Creating A Brick Sculpture

Introduction:

- Brick sculpture may be designed for exterior or interior sites.
- It can be wall-integrated, freestanding or even used as a floor installation.
- Most any circumstance can be utilized for a successful presentation with maximum effect.
- After all the project details are decided (location, brick type, square footage, budget, timeline), a specified project contract is signed.
- The contract’s down payment begins the project’s design phase.
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Design Phase:

- Preliminary designs are developed on paper, based on meetings with the client and/or architect.
- When the design concept is finalized, the raw brick may be ordered from the chosen brick plant.
- Final full-scale design drawings are completed in the Studio.
- These drawings are used to transfer the design to the raw brick material for sculpting.
- The actual sculpting takes place within the regular production schedule of the brick plant.
- Not all brick plants can accommodate a sculpture project.
- If the desired brick comes from a plant that has never produced a brick sculpture, special preparations need to be made well in advance.
- The Sculptor’s knowledge of specific plants that have the capabilities of handling the needs of sculpted brick can provide guidance to the client in this process.
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Design Phase:

- The sculpture’s brick material does not necessarily have to be the same brick material that is used in the overall scheme of a building project.
- If the two are planned to match, a single material order is placed to assure that the sculpted and field brick match each other.
- If the brick material used for a building project is produced on a specific production run at the brick plant and the sculpture is going to be of the same material, it needs to be a part of the same run to assure an over all uniformity of color.
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Sculpting Phase:

- A floor-standing easel is used for sculpting.
- The raw brick is delivered to the workroom as needed, then laid onto the easel in the correct bond order.
- Spacers are used to mimic the bed and head mortar joints.
- Depending upon the size of the sculpture design, there can be from 500-2,000 or more brick handled, each weighing 10-20 lbs. to 50 lbs.
- Brick solids are used to allow for a maximum available sculpting depth.
- Special shapes of upwards to a 12” bed depth can be used for dramatic emphases.
- Work has to move at a fast pace because the raw brick is designed to dry quickly.
- To slow the drying, the material is covered with plastic during sculpting.
Production Phase:

- When the sculpting is completed, the raw brick is taken down from the easel.
- The individual bricks are numbered for specific placement.
- The solid bricks then have core holes hand-drilled in them to promote uniform drying.
- Stacked on drying racks, they are left to air-dry completely and slowly.
- When dry, the brick is hand-stacked onto kiln cars and run through a mechanical dryer to expel any remaining pockets of moisture.
- The sculpted brick then become a part of the brick plant’s regular production line.
- To insure that the hand-dried brick is really ready, it travels through “drying rooms” twice.
- From here, the sculpted brick travels directly to the “burn-out” phase (kiln firing).
- The brick sculpture will take about five days to travel through the almost 100-yard long kiln.
- During the journey, the brick is exposed to a constant increase in temperature, reaching a 2,000° maximum at the midway point.
- From there, the temperature is gradually decreased until the brick reaches about 400° when they emerge from the firing kiln.
- The fired brick sculpture is laid up on the easel to insure there was no damage. If damage did occur, brick material saved from the initial run are sculpted and sent through the kiln for completion.
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**Installation Phase:**

- The completed brick sculpture design is then carefully packed and shipped to the designated site of installation.

- At the installation site, the brick masons proceed with the actual installation under the direct supervision of the Sculptor.

- The Sculptor stays with the masons, following their work and tooling the mortar joints to complete the “flow” of the sculpture’s design.

- Finally, the completed sculpture is inspected, washed down and, if necessary, sealed.

- It’s done! **WHEW!**
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attracting the eye — complementing the space