

CONGRESS OF AESTHETICS

During the discussions following, a Russian delegate made a short and poignant remark (which illustrates well the economy needed in the *communications* conducted in a foreign language). His words "organised change is not chance" were clear, especially in view of his earlier lecture. If undue pressure is applied on the artist and changes in art are brought about for commercial reasons (such as advertising and critic-encouraged styles) changes, or 'chance' offshoots, may not be significant in the aesthetician's reading of the overall shift in art's course.

Specifically in this compartment of art, where commercial pressures and the many influences of advertising and photographic reproduction of work affects artists and produce startling changes even in non-commercial work, the painter and sculptor could make valuable contributions to the discussions, and provide facts to feed them.

There have always been good reasons for the study of aesthetics. The inspiration of the five day Congress of Amsterdam lifts one out of the sphere of common-sense, the origin of so much dull art, into a spacial one where truth is too pervading to be argued out in terms of a single art form. Truth was followed if not trapped; its compulsion was made visible. Artists in this atmosphere become participants in a work proper to the artist: the word made flesh.

Over two hundred communications, some delivered in the Aula to all delegates, the greater number addressed to groups in other lecture rooms, cannot be summarised in this brief report. Papers were read under headings of "Experimental aesthetics", "Situation of modern art", "Language and aesthetics" etc. There were outstanding contributions on many themes. Sir Herbert Read made the introductory address, in the Colloquy on Problems of Realism, a subject of central significance, staged in the Aula and drawing the largest single audience. Sir Herbert Read dealt with a specific aspect in this colloquy, under the simple title "Informality". His brilliant address, quietly spoken, carrying immense authority, was especially rewarding to the small British contingent. That British representation should be numerically light was a pity in view of the great contribution by our country to aesthetics in the past.

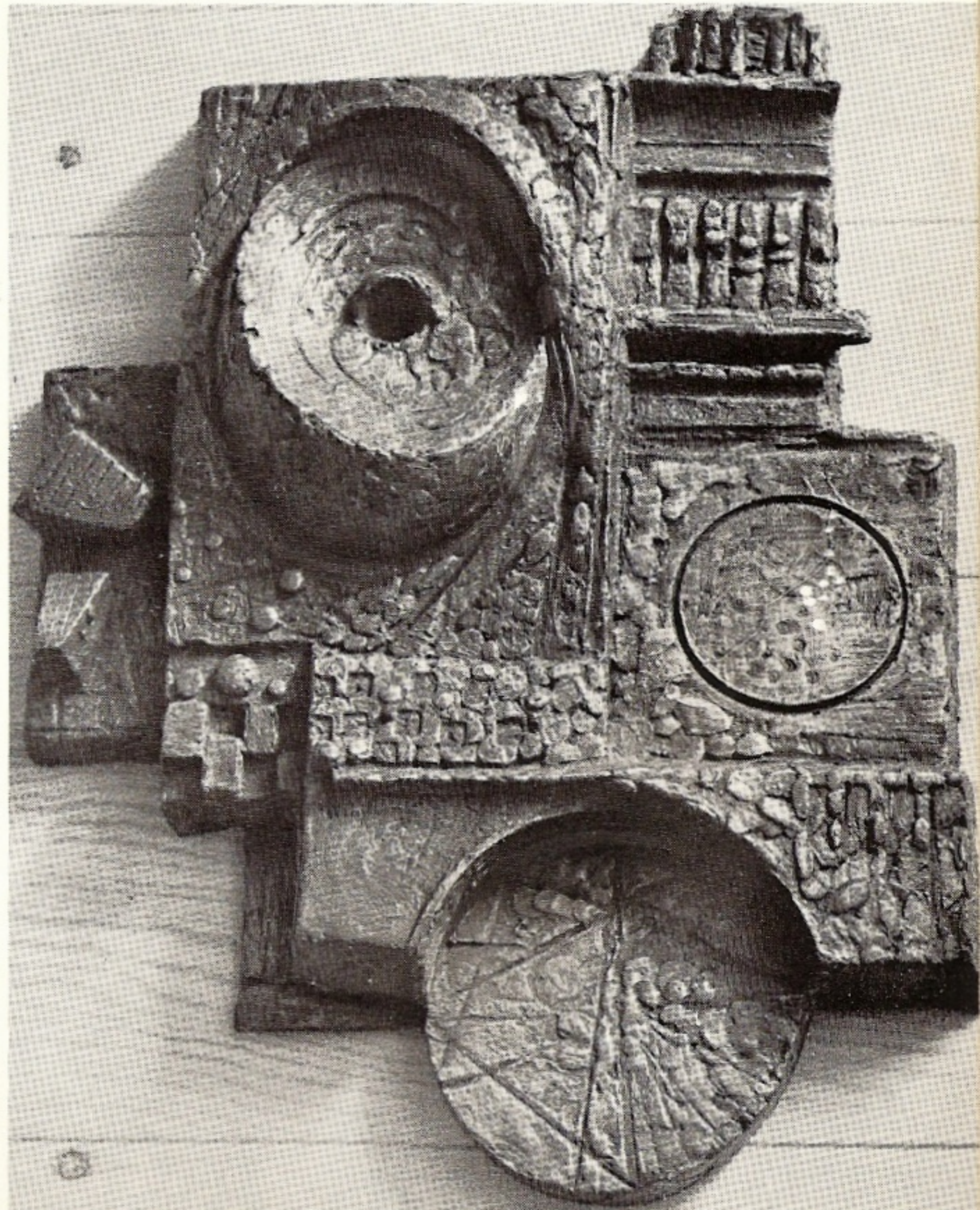
There were other interesting papers in the English language, more often than not delivered by American philosophers, a powerful delegation. East Europe was also well represented, the Soviet Union alone sending over twenty delegates. Herta Pauly from New Jersey, and E. Jakolev from Moscow, spoke on aesthetics in relation to religious art, and one did not seem any more materialistically inclined than the other. Large areas of agreement in philosophical thought, not without shades of disagreement, naturally, from the East and West

gave great encouragement and reminded one that aesthetics, properly concerned with harmony and communication, is pioneer ground for understanding between opposed ideals.

The Congress ended on the 28th August.

The work of aestheticians and artists continues, and in each country the purposiveness of Societies of Aesthetics will support both. I sincerely hope more artists will discover the importance of the activities of these Societies, as I did. The edited communications of the Congress will be published, and the balance of the many significant views it will clarify should constitute an Art Manifesto of this age. If artists pursue its arguments, in aesthetics as well as in Art, there will be an even more fruitful Congress in Sweden, in four years' time, for it will encourage a greater number of artists to be present.

Fabio Barracclough.



Right: "Orion" Fabio Barracclough.