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# The 2:30 Man

by Don Crinklaw

Ernest Tino Trova has a Falling Man wristwatch; it's the first thing he showed me that clammy-cold Saturday morning in December. I had been standing in the foyer of his home on Layton Terrace in Ladue for only a few seconds before Trova, a strongly-built and jovial bear of a man, held up the big clunky watch for me to see and sure enough, there he was: the familiar armless, hairless, faceless, potbellied humanoid profile forming the minute hand and the hour and thus falling, forever falling, keeping up with the time.

The Falling Man wasn't the only curious feature of Ernest Trova's wristwatch: between the hours of two and three, "2:30" had been printed in bold numbers on the watchface. I had come across this "2:30" business before: the flyers promoting Trova designs advertised his corporation as "2:30 Productions."

"There was a time when you could tell a lot about a man by the necktie he wore," Trova answered before I had asked. "Red tie meant extrovert, pale grey meant introvert. But now nobody wears neckties. A lot of people don't have to dress a certain way to go to work. So you have to look for other things.

"There's something arbitrary about 2:30 in the afternoon," a chortling Trova went on. "It's after lunch and before dinner. Tell me what you are doing at 2:30 each afternoon, and after a month of this I'll know what sort of person you are. Are you working at that time every day? Or are you always free? Now, who's free at 2:30 in the afternoon? Bums, mostly. And artists."

All this took place inside the front door while Trova—who insisted that I call him "Ernie"—prepared to go out to lunch by donning a black car coat and a black curly-brimmed artist's hat that he called, variously, a "borsalino" or "barcelona."

Trova walks to lunch on those days when the weather permits; he says it's only a 15-minute stroll to "The Pit"—the Flaming Pit on Clayton Road—but this time he drove. Or rather I drove: Ernie has managed to live 47 years without learning to drive and counts himself blessed: "Something has to interest me visually before I can really pay any attention to it," he said during the short ride, "and American cars don't offer much to the eye. Maybe if Dusenbergs were still around I'd be driving one but....What kind of car is this?"

They know Ernie Trova down at "The Pit." When he told the maitre 'd that he wanted "a quiet table in the corner so we can discuss philosophy," he got it without a blink. The waitress, a Eurasian girl so beautiful that it hurt the eyes to look upon her, kept her poise when he ordered a ham and cheese sandwich and a bottle of Hyde Park beer; she explained to him matter-of-factly that the Hyde Park brewery has been out of business for 20 years. After Ernie had settled for a Falstaff and the patient waitress had gone, he frowned after her and asked, "She's not from around here, is she?"

To St. Louisans of a certain age and background Ernie Trova's name conjures up something besides an image of the Falling Man: he was at the center of that vanished world that was Gaslight Square in the late fifties and early sixties. As he talks about those days he drops the familiar

names: Mutrux (owners of the Three Fountains restaurant and the Gaslight Bar); Landesman (of the Crystal Palace), and the journalists William Woo and Harper Barnes.

Now Mutrux and Landesman are gone, Woo and Barnes write for the *Post-Dispatch*. Gaslight Square is in ruins and Ernest Trova's reputation seems to have gone from the Square to the art capitals of the world, without ever stopping in St. Louis. As it is few St. Louisans are aware that one of the world's foremost sculptors and painters can be found tormenting the help at the Flaming Pit around lunch time.

Local neglect is about to be overcome, though. As this is written—the last week in December—plans are being made for a spring showing of Trova's larger works in Shaw's Garden and the newspapers are reporting the pending creation of a "sculpture park garden" in what is now Laumier County Park; ferociously valuable items are to be donated by "E. Trova, Artist."

After lunch we drove back to Ernie Trova's house and huddled inside our coats while he led me on a tour of his own "sculpture park garden." Layton Terrace is a cul-de-sac and Trova's house is near the end of the concrete drive; at the very end is his mother's house. Their properties adjoin and the arc of land, with lots of shrubbery and trees and hillocks, presents some interesting visual possibilities.

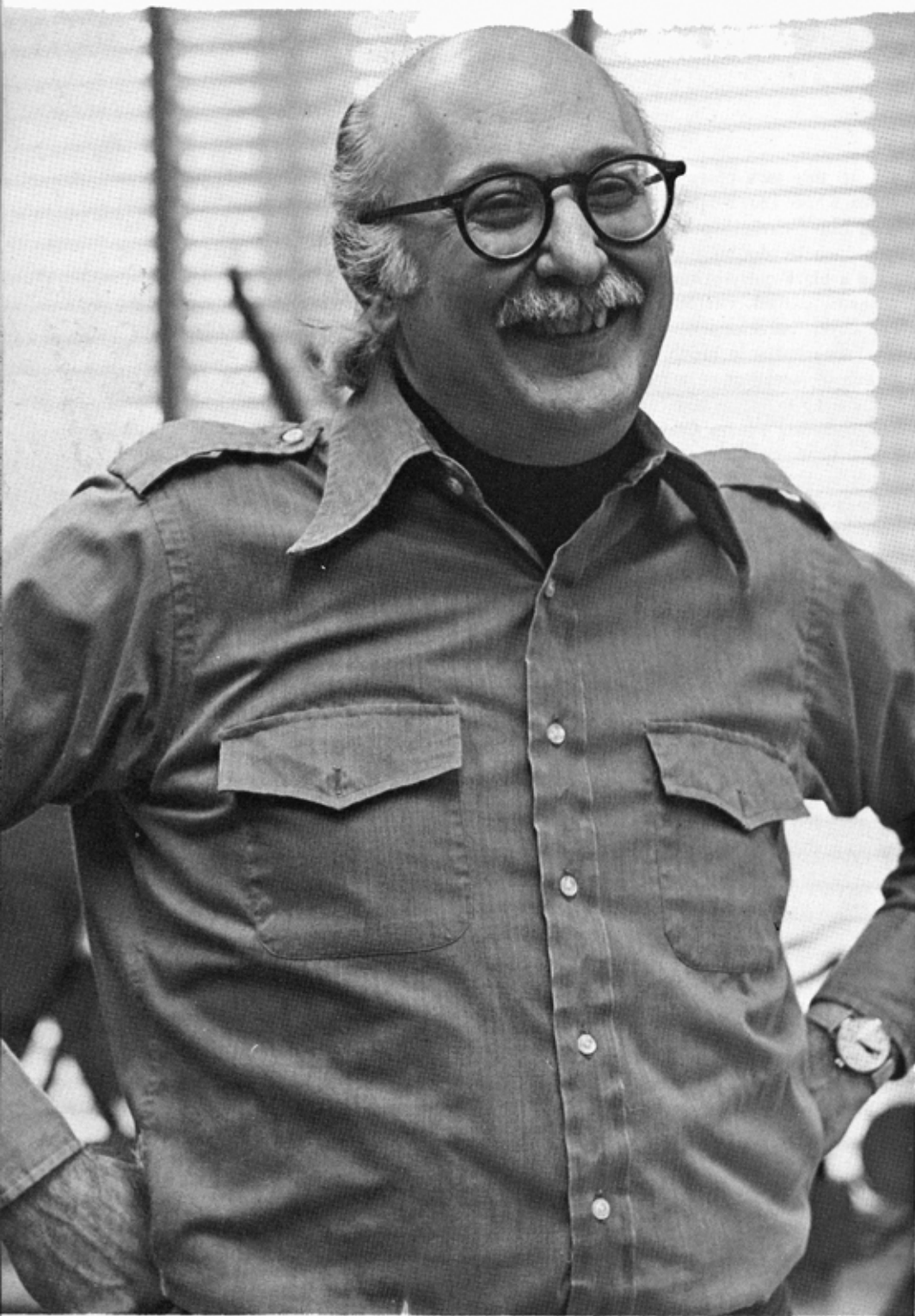
They haven't gone to waste. Between the houses are several stainless steel Gox, a Trova-word for Geometric Exercise. A *Post-Dispatch* art critic called the Gox series "syncopated cascades of geometric forms that vaguely recall Art Deco,"

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SHANLEY SCOTT

and that seems as good a description as any. I asked Trova if he used mathematical formulae to determine proportions.

"No, the eye is the final judge," he said. "But everybody's trying to fool you, including your eye. You gotta be careful." Trova said that every

sculpture starts life as a tiny model on his studio table. Then comes "editing--to determine proper scale. The success of the piece depends upon choosing the proper scale. Sometimes I'll spend a whole afternoon sitting in the studio, staring at a cardboard model, trying to see it full size."



Trova's mother--his father, a La Scala baritone born in Piacenza, died in 1954--lives in a little house dwarfed by a monumental Profile Canto, one of a series of Cor-Ten steel sculptures that play with the silhouette of the Falling Man. This one, Trova said, had been lifted into place by a helicopter and bolted to its concrete base by a crew of workmen while Trova hid in his house to avoid the ruckus. Did he ever feel, I asked, that things had gotten overcomplicated since those days he worked all alone in his studio, painting?

"After spending 25 years sitting and painting 16 hours a day, I just got interested in sculpture and the other side of the coin, production." Trova looked up at the top of the 10-foot Profile Canto from under the brim of his borsalino-- or barcelona-- and said, "It would have been easier if I'd been satisfied with the model sitting on my table. But no, I had to see it."

Trova's studio is on the eastern end of the house, and you get to it by passing through two of the most incredible rooms in the world. They house Trova's Mickey Mouse collection--glassed-in shelves of the Disney creature in nearly all his incarnations: Mouse statuary, Mouse lunchboxes, Mouse letterheads. Then there is his assemblage of "found objects," thousands of them, from brewery ornaments--Hyde Park, if I remember correctly--to Coca-Cola trays to a cover from a man-hole in Paris, and what is so astonishing is not their number or variety but the beauty of their arrangement. Trova has mounted them on shelves and hung them from wires and tacked them to corkboard in ways that calm the eyes like Bach's music calms the ears.

The studio itself is white. The walls are white and the table-top is white and the light, filtered light from fluorescent rods, has one blinking for a moment and trying to identify what it is that is absent from this light. Then it comes: there are no shadows in the room, and no glare. The Falling Man stands on the tabletop: he is made of bronze and plated with black nickel and he glows like satin under the soft light. Trova continues to torture him: this one is split through the upper torso and the halves

"The Falling Man is falling in the sense of moving from one position to another. Falling up, falling down, falling over. This is always the condition man is involved with."

pulled away from one another and locked into place with Allan bolts.

During the interview Trova sat in a low chair in front of his work table. Midway through the interview a grey-black cat padded into the studio; Trova gathered it into his arms and stroked it absently as he talked. He is a cheerful and gracious man--even when things turn rocky, as they did toward the end of the interview.

We began talking about the poster the St. Louis Symphony had commissioned from him: a startling blend of brown and blue and red....

*St. Louisan:* I was admiring that poster you did for the Symphony Society ....

*Trova:* Did you know that poster turned up on the wall of Meathead's apartment? He's Archie Bunker's son-in-law. Nobody knows how it got there.

*St. Louisan:* The colors are beautiful. Do you think in colors?

*Trova:* No. Some artists are very concerned with color, with big splashes of color, but I'm drawn to the endless variation of shapes and forms. The symphony poster was conceived like a grid or a blueprint and the color was secondary. By the way, that's what I call a "manscape" -- portions of the Falling Man used as the landscape. Anyway, it's part of the Irv.

*St. Louisan:* The Irv?

*Trova:* Well, it's spelled o-e-v-r-e.

*St. Louisan:* I think that's "ooohv." Something like that.

*Trova:* Oh. I knew "ovary" wasn't right.

*St. Louisan:* It says here you never went to art school.

*Trova:* I may go next year.

*St. Louisan:* But seriously ....

*Trova:* I have nothing against it, but I've always liked the independence of working alone. As a young man I was very old. I had fixed ways and I knew what I was going to do. It took me twenty-five years to do it.

*St. Louisan:* How did you manage to make up your mind so young?

*Trova:* My engagement with the arts is intuitive: it has always interested me. I'm entertained by the process of doing things.

*St. Louisan:* You began as a window trimmer?

*Trova:* I got into it out of Clayton High School, working at Stix, Baer &

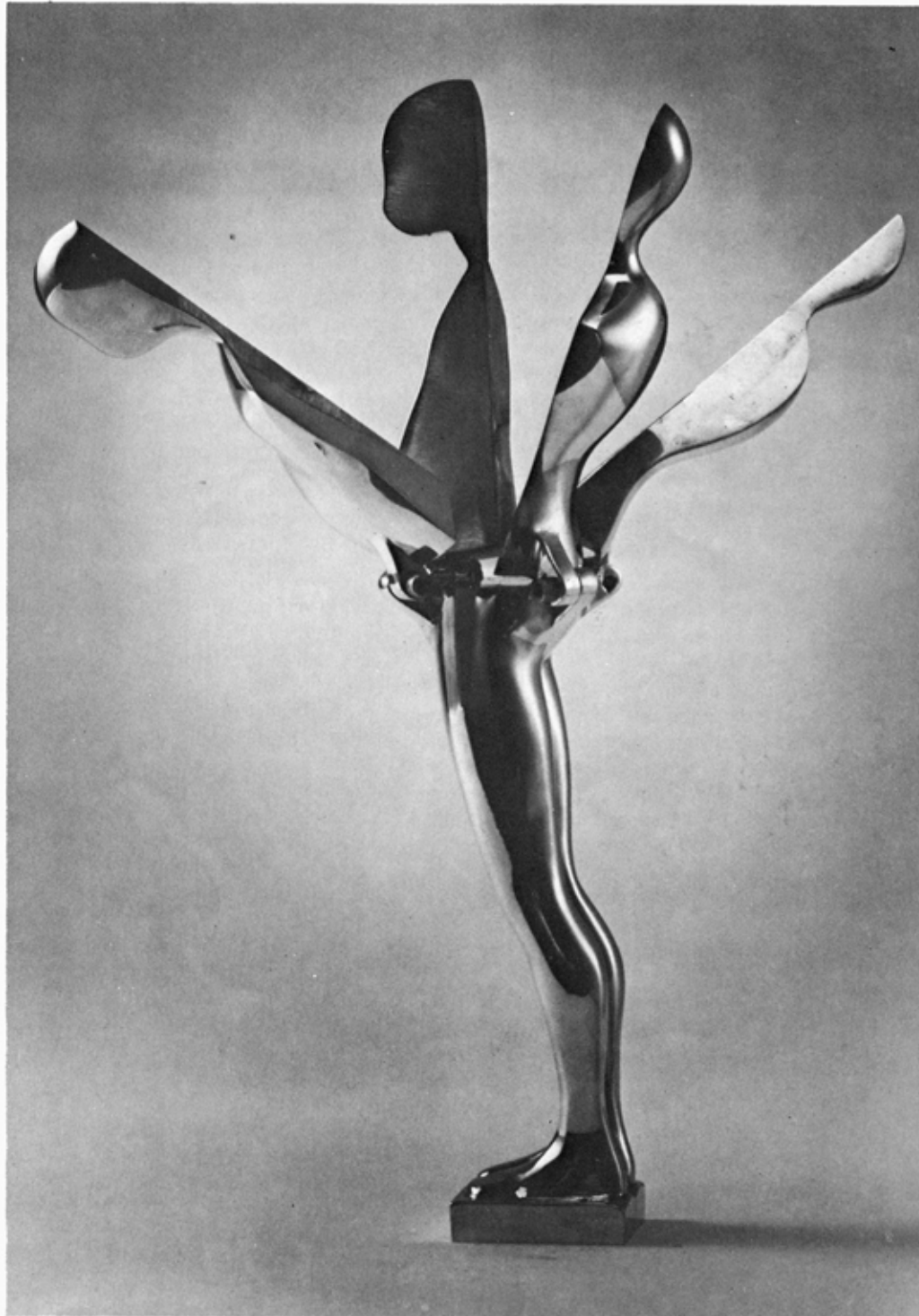


Photo courtesy PACE GALLERY New York



**"If one doesn't believe that what he's doing is significant, and if he doesn't believe he's doing it better than anybody else could, he doesn't deserve to be counted."**

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Fuller in the Window/Interior Department. It was more Interior than Window. It was an obvious place for me to go as an untrained technician. A lot of out-of-work artists in New York find a home in window trimming. Then I did stage sets for the old Crystal Palace in Gaslight Square.

*St. Louisan:* That was in the late fifties .... When did things begin to come together for you?

*Trova:* Early sixties. In New York I met Ivan Karp, an assistant at the Castelli Gallery and the fellow who helped Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. Arnold Glimcher's Pace Gallery was in Boston when Karp arranged my first showing in 1963. When Pace moved to New York in 1964 I went with them. Around that time, too, Famous-Barr asked me to put on a show of my paintings. I suggested that instead of exhibiting paintings I use all the resources of the department store to create new works. I got to use everything, just like on a battleship: carpenter shop, paint shop, display department, everything. It was an ambitious project and a tremendous experience. Greater than a Guggenheim.

*St. Louisan:* Was that when the Falling Man made his debut?

*Trova:* It's when he began in three-dimensions. Previously he was in painting and previous to that he was about twenty-five years of experimenting with the human figure.

*St. Louisan:* Do you ever get tired of the Falling Man?

*Trova:* No, because he's not all I'm doing. You don't know what my pseudonyms are.

*St. Louisan:* Has the Falling Man been much misunderstood?

*Trova:* Oh, yes. I've heard him called a pregnant woman, a department store mannikin, an automaton, and I've heard him called sexless. That's totally wrong, that sexless number: with a little observation you can see that he's really in a pair of tights and you can't see beneath them. I didn't detail the genitalia. To say that he looks like a pregnant woman and all the rest is to be uninformed.

Now, you don't want to be called uninformed, do you?

*St. Louisan:* Why is he faceless and why doesn't he have any arms?

*Trova:* For series purposes. He's the edited "sign" of my image of man, the comfortable resolution of the human figure for my own purposes .... To clutter him with eyelashes or hair or arms or a pair of pretty lips is to limit the possibilities in a series. The series format is important in my work because I like continuity. It was an intellectual decision to do this rather than still lifes or landscapes.

*St. Louisan:* He certainly speaks to modern man. Do you have any idea why that is?

*Trova:* He's contemporary, he's compatible with our time. The chrome surface suggests futurism. This is not altogether wrong and I don't deny the premise, but it's not the whole story.

*St. Louisan:* What is the whole story. Is he a pun on Fallen Man, in the Book of Genesis?

*Trova:* No, he's falling in the sense of moving from one position to another. Falling up, falling down, falling over. This is always the condition man is involved with. And most important, the Falling Man is non-hysterical in his physical posture: there's *no* expression on his face. Let's say he is *rational*. Not contorted. Whatever position he is in, he can get to another. I'm not implying that everyone can approach this definition. All men are created equal. Until they're born.

*St. Louisan:* Why does hysteria repel you so?

*Trova:* It's uncivilized... It's that element in humanity that tends to tear relationships apart, to destroy things. Can you imagine Confucius yelling hysterically at somebody who doesn't appreciate a cloud formation? There are only two places where hysteria is useful: in art and in sex. Still, you can do anything as long as you don't frighten the horses; you can be as hysterical as you want when you're all alone in your room. At 2:30.

*St. Louisan:* I keep seeing some-

thing sinister in the Falling Man ...

*Trova:* There's something sinister about life. Read the latest revelations about the CIA, or whatever. If there were not that element of the sinister in the Falling Man he wouldn't be representative. I don't agree with the way you're leading this. I don't like that word sinister -- No, I see him as a positive figure.

*St. Louisan:* Still, nobody seems to be able to talk about the Falling Man without getting into personal philosophies.

*Trova:* And they're all irrelevant. The form and shape are all that's important and the rest is interpretation. Some people don't like Nixon. His wife does.

*St. Louisan:* One of the things that's always mystified me about the art world is its worship of signatures over quality. I mean, a masterpiece signed by me would be worthless but a masterpiece signed by Picasso will fetch lots of money.

*Trova:* That's a fact of life. A couple of clever well-known artists signed checks with small sketches, knowing they'd never be cashed. A signature on a work is valuable because of what happened before: How many museum shows has the man had? How many collectors bought? A name artist cashes in on his signature; that's the fruit of his labors. Now, for the genius who paints masterpieces out there in Festus but who doesn't enter the arena... Well, you can't grow fig trees in Alaska.

*St. Louisan:* The arena?

*Trova:* New York. That's the center of the art world now. You have to be there.

*St. Louisan:* But you're in St. Louis.

*Trova:* My work is in New York. I have a dealer in New York and showings there. I'm in the arena.

*St. Louisan:* Why have you chosen to stay in St. Louis, then?

*Trova:* It's easier for me to get things done here. I'm sure that some artists might be more gratified living in New York, but not me. There are more plusses for my being in St. Louis, particularly family and friends.

And in New York I couldn't have two acres with sculpture in the back yard. Large-scale works are hard to do in Manhattan.

*St. Louisan:* What's the art world like now?

*Trova:* For one thing, there's no longer an avant-garde as we used to think of it. Anything new in art is in *Time* magazine even before it's shown publicly. The word to describe the art scene now is "fractionalism" -- everything is going on all at once and there is no clearly-defined dominant group. We'll have to wait and see what will emerge, but right now nothing has captured the public's attention the way pop art did in the sixties and as abstract expressionism did before that.

*St. Louisan:* The public seems so confused ...

*Trova:* I've heard reports that the plastic arts have less force now. *Time* magazine used to have an arts page every week, but it doesn't any longer. But there are more diverse ways of doing things and that's good. Remember, too, that in the late sixties there was a lot of extra money around. We're in a recession now, and that means a recession in the art world, also. A number of galleries have closed. But look at it historically: the forties and fifties were a time of terrific struggle for American artists. Then, in the sixties, New York took over with abstract expressionism, followed by pop art. There was a lot of buying, a lot of artistic activity. Then came a procession of other movements: minimal art, color field painting and so forth, and these got less fanfare. After that came process art, body art. Artists having themselves shot at and mutilated. All this is *concept* art. Performances. There's nothing tangible for people to buy.

*St. Louisan:* What do you think of all this?

*Trova:* Well, there are some very strange things going on. But I don't want to be hard cheese and say, "That artist shouldn't be burying himself!" -- or whatever it is he's doing. History will judge. And don't overlook the work being done in audio-visual, like Andy Warhol's 8-hour film of the Empire State Building.

*St. Louisan:* That was a joke, wasn't it?

*Trova:* No, it was a valid experiment

and a lot of very serious critics take it very seriously.

*St. Louisan:* What do you think of it?

*Trova:* Everybody has the right to experiment and exhibit ...

*St. Louisan:* ... and history will judge. We're forever hearing our culture called a junk culture: plastics and McDonald's hamburgers and

disposables and all. But your work suggests that you find the times interesting. Is there a contradiction there?

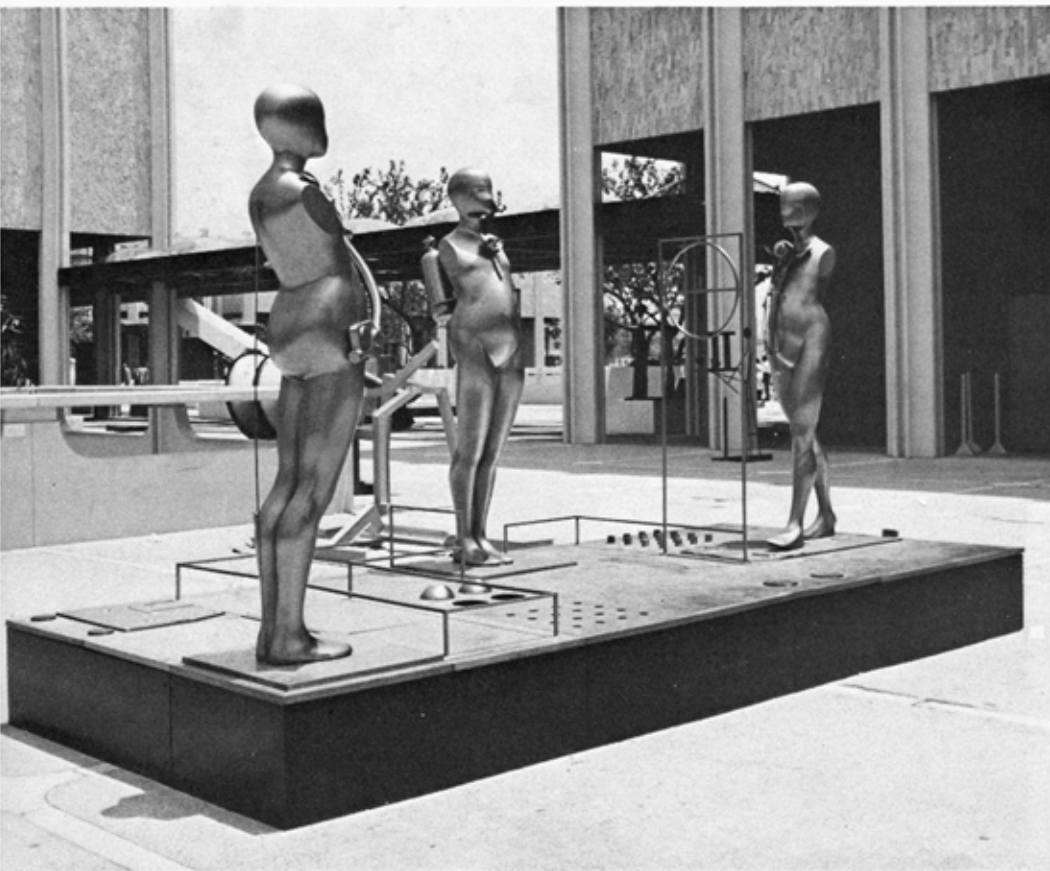
*Trova:* No. The things of the twentieth century that I like I absorb. The rest I leave alone. I have no problem with McDonald's, for instance, though I do like Steak 'n Shake's super-cheeseburgers better.







Photo above courtesy PACE GALLERY New York



It's not that McDonald's is bad, not if you use it right and not as a substitute for Tony's or the Tenderloin Room. Or home cooking. And I don't know how we got along without masking tape and plastic drop cloths twenty years ago -- if that's junk culture, I'm all for it. Why, I have a device in the next room that can make you a cup of coffee in three seconds! Instant hot water. You put in the Maxim and ...

*St. Louisan:* These are good times?

*Trova:* The latest moment in history has this advantage: you have all the past to draw from. Look at it another way -- take music. In the forties you had jazz and if you didn't like it you could go listen to Fred Waring. Or classics. Or do without. That's not true any more. There is so much more variety now. In everything. This is a time for synthesizing.

*St. Louisan:* I'm reading more and more writers who say that we would all be better off if industrialization hadn't happened. Your art, which is involved with machinery and technology, could be called a celebration of the industrial age. I'll bet you've heard that one before.

*Trova:* Yes. That's silly. I use everything that's available to me, including valuable antiques and the trash in the back yard. I don't want to limit myself to anything. I make the final decisions. All of them.

*St. Louisan:* How about your viewer? Do you think about him much?

*Trova:* No. Art is totalitarian and I'm the dictator, and if he doesn't like what I've done then he's out in the cold. I've always thought, though, that others of like mind would enjoy what I'm doing. I go to a lot of movies and enjoy what other people enjoy -- so we must have something in common.

*St. Louisan:* Are you mellowing? Thirty years ago you gave a whole lot of *enfant terrible* quotes to the press:

"My art is infallible because I've never been taught any art."

"Anything I do is right. It's wonderful to know you're perfect."

"To please others is to admit

*Trova's work is exhibited at major museums throughout the country, including the Guggenheim in New York (above) and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.*



**"No, I'm not religious. It would be nice if Christ could die on the cross every Friday; when he arose again everybody would believe. But at the moment I don't even believe in Bigfoot."**

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defeat."

*Trova:* But that's all true! After all, somebody has to be in charge. When a committee designed a horse, it came out a camel. No, in regard to my art my position is dictatorial. The artist is sole judge. Anything other than what I want is folly.

*St. Louisan:* Do art critics have any influence on you?

*Trova:* No, not at all. They can only respond to something I do. But I'm out of touch with critics on a personal level and professionally I keep my distance.

*St. Louisan:* What do you think of Picasso? I was struck by a characterization of him as the great destroyer of art in the twentieth century; that it was no longer possible to take art seriously after he got through with it.

*Trova:* He is *the* artist of the twentieth century. Very much an explorer. A great sculptor and painter. What you're quoting is the conventional negative view of twentieth century art. Hitler drove the expressionists out of Germany and Stalin drove them out of Russia. Called them decadent. For sure, modernist art is not unanimously accepted.

*St. Louisan:* What does that word mean, by the way? Decadent?

*Trova:* Without validation. On the verge of triviality. Part of the process of decay, part of the luxury of the twentieth century. *Vogue* and *Womens Wear Daily*.

*St. Louisan:* What sort of person should an artist marry?

*Trova:* Someone sympathetic to the idiosyncratic behavior of the artist. Sympathy. There has to be sympathy.

*St. Louisan:* What quality in other people especially attracts you?

*Trova:* Sympathy to the basic premise of what I'm doing. Even if they disagree.

*St. Louisan:* And what repels you, besides hysteria?

*Trova:* Antagonism of all varieties. There are unsympathetic factions in the art world and I have no time for coffee with them. That's another advantage of not living in New York.

*St. Louisan:* Lots of artists teach to support themselves ....

*Trova:* That's not something I have any experience with.

*St. Louisan:* I know writers who teach in universities and it's always seemed to me to be bad for them: they make the university audience their only audience.

*Trova:* What do you want them to do -- work in a shoe store and turn shoe customers into their only audience? An artist has to make out the best he can. Go to school. Teach school. Go to New York. Though I wouldn't do any of it myself.

*St. Louisan:* What do you do when you aren't doing anything?

*Trova:* Well, I devote as much time as needed to walking and thinking. And I have a full home life. And twice a week I play badminton. I play quite seriously, by the way. I play with the best players in town and we're on the midwest badminton circuit. This demands attention to one's health so I don't even smoke. Besides, it's unhygienic. I don't follow Adele Davis to the limit but I do take vitamins. And it's good for my badminton that I walk a lot. It's important that you wash out your mind.

*St. Louisan:* Would you describe yourself as a serious man?

*Trova:* Very serious, when it's necessary. Like my relationship with my family and with my career and with other people. I'm serious about what I'm doing.

*St. Louisan:* When you began your work, did you map out a career for yourself?

*Trova:* Absolutely not. Everything happened out of a natural evolution. Nothing was planned except the decision to work and make art.

*St. Louisan:* Do you enjoy your fame, then?

*Trova:* I can't get a seat on a plane easier than anybody else. And the art community is so tiny, and so factionalized, that the corner I occupy is pretty small. I don't like to talk about it, because there are so many elements involved. Like when you finally get your Nobel Prize for

Literature: either you will have always expected it so it won't make any difference, or it will come too late to do you any good.

*St. Louisan:* But that sort of contradicts your remark that nothing was planned but the work.

*Trova:* And it sort of doesn't. Everything I've said so far is half true. But if one doesn't believe that what he's doing is significant, and if he doesn't believe he's doing it better than anyone else could, he doesn't deserve to be counted.

*St. Louisan:* Speaking of serious: In the late fifties you were painting in a night club to the rhythm of a jazz band. Then you went through a period of painting baseballs. Then manila envelopes. Didn't you fear this would hinder your being taken seriously?

*Trova:* These were side issues, never meant to be profound. Yes, there's a big danger of not being taken seriously. The cartoons I did in the mid-sixties were done under an assumed name and I don't include them in the New York catalogues. I don't underline them; they were done just for enjoyment. As for painting in a night club: I always did paint with the radio on, and for once I got to hire my own blues band! It's worth noting that later on such activities were called "happenings" and weren't seen as trivial at all. Back then, though, to have gone on with it longer than two weeks would have been a gimmick. So I stopped.

*St. Louisan:* Commercial success can be dangerous to a serious reputation, too. The Falling Man has had popular as well as critical success ...

*Trova:* Yes, he's been on both sides of the ledger.

*St. Louisan:* But you're still regarded as serious, while someone like Peter Max is not.

*Trova:* No, Max is not seen as fine art. There are various interpretations of personal success and some people are counted out or counted in because of preconceived ideas.

*St. Louisan:* Which brings us to the observation that the Falling Man has gotten you compared to Walt Disney.



How do you feel about that?

*Trova:* It's partially my fault, and I don't emphasize it. But we might ask: who is the supreme pop artist? Disney or Warhol? Disney used Mickey Mouse to build an empire, and finally the mouse created a city in Orlando, Florida. Mickey became such a powerful icon that he was able to create EPCOT. Isn't that fascinating?

*St. Louisan:* EPCOT?

*Trova:* Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow. It's a total environment. No other artist, pop or serious, has ever done that.

*St. Louisan:* But there's evidence that Disney never drew Mickey Mouse.

*Trova:* He didn't. I met the artist who did, his name was Ub Iwerks. That's beside the point. Disney was the conceiver and beyond that, *the "art form" is making something happen...* But how do I feel about the comparison? I don't mind, if people are talking about it as a side issue. For instance, the Falling Man wristwatch: it's important to me, but not significant.

*St. Louisan:* You still wouldn't describe yourself as ambitious?

*Trova:* Not any more than any other citizen. I have things to do and I'm industrious and I've never stopped. You could say I'm ambitious to get the work done for some inner satisfaction. Or just say I'm persistent. I sleep eight hours and after that I establish my priorities. If drinking in a bar were important to me, I'd do that.

*St. Louisan:* Speaking of that ... Alcohol and drugs figure big in a lot of artists' lives. Do you have much experience with either?

*Trova:* Not really. I like a beer with my sandwich and I've found that a good-sized plate of linguini with clam sauce and a moderate amount of red wine produce a quite satisfactory high. My favorite drink is cream soda. I drink too much of it. That's bad for me.

*St. Louisan:* And drugs?

*Trova:* When I was playing tenor saxophone in a high school jazz band in 1947, marijuana and the rest were all around. I saw and rejected them that long ago.

*St. Louisan:* Do you still paint to music?

*Trova:* Sure. I start work at ten in the morning, drinking coffee and

listening to KCFM. It's a rather elegant life.

*St. Louisan:* No classics?

*Trova:* Sometimes. I like the big juicy arias in Puccini. But I don't have the patience to listen to a whole opera. I much prefer Muzak in elevators. And people whistling. But I'll tell you one musician I really enjoy, and he's not too well-known: Barry White. Of the Love Unlimited Orchestra. He's able to project a remarkable blend of jazz, pop, rock and classics. Sometimes I use him for inspiration. Raises the adrenalin.

*St. Louisan:* Do you believe your life has a purpose?

*Trova:* The purpose of one's life on earth is to survive and fulfill one's potential. That sounds dumb, doesn't it? But it's hard to survive and co-exist and to get things done -- some men more than others have the opportunity to do all this. As for supernatural purpose, that's another matter: I don't know how many gods there are.

*St. Louisan:* Have you ever had any sort of psychic experience?

*Trova:* No. Maybe in 48 years there have been some coincidences, but none profound.

*St. Louisan:* You aren't religious?

*Trova:* I was baptized a Catholic, but now I'm a Loyal Disobedient. I married outside the Church, and that's what the priest told me I was: a Loyal Disobedient. But no, I'm not religious. It would be nice if Christ could die on the cross every Friday; when he arose again everybody could believe. But at the moment I don't even believe in Bigfoot.

*St. Louisan:* Has there been a time in your life that you look back on as golden?

*Trova:* Yesterday. Now *that* was a very successful day. Every day last week was good. I'm not being flippant. I've been talking with Peter Raven of Shaw's Garden about a showing of my outdoor sculpture -- details began to come together in the last couple of days. The County Park project also moved a little further along this past week.

*St. Louisan:* Has there been a particularly bad time?

*Trova:* When I was drafted into the army. When I lost my hair. When I have to go to the doctor. There have been times of austerity, but we remember those afterwards as good.

*St. Louisan:* What makes you laugh?

*Trova:* I love movies. Spy movies. "Three Days of the Condor." Have you seen it?

*St. Louisan:* Yes, but what makes you laugh?

*Trova:* I laugh when I hear good music. Good conversation is full of laughter. I'm average in that.

*St. Louisan:* What don't you like about yourself?

*Trova:* Let me think ... I'm sure there must be a lot of things I could improve on. Maybe if I didn't wear glasses and still had my hair ... Maybe if my teeth had been straightened when I was younger ... Maybe if I looked more Anglo-Saxon than I do ... Say, what's with these questions? Do I believe in ghosts and why do I hate myself. What are you getting at?

*St. Louisan:* It's a sort of "Silver Screen" interview. Don't you like the questions?

*Trova:* Boy, you ought to try pulling them on the newer conceptual artists in New York. They talk only in the most theoretical terms. I can see you asking one of them if he sleeps in the nude. Hooooo!

*St. Louisan:* I wonder if I could ask if you ...

*Trova:* Well, not in the winter ...

*St. Louisan:* Won't you finish?

*Trova:* Okay, but nothing I've said is the sort of thing that *has* to be said. What's more important than what I've said is that I wouldn't normally say it.

*St. Louisan:* We were talking about personal discontents ...

*Trova:* Maybe if I weren't so obsessive to see certain works realized I wouldn't be so hard on the people around me, and on myself. I have a great desire to see things to fruition and sometimes it gets out of hand. I fuss at people when I shouldn't, and it's a strain on one's budget to do something fourteen feet high in stainless steel.

But I'm fascinated by realization. I make things that people look at; it seems strange, but that's what I do. All I want is to make something whose only purpose is to be looked at. It might weigh three thousand pounds, it is brought in by helicopter, it sits next to a tree that's a hundred years old, and there's nothing you can do with it but look at it. If you climb on it, I'll tell you to get off. 