



## Pristine machines

THE Imperial War Museum is not the first place you would visit to see work by modern artists but it does have a policy of showing contemporary art, much of it quietly questioning the value of the museum and almost invariably anti-war in spirit. Currently on show is the work of a young German artist, *Christoph Bergmann*, whose slick figurative sculptures merge the body with parts of machinery, much of it aerodynamic in feel, drawing fascinating literal and metaphorical comparisons.

The bodies of the figures themselves are idealised and classically beautiful, their highly polished surfaces constructed with machine-like precision, gleaming with pristine hardness. The riveted surfaces made up of sections of metal, recall the articulation of a suit of armour, an implication of the protective skin we often build around ourselves. However, the neo-classical perfection of the work carries hints of the notion of superman and the idealisation of the human race, which recalls the fascist ideology which swept Germany in the thirties. For example, the sculpture "Enola Gay" (above), of a perfect female form merging into or emerging from the base of a rocket, is both startlingly effective and chillingly ominous, but does, nevertheless, make the point that it is human beings who control machines and war itself, not the other way round. *EMMANUEL COOPER*