

GEORGE KORAS



November 6 – December 16, 1992
University Art Gallery
Staller Center for the Arts
State University of New York at Stony Brook

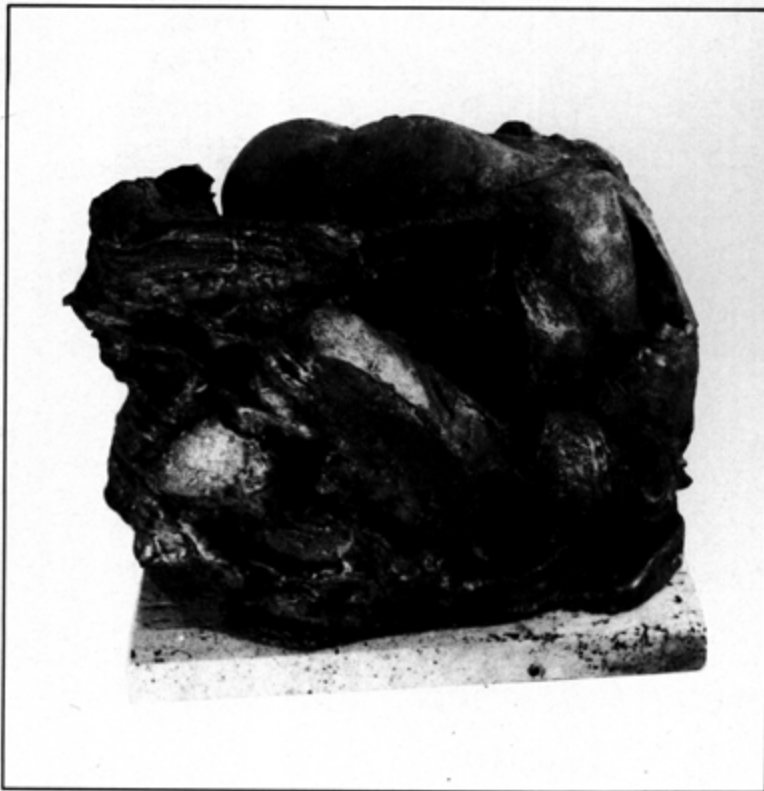
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to art critic Cynthia Nadelman for contributing the insightful essay published in this catalogue. I also want to thank Professor James Rubin, Chairman of the University's Department of Art, for chronicling George Koras's teaching career in the catalogue introduction.

Special thanks are also extended to members of the Staller Center for the Arts staff: Nancy Alberto, Kristin Bruno, Merle Cuthrell, Dwana Farrell, Brenda Hanegan, Patricia Hubbard, Patricia Jaconetta, Heejung Kim, Annmarie Roper, and Pamela Sienna, Gallery Assistants; Vico Fabris, Gina Felicetti, Gregory Morley, and Pete Pantaleo for installation assistance; Patrick Kelly, Liz Silver, and the Technical Crew, Staller Center for the Arts for exhibition lighting; and Mary Balduf, Gallery secretary.

Most of all, I wish to thank George Koras for sharing his work with the Stony Brook community.

Rhonda Cooper
Director



Anguish
Aluminum, 15 x 17 x 12"
Lent by the artist

Front Cover
Fighting Animals
Bronze, 22 x 29 x 13"
Lent by the artist

INTRODUCTION

George Koras began teaching sculpture at Stony Brook in 1966, with a specialization in bronze casting and in modeling after the human figure. He was educated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Athens, Greece. He also attended the Art Students' League in New York City, during which time he served as an assistant to the famous sculptor, Jacques Lipchitz. The winner of many prizes and awards, as well as a frequent exhibitor, Koras's best-known work is in the field of public commissions. He has done large outdoor bronzes for the New York City Board of Education, and his Vietnam War Memorial for Danbury, Connecticut was dedicated in May 1988.

During his nearly thirty-year career at Stony Brook, George Koras introduced many students to the presentation of the human figure and to the secrets and marvels of casting. Working first in a makeshift studio area located in an old garage, Koras was eventually able to bring his classes into the first-rate facility in the Fine Arts Center, now the Staller Center for the Arts, when it opened in 1976. Koras was one of the core faculty for the Art Department's foundations courses, that is, courses that taught the fundamentals of artistic techniques and concepts. Himself the product of a rigorous academic background, Koras was a strong believer in firm grounding in the basics. He frequently taught drawing, and he often taught courses specially designed for art teachers. At the advanced level, Koras's specialties were modelling and bronze casting. Indeed, his own work bears the traces of his expressive handwork, and he clearly took pleasure in conveying the excitement of creativity through his hands-on methods.

On behalf of the faculty of the Department of Art and the many students he introduced to sculpture and guided through their art studies, I salute Professor George Koras upon his retirement and commend him for a lifetime of achievement in both teaching and creative artwork.

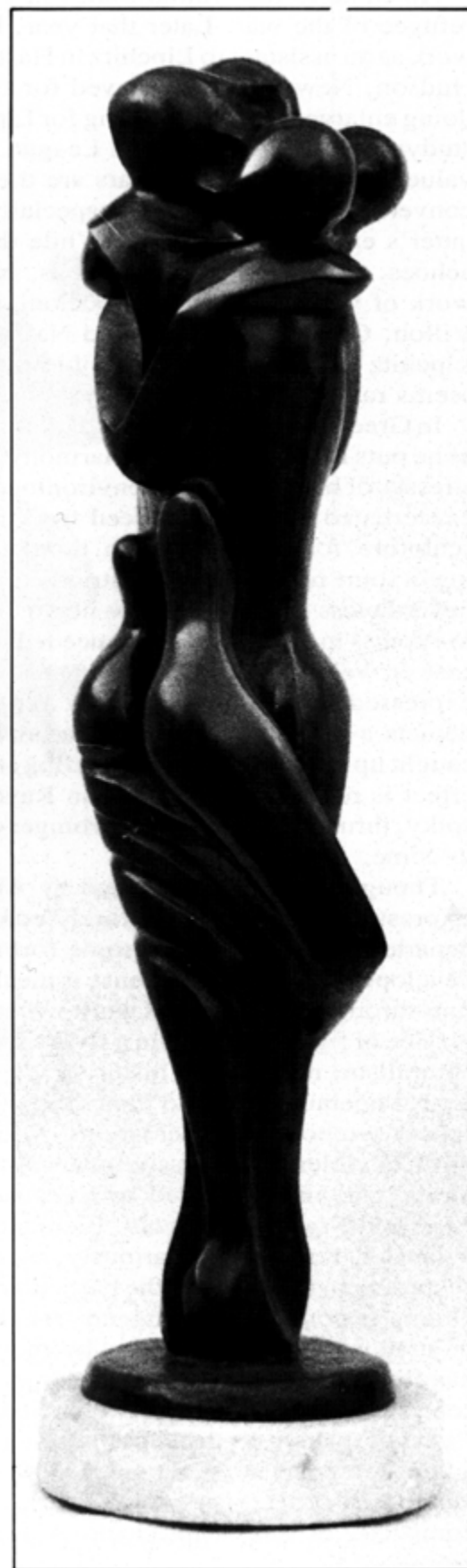
James Rubin
Chairman
Department of Art

GEORGE KORAS

Perhaps incongruously, George Koras has been assembling sculpture of late from found pieces of wood and assorted metals. "What I enjoy recently," the artist says, "is exploring new materials, new tools, and new techniques. I search for found objects that have potential for transformation into sculpture. I enjoy visiting the junkyards in search not only for usable materials but also for unusual, 'accidental' forms." He continues: "I don't look anymore for deep meanings in my art, nor do I look for escape and catharsis. Much like a child playing with his toys, I play with my materials. I lock myself in my studio, in my temple, and I worship my own God. Playing with my material becomes a joy and a challenge. I'm very content, very eager to see where all this is going to lead me." With all due respect for teaching, which has occupied Koras for quite a few years, such a turnabout in motives and outcomes is a testimonial to the impact of retirement.

Formerly an assistant to Jacques Lipchitz, once a foundry worker at the Modern Art Foundry, and a professor at SUNY Stony Brook for 27 years who built a foundry there for his students, Koras has endured the customary difficulties of continuing to make one's own art while earning a living helping others to make theirs. Words like "turbulence," "psycho-adventure," "struggle," and "troubled soul" are far more common than "joy" when Koras describes his working state of mind over the years. Steeped in a classically mid-20th-century bronze idiom, Koras's work has exuded gravity, difficulty, stress – in short, the seriousness for which bronze is so well suited. The opposite of a sculpture of whim, bronze sculpture is generally hard won, painstaking in execution, and challenging in the creation of meaningful forms. The rewards are in the material's expressiveness and ability to convey subtleties. These are the qualities traditionally mined by this artist.

The Greek-born Koras says that from an early age the great artists were his gods — and not only the artists of classical Greece but later artists whose work he saw on travels through Europe after graduation from the Academy of Fine Arts in Athens. A musician as well as an artist, Koras was nevertheless obliged early on to stay in the family business rather than pursue art as a vocation. Struggle was present within as well as without. An early memory of historic turbulence remains with Koras: A beloved violin teacher, who was his idol and role model, was hung along with other distinguished Athenians by the Nazis occupying Greece during World War II. The action was taken as a reprisal after a Partisan mine killed four Germans in a jeep. After the war, when Koras saw photographs of powerfully expressive contemporary American sculpture, he knew he wanted to be where such work was being created.



Embracement
Bronze, 35 x 10 x 10"
Lent by the artist

He came to the United States in 1955 as a refugee of the war. Later that year, he began work as an assistant to Lipchitz in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. He stayed for five years, doing enlargements and casting for Lipchitz and studying at the Art Students League. What he values most from those years are the lengthy conversations with Lipchitz, especially about the latter's early years in Paris. While there are echoes, conscious or unconscious, in Koras's work of various "gods" – Boccioni, Duchamp-Villon, Gonzalez, Roszak and Nakian – where Lipchitz is concerned, the visible influence seems rather minimal.

In Greece, Koras had worked in stone, aiming, as he puts it, for "beauty and harmony"; but the stresses of his new life and environment simply exacerbated his growing need for immediacy in sculpture, for a method which, though painstaking in some respects and not strictly direct, would nevertheless capture the raw nerves he wanted to express in visual terms. He needed to work in cast or welded metal. Early on, his ethos was expressed in a painting, *Lost at Sea*, which depicts a man – the artist – in a boat that is caught up among powerful, swirling strokes. The effect is reminiscent of Russian Rayonism. The spiky, thrusting forms are a harbinger of sculpture to come.

Though certainly influenced by Abstract Expressionism, Koras has rarely completely departed from imagery in some form. A highly developed compositional sense is the thread that runs through the sculptor's work, whether in the service of figures created in a style approaching naturalism; mythic and historical depictions – from Phoebus Apollo to Don Quixote to Jim Jones; symbolic representations of lovers, or birth; or violently expressive near-abstractions of dire situations, suggested by titles such as *The Prey* and *Fighting Animals*. Elements are balanced, however precariously, or skewed according to the needs of the particular sculpture. Drama is conveyed by rugged, rough modeling in attenuated forms, softness by more sensuous handling of materials, by a fullness. A sculpture's center of gravity may be sorely tried, as in *Phoebus*, where limbs shoot out at various angles, or it may be rock solid, as in the various versions of *Lovers*, in which forms coexist compactly in single, interlocking masses.

Victorious Torso and *Dancer* are upright, vertical depictions of individual figures, opposite totems: the latter, controlled and planned in advance; while *Victorious Torso*, like its title, is more interested in conveying a (perhaps evanescent) state than a form. Like the painting *Lost at Sea*, this sculpture exemplifies Koras's great gift for capturing states, or essences. In his expressionist works, he can be a sculptural force unleashed, a dynamo of violence, while in the more lyrical or romantic pieces, he is an exponent equally of tenderness and wholeness.

After the force of concentration required to create bronzes of this type over an artistic lifetime, it is small wonder that the sculptor has embraced a more curious, meandering assemblage-esthetic in recent works, perhaps influenced, in turn, by more recent generations of students. He has also been working in hammered brass and aluminum and, as always, he occasionally wields a welding torch. No longer tied to any one material, he can be beguiled by many, finding new outlets for his expressions and being led, in turn, by new materials to new expressions and to new beginnings.

Cynthia Nadelman



Lovers
Bronze, 21 x 16 x 16"
Lent by the artist



Jim Jones
Bronze, 27 x 14 x 10"
Lent by the artist

"When I saw in the newspapers and magazines the pictures of 900 dead bodies – lying down like dead fish at a seashore – I was not only shocked and overwhelmed with anger for this senseless and stupid tragedy, but I was also frightened — frightened by the power some sick 'leaders' could have over our fragile society. Ghosts started reviving and I was chilled, as the face of Hitler flashed into my mind. That is when

I decided to do the sculpture of Jim Jones. I envisioned him sitting on his cloudy throne, holding the fatal cup and a cross. His head as a skull and his body as an animal's jaw indicate death and grasping selfishness. Under his powerful claws, covered with a blanket, one can see the skulls of 'his people,' the people he robbed before he poisoned them to death."

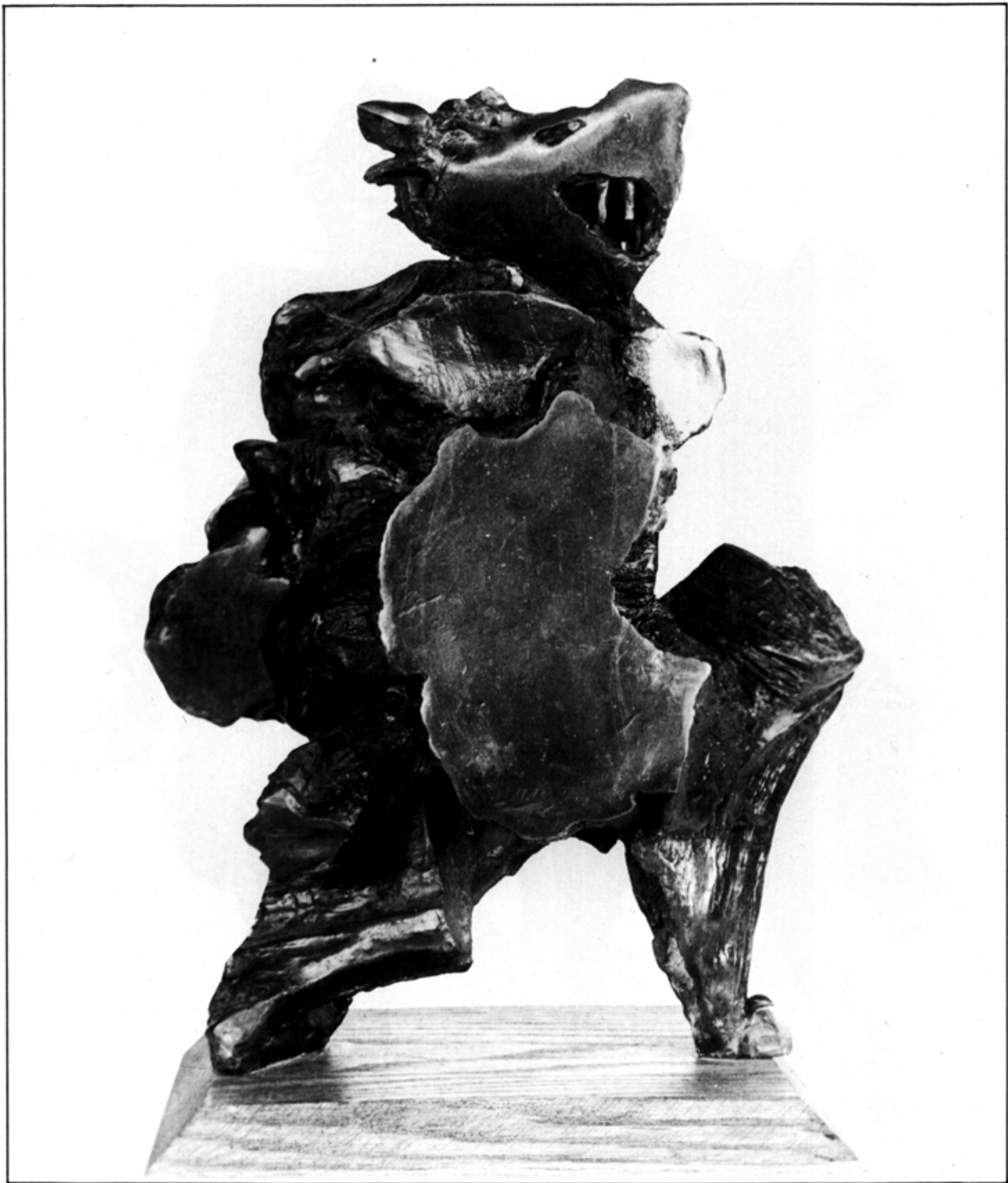
George Koras



Don Quixote
Bronze, 30 x 30 x 14"
Lent by the artist



Two Friends
Bronze, 18 x 14 x 11"
Lent by the artist



Werewolf
Bronze, 19 x 11 x 9"
Lent by the artist



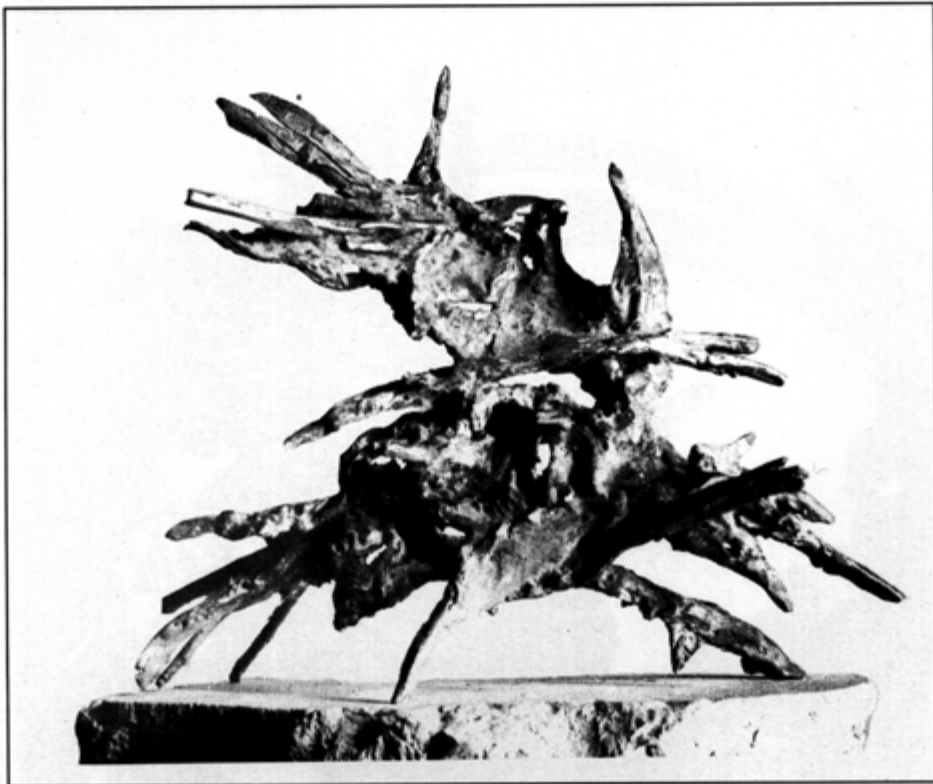
Phoebus
Bronze, 31 x 31 x 24"
Lent by the artist



Study for Sculpture
Ink on paper, 20 x 24"



Medusa
Bronze, 36 x 24 x 10"



Attacking Indian
Bronze, 22 x 20 x 10"



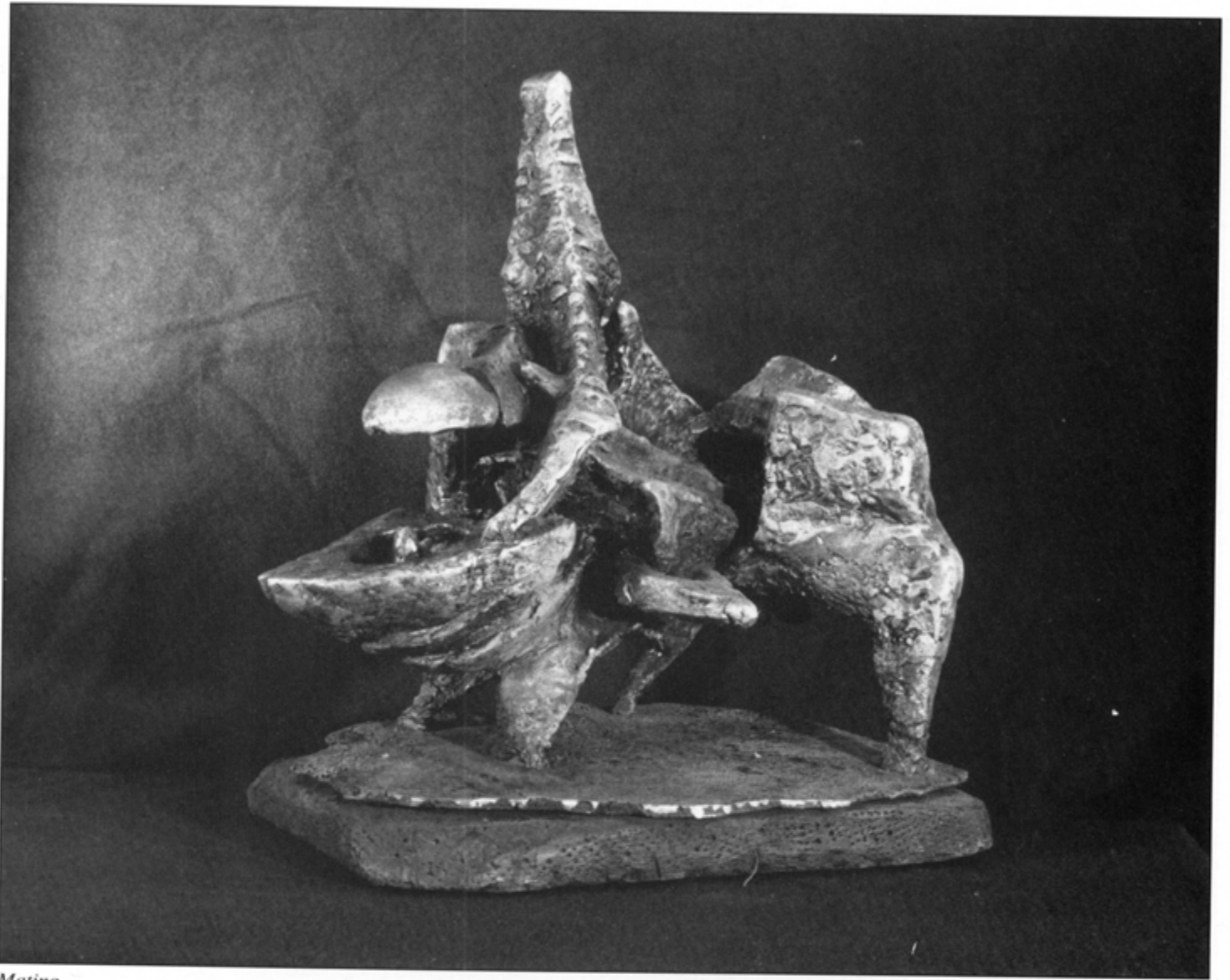
The Pained Animal
Bronze, 20 x 12 x 7"
Lent by the artist



Victorious Torso
Bronze, 29 x 13 x 8"
Lent by the artist



Oriental with a Fish
Bronze, 30 x 27 x 10"
Lent by the artist



Mating
Aluminum, 25 x 15 x 15"
Lent by the artist



Struggling
Bronze, 17 x 12 x 12"
Lent by the artist

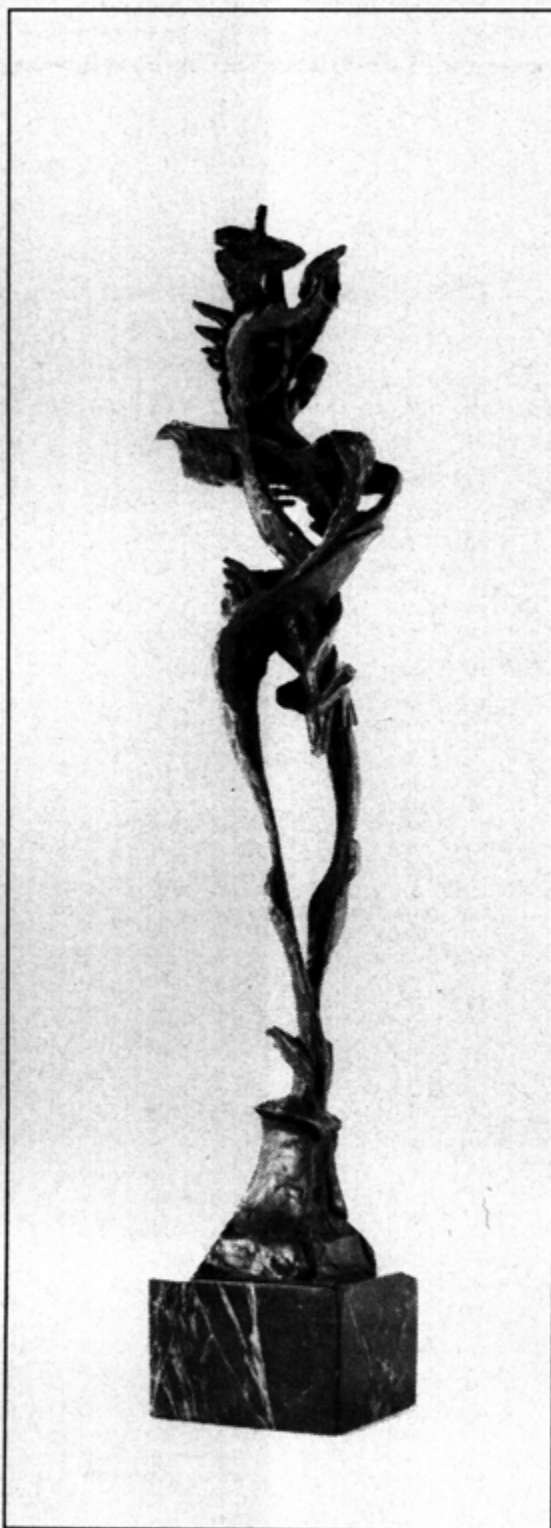
GEORGE KORAS

George Koras was born in Greece and graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Athens. Emigrating to the United States in 1955, he studied at the Art Students' League in New York City and served as an assistant to the sculptor **Jacques Lipchitz** from 1955 to 1960. Koras studied metal casting at the Modern Art Foundry in Astoria, New York, and in 1975, studied the foundries of Italy and Spain with the help of a fellowship and grant-in-aid from the Research Foundation of the State of New York.

His many commissions include three large outdoor bronzes for the New York City Board of Education and a Vietnam War Memorial for the city of Danbury, Connecticut. His work is included in the W.P. Chrysler Collection and Museum in Norfolk, Virginia, the National Museum of Greece, and the I. Vorre Museum for Contemporary Greek Artists in Athens. He was the subject of a television program produced by the New York State Council on the Arts.

Koras has participated in many solo and group shows. His most recent show, in April of 1992, was held at the Greek Consulate General Cultural Center in New York City. His work is currently shown at the **Kouros Gallery** in New York City. Koras has received awards from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Hudson River Museum (awarded by **Marcel Duchamp**), among many others. He is listed in *Who's Who in American Art*.

A professor of sculpture at the State University of New York at Stony Brook for the past 27 years, Koras retired in August, 1992, and now sets his sails for new horizons.



Ballerina
Bronze
Lent by the artist

University Art Gallery

STALLER.
CENTER

PREVIOUS EXHIBITIONS AT THE ART GALLERY

- 1975 FACULTY EXHIBITION
1976 MICHELLE STUART
RECENT DRAWINGS
SALVATORE ROMANO
1977 MEL PEKARSKY
JUDITH BERNSTEIN
HERBERT BAYER
1978 LEON GOLUB
JANET FISH
ROSEMARY MAYER
THE SISTER CHAPEL
1979 SHIRLEY GORELICK
ALAN SONFIST
HOWARDENA PINDELL
ROY LICHTENSTEIN
1980 BENNY ANDREWS
ALEX KATZ
EIGHT FROM NEW YORK
ARTISTS FROM QUEENS
OTTO PIENE
STONY BROOK 11, THE STUDIO FACULTY
1981 ALICE NEEL
55 MERCER: 10 SCULPTORS
JOHN LITTLE
IRA JOEL HABER
LEON POLK SMITH
1982 FOUR SCULPTORS
CECIL ABISH
JACK YOUNGERMAN
ALAN SHIELDS
THE STONY BROOK ALUMNI INVITATIONAL
ANN McCOY
1983 THE WAR SHOW
CERAMIC DIRECTIONS: A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW
CINDY SHERMAN
THE FACULTY SHOW
1984 BERNARD APTEKAR: ART AND POLITICS
ERIC STALLER: LIGHT YEARS
NORMAN BLUHM: SEVEN FROM THE SEVENTIES
EDWARD COUNTEY 1921-1984
CARL ANDRE: SCULPTURE
1985 LEWIS HINE IN EUROPE: 1918-1919
FRANCESC TORRES: PATHS OF GLORY
HOMAGE TO BOLOTOWSKY: 1935-1981
FREEDOM WITHIN: PAINTINGS BY JUAN SANCHEZ/
INSTALLATION BY ALFREDO JAAR
ABSTRACT PAINTINGS REDEFINED
1986 KLEEGER: METAL SCULPTURE
TOBY BUONAGURIO: SELECTED WORKS
YANG YAN-PING AND ZENG SHAN-QING
EIGHT URBAN PAINTERS: CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS OF
THE EAST VILLAGE
TV: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS
WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT
1987 HANS BREDER: ARCHETYPAL DIAGRAMS
MICHAEL SINGER: RITUAL SERIES RETELLINGS
JUDITH DOLNICK/ROBERT NATKIN
MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE: THE HUMANITARIAN VISION
MEL ALEXENBERG: COMPUTER ANGELS
STEINA AND WOODY VASULKA: THE WEST
1988 THE FACULTY SHOW '88
ROBERT WHITE: SELECTED WORKS 1947-1988
LEE KRASNER: PAINTINGS 1956-1984
EDGAR BUONAGURIO: PERMUTATION AND EVOLUTION 1974-1988
JOAN SNYDER COLLECTS JOAN SNYDER
1989 THE M.F.A. SHOW '89
ROBERT KUSHNER: SILENT OPERAS
HERMAN CHERRY: PAINTINGS 1984-1989
HAITIAN ART: THE GRAHAM COLLECTION
FIBER EXPLORATIONS: NEW WORK IN FIBER ART
1990 THE M.F.A. SHOW 1990
PRINTS BY PRINTMAKERS
KIT-YIN SNYDER: ENRICO IV
FANTASTIC VOYAGES
POETIC LICENSE
1991 M.F.A. 1991
FREDERIC AMAT AND ROBERTO JUAREZ
ADOLPH GOTTLIEB: EPIC ART
THE MONOTYPES OF ADOLPH GOTTLIEB
THE FACULTY SHOW '91
NEW TRADITIONS: THIRTEEN HISPANIC PHOTOGRAPHERS
1992 M.F.A. SHOW 1992
JULIUS TOBIAS
REUBEN KADISH
CITY VIEWS