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FACULTY OF CRAFT/DESIGN

CERAMICS

**"THE BODY, MOVEMENT AND THE DANCE
IN THE WORK OF MARY FRANK."**

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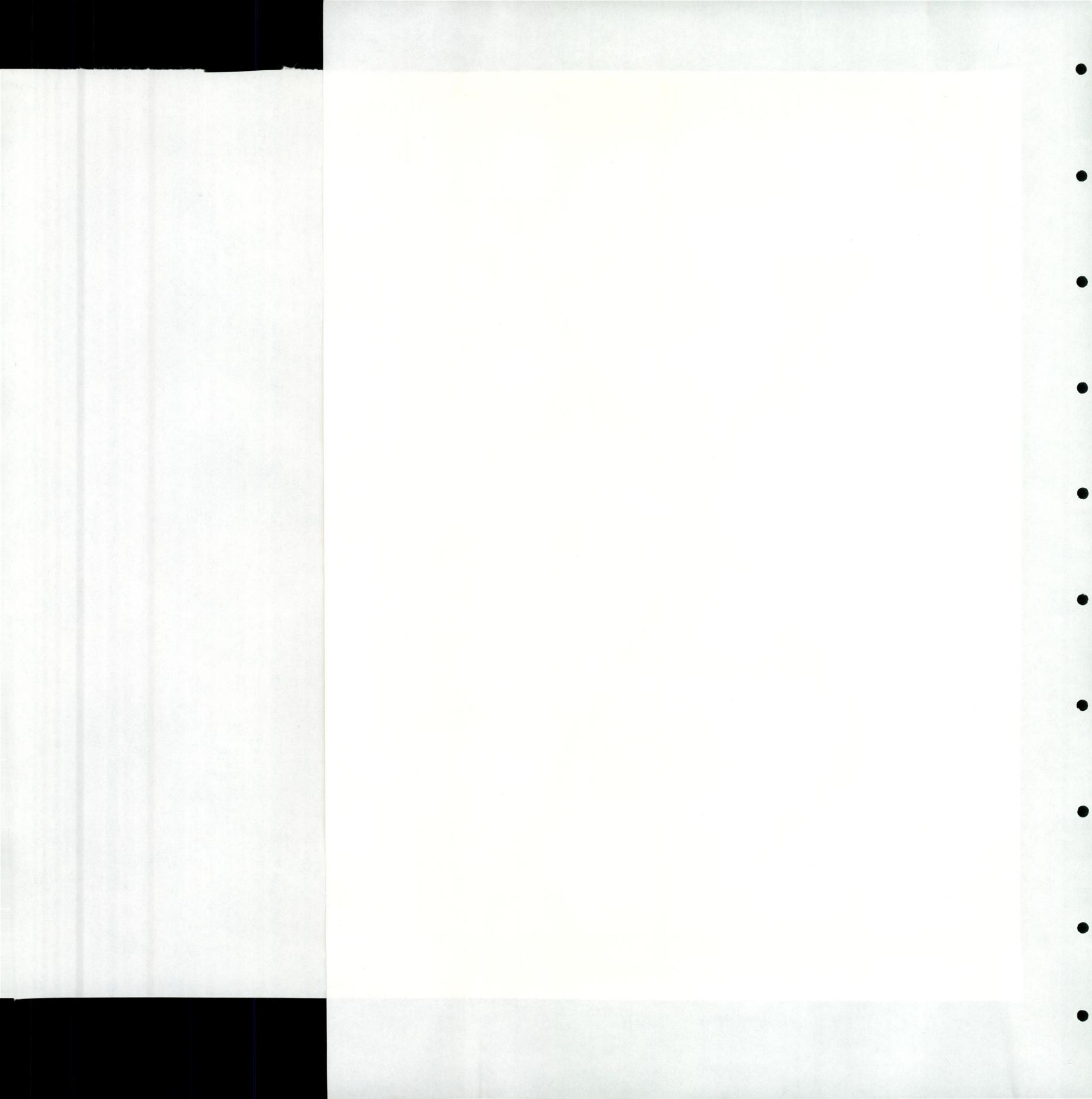


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 4	List of Plates.
Page 6	Introduction.
Page 8	Chapter 1 - Introduction To Mary Frank - The Artist And Her Work.
Page 13	Chapter 2 - Frank's Early Life And Influences.
Page 20	Chapter 3 - Functions Of Dance - Modern Dance - Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham.
Page 25	Chapter 4 - Rodin - Emphasis on Dance and Movement - Influence on Sculpture of Mary Frank.
Page 28	Chapter 5 - Frank's Ceramic Sculpture and Emphasis on the Dance and Movement.
Page 34	Chapter 6 - Frank's emphasis on Movement and the Dance in Drawings and other work.
Page 39	Conclusion.
Page 41	Bibliography.

LIST OF PLATES

1. Woman in Waves, 1972, Ceramic, 22" x 12" x 18".
2. Nike Persephone, 1987, Ceramic in five parts, 9½" x 25" x 13".
3. Chimera, (1984-1986), Papier Mâche, 34" x 60" x 24".
4. Chimera, C.350B.C., Bronze.
5. Nike, C.360B.C., Marble.
6. Woman in Waves, 1972. (See Figure 1)
7. Chant, 1984, Ceramic 44" x 60" x 38".
8. Creature, 1972, Ceramic, 31" x 12½" x 17".
9. Daphne, 1962, Bronze, 11".
10. Disappearance, 1976, Monoprint.
11. Woman with Outstretched Arms, 1975, Ceramic in eight parts, 91" x 64".
12. Head with Ferns, 1975, Ceramic.
13. Head with Petals, 1976, Ceramic.
14. Rainbow Woman, 1972, Ceramic, height 19½".
15. Daphne, 1962. (See Figure 9)
16. Lion Headed Woman 1958, Bronze 5" x 10" x 4".
17. Bird Woman, 1957, Bronze, height 14½".
18. Of this time and place, 1966, 1967, Plaster.
19. On the Horizon, 1967, Plaster.
20. Dance Movements A, B, & D, 1910 - 1911, Bronze, Auguste Rodin.
21. Inner Voice, 1910, Bronze, Auguste Rodin.
22. Njynsky, 1912, Bronze, Auguste Rodin.
23. Journey, 1970, Ceramic.
24. On the Horizon, 1970. (See Figure 19)
25. Taming of the Harp, 1971, Ceramic.
26. Ghost Dancers, 1972, 1973.
27. Moving Woman, 1973, Ceramic.

28. Moving Woman II, 1976, Ceramic.
29. Running Man, 1981, Plaster.
30. Walking Woman, 1981, Plaster.
31. Leaping Man, 1977, Ceramic.
32. Lovers, 1974, Ceramic.
33. Chant, 1984, Ceramic. (See Figure 7)
34. Winged Armed Woman, 1976, Ceramic.
35. River figure, 1976, Ceramic.
36. Arrowed Woman, 1977, Ceramic.
37. Three Dancers, 1981, Ceramic.
38. Youth Battling a Centaur, 460B.C., Marble.
39. River God, 437-432B.C.
40. Conceicao, 1976-1977, Charcoal.
41. Crouching Man, 1980, Charcoal.
42. Lovers, 1978, Cut paper.
43. Natural History, 1985, Monoprint.
44. The time is now, 1986-1986, Monoprint.
45. Presence, 1985-1986, Bronze.
46. Grammar of Regret, 1982, Plaster, Glass, Clay.
47. Trajectories, 1988, Papier Mâche.

INTRODUCTION

Sculptors have used the human body as a source of expression for their art throughout the ages, from the Greeks, to the Renaissance Italians to the sculptors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The body in motion has also being a concern and with this in mind I have undertaken to write my thesis.

To write about the body in motion is to write about the Dance as to dance is to move the body or to use the body as an instrument to create movement. One artist who has been greatly influenced by the Dance and its philosophies in the twentieth century is the English-born American artist, Mary Frank. Throughout her career, she has produced figurative sculpture that draws inspiration from many sources including antiquity, life itself and the Dance.

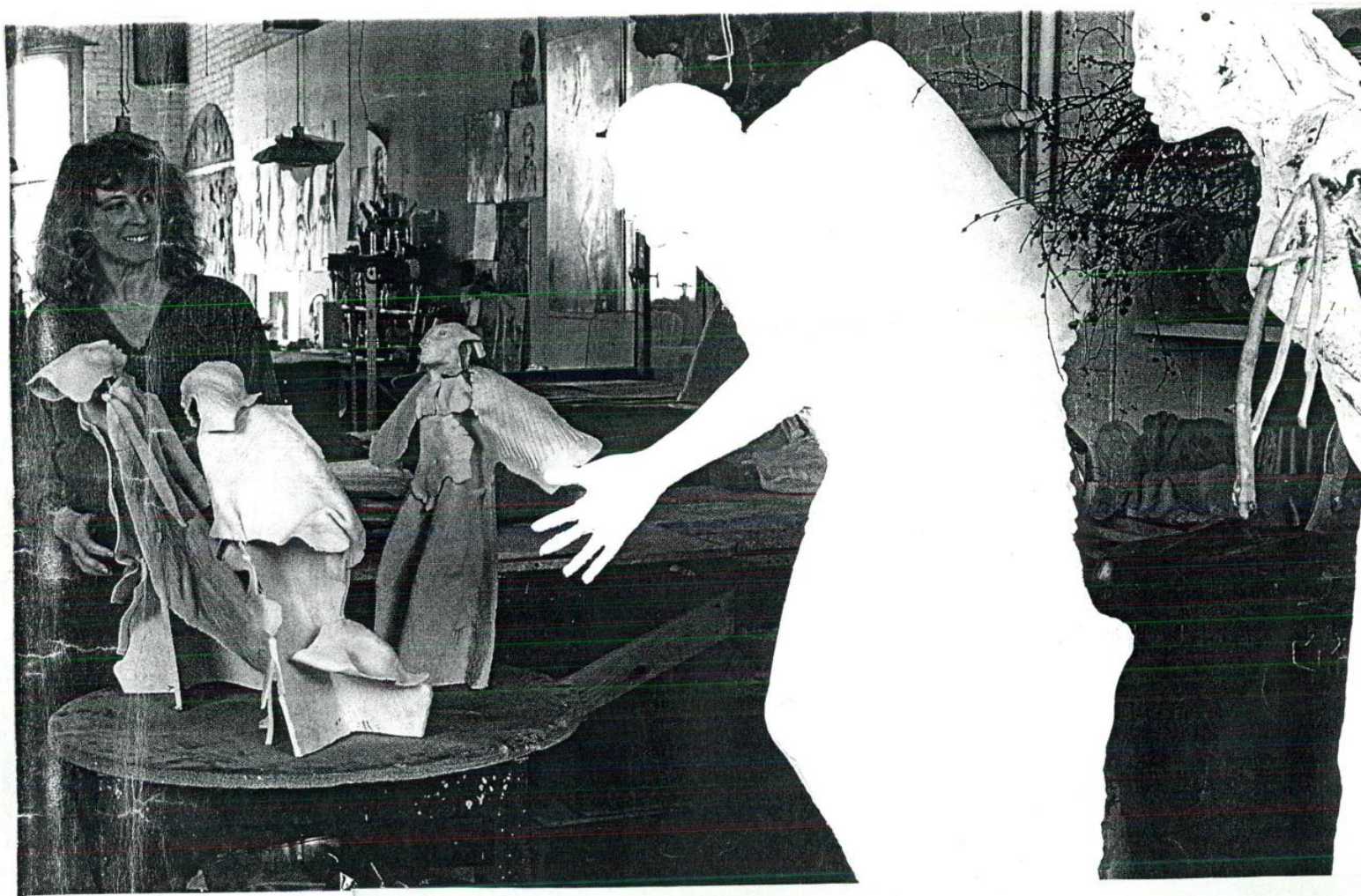
Her work is the main discussion of this thesis, but I must refer to other themes and other personalities in order to comprehensively cover the range of aspects involved.

Featured personalities are people who are/were directly concerned with the body and the figure in motion, and the Dance in their work. Auguste Rodin for example, was an artist who devoted his life's work to portraying the naturalism of the moving figure in his sculpture and constantly looked to dancers and the Dance for reference.

Individual dancers too, have done much to inspire artists, and of course are artists themselves using different mediums to create movement, so it is important to look at their work and philosophies. I have chosen two influential modern dancers; Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham as these two have directly inspired both Rodin and Mary Frank, who have similar ideas particularly that motion is motivated by emotion.

Grace and gesture are words that come to mind when describing figurative work based on the movement of the body, and one of my main concerns is to show how and where grace and gesture apply to the art of Mark Frank, particularly in her ceramic sculpture. I also wish to show comparisons between Frank's work and the work of other sculptors who have focused on the human body as a source of inspiration apart from Rodin, these include Henry Moore, Alberto Giacometti and Edgar Degas. In addition, I wish to demonstrate how Frank's work [like Rodin's] relates to and stems from her affection for the Dance and her recognition of the beauty of the body in motion.

To begin, I feel it is necessary to introduce Mary Frank, to recount her early life and look at her early influences and first attempts to create art.



Mary Frank in her studio.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO MARY FRANK - THE ARTIST AND HER WORK.

Mary Frank was born in England but moved with her mother to America early in life. She is described by Hayden Herrera, an Art Historian and Critic, as one of America's best loved contemporary artists.(Herrera, 1990, p.8) I was first introduced to Frank's work when I came across a book written by Herrera, in my second year in college. I was immediately taken by the images that seemed to leap out at me from between the pages "Images impelled by emotion"(Herrera, 1990, p.8), love, loss, rage, joy in nature are all explored emotions. Pastoral images, along with evocations of myths, glimpses of dreams and perceptions of nature are concerns that Frank often deals with.

Elanor C. Munro describes Frank's sculptures as "... figures of lovers, Nereids, Nikes, and fallen leaf-winged angels"(Munro, 1979, p.290), while Herrera lists Frank's subjects as nudes, earth Goddesses, sylvan spirits and " ... a vast bestiary that does not always conform to fauna in zoology books"(Herrera, 1990, p.8). These include Chimeras, bird women, centaurs, women that are part fish, part snake or part lion, and are familiar characters that feature throughout her work.

Since becoming aware of Mary Frank I have been greatly influenced by her in my own work and this is one of the main reasons why I chose to write about her. She can be described as a figurative artist working mostly in clay but during her life has tried her hand at many different mediums which I will discuss later. Because I am a ceramicist and am also interested in the figure I feel, in some way connected to Frank and her style.

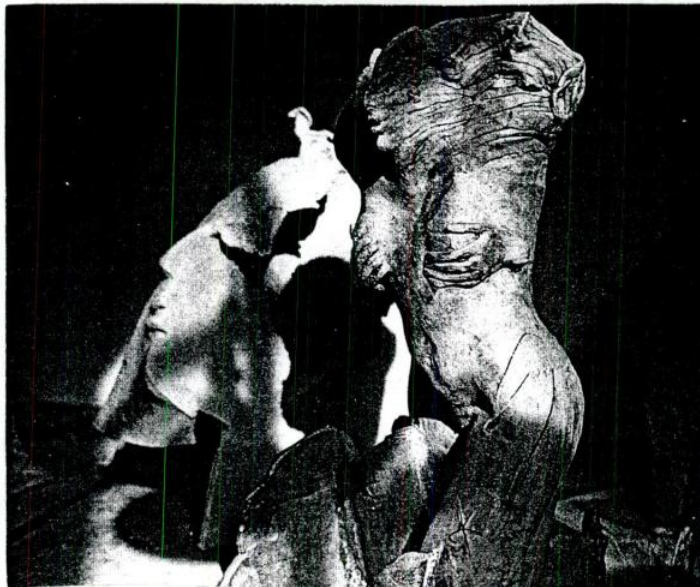
To me, Frank seems to have similar ideas on Dance and the moving body as Auguste Rodin and that is why I have chosen him as a reference for Frank's work. Of course,

there is a huge division between the two, as Rodin lived at the end of the nineteenth century, secondly was French and thirdly is considered to be one of history's most famous, ingenious, and influential sculptors. But as they both are sculptors, both love the figure and are both taken by the Dance, I can see many connections between the two; also Frank names Rodin as being one of her idols.

There is a great deal more written about Rodin than Mary Frank, so I have had to rely heavily on Herrera's excellent book entitled Mary Frank(1990). But I have uncovered various articles from periodicals and an essay in Elanor C. Munro's book [Originals; American Women Artists (1979)] about Frank that has provided me with some useful information. Unfortunately, I have not seen any of Frank's work in the round, but have obtained a vivid impression from colour, and black and white photographs printed in Herrera's book and also in magazines and journals.

While Frank's work is affected by happenings in her life, it is not necessarily autobiographical. Although many of the titles of her sculptures are mythical they do not necessarily illustrate myths or come from books, but from images absorbed from art history as well as everyday experiences and feelings, for example Woman in Waves (1972) (See Figure 1) comes from, Frank says "... being in waves, from seeing people in waves on Cape Cod and drawing them".(Herrera, 1990, p.9).

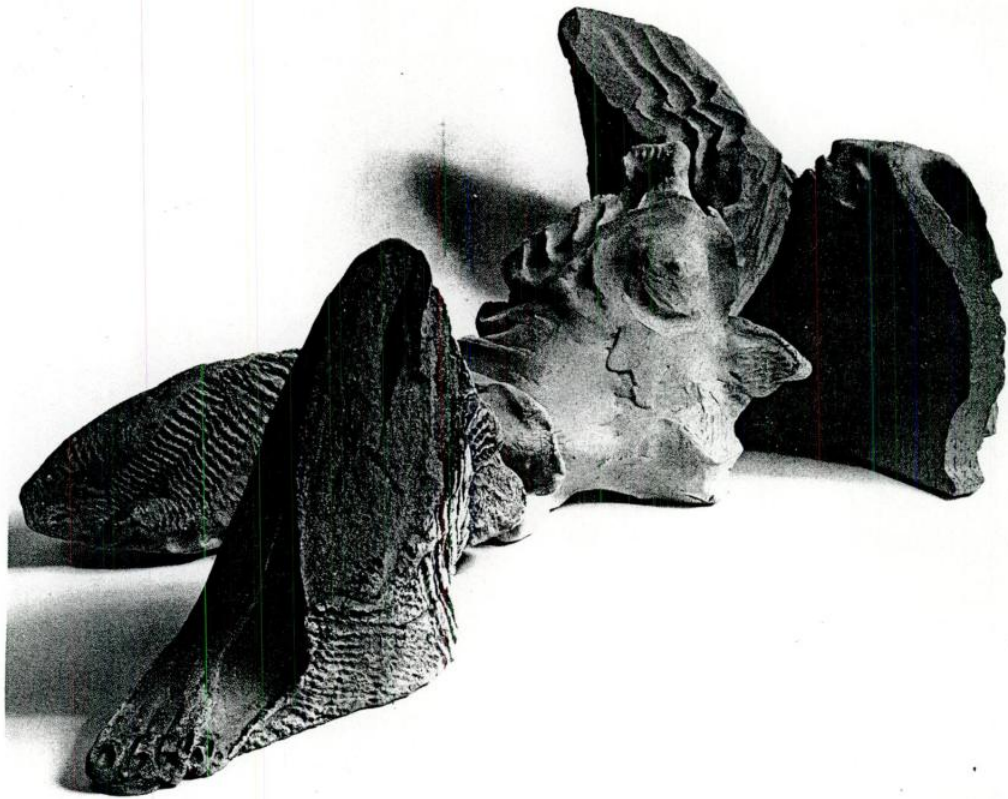
According to Munro "... nearly every person and people who treated the human figure as a thing of dignity and fragility might have had a hand in this work".(Munro, 1979, p.290) There are recognisable traces of the classical and the cubist, the surreal and the expressionist, Egyptian, the Hellenistic and the Etruscan e.g. in Nike - Persephone (1987) and Chimera (1984-86) (See Figures 2 - 5). One can also see references to Rodin, Degas, Matisse and Picasso particularly in her drawings. She has also been inspired by the Sculptors, Henry Moore, Brancusi and Giacometti. Other comparisons



1. Woman in Waves, 1972, Ceramic, 22" x 12" x 18".



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2. Nike Persephone, 1987, Ceramic in five parts, 9½" x 25" x 13".

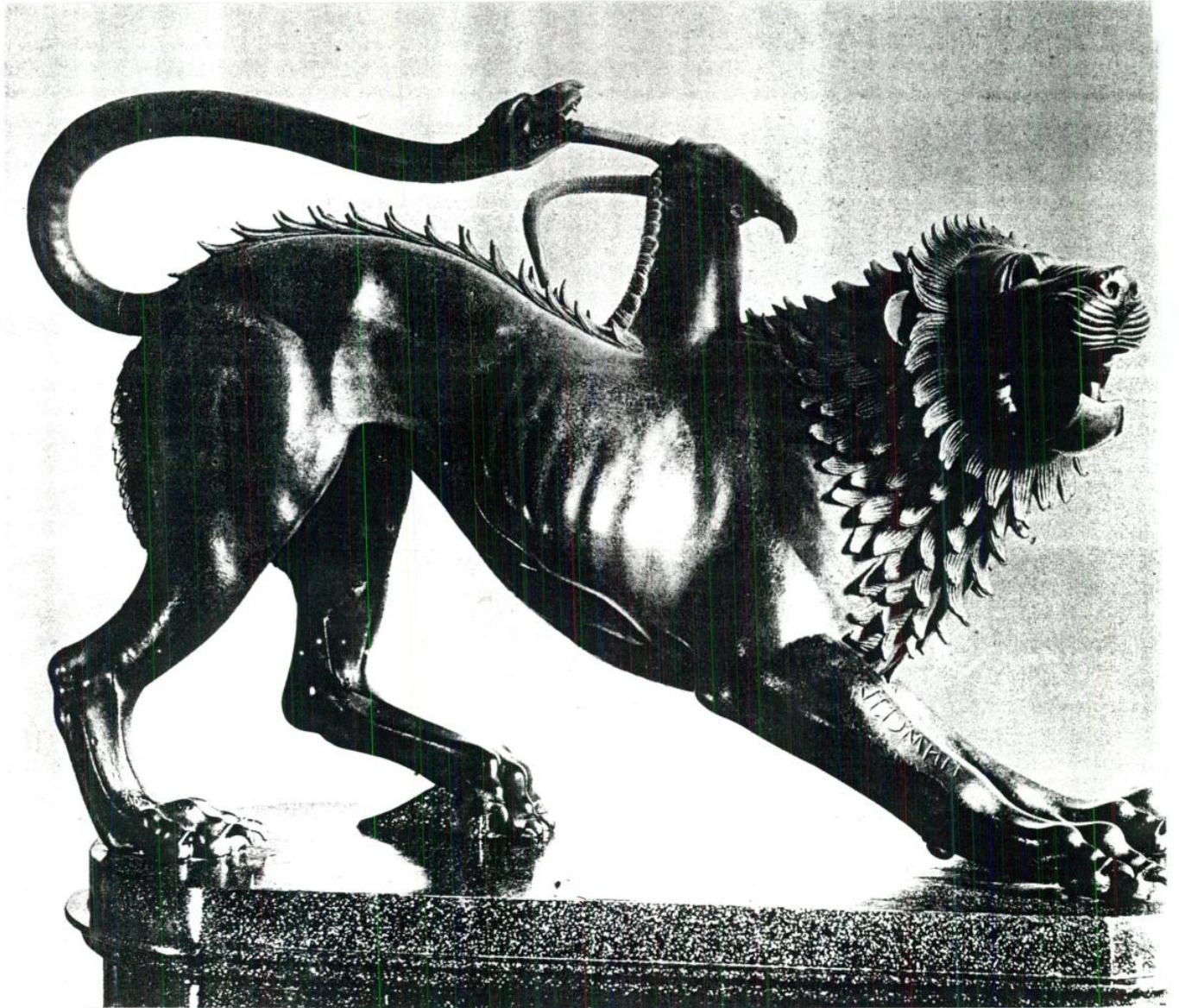




5. Nike, C.360B.C., Marble.







4. Chimera, C.350B.C., Bronze.



have been made of her work to Paul Klee and Rueben Nakian, so there is a rich reservoir of sources by which Frank has been inspired to make art.

However, her work is original in that it does not draw from these sources in a planned or conceptual way. The sources are things seen in passing that form "... a rich debris in the mind ..." (Munro, 1979, p.290), which she translates into three dimensional sculptural terms.

Frank works from the model, but not from set poses (like Rodin). Sometimes, but rarely, one of these quickly drawn images is transferred into clay. For example, a model once, by accident, cupped her hands under her breasts and this gesture of "... archetypal grace" (Munro, 1979, p.290) has found its way into sculptures like Woman in Waves (1972), Chant (1984) and Creature (1972). (See Figures 6, 7 & 8). Another example of Frank's attraction to the poses and spontaneously intimate gestures of her models can be seen in her Daphne images with one leg and no foot, for example Daphne (1962), Disappearance (1976), Woman with outstretched arms (1975) (See Figures 9, 10 & 11). This comes from a pose adopted by a male model whose back leg stretched into a strong diagonal that hid his front leg from view.

Other themes for her sculpture are transcendence through transformation and motion, as well as movement through metamorphosis.

The sculptures themselves look ancient and have a strong aura of history about them, as Herrera says like "... something from an archaeological dig ..." (Herrera, 1990, p.9). The variety of colours and textures also suggests age: warm tans, reddish browns and imprints of leaves, ferns and petals for example Head with ferns (1975) and Head with petals (1976) (See Figures 12 & 13). Frank writes in a notebook, "... sculpture could be just a deepening impression like a fossil ..." (Munro, 1979, p.290). She clearly wants to establish a link with the past and antiquity.



7. Chant, 1984, Ceramic 44" x 60" x 38".



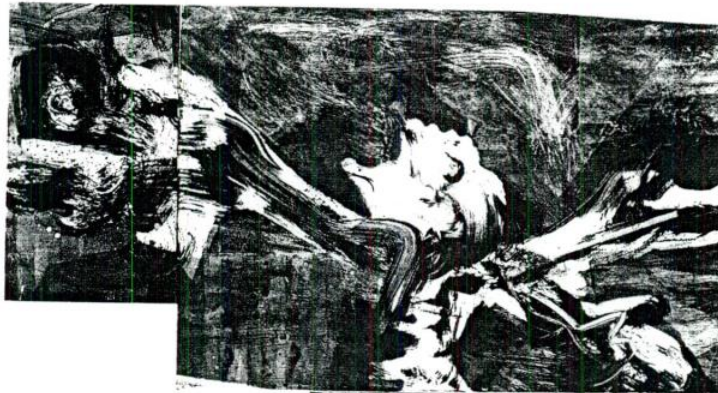
8. Creature, 1972, Ceramic, 31" x 12½" x 17".





9. Daphne, 1962, Bronze, 11".





Disappearance. 1976
Monoprint in three sheets,
53 × 45" overall
Private Collection



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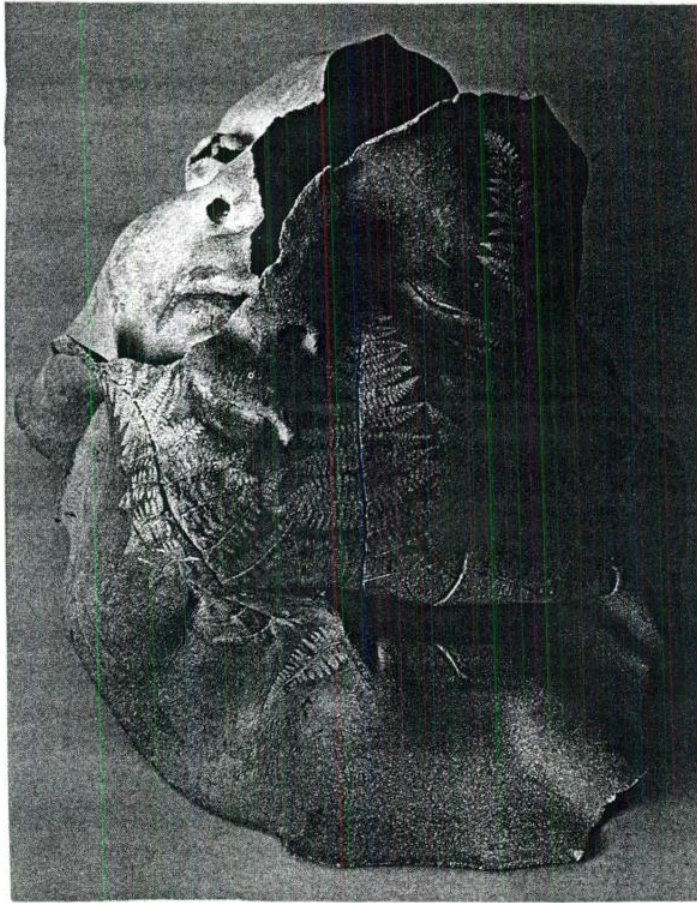
10. Disappearance, 1976, Monoprint.



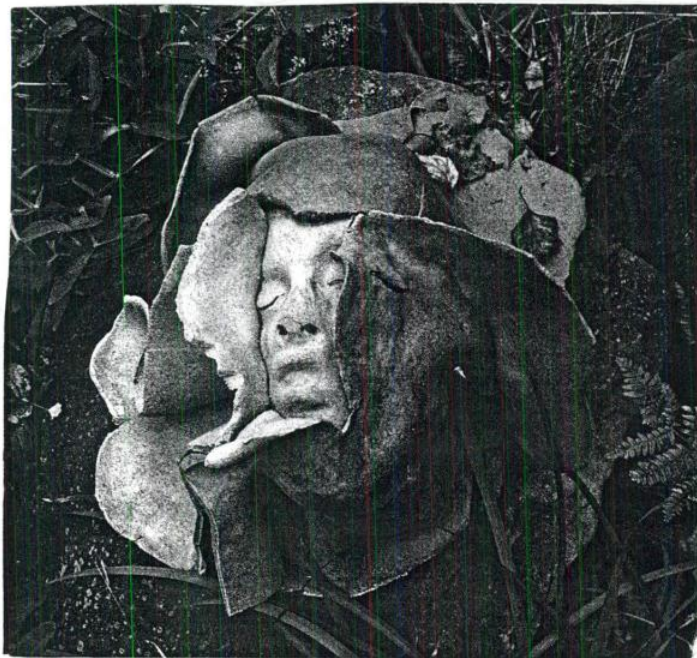
11. Woman with Outstretched Arms, 1975, Ceramic in eight parts, 91" x 64".







12. Head with Ferns, 1975, Ceramic.



13. Head with Petals, 1976, Ceramic.



Frank's main choice of medium has been clay, although she has also worked with plaster, glass, sticks, wax, bronze and papier mâché. She is best known for her clay sculpture which she feels responds to the lightest touch of her fingers and which she describes as the most impressionistic material she knows. She also likes it because it is cheap, common and accessible. She lets the medium speak for itself, lets the clay have a life of its own. While it is transformed into one of her figures, it still looks like clay. As Herrera says; "... She moulds the human figure in the image of clay rather than clay in the image of the human figure."(Herrera, 1990, p.10)

Movement in her pieces is created by the line and shape, and, light and shadow that move constantly as the viewer walks around it. Also, traces of the artist's own gestures are left in the clay; fingers dragged through wet clay, edges torn, folded or left alone. No attempt to finish edges or surfaces is made. Perhaps Frank is responding to the words of the great Leonardo "... Tell me, can anything ever truly be finished".(From Rodin Rediscovered, Varnedoe, 1981, p.156)

Movement is also created by the pieces transforming themselves into hybrids - part animal, part architecture, part plant, part water, air and earth e.g. Rainbow Woman (1972) (See Figure 14). The very fact that Frank is literally moved to create art expresses emotion in her work. She sees an equivalence between motion and emotion as did the dancers Duncan and Graham. She says, maybe that's why she draws moving people or animals. "... their movement gives an image to my own. I mean, when we say we are moved, something is actually changing in us."(Herrera, 1990, p.10)

Frank's sculpture changes radically when viewed from different angles. She wants the spectator to have an intimate encounter with her pieces. They are to be looked at close up as well as from a distance. Herrera mentions an element of mystery and feeling attached to Frank's work, which Frank herself feels is lacking in contemporary



14. Rainbow Woman, 1972, Ceramic, height 19½".



sculpture. She believes her work has layers of meaning and likes the openness of being able to see it differently from different angles. Frank does not want it to be pinned down to any one thing.

Frank says that a lot of her inspiration comes from her summers before 1973, spent on Cape Cod. "The sea inspired her vision of the human figure pitted against open space."(Herrera, 1990, p.14) Says Frank; "...I learned to draw at the Cape ... all those naked bodies against the light and against the Horizon ..."(Herrera, 1990, p.14)

"The light on the Cape ... on the dunes ... people destroyed by light. The nudes, so beautiful. The sea ... you can't see people like that anywhere else ..."(Munro, 1979, p.300)

CHAPTER 2

FRANK'S EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCES.

Frank was born Mary Lockspeiser on February 4th, 1933. She was introduced to art at an early age, as her mother was a painter and her father was a musicologist, a specialist in Debussy, who conducted for the Ballet and wrote on art and poetry. He took the young Frank to the Ballet, such as Nutcracker and Petroushka, and she remembers dancing barefoot and waving a silk scarf in time to her mother's accompaniment on the piano. It is possible to trace Frank's affection for the human body to the fact that she was allowed to be naked often up until the age of six or seven.

In June 1940, to escape the blitz in London, Frank and her mother boarded a refugee evacuation ship bound for the United States. Edward Lockspeiser remained in London while mother and daughter settled in Brooklyn, New York with Frank's maternal grandparents.

As a child in New York, Frank spent hours looking at her mother's art book collection including Verve - a literary and art journal which contained reproductions of Matisse, Klee and Picasso. Her attention was also held by Indian and Persian miniatures as well as Chinese and Japanese art which she saw in Verve. She frequented museums with her mother and this became a storehouse of visual culture from which she drew over the years.

At the age of 13, dancing was Frank's passion but the High School for Music and Art in Manhattan, to which she applied as an art student, had no dance. It was here that she first carved clay. From the beginning she drew figures; "women standing on the edge of something", (Herrera, 1990, p.21) a subject that she returned to regularly.

Later, Frank recognised these solitary figures, often looking out across the ocean, as traditional images of longing in Romantic Art.

Frank was encouraged by her mother to paint, but she herself wanted to be a dancer. However, when she visited the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, she liked paintings including Two Children by Renoir, and Woman sitting in field by Van Gogh and loved Henry Rosseau. She also loved the small wooden figures of Walking boys in the Egyptian rooms.

In 1945, the Franks moved to an apartment on 9th Street and University Place. Here, she made all kinds of friends, artists, writers, dancers and politically minded people. At this time she developed a passion for folk dancing.

Because of this passion for dancing, she decided to become serious about it. For her last two years of high school, she switched from music and art to the Professional Children's School in Manhattan, which she described as a weird place with no regular classes. From this Frank went on to spend five years in dance training with Jose Limon and Martha Graham among others. However, during this time, Frank only performed once, not as a modern dancer, but with an Israeli group as a folk dancer.

Both Munro and Herrera recognise Martha Graham out of all Frank's dance teachers as being the most influential. Says Frank, "Graham was ferocious and overwhelming, a tremendous powerful presence. And alot of things she said were loaded."(Herrera, 1990, p.21) She continues "... sometimes she made reference to sculpture - to Greek art and to Henry Moore, and I was particularly interested in Moore when I was studying dancing . He was the first sculptor that I felt in some way connected to."(Herrera, 1990, p.21) Herrera makes the point that just as Graham used her knowledge of Moore and sculpture in choreography, Frank incorporated her dance knowledge into her sculpture.

As Herrera says, Frank's passion has always been to "... catch movement in all its potential ..." (Herrera, 1990, p.21) while Frank states that "... Graham's idea of dancing was from the inside out ..." (Herrera, 1990, p.21) - Herrera believes that Frank's figures move as if propelled by a force, spreading outward from their centre and acknowledges her. " ... deep kinaesthetic understanding of gesture ..." (Herrera, 1990, p.21)

Frank remembers her experience with Martha Graham as awakening her to such fine details as being conscious of " ... what it is to move from a standing position - at what angle the body takes off or how a foot runs ..." (Munro, 1979, p.298)

She says that certain elemental gestures interested her a lot, like standing, walking or running also crouching, kneeling or lying down.

However by the time Frank was seventeen she realised that dancing or choreography was not her calling in life. So she gave it up and concentrated on art. Despite this, the Dance has remained central to her life and work and has always been a main inspiration for her figures.

She now took sketching classes in various parts of the city. She drew from the model although she had no teacher. When she wasn't life drawing she drew from her head and imagination. This period also saw her first serious attempts at sculpture in the studio of Dutch sculptor, Alfred Van Hoen. She paid for wood and the use of his studio and carving tools, however she received no instruction from him. During these months, she produced a few small wooden carvings and continued on her own at home. These carvings were, as Herrera describes them, "serpentine, highly polished," (Herrera, 1990, p.21) figures of girls and pragmant women. Also women that were part bird, and young boys walking based on the Egyptian walking boys she

had seen in the Museum of Modern Art. The woman/bird figures were the first in the series of metamorphosing creatures that she continued in clay, years later.

At this time, she took inspiration from Alberto Giacometti, whose work she saw at the Pierre Matisse Gallery on 57th Street. This exhibition moved her deeply, according to Herrera. She was also impressed by Moore's conception of woman as landscape and his insistence on the form's mythical and metamorphical potential.

At the age of seventeen, Mary fell in love with the Swiss born photographer Robert Frank. She was attracted to the melancholy of his photographs and his drive for work. She regarded him as having had a strong, personal, non-intellectual eye, very fast. Munro says that, with him she learned to see, work and draw fast.

Before Frank graduated from high school, she became pregnant and a week after graduating, married. Still very young, in the early stages of marriage she continued to make small sculptures in wood. Before the birth of her son Pablo in February 1951, Frank studied drawing with the German expressionist painter Max Beckman in the tiny little known American art school on 13th Street. At this time, she didn't know any of his work, and it wasn't until after seeing a retrospective of his work years later that Beckman became one of the artists that Frank admired most.

During the Fifties, the Franks travelled all over Europe, Zurich, Pans, Valencia, London and Caerau, Wales.

In Paris, Frank visited the Louvre, especially the Egyptian section also the galleries with Etruscan, Greek and Asian art. She refers with affection to the Tangara and cycladic sculpture and the section called Antiquites Orientales which had Middle Eastern Art. She also drew at the Musee Guimet and studied Han dynasty sculpture at

the Musee Cernuschi which, says Frank, was the beginning of her real interest in Oriental Art.

In Valencia, Frank says the Mediterranean Culture had a tremendous effect on her. Before leaving Spain she went to Toledo to view the works of El Greco and Goya. In 1953, the Franks returned to New York and in 1954 they had a second child, Andrea. After travelling around the States while Robert Frank completed a Guggenheim fellowship to photograph the country, they again settled in New York, this time at 34, Third Avenue between 9th and 10th Streets. Tenth Street was at the time, the centre of New York's vital Art World. The painter, Alfred Leslie, lived next door to the Franks, while across the back yard from them lived Willem de Kooning. Frank got to know many of the artists, but did not become involved in the aesthetic and social preoccupations of the Tenth Street School according to Herrera. She remained detached from the abstract expressionists' ideas of freedom, finish, abstraction and meaning, and continued as Herrera puts it "pursuing figuration,"(Herrera, 1990, p.26) even though it was out of fashion.

Frank recalls that she did not keep in touch with contemporary movements and worked in an isolated way. However, later she became interested in De Kooning as she was drawn to the energy and movement in his work. Herrera says that Frank incorporated into her own work "... something of the speed and improvisatory freedom of his gesture ..." (Herrera, 1990, p.26) and De Kooning's insistence that the tracks of the process be left visible on a work, became a vital deliberation in Frank's work.

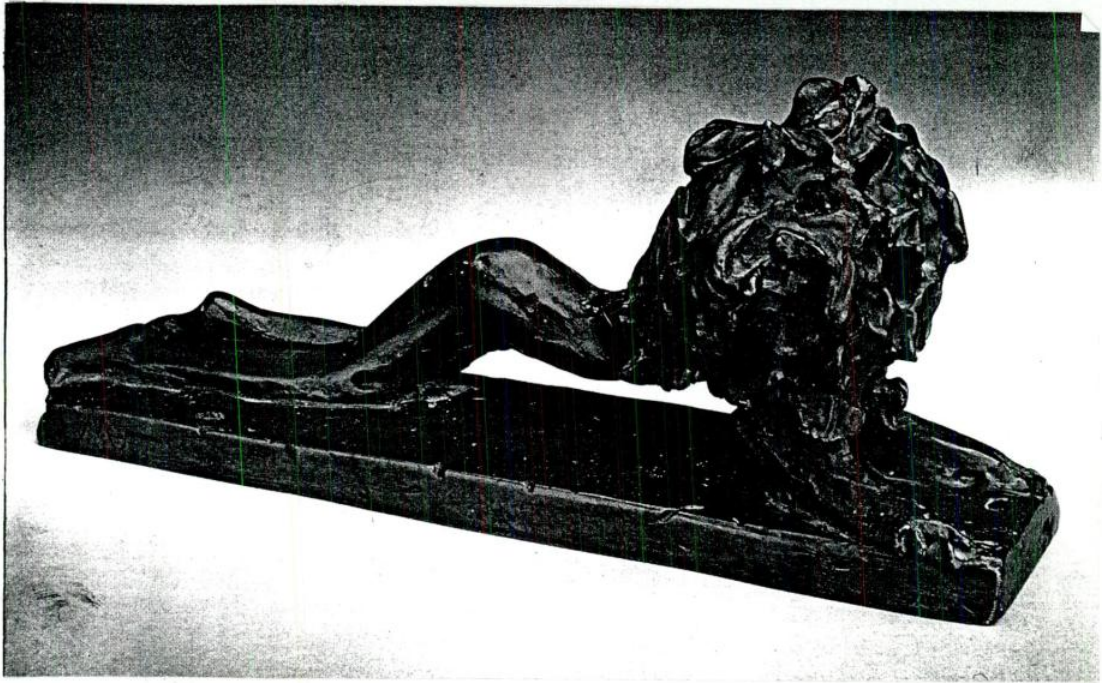
For two brief periods in the Fifties, 1951 and 1954, Frank studied figure drawing at evening classes at Hans Hoffman's Eight Street School. Hoffman called Frank's drawing psychologically correct, although complained that she didn't put the whole figure on the page. Frank says, she wasn't really involved with Hoffman's ideas - "... all, that talk about things, like push, pull and surface depth." (Herrera, 1990, p.27)

During the Fifties, Frank's sculpture became larger, freer and less polished according to Herrera. Frank herself describes them as "... strange lunar torques, lion women, figures in water, figures and horses, and crescent moon shapes."(Herrera, 1990, p.27) According to Frank, the sculptures became larger and rougher and although they might have become slightly more abstract, she says they were always very figurative. They were based as one might expect on human and animal gestures.

Moore and Giacometti continued to inspire her as did primitive art which she drew at the American Museum of Natural History. Herrera notes Frank's admiration, for the Rumanian Raul Hagues' "massive wooden sculptures which hovered between human Torso and bronze tree trunk."(Herrera, 1990, p.27) Another source at this time was Brancusi particularly as he was working in wood.

Early drawings by Frank were line drawings described as picasso-esque by Herrera who says she simplified and abstracted anatomy so that the body became a "... tangle of tubular limbs"(Herrera, 1990, p.29) (See Figures 15 & 16). Other drawings can be compared to Matisse's charcoal drawings of nudes (See Figure 17).

At the end of the Fifties, Frank started using wax as a medium for her sculpture. She modelled small figures that were, says Herrera "... full of a kind of sprinted movement."(Herrera, 1990, p.29) Some of these were cast in Bronze for example Daphne (1962), Lion Headed Woman (1958), Bird Woman (1957) (See Figures 15, 16 & 17). These sculptures seem to have a fluidity lacking in her previous wooden pieces and it is clear to me that this was, perhaps a more suitable medium for Frank's desire to capture movement and create energy in her figures. Indeed, Herrera states that Frank treated wax as if it were "... pure undifferentiated, pulsating energy, an energy that keeps acrobats dancing on horses' backs and that lifts Daphne into the sky."(Herrera, 1990, p.29)



16. Lion Headed Woman 1958, Bronze 5" x 10" x 4".



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17. Bird Woman, 1957, Bronze, height 14½".



The connection between Dance and the body, and motion and emotion is a main tenet of Mary Frank's work as it was in Rodin's, and is also deeply rooted in all philosophies of dance, particularly modern dance. So it is worthwhile to look at the functions of Dance in society and primitive cultures and also at the advent of modern dance, the philosophies behind it, and some of the personalities involved whom I feel relate to Mary Frank.

CHAPTER 3

FUNCTIONS OF DANCE - MODERN DANCE - ISADORA DUNCAN AND MARTHA GRAHAM.

The Dance encompasses many different forms. There are at least six widely found forms, which are each unique in character. These are Ballet, Modern Dance, Musical Stage Dance, Ballroom Dance, Folk Dance and Ethnic Dance. Each has its own set of disciplines and guidelines, enjoyed by its own separate social classes with widely ranging levels of artistic taste. One definition of Dance is to jump, hop, to move feet hands and body in certain rhythms to music or gestures keeping time with musical instruments. (From Kraus/Chapman, 1981, p.6) This definition applies to all forms of dances but each form varies.

The function of Dance ranges from social pastime to theatrical performance. While there is no doubt that it is an art form in its own right, sociologists point out that it is far more than just graceful movement. It is also a " ... profoundly important social experience, a powerful rite shared by all members of a culture and essential to its well being." (Kraus/Chapman, 1981, p.11)

In History of the Dance in Art and Education (1981), Curt Sachs, a cultural historian, believes that in primitive life and ancient civilisations, no communal function was as important as the Dance. He says; "... on no occasion in the life of primitive persons could the Dance be dispensed with. Birth, circumcision and the concentration of maidens, marriage and death, planting and harvest, the celebration of chieftains, hunting, war and feasts, the changes of the moon and sickness - for all these Dance is needed." (Kraus/Chapman, 1981, p.11)

In African culture, the role of the dancer has held tremendous importance. He was necessary for all ceremonies, feasts, and occasions which involved the health and well being of the tribe. According to Pearl Primus, the Black American Dancer, "... In return for his services, the tribe fed and clothed him and provided for his every need. He was left free to dance."(Kraus/Champman, 1981, p.19)

One of the first uses of Dance was as gesture in order to communicate. "...Because of the lack of adequate speech, man was probably compelled to use easily recognised gestures sometimes supplementing the movement with cries of animals or other natural sounds, or with whatever basic words he had developed."(Kraus/Chapman, 1981, p.20) Examples include the East Indian Mudras or hand language used in Dance and the sign language of the American Indian.

Mary Frank's inspiration for some of her work has been primitive dance and the movements of birds and animals. Prehistoric man was aware of living things around him. He hunted them for food and clothing, fought them for survival and knew their courage, beauty and cunning. "He felt at one with them."(Kraus/Chapman, 1981, p.21) Many insects, animals and fish perform ritualised movement patterns that are very much like our own conception of dance.

While Dance is obviously dependent on human movement it is argued that movement is but a basic need. According to Kraus/Chapman "... the quality of the movement experience is crucial."(Kraus/Chapman, 1981, p.13) They suggest that this experience has the capacity to promote a special kind of feeling, a sense of heightening of life, an exhilaration, a sense of joy. It has, he says, the capacity "... to blend or combine the physical and emotional aspects of our being in an integrated expression ..." (Kraus/Chapman, 1981, p.13)

MODERN DANCE

In 1889 the American Loie Fuller invented "the Serpentine" Dance and started what eventually became known as Modern Dance. i.e. serious theatrical dance that is not Ballet. It demanded a freedom of expression and generally made the movement more important than the music.

Modern Dance is essentially an art form which developed through the individual genius of the dancers. Two of these are Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham. Both are acknowledged as innovators of Modern Dance and both in some way or another have directly inspired artists and sculptors working with the figure, including Rodin and his disciple Boudelle [Duncan] as well as Mary Frank [Graham].

Duncan was one of the first modern dancers. She dreamed big, like an American. She had a vision of a thousand children dancing to the Chorale of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. She helped liberate women from their corsets and Dance from its academic restrictions. She shocked people in the early part of the twentieth century. Her dancing was pagan, her religion; the beauty of the human foot, involved running barefoot and half naked. Running and bending and pausing and floating in a stream of music. She improvised a great deal and was inspired by the poet, Walt Whitman who Mary Frank also makes references to; "... there is a grace that Walt Whitman talks about." (Herrera, 1990, p.85)

Duncan never formally learned to dance, just as Frank never formally trained as an artist. In 1900 Duncan danced in Paris. Rodin made advances and critics compared her to a Botticelli painting, as her costumes were modelled on The Primavera. She saw Greek vases in the Louvre that influenced her art and was inspired by the great bronzes of Rodin. While in Paris, she made a discovery that according to Joseph H. Mazo, (from Prime Movers, 1977, p.42) more than anything else contributed to the

principles of Modern Dance i.e. motion is motivated by emotion and must be expressed by the instrument of the entire human body. Rodin was already exploring this and it continued to occupy the thoughts and ideas of modern dancers as well as sculptors employing the Dance and movement as a theme for their work. Mary Frank certainly had this in mind whenever she endeavoured to capture the movement and gesture of the Dance in her figures.

Duncan's dancing made use of simple movements, running, skipping, reaching and pantomime gestures such as beckoning and pointing, and created impressions of nature through improvisation e.g. rippling her fingers to imitate trees being ruffled by the wind. She had no technique in the sense that a ballet dancer does. She simply moved to music, keeping her shoulders soft, her neck free, and holding a curve in her arms and legs.

She took the dances of the ancient Greeks as a model for a new form of dance, natural to the body, discovering that they found the human body beautiful as she did herself.

Martha Graham also referred to the Greeks for inspiration, particularly Greek sculpture. She has been described as the greatest artist of American Modern Dance, and one of the moulders of the age known as a great choreographer as well as a "consummate"(Mazo, 1977, p.153) dancer, she was also a costume designer and an innovator of theatrical lighting. She made works that were considered introspective and like Duncan was concerned with human emotion and motivation.

Graham's dances are described by Mazo as "... taut attempts to concentrate the whole of her body, intellect, and emotion, on a moment of movement."(Mazo, 1977, p.154) Like Duncan and Doris Humphrey (another great innovator), Graham studied the functions of her own body and its relationship to the space around it. Frank obviously referred to Graham's studies in her early sculptures of figures surrounded by a mass of

space, water/waves or landscape for example Of this time and place - Plaster, (1966-1967), On the Horizon, Ceramic, (1967 - 1970). (See Figures 18 & 19)

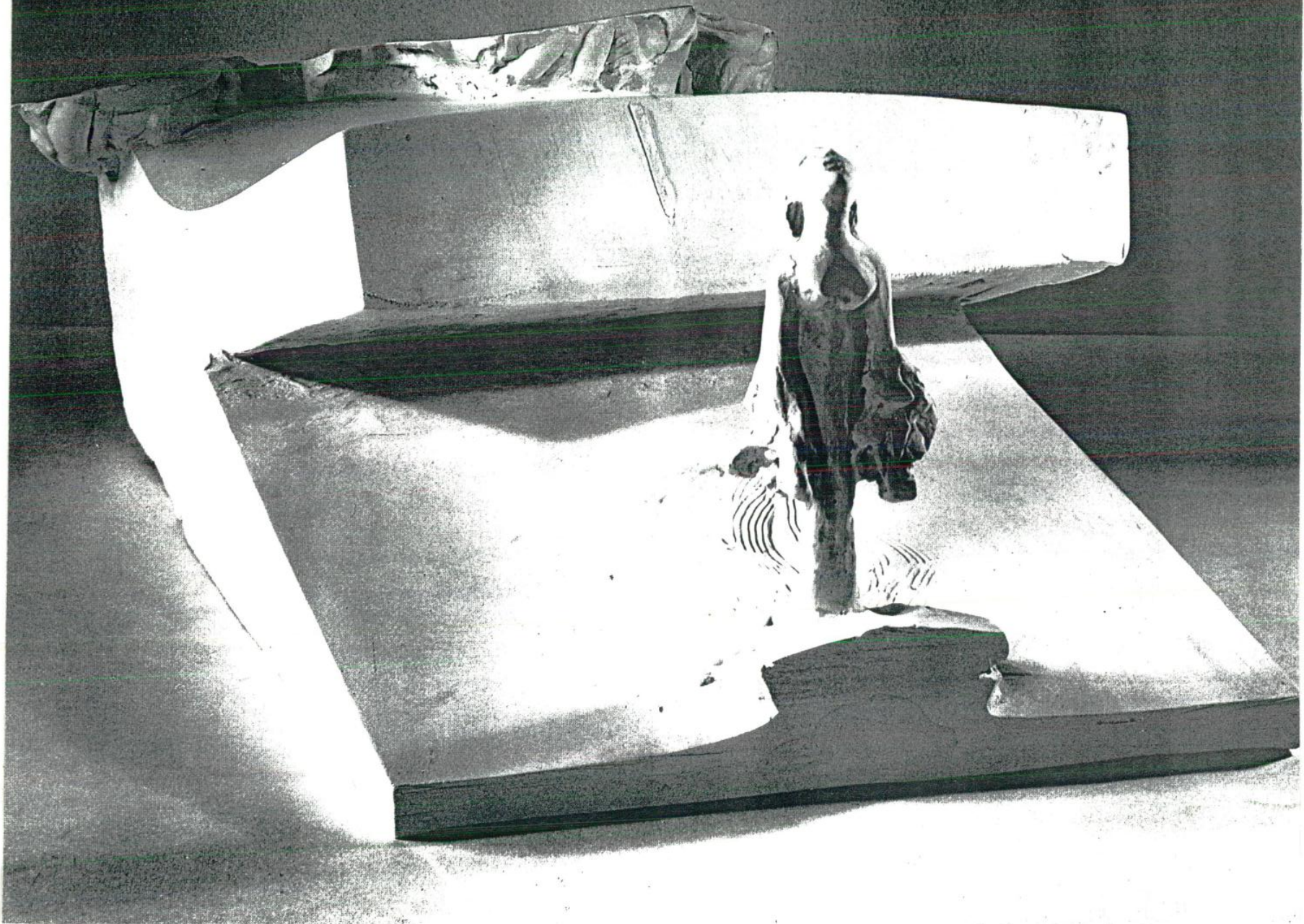
Graham used the dance floor not as a launch pad for Balletic leaps but as a foundation for more earthy movements, understanding that a tree draws energy through its roots as well as through its leaves.

She took inspiration from Indian Ritual Dance as well as black music and history. Theatricality dominated her work and sexuality was a major theme as it is in the work of Mary Frank, especially her Lovers theme e.g. Lover, (1977), Ceramic, 23" x 44" x 25". Mazo suggests that Graham's technique evolved from a need to control intense emotional power, describing her passion as overwhelming, and it was this emotionalism and magnetism that led many dancers and artists to study her methods.

In her words, "you have to take life as it surges through you (Mazo, 1977 p.196) and according to Mazo, "... she felt this surge, accepted the vastness of human potential and existed not as an object but as an active force ..." (Mazo, 1977, p.196)

Since the Dance deals with the body and movement as well as emotion, it follows that any sculptor using the body or figure as a source, would at some stage be taken by the Dance and recognise the beauty of the body in motion. The most obvious and most famous example of this is Auguste Rodin, who devoted his life's work to portraying the naturalism of the figure as it moved. He is recognised as being a revolutionary figure and it was Rodin and his work that, it seems to me, more than anything influenced the sculpture of Mary Frank.

18. Of this time and place, 1966, 1967, Plaster.







19. On the Horizon, 1967, Plaster.





Lover 1977, Ceramic.



CHAPTER 4

RODIN - EMPHASIS ON DANCE AND MOVEMENT - INFLUENCE ON SCULPTURE OF MARY FRANK.

Rodin was, at the end of the nineteenth century, responsible for the movement away from subject sculpture. His primary concern was to use the human body as an expressive form. Says W.J. Strachan in Towards Sculpture, (1976) "...Rodin exploits the sensuous qualities of the female body..."(Strachan, 1976, p.45) in subjects such as The Toilet of Venus or The Fawn or in his Dancers. Rodin treated nature and the human form with a great sense of freedom. Strachan quotes him as saying; "... the human body is dramatic in itself. It is also the standard of harmony."(Strachan, 1976, p.81)

In reference to Rodin's preoccupation with movement, according to Strachan, "... no one has bettered his definition of movement in the sculptural sense." Says Rodin; "... movement is composed of different moments straining towards something."(Strachan, 1976, p.191)

Rodin did many studies of the exotic and sensuous dances of the Javanese and Cambodian troupes that visited Paris. The subject of the Dance had long interested him and from early in his career used dance poses for his sculpture. He drew from models that were not posed but moved spontaneously before him. They gymnastically stretched, bent, danced or reclined as he drew constantly, rapidly moving from one sheet of paper to the next without taking his eyes off the model. Strachan says that he showed brilliant spontaneity in drawing techniques: vector lines, characteristic fluidity of line enhanced by touches of wash and tonal scribble which reflect the rapidity of execution. These were typical of Rodin's "... explorations towards discovering a satisfactory synthesis of dance movements."(Strachan, 1976, p.194) Kirk Varnedoe

says that Rodin "... by reflex, semi automatically inscribed continuous contours that leaped, swelled and twisted in simultaneous response to the play of muscle and bone he observed." (Varnedoe, 1981, p.179, from Rodin Rediscovered)

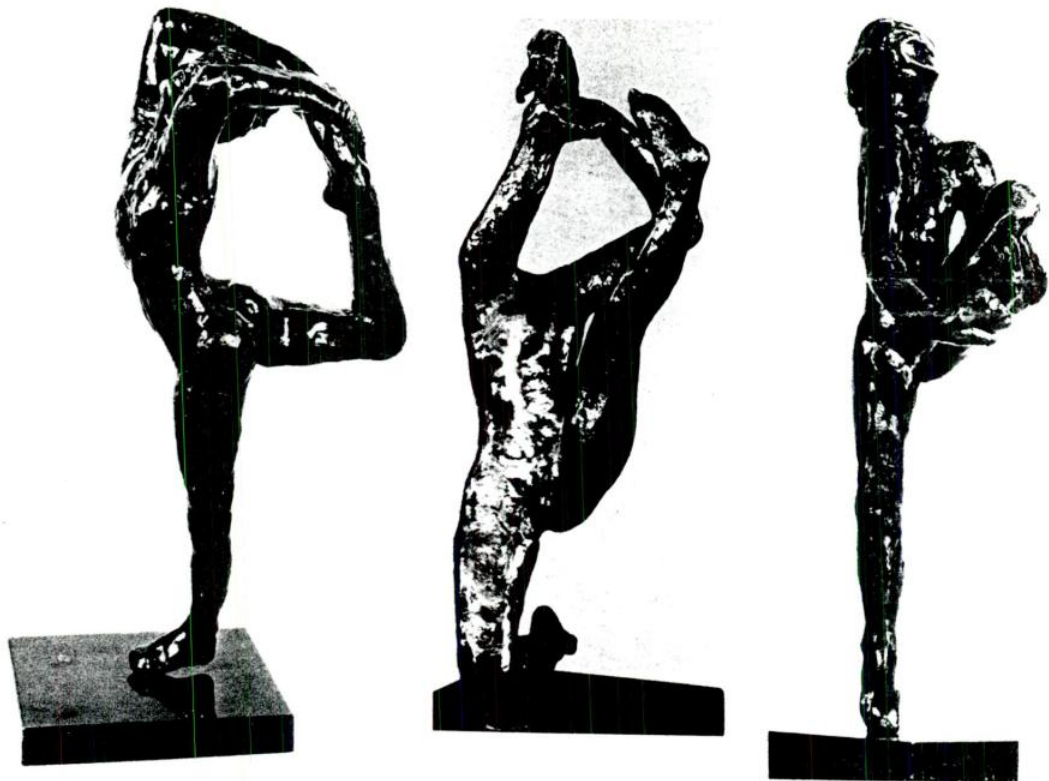
Rodin himself says;

... Don't you see that for my work of modelling, I have not only to possess a complete knowledge of the human form, but also a deep feeling for every aspect of it. I have, as it were, to incorporate the lines of the human body, and they must become part of myself, deeply seated in my instincts. I must feel them at the end of my fingers. All this must flow naturally from my eye to my hand not a thought about the technical problem of representing it on paper could be allowed to arrest the flow of my feeling about it.

(Varnedoe, 1981, p.179, from Rodin Rediscovered)

Rodin gathered together a series of rapid life studies, to which he often returned and reworked. Here he attempted to achieve what he described as "... a drawing of movement in the air." (Varnedoe, 1981, p.179, from Rodin Rediscovered) He, according to Varnedoe, sacrificed everything to the drawing of movement. A lot of these drawings were used as references for his sculptures and indeed these dance poses have been directly translated into Bronzes. For example Dance movement A, B, & D (1910-11) and Inner Voice (1910), also a study of Vaslav Nijinsky (1912) (See Figures 20, 21 & 22). However Strachan adds to this that Rodin seized the essence of movement so that we do not identify it with a particular dance but with the spirit of the dance.

It wasn't until the Forties and the sculpture of Lipschitz, Giacometti and Henry Moore, that a shift of interest back to the figure became obvious. Sculptors that had hitherto been working abstractedly, now turned to the figure for a source, while others that had been working consistently with the figure for example, the Italians Giacomo Manzo and Marino Marini, came into prominence. Giacometti created a tension and static



20. Dance Movements A, B, & D, 1910 - 1911, Bronze.





21. Inner Voice, 1910, Bronze.



22. Njynsky, 1912, Bronze.



movement in his figures by elongating their proportions and also by employing vibrant modelling techniques.

Many sculptors adopted the methods and techniques of Rodin, but not necessarily in an obvious or planned way. I can see many similarities between Rodin and other twentieth century sculptors, and Mary Frank surely made reference to Rodin constantly in her own work.

CHAPTER 5

FRANK'S CERAMIC SCULPTURE AND EMPHASIS ON THE DANCE AND MOVEMENT.

It wasn't until the Sixties that Mary Frank's work began to attract real attention. In 1961, 1963 and 1966, she had three shows at the Stephen Radich Gallery on Madison Avenue. She received several grants and also had enthusiastic articles written about her work. However, while there was admiration for her "... restless and productive imagination", (Kramer, 1963, Arts) her sculptures were referred to as "stolid" "earthbound" and "tree bound." (Kramer, 1963, Arts) At this stage, her drawing received more acclaim, a critic for Art News saying; "... she is so closely in touch with her own creative sources that even a dancer or a bather in a swift drawing can have the evocative and luminous presence of a Klee or Rilke* Angel." (Art News, 1966, p.1)

In 1969, after separating from her husband and taking on a teaching job in drawing and sculpture at the Queens College Graduate School, Frank reached a turning point in her work. She wanted to try a new medium and knew that a few artists were experimenting with clay trying to find ways of using it beyond standard forms. She was inspired by the pottery and sculpture of Margaret Israel (described as intriguing anthropological images, half pottery, half figure in unglazed clay) (Munro, 1979, p.302), and the potter/sculptor Jeff Schlanger taught Frank what he knew about the technique. She tried working directly in the clay and found it to be a clean medium, it had "... interesting overtones of antiquity." (Munro, 1979, p.302)

Since then, nearly all of her sculpture has been ceramic, some terra cotta, some Raku, but mostly stoneware fired to a high temperature so that it becomes extremely hard and durable.

* German Poet, profoundly affected by his contact with Rodin.

She was already familiar with clay, having used clay models to reverse cast shapes in plaster and had made a number of small ceramic wall reliefs. But she says learning to handle clay was a big struggle. "...I had to work out a way for the large pieces to be armatures for themselves. The inner surface of a head, for instance had to be actually the armature for the outer surface, sometimes hidden, sometimes not."(Munro, 1979, p.302)

Roll out slabs with the rolling pin ... fold them ... wait for it to dry just enough to be cut. Everything about clay is common. How hard, how dry, how soft. It's a matter of five minutes one way or the other. Wait too long or don't wait long enough, the thing will collapse or become rigid ...

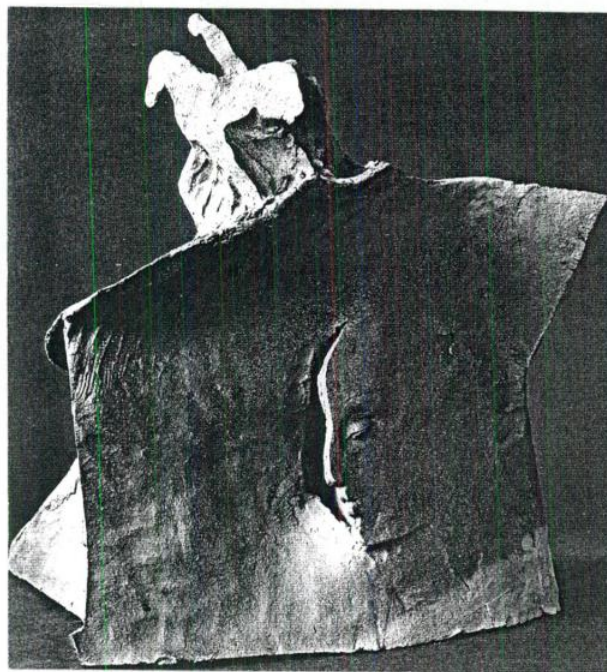
(Munro, 1979, p.303)

Frank experienced the problems encountered by any student of ceramics.

Herrera believes that in the end, clay proved to be the ideal medium for Frank. It, she said, suited her earthy conception of form and "... it is in perfect accord with the fluency of her vision."(Herrera, 1990, p.41) After a year, Frank felt more free working in clay than in any other medium. She invented form as she went along, whereas in wood she had to figure out in advance what image she could carve out of the block. She recognised immediately the spontaneity of clay, describing it as being direct like drawing.

The new clay pieces combined several sculptural processes - carving, modelling, incising, assembling. The first pieces were hills or dunes or ocean waves upon which she placed small figures that "... conform to the landscape's rhythms"(Herrera, 1990, p.43) for example Journey (1970), On the Horizon (1970), (See Figures 23 & 24).

As she discovered the many new possibilities of clay as a sculptural medium, her sculpture became "... more supple and open in structure"(Herrera, 1990, p.43), and



23. Journey, 1970, Ceramic.



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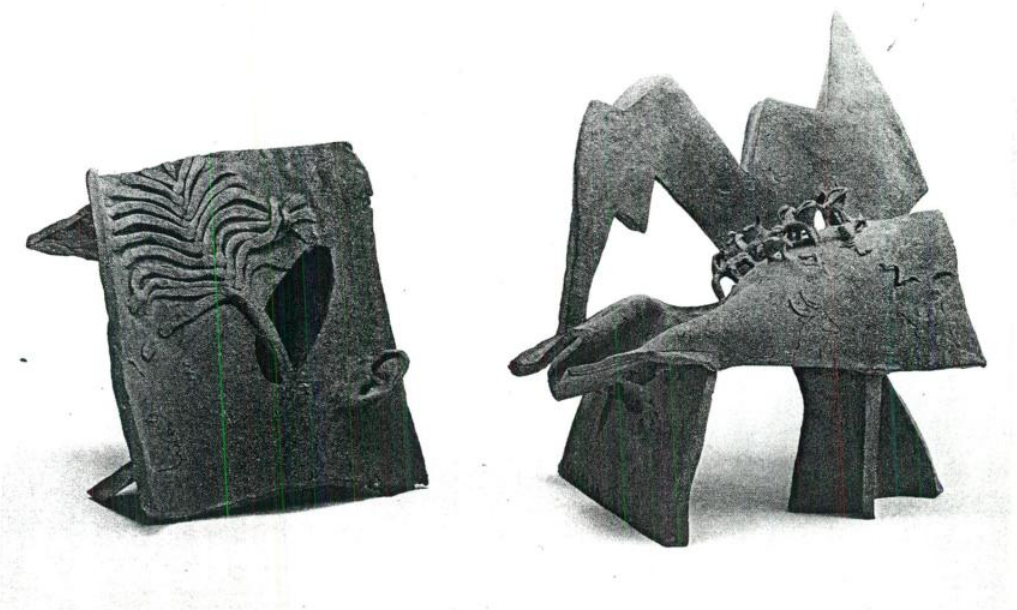
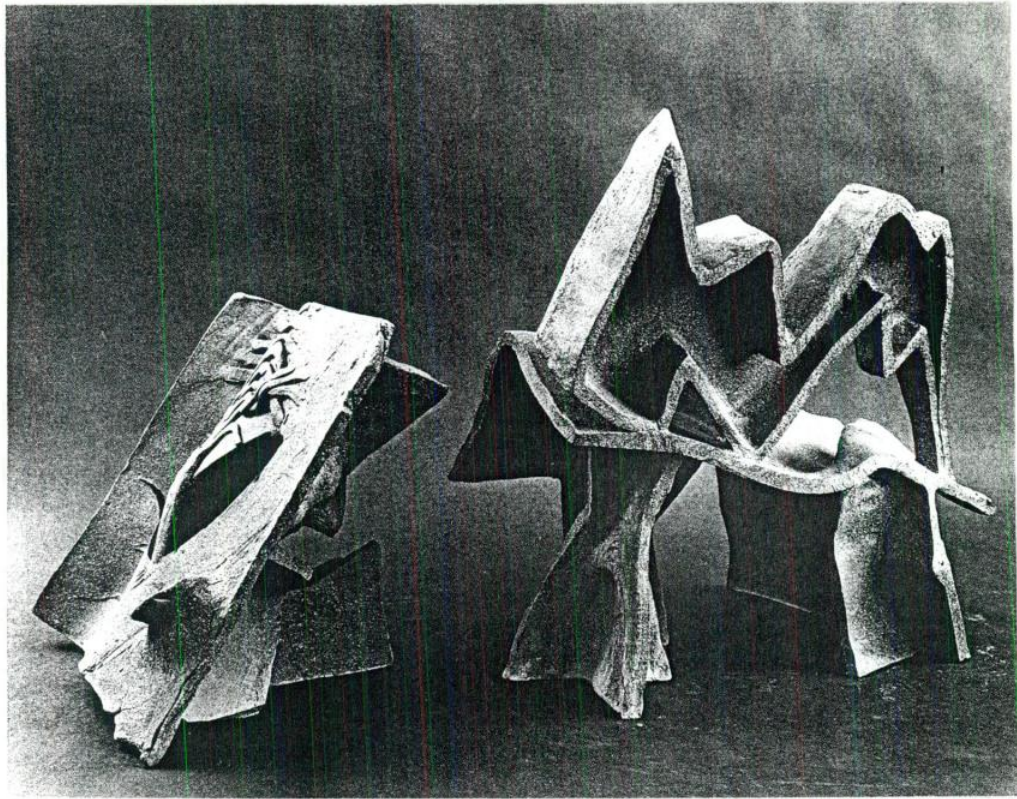


soon she had developed her technique of constructing her pieces out of thin clay slabs so that "... air and light could interpenetrate with form"(Herrera, 1990, p.43) for example Journey (1970), Taming of the Harp (1971) (See Figure 25). Soon she was making her pieces raised up on armatures made up of slabs set vertically and perpendicularly to each other.

As Herrera points out with clay's greater range of handling there came for Frank an expansion of subject matter. In smaller works she continued to explore the theme of the figure in an expanse of landscape or space, echoes of Martha Graham's use of space in relation to the individual dancer. In larger works the human figure became more prominent in relation to its setting. In Ghost Dancers (1972-1973) the figure is no longer integrated into the landscape, rather, the landscape is absorbed into the figure. Again echoes of Martha Graham and her belief in the internal landscape existing within the body. (See Figure 26).

In the Seventies, Frank made a series of figures that plunged through space e.g. Creature (1972), Moving Woman (1973) (See Figure 27); by now her style and methods of expressing the moving figure was becoming increasingly identifiable. Her sculpture took on a new openness and flow although she became frustrated by the limitations of scale imposed by clay. But the finding in 1974 in China of a burial cache of over life-size ceramic figures of horses and soldiers reaffirmed her reach for bigger scale. Consequently she worked out a method of making larger than life size recumbent figures by assembling them from separately fired sections which were placed on the ground for example Woman with outstretched Arms (1973) (See Figure 11).

While most of Frank's is life size work reclines, her largest upright ceramic works reach up to three and a half feet tall for example Moving Woman II (1976) (See Figure



25. Taming of the Harp, 1971, Ceramic.



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26. Ghost Dancers, 1972, 1973.



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27. Moving Woman, 1973, Ceramic.





28. Moving Woman II, 1976, Ceramic.

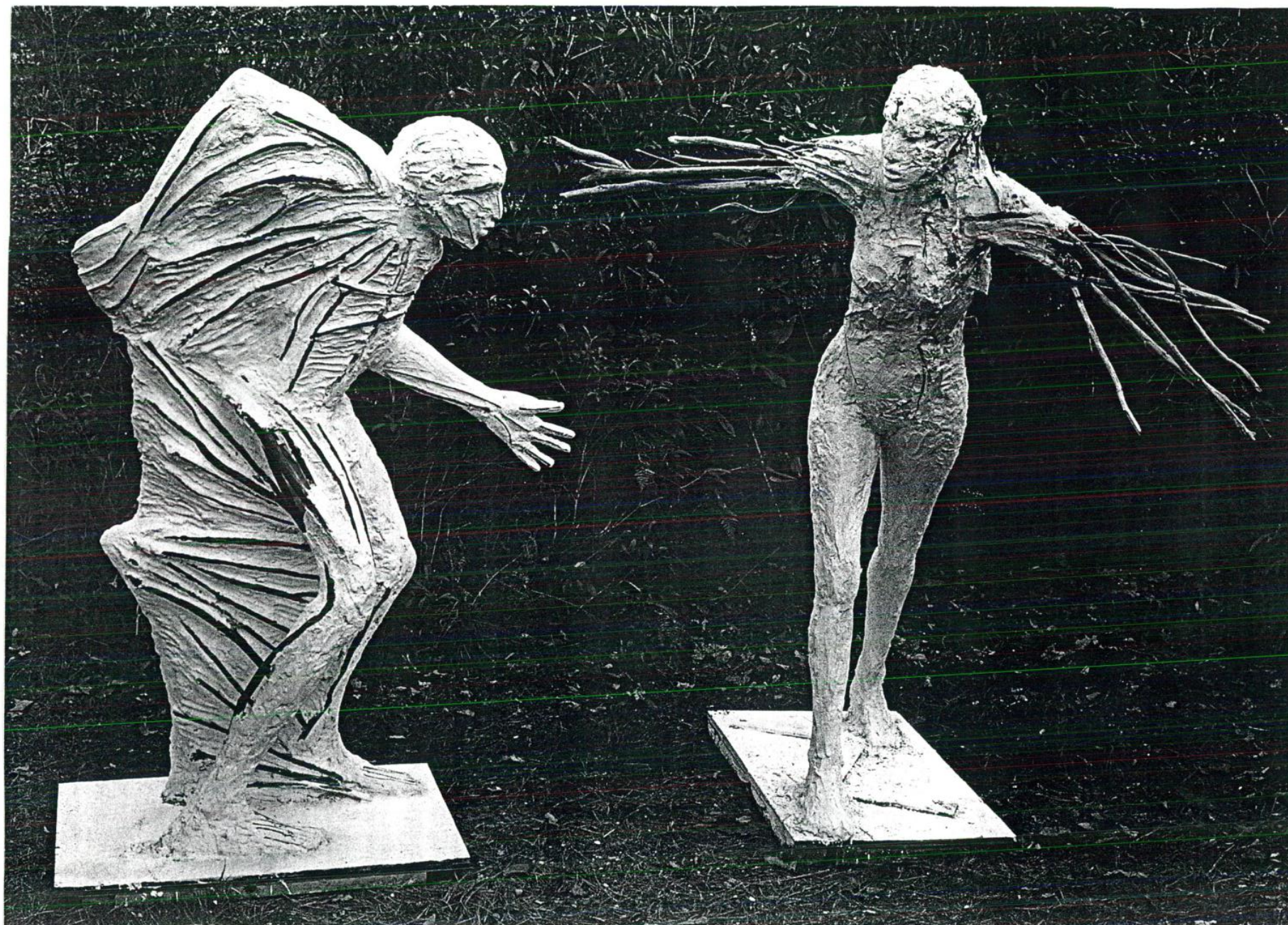


28). However she has made other over-life-size upright work out of stick and plaster, for example Running Man and Walking Woman (1981) (See Figures 29 & 30).

The fragmentation in Franks' new pieces gives the moving figure an extra sense of fluidity. Herrera compares these sections to the shifting planes of a cubist figure in that the viewer is required to put the figure together in his or her mind. She also makes comparisons to Picasso's "... anatomical dislocation, his emotionally charged torsion, his ability to turn a figure inside out or to replace volume with void without forfeiting wholeness and function." (Herrera, 1990, p.60) Like Picasso, Frank distorts anatomy in such a way that her figures seem to be felt from within rather than seen from without. She also compares the breaking up and re-assembling of the female body to the paintings of Willem De Kooning. Frank insists that the separate sections are "... part of a single flow of energy ..." and says that she needs it to make a figure with a lot of space inside and outside. "They are alive, the space moves back and forward like breath." (Herrera, 1990, p.66)

While many of Frank's female figures are recumbent, the males have a more active role. They propel themselves through space by swimming, running and leaping e.g. Leaping Man (1977) (See Figure 31). Male figures also feature in her sculptures on the Lovers theme. These have been called "idyllic" and "erotic" by Herrera, and she believes that all of Frank's art is [like the dances of Martha Graham] sensuous and "...in the deepest sense sexual." (Herrera, 1990, p.72)

The Lovers are suited to Frank's life-size sculpture and I agree with Herrera that the fragmentation successfully demonstrates the joining of two bodies in the act of love making with twisted limbs sprawling at angles to each other for example Lovers (1974) (See Figure 32) According to Herrera, Frank sees sex from a woman's point of view as did Graham. Her female figures are neither "... coquettish nymphs nor sex goddesses" but "... earthy, self-aware, fulfilled women." (Herrera, 1990, p.69)



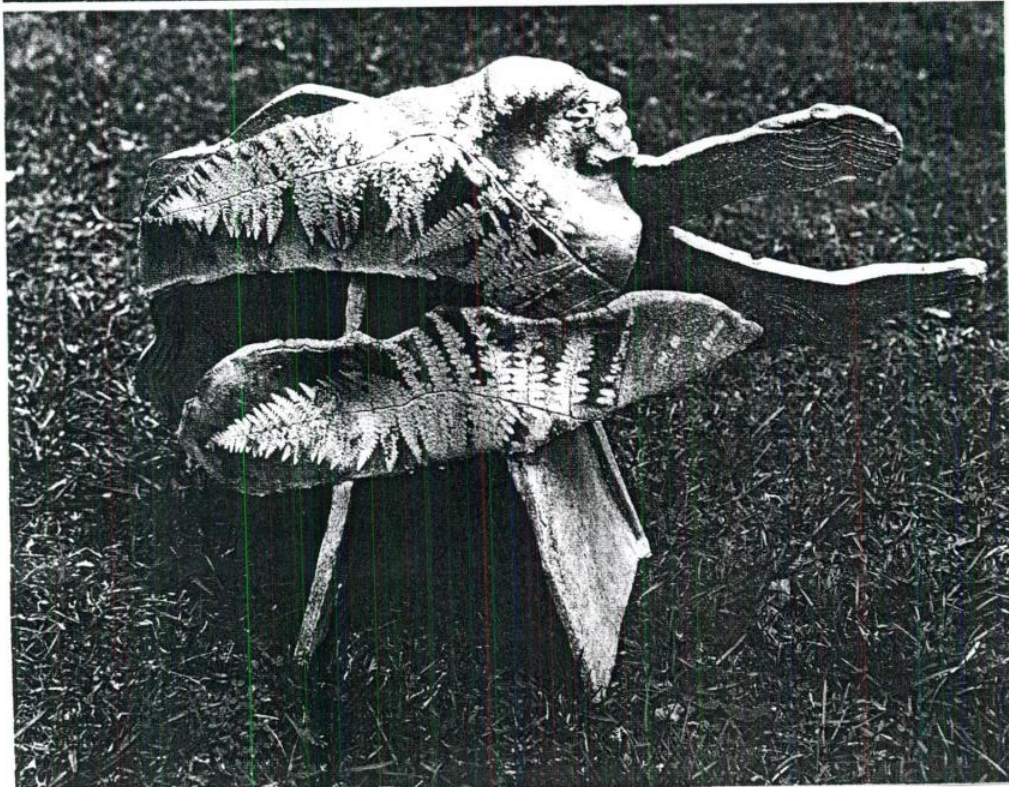
29. Running Man, 1981, Plaster.





30. Walking Woman, 1981, Plaster.

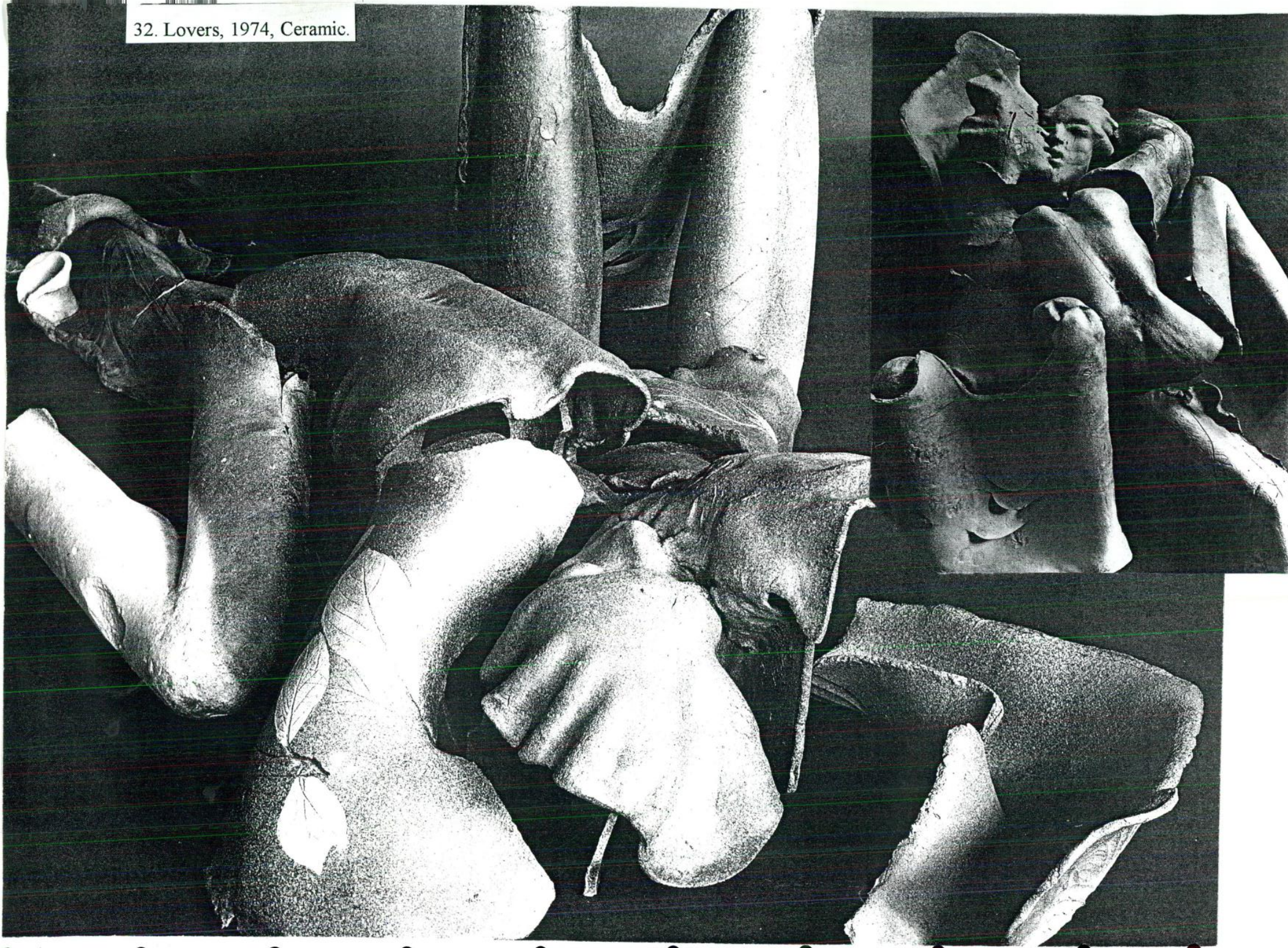




31. Leaping Man, 1977, Ceramic.



32. Lovers, 1974, Ceramic.



Chant (1984) (See Figure 33), another piece on the love theme, is to me a perfect example of Frank's expression of the figure through clay. Using slabs, she assembles the body, draping skin over armatures and adding subtle details like a foot that could be a slab allowed to harden after being draped over her own foot. This is the kind of style and handling of clay that has attracted me so much to her work. The whole piece is free and original with a freshness that is unique to Frank.

In observing her figures of women, one can see that they all share certain characteristics. For example, the walking figures have an "arrested movement", [as in Egyptian and archaic statues] that looks like a ceremonial stance. For example Winged Armed Woman (1976), River Figure (1976) and Arrowed Woman (1977) (See Figures 34, 35 & 36). Herrera suggests that the latter three are "... asswirl with motion" (Herrera, 1990, p.78) and are caught in states of "...extreme energy and emotion." (Herrera, 1990, p.78) They have an urgent quality where movement is "impelled" by emotion. One is reminded of the belief of Duncan and Graham that motion is motivated by emotion and the figures are certainly reminiscent of dancers.

Some of Frank's figures do represent dancers, for example Three Dancers (1981) (See Figure 37). She hints at the importance of the Dance in her work when she makes references to a West African Dance that she had seen. "The gestures go from the heart, to the sky, to the Gods, to the rain, to the sun. They go back to the heart and to the earth, back to the heart and to the four directions, six really, including up and down ... there is no indifference or irony toward any of these that are being saluted." (Herrera, 1990, p.78)

Herrera adds that she could have been describing her own ceramic figures' "lack of indifference or irony." (Herrera, 1990, p.78)



34. Winged Armed Woman, 1976, Ceramic.



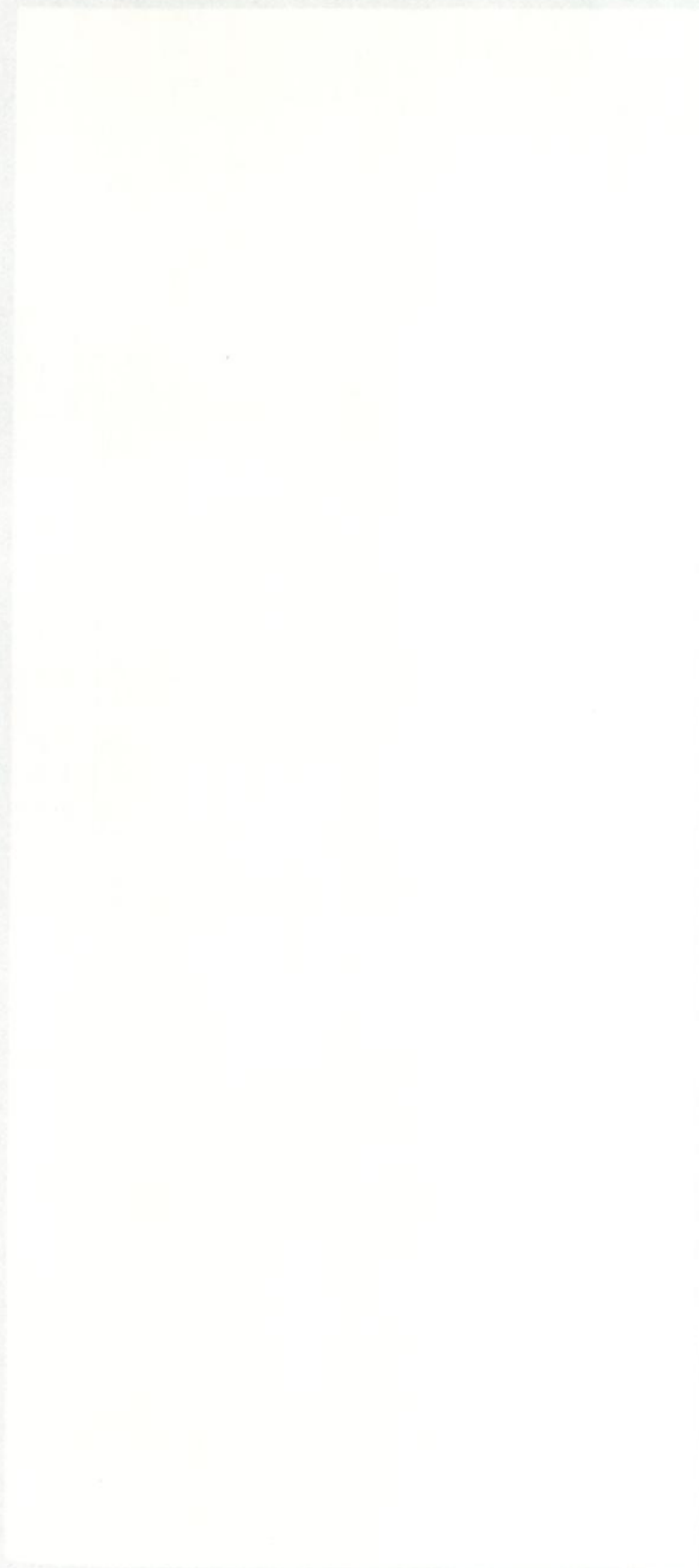


35. River figure, 1976, Ceramic.



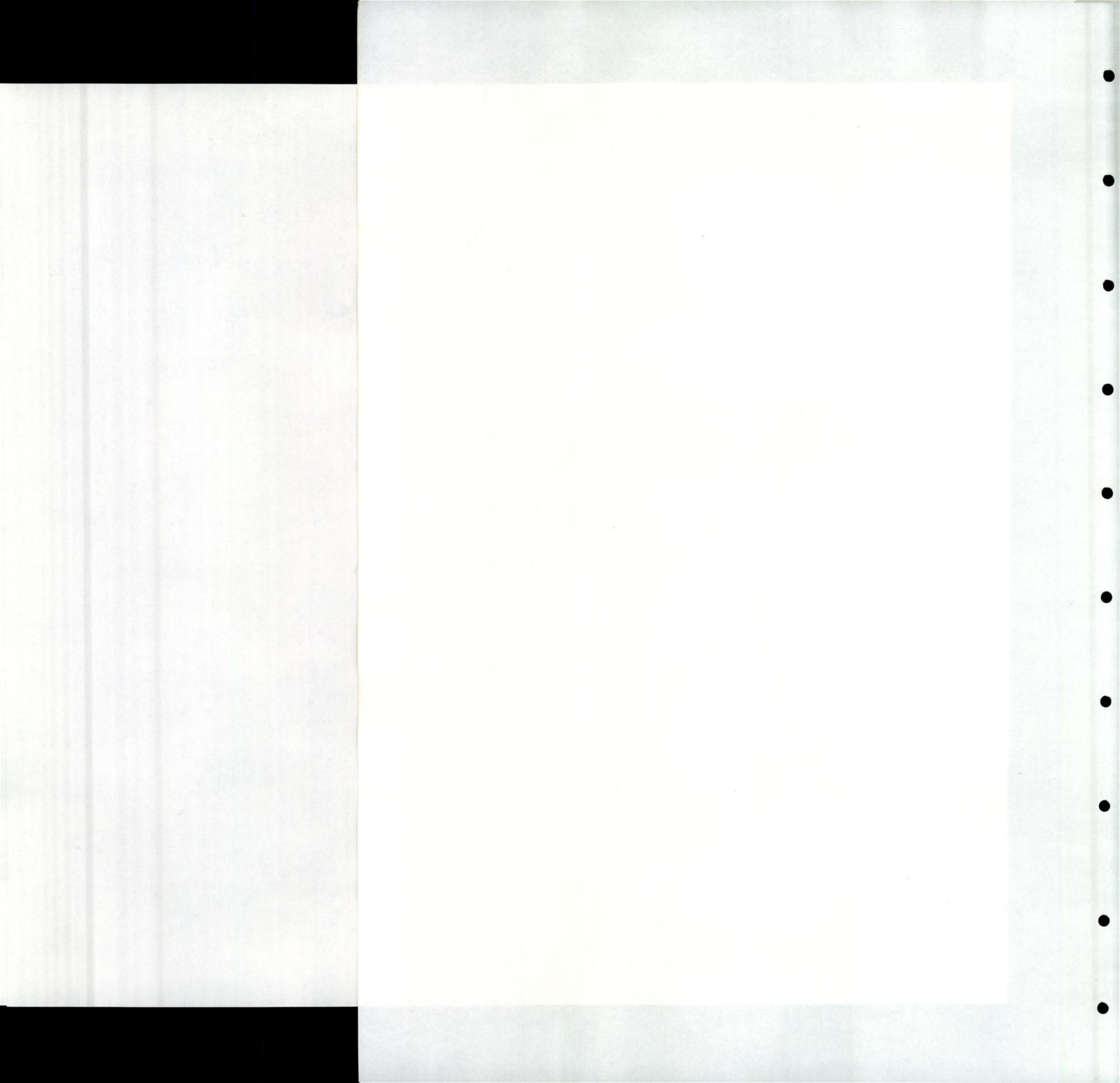


36. Arrowed Woman, 1977, Ceramic.

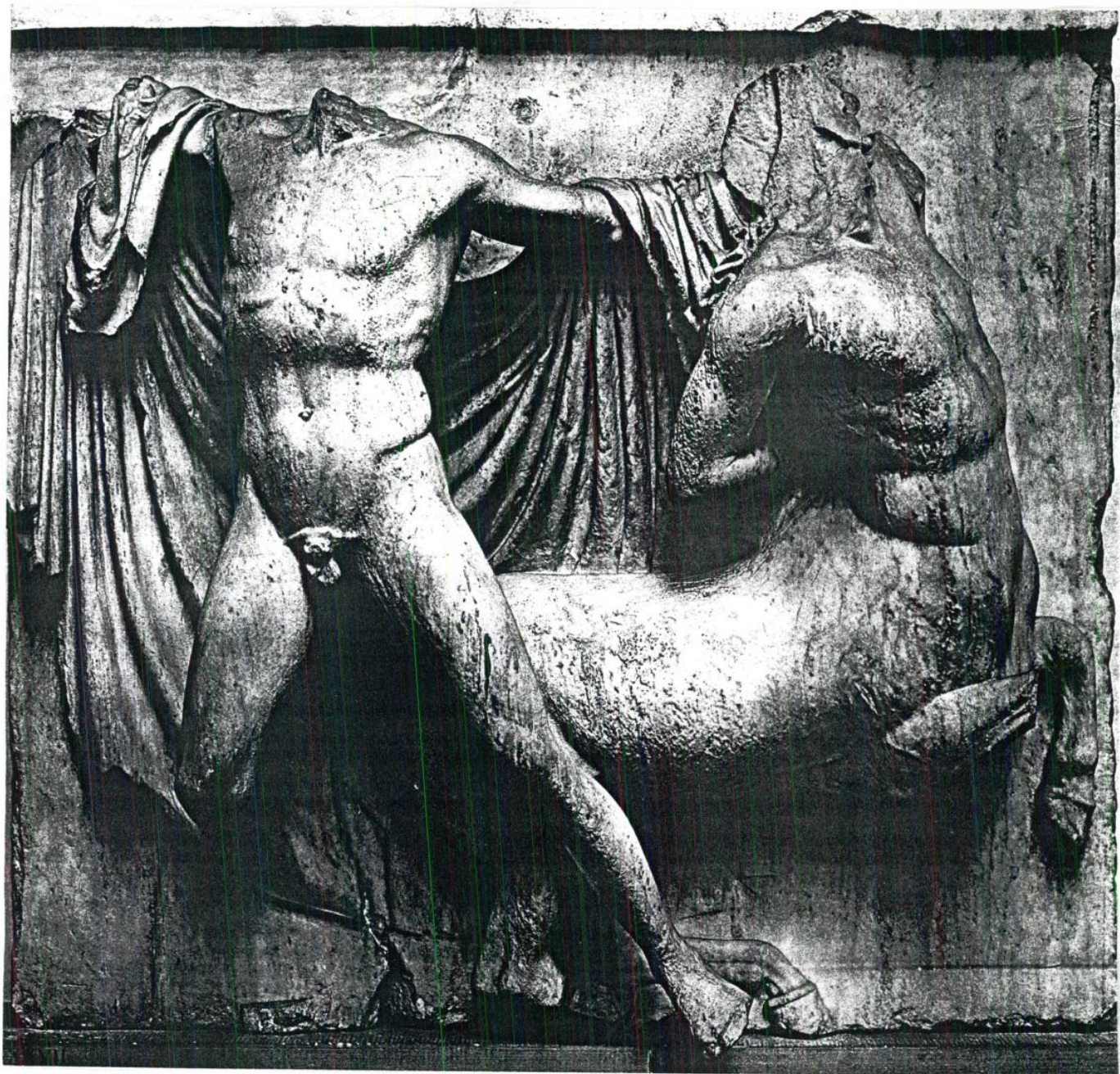


37. Three Dancers, 1981, Ceramic.

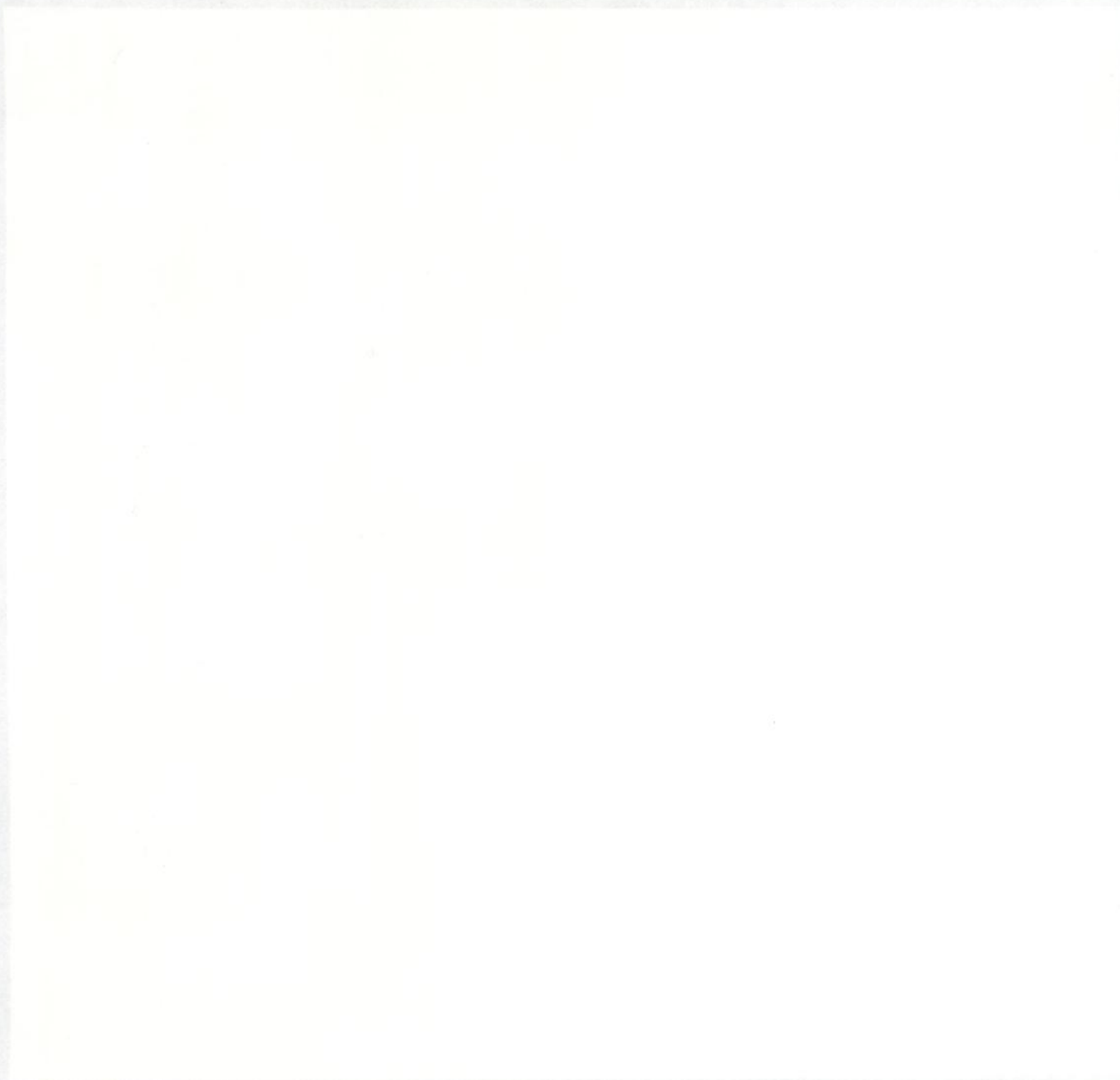


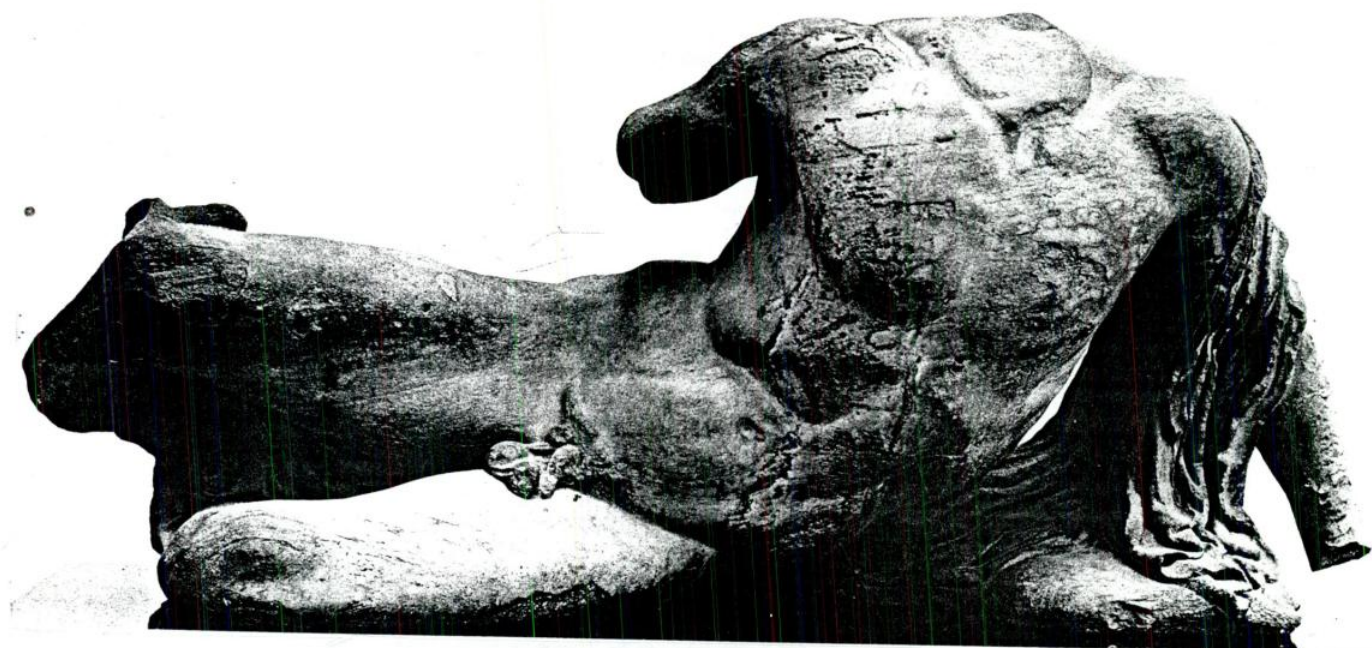


The features of Frank's figures nearly all have the same facial expression, "...between anguish and rapture."(Herrera, 1990,p78) They originate apparently from a black and white photograph of a Himalayan dolls' head which she had seen in one of her mother's copies of Verve. She doesn't portray any particular personality or type in her figures. She says they are Everywoman. This is similar to Rodin's depersonalisation of facial features omission of head and arms, and concentration on form. Similarly her fragmentation could be a reference to Rodin's Torsos, a way of establishing a link with antiquity and remains of Classical Marble Carvings for example Youth Battling a Centaur 460 B.C. and River God or Hero 437-432 B.C. (See Figures 38 - 39).



38. Youth Battling a Centaur, 460B.C., Marble.





39. River God, 437-432B.C.



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CHAPTER 6

FRANK'S EMPHASIS ON MOVEMENT AND THE DANCE IN DRAWINGS AND OTHER WORK

Mary Frank received whatever formal training she had mostly in drawing. Herrera suggests that even when she is making sculpture she thinks in terms of drawing. Speed and immediacy are essential to her inventive process, rather than deliberation analysis and construction. Her techniques and processes of making are evident in her sculpture, inventing as she goes along. Herrera calls her work fluid and painterly and says she is guided by the process as much as the idea she has in mind. Says Frank; "... I love the gesture of work, watching someone do work they do well or with experience, with certain essential gestures, nothing wasted."(Herrera, 1990, p.85) Herrera describes the grace and economy of gesture that characterise Frank's drawings: "... a single curve can define a figure from head to toe."(Herrera, 1990, p.85)

She finds it interesting to see how little she can use to convey a lot, rather like the dancer's need to improvise by using their own subtle gestures and shifts of anatomy to convey emotions or representations of nature for example Duncan rippling her fingers to represent leaves in the wind. This shows an undeniable connection between her style of working and her previous training as a Dancer.

...Rough outlines and sketches hitherto considered incomplete forms of a work undertaken by the artist, become witness to his creative process. They are all the more moving and important as they are more rudimentary and spontaneous; so they too are considered original works worthy of being preserved and admired.

- Jean Chatelaine (Chatelaine, p.275, from Rodin Rediscovered) on Rodin's drawings.

Chatelain obviously held Rodin's drawings to be as important as his bronzes, and to Mary Frank (like Rodin and most other sculptors) drawing is not necessarily a subsidiary aspect of her work. She spends as much time drawing from her sculptors as drawing for them.

To keep her hand and eye true, to keep her from falling into style, she regularly draws from the model. Herrera describes, "bold" charcoal drawings and coloured ink wash drawings that capture the energy of the models as they move about her studio. She seems to have adopted Rodin's habits as her models are never posed. "They pose themselves, mostly they are moving in space"(Herrera, 1990, p.85) unless she asks for a pose.

Frank has worked for 25 years with her friend and dancer, Lily Santangelo who she says, "... brings such a full range of expression to movement that it is a challenge for me to equal her intensity."(Herrera, 1990, p.85)

Herrera describes Frank's attempt "like two of her idols, Rodin and Degas", (Herrera, 1990, p.85) to bring movement on to the stillness of the paper. Frank believed that Degas' "endlessly practising" dancers were metaphors for his own endless drawings; she identifies with his "... exquisite attempt" to draw the dancers while they moved.

In drawings, Frank has a tendency to depict her models in two different positions in time, so that a nude might have two heads or four legs. Says Herrera; "when she follows a model's movement in a series of charcoal drawings, her lines are as dynamic as the bodies they delineate."(Herrera, 1990, p.86)

She says "... It is very hard to catch them in motion like that, you have to work fast. It's a never-ending struggle, but when you come near it, your work is injected with the life they have."(Herrera, 1990, p.86)

Frank's greatest challenge is when she draws actors in rehearsal. She has less control than when she draws a model in her studio and has to work fast to catch passing gestures. Such gestures and the relationships of people moving on stage in these drawings are, she says a great source to her.

Another challenge for Frank is drawing at the zoo. She tries to catch the animals in motion - " ... you have no choice, they aren't going to sit and pose for you."(Herrera, 1990, p.86)

Frank considers drawing to be "a kind of breathing."(Herrera, 1990, p.87) Certain subjects continuously attract her, like her friends. However she does not so much draw facial expression as gesture. A struggle to get a likeness right leaves no room for her "transforming imagination."(Herrera, 1990, p.87)

When she draws, she likes to switch mediums using pencils, ball-point pens, quills, brushes, crayons and pastels. Sometimes she makes careful studies from the model such as the two Conceicao (1976 - 77) drawings and Crouching Man (1980) (See Figures 40, & 41). Again gesture is as important as a feeling of form and a lovely flowing movement of line.

Other preoccupations of Frank include making shadow papers in which she uses a scissors to cut into sheets of white paper to make simple yet effective images. e.g. Lovers (1978) (See Figure 42). She is also fascinated with the monoprinting process in which she initially painted on glass but then switched to metal plates. These go through dozens of stages of painting with etching inks. Prints are then taken from them, which are brilliantly coloured and contain layers of ever changing elements and ghost prints. Her prints portray images of animals, fish, horses, snakes and birds. Also running, leaping and dancing figures for example Natural History (1985) (See Figure 43). Hundreds of her prints reflect her preoccupation with movement: "... You can



40. Conceicao, 1976-1977, Charcoal.





40. Conceicao, 1976-1977, Charcoal.

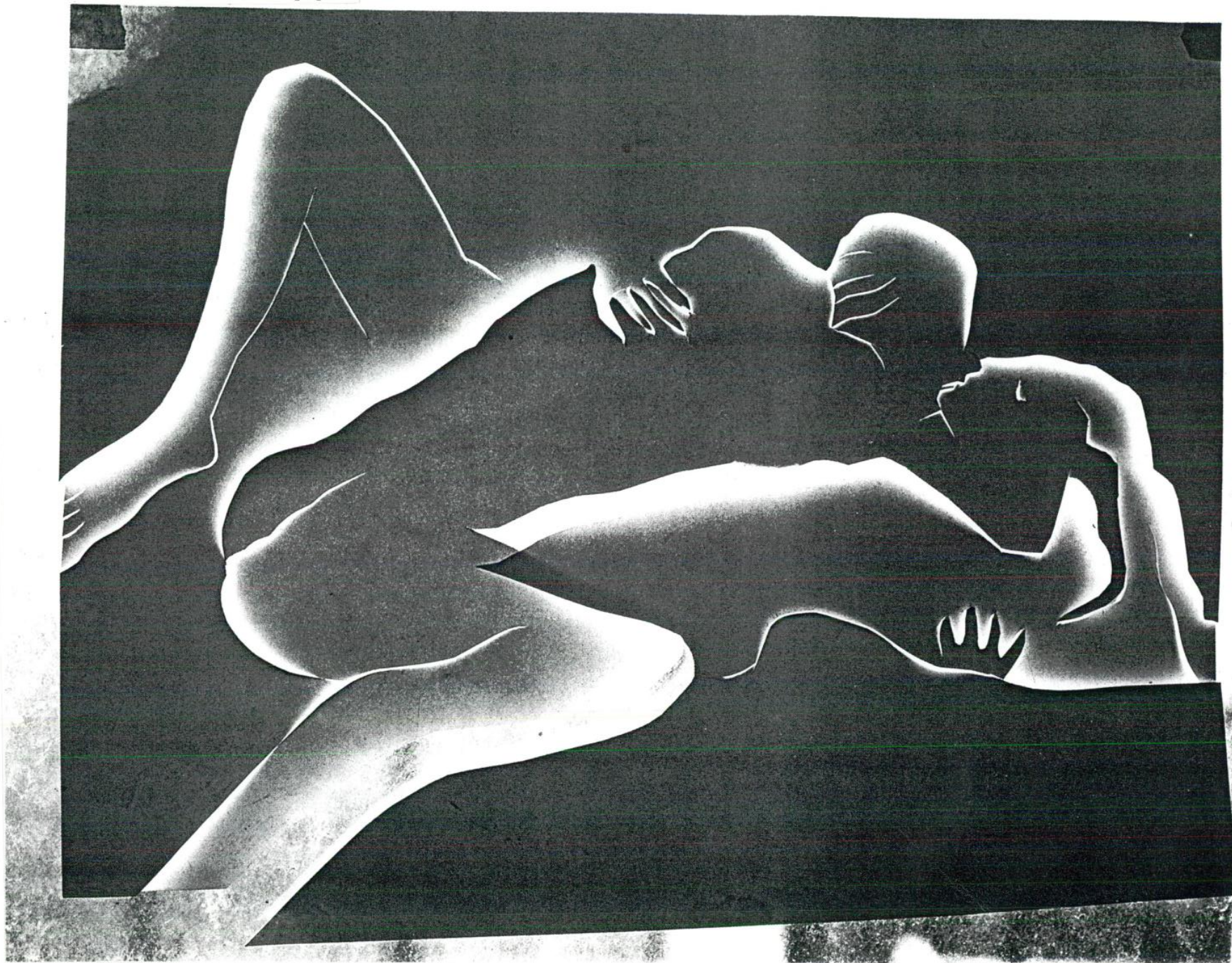




41. Crouching Man, 1980, Charcoal.



42. Lovers, 1978, Cut paper.







Natural History, 1985

Monoprint, 27½ × 62¾"

Collection Betsy and Frank Goodyear

have your past, present and future in front of you" for example The time is now (1985-86) (See Figure 44).

In the second half of the Eighties, Frank was able to have several of her clay sculptures cast in bronze for example Presence (1985-86) (See Figure 45). At this time, she returned to plaster for some sculptures. She carved into tablets into which she stuck small fragments of painted glass and sometime small clay sculptures for example Grammar of Regret (1982) (See Figure 46).

Unfortunately, Frank began to feel that clay no longer engaged her full energies. In 1986, as her fascination with colour grew, she stopped making sculpture for two years, instead painting on plaster, glass, metal, paper and canvas. Herrera suggests that turning to painting may have been a way for her to revitalise her creative process.

When she returned to sculpture in 1988, she started doing more pieces in papier mâché for example Trajectories (1988) (See Figure 47). This seems to be a successful medium for her themes, but for me doesn't have the appeal of her clay figures.

I have thousands of ideas, I don't ever get to. I see them all as a huge soup kettle - working is failures and parts and pieces. I could do fifty and get not one right. Some big pieces begin as small ones. Or I begin with a foot or a torso, or they may remain only thoughts.

(Munro, 1979, p.289) - she says.

Mary Frank works in her studio at her country house in Lake Hill in the Catskills [outside New York]. It is filled with racks of clay figures and part of figures. In person, Munro describes her as soft spoken, physically large and light on her feet with a mop of brown hair. When she is not working, she reads or listens to music for example Rumanian and Peruvian panpipes.

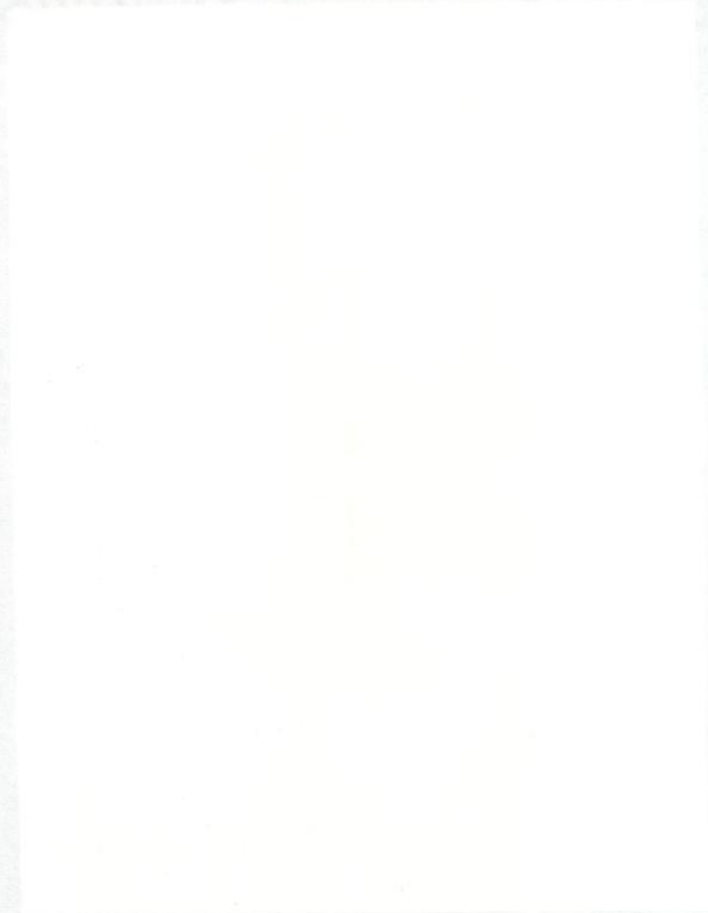


44. The time is now, 1986-1986, Monoprint.

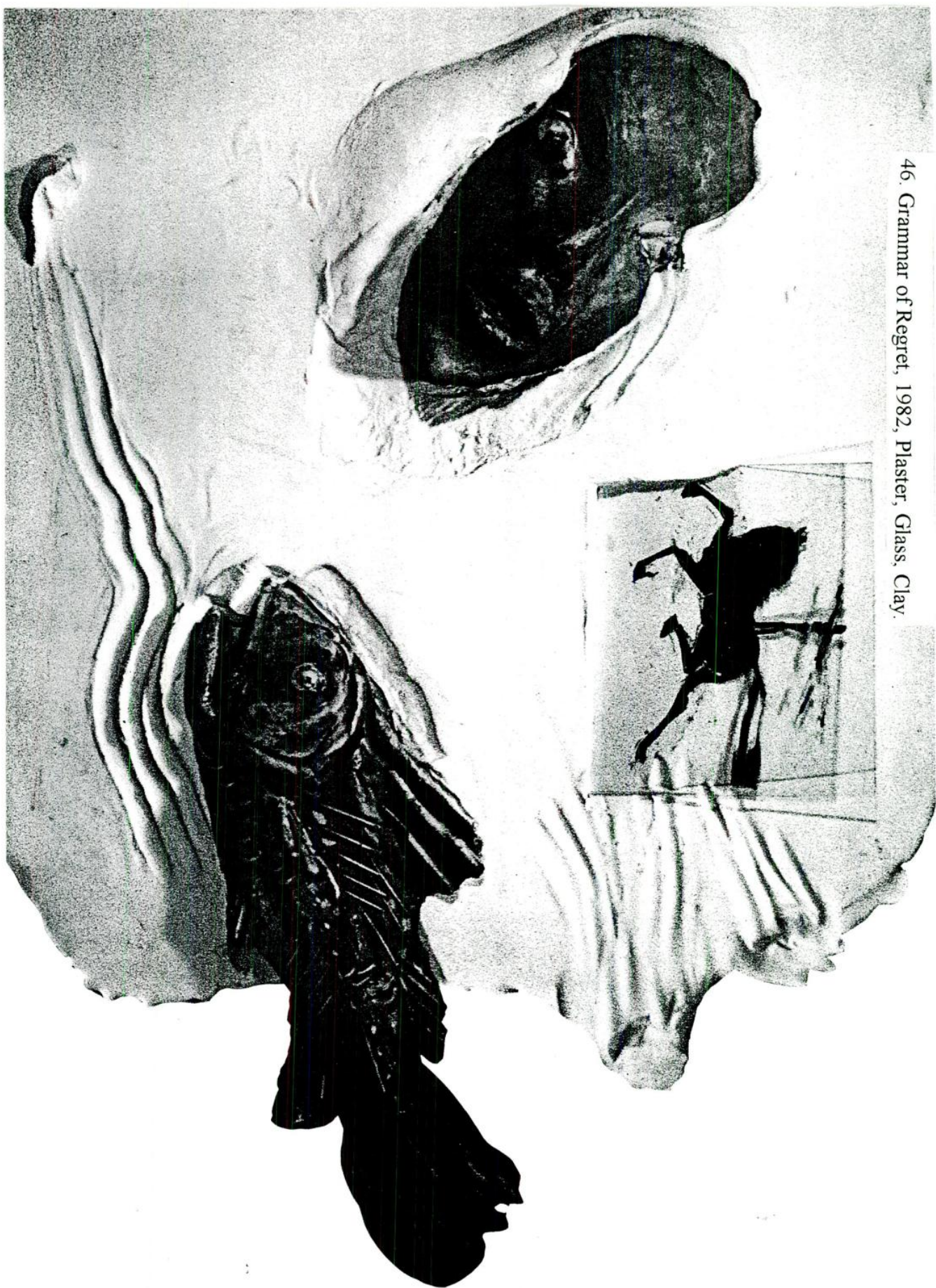




45. Presence, 1985-1986, Bronze.



46. Grammar of Regret, 1982, Plaster, Glass, Clay.







She is still a "mesmerised dancer", according to Munro, and her friends include dancer Henrietta Bagley and painter, Gwen Fabricant. She has lived with Leo Treitler, a well known American musicologist, since 1985.



Lake Hill studio,

CONCLUSION

This thesis has considered how the inexorably connected elements of the body, the Dance and movement are integral to Mary Frank's sculpture as well as her other work and how these have affected her creative vision.

The first chapter attempted to introduce the artist's themes and sources, giving an overview of her standing in art culture.

Chapter two recounted Frank's early life and influences, to show how her life experiences have forged her ideas about art and self-expression.

Chapter three discussed the Dance particularly in primitive cultures, the importance of the advent of Modern Dance and two of its most outstanding Dancers, Graham and Duncan whose philosophies and methods are explored. Connections were made to sculpture and sculptors who work with the figure, trying to create movement and gesture in their work.

Chapter four concentrated on other artists who have been influenced by the Dance and movement in particular Auguste Rodin, who had a major impact on the sculpture of the twentieth century especially Mary Frank's.

The following chapter deals with the main work of Frank [i.e. making sculpture] and makes comparisons to Rodin and other sculptors and their work.

To finish up, I felt it was necessary to discuss her drawing and her use of gesture and improvisation which she tries to incorporate into her three dimensional work. Drawing is a hugely important part of her making processes as well as being works of art in

their own right. The final chapter also briefly mentions other work including Monoprinting.

All of her work in whatever medium, "proclaims her reverence of life."(Herrera, 1990, p.127) Her working as an artist is, Frank says, based on faith and she protects most fiercely her creative drive.

For the future, she says, she is still attached to the figure but she feels she must begin to see in some other way "...I'm looking for something else."(Munro, 1979, p.306)

In whatever direction her work proceeds it will be hard, in my opinion, to surpass the uniqueness and freshness of her ceramic sculpture but I am sure it will, in some way, reflect her affection for the Dance, the body and movement.

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