

## Walking and Looking



This monumental sculpture of stacked cubes is at the Medical Sciences building at the University of Toronto. It was created around the end of the 1960s by Robert Downing, a Canadian artist.<sup>1</sup> The sculpture shares similar elements and ideas presented in Henri Le Fauconnier's artwork "Abundance." The sculpture is embedded into the wall as part of the facade, giving the impression that it is materialized from the same concrete substance. It also emphasizes the volume, density,

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Aagaard, "Concrete Jungle – How the Medical Sciences Building got its stripes," *University of Toronto Magazine*, 2012, <https://magazine.utoronto.ca/campus/places/concrete-jungle-medical-sciences-building-karen-aagaard/>.

and weight of the cubes. The sculpture fragments time and space while preserving dramatic and disorganized unity. It does not only consist of cubes but also cut planes of triangles and different-sized cubes, similar to elements found in cubist paintings such as Albert Gleizes' "Woman with Phlox," in which it combined angled planes of multiple perspectives. The cubes get smaller and more intensive as they project closer to the wall's middle, mimicking a cubic explosion. There is an apparent intention that there are no pictorial efforts through the cubes and that the artist merely wanted to emphasize volume, structure, and materiality. The sculpture itself hints at industrialism and modernization. It also hints at a balance between industrialism and nature, where it creates a geometric precision and consistent flow and movement through the wall. Although the sculpture may not directly refer to cubism, it does reflect how cubism has affected how people approach artistic techniques in the preceding years and how it unconsciously plays a role in the artworks artists create today.

## Bibliography

Aagaard, Karen. "Concrete Jungle – How the Medical Sciences Building got its stripes."

University of Toronto Magazine. 2012.

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