

## RUDOLF BELLING AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO TURKISH SCULPTURE

**D**uring the years following the World War I Rudolf Belling (1886-1972), a pioneer of abstract sculpture, became one of the most celebrated artists in Germany (Fig.1). His fame was based primarily on works such as his *Triad* (1919) and *Sculpture 23* (1923), in which he strove toward a synthesis of Russian revolutionary art with the current modernist trends. As a member of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Workers' Council on Art) and a cofounder of the *Novembergruppe*, he also sought a closer relationship between sculpture and architecture, successfully collaborating on many occasions with architects. In the German literature on modern art of the period, Belling was highly praised and embraced as one of the spokesmen of the new art<sup>1</sup>.

When the National Socialists came to power in 1933 and started their campaign against avant-garde art, like many other artists, Belling too sought refuge abroad; accepting an invitation from the Turkish government he left Berlin for Istanbul in 1937. When his professorship at the *Kunstakademie* (Berlin-Charlottenburg Academy of Art) was interrupted

Funda BERKSOY is associate professor, Uludağ University, Department of art history, Görükle Kampüsü, Bursa, Turkey.

\* Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

<sup>1</sup> Carl EINSTEIN, «Die Kunst des 20 Jahrhunderts», *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* 16, Berlin, 2nd ed., 1928, p. 228-29; Paul Ortwin RAWE, *Deutsche Bildnerkunst von Schadow bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin, 1929, p. 223-25. For a list of publications with statements by Belling, see J.A. SCHMOLL gen. EISENWERTH, *Rudolf Belling*, vol. 17, in the series *Künstler unserer Zeit*, St. Gallen, Erker Verlag, 1971, p. 27-29.

by the political turn of events, he had been offered an equivalent status at the *Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi* (Academy of Fine Arts) in Istanbul, where he served as chairman of the Department of Sculpture from 1937 to 1954. Having joined the Faculty of Architecture at Istanbul Technical University as well in 1950, he continued lecturing until 1965. It was most particularly his years at the Academy that proved invaluable for the future of Turkish sculpture; Belling not only reorganized the entire department, but also introduced a new curriculum, the principles of which have prevailed ever since. His curriculum excluded the styles and tenets of contemporary sculpture, favoring a primarily academic education focused upon the arts of antiquity and nature itself. This led to criticism; by the beginning of the 1950s two different fronts had evolved within the Academy. The first was led by Belling, and the second by young artists such as Hadi Bara (1906-71) and Zühtü Müridoğlu (1906-92).

It seems astounding that an artist as modern as Rudolf Belling would exclude contemporary trends from his academic curriculum. Thus from time to time one question keeps arising: to what extent Belling actually contributed to the development of modern Turkish sculpture. To answer this question we shall examine the education of sculpture at the Academy before Belling came to Turkey and evaluate the years he spent in Turkey in relation with the social and cultural atmosphere of the country during that time. Neither the artist's work as an educator nor the sculptures he produced between 1937 and 1965 had been surveyed in detail until recently. It had always been his earlier career that received attention. The focus of this paper, therefore, is Belling's achievement during his stay in Turkey: both the works he created during this phase of his career and his influence upon Turkish art. In order to put Belling's career in Turkey into a proper perspective and to see its relation to his entire career, we must first review certain biographical considerations and evaluate his recognized status in the history of modern sculpture.

---

**RUDOLF BELLING AND THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE ARTS  
IN BERLIN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

Rudolf Belling was born on 26 August 1886 into the family of a merchant<sup>2</sup>. After finishing school he held several jobs before entering a two-

<sup>2</sup> I am most grateful to Rudolf Belling's daughter, Mrs Elisabeth Weber-Belling, for the information she gave me about her father during my visit to Munich (July-September 2001).

year apprenticeship in *Kleinplastik* (the modeling and sculpting of three-dimensional objects of modest dimension) and related crafts in 1907. He thus absorbed much from the popular trend of *Jugendstil* (Art Nouveau) that would help him become a master of stylization. In 1908 he and his colleague Emil Kasedow established a studio for décor, *Kleinplastik*, and handicrafts in Berlin, an enterprise that continued two years. From 1909 onwards Belling began to receive commissions for set designs, including scenery for the well-known theater director Max Reinhardt. He became acquainted with many outstanding personalities of theater and cinema (e.g. the actor Alexander Moissi, the Expressionist stage designer Ernst Stern, and the architect Hans Poelzig); he remained in contact with Poelzig until his death in 1936<sup>3</sup>. It was Poelzig who later arranged the position in Turkey for him. This friend was the first of many architects that the artist associated with, new acquaintances who would prove very important for his career over the following years.

In 1911, then, Professor Peter Breuer at the Kunstakademie Berlin-Charlottenburg chose Belling (at the age of 25) as his “master pupil.” Thus, having a studio of his own, the artist both worked in the Academy and continued to earn a living by designing stage sets until 1922. The great advantages Belling possessed (being both a skilled craftsman and an artist with a careful, yet still spontaneous and by *no means* painstaking manner) he owed mainly to his work as a designer. Under Breuer’s tutelage he soon became acquainted with all the current artistic trends and theories, including those of the German sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand (1847-1921), very popular among the young sculptors of the day.

Hildebrand’s great work—published many times over—*Das Problem der Form* (1893) had introduced a new trend to the plastic arts<sup>4</sup>. Hildebrand drew a sharp distinction between the two main possibilities of sculpture and their effect on style: direct carving and modeling, the creation of form by taking away or by adding. He saw direct carving as the higher order of work, because he felt that it assured the statue a firm

<sup>3</sup> Winfried NERDINGER, *Rudolf Belling und die Kunstströmungen in Berlin 1918-23 mit einem Katalog der plastischen Werke*, Berlin, Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1981, p.18. For a biography of R. Belling compiled on the basis of his own statements, see Waldemar GRZIMEK, *Deutsche Bildhauer des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, Leben, Schulen, Wirkungen*, Munich, Heinz Moos Verlag, 1969, p. 143-49.

<sup>4</sup> In the Belling family archive is a copy of Adolf von HILDEBRAND’S, *Das Problem der Form*, ed. J.H. Heitz, Strasbourg, Heitz und Mündel, 1913. The work is also published in Henning Bock, ed., *Adolf von Hildebrand, Gesammelte Schriften zur Kunst*, Köln und Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969, p. 199-265.

formal and spatial idea, which for him was the essential artistic element of sculpture. He furthermore held that sculpture had its origin in drawing, two-dimensional design that would then be given depth through gradual transition into relief; from the drawing a freestanding statue would eventually emerge. In other words, Hildebrand claimed that the sculptor working in stone or wood should start from a pictorial idea, which he would draw on the face of the medium and then carve out layer by layer<sup>5</sup>. Hildebrand praised unity in an artwork, and to him unity was always a consequence of 'pictorial clearness.' This clarity demanded a distinct image from the viewpoint of the observer; from here the essence had to be accessible. The purpose of sculpture, he asserted, is not to put the spectator in a haphazard and troubled state regarding the three-dimensional or cubic aspect of things<sup>6</sup>. Although these ideas influenced many artists, they had little impact on Belling. In opposition to Hildebrand's request of a picture-like image seen from a fixed point of view, Belling's aim was to create *Raumkörper* (spatial bodies; Belling's term) that would remain effective in three-dimension regardless of which angle they were viewed from<sup>7</sup>. While Hildebrand was mainly interested in form, Belling was occupied with the spatial aspect of sculpture. His attitude can be clearly grasped from the following words he penned to his art dealer, Alfred Flechtheim: «To me sculpture is first of all a notion of space, not dependent upon any two-dimensional illustration, as has thus far been proposed. Therefore, I work with the air just as I do with the solid material, thus giving as much value to the space at the center, formerly called the 'death form,' as to the boundary-lines of the modeled material.»<sup>8</sup>

Belling treated the spatial body as a counterpart to the plastic body; to him, the two created a synthesis: *Rundplastik*, or sculpture in the

<sup>5</sup> H. BOCK (as in n. 4), p. 257-265.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240-44.

<sup>7</sup> Belling claimed that a sculpture must be effective from all angles; he praised Giovanni da Bologna's *Rape of the Sabines* as a masterpiece in this respect. See R. BELLING, "Skulptur und Raum," in *Von allen Seiten gleich Schön*, ed. Lars Olof Larsson, Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1974, p. 105-106.

<sup>8</sup> "Für mich ist Plastik zunächst Raumbegriff, nicht wie bisher auf zweidimensionale Bildwirkung modellierte Illustration. Darum verarbeite ich die Luft ebenso wie festes Material und erreiche, dass der Durchbruch, früher 'tote Form' genannt, denselben Formwelt darstellt wie seine Eingrenzung, das bearbeitete Material." From Rudolf BELLING, "Brief an A. Flechtheim," *Das Kunstblatt*, 1920, p. 374-76. See also Rudolf BELLING, "Skulptur und Raum," *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt* 6, 10 November 1922, p. 105-107.

round. According to W. Nerdinger, Belling developed this concept by determining his position against Hildebrand's ideas and combining the current prevailing concept of sculpture (which asserted the necessity of multiple viewpoints) with other assessments from the history of art<sup>9</sup>. Certain of Belling's contemporaries who provided him with inspiration (Umberto Boccioni, Alexander Archipenko and Naum Gabo), were also applying the negative—or "death"—form as a means in plastic expression. Through the exhibitions in the Sturm Gallery<sup>10</sup> the Berlin public as well as Belling himself became acquainted with the French Cubists, the Italian Futurists and the Russian Constructivists. In 1922 the Van Diemen Gallery in Berlin organized a comprehensive exhibition of Russian art, which brought several Constructivists from Moscow. These artists not only helped set up the exhibition but offered demonstrations and lectures as well. Vladimir Tatlin, Alexander Rodchenko and El Lissitzky all took part in these activities. That same year El Lissitzky and Ilya Ehrenburg founded a magazine for Constructivist art entitled *Vestich, Objet, Gegenstand*. Other modern artists as well—among them Alexander Archipenko, Maholy-Nagy, Ivan Puni, Anton Pevsner, Naum Gabo, Theo Van Doesburg, and Georges Vantongerloo—stayed on in the city for some time<sup>11</sup>. By the beginning of the 1920s the Russian Constructivists Gabo, Pevsner and Puni, protesting the cultural policies of the New Regime, had emigrated from the USSR. The Ukrainian artist Archipenko, a personal acquaintance of Belling, had already opened a private art school in Berlin (1921), which he ran until his departure for USA in 1923. In the early twenties Berlin was unquestionably the cultural center of Germany; it was there that the artistic trends influential upon modern art developed. Influencing sculpture, in addition to the short-lived experimental late Expressionist tendencies (represented by the *Novembergruppe* and the Russian avant-garde artists), there were

<sup>9</sup> NERDINGER (as in n. 3), p. 214-220. For information on the concept of space in art (especially in regard to sculpture), see A.E. BRINCKMANN, *Plastik und Raum*, Munich, R. Piper and Co., 1922; Hans JANZEN, *Über den kunstgeschichtlichen Raumbegriff*, Munich, Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1938; Karl ALBIKER, *Das Problem des Raumes in den Bildenden Künsten*, Frankfurt am Main, Societäts-Verlag, 1962; Kurt BADT, *Raumphantasien und Raumillusionen, Wesen der Plastik*, Köln, Verlag M. Dumont Schauberg, 1963; Hans Joachim ALBRECHT, *Skulptur im 20. Jahrhundert-Raubewusstsein und künstlerische Gestaltung*, Köln, Dumont Buchverlag, 1977.

<sup>10</sup> *Herwarth Walden und die Europäische Avantgarde Berlin 1912-1932*, exh.cat., the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1961.

<sup>11</sup> Herbert READ, *Modern Sculpture: A Concise History*, Singapore, Thames and Hudson, 1964, p. 102-109; NERDINGER (as in n. 3), p. 12-13.

also conservative trends being voiced by the professors of the Berlin Academy, among others. Belling's professor Peter Breuer, well known not only for his *Kleinplastik* but for monuments designed in the Neo-Baroque tradition of Reinhold Begas as well, supported the conservatives. In Berlin during the 1920s and 1930s the influence of sculptors like Louis Tuaillon, Hugo Lederer, Fritz Klimsch, August Gaul, Georg Kolbe, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Ernesto de Fiori, Gerhard Marcks, Ludwig Casper was easily discerned and Belling was one of these sculptors who represented the main trends in sculpture<sup>12</sup>.

---

THE EARLY PHASES OF RUDOLF BELLING'S CAREER (1915-36)

W. Nerdinger states that the creativity of Belling can be examined in five phases in which he was influenced by different artistic trends such as Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, abstract art and Neoclassicism<sup>13</sup>. The early phases of his career discussed here include the first three as defined by Nerdinger —his life before his emigration to Turkey. During the 1930s Belling elucidated the **first phase (1915-18)** of his career with the following words: “Masses are broken and pierced, consciously turning away from the block-like mass. At the beginning the figures are still realistic, then they become freer.”<sup>14</sup> His works *Wounded Soldiers* (1915), *Combat* (1916), *Female Dancer* (1916), and *The Man* (1918)—all with themes characteristic of the Expressionist style—belong to this first period (Fig. 2). They were all created with a conscious effort to create *Raumkörper* (spatial bodies) effective in three dimensions. Although his effort towards this end is perhaps most striking in the *Female Dancer*, which first presents Belling's spiral motif, it is his sculpture entitled *The Man*—with a rhythmical motion in the abstract forms of two struggling men—that can first be evaluated as his achievement of this goal<sup>15</sup>. The rudimentary

<sup>12</sup> Joachim HEUSINGER VON WALDEGG, “Plastik“ in *Deutsche Kunst der 20'er und 30'er Jahre*, ed. Erich Steingräber, Munich, Bruckmann, 1979, p. 247-250, 256-260; *Der Traum von einer Neuen Welt, Berlin 1910-1933*, exh.cat., Museum-Altes-Rathaus, Ingelheim am Rhein, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> NERDINGER (as in n. 3), p. 273-274.

<sup>14</sup> Joachim HEUSINGER VON WALDEGG, “Belling,” *German Expressionist Sculpture*, exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 74. These words are from *Rudolf Belling*, exh. cat., Weyhe Gallery, New York, 1935.

<sup>15</sup> NERDINGER (as in n. 3), p. 20. On the theme of dance in sculpture of the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Anita BELOUBEK-HAMMER, “Tanz ist rhythmisch im Raum bewegte Plastik,” *Tanz in der Moderne, von Matisse bis Schlemmer*, ed. Karin Adelsbach and Andrea Firmenich, Köln, Wienand Verlag, 1996, p. 190-99.

depiction of the two figures clearly demonstrates that this sculpture addressed not only Cubism, but the Futurism of Boccioni and the abstraction of Archipenko as well<sup>16</sup>. A later version of *The Man* (probably from 1921 or 1922)—the only work of Belling's in stone that still exists—may be interpreted as symbolizing the self-destruction of Europe during World War I, into which the artist himself was drafted in 1915<sup>17</sup>.

The **second phase (1919-24)** of Belling's career was both longer and more productive than the first, probably as a result of the changing atmosphere in Germany. After the war, Belling witnessed the November Revolution and the declaration of the Republic, revolutionary events that initiated a new era for Germany—both politically and culturally. Many groups were formed with a desire to influence the cultural milieu of the day<sup>18</sup>. At the end of 1918 Belling became one of the cofounders of the *Novembergruppe* and a member of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*<sup>19</sup>. Especially in his work on the managerial board of the *Novembergruppe*, he engaged in much artistic experimentation, and came into contact with new trends such as Futurism, Constructivism, Dada and *De Stijl*<sup>20</sup>. As a result, the

<sup>16</sup> Schmoll gen. EISENWERTH (as in n. 1), p. 7. The plaster model of *The Man* was destroyed in World War I, but an enlarged version of it (probably dating to 1921/22) exists; since 1966 it has been housed in the Museum Folkwang in Essen. See NERDINGER (as in n. 3), cat. nos. p. 14, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Peter H. FEIST, *Figur und Objekt, Plastik im 20. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig, E.A. Seemann, 1996, p. 89. From 1915 to 1918 Belling was a soldier in the air force in Berlin Adlershof, where he worked in the model department. His bronze sculpture *Flyer* (1917) was created during this time. See NERDINGER (as in n. 3), cat. no. 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit, Künstlergruppen in Deutschland 1918-1923*, exh.cat., Städtische Kunsthalle, Reclinghausen, 1983.

<sup>19</sup> Anita BELOUBEK-HAMMER, "Wider die 'Stand-Und Spielbein'-Skulptur, Die Bildhauer der Novembergruppe," *Novembergruppe*, exh.cat., Bodo Niemann Gallery, Berlin, 1993, p. 29-47; *Arbeitsrat für Kunst, Berlin 1918-1921, Ausstellung mit Dokumentationen*, exh.cat., Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1980, p. 23, 128, 157.

<sup>20</sup> As Belling reported in an article, by the end of the 1920's the *Novembergruppe* had some 150 native and foreign members, among them many painters, sculptors, architects, poets and musicians. This group, which became the center of cultural and intellectual life in Berlin, wished to influence all fields of artistic creation and took an interest in architectural projects, the reorganization of art schools and museums, the establishment of public showrooms, and drawing up new legislation for the arts. See Rudolf BELLING, "Novembergruppe und Kunstpflege zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik," in *Edwin Redslob zu 70. Geburtstag, Eine Festgabe*, Berlin, 1955, p. 169-171. As a member of the *Novembergruppe*, Belling believed that all revolutionary artists—Expressionists, Cubists and Futurists alike—should unite and exhibit together to make modern art a part of people's lives. He also stated that no distinction should be made between arts and crafts. For his views on the aims of the group and the position of the artist in the society, see Diether SCHMIDT ed., *Manifeste Manifeste 1905-1933, Künstlerschriften I*, Dresden, VEB Verlag der Kunst, n.d., p.158, 208-209.

works he created in this phase display the influence of various styles. *Triad* (1919) and *Erotic* (1920), for example, combine tendencies of Cubism, Futurism and Expressionism, while *The Gesture of Freedom* (1920) embodies both Expressionism and Dadaism; *Organic Man: Striding Man* (1921) was then created under the influence of Italian Futurism. *Head in Mahogany* (1921), with its spatial-body concept, signals the final stage of Expressionism, and *Sculpture 23* (1923) may be termed a figurative Constructivist spatial work<sup>21</sup>.

Besides sculpting, Belling collaborated in many projects with *Novembergruppe* architects such as Walter Würzbach, Arthur Korn and Max and Bruno Taut. This collaboration demonstrated his ability to assimilate sculpture and architectural setting. Two examples of such projects are the Cubist ceiling he designed for the *Scala Casino* in 1920 (Berlin, later destroyed during the war) and the kinetic fountain on the estate of the Berlin lawyer and notary Goldstein in 1923 (Berlin, destroyed in 1926)<sup>22</sup>. The casino was built by the architect Würzbach whereas the latter was the work of Arthur Corn. In the meantime, Belling was also designing advertisements and creating papier-mâché mannequins for department store windows in Berlin and Paris<sup>23</sup>. He prepared impressive one-man exhibitions at the Gurlitt Gallery in Berlin (where a plaster version of *Triad* was displayed) (1919), the Flechtheim Gallery in Düsseldorf (1920), the Goyert Gallery in Cologne (1921), and the Nationalgalerie in Berlin (1924).

Considering the sculptures Belling created in these first two phases of his career, one might argue that *Triad* was the masterpiece winning him

<sup>21</sup> On the different styles in Belling's work and his achievements in modern art, see Joachim HEUSINGER VON WALDEGG, "Rudolf Belling," in *Skulptur des Expressionismus*, ed. Stephanie Barron, Munich, Prestel Verlag, 1984, p. 68-72.

<sup>22</sup> In addition to the ceiling decoration the artist also designed a fountain for the restaurant of the same Casino. His work there was highly praised in the literature of the day. See Paul WESTHEIM, "Auftritt des Architekturwollens (Scala-Palast, Berlin)," *Das Kunstblatt*, 1920, p. 366-372. See also the same author's *Architektur des Plastischen*, Berlin, p. 1923. For further information on Belling's works in the Scala Casino and on the Goldstein estate, see NERDINGER (as in n. 3), p. 44-58, 168-90. The artist's cooperation with architects and his attitude towards architecture in general as discussed by Belling himself appear in a conversation printed in Werner HEGEMAN, "Der Bildhauer als Teufelsbeschwörer der Architektur, Ein Gespräch mit Rudolf Belling," *Monatshefte für Baukunst und Städtebau* 16, 1932, p. 382-88.

<sup>23</sup> Harold HAMMER-SCHENK, "Das Patentierte Kunstwerk, Rudolf Bellings 'Moden Plastiken'," *Ikongraphia, Anleitung zum Lesen von Bildern, Festschrift Donat de Chapeaurouge*, Munich, Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1990, p. 296-305.



a place among the international avant-garde artists<sup>24</sup> (Fig. 3). It was exhibited at the Berlin *Kunstaussstellung* of 1920, an exhibition in the genuine spirit of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (an ideal integrating architecture, sculpture and painting). A brief survey of his early sculpture reveals its originality. *Triad*, a symbolic representation of the three art forms Painting, Sculpture and Architecture depicted as three dancers, was actually the only work on display in total correspondence with the theme set by Walter Gropius in the Bauhaus Manifesto of April 1919: the creation of a new building for the future that would combine architecture, sculpture and painting in one<sup>25</sup>. According to the catalogue of the Berlin *Kunstaussstellung*, Belling had originally intended to include music and to create an enlarged version of the work “six meters high, built of brick and colorfully plastered.”<sup>26</sup> The catalogue of the Goyert Gallery further explains that the work was intended to serve as a platform for an orchestra performing the music of Hindemith, Schönberg and Stravinsky<sup>27</sup>. *Triad* was based on the concept of three-dimensionally effective *Raumkörper* (spatial bodies) via the use of clearly cubic forms that the artist developed from 1912/1913 onwards; the work was meant to be viewed from various angles. *Triad* combines different styles; the combination of flat and rounded surfaces and the introduction of space demonstrate the influence of Cubism, whereas the virile subject, the strong directional lines, and the fusion of opposing forces are altogether Futurist in spirit. The representation of human emotion, on the other hand, is more characteristic of Expressionism.

Archipenko's *Dance* (1912) has often been designated as a forerunner of the *Triad*, for there are certain similarities between the two works, most obviously the representation of dancing figures cubic in form and the space that they enclose<sup>28</sup> (Fig. 4). Although the conceptual balance

<sup>24</sup> There are two versions of *Triad* in wood (mahogany and birch)—one in the collection of the *Nationalgalerie Berlin* (1924) and one in the Wilhelm-Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg (1950), as well as several versions in bronze (1949-50) in various museums and private collections, including the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in Munich and the Saarland Museum. It is interesting to note that in 1919 the artist reused the composition in a model for a fountain, *Symbol of the Three Arts* (destroyed in World War I). A picture is published in Nerdinger (as in n. 3), cat. no. 21.

<sup>25</sup> For the manifesto of W. Gropius, founder of the *Bauhaus*, see Giulio Carlo ARGAN, *Gropius und das Bauhaus*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1962, p. 126, 128.

<sup>26</sup> *Kunstaussstellung Berlin*, exh.cat., Berlin, 1920, cat.no.1096.

<sup>27</sup> *H.M. Pechstein and Rudolf Belling*, exh.cat., Goyert Gallery, Köln, 1921, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Some writers claimed Belling was imitating Archipenko. See Roland SCHACHT, “Archipenko, Belling und Westheim,” *Der Sturm* 14/5, 1923, p. 76-78. In the literature

of mass and space in *Triad* may be in some respects indebted to the work of Archipenko, there are, however, significant differences. Whereas Archipenko's *The Dance* was intended to be seen primarily from one angle, *Triad*, a sculpture in the round, was meant to be placed in the middle of a room and viewed from all perspectives. In comparison to *The Dance*, *Triad* is more abstract, resembling Archipenko's *Boxers* (1914), but still figurative<sup>29</sup>.

In 1923 Belling married the dancer Toni Freeden, and then in 1924 he helped prepare a ballet on ice (*Formbalett*) performed in Vienna for *Kiesler's Internationale Ausstellung Neuer Theatertechnik* (International Exhibition of New Theater Techniques)<sup>30</sup>. By this time, the year in which his fourth one-man exhibition appeared at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin (with still another version of *Triad* in wood on display), he had become a popular artist, primarily as a result of his architectonic works.

Subsequently, in the **third phase of his career (1925-36)**, Belling produced many busts, masks, and other sculptures influenced by Cubism, Constructivism, *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and Neoclassicism. The *Head in Brass* (1925), the *Fountain of the Forty Labor Unions* for a Pavillion at the GASOLEI Exhibition (1926), his *Design for a Beethoven Monument* (1926), the *Portrait of Richard Haertel* (1926), the *Portrait Mask of Alfred Flechtheim* (1927) and that of *Max Schmeling* (1929), as well as his reliefs for the conference room of the Labor Union *Gesamtverband* (1930-32) figure among Belling's outstanding works in this period<sup>31</sup>. The latter was built by the architect Bruno Taut and F. Hoffmann and destroyed ca. 1945.

Until the middle of 1930's Belling created a series of portraits in a very distinctive style that can be described as Naturalism, which

two groups arose, one criticizing Rudolf Belling, claiming that he was nothing more than an imitator of Archipenko, the second pointing out the inventions of the artist and generally playing down Archipenko. This dichotomy had its origin in a private quarrel between the editors of *Der Sturm* (Herwarth Walden) and *Das Kunstblatt* (Paul Westheim), both trying to influence the artistic environment in Germany after World War I; see NERDINGER (as in n. 3), p. 26-32. In the *Sturm* article cited above, R. Schacht claimed that Westheim had disregarded the innovations of Archipenko in his *Architektur des Plastischen* (1923) and overestimated Belling's achievements, which—as far as he was concerned—were based entirely upon Archipenko's work.

<sup>29</sup> SCHMOLL gen. EISENWERTH, "Zum Werk Rudolf Bellings," in *Rudolf Belling*, exh.cat., prepared by H.D. Hofmann, Wolfgang Ketterer Gallery, Munich, 1967, p. 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> A photograph from this performance appears in A. BELOUBEK-HAMMER (as in n. 15), p. 193.

<sup>31</sup> SCHMOLL gen. EISENWERTH, "Rudolf Belling 1886-1972," in *Epochengrenzen und Kontinuität*, Munich, 1985, p. 344-45.

includes stylization to a certain extent. Most in metal, these demonstrated his skill as a craftsman. As in his *Portrait Mask of Richard Haertel*, he achieved both physical likeness and stylization at once (Fig. 5)<sup>32</sup>. This mask of the founder of the *Gewerkschaft Duruck und Papier* (Labor Union Print and Paper) was made for the conference room of the union building in Berlin built by Max Taut. At the beginning of the 1930's his figurative works for the labor unions greatly increased Belling's public recognition; in 1931 he was elected to the prestigious Preussische Akademie der Künste (Prussian Academy of Art) together with Heckel, Mies van der Rohe, Bruno Taut and others<sup>33</sup>, and his sculptures were exhibited abroad — both in Zurich and New York.

If we consider these first three phases of Belling's career in retrospect, it becomes obvious that in the second phase he reached an apex, a period of original creativity that brought him international recognition as an avant-garde artist. It was first in Berlin and then in the Bauhaus that German sculpture rose a new potential with ideals highly acclaimed in the international circle of modern art; Belling contributed to this development with the works he created between 1915 and 1930, just as did Oscar Schlemmer and Maholy Nagy, who worked for the *Bauhaus* in Weimar and Dessau. Belling's works — e.g. the *Triad*, *Erotic*, the fountain sculpture for the Goldstein estate, and *Sculpture 23*— were so masterly in skill and original in style that they far surpassed the works by other German sculptors<sup>34</sup>. In the 1930s, with the artistic climate in Germany deteriorating under the Nazi ban on modern art, Belling remained with scarcely any commissions. The suspicious death of his art dealer Flechtheim, who had emigrated to Britain, left him in an even more adverse financial situation<sup>35</sup>. Therefore he left Germany in 1935, accept-

<sup>32</sup> On the technic of Belling see NERDINGER (as in n.3), p. 203. For information about Haertel's portrait see *Gearbeitet Gewerkschaftet Gewohnt, 75 Jahre Verbandshaus der Deutschen Buchdrucker von Max Taut*, Berlin, 2000, p. 33-34.

<sup>33</sup> *Akademie der Künste, Die Mitglieder und ihr Werk*, Berlin, Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1960, p. 3-5; *1696-1996-Akademie der Künste: Dreihundert Jahre*, exh.cat., Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1996, p. 494, 500-501, fig. 3, 8.

<sup>34</sup> NERDINGER (as in n. 3), p. 206.

<sup>35</sup> Alfred Flechtheim was one of the most important art dealers prior to World War I. He had opened galleries in Düsseldorf (1913) and Berlin (1921) and was the founder of the journal *Der Querschnitt* (Propyläen Verlag, Berlin), which had often published works and personal photographs of Belling. Sculptors and painters such as Benno Elkan, Ernesto de Fiori, Otto Dix, and Carl Hofer had made portraits of Flechtheim; see J.H. von WALDEGG (as in n. 21), p. 70-71. For Belling's portrait mask of him see NERDINGER (as in n. 3), cat.no.58

ing an invitation to teach at the private Annot Art School in New York, where he would also exhibit in the Weyhe Gallery at the Rockefeller Center. On his way to the United States, he learned that his marriage to Toni Freeden had been annulled.

It was not too long, therefore, before he returned to Germany, anxious about his son, who was, partly Jewish. Thereafter, unsure about his future opportunities in the USA, Belling opted to emigrate to Turkey, which he did in January of 1937. In July of that same year two of his works, *Triad* and the *Head in Brass*, both from the National Gallery in Berlin, were exhibited in the *Entartete Kunst Exhibition*, the “Exhibition of Degenerate Art,” while at the same time, ironically, his bronze sculpture of the boxer *Max Schmeling* had been judged worthy of display in the official *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (The Great German Art Exhibition) in the *Haus der Kunst* in Munich. Once this contradiction had been brought to the attention of the Nazi regime, however, the first two sculptures were hastily removed from the former exhibition<sup>36</sup>. Together with pieces of other avant-garde artists, a number of Belling’s works were nonetheless confiscated and destroyed in the late 1930s. In 1937 the Prussian Academy of Arts was reorganized by the Third Reich, and Belling was forced to relinquish his membership. In 1944, while working in Istanbul, Belling also received the unfortunate news that his studio in Berlin, where many models for his works were stored, had been destroyed in a bombing raid.

---

**THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ATMOSPHERE OF TURKEY  
DURING THE 1920’S AND 1930’S**

As Rudolf Belling came to Turkey the country had faced a series of reforms that were succeeded by many others. The fall of the Ottoman Empire after the World War I and the War of National Independence (1919-23) against the occupying forces in Turkey caused a crucial change in the history of the people in Turkey. In 1923 Mustafa Kemal

<sup>36</sup> Peter GUENTHER, “Rudolf Belling,” in *Degenerate Art, The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991, p. 211. Photographs taken in 1930, showing *Triad* and the *Brass Head* in the Gallery of the Kronprinzen-Palais and the National Gallery in Berlin, and *Triad* in the *Entartete Kunstausstellung* in Munich, are published on p.104 and as the frontispiece. Cf. also *Verboten Verfolgt, Kunstdiktatur im 3.Reich*, exh.cat., Wilhelm Lehbruck Museum, Duisburg, 1983, p. 40, 60-63.

Atatürk, the leader of the War of National Independence, founded the secular Turkish Republic upon the remnants of the defeated Ottoman Empire. During the single party regime of the Republican People's Party between 1923-46 Atatürk and his cadre started a series of reforms with the intention to transform the traditional society into a modern nation. Thus the 1920's and 1930's were marked by reformist legal actions, which aimed the organization of the political and socio-cultural structure of the new Republic. The remnants of the old regime, especially the political ones that were intermingled with the religious dogmas, were swept away. In this context reforms such as the abolishment of the caliphate, the termination of the religious educational system and the unification of schools in secular schools, the change of alphabet from Arabic to Latin, the secularization of the legal structure, the adoption of the new Turkish civil code were realized. In short, the process of westernization that had been initiated by the Ottoman sultans a century earlier in order to elevate the fading Ottoman civilization to the level of its contemporary European counterpart, culminated in the pro-Western reforms of the Party<sup>37</sup>. But during this process the authoritarian and totalitarian governments of the West rather than liberal ones were taken as models. In the 1930's the world was witnessing the rise of Fascism and Stalinism, and the newly emerged Turkish Republic was under the impact of both political ideologies. Many Turkish politicians and intellectuals visited Germany, Italy and Soviet Union and were inspired by them in establishing several institutions<sup>38</sup>. In the political context, the union of the state and the Party, the acceptance of the single party system as the permanent regime of the country, and étatist economic policies are all signs of the influence of foreign political systems. In these years the "Turkish History Thesis" and the "Sun Language Theory" which depicted Turkish civilization and language as the pioneer of all civilizations and languages came into existence<sup>39</sup>. It can be argued that

<sup>37</sup> Cemil KOÇAK, "Kemalist Devrimler", *Türkiye Tarihi, Çağdaş Türkiye 1908-1980* 4, Istanbul, Cem Yayınevi, 1997, p. 111-113.

<sup>38</sup> Çetin YETKİN, *Türkiye'de Tek Parti Yönetimi, 1930-1945*, Istanbul, Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi, 1983, p. 17, 18. On the process of the establishment of the single party regime in Turkey see Mete TUNÇAY, *Türkiye'de Tek Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması (1923-1931)*, Ankara, Yurt Yayınları, 1981.

<sup>39</sup> Jens Peter LAUT, *Das Türkische als Ursprache? Sprachwissenschaftliche Theorien in der Zeit des erwachenden türkischen Nationalismus*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2000. Büşra ERANLI, "The Turkish History Thesis: a Cultural Dimension of the Kemalist Revolution", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 1989.

the rising Nationalism of the period may have influenced the formation of these theories<sup>40</sup>. In the cultural area, the effect of Soviet Union and Germany are especially felt in the establishment of the People's Houses (1932-51) and the reorganization of the Istanbul University (1933).

From 1932 onwards the People's Houses were opened in many cities by the Republican People's Party as an institution to strengthen the national organization of the society in the area of culture<sup>41</sup>. Through the conferences on wide-ranging subjects from natural to social sciences, which were given in these houses especially by the academics of the Istanbul University, the ideological mobilization of the young generation was realized. The People's Houses had many branches of activity including painting and sculpture. As the Party decided to impose a Western style of life on the society Western forms of painting and sculpture, poetry and prose, drama and music were encouraged through the exhibitions and awards. In 1937 one wing of the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul was converted into the Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture and two years later the first of the annual State Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture was organized in Ankara.

The university reform piloted by the Party in 1933 aimed to discard from the university the recalcitrant academics, who were in opposition to the policies of the government<sup>42</sup>. In this way the faculties of the university were composed of members who were supporting and disseminating the ideas of the newly established official ideology. This cadre of the university held public conferences between 1935 and 1945 to introduce this ideology to the people<sup>43</sup>. Foreign professors also contributed to these conferences. Although it cannot be argued that ideological mobilization was the aim of these professors, the similarity between some of the for-

<sup>40</sup> Günay GÖKSU ÖZDOĞAN, "The Case of Racism-Turanism: Turkism During Single Party Period 1931-1944: a Radical Variant of Turkish Nationalism", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 1993. For the influence of Nazi Germany on Turkish politics see Johannes GLASNECK, *Deutsch-faschistische Propaganda in der Türkei. Methoden der deutsch-faschistischen Propagandatätigkeit in der Türkei vor und während des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, Halle (Saale), Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 1966.

<sup>41</sup> Sefa ŞİMŞEK, "The People's Houses: an Experiment in Ideological Training in Turkey 1932-1951", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 1996.

<sup>42</sup> Mete TUNÇAY, H. ÖZEN, "1933 Dar'ül-Fünun Tasfiyesi veya Bir Tek Parti Politikasının Önlenemez Yükselişi ve Düşüşü", *Tarih ve Toplum* 2, 10 Ekim 1984, p. 6-20.

<sup>43</sup> For further information on these conferences see Biriz BERKSOY, "Party Conferences 1935-1945: Academicians Contribution to Ideological Mobilization in Turkey", unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2000.

eign professors' views who were specialized especially on law, state and economy and the state ideology enabled the acquaintance of the public with the ideology of the state. German professors like Gerhard Kessler, Fritz Neumark and Hans Reichenbach were among the most well known ones who took part in these conferences. The subjects that they introduced to public varied from law, economy to medicine and philosophy. (They did not include fine arts.) The German professors were welcomed by the Turkish government as a result of the vacuum in the university created by the reform, which necessitated the exclusion of many academics. Within a short lapse of time there were nearly eighty-five German professors teaching at Turkish universities. It is interesting to note that the employment of the German scholars and artists were managed together by the German and Turkish governments<sup>44</sup>. The Turkish-German relations, which had gained impetus from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards played an important role in the cultural as well as socio-economic transformation of Turkey. In the aftermath of the 1929 Great Depression Turkey reduced its foreign trade and started to implement protectionist and étatist economic policies in which the clearing agreements with Germany occupied an important place. German credit and technology were used for the organization of the state-oriented industries and the building of an extensive network of railroad communications, which would have important effects on the national economy and the growth of cities until the end of the 1940's<sup>45</sup>.

In consideration of the artistic milieu in Turkey, German influence was strongly felt on the architecture of the time. Many of the German and Austrian architects like Ernst Egli, Clemens Holzmeister, Martin Wagner, Bruno Taut, Martin Elsaesser, Franz Hillinger were employed by the government to design monumental buildings in the capital Ankara and for various other towns. As the Turkish nationalist approach of the time denied the Ottoman cultural heritage and was seeking after an art that would embody the goals of the Republic such as modernity and progress, the European styles were welcomed<sup>46</sup>. The principles of the

<sup>44</sup> On the emigration of German scholars to Turkey see Horst WIDMANN, *Exil und Bildungshilfe. Die deutschsprachige akademische Emigration in die Türkei nach 1933*, Frankfurt am Main, 1973. Fritz NEUMARK, *Zuflucht am Bosphorus: Deutsche Gelehrte, Politiker und Künstler in der Emigration (1933-1953)*, Frankfurt am Main, 1980.

<sup>45</sup> On the economic, socio-politic relations of Germany with Turkey from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards see Lothar RATHMANN, *Berlin-Bagdad; die imperialistische Nahostpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschlands*, Berlin, Dietz, 1962.

<sup>46</sup> Sibel BOZDOĞAN, *Modernizm ve Ulusun İnşası*, Istanbul, Metis Yayınları, 2002, p. 76-95.

new architecture were marked by monumental, axial and symmetrical planning, repetitive rectangular windows, flat hidden roofs and high overpowering colonnades and entrance porticos composed of square or circular columns without capitals<sup>47</sup>. This architecture took the place of the older one, which was designed according to the principles of historical revivalism, also called Ottoman Revivalism (1908-30)<sup>48</sup>. Some of the foreign architects like Prost and Egli gave lectures in the Academy of Fine Arts of Istanbul and Istanbul Technical University and transferred their knowledge to the Turkish students. Accordingly, between 1930-40 the Turkish architecture was highly influenced by the contemporary German architecture. In 1932, a new urban plan for Ankara was prepared by the German planner Herman Jansen.

In the Republican era Turkish painting entered a new creative phase, because the Turkish artists educated in France and Germany in 1920's brought back a variety of styles ranging from Cubism to Fauvism or German Expressionism<sup>49</sup>. Some of them like Ali Çelebi (1904-93) and Zeki Kocamemi (1901-59) were trained in Munich by Hans Hofmann and practiced a sort of Cubist Constructivism. *The Society of Independent Painters and Sculptors* founded in 1929 held exhibitions and gave conferences in order to bring the modern art near to the people. In 1933 some members of this group formed the *D Group*, which was an avant-garde group not restricted to one particular trend. Most of the members of the *D Group* lectured in the Academy of Fine Arts and wrote on art. But during the 1930's the Turkish government expected also the painting of local themes including themes like the War of National Independence and the reforms of the new Republic. Between 1938-43 a number of Turkish painters were sent by the Ministry of Education to different regions and were encouraged to paint folkloric themes and scenery from Anatolia<sup>50</sup>. Many of the avant-garde artists took part by these artistic actions.

<sup>47</sup> Yıldırım YAVUZ, "Turkish Architecture during the Republican Period", *The Transformation of Turkish Culture, The Atatürk Legacy*, ed. Günsel Renda and C. Max Kortepeter, Princeton, New Jersey, Kingston Press Inc., 1986, p. 275-277.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267-275.

<sup>49</sup> On the history of Turkish painting in the republican era cf. Günsel RENDA, "Modern Trends in Turkish Painting", *The Transformation of Turkish Culture, The Atatürk Legacy*, ed. Günsel Renda and C. Max Kortepeter, Princeton, New Jersey, Kingston Press Inc., 1986, p. 229-247.

<sup>50</sup> *Yurt Gezileri ve Yurt Resimleri*, ed. by Amelié Edgü, Istanbul, Milli Reasürans Art Gallery, 1998. Zeynep Yasa YAMAN, "Yurt Gezileri ve Sergileri ya da 'Mektepten Memlekete Dönüş'", *Toplum ve Bilim* 4, Haziran 1996, p. 35-52.



In short the Turkish architecture and painting of the 1930's were highly influenced by the political atmosphere of the day. As it was the case for Turkish architecture between 1930 and 1940, from the end of the 1930's onwards the Turkish sculpture was to be shaped in the hand of a German master and fulfill the demands of the government.

---

**BELLING'S WORK AT THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS OF ISTANBUL  
AND HIS POSITION AS AN EDUCATOR**

The academic discipline of sculpture in Turkey (up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) may be defined in two phases, pre-Belling (1883-1937)<sup>51</sup> and post-Belling, that is to say, beginning with his stay in Turkey (1937-54). *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*, a school of fine arts, was founded in Istanbul in 1883; this would later become the *Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi*, or Academy of Fine Arts. The school was established on the lines of the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, with Departments of Painting, Architecture and Sculpture. Although instruction in painting had already begun in the military schools, the earliest three-dimensional sculptures of the human figure in Western norms appeared after the foundation of the Academy, which soon became the most important center for the plastic arts in Turkey, an institution of repute in which culture and the arts flourished from the late Ottoman Empire into the Turkish Republic<sup>52</sup>.

Yervant Osgan (1855-1914) and his pupil Ilhan Özsoy (1867-1944) were the first instructors in sculpture at the school. Their academic method was based on the instruction they had received in Rome and Paris. Our information on the curriculum between 1883-1936 is based primarily on statements of the students because a fire in 1948 destroyed most of the school's documents. According to oral testimony from the students, they worked in only one atelier and received lectures on art history, anatomy, and the like<sup>53</sup>. The pre-Republican artists shared a natu-

<sup>51</sup> The history of Ottoman sculpture is examined in Günsel RENDA, "Osmanlılarda Heykel," *Sanat Dünyamız* 82, 2002, p. 139-145.

<sup>52</sup> On the history of the Academy that was transformed into Mimar Sinan University in 1983, see Mustafa CEZAR, "Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi'nden 100.Yılıda Mimar Sinan Üniversitesine," *Güzel Sanatlar Eğitiminde 100. Yıl*, Istanbul, MSÜ Yayını, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> Fatma AKYÜREK, "Çağdaş Türk Heykel Sanatında Eş Ya Da Geçmiş Zamanlı Kültürel Verilerden Yararlanma", unpublished proficiency thesis, Mimar Sinan University, Institute of Fine Arts, 1998, p. 81-82.

realistic approach; their subject matter was more often than not either portraiture or the human form in general. The most successful students at the school were then sent to Europe to continue their study. Mahir Tomruk (1885-1949) and Nijad Sirel (1897-1959), for instance, went to Germany, where they were impressed by the classicism of Hildebrand; artists of the next generation, including Hadi Bara (1906-71), and Zühtü Müridoğlu (1906-92), who studied in Paris after 1923, were strongly influenced by Rodin, Bourdelle, Maillol and Despiau<sup>54</sup>. Considering the education they had received and the limited background of sculpture in Turkey, it is not at all surprising that these artists tended to ignore contemporary trends in European sculpture, taking as their models western artists who promoted more classical sculpture.

From 1925 onwards, then, foreign sculptors such as the Austrian Heinrich Krippel, Italian Pietro Canonica, Austrian Anton Hanak, Austrian-German Josef Thorak came to Turkey to create monuments and structural compositions celebrating the Turkish National War of Independence as well as the newly introduced social reforms; there were simply not enough trained sculptors in Turkey<sup>55</sup>. Such monuments, erected in public squares throughout various cities<sup>56</sup>, were the works of both foreign and native artists. They played an important role in establishing an appreciation for sculpture in the hearts of the people. The invitation of the foreign sculptors who are mostly Austrian, German and Italian origin shows that the Turkish government was influenced by

<sup>54</sup> This is easily discernable in Müridoğlu's article on sculpture. See Zühtü Müridoğlu, "Heykel," *Güzel Sanatlar Dergisi* 2, 1940, p. 93-102. See also Devrim ERBİL, "The Development of Turkish Sculpture of the Republican Period," in *The Transformation of Turkish Culture, The Atatürk Legacy*, ed. Günsel Renda and C. Max Kortepeter, Princeton, New Jersey: Kingston Press Inc., 1986, p. 131-44.

<sup>55</sup> On the works and activities of foreign sculptors in Turkey see Hüseyin GEZER, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Heykeli*, Ankara, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1984, p. 75-91. In the 1930's when foreign sculptors were generally favored by the government, Turkish sculptors such as Ali Hadi Bara, Zühtü Müridoğlu, Kenan A.Yontuç, and Nijad Sirel criticized the government's choices, arguing that monumental projects should be the work of Turkish artists alone; because the subject matter was entirely national, Turkish artists could better express its significance (usually the Turkish War of Independence and the social reforms of Atatürk). See Zeynep YASA YAMAN, "Cumhuriyet'in Ideolojik Anlatımı Olarak Anıt Ve Heykel," *Sanat Dünyamız* 82, 2002, p. 157-160.

<sup>56</sup> Neşe G.Yeşilkaya, "Osmanlı'da ve Cumhuriyet'te Anıt-Heykeller ve Kentsel Mekan," *Sanat Dünyamız* 82, 2002, p. 146-153. Gültekin ELİBAL, *Atatürk ve Resim-Heykel*, İstanbul, Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1973, p. 196-197. In contrast to the monuments of the republican period the public monuments of the Ottoman Empire were entirely non figurative. For further information see Klaus KREISER, "Public Monuments in Turkey and Egypt, 1840-1916," *Muqarnas* 14, 1997, p. 103-117.

the artistic atmosphere in these countries. The cultural policy of the National Socialists in Germany supported an idealized, nationalistic, Neo-romantic approach of sculpture that was easy to understand by a wide part of the public<sup>57</sup>. This kind of sculpture was embedded in the Neoclassic style of the 1930s in which an appeal to order was observed. It was influenced from different mental attitudes such as Patriotism and Nationalism. In consideration of the political atmosphere in Turkey and its close contact with Germany it is understandable that the German sculpture of the day found appreciation amongst the Turks. For example, Josef Thorak who designed with Anton Hanak the “Monument of Trust” *Güven* (1935) in Ankara made many works for the Nazis such as the statues for the NS Party Building in Nürnberg (1935-42). Also the works of the Turkish sculptors who were active in the 1930s were created in classical style that pleased the Turkish rulers. Ali Hadi Bara’s *Statue of Atatürk* (1937-38, Harbiye, Istanbul) is an example to this.

As it is stated in the previous chapter, the 1930s proved a significant decade for the newly founded Republic, hard-put to the challenge of replacing an Ottoman political structure that had endured for approximately six hundred years. Feeling the need to consolidate its power, the Republican Party wished to strengthen the national institutions and promote cultural reform. It was within the university reform that the Ministry of Education reformed the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts in 1936, appointing European artists as chairmen in the Departments of Architecture, Painting and Sculpture<sup>58</sup>. Hans Poelzig was invited to become the head of the Department of Architecture, but his death later that year enabled Bruno Taut to take the post. When Taut died only two years later in 1938, he was succeeded by Robert Vorhoelzer, who held the position from 1939 to 1941<sup>59</sup>. It was Poelzig, however, who was responsible for Belling’s assignment as head of the sculpture division. Although Poelzig had also tried to persuade the Ministry of Education to

<sup>57</sup> FEIST (as in n.17), p. 112.

<sup>58</sup> On the reformation in the Academy see Mustafa CEZAR, *Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi, 90 Yıl Kataloğu*, Istanbul, Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi, 1973. Also see Cezar (as in n.52), p. 26-30.

<sup>59</sup> Bernd NICOLAI, *Moderne und Exil, Deutschsprachige Architekten in der Türkei 1925-1955*, Berlin, Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998; and *Idem*, “Bruno Taut’s Reforms at the Academy of Fine Arts: Opening Path to a New Architecture for Turkey,” in *Thinking for Atatürk*, Istanbul, Istanbul Technical University Rectorate, 1998, p. 37-42, with a German text on p. 43-45.

appoint Max Pechstein as chairman of the Painting Department<sup>60</sup>, in this he failed; the French painter Leopold Lévy received the appointment. All these artists were fleeing the racist politics of the National Socialists with their hostility towards modern art. Burhan Toprak who was the director of the Academy between 1936-48 supported the reforms. In 1936/37 the Ministry of Education decided that from then on the sculpture training in the Academy should not be practiced only on the high-school level but in the undergraduate curriculum as well<sup>61</sup>.

Eventually arriving in Istanbul on 6 January 1937, Belling must have been very pleased to greet his friend Bruno Taut in the Academy. Just as Taut was responsible for organizing the architecture curriculum, Belling looked after that of sculpture. On January 7, 1937 when Belling started his work, Mahir Tomruk and Hadi Bara were lecturers and about a month later Nijad Sirel joined the staff, followed by Zühtü Müridoğlu in 1940. The latter worked in the Department of Decorative Arts and gave lectures in sculpture. As stated in Hüseyin Gezer's *The Turkish Sculpture of the Republican Period*, the German master did not deem the Turkish sculptors his professional equivalent and would not allow them to teach<sup>62</sup>. He regarded them as his assistants, responsible for translating his lectures to the students; he stated that the Turkish sculptors had much to learn from him.

While Adolf Treberer von Treberesburg was in Ankara completing the stone elements for the "Monument of Trust" *Güven* (designed in 1935 by Anton Hanak and Josef Thorak), Belling invited him to give

<sup>60</sup> NICOLAI, *Moderne und Exil* (as in n. 59), p. 131. Belling had known Poelzig since the time the two of them worked on a film of Paul Wegener for which Belling had created the mask of Golem; Poelzig had been responsible for the architectural sets in the second version of the film. See W. NERDINGER, *Rudolf Belling* (as in n. 3), p. 18. In 1920 Belling created the double mask entitled *Charaktersumme des Architekten* depicting the architect Poelzig (later destroyed in wartime): *Ibid.*, cat.no. p. 26.

<sup>61</sup> According to this system, first practiced in 1940/41 the curriculum was redefined; students at the high-school level studied three years, those attending at the university level, four or five years. Those originally enrolled for high school and aim to complete the undergraduate curriculum as well were obliged to continue until a total of six years had been completed. In 1959, then, the program became university-oriented, with only students already having a high school diploma eligible for entrance. The student was thereafter obliged to finish within four or five years. On the history of education at the Academy, see CEZAR (as in n. 58), p. 31-32.

<sup>62</sup> GEZER (as in n. 55), p. 144. Gezer, who eventually became director of the school (1966-1969) and has published the only comprehensive book on modern Turkish sculpture, was Belling's student from 1944 to 1948. Here he mentions a report written by Belling (no reference) in which the artist spoke to this effect.

lectures in the sculpting of stone and wood. Agreeable, von Treberes-burg complied, and then stayed on in Istanbul to work at the Academy from 1938 to 1940<sup>63</sup>. His place was then filled by Kenan Yontuğ (b.1904) and Nusret Suman (1905-1978), who became Belling's assistants in 1943.

The building of the Department of Sculpture was planned according Belling's instructions. The large windows enabled the sunlight to enter the atelier with an angle of 30-35 degrees in order to see the third dimension of the model during the modeling procedure<sup>64</sup>. In an article entitled "An Exhibition of Sculpture" (1942), Belling reported on the first sculpture exhibition of the students after his arrival to Istanbul, and mentioned the ateliers within the Sculpture Department<sup>65</sup>. These were the ateliers of the beginners and those with live models, sculpting in both wood and stone, and the atelier of the chairman. According to Gezer, who was a student at the Academy as Belling came to Turkey, the German master put a very methodical training into practice, assigning different genres to each year of the curriculum. First year they worked on busts and second year on reliefs<sup>66</sup>. Only thus could successful students learn to model full-length human sculptures in the round and design compositions. The students were confronted with all technical aspects of sculpture and challenged to solve the problems involved. Live models—as well as reproductions of Greek sculpture—were introduced in the studio. There were also lessons in anatomy, perspective, mythology and art history<sup>67</sup>.

Belling, with his wide experience and knowledge international in scope, provided his pupil with new perspectives<sup>68</sup>. As a result, the art of sculpture was no longer seen as manual labor, but as an artistic profession dependent upon academic training. The sculptor was now *more*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 147-49.

<sup>64</sup> *Akademi'ye Tanıklık 1, Resim ve Heykel*, ed. by Ahmet Öner Gezgin, Istanbul, Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2003, p. 56, 77-78.

<sup>65</sup> For Belling's article written on the first exhibition of his students opened on the Academy, on April 8, 1940 by the Minister of Education Hasan Ali Yücel. See Rudolf BELLING, "Bir Heykel Sergisi," *Güzel Sanatlar* 4, 1942, p. 24-28.

<sup>66</sup> GEZER (as in n. 55), p. 144. See also Vilder GETINTAŞ, «Rudolf Belling ve Atölyesi», Hacettepe University, Institute of Social Sciences, department of Art History, unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Ankara, 2003.

<sup>67</sup> Ali Teoman Germaner, Belling's student for six months in 1949, reports about the education in the Academy in "Celal Esad Arseven Anısına Sanat Tarihi Seminerleri Bağlamında," *Celal Esad Arseven Anısına Sanat Tarihi Seminerleri, 7-10 Mart 1994, Bildiriler*, Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi, Istanbul, 2000, p. 162-172.

<sup>68</sup> On Belling's teaching methods see GEZER (as in n. 55), p. 144-149. YAMAN (as in n. 55), p. 162-164. See also AKYÜREK (as in n. 53), p. 89-91.

than an imitator of nature he had become an investigator and interpreter of nature. Hüseyin Anka (b. 1909), a pupil of Belling, describes this change in the education with the following words. “Before Belling academic education was based on copying. We had to reproduce the given models... But when Belling came he changed this practice... Instead, he wanted us to be creative. The period of copying had come to an end.”<sup>69</sup> A sculptor was henceforth expected to understand anatomy and geometry in order to construct volume. Physical structures in nature were methodically examined, and the principles necessary to transform them into volume and form were introduced and discussed<sup>70</sup>. Belling would demonstrate such processes using models from antiquity, explaining how the old masters had achieved their success.

A photograph of the first sculpture exhibition of Belling’s students in 1940 provides information about the results of Belling’s teaching. It shows a monumental sculpture of an athlete by Hüseyin Anka Özkan and some busts and reliefs by other students (Fig. 6). It is interesting to note that Anka’s robust nude recalls healthy nude figures produced by German artists such as Arno Breker and Josef Thorak during the reign of the National Socialists as well as statues by Soviet artists that are also naturalistic in treatment<sup>71</sup>. The works of his students demonstrate that Belling’s teaching was in harmony with the demands of the Turkish Republic. Influenced by the contemporary social and artistic atmospheres in Soviet Union, Italy and Germany the rulers of the young Turkish Republic showed a particular interest in sturdiness, health and youthfulness<sup>72</sup>. As Sibel Bozdoğan states these qualities were idealized by the Turkish government in order to indicate to a nation that successfully broke off all the ties that bounded it to the old Ottoman Empire, which was usually called in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as ‘the sick man of the Europe’<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Hüseyin ‘Anka’ Özkan, “Anıt Kabir Heykel ve Rölyefleri İlk Modern Uygulama,” in *Thinking for Atatürk*, Istanbul, Istanbul Technical University Rectorate, 1998, p. 153. For the English version of the article with the heading “Sculptures and Reliefs at Anıt-kabir: The First Modern Application.” *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>70</sup> Belling expressed his views on the study of nature in “Das Neue Naturstudium,” *Künstlerbekenntnisse, Briefe, Tagebuchblätter, Betrachtungen Heutiger Künstler*, ed. Paul Westheim, Berlin, Propyläen Verlag, 1925, p. 342-343. Belling published a summary of his ideas in Turkish. See BELLING (as in n. 65), p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> For the works of the Russian Wera Muchina and Josef Thorak displayed at the World Exhibition (1937) in Paris see FEIST (as in n.17), p. 118-119.

<sup>72</sup> The exhibition of Russian painting and sculpture held in Ankara in 1934 demonstrates this interest. Subsequently the first traveling exhibition of Turkish painting went to Moscow in 1935 to reciprocate this exhibition.

<sup>73</sup> Bozdoğan (as in n.46), p. 91.

The Turkish government commissioned monuments that celebrated the Turkish War of National Independence and social reforms similar to the painting of the day. Since there was not enough trained sculptors to fulfill the needs of the government Belling's primary aim was to educate skilled sculptors. In an interview of 1937, he predicted that soon his students would be in a better position to create monuments than the foreign sculptors presently working in Turkey<sup>74</sup>. True to his words, within a short period of time Belling had trained Turkish sculptors (e.g. Hüseyin Anka Özkan, Hüseyin Gezer, Yavuz Görey) capable of creating monuments equal to those produced by the foreign artists. In different cities of Turkey they made a series of works that expressed patriotic feelings (Fig. 7).

Gezer contends that Belling avoided discussing modern works of art in his lectures only because he believed that the students should first learn the basic principles of sculpture<sup>75</sup>. He explained his ideas that affected the modern art as artistic principles without giving information about his works. Belling assumed that students who achieved strong technical skills through this classical curriculum would not fall into academicism and also would not be left behind of modern developments. According to him if they would start to experiment in modern styles before they took an academic education they would not be in a position to understand the logic of sculpture and this would prevent them from attaining individual styles. When we consider the work of Belling's students Zerrin Bölükbaşı (b.1922), Sadi Çalık (1917-79) and İlhan Koman (1921-86), it is clear that their academic curriculum proved no hindrance to their adapting the modern styles they later encountered in Europe. Quite to the contrary, their figurative and abstract works reflect the influences of artistic trends such as Cubism, Expressionism, Minimal art. Koman's *Mirror II* (1962), for example, is an abstract work; Bölükbaşı's *Negro Head* (from the 1960s) combines Expressionism with Cubism; and Çalık's *Birds* (also from the 1960s) is an example of Minimal Art<sup>76</sup> (Fig. 8). Together with Bara and Müridoğlu, these students

<sup>74</sup> KANDEMİR, "Güzel Sanatlar Akademisinde İki Sanatkarı Ziyaret", *Yedigün*, Year 5, vol. 9, 212, 31 March 1937, p. 9. See also Rudolf BELLING, "Heykeltraşlık," *Arkitekt* 12, 1936, p. 348.

<sup>75</sup> GEZER (as in n. 55), p. 29, 145.

<sup>76</sup> For the works of Bölükbaşı and Çalık, see Kaya ÖZSEZGIN, *The Collection of Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture, Mimar Sinan University, Istanbul*, Yapı Kredi Publications, 1996, p. 314, 320. Prominent Turkish sculptors educated by Belling are discussed in GEZER (as in n. 55), p. 150-206.

became the first Turkish sculptors to distance themselves from the official policies of government art and engage in individual experimentation<sup>77</sup>.

Especially in his first ten years in the Academy, Belling proved invaluable to his students because of his education, skill and practice. He had immediately reorganized the education at the Academy with method and reason. He introduced a new perspective of sculpture while stressing the innovative qualities of artists who are *more* than imitators of nature. Even though Belling was not specialized in monumental sculpture, he instructed the practice of it in Turkey and produced monumental works. His own statues (which will be examined in the following pages) served, especially from a technical point of view, as an example to the sculptors because the technical methods applied previously by the Turkish artists were much behind the times. In this aspect, his students as well as many other Turkish sculptors profited from his knowledge. The works of the students demonstrate that Belling's teaching happened to be in harmony with the demands of the Turkish Republic.

In opposition, some have objected that — in reference to his considerable contribution to the education in the Academy—Belling ought to have intermingled more in academic and artistic circles. Why, they ask, did he always avoid speaking Turkish<sup>78</sup>. Other criticism has come from his colleagues in the Academy. Towards the end of the 1940s Belling was criticized for excluding modern trends from his instruction by some of his students and lecturers Bara and Müridoğlu. After the World War II these sculptors had visited Paris for the second time and perceived that

<sup>77</sup> These artists are regarded as the pioneers of abstract sculpture in Turkey. On the history of abstract sculpture in Turkey see Adnan ÇOKER, "Soyut Heykel," *Yeni Boyut*, 1982, p. 4-6.

<sup>78</sup> CEZAR (as in n. 45), p. 29. It may be true that Belling did not have good relations with all of his colleagues, but—as expressed by some of his students (Gezer, Bölükbaşı and Germaner, whom I interviewed in 2001 and 2002) Belling was particularly close to Sirel, Bölükbaşı and Gezer, as well as Özkan. His daughter Elisabeth Weber-Belling feels that her father spoke little Turkish because he was embarrassed by his pronunciation. In the second Turkish edition of Widmann's book (as in n. 44), one of the translators, Prof. Aykut Kazancıgil, writes in the appendix about his impressions of Belling who was a friend of his father Prof. Tevfik Remzi Kazancıgil (Professor at the Istanbul University). According to him besides his father the fashion designer Kenan Temizan and Nijat Sirel were among the people that the artist met privately. The two photographs from the archive of Kazancıgil show Belling in his atelier at the Academy and in the house of Kazancıgil. See Horst Widmann, *Atatürk ve Üniversite Reformu*, trans. Aykut Kazancıgil, Serpil Bozkurt, Istanbul, Kabcacı Yayınevi, 2000, p. 414-416, fig. 1, 2.



academic art had given way to modern representation<sup>79</sup>. Because of their complaints, which might also be attributed to their exclusion from a proper instructorship in the Sculpture Department, one of the two studios under Belling's direction was taken out of his hands in 1950, leaving only one atelier under his supervision<sup>80</sup>. A few years later (1954) Belling, who had also begun to work in the architectural department of Istanbul Technical University, eventually resigned from his position at the Academy of Fine Arts<sup>81</sup>. Now on the architectural faculty at ITU, he lectured on modeling and sculpture, stressing the importance of both plastic form and color in the organization and construction of architectural space. As mentioned above, from the 1920s onward Belling had developed his concept of tectonic form to include entire units within the concept of *Raumkunst*, as exemplified by his earlier works for the *Scala Casino* in Berlin. He could thus offer his students a priceless opportunity: instruction by a master who had gained his own proficiency through actual cooperation with architects.

It was here that his first and only exhibition in Turkey was organized in 1965 shortly before his departure from the country<sup>82</sup>. In this exhibition the works that he had left in the Weyhe Gallery in New York were also displayed. The art dealer had kept three of his early works, as well as a *Head in Mahogany*, for all these years<sup>83</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> For information on these artists see YAMAN (as in n. 55), p. 167-169 as well as Mehmet ÜSTÜNİPEK, "Hadi Bara'nın Sanatsal Kişiliği ve Yapıtları", Mimar Sinan University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Archaeology and Art History, Western and Contemporary Art Program, unpublished master thesis, Istanbul, 1994, and Zeynep Yasa YAMAN, "Zühtü Müridoğlu'nun Sanatı", Hacettepe University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Art History, unpublished proficiency thesis, Ankara, 1983.

<sup>80</sup> GEZER (as in n. 55), 207ff.

<sup>81</sup> Many sources give misleading information about the dates when Belling started to work in ITU and when he resigned from the Academy. The dates that Gezer gives in his book are correct. The documents in the archive of ITU and the information in Cezar's book which is based on the documents present in the archive of the Academy verify the dates that Gezer gives in his book. See GEZER (as in n.55), p. 140, 147; CEZAR (as in n. 52), p. 67. It is also of note that Belling's son (Thomas Belling) studied architecture at Istanbul Technical University. He afterwards worked as the assistant of Paul Bonatz.

<sup>82</sup> *Rudolf Belling Skulpturen, Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Kunstrates*, exh.cat., Istanbul Technical University and the German Bibliothek in Ankara, Ankara, 1965.

<sup>83</sup> Heidi C. EBERTSHÄUSER and Beate MENKE, "Rudolf Belling und Fritz Erlert: Beispiele künstlerischer Strömungen in Deutschland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts," in Otto Meitinger (ed.), *Bauen und Gestalten. Münchener Rück*, Munich, Münchener Rückversicherungs Gesellschaft, 1993, p. 296.

In the **fourth phase of his career (1937-50)**, in addition to teaching, Belling took on many commissions for portraits and other sculptures. It is significant that Belling, in contrast to most other avant-garde artists, gave high importance to portraiture. His portraits are nevertheless quite distinct from the much more traditional works of Maillol, Despiau and Kolbe<sup>84</sup>. In the heads created by Belling, each individual facial feature—the eyes, ears, mouth and hair—was stylized, a feature recognizable in his portraits of the Turkish publisher and collector Salah Cimcoz (1938), the Turkish presidents Ismet İnönü (1946) and Celal Bayar (1953), the German architect Paul Bonatz (1950), and the Turkish architect Emin Onat (1952) (Figs. 9, 10, 11). Although, these heads, which are created in Turkey, are formed in a similar style as his earlier works of the third phase of his creativity, they nevertheless represent a transition from a naturalistic style loaded with stylization to a Neoclassical style in which the stylization is reduced to a certain degree in order to give a solemn look. This transition can be observed if *the Mask of Richard Haertel* (1926) (Fig. 5) is compared to the portraits stated above, especially the *Portrait of Celal Bayar* (Fig.10).

The Neoclassical monumental works that Belling created after his arrival to Turkey can be considered as a new step in his career. Except his *Design for a Beethoven Monument* (1926), Belling was hardly interested in making public monuments<sup>85</sup>. During his work in Turkey his training at the Berlin Academy as a student of Peter Breuer and Hugo Lederer, renowned for his contribution to the *Bismarck Monument*, must have been very useful to him<sup>86</sup>. So while he taught his pupils the methods of monumental sculpture, he accomplished the commissions that he received from the Turkish government. The statues and a bust designed by him during the 1940's can be listed as the life-size bronze *Portrait of İnönü* (1940) displayed at the Agricultural Faculty of Ankara University, the bronze *Equestrian Statue of President Ismet İnönü* (Istanbul, 1941-44), the plaster *Portrait of İnönü* (ca.1940's) and the plaster model for

<sup>84</sup> SCHMOLL gen. EISENWERTH (as in n. 1), p. 9.

<sup>85</sup> On the Beethoven monument see SCHMOLL gen. EISENWERTH, "Zur Geschichte des Beethoven-Denkmal," in *Epochengrenzen und Kontinuität*, Munich, 1985, p. 255-256.

<sup>86</sup> In a conversation, Belling once commented that he had been a student of Hugo Lederer after the sculptor had completed his colossal Bismarck Monument in Hamburg. See HEGEMAN (as in n. 22), p. 385.

the *National Monument in Erzurum* (ca. 1949). The latter, which is lost, is only known through photographs<sup>87</sup>.

İsmet İnönü (1884-1973), a general during the Turkish War of Independence (1919-23), became the second president of the Turkish Republic upon the death of Kemal Atatürk in 1938. Belling's bronze statue in the court of the Agricultural Faculty in Ankara portrays İnönü dressed in a suit, standing on an octagonal base adorned with three rectangular bronze panels in relief, all are representing scenes from the agricultural sector (Fig. 12). Behind the figure, the base is articulated into a semicircular wall that rises to the figure's thighs. The right-hand of the backdrop is lined with a shell of bronze, towards which the figure of İnönü extends the fingertips of his right hand; his left hand is balled into a fist.

Belling knew Heinrich Krippel's bronze *Statue of Atatürk* (1925, Sarayburnu, Istanbul), which is the first statue of Atatürk created by a foreign artist. In this work Atatürk, in a suit, with his left hand resting on his hip is represented in a determined and courageous pose. It shows the leader after he has resigned from his official position in the Ottoman government; he gazes intently towards Anatolia, where he is planning to initiate the Turkish struggle for independence<sup>88</sup>. In contrast to Krippel's work, made only three years after the war ended and therefore underlining Atatürk's position as a leader, Belling's statue presents the second president in a relaxed pose as the prime minister of a developing country. The reliefs at the base, representing Turkish peasants at work, signify agricultural progress in the country and İnönü's support of Turkish peasants. Belling may also have been inspired by Hugo Lederer's colossal circular granite composition, the *Bismarck Monument* in Hamburg (1901-08, designed by the architect Emil Schaudt) as well as by the series of life-size stone replicas of the thirty-two rulers of Brandenburg and Prussia (Albrecht to Wilhelm I) lining either side of the former Siegesallee in Berlin, each backed by a semicircular enclosure (Fig. 13)<sup>89</sup>. Belling's treatment of İnönü's figure, however, is very different from the hard-edged, compact style of Lederer. Although it is more similar to the naturalistic rendition of the statues along the Siegesallee (some being the work of Belling's professor Peter Breuer), the modern treatment of Belling's statue is very distinctive.

<sup>87</sup> For a photograph of the plaster model of the National Monument in Erzurum, see NERDINGER (as in n. 3), cat. no. 87.

<sup>88</sup> ELIBAL (as in n. 56), p. 196-197.

<sup>89</sup> For the monuments of the German rulers see Heinz CSALLNER, *Kaiserdenkmäler in alten Ansichten*, Zaltbommel, the Netherlands, Europäische Bibliothek, 1982.

Belling's second work of İnönü is an over life-size equestrian statue commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and the Istanbul Municipality Council (Fig. 14). Heinrich Krippel and Pietro Canonica had created some equestrian statues of Atatürk, but Belling's work is the only equestrian statue of İnönü<sup>90</sup>. Originally intended for Taksim Square, the bronze statue—for political reasons—was not put on display until 1982, when it was erected in Taslik Park, in Maçka<sup>91</sup>. It stands on a tall marble base with inscriptions at both sides praising İnönü's achievements. The statue is on a podium accessible by steps. İnönü, in military garb, is shrouded in a long cape, the skirts of which cover the back of his horse. In his left hand he holds the bridle; his right hand rests on his hip. The left front hoof of the horse is suspended from the ground as if the animal is marching in parade. The portrait is idealized and the facial features are distinctly individual, because İnönü had been posing for the artist<sup>92</sup>. At the front of the base there is a young man symbolizing the Turkish Republic; in his hands he holds a torch and a laurel branch that indicate the propagated ideals of the Republic such as "enlightenment", "freedom", "progress" and "peace". At first glance, the frontal pose of the half-nude male in Belling's equestrian monument in Istanbul brings to mind the naturalistic bronzes created by Arno Breker during the reign of the National Socialists. One particular work of Breker (*The Party*, Berlin, 1938-39) includes a nude male holding a torch<sup>93</sup>. The fluid and relaxed body in Belling's composition is, however, quite different from the aggressive and muscular body of Breker's figure. The determined and tensed expression on Belling's figures' face and the treatment of his body reminds Michelangelo's

<sup>90</sup> For a list of the works of Krippel and Canonica in Turkey, see GEZER (as in n. 55), p. 75-81.

<sup>91</sup> Although it was completed in 1943/44 the statue was not raised and the Democratic Party that came into power in 1950 was opposed to the idea of erecting a statue of İnönü, leader of the opposition (*i.e.*, the Republican People's Party), in Taksim Square. Still others argued that it would not be appropriate to raise a statue of İnönü near Canonica's *Monument of the Republic* (1928) that stands in the square. See Gezer (as in n. 55), p. 140.

<sup>92</sup> In the pamphlet prepared by the Istanbul Municipality for the unveiling of the monument in 1982, there are photographs of Belling working on a clay model of İnönü's bust in the latter's lodge in Florya in 1941, and of İnönü and Belling inspecting progress of the *Equestrian Statue of İnönü* in the ateliers of the Academy: *İsmet İnönü Heykeli Açılış Töreni*, 24 Temmuz 1982, ed. Ümit Yurtseven, Istanbul, Istanbul Belediyesi, 1982.

<sup>93</sup> *Skulptur und Macht: Figurative Plastik im Deutschland der 30<sup>er</sup> und 40<sup>er</sup> Jahre*, exh.cat., Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1983, p. 29.

colossal statue of *David* (1501-4, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia) that was placed in front of the Palazzo Vecchio where it became a symbol of the Florence Republic ready to battle against its enemies. This work as a whole, which is the only equestrian statue ever created by Belling can be interpreted as representing İnönü as a military personality who did much for the foundation of the Republic and who still supports the ideals of it.

Belling's monument follows a tradition popular not only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but spilling over into 20<sup>th</sup>. He must have known of Rodin's design for the *Equestrian Statue of General Lynch* in Chile (1856, never completed) and of Bourdelle's *Equestrian Statue of Alvear* (Buenos Aires, 1912-13), both important works<sup>94</sup>. Certainly the artist was familiar with similar memorials from Antiquity and the Renaissance; the over life-size bronze *Statue of Marcus Aurelius* in Rome (A.D. 161-80) and Donatello's bronze *Gattamelata* (Padua, 1445-53) are among the earliest examples of this tradition. Works by European artists in Turkey, such as Canonica's *Equestrian Statue of Atatürk* erected in front of the Ethnographical Museum at Ankara in 1927, possibly served as models for the artist<sup>95</sup>. Belling might also have been influenced by the monuments of the Kaisers that stood scattered throughout Germany. One of the latter, the *National Monument for Kaiser Wilhelm I* in Berlin, was the work of Reinhold Begas; it boasted winged Nikes at its base. Another was the *Equestrian Statue of Wilhelm I* in Elberfeld, with an allegorical female figure representing Germania at its base<sup>96</sup>.

According to Belling's daughter, the artist made a special trip to Germany—probably in 1942—to procure a proper “master” to enlarge the plaster cast that he had prepared<sup>97</sup>. He came back with a man named Engels, who then made the over life-sized plaster model on which Belling and his students worked. The method Engels used—dividing Belling's model into twenty pieces, each of which was separately enlarged by adding plaster to the surfaces—proved very instruc-

<sup>94</sup> Schmoll gen.EISENWERTH (as in n. 3), p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> ELIBAL (as in n. 56), p. 210-212.

<sup>96</sup> H. CSALLNER (as in n. 89), Fig. 5, 35.

<sup>97</sup> In the summer of 2001 Elisabeth Weber-Belling explained to me that her father had been taken to Germany as a courier in a German courier airplane. After he stood there circa one week he returned to Istanbul. She has always suspected that opposition after 1945 to Belling's appointment for a position at the Kunstakademie Berlin might have been connected with this incident; his German colleagues may well not have forgiven him for accepting that flight in a Nazi courier plane.

tive for the Turkish sculptors, who frequently employed it from then on, as this technique facilitated the enlargement process considerably<sup>98</sup>. A couple of artists obtained a reproduction of the machine used by Engels during the enlargement process. In 1944 the enlarged and perfected plaster model of Belling's statue was then cast in bronze by the Hungarian master Fidzek Karoly and his Turkish assistant O. Yurdagün<sup>99</sup>. However, as mentioned above, it was not immediately erected; the bronze components were put into storage and not assembled until 1982.

In that phase of his creativity Belling produced only a small number of abstract works such as the *Sculpture 49* (1949), which was designed in memory of *Triad* after the artist had received the (mistaken) news that it had been destroyed. Therefore his works until 1950 appealed generally to the official—and public—taste. Turkish environment must have prevented him from being more experimental and the artist was informed about the current developments only through publications that he only seldom received from Germany. He missed his visits to museums and exhibitions, as well as the constant exchange of ideas with the critics and journalists to which he had been accustomed. In Turkey he faced no opposition; everyone was pleased with his works. Although he was admired, there was no one with whom to discuss his works, no one to give him new inspiration. In 1942 he married Yolanda Manzini, a woman of German-Italian descent born in Istanbul, and the following year his second child, a daughter, was born. At the conclusion of World War II, his application for a position in the Academy of Arts (Berlin) was rejected for reasons unknown to him, and he opted to continue his life in Istanbul.

During the **fifth and last phase of his career (1951-72)**, fifteen years of which Belling spent in Turkey (1951-65), he was first employed (1950-53) as a coordinator for the grand project of Atatürk's Mausoleum in Ankara; he also found time to design such compositions as his *Frieze for Istanbul University* (1954) and his *Fountain for Istanbul Technical University* (1956), which were never realized. From the 1950s onward—both in Istanbul as well as in Munich where he settled in 1966—Belling also returned to the pursuit of his private experimentation with abstract spatial bodies. *The Folding* (1951), *The Fish* (1954), *Sail-Motif I* (1959),

<sup>98</sup> GEZER (as in n. 55), p. 127.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

*Symbol of Community* (1966), and *Bloom-Motif* (1971-72) are all worthy of mention here<sup>100</sup>.

The beginning of this period was marked by Belling's appointment to a committee set up by the commission responsible for *Atatürk's Mausoleum* (the *Anıtkabir*). This committee was entrusted with decisions on both the theme and location of all statuary, reliefs and inscriptions. The impressive *Anıtkabir* (Ankara, 1944-53) itself was designed by the Turkish architects Orhan Arda and Emin Onat. Once the themes for the sculpture had been decided upon, certain members of the committee proposed that a competition be arranged to select European artists to execute the project. Belling objected, insisting that the contest should be open only to sculptors from Turkey. "The subject matter of the *Anıtkabir* statues and reliefs was entirely national, of a nature that only Turkish artists could express in a sincere and heart-felt manner," he later declared<sup>101</sup>. Belling's sentiments met with approval, and the contest resulted with his own students—Hüseyin Anka Özkan, İlhan Koman, and Hakki Atamulu (b. 1912)—as well as two of his colleagues from the Academy, Z. Müridoğlu and N. Suman, being entrusted with the execution of the sculpture (Fig. 15)<sup>102</sup>. This project, which materialized with the close cooperation of Belling and Emin Onat (an old colleague of Belling's from Istanbul Technical University) represented a great challenge to the new discipline of Turkish sculpture, one which was successfully and enthusiastically met by very young sculptors who demonstrated the considerable progress they had made thanks to Belling's efforts. A student of Belling, H. Özkan, stressed this by pointing out that the sculpture of the Mausoleum not only represented the earliest example of modern Turkish monumental sculpture, but also the initial attempts of Belling's students (with the exception of Koman) in modern art<sup>103</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> The last three works, all of large scale and in bronze, were commissions to be placed in the open air. The *Sail-Motif I* was placed before a bank (*Bank für Gemeinschaft*) near the *Rathaus* (townhall) in Hamburg, the *Symbol of Community* was designed for another neighborhood in Hamburg, and the *Bloom-Motif* set up in the Olympic Park in Munich. See NERDINGER (as in n. 3), cat. no. 114, 123, 132.

<sup>101</sup> Murat ÜRAL, "Art at Anıtkabir, Aesthetics of Transforming 'Deep Grief' Into Consciousness, Pain and Human," in *Thinking for Atatürk*, Istanbul, Istanbul Technical University Rectorate, 1998, p. 123; and (by the same author) *Anıtkabir Tarihçesi*, Ankara, T.C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Basımevi, Yayın No. 94/2, 1994.

<sup>102</sup> ÜRAL, 1998 (as in n. 101), p. 123-126.

<sup>103</sup> ÖZKAN (as in n. 69), p. 155. İlhan Koman had started previously to create modern works.

All through his entire career Belling's style changed according to the social atmosphere and the wishes of his patrons. In 1954 he designed a frieze for the conference room of Istanbul University in classical style very different from his earlier reliefs at the building of the Labor Union *Gesamtverband* in Berlin that include scenes from the workers' lives in a realistic style reminiscent of Socialist Realism with didactic and propagandistic overtones<sup>104</sup>. The remaining plaster models of the frieze at Istanbul show allegorical figures besides philosophers (Figs. 16). In the middle of it there is an allegorical nude woman who is holding a laurel branch at her right hand and has a torch at her left similar to the ones hold by the nude male at the Equestrian Statue of İnönü. As indicated above they symbolize the propagated ideals of the Turkish Republic such as "enlightenment", "progress" and "peace".

In 1949 Belling was granted a German passport, and from 1951 onwards he visited his homeland from time to time. It was then that he—probably inspired by the intellectual circles in Germany—again started experimenting, exhibiting his new creations in Hagen (1956), Munich (1959), Düsseldorf (1962) and Berlin (1962)<sup>105</sup>. According to Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth, his work in the 1950's can be grouped under two headings: 'figurative abstraction' (*figürliche Abstraktion*) and 'purely abstract design' (absolute *Gestaltungen*)<sup>106</sup>. Works in the first category include *The Folding* (1951), *Fish* (1954), *Torso of a Woman* (1955), and *Dance* (1956); those in the second, *Conical Forms* (1952), *Synthesis* (1957), *Spatial Curve* (1958), and *Pause* (1958). In these Belling continued to employ a combination of styles, as he had done in Berlin before 1937.

In 1959, three years after the artist had joined the *Akademie der Künste* in Berlin, he received his first public commission from a German institution. This was *The Sail-Motif I* (1959-62), a 420-cm high bronze sculpture for the *Bank für Gemeinwirtschaft* in Hamburg. In 1959 he prepared two models before he realized it in a larger scale (Fig. 17). Inspired both by the film *Windjammer* and by the ships and boats he had

<sup>104</sup> NERDINGER (as in n.3), cat.nos.68, 68a-f.

<sup>105</sup> In 1962 Belling's exhibitions in the *Akademie der Künste* in Berlin and the Alex Vömel Gallery in Düsseldorf were accompanied by an article announcing that the artist was returning to Germany: Eberhard RÜHMER, "Ein Klassiker der Neuen Plastik, Rudolf Belling kehrt nach Deutschland zurück," *Die Kunst und das Schöne Heim* 3, December 1962, p. 140-143.

<sup>106</sup> SCHMOLL gen. EISENWERTH (as in n. 1), p. 9-10.



observed from day to day in Istanbul<sup>107</sup>, this is a spatial creation echoing the spirit of *Triad*; it consists of circular planes pierced over and over again. The artist worked with the air between and around the masses of the sculpture just as much as he did with the solid material in order to depict an inflated sail. Thus, the work is not a true representation, but rather the symbol of an inflated and billowing sail. A series of models for abstract and symbolic statuary with architectonic and cubic shapes—as well as crystallized and winged forms—followed. These works include *Fertility* (1962), *Departure* (1963), *Action 64* (1964), *Symbol of Community* (1966), and *Bloom-Motif* (1971-72).

The *Bloom-Motif* was his last work, realized shortly before his death. It was designed to be displayed on a rise (artificially formed from the rubble left in the city after the Second World War) in the Olympic Park in Munich<sup>108</sup>. This sculpture for the Olympic games in 1972 was also dubbed “the Rubble Flower,” “*Schuttblume*.” The work not only signified new life growing out of the ruins, but stood for international peace as well. Belling had planned it well in advance, preparing two models as early as 1967-68 (Fig. 18). But it was not until 1971-72 that he executed it on a large scale. Two leaves of the *Bloom-Motif* curl into spirals; and as they curve, the air around them moves and they seem to vibrate. The formal approach employed by Belling for this—his last public commission—is the same as that of *Triad*—dynamic movement and mass extending into the surrounding space. In both of these works, the artist considered space (both that interpolating and surrounding the sculpture) as an integral part of his creation; both statues are vivid images—alive in space and time. In his final work *Bloom-Motif*, Belling’s artistic career culminated in an artistic statement that demonstrated the same emotion conveyed by his successful *Triad* more than a half century earlier.

---

#### CONCLUSION

In the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Rudolf Belling’s contribution to the development of modern art is uncontested. Although he

<sup>107</sup> H.C. EBERTSHÄUSER and B. MENKE (as in n. 83), p. 298 with note 20.

<sup>108</sup> As the architects of the Olympic complex, Behnisch and Co., did not want any vertical accent disturbing the line of the tent roofs and supporting pylons, the sculpture was placed on a slope. See J.A. SCHMOLL gen. EISENWERTH, “Rudolf Belling, Pionier und Nestor der Modernen Plastik,” *Die Kunst und das Schöne Heim* 84/2, February 1972, p. 80; and Reinhard MÜLLER-MEHLIS, “Zum Tode Rudolf Bellings,” *Weltkunst* 42, 1972, p. 1028.

lived in a caustic period and was forced to leave his country for political reasons at the age of fifty-one, the artist felt no hesitation in starting a new life in Turkey, a land foreign to him in both culture and language. After he was appointed to the head of the Sculpture Department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul, Belling completely reorganized the curriculum and due to his prerogatives Turkish sculpture could develop on a strong academic ground (Fig.19). The Turkish government needed monuments that celebrated the Turkish War of National Independence and social reforms. Since there were not enough trained Turkish sculptors to fulfill the needs of the authority Belling's foremost aim was to educate skilled sculptors. Within a relatively short period he managed to pass on to his students both the craftsmanship and perspectives necessary to make monumental sculptures. Besides his teaching at the Academy the methods he applied when creating his monumental works were very instructive for the students that assisted him. The reliefs and statues at the *Atatürk Mausoleum* in Ankara and various monuments of his pupils in different cities of Turkey demonstrate the maturity of Turkish sculpture achieved through Belling's efforts. Towards the end of the 1940's Belling was criticized because of excluding modern trends from the curriculum, but the artist believed that only after an academic training the students would be able to understand the logic and methods of modern sculpture.

In Turkey Belling received many commissions. Before he came to Turkey during the 1930's he had created masks, busts, statues and reliefs in different styles. In Turkey he produced portraits in a personal style that can be termed as Neoclassical. In those years his monumental works in the same style proved to be a totally new step in his career and the artist worked in every genre without prejudice; his only norm was quality. Towards the end of the 1940's Belling took up more and more his earlier experimentations and started to produce modern sculptures that approached his *Triad* in harmony and balance. His visits to Germany after 1950 must have given him new artistic impulses. Concurrently, the modern art and abstract sculpture gained impetus in Turkey too in 1950's.

When arriving to Germany the artist was most upset to discover that he had been nearly forgotten there. Gradually, however, he recovered his image in the homeland, and in 1955 President Theodor Heuss honored him with the *Grosse Bundesverdienstkreuz*, a medal for outstanding merit to his country. This honor was awarded to him most particularly

for of his contribution to the positive cultural relations between Germany and Turkey after World War II. In an article published that same year Belling wrote, “The ideals of modern art have been kept alive in spite of Nazism, the war, and the very trying post-war times, and we, the standard-bearers of modern art in Germany, accepted today throughout the world, are most pleased to see further development of our ideas, not only in the mature hands of progressive artists, but—above all—in the hands of competent young artists.”<sup>109</sup>

In 1967 the Ketterer Gallery in Munich organized a retrospective and quite comprehensive exhibition of Belling’s works. Then in 1971 a monograph on Belling appeared, published by Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth, a professor at the Technical University in Munich; this was followed in 1981 by another book, the work of one of his students, Winfried Nerdinger<sup>110</sup>. Nerdinger’s book, with a catalogue of all of Belling’s works; this remains the most comprehensive work on the artist, even though focused primarily on the period between 1918 and 1923. Despite the fact that Rudolph Belling enjoyed the apex of his popularity as a modern sculptor during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the remainder of his career—including the years he spent in Turkey—is no less important. Turkish sculpture is greatly indebted to him, as we recognize in the fond respect and admiration demonstrated by the 1990 exhibition in his honor at the Destek Reasürans Art Gallery in Istanbul organized by three of his protégés: Bölükbaşı, Gezer and Görey. It is not his own works, but those of his students as well (several of them, including I. Koman who worked in Stockholm from 1959 to 1986, internationally recognized) that demonstrate how truly successful the sculptor Rudolph Belling was in overcoming hurdles and surpassing boundaries to enable art to reach the populace.

---

#### FREQUENTLY CITED SOURCES

GEZER Hüseyin, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Heykeli*, Ankara, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1984.

HEUSINGER VON WALDEGG Joachim, “Rudolf Belling,” in *Skulptur des Expressionismus*, Munich, ed. Stephanie Barron, Prestel Verlag, 1984, p. 68-72.

<sup>109</sup> BELLING 1955 (as in n. 20), p. 171.

<sup>110</sup> See NERDINGER (as in n. 3). Nerdinger also prepared a maquette (now housed in the Technical University, Munich) of the kinetic fountain Belling built in the garden of the Goldstein estate.

NERDINGER Winfried, *Rudolf Belling und die Kunstströmungen in Berlin 1918-23 mit einem Katalog der plastischen Werke*, Berlin, Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1981.

SCHMOLL GEN. EISENWERTH J.A., *Rudolf Belling*, vol. 17 in the series *Künstler unserer Zeit*, St. Gallen, Erker Verlag, 1971.

## LIST OF FIGURES

- 1 *Rudolf Belling*. (Photo: from the archives of Istanbul Technical University).
- 2 Rudolf Belling, *The Man*, shell-limestone, 1921/22. Essen, Museum Folkwang. (From H.C. Ebertshäuser, B. Menke, "Fritz Erler und Rudolf Belling," p. 29).
- 3 Rudolf Belling, *Triad*, mahogany and birch, 1924. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie. (From P. Guenther, "Rudolf Belling", p. 210, fig. 178).
- 4 Alexander Archipenko, *The Dance*, bronze, 1912. Collection Frances Archipenko-Gray. (From *Archipenko*, Galerie Maeght, Paris, 1997, p. 51).
- 5 Rudolf Belling, *Portrait Mask of Richard Haertel*, bronze, 1926. Industriegewerkschaft Druck und Papier, Berlin. (From Nerdinger, *Rudolf Belling*, cat. no. 56).
- 6 *First exhibition of Belling's students at the Academy in 1940*. (From Rudolf Belling, "Bir Heykel Sergisi," p. 28).
- 7 Yavuz Görey, Hakkı Atamulu, *Atatürk and the Young Generation*, bronze, 1955. Garden of the Istanbul University, Beyazit, Istanbul. (From Elibal, *Atatürk ve Resim-Heykel*).
- 8 İlhan Koman, *Mirror II*, iron, 1962. Whereabouts unknown. (From Read, *Modern Sculpture: A Concise History*, 261, fig. 323).
- 9 Rudolf Belling, *Portrait of Emin Onat*, plaster, 1952. Istanbul Technical University. (Photo: author 2002).
- 10 Rudolf Belling, *Portrait of Celal Bayar*, bronze, 1953. (Photo: Museum of Celal Bayar, Umurbey, Gemlik).
- 11 Rudolf Belling, *Bust of President İnönü*, plaster, c.1940. Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture. (From Yasa Yaman, "Cumhuriyetin Ideolojik Anlatımı", p. 163).
- 12 Rudolf Belling, *Statue of President İnönü*, bronze, 1944/45. Courtyard of the Agriculture Faculty of the Ankara University. (From H. Gezer, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Heykeli*).
- 13 Hugo Lederer, *Bismarck Monument* (architect Emil Schaudt), granite, 1901-08. Hamburg. (From Feist, *Figur und Objekt*, p. 31).
- 14 Rudolf Belling, *The Equestrian Monument of President İnönü*, bronze, 1941-44. Maçka, Istanbul. (Photo: author 2001).
- 15 Hüseyin Özkan, *A Group of Statues at Anıtkabir*, stone, 1953. (From Ural, "Anıtkabir'de Sanat", *Atatürk İçin Düşünmek*, p. 99).
- 16 Rudolf Belling, *Frieze for Istanbul University*, plaster, 1954. Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture. (From Yasa Yaman, "Cumhuriyetin Ideolojik Anlatımı", p.164).
- 17 Rudolf Belling, *The Sail-Motif I*, mahogany, 1959. Collection of the artist. (From *Meisterwerke II*, exh.cat., Galerie Thomas, München, 2000, p. 91).
- 18 Rudolf Belling, *The Bloom-Motif*, bronze, 1967, cast in 2001. Collection of the artist. (From *Garten*, exh. cat., Galerie Thomas, München, 2000).
- 19 Artist unknown (a Turkish student of Belling at the Academy), *Portrait of Rudolf Belling*, bronze. Collection of the artist. (Photo: author 2001).



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

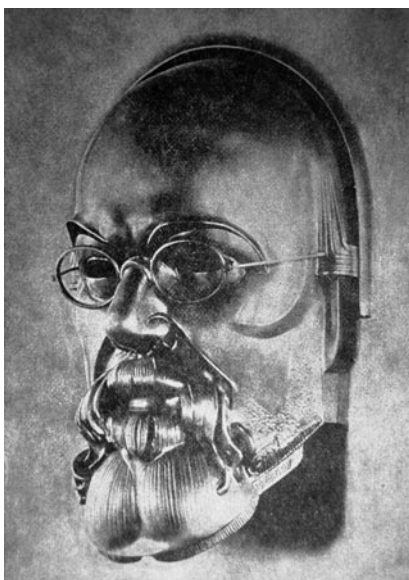


Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7





Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

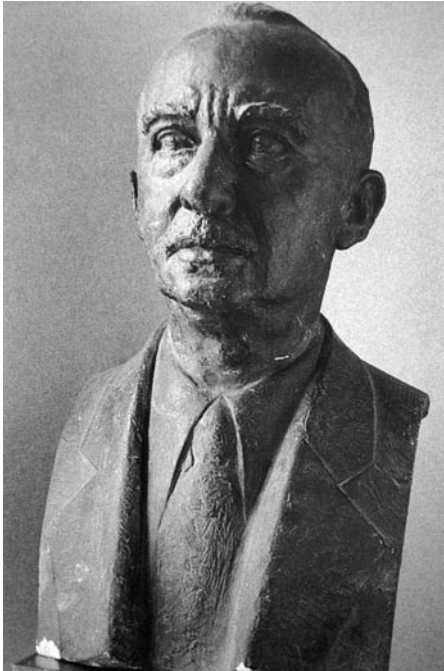


Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

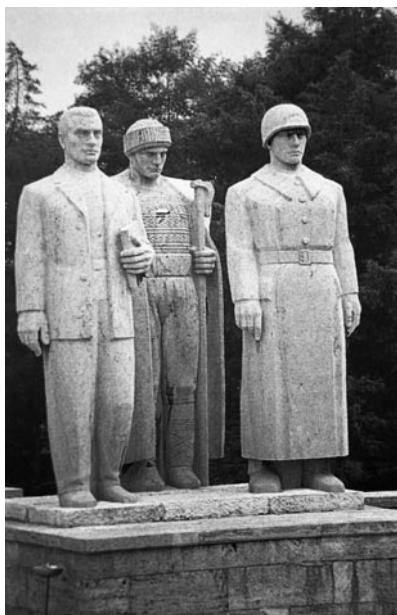


Fig. 15

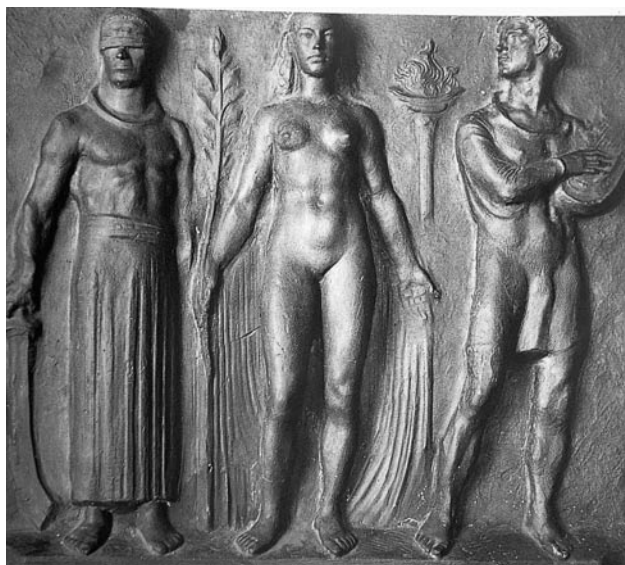


Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18





Fig. 19

Funda BERKSOY, *Rudolf Belling and his Contribution to Turkish Sculpture*

The German sculptor Rudolf Belling (1886-1972) who was one of the most innovative artists during the years following World War I was forced to leave his country after the National Socialists came to regime. He was appointed as the chairman of the Department of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul between 1937-54. Until now, it has always been his earlier career that received attention. This paper argues that the remainder of his career is no less important. His influence upon Turkish sculpture and the works created in Turkey are examined within the framework of his entire career.

Funda BERKSOY, *Rudolf Belling et sa contribution à la sculpture turque*

Le sculpteur allemand Rudolf Belling (1886-1972), l'un des artistes les plus novateurs des années qui ont suivi la Première Guerre mondiale, dut quitter son pays après que les nazis furent arrivés au pouvoir. Il fut nommé président du département de sculpture de l'Académie des beaux-arts d'Istanbul, de 1937 à 1954. Jusqu'à maintenant, seule la première partie de sa carrière a retenu l'attention. Cet article démontre que le reste de sa carrière n'est pas moins important. Son influence sur la sculpture turque et les œuvres créées en Turquie sont examinées dans la perspective d'ensemble de sa carrière.