

"In The Beginning"

An Appreciative Article On Edna Manley's Latest Work

What strikes one primarily after contact with the sculptor Edna Manley's latest work called "In the Beginning"—mahogany carving of a man and woman in dance movement—is that anything so happy, so exhilarating, so contented—could be created in the chaotic world of today, a world of so much uncertainty. Remembering also, and to be even more local, that Edna Manley is working in Jamaica a country with its own near problems and uncertainties.

Edna Manley in this new work of hers, reveals one great asset of the artist—the capability of departing to her studio and there stably creating unaffected by any exterior confusion. The artist's apparent control of his own intellectual mind, might probably mean one of these things: one, stability of mind; two, the steeling of oneself against nervous reaction, or three, indifference.

One or other of the first two can be pinned to Edna Manley, but never the last. She is closely identified with the life around her—one feels with Jamaica and

future. All her work since the strike of last year reveals the artist's attitude of mind to what is vital around her. Her bronze "Strike" one feels is the most important artistic creation that has come out of Jamaica's great social strike of last year.

RETROSPECTIVE TITLE

"In the Beginning" the dance

between man and woman—its title probably retrospectively of a people (the Negro's) earlier happier life—has two important but continuous movements in forward lifting drive of the figure and the liquid slipping upward motion of the female center. The arms of both figures in a balancing pattern serving a framework for the figures themselves. Effect of the whole sculptural group is that of a hanging panel.

Edna Manley's powers as a craftsman are at their highest in this work, and all advantage is taken of grain and word to introduce relieving subtleties where there might have been flat simplicity. It might be of interest that all detail is reserved for the frontal view and this more supports the feeling that the carving gives of a hanging panel.

One feels that Jamaica is fortunate in possessing an artist as valuable as Edna Manley who in her work can from time to time show what can be drawn from the vital spirit of the New Jamaica, and can at times fall back in retrospection to a people's Idyll of Africa.

"G. C. C."

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National Library of Jamaica