

Golden Bird, Constantin Brancusi, early 20th Century, 55.39

Romanian 1876-1957

Current Label: Constantin Brancusi began making abstract sculptures at about the same time Wassily Kandinsky, his contemporary was exploring abstraction in painting. Kandinsky eventually chose to obscure the natural objects that provided the starting point for his abstractions, whereas Brancusi took natural forms to an extreme of simplification but never completely excluded them from his work. Golden Bird belongs to a series of twenty-eight marbles and bronzes exploring the theme of birds and their flight, which Brancusi executed between 1910 and the early 1950s. His inspiration for these sculptures was a Romanian folktale about a dazzling golden bird called the Maiastra, whose magical song restored sight to the blind and youth to the aged. The shiny polished bronze of Golden Bird recalls the Maiastra's brilliant plumage, and the vertical thrust of the neck suggests open-throated song.

Questions

1. How is this sculpture different from those of the past?
2. How do you interpret the use of the different materials (from bottom base to the top)
3. Describe what you see from different angles

Key Points

- Influence—non-Western art, simplification of forms, capturing the “essence” vs. Western tradition after Michelangelo – focus on superficial appearance.
 - “What is real is not the external form but the essence of things. Starting from this truth it is impossible for anyone to express anything essentially real by imitating its exterior surface”
- Symbolism
 - Human urge to transcend gravity, earthbound existence
- Early Inspiration for “Magic Bird”
 - Igor Stravinsky *The Firebird*, Russian folk tale: Prince Ivan rescues self and princess from evil sorcerer and monsters by waving a Firebird feather. The Firebird leads Ivan to the hidden egg that holds the evil sorcerer’s spirit, she tells him to break it, causes sorcerer to vanish. Figures in sculpture are struggling human masses that symbolize the sorcerer’s assistants.
- Armory Show 1913 assembled by Arthur Davies (one of The Eight)
 - Critics claimed that Matisse, Kandinsky, Braque, Duchamp and Brancusi were the agents of “universal anarchy”

Notes ---from Audio on Artsconnected

Walk around

One angle appears to be crying out, another angle calmer appearance

S shaped, concave, convex, openness at top

Nothing left to chance with the use of materials

Earth bound base upon which this heaven bound golden bird rest

Bibliography

http://artsimia.org/education/teacher-resources/objectinfocus_d.cfm?p=1&v=120

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