

# Sculpture at the Buffalo Exposition

By Karl Bitter

IT is my opinion that an artistic decoration in any case should have a clear, distinct, and well-defined meaning; that the subjects should be selected with great care, even before questions of manner of rendering are considered. This is particularly desirable in an instance of such importance as this Exposition. The exhibits are housed in buildings which serve not only as shelters, but are in themselves examples of the conditions of our people and our times. They are intended to be of an educating influence, perhaps as great as the exhibits themselves.

Their artistic attributes may be considered as the phraseology of the sermon that is to be delivered. In order to make this sermon effective, its scope and principal lines are questions of primary importance.

Happily, in our case, the grouping of the buildings suggests these principal lines. We observe that to the left, on the Esplanade, buildings are situated containing, in a measure, the examples of our natural resources. We find there a Forestry, a Mining, a Horticultural building. We show with pride the natural wealth of our continent; we will impress the visitor with the magnitude and abundance of the trees of our forests, their great varieties; we point to the unparalleled deposits of coal and iron, etc. — all things that nature can provide,

and not man. These facts and the resulting thoughts of pride and gratitude to nature should be crystalized in the things that form the frame of our exhibits. The simple, cold fact demonstrated inside of the buildings should find ideal and elevating expression in the paintings and sculptures about the buildings. It is needless to elaborate on the field that opens before the eyes of the artists, when we speak of the gratitude we owe to nature that has given us all that is, that grows, and that forms the fundamental conditions of life.

The other side of the Esplanade, surrounded principally by Government buildings, will invite to speak of our people and our institutions. We are aware that the natural wealth of our country means comfort and wealth to the people, only if they are of the right kind, and their institutions such as to insure liberal and peaceable enjoyment of such wealth. The institutions of our country form a worthy parallel to our resources. Again, the expressions in color and form must give inspiration to the mind, and assist reason that

has been called upon by the contents of the buildings. Not a mere shell, beautiful and glittering, but empty inside, is the work that sculptors will have to give us here; and not here and there a spark of an idea, but step by step, and link by link, should our work lead the thinking mind to grasp one big idea, and ignite a fire of lasting true enthusiasm.

In distinct separation from the above Products of two groups, Genius we find another group of buildings devoted to Machinery and Transportation, Electricity, Manufacture and Liberal Arts, etc. What is shown therein is neither a direct product of nature nor attributable to any institution, but solely to the genius of man, though on the basis of what material nature has given him, and what freedom and liberty the institutions of his

country will allow him. These buildings, and the Court of Fountains, as well as the Mall, around which they are located, should be devoted to the allegorization of that subject. There is the wheel of progress, advancement, and civilization, that is revolved and moved by the mighty brain and sturdy arm of the nation. Our inventive, industrious, and ingenious qualities will be the motive for the painter and the sculptor. Again an enormous field.

Next in order is the group of buildings surrounding



*Mounted Standard-bearer, by Karl Bitter.*



the Plaza. We find the gateways on one side to the Stadium, on the other to Vanity Fair. We have left the practical side of life and come to the more poetical, which will show us the tempering of the people, their games and sports, and their varied amusements. Again the subjects for decorations suggest themselves, and it is not necessary to point them out; but I will also here repeat that not the occasional reference to sport or stage or dance will suffice, or the repetition of the same idea in different forms, but that all decorations in those surroundings, together, should reflect in an ideal light, and in elaborate and distinct form, the characteristics of the people.

In many respects the most prominent feature at the Exposition is to be the Electrical Tower and its Colonnade. The display of water about this tower suggests the following treatment of its sculptural effects: Buffalo's importance, growth, and prosperity, are chiefly due to the Great Lake System and the waterways on which the city is located; its commerce and wealth are a direct offspring of the "Great Waters," as the Indians called them. They connect this city with the many other cities that dot the shores of those big inland seas. That will lead us to an allegorization of the "Great Waters," expressed already in the display of cascades and fountains, but not assisted by figures and groups, in which reference is made to the gigantic rôle which the lakes, the rivers, the Erie Canal, and the eleven railroads play in inland commerce.

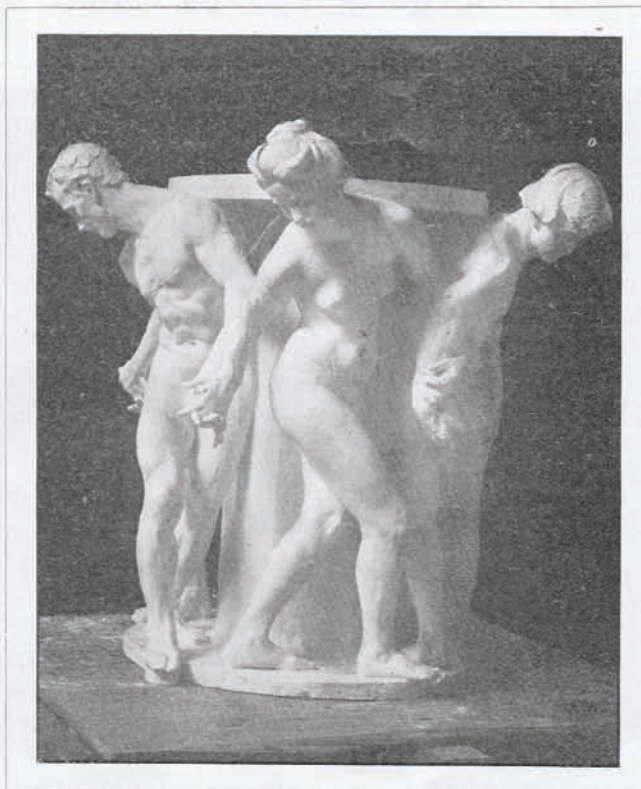
On approaching the Exposition, the Bridge, as perhaps the most ornate feature, should be given over to an apotheosis of the United States, an allegorization of national pride.

With a few minor exceptions I have been given the opportunity by the Exposition authorities to carry out the foregoing proposition. There was no restraint or outside influence to interfere with the conception that I arrived at concerning the subjects for the sculptural decoration.

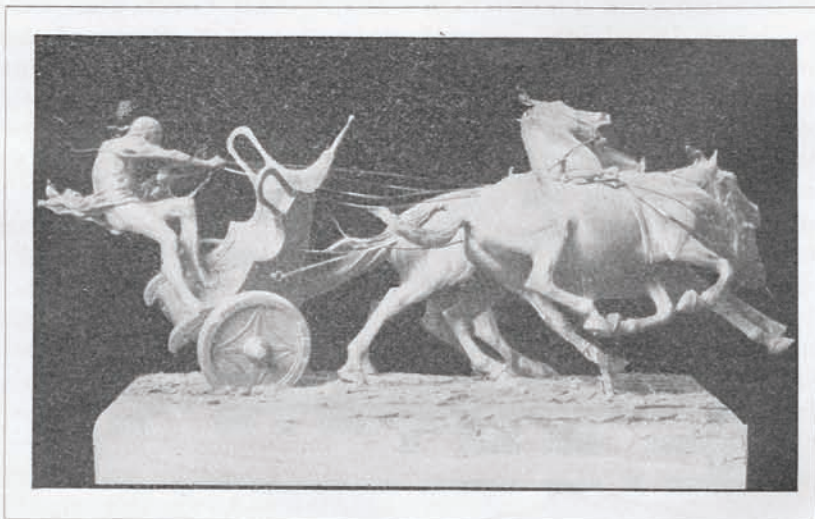
Being governed by the groups the buildings formed, I classified the sculptors' work in three great groups: The Court formed by the left wing of the Esplanade, and surrounded by Forestry, Mining, etc., buildings, I devoted to the subject of Nature; the opposite right wing, surrounded by the Government buildings, to Man and his institutions; the main court called Court of Fountains, flanked by Machinery, Electricity, Transportation, etc., buildings, formed the third group: the Genius of Man and his development in the fields of art, science, and industry.

Three Great Groups

Beginning with the east wing of the Esplanade, for which I selected the subject of Nature, I found that it contained a large basin forming in its outlines a cross. At the head a great fountain was provided, the cross-bar emphasized by two subordinate fountains, while pedestals for six large groups, three on either side, marked the corners of the basin. Those were the main features which the architect desired decorated and which were shown on his plans, in their size and proportions. The large fountain at the head I named Fountain of Nature, and George T. Brewster was commissioned to execute it. In carrying out his work he introduced allegorizations of the Sun and the Stars below him; the Globe, on which figures are placed representing the four Elements; further below, River and Brook, Mountain and Dale, etc., etc. For the two subordinate fountains, which were to be composed of fewer figures, I selected Kronos and Ceres, to indicate the eternity of nature on one side and its yearly revival by the fruit-spreading goddess on the other. F. E. Elwell, the sculptor, represented



*The Five Senses, by Charles Grafty.*



*Chariot Race, by F. G. Roth.*

Kronos as a winged figure—the swiftness of time—and placed him on a turtle—the slowness of time. Ceres he has shown with outstretched arms holding symbols dating back to the old heathen times, and speaking of the birth that Nature gives to all that exists.



The subjects for the six groups which were to be placed on the pedestals, mentioned before, I arranged in three series: the first two and nearest to the Fountain of Nature, to express Mineral Wealth, executed by Chas. H. Nichaus; the following two Floral Wealth, by Bela L. Pratt; the remaining two Animal Wealth, by E. C. Potter. In Mineral Wealth we find the Nymph of Opportunity calling man to unearth the hidden treasures; in Floral Wealth, blooming and withering; the wild on one side, and the domesticated on the other in Animal Wealth.

The same architectural disposition of the Government Buildings

and bases for fountains, groups, etc., as just mentioned, we find in the other wing of the Esplanade, which is formed, as stated before, by the Government buildings. Corresponding with the Fountain of Nature in the centre of the semi-circle, and right in front of the imposing dome of the Government building, which balances the dome of the Horticulture building, on the other side of the Esplanade, is the principal feature of this beautiful Court—it is the Fountain of Man, by Charles Grafly, of Philadelphia. This is surmounted by two figures, joined into one and veiled—the two sides of man's nature being thus indicated, and by the veil, the mystery of his soul. Below, the Five Senses join hands in a circle and support man. The waters in this fountain fall into an elevated basin which is supported by groups of crouching figures representing characteristics of humanity; as love and hatred, courage and cowardice, etc. As I selected mythological subjects at either side of the Fountain of Nature I have in the corresponding positions, at either side of the Fountain of Man, chosen the subjects: the Fountain of Hercules and the Fountain of Prometheus, which Hinton R. Perry has executed. Furthermore, to correspond with Mineral, Floral and Animal Wealth, I have chosen for the six important pedestals on this side, the subjects: the Savage Age, the Age of Despotism, and the Age of Enlightenment. John J. Boyle shows in the groups of Savage Age, on the one side, the rape of the Sabines; on the other side the subject is entirely modern, representing the war dance of an uncivilized tribe.

The Age of Despotism was treated by two different artists and in two entirely different ways. One group, by Isidore Conti, has the Chariot of State drawn by four men representing the mass

of the people: the peasant, the artisan, etc. On the chariot is seated the Despot, his governing power being represented by a fury, scourge in hand, forcing the people in the yoke to draw the heavy burden; in the rear of the chariot are chained Justice and Truth. Different is H. A. MacNeil's conception of Despotism. He shows the despotism of conscience that will give no

rest to the guilty; he shows the despotism of a fanatical idea that will possess both the aged and the innocent child.

The two groups representing the Age of Enlightenment, by Herbert Adams, show the blessings, in a modern sense, of Religion, Education, and the Family.

Again, arriving at the axis of the Esplanade, we have to the left Nature, to the right Man and his institutions; and before



*Human Emotions, by Paul W. Bartlett.*

us the large open Court of Fountains. We find this Court surrounded by a group of buildings devoted to Machinery, Electricity, Transportation, Manufacture and Liberal Arts, and we find at its head the principal feature of the colossal Electric Tower. I said before, that I have selected as the subject for this Court the Genius of Man. This Court also contains a basin, but larger than those of the Esplanade and grander than the fountain effects. Piling up against the semi-circular wall which forms the upper end of the basin, in front of the Electric Tower, will be sculpture of heroic size and composed of many figures—sea-horses and other animals. The central composition will bear the title, the Genius of Man. On either side we shall have two subordinate groups, the one Human Emotions, and the other Human Intellect. Paul W. Bartlett has been chosen for this important work. Since this basin recalls in the ground plan the basins of the Esplanade, and is also provided with two wings, such as have been devoted there to mythological subjects, I have again put the main subject in a frame of mythology: the Birth of Venus will be placed on the side of Human Emotions, the Birth of Athene to the side of Human Intellect. We also find in this Court the pedestals which mark the architectural design and emphasize the corners of the basin. To lead the ideas expressed in these fountains to a culminating point, a group representing Art will decorate the pedestal nearest to Human Emotions and the Birth of Venus, while Science will occupy a corresponding position in regard to Human Intellect and the Birth of Athene. The two groups are executed



by Chas. Lopez, and the two fountains by Mr. and Mrs. Michael Tonetti.

Back of the Electric Tower and surrounded by the entrance to "Vanity Fair" on the one side, to the Stadium on the other, and by the Propylaeum on the third side, we have a large, open square called the Plaza. While before we have been confronted

**A Study in Temperament** with things appealing to our intellect and to the practical side of life, we may see here and study the temperament of the people, their sports and games, and their varied amusements. Since lack of time, and, to some extent, lack of funds have not permitted us to commission artists with the creation of original pieces, to express those sentiments, we have had recourse to existing works of art, of which replicas could be procured, such as antique figures and works of the later Renaissance



*Fountain of Abundance, by Philip Martiny.*

period. The Achilles Borghese and other athletic subjects familiar to us all, will be seen on pedestals flanking the Stadium entrance. Nymphs, fauns, and bacchantes will make ornate the pedestals near the entrance to the Midway. Groups of children, copies of those at Versailles, will be distributed among the flower beds and paths surrounding the Music Pavilion, which is located in the centre of the Plaza, and around which it is expected that music-loving people will gather.

It now remains to speak of the Monumental Bridge, which forms the great introduction into the architectural charms of the Exposition. The host welcomes the visitor—there, the United States the nations of this hemisphere. The adornments of this bridge are to be an apotheosis of national pride and quality. Mounted Standard-bearers will crown the bridge piers, expressing Peace and Power. Below them will be heaped Trophies modeled by Augustus Lukeman, and embodying the same subjects in different forms. In addition, the bridge towers will show eight niches, which will contain statues expressive of Courage, Patriotism, Truth, Benevolence, and other characteristics of our people. Large semi-circular bays will extend on either side from this bridge, into the canal, and these bays will support colossal flag-poles, the bases of which will be richly ornamented by figures and sea-horses, the one having as its subject the Atlantic, the

other the Pacific Ocean, by Philip Martiny. At some distance, in front of the bridge, two guard-houses are situated, which will be surmounted by two colossal groups of Fighting Eagles, by Maximilian Schwarzott.

I have not mentioned anything but the subjects that were to be expressed by the sculptor. Certainly whether the sculpture will be successful or not does not depend entirely upon the selection of subjects—there are a great many more sides to the question; but I believe that one man in the position I occupy could hardly make his influence felt in any other direction without forcing his own individuality upon others. Therefore, it may be said that the manner in which a subject is treated, the arrangement and composition of the figures, was left absolutely to the individual sculptor. No doubt a strictly uniform result cannot be obtained in such a way. As much as character, the training and education differ, so much will conception and execution vary. Still, I believe the result will be interesting and pleasing. While one artist is gifted by nature with an imagination full of ideas and resources, in some cases supported by considerable knowledge of history, mythology and literature, the other has a fine sense for the real, a keen observation of nature and the life that immediately surrounds him.

Whatever the result will be, it will demonstrate, perhaps clearer than on any other previous occasion, the time, condition and standing, the ideals and direction of contemporary sculpture in America.

I purchased from the museums of the Trocadéro, the Louvre, and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts at Paris, a number of plaster casts of vases, gaines, figures and groups. The originals of a majority of them may be known to those who visited the gardens of Versailles. While I am reluctant in giving praise to the work which our modern school has given to the Exposition, I feel free to say that those nymphs and satyrs and river-gods on bridge-piers and among flowers and greens are delightful to the eye, and although they symbolize the rivers of France, and depict ideas of bygone days and of a foreign land, they are nevertheless of a great educational value. Though these pieces have a place in the history of art, many among us are not acquainted with that particular period; or others, having seen them in museums only, failed to be impressed by the charm of this period of art which demands surroundings of a kind which will be found in the flowers and fountains, the stairways and balustrades of our Exposition.

Of course, to these objects of art my original scheme does not apply, and to carry out my scheme even in its limited form would have been impossible had we proceeded in the usual manner and by such methods as were pursued, for instance, at the Chicago Exposition. Though we have, as I believe, nearly as many pieces of original sculpture at the Pan-American as Chicago had at its Columbian Exposition, the cost of their production is perhaps less than one-quarter.

To reduce the cost without diminishing the artists' just remuneration I concluded to take charge of, and simplify, the process of enlarging the artists' original models. The expenses which the many artists would have otherwise incurred in paying

**The Monumental Bridge**

**From Foreign Museums**

**Buffalo and Chicago**

**An Economical Plan**



rent for especially fitted and large studios, the purchase of material in small quantities, and many other incidentals which are not of an artistic, but simply mechanical, nature, were thus abolished. Special credit is due to the invention of a young American sculptor, Robert T. Payne, whose pointing machine proved a great success. It was the first time that this new device for making an enlarged copy of the artist's small original model was experimented with, and the result was greater precision and faithfulness in the reproduction, and a considerable saving in the cost of purely mechanical labor.

On the other hand, this great common studio, in which, during the period of five months, over five hundred figures were produced and sent to Buffalo in fifty large railroad cars, was a school of training for many young American sculptors, who found there an opportunity for study on large and am-

A School of  
Training

bitious objects, which art schools cannot ordinarily afford. I am certain that the visitors to this studio will remember the busy scene. The interest which the young men took in their work was apparent and will speak for itself in the result they accomplished in the astonishingly short space of time. Many of them got little rest during those five months, and particularly their Superintendent, Gustave Gerlach, who set them an example of disinterested devotion to the purpose, as only a true artist can.

Apart from the gigantic proportions of the undertaking, the names of those who were engaged therein make it important and representative of contemporary American art ; and though disciples of many beliefs in art had to meet on the same ground and often compromise, harmony prevailed from beginning to end. May success crown their efforts and reward them for their indulgence !

Representative  
Men