

CINEMA ARCHITECTONICA, EDITION 4/9, (1990), Richard MacDonald

This is the second stop on the Public Art, Public Memory tour.

Once a monument situated in Metro-Goldwyn Mayer's Hollywood lobby, Richard MacDonald's *Cinema Architectonica* has brushed shoulders with stars of the silver screen and Hollywood bigwigs. An homage to the studio's corporate legacy and its impact on a bustling industry, the monument now stands quietly in a back corner of the John Molson building lobby. A gift from former business professor Bruce Mallen, the sculpture's installation in the university draws links to Mallen's work in the American film industry.

Shaped like a circular pillar and clad with various decorative elements, the work is typical of the artist's practice, which plays with the human figure and architectural forms to honour the performing arts and entertainment industries. If you can, take a moment to move around the sculpture to view all sides of the work – or imagine it's different elements. The bronze's pillar-like quality is reminiscent of mid-century office tower architecture. Pyramids, waterfalls, female busts in headdresses and masculine forms all protrude from the sculpture's centre.

At one level, the bronze's homage to film production is fitting for a university with a creative and commercial impact on the national and global film industries. Yet we must also consider what is implied by this erotic representation of the female body. How might this sculpture represent the antiquated world of the American studio industry, known for its troubled history of systemic racism and exclusion based on gender?

According to MacDonald, the sculptural elements embody traditional Hollywood iconography. The pyramid is reminiscent of the style of early Egyptian theatres, the cascade of water represents film's kinetic abilities, and there are male and female heroes. However, at a time of ongoing and necessary transformation in many local and global film industries, we cannot ignore the sculpture's Orientalism – a 19th century artistic style which exoticized non-western imagery, and its sexist imagery. These images are imprints of a different era. How do we contend with this subject matter when it is monumentalized and placed in public view?

The sculpture also takes starkly different approaches to male and female forms. Although all of the figures are nude, the men appear strong and autonomous, while the female figure is positioned as a sexualized object of pleasure (or, in the artist's words, "an enjoyment associated with the medium.") This representation speaks to over a century of institutionalized sexism and misogyny in Hollywood as well as the global film industry.

Although it was produced in 1985 for a different site, how might we reconsider this piece within the twenty-first century context and culture of Concordia University? Concordia is an institution with many film, media, and communications programs. Students and professors at the university research and interrogate women, transgender people, and gender non-conforming

people's experiences in the traditional film industry, create space for their contributions, and improve filmmaking methods, processes, and conditions. These moves towards equity are centred in feminist and gender-inclusive approaches that highlight queer, Black, Indigenous, and people of colour's voices and aim toward decolonization.

Perhaps we can consider MacDonald's sculpture as a work that is in tension with the university's current tenor, and with necessary disruptions to the film industry. We can look at this work and consider how redressing the past plays a role in shaping our future. Perhaps this strategy also applies to how we engage with public art: when we recontextualize work we reconsider its place in public history.

To continue this tour, click on *Untitled* by Claude Th  berge.