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## James Sicner's "Eternal Vigilance": An Illustrated Narrative to The World's Largest Photo-Collage Mural

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*James Sicner*

*“Eternal Vigilance”*



**“This piece will take its place in history as a masterpiece  
created in the twentieth century.”**

**Dale Kobier. National Foundation for the Arts, 1983**

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**In conversation: James Sicner and Karl H. Kregor, Ph.D.**

**An Illustrated Narrative to The World's Largest Photo-Collage Mural.  
Coates Library at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas**

§

**For James Sicner, whose creative imagination has tied us to the world's common  
humanity — past and future.**

§

**To Ellen, for the trust and patience which has given this project its life.**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Two Titles

It took James Sicner over four years to complete the complex mural. In our talks, he said the mural's formal title, "The History of Printing and Writing: Man's Evolving Images" was a kind of working title, spun off over time by Robert Houze, the library Director. It was more a description of what was in progress, and never very specific at the start of the project. But needing a title for announcements, publications, and the library dedication ceremony, the working title became the formal one.

Deeper in this narrative I ask Sicner about finding mural image which kept the actual words of its title. He hadn't otherwise done that. Beneath a standing figure is this title: "ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS THE PRICE OF LIBERTY." In a flash he immediately said: "*That* should be the title of the mural . . . *That* was the original idea! I had to think about something on there. . . . And it came like this, with the figure and this at an angle. And I thought 'Rockwell Kent has given me this gift!'"

As my way to honor, in retrospect, James Sicner's desire — and for viewers of this art work — I offer this alternative title as a way to confirm the liberties all peoples have had of expressing visions and insights.

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In the Coates Library at Trinity University in San Antonio Texas, a remarkable work of art covers the outer and inner walls of its central stairwell. It is the world's largest photo-collage mural, encompassing c.1,400 square feet, and composed of hundreds of images, many of which are themselves composed of, and integrated with, other images.

Yet, though it sounds complicated, the interplay of the images clearly reveal major themes as well as subtle, ironic, and humorous asides. Sicner's techniques, composition, and unique shadow-brush painted effects, create an almost three-dimensional effect. A viewer often feels at the "center" of the work even as they move around the curves of its surfaces.

If you have seen the mural and seek more detail about its content, I hope this Guide will satisfy your curiosity. It is based on a primary research project conducted in the Spring of 1991. James Sicner was ill, suffering from AIDS-related complications, but was able to provide almost ten hours of conversations. I also examined primary sources, texts and illustrations located in Sicner's home, conducted and transcribed two subsequent interviews with James' sister Celeste Sicner-Hurd, and transcribed an on-air Trinity University "Library Hour" program James Sicner had with Irma Dee Everts, and Katherine Pettit, on January 30, 1980.

If you have not seen or heard of the mural, I hope the Guide will motivate you to visit and admire this unique work of art. It will open your eyes to collage as a medium of expression, especially when a shadow-painted photo-collage. It provides an all-encompassing perspective on human creativity and artistic expression, from cave paintings to computer renderings of mathematic formulae.

When you combine the Guide with a visit, you may come to share the observation made by Dale Kobier of the National Foundation for the Arts in a letter to Trinity's President Ronald Calgaard in 1982: "This piece will take its place in history as a masterpiece created in the twentieth century."

Finally: If you are an alumnus and have met and chatted with James Sicner, please share your experience with me at: [kkregor@trinity.edu](mailto:kkregor@trinity.edu). And if you have spotted in the mural the source of a specific item, again, contact myself and the library to help us enrich the site.

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### THE BACKSTORY

In the mid 1970's Trinity University was aware it needed a new, sophisticated library to position itself as a leading Southwest university with an expanding talented student population. It commissioned the library to be designed and built by the Southwest's noted architect O'Neil Ford. Completed in 1978, the library featured an imposing, curving, central stairwell column. At 18' in height and 80' in length, including its convex and concave surfaces, Ford and others knew the stairwell would posed an aesthetic, decorative challenge.

Earlier, in the spring of 1977, Gilbert Denman, a Trinity Trustee and Chairman of the Ewing-Halsall Foundation, met with members of the National Endowment for the Arts in Los Angeles, California who were there for a meeting of state art councils. The Colorado contingent included the collage artist James Sicner and copies of his 1976 Colorado Centennial poster, a standard sized work, 36 by 26 inches:



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**COLORADO BICENTENNIAL POSTER. Fig. 1**

Denman and Sicner met, and Denman believed the poster's style and execution would intrigue O' Neil Ford as a solution for the stairwell — and it did. They saw in this 36 inch by 26 inch poster that the collage genre could work on the stairwell column. Denman formally commissioned James Sicner for the task in December, 1977.

But Sicner was not completely on his own. Gilbert Denman, a philanthropic patron of the arts, had specific ideas he wanted to see rendered. Among the Halsell Foundation papers, I found an undated, legal-size notepad page. The upper-left margin says: "Gilbert Denman to James Sicner." What follows is a specific, thematic concern for the mural's content. Not the "how," but the "what:" Sicner was to depict the history of written language beginning with the earliest known writing and ending with a recent publication of the Trinity University Press. The languages were to range from Sumerian Cuneiform writing and ancient Minoan Linear A, computer "language," Braille, musical notation, sign language, and the Cherokee syllabary with a portrait of its creator, Sequoyah.

Denman also specified documents, ranging from the Rosetta Stone, to cartoons, to a page from Shakespeare's first Folio — fifteen documents in all. Also, there were to be engraved renditions of Moses, Homer, Jesus (specifically from Rembrandt's "Christ Teaching"), scenes from the works of Shakespeare, John Milton, and Cervantes, to scribes at work and an engraving of an early printing press itself. The notion of "printing" was also to include financial records, advertisements, checks, stock certificates, deeds, wills, paper money, inscriptions on coins, and, though technically not "printed," Illuminated manuscripts.

Imagine the challenge: Sicner was to compose a monumental collage of images, symbols, and allusions found within the world's diverse cultures and iconographic traditions as represented through printing and writing. Libraries are the world's repositories of human endeavors. This iconographic mural would be the Trinity library's contribution to that repository.

James Sicner then spent almost 18 months on research, and began work March 1st, 1979, amid final construction work, three months before the library was to open and be dedicated. But the mural would not be completed until September 30, 1983. Over the four and one-half years it took to complete the mural, its demands began to exhaust Sicner's energies. His comments in interviews begin to reveal that he was in service to the *mural*, not the university or Denman — it was taking on a life of its own.

Suspecting as early as 1982 that bouts of fatigue might be related to an HIV infection, he continued to maintain the discipline to trust his insights and push toward an end which would satisfy his high standards.

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**"You mean he's making this up as he goes along!?"**

As Sicner began constructing the mural, Gilbert Denman was surprised by Sicner's approach. Denman expected to see a photo-mural of smaller-sized overlapping woodcuts and engravings. Its large dimensions and painterly aspects were a surprise to him. Another surprise was to discover Sicner had no small model, no overall image or sketch of the work to show others. When Denman told this to the architects, he reported to Sicner their shocked but admiring response: "You mean he's making this up as he goes along!?"

All viewers, with their own world-views, backgrounds, and sense of expectations, find their own surprising moments. These can range from admiration, to irony, laughter, discovered erotica, to sober reflection. In part, it depends on where you stand in relationship to the mural — in front of it as you've entered the library, twelve feet

away or one foot away, at its left or right sides, above it on the upper landing, on the stairwell landing halfway up its concave side, or even kneeling to see the 3 inch size images hidden beneath the beginning of the stairwell steps.

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**“Do you realize how hard it is to make a round composition so that wherever you’re standing you’re in the center of it?” (O’Neil Ford)**

In short, as you engage the mural through this narrative guide, understand that you are being invited into it.

The mural began as photographs of documents, but are also shadow-brushed painted, layered, superimposed, and glazed. Some images have been “flopped” and subtly modified from their original sources. All but a few were originally black and white, and small: Sicner claimed, a little extravagantly, that none were larger than about 3 inches to 8 inch square. Take a patient, quiet, “be in the moment” pause in front of any portion of the mural. As O’Neil Ford had said, one always seems to be standing at the center of the mural when standing at any one point. It won’t take too long before the suggestiveness of the work reveals a kind of other-worldly dimension. And this final thought from Sicner himself: “I’m interested in dissolving the surface completely, and with this rounded surface, as you walk around it, you do ‘get into it,’ and it’s so large you forget that it is just a surface. . . . You’re fooled but not aware you’re being fooled, you’re looking too much at the interesting pieces.”

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### A GUIDE TO THE NARRATIVE

The *Guide* provides a set of tools to begin this discovery. Most images can be seen as clusters of what I call “Major Images” and “Supporting Images.” Sicner never thought of an image in isolation. Images were chosen, arranged, and painted in ways to solve composition issues, or to act as thought-provoking moments — or both. Where Sicner had a specific meaning in mind, the *Guide* will highlight it.

I’ll title an image in **bold letters** by a simple term for what it looks like. Then, in the comments, its commonly known title, and any comments Sicner made. I found many images as single items taken from books and magazines, either xeroxed or cut from their original contexts. These items were located in the basement of the Sicner home, examined in the evenings after the interview sessions. There are images in the *Guide* I did not hold in my hand, but found through internet searches. But there are hundreds of images in the mural — faintly rendered, shaded, hinted of — waiting to be sourced. Over the years, my internet searches have led to highly probable sources.

**Appendix 1: Figure Sources** provides the bibliographic details and follow the image sequence in the *Guide*.

**Appendix 2, Bibliography**, is a catalog of the unique store of materials in Sicner’s Denver archives. My goal with both Appendices is to meet the curiosities of a general reader and for those with a deeper interest in art history and Sicner’s eclectic interests.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS



**ANGEL DESCENDING. Fig. 2**

If you pause at the entry to the library's central space, the mural images, 12 feet high, are striking: an angel looking downward, hovering over a dark stone which itself hovers over a lighter set of engraved documents which, in turn, seem to hover over an image of a large round stone with concentric rings of engravings. There's also an astronaut, young men leaping over bulls, a white rabbit blowing a trumpet, alphabet letters, and a medieval manuscript letter "D." Impressive as *this* is, there will be more. When you enter the library further, you realize these images form only the lower two-thirds of a wall that is actually 18 feet high. Next, then, is the entire front-central section:



**FRONT CENTRAL SECTION. Fig. 3**

The topmost portion is framed by a 12 foot spread of the wings of an Egyptian falcon icon. Snake heads flank a central circle of light into which thrusts the torch of the Statue of Liberty. That circle of light is the key light source — cascading, framing, and illuminating the images you first saw.

**“When you walk in ... you don’t see the top of the mural. And this was a [visual] dilemma. O’Neil said he couldn’t figure out how I was going to solve it.”** (James Sicner)

Yet, as integrated as all this seems, it was not so at the outset. Sicner knew that a viewer upon first entry would not see the *true* top of the mural (the spread wings and central sun, which were the first collage images to be enlarged and glued in place). So an “apparent top” would be necessary as a viewer first entered. O’Neil Ford also saw the aesthetic dilemma and wondered how Sicner would solve it. That’s when Sicner had the idea to place the central angel so that, as he said: “you *feel* like you’re looking at the whole project” but as you enter further you realize it’s even greater.

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## FRONT WALL IMAGE CLUSTER



**WINGS, CIRCLE, COBRA HEADS, STATUE OF LIBERTY, PROFILE FIGURE. Fig. 4**

**“You see, the Trinity, the earliest Trinity, the Egyptians used it, . . . in the Christian tradition, it’s the same idea. And the sun in the middle, [is] God the Father.”**  
(Sicner)

The wide swath of falcon wings, central circle, and two cobras are iconographic representations of the **Egyptian god Horus**, often depicted as a falcon, or as a man with a falcon’s head. The central circle is the **Sun-God**, and the cobras represent **Upper and Lower Egypt**. The figure in profile, just below and to the right will be discussed a little further below.

The source of this array is remarkable: a coloring book simply titled *A Coloring book of Tut-ankh-amun*. (FIG. 5). Sicner hit upon these images as the perfect frame for the top of the mural, and they are on the back of the coloring book’s front cover. He copied just its top section, sensing that from that central circle, that sun-god, the entire mural would unfold. The copied portion also included a cow, a hawk, and the figure holding a staff whose circle-end will later include a boot-print. Here is the 8 inch by 7 inch upper-half of the back of the front cover:



**COLORING BOOK, TOP INSIDE COVER. Fig. 5**

Sicner went on to say that the architects saw the wings and circle as “perfect solution, an inspiration actually.” Then, recalling their enthusiasm, he described his personal understanding that Egyptian motifs prefigured

the Christian Trinity. He believed many cultures' belief-system imagery were graphic expressions of human psychic needs. Sicner saw confirmed in authors such as James Frazer and his *The Golden Bough*, which also put forward Egyptian-Christian divinity parallels. In that upper central circle, the sun-god symbol, Sicner has placed the upheld torch of the **Statue of Liberty**, whose full title is "**Liberty Enlightening the World**," less commonly called "**Mother of Exiles**."

The source for the Statue of Liberty was not among Sicner's papers, but he described it as from a New York City Bicentennial brochure sent to him by his friend Lance Wyman, a graphics designer living then in New York. Sicner described it as a drawing/painting made in the 1920's "done for a promotion," and felt especially lucky that the perspective created an unusual pose whose angle was perfect for his design.

Sicner also admitted a certain fondness for the Statue, describing it as a "beautiful figure, a beautiful statue, a beautiful object." In fact, he once crafted series of 12 collage posters with her as their focus. Of all the images in the mural, Liberty was the only one he confessed was "to sort of symbolize" American patriotism, the "liberty" of our country to read, write, collect, and access books, for which libraries — and of course Trinity's — are vital.

While he liked *The New Colossus*, the sonnet written by Emma Lazarus, and cast on a bronze plaque at the base of the statue, Sicner chose not to put any of the verses in the mural. He especially liked her line: "A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame/Is the imprisoned lightning." Lightning intrigued Sicner, as we will hear later on, and stylized lightning will become a design element elsewhere in the *Guide*.

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#### CENTRAL IMAGE CLUSTER



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**DESCENDING ANGEL ENGRAVED STONE DOCUMENT CIRCULAR STONE Fig. 6**

Beneath the Statue of Liberty, a sword-bearing angel in diaphanous fabric leans downward. Its left hand rests above two engraved stones and a document. Sicner wanted to have a central focal point and decided it would



be an angel bringing to earth, from the heavens, “inspiration.” He initially called the figure “an angel” in the 1980 Trinity radio interview, but soon after, and certainly by 1991, he and his sister, Celeste Sicner-Hurd, unhesitatingly called it **Saint Michael the Archangel**. Perhaps Sicner did not want to be that specific in 1980, reluctant to imply the mural was to be seen as an overtly religious work. Yet, in the hundreds of online representations of The Archangel, his common attributes include boots and breastplate armor. Sicner’s reading of Saint Michael is unique.

Celeste Sicner-Hurd reiterated James’ later assertion regarding the angel-as-Michael. As she phrased it in one of the conversations: “Michael is actually *presenting* the Rosetta Stone, and the Aztec, and the Declaration of Independence. Four different civilizations. The whole piece revolves around that; that is really the heart of the piece.”

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**DESCENDING ANGEL. SOURCE. Fig. 7**

The working source for the descending angel is a copy of an engraving dated June 1796, from an 1803 Bowyer edition of David Hume’s *History of England*. In this 6 inch by 7 inch engraving, the angel is bending down from a dark-clouded heaven. Its left hand holds a figure shrouded in a hood. The angel’s right hand holds a wave-edged sword. The figure being held holds a torch and is about to burn icons of royal power. The plate appears to be the 74th image in Bowyer’s edition. However, in the *History*, neither the angel nor the context is described. (**Fig. 7**)

**“Oh, Michael the Archangel is a very interesting person, personage, the most beautiful, most intelligent angel, and it’s in all religions.”**  
(Sicner)

However, in 1812 Bowyer created a catalogue of the illustrations for an 1812 re-issue of the *History*. On a facing-page for this image he writes: “Angel preventing the demon of sedition setting fire to the emblems of royalty, to commemorate the Gunpowder Plot.” (A plan to blow up Parliament on Nov. 5th, 1605, with King James the 1st in attendance.) Again: no reference to the Archangel Michael.

As I showed Sicner photos of the mural angel, they triggered a flood of excited commentary about Michael, elaborating on the Archangel’s presence in Judeo-Christian and Moslem cultures. He confirmed Celeste Sicner-

Hurd's statement that the Archangel was "presenting" the artifacts — but James on to say the Archangel was also coming down to *protect* "the great developments of civilization."

He very earnestly described the Archangel as the most interesting, most beautiful, and most intelligent personage, to be found in all religions, lives, and societies. He had heard that Michael the Archangel is the patron saint of the United States, has resting places at Banff and Louise Lakes in Canada, and figures among various Protestant groups such as Anglicans, Mormons, Jehovah's witnesses, and 7th Day Adventists. Sicner was open to the idea that we are born with guardian angels: "Some people say you are born with a guardian angel, . . . who knows about that?, but I *know* there is some magic to him" — and in his case, St. Michael.

His final assurance that St. Michael had a personal role in *his* life came at a moment while he was painting, deep in the evening, when the library was closed. He had just turned on the radio, and a classical music station began playing "Michael the Archangel," from Ottorino Respighi's musical piece called *Church Windows*: "Right then! And I thought, 'How strange,' All of these omens mean either one of two things: they are either warnings or reconfirmations. That's how omens work. [a pause] So that's the story of Michael the Archangel." And Sicner never referred to him again in the interviews.

The items beneath the angel's left hand are, uppermost, the **Rosetta Stone**, then **The Declaration of Independence**, and lastly the **Aztec Calendar Stone**. These items will be discussed in sequence, but to Sicner they are inter-related humanistically and aesthetically.

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**ENGRAVED STONE. Fig. 8**

The first stone beneath the angel's hand is the **Rosetta Stone**, or less commonly known as the **Decree Stone**. The Stone is a standing rock, or stela, issued by King Ptolemy the Fifth of Egypt, around 196 B.C., affirming that the priests of the temple in Memphis supported the king. The Decree is repeated in three languages: a script

form of Egyptian hieroglyphics, a script form called “demotic,” and then ancient Greek. Discovered in 1799 during a Napoleon expedition, the Stone finally allowed scholars who could read ancient Greek to translate hieroglyphics and reveal to the world much of ancient Egyptian history and culture.

Sicner apparently worked from a xerox copy of the Stone from a British Museum catalog. The quality of the rendering isn’t sharp, and he noted it was to be enlarged from this letter-size xerox copy to 3 feet by 3 feet. Moreover, he *painted* the lettering you see because of the poor quality of the xerox.

Ironically, while he considered the Stone one of three “great developments of civilization,” worthy to be brought by the Archangel, his primary motive was aesthetic: “But the texture is probably really why I chose that. I’ve kept the granite texture that it has and the exact size of . . . the black granite one in the British Museum.”

The Document beneath the Stone is the **United States Declaration of Independence**. Sicner apparently cut it out of a work called *The American Revolution*, by John Grafton, because pp.13-14 has a slice down the center and an item has been removed. Again, Sicner’s motive was as much aesthetic as thematic: “Visually, the three fit together so interestingly, because of the *shapes*; the Rosetta Stone, the Calendar Stone being round, and the Declaration of Independence in sort of a squarish shape . . .”

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**CIRCULAR STONE. Fig. 9**

Beneath all three items presented by the Archangel, is the **Aztec Calendar Stone**. He had some concern about using it, saying, “I think it has become an image, perhaps banal and vulgar. I see it many times, but it is still is a wonderful and incredible piece of art work and . . . has an important cultural heritage.” Still, his interest was as much aesthetic as cultural, because “visually, the three fit together so interestingly, because of the shapes, the Rosetta Stone, the Calendar Stone being round, and the Declaration of Independence in sort of a squarish shape.”

Sicner continued to elaborate on the overall design issues of someone's first experience of the mural, the Central Image cluster. While the images in themselves arrest your attention, Sicner always came back to metaphors of aesthetics, like "taste" in fashion, or as he'd say, "something that would say 'Yes,' to me." He sought particular angles of an image, or its shape, and then played with various arrangements of these shapes. Content matters, of course, but *how* it says what it says matters even more. Sicner would often make multiple copies of a basic image in multiple sizes to see how they would fit together: "perhaps like your clothing. If you buy a lot of different pieces they will somehow fit together. You're the common denominator of this." For Sicner, the same principle is at work at the heart of any artwork that prompts you to pause, and then satisfies you.

### SUPPORTING IMAGES

I've used the term "Supporting Images" although I have to hedge a bit. "Supporting" suggests the images are somehow relatable to the images I've called "Major." But their roles are questionable: are they somehow confirmations of an idea? Are they an ironic, serious, or humorous commentary on the larger images nearby?

This *Guide* is not intended to be an interpretive guide. Apart from Sicner's specific comments, my aim is not to claim an overall meaning regarding the mural other than the title: — that humankind has been gifted with the power to "line," to inscribe, and so share our insights. With this caution, here are more images:



**TO THE RIGHT OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY. Fig. 10**

As mentioned earlier, (p. 10), the source for this cluster of images is the back of the front cover of a coloring book of Egyptian arts. Apart from the upper wings, Sicner copied the group which included a cow, a hawk, and the figure holding a staff whose the circle-end will include an astronaut boot-print.

Sicner thought the figure with the chin-beard was Tut-ankhamun, but Aldred identifies the figure as **Heh, the Egyptian personification of Eternity**. In the circular loop of the staff, Sicner has placed the **Yin-Yang** symbol of Chinese Taoism, wherein the Yin (dark) is associated with shadows and mystery. The Yang (light) is associated with brightness and growth, and the curves between them:— energy. The symbol fits about a 1/2 inch square, which Sicner notes: "enlarge to 7".

Curiously, in the disk of the sun, above Heh's head, Sicner placed **Neil Armstrong's boot-print**, left by this American astronaut in the dust of the moon's Sea of Tranquility on the Apollo 11 moon mission in 1969. Sicner found it in a National Aeronautic and Space Administration publication. **Figs. 11, 12.**



**BOOT: MURAL RENDERING. Fig. 11**



**BOOT: NASA PHOTO. Fig. 12**

Sicner was very enthusiastic about the item, exclaiming, without irony: “that’s the first time man made a ‘print’ [beyond] the earth.” When I asked if he thought it was appropriate to have it in the midst of Egyptian cultural elements, Sicner responded: “I didn’t even think about it, actually, but it was appropriate when it fit *here*, see, the circles.”

Superimposed on the Aztec Calendar is this figure spread-eagle within a circle:



**MAN WITHIN A CIRCLE. Fig. 13**

The image is Man as Microcosm (“little world”), from Ernest Leher’s *Symbols, Signs, and Signets*. The illustration is by Cornelius Agrippa, a 16th. century German occult theologian, but Sicner had a different understanding, calling it “the Devil’s Circle,” a trap in the form of a “khalaza,” or “small knot” in medieval Greek.

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**BIRD FIGURE. Fig. 14**

Below the angel and stones, at the base of the front of the mural, is an **Illuminated Manuscript Letter “D.”** Sicner found the stork-like illustration in George Bain’s *Celtic Art. The Methods of Construction*. The same figure appears in a coloring book, *A Medieval Alphabet to Illuminate*, by Bellerophon Books.. It seems Sicner could have used either source. In any event, it’s apparently in the mural purely for its aesthetic: “This was an addition, this beautiful stork, I just found that, and I had wanted to put something there.”

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**BEADED BELT WITH FIGURES. Fig. 15**

Sicner also enjoyed this **Onondaga Wampum Belt**, simply calling it “very unusual,” found in Leroy Appleton’s *American Indian Design and Decoration*. Appleton suggested It may have represented the founding of the Iroquois League, “perhaps . . . a treaty between the tribe and the U.S. government. ”



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**FIGURE WITH SWORD OVERHEAD AND DRAGON. Fig. 16**

Sicner employed the **Illuminated Manuscript Letter, “R,”** which he found in either George Bain’s *Celtic Art. The Methods of Construction* — or, the Bellerophon coloring book mentioned at the letter “D.” The “R” is noted as from a 12th-century manuscript rendition of a homily written in the 6th century by Pope Gregory to Saint Leander, Bishop of Seville. In it, Gregory celebrates St. Michael’s fight against the Dragon, in Revelations 12:7–8. But unlike the bird-like figure, above, incorporated for its aesthetic appeal, Sicner used this “R” as a structural element to guide a viewer’s attention. He wanted the entire page to be enlarged to 6 feet by 3 feet tall. By its placement, the overhead sword and turned face subtly point your attention to the *right* side of the mural and to new cultural themes.

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**YOUTHS LEAPING OVER BULLS. Fig. 17**

This image is usually called the Bull Leaping Fresco, found on an east wall at the palace at Knossos in Crete. For Sicner, this piece fascinated him for its visual simplicity: “I mean, it has all of what people praise out of Picasso.” He also admired its sensuality, revealing a culture at ease with its bodies, an ease which Sicner feels Christianity seeks to suppress. He claimed there are “two Dead Sea scrolls to be kept quiet about,” and “erotic pottery in Peru and Mexico that priests have destroyed.” Sicner also imagined what that Etruscan bull-leaping might actually have been like, a ritual spectacle, with “pine on the ground and music with screaming, and fixed drones,” as he later saw as effects in the 1988 movie *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Martin Scorsese.

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**VARIATIONS ON A THEME: BOOKS TEXTS SCROLL**



**YOUNG GIRL READING. Fig 18**

**ASIAN ELDER. Fig. 19**

**SILHOUETTE IN PROFILE. Fig. 20**

Beneath the illuminated manuscript letter “R” is a set of supporting images I’ll call “Books, Texts, and Scrolls.” The first is a **Young Girl Reading** while perched on a stack of books. The second is an elderly Asian man intently reading a Chinese scroll. The third is another scroll, at the young girl’s back and above the Asian man. Its bottom is curled, but the lengthened section is Silhouette in profile. The Young Girl Reading is from an untitled 3 inch by 5 inch bookplate by Rockwell Kent, the noted American woodcut artist Sicner highly admired. He would go



on to use another of Kent's works as a major visual statement on the concave wall of the stairwell. Sicner found the bookplate in *The Illustrations of Rockwell Kent*, and wrote a note on it to "flop" it and enlarge it from its few inches to 4 feet in height.

He then identified The Asian Elder as "**Confucius**, from a book of Chinese calligraphy," and had no other comment.

But then he spoke with animation about finding a unique **Silhouette in Profile of Abraham Lincoln**: "I love Abraham Lincoln, and it fit perfectly." The profile is done in the manuscript letters of the Gettysburg Address. No one knows its creator, or date and place of publication, but it was done for an insurance company advertisement. It is now held by Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, in the Indiana State Museum. And as with other Rosetta Stone, Sicner carefully painted the letters to ensure clarity.

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**WHITE RABBIT WITH TRUMPET. Fig. 21**

The fourth supporting image is a startling one: the **White Rabbit as Herald**. It is a John Tenniel illustration for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. He is blowing a trumpet as a call to order and carrying a scroll. The scroll contains an indictment of another character, the Knave of Hearts, for having "stole some tarts," a bit of irrelevant trivia in this otherwise serious setting in the mural. Sicner removed a complete page from a large-type edition of *Alice* for this addition.

Look carefully at the background behind the White Rabbit and you can see an ancient map of the Middle-East. I wondered, and asked Sicner, if the White Rabbit as Herald, from the topsy-turvy world of Wonderland, was a commentary on the topsy-turvy world of Middle-East politics. He was struck by the irony, amused, but said: "That's just coincidence!"

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**FIGURE. OBELISK. TRIAD OF FIGURES. Fig. 22**

This major image cluster is another example of O’Neil Ford’s claim that wherever you stand at the mural, you seem to be at a “center.” If one stands to the left of the descending angel, the obelisk image creates a powerful upward thrust. It points to a strong figure with upraised arms holding a stone tablet who looks downward toward the left, reinforced by the left slanting light rays from the sun-god circle behind him, while a demure woman looks at three men, one of whom is pointing further left. The tableau arrests our attention and then will guide it toward activity which will be even further to the left.

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**FIGURE AND OBELISK. Fig. 23**

The figure above is **Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law**, an illustration Sicner took from a Dover publication, *The Doré Bible Illustrations. 241Plates*. He notes to enlarge the entire engraving, but with no dimensions. The **Egyptian Obelisk** image was not found, and Sicner thought it was an obelisk Napoleon took to Paris after his Egyptian expedition. The obelisk was actually a *gift* from Egypt to Charles X of France in 1830.



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**TRIAD OF FIGURES. Fig. 24**

The trio of men is entitled *Bathers on the Edge of a River*, or *The Climbers*, and had been done by Michelangelo as a fully drawn version of a scene intended for an uncompleted painting, *The Battle of Cascina*. The Florentine army was taken by surprise when the Pisan army attacked, and the men are depicted as responding to a warning trumpet call. Sicner's initial response to my photo was that the trio was an element in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*. But it turned out James had a tab in the book *Prints and People, A Social History of Printed Pictures*, by Hyatt A. Mayor. The illustration is an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi, 1510. The image is about 4.5 inches square, which Sicner noted: "to be enlarged to a width of 44.5"

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#### SUPPORTING IMAGES



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**FIGURES BEHIND OBELISK. Fig. 25**



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**ROCKET WITH "USA" BEHIND ANGEL'S WING. Fig. 26**

Sicner enjoyed finding this particular print of **Adam and Eve**, though the title in his source simply called it "**Woodcut from the Bible in French, French School,**" 1498. His pleasure lay in that this German print is

“the first one done” and “happens to be Adam and Eve, too,” humankind’s “first,” so to speak. He flopped the image which allows Eve to seem to be looking at the triad of muscular men, (a humorous intent?). James also kept the round format he found in his source, Douglas Percy Bliss’s *A History of Wood Engraving*, though it was actually printed from copper relief blocks.

He also enjoyed musing about different cultural design traditions and observing what they shared in common. Here, the **Saturn 1B Rocket**, struck him as being “totemic.” That is, all civilizations have this long form, from totem poles to Trajan’s Column. All have cultural significance: “showing the gods, or showing different conquests, or tribute columns in Egypt — or the rocket ship.” *This* totem, in Sicner’s words, “is marching up there [to heaven?]with the United States of America written all over it.” From an undated NASA publication: *NASA Facts*. “Manned Space Flight —The First Decade.”

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**MASK BELOW CLIMBERS. Fig. 27**

Below *The Climbers*, this image, is simply titled **Sumerian Statue, Abu Temple, Tell Asmar. c. 2500 b.c.e.** Sicner’s working source was not found, was one among many to be found via an internet image search.

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**FIGURE IN SPACE SUIT. Fig. 28**

The figure in the space suit is Edwin Eugene Aldrin Jr., more familiarly: **Buzz Aldrin**. Sicner found the illustration in *A Coloring Diary of Aircraft*, by Peter M. Spizzirri, pg.23, labeled: “Astronaut Buzz Aldrin in his

space suit during the Apollo 11 Mission (1969).The lunar module is reflected in Aldrin’s helmet visor.” Sicner has penciled instructions to enlarge the illustration to “63 inches wide and 63 inches tall.”

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**FIGURE IN ROBE WITH CALLIGRAPHY. Fig. 29**

While Sicner often chose images for their aesthetic appeal or as an element of composition, an image could have an additional meaning for him which prompted his choice.

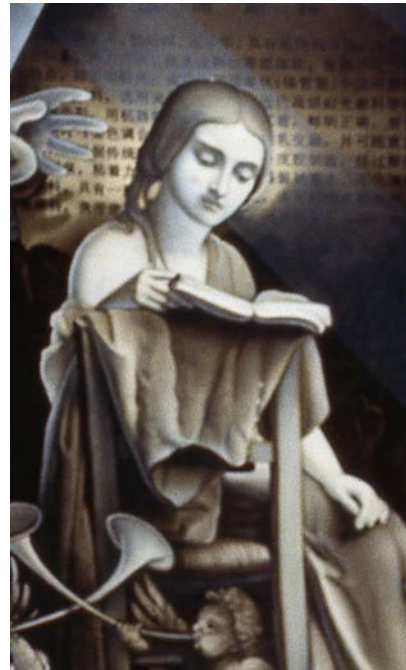
For example, on the front of the mural there is a Japanese actor wrapped in a cape. He is about to raise it and go onstage. For Sicner, apart from choosing it for its sideways presentation, this image of a **Kabuki Samurai Actor** symbolized creative tension — an actor in repose, waiting for his line, an artist /actor about to present his talent for judgment. The calligraphy on his robe means “Gold, Golden One, or the Enlightened, Shining Knowledge,” but the robe (as curtain?) must be raised to begin the action.

Sicner tells the story that one day while working on the mural, a Japanese visitor asked him: “Where did you find this? That’s a very famous [Kabuki] actor in the 18th century.” He explained to Sicner that the sideways pose would allow him to raise his arm with the cape and its embroidered calligraphy. The audience would then know the part he was playing, even perhaps a season, and what was happening. “And,” he said, “it’s very unusual to see that.”

James thought so too, admitted he did not know anything about its fuller context, and said he had chosen that pose because of its implicit drama and sideways pose. He also saw in the print “the subtlety and the sensitivity of the Japanese artist.” His source was a page numbered 17 and 18 with three large folio-size pages of other Kabuki warriors prints found in the basement of his home. No other bibliographic information was found among his papers or after many internet searches.



**OWL AT LOWER LEFT. Fig. 30**



**SEATED GIRL READING. Fig 31**

The owl is an engraving by Alexander Lawson of a **Red Owl**. It's known for its large eyes and is based on an illustration, c. 1808-16, by Alexander Wilson. Sicner loved birds, calling them another example of an “important mystical thing.”

He said Alexander Wilson had been ignored, until recently, and that James Audubon “learned a lot from this guy.” Sicner thought Wilson was not as good as Audubon as a painter of birds — yet, when considering bird images for the mural, Sicner used birds from Wilson’s collections. All the illustrations were originally done in color, but found as black and white prints among Sicner’s items.

“*The Reading Girl*” engraving by William Callio Roffe, is based on a marble statue by Pietro Magni, carved sometime between 1856-61. There is no date or source on the illustration, but this item, as with the Descending Angel, can be found in British Museum catalogs. Sicner observed that this was an example of sculpture probably inspired by the sculptor Antonio Canova and “used for funerary decoration” or “probably a salon piece.” The print has a written note: “to be enlarged 45”.





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**TWO CRUCIFIED FIGURES    SKELETON    FIGURE IN AIR    Fig. 32**

This major image cluster is another instance confirming that where one stands can serve as a “center” of the mural. Its array of Christian crucifixion and resurrection imagery is so engaging, Sicner said visitors would write to him on the cluster’s strange effect upon them. And that one had even sent a picture of the cluster to the ailing Salvador Dali. But Sicner urged me to understand that he never wanted the mural to be seen as ‘religious,’ per se.

On January 30, 1980, Irma Dee Everts with Katherine Pettit interviewed James Sicner for their Trinity Library Hour program, and called the show *Mans’ Evolving Images — the Collage*. Sicner made a variety of observations about this section of the mural. And since he began his radio comments with the images at the bottom portion, let’s begin there:



The lower figure, head bowed, as seen from above, is “*Christ of St. John of the Cross*” by Salvador Dali, 1951. Sicner’s illustration was about 14 inches by 18 inches, noted to be enlarged to 30 inches by 40 inches. The upper figure is “*Christ on the Cross with Three Angels*” from *The Complete Engravings, Etchings and Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer*. James indicates Dürer's engraving should be enlarged to 52 inches wide from one end of the crucifix arm to the other.

Sicner also decided the Dürer crucifixion should be higher up, looking down at the Dali. He would “drop” the Dali “right down to the floor,” so that a viewer would look down into Dali’s Christ “and then up into the Dürer Christ.” He also said an upcoming Easter was on his mind while designing this section, and: “then it just happened!” The composition was put together on Good Friday, glued, and “the whole thing was resolved.”

He also said the Dürer was an inspired choice, allowing him to superimpose images of a well-known pictorial theme generated in different times and settings. James considered Dürer’s rendering of the angels remarkable, calling the left angel “one of the most important woodblock prints of the period of the German Renaissance.”





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**SKELETON AND FIGURE IN AIR. Fig. 34**

Sicner goes on to say the image cluster “goes up into a skeleton from William Blake’s *Night Thoughts*, and then the Resurrection Christ, by Blake.” Attributing *Night Thoughts* to Blake was Sicner’s shorthand reference to a nine-part poem by Edward Young which Blake illustrated for an edition in 1795-97. Young’s poem was called *The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality* (1742-45).

For Night the Second, “On Time, Death, and Friendship,” Blake based his illustration on the opening lines, which include references to a “midnight sentinel, with clarion shrill . . . which shall wake the dead . . . into thoughts of heaven.” Blake did not give his illustrations titles, but scholars have used lines from the poem, or created titles, that have become conventional. In this case, from “Night the Second” — **“Emblem of That Which Shall Awake the Dead”**

So too, the subtitle of “Night the Fourth, **The Christian Triumph,**” is used to identify Blake’s image of Christ ascendant. Sicner included Blake’s two angels, to the left and right of the ascending Christ, as found in the original illustration. In both instances, Sicner used 8.5 inch x 11 inch photocopies of Blake’s work from the 1797 *Night Thoughts* edition. I did not find Sicner’s source for the photocopies, but he added a note to flop the entire skeleton/clarion illustration.

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## Supporting Images



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**RADIANT LIGHT      STEPPED TOWER BEHIND CHRIST TRIUMPHANT. Fig. 35**

To the left of *Christ Triumphant* is a radiant light, the mural's second major light source. Earlier, Sicner had described the mural's uppermost sun as the central Egyptian/Christian light. This second sun contains Hebrew word for God, "**Yahweh.**" Here, Yahweh is a link from the Egyptian Sun God to the "Light of Creation" associated with Genesis and subsequent biblical history, foreshadowing the Christ—all illuminated by Yahweh's rays.

Part of that history is the stepped **Tower of Babel**, from an illustration by Gustave Doré which Sicner used as a dark backdrop for *Christ Triumphant*. Sicner was especially taken by Doré's work especially this piece which, he said, "fit so beautifully into the 'movement' of the painting and the collage," and that given the context of the mural "you had the historic sense of man's creation." As far as I have determined, Sicner's source for all of Doré's biblical illustrations have been Dover Press editions of *The Doré Bible Illustrations*.

Other comments he made during the radio interview explain something of the reason for the next group of images. He called the area to the left of Christ Triumphant "the Judeo-Christian area" because of the *relationship* of the images: "there are all of the people *related*, from Moses down through Christ and up to the Virgin on the left side, and then the Tower of Babel."



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**WOMAN IN CRESCENT MOON    BOAT AGROUND    DOVE BELOW. Fig. 36**

Resting in an iconographic crescent moon is *The Virgin in Glory*. She is illuminated by the rays from Jahweh. The source is the title page to Albrecht Dürer's *The Life of the Virgin*, 1511, from another Dover reprint. Beneath the Virgin is an illustration taken from Gustave Doré's biblical illustrations, *The Dove Sent forth from the Ark*. The white dove can be found in the shadow of the hill below the Ark, and note that Sicner has intertwined several bodies from the aftermath of the flood in Christ's right hand fingers.

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**ALTAR FIGURES. TOTEM POLES. Fig. 37**



**LION AND COLUMN. Fig. 38**

At this point, discussing the images trending toward the left edge of the stairwell wall, Sicner's tone became laconic. When I asked about the **Totem Pole Design**, from pages of Bill Holm's *Northwest Coast Indian Art*, here beside an altar scene, and elsewhere in the mural, he said: "I chose all this stuff purely for the visual . . . Just what appeals to me." The altar figure looking upward is St. Gregory, conducting a Mass witnessing the crucified Christ. This rendition of *Mass of St. Gregory* is from a Dover Press 1963 reprint of *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*. **The Lion with Column** had that same "visual appeal," and came from a loose page with the line: "The printer's trademark by an unknown master from the shop of Crafft-Miller, Strasburg, 1537." Sicner had written on it "to be enlarged 20.5" wide, the entire item."

While Sicner says he "chose all this stuff purely for the visual" and "Just what appeals to me," one image is consistently structural. He continually uses light as a unifying design element. The images just described are still lit by the stream of Jahweh's light radiating from its first appearance — but the rays have become wider and increasingly dim. So dim, in fact, that the last major image in this Judeo-Christian portion of the mural will be a classic statement of Western culture's struggle to reconcile faith with reason. Despite imagery intended to dramatize and reinforce Hebraic and Christian truths, Jahweh's radiant truth dims to melancholy uncertainty — perhaps signaling the next significant image — a thoughtful angel.

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**THOUGHTFUL ANGEL AND CARTOON MOUSE WITH LETTER “M” Fig. 39**

The thoughtful angel is Albrecht Dürer’s *Melancholia*, which Sicner especially enjoyed, and that the image represents “melancholy regret.” He was also fascinated by the grid of numbers, composed by Dürer, just above the angel’s head. The numbers in any direction add up to 32 — Dürer’s age: “There’s a magic number on there that he devised. It was the fashion then to make those, with your birthday, and it’s not so easy to do. . . I mean it’s just amazing.” He took the image from Dover’s *The Complete Engravings, Etchings and Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer*, said he used only a part of it, and then flopped it (**Fig. 40**) :



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CARTOON MOUSE FIG. 41

A “cartoon mouse”? It’s hard to imagine there will ever be a generation not able to identify *Mickey Mouse*. The character illustration was created by Walt Disney (1901-1966). Sicner found this version in the *Walt Disney, ABC Character Color and Activity Book*. In it, Mickey is smiling and *is actually* pushing a blank letter “M.” But the letter has no shading or depth. In the *Activity Book*, the letter “M” is about 2.5 inches by 3 inches, and Mickey is also about the same size. The overall original image is just about 7 inches by 4 inches. Sicner indicates it’s to be flopped, and Mickey is to be 18 inches high, from ear to toe.

Surprisingly, he had no comment about Mickey’s presence so close to *Melancholia*. Sicner knew he wanted to find an appropriate Mickey image, partly to satisfy Denman’s image list. He looked, he said, for three years “and then I got the idea to integrate it in the alphabet.”

The *alphabet* he means are the block letters beneath Mickey which lean in perspective and surround the base of the mural. He also chose to have the Mickey image be a surprise: “I didn’t want it out there where everyone could see it.” He wanted viewers “to *discover* it, and in that place.” If he meant “place” to mean Mickey’s possibly ambiguous relationship to Melancholy, (as a ‘counter-melancholy’ statement?) Sicner never took that moment to explain.

Instead, he said of Mickey Mouse that it was the “hardest thing to grade, when that came, and retain it, and at the same time — it fit.” I take “grade” to mean gauge its proper size, and “retain” to mean judge its appropriateness for the block-letter context. Sicner was quite urgent to have me understand the technique and process issues involved: Holding his thumb and forefinger a few inches apart, Sicner said he found it “amazing how I imagined them from this size.” He would visually guess at measuring, then “step back, see it, measure *that*, all very loose.” When he finally decided the size, in this case 18 inches high, he’d have the piece enlarged and printed, returned from the photo shop, and, he said: —“it’d always work!” But he did admit that should a piece be a bit too big or small for its place, he would adjust the next piece to fit *it* — “if you didn’t want to lose a piece.”

Sicner was also *very* convinced of the importance of Mickey Mouse, and also Donald Duck (who will appear on the back wall of the mural), as forming “a strong American image” — because their images and stories could be found “anywhere in the world.”

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LEANING ALPHABET. Fig. 42



LEANING ALPHABET. Fig. 43

He was also very enthusiastic about this leaning alphabet, saying: “This alphabet! This was the hardest thing to work out.” He said it was used for an invitation for Abraham Lincoln, and when James saw it: “I knew *that* was the alphabet” and how well it would fit around the base of the mural.

It may have been hard for Sicner to work out, because his source was from a book which included the section, “From Silvestre, ‘19th century; reclining Capitals’ ” in another Dover publication, *Florid and Unusual Alphabets*. Not only were the letters just one inch high, but they were not leaning in proportional curves. They would not fit any radius, much less the base of the mural wall. He noted to enlarge them from their 1 inch size to 8 inches.

In retrospect, knowing he repainted the *Rosetta Stone* and *Lincoln Silhouette* to meet his needs, there’s a high probability that Sicner also repainted these letters.

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#### Supporting Images



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SPHERE AND SIGNATURES. Fig. 44

In the Trinity “Library Hour,” Sicner was very animated about what he called “calligraphy” behind the sphere in the image above. He pointed out they were the *Signatures of Seven Demons*: “There was a sphere, and behind that, I decided that it would be interesting to have some of the calligraphy that I had seen in the British Museum from contracts that people had made with the devil during the Medieval Period. Contracts with the devil, signed by . . . the seven fallen angels, the seven devils: From Satan to Beelzebub, Lucifer, and all of these. And they’re all signed with a very strange kind of calligraphy that’s unknown in any language. They have [been] photographed and have them all together and I was able to put them together in one group.”

In our 1991 interviews Sicner said he had “a lot of trouble to get them from the Vatican Museum,” but they can be found in Ernst Leher’s *Symbols, Signs, and Signets*, the section entitled “Magic and Mystic — Magic Seals and Signatures.” Leher labels one of his illustrations: “The signatures of seven demons from a pact in 1616 between Lucifer and Urbain Grandier, Minister of St. Peter in Loudon, France.” The signatures include: Lucifer, Beelzebub, Satan, Astoroth, and Leviathan. The last two signatures on the right hand form a column, the topmost one is Elimi and the final is Baalarith.

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**SPHERE AND PLAQUE. Fig. 45**

The *Apollo 11 Plaque*, commemorating the first moon-landing, July 20, 1969, sits between the demon signatures and the Triumph. Sicner found it interesting that the plaque showed both sides of the earth and that humankind had actually landed on the moon. Adding to his pleasure was having found large spheres by the cartoonist-artist Saul Steinberg to use as part of a “wonderful mixture of images right there in the Judeo-Christian part.” He also pointed out that he intentionally covered the name of President Richard Nixon on the plaque. Nixon was America’s President at the time of the moon landing: “I covered up Nixon’s name. I didn’t care . . .”

No source for the plaque image was found among the Sicner materials, but may be available in “Manned Space Flight —The First Decade” published by NASA, previously used for the sources of the Saturn rocket image, Buzz Aldrin, and the boot print. The plaque reads: “Here men from the planet Earth first set foot on the moon – July 1969 A.D.–We came in peace for all mankind.”

In the same interview, Sicner goes on to say that “to the right of that, is the base of the *Christian Triumph*.” A curious phrase unless he considered the entire triple-Christ image-set to be one entity.



FRONT OF THE MURAL    CENTER-RIGHT  
MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



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ARCH    FIGURE    HEAD    HAND    LIGHTNING    SILHOUETTE    FIG. 46

A key image in the front-central part of the mural, below the descending angel, is a traditional image of St. Michael. He is in armor and holds a sword. He is an illuminated manuscript letter: “R.” Michael is *facing* right, and his sword is shown overhead, and *pointing* right. (Note: Abraham Lincoln is also “looking” right). These elements guide a viewer’s gaze toward an imposing arch. Beneath that arch stands a full size figure, and further to the right, Siner will introduce cultural images primarily from Asian cultures.



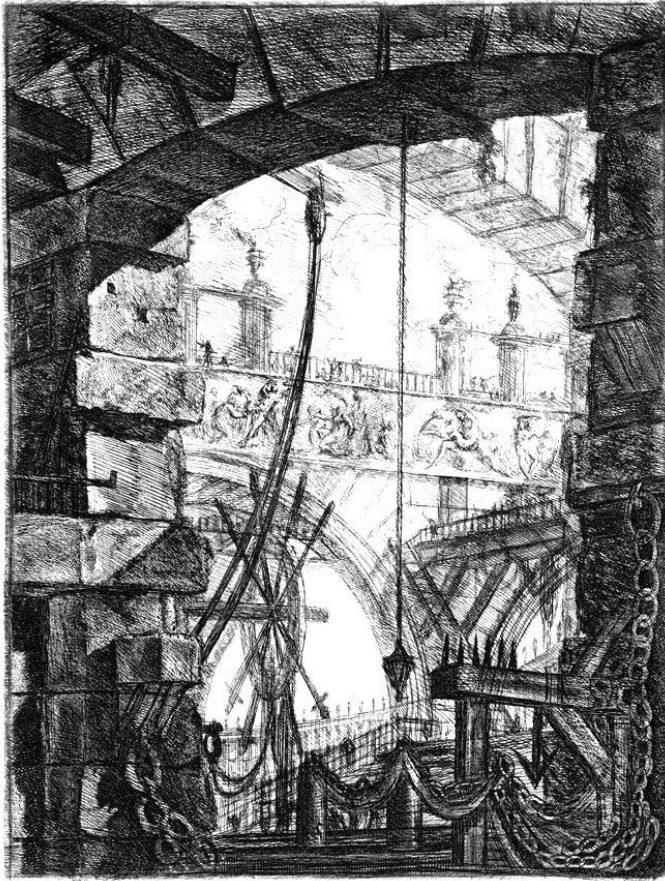
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**ARCH AND STANDING FIGURE. Fig. 47**

Sicner knew he needed a visual transition from the Egyptian-Judeo-Christian material to Eastern imagery, and also knew that Giovanni Piranesi had done engravings which depict huge stone archways, entries, with moody imposing perspectives:

“And that was another thing, I searched through all of Piranesi, I *knew* that picture existed, but I couldn’t find it. And I finally found it and I was so happy I almost screamed and yelled ‘Look, I found it! I found it!’ And I always thought it was one of the most beautiful ones he ever did.”

The working source is a single print, *The Prisons / Le Carceri*. The description on the back reads: “**Carcere, with a View Through an Arch** Toward a Bridge with a Sculptured Frieze. Plate #4.” In speaking of the many prints Sicner enlarged as a matter of course, he said of the arch: “Some of them were *very* big, [enlarged to] fifty inches across and ten feet down, like that Piranesi print.”



**CARCERE. VIEW THROUGH AN ARCH. Fig. 48**



**STANDING FIGURE. Fig. 49**

With our attention guided to the right, Sicner forces us to pause by introducing a virtually life-size figure looking outward toward us. During the interview, Sicner seemed a bit unclear whether it was Caesar Augustus or Alexander the Great. He said “I had a big problem with this statue” but “knew exactly what I wanted there—a figure is very important.” The 18 inch image Sicner used, of **Augustus of Prima Porta**, was one he found in a catalog from the Vatican Museum.

Sicner’s main point was the need for a western European figure to transition from Western culture to the right side’s Asian cultural material. Augustus wasn’t placed on the mural until January 30, 1980, almost a year after the project began, and *after* much Eastern imagery had already been glued into place. Of all the images discussed so far, Augustus is the only substantial *secular* figure. And he is engaged toward us, in the pose of a classical orator. What might he be saying!?

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**HEAD      HAND      LIGHTNING BOLT      SILHOUETTE      Fig. 50**

Sicner made no comments about the **Chinese Buddha Head** image, nor did I find a source, but he was serious about the **Hand**, Buddha's **Vitark Mudra**. It is the symbolic gesture within the four variously toned circles. The Mudra represents discussion, intellectual argument, discussion, law, and reason. He recalled the circles were circles of Enlightenment: — Suffering, Suppression of selfish desire, Expansion into universal life, and ... but he could not recall the fourth (that Cessation of desire can be achieved).

**Lightning bolts** fascinated Sicner, "as one of the forces of nature that cover all [forms of] chemistry." Moreover, he said he was struck by lightning four times within his lifetime! Once in Colorado, once in Europe, once climbing a mountain, and "then just walking down the street." In Sicner's earlier description of the Statue of Liberty, while he did not use any lines of the Emma Lazarus poem, he did like her phrase that Liberty's flame is "imprisoned lightning."

Throughout the mural, as here between the Buddha head and Mudra, we see the lightning bolt an example of a design motif. "Lightning is the last thing you do," Sicner said. While it was just black and white, he pointed out that the white pigment is of three different kinds, including white lead and titanium. He was concerned that a simple white would "go dead" after twenty years, but that his approach would maintain a true contrast during tonal changes over time.

Above the hand and within the white circle bisected by the lightning bolt is the silhouette of a **Mayan Head**. Sicner's source for this and other Mayan and Aztec imagery is Ernst Leher's *Symbols, Signs, and Signets*, and Leroy H. Appleton's *American Indian Design and Decoration*.



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**FEMALE AMID WAVES BESIDE SUPPORTING ARM. Fig. 51**

There is no single working source for what is a very unique, complex, mash-up of original images. Sicner found Eve in an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi, based on the Raphael [Raffaello Sanzio], oil painting, the “*Temptation of Adam and Eve*,” c.1515. The supporting arm is from the Doré engraving “Descent to the Last Circle,” *The Inferno*, canto 31, verses 142-143, which translate: “But lightly in the abyss, which swallows up Judas with Lucifer, [Antaeus,] put us down.” (Fig. 52).

Sicner thought Eve also might have been Doré’s. His Doré print has a note: from the back of Antaeus down to the feet of Dante and Virgil, the image is to be expanded to 7 feet tall and flopped. He made four major modifications to achieve this image: First he replaced Virgil and Dante in the Doré with Eve: (Fig. 53).



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**Original: DORÉ VIRGIL AND DANTE. Fig. 52**



**DORÉ REDONE WITH EVE. Fig. 53**



Second, he flopped the image (as seen in Fig. 51):



Third, he rendered Antaeus very faintly. (Note his arm and thumb beside Eve and his beard behind her.)  
Fourth, Sicner overlaid the resulting image with rays of light emanating from a locale to the right.

When I asked about the final, fainter, rendition, Sicner explained it as a result of using the shadow-brush painting technique. He had used that technique throughout the mural for a purpose: That is, after shadow-brush painting, some of these original layers become, as he said, “*trace* elements, or *hints*. I never covered anything entirely.”

“Hints,” and of “what?” are left for viewers to ponder.

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## MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



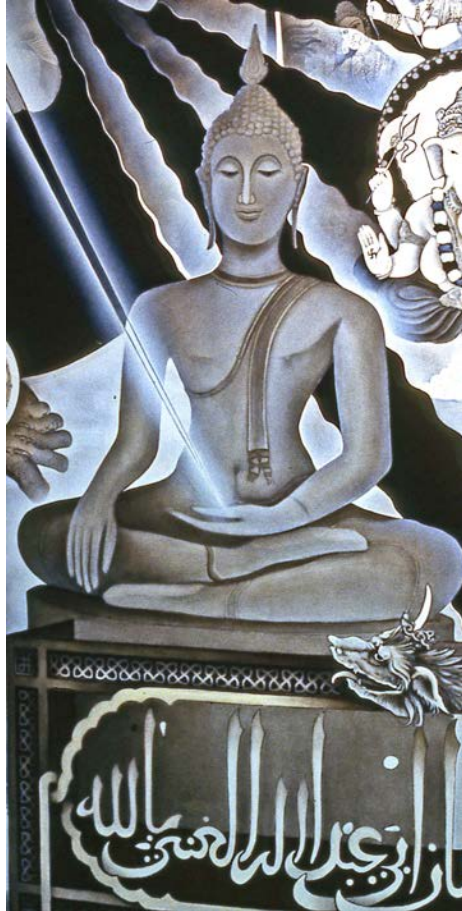
DANCING FIGURE

SEATED FIGURE

Fig. 54

Sicner: “Then you have the Hindu figure of **Shiva doing the Dance of Creation** while standing on an early roadmap showing Jerusalem as the center of the world.” The probable source for Sicner’s map is Jacob Ziegler’s *Ancient Maps of the Holy Land*.

But what is important is the major presence of *light*. Shiva has joined the Egyptian Sun-God and Jahweh confirming humankind’s instinctual understanding of light-as-creation. This light bathes Eve as well as Caesar. And by standing on a circular map of the Holy City, Jerusalem, as the “center of the world,” Shiva thematically links East, Middle East, and West — though Sicner did not speak to this possibility.



**SEATED FIGURE CALLIGRAPHY BELOW Fig. 55**

In this composition Sicner introduced another major icon, a seated **Thai Buddha**. He said it took “a lot of work, a lot of work,” to make the Buddha and Dancing Shiva “fit.”

While he didn’t elaborate, one design link could be the descending lightning bolt ending in the Buddha’s palm; another, the light rays from Shiva.

Beneath the Buddha is **Arabic calligraphy** which Sicner described as from a large tile in the Alhambra, in Granada Spain, above an arch. He described it as a “prayer” thankful for the life of a ruler who brought the power of rule to his community. In addition, every time one walks beneath the arch this prayer will appear in one’s mind. As Sicner understood it, the prayer would prompt even the rich, famous, and powerful to be, as he said: “afraid of death, same as everybody.”



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**ELEPHANT HEADED FIGURE**    **Fig. 56**

“I just did that because I loved the image of the elephant.” Yet Sicner also said the **Hindu god Ganesha**, is the patron saint of artists, the god of creativity and arts, who removes obstacles from an artists efforts. No source found. (Note the dragon head, to the right, below Ganesha).



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**FIGURE WITH TEN ARMS**    **Fig. 57**

Above Ganesha sits **Durga**, a Warrior Hindu Goddess who holds weapons in each hand of her ten arms, about which Sicner said each hand stands for a different military virtue. Above her are “five cycles from Tibet, symbols of good fortune, a mandala.” In one of the Durga tales, she turned into a dragon and pulled heads off “all those men,” but Sicner didn’t amplify. His probable source for the image seems to be the page fronting the title page to *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, by W.J. Wilkins. His comment about Durga turning into a “dragon” may account for his including a dragon below to the right of Ganesha — but, curiously, *this* dragon will be from 15th century European art:





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**SEVEN HEADED DRAGON OR HYDRA** Fig. 58

Sicner's working source is a Dürer print called "**The Woman of the Apocalypse and the Seven-headed Dragon.**" The original print is a complex one, but he has cut away *everything* except the Hydra (his term). The Dürer dragon has seven heads, but Sicner removed one, and added a note: "its tail is to be kept." With no irony in his voice, Sicner called the circle the Hydra is standing on "a mandala for long life and good health."

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**FIGURE WITH PROTRUDING TONGUE** Fig. 59

Finally, the **Hindu Kali**. She is holding a human head (lower right). Is it the missing seventh Hydra head? Sicner said "Maybe. I would just fit it, visually." He hurried on: Kali is "an interesting woman, who destroyed her men," beautiful but turned into a horrible monster: "a danger that every woman, you know, has got this side to her." He admitted that her story in Hindu lore is very complicated, but that his rendition made it "clear to read" what the image was about. Probable source: *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, by W.J. Wilkins





the continuity he imagined is, ironically, to the stand *away* from the rear wall. “The further away you get, the more it fits this one enormous unit, the whole wall, and the stairway’s just sort of floating on the middle.”

Mural sections on the rear wall include multiple illustrations from collections of works. Three collections in particular will be Doré’s engravings for Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Danté’s *Divine Comedia*, and Peter Breughel the Elder’s engravings depicting *Seven Deadly Sins*. Then there are hundreds of images of book titles, currencies, stamps, and crossword puzzles, all handled as overt collage.

### A Word about “Collage.”

**“I use collage because it seems the strongest, most truthful statement on man as he exists in relation to his environment.” (Sicner)**

Collage, from its beginning in the latter 19th. century, is an art form based on paper-based cut and pasted images. Images include drawings, photos, printed items such as labels, train tickets, newspaper clippings, etc. — *purposefully* pasted upon each other, on to paintings, and even upon sculptural pieces. Collage is an art form meant to challenge, disturb, and yet please your engagement with the work. As Sicner wrote for the

catalogue of a an exhibit, *Collage and Assemblage*, held at the Mississippi Museum of Art in the fall of 1981:

“The forms of collage and assemblage are largely independent of painting and sculpture, and are not recent developments.” And: “The old idea of appealing to the refinements of a gentle audience seems less valid than the solid contact and gut reaction the collage media creates. I use collage because it seems the strongest, most truthful statement on man as he exists in relation to his environment.”(p.25).

In the Trinity radio interview mentioned earlier, Sicner described the craft of collage as: “to paste-up, which it really is; things pasted together. But if one pastes *only* photographs that would be ‘montage.’” And Sicner mused: “actually this mural could really be called a photo-montage, but it is also a collage as a general heading . . . collage is a collection of things, images, they’re put together from different sources that already exist; and you may tear them apart, you can use them wholly, as they are, but it’s not using one medium; a mixed-media would be another way to describe it.”

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**“That’s one of the hardest things in using collage, is to keep the, pulse, power of the composition right, but also retain the artistic and aesthetic. This was so difficult.” (Sicner)**

Overall, the rear wall is very much in keeping with James Sicner’s collage technique which first attracted Gilbert Denman and led to the mural commission. Yet, while this rear wall is less “painterly,” it has sections which *are* painted, creating a remarkable, arresting, “floating” quality. This is especially to be seen in the section using title pages of early first editions. As Sicner put it, “the original print is still there, but at

the same time there is the effect of the shadows” which allows you to accept that it is integrated with the other surrounding items. Yet, Sicner wanted to be clear that even though he painted collage components to create a depth-like quality, the mural is “out of the category of *just* painting;”

While this Guide is not intended to be an interpretive guide, Sicner’s comments and juxtaposed images seem to make “statements” befitting the collage heritage. What they might be about depends on what you connect. For example, when have you seen an artist’s “signature” on an artwork *be* a picture of the artist at work? Or if it strikes you at another point: “Is Michelangelo’s Moses eyeing a Victorian lady at archery?”

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Sicner could have used a flowing design to fill that concave rear wall, from its high left edge to the few inches under the stairwell. Perhaps the rising, curving, staircase and flat landing, midway, interrupted that possibility. He never spoke about it. What we see, though, are three fairly distinct sections, to which fill the wall.

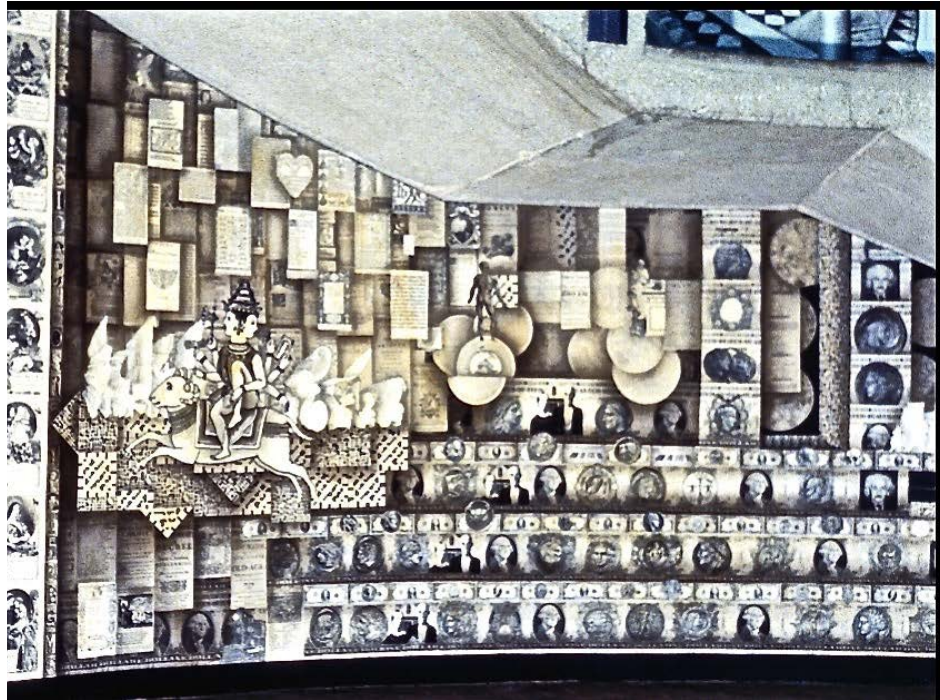
**Section One, fig. 61,** begins with three tall female figures at the left edge of the wall, a large ocean wave before a triple arch monument, and ends at three vertical columns — with cartoon ducks at their base:



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**Section Two, fig. 62,** includes a figure astride a ram, a cartoon parade behind them, “floating” book titles, currencies, stamps, and crossword puzzle diagrams. It will end just before an image of James Sicner (seen next), in the act of painting. (Note the staircase landing above in the upper right corner):



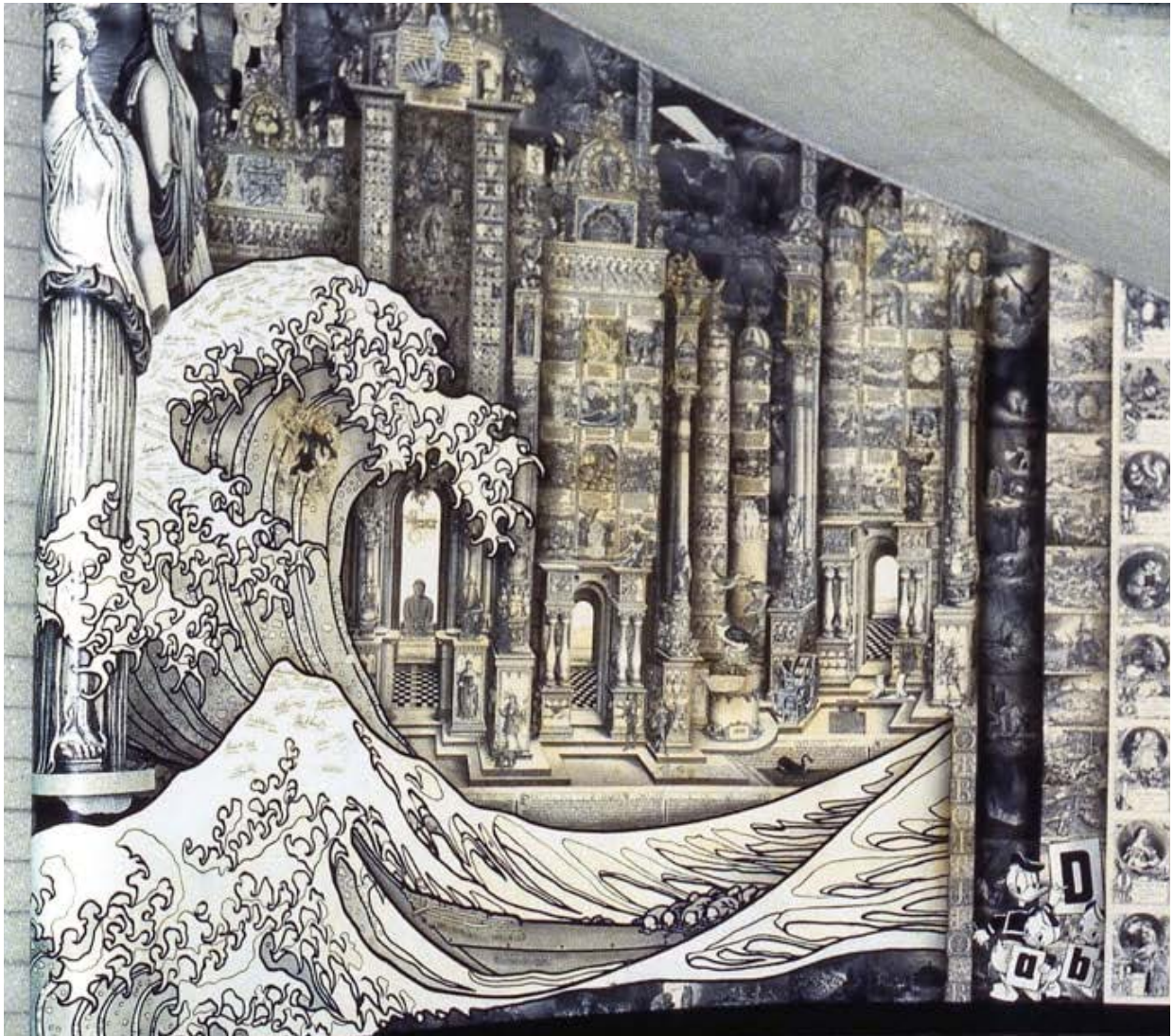
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**Section Three, fig.63,** begins with James Sicner painting and trailing behind, simple cave drawings, erotic designs, and primitive warrior images shrinking to inches in the corner beneath the stairwell:





REAR WALL SECTION ONE  
MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



FEMALE FIGURES WAVE TRIPLE-ARCH MONUMENT THREE COLUMNS OF IMAGES

Fig. 64

Sicner was excited to find these images of tall women, the **Caryatids**, as “perfect” for the wall’s tall, concrete column edge. I found no specific source, but there are many images of the six Caryatids supporting the entablature at the Erechtheum, a marble temple on the Acropolis southern portico. They represent the female priestesses of Artemis at Caryae in ancient Laconia, near Arcadia.

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**THE WAVE**

**Fig. 65**

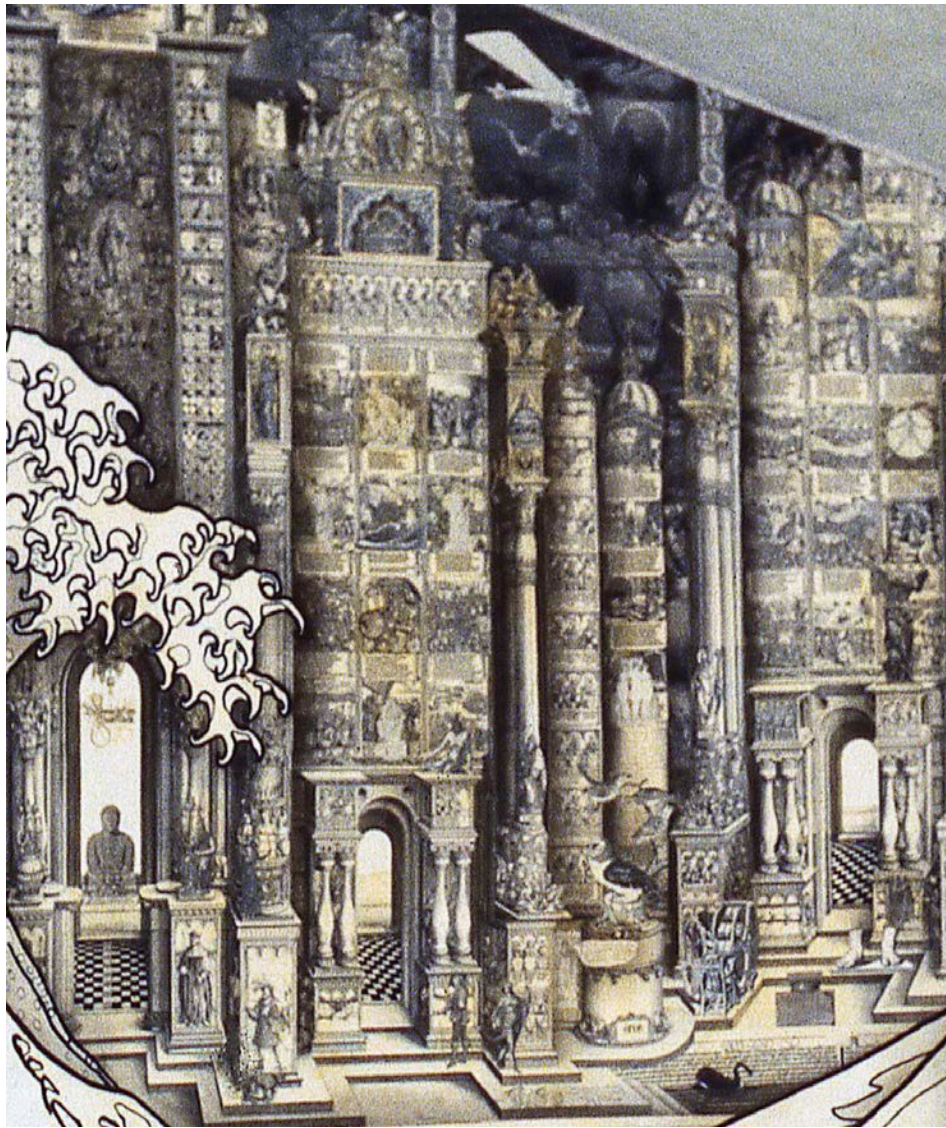
*The Great Wave of Kanagawa* by Katsushika Hokusai (1829-33), had really captured Sicner's imagination. He wanted the image to be on the *front* of the mural and truly large: "I wanted it to go all the way from the top to the floor. And it would have been fabulous."

However, as he started to do so, Denman and others teased him that the mural would be done in three weeks. Sicner also claimed one of Trinity's art faculty told him that "everyone said this is a big rip-off. You can't glue it up as wall paper."

In time, however, Sicner had some satisfaction when in the third year of working on the mural that faculty member ultimately said, as Sicner reports, "God, I can't believe this! You are a real artist!" The Wave working source was not found among Sicner's papers.

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**MULTIPLE COLUMNS WITH THREE ARCHS**      **Fig. 66**

Here is another item which Sicner used from the works of Dürer. This is the **Maximilian Triumphant Arch** to be seen in *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*. James said they came from a book from Germany that he bought in New York. The Triumphant Arch consists of three arches, titled: “Praise” (left), “Honor and Might,” (central), and “Nobility,” (right). The images refer to Maximilian’s family tree, from its mythological origins through its family and political history. The complete set of assembled prints which make up the piece stand ten feet wide and twelve feet high.

In the interviews, Sicner rarely commented on the seemingly countless items he added to the Arch, the Wave, and to the rest of the rear wall. Except when prompted regarding specific items, he seemed to feel no need to elaborate on the earlier collage aesthetic described earlier.

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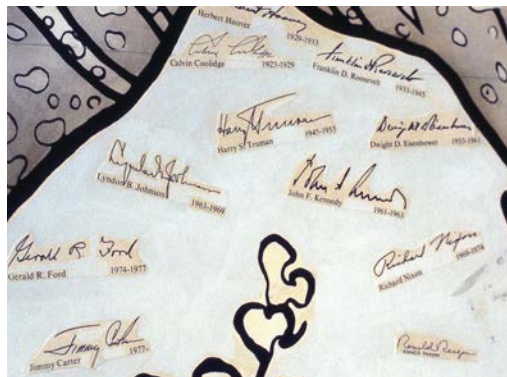
## SUPPORTING IMAGES



**FIGURE ON THE WAVE**      **Fig. 67**

An engraving by Martin Schongauer (1470's ), *The Temptation of St. Anthony* or *St. Anthony Tormented by Demons*. Probably based on St. Athanasius' *Life of St. Anthony*. Anthony's asceticism is to have made him immune to tortuous temptations. "I *wanted* to use that, and I *had* to find a place for him!" He simplified the beard and used blue to accent his robe. "It just seemed to *fit*, with the waves." (Energies of nature *and* repressed desires?)

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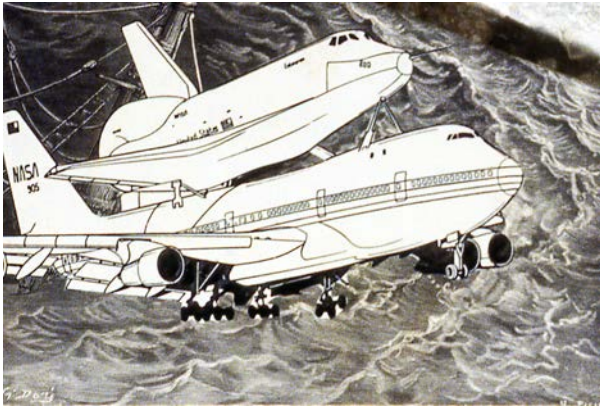


**SIGNATURES ON THE WAVE**      **Fig. 68**

Look closely at the Wave: there are signatures tossing within the curling foam. They are **Presidential Signatures**. Asked if there was any special reason, Sicner's response was personal, puzzling, and about design: "Yes! I just love all the signatures of the Presidents. And I did all the ones up until Reagan. I thought it was *the* solution for that wall." He copied and cut them from a document dated 1976 by Mel Kline Art Service, Binghamton, NY. The size is about 18 inches by 20 inches, in four columns separated by small red stars. The signatures are in black, their names below typed in blue, beginning with George Washington and ending with Jimmy Carter. What Sicner meant by "*the* solution for that wall" seems enigmatic.



Sicner overlays the Arch with scores of illustrations. Here are just a few:



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**AIRCRAFT BEING CARRIED Fig. 69**



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**EARLY AIRCRAFT Fig. 70**

The aircraft on the left is the **Orbiter Space Shuttle**. The image on the right is a **Flying Jenny**, also known as a **Morane-Saulnier** monoplane, 1913. Both images come from *A Coloring Diary of Aircraft*, by Peter M. Spizzirri. The Flying Jenny is on the inside of the title page. The Orbiter could be from almost any page, as it is a motif throughout the book. Sicner flopped the Orbiter image.

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**FERTILITY GODDESS Fig. 71**

An internet image search led to this Sumerian fertility goddess, **Inanna**. Otherwise, no source among his papers nor any Sicner comments.

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ORATOR WITH SPEECH BUBBLE Fig. 72

The added image is **Marc Aurèle Jeune**, or “**Young Marcus Aurelius**.” No source found, but notice that Sicner has added a speech bubble recognizing the Halsell Foundation patrons!

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NUDE FEMALE ON SHELL Fig.73

An illustration taken from Sandro Botticelli’s painting the **Birth of Venus** (c. 1485). No source or Sicner commentary.






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**SEATED FIGURE AND FEMALE ARCHER Fig.74**

**“There’s humor in the work,  
but most people don’t get it.”**  
(Barbara Long)

The seated figure is an illustration of Michelangelo Buonarroti’s sculpture, *Moses*, c.1513–1515. A highly probable source for the female archer, and other women in nearby sections of the mural, is *Women: A Pictorial Archive, from 19th Century Sources*, by Jim Harter, from which several pages have been removed. Note the collage layout: Is Moses eyeing the female Victorian archer?

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**Behind and Beside the Arch**




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**SHIP IN ICE Fig.75**

The ship entrapped in ice is an engraving from a Dover edition of Gustave Doré’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, plate 5, titled: “It was wondrous cold.”

## Columns of Images



LEFT COLUMN Fig.76



RIGHT COLUMN Fig.77

The left column has engravings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, likely from *The Graphic Worlds of Peter Bruegel the Elder*, ed. H. Arthur Klein. Bruegel's images often depict a fantastical world of nature and man: ships, (an image Sicner flopped), large fish eating small fish (c. 1556), and the Seven Deadly Sins, (here "Sloth.") The right column has more illustrations, fully incorporated, not modified, from the Dover edition of *The Doré Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy*.

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**COLUMN OF IMAGES Fig.78**

Sicner found these images in *The Mother's Picture Alphabet*, ed. by Peter Stockham, but look carefully at the final column image, below: "P" is for prayer: Is the mother observing the romantic couple below, at the lower right?



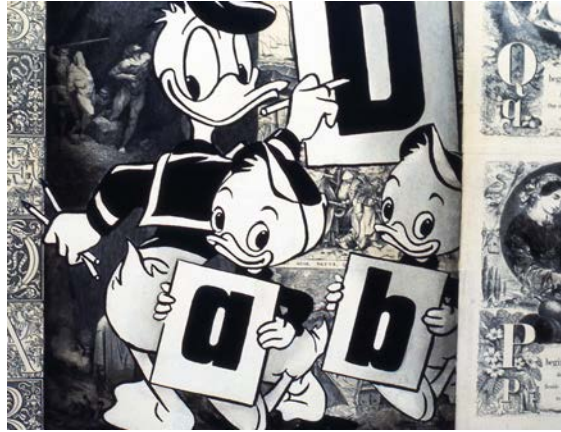

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**MOTHER AND CHILD Fig.79**

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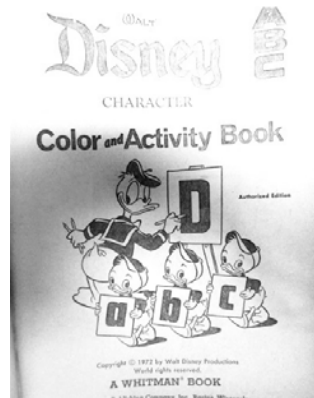


### At the Base of the Columns



CARTOON DUCKS and SOURCE Fig. 80

Sicner found **Donald Duck** and three nephews on the inside front page of the *Walt Disney, ABC Character Color and Activity Book*, 1972:



In the mural, however, Donald is with just two of his three nephews **Huey, or Louie or Dewey**. In his Trinity Library Hour interview Sicner explains that Donald Duck is an important image, part of our printed tradition, and says that he will have the *three* nephews, Huey, Louie, and Dewey.

When I asked why there are only two, and about a rumor that someone had stolen the third nephew before it was finally glued in place, Sicner vigorously denied it. The third nephew is “missing” because, as Sicner put it, he did not want to do a “clichéd” rendition of the usual expectations. He added that Donald Duck is “very important,” part of our print tradition, and, forms, as with Mickey Mouse, “a strong American image” whose stories could be found “anywhere in the world.”



SECTION TWO. MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



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FIGURE ASTRIDE A RAM Fig. 81

While I did not find Sicner’s working source for **Agni, the Hindu God of Fire**, the exact image is in *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, by W.J. Wilkins. When Sicner saw this photo taken eight years after the mural was complete, his first response was that of the craftsman, observing that over time the head had gotten dark. Then he reflected that the multifarious gods and their complicated manifestations are, in India, “ordinary, magical, and mystical,” and repeated his wonder at Ganesha, an elephant god, as a symbol of art and creation.

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Example of Overall Collage “Floating” Effect. A Three foot by five foot section

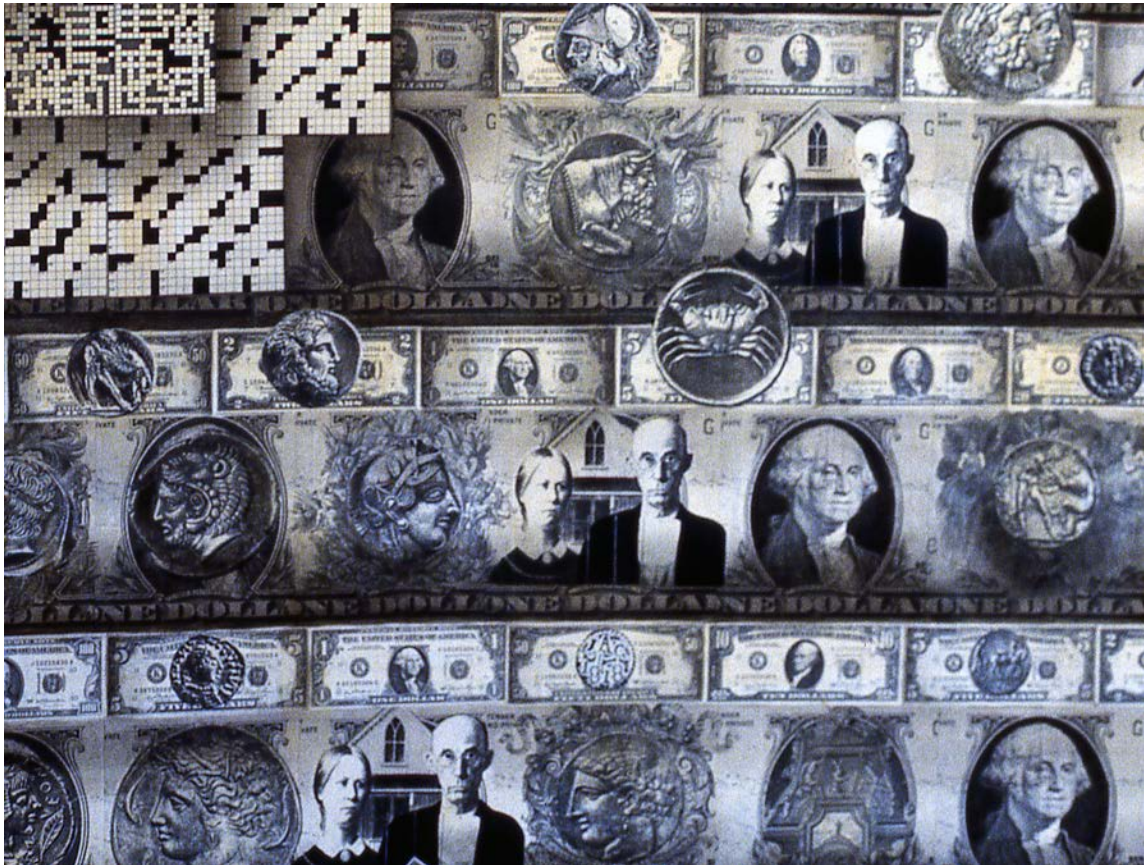


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BOOK COVERS AND TITLE PAGES Fig. 82

As Sicner worked on the section of the mural which began to include books and title pages, various faculty members would chat with him and bring him photocopies the first editions of early important works. When I characterized them as being “unpainted,” as if incomplete, he said “No, that was the way I wanted to leave those,” but they *were* given different degrees of shading to create what he would call a floating effect.

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CURRENCIES Fig. 83

At one point in the interviews I mentioned items in this section at random to trigger some free associative responses. When I said “stamps, . . . currencies” Sicner jumped in at the word “currencies.”

“Yes, I did that whole money thing because the printed image on money is very important, especially if you see it out of time. Some of the best artists made those engravings. There are some monies that are so extraordinary in quality that they should be in museums.” His choices were based on their “look” and “fit,” and a desire to represent many countries. So too with coins. Sicner chose Babylonian, Greek, Roman, American, early Christian, Chinese, Japanese and even coins minted in Texas by the Spanish Crown. His key source was *Money of the World* by Richard G. Doty. Reviewing the collage items in this section, Sicner said “That’s a great Grant Wood,” of Wood’s *American Gothic*, the stoic farmer and his wife. He then commented on the gold *Mask of Agamemnon* on a dollar bill:

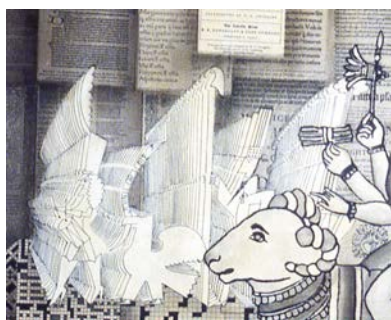




MASK OF AGAMEMNON Fig. 84

Sicner said it has a “restless magic” to it, used in many of his paintings, and that he wanted to use it in the front, in a larger size, as a “piece of gold” in the mural. But neither Gilbert Denman or O’Neil Ford liked the idea. As Sicner thought about it, he agreed, and reflected the mural is more beautiful all black and white, that adding color to the mural would begin to change it, so resisting the impulse turned out well. The source for *American Gothic* was not found. The source for the Mask of Agamemnon is Sinclair Hood’s *The Home of the Heroes: the Aegean before the Greeks*.

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CARTOON PARADE Figs. 85, 86, 87, 88.

When Sicner saw this Saul Steinberg cartoon entitled **Join or Die**, he exclaimed: “I love Steinberg . . .[and] when I saw this one with the repetition of the parade, I thought this does what I want.” And what he wanted was the repetition of the shapes because they were so like collages themselves. Sicner knew from the outset of the project that he’d be using Steinberg, but waited until he had the perfect place.

The sources for the images were on ten loose pages, most probably from *The Inspector* by Saul Steinberg. The ten pages are images of a series of figures as in a parade and Sicner has chosen ten parade components from among them. These include:

Drum majorettes - eagles with “Join or Die” in their beaks - bearded characters - artists at drawing pads (the closest pad has Sicner’s signature!) - Uncle Sams - characters with cornucopias on wheels - Lady Liberties with smoking torches - “Blind Justices” — Santa Clauses — persons watching TV - couples embracing - palm trees - men with cocktail glasses - cats - Charles de Gaulles- Smokey Bears - tin men - ladies in curlers with shopping carts.

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**SICNER AT WORK AS SIGNATURE Fig. 89**

**“That’s it — my signature! . . . Actually, the whole thing is me! I don’t need to sign it.”**

As Sicner tells the story, he was shadow-brushing the Japanese Kabuki actor on the front of the mural when a young woman and “boyfriend,” as James described him, came by. She was taking pictures. They stopped to watch him paint when the friend said: “Why don’t you take a picture of James painting?” She did, and when she eventually brought the picture to him, that’s when he knew.

It’s been “touched up, to fit,” Sicner said, flopped and added late in the mural’s construction. The picture has not been found nor the photographer identified.



**SECTION THREE**  
**MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER**



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**CAVE DRAWINGS Fig.90**

Sicner's working source was *The Rock Paintings of the Chumash*, by Campbell Grant. The hands and bison are from the Altamira Cave in Northern Spain. There is a hand which Sicner notes "to enlarge," with no final size indicated.

The antelope is from the cave at Font-de-Gaume. Sicner has an arrow pointing to the antelope figure which is about 1.25" in diameter. He notes: "flop with a sort of double set of horns . . . flop it and enlarge it to 14."

While no working sources were found for all the hands and warrior/hunter figures, they appear from internet searches to be from Lascaux cave paintings.

While these items were not stated in Denman's original list of items to include in the mural, Sicner had no issue with choosing what *he* wished: "So the research was conducted by looking at everything that I would relate to, things that I thought were appropriate in the history of printing and writing, . . . from the Altamira Cave to the Moonwalk."

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### EROTIC DESIGNS Fig.91

To the right of the cave drawings is an elephant design composed of couples having intercourse. Sicner copied the design twice and overlaid one upon the other.

He used erotica here and high above the stairwell, within snowflakes, saying no more about his sources except mentioning the *Kama Sutra* “and other books.” Look carefully and you’ll see a label on the image which simply says: “**Indian composite erotic elephant**, the symbol of sovereignty. A sexual amulet in the form of a miniature painting. Rajasthan, late eighteenth century.”

Barbara Long, Sicner’s close friend, and Coates librarian at the time, said the images came from Gilbert Denman’s collection of Eastern materials. Sicner was prompted by the image to comment on Eastern, meaning non Judaeo-Christian, approaches to sexuality in art:

Eastern eroticism often occurs in social settings, that in their pictures “they are *doing* something but you wouldn’t realize it unless you study it. . . that they were having sex under all that dress.” The eroticism is often sophisticated as well, that “they were educated, that’s another thing too, it’s like the Romans and Greeks, they had such a different approach to sex” than in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.



## THE STAIRWELL IMAGES



As mentioned earlier, while the front of the mural is a clean convex surface, the backside is a concave surface “cut” by a staircase. Sicner was very aware of the compositional and aesthetic issues it created, and approached the issue by imagining the cut *not* there!

On the back wall beneath the staircase, columns of Doré images and the Victorian alphabet book, continue upward *through the stairs* to re-form as columns. They finally come to an end *behind* images applied to the stairwell wall. His motive for this decision was to create visual continuity despite the stairway “cut.” As mentioned earlier, Sicner said the best way to experience the continuity he imagined is, ironically, to stand *away* from the rear wall. “The further away you get, the more it fits this one enormous unit, the whole wall, and the stairway’s just sort of floating on the middle.”

Viewing the stairwell images presents different challenges than viewing those on either the front wall or lower rear wall. The stairs themselves are about six feet wide and contained by banisters. At about midway, after a nine foot walk up the stairs, there is a landing before the final steps to the upper floor. The limited width creates interesting issues: on the one hand, it *prompts* a viewer to look closely, but *limits* stepping back to see overall designs.

The best way to experience the full sweep of the images is to be on the library’s upper floor, and to look with a panoramic gaze. Pause at the images at the landing, and continue on, marveling at the rhythm and power of the major and supporting imagery. From that vantage point, a viewer can see how Sicner’s painted-collage technique carry our eyes into, and even through, images. The creation of depth is especially prominent when on the landing — it’s the key vantage point to suggest a way to get into varied meanings the mural may hold.

The high side of the stairwell begins at the concrete column on the right of the first step. The wall then rises almost 18 feet. Unlike the rear wall's high left column, where Caryatid images are at its *inner edge*, Sicner uses images to *cover* this column. Curiously, the images have a bulletin-board like feel, rising miscellany, and have no apparent theme. Here are the major items starting from the bottom step:




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**WINGED LION WITH HEAD Fig.92**

Sicner describes a moment when, working on the base of the column, some passing students off-handedly said to him that *this* Greek Sphinx, with her upright lion body and eagle wings, “protects” the mural as she had protected the city of Thebes.

James very earnestly said: “Yes! Yes!” He was always concerned about mural art being protected from defacement, weathering, or their locales destroyed. For this piece to be within the safety of a university library was an important motive, mentioned several times during the interviews, in accepting the commission.

I have not found the source for this Greek Sphinx image, and internet searches indicate it is apparently an uncommon representation and uncommon photographic angle. When people hear the word “Sphinx,” the usual association is with the Egyptian Sphinx near Cairo, Egypt. Sicner will use an image of *that* sphinx higher on the back wall, and with a less pleasant aspect.

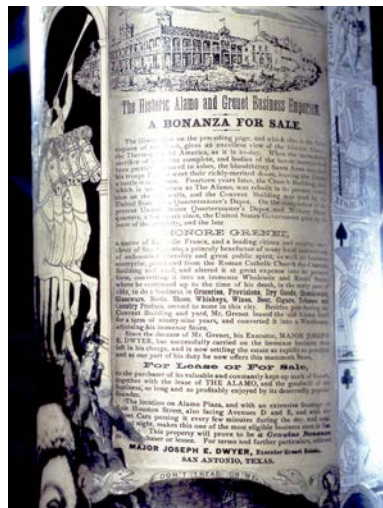




**CARTOONS OF SNAKES CUT INTO PIECES Fig.93**

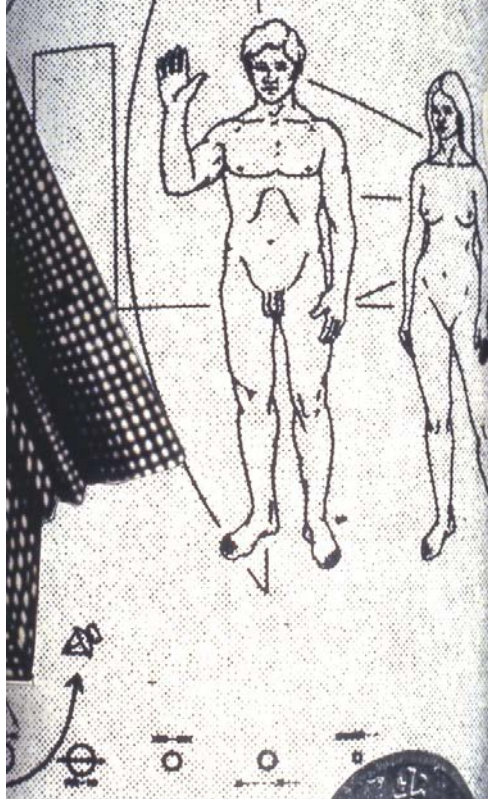
Sicner used *The American Revolution: A Picture Source Book*, by John Grafton, and removed a cartoon of a rattlesnake cut into three segments. The “Join or Die” motif was compliments the Steinberg cartoon on the back wall, where eagles’ beaks hold a flowing “Join or Die” ribbon. Here the segments represent the *disunited* states with the legend: “Join, or Die.” The cartoon was designed by Benjamin Franklin at the time of the opening Congress, 1754, later to lead to the United States Constitution, published in Franklin’s *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754.

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**ALAMO FOR SALE Fig.94**

This advertisement appeared in the *San Antonio Light* newspaper c.1876-83, announcing “A Bonanza For Sale,” that is — the San Antonio Alamo Mission. It had been bought from the Catholic Church and refurbished as a store. While its history is recognized in the ad, its status as a “shrine” of Texas liberty was to come later. Sicner was given the ad, which is a copy of one in the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures. He called it “amazing” upon discovering this mundane aspect of Alamo history.



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**MALE AND FEMALE FIGURES Fig. 95**

“Carl Sagan’s wife designed it . . . It’s awful. It just isn’t done.” Sicner never said more about this item. He found the image of the **Voyager Plaque**, placed on Voyager, the Pioneer 10 Spacecraft, in an issue of *Readers’ Digest* (No date).

The *Digest*, however, summarizes a book *Murmurs of the Earth*, Random House, 1978. Within the summary is an account from the *NY Times Magazine*, Dec. 4, 1977 of Carl Sagan, Frank Drake, and artist Linda Saltzman-Sagan designing gold anodized aluminum plaques. Images included a diagram of a solar system, and a nude man and woman to scale. The plaques are designed, say the Sagans: “To be the longest lived works of mankind able to survive unchanged for hundreds of millions, or perhaps billions of years.”

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## THE STAIRWELL

As you take the first step up the stairwell, the wall to your right rises 18 feet. Major images are large and fairly bright, with supporting images and arresting details that range from dramatic to intimate.

### MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



MAN ON PEDESTAL    MAN AND SLAB    COUPLE WITH LUTE    JAPANESE LADIES    Fig. 96





**MAN ON PEDESTAL Fig. 97**

**“He actually wrote that: ‘ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS THE PRICE OF LIBERTY.’ *That* should be the title of the mural! *That* was the original idea!”** (James Sicner)

James Sicner rarely said that an image, or image cluster, was intended to have a specific “message” for a viewer to “get.” But when he *did* elaborate, there could be a personal flash of a felt but previously unarticulated idea. For example: The

mural’s formal title is: *The History of Printing and Writing: Man’s Evolving Images*. According to Sicner, the title was composed by Robert Houze, the library’s Director at the time, and composed mainly as a convenient description rather than anything determined at the start of the project.

However, when I wondered that this image was the only one I found in the mural that came with a title that he kept, i.e., “ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS THE PRICE OF LIBERTY,” Sicner suddenly, and vigorously, said: “*That* should be the title of the mural . . . *That* was the original idea! I had to think about something on there. . . . And it *came* like this, with the figure and this at an angle. And I thought ‘Rockwell Kent has given me this gift!’”

That moment, coming *eight* years after completing the mural, was an eye-opener: the meaning of any one image, or the relationships among many, were not always precise in Sicner’s mind — and that we are in luck to have any of his comments to deepen our mural experience.

Here is Sicner’s working source, from the Dover book, *The Illustrations of Rockwell Kent: 231 Examples from Books, Magazines and Advertising Art*. **Fig. 98:**



In Kent’s original lithograph the inscription is in a straight line beneath the figure. In the mural, Sicner has transposed and painted the words onto two edges of a slab beneath the figure’s feet:





**FIGURE BEARING SLAB Fig. 99**

Sicner found this image in *Pen Drawing and Pen Draughtsmen* by Joseph Pennell. It's a drawing by Frederick Lord Leighton entitled: "Samson Carrying off the Gates," the gates of Gaza. (in the Bible, Judges: 1-3). Sicner has transformed the gates into a pedestal for the Rockwell Kent figure. Here is the image in Pennell:



**FIGURE BEARING SLAB. SOURCE. Fig. 100**

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**COUPLE WITH LUTE Fig. 101**



**JAPANESE LADIES Fig 102**

The sources for these two images were not found. Sicner said he chose the 19th. century Japanese print, because of its “beauty,” and that the Japanese woman is “teaching her children how to do calligraphy.” The style suggests Kitagawa Utamaro, late 18th/19th century, Japan. There is only one child, so Sicner may have simplified it to minimize visual clutter. But then he made a puzzling risqué comment that “it looks like she’s putting a paintbrush in that girl’s butt!” In any event, both sets of images involve the arts, e.g., music and calligraphy, and the composition is a dynamic, triangular one. See Fig. 96: it flows from the woman with the brush, to the woman looking upward to the couple, from which the gentleman’s leg and foot return us the woman with the brush.

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**CARVED MONUMENTAL HEADS Fig. 103**

The image of presidential heads at the **Mt. Rushmore National Memorial**, in the Black Hills near Keystone, South Dakota, appears in an advertisement for Frank B. Hall, Insurance Services, in Houston, Tx. When asked why all four presidents are *not* in the mural, Sicner’s answer was terse, combining an aesthetic matter with what I’ll call a “commission issue.” He said he did it purposely: “when you get more modern it loses.” He seemed to mean a very familiar image pulls a viewer’s attention *out* of the collage and not *into* the image’s relationship to other items within a collage. About the “commission issue”: “I had a very good idea for Mt. Rushmore, but I couldn’t do it because of this pressure [to finish]. And everyone said: ‘Well, four years is enough,’ and I said ‘Who says it’s enough? In relationship to what? To who? It took ten years for what’s her name to write *Gone with the Wind*. I said, it’s *all* relative.”



**WOMAN'S HEAD Fig. 104**



**FALLEN SOLDIERS Fig. 105**



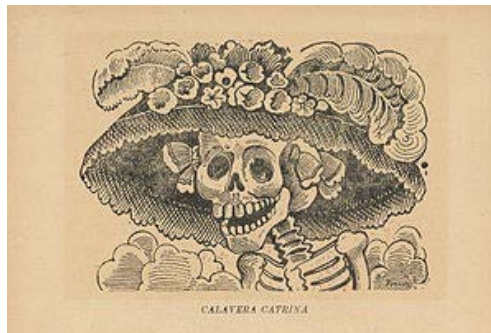
**SKULLS IN HATS Fig. 106**

Beneath the Mt. Rushmore images and to the right of the “Eternal Vigilance” figure, Sicner placed images which denote war and death. He mentioned the woman’s head was from Pablo Picasso’s **Guernica** and did not amplify. *Guernica* is Picasso’s monumental painting in which Nazi Germany and Italian warplanes, at the request of the Spanish Nationalists, destroyed the pro-republican town which was leading anti-nationalist movements.

The fallen soldiers are from a fresco mural called **The Trench** by the Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco. Sicner may have taken it from a 100 peso Mexican bank note issued in 1975 which I found among his possessions. He was truly taken by Orozco’s work, saying this work captured the carnage of the 1910-20 Mexican revolution: “That’s everything right there, in that one drawing.”

At this point Sicner also expressed a fear that as some of Orozco’s murals had been “painted out,” his mural, too, could be “painted out,” or destroyed.

The skulls in hats is a print entitled **La Calavera Catrina**, or “The Calavera of the Fashionable Lady,” or “Elegant Skull,” by the Mexican graphic artist José Guadalupe Posada. Sicner’s copy of *Posada’s Popular Mexican Prints*. has several items on pp. 3-6, and pp.13-14 torn out of the Calavera section. He took the image and made multiple copies to overlay in the mural:



**SKULLS IN HATS. SOURCE. Fig 107**



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**FIGURE HOLDING SNAKES Fig. 108**

**ARABIC SCRIPT WITHIN CIRCLES Fig. 109**

No image source was found for this **Etruscan Snake Goddess**, and Sicner offered no commentary. The image on the right has been called a **Great Calligraphic Pane**. Sicner described the pane as a large hanging in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey, and that this one, and the one further left, reference Muhammed and his disciples. The pane on the right behind the arm of the Rockwell Kent figure reads: “Mohammed, may peace be upon him.” The calligraphic pane to the left of the column bears the name of the second orthodox caliph Umar, and says: “May God be exalted, be pleased with him.” No image source has been found.

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**BACKGROUND PHOTO ARRAY Fig. 110**

The image array of a nude male in various postures is actually a set of still frames from a motion picture of the body in motion. The title is **Human Motion Study**, done by Eadweard Muybridge (born Edward James Muggeridge). If you look carefully, the frames are *not* a filmed sequence. For Sicner, the position of images was a design issue. As he explained, he wanted to use Muybridge’s images but to make them into a design and not be just “decorative.” He considered Muybridge a genius and that the photography was beautiful. Look closely and you’ll see what Sicner did: the images are repetitions of just a *few* of the frames of *Human Motion Study*.

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**STYLIZED SHAKESPEARE AND GLOBE THEATER Fig. 111**

A **British Broadcasting Corporation Shakespeare Logo** sits with the snake goddess and “Eternal Vigilance.” Disconcerting? not to James. He said he included it for its “catchiness.” No source found.

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**SUPPORTING IMAGES**



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**ANATOMICAL FIGURE Fig. 112**



**YOUNG SCHOLAR Fig. 113**

The Figure is from *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius, of Brussels*, called: “The Third Plate of the Muscles.” Sicner notes to enlarge to 5 feet tall. He called the mechanism superimposed on the figure a “French chronometer.” Do you see a small man with extended wings at the figure’s left shoulder? It’s from Vesalius, but Sicner added wings, to make it Icarus, son of Daedalus. Why? Daedalus, Sicner mused, was “sort of in the back of my mind.” So the master craftsman of ancient Greece, creator of the Labyrinth, “was on his mind.” Was Sicner creating a labyrinth of images for us to wander ’til we reach it’s central, Minotaur-like, discovery? Sicner had no comment about the scholar and there no source among his papers.

MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



CHARACTERS IN FLIGHT

EXTENDED ARM IN GLOBE

ANATOMICAL WOMAN

SHE-WOLF NURSING TWO BOYS Fig.114





**CHARACTERS IN FLIGHT Fig. 115**

These are the DC Comic, Inc. characters **Superman and Lois Lane**. The working source is a single page apparently from a large coloring book edition of Superman.

An Internet search shows the image as a plate from the *DC COMICS STYLE GUIDE*, 1982. Sicner's page is noted to be photographed, no indication of size.

When Sicner had said earlier in the Trinity Library radio interview that cartoons are part of our printed tradition, he announced "and [the mural] will have the Superman," indicating that as of January 30, 1980, nine months after beginning work, he had not constructed this section of the mural. (Note: in the Supplementary Photos pages a large Superman cut-out lies on the floor — but it is *not* the one he would eventually place.)



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**GLOBE WITH EXTENDED ARM WITH EARTH SUPER-IMPOSED Fig. 116**

Sicner used a photograph of an engraving entitled **Hercules with Globe**. The engraving was done by a Johan Hauer, 1620, and was based on a sculpture of the same name done by Christopher Jamnitzer and Jeremias Ritter, Nuremberg. 1618-1620. Upon seeing this composite image again, Sicner thought it was interesting to see Atlas bearing two earths, one as a “map,” as he called the globe, and one of earth as seen in the famous **Earth Rise** photo, the first photograph from space — about which he laconically said — “. . . which *now* doesn’t have much interest.”

Here is the photo he used, re-oriented, by rotating it a bit to the left, about 25°:



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**HERCULES WITH GLOBE. SOURCE. Fig. 117**

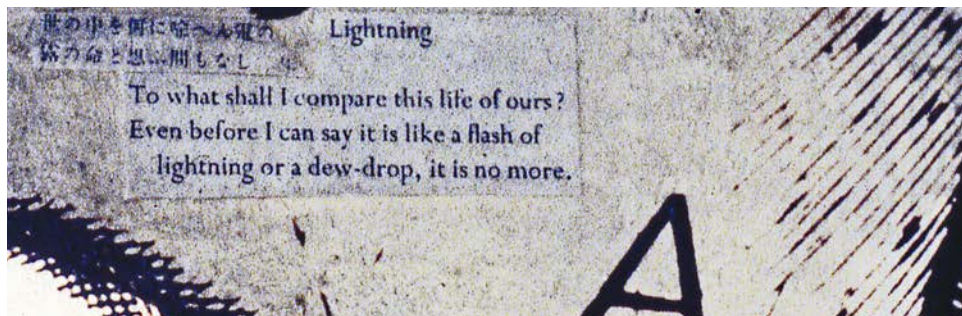




ANATOMICAL WOMAN. WOMB RENDERING Fig. 118

If you stand on the stairwell at this particular point, Sicner provides, ironically, a chance to peer *into* a figure which otherwise prompts us to step back to see in full. His working source was not found, but the image is an engraving by Francesco Valesio, done for Giulio Cesare Casseri's *Theatricum Anatomicum*, 1672. Specifically, it is related to fetus formation, Plate IV from *De formato foetu liber singularis*.

Now peer closely *into* the figure, looking specifically at the upper "A" layer of flesh near her breast. Sicner pointed out a tiny poem he added — because of its "lightning" reference? It is by the Japanese Zen Buddhist monk, Sengai Gibon, 1750-1837: "To what shall I compare this life of ours? Even before I can say it is a light, a flash of lightning or a dew drop, it is no more."



ZEN POEM Fig. 119



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**SHE-WOLF NURSING TWO BOYS Fig. 120**

While the source was not found for this image of **The Capitoline Wolf**, suckling the twins, Romulus and Remus, legendary founders of Rome, Sicner did comment that the depiction of the threesome changed at times over the centuries according to “fashion in art.”

§

Illustrations from the *Victorian Alphabet Book* Doré’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, stamps, and other items below the steps, seem to go *through* the staircase. In addition, there are columns *on* the stairwell of plant illustrations and capital letters. Sicner never discussed columns as a design element or invested with purpose. Yet, they are means by which Sicner focuses attention to the larger material between them. Stairwell column examples include:



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**CAPITAL LETTERS Fig. 121**



**PLANT ILLUSTRATIONS Fig. 122**

The block **Capital letters** to the right of the anatomical man are from *Florid and Unusual Alphabets: 109 Complete Alphabets*. **Plant Illustrations** are from *Decorative Floral Engravings, 118 Plates*.

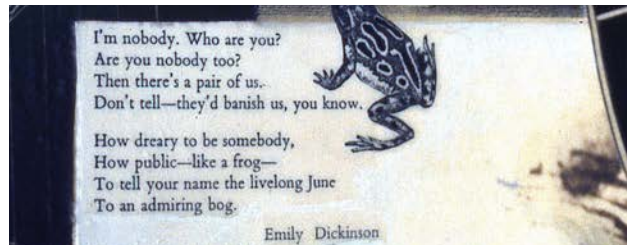


**COLUMN OF COMPUTER GENERATED FORMS Fig. 123**



**MATH FORMULAS Fig. 124**

Sicner enjoyed meeting Trinity faculty who suggested and offered items to consider. One was John Plapp from Trinity’s math department who brought him hand composed mathematical formulas. Sicner jumped at the idea: math formulas are internal views of reality, and computers can image forth these views. But before we become too proud, look carefully at the upper right edge of the top-most computer generated form:



**DICKINSON POEM Fig. 125**

“I’m nobody. Who are you?  
 Are you nobody too?  
 Then there’s a pair of us.  
 Don’t tell — they’d banish us, you know.  
 How dreary to be somebody,  
 How public — like a frog —  
 To tell your name the livelong June  
 To an admiring bog.”

This is the second of two poems that seem to “temper” the energies of their larger contexts.

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ANTI-PRELATIC TRACTS Fig. 126

The book-title motif beneath the stairwell is continued here, but with a difference. These are titles of **Anti-Prelatic Tracts**. Sicner said he added them because they “are very unusual,” and that he had been told about them by a visiting Franciscan priest, but did not say if that priest brought him the title pages.

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SAN IL DEFONSO PUEBLO POT Fig. 127



ZIA PUEBLO POT Fig. 128

Sicner used *American Indian Design and Decoration*, by Leroy H. Appleton. There are twelve Illustrations of pottery which Sicner notes to enlarge to 14” in width. While the illustrations were in color, Sicner would use items with no more than three colors, or if colors were subdued. Further up the staircase we will see one notable exception.



SAN IL DEFONSO PUEBLO POT. SOURCE. Fig. 129

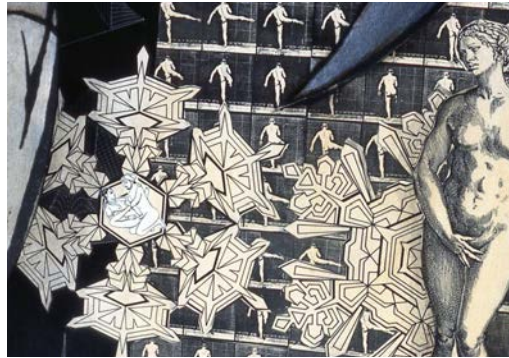


ZIA PUEBLO POT. SOURCE. Fig. 130

Zia (spelled “SIA” in Appleton)

Sicner said of the San Il Defonso pot: “I love it, unique in the world,” (though he attributed it to the Acoma Pueblo), and was very pleased at the effect of the pottery images situated “on” the stairs.

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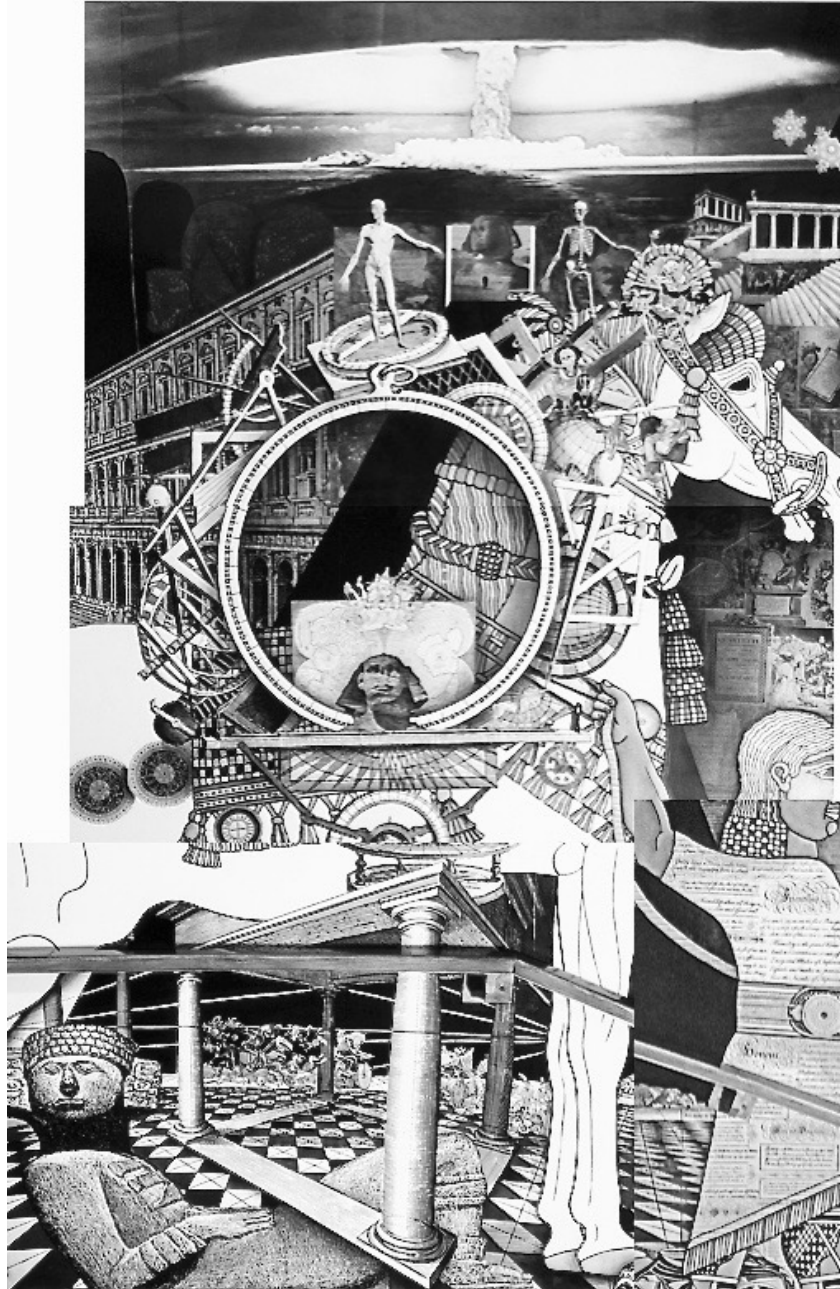
**HIGH UPPER BACKGROUND SNOWFLAKES Figs. 131, 132, 133**

When asked about the “snowflakes,” Sicner smiled and shook his head: “They drove me crazy . . . I don’t know where I get those ideas.”

The images came from *Designs for Coloring: 3* by Ruth Heller. The patterns in the book are black and white, and kaleidoscopic in design. From a variety of pages, Sicner cut out designs that appeared to him as snowflakes. The erotica collage elements added to them were not found. Sicner’s usual response to erotic imagery sources was simply “*The Kama Sutra*.”

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MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



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HYDROGEN BOMB CLOUD

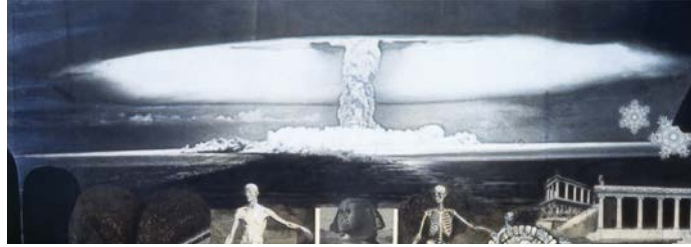
LARGE RING

LARGE HORSE

ARCHITECTURAL PERSPECTIVE Fig. 134

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**HYDROGEN BOMB CLOUD Fig. 135**

**“Yeah, that’s how it all ends, in a nuclear holocaust.” (Sicner)**

One question a visitor might ask, is “Does the mural have a beginning and an end?” If so, is the beginning deep in the dark corner beneath the first steps, with violence and erotica, curling around the wall and up to

the Egyptian Sun God? Or is it the reverse? For Sicner, the question of “an end” was his *private* view of where the human condition was headed, but also a *public*, but artistic, expression within the mural.

When I asked him, well before this image was discussed, where the mural ends, he said: the “top of the stairs,” *specifying* the long, nuclear bomb cloud. “Yeah, that’s how it all ends, in a nuclear holocaust.” He went on to say that the development of nuclear weapons has been one of the most important human achievements in the last two thousand years.

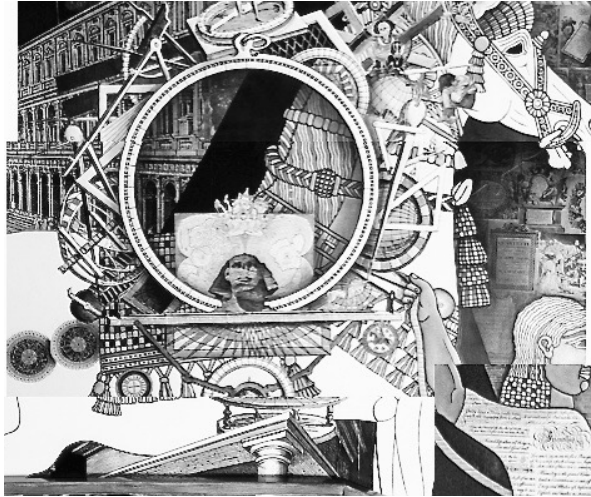
Sicner held this view for many years, yet just as important, was to search for the best illustrations. He wondered where he was going to find an explosion to fill the width of the stairwell landing, a place where a viewer could best pause and explore the top-to-bottom sweep of images. “I knew just what I wanted, and I always kept an eye out, and I saw this, and it was amazing, very beautiful and impressive and I thought, ‘*That’s it!*’ I found it, the solution to the top, after looking for years, but not really looking, but thinking, I kept thinking about the top of the explosion, . . . but it had to be very important and, at the same time, it just was magic how that fit:”



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**HYDROGEN BOMB CLOUD. SOURCE. Fig. 136**

What Sicner found was an image of a French hydrogen bomb test from a *Newsweek* magazine, June 22, 1981, “Special Report: And the Nuclear Race Goes On.” He initially thought it was a French photographer and *Time* magazine, but his main concern was repainting the photo. It would be an exception to to using an image with deep and multiple colors. The photo in question is an Associated Press photo, and was actually taken in 1971. But its unique color, size, and inherent drama had been used many times since then in articles about nuclear weapons.




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**LARGE RING AND LARGE HORSE Fig. 137**

Standing on the landing, it's virtually impossible not to be engaged by the large ring or circle. It pulls our eyes through the plane of the mural to create depth which is then reinforced by the perspective lines descending to the left of the figure beneath the bomb cloud.

This is also a “disturbed” section in the mural. Around the ring, which looks like a chronometer frame with no inner works, is an array of broken tools and aids useful in mathematics and geometry. Then there's the chaos of skeletal figures and an upper figure without skin. Look closely and see a disconsolate young boy sitting at the horse's cheek. And if *any* sphinx, whether Greek or, as here, Egyptian, is intended to guard humankind — this Sphinx's diminished size and its broken nose seems to undercut that role.

All in all, Sicner has graphically depicted the consequences of the hydrogen bomb blast. In retrospect, one wonders if the “snowflakes” can now be seen as floating ashes.

While I found no source for the ring among his papers, Sicner apparently found the Large Horse image in the *The Ancient Near East Coloring Book* by Nancy Conkle. The image is on a loose page, flopped on the mural, and entitled The Big Horse of King Ashurbanipal:

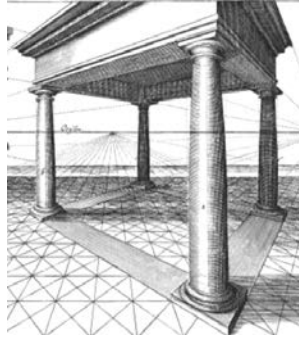



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**LARGE HORSE. SOURCE. Fig. 138**

He was in a wry mood when he pointed out that what appear to be trappings or medallions on the horse's side are not so. They are images of 5,000 year old Chinese calendars. "Some of these things are not what they look like they are," and they were added purposefully because they are "more accurate than ours." His tone seemed to suggest the Chinese have a deeper wisdom, a longer vision regarding time, and might be wiser than the West to the risk of self-annihilation.

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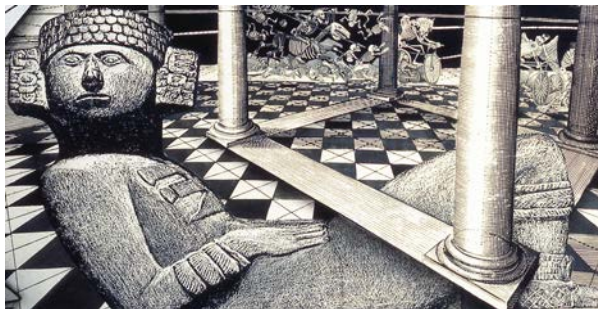

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**ARCHITECTURAL PERSPECTIVE Fig. 139**

This image is from *Perspective*, by Jan Vredeman De Vries, another Dover book. Perspective # 23 has "59 inches" in pencil in the top right-hand of the margin. Otherwise, Sicner just said "I had all these squares like that," seeming to mean that receding squares elsewhere in the mural also came from this source.

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**SUPPORTING IMAGES**




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**RECLINING FIGURE Fig. 140**

**SKELETONS ON HORSEBACK AND BICYCLE Fig. 141**

Further evidence of Sicner's love of Mexican culture are in these two items which complete the sweep of images from the top to the bottom of the stairwell landing. The first is the reclining **Maya Chac-Mool** from Chichen Itza, Mexico, looking out toward the library, impervious to the turmoil above or behind him. The source was not

found, but most likely this photo from the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, Mexico. **Source Fig. 142:**



Behind Chac-Mool are tumultuous skeletons (calaveras), the **Calavera of Don Quixote**, and one on a bicycle. They all come from *Posada's Popular Mexican Prints. 273 cuts*, by José Guadalupe Posada. Pages 3-6, and pp.13-14 are torn out of the Calaveras section. Sicner called Posada an important printmaker with charm and wit, and that “some of the best he ever made are in the mural.”

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#### MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



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**PUBLIC SQUARE AND STANDING STONES AS BLACK SILHOUETTE Fig. 143**



The public square is the **Piazza San Marco** in Venice, Italy. The source was not found but seems to be from a photo or engraving of a painting by Canaletto, i.e. Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1720. Note also how its receding lines provide depth to the wall as you stand on the staircase landing.

Sicner mentioned that the library Director, Robert Houze, had an old photo of himself in uniform standing in the Square. Sicner requested it and placed Houze within the crowd. Can you find him? It is apparently the only true, unmanipulated photograph in the mural.



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**ROBERT HOUZE Fig.144**

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**STANDING STONES AS BLACK SILHOUETTE Fig. 145**

Here in silhouette are the vertical stones of **Stonehenge**, a prehistoric monument in Wiltshire, England. This view and adaptation was in an advertisement for Oleanus Ceramic Tile, from an unknown home remodeling magazine. The Stonehenge silhouette is at the top 1/3rd of the page. Sicner note: “Seven feet, flopped.”

§

## SUPPORTING IMAGES



FIGURES POINTING Fig. 146

STAMPS Fig. 147

The figures pointing toward a “star” are from a section of the **Bayeux Tapestry** c.1070, entitled “Isti Mirant Stella.” [“These men wonder at the star”]. Sicner had no specific comment on this image, but twice in interviews he mentioned “comets.” He had a general interest in astronomy and the sciences, and mentioned that a comet is in Albrecht Dürer’s *Melancholia*. Sicner did not include that comet in his *Melancholia* rendered on the front-left side of the mural. Notice: the figures point admiringly toward the “star” (Halley’s Comet, 1066 ) and — compositionally — toward the hydrogen bomb flash.

**Stamps** fascinated Sicner, and he has them on the stairwell, as extensions from the stamps below the stairwell. He wondered while working on the mural how they would look over the years. When he saw the photographs, he said “Gosh that turned out nice with time. . . . I use to wonder what they were going to look like in five years, for after five years they’re pretty much the way they’re going to be in another hundred years.” Sicner also confirmed a comment I had heard that the Martin Luther King stamps beneath the stairwell and elsewhere were done by the Mexican government and designed by James’ friend, Lance Wyman, in 1968.

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**WRITHING FIGURES AND SNAKES Fig. 148**



**HORSEMAN Fig. 149**

The statue **Laocoön and His Sons**, entrapped by snakes, also called the **Laocoön Group**, was unearthed in Rome in 1506. Sicner's source seem to have been *Prints and People — A Social History of Printed Pictures* by A. Hyatt Mayor. Several differing engravings of the group were made, and Sicner went with one done by Charles-Clement Valday Bervic, 1809. It was an engraving of a 1533 restoration by by G. A. Montorsoli , who added Laocoön's raised arm.

The horseman is an illustration by Fredrick Remington entitled "**In a Canyon of the Coeur D'Alene.**" Sicner knew it was Remington, but suggested it might be a Teddy Roosevelt "Rough Rider." However, the illustration was done for an article entitled "The Ranchman's Rifle on Crag and Prairie," written by Theodore Roosevelt. It appeared in *The Century*, Vol. 0036, Issue 2 (June 1888). Here is the original:



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**HORSEMAN. SOURCE. Fig. 150**

## SUPPORTING IMAGES



SONG SHEETS    MAGAZINE COVERS    WOMAN IN FRAME    OBESE MALE    Fig. 151

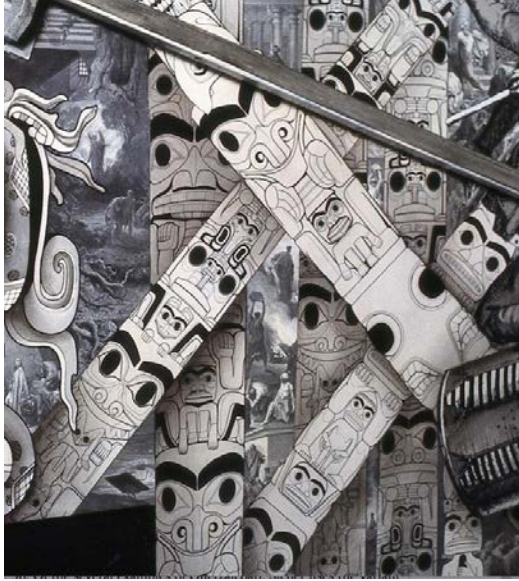
Working sources for the Stephen Foster Song Sheets, the *The Savoy*, *The Yellow Book*, and *The Studio* magazines, were not found. The other images were found on the cover and interior page of John Lane's *The Later Work of Aubrey Beardsley, 174 plates*. The obese character is Ali Baba, an Arabic character in "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," a story in the collection *One Thousand and One Nights* by Antoine Galland. The woman in the picture frame is Lysistrata, the lead female in the comic play of the same name by Aristophanes, composed in Athens, Greece, 411 B.C.E.

The source for the women depicted in various activities in this portion of the mural, and the **Mother with Child**, is *Women: A Pictorial Archive, from 19th Century Sources*, by Jim Harter. It was missing pp. 1-2, pp.11-12, with cutouts taken from pp. 25-26, and pp. 97-98. Among the pages is a poor xerox copy of a woman playing violin, which Sicner used near the Stephen Foster song sheets.

As mentioned earlier, "Supporting Images" in this portion of the mural are extensions of images from works beneath the staircase. Apart from stamps and currencies, these include more pages from Doré's illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Also, *Historic Alphabets and Initials: Woodcut and Ornamental, The Mother's Picture Alphabet*, and a column of bookplates.



## MAJOR IMAGE CLUSTER



**CROSSED TOTEM POLES Fig.152**



**MUSICIANS AND PRINTSHOP Fig. 153**

The image of musicians was found after an internet search for “16th century flute and drum player.” It is a copper engraving by Lorenz Starch, Nuremberg, late 16th century, and is simply titled: “**Flute Player is sitting on the Shoulders of a Drummer.**” Sicner’s working source was not found for this image nor the **Printshop Workers**, but that too was found, but with no title, after an internet search for “renaissance printshop images.”

Sicner again used *NorthWest Coast Indian Art*, by Bill Holm, as the source for the vertical and tilted totem poles. What he had said earlier about their placement among biblical images may be at work here: “I chose all this stuff purely for the visual . . . Just what appeals to me.” Yet here, other effects are at work. These totems appear to be “tumbling,” but held back by a serpent deity (as well as the wall bannister ?) as we near the top of the staircase.

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**STYLIZED SERPENT-GOD Fig. 154**  
**(lower side view at stairwell and bannister's end)**



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**STYLIZED SERPENT-GOD. Source. Fig 155**

The serpentine deity is **Quetzalcoatl**, an ancient Mexican serpent god, and it marks the end of the interior stairwell (note the end of the bannister.)

Sicner found the image in *American Indian Design and Decoration* by Leroy H. Appleton, pg. 56. Of the several examples of Quetzalcoatl, Sicner uses the variant where the hand is near the chin, with its middle finger touching its thumb. Sicner flopped the image:

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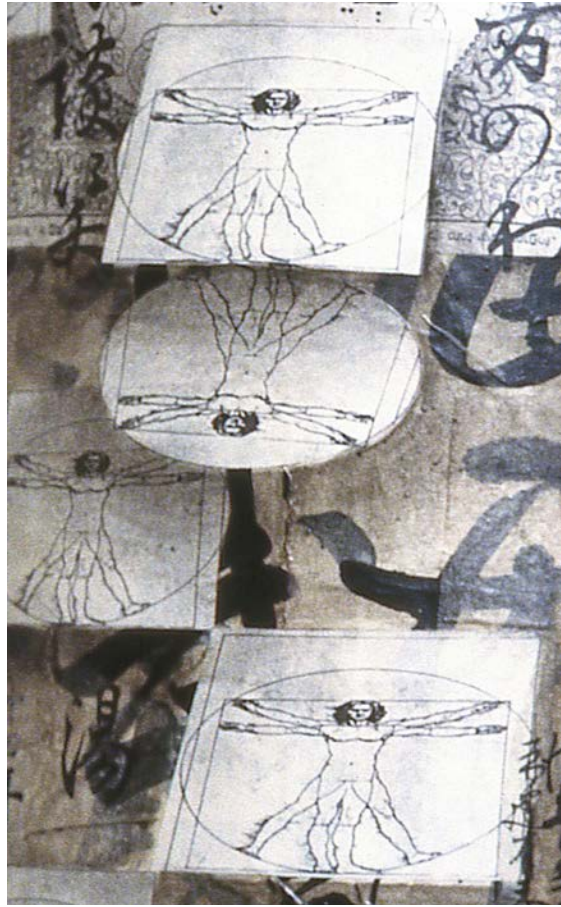
MAJOR IMAGES



MEN IN CIRCLES    PORTRAIT WITH  $E=MC^2$     CHINESE CHARACTERS    HEBREW SCRIPT

Fig. 157





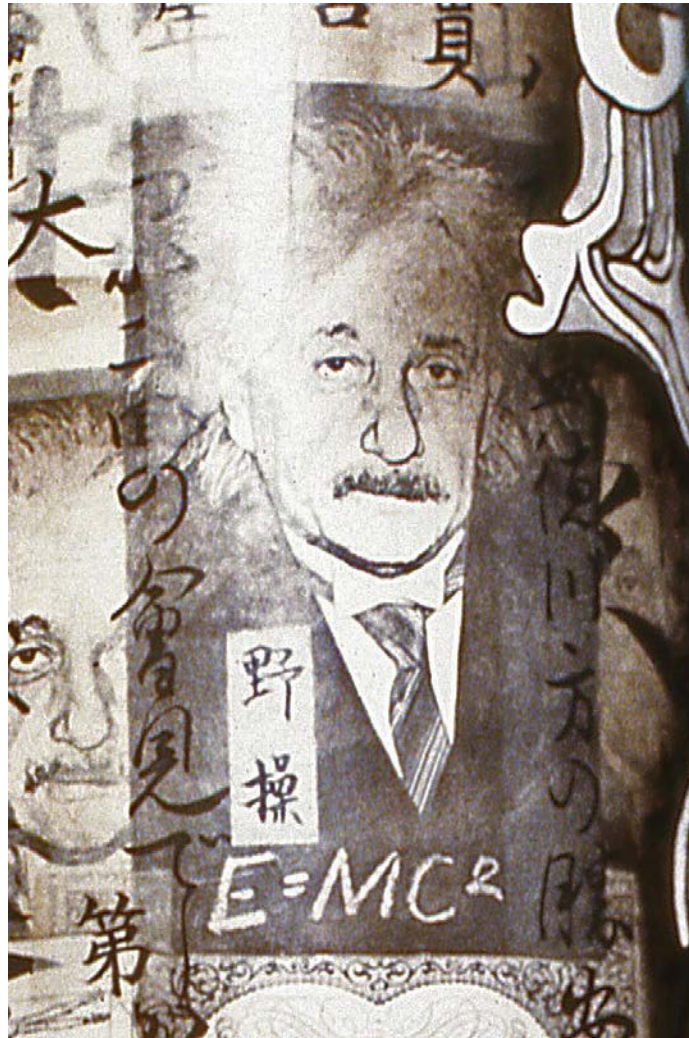
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**MEN IN CIRCLES Fig. 158**

The figure of a man in a circle, **Vitruvian Man**, was drawn by Leonardo DaVinci. It's based on the claim of the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius that the ideal human body has proportions which align with a geometric square and circle. The drawing has by tradition been named in Vitruvius' honor. What is interesting about the image *here* is its foreshortened, tilted perspective.

Sicner found it in a *Time-Life Portfolio of Art* advertisement, where Vitruvian Man on the cover is *leaning* on other books. Notice that Sicner turned the middle of the three figures upside down! When I asked in an earlier interview why humankind, represented in Vitruvian Man, isn't more prominent in the mural as some heavenly revelation, or angelic gift, Sicner said the image has become "... too corny! I have it in the back, real small."





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**PORTRAIT WITH  $E=MC^2$  Fig. 159**

When asked about the **portrait of Albert Einstein** and the  **$E=MC^2$  formula**, Sicner said that while the formula is important, it's "not so important anymore." He was suggesting it's become clichéd and, today, we have lost the importance of its original significance.

Sicner was more animated when he spoke of Einstein having written a book on religion that was never published, and that Einstein was a very strong mystic, but "he didn't want it known what his real feelings were about mysticism because most people couldn't handle it."

As for the Chinese characters applied *to* and *around* the portrait, Sicner laughed: "I forgot they were there!" Nor could I find a source, though I've had them translated and have come to imagine a serendipitous link to Einstein and  $E=MC^2$  —



**CHINESE CHARACTERS AND HEBREW SCRIPT Fig. 160**

In showing the **Chinese Characters** to a trusted translator, apart from the Einstein portrait, she offered this translation which I find remarkable: The characters 野操. 野 and can mean “field, wild, wilderness, countryside.” The character 操 can mean “conduct, ways to manipulate, ways to operate, behavior,” etc.

Finally, the Hebrew script reads as Bereshit (or Bereishit, Bereshis, Bereishis). The characters stand for the concept: “In the beginning . . .” the opening words of the *Book of Genesis*.

Since they are “applied” to Einstein, the characters together may mean the way “the force field operates,” or the “law of the field.” Or, perhaps?, the unified space-time field, the “Big Bang,” in Einstein’s theory of relativity?

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### A FINAL NOTE

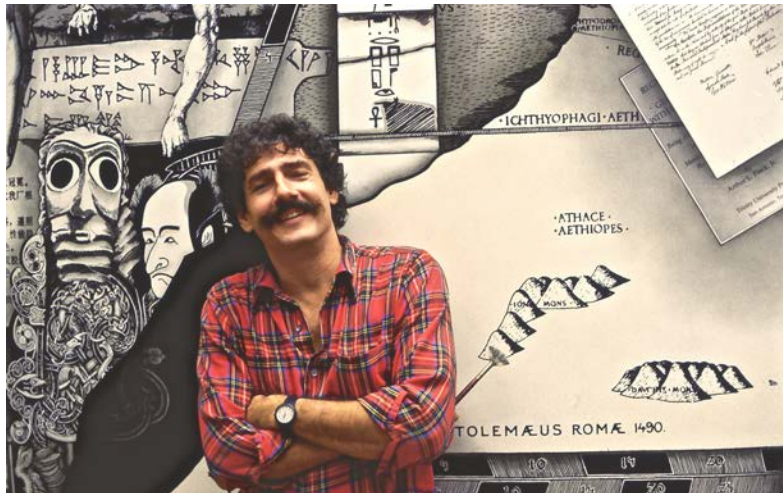
At the outset of the *Guide*, I said it would not be an interpretive guide. Yet there have been times I’ve offered comments which, to my mind, and in the context of the interviews, explained an image cluster as suggesting a Sicner “intention.” I wonder if these last few images offer us hints to James Sicner’s perspective into the evolution of the design of this complicated and stunning collage mural. Here we see:

1. The mathematical formula which unleashed atomic catastrophic power.
2. “The Word” beginning Creation.
3. Humankind perceived as ideal: rationally proportional to fundamental mathematic and geometric forms — and yet, in one instance, portrayed upside down.

This would not be the *last* instance where groups of images prompt interpretive curiosity. Return to the front of the mural, and begin this guided journey again — but this time look beyond and beside the images shown here. Remember, the images in this Guide were chosen, framed, and cropped through *my* eyes, background, and career, seasoned by James Sicner’s reflections. Now, from *your* unique age-time-space continuum, what else might these clustered images be speaking?

Enjoy!

PROGRESS PHOTOS



James Sicner c. 1979 Fig. 161



“ETERNAL VIGILANCE” Fig. 162



FEMALE WOMB ANATOMY Fig. 163



Fig. 164 (Note the Superman photo on the floor is one *not* used in final rendering)





Fig. 165. Sicner & Barbara Long at Medieval “R”



Fig. 166. Shadow-brush/shading applied at Medieval “R”

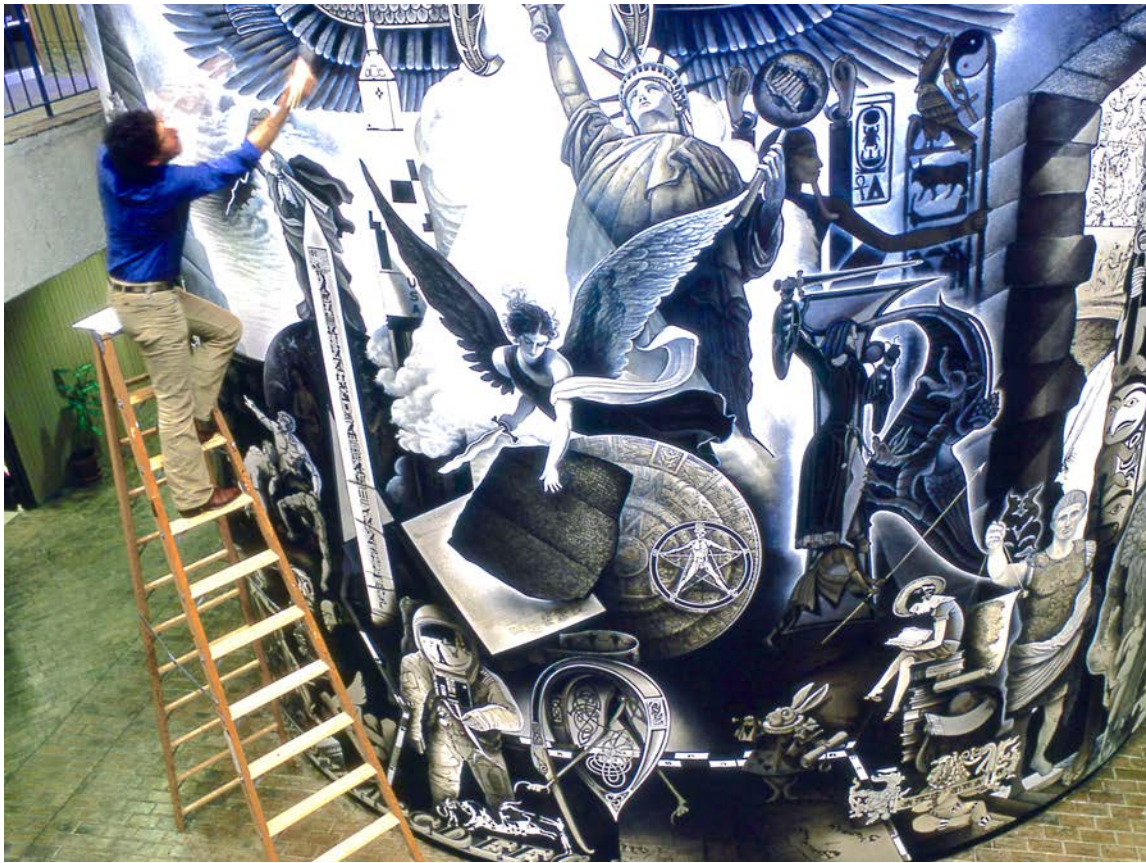


Fig. 167. James Sicner working at Front Wall



## BIOGRAPHY

James Sicner was born July 9, 1938 in LaGrange, Illinois, just outside Chicago, in a family active in the arts. He grew up in Denver, Colorado revealing a talent for collage artistry at the early age of eight. He studied art at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado (1960-61), and the National University of Mexico, in Mexico City (1962-63), and began showing in his 20's. As his sister Celeste Sicner-Hurd describes his early development, James' habit was to cut out images that interested him from *any* source and make multiple copies for immediate and future use, accumulating "many boxes of cut out things." Multiple copies allowed him to experiment with varied assemblies of a theme, at times over 30, as in a series of 12 collage works incorporating the Statue of Liberty. At times, he would also paint eight to 12 hours a day.

Over time, painting led to Sicner's collage hallmark feature: the shadow-brush technique modifying what could otherwise be an overly sharp-edged, two-dimensional feature of collage into a thought-provoking work with transparency and depth.

By the time of the Trinity University commission in 1977, he had shown in New York, Paris, Rome, Spoleto, Paris, London, Mexico City, and elsewhere, 34 shows in all, including group exhibits and joint projects with Juan O'Gorman, Vladimir Kaspé, Lance Wyman, José Luis Cuevas, and Pedro Friedeberg. He continued showing, six more times, even during the years he worked on the mural. When I asked "Why?" he replied that if a professional artist doesn't show every two years, they risk being forgotten.

Sicner also exhibited in five museums which purchased works, and had actually fulfilled two earlier, but smaller-scaled, mural commissions, c. 80 sq. ft., one at the Israel Sports Club, Mexico City, 1970, and an earlier work in 1968 for the architect Ricardo Legorreta's highly praised Camino Real Hotel, Mexico City. [See Appendix for a full list] The Trinity library mural was Sicner's magnum opus, the culmination in 1983 of a lifelong career dedicated to exploring the collage genre to its most sophisticated potential.

James Sicner was to die on May 27th, 1992, of AIDS-related complications.

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## EXHIBITS & COMMISSIONS

Galeria de Antonio Souza, Mexico City, 1966, 1968	Galeria Orlando, Los Angeles, 1966-67
Galeria de la Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico City, 1966	Heritage Gallery, Los Angeles, 1966, 1969-70, 1972, 1975
The Gallery, Denver, 1967	The Contemporaries Gallery, New York City, 1967
Instituto Frances de America Latina, Mexico City, 1968	Square Frames Gallery, Denver, 1968, 1972
19th Olympiad, Mexico City, 1968	Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, 1968
La Palapa Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida, 1969	Spoletto Festival of Two Worlds, Spoleto, Italy, 1969
Iris Clert Gallery, Paris, France, 1969	Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City, 1969-72
Galeria 88, Rome, 1969,	Galeria Avril, Mexico City, 1970-72, 1974-75
Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1970	David Gallery, Houston, 1970
Norma Clark Gallery, London, England, 1970	Tacoma Art Museum, 1972
Galerie Henriette Gomes, Paris, France, 1971, 1974	Museo Nacional de Anthropologia e Historia, Mexico City, 1973
Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs, California, 1973	Galerie Helliggejst, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1974-75
Edan Gallery, Acapulco, Mexico, 1974	American Bicentennial Collection, Law House, Washington, D.C., 1976
Indianapolis Museum of Modern Art, 1975 (purchase prize)	Central City Opera House Association, Central City, Colorado, 1978
American Bicentennial Collection, State Capitol Rotunda, Denver, 1977	

Print for Colorado Centennial, Colorado Council on the Arts and Humanities, 1976, 1978

### MURAL COMMISSIONS:

Industrial Club de Mexico, Camino Real Hotel, Mexico City, 1968  
Israel Sports Club, Mexico City, 1970  
Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, 1977-81

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Celeste Sicner-Hurd. Her insights into James Sicner's spiritual values, and her care for his health and reputation through the interviews, have been an unspoken force which has kept this project alive.

Gilbert Denman, Trinity Trustee and Ewing Halsell Foundation President, who assisted me in navigating the mural's contract files at the Foundation and sharing his recounting of the mural's origins, development, and tribulations.

My Trinity colleagues who enabled the core research to go forward: Peter Balbert, English Chair, William O. Walker, Dean of Humanities and Art, and Edward C. Roy, VP for Academic Affairs.

Barbara Long, a Sicner friend and Coates Librarian whose conversations reminded me, as she put it: that everything Sicner did "had a purpose," and to remember "there's humor in the work!"

Ronnie Swanner, Instructional Media Services Head for his assistance with lights, ladders, and tips for the photographs that now shape the Guide.

Margaret Stanley for her engaging radio interviews whose questions allowed James Sicner and myself to expand upon his thoughts regarding the mural's images and design.

### §

For their guidance in tracking down texts and documents from which mural images were taken:

Esther Chadwick, Print Curator, British museum.

Jenny Ramkalawon, Curator, Dept. of Prints and Drawings, British Museum.

Gwen Mayhew, Librarian for Instruction and Interlibrary services, Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY.

Sam Duncan, Head of Library and Archives, Amy Carter Museum of American Art. Fort Worth, TX.

Laura A. Foster, Director, and Laura Desmond, Curator and Educator, Fredric Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, NY.

Eric Chinn and Wanda Larson, Administrators of the Central City Opera House in Central City, Colorado and James Sicner's Opera Centennial Poster.

Kevin O'Sullivan, Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX.

Sheila Schwartz, Research & Archives Director, The Saul Steinberg Foundation

Michelle Yu Kregor, for her Asian deity insights and Chinese character translations

## APPENDIX 1: FIGURE SOURCES

Photos of mural items are by the author.

Figure sources are in the order of the items specifically treated in the *Guide*.

Sources that are “probable” are noted as such.

Some entries were identified or confirmed through internet searches.

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Fig. 1. Colorado Bicentennial Poster.**

- Author’s print. Gift of the artist. Copy at the University of Denver.

### FRONT WALL IMAGES

**Fig. 5.** • *A Coloring book of Tut-ankh-amun*. Cyril Aldred. Bellerophon Books. 1978

#### **Fig. 7. Descending Angel. Source**

- *History of England*. David Hume. Bowyer edition, 1803. Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

#### **Fig. 8. Engraved Stone: Rosetta Stone. Document Beneath Stone**

- May be seen via internet search of the British Museum Catalog: “Rosetta Stone.”
- “Declaration of Independence”: *The American Revolution: A Picture Source Book*. John Grafton. NY: Dover Press, 1975.

#### **Fig. 9. Circular Stone. s Aztec Calendar Stone**

- *American Indian Design and Decoration*. LeRoy H. Appleton. NY: Dover Publications, 1971.

#### **Figs. 10, 11, 12. To The Right . . .**

- Photo by author

##### **Yin-Yang**

- *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*. C.A.S. William’s NY: Dover Press, 1976.

##### **Boot: Mural Rendering Boot: NASA Photo**

- National Aeronautic and Space Administration publication: “NASA Facts. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Public Affairs Office, Houston, TX. No date, but title: “Manned Space Flight —The First Decade.”

#### **Fig. 13. Man Within a Circle. Man as Microcosm**

- *Symbols, Signs, and Signets*. Ernest Leher. NY: Dover Publications, 1950

#### **Fig. 14. Bird Figure. Illuminated Manuscript Letter “D.”**

- *A Medieval Alphabet to Illuminate*. San Francisco: Bellerophon Books, 1970.
- In the loose page from Bain’s book, the image is sourced as: “From the Collectio Cannonum, Hybergio North UMBERLAND, 8th Century, Cologne. Dombibliothek Mss.213. folio 4. verso.” In the Bellerophon book the source is treated differently: “From the Collection Canonum, Hiberno-Northumbrian, Cologne, Dombibliothek, MS.213, f 4v; 8th century

#### **Fig. 15. Beaded Belt with Figures. Onondaga Wampum Belt**

- *American Indian Design and Decoration*. Leroy Appleton. NY: Dover Publications, 1971.

#### **Fig. 16. Figure with Sword Overhead and Dragon. Letter “R”**



• *Celtic Art. The Methods of Construction.* George Bain. NY: Dover Press, 1973 or *A Medieval Alphabet to Illuminate.* San Francisco: Bellerophon Books, 1970.

**Fig. 17. Youths Leaping over Bulls. Bull Leaping Fresco**

• no source found. May be seen via internet search “Bull Leaping Fresco”

**Fig. 18. Young Girl Reading.**

• The Illustrations of Rockwell Kent, 231 Examples from Books, Magazines and Advertising Art. Fridolf Johnson and John F. H. Gorton. NY: Dover Press, 1976

**Fig. 19. Asian Elder**

• no source found.

**Fig. 20. Silhouette in Profile. Abraham Lincoln**

• An insurance company advertisement. Held by Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, in the Indiana State Museum.

**Fig. 21. White Rabbit. As Herald**

• *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* Lewis Carroll. John Tenniel illustration. From a large type edition, no information.

**Fig. 23. Figure and Obelisk. Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law**

• *The Doré Bible Illustrations by Gustave Doré. 241 Plates.* NY: Dover Publications, 1974

**Obelisk**

• no source found

**Fig. 24. Triad of Figures. The Climbers**

• *Prints and People, A Social History of Printed Pictures.* Hyatt A. Mayor. NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1971. Engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi, 1510.

**Fig. 25. Figures Behind Obelisk. Adam and Eve**

• *A History of Wood Engraving.* Douglas Percy Bliss. Spring Books. 1964

**Fig. 26. Rocket with USA behind Angel Wing. Saturn B1 Rocket**

• National Aeronautic and Space Administration publication: “NASA Facts. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Public Affairs Office, Houston, TX. No date, but title: “Manned Space Flight —The First Decade.”

**Fig. 27. Mask below Climbers. Sumerian Statue, Abu Temple, Tell Asmar**

• no source found. Internet search image.

**Fig. 28. Figure in Space Suit. Buzz Aldrin**

• *A Coloring Diary of Aircraft,* by Peter M. Spizzirri. Museum of Science and Industry Collection: Chicago, 1979

**Fig. 29. Kabuki Samuri Actor**

• no source found

**Fig. 30. Owl at Lower Left. Red Owl**

• no source found

**Fig. 31. Seated Girl Reading. The Reading Girl**

• no source found. May be seen at British Museum catalog: “*The Reading Girl!*” engraving by William Callio Roffe

**Figs. 32-34. Two Crucified Figure. Skeleton . Figure in Air.**

**Christ of St. John of the Cross**

• no source found

**Christ on the Cross with Three Angels**

• *The Complete Engravings, Etchings and Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer,* 2nd. ed. NY: Dover Press, 1972.

**Emblem of That Which Shall Awake the Dead [Skeleton] / The Christian Triumph [Figure in Air]**

- *The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality.* Edward Young. London: R.E. New Bond Street: London, 1797.

**Fig. 35. Radiant Light. Stepped Tower behind Christ Triumphant. Tower of Babel**

- *The Doré Bible Illustrations* by Gustave Doré. NY: Dover Publications, 1974

**Fig. 36. Woman in Crescent Moon. Virgin in Glory**

- *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer* Dr. Willi Kurth, ed. N.Y: Dover Press, 1963
- Boat Aground. Dove Below. The Dove Sent forth from the Ark**
- *The Doré Bible Illustrations* by Gustave Doré. NY: Dover Publications, 1974

**Fig. 37. Altar Figures. Mass of St. Gregory**

**Mass of St. Gregory**

- *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer.* Dr. Willi Kurth, ed. N.Y: Dover Press, 1963 Totem Poles. Lion and Column.

**Totem Poles**

- *Northwest Coast Indian Art.* Holm, Bill. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1965

**Fig. 38. Lion and Column**

- no source found

**Fig. 39-41. Thoughtful Angel and Cartoon Mouse with Letter M.**

**Melancholia**

- *The Complete Engravings, Etchings and Drypoint of Albrecht Dürer.* 2nd. ed. NY: Dover Press, 1972.

**Cartoon Mouse. Mickey Mouse**

- *ABC Character Color and Activity Book.* Walt Disney Productions. Racine Wisconsin: Whitman Book. Western Publishing, 1972.

**Fig. 42-43. Leaning Alphabet**

- *Florid and Unusual Alphabets: 109 Complete Alphabets.* J. Midolle, J. B. Silvestre. and others. NY: Dover, 1976.

**Fig. 44. Sphere and Signatures. Signatures of Seven Demons**

- possible: *Symbols, Signs, and Signets.* Ernst Leher. NY: Dover Publications, 1950. Section entitled: "Magic and Mystic — Magic Seals and Signatures."

**Fig. 45. Sphere and Plaque. Apollo 11 Plaque**

- probable: "Manned Space Flight — The First Decade" published by NASA,

**Fig. 46. Center-Right Section. Mural Photo**

**Fig. 47-50. Arch and Standing Figure**

- *The Prisons / Le Carceri.* Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Philip Hofer (Introduction), John Howe (Preface) Dover. NY: 1973

**Augustus of Prima Porta**

- probable: Vatican Museum catalog. Image available via internet search for "Augustus of Prima Porta."

**Chinese Buddha**

- no source found

**Vitark Mudra**

- no source found

**Silhouette. Mayan Head**

- *Symbols, Signs, and Signets.* Ernst Leher. Dover Publications, 1950. and/or Leroy H. Appleton's *American Indian Design and Decoration.* NY: Dover Publications, 1971.

**Fig. 51-53. Female Amid Waves Beside Supporting Arm. Eve**

- Engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi, based on the Raphael [Raffaello Sanzio], oil painting, the “*Temptation of Adam and Eve*,” c.1515.

**Antaeus. “Descent to the Last Circle.”**

- *The Doré Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy: 136 Plates by Gustave Dore*. NY: Dover Publications, 1976.

**Figs. 54-56. Shiva doing the Dance of Creation**

- no source found

**Map of Jerusalem**

- probable: *Ancient Maps of the Holy Land*, “with reproductions of 27 maps and views of the country.” Ziegler Thai Buddha

- no source found

**Elephant Headed Figure. Ganesha**

- no source found

**Fig. 57. Figure with Ten Arms. Durga**

- Highly probable. *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, by W.J. Wilkins [1973?]

**Fig. 58. Seven Headed Dragon or Hydra**

- *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*. N.Y: Dover Press, 1963. “The Woman of the Apocalypse and the Seven-headed Dragon.”

**Fig. 59. Figure with Protruding Tongue. Kali**

- Highly probable. *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*. W.J. Wilkins.[1973?]

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**BACK WALL IMAGES**

**Figs. 60-63. Rear Wall of the Mural. Staircase and Landing.**

**Left Side segment.**

**Central Segment**

**Right Side Segment**

**Figs. 64-68. Female Figures. Caryatids**

- no source found

**Wave. The Great Wave of Kanagawa**

- no source found

**Multiple Columns. Maximilian Triumphal Arch**

- possible. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Durer*, by Willi Kurth. N.Y: Dover Press, 1963

**Figure on the Wave. The Temptation of St. Anthony**

- probable. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Durer*, by Willi Kurth. N.Y: Dover Press, 1963

**Signatures on the Wave. FiPresidential Signatures**

- a document 1976, dated dated 1976, designed and printed by Mel Kline Art Service Binghamton, NY.

**Figs. 69. 70. Aircraft being Carried.Orbiter Space Shuttle**

**Early Aircraft. Flying Jenny**

- *A Coloring Diary of Aircraft*, by Peter M. Spizzirri. Museum of Science and Industry Collection: Chicago, 1979

**Fig. 71. Fertility Goddess. Inanna**

- no source found. Inanna image found via internet search

**Fig. 72. Orator with Speech Bubble. Marc Auréle Jeune, or “Young Marcus Aurelius.**

- no source found

**Fig. 73. Nude Female on Shell. Birth of Venus**

- no source found

**Fig. 74. Seated Figure. Moses.**

- no source found

**Female Archer**

- Probable source. *Women: A Pictorial Archive, from 19th Century Sources*, Jim Harter, NY: Dover Press, 1978.

**Fig. 75. Ship in Ice. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, plate 5: “It was wondrous cold.”**

- *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Gustave Doré, S.T. Coleridge. Dover Publications, 1970

**Fig. 76. Left Column. Bruegel image column**

- probable source: *The Graphic Worlds of Peter Bruegel the Elder*, ed. H. Arthur Klein, Dover Press, 1963.

**Fig. 77. Right Column. Doré image column**

- *The Doré Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy*: 136 Plates by Gustave Doré. NY: Dover Publications, 1976

**Figs. 78-80. Column of Images. Alphabet image column**

**Mother and Child.**

- *The Mother's Picture Alphabet*, ed. by Peter , Unabridged republication of the original 1862 edition. NY: Dover Press, 1974.

**Cartoon Ducks. Donald Duck. Cartoon Ducks Source.**

- *Walt Disney, ABC Character Color and Activity Book*, Walt Disney Productions. Racine Wisconsin: Whitman Book. Western Publishing, 1972.

**Fig. 81. Figure Astride a Ram. Agni, the Hindu God of Fire**

- Highly probable. *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, by W.J. Wilkins. Kessinger Publishing, LLC: Whitefish MT, 2004. [NOTE: many editions: 1882, 1900, 1904 etc.]

**Fig. 82. Book Covers and Title Pages.**

**Fig. 83. Currencies**

- *Money of the World* by Richard G. Dotty. NY: Ridge Press, Ross & Dunlap, 1978.

**American Gothic**

- no source found

**Fig. 84. Mask of Agamemnon**

- *The Home of the Heroes: the Aegean before the Greeks. Sinclair Hood*, NY: McGraw-Hill/Thames and Hudson, 1967

**Figs. 85-88. Cartoon Parade. Saul Steinberg. “Join or Die”**

- *The Inspector* by Saul Steinberg. Viking Press, Second Printing edition, 1973

**Fig. 89. Sicner at Work as Signature.**

- no source found

**Fig. 90. Cave Drawings. Hands and Bison**

- *The Rock Paintings of the Chumash*, Campbell Grant. UCAL Press: Berkeley, CA, 1965.

**Fig. 91. Erotic Designs. Indian Composite Erotic Elephant**

- no source found

**Fig. 92. Winged Lion with HeadGreek sphinx**

- no source found



**Fig. 93. Cartoons of Snakes cut into Pieces. Fig. Fig. 94. “Join or Die”**

• *The American Revolution: A Picture Source Book*, John Grafton. 400 copyright free illustrations battles, events, documents, people of the Revolution. NY: Dover Press, 1975.

**Fig. 94. Alamo for Sale A Bonanza for Sale**

• source not found. Advertisement in *San Antonio Light* newspaper c. 1876-83. copied from holdings in the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures.

**Fig. 95. Male and Female Figures Voyager Plaque**

• *Readers' Digest* (No date). The *Digest* summarizes *Murmurs of the Earth*, Random House, 1978, including an account from the *NY Times Magazine*, Dec. 4, 1977.

**Fig. 96. Start of Stairwell wall.**

**Figs. 97-98. Man on Pedestal. ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS THE PRICE OF LIBERTY**

• *The Illustrations of Rockwell Kent: 231 Examples from Books, Magazines and Advertising Art*. Fridolf Johnson, ed. NY: Dover Press, 1976

**Figs. 99-100. Figure Bearing Slab. Samson Carrying off the Gates**

• *Pen Drawing and Pen Draughtsmen: Their Work and their Methods*. Repub. of 1920 original DeCapo: N.Y., 1977.

**Figs. 101-102. Couple with Lute. Japanese Ladies**

• no sources found

**Fig. 103. Carved Monumental Heads. Mt. Rushmore National Memorial**

• From an advertisement for: Frank B. Hall, Ins. Services firm, located in Houston. No date.

**Fig. 104. Woman's Head. Guernica Head**

• no source found

**Fig. 105. Fallen Soldiers. The Trench**

• probable source: 100 peso Mexican bank note

**Figs. 106-107. Skulls in Hats. La Calavera Catrina**

• *Posada's Popular Mexican Prints*. 273 cuts, by José Guadalupe Posada. Berdicio, Roberto and Stanley Applebaum, eds. NY: Dover, 1972

**Fig. 108. Figure Holding Snakes. Etruscan Snake Goddess**

• no source found

**Fig. 109. Arabic Script within Circles. Great Calligraphic pane**

• no source found

**Fig. 110. Background Photo Array. Human Motion Study**

• probable source: *The Human Figure in Motion*, Eadweard Muybridge. Dover Press, 1955

**Fig. 111. Stylized Shakespeare and Globe Theater. BBC Shakespeare logo**

• no source found

**Fig. 112. Anatomical figure**

• *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius, of Brussels*. Saunders, John Bertrand DeCusance, and Charles O'Malley, eds. Univ. of Stanford, CA: Dover Publications, 1950.

**Fig. 113. Young Scholar**

• no source found

**Fig. 114. Central Stairwell.**

**Fig. 115. Characters in Flight. Superman and Lois Lane**

- probable source: *DC Comics Style Guide*, 1982

**Figs. 116-117. Globe with Extended Arm with Earth Superimposed. Hercules with Globe**

- loose photo of engraving by Johan Hauer, 1620, **Hercules with Globe**, based on a sculpture of the same name done by Christopher Jamnitzer and Jeremias Ritter, Nuremberg. 1618-1620.

**Earth photo from space**

- no source found

**Fig. 118. Anatomical Woman. Womb Rendering. Anatomical Woman/De formato foetu liber singularis.**

- no source found

**Fig. 119. Zen Poem. "Lightning." Sengai Gibon poem**

- no source found

**Fig. 120. She-Wolf Nursing two Boys. Capitoline Wolf**

- no source found

**Fig. 121. Capital Letters. Block capital letters**

- *Florid and Unusual Alphabets: 109 Complete Alphabets*, by J. Midolle, J.B. Silvestre, and Karl Klimsch. Dover Pictorial Archives. 1976

**Fig. 122. Plant illustrations**

- *Decorative Floral Engravings, 118 Plates from the 1696 Accurate description of terrestrial plants*. Abraham Munting. Dover Press, 1975

**Fig. 123. Column of Computer Generated Forms**

- no source found

**Fig. 124. Math Formulas**

- Prof. John Plapp

**Fig. 125. Emily Dickinson Poem: "I'm nobody. Who are you?"**

- no source found

**Fig. 126. Anti-Prelatical Tracts**

- no source found

**Figs. 127- 130. San Ildefonso Pueblo Pot/ Zia PuebloPot. Mural and Sources**

- *American Indian Design and Decoration*. LeRoy H. Appleton, NY: Dover Publications, 1971.

**Figs. 131-133. High Upper Background Snowflakes**

- *Designs for Coloring: 3*. Ruth Heller, Gross & Dunlap, 1977.

**Fig. 134. Central Rear Wall. Stairwell Landing**

**Figs. 135-136. Hydrogen Bomb Cloud and Source**

- *Newsweek* magazine, June 22, 1981, "Special Report: And the Nuclear Race Goes On."

**Figs. 137-138. Large Ring and Large Horse. Large Horse Source. "The Big Horse of King Ashurbanipal"**

- *The Ancient Near East Coloring Book* by Nancy Conkle, Santa Barbara, CA: Bellerophon Books, 1968.

**Fig. 139. Architectural Perspective. #23**

- *Perspective*, A reproduction of the 1604-1605 edition, 73 plates, Jan Vredeman De Vries, NY: Dover Press, 1968.

**Figs. 140, 142. Reclining Figure. Maya Chac-Mool**

- probable source: National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, Mexico. [brochure/catalog/card?]

**Fig. 141. Skeletons on Horseback and Bicycle. Calavera of Don Quixote**

- *Posada's Popular Mexican Prints*. 273 cuts, by José Guadalupe Posada. Berdicio, Roberto and Stanley Applebaum, eds. NY: Dover, 1972

**Fig. 143. Public Square and Standing Stones as Black Silhouette.  
Piazza San Marco**

- no source found

**Fig. 144. Robert Houze.**

- no source found

**Fig. 145. Standing Stones as Black Silhouette. Stonehenge**

- An advertisement for Oleanus Ceramic Tile, page from a magazine of remodeling materials. No title or date available.

**Fig. 146. Figures Pointing. Bayeux Tapestry**

- no source found

**Fig. 147. Stamps**

- no source found

**Fig. 148. Laocoon and His Sons**

- Probable source: Hyatt A. Mayor, *Prints and People, A Social History of Printed Pictures*,. NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1971.

**Figs. 149,150. Horseman. Horseman Source. "In a Canyon of the Coeur D'Alene."**

- "The Ranchman's Rifle on Crag and Prairie," written by Theodore Roosevelt. It appeared in The Century, Vol. 0036, Issue 2 (June 1888).

**Fig. 151. Song Sheets . . . Woman in Frame. Obese Male. Ali Baba & Lysistrata**

- *The Later Work of Aubrey Beardsley, 174 plates*. John Lane. Dover Press, 1967

**Mother and Child**

- *Women: A Pictorial Archive, from 19th Century Sources*. Jim Harter. NY: Dover Press, 1978.

**Fig. 152. Crossed Totem Poles. Totem Poles**

- *Northwest Coast Indian Art*. Bill Holm, Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1965

**Fig. 153. Musicians and Print Shop. "Flute Player is sitting on the Shoulders of a Drummer."**

- no working source found. Found via internet search for "16th century flute and drum player."

**Printshop Workers**

- no working source found. Found via internet search for "renaissance printshop images."

**Figs. 154, 155. Stylized Serpent-God and Source.**

- *American Indian Design and Decoration*. LeRoy H. Appleton. NY: Dover Publications, 1971.

**Fig. 156. Stylized Serpent-God Front View. Upper Stairwell Edge.**

**Figs. 157-160 Upper Stairwell End.**

**Men in Circles. Vitruvian Man**

- *Time-Life Portfolio of Art* advertisement. No date

**Portrait with E=MC<sup>2</sup>**

- no source found

**Chinese Characters**

- no source found

**Hebrew Script. "Bereshit"**

**Figs. 161-167. Sicner Progress Photos.**

- Found among James Sicner's materials

## APPENDIX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY

The works listed below are items and books found in James Sicner's home at the time of the 1991 interviews which inform the Guide. Sicner also maintained a studio in Houston, Texas which I did not access. Celeste Sicner-Hurd remarked that James spent at least a year compiling other materials in the interim period of the library's construction, confident that many more mural related documents resided in the Houston studio. The works found in Denver can be characterized as:

### ITEMS

1. Photocopies of engravings, photographs, and woodcuts.
2. Pages taken from absent books or magazines and had identifying information.

### BOOKS

Complete texts from which illustrations were copied or cut for later photographic enlargement.

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### ITEMS

These are listed as found among boxes in the Sicner basement in 1991 and roughly noted.

- 12 Illustrations of pottery. Notes to blow up them up to 14" in width. across each pot: Nekoosa, Zia, Zuni, Laguna, Santa Domingo, San Ildefonso, Acoma, [Taken from: Appleton, LeRoy H. American Indian Design and Decoration. NY: Dover ]
- Publications, 1971. "For Sale" advertisement of Alamo Mission site copied from The University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, which advertisement appeared in San Antonio Light newspaper.
- Mt Rushmore pictures. From an advertisement for a company: Frank B. Hall, Ins. Services firm, located in Houston. No date.
- Hydrogen bomb test picture by the French. From an article "Special Report: And the Nuclear Race Goes on." Newsweek, June 22, 1981
- An Illustration of Hercules carrying global earth as engraved by Johan Hauer, 1620.
- Photocopy of a Table of the Census taken in 1790 after the Constitution was ratified in 1788.
- Photocopies of steam engines, the Burlington route, the Zephyr. [Dover/ Bellerophon coloring book?]
- A printers device/herald/trademark, looks like a caduceus, with two hands out of clouds holding it at the bottom. Johan Froben. 1516
- Another caduceus with two crowned snakes, and dove above.
- A printers device/herald/trademark. The Aldus Anchor with a Dolphin, 1502.
- Mexican revolutionary with sombrero, rifle, bandoleers, labeled Calavera "Revolutionaria."
- Photocopy. Khan, Hazrat Inayat. "The Divinity of Art," in *Purpose of Life*. No publishing data.
- Photocopy. "Pythagoras and Christianity." No publishing data.
- Pamphlet. "A History of Military Actions against the Communist Rebellion during 1930-45." Military History Bureau. Oct, 1967, Cheng-eng-wen. Taiwan, Rep.of China



- Large Dürer illustration: “Mary Magdalene Repentant.”  
Magdalene
- Card in German. Photo of an art work entitled: “Joseph and his Brothers.” an 1816/17 fresco painting by Peter von Cornelius.
- An engraving dated June, 1796, by H. Hower Historical Gallery, Pall Mall, T. Holloway, Sculptor, probably the engraver: on side: “R. Smirke. R. A. Prints. No title. An angel reaching down with its left hand, holding the arm of a shrouded figure holding a torch about to burn of crown, scepter, icons of power.
- Photocopy. A bent-over stork: with walking legs:“D” is for ‘disentangle.’ Labeled: “From the Collectio Cannonum, Hybergio North UMBERLAND, 8th Century, Cologne. Dombibliothek Mss.213. folio 4. verso.”
- Photocopy. A figure with a sword fighting a dragon, the letter “R.” Labeled: “From St. Gregory Moralia in Job, from the Abbey of Ciütiaux Dijon, bibliotec municipale, mss. 168 folio, 4verso, 12th c.”
- An engraving by W. Roffe, from “The Statue,” by P. Magni. The “Reading Girl.”
- Photocopy. A lion carrying a column. “The printers mark by an unknown master from the shop of Crafft-Miller, Strasburg, 1537.”
- Copy of the Constitution. From parchment copy, has orange tones. No source of the reproduction. In “authentic’ style.” Library of Congress, gift shop.
- A child-size Halloween skeleton, foldable limbs. Possible model for skeletons in the mural.
- Copy of Christ in the air. Apr. 8.5”x11”. No attribution on the copy. [Probable source: “The Christian Triumph” by William Blake, pub. 1797 by R.E. Edwards, New Bond Street]
- Leonardo DaVinci’s Vitruvian Man. Tilted perspective. Time-Life Portfolio of Art advertisement (no date).
- Loose page. Man with spear, leading a horse. On reverse: Phoenician images of sailors in a ship, rowing. [Probable source a Dover or Bellerophon coloring book]
- Photocopy of “The Expulsion from Paradise,” a painting in the Brancacci Chapel, by Masaccio. Captioned in German.
- Document. Signatures of the presidents in black and, underneath, their names typed in blue. Begins with Washington and ends with Jimmy Carter. Apr. 18” x 20” in four columns separated by small red stars. Mel Kline Art Service. Binghamton: NY, 1976.
- Illustration. Japanese or Chinese women, one looking up, one doing calligraphy. No title or attribution.
- Photo-copy of The Magna Carta. Apparently a souvenir version of the document. Apr. 20”x20.” From “The archives of the Cathedral in Lincolnshire.” No date.
- Page a periodical. Contains: James Sicner: “Collage and Assemblage,” The Mississippi Museum of Art, Sept.17th-Nov. 15th, 1981. Pg. 25 of the catalogue.
- Stonehenge silhouette from an advertisement for American Oleanus Ceramic Tile. The Stonehenge silhouette is at the top 1/3rd of the page. No publication source or date.
- Photocopy of “The Christian Triumph,” by William Blake. by R.E. Edwards. London: New Bond Street, 1797.
- An illustration. “The Piranesi Arch.” On the back of the print: “Carcere, with a view through an arch toward a bridge with a sculptured frieze, below a colonnade reminiscent of St. Peter’s Square in Rome.” Plate #4. Size: c 8.5” x 14.”
- An illustration. “Christ of St. John of the Cross.” Salvador. Apr. 14” x 18.”

- Illustrations of birds. Painted by Alexander Wilson. Engraved by an A. Lawson.
  - #1. Whippoorwill, in male and female renditions
  - #2. Red owl
  - #3. Warbling flycatcher
  - #4. Snow Owl
- Ten loose pages of Saul Steinberg cartoon panels. Parade theme, “Join or Die” motif.
- Illustration of the John Tenniel's drawing of the White Rabbit dressed as a Herald. From a very large type edition of *Alice in Wonderland*, probably page 55. There is text on the back, p.56., re. “The Queen of Hearts she made some tarts ...” No date.
- Illustration of skeletal figure by Blake, with angel trumpet at skeletal head. From *Night Thoughts*, “Night the Second,” by Edward Young. London: R.E. Edwards, New Bond Street: London, 1797.
- Photocopy of Doré's engraving re. Antaeus, “Descent to the Last Circle,” from *The Inferno*, canto 31, verses 142-143. “But lightly in the abyss, which swallows up—Judas with Lucifer, He put us down.”
- Photocopy of Christ on the Cross from the Dover book of *The Complete Engravings of Dürer*.
- Doré engraving of Noah's Ark. Labeled: “The Dove Sent forth from the Ark,” Genesis 8, ch. 11: “And the dove came into him in the evening and lo! In her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off. So Noah knew the waters were abated off the earth.”
- Article from *Readers' Digest*. No date visible. An account from the NY Times Magazine, Dec. 4, 1977, referencing *Murmurs of the Earth*. Random House, 1978.
- Photocopy. From the Dürer book of engravings. The engraving is dated 1511, and it's entitled: “The Mass of St. Gregory.”
- Photocopy of Astronaut Neil Armstrong' footprint left on the moon, July 16-24, 1969. No source indicated.
- Hydra figure beast. A Dürer engraving from a book called “The Revelations of St. John.” Labeled: “The Woman Clothed with the Sun and the Seven Headed Dragon.” Based on Revelations 12, verses 1 through 16.
- Book page. A Kabuki actor. No indication of the artist, or date, or the source. Pages 17,18 which appear to have been turned horizontally. The actor is in the center of three different renditions of warrior actors.
- Copy of the Virgin Mary sitting in a crescent moon. Albrecht Dürer, title page to the book called *The Life of the Virgin*. Image titled known as “The Virgin in Glory.” 1511.
- Single copy of Mickey Mouse pushing the “M.” From Disney, Walt. *ABC Character Color and Activity Book*. Walt Disney Productions. Racine Wisconsin: Whitman Book. Western Publishing, 1972.
- Copy of Doré's Tower of Babel, from *The Doré Bible Illustrations* by Gustave Doré. NY: Dover Publications, 1974
- Copy. Saturn 1B rocket with “USA” down the side. A NASA publication, Houston, TX. called “NASA Facts. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Public Affairs Office, Houston, TX. No date, but title: “Manned Space Flight —The First Decade.”
- A Doré print. “The Egyptians Urge Moses to Depart” with Moses standing before a series of columns which have a rather bulbous top and four major ones recede into the background.
- An Illustration. Title says: “Woodcut from the Bible in French, French School. 1498. Adam and Eve in a circular frame, and quite slim. Attractive mermaid-like spent in the tree between them. Set in a peaceable kingdom setting.
- Photocopy of the Rosetta Stone. 8.5” x 11.” Not sharp. No source indicated

- Illustrations. Two medallions with Arabic script identified as residing in the Great Mosque, Hagia Sophia. No source indicated.
- Illustration. “The Climbers in the Battle of Piza,” an engraving by Mark Antonio Rainondi, after Michelangelo, 1510. No source.
- Large coloring book page, with photograph and negative of Superman, saying: “To the West Coast, up, up, and away.” [Not in mural]
- Illustration. Magazine page. [Old Saturday Review?] Silhouette of Abraham Lincoln’s portrait, done in the text of Gettysburg Address. Creator, date and place not indicated. [Now held by Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection., Indiana State Museum.]
- Photocopy. Set of three fallen soldiers by Orozco, titled “In the Trench.” No faces seen. Seems to have been copied from a Mexican bank note.
- Illustrations from Doré’s *Idylls of the King* by Alfred Tennyson. a. Gloomy Skirts of Celadon, the Forest; b. Merlin and Arthur; c. The Shipwreck., d. Merlin in his Cave; e. A Battle Scene with people escaping over a log; f. man & woman in forest; g. “The Dawn of Love from Guinevere, h. from Piza Guinevere the “Moonlight Ride; i. King Arthur knights j. parting from Guinevere.

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## BOOKS

*The Coloring Book of Ancient Egypt*, Bellerophon Books, Santa Barbara, CA. 1970. [No author/editor attribution]

*Antique, Decorative, and Ornamental Alphabets*. “Alphabets to express every artistic mood and purpose. Rare curious and decorative from early and contemporary sources.” William Penn Publishing Corp: Philadelphia, 1955. [No author/editor attribution]

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- Gillon, Edmund V. Jr. ed. *Cartouches and Decorative Small Frames: 396 Examples from the Renaissance to Art Deco*. NY: Dover Archival Series, 1975.
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## About the Author



Karl Kregor is a retired professor of English and Humanities with degrees from Queen's College, City of New York and Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. He taught English Renaissance literature classes and team-taught in Humanities programs at SUNY, New Paltz, NY, and then Trinity University, San Antonio, TX from 1968 to 1993.

Karl and his wife Ellen moved to Santa Fe, NM in 1995, where he became active in RENESAN, a life-long learning program in 1997 and has been an administrator, lecturer and discussion leader for many years. A lecture on the history of Collage and the James Sicner mural in 2017 became the spur to revisit the primary materials at the heart of this Guide.