

The sculpture of Carl and Heidi Bucher

by Henri Barras

translated from the French by
Mary S. Conrad

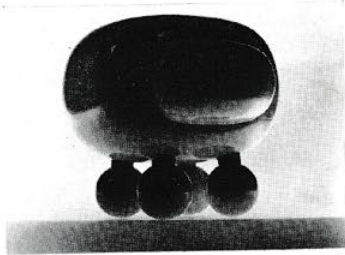
All photos by courtesy of the
Rothmans Art Gallery, Stratford.

The gesture of the creator reflects our surroundings and our way of reacting to those surroundings. Although not very long ago the rules of art, of great art, were defined by order and balance, the current tendencies in diverse plastic expressions are often conveyed through disorder and disequilibrium. Confidence and contemplation have given way to cries and shocks.

There are particular locales which seem to nourish the identification of art more fully with technology; and if one of the glories of Switzerland is the perfection of its technique, Swiss artists, for the most part, are the glorifiers of this technique.

Carl Bucher, a young artist from Zurich who has been living in Toronto for several months thanks to a Canada Council exchange grant, is, in my opinion, the perfect example of this. His sources of inspiration in seeking the nature of spatial, human, or kinetic relationships are trains, trucks, missiles, and supersonic planes. It is from these that he has drawn his simplified, symbolic imagery and the essential tension of his forms. The precision of the execution of his work is worthy of the greatest watch-makers. With this one must consider the inventive genius of the artist who transforms a cold and angular block of plastic into the sumptuous and sensual material of the *Evanescent Shadow Sculptures*, of the *Phosphorescent Inflatables*, and of the *Apparel Sculptures*, his latest works which were seen at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York in April and which will be exhibited at the Musée d'art contemporain in Montreal from June 1 to 27, and at Rothmans Art Gallery, Stratford, from July 2 to August 1, 1971.

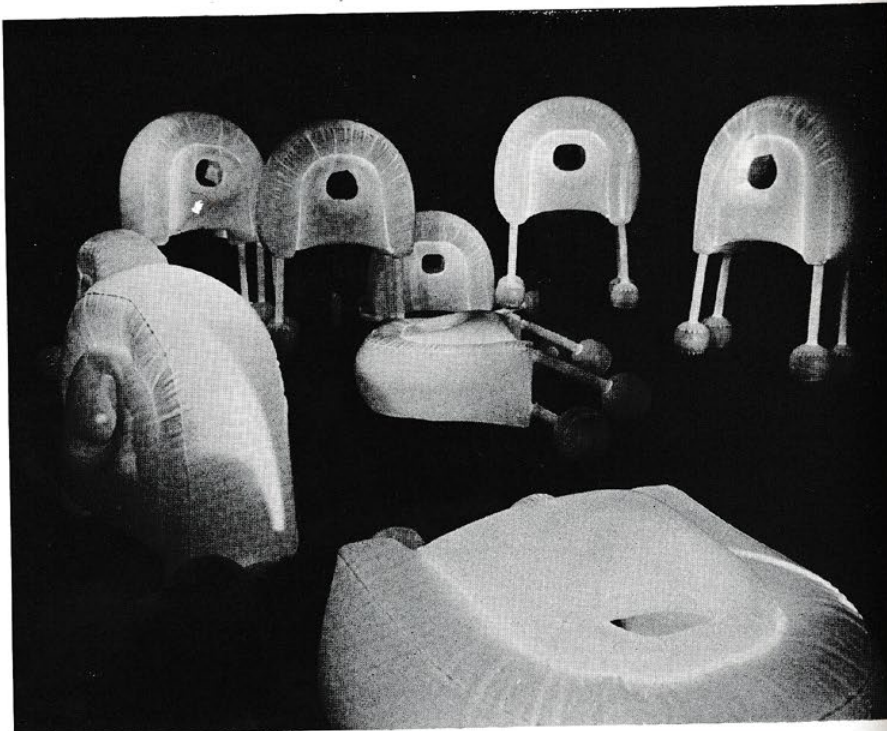
Although advanced, modern technology is the point of departure. Bucher's work reflects the disequilibrium induced by the frantic invasion of our human mi-

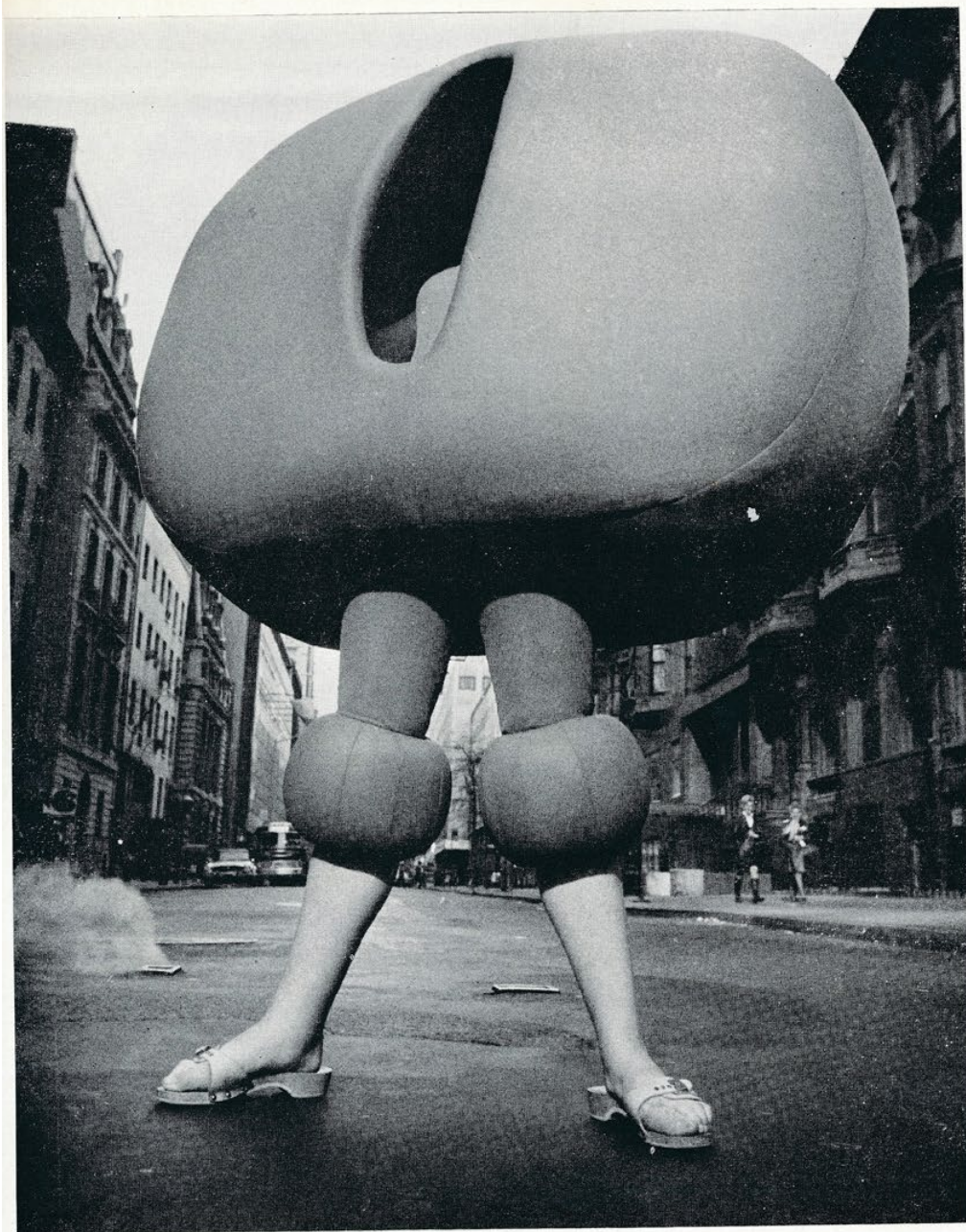


1 *Landing Sculpture V*, 1970, by Carl Bucher of fibreglas, 31" x 27" x 28"; model for a proposed large-scale project in which this sculpture will seem to hover on a surface of water. Photography by Photomagic, Zurich.

2 *Phosphorescent Inflatables* by Carl Bucher lie about on the floor until somebody climbs into one. With a human body to give some rigidity to the sculpture, it can then stand upright, be walked around in or whatever the wearer-participant wishes. The sculptures of phosphorescent material developed by the artist glow in the dark obscuring the people wearing them and creating a ghostly choreography. Photography by Bob Hanson.

3 *Evanescent Shadow Sculpture* capturing the "portrait" of the artists, Heidi and Carl Bucher. Photography by Bob Hanson.





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lieu by the "machine." From a series of paintings and reliefs titled *Wagons*, his first works, Carl Bucher passed to another series named *Landing*, giving birth to a tridimensional form, a sort of bathyscaphe, another Swiss invention, which looks as though it could rise up over a Zurich public square and land in the middle of a forest of fountains. Indeed, in one of its permutations, just such a form is being fabricated for a vast hydraulically operated sculpture fountain there.

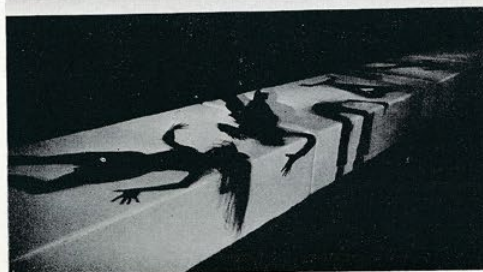
Carl Bucher's "machines," painted or sculpted in plastic or cloth are aesthetically beautiful; but they suggest as well the anguish or tension that one feels watching trains at top speed shattering the peaceful European countryside or watching a supersonic airplane cut its motors and let itself seem to fall onto the landing strip. As beautiful objects, Bucher's works bridge the abysses which man's technology has created. An art of potential cries, joyful if the machine accomplishes its mission, horrified in case the mechanism begins to "think." But the artist does not take sides. He observes, only opposing the two forces, and suggests to us that one of the two can be nullified, thus breaking the balance. The art of Carl Bucher is an illustration of the concept of static mobility.

The Swiss artist Heidi Bucher, the artist's wife, took an active part in developing Carl's recent works, and he got his inspiration for the *Apparel Sculptures* from Heidi's research in soft fabrics.

Heretofore Carl Bucher has established a distance between his works and the viewer; but in the pieces recently exhibited in New York, and soon to be seen in Montreal and Stratford, the human being is an essential part of the work. I am not speaking of the shell which envelopes us, but of the spectre we are, or of the shadow of ourselves.

4-5 Views of some of the *Apparel Sculpture* by Heidi Bucher of opaque nylon fabric over foam shapes. When they are not being worn, these works function as object-sculptures. Photographed in New York by Dirck Halstead.

6 *Evanescent Shadow Sculpture* of foam blocks covered in phosphorescent vinyl. Each block is 48" x 30" x 96". Top: bodies recline on treated surface while bright light is on and in the bottom view the after-image or silhouette left for a few moments is seen. Photography by Bob Hanson at The Museum of Contemporary Crafts, N.Y.



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