



DAVID BEGBIE
LONDON KNIGHTSBRIDGE

TEXT BY
EDWARD LUCIE SMITH

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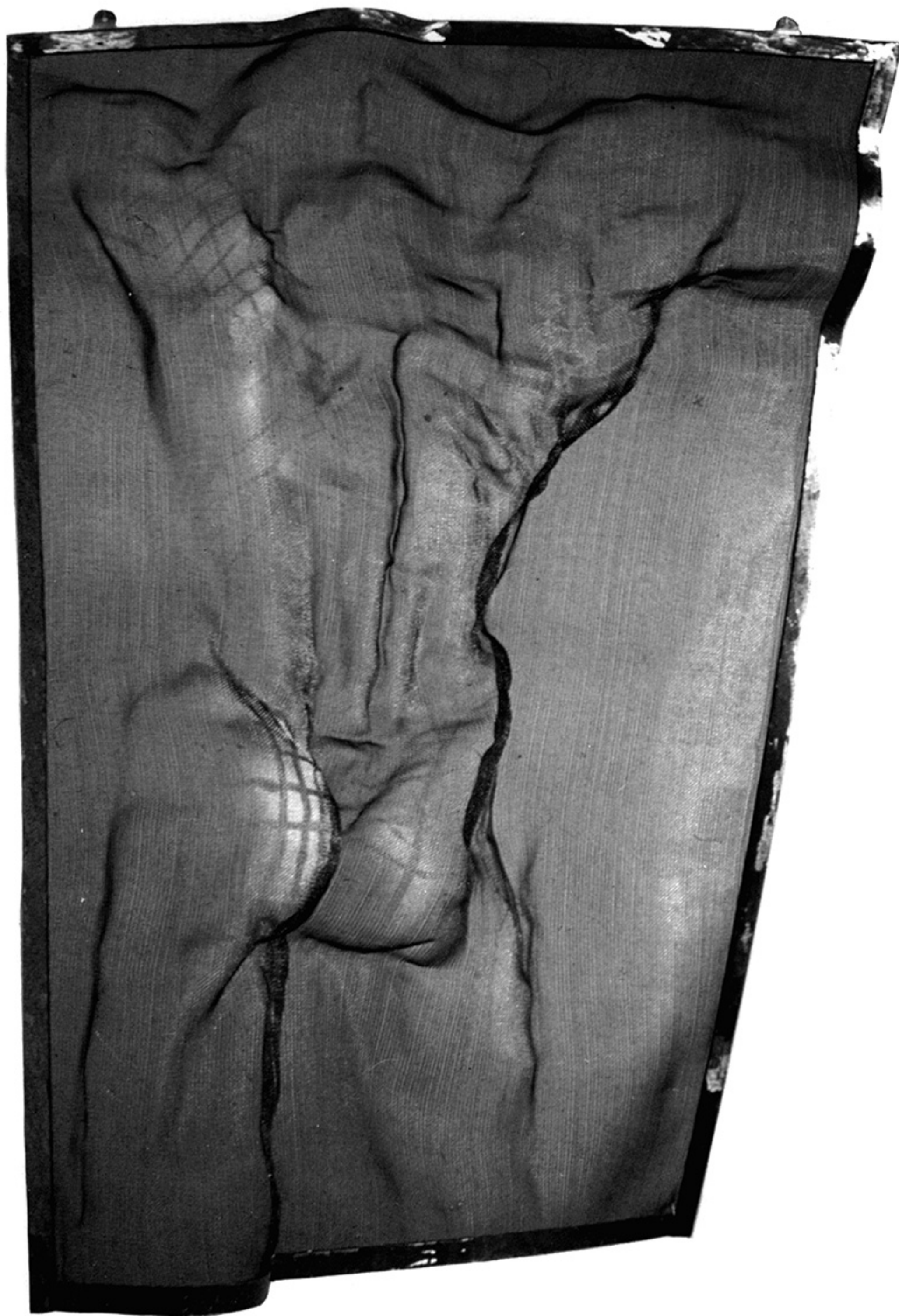
It is not surprising that David Begbie's work has made him a large reputation in a comparatively short space of time. His work is easy to assimilate, and quite unlike anything else being done at the present moment. He has been very successful in solving two problems. The first is, can sculpture still make use of a naturalistic image? The second is, can sculpture incorporate a sense of movement?

His solutions to both of these problems arise directly from the personal nature of his technique: His figures and figure-fragments are moulded from fine wire-mesh. This material turns out to be extraordinarily sensitive: Begbie is able to shape it with his hands to produce the illusion of rippling musculature. He makes it seem as sensitive and pliable as the wax used by Medardo Rosso. But the mesh provides a whole range of other effects as well – the sculptures become translucent – they are simultaneously there are not there. When one piece of mesh overlies another, the surface is further animated by rippling moiré patterns, which give an illusion of actual motion.

In this new series of works, Begbie has become much bolder – the figures are deliberately fragmented, metal armatures are used to 'draw' with, so that the spatial interaction becomes more complex. Every time the viewer shifts position, a new set of relationships appear. The fascinating thing is that these relationships remain coherent.

I have mentioned Medardo Rosso in connection with Begbie – I think one should also mention Rodin. Rodin's reputation has undergone a tremendous revival in the past few years; he is once again recognised as a great sculptor. But he remains apart from the modernist tradition. Until now, it was impossible to think of an artist who had been able to make use of him, yet remain his own man. I think Begbie's ability to renew Rodin, to tackle the problems which interested Rodin most and find new and original solutions for them, is not the least significant part of his achievement.

Edward Lucie-Smith



"TRUNCUS AND FRAME"
SCULPTURE IN PAINTED STEEL AND WIRE-MESH. 1985
SIZE: 40½" × 29"
103 × 74 cm

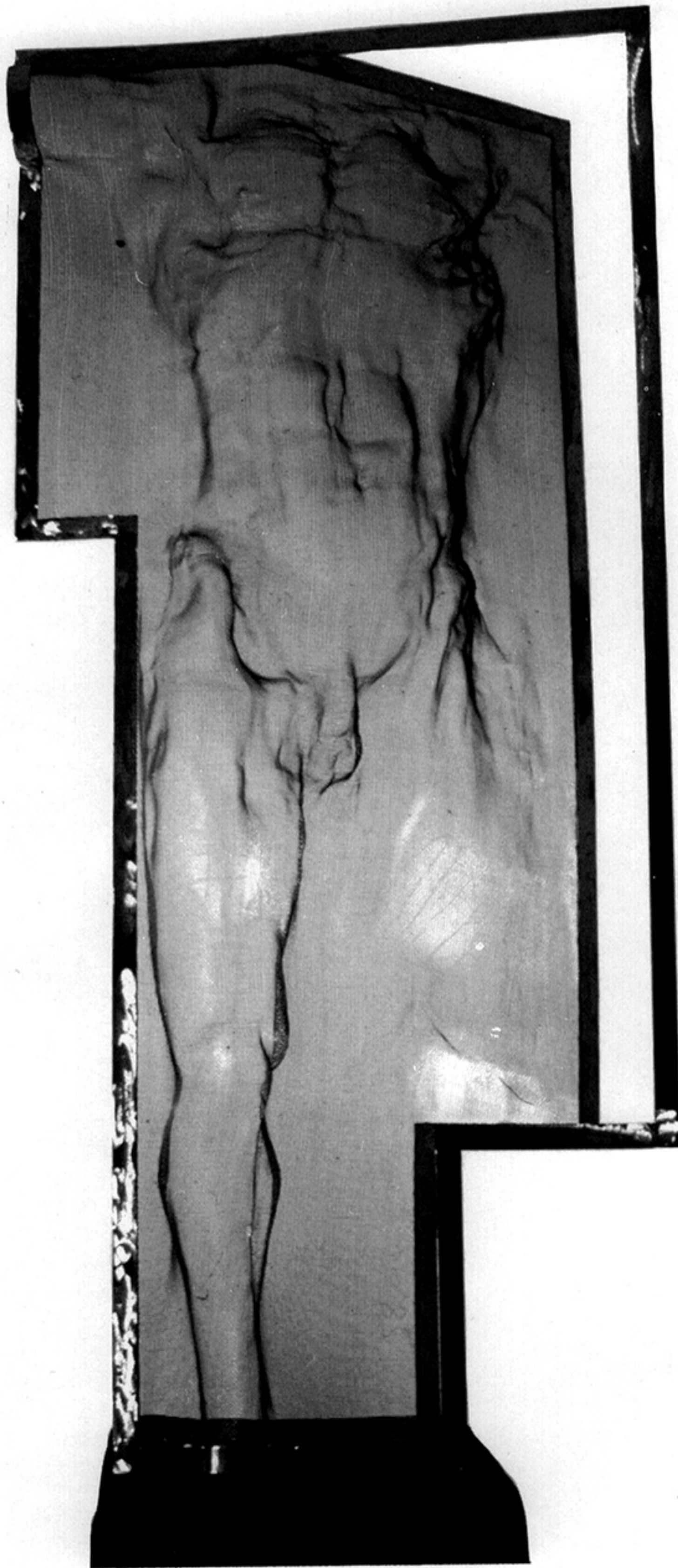


"TRUNCUS AND APPARATUS"

SCULPTURE IN PAINTED STEEL, WIRE-MESH AND WOOD. 1985

SIZE: 55" × 30" × 30"

140 × 76 × 76 cm



"FRAMED FIGURE"
SCULPTURE IN PAINTED STEEL AND WIRE-MESH. 1985
SIZE: 46½" × 21" × 9"
118 × 54 × 23 cm



"NULLUS"

SCULPTURE IN PAINTED STEEL, WIRE-MESH AND WOOD. 1985

SIZE: 71¼" × 15" × 15"

181 × 38 × 38 cm