

remain the movement's most plastically interesting achievement. *Unique Forms in the Continuity of Space*, his sculpture, the studies for a "plastic dynamism" and the notably unfuturistic *Soul States* are evidence of how little, in the end, theory counts in the creation of significant art.

*

The Musée des arts décoratifs has organized a tribute to the Italian review *Domus*, launched in Milan in 1928 by the architect Gio Ponti. It turned out to be an agreeable, rambling affair of photographs, paintings and objects that represent the different epochs of the magazine's long, fruitful history, with atmospherics provided by records of "Bella Ciao" and Glenn Miller. The most visually attractive section of the exhibition is a magnificent array of objects which serves to illustrate changing tastes in design. It includes furniture, motor cars, and that quintessentially Italian appliance, the espresso machine. There is one here, dated 1935, that looks as though it were also meant to fly. Bristling with knobs, its steel casing mirror-bright, it is surely part of a futurist's dream of how modern a twentieth-century breakfast should be.

*

More than ever, life is reviled in the brightly coloured, hellish visions of Dado, whose new paintings (1972-73) are on show at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher. Their curious mixture of delicacy and decay makes one chary of definitions. Yet, at the same time, they are explicit enough: their subject matter, surely, is horror, even a certain delectation of horror. Once one has been drawn into their world by the beguiling nursery colours, one realizes that their sole concern is to record in the most telling detail the horrifying way in which all substance rots. The powdery pinks and blues snap shut. Here, all flesh is crooked and diseased; all appetite is obscene lust; existence itself is a monster, full of chancres and treachery. The only hero of the piece is Death, the invisible cleanser of this rampant putrefaction, towards whom Dado's entire drooling bestiary is being sped.

Everything in this passionate hate for the world disgusts. Hunger and sexual desire are the most loathsome, degrading communions in which one monstrous, mutilated form of life feeds with sick voracity off another. In *Triptyque alimentaire*, the fare is cannibalistic: rottenness to be consumed by rottenness. The dripping sex in *Autoportrait à la chaude-pisse* is an infected instrument: in propagating ourselves, it suggests, we propagate our infirmities. Elsewhere, of course, present infirmity runs amuck. Flesh splits on the bone, revealing organs piled up like an unsteady pile of vegetables; eyes

start in terror or leer inanely; mouths open for some revolting sustenance or crack open in a final burst of mad, lubricious hilarity. The whole fabric of life is rent through and through. With these last tatters of flesh, we are apparently minutes away from the end of an ancient process of dissolution.

But this is an outsider's judgment, based on a concept of normalcy which has nothing to do with the pictures' standards. Within their terms, no doubt, nothing unusual is going on for the most part. When everything is horrifying, only the very worst can be really bad. The *Autoportrait format Jésus*, in which an armless figure with cat's whiskers and transparent skin screams against the bolts driven into it, looks pretty painful, it's true. But in many of the others, the unlovely lumps of flesh seem to grovel by. Though brought this low, life nevertheless goes on. Perhaps, after all, Death is not the only hero in this last extreme where flesh, half-human, half-grotesque, puts up so unconditional a fight.

Ivan Theimer, born in Czechoslovakia in 1944 and based in Paris since 1968, has had work shown both at the Biennial and at the Galerie Zerbib. He expresses himself in two quite separate ways, relatable only by their common nostalgia (both are accompanied, moreover, by quotations from Rousseau). One is a series of bronze sculptures, entitled variously *Grand trou* or *Etude* or *Fragment*, that spread a wistfully funereal atmosphere ("Consumé d'un mal incurable qui m'entraîne à pas lents vers le tombeau", begins one of the passages chosen from Rousseau). The other consists of paintings of still lifes and landscapes, meticulously rendered and as though trapped under a gloss of dark, rich colour. The landscapes are set beneath skies heavy with billowing clouds. The eye is both led into them and brought up short by the existence of curious transparent screens, which create a pictorial and a psychological tension. As in the tomb-like sculpture, they suggest something irretrievable, as though they had been pinned down in the artist's memory by a sense of loss.

At the Galerie Claude Bernard, the Hungarian painter Tibor Csernus is exhibiting new canvases of an immaculate photographic realism. They move easily from street scenes and lovingly recreated house fronts to shadowy interiors which contain, for some reason, model aeroplanes. Cunningly and with great detailed deliberation, they capture appearance with the built-in equivocations that their fidelity implies; but one is more struck by their dexterity than by a sense of investigation into the surface of things.

A coy note is struck in Anthony Donaldson's bathing beauties at the Galerie du Luxembourg.

They lie in the embrace of metallic waters, fixed in gentle voyeuristic memory—inviting one to peep and find out where lapping water ends and body begins.

The fast-ageing antics of Ben are being fêted at the Galerie Daniel Templon. One walks past them, slowly at first, sympathizing, grinning (at times, we are all Bens at heart), and wondering whether, in the end, a little ingenuity and more ingenuousness have not been spread too thin. As ego-trips go, this has the charm of a certain frankness; though one is soon at a loss what to call a frankness that shades off so swiftly into exhibitionism. The theme of the now familiar confessional or imperative tablets is the current situation of art and artists, reflected in the mirror of the artist's own frantic will to success. Ben states out loud what others feel but hide or camouflage with sophistications. As such, he is essentially a critic, although one who has decided to muscle in directly on the creative scene. Acrid or naive, his commentaries are intent on pointing out that the Emperor has no clothes on. But they are

above all out to please, leaving plenty of scope both for art and a profounder criticism.

Four hundred years later, the "Massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy" has been reenacted, bloodlessly enough, by B.B. Lavier at the Galerie Lara Vincy. The inhabitants of the rue Barthélemy who appear in the city's telephone directory were the victims; and the show consisted of a number of images of a door with a cross on it.

A handful of mixed minimalisms by Brice Marden were at the Galerie Yvon Lambert for the appreciation of the cognoscenti, one of whom, a young Greek called Georges Touzenis, paid the American artist his respects by including his name on a handwritten roll of honour visible, along with other notes of a similar bearing, at the Galerie Germain. At Sonnabend, Rauschenberg reappeared in a swift and doubly unconvincing conversion to *arte povera*: poor art further impoverished. Lastly, at La Demeure, the soft wools of this home of tapestry have been parted to make way for some rather flashy metal reliefs by Claude Bleyne.