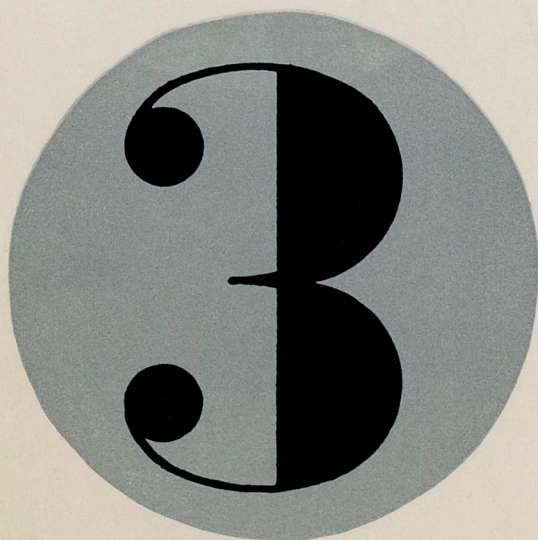


July 1935

AXIS

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY
"ABSTRACT" PAINTING & SCULPTURE

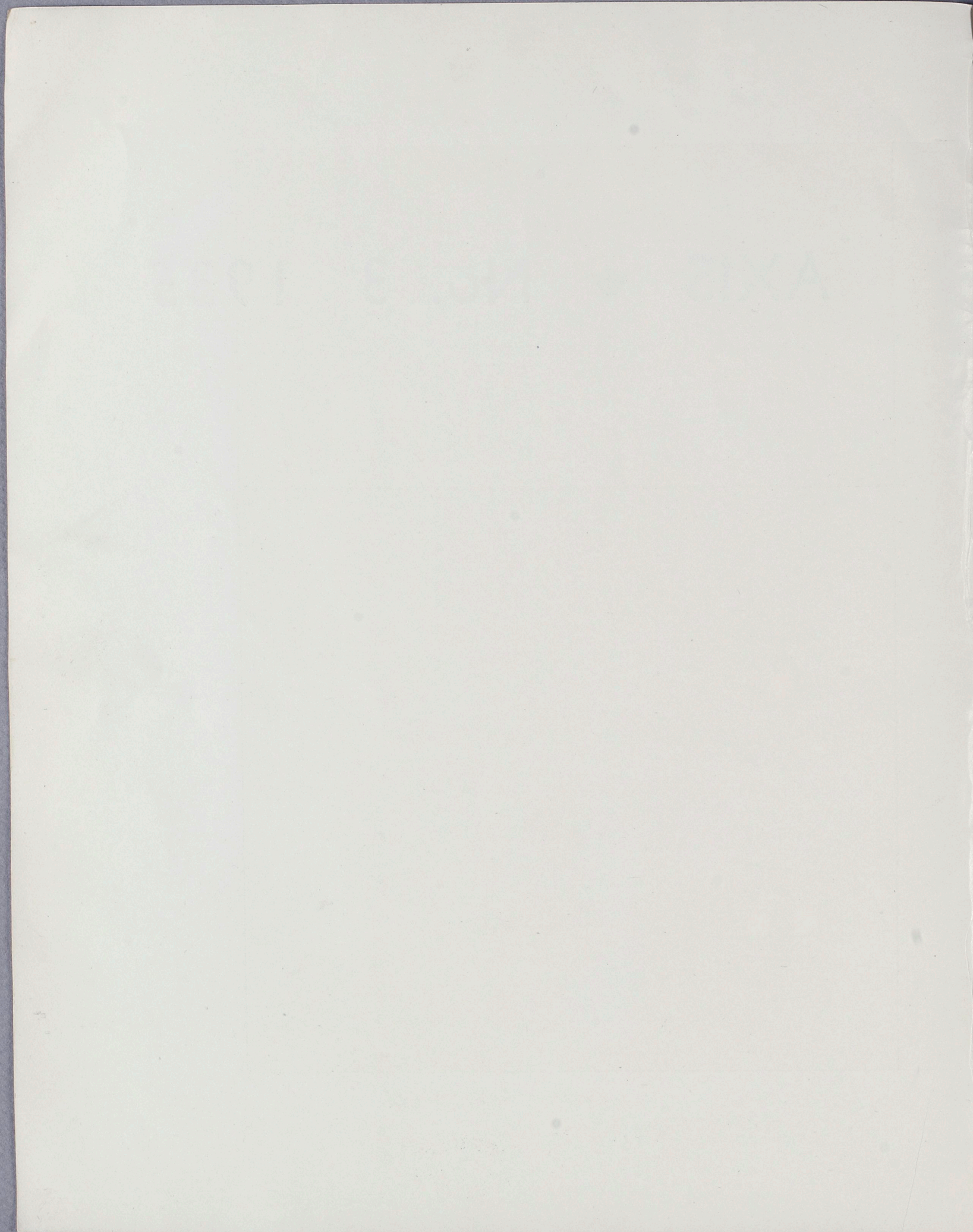
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CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE NUMBER
BRANCUSI, MOORE, HEPWORTH, CALDER

AXIS • No. 3 1935



No. 4

The FOURTH NUMBER of AXIS (to appear in October) will include illustrated articles on "THE GALLERY OF LIVING ART" in New York, and the painting of JEAN HÉLION and others. It will also contain one or more coloured illustrations.

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The photographs of works by Brancusi, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth reproduced were all taken by the artists themselves.



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The photographs of works by Brancusi, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth reproduced were all taken by the artists themselves.



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BRANCUSI. Colonne sans fin.

Brancusi

There are not many men like Brancusi, whose long life and long vision is unwaveringly devoted to the constant elevation of his art, to the uninterrupted and symbolic construction of the "Colonne sans fin," of which fortunately we shall not see the completion, either to-day or to-morrow. The task is doubly difficult for a sculptor; for Brancusi, I must point out, has his roots in the century already forgotten, the century which was essentially anti-sculptural, extra-pictorial and illusionist, and of which the greatest sculptor, Rodin, did after all nothing but introduce the impressionist principle into sculpture, and thus fatally destroy it. Rodin's touch, his little cells of shadow and light, disintegrate the volume, in the same way as spectral divisionism—the decomposition of the old "white" by painters of this school killed the modelling, exhausted the perspective and consequently destroyed the whole weight of the picture.

Architecture even lost its solidity, and the stone dripped away drop by drop through the cut veins of these unusual "modern-style" buildings, scattered throughout Europe. At that time the eyes of the world announced themselves as Monet, Renoir, Manet.

Their power lasted until Cubism. Until the new century's first attack of conscience, which showed itself little by little in Montmartre.

There, in a heavy atmosphere of expectancy, when paradox was the only possible form of truth, and the only reasonable means of escaping from a thoroughly shaken reality, fantastic voyages and Gauguin's flight to Tahiti presided over the discovery of negro art made by a new Bohemianism living in the immemorial tradition of artists *maudits*, persecuted in their turn by the persistent recurrence of the *mal du siècle*, which left nothing behind it but a ditch full of evasions, stupidities, neuroses, suicides. Lautréamont, Van Gogh, Gerard de Nerval, Baudelaire. How long it is, this furrow of despair! So the new spirit revealed itself under the sign of artificial paradises and negro fetishes.

Having succeeded in exhuming the beauties of former times—the arts and dead visions of all people and all ages, from the Pre-Raphaelites to the arts called prehistoric and savage—there is nothing to do but to draw up a balance sheet and make a clean sweep of all preceding cultures, and open the way to abstract art, which will not be slow in appearing. Cubism clearly traced the frontier between the two civilizations, between the millenary and the electro-metallurgic period which begins our days.

But Cubism perished in the field. That is its merit.

The ripening nineteenth century must no doubt have recognised in Brancusi its precursor, its first great authentic sculptor. He was born far from Paris on Roumanian soil, where the sun is never sombered by factory smoke. Yet his meeting with the machine was happy. City reversions and reactions were lacking. And so he never had a taste for rust, for mould, for holes and corners of all kinds, the equivalent of the romantic's love of ruined chateaux—the poetry of the death-throes of feudal heredity.

The bourgeois heritage of urban civilisation gave warning too of the disappearance of its homes, the little agglomerations of villages, rural districts, suburbs, small towns, swept inevitably into the orbit of the large towns, and trampled down mercilessly by the new order of life. From this springs the morbid, desolating, funereal, convulsive aspect of things.

Brancusi does not look on encroaching industry as an enemy, but as the basis of art forms of the future. He admires its health and strength, he loves its forms, of lofty preciseness, of high tension—its polished, clear surfaces. Work which is brilliant and accurate.

Instead of examining the negroes like the cubists had done Brancusi simply recalled the memories of his childhood, the immaculate whiteness of Roumanian churches perhaps, the purity of their marvellously free and outlandish style, where Byzantine, Roman and Gothic dispute their titles and positions with folklore.

The gravity of his work most certainly has its source here. To factitious biology he opposes the certainty of instinct. Spontaneity to mechanical automatonism. To a childhood dreamed of by old men, the true primitive: the hieratic attitude of the true peasant who is, as he once said himself, "nearer to God."

But before making my final decisions about Brancusi's work, I will allow myself to analyse one by one the four constituent elements of sculpture, so as to place his better, to define his contribution and novelty.

The Subject.—Complete and integral man ceased to be the "subject" of sculpture from the end of absolutism and the great French Revolution.

The human body, as well as the face, which were the bases of Hellenic creation and that of the Renaissance, instead of being an ideology which always reflected the general through the particular, became in the nineteenth century

nothing but the expression of the particular, of fragments. That which was to degenerate later into the exceptional, the rare, the extravagant, the unexpected, the precious.

These fragments (bodily and mental) become in turn the bearers of tendencies. Of different ideas. Of an isolated direction, of a particular tragic direction of human life, suppressing, effacing the rest. First the body becomes the symbol of social and military expansion—of the conquest of the world (victories with fanfares of trumpets, the bas-relief of the Arc de Triomphe).

This conquest accomplished, man leaned gradually on his past. He analysed his spiritual states which were changed by his new social position. (The acute psychology craze, literally translated by Rodin's *Penseur*.) This evolution is far better represented by the painting, always a more descriptive art. In Delacroix's exaggerated muscles.

Classical sculpture became part of space and disappeared in this meeting. It was made expressly for building, for nature. The men who made the parks at Versailles peopled them with statues which they found elsewhere. They put them there to mark man's presence: to overcome the solitude of places subjected to them. They put them everywhere, these monuments in their own image, robust and muscular symbols of their power, without worrying whether or not they went with the arches and trees as long as they were spread over as large an area as possible, like Napoleon's great army lost in the snows of Russia. (Later they transformed themselves into the lamentable *Siegesallee* in Berlin.)

Man to-day no longer recognises himself when he looks at these figures. He will have nothing to do with these marble ghosts. And the meeting between these petrified bodies and modern technique which dominates nature otherwise than by trampling underfoot, and seeing with a simple, naïve, rustic eye which can embrace nothing but a limited space—the meeting between a factory chimney and a gladiator, seen so often by Chirico, becomes more formidable, more moving than the famous: "*Rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et un parapluie!*" of Lautréamont, so much cherished by the Surrealists.

The human body disappeared inevitably with the approach of the present civilisation, and Brancusi's *Leda* and *Le Nouveau-né* as well as his few portraits, are the last traces of it. The portrait begins to play the same part as the portraits of savages' ancestors, and totem poles. The new form embraces everything, and becomes clear in itself, in its new beauty. The man of yesterday vanishes behind his death mask, and

the new age is ready to break its shell and bring to birth a shape, an image, that is unanticipated.

The Material.—Marble, wood, stone, bronze, steel. And it is only in new materials, especially metals, of present use and interest, that Brancusi introduces important innovations. He completely transforms the function of bronze. The heavy, rough mass becomes polished and shiny. He treats it like steel. But transforming its outward appearance he also transforms the conception of the material. It is no longer a heavy, inert mass, but a mass which conducts energy; the coefficient of its resistance is raised; the rhythm dispels the ponderousness. Examples: his tangent *Poisson* which touches the white sea of its pedestal at a single point only; his *Oiseau dans l'espace*, in which gravity is all but conquered. He treats the stone like reinforced concrete.

The end of the century is best characterised by the double anguish of smelting and steam. Metals that are slow, yielding, smooth-flowing (the gates of the Metro. in Paris) and the dim portraits smothered by Carrière's vapours give place to taut, fine wires—posts of pierced reinforced concrete. Brancusi translated this surface reality in his works, which are its aesthetic equivalents.

Space.—First: round, shut, circular, like Newton's apple which was the root of the Renaissance conception of the world. Revolving—"All the same, it *does* go round" (Galileo). The earth turning, in spite of the temporary hold-up proclaimed by the flames of the Inquisition. But there the Middle Ages burned out.

The thighs, the over-abundant breasts, the sparkling roundnesses of the human body, definitely replace the Gothic ecstasy, following the apple. They were to last until mankind's new age, until the new theories of space of Riemann, Lobatchevsky and Einstein. Rotation, gyration, cyclical movement serve as a framework for all artistic creation. In music the rondo replaced polyphony. Perspective, truly *prospect*ive, traced by the hesitant but resolute hand of Ucello, is transformed into clouds, into a mass of clouds, gathered in scrolls on the canvases of the Dutchmen. Baroque in architecture. "Modern-style" is the swan-song of Baroque: Sevillian Baroque become flaccid, worn-out and soft.

And then everything scatters, turns to dust and vanishes. Seurat impels another rhythm, another linear space (this time drawn with a drawing-pen) like all ascendant periods. Rectangular, clear, tense, real, like all early-morning vision. In his *Chabut* Seurat gives voice to the hysteria of the French *can-can* where already, mingled with the slow circular movement of the dying valse, is the rigid movement of pistons and



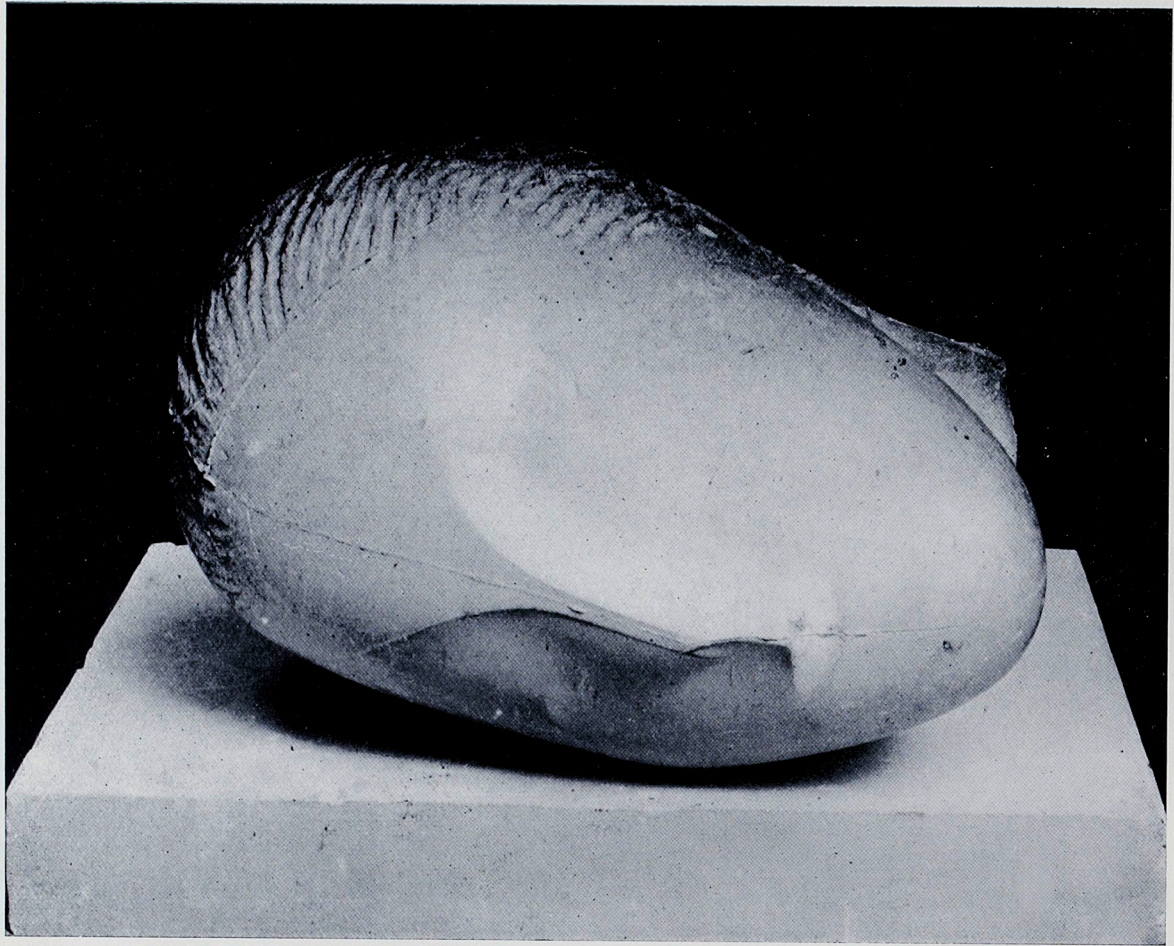
BRANCUSI. Socrate.

(Two following pages : left : Leda et Le nouvea-né; right : Poisson)

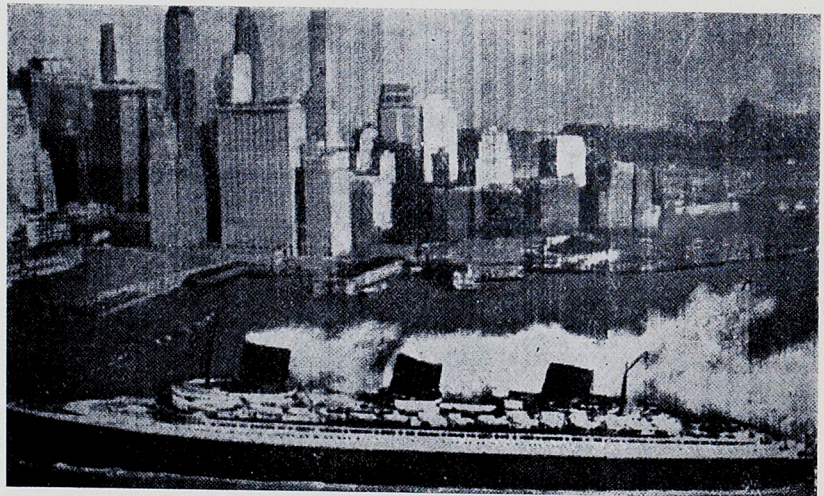




BRANCUSI.
*La muse
endormie.*



● "Normandie"
entering New York.



rods. Yesterday! When: "*Une valse rapide dans un salon éclairé de mille bougies jette dans les jeunes coeurs une ivresse qui éclipse la timidité, augmente la conscience des forces et leur donne enfin l'audace d'aimer*" (Stendhal).

The valse which is for the future to symbolise the nineteenth century reappears for the last time in Renoir's *Moulin de la Galette*, then to die for ever.

Everything scatters, turns to dust, vanishes. The roundness of nudes which would once have delighted the Impressionists lengthened and shrivelled. Spirals no longer make us dizzy. We are intoxicated with the straight line, that which shows the way to another limitless space, where numerous light-giving dynamos are already in action. Aero-dynamics affirms its power on all sides. Brancusi keeps the last traces of roundness, as Mondrian keeps the last traces of modelling in light and shade. Their successors—most of the younger generation—Giacometti, Pevsner, Piper, Calder, work in geometrics. They calculate the infinite. They work in counterpoint. They build, but their works have no boundaries, as a

photo has no margins. Like energy, or light, which we cannot yet isolate.

Brancusi's work will always remain unique, solitary and inimitable, like all work which acts as a lighthouse in the darkness of the ages.

Rhythm.—The same problem as space, for sculptural rhythm is space solidified, that is to say, space materialised.

● At the moment when I was finishing these lines the evening paper thrust under my eyes a magnificent photo by wire of the arrival of the *Normandie* at New York. I believe, and always expect to, that no illustration, no homage, can so eloquently present Brancusi's victory as this upward flight of birds in stone, singing from all their windows at the phantom-like appearance of the giant liner, strangely like Brancusi's marble fish. This photo hung up in my room will always remind me of him, and recall his studio peopled with like forms, *existing in a like rhythm*.

ANATOLE JAKOVSKI.

(Translated from the French.)

Henry Moore and Ourselves

When success is publicly assumed to be one of the primely virtuous achievements, measured by the energy applied over forty years to "making" money and giving oneself a comfortable old age and leaving a surplus of comfort for one's heirs, i.e. when the world is a good-time world (good time for the few, as now, or for the many, as desired: it makes no difference), then people are not likely to care for painting or sculpture; the artist himself must live then, as he now does, in a corner, and choose in it, by his nature, one of about three ways of going to work.

He can purify, representing the facts of order statically in ideal harmonies.

This is Brancusi, or Mondrian rather.

He can soak, squirm and swim and say that life is life, male the full necessity of female.

This is D. H. Lawrence.

He can synthesise, mix life and mind, give each the tensivity of the other, affirming that life is a machine (mind distinguishes man from the

bacteriophage), that there is life and also a life of mind; representing them, not at rest, but dramatically.

This is Wyndham Lewis; or in verse, with a few shifts, it is W. H. Auden; and Henry Moore is at once beyond Brancusi and Mondrian, and half-way between Lewis and Lawrence, and because he changes with a single aim, he works more certainly than Lawrence and Lewis have been able to do.

Lewis's painting, the best of which is extremely good, approaches (though keeping severely separate in its elaboration) Mondrian rather than Chirico, Dali, or even Picasso. He would be, if he could against his time, the Classicist. Moore, in his shapes, gives body to his own phantasies. He is nearer surrealism. He goes to work (there he is the English artist) intuitively, feeling all kinds of life and matter and their relationship; but once he has made a discovery, he can make it an element, use it again, modify it or discard it. He can control it when

it exists, without, I believe, always realising how or why it first came to exist.

Among English writers or artists now, Auden, apparently "romantic," has the truest classical attitude. Lewis endeavours, with intermittent success, to work by will. Eliot, though he *knows* about them, is subject to his own phantasies about death, he is a fragmentary mythomaniac poet, Auden, both classical and metaphysical (or "psychological") like a Blake without God, has a skill in mastering his own phantasies without repressing them, is learning to use those which have an objective value as he wishes, and remarkably employs "art itself" (rhythm and form) and association and narrative and all the small elements of technique.

Moore, finding, like Auden, his "mysteries" within man rather than in man and matter, contemplated in relation to any transcendent or immanent power, carves stone and wood with a technique more thorough than Auden's still developing technique for language; but his control of his phantasies, as I have said, is less thorough than Auden's, and different to it, just as his aim is less explicit and less public; as to a point it must be now for a plastic worker in free volumes.

Moore does not know himself so well, and he is not so separate from himself—not separate enough, even if his solemn concentration allowed it, to make jokes in wood as Auden does, when he wants to, in words—and that leads to what I find least good in his sculpture: He gives up the fullness and strength and solid grace of ordered stone which make his megalithic humans or semi-abstracted humans (such as the two figures together in ironstone), for a big squatness, sometimes, or broadness or brutality, positive and complete, I feel, like an all-in wrestler. His salvation is that he knows when to stop becoming finally the surrealist-who-cannot-help-himself. But obviously Moore has also liked other things in Mexican free sculpture than its sculptural or vital or occasionally idealistic qualities.

Also, as Lewis has complained about Picasso, many of Henry Moore's shapes of life, much more than can be liked, are vegetative and static or at least slow-moving rather than energetic images of human life or energetic images of all life in common. He is the artist there of our time. When Mediterranean peoples in Italy, Greece, Crete or Sardinia, when Esquimoos or Bushmen or Altamira cave-painters imaged animals or humans of a tense vitality, physical life was for them a total, a final, an embracing fact, a paramount good. So they produced sculpture in bronze or ivory, or drawings, or reversed wedge designs, as round an al 'Ubaid pot from the pre-Flood levels of Sumeria, which possessed a sharp full vitality which we are not likely to see again. For us life must become partly an accessory fact to mind. Its processes are secondary to the processes of thought (except under a Communism of charity, mediocrity and dogmatism?). In fact, life tends to become thought.* The natural appearance tends not to attract us so much, and images of nature are modified by different degrees of abstraction. Only the rarest artist is likely to give such abstractions a consistently energetic, dramatic

* The fallacy of Puritan painting is that it cannot go beyond a tendency, and that it forgets the activity of thought.

quality, a quality of the life of thought and the required degree of the life of nature, or the organism, in a period like ours which is one of confused and hasty distraction, of possibilities of construction and power for excellence, but of still more enormous likelihood of destruction.

In the vegetative stillness of some of his figures Henry Moore partly exhibits his Lawrence side, the life stream in slow motion, the small head, the liquescent and the fertile large guts, the swan's web in the marshy soil of Leda's belly; and partly establishes his duplicate of the mechanical stillnesses of Mondrian, refuges, or straps of steadiness, either way. You cannot act when the purposes or ways of action are not at all clear.

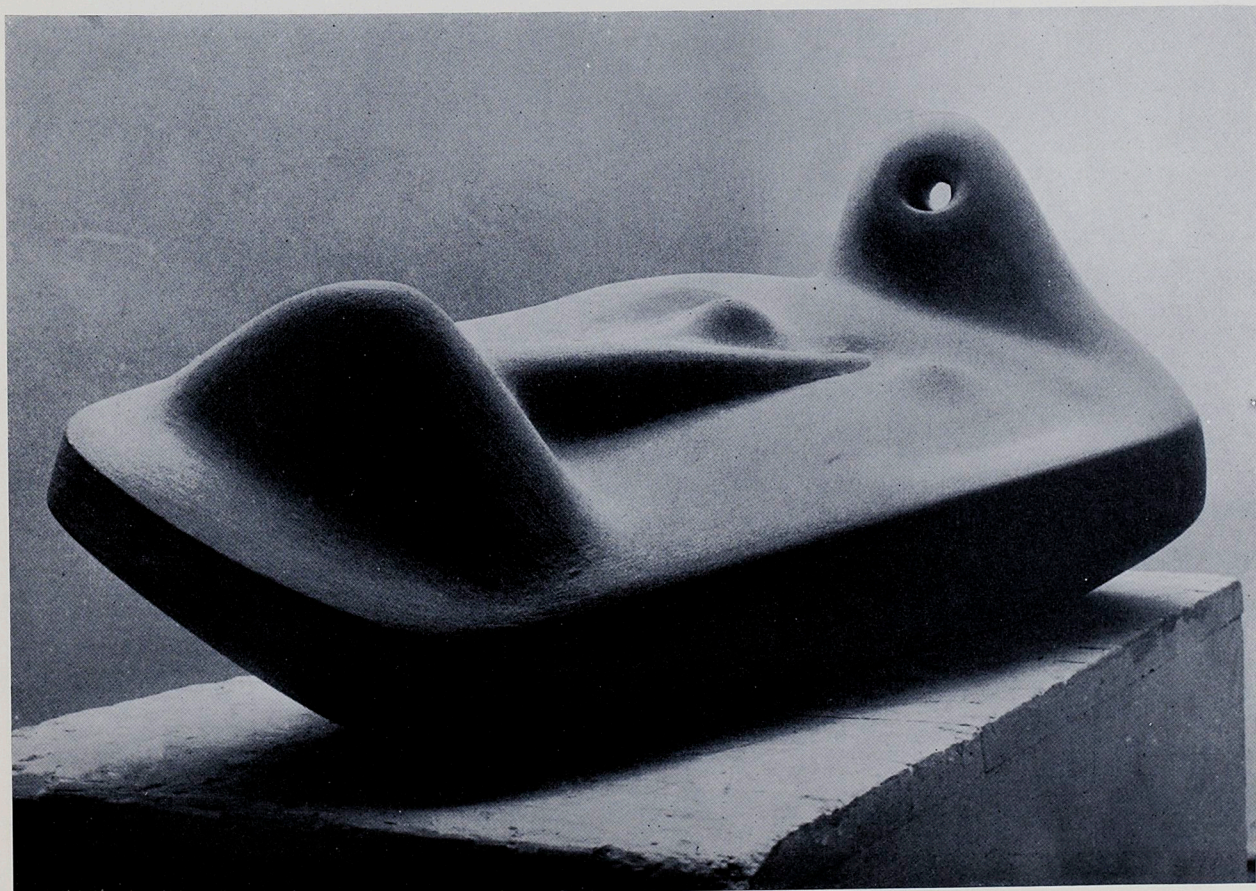
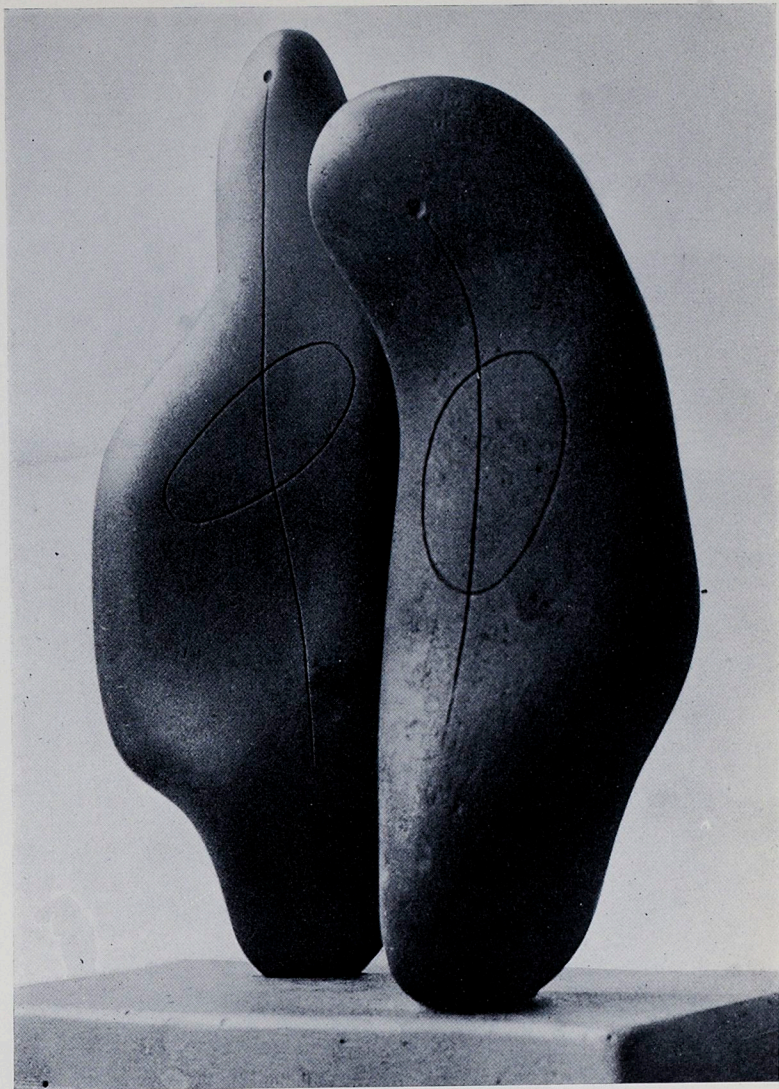
Yet Moore intuits deeply, and his expressions, not always pure, not always admissible, grow in the block and are removed from it with the power and the skill of an exceptional artist. He is with Auden, Lewis and the unfulfilled Christopher Wood, one of the only English phenomena of a big value, and he points with them and with others abroad to at any rate a widening of the corner of the private artist.

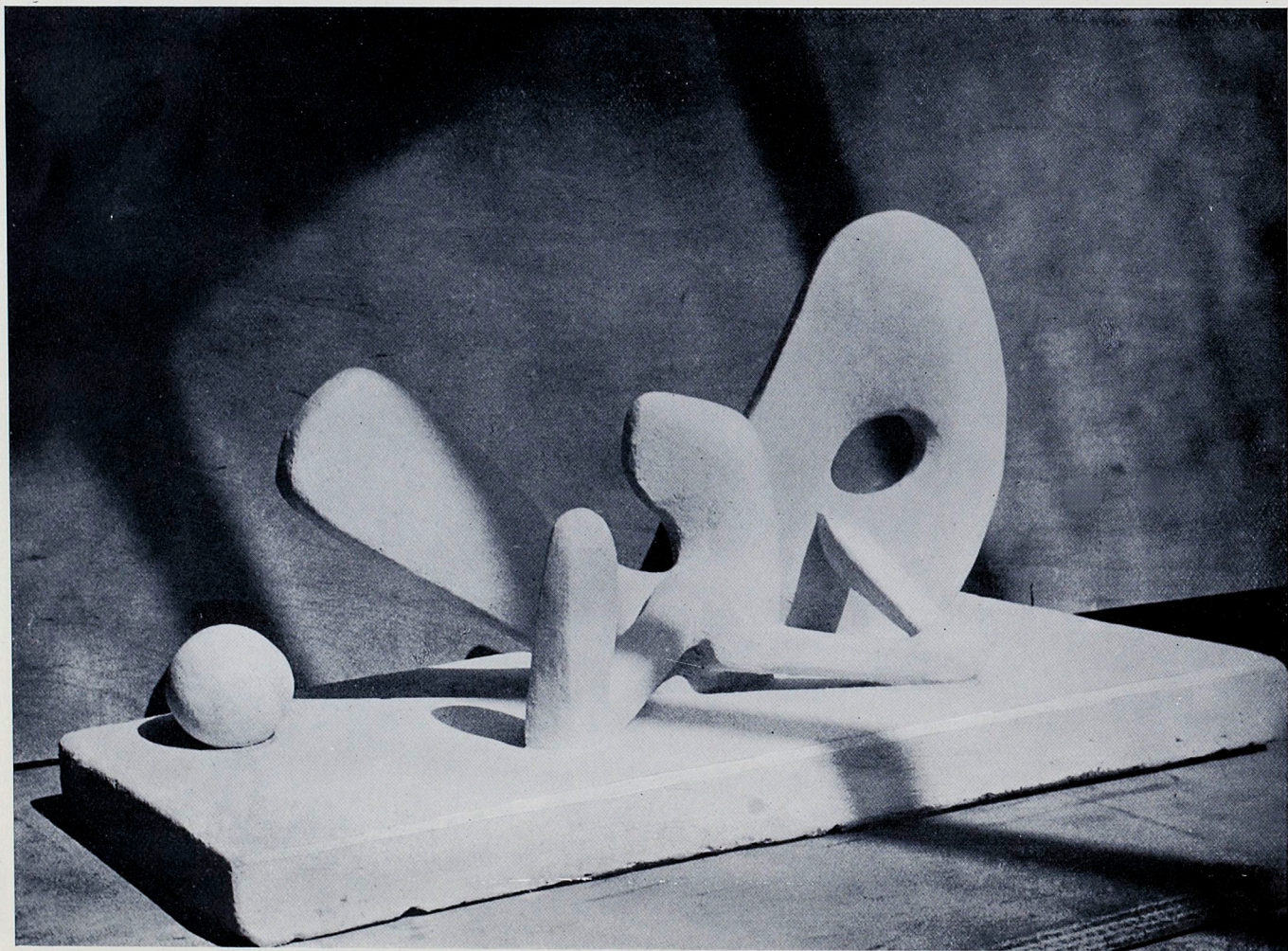
If his sculpture seems difficult (partly from its subjectivity and from his limited control) remember also that there is no popular art of figures which the sculptor can reanimate as Auden can reanimate popular or bawdy verse forms and entice readers through them. The free sculptor now has still to suffer as an original explorer and expositor.

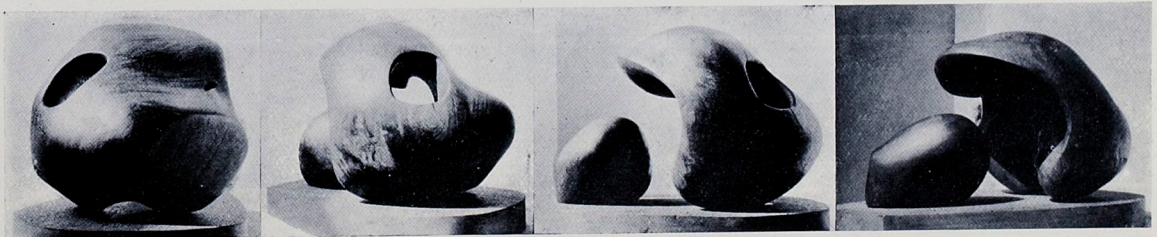
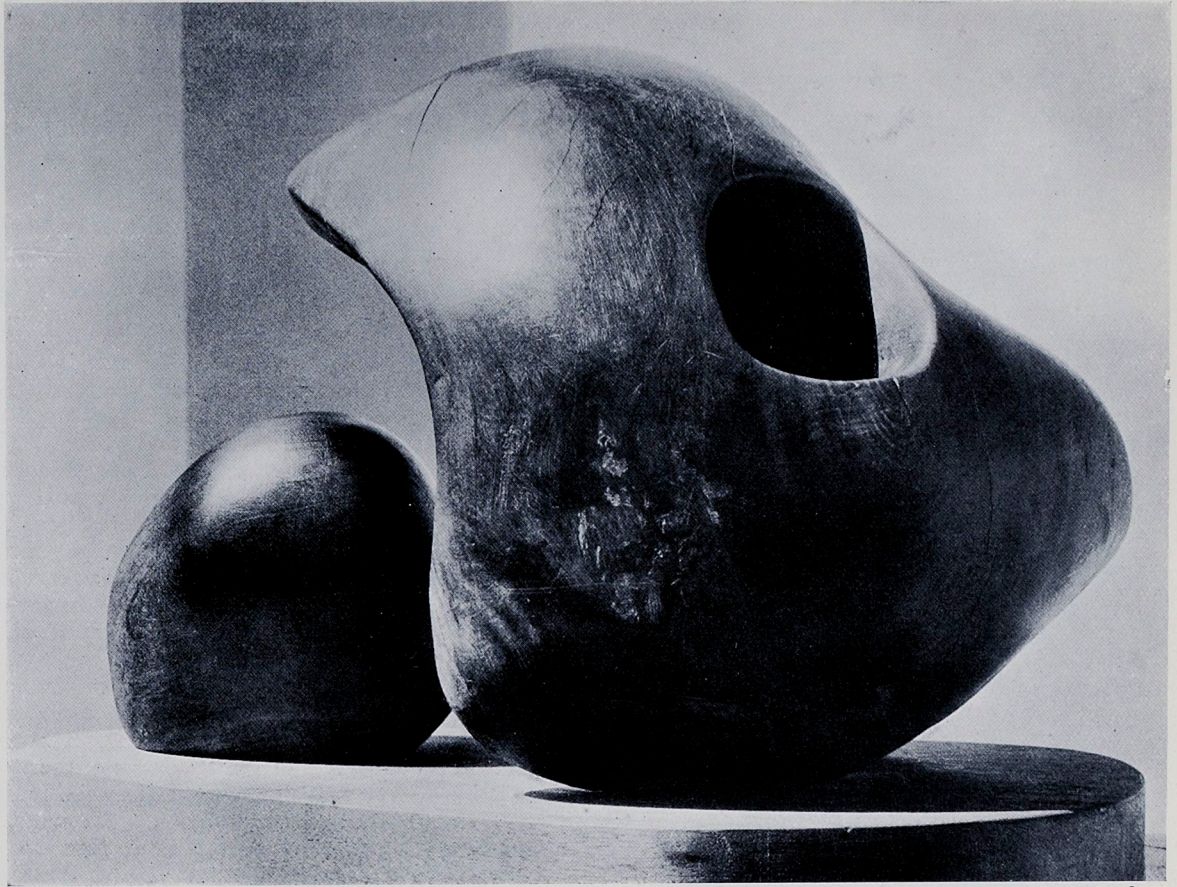
GEOFFREY GRIGSON.

Illustrations : HENRY MOORE ; opposite, above, Sculpture, 1934 (Ironstone) ; below, Carving, 1935 (Corsehill Stone).

Two following pages : left, Composition, 1934 (Reinforced Concrete) ; right, Two forms, 1934 (Carving in Pynkado Wood).







New Works by Barbara Hepworth

As a professional archaeologist, the writer feels to some extent qualified to comment on Barbara Hepworth's most recent works. For she has realised values which belong to the essence of sculpture and which, in fact, characterise good work of all ages.

Two qualities appear, upon reflection, to be elements common to the varied enjoyment of all these carvings. The spatial disposition emphatically achieves a three-dimensional effect; and the physical peculiarities of the materials are turned to account with subtle mastery. Both qualities also establish these new works as contemporary representatives of the best traditions of plastic art.

The method of spatial disposition which Barbara Hepworth has adopted may best be understood by considering a formal characteristic common to all the carvings reproduced here. They each consist of a rectangular slab upon which two or three distinct elements are presented. One hesitates to call the slab a base, for it is by no means an accessory, but, on the contrary, an essential part of each carving; and it requires but little contemplation to discover its function.

It appears, then, that each carving contains, besides the base and the exquisitely modelled elements upon it, a third constituent of equal importance. Even as in music, not only the sounds but also the silences enter into the rhythm of the composition, so matter and empty space form in their harmony these carvings. But space unlimited, cannot enter into the order which is a work of art. It is the function of the oblong slab to give it definition, to delimit with precision the spatial individuality of each work as a whole.

It is a remarkable achievement that Barbara Hepworth has in one or two cases omitted to fix one of the three elements upon the base. It means that she has so exhaustively realised all possible spatial interrelations between the elements of these particular carvings that each new grouping, each displacement of the mobile element within the limits of the work as defined by the slab, results in fresh harmonies. One is tempted to consider these works as living organisms in which (within certain limits which to pass means death) distinct organs each with a character of

its own, exist interdependently within a larger unit which is more than the mere sum of its constituents.

Perhaps we have passed beyond the limits of rational analysis with the last remark. Words, being counters of the intellect, can in any case have no bearing on the peculiar fascination of these works, the amazing scope and variety of their harmonies and contrasts, the tensions between their separate yet connected masses. And it should be stated explicitly that the excellent photographs can only give a shadowy idea of works so essentially three-dimensional. The one view here given of each carving has a strictly limited appeal which collapses at the very moment that the original would, by the sheer force of its plastic qualities, compel the spectator to move and open up new tracts of vision. Nor can the photographs suggest the living perfection of a surface where the colourless light of day is married to the hidden splendours of the stone.

It is a most unusual sensibility for her material which enables Barbara Hepworth to achieve a modelling at the same time so subtle and so tense; as a result of this, worked surface and contained mass make, indivisibly, one single plastic statement. Moreover, the effect which is realised contains colour and texture as powerful elements, which critical reflection may attempt to separate but which were, in fact, insolubly contained in the one original creative act of artistic conception.

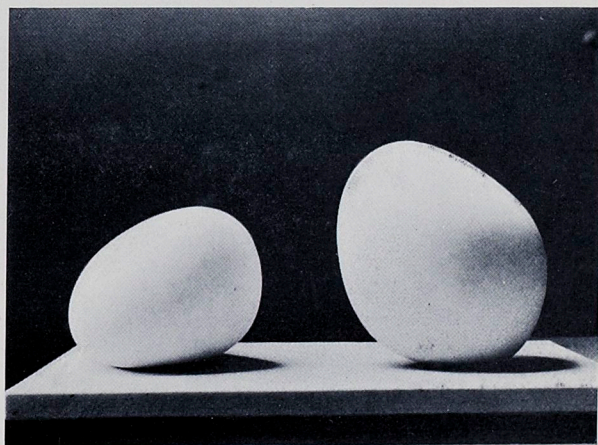
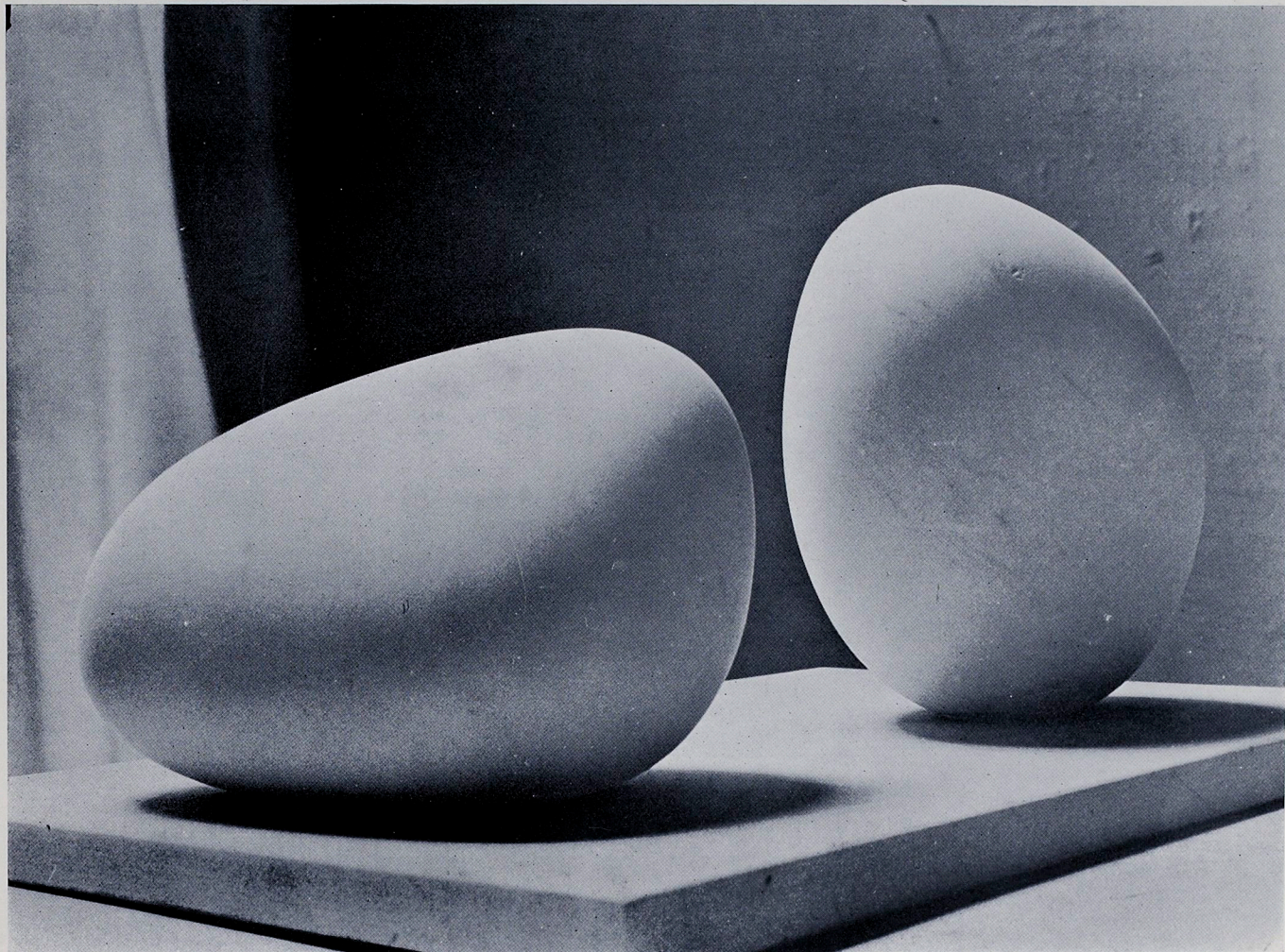
By thus actuating to the last degree the forces which lie dormant in her material, Barbara Hepworth places herself not less in line with ancient sculptural traditions than by the sustained tension of her composition and a thoroughness of carving which leaves every particle of surface shaped and luminous. Chinese carvings and those ancient Egyptian works which were not meant to be covered with a coat of painted stucco show a similar surface treatment. As for her spatial disposition—the Apollo of Olympia (and no one should speak here who has not experienced the impact of the original upon his startled vision) includes as indispensable parts the empty space between chin and shoulder, arm and flank. The essentials of art are immutable.

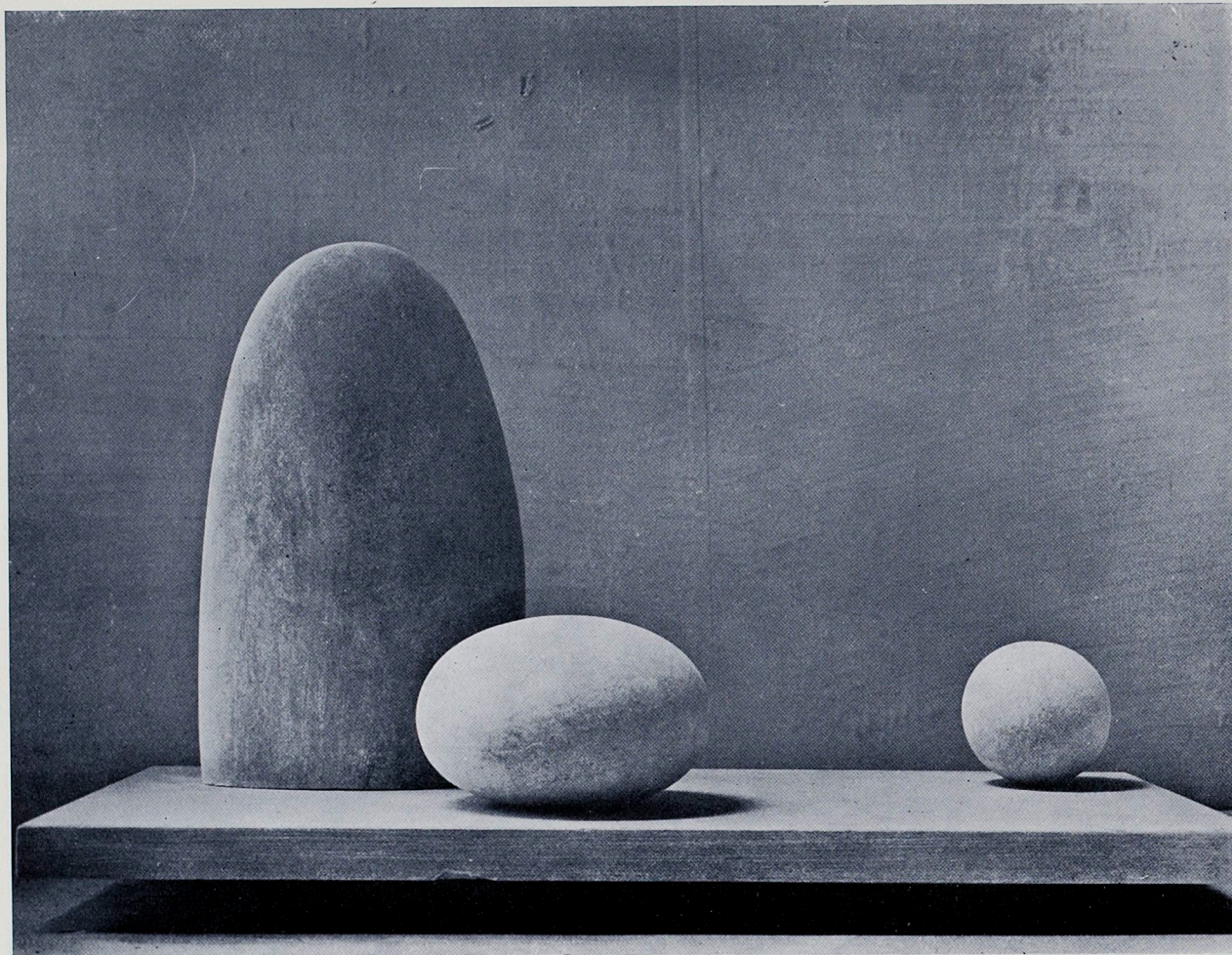
H. FRANKFORT.

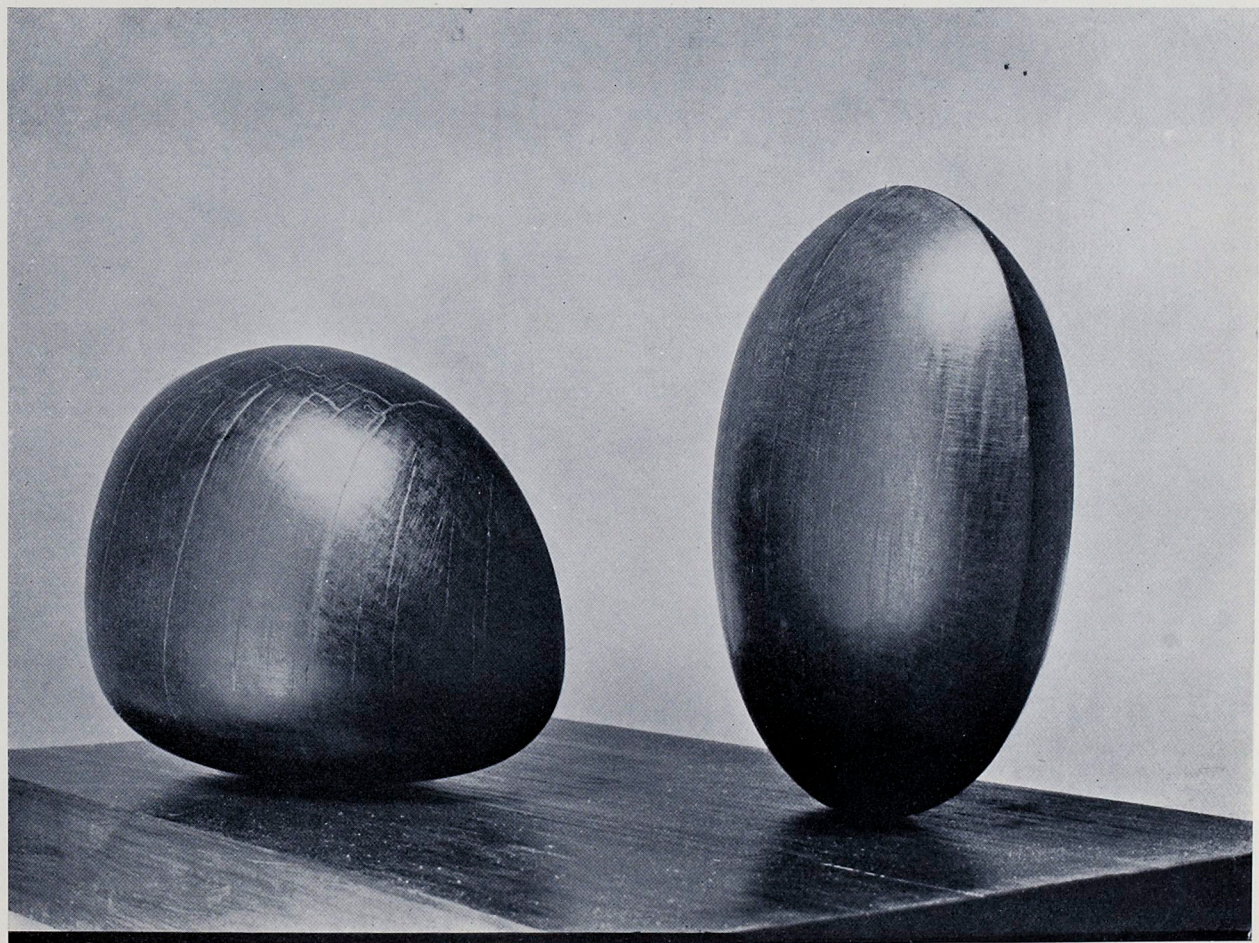
Illustrations : BARBARA HEPWORTH. *Opposite, Carving in White Marble, 1935.*

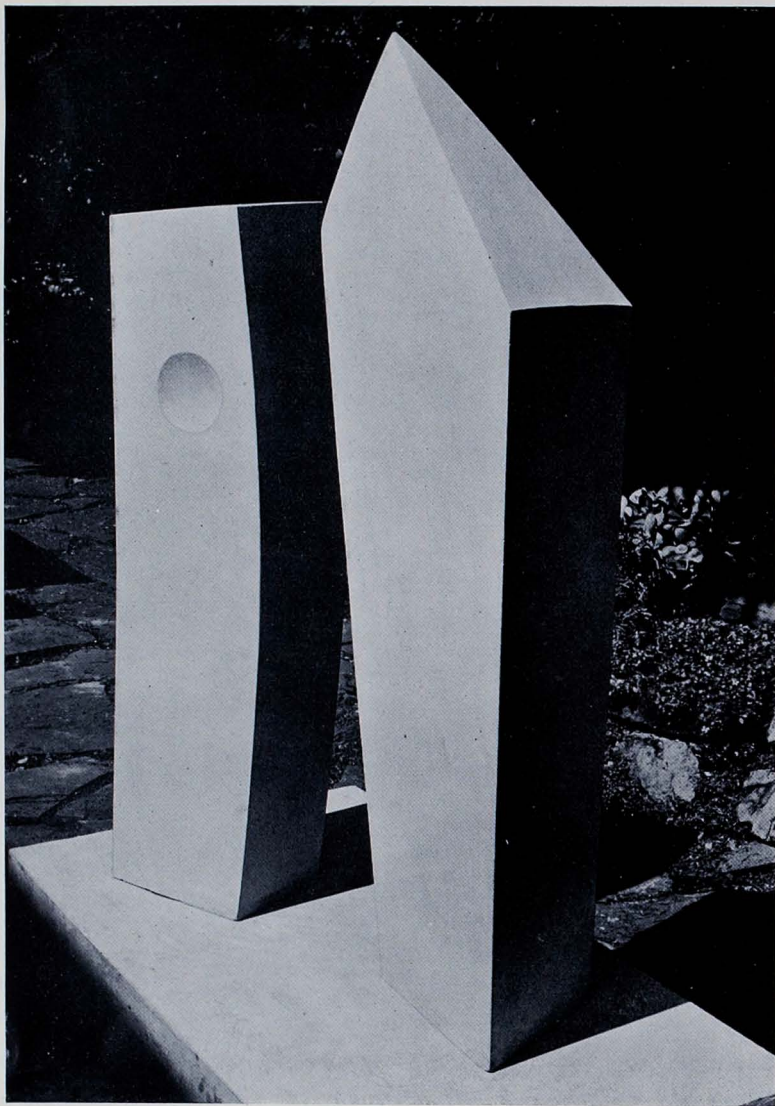
Two following pages : left : *Carving in Grey Alabaster, 1935;*

right : *Carving in Snakewood, 1935.*

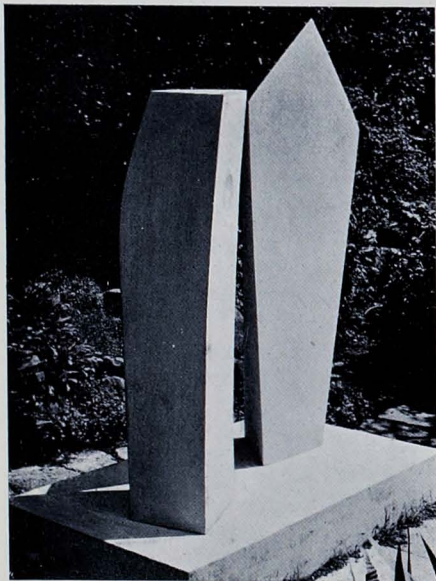








BARBARA HEPWORTH.
Carving in Blue
Ancaster stone
(Two views).



Alexander Calder

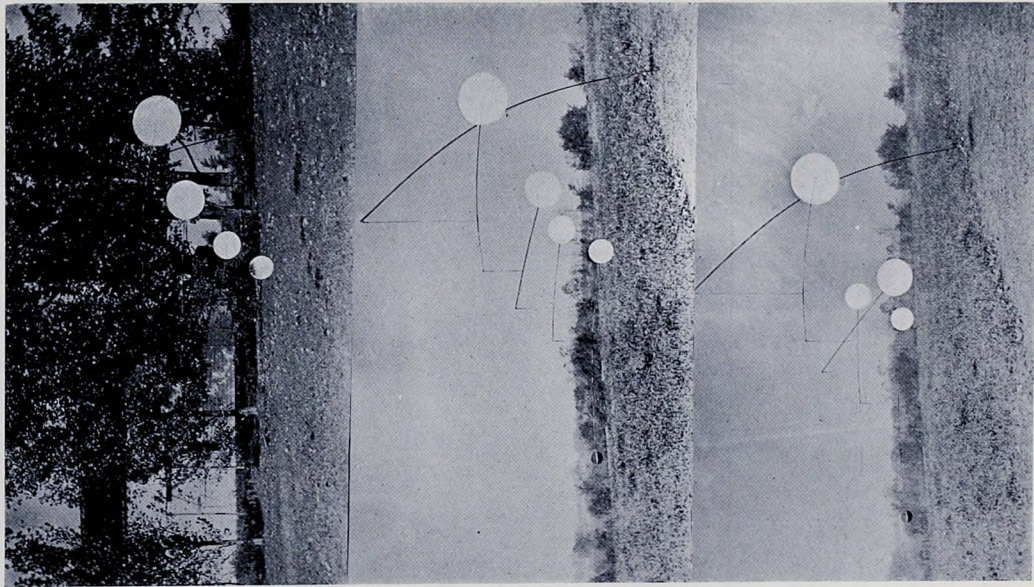
In sculpture, Alexander Calder's expression is that of a gay asceticism. He has seen the virtue of stripping forms to their plastic essentials. But in refining his idiom to its elements he has never impoverished it. Instead, with every layer of non-essentials that he clears away, a richer, blither sensibility comes to light.

The outstanding characteristic of Calder's work is the liveliness with which he imposes his temperament on his plastic organisations. Through them a simplicity and directness speaks with an unflinching sense of humour. A lightness in his linear rhythms and in the arrangement of his space-intervals, as well as his fondness for bright primary colours, give his work a lyric quality. This and the seeming care-free spirit of his essays lift his work out of the ruck of still-born, self-conscious, contemporary experimentation. Calder's expressions seem almost spontaneous growths.

However, a consideration of his development throws another light on his approach. His work is by no means solely a product of his intuitions. Intellectually he offers a combination less common in the last few generations than might be desired; a scientifically trained mind that preserves a respect for sensibility. Although a son and grandson of sculptors he was educated as an engineer. But four years' work as a graduate engineer did not prevent his return to the arts. And from his beginnings in Impressionist painting we see a steady effort to find himself and his expression that curiously epitomises the evolution of plastic art in the present century. First his wire-caricatures: a reduction of volumes to contour lines—a sort of spatial calligraphy—which gave a freer field to fantasy but at the same time laid a stronger emphasis on essentials. Then a growing interest in the bases of plastic organisation: texture contrasts, primary colours, simple rhythms. Finally a new fusion of these elements into forms interesting not so much in their representational character as for themselves.

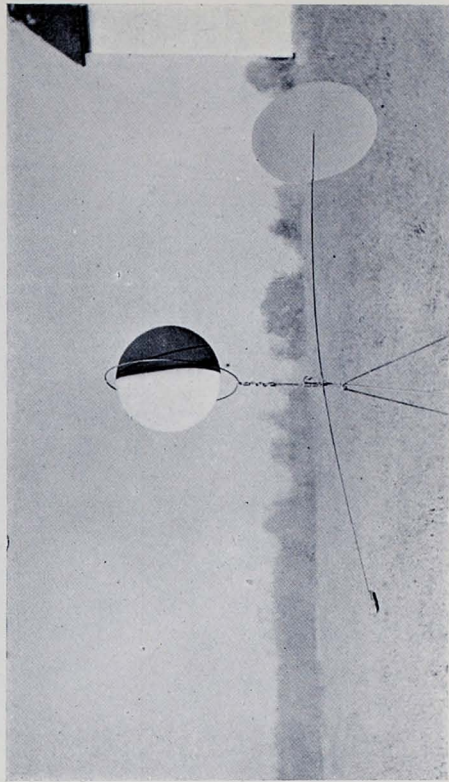
Calder's expression is the product of a conscious and conscientious striving. It is not the first by any means in the same field. But while the related expressions of other artists have remained lifeless or dated, Calder's lyricism personalises his with a vitality and promise.

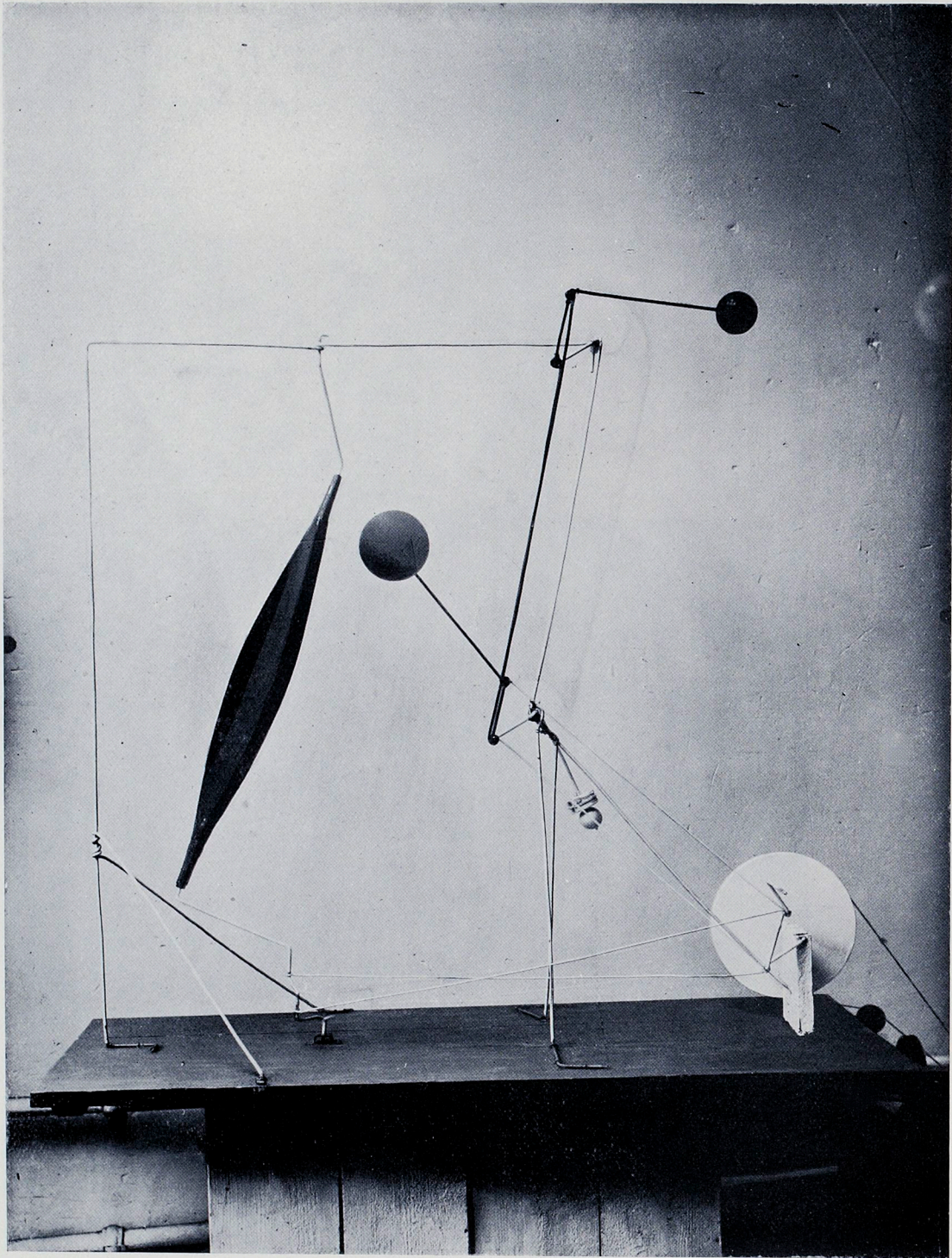
JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY



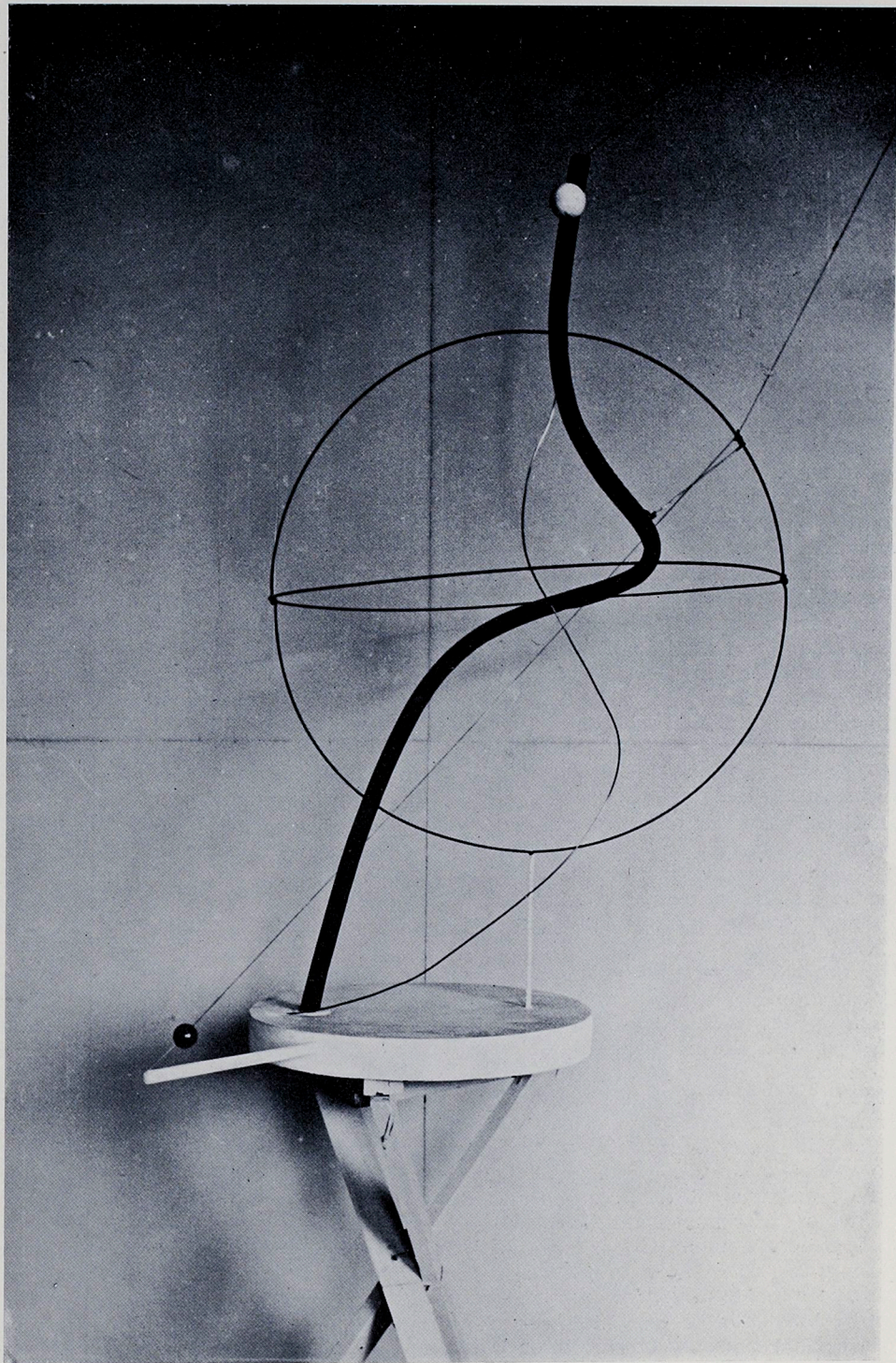
ALEXANDER CALDER.

Left: "A mobile for the open air; four white discs and a little red blob. The supporting rod is twelve feet long and is guyed from the centre of its length."
Below: Mobile.





ALEXANDER CALDER. *Mobile.*



ALEXANDER CALDER. *Mobile.*

New Planets

Since I have not the pleasure of knowing personally any of the artists whose work I shall mention, I cannot tell you how and why they make the shapes which you see scattered through these pages. Their own explanation would inevitably differ from mine. But I shall begin by risking a generalisation, and proceed to some very particular matters later.

The significant sculpture of the last five years is distinguished from all previous sculpture by a novel departure—it has *split itself up*, as mercury splits up, or as certain primitive organisms, or the fish *poi* found in the South Seas, split up to propagate their kind.

Sculpture hitherto has concerned itself, on the plastic side, with relations between surfaces of a single object. The new sculpture, without neglecting the claims of plastic motion within or upon the object itself, attempts to make relations between itself and other separate objects of the same kind, or between dislocated bits of itself. And it is “abstract” with far more assurance and justification than before. The sculptor has to cultivate a new sense—the sense that responds to the magnetic strain set up between, not masses merely, as in “three-dimensional” paintings, but actual objects: the strain that planets feel in relation to each other and to stars. In a more profound sense than the sculptor of the Hellenic tradition, the new sculptor probes the secrets of heavenly bodies.

The pioneer of this new sculpture was not, indeed, a member of another planet, but it is unlikely that any of the sculptors in question have heard his name: the Earl of Orrery, the inventor of the clockwork planetarium. The sculpture itself probably derives more directly from two independent visionaries: Calder and Arp. Calder is the greater, the more original, the more sensitive and subtle. He poises spheres and discs in space, inhabits them until he senses their precise relative positions. It would be found probably that this poetry of stellar units, exquisitely and instinctively spaced, obeys the square law and the injunctions of the electromagnetic system. Often the main line of force is emphasised with a fine structural wire. Calder forges beautiful and compelling constellations. He is also one of the few sculptors to justify the use of colour. Calder is the inventor of this new artform, *dislocated* sculpture; Brancusi is the inventor of its shapes; Arp was the first to wed the two inventions; Moore was the first to turn Arp's toy into a work of art.

Moore is the only English sculptor of any

outstanding power, vision, sensibility and technical competence. I emphasise “and,” because several Englishmen show one or other gift without the remainder; I emphasise “English” because the semitic genius is older, quite different, and fairly constant in character for all times and places; and this is no time or place to attack or defend Epstein anyway. Moore's latest work illustrates the way in which a man of genius and ability can adapt a new invention and make it at once his own and superior to what “influenced” him.

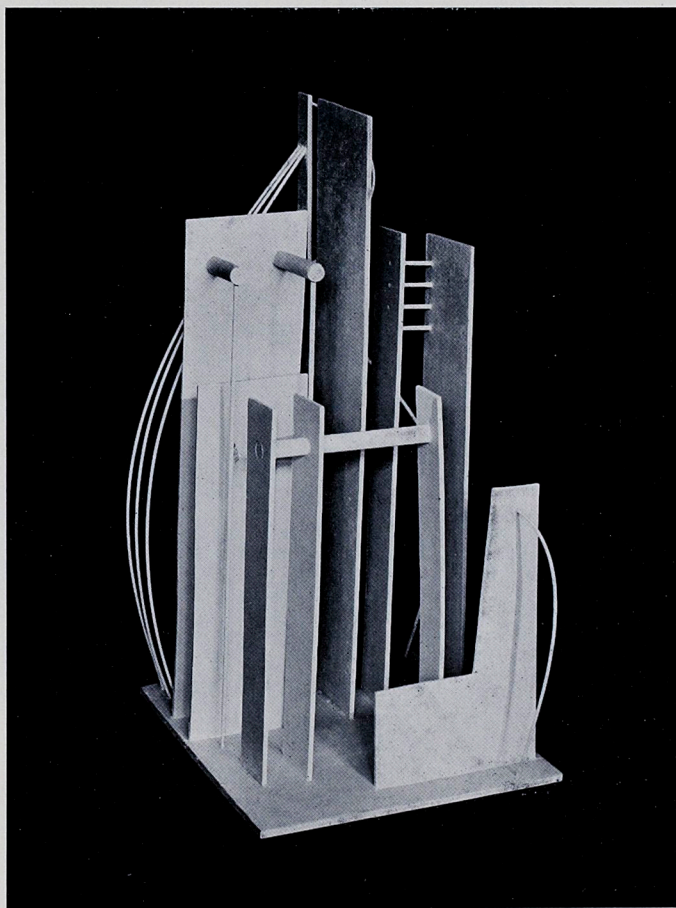
Moore's earlier work, bunions raised in rock, lunar landscapes with female features, budding eyes or breasts, boiling mud-beds transfixed on the point of eruption, have gently disbanded into simpler elements, disparate but juxtaposed. It seems likely that work by Barbara Hepworth suggested to Moore the possibilities of this new game.

Take away from Barbara Hepworth all that she owes Moore, and nothing would remain but a solitary clutch of Brancusi eggs, with a few Arp scraps. A Hepworth torso is always barely and perilously existing, as sculpture. One touch and it might collapse like dough. But in this new form she has discovered new gifts. To get under the skin of something, to intuit its degree of sympathy or resistance to a foreign body—that is a feminine gift. Considered singly, her objects often lack power—partly, perhaps, because of the proximity of a Moore! But consider the superb poise of her new twin monoliths; and, as between the units of her rotunder pieces, note the precise apprehension of surface tensions. Her objects are related together in a manner diametrically opposed to that of Moore. Where Moore's forms are linked by an intangible bond of sympathy, attraction of opposite magnetic poles, Barbara Hepworth's are as deliberately based on similarity of forms, magnetic repulsion. Each unit is a highly individualised, haughty, feminine, enclosed lump, spurning its neighbour with a tacit *noli me tangere*. This principle of repulsion is to be found at the core of Eileen Holding's Giacomettesque also: the forms are knit together by a mutual assertiveness and hostility. Or it is the struggle of gourd-vines within the formal goal of a trellis, the self a prisoner exulting masochistically (femininely) in all the paraphernalia of the public stocks, the tongue-bit, Chinese *Kang*, etc.

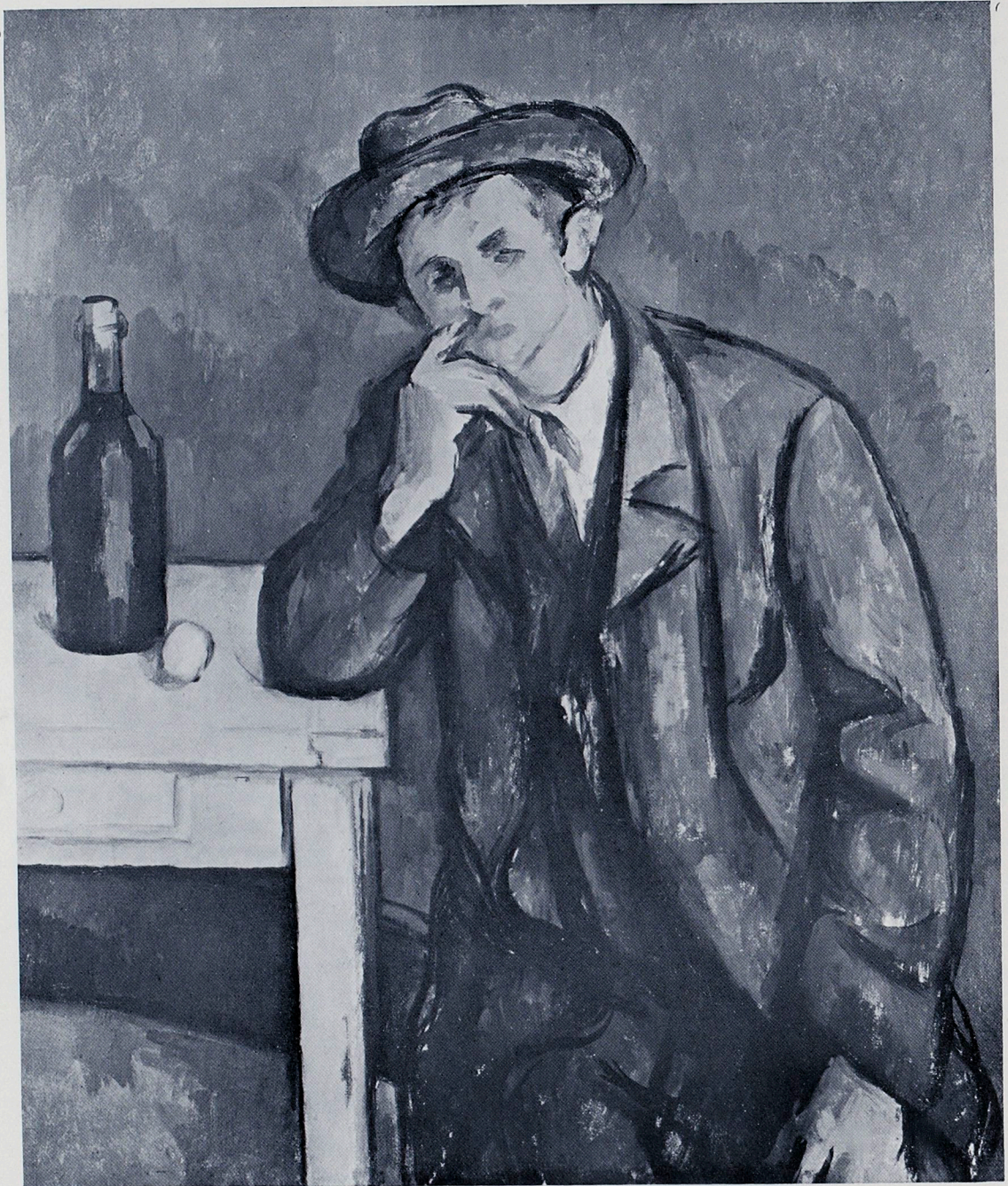
All these sculptures are potent personal symbols of pride and struggle and suffering, grown for a dimly apprehended purpose—as a

stag or stag-beetle grows antlers, or as an army "grows" ramparts and barbed wire,—tremendous defensive weapons projected by a few civilised persons against the mass stupidities of the age. And all these sculptors are busy *climbing out* of their constructions, as fast as they are built; men constantly entangled in complex machines of their own devising, or like hermit crabs constantly outgrowing their borrowed shells. Sculpture is the most civilised as well as the most primitive of the arts. Its tempo is that of the turtle, whose markings the Chinese used in divination.

HUGH GORDON PORTEUS.



EILEEN HOLDING.
Construction, 1935.



CEZANNE. *Le Buteur*, about 1900. Courtesy of Alex. Reid and Lefevre Ltd.

A Review and a Comment

It is a great pleasure to see an exhibition of Cézanne the full-time painter again. So often lately we have seen Cézanne the painter of occasional masterpieces, which are beautifully hung with the masterpieces of his contemporaries. The show at the Lefevre Galleries includes one or two very famous pictures to give it an obvious importance, and a great many lesser known ones which are so clearly Cézanne's that they give it a weight of familiarity and surprise at the same time—rather like pictures picked out at random from piles in a studio.

One of the best known pictures in the exhibition is also nearly the earliest, *L'enlèvement*, painted in 1867. It has an academic and romantic subject: two figures clasped together in the centre of a wide dark landscape. It is Cézanne's Delacroix period. It is also very like Watts. The two central figures might be *Love and Life*; the man, brown and muscular, leaning over a pale drooping woman—even the man's head has a cloudy Pre-Raphaelite-like appearance. But Cézanne's picture is a painting and Watts' is a fable. The two figures, and even the conventional dark trees with a dim light in the centre background are realised entirely pictorially; the paint, not the landscape, is dark but brilliantly exciting. The two figures are vigorous with a life in the picture, not with a detached moral or literary life. *L'enlèvement* seems to me to be the key to all the rest—the apples lying with delicate solidity on a round dish (*Fruits sur une assiette*, watercolour), or salmon pink rocks in a composition of heat beating from one slightly varying plane to another (*La Carrière du Tholonet*) or *Le portrait de Choquet* or *Le Buveur*. *L'enlèvement* has a rather ordinary academic subject; it is clearly influenced by Delacroix, and if Cézanne had painted nothing after it he could not very well have been described as an innovator. But it remains moving as a picture, not merely interesting as an early work. The point seems to me to be that Cézanne the painter of apples, Cézanne the painter of the famous almost analytical portraits, Cézanne the painter of trees and mountains broken up into related planes is not important, but Cézanne the painter is. How and what he painted was an inevitable accident of birth and time—that is to say if Ucello had lived in Cézanne's time and Cézanne in Ucello's their particular achievements would have been reversed—the one thing that is constant is an interest in painting for its own sake. The intensity with which Cézanne painted made him paint what he did when he did. It kept the spirit

alive by continual change, conviction and achievement. Each stage, each brush stroke even was an answer to his own spiritual necessity, and because he was a painter of genius an answer to the pictorial needs of the time. We can see that just as well now in the early pictures as in the late ones. In *L'enlèvement* as well as in *Le Buveur*.

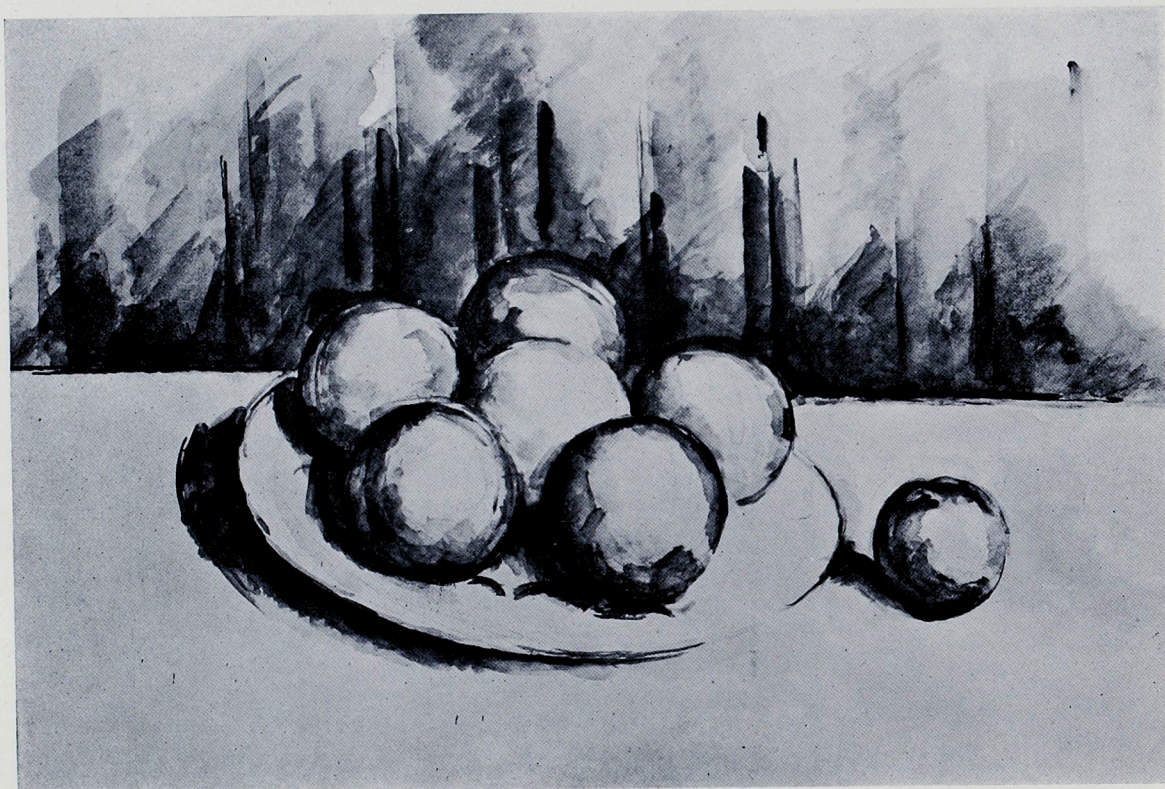
There are plenty of painters and critics who take Cézanne as the handiest and most up-to-date old master, and judge all modern painting by his particular idiom of painting (or by Michael Angelo's). They ask for the result without the spiritual necessity that produced it. Like asking people to cross the Channel in a balloon or Blériot's monoplane and trying to stage the old applause and enthusiasm.

Any gifted painter can find out how Cézanne worked by studying his pictures and produce new Cézannes with complete dexterity. But they cannot produce his purpose again any more than they can live in his time, and so their new Cézannes lack the only thing that makes his pictures worth anything at all—actual living intensity. Most modern painters don't produce new Cézannes or new Michael Angelos or new Constables, but painting for which they have an enthusiasm warmed and given a false authority by someone else's vision (Cézanne's, Michael Angelo's, Constable's). Half alive because they have a living hand and eye; half dead because they have a spirit that looks back.

Painters with a new-born intensity of their own must go on to a different way of showing their vision from that of their predecessors—this is nothing to do with progress; it is not a matter of ethics, it is merely the direction which keeps the real vision moving and intense. The only inevitable direction to-day seems to be towards abstract painting. All good painting is abstract in the sense that it translates a personal need and a universal need into one intense result that satisfies both. But it happens to-day that non-representational painting is called abstract and that some of it is also abstract in this intense living way; but it is never clear whether abstract painting (meaning non-representational) is being used as a synonym for good painting or not.

It doesn't matter if a good painter paints apples or squares, but he must move from a calculable achievement (Cézanne's apples), which dies if it is over-worked, to an incalculable and urgent possibility of achievement.

MYFANWY EVANS.



CEZANNE. *Fruits sur une assiette*, about 1896. Courtesy of Alex. Reid and Lefevre Ltd.

London Shows

EXHIBITION OF PRIMITIVE OBJECTS

Museum dust destroys the ageless purity of a work of art and suggests instead the frowstiness of the old curiosity shop, crammed with antiques whose mildewed surfaces proclaim them genuine. The Exhibition of Primitive Objects at the Burlington Fine Arts Club stifles the visitor with its atmosphere of dark decay, and the vigour associated with a primitive conception emerges only gradually through a mesh of cobweb-draped horsehair, and the straggling remnants of moth-eaten cock's feathers. Ornaments of portable size smother the shelves of the showcases. Their spiritual home is the occasional table, where their indecencies of characterisation would be atoned for by their respectable bronze casting and their niggling ivory work. The disheartening appearance of an old-fashioned bric-a-brac counter at first provokes the comment that the Primitive Art bubble has burst. But apart from the curios whose formal and psychological quaintness is now too familiar to arouse curiosity, the collection contains some objects ingeniously combining idea and workmanship. The masks of whitewashed wood, nos. 161, 162, 163, have a topical interest, but the inventive economy that went to their construction gives them an added lease of life. Their shape is oval and they are decorated with shells. Cowrie shells planted in approximately the right places indicate the eyes with a cunning realism. The symbolist invokes a recognition by using forms that are exaggeratedly different from his subject. The caricaturist reverses that process by using forms that become in his hands, more like the object than the object itself. These masks have an aptness; their satire justifies them.

The small wood carving of a figure, no. 194, is elusive in its directness. It is composed in a few bluntish points, and its sparseness embodies marvellously the basic plastic forms. Its formal alertness is refreshing in contrast with most of the other exhibits whose shapes are concealed by fringes of withered fish skin which has outlived its function of adornment.

PAUL KLEE

The Paul Klee Exhibition at the Mayor Galleries checks the preconceived exclamation; "inspired Kindergarten." His work falls rather delicately into an order that, while it enfeebls an intellectual response at least debars the onlooker from the facile substitution of an introspective one. In Klee's work, imagination has its root in reality, not the reality of the chair and table or the reality of medical fact, but in pictorial reality.

The show looks at first glance like a collection of exciting paintings; on examination it proves itself to be a collection of astute comments pictorially justified. Attenuated shapes, finely etched outlines of boggy men, recall partly the creepy Grimm and Struwwelpeter; but it is only in characterised work that Klee is Germanic. No. 20, a pink and black painting, starts from an association, but it survives its subject by its consciousness of the even more important demands of painting as such. Its equilibrium of marks on paper is reassuring. The balance tips the other way in nos. 23, 24, 25. The psychological bed-time story not only annihilates the quality of form, but obscures the clarity of subject, divorcing it from its own terms. The best thing in the show is a small watercolour, no. 9. Gruesome amusement is forgotten, and the artist, with cleanly detachment, has produced a spontaneous composition, alive through its own independence.

RENOIR. LEFEVRE GALLERY

This exhibition is almost too representative to be commented on. Renoir has soaked in. The discovery of a painting of his in the Holbein manner might start a hare in the popular press, but in fact it is his permanence as an artist that makes possible new discoveries in his work nowadays. There are specimens (permissible term for a genius in pickle) of all his phases. The early little paintings, impressionist-cum-Velasquez realised sensitively and pallidly have that charm which only later became a physical force, and might have been painted with a dandelion clock. Following this period of artistic innocence comes the time when Renoir developed a misplaced conscience and painted glazed waxy-looking nudes in order to obey fictitious rules of drawing. This textural Calvinism is compensated for in the magnificent nude *Baigneuse Assise*, no. 29, painted richly and glowingly, as much a part of its surroundings as fruit on a tree. A delightful picture is no. 7, an impersonal landscape, but one that could only have been painted by Renoir. Fundamentally it is a canvas divided into two unequal parts, expressive of Renoir's remark at the cigar-counter: "Light and dark! The art of painting in a nutshell." The two essentials are ushered in with gracious pomp by devious undulations and dapplings in sombre, acid colours. At second glance there is an effect of vivified cotton wool illuminated with pantomime lights, and finally the essentials resolve themselves again into a perfect juxtaposition of light and dark.

EILEEN HOLDING.

Paris Notes

Under the name of "Atelier 17" artists introduce themselves at the Galerie Pierre, grouped round G. W. Hayter, with whom they study etching and engraving by a special method. An apparent uniformity is produced, not only because these artists all employ the same technique, but because Hayter as a teacher follows a quite decided line of thought—that the quality of a work of art depends on the degree in which the artist has realised his primary vision. He opposes all mere illustration or reproduction of reality, but besides this he considers certain restrictions necessary in respect of pure mathematical forms. He fears that the logically conscious working might restrain the vaster possibilities of the creative subconscious. From the point of view of a teacher he may be right. Once all means of artistic expression have been imparted to the pupil, the individual may be left to take the final decision of choosing pure geometrical shapes which as a first step might have contained the danger of too great a simplicity.

Giacometti has taken this course, finding a special graphic form; he projects mathematical structures into a plane, but in such a way that the lines, leading into the space, return to the foreground.

Hayter himself adheres to abstraction in another sense. He prefers a more open form, as Kandinsky did in his earlier period. He confides a most subjective meaning to line and curve, not only as regards tendency and direction, but also in respect of their qualities, which may be light or heavy, flowing or stagnant, static or dynamic.

Rather more technical experiments are the etchings of Prinster in their interplay of light and shade; the negative, blotted out shapes—congenial to the expression of modern photogramms—are used as a competitive element to the positive contours.

Husband has found a satisfactory graphic solution for the problem of relationship between plane and space; she detaches some single shapes from the mass, and links up the distance with the whole, by two lines building a narrow path from the vague beyond.

Perhaps Max Ernst, artistically the most experienced, is the least teachable as regards Hayter's ideas. Obsessed by the object, by constantly new objects, I might even say, by a new meaning of new objects of painting, he surely attains a certain degree of realisation in his works, but hardly ever a real simultaneity of statement and expression.

At Cahiers d'Art you could see his effort to give variations of some special themes from all sides.

There was one series of green-yellow submarine-marvels with plants and sea-weed and the mystery of mermaids and mermen, another, in which demons and other fabulous creatures, dark-coloured on light background, fight or dance (evoking Brahmin shadow-play or Norman church-windows), or landscapes in moonlight, with rocks piled high and looking like runic symbols, or aircraft, stranded in some strange country, the parts having turned to plants and sending forth leaves and blossoms.

Although the subject of all these pictures is taken from the world of dream and miracle, the artistic expression is pure realism. So that their quality—and there is quality especially in the small ones—lies outside the problems of painting only.

There are some pictures of this atelier to be seen at the Anglo-American Group. Besides Hayter himself, Buckland-Wright gives some examples of a sound decorative effect, Ferren some subtle coloured improvisations. At this show Marlow Moss proves himself an attentive pupil of Mondrian, who has not found yet a strong personal decision. There are two interesting compositions of Xceron, one appealing by its rhythm of lines, the other by shapes of colour coming forward out of a mysterious background.

Modern Italian and Spanish Art

It is surprising to see how the Italians of to-day have retired from the foreground of art, considering the part they played in the decisive years round about 1910. Three pictures by Boccioni, shown in the exhibition in the museum of "Jeu de Paume," are a proof of the dynamic revolution, brought on by futurism, which overthrew the principles of classic composition (*La ville qui monte*: raging elements rising out of the deluge.) By way of a quasipointillism he reaches a turbulent, decentralised cubism, in contrast to the axial constructive cubism of Picasso. The demand of futurism, to stimulate art by introducing in it the rapidity of modern life, has more and more been concentrated on its concrete objects, and the simultaneity of the means of expression have drifted to the background. As *Aero-Painting*, consecrated to the aviators' ideal, a great number of insignificant pictures were to be seen at Bernheim, while there were very few works interesting as art-experi-

ment worth mentioning; some by Diulgheroffs dal Bianco, and more particularly works by Prampolini. He had quite a number of non-figurative compositions with important titles, such as *Family of Atoms*, *Bioplastic Composition*, *Stratosphere-Magie*, but their abstract vision seems to have been narrowed rather than broadened by their tendency to dwell in the cosmos. The representation of the universe looks only like the wrong side of an entirely concrete actuality, which Prampolini gives in his other pictures. If we reduce this artistic bragging to its real proportions, we are left with some interesting variations on the theme, that is the dramatic interview of expansive bodies in space.

The Spanish artists living in Paris, somewhat outside programmatic demands, have therefore followed more consistently the subjectively artistic directions started by Picasso and Juan Gris. Both these are represented by a discreet choice of high quality at the exhibition of the Spanish Foundation at the Cité Universitaire: Picasso had some wonderful *Collages*, Juan Gris, besides others, a strong green-blue portrait of his early period, of an astonishing decorative effect which reminds one of Metzinger. However, the chief object of this exhibition is to set forth, by means of a further ten to twelve masters, how generously Spain participates in the European art-movement. For every tendency is represented by particularly interesting manifestations: Dali and Bernal are the protagonists of Surrealism, both from the highest intellectual point of view and from the naïve angle. De la Serna and Castellion follow expressionism, the latter in order to give a sentimental complex as summary of separate optical elements which bear in themselves most expression. Miró and Gonzales are searching for a shaping of new forms. A beautiful specimen of Miró illustrates order in cosmos; he takes a certain number of the innumerable beings and fixes them in an extraordinarily labial balance of shape and colour. In the centre of attraction of this show there is a tall sculpture of Gonzales, a figure, seemingly nothing but crystallisation of suppleness and dynamic accentuation, which, however, calls forth a bitter-sweet sentiment.

Gonzales has the gift of creating numerous varied new plastic forms, and at the same time completely uniting them in one theme. This appears to be the most important effort towards a sculpture-renewal seen at the exhibition at Casteluchio-Diana's, besides that of Lipchitz, who is following quite a different anti-naturalistic tendency. His torso of a woman sets forth a new relationship between the parts of the human body. Another solution of the problem of fixing objects in space is presented by Calder at the Anglo-American exhibition. His two *Mobiles* remind us of the constructivism of the after-war period (Tatlin, Maholy-Nagy, Pevsner. They aimed at demonstrating a physical law of balance as the basis of art, even by introducing elements of mechanical mobility). The use of broken glasses and plates seems a concession to the taste of the day which makes his work likeable on the one hand but somewhat frivolous on the other. Another with wood forms is quite serious and most effective.

The show at Casteluchio's illustrates the problem of enlarging the expressive possibilities of abstract art as it exists to-day, both for sculptors and painters. It is undoubtedly Kandinsky who has achieved the greatest mastery in weaving round and crooked shapes of the most exquisite shades into a fairy tale. Hélon concentrates on more uniform, geometrical bodies: while the associations are fewer, the intensity of a conscious will has grown.

Seen as a whole this show is a warning for abstract artists against formal decorativeness. Benno and Magnelli do not escape this danger, nor do Léger and Fernandez, whose drawings rest on sound construction but become too expansive on canvas. Even Kandinsky, who has an important exhibition of his own at Cahiers d'Art, must beware of a pitfall. If we call to mind his pre-war "impressions" of the "Blaue Reiter" whose intensity threatened to burst the frame of the picture by their dynamic force, then the serene harmony of to-day's works almost verges on pure æsthetics. These pictures, which seem to be embroidered, emanate a kind of longing for a paradise lost, which the artist once upon a time left in his revolutionary ardour.

H. WESCHER.

Mr. Tschichold asks that an error which appeared in the printing of his article in Axis 2, should be corrected in this number.

Page 18, H₂ O or N should read H, S, O, or N.

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