects in a wide sense. These are things, images, histories, symbols and fragments of a town

or a single establishment. The resulting collages are not comprehensive scholastic overviews, rather they are artistic sketches that celebrate in an entertaining and aesthetically pleasing way. These installations can be regarded as archeological still lifes with contemporary design and superb lighting.

6 Conclusion

Having defined 5 different categories of artworks, it is interesting to note that production of these types often runs almost simultaneously. Up until 2012 Christian Sunde worked to refine and establish each category, but since this date the need for independent development and production phases has ceased. Since 2012 it is the space of the commission, or the function of the artwork, that dictate which solution(s) is suggested by the artist for any given project. Fortunately this includes a hard earned confidence regarding the stability, and total lifetime, of materials and technology in Norway's challenging climate.

Of the five categories only the miniature heads can be said to be an art form that can suit many different spaces; they are transportable and exist in their own right. Exhibition viewing of large groups of miniatures heads has been the most common opportunity for the public to see these fascinating faces. One might also suggest that these miniatures are the only category that have a melancholic tendency; these installations do indeed represent the "thin ice" of our own mortality. In contrast, the other four categories are overtly site specific and celebratory.

Site specific

Sunde's sculptures are closely aligned to either a social or an architectural space. They are not ornaments and the artist's appreciation of immediate surroundings, architectonic or social, lead to an integration within and illumination of these sites with new eyes. Sunde enlightens places easily forgotten and often bestows upon them a humane element. Such that the geometric light sculptures illuminate and echo the architecture of hard edge architecture with the softening glowing warmth of LED. Similarly, the monumental head sculptures use height and illumination to celebrate the stylized profile of every man and every woman.

All sculpture comes down to the size of the human body, before and since Leonardo, it has been our shared measure. Indeed, everything starts being relational to the space that it's in. But a good work of art takes you to a place you did not know and allows reactions that were perhaps unforeseen. Thus, the better an artist is at understanding a site, with an awareness and desire to be there, the better the final work of art can be. It is clear from looking at Christian Sunde's finished commissions that he does not believe in accidents or randomness. Sunde's first question is always - what is that space? With his heightened architectural and social awareness, Sunde reveals an enhanced understanding of the site, of placing art, and, of arranging the accompanying elements. As he states; *looking back, nothing is by chance!*

Norwegian essence

Similar to many Norwegian artists, Christian Sunde is engaging with international influences whilst holding true to a Norwegian essence. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century Modernism remained strong in Norway. Thus, Sunde's educational influences included a strong late Modernist respect for materials. All five of Sunde's working categories show an experimentation with media, and, a working knowledge of the potential and promise of raw materials. The ethnological installations and the miniature heads continue to be fields of research about material processes and collage techniques.

As we have seen throughout this essay, it is easy to cite comparisons with international artists and movements. Only well-known examples have been used here, but the wealth of documentation and sources of information available in this digital age can make it hard for

individual artists to make their own independent progress. Sunde achieves this by working in a relatively isolated fashion, away from the urban jungle of gallery and peer group influence. Such independence has led to a style that is strongly recognizable as Sunde's own, and it includes a variety of artistic expressions. Comparisons ranging from Egyptian tombs to Parisian mortuaries merely confirm that no man is an island.

Perhaps the strongest Norwegian aspect of Sunde's production is its pronounced social democratic essence. There is a genuine consciousness about the common person; a sincere message of solidarity with no hint of urban irony. These sculptures open up to be liked by the normal citizen, and there is a wish to celebrate both the places and the human inhabitants of this large country with its thinly spread population.

Balance

For well over a century now, artists have recognized that art and life do not exist in separate domains. The idea that the place of art is superior to everyday life is an illusion that no longer has meaning. However, public art is not just an enhancement of a place, it is also about the thing. Art is made as a thing in itself, not merely a decoration. There is a balance here that is difficult to maintain. The "ego" of the artwork should be in harmony with the requests of the commission.

Sunde's sculpture are sensuous, beautiful and very communicative. In themselves they exist as powerful objects. However, they also function as commissions, often as a harmonic object that stimulates the public to positive reflection. Even the ethnological installations are not overwhelming with meaning, as are many museum exhibitions. Sunde's sociology communicates tales of social realities with a charming persuasive smile. Indeed, humour is an essential part of the art's character as is his infectious enthusiasm. An artist does not have to be distant; better to be a worker with lots of fantasy. Twenty five years of professional production has given a considerable variety of work which Sunde creates and communicates with continued passion. The dialogues on which good art are based; between the artist and public; between the artist and site; between the artist and material, all Sunde's dialogues are utterly serious; but he completes them smoothly and enthusiastically. Looking forward, these dialogues can inspire further interesting developments from Sunde's creativity.

Martin Worts

ⁱ It should be noted that the abstract LED geometric installations of section 2 are not solid, they are constructed with 3mm plates of acrylic plastic – Poly-methyl methacrylate (PMMA).

ⁱⁱ <http://marquinn.com/artworks/self>

ⁱⁱⁱ A seminal book on the subject is still to be found in the artist's studio. *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America* by Stanley B. Burns, 1990. Twelvetees Press.

^{iv} In the 1980s and 1990s many art installations were socially based and ethnographic in attitude. The real physical site became the content of the work and the artist was cast in the various roles of tour guide or archivist. Subsequently a great amount of contemporary art has had a strong ethnological content, indeed the two disciplines of ethnological studies and contemporary art are now common collaborators. Many contemporary museum presentations of ethnological research are presented as a kind of art film or art installation within the safe haven of the museum.