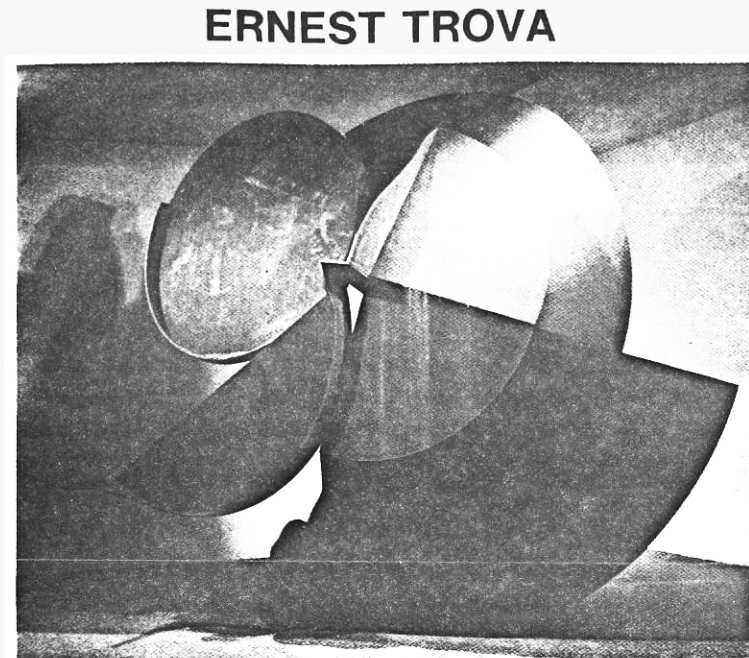


Ernest Trova's recent work at Pace departs from the tasty figurative mode by which he expressed the sterilized and streamlined image of contemporary man. This change was anticipated before the actual fall of the Falling Man in his *Flowerman* (1972). In this work, the solid chrome body is splayed open into the surrounding space like the blooming of a morbid anthropomorphic flower. For the first time, Trova invades the interior of the body, dissecting its mass. Hitherto, the solidity of the torso had remained sacrosanct, although subject to machine part transplants and the castration of appendages.

The *Profile Cantos*, begun in May of 1972, represent a further complication and development in the formal exploration of the image of the Falling Man. Although they appear to be abstract studies in the relationship of planar geometric forms in space, they are not understood correctly as such. By retaining the image of the Falling Man in the suggestion of its profile, Trova identifies this sculpture as figurative. As a result, the manipulations he performs on his materials are not purely aesthetic adjust-



Ernest Trova, *Profile Canto XI*, 1974.  
Cor-ten steel, 4' x 10'10" x 5'3". Courtesy Pace Gallery.

ments on a formal level, but become emotionally charged distortions of the human form. If anything, his *Profile Cantos* series is even more at odds with what are customarily thought of as humanistic concerns. The introduction of rigid geometric forms into the human anatomy, and the bending of its lines to conform to its alien shape, bespeaks a brutality as radical as that of Kienholtz (although he accomplishes figural dis-

tortion by the introduction of real objects and furnishings rather than abstract forms into the figure).

Not only is the figure changed by this hybridization, but the abstract forms involved take on a feeling of tension and compression ultimately accountable to associations of muscularity. The bending and stretching of the body contour is so unnatural as to demand a return to normal proportions. The abstract

forms which inhibit this resolution are subject to the pressure resulting from this frustration.

Notwithstanding the significance of the relationship between the *Profile Cantos* and the *Falling Man* series, it is true that the former represents a considerable departure from his earlier work on a strictly formal level. The scale of his sculpture has grown from the statuesque to the monumental. He has given up his penchant for the preciousness of highly polished chrome, replaced now by the more rigid expressive power of a variety of metals. (He uses aluminum, Cor-ten steel, brass sheet metal, and even masonite.) The manner of construction of his sculptures has changed. The *Falling Man* is a solid figure, cast in one unit. The *Cantos* are built up of sheets of metal in what is essentially a Constructivist manner. (They bear comparison to Naum Gabo's *First Constructed Head*, 1915.)

The power and legitimacy of Trova's work is derived from the inventiveness and daring with which he approaches the problems of figurative sculpture. (Pace, *April 15-May 6*)

**Joseph Dreiss**