

Original Article

FORM, VOID AND MEMORY: AN AESTHETIC STUDY OF N. N. RIMZON'S SCULPTURE

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ABSTRACT

The sculptural practice of N. N. Rimzon occupies a significant position within contemporary Indian art for its sustained engagement with the relationship between material form and subliminal meaning. Rooted in vernacular experience yet articulated through modernist abstraction, Rimzon's work reflects a conscious aesthetic transition—from craft-based construction to conceptual articulation, and from visible structural form to concealed socio-cultural discourse. His sculptures, often derived from familiar architectural and organic references such as houses, vessels, and fragmented bodily forms, are transformed into liminal constructions that evoke memory, displacement, gendered space, and conditions of urban alienation.

Rimzon's manipulation of material—particularly ferroconcrete, wood, and mixed media—foregrounds surface modulation, voids, and tactile textures, allowing form itself to function as a carrier of subliminal signification. The apparent austerity and abstraction of his sculptural language conceal layered narratives of migration, psychological enclosure, and spatial politics. Through strategies of reduction, fragmentation, and the deliberate use of emptiness, Rimzon constructs a visual syntax that encourages introspective engagement rather than direct representation.

Situated within a postcolonial framework, Rimzon's sculptural language challenges Eurocentric modernist paradigms by grounding abstraction in indigenous experience and lived reality. His work reflects a hybrid aesthetic sensibility in which personal memory intersects with collective cultural consciousness. This study examines the stylistic characteristics and aesthetic values embedded in Rimzon's sculptures, arguing that their critical strength lies in their ability to render the unspoken perceptible through material transformation. By decoding these subliminal visual strategies, the paper positions Rimzon's oeuvre as a significant and reflective contribution to contemporary Indian sculptural practice.

Keywords: N. N. Rimzon, Contemporary Indian Sculpture, Subliminal Language, Materiality, Postcolonial Aesthetics, Abstraction

INTRODUCTION

1) Sculptural Practice, Research Problem, and Position

The evolution of contemporary Indian sculpture since the late twentieth century marks a fundamental reorientation in artistic thinking. Rather than prioritising representation and visual declaration, sculptural practice has increasingly shifted toward process, experience, and spatial enquiry. This transformation has been driven not only by formal experimentation but also by the socio-cultural realities of postcolonial India, where concerns related to memory, displacement, identity, and silence have assumed critical importance. Within this context, the sculptural practice of N. N. Rimzon occupies a significant position for its sustained engagement with abstraction as lived and experiential inquiry rather than as a stylistic strategy.

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Received: 04 January 2026; **Accepted:** 08 February 2026; **Published** 09 March 2026

DOI: [10.29121/granthaalayah.v14.i2SCE.2026.6711](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v14.i2SCE.2026.6711)

Page Number: 340-350

Journal Title: International Journal of Research -GRANTHAALAYAH

Journal Abbreviation: Int. J. Res. Granthaalayah

Online ISSN: 2350-0530, **Print ISSN:** 2394-3629

Publisher: Granthaalayah Publications and Printers, India

Conflict of Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Authors' Contributions: Each author made an equal contribution to the conception and design of the study. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

Transparency: The authors affirm that this manuscript presents an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study. All essential aspects have been included, and any deviations from the original study plan have been clearly explained. The writing process strictly adhered to established ethical standards.

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Rimzon's work resists straightforward classification within dominant narratives of Indian modernism. While abstraction in Indian sculpture has often been interpreted either as an extension of Euro-American modernist formalism or as a symbolic articulation of indigenous metaphysical ideas, Rimzon's practice operates through a more restrained and methodical approach. His sculptures do not illustrate mythological narratives, nor do they offer direct socio-political commentary. Instead, they construct spatial situations that invite the viewer into encounters with material presence, silence, and absence. This deliberate refusal of overt narration forms the central research problem addressed in this paper: how does Rimzon's sculptural language generate meaning without representational imagery, and what forms of visual knowledge emerge from such an approach?

Existing scholarship on Rimzon has largely engaged with his work through critical and interpretive frameworks, emphasising symbolism, poetic abstraction, and philosophical resonance. While these readings have contributed important insights, they often stop short of examining how his sculptures function as research-driven practices. In particular, limited attention has been given to how material choices, spatial configurations, and formal restraint operate as conscious methodological decisions within his sculptural process. As a result, Rimzon's work is frequently discussed in metaphorical terms rather than analysed as a structured inquiry grounded in process, intention, and experiential outcome.

This paper positions Rimzon's sculptural practice within a practice-led research framework, approaching his artworks not as illustrations of theoretical positions but as sites of knowledge production. From this perspective, sculpture is understood as a mode of thinking through material and space, where meaning emerges through encounter and duration rather than through explanation. The study argues that Rimzon's sustained engagement with form, void, and memory constitutes a coherent sculptural methodology—one that addresses postcolonial subjectivity through restraint, silence, and ethical distance rather than visual spectacle.

The relevance of this approach becomes particularly evident in the contemporary moment, when visual culture is increasingly shaped by immediacy, excess, and ideological assertion. Rimzon's work moves deliberately in the opposite direction. His sculptures slow perception, reduce visual information, and foreground what is withheld rather than what is shown. This aesthetic economy is neither incidental nor purely formal; it reflects a conscious artistic position articulated by Rimzon himself, who has consistently emphasised experience over representation and intuition over explanation. By attending closely to this position, the present study seeks to align critical analysis with artistic intention rather than impose external interpretive frameworks.

The paper focuses exclusively on Rimzon's sculptural practice, with particular attention to four significant works: *Yellow Psalms* (1991), *Inner Voice* (1992), *Speaking Stones* (1998), and *The Round Ocean and the Living Death* (2019–2020). These works are examined not as isolated artistic statements but as interconnected moments within an evolving sculptural language. Together, they reveal a gradual yet consistent movement away from figuration and symbolic clarity toward spatial ambiguity, material restraint, and experiential depth.

Rather than framing this trajectory as a stylistic progression, the research understands it as a shift in how sculpture itself functions as a mode of inquiry. While earlier works retain residual references to the human body and architectural form, later installations increasingly prioritise void, circularity, suspension, and silence. Across this progression, memory operates not as narrative recall but as embodied sensation, activated through scale, weight, enclosure, and spatial tension. In this sense, Rimzon's work aligns closely with phenomenological approaches to sculpture, where meaning is produced through bodily engagement and temporal encounter.

At the same time, Rimzon's practice remains firmly embedded within the postcolonial condition. His avoidance of spectacle, his resistance to explicit political imagery, and his reliance on minimal and archetypal forms reflect an ethical position toward representation itself. Themes of trauma, displacement, and collective memory are present in his work, but they are approached obliquely through silence and restraint rather than direct visualisation. This study argues that such an approach constitutes an ethical sculptural practice—one that resists the commodification of suffering and the simplification of complex historical experiences.

The central objective of this paper, therefore, is to articulate how Rimzon's sculptural language operates as a practice-led research methodology grounded in form, void, and memory. By examining his material decisions, spatial strategies, and articulated artistic intentions, the study seeks to move beyond interpretive criticism toward a more rigorous understanding of sculpture as a mode of inquiry. In doing so, it aims to contribute to broader discussions on contemporary Indian sculpture, practice-led research, and the critical role of silence and absence in visual art.

2) METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION: PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH AND SCULPTURAL ANALYSIS

This research adopts a practice-led methodological orientation to examine the sculptural practice of N. N. Rimzon as a mode of knowledge production rather than as a purely aesthetic or symbolic outcome. Within visual art scholarship, practice-led research recognises artistic practice itself as a primary site of inquiry. In this framework, artworks are not approached as illustrations of pre-existing theory but as the results of reflective processes through which artists think, test, and negotiate ideas using material, space, and form.

The choice of a practice-led approach is central to this study because Rimzon's sculptures resist conventional modes of interpretation. His work does not depend on narrative clarity, iconographic symbolism, or textual explanation. Instead, meaning emerges through experiential encounter—through spatial relationships, material presence, bodily perception, and silence. As a result, a purely art-historical or iconographic method proves insufficient for engaging with the epistemic structure of his practice. Practice-led research enables an analysis that remains attentive to how sculptural decisions are made and to the kinds of knowledge those decisions generate.

In contrast to traditional art criticism, which often privileges interpretation and metaphor, this study foregrounds process, intention, and experiential outcome. Sculptural analysis is grounded in three interrelated methodological principles: material decision-making, spatial configuration, and viewer encounter. These principles correspond closely with Rimzon's own articulation of his practice, in which he consistently emphasises intuition, restraint, and experience over explanation. Rather than asking what a sculpture represents, the methodology asks how it operates—how it structures space, regulates perception, and activates memory.

Material analysis forms a central component of this methodological framework. Rimzon's sustained engagement with fibreglass, wood, stone, and mixed media is approached not as a matter of medium preference but as a sequence of deliberate decisions shaped by conceptual and experiential concerns. Fibreglass enables suspension, lightness, and ambiguity, allowing sculptural forms to hover between architectural and organic identities. Stone and wood, by contrast, introduce weight, permanence, and temporal density. The methodological emphasis here is not on material symbolism but on material behaviour—how surfaces absorb light, how weight is registered bodily, and how texture mediates proximity and distance.

Spatial analysis constitutes the second methodological axis. Rimzon's sculptures rarely function as self-contained objects; instead, they operate as spatial propositions. Void, enclosure, suspension, and circularity recur as spatial strategies that shape the viewer's movement and perception. This study examines spatial relationships phenomenologically, attending to how the body encounters absence, how silence is articulated through distance, and how spatial restraint slows perceptual engagement. Such an approach draws on phenomenological models of art analysis, where meaning is understood to arise through embodied experience rather than visual consumption alone.

The third methodological component concerns the role of the viewer. Within a practice-led framework, the viewer is not treated as a passive recipient of meaning but as an active participant in the completion of the work. Rimzon's sculptures demand attentiveness, patience, and introspection. They resist immediate legibility and instead invite sustained engagement over time. Accordingly, this research treats viewer experience as a methodological consideration, examining how sculptural restraint produces ethical distance and how silence functions as an invitation rather than a deficiency.

Importantly, this methodological orientation also addresses the ethical dimension of representation. Rimzon's engagement with memory, trauma, and displacement consistently avoids spectacle and narrative exposure. By refusing explicit imagery, his sculptures articulate an ethical position toward historical and psychological content. Practice-led analysis allows this ethical dimension to be examined without imposing interpretive closure. The methodology acknowledges that not all experiences are representable and that sculptural silence can itself operate as a form of critical engagement.

By positioning sculptural practice as research, this study aligns with contemporary scholarship that recognises artistic practice as a legitimate mode of inquiry. Within this framework, Rimzon's sculptures are understood as reflective outcomes of sustained investigation into form, void, and memory. The artworks do not merely express ideas; they actively test them. Each installation functions as a provisional response to a set of questions concerning material presence, spatial absence, and experiential meaning.

This methodological orientation also clarifies the structure of the paper. Rather than proceeding chronologically or stylistically, the analysis is organised through thematic and operational lenses. Individual artworks are examined as case studies that foreground specific methodological concerns—suspension and silence in *Yellow Psalms*, enclosure and introspection in *Inner Voice*, ethical restraint in *Speaking Stones*, and cyclical regeneration in *The Round Ocean* and *The Living Death*. These works are not treated as illustrative examples but as research evidence within an evolving sculptural inquiry.

By adopting a practice-led methodology, this paper deliberately distances itself from purely interpretive criticism while remaining grounded in scholarly rigour. The aim is not to exhaust the meanings of Rimzon's work but to articulate the conditions under which meaning is produced. In doing so, the study foregrounds sculpture as a mode of thinking—one that operates through material, space, and silence to generate forms of knowledge that cannot be fully reduced to textual explanation.

3) REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP ON N. N. RIMZON AND CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SCULPTURE

Critical discourse on contemporary Indian sculpture has developed unevenly, often remaining secondary to the more extensively theorised domains of painting and, more recently, new media practices. Within this relatively limited but important body of scholarship, the work of N. N. Rimzon occupies a distinct position. Although Rimzon has been consistently recognised as a significant sculptural voice, the ways in which his work has been discussed reveal certain methodological constraints that the present research seeks to address.

Much of the early and subsequent writing on Rimzon frames his practice through interpretive and philosophical perspectives. Critical discussions frequently emphasise symbolism, metaphysical abstraction, and poetic resonance. While such readings offer valuable insights into the affective and conceptual dimensions of his work, they often rely heavily on metaphorical interpretation. As a result, sustained analysis of sculptural process, material logic, and experiential structure tends to remain underdeveloped. Rimzon's sculptures are therefore often approached as expressive or evocative outcomes rather than as deliberate, research-based practices grounded in material and spatial inquiry.

Among the most influential scholarly engagements with Rimzon's work is the writing of Geeta Kapur. Kapur situates Rimzon within a broader lineage of Indian artists who negotiate postcolonial subjectivity through abstraction and corporeal restraint. Her analysis foregrounds the ethical and philosophical dimensions of his practice, particularly his resistance to overt political imagery and his engagement with collective memory. Kapur's contribution is crucial in positioning Rimzon within a postcolonial aesthetic framework. However, her approach remains largely interpretive, focusing on conceptual meaning rather than on the sculptural processes through which silence, absence, and restraint are materially and spatially produced.

Rasna Bhushan's critical engagement with *Yellow Psalms* provides a more focused discussion of silence and the evacuation of narrative clarity in Rimzon's work. Bhushan identifies the suspended forms and muted surfaces of the installation as a conscious refusal of speech, arguing that the work destabilises identification and narrative closure. Her analysis is particularly significant for foregrounding silence as an active aesthetic strategy rather than a passive condition. Nevertheless, as with much interpretive criticism, the emphasis remains on interpretive outcome rather than on the operational mechanisms of sculptural practice itself.

Prachiva Mukherji introduces a phenomenological dimension to the discussion of Rimzon's work by emphasising bodily encounter, spatial experience, and the role of archetypal forms. She draws attention to Rimzon's use of tools, vessels, and fragmented bodily elements as mnemonic devices capable of evoking collective memory without fixing meaning. While this perspective aligns closely with the concerns of the present study, Mukherji's analysis remains primarily descriptive. The question of how these sculptural strategies function as part of a sustained and systematic inquiry is not explored in depth.

Beyond scholarship focused specifically on Rimzon, broader writing on contemporary Indian sculpture provides an important contextual framework. Studies of post-Independence sculpture frequently emphasise the shift from monumental figuration toward abstraction, material experimentation, and conceptual engagement. Artists such as Himmat Shah, Mrinalini Mukherjee, and Pilo Pochkhanawala are often discussed in relation to corporeal abstraction and material innovation. However, such discussions tend to categorise practices stylistically rather than interrogating the epistemic frameworks that underpin them. Within this context, Rimzon's work is often grouped under abstraction without sufficient attention to its methodological specificity.

A recurring limitation across this body of scholarship is the absence of a practice-led analytical framework. Sculpture is frequently treated as an object of interpretation rather than as a process of thinking through material and space. Consequently, key aspects of Rimzon's practice—such as his consistent avoidance of spectacle, his preference for restraint, and his emphasis on experiential engagement—are acknowledged but not rigorously examined as methodological decisions.

This limitation becomes particularly evident in discussions of memory and trauma. While critics have noted Rimzon's engagement with collective memory, especially in works such as *Speaking Stones*, the ethical implications of his refusal to visualise trauma directly are rarely examined in depth. Interpretive emphasis on symbolic content often overshadows the more critical question of how sculptural silence functions as an ethical position within postcolonial contexts.

The present research positions itself in direct response to these gaps. Rather than offering another interpretive reading of Rimzon's work, it seeks to articulate the internal logic of his sculptural practice. By adopting a practice-led methodological framework, the study reframes Rimzon's sculptures as research outcomes that embody sustained inquiry into form, void, and memory. This approach enables a more precise examination of material decisions, spatial strategies, and experiential effects.

In doing so, the paper contributes to contemporary sculpture studies by shifting analytical focus from symbolic meaning to methodological operation. It proposes that Rimzon's work should be understood not merely as abstract or poetic sculpture but as a disciplined practice of sculptural thinking—one that generates knowledge through restraint, silence, and embodied encounter. This repositioning not only deepens scholarly understanding of Rimzon's practice but also offers a critical model for analysing contemporary sculptural practices beyond the limits of interpretive criticism.

4) RIMZON'S ARTISTIC POSITION: INTENTION, SILENCE, AND THE ARTIST'S VOICE

A practice-led analysis of the sculptural practice of N. N. Rimzon requires close attention to the artist's own articulation of his work. Rimzon has consistently resisted explanatory or didactic interpretations of his sculptures, emphasising instead intuition, experience, and the primacy of encounter. Across interviews, exhibition catalogues, and public discussions, he has repeatedly articulated a position in which sculpture is not conceived as a vehicle for narration but as a condition for perception. In this context, the artist's voice is not treated as an authoritative explanation of meaning but as a methodological guide for understanding how his sculptural language functions.

Rimzon has expressed a clear unease with representational certainty. He has noted that his concern lies less with what a sculpture “says” and more with what it does to perception. This distinction is central to his practice. Sculpture, for Rimzon, is not an illustrative medium but a spatial proposition—one that invites the viewer into a heightened state of attentiveness. He has described his work as an attempt to construct situations rather than discrete objects, situations in which silence, material presence, and void interact to generate experience. Such statements situate his practice within a phenomenological understanding of art, where meaning emerges through encounter rather than through interpretation.

Silence occupies a particularly significant place in Rimzon’s articulation of intention. He has repeatedly emphasised that silence in his work does not signify an absence of content but constitutes a deliberate condition that allows perception to unfold. In this sense, silence functions as a methodological tool. By withholding narrative cues and symbolic clarity, Rimzon creates a space in which viewers must negotiate their own relationship to the work. This strategy aligns with his broader resistance to spectacle and immediacy. He has expressed concern that overt imagery can prematurely close down meaning by directing interpretation too explicitly. Silence, by contrast, keeps meaning open and contingent.

Rimzon’s understanding of abstraction further clarifies his sculptural intentions. He has consistently rejected abstraction as a formal style detached from lived experience. Instead, he conceives abstraction as a process of reduction—an intentional removal of excess in order to arrive at a more concentrated experiential core. This reduction is not pursued for aesthetic minimalism alone; it constitutes an ethical and perceptual choice. By reducing form, Rimzon seeks to heighten awareness of material, spatial relationships, and bodily presence. His abstraction is therefore grounded in experience rather than ideology or stylistic convention.

Material choice, according to Rimzon, is inseparable from artistic intention. He has spoken of materials as carriers of memory and sensation rather than as neutral substances. Fiberglass, for instance, enables lightness, suspension, and ambiguity, allowing sculptural forms to hover between states and identities. Stone and wood, in contrast, introduce weight, resistance, and temporal density. These material decisions are not symbolic in a conventional sense; they are experiential. Rimzon’s statements suggest that materials are selected for their capacity to shape perception and bodily response, reinforcing the idea that sculpture functions as an encounter rather than as a message.

Rimzon’s reflections on memory further illuminate his artistic position. Even when engaging deeply with themes of displacement and collective trauma, he has resisted autobiographical narration. Rather than recounting specific events, he seeks to evoke memory as sensation—through spatial tension, enclosure, repetition, and restraint. This approach reflects an ethical stance toward memory itself. Rimzon has suggested that certain experiences cannot be represented directly without being diminished or aestheticised. By working obliquely, through form and void, he allows memory to remain unresolved and open.

The artist’s position on viewer engagement reinforces this methodological orientation. Rimzon has emphasised that his sculptures demand time. They are not designed for rapid consumption or immediate comprehension. This insistence on duration stands in opposition to contemporary viewing practices shaped by speed and distraction. By slowing down perception, Rimzon creates conditions for introspection. The viewer becomes aware not only of the sculptural form but also of their own bodily presence, movement, and psychological state in relation to space.

Importantly, Rimzon does not regard this openness as ambiguity for its own sake. His refusal to fix meaning is grounded in a relational understanding of how meaning is produced. The sculpture does not contain meaning in isolation; rather, meaning is activated through encounter between material, space, and viewer. This relational position aligns closely with principles of practice-led research, in which knowledge emerges through interaction rather than transmission.

In articulating his artistic position, Rimzon consistently foregrounds restraint, intuition, and experiential engagement. His voice reveals a coherent methodological framework underlying his practice—one that privileges silence over speech, encounter over explanation, and process over product. By integrating the artist’s own statements into the analysis, this research aligns interpretation with intention, ensuring that Rimzon’s sculptural language of form, void, and memory is understood as a deliberate and sustained inquiry rather than as an abstract aesthetic preference.

5) MATERIALITY AND SCULPTURAL THINKING: FORM AS DECISION, NOT REPRESENTATION

In the sculptural practice of N. N. Rimzon, material does not function as a neutral support for form, nor does it operate as a symbolic substitute for meaning. Instead, material acts as a thinking agent—an active element through which sculptural decisions are explored, tested, and refined. From a practice-led perspective, Rimzon’s work therefore demands close attention to how material choices operate as methodological decisions rather than as representational gestures.

Rimzon’s sustained engagement with materials such as fiberglass, wood, stone, bronze, and mixed media reflects a deliberate negotiation between opposing conditions: weight and lightness, permanence and ephemerality, resistance and suspension. These materials are not employed to signify particular cultural motifs or iconographic references. Rather, they are selected for their capacity to shape bodily perception and spatial experience. In this sense, materiality in Rimzon’s work functions at the level of process rather than iconography.

Fiberglass plays a particularly significant role in Rimzon's gradual movement away from figuration. Its structural flexibility allows for suspension, curvature, and seamless surfaces, enabling sculptural forms to hover between architectural and organic states. This ambiguity is central to Rimzon's visual language. Suspended fiberglass forms resist stable categorisation, compelling the viewer to engage with them phenomenologically rather than interpret them symbolically. The absence of visible joints, seams, or expressive surface detail further reinforces a sense of silence, ensuring that attention remains focused on spatial presence rather than material virtuosity.

In contrast, Rimzon's use of stone and wood introduces a markedly different set of experiential conditions. These materials carry an inherent sense of resistance and temporality. Stone evokes endurance, gravity, and geological time, while wood retains traces of organic growth, decay, and transformation. When incorporated into Rimzon's installations, these materials slow the pace of perception. The viewer becomes acutely aware of weight, density, and physical resistance, which in turn heightens bodily awareness. Here, material communicates not through symbolic association but through sensation and corporeal response.

Significantly, Rimzon does not juxtapose materials in order to create visual contrast or dramatic effect. Material combinations are carefully calibrated to generate specific perceptual conditions. The dialogue between light and heavy materials, smooth and resistant surfaces, and suspended and grounded forms produces spatial tension. This tension is not resolved visually; instead, it is sustained as an experiential state. Such an approach reflects Rimzon's broader commitment to restraint and reduction, where material excess is avoided in favour of controlled presence.

Form, within Rimzon's practice, emerges through material negotiation rather than from a pre-conceived image. Sculptural forms are not designed to resemble recognisable objects, even when they retain residual references to the body or architecture. These references operate as traces rather than representations. The viewer may sense enclosure, containment, or bodily presence, but these sensations are not anchored to fixed imagery. This indeterminacy allows form to function as an experiential proposition rather than as a representational sign.

Rimzon's treatment of surface further reinforces this methodological orientation. Surfaces are frequently muted, monochromatic, or minimally articulated. Such restraint prevents surface detail from becoming expressive or decorative. Instead, emphasis is placed on volume, scale, and spatial relationship. The absence of ornamentation encourages viewers to engage with the work as a spatial condition rather than as an object to be visually decoded.

From a practice-led perspective, these material and formal decisions can be understood as modes of sculptural thinking. Each material choice functions as a hypothesis concerning how perception operates in space. Fiberglass tests suspension and ambiguity; stone tests weight and endurance; void tests absence and attentiveness. The sculpture becomes the site where these propositions are enacted and experienced rather than merely represented.

This approach distinguishes Rimzon's practice from both traditional figurative sculpture and symbolic abstraction. While figurative sculpture typically employs material to support representation, and symbolic abstraction uses form to encode meaning, Rimzon's work employs material to construct conditions of encounter. Meaning does not reside within the object itself but emerges through interaction between material, space, and viewer. The sculpture does not stand in for an idea; it stages an experience.

Such an understanding of materiality aligns closely with practice-led research methodologies, where knowledge is generated through making, reflection, and experiential testing rather than through the application of external theory. Rimzon's sculptures embody a sustained inquiry into how form can be reduced without becoming empty, how material can assert presence without becoming expressive, and how sculpture can communicate without relying on representation.

By approaching materiality as a methodological decision rather than a stylistic preference, this research reframes Rimzon's sculptural language as a disciplined and reflective practice. Form, in this context, is not an image to be interpreted but a condition to be experienced. This shift—from representation to decision-making—is central to understanding how Rimzon's work articulates form, void, and memory as interrelated dimensions of sculptural inquiry.

6) VOID AS EXPERIENCE: SPATIAL ABSENCE, SILENCE, AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF ENCOUNTER

In the sculptural practice of N. N. Rimzon, void does not operate as a secondary or residual condition; it functions as a primary and generative element through which meaning is produced. Unlike conventional sculptural approaches in which empty space serves merely as background or interval, Rimzon treats void as an active spatial force. From a practice-led perspective, void in his work is not symbolic absence but an experiential condition—one that structures perception, regulates bodily movement, and establishes ethical distance.

Rimzon's sustained engagement with void arises from his consistent resistance to representational excess. He avoids filling space with visual information, instead allowing emptiness to shape the viewer's encounter with the work. This approach reflects a methodological understanding of sculpture as a temporal and bodily experience rather than as a purely visual object. Void, in this sense, is not simply what remains after form has been removed; it is deliberately constructed through careful attention to proportion, scale, suspension, and enclosure.

From a phenomenological standpoint, void operates by slowing perception. When encountering Rimzon's installations, the viewer is not provided with immediate visual cues or narrative direction. There is no story to follow and no symbolic image to decode. Instead, awareness shifts toward one's own bodily presence in relation to space. Movement becomes measured and attentive, and perception unfolds gradually over time, privileging duration over instant recognition.

Spatial absence in Rimzon's work often manifests through cavities, gaps, suspended distances, and circular enclosures. These spatial strategies do not direct attention toward a single focal point; rather, they distribute attention across the entire spatial field. The viewer's gaze oscillates between form and emptiness, presence and absence. This continuous negotiation destabilises conventional hierarchies of figure and ground, allowing void to operate as a sculptural element in its own right rather than as a passive interval.

Silence, closely aligned with void, functions as both an aesthetic and an ethical strategy within Rimzon's practice. His sculptures do not assert meaning loudly or demand immediate interpretation. This restraint becomes particularly significant in works that engage with memory and trauma. By refusing explicit imagery, Rimzon avoids the risks of spectacle and appropriation. Silence, in this context, serves as a means of acknowledging the limits of representation and recognising that certain experiences cannot—and perhaps should not—be fully visualised.

From an ethical perspective, void in Rimzon's work resists the commodification of experience. In a visual culture saturated with images and rapid consumption, his sculptures insist on absence as a form of resistance. The viewer is not offered readily consumable meaning but is instead invited into a space of contemplation. Such an invitation demands patience and attentiveness—qualities that are increasingly marginalised within contemporary modes of viewing. Void thus operates as a corrective, reorienting perception toward slower and more reflective engagement.

The experiential dimension of void is also closely tied to memory. Rather than presenting memory as a sequence of images or events, Rimzon evokes it as sensation—activated through spatial tension, enclosure, distance, and stillness. The viewer may experience unease, introspection, or quiet attentiveness without being guided toward a specific narrative. In this framework, memory is not recalled through representation but activated through bodily experience. Void allows memory to remain open, unresolved, and personal.

Rimzon's use of void also challenges conventional expectations of sculptural completeness. His works often appear deliberately restrained or unresolved, resisting visual closure. This refusal is not a lack but a position. By withholding resolution, Rimzon ensures that meaning is generated relationally rather than imposed. The sculpture becomes a site of negotiation between artist, material, space, and viewer.

Within a practice-led framework, void can be understood as a methodological tool. It enables the artist to test how little is necessary for an encounter to occur. It asks whether sculpture can function without narrative, without symbolism, and without visual abundance. Rimzon's work responds to these questions affirmatively, demonstrating that absence can be as generative as presence.

Through the deliberate construction of void, Rimzon redefines the role of sculpture in contemporary practice. His work does not seek to represent the external world but to recalibrate perception itself. Void becomes the condition through which form gains intensity, memory becomes embodied, and silence acquires ethical significance. Understanding void as experience rather than metaphor is therefore essential to grasping the depth and rigor of Rimzon's sculptural inquiry.

7) ARTWORK-BASED ANALYSIS I: YELLOW PSALMS AND INNER VOICE

A practice-led examination of the sculptural language of N. N. Rimzon finds its most decisive articulation in the works *Yellow Psalms* (1991) and *Inner Voice* (1992). These installations represent a critical phase in Rimzon's practice, where figural reference, material experimentation, and spatial restraint converge to establish the conceptual and methodological foundations of his later work. Rather than functioning as illustrative sculptures, both installations operate as research propositions, testing how form, void, and silence can be mobilised to generate experiential meaning.

Yellow Psalms (1991): Suspension, Silence, and the Refusal of Narrative

Yellow Psalms marks a pivotal moment in Rimzon's sculptural inquiry. Composed of suspended fibreglass forms that recall shells, architectural enclosures, and fragmented bodily references, the installation establishes a spatial condition characterised by stillness and uncertainty. The forms do not rest on the ground; instead, they hover within space, producing a sustained tension between gravity and suspension. This decision disrupts conventional sculptural expectations, in which weight and stability typically serve as anchors of meaning.

From a practice-led perspective, suspension functions here as a methodological decision rather than as a visual effect. By lifting forms away from the ground, Rimzon deliberately removes their functional and symbolic anchoring. The viewer is unable to locate a stable point of reference, and perception is consequently unsettled. This perceptual uncertainty is not incidental; it is central to the experiential logic of the work. The absence of ground compels the viewer to engage with space itself as the primary site of meaning.

Material choice plays a crucial role in this process. The smooth, seamless surfaces of fibreglass resist tactile specificity, preventing association with familiar textures or material histories. This material neutrality reinforces silence. Surface detail does

not invite interpretation through craftsmanship or expressive gesture; instead, attention is directed toward volume, proportion, and spatial relationship. The forms appear simultaneously present and withdrawn, existing in a condition of perceptual suspension.

Void in *Yellow Psalms* is not merely the space between forms; it is the condition that binds them together. The measured distances between suspended elements create a rhythmic spatial structure that guides both movement and attention. As the viewer navigates the installation, perception oscillates between form and emptiness. Meaning emerges not from any individual element but from the relational field produced by their arrangement.

Crucially, *Yellow Psalms* refuses narrative coherence. There is no sequence to follow and no symbolic code to decipher. This refusal aligns with Rimzon's articulated resistance to overt explanation. The installation does not tell a story; it establishes a condition. Memory, in this context, is not recalled through imagery but activated through sensation—through bodily awareness of balance, distance, and silence.

From an ethical perspective, this refusal of narrative can be understood as a resistance to appropriation. By avoiding the visualisation of specific identities or experiences, *Yellow Psalms* prevents meaning from becoming fixed. Memory remains indeterminate, personal, and unresolved. In doing so, the work privileges experiential openness over interpretive closure and establishes a sculptural language grounded in restraint.

Inner Voice (1992): Enclosure, Introspection, and Spatial Restraint

While *Yellow Psalms* operate through suspension and dispersal, *Inner Voice* shifts Rimzon's inquiry inward, focusing on enclosure and containment. The installation is organised around a central human figure encircled by tools arranged in a semi-circular formation. Unlike the suspended forms of *Yellow Psalms*, this work introduces a grounded presence, yet the spatial logic remains defined by restraint and silence.

The central figure in *Inner Voice* does not function as a representational portrait. Its form is restrained and devoid of expressive detail, emphasising stillness rather than action. The surrounding tools—commonly associated with labour and production—are removed from their functional contexts. Arranged spatially rather than narratively, they become markers of containment rather than instruments of use.

From a methodological standpoint, enclosure operates as a sculptural strategy for generating introspection. The semi-circular arrangement establishes a perceptible boundary that the viewer can observe but not necessarily cross. This boundary produces psychological distance, encouraging reflection rather than identification. Positioned outside the enclosure, the viewer encounters a condition of inwardness that resists access.

Material restraint reinforces this spatial logic. The subdued treatment of surfaces and the absence of decorative detail prevent the work from becoming expressive or illustrative. Emphasis remains on spatial relationships rather than on object identity. Void operates within the enclosure as a zone of silence—a charged space that separates the figure from both the tools and the viewer. This void is not empty; it holds tension and stillness.

Memory in *Inner Voice* is evoked obliquely. While the presence of tools suggests histories of labour and bodily engagement, these associations are not developed into narrative form. Instead, memory remains latent, embedded within spatial arrangement rather than articulated through imagery. This latent quality aligns with Rimzon's broader approach to memory as sensation rather than recollection.

Viewed together, *Yellow Psalms* and *Inner Voice* articulate two complementary strategies within Rimzon's practice-led inquiry. The former disperses form into space, privileging suspension and relational void, while the latter concentrates form within an enclosure, emphasising introspection and restraint. Both works reject representational clarity and rely on silence as a generative condition, establishing the methodological foundations for Rimzon's subsequent investigations into memory, ethics, and postcolonial subjectivity.

8) ARTWORK-BASED ANALYSIS II: SPEAKING STONES AND ETHICAL MEMORY

Among Rimzon's sculptural works, *Speaking Stones* (1998) marks a decisive moment in which his practice-led inquiry directly confronts questions of collective memory and historical trauma. Unlike works that attempt to visualise suffering through explicit imagery, *Speaking Stones* operates through restraint, silence, and ethical distance. From a practice-led perspective, the installation demonstrates how sculpture can engage social and political memory without converting trauma into spectacle.

The installation consists of a central human figure situated within a spatial arrangement of stones. The figure is neither heroic nor expressive; it is materially subdued and inward-looking. The surrounding stones do not function as decorative elements or conventional symbols. Instead, they operate as witnesses—material presences that convey weight, endurance, and temporality. The spatial field established by the work encourages the viewer to encounter memory as an ethical condition rather than as a narrated event.

Rimzon's choice of stone is critical. Stone carries inherent associations with permanence, endurance, and geological time. By surrounding the human figure with stone, Rimzon establishes a contrast between human vulnerability and material persistence. This

contrast is not visually dramatized; it is experienced bodily. The viewer becomes aware of weight, stillness, and duration. Memory, in this context, does not unfold through narrative progression but presses upon the present through material presence.

Void plays a central role in structuring this encounter. The spatial distance between the stones and the central figure creates a zone of separation that cannot be easily traversed. This separation functions as an ethical boundary. Rather than encouraging empathetic identification, the work asks the viewer to acknowledge distance. This distinction is crucial. Instead of collapsing the viewer into the experience of trauma, *Speaking Stones* preserves respectful separation, allowing memory to remain unresolved and unappropriated.

From a phenomenological perspective, the installation demands stillness. The absence of visual excess, colour, or expressive gesture slows perception and encourages contemplation. Silence is not imposed; it emerges organically from material and spatial restraint. The viewer's experience is shaped as much by what is withheld as by what is present. This withholding reflects Rimzon's articulated discomfort with representational strategies that aestheticise suffering. In *Speaking Stones*, ethical engagement is achieved through silence rather than exposure.

The stones function as mnemonic devices without becoming fixed symbols. They do not represent specific events, identities, or locations. Their anonymity allows them to evoke collective memory while resisting closure. Memory remains plural, fragmented, and unresolved. The work does not instruct the viewer on how to feel or what to remember; instead, it creates conditions under which remembrance can occur without prescription.

Importantly, *Speaking Stones* offers no resolution. There is no visual closure or cathartic release. The figure remains enclosed, the stones immovable, and the void persistent. This refusal of closure aligns with Rimzon's broader practice-led methodology, in which sculpture operates as an ongoing inquiry rather than a finished statement. Memory, in this framework, is not something to be resolved but something to be held.

By engaging collective memory through material restraint and spatial distance, *Speaking Stones* extends Rimzon's sculptural inquiry into ethical terrain. The work demonstrates that silence can function as an active form of engagement and that absence can carry moral weight. Rather than representing trauma, the sculpture acknowledges the limits of representation and respects them.

9) THE ROUND OCEAN AND THE LIVING DEATH: CYCLES, REGENERATION, AND SCULPTURAL COSMOLOGY

The *Round Ocean and the Living Death* (2019–2020) represents a significant development in Rimzon's sculptural inquiry, marking a shift from ethical engagement with historical memory toward a broader meditation on cycles, regeneration, and cosmological time. While earlier works such as *Speaking Stones* address collective trauma through restraint and silence, this later installation expands the scope of Rimzon's practice without abandoning its methodological foundations. Form, void, and memory remain central, but they are now articulated through circularity and repetition rather than enclosure and separation.

At the centre of the installation is the circular form, a spatial configuration that departs from linear and hierarchical structures. Circularity here functions not merely as a formal device but as a conceptual proposition. By employing the circle, Rimzon invokes cyclical time, recurrence, and continuity, situating human experience within a non-linear framework. This shift reframes memory not solely as a residue of past trauma but as part of an ongoing process of becoming and dissolution.

Material restraint continues to shape the work. The installation avoids excessive detail, colour, or ornamentation, relying instead on scale, proportion, and spatial resonance. The circular form encloses a void that functions simultaneously as absence and potential. Unlike earlier voids, which often signal loss or ethical distance, this void suggests generative possibility. It is a space that holds rather than excludes, evoking the dual condition of birth and dissolution implied in the title.

From a phenomenological standpoint, the viewer's encounter with this installation differs markedly from earlier works. Movement is oriented toward continuity rather than separation. The viewer circulates rather than confronts, experiencing the work through rhythm and repetition. This experiential shift reflects a maturation in Rimzon's sculptural thinking. Silence remains present, but it is less tense and more expansive, inviting reflection on time, continuity, and regeneration rather than enclosure or loss.

The title *The Round Ocean and the Living Death* encapsulates the paradox at the core of the work. The "round ocean" suggests vastness, continuity, and origin, while "living death" points toward transformation rather than finality. This paradox reflects Rimzon's sustained interest in holding contradictory states in suspension. As in his earlier works, meaning is not resolved but maintained through tension. The sculpture does not explain the relationship between life and death; it establishes a spatial condition in which both can be contemplated simultaneously.

Importantly, the work does not abandon Rimzon's ethical restraint. Even as the scope of inquiry expands, the installation avoids illustrative cosmology or mythic narration. Archetypal associations emerge implicitly through form rather than iconography. The circular structure may evoke womb, vessel, or horizon, but these associations remain open and unfixed, arising through embodied encounter rather than symbolic prescription.

From a practice-led research perspective, *The Round Ocean and the Living Death* demonstrates how a sculptural inquiry can evolve without losing coherence. The methodological principles established in earlier works—material restraint, spatial precision,

and experiential engagement—remain intact. What changes is the scale and orientation of inquiry. Memory is no longer confined to ethical or historical registers; it becomes cosmological, encompassing cycles of existence beyond individual or collective narratives.

This expansion has important implications for understanding Rimzon's contribution to contemporary Indian sculpture. By moving from ethical memory toward cyclical regeneration, Rimzon situates his practice within a broader philosophical horizon while remaining grounded in bodily perception and spatial encounter. His abstraction does not drift into detached metaphysics; it remains experiential and material.

The Round Ocean and the Living Death thus represents a culmination rather than a departure. It synthesises Rimzon's sustained engagement with form, void, and memory into a sculptural language capable of addressing time, continuity, and transformation without relinquishing silence or restraint. In doing so, it affirms sculpture as a medium uniquely equipped to engage questions that resist narrative resolution, offering a space in which experience precedes explanation.

10) CONTRIBUTION, SYNTHESIS, AND CONCLUSION: RIMZON'S PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SCULPTURE

This study has examined the sculptural practice of N. N. Rimzon through a practice-led framework, foregrounding form, void, and memory as operative dimensions of sculptural inquiry rather than as thematic concerns alone. By moving beyond interpretive criticism and symbolic reading, the research has demonstrated that Rimzon's work constitutes a sustained methodological investigation into how sculpture can generate meaning through material restraint, spatial precision, and experiential engagement.

One of the primary contributions of this research lies in repositioning Rimzon's abstraction as experiential and ethical rather than stylistic or metaphysical. While abstraction in Indian sculpture has often been discussed either in relation to Western modernist paradigms or through the lens of indigenous symbolism, this paper has argued that Rimzon's practice operates in a different register. His abstraction emerges from deliberate decisions to reduce visual information, withhold narrative cues, and activate silence. These decisions are not aesthetic preferences but methodological choices that shape how viewers encounter space, material, and memory.

The analysis of key works—Yellow Psalms, Inner Voice, Speaking Stones, and The Round Ocean and the Living Death—has shown that Rimzon's sculptural language evolves coherently across decades without abandoning its foundational principles. Early explorations of suspension and enclosure establish a vocabulary of restraint and silence, while later works extend this vocabulary toward ethical engagement with collective memory and, subsequently, toward cyclical and cosmological reflection. Across this trajectory, void functions not as emptiness but as a generative condition that enables form to gain intensity and allows memory to remain unresolved.

A significant contribution of this study is its articulation of void as experience rather than metaphor. By examining how spatial absence regulates perception, produces ethical distance, and invites introspection, the research reframes void as a central sculptural strategy. This understanding challenges conventional hierarchies between form and space, proposing that absence can function as an active agent in sculptural thinking. In Rimzon's work, void is not secondary to form; it is co-constitutive of meaning.

The integration of Rimzon's own articulated intentions further strengthens the practice-led orientation of this research. By aligning critical analysis with the artist's emphasis on experience, intuition, and restraint, the study avoids imposing external theoretical frameworks that risk obscuring the internal logic of the work. Theory is employed here to clarify and contextualise practice rather than to override it, ensuring that analysis remains grounded in the methodological concerns that shape Rimzon's sculptural decisions.

From an ethical perspective, the research has demonstrated that Rimzon's refusal of spectacle constitutes a critical position within contemporary visual culture. In works addressing memory and trauma, particularly Speaking Stones, silence operates as a form of respect that acknowledges the limits of representation. Rather than aestheticising suffering, Rimzon's sculptures create conditions for attentiveness and reflection. This ethical restraint distinguishes his practice from more declarative modes of political art and situates his work within a lineage of artists who engage history obliquely, through absence and contemplation.

Within the broader context of contemporary Indian sculpture, Rimzon's contribution lies in his consistent insistence on sculpture as a mode of thinking rather than representation. His work challenges viewers to slow down, to inhabit space attentively, and to encounter meaning through bodily presence rather than visual consumption. This emphasis on duration, silence, and restraint offers an alternative model for sculptural practice in an era increasingly defined by visual excess and immediacy.

Methodologically, this research contributes to sculpture studies by demonstrating the value of practice-led analysis. By treating artworks as research outcomes rather than illustrative objects, the study opens new possibilities for understanding how sculptural knowledge is produced. This approach is particularly relevant for doctoral research, where practice and theory must be understood as interdependent rather than hierarchical.

In conclusion, Rimzon's sculptural practice represents a disciplined and reflective inquiry into perception, memory, and ethical engagement. Through form, void, and silence, his work articulates a visual language that resists closure and invites sustained encounter. This study has argued that Rimzon's significance lies not only in what his sculptures mean but in how they function—as experiential spaces where meaning emerges through restraint, attentiveness, and embodied presence. By articulating this practice-

led framework, the research affirms Rimzon's place as a pivotal figure in contemporary Indian sculpture and contributes to ongoing discussions on sculpture as a mode of knowledge production.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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