



## PREFACE

By Erik Mørstad

For many art lovers, the art of sculpting is a distant and inaccessible art form. Literature, film and theatre, on the other hand, deal in stories on human terms. These are art forms which express the most pressing questions of our own times and which, therefore are often decisively more present and of the moment than the products of the stone sculptor. In contemporary art forms the public recognise themselves. The art of stone sculpting definitely has its Achilles heel: The public must at all times actively relate to the visual form of expression which, to make matters more complicated, is in addition mute. Due to this, stone sculptors are probably that group of contemporary artists which meet the greatest resistance. Perhaps sculptors can be regarded as suffering from an information problem, because, after all, what is sculpture actually? For the sculptor, a sculpture is something which is slowly created, and for the public it is something which is very quickly viewed.

In this book Per Ung presents his answer to the question: What is sculpture really about? Photographs and accompanying texts visualize and exemplify his approach to the problem.

In general, one can say that sculptors, whatever their style, work with the composite elements mass, volume, space, surface, in addition to light and shadow. Another common factor is that sculptors must train themselves to become adept at orientating, proportioning, articulating and balancing their works of art. These are principles and elements of composition which also confront Per Ung, and which he solves on the basis of his artistic premises and choices.

What choices has he then made? For Per Ung, the human body has always been the main motif. His art is figurative, and in that respect adherent to an unbroken European art tradition which has its roots in Greek antiquity. The reason that Per Ung has chosen the human body as his motif, is probably connected with the emotional position occupied by the human being in the minds of most individuals. The human being is an object of love, hate, desire, fear, respect and worship.

However, also in a formal sense the human body possesses an almost limitless amount of variation. The body can be formed in countless ways, and as result can express a very broad spectrum of emotions and atmospheres. Simultaneously, the sculptural forms have certain geometrical structures, and these structures contain precise expressive qualities. The figurative form has abstract hallmarks, and in this respect Ung's sculptures are both abstract and figurative.

Even though we here in Norway use the art of sculpture as a common term for three-dimensional art, one is bound to characterise Per Ung more as a modeller than an actual mason. He forms and works in clay which thereafter is cast in plaster and bronze. This can also be considered as a crossroads which set the premises for the result. Occasionally he will create circularly modelled, free standing statues, at other times two figures grouped on the same pling. Per Ung is, at least as I understand his sculptures, equally interested in modelling and anatomical studies as in the expressive power of the completed figures. Therefore, on looking more closely, Per Ung's sculptures deal just as much with interhuman relations as do literature, film and theatre. But here, as in other fields, the rule is that one must take one's time to look closely, and this book is a welcome opportunity to become better acquainted with the sculptural world of Per Ung.