

ERNEST TROVA

The subject of Ernest Trova's work is man affected by his environment—an environment that man himself has created and one that has metamorphosed its inventor. The automobile, wristwatch, radio, elevator and even the vacuum cleaner are among the inventions Trova uses in his work. All are aspects of our life which are so commonplace that we seldom stop to think how they have transformed us, how dependent we are on technological aids and how literally they have become parts of our bodies. Trova symbolizes this transformation by his figure of man who is featureless (anonymous), armless (powerless to provide for himself), sexless (unable to enjoy and be creative), flaccid and slumping (neglectful of his body). His man is a passive armature for mechanical organs.

Much of Trova's sculpture is cast in bronze. A highly polished, rich, golden surface is obtained in most of the pieces; others are chrome-plated. Some figures are encased in plexiglass and formica. All of these materials allude to a rich society, one perhaps falsely golden but shiny and expensive at all times.

Typical of Trova's work, the chrome-plated *Study: Falling Man (Walking Man)* is a beautifully crafted piece. The figure strides with some animation and in perfect rhythm with the tube that extends from the spray mechanism attached to his chest. The machine is no longer attached to the man in *Study: Falling Man (Double Gold Racing Cars)*; instead man has

become an integral part of the machine. Polished, beautiful and powerful, he has been enthralled by a high-speed instrument and has entirely lost the power to control it. Automobiles have had more impact on our culture than perhaps any other single invention. They are a source of pride, a symbol of power and wealth, an instrument of excitement and danger and a determining factor in where we live, the quality of the air we breathe and the kind of landscape we see. Trova deals with all of these aspects of man and car.

The figures in *Study: Falling Man (Venice Landscape)* are closely related to the computer-like grid on which they stand. The geometric shapes of the platform are repeated in the figures, some of which are literally tied to their base by wires. As close as is the communication between man and his setting, it is entirely lacking between the figures themselves. In even greater isolation is the lone figure in *Study: Falling Man (H Box)*. Alone in a sealed chamber, he is exposed, measured and overpowered by an instrument.

Trova started to develop the theme of *The Falling Man* in 1961, and since 1963 this has been the sole subject of his art. In conjunction with St. Louis's bicentennial celebration in 1964, Famous-Barr Company offered Trova the opportunity to prepare work for an exhibition using the department store's numerous facilities. The tools of a merchandising enterprise remain evident in Trova's work: graphic design, display technique and, most importantly, the mannequin, in Trova's case the product as well as the prop.