

反諷的雕塑角色鑄型：「美的提問」
的可被提問性——論《麗美中心：金
山上的美容院—楊子強個展》

Sculpture Cast as Satire: Misgivings on the
Quest for Beauty

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I . Ideals & Idealizations

*Can you polish your mysterious mirror
And leave no blemish?*¹

The sculptural object occupies the same space that a human body does—we encounter it as we encounter one another, within the reality of space as we experience it. On a larger scale, and when intended for permanence, sculptural form becomes a landmark, and displacing more than space, it is a significant factor in place making. Emplaced thus, it also stakes a claim on time, tending towards timelessness, as memorials and historical monuments tenaciously hold on to their place in the present, and moor in our cultural consciousness. And nothing seems to rightfully occupy space and timelessness more than embodiments of the ideals of “Beauty,” where the quest for “Truth” is often conflated. Ancient sites and works of art marked by these ambitions, are in our present time considered as part of the world’s cultural heritage, and continue to fascinate and hold us in thrall. Ensconced in our minds—alluded to by Lao Tzu as the “mysterious mirror”—is a space that is haunted by seemingly timeless ideals of beauty and truth, ideals that regulate the evaluation and judgement of the self, the other, nature and art. Despite radical

1 Lao Tzu, “Book One, X,” *Tao te ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 14.

paradigmatic shifts of perspective in the contemporary art world, “Beauty” lingers on as an imperative, and we continue to contend with expectations of “perfection” —both in art and the human form. However, only the ethereal and ambiguous *concept* of beauty is timeless, and not necessarily the era-bound perspectives of what might constitute beauty, as consensus for what is “beautiful” constantly shifts. And then, there’s “Power.” No doubting that being in the presence of beauty is a powerful experience: it seems to transcend the ugly fact that the pursuit of beauty at all costs can be quite a grotesque and disenchanting process indeed.

Inevitably, art has always been a partner—reluctantly or otherwise—to projections of power, and the beautiful work of art has been used variously as ruse, muse and midwife for political intention and power throughout history, and a proxy for abstract relations of power that have real-life influence on the individual and society at large. Artists are themselves aware of this power of form and image, and sometimes deploy their own agendas accordingly, for better or worse. The evolving roles of craftsman, architect, and artist, from anonymity to the non-anonymous complicity and affiliation with power-projection, have come increasingly to the fore with every passing generation, where the ambitious, and necessarily “beautiful” work of art—architectural and sculptural form in particular—is cast as the emblematic right hand of cultural power and national pride, with the objective of keeping the eye, and so heart and mind, in awe.

Critically, the end—beauty—seems to transcend, if not exactly justify, the means: the inescapable fact that it is money and power that