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IMAGES AS TOOLS OF SOCIAL CONTROL :
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRODUCTION OF IDENTITIES
IN CONTEMPORARY MASS-CULTURE

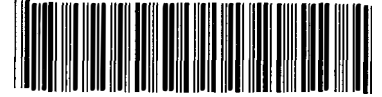
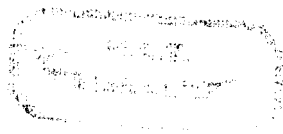
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1. INTRODUCTION

The multi-media paintings and works on paper which form the basis of my work are in essence an attempt to subvert the production of identities in contemporary mass-culture.

In employing the term "mass-culture" I wish to refer to a network of interlinked forms which dominate contemporary existence. The mass-media are commonly cited as the major players with respect to mass-culture, entrenching commodity-fetishism and systems of stereotypes which play a vital role in determining social norms.

These "stereotypes" are continually being adapted in order to facilitate the illusion of being new, relevant and fashionable. At the same time this process encourages an insatiable appetite for new images and fashions, to the extent that culture and fashion converge.

Despite the fact that these mass-cultural stereotypes appear to be in a constant state of flux, it is important to realise that the vast majority of these changes are changes in appearance alone. The mind-sets behind the masks remain largely unchanged, as too do the aspirations and fears these images embody.

In a mass-culture obsessed with surface value and novelty, these stereotypical images assume an almost iconic value. The cult of the commodity is not simply about tangible products, but extends to include images themselves as vital commodities.

It is within this framework that I have attempted to produce paintings which parody the effusion of images which act as exemplars and determinants of individual identities. The completed works are in essence mock-celebrations of mass-cultural stereotypes. The aspirations and fears which these stereotypes entrench are simultaneously venerated and negated through humorous inversions which rely on absurd excesses and an ironic iconolatry.

In producing practical responses to an analysis of contemporary forms of social control I attempted to bring a sense of irreverent playfulness to an area of study dominated by austere pessimism.

My intention was to produce works which acknowledge the omnipotence of social controls, yet also suggest ways of subverting them. I did not want to produce paintings which offer up some illusion of remaining untouched by social controls. Instead I worked from a position of acknowledging both my vulnerability to such controls as well as my (and others) ability to question them.

In this way I am using my own particular identity as a starting point from which to examine the ways in which images and symbols assist in the production of human identities.

I accept that my own particular identity is subject to the fixed models on offer through the mass-media. Whether accepting or rejecting these models I am involved in a socialising process which links individuals across time and space. My intention was to celebrate the right to choose but also to be aware of the ways in which this freedom to choose is in many instances illusory, or at least severely limited.

2. THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

a) SOCIAL CONTROLS AND THE MASS-MEDIA

Sociologists' traditionally refer to three main exemplars of social control : Religion¹ (focusing on spiritual and moral concerns), Education² (concerned with the transferral of a particular and selective body of knowledge, and utilising particular linguistic, logical, and moral systems), and Law³ (empowered with the regulation of a societies actions through the establishment of taboo's and obligations, contractual systems, and the marginalisation and alienation of transgressors).

From the above it is clear that these three areas should not be seen as distinct and independent terrains, but as inter-dependent and symbiotically linked. It is also important to consider how these controls have infiltrated and utilised forms outside and beyond their traditional institutions, most noticeably, the mass media (particularly film, television, and the printed word). The mass media are of course controls of a different and more pervasive nature in themselves; encouraging selective consumption, procreation, war; and denying, or at least numbing the harsh effects of inequality and prejudice.

Greil Marcus quotes the Situationists⁴ belief that "in contemporary society, the whole body of technology - above all the means of so-called communication - is orientated towards the maximum passive isolation of individuals, towards their control by a direct and permanent relationship

1. Greil Marcus comments on the western, Christian model by explaining how the church "administered Europe by means of its monopoly over the meaning of life. The meaning of life was between the two poles of Original Sin, the fact of innate depravity, and the Resurrection, the promise of salvation. Both were principles of authority, for both signified that no-one's fate was one's own work" (Marcus 1990 : 296). For a greater part of its history the church

that only works in one direction. Orders to which one cannot reply are broadcast by every sort of leader" (Marcus 1990 : 408).

The Situationists, and Guy Debord in particular, also display an influence on the writings of Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard shares the Situationists concern with the mono-directional nature of the mass-media, the manner in which it talks to its audience without allowing for any response. A sense of interaction being simulated through the use of studio audiences, canned laughter, phone-ins, viewers polls, competitions, and so-on. Baudrillard focuses particular attention on television in stating that it "has precisely the effect of neutralising the lived and unique character of events which it relays, which it makes into a discontinuous message, signs interposable with others." (quoted in Gane 1991 : 50).

In this way the very structure of the mass-media is responsible for a situation in which little is done in terms of reflecting social conditions, and far more in terms of producing and manipulating them. This has important implications if one considers Jean Francois Lyotards assertion that "the question (overt or implied) now asked ... is no longer 'Is it true?' but 'What use is it?'. In the context of the mercantilisation of knowledge, more often than not this question is equivalent to : 'Is it saleable?'" (quoted in Nairne 1984 : 51). The issue then becomes; how can we (the controlling powers) entrench beliefs, morals, aspirations, and fears, which are conducive to the survival and growth of our hierarchies and systems, and profit from the process at the same time. The motivating factor for control becomes economic, rather than moral.

1. attempted, principally through the use of images, to entrench these notions in the minds and lives of the illiterate and unconverted. Georges Bataille believed that Christianity was largely responsible for depriving peoples' fascination with "recklessness, discharge, and upheaval," forcing them into insanity, crime, dream, perversion, war, and revolution" (Marcus 1990 : 394).

Whilst it may seem that these forms of control reflect certain common beliefs and social conditions, it should be realised that this exists only on a very superficial, generalised level, and is employed as a tactic to entice its audience, rather than as an aim or primary concern. In this way "human-interest" or documentary-type features seem to reflect certain commonly held notions of sympathy or contempt; though what they are actually doing is cueing in what are seen as acceptable attitudes and emotions (consider the use of background music, the language used to describe an event, the way images are framed, edited, and subtitled etc). In this way the media are responsible for producing the illusion of consensus among recipients. Mike Gane describes this as a "vast process of homogenisation as media relate across cultures and between themselves. This is the 'totalitarian' message of the consumer society" (Gane 1991 : 50). As Gane so clearly states, this process of homogenisation is clearly linked to commercial interests and their need for growing markets.

In the media, in courts of law, in classrooms, and in churches, the word "we" is frequently used to create a false sense of commonality and unity. Whilst it is acknowledged that "we" may disagree, the artificially constructed unity (through conditions of proposed normality, sanity, legality, and morality, which are implicit in the "we") serves to limit the scope and implications of these disagreements. It would be naive to assume that this exists purely in the interests of practicality and communication rather than control and economics.

The manufacturing of identities is a vital pivot in the all encompassing

2. Within the South African context the apartheid-based educational systems speak volumes about the manner in which education is used
3. Freud sees law as an embodiment of the "superego" with its origins in the Oedipus complex; it is "the expression of the strongest libidinal vicissitudes, irrational to the point of insanity".

to divide, condition and control.cult of the commodity. The encouragement to consume is but one aspect of the stereotyped images which litter our environments.

From billboard to television screen society is continually presented with images of what they may be. From career choices to personality traits these images are involved in a relentless commodification of the individual. In the same way products are packaged and marketed, so to are human individuals. Victor Burgin accurately describes the implications of this by stating that "... the common sense view, the one which just seems obvious, is that we are each born into the world as a little 'self' which is just as much simply there psychologically as it is physiologically - a little seed of individuality which over time sprouts to form the adult we eventually become; but psychoanalysis has built up a different picture : we become what we are only through the encounter, while growing up, with the multitude of representations of what we may become - the various positions that society allocates to us." (quoted in Nairne 1987 : 154).

An awareness of the way in which the very structures of the mass-media are responsible for dis-empowering the individual is essential, though not enough if we consider Victor Burgins statement. It is also vital to question and unfix the implications of particular images and their effects upon recipients.

Images which entrench stereotypical belief systems, desires and prejudices are able to be unfixed through irony and humour. In this way issues

3. Even if this were so, as may be the case, considered within the South African context, law has been transformed into a dispenser of state-issued controls (Eagleton 1990 : 121).

4. A group of French social theorists working in the 1960's

relating to gender, race, class and national identity are opened up to debate and stripped of fixed meanings.

This has important implications if one considers Susan Sontag's statement that "social change is replaced by a change in images. The freedom to consume a plurality of images and goods is equated with freedom itself" (quoted in Nairne 1987 : 19).

It is thus of vital importance to foster the freedom to question media images. In this way the illusory "freedom" which Sontag refers to is effectively challenged.

b) TRANSFORMING STANDARDISED IMAGES OF POWER AND SUBMISSION
: GENDER AND CLASS STEREOTYPES

From public statuary to images beamed to and from satellites that ring the earth, contemporary societies are continually bombarded with images which entrench gender and class stereotypes. These stereotypes are not simply ideal images, but carry with them encoded references to acceptable ways of thinking and behaving. These "acceptable ways" have been woven into the fabric of daily existence to the extent that they appear to be natural conditions, inherent in the genetic make-up of each individual.

Though I have decided to focus particular attention on stereotypes relating to gender and class these are by no means the only areas in which stereotyping occurs. I decided to focus particular (though not exclusive) attention on these stereotypes as I felt they encapsulated the most dominant and pervasive forms of identity production in contemporary mass-culture.

These stereotypes should not be seen as distinct from one another. Gender stereotypes often reinforce and draw on class stereotypes, and vice-versa. Notions of race and national identity are also frequently related to gender and class stereotypes; particularly in the context of South Africa and its apartheid policies. My intention was to show how gender and class stereotypes are able to co-opt the prejudices

associated with other forms of stereotyping. This has important implications in the post-apartheid South African environment where racial stereotypes are now openly being challenged and stigmatised. In this context it is vital that racial stereotypes are not simply transformed into class or gender stereotypes (where black people are no longer perceived as being inferior because of the colour of their skin, but because of their gender and/or perceived class).

i) GENDER

The categories of "male" and "female" have been driven to opposite poles of a complex system of binary oppositions. The mass-media largely encourage this polarising process, manufacturing and disseminating stereotyped images of men and women in order to seduce recipients into a hyper-real Utopia in which inequalities and imbalances are glossed over and transformed into eroticised power-games.

In advertising, these gender stereotypes are manipulated in order to imbue material products with an appeal they would not otherwise have. When a product is purchased the buyer is not only purchasing the product itself, but a system of images which are linked to it. These images in turn refer to socially entrenched norms and current fashions.

The fact that these images are produced largely by men has obvious results. The objectification and commodification of womens' bodies has spawned a wide number of financially lucrative industries. As Julie Burchill explains :

"Surgery and silicone, liposuction and lipstick, diet and dye - all the sleight of hand that carvery and cosmetics can manage make the modern Eve, occasionally with tragic results (Burchill 1992 : 27)."

However, in the last two decades men have been increasingly subject to the demands of the "body beautiful". Though in no way comparable to

the systematic objectification of womens bodies, men are under increasing pressure to conform to ideal images of masculinity.

It is possible to read this as a reaction to the growing androgyny of a generation seeking to move beyond stereotypical embodiments of male machismo and female subservience. Many would argue that the mass-media have simply co-opted androgyny, in the process transforming it into a fashionable (hence transient) curiosity.

This may well be the case, as an examination of mass-culture in the last decade of the twentieth century seems to indicate. Entrenched male stereotypes (from battlefield to parliament, boardroom to bedroom) display only minor cosmetic refinements. The New Man is simply the Old Man who has learned how to dress himself and fool women into believing he is a sensitive, caring individual.

The New Woman appears to be an equally superficial conceit. Still bound to the body as malleable sex-object, the New Woman is portrayed as independent, and strong-willed, yet vulnerable in ways only "weak" males are. The most frequent images of women are still based around her status as sex-object, servant and mother.

Though the artifice may have changed a million times, the ideal woman is still portrayed as some kind of latter day Madonna (the Madonna who gave birth to Jesus, not the Madonna who simulates sexual acts on stage). As such, the type of mind-set which thought up the idea of Original Sin

seems little different to the type which engineers today's gender stereotypes.

One of my principal aims was to subvert these image-based gender stereotypes; focusing particular attention on the division of labour and the fixing of characteristics and capabilities.

As Stephen Heath states : "... men and women are not simply given biologically; they are given in history and culture, in a social practice and representation that includes biological determinations, shaping and defining them in the process" (quoted in Nairne 1987 : 141).

What I have attempted to do in my practical work is to satirise some of these historical and cultural stereotypes, highlighting their artificial and "man-made" qualities.

ii) CLASS

The class stereotypes I refer to in my work are related to the division of labour and the divisions between popular (Low) culture and High culture. These stereotypes refer to specific social backgrounds in setting up conditions to both aspire to and avoid. In this way the divisions between upper, middle and working classes are entrenched and internalised. This leads to a situation where class divisions appear to be natural, hence the fact that individuals are frequently encouraged by media stereotyping to remain "true" or "loyal" to their respective classes.

These appeals to ones origins and/or social status are not always so explicit. The advertising media in particular lend a certain glamour and integrity to "knowing who you are"; something they are all too willing to do for us by connecting products, lifestyles, capabilities and characteristics to generalised class stereotypes.

My intention was to conflate references to different class stereotypes in order to reveal the artificial and pre-manufactured nature of such stereotypes.

My intention was not to pit different class stereotypes against one another, but to parody the very process of stereotyping by formulating deliberately absurd confluences of different class stereotypes.

c) FROM HIGH TO LOW : THE ALL-EMBRACING CULTURE OF STEREOTYPES

Within the multiplicity of concerns and forms which characterise much of late 20th century art-making practices, one salient feature seems to dominate. The divisions between High and Low, art and craft, masterpiece and commodity have been considerably challenged from a number of viewpoints.

Perhaps the greatest impetus to challenging Western cultural hegemony and established hierarchies was the advent of Dada and Marcel Duchamp's readymades. Distinctions between artwork, cultural artifact and the products of mass-consumerism have been constantly challenged ever since. Found objects and appropriations of mass-cultural forms and images are now largely accepted as viable options open to artists.

German artist Rosemarie Trockel has worked with a wide range of media (from knitting machines to oils), employing imagery ranging from common symbols (such as the hammer and sickle) to more naturalistic, figuratively-based imagery.

Trockel's Daddy's Striptease Room confronts notions of purity, morality and value. A large cardboard box with clear windows and marked "Daddy's Striptease Room" contains a model of a Gothic cathedral. Trockel creates a situation where the church is something potentially obscene, something created by and for male perversions. Trockel thus calls into question the authority of a system which, through Original Sin holds

women to be weak, unclean, and condemned to bear children in pain as punishment for the sins of Eve. In this way Trockel subverts the worship of an image largely admired and revered, calling into question its position within society, and its implications.

Eduardo Paolozzi is another who employs both High and Low media and subject matter to blur boundaries and reformulate acceptable methods of making art. In his mock-museum installations (such as those in the collection of Leeds University) he combines his own bronze sculptures with found-objects and non-Western artworks and artifacts, questioning the distinctions which arbiters of cultural authority draw between masterpiece and artifact⁵, in the process de-contextualising that which has been fixed, pinned down and stripped of all ambiguity (recalling the readymades of Duchamp).

The work of A. R. Penck (the pseudonym of German artist Ralf Winkler) combines symbols of a highly sinister and threatening nature (relating to nuclear power and Nazidom for example), with more playful, non-sensical imagery (such as cartoon-like creatures and imagery derived from computer games). Penck, like many of his contemporaries, displays a firm interest in the manner in which the subject within society is involved in the socialising process of both manipulating and being manipulated by, a diverse barrage of images and information. Ironically, this process is able to create both self-awareness and social order, individuality and conformity.

5. Such as the practices of Susan Vogel (Executive Director of New Yorks Centre for African Art), revealed in her statement that "masterpieces" are able to "transcend the limitations of time and place, to speak to us across time and culture ... a testament to the greatness of their creators" (Clifford 1988 : 203). Vogel uses her own, allegedly instinctual criteria to decide whether something is a "masterpiece" or a mere artifact.

As human subjects we all too easily forget the capacity of signs and symbols to affect deeply entrenched systems of belief and behaviour. With the growth of humanism and individualism in the West we have become increasingly deluded with regard to the nature of meaning and society, seeing ourselves as the source of all meaning and history.

American artist William Wegman uses banal, jokey elements in his photographic work (particularly in his photographs of his two pet dogs dressed in theatrical and fashionable costumes), creating deadpan, absurdist comments on the nature and construction of stereotypes.

Wegman uses traditional Fine-Art devices (particularly the conventions of portraiture) in conjunction with an interest in satirising mass-culture stereotypes (particularly relating to fashion and advertising). Wegman, like Trockel, displays a strong interest in tracing common stereotypes to possible sources in European High Culture. Wegman acknowledges the role of the mass-media in accelerating the pace of information relating to what one may be, but realises full well that these stereotypes existed in different forms long before the advent of the mass-media. As such, his interest in breaking down barriers between High and Low is the result of more than just a desire to employ different formal qualities.

Japanese artist Yasumasa Morimura, in his series of three paintings/photographs entitled Playing With Gods - Twilight, Night, and Dawn; presents garish and irreverent crucifixion scenes ; where Barbie Dolls fondle each other, tourists take snap-shots, and gold-painted people

with bizarre phallic extensions pose like fashion models. Morimura upsets the sacred and deliberately confronts ideals of good taste and serious, solemn art.

Morimura treats the crucifix no differently to the Barbie Doll, highlighting the manner in which stereotypes are set up as objects of fetishisation and consumption.

d) MULTIPLICITY VS AUTHENTICITY

It would be impossible to pin down one particular artist as an overriding influence since my work deliberately refers to a multiplicity of sources.

My interest in medieval and Russian icon painting reflects an appreciation of richly decorative techniques allied with an interest in the selective use of images and stylistic devices in order to propagate religious fervour and entrench particular belief systems and codes of social conduct.

This in turn led to an interest in medieval book covers and manuscript illustrations.

The covers of the Codex Aureus of Lindau and the Codes Aureus of St Emmeram (both from around 870 AD) are good examples of the type of work which drew my attention.

Both make use of large quantities of precious stones, ornate patterning and flat areas of gold. The highly light-reflective qualities of these materials and their associations with material wealth is an interesting foil to the biblical references found in the delicate relief work.

Allied with my interest in manuscript illustrations and book covers from the Medieval period is an interest in certain contemporary artists. Apart

from those mentioned in previous chapters I also looked at artists such as American Jonathan Borofsky. Borofsky's installations reveal an interest in combining seemingly incongruous elements (such as the head of a male clown mounted onto the body of a female ballerina), fusing images which belong at opposite poles of entrenched gender and class categorisations.

Pop artists such as Claes Oldenberg and Peter Blake exercised a strong influence on my interest in common commercial products and materials. Indeed many of the contemporary artists I studied owe a debt to European and American Pop Art. Jeff Koons and Lucas Samaras are two such artists who have benefited from the resurgence of interest in Pop. Their manipulations and/or reconstructions of banal kitsch objects such as domestic appliances and tourist souvenirs encouraged and informed my own interest in working with pre-manufactured objects.

American David Salle is another who is regarded as being firmly indebted to Pop. His stylistic multiplicity and use of jarring incongruities with respect to image -combinations acted as a stimulus to develop my technical skills and to focus carefully on the ways different images affect one another.

e) THE DOUBLE-LOGIC OF INTERDICTION

The implications of utilising museological elements led me to a study of early ethnographers such as Marcel Mauss (nephew and collaborator of Emile Durkheim, the theorist of the division of labour) and Georges Bataille. Mauss, along with Paul Rivet (creator of the Musee del Homme) and Lucien Levy-Bruhl, established the Institut d'Ethnologie (the first ethnographic institute in France) and remains infamous for his insistence that "taboos are made to be violated" (Clifford 1988 : 126).

Both Mauss and Batailles had strong links with the early surrealists, particularly Andre Breton⁶; and have even been referred to as "ethnographic surrealists" (Clifford 1988 : 126).

Bataille argued that murder and war are both generated by the interdiction on killing.

It was his view that cultural order includes both rule and transgression. For a system of controls to be seen to be working effectively, it is necessary for examples to be made, to convince the majority that the laws and norms which govern them are necessary and effective, and that there are people who make such controls necessary (the immoral, insane, deviant, criminal etc).

6. This connection was fascinatingly reflected in the Pompidou Centres 1991 exhibition of pieces from the collections Breton built up. These included Surrealist and Dada artworks, non-Western artworks, natural objects, scientific displays, and texts.

One of Batailles first published texts was based on Pre-Columbian Society, and focused on juxtapositions of the ugly and the beautiful in human sacrificial ceremonies, highlighting the violent and bloody deaths victims suffered in flower and garland decorated canals (Bataille is also known to have expressed a desire to witness public executions in Place de la Concorde).

Bataille worked vigorously on his theory of collective order based on the double logic of interdiction. In the 1920's and 1930's ethnographic and anthropological study (not yet firmly delineated social sciences with fixed methods and resource texts) was still able to serve as a form of subversive cultural criticism. Bataille and Mauss both rejected what they saw as closed systems of moral and aesthetic hierarchies, and sparked off a more widespread questioning of norms, embracing the non-absolute, mysterious, and paradoxical; reflecting the Dadaists fascination with the sublime and the vulgar, giving each equal significance.

Batailles concerns with the regenerative processes of disorder, collective transgression, and the vital irruptions of the sacred in day-to-day existence assume added significance if considered in the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the failure of the 1991 coup. In the installation work of Ukranian Ilya Kabakov (who like Paolozzi, has used museological and Dadaesque elements in his work), the viewer is directed to the desperate, almost futile nature of attempts to escape the mechanisms of control (consider The man who never threw anything away and The man who flew into space from his apartment).

Kabakov's work is filled with a wry, empathetic warmth which acknowledges the longing to escape an imperfect existence. His fictional characters (often seen only through their belongings, living-spaces, and/or inventions) are tragi-comic figures; absurd, perhaps even laughable, yet somehow inspiring and touching. My main interest in Kabakov however, is the manner in which he confronts the viewer with a dense network of images which convey the claustrophobic, oppressive nature of a society in which the operations and effects of social controls are oppressively harsh, and rigorously enforced.

3. CREATIVE PROCESSES AND EXPLICATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL WORKS

a) INTRODUCTION

Each painting in this series grew out of ideas developed through rough sketches and experimental work on paper. The completed paintings are never exact reproductions of these smaller works; but rather, variations on a theme. As such the paintings each evolved through a number of stages.

The completed paintings are built up through long processes of layering and re-layering; exploring compositional nuances and iconographic relationships. Mistakes are allowed for and even encouraged so as to prevent a purely illustrational re-scaling of smaller works.

The relatively large scale of the final works necessitated an ongoing re-structuring of ideas. In my view this process is a healthy one, encouraging a continuous re-assessment of the link between form and content.

A deliberate attempt was made to echo the iconographic diversity in formal terms. In this sense I deployed styles and techniques from a variety of sources, including art-historical and commercial. This was not done purely in the interests of eclecticism, but as a means of challenging the notion of a uniquely personal aesthetic and the autonomy of artworks. Beyond the obvious allusions to entrenched art-historical and commercial

image-making practices I attempted to produce paintings with a diversity of surface values and material qualities.

The processes involved in producing these included sculptural casting techniques (in resin, latex and plaster-of-paris), manipulations of found objects, cut-outs (masonite, ultraboard, aluminium sheeting and rubber), electric lighting and rotating turntables, fluorescent colour, sound, spring-mounted objects, and stencilled images.

In terms of painting techniques I wished to refer to both High and Low cultural archetypes. In this respect I made use of illusionistic modelling (manipulating tonal and colour values), painterly and textural surfaces (using enamels, acrylics, oils, inks, spraypaint, sand, polystyrene, cloth, liquid lead etc) superimposing and layering of imagery (using unbroken line, dotted line, stencils and templates), decorative design (using dot, line and shape) and graphic devices (flat colour, outline).

The found-objects and pre-fabricated materials include everything from radial-arm saw-blades to childrens toys. With each painting I selected certain objects and pre-fabricated materials (such as sequins and beads) in conjunction with a consideration of more painterly and graphic qualities. The collection of these objects and materials was built up over a long period of time and involved repeated visits to dumps, scrapyards, thrift-shops and novelty-shops.

After the first few paintings I developed an interest in combining various

elements of these objects and materials. The first results included the silver rabbit/Kewpie doll creatures (consisting of the body of a plastic Kewpie doll, the head of a plastic rabbit and two red beads as eyes).

The use of various cut-outs was employed in order to extend the painting into space and on occasion onto the floor. The effect of this is to confuse notions of real and illusory space and at the same time to break down the rigidity of the rectangular frame.

These movements in and out of space are echoed by the actual physical movement of certain elements. The most visible of which are the two components mounted on electric advertising turntables which slowly rotate. Unlike this electrically-powered movement, frequent use is made of spring-mounted components. A slight gust of air or the touch of a hand is enough to set these various components in motion. What these do is to encourage viewer participation, heightening the accessibility of the paintings themselves. This also reflects interestingly on the illusion of viewer-participation in television (brought about by phone-ins, competitions, canned laughter etc).

The notions of accessibility and viewer-participation are also reflected in the use of arcade or video-game effects and pictorial devices. The brightly coloured surfaces and graphically rendered components have much in common with such games, encouraging the viewer/participant to engage with the work.

The use of common mass-media images encourages further identification with the paintings, though this is simultaneously negated through the use of images which are conventionally seen as threatening. This dual notion of comfort/threat is a vital ingredient in many of the paintings, echoing the mass-media stereotypes which enforce notions of reward (for conforming to dominant social norms) and punishment (for transgressing dominant social norms).

My interest in stylistic multiplicity and the use of images drawn from a wide variety of sources is the result of two very specific concerns which are strongly linked.

The first entails the production of complex networks of images. By formulating these complex networks I hoped to mirror the almost schizophrenic nature of the contemporary mass-media, including as they do everything from idealised depictions of objects and people to images of famine, war and mass destruction. I attempted to isolate these contradictions within individual works so as to encourage the viewer to consider relationships between ideology and desire, or how ideological concerns are effectively glossed over and cosmeticised through the mass-media's appeals to artificially constructed desires (in the process ensuring its survival and health).

These networks of images often take the form of absurd juxtapositions and/or fusions in order to bring humour to issues, hopefully making them more approachable and less majestic in nature. Within a relatively static

framework, I am mimicking and satirising the operations and effects of the mass media by forming those networks of the serious and the banal, the delicate and the vulgar, the violent and the passive. As Greil Marcus points out, this is not without precedent, since the "formal juxtaposition of the evenings items -suggesting identifications between art and science, alchemy and housework, occultism and militarism, or a general vice-versa - is a TV version of what, when the man in the costume was brought onto the stage, was called dada" (Marcus 1990 : 238).

This reflects interestingly on the second factor which is an attempt to place myself within a contemporary framework which questions notions of authentic expression, originality, truth and representation. Allied with this is an awareness of artists' reliance on art history, the artificiality of style and the manner in which images are used to co-opt and subjugate both the image itself and peoples identifications with it.



- i) **Title:** If you can't fuck it, kill it
 Dimensions: 2,2m x 1,2m

This painting, the first completed in the series, serves as a logical entry-point into an overview of my work.

My interest in producing works which blur distinctions between European High Culture and contemporary mass-culture is visible in both the choice of imagery and the execution thereof. Allied with this is a transformation of images which are designed to assist in the manufacturing of consent and conformity within society.

The iconography consists of crucifixes, flying ducks, eagles, cowboys, dollar signs, dogs, aeroplanes, a man with a gun and a common two-fingered hand gesture.

The sacred and the profane are conjoined in an ironic celebration of stereotypical male heroism and defiance in the face of adversity.

The gun-toting figure which serves as focal-point of the lower panel is adapted from a typical mass-media image of urban violence. In order to subvert the sensationalistic manipulation of such images I submerged the figure in a decorative network of stencilled images and painterly effects. The layering of dogs, cowboys, eagles, aeroplanes and dollar signs gives the painting a feeling of playfulness and brash iconoclasm, though paradoxically are also suggestive of violence and aggression. All of these images are frequently manipulated in order to produce stereotypes of masculine heroics and bravery. My interest lay in subverting these stereotypes through deliberate excesses and subtle transmutations.

The flying ducks which fade out towards the top of the picture plane add an element of absurdity to the painting. As with the seven crucifixes along the top of the picture plane, these flying geese are cast in plaster-of-paris from plastic commercial moulds and then painted. Whereas crucifixes are generally perceived as symbols of Christianity, the geese

detail

are largely seen as simple domestic ornaments. However, in the context of this painting the crucifixes are used in a more overtly decorative manner than the geese, arranged as they are, neatly along the top of the picture plane in a horizontal line.

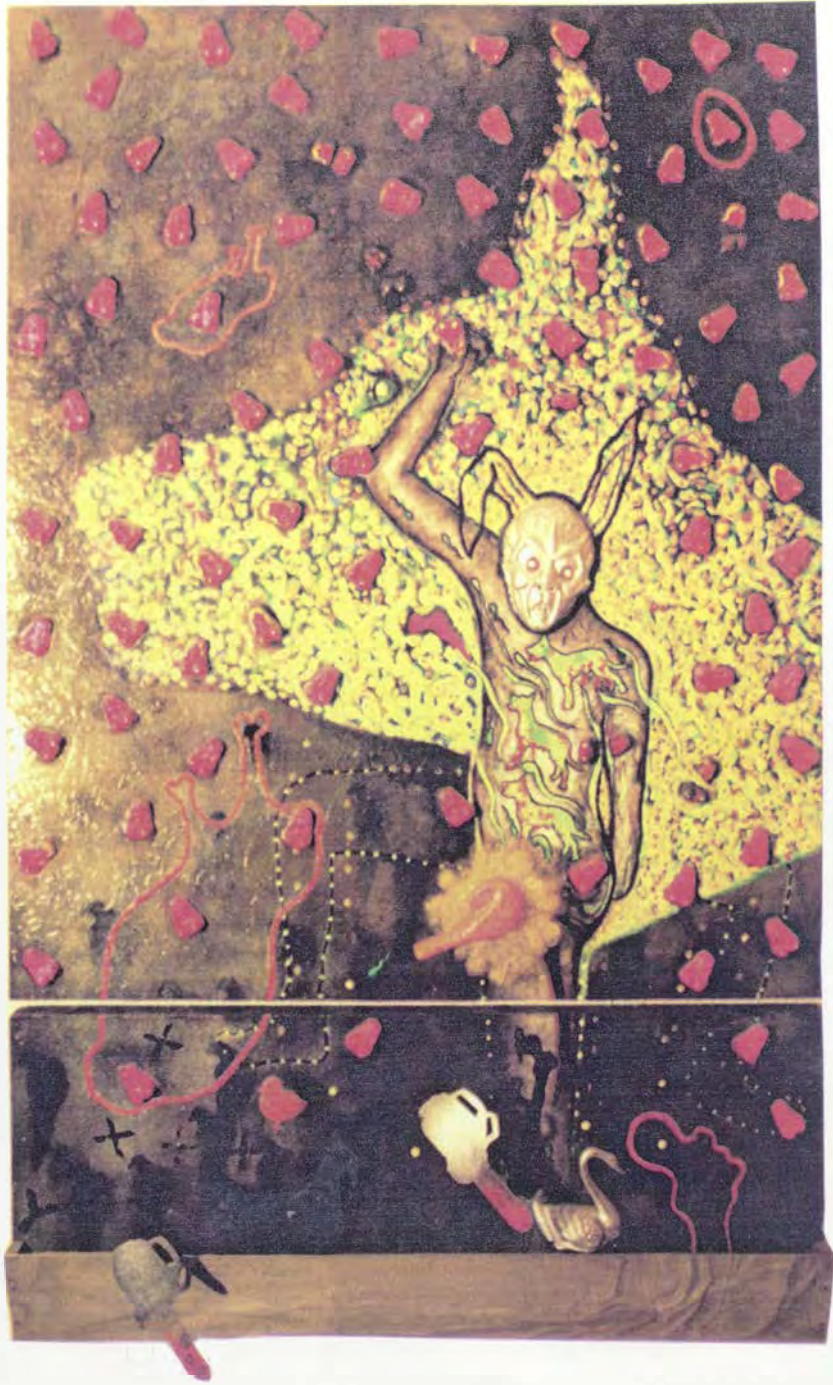
The geese are given a more animated presence. The differently scaled birds are placed carefully in order to suggest a swooping mass moving toward the top left-hand corner. The silver colouring (almost identical to the crucifixes) and the cracked qualities of the plaster-of-paris seem to subtly pull the geese back again towards mere ornament and object.

The formal language is relatively simple at this early stage. The painting techniques I chose to employ include painterly and tonal treatments offset against more decorative and graphic devices.

The use of texture (sand and acrylic paste), found-objects (toy soldiers embedded in the surface), plaster-of-paris casts and cut-outs (the hand) reveals an early interest in extending spatial relationships and bringing the picture plane further towards the viewer.

If you can't fuck it, kill it is an attempt to parody both the production of such male stereotypes and their effects on uncritical recipients. Man as killing machine and martyr is twisted on its axis to face the garish light of a global culture which spits out "live" wars in between advertisements for luxury motor vehicles and health-related products.

As an ironic celebration of macho bravura and control If you can't fuck it, kill it subverts fixed social hierarchies and the utilisation of images in entrenching social controls.



- ii) **Title:** Arcade of Beastly Delights
Dimensions: 2,2m x 1,2m

The second completed painting plays upon the notion of appetite, combining and confusing appetites for food, violence and sex.

I hoped to produce an absurdist parody of the commodification of sexuality and the manner in which sexual desires are both manufactured and stimulated in the mass-media. In this particular work I chose to focus on sexual stereotypes which suggest "raw animalistic desire" rather than "perfect romantic bliss".

A profile view of a dog's head (adapted from "Beware of the dog" signs) acts as a focal-point in the painting. This large pointy-eared creature is not immediately recognisable however. The surface treatment consists of a densely layered network of decorative and painterly effects intertwined with stencilled bones and sperm. The bright colours and decorative effects stand in harsh contrast to the more sombre tones which surround the dog's head.

Dotted over the dog's head and the rest of the painting are a large number of charicatured female busts (cast in plaster-of-paris from a novelty ice-cube tray and then painted fluorescent pink). These "buxom beauties" almost take on the appearance of fruit, fusing appetites for sex, sexual stereotypes, and food. The notion of women as fruit refers to a wide number of stereotypes from the present day all the way back to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Seemingly in front of the dog's head is the unusual form of a creature stabbing out into space with a fork (an actual fork attached to the picture surface). The body seems almost human though the head and ears suggest otherwise. The zombie-like head is cast in plaster-of-paris from a party-mask. The form was altered slightly by carving into the plaster-of-paris before it had dried completely. The cast was then painted with silver-aluminium paint and attached to the picture surface.



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large from the top and right are below the water.



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Superimposed in black line are rabbit-like ears which add another dimension to this zombie-like form. In addition a number of stencilled images (bones, sperm and dogs) are layered over the semi-illusionistically modelled body. The pubic region consists of bright yellow hair (from a novelty-shop wig) and a fluorescent orange coloured phallus (a plaster-of-paris cast of a rubber chicken leg; marketed as a dog's toy). This male figure acts as a parody of stereotyped masculine sexuality, pushing the "beast in every man" to absurdly literal extremes.

The lower panel is punctuated by stencilled cats and parrots, rubber chainsaw cut-outs mounted on springs, a wooden chicken cut-out, and a chrome-sprayed plastic swan. The connotations of each refer to entrenched sexual stereotypes and derogatory categorisations. The angled aluminium sheeting placed at the bottom of the lower panel serves as a "cat-walk" for these images and objects to parade across.

Seen as a whole *Arcade of Beastly Delights* is a work which revels in comical excesses, ironically venerating the co-option of sexual instincts and attendant stereotypes which dominate contemporary existence.



- iii) Title: Feelings ... nothing more than feelings
Dimensions: 2,2m x 1,2m

This painting ironically suggests certain stereotyped "inner feelings" through references to internal organs and sperm. Digestive, reproductive and coronary functions stand in place of "gut feelings", "warm feelings", and "heartfelt feelings" respectively.

A small mechanical music-box device plays The sound of music when wound, adding an absurdly incongruous effect to the work.

A large fluorescent pink small intestine (adapted from an anatomical illustration) dominates the central area of the painting. Positioned throughout the intestine are a number of spring-mounted fluorescent pink "chops" (adapted from a plastic dog toy) and a spring mounted clown-like face. A small musical note and arrow indicate the winding key of the music-box device mentioned above.

Apparently floating in space in front of the intestine is a semi-illusionistically rendered heart (based on a photograph of a plastic anatomical model). One of the veins leads downwards to a group of two figures.

Hunched over the dark, grittily textured reclining figure is a comically grotesque character with fangs and horns. Surrounding these two figures is a fragmented field of contrasting fluorescent coloured marks.

Rising out of this garishly coloured field is a hazily rendered male figure standing in a dustbin. A large diagrammatically rendered spermatozoa twists its way upwards over the intestine from in between the figures legs.

The human figures are barely recognisable in comparison to the graphic treatment applied to small-intestine, "chops", heart, and sperm. The lurid, comically grotesque characters also assume a more visible role (the clown-



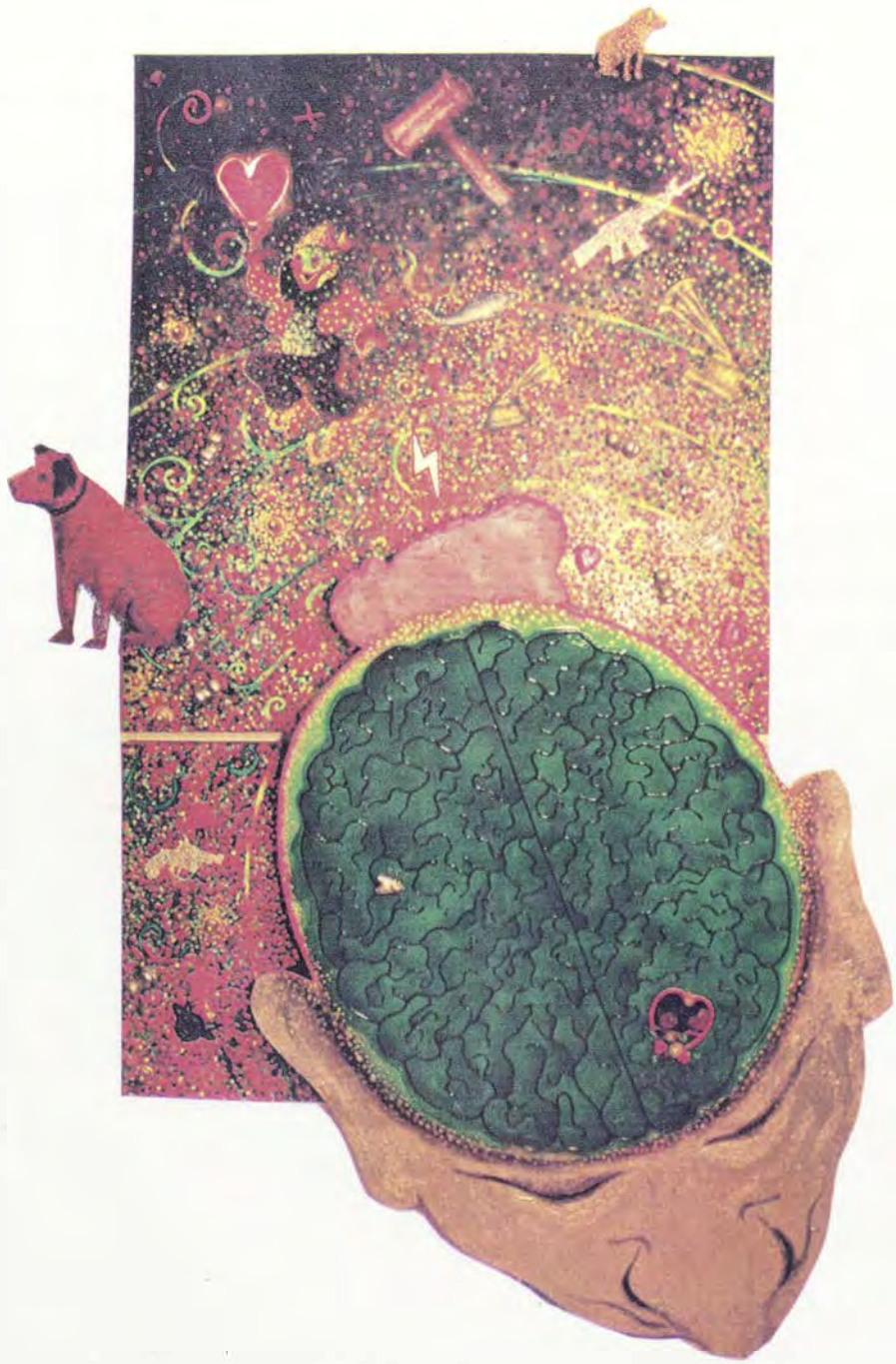
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face, the figure with fangs and horns, and the silver skull with fluorescent green wig situated towards the top left-hand area).

Two cut-out dogs leap in and out of the painting, leading the eye diagonally across the picture surface from bottom left to top right, and heightening the garish, playful atmosphere of the work.

The formal vocabulary includes combinations of cut-outs, casts, fluorescent colour and densely textured surfaces resonant of tactile sensibilities.

These fragmented and contradictory formal qualities enhance the play on "inner-feelings", linking formal and conceptual incongruities in a work which ironically celebrates the primacy of corporeal sensations.



- iv) Title: **The Opera on Planet Brain**
Dimensions: 2,2m x 1,2m

With the fifth painting I decided to parody the formularised dual theme of love and hate. The manipulation of stereotyped desires and prejudices through televisions soap-opera genre is perhaps one of the most transparent examples of mass-media forms which endlessly flood recipients with interlinked stereotypes of love (good) and hate (bad). The title of the painting ironically refers to Opera and not soap-opera, deliberately confusing High and Low.

The formal language employed in The Opera on Planet Brain is a conglomeration of approaches found in the first four paintings. A diversity of painting techniques are employed in conjunction with the use of liquid lead, cut-outs, casts (plaster-of-paris, resin and latex), altered found-objects, and electric lighting. Conventional painting materials such as oils and acrylics are combined with fluorescent paints, silver-aluminium paint and gold enamels.

The focal-point of the painting is a large cut-out in the shape of a human head. The head consists almost entirely of a diagrammatic brain, capped at the top by a baby lying on its stomach. The illustration I based this on is of the type used to illustrate to split between the right (visual) and left (verbal, analytical) hemispheres of the brain.

This particular brain, however, is transformed into a home to two artificial "love-birds" (set in a heart-shaped cut-out complete with plastic flowers) and a large silver fly. A series of flashing lights mounted behind the brain results in light flashes of different intensities and time-lengths across the main picture surface.

The areas surrounding the head/brain are infused with large numbers of multi-coloured dots, setting up a visually jarring backdrop to the painting. Layered over this backdrop are a variety of painted images, cast objects, found objects and cut-outs. These take the form of heart-

travels, drawing in his shape-like form, some grasping a fish, a sword, a staff, and some carrying a shield, holding a staff, a bow, a spear, a sword, and a shield, holding a staff, a bow, a spear, a sword, and a shield.

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symbols, crawling babies, gargoyle-like faces, guns, gramophones, a fish, a cowboy, a gavel, dogs, babies dummies, a stylised lightning bolt, a flying duck and a clown holding up a winged heart (the heart lit from behind).

Overt references to stereotyped romantic and procreational bliss are linked with images commonly associated with urban violence. Allied with these stereotyped symbols of love and hate are images which refer to obedience (the dog and gramophone derived from the His Masters Voice logo) and the order of law (the gavel).

In this way links are established between mass-media stereotypes of romantic love and mechanisms of social control which define how individuals ought, or ought not to structure their lives and their identities.

The "soul"-bearing clown (winged hearts are traditionally seen as symbols of Christ's soul in Christian iconography), the fish, and the gargoyle-like faces add an element of playful irreverence to the scene.

My hope was to produce a visually demanding work which transformed soap-opera melodramas into a carnival of gratuitous excesses; parodying and inverting the dual spectacle of love and hate.



- v) **Title:** **Orgy of the Censors : the missionary position on sinners**
- Dimensions:** 2,2m x 1,2m

The title of this work contains two word-plays which are of vital importance in unlocking possible meanings. An "orgy of the senses" is turned into an "orgy of the censors" in order to link censorship with visual and sexual freneticism (referring back to Batailles "double logic of interdiction"). In this way links are formed between censorship, religious zeal and sexual proclivity.

With these double-meanings in mind I set about producing a work which plays up these indeterminate qualities rather than seeking to clarify them.

I hoped to parody the moral authoritarianism of Western Christianity, satirically suggesting a link between the setting up of taboos and a fascination with transgression.

The uneasy focal-point of this painting rests on the oval-framed head of a stoney-faced woman. Her face is not derived from any particular source, but exists as an attempt to convey a sense of icy sternness, moral propriety and quasi-Victorian artifice. The scarlet coloured lips stand out clearly against the pale subdued tones of the skin. The nose appears sharp and angular, the eyes fixed into an uncompromising stare (though overlays of fluorescent colour suggest movement). The oval "frame" is surmounted by vine-like coils with artificial roses (one red, two silver) placed at intervals around the "frame".

The image of a dog and a woman dancing (adapted from a book on how to teach Great Danes obedience) occupies the top right-hand area. Parts of this image are superimposed over the oval-framed face, while others extend beyond the rectangular picture-frame in the form of cut-outs. A decorative system of curved lines and dots occupies the space inside these forms.

The lower part is dominated by the various subject forms. On the left
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the hand (which is not to be confused with the hand of the figure). The hand of the figure
and child (which is not to be confused with the hand of the figure) while
the child stands at this level.

The small, spiral-shaped, circular, of playing card system (out of
classical nature and placed on the fluorescent red background), set
as a symbol of love and passion, further emphasizing the
frivolous, playful feeling of the

detail

The end result is intended as a playful expression of moral order, under
the sacred and the profane in a manner which reveals the "deviant"
behind every mask of moral certitude.



The lower panel is dominated by two distinct cut-out forms. On the left-hand side the viewer is confronted by an unusual adaptation of the Virgin and Child motif. The Virgin is transformed into a luridly coloured cut-out, one breast a huge latex protrusion (produced by pouring latex over an inflated condom) and the other a minuscule babies dummy (mounted on a spring). The large latex "breast" is lit from inside with a strobe-light.

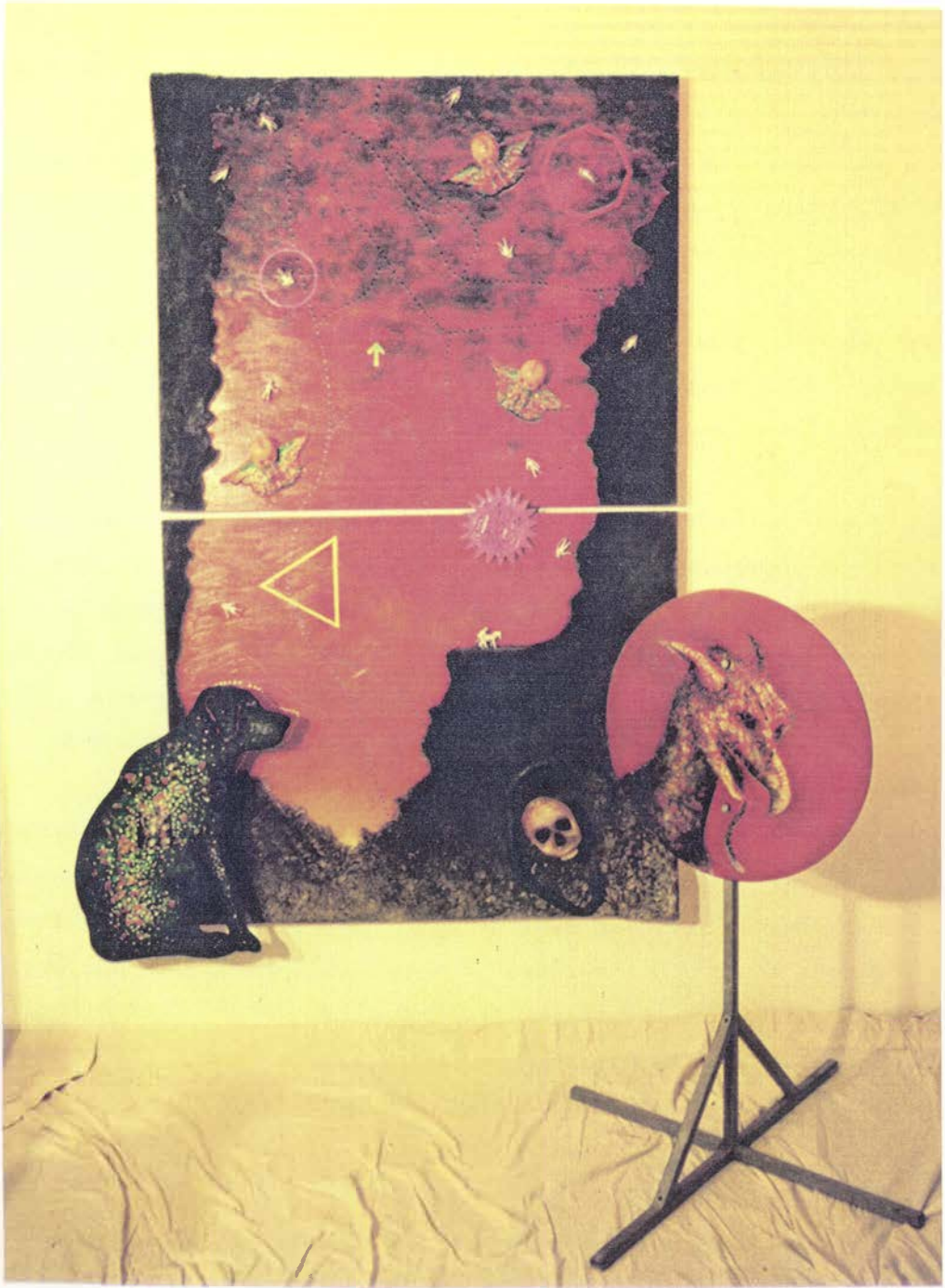
The "child", situated under the latex "breast", consists of the head of a plastic rabbit and the body of a "Kewpie Doll". The head and body are painted silver, and two red beads form the eyes.

The figure occupying the lower right hand area is loosely adapted from paintings depicting Bacchus (the Greek and Roman God of Wine) by Titian. The cut-out form is dominated by swirling fluorescent pink lines (reminiscent of contour lines on a map) and a large silver phallus projecting into space (a chrome-sprayed plastic cucumber). The head of this figure is another of the red-eyed plastic rabbit variety.

Standing separately in front of the painting is a cut-out female figure. The Victorian theme is further suggested by the elaborate corset (based on a fashion illustration from the Victorian era). Adapted from a silhouetted image of "Wonder Woman" this figure is no fey "Virgin" however. One arm is held aloft, a bunch of plastic grapes dangling from the hand (linking her to the Bacchanal figure). The second of the red-eyed rabbit/doll creatures appears to be holding her other hand, while the third stands at floor level.

The small spring-mounted cut-outs of playing card symbols (cut of aluminium sheeting and mounted on the fluorescent red background), act as symbols of leisure and gamesmanship, further entrenching the frivolous, playful feeling of the painting.

The end result is intended as a playful travesty of moral order, fusing the sacred and the profane in a manner which reveals the "deviant" behind every mask of moral certitude.



- vi) Title: Invaders of the Lost Ass
Dimensions: 2,2m x 1,2m

Intended as a parody of high tech heroics, Invaders of the Lost Ass plays high tech forms off cowboy anti-heroics and cliched images connecting sin, sex and death.

The formal vocabulary suggests a fusion of arcade game and tableau-like devices. Cut-outs, found objects, and plaster-of-paris casts are used in conjunction with contrasting painting techniques and textural qualities.

The dramatically silhouetted canyon setting (adapted from a 1970's Western movie poster) features a distinctly un-heroic meeting of man and nature, in this case a cowboy and an ass. In the richly coloured sky above, silver astronauts (some with pipe-like phallic extensions between their legs) hover around the superimposed form of a woman (adapted from a lingerie advertisement).

Geometric fluorescent coloured road-sign shapes are superimposed over the sky in different areas, echoing the free-standing road-sign (bearing the painted image of a fantastical, gargoyle-like creature) which is placed at a slight angle in front of the paintings right-hand side.

The sky is further punctuated by three angel/eagle creatures, a small fluorescent green arrow, and a stylised fluorescent pink "sun" with text. In this way icons of high tech heroics (the astronauts) are cast into a comic-nightmare of base sexual depravity, fantastical absurdities and incongruous superimpositions.

The dog in the lower left-hand area features a piece of electronic circuitry attached to its surface and submerged under thickly layered clear acrylic paste. A skull, a snake and numerous cheap fake gems occupy the lower right-hand area. The "gems" are highly light-reflective and create a visually sparkling effect when viewed from the correct position.

In this way stereotypical embodiments of greed, sin and death are linked to images of obedience, soft-erotica and high tech heroics. The astronauts are transformed into voyeurs and accomplices in this absurd spectacle. Idealised perceptions of technology and its supposed salvation of humankind are satirised through ironic inversions of Hollywood "adventurer" heroics and consumer demands for high-tech gadgetry and styles.



- vii) **Title:** **Attack of the Neighbourhood Surveillance Droids**
Dimensions: 2,2m x 1,2m

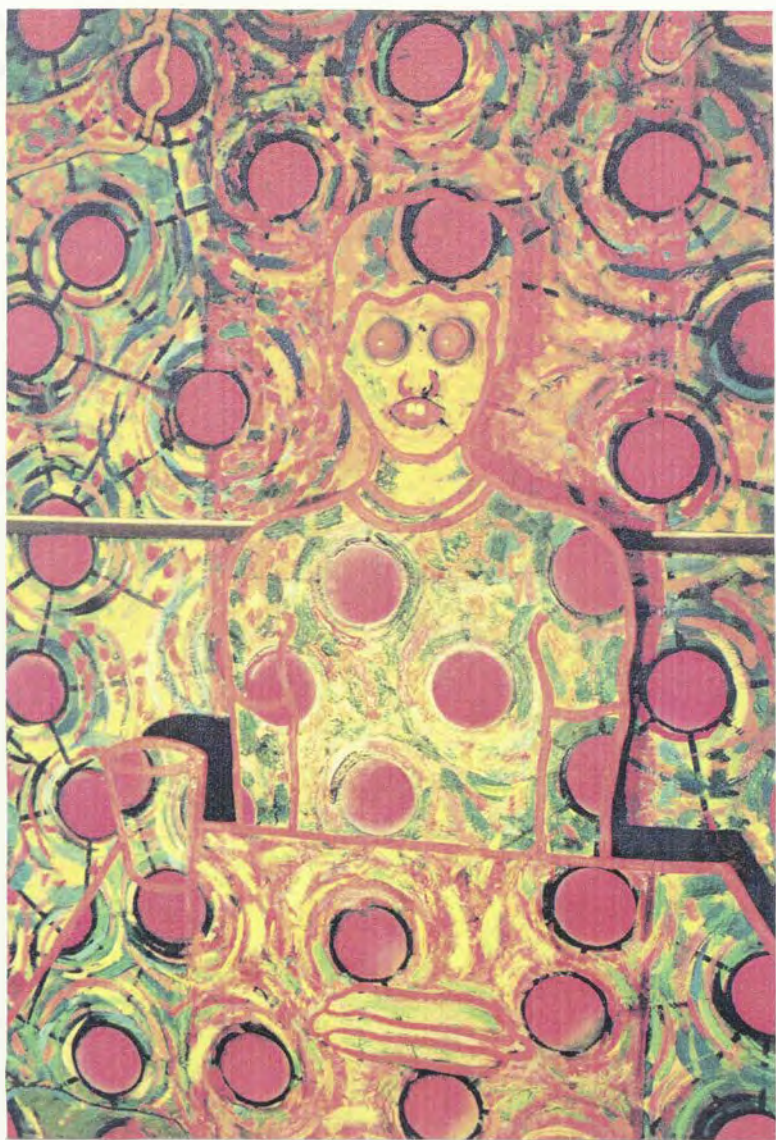
This painting is an attempt at producing an ironic advertisement of suburban paranoias concerning safety and the protection of the nuclear family unit.

A network of images is superimposed over a busy, garishly-coloured field of interconnected atom-like spheres. The neon-pink spherical forms clash strongly with the gestural and painterly strokes of greens, yellows and oranges in the surrounding areas. Though almost impossible to select a fixed focal-point, much activity begins and ends with the centrally placed cut-out of a boy seated at a table. A thin fluorescent orange line delineates the edges of the cut-out and minimally describes the boys features, as well as a cup and a hot-dog. This cut-out, although projected off the main picture surface, almost appears to be a transparency suspended over the background detail. The boys face is punctuated by two semi-spherical light-coverings in the place of eyes, and a gaping mouth which features two rodent-like teeth.

Further images include the stylised, almost cartoon-like head of a woman in profile (her eye a peep-hole looking out at the viewer), a chef (adapted from a catalogue of "wining and dining" illustrations), a baby (adapted from a babywear advert), a small bird (barely visible amidst the frenetic background) and the form of an exclamation mark (the dot being a painted radial-arm-saw-blade).

These images are rendered in a manner more akin to illustrational and advertising work than the traditional fine-arts. The question becomes "what is it that is being sold?" rather than "what is it that this is about?" Images which reek of stereotypical notions of suburban "normality" and procreational activity are infused with a sense of imminent aggression and voyeurism. The male chefs knife assumes more sinister connotations in the context of the title, the peephole-eyed woman, the bug-eyed boy and the saw blade. The idea of "not being able to

intermediate" forms used as a starting point in searching for
these "new" forms of expression. The wall and
Pallasius is



detail

trust anybody" being used as a selling point is parodied by turning those fears into a garish play on idyllic visions of the nuclear-family unit and suburban normality.



viii) Title: A Shock to the System
Dimensions: 2,2m x 1,2m

This painting is essentially a play on the idea of "shocking the system". References to commerce, bureaucracy, religion, anatomy and nature are conflated in a constellation-like arrangement of forms.

My starting point lay in reworking a typical seventeenth century Dutch portrait of a nobleman (very similar to the portrait of Jan van Riebeck seem on South African bank notes). Rather than simply regurgitating the dignified pose and sombre tones of the source, I decided to transform the image into a clown-like spectacle of sequins and fluorescent colour.

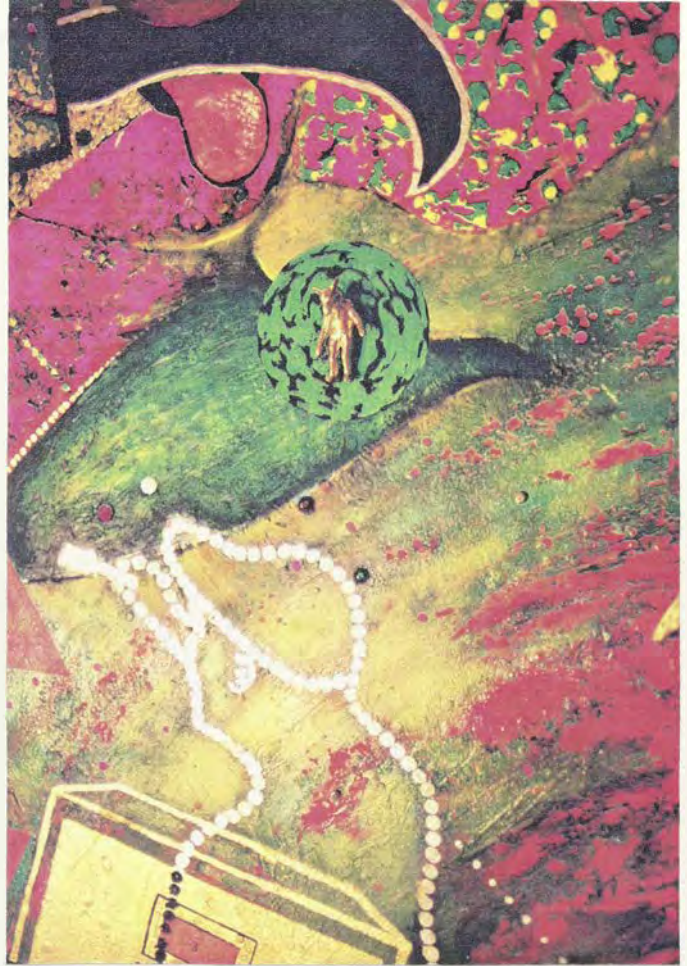
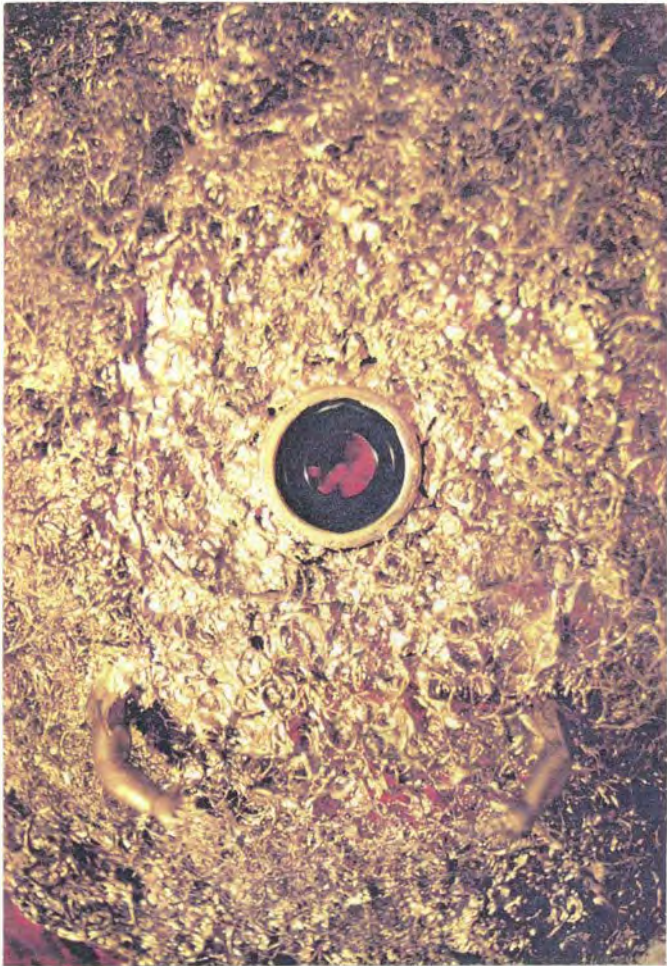
Over this reworked portrait are the broken fragments of a crucifix and a painted rostrum.

The painting then grew outwards to include stylised depictions of a filing cabinet, a toilet, a chair, two workers, and an arrow indicating electricity. This group of elements is played off against a variety of kitsch elements such as the golden "angel" (resembling a giant flying furball) featuring a small tableau visible through a lens.

The circular-framed brain tissue and section of small-intestine in the top left and right-hand corners seem to float separately in space. These anatomical elements suggest the possibility that the "system" being "shocked" is in fact a human body being electrocuted.

By this stage the formal vocabulary had evolved to include some quite complicated three-dimensional components. The golden "angel" is one such form; as is the heavily textured "display cabinet" which sits on a rotating turntable on the floor in front of the painting. This cabinet features a number of components (from childrens toys to tourist souvenirs), arranged in such a way as to defy conventional scientific and cultural categorisations.

2. "March to the chains" by Claus Schmitt, 1945. A work which refers to...



details

A "shock to the system" is thus translated into a work which defies easy or comfortable interpretations in favour of an open-ended, non-narrative approach which encourages the viewer to consider many possibilities.



- ix) **Title:** **The Great Provider**
Dimensions: 2,2m x 1,2m

This painting serves as an attempt to parody "man as provider" stereotypes which dominate the mass-media. Conflated with these stereotypically male "hunter and gatherer" roles are references to stereotyped female roles such as child-rearer and cleaner.

These stereotypes are unhinged through deliberate absurdities and transmutations. Food and cooking are subsumed by overt references to male activities and physiognomy (the barbecue and the phallic/worm-like extension protruding from a bunch of fruit). Stereotypical "mother and child" images are re-constructed in the form of mother and dog (male child); echoing the conflation of man and dog found elsewhere in the picture.

Stereotypical images of male strength and fortitude are subverted through a circus-like performance of sperm, dogs, domestic appliances anthropomorphic creatures and quasi-religious iconography.

A wide range of formal devices and techniques is employed in order to heighten the fragmented, circus-like atmosphere. Electric lighting, resin casts, cut-outs, adapted found objects, plastic beads, sequins and a variety of different painting materials are combined in an irreverent play on material abundance and the division of labour.

The central image of an encircled dog's head and vacuum cleaner acts as a point around which numerous "satellites" are positioned. The vacuum cleaner appears to be either sucking in or blowing out a stream of dollar signs, sperm cells and fantastical creatures. As such it is not clear whether this vacuum cleaner/dog image is the "great provider" of the title or simply a receiver of goods given out by the "great provider". The same applies to the unusual beefburger-like form which rotates on a turntable in front of the painting. Food and pro-creation are conflated through the inclusion of the baby (immersed waist-deep in the "burger").



details

A potentially threatening quality is added to the baby/burger by turning the baby's hands into hook-like claws.

In this way it is impossible to decide who the "great provider" is, or whether he/she/it is even depicted. Both male and female stereotypes concerning pre-assigned roles and what they have to offer are satirically subverted. Further still, the notion of God as creator (and hence provider) is subverted through references to capital and material goods.

- x) Title: **Baby ... come to Daddy**
Dimensions: * 2,2m x 1,2m

This, the final painting in the series, is concerned with the dual aspects of reward and punishment. References to sexual activity and physical violence overlap with references to the granting of rewards and the metering out of punishment.

The painting combines and conflates stock horror-movie imagery (such as chainsaws, mallets, bones and guns) with more innocuous comical elements (a poodle, a smiling girl and dancing barbie doll/rabbit creatures). Formal devices run the gamut from illusionistic and atmospheric to graphic and cartoon-like, from flat and linear to three-dimensional and textural. Traditional fine-art materials (oils, acrylics, inks etc) are used in conjunction with more contemporary commercial materials and techniques (fluorescent paint, metallic paints etc).

A concerted effort has been made to form a schizophrenic marriage of the whimsical and the sinister. The aim was to arrive at a completed work which initially appears to be innocent and playful, but on closer inspection becomes perverse and twisted.

A poodle stands on its hind legs as though begging for a bone or performing a trick, a young girl smiles, Barbie doll/rabbit-dancers frolic, a pot-bellied man aims a gun, another grins menacingly and bones dot the picture surface in a work which parodies the "power of the father"; in the process subverting stereotyped notions of the family as haven and unit.

The acts of rewarding and punishing become fused into an over-the-top display of violent and sexual power-games. Being "in control" means being "out of control" as the reward becomes the punishment and vice-versa.



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CONCLUSION

In considering the scope and power of identity-production in contemporary media-saturated existence I did not want to fall into the trap of becoming a conspiracy theorist or preacher of moral reform. As such I did not want to lose sight of the power each individual exercises in rejecting or accepting prevalent stereotypes relating to the formation of identities. I also did not want to forget that the ability to impose an identity on oneself is directly related to the ability to control the identities of others.

My paintings are deliberate attempts to subvert fixed stereotyped identities.

They do not offer solutions to the problems of identity-production, but encourage a respect for difference and heterogeneity. Hopefully this plays some small role in fostering an appreciation of diversity and an understanding of the internal contradictions within dominant Western forms of knowledge.

Hopefully the humour contained in my paintings makes them approachable where the confusing confluences of images make them difficult to read. Humour, particularly in the form of absurdity and irony is thus a vital ingredient in these paintings; encouraging the viewer to re-consider that which has been pinned down and stripped of all ambiguity. As Freud stressed, comedy is a "tolerant, ironic, debunking form, inherently materialist and anti-heroic, which rejoices in human frailty and imperfection (and which) wryly concedes that all ideas are flawed" (quoted in Eagleton 1990 : 282).

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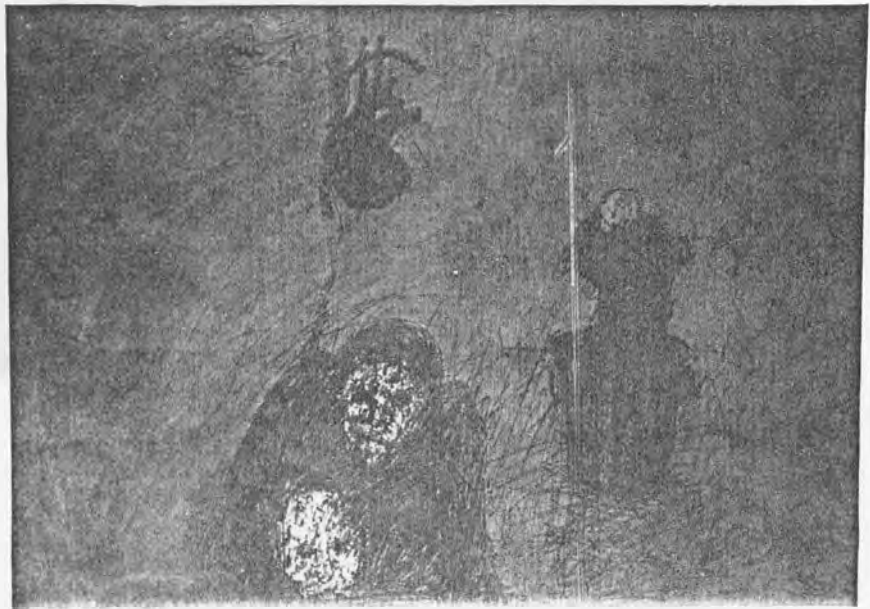
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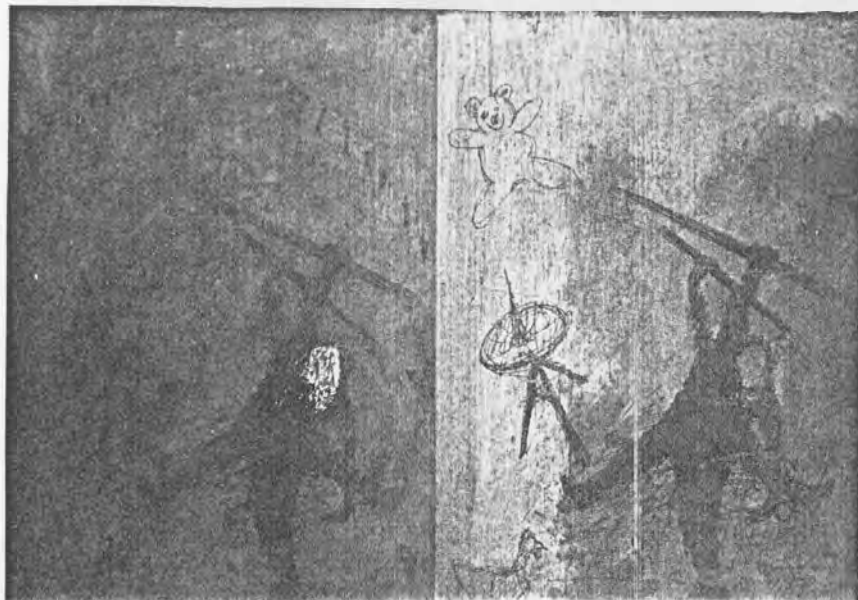
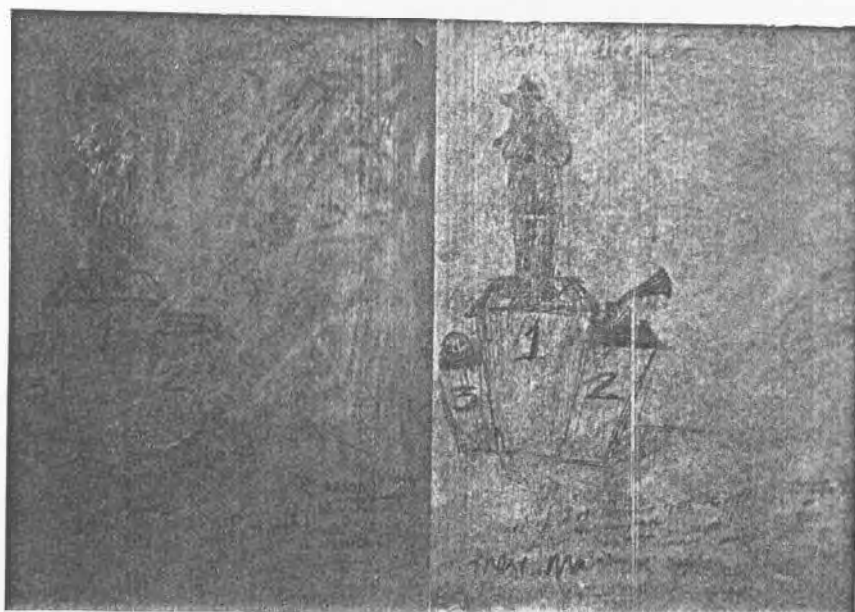
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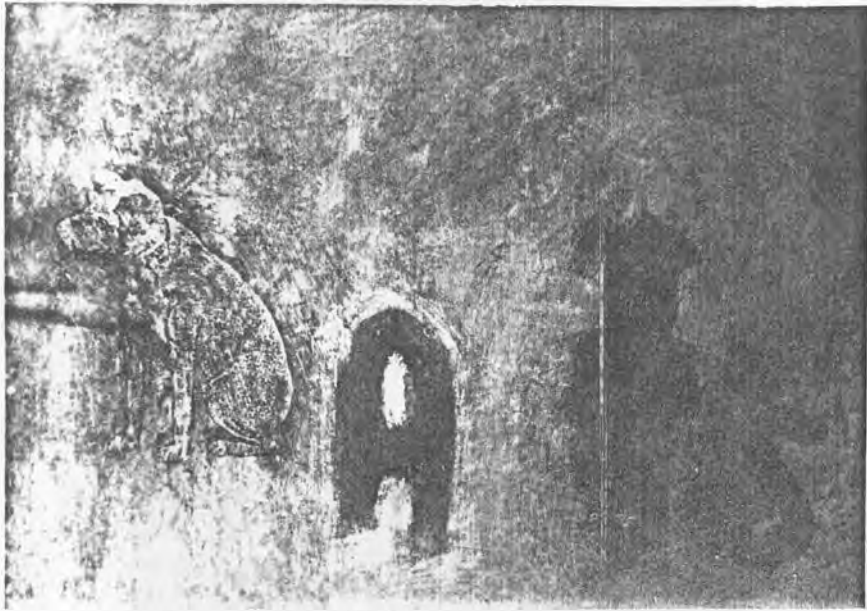
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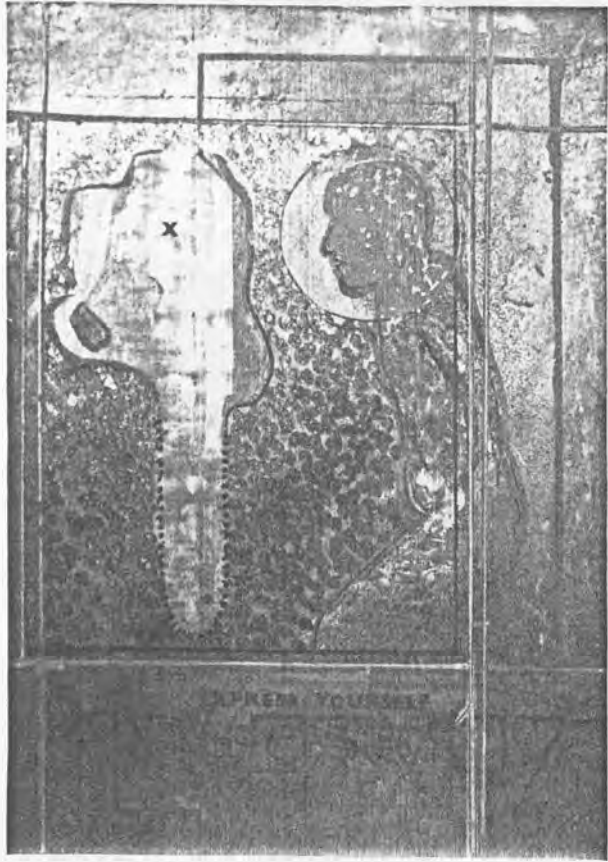


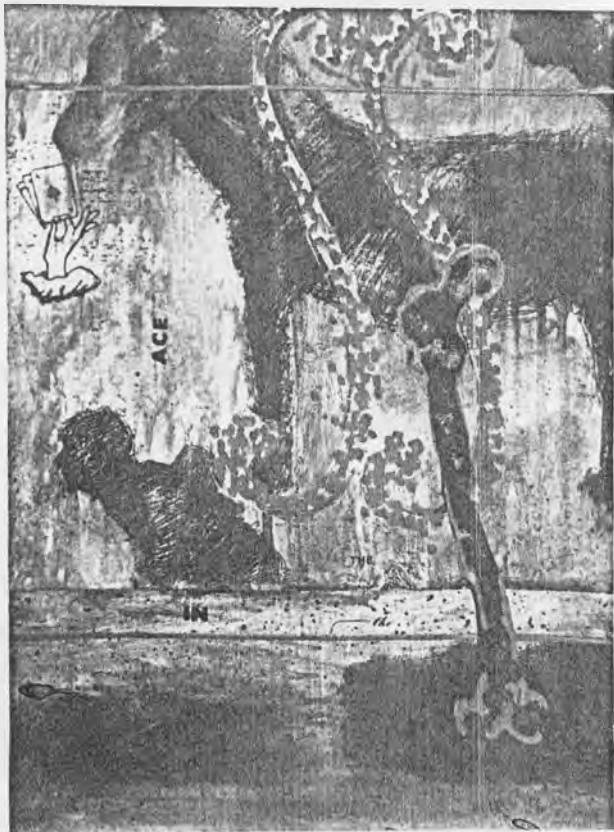
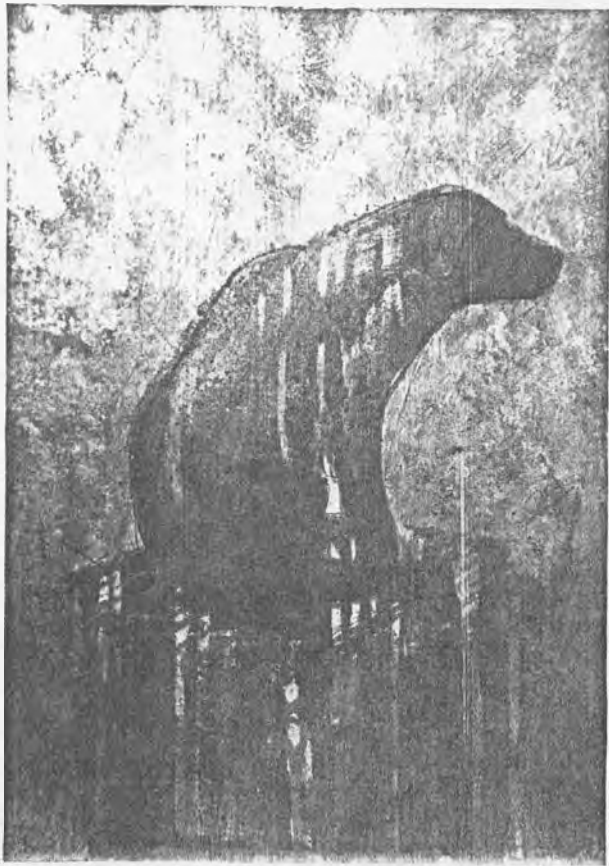














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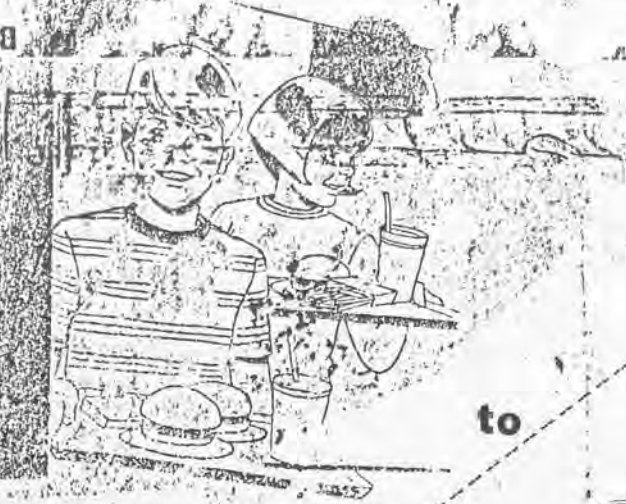




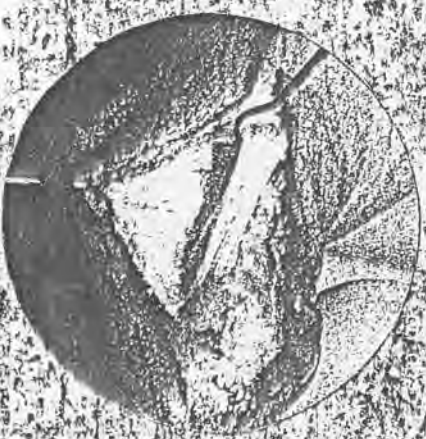
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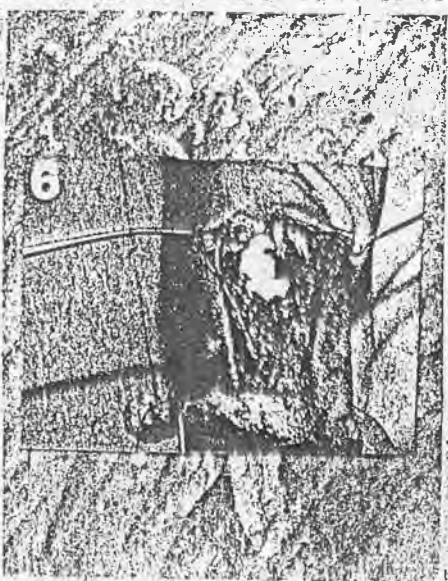


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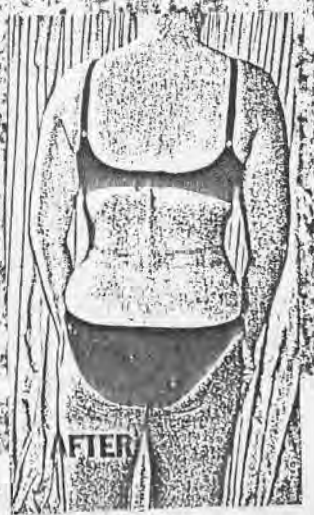


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