

A fine balance between human form and cubism

Clara Hali: Yogis and Yoginis,
Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin.
Until September 3.
Reviewer: **Sasha Grishin**

There was a quiet revolution in sculpture about half a century ago when the whole tradition was put on its head, assemblage and environmental constructions replaced modelling and carving, and a brave new sculptural order was proclaimed.

Those who chose not to join in the revolution were branded reactionaries and became unpopular with art institutions.

Clara Hali was one of those who remained true to the heritage of figurative sculpture, building on radical revisions of cubism and the work of artists such as Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Jacob Epstein.

Now that the barricades have been stormed and the remnants of these artworks placed in museums, some of the young turks appear somewhat boring and hollow in their rhetoric, while the conservatives no longer appear that reactionary and are praised for their skill levels and the accomplishment of their works.

Sydney's Hali is quite a traditional sculptor who works mainly in bronze.

When I saw her work at the Beaver Galleries four years ago, I was attracted by the creative inventiveness of her pieces, but was struck by the fact that they appeared more like maquettes with the potential to be executed on a much larger scale.

Subsequently, on seeing some of her more monumental pieces at Sculpture by the Sea in Sydney and at Cottesloe, I was certainly confirmed in that opinion.

Hali's work, in its finest pieces, such as *Padma-*

pani, possesses a grandeur, wit and a with the forces of has the maturity who knows her but is still desire to This domin-

sense of clever play gravity. She of a sculptor craft well, hungry in the experiment.

ated by a series of bronze yogini. The term itself has a twin meaning - female exponents of yoga, as well as a female sacred force that is made incarnate through the body of a woman.

Much of Hali's sculpture has been preoccupied with finding a balance between the human form and the dislocating planes of cubism or associating the human form with the abstracting planes of nature.

In this series of sculptures she explores the unusual shapes adopted by the human body when adopting the poses of yoga, such as the elegant Sirsasana headstand or the graceful upward lotus, as well as the sensuous and organic image of the upside down lotus.

Hali's exhibition is one that is full of great potential, although it could be best realised on a more monumental scale.

'A clever play with the forces of gravity.'

OUTSTANDING: Clara Hali's *Spinal Twist* shows her command of the figurative sculpture.

