

Considerable publicity from new event

FIRST VISUAL ARTS FESTIVAL HAS PUT HARROGATE IN THE NEWS

FASCINATING - OR POINTLESS?

Frank sculptures are Festival talking point

THE work of Miss Olga Jancic, the 31-year-old Yugoslavian sculptor, which now forms part of the open-air exhibition of sculpture, at the



"In the sun"



"Composition"



"Pregnant"



"Victim 1"

Visual Arts, has proved the talking point of the festival.

Her works arrived on the scene at the very last minute, having been delayed by the Bank Holiday and by Customs formalities at Harwich, until mid-day Friday. By mid-day Saturday some of the 20 works were in position in Crescent Gardens, and the rest arranged in the Exhibition Hall, where they have attracted considerable attention.

While experts recognise Miss Jancic's talents, her work is of the kind to stir up controversy and occasion comment from the man in the street." Miss Jancic belongs to the modern school of abstract sculptors, and has exhibited in many European countries. Last year she won a first prize in the Paris Biennale with her study of "Maternity." This is one of the works on show in Crescent Gardens. Most of her themes are concerned with sex.

Mr. Mervyn Levy, the festival director, told a staff reporter this week that he had heard many comments, but none expressing disgust. He admitted that practically all the work was sensual and erotic and based on sex, but said he thought there was nothing wrong with this, as it was only natural.

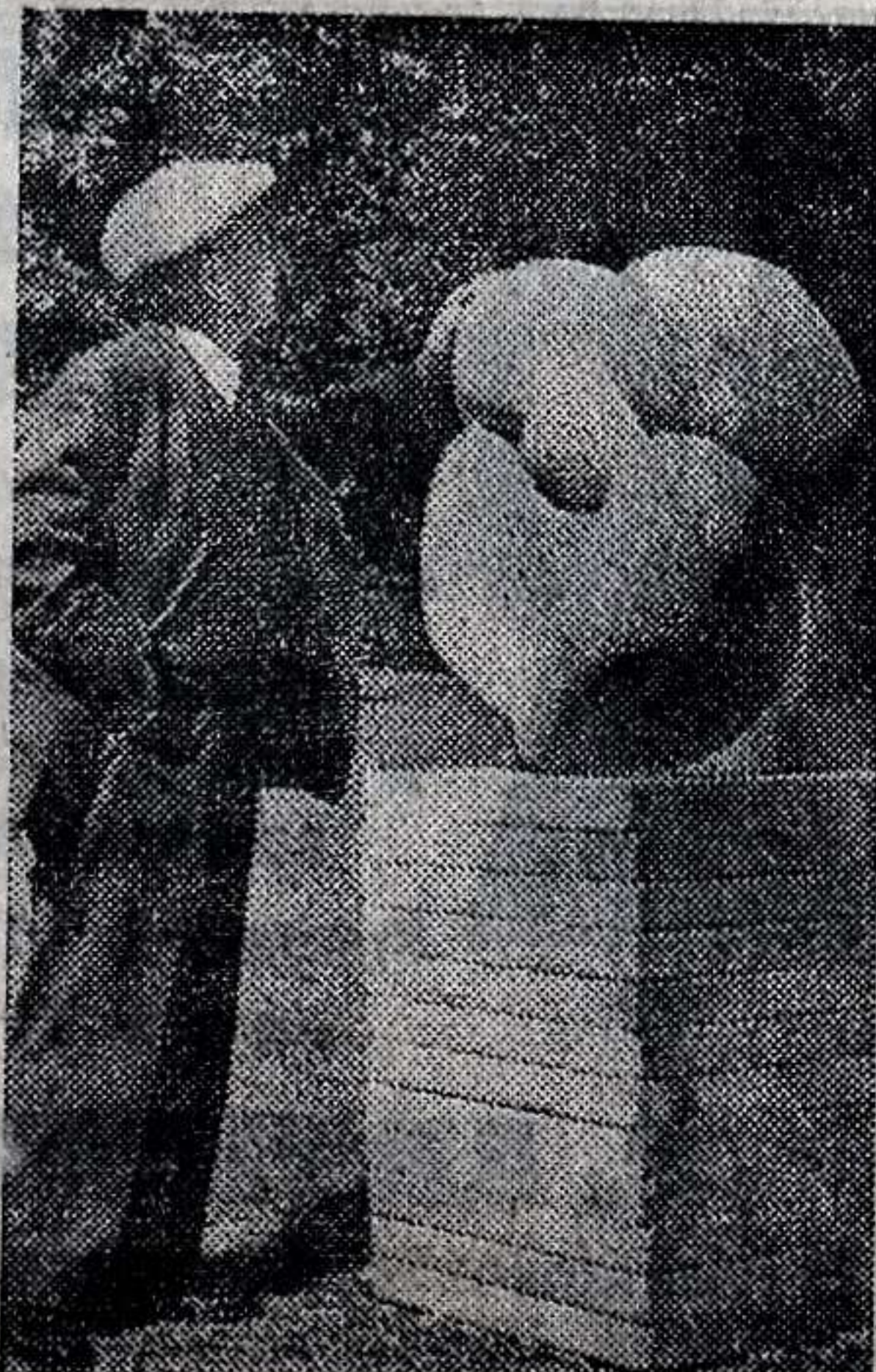
In Yugoslavia, he explained, sex was treated more frankly than in this country. He said that he was aware that Miss Jancic's work would raise eyebrows in Harrogate, and he was all in favour of this.

Many people had expressed bewilderment at the forms and did not understand their significance. In Crescent Gardens on Monday morning the comment of old elderly lady was: "Frightful. Not disgusting, just meaningless."

A Harrogate architect said: "This means nothing to me. It is pointless, and is not a sign of progress, and therefore what useful purpose can it serve? Why cannot artists these days present something pleasing to the eye and intelligible to the man in the street?"

A woman who had come to see the exhibition said that when

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"Bewildered?"

Controversial sculptures stimulate interest

HARROGATE'S first Festival of the Visual Arts, opened on Saturday, has had a mixed reception in the country's Press. Art critics have varied from attack to benign praise. Reporters have tended to leave the art to defend itself and have concentrated on what mild sensationalism can be extracted from the allegedly erotic sculptures of the Yugoslavian Olga Jancic and some paintings by Clifford Hall.

The combined publicity content has been considerable for Harrogate, and a steady flow of visitors to the exhibition is proof of the interest it has aroused.

Opening the festival, the Mayor, Coun. Leonard Roberts, said the Council felt that there should be a festival for the high season. He hoped that it was the first of many to be held in the town and that it would become internationally famous.

Harrogate had everything for such a festival in the way of geographical location, first-class hotels and other amenities.

There was no reason why Harrogate should not hold the event in the future, because already the town had a long list of events held during the year which made it popular throughout the world.

Coun. G. Holroyd, chairman of the Entertainments Committee and Deputy Mayor, said he was Mayor when the idea of the festival was conceived and had thus been chairman of the special committee formed to stage the event. When Coun. Roberts became Mayor, he naturally took over the duties of chairman of the special committee and had done a wonderful job in following it through.

Controversial?

He felt that everyone who visited the festival would agree that the town had mustered a wonderful collection. He admitted that some people might consider it controversial.

Turning to the future of the Festival, Coun. Holroyd said he very much doubted that the Council could tackle it all on its own, but, nevertheless, it was just possible.

"I would like to see the festival in the civic calendar," he said. "We are trying to build up a calendar of worth-while events." This year's festival would create a lot of interest and controversy.

The opening was attended by Mr. L. S. Lowry and Miss Olga Jancic, who are both exhibiting at the festival.

Frank sculptures

(Continued from page 1)

one was provided with the titles, the implication of the works became plain. They were certainly more frank than anything of the kind hitherto seen in Harrogate. She found the exhibits fascinating.

"I don't understand this work, but it must be interesting, because it held my attention for the last half-hour," said one young man.

Of her own work Miss Jancic says: "I am primarily interested in Man, in his physical situation and his most vital impulses, such as love, motherhood, birth and death." She says that she is interested in his internal force and vitality, which like basic motifs, permeate his whole being.

Her secondary theme is the disintegration and abandonment of Man in this atomic age.

She achieves her effects through economy of detail, with only the most direct and essential expression, thus making her forms somewhat obscure to the man in the street. "I look for the hidden force within the object itself. The tension in my forms comes from within themselves."

It is perhaps this force which has been communicated to those who have seen her work. It is unlike abstract art in that Miss Jancic creates and presents a form veiled, but still definable. Such forms as "Pregnancy," "Maternity," "Composition" are not sufficiently subtly disguised to pass as abstract, but they are sufficiently obvious to stir up feelings in those who come nearest to understanding her work.

Miss Jancic, who started sculpture as an art at the age of 16, belongs to a group of eight young sculptors who give an outdoor exhibition in Belgrade each summer. Last year she exhibited in London, but this is her first visit to Harrogate. After her fortnight's visit she is returning to Belgrade to "get down to some more work."