



RELIEF SCULPTURES 9

The term *relief* is from the Latin verb *levo*, to raise.

Bas-relief sculpture (low relief) is a stone sculpture made by chipping away at a slab of rock to make a picture that stands out. It is also called low relief sculpture (bas being the French for 'low') and is contrasted with high relief sculpture. (In Italian-*basso-rilievo*)

High Relief Sculpture is a stone sculpture where more than 50% of the image stands out further from the surface. The Egyptians, Persians, Greeks and many others have used high-relief (*alto-rilievo*).

•**Relief** is a sculptural technique. The term [relief](#) is from the Latin verb *levo*, to raise. To create a sculpture in relief is thus to give the impression that the sculpted material has been raised above the background [plane](#). What is actually performed when a relief is cut in from a flat surface of stone or wood is a lowering of the field, leaving the unsculpted parts seemingly raised. The technique thus involves considerable chiselling away of the background, which is a time-consuming exercise with little artistic effect if the lowered background is left plain, as is often the case. On the other hand, a relief saves forming the rear of a subject, and is less fragile and more securely fixed than a sculpture in the round, especially one of a standing figure where the ankles are a potential weak point, especially in stone. In other materials such as metal, clay, plaster [stucco](#), ceramics or [papier-mache](#) the form can be just added to or raised up from the background, and monumental [bronze](#) reliefs are made by [casting](#).

•shallow-relief or *rilievo schiacciato*,^[1] where the plane is scarcely more than scratched in order to remove background material. There is also **sunk relief**, which was mainly restricted to Ancient Egypt.

Reliefs are common throughout the world on the walls of buildings and a variety of smaller settings, and **a sequence of several panels or sections of relief may represent an extended narrative**. Relief is more **suitable for depicting complicated subjects with many figures and very active poses**, such as battles, than free-standing "sculpture in the round". Most ancient architectural reliefs were originally painted, which helped to define forms in low relief. The subject of reliefs is for convenient reference assumed in this article to be usually figures, but sculpture in relief often depicts decorative geometrical or foliage patterns, as in the arabesques of Islamic art, and may be of any subject.

Why would sculpting in relief be easier/safer than trying to sculpt the same scene as a series of free-standing sculptures??



A ancient greek Bas relief carving of a Goddess (c5thBC)
Metope from the Elgin Marbles (former architectural detailing from the Pantheon on the Acropolis, Athens) depicting the fight between the Centaurs and the Lapiths.
(447- 432BC)- **Bas or High Relief and why??**



Chidi Okoye- African Tribal Mask- This can be called a Bas Relief sculpture as it has a flat base designed not to be seen.

This is typical of the origins of Bas Relief- this is a Bas Relief Sculpture of a maiden found in the Bayon Temple in Ankor, Cambodia- You can now see, due to the erosion process, how this sculpture started as a block of stacked rocks which a Stone carver would then chip away the rock to reveal their own chosen composition. Look at the precision detailing of each minute detail in the background!!!



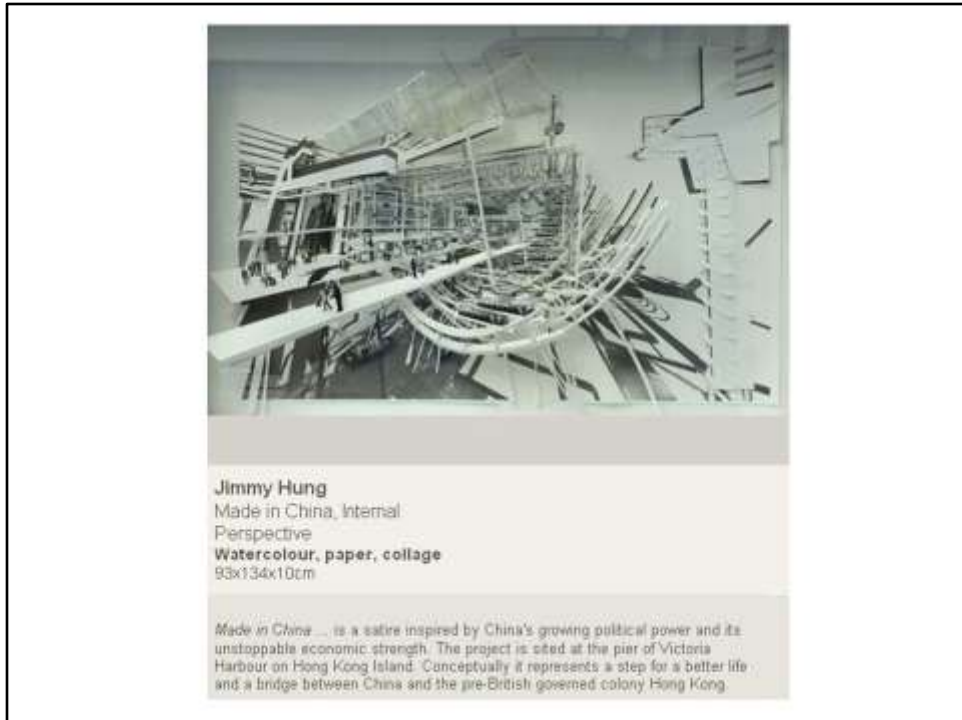
War memorial in Ostend, Belgium
Paul Day's Sculpture reliefs- Debt of Many and Sunday Sport (2001)



Daniel Chester French- The Angel of Death and the sculptor from the Milmore Memorial (1889-93)
Mourning Victory from the Melvin Memorial (1906-8)



Henri Matisse- 4 bass relief sculptures created over a 21 year period showing Matisse's development towards a more abstract (unreal) figurative representation. Bass Relief #1= 1909, Bass Relief #2=1913, Bass Relief #3= 1916-17, Bass Relief #4= 1930,



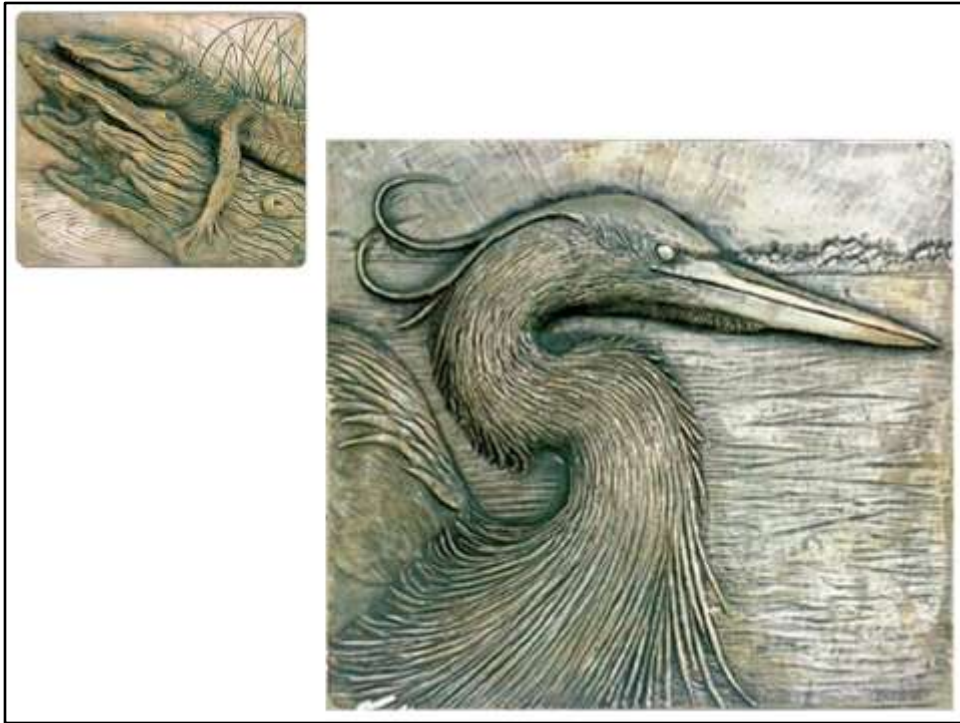
Architectural models are becoming more and more creative and a lot work on the principle of theatre modelling where the design was made coming out of a box (ie it had a flat back and items would come out of the space. If you are interested the Royal Academy hosts its Summer Exhibition every year that has a brilliant architecture section (where I found this image)



Bridge City (Bridge on 110 street) New York Project 1960 by James Fitzgibbon



Berlin Zoo- outside walls of building- public art display.



Mike O'Brien created these four bas relief carvings- from clay to create mould then each mould was then cast in bronze. These relief sculptures were all created for the Brazos Bend State National Park in Texas as a commissioned piece of work in 1996

