

# TROVA

## ELEGY FOR MECHANICAL MAN

THERE IS MUCH talk today about man becoming just one more expedient in his own machine-tooled world. America has best carried out the awful possibilities of machine creation and standardisation, and it seems fitting that the American, Ernest Trova, should express the condition of his New World culture. He sees his fellow men as so many mechanical levers or cogs in the factory wheels, each one punched out of the same die. They are not of nature, but of science, they are not part of society, but the results of production. They are not the measure of the universe, but rather another unit in the pile-up of machinery that produces increasingly useless items for a swelling population already sated with stereotyped sameness.

Are Trova's men, which he labels 'falling', the builders of the I<sup>2</sup>-III, gearing the whole of their existence to some mammoth project which doubtless will prove obsolete before its completion? Or are they the beings who make the very same toys for children that they resemble: faceless dolls with rigid legs, and skewered footballers purposelessly kicking across a gameboard?

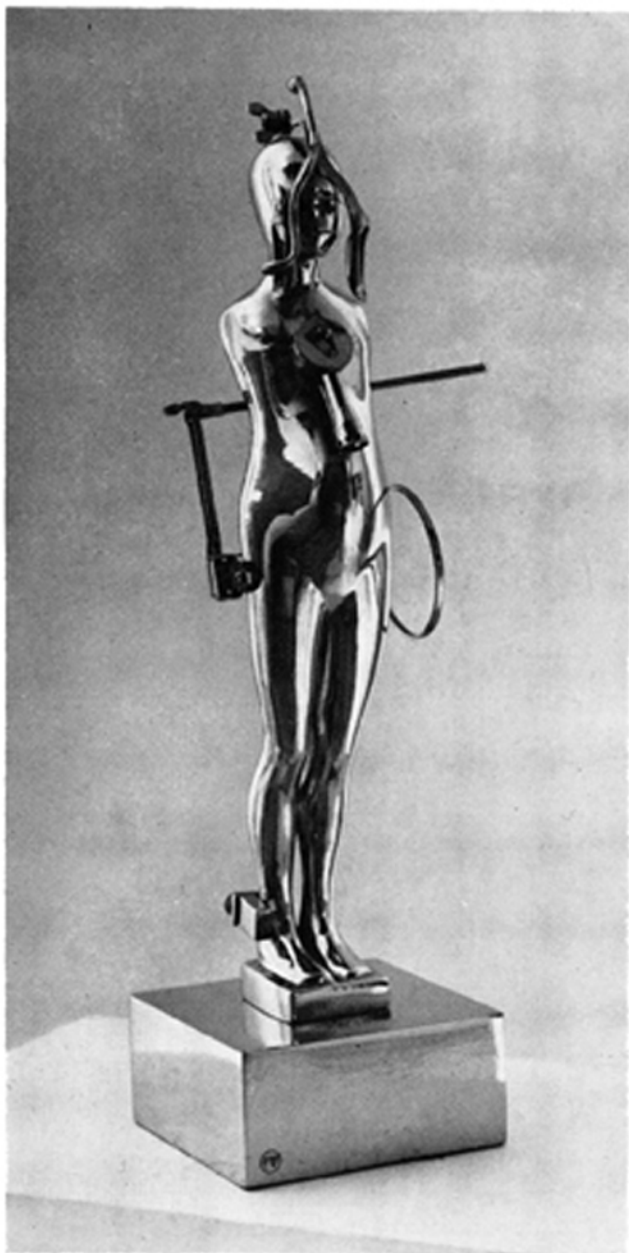
Trova does not show these shiny, metallic mannikins as cheap or dispensable. They fool us with their appearance of durability and necessity. The complicated machine trappings that surround them convince us that something much more 'scientific' and functional is at stake, and we are distressed when we find they do not move or perform, and that they cannot be 'used' in any way, except visually.

But for all this the artist does not send us screaming from the current exhibition at the Hanover Gallery, terror-stricken with the implications of these mannikin constructions. Instead he charms us much the way most of our useless trivia does, with metallic brightness and the deceptive trappings of promised utility.

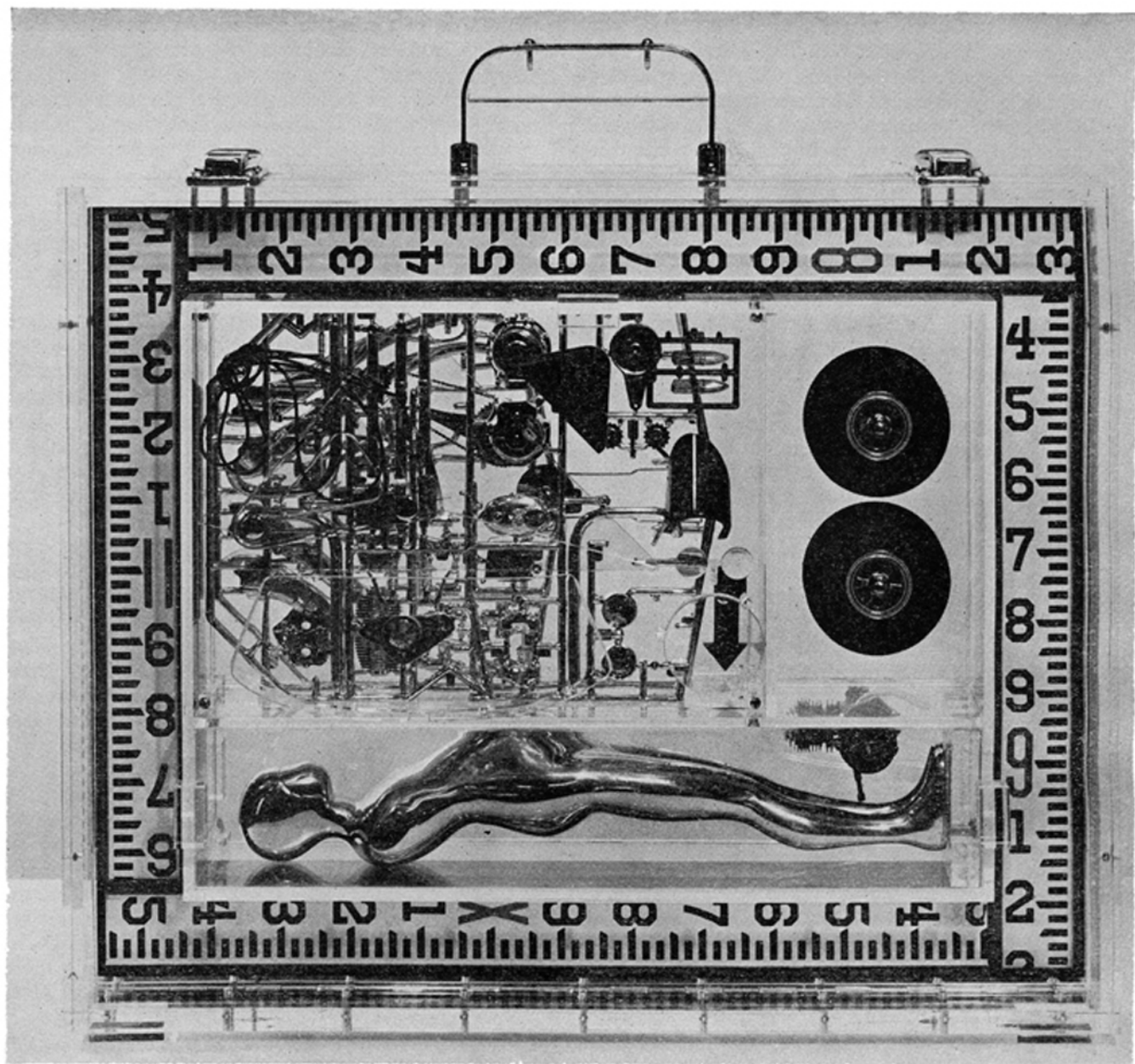
Like other Americans, Trova keeps us guessing as to where he stands. Is he deploring mechanical man, or merely accepting him as a given factor in contemporary life? There is neither affection nor disdain in his chosen theme, only efficient representation as coldly calculated and clean-lined as the mechanisms which might have spawned these figures.

Perhaps, without knowing it, Trova is telling us something more: never before have there been so many human beings, and yet never before have they proved to be so costly and impractical when used as a working element. Ironically, the machinery they depend on and which threatens to make them obsolete, cannot yet function without them. But how long will they continue to be the one essential item in the workings of their own automated civilisation?

M.A.



*Standing Figure, (Falling man series) Chrome plated bronze, Hanover Gallery*



*The catalogue note for the exhibition of Trova's works at the Hanover Gallery in April, 1964 stated: 'the compulsive images of Trova's "falling man" spin, slide and fall in a vacuum of discipline and control. Totally involved in his own fall, the armless, uniformed, unconcerned mannikin has unquestionably accepted his fate'.*

*Car Kit, Mixed media in perspex case, Hanover Gallery*

*Ernest Trova was born in St Louis, Missouri on February 19, 1927. His first one man exhibition was held at the Pace Gallery in Boston in 1963, his first European exhibition at the Hanover Gallery the following year. His works have appeared in the Beyond Realism exhibition at the Pace Gallery, New York, in 1965; Sculpture, 20th Century, at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Texas, and in the Word and Image exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1965-66. He was initially chosen by the Guggenheim Museum as one of the Venice Biennale artists this summer, but lost out when the choice was re-allocated to the Metropolitan Museum, New York.*