



GERALD LEWERS

GERRY LEWERS HAS LEFT US

By
PATRICK WHITE

Gerald Francis Lewers, who died last week in Queensland after a fall from a horse, stunned his friends by the suddenness of his leaving them. Not that we would have wished to watch that honest eye grow bewildered in a fog of age, or detect his vigorous mind spoiled by last illnesses. His approach to life was simple and direct, and he left us simply, suddenly. What may seem capricious, could in fact have been right.

BORN in Tasmania in 1905 of Quaker stock, Gerry remained closer to his Quaker background than he himself believed. Although his art perhaps his god, strength of both art and the grain of which he found

the movements of animals and birds.

I am not trying to suggest he was a quietist or mystic. In the house at Emu Plains ideas hurtled, argument flared, voices shouted, sparks flew. It was a place in which people gathered spontaneously, to eat, drink and discuss, and I shall remember the mass of friends surging out to welcome in a New Year festooned with coloured lights. Along with the paintings and the sculpture, the mosaics and the watergarden, an ephemeral dish of food wore the expression of a work of art. As I see it, the house on the Nepean, over which Lewers presided, with his painter-wife Margo, and his two beautiful and gifted daughters, provided one of the focus points of our still tentative civilisation.

THIS relaxed, informal Australian artist studied in Vienna, and in London under Skeaping. At home, as partner in an engineering firm, some of his life was spent on the construction of roads and railways. The engineer links the sculptor to the maker of fountains.

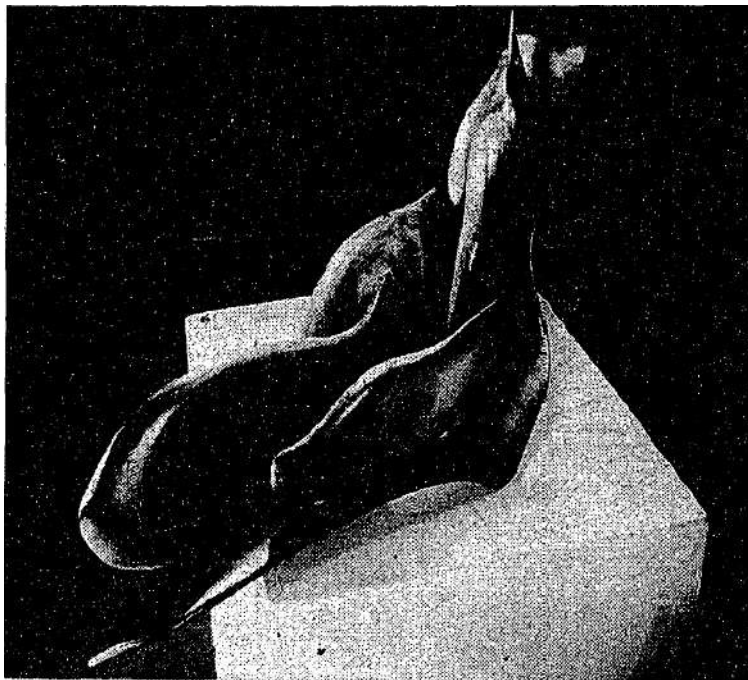
Although there are memorable sculptures—the reclining sandstone figure of the National University, the sandstone carvings at the M.L.C. Building, the relief in copper entered for a recent competition at Reserve Bank — possibly Lewers will be remembered

more for the fountains he has left behind him in our public places: at the I.C.I., Melbourne; in Macquarie Place, Sydney; certainly the windjammer, unsuited to its proposed site at the A.M.P. but which many of us hope may eventually add to the splendours of the Opera House, the wind filling its sails of water on the deck of the vaster ship of stone.

BECAUSE this is a personal memorial, and Gerry Lewers was a human being rather than a public figure, my own attention concentrates on his intimate works.

In the happiest of these smaller pieces the warmth and affection of the man have transferred themselves to the materials, surfaces invite the touch. Because it was good to be with Gerry, so it will be good to remember him—in my house in solid sculptural forms, in my garden as the skeleton fountain leaps to life, a Minerva's helmet plumed with water, under the jacaranda, on sultry afternoons.

Domestic works of art run the heaviest risks in the trial for survival, but the Minerva fountain seems to be surviving, and in the same way the little Lewers semaphore figure on my bookcase signals its message of permanence—or as much of it as we are allowed to understand.



FISH, carved in grasstree. In the possession of Miss Winifred West, Sturt House, Mittagong.