



Thaddeus Mosley: African American Sculptor

Prof. David Lewis

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Thaddeus “Thad” Mosley is a self-taught African American sculptor. Earning a living throughout his adult life as a postal worker in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, so that he could support his family by day and work as a sculptor by night, he has evolved an individual and powerful African American voice. He worked alone, patiently developing a sculptural language absolutely his own, yet traceable to his primary sources of inspiration, the vitality of African art and American jazz on the one hand, and on the other, two twentieth-century artists, the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi and the Asian American sculptor Isamu Noguchi.

From the beginning Thad Mosley has been a carver. His materials have always been those “at hand,” logs from the trees of his native Western Pennsylvania, stones from the sites of demolished buildings in Pittsburgh, and metals from local scrapyards. Finding within each log or block of stone an essential vitality, his carvings invariably bear a syncopation of chisel marks evoking the rhythms and surging freedoms of jazz. Mosley’s perseverance and his pride in who he is offer an inspiring example of the unquenchable spirit of a true artists.

This short book introduces the life and work of this remarkable man. Davis Lewis, architect, writer, and painter, has been a friend of the artist for twenty-five years. His narrative is distilled from hours of taped interviews with Thad Mosley, as well as from a deep understanding of his art and influences. Lonnie Graham is a nationally known African-American photographer.

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