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Borrowings From The Of OLD

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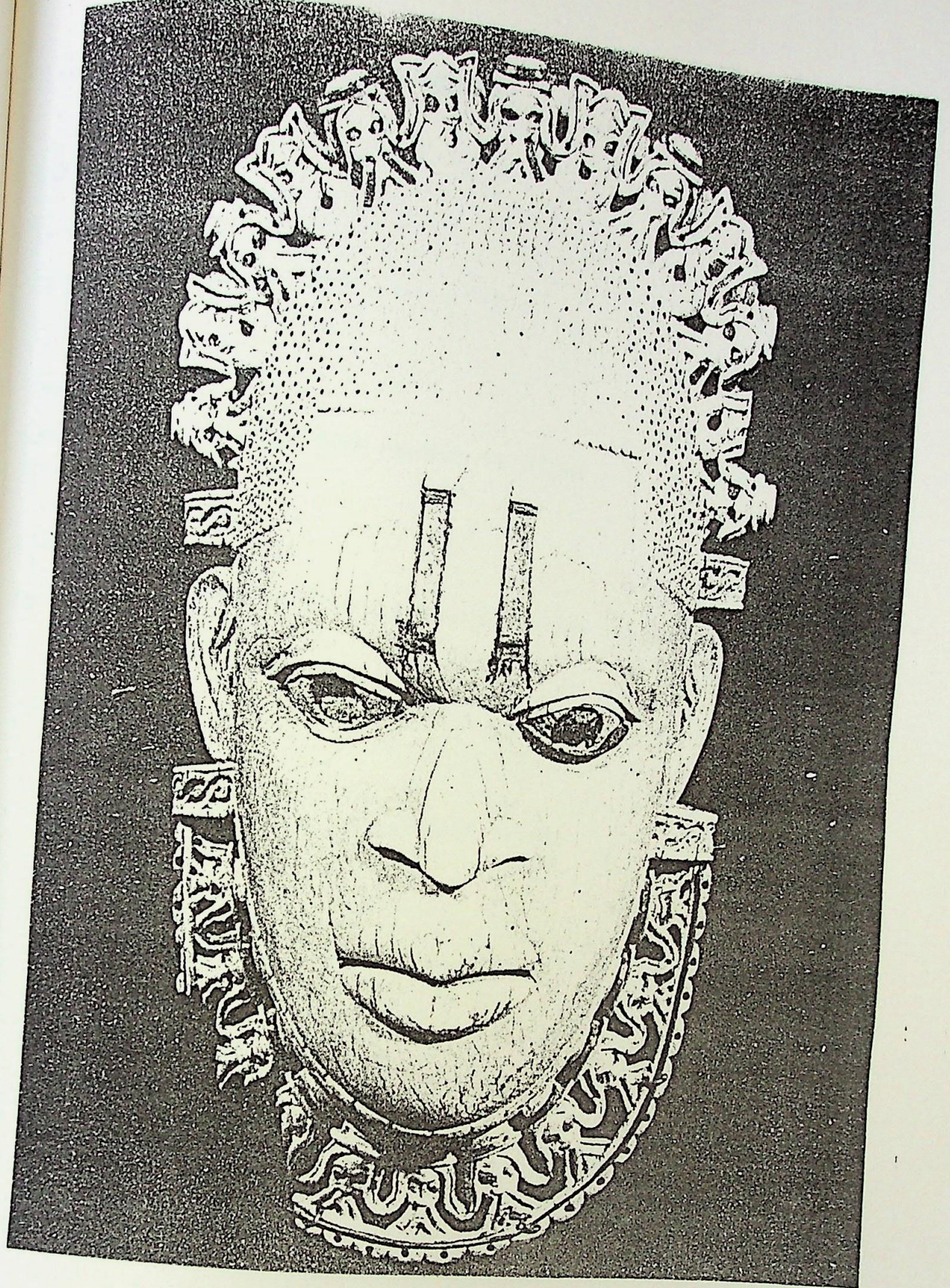


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Foreward

Artists at the turn of the century, bored with the conventions of the Classical Academies began to search for a more vigorous and progressive art medium. With the Twentieth Century came better modes of travel which in turn enabled artists and scientists the opportunity to explore at first hand the culture of the Far and Near East.

Vast collections of cultural objects were accumulated in ethnographical museums throughout Europe. As a direct result of these new discoveries western civilisation came to have a far greater understanding of the art of these early epochs, and rather than passing them off as mere barbaric fetishes (As was generally the case before 1900) they embraced them enthusiastically, and began to appreciate certain of the symbolic content they contained.

As artists became more aware of the hidden properties in primitive carving, some of these qualities began to re emerge to formulate a totally new concept in Western Art,

In my opinion primitive art acted as the very foundation for all of the major art events of this century right up to the present date.

In this thesis I attempt to portray this phenomenon through the random selection of some of the major artists who at the turn of the century having discovered primitive art, went on to establish a complete new departure in art.

Chapter One

Introducing Primitive Art

By the term Primitive Art I refer specifically to the art produced by people living under conditions of unspecialized technology and simple social organization. Traces of Primitive Art have been discovered in every country throughout the world, but it is most concentrated in Africa, the Pacific Islands, among the tribes of the North American Indians and the ancient Inca empire of Peru and South West America. For all their variety, the artistic creations of primitive peoples throughout the world appear to have certain characteristics in common. What distinguishes Primitive Art is that primarily it is functional and not for purely decorative purposes. Generally it is thought to be an object or fetish used symbolically during Magical or Religious ceremonies.

Primitive Art is firmly rooted in tradition passed on from generation to generation, as such this awareness of tradition acts as an obstacle to any quick changes in styles of representation. Anthropologists have discovered works made recently that are practically identical to work made centuries ago.

One of the first things we must realize is that the Art of primitive peoples is not intended to serve primarily aesthetic ends. The artist merely responds to the needs of his society; he produces precisely the number of objects, no more and no less, that his patrons require. Moreover all the works he makes have an ulterior function, either they assist in ritual or they perform a social role. Any time or energy left over will be spent in other activities not in the further production of Art. Thus the western idea of Art of

Art's sake would mean little to the Primitive artist. He does not dream that the sole purpose of an object could be to give himself and others that joy in artistic performance that we call artistic pleasure.

Equally meaningless to the Primitive artist is the Western artist's stress on exact imitation of nature as developed in the Renaissance and practised right up to the turn of this century. The primitive artist bound to a long, strict tradition, repeats again and again only that version of reality accepted in his society. His symbols are perpetuated because they have the weight of the past behind them. Neither a spontaneous emotional outpouring nor a mystical, intuitive creation, Primitive Art is an endless incantation given visual form.

The aims of the primitive artist are essentially those of his group. He may be asked to help placate supernatural powers to glorify the living or to commemorate the deceased members of the community.

The traditional artist was held, in awe or fear regarding him as a magician or witchdoctor who made fetishes, objects that were consecrated for such purposes as protecting people against illness and misfortune and in some cases were used to harm enemies. Most fetishes were crude models of people and were generally thrown away after use. (Illustration - 1). Ancestors and supernatural powers it is believed could influence or alter the physical and economic well being of the

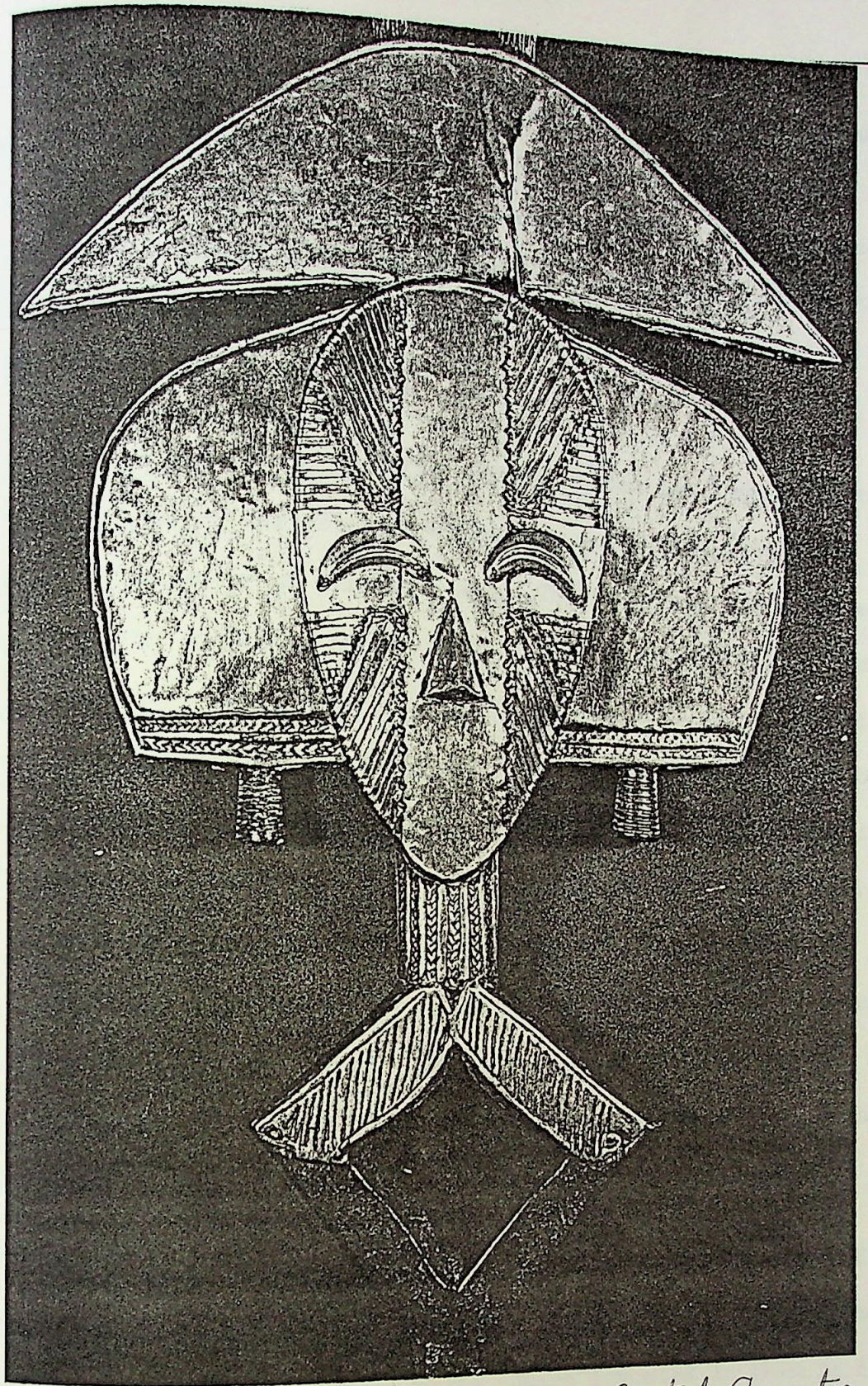


Illustration 1 Seated Ancestor

living. When he has produced prestige objects and other emblems of rank, the artist has helped to give order to human affairs. Thus far from being passive in the face of reality primitive peoples have tried constantly to manipulate the forces which surround them. Because this effort has been unabating, the artist has enjoyed a steady demand for his work.

Before turning to specific aesthetic examples I must first consider some of the external influences which contribute to mold the character of primitive art. The importance of the society in which the primitive artist works in shaping his ideas can hardly be overstated. Living in a community closely knit by ties of kingship and marriage, the artist needs the full sanction and approval of his group even to begin his work. Quite naturally he absorbs its viewpoint and attitudes, and, whatever his particular status, he functions as an integral part of the group. The idea that the artist is rebellious, temperamental and generally antagonistic towards his society is a Western notion that dates no earlier than the Renaissance. The primitive concept of the artist's role is totally different.

Unlike the Western artist the primitive artist is selected from within the community. Generally those selected to perform the role are believed to possess magic powers invested in them in infancy. For example among certain tribes, a child born with the umbilical cord wrapped about its neck is believed to be immune to danger. This is but one example, methods of selection vary considerably

among different tribes.

The training given to the primitive artist varies just as widely as the process of selecting him. It commences usually about the time of puberty whereby the child is apprenticed to the practising artist within his community. There would seem to be no special requirements for the role, other than a liking for ritual. Learning to carve or paint, like acquiring fishing or hunting skills, came largely through participation in the work itself. His immediate goal is to master his teacher's repertoire, since the aim of all his training is to ensure accurate reproduction of the forms approved by tradition. Exact imitation is felt by primitive man to be the essence of creativity the right to make and use specific symbols belonged not so much to the artist, but, rather to the community in which he lives. To borrow ideas from fellow artists was in the minds of primitive man considered a crime worse than ordinary thefts of property, because it meant tampering with the supernatural and not infrequently the punishment for such was death. In most tribes the maturation of the artist coincided with his initiation to adulthood.

Other factors which constitute to primitive arts distinctive character were perhaps the medium and tools with which the artist worked and indeed the physical environment which determines the materials available to him.

As already stated the primitive artist does not attempt to imitate nature, however nature herself imposes various conditions on its art. It is at this point I turn to the art of Subsaharan Africa to which the title Negro Art has been applied.

With regard to the precise origin of Negro Art we have little knowledge. However it is thought that the earliest known form of Negro Art can be seen in the early stone age drawings by the Kalahari tribesmen of South Africa. These drawings whilst being very decorative and colourful were designed to cast a spell on the game so necessary for survival. Drawings similar to these can be found in the caves of Altimira(Spain) and Lascaux - France where early tribes painted the walls of the caves with effigies of their hunting expeditions the earliest known of these being painted Circa (15000 B.C.) Even to the present day the Bushmen tribes have remained faithful to this form of representation.

However as man became more vivalized his art evolved into more stylistic forms of presentation, namely that of carved wooden objects clay work and much later metal work. It is with this development in mind that I look to the African Continent in particular, which its rich inheritance of the Arts of past civilizations supplies an excellent view of the development of Primitive Art.

African Art and in particular the carvings of West Coast regions have had a profound influence on the work of some of the most prominent artists of this century.

The art of this region is expressed in a variety of forms. Perhaps the most outstanding examples were the carved Female Figures symbolising the Goddess of Fertility. (Illustration No. 2) - In which the artist consciously over exaggerates the breasts, navels and swollen abdomen to show its true significance. The head is also generally too large and out of proportion to the rest of the body. To the African the head symbolised the seat of thought hence the artist sought to magnify and embellish it with highly decorative Motifs that would in some way reflect the needs of his particular request.

A persistent Motif that runs throughout is the heart shaped face appearing with great clarity in Kuele Masks from the Gabun region. (Illustration No. 3) This face is shown as a smooth depression or concave surface which extends from the underside of the eyebrows to the mouth. Within this heart shaped plain the nose appears in relief as a downward extension of the forehead and the eyes as raised oval shapes.

Much of the art presented holds little regard for Naturalism, it never copies nature (as we might see it) but rather it attempts to portray reality as in a primitive people's eyes and in character is somewhat similar to that of child-like drawings in which the important characteristics are over emphasized and distorted. While the art deals with the human figure, animal shapes and colour may also enshrine a symbolic significance. The very material used implied

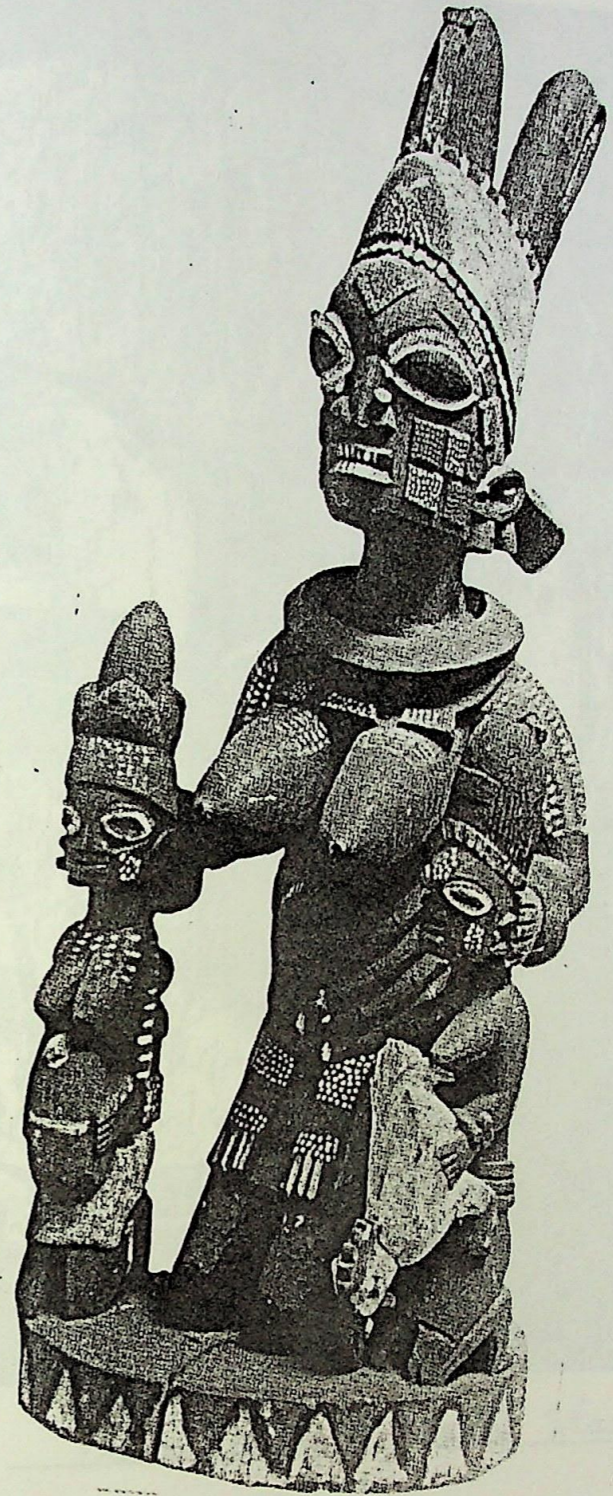


Illustration 2. Fertility Goddess

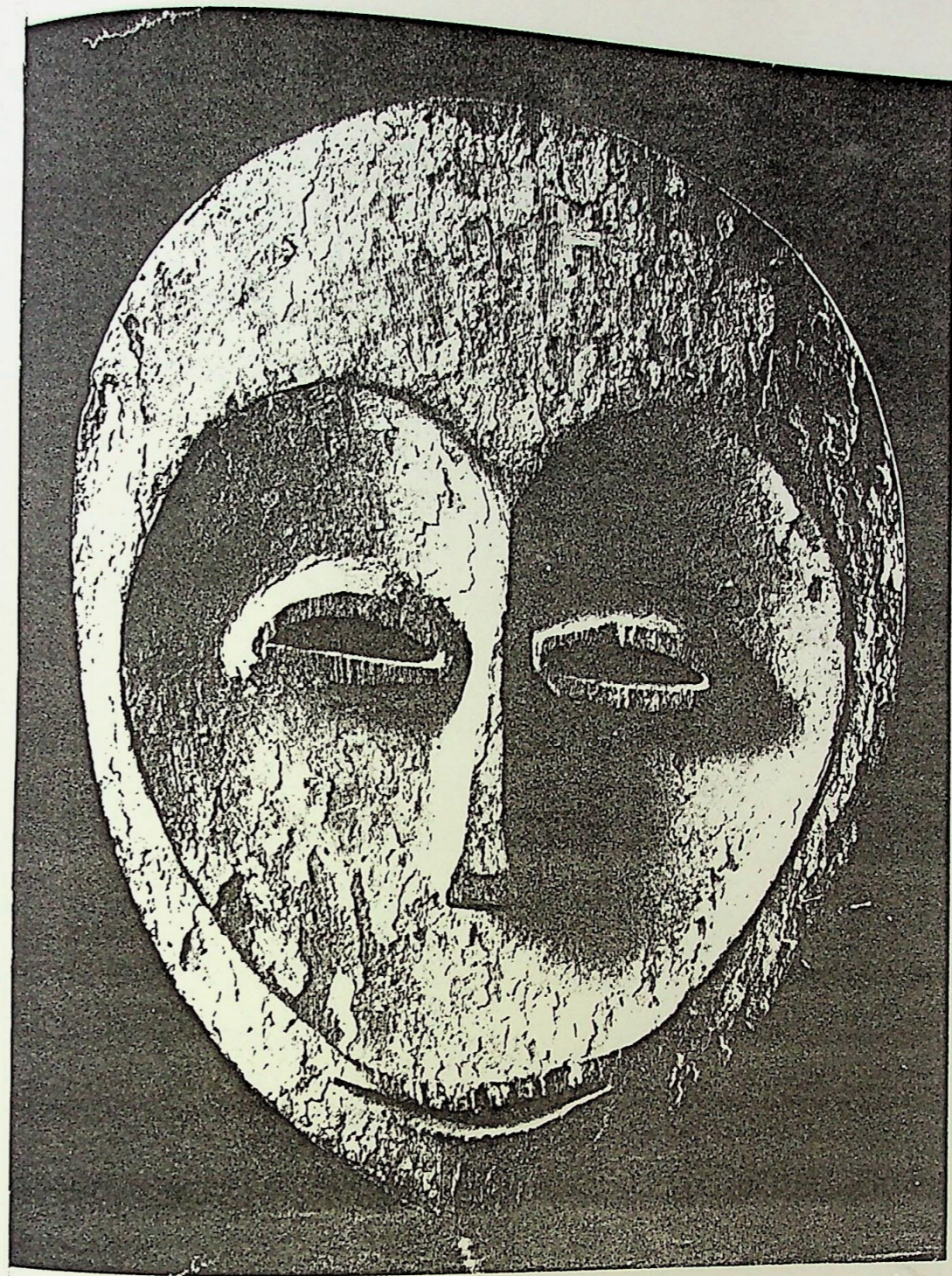


Illustration 3 Kwele Mask

the highest ritual or symbolic meaning. Carving from wood was seen to invest in the statue the power of the living tree.

The artist used wood as a means of conferring immortality of his ancestor-frequently the ancestral statues were carved in attitude of repose. (Illustration No. 4)

Sometimes human and animal forms were combined in one figure heightening the meaning of the object. (Illustration No. 5) Such symbolism is not always obvious and may sometimes be understandable only to the people in whose midst it was created. The power of such objects was further accelerated and heightened through elaborate ceremonies - a symbolic meaning. Statues and other representations of animals were often stylized to convey the character of the animal, Elephants and Buffaloes represented strength, a bird may signify speed, Leopards implied ferocity, whereas snakes were often the symbol for life and eternity.

One of the most important rituals where symbolism plays an integral role is in the 'rites of the dead' white masks, the colour being associated with spirits were used to deliver people possessed by demons.

Although the Primitive Art relied mainly on wood for his carvings in Benin a significant development appears when artists discovered the medium of Bronze casting. Such statues whilst still reflecting African characteristics, became infused by western influence and

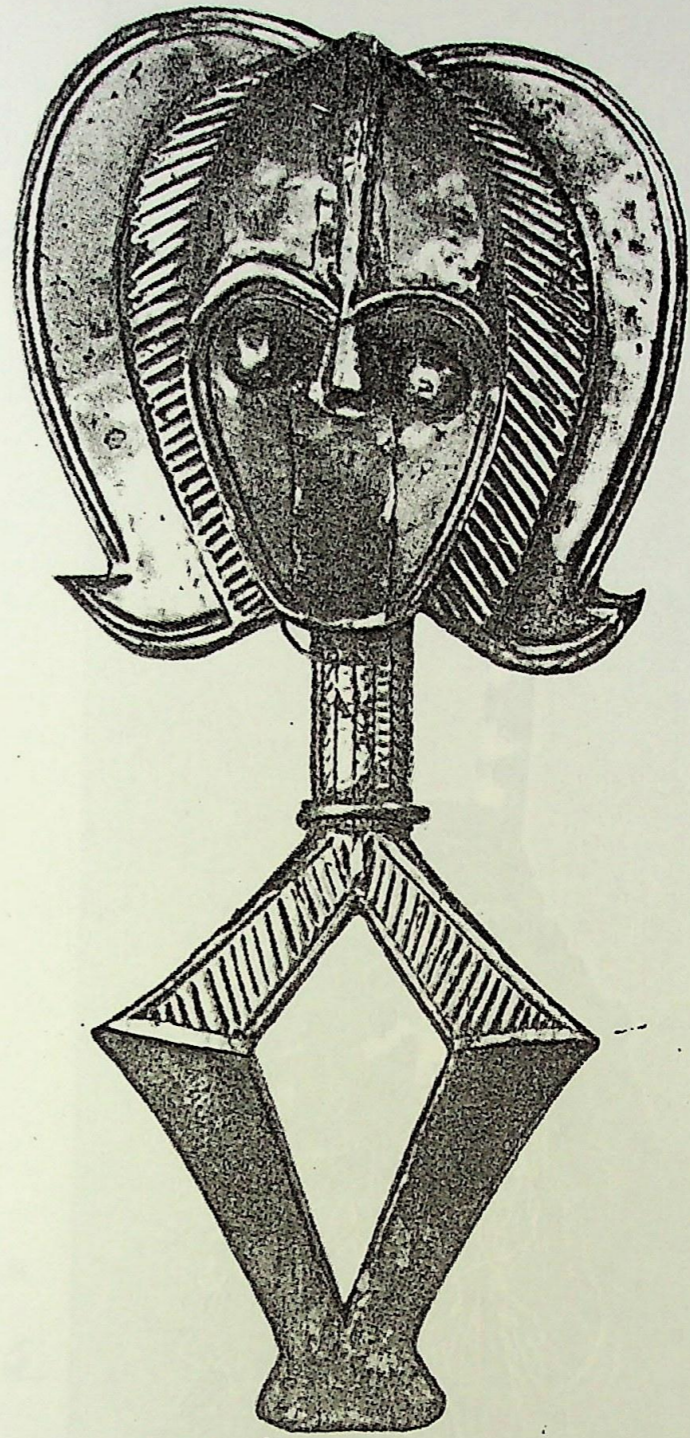
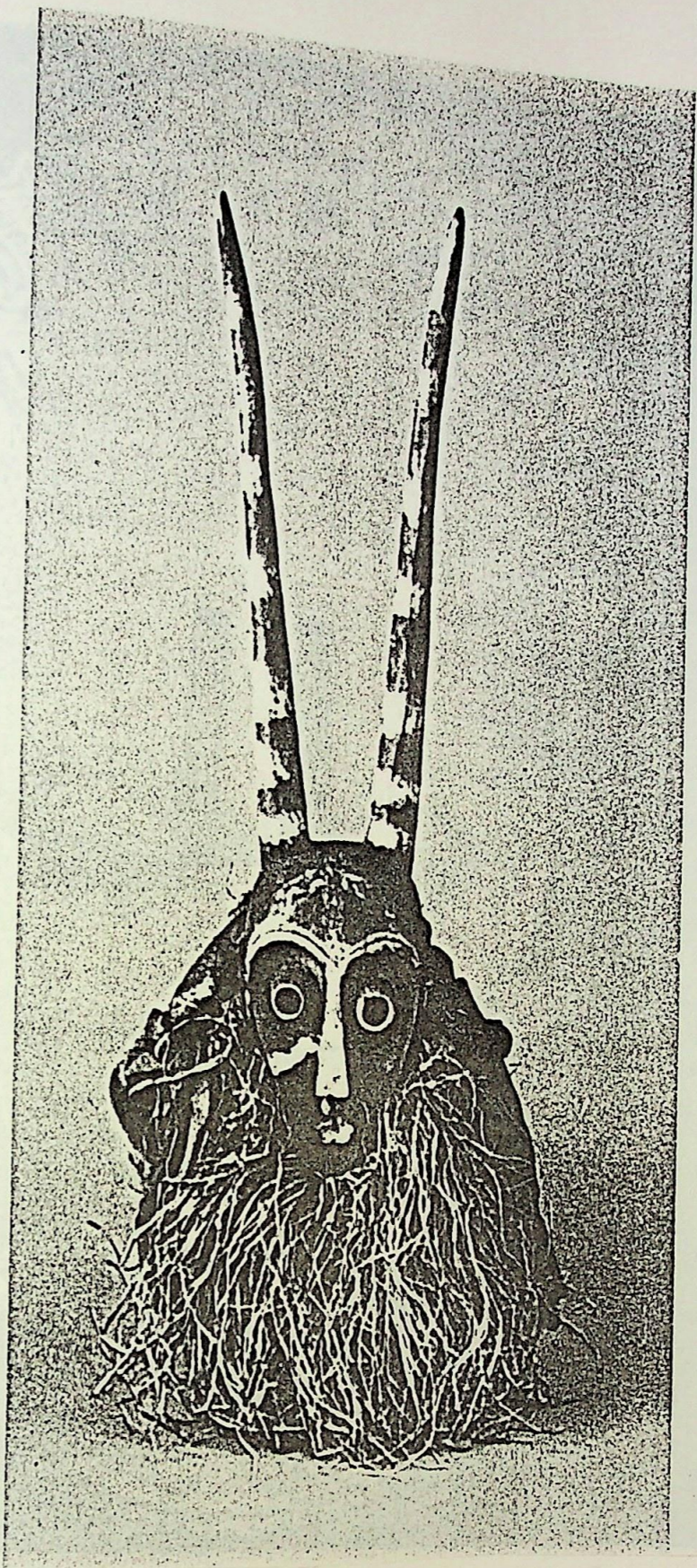


Illustration 4 Ancestor God



*Animal mask. Pende,
Central Congo.
Illustration 5*



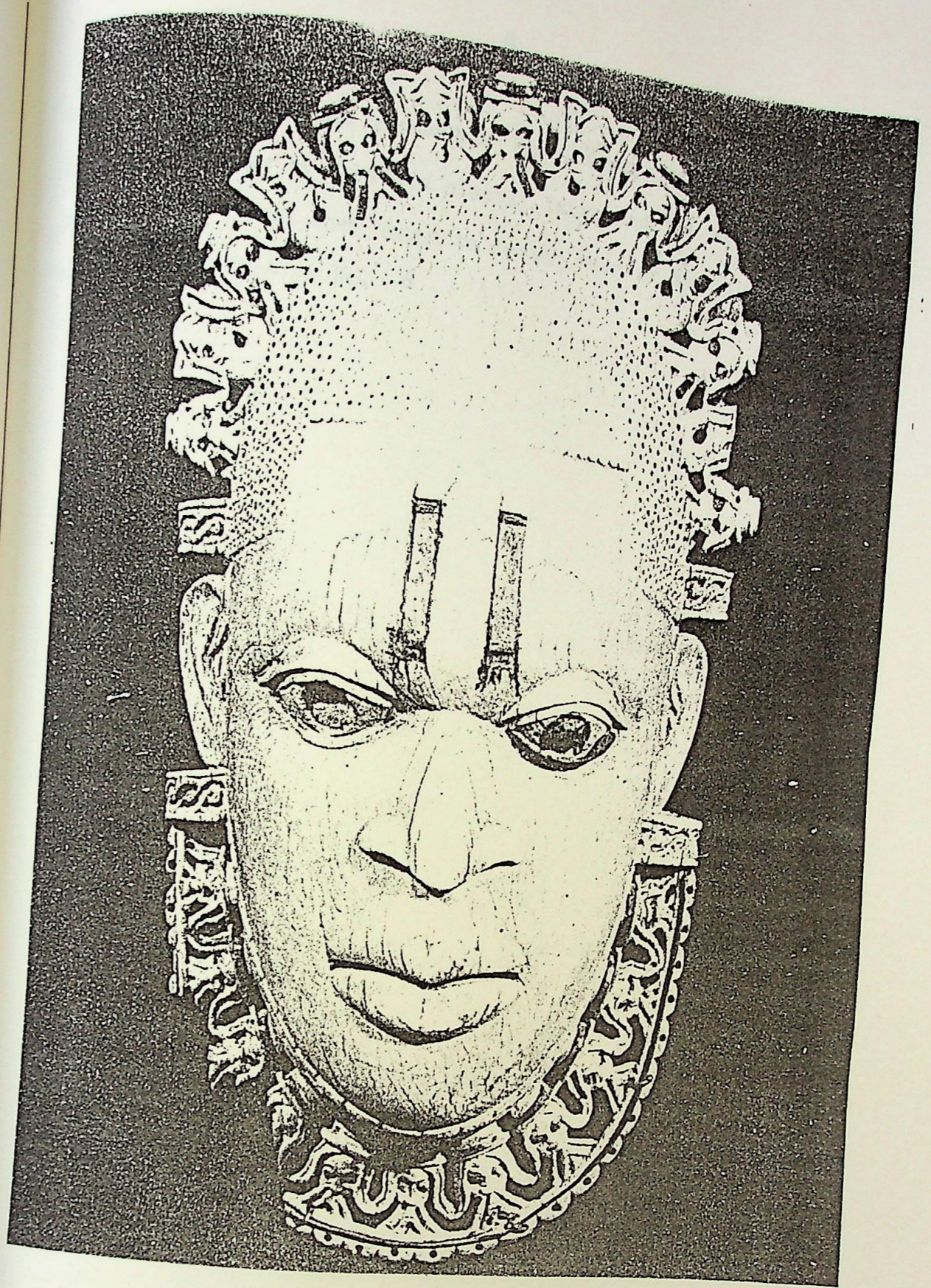


Illustration 6 Royal Head.



Illustration No. 6

technology. The dress, weapons and beard styles of 15th and 16th century explorers or visitors clearly impressed the bronze casters to such an extent that they began to depict them in their respective works. (Illustration No. 6)

Chapter Two

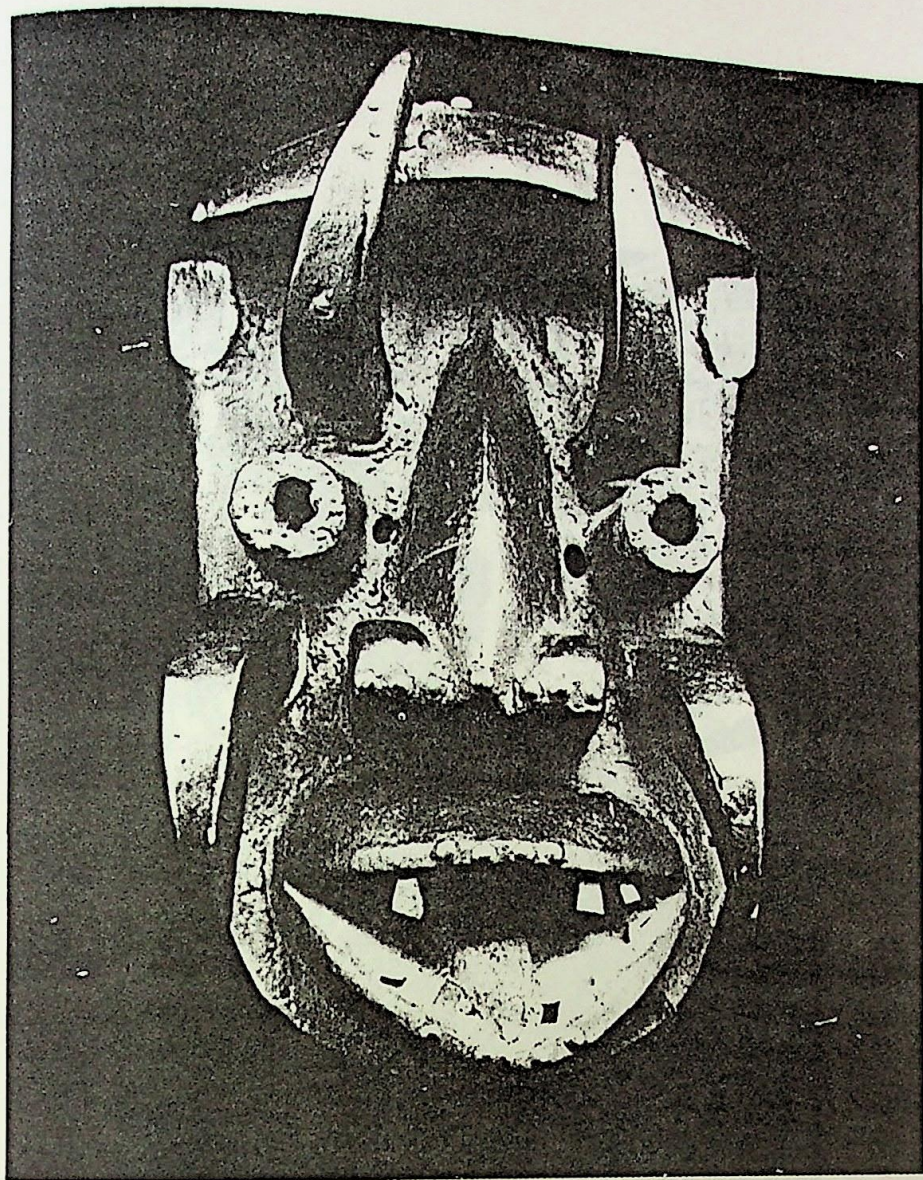
Primitive influence on 20th century

Painting

In their search for new artistic directions at the turn of the century many artists in Western Europe became attracted to the art of early epochs and of uncivilized peoples. The fauves (a group of french painters to whom the title was addressed as early as 1906) pride themselves with being the first to discover and appreciate the aesthetic values of such primitive peoples.

The exact date and circumstances of this discovery are still somewhat in doubt, there being numerous claimants for the honour. However it is generally held that Maurice de Vlaminck is one of the first European artists to have been influenced by primitive art. He recalls in his autobiography 'Tournant Dangereux' (1929) of seeing two Negro Statuettes behind the counter of a bistro among the bottles of Picon and Vermouth and of buying them for two litres of Aramon. In this first recollection Vlaminck does not give the date of his discovery and acquisition but it is thought to have taken place as early as 1904. On another occasion in 1905 he tells of having purchased three statuettes, two from Dahomey, painted red, yellow and white and one from the Ivory Coast - all black. Although he along with Andre Derain, a fellow artist and close associate had often visited the Museum of Historic Artifacts at the Trocadero, he had, until he purchased these statuettes, shared the view of many Europeans, in that , many African carvings and masks were merely 'Barbaric Fetishes'. (Illustration 7)

These carvings had a profound influence on Vlaminck and both he and Derain began collecting a variety of objects extending from African carvings to folk Art and the archaic Arts of both East and West. Primarily these objects were collected as curios,



Mask representing the wart-hog. Illustration 7



MAURICE DE VLAMINCK. *Man with a Pipe (Le Père Bouju)*.

Illustration 8^a



MAURICE DE VLAMINCK. *Picnic in the Country*. 1905.

Illustration 8^B

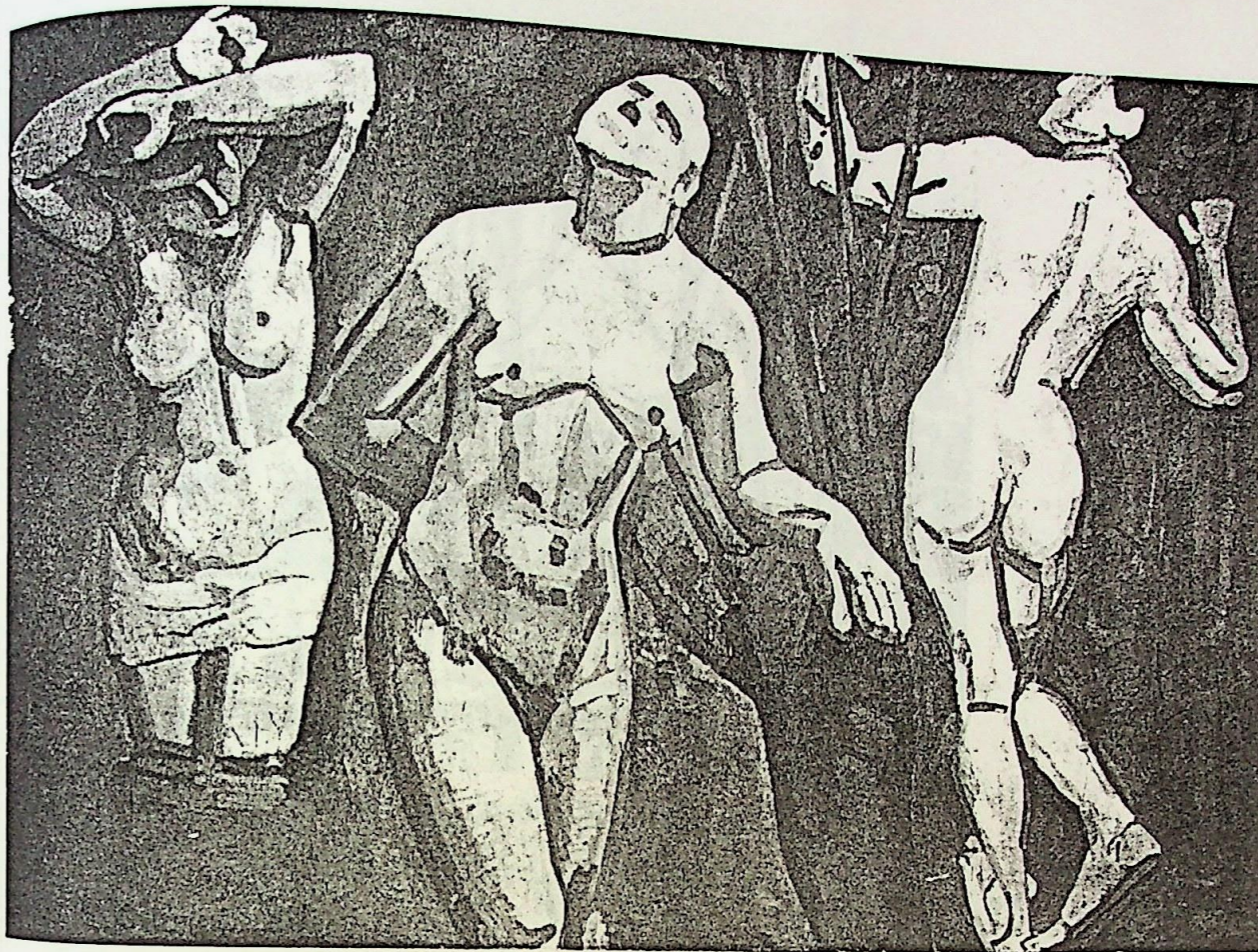
objects that were evidence of the human imagination and of the ingenuity of the primitive craftsman.

In Vlaminck's appreciation of African Sculpture there is still something of this attitude, so that in part he is drawn to these statues by their strangeness and their curiosity rather than by their qualities as works of Art.

Derain on the other hand found African Sculpture 'amazingly frighteningly expressive', both because of its symbolic meaning and because its forms were designed to function in a full outdoor light. Ironically however the profound influence of Primitive Art is not carried into the paintings of the Fauves, there is hardly any trace of either African or Oceanic production in the form or subject matter of their paintings. *Illustration (8^a 8^b)*

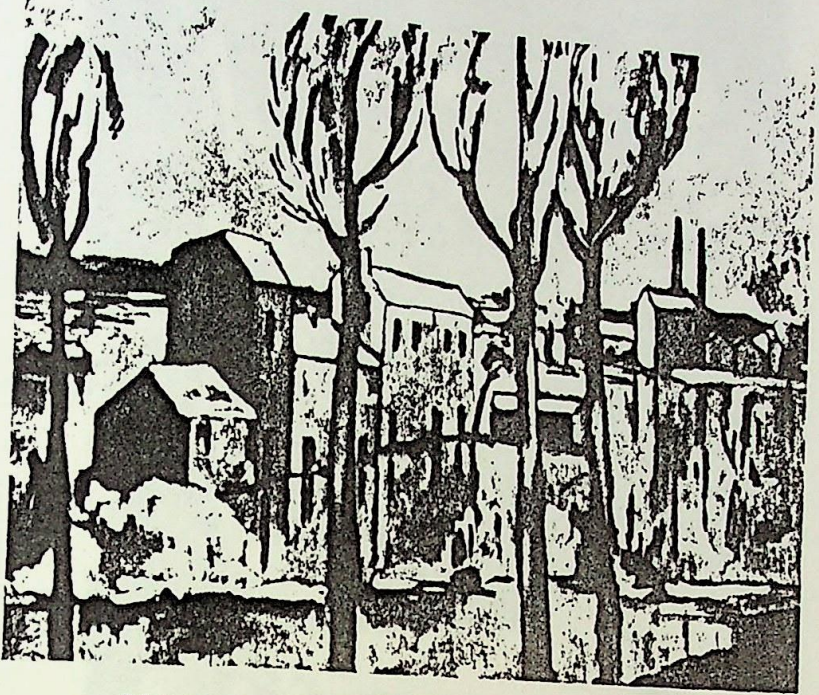
In Fauvist painting one of the most common themes is that of large nudes bathing in a landscape, a scene neither new or original (*illus 9^A 9^B*) yet it is treated in a manner which sets it apart from everything that has gone before. Their use of broad, unfinished line, the application of large areas of undifferentiated areas of colour and lack of perspective in the composition as a whole marks a further simplification of the methods of earlier painters namely those of Gauguin, Van Gogh, Seurat. In certain respects this simplification recalls aspects of primitivism but it also contained elements pointing directly away from primitivism.

The Fauves were primarily concerned with a directness and immediacy of expression with little or no concern for any deeper



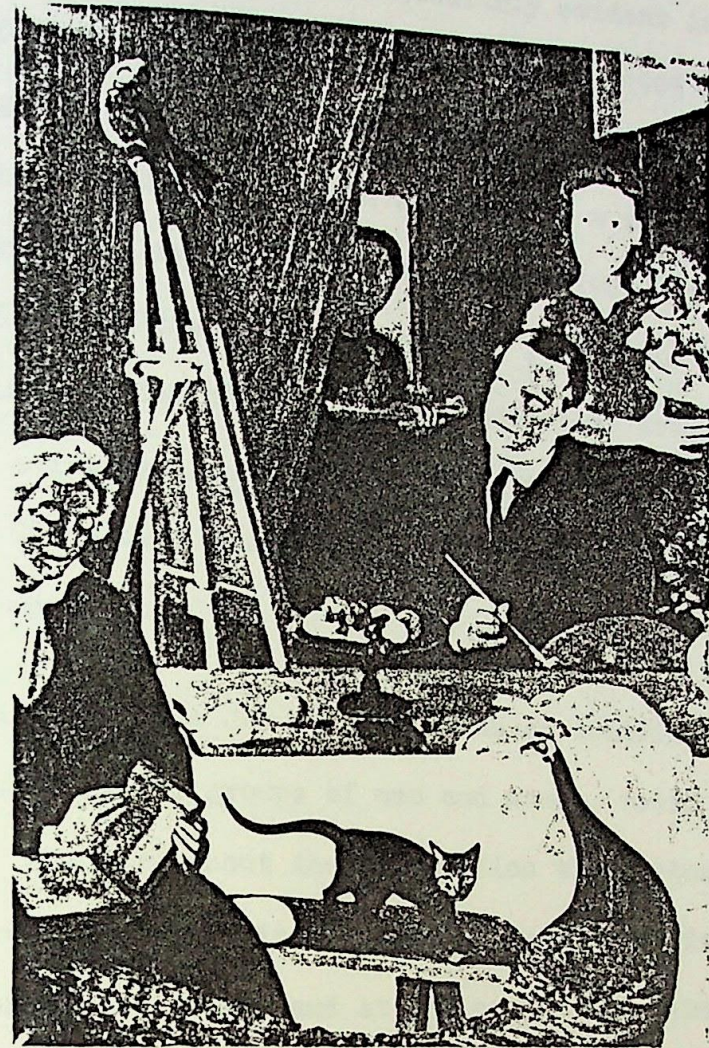
André Derain: *Bathers*. 1907.

Illustration of Fauves



MAURICE DE VLAMINCK. *The Flood*, Ivry. 1910.

Illustration 9^B Fauves

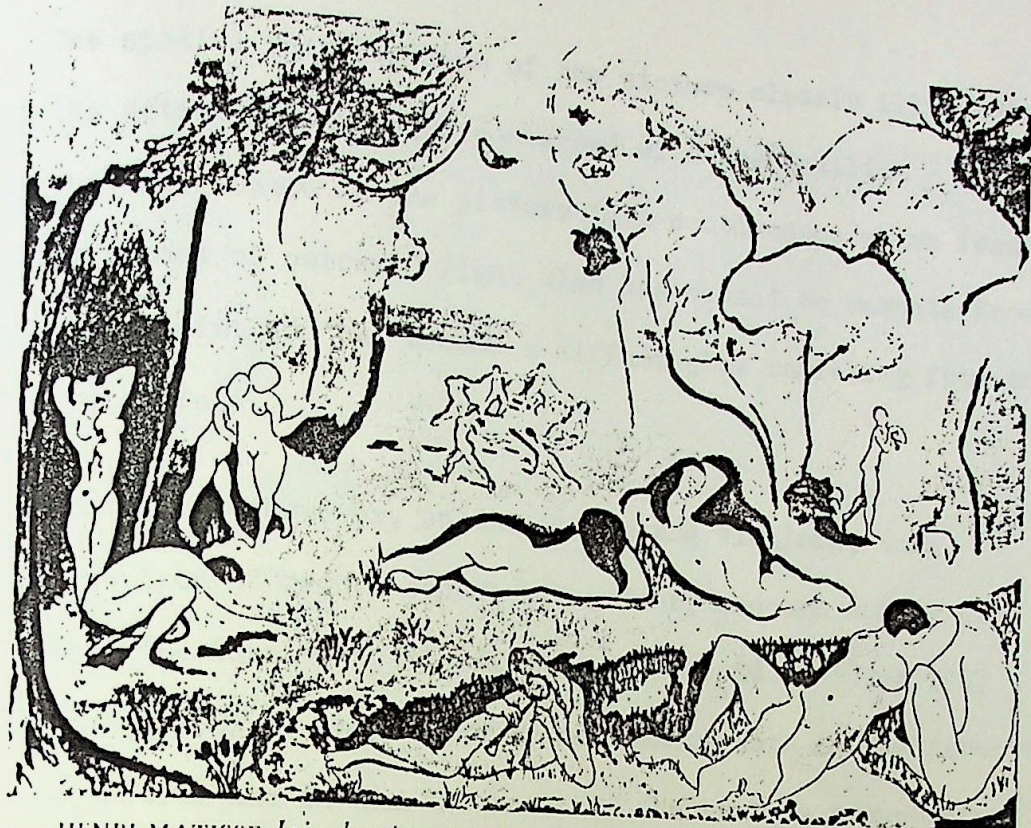


ANDRE DERAÏN. *The Painter with His Family*. c. 1939.

or symbolic meaning. This is particularly evident in the painting 'Joy of Life' painted by Henri Matisse between 1905 and 1906 and it is thought to have marked the 'Climax of the Fauve period'. Matisse like Vlaminck and Derrain accumulated a vast collection of primitive art, begun perhaps as early as 1904 and certainly before 1906. Appollinaire has said of him, that 'he likes to surround himself with objects of old and modern art, precious materials, and those sculptures in which the negroes of Guiney, Senegal or Gabun have demonstrated with unique purity their frightened emotions.'

The painting 'The Joy of Life' shows an arcadian scene, In (illus 10) a sun drenched field, groups of men and women, rest, dance, and make love. But throughout the composition the pastoral and dance-like elements are transferred into a play of arabesques determining the position of the groups and at the centre embracing the linear motif of the 'round dance'. The rhythmic line plays around the body of the girl on the left as she garlands herself with laurel whilst simply and expressively it outlines the movement of the one who crouches at her feet picking flowers, and in a passionate sweep unites the bodies of the lovers on the right.

Where the melody requires it, the line spontaneously distorts the naturalistic appearance in order to attain more simplified expressiveness. This non naturalistic mode of presentation is further exemplified in the relative sizes of the figures. They are arranged purely according to the requirements of the surface decoration without thought of the distances in nature.



HENRI MATISSE *Joie de vivre* 1905-06

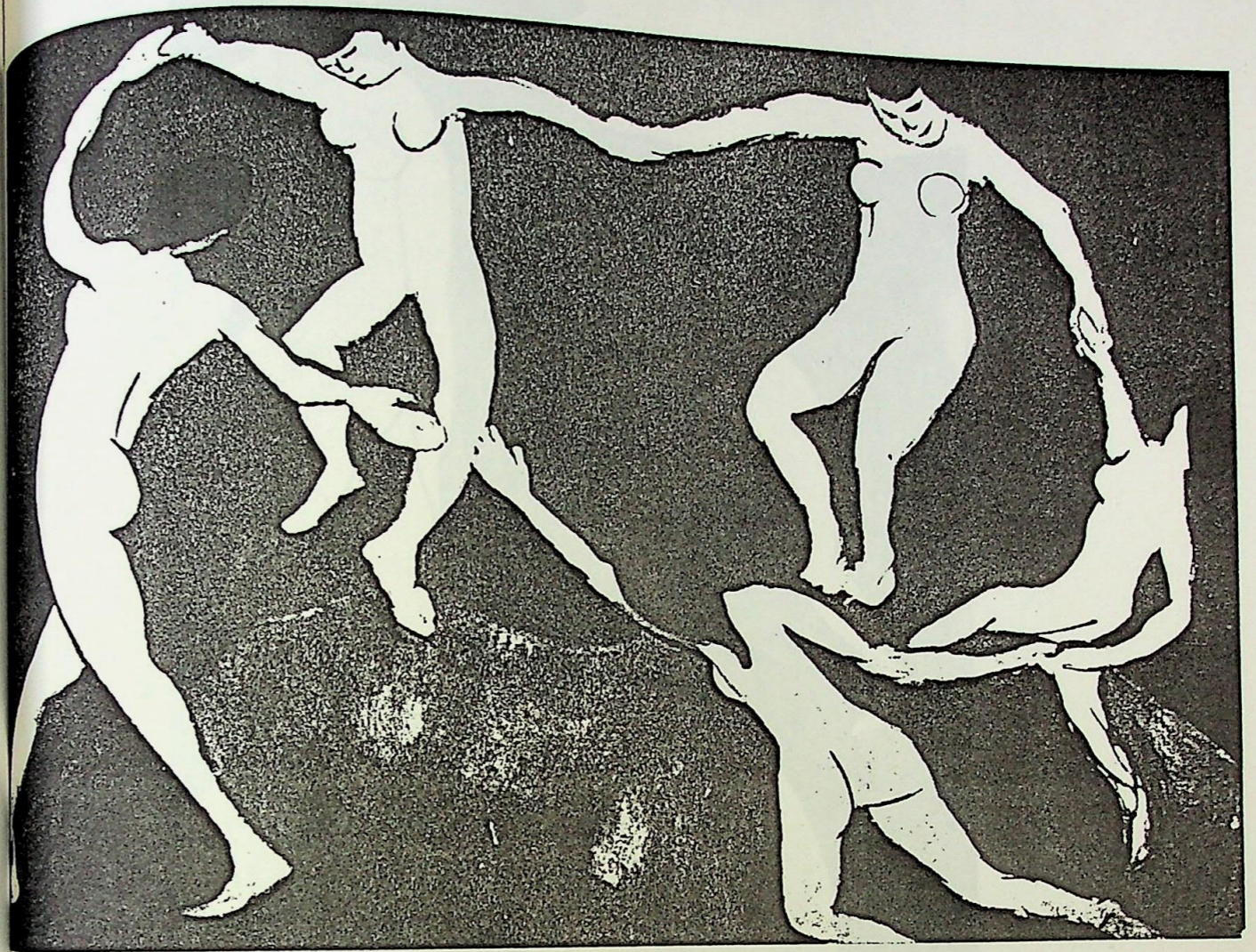
Illustration 10^a

The spatial relationships of the picture clearly illustrate that the artist is no longer concerned with the familiar perspectives. Space in the picture is a continuence which forms out in flat planes of colour. Light also has ceased to emanate from a specific point and has become a diffuse glow radiating from the coloured surface.

For Matisse however, unlike Derran and Vlaminck, this simplification of method became his primary concern and in his paintings 'Le Luxe 1 and 11 (Illustration No. 11, No 10^g) of 1907 and 'Dance' 1909 we see a further refinement both in his structure of composition and in his treatment of the various components.

Another artist who at this time came under the influence of primitive Sculpture and through whose endeavours in this area of study brought about a notable change in the artistic directions of the early part of the 20th Century is that of Pablo Picasso.

Picasso whilst being aware of the collections of Primitive Art accumulated by Derran , Vlaminck, Matisse and the Fauves generally, he held little regard for these curios. Until one day in the Spring of 1907, while working on a large canvas 'Les Demoiselles D'avignon' he paid a visit to the Trocadero (it is widely believed that he became aware of the Troc. from Derain) and that the ethnographical department contained a splendid collection of Negro Sculpture. It might be worth noting here that Negro Art in the Trocadero was esteemed only for its scientific value, there was then no attempt to present the objects as works of Art, on the contrary they were



HENRI MATISSE. *Dance*. 1909.

Illustration 10^B

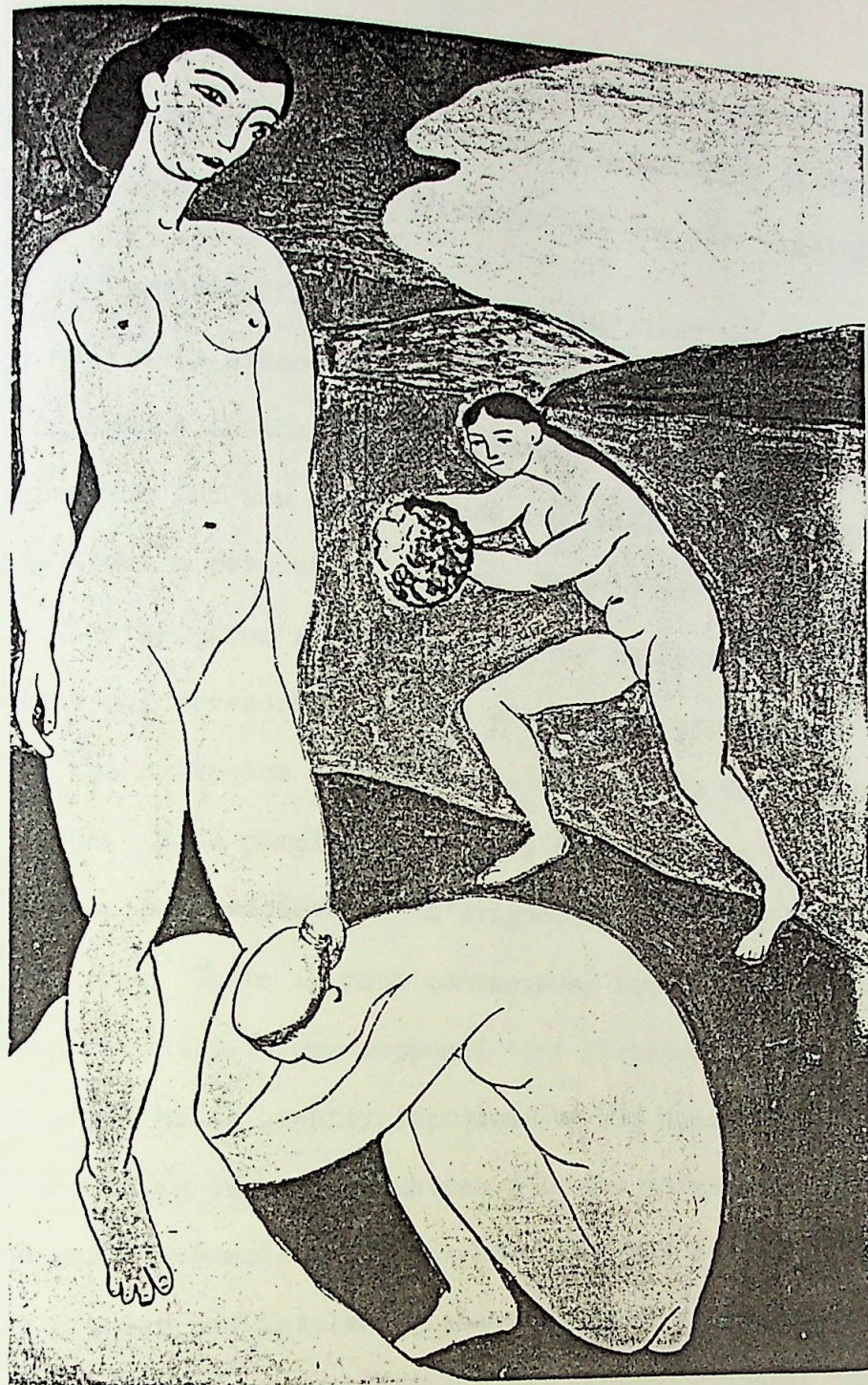
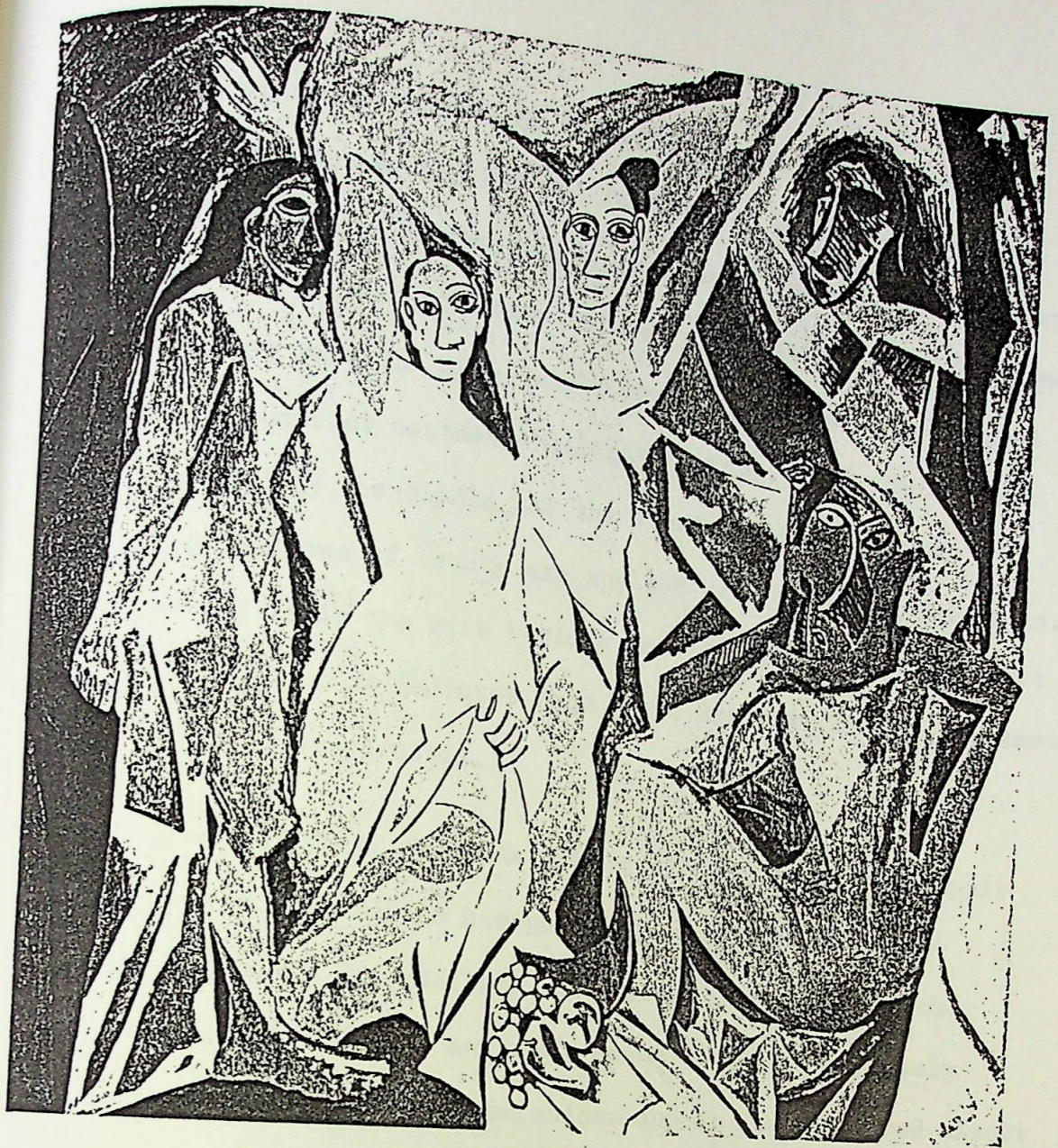


Illustration 11 La Luxe II

piled into badly lit glass cases, with complete disregard for those who might be interested in the startling originality of their form. This for Picasso made their discovery all the more exciting.

It is very significant that while the other painters who had already made this discovery, continued to show little or no sign of its influence in their work. Picasso understood immediately its importance and saw the profound implications that could be used to bring about a revolution in Art. Shortly after this he too began collecting from a dealer in the Rue de Rennes. His first finds were not necessarily pieces of great value, but they possessed vitality and a freedom from academic conventions that excited his imagination. With complete disregard for stylistic unity he completed his picture 'Les Demoiselles' D'Avignon which sprang from his delight at his new discovery. There is much controversy surrounding this painting (illus 12) and until recently it was supposed that Picasso painted the whole picture after being greatly impressed by his discovery of African Sculpture. This is however untrue, for the three nudes to the left show no such tendencies. Their ancestry lies without doubt in Iberian Bronzes and Catalan murals with which certain Egyptian influences have been assimilated. Furthermore Picasso has stated firmly that when he started the picture he was not conscious of any particular interest in Negro Art. The other two faces on the right-hand side, can be seen at a glance to be totally different in treatment and bear strong resemblance to the barbaric simplicity of Negro Masks. It would appear therefore that they were painted in after the rest of the picture had already taken its present form in the spring of 1907.



Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)*, 1907.

Illustration 12

There are many aspects of Primitive Art that have intrigued Picasso. The simple blocked out features of Negro Masks express the primeval terrors of the jungle, and their ferocious expressions of serene look of comprehension between man and the animal Kingdom. In more formal ways the able use of geometric patterns and shapes produces an abstract aesthetic delight in form. The simple basic shapes created by the circle and the straight line, the only unchanging features of beauty are applied with startling aptitude. But above all it is the rich variety in which these elements exist and the vitality that radiates from Negro Art that brought Picasso a new breath of inspiration.

Picasso differed from the Fauves in that he chose to apply these elements directly to his painting as we can see in the 'Les Femmes d'Alger' (O. J. No. 115). The ghoulish and sinister manner in which Picasso has painted these two heads seems to make the already forbidden features of their companions appear dignified and almost gentle. The 'upper face' is dominated by a wedge shaped nose of enormous size. Heavy shading with green hatching spreads from its crest almost to the jaw. The structure of the 'face below' depends on the strong sweeping curve of a monstrous snout which divides terracotta coloured cheek from the heavy blue shadow on the side of the nose, a contrast which gives solidity to its flat surface. With astonishing economy and the use of revolutionary means the awful asymmetry of this mask-like face comes to life.

The painting which followed the 'Les Femmes d'Alger' (O. J. No. 115) was 'Les Femmes d'Alger' (O. J. No. 116).



Illustration 13
Nude with Drapes



Study for 'Les Femmes d'Alger' (O. J. No. 114)

added to his discoveries. Many of them were direct 'postscript' in which the sculptural appearance of the two wry heads were developed with a passionate fervour. A new architecture of the human form came to life in which classical proportions were a hindrance.

Heads such as the upper one of the barbaric pair in the Demoiselles appear in several studies about this time, it is held by most critics they derived from masks from the Ivory Coast. Further the manner in which he painted them. strong features, heavy shading with strong parallel lines coming down across the cheek, and violent cross hatching, are all characteristics of Picasso's style during this period. (Illustrations No. 13) It is for this reason that this stage of Picasso's development has been described as his 'Negro Period'.

To label all paintings of this period as 'Negro' is in fact to oversimplify the problem of their origins and diminish their significance. It has been suggested that it would be less misleading to call this period 'prehistoric' or 'pre hellenistic', but if the period must have a label it would be more exact to use the term 'Proto-cubist' invented by 'Barr', since all these tendencies led consistently to the birth of the new style.

In Germany about this time (1905-1906) a group of artists similar to those of the Fauves came to light. In Germany however the situation was much less coherent than in France, developments occurred in greater isolation, simultaneously, though in widely separated centres. In North Germany Emile Nolde, Paula Mondersohn and

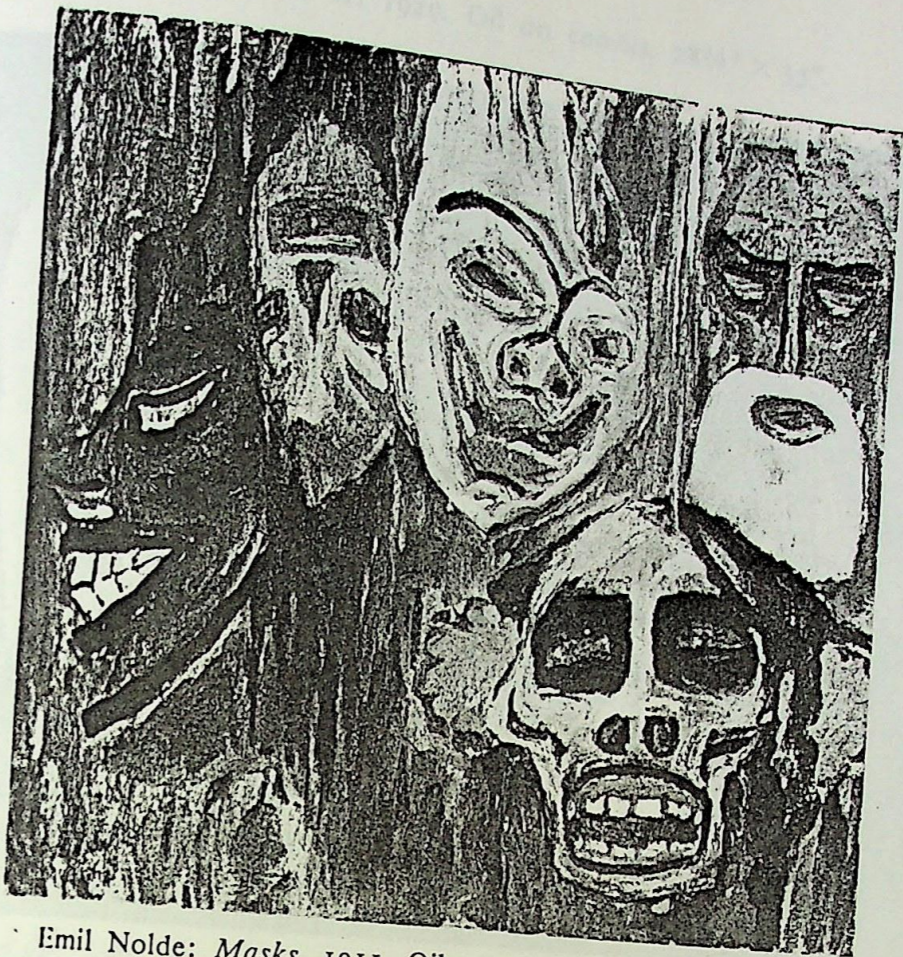
Rahlfis were working on their own towards a new expressive art, Kokoschka was doing the same in Vienna, in Dresden there were four friends, Schmidt, Rothuff, Kirchner, Heckel and later Pechstein who formed the group known as Die Brücke (The Bridge) and in Munich the few painters which gathered around the Neue Künstlervereinigung, Macke, Paul Klee and Franz Marc who called themselves Die Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider). Only gradually did these separate elements coalesce to form the style we call 'Expressionist'.

The Artists which constituted these groups 'The Expressionists' also knew of primitive painting and sculpture. The creations of the native artists of Africa and Oceania were 'discovered' by Ernst Ludwig Kirschner in the cases of the Dresden Ethnological museum in 1904 as he recounts in his history of the group, the 'Chronik der Brücke'. Unlike earlier artists (namely Gauguin who had known the sculpture of the Marquesas and Easter Island and perhaps of New Zealand, and the Fauves figures and masks from Africa) the Germans, with proper thoroughness, found both Africa and Oceania at once in a museum, and as befitted the more advanced state of ethnological collecting in their country, they immediately became acquainted with a range and variety of style that the French took some years to discover.

Owing perhaps partly to this circumstance but also to their artistic intentions they never regarded primitive art simply as a curiosity as Vlaminck did in large measure. As Emil Nolde wrote it was at once 'raised up to the level of art, pleasing, ripe,

original art'. It is true that other primitive and exotic arts were being discovered at the same time, Chinese, Indian, Persian and above all German woodcuts of the 16th Century and 17th Century, nevertheless since the Expressionists did little direct copying and were little interested in purely formal exercises, there is never any questions of a borrowing eclecticism in their work. What fascinated them was the power and immediacy of primitive art or as Nolde said, 'Its absolute primitiveness, its intense often grotesque expression of strength and life in the very simplest form'.

Nevertheless an element of exoticism remains, which is evident not only in their admiration for earlier artists, whose art they came to know either in Germany or like Nolde on trips to Paris, or in the clear imitation of Gauguin's voyages and paintings in the work of Max Pechstein (Illustration), the least original member and one of the later adherents of Die Brücke. It can be seen also in the subject matter chosen for their pictures and particularly in those of Nolde. The ironically entitled, 'Man Woman and Cat' (1912) - Illustration No. and Missionary (1912) although directly inspired by Dahomeyart and show no attempt to copy its formal characteristics. Alongside such pictures as the several paintings of Masks whether from 1911 or 1920 (Illustrations No. 17^{A, B}) composed of isolated objects hung close together as one would find them in the documentary cases of a museum and the still life of 1914 (Illustration No.) which contains a New Guiney shield placed with other non primitive objects, appear such subjects as 'The finding of Moses by Pharaoh's Daughter' 1910 (Illustration No.),



Emil Nolde: *Masks*. 1911. Oil on canvas. 28¾" × 30½".

Illustration 17[^]

Emil Nolde: *Masks II*. 1920. Oil on canvas. 28¾" × 35".

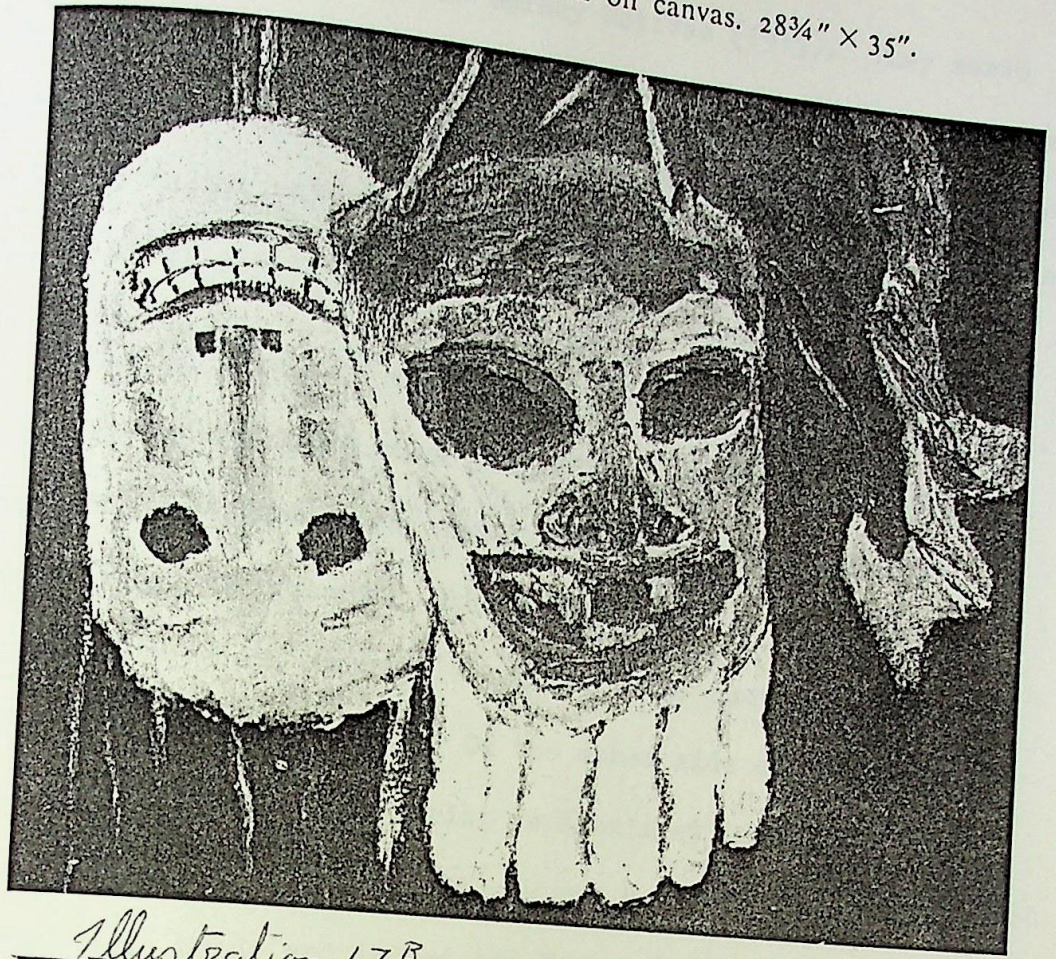
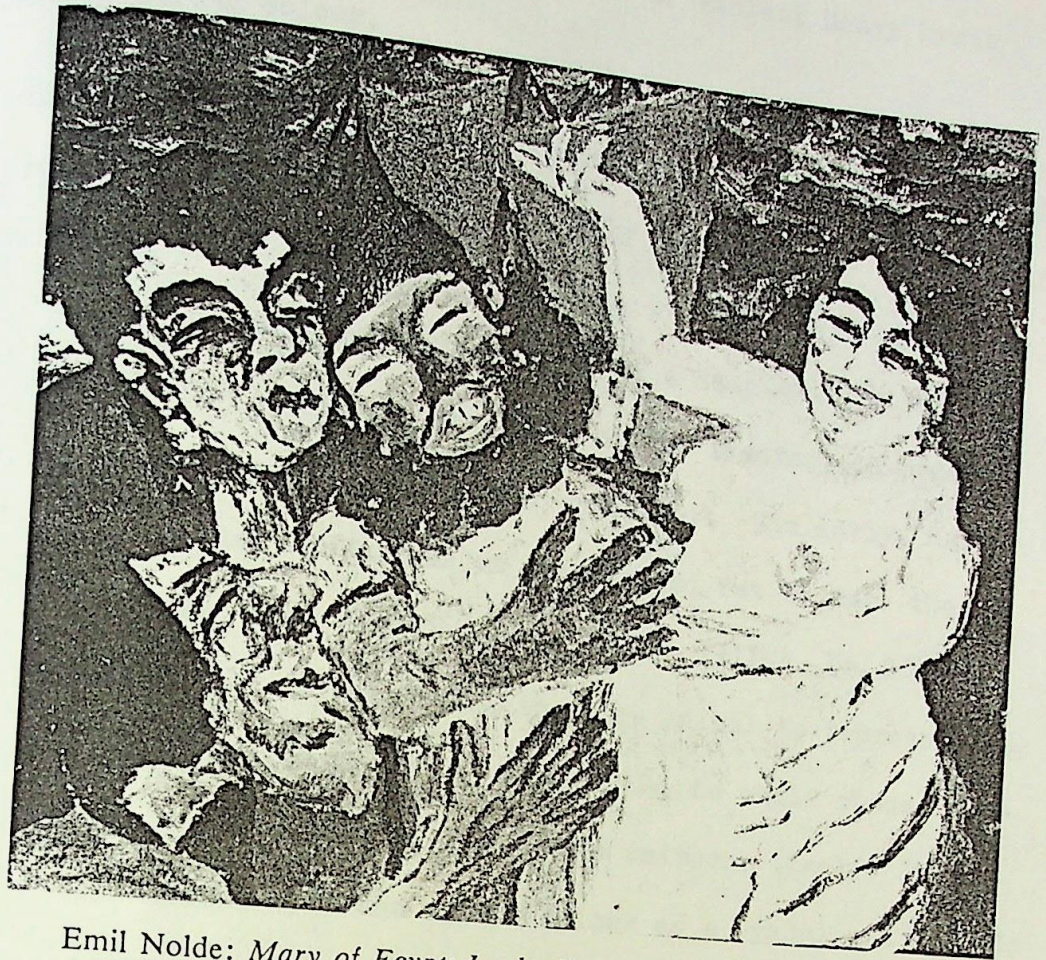


Illustration 17^B

Indian Dancers (1915) and New Guinea Natives (1915). They serve as an indication to Nolde's extensive travels but unlike many other artists he had no need to make portraits or to copy the decorative details of Native Art, he could transcribe his impressions and his feelings after his return.

In his portrayal of the legend of Maria Aegyptiaca 1912 (ill. No. 22) the wordly life of the harlot who became a saint is shown in a setting of great simplicity against a background of summarily suggested sails and Masts. The bawling crowd of fishermen is represented by three expressive masks, whose contorted grimaces create the illusion of lust. On the other side of the picture the dissolute body of the harlot is displayed in shrill tones of yellow and orange, while the bloody red hands of the sailors reach towards her. Nolde and indeed the Expressionists at large sought in their art to arouse the emotions of the spectator. As such much of their art illustrates the human form in heightened emotional states of great joy or great sorrow expressed by laughter or trars. The desire to heighten the expressiveness of such emotional states resulted in distortion, not only of the face, removed from its naturally relaxed expression, but of the entire body. It even transmitted itself to inanimate objects and the painting as a whole, because these did not appear for their own sakes but were meant to symbolize part of the underlying intention. This symbolism was further emphasized by their rich use of line, colour, and form. While these paintings bore some similarities, mostly formal, to the work of the French painters the expressionist differed greatly



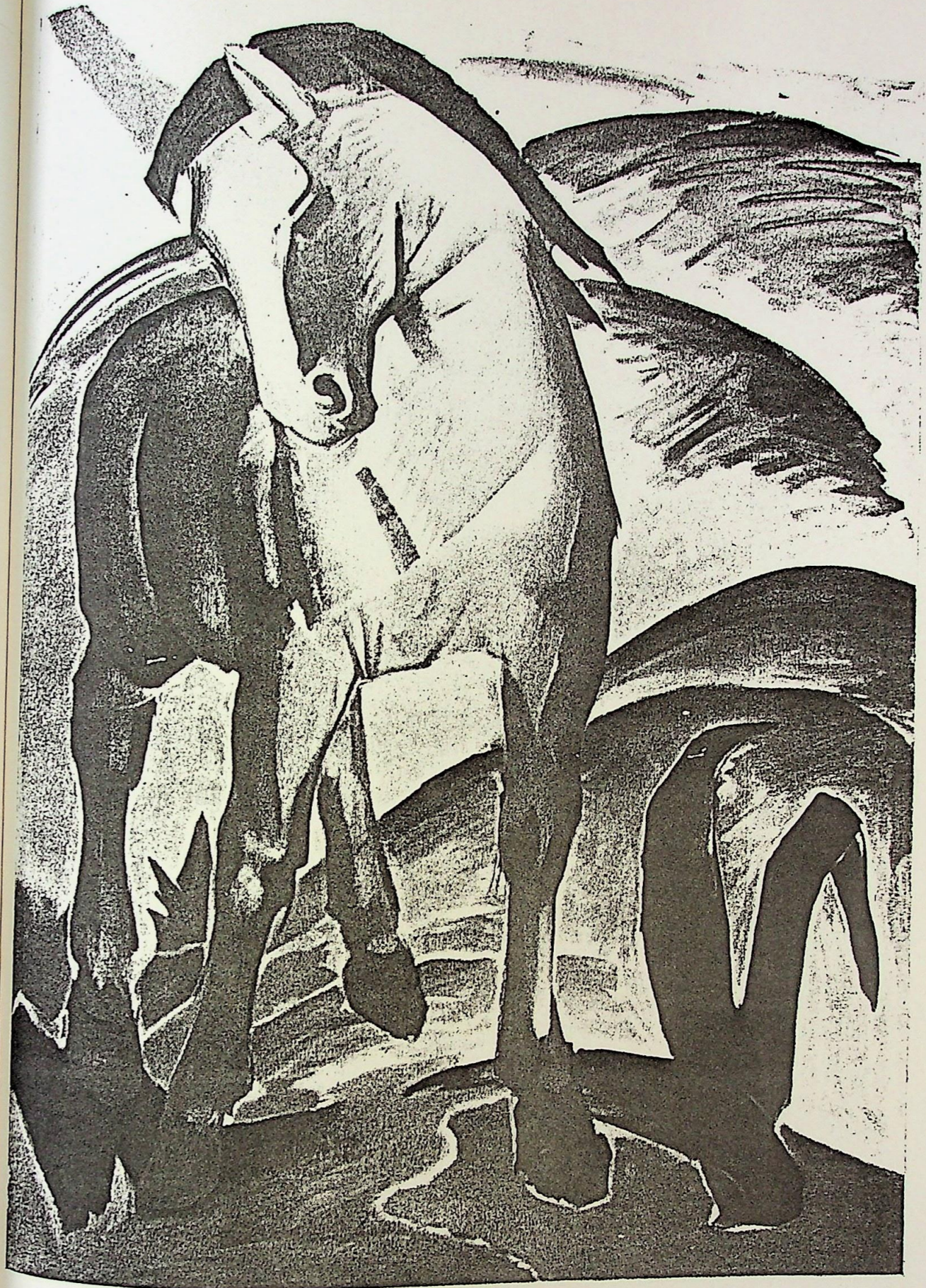
Emil Nolde: *Mary of Egypt: In the Port of Alexandria*. 1912. Oil on canvas.

Illustration 22

from that of the fauves, through the use of violent heavy brush strokes of strong colour.

In the work of Kokoschka and Franz Marc this use of the symbolic properties of colour becomes particularly apparent. In this painting 'Bride of the Wind' 1914, Kokoschka, rather than treating the sky in a subdued nocturnal manner, applies a deep and luminous shade of blue that surpassed even that of the tropics, in order to convey an atmosphere of mystical splendour. Similarly, Marc occasionally painted his horses an exaggerated red to make them appear as symbols of a vigorous natural life (Illus. No. 25)

If on the other hand, he was using the same animal to represent the creature in relation to the rest of creation, he would choose blue the colour of distance of the sky, of the universe itself. In his Tower of blue horses 1912 the use of colour as a symbol and vehicle for inner expression is immediately discernable.



FRANZ MARC: The Blue Horse

Illustration 25

Chapter Three

Primitive influence on 20th century

Sculpture

So far we have seen how painting in the early part of this century became influenced by primitive art. In a somewhat similar manner we see how certain sculptors at the turn of this century, also adopted elements of primitivism in their respective works. For the most part the influence of primitive art on sculpture in this century seems to have evolved at a much slower pace than that of painting. This is perhaps due to the fact that for hundreds of years prior to the twentieth century painting had undergone major changes, dramatic upheavals which in turn led to a breakdown in classical ideology whilst sculpture had changed relatively little and remained in the tradition of the figurative sculptures of the renaissance. The French sculptor Rodin may have been an exception to this as in the latter end of the nineteenth century his contributions were considerable.

It is interesting therefore to notice that of these artists Matisse and Picasso emerge once again to establish themselves as the primary instigators. For Matisse interest in sculpture was a means of indulging his romantic expression to fulfill his role as an artist, that is both painter and sculptor.

With regards Matisse's early experiments in sculpture, they are indeed by far less impressive than those of his paintings. For Matisse his initial interest in sculpture, lay not in the finished work of art per se, but rather it constituted a means through which he could resolve his painterly intentions. Between the years 1905-10 Matisse studied the figure in every conceivable pose and in every medium, drawing, painting, linolium cuts and lithography as well as sculpture. Although he used a number of mediums for the same or similar pose, he revealed his awareness of their separate properties.

This becomes particularly evident in his sculpture from 1907 onwards the most notable of these being "Reclining nude 1 1907" (Illus no 26) "Two negresses 1908" (Illus No 27) and "La Serpentine of 1909" (Illus no 28). What is significant about all of these sculptures is that they derived from a two dimensional source. His first reclining nude 1907 the idea for which appears to have been borrowed from his large painting "Joy of Life" (Illus No 10) 1905-1906. The Serpentine and two negresses whose pose originated from photographs which Matisse used when he had no model available at his studio in Callioure. Working on a two dimensional source gave him total freedom to develop the sculptures in volume and disposition according to his own sense of the architecture of the parts. Somewhat similar to the manner in which he painted, there is a richness of arabesques and rhythmic line throughout. Arabesque a word often used by Matisse, is a decorative conception. He uses it in an attempt to escape from mass and volume, towards movement and action and that of course, with many qualifications is also true of his paintings. Even in the small sculpture two negresses from 1908 which upon first impressions appears sedate and static this use of the arabesques is presented in the subtle movements of the interlocking arms.

Similar features in an even more exaggerated form can be seen in La Serpentine as early as 1909 the transformation of volume into line is so modulated as to reinvoke a volume of an entirely new order. Every inflection of the surface gives a key not only to a residual anatomic function but affirms an outward directional role modulating the flow and pace of the surrounding void in favour anti anatomic perceptual rhythms and connections through the figure.

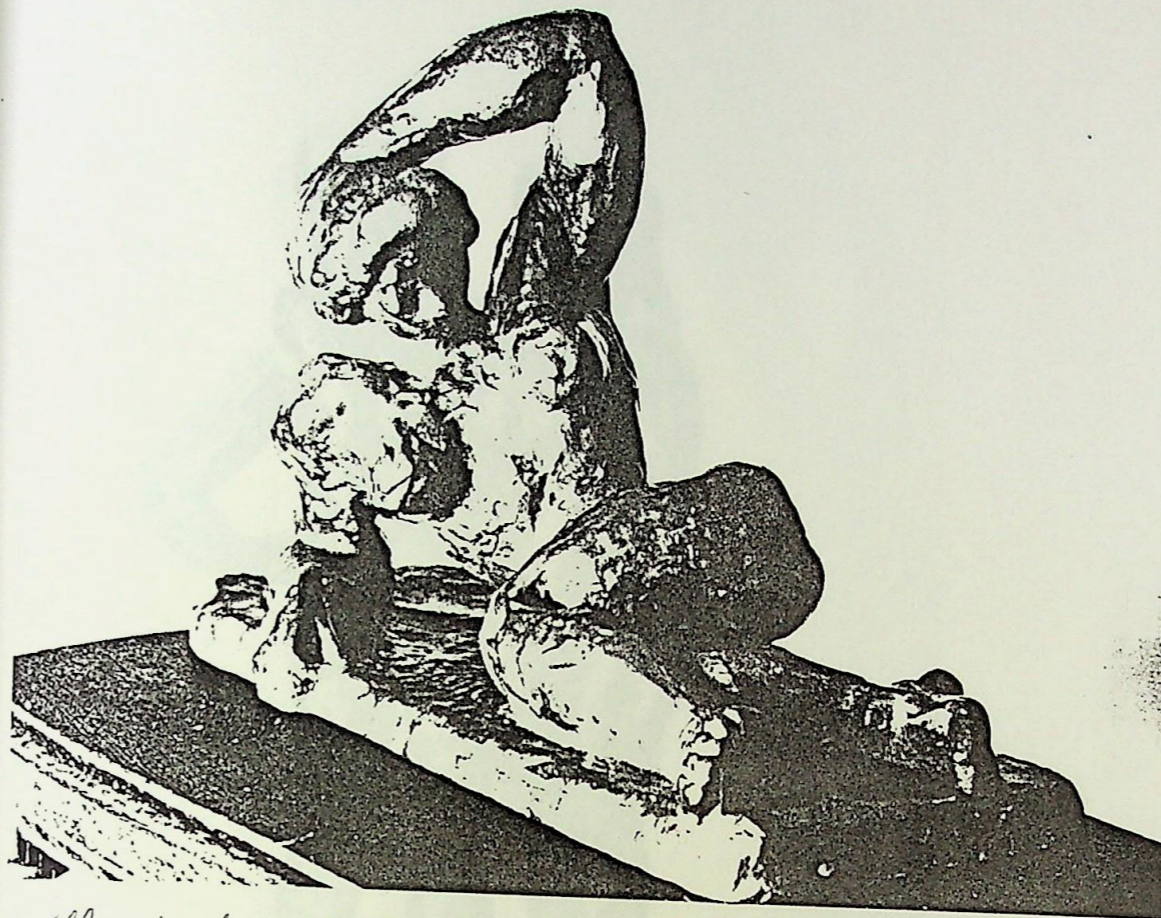
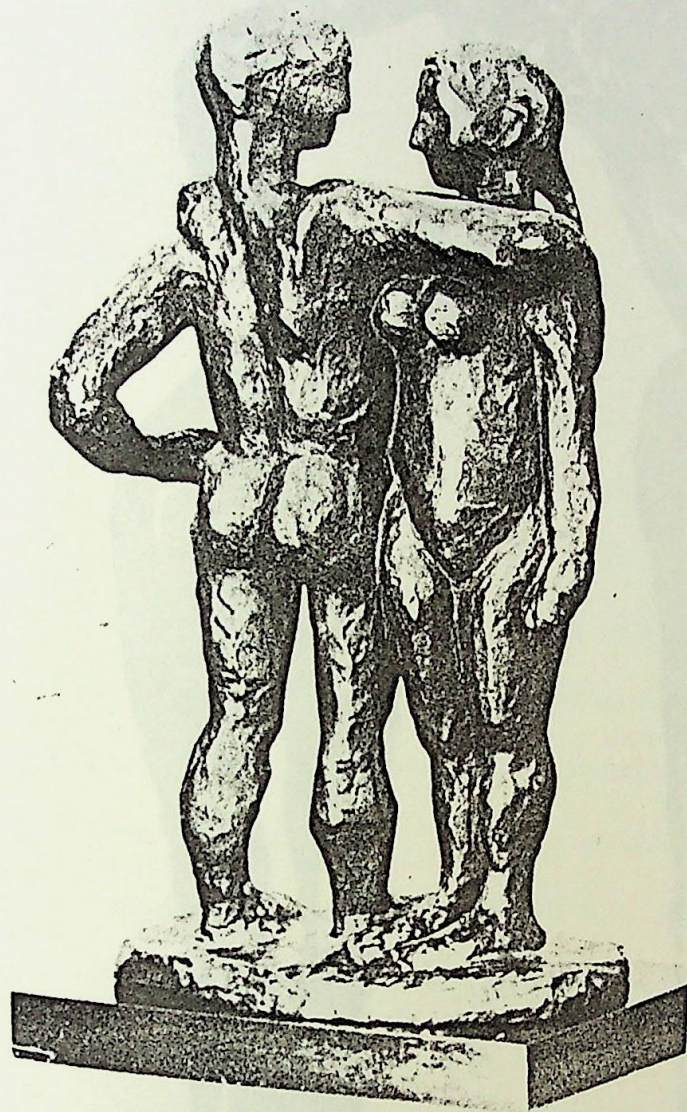


Illustration 26



HENRI MATISSE *Two Negresses* 1908
Illustration 2.7

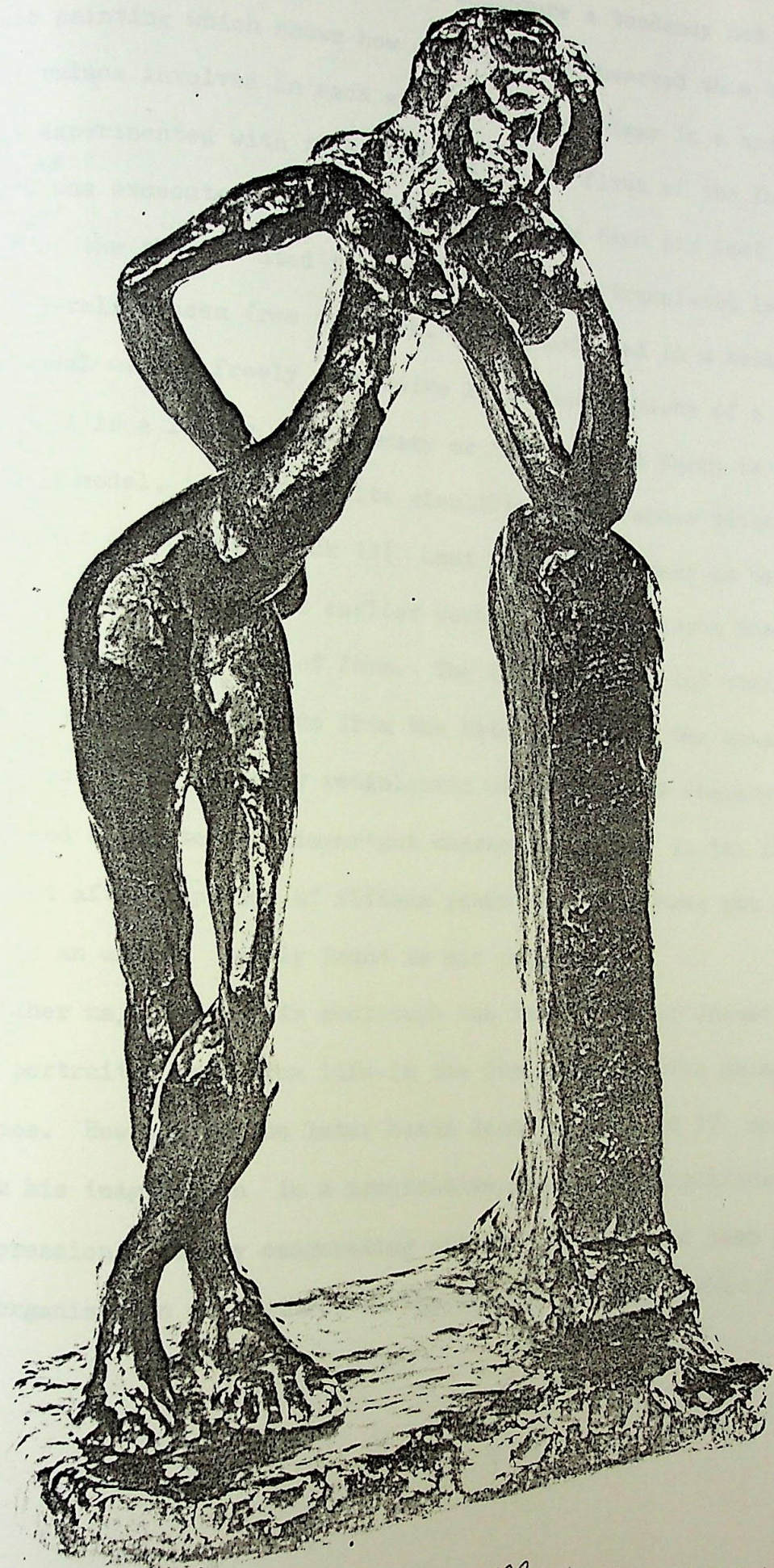
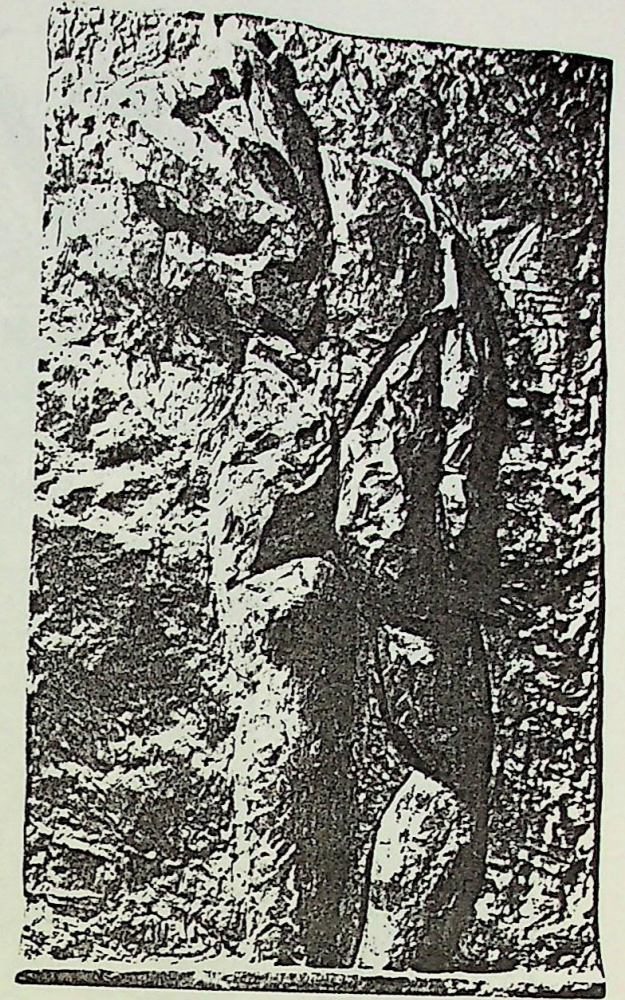
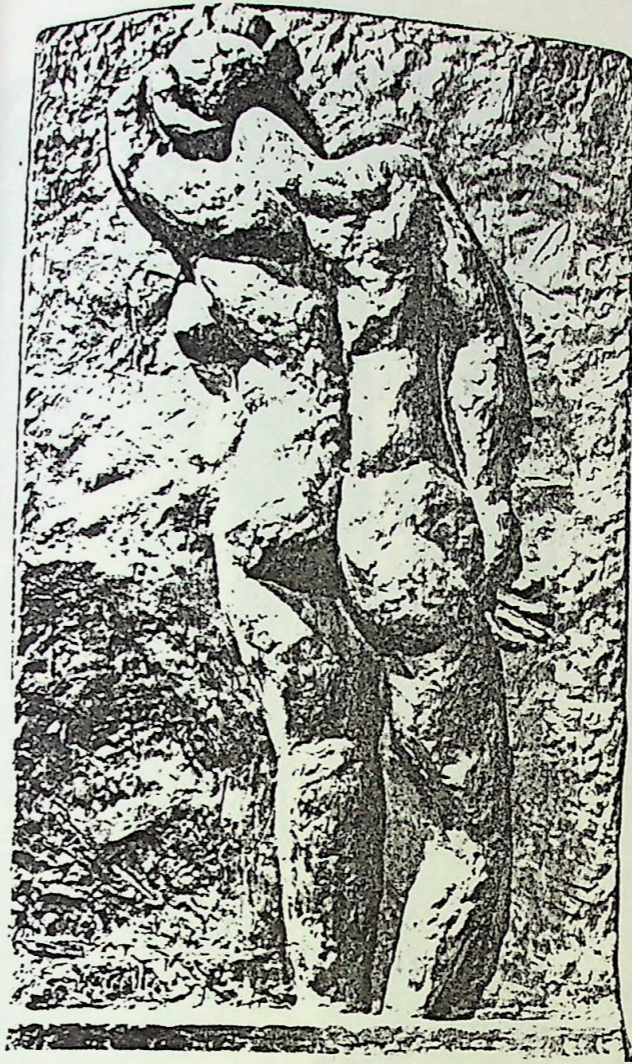


Illustration 28 La Serpentine

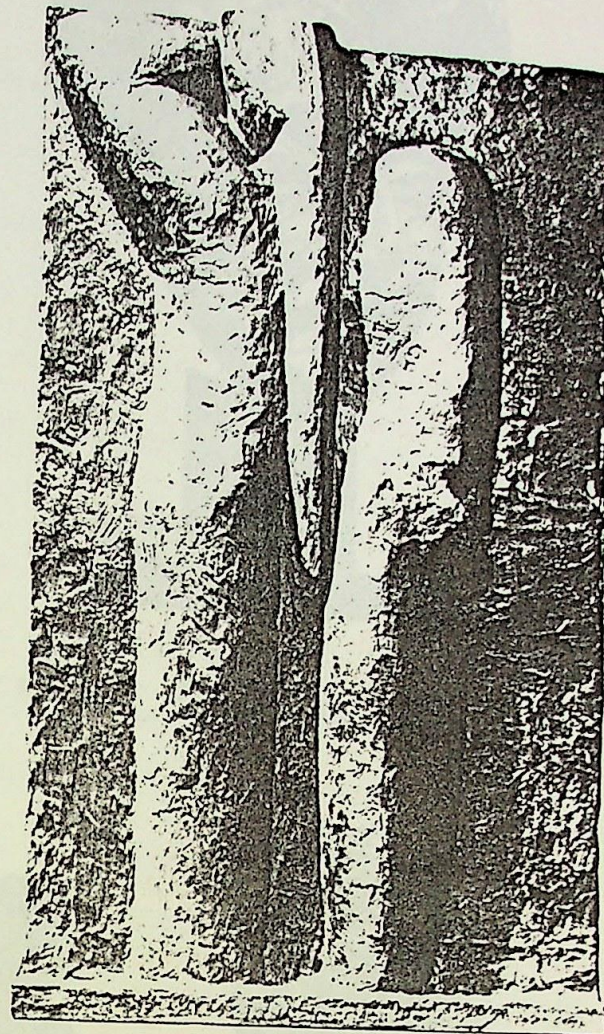
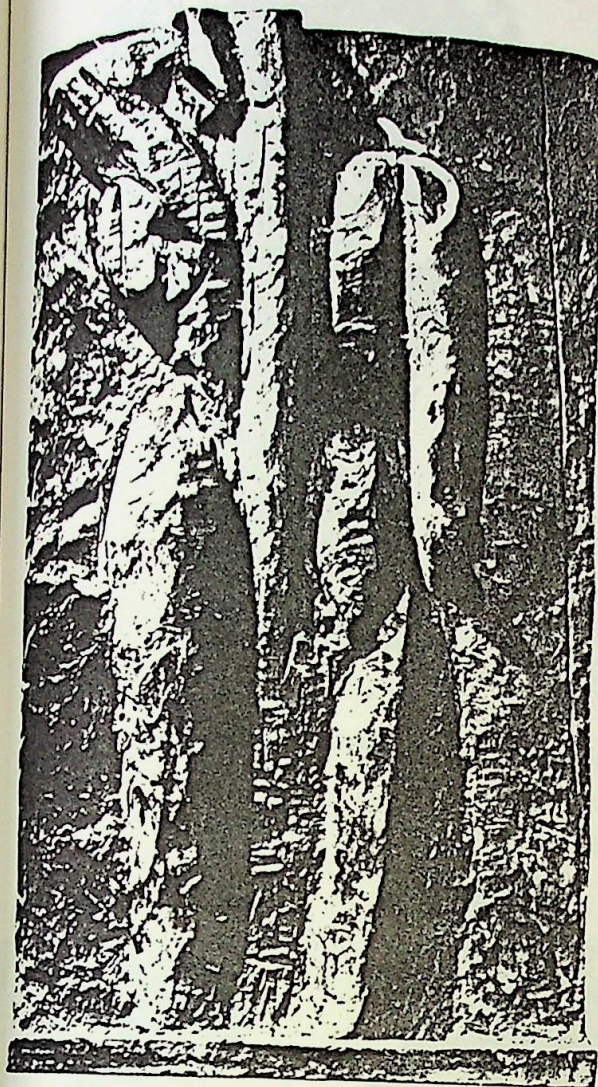
This expressionist tendency in Matisse's sculpture a tendency not generally found in his painting which shows how carefully he observed this distinct sensational values involved in each art, come to a climax in a series of "Backs" he experimented with from 1909-1929. The first of the four "Backs" (illus No's ^{AB} 27) was executed in 1909. This work more than six feet high is a development of the theme stated in Two Negresses now translated into a single figure in Bas-relief seen from the back. It is modelled in a relatively representational manner freely expressive in the modulations of a muscular. Back 11 1913-14 is a rather more summary or "Brutal" but there is no essential departure from the human model, if anything its simplified in a manner reflecting the artists interest in cubism. Back 111 cast in the same year as Back 11 contrasts strongly to Matisse's earlier works. By comparison the third Back shows drastic simplifications of form. The limbs have become rigid tree trunks, and a long tail of hair descends from the head to balance the upward thrust of the legs. In effect it is strongly reminiscent of negro masks whereby the artist over stated and distorted the important characteristics. In the final version which followed after a period of fifteen years the forms have yet again been simplified to an extent rarely found in his painting.

Matisse's other major effort in sculpture was the series of Jeanette 1 and 11 are direct portraits done from life in the freely expressive manner of late Rodin bronzes. However in the later heads Jeanette 111 and 1V and V Matisse worked from his imagination in a progressive process of simplification into an expressionist study exaggerating all the features and then into a geometric organisation of features in the mass of the head. (Illustration 30)



HENRI MATISSE *The Back I* c. 1909; *The Back II* c. 1913-14

Illustration 29^A

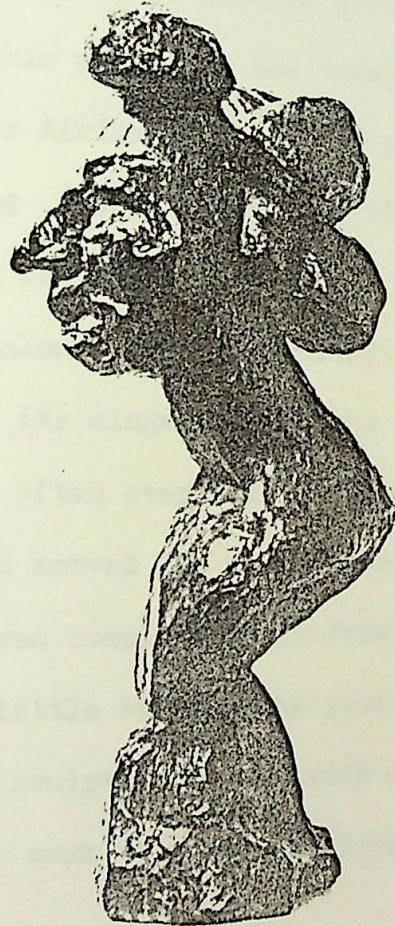
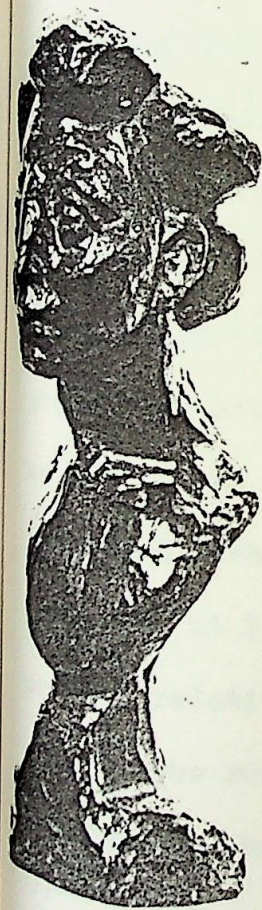


99-100 HENRI MATISSE *The Back III* c. 1914; *The Back IV* c. 1929

Illustration 29 B



HENRY MATISSE *Head of Jeannette I, II, III, IV, V* 1910-13 *Illustration 30*



Picasso unlike Matisse found renewed interest in sculpture through his sympathy for the violent expression and primitive strength of negro sculpture which came at a moment he was again preoccupied with the realization of solid forms on a two dimensional surface. Picasso's thoughts were inspired by sculpture but it was not until two years later after his discovery of primitive art that he turned his hand again to carving. For Picasso negro art had been an abrupt and dramatic incursion. When look at the works that belong to the period of his art we find not more than a handful of paintings and two or three of his sculptures that have been hidden for years. One such sculpture is the immensely savage totem-pole figure carved (hewn) in 1907 (Illus no 31) given the date one jumps at the affinities but figure remains a rather perplexing work. There is a notable difference between this piece and the paintings of this time. Whatever primitive or African things were pressed into the service of early cubist painting found themselves being mingled with the delicate and artificial trappings of European culture such as easle painting. This did not happen with figure which stands alone without a context. It does not nescessarily have high stabling as art, and its singularity (there are only two smaller things like it) has meant that it is often overlooked. It may not appear finished but on the other hand perhaps it served all of Picasso's purposes as it was and therefore in his eye at least was complete. Apart from these early sculptures Picasso produced relatively little between the years 1910-1925. When Picasso resumed sculpture it was with construction in iron and wire that he chose to work this was an altogether new and unprecedented type of art.

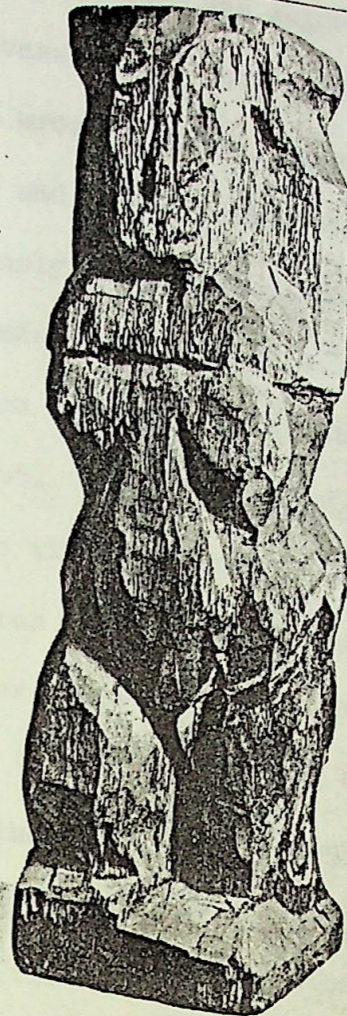


Figure 1907

Illustration 31

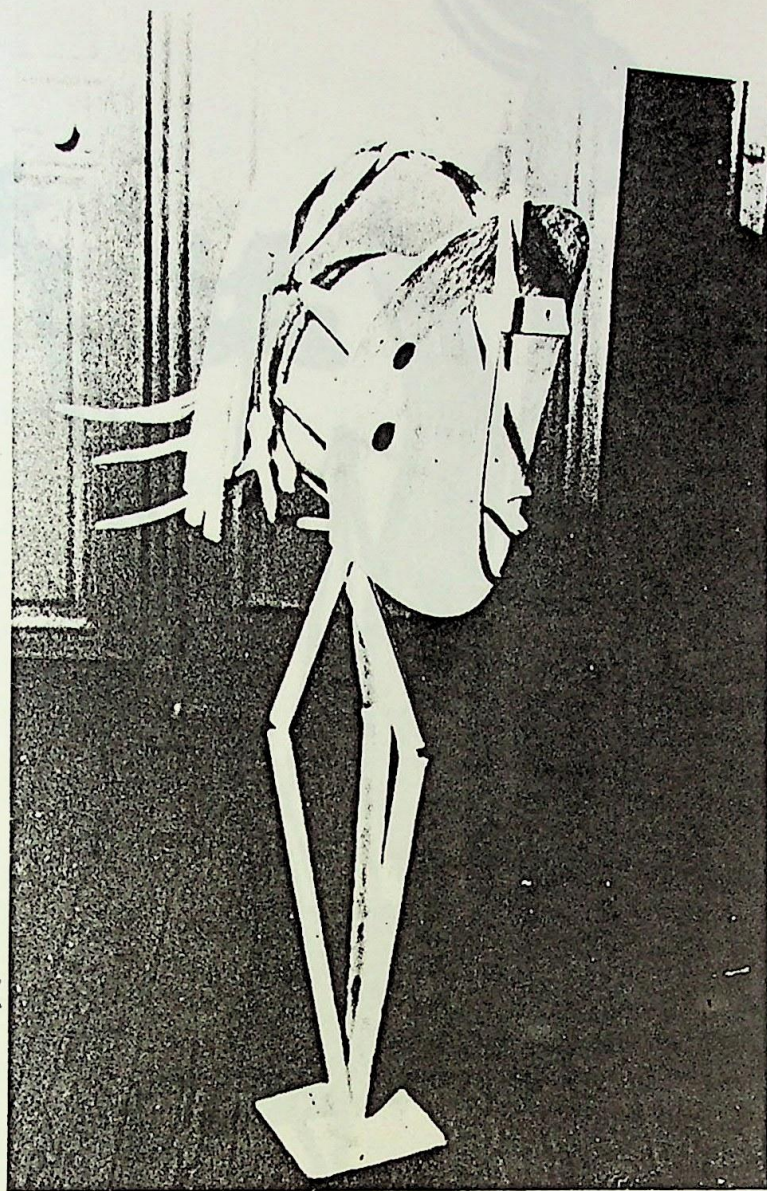
This new direction explored by Picasso was suggested by his fellow Catalan Julio Gonzalez with whom Picasso had a very close relationship in 1927 he began to experiment with wrought iron. Pieces of scrap-iron, springs saucepan lids, sieves bolts and screws picked out with discernment from the rubbish heap could mysteriously take their place in these constructions, wittily and convincingly ~~coming~~^c to life with a new personality. The vestiges of their origins remained visible as witnesses to the transformation they underwent. Among certain of these works elements of the tribal influence emerges once again with far greater clarity than those of the wood carvings. Picasso's iron figures can be seen to have definite emotional attributes, they are sinister, mysterious and even humorous. There may have been no conscious intention to create anything analggous to a tribal idol or totem, but that is the effect they achieved.

In the sculpture Construction (head) 1930-31 (Illus no32) one is again reminded of the recurring motiff of the heart-shaped face prevalant in African west coast carvings. Between 1930 and 1932 Picasso made at least fifty assemblages. They vary greatly in style but two completely original inventions emerge to constitute prototypes for the future devolpment of the art of sculpture. The first being that of open-work sculpture, generally (Illus 33) made open for decorative purposes to display the exterior and interior of an object simultaneously. The second being that of assembling actual objects and raw materials, th idea he already used for his cubist reliefs in the three dimensional constructions.

PABLO PICASSO
Construction (Head)

1930-1

Illustration 32



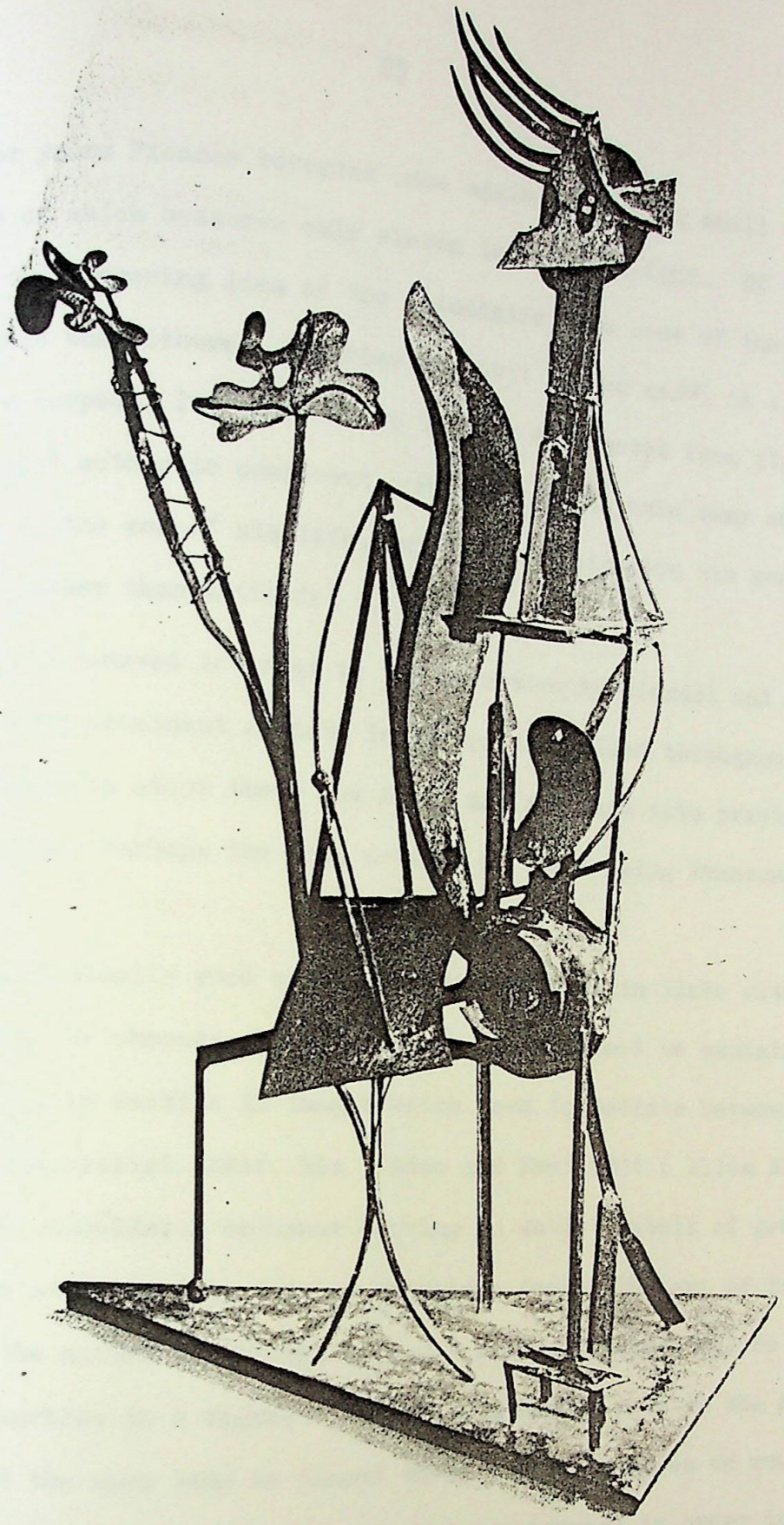


Illustration 33 Woman in the Garden

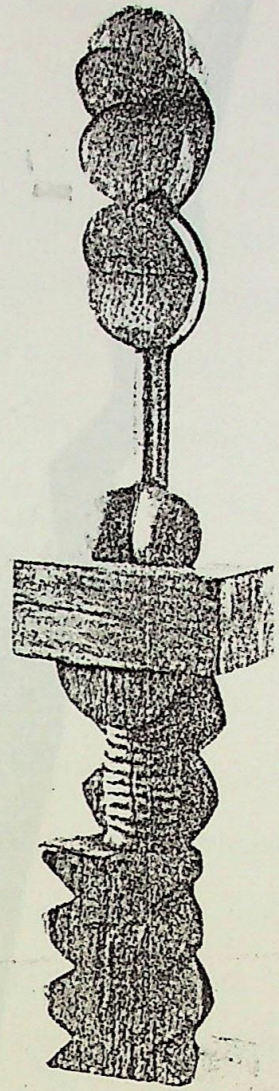
In his later years Picasso reverted once again to carving small wooden objects the largest of which measures only eleven inches in height. Of these latter works only the lingering idea of the totemiatic made some of these objects look more authentic than others. Figurine of 1931 (illus no 34) is a significant work in this respect, its scale is so totally disjuncted from its size that the gap is its most authentic component. Picasso was to make many such small objects and figures to the end of his life, but their inspiration was generally occasional rather than artistic.

Because of this renewed interest in the primitive by Picasso and Matisse, many of the most prominent artists in Europe and indeed throughout the Western Hemisphere began to adopt these new ideas and put them into practice in their respective works. Perhaps the most notable of these being Brancusi and Alberto Giacometti.

In Brancusi's wood carving we find once again links with prehistory with ethnology. He chooses symbolic themes which cannot be explained formally, he is particularly fertile in images which seem to mediate between primeval forces and metaphysical order. His 'Adam and Eve' 1921 (Illus No. 35) is one of the better examples, a columnar carving in which symbols of generation and fecundity are stylized into precise geometric forms. The art of Brancusi encompassed the nature of materials in all its manifestations. He finished his bronzes and marbles to a degree of perfection rarely seen in the history of sculpture, at the same time he placed these polished shapes on roughly hewn stone pedestals or on bases hacked out of tree trunks, in order to attain a mystical fusion of disembodied light reflecting surfaces, and solid earth



Illustration 34 Figure



BRANCUSI Adam and Eve 1921

Illustration 35

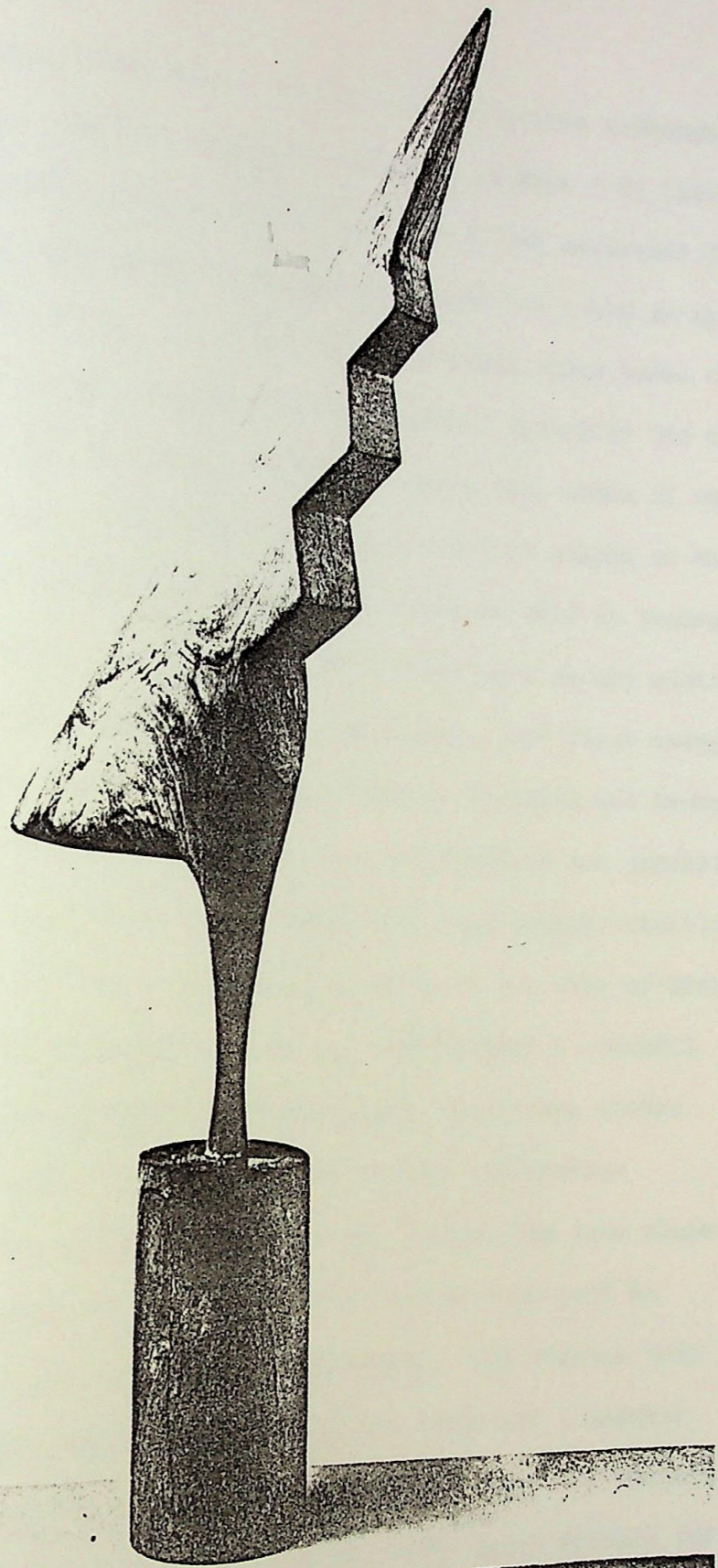
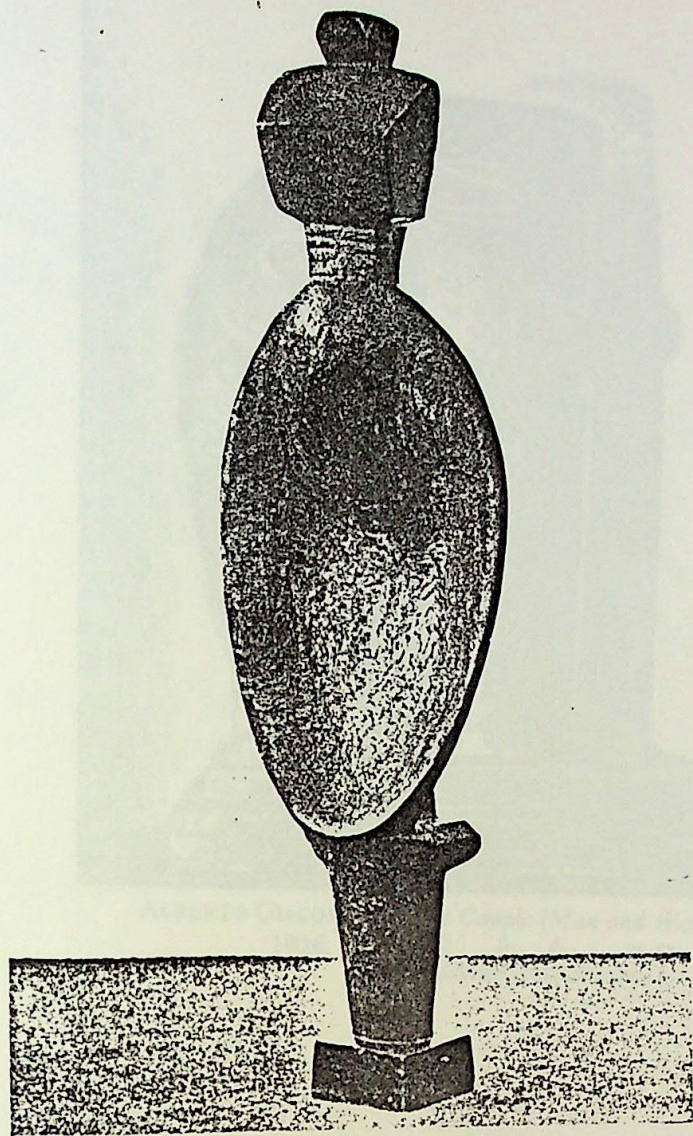
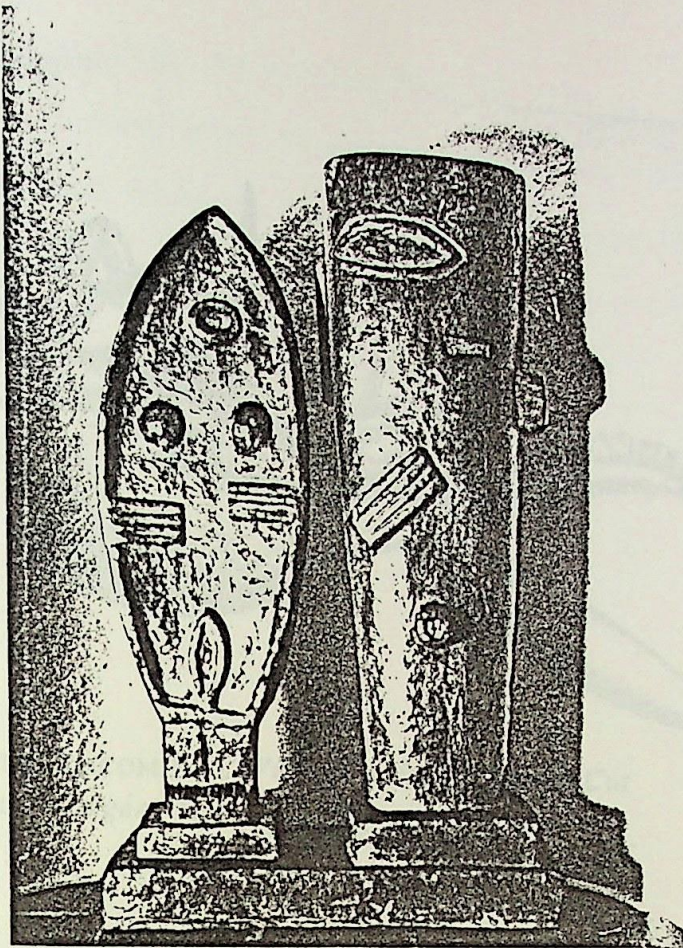


Illustration 36 Book I

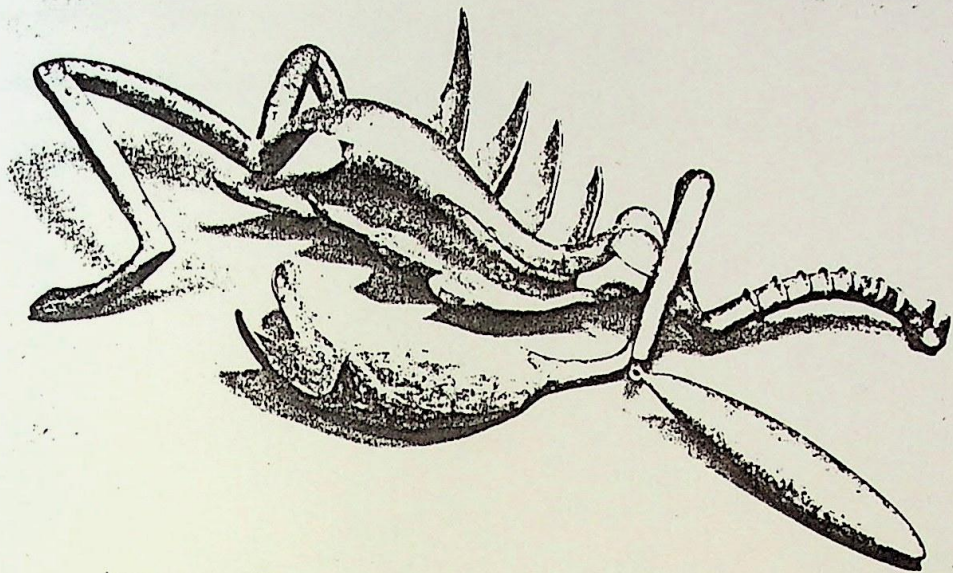
surfaces, and solid earth bound mass. In his wood sculptures although he occasionally strove for the same degree of finish as in Cock 1 24 (Illus no 36) where the polished stepped shape seems to give form to the seperated Cocks crow, he more normally worked for a primitive roughed out totem as in the King of Kings 1930s (Illus no), were the great regal shape based on the forms of a massive old wine press expressed with tremendous authority the spirit of primitive oriental religion. Brancusi did not create many works if one counts the symbols. But of the symbols he did create, he played on them, varied them, and modelled the same symbol many times as well as transposing them into different materials. Another artist who worked in a manner similar to that of Brancusi is the Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti. His first independant sculptures reflected familiarity with the cubist sculptures of Lipchitz and Laurens but more importantly they bore strong witness to primitive and prehistoric art. Spoon Woman 1926-27 (illus no 38) is a frontalized, surrealist primitive totem with a spiritual if not a stylistic affinity to the work of Brancusi. This sculpture along with Couple 1926 (illus no 39) combine a powerful plastic combination with symbolic erotic content. This frank erotic symbolism the near abstraction of his work and his exploration of the dream and reliance on the unconscious, brought him into close contact with the Surrealists and for a brief time he took part in their exhibitions and wrote in their publications. But whereas they seemed satisfied once they had found a certain style and imagery; Giacometti continued to experiment, discovering new forms and symbols such as Woman with her throat cut 1932 (illus no 40) which reveals the violent and destructive aspects of his imagination and his obsession with sexual murder.



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI. *Spoon Woman (Femme cuiller)*.
1926-27. *Illustration 38*



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI. *The Couple (Man and Woman)*.
1926. *Illustration 39*



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI. *Woman with Her Throat Cut*
(*Femme égorgée*) 1932. Illustration 40

After this Giacometti returned to working from the figure. After the second World War new figures began to emerge. Elongated effegies rooted to their bases with enormous feet su erbly arresting in their immobility Nine standing figures 1966, (illus no41)Chariot 1950 (illus no42).



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI, Reclining Figure, 1950

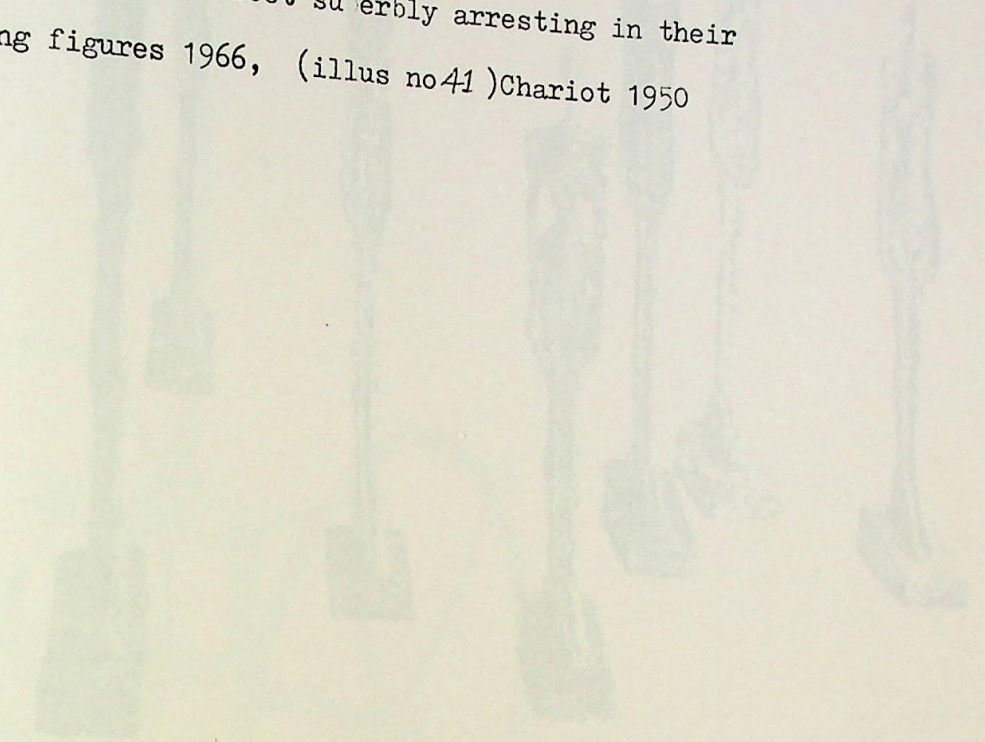


Illustration 41 Nine Standing Figures

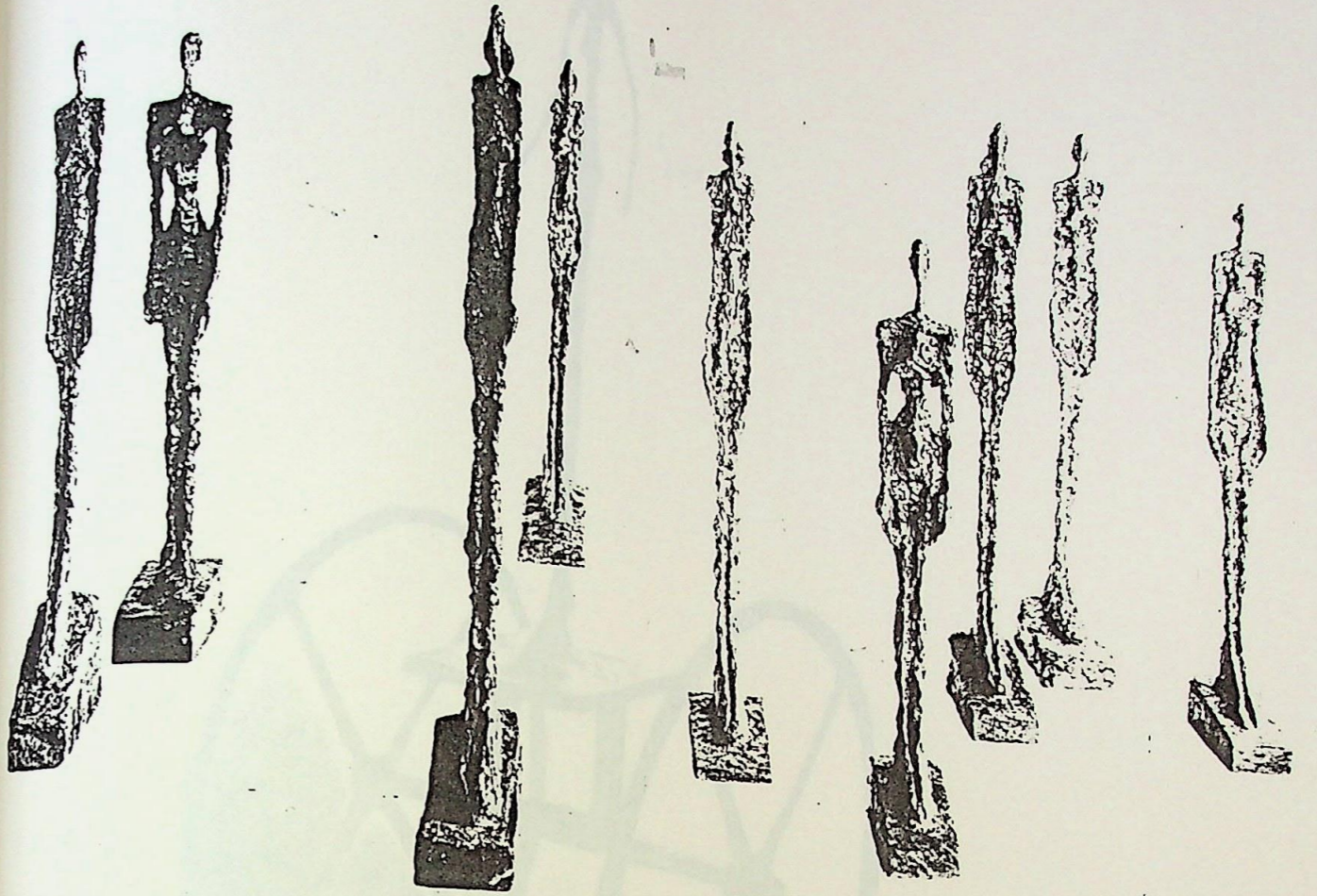


Illustration 41 Nine Standing Figures

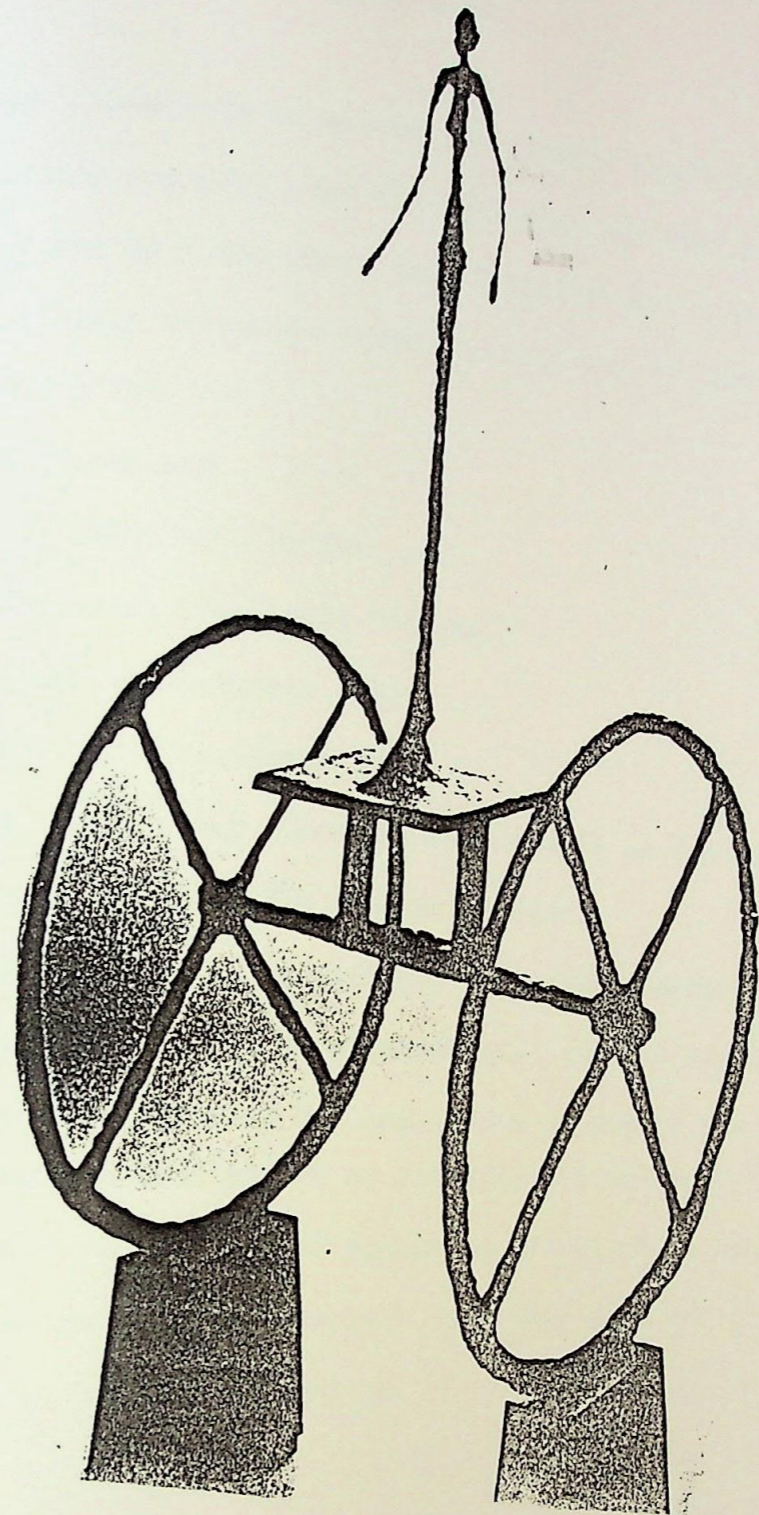


Illustration 42 Chariot

Conclusion

In my thesis I have only discussed the primary exponents of Primitive Art in the twentieth century. But its influence has been felt universally. This can be seen by the fact that Primitive Art has injected new interest into seven clearly definable cultures which may be listed as follows:

- (1) Far Eastern Art
- (2) African Tribal Art
- (3) Folk Art, Child art, Native art.
- (4) Prehistoric Art (Neolithic Carving)
- (5) Early Greek and Etruscan art)
- (6) Christian Art (Romanesque Art)

There may be still other minor influences such as Celtic Art, or Polynesian Art, but these fall into the general pattern.

Primitive Art has become so diffused with Contemporary Art that its significance can often be overlooked, and its vast contribution to Western Art swept aside in the mainstream of Modern Art.

This thesis was born out of my intention to pay tribute to the wealth of tradition and culture of primitive art which so impressed the leading artists of the twentieth century that they paid it the most sincere form of flattery, that of imitation.

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