TITLE: "THE WORD AS IMAGE": a survey with special reference to
the twentieth century.

RESEARCH ESSAY

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

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by S. EDWORTHY (nee Lauer)
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DEDICATION

For my Mom and Dad, Hedda and Victor Lauer, my family and
friends.

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"The artist sees and feels not only shapes but words as well. We

see words everywhere in modern life; we're bombarded by them.

But, physically, words are also shapes. You don't want banal

boring words any more than you want banal boring shapes or a

banal boring life."

-- Stuart Davis, as quoted by Katherine Kuh, The Artists Voice

(1960).

This essay is intended, firstly for those who at some time have

had the urge to include words into their otherwise conventional

representational images, but are deterred by the suspicion that

such elements have no place in the picture plane.

Secondly, it is hoped, that this dissertation will provide some

understanding concerning the motivations and aims of artists,

using "verbal symbols" in their visual images. At this point, I

offer some explanation of the term "verbal symbols". The

alphabet that we are accustomed to today differs vastly from the

first writing that was invented. The naming of items nowadays is

arbitrarily established and all we are left with is a name that

bears no visual resemblance to the object it represents in real

life. The word "house", for example, tells us nothing of the

physical nature of a house. However, owing to our conditioning,

the word evokes in us a mental picture of a house, even if the

details of this picture will vary amongst individuals. Words

then are symbols which denote, broadly speaking, objects that

exist in our daily lives, without being in any way visual

representations of these objects. Of course there are also words which are dependent on other words for their meaning, such as prepositions, conjunctions or suffices, but this is irrelevant to this essay.

The second interesting factor about words is that physically, as Stuart Davis said, they are also shapes. Not only their meaning, but also their appearance, can evoke imaginary images. An extreme example of this would be an excerpt from Great Expectations, by Charles Dickens:

"As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of them, my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's grave gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair..."

By incorporating words, the artist can therefore give his work additional meaning. This combination of words with images however, extends our accepted way perceiving Art, since it includes two forms of communications, the verbal and the visual. The response to this combination has always been diverse. In order to interpret any kind of writing in a work of art, the viewer needs a certain knowledge. He must be familiar with the visual objects shown in the picture, he should be aware of artistic conventions current in a given cultural area and epoch. He should also be familiar with the language and the given system of writing in question. Generally, this is why inscriptions appeal to a limited circle of spectators. The viewer is able to

interpret the painting, without being able to read or comprehend the writing contained in it.

If all these requirements are not met by he spectator, his response to a particular artwork will differ from what it could have been. His perception of the artwork will be on a purely visual level. This realization led me to consider this subject from a historical viewpoint. It is important to reconstruct, the great changes that took place in society over the centuries and to consider the role which art played in these societies at that time, in order to understand any stylistic innovations.

Words have always been a part of the visual arts. Incidently, one of the greatest art objects, the `Rosetta Stone', is made up entirely of writing showing the same text in three visual forms.

Another civilization that has elevated writing to an artform is China. Chinese calligraphy is in fact the highest achievement of visual art. Unfortunately, most viewers are still largely ignorant to its beauty and degree of difficulty. In no other artform, - as in Chinese painting, - has the painted word been so successfully intergrated with the visual image.

As Michael Sullivan once stated: "In Chinese painting space is simply space - the matrix out of which forms emerge. As space it can be as readily occupied by a poem as by a rock as by a pinetree. The poem becomes as much a part of the total work of art as any object the painter puts in and has as much claim to the picture space." (quote: M. Sullivan)

The words become images, perhaps owing to their incredible visual
appeal as objects. In Chinese painting, - as in no other
artform, - the fact that we, as Westerners cannot read or
comprehend the content of the scriptures, becomes irrelevant.
The words themselves are picturesque, - aesthetic objects, - and
their value is that of visual beauty. Words included in Chinese
paintings are often the name of the artist, place and date of
execution of the particular work. However, the artist might also
include whole poems in his paintings, philosophy or even
metaphysics.

As the scope of this dissertation covers such a wide range, I
have limited my discussion to two dimensional art, although
special reference may be made to other artforms. Since there are
as many art movements as there are artists in the twentieth
century, this discussion is based on individuals, rather than
artistic movements as a whole. I have only chosen those which
are of particular interest to me, or those artists who
essentially illustrate specific points. I have deliberately left
out French Letterism and Concrete Poetry as these artforms
consist of images made up of words entirely. I have concentrated
on words which are combined with images. However, there will be
some discussion of Futurism, whereby words constitute the entire
image. These examples are included, because they are
illustrations of a more complex whole and they do not form an
entire art movement as such.

HERMANN HESSE:

"All people treasure words and letters as something holy and
magical. By incorporating the naming and the writing into
magical rituals the spirit takes possession of nature. The gift
of writing has been praised everywhere to be of divine origin."

I. A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ART AND SOCIETY

In primitive and archaic societies, such as that of the Egyptians, art was still a vital activity. Religious values and traditions gave these societies their coherence and art was a way of expressing and upholding their principles. Works of art were not considered as aesthetic objects judged by standards of beauty, but rather as an activity which served to create and preserve unity. All man's activities, including art, were determined by his faith. The style of work the artist assumed was laid down by tradition. The artist was a craftsman, hardly aware of his own individuality.

These were also the conditions for the Egyptian scribe, even though, in this largely illiterate society, he assumed an important role in expressing society's religious ideas. Writing, as such, most probably originated in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Then, however, it differed vastly from the form of alphabetical writing we know today. It's inventors used simplified drawings, - known today as pictographs, - to write down symbols which represented words. This pictographic way of writing had obvious limitations; it could represent concrete objects, but could not express abstract concepts. This was solved by using ideograms: that is, symbols which stand for several related words or concepts. The original pictograph depicting the sun, for example, could then be extended into an ideogram meaning day or daytime. (Watterson, 1981, p.25-26)

This also formed the basis for the first hieroglyphic writing. The word hieroglyphic is derived from the Greek word meaning

'sacred writing'. From its inception in Egypt, hieroglyphic writing seems to have consisted of a combination of ideograms (signs representing ideas), and phonograms (signs representing sound), assembled in a fairly complex way. (Watterson, 1981, p.36)

It was only from the eighteenth dynasty onwards that hieroglyphics were combined with wall paintings to decorate tombs and chapels designed for burial. This use of images and hieroglyphics stems from the Egyptian belief in life after death. Tomb paintings show the many different events of life on earth, as well as funeral ceremonies and rural scenes, - all rendered in great detail. The funerary texts which accompanied these scenes, served as magical formulas, believed to transform the painted scenes and the people into reality. These not only consist of magical spells, formulae and incantations, but also of hymns, litanies, myths, names and prayers, as well as the names and titles of the personage shown in the painting. Sometimes they also related the story of the person's life - a story addressed to his descendants, from whom he expected prayers and sacrifices. The content of some of these inscriptions were believed to have been composed by the God Thoth, the scribe of the Gods, and therefore were believed to be of divine origin. They were the appropriate magic formulas preserved in writing, which prevented the dead persons second or final death. For the deceased, this ensured a similar or happier life in the hereafter, compared to the one he had already experienced. (Wallis, 1975, p.80) In the hieroglyphic writing as well as in the paintings they accompany, we find the same representations, i.e. a bird, drawn

in the same convention. Jean Capart stated that in Egypt the art of writing did not differ from that of drawing: on the same tomb we often find an animal shown, in one case, in its natural state and in the other as a hieroglyphic. In each instance, the two pictures are identical. (quoted after Etiemble,R; La Scrittura, Milan, 1962, p.89) The most interesting fact about these elaborate artworks is that they were never really seen or read by the average person, since the tombs or pyramids were sealed after the funeral service. They were not intended for the masses, nor did they serve a diadactical purpose. They did not have to be seen and read at all: it sufficed that they were there and they took effect by the very fact of their existence.

The use of words and images changed rapidly. By the time Christianity was officially recognised in 392AD, writing had already developed away from pictographs. Art was still at the service of religion, and with the rapid development of church building under Constantine, there was a need for an artform, that would arouse religious feelings in the spectator. Paintings were used as a pictorial narrative in the Church, to educate the still vastly illiterate public. The inscriptions which are found in these artworks, were intended to clarify the often highly stylized images. This would help the literate spectator to identify the persons shown in a scene, who could in turn then interpret the scene for the illiterate.

The ways in which inscriptions were introduced varied. Sometime, in mosaics, the inscription was written on a flat usually gold

background. For example THE TRANSFIGURATION, ca. 548-565, mosaic
in the apse, Mount Sinai, monastery of st. Catherine,(Beckwith,
1970, p.105, fig.85) Christ is represented between Elias and
Moses. There are also apostles John and James kneeling, and St.
Peter lying below the feet of Christ. (Beckwith, 1970, p.105)
The names of the apostles are written above their heads, floating
freely on the gold background. Even though the faces of the
apostles are all different, it would still help a person to
establish who they are, by reading their names. In some mosaics,
however, the inscriptions become indispensable. The PROCESSION
OF THE VIRGINS, ca. 556-569AD, (Beckwith, 1970, p.108, fig.88),
is an example where the faces are so stylized that they become
hardly distinguishable from one another. In the inscription
above the women's heads, the names Christina, Savina, Avina,
Anatola and Victoria are visible.

According to M. Wallis, long inscriptions in Medieval Art are
rarely original texts: "In most cases they consist of quotations
from the Old and New Testament, or Church songs, such as the
hymns of St. Ambrose. Since inscriptions often were quotations, -
the artist and his consultant could expect an educated spectator
to know the full text in question -, inscriptions served not so
much to communicate something new as to recall something
well-known and were accordingly given in an abbreviated form."
(quoted: M. Wallis, 1975, p.71)

Inscriptions were an important factor for the development of
Christianity, but as M. Wallis says: "At that time only few of
the faithful knew how to read, and out of those only very few

knew Latin and/or the other languages in which such inscriptions were written. But the inscriptions could have a strong emotional appeal even to those who could not read, since those people had a presentiment of the fact that the inscriptions were important, that they contained the sacred truth of the creed, and the realization of this made those mysterious signs which they did not understand something that demanded respect." (quote: M. Wallis, 1975, p.71)

Another development in art took place in the western European countries during the Christian era; the production of illustrated manuscripts. Books were written and illustrated by hand - Gospel Books for example. Illustrated manuscripts also included secular books. These formed the medium for the scriptures from the Classical and the Medieval Ages.

These books brought about a change in the relationship between the written word and the visual image. In Byzantine Art, for example, the image was designed to inform the illiterate, and words were explanatory to the image. Illuminated manuscripts however, were intended mainly for literate people, thus forming a kind of elite art form. The images in these book, apart from thematic illustrations, consist of highly decorated letters belonging to the text. The decorations served different purposes. As C. de Hamel explains, in the eight century for example, a Gospel did not have chapter numbers or running titles, the decorations thus served a practical function, helping one to find one's way about the Gospel. These decorations consisted of bright carpet pages which provided the quickest indication of the

beginning of each Gospel. The large decorative initials, of

varying sizes, were also common in these books, which

conveniently separated the text into visually recognizable

sections. There were also theological reasons for illuminating a

manuscript. The Gospel books were decorated because they

contained and revealed the work of God. His word was honoured

with elaborate ornamentation. A well known example is one of the

opening pages from the great book of Kells, - the XPI PAGE. - (De

Hamel, 1986, p.27, plate 22) XPY - are the first letters in Greek

for 'Christ'. The lavish decoration and complex intertwine of

these three letter embellish the whole page, making it difficult

to decipher the individual letters at first glance.

At this stage, the images and the letters are still very

closely linked. Over the centuries, however, the images started

to develop on pages separate to that of the writing. This may

have been caused by the greater demand for books, which

subsequently became reproduced on a larger scale. As told by C.

de Hamel, often manuscripts consisted only of written material

and were only illustrated afterwards in the small space left for

the illustrators. In the twelfth century, the making and keeping

of books was essentially managed by monks. [1.] Monks needed

liturgical books in large quantities and monasteries were the

focal points of intellectual and artistic life during this

century. By 1170AD, books were generally larger and the text

often written in two columns to one page. The first letter of

each paragraph was enlarged and decorated in its appropriate

1. Illuminations had been mostly monastic, except for Carolingian
and Ottonian illumination. During the twelfth century,
especially in England, illuminations were mainly done by monks.

position in the text to mark the beginning of each book or
chapter. The enlarged initial served as a visual guide into a
more important part of the text. The other illustrations - those
that were not connected to the written text - were there to
explain the written text in visual terms. For example, a
Bestiary, or book of animals (De Hamel, 1986, pl.194, p.100) is
really only comprehensible with pictures. A miniature
accompanying the text shows a flying fish, which the text calls a
sardine. But even manuscripts of the Church Fathers were
difficult to use. The reader was ensured of not losing his
place, because he had initials as a visual aid to remembering.
The great illustration cycles of the lives of saints must have
helped the reader understand rather badly written texts, - viz.
the fifty-five miniatures in a copy of the life of St. Cuthbert
made at Durham. A large Bible is difficult to use without a
visual guide to the vast text: Pictures serve this function.
They identify and grade the importance of texts. (De Hamel; 1986,
p.100-101)

As the demand for books grew, the monks may have called on
professional artists to help illuminate the books. The
production of the manuscript was thus divided and allocated to
different people. Scribes would write the text, others were
illuminators, - all of which again fostered the separation of
text and image onto different pages. Another interesting point
to note here is that the work of writing and illuminating used to
be done by one person. As the work became divided, scribe and
artists developed separately.

In the late twelfth century, the book trade, including secular books, grew together with the rise of European Universities. The final break between image and text arose with the invention of the first printing press in Germany, in about 1450AD. Illustrations and text were now processed separately, and its tremendous advantages to publishers and booksellers became obvious. Some scribes turned to illumination and even printed books were often illuminated to make them look like exclusive manuscripts.

With the evolution of easel painting during the Gothic period, major changes arose although progress was slow. Firstly, the image moved from books and walls of cathedral onto the easel. The artist, a craftsman up until now, started to emerge as a individual who no longer remained anonymous. We now find panel paintings - for instance the PIETA, by Giovanni Da Milano, done ca. 1365 (Hartt, 1977, p.22, fig.19), - carrying artist's signatures.

The development of easel painting resulted in major stylistic innovations in art. Beginning with the Gothic period, and during the early fifteenth century, naturalistic trends in painting intensified. Art was based on calculated and rational proportion. There was a new interest in the human body set in real space. There seems to have been a tendency to link all elements of a given painting closely together.

M. Wallis states that, when inscriptions were introduced, they were treated not as clearly separate parts, but as closely connected with objects shown in the paintings. Thus, they are

placed on objects whose presence in a given situation is somehow
motivated, i.e. on the pages of an open book, on a person's robe,
on a banner, on a tombstone, on an entablature, on a plinth,
etc. Such objects are treated realistically on an equal basis
with all others. The letters of the inscription are illustrated
to resemble engraving in stone, or embroidery on a robe for
example. (Wallis, 1975, p.61-62)

An example of this is THE DYING MAN COMMENDING HIS SOUL TO GOD,
(c.1418), executed by the Rohan Master,from the Grandes Heures de
Rohan. (Hartt, 1977, p.77, fig.92). In this unique full-page
illustration of the office of the dead, he depicts a dying man
from whose mouth issue the words in Latin: "Into thy hands I
commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth."
According to F. Hartt: "The first clause was uttered by the
dying Christ from the Cross (Luke 23:46), and the rest is a
quotation from verse 5 of Psalm 31." (quote: Hartt, 1977, p.76)
The writing issues from his mouth and is written on a long
banderoll, in a similar idiom to what appeared much later in the
comic strips, with the difference that writing is enclosed in
bubbles.

The tendency during the Gothic period was towards the use of
symbolism rather than that of words, to explain a painting. This
is very visible in Jan van Eycks paintings, such as the MADONNA
OF CHANCELLOR ROLIN, ca. 1433-34. (Arnason, p.100, fig.100).

As the more formal aspects of painting advanced, artists were
mainly concerned with light and space, form and proportion, and
words were largely dispensed with. However, they still appeared,

mainly as mottoes and signatures of the artist.

For example, - in Jan van Eyck's **ARNOLFINI WEDDING**, ca. 1434, (Hartt, 1977, p.101, fig.101), on the rear wall of the painting, we see his signature, "Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434" ("Jan van Eyck was here 1434"); the artist thus takes his part in the solemn event. Statements by the artists themselves, in the form of signatures, became most significant of all in post-medieval painting, namely the above example, as well as Jan van Eycks **MAN IN A RED TURBAN** ca. 1433 (Hartt, 1977, fig.103, p.103) where the painter signed the picture boldly on the frame. Also included here is the date, October 21, 1433, and his motto, "Als ich chan" ("As I can"). This form of inscription, already in use in the fifteenth century, became very common in the sixteenth century, especially in Western Europe. They were often combined with information about the date and/or place of the painting, or included the painters dedication. M. Wallis states, that: "At first,the signatures were elaborate and similar in lettering to inscriptions in books or on monuments. In the course of time people came to appreciate in signatures the individual handwriting of the painter, as the expression of his personality. El Greco and Rembrandt were among the first painters to sign their pictures as they signed their names on ordinary occasions." (quote: Wallis; 1975, p.76)

The reputation of the artist grew, during the Renaissance, as he was being used for different purposes by the State. Traditional duties, such as the construction of Churches and the painting of frescoes continued, but furthermore the artist became interested

in perspective, botany and anatomy studies to mention a few.
¹· He was also expected to plan cities, design bridges and
arches and even weapons and engines of war. ²· (Hartt, 1977,
p.25) It is interesting to note here how diversified the artists
role was already becoming, and that they no longer aspired to the
same goals at they did in primitive societies, i.e. spiritual
unity. Additionally, the Renaissance witnessed the invention of
the first printing press. This replaced the artist as scribe,
breaking the longstanding tradition of illuminated manuscripts.

With the patronage by patrons, the Church, and leading mercantile
families, the artist started working for an elite. By the end of
the sixteenth century, the "discovery of the world and of man"
had created fundamental changed in man's view of himself, of
society, and of the Christian religion. Religious division of
western Europe was complete. Central Europe and the
Mediterranean were Catholic, and the North was Protestant.
Christian faith was diversifying.

1. The word 'Renaissance', (Fr. Trans: rebirth) has generally
been taken to signify the revival of the knowledge of Greek and
Roman civilizations. But, according to F. Hartt: "The revival of
classical antiquity is not enough to explain the tremendous
change that took place in the visual arts in the fifteenth
century." (quote Hartt, 1977, p.24) Man also discovered his own
divinity, his own genius, beauty and intelligence. Man thought
of himself as so perfect, that he was justified in representing
their gods in human form. With this advancement of humanism, the
authority of the Church was questioned.

2. F. Hartt: "When the fifteenth century began, the artist was
still a craftsman, firmly embedded in the system of merchant and
artisan guilds that controlled the Florentine Republic. By
mid-century, he had become everywhere, except in Venice, an
apanage of the princely society that was visibly or invisibly
replacing the medieval republics. By the sixteenth century,...
artists of the stature of Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian had
acquired aristocratic social status, wealth and influence."
(quote: Hartt, 1977, p.25) Proof that the artist was no longer
just a craftsman.

After the artistic experiments and achievements of the
Renaissance, problems of representation or composition presented
few serious difficulties to a diligent and properly trained
artist. F. Hartt states that: "Art academies were established
in major European centres, and instruction in them and in
artist's studios was thorough. The wide differences in national
style can no longer be explained, therefore in terms of stages in
the conquest of reality or of changes in technical procedures,
but in the light of the demands made by patrons, religious or
secular and local traditions." (quote: Hartt, 1977, p.209)

In the ensuing centuries, the use of inscriptions varied.
Inscriptions conceived as statements by the person depicted, so
frequent in medieval sacred painting, vanish completely in the
sixteenth century. [1] Painters strove to render the emotions of
the persons they painted by showing their gestures and facial
expressions. On the other hand, in sixteenth to eighteenth
century painting, inscriptions treated as maxims are quite
frequent.

1. For instance, Antonio Moro in his self-portrait (1585,
Uffizi) placed before his figure the latin panegyric, written in
Greek letters on the canvas pinned to the easel, and composed in
his honour by Lampsonius. It goes more or less as follows: "O
Heavens, whose likeness is this? It comes from the most famous
painter who, superior to Apelles, to the anchients and to his
contemporaries, with his own hand painted himself in front of a
mirror. O sublime artist! Moro is portrayed here. Be watchful,
he will speak to thee". (quote: M. Wallis, 1975, p.72, from E.
Benkard, Das Selbstbildnis vom 15. bis zum Beginn des 18.
Jahrhunderts (Berlin, 1927, 24)

[1.] In this period, no less than in the Middle Ages, painting was imbued with concepts. Its task was to teach, to preach and to inspire reflections on human life. Like medieval painting, it therefore developed a vast variety of conventional signs, symbols, allegories, etc. Inscriptions containing maxims stating the main idea of a given painting, were one of the methods used to encourage the viewer to contemplate the message. In most cases, they were in Latin, which appealed to educated people only. Latin was a language that most educated people, of different nationalities, could read. (Wallis, 1975, p.73) Even if the inscriptions only appealed to educated people, at least it appealed to educated people of various nationalities. These Inscriptions were shown as if they were elements of the scenes depicted: they were placed on a sheet of paper, shown in the painting as attached to the wall, to a musical instrument,or to a tomb.(Wallis; 1975, p.74)

The Baroque artist falls within this period. The seventeenth century artist was in a secure position through patronage by the Church and royalty but there was great pressure on him to conform to the norms and values of society. This was an age of authority

1.   "Maxims are found in many paintings whose subject matter is vanitas, the transient nature and the vanity of everything, and the omnipotence of death." (quote: Wallis, 1975, p.74) He gives as an example: "Juan de Valdes Leal introduced into his painting of three human bodies in open coffins and in the various stages of decomposition (1672, Sevilla, Hospital de la Caridad) the inscription "finis gloriae mundi", which is a paraphrase of "Sic transit gloria mundi", derived from "Oh, quam cito transit gloria mundi" in 'Imitatio Christi' by St. Thomas a Kempis (I,3,30;1441); this in turn alludes to a letter of St. John: "Et mundus transit et concupiscentia eius" (1 John 2:17)." (quote: Wallis, 1975, p.74)

and society was founded on confidence in Church and State. Art

was expected to be a source of propaganda, - a unifying force,

permeated with the religious, political and social idealism which

gave society its coherence. Instead of depicting the miracles of

saints as evident in medieval art, the artist set out to reach

the emotions of people by showing them the martyrdom of saints.

The idea in all the spheres of art was to produce a strong

emotional experience. [1] Inscriptions treated as items of

information were confined to portraits. In the case of

Renaissance, Mannerist, and Baroque Portraits they were sometimes

expanded into lengthy acclamations. (Wallis, 1975, p.72)

With the exception of Germany and England the eighteenth century

saw a decline in the ideals of the seventeenth century, and a

lack of confidence in King and Church. [2] The diadactic nature

of Baroque art was rejected for the pleasures of art for art's

sake. The artist was regarded as the genius who provided the

aristocracy with tangible visual evidence of its luxurious and

hedonistic lifestyle. This period is also known as the Roccoco

period in France. [3] Art became elitist, reserved for the

appreciation of the privileged minorities, and the artist lost

touch with ordinary man in society. In eighteenth-century

England,an original school of painting arose, under limited

1. This is only one aspect of Baroque art. We also find
secularism and Classicism.

2. Germany and England were under very autocratic rule at the
time.

3. After the demise of Louis XIV, many courtiers moved from
Versailles to Paris. In France the late Baroque Period turned
into the over-decorated style of the Roccoco.

influence from continential Rococo, but with little of the

frivolity so delightful in French painting of the period.

(quote: Hartt, 1977, p.392)

The most fascinating of the English painters during this period

was William Hogarth (1697 - 1764). Born in London, Hogarth was

apprenticed as a silver engraver and in 1720 he also learned to

engrave on copper. Hogarth's apprenticeship as an engraver is of

great significance. He later reproduced and published many of

his paintings as engravings, - thus reaching a wider audience

than that for painting and achieving a large degree of

independence from aristocratic patronage. (Wilson, 1979, p.29)

Hogarth's interest lay in group portraits, taking it beyond pure

portraiture and extending it into a broader depiction of the life

of his time. Hogarth developed the single portrait painting into

series of paintings, commenting, - with his satirical wit, - on

the contemporary world. Hogarth called them "modern moral

subjects", and reproduced them as engravings in order to reach a

larger audience. Such series as **A HARLOT'S PROGRESS,**

MARRIAGE-A-LA-MODE and **A RAKE'S PROGRESS,** are superb examples of

the graphic medium. Hogarth's engravings are a form of pictorial

narrative, often humorous, - achieving a range of stirical

expressiveness and biting social comment which few artists have

attained.

Understanding the contents of Hogarth's series depends largely on

the viewer's knowledge of the story, as much as on

interpretation. However, the titles of Hogarth's engravings, -

as well as the occasional words and sentences included in his

images, - serve as pointers to the message of the work. These words are also indispensable to achieve the pungent moralistic comment in his works.

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS, published in 1732, is a simple tale in six engravings of a country rector's daughter who comes to London ostensibly to enter domestic serivce, but quickly becomes first a rich man's mistress, then a common whore, is imprisoned and finally dies in misery. (quote: Wilson, 1979, p.30) In the first plate (Burke, J. and Caldwell, C. pl.134) Hogarth depicts the innocent country girl Moll Hackabout, a brothel-keeper (the notorious Mother Needham), a lecher (the infamous Colonel Francis Chartres, who died after a lifetime of vice, just before the series appeared) and a country clergyman. " So obsessive was the appetite of Colonel Chartres for fresh young woman that he employed panders, one of whom stands beside him, at inns where coaches arrived from the country. Here he is forestalled by Mother Needham, who presents herself as a fine lady needing a servant. A goose in a basket is adressed to 'my loving cousin in Thames Street.' The cousin has failed to arrive. The clergyman, who has accompanied the wagon from York, is too busy to notice the seduction." (quote: Burke, J. and Caldwell, C. pl.134)

In another example, ENTHUSIASM DELINEATED ca. 1761, Hogarth makes extensive use of lettering in the image itself. (Burke, J. and Caldwell, C. pl.252) A satire on Methodism and Old Masters, dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury, was never published. A description is given by Burke, J. and Caldwell, C. and states: "The preacher modelled on George Whitefield, has a harlequin's robe under his gown and the tonsure of a Jesuit under his wig,

this equating Methodists and Catholics according to a popular prejudiceof the time. The text of the sermon is `I speak as a fool' .(2 Corinthians, 11:23). A thermometer in place of an hour-glass gives the key to the reactions of the congregation, ranging from `Luke Warm' to `Convulsion Fits', `Madness' and `Despair'. Prominent among the congregation are Mother Douglas, the Pious Bawd, having convulsion fits, and a Jew in the manner of Rembrandt, with his bible open at the Sacrifice of Isaac. At the window a Mohammedan Turk is amazed to see such strange manifestations of Christian Piety." (quote: Burke, J. and Caldwell, C. see notes to plate 252)

Unlike Goya's engravings, (discussed later in this essay), Hogarth's social comment is comical, - depicting rather than criticising English life and culture of his time.

During the latter half of the 18th century, there was a reaction to the moral decadence of fashionable Roccoco art. A desire for moral and spiritual regeneration resulted in idealism in all spheres of society. Socially and politically this led to the French Revolution, inspired by ideals of social democracy, justice, liberty and dignity for all men. It was expected that once again art should be socially useful, morally elevating and instructive. Historical and heroic subject matter became very fashionable. The French Revolution enhanced this interest. Inscriptions as such had no place in painting, and as a spectator, one had to be well-read to understand the paintings inspired by literature.

Jacques-Louis David (1748 - 1825) was the leading classical

artist of the French Revolution - the perfect political artist, used to educate the public through his art. David's most memorable work is the DEATH OF MARAT, ca. 1793 (Hartt, 1977, p.308, fig. 367) Marat was one of the leaders of the French Revolution. David made the event of his death eternal, enshrining marat as the 'Martyr that died for his beliefs'. The simplicity of this composition enhances the depiction of Marat as a simple person who died for his country. Dedications by the artist combined with his signature has its special expression in this painting.

A MARAT

DAVID

        L'AN DEUX

(Transl.Fr :- "To Marat, David, Year Two".) David stresses in literal terms that his painting was a homage to the man whose death it portrays. (Wallis; 1975, p.76)

The forty year period from 1775 to 1815 marks one of the great upheavals in Western History. The French Revolution broke down many conventions. There was a great change in the artists attitude towards style. He wanted to establish his own style and be different to all others. The academies of the eighteenth century naturally held exhibitions, and now the artist was out to make a name for himself. However, some significant artists were not recognized by these academies, because they did not fulfil the norms of official style. This led to the revolt against the academies by some artists. Towards the close of the eighteenth century it caused a schism among artists. Style and recognition

became a conscious issue. [1] Subject matter changed, - the
artist looked for new themes and painted what pleased him. This
caused a break in artistic tradition.

Neoclassicism was soon followed by Romanticism, which found its
interest in the sublime, containing elements of the pain, terror
and above all, awe before the unknown. Arising from the
generation as David was a Spaniard, Fransisco Jose de Goya y
Lucientes, (1746 - 1828). His work consists of paintings and
etchings, some of which were intimately personal. Goya's work
reflected not only the social scenes and events of his time, -
and society's longings for a better world, - but the nature of
Man himself. As E. Lafuente Ferrari stated: "He shows us Man
with his failings and his vices and reveals his subjection to the
disturbing, formless world of dreams. Goya's work is both a
declaration of his own moral and social reactions to the world
around him and a daring exploration of the recesses of the human
mind, with its vision and its monsters. In his work there is
both hope and despair, the latter violently and aggressively
pessimistic." (quote: Lafuente Ferrari, 1962, p.1)

The late eighteenth, - early nineteenth, - century, was one of
history's most abrupt periods of transition and the ideas
current in that era are reflected in Goya's work. The artist

1. John Constable, (1776 - 1837), had already rebelled against
the brown tonality then fashionable in landscape painting. His
use of different tones of one colour, set side by side to produce
the effect of optical mixing at a distance, was incomprehensible
to many viewers. They called it "Constable's snow". This
comment reflects the beginning of the adverse reaction that
became common in the nineteenth century by a public which
resented being shown what it actually saw, instead of what it had
been taught to see by tradition and the Old Masters. Under
Impressionism in the 1870's this schism between artist and public
was to become extreme. (Hartt, 1977, p.327)

was forced to invent his own style, - or language, - as there was

no guideline in the art of his time to follow; for him to find a

way to express his ideas. He had to rely on his own imagination

to bring his ideas to light. In the words of E. Lafuente

Ferrari: "He translated into graphic terms that bitter Spanish

humour which runs through Spanish literature from the Middle Ages

to the Classical Period. Goya was the last in an essentially

Spanish tradition. This is why his humour is often so violent,

and so filled with the sense of tragedy." (quote: Lafuente

Ferrari, 1962, p.11)

Goya's consciousness of living in a time of crises so held him,

that he felt obliged to express it in his work. The fact that

Goya was deaf, due to an illness he suffered in 1792, is often

mentioned by art historians. Perhaps it was this disadvantage, -

which made communication with fellow men dificult, - that brought

out his immense creative ability.

Goya produced four major series of etchings, of which **THE**

CAPRICES was the first to emerge between 1796 - 1798. A human

and social satire, this series suggests that the vices in man and

society come from straying from the path of ordered and rational

conduct. (Lafuente Ferrari, 1962, p.III)

Capricho comes from the Italian word 'Capriccio' and is

synonymous with 'fantasy'. In the words of E. Lafuente Ferrari:

"For Goya, a caprice was a distorted glimpse of reality, the best

means of conveying the degradation, grotesqueness, and sinfulness

of Man, which at times makes him subhuman. He also used his

artistic language to express purely imaginery and impossible

visions. His theme as a whole was Man: Man who takes leave of

his senses and falls prey to his own animal passions, to vice,

selfishness, falsehood, vanity, lust, social injustice,

superstition and fanaticism." (Quote: Lafuente Ferrari, 1962,

p.V)

One of these, THE SLEEP OF REASON PRODUCES MONSTERS, (1796-98,

Hartt, fig. 378, p.318), shows the artist asleep at his table

congested with drawing instruments, before which is propped a

tablet inscribed,' El sueno de la razon produce monstrous' ("the

sleep of reason produces monsters"). This etching is a satirical

and bitter attack on human failing and weakness. He mocks the

ignorance and superstition which was apparent in his society at

the time. In the words of F. Hartt: "Reasons, the goddess of

eighteenth-century philosophers, to whom the Cathedral of

Notre-Dame in Paris had been temporarily rededicated during the

French Revolution, once put to sleep, allows monsters to a rise

from the inner darkness of the mind." (quote: Hartt, 1977,

p.318)

Goya always added captions to his work. The bitter sarcasm

apparent in the captions of his preliminary drawings, was often

toned down in the tile of the final work. This was evidently

done on the advice of some of Goya's friends, who he consulted

frequently.

In another plate, titled WHAT A SACRIFICE!, he attacks marriage

of convenience, - which is contracted without love, purely for

ulterior motives. One of these motives is money. In this plate,

(Lafuente Ferrari, 1962, p.14) Goya portrays a less than suited

couple. The groom - grotesquely disfigured, - tries to charm his bride-to-be. Her head is turned away.

In another series, THE DISASTERS OF WAR, the poetic intent is more obvious than in the 'Caprices'. The series begins with a plate entitled SAD PRESENTIMENTS OF WHAT MUST COME TO PASS. (Lafuente Ferrari, 1962, p.86) This etchings serves as a fateful prophecy of what the following plates will show. As stated by Lafuente Ferrari: "The premonition of disasters is expressed in the shape of a kneeling man: he extends his arms as he looks up to the sky, as if awaiting some dreadful blow; his countenance is ravaged with fear and anguish. This frontispiece is immediately followed by violent scenes, episodes of brutal struggle between French soldiers and Spanish peasants." (quote: Lafuente Ferari, 1962, p.XVI)

Later, Goya shows a heap of corpses left on the field, the tragic aftermath of a battle. WAS IT FOR THIS THAT YOU WERE BORN? (Lafuente Ferrari, 1962, p.97), is a very effective title, full of bitter sarcasm, implying that Man is born only to perish. Goya was one of the first artists to explore and criticize human behaviour in this way, thus anticipating the art of today.

The artist may have wanted to change social attitudes with his paintings, etchings, and later frescoes depicting a universe dominated by irrationality and terror, making a cruel mockery of humanity. Unfortunately, of his engravings, only Los Caprichos were published. They had limited effect. (Hartt, 1977, p.318)

When Realism set in, during the mid-eighteenth century, artists

were involved in politics and the social issues of their time and
accordingly, their works reflected their deep personal
convictions about such matters. Their aim was not
propagandistic, nor were they coerced by society to paint such
subjects. In fact, society preferred traditional academic art,
with its emphasis on the ideal and the sublime. After the
Romantic revolution, the artist was by this time too much of an
individual to accept coercion from without. Art found a new use
for words in the form of captions in political and satirical
graphics. According to F. Hartt: "Honore Daumire was a
caricaturist who satirized the Royalists, the Bonapartists,
Politicians and Lawyers unmercifully." (quote: Hart, 1777,
p.319)

If a Realist painter included an inscription in his painting,
apart from captions in Social Realism, he usually did so because
such an inscription was part of what he was reproducing.

From 1850 on, Realism dominated French painting. Officially and
publically, Social Realism was condemned, as were most important
styles, during the second half of 19th century French Painting.
The Salons were the only place where the artist could exhibit
publicly. The jury had tremendous power and only accepted works
displaying strictly academic norms from the seventeenth century.
This caused further separation between the two groups of artists,
- the traditionalists and the contemporary. Many artists lived
in isolation to persue their own art. (Copplestone, 1983,
p.200)

In the nineteenth century, the vast set of conventional signs,

symbols, personifications and allegories which embodied West
European painting from the 16th to the 18th century, especially
in the periods of the Counter Reformation and the Baroque, was
gradually abandoned. The trend in style was to reproduce
unadorned reality with maximum fidelity. However, the demand for
realistic paintings waned with the birth of Photography. The
machine could now capture faster and better and there was no need
for the artist to concern himself any more with capturing a
specific scene. Some advantage for the artist however, lay in
the ability to capture, - with the camera, - unusual perspectives
and sections of nature, and study them at home. Additionally,
the painter was now forced to experiment with his work. Realism
turned to Expressionism.

Society during the Impressionist period lacked unity and looked
nostalgically to the past, finding the present too difficult to
accept. The Impressionists were rejected by the public and
forced to exhibit in the Salon des Refuses. The breach between
artist and society was now complete. Not only did the public
refuse to acknowledge their subject matter, (scenes from daily
life), but also their artistic style which reflected the
uncomfortable truth that reality is constantly changing. The
artist at the end of the 19th century was no longer concerned
with transcendental intangible realities, nor with illusionism.
He no longer wanted to perfect or idealise nature. He turned
inwards to explore his own creativity. In so doing he retreated
from society to remain true to himself.

The Impressionists, beginning ca. 1870, tended to eliminate from

their paintings all elements that could not be seen directly, and concentrated on visual impression. Hence, they rejected not only, all allegories and symbols, - as the Realists had for the most part already done, - but also all literature, all anecdote and plot. If, in painting a city street, the artist rendered an inscription on a shop-sign, he rendered it only as a fugitive configuration of coloured patches, usually blurred, indistinct and illegible. The Impressionists were complying with Delacroix's postulate that a painting should be, above all "a feast for the eye". So conceived,a painting offered no place for inscriptions. The whole idea of a painters work had to change before the written word could be reintroduced into paintings. (Wallis, 1975, p.77)

VASILY KANDINSKY:

"Letters act as practical and useful signs, but also as pure form and inner melody."

MODERN ART

II   THE EARLY ART MOVEMENTS

The formal revolution initiated by the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists indicated the direction that art was to take in this century. Its logical conclusion was abstraction.

Art, beginning with the Cubists, took on a totally new form. The representation of realistic scene and objects was abandoned, as was the technique of perspective drawing, which had made such illusion possible. These were replaced by the structural composition of objects and their position in space. The artist concerned himself with the image in its totality, not with the imitation of visual reality.

Subject matter, for the cubist painters, consisted largely of simple things - mainly still life objects, because these succumb more readily to an essentially geometric vocabulary. These objects were broken down into facets, and rearranged irregularly, the initial object often becoming unrecognisable. Yet Cubist painting was never an abstract movement in the sense that subject matter always played an important part. Since the represented objects often disappeared completely in the picture plane, the artists started introducing collage materials into their works to suggest an object. These consisted of newspaper clippings, letters, pieces of paper etc., which pulled the image back from complete abstraction, to suggest an object or environment. In this manner, the artist could still suggest objects, without sacrificing the newly found two dimensional representation.

This concern for realism is of particular significance for the emergence of the first collage object in Cubist painting. It was stated that: "At first, the inclusion of these objects provoked an element of shock that derived in part from the seeming audacity and incompatability of this folk art device in serious art." (quote Janis, Blesh, 1967, p.11) For that is all collage was up until then - a folk art, or pastime of cutting and pasting bits of paper into pictures or ornamental designs.

H. Arnason said: "From 1911 onwards, artists represented forms that were equivalent to objects in the visible world, without being in any way illusionistic representations of those objects. To counterpoint the abstract structure built up by the paint, the artists introduced words, pieces of newspaper, restaurant menus, to act as "real" themes." (quote: Arnason, 1969, p.135). Since words are abstract symbols for real objects, they could be seen in this context as "abstract reality". The Cubists could thus use abstract elements to suggest reality, without sacrificing their ideas about a painting.

In Picassos STILL LIFE WITH CHAIR CANING, 1911 - 1912 (Arnason; 1969, p.137, fig.225), Picasso used a piece of common oilcloth with a design of simulated chair caning, and then worked over it with a particularly free and bold pattern of still-life shapes. Even the oval shape of this work - a shape that many Cubists were exploring as a reaction against the dominant rectangle format of Renaissance Painting - together with the rope frame, contribute to the complexity of the different levels of "reality" with which he was playing. The oilcloth served to indicate the presence of

a chair, without the slightest use of traditional methods. The
painted letters "Jou" signify "Journal", a popular newspaper at
the time. Everyone who read this paper must have been aware of
the connotation and it had the effect of giving the viewer
something he could relate to, - something familiar to his daily
life. This provided the viewer with visual accessibility to the
otherwise abstract imagery. This second phase of Cubism, -
Synthetic Cubism, - must have had more appeal to spectators than
Analytical Cubism which did not offer the spectator much
information for the deciphering of the contents of a painting.
These collage objects presented a new and original source of
interplay between artistic expression and the experience of the
everyday world. A significant step in bringing art and life
closer to being a simultaneous experience had been taken.
(Wolfram, 1975, p.15-18)

Words and letters were never chosen arbitrarily and almost always
referred to a specific aspect of the objects being portrayed,
e.g.: the name of a newspaper in Braques STILL LIFE WITH HARP AND
VIOLIN, 1912. In addition to a harp in the background, there is
a still-life with a bottle, glass, violin, musical scores and a
newspaper of the period, "EMPS", - an abbreviation of "Le Temps".
He also perhaps intended to create a play on words, in which
(T)Emps would refer both to a newspaper and to a musical beat.

The Cubist's use of words in their art made it comprehensible to
the intelligent viewer. Art was no longer elitist and reserved
for the Salons. The artist could still communicate something to
the public without having to sacrifice his individuality by

conforming to a dictated style. The pieces of newspaper or papier colle also allowed the artist to introduce colour into his otherwise monochrome paintings without losing the two - dimensional effect, - in other words, without creating an illusion of space.

In some paintings, the words become calligraphic lines or abstract forms making it more difficult to read. In more abstract paintings, by contrast, they sometimes become more explicit by being stencilled in. These pictures, with their papier colle lettering, now made a place in art for both worlds :- that of aesthetics and that of everyday life. As H. Janis and R. Blesh mentioned: "Collage has a strange dualism. The collage object, (such as a newspaper cutting etc.,) participates in a picture, which it is put upon, but the memory where it came from is unimpaired. The painted letters of a living language have ineradicable overtones of meaning; separately or combined into words they can not merely be looked at, they insist upon being read." (quote: Janis, Blesh, 1967, p.12) Words have also become universal since the printing of newspaper. Certain articles recall an event that many people know about. Introduced into painting, this can evoke certain emotions and cause the viewer to look at the picture in a different way. This becomes particularly important in Futurism.

But, according to T. Copplestone: "Cubism did not have the questioning spirit of the new age. It also did not really concern itself with the new inventions such as machines and fast travel. It was more a technical revolution. The fact that

Cubism could change the course of art in the modest observation
of a few objects on a table, or a single figure, is a measure of
how profound was the visual revolution that had been achieved."
(quote: Copplestone, 1983, p.335)

Once Cubism initiated collage and the use of hand painted words
and letters, other art movements began to utilise them. Among the
earliest to do so was Futurism, the Italian movement, whose main
purpose, unlike Cubism, was to generate outraged reaction. As C.
Tisdall and A. Bozzolla said: "Cultural violence and aggressive
attacks on prevailing values, both cultural and moral, were part
and parcel not only of Futurism, but also of Dada,
prerevolutionary Russian art, and later, Surrealism." (quote:
Tisdall, Bozzolla, 1977, p.17)

Futurists were interested in concepts of `speed' and `modernity'.
In the words of C. Wolfram: "Futurism was the first artistic
movement to recognise the radical effects which the machine age
and technological inventions in communication were to have on the
fabric of life as well as art." (quote: Wolfram, 1975, p.36)

C. Tisdall and A. Bozzolla go on to say that: "The political,
cultural and philosophical currents at the turn of the century,
provided the foundation of Futurism. These currents come to
light, unacknowledged, in `The Founding and Manifestos'. Few, if
any ideas in it are totally original. Violence, war, anarchy,
nationalism, the cult of the superman, glorification or urban
life, of technology and of speed, together with hatred of the
past and scorn of academic values, had all been voiced before.
War was glorified as an instrument of progress. What was new was

the way in which they were all brought together and synthesis
into one inflammatory cultural document ripe for distribution."
(quote: Tisdall, Bozzolla, 1977, p.17-18)

The Futurists revitalized the traditional arts of painting,
sculpture, poetry and music by including new elements. Poetry,
theatre, painting etc., were all thrown together in what was
known as the Futurist Evenings. Even the spectator was expected
to participate. This transformation of the relationship between
the artist in all fields of activity and the spectator in all
walks of life, is central to Futurism and coincides with the aim
to reach a mass audience. This concept, - that of the
relationship of artist and public to the picture, - was probably
the most revolutionary.

Futurism was first of all a literary concept, propagated in
manifestos. These manifestos were intended to provide clear and
dynamic proof that the movement was invading every branch of
life, cultural, social and political. The manifestos could be run
off in vast editions, suitable for a mass audience. The
distribution of manifestos by post, together with the
publications in "Le Figaro" and "Lacerba", gave the impression
that the movement was a huge organization encompassing all the
disciplines. C. Tisdall and A. Bozzolla stated: "Often the
manifesto was produced before any tangible evidence existed of
the innovation it announced. The daring of the manifesto often
went beyond the results that followed. For instance Russolo's
description of noises as the new dimension of music was described
in "The Art of Noise", before the machines that were to produce

this concert of noises were constructed." (quote: Tisdall,
Bozzolla, 1977, p.12) Since most of the Italian people at that
time were illiterate, the Futurists invented the Futurist
Evening, (serata futurista), which was a combination of theatre,
concert, political assembly, discussion and riot, and they always
guaranteed much riot and publicity.

Futurism emerged as a theory and the artists then set out to
produce the images that illustrated that theory.

In literature, the Futurists first invented "Words-in-freedom".
This basically meant doing away with grammatical conventions,
syntax etc., and "liberating the word from their Latin prison."
(Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature 1912).
"Words-in-freedom" became the style of Futurism for both, poets
and painters alike. For the writers it offered tremendous
typographic possibilities, and meant a stimulating combination
of visual art and poetry. This also broke down a further
distinction between the arts, poetry and painting. A
revolutionary use of different typefaces, forms and graphic
arrangements and sizes, became a distinctive part of Futurism.

The artists extended the possibilities of the visual forms of
word-in-freedom into their "free-word paintings", (tavole
Parolibere), including Carra's PATRIOTIC CELEBRATION, 1914 which
succeeded in imposing a certain amount of Cubist order on the
exuberance of exploding word-clusters. (Tisdall and Bozzolla,
1977, p.87-99) In this painting, (Arnason, 1969, p.222, col
plate 93), Carra followed Marinetti's invention of "free words"
which: "through their visual associations, were to affect and

stimulate the spirit and imagination directly, without the intervention of reason." (quote: Arnason, 1969, p.222) This work, a collage, was described by Carra to Severini, who was also experimenting with collage, as an attempt to render "the plastic abstraction of civil tumult". This collage is futuristic in content and appearance. It is a visual manifesto of all the Futurists believed in. In the words of C. Tisdall and A. Bozzolla: "The domineering noise of modern life, is in the hurtling traffic stream of lettering, dogma, slogans and verbalizations (as in futurist poetry). He uses the compositional device of spiralling-out from the centre. Place of honour at the centre of the collage is reserved for Italy and her aviator, then it spirals out to shouts of: EEE, EVVIVVA, TRRRRR<OO/oo/oo- - the high-pitched mechanical sonics, of the city. Futurist preoccupations appear in various phrases: the modernisation of Italy, "citta moderne" - "the modern city"; the electric light, "taie volunta di edison" - "by the will of edison"; science, "costellazioni per nuovi piu acuti astronomy" - "new constellations from a more exact astronomy". There is more in this pictorial futurist manifesto: technical means, "incidente" - "chance", and "accidente" - "accidents"; defiance of leadership by argumentative, assertive, gifted young artists, "noi siamo primo" - we are first"; excited plaudits of the crowd, "folle eccitato"; a visual furora of noisy salutes to friends: Zang Tumb Tuum for Marientti, La Rosa for Apollinaire." (quote Tisdall, Bozzolla; 1977, p.187) At the bottom the signature "Carra, Leggiero, duraturo, Futurista" - the strong and lighthearted. This collage was intended for propaganda and, using

radiations of colours and lines and verbal symbols, he simulated visually the noise of sirens and mobs.

In Severini's DANCE OF THE SERPENT, 1915 (Tisdall, Bozzolla, 1977, p.99, fig.96), printed in Lacerba, Severini used blocks of evocative or imitative words to indicate colours (bleu, bleu, bleu) and rhythm (ttattatta), fitting them into the abstract cubist planes of his painting. A year later Canguillo took the much more radical step, in his "Free-word painting", of making the words themselves, painted in various colours, supply subject, composition and directional flow.

In Severini's painting the different word clusters occupy faceted spaces, distinguished from one another by shading, that lifts, or outlines the different shapes of these fields. So every word-cluster still occupies a certain space. In Canguillo's painting, there are no facets, no distinguishable fields and the words are simply written across the canvas. Different letters and sizes are used by the artist, some letters cut off, extending right out of the picture plane. These large letters give the composition a strong directional flow towards the top right corner. The whole composition is determined simply by words, without the aid of facets or shading.

E. Wolfram stated: "In order to be clear about Severini's use of collage and words in a Futurist idiom, it is worth recalling one of his quotations: "Objects no longer exist... The important thing is not to represent the speeding motor car, but to represent the speed of the motor car." (quote: Wolfram, 1975, p.40) That also marks the difference between the Cubists use of

words compared to that of the Futurists. Whereas Cubists used words to pull the image back from pure abstraction, the Futurists were only concerned with the abstract concept of an object or scene, not with the object itself, and used words to express this concept.

Prophetic as they were, the Futurists were too early to be pacifists when war came. As said E. Wolfram: "In Nietzchean fashion, they glorified armed combat." (quote Wolfram, 1975, p.42) Boccioni's 1915 collage, LA GUERRE (charge of the Lancers), is painted over the fragments of battle announcements - an almost monochromatic horde, - the horses Boccioni had previously used to symbolize work now representing war. E. Wolfram goes on saying: "No overtones linger here of the trivial or discarded: the bits of newspaper assume grim, explicit factuality. The use of documentary collage elements like news items, could be viewed as an attempt to yield the most vivid expression of what war felt like." (quote: Wolfram, 1975, p.42)

The newspaper report of 4 January recorded progress on the front in Alsace and the taking of a German strategic point. (Tisdall and Bozzolla, 1977, p.177-180). The jagged diagonals of the lances give this composition movement and direction.

The viewer automatically reads the newspaper article at the top right corner,which serves almost as background to the scene. The combination of the event, and the news of the same event afterwards, give one the feeling of being at both places at the same time, - in the city and on the battlefield. Even today it

serves as a constant reminder of the war. It does not allow the viewer to forget it.

The key difference between the Cubist use of collage and word and the distinct use they were put to by most of the Futurists, is that the insertion of word forms and typographical letters in Futurist work is an attempt to bring topicality and documentary realism into art, expressing the day-to-day world, - the here and now. It is not found in Cubism. The Cubists were more concerned with the concrete qualities of letter-forms in the idiom of 'art for art's sake', whereas the Futurists embraced newsprint, for example, for its propagandaistic significance and for its particular relevance to the patriotic war mood in Italy, as well as using it as a prime symbol of the quotidian.

The Great War, supplied an appropriate background for a new development in art: Dada. In the words of H. Janis and R. Blesh: "The political situation at the time - the war and the ensuing scene of national collapse and revolution - fostered the growth of every kind of revolt, resistance and protest." (quote: Janis, Blesh, 1967, p.17) Like Futurism, it is best understood not simply as a stylistic and visually aesthetic manifestation, but as an all-embracing cultural and social revolt against the attitudes of its time. Dada was not merely anti-art. As said by H. Janis and R. Blesh: "The Dadaists were anti-society, violently opposed to the materialistic culture that could unleash the most destructive war in man's history. Dada was destructive of all established values: - social, political and esthetic." (quote: Janis, Blesh, 1967, p.49)

The influence of Futurism, i.e. the direct approach to the public, the free use of typography and the manifesto and its visual format; can all be found in Dada. The fundamental difference, however, is that Futurism had a programme and produced works to fulfil this programme, whereas Dada had no programme. "It was against all programmes, and it was just this, that gave the movement its power to unfold in all directions, free of social and aesthetic constraints. the absolute freedom from preconceptions was something quite new in the history of art." (quote: Richter, 1965, p.34). Then he states: "It was evident, that this necessarily lead to so-called abstract art." (quote: Richter, 1965, p.44)

The Dadaists took lots of chances, in fact chance became one of the major innovations of the Dada movement. They recognised it as a new stimulus to artistic creation, for example, by cutting up a piece of work and throwing the pieces into the air. The chance configuration or the way they would land is the way the artwork would look. They also thought this to be a way to derive new expressive forms and meanings. This freedom from preconceived ideas about processes and techniques in making art, was in itself a factor in the advance of art. Richter: "When Art is brought into line with everyday life and individual experience, it is exposed to the same risks, the same unforseeable laws of chance, the same interplay of living forces. Art is no longer a 'serious', and 'weighty' emotional stimulus, nor a sentimental tragedy, but the fruit of experience and joy in life." (quote: Richter, 1965, p.49)

This conscious break with rationality may also explain the sudden proliferation of new art-forms and materials in Dada. As H. Richter said: "from painting to sculpture, from pictorial art to typography, collage, photo-montage etc., to the 'object trouve', to the readymade. As the boundaries of the arts became indistinct, painters turned to poetry, and poets to painting." (quote: Richter, 1965, p.57)

The use of chance had opened up an important new dimension in art: the techniques of free association, fragmentary trains of thought, unexpected juxtapositions of words and sounds. H. Richter: " Words, which bear a burden of meaning designed for practical use, and do not readily submit to a process of random arrangement, were now cut up, scattered over a table, and now constituted a 'poem' for example." (quote: H. Richter, 1965, p.51) Chance had yet another purpose. H. Richter goes on to say that: "This was to restore to the work of art its primaeval magic power, and to find the way back to the immediacy it had lost through contact with classicism." (quote H. Richter, 1965, p.59) This made for a situation of conflict. H. Richter: "Even though the Dadaists claimed to be so liberated in the way they went about producing their works, they could not help but involve the "whole-self", including the conscious sense of order in the creative process. Despite their dedication to anti-art, they produced works of art. Chance could never be liberated from the presence of the conscious artist." (quote: Richter, 1965, p.59). This conflict is in itself an important characteristic of Dada.

Kurt Schwitters (1887 - 1948) was working at the same time as the

Dadaists. Even though it was only with some difficulty that he
and the Berlin Dada circle came to terms with one another, we
tend to think of him nowadays as the Messiah of Dada. It was he
that said: "Everything the artist spits is Art". (as quoted by
Wolfram, 1975, p.86) According to E. Wolfram: "Schwitters was
concerned with abstraction as a method for expressing the human
spirit more vividly, as opposed to Huelsenbeck (President of Club
Dada), who put a premium on political commitment as he said in
'En Avant Dada', 'Dada is a German Bolshevik affair'. This was
distasteful to Schwitters who agreed with Tzara's maxim, 'Dada
is the distinctive sign of abstraction.'" (quote: Wolfram, 1975,
p.87)

With Kurt Schwitters - poet, painter, and sculptor - the collage
technique already experimented with by the Cubists and Futurists,
developed into an art medium important enough in its own right to
stand alongside painting. As material, he used anything he could
pick up off the streets. But not only that: "Schwitters made no
strong distinctions between his various media - collage,
painting, sculpture, constructions, architecture - and his
literary efforts: all were "Merz". Even his poems have been
referred to as verbal collages." (quote: Janis, Blesh, 1967,
p.66) [1] In the words of E. Wolfram: "His dream was of a
'Gesamtkunstwerk', a union of all the arts, a theatrical
spectacle in which the all-pervading 'Merz spirit' would
triumph." (quote: Wolfram, 1975, p.87)

1. Merz is a word derived from Commerzbank. He adopted the word
"Merz" as the name for his collage constructions, and eventually
everything else, from a chance newspaper advertisement fragment
for the "Kommerziel Privat Bank" which he glued into one of his
collages in 1923, and the word stuck.

More than any other artist of this century, he was able to instil a special significance into the most mundane, the most trivial pieces of scrap - and always with a sense of organization which made the curios he brought together seem as if they were meant to be together on the picture plane. His genius resided in this unique ability with collaging material. E. Wolfram stated: "His initial inspiration sprang out of the 'Zeitgeist' of Dada." (quote: Wolfram, 1975, p.88) He quotes K. Schwitters: "I value sense and nonsense alike. I favour nonsense, but that is a purely personal matter. I am sorry for nonsense, because up to now it has so seldom been given artistic form, and for that reason I love nonsense." (Schwitters as quoted by Wolfram, 1975, p.88)

During Schwitter's early work, he was continually plaqued by the whole problem of "expression", by the question of what the relationship of art to the outside world was on the one hand and to the artist on the other. Schwitters once wrote: "My basic trait is meloncholy." (Schwitters as quoted by Elderfield, 1985, p.27) J. Elderfield continues: "Henceforth, Art was to be both an escape from his introverted self into the outside world and an escape from the urgencies of the outside world into one of his own making. A sense of alternating involvement and detachment with respect to his external environment was to characterize virtually everything that he did." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.27)

Schwitters had an obsession with the impermanent elements of daily life, with the picturesqueness of the used, and the

unnoticed. He collected perishable fragments of modern life to build his artworks. (Elderfield, 1985, p.168)

Schwitters: "One can even shout out through refuse, and this is what I did, nailing and glueing it together. Although this was not in any way a socially activist stance, it was to some extent a social viewpoint." (Schwitters as quoted by Elderfield, 1985, p.35) Schwitter's writings and pictures do function as social documents, but most of all they indicate a highly personalized world, in the way they are presented.

In DAS ARBEITERBILD, ca. 1919 (Elderfield, 1985, fig.46) the viewer is presented with the word `Arbeiter' ("Worker"), and added above it the fragment: `Unter diesen Gesichtspunkten sind die meisten letzten Streiks' (`In these respects most of the recent strikes are'). This composition was made during the civil strife of 1919. An interpretation by J. Elderfield states: "This image dedicated to the Red Worker, may seem to be romanticised by the inclusion of what looks like a black cresent moon at the centre, but in this context, it reads suspiciously like a parody of a romantic landscape." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.63) Schwitters wrote that when one of his titles was taken from a word-fragment in a picture it generally expressed his "feeling belonging to the spirit of the picture." (Schwitters as quoted by Elderfield, 1985, p.63) J. Elderfield goes on saying: "The title `Hopf' he used as an example, could not be reduced to a verbal meaning. "I don't know, HOFF may be part of Schoepfung (creation)." But Merz is "feeling without knowing." His titles, like his picture themselves and the word-fragments in them, were

intended to express "what cannot be understood, what only can be seen." Their meaning was an "abstract meaning" and they even constituted "a poem about the picture." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.63)

In DAS ARBEITERBILD, among the cut-out phrases, we read (R)eichsk(anzler) ("reichs Chancellor"), blutigen ("bloody"), offener Brief e... ("Open Letter E..."), Mathias; Die Korrupt(ion) ("Corruption"), Generalleutnant ("Lieutenant-General"); erhoehung ("increase"); Hungersn(ot) ("Starvation"). A description of the circumstances at that time, is given by H. Janis and R. Blesh: "The date is 1920, and Mathias Erzberger, the Finance Minister of the new Republic, had been forced to resign after the well-to-do, protesting against severe taxation, organized a smear campaign to discredit him as a supposedly corrupt agent of Germany's enemies. It is also the date of the Kapp-Putsch, when the President and Reich Chancellor were forced to flee Berlin, of a general strike broken with terror and bloodshed, of dissent in the armed forces, of unemployment and inflation. Schwitters' picture alludes to all of these things. It does so, however from an almost neutral position. Although certainly no celebration of the events it describes, neither is it an overt criticism of them: it is by no means the statement of a political activist." (quote: Janis, Blesh, 1967, p.58-61)

Schwitters considered collage as a material enrichment in art. In 1920, quote H. Janis and R. Blesh, he wrote: "When I adjust material of different kinds to one another, I have taken a step

in advance of mere oil painting, for in addition to playing off colour against colour, line against line, form against form etc., I play off material against material for example wood against sackcloth." (quote: Janis, Blesh, 1967, p.58-61) Beyond a material enrichment of art, Schwitters saw in collage a liberation of the creative impulse from conformity and tradition. However, he did not involve 'chance' in his collage compositions the way the Dadaists did. H. Janis and R. Blesh state: "Though he saw collage as revolutionary, he also saw it as logical and reasonable. Every artist," he wrote, "must be allowed to mold a picture out of nothing but blotting paper, for example, providing he is capable of molding a picture." (Schwitters as quoted by Janis, Blesh, 1967,p.61)

Merzbilder are abstract works of art. "The word Merz denotes essentially the combination of all conceivable materials for artistic purposes, and technically the principle of equal evaluation of the individual materials." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.50) It is unimportant whether or not the material used was already formed for some other purpose. J. Elderfield writes: "The artist creates through the choice, distribution and metamorphosis of the materials. The metamorphosis of materials can be produced by their distribution over the picture surface. This can be reinforced by dividing, deforming, overlapping or printing over. In Merzmalerei, the box top, playing card and newspaper clipping become surfaces, string, brushstroke and pencil stroke become line; wire-netting becomes overpainting or pasted-on greaseproof paper become varnish, cotton become softness." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.50)

The deciding factors in the creation of the collage, then, are the choice of materials, their distribution and organization over the picture surface, and their metamorphosis (Entformung) into purely formal elements. By "Entformung", Schwitters means that just as in a painting a handmade mark denotes a line, so does a length of string or wire in a Merzbild. (Elderfield, 1985, p.51)

It should not be forgotten, however, that these materials are not neutral or conventional pictorial elements but found material, "non-art" ones. Many of Schwitters assemblages contain words and slogans that tell of the outside world. Most refer only in the most general terms to the urban environment in which Schwitters lived. "The tram tickets, postage-stamps, coins and newspaper advertisements with their eye-catching numbers and fragmented phrases, all combine to evoke a definite period atmosphere." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.62) But, more often than not, without describing a particular moment or place. "They do tell of the disjointedness and claustrophobia of the modern world, of a commercial and bureaucratic world dominated by pieces of paper: papers that identify you; perhaps that allow you to travel (for passports and visas only became standard after the outbreak of the First World War); paper with which you buy things (and which soon is devalued); and paper, of course, to read. Together - in their jumble of cross-references and in their fragmentation - they evoke a kind of spiritual homelessness." (quote Elderfield, 1985, p.62) In Schwitters work, all these discarded elements of society, are picked up, evaluated, put together and given new

meaning and value through Schwitters art. (Elderfield, 1985, p.62)

Papers not only intended to be read but which provide specific, identifiable reference do appear in some works. MERZBILD ROSSFETT for example, ca. 1919 (Elderfield, 1985, pl.111), "jokes on the juxaposition of its title ("Horsefat") with the advertisements for various toilet preparations below." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.63) A few of the earlier assemblages, moreover, combine cut-out phrases to produce an unmistakeable message, or combination. J. Elderfield states: "It may be just accidental that as one reads down DAS UNDBILD, ca. 1919 (Wolfram, 1975, p.78, fig.40) one finds `burg` (upside down, to the top left)' the `und' itself, then `erde' at the bottom of the picture – to produce the phrase "castle and earth" or, if `erde' is from `pferde', "castle and horses", which must clearly have been intended." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.63)

Das STERNENBILD, ca. 1920 (Elderfield, 1985, fig.66) may be the most socialist documentation of Schwitter's assemblages, referring to political disorder and corruption. Precisely because its social references are in the form of documentary quotations, it can, while telling vividly of its time, still remain detached. Schwitters once wrote: "For me art is too precious to be misused as a tool: I prefer to distance myself from contemporary events ... But I am more deeply rooted in my time than the politicians who hover over the decade." (Schwitters as quoted by Elderfield, 1985, p.64) J. Elderfield mentioned that, "if anything is implicitly criticised in DAS STERNENBILD,

it may perhaps be the Expressionist cosmology suggested by the
title, for is it not ironic to make a Sternenwelt or Celestial
sphere out of such utterly tawdry materials? But here, we cannot
be sure. Schwitters did talk of shouting out his exaltations
through garbage and of seeking to build a new world from
fragments of the old." (quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.64)

By using `non-art', or found material, as replacement for
conventional formal elements, Schwitters created an immediate
duality of formal design and associative reference in our
perception of these works. This duality is accentuated by
placing these materials on top of worked, painterly grounds, so
that the material seems to belong equally and alternatively to
the outside world they come from and to the picture plane that
contains them. The material alternates between having a
self-sufficient meaning as material objects and being drawn back
into the object which contains them. J. Elderfield states: "The
denotive status of the material is further offset by the fact
that they act as the formal replacements of more conventional
materials. Reworking originally painted themes with materials
which allowed colour, surfaces and textures difficult to produce
by painting alone, was for Schwitters a way of broadening the
scope of his art. Doubtless aware of the inherent associative
strength of his material sources, he felt always compelled to
emphasize in his writings that they were used only as form."
(quote: Elderfield, 1985, p.65) In `Merz 1' Schwitters wrote:
"What the material denoted before its use in the work of art is a
matter of indifference so long as it is correctly evaluated and
given artistic meaning in the work of art ... All that matters

in a work of art is that all parts should be interrelated and
evaluated against each other ... The picture is a self-contained
work of art. It refers to nothing outside of itself. Nor can a
consistent work of art refer to anything outside of itself
without loosening its ties to art." (Schwitters as quoted by
Elderfield, 1985, p.65) In structures created by assemblage a
tension between inner and outer reference always remains.

The Merzbilder, however abstract their construction, are
realistic in a way that the most academically representational
painting can never be, by using pre-existing material - material
of the time. Natural collages exists everywhere around us; they
are the artifacts of our time. We see them on billboards,
shop-windows, cinemas etc. The scraps of paper, labels, tickets,
all the fragments Schwitters obsessively picked up from the
streets to use as form of expression, were parts of natural
collages before he ever retrieved them. Any observer can see
them. Schwitters saw them, saved them, and recorded them - true,
realistic histories of his time and ours.

III   <u>ART SINCE WORLD WAR II</u>

World War II, changed the balance of power between nations, in
ways that still influence the world today. The United States,
for example, were revealed as a country of global power and
importance. In the Art world a great shift in focus occurred
during the 1930's, when fascism forced a large number of creative
people to leave Europe for exile in the United States. Thus New
York replaced Paris as the prime centre for artistic creation,
especially Modernism. The concept of the United States as symbol
of material abundance, self-confidence and individualism was one
that was greatly boosted after 1945.

In the words of T. Copplestone: "American culture received a
tremendous boost, reciprocated by a striving economy that had
survived the Depression." (quote: Copplestone, 1983, p.363)
Another important change that took place after the war, was the
rise in prestige of the museums, nationwide. This was mainly due
to renewed patronage, with the significant difference that they
now held contemporary works as well as old masterpieces. T.
Copplestone stated: "In 1929, Modern Art had already been
established (institutionalized) in the form of the Museum of
Modern Art. The artmarket thus expanded, to meet demands from
public and private sources, and as a result, works of art have
acquired the charisma of deluxe commodities." (quote:
Copplestone, 1983, p.364) By 1960, any 'new' art movement was
accepted, rather then rejected by the art world, thus encouraging
artist to find new directions. The speed at which art movements
overtook each other in this era is breathtaking, each new
movement proclaimed to have found the 'right', 'new' way of

seeing and expression. This resulted in the destinctions between
the different arts to blur, as artists experimented a great deal
with mixed media. Theory became very important, almost more
important than the artwork itself.

One of these movements was Abstract Expressionism in America.
Even though it concentrated on one medium, - painting, - artists
created a lot of theory to go with the artworks they produced,
which were no longer visual representations of anything. Its
main concern was flatness and purity in painting, and words and
inscriptions had no place in it. Abstract Expressionism was
quickly succeeded by Pop Art, proof, that there were no shared,
fixed values amongst artists.

Pop Art emerged independently in America and England, round about
1960. In America, Pop Art was first of all a reaction to the
prevailing Abstract Expressionism. Artists tried to find a new
kind of figurative art, without sacrificing the `new' theories
about painting, for example `flatness'. There was no going back
to literal representational painting.

Secondly, in the USA for example, the visual pressure of
advertising and ad-mass communications were saturating peoples
lives. New York alone had several television channels, many
newspapers, periodicals and movie houses. In the words of E.
Wolfram: "To understand the `new super-realism' as it was first
called in America, requires an understanding of the popular
culture and the unashamed prevailing commercialism." (quote:
Wolfram, p.160-161) It is an artform, that concerns itself with
the tangible visual world, - a world of objects and everyday

events, - as its basic material. E. Wolfram maintains that:

"The unique significance of Pop Art as a movement is that it attempts to embrace the aesthetic standards of the consumer-oriented world with its amalgam of trivia, kitsch and general eclecticism, from the popular media of the movies, TV, comics, newspapers, girly magazines, billboards and supermarket packaging. Pop art became not so much even an art about 'life' as the expression of an ad-mass acceptance of a way of living, rather than revolt against it. It was a world in which media itself became message." (quote: Wolfram, 1975 p.158)

Pop art, is the product of its environment, whose presence is so strong, it defeats heredity and tradition in art.

E. Wolfram quotes Mario Amaya saying: "Never before has the human eye been so assaulted by images ... because of the immense power and spread of advertising and mass-media communications ... we have taken for granted a whole new set of sign, symbols, emblems and imagery, which have settled in our subconscious ... (which) massproduced ... have become part of a mid-twentieth-century urban 'folk' art, made ... for materialistic and commercial ends ... These commercial artifacts constitute a new potent means of visual communication and the Pop artist is concerned with scrutinising this strange new language. It is not surprising that young artists ... should be interested in exploiting the psychological, sociological, mythological (as well as purely visual), elements in such images, taking them out of context, transforming them and elevating them to the level of 'fine art'."

(Mario Amaya, Pop as Art, Studio Vista, 1965; as quoted by
Wolfram, 1975 p.158)

But Pop Art, like all art movements had roots deep in the past.
The deepest of these were in Dada and perhaps also the work of
Kurt Schwitters.

This becomes apparent in the work of Robert Rauschenberg for
example. As early as 1955, Rauschenberg (b. 1925), - one of the
leading American Pop artists, - was including found objects in
his paintings. Unlike Schwitters and the Cubists, he not only
used fragments of an object, but the entire object in his
artworks. Rauschenberg used the most diverse materials, for what
he called combine paintings. At the beginning these were
relatively modest objects, - newspaper clippings, photographs or
any other object that could have accumulated around his studio.
(Arnason, 1969, p.618)

His most spectacular combine painting was entitled 'Monogram',
1959, (Arnason, 1969, p.619, fig.1109). Rauschenberg included a
stuffed ram, with an automobile tyre around its middle. The
construction stands on a base made up of collage material and
free brush painting.

Even if the origins of these combine paintings are to be found in
Dada and 'Merz' constructions of Kurt Schwitters, his approach
was somewhat different. H. Arnason stated: "His motivation and
approach, however, are different not only in the great spacial
expansion, but in the use of the topical, the specifc
association with which the artist at the same moment was

concerned. It is this attempt to create a unity out of
impermanent materials, topical events, and an expressive
brushstroke that gives his paintings their particular qualities
and raise numerous questions concerning the nature of subject and
abstraction in the later twentieth century." (quote: Arnason,
1969, p.618)

This inclusion of entire objects into the artwork, must have been
an inspiration for artists to develop the object itself into a
work of art, - without the future aid of a medium such as paint.

But Pop Art had other sources as well. In the work of Stuart
Davis (1894 - 1964), for example, the beginnings are visible in
his use of commonplace domestic objects. American scene subject
matter - an electric fan, a rubber glove, or a cigarette packet
as in the work LUCKY STRIKE, (Arnason, 1969, fig.693, p.430),
are already used as material for his art in the late twenties.
By the fourties he was using extensive lettering as the basis for
his compositions. It was said by H. Arnason, that: "Stuart
Davis's professional career encompassed virtually the entire
span of modern art in the United States." (quote: Arnason,
1969, p.429)

Since his collages and paintings of the early 20's are already
explorations of the everyday items that became so common in Pop
art, he is often viewed as the pioneer of Pop art. An example of
his work, RAPT AT RAPPAPORT'S, 1952 (Arnason, 1969, col.pl.193)
displays large colourful shapes, with the title repeated in the
picture plane. The whole composition is bright and vibrant, all
the shapes set against a flat, bright green background colour.

The Cubist influence is obvious, except for the bright colours
that the Cubists never used. Davis experimented with over-all
patterns in a number of his works, which is also very visible in
BLIPS AND IFS, 1963-64, (Arnason, 1969, col.pl.195). Here the
shapes have become larger, the whole composition more open, and
shapes and letter such as 'Comp...', cut off as they extend over
the picture plane. About the frequent use of words in these
compositions, when asked why by K. Kuh, he replied that he paints
his pictures spontaneously, but not in a technical sense. "In a
technical sense I work on them for months. It's spontaneous
content, I'm interested in, and by this I mean the direct
reaction of the spectator to the finished painting and the
continuous reaction of the artist himself as he's working on it.
The artist sees and feels not only shapes but words as well. We
see words everywhere in modern life; we're bombarded by them.
But physically words are also shapes. You don't want banal
boring words any more than you want banal boring shapes or a
banal boring life. You've always got to make a choice. In
choosing words I find that the smallest idea is equal to the
greatest. I've used significant words and drawn significant
objects because at times these were all that were at hand. By
giving them value as experiences and by equating great with
little, I discovered that the act of believing was what gave
meaning to the smallest idea." (Stuart Davis, as quoted by Kuh:
1960, p.52-52)

An interesting point to note, is how Davis often incorporates his
signature into his design, as part of the design, not as a hand

written personal mark. On this he said: "In the past it was
customary for artist to sign their names on the front of
paintings. I got the idea it ought to be integral, or else on
the back of the canvas. If you're going to sign your work, why
not make it part of the Composition? Refrigerator and automobile
companies are not modest - why should the artist be?" (Stuart
Davis: as quoted by Kuh, 1960, p.58)

At this point, words had been re-introduced into art, not only to
complement the image, but even to constitute an image. This
becomes more visible in the work of Robert Indiana, (b.1928).
Like Stuart Davis, Indiana has been obsessed with word images, in
his case attaining a stark simplicity, such as: EAT, LOVE, DIE,
words derived from American neon-signs. These are rendered in
clashing colours and precise, hard-edge colour shapes. He does
not alter them, nor does he recombine them with other images or
shapes, as Stuart Davis did. For example, **THE RED DIAMOND DIE,**
1962, (Arnason, 1969, p.641, fig.1135) The word 'Die' is
displayed clearly in a circle, which is turn is placed on a flat
background diamond shape. The American dream, of easy life,
abundance and finally death, is obviously the subject. The
social comment injected in this work, as in some of his others is
apparent. These comments on the American way of life might at
first appear as negative, but according to E. Lucien-Smith this
is not so: "In his view, the American dream, using the words in
a general rather than a specific sense, is 'optimistic, generous,
and naive'". (quote: Lucie-Smith, 1977, p.232)

Indiana is perhaps most commonly associated with his rendering of

LOVE, 1972 (Arnason, fig.1136, p.641). This design has been
reproduced by the millions, in any conceivable form, from
postcards to posters. He himself continues to produce many
variations on 'love', one of which is a three-dimensional metal
sculpture.

Like several other Pop artists, Andy Warhol (1930-   ) was first
a successful commercial artist. As a Pop artist he became best
known through his reproductions of standard brands and
supermarked products - Coca Cola bottles, Campbell's soup cans,
and Brillo cartons. His images, - often repetitions of one
single item (soup cans for example), give the impression of
looking at a supermarket shelf. Furthermore, this repetition
seems to remove - from the single object - any significance it
might have possessed when viewed on its own, in isolation to the
others. Warhol's desire was to create images without 'style', or
emotional involvement of any kind. The next step was to abandon
hand work altogether, in favour of a mechanical process, in this
case silkscreen. In the words of E. Lucie-Smith: "In his
massproduced silkscreens, one is not even sure if Warhol himself
has intervened in their production, which bear his name. This is
because he believes that art should have the egalitarian
anonimity of the life he observes around him." (quote:
Lucie-Smith, 1977, p.199)

Warhols nihilism goes even deeper than this. Another
characteristic series of paintings are those named 'The
Disasters', where he would silkscreen images of car crashes, race
riots, or the electric chair. According to E. Lucie-Smith:

"These pictures are at one and the same time an acknowledgement
of a deep streak of negative emotion, and a deliberate
cauterization of that emotion. He quotes Warhol saying: 'When you
see a gruesome picture over and over again, it doesn't really
have any effect.'" (quote: Lucie-Smith, 1977, p.199) Andy
Warhol eventually stopped painting altogether, and concentrated
on film. As films became increasingly commercial, and were no
longer viewed as avant-garde, he became celebrated merely for
being Warhol. He scarcely intervened in the activity which still
went on around him, and which continued to bear his name.

A different aspect of the American Pop movement is revealed by
the work of Roy Lichtenstein (b. 1923). His approach to Pop Art,
according to E. Lucie-Smith, was largely negative - "anti
contemplative, anti-nuance, anti-getting away from the tyranny of
the rectangle, anti-movement-and- light, anti-mystery,
anti-paintquality, anti-zen, and anti all of these brilliant
ideas of preceding movements which everyone understood as
thoroughly" (from an interview with Lichtenstein in "Picasso to
Lichtenstein" exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, 1974) (quote:
Lucie-Smith, 1977, p.199) Lichtenstein, unlike Warhol was deeply
interested in questions of style, even though the interest was
often to create a work of art, that was, as Lichtenstein said:
"... despicable enough so that none would hang it"
(Lichtenstein, as quoted by Lucie-Smith, 1977, p.205) Ironically
this implies an interest in the sort of artworks that people and
galleries do in fact hang on their walls.

Lichtenstein's material was the comic strip, mechanically

reproduced and substantially revised. Lichtenstein said: "What I do is form, whereas the comic strip is not formed in the sense I'm using the word: the comics have shapes but there has been no attempt to make them intensely unified ... One of the things a cartoon does is to express violent emotion and passion in a completely mechanical and removed style. To express this thing in a painterly style would dilute it; the techniques I use are not commercial - and the ways of seeing and composing and unifying are different and have different ends." (interview with G.R. Swenson, "What is Pop Art?", Art News, vol.62 no.7 (November, 1963), p.24-27) (quote: Lucie-Smith, 1977, p.205)

Lichtenstein enlarged and reproduced his images by purely mechanical means, often the size of a billboard. When he enlarges sections of a comic strip, the effect is often quite different, even though all that has changed is the size. Lichtenstein had previous experience in design and display, which is very obvious when one looks at an image like WHAAM!, 1963 (Lucie-Smith, 1977, fig.163). The abstract use of space and colour, definitely put this comic strip image into a high-art context. L. Lippard stated that: "Roy Lichtenstein's 'transformation' of an object is somewhat different to Andy Warhols approach, since the latter's work is so ultimate in its rejection of involvement, but Lichtenstein's certainly is not." (quote: Lippard, 1966, p.92) L. Lippard goes on to say: "Lichtenstein is excited by the 'highly emotional content, yet detached impersonal handling', of love, hate or war in these cartoon images, but he finds their pictorial structures outweigh emotive considerations," (quote: Lippard, 1977, p.94) In his

images, Lichtenstein omits distracting details, lines, figures, or words that distract clarity, and presents his images - which were detailed narrative sequences - as clear cut designs. The content of these images is so blatant, that it can be viewed and comprehended at a glance.

E. Lucie-Smith stated that: "Of all the art styles that have arisen since the war, Pop Art, and especially American Pop, was the one which seemed to mesh most successfully with the society that produced it. In this connection it is important to note that its success was made by dealers and collectors, rather than by critics." (quote: Lucie-Smith, 1977, p.242)

Another artist, who's formative years coincide with the era of Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art was David Hockney.

Hockney was born in Yorkshire in 1937. His father, - a amateur painter, - encouraged David's interest in art and literature from an early age. At the age of eleven, Hockney had made up his mind that he wanted to be an artist. In 1953, he entered the Bradford School of Art, where he received intensive training in the more traditional skills of art, - anatomy, perspective, figure composition and life drawing. He graduated in 1957. Two years later, in 1959, after broadening his knowledge of art, - including contemporary English art, - Hockney enrolled in the Royal College of Art as a post-graduate student.

His initial experiments were with Abstract Expressionism, but he soon realised that his concern for figurative painting, literature and other subjects was too intense to exclude from his

work. Encouraged by his fellow students, R. B. Kitaj and Richard
Hamilton, Hockney began doing pictures with letters: He started
to write on his paintings.

The true reason for including letters into his images was a lack
of courage to paint real figures. The idea of figurative
painting at that time seemed "anti-modern". In the words of E.
Pillsbury: "He would instead write a word to identify the
subject of the painting or give a clue to the meaning or title of
the work. For example he would write the word `Gandhi' on a work
about the Indian politician. The presence of the word created a
feeling about the picture that was more specific. It also forced
the viewer to come close to the work and inspect the surface in
search of other messages or clues to possible meaning." (quote:
Pillsbury, 1978)

As already mentioned, Hockney has a great interest in literature.
It should not come as a surprise then, that the artist used words
in his artworks. For example, some of Hockney's works were
inspired by the poetry of Walter Whitman. The first is a
painting entitled **ADHESIVENESS**, (Hockney, 1976, p.25, fig.1) done
in 1960. The title to the painting is derived from one of
Whitman's poems, who used the word `Adhesiveness' to describe the
concept of friendship. In the painting, two figures are
embracing, - silhouetted against a black border, - in front of an
abstract panel of paint. (Pillsbury, 1978) E. Pillsbury stated
that: "The numbers drawn on each figure refer to a code used by
Whitman to designate letters of the alphabet; by this system
`4.8' stands for `DH' or David Hockney, and `23.23' for `WW' or

Walter Whitman." (quote: Pillsbury, 1978)

He goes on to say that the painting therefore takes on a number
of meanings. On one level, the painting, - in a 'truly modern'
fashion, - is a purely abstract juxaposition of colours and
shapes on a flat surface. It is also an allegory of friendship,
- which is the theme of the poem. Thirdly, it could be viewed as
a statement about the shortcomings of abstractionist painting.
On a fourth level it is a self-portrait of the artist expressing
the painter's love of Whitman's poetry. (Pillsbury, 1978) In
ADHESIVENESS, Hockney only used numbers as symbols for a larger
concept, but in **THE THIRD LOVE PAINTING**, (Hockney, 1976, p 25,
fig.2), - done in the same year, - he included words and lines
from Whitman's poetry. The painting is basically and abstract
expressionist work. Hockney combined certain lines from
Whitman's poems together with graffiti, - all of which serve as
pointers to the content of the painting. Hockney's own comment
was: "You are forced to look at the painting quite closely
because it is covered with lots of graffiti, which makes you go
up to it. You want to read it. I assume people are always
inquisitive and nosy, and if you see a little poem written in the
corner of a painting it will force you to go up and look at it.
And so the painting becomes something a little different; it's
not just an arrangement in browns, pinks and blacks. At the same
time, when you see the painting you can see it's not totally
preoccupied with content because the paint itself is
interesting..... But it also contains pointers which have to do
with content, like 'must go' and the Whitman's lines; 'My brother
is only seventeen' I think was just taken from the walls of a

toilet in Earls Court tube station. When you first look casually
at the graffiti on a wall, you don't see all the smaller
messages; you see the large ones first and only if you lean over
and look more closely do you get the smaller, more neurotic
ones." (quote: Hockney, 1976, p.44)

The subject matter of love and boys, could be viewed as a
deliberate flaunting of the artist's homosexuality, - for which
he was much criticised at that time. The writing also invites
the viewer to interpret the painting by means of reading the
messages. The combination of abstract painting, with literal
elements such as words, serves to demonstrate the shortcomings of
pure abstract painting. In the words of E. Pillsbury: "There is
a criticism of abstract painting, a kind of art which one
normally viewed only briefly and from a distance, without an
interest in anything beyond the manipulation of the forms and
paint, and which normally bore serial titles based on
matter-of-fact descriptions of colour or purely abstract elements
of the composition." (quote: Pillsbury, 1978)

Writing on a canvas can change the way one looks at a picture.
In 1962, Hockney painted PICTURE EMPHASIZING STILLNESS, (Hockney,
1976, p.69, fig.47) It shows two men, - quite a distance away
from a little house, - talking. A leopard is stretched above
them in full flight, ready to leap onto the two men. In front of
the leopards nose there is a little line of type. On this, D.
Hockney commented: " ...And as you walk a little closer to the
picture, because you notice a line of type, you read the type
first; in a sense this robs the picture of its magic, because

you interpret the picture in terms of the written message, which says: 'they are perfectly safe, this is a still.' You realise the leopard will never reach the men." (quote: Hockney 1976, p.61)

His intention once again was to force the viewer closer to the canvas. He added that he realized that this robber the viewer of his first impression he got of the work, and forced him to look at it in another way. Putting a real message onto the canvas is intending it to be read, and it normally is.

Hockney's words are never large or overpowering, since his intention is to make the viewer come close to the picture. They are not meant to be read at a first glance. In this way, the images produce dual impressions, - before and after reading the words written.

IV   THE EVOKATIVE QUALITY OF WORDS:

CHARLOTTE SALOMON and ANSELM KIEFER

Amongst all artists, - past and present, - Charlotte Salomon and
Anselm Kiefer are excellent examples, utilising words and images
as a very personal form of expression. Even though Charlotte
Salomon (1917-1943) and Anselm Kiefer (b.1945), did not share the
same life span, they do have one thing in common, - the war, -
and its effects. For Charlotte it was a reality she lived with
and for Kiefer it is but a memory.

For the Generation that lived at the time, the division of
Germany was traumatic. In the words of T. Godfrey: "It is this
sense of loss and incompleteness, together with the repressed
history of Germany, which Anselm Kiefer takes as his subject."
(quote: Godfrey, 1986, p.37) Charlotte on the other hand, was
driven by persecution and war to give artistic form to the
essentials of her own life. She did this in the form of an
autobiography, called 'Life or Theatre', relieving her past in
the Jewish community of Berlin, from her birth in 1917 until the
day in July 1940 when she began to work on her book. The
autobiography is composed of 769 pictures which, together with
the accompanying painted texts, preliminary studies, and unused
compositions, constitute a total of 1,325 sheets. She left the
complete work in the car of a village doctor in the South of
France, in the summer of 1942. Charlotte died not long
afterwards, probably in Auschwitz in 1943.

In the words of J. Herzberg: "She used her own life to give new
meaning to an existence that had been declared by the world to be

of no meaning. Her conviction that profound pain is inseparable from the life of man, and her struggles with that pain, were attitudes that were to prove characteristic of the generation that reached maturity after the Second World War and had to learn to live with a legacy of millions of needless deaths." (quote: Herzberg, 1981)

Charlotte fled to France in 1939 to her grandparents. After the war broke out in September 1939 her grandmother became despondent, committing suicide in March 1940. It was one of a series of suicides in Charlotte's family. Charlotte's great-grandmother, her grandmother, her mother and aunt, all ended their lives. As J. Herzberg stated: "With the Nazi danger steadily approaching and the threat from outside growing daily, Charlotte was now threatened from within as well, by the family doom. That was when she decided to put her life onto paper, rather than fall into despair that might have, for her as well, ended in suicide." (quote: Herzberg, 1981)

Charlotte lived and worked under extreme pressure, continually aware of the war — the streams of refugees, the shortage of food, the Italian and later the German occupation of the Cote d'Azur. When paging through her manuscript, one is aware of the increasing haste, with which she executed her work. Surely she was aware of the fact that she was racing time to capture her entire experience of life as completely and quickly as possible. J. Herzberg stated that: "The style of the book has a pace that is dictated partly by Charlotte's circumstances of the moment but also by the contents themselves." (quote: Herzberg, 1981)

At the beginning of the book, for example, Charlotte depicts
scenes from her childhood. One of these, - her parents' home, -
is so detailed and described down to the edges of the carpeting.
These must have been happy years of her life, which she cared to
remember. In the course of the work however, the accents shifts
from objects and background, to psychological situations.
Perhaps because she felt time pressing, she concentrated more and
more on essentials. Also, since life was full of hardship at
that time, she might have preferred to record it quickly, then
set it aside. J. Herzberg stated: "Her style becomes
increasingly her own, increasingly intuitive, until in the latter
sheets she transfers her obsession onto paper with unequalled
directness. She scribbled these words in pencil: "That which van
Gogh attained in later life, ... a brushstroke of unprecedented
lightness, which unfortunately seems to have a distinctly
pathological side, I have attained already." That directness and
urgency still affects those that see her work today." (quote:
Herzberg, 1981)

"Life or Theatre", which is produced in the form of a play, is
meant to be read, and was not intended for performance. The
words spoken by the characters are written on the paintings
themselves. The dialogue only really begins at the time Paulinka
(Charlotte's stepmother) is introduced to her voice teacher, Mr.
Dabberlohn. Before that point, the texts are written on sheets
of tracing paper and put together with the illustrations they
belong to. After the dialogue begins in the play, only narrative
information is given on separate sheets of paper. Charlotte
usually wrote with a brush onto her work.

"In the beginning of the play, the only words included in the paintings are those of information, such as the announcement in the paper of her aunt's death." (quote: Herzberg, 1981, p.8) Charlotte paints her dead aunt, lying on a oval flat shape, her grandfather, - whom she paints frequently later on, - as well as two people at the bottom of the picture plane, mourning. The newspaper announcement is written in the middle of the painting and reads, translated into English 'Suicide of eighteen-year-old! Charlotte seeks death in Lake Schlachten! Last night a young girl drowned herself in Lake Schlachten. The body was recovered and was identified this morning at the morgue by her father. We extend our deepest sympathy to her parents and trust they will find consolation in their older daughter.' Vossische Zeitung.

The older daughter being Charlotte's mother of course. The story continues about Charlotte's mother's life, how she becomes a nurse, goes to the front and meets a man that was to become her husband. Very little lettering is included in the paintings, often just the date of the year, when a particular scene took place. An example, such ad '1914', shows Charlotte's mother explaining to her parents that she wants to be a nurse (Herzberg, 1981, p.9). The accompanying narrative text was at this stage still written on separate sheets of paper, and filed with the guaches in their correct place.

The story goes on, telling of Charlotte's birth, the death of her mother, the years following her mother's death, during which Charlotte was tended by maids and governesses. These must have been hard for Charlotte since her father, also having to cope

with the suicide of his wife, withdrew into his work. Then,
after four years, Paulinka (Charlotte's stepmother) appears.
Paulinka, a singer hires a voice teacher called Mr. Daberlohn,
who made and overwhelming impression on Charlotte.

At this stage of the story, the dialogue begins between the
people in the paintings, and the words are written onto the
picture surface.

Considering the volume of Charlotte's work, it is impossible to
discuss the whole of her life. However, certain scenes of the
book can be discussed to show the evolution of her work, which
tends to get simpler and more to the point. The words, which
were an adjunct to her images in the beginning, fill the entire
picture frame at the end of her book. The pressure of time
becomes very obvious in the end. Perhaps she had a preminissence
that her time was running out. In Charlotte's work, words were
very useful to express what could no longer be portrayed.

In one example (Herzberg, 1981, p.259), Paulinka's face is drawn
six times, very close to the technique used in comic strips. Her
thoughts and speech revolve around selling a ring to provide Mr.
Dabberlohn with some money. The first two face expressions show
Paulinka with her eyes closed. Deep in thought, before she
speaks. In the third picture her eyes open and she says: "I'm
thinking of this ring I have", and following the next three
pictures of her face, "Quite a valuable little thing, I'd be glad
to sell it for you for when it comes to cash I'm not exactly
flush!" The mood in this painting is quite special. Charlotte
represents Paulinka, - in the beginning, - as quite sentimental

about the ring, which none the less she is prepared to sell.

The last representation of her face, shows her eyes, - wide open, - with a sort of determined look about her, saying she is quite ready to part with her ring. The words 'Ring" and 'Ding' (ring, thing) are written much larger than the rest of the writing. One must assume that they were perhaps spoken a little louder, with a bit more emphasis. Charlotte had a very expressive way of rendering the words in her paintings.

Another scene, - after trying desparately for a period of time to save her grandmother from committing suicide, - shows her dead grandmother and herself. Her grandmother has thrown herself out of the window. Next to her grandmother this time stands Charlotte. The only words written onto this image are red letters superimposed onto Charlotte's figure. They read: 'May you never forget that I believe in you.' Charlotte is weary, and this is very noticeable. The painting is executed very quickly, plain and only the most essential details portrayed. (Herzberg, 1981, p.748) The red colour of the letters hightens the sense of drama, since red is often associated with blood, violence and terror. Whether this was intended by Charlotte, or purely accidental, remains unknown.

Then Charlotte portrays herself lying in bed, eventually trying to get some sleep. (Herzberg, 1981, p.752) The background of the room is largely made up of a dark window. Charlotte, on the right hand side of the room, is facing the wall. The words she is thinking are written in blue and red. They read 'It seems to me, that you are somewhat insensitive because of the number of

your family tragedies.' The word 'Tragedies', is rendered in
large, curved letters. It evokes the feeling of Charlotte
falling asleep, feeling disillusioned. The image as such is very
disturbing, partly due to the window in the background, which
seems to be open, - ready for Charlotte to throw herself out.

The following illustration is that of her grandfather in the next
room. Almost the entire canvas is covered in writing, saying:
'That happens to be the fate of this family. They are all so
unnatural. I immediately switched to my wife's bed because the
view from here is so much more attractive - I probably have to be
prepared for that girl in the next room to attempt suicide too.
What have I done to deserve that? Haven't I always striven to
combine education and knowledge with an understanding of human
nature? Fate, you really are hard on me.' (Herzberg, 1981,
p.753) The writing makes the image claustraphobic, leaving the
impression of her grandfather as very preoccupied and worried,
despite the statement he made. These are feelings that no image
can express on its own.

But Charlotte is obviously not able to sleep. A few scenes later
(Herzberg, 1981, p.755), she paints the same bedroom, - entirely
in orange, - showing herself clasping her head. The lettering
over the image is large and states: 'Dear God, please don't let
me go mad." The words 'Gott", (God) and 'Wahnsinnig' (mad), are
emphasised. The simplicity and colour of the scene, enhances the
mood of desperation at this moment.

The date marking the beginning of the War, - May 1940, - is shown
in a simple picture. (Herzberg, 1981, p.761) The date 'Mai

1940' is written in a circle with stars and lines around it, reminding one of the Futurist's direction lines. The lines give the picture a sense of movement. No additional information is given in the painting, but surely the date speaks for itself.

Next Charlotte and her grandfather have to leave their home, travel by railway, and eventually arrive at their destination - the camp of Gurs where all the non-French Jews in the district were locked up. Charlotte's grandfather was released on account of his age, and she was allowed to accompany him as his attendant. J. Herzberg states: "Although she owed her freedom to this arrangement, she found it intolerable to be near him. She saw him as a small minded egotist, who was detaining her from her work, the only thing that kept her alive." (quote: Herzberg, 1981, p.xii)

The last illustration in the play (Herzberg, 1981, p.774), shows Charlotte sitting in front of her grandfather, who has a peculiar smile on his face. Charlotte's facial expression is sincere. She says to him: "You know, Grandpa, I have a feeling the whole world has to be put together again." He replies: "Oh, go ahead and kill yourself and put an end to all this babble." The largest letters on the painting are the words spoken by him. Especially the 'Nun nimm Dir doch endlich das Leben' (Oh, go ahead and kill yourself.) It sounds almost like an order, and he seems to get pleasure out of tormenting her.

From then on, the rest of the story is told in words, - whole pages of it. Large clear letters, going over into small letters, written on uneven lines, in different colours.

- The last page ends with: "And with dream - awakened eyes she saw
all the beauty around her, saw the sea, felt the sun, and knew:
she had to vanish for a while from the human place and make every
sacrifice in order to create her world anew out of the depths."
The concluding page states: "And from that came Life or
Theatre???" (Herzberg, 1981, p.782-784) The final illustration
shows Charlotte sitting at the beach, sketchbook in hand and
'Life or Theatre' written across her back.

Charlotte does not comment on her existential situation, however,
the circumstances she lived in shaped her life to be as unhappy
as it was, and this is obvious in her paintings.

Anselm Kiefer, however, takes these circumstances, - his
country's Nazi past, - and presents them, in what is more than
just a documentary reconstruction. Eric Gibson stated: "Kiefer's
aim is to exorcise the lingering burden of an inherited past, as
well as to remind us that the will to distruct is not confined to
a single historical moment in one country, but is broadly
characteristic of the modern condition." (quote: Gibson, 1988,
Studio International, p.22)

M. Rosenthal stated: "Kiefer studies and confronts "historical
man," the modern man who in Mircea Eliade words, "consciously and
voluntarily creates history" and who has "Faith in an infinite
Process." As a German citizen born in 1945, Kiefer has inherited
the fruits of that modern faith in its most horrendous form. By
talent, nationality and temperament he is ideally suited to
making the present spiritual plight of humankind the universal
subject of his intensely German art." (quote: Rosenthal 1987,

p.7)

Furthermore, Kiefer is one of the modern artists that believes
that art should be created to renew or re-invent a shared
spiritual language and common mythology. Because of the lack of
it today, too many artists are producing art for its own sake.
Kiefer's sees painting as possessing a mission more urgent than
simple depiction.

This vision of art as socially useful activity, recalls Joseph
Beuys. In fact Kiefer was once his student. For Beuys, art was
an escape from the corrupt society he lived in, as well as a tool
for initiating a 'healing process'. Beuys freely incorporated
myths, metaphors and symbols of various cultures into his ideas,
together with his wrenching personal experience during World War
II. From Beuys, - amongst other things, - Kiefer probably
inherited the urge to grasp great regions of human history within
the boundaries of his art.

M. Rosenthal stated: "The purpose of Kiefer's often esoteric
subject matter is not romantic titillation but the search for
lessons in both the recent and distant past to prepare the artist
and his audience for the future. He insists on the need to learn
from ancient myths and religions as well as recent tragic events
if we are to deal with that "terror of history" that casts its
shadow over our lives." (quote: Rosenthal, 1987, p.7)

In order to attain his goal, - grand encompassing statements, -
Kiefer freely intermingles real and mythic times, spacial
depictions, phylosophical outlooks, and media. M. Rosenthal

states: "In his approach historical and mythical events are
signposts, presenting information about the nature of the world.
His recall of a particular incident or subject is meant to
introduce a spiritual outlook or moral lesson that is almost
always ambiguous or paradoxical, since Kiefer's view of
experience is that there are no truths, only interpretations."
(quote: Rosenthal, 1987, p.10)

One painting, **MARCH HEATH**, 1974 follows Kiefer's landscape
prototype. These normally have a high horizon line, which evokes
a kind of claustraphobia. A road is carved our of the natural
growth, indicating human activity or habitation. The words
"Maerkische Heide" are written across the painting, meant to be
read, and definitely forming a message to all that read German,
or know about its meaning. The March Heath belongs to the
Brandenburg region, located in East Germany southeast of Berlin.
M. Rosenthal states: "The area is happily recalled for many
Germans in Theodor Fontane's 'Walking - Tours through the
Brandenburg March', written in the nineteenth century. But the
Brandenburg territory has had great importance in Prussian
history since the early seventeenth century, and the Brandenburg
March became a frequent fought-over prize, which in this century
was first lost to Russia and later to East Germany. At first
Kiefer's title and the birch tree on the right establish a
Fontane-like context of natural resplendent, waiting to be
enjoyed in peaceful contemplation. But Kiefer, who has never
visited the region, chose to represent the heath as barren; the
road then, may signify the events of history, not the idyllic
tour of Fontane. This territory has become a sad momento mori of

the Nazi experience and the separation of Germany. Adding to
the multiple associations of the painting is that "Maerkischer
Heide, Maerkischer Sand," an old patriotic tune of the region,
became a marching song for Hitler's army." (quote: Rosenthal,
1987, p.35)

For the viewer without the slightest knowledge of German history
and language, this message, and the lettering in the painting as
such become totally negligible. This is what makes Kiefer's work
so very German, is that it only really speaks to the German
nation.

Another of Kiefer's series was concerned with an obsessive
emotion, love. It was the **BRUNHILDE** series, based on Wagner's
'Ring of the Niebelung'. One part of the story tells of
Siegfried, who penetrates a ring of fire surrounding Brunhilde,
and wakens her from a magic sleep. In the words of M. Rosenthal:
"We witness the rapture and purity of their love. Subsequently,
Brunhilde is idealistic and willing to make sacrifices: she
forgets her identity as a Valkyrie and casts off her supernatural
powers. Siegfried falls victim to a passion for adventure and
fame. Eventually he is tricked into taking a potion that causes
him to forget the vows he has made to her, and at that moment,
the formerly admirable heroes assume new characteristics.
Siegfried is weak and prone to ambition, Brunhilde becomes
revengeful, for her sacrifice has been wasted." (quote:
Rosenthal, 1987, p.55)

In Kiefer's version of the theme in 1975, (Rosenthal, 1987,
fig.40, p.55), he simply writes "Siegfried vergisst Bruenhilde"

(Siegfried forgets Brunhilde) in a snowy field, the words
eavoking another human drama that has occurred in nature. "It is
as if this powerful subject cannot be reproduced in narrative
form or with humble paint; it requires the suggestive potential
of words." (quote: Rosenthal, 1987, p.55) For those who know
the story, the names written across the canvas serve as a
reminder of a great idealistic love. The moment of forgetting
emphasizes a subsequent period of emotional suffering,
disillusionment and loss.

M. Rosenthal states: "Apparently, Kiefer wants to test love, to
reflect on its existence and consider whether anyone measures up
to the indescribably idealistic notions attached to this emotion.
And if there is loss of memory, as it were, he is eager to
discover the meaning of that as well. Indeed, about forgetting,
Kiefer notes that it is impossible to hold everything in one's
consciousness all of the time and, furthermore, that forgetting
is sometimes necessary. One wonders whether the artist might
yearn to apply this thought to German history as well." (quote:
Rosenthal, 187, p.56)

Another theme which occupied Kiefer, was that of Margarete and
Shulamite. This subject is founded on an excruciatingly painful
poem entitled "Death Fugue" (Todesfuge) by Paul Celan, written in
a concentration camp in 1945 and published in 1952. Celan
survived the concentration camp, — out of his family he was the
only member to do so, — but committed suicide in 1970, at the age
of forty-nine, after producing an extraordinary body or work.
(Rosenthal, 1987, p.95)

Two figures are contrasted in the poem, and gradually become the central metaphor with which Celan concludes it. Margarete is a woman to which a German guard writes his love letters. The guard is described to have blue eyes, and she Margarete, blonde hair. Both evokes the Aryan identity. By contrast, Shulamite is the Jewish woman, whose hair is black owing to her race, but ashen from burning. (Rosenthal, 1987, p.95)

As Kiefer's series on Margarete and Shutamite evolved, he developed characterizations of the woman that united them in certain ways. Both Margarete and Shulamite have luxuriant cascades of hair. Shulamite's black hair is usually painted, while Margarete's locks are described with straw, which is usually stuck onto the picture plane. In the poem, the two women are inseparable, and Kiefer makes that point in his paintings as well. He does so by always implying the presence of the other, unnamed woman. As already mentioned, straw may be added to a painting of Shulamite on the one hand, and a painted black curve or straight lines may echo the shape of Margarete's hair on the other.

M. Rosenthal stated: "Kiefer often juxaposes Shulamite's naked body with an urban environment, as in a painting entitled **YOUR ASHEN HAIR SHULAMITE** (Dein Aschenes Haar, Sulamite), 1981. This he does to suggest that the monstrous acts befalling her are those perpetrates by civilization against a defenceless victim." (quote: Rosenthal, 1987, p.95)

The painted words, "dein aschenes Haar Sulamit", have the effect of being uttered in horrified wonder at what has happened to her

black hair, which is only accentuated by the fact that it is
written along the line that her hair forms in the picture. By
contrast to Shulaman, who is almost always shown by
representational form, Margarete is never depicted. Only words
and straw evoke her. "She is a naif or an ideal, then, who exists
in nature, unaffected by the events of history." (quote
Rosenthal, 1987, p.95) In **YOUR GOLDEN HAIR MARGARETE**, 1981, the
artist presents her in the form of straw, with Sulamite
represented as a black shadow next to that.

M. Rosenthal concludes by saying: "Germany maimed itself and its
civilization by destroying the Jewish members, and so, by
frequently alluding to both figures, the artist attempts to make
Germany whole again." (quote: Rosenthal, 1987, p.96)

Since Kiefer rarely paints figures in his landscapes, preferably
writing a name across the canvas instead, these words become
indispensable to the whole meaning of the painting. Words in
Kiefer's paintings could be viewed as explicit references, -
referring to history, people or places of significance. As his
work developed, so the urge for symbols, - shown in an
increasingly abstract, pictorical world, - took precedence over
his desire to make explicit references, and words were largely
dispensed. (Rosenthal, 1987, p.153)

CONCLUSION

Words and images have always formed a large part of society's
communication network. In various artistic traditions, words
have performed different functions for the interpretation and
response to the work of art.

Art, as a ordinary means of communication in society, has become
a minor activity in this century. The significance of art today
can no longer be compared to the value ascribed to it in the
Middle Ages for instance. Society itself has created this
situation, because the proper purpose and nature of art has
changed. Once it used to uphold society's norms and values, now
there is no need for it. Society has lost its coherence and has
diversified. Industrialisation, mass production and the emphasis
on science and technology has taken the place of art.

As Art was being deprived of its initial purpose, so the reasons
for introducing words into images changed. Words, in the Middle
Ages, also had a different value to that they have today. We are
being increasingly flooded by words - spoken, written, or
transmitted by radio and television. Hans Jantzen has said that:
"The word as an item of information had a different weight in the
Middle Ages than it has now, in our many worded epoch. It
sounded more fully, it was imbued with meaning, and was capable
of containing ultimate truth." (Hans Jantzen as quoted by
Wallis, 1975, p.70) One also has to remember that words were
ascribed magical powers. In Egypt, for example, they were
believed to activate the resurrection of the dead. M. Wallis
stated that: "In the Middle Ages, the word was also held in

much higher esteem than the picture, and literature in much
higher esteem than painting." (quote: Wallis, 1975, p.70)
However, words and letters play an important role in our daily
lives, especially since they are visible everywhere around us.
Since literacy amongst spectators is common today, the
contemporary artist can freely incorporate words into his images
as comprehensible signs. Words are abstract symbols which offer
any artist an additional expressive technique, whether he be a
conceptual or a more traditional realistic painter. The
availability of printed material, stencils, and other printing
devices, have added to the possibility of instant letter
manipulation by non-specialists. The artist can choose freely
amongst different types of writing in preference to his own
handwriting.

Then, there is the artist to consider. At the turn of this
century, he was no longer willing to conform to a dictated style.
Furthermore, he had to deal with a society that lacked spiritual
unity, and as a result, was preoccupied with materialistic
values.

The artist withdrew from society in order to preserve his own
creativity and the creative essence of his art. He responded to
his particular existential situation and his art reflected his
personal mode of being in the world. Most early twentieth
century artists viewed their work as a world of pure creation,
and the work of art as something that has its own laws and
reasons for existing.

Modern Art is intensely personal and represents the artist rather

than the idea and values of society. Some people, such as Suzi Gablik for example, even fear that Art has become rather arbitrary and fragile. (Gablik, 1984, p.24) The most natural question to arise now is: What should Art be today? Marxist aesthetics for example, demand that art should be a social force, but in order to achieve this it needs a wider audience and it must pass judgement on the phenomena of life. Without being quite as extreme, I feel that art can express and fulfil some of society's needs without any real compromise on the part of the artist's newly found expression as an individual. In recent years for example, a number of artists have become interested in making artworks which move beyond a socially indifferent formalism. By incorporating words into their images, these artists have managed to communicate messages without sacrificing their personal way of representation or resorting to more conventional means of representation. In this way, their art remains personal, does not conform to any specific style, and still manages to communicate. In a sense, this is the advantage of progress, since Art in the twentieth century has been liberated enough to also follow material possibilities, such as collage for example.

Unfortunately spectators today do not always pay much attention to words contained in images. This could be compared to the lack of interest concerning the symbolism of objects such as the fruit, flowers, and insects portrayed in Dutch seventeenth century still-life paintings. They are barely or casually read. In medieval paintings, as in modern works of art, viewers look for beauty of composition or colour, or mood, or power of

expression. Every epoch may perceive or respond to works of art in a different way, but today's viewer must try to reconstruct the reaction of those for whom these works were intended, even if that reconstruction may always be hypothetical. Inscriptions in artworks have always had an effect on people. It may have been because they could read and understand them, or because they could not read them, and therefore respect them as something holy or magical. (Wallis, 1975, p.69) Obviously the response to art is the result of numerous influences, differing from person to person. It should not be surprising to see artists today using both means, - words and images, - to convey messages to a society which has stopped reading and looking. As Suzi Gablik said: "We need to look at art once again in terms of purpose rather than style - if ever we are to succeed in transforming personal vision into social responsibility." (quote: Gablik, 1984)

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