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Minneapolis, Minnesota,  
February 18th, 1915.

Mr. Gutzon Borglum,  
New York City,  
New York.

My dear Mr. Borglum: I am writing you on a subject entirely apart from the matter of talking here about which we have been corresponding. I might say in passing, however, that a half formed group of citizens headed by several different committees is a hard thing to shape into anything definite, and the time was short, so that we could not accomplish anything. But your name is in mind and it is quite possible that something definite can be arranged for next season.

I am writing you in regard to our desire for some sculptural work from your hand in connection with a Court House in Sioux City, Iowa, for which we are Associate Architects with Mr. William L. Steele of that city.

Our idea here is to make the sculpture an integral part of the actual construction rather than something set upon a pedestal in front of it or near it. This piece of sculpture with its setting will be practically the only enrichment of the building. Its mass, which is 150 x 150 and three stories tall, has been kept just as clean and crisp as possible, and a very direct and functional expression of the actual requirements of the building is maintained in the design. Out of the center of the building proper mounts a tower-like mass which again expresses perfectly definite functions of a practical nature which occupy the space.

Mr. Elmelie, who is not in Sioux City at work on the design writes as follows:-

"You might write to Borglum indicating what we and Bill Steele have in mind anent a great terra cotta figure about eleven feet high developed in and on the wall -- head probably in full relief, etc. Background, rich, rich, rich in terra cotta and mosaic in old gold, dull blue, cream, etc. Schneider and he would have to collaborate.

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Another scheme of a group on the side above the minor portal, about twenty-five per cent larger than full man size in lower relief, similar in background treatment.

Main figure very architectural and formal -- HUMANITE -- no Justitia for us. Let him dream of the group, but it should be more in the nature of a processional. We have about twenty feet to go and come in.

The building is no great shakes but we can dazzle our friendly critics by a great blending of architecture and sculpture that will yield at least a step in advance. Sorry that the Humanite has to be winged. It seemed necessary to get a spread. Our full space is about 16 x 16, including background.

Get an idea of the cost of models if he can do so at the present writing. Try the big man out and see if he would come in and help us and yield something from his fertile soul..

We are formulating all this for approval, which includes a brick building above a five foot granite base. Bill thinks it can go just as desired. Wish you were here to help moribund me."

Well, you see I gave you the whole letter, personalities and all, just as it came to me. There are two schemes in mind still somewhat indefinite. Schneider who is referred to is an architectural sculptor who has done all of the work of Mr. Louis Sullivan and ourselves for twenty-five years. He is one of the most facile modellers in this country and the only one who has an understanding of what we are trying to do. You will see some of his work in the copy of the Western Architect which I sent you some days ago.

A little later, of course, we would be able to give you a very definite account of the design of the entrance as it stands. The design is just being finished and made ready for architectural perspective rendering.

Well, you see the only way in which we would be able to get this in and be able to control it would be to make the cost of the sculptural work, both the fee of the sculptor and the cost of making the terra cotta, a lump sum allowance within the contract price, and that is the reason we are writing you.

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It is quite possible that you would not be able to venture a figure from the meager data which I am able to give you at the present time, but we would be glad to answer your queries as they occur to you. Of course, in a work of this kind we face the problem of making the amount of money to be expended appear to take a reasonable relation to the cost of the real needs of the city for which the building has been built, and just what that amount of money would come to be can possibly only be determined by further consideration.

There is hardly an instance in this country where an architect has definitely decided to omit all the architectural foolishness in favor of a fine and significant sculptural statement concentrated at an effective point in his building, so that there has been very little opportunity for the real working together of architecture and sculpture. The nearest we have come to it in any significant sense is a mild preparation on the part of the architect for a locality for a sculptor to set his work or have a reasonably suitable background for it.

Here is a case where we cut out all the silly carved column caps, all the yards and yards of foolish cornices and brackets and "eggs and darts", and try to get the public to believe that an equal sum spent in something significant is not an extravagance. The trouble is that people are used to paying for all this unnecessary carving and its cost gets buried in General Construction amounts so that the waste does not really appear on the surface.

Mr. Steele, however, carries a good deal of weight in Sioux City, has landed this commission in the face of a great deal of competition; and ~~has~~ given a figure that he conscientiously believes bears a reasonable relation to the entire cost of the building, ~~and he~~ seems to think he will have no difficulty in putting it through. Well, now, ask your questions and let us see if we cannot make something interesting out of this.

The law compels the completion of the documents in the various stages of sketch, working drawings ready for bids, and complete details at certain specified times, so that we really have no time to lose.

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We will be glad to hear from you at an early date.

Yours very cordially,  
PURCELL and ELMSLIE, Architects.