

ROUND the GALLERIES

Marble is For Ever

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The white reliefs arranged from masses of uniform wooden elements by the Brazilian, Sergio de Camargo, have been known to Europe since he came to live in Paris in 1961. This is his fourth exhibition in London, but the first time he is showing free-standing pieces in marble (Gimpel Fils, 8 January–2 February). Pure white still dominates. Previously, in the reliefs the dazzling effect of white was relieved by the scatter and trapping of light and dark, producing a gently broken over-all texture; now the smooth surfaces of Carrara marble expose the form uninterrupted by textural distractions.

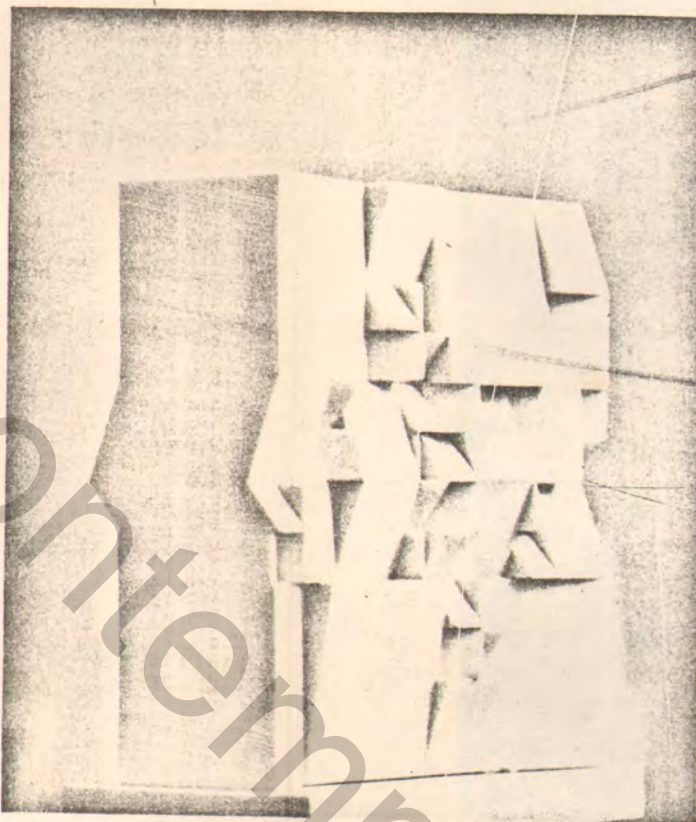
In the extreme formal simplicity of his work—where perhaps two halves of a perfect cylinder conjoin but are subtly off-set to form a basic geometric relationship—the influence of Brancusi, whom he met in Paris, is evident. Also in these exquisite formal essays both large and small, there is a sense of monumental poise and stillness which one finds in some totemic and cult images and which again recalls the sort of magic Brancusi could infuse into elemental shapes.

The machine cutting of marble produces the absolute accuracy and repeatability essential for a language of solid geometry where modules are assembled mathematically into rectilinear constructions. The arrangement of surface facets in some cases (Fig. 1) recalls the mathematical formula favoured by the late Mary Martin and has a similar pure formal beauty.

Camargo in his subtle adjustment of closely interlinked shapes establishes severe but unshakably serene formal relations which both satisfy the eye and give a feeling of architectonic stability that is reassuring to the spirit in an age where meretricious and transitory effects are often unjustifiably revered.

In the third exhibition in London (Annely Juda Fine Art, until 19 January) of the self-taught German sculptor Friederich Werthmann one can see a distinct move from complexity to simplicity in his metal constructions. Since 1957 he has electro-welded steel with a sensitive understanding of organic growth forms and the ability to transpose these into elegant structures that are both tough and tender.

These recent pieces have a taut and graceful poise, many thrusting upwards like slender plants to culminate in a stark and sharp efflorescence. He works with the delicacy and precision of the watch-maker rather than with the crude robustness of the machine shop. Werthmann has a penetrating eye for the structural intensity of sinuous growth movements and for converting the fragility of emergent fronds and nascent unfolding leaves into a durable abstract language of hard metallic shapes. This exhibition is a development in his



1. *Opus 416* by Sergio de Camargo (born 1930), 1973. Carrara marble, 21 × 21 × 9 cm. Gimpel Fils, 8 January–2 February

search for symbolic equivalents for the gentle, tender and vulnerable aspects to be found in natural form (Fig. 4).

The heavy low-toned expressionism of David Bomberg lives on in the painting of two of his pupils, Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach. Kossoff's painting (*Fischer Fine Art*, 9 January–8 February) carried out since his Whitechapel exhibition shows him still immersed in the use of dense pigment that is churned and furrowed like a muddy farm track in winter. The violence and emotional fervour injected into the act of painting are almost an end in themselves and seem at variance with the rather tame naturalistic vision that is almost submerged by torrents of thick paint. However, this ebullition of frenetic passion gives only a surface display of deeply felt anguish hardly involving the imagery itself. The portraits and self-portraits are striking at first, but underneath their tangles of paint, ordinary enough. The grim dulness of the railway junction at Dalston is captured in a series of

large oils and gouaches leavened with occasional flashes of Soutine-like bravura when the street market penetrates the gloom with stabs of colour. The traditional subjects such as nudes and landscapes seem routine. More successful is the integration of both theme and technique in the indoor swimming-pool series, in which the agitated jumble of figures suits his staccato brush strokes. Although individuality is paraded, Kossoff's painting is safely cast inside the normal, expressionist mould (Fig. 2).

Sharing the Gallery is D. H. Smith, whose cool eye is revealed in tiny water-colours drawn with the precise exactitude associated with a surgeon and his knife. His work is a thin cry of protest at the obliteration of the countryside by industrial pollution and the encroachment of bricks and mortar. Smith provides a skilful and accurate record of Nature, and no detail, however minute, escapes his searching pencil and delicate brush. On close inspection, and the eye must be put very close, a riveting veracity grips one in the objectivity and