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BANGLADESH SHILPAKALA ACADEMY

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SCULPTURE IN BANGLADESH

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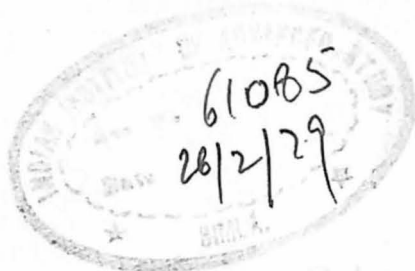
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SCULPTURE IN BANGLADESH

Aesthetic art comprehends all aspects of fine and plastic forms the artists would choose to express themselves. Creative artists are temperamentally inclined to toy with new ideas and experiment in ever-changing media. Since the dawn of civilization, mural and plastic art flourished side by side, as demonstrated by cave paintings and statuettes of mother goddess. Examples of plastic art are well-represented in the Ancient Civilizations, like the Sumerians, the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians, the Greek, the Roman, the Persian, and of the Indian sub-continent. A completely new trend of Sculpture emerged during the Renaissance period when painting and sculpture vied with each other. Though Cellini thought that sculpture was as great as any other form of art based on drawing for statues have different views to represent. Yet Leonardo da Vinci considered painting as superior to sculpture as painting was more intellectual and subtle. However, Michaelangelo struck a balance between the two for he was past-master both in painting and sculpture. He distinguished himself in both 'cutting away' technique and 'modelling', but after him 'modelling' degenerated.

The trend of modern Sculpture owes its origin to the most distinguished Sculptor Auguste Rodin, who made modelling "a precise medium of expression, a science of volume and proportion, of rhythm and movement, of light and shade." The renaissance of modelling started by him was further carried on by other Sculptors, like Bourdelle, Maillol and Epstein. The art of direct 'cutting' though arduous, also found favour with many sculptors for they provide not only new vision of reality but ultimately led to, like abstract painting, Cubistic sculpture, as evident in the works of Brancusi, Archipenko and Laurens. Their works may have been the outgrowth of our mechanised civilization. Yet these Sculptors basically preferred the materials to relieve the artistic form, stress, strain, rather than transfer a 'model' to either stone or wood. The most revolutionary form of modern sculpture is aptly called 'Constructivism'—for art forms are constructed of metals, plastics, glass, wire and other industrial products. These apparently 'odd' shapes have a cute geometrical and dynamic interrelation and harmonious balance between solid mass, space and planes, creating beauty, strength and dignity.

According to Louis Slobodkin, "Sculpture, like all the creative arts, is mainly a process of transferring into some tangible material seemingly intangible ideas". This is best illustrated by the excellent works of Henry Moore who put so much emphasis on the degree of hardness of the material in total disregard to the actual appearance of the objects. In his works the stone receives the form rhythmically and ebulliently, rather the model, being 'reduplicated' in stone. They may appear incomprehensible, yet manifest grace and charm. In the history of abstract sculpture, the name of Barbara Hepworth can never be missed, particularly for her famous innovatory 'String' motif.

In the context of modern Western Cubistic sculpture, the trend of plastic art in Bangladesh has to be judged and appreciated. There is no denying the fact that the impact of Western art is also perceptible in the various media adopted by our sculptors, namely Cubistic sculpture, metal collage, bronze casting. Our energetic artists experimented with clay, wood, metal, plaster, marble, iron, bronze, copper, aluminium, cement, boulder, and even wire and glass. It may be said that modern sculpture in Bangladesh owes its origin to Novera Ahmed, who created a sensation by her first solo exhibition of Cubistic sculpture in marble in the early sixties. Matiar Rahman and Anwar Jahan later followed suit. In the first exhibition of sculpture ever held in Bangladesh, under the auspices of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy a wide-ranging assortment of subjects have been attempted by our sculptors, ranging from incomprehensible metal collage to the realistic portraiture. The welded metal technique of Abdur Razzaque, Shamsul Islam Nizami and Mahmudul Haque designed to create a play of movement recalls the works of Alexander Calder, David Smith and Robert Muller. In the technique of metal casting Hamiduzzaman owes his inspiration to Rodin and Epstein. The cubistic figures, as executed by Chandra Shekhar Dey and Mansur-ul-Karim are obviously reminiscent of early 20th century trend of Cubism in sculpture, observable in the works of Lipchitz, Csaky and Zadkin. Moreover, the plaster casts of Nitun Kundu, Zakia Begum, Tapan Kumar Das have distinct flavour of Henry Moore.

ABDUR RAZZAQUE

Though basically a painter and graphic artist, Abdur Razzaque has not only earned fame as an accomplished sculptor, as demonstrated by his cement statue of the Freedom Fighter at Joydevpur and seated male figure in bronze exhibited earlier, but also pioneered the movement of the new generation of Bangladeshi sculptors. As a teacher he has set the trend of plastic art and skilfully wrought his shapes in wood, metal, copper etc. His relief, depicting a mystical figure in a decorative pattern is as charming as Cubistic wooden composition, (pl. 2) showing the harmonious relation between mass and space. The twisted welded metal (pl. 1) in its geometrical form skilfully displays his tensions and fury in space by means of semi-abstract symbols.

SHAMSUL ISLAM NIZAMI

Abdur Razzaque's welded metal figure may be compared with the metal collage (pl. 5) of Shamsul Islam Nizami who however, did not lag behind in catching the modern trend

in 'Constructivist's composition. His metal for m, complete with bits and pieces of scrap metals of various types are brought together to bring forth a motif. Like David Smith, his disciplined mind enabled him to achieve a direct symbolic expressiveness—a stylistic embodiment of contradiction, yet without losing balance and harmony.

NITUN KUNDU

Nitun Kundu is one of those few artists in whom the qualities of a fine painter and sculptor are harmoniously blended. He, like Henry Moore, would like to create a form out of the material rather than transfer his form to his material, thereby leaving something to the imagination of the beholder, as exemplified by his abstract wooden sculpture entitled 'Cat', the 'Fountain' (plaster). One is tempted to regard these pieces as the outcome of the Sculptor's Intuition rather than his conscious mind, and even then he succeeded in striking a balance in vertical forms with its well-adjusted components, rhythmically arranged to achieve a desired result (pl. 3). His 'Torso' (pl. 4) in plaster, a headless nude in abstract form, is remarkable in the sense that it displays subtlety of form and superb modulation. Such plastic preception is characteristic of an accomplished draughtsmanship.

ANWAR JAHAN

In the history of Sculpture in Bangladesh the name of Anwar Jahan stand out in bold profile. He is one of those accomplished Sculptors who resisting the temptation of experimenting with multi-media forms, engrossed himself to only plastic art. His deep attachment and soul-searching spirit is well testified by his several solo exhibitions. He earned considerable reputation for his significant works, such as 'Torture' (bronze), 'Genocide' (wood) and 'The Famine' (Cement). One of his most celebrated wooden Sculpture is 'The Cyclone' (pl. 9) depicting blood-curdling horrors and havocs wrought by natural calamity in 1970. The vertical high relief shows a weary and dishabilled mother with her hair blown atop, making a frantic attempt to hold her baby about to be blown off. The dramatic intensity and dynamic movement so skilfully carved leaves no doubt that Anwar is a past-master in wood-carving, concave-convex relation, mass and space. He is intuitively conscious to create a great work of art in depicting human pathos. Another interesting piece is entitled 'Fossil', a combination of charred wood and metal pikes and rods, depicting a fossilized fish of pre-historic age (pl. 8).

HAMIDUZZAMAN KHAN

Hamiduzzaman Khan is one of those few young celebrities who made a major break-through in casting metal technique. His basic training in cast metal particularly bronze enabled him to transform plastic forms into themes, displaying profound ingenuity, dramatic expressiveness and innovatory zeal. Needless to say, he was deeply inspired by Western technique as observable in the finest works of Rodin and Epstein and having thus been profitted by it he could dispense with traditional methods and dwell on stress and tension, mass and shape, convex-concave relationship. His most enchanting series are based on the

genocide in Bangladesh, entitled "Remembrance '71" representing hanging figures, "The Dismantled Gate", "A Dead Figure", "The Rickshaw", "Go-cart", done in bronze, aluminium, metal. The chef d'oeuvre, of Hamiduzzaman's cast bronze is the Remembrance '71-1 (plate 10) in which the shattered gate with wide gaping doors, broken off sills, the deformed door frame and a barking dog about to cross the threshold is shown—a unique piece showing the artist's ability to depict the holocaust of the War of Liberation in an aesthetically and technically satisfying manner. The same pathos and agony of the suffering humanity is eminently demonstrated in the "Remembrance '71-2 (pl. 11) showing five emaciated and hanged figures. The potentialities of Hamiduzzaman as a sculptor is also demonstrated by his other bronze and aluminium pieces in small or large scale. His skill in plastic modulation and sensuous and undulating curvature are well illustrated in his white draped plaster cast figure, trying to protect itself from the chill of windy winter night.

MAHMUDUL HAQUE

The welded metal designed by Mahmudul Haque, depicting a flying bird (pl. 12) in abstract form is done like other metal works in the modern constructivists' method. Though it may not be for popular consumption, yet they are neither in isolation nor devoid of aesthetic charm and vitality.

S. A. KHALID

One of the most outstanding young artists of Bangladesh, S. A. Khalid has shown keen interest in plastic art, as demonstrated by his assignment of Freedom Fighters' consisting of three large statues (still incomplete) in the Arts Building of the Dacca University. The dignified facial expression observable in the clay portraits of Professor Abdur Razzaque (pl. 13) and "Anamika" (pl. 14) is characteristic of S. A. Khalid's technical expertise and organic unity.

TAPAN KUMAR DAS

The most consciously cultivated form of artistic expression observable in the works of Tapan Kumar Das is plasticity with its three-dimensional effect. He has already made his marks in his early abstract wooden figures depicting "Reclining Woman", "Walking Lady". His recently modelled cement figures are aesthetically pleasing and highly personal in manner. His "Farmer Women" (pl. 16) has the solidity of mass and superb expressiveness, executed in semi-realistic method, for here we observe two large standing draped figures with its sensuous outline holding baskets in hand and on the head, locked together to give realistic touch of working class. Another ambitious figure is the "Freedom Fighter" in white cement showing virility and grace.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR DEY

Basically a painter, Chandra Shekhar Dey has his diversion in sculptural works, not however, without success. The Impact of Cubism is writ large on his "Female Figure" (pl. 17) in clay which is very effeminate and cute in shape. His symbolic expression is in perfect

league with his psychological intensity, geometric cones, cylinders and sphere could provide an illusion of physical volume is well demonstrated by Shekhar.

MANSUR-UL-KARIM

The surrealistic manner of expression so remarkably adopted by Mansur-ul-Karim in his painting is also revealed in his rare clay figures, called "Music", (pl. 18) "Virgin" and "Couple". The beautiful clay figure, depicting a lady violinist with her head a little tilted towards the left in a very coyish mood, may appear to be undulating volume of deformed mass, but in fact there is ethereal charm and spatial consistency in its powerful carvings and delicate articulations. Like his painting 'In Dream', this excellent piece may also be regarded a 'dream' in clay, exhibiting serenity and technical virtuosity.

SHAMIM CHOUDHURY

As one of the most promising young Sculptors of Bangladesh, Shamim Choudhury experimented in wood, clay, plaster and copper. She appears to have specialized in portraiture as illustrated by "Jack", "Portrait", "Mystic Woman" and "Cry". Her skill in metal casting is highly commendable for in her "Mystic Woman" (pl. 19) in copper she brought out all the characteristic features in the facial expression of a mysterious woman. Keeping in view the solidity of mass the spatial relation and the technical know-how. Her figures are more individual, not altogether devoid of plastic effect, and naivety.

KAZI MATIAR RAHMAN

Though devoid of any academic training, Kazi Matiar Rahman may be regarded as one of the pioneers of Sculpture in Bangladesh. He is probably one of those dedicated and gifted Sculptors who dared to work in plastic form ceaselessly and arranged solo exhibitions in the then East Pakistan. His boulder works entitled "Mother and Child", the "Bather" are products of his inherent artistic ability and technical expertise. In his "Owl" (pl. 20), in burnt wood, he attempted to carve out a close-winged ugly owl with all its characteristic features in a realistic manner. There is superb novelty and manifest charm in his ambitious works executed in wood, clay and particularly boulder.

M. A. LATIF

The life-size figure in the round of a typical "Beigali Damsel" (pl. 6) in cement is ambitiously planned and skilfully executed, keeping in view all the folded drapery, plaited hair, facial expression and coyish posture. In its simplicity of outline and massive plastic shapes, Latif has brought forth an individual style of his own.

ZAKIA BEGUM

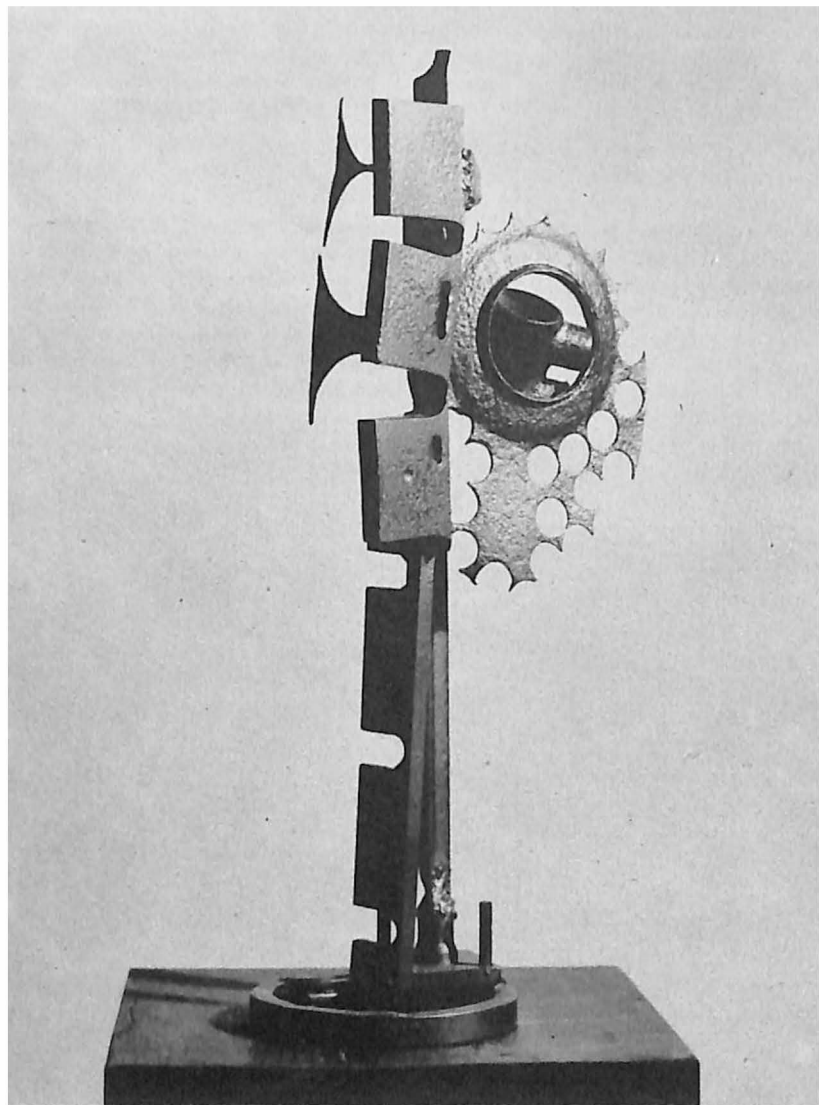
As one of the budding young Sculptors, Zakia Begum has aptly moulded her enchantingly beautiful figure, entitled "Unmindful" (pl. 22), in plaster. It required basic tectonic

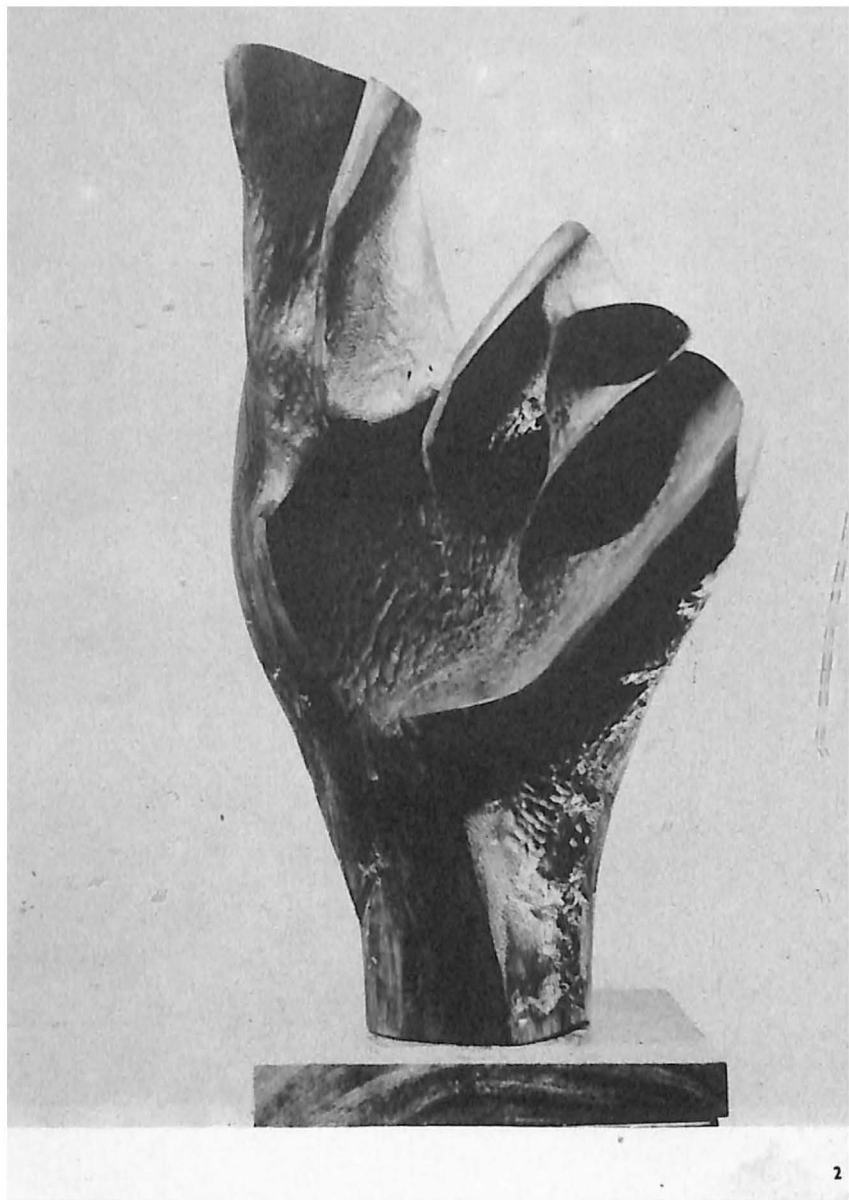
qualities to transform a nude, seated on a mattress with her folded knees in a nonchalant mood, presumably combing her hair. Obviously inspired by Western ideas, the Sculptor has infused lyrical charm in her form, depicting suavity and feminine grace. One is tempted to say that all she wanted in it is 'poetry' in plaster. A skilful modeller as she is, her figuration assumed a new and profound value.

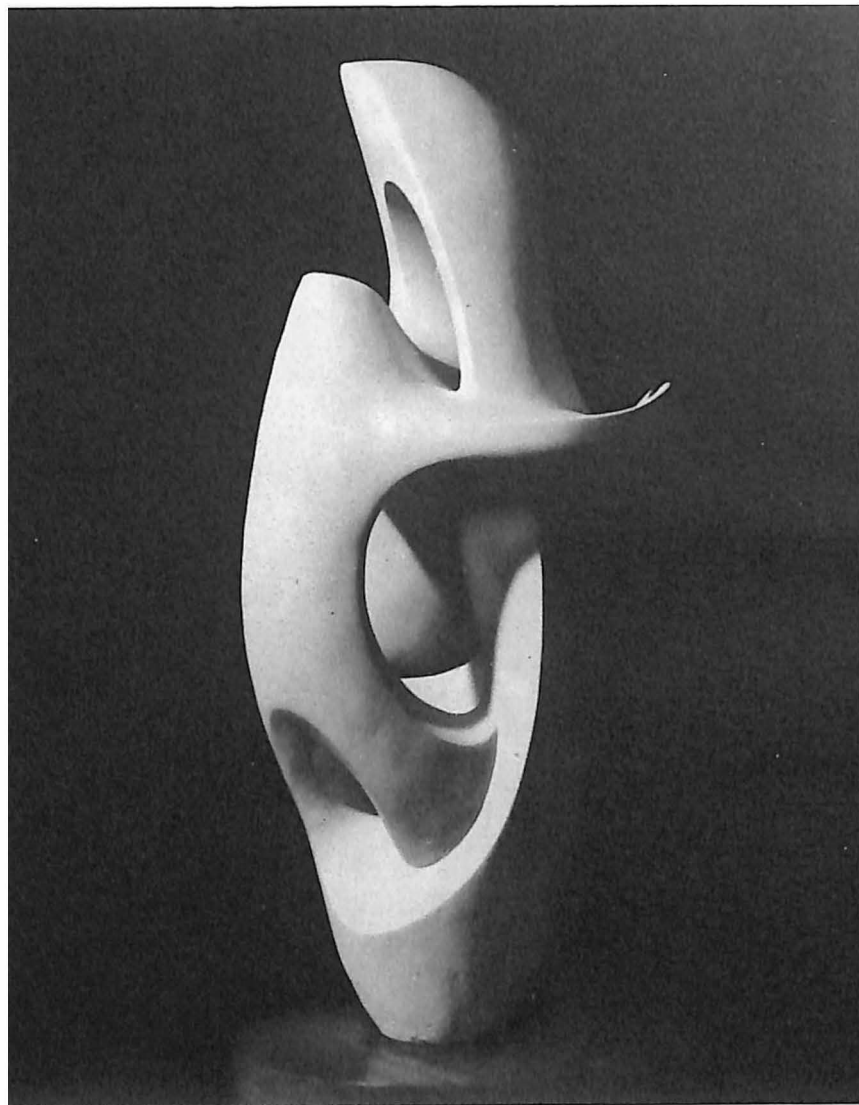
In the realm of Sculpture Anwarul Haque, Abdus Satter and Abdur Rouf Sarkar have also been able to break fresh ground. "The Tea Picker" (pl. 7) with her basket at the back by Anwarul Haque is beautifully carved in wood and betrays spontaneity and feminine grace. The wood carving, depicting two burkha-clad ladies (pl. 21) in low relief by Abdur Rouf Sarkar attempts a totally new technique of chipping off wood to bring forth his attractive linear forms. But the most aesthetically conceived and ambitiously planned figure of an "Eagle" (pl. 15) in burnt wood by Abdus Satter is symptomatic of the artist's concern for space, volume and mass. The dynamic movement of the bird accurately carved in its configuration. Thus the new avant-garde as represented by the young Sculptors of Bangladesh was free from archaism, but forging ahead.

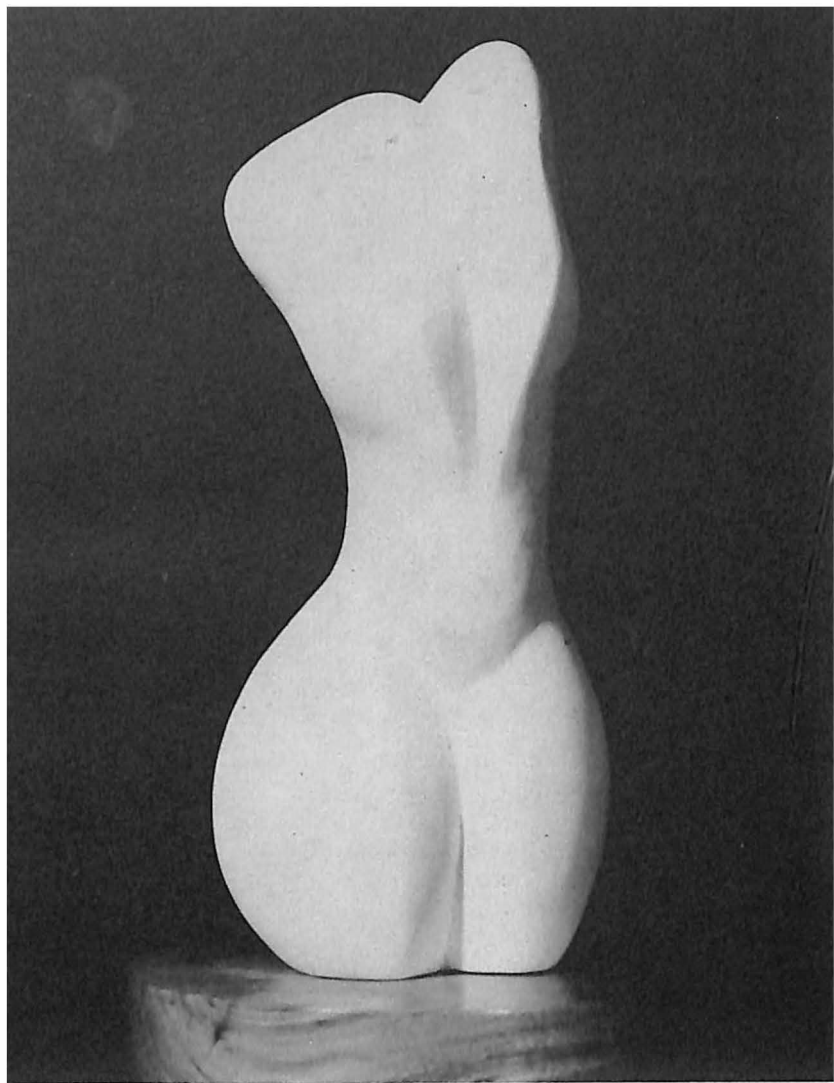
S. M. HASAN

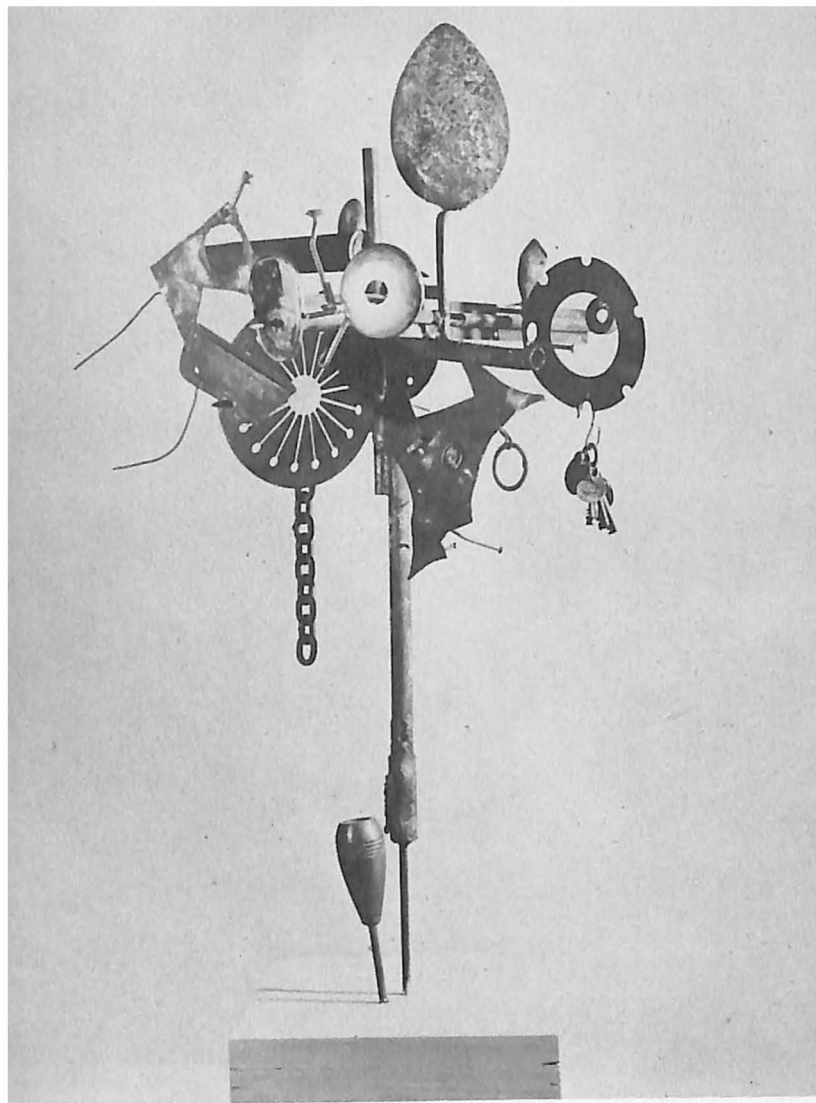
THE PLATES

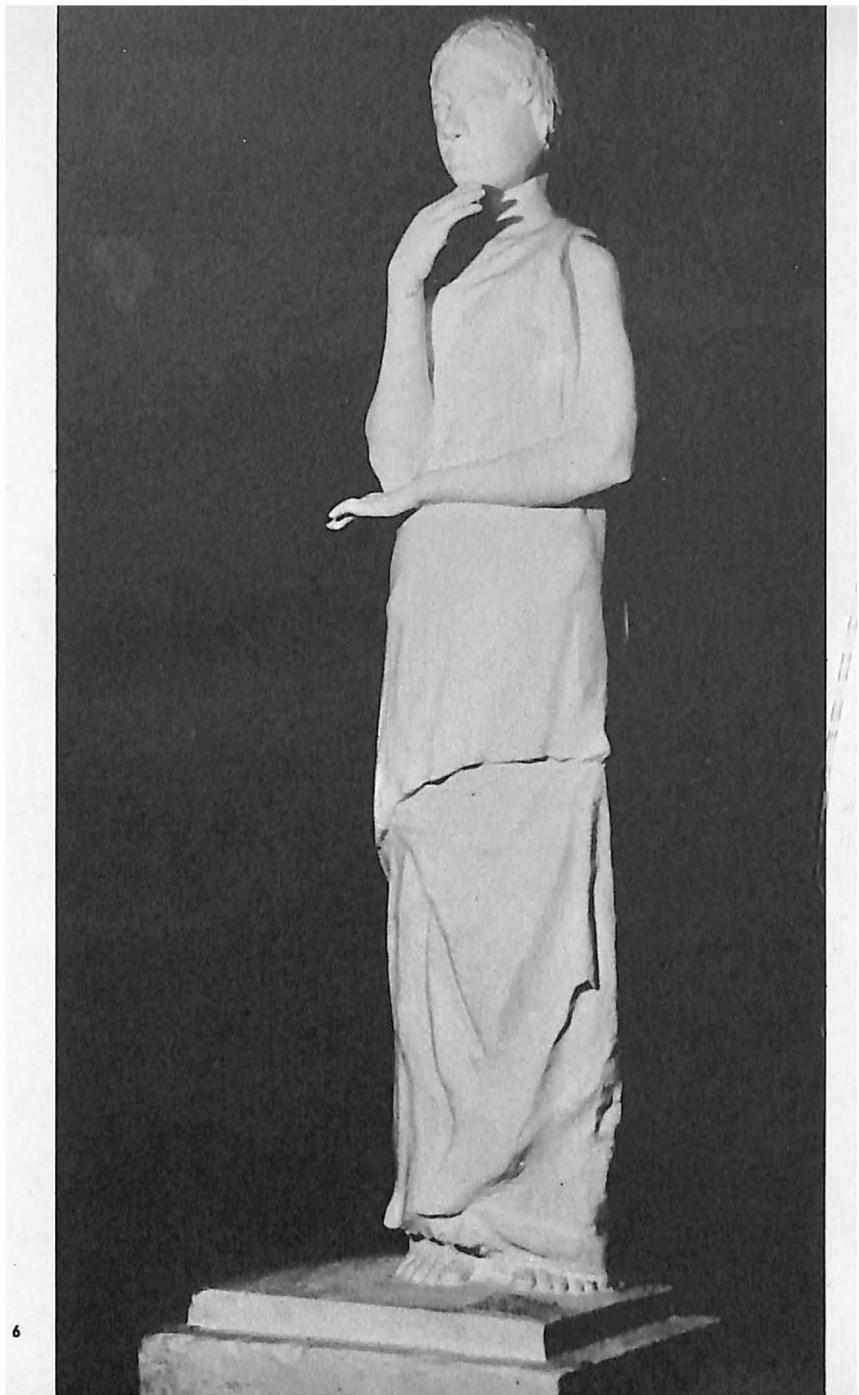




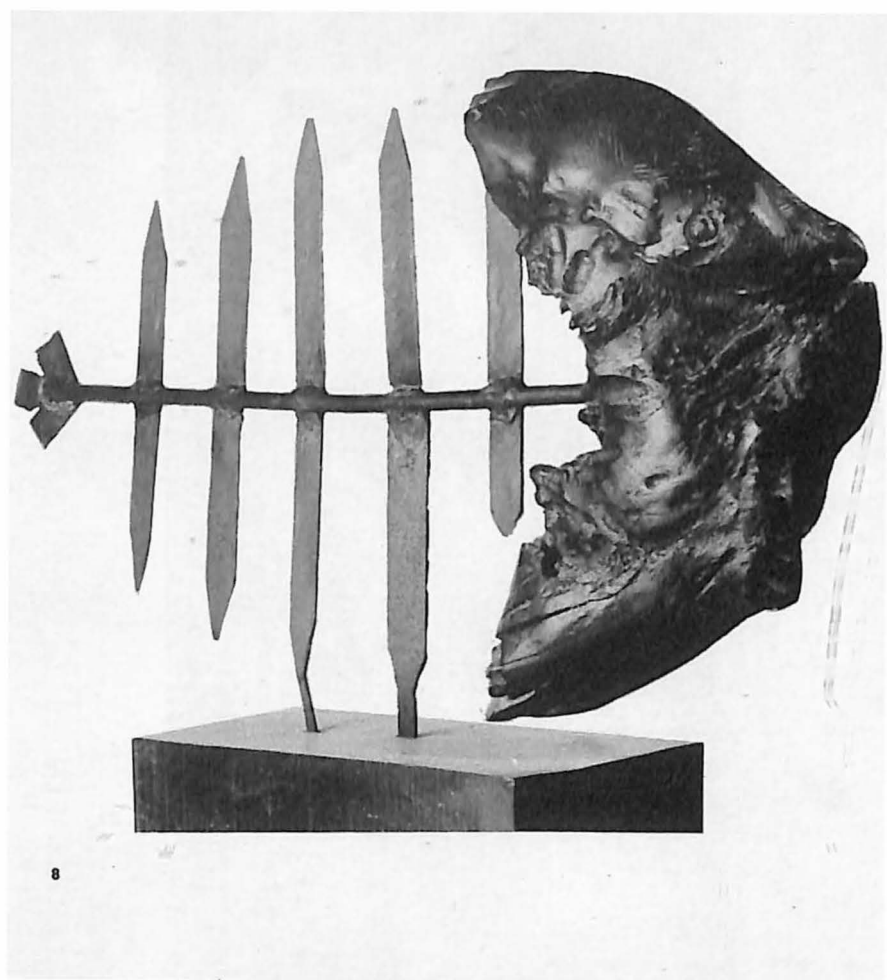




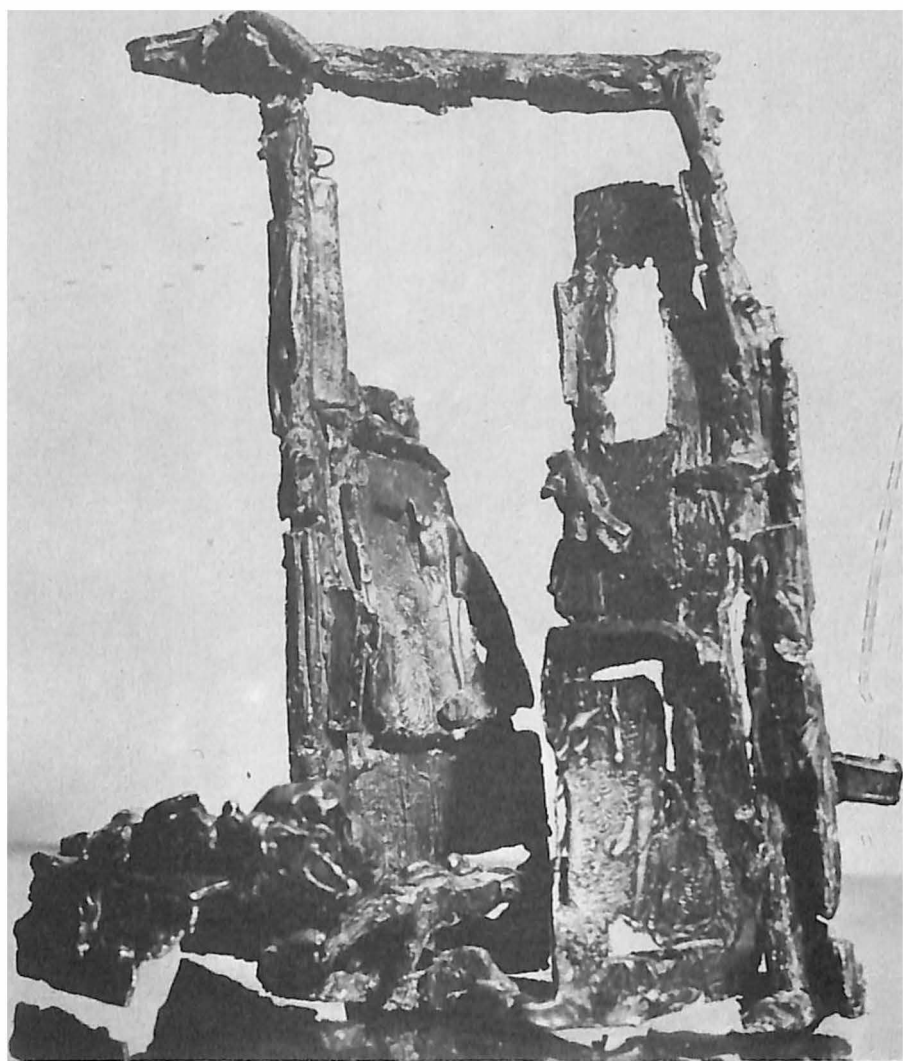


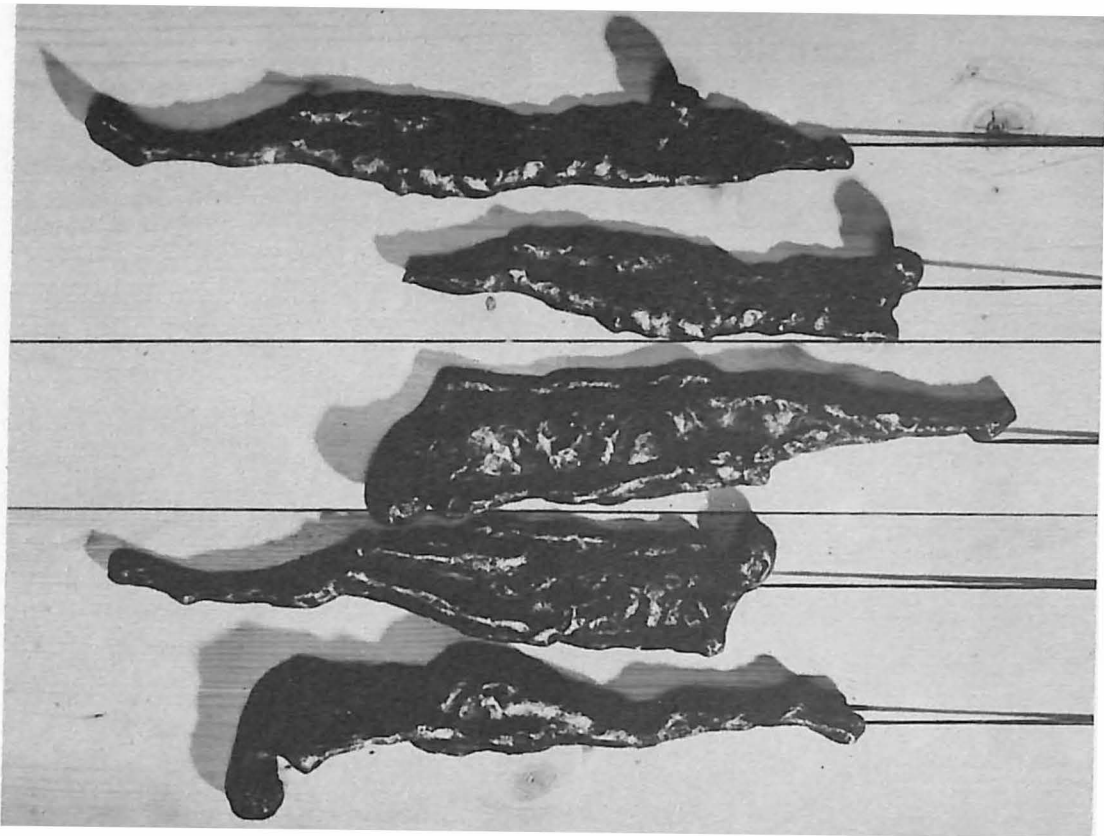


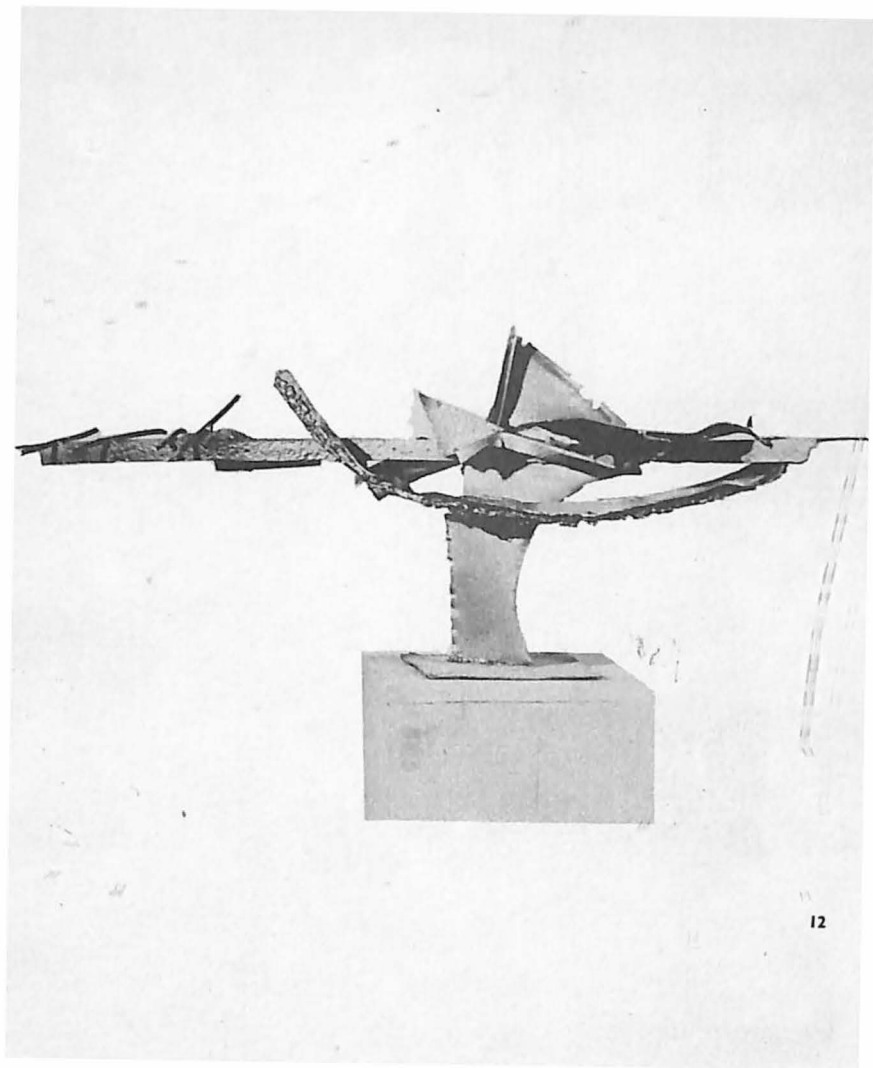


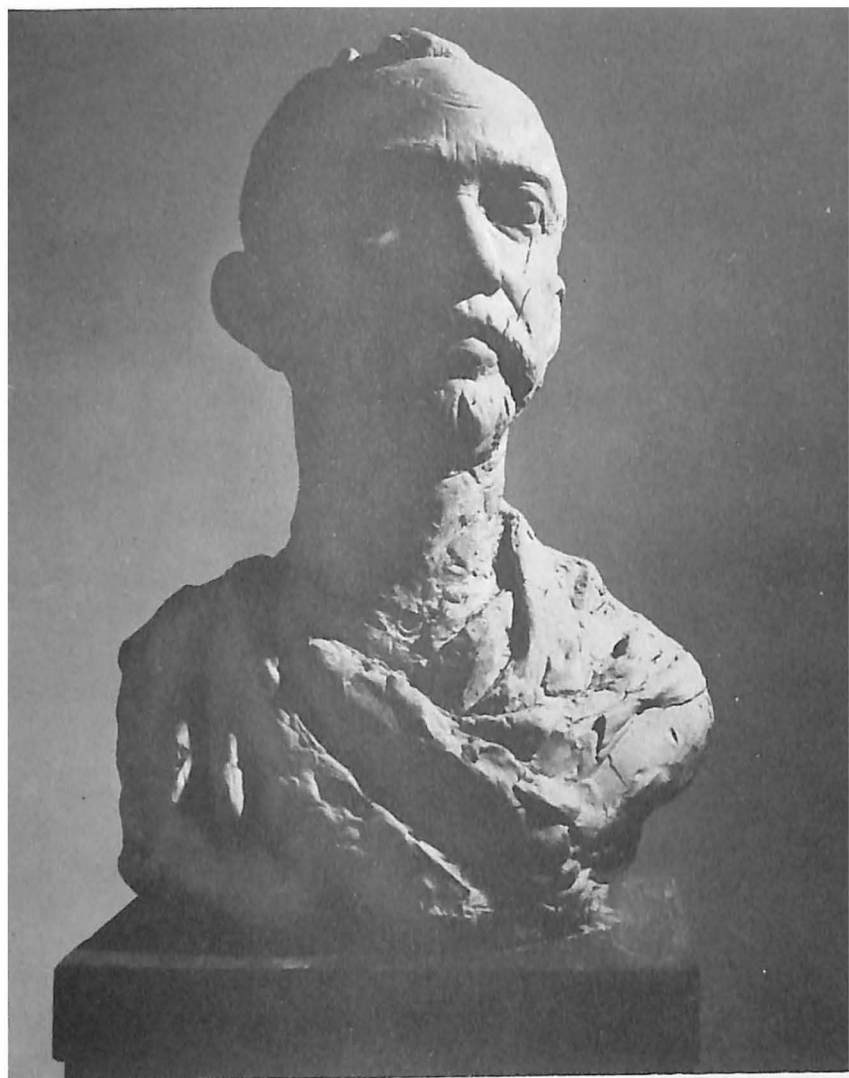




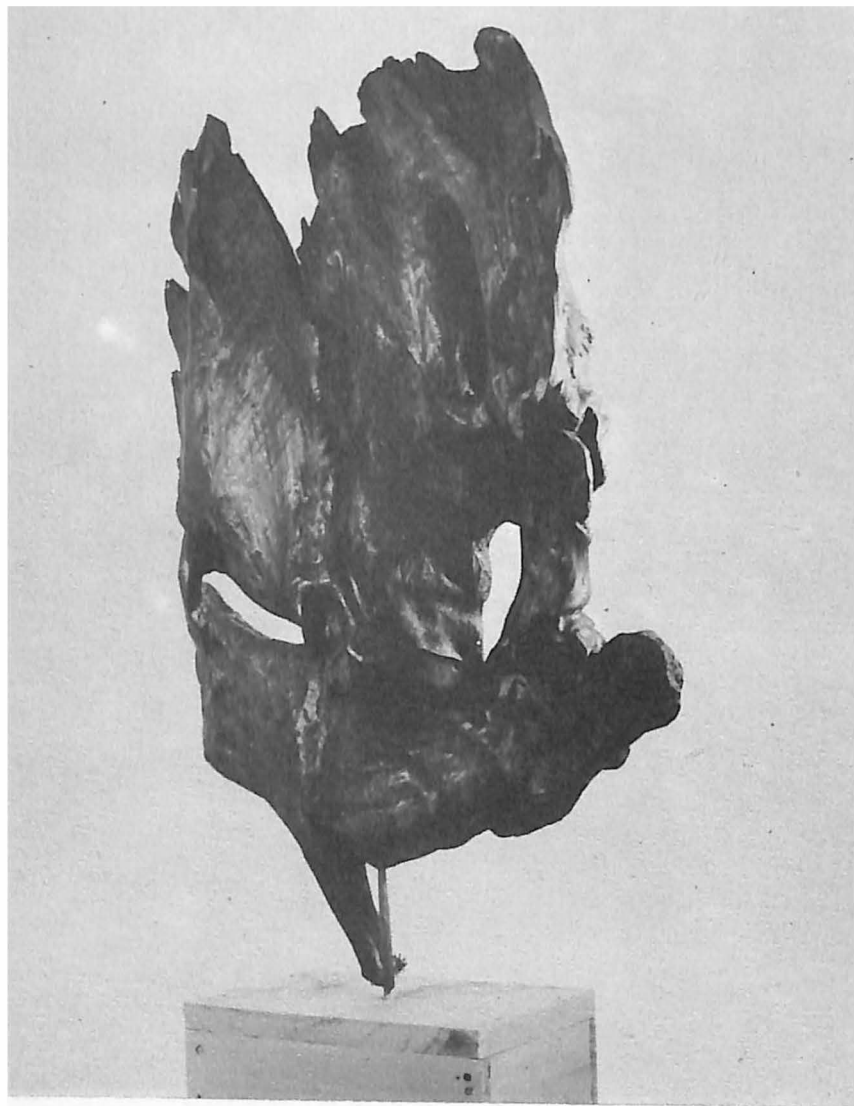












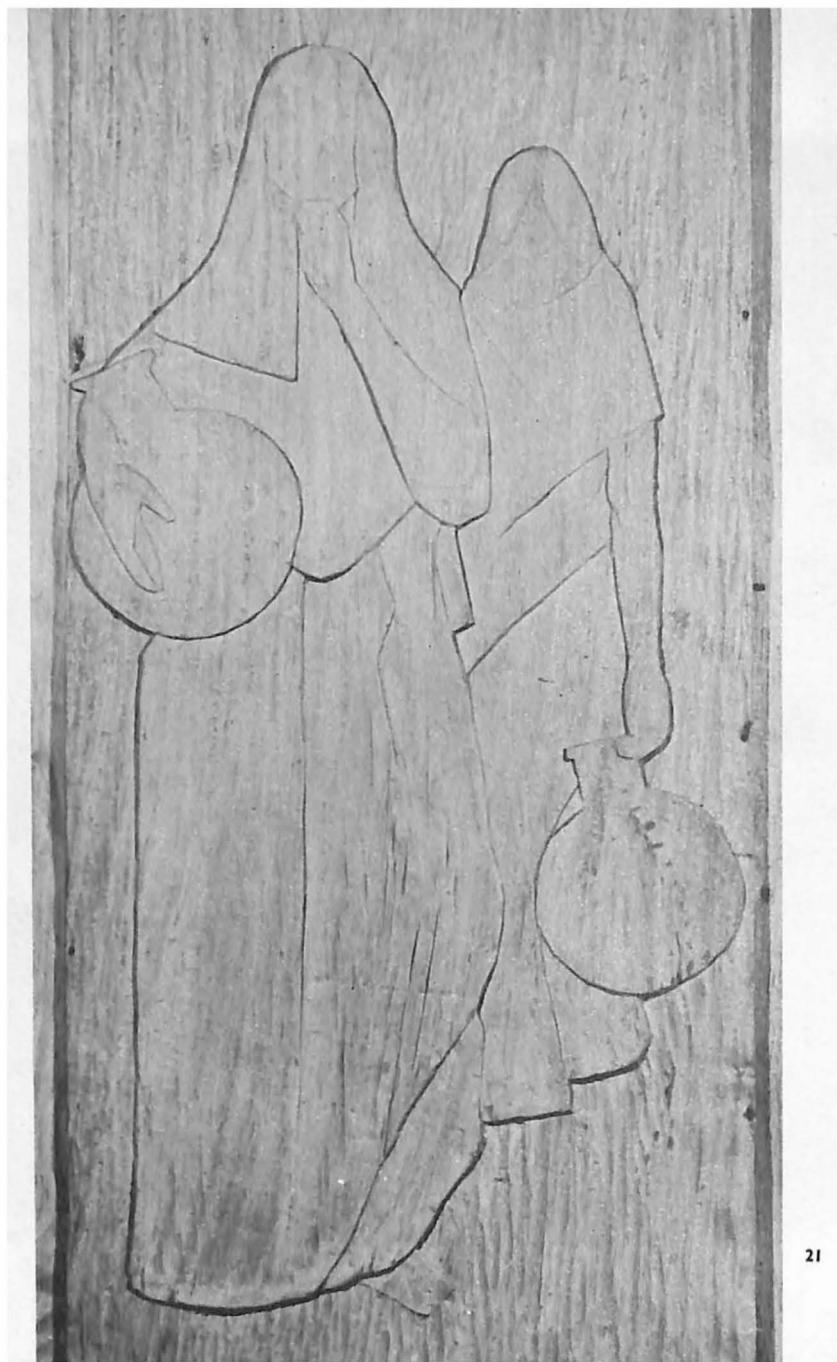


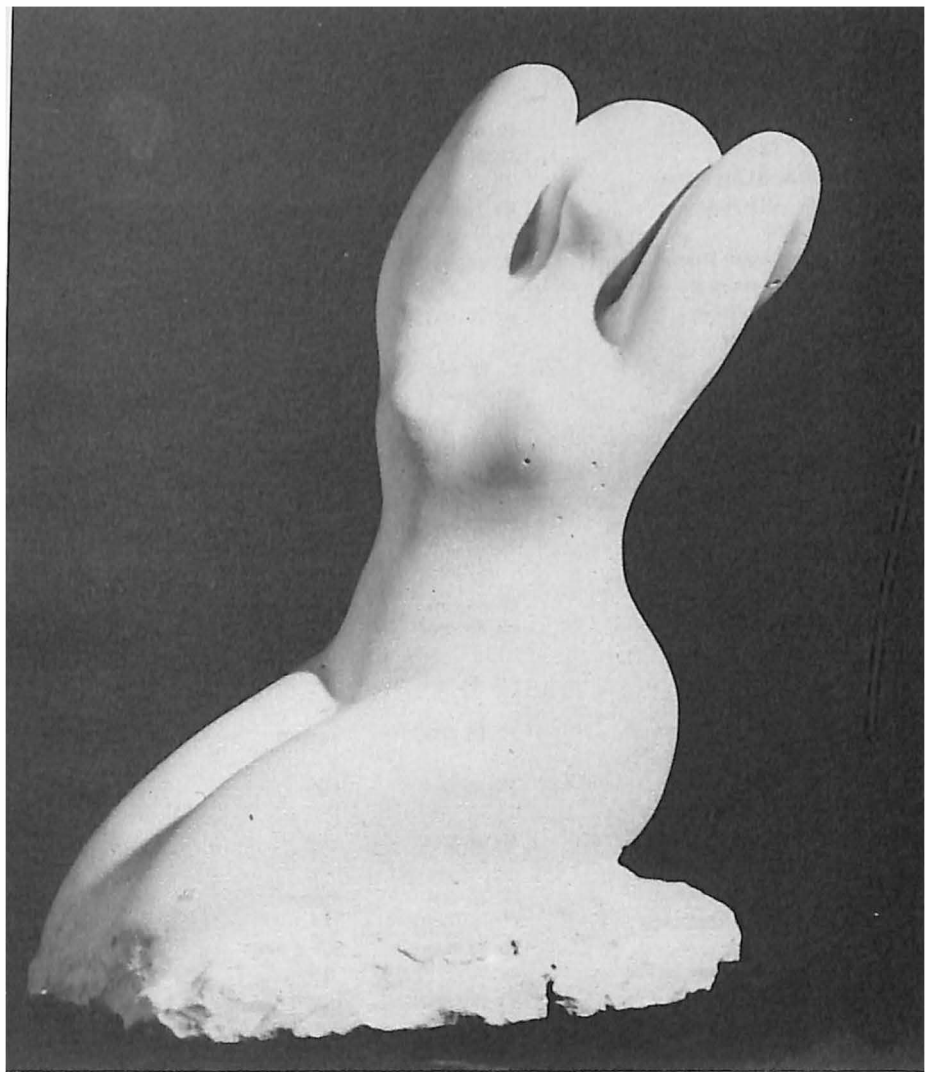












THE PLATES

ABDUR RAZZAQUE			
1. Welded Metal	Ht 50 cms	metal	1976
2. Composition—2	Ht 64 cms	wood	1975
NITUN KUNDU			
3. Fountain	Ht 62 cms	plaster	1976
4. Torso	Ht 45 cms	plaster	1976
SHAMSUL ISLAM NIZMI			
5. Composition	Ht 120cms	metal collage	1976
M. A. LATIF			
6. Bengali Damsel	Ht 160cms	cement	1976
ANWARUL HAQUE			
7. Tea Picker	Ht 90 cms	wood	1964
ANWAR JAHAN			
8. Fossil	L 98 cms	wood & metal	1968
9. Cyclone	Ht 240cms	wood	1968
HAMIDUZZAMAN KHAN			
10. Remembrance '71-1	Ht 62 cms	bronze	1974
11. Remembrance '71-2		bronze	1974
MAHMUDUL HAQUE			
12. Bird	L 100cms	metal	1976
S. A.KHALID			
13. Portrait of Professor Abdur Razzaque	Ht 45 cms	burnt clay	1975
14. Portrait of Anamika	Ht 40 cms	burnt clay	1975
ABDUS SATTER			
15. Eagle	Ht 80 cms	burnt wood	1976
TAPAN KUMAR DAS			
16. Farmer Women	Ht 84 cms	cement	1976
CHANDRA SHEKHAR DEY			
17. Figure	Ht 36 cms	clay	1974
MANSUR-UL-KARIM			
18. Music	Ht 56 cms	clay	1974
SHAMIM CHOUDHURY			
19. Mystic Woman	Ht 25 cms	copper	1974
KAZI MATIAR RAHMAN			
20. Owl	Ht 50 cms	burnt wood	1975
ABDUR ROUF SARKAR			
21. Two Women	Ht 100cms	wood	1973
ZAKIA BEGUM			
22. Unmindful	Ht 42 cms	plaster	1976

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