

**THE NEW WITHIN THE GIVEN –
COLLAGE PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES
IN CONTEMPORARY PAINTING**

by ZAHAVA EDELSBURG

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AND PROCESSES IN CONTEMPORARY PAINTING**

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Title:

“The new within the given - collage principles and processes in contemporary painting.”

Summary:

Collage is presented as an allegoric art-form *sui generis*, considering allegory itself as an open-ended form of art.

The research provides a suggestion to a different understanding of collage i.e.: as a catalyst for a search for structure and semiotic relationships in an attempt to overcome a constant disordered expansion of an intertextual web and hermeneutic possibilities; and as an *open work*, providing multi-layered meanings. As an open work collage is typified by the prominent role of its “readers”, its ambiguity and the infinite net of references it summons.

Collage may be conceived as a bridge between modernism and postmodernism, structuralism and post-structuralism; as a model for constant innovation and suppleness; as a stimulator for meta-artistic questions, acceptance of “soft” universals and reevaluation of the role of the Other within an artwork.

Works by Jasper Johns, Michal Na’aman, Dina Hoffman and myself exemplify these ideas.

List of key terms:

Allegory; Ambiguity; Benjamin (Walter); Collage; Eco (Umberto); Hoffman (Dina); Intertextuality; Johns (Jasper); Na’aman (Michal); Openwork; Postmodernism; Structuralism.

In allegory, the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face - or rather in a death's head. And although such a thing lacks any 'symbolic' freedom of expression, any classical proportion, any humaneness - nevertheless, this is the form in which man's subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly puts forth not only the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also the biographical historicity of the individual. This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing...

Walter Benjamin, *German Tragic Drama*

....it could be said that the saprophyte, living off the decay of dead organisms in a way that makes life possible for living plants, is to nature what the ruin is to culture, or allegory to thought.

Ulmer, *The Object of Post-Criticism*

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PREFACE

During the years, I became interested in collage, not merely as a technique, but rather as an open field of possibilities. That interest developed into a theoretical research, as well as practical work dealing with paintings which bring to the fore the idea of accumulation of layers of images and interpretations.

My acquaintance with South African art, while staying in this country for three years, encouraged my interest in the role of the narrative in painting and in the wealth of components in a work of art. Being an Israeli, my encounter with the South African scene has been most influential. I would like to clarify this impact by briefly describing, unavoidably in a generalizing manner, both artistic milieus. The prevailing Israeli art of the nineteen seventies, eighties and early nineties has been highly influenced by modernist spirit (although typified by postmodernist traits as well, for example: Michael Gross, Raffi Lavie, Tamar Getter, Michal Na'aman and Yehudith Levin). Major Israeli artworks of those years maintain "reductionist" approach, use extensively abstract images (also in conjunction with figurative ones) and reveal preference of what has been labeled as "the want of matter" (Breitberg-Semel 1986). In contrast to the Israeli art, South African art (for example: Walter Batiss, Helen Sebidi, Sfiso Ka Mkame, Penelope Siopis, David Brown, Marion Arnold and Keith Dietrich), although stylistically varied, present figurative images, density, compressibility of elements, elaboration of small details and rich colourfulness. Many South African artworks present abundance of relatively small objects or human figures treated allegorically, as if

reduced against the system, suggesting social and political awareness. Some artworks refer to history, art-history and African tribal tradition, alongside with personal fantasies, exemplifying distinct postmodernist traits.

I have searched many collages in order to apply my theoretical findings, but since only a few examples thoroughly analyzed seem to suffice, I finally have decided to adhere mainly to discussions of the work of Jasper Johns (b. 1930), a pivotal figure in the development of contemporary art and works created by two Israeli artists: Michal Na'aman (b. 1951) and Dina Hoffman (b. 1949). This choice gives me the opportunity to refer to phenomena relevant to the Israeli scene, as well as to artists highly appreciated by me, whose work I have followed closely for several years.

The works under discussion are collages in conception, strictly organized, yet, structurally and conceptually multi-layered, suggesting a complex web of references. They seem to induce a feeling of distress although their components not always obviously suggest this kind of feeling. Time is a decisive factor in their decipherment since only a thorough process of observation and examination of the references and their relationships unveil their significance. This means that such artworks, although seemingly “static” paintings, as a matter of fact, epitomize a starting point for a complex process, important by itself, led to unforeseeable results. These phenomena, which typify many collages, has attracted my attention, leading to this research.

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INTRODUCTION

The term *collage* usually refers to "a picture built up wholly or partly from pieces of paper, cloth, or other material stuck on to the canvas or other ground" (Murray 1968:89). The device was much used by the avant-garde movements since the early twentieth century, namely: the Cubists, the Futurists and the Dada artists, who used pieces of newspaper as well as other unconventional materials, such as: wall-paper, stamps, strips of cloth and mirrors stuck on to the paintings. Since its inception as a genre in the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century¹, collage has been used throughout the century by major artists of various trends, functioning as a *strategy* leading to the evolution of contemporary art, rather than a mere technique. As a strategy, it is epitomized by the combination of stuck pieces of material painted by the artists themselves, or even by the contemporary prevailing method of treating the painting as a conjunction of different sections, alluding to various sources, while avoiding the use of stuck materials. Thus a wide definition of the term *collage* would accurately explain its nature and its embracing role: collage presents the principle of lifting "a certain number of elements from works, objects, preexisting messages and integrating them in a new creation, in order to produce an original totality, manifesting ruptures of diverse sorts" (Group Mu 1978:12-14). This definition implies the possibility to use any medium in order to achieve collage. Assemblage, video-clip, multimedia works, etc. are derivatives of this form of art. The term

collage in the visual arts, however, is used here mainly in order to describe those two dimensional works of art, including *paintings* which display different sources within a single configuration.

The basic hypothesis of this dissertation is twofold: first, collage is an allegoric form of art *sui generis*; second, allegory itself (while adopting Walter Benjamin's approach), is an open-ended form of art. In this respect, collage, which has been already described as an allegory, would epitomize the open structure of postmodern art.

The argument will be carried in two stages: in the beginning of the first chapter, allegory will be introduced as traditionally implying a *closed system*, i.e. its decipherment depends on previous knowledge, leading to a certain meaning. In the *Encyclopedia of World Art* we find that:

[T]here are allusive or substitutive representations that have their origin not so much in the substitution of signs as in a correspondence of concepts: these are designated by the term "allegory" In allegory the sign is always something other than the entities and there is no direct or unambiguous relation between them; ... The reference is first and foremost an intellectual one In allegory then, not only is the thing signified of more value as a concept than the image that signifies it, but it remains independent of the sign ... and, in any case, tends to overshadow the image itself, which is merely a means to an end (Encyclopedia 1971:791-794).

Consequently, collage will be described as an allegorical form of art, which implies codification, i.e. it "works" *figuratively* rather than literally: by dissecting and re-articulating the components of the work of art, it summons a process of decipherment. As an allegory, collage is based on a consistent principle: it

presents some recurring patterns which make its "reading" possible. As such, at a first sight, collage appears as a closed system. However, this closure of allegory and collage is only *prima facie*. According to Walter Benjamin's conception, allegory epitomizes, in fact, an *open form of art*, inducing constant unpredictable changes, which raise difficulties in its "reading". In Benjamin's view, the conventional link between the allegorical image and its significance, yields a process of expansion of signification from some well established cultural meanings toward contingent and arbitrary ones. This means that anything may be attached to anything within the realm of allegorical hermeneutics (Benjamin 1996a:21).

That is why this research provides a suggestion to a different understanding of collage. The suggested approach is twofold: a search for structure and semiotic relationships in order to overcome its constant bias towards disordered expansion; and discerning its characteristics as an open work, thus accepting its ambiguity.

The main idea is that collage is an open-ended mode of art making, highly characteristic not only of the modern or avant-garde period, but also of the postmodern era. Furthermore, it can be even considered as a paradigm for postmodern art. Thus, collage transcends the limits of historical genres, in order to epitomize a meta-historical genre which is the allegorical work of art.

The open nature of collage constitutes the core of the entire research and is also the point of departure for future investigation.

The first chapter of the dissertation, "Allegory and Collage", presents a conceptual approach, with special reference to Walter Benjamin's ideas about allegory. Further, a "family" of images introduces motifs and themes common to allegory and collage. This chapter ends with some tentative conclusions concerning the common features of contemporary collages; and a collage by an Israeli artist: Michal Na'aman, as an example of a stimulus for the allegorical "project".

The second chapter, "A Search for Order", claims that the complexity of collage brings about repetitive attempts to impose order upon it, in a search for understanding. This search for order takes the form of a search for structure (as a structuralist project) and allows semiotic analysis. Intertextuality, which is embedded within the notion of collage, by enhancing complexity and disorder, is being examined in the process of "reading". The chapter proposes to discern in collage two models of structure, which introduce the amalgamation of borders and "unreadability": Baroque scopic regime and transgression of frames. A collage by Jasper Johns serves as an example for the imposition of order.

Chapter three, "Collage as an *Open Work*", uses Eco's concept in the analysis of a collage by the Israeli artist Dina Hoffman, as an open work. The main features of openness, such as : the prominent role of the "reader", ambiguity and the infinite net of references are investigated against the visual configuration that this specific collage summons.

The fourth chapter presents my own collages as examples of *open work*, inducing the allegorical expansion and the imposition of order.

The Conclusions encompass a wide scope of implications. The basic conclusion is the complex process induced by absence and discontinuity; on the one hand, it purports unlimited expansion and imposition of order and, on the other hand, a constant movement is witnessed between different concepts, forms and artistic realms. Other issues are: the ambivalent relationships to the Other, adopted by the artist as a means for self-expression, but still, not fully grasped by him/her, nevertheless changing his/her frames of identity; the references to meta-artistic conceptions like the notion of referentiality and culture as the subject matter of art; and the repetitive shifts between the particulars and the “soft” tentative universals they summon which are embedded within the notion of collage.

To sum up: collage may be seen as a bridge between modernism and postmodernism, structuralism and post-structuralism; as a model for suppleness, which is vital in the postmodern era. The constant innovation evoked by this form of art lies at the core of incessant dynamism marking the various artistic media throughout the twentieth century.

ENDNOTES INTRODUCTION

1. As practiced by Braque and Picasso who are thought to be its “great” inventors (for example: Waldman 1992:15).

CHAPTER I

Allegory and collage

The subject-matter of this chapter is twofold: first, it introduces a discussion about allegory in the classical tradition, as being based on a univocal relationship between the verbal and/or visual level of representation and the level of signification. In this respect, allegory induces association and continuity. From this perspective, there are no connections between allegory and collage as modern forms of art. Second, this chapter introduces another possible definition of allegory as an art of the contingent, fragmentary and free-play of associations. As such, it meets the twentieth century collage and merges with it. A collage by an Israeli artist: Michal Na'aman (b.1951) will serve as an example of a stimulus for the allegorical "project".

It is, probably, the return of the narrative in contemporary art that encourages the exploration of originally literary concepts such as allegory.

Collage, which lifts elements from preexisting objects and messages and integrates them in a new creation, thereby exploiting the atomizing disjunctive principle which lies at the heart of allegory. Furthermore, in collage, as in allegory, appropriated imagery becomes "something else", i.e. images are generated through the reproductions of other images. Therefore, even nature is approached through its cultural representation. Thus, an allegorical impulse is

immanent within collage and melancholy is induced. Yet, this state of mind is an impetus of activity and renewal, as if it were a swing of a pendulum.

Furthermore, certain collages seem to emphasize the notion of allegory; it may be said that they epitomize it. An attentive consideration reveals the relevance of this concept in relation to any collage, even in those collages which are apparently not narrative. Their structure itself impels “reading” in terms of allegory. The very configuration leads the perceiver into the essence of collage.

The following chapter draws freely on Walter Benjamin’s ideas as a framework within the discussion about collage, while introducing ideas of other authors on the theme.

ALLEGORY: A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

The term “allegory” comes from the Greek word *allegoria* which means the “description of one thing under the image of another”. In its etymological form, the term comes from the Greek *allos* (other) and *agourein*, meaning to speak in the *agora* - the assembly (or market) place. This means that allegory preserves a sense of social or verbal interaction, suggesting, as Quintilian mentions, the polysemy of language itself. At the same time, the word “symbol” has a deep connection with physical phenomena, with things. Its origin is the Greek word

symballein - "to throw together", a physical token, the two halves of which form a whole (Quintillian 1970:32). Consequently, allegory turned to be a kind of discourse. With the birth of the written text, allegory, as Spariousu clarifies, turned to be the discourse of the absent author (or the other), which it substituted. Until the end of the Neoclassical period it served as a rhetorical figure and an interpretative, hermeneutic device (Spariousu 1990:59).

According to classical approach, allegory is a literary and visual genre, which introduces conventional, artificial relationships between the signifier and the signified (Encyclopedia 1971:791-794). A universal idea is expressed through the particular. Thus its reading is uncomplicated, similar to translation, giving prominence to the signified. As such, allegory typified the rationalist Neoclassical art.

In the Romantic period, allegory was considered to be inferior to the symbol, a related term, which was now conceived as allegory's symmetrical opposite (Gadamer 1975:65-73). This change was probably a direct consequence of the loss of the traditional sense of *community* and *convention*, on which both allegory and hermeneutics depend and the concurrent development of notions like *individuality*, *originality*, *creative freedom* and *genius*. Goethe's condemnation of allegory accounts for this preference. According to Goethe, it makes a great difference whether the poet starts from a universal idea and then looks for suitable particulars, in this way producing allegory, or whether he beholds the universal *in* the particular - thus producing a symbol. The latter reveals poetry in its true nature (in Todorov 1982:204).

However, a common procedure seems to bridge the gap between allegory and hermeneutics. The latter unveils a hidden connection between distant things, by overcoming barriers. Allegory induces a similar process. In this way, allegory is open to limitless possibilities of interpretation. Instead of the previous, unequivocal, arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified, this relationship is constitutive and infinite. In the twentieth century, this kind of approach became prevalent; it was to reach its peak in postmodern literature. In this respect, one can recall the way in which W. Benjamin referred to the broad meaning of the concept: "Any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" (Benjamin 1996a:21). As such, allegory is considered as a structural possibility inherent in every work. Spariosu also explained: "...all literature and by extension, all language is 'allegorical', being an infinite network of deferments, displacements and substitutions that point to and stand in for an absent, perhaps imaginary, referent or origin" (Spariosu 1990:60). This description of language well defines collage: both elements appear as a network of displacements and substitutions that point to absent origins. A tentative conclusion is that an allegorical dimension is immanent within collage.

The contemporary approach to allegory, as posited by Benjamin, derives not so much from the Neoclassical tradition, but from the Romantic one, based on Neoplatonic philosophy. Yet, unlike the Romantic theorists, who emphasized the integration between the signifier and its signified into a single unit, Benjamin saw the (graphic) sign, as representing the distance between an object and its

significance. This enabled him to liberate writing from its traditional dependence on speech. Consequently, in allegory, "written language and sound confront each other in tense polarity" (Benjamin 1977:201). It seems therefore that a similar process brings about the gap between the allegorical visual image and its significance; this gap complicates and expands the process of decipherment.

Benjamin, in his essay about the German mourning play, fundamentally changes the traditional conception of allegory as being inferior to the symbol. He endows allegory with its proper status, as a complex process of search into the past, an endless accumulation of significances surrounding the phrase *ruined past*.

From the polemics around allegory and the symbol, some basic theoretical questions emerged:

First, the importance of the symbol lies essentially in its theological role as the unifier of the physical object, perceived by the senses, yet bearing a transcendental value. This view is expressed in different forms in Kant and Winkelmann, who have already conceived the symbol as the representation of a supposedly indissoluble unity of form and substance; or as the material realization of the idea and not as the conventional relationship between the signifier and the signified. According to them, the beautiful human body is an actualization of the idea of the beautiful and the moral (Benjamin 1996a:13). This unity of form and substance characterizes the work of art as pure presence, as a model of the world in the philosophical sense. To put it otherwise, the symbol is a synecdoche, a part presenting the whole, that part of the whole to which it may be reduced. In

Coleridge's view, the symbol does not represent essence: it *is* essence (Coleridge 1936:99). Nevertheless, this kind of unity does not characterize allegory. The latter seems to use the transcendental drive because of other reasons. While a kind of natural *necessity* typifies the symbol, namely, the beautiful object is conceived as a harmonious and complete whole, in which every detail belongs to the organism and, as such is an unchangeable, allegorical connection between the visual image and its signification is characterized by *arbitrariness*. Unlike symbol, its image is not an organic part of its significance.

Second, the conventional link between the parts, affords a process of expansion of significations from some well established cultural meanings toward contingent and arbitrary ones. That means that anything may be attached to anything else within the realm of allegorical hermeneutics. It is not arbitrariness that typifies the signifier within the relationship: signifier - signified, but rather, the whole process is characterized by an obsessive arbitrariness, according to which anything attaches meaning. The multiplicity of meanings attached to the image, brings about mystery, viz. the religious sphere. It is about this kind of departure from closed relationship to open and even unlimited semiosis, that Benjamin was talking while pointing out that there is a dialectical tension between the human arbitrariness of attaching significance and the ascent towards the transcendental.

Furthermore, it seems that collage, just like allegory, induces different axes of dynamics: on the one hand, there is a multidirectional group of horizontal, vertical

and diagonal axes of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships¹ of the components and the accumulated associations and meanings they summon. These axes constantly alternate, emphasizing the *horizontal* expansion of the field of possibilities. On the other hand, there is a steady *vertical* axis toward the transcendental.

Third, symbol and allegory suggest very different conceptions of *time*. While symbol is conceived momentarily, as a revelation which demands our total "presentness", allegory demands a continuous *process* of conception, a search into the past for lost sources and so does collage. As Owens phrases it, allegory's most fundamental impulses are a conviction of the remoteness of the past and the desire to redeem it for the present (Owens 1984:203). Theoretically, allegory had been conceived as antithetical to the modernist credo: *Il faut etre de son temps*. In practice, at least, modernism and allegory are not antithetical. Allegory remains in modernism *in potentia*.

Fourth, the possibility to actualize (within a single configuration) some unexpected relations, becomes the preferential topic in the new versions of allegory, mainly in the twentieth century. It is on this possibility that the essence and power of allegory relies. Benjamin saw that this topic is immanent within the idea of *collection*. Unlike a museum's collection which includes valuable items, namely, arranged according to certain categories, there exists another kind of collection (Benjamin's example is the collection of the Baroque royal court), the

items of which gain their value within the context of the collection. Sometimes this kind of collection seems to be an arbitrary accumulation. This kind of collection is induced by allegory (Benjamin 1996a:30).

This shows that the “common practice” of allegory is ceaselessly to pile up fragments. In his turn, Agnus Fletcher likened the allegorical structure to the obsessive neurosis (Fletcher 1964: 279-303). As a form of visual art, collage embodies the idea of accumulation - in its form and significance. Accumulation or progression have no inherent “organic” limit of magnitude. Many allegorical works of art (in literature and visual arts) therefore still seem to be able to “progress” i.e. to absorb more components, in the process of creation, as well as in interpretation.

Paradoxically enough, this continuous search for significance, does not reach the ultimate level of significance, but rather evokes an endless chain of associations. The allegorist neither invents an image nor does he restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured. It may rather be said that he/she adds another meaning to the image. A first conclusion could be that being a *supplement* is the reason for allegory’s condemnation. However, at a closer glance, this supplementation is the very source of its theoretical significance (Owens 1984: 205).

Fifth, as a narrative structure (since associations are necessarily fragmentary), allegory outlines a *fragment*. A fragment always represents an *absence* which evokes a *past world*. The whole does not belong to the present world any longer.

As a remnant (discussed by Benjamin in his essay about Baudelaire, Benjamin 1996b:90) it has the power to hurt: to "break" the integrity of the present and to bring about a shock. This potential is linked to its latent collecting impulse. At the same time, this remnant is beneficial: it attaches the present moment to memory and to the texture of life.

Sixth, the search for lost sources suggests affinities between allegory and the *myth* (the latter's etymology implied collection). Yet, unlike the myth, which brings about an internalization of another kind of time, disconnected from the historical time (implying an internalization of the Other within itself that characterizes the symbol), allegory implies the conclusion that the lost source, *viz. the Other is unattainable*. This acknowledgment of the unavoidable gap induces a *deep sadness*.

Thus, collage as a collection of fragments is capable of bringing about a forceful experience although it introduces impersonal sources. The artist recalls, in this respect, the traditional story-teller that causes this deep impression, almost as if he/she narrated an autobiography, by interweaving *tradition* and the *narrative*. (As if, paradoxically enough, it is not possible to turn the newspaper into personal experience although the newspaper makes everything very accessible). The artist, like the story-teller, is able to cause a strong experience, probably due to his/her unique, *personal, as if improvised way of regrouping* the excerpts and the "*ritualistic*" foundations of this activity. The use of "*free play*", the "formless"

forms namely fragments that are constantly attached in new combinations producing new forms on the one hand, appear together with the preservation of *order* which is strengthened by repetitive patterns, on the other hand. The transforming is combined with the fixed, not as a synthesis, but as a process of constant "nomadism". This combination of the "formless" and the aesthetic order induces bi-directional movement: the horizontal movement of the "formless" and the vertical ascent towards the transcendental level of the ritual. This seems to be another facet of the double-movement, previously described, of the horizontal axis of the expanding field of possibilities and the vertical axis towards the transcendental, which characterizes the arbitrariness of attaching significance.

Allegory's structure which tends to be *sequential*, as has been explained, forms an epitome of *counter-narrative*: allegory superinduces a vertical or paradigmatic reading correspondences upon a horizontal or syntagmatic chain of events (Owens 1984:208). It compels a disjunctive reading of form and content, alternately.

There are allegories that are primarily perpendicular, concerned more with structure than with temporal extension. There are also allegories that are primarily horizontal, namely temporal and there are such that blend both axes together in relatively equal proportions (Fineman 1980: 50). In the same way, taking into account the structural similarity between allegory and collage, it seems that the more abstract collage, the more prominent is its spatial axis. This structure enables both allegory and collage to cross aesthetic boundaries and practice hybridization,

eclecticism. Collage can be described, therefore, as the paradigm of the eclectic twentieth century art in any medium.

Within the present context, collage is a form of visual art. However, its “nomadism” or pendulum movement between contrasts suggests that the notion of collage implies duality, a constant erratic movement between different, sometimes opposite concepts, forms and artistic realms. This apparently simple and unproblematic artistic strategy surprisingly unites within a single pattern: the image and its concealed significance; the present and the absent; the past and the present; the Subject and the Other; “free play” and order; the horizontal movement of the expanding field of possibilities and the vertical transcendental movement; syntagmatic and paradigmatic readings; form and content; spatial and temporal characteristics. It might be said that collage is the visual version of the Apollonian and the Dionysian “fates”, namely: eternity, stasis, beauty, light, wholeness and clear borders - on the one hand and contingency, dismemberment, dissemination, blurred borders, loss, melancholy and extensive search for significance, on the other hand.

ALLEGORY AND COLLAGE: A FAMILY OF IMAGES

There are a few images which can be organized into a repertoire of motifs and themes common to both allegory and collage. Some of them recall the traditional allegorical images such as *the skull* and *death*. Others had been developed through interpretative strategies, mainly in postmodern metanarratives. As such they provide analytical tools in the intricate hermeneutics of the *fin de siècle's* culture. W. Benjamin is one of the most prominent names among the philosophers who use canonical allegory in order to pour new meanings.

To begin with, both allegory and collage introduce unrecoverable "quotations", ever-existing lop. That is why they always seem to bring about melancholy and frustration, while at the level of representation they simultaneously convey the *absence* in terms of *presence*. The visual image compels repeated efforts for recovery, that is a "battle" against the end. In other words, they use images of death / destruction and renewal.

As Benjamin suggested, the *skull* is an image of allegory. To summarize, according to him *death and its representative*, the expressionless skull, is *uninternalizable, unidentifiable with*. Furthermore, unexpectedly, a reversal occurs: the skull, with its terrifying "smile", seems to watch the beholder with its empty eyes. Epitomizing fate, it undoes any defence of the beholder; any attempt

made by him/her to internalize sight. Allegory, as the skull, a remnant of the past, does not allow internalization or redemption (Benjamin 1996a:15).

The skull brings about reflections on the incomplete course of life which seems to end arbitrarily. It presents *a lack of teleology of the history of the individual and of humankind*. This means that it leads to an unavoidable *search for significance*. The skull as a remnant, induces, as happens in collage, the development of significance out of *accumulation* and not as a result of internalization. The allegorical process cannot attain the unification with the transcendental. Nevertheless, it causes a *dialectical motion between the "here and there" and the transcendental* because of the enigmatic interruption of life.

If the skull is a canonical image, *the ruin* becomes in Benjamin's view another emblem for both allegory and collage. The ruin is taken as paradigmatic for the dialectical relationships between history and nature: history (seen as ruins) returns to an original state of affairs and becomes an a constitutive part of nature. By contrast, the "frozen" primordial nature becomes history. There is no clear separation between history and nature within the realm of the ruin (Benjamin 1996a:23). This situation is reminiscent of the artistic procedure at work in collage and in allegory, where the technique of association leads to a blurring of borders between otherwise separated realms. The contingent relationship between man and history, nature and culture, progress and decay, suggests that not only *is* significance a construction, but it can also disappear or be destroyed. When the eternal idea is ruined, it becomes an instance of *still life*, or "matter", which *nourishes other ideas*. This turning of significance into matter is the condition for

the allegorical activity and it is the process achieved in collage. The notion of the ruin is configured in collage.

Thus allegory and collage are linked to *death and melancholy* but at the same time, bring about *activity*.

As Serres suggested, allegory is to thought what the ruin is to culture and the saprophyte is to nature (Serres 1982:100). That is to say that the “destruction” of significance nourishes other ideas. A similar relationship of nourishment seems to exist between tradition and collage, since collage accumulates fragments of preexisting sources, in order to produce a new totality. This means that although melancholy usually entails apathy, unwillingness to be active and therefore establishes links only to remnants of past activity (as shown in Dürer’s etching: *Melancholy 1*, Fig. 1), collage and allegory introduce the transformation from despair to activity and renewal.

Two other motifs i.e. relics and shattered mirrors, seem to be immanent within the notion of collage and are most distinctive, since they suggest both the end and still ongoing activity.

Collage's excerpts, which are always being cut out of their natural source and as such, *relics*, serve as a memorandum for their source. Like the ruin, this motif represents a situation *after a disaster* and in this sense, it implies a certain *optimism*, which assumes, at least, the existence of something after the end, though the shattered world is unrecoverable.

The artist appears as a kind of "last survivor", a witness to what remains after the collapse of an inner or outer world. At one and the same time, he will play the role of the "savior", although a limited one, who gathers the relics, joins and reconstructs them dedicatedly and meticulously (Katz-Freiman, 1992: 20).

Collage uses excerpts which are reflections of a source, usually even reflections of reflections of a source, while introducing the source in a "delusive", "deceiving" way, as if within a complex of *mirrors*. In many cases the excerpts are reflected more than once within a work of art. Thus a reflection is being reflected again and again within a work of art, sometimes in different variations: different sizes, "distortions", etc. Nevertheless, these reflections are always *shattered, detached*, at least partially, from their context.

Italo Calvino once described the delusory qualities of the mirror, by using the image of a complex of mirrors which produce an unlimited number of reflections of reflections. A defined number of figures is reflected, reversed and reproduced. "If indeed my figure goes forth in all directions" Calvino remarks, "and is doubled at every angle, this is done in order to weaken my pursuers" (Calvino, 1990: 165).

Calvino's comparison of the *process of thinking* with reflections in the mirror, while describing constant shifts of dissection and articulation, brings the collage to mind. Like a beholder of a collage, Calvino's hero can concentrate only when he faces his reflections. These elements are essential for his soul in order to speculate. When he watches a kaleidoscope, he feels that his ratio, following the different fractions of colours and lines which conjoin into ordered formations, finds out immediately its route, although it is a sudden, temporary revelation of an

extremely vulnerable structure. This structure collapses only to enable the formation of another structure-variation which assembles the same components (Calvino, 1990: 163).

Nevertheless, the mirror converts reality into a picture, flattens it, creates an illusion. The *real* which is revealed in it is a delusory flash, a superficial appearance. The myth of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection, best expresses the disaster latent in mistaking the lie for truth. The mirror represents therefore, the complexity of inter-relations between original and reproduction, reality and reflection, life and art.

Shattered mirrors, as collages, can be read as metaphors for a disintegrating reality, a distorted and collapsing world. Beyond a statement that implies a violent struggle, a broader stance is held with regard to the *problem of representation itself*. A dual move can be read: a declaration about a kind of reality which contains a *false denial* and, at the same time, an *eschewal of successive narrative structure* which could make possible a rebuilding of clear order.

The figure of dismembered Orpheus also introduces characteristics of collage. The myth of Orpheus narrates about death, dissection, dissemination and articulation within new contexts. Being dismembered, his head, drifting seaward in the river, continued to sing, thus influencing nature, restoring himself to nature and moving along with the secret life of things. His dissemination and new articulation with nature can be considered similar to the artistic procedure at work in collage; the latter is based on a destruction and a reorganization of components. By analogy to Orpheus, collage as an artistic entity, which brings *in praesentia* a

kind of mysterious process, by attaching *being* and *nothingness* and by uniting opposites, e.g. art and nature, form and energy, language and mind, poetry and biology. In this capacity of attaching distant concepts lies the *differentia* of collage. Yet, collage, like the singing body of Orpheus holds a contradiction that the allegorical project longs to overcome, i.e. the contradiction between the "dumb" unity of nature and the multiple voice of consciousness or associations.

COLLAGE AND ALLEGORY: TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, the concept of allegory itself went through a process of change in twentieth century writings, as exemplified by W. Benjamin. The philosophers returned to the sources of the hermeneutic tradition and found the forgotten potential to openness and indeterminacy concealed in the concept of allegory. As used by Benjamin, allegory became the epitome of modern art and as such, of modern culture, characterized by dissection and discontinuity. The gap between alienated signifiers and their indecipherable and even meaningless significations, paved the way to a possible definition of allegory as an art of the contingent, fragmentary, free-play associations. On the other hand, the new allegory still preserves from the older one the strategy of transgressing the limits between direct and indirect expression; as such it impels both our mental faculties and our creative ones. At this stage, allegory meets twentieth century collage and merges with it. This phenomenon lies beneath the following analyses of some

contemporary collages. As a tentative, preliminary, conclusion, it can be said that in contemporary collages, including those that are discussed in this dissertation (Figs. 2,3,12, 25-52) one may discern a number of common features:

1. There is a combination of images that are brought into the painting as fragments, while other images are subjected to fragmentation imposed by the painting itself, as a result of their collision with one another, with the limits of the format or with the subdivisions.
2. The size-relations between the images are often unrealistic. Different images appear in different angles of perspective, different painterly means. There is no hierarchy between them.
3. The images, very often, look robbed of vitality and “communication” between them is impossible. There is a strong feeling of disintegration in form and content, yet barriers do not separate.
4. The source of images is culture: psychoanalysis, myths of heroism, myths of ancient cultures, biology books, reproductions, frescos, architectural sketches, etc.
5. Morbid atmosphere is reflected, at least as one aspect of the work of art.
6. Reappearance of elements emphasizes multiplicity, erases individuality, brings about a ritual character in creating and in “reading”, while increasing disjunction. This is, as has been mentioned, the epitome of counter-narrative.
7. The images work as personifications of abstractions.

To sum up, collage, like allegory, does not introduce subjective inventions so much as the objective discoveries of the *new* within the given immanently through *regrouping* of the elements.

The different excerpts are introduced through an *ahistorical perspective* and the work summons, as allegory does, a *synchronic analysis* as opposed to the diachronic one.

READING COLLAGE: *FAMILY OF MAN*, BY MICHAL NA'AMAN

A painting by Michal Na'aman *Family of Man* (1981)² (Fig.2), which is collage according to the definition introduced in this paper, serves as an example of a stimulus for the allegorical project. Moreover, due to its "clean" yet intricate structuration of elements, this work becomes a "trigger" for a reading and a re-reading of modern Western culture through the filter of collage.

The work is made out of three rectangular panels in different sizes, attached to each other, introducing only a few images, strictly organized. The upper and lower panels include anatomical pictures of the brain and the heart, disconnected from a body, but complete within the frame and inscriptions (in Hebrew): "The Source of Evil", "The Family of Man" (in the upper panel), "Young New Victim" (in the lower panel). The middle panel, includes a bird with an emphasized round eye and

flat schematized images (made by moulds) of probably a Klein bottle, a vessel whose exterior is also its interior (which recalls a headless duck) and heads of rabbits/ducks (used in psychological tests) in a diagonal row. The borders of these images are cut in some places by the format. Very vague images of the rabbit/duck heads appear in the background of the three panels. In the upper panel's background, there is a round, linear rough drawing, maybe a scientific cross-section drawing of the brain. The colour scale is very limited: red and green, black and white i.e. two pairs of complementary colours and gray. Each colour "belongs" to specific shapes. Each detail seems to be significant within such a strict composition. The viewer is invited to "read" the work: the images, the inscriptions, the relationships between all the components, between the components and the format. The relative simplicity of the structure, the clear, closed, uninterfered shapes of the images, their small number and the inscriptions which accompany them contribute to the false impression that the decipherment of the work is very simple. The different worlds that the images represent, the dissection and articulation of the images, the different approaches to their shapes and the unusual format complicate reading, yet intrigue. The work exercises an allegorical power, which inactivates a very long process of "reading", limitless *in potentia*. Thus a few disconnected images produce a grand collection of ideas which represent major issues in Western culture: mythology, literature, Christianity and Judaism, the Bible, ancient, medieval and Renaissance arts and cultures, twentieth century art and philosophy, language, sex and especially psychology of Freud and Lacan.

Each of these thoughts seems to deepen our understanding of the work, nevertheless each complicates its meaning, brings about ambiguity and denies any possibility of univocal interpretation. The following contradictions are meant as a partial introduction to some of these thoughts. Being a collage, an allegorical work of art, the ideas evoked by it are inseparable from its painterly means. The beholder is frustrated by the narrative disjunctions and is compelled to "read" intermittently the "narrative" and its means. Furthermore, since the intertextual net is a complex one and some of its components undo some of the other, it is impossible to present here a neatly classified, hierarchical series of ideas.

The brain and the heart are images that bring to the fore the notion of unity of body and soul, emotion and ratio. The theme represents Na'aman's dualistic perception and the underlying sense of split world striving towards unity.

The brain and the heart are painted in an unexpected way. They introduce realism, but not the type of realism stemming from a culture of painting but rather, the type suggested by anatomy textbooks. Furthermore, they appear as metaphors, but in their unexpected concrete physical form. Brain and heart as images for the intellectual and emotional worlds exist in the realm of language, yet Na'aman introduces them into the world of painting by materializing them in detailed anatomical illustrations, while exposing the less expected side of the verbal metaphor. These images, especially painted in red and black, look morbid and seem to echo the skull in "*memento mori*" (previously described as an emblem of allegory). The inscription "New Young Victim" attached to the red heart,

introduces a fatal death into the work. The presence of this inscription, paradoxically enough, seems to revive the heart and its colour "turns" into "blood". Namely, here, the conclusion reached by "reading" the upper panel, that the colours in this work function as codes, is denied, at least for a while. The inscription "The Source of Evil" above the black heart, becomes undetachable from this context and turns into the symmetrical counterpart of the "good" heart. The words "Family of Man" which reappear as the name of the work, induce humane warmth into a morbid vision. Breitberg-Semel suggested the notion of dynamics and life teeming at the bottom of hell, as opposed to the static sublimity of the upper worlds and above all, the continuity of life and growth as the only unshakable fact in the work of art (Breitberg-Semel 1983³). Another subject raised by these images is the Darwinian "origin of species". Another possibility is a red heart and a black heart in cards, which represent destiny and rivalry.

The words "The Source of Evil", when linked to the brain and the heart, underline the moral prism that characterized the questions of body and soul and the question of the brain-heart relationship.

Nevertheless, these images represent *mental patterns, universal ideas* and not the visible world. Therefore, their iconography is most important. Accordingly, Na'aman avoids any "painterly" mannerism. Although the heart and the brain seem to be copied from an anatomy book, they seem to be painted very rapidly, without paying too much attention to volume or accuracy, in a manner that could easily produce many copies. The images in the middle panel are painted without details, as flat silhouettes. As LeVitte-Harten explains, the *schematism* of the

icon in Na'aman's works has a dual function. On the one hand, it encapsulates *knowledge* and so, apparently, prevents the narrative from migrating to other regions. On the other hand, the schematic process proclaims itself *the model of the lost source*, since the paradigmatic object is not to be found, yet summarizes all other objects and from that moment, the picture cannot represent anything outside of itself and becomes an anonymous object, lacking the history and depth it aspires to embody (LeVitte-Harten 1999: 218-219). A similar process is activated by the words that refer to universal ideas, that are of the unifying type, that create an impression of clarity and wholeness. The letters, in accordance with the images, are designed as printed letters, avoiding any subjectivity. Furthermore, without depth or history, the meanings of the words and the icons move in different directions and restore the "hieroglyphic" value of the signs and this value exists only within the work of art. For the cultured viewer they probably contain a kind of irony and humour, too.

The *colours* function as signifiers, in positive-negative oppositions of complementary colours (red and green, black and white) and as metaphorical oppositions: a white heart - a pure heart, a kind heart; a black brain - a dark brain, an evil brain. Thus, in Na'aman's iconography the colours are not given by nature, but rather by a "*semiotic decision*" which creates distinctive units (Ginton 1999:173). This distinct use of colours suggest a connection to the Biblical significance of the rainbow which is a sign, a token (in Hebrew "a letter") of a covenant (*Genesis* 9:12-13). An interpretation of the colours as letters, introduces

them - as Lacan suggested - as forceful signifiers that "kill" the real i.e. chaos and death and turn them into symbols (Fink 1986:24)

If this work depicts a split between head and body or between brain and soul, the mode of painting represents the brain. The industrial pigments on the plywood add to the work's incorporeal appearance.

The symbolization and representation in Na'aman's work are linked to *medieval tradition*, which created a treasure of symbols and signs forming a cannon for a spiritual-fantastic world view. Yet, in Na'aman's work, emblems are created and their validity is undermined with the same breath, giving expression, in this way, to the evasive nature of the modern emblem. Inseparable from medieval heritage is the composition divided into panels, or registers, endowing hierarchy and synchronism.

As Na'aman explained:

Medieval art is also called Holy Scripture. It is an art whose objective is, among other things, to serve as a visual illustration of the world. There are set laws of representation. Set conventions of design were evolved so as to make identification specific and unambiguous, a mirror image of the world order. It shows a firm division into separate registers ... its schematism is fascinating. It does not determine what is right for art. What it determines are, rather, types of linkage, between "being below" and "being bad", "being on the right" and "being good". I have often made use of such set methods of characterization, organized good-bad hierarchies, God-man-beast hierarchies etc. Naturally I couldn't use these orders literally, lacking the norms that would justify such a mapping My maps are much more "egalitarian"... (Na'aman 1981).

The work as a scripture, is "read" from top to bottom, but at the same time, it invites the beholder to "reread" in different directions. In this way, the repeatedly

changed order of "reading" i.e. the validity of any temporal order, results in simultaneity. The hierarchy that is usually compelled by medieval division into zones, is questioned by the reappearance of the heart in the lower panel and by allotting to it the colour of the upper brain.

Na'aman's work (according to her own opinion about her work in general), apparently, has the atmosphere of the *positivistic* nineteenth century which believed in its ability to understand and explain the "world in which we live". The use of an ordering convention contradicts the awareness that the world which is represented lacks any such convention, or any commonly accepted hierarchic cultural code. Any attempt to create a rigid world order is necessarily accompanied by an ironic dimension (Breitberg-Semel 1983).

The bird in the middle panel appears as an allusion to the "bird of the soul" and as an extension of the visual dimension. While the brain and heart lead into the human body, through its innermost parts, the images in the middle panel are not shown from inside. Furthermore, the cut borders of the middle panel images implies the probable existence of a much wider space around them, as if they were bursting out of their oppressive format. The conjunction of these phenomena, together with the different shapes and sizes of the panels, serve to underline the plausibility of the scene's existence in the painting only, namely in the emblem.

The split between the brain and the heart and the appearance of another heart recall another kind of division: the *division within the subject*, between two "others", discussed by Lacan. According to him, the ego is defined as alienated and determined by the other. In this way, jealousy and rivalry are the fundamental forms of relationship. Communication can work only if the struggle is transcended between the other and the ego, which is the mirror image of the other, (Lecerle 1985:135). Thus, the mirror image of the other and an internal struggle seem to come to the fore in the work under discussion.

The possible rivalry between the brain and the heart, between the moral and the immoral, between the other and the ego, "ends" within the work in a standstill. Uncertainty ever remains as to who is alive and who is dead. In another work by Na'aman (discussed by Ginton), i.e. *The Judgement of Solomon* (1976)⁴, which probably presents the Biblical story as an allegory of psychoanalysis, the sentence ends in a standstill. The acronym of the word "teiko", which appears there, means that all is suspended, deferred, until the coming of the Prophet Elijah, of the Messiah (Ginton 1999:204-201). The reference there - and here, as well - is to the nonextant infinity.

Death, the antithesis of eternal life, is a major theme in the work under discussion and in other works created by Na'aman. As Breitberg-Semel remarks, it is not a matter of an obsessive preoccupation with death, but rather with the "death of the obsessive", discussed by Lacan, which raises the question "Am I dead or alive?" The images seem to be dead and alive at the same time. The description of

the Messiah in the New Testament, suggested by Ginton as linked to another work by Na'aman, complies with this situation: "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:18; Ginton 1999:191).

The fact that Na'aman's work consists of *binary patterns of pairs*, word combinations, inversions, etc., has often been noted, as had its pervasive preoccupation with chance, destiny and death. In the work under discussion, one of the components of the pair often repeats itself, thus emphasizing the repetitive nature of the whole work and its significance. There appear a heart and a brain and another heart; a black heart, a red heart and another red organ, i.e. the brain; a dark animal and a white object and another partially dark group of "animals"; a green background and a red background and another green background; a broad square panel, a long and narrow one and another broader one, etc.

The repetition compulsion expressed by The "Fort-Da" (absent-present) game described by Freud, which indicated the comings and goings of a child's mother as a binary sequence (Freud 1991A: 284), Lacan's binary model of the "unconscious as language" and Edgar Allan Poe's tale "The Purloined Letter", which includes divined binary choices (that influenced Lacan; Poe 1938:215) are reminded of by the painting and therefore, the unconscious is raised to the status of a major subject. A binary model structured by Lacan showed that a random binary structure creates meaning and destiny: disparate events are "read" according to syntactic laws that were not "already there" (Fink 1986:181). Na'aman's work, in this context, brings about "syntactic" laws for its reading. The autonomy of the

unconscious language and the immortal nature of unconscious content, as explained by Lacan, play an important role in reading the work of art.

Ginton also suggests an analogy between Lacan's binary method for divining the thoughts of the unconscious and the computer (Ginton 1999:189).

Being collage, the work introduces *discontinuity* - of its "lost sources" and of its components within the composition. Here the discontinuity of the dissected organs is emphasized as well. *Displacement*, *discontinuity* and *rupture* typify the rhetorical means - metaphor and metonymy, the unconscious and collage. Surrealism, which purports displacement and discontinuity, the unconscious and dreams as its foundations, is borne in mind while the work is analyzed.

The composition under discussion entails the thought about the role of *chance* within the work. The notions of chance, discontinuity and displacement are evoked to a great extent, by the attachment of the middle panel to the other panels and by the strange collection of objects within this panel. These syntagmatic relations remind of the Surrealistic syntax most commonly introduced by the famous sentence from Lautreamont's *Maldror*, viz. "the chance juxtaposition of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table!" (Lautreamont 1978: 217). The *chance* juxtaposition / encounter is a fundamental concept in the discussion of the unconscious by Freud, Lacan and their interpreters. Chance is the concept serving as the foundation for Lacan's model of "the unconscious structure like language" and probably, is referred to, in Na'aman's work, which introduces itself as a text to be read. Apparently, Lautreamont is an important reference in

Na'aman's work. A fencing lesson, a tartan garment and kindred souls, which are juxtaposed by Lautreamont (1978:133) two lines below his classic statement, are key images in Na'aman's works from different periods.

The chance encounter in the present context, is the connection of distant elements which are revealed to be *closely related*. Thus apparent indeterminacy is denied and turned into determinacy. This process is evoked by many twentieth century works of art and by Na'aman's works as well. It is epitomized by the motif of Oedipus, who escaped from his family only in order to encounter it; the motif of the twin brother and sister who fell in love with each other without knowing that they were related; and the concept of the uncanny - the strangely familiar - which is close to the concept of "coincidence" (Ginton 1999:196).

The clear division into apparently disconnected panels (each of them including specific images) and the presentation of parts of the body, recall a game called "*cadavre exquis*" (exquisite corpse), practiced by the Surrealists in order to confront the otherness presented by the unconscious in a methodical manner. This game was based on an old password game, played by several people, each of whom wrote a phrase on a sheet of paper, folded the paper to conceal part of it and passed it on to the next player for his/her contribution. The game was adapted to the possibilities of drawing and even to collage, by assigning a section of a paper to each player (Rubin 1968:83). This technique represents, as Ginton phrases it, an attempt to "create" the "unconscious" by means of circumventing the individual through numerous consciousnesses or "unconsciousnesses" (Ginton 1999:196). A prime example of the cut that links two fundamental elements is found in the story

presented by Freud. There the unconscious linked two poetic sentences written on two sides of the same page with a view seen years after those sentences had been read (Freud 1991B:314-15). This is the ultimate example of randomness, similar to the Surrealists' game of folding a sheet of paper, or to the two sides of a tossed coin.

The figure of the *rabbit-duck* is basically an elementary psychological exercise illustrating the ability of perception to distinguish. The representation of two beings within one image and the presence of several duplicated images suggest the implication of cloning - the creation of living creatures through the duplication of single cells, namely a type of autogenesis. This idea is supported by a text that conjoins this image in other works by Na'aman. Autogenesis is linked to the idea of the extinction of the sexes and the possibility of granting eternal life (Breitberg-Semel 1983). The duck-rabbit, the one-turned-into-two (which is reminiscent of other images in previously painted works by Na'aman, for example, the pair of identical apes in the ape - map series) seems to be a metaphor for a *split internal*, a *schizoid self*. Breitberg-Semel understood this image as a projection from the interior onto the world, the viewing of dualistic states, which preoccupies Na'aman throughout her work (Breitberg-Semel 1983). Kimhi suggests a meta-artistic significance of the image which is linked to allegory - the multiplication of identities and meanings created by the conditions of the painted surface itself. "In the instant between one figure's transformation into another, the

locus of the transformation itself is revealed as a site transcending any figurative identity” (Kimhi 1999:234).

The images and the sentences, by virtue of their being quotations of a different knowledge, are inserted between inverted commas - *Granzefüsse* (goose feet) in German - and the mythological rabbit constitutes a metonymy thereof, being a whole that represents a part. The images and sentences transform the picture into a place with a declared absence, in which the linguistic stereotypes, the homophonic and the homographic combinations point to the absence of art or the absence of discourse about it and there is a constant probing of the speculation whether it is the issue of that same absence and whether it can be filled (Levitte-Harten 1999:217). The rabbit-duck images seem to refer to Jasper John’s works from the nineteen eighties (for example: *The Spring*, discussed in another chapter of this dissertation and to other prints of *The Four Seasons* series; see Goldman 1991) alluding to the same ideas.

The duplicated rabbit-duck heads, the Klein bottle which reminds of a beheaded duck and the brain dissociated from a body seem to refer to the *Acephal and Polycephal*. The *Acephal*, the figure lacking a head, which originated in antiquity, implies a demonic, powerful creature that is connected to language (Ginton 1999:180). The concept was developed in the twentieth century, especially by George Bataille and his circle of friends, Lacan among them. The acephal and the polycephal serve as key images for the *unconscious* and the different *identifications of the ego*, as suggested by Lacan. A combination between the

demonic acephal and the Christian Alpha and Omega, as the reversal of "no-one" and "all", namely a reference to language, is another idea of Lacan (Miller 1988:170) probably taken into account by Na'aman. Thus the alluded acephal-polycephal images within Na'aman's work may imply a variety of ideas: the unconscious, the subject without an ego, different identifications of the ego and the imaginary plurality of the subject, the interpretation of dreams, references to Freud, Lacan and Bataille, the mythological Hydra that lost its heads, Alpha and Omega which means Christianity/the Christian deity or alternately, the Gnostic demon, everything/nobody and reference to language.

The emphasized only *eye*, which exists in the painting evokes thoughts. It belongs to the bird which is the only uncut, lively creature within the work. The eye seems to endow with life. The Gospel of Matthew associates the eye with light and darkness - good and evil, probably knowledge and ignorance, loss of way (Matthew 6:22-23.).

Thus the eye is connected to the brain and the heart, to "The Source of Evil" and to the source of understanding. The ability to see means the ability to understand, to know. The eye is the sphere of wisdom and prudence. Those were represented by the Egyptian deity Thoth, who restored Horus's eyes, by the gaze of God the Father and perhaps also by the forbidding gaze of Lacan's symbolic father. The bird, which also implies the soul, has the ability to see, to understand its surrounding and at the same time, its innermost world. It forms the connection between the outside and the inside. As LeVitte-Harten suggests, the *eye and the*

circle representing it, keep up the hybrid principle of the work which both "sees" and "speaks". Such a work is a "monster" (LeVitte-Harten 1999:216). The eye also steers clear of the dangers lurking in the artistic act.

Eyes may represent the "*primal scene*": the scene in which a child witnessed his parents' intercourse, discussed by Freud, following his patient's dream of the wolves. The peering eyes of the wolves in the dream (painted in other works by Na'aman), were associated with deep *anxiety*, *sex* and *voyeurism*. Eyes seem to be related to the Tree of Good and Evil Knowledge and to the *Original Sin*. The primal scene and the Original Sin are homophonic and therefore analogous terms (used by Na'aman in later works).

The eye may suggest *aggression* and the universal transition stage, the "mirror stage" discussed by Lacan (1977). It implies *analysis*, the analytical Cartesian eye and together with it, the icon of all that cuts. In this context, it is undetachable from the sharp edges of the images within the middle panel of the painting, which resemble cutting implements. In this way, the eye threatens, while removing the beholder from the metaphorical level and imagination to primordial fear. Like other images in Na'aman's work, it still functions as a cultural symbol which has not lost its magical power. The eye stands for the enigmatic nature of the work, which is not easy to "see" and imposes a process of unveiling the layers.

The eye may allude to self-mutilation, being the attribute of St. Lucia (LeVitte - Harten 1999:215). As such, it is connected to mutilation and anguish in twentieth century art. It may be linked to Bataille's eye in his pornographic book *The story of an eye* (1927). There, the eye of the hero went through an odyssey of tortures

ending in the anus of the hero and in the vagina of the heroine. The eye of Bataille turns into the dark, organic and forbidden place, in contrast to the Cartesian eye, which turns to the light. Na'aman's work which abolishes the hierarchy of good and evil, inside and outside and introduces the brain and the heart as anatomical organs observed by penetration into the body, presents an approach which seems to relate to Bataille's. LeVitte-Harten concludes that the eyes of Bataille and Na'aman "both constitute critique, satire and re-enlightenment at the same time." (Levitte-Harten 1999:214.)

The eye allows, therefore, varied opposite interpretations; among them: light and darkness, good and evil, Christianity and ancient deities, Father-God and the symbolic father, wisdom, enlightenment and aggression, primordial fear, the primal scene and the Original Sin, torture, dark secrets, analysis and lust, evidence, enigma to decipher and denial of hierarchies.

The *Klein bottle* is a vessel that constantly transforms itself, whose exterior is also its interior. It alludes to the question of the sexes which accompanies the question of identity throughout Na'aman's work.

The work's *format* suggests a few ideas. One possibility is a *genealogical tree*, a metaphor suggested by Breitberg-Semel as one of two models for the formats of other works by Na'aman, namely *The Rabbit-Duck* series (created in 1979; Breitberg-Semel 1983). Genealogical trees are linked to the psychoanalyst tree of free associations discussed by Freud (Chaitin 1996:12), which is associated to the

genealogical-linguistic tree devised by the analytical writer Poe (Ginton 1999:175). Both are regarded as the descendants of the *Gothic narrative*. Na'aman's work weaves into this tradition. The structural principle of the genealogical tree is a recurrent forking off from a single starting point: a couple of parents. Usually it results in multiplicity growing out of one and thus, the format corresponds to the idea of allegory according to contemporary approach. Here the work can be "read" as a very limited genealogical tree, starting either from above or from the bottom. Such a "reading" compels a diachronic chain of events instead of a synchronic one and the narrative changes according to the starting point. Nevertheless, this idea fits the work both in form and in the concept behind it.

The use of dissection/articulation of panels forms an enigmatic structure which also recalls word-games and crossword puzzles.

Na'aman's work is typified by the strategy of *the emblem*. The emblem, which reached a height of popularity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, derived from the Egyptian hieroglyphs and from the Greek *physiologus*, which was well known in medieval Europe. As a matter of fact, the emblematic method of Italian humanism was based on the accumulation of errors which was the result of misinterpretation of the hieroglyphs. Thus, the world was explained through the classical prism, assuming that the world with all its manifestations is suffused with secret meanings which can be decoded as long as there is a code (LeVitte-Harten 1999:220).

The emblems contained three elements: the *lemma* or motto, a *heading* which expressed an ethical truth and the *icon*, or image. These elements were combined to form a *rebus* with an explanatory caption below the icon.

The formulation of the emblem and its decoding were based on the assumption that the divulging of the secret can be but partial, since it was inconceivable that Egyptian wisdom could be fully understood by medieval or Renaissance European inhabitants. Nevertheless, as LeVitte-Harten concludes, the emblem communicates, while concealing something that serves as an admonition. It declares itself to be a model, that is *neither real nor fictional*, but it *does not disclose the source of the model or what it represents* (1999:220).

Two elements of the emblem, the *lemma* and the icon, are present in the works of Na'aman. It is the relationship between these two elements that establishes the emblematic quality of the work. The combination of images and words does not necessarily result in an emblematic structure. When the text corroborates the icon to the point of moral barrenness, as, for example, in Barbara Kruger's *Untitled* (1991)⁵, or when the text categorically denies the icon, as with Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1928-29)⁶, an emblematic ambivalence does not transpire. When the text accords and, apparently, denies the images at the same time, as in Na'aman's work, the combination intrigues and compels a process of deciphering.

Na'aman's icons and texts are defined and partly drawn from fables or sayings; that is, they already exist in our consciousness as the prototype of the things they represent. This approach seems to reflect Jasper Johns's choice of "taken for

granted” images, those of most conventional objects (Sylvester 1991:11), since the sixties. In the words discussed here, namely ”The Source of Evil”, ”The Family of Man”, ”A New Young Victim” and the image which alludes to the bird of the soul, well known sayings are established, which function as absolute signs. Yet, as LeVitte-Harten explains, they only represent themselves, since the depth of what they once represented had to be eroded to invest them i.e. the icons and the words, with their own power, with new life. In this way, the images and their meanings are on equal footing (1999:219).

In Na’aman’s work, *time* appears as a continuous present. It is halted. Since many components are dual, “reading” and “rereading” in any direction is possible. This simultaneity contradicts the directionality of real time and can be referred to as absence of time. This “absence of time” or simultaneity, typify the unconsciousness (Freud 1973:106; 1991A:191). In this respect, there is a linkage between collage in general and specifically Na’aman’s works and psychoanalysis.

Na’aman’s approach to time may allude to the transcendence of time in the Torah. According to the generally accepted view of the school of Rabbi Ishmael, ”there is no ‘earlier’ or ‘later’ in the Torah.” (Heschel 1962:199). Rabbi Aha suggested that the sequence is disarranged in order to indicate that it was composed under divine inspiration (Midrash Rabbah, Genesis, vol.2., cited by Ginton 1999:187). No doubt, the unconscious lack of time awards it a divine status.

To conclude, a basic examination of the work reveals a *rationalistic* approach which raises a few fundamental questions, while a more thorough examination unveils a struggle with the *dubious, evasive nature of the concept of "self"*, an examination of *identity*, of the boundaries of self. The spiritual-historical conventions of order do not conceal a state of distress.

Na'aman explains in an interview that the *plurality* of signs and meanings is the condition for the appearance of the field of vision of her works. This is exactly the effect of *collage*. She clarifies that collage introduces the impossibility to fulfill the desire for unity, for a total formal organization (which Modernism presented). It questions lost sources and therefore, uses the narrative and the contingent. It introduces the loss of beginning and end. Totality is lost in favour of *heterogeneity and infinity*. Collage achieves an aesthetics of *addition and deduction*. It causes the *collapse of barriers between identities, between inside and outside*. Na'aman conceives her works as a practical allegory of *excess and absence* (Na'aman 1999:22-23).

The works perform two kinds of *double movement*: one is *towards the complete body of knowledge*, which is unattainable and therefore results in a *repeated failure*: every framing reveals what exists outside the frame. The other movement is between the unique and the repetitive, since the unique, being a hybrid, is "threatened". The acute identities of the figures are endangered since they are either split or doubled. Thus the works exhibit the fear of the unique and exceptional and suggest (as a "defence") repetition, plurality. The works express

the wish to *destroy ambiguity* and yet, they retain ambiguity and admit the impossibility to "include everything." (Na'aman 1999:22-23).

Na'aman's work exemplifies the impetus for an extensive search for significance, evoked by absence and discontinuity immanent within the notion of collage and allegory. The long catenary of significances apparently introduces possibilities and enriches the aesthetic experience, without encapsulating a definite meaning.

The work illustrates the allegorical reading-process in the "disguise" of a free-combination of forms i.e. a collage; as such it directs and focuses the "reading" along the apparently erratic contemplation of visual configurations.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER 1

1. This is Barthes' terminology (1972:209). These relationships will be discussed later (pp. 56-58).
2. Michal Na'aman (b. 1951, Kvutzat Kinneret) is an Israeli painter, a collage artist and a teacher who lives and works in Tel Aviv. She studied in Israel and New York, exhibited extensively in Israel and abroad (including the Venice Biennale in 1982) and has won several important prizes. Her works are collages in conception. Most of them include words, expanding the suggested frames of reference. Black humour, literary works, allusions to Christian representations of the world, intentional displacements of male and female and psychological theories are some of the sources used by her. A superficial viewing perceives her as a rationalistic artist who indulges in irritating, superfluous questions, while another viewing perceives her as an artist struggling with the dubious, evasive nature of the concept of "self". The boundaries of self, body and soul and the imprisoning matter against the imprisoned matter are examined by her. The strict organization of the components and the rich intellectual references which typify her works, seem to conceal a feeling of distress (Breitberg-Semel 1983).
3. The pages are not numbered.
4. *The Judgment of Solomon* (1976). Paper, photograph, Letraset and pencil on cardboard, 29x36cm. Collection of the artist. (Ginton 1999:204.)
5. Barbara Kruger *Untitled* (1991). Photographic silk-screen on paper, floor lettering vinyl paint, dimensions variable according to location. Installation at The Mary Boone Gallery, New York. In this work, vulgar expressions of violence, racism and sexism accompany images of crying women, a door lock and an eye (Lucie-Smith 1995:468).
6. René Magritte *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1928-29). Alternative title: *The betrayal of images*. Oil on canvas, 58.75x92.5cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. (Hughes 1989:229). The conjunction of the words with the image clarifies that a painting is not its representation.

CHAPTER 2

A search for order

Collage, which assembles different sources and ideas within a work of art, forming a weave of differences and tensions, brings to the fore the issue of *order and disorder*. Different collages seem to embody different degrees of order in accordance with their apparent visual complexity, although even relatively "simple" collages may evoke complicated thoughts. Some collages, especially multi-layered ones, suggest disorder, even chaos. Although the process of constructing these works might have been an ordered one, it is impossible to linearly "reconstruct" it. Sometimes it is impossible to "reconstruct" images which have been shattered. Nevertheless, since collage induces an allegorical impulse (in the sense discussed above), summoning an intertextual activity (as will be further shown), the complexity, even within apparently simple works, is immanent. The beholder faces an absence of focal hierarchy and orientation.

Generally speaking, chaos and order are inseparable, although they seem to be opposites. It is impossible to understand phenomena without searching for their internal order. The imposition of order is inevitable especially for understanding chaos, though *this activity completely changes the phenomenon one tries to understand*. Furthermore, the efforts made to understand chaos in art, as in science, lead to the conclusion that in some cases, wild shapes, random and unpredictable phenomena derive from structured, "ordered", processes ¹. The

same insight happens in the process of "reading" collage: underneath an apparently chaotic work of art, a hidden order is revealed.

An attempt to impose order upon collage, in a search for understanding, characterizes the *structuralist project*. Nevertheless, collage resists synthesis. As such, collage epitomizes the linkage between structuralist approaches and poststructuralist ones.

Since collage painting has not been sufficiently investigated, a theoretical approach to collage can use literary theory, mostly the "critical texts wrought to paraliterary form"², which bear similar traits to those of visual collage works. The basic components of the structuralist method i.e. dissection and articulation, are best suited to describe the "activity" involved in the making / "reading" collage. Further, the different relations are explained between signs, as well as their role in collage. The kind of articulation stressed by collage affords the use of another literary concept i.e. intertextuality, as it is configured by collage. The last section of this chapter introduces two depictions of collage, which bridge the gap between the visual structure of collage and its implied conceptual complexity.

These subjects are illustrated by an etching created by Jasper Johns (b. 1930)³: *The Spring*, from the series *The Seasons* (1987) (Fig.3). The work presents flat images, most of them within square frames in different sizes, which apparently partially superimpose each other. The surface is covered by diagonal lines which suggest the sight of the falling rain. The basic structural division is in three vertical parts. The middle one presents two silhouettes of human figures, a large

one - accompanied by a "meagre" tree and a smaller one - superimposed by geometrical shapes. The two other parts, on both sides, include various images. Several of them are drawn from psychological tests. Others are: parts of Johns' painting, parts of a circle which includes a skeletal arm and an arrow, sky with scattered stars / leaves, a rope and a suggestion of parts of a ladder. Most of the colours are gloomy. Such a group of images portrayed as a configuration of the spring expresses a very personal choice.

This work, a collage by its conception, serves as a good starting point for discussing different aspects of contemporary art, among them: "reading" a work of art as a *process* developing in time; the work of art as the place of conjunction of different times: biographical-personal and historical periods; the work of art as a site which fuses synchronic and diachronic viewpoints; the work of art as simultaneous accumulated layers rather than a linear course; the work of art as an allegory that summons constant transitions among the different layers, from the form to the "narrative" and vice versa; the work of art as a reflection of culture rather than nature as traditionally experienced; the work of art as an intertextual junction; the "open work" (Eco 1989) that ascribes importance to the role of the reader in "composing" the work of art; the eclectic work of art which embodies unity in plurality; collage as a process of dissection and articulation, disconnection and connection, concealment and exposure, activities that unveil the *new* within the *given*. The following discussion develops some of these aspects while referring to *The Spring*.

A SEARCH FOR STRUCTURE

Structuralism and semiotics have influenced in depth contemporary scholarship in the fields of humanities, social sciences and art theories. As such, they provide a method for analyzing collage as a distinct form of art.

Structural linguistics since Saussure has served as an example for other domains of social and cultural life, by granting *primacy to relations and systems of relations*. The deduction that brought about this premise was that noises that we make have no significance in themselves but rather become elements of language only by virtue of the *systematic differences* among them, signifying only through their relations with one another in the complex symbolic system we call "language" (Culler 1981:27-29). In a similar manner, the components of collage do not have significance in themselves, but rather, accomplish their meaning by virtue of the systematic differences among them, through their relations with one another.

The structuralist method *reduces phenomena to structures of systems*. The basic principle of this method, applicable in reference to collage, is that *to understand phenomena is to reconstruct the system they are manifestations of*. To describe that system would be to identify the *oppositions* which combine to differentiate the phenomena in question (Culler 1981:47). In *isolating basic pairs of oppositions*, one describes *codes i.e.:* "set of categories drawn from a single area of experience and related to one another in ways that make them useful logical tools for expressing other relations" (Culler 1981:29).

Some of the *oppositions* that appear in *The Spring* are used here as devices for understanding the relationships within the work of art and therefore its meaning. Each opposition connects different levels of the internal organization of the work leading from the visual image to the ideas suggested by it. For example, the bright colour of the square of the small human figure may be transferred into a general opposition, i.e. the opposition between light and dark places and, further on, that of open vs. hidden places. This bright colour, in comparison to its dark surrounding, especially to the partial circle with the skeletal arm, emphasizes both the small figure and the strange, enigmatic geometrical shapes superimposed on it. A scholarly interpretation which connects these shapes to Dürer and to the three "galls" (Cuno 1991:47) contributes to the melancholy atmosphere of the whole work and suggests a common ground for Dürer's *Melancholy I* (1514) (Fig. 1) and *The Spring* as works that present a *collection* of images which clarify different aspects of melancholy. For example, the transparent superimposed geometrical shapes, as opposed to the organic silhouette of the small figure, draws attention to the linearity of most of the shapes in the work, to the basic symmetry of the composition and to the abundance of geometrical shapes in the work as a whole. The lack of rigidity of the small figure, not only against the geometrical shapes, but also against the main figure, turns it into a human, fragile, maybe even ill person, or, rather, child. Here, too, the scholarly suggested connection with Munch links this part of the picture and the work as a whole, to the melancholy and sickness in Munch's works. The skeletal arm draws attention, in this context, to

Munch as well (Goldman 1991:42) (Fig. 4). The opposed diagonal directions of the axes of the large figure and the items on its both sides suggest instability, contingency, enhancing the feeling of lop and dissection. The relative liveliness caused by the realistic style of the tree - in comparison to the other schematic images, especially those drawn from nature i.e. the stars and the rabbit - may emphasize the former's symbolic possibilities which include: growth, development and optimism mixed with bareness and want. All these connections, together with others not mentioned here, "depict" a process experienced by the artist, alluding to a certain period in the artist's life, to which the collage-structure of the work is best suited. Thus, the examination of the oppositions proves to be an excellent tool for analysis and for widening the conceptual scope of the work .

The reader of a collage mentally re-constructs its creation during the act of contemplation; somehow, he experiences an *activity* which is very similar to the work of the structuralist researcher, involving two typical operations: *dissection* and *articulation*. In collage, as in an object of research viewed from a structuralist standpoint, the actual *frontiers* between the components are most important and therefore, often, easy to identify. These frontiers, which are the *loci* of dissection and articulation are significant also for the mental process induced by collage: they separate the units from other actual units of the discourse and also from those which distinguish them from other virtual units, with which they form a certain

class ("paradigm"). What characterizes the paradigmatic object is that it is in a certain *relation of affinity and dissimilarity*, vis-a-vis other objects of its class.

Thus, while watching *The Spring*, one examines, for example, the affinities and dissimilarities: between the human figures, between their close surroundings, as well as the frontier where they touch each other; between the main figure and the tree; between the small figure and the geometrical shapes, etc. The same units determine the lines of associations raised while "reading" (this process will be further discussed later). In *The Spring* the frontiers of the shapes seem quite obvious. In most of the cases, they are even marked by lines and they do not merge. The distinction and isolation of every image are emphasized. Yet, formally, the images relate to each other: the images dissect and conceal each other, their diagonal axes bring about an illusion of movement, as if they approach each other. The mutual dissection of the images causes them to touch each other very "deeply", although each of them is apparently closed within its contours.

An observation of collage, especially a multi-layered one, brings about a moment of clarification in which *apparent "chaos" suddenly becomes intelligible*. This phenomenon fits the paradigm of the intellectual quest, as discussed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who developed structuralism in fields outside linguistics. This moment of revelation is experienced by the geologist or the archaeologist: when apparent chaos becomes intelligible; "space and time become one ..." (Lévi-Strauss 1962:43). Unlike the history of historians, the history of the

geologist or collage viewer is similar to the history of the psychoanalyst, as it tries to project in time certain basic characteristics of the physical or mental universe.

In a similar manner, the process of accumulation in collage and especially the superimposition of layers, seems to be an illustration of the notion of *ahistorical perspective* or synchronic approach, which typifies contemporary scholarship. This methodology is opposed to the diachronic one, which attempts to construct a historical evolution (Lévi-Strauss 1962:30-31). In collage, as in scientific research, the explanation of phenomena does not focus on the discovery of temporal antecedents and the causal chain which links them, but rather, on the specification of *the place and function of the phenomena in a system*. Collage, as it is in science, induces the recognition that *understanding is possible only from a synchronic standpoint*. As Lévi-Strauss contended, history has to be seen as a series of shifting configurative patterns, the meaning of which becomes increasingly opaque with the passage of time. Events significant to one code are no longer so to another code. Historical understanding is possible only from a synchronic standpoint (Culler 1981:30,31; Norris 1982). The multi-layered collage seems to illustrate this process: the images, the relationships among them become increasingly opaque "with the passage of time" as additional layers are superimposed. Apparent chaos becomes intelligible here, as in geology. Thus, reading collage implies an "archaeological excavation" which uncovers layer by layer, in order to understand the whole complex.

Consequently, practicing this kind of observation upon collage *The Spring*, one reveals an *order*, namely, a calculated organization of the components. For

example: the work includes elements of symmetry, which is "abolished" by varied means; the actual composition is the result of dissection and re-articulation of another composition; this fact contributes to the feeling of contingency, i.e., there is a virtual possibility of another organization of the components; the work is composed out of squares; all the images are flat; their accumulation brings about an illusion of depth; the images are "surrounded" by their own "background", yet, they are constantly disconnected; a diagonal "movement" in different directions reappears, "demolishing" the stability of the images.

As in archaeology or geology, the ordered process of uncovering the layers is "disturbed" by the many dissected layers; by the relative protrusion of "deep" layers and "immersion" of "upper" layers - for example: the use of "warm" or "light" colours, causes the protrusion of the deep layers, but at the same time, the use of "cold" or dark colours for "upper" layers brings about their "immersion". Layers accumulated at different times sometimes merge and other layers split into several parts. For example, the rabbit-duck "protrudes" although it forms a "deep" layer; the "depth" of the huge human figure is ambiguous: the figure seems to protrude against the brown background, yet it complies with its level or even immerses in it as a hole, because of the colour of the figure and its relationship to the colours of its background - brown and gray-blue. Many images split into parts scattered in the composition, in apparently different degrees of depth. Nevertheless these degrees of depth and the derivative virtual possibility of these parts' re-unification require examination. This phenomenon may be exemplified by the images of the "goblet heads" at the two sides of the picture and by the

disconnected parts of the big circle. Yet, the similar colours of the circle's parts and those of the "goblet heads" seem to connect them to a certain extent, although they seem to form different layers.

Constant alteration of states i.e. of connection and disconnection of the components, bring about contingency, instability and relevance of other possibilities of organization of the same components. The constant dissection causes frustration, while turning the notion of the unattainable whole into the main axis of the work.

The ever loop and the impossibility of amalgamation of the components which typify collage and emphatically appear in this work, bring about an essentially allegorical work, in the postmodern sense of the word: reading of the narrative is constantly undermined by the desire to reveal its artistic aspects. Thus "content" and "form" are inseparable yet distinct, according to a dialectic of indeterminacy.

References to different times in the artist's biography and in the history of art appear in the work. These elements merge and gain a new significance, out of a *synchronic* standpoint.

Biographical-personal references are, for example: the tracing of the shadow of the artist's figure, the artist's removal to a new studio (his own shadow, his works tied by ropes, a ladder...) which probably implies a change of his art (Cuno 1991:44), items from his bathroom's collection, including psychological tests which present the portraits of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip (Goldman 1991: 42), citations from the artist's own works (linear abstract paintings and the circle probably allude to a specific work: *Periscope* (1963) (Fig. 5).

Jasper Johns referred in this work to artists from various periods: he drew inspiration and "quoted" them in his own style, parts from Picasso's *Minotaur Moving his House* (1936) (Fig. 6). In addition, Johns was influenced by Picasso's *The Shadow* (1953) (Fig.7). There, Picasso's shadow appears in front of his bedroom, which exhibits his works.

The skeletal arm refers (among a few possibilities) to the works of Edvard Munch, especially to his self-portrait *A self-portrait with an Arm of a Skeleton* (1895) (Fig.4) which includes a similar arm. The child's figure is identified with the three years old Munch (Goldman 1991:43).

The skeletal arm and a concealed figure within an abstract painting by Johns which appears in the work, refer to Matthias Grünewald's panel of "Isenheim altarpiece": *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (~1512-1516) (Fig. 9). The convent which ordered Grünewald's painting, treated patients who suffered from a terrible disease ("Saint Anthony's Fire") by cutting their arms (among other treatments) (Cuno 1991:46).

The geometrical shapes follow Albrecht Dürer's etching *Melancholy I* (1514) (Fig. 1). They indicate the ancient theory of the four "galls" that correspond to the Four Elements, the four seasons, the four parts of the day and the four stages of life which maintain the body and soul. According to the scholastic doctrine of the twelfth century, the harmonious relationship between them has been impossible since the Original Sin and this is the reason for the vulnerability of all men to sickness, sin and death (Panofsky 1971:157-163; Cuno 1991:47).

Being consciously influenced by Dürer, it is possible that Johns' "frozen" figure is attached to the "frozen" figures of *Melancholy I*, epitomizing the melancholy of the artist, paralyzed by his own thoughts (Cuno 1991:48).

The posture of the left arm of the main figure and the branch in the upper part of the picture, may allude to Dürer's *Adam and Eve* (1504) (Cuno 1991:17) (Fig. 8).

According to Goldman, Johns created visual parallels to Crane's poetry and to Becket's fiction (Goldman 1991:36,41).

All these references, together with many other components accumulate to form a work of art.

The beholder reveals complicated, *new* phenomena, different from the references:

The apparently anonymous "frozen" figure of Johns, "reads" as present or absent (A figure? A shadow? A hole?), conjoins the Minotaur which is the portrait of the hedonist, joyful, mythological Picasso and at the same time, the portrait of Munch, the artist of anxiety.

The skeletal arm attaches Johns - on the one hand - to Munch and on the other - to Saint Anthony who was in agony, but still maintained his devotion to God, thereby symbolizing the victory of humility over evil (Cuno 1991:46). The arm and the figure of Saint Anthony probably refer to Aids as well (Cuno 1991:46). Nevertheless, death always waits and it is an integral part of nature, man and culture.

The virtuosity of Dürer's drawing is not traced at all in Johns' work. The geometrical shapes are flat, the human figure is flat and most simple. Johns' approach is "linear" (according to Wölflin's classification, Wölflin 1964), but unlike Dürer, he does not refer to volume i.e. light and shade and perspective. The notion of the four "galls" induces pessimism into the renewal and spring.

The removal to a new studio is a metaphor for other changes: personal, cultural and cosmic changes. Thus the name *The Seasons* is both particular and universal, both descriptive and allegorical. Jasper Johns unites works of other artists, objective perception tests and conventional signs - i.e. impersonal elements - into a *self-portrait*. An unidentifiable, "empty" figure is being distinguished; the impersonal turns into the most personal. The impersonal elements together with Johns' private collections and an excerpt of his own work, suggest an activation of significant changes in the artist's life and art.

An atmosphere of melancholy is induced by several formal factors and their binary distribution: the images of death and soul and, in addition, the constant dissection and concealment, the gray and light colours, the clarity and obtuseness of the sources, the protuberance and flatness, the apparent disorder within a sophisticated organization. All these features lead to the impossibility to separate between the layers in order to decipher the process of accumulation.

The disconnection of the references from their sources and their insertion into new contexts, change our observation - even of the sources and bring about a completely new creation. However, an apparently impersonal, alienated, rational approach yields an expressive, emotional work of art. This work of art develops as

an allegory: the artist in a search of wholeness, continuity and clarity within a disconnected world.

Contrasts (which are prominent to the same extent) coexist: activity, renewal and a standstill; clear, well defined shapes and enigmatic disconnected ones; alienation and self-expression; the impersonal and the personal.

The goal of a structuralist analysis is to *reconstruct an "object"* in such a way as to *manifest thereby the rules of functioning* (the "functions") of this object. Structure is therefore actually *a simulacrum* of the object, but a *directed, interested* simulacrum, since the imitated object makes *something appear* which remained invisible, unintelligible in the natural object. The real object is decomposed and then recomposed. Thus the structuralist activity is an actual fabrication of a world which resembles the primary one, not in order to copy it, but with a view to render it intelligible.

To sum up, it might be said that *to dissect* collage (or another object of observation which is given to the simulacrum-activity), is *"to find in it certain mobile fragments whose differential situation engenders a certain meaning; the fragment has no meaning in itself, but it is nonetheless such that the slightest variation wrought in its configuration produces a change in the whole"* (Barthes 1972:216).

The dissection produces an initial dispersed state of the simulacrum, but *the units of the structure are not at all anarchic*: before being distributed and fixed in the continuity of the composition, each one forms with its own virtual group or

reservoir, an intelligent organism, subject to the sovereign motor principle, viz. the principle of the least difference.

The activity of *articulation* is establishing certain rules of association for the units. One of the most important constraints (which has an almost demiurgic value according to Barthes, (1972:217) is the *recurrence* of units which endows *stability*. This is a kind of *battle against chance*. Many elements are recurrent in *The Spring*: images, shapes, colours, axes of movement, dissections, the use of the line and the approach to the space. It is by the regular return of the units and of the association of units that the work appears constructed i.e. endowed with meaning.

Thus collage is not a subjective invention so much as the "objective discovery of the new within the given, immanently, through a regrouping of its elements" (Adorno, Buck-Morss 1977:132). In collage, art appears as a search of knowledge, of the potential within the object, the material, a search for the inner logic of the object. The material is "rearranged" in order to convey its truth. Thus collage strategy enables one to exploit the tension between science and art.

The simulacrum thus constructed, does not render the world as it has found it. The search for structure highlights the strictly *human process* by which men give meaning to things. Moreover, it seems that for the structuralist viewer (artist or analyst), the fabrication of meaning is more important than the meanings themselves i.e. the process is more important than a complete product. As Barthes phrased it: the work's present being is its past act: it is "having been made" (Barthes 1972:86).

Paradoxically enough, structuralist and semiotic thinking has been repeatedly labeled as antihumanistic since meaning is explained in this method, in terms of sign-systems which the subject does not control, being deprived of his role as a source of meaning. (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1962:326; Culler 1981:32). As has been shown here, although the subject (in the case of collage - the artist and the spectator) searches for sign-systems, he/she chooses their own choices from a vast field of possibilities, maintaining his/her role as the source of meaning.

SEMIOTIC RELATIONSHIPS

While examining collage, one should take into account three kinds of relations that every sign involves, namely an interior relation, which *unites its signifier to its signified*; this relationship can be considered a *symbolic relation*; there are also two exterior relations, viz. a *paradigmatic relation* and a *syntagmatic relation* (according to Barthes' classification, 1972:207).

The symbolic relationship in *The Spring* is raised, for example, by the skeleton, as the symbol of death and as a *memento mori*; the circle as symbolizing the cycle of human life, the cycles of nature and infinity; the branch as symbolizing growth, renaissance, descendants, the Tree of Life, the Original Sin, etc.

The symbolic relation involves a *vertical arrangement* of signifier and signified. For example, the circle as the symbol of cycles implies that different

cycles in nature are *under* the circle: the cycle of human life, the passage of time, the day and the calendar, the astrological cycle, the cycle of water, the cycle of life of different animals and plants, etc. The vertical relation tends to seem solitary: the symbol seems to "stand by itself in the world" and even when we assert that it is abundant, it is abundant in the fashion of a "forest"- i.e. by an *anarchic juxtaposition* of profound relations which "communicate" only by their "roots" - by what is signified. What interests the symbolic relation - is the signified. The signifier is always a determined element (Barthes 1972:207). Nevertheless, this signifier was designed in distinct ways in different periods, for example, as a "rosette" window in churches, or as the image of the clock used by many artists (for example: Dali, Chagal and Ardon). The circle itself does not express in its form the different aspects of nature referred by it, or different artistic ideas applied to it in different periods. The symbolic relation, therefore implies an imagination of depth. It experiences the world as a relation of a superficial form and many-sided, massive, powerful *abgrund*. The image is reinforced by a very intense dynamic: the relation of form and content is *ceaselessly renewed by space* (different objects of observation) and *time* (history), the superstructure is overwhelmed by the infrastructure, without our ever being able to grasp the structure itself (Barthes 1972:209). The circle in Johns' work does not present the whole *ground* concealed "under" it, but rather intrigues the beholder, by raising thoughts selected by him, in accordance with his intellectual background and his preferences, i.e. the circle opens a field of possibilities. In addition to this, the examination of the symbolic properties of the image strengthens the links between

itself and other images in the work, for example: the young and the grown up human figures seem as a representation of the circle of life; the tree seems to represent changes generated by time; the colour of the sky and the unclear stars/leaves scattered in it raise the question about the time of the "narrative"- the part of the day and the season - and the possibility of their repetition. These questions are undoubtedly inseparable from the subject suggested by the name of the work and by its references to changes in the life of the artist discussed above. The same kind of selection of possibilities inherent within the ground of each symbolical signifier and the establishment of the connections to other images are suggested by each symbolical signifier in *The Spring*.

The paradigmatic relationship in *The Spring* is obvious, for example, within the realm of the geometrical shapes, the realm of the flat shapes (in contrast to voluminous shapes), the realm of psychological tests, pictures of the spring in the history of art, the worlds of Dürer, Picasso, Munch, Johns, self-portraits of different artists, various private collections, other expressions of the cycle of life, of death, in painting, sculpture and literature, in different periods in the history of art, etc.

The paradigmatic relation is a *virtual* one; it unites the sign to a specific reservoir of other signs it may be drawn from, in order to be inserted in discourse. This reservoir is an organized "memory" of forms from which the sign is distinguished by the smallest difference necessary and sufficient to effect a change of meaning. This relation is the *system*.

According to Merleau-Ponty's designation the paradigmatic relation defines meaning as a "modulation of coexistence" (in Barthes 1972:208). For example, the tree refers to other symbolic forms of life, growth and source of life, in different cultures, in different periods, for instance: the source of water, earth, Mother Earth, a seed and a bud. The "stars" in the sky are reminiscent of stars in pictures of other artists, for example: Van Gogh, Matisse, the medieval mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the stars on the body of the ancient Egyptian Sky Goddess Nut and even the stars on the American flag. The stars cease to entertain a "solitary" relation with what each of them signifies. They all form an interplay of distinctive terms, each of which corresponds to a different signified. This consciousness "substitutes for the bilateral relation of the symbolic relation a quadrilateral or more precisely a homological relation" (Barthes 1972:208).

The paradigmatic relation presents the signifier linked, as it were in profile, to several visual signifiers. It introduces the sign no longer in its depth, but rather in its perspective. Thus the dynamics attached to this vision is that of a *summons*: the sign is chosen from a finite organized reservoir and this summons is the sovereign act of signification.

The paradigmatic imagination implies an acute attention to the variation of several recurrent elements. Collage, which articulates elements from preexisting sources, can exemplify this imagination. It enables recurrence of citations, variation of a source and a play of contrasts between different signifiers in order to stress their characteristics.

The syntagmatic relationship in *The Spring* occurs between the image of death to the "decipherment" of the psyche, between that image and the change in the artist's life, up to the constant disconnections of the components of the whole. These attachments create a melancholy, complex, personal internal world and a work of art which is its reflection. The articulation of the disconnected components appears in forms and in the subsequent narrative. The syntagmatic relation is an *actual* one; it unites the sign to other signs preceding or following it in the composition. This is a temporary but signifying association, analogous to the association uniting the words of a sentence.

The syntagmatic relation is more a structural relation than a semiotic one. It enables us to imagine *operational groups, complex classifications*. The syntagmatic imagination no longer "sees" the sign in its perspective. It "forsees" it in its extension, in its antecedent or consequent links, in the bridges it extends to other signs. This is a "*stemmatous*" *imagination* of the network. The dynamics of image here involves an arrangement of mobile, substitutive parts, whose combination produces meaning. It is strictly fabricative (Barthes 1972:209).

It seems that when we consider the signifying phenomenon, we are obliged to focus on one of these three relations more than on the other two, as a result of a different *semiological consciousness* (or of ignorance of the other relations). The syntagmatic relation is the most prominent in collage. It nourishes all those works that are fabricated by arrangement of discontinuous and mobile elements. *Collage* seems to be a distinctive example, since it forms connections between different signifiers, decomposed and recomposed, including those which did not have any

previous connection. It enables infinite possibilities for creating new meanings out of new combinations. This emphasis on the syntagmatic imagination can be perceived as a *bridge between structuralism and poststructuralism*.

INTERTEXTUALITY

The notion of intertextuality seems to me an immediate derivative of the syntagmatic consciousness. Collage, which lifts elements from other works, objects, preexisting messages, exemplifies explicitly what has been designated in literature as "intertextuality".

Julia Kristeva (who is generally credited with having formulated and developed the notion of intertextuality) argued about literature in a way which can be argued about art: "Every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of *other discourses which impose a universe on it*" (Kristeva 1974:388).

Intertextuality has a double focus: on the one hand, it calls our attention to the importance of prior texts, in the case of art - prior works of art and texts. A work has the meaning it does only because certain things have previously been written/painted. On the other hand, it leads us to consider prior texts as contributions to a code which makes possible the various effects of signification. "Intertextuality" thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture" (Culler 1981:103).

Thus intertextuality includes anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost and identifiable sources that make possible the signifying practices of later texts.

In order to find out the source of strength of a work of art, one must engage with the sedimentation of prior works.

Here are some of the texts referred to by Johns' work under discussion: biographical details of the artist; his daily life and his artistic life; different periods of his artistic development; psychological tests; different artists in the history of art; and different philosophical and theological approaches in the history of culture. One example is the change of attitude toward the connection between body and soul expressed in the "galls" i.e. the pessimistic approach of the twelfth century that considered harmony in human life to be impossible because of the Original Sin and the later optimistic approach. Another example is the conception of death and cycle of life in different periods. The intertextual web unveils relationships between elements never to be completely deciphered and visually articulates a discourse on and of, postmodernism. It reveals an interest in plurality and complexity, in irreconcilable and indecipherable situations and contradictions in almost any human area.

Jacques Derrida emphasized the double reading that collage necessarily implies, viz. the reading of the fragment perceived in relation to its text of origin and the reading of the same fragment as incorporated into a new whole. Collage never entirely suppresses the altering of the elements reunited in a temporary

composition. Thus, this double reading turns the art of collage to one of the most effective strategies in putting into question all the illusions of representation ("Mu Group" 1971:34-35; Ulmer 1983:87). The presentation of numerous citations by a collage implies, therefore, a complex network of intertextuality i.e. numerous "double readings". Superimposition of images complicates even more these "double readings", since they interfere with each other, in this way producing a web of intertextuality.

The relationship between the cited components and the work as a whole can be seen as the relationships between parasite and host (Ulmer 1983:100). This comparison is not simple. Miller referred to this problem in paraliterature: "Is the citation an alien parasite within the body of its host, the main text, or is it the other way round, the interpretative text - the parasite which surrounds and strangles the citation which is its host?" (Miller 1977:439). The meaning is equivocal, paradoxical. This fact brings about most interesting relationships between the components of collage. This question is raised in different ways by *The Spring*, in reference to each citation it presents. For example, do the parts of *The Spring*, which refer to Picasso's painting *The Minotaur moving his house* (1936) (Fig.6), function as parasites within Johns' work, deriving their strength from it, subordinating the other components of the work to their realm and thereby weakening them, thereby weakening the autonomy of the work of art? Alternatively, is Johns' work possibly a parasite which surrounds and "strangles" the citation *Minotaur moving his house* that nourishes it? The relationships are *symbiotic* and *bi-directional*. The presence of the citation creates a constellation of

relationships between the works of two distinct artists and serves as a main axis of the work of art. It is a decisive factor for conceiving Johns' work as a self-portrait. Nevertheless, Picasso's painting appears in a new light in Johns' work: its dissection, the use of isolated elements selected from it, its insertion into a new intertextual very rich context, generate a change in it and weaken it as an autonomous work of art.

As Serres showed, the parasite which can be interpreted as an *allegory of communication* too, is both the *atom of relation* and the *production of a change* in this relation (Serres 1982). It is the motor of change or invention. Collage at the level of discourse is an operator of this inventive interruption.

This complexity brings forth another model of relationships between the components of the work of art and the whole and between a contemporary *collage work of art and tradition*, namely the model of *saprophyte living on the decay of dead organisms* in a way that *makes life possible for living plants*. The saprophyte is to nature what the ruins are to culture, or allegory to thought (Ulmer 1983:100), viz. the generator of new life.

In the symbiotic theme of ecology (mushrooms), Cage saw an allegory of *cooperation* and an *end of competition* (Cage 1974: viii). He realized that the montage-allegory provides the very technique for popularization, for communicating the knowledge of the cultural disciplines to the general public, which the normal so-called humanist critics claim to desire (Cage 1974:196).

Here lies one of the paradoxes inherent in postmodern art and in collage in particular: although its communication to the general public seems to be better

than in the case of modern art; its understanding is quite often incomplete. Full understanding requires identification of the sources of citation and the ability to trace their allegory. The difficulty is greater in collage, in which the components are fragmented and disintegrated. The dialectic is sharpened inasmuch as the components are interrupted by each other. However, from this clash, the particular characteristics of different components within the total economy of collage are sensibly reinforced.

THE SCOPIC REGIME OF COLLAGE

Since the principle of collage is to introduce excerpts from various sources, it may include excerpts dominated by any scopic regime. Yet, while discerning the scopic regime of collage overall composition, one detects a "Baroque scopic regime", a term coined by M. Jay ⁴ (Jay 1992:178-195).

Although collage which conjoins apparently disconnected components, sometimes even abstract ones, is completely different from the Baroque style, unexpectedly, it presents traits which typify Baroque scopic regime, namely it is *recessional, multiple, open and dynamic*. It favors *indeterminacy of effect* in its play of *solid and void, light and darkness, its curvature, its broken surfaces, its widely diversified angles of inclination*. Its multi-focused composition seems to be an extension of the Baroque soft-focused representation. Its space is progressively

dilated. Its search for kinetic excitement brings about *avoidance of a privileged, definitive, frontal view*. The spectator is induced to shift his position continuously in order to see the work in constantly new aspects, as if it were in a state of perpetual transformation. The spectator faces "a world in a fluid state" (Eco 1989:7), which requires corresponding creativity on his part. The work of art is seen as a potential mystery to be solved, a stimulus for imagination. Like collage, Baroque vision which connotes the *bizarre and peculiar*, favours the *dazzling, disorientating, ecstatic surplus of images, opacity, unreadability, indecipherability* of the reality it depicts. Thus it anticipates contemporary art .

This visual order emphasizes the *contradiction between surface and depth*, without any attempt to reduce the *multiplicity of visual spaces* into any simple, coherent, essence. Nature is reflected as if by an anamorphous mirror that *distorts* the visual image, reveals the *conventional* rather than natural quality of the image, by showing its *materiality*. Collage has a strong tactile quality (rather than ocularcentrism), also a heritage of the Baroque visual experience (in contrast to the Cartesian perspectivalism).

Melancholy which typifies collage (as has been explained), seems to be immanent within Baroque vision. Following Walter Benjamin, Buci-Glucksmann suggests (1986) that this melancholy derives from the fact that Baroque vision sought to *represent the unrepresentable* and necessarily failed. Thus it is closer to what aesthetics designated as "sublime" in contrast to the beautiful.

Furthermore, Baroque vision, which reflects a concurrent approach to language, relates collage approach to language and to visual arts: it maintains *the*

inextricable nature of rhetoric and vision. Images are perceived as signs and concepts always contain an irreducibly "imagistic" component. Thus it favors *amalgamation of disciplines.*

Jasper Johns' *The Spring* presents all these characteristics. Since its components are introduced as drawn from different sources, they present different view-points and unrealistic size-proportions. All these components, apparently disconnected, bring about together an illusion of relief which maintains different stages of depth and a "play" of lights and shadows (although the images themselves are flat). The effects of concealment of some of the components by others and of protrusion of the bright and warm colours create this illusion. Some of the focuses are located closer to the margins than to the middle of the work, due to the bright colours and the contrasts between themselves and the dark ones. Some of these elements that attract attention are even cut by the borders of the format. Thus the work is abundant of surprises: it conjoins various apparently disconnected elements, surprising proportions, angles of inclination and focuses. The images are cut by each other and by the borders of the work and thus seem to penetrate each other and transgress the work's "territory". This phenomenon reveals affinity to the Baroque painterly approach which merges elements and conceives the work of art as inseparable from its environment. In addition to this, the diagonal axes of the components, which bring about the illusion of movement, remind of the diagonal movements of Baroque art as well. The "unreadability" and melancholy which typify this collage, as well as the notion of collage have been

previously discussed. The allegorical impulse induced by this work, as by other collages, brings about inextricability of rhetoric and vision. Thus, the structure of collage implies, by itself, multiplicity, "broken" surface, multi-focused composition, surprises, amalgamation of disciplines, melancholy and unreadability; all these elements suggest a kinship to Baroque art.

The openness and dynamism of Baroque vision mark the advent of subjectivity embedded in scientific awareness. Attention is shifted from the *essence* to the *appearance* of images. The concept of real substance as a series of *subjective perceptions* of the viewer characterized empiricism and has developed through the modern era, to reach its culmination in the twentieth century. Subjective viewpoint dominates collage as well, although it cites the Other (as has been previously discussed).

The equal value and dignity endowed to the various components of collage and those of a Baroque work of art reflect contemporary resistance to a sovereign universal and Baroque Copernican universe. The whole construct of the work of art expands toward a totality which is close to the *infinite*. This totality refuses any ideal normative conception of the world. Rather it summons influences of new discoveries and renewed contact with reality (Eco 1989:14).

TRANSGRESSION OF FRAME

By conceiving the framed picture as a text, one can conclude that the transgression of the frame/ borders becomes the visual expression of intertextuality. As such, it is the reflection and at the same time, the trigger for collage's mental process: collage forms a network of excerpts from different "worlds" - which meet, collide and interfere with each other within an "embracing" work of art.

Since the components of collage are inevitably fragments and their original disconnection to their present context is not concealed, in many cases, each component has its own borders (or partial borders - when it merges with other components). Thus collage forms a conglomerate of distinct "territories", sometimes even emphasized by frames: there are borders within borders, borders upon borders and borders that exceed from other borders.

The traditional frame, which used to delimit the work of art only at its edges, was considered to be a *parergon* ("by-work") i.e. an external complement - as Kant characterized it (Harvey 1989:59-76). However, in collage it loses its primary function and appears in the midst of the work, as an essential component. In addition, since the borders are also interrupted even in the margins of the work of art, the latter, as a whole, becomes a kind of *object*, rather than a picture in its classical form. This object is "open" towards its surrounding: it is not closed by a continuous border/frame which separates it from the exterior world; sometimes it even extends its parts, thus suggesting a merging with the surrounding. The use of

ready-made components and the repetitive elements in collage and sometimes its irregular borders as well, contribute to its object-like character. This trait brings about an affinity between collage and sculpture. Assemblage appears to be an inevitable extension of collage.

Collage as a complex of frames within a frame or borders within borders, creates a dynamic system of "openings" and "closures", while alternating fusion and displaying of the components. Each frame, or territory within collage and collage as a whole, can be perceived at one and the same time as both disconnected and connected to their context. In order to understand this complexity, it is worthy to discern the role of the traditional frame.

In traditional painting the frame functions, as Norris notes, as an apparent boundary between the work of art and everything that belongs to its background, context and space of exhibition (Norris 1988:7-31). Yet, as Derrida suggests, referring not exclusively to the work of art, but rather to the "frame" of knowledge or "framing" of philosophy, the *parergonal* frame stands out against two grounds, viz. the work and the "wall". Each of these grounds merges into the other: when the work serves as a ground, it merges into the "wall" and then, gradually, into the general text. When the general text is the ground, it merges into the work. Thus, there is always a form on the ground, but the *parergon* is a form that disappears the moment it deploys its greatest energy (Derrida 1987: 17-147). Thus the stability of the frame is abolished. The frame which is both necessary and supplementary, absent and present, functions as *the essential site of the production of difference*. It induces *dynamic relationships between the inside and the outside*.

Visual art also testifies to the presence of this process. The complex structure of frames within a frame, or borders within borders, which characterizes collage is inseparable from the allegorical impulse, intertextuality and inter-discursive mediation. Instances of the frame as a marker of limits, are particularly visible in collages, particularly those collages which display in irregular formats. There the field of representation exhibits a tendency to colonize the space around its borders. The frame renders what is inside the frame as significant. Furthermore, the frame as edge and border serves as a constitutive supplement, as Martin explained with reference to the Baroque art, by rendering the work autonomous in visible space, by emphasizing its exclusive presence, by defining the conditions of its visual reception and by enabling its conception as an object of contemplation. Therefore, the absence of the frame, causes the work of art to exhibit an incompleteness of purpose, or even to expose its shortcomings (Martin 1996). Thus, the erasure, interference or blurring of frames/borders in collage disrupt their identity.

To conclude, it is the frame that positions us at the matrix of a scopic regime. It provides the illusory coherence of the work of art - the seemingly unity beyond everyday reality and thus apparently fulfills a human expectation (Duro 1996:4-5). The "play" of frames/borders in collage resists coherence and unity. The resulting plurality and ambiguity, as has been explained, are the essence of collage.

No discourse is in a position to frame the "other", at least not without itself being framed (Duro 1996:7), since the act of "framing" is connected to the establishment of self-identity. Nevertheless, the crystallization of self-identity is a dynamic process. Collage articulates various "frames" or territories which are

alternately "opened" and "closed" through the "reading" process and therefore introduces flexible, changing frames of identity. Sometimes collage blurs or erases some of the borders, thus deliberately emphasizing the actual opening of the frames/borders. The "frames of reference" are opened by any kind of collage.

In applying the above general considerations to our example, one can observe that *The Spring* introduces a visual transgression of frames. The work apparently introduces very closed excerpts: their borders are well defined, even by contours, their colour does not transgress their borders, the images within them are also well defined. The backgrounds which surround the images in the square excerpts emphasize the isolation of the images. Some of the images are parallel to the excerpt's border, thus enhancing the closure of the shapes. For example: the tree, the frames of the heads-goblets and the arrow. In this way, each image appears to be encapsulated within its frames. Yet, this closure is systematically interfered with and thus it only emphasizes the *openness* of the work. All the excerpts are cut, as if arbitrarily, alluding to a possible mutual penetration of the images into one another and to transgression of the work's format. This dynamism is enhanced by the deluded movement of the components, caused by their diagonal axes and by similar colours that link two neighboring excerpts. One of the bright protruding images, a head-goblet, literally transgresses its frame, by penetrating into another excerpt. The tree which has been mentioned as parallel to the border of its excerpt, changes its direction, by "cutting" diagonally its square. Thus, the only "complete" image within its territory, appears to be the combination of geometrical shapes. Yet, its transparency brings about an

openness towards the depth of the work. The contingency of the present articulation of the components, caused by the recognition that some of the dissected components were previously linked to each other and that the same components, in other combinations, form other works of art (the other seasons and combinations of them all, for example: Figs. 10,11) induces openness as well. During the reading process, the various frames or territories are alternately "closed" and "opened" and therefore, introduce flexible, changing frames of identity visually and conceptually.

Transgression of frames - practically and metaphorically characterized the avant-garde throughout the twentieth century. It is inherent in the notion of art which is a series of *acts of imposition which create meaning* rather than a transcription of preexisting thoughts (Culler 1981:39, referring to literature). The question of "territoriality" was crucial for the self-definition of avant-garde activity which examined the limits of transgression. It was crucial for the modernists who searched for the autonomy of the work of art and for the Conceptualists who transgressed the "frames" of painting and sculpture, by fusing them with language and culture. This transgression is embedded, structurally and conceptually, in collage.

CONCLUSIONS

So far, collage affords both a structural and a semiotic approach. A semiotic analysis, as described above, is meant to decipher the organization of the actual components of collage, as well as some of the associations they evoke. However, collage is characterized by two opposite processes at work: both at the formal level and at the level of hermeneutics. From a formal point of view, within the same framework, we notice: overlapping elements, simultaneous layers, adoption of motifs and quotations of sources. At one and the same time, they appear side by side, leading to a loss of clarity. As such, the beholder is both gratified and frustrated, as he tries to impose order, since the signifiers and the signified are continually breaking apart and reattaching in new combinations. Every borrowed sign can break with every given context, thus engendering an infinity of new contexts, in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. The components of collage transform each other, "contaminate" each other's content, tend at times to reject each other or "pass elliptically one into the other and become regenerated in the repetition, along the edges of an overcast seam". Each grafted component "continues to radiate back toward the site of its removal, transforming that too, as it affects the new territory" (Derrida 1981:355).

This collage strategy is itself an image of the "break up", the "disintegration" of civilization in the modern world (Ulmer 1983:97). Contradictions of the present are brought without resolution; it is the dialectic at a stand still. There is no hierarchy of the ideas brought together.

The mechanics of collage-montage ⁵, as Brecht pointed out, is an alternative to the organic model of growth and its classic assumptions of harmony, unity, linearity, closure. Collage constructs an object, or rather mounts a *process* in order to "intervene in the world", not to reflect but to change reality. The relation of form to content is no longer a relation of exteriority (Ulmer 1983:86).

Thus, collage introduces traits ascribed to post-structural or postmodernist era in a very early stage i.e. intertextuality, plurality, complexity, inclusion of irreconcilable differences, loss of hierarchy, unreadability, illimitable process etc. It can be said that collage, apparently paradoxically, embodies both a structuralist and poststructuralist mode: it imposes a search for order, therefore enriching our experience by this imposition, yet refuses order, at the same time. It "deconstructs" not in the sense of invalidating structuralism, but rather, suggests an evolution of structuralist approach into a "softer", more flexible method, resistant to rigid structures, which means, also, the invalidation of rigid universals ⁶.

Collage, which accumulates multiplicity of visual spaces and diversified angles of inclination, as a matter of fact, seems to develop the *Cubist* heritage that presented literally diversified angles of inclination, breaking with traditional Renaissance one point perspective exercised hitherto. The characteristics of Cubist works of art brought about collage and further developments in twentieth century art: fragmentation, diversity, lack of hierarchy of the components, synchronicity and above all - abolition of aesthetic hierarchies i.e. the inclusion of materials

"alien" to painting which started with the Cubist use of language and blurred borders between art and life (for example Watts 1975:10-11).

An examination of the syntagmatic relationships among the components of a Cubist painting, also reveals fundamentals of collage: the units constantly interfere with each other, by breaking into each other's contours. The emphasis on one-to-one interaction between individual elements brings about a pattern that can extend for ever, namely, an illimitable process. The relationships among the paradigmatic elements are similar, since the painting produced is the starting point for an interdisciplinary and intertextual work of art.

Yet, it has been collage that revolutionarily transgressed the realm of painting and introduced various "worlds" instead of only various angles of inclination, thereby presenting the paradigm of twentieth century art.

Form appears as the generator of the conceptual approach and of the content of the work of art not less than the images used in it. This phenomenon is, probably, responsible for the illusion that the imposition of order is possible.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER 2

1. Science provides an excellent example: the Fractals, discovered by Mandelbrot, are geometrical patterns, which develop in recognizable and innocent steps to combine and create strange and alien structures which baffle common sense. They supply the mathematical structures to the bends of rivers, to shore lines, to the texture of meteors on the moon and to other natural phenomena. (For example Gleick 1991:101.)
2. This is Krauss's explanation for "paraliterature" (Krauss 1980:40).
3. Jasper Johns (b. 1930), painter and creator of collages and assemblages, has been a most influential American artist since nineteen fifties (Murray 1968:213). He was one of the main formative influences on the New York Pop Art. His work in the fifties combined all the main tendencies of these years. He appeared to overlook the traditional boundaries between painting and sculpture, presenting flat commonplaces as images: targets, maps and the American flag. These were intended neither as still-life nor as abstraction i.e. each painting became an object, camouflaged, embalmed and enshrined. He was at once a neo-Dadaist, a neo-Realist and a second-wave Abstract Expressionist. On one hand he worked on the edge of the systematic reductive field and, on the other, he was among the first to anticipate the insertion of everyday figuration into the confines of fine art (Read 1975:295-296). His works since nineteen eighties are collages in conception, not "reductionist" in approach as the earlier ones. The sources of the "citations" are varied: his own early works psychological tests, works of art from various periods, road-signs and personal objects. The conjunction of these images brings to the fore autobiographical aspects, the relationship between memory and painting, between life and art. In addition to paintings in oils and encaustic, some of his works are prints (in various printing techniques) which transfer images from one medium to another and back again (Moshenson 1991:7). Undoubtedly, Jasper Johns has influenced directions of thought and creation in Israeli art.
4. "Baroque scopic regime" is one of the three "scopic regimes" prevalent in modern visual art - according to Martin Jay's classification. The other "regimes" are: "Cartesian perspectivalism", which combines Renaissance notions of perspective and Cartesian ideas of subjective rationality in philosophy and "The art of describing" practiced by Northern art, which suppresses narration in favor of description, by assuming a flat working surface and an "arbitrary" frame (Jay 1992:178-195).
5. "Collage" is the transfer of material from one context to another and "montage" is the "dissemination" of these borrowings through the new setting (Ulmer 1983:84).

6. About post-structuralist critiques of structuralism and the invalidation of universalist conceptions, see, for example, Norris 1982:17; Gurevitz 1997:114-115, Calinescu 1987:274-275.

CHAPTER 3

Collage as an “open work”

As has been explained, collage opens a wide field of possibilities. Within the same framework, we notice: different angles of inclination, overlapping elements, simultaneous layers, adoption of motifs and quotations of sources. Furthermore, during the “reading” process the signifiers and the signified are continually breaking apart and reattaching in new combinations, engendering an infinity of new contexts and new meanings. The following discussion focuses on various strategies used in order to find out the unlimited potential of the work of art. Finally, these findings will be applied to an analysis of the visual collage.

I shall adopt as my point of departure for this assumption Umberto Eco’s study *The open work* (1989). The concept of the “open work” has been suggested by Eco in order to explain fundamentals of contemporary art. My intention is to present collage as an exemplary case of this concept. Eco proposes several aspects of “openness” of the work of art, which are highly interwoven: the collaboration of every “reader” in the production of the work of art, the ambiguity of the latter and the infinite net of ideas suggested by it. All these features can be seen as fundamentals of collage.

A work created by the Israeli artist Dina Hoffman (b. 1949)¹ *A Theater of Patches*, (1999) (Fig. 12), a collage by its conception, will serve as an example of an “open work” and as such, meant to expose the infinite within the finite.

THE OPEN WORK: A SHORT PRESENTATION

A most important aspect of the contemporary artistic scene, asserts Eco, is the emphasized role of the "reader" who approaches the work of art through an interactive process, implying a multiplicity of responses. "Every reception of a work of art" explains Eco "is both an *interpretation and a performance* of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself". Thus, the work of art presents a *continuous potentiality of openness* - an indefinite reserve of meanings endowed by anyone - the author or the addressees (Eco 1989: 11).

Although since the Baroque there has been an ever-sharpening awareness of the concept of the work being susceptible to many different interpretations, contemporary art represents a fresh advance: the consumer is invited to freely "reorganize" a work of art i.e. analyze its components and their interrelations within it and in reference to other contexts. Thus the viewer collaborates with the composer in *producing* a work of art. As has been explained, the decontextualized and grafted components suggest limitless associations in reference to different sources and the relationships between them and the new context. It is impossible to encompass the whole range of these associations. In works of art which present no privileged points of view, i.e. in collage and its derivatives, the observer is required to constitute his/her own system of relationships. Thus, the recipient "reads" a work from his/her *point of view, revealing it only when it is highly*

personalized (Eco 1989:21). Yet, theoretically, all the personal "readings" together, endow the work with meaning.

According to Eco, the emphasized role of the "reader" has evolved as a part of twentieth century's intellectual atmosphere. *Multi-value logic* and *indeterminacy* that characterize contemporary approach to the cognitive process, have affinities with acceptance of various points of view, not necessarily reconcilable, implying unforeseeable conclusions, typical of a contemporary approach to art (Eco 1989:14). In addition to this, *discontinuity*, which is recognized by contemporary physics as an essential stage in all scientific verification procedures is achieved in the "open work" as well: every time the work is perceived, a *version* of it is received, its incompleteness is emphasized because it is impossible to grasp all the artistic solutions the work may admit simultaneously. The physicist's principle of *complementarity* revealed in behavior patterns of elementary particles in spite of apparent contradictions, also seems to accord the "open work" (Eco 1989:15). Bohr's contention in physics, suits the discussed approach to art: *only the sum of all the phenomena observed in different situations, could exhaust the possibilities of information* (Eco 1989:15). Modern psychology and phenomenology use the label "perceptive ambiguities", which indicates new cognitive positions that allow the viewer to conceive the world in a fresh dynamics of potentiality before habit and familiarity are fixed: each state of consciousness implies the existence of a *horizon* which varies with the modification of its connections together with other states and also with its own phases of duration. This explanation can be easily applied to visual arts, since it is clarified by a visual example: the sides of an

object which are *actually* perceived, suggest the other sides which are expected to be perceived. This process is similar to a *continuous projection*, endowing a new meaning in each phase. Furthermore, perception itself encompasses other perceptive possibilities, for example, by deliberately changing the direction of sight or the location of the viewer (Eco 1989:16).

The continuously altering subject, also implies the impossibility of closure: the existent object can never be reduced to a given series of manifestations. An object presents different profiles, different points of view which must be related to in order to be defined. In this way, the traditional dualism between being and appearance is replaced by the polarity of finite and infinite. *The infinite exists at the very core of the finite*. This sort of "openness" is at the heart of every act of perception. Such an openness transfers the emphasis from the problem of the relationship of a phenomenon to its ontological basis, to the problem of its relationship to the multiplicity of different order perceptions suggested by it (Eco 1989:17).

The possibilities made available by an "open work", are rendered manifest within a *field of possible relations*. The absence of a single prescribed point of view does not mean chaos in internal relations, but rather a possibility of numerous different *personal interventions* within an organizing rule - by the interpreter: the performer and the addressee (Eco 1989:19).

A second notion developed by Eco is the notion of *ambiguity*, as characteristic of the "open work". While comparing traditional "classical" art to contemporary

art, Eco claims that much of contemporary art (music, literature and visual arts) in contrast to traditional art is deliberately and systematically *ambiguous*. A great variety of potential meanings *coexist* in a work of art and none of them is a dominant one (Eco 1989: xi,96,98).

Therefore, *ambiguity*, according to Eco, is the product of *contravention of established conventions of expression*. The less conventional forms of expression are, the more scope they allow for interpretation and therefore give rise to ambiguity, since ordinary rules of expression no longer apply.

An "open work" conveys a high degree of information. Following mathematical theory of information, Eco establishes the principle that information of a work of art, i.e. the potential possible order envisaged within it and its "meaning", is in inverse proportion to its probability and predictability. Thus, one may face a situation when a work of art conveys a high degree of information, but not a high degree of meaning.

Theoretically, a fairly high degree of *information*, produced by a really loaded and complicated work of art, results in *chaos*, "white noise" (as Eco calls it in music). In such a case, the viewer becomes passive. He/she is not capable of choosing, being deprived of all indication or direction.

Apparently, the most open form of communication requires "a delicate balance permitting the *merest order within the maximum disorder*". The more loaded with information the work is - the greater are the efforts the viewer has to make in order to reveal some order within it and decipher it. As has been shown, this is the case with collage as well. Eco contends that the "open work" proposes an equation

between the degree of openness, the degree of information, the degree of ambiguity and the degree of contravention of conventions.

Through its lack of conventional sense and order, the "open work" represents by analogy the feeling of *senselessness, disorder, discontinuity, instability, essential incomprehensibility* that the modern world generates. Like all art, it is an "epistemological metaphor": art represents our experience of the world through the way it organizes its constituents and, therefore, it contributes to the process of understanding the world (Eco 1989:xi). Thus, the "open work" is a form of knowledge of the world. It brings to consciousness the nature of contemporary "crisis", the contravention of conventions and helps to overcome this crisis, by offering a new way of seeing, feeling, understanding and accepting the world. It encourages involvement and activity that induces change.

A third notion discussed by Eco is the infinite net of ideas induced by the "open work". Eco suggests that the nature of our knowledge of the world is comparable to that of an *encyclopedia*. It is much more complex and variable than a set of codes or a dictionary. It is a "vast aggregation of units of meaning among which an infinite variety of connections can be made". It is like "a net, a rhizome - a tangled clump of bulbs and tubers - or a labyrinth" (Eco 1989:xi). An orientation within this labyrinth derives from a process of detection. Just as the detective finds the author of a crime by postulating certain rules concerning the connections between human motive and actions and physical events, so we find the meaning of a sign by postulating certain rules concerning the relationship between that sign

and other signs. Thus forms of communication, interpretation and understanding are tentative and hazardous acts of influence (Eco 1989:xxii). Eco's net of ideas implies intertextuality. Each component of the "open work", each attachment between components and furthermore, each association evoked by these, evolves infinitely into an ever expanding labyrinth. Thus, the "open work" is, in this respect as well, a form of *movement that has been concluded*, presenting *the infinite contained within the finite* (Eco 1989:21).

From a phenomenological point of view, the openness is a stimulus for *creative activity*. "It is therefore essential for an object and also for the world to present themselves to us as 'open'... and as *always promising future perceptions*" (Eco 1989:17 my italics, Z.E.).

To sum up, the work has infinite aspects: each of them contains the totality of the work and reveals it according to a different perspective. The infinite points of view of the beholders and the infinite aspects of the work interact with each other, juxtapose and clarify each other. Nevertheless, the "open work" is highly ambiguous. The role of the "reader" is to "create" a field of possibilities suggested by the work and to relate to these possibilities.

Eco's cardinal ideas in his study *The open work*, which can be defined as: the participation of every "reader" (in addition to the role of the artist) in the creation of the "open" work of art, the essential ambiguity of this kind of work and the infinite net of meanings it suggests, are consistent for any medium, including the visual arts.

In the following discussion I shall depict Dina Hoffman's collage *Theater of Patches* (1999) (Fig. 12) as an "open work", while using these notions as heuristic tools for analysis.

COLLAGE AS AN "OPEN WORK"

Hoffman's work belongs to a series of works by the same designation, which formed a part of her exhibition: *Was Mary Magdalene a red-head?* (1999). The work is made of painted aluminum foil, printed paper, plastic and threads, thick acrylic paint and semi-transparent glue. By maintaining a relatively flat surface and "quoting" various sources, it retains the principles of collage. The work introduces Donatello's unique expressive sculpture of ascetic Mary Magdalene (1453-55) (Fig. 13) as its main theme. Painted and laminated black and white photocopies of the upper part (from waist to head) of this figure recur in the work: two relatively large figures, embroidered in their margins, protrude at both sides of the middle area of the work, two rows of seven small figures each, in the upper area and two cut-ended rows of unclear figures in the lower area. In the middle of the lower area protrudes a plastic voluminous veiled face of a beautiful doll from the world of children's animation (possible alternatives are Jasmine from Walt Disney's *Aladdin*², 1992 and April from the *Ninja turtles*³, 1990), attached to a string of beads. In the middle of the upper area, above and under the rows of the figures of Mary there are oblongs in various sizes and tiny fruits. These are

partially made of embroidered threads and candies' wraps. All these elements are surrounded by a chequered surface, including two marginal strips, "flanking" the work in its both sides and transgressing its oblong format at the bottom. The most prominent colours are orange-red, gray and black, in accordance with the exhibition's designation and the ascetic figure chosen to present its light-motive. The basic composition is a symmetric one, although not an accurate one, "interfered" by some asymmetric elements.

The role of the "reader"

Various beholders may endow prominence to different subjects the work suggests, by considering the components of the work as subordinated to the "chosen" subject. Here are some of the possible "readings" of the same work:

1. Mary Magdalene

As the name of the exhibition suggests - the axis of the work is *the personality of Mary Magdalene* that epitomizes dualism: she was a sinner and a saint; a prostitute and an outstanding type of the penitent and the contemplative; the embodiment of the ideal earthly beauty and spiritual beauty; a totally devoted and yet, independent and uninhibited woman (Miles 1985:80).

Mary Magdalene who has been traditionally depicted as a young and beautiful woman devoted to Christ, appears here mainly as an old, ascetic, spiritual, suffering woman, an exceptional expressive figure, sculptured by Donatello. This figure complements her conventional depiction by representing her deep repentance (presented in popular texts and images, Miles 1985:80) which has become a dramatic symbol of the possibility of conversion from deep sinfulness to high sanctity. Her prevalent traditional representation as a beautiful young woman is probably alluded to by the manufactured beautiful doll's head.

Mary's decayed and thin figure covered by her long hair, as designed by Donatello, maybe intermingles Mary Magdalene and Mary the Egyptian, a penitent from the fifth century (?), previously a harlot at Alexandria who converted and lived a solitary life of penitence in the wilderness for the rest of her days (according to a story known all over Christendom in the Middle Ages. See Attwater 1965:237). Nevertheless, Mary Magdalene's hair, as deduced from the stories of the Gospels and from artistic illustrations, symbolizes her beauty, her eroticism and her healing power. These characteristics are linked to each other in the ointment jar scene, which is, as Kleinberg notices, the only erotic scene in the New Testament, describing Jesus in a close physical contact with a woman, focusing on His feet (Kleinberg 1993). The intimacy of the relationship between the two figures is revealed in other occasions as well: in the scene of the risen Christ, who says to her: "Do not touch me" (John 20:17) and in the Crucifixion scene, when she kneels weeping, touching the foot of the crucified Christ, the foot that she had once before covered with tears and dried with her own hair (since

twelfth century art, see Miles 1985:177). The Gospels and the artistic illustrations which followed them did not depict Mary Magdalene as restrained, or polite after her conversion. She did not cut or cover her inflaming hair. She was prized, in painting and stories precisely for this lack of restraint (Miles 1985:80). Mary's hair appears in the work and in the exhibition as a whole, as a major motif: it is emphasized in Donatello's sculpture, which is the major component of the works. It is further stressed by the embroidered margins of the large figures, by the brush-stroke around the doll's head etc. Intriguingly enough, although the declared subject of Hoffman's exhibition is the red colour of Mary's hair, the chosen citation is from a sculpture, which does not present a specific colour for hair; the citations are brought to the work as black-and-white photocopies, covered all over by a transparent warm colour (ochre or orange-brown), without a specific colour for the hair. In addition, the red or orange margins added by Hoffman surround not only the hair. Mary Magdalene's healing power, which is usually symbolized by an ointment jar (her attribute since she anointed Christ's feet with precious ointment), is represented in the work also by a reference to a snake (whose poison is used for healing), suggested by the ornamented smooth and "chilly" aluminum surface. This allusion to a snake is inseparable from the Freudian erotic aspect of Mary Magdalene noticed by a twentieth century beholder.

Mary Magdalene, the sinful and erotic woman, singularly loved by Christ, has inspired hope for similar forgiveness and acceptance upon every sinner. Moreover, her conversion did not require a change of personality. The humaneness latent within her personality and therefore the empathy evoked by

her, apparently bring about linkages to women in general and to the personality of the artist alluded to.

The multiplication of Magdalene's figure in the work, on the one hand, links Hoffman's work to medieval Christian art, which presented multiplication of a major figure within a work of art, in various scenes in life (Fig. 14). On the other hand, this multiplication of the figure and its insertion into a new context enable a transgression of the Evangelic realm: the transition from the characteristics and the biography of the saint and her religious significance and from Donatello's sculpture to general phenomena, as the state of contemporary women (for example: the perseverance of her traditional roles, yet her battle against conventions. This subject will be discussed later). Other universal topics suggested by the grafted figures are: the devotion and lack of inhibition of the artist; art, the artistic work and life as a theatre or game (an idea which will be discussed later); and the healing power which is latent in devotion, on the one hand and in beauty and decoration, on the other hand. The emphasis on the "red head" clearly suggested by the name of the exhibition, generates transition to the person Dina Hoffman (who is a red-head). For the artist, the unique brave personality of Mary Magdalene turns into a focus of search for identification.

2. *The theater*

Another reading can be provided by the *theater* as another axis of the work, as suggested by the name of the work i.e. dramatic play, fiction, life's reflection, *theatrum mundi*, theater of shadows, puppets theater, colourful procession etc.

The work presents figures shown *en face*, as if performing for an audience; the background of the uppermost row of figures can be perceived as a stage setting; the figures of Donatello's sculpture, especially the large ones, are flat like figures in a theater of shadows. The beads (which cause a gap between the figures and their background) and the embroidered contours emphasize this flatness. The lamination and the semi-transparent glue suggest reference to traditional Eastern shadows theater figures, made of semi-transparent leather. Specific references are the figures of the prostitute and the descent woman of the Turkish theater (Fig. 15), which suit the dualism of Mary. The doll that protrudes at the bottom is a cheap imitation of a figure of a heroine from children's animation film, which acts as a heroine of culture. Her double veil (the original veil and an additional one made of acrylic paste) conceals her face and complicates her identification. Thus, the figure is a copy of a veiled fictional figure. The string of beads attached to the head suggests a puppet pulled by a string, in addition to its supposed function as a bizarre necklace, a decoration which artificially beautifies the body, forming part of a disguise. The doll together with the figure of the saint may also allude to the decorated figurines carried in festive religious processions. The multiplication of the same figure within the same "picture" suggests the possibility of a depiction of Mary's various appearances in different times, reminiscent of various acts within a play, or a series of frames taken from a film, differentiated by the smallest details which are responsible for the creation of a movement. The strips which transgress the lower part of the oblong work may refer to lifting sticks of puppets/ stage decoration/ poster/ flag or, as the artist suggests, they allude to an apron or some

kind of a dress i.e. a cover for the body. Thus, any of these interpretations implies the double concealment of the authentic source maintained by the format as it is done by its components.

3. *Chance, indeterminacy and contingency*

A third reading of this collage raises the question of *chance*, *indeterminacy* and *contingency* embedded within both processes of creating and “reading” the work of art.

The rough “seams” that attach the components to each other, the existence of details that “break” the symmetrical composition, the apparent inaccuracy of elaboration of the details, the combination of several perspectives within the same work (the images are shown from above, confronting the viewer from different distances and turned upside down), and the apparent temporary laying of the string of beads entail the impression of chance, indeterminacy and contingency. Hoffman testifies (in a private conversation, Aug. 99) to the important role of chance in the processes of creation and observation of her works. The haphazard attachment of elements during these processes brings about unexpected linkages, broadening the scope of allegorical implications and intertextuality (as has been already explained in previous chapters. The scope of this work will be reviewed later).

The haphazard combinations and the use of various perspectives introduce a dimension of synchronicity. Thus, the approach to time is inseparable from the use of chance, suggesting the untraditional merging of time and space i.e. the

amalgamation of disciplines that typifies collage. The string of beads, as round shapes as well as beads of prayer, may suggest the passage of time, the cyclical nature of life and infinity of the time. The beads seem to echo the "catenaries" of the repetitive figures of Mary which also summon the wandering eye, moving from figure to figure, in this case - in a wider range of directions. The same kind of endlessly wandering in different directions is emphasized by the chequered surface which resembles a game-board, as such suggesting the synchronicity of a field of possibilities for different moves. Many periods are referred to by the work, being leveled to an even surface (details will be given later)

4. The state of the woman

Finally, the work may be read as a feminist comment on the state of the woman: women are the heroines of the work; the dualism of flesh and spirit epitomized in Mary Magdalene's personality, the apparently suffering woman together with the beautiful attractive veiled one, the red contours which accompany mainly the hair of the women emphasizes a symbol of feminine beauty and eroticism. Being red, they may also suggest blood, life and death, the woman as the source of life, the cycle of menstruation and as a metaphor, the cycle of life. The reference to a snake's skin, suggested by the chequered smooth and cold surface of the work suggests the temptation and seduction of the Original Sin and Freudian connotations; the appearance of fruits, which may imply fertility, temptation, hospitality and the responsibility of serving food in one's house, an idea supported by the allusion to a table; the link between the oblong format, the rows of

repetitive patterns, the embroidery, the appearance of vegetation refer to antique Turkish towels which also belong to the realm of house-maintenance usually by women; the introduction of an ornament like the string of beads, the reference to a dress or an apron suggested by the work's format, the use of embroidery which is a traditional women's handicraft prevalent in many Feminist women's works of art since the nineteen seventies, combinations of oblongs which may allude to quilting (another popular women's handicraft); the shiny surface of the whole work, the warm colours in addition to the dark ones and the multiplicity of ornaments combine to form a very loaded object which seems to camouflage deep distress.

As has been previously explained, the various aspects "read" by different beholders (including the artist's point of view) converge in constructing the work of art. This combination includes the interrelations among these aspects. Referring to Hoffman's work, one may conclude, for example, that the artist's choice of ascetic Mary Magdalene, the emphasis on indeterminacy, the references to theater and to the complex state of contemporary women enrich our picture of the world, distracting attention from personal problems. Nevertheless, feelings of sadness and distress are unavoidable. The shiny theatrical ornaments and the organized composition attract the viewer, but still impel the notion of distress by the dissection of the components, the agony induced by the heroine of the work, the darkness of colours, the apparent contingency of the components, the interference with symmetry and the *horror vacui*.

Ambiguity

Every detail within Hoffman's work is ambiguous. The combination of fragmentation which typifies collage, on the one hand and abundant information, on the other hand, induces ambiguity of the small details as well as of the major issues that the work raises. Every detail suggests a "field of possibilities" without resolution. Here are some examples of ambiguity brought about by the work. The first one is a small part of the work, the second is a major issue and the others are some formal effects and conceptual implications.

The two rows of "Marys" in the upper area of the work evoke questions concerning the meaning of the multiplication of Donatello's figure and the way in which this multiplication undermines the uniqueness of the saint's personality. These figures suggest, for example, the possibility that numerous contemporary women reflect Mary's complex personality and her spiritual/psychological/social state. The multiplication may allude to perseverance of assertion as well as to indeterminacy embedded in a game. The figures function as formal components i.e. as a repetitive pattern, similar to the beads or the squares of the chequered surface. At the same time, they function as elements of content, for example, as a group of devoted disciples, similar to that of the *Last Supper*. This resemblance brings about an examination of the small details in the light of Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting (Fig. 16): an apparent division into groups, a possible existence of an exceptional person ("Christ"), an elaborate perspective for representation, alluded to by architectural elements and by the sky in the

background, etc. The figures, which are turned upside down, are ambiguous. They may be considered as ornaments. At the same time, they suggest an additional point of view in the picture, in the typical manner of children's painting (Fig. 17). They still enhance the feeling of participation in a game or a play of shadows/puppets taking place on the picture's plane.

The area between the two rows of "Marys" can be interpreted in various ways: it may be related to as an abstract component. The closed line made by a brush-stroke in this area may suggest an "echo" to the oblongs in the work, especially the ones underneath the large figures of the "Marys". At the same time, it can be understood as emphasizing, together with the golden aluminum foil stuck on it, the golden hair of Mary Magdalene. The shape of the stuck aluminum foil evokes a search for its meaning. A possible conclusion may be that it is there mainly to accompany the contours of the heads of the large figures or to present a protruding layer echoing the large figures. It also may suggest an interesting variation of the pink area between the large figures. In addition to these possibilities, this area may refer to the table of the *Last Supper*, shown from above. It seems impossible to decide which are the components that draw the viewer's attention more: the rows of the figures or the area between them. During the process of watching, the two possibilities are examined and none of them is undermined.

From a broader perspective, the figure of Mary Magdalene will exemplify the ambiguity of the main issues of the work. The most intriguing is the question of her identity within Hoffman's work. She seems both real and fictional, exposed

and disguised at the same time. Her representation in the work seems to express her personality, but also to "perform an act" like an actress, a puppet or a pawn. She seems to protrude against her surrounding but also to immerse in it, literally and metaphorically. The artist's choice to introduce the upper part of her body may imply, the preference of her spiritual aspect. At the same time, her figure may be either dissected or partially hidden. Her potential "movements" seem to be limited both practically and conceptually. Practically, the limitation of "movement" is caused by: the symmetrical organization of the work; the contours; the clear separation between the images; the chequered strips on both sides of the format; and the existence of the string of beads. Yet, the limitation is not complete, since the symmetry is "broken" by many details; the contours do not surround most of the images; and the contours that surround the large prominent figures of Mary Magdalene are interrupted. An illusion of movement is caused by: the accumulation of layers; the transgression of the border of the black and "white" chequered area by the left large figure in agreement with the distancing right figure from the right border of the same chequered area; the "play" of "protruding" and "immersing" colours; the illusion of approaching figures caused by the turn to the left of these large figures; and the introduction of smaller images suggesting perspective. Movement is also alluded to by the recurrence of repetitive figures of Mary as it is done by the repetitive squares and beads. Conceptually, external "movement" seems to be limited because of the praying/contemplative posture and the expression of the faces of the figures. Furthermore, limitations seem to be imposed by social behavior, personal

restraints and by the rules of a "game" or the "script" of a "play". Yet, "movement" still develops due to internal strength which overcomes barriers i.e. rejects conventions and suggests endless possible combinations which the "rules" or "script" allow.

Even formal effects of the work are ambiguous. It is a flat work, but still, it maintains depth; this dimension is brought about by: different perspectives; accumulated layers; voluminous elements; and protrusion of bright and "warm" colours against dark and "cooler" ones.

The work develops in space, but it also seems to develop in time; in this way, it suggests a fusion of barriers. It seems to present a final state, but at the same time, it summons re-articulation. It seems to be organized, even pedantically elaborated, yet, it may be the result of chance-conjunctions or a negligent working process (suggested by the wrinkled surface; the "imprecise" painted squares; the unglued end of the aluminum foil; and the uneven small elements which "break" the basic symmetry.)

It is unclear whether it is "high" art, or an amalgamation of "high" art and craft, which (in addition to a quoted major work of art) presents: embroidery, ornamented candies' wraps, beads, repetitive pattern of chequered squares and kitchen aluminum foil.

An infinite net of references

The web of associations evoked by the work is evidently limitless. The following are only some of the possible connotations in various areas:

History of art: the art of Donatello; other works of art, from various periods, which represent the saint, most of them in an entirely different manner; Expressionist art, for example Emile Nolde's religious works (Fig. 18); Matisse's ornaments and flat pictorial space (Fig. 19); Pop art and its "flattening" of mythical figures (Fig. 20); geometrical Greek vases which are typified by *horror vacui* (Fig. 21); the use of contours in modern art, including Gauguin and his theory of "synthetic" painting (Peiper 1992: III 116).

Contemporary art: fusion of barriers between "high" art and "low" art; fusion of barriers between the "inside" and the "outside"; the emphasis on reflections of reflections in postmodernist theory.

Christianity: the generation of Christianity; the Gospels; Mary Magdalene's veneration throughout the ages; asceticism; revelation; faith; Martyrs, martyrdom and relics; the "Seven Devils"; Mary Magdalene's human characteristics; her representation in different works of art in different periods; garments of the Christian clergy.

Islam: the status of Moslem women; prayer beads; the veil.

Beauty and fashion: the ideal beauty in different periods and nowadays; beautiful contemporary women; jewels.

Stereotypes: the stereotype of the red-head.

Cultural heroines: Marilyn Monroe, Madonna, "Barby".

Feminism: the problematic status of women; the woman as a housewife; Feminist artists, their use of traditional women's handicrafts and the tribute paid by them to great women, Judy Chicago among them (Fig. 22); Kadia Molodovsky's poem "The Child Aielet" (which introduces very clearly women's traditional obligations; known to the artist since her childhood, cf. Molodowsky 1966:7).

Crafts and ornaments: folklore handicrafts including Indian and Turkish crafts, for example, Turkish towels embroidered at the edges (Fig. 23); puppets; Turkish and Indonesian shadows' theaters, including the traditional figures of the prostitute and the descent woman (Fig. 15); decorations for the *suka* and for Christmas; the use of lamination; the use of cheap shiny materials; women's traditional handicrafts as embroidery, sewing, quilting decorations; repetitive patterns, moulds.

Rituals and masks: ritual objects, including icons and book covers, ritual figurines, voodoo figurines, magical breaking of figurines; masks in rituals, in theater and festivals, including *Purim*; the mask as a metaphor and its influence on the interaction with other people.

Snakes: their Freudian connotations; their healing power.

Games: game-boards; game strategies.

Fruits: the fruits of *Gan Ha'eden*, the apple as a symbol of temptation; hospitality; health.

Meals and offerings: the meal as ceremony; The Last Supper, Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper* (1495-98) (Fig. 16); other famous representations of the

subject, including Mary Beth Edelson's "Last Supper": *Some living American Artists* (1972) (Fig. 24); family meals; Heaven; the super-natural; altars in different periods since antiquity, ancient Egyptian altars, offerings, offerings to the dead.

Visual artistic means: different kinds of perspective; the flatness of the pictorial surface; the symbolical implications of red and black; unusual formats; the use of expendable materials; multiplication of images.

Children's art: art made by children (Fig. 17); children's animation films.

The art of Dina Hoffman, the other works in the exhibition *Was Mary Magdalene a red-head?*; works from other exhibitions.

To sum up: "reading" collage as an "open" work of art, implies unavoidable reduction of the unlimited field of possibilities induced by the work. Thus, an understanding of the work is always incomplete since the full scope of "openness" can be never reached.

Ambiguity which typifies the "open" work is latent within collage, thus blurring the identity of the artist. The absence of an accurate reading, the possibility to endow the work with an interpretation unthought of by the artist, the indeterminacy which dominates the choice of possibilities prevent an exposure of the creating subject. As such, collage introduces a bizarre situation: it exposes the subject by exposing the other (or a subjective variation of the other, in many contemporary paintings), which is unavoidably only partially known. Exposing the other as the subject enables the artist not to expose so much of himself/herself, of

his/her way of elaborating the other, but rather to cite the other. Thus, closure is impossible in this respect as well.

The immanent infinity within the notion of collage is unconceivable by sensibility. This “openness” is induced by several factors: the unlimited possibilities of dissection and articulation summoned by collage; the unconceivable distancing of collage's excerpts into remote periods of history; the complex nature of reflections of images which disables clear vision of the sources used by collage; the unlimited intertextuality and the infinite possible interpretations impelled by collage, uncontrollable by its producer.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER 3

1. Dina Hoffman (b. 1949, Kibbutz Ein Gev) is an Israeli artist and teacher who lives in Tel Aviv. She studied art for ten years in the USA and has exhibited extensively since the late nineteen seventies. Her works are made of mixed media (mainly “non-artistic” materials in common daily use), very rich in materials and textures. They are loaded almost obsessively with repetitive elements. This “obsessive” accumulation, which purports a ritual, seems to conceal/reveal personal loss and distress (Shaman 1996:33-32,21). The intertextual references suggested by her works transform her personal “mythologies” into universal ideas i.e. the loss of her beloved men and her search for identification as a person and as an artist are “read” also as a feminist comment on the state of the woman, with references to various cultures and periods.
2. *Aladdin* (1992). Directed and produced by John Marker and Ron Clements, Walt Disney’s Studios, USA.
3. *Ninja Turtles* (1990). Directed by Steve Barron, produced by Kim Dawson, Simon Fields and David Chan, Mirage Studios, USA.

CHAPTER 4

My own work

The following discussion will introduce my own collages as examples of the allegorical expansion, the imposition of order and the realization of the characteristics of the *open work*.

The works under discussion (Figs. 29-52), created during 1990-1991, were exhibited in the art gallery of Unisa in Nov. 1992, together with other early works from 1989-1990 (Figs. 25-28) which prefigure the later developments. While the early works (Figs. 25-27) are basically abstract, sometimes alluding to figurative images (for example: landscape in *Untitled I*, Fig.25; or scrolls in *Untitled III*, fig. 27), the later ones are abundant of figurative images, prominently encouraging the intertextual referentiality and the allegorical expansion. The earliest work (*Untitled I*, Fig.25) was painted in water-colour in one layer on paper. The other two early works are made of accumulated layers of paper, forming a relatively flat surface. They are relatively small and their structure is simpler than in the case of later works. They already bring to the fore the notion of accumulation. The work *Untitled 1* (Fig.28) configures a transitional stage; it presents figurative images conjured up by free associations. The nine works chosen for discussion form a body of works, displaying similar subjects and dealing with the same motives by similar techniques. They are also made of many accumulated painted layers of paper, stuck on different irregularly shaped grounds, but this time, the grounds are

also dissected and articulated. Furthermore, some of the works are reliefs made of clay or fiberglass. Even the works which are made of paper and cardboard protrude in some places, owing to the thickness of the layers or some bends in the papers that form the ground. The shapes of the grounds are mostly abstract, in this way basically suggesting the view of earth, landscapes, ruins, faded murals or palimpsests. The prominent painted images are: Filippo Brunelleschi's plans for the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, manipulated to form various constructions; monkeys; human beings; vases and other archaeological shreds; and boats. The apparent arbitrary combination of these images with other images, with abstract shapes or unrecognizable dissected images bring about new hermeneutic possibilities.

The works are based on fragmentation, discontinuity and destruction of the images, as well as their ground, on the one hand and the conglomeration of the superimposed components into a mass, the structuring of which is difficult to decipher, on the other hand. Thus, the works suggest the view of ruins, archaeological sites, faded frescoes or cave's murals, or even scabbled notebooks, while introducing time and contingency. The works have been actually "crystallized" during time by getting new additions. This continuous process of accumulation is their main feature. Thus, even abstract parts of the works convey meaning and content (as earlier abstract works do): eternal process and constant change. The present is seen in the light of the past and the future. This impression complies with the notion of the ruin, which implies metamorphosing, merging with the earth, intermingling history and nature.

As years have passed by, my works have become more and more loaded with many small details, much more loaded than the works of Johns, Na'aman, or Hoffman. These details seem to be accumulated at random, thus limiting the feeling of movement but contributing to the feeling of depth and to the richness of texture. This treatment of the layers enables a combination of various images, lacking any previous connection and demanding from the beholder a process of "reading". The irregular accumulation of layers, the combination of the relatively big abstract shapes of the format and the small delicately painted figurative images, the relief and the two dimensional paintings, bring to the fore the question of their relationships.

The use of water-colours, which are almost "immaterial" can be seen in the light of the tendency towards the want of matter in Israeli art (Breitberg-Semel 1986). Most of the colours are pale earthen, ones. Sometimes the colour clarifies the shapes, whereas in most cases it blurs them, since it is not treated locally i.e. it is not confined to the borders of the image or to its components. It supports the "arbitrary" overlapping of layers. It stresses the flatness of the shapes and the painting as a whole when warm colours appear underneath cooler ones. The images are drawn by very thin lines, made by extremely thin brushes. This device enabled the creation of sensitive lines, which gradually change their thickness and tones, thus retaining a personal "handwriting" and introducing a personal site. The transparency of the stuck papers obtained by their absorption of glue, brings about the visibility of all the layers stuck together, thus enhancing the illusion of depth. The accumulation of many layers in a certain place and the use of less transparent

paper bring about relative opacity, which suggests the blurring of details due to the passage of time.

THE ROLE OF THE READER

The works can be approached from various points of view, each of them focusing on a different issue. As has been explained, the open work of art is consequently nourished, or even produced, by the conjunction of these approaches. Here are four possible points of departure for the examination of the works:

1. A battle against arbitrariness

Examining the works, the first impression might be that the painted shapes were conjoined and accumulated by chance upon an arbitrarily designed ground. This situation brings about a potential transformation, or mobility, of the components. The feeling induced is that every change in the constellation would yield as good a result as the others. Thus, in spite of the conglomerate of images created by accumulation, a potential dynamism can be noticed.

A thorough process of observation reveals deliberately designed structures: some painted images are echoed by sculptured or protruding cut cardboard shapes, for example, the dome and the boat (Fig.47); the borders of some of the painted

images accompany borders of the ground (for example the boat in Fig. 40). Yet, many of the painted images do not comply with the shapes of the ground, being "cut" by the subdividing borders of the ground, or seeming to be far away from them. This relationship of linkage and lack of linkage, at one and the same time, typifies the works, thus functioning as a regulating idea.

Most of the images recur within each work. Some of them are emphasized by protruding shapes or contrasts of colours, thus turning into focuses for attention and bringing to the fore the ideas of: multiplication; the continuity embedded in superimposition; and rhythm. Therefore, this recurrence is significant; it functions as an indicator for order or for structure.

Another distinction, which typifies the works and represents a formal and conceptual common ground for the components, occurs between geometrical, more mechanical, shapes of the domes and their derivatives (although they are always drawn by hand) and the organic shapes. This distinction is echoed by the margins of the works, as well as by the surface of the reliefs, by the inclusion of straight and angular cuts and irregular, amorphous, as if haphazard, ones. Another distinction which is apparent, is witnessed between the flatness of many images (although their superimposition presents volume), on the one hand and the three dimensional perspective, which typifies many of the domes, on the other hand.

In addition to the treatment of details, the general structure of the works is revealed as a planned one. Two works will exemplify this conviction: one of them (*Untitled 5*, Fig.37) consists of a major section and two minor ones, attached at the bottom, which contribute by their shapes and sizes to an equilibrium of the work

as a whole. Against the loaded areas of the work, the right part contains only several neatly organized images: almost identical baboons are sitting one above the other, as if watching, or even generating the whole scene which takes place in the main section. Thinly painted boys, turning their backs to the monkeys, "walking" on their knees, are advancing towards the "disordered" scene. There is a relatively broad space between these elements. The right margin of the work is designed in accordance with the shapes of the baboons, as a repetitive pattern. The other work (*Untitled 10*, Fig.48) displays an almost symmetrical structure: the main part of the work is quite loaded with details, relatively dark, maintaining blurred borders between images, while the side-sections are less loaded, lighter and the images they present are clearer. Horizontally, the structure is also clear enough. There are three sections: the middle one consists of living creatures i.e. human beings, monkeys and some other creatures, while the upper and bottom sections display the multiplied image of Brunelleschi's dome, as their central theme. In the upper part the domes are presented in their "natural" position, whereas at the bottom, they are turned upside down, as if complementing the shapes of the upper ones.

2. Blurring of borders

The different sections brought together in order to compose the works are both separated from and connected to, their counterparts: in some places, their borders are emphasized by the dissection of images, by a change of colours, or by another kind of interruption. Yet, in some places, the images of the neighboring sections

transgress their main territory and unite the sections. In some places, pieces of paper fill the gap between the sections, in this way concealing their original division. Furthermore, "artificial" divisions i.e. divisions that do not indicate separated parts of the ground, complicate the "reading" of the work.

The partial overlapping of the transparent images makes the images intermingle. The superimposition of several images brings about "unreadability". Under the circumstances, a clear-cut contour of each image is not enough to convey a closed shape, separated from its surroundings. While observing the details and ascribing importance to the blurring of borders, one might conclude that the clear contours serve as obstacles. "Unreadability" is achieved in spite of such obstacles.

The distinctions between: inside and outside; above and beneath; different points of view; surface and depth; conceptual center and margins; and source and imitation are blurred. Let us take all these features one by one:

Lack of distinction between inside and outside: As has been explained, the superimposition of various images fuses them, while intermingling them with their surroundings. In addition, the irregular formats of the works, which extend towards their surroundings, draw attention to the borders of the works and to their relationships with their surrounding space. Thus they turn the margins of the works into an important point of focus, no less important than internal points of focus. Specific images also blur the distinction between inside and outside: the domes and vases, which are presented as containers, do not "hold" their content

since they are represented as skeletal constructions, perforated and transparent; while being inside them, the creatures transgress them as well.

Lack of distinctions between above-underneath and different angles of inclination: Various creatures and objects are scattered everywhere; they "move" in various directions, without being subordinated to the force of gravitation, without an apparent distinction being made between the ground and the sky. The various images are attached to each other in various variations, in various places, thus inducing the feeling that everything is attachable to everything else, that everything is mobile. This open field of possibilities refers to the contemporary approach to allegorical hermeneutics (previously discussed), which allows the attachment of anything to anything else to be a source of signification. Thus, the works open infinite possibilities of interpretation. This multiplicity of possible linkages and therefore, meanings, may evoke a kind of mystery. In addition to this, there is a mixture of different angles of inclination: the images are painted in different sizes that do not necessarily suit their actual size-relations; they are presented as seen from different angles, yet facing the observer. In contrast to this situation, the grounds of the three-dimensional works suggest the presentation of a three-dimensional landscape, or archaeological site i.e. a place usually seen from above; but here, vertically lifted. Several carved images, which fit in with the painted ones in these works, enhance this mixture by presenting some images as seen from above (for example, the "boats" in the left and right margins of *Untitled 9*, Fig.47), while others, are presented as facing the beholder.

Fusion of surface and depth: The overlapping transparent images, contoured but also painted by transgressing colour-shapes, blur the distinction between the accumulated layers. The fusion between the layers is emphasized by the use of relatively warm colours in deeper layers, underneath cooler ones. In some places the numerous layers are seen very clearly, as if protruding toward the surface, whereas in other cases, the numerous layers bring about opacity. The fusion of the layers suggests the feeling of disorientation, induced by an archaeological site during excavation. Another suggestion is the notion of tradition, which "sews" different periods together.

Lack of distinction between the central theme and minor themes: The lack of distinction between conceptually important themes and minor ones typifies the works. All the images appear in the center of a work, as well as in its margins, as prominent, as well as less attractive, to the eye of the viewer. This lack of hierarchy causes apparent disorder and complicates the decipherment of the works. Emphasized images by colour and repetition, by the presentation of a single layer of images, or by the absence of painted images in a certain area, may serve as a starting point for the search for order.

The dome and the boat as concepts, configure transgression of borders by their features, each one in its own way: theologically, the dome has been conceived as the metaphor for sky and heaven (Smith 1950). The specific dome of Brunelleschi, which is built as a doubled dome (Yfat 1980¹), may be considered, in this context, as an extension of the implied sky, as well as an additional barrier between the internal "sky" and the "true" sky. The boat, which is capable of

literally transgressing borders, may entail an additional significance of transgression, if linked to the realm of ancient Egypt. There it served as a godly vehicle for the solar circuit: for the Sun God Re and the deceased pharaoh who joined the sun in his downward journey towards the West, where he entered the nether world, being absorbed in the great rhythm of the universe (Frankfort 1961:106)(Fig.53). Thus, both the dome and the boat can be conceived as means of transgression towards the transcendental.

Another reference that may be suggested by the conjunction of the boat and the "containers" of living creatures, is Noah's ark that survived the Deluge (Genesis 8), thereby transgressing the barrier between water and earth and between the evil world and the better one, which followed.

In the works, combinations of two domes, one against the other, may suggest a resemblance with an egg (especially when they contain some creatures; see for example, the uppermost area of *Untitled 3*, Fig.35), consequently outlining a stage of transformation, towards birth. The same domes, in various combinations, suggest modern or future buildings or vehicles (see for example, Figs.54, an example of Art Deco architecture by William Van Alen; and Fig.55, an illustration of a visionary encased city by Leo Morey). Nevertheless, all these images are treated as an integral part of the ground, as paintings and as carved shapes, which are engraved in it. Thus, there is no clear distinction between the ground and other objects which turn into matter for its composition. Furthermore, there is no distinction, in this respect, between objects and living creatures. All of them nourish the ground.

Lack of distinction between the source and its imitations: The works present drawings from zoology books (For example, de la Fuente 1971:92-93), Renaissance architectural drawings (Yifat 1980, Fig.58), professional drawings of archaeological items (Yadin 1976:103,106) etc., which are not the original objects by themselves. Furthermore, these drawings are inaccurate imitations of the original drawings. Some of them, within the works, turn into quite subjective variations, drawing inspiration from the above-mentioned sources. Other parts of the works present images which do not allude to their sources. Yet others seem to present scribbling, without imitating any model. All of these appear without a hierarchy, without indicating (because of the distance from their source) whether there is any source at all. All these copies are transferred to a new context, as was done by Veronica's veil. To adopt Madoff's suggestion, the presence of the veil implies that the past is uprooted and shifts towards the present (Madoff 1985:70).

To conclude, the works introduce blurring of borders, which is formal and conceptual at the same time.

3. A Journey into time and space

Being collages, the works entail a specific process of "reading", as has been explained in this dissertation. Yet, these works especially evoke conscious acknowledgment of the necessity of a long process of decipherment, inevitably impossible to be fully achieved. The time-duration of the works is linked to the effort to encompass their whole space, as well as their intertextual references. Being loaded with numerous tiny details, accumulated within many layers, the

works entail a long process of "reading", necessarily failing to "cover" everything. The apparent disorder i.e.: the excess of information; the lack of hierarchy; the structures of the ground which do not suit the shapes of the painted images; the transgression of the "frames"; the complexity of dissection and articulation of the same components; the extensions of the formats towards their surroundings; and the scattered repetitive components which draw the viewer's attention in a chaotic "jumpy" manner, extend the necessary time for decipherment. In the high-reliefs, the fact that the whole surface of the work is treated in the same way i.e. hidden parts are as important as the revealed ones (for example *Untitled 2*, Fig.32), extends time of "reading" as well. The multi-layered works suggest a comparison between the "reading" process and excavation, as if alluding to Lévi-Strauss' reference to the structuralist project (previously discussed). The earthen colours of the works may be conceived as supporting their time-duration, reminding of continuous geological chemical processes.

The narrative suggested by the works focuses on time as a major issue: evolution in nature in general and evolution of human beings; the "circle of life" represented by adults and youngsters; archaeological layers; the accumulation of the layers of the works themselves; activities such as: sailing, climbing, jumping, sewing and passionately speaking. The various issues that are linked to specific periods, alluded to by the images, provide an important contribution to the narrative. Ancient Egyptian religion, Renaissance architecture and archaeological findings from Yehuda desert are part and parcel of the content of the works. The baboons standing in a row (*Untitled 5*, Fig.39) may allude to their representation

in Ancient Egypt as blessing the rising sun. The God Thoth, the god of wisdom and the protector of the scribes (which was associated with the moon), was the god that tried to dispel darkness by means of his own light as the sun vanished, according to Egyptian religion (Casson 1966:185) (Fig.59). The baboons may suggest the viewpoint of the beholder, or the ability to trace the hidden order within the apparent chaos. The boat may suggest the notion of transformation, as it was conceived as a celestial vehicle in ancient Egypt, linked to Re the Sun God, to the deceased pharaoh as its embodiment and to life in the other world (Frankfort 1961:52-55). The boat may also refer to Noah's ark that served as a bridge between two "worlds": the evil one and the good one. The Renaissance dome, which in turn may present modern and future constructions, may imply also the notions of transformation and transcendence. It is presented as imprisoning/defending/transporting living creatures and, as suggested by its resemblance to an egg, as encapsulating life in a transition period towards birth. This focus on the mystery of life highlights the transcendental nature of the symbolic celestial dome. Items from two rare treasures found in caves in the Yehuda Desert are also painted in the works: one is a group of metallic enigmatic poles, probably of worship, from the fourth millennium B.C. from Nachal Mishmar (Yadin 1976:217-221) (Fig.60); the other group consists of metallic objects from the period of Bar-Kokhba's revolt against the Romans, including a metallic decorated jar (Fig.61), a "libation" bowl with a ram shaped handle, presenting a mythological scene (Fig. 62) and a key (Fig.63). The three of them had been hidden within a basket in a cave in Nachal Hever since the second century A.D.(Yadin

1976:101-107). Being "encapsulated" within several layers i.e. the basket, the cave and the remote river in the desert, these items suggest a common ground with the other images.

4. Metamorphosis of a Dome

The Renaissance dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, planned by Brunelleschi, was a revolutionary construction of its time, as it offered a solution for roofing a huge space (Saalman 1980); it may be conceived as the main axis of the works. As such, it may be interpreted as a symbol of human achievements and as part and parcel of human evolution. Since an important invention means progress, but also the sovereignty of a certain frame of mind, it may be conceived as bringing about a certain amount of closure. This may be one of the reasons for its presentation in some places in the works as enclosing creatures, yet, "letting" them transgress it.

The dome is represented in the works not only as an identifiable dome, but also as metamorphosed into other kinds of constructions (for example, Fig.38), positioned in various directions, in various places in the works, this way alluding to objects which are not identified at all as linked to their source. These constructions, as has been already mentioned, may be conceived as modern buildings, future vehicles and enigmatic containers, which sometimes contain living creatures: human beings, monkeys and other animals (for example in Fig.31, at the bottom and in Fig. 37, on the left). These containers may be conceived as arresting devices, but at the same time as defending ones. An association with an egg, which may be evoked by the articulation of two "domes"

(for example, in *Untitled 3*, in the upper part, Fig. 35) may imply a transitional phase of life, namely giving birth. The round shapes of the dome and its derivatives suggest a link to vases. The latter are the most common archaeological finds, accompanying human beings through life and death. Their appearance in the works brings about thoughts about the various uses of ancient vases, as food and water containers and as burial containers as well, thus implying both life and death. Other ancient items which are "cited" in the works, refer to shapes of vases, sometimes being metamorphosed into vases, for example, the "heads" of the poles of worship from Nachal Mishmar and the knob of the key from Nachal Hever. In one of the works (*Untitled 10*, Fig.50) this vase is a metamorphosed pole; it is "covered" by a monkey's head, thus alluding to the possibility of references to ancient Egyptian canopic round-bellied urns. Such urns had lids carved as human faces and were used for the storage of the internal organs of the deceased pharaoh (Desroches-Noblecourt 1963:222) (Fig. 64). Thus, this image may suggest death and transcendence, which is linked to the other world, in accordance with the implications of the dome, the other vases and the boats.

The dome and some of its derivatives, which are scattered in the works in different directions, seem to move. Some of them, as has been mentioned, may refer to vehicles, whereas others that are presented as a group of shapes, might suggest the view of "Heavenly Jerusalem" as, for example, in *Untitled 10* (Fig. 48 the upper area). Here, the upper domes are complemented at the bottom by domes which are turned upside down, in order to resemble strange modern constructions/containers/"egg shells". These elements seem to reflect each other,

as well as the upper domes, thus suggesting an "earthen city", which does not seem to be tactile. In addition to their reflections and their ability to reflect, these constructions contain (but do not "hold"), recurring reflections of a working human figure (which is probably sowing in a field) and other creatures, including tiny dinosaurs. The middle zone of the work (Fig.49) includes larger overlapping reflections of the same figure, one of them, the largest, establishing a link between these elements and the two zones of the domes. The upper part of the head of the largest figure is covered by the bottom part of a dome, possibly suggesting some surrealistic glasses. Another association may lead to a caryatid or a giant whose head touches the "hovering" domes. In some places, the figures are partially covered by unclear monkeys, which are inseparable from them. A figure which touches a dome-construction by its head and monkeys that are flanking a dome appear not only here, but also in another work (*Untitled 5*, Fig. 38). In this work, the monkeys seem to dance, "praising" the construction, almost "deifying" it.

Thus, the dome, which according to this approach, symbolizes human achievements and faith, suggesting by its shape generation of life and death, appears in the works as a kind of matter that nourishes tradition, while fusing it with nature.

AMBIGUITY

The above term refers to one of the main features of the open work.

Ambiguity, as already explained, consists in the excess of information; the lack of hierarchy; and the structures of the ground which do not suit the shapes of the painted images. In addition to these traits, the transgression of the "frames"; the complexity of dissection and articulation of the components; the extensions of the formats towards their surroundings; and the scattered repetitive components which draw the viewer's attention, also contribute to the ambiguity of the details and of each work as a whole. A specific example in this respect would be the large figure in *Untitled 10* (Fig.49), which covers a relatively broad space in the center of the work, echoed by its several recurrences in other places in the same work (Fig.48). In spite of these facts, this figure is almost untraceable, because of its absorption within the numerous painted layers which include images and dissected images accumulated in the same area.

The works induce the impression that the painted shapes were conjoined and accumulated by chance upon the ground and that other compositions are possible. The feeling induced is that every change in the constellation would yield as good a result as the other ones. This characteristic undermines any interpretation of the works. To use the same example of the large figure in *Untitled 10*, it would not entail the association of a caryatid and therefore reference to the ancient world and the transcendental linked to the ancient Greek religion, if the work presented a displacement of the dome in relation to the figure. Another example is the

suggestion of a canopic urn, by the conjunction of a monkey's head and a vase (in the same work). A slight displacement would abolish such a suggestion, while limiting the range of associations to the suggestions brought forth by those images when disconnected.

Many images do not disclose their sources and therefore cannot be understood as references thereof. The discussed allusions to Ancient Egypt are indirect. They are not supported by stylistic fundamentals or identifiable Egyptian contexts. Therefore, these references are probably untraceable by most of the beholders. Other images, which disclose identifiable sources are probably not sufficiently well known to be recognized by the majority of the beholders, for example: the items from Nachal Hever or Brunelleschi's plans (in contrast to the known view of the cathedral).

The fact that the cited images are changed i.e. dissected and articulated to other images, blurs their source, for example, the poles from Nachal Mishmar and the key from Nachal Hever that are turned into vases (in *Untitled 7*, in the bottom right side, Fig.44) and the jar from Nachal Hever that is cut, multiplied and overlapped by its own parts (in *Untitled 3*, in the upper area close to the central boat, Fig.35).

Some images are ambiguous, since although they are drawn in a realistic manner, they include unrealistic details. This phenomenon, in addition to the recurrence of these images in conjunction with various other images in different places, entails numerous possible interpretations. For example the child, who seems to advance on his knees in a position similar to that of some of the

monkeys, clings his knees to a beam in a manner that prevents an advance. On turning the figure upside down, one notices a child hanging on the beam, holding himself by his feet. Such a position demands physical efforts and does not enable free observation of the view in front of him. In one of the above mentioned works (*Untitled 5*, Fig.37, on the right and Fig. 39), his recurring figures advance toward the main scene of the work, leaving behind a row of static baboons, thus suggesting a starting point for the occurrence. In another work (*Untitled 7*, Fig.43, at the bottom margin), he appears above elements which resemble a surf-board, thus suggesting reference to water and therefore to the boats in the works.

There are no stylistic characteristics that may link the images to some of the otherwise identifiable sources. The suggested associations of Ancient Egypt exemplify this situation.

Nevertheless, even when the sources are clear, quite often, certain conjunctions of images induce the feeling that they are not easy to decipher, for example: the link between the sowing figure (probably the nature of its activity is not clear) and the monkeys; the link between the same figure and the "libation" bowl (probably not identified by the observer), etc.

This kind of conjunctions enhance the feeling of arbitrariness, discouraging a thorough examination of the sources of the images and their syntagmatic relationships in the light of those sources. It might be concluded that the works can be observed in different ways, according to the frames of references of the beholder, his/her sensitivity and motivation to examine the details. It seems,

therefore, that the consideration of the work at any level yields a wide field of possibilities.

AN INFINITE NET OF REFERENCES

As in the previous part, the web of associations, characterizing the open work, as evoked by these works is evidently limitless, as in the other collages. Here are some of the possible connotations in various areas (often linked to each other):

Zoology and evolution: Darwinism; dinosaurs; lizards; apes; baboons; other monkeys; the relationships between adults and youngsters and other aspects of their social life; contemporary zoological drawings; conditions for the increase of the number of individuals.

Archaeology and ancient religions: archaeological excavations and surveys; dating methods; different functions of clay vessels as food containers and as burial places; burial habits; ancient Egyptian deities, especially Thoth and Re; the Egyptian world after death, ceremonial boats and representations of boats; the function of the Ushabti as a "soil-worker" in the other world (Frankfort 1961:119); canopic urns; the treasure from Nachal Mishmar; the Chalcolithic era; the treasure from Nachal Hever; Roman rule in Israel in the second century; Bar-Kokhba's revolt; the Yehuda desert as a refuge in different periods.

Geology: various landscapes; rocks' formations.

History of art and contemporary art: caves' murals; frescos from various periods; Hyper-realistic works of art, which present infinite overlapping reflections of reflections, for example, Don Eddy's *Glassware I* (Fig.65); works of art, which deal with evolution, archaeological or geological shreds: works by Alan Malcolm, which represent multiplied fossils (*The Dog from Pompei*, Fig.66), *Chicks and Whelps* among other works by Michal Na'aman (Fig.67); works which present superimposition of transparent layers, such as works by David Salle that sometimes seem to conjoin the layers arbitrarily, as seen in *Untitled* (Fig.68); works by the Israeli artist Tamar Getter who uses landscape, history and the human being as subject matter, as illuminated in *Green Landscapes with Inverted Heads* (Fig.69); various conjoined, sometimes overlapping drawings, which were created as studies like Picasso's *Self-Portrait with a Palette* (Fig.70); works of art which conjoin various angles of inclination, for example, Picasso's works from his Cubist period, which also present: accumulation of layers, multiplication of shapes, simultaneous use of emphasized lines and unoutlined coloured shapes; and finally, "earthen" colour scale, as seen in *Still Life on a Piano* (Fig.71); works that conjoin previously disconnected "worlds" into a new narrative, while commenting on nature, the modern world and human nature, such as Max Ernst's *Massacre of the Innocents* (Fig.72); works of art which examine a process of accumulation such as Kurt Schwitters' *Mirror Collage* (Fig. 73); works by Jackson Pollock which posit the painting as a circumstantially "interrupted" activity that could otherwise proceed, introducing ahierarchical approach to the plane (Fig.74); works of art which are loaded with details; works of art which

configure a conjunction of sculpture and painting; irregular formats which extend towards the work's surrounding; "Hellenistic" or "Baroque" dynamics of figures, which are captured in the midst of their activity; paintings which are based on drawings, such as Michelangelo's use of transparent layers of colours upon *grisaille*; fine "linear" drawings which preserve closure of shapes like drawings by Breugel and Dürer and those that preserve "openness" of the contours like drawings by Rembrandt; representations of heavenly Jerusalem.

Architecture: the architecture of the Renaissance; the work of Brunelleschi; the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore; different methods of dome construction; different methods of roofing huge spaces; the Christian conception of the dome; modern buildings; visionary architecture; the use of metal constructions transparent materials and mirrors.

The Bible and literature in general: the Bible as an accumulation of different layers; Noah's ark; works that introduce accumulation of different layers, for example: Derrida's *Glas*, an intertextual work fusing the borders between literature and philosophy; works that blur the distinction between fiction and reality, structured as an accumulation of repetitive components and eventually leading to thoughts about human nature, as for example, Italo Calvino's *Le Citta invisibili* (Calvino 1972).

To sum up, these works may be read within the (in)finite framework(s) of postmodern approaches to history and culture.

CONCLUSIONS

At first sight, the works appear as an abundance of fragments piled up together arbitrarily, contingently. A process of dissection and articulation, a kind of archaeological excavation, brings about various possibilities of "reading". Even then, contradictions still exist and the meanings remain persistently evasive. "Reading" is complicated since each cited element breaks the continuity of the linearity of discourse, necessarily leading to a double "reading": the reading of the fragment in relation to its source and in relation to its new context. Furthermore, the spectator is frustrated by the narrative disjunctions and paradoxically enough, compelled to "read" more literally, to be aware of textuality and of the materials of the works of art. The works entail deciphering as multi-layered sites or palimpsests do, thus suggesting an exploration of untraceable sources and a plurality of relations. The notions of intertextuality, discontinuity and mobility of the components are emphasized, while bringing to the fore the dichotomies of evolution and decay, integration and disintegration, life and death, accumulation and excavation, diachrony and synchrony. "Decay" or disintegration is revealed as an analysis which is vital for constituting knowledge.

At first glance, the interpretations suggested here describe the works as if they were dealing with general ideas rather than with a personal world. As a matter of fact, the continuous accumulation of matter, the amalgamation of uncontrollable nature and of the human creations the works include are reflections of a subjective approach. An obsessive attention to details, an eclectic approach to the solution of

problems, while taking into consideration every possible detail (and unavoidably a slow progression), are the factors which constitute the personal world, as well as the creation of the specific body of works. Inseparable from both is the apparent arbitrariness involved in the accumulation of significant thoughts, their dissections and articulations, as well as their "intertextuality". Thus, each work forms not only a microcosm of the external world, but also a microcosm of the internal world of the creating subject.

Furthermore, the use of citations (to be more precise: subjective variations of the citations), which implies the introduction of a collection of particulars in order to describe universal ideas, finally leads to the description of a personal world. Clinging to citations, which apparently enables prevention from self-exposure, contradictorily (and paradoxically) results in self-exposure. It might be concluded that the dominance of the dissections and re-articulations draws attention to the meta-narratives and not only to the particulars, thus leading to the processes at work enacted by the creating subject.

To sum up: the works induce an allegorical impulse, while suggesting a wide range of associations and interpretations, constantly expanding the intertextual web. Nevertheless, at one and the same time, they retain the contingency and indeterminacy of those interpretations.

The works are collages which retain the characteristics of the *open work*. Their "reading" implies an unavoidable reduction of the unlimited field of possibilities

they induce. Thus, understanding of the works is always incomplete, since the full scope of "openness" can never be reached.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER 4

1. The pages are not numbered.

CONCLUSIONS

The simple procedure of attaching fragmented sources called "collage", induces a complex process. This artistic phenomenon has intrigued artists throughout the twentieth century and it still does, on the threshold of the third millennium. This dissertation has tried to unveil some of the "hidden" processes that bring about the power of collage.

The first section concerns the main subject of this dissertation i.e. the unlimited expansion and the imposition of order induced by collage. The other sections of the conclusions widen the scope of collage, while suggesting its place and role within the twentieth century art i.e. its ability to maintain movements between contrasts; its self-deconstruction which leads to self-construction; its self-reflexivity; its flexible frames of identity; the "nomadism" it induces between the particular and the universal; and its potential as a bridge between modernism and postmodernism, structuralism and poststructuralism.

1. ABSENCE AND DISCONTINUITY EMBEDDED WITHIN COLLAGE INDUCE UNLIMITED EXPANSION AND IMPOSITION OF ORDER

Collage demands a continuous *process* of conception, by being dissected, the components resist clear significance, evoke a search into the past for their lost

sources and an examination of the unexpected linkages among them as a result of their coexistence within a work of art.

Collage is characterized by two opposite processes at work, both at the formal level and at the level of hermeneutics i.e. accumulation and "excavation", or a search for order. These processes typify both its creation and its "reading".

Accumulation and unlimited expansion

At the formal level, collage introduces an articulation of dissected sources i.e. the coexistence of different worlds, lack of hierarchy, as well as lack of synthesis. This kind of composition, on the one hand, blurs the barriers between different components, yet, on the other hand, retains many of the "seams" attaching them. Thus, formal effects are often ambiguous: frames are transgressed and the same components seem to protrude but also to immerse during the process of observation.

At the hermeneutic level, collage induces an allegorical impulse, which brings about unlimited semiosis and accumulation of infinite meanings and associations, thus forming a complex intertextual web. The multiplicity of meanings attached to the image points to the dialectical tension between the human tendency to attach significance arbitrarily and the ascent towards the transcendental. Significance is revealed not only as a construction, but also, as a contingent phenomenon that can disappear or be destroyed. When an idea is ruined, it becomes an instance of still life, or "matter", which *nourishes other ideas*. On the one hand, both allegory and collage are linked to *death and melancholy*, therefore implying the cessation of

things; however (thanks to its very nature, that is to combine different pieces), a potential activity complements the stage of "death" or disappearance.

All these processes of accumulation, experienced by different "readers", construct collage. Inevitably, indeterminacy and chance are involved and ambiguity is induced by this representative of the *open work*. At this level too, there is neither synthesis nor hierarchy of ideas, but rather a constant transgression of "frames" and synchronicity, by refusing any unified, coherent, significance of the work.

A Search for Order

Such incoherence makes the search for order in collage into a cardinal need and inspires the hope for its better understanding. This search for order, which is implemented by the artist as well as by the "reader", is similar to an archaeological excavation or to a structuralist research, while specifying the place and function of the phenomena in a system i.e. the place and function of the formal as well as the hermeneutic elements in collage as a whole. "Reading" collage involves a mental "re-construction" of its creation through the operations of dissection and articulation. Formally and conceptually, order is expressed/discovered by the distinct structure of the work i.e. repetitive elements, symmetrical/asymmetrical organization, separation into units/layers and focuses of attention. The *recurrence* of units is especially important, since it induces *stability*, maintaining a kind of *battle against chance*. It is by this regular return of the units and of the association of units, that the work appears constructed i.e. endowed with meaning.

Semiotic analysis of the signs presented in collage apparently enhances order, by examining three kinds of relations of the components: the symbolic relations, the paradigmatic ones and the syntagmatic ones, thus classifying the infinite meanings and associations raised by the work as well as the signifiers. The syntagmatic relation is most prominent in collage, since it presents the possibility for creating new meanings out of new combinations of the decomposed-recomposed elements.

One of the conclusions drawn from the structural examination of collage is its affinities to Baroque art implied by: "broken" surface, multi-focused composition, surprise, amalgamation of disciplines, melancholy and unreadability.

Another conclusion involves the transgression of the frame typifying collage; this is the visual expression of intertextuality. As such, it is the reflection and at the same time, the cause of collage's mental process: collage forms a network of excerpts of different "worlds" - which meet, collide and interfere with each other within an "embracing" work of art.

Thus, in the process of "reading" collage, underneath an apparently chaotic work of art, a hidden order is revealed. Yet, order and therefore gratification, is only momentary. Frustration is unavoidable, since the "achieved" order is disturbed by the unlimited continuous process of attachment-detachment of the signifiers and the signified, thus producing an uncontrollable, ever increasing web of ideas. Yet, imposition of order is repeatedly maintained. However, paradoxically enough, this continuous search for significance does not reach the ultimate level of significance, but rather, evokes an endless chain of associations.

The “reader” of collage, driven by the allegorical impulse, neither invents an image nor does he/she restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured. It may be said that, he/she rather adds meanings to the image.

This search for order, in spite of the repeating disorder, highlights the strictly *human process* by which meaning is given to things.

2. CONSTANT MOVEMENTS BETWEEN CONTRASTS

The constant erratic movement between disorder, “free play” and order, may be seen as belonging to a general phenomenon of “nomadism” between different, sometimes opposite, concepts, forms and artistic realms, implied by the notion of collage. An apparently simple and unproblematic artistic strategy surprisingly unites within a single pattern: eternity of the allegorical impulse and contingency of significance; closure of some of the units and openness of expansion; the unique syntagmatic relationships of the excerption and its repetitive nature being a citation, sometimes even a recurring one; absence of sources and significance and excess of the unlimited field of possibilities; dissection and articulation; the previous context of the citation and the new one; the horizontal movement of the expanding field of possibilities and the vertical transcendental movement; the image and its concealed significance; the present and the absent; the past and the present; the Subject and the Other; syntagmatic readings and paradigmatic ones; form and content; spatial and temporal characteristics; the infinite and the finite;

melancholy and eternal renewal. Thus collage creates an endless process of apparently reconciling opposites and deepening them, of attaching the different components, while also detaching them. Each and every time, unity and commensurability are momentarily experienced.

Therefore, collage maintains eternal *self-deconstruction*, leading to eternal *self-construction*. This phenomenon posits the generation of collage as an anticipation of contemporary discourse. Furthermore, collage configures the *paradigm of self-reflexive art*. This kind of art examines the limits as well as the potential of its deconstruction.

3. INABILITY TO INTERNALIZE THE OTHER

Collage, which cites various sources, while using them as a means for self-expression, inevitably implies the impossibility to fully grasp these sources i.e. the Other¹. The role of the detached Other is further emphasized in collage, by its participation as the "reader" in the production of collage as an *open work*. The Other is subsumed by collage/ the artist/ the "reader", but not identified with, or internalized, by them. Adopting Friedman's explanation of premodern and postmodern forms of identity (Friedman 1992:336-338), it might be said that in the process of identity formation of collage perceiver (the artist and the viewer), the Other, which (under different circumstances) is internalized and transformed into a process of self-identification (the Lacanian mirror stage i.e. the

mother-Other's identification of the child), in its dispersed-fragmented state, is replaced by holistic cosmologies and symbolic networks and *the mirror identification process is never internalized*. Therefore, this process of identity formation, is founded upon a primary state of *narcissism*. This impossibility to fully internalize the Other implies dependence on the external world for identification. We are *narcissistically* dependent on the Other, in order to become ourselves. Now the mirror is not only *externalized*, it is *fractured* as well and narcissism is revealed as a "clinical" state.

Another aspect of the relation to the Other is revealed by the transgression of frames/borders maintained by collage. The act of "framing" is problematical, being connected to the establishment of self-identity, which is on its part, inseparable from the establishment of the identity of the Other. Nevertheless, the crystallization of self-identity is a dynamic process: collage articulates various "frames" or territories which are alternately "open" and "closed" through the "reading" process and therefore introduces flexible, changing frames of identity, both formally and conceptually.

4. REFERENCES TO MAJOR META-ARTISTIC CONCEPTIONS

Collage primarily refers to the essence of art: it brings to consciousness the notion of referentiality.

Similarly, collage impels an examination of the category of *meaning*: collage serves as a drive event which produces a *de-realization* of realities introduced by different excerpts. The mere act of joining these documents together changes their meaning. The allegorical impulse, which endows collage a wide field of meanings, involves the entirely abstract category of meaning itself: the process of "reading" collage implies ascribing importance to the *fabrication of meaning* more than to the meanings themselves.

The prominence of the notion of referentiality and the category of meaning emphasizes the shift from nature to *culture* as the subject matter of art, consequently undermining the importance of *representation*. Collage "intervenes" in the world instead of reflecting it. It mounts a process of unlimited arbitrary accumulation, while resisting logocentrism (apart from the rational imposition of order during the process of construction and conception), deconstructing the very concept and philosophy of mimesis. Thus, collage suggests a conventional model for the work of art, namely: heterogeneity, simultaneity, repetition and openness, as an alternative to the organic model of growth and its classical assumptions of harmony, unity, linearity and closure.

In collage, the possibility is achieved of seeing *complexity* and *contradiction* as a regulative idea in art, vs. the classical approach which yearns for

commensurability and unity. The inclusion of detached components within a single work of art brings about a search for affinities among them, in a desire for reconciliation. Nevertheless, once achieved, consensus "collapses", to be replaced by contradiction as the sovereign principle. Wholeness is lost in favour of an *(in)determinacy* of form, that accepts both *heterogeneity* and a *formative principle* at work..

5. ASCRIBING IMPORTANCE TO THE PARTICULAR AND THE UNIVERSAL

As an artistic procedure, collage means the introduction of particular excerpts or the evocation of general associations in terms of particular approaches. Thus its strategy may be described according to the *philosophical concept of the concrete particular*.

This kind of art is not so much a subjective invention as the "*objective discovery of the new within the given, immanently, through regrouping of its elements*" (Theodor Adorno cited by Buck- Morss 1977: 132). Art appears as a search for *knowledge*, for the *potential* and the *inner logic* of the object. The material is "rearranged" in order to render its "truth". In this respect, collage strategy resembles science, thus enabling the exploitation of the tension between science and art.

The metamorphosis of the *particular* into the *universal* is linked to the conjunction of *rationalization and individuation*. This linkage, which has been explained in ethics (Eder 1988) is based on the third Kantian Critique of Judgment, namely the aesthetic critique, which implies the subsumption of the particular by a particular, with reference to a universal. Particulars, under suitable circumstances, may have a ritual and symbolic status, nominating and classificatory powers and consequently become *unmediated universals*. The unavoidable *rational* mental process, which brings about an imposition of order, reflexively helps shape the particular components: sources, styles, aesthetic approaches and cultural phenomena within the work of art, thus turning them into universals i.e. these particulars conjoin to suggest general ideas; they unveil collage's own strategy; and they constitute (almost paradoxically) the artist's self-expression². Yet, since the particulars are fragmented and their conjunction leads to ambiguous meaning, the universals achieved are tentative, "soft" conclusions. They summon a repetitive return to the particulars and vice versa, thus leading to "nomadism" between the particular and the universal, in accordance with the general phenomenon of "nomadism" (previously explained) which typifies collage.

A good example of these shifts between the particular and the universal, valid for every collage, is the temporality of the excerpts and of the associations evoked by them. As Berman concludes in reference to "Low Modernism" in general, the time of the discussed particulars is not the abstract, homogenous time of a system, but rather, the self-constructed time of the "flaneur", namely

subjective, irregular and unpredictable duration (close to the Bergsonian view. Lash and Friedman 1992: 11). Thus a minimally mediated universal (i.e. time) is transformed into a particular, still with reference to the universal, but without impelling a search for uniformity. This transformation is being repeatedly examined during the "reading" process of collage, thus maintaining the bi-directional "nomadism".

6. A BRIDGE BETWEEN MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM, STRUCTURALISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM

The question about the prominence of the particular configured within collage is undetachable from the current debate about modernism and postmodernism. Apparently, collage accords characteristics of postmodernism: it deals with the plurality of quotations and associations, intertextuality, references to the past, etc. As a matter of fact, it conjoins characteristics of modernism as well as of postmodernism. The search for order impelled by it complies with the features of modernism. Adopting Ihab Hassan's classical comparative list of modern and postmodern characteristics, some of the prominent features of modernity are: conjunctive/closed form, purpose, hierarchy, mastery/logos, art-object, creation/totalization, boundary and selection. (Hassan 1993:146-156). All these features are searched for during the process of "reading" collage. Nevertheless, typical features of postmodernism, as disjunctive/open "anti-form", play, chance,

anarchy, process, deconstruction, absence, dispersal, intertext, syntagm, misreading, anti-narrative and indeterminacy are immanent within collage as well, linked to its allegorical impulse and disorder. Collage bridges the gap between modernism and postmodernism while examined in the light of another viewpoint as well, by ascribing to modernism: *movement, flow, change, unpredictability* and the reassertion of the *sensual* nature of the Baroque allegory (Lash and Friedman 1992:1-3). In addition to this, although theoretically, the allegorical impulse had been conceived as antithetical to the modernist credo: *Il faut etre de son temps*, in practice, at least, allegory remains *in potentia* in modernism.

As has been shown, the search for order impelled by collage, can be seen as similar to structuralist activity. Yet, the disorder which reappears, while abolishing any unambiguous structure, refuses a rigid fixation of the place and function of any component within the system. This refusal is on a par with the poststructuralist rejection of rigid narratives or rigid universals (Gurevitz 1997:24). Not only is reading of the narrative constantly undermined by the desire to reveal its artistic aspects, but also is the narrative constantly changed as a result of indeterminate attachment-detachment of elements during the "reading" process. The equal value and dignity characteristic of the various components of collage reflect contemporary resistance to sovereign universals. The whole construct of the work of art expands toward a totality which is close to the *infinite*. This totality refuses any ideal normative conception of the world. Rather, it summons influences of new discoveries and renewed contact with reality (Eco 1989:14).

Thus, collage allows the coexistence of structuralist as well as poststructuralist approaches.

The concept of *difference*, discussed extensively in reference to poststructuralism, may exemplify the linkage to both approaches in collage. On the one hand, judging from structural linguistics, it is clear that the components of collage are not endowed with significance by themselves, but rather, accomplish their meaning by virtue of the systematic differences among them, through their relations with one another (Culler 1981:27-29). On the other hand, collage exemplifies the transition discussed by Derrida, from *differ* into *defer* i.e. meaning is always *deffered*, perhaps to the point of an endless supplementarity, by the play of signification (Norris 1982:32).

Furthermore, the mere situation of coexistence of contradictions might be linked to poststructuralist thought which offers no theoretical reason to move in one direction rather than another and thus posits rationality as a limiting framework. It might be said that collage introduces poststructuralist approach not in the sense of invalidating the structuralist one, but rather, as an evolution of structuralist approach into a "softer", more flexible method, resistant to rigid structures, which means invalidation of rigid universals, as well.

7. COLLAGE AS A MODEL FOR *SVELTNESS*

Collage requires a special kind of a "reader", capable of discerning the constant changes brought about during the process of "reading". This "reader" should have *suppleness, speed* and the *ability to submit to metamorphosis*. These characteristics form the concept of *svelteness*, a Zen and Italian term, used by Sim and Lyotard, in order to introduce the ideal "poststructuralist man" (Sim 1992:108). This ability seems to comply with the Foucaultian ideal intellectual, who destroys universalities, "who locates and points out, in the inertias and constraints of the present, the weak points, the openings, the lines of stress, who constantly displaces himself, not knowing exactly where he'll be nor what he'll think tomorrow, because he is too attentive to the present." Thus both Lyotard and Foucault introduce an individual who is engaged in *a war against totality, constraints of systems, logic and value judgment, on grand narratives*. As Lyotard explains, it is the *unpredictable nature of svelteness* that enables breaking up narrative monopolies (Lyotard 1986:6-7). The svelte-sceptic approach to collage, brings about a recognition of the little narratives within the larger ones, as well as the flexible character of the latter.

Svelteness summons *agonisticism*: individual moves necessarily provoke countermoves. This situation prevents authority from ever becoming entrenched. Thus collage, which is typified by undecidables, paradoxes, discontinuity, unrecoverability, chaos and the prominence of the absent and the production of the

new within the given due to new combinations, provides a model for svelteness and for agonistic behaviour.

8. A STIMULUS FOR CONSTANT INNOVATION

In collage, art appears as a search for the potential within the object, the material, a search for the inner logic of the object. The material is "rearranged" in order to render its truth.

The simulacrum thus constructed, does not render the world as it has found it. Moreover, it seems that for the viewer (artist or analyst) the process is most important. As Barthes phrased it: the work's present being is its past act: it is "having been made" (Barthes 1972:86).

Collage, by presenting the coexistence of irreconcilable contradictions, creates an unlimited field of possibilities that contributes to the enrichment of our mental and intellectual faculties. The contribution of collage to art and thought may be compared to the contribution of the saprophyte to nature, or of ruins to culture (adopting Ulmer's comparison to allegory's contribution to thought, Ulmer 1983:100), as the generator of new life.

The absence of a unified significance embedded within collage, is precisely the reason for its ceaseless excitation. As symbolic logic explains, contradictory results are followed by *everything* rather than by *nothing*: "Anything is true if a contradiction is true" (Fitch 1952:54).

Collage strategy is itself an image of the "break up", the "disintegration" of civilization in the modern world (Ulmer 1983:97): contradictions of the present are brought forth without resolution. This lack of resolution is the generator of innovation within the already existing elements. Collage constructs an object, or rather mounts a *process* in order to "intervene in the world", not to reflect but to change reality.

An inevitable deduction from this discussion would be that form appears as the generator of the conceptual approach and of the content of the work of art not less than the images used in it. The content and atmosphere of every collage are determined to a great extent by its being collage. Some collages introduce images which present a similar content, thus enhancing the allegorical influence of the work as an "allegory of allegory".

The special stimulus evoked by collage, as has been explained, is the reason for its extensive evolution in various artistic media throughout the twentieth century, to reach its peak in the amalgamation of disciplines, including the fusion of time and space and the realms of art and life i.e. an extreme expansion of the formal as well as conceptual transgression of frames.

With reference to contemporary collages/collage-paintings, one discerns the use of an unlimited variety of subjects, sources and ideas, in comparison to the use of certain subjects, certain kinds of citations and ideas, resulting in similar works of art in collage at the beginning of the century.

Contemporary approach, which suggests no privileged direction in creation or "reading" collage, conceals the "danger" of confusion or boredom that follows

"white noise". Moreover, the role of the artist as the determinative of "reading" is undermined, subjecting decipherment to indeterminacy and chance. This playfulness, which typifies any collage, including inferior works, might be conceived as lacking seriousness. This influence raises the question of the validity of the absence of hierarchies or directions in future developments of the notion of collage.

Nevertheless, the role of collage in the evolution of art is a cardinal one. It serves as a model for art, which suggests *enciphering* and *deciphering* at the same time. It provides forms and meanings which can come to terms with the *(un)stable* structures of culture at the end of the millennium. Thus, this narrative of and about, collage can be only a beginning.

ENDNOTES CONCLUSIONS

1. In this respect, citations of the artist's own previous works within a collage-painting are not necessarily known to the viewer within their full context, thus implying the distant view of an "Other".
2. Beck recognized the paradox of rationalization - modernization - individualization: we have become so rational that we can reflexively help shape particularist and localist ethics (Beck 1986).

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Fig. 1 Albrecht Durer, *Melancoly I* (1514).



Fig. 2. Michal Na'aman, *Family of Man* (1981).

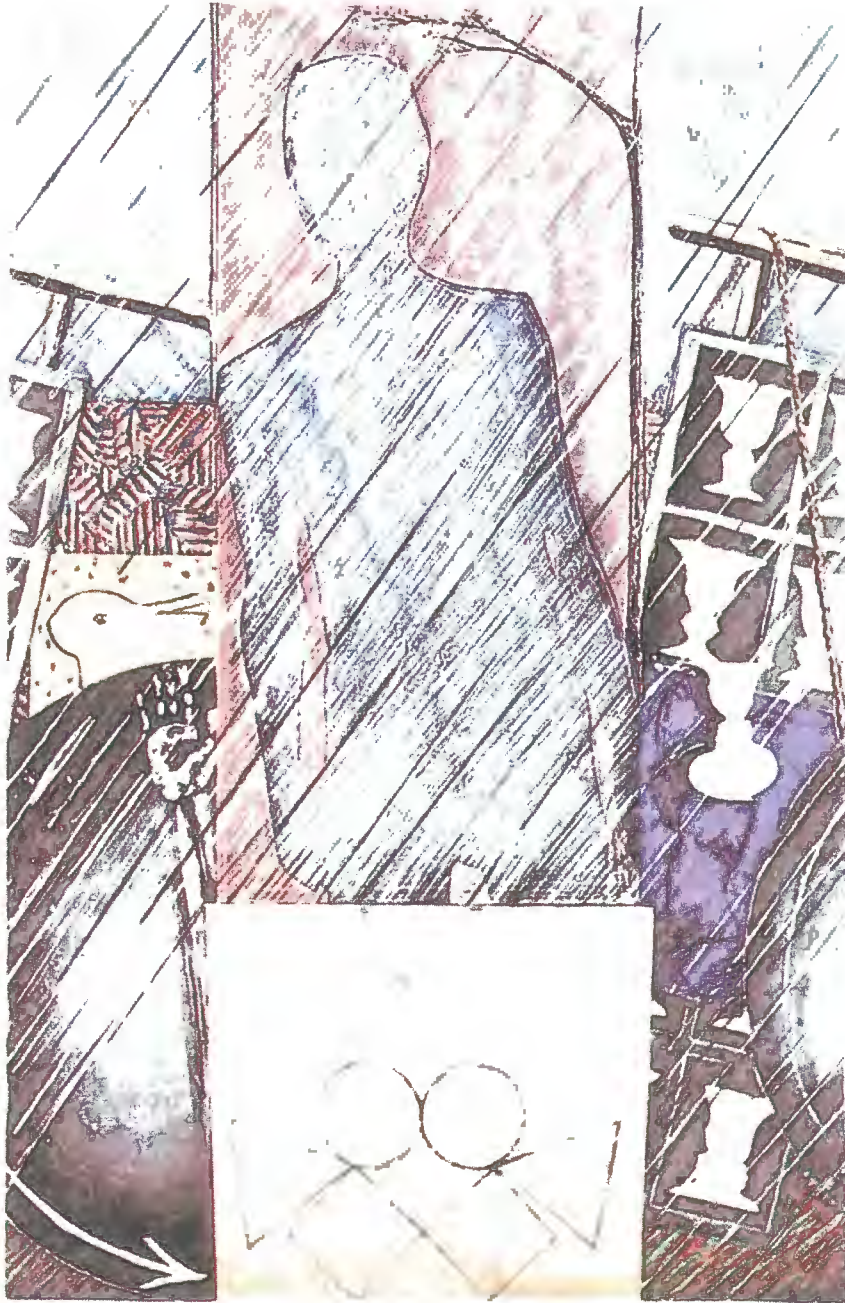


Fig.3 Jasper Johns, *The Spring* (1987).



Fig. 4 Edward Munch, *Self-Portrait with Skeletal Arm* (1895).



Fig. 5 Jasper Johns, *Periscope* (1963).



Fig.6 Pablo Picasso, *Minotaur Moving his House* (1936).



Fig. 7 Pablo Picasso *The Shadow* (1953).



Fig. 8 Albrecht Durer,
Adam and Eve (1504).



Fig. 9 Matthias Grunewald,
The Temptation of Saint Anthony,
Isenheim Altarpiece
(c. 1516-1512).



Fig. 10 Jasper Johns,
The Autumn (1987).



Fig. 11 Jasper Johns,
The Seasons (1989).



Fig. 12 Dina Hoffman, *Theater of Patches* (1999).



Fig. 13 Donatello, *The Penitent Magdalene* (c. 1453-55).



Fig. 14 *The Desposition and Burial of Christ*. Codex Egberti. Trier (c. 980).

Fig. 15 Traditional Turkish shadow-puppets: figures of the descent woman and the prostitute.





Fig. 16 Leonardo da Vinci, *Last Supper* (1495-98).

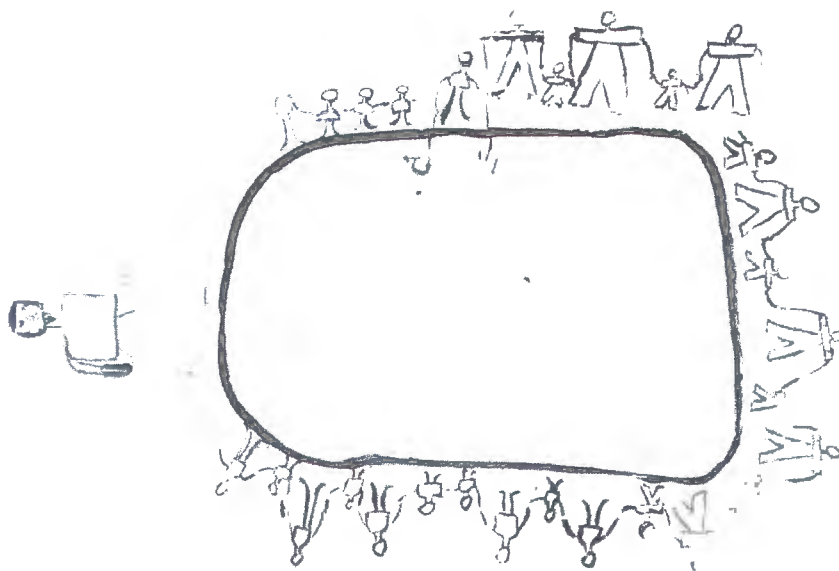


Fig. 17 A drawing by a child (7 years old), *People around a Pool*.



Fig. 18 Emil Nolde,
Last Supper (1909).
(detail)



Fig. 19: Henri Matisse,
Harmony in Red
(1908-9).



Fig. 20 Andy Warhol,
Marilyn Monroe (1962).



Fig.21 The Dipilon painter,
large Geometric funerary
krater from the Dipilon
(c. 750 B.C.).

Fig. 22 Judi Chicago,
The dinner party
(1979).



Fig.23 Turkish
traditional embroidery



Fig. 24 Edelson Mary Beth. *Some Living American Women Artists* (1972).



Fig. 25 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled I* (1989).



Fig. 26 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled II* (1989).



Fig. 27 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled III* (1989).



Fig. 28 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 1* (1990).



Fig. 29 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 2* (1991).



Fig. 30 *Untitled 2*, detail of the upper part.



Fig. 31 *Untitled 2*, detail of the bottom.



Fig. 32 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 2* (1991). (detail of the left area)



Fig. 33 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 3* (1991).

Fig. 34 *Untitled 3*, detail of the center.





Fig. 35 *Untitled 3*, detail of the central upper area.



Fig. 36 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 4* (1991).



Fig. 37 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 5* (1990).



Fig. 38 *Untitled 5*, detail of the middle bottom area.



Fig. 39 *Untitled 5*, detail of the right area.



Fig. 40 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 6* (1990).



Fig. 41 *Untitled 6*, detail of the central area.



Fig. 42 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 7* (1991).



Fig. 43 *Untitled 7*, detail of the left area.



Fig. 44 *Untitled 7*, detail of the right area.



Fig. 45 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 8* (1991), seen from above.

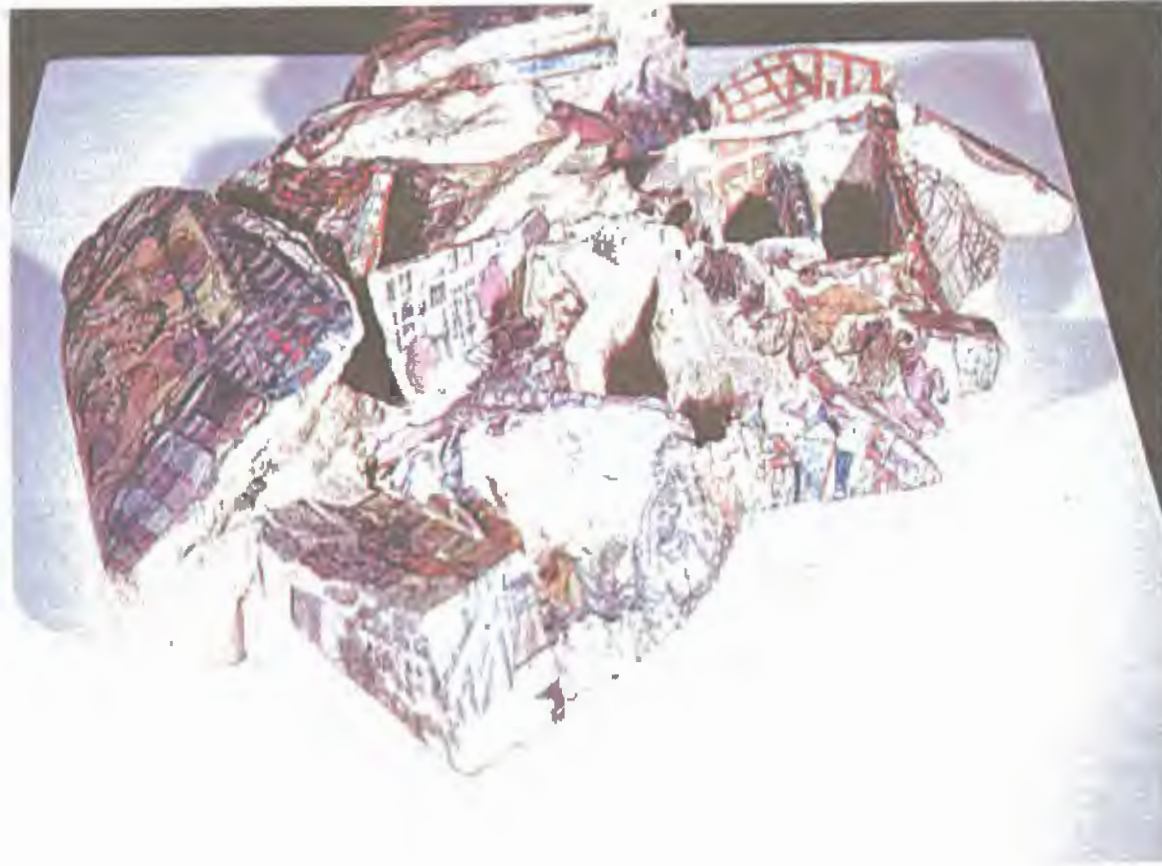


Fig. 46 *Untitled 8.*



Fig. 47 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 9* (1991).



Fig. 48 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 10* (1991).



Fig. 49 *Untitled 10*, detail of the middle area.

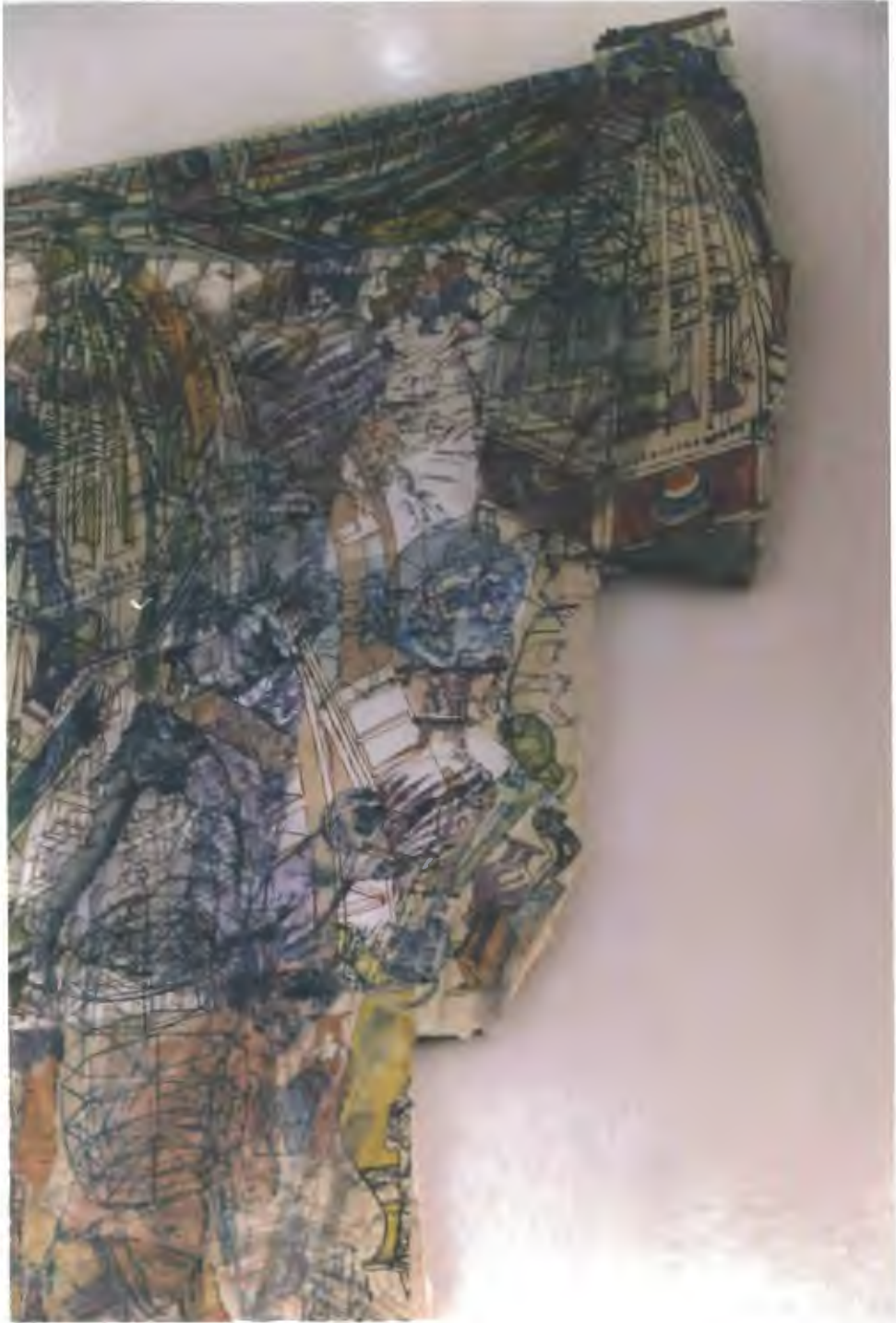


Fig. 50 *Untitled 10*, detail of the upper left area.



Fig. 51 *Untitled 10*, detail of the upper area.



Fig. 52 Zahava Edelsburg, *Untitled 11* (1991).

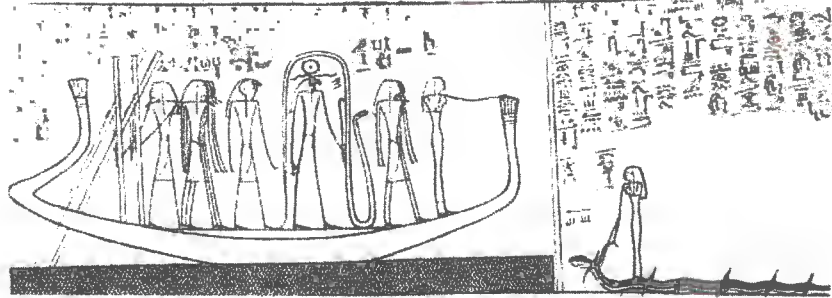


Fig. 53 *The sun boat* (destruction of the serpent before the sun boat), tomb of Seti I, Thebes (thirteenth century B.C.).

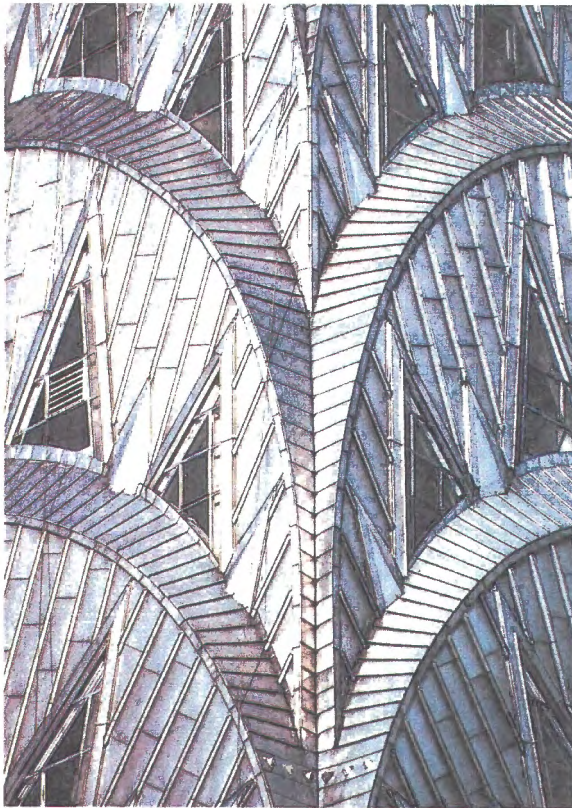


Fig. 54 William Van Alen, *Chrysler Building*, New York (1930), detail of the upper part.

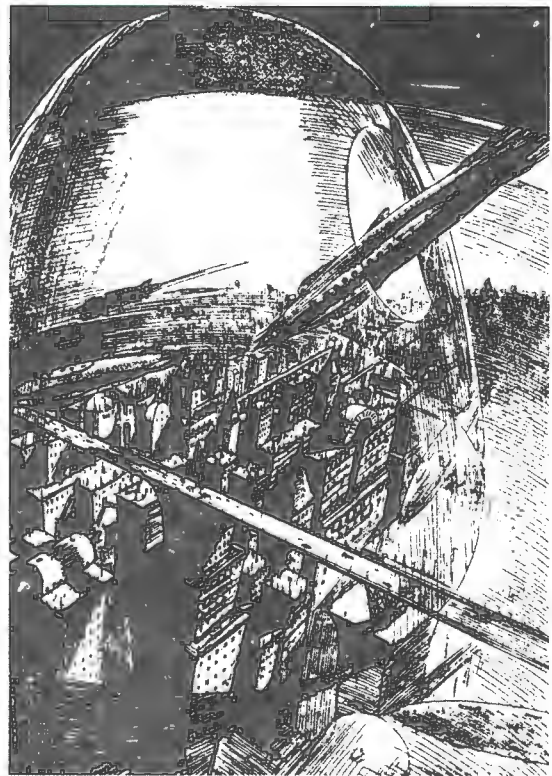


Fig.55 Leo Morey, an illustration of a fictional encased city (1934).



Fig. 56 Three stages in the development of the young baboon, according to the zoologist Irven de Vore.



Fig. 57 The repetitive ritual of threat, intimidation and self-abasement, performed by the baboons in order to avoid actual combat.

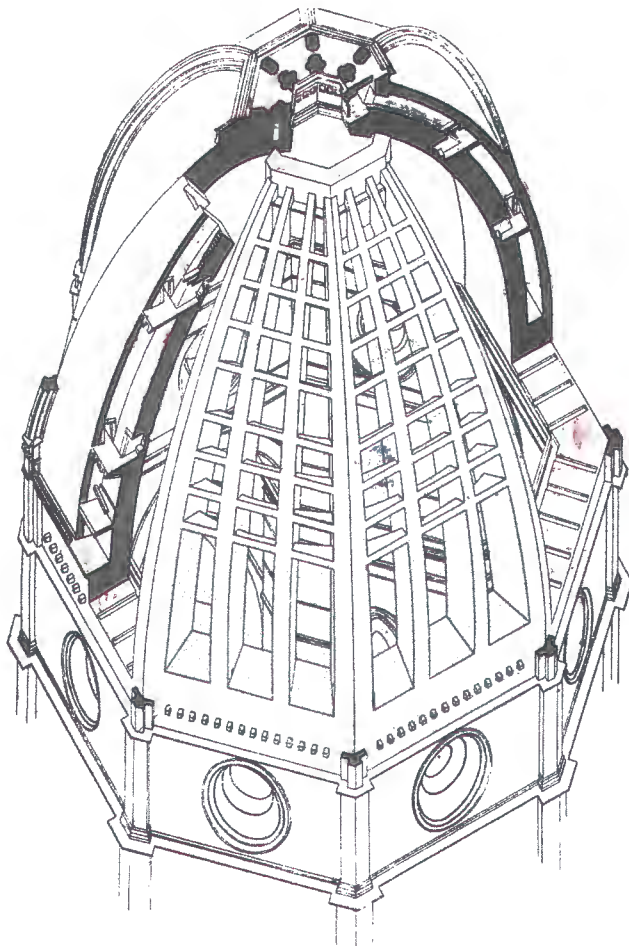


Fig. 58 Filippo Brunelleschi, the plan of the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore (according to Sanpaolesi).

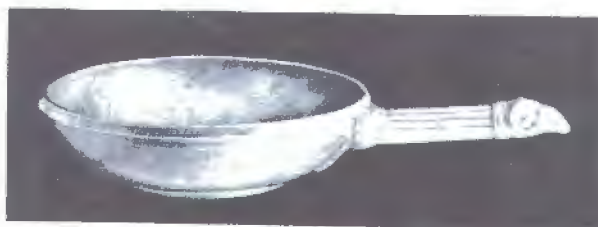
Fig. 59 Baboon, painted limestone relief. Detail from a chapel of Ptolemy I (Ptolemeic period, c. 300 B.C.).



Fig. 60 Copper poles, probably for worship, found in the "Treasure Cave" in Nachal Mishmar, (Chalcolithic period).



Fig. 61 Bronze decorated Jar from "The Letters Cave" in Nachal Hever (second century).



טראח מן העד ומיורים של האסורה.

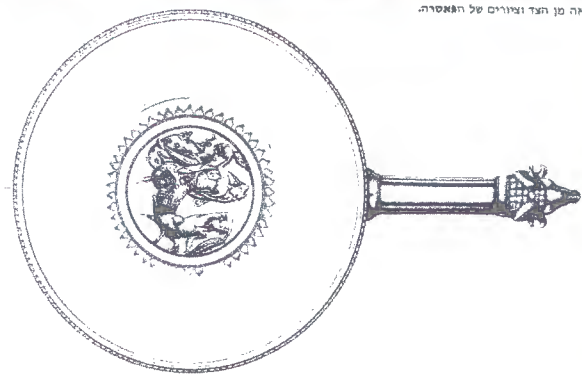


Fig. 62 Bronze decorated "libation" bowl from "The Letters Cave" in Nachal Hever (second century).



Fig. 63 Bronze key from "The Letters Cave" in Nachal Hever (second century).



Fig. 64 Stopper from one of the four canopic urns in the form of the king's head, the tomb of Tutankhamen (fourteenth century B.C.).

Fig. 65 Don Eddy,
Glassware I
(1978).



Fig. 66 Allan MacColom, *The Dog from Pompei* (1991).



Fig. 67 Michal Na'aman, *Chicks and Whelps* (1977).



Fig. 68 David Salle, *Untitled* (1984).



Fig. 69 Tamar Getter, *Green Landscapes with Inverted Heads* (1982).



Fig. 70 Picasso, *Studies for Self-Portrait with a Palette* (1906).



Fig. 71 Pablo Picasso, *Still Life on a Piano* (1912).



Fig. 72 Max Ernst, *Massacre of the Innocents* (1921).



Fig. 73 Kurt Schwitters, *Mirror Collage* (1920).

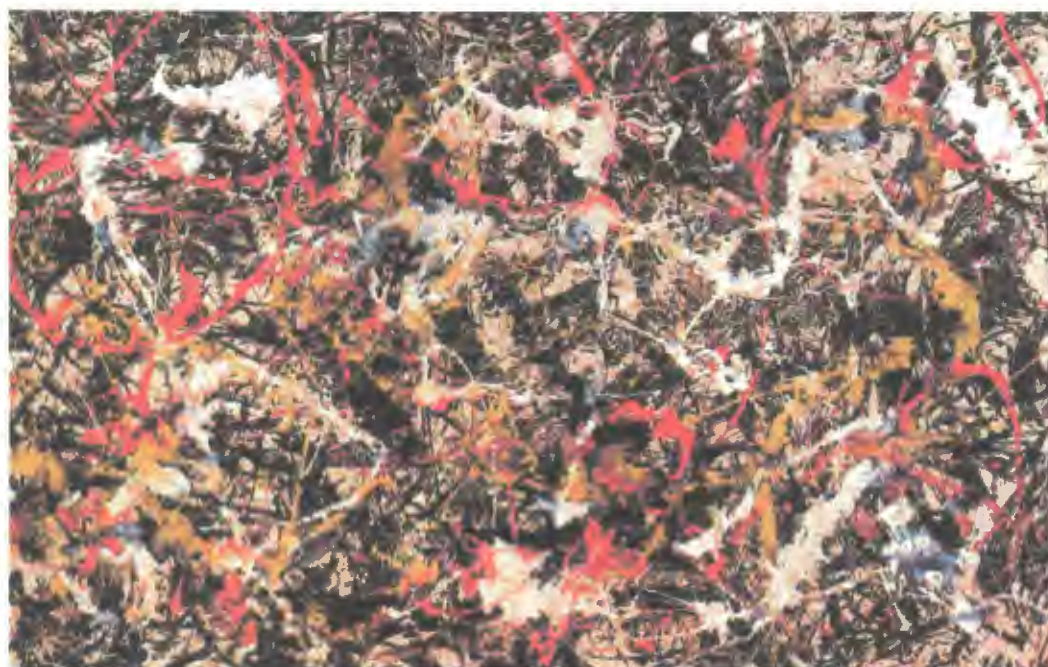


Fig. 74 Jackson Pollock. *Unification* (1952).