





Benefits of Stainless-Steel Material in Rectifying Local Identity in Public Sculpture

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Abstract. In the past decade, stainless steel has become an increasingly popular material for public sculptures, substantially contributing to the modification and improvement of community identities. This article aims to investigate the several advantages that stainless steel may bring to public art, with a particular emphasis on the metal's aesthetic, practical, and symbolic effects. Aesthetically, stainless steel is a versatile medium that can generate a broad variety of surfaces and forms, allowing it to reflect and intensify the visual identity of a community. Its long-term durability, resistance to corrosion, and low maintenance requirements make it an excellent option for public installations subjected to various environmental conditions. Symbolically, stainless steel represents modernism, robustness, and sustainability, aligning with the contemporary ideals and goals of local communities. This article seeks to demonstrate, using an artistic research approach, how stainless-steel sculptures function not only as creative expressions but also as essential components in the process of place-making, generating a sense of pride and belonging among people. The incorporation of stainless steel into public sculpture is therefore a crucial factor in forming and revitalising local identities in urban settings.

Keywords: Public, Stainless-Steel, Sculpture, Identity.

1 Introduction

In the past several years, there has been a substantial increase in the utilisation of stainless steel in public sculpture, which has resulted in the transformation of urban landscapes and the redefinition of community identities. As cities continue to develop, so does their requirement for materials that are long-lasting, visually beautiful, and rich in symbolism, and that are also capable of withstanding the test of time and the challenges posed by the environment. The material stainless steel has evolved as a material that not only satisfies these objectives but also provides one-of-a-kind chances for artistic expression and community engagement.

In the context of public art, this essay examines the several benefits that stainless steel can offer, with a particular emphasis on the aesthetic, functional, and symbolic contributions that it gives. In terms of aesthetics, the versatility of stainless steel enables artists to produce a broad variety of surfaces and forms, which in turn enhances the visual appeal of public areas. Because of its resistance to corrosion, its

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durability, and the fact that it requires very little maintenance, it is an excellent option for outdoor installations. In a symbolic sense, stainless steel is a material that epitomises modernism, strength, and sustainability. This material resonates with the contemporary values and aspirations of metropolitan areas.

This study aims to emphasise how stainless-steel sculptures function not only as artistic expressions but also as important pieces in the process of place-making. This will be accomplished by studying these characteristics through an artistic research approach. These sculptures foster a sense of pride and belonging, which significantly form and revitalise local identities in metropolitan contexts. Academics have conducted substantial research to record the aesthetic, practical, and symbolic benefits of stainless steel. Besides, the increasing amount of material used in using stainless steel in public art highlights its importance in modern urban settings. Studies have thoroughly recorded stainless steel's aesthetic, functional, and symbolic benefits, emphasising its importance in contemporary sculpture and architecture. The public works of art require material support and organisation, which is critical for representing the work's concept and thought. The choice of materials is not only a mechanical requirement but also a means of conveying artistic expression and thematic depth [1]. Stainless steel is celebrated for its durability, corrosion resistance, and aesthetic versatility, making it an indispensable element in contemporary architecture and art. Its application ranges from structural components to artistic installations, driven by its varied alloy compositions, finishes, fabrication techniques, and maintenance requirements [2]. Therefore, the focus of the study is on steel's strength, stability, and versatility, which are used to create innovative, functional, and aesthetically striking designs. The world of steel is constantly evolving and incredibly diverse, making it challenging to keep track of advancements [3]. Nowadays, the welded metal sculpture has gained significant prominence and can be easily observed in galleries, museums, and public spaces worldwide. The research offers a comprehensive examination of the styles, techniques, and subjects utilised by two renowned artists, Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola. This study fills a research void by comparing and contrasting their works, a task that has not been undertaken previously. The second study focuses on outdoor painted sculptures, which pose challenges due to their subtle colour, texture, and reflection, making them difficult to maintain [4]. They are exposed to many variables; therefore, conservation focuses on the artist's intent rather than the paint method [5]. Additional instances encompass the burgeoning popularity of China's public art, propelled by advancements in science and technology. The study of Chinese traditional glass art is being conducted in contemporary public spaces with a focus on sustainability and innovation. This study investigates the presence of traditional Chinese glass art in modern public spaces, emphasising its societal significance and advancement [6].

However, the closer example is in how the sculpture of "Cloud Gate" that was formed by Anish Kapoor, this example of the iconic stainless-steel sculpture in Chicago, also known as "The Bean", is celebrated for its reflective surface that mirrors the city skyline and engages viewers. It has become a symbol of the city's modern identity [7, 8]. The sculpture "Angel of the North" by Antony Gormley is mostly composed of steel, although it also includes stainless steel parts. The structure embodies the industrial legacy of the area and has emerged as an iconic emblem of Northern England [9]. The sculpture "A-maze-ing Laughter" by Yue Minjun is made

of stainless steel and is located in Vancouver. It showcases exaggerated laughing figures that embody the artist's distinctive style and playfully captivate visitors. It has gained a cherished status within the city's cultural milieu [10]. "Stainless Steel Fish" by Frank Gehry is a monumental outdoor sculpture in Barcelona that prominently displays the remarkable adaptability of stainless steel as a material. The reflective surface of the object interacts with the light in its surroundings, resulting in a visually dynamic effect that emphasises its seaside location [11]. These examples demonstrate the appropriate utilisation of stainless steel in public sculptures to promote local identity, engage people, and produce a lasting visual impression. In fact, my recent consideration also deals with wood as material in making an outdoor sculpture [12] and also, I was trusted with stainless steel material in highlighting the sculpture that I produced [13]. Additionally, the projects were managed using suitable creative practice techniques for sculpture making.

2 Methodology

The study utilises a comprehensive methodology to investigate the utilisation of stainless steel in public sculpture and its influence on the local identity. The process involves conducting a thorough examination of the current body of literature on stainless steel in public art, with a specific emphasis on its aesthetic, functional, and symbolic advantages. A comprehensive comparative examination of the artistic styles, methodologies, and subject matters employed by Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola. This entails analysing their artistic creations through public exhibitions in galleries, scholarly evaluations, and interviews. Exploring areas featuring prominent stainless-steel sculptures to assess their influence on local identity and community involvement. Interviews are conducted with local artists, curators, and community people in order to align with the concept. Active participation in the fabrication of stainless-steel sculptures, recording the procedure, difficulties, and results. This practical approach facilitates comprehension of the material's adaptability and the technical intricacies of handling stainless steel. By integrating the results obtained from the examination of existing literature, the comparison of different sources, the study conducted in the field, and the use of artistic techniques, we are able to synthesise a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. My project explicitly focuses on identifying the patterns, common motifs, and unique contributions of stainless steel to public art and local identity.

3 Result and Discussion

Stainless steel has been a major material in modern public sculpture due to its aesthetic flexibility, long-lasting nature, and capacity to interact dynamically with its environment. This essay examines the advantages of using stainless steel in the process of enhancing local identity through the creation of public sculptures, employing a methodology rooted in the field of fine art.

Fig. 1 exhibits a stainless-steel sculpture featuring a shape reminiscent of either a flower or a wheel, adorned with exquisite petal-like formations. The sculpture is

supported by a base with three legs, which raises the flower-like top portion. The top piece seems to incorporate mechanical aspects into its construction. The utilisation of stainless steel imparts a streamlined and contemporary aesthetic, while its lustrous surface effectively reflects light, enhancing its visual allure. The polished stainless-steel surface reflects its surroundings, making the sculpture interactive with its environment. This reflective quality allows the sculpture to change appearance depending on the light and weather conditions, engaging viewers in a dynamic visual experience. The clean lines and mechanical aesthetic give the sculpture a contemporary feel, suitable for modern urban spaces. The design combines organic elements (flower-like petals) with industrial components (mechanical joints and structure), creating a harmonious blend of nature and technology. The fusion of floral and mechanical elements could symbolise the intersection of nature and human innovation. This duality can provoke thought and discussion about the relationship between natural environments and technological advancement. Stainless steel exhibits exceptional corrosion resistance, making it indispensable for outdoor sculptures that are subjected to diverse environmental conditions. By ensuring the sculpture's structural integrity and attractiveness are preserved over time, it becomes a sustainable option for public art, as depicted in Fig. 2.



Fig. 1. Aryan, Ramlan Abdullah, 2021. The model of stainless-steel sculpture features a flower-like design atop a tripod base, combining organic and mechanical elements.



Fig. 2. Aryan, Ramlan Abdullah, 2021. The sculpture is displayed outdoors. It features a flower-like design atop a tripod base, combining organic and mechanical elements.

The sculpture's stain resistance and simplicity of cleaning result in minimum care, hence decreasing the expenses and efforts required for maintenance. This is especially beneficial for public art pieces that require durability against continuous exposure and interaction. The high strength-to-weight ratio of stainless steel enables the construction of huge and sturdy buildings that can withstand physical pressures and environmental variables without sacrificing their shape. Urban Spaces: The sculpture's contemporary and contemplative characteristics make it highly compatible with urban settings. It has the ability to enhance the aesthetic quality of public areas by complementing contemporary architecture and urban landscapes. By using symbolic or culturally significant components, such as the flower motif, the sculpture can connect with local populations, promoting a strong sense of identification and pride. The modern design of the product also demonstrates forward-thinking and creativity, making it suitable for towns that prioritise technological growth. The polished facade and innovative layout promote engagement with the public. Observers have the opportunity to perceive their own reflections and the environment around them mirrored in the sculpture, establishing an intimate bond with the artwork. This interaction has the potential to transform the sculpture into a central centre of interest for social events and community involvement.

4 Conclusion

An outstanding benefit of utilising stainless steel as a medium for public sculpture is its substantial contribution to the improvement of local identity and the enrichment of public spaces. The comprehensive understanding of the material's flexibility and influence was provided by the multifaceted approach, which included an examination of the pertinent literature, comparative analysis, field research, and artistic experimentation. The comparative examination of Adeola Balogun and Dotun Popoola in the field of welded metal sculpture revealed numerous techniques and thematic explorations related to this medium. Both of these artists challenge the limitations of the medium, enhancing its ongoing evolution and enduring relevance in modern art. An in-depth examination of the sculptures "Cloud Gate" by Anish Kapoor and "Angel of the North" by Antony Gormley revealed how stainless-steel sculptures may transform urban environments, foster community engagement, and establish themselves as significant cultural landmarks. These sculptures exemplify the utilisation of material to showcase their aesthetic allure, durability, and ability to represent broader social and cultural narratives.

The case study of my work "Aryan" presents more proof of the practical and symbolic benefits that stainless steel provides for outdoor sculptures. The material's durability ensures its longevity in public settings, while the contemporary design and reflective surface enhance the product's visual impact. Stainless steel is an attractive material for public sculpture because it combines artistic variation, utilitarian durability, and symbolic resonance. Integrating this material into public art not only improves the visual attractiveness and rejuvenation of urban areas, but also promotes community engagement and mirrors current ideals. The results of this study clearly demonstrate that stainless steel plays a crucial role in addressing local identity issues and contributing to the cultural essence of public places.

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