

CONDITIONS FOR CREATIVITY

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## INTRODUCTION

Rather than define, I would rather accept a meaning for creation. In my own acceptance of what it means, I would say that it would be, what is done by a human being in relation to a demand or a need. The need could be practical or aesthetic. The separation of the aesthetic and the practical can be a very difficult one, especially so, when one tries to do this in relation to prehistoric man, which I will be attempting to do. I am not for one moment saying that they can be completely separated, but I doubt if that could be done even in the context of some of to-day's artists. In discussing this question, Herbert Read says:

"An attempt has been made to explain this perfection (of cave paintings) as due entirely to the caveman's desire to make his representations magically effective" - 'Par le désir d'obtenir l'efficacité', as H. Schuwer expresses it. But when this critic used the word 'desire', I think he has given his case away. Primitive man has a desire to paint efficaciously. He has the desire to make one painting more effective than another. This is to say, he distinguishes between one painting and another, but surely not by the magical results gained from it.\*

In any normal creation in the nature of caveman, it would be ridiculous to rule out aesthetic tendencies. This is why I will be using the work of the Paleolithic caveman as an important part of my discussion on conditions for creativity. I will also be relating this work, with that of the Neolithic farmer, type of work (especially pottery). The reason I am giving Henry Moore's quotation is that I am trying to show that it is agreeable at the very least, that there is an aesthetic quality in the caveman's art. Firstly, I will be trying to show why I think that the caveman's art is superior to that of the Neolithic farmer.

\*Art and Society - H. Read. London. 1967 Page II.

The caveman was a hunter and this is reflected in his creativity. As well as this life style being reflected in his art, that life style also greatly contributed to the excellance of that art. In the first chapter, I will be trying to point out how this life style made such a contribution to his creation.

In the second chapter, I will be dealing with the Neolithic type farmer and his artistic creations. There are great limitation apparent in the Neolithic's farmer life style. I will be trying to point out these limitations in the second chapter. The domestic situation which happened with the Neolithic revolution demonstrated utilitarian objects as an after-thought. Visual observation reached a very low ebb and there is hardly a comparison with the observation of the caveman. Side by side with the caveman's art, that of the Neolithic man lacks vitality and definition. During the second chapter, I will also refer to some art of the Han Dynasty in China. The dates of the Han Dynasty are a lot later than the Neolithic period (206 B.C. - 222 A.D.). Yet there is a very interesting aspect about life styles occurring in this period. During the Han Dynasty, China opened up to other countries and intercommunication reached a high level. Many tribes of Northern China came in contact with nomadic tribes of Central Asia. Chinese Art changed dramatically during this period. In fact, sculpture first appeared in this period.

Finally, I will be looking into contemporary society through the work of Brancusi. By doing this I will be trying to show that the traits of ancient man are still relevant. Brancusi used his work as his passport. His work is the result of a fresh experience and that is amply portrayed by Brancusi. In the final chapter I will also be trying to show the huge differences in modern life to that of the ancient.

## CHAPTER I.

Prehistoric Art. How it changed from the Paleolithic hunter to the Neolithic farmer.

In starting to write about the art of the early hunter throughout the world, I will be trying to explain the closeness of his artistic endeavours to himself as a person. One point is very clear: artistic endeavour is a human need, be it applied to practical tools and utensils or to purely ornamental work. In societies where there could have been very little precedent of creativity or art, humans started to create. The initial human phase started around three million years ago and during that very early period, humans began to create. During that period there is great evidence of stone tools which are very well designed to suit their purposes. Of course, all tools made in the initial human phase were functional. The humans of those days would not have seen those tools in any other light. It is debatable exactly when the earliest human created for an aesthetic reason.

However, the very fact that he created at all shows him to be a different animal to all others. Each and every normal member of the human species has to be seen as an individual of creative ability.

"It is important to seize the fact that the oldest art is the work of man directly ancestral to modern humanity." 1. Many fascinating tools were made during the initial human phase, with very good design. However, I would not think that any of these tools could be termed Art. It would be during the Paleolithic period (40,000 - 15,000 B.C.) that Art made its first appearance. There are many question as regards to why that Art was created. Were the visual creations of the Paleolithic period done for magical or for aesthetic purposes? There is no definite proof to answer either of those questions and I doubt if there ever will be, whichever may be true.

The important thing is, creativity was in action never to cease until the extinction of mankind.

Before extending any theory, I feel it is important to view these works in a historic setting both geographically and culturewise. During the upper Paleolithic period, Europe was essentially a wild geographical space of plains and mountains. These plains and mountains were not used for agricultural production as we know it today. The inhabitants of Europe were mainly made up of two cultures, The "Aurignacian" and the "Gravettian", both of which emigrated from South West Asia. The Gravettians stayed on the open plains while the Aurignacians stuck to the foothills of mountain ranges, especially of Western Europe. The life of the Gravettian was in many ways quite different to that of the Aurignacian. There are many sculptural figurines in the Art of the Gravettian, while the Aurignacian Art mainly consists of cave paintings of animals. 2.

Some of the small stone carvings and baked clay figures are more than magical symbols. While they may have magical significance, there is a definite observation of the figure and a sensitivity towards composition. This figurine ( Fig. 9 Prehistoric Art) shows the able way in which the Artist dealt with this piece of wood. The piece of wood was quite narrow but he just cut away the essential pieces to create the image. There are many things which are possible to say about this piece and others of the period, but I am not doing an appreciation of Paleolithic Art. The question that interests me is: Why did the Paleolithic Artist create this image in the first place? I would not agree with the theory that there was a formal community or school of Artists at that time. By the very nature of their existence, they would find it difficult to have any such community. Whether or not they would have a test to become a gang Artist is debatable but, I believe it is possible.

We do know, however, that there are varying standards in the art of the Movarian hunters and the cave Artists. In the cave Art of Southern France, Northern Spain, there is evidence to show that drawings and paintings were done for objective observation reasons as well as magical ones. There are many small drawings on stones and pebbles which could be interpreted as preparatory sketches for larger paintings done in the caves. There are many different techniques used to create Art work in the caves. Among techniques used are linear drawings, painting, dotted painting, and even carving. Some of the ways in which the techniques were used could be attributed to magical purposes. There are horse drawings in which the actual horse image is drawn with line, filled in with dots extending outside the contours of the body. There are other drawings in which dots are used to make a contour for the image. We can also see that as well as observing the object, these early hunters gave great consideration to the actual shape of the material and to the area in which they worked. In carving from antlers, we can see that the minimum amount of material was wasted to produce an image. In some drawings the natural shape of the rock was often used to suggest an image as well as line and paint. With respect to this varied and objective approach there can be no denying that the painter had more than magic on his mind. The question of whether this creative activity was exclusive to only certain members of the group deserves more attention. I would assume from the drawings, paintings and carvings in the caves and elsewhere that the best Artists of the time worked on there. If these Artists did have an entry test to become a cave painter or draughtsman, there would have to be a set standard. However, there is no evidence of an area where beginners might practice. I do not think that there was such an area. Even though the cave paintings are very brilliant visual observations, there are some which are not so good. The presence of those not so good works would indicate an involvement by any member capable of drawing or painting. No doubt, there are many other things done during the Paleolithic period which have not survived. If more evidence had survived the picture could possibly be a different one.

It was definitely a very creative period and it would seem that there was great co-operation between the members of the group. It would probably be true to say that the visual creations had a relevance to everyone. They benefitted from the magical significance of the paintings as well as from their visual beauty. During the period around and directly after the cave drawings, some beautiful sculptural images came to light in Northern Europe. These are carved out of wood and show natural objective observation. The carving of the duck (Fig. 8.) is a great example of how the people of Northern Europe are able to handle wood. There are different approaches to finding expression in wood in many of these Northern carvings. Indeed, this could be said for most of the Paleolithic visual creativity. The open life style of the Paleolithic hunter gave an opportunity for a broader visual approach. The advantages of the Paleolithic life style can best be seen when compared to that of the Neolithic cultivator. In the next chapter I will be looking at the disadvantage of the Neolithic life style for the purpose of visual creativity.



FIG 1



FIG 2



FIG 3



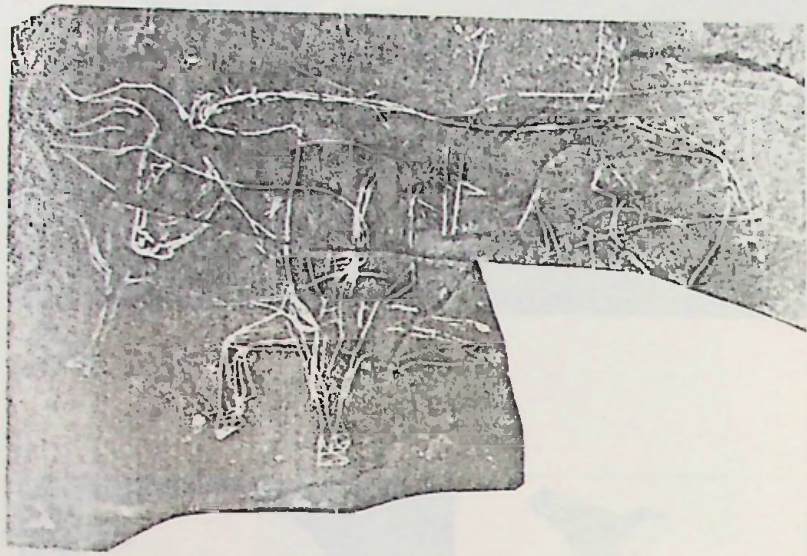


FIG 4



FIG 5



FIG 6



FIG 7

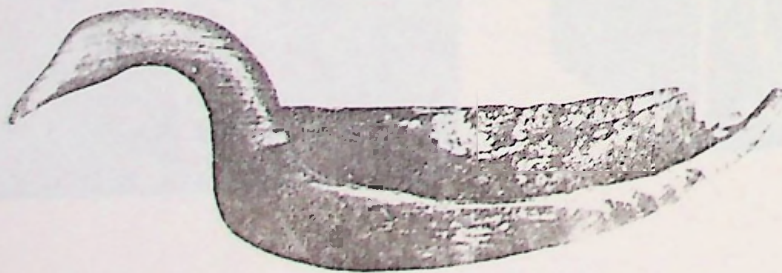


FIG 8

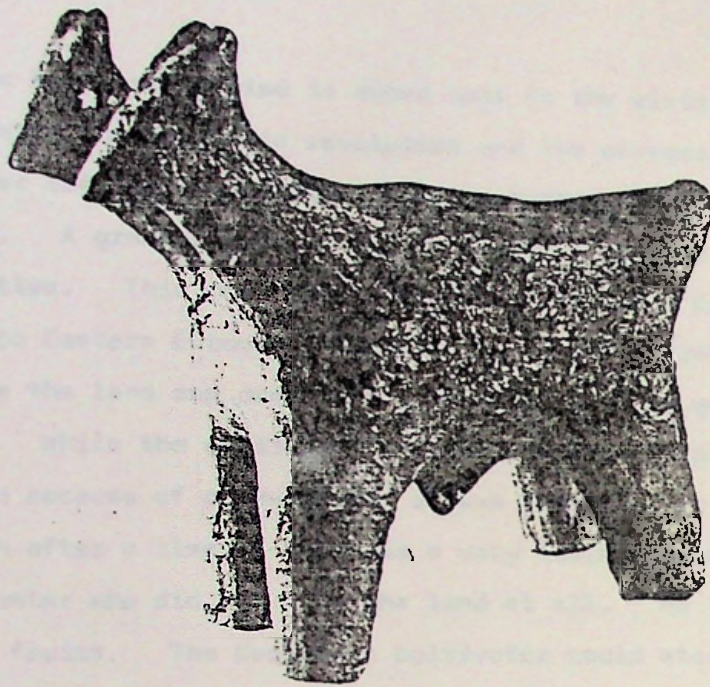


FIG 10

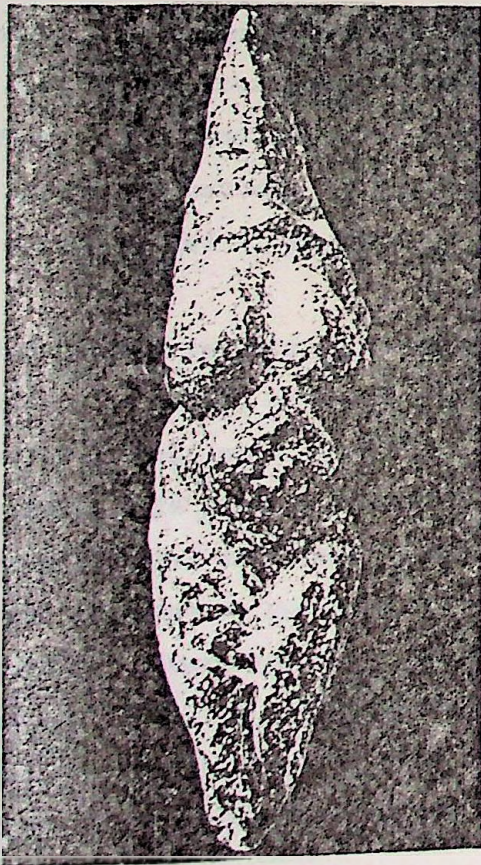


FIG 9

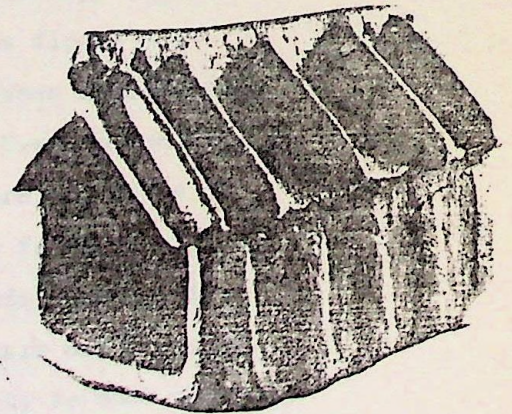


FIG 11

## CHAPTER II

The Neolithic period is dated back to the sixth Millennium B.C. With the Neolithic revolution and the emergence of cities and other settled communities, pottery became the dominant Art form. A great change in living styles preceded the building up of cities. This came about firstly in the Near East and later spread to Eastern Europe. Cultures of the Near East began to cultivate the land and domesticate animals, such as goats, sheep and cattle. While the cultivator did have to occasionally move from his land because of overworking, it was possible for him to move back again after a time. This was a very basic change from the Paleolithic hunter who did not work the land at all. He just lived on prey and fruits. The Neolithic cultivator could stay in one place and therefore, turned his attentions to domestic problems. Attention to domestic problems meant a quest for better living conditions. However, it became clear that better living conditions for man did not mean better creativity. While the Eastern Neolithic cultivator was finding out many new materials and methods, he did not necessarily create any better. In fact, he lost a great deal of his creative energy by being too involved in domestic problems.

The Eastern Danubian regions give us many examples of Neolithic pottery. In most of the Danubian pottery, there is a rigid type of design without much variation. The figure was introduced to decorate this pottery sometimes. When introduced, it was an extremely stylised and clear figure. Even though pottery was mostly used for utilitarian purposes, there are figurines of clay from this period. There has also been some finds of architectural models. Some of the figures of this period excel aesthetically when seen in relation to some of their contemporary pottery. There seems to be a premature simplicity in some of these figures.

The complicated elements of the figure are discarded in many of the figures. Of course, it could be said that those elements had not even been observed at that time. Either way, a great strength and composition had been achieved. There are a few other works of note which were found in a Movarian grave (Fig. 10.)

Again this two-headed animal is a very strongly composed design. The little model of a house (Fig. 11.)

is very interesting. It is possible to give different interpretations to this model. It could be used to show far off cultures a copy of existing architecture or it could be a proposed design for a new building. There is one other figurine of this age (Fig. 13.)

that I find very strong and simple. It's just a cross shape with a few important aspects of the figure included. After these figures a strange phenomenon known as the "Oculus Motif" appeared. This 'motif' spread as far as England and Scotland where it has been found carved on small stone spheres. Previous to that, there are examples of the "Oculus Motif" from Spain (Fig. 16.)

which are carved in antler and in stone. This subject is always very stylised and hence, it is always rather lifeless. The motif is always used as decoration added on after something had been made. This decoration was mainly applied to pottery and there are many existing examples of this (Fig. 15.).

Overall, there is very little visual creativity of this Neolithic period which would impress. In comparison with the free hunter, the life and freedom has left the cultivator's work.

In China, there is a very interesting revival with the Han Dynasty (206B.C. - 222 A.D.). During this period, China opened up its borders to other nations and generally became more gregarious. It would seem that a new dimension came to Chinese Art at this time.

"With the exception of certain marble sculpture from Anyang and wooden figures from Chang sha, we can say that sculpture in China starts in the 'Han Dynasty'." 3.

Why did this happen and why the new vitality and innovation in Chinese Art? There came a big change in the Chinese outlook with the beginning of this dynasty. From the inner conflict of tribes, the "Han" emperors wanted to look outside the frontiers of their country. There was particular influence from India and from nomadic tribes of Asia.

"The change in the traditional social order of the archaic period had also been accompanied by new philosophical ideas. Confucianism began to have a profound influence over three hundred years after the deaths of Confucius. The scholarly ethics of Confucianism influenced both Government and the Arts." 4.

However, there is another reason for this upsurge of creativity. From the outside came new philosophies mainly through contact by the Chinese with foreign tribes.

"This expansionism brought the Chinese into closer contact with the nomadic "Barbarians" of Central Asia. Contact with the energetic Art forms of the nomads was reflected in Chinese Art, especially that from the Ardos region." 5.

There were two underlying reasons for the "lift" in Chinese Art at that time. One is the contact with the hunter or nomad of Central Asia. The nomad's life style gave him much more incentive for creativity. There was much more room for experience in the nomad's way of surviving and this he shared with his Chinese contacts. The second reason for this upsurge in Chinese Arts in concerned with the new channels open of learning and ideas open to them. There were new geographical areas and new philosophical ideas facing the Chinese. This created an incentive for them to try new ideas in a visual way as well as other ways.

This helped the Chinese people to break away from any inertia into which they might have fallen. In comparison with European bronze and pottery, a much greater creative energy can be seen in the work of the "Han" people. Even before the "Han Dynasty" in China, the Art of that country would seem to be better all round. In relation to China, this much is of great interest.

"We know now that elsewhere the Paleolithic tradition of hunting gave way to the Neolithic practice of food gathering and hunting. This appears to have taken place much earlier than elsewhere and continued even after the Neolithic farming communities had been established." 6.

I believe that the elongation of the Paleolithic and Neolithic practices of painting kept a vitality in Chinese Art up until the "Han Dynasty".

With the great revival of the "Han Dynasty", there came a big change of ideas in relation to Art forms. It is also clear that values changed.

"Sculpture in China was never highly regarded. It was generally considered a lesser Art." 7.

During and after the "Han Dynasty" sculpture became a very important element in the creative activity of the Chinese people.

It would be difficult for anyone to claim that the visual Art of the Neolithic age was an advancement of the Paleolithic. In fact, I think that it was a reversal, if anything. There may have been many new techniques discovered, but the mode of living did not drive the Neolithic people in any way to good creative visual thinking.

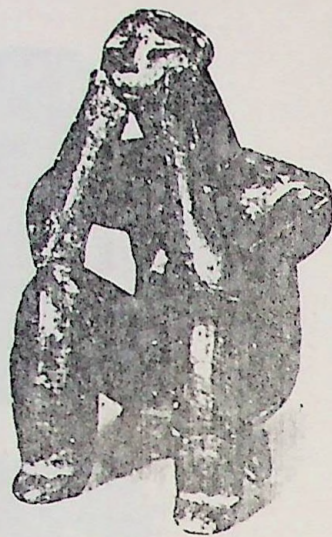
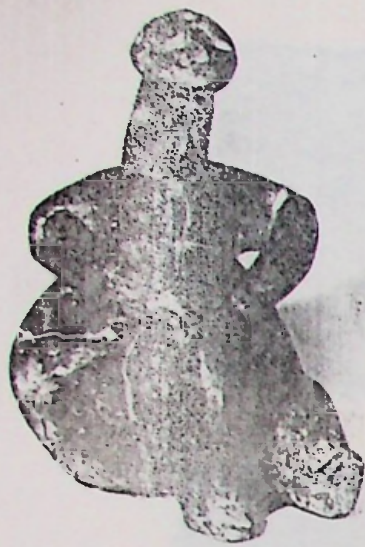


FIG 12

FIG 13

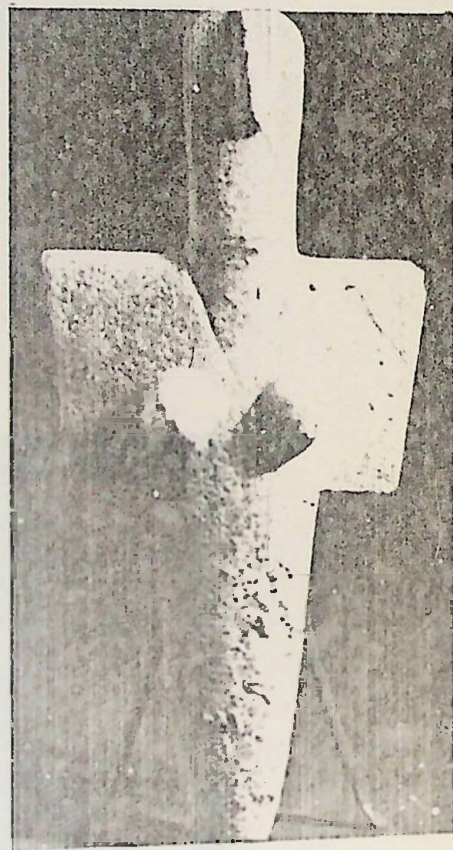


FIG 14



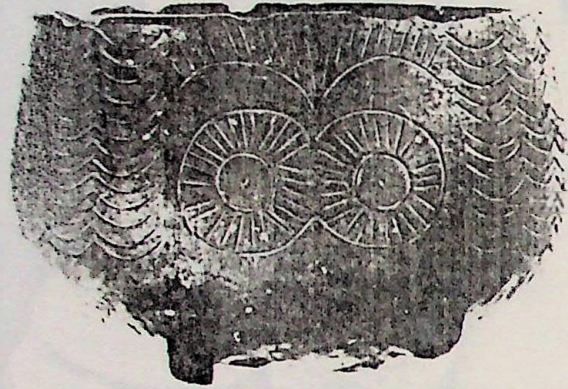
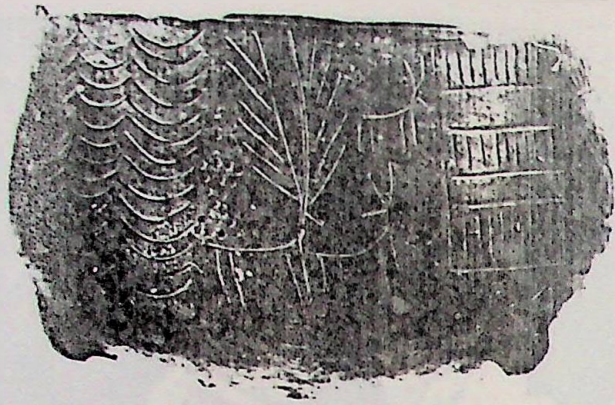


FIG 15

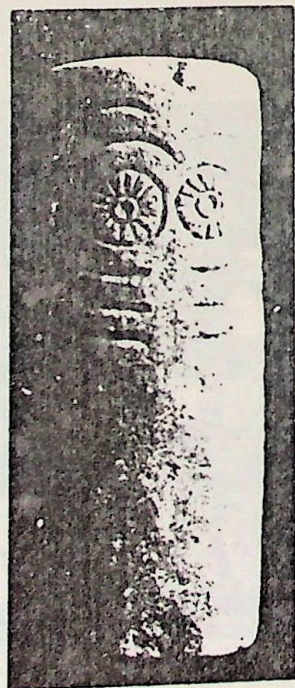
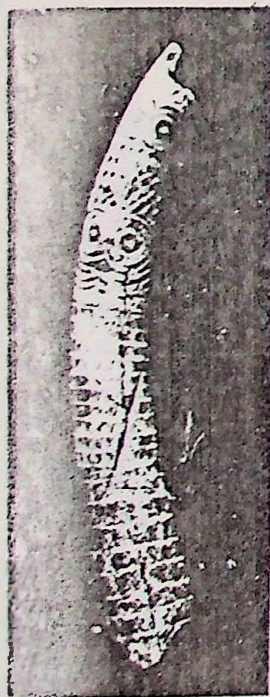


FIG 16



FIG 17

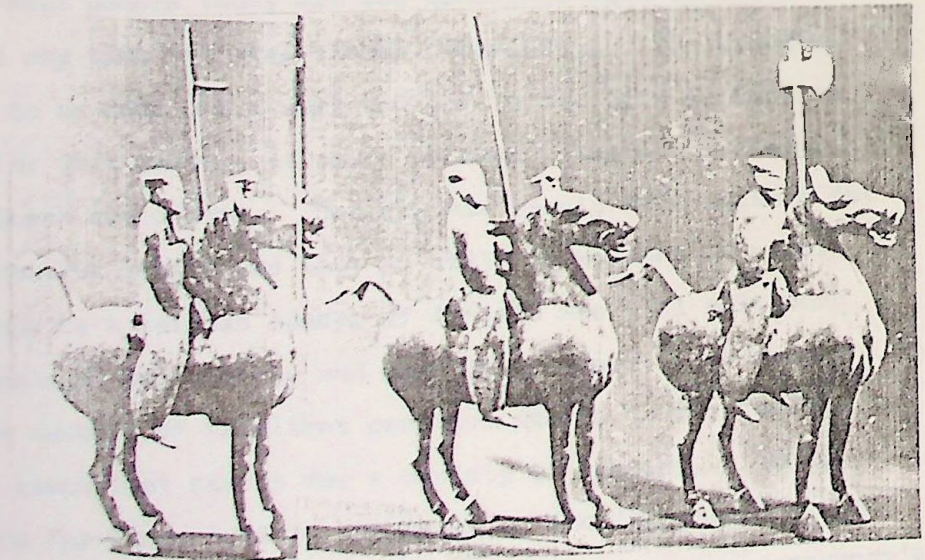


FIG 18

### CHAPTER III

Many people today would agree that we are at the highest point of civilisation now. No doubt, today's life style is a very sophisticated one, but for me, many questions hang over it. It appears to me that many values are held in relation to the subject - materialism. It is true to say that most people live in more comfortable conditions than in days of yore. Among many advancements in scientific areas, medicine has greatly added to the comfort in the life of a modern man. There are greater efforts being made to make life more comfortable for the weaker people in our societies. One of the main reasons for this comfort is found in the all-round development of the sciences and through greater economic power. Women have easier lives today through greater amenities in all spheres of life. Their access to greater care through pregnancies can only be seen as a great advancement in civilisation. All these improvements could easily lead us to believe that there is very little wrong with our mode of living today.

Most people today are too concerned with domestic affairs to have any time for real visual creativity. The creative work has often to be done after work and before the good television programmes. For that matter, it could be done between breakfast, coffee break, lunch and dinner. Society has rarely ever catered for the visually creative people and that is still as evident as ever. There will always be a certain number of Artists who will sell work to the rich people of our society and make their names. However, there are large numbers of excellent creative people in our society who will never reach that status for a variety of reasons. Among the many reasons for these Artists not reaching the 'big name' status is the lack of ability as salesmen. The breaks do not come everybody's way and, in many ways, some are not even interested in making the big time.

However, I would not like to give the impression that the big names in Art made it by pure chance. In fact, most of the elite artists of to-day made it there by hard work and dedication. Of course, success in the financial world does not mean that a work is successful from an artistic point of view.

The nature of the hunter in the modern world is somewhat more complex now than in primitive times. "E<sup>c</sup>lecticism" is a term for a period early in this century when Artists looked to other cultures for inspiration. As the geographical world became more accessible, Art works from captured countries were transported to Western Europe. At one time, one would have to travel to experience these works, but now they could be seen in one's home country. Many artists still travel to alien countries to create. Paul Gauguin, a French painter, was one of those. All sectors of the media and books make it possible for us to travel while sitting at home. Yet this is, in many ways, a limited way of experiencing other cultures. Even though these methods of communication have changed many things for the modern hunter Artist, he still has a basic quality. To use his work as his passport in all situations is that quality

One man who could illustrate the achievement of a hunter-type Artist in this century was Constantine Brancusi. He did not hunt bison to survive but, unlike the Neolithic farmer, Brancusi did not accept the accepted academic style, or the home comforts. After spending some time at his local Art School in Rumania, he very soon made an impression with his academic brilliance. He was not satisfied, however, with his academic figures and he wanted to look for a personal language. It was more than a language for him to strive for personal expression. It was a necessity. He gave his time completely to his work.

He would be where his work would be, even when that meant Paris.

"In 1902, he left the village under the Carpathians where, (he remarked to Michael Seuphar) life was happy without quarrels or sickness, because the civilisation which falsifies had never come there, to go to Paris where the new century was forming." 8.

We can still find more evidence of the sincerity of his intention.

"He travelled penniless and on foot by way of Munich, Zurich and Basle seeking work here and there as a stonemason and builder's labourer." 9.

Arriving in Paris in 1904, he entered the Ecole des Beaux Arts. In doing this journey, he placed himself in a position of almost complete destitution which was completely contrary to his comfortable situation at home in Rumania of being a local hero. It took a long time before Brancusi reached what might be called the elite Artists of France. He got a quiet studio in Paris and worked away at his sculpture. There are many different kinds of situations in which Artists exist today. Yet there are few who carry out their work with any great amount of personal honesty. As a final year student, I do not think that it would be of any value for this thesis to bring my own work and situation into discussion. I am looking at man's nature in relation to two basic different kinds of life styles which are clearly shown in the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras. One basic trait is that man is more creative when without too much domestic involvement or without being in the one place all the time. The other is that man is less so when he gets a house and settles down. He gets attached to his comfortable situation and wants to make it more so hence automatically giving his energy to this goal.

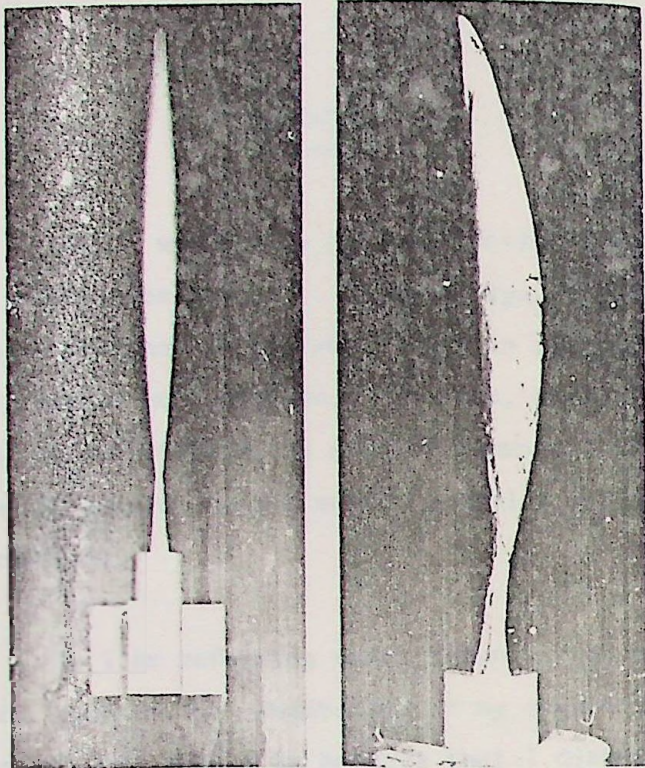


FIG 19

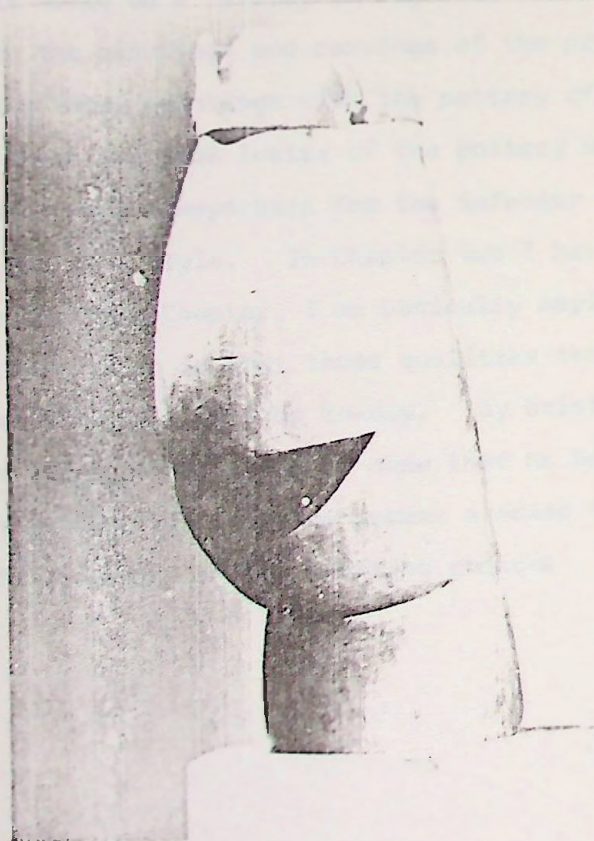


FIG 20



FIG 21

## SUMMARY

When I set out to do this thesis, I felt that there was a point to be proven. In some ways, I still believe that. Many points that seemed very clear in relation to what was good and bad, became more obscure. In fact, a reasonable percentage of my beliefs were to do with personal likings. Yet I was pleasantly surprised with some supportive evidence I came upon while reading.

As I am referring quite often to the illustrations in the thesis, much of the credibility of my argument will lie with them. I do not want anyone to believe that I disbelieve my own argument. What I do think is, that my argument would need an immense amount of research, and even then it would be debatable. From the illustrations and the supportive writing in the first Chapter, it would be a falsity to say that there is no energy or vitality in the paintings and carvings of the prehistoric hunter. In comparing those paintings with the pottery of the Neolithic farmer, I think the lack lustre of the pottery becomes clear. The reason that I have always been for the inferior Art of the Neolithic farmer is his life style. In Chapter two I have tried to show that. In the last Chapter, I am basically saying why I wrote this thesis. The reason is that those qualities that are noticable in ancient man are still with us to-day. By briefly looking at Brancusi's life, I have tried to show that he had choices in his life. To achieve his goal, he became a nomad for a number of years, showing the relevance of the existing choices.

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