

Lovers' Skin Under Gravity: Reading Archenima

ARAYA ASGEDOM
Hampton University

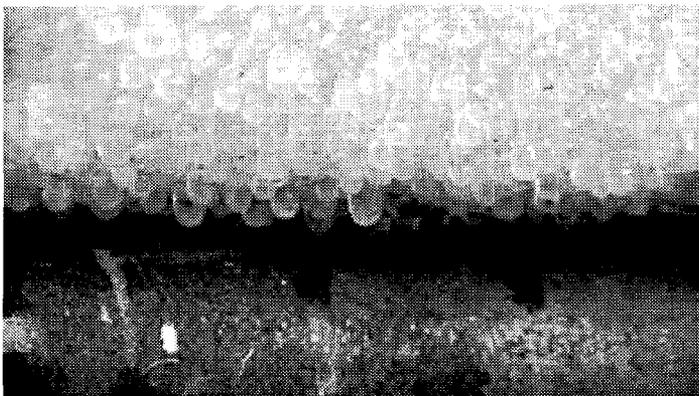


Fig.1 Skin, Steel, and Sweat

In giving flesh to our bones we lose quite a bit of water.
Seems that we are dehydrating.
Shedding excess water needed for the enveloping movement
of our flesh around our bones.
The stretch of our skin
opens thousands of surface pores.
The machined weave is very tight,
holding
invisible spaces all over our skin.
Our flesh in exerting its ponderous weight, opens these spaces through
which we weep and bleed.

All footings shall bear on undisturbed soil or controlled compacted fill capable of supporting a design bearing pressure of 1500 PSF.

All concrete is to be 3500 PSI structural lightweight concrete.

All reinforcing steel shall be in accordance with A.S.T.M. A615, grade 60 lap all bars 36 diameter.

Concrete protection for reinforcing as well as placing and fabrication of reinforcing shall be in accordance with the "American Concrete Institute Building Code Requirements (A.C.I. 318-latest edition.)

Earth formed footings shall conform to the shape, lines and dimensions as shown on the foundation plan. All water shall be removed before deposition concrete.

Before placing concrete, all embedded items shall be properly placed, accurately positioned and maintained securely in place.

The contractor shall coordinate and verify all dimensions prior to starting construction and any discrepancy shall be brought to the attention of the structural engineer.

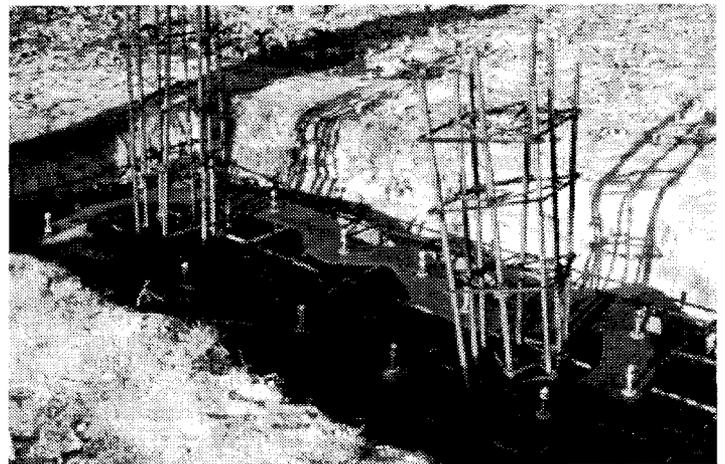


Fig.2 The Soles of Our Feet

The anchor of our bodies,
the soles of our feet
allow us to roam the earth.
They hug one another.
The anchor,
arising out of the flesh of the earth
pierces through the bones and skin
of our feet to make
the bond.

The formwork for the sculpture consists of

- a) #10 duck canvas, natural color, 72" wide and 10yards long.
- b) 1 1/2" diameter mild steel tubing, cut bent, welded, ground and transported to site.
- c) 3/4" thick plywood and 1/2" X 3" wood boards
- d) poly-cotton cords as ties
- e) 1" diameter brass rivets at the top edges and seam edges of the canvas formwork, and,
- f) a one-to-one pattern of the canvas formwork made from furniture cover material.

Canvas formwork secured at the bottom between the twin 1/16" thick sheet metal base plates.

The canvas formwork covers a nominal area of 14' - 0" by 8' - 0" dimension.

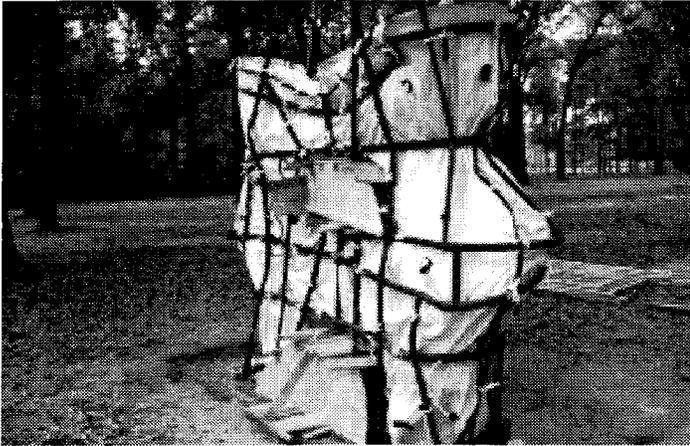


Fig.3 Skin Waiting for Flesh

Our skin and bones await the arrival of flesh.

Any day, now,

We are not sure we have loose skin or just that our skin has shrunk from some vacuuming of our breath our very breath from our body.

We are tethered to our external bones by the white ties.

Yards of synthetic fiber cord encased in cotton-like softness and weave.

If not for the ties

our skin would slip off

our bones and gather down at our feet.

Six and half tons of 3500 PSI regular mix of concrete is poured into the formwork.

A mechanical vibrator facilitated the proper settlement and compaction of the concrete into the canvas formwork.

In the course of pouring the concrete two failures of formwork were encountered and recovered from:

- 1) hydrostatic pressure induced tear within the canvas fabric and
- 2) an improperly sewn seam gave up under pressure from the vibration.

Adjustment of pressure points which are tied with quality of surface finish during the pouring was assisted by manual vibration (punching) of the slurry concrete.

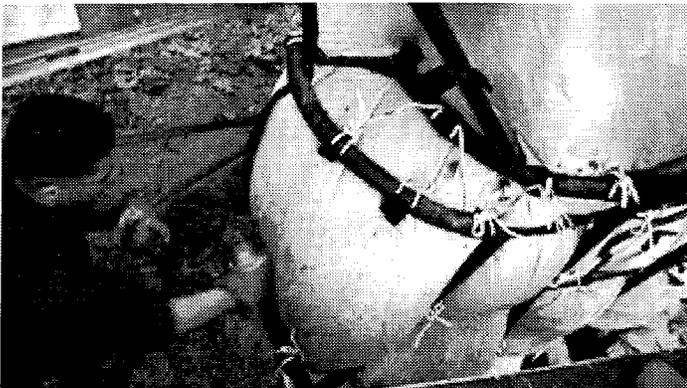


Fig.4 Boxer Vibrating

Part of the flesh settlement and compaction comes

from the vibrations we receive on our skin.

One might call it boxing or punching, But it delivers the finer touches in accommodating our flesh around those tight joints where the skin comes close to our bones

or where sometimes the flesh gets trapped under the bones or where it folds around the form of our exterior bones.

Stripped of the canvas formwork, the work stands in its own skin and voluptuous flesh.

The laborious process of stripping the canvas form was made difficult by two factors:

one, the thickness of the canvas material, and

two: the fact that the canvas material is held under pressure of the concrete along the hollow steel tubes which serve as the exterior structure of the work, and on which the canvas itself hangs for its capacity as a formwork.



Fig.5 Elevation on the Oblique Side

At times it seems we are standing at attention, our bulk exposed.

Steel balls are hollow spheres.

They are welded to 1/2" and 1" diameter mild steel tubes.

Spray painted with primary colors to accent and

make reference to the new building neighboring the work.

Embedded within the cast concrete as the pouring was getting to the top,

these balls were planned to have been at the end of the tails of the tube structure in the initial proposal.

Questions of safety and fear of liability moved them up to the shoulder position.

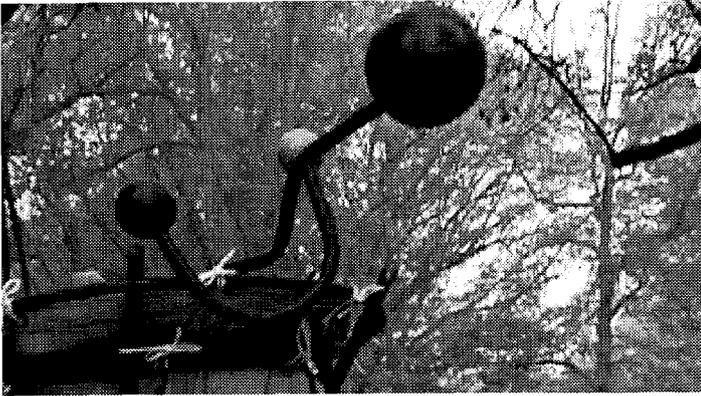


Fig.6 Colored Antennae

Once in a while we communicate with our antennae.
 We call them ferro dreadlocks,
 hair of ancestors,
 wires of intelligence.
 The nodes help us store our knowledge of the surroundings.
 The earth we walk on and the space we live in.
 Some of them are lonely.
 Others,
 fraternal twins.

Fabricated out of 1/16" thick sheet metal,
 the collar is attached, with screws,
 to an inner metal cylinder which is in turn anchored
 to the reinforced concrete neck of the lovers.
 Each lover has 7 stainless steel screws finished with cap nuts
 to brace together the two front edges of the collar in place.
 The collar serves as graduated (if not yet smooth) point of transition
 from the neck to the head or vice versa.

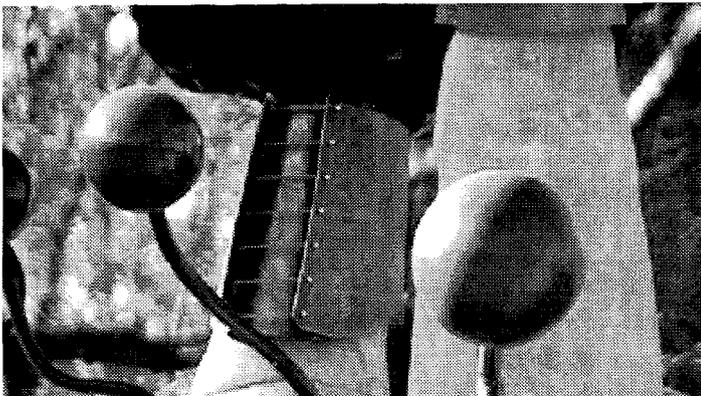


Fig.7 The Collar

Our collars.
 They remind us of our ancestors.
 How they kept metal rings around their necks.
 A bundle of them. Storied like coiled springs, and
 weighted down by tradition.
 We instructed our makers
 that we
 would like to celebrate how our heads are connected with our necks.
 For lack of a better term
 they called it, the collar.

The ties secure the position of the canvas formwork to a particular location.

Depending on the hydrostatic pressure of the wet mix of concrete on the formwork, we loosen the ties, reposition it, and secure again to release the pressure and yet keep the fabric in place.

Even though they are momentary helpers in the construction performance,

they lend particular formal and aesthetic nodes which want to remain part of the work.

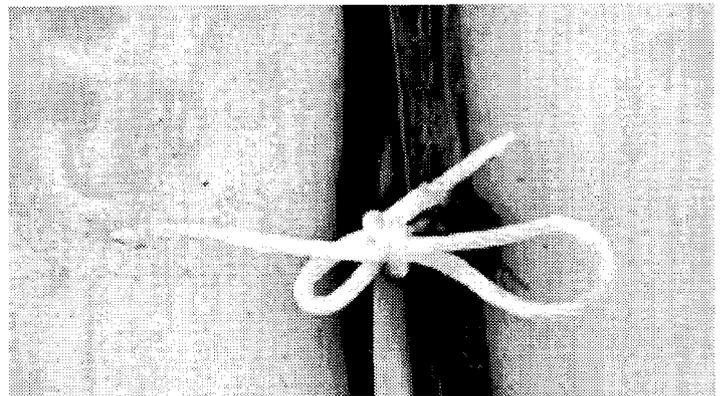


Fig.8 Bow Tie

Neither the strength of our bones
 nor the solidity of our flesh;
 neither the metal wires our skulls are partly made from
 nor the colored antennae on our shoulders;
 but the ties which pull together the skin,
 the flesh,
 and the bones
 make possible
 —in their sheer multitude and gathering—
 the fleshing of the body.