

mounted again, or indeed that it could be in the future to such pointed effect.

At present, there seems to be a widespread consensus that the recent artists who require most study are Warhol and Beuys. Both were rooted in the 1960s, yet, had their careers ended then, they would not carry the weight and pertinence currently ascribed to them. Despite their dissimilarities of stance – marked by the difference between radical politics and the politics of consumption – it is the conjunction of their post-1968 activities, in which showmanship played a vital rôle, with their earlier output that makes their contribution so telling. The problems of addressing Beuys's art, once the artist was no longer alive, became only too evident in the retrospective held in Berlin in 1988. Perhaps it is still too soon to tackle Warhol whole – not just the *Cows* and *Maos* but the entire unruly contradictory mass. For this involves not only the devising of an appropriate conceptual framework but the locating of a suitable venue. Given its insulating and framing conventions, the art museum as it customarily functions today may not prove to be the ideal locus. In this respect, as in so many others, Warhol's art demands a radical rethinking of current conceptions and norms.

LYNNE COOKE
University College, London

¹The retrospective is now at the **Art Institute of Chicago** (to 13th August) and comes to the **Hayward Gallery, London** (7th September to 5th November) in a slightly revised version. Thereafter at the **Museum Ludwig, Cologne**, the **Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris** and the **Palazzo Reale, Milan**.

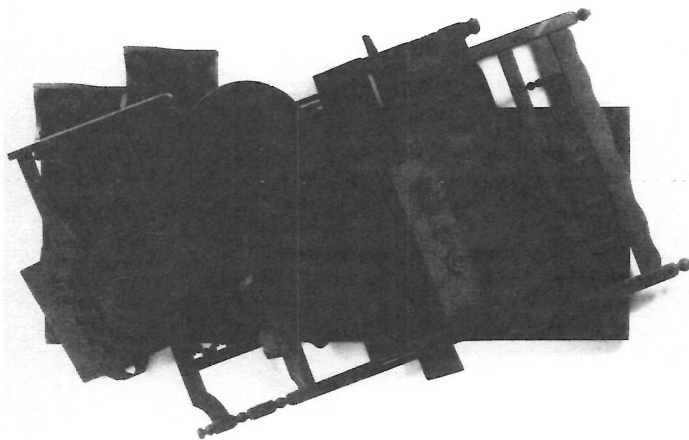
²*Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*. Edited with an introduction by Kynaston McShine, essays by Robert Rosenblum, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Marco Livingstone. 480 pp. with 277 col. pls. and 359 b. & w. ills. + figs. (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1989), £35. Distributed elsewhere by Thames & Hudson, London. ISBN 0-87070-680-2.

³*Success is a Job in New York: The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol*. Catalogue published jointly by the Grey Art Gallery Study Center, New York and the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, 1989. 90 pp. with 24 col. pls. + 73 b. & w. ills. This exhibition closed at the **Grey Art Gallery** on 29th April and will be shown at the **Serpentine Gallery, London** from 3rd September to 1st October.

⁴For a recent account of Warhol's silkscreen procedures see, for example M. LANGASTER: 'Andy Warhol remembered', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE*, March 1989, p.200.

New York The 'primitive' and some recent sculpture

In the presence of great tribal art, without knowing specifically what spells are being cast or devils exorcised by the sculptor, one can sense the work's strange power. On occasion modern sculptors can produce parallel effects. The 'Ancient Explorations' (at **Met Life Gallery**, closed 10th June) of five contemporary sculptors – Clyde



75. *Mirror-shadow XXXIII*, by Louise Nevelson. 1987. Wood painted black, 142.2 by 236.2 by 40.6 cm. (Exh. Pace Gallery, New York).

Connell, Orazio de Gennaro, Ellen Driscoll, Arthur Gonzalez, and Alison Saar – are deliberate attempts to tap into that emotional substratum. All but de Gennaro incorporate found objects or materials into their work. Saar embeds gems as an African does mirrors; Gonzales substitutes tree branches and bark for body parts; and Connell inserts pieces of hand-worked iron inside the papier-mâché coverings on her wooden structures. Only Connell, however, manages to evoke the hushed silence of a holy place, the sense of being not quite of this world and of being in touch with forces beyond normal human control.

The work in the 'Ancient Explorations' exhibition was all interesting but it suffered from the corporate context in which it was shown and – with the exception of Connell – from arty predictability. Most of it looks like 'Art,' which, paradoxically, really great art never does. In order to have a penetrating effect on the human psyche, to move directly from the object into a person's emotional realm, the work of art cannot allow consciousness of art history or of artiness to intervene. Connell's work doesn't. She is a mature, sophisticated 'primitive' working out of her childhood experiences of voodoo and tree spirits in her black grandmother's East Texas America. Whether building brick chimney-totems or carving tree-trunks as she formerly did, or burying the tree-limb supports beneath layers of moulded paper inscribed with myriad intaglio signs as she has been doing recently, Connell's work never seems as concerned with art as it is with non-verbal communication. Even if we have no clue as to the meaning of her images and inscriptions, we understand that they are reaching beyond the known and into the frightening realm of half-sensed archetypal mysteries.

Strangely enough, Marisol, famous since she burst on the scene in the early 60s as a pop artist, also reaches at times into that deep emotional pocket where tribal art exists. The power of her pieces (on show

at **Sidney Janis**, closed 3rd June) resides in the materials she incorporates and in the human history these materials carry with them into their new context. Massive hunks of ravaged wood are hacked into portrait heads, the protruding spikes and hooks left in place. She scavenges at dawn on the waterfront near her Tribeca studio to find these creosoted 'treasures', pulling them home on a cart. Perhaps part of the thrill of finding them lies in the potentially menacing aspect of such prowls. *Bishop Desmond Tutu's* chunky head with its glittering dark glasses seems to belong to a world where danger predominates. Only his illuminated pendant crucifix and his elaborately carved mace help him ward off evil. Subject, means and method come together perfectly in this portrait.

A similar feeling is generated by the massive figural blocks in *Poor Family 2*, where father and mother are seated in front of their cardboard, straw and sheet-metal shack, huddled together with their knock-kneed girl. An arrow above the man, a blue crown above the woman on the packing cardboard behind, turns them into mock royalty in front of a paper castle. Marisol is adept at catching characteristic gestures and facial movements, her conceptions are witty and even her most overtly crafty 2D-to-3D manoeuvres are still pleasing after many repetitions. What can be missed by eyes dazzled by her cleverness are her skills as a carver – in the traditional sense as well as in her more up-to-date use of a belt-sander to carve laminated plywood. The ceramic head of Emperor Hirohito shows her prowess in that medium, but also hints at her art-historical awareness by its resemblance to the clay life heads made in Nigeria. Marisol's skill, however, is less interesting than the raw power of her sculptural masses and her ability to distil essences that bypass or transcend technique to make contact on deeper emotional levels.

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tive art, but only her signature in partite boxed or standing, tottem from 1975 was memorial exhibit (closed 29th June). An example of the sculptor by left the work as possible consisted of a be point at its apex taller unit that Nothing more would have seen

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76. *Figure*, by Louise Nevelson. Painted wood, 166.4 cm. (Exh. Westwater, New York).

tive art, but only occasionally after finding her signature image – the black, multi-partite boxed relief – did she create free-standing, totemic works. One such piece from 1975 was included in her recent memorial exhibition at the **Pace Gallery** (closed 29th April); it was a stunning example of the benefits that accrue to a sculptor by letting nature do as much of the work as possible. Eleven feet tall, it consisted of a beam naturally eroded to a point at its apex coupled with a smooth, taller unit that was probably a banister. Nothing more was necessary; nothing less would have seemed enough.

During her career, Nevelson tried working in plastic and steel instead of wood, colouring the work white, gold and brown instead of black, but her most effective pieces remain the plain black wooden ones, particularly those that are rough and crude, assembled from the debris of human life (Fig. 75). Using broken chairlegs, parts of headboards, and milk crates she found on the street, she injects such objects with human spirit. Her best work has a haunted-house spookiness which recalls Gothic tales of horror as well as surrealist nightmares. As Lucas Samaras remarks in a statement for the exhibition catalogue: 'The deep dark stark dangerous aroma of your work and passions continues to bedevil and caress me.'

Louise Bourgeois's sculpture always carries a heavy psychological charge and she never seems to succumb to niceties. Truly committed, unlike Nevelson, to the three-dimensional she has also maintained a profound attachment to the spirit if not the content of Primitive art throughout

her long career. The early pieces from the 1950s on view at **Sperone Westwater** (closed 6th May; further works were on view at **Robert Miller** and **Galerie Lelong** to 22nd April) gave ample evidence of this loyalty. Each stacked on a vertical axis, some painted white, others blueish, black or left their natural colour, most of the twenty-two sculptures have a figurative or human-like quality. Some seem feminine, others masculine, some active, as though dancing, others mute and inert. The units are irregular and crudely fashioned; in fact, they often seem to have been jammed onto their threaded rod axes in a frenzy.

Bourgeois's is not a cool, contemplative art. One senses passion in their making, obsession in their content and a vital force inside them which, if released, could be frightening in its intensity. Some of the pieces seem to spin like dervishes and cast frenzied shadows. Others, such as a marvellous totemic black and white attenuated stele entitled *Figure*, 1954, look as though they might have been carved by the mystical Dogon in Africa (Fig. 76). Bourgeois must have been on intimate terms with Primitive art of all kinds through her husband, Robert Goldwater's, lifelong involvement, but she clearly avoided the pitfalls of so close an association with powerful influences. Never imitative, she nevertheless captures the essence of that work through contemporary means. Hers is a rare instance of an artist bridging a vast cultural hiatus and making it seem perfectly natural to do so.

APRIL KINGSLEY

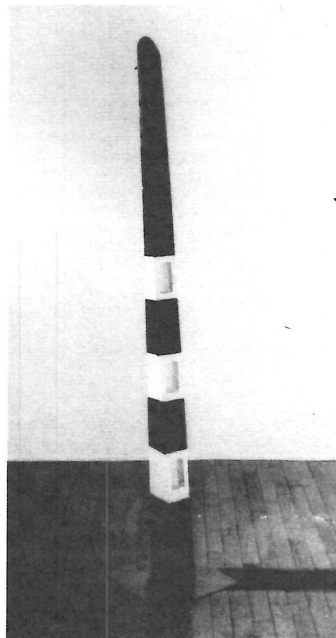
Washington & Los Angeles Timurid art

Interest in the arts of fifteenth-century Iran and Central Asia has recently revived: two major studies of Timurid architecture have appeared in the past eighteen months.¹ This enthusiasm is understandable, for the area of Eastern Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia, with the grand and colourful architecture of Herat, Meshed and Samarkand – often made more attractive by ruin or picturesque decay – has for more than 150 years inspired the romantic traveller and, where the frontiers are still open, the modern tourist. The architectural histories have been complemented by the work of a group of younger American political, social and literary historians on the period of Tamerlane and his immediate successors, seeking to re-evaluate a period generally dismissed as bloody and unproductive, artificial and wearisome, nasty, brutish and far too long; but, on the political side at least, the revisionism is, perforce, restrained and limited to demonstrating that Tamerlane's madness had method: if 'chaotic' is one obvious way of describing the period at least, up to a point, the chaos was organised.

The revisionism of the present exhibition

(*Timur and the princely vision. Persian art and culture in the fifteenth century*, **Sackler Gallery, Washington**, to 9th July) far outstrips the historians. It reiterates the message of the great Persian exhibition of 1931 that in the visual arts the fifteenth century was no interlude, though the authors of the catalogue,² Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, frankly recognise in the prominence they give to architecture that there are far more surviving buildings than there are objects or artefacts. The catalogue is given a polemical slant by the adaptation of recent theories on princely connoisseurship and the centralisation of court craftsmen in sixteenth-century Ottoman Turkey to the reign of Tamerlane (d.1405). The authors argue that here, too, there was a centralised institution, the *Kutubkhāne* (literally 'book house' – a term not used in the contemporary sources), which not only controlled the arts of the book but served as a design- and production-centre for the court arts: it was initially staffed, they assume, by an élite corps of craftsmen deported en masse from the cities of Western Asia which were sacked by Tamerlane or capitulated to him – though random deportations could hardly have guaranteed the requisite quality. While the studio (*Kutubkhāne*) of Baysunqur at Herat c.1430 is known to have had a designer (*tarrāh*) for book-bindings, illumination, tiles and tent-panels, designs of the same type, namely for rectangular panels with corner-pieces and a central medallion, there are no such documents for the reign of Tamerlane, and the thesis is presented virtually without argument, as suitable to the ideas of a great conqueror and autocrat. Not surprisingly, in view of the dearth of extant material, the exhibits cannot be said to demonstrate it. The scriptorium of Baysunqur at Herat is generally held to be an innovation, but even under Tamerlane's successors, resemblances in designs in the various media, where they are demonstrable, are generally susceptible of more obvious explanations. The chimera of strictly centralised art-production seems to exercise a curious attraction on recent American historians of the later arts of Islam.

The material exhibited is a tribute to the organisers' adventurousness: loans – some restricted to a single venue – have come from Athens, Lisbon, London, Istanbul, Paris, West Berlin, Cairo, Leningrad and the Armoury of the Moscow Kremlin, as well as American museums and important private collections, though, paradoxically, manuscripts such as the marvellous *Dīvān of Ahmad Jalālīr* in the Freer Collection could not be lent. The greater part of the exhibition is devoted to the arts of the book at Herat, and it is a great pleasure to see the Cairo *Bustān* (no.146), which contains four paintings by Bihzād. Particularly beautiful is the double page and two drawings (no.36; Fig.79) from the horseshoe of Iskandar Sultan in the Wellcome Foundation in London. The generous choice of Timurid illumination shows that that was no less fine. The pottery (nos.130-1) is poor and, though excavated



76. *Figure*, by Louise Bourgeois. 1954. Painted wood, 166.4 cm. (Exh. Sperone Westwater, New York).



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