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EXHIBITIONS

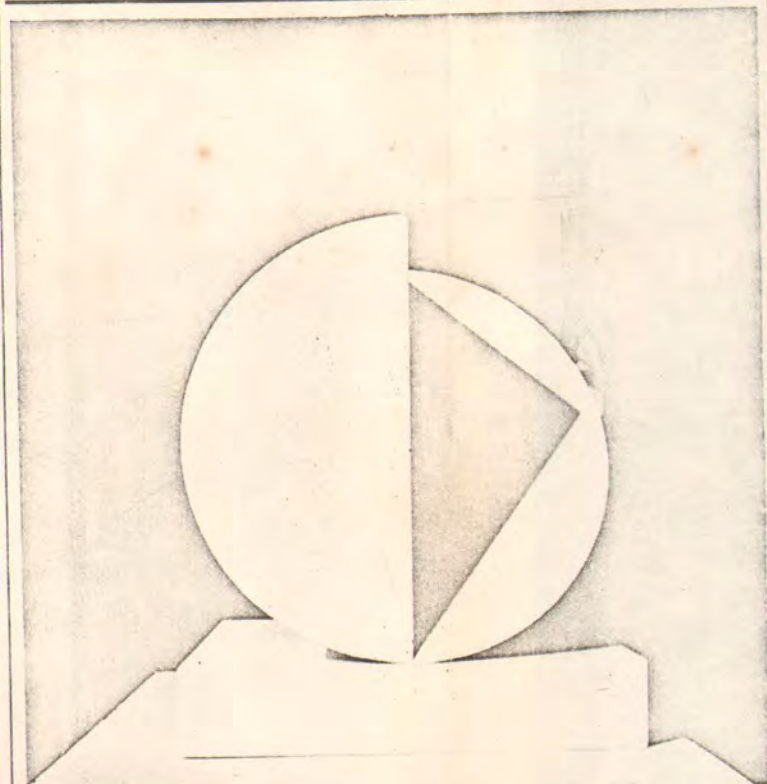
Camargo

After looking at the scanning electron micrographs of fossilized diatoms and shells, the sculptures of Sergio Camargo seem familiar. They appear to belong to a category of objects constructed from elements in which our surroundings abound. Each of Camargo's works is based on one of two types of fundamental groups of shapes: the circle and the cylinder, or the square and the cube.

Today, made of white Carrara marble, they appear larger, less busy and more opulent than before, but the initial introduction to this Brazilian artist's work which took place 10 years ago at the Paris Biennale, was rather different. There, Camargo's white constructions which were the revelation of the Biennale, were made up of wooden cylinders of varying thicknesses cut on a bias and glued to a flat support. They were assembled at different angles to one another and painted white. They were both geometric and lyrical; formal and organic. The reason why they possessed such contradictory qualities is because the appearance of each relief depended on the light cast on it. Thus the effect could be that of sharp edges and great contrasts or alternatively of soft intermingling forms like elbows or knees clustering together.

It is not surprising to learn that Camargo's first works which were entirely informal were made by placing his fingers in sand and then capturing the form in plaster. Some of those early works looked like thick white needles standing away from a magnet, and others, more opulent were compared once by a critic to the white cliffs of Dover.

In the context of post-war sculpture Camargo is associated with those artists like Signori, Viani, and André Bloc who extended the classical tradition exemplified by Brancusi, Arp and Vantongerloo. These latter three names are mentioned in every one of Camargo's catalogues as those artists whom he knew and admired in Paris. It is those artists that combined the organic and the sensual with simplicity and discipline, and it is these particular qualities that Camargo wanted to associate himself with. He had no formal art education and his learning was through a contact with other artists. He came to study philosophy at the Sorbonne and stayed on in Paris where his



creative adventures developed.

Although his work has altered during the past 10 years, his forms and their association are very similar. The elements and their disposition constitute what Camargo calls a visual language. 'The artist - he says - organizes his language to say what he wants to say or can say. I can speak very easily with the elements of my language, and I can say everything I want. There is a sort of symbiosis between me and these elements and the work and me.' The language, of course, is only useful to say what you have to say; 'if you have nothing to say the language is dead'.

Recently his reliefs have become sculptures in the round. The variegated textures that

looked like tweed from a distance were transformed into larger and simpler compositions of fewer elements.

Today, the marble emulates painted wood. It is not polished and does not shine. To know that Camargo's recent works are made of marble, it is necessary to touch them and be surprised by the cold feel of stone which belies those gentle and sensuous undulations. These new works are no longer experiments in the course of finding out what one can do with organic clusters of wooden cylinders. They are very generalized, classical and contemplative. It is as if Camargo had added to the inventory of world's objects a few more inevitable organic forms.

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