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Critical possibilities for painting after neo-expressionism

Burgener, Andrea

2017-01-30
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literature I refer to. At other times these terms have very particular uses. This will also account for the occasions where I deviate slightly from Foster's or Pollock's terms of reference.

As I have indicated, my particular concern here is to identify a critical form of postmodern practice in expressionist painting. I draw predominantly on Foster's definition of 'critical'. In his identification of two distinct strands of postmodernism - a postmodernism of reaction and a postmodernism of resistance (which he also refers to as critical postmodernism) - he stresses that this latter postmodernism "is concerned with a critical deconstruction of tradition" which "seeks to question rather than exploit cultural codes"(1983:xii). Foster asserts through these propositions that a fundamental feature of a critical (resistant) art practice today is that it admits its own language to be a set of conventions. Critical postmodernism here indicates a practice which does not accept representation as natural. Instead, it problematises representation in order to reveal its forms as those of convention, as constructed. In this way critical postmodernism undermines the idea that any one form or system of representation has the authority to "represent some authentic vision of the world"(Owens, 1983:58). For Foster, "[critical] postmodernist art 'disentrenches' its given medium, not only as an autonomous activity but also as a mode of representation with assured referential value and/or ontological status".[8]

As noted, Foster, and others (Craig Owens in particular), see critical postmodernism as an extension and renegotiation of a certain aspect of avant-garde modernism. By the same token, they view critical postmodernism as a simultaneous critique of the modernist tenets of authenticity, originality and discipline-specific purity. They maintain that the 'critical side' of modernism (in spite of the fact that modernism in general might have perpetuated certain myths around representation) was concerned with a self-criticality which was connected to a rejection of tradition. Owens for example, refers to the "radical impulse that motivated modernism"(1992:147).

The undermining of the discipline-specific purity which is the preserve of modernism, and the breakdown of disciplines which characterises postmodernism, is commonly termed postmodern intertextuality. Foster notes in this regard, that in postmodernism "the artifact is likely to be treated less as a *work* in modernist terms - unique, symbolic, visionary

Another perspective on postmodernism which is very pertinent to this discussion is that it has also been defined as an extension of the 'cutting edge' of modernism. This is posed as the more productive (or critical) aspect of postmodernism. I elaborate on this point further on.

There is much to be said for these definitions and perspectives on postmodernism, and I have of necessity simplified them. For the purposes of this research however, I refer predominantly to Hal Foster's and Griselda Pollock's uses of the terms (Foster 1985 et passim, Pollock 1986). They posit the existence of a particular kind of critical postmodernism which supports my propositions concerning a space for intervention in expressionist painting. Foster proposes a critical as well as a reactionary postmodernism. This definition provides a general conceptual framework for my discussion and is of primary importance to the observations I make. Pollock's comments on postmodernism are more specific, and are most productive in terms of their critique of painting as a product of a masculinist discourse.

However, Pollock's general definition of postmodernism is also useful. She defines postmodernism as "the socio-economic and ideological processes which currently define our horizons".[7] Foster's use of the term is similar. He suggests that postmodernism is "a conflict of new and old modes"(1983:xi). In subsequent texts he bears this out, noting that postmodernism should "not be regarded as a mere style or grand episteme but as a heuristic term in the periodization of late capitalist culture"(1992:7). I find these definitions useful as they reflect postmodernism as a general cultural phenomenon, and not only as particular cultural practices or forms, which is often the way the term is used. Pollock's and Foster's definitions then, include anything that exists or is produced within the time perceived as postmodern.[8]

These definitions have the kind of breadth that is appropriate to my exploration (although, of course, the way they operate is always framed within the very particular terms of my research). Throughout my dissertation I am bound, of neccessity, to refer to many cultural practices or forms, as well as particular contemporary historical moments and social phenomena that may be perceived to be postmodern. It is often difficult to find the appropriate term in each context. In certain instances, the terms postmodern, postmodernist, postmodern culture/context may be used interchangeably as is often the case in the literature I refer to. At other times these terms have very particular

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and equally necessary and possible to reposition painting as a critical practice.

I need to emphasise here that in this dissertation the term neo-expressionism, when used in lower case, has a descriptive function. It refers to expressionist painting after Expressionism. Neo-expressionism when used in upper case, refers to the resurgance of expressionist painting identified above, which characterises a particular form of postmodern art practice of the 1980's. In terms of these distinctions, my own painting could be seen to be neo-expressionist. It could also be *confused* with Neo-expressionism (the movement), because of certain formal aspects of the work.

I have mentioned that postmodernist discourse has been defined in relation to modernism. Even so, these definitions vary according to different theoretical perspectives.[6] There is the added complication that postmodernism by definition (paradoxically) eludes definition. As I have indicated, my interest in postmodernism focuses on issues arising out of certain forms of postmodernist aesthetic practice (expressionist painting) which emerged in the 1980's. It is important that I stress this time period, as it has come to represent a 'high point' of postmodernism. Alex Callinicos notes that "the 1980s were a boom time for postmodernism"(1989:1). It is relevant to note that "boom time" is a term usually associated with popular (consumer) culture - also a growing phenomenon in the 1980's.

Indeed, postmodernism is often defined as a cultural form which conflates popular (consumer) culture and high art. Modernism by contrast, has been defined by virtue of its separation of popular culture from high art. A classic formulation of this latter definition is Greenberg's influential article 'Avantgarde and Kitsch' (1939). The issue of high art's relationship to popular culture has been given much critical attention in postmodernist discourse. Fredric Jameson's theories of the convergence of postmodernism with consumerism and late capitalism are one such example.(1983, 1992b) It is also significant to note that it is not only postmodernism that is associated with consumer culture in problematic ways. Modernism's position in this regard is also questioned by some critics. Callinicos and Terry Eagleton note that modernism could not resist commodification, however much it positioned itself as elitist (Callinicos 1989, Eagleton 1985). What is commodified here is modernism's 'authenticity', original gestural mark, artistic persona, etc.

framework that I wish to position my response to the way painting has been problematised in postmodernist discourse and the way it might be re-invested with critical potential. I see these notions (authenticity, originality and discipline-specific purity) as particularly relevant to my discussion of neo-expressionist painting. By neo-expressionist painting I mean expressionist painting which post-dates Expressionism. The term Expressionism refers to that period of European painting prominent between 1900 and the mid 1920's which is commonly called German Expressionism. Abstract Expressionism, as formulated by Greenberg (generally seen to operate from the early 1940's to the late 1950's) is a particularly pertinent example of (neo)expressionist painting. It could be seen to have developed out of the movement of Expressionism, in a way which purged Expressionism of its representational content. This purging signalled a drive to achieve a refinement of form. This refinement of form involved the ideal of discipline-specific purity. A kind of formalism resulted, in which the medium was considered fundamental (ie. paint, canvas, and the concommitant signs of brushmark and flatness).

Greenberg's formulation of Abstract Expressionism has, arguably, become synonymous with the 'high point' of modernism (so much so as to be commonly termed Greenbergian modernism - a form distinct from earlier forms of modernism).

I need to reiterate here that whilst Greenbergian modernism is significant, it is only in so far as it is appropriate to critiques of painting in a postmodernist context that it will be explored in this dissertation. For example, just as discipline-specific purity is fundamental to modernism, *impurity*, very generally, can be said to characterize postmodernism. In this way, modernist painting has come to stand for the dominant form of representation against which postmodernist painting, of a certain kind, is defined. This definition of postmodernism became partly situated around the emergence, in the 1980's, of Neo-expressionist painting. This 'movement' has also commonly been termed the Trans-avantgarde, as well as New Wild and Neo-Fauve.[3] This phenomenon occured in Europe initially, and later the United States.

While Neo-expressionism confirms the problematic of painting, the mere fact of its existence within a postmodernist context suggests that painting is not closed off as a potentially viable practice. It is possible, and indeed necessary, to challenge Neo-expressionist claims,

are reproduced and perpetuated. The 'Art and Language' group is well known for this kind of work. An interesting example of the group's work is **Portrait of V.I Lenin in July 1917 Disguised by a Wig and Working Man's Clothes, in the Style of Jackson Pollock II, 1980.**[2] This kind of painting marks the opposite extreme to the unselfconscious use of expressionism.

It is almost commonplace to say that a crisis in representation characterises postmodernism. Painting, arguably more so than other disciplines, has been affected in this instance, not least because of the primacy ascribed to the practice within modernism. This crisis in representation is a complex notion in itself. It is often argued to be (amongst other things) a result of developments in poststructuralist theories in which notions of fixity of signification are challenged, with beliefs in essences being displaced by ideas of social and psychic construction. Subjectivity (within this poststructuralist framework) is produced *in* and *through* language, constructed *in* and *through* discourse. For poststructuralist theory, as Chris Weedon comments, "language is not the expression of unique individuality"(1987:21). Subjectivity "is neither unified not fixed"(1987:21). This notion of subjectivity as being a construction, has of course had major consequences for the notion of expressionism, which is predicated on ideas of artistic agency as being able to be realised through *an innate* (stable) subjectivity.

Postmodernism and poststructuralism have come to be (inextricably) linked. Katy Deepwell for instance, actually connects them structurally, as effectively one and the same thing, by her use of the term "postmodern/post-structuralist"(1995:6). This postmodern phenomenon represents a break with the Enlightenment tradition, on which principles the modernist project was developed. Concepts of progress (which were connected to notions of a stable subjectivity) were intrinsic to the Enlightenment tradition, and became fundamental in defining a modernist aesthetic of the avantgarde.[3] Avantgardist painting has taken many forms historically, with a certain kind of expressionist painting being a major example. However, it is Clement Greenberg's notion of av ntgardist (Abstract Expressionist) painting which concerns me in this dissertation.[4] This is not so much modernist painting in and of itself, but how its legacy has determined certain postmodernis' practices.

Modernist painting in this Greenbergian formulation, privileges notions of authenticity, originality and discipline-specific purity. It is within this

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION.

This research was motivated by scepticism I experienced in my undergraduate years concerning the critical possibilities of a certain kind of 'expressionist' painting within a postmodern context. Expressionist painting no longer seemed viable as a critical practice. It appeared so heavily inscribed with dominant values emanating from an essentially masculinist discourse - with its valo 'zation of the artist's 'mark', notions of genius, the masterpiece etc - that it seemed impossible to engage with expressionist painting without reproducing these dominant values.

However, as my ideas developed in my postgraduate years, I found productive ways of dealing with the problematic which gave rise to this scepticism. These ways of dealing with the problematic of expressionist painting emerged through a particularly integrated experience of the practical and theoretical components of the degree. This experience convinced me that the most appropriate approach to the writing of this dissertation was to use the concerns of my own painting as a framework through which to explore the vast and complex field that constitutes the problematic of painting within postmodern discourse. Through this approach I hope to find a way of working through the possibilities of reinvesting painting with critical potential.

Painting in general, as a discipline, has been problematised in postmodern discourse. Expressionist painting has come to be seen as a particularly problematic form of postmodern painting within this context. There are many reasons for this, some of which I explore in this research. My area of concern is limited to particular forms of expressionist painting - forms which are often seen (from certain contemporary perspectives) as being out-moded or regressive. It is important at this point to mention another example of postmodernist painting. I do this to in order to clarify the terms of my exploration into painting in this dissertation. I need to draw attention to the way the medium of paint has been used to critique the discipline of painting. This latter example of painting *uses* paint in order to *renounce* painting. Here painting is *not* conceived of as a viable practice. It is seen as a singularly oppressive ideological elitist practice through which dominant values inscribed in notions of universalism, mastery and artistic aura

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ABSTRACT.

Painting as a practice has been problematised in postmodern discourse in many ways. Neo-expressionist painting has been seen by certain influental critics as standing for a particularly regressive form of painting. These critics argue that Neo-expressionist painting, perpetuates dominant (masculinist) values.

This dissertation examines how these critiques of Neo-expressionism might open up a space for a re-articulation of painting. More specifically, it proposes that painting may be re-inscribed with critical potential. This re-inscription is proposed as operating by way of the adoption of certain formal and conceptual strategies, these being parody, metonymy and readymades. Whilst these strategies have wider relevance in contemporary debates - many of which emanate from critiques of Neo-expressionism - they are of also of primary importance to a re-articulation of painting within my own practice.

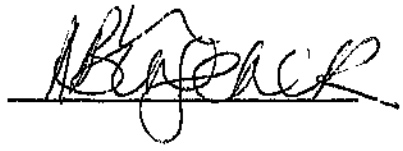
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor, Penny Siopis, for all the time, energy and enthusiasm she has given to this research. Her guidance has been invaluable. I owe my parents many thanks, both for giving me the oppurtunity to complete this degree, and for their patience. I would also like to say thank-you to Marco Cianfanelli for all his support and help. A number of other people have helped with this research - in particular I wish to thank Joni Brenner and Marcus Burgener. Thanks also go to Tino Cianfanelli for the binding of the thesis.

The assistance of the University of the Witwatersrand, in the form of a Senior Bursary, is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.



(Andrea Burgener)

01 day of 03 1996.

CRITICAL POSSIBILITIES FOR PAINTING AFTER NEO-EXPRESSIONISM

Andrea Burgener.

Graduated with distinction on 25 June 1996.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Fine Arts.

Johannesburg 1996.

The gestural mark is connected, for the modernist painter, to the notion of artistic 'presence'. This notion of 'presence', it can be argued, emphasises the idea of the artist as persona. The expressive, creative individual or persona, may be connected, culturally, to notions of creative genius.

The concept of the genius, in turn, has come under particular attack in critical postmodern discourse. Whilst the critique of the concept of genius has been a general concern for feminist critics, modernist painting (especially) has come to stand for a specifically male subjectivity.[4] It is the forms and claims of modernism which can be said to encode male dominance. Pollock puts it that these forms and claims mark modernism as a "... monological masculine discourse ..." (1988:159). While I am specifically concerned with the effect of modernist discourse on painting, it should be noted that critics such as Pollock perceive the problems associated with painting to be with patriarchal social structures in general. Put into very simple terms, the argument takes the following route. Culture, generally, is defined and controlled by masculine power, and can thus be seen to represent masculinity. As the "ideological centrality of painting" noted by Newman as a defining feature of modernism, can also be seen to apply to Western culture in a more general sense, painting, in Western culture, is often seen as the epitome of, or central sign for, this (masculine) culture. Painting, in terms of this equation, can be said, more than other art forms, to be a material and ideological sign of patriarchal power, and as such, works to affirm and perpetuate such power. The painter and critic Rosa Lee comments for instance that women artists in the 1970's and early 1980's avoided painting, and used "... 'alternative' media which were designated as being more overtly progressive, less tainted by 'tradition' and the more patriarchal values and attitudes associated with it"(1987:16). This perception of painting as regressive in relation to other forms of representation, continues to characterize much critical postmodern practice today.

There has been a shift which complicates matters here. Critics and artists such as Pollock and Lee have recently proposed that painting, however 'colonized', may still be a viable practice - one which through different forms and strategies, opens opportunities for women artists.[5] It is relevant to note Lee's assertion that certain forms of abstract painting can be strategic in this respect. Lee cites for example, the case of the British painter Therese Oulton. Oulton's work engages not

Painting in modernism has been valorized to the point that it has become a virtual sign of modernism. While Greenberg's writings on modernism do refer to other art forms, his discussion highlights painting. The critic Michael Newman notes that Greenberg's model proposes an "ideological centrality of painting in the discourse of art"(1989:121). In an essay in which he examines key postmodern issues, Newman makes particular note of how this modernist privileging of painting has made it difficult to produce a discursive practice.

> *[A]ccording to modernism in its Greenbergian version, the primacy of painting reinforces the separation of the ontology of vision, from the epistemology of language in a way which blocks any possibility for the centrality of a theoretically informed critical and deconstructive practice.*[3]

Foster echoes Newman's view that the centrality of painting may be oppositional to discursive, critical practice. He notes for example, that the modernist will to purity "affirms the idea of art as its own issue, engendered from a special history"(1988:190).

It is perhaps relevant here to focus on this issue of purity, as the issue is central to modernism. In his influential articles 'Towards a Newer Laocoon' and 'Modernist Painting' (1940, 1965), Greenberg proposes that each art has its own pregiven nature: "It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium"(1965:68). Based on this premise, Greenberg argues that "purity" should be a central concern: "Purity in art" Greenberg writes, "consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art"(1940:69). Each art form was to eliminate anything that might also function as an attribute of another art form. In the case of painting this meant an elimination of all elements apart from pigment, flatness of surface and the shape defined by the support. Greenberg suggests that: "[t]o restore the identity of an art the opacity of its medium must be emphasised"(1940:69). It is important to note that this opacity was not one which could be evidenced through illusionistic rendering.

In the case of painting, emphasising the medium meant of course an emphasis on the paint itself. The emphasis on the painted mark, or more particularly on gestural mark, has major significance for this research.

CHAPTER TWO. MODERNISM/POSTMODERNISM: PROBLEMATICS OF PAINTING.

This chapter explores painting within a postmodern context. More specifically it focuses on inscriptions of power and gender in painting practice within neo-expressionism.

The writings I refer to are selected for the way they reflect debates relevant to the above issues. My approach is somewhat eclectic.[1] Whilst I refer to other writers, the views of Foster, Pollock and Owens are of primary importance.

I wish briefly to draw attention back to the definitions of postmodernism presented in the introductory chapter. I noted that in the context of this dissertation, postmodernism indicates "a heuristic term" rather than "a mere style or grand episteme"(Foster, 1992:7), and that in broad terms it may be conceived as a "conflict of new and old modes"(Foster, 1983:xi). As I have noted, in order to address problems of painting within postmodernism, it is necessary to examine certain features of modernist practice. It is impossible in this thesis to engage with modernism in any depth, and this is in any case not appropriate, for as I have noted, my argument in relation to these concerns is not with modernism per se, but with the deployment of particular modernist features within certain postmodern painting which can be said to be either regressive and/or progressive.

Postmodernism's continuing relationship with modernism has been stressed by many writers. Jonathan Arac, for example, (1986:1) notes that most critical writing on the issue reflects a difficulty in determining whether postmodernism should be seen as a continuation of, or a break with, modernism. These writers define modernism from different perspectives. I focus on the way it is defined in relation to Greenberg's theories. As I have stressed in chapter one, there are three aspects of this Greenbergian model which are of special relevance here: authenticity, originality, and discipline-specific purity. In addition, two other features implicit in these aspects are significant. These are the primacy which painting is accorded within this model, and Greenberg's positioning of high art against popular culture.[2]

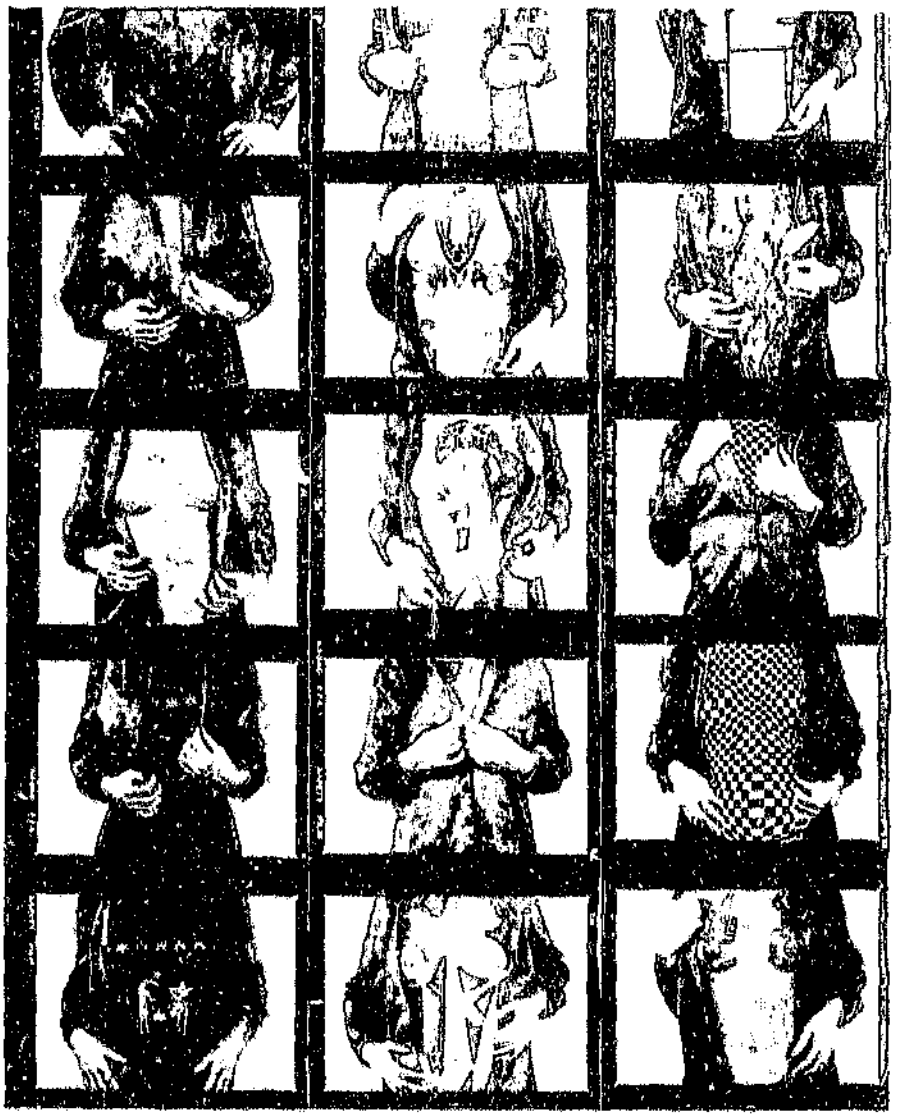


Fig.1. Virginia Maksymowicz, History of Art.
(Ongoing series)

to note the terms here, as they serve to further describe popular conceptions of this type of painting.

6 For critical explorations of a number of these different perspectives, see Appignanesi (1989) and Foster (1983).

7 (1986:172). Although I use this phrase to define the term postmodernism/postmodern context here, I should note that Griselda Pollock's use of this phrase is in relation to the term post-modernity. She uses the term postmodern to refer to "the cultural forms generated in this larger social transformation, which are the site for both affirmative and critical cultural responses to post-modernity". Pollock's definition is partially drawn from Hal Foster's outline of the terms in his **The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture** (1983).

8 Postmodernism is usually held to take over from modernism in the early 60's, although there are conflicting views on this. Some would cite the late 50's as already predominantly postmodern, while others argue that a strongly postmodern sensibility and practice has only been in evidence since the late 60's or early 70's. A number of critics, such as Terry Eagleton, have suggested that the 80's were what could be called the 'heyday' of postmodernism (Eagleton, 1985).

9 (1984:75). Foster uses the term 'postmodern' to refer to a reactionary (uncritical) practice, and the term 'postmodern*ist*' to denote criticality. Although I use Foster's notion of a critical versus reactionary practice, I will not be distinguishing between the terms postmodern and postmodernist.

10 The term master narrative can be described as the "organizing story that a philosophy of history tells, and that provides a framework in relation to which all historical events can be understood" (Childers and Hentzi, 1995:181). The concept has been a point of much debate within postmodern discourse. Jean Francois Lyotard, among others, has criticised the master narrative on the grounds that it is regressive and idealizing (1984).

NOTES

1 For the purposes of this dissertation, a working definition of 'expressionist' is necessary. While opinions on what constitutes the 'expressive' in visual art differ, certain formal qualities are, on the whole, agreed to be 'hallmarks' of expressionist works. John Willet notes these as "distortion, fragmentation, and the communication of overstressed emotion"(1988:301). An emphasis on autographic mark (such as gestural brushmark) is an important characteristic of works commonly termed expressionist. Alan Tormey notes that "thick paint, spills, drips, amplified brushstroke and the like" are the features most often present in works popularly termed expressionist, or thought to be 'expressive' (1971:x). The idea that these visual signs are natural, a spontaneous expression of an innate subjectivity, is often connected to expressionist works. The idea of expression as natural, and the importance of artistic presence through mark, are major concerns in this dissertation.

2 Another example of this sort of painting is Virginia Maksymowicz's History of Art (fig.1). This ongoing work is made up of a series of photographs which depict various art historical images painted onto a cast of the artist's torso. Art from classical greek vase painting to Jackson Pollock is represented in the series. Maksymowicz's images emphasise the history of painting as a masculinist discourse, by showing a female body very literally inscribed by the authorship of the male artist. Gerhard Richter has also produced works which can be seen to reflect critically on aspects of painting practice. In Uran I, 1989 for example, Richter quotes certain formal elements from the repetoire of the Abstract Expressionists, but problematises the idea of unmediated expression by producing his 'painting' through the quasi-mechanical technique of screen printing.

3 In its original context (from the late 1800's up until perhaps the 1940's or 1950's) the term avantgarde can be seen to indicate those cultural innovators who are posed against Bourgeois values, and whose work "appeared most inaccessible to public understanding" (John Willet, 1988:63). As many works currently associated with the avantgarde are now supported by 'mainstream' galleries and institutions one could describe them as being institutionalised - as being a Bourgeois commodity rather than standing in opposition to Bourgeois values. The term avantgarde is therefore seen by a number of artists and critics as an anachronism. Foster, for example, remarks that the (so-called) avantgarde art of the 1980's functions as a "legitimation of the patron class" (1992:25). Other writings which address this problematic position of the avantgarde are Peter Burger's Theory of the Avant-garde (1984) and Donald Kuspit's The Culture of the Avant-Garde Artist (1993).

4 While I use Greenberg's writings to form my definition of modernism, I should note that the views of the critic Harold Rosenberg, Greenberg's contemporary, are also significant in relation to modernism. Greenberg is, however, more useful for my purposes as he theorises modernism more extensively than does Rosenberg, and has, arguably, been more influental.

5 See for example Klotz (1991). The terms New Wild and Neo-Fauve are not as widely used as Transavantgarde or Neo-expressionism, however I feel it relevant

modernism and postmodernism. In a way, his work could be seen to exemplify an aspect of the threshold condition I identify in my own practice. I see metonymy as fundamental in defining this threshold condition. Lichtenstein's work, as noted, raises some different issues to Johns's work. Parody is foregrounded in Lichtenstein's work, especially in the way it reflects on the relationship of high art to popular culture.

Despite the differences in the forms these artworks take, I argue that both Johns and Lichtenstein reflect a self-conscious concern with the language of painting, and most notably for my purposes here, reflect on the notion of the expressive in different ways. It is in this sense that they can be seen to be relevant to contemporary postmodernist painting.

In chapter seven I analyse my own paintings in relation to the above issues. Of particular importance in this discussion is my concern with creating a body of paintings which, while diverse in form, is strongly interrelated and interdependent. Special attention is paid in this chapter to the way that parody, metonymy and readymades might operate *collectively* as strategies to reinscribe painting with critical potential. I stress that these strategies operate within individual works as well as in the relationships set up between different works (within a given space, for example a gallery).

In my conclusion I reflect on questions emanating from my discussion and try to bring together what might at times appear to be quite diverse threads of thought. I reflect on how critiques of neo-expressionism (neo-expressionism includes Neo-expressionism) have determined the possibilities for painting in the 1990's.

certain codes, rather than an uncritical quotation or 'pastiche'. As popular culture is implicated in postmodern quotation, I explore something of the relationship between popular culture and high art in postmodernism. I refer to the work of American artist Jeff Koons as a significant example of how popular culture might be parodied in high art and how high art itself might be parodied. The notion of 'double' quotation becomes relevant here. In this 'double' quotation, the process of quoting is itself parodied.

Chapter four involves a discussion of metonymy in visual art. I begin by defining my terms of reference. I go on to explore ways in which metonymic meanings may be produced. Ambivalence and multiplicity, being fundamental features of metonymic readings, are discussed as ways to undermine stereotypical receptions of images. I suggest ways in which formal and iconographic aspects of artworks may be manipulated to encourage certain kinds of spectator response. I draw heavily on Fred Orton's observations on metonymy, as Orton has made very pertinent observations regarding the way metonymy may function in visual art in general.(1987) More specifically, I find these observations to be most relevant to readings of my own paintings.

Chapter five is an exploration of aspects of the use of readymades, and how this use may open up possibilities for questioning authenticity, originality and discipline-specific purity in painting. I refer to Marcel Duchamp's readymades in order to define my use of the term and contextualise my practice. I make distinctions between this term (readymades) and the term 'found object'. Primary to my definition of the term readymades is the notion of readymades as the pre-given language of painting. This definition would include gestural brushmark as a sign for the 'expressive' in painting.

In chapter six I examine how the issues discussed thus far may be seen to be borne out in certain works by the American artists Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtenstein. While the work of these two artists is in many ways very different in form and in focus, the particular works I select for discussion reflect in one way or another the strategies pertinent to my own practice. Different issues are raised in the case of each artist. Neither artist is considered quintessentially postmodern. On the other hand neither artist fits comfortably into catagories of modernist art. Johns is particularly pertinent here for the way that his work has been positioned by many writers as situated on a threshold between

the term strategy suggests agency, which I see as particularly productive in relation to critical practice.

I have chosen these strategies since they seem to me to be the most conceptually viable forms for re-investing painting with critical potential. To parody painting could be seen to question the notions of authenticity and originality; to foreground the contiguity implicit in metonymic readings can undermine fixed meanings; to use readymades (including, in this context, readymade brushmarks and surfaces) can be seen to involve both parody and metonymy, by stressing representation as pregiven. Quotation and repetition (often seen as primary characteristics of postmodern painting) are interwoven in different ways in all three of these strategies.

Whilst I deal with these three strategies independently in the dissertation, this is for reasons of clarity alone. I perceive them to be a complex set of relations which are manipulated with the aim of achieving the kind of tension I propose as facilitating a critical practice. In other words they function *collectively*, not singly. For example, whilst in some ways parody requires the certainty of a shared (public) reference, metonymy may be seen in certain respects to imply its opposite. Metonymy (amongst other things) is more to do with a private language, albeit that this language may be placed in a public domain). The way the relationship between these two strategies is negotiated, and their relation to the notion of readymades is fundamental to the threshold condition referred to earlier.

At this point a brief outline of the structure of the thesis is necessary. In chapter two, I expand on issues touched on in this introductory chapter. Postmodernism is further delineated in relation to painting. Questions of gender and power are explored within this framework. I relate these questions to both neo-expressionism and Neo-expressionism.

In chapter three I discuss notions of parody, and how these might be applicable to visual art. The issue of pluralism is an important consideration here. I have found Linda Hutcheon's writings on parody useful (1985, 1989). She provides a general definition of parody, and also explores more specifically, what might define a distinctively postmodern parody. I attempt to establish what constitutes parodic quotation of

Women have, for the most part, been excluded from the production of master narratives. It is for this reason (rather than reasons based on essentialist notions - for example that women by *nature* produce less 'aggressive' work), that painting becomes a potentially critical site for women.

I need to address next how this critical space, as formulated thus far, might be engaged in practical ways. To open up such a space I find it necessary to identify and explore in this dissertation, certain strategies which I use in my painting. Before discussing these, a brief outline of primary aspects of my practical research is necessary.

My practical research is diverse. Beginning from what might be considered 'orthodox' paintings (oil on canvas), my development has been marked by an increasing use of readymades. These readymades range from fast-food packaging to elaborate (holographic) giftwrap. Drawn from consumer culture, these provide me with fields, already inscribed, for painting. By painting onto these surfaces I hope to mark the way the so-called blank canvas too, is an already preinscribed field.

Whilst the iconography I use is varied, my choices of subject often reflect gender stereotypes and violence - themes in which both popular culture and high art are implicated. Here it becomes possible to look at the painted mark itself, more especially the expressive brushstroke, as a sign which, if it can not be considered gendered, can at least be seen to embody a set of values caught in a network of power relations.

My use of these above-mentioned features - preinscribed surfaces, particular iconography, and expressive brushmark - is intended to problematise the idea of painting. More specifically, I wish to problematise notions of authenticity, originality and discipline-specific purity connected to the expressive mode.

In order to engage with these problematics, I have identified three forms of strategic intervention into the language of painting - parody, metonymy and readymades. I am all too aware that the three forms I have identified here are of different orders, and I would not want to conflate them. Nonetheless, I apply the same term (strategy) to each form, as I need a method which enables me to explore aspects of my practice within a more or less coherent frame of reference. In addition,

> *To [this] position, a wide range of art is natural (what is thought more natural than freedom of expression?). But art is precisely unnatural - indeed, both art and freedom consist entirely and only of conventions (1982b:9).*

Owens' views are also relevant here. Like Foster, he tends to see forms of representation other than painting as holding greater possibilities for critique. In his article 'Honour, Power and the Love of Women', Owens argues that Neo-expressionism works to perpetuate notions of male mastery and genius (1992).

Pollock's position in this context is also useful. Like Foster and Owens, she is known to have found painting problematic, particularly in her earlier writing. However, in more recent texts she has made a case for painting (1992:138-176). In these more recent texts, Pollock shifts the terms of the debate somewhat, to concerns around questions of master narrative as critiqued by Foster and Owens, amongst others.[10] Pollock stresses the masculinist inscriptions of these master narratives, focusing on issues of gender and power. Through debate around these issues she demonstrates the very close and particular connections between painting, power and gender. Her argument in relation to expressionism directs us to the way particular features, such as the implication of artistic presence through the use of gestural mark, can be seen to encode masculine dominance. By focusing on Abstract Expressionism, she highlights particular issues such as the masculine aggression and virility encoded in expressionist painting.

> *[expressionist painting's] combination of gesture and trace ... secure by metonymy the presence of the artist. These inscribe a subjectivity whose value is, by visual inference and cultural naming, masculinity (1986:142).*

Despite her identification of this problem, Pollock sees greater possibilities for painting than does Foster, arguing that certain forms of painting might function as a critical intervention into masculinist discourse. Pollock's writing is important here as it is paradigmatic of the view that painting both should and can be reclaimed as a site which affords critical agency. Her view has been supported by more recent writings on the possibilities of painting for (especially) women artists.

- than as a *text* in a postmodernist sense - "already written", allegorical, contingent"(1983:x). It is important for me to mark the term intertextuality as it has emerged as a continuous thread in my own painting. It represents for me an interesting and challenging notion, for, whilst everything and anything could be argued to be intertextual, this view does not imply for me total arbitrariness. My intention in my own practice is one of resistance to an 'anything goes' approach. At the same time, I recognise that intertextuality is invariably inflected with problems of pluralism. The question that needs to be asked, is how might criticality function in this context? For me this is a fundamental question. A self-conscious deployment of a variety of texts, and maintaining these texts in some kind of formal and conceptual tension, might produce what I call a 'threshold' condition both in the production and reception of my painting. This threshold condition may be realised in a comp[illegible]algam of both easily recognisable forms and those which are less accessible. In certain ways, this condition could be seen as emblematic of the formal and conceptual differences commonly perceived as fundamental to modernist and postmodernist visual forms. In maintaining this threshold condition, I hope to achieve a play between ambivalence and directed criticality, and in so doing perhaps realise the potential to inscribe expressionist painting with a kind of productive criticality.

At this point it is appropriate to turn the discussion back to painting. More specifically, I need to reflect on issues around expressionist painting within postmodernism. Much of the painting practice I engage with in this discussion involves expressionism through the quotation of expressive codes. While a certain kind of (self-conscious) quotation is claimed by critics to give a work distance, expressionism is seen by many of these critics as a particularly difficult set of codes to work with critically. Foster argues this point in his discussion of Neo-expressionist painting. Foster proposes that expressionism is particularly problematic in terms of producing a critique of representation because "expressionism denies its own status as a language - a denial that is necessary given its claim to immediacy and stress on the self as originary"(1992:60). Foster points out that 'n denying its own status as language, expressionism claims itself to be a natural means of representation. He maintains that such a position is false:

ways in which an impression of spontaneity is produced. The other is the foregrounding of artistic persona. (Both happen, as I have discussed, through iconography as well as through manipulation of material). It is their particular relationship in this work which serves to reinforce the image of male mastery.[15]

Owens' views support this reading. Referring to Schnabel's work in general, Owens has, for example, described his brushmark as "violent"(1992:148). Owens gives far more attention than does Foster to the ways in which representation encodes a particularly male subjectivity. He discusses ways in which this male subjectivity is challenged through particular forms of practice, which could be loosely seen as feminist. Many see Owens' comments on this issue as a strong critique of masculinist discourse. Lee however, sees Owens' attention to the issue of feminism's relation to postmodernism as not unproblematic. She argues that he relegates feminist issues to a marginal position in relation to postmodernism (meaning that he sees feminism as partly a response to postmodernism, rather than as central to its development). For Lee, the "crisis of cultural authority" (for "cultural" one could substitute 'patriarchal' here) which determines postmodernism, is a direct *result* of feminist interventions. These interventions, are for Lee, "plainly the root cause of the postmodern crisis of cultural authority, and not merely a facet of it"(1987:10). (While my focus is not on the extent to which either Owens or Lee is correct, I cite their comments as a means of reflecting the complexities involved in determining how issues of representation are bound up with issues of power and gender).

It is of some relevance in this context to note that unlike a number of other postmodern forms and movements, Neo-expressionist art[16] are almost without exception male. The New Spirit exhibition for example, did not show the work of one woman artist.[16] This fact is all the more striking given the challenges to masculinist discourse prevalent in postmodern art of the time.

While my discussion of expressionist modes is necessarily focused around high art, I should also like to note some issues related to popular culture. Popular culture has adopted expressionist art as a favourite form of representation. This would seem to support the argument that expressionism in the postmodern context can no longer represent a subversive or critical position. The ways in which popular culture involves itself with high art are many and varied. I discuss one

of painting. The work in question, Exile, 1980 (fig.4), includes the artist's representation of himself. The issue of self-representation is important in this context. As was seen to be the case in relation to representations of Jackson Pollock (Namuth's pictures for example), one may be able to read off the representation to determine particular connections between artistic 'persona', gender, and power. While Jackson Pollock's photos are not self-representation, they can be seen in relation to Schnabel's self-represe tation, as reflecting similar dynamics.

In Exile, Schnabel juxtaposes various 'texts' - quotations of different styles of representation as well as found objects. Critics have commented to the effect that the artist presents "all of [these texts] as equal and on a horizontal plane"(Kent, in Wood et al (eds) 1993:235). This applies, it seems, even to his use of found objects: it would seem that Schnabel's found objects are not included in the painting in order to problematise iss.es of representation. Rather, as Charles Harrison and Paul Wood have noted, they are used to "energise the surface", and as such, are purely aesthetic devices.[14] These critics link this emphasis on the aesthetic directly to the production of certain stereotypes around artistic persona. They comment for example that "scale, gesture, energy, boldness, apparent conviction and so forth all serve to reinflate the sense of the artist as 'visionary'"(Harrison & Wood, 1993:233). Iconography such as the image of the artist depicted in classical priestly garb and the (male) prophet-like face in the upper right hand corner of the painting, reinforce this notion.

Such images can be seen to be closely bound to the expressionist concepts of the artist as godlike genius. With reference to this painting, Foster comments that Schnabel's "martyr-figures" (such as the artist/priest figure) recall a romantic notion of the "artist as outsider". He proposes that art such as this is directly connected to ideas of "the master work, the master artist"(1984:77). The notion of the romantic, linked as it is to terms such as passionate, impulsive, wild, may be seen to signal spontaneity quite overtly. These notions become further naturalized through iconography such as the basket of flowers which the artist holds - an overt reference to nature. (The flower arrangement might also perhaps - in that it alludes to certain 'traditional' still lifes - be a way of evoking the masterpiece). Two distinct features of Exile seem important here. One is the different

'innocently' reclaim for themselves. It is relevant that a position of innocence is connected here to aggression. This sort of connection seems to run along similar lines to Oliva's connection of gentleness and violence. I would suggest that gentleness, here, could also be read as innocence. Using the concept of innocence in relation to the notion of violence may well encourage a reading of violence as natural, innate.



Fig.4. Julian Schnabel, Exile, Mixed Media, 1980.

It may be useful at this point to study a particular Neo-expressionist work in more detail. The American painter Schnabel (included in the New Spirit show) has been among the most successful of the Neo-expressionists, and I use one of his works as emblematic of this mode

critiques the manner in which these painters represent themselves - namely through means which reinforce notions of the artist as genius and revive the sort of aura which usually surrounded the modernist artist. In relation to Francesco Clemente and Julian Schnabel, two leading Neo-expressionist painters, he comments:

> *Clemente poses on the cover of L'Uomo Voque and Schnabel is promoted as the new American hero, without even the residue of irony that accompanied Warhol's creation of himself as a brand name for the output of his 'Factory' (1989:114).*

It is of some relevance to this dissertation that both the New Spirit curators and Oliva (despite his comments on 'gentleness', cited earlier), identify violence as part of the Neo-expressionist philosophy. Interestingly, Oliva relates this violence to the American Abstract Expressionists.

> *The art of the trans-avantgarde, which embraces non-planning and non-control, and rejects any kind of control or restraint, is an expression of violence ... [I]t is not the first form of art as violence. We know of others, some in this century: expressionism for instance, or so-called American abstract expressionism (1982:137).*

Oliva links 'non-control' ('the expression of violence') quite directly to creativity and genius. In this way he forwards violence as an intrinsic part of the artmaking process. Artmaking is offered as an arena in which the artist may enjoy free play of (masculine) aggression and dominance. It might be said in fact that violence is encouraged here as the 'hallmark' of an artistic temperament. The New Spirit curators make connections to aggression through a slightly different channel, but like Oliva, invoke past expressive modes as ideal models. They mention some of Picasso's late work as emblematic of the type of practice they support. They note that his "powerfully expressive late work ... reembodies the spirit of a very young artist who gives form to his perception of the world in fresh, unsullied, aggressive images"(1981:16). The words "fresh" and "unsullied" in this context can be seen to reflect the notion of an innate form of representation - one which artists may

Subjectivity is presented unproblematically here. But, as Foster has pointed out, attempts made to "reclaim a lost reality through a new investment in subjectivity" may not be possible in the context of contemporary culture. This culture, Foster goes on to say, is one in which "subjectivity is no more exempt from reification and fragmentation than objective reality"(1992:75).

Elsewhere in the 'New Spirit' catalogue, we read that these are works which are "full of expressionism and devoid of mannerism"(Joachimedes, Rosenthal, Serota, 1981:11). While Oliva acknowledges the use (albeit uncritical) of various already institutionalised styles in Neo-expressionism, the curators of the New Spirit exhibition seem to suggest an art which is uninformed and unhampered by past convention(s). Expressionism is not acknowledged here as a term which refers to preformed styles and contexts, but is seen, rather, as a mode which conveys an originary self, an "individual creativity" (Joachimedes, 1981:15). As Foster notes however, with reference to Neo-expressionism, "the very term signals that expressionism is a gestuary of largely self-aware acts"(1992:59).

As in the case of Oliva's Trans-avantgarde, the New Spirit presents its artists as positioned outside social concerns: "In the end", the curators propose, "the only care is about the act of painting itself"(1981:13).

In his critique of the stance adopted by Neo-expressionists, Owens makes particular mentio.. of critics such as Oliva. He argues that the suggestion of 'essence' places the Trans-avantagarde in opposition to an art which can work to critique and transform ideas of representation. Like Foster, he argues that the Trans-avantgarde artists reflect tradition rather than originality (1992:143-155).

> *In "neoexpressionism" ... expressionism is reduced to convention, to a standard repetoire of abstract, strictly codified signs for expression. Everything is bracketed in quotation marks; as a result, what was (supposedly) spontaneous congeals into a signifier: "spontaneity"; "immediacy" (1992:148).*

In a broad discussion of what he perceives to be postmodernism's central features, Newman too, highlights the art of the Trans-avantgarde as problematic in terms of criticality. In particular, Newman

its appeal on ideological fixity, but dissolves in multidimensional digression"(1982:24). Elsewhere in the same text, Oliva elaborates on the point:

> *A gentle subject resides in the pictorial image of the trans-avantgarde. Gentleness, in this case, indicates an identity that has no reason for strong affirmations in the social context, and that restores the possibility for a non-declamatory accent in art ... Eclecticism is a further characteristic of this gentle identity of the artist, who tends to neutralize the differences, to close the gap, between different styles and the distance between past and present (1982:72).*

Further to this concept of a 'neutral' use of images which divorces itself from ideology, conscientised art is viewed by Oliva as self-punishing and repressive (1982:38). It could be argued that what Oliva is objecting to here is in fact the challenge made to the artistic (male) subject, as genius, as visionary, and as master. (Oliva frequently refers to the Trans-avantgarde artist as visionary). These characteristics are bound up with his assertion of an 'originary self'.

It may be useful here to look at some other examples of Neo-expressionist painting. In 1981 an exhibition titled **A New Spirit in Painting**, was shown at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, showcasing predominantly Neo-expressionist paintings. Oliva's views are to a large extent echoed in the text of the exhibition catalogue, in which the curators offer their reading of these works. The problematic raised for painting within postmodern discourse is largely ignored or refuted. It is suggested that painting is the form found most valid for a subjective sort of expression:

> *The subjective view, the creative imagination, has come back into its own and is evident in a new approach to painting. Artists, no longer satisfied with the deliberately objective view, are beginning to respond to their environment, allowing these reactions to be expressed in the form of images (Joachimedes, 1981:14).*

modernist movement), specifically, on those conventions which subject unconscious impulses to the laws of form and thereby rationalise them, transform them into images"(1992:149).

In accordance with the above view, Foster sees the pluralism of what he might term reactionary postmodern art, as a kind of corruption of modernist tenets (1984). Viewed in such a way, Neo-expressionism can be seen to be posed against both critical modernism and a critical postmodernism.[13]

It seems necessary here to examine Neo-expressionism more closely. Achille Bonita Oliva's concept of the 'Trans-avantgarde', as delineated in his book **Transavantgarde International** (1982), is regarded by many as the supreme definition of Neo-expressionism. Oliva has championed the cause of these painters and is popularly known as the 'inventor' of the Neo-expressionist movement. In reference to a number of Neo-expressionistic (or as he terms them Trans-avantgarde) works, Oliva tells us that "here the art of the last generation rediscovers the pleasure of timelessness, which consists in part of the recovery of languages, positions and methodologies pertaining to the past"(1982:11/12). In another passage he intones that visual language "is taken up as a style, in which the artist recovers the mark rather than the meaning"(1982:20). It seems appropriate to relate this comment to Foster's proposition that a reactionary or uncritical postmodernism occurs when artists simply manipulate signifiers within the forms they quote without consciously dismantling the logic of these forms. This contrasts to a critical use of "old signs", where, as Foster remarks, "[the artist] is a rhetorician who *transforms* logic"(1988:194) (my italics).

Oliva notes that the numerous juxtaposed quotations of signs or codes represent for the Trans-avantgarde, a "remastication of the past, but without hierarchies"(1982:52). The stance of the Neo-expressionists then, as represented in Oliva's text, is pluralist. For Foster, this pluralism blocks the possibility of a critical practice. He comments that "[a]s a term, pluralism signifies no art specifically. Rather, it is a situation that grants a kind of equivalence; art of many sorts is made to seem more or less equal - equally (un)important"(1992:15). Foster maintains that as a general rule "pluralism tends to absorb argument", rather than engage it (1992:13). The validity of this view is reflected in the following statement of Oliva's, in which he praises "a sort of mildness in [neo-expressionist] work, which no longer speaks peremptorily, nor bases

represents a conscious deconstruction of tradition through appropriation. He notes that:

> *In cultural politics today, a basic opposition exists between a postmodernism which seeks to deconstruct and resist the status quo, and a postmodernism which repudiates the former to celebrate the latter: a postmodernism of resistance and a postmodernism of reaction (1983:xi/xii).*

In a later text, Foster (1985) related the above contention more specifically to painting. Here Foster wrote that:

> *recently ... we have witnessed a resurgence in painting, not only a revival of old modes as if they were new, but also a retreat to old values as if they were necessary. Much of it is regressive - or rather, defensive (1988:197).*

Whilst these "old values" which Foster criticises, are those which characterize modernism, Foster, as I noted earlier, does not reject modernism per se. He complicates matters in this regard through his identification of a regressive *side* of modernism. This he notes as "the impulse toward autonomy, the desire for pure presence in art, the concept of negative commitment (ie., of criticism by withdrawal)"(1985:31). He proposes that "these and other tenets must be rethought or rejected"(1992:31). For Foster, Neo-expressionism is particularly representative of these regressive aspects, or moments, of modernism. Neo-expressionism he argues, represents a modernism which is "monolithic in its self-referentiality and official in its autonomy"(1984:75).

On the other hand, the transgressive and progressive spirit of the modernist project that Foster, Owens and others identify, is equally important here. This spirit can be summed up in Foster's term "adversarial"(1992:25). He refers to the "utopian and anarchic transgressions of the [modernist] avantgarde"(1992:23). Elsewhere, he asserts that "the critique of representation is originally a modernist imperative"(1988:193). Owens echoes these views in a comment directed at Expressionism in particular - (here his definition of modernism includes periods prior to Greenbergian modernism). "Expressionism" comments Owens, "was an attack on convention (this is what characterises it as a

reasons). They serve to support her reading of the works by emphasising virility, and more specifically aggression, in relation to certain expressionist works. In an article in which he supports Jackson Pollock's painting's as quintessentially American, Greenberg calls upon the "nativeness of such violence, exasperation and stridency"(1947:166) - a 'nativeness' which he sees as both American and part of Jackson Pollock's project. Greenberg again remarks on this aggression, in his review of an exhibition by Jean Debuffet and Jackson Pollock, where he comments about the latter artist and his work that (in comparison to Debuffet) "[Pollock] is American and rougher and more brutal"(1947:125). Here 'nativeness' is clearly connected to instinct, or nature.

The issues which (Griselda) Pollock raises around action painting and notions of expressionism are particularly relevant to critiques of postmodern painting today, especially the resurgence of expressionist concerns invoked by Neo-expressionist painting. This needs to be addressed in some detail.

The resurgence of painting in the 1980's, came at a time when "the act of painting itself had been declared anachronistic, defunct and potentially reactionary"(Lee, 1987:5). Like much modernist painting, a primary formal feature of this painting was the use of painterly, gestural, 'expressive' mark. Generally unlike modernist painting, the expressive was often juxtaposed with passages of other styles which ranged from the very painterly to the more linear or 'graphic'.[12] The difference claimed between Neo-expressionism and other expressionist movements, was the use of various artistic styles from the past, as well as images from popular culture. It should be stressed that this use of quotation was proposed as constituting a radicality, in the form of a self-consciousness apparently absent from earlier forms of expressionism.

One may argue however, that despite its claims of a new form of expression, Neo-expressionism *repeats* the values of the styles it quotes, and as such can be seen as regressive. Lee for one, has referred to this process of quotation as an undirected sort of picking "from out of the historical Jamboree bag"(1987:6). In this sense, Neo-expressionism can be seen to represent Foster's reactionary postmodernism, which he identifies as the uncritical appropriation of codes and images, as opposed to his critical postmodernism which

Pollock's movements around the canvas in the process of making the composition"(Harris, 1993:47). As the canvas is large, we may assume that Jackson Pollock is not only walking around it but also bending or stretching over it, - all fairly expansive movements. In this way the entire body of the painter is implied in the tracing of movement through mark. The arcs described by these lines could be seen to describe, quite literally, the size of the artist's reach: to act as a measure of his physical stature and force.



Fig.3. Jackson Pollock, Number 1 (1948), 1948.
Oil and enamel on unprimed canvas.

In the context of (Griselda) Pollock's views regarding gestural mark as gendered and encoding masculine virility, particular comments of Greenberg's in this regard are illuminating (but obviously for different

She argues that painting's legacy of sexual hierarchy is as evident in these action paintings, as it is in representational paintings where the male activity of painting as opposed to the passivity of the female sitter/model, is pictured directly. (Pollock uses Matisse's **The Painter and his Model**, 1917, as paradigmatic here) (1992:139).

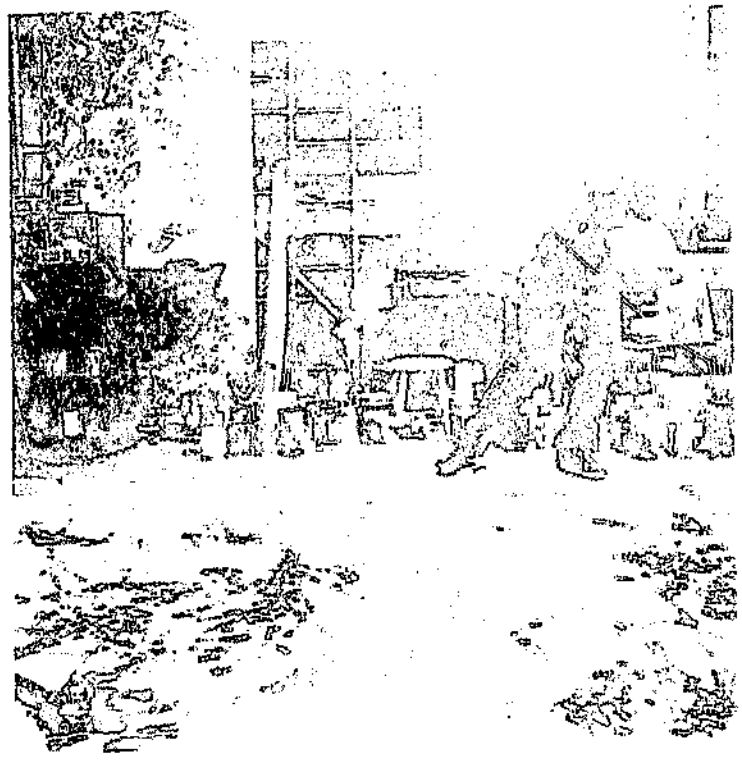


Fig.2. Photograph by Hans Namuth, 1950.
Jackson Pollock at Work

A closer look at one of Jackson Pollock's canvases may demonstrate how gestural mark can be seen to inscribe the sort of physicality referred to above.[11] In **Number 1 (1948)**, 1948 (fig.3) for example, the sweeping lines or drips of paint may be read as arcs which suggest "a record of

only with the problematic of painting, but with the more particular problematic contained in Expressionism. Oulton paints what appear to be 'spontaneous' expressive passages, but are in fact only signs for conventional notions of expression. The forms are emptied of iconography, and marks are painted with mechanical regularity.[6]

Gestural mark characterises Expressionist works - from German Expressionism to Neo-Expressionism. This mark has typically been judged as direct, spontaneous and unmediated - traces of artistic presence and genius.[7] This formulation is perceived as 'natural'.[8] If taken as such, and in relation to feminist critiques, this 'natural' position could logically be connected to the 'naturalizing' of a process of culture which encodes male dominance. Gestural mark may be seen, through the same logic, to be a sign of this dominance. In her article 'Painting, Feminism, History', Pollock critically examines Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock's practice of action painting. Jackson Pollock is generally seen as the quintessential modernist artist. (Griselda) Pollock[9] examines not only what she perceives his work to embody, but also the way this work (and working process) has been represented. She demonstrates this by drawing attention to a certain set of photographs of the artist taken by Hans Namuth (fig.2).

These photographs emphasise the artists's physicality by focusing on his activity as producer, as artist in action in the creative act, rather than on the paintings themselves. Representations such as these naturalise an idea of aggressive male physicality as a mark of authority, both in the artistic process and culturally. (Griselda) Pollock takes Namuth's photographs as emblematic of both the way this sort of work is generally regarded, and the claims made for it. She proposes that "Pollock's practice was critically valorized in different ways, all of which celebrate, however subtextually, a colonizing masculine mastery"(1992:142). This notion of mastery is implied through what we could refer to as the artist's 'possesssion' of the canvas Jackson Pollock can be said to possess the canvas in the sense that he treats it (and/or is represented as treating it) as a clean slate, or 'virgin' field which is natural, not culturally preinscribed. Here the field is a passive agent somehow. Namuth's photograph, by focusing on the painter's activity, emphasises this passivity. (Griselda) Pollock puts it that in these pictures we see the canvas "supine on the floor, receiving from his flurry of gestures the marks and traces of his presence and action".[10]



Fig.6. Jeff Koons, Rabbit (Stainless Steel).

In using objects which have already been copied so repeatedly, or are mass produced to begin with, Koons could be described as dealing with a parody of appropriation. The work has been described by one critic, for example, as "copies of copies of copies"(Smith, 1988b:), Koons replicates, or quotes, those objects in their entirety. While Koons' process of making "copies of copies of copies" could be read as a critique of stereotypes and the values accompanying mass production, these works are at the same time problematic.

The issues around parody become more complex when parody itself is parodied, resulting in a kind of double quotation. The use of double quotation reflects the unstable nature of postmodern parody, for here the modernist parody which enacts a "displacement or decentring" (Newman, 1989:141), is itself thrown into question. Issues of origin and authenticity become more complex through this process. Certain works by the American artist Jeff Koons are examples of this form of parody. His 'Statuary' series consists of a group of stainless-steel factory cast figurines and statuettes. Some of these are copies of long lost originals - the **French Coach Couple**, 1986 (fig.5) for example, being an early 20th century copy of a porcelain Rococo statuette initially intended as a lamp base. In other cases the source is contemporary. This is the case with **Rabbit**, 1986 (fig.6), a stainless steel version of the type of mass produced plastic inflatable bunnies that are sold at gas stations or supermarkets (fig.7).



Fig.5. Jeff Koons, French Coach Couple, 1986.

this lack of norm is problematic, for as he points out, parody relies on "that still latent feeling that there exists something normal compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic"(1983:114). Without this sense, Jameson argues, any attempted parody reads as blank appropriation (pastiche).

While Hutcheon proposes that postmodern parody by definition (albeit complicitous) holds possibilities for critique (the term pastiche being used to describe an uncritical quotation), others have felt a need to define what a specifically critical parody might be. Margaret Rose, in her book **Parody/Metafiction**, comments on how critical parody should operate. She proposes that this form of parody should, in its adoption of the values and devices of the target text, lay them bare (1979). To what extent this laying bare would involve a positioned critique is difficult to determine.

Postmodernist works, more often than not, differ from modernist works in the degree to which, and how, this 'laying bare' of the target text might occur. In his analysis of the major features of postmodern practice, Newman makes a clear distinction between modern and postmodern forms of parody. He regards the modern form as "parody which questions the *assumption* of authority or origin, so that the parodic text enacts their displacement or decentring", and postmodern parody as a parody "which *begins* with the assumption of the impossibility of authority, origin, full presence and so on".[7] The issues of origin and authority are important here. I see an acknowledgment of the impossibility of origin and authority as particularly relevant to a critical neo-expressionist painting, and fundamental to a critique of Neo-expressionist painting.

Newman admits that these catagories are perhaps over-generalised, and that we may encounter mixes and exceptions. Important here is his proposal that the parody he designates as postmodern is less critical than modernist parody. He views the move from modern to postmodern parody as "marking a shift from a strong to a weak form of nihilism", a nihilism which can no longer act as a subversion of dominant values (1989:141). The weaker form, he asserts, arises from a *"laissez faire"* position in postmodern culture, a position from which it makes no difference what an artist does, because "everything is permitted", and therefore "nothing is worth anything"(1989:141). Aspects of this nihilistic position could also be identified with pluralism.

To distinguish between pastiche and parody within postmodern quotation has, however, become difficult, and this difficulty is in fact part of the contradictory nature of postmodern practice. This is most marked in more recent postmodern practice.

Hutcheon's definition of parody is useful in relation to this point. As I noted, she defines parody as marking "difference rather than similarity"(1985:6). The issue of difference that Hutcheon includes as a determinant is important here in relation to Neo-expressionist painting. In my discussion of the Trans-avantgarde (Neo-expressionists) in chapter one, I noted that Oliva sees the *negation* of difference between old and new texts as desirable. Hutcheon's specification of "difference" then, would seem to highlight the fact that the Neo-expressionist use of quotation is closer to pastiche rather than parody. For Hutcheon a major difference between parody and pastiche is that, unlike parody, pastiche is never "transformational" in relation to the quoted text(s)(1985:38).

The difficulty in distinguishing parody from pastiche is connected to parody's paradox - namely, its complicit nature. As noted, any parodic quotation must, at the same time it is critiqueing, also be reinforcing the value of that which it critiques. Whether this paradox of complicity in parody precludes a critical practice has been cause for much debate. In her earlier writing, Hutcheon refers to parody both as "target" and as "tribute"(1985). As Hutcheon comments, "complicity always attends its critique"(1985:26). By being selected as subject matter, the quoted text is included where other representations are by necessity excluded (thereby marginalised), and in this way is given authority. Hutcheon in fact refers to parody as "authorized transgression"(1985:26). It is precisely this paradox of parody which critics such as Foster find problematic. Hutcheon proposes that postmodern parody is far more complicit in nature than modernist or pre-modernist parody. She suggests this complicity is due to the postmodernist rejection of "the resolving urge of modernism towards closure"(1989:99). This (postmodernist) rejection of closure can be understood in the unstable relationship between sign and signified in postmodernism.[6]

In contrast to Hutcheon, Jameson (not unlike Foster) sees parody as problematic in the postmodern context. He argues that postmodern culture has become a field of "stylistic diversity and heterogeneity" in which all sense of stylistic norm has disappeared (1983:114). For Jameson

Krauss's comments are focused on quotation's potentially critical function. Foster on the other hand, is more concerned with the potentially reactionary role it may play. Referring to visual quotation in general, Foster asserts that "[m]any artists borrow promiscuously from both historical and modern art. But these references rarely c ,age the source - let alone the present - deeply"(1985:16). He does however, acknowledge that certain postmodern artists *have* engaged these references in a way which is critical.[5] Like Foster, Crimp has indicated the need to determine a critical quotation (also referred to in this text as a parodic quotation). For Crimp it is the pervasiveness of quotation within postmodernism which determines a problem, for as he points out, "if all aspects of the culture use this new operational mode, then the mode itself cannot articulate a specific reflection upon that culture"(1985:157). One might conclude from Crimp's comment that a critical form of quotation should not only parody its target text, but should also parody quotation. At this point I wish to mark the fact that such a parody of quotation is especially pertinent to critiques of Neo-expressionist painting.

The quotation of expressionist codes, as discussion in chapter one will have indicated, is particularly problematic. In relation to the question of expressivity, Foster proposes that references to expressionism may become critical where expressionism is regarded as "more than an artistic style", and is treated as "an ideological site where discourses of many sorts meet and may be caught out"(1992:71/72). To implement such a practice, he suggests that a critique of notions of 'authenticity' is central. Notions of authenticity of course are not confined to the expressive (autographic) brushstroke. In postmodern culture, iconography and forms from popular culture which stress mechanical processes and mediation can be just as reified as the expressionist 'signature' of the artist.

The debates surrounding postmodernism foreground a heightened self-consciousness. While self-consciousness is necessary for parody, I would agree with Foster when he argues that even in cases where quotation is consciously intended as critique, this does not necessarily make for a critical practice. The writings I have made use of, suggest that an essential point in developing a c itical practice is the ability to distinguish between parodic quotation and pastiche. This needs to be stressed as a primary concern.

While I refer to Hutcheon's definition of parody in this dissertation in a broad sense, my use of the term is somewhat more specific and is not always aligned to hers. Hutcheon notes for example that "[parody's] range of intent is from respectful admiration to biting ridicule"(1985:16). I, however, do not identify parody with 'respectful admiration'. For me, parody needs to emphasise critique of an original text. While I understand that critique is, arguably, never guaranteed - given differences of context, presentation, viewing etc - I do want to stress that parody needs to be more positioned as targeting the original text than as giving it tribute.

Repetition is an integral part of parodic quotation. Parody necessarily involves the conscious repetition of a referent, and requires that the repetition of the referent, in whatever form, be recognised as such. Further on in this chapter I discuss the way in which issues of repetition become complicated within postmodernism.

The forms of quotation in question here are varied. For example, a work which contains the quotation of a single referent (as in Roy Lichtenstein's quotation of entire paintings by other artists) can be distinguished from works where different references (which we can also call texts) are juxtaposed. An example of this latter form would be Jasper Johns's use of both gestural mark and stencilled images within a single work. This juxtapositioning of different references is sometimes termed bricolage. Newman notes that bricolage has been used to describe " the combination of fragments of quotation from other works in a single work of art"(1989:132). While the term is more commonly used in relation to sculpture, it may also be applied to painting, drawing, mixed media works or other visual forms which are composed of varied texts. Rosalind Krauss discusses bricolage in terms of collage. She suggests that the use of collage might be seen to oppose "modernism proper"(1985:38). She continues by commenting that "collage operates in direct opposition to modernism's search for perceptual plenitude and unimpeachable self-presence. Modernism's goal is to objectify the formal constituents of a given medium, making these ... the objects of vision. Collage problematises that goal by setting up discourse in place of presence"(1985:38).

difference rather than similarity".[2] I use Hutcheon's analysis as a working definition of parody for my discussion. This is important as her writings on parody are frequently referred to by others in the field. However, I would suggest that parody is a more complex process than indicated through Hutcheon's definition. Her definition is curiously open - so much so as to embrace pluralism. She equates parody with what others might term pastiche.[3] (I discuss pastiche further on in this chapter).

In her book **A Theory of Parody**, Hutcheon addresses parody quite broadly, tracing its development historically and citing a number of ways parody operates. Those most important to this discussion are the functions of inverting and 'transcontextualising'(1985). The inversions and transcontextualisations Hutcheon identifies, refer to, for example, the way a particular text may be used against itself. In other words, the text is used in such a way that its original function, or meaning, is reversed. Transcontextualising - basically a use of different texts within one wo - could also be interpreted as a kind of intertextuality. In relation to the term, Hutcheon comments that "[p]arody's overt turning to other art forms implicitly contests Romantic singularity and thereby forces a reassessment of the process of textual production"(1985:5).

In a later text Hutcheon notes that postmodern parody differs from modernist and pre-modernist parody in important ways. Hutcheon describes postmodern parody as less stable and mor ambivalent than previous parodic forms. As a result of this instability, issues of quotation become more complex. This complexity is explored in her later book **The Politics of Postmodernism** (1989), where she shifts her position somewhat to adopt a more critical stance. Despite this shift her position is still basically pluralist. She maintains that most postmodern use of parody is critical rather than reactionary. This position is expressed in her general definition of postmodern parody, where she suggests that "postmodern parody is a value-problematising, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representation".[4] This pluralist position advanced by Hutcheon as having critical potential, is not in line with Foster's conception of a critical postmodernism. Nor is it the same as Crimp's definition of "progressive" as opposed to "regressive" appropriation. Both Foster and Crimp question the effectiveness o' parody as 'value-problematising' within postmodernism.

CHAPTER THREE: PAINTING PARODIED.

To deal with the problematic of painting as articulated thus far, in a way which is pertinent to my own art practice, certain formal and conceptual approaches have emerged as particularly useful. I have identified these approaches as parodic quotation, metonymic readings and the use of readymades. Whilst these approaches differ in form and function, I propose that they can be used in conjunction to facilitate a critical practice in painting.

To support my proposition I need to frame these three approaches - which from now on I term strategies - in slightly more general terms, as well as reflect on how they may operate in postmodern discourse.[1] In this chapter I concentrate on parodic quotation.

Parody is a complex term. Its use in visual art is not unrelated to that of other disciplines. It basically involves a conscious repetition of a pre-existing text (image), or part thereof, in a 'new' work. This repetition can take many forms and is differently termed according to context and use. The term quotation is, arguably, the term most commonly used currently to describe this repetition. The terms borrowing and appropriation are also commonly used. Unlike the term appropriation, which often has negative associations, quotation and borrowing are usually considered less value laden. Foster, however, sees quotation as in itself (generally) problematic. This is reflected in the fact that, unlike most critics (for instance Owens), Foster uses the terms appropriation and quotation interchangeably. Douglas Crimp is another critic who uses the term appropriation to refer to quotation, however Crimp, unlike most writers, uses the word in a more neutral sense. He makes a distinction between "regressive" and "progressive" appropriation (1985).

There is much debate as to when and how the repetition of an image or a text constitutes parody. Most writers argue that for a text to be parodic it should have some significant distance from, and critical relation to, the 'original' source. Linda Hutcheon has written quite broadly on parody, and her views are useful here in establishing certain broad features of the term as it applies to postmodernism. Hutcheon defines parody as "repetition with critical distance, which marks

Yuppie's choice par excellence, and it is hardly a secret in the art world that Schnabel's reputation in Europe was largely fabricated by the man without whom the English New-Right might never have risen from their tubular-steel armchairs: Charles Saatchi himself"(1988:79).

16 Roberta Smith comments on this in her review of the exhibition; "One factor which clearly mitigated against artists was being female. The nasty message implicit in the complete absence of women painters from this show, a message which also seemed to be reflected in the overblown canvases, is that painting is once again 'man's work'" (Smith, 1981:75).

17 Lust for Life, a 1965 movie about Van Gogh, is perhaps one of the better known examples. Another movie which centres on the act of 'creating' is Jan Vrijsman's The Reality of Karel Appel.

Mitchell's on 'the natural' are interesting here. Mitchell argues that "the notion of the image as a'natural sign' is, in a word, the fetish or idol of Western culture. As idol, it must be constituted as an embodiment of the real presence it signifies"(1986:90). I suggest that Abstract Expressionism might be seen as an instance of Mitchell's assertion.

9 Some confusion may arise in this section of the dissertation, through the similarity of names. In order to distinguish between Griselda Pollock and Jackson Pollock, I have always included the first names of both individuals, and in Griselda Pollock's case, have bracketed her name. Where the name Pollock appears in the rest of the dissertation, the reference (unless otherwise indicated) is to Griselda Pollock.

10 Elizabeth Frank notes how the particulars of Jackson Pollock's physical appearance within Namuth's photographs work to increase ideas of artistic presence and genius: "Pollock's brooding appearance in the Namuth photos, his cowboy boots and denim, and the ever-present cigarette dangling from his lips or held nonchalantly between his fingers no doubt helped to deflect attention away from his paintings and onto himself, ultimately feeding a popular view of the artist as an inspired existentialist savage"(Frank, 1983:85).

11 (1992:142). The notion of gesture in Pollock's painting is not archetypally expressionist in that there are no actual brushstrokes laid down. Artists such as Willem de Kooning show more clearly the legacy of German Expressionism, and form the aesthetic basis of postmodern Neo-expressionism. However, Pollock's work is important here for the way that he has been represented, - the particular ways that his painting activity reflects notions of physicality and artist's presence.

12 While a few examples of other disciplines are cited as part of the Neo-expressioonist project by its proponents (the bronze sculptures of the Italian artists Sandro Chia, Enzo Cucchi and Mimmi Paladino for instance), the recuperation of painting can be seen as the core of the project.

13 Some have critiqued the notion that a progressive postmodernism could be aligned to the critical moments of modernism. The critic Michael Newman for example, writing in the late 1980s, argues that the modernist model of critique is inappropriate in the present social context, and that a concept of critique formed in opposition to Greenbergian modernism is now irrelevant (Newman, 1988:95-154).

14 (Harrison & Wood, 1993:233). Although I use the term readymade in relation to other works, the term found object seems more appropriate to Schnabel's painting: the 'natural' objects (animal horns) which he makes use of here are not readymades in the sense that a manufactured object is, nor are they marked by him in any way that suggests that he intends them to be read as pre-given.

15 In relation to the question of Schnabel (and Neo-expressionism in general) as being somehow radical, it is interesting to look at a comment made by Peter Fuller on the issue. In response to the accusation that he shows conservatism by rejecting Schnabel's work, he makes the following rather cutting observation to point out that the exact opposite is in fact the case. "Schabel was the

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1 An eclectic approach is appropriate to and in keeping with my own painting. This type of approach is also, not unproblematically, a feature of postmodernism.

2 (Greenberg, 1965). The assertion of flatness is also a feature of Greenberg's modernism. While it is not a primary consideration in this context, it is implicated through the other issues, and needs to be noted.

3 Newman questions the usefulness of taking the Greenbergian model of modernism as antithetical to postmodernism. He comments that this may be a way of reinforcing the centrality that Greenbergian modernism accords painting. He also questions the general relevance of this model to postmodern practice. For his arguments around this point, see Newman (1989:32-50).

4 Christine Battersby points out that the modernist notion of genius, as inherited from the Romantics, is based on a "logic of exclusion", which serves to reinforce, among other things, male/female divisions (1989:6).

5 (Pollock, 1992) (Lee, 1987). I wish to stress that this position is not essentialist. I should also mention that I do not see critical painting practice as relevant to women artists alone.

6 According to Lee, Oulton produces abstract rather than figurative images not "as a deliberately obscuring device, but in order to prevent the naming or 'fixing' of things". This strategy, she goes on to say, "is an intention which is based on the view that the recognition of an object implies the colonization, the possession of it"(1987:19). Other strategies, such as the production of multiple meanings (through, for example, a deliberately ambiguous use of iconography), which I discuss in more detail in further chapters, could also be used with this intention in mind.

7 It is important for me to qualify what I mean by gestural mark in this context. Here the term indicates not only the archetypal broad expressionist brushstroke (evident in, for example, de Kooning's paintings), but also refers to other types of (painted) mark which could be described as autographic, as *visible trace* of the artist's hand. What is important here is the idea of the mark as constituting artistic presence and authenticity.

8 I find it useful, in this context, to define the natural in relation to the concept of naturalization. **The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literacy and Cultural Criticism** outlines this concept as follows: "According to the concept of naturalizaton, what is 'natural' in any given society - what is accepted as self-evidently and transcendentally 'true'- is actually *historically* constructed. 'Natural' knowledge has been *naturalized*; that is made to *seem* natural by means of ideology"(Childers & Hentzi, 1995:202). The concept of naturalization could be said to oppose essentialism. Certain comments of W.J.T.

example here, which I feel to be relevant to the notion of 'naturalness' which is implicated within (neo)expressionism. One of the ways in which popular culture evidences this fascination with the spontaneity of expressionist works, is by concentrating on the actual moment when the outpouring of expression takes place. This has resulted, for example, in numerous movies about artists in which the actual act of making is a central feature of the movie.[17] Philip Hayward is one critic who has remarked on the point. He refers for example, to cinema's "extreme fetishization of the actual moment of creation"(Hayward, 1988:8). This focus on the production of the work is not at all the same as its occurence in certain postmodern artworks, where production is made transparent in order to *dispel* the mystique of the 'creative act'. Such artworks often reveal that the work is produced in a real world, where for example, the size of an artist's workplace or the type of space where the work is exhibited, may play as great a part in determining the end result as does 'creativity'. (Popular) cinema on the other hand, accentuates the 'making' process in order, arguably, to depict 'creativity' flowing from the artist and so emphasise the means of representation as natural. Thinking of Pollock's method of action painting, it might not be inappropriate to see it as playing into the hands of popular culture's 'fetishization' of the 'creative' act and the commodification that comes with it.

My intention in this chapter has been to frame some of the central issues around expressionist painting in postmodern discourse. My aim has been to set in motion a process whereby I am able to work through a set of assumptions about painting which I believe should be challenged. This process may facilitate (both in the dissertation and in my painting) a space for a re-articulation of painting in a way which tries not to reproduce the values inherent in these assumptions. Part of this process, is to reveal that the apparent naturalness of the expressionist mode is in fact a construction. Here I would like to cite Foster once more. Referring to the divide which he marks between critical and reactionary postmodernism, he notes that:

> *whereas [reactionary] art refers so as to elicit a given response and regards the reference as natural, the return to history as certain, [critical] art refers to question the 'ruth-value of representation (1985:214).*

CHAPTER FOUR. METONYMY.

In this chapter I explore metonymy as a strategy to facilitate a critical practice in expressionist painting. However, as I have already indicated, it is the way metonymy may function in relation to the other strategies I have identified (namely parody and readymades) which makes it a viable pursuit. Before examining some of the features of metonymy relevant to this dissertation, I need to make a few general comments concerning metonymy's relation to parody. (Metonymy's relation to readymades will become clear through my discussion in chapter five).

As already noted, for parody to function successfully, certain semantic features of the parodied image must be evident in order for the viewer to make basic assumptions. (The parodied image should be well-known, even 'public knowledge'). In postmodern practice, the form of repetition necessary for parody is often called quotation (as noted). Whilst repetition (which may function as quotation) is a necessary condition for parody, it is not a necessary condition for metonymy. This does not mean, however, that metonymy does not ever involve certain forms of repetition.

Unlike parody, metonymy is not a formal or conceptual device deployed in the production of images. One cannot, for instance, talk of 'metonymizing' an image, as one can talk of parodying an image. Metonymy has more to do with the reading of an image. This reading is not guaranteed by formal and iconographic elements in the work *itself*. However, I suggest that a certain kind of manipulation of formal and iconographic elements within individual works, and in these works' relation to other works in a given physical space, can 'induce' metonymic readings in the spectator.

As I have proposed earlier in my discussion, metonymy as a strategy, in relation to parody, is by way of dialectical practice. It is important to stress here that the metonymy accords "a kind of privacy to language"(Orton, 1987:172), which counterpoints the shared cultural experience of signs (of familiarity of the referent) which characterises parody. Metonymic readings foreground contiguity. A result of this contiguity is the accentuation of the physical relationships of things.

trappings"(1992:76). These trappings might include a large canvas, traditional framing (usually gilded, carved or heavy-looking) and serious thematics, often stressing the conventional 'artist-versus-society' crisis, which would include the positioning of the artist as a romantic.

11 A foregrounding of repetition within postmodern art can be connected to the way in which the mediation of images (implicating mass production/ mass culture) predominates postmodern culture in general.

Foster has marked as particularly difficult to use critically. He comments that "a kind of consummativity is active in art that uses imagery from popular culture"(1992:28).

6 It is necessary to define my use of the terms sign and code here. For the purposes of this dissertation, sign is defined in accordance with Ferdinand de Saussaure's linguistic sign system. Here the sign is "a two-part entity composed of signifier and signified, as distinct from the referent which is the 'real thing referred to'"(Joselit, 1993:57). In linguistic terms, the signifier is the "material word; its letters and sounds; the signified is the concept it represents"(Joselit, 1993:57). Pierre Guiraud puts it that codification can be described as "an agreement among the users of a sign: they recognise the relation between the signifier and the signified and respect it in practice"(Guiraud, 1975:25). Codification can therefore be seen as necessarily based on convention. Guiraud notes that "codification ... is a process: usage renders the sign more precise and extends the convention. The more precise and widespread the convention, the more the sign is codified"(1975:25). A code then can be defined as "a system of explicit social conventions"(1975:41). (In chapter three, I discuss Roman Jakobson's theory of codification in relation to metonymy. While Jakobson's linguistic system differs from the Sassaurian model, this alternative conception of code is not, to my mind, in conflict with my use of sign and code in the rest of this dissertation).

7 (Newman, 1989:141). Modernism in this context does not refer to Greenbergian modernism in particular, but is used as a heuristic term. (Modernism is generally regarded as being the predominant cultural mode from about 1900 up until (and including) the 1940's. It is course difficult to put exact dates onto cultural movements, and critics differ widely in their opinion on these dates. Some critics (for example Jurgen Habermas) have called modernism "an incomplete project", and insist that modernism is still the dominant cultural form (1983:9).

8 It is worth noting a much earlier theory which deals, albeit in different terms, with the same issue. Here I refer to Walter Benjamin's The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, written in 1936. Benjamin argues that the idea of the creative genius, and the aura which surrounds 'high art' acquire authority from the fact that the artwork is unique and handmade. He asserts that the 'mechanics of reproduction' could be used to challenge this authority, and expose the false nature of this aura (Benjamin, 1969). Benjamin's ideas become complicated through postmodernism, where high art and popular culture become implicated in similar problems.

9 (1988:30). Baudrillard's theory has been problematised by others. Unlike Baudrillard, these critics do not propose reality as an objective concept which can be separated from signs unproblematically. Newman for example, asks "isn't [Baudrillard's] model of realism a rather outdated one, a simple correspondence of words or images (icons) with an external reality of things?" (Newman, 1989:137).

10 (Foster, 1992:76). Some features of these works which work towards the simulation of an authentic or original art, are what Foster calls "masterpiece

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1 Malcolm Bowie refers to metonymy as "a mode of connection within the signifying chain"(1979:129). Whilst I see metonymy in terms of a strategy in the context of this dissertation, I realise that this is also problematic. Unlike parody, metonymy is not always consciously produced, and may occur, rather, as a result of a paticular use of other visual strategies, such as repetition. Nonetheless, for my purposes here, the term strategy is appropriate.

2 (Hutcheon, 1985:6). Hutcheon discusses parody as both a pragmatic strategy and a formal structure. She remarks that "the act and form of parody are those of incorporation, its function is one of seperation and contrast"(1985:34). One of the reasons that Hutcheon's concept of parody is appropriate to this context, is that unlike certain other writers (for example Margeret Rose, whose com ents I include in the chapter) she does not limit the term to the use of humour or ridicule. Hutcheon sees the "insistence on the presence of comic effect" as a restrictive application of the term, in light of the range of contemporary parody (1985:20). Another reading of parody is interesting to look at here. Some critics have examined quotation and parody in terms of allegory, as allegory basically involves the reading of one text through another. For Owens, the "allegorical impulse" is a defining feature of postmodern culture (Owens, 1992:52 et passim). Hutcheon proposes that the term parody may be substituted for allegory to describe postmodernism's reference to past texts (Hutcheon, 1989:95). Allegory needs to be mentioned here as it has been applied to a number of postmodern texts; however in this dissertation the terms allegory and parody will not be conflated.

3 Pastiche, like parody, involves the mimicking or repetition of certain styles or forms. But, as Jameson comments, "it is a neutral practice of such mimicry... [Pastiche] is without "parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse"(1983:114). For Hutcheon a major difference between parody and pastiche is that, unlike parody, pastiche is never "transformational" in relation to the quoted text(s)(1985:38).

4 (Hutcheon, 1989:94). As Hutcheon's comment suggests, parody usually involves some degree of irony. In her earlier writing, Hutcheon in fact notes that "irony is the major rhetorical strategy deployed by [parody]"(1985:25). Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi offer a definition of irony which is useful here: "Irony is a rhetorical trope that involves the creation of a meaning different from - and often opposite to - the meaning one would normally expect in a certain situation or associate with a given word or phrase. According to this most basic definition, to be ironic is to say one thing and mean another"(Childers & Hentzi, 1995:160). For Hutcheon, as I noted, 'critical distance' between the text(s) being parodied and the new text, is fundamental to parody. She suggests that it is irony which encourages the viewer to read this critical distance. Owens notes that as a trope "irony is ... calculated to expose false consciousness" (1992:149). He suggests that in this respect, Neo-expressionist paintings can be seen to preclude irony (1992:149).

5 Certain works by American artists Sherrie Levine and Gretchen Bender for example, are seen by Foster to engage references in a critical way (1992:72/73). Interestingly, both artists often include references from popular culture, which

the Trans-avantgarde (Neo-expressionism). This, in an obvious way, would constitute a double quotation and would in some respects doubly complicate notions of authenticity and originality, and in certain ways, discipline-specific purity. Terry Eagleton in fact remarks that what really constitutes postmodern parody is a "parody of the 20th Century avant-garde"(1985:60).

engage issues of difference and repetition simultaneously. Postmodern parody used in this way can be important in contesting the production of stereotypes, for as Owens notes "mass production and the social logic of homogenisation which it entails work to eliminate difference"(1992:119).

Jameson argues that emphasising difference may be the only way to produce a critical (parodic) quotation. (As I noted earlier, he views the production of a parodic quotation as almost impossible within postmodernism). Jameson's argument, expressed in his concept of 'cultural revolution' is viewed by Foster as fundamental to critical practice (1992:176-179). Jameson's concept of 'cultural revolution' focuses on the particular way in which quoted texts are used in relation to one another. The central point of the concept involves an insistence on *conflict* or *tension* as a necessary condition of the relation between different quoted texts. Jameson points to the fact that in any cultural moment, several modes of production are happening simultaneously. Some of these modes are vestiges, others are only emerging. These modes each represent the interests of different social groups within the culture, and are ideologically in conflict. Jameson argues that practice can only be termed critical if it serves to reveal this conflict. In this way, dominant ideologies and representations (which speak only for some) may be challenged (Jameson, 1981). Foster writes that:

> *[C]ultural revolution stands for a critical activity that reactivates the conflictual history of sign-systems so as to break through the (ahistorical) logic of the code as well as the formalist discourse of academic disciplines (1992:177).*

Within the concept of cultural revolution, what is finally important is that we see a tension between modes and sign-systems, which serves to undermine the idea that any social moment is total and absolute, or that any sign-system or mode of representation is a natural one.

The intention to *expose a conflict or tension between texts* is of central importance to the question of parody. I hope that the various arguments and approaches I have explored in this chapter, also serve as a pointer to discussion of my own painting, a significant aspect of which includes a kind of postmodern parody that I will only hint at, at this stage. This is the parody of the avant-garde itself. Implied in this parody would be

particularly problematic. The prime example here perhaps, is the Neo-expressionists, who, by referring to various pre-existing artworks, simulate authenticity and originality.[10] He proposes that to enable critique, visual practice should also be "critical of simulation as a mode"(1986:90).

A conscious manipulation of repetition may provide a method of dealing with the problems which simulation raises. Hutcheon suggests that when the same quotation (form, icononography etc.) is repeated, parodic quotation may function more effectively as 'target' rather than 'tribute'. The process of repeating the quotation, she proposes, challenges the authenticity of the parodied or quoted text so that parodic intent becomes clear. Viewed in this way, repetition might be seen as a way of foregrounding the code or sign to the point that it becomes apparent as a convention or construction. This could perhaps be compared to the way in which a word, repeated over and over again, starts to lose its meaning and becomes obvious as a sound, seemingly divorced from any particular meaning. I suggest that because the [illegible]ess is *deliberate*, this dislocation of the sign from its conventional accepted meaning is different from the 'ahistorical', 'decontextualised sort of quotation which Foster finds incompatible with critique. Ensuring that the use of a certain kind of repetition may facilitate critique, involves of course, more than the presence or absence of deliberate intent. I feel it necessary to develop the issue a little further.

In postmodern practice, repetition is foregrounded as a primary characteristic.[11] It is important to note that this happens in different ways. These include for example, the repeating of images within the pictorial frame, and/or the repeating of codes and formats within a body of work. This may be described sometimes, as a sort of serial production. An example of this serial production is the postmodern artist Cindy Sherman's series of photographic self-portraits in which she adopts various feminine stereotypes in a sort of masquerade. "The significance of her work", Owens notes, "resides in the permutations of identity from one photo to the next"(1992:119). While the repeated handpainted image raises some different issues to those raised through repetition by mechanical reproduction, it is often used to comment on notions of authenticity and artistic aura in much the same way that mechanically produced images operate. A conscious use and manipulation of this (relative) inexactness, may be used to critically comment on issues of authenticity and spontaneity. Seriality is often used to

> *transformation: from what he calls 'realism', to 'modernism', and now to 'postmodernism'. For Jameson, 'postmodernism' is the new 'cultural dominant' of late capitalism (Harrison & Wood,1993:237).*

The particular ways that postmodern cultural forms (for example, painting, cinema) reflect these elements of consumer culture, reproduces the logic of this social moment. Thus, according to Jameson's formulation, the quotation of popular culture in postmodern artworks would be problematic, perhaps impossible, as a means of critiquing dominant values.

Using a somewhat different formulation to Jameson, Foster also refers to the way that postmodern practice lifts and re-places (therefore displaces) images, and what this means for possibilities of a critical practice. Foster points out that particular problems are raised for parody in the postmodern context because of the fact that our entire culture gives privilege to the sign. Here Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation, in its broadest terms, is of major relevance (Baudrillard, 198[illegible]). While Baudrillard's views are not a central concern in this dissertation, it is important to mention simulation as a significant form of postmodern quotation or parody. Simulated images (simulacra), in Baudrillard's formulation, have no referent in the real (material) world. They reflect what, for Baudrillard, governs the postmodern condition - a never-ending circulation of signifiers. This circulation of signifiers forms a sign system that is always (and only) referring to itself. Simulation differs from the idea of the copy. Unlike the copy, the simulacrum (simulated image) has no referent in the real (material) world. It is always derived from other representations. Baudrillard sees this sign system (of simulacra) as representative of dominant ideology. He notes that "[i]deology only corresponds to a betrayal of reality by signs".[5] Using Baudrillard's formulation, critical representation must entail challenging the truth value of the sign. Thus the sign itself must be the object of critique. Here we may be able to see how quotation is implicated, for, as Foster puts it, "appropriation becomes problematic ... because it is predicated on the logic of the sign, not a critique of it"(1992:173).

Foster sees a certain conscious use of simulation as potentially critical. However, he also notes instances of simulation which are

kind of metaphor, the experience of the schizophrenic individual to describe the postmodern human condition. For Jameson, this schizophrenia inhibits the development of a critical postmodernism. In his view, certain forms of quotation are symptomatic of this schizophrenia. He notes that the schizophrenic has no understanding of temporal continuity. He or she lives in "a p erpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future ..."(1983:119). Our identity, Jameson points out, is made up of our sense of our own personal history. The schizophrenic, in this framework, is 'no-one', in the sense of having no personal identity. He remarks that "schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent se ;uence"(1983:119). Jameson goes on to argue that the sort of postmodernism which results from this state is at one with modern consumer society, and it therefore "replicates or reproduces - reinforces the logic of consumer capitalism"(1983:125).

His writing is emblematic of the concern in postmodern debates which focus on the relationship between 'high art' and popular culture. Commenting on "the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture"(1983:112), Jameson argues that this feature of postmodernism is in most cases problematic. Jameson relates his points to cultural forms such as popular movies (for example 'Star Wars' and 'Raiders of the Lost Ark'). While the features he examines in these particular works may not have direct relevance to my arguments, what is significant here is the *fact* of such texts (examples of popular culture) being examined in the same context as high art. I have noted this aspect of his writings because of the way it reflects a major feature of postmodern intertextuality - "the effacement of some key [cultural] boundaries or separations"(Jameson, 1983:112).

It is clear that for Jameson, mass culture and postmodernism need to be discussed together. Jameson writes that "the emergence of postmodernism is closely related to the emergence of ... consumer, or multinational capitalism"(1983:125).

> *For [Jameson], just as the productive base of capitalism has moved through different stages, from competitive capitalism, through monopoly capitalism, to mul'tnational (or 'late') capitalism, so the terms of cultural expression have undergone epochal*

the original text is not, in the end, addressed is of course a point that could apply to any use of parody. The question that could be asked here is, is this self-referentiality that different from the formalism of modernism?

I now move on from the sort of parody of quotation (or 'double quotation') which Koons' work exemplifies, to return to more general questions around parodic quotation. I have noted thus far that Foster sees quotation in general as deeply problematic for the production of a critical practice. He argues that this problem is compounded by the nature of pluralism, which as I noted earlier, posits all cultural positions and cultural forms as generally equivalent. Foster proposes that "as pluralism is without criteria of its own, old values are revived, ones necessary to a market based on taste and connoisseurship, such as the unique, the visionary, the genius, the masterpiece"(1992:17). Foster's point of the artist as visionary and the artwork as unique, is particularly appropriate to problems of painting explored in the previous chapter (exemplified by Neo-expressionist artist Julian Schnabel's work Exile).

If it is true that all cultural positions and cultural forms are equivalent from a pluralist perspective, then a practice of this sort could lose the dimension of the social. This detachment from any historical specificity is a phenomenon which Foster refers to as the "ahistorical" nature of much postmodern practice (1992:16 et passim). He argues that instead of engaging historical forms in order to deconstruct them, postmodernism of this kind "tends to assume historical forms - out of context and reified"(1992:16). This problem of 'ahistorical' practice as Foster sees it, is embodied in, and compounded by, certain forms of quotation. Foster points out that when the quoted or appropriated texts are placed outside of their original context (thereby losing their connectedness to the relevant particular socio-political condition), there is a danger that they will be naturalized.[8]

Jameson addresses this idea of the loss of context brought about through the process of quotation, in a different way, (Jameson's views are useful here as he examines postmodernism from a broader perspective than the other critics referred to so far). In his essay 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' he refers to what he calls the "schizophrenic experience" in postmodernism (1983:118). Jameson uses as a

In these two works (as with the rest of the works which make up the **Statuary** series), material seems to be marked by Koons as important in terms of parody. Its effectiveness in this respect is, however, debatable. The stainless steel intensifies certain qualities of the copies which Koons uses as reference. A brief look at the effects which result from this use of material may show why determining criticality in these works is problematic.

In the case of the **French Coach Couple**, the fluidity and reflective quality of the steel accentuates the florid style of the statuette, while simultaneously serving to confuse the forms, so that the generalised 'bad' casting, typical to cheap mass produced goods, is emphasised. In the case of **Rabbit**, the steel accentuates in a different way: reflection and fluidity intensify the taut, bland quality of the (originally plastic) surface. In **Rabbit**, the steel seems to accord the figure a sort of monumental quality, so that it could be read as a kind of trophy. While one might see this as a parody of the transient, 'junk' status which the plastic rabbit actually has, and a critical comment on America's elevation of its consumables to icon-like stature, a case for collusion could also be argued. The intensification of the copied figurines' features, coupled with the alluring visual quality of the steel, might lead one to conclude that the overriding function of this steel is one of seduction.

Koons has made comments which indicate that he may in fact want the viewer to be seduced. With reference to a series of works called **Banality** (objects chosen for their 'kitsch' value), he comments "I wanted to remove their [the bourgeois class's] guilt and shame about the banality that motivates them and which they respond to ... so that they can embrace what motivates them and what they respond to"(Koons, in Muthesius, 1992:28). This route which Koons suggests the viewer takes to overcome a culture which, as he put it, "debases" them (through seduction), is at the very least, problematic. It would seem that ultimately he invites the viewer to submit to consumer culture rather than view it critically. Here, the viewer is made into a dupe of sorts.

Rose has said of this sort of quotation that: "the conscious use of parody to parody parody, may be seen to lead the parodist only deeper into a maze of self-reference"(1979:156). The danger then, from Rose's point of view, is that the values attached to the 'original' text (that which is parodied), are never addressed or challenged. The danger that



Fig.7. Jeff Koons, Inflatable flower and bunny.
(Tall yellow, Pink Bunny) 1979, (reference for Rabbit).

this context, is his **Box in a Valise**, 1963 (fig.8), comprising a box and various objects put out on display. Among these objects are reproductions of paintings. In grouping these painted images with a collection of objects - all of which could be read as readymades - Duchamp produces the conditions whereby the painted images may themselves be seen to be readymades.

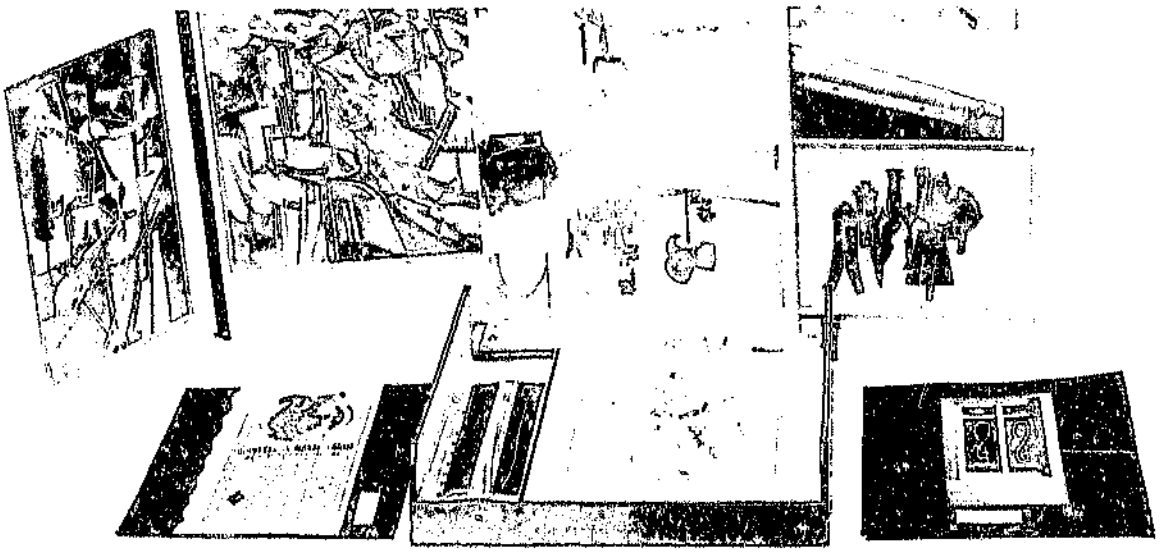

Fig.8. Marcel Duchamp, **Box in a Valise**, 1963.
Mixed Media (box with 68 objects).

Also significant here are Duchamp's own comments regarding his use of readymades. These comments reflect his view that anything constitutes a potential readymade. This could even include the processes of conscious thought, that is, thought marked by a certain kind of

CHAPTER FIVE: READYMADES.

While I have identified the use of readymades as a strategy, I propose that it is only in conjunction with the other conceptual 'tools' - parody and metonymy - that readymades come into operation as such. By defining readymades in this context (as part of, and in relation to, parody and metonymy), it should become clear that I do not perceive readymades as objects or formal devices alone. I use the term to refer to both 'thing' and process. These could be represented for instance, by 'expressive' brushmark, and by the pre-given field (canvas). I use the term readymades rather than found object or *objet trouve* for particular reasons. One reason is that the term readymades stresses the sense that the objects in question are manufactured rather than natural (a natural object, in this context, being for example a sea-shell). The term found object seems more neutral in this respect. The stress on the manufactured quality of the object is important in view of my concern with popular culture and the notion of reproduction. My other reason for the choice of the term is that I use it to indicate something pre-given or preformed. This might include for example, pre-given images or 'readymade' pre-given surfaces.

The term readymades (or 'the readymade') is now part of the language of art. Its use reflects critically on concepts of originality and authenticity amd undermines the apparent coherence of discipline-specific purity of medium. The notion of readymades has been seen, historically, to have raised questions around definitions of art. It would be inappropriate to discuss readymades without referring to the work of Marcel Duchamp (1887 - 1968), who first introduced readymades into the institution of art. The most commonly cited of these readymades are his famous Bottlerack ,1914, and Urinal, 1917. But what is probably of more significance in the context of this research, is Duchamp's use of images and texts as readymades. Here I refer to the Mona Lisa image, L.H.O.O.Q, 1919, and a work comprising his own words (a copy, typed out by the artist, of a speech made by him in 1961) which he titled Apropos of Readymades, 1961. Another interesting work, in

NOTES.

1 For an extensive definition of metaphor see Childers and Hentzi, (eds) (1995).

2 The use of the word reading, in relation to postmodern art, may be connected, among other things, to the shift within postmodernism from *work* to *text*, a shift which reflects intertextuality. See for example Foster (1985).

3 Fiske interprets Jakobson's writing on metonymy differently to critics such as Fred Orton. Orton sees this relation of part to whole as being only one 'type' of metonymic relation.

4 Silverman notes that in a similar way, metaphor, paradigm and condensation may be associated for the fact that "all three derive from the perception of similarity"(1983:87). For a detailed account of this, see 'Similarity and Contiguity' in Silverman (1983).

5 While the relation between written text and image is not of central importance in this dissertation, I feel it relevant to mention the point for the fact that it highlights the (often) very textual nature of the serial form, as it is used in postmodern art.

Two aspects of metonymy seem to emerge as important here. One is the relationships of *contiguity* which metonymy plays on, the other is the relative *privacy* of language implicit in metonymic readings. While these two aspects or functions are distinct, they are also related: both of them play a part in foregrounding intertextuality.

quote again a comment of Pollock's (previously cited in the introduction). She notes that "[expressionism's] combination of gesture and trace ... secure by metonymy the presence of the artist"(1986:142).

I touch on this problematic aspect of metonymy for the same reason that I cite both Oliva's and Dibosa's use of metonymy. Namely, to highlight the fact that no terms or strategies examined in this research, metonymy included, are viewed as in and of themselves effective - that is to say critical - in absolute ways. They are 'open' processes. It is the particular ways in which processes are mobilised which produce the conditions for critical intervention.

At this point, I would like to touch on certain aspects of repetition which are often implicated in metonymy. One such form of repetition is seriality. Seriality has frequently been discussed as a device which can be seen to place a certain modernist singularity into question. Mary Kelly, in her text **On Representation, Sexuality and Sameness**, addresses seriality as a strategy which "breaks down modernism's holy paradigm: the single, essentially expressive and preferably non-discursive picture"(1987:102). Kelly sets metonymic 'readings' up in her own practice. For example, in the series of works which make up **Postpartum Document, 1973 - 1979**, she uses multiple representational systems which include human traces (in this case, the handprints of her child, among other things). This reflects her position that "there's no single theoretical discourse which is going to offer an explanation for all forms of social relations or for every mode of political practice"(Kelly, 1982:33). Seriality in this form, interestingly, often includes written text as well. Inclusion of written text more often than not introduces a different discursive framework into the 'visuality' generally seen as primary to modernist discourse. It also, literally, reflects intertextuality, by highlighting 'impurity' of discipline.[5]

Metonymy may draw attention to seriality's potentially discursive function. The ambivalence or multiple meanings produced through metonymy, make it, arguably, more productive than metaphor in setting up a process of questioning in the viewer. In this way then, modernist discipline-specific purity may be challenged. Modernism, as Michael Newman puts it, blocks the possibility of a "theoretically informed critical and deconstructive practice"(1989:121).

postmodern works is not necessarily regarded, as it is by Orton, for example, as a means of challenging notions of stereotype.

In referring to Dibosa's text I also emphasise the effectivity of metonymy in constructing particular subjectivities or identities. While Dibosa takes examples which construct dominant ideologies over and over, I suggest that metonymy can be used as effectively to *deconstruct* these ideologies, thereby destabilising the associated identities. In this way, metonymy can work to reconstruct or recuperate a multiplicity of meanings formally repressed.

At this point it is important to examine metonymy which is used to different effect. To see how this might function in visual art, I need to present a case in which metonymy serves to perpetuate rather than challenge dominant discourse. Oliva, who as I noted, championed the cause of the Trans-avantgarde, uses the notion of metonymy as a kind of alibi for an 'anything goes' sort of pluralism, where the unfixity of meaning effectively amounts to unaccountability. For Oliva, metonymy has relevance for its neutralising effect. This neutrality is important to Neo-expressionist painting in that it reflects an apparently ideologically 'free' position in relation to quotation. Oliva writes that metonymy is "free of symbolic capacity", and thus able to produce a "neutralization of ... strong meaning"(1982:18). Oliva goes on to suggest that the unstable meaning produced through metonymy has as its direct consequence, the dissolution of any "ideological fixity"(1982:24). My conception of the possibilities offered by metonymic readings is directly opposed to Oliva's. I explore a form of metonymy that is set up to disturb certain heirarchies or values in a way which I perceive to be critical. This is a way which, unlike Oliva's, is determined by a particular position. In other words, where entities, forms or ideas often viewed as distinct, are (through metonymic links) shown to be related, this connection is acknowledged not to convey ideological neutrality, but to reflect a subversion of stereotypical notions of difference and categorisation.

Here it seems important to bear in mind that a particularly problematic sort of metonymic reading exists in relation to expressionist painting. By this I mean the connection that is conventionally made between autographic mark and artist's presence. I feel it appropriate here to

> *associative chain to the moment of its constitutive pro'uction, which will, in principal at least, reveal its meaning and reference"(1987:172).*

An alternative reading of metonymy can be found in Daniel Dibosa's essay 'Metonymy: Objects and the dispossessed' (1993). In opposition to the way metonymy is usually seen to function, Dibosa suggests that metonymy may be used to p·y a central role in perpetuating the logic of popular culture. Like Orton, Dibosa sees metonymy as an important part of visual representation and regards its linguistic function as only one application. Dibosa explores metonymy as a trope that is used in postmodern popular culture to construct identity through assocations with objects. He concentrates on televisual advertising and photo-journalism..

Dibosa discusses the way that particular sets of objects and scenarios within advertisments and photographs are (metonymically) linked to particular ideologies. In relation to television, he proposes that these sorts of associations construct a particular subjectivity (his example being that of the fairly affluent white subject)(1993:139). He argues that

> *the processes by which this is done involve the exclusion of any other contesting notions of subjectivity. Advertising, with its deployment of metonymy and its employment of repetition as a means of establishing coherence (the same metonymy over and over again), continually re-inscribes objects with, among other things, racia y exclusive signifiers. Metonymy as a rhetorical device within this must be challenged (1993:139).*

The way postmodernism and popular culture are implicated, makes Dibosa's comments most relevant to my research. However, its applicability for my purposes is also limited. It should be clear from my exploration of metonymy thus far that its function as defined in Dibosa's examples (representations which define identity through commodity) is only one aspect of metonymy. My main reason for drawing on the ideas Dibosa propogates, is to highlight the fact that the use of metonymy in certain

and quite direct language of parody is disturbed by the more private and ambiguous language of metonymy.

In this respect metonymy may be used to undermine the reproduction of stereotypes. I argue that the ambiguity produced through a certain use of metonymy can invert the logic through which stereotypes are created and perpetuated. (In the case of my own paintings this would be stereotypes relating to gender and sexuality). Baudrillard suggests that ambivalence may be the only way to produce a critical practice. He sees it as bringing about "a rupture of value"(1981:150). Here I assume Baudrillard refers to dominant or popular values, as reprsented for example, through mass media.

In relation to the stereotype, a view of Jakobson's which Orton notes, is interesting here. Although used by Jakobson in relation to written language, these comments reflect the way metonymy may be used as a strategy to challenge stereotypes encoded in visual representation.

> *Jakobson noted the aptness of metonymy for the expression of repressed wishes and saw it at work in the censored letters of prisoners speaking about their privation and desire... [Metonymy] represents not the object or thing or event or feeling which is its referent but that which is tied to it by contingent or associative transfers of meaning. In this way metonymy permits the utterer to bypass obstacles of social censure including those which are consciously or unconsciously self-imposed (1987:172).*

What is important here, in terms of the critical position I propose, is to emphasise that while metonymy may not operate in a public sense, it is at the same time not closed to interpretation. As Orton notes

> *"there can be no such thing as wholly private language, possessing totally individualized and isolated meanings. Even the most private metonymy is public insofar as it is a language, a communication, has a history. It can therefore be pursued along its*

Displacement suggests another text in which the displaced image or meaning may be located. Through this process of displacement, meaning in the work is rendered contingent, never complete because it is always related to texts and ideas which exist outside of its apparent boundaries or frame. In this sense, texts may be perceived, in Kaja Silverman's words, as "discursively adjacent"(1983:105).

Orton's remarks point to the intertextual readings which metonymy accords through certain kinds of connections. These connections may also be expressed in terms of contiguity, which as I noted, is a defining process of metonymy. Silverman's writing is useful in relation to this. Where Orton gives attention to the *conceptual* relations that are formed through contiguity, she emphasises the *physical* relations. She notes that metonymy may be associated with syntagm, because both involve the principle of contiguity.[4] She goes on to note about syntagm that "the *spatial disposition* of objects in a painting or photograph establishes a syntagmatic connection between them ..."(1983:106). Silverman refers to 'actual' physical space here. We may also think of these spatial connections in terms beyond the relation of objects within a single format. The connections between different, *separate* works in a particular space are, arguably, just as strongly foregrounded through contiguity.

While metonymy's role in producing continuous links between texts is important, it is necessary to note that these links, as Orton points out, are often remote. This produces relations between signs that are far less stable than is the case with metaphor. This potential remoteness of metonymy has implications for postmodernist discourse. As noted, a defining feature of postmodernism is that (relative to modernist & pre-modernist models) the sign is perceived as unstable. This concept of the sign foregrounds possibilities for intertextuality in that it reflects the notion that any text is contingent, and open to change (Foster, 1988:194). Ambiguity is more often than not the result, and a multiplicity of meanings is thus suggested. The text is therefore subject to different readings. I proposed earlier that this ambivalence of meaning could be an important tool for critical intervention when used in conjunction with quotation (where the 'original' text(s) is recognisable in some form). In this way the authority of each form of representation quoted may be challenged. In this sense, metonymy and parody can be seen to function in relation to each other - the public

difference; and determining metonymy is the externa relation of continuity and remoteness"(1987:171).

Orton explains the difference between the two very clearly, so I will use his words again here to define the way metonymy operates in visual terms: "Metaphor is based on a proposed similarity or analogy between the literal subject and a subject substituted for it ... Metonymy is based on a proposed continuous or sequential link between the literal object and its replacement by association or reference"(1987:171/172).

The important point here is the link through *association* that is created with metonymy as opposed to the *analogous* relationship that signs are given when metaphor is used. Metaphor could also be described as a trope which implies comparison (Childers and Hentzi, 1995:185). Orton notes that usually "a metaphor is easily understood because the metaphoric associations, the link between the literal subject and its metaphoric substitute, are alive in culture"(1987:172). Metaphor then, is a public or more open language. Unsurprisingly, metaphoric relations are generally stable. They do not encourage ambivalence or multiplicity of meaning. Metonymic relations are potentially more obscure, less stable than are metaphoric relations. There is no setting up of equivalents or substitutes. Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi offer the following as examples of metonymic associations: the link between *crown* and monarch, or between the *ring* and boxing (1995:187). While these are not examples of a use of metonymy in visual art, one can see how this sort of meaning production might be translated into visual terms.

Instead of equivalence or analogy, Orton puts it that the metonymic processes are "reduction, expansion and association". Synecdoche is a particular sort of metonymic relation, in which the part is referred to by the whole or vice versa, or where something omitted is referred to by what is included. The relation of part to whole would include the 'reduction' and 'expansion' that Orton talks about. The process of referring to something which has been omitted, points to the displacement and deferral which the metonymic processes create. As Orton remarks, metonymy is "the record of a lacuna, of a move or displacement ..."(1987:173). The notion of displacement is especially important here, in the way it may be implicated in intertextual readings.

condition partly provided by the convergence of modernism and postmodernism (1987:170-174). By this convergence I mean a use of both modernist and postmodernist elements within individual works. This may set up a tension or dialectic.

Orton refers to Jakobson's discussion of metonymy and metaphor as these terms operate in the linguistic field. He demonstrates how an understanding of the particular differences between these terms (and through this to an understanding of metonymy's place in visual language) is also necessary for the complete comprehension of visual language. As Jakobson points out, language functions because of the association between the participants in the speech event. The participants' separation is overcome by the fact that internal relations between symbols used by the addresser are the same as those understood and used by the addresee. No encoding or decoding of meaning can occur without this "common code"(1987:171).

Orton points out that within the "language of art", the artist (or producer of the work) and the viewer need to hold a similar set of "preconceived possibilities" as regards meaning production (1987:171). Here we can understand "preconceived possibilities" to refer to whatever both the artist and viewer understand by certain visual signification. (This would necessarily entail similar cultural backgrounds or visual 'education'). Both the artist and the viewer must hold an almost identical set of possibilities of representations, and an almost identical way of comprehending the relations set up within the representations chosen (by the artist) from this given set. But, Orton notes, the message cannot be understood just by knowing the code. That is to say, we might know, when looking at a particular image, that a yellow disk signifies sun and that blue wavy lines signify sea, but if we do not understand the cultural significance of sun or sea we will not understand the 'message'. As Orton puts it "one needs to know the context which provides the necessary area of associative reference upon which intelligibility depends". He notes that this comprises two relations. "The components of any message will be linked with the code either by an internal relation of equivalence, or with context, by an external relation of association. For Jakobson, metaphor and metonymy present the most condensed expression of these two basic modes of relation. Underlying metaphor is the internal relation of similarity and

This point is discussed in more detail later in the chapter. I wish to mark it here however, before moving on, as it is central to my use of metonymy in my own paintings.

In order to understand metonymy in its use as a strategy within (neo)expressionist work, it is necessary to examine metonymy in its broader theoretical context.

Metonymy is essentially a linguistic term. It has its roots in literary criticism, where it is regarded as a trope or figure of speech. Like metaphor, metonymy works by way of association. However, there is a fundamental difference between the two terms which should become obvious as this chapter unfolds.[1]

Recently, metonymy has become increasingly invoked to account for particularly complex readings of *visual art.*[2] As Daniel Dibosa remarks, "[Metonymy] has, as a rhetorical device, been no less persistent within the construction of visual methodologies of representation than it has within verbal ones"(1993:137). I will suggest here that metonymy may be a particularly appropriate strategy to use in the pursuit of a critical visual practice.

At this point is it necessary to define metonymy in its more regular use. John Fiske notes that "metonymy works by using a part or element of something to stand for the whole.[3] Metonymy and metaphor are, according to Roman Jakobson, the two fundamental modes of communicating meaning"(1984:181). Fiske goes on to say that "[m]etonyms work syntagmatically: we construct the rest of the 'story' from the part that we have been given, in the same way that we construct the rest of a sentence if a speaker finishes off in 'mid air' "(1984:181/182).

With respect to the use of metonymy in visual art, and more specifically in relation to my own painting, I have found Fred Orton's observations illuminating. While he explores metonymy in relation to Johns's works, his discussion has broader relevance to metonymic meaning production in visual art. I therefore quote or make reference to his writing extensively here. He is one of the few critics to have advanced theories of metonymy in relation to a particularly complex configuration of visual art - one which may be represented in terms of the 'threshold'

metonymy. This does not mean to say that parody and readymades are not also features of the works. In a similar vein, I use Lichtenstein's works as exemplifying parody, especially a parody of painting. Again, this does not imply that either metonymy or readymades are absent from Lichtenstein's work. Lichtenstein's use of readymade 'expressive' language, in the image of a brushmark, is particularly useful here as an example of a parodic or mocking painting.

The examination of selected artworks by Johns and Lichtenstein should be understood primarily as constituting a framework for discussion of my own practical work. I feel it important to repeat the point that it is strictly within these terms that I address the artworks. This dissertation in no way claims to analyse the works in broader terms.



Fig.10. Jasper Johns, Field Painting, 1963/64.
Oil on canvas with objects.

CHAPTER SIX. PAINTING REFIGURED AND CONTESTED: JASPER JOHNS AND ROY LICHTENSTEIN.

Certain works by Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtenstein are illuminating in respect of the strategies I have identified as appropriate to a critical painting practice within postmodernist discourse. Whilst neither artist can be said to be quintessentially postmodern, certain aspects of their work reflect a kind of 'impurity' (of both iconography and form) which could be perceived as postmodern. Here I relate this to the notion of intertextuality explored in previous chapters.

It is significant to note that both Johns and Lichtenstein have been categorised as Pop artists. Pop art defined itself largely against the ideals of modernist - Abstract Expressionist - painting. Many Pop artists reflected this by parodying high art. (As I noted in Chapter Five, Pop art was also characterised by the use of readymades - both readymade objects and readymade visual language).

The works of Johns's and Lichtenstein's which I discuss here, have been chosen for the way they bear out significant aspects of parody, metonymy and readymades. This is seen against a backdrop of a problematization of the 'expressive', which is said to characterise both artists' work. The artworks have also been chosen for the way they might relate to the analysis of my own painting. This is of major importance. As the artworks serve to contextualize my own painting, my exploration of them in turn is largely determined by particular needs of my own practice. I need to emphasise that it is not the purpose of this dissertation to analyse works by Johns and Lichtenstein in their broader art historical context.

Parody, metonymy and readymades, all, arguably (through a particular kind of reading), feature in the works I have chosen for discussion. They feature in different ways and for different reasons. Mostly they occur through processes of quotation and repetition. While the works of both artists have these features in common, I have also chosen these artists for the differences in their works. The difference in degree and kind of use of the strategies mentioned above, serves to highlight, in the case of each artist, different aspects of my argument. For instance, I see Johns's works as being mostly significant for an exploration of

NOTES

1 In this instance I mean modernism as a time period rather than Greenbergian modernism in particular.

2 In relation to Duchamp, Joselit has suggested that his "puns, opaque statements and allegorical demonstrations [may be thought of] as a kind of assisted readymade".(1993:55) As in the case (mentioned earlier) where intention is seen to be implicated in readymades, the artist's material realisation of these verbal constructions is implied.

3 My own paintings will also be considered in these terms. In these works, I quote the sign of painting: quotations of expressive brushmarks and cartoon images for example, are used to signify readymade or pre-given language. With my inclusion of fast-food boxes and gift-wrap paper as surfaces on which to paint, I reflect on the canvas as a preinscribed field.

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Fig.9. David Salle, Melancholy, 1983, Mixed Media.
(Oil and acrylic on canvas with umbrella).

Peter Burger's comments are useful here. He suggests that readymades within a postmodern context have little ability to function as a strategy which critiques or subverts stereotypical notions of art. In his view, postmodern use of readymades is in a way opposite to modernist use. He comments that Duchamp's Urinal is intended to destroy art as an institution, including the destruction of institutional forms such as museums, galleries and exhibits)(1984:51/52). He goes on to argue that the opposite is true of a postmodern use of readymades. Burger suggests that the postmodern artist is simply "adapting" to the art market, rather than "denouncing" it. The artist is in fact, according to Burger, asking to be accepted (1984:51/52).

Burger has a strong point here. Readymades, in postmodernist art, could be seen in many instances, to be included for their commodity value. Readymades are used in many cases, to mark a work as avant-garde. They have in a way, become a sign for art in much the same way as gestural mark has. (I would suggest that Neo-expressonist painter David Salle's use of readymades - fig.9 - is a case in point). It becomes clear that to identify a critical use of readymades is complex within a postmodern context.

It seems appropriate to end this chapter with a comment of Umberto Eco's, which expresses his general view of postmodernism. Here the postmodern condition as a whole is seen to be accurately expressed, even governed, by the readymade concept. Eco sees everything within postmodernism as pre-given, already known. His comment is especially appropriate to my discussion of readymades as he uses the example of pre-given language. While verbal language is used in this instance, I feel it a very appropriate example of the way in which visual language too, may be readymade or pre-formed, for both artist and viewer.

> *I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, 'I love you madly', because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland (1985:67/68).*

most often reflects in its use of readymades, is the fact that, in accordance with Baudrillard's theories on consumer culture and simulation, our notion of the material world is constituted through, and in some ways equivalent to, images.

Intertextuality is seen here as central to this critique, and readymades are particularly relevant in this respect. The inclusion of readymade elements within a painting may operate in a number of different ways to break the modernist notion of the painting as a self-sufficient and closed field. For this reason the readymades which interest me are those used as a part of a work rather than as a work in their own right (as for example is the case with works such as Duchamp's **Urinal** or **Bottlerack**).

I feel it important to note that the use of readymades within paintings does not necessarily result in a critical practice. (As I mentioned in relation to metonymy and parody, no strategy is in and of itself critical). Readymades might in fact cause problems for critique. The inclusion of mass produced objects or 'readymade' images and phrases (the wording from particular advertisments for example), may operate, as was seen to be the case with parody, as "tribute" rather than "target", in Hutcheon's words (1985). Their use also raises problems of a different nature: for all that the use of readymades problematized art historically, and, some might argue, continues to do so, it is equally interesting to note that as mediated as this activity is (borrowing forms and representations from both 'non-art' and art contexts), the rhetoric surrounding, it continues to invoke notions of the artist as genius, the work as some kind of masterpiece (albeit a different sort of masterpiece). Thus, 'aura' around the artwork and the artist are maintained. (Here, Duchamp is again a good example). In this respect it is interesting to note that Duchamp has signed many of his readymades. This applies even to the 'unassisted' readymades which consist of only an object, which has not (save for the change of the object's context) been manipulated in any way. The artist's presence may now be 'felt' by the viewer through the presence of his signature rather than (as in the case of expressionist works) through the painted mark. Thus, 'aura' is, arguably, still an important part of the artwork (albeit that in Duchamp's case, the use of the signature is intended as ironic).

work of art [the painting] as a *thing* exhibited in a *place*"(Harrison & Wood, 1993:227).

Joselit discusses readymades in linguistic terms. He suggests that their use disturbs conventional (modernist) visual signification. Joselit uses a linguistic model to explain his view that the readymade may function to collapse the Saussurian model of the sign as composed of a signifier and signified which are distinct from each other. He uses a letter of the alphabet to demonstrate this point. Joselit writes that "the letter 'a' for instance, is identical to what it signifies: the letter 'a'." This is "a sign whose material signifier is identical to its signified"(1993:58). In the same way, he suggests, readymades may be read to be simultaneously signifier and signified, or as he puts it "a sign of itself"(1993:58).

This reading of readymades is especially important for painting. In what might be called a conventional reading of a painting, signifiers such as expressive mark are seen to connote, for example, originality, authenticity and spontaneity. To reveal this association between signifier and signified (expressive mark as synonymous with spontaneity, instinct, etc) may be a way to draw attention to the image as convention rather than as 'natural'. How this happens is quite complex and can take many forms.

Readymades, having the potential to collapse signifier and signified into one, may effectively undermine an (assumed) stable correlation between signifier and signified, that is, between expressive mark and notions of authenticity and so on. In a critical painting practice where gestural mark is used, this mark would not stand for originality etc in an unproblematic way, but instead would be understood as a sign which signifies 'painting'.

This complication of the sign could be related to simulation. One of the issues of readymades which can be said to remain central in both modernism and postmodernism, is the desire to deal with the gap between the material world and its image (in the form of the artwork), so that this relationship might be critically addressed. One of the features of postmodernism connected to, and affecting this, is the relationship between 'high art' and popular culture: what postmodernism

of 'high art' versus popular culture. Rather, it can be seen to point to broader concerns with representation in postmodernist discourse.

Neo-expressionist painting has made much use of readymades as a particularly relevant strategy for current painting practice. The notion of artistic presence is embodied in the way readymades are used in certain Neo-expressionist works (here I am thinking particularly of certain works by Schnabel). Readymades in these instances, signify a kind of romance of the artist, in which everything he touches turns to gold. Neo-expressionist claims of a direct corrolation between the gestural brushmark and the artist's presence can also, in this way, be seen to extend to readymades. A more critical use of readymades would be one which comments critically on notions of artistic presence, by signifying, instead of this presence, the artist's absence.

The term readymades, as mentioned earlier (particularly in relation to Duchamp) has been used to refer to a wide variety of forms. These range from certain images and visual codes, to phrases, words, ideas, or other elements of a work, as well as objects, which are in some way pre-given. (As mentioned before, this does also imply material expression of these words, ideas etc). This formulation of readymades would include, well known catchphrases or images from an established visual or verbal repertoire.[2] Here I refer to visual and verbal conventions such as the jingles from advertisments, the structure and layout of comic strips, and proverbs or cliched sentiments. Painting itself - its popular image or sign - might be considered in these terms. Here I mean for example, reproductions of well known high art works, or paintings or high art styles used in advertisments. Readymades in this sense, have a direct connection to quotation.[3] In Duchamp's **Box in a Valise** (fig.8) for example, the reproductions of paintings put out on display, could be seen as 'quotes' of high art.

As well as the consideration of certain verbal or visual cliches as readymades, the painting as a whole could also be addressed in these terms. This has been been made an issue of by certain postmodern artists (such as Daniel Buren), by foregrounding, through a variety of methods, the objecthood of the painting. Here the artist presents "the

application reveals both a "continuity and "discontinuity" with a modernist use of readymades (1993:55).

Readymades have been used by many artists to disturb certain modernist notions (albeit that some of these artists could be seen as modernist). The notion of discipline-specific purity, as discussed in chapter one, is arguably the feature of Greenberg's modernism which is most clearly challenged by a certain use of readymades. Greenberg, as I have noted, stresses the purity of the medium as an important point for a valid art practice: "purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art"(1940). In chapter two, the notion of this kind of media purity was argued to have particular importance in relation to forms of representation which are inscribed with masculinist values - more, specifically, a masculinity that can be read as aggressive or dominant. By this token then, a certain use of readymades, could be said to constitute a potential challenge to the type of monolithic masculinist discourse usually associated with high modernism.

While modernist painting in general may be problematised through a certain deployment of readymades, it is expressionist forms of painting in particular which have come to be most challenged by readymades. Notions so primary to expressionist painting, such as spontaneity and artistic presence - both of which accompany the modernist notions of authenticity and originality - are particularly vulnerable. These notions are problematised by the inclusion of readymade manufactured articles, as these articles show little evidence of the 'hand-made' quality so intrinsic to the artist's painted mark. This is of course not to say that the very choice and placement of the the manufactured article by the artist might not signify in some sense, creativity, a.[illegible]s touch, genius etc. Clearly, all these permutations would depend on the kind of readymades used and in what context they were placed (be this within a painted 'frame' or isolated in space). The evocation of mass production in conjunction with handpainted passages in a work makes an issue of the relationship between high art and popular culture. However, as I discuss further on, the strategy is also more complex than this issue

attained (1984:52). Nonetheless, the use of readymades can still be provocative and can still challenge the terms of art practice.

For critic John Perrault, the function of readymades is to cause a shift in the perception of the viewer. He describes this shift as moving from "seeing something as non-art to seeing it as art"(1985:20). While Perrault's suggestion involves itself primarily with aesthetic considerations - aimed at revealing the 'artistic' or aesthetic value of the object in question, my use of readymades in my painting (as further discussion will reveal) is more pointedly directed at questioning those very aesthetic considerations which Perrault refers to.

Art historian David Joselit, views readymades in perhaps a more complex way than does Perrault. Joselit points out that the precise implications of readymades for art practice need to be considered in terms broader and more intricate than those in which he feels many critics have addressed the issue:

> *The apparent simplicity of the readymade concept has been exploited by critics and art historians ... to obscure the specificity of its meanings in different artistic or historical contexts. Too often the strategy of appropriating objects is seen as a simple indictment of the commodifed nature of the artwork - as a monolithic reduction of its status to that of an everyday product; a reduction which, it is implied, operates in the same way in 1913 as it does in 1960 (1993:55).*

Joselit goes on to acknowledge that the issue of the artwork as commodity is in fact important, but stresses that this is only one aspect of readymades' significance for art practice. This view reflects my own concerns with readymades. For example my concern with readymades is the potential offered to undermine notions of mastery and genius. (I explore this further on in this chapter). Joselit is useful for my purposes as he explores what might constitute a particularly *postmodern* application of readymades. In his view, this

intention. In an interview with Pierre Cabanne, for instance, Cabanne reminds Duchamp that he has "compared the readymade to a sort of rendezvous"(1971:49). Duchamp responds by commenting that "I was preoccupied with the idea of doing a certain thing in advance, of declaring 'at such and such an hour I'll do this ...' "(1971:49). This is of course quite an extreme version of readymades, but it is its extremity which makes it useful to cite here. It marks the point at which a form or thought might constitute art when it is framed in terms of artworld 'language', or placed in a gallery context. This idea of the thought as constituting a readymade would of course, always imply some form of materialization - that is, some physical action or object. As with parody, readymades need to be considered as both 'thing' or form, and process.

It is of particular interest to me to view the use of readymades as mentioned above in relation to painting. Duchamp was rather sceptical of 'expressive' painting (Cabanne, 1971), but was more partial to Pop Art. He noted that "they [Pop artists] borrow from things already made, ready-made drawings, posters, etc"(Duchamp, in Cabanne, 1971:94).

Duchamp's conception of readymades form an important backdrop for the exploration of readymades in a postmodern context. What needs to be stressed at this point, is how the implications of readymades are changed within a postmodern framework. The function of readymades in postmodern practice is complex and diverse. In this chapter I am concerned only with those aspects of readymades which either reflect or have implications for the notion of criticality as proposed thus far, and which relate to Johns's, Lichtenstein's and my own painting.

Within Duchamp's context, and within modernist painting, the use of readymades amounted to a drastic attack on traditional ideas of the gallery as well as the artwork.[1] In a postmodern context, this is changed. Pervasive use of readymades within postmodernist (as well as certain modernist) works suggests that readymades cannot be argued to hold the same resonance today as in Duchamp's time. Peter Burger (writing in 1984) suggests that no matter what object an artist today might exhibit as a readymade (he gives the example of a stove-pipe), the intensity of protest of Duchamp's readymades can never be

subvert notions of authenticity and spontaneity. Rather than marks of expression, these brushstrokes are signs which indicate gestural mark. Foster has said of the brushstroke images that they work to expose "the gesture as a sign - a sign that does not present the real or register the self so much as it refers to other signs, other gestures"(1992:63).

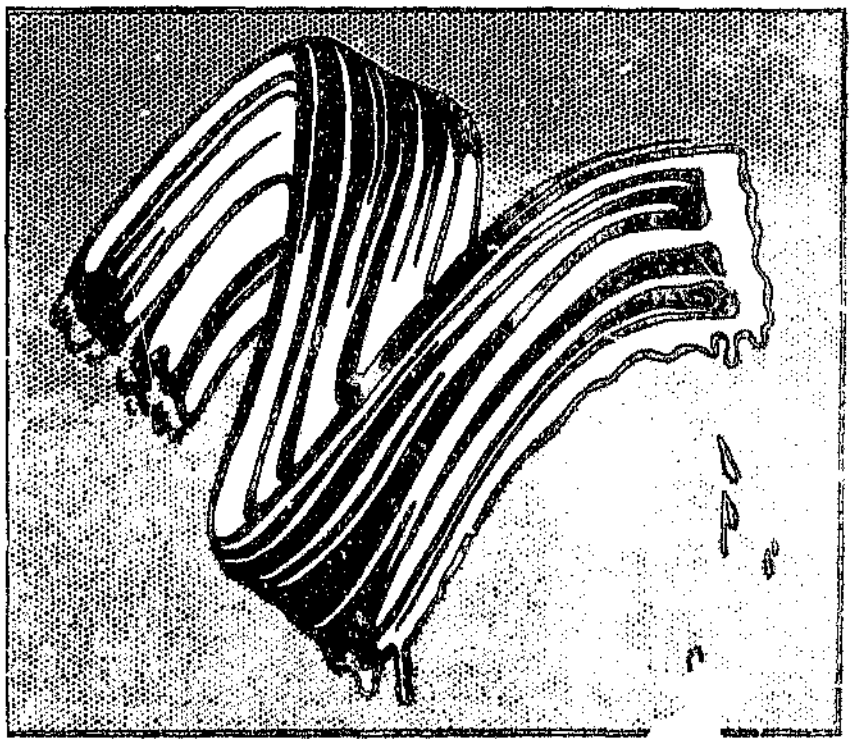


Fig.15. Roy Lichtenstein. White Brushstroke, 1965.
Oil and magna on canvas.

Although, as Foster asserts, these images might make us aware of the coding of the so called expressive artwork, Lichtenstein's brushstroke works are also problematic. It could be argued that they function to make this coding seductive, so that while the brushmark is an obvious parody of a real oil-paint brushmark, it could just as easily work to

consciously pre-formed or pre-given, with the sketches, operating in a sense, as templates (not unlike the way in which Johns's stencilled images operate).

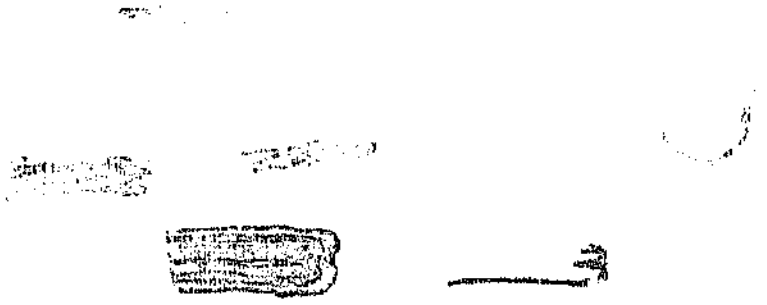


Fig.14, Roy Lichtenstein, 'Sheet of Sketches of Brushstrokes', 1980, coloured pencils on paper.

In the most extreme uses of brushmarks, Lichtenstein produces images where the only thing represented is the outsize brushmark, as in **White Brushstroke**, 1965, (fig.15). The 'originally' painterly gestural brushstroke, is portrayed here in a cartoon-like style which shows no trace of the artist's 'hand'. It appears to be mechanically generated. The expressive form and the cartoon form are conflated, it would seem, in order to problematise concepts in (modernist) high art. Lichtenstein's brushmarks could be described as simulations of expressionism, with the intent to

rather than being a "return to representation after Abstract Expressionism, [Pop Art] was a turn to simulation, to the serial production of images without originals"(1986:89). The way that simulation operates in these works is at times problematic as an effective critique of representation. Lichtenstein manipulates both the language of traditional high art and of mass culture. However, while his work poses a challenge to certain notions of high art, some critics, as I will discuss here, have questioned whether he actually challenges the latter at all.

Within the context of this discussion, one of the most important aspects of Lichtenstein's images is the significance given to mark. Here I do not necessarily mean painted gestural brushmark, but whatever mark makes up the image which Lichtenstein uses as reference. The use of the benday dot is a commonly used 'mark'. The benday dotting characteristic of mechanically printed images (such as those in comics or newspapers) are emphasised through enlargment, and through manipulation of various other pictorial elements. As a result the marks that we previously read only as tone and colour, are clearly evident as a kind of patterning over the surface, becoming shapes in the image in almost the same way that, say, figures are. The constituent parts of the image can no longer be accepted as 'natural' forms of representation, but are evident as pictorial conventions. Lichtenstein's use of the benday dot takes the image even further from the tradition of the handmade unique artwork. Lichtenstein himself sees the dots as functioning in various ways in his work. In an interview in 1970 he comments:

> *...the dots can have a purely decorative meaning, or they can mean an industrial way of extending the color, or data information, or finally, that the image is a fake. A Mondrian with a set of dots is obviously a fake Mondrian (Lichtenstein, in Hendrickson,1988:49).*

In certain instances Lichtenstein's marks are constructed from other artworks or from a repetoire of different brushmarks which the artist has built up. He has in fact made up reference sheets of 'expressive' mark - see 'Sheet of Sketches of Brushstrokes', 1980 (fig.14). The notion of selecting his 'expressive' strokes from a reference sheet would seem to suggest a reading of these marks as readymades. They are

> *The artificial construction people make is that painting is not intellectual, and does not involve much thinking, but involves psychic or subconscious pressures which are released through the act of painting. But I think painting like mine shows obvious kinds of hesitation and reworking which people associate with thought (Johns, in Francis, 1984:27).*

This feature of Johns's work is important for the way it contests assumptions about the immediacy and spontaneity of expressionist painting.

Lichtenstein addresses the language of expressionism in a way which, formally, is in sharp contrast to Johns's work. While Johns engages modernist forms in order to critique, Lichtenstein produces his critique through a language which can be seen to stand in direct opposition to these forms. In Lichtenstein's work, both form and content read as very direct responses to the modernist paradigm. The modernist tenets that encouraged purity of medium, the belief in and pursuit of individual style, the expression of the personal and of emotion through purely formal means, the emphasis on the work as subjective intuitive response, are all clearly challenged, and Abstract Expressionism in particular is problematised. Unlike the way that quotation generally operates in Johns's work, where various texts are juxtaposed within a single work, Lichtenstein, in most cases (apart from some of his later works) quotes a single referent (for example one frame from a comic book, or an entire painting).[7] Within the frame of the image, the style is coherent, and of the same mode.[8]

As with virtually every Pop artist, his work reflects a direct concern with the relationship between high art and popular or mass culture.[9] This relationship, as reflected in Pop Art, is of importance in its implications for the way that repetition and quotation function in postmodernism. As Pop Art's referents are almost always reproductions rather than referents from the 'real' world, images such as Lichtenstein's can be said to simulate rather than copy. They are always 'second order' images. Foster comments of Pop Art in general that,

and denies itself as a construction. In Johns's case, the readymade objects used seem chosen specifically for the way they can oppose this expressionist logic. The ruler (as I discussed) can be seen as a sign of measurement for material things, the body parts as parodic signs for artistic presence (or absence), and the tools of his trade (cans and brushes) as revealing perhaps the reality and act of construction behind the brushstrokes. They signify the artist and the process of artmaking in a manner which disrupts the coherence of the language of expressionism (and by implication, neo-expressionism).

Johns's use of readymades goes further than this. It has been noted that even the depicted images in his works allude to the found object: "what he *makes* in his paintings retain a quality of the found; hence his penchant for the traced (or indexical) image, linked not to a style of rendering, but to a real object"(Shiff, 1987:150). The stencil lettering which Johns has repeated often, as it occurs for example in Device (fig.11) is one example of this. The form of the lettering is dictated by the physical border of the stencil the letters were traced from, rather than by any representational form or 'style' that could be seen as part of paintings's repetoire. As Johns has said of elements such as the stencil lettering, "they seemed to be pre-formed, conventional, depersonalised, factual, exterior elements"(Johns, in Livingstone, 1991:48). Johns has also referred to the pre-formed elements he uses as "things which the mind already knows"(Johns, in Livingstone, 1991:281). I find this comment interesting for its relation to the notion of readymades as identifiable through processes of intention, (rather than through physical objects alone) which I discussed earlier in relation to Duchamp.

The depicted stencilled lettering in **Device** may be seen as readymades in much the same way as one might view the 'real' ruler. This conflation of depicted object and actual object works to complicate the relation between sign and signifier.

Complicating this further, Johns makes comments which indicate a view of the entire work in many cases, as a sort of readymade. "...a large part of my work has been involved with the painting as object, as a real thing in itself"(Johns, in Livingstone, 1990:48).

Through the use of these approaches, Johns makes painting apparent as a process which involves planning, doubt, and conscious renegotiation of his own subject.

Meaning within the individual works seems almost inaccessible, but starts to become clearer when we see the way that certain images and codes are repeated in different ways or different combinations. We see in this, the 'continuity' that Orton refers to in his description of metonym. As is the case in **Target with Four Faces**, meaning in **Untitled**, 1972,(fig.13) is structured metonymically not only in itself, but also in relation to a number of Johns's other works. The work depicts fragments, patterned fields, portions of different ('real') surfaces (such as body parts which are sometimes unidentifiable), and suggestions of various other objects. A household iron for example, is suggested through the presence of a sort of imprint - made, it would seem, by the bottom of the actual iron, which has been dipped into pigment.

Orton notes that "each pattern, object, imprint, is tied by the association of ideas and values to something else: reflexively to Johns' own work, to events and objects in New York, and ... to the work of other artists and other ideas and associations"(1987:172). The cross hatch pattern on the left of this image is first evident in **Scent**, a work which Johns made as parody of (or perhaps homage to) Jackson Pollock. **Untitled** could therefore be understood, through metonymic association, to also refer to Pollock. The important point here is the link through association.[5] **Untitled** is particularly interesting in relation to the idea of a threshold position. On the one hand the use of crosshatchings may be seen as quintessentially modernist, for they recall modernism's concern for "the physically literal mark that asserts the primacy of the picture plane"(Rosenthal, 1989:14). Countering this, is the assertion of many critics that Johns's use of the crosshatch motif may be seen in terms of both a sort of parody and as readymade visual language. Barbara Rose for example, refers to the paintings which contain crosshatchings as "pseudo-abstractions - impersonations of an abstract style"(1977:149). Repeated 'moves' in a crosshatch work, which also appear in others, indicate a pre-plotted system which would seem to support the notion that the motif can be read as an 'impersonation' of modernist tradition.[6]

In chapter five I reflected on how readymades might be used to contest the logic of the sign. The sorts of readymade objects which Johns chooses, and the way he uses them can be a particularly effective strategy as a critique of expressive painting. Many of the claims for expressionism and Neo-expressionism are that it reflects the 'inner' world (this being a world of 'instinct', uninfluenced by social realities)

through the connections between this work and Johns's other renderings of the 'target' image. Parody, metonymy and readymade signs and objects work together here to expose expressionism's claim to immediacy as false.[4]

The idea of repetition or reproduction of the image is produced very differently in Johns's work to the way it will be seen to occur in Lichtenstein's work. Johns's repetition reflects a high degree of self-reflexivity. He repeats not simply the subject matter he has used before (for example the ruler and the target), but also his own previous representations of these elements. This self-reflexivity could be said to subvert notions of spontaneity, in that elements in the work become clear as part of an extended, considered and deliberate process in which the artist objectifies his own work. Johns's self-reflexivity is of interest to me for the fact that while it is so prevalent, it is also extremely subtle, which is at odds with a great deal of contemporary postmodern work.

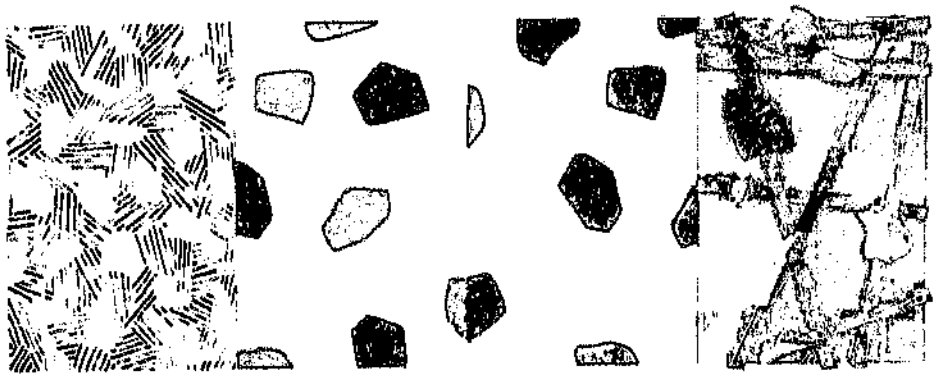


Fig.13. Jasper Johns, Untitled, 1972. Mixed Media.

asserted in relation to his own action paintings. In this way Johns again problematises notions of 'aura' and artistic presence.

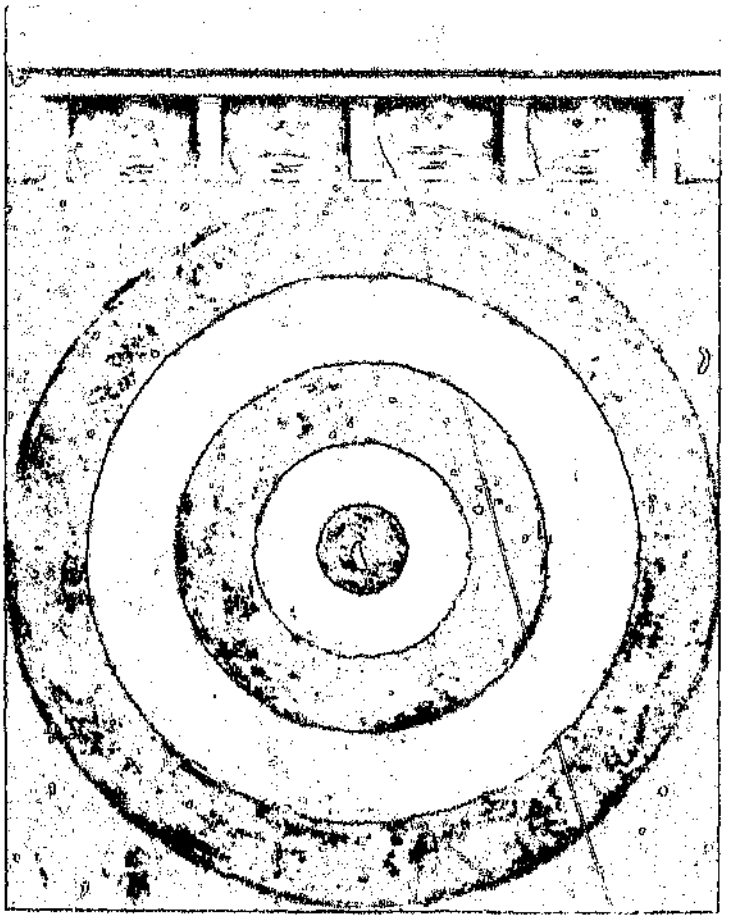


Fig.12. Jasper Johns, Target with Four Faces, 1955, Mixed Media.

The relations set up between the faces, the target, and the juxtaposition of different codes can be seen to be metonymically conceived. As the discussion above shows, these relations are both continuous and multiple. Associations through metonymy are extended

Device, 1961/62 (fig.11) evidences similar gestural mark, and makes use of a readymade object to comment on this mark so that we read it as conscious *quotation* of gesture. In **Device**, the ruler, rather than the paintbrush defines the kind of mark the artist makes. The gestural autographic mark that the brush in the rest of the painting makes, is replaced in the arc of the ruler, by a mark which not only shows nothing of the artist's 'presence' (the idea of his trace in the form of mark) but acts to obliterate such a notion of presence through the wiping motion, which can be read as an erasure. The critic Michael Fried proposes that Johns's use of the ruler in this particular way, works as a "mechanical, ironic paradigm of de Kooning's dragging brush and smeared paint texture"(1963:61). The choice of the ruler itself is relevant. As an object which is used to make measurements of real (material) objects, it could be seen to refer to methods of judgement which are far more prosaic than the terms in which the art object is evaluated.

In **Target with Four Faces**, 1955 (fig.12) Johns comments on signs through a metonymic connection between various texts and images. Johns juxtaposes variant texts in a way which problematises the authority of each of them. He places the plaster casts of four faces, each in its own compartment, above a painted target. The slight hint of a simulated 'gestural' brushmark is visible on the target. The quotation of gestural mark here can be read as parodic. The paint itself is applied smoothly, and it is rather the underneath layer of encaustic which creates this slight activation of the surface. The faces, although they contain minor differences, appear to be of the same person, possibly Johns himself. The inclusion of these faces could be argued to be a parody of the notion of 'presence' ('presence' of the artist). Johns may be pointing to the formulaic nature of expressionism through the repetition of these faces. The use of a cast, for the fact that it is a method of replicating, is in itself an allusion to repetition. Significantly, the faces are cut off from just below the eyes, rendering them blind. Absence is thus doubly stated. This occurs once through the absence of sight, and secondly, and most relevant here, in the absence implied by the cast - that is to say, the absence of the object the cast was made from. However, while this object may be absent, it also remains part of the work, in that it is metonymically connected to the work through the cast. In the absence of the faces implied by the casts, Johns may intend a direct parody of the notion that the artist may get "inside" the work, which Pollock



Fig.11. Jasper Johns, Device. 1961/62.
Oil on canvas with objects.

manifestly artificial *schemes"(my emphasis) (Harrison & Wood, 1993:185).*

Although expressionist language is made an issue of in Johns's work, the spirit in which he takes on this language, is not so much one of parodic critique as in the work of artists such as Lichtenstein. Johns does not pose himself gainst expressionism or subjectivity in the very strong and ironic terms which Lichtenstein and other [illegible] artists adopt. Rather, the works serve to reveal expressionism as set of codes because "they deal, often, with the problems specific to making paintings"(Francis, 1984:7).

Repetition, quotation and metonymy all operate in this process. Johns's work is very appropriate for my purposes, as metonymy and repetition are particularly closely connected in his work, as they are in my own painting.[3] Johns will use the same image or subject repeatedly, but in slightly different ways. Medium, mark, other images, all change the way the same subject can be read, and diverse interpretations are suggested through this process. The diversity produced through a shifting type of repetition problematises notions of 'transcendent' or 'essential' representational forms - forms usually associated with expressionist painting.

Johns will often quote the type of gestural brushmark that characterises expressionist works such as de Kooning's, and then disrupt these expressionist forms through the inclusion of other features in the work. **Field Painting**, 1963/64 (fig.10) is an appropriate example. This work shows the use of expressionist mark as objectified sign, and could also be read as a dialogue between modernism and postmodernism. One could identify this dialogue in a quite reductive way: modernism can be seen as being quoted in the 'expressive' mark on the left, postmodernism in the flat 'inexpressive' paint on the right. These features work to inhibit a modernist reading of the work in which the gestural mark would be read as spontaneous, 'natural', a trace of the artist's presence. The use of the word painting in the title could be read to signify both the finished work that the viewer sees, as well as the actual activity of painting. It seems to reflect Johns's wish to draw our attention to the work in terms of its construction.

Johns's work, arguably, represents some of the very earliest concerns of postmodernism, and is useful in this context for the way it can be seen to illustrate aspects of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. While his work engages critically with issues of authenticity, originality and discipline-specific purity, it does not (unlike most Pop art) use popular culture as its central subject. Whereas the Pop artists, to varying degrees, clearly *reject* modernist forms in order to formulate their critique, Johns can be seen to be in a threshold position, which involves both critique and incorporation of modernist forms. This threshold position, has been noted (but not in terms of its critical value) by Greenberg, who comments, with reference to Johns's Target Paintings, (for example, Target with Four Faces, 1955 (fig.12) that his work entails a sort of "homeless representation"(1962:365). Greenberg's comment reflects Johns's interest in problematising conventional (modernist) notions of representation.

Although often lumped together with Pop artists, Johns has mostly been seen as situated within a 'pre-Pop' phase.[1] The work of his selected for discussion here is important for the way that it relates to what Foster calls the "fallacy" of the 'expressive' brushmark.[2] Many of those who have written about Johns's work argue that he is consciously *in*expressive. Richard Shiff argues that:

> *Johns's art, both early and late, signifies an inexpressiveness that can be opposed to the more characteristic modernist mode of self-expression and psychological engagement. This inexpressiveness provides access to an artistic alternative to modernist practice (1987:149).*

In this way Johns can be seen to problematise the notion of the work as a register of the artist's inner self, and offers us as alternative, the expressionist language as an objectified code, a register of signs that have their origin outside of the artist. As critics Charles Harrison and Paul Wood put it:

> *[Johns] treated the legacy of Abstract Expressionism differently, as if the colour, texture, brushstroke and so forth were no longer conceivable as 'vehicles of expression' but had to be treated as the conventional components of*

stylistically hybrid, and include more naturalistic elements. The relationship set up between what might appear to be two different approaches, and the way certain forms of painting are inverted, suggests that something is being parodied here (in this case, perhaps expressionism).

While the interdependence of these works is important to the way I intend them to be viewed, I need to address the works individually in this chapter. This is not only for the sake of clarity, but because I want to emphasise that this interdependence does not necessarily deny the integrity of individual works.

Each work could be seen as a fragment of a whole, so to speak. As individual fragments they could be seen to reflect a certain type of metonymy, namely synecdoche (a relation of fragment which refers to the whole, or vice versa). Before looking at these works in more detail, I need to make a few general comments.

In all of my works, as with artists like Johns, form *is* in fact content. A self-conscious use of form (for example, gestural mark) is central to my approach. There are however certain aspects of my practice which will also be referred to as content. These are iconographic features. These (to a varying extent) reflect my focus, which is on problems around stereotyped gender roles and sexuality. More specifically, my concern is with the ways in which these stereotypes might be challenged through the use of different representational modes. Of particular importance within this system of representation is the relationship between gender stereotyping and violence. The idea of violence as a result of certain gender stereotyping is, within my paintings, conceived both within formal processes and as iconography. In this way, both painted mark and image represent content.

In chapter one, I examined ways in which certain forms of painting (and arguably painting per se) encode masculine presence, specifically masculine virility and mastery. I also noted that similar ideas can be applied to popular culture. A valourization of male subjectivity (aggressive 'macho' qualities are part of this) is conveyed through various forms of popular culture (on the most obvious level, forms such as movies, comics, television, advertising). This feature of society as perpetuated through popular culture is so prevalent and obvious as to be a truism. I therefore do not want to turn this chapter into an

CHAPTER SEVEN:
PAINTING AFTER NEO-EXPRESSIONISM - SIGNS AND STRATEGIES.

My exploration thus far will hopefully have provided a framework for the discussion of my painting. In this chapter I discuss how the strategies of parody, metonymy and readymades may be seen to operate in my own work. Before doing this, however, there are some points I need to make.

The reading done for this dissertation has made me think differently about visual practice in general. This has been productive in many ways. However, it has meant that my approach to my own painting has become more complex. Consequently, I have found it more difficult to discuss my work in a manner which does not deny this complexity.

The way I discuss my work should reflect that the relationship of single works to other works is as important as the relationship between formal and conceptual features within individual works. It is within this framework (which stresses the correspondences between individual and collective features of the works) that I feel the strategies I use are most effective. I suggest that this effectivity is manifest in the tension that results between the object (painting) and the viewer as producer of meaning(s). Foregrounding intertextuality is part of this process. The space of the gallery becomes a space for active viewing. As Harrison and Wood (1993:229) comment in this regard, "[these works] address the real space they inhabit rather than the illusionistic space internal to traditional and Modernist painting alike". The fact that these works may be viewed as relating to one another across the (real) space they occupy, can function to disrupt the aura often ascribed to the single work - the aura associated with the masterpiece.

The body of work can, in strictly formal and chronological terms, be seen as comprising three parts. The first comprises a group of (more or less) orthodox oil on canvas works, the second part is composed of a series of 'fast-food box' paintings, and the third is made up of a set of partially painted holographic 'giftwrap' works. The work ranges from large format paintings that adopt a clearly expressionist mode, to small scale works which are less expressionistic. The latter are more

7 Although perhaps it goes without saying, I feel it should be stressed that any discussion of criticality in Lichtenstein's work is complicated by the fact that much contemporary postmodern art (Neo-expressionist painting included) has adopted the aesthetics of Pop Art images to the extent that they have become almost neutralized.

8 There are a few exceptions to this. In Tomatoes & Abstraction, 1982, for example, Lichtenstein's hard edge cartoon-like style is juxtaposed with gestural mark which is clearly made with a brush. It is interesting that this juxtaposition of styles should occur in Lichtenstein's work during the same time that Neo-expressionism - with its trademark juxtaposition of different modes - experienced growing success.

9 For the purposes of this discussion I would like to suggest that Pop Art be seen along the lines that Dan Cameron suggests, in his essay 'neo this, neo that. approaching pop art in the 1980s. Cameron, instead of treating Pop as "a finite movement", considers it rather as "a loosely organised vocabulary of forms". He proposes that we view it as a tradition that has never really dispersed, and which still provides continuing reference and a source of concepts and formal devices (1991:261).

NOTES

1 Marco Livingstone notes that Johns deliberately distanced himself from the Pop art movement. Johns's motive, he comments, was "to preserve the ambiguity of his works"(1991:281).

2 (Foster, 1985:59) Johns himself is ambivalent in his responses to a reading of his work as deliberately anti or in-expressive. His later statements where he seems to identify more with the idea of personal 'expression', often conflict with earlier statements. Nevertheless I suggest that his use of the devices which I examine here, serves to disrupt modernist ideas of the expressive, whether or not Johns is quite as deliberate as some claim he is. One could perhaps argue that his seemingly conflicting positions on the point might in itself constitute a method of disruption, in that this tactic foregrounds an 'unfixing' of meaning.

3 As, in my own painting, I have been dealing (at least in part) with a critique of stereotyped sexuality, and have attempted to suggest ambiguous notions of sexuality and gender, it was interesting for me to consider in what ways metonymy in Johns's work is used for the purpose of articulating his own sexuality in ways which elude clear readings .

4 I have been concerned here with interpretations which relate to the strategies in question as critical devices. There are however, as with most of Johns's work, numerous interpretations for this image. These interpretations are varied, and many of them are less concerned with Johns's critique of representation, and more concerned with the work as a representation of Johns himself. Critics such as Kenneth Silver and Brooks Adams have commented on Johns's sexuality as a major point of interpretation. Shiff makes an interesting comment about interpretation, in relation to Johns's work in general: "Since Johns creates conditions for the most active and inexhaustible kind of interpretation, the only dependable 'meaning' that his art signifies is interpretation itself" (1987:158). I find this comment interesting in that it suggests to me the importance of the viewer in determining meaning(s).

6 Orton comments that despite the privacy of the metonymic codes in Untitled, there are ways to open the work to interpretation. He suggests that "[one] can undertake an enquiry which goes towards opening up the private code by reconstructing the contextual field; to enquire into the significance of hatchings, flagstones, fragments, and imprints, and to establish contiguities which match contexts of use to what can be learned of the world in which they are used"(1987:174).

6 The scope of this discussion does not allow me to go into detail about these moves, but they have been analysed at length by a number of critics, Barbara Rose among them.

order to read the work as a whole, may be seen as a direct challenge to the modernist notion of the sealed and self-sufficient work. In this work, a type of self-reflexivity is produced which, I suggest, is particularly successful in foregrounding intertextual readings.

The production of intertextual readings can be seen as central to both Johns's and Lichtenstein's critiques of notions of expressionism. In the following chapter I explore ways in which such readings figure in my own paintings.

a critique of Pop Art. While Lichtenstein includes his earlier images and themes here, Kalina sees this later work as "anti-nostalgic"(1994:133). The fact that significant portions of one painting are blocked out by the reflection motifs in the other, leads Kalina to conclude that "In many ways these paintings are attempts not just to call up the past but to erase it"(1994:133).

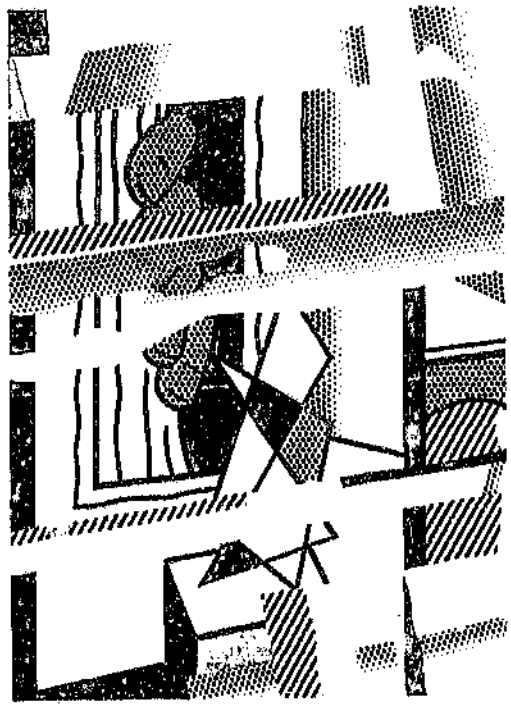


Fig.18. Roy Lichtenstein, **Three Reflections**.(left panel) 1993.

The dialogue between the panels makes it impossible to gain access to meaning in either **Large Interior** or **Three Reflections**, without looking at both of them. That the viewer is forced to go from one to the other in

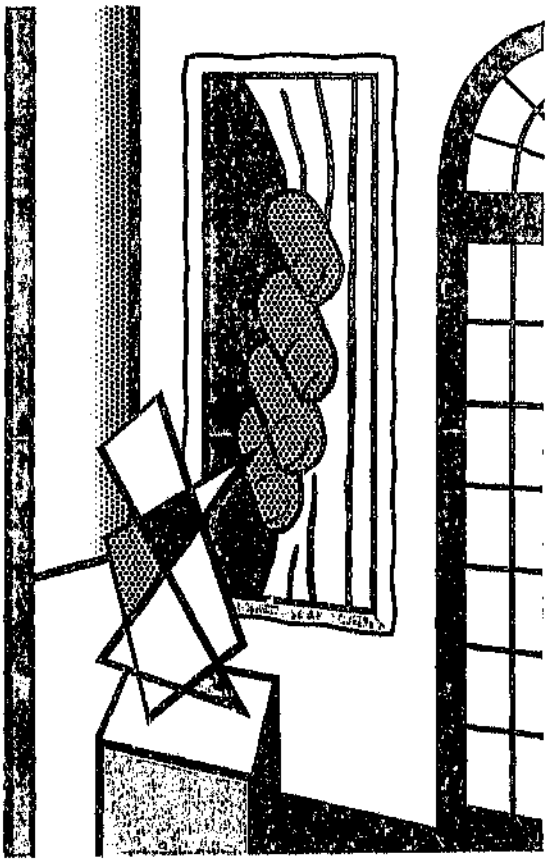


Fig.17. Roy Lichtenstein, **Large Interior** (right panel), 1993.

With this strategy, the codes of the artist's own representations become implicated in debate and critique. This could be an effective way to undermine modernist notions of the 'unique self' and of the artist as visionary. Kalina proposes that this work may to some extent constitute

works in terms of their critical potential. The problem of perpetuating the aura of the mechanically produced image is central to the more general problems around perpetuating stereotypes of mass/popular culture. Both popular culture & mechanical reproduction operate through repetition (and work against the idea of the authentic or original). Mechanical production might well, through a certain use, be a way to contest the aura of the 'unique' artwork. However I would argue that Ratcliff's point above, concerning the danger of creating a new aura around the mechanically produced image, seems more appropriate in relation to some of Lichtenstein's work. In relation to this point about the perpetuation of aura it is interesting (and perhaps paradoxical) to note that the heyday of Pop art saw the notion of artistic persona elevated to arguably even greater heights than the Abstract Expressionists.

To return to the question of quotation, it is interesting to see how Lichtenstein complicates his use of repetition and quotation still further in some of his more recent works. In one such example, **Large Interior with Three Reflections**, 1993, Lichtenstein creates a dialogue between two (physically) seperate paintings which works to produce an intertextuality not previously present in his works. (fig.17 shows the right hand panel of **Large Interior**, fig.18 shows the left hand panel of **Three Reflections**). **Large Interior**, a mural-sized painting containing three panels, constitutes one half of the work. On the opposite wall hangs **Three Reflections**, making up what we could see as the other half. This second half of the work is also made up of three panels, but unlike the first, is actually, rather than only visually, split into three. (I refer to a 'second half' for the sake of clarity. Neither the way in which the works are hung, nor their relative sizes indicate to the viewer which one has priority. Only the titles hint that the one necessarily precedes the other). The 'reflections' in this second image mirror the images in the first painting, but the strips of benday dotting and diagonal 'shading' confuse this mirror image. The dots, which can be seen to represent the visual workings of commercial images, are shown to obscure or confuse a represented 'reality', which is also clearly constructed of codes. The benday dots have been blown up to such a scale, that as painter and critic Richard Kalina comments, "they read not just as information but as interference, static"(1994:82).

forms ... Our new art seems to *assume* historical forms - out of context and reified ... [I]t is a profoundly ahistorical enterprise"(1992:16). Foster has put it that reactionary postmodernist thinking is by nature ahistorical. One of the reasons he gives, is that the "continuum [of history] is disavowed"(1992:16). We might then ask if this "game" of Lichtenstein's denies history by denying actual chronology?

However, in more general terms I believe Lichtenstein's quotations of paradigmatic artworks or styles have a critical function. His rendering of images allows us to perceive the vast shift between the social context of the quoted image, and the social context that Lichtenstein is a part of.

As I argued in chapter one, it seems central to a critical quotation or parody that tension is created between the quoted texts. This tension can work to throw the authority of each text into question. Lichtenstein's particular tension may be dependent on the extent to which his forms challenge certain stereotyped modernist and pre-modernist notions of the division between traditional 'high art' and popular culture. The work does however raise some problems in its r'ation to popular culture. It has been argued by many critics that not only do Lichtenstein's works reflect mass culture quite passively, but that the type of quotation present in these works of Lichtenstein's serves to perpetuate the dominant values of postmodern consumer society. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, for example, in his article 'Popular Imagery', has the following to say on the point:

> *[T]he much-vaunted historical consciousness of our century has been turned into a curious kind of consumerist relationship with modernist history, where styles - German Expressionism, Italian Metaphysical painting, etc., etc. - are picked at will as one might choose a variety of cheese in a supermarket (1985:129).*

A number of critics have argued this point in terms of Lichtenstein's work (and Pop Art in general) - that it perpetuates the glamour of contemporary popular culture. Carter Ratcliff has looked in particular at the phenomenon of the mechanically produced image. He argues that the mechanically produced image has itself got a particular aura, which is perpetuated by Pop art (1989). This factor once again complicates the

Lichtenstein successfully challenges the authority of the images he quotes. But, much like the 'brushmark' works, the degree to which this is effective - beyond the immediacy of a humourous sort of mimicry - is debatable.

Complicating the process of quotation, Lichtenstein has also used his own works as reference material for quotation. As with most of his quotation, his form of self-reflexivity is very blatant. The challenge to authorship is implicit in every work of Lichtenstein's to a greater or lesser extent. The activity of repeating his own paintings, coupled with the increasingly 'clean' graphic quality of his images which seem almost machine generated, can work to contest notions of the artists's own 'presence' in the production of his art. This gesture of Lichtenstein's undermines the notion of the self as originary. By using his own paintings as source (making the *sign* originary), he deliberately misuses the notion of origin. This activity of returning to his own work becomes a significant part of the meaning in the image, and as with Johns's work, can be seen to problematise not only modernist notions of authorship, but also expressionist notions of spontaneity and 'naturalness'. Here we may perceive both the self and the sign as "belonging to a pre-existent image repetoire"(1985:62).

A point has been made regarding the fact that when Lichtenstein quotes himself, he mixes up the time order of the respective works or styles. As Carter Ratcliff puts it, he "rearranges his own past". Ratcliff has argued that this "is the most powerful of the artist's devices... for making a game of history"(1989:115). This comment is interesting in relation to Foster and Jameson's remarks cited earlier, where both writers made points about the difficulty within postmodernism to situate 'the self' in history, and thus to critically address this history as part of a cultural present.

There are two ways to read these works of Lichtenstein's, in reference to Foster and Jameson's views. On the one hand, we could take the way Lichtenstein makes a "game" of history, as a means to a critical practice. By subverting his own history, he could be seen to allude to the power that the artist has to subvert the 'major' history of representation. On the other hand, we could also apply Foster's and Jameson's arguments concerning the 'ahistorical' to conclude that this game of Lichtenstein's makes for an uncritical practice. Foster (as I noted in chapter one), comments that "[m]odern art *engaged* historical

Lichtenstein's quote of the work, serves only to reveal "the breadth of a fissure that has opened up between the two images". Lichtenstein's image, Deitcher argues, acts as a way of measuring his distance from the tradition in which the original image was produced (1983:87). In relation to **Rouen Cathedral**, Lichtenstein remarks "my series is supposed to be times of day only because his were, and because it's kind of silly and fortuitous and obviously not about daylight at all"(Lichtenstein, in Hendrickson, 1988:70).

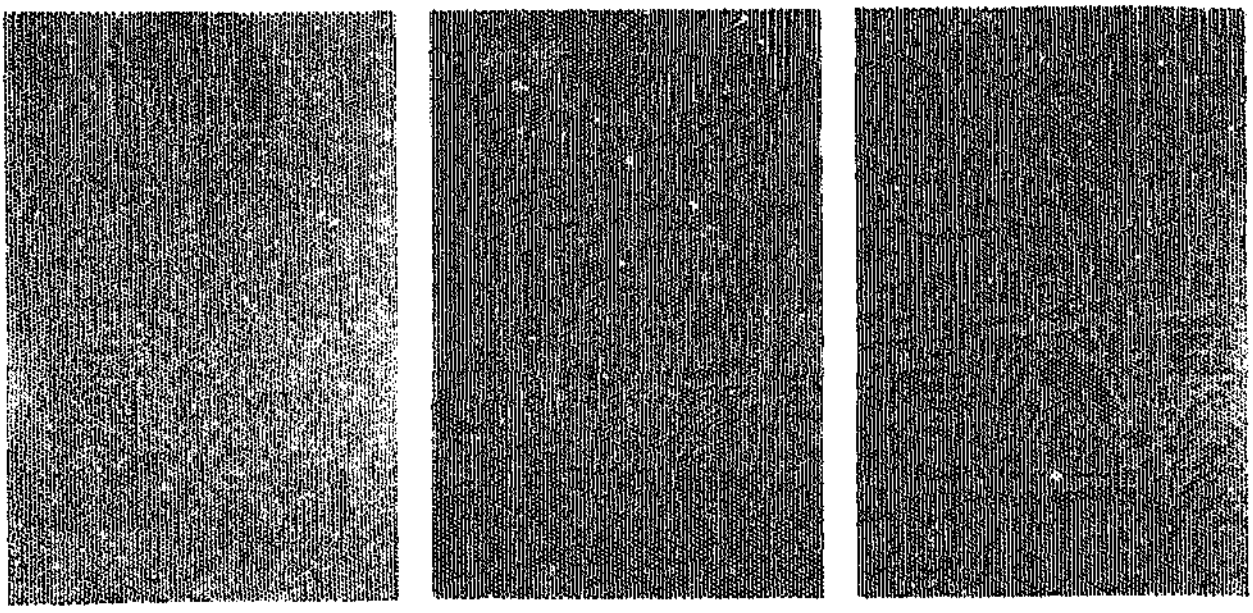


Fig.16. Roy Lichtenstein, **Rouen Cathedral II (seen at three different times of day)**, 1969, Magna on Canvas.

Deitcher comments on the way visual codes operate to bring about this distance in Lichtenstein's work. Here he refers to Lichtenstein's reworking of a De Kooning portrait. "[T]he savagery of the originals is neutralised, rendered rather comic by Lichtenstein's 'depicted' brushwork - the linear description of painterly gesture"(1983:84). Deitcher's use of the words 'neutralised' and 'comic' suggest that in these works

perpetuate the glamour and aura that accompanies 'high art' rather than challenge it. This consequence of quotation is what I understand Foster to be referring to when he warns that quotation, even quotation with parodic intent, may perpetuate a "passion for the code"(1992:6). Here then, the modernist painting, signified by the expressive brushmark, even when entering postmodern discourse, can in fact remain or become a commodity.

There are a further issues at stake here. The large size of the brushmarks gives them importance, seductive colour is used, and no other image or alternative text is introduced into the work as a way of marking the problematic of painting. The first two factors might still function as a kind of critique of painting, but this would depend on, for example, the context in which the works are exhibited and the method of reading (reception). However, it could be argued that an intervention has already occured through the very fact that there *is* no formal rupture. Because the brushmark sits in isolation, decontextualised, (the rest of the painting seeming to have disappeared) the viewer may be forced to reconsider the mark as a mere formal device. Janis Hendrickson sees the scale itself as having a somewhat critical function. She comments that "[T]he monumental scale of the petrified brushstrokes makes them into memorials commemorating the heroic medium of painting which literally has fallen in Action"(1988:62). Hendrickson's comments highlights the target/tribute dialectic that characterises parody.

Lichtenstein's quotes of particular artworks, such as those from particular Surealist, Cubist and Expressionist forms, raise other questions. These works are quoted more or less in their entirety. One such example is his **Rouen Cathedral (seen at Three Different Times of the Day; II, 1969** (fig.16). (It is perhaps relevant here that Lichtenstein chooses an image of Monet's which was realised in serial form).

Here I would like to refer back to Hutcheon's definition of parody, discussed in Chapter Two. It is useful to relate these works of Lichtensteins' to Hutcheon's assertion that parody (taken for granted in her context as meaning *critical* quotation) marks "difference rather than similarity", and that it should set up a "distance" between the old and new text/s. The comment of Hutcheon's is relevant in relation to certain comments by the critic David Deitcher. He remarks on this issue of "difference", in relation to Lichtenstein's quotes of other artworks. Deitcher suggests that a comparison between the original and



Fig.27. Untitled III, 1995, Oil on Canvas.

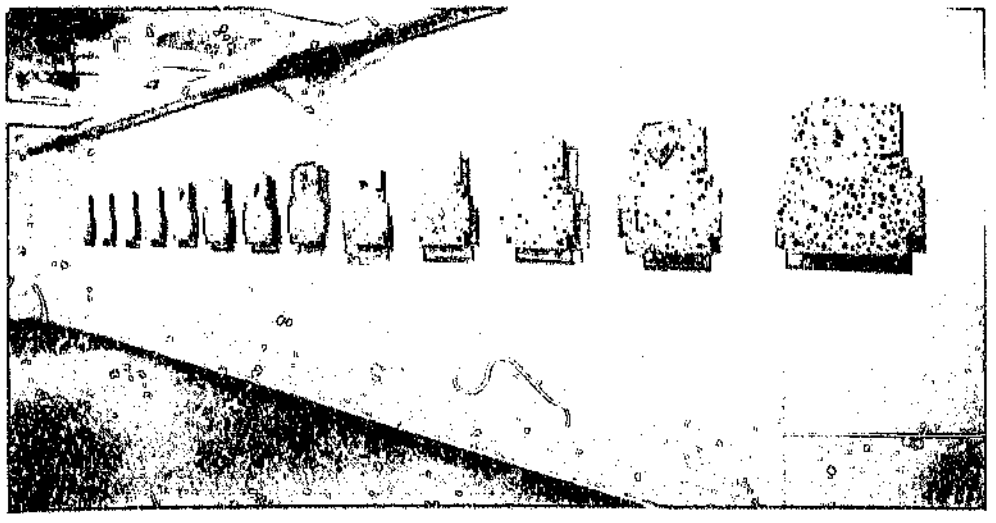


Fig.28. Boxes, 50 ×63, Oil and Spray Paint on Cardboard.



Fig.25. Decoration, 1994/95 (Detail).



Fig.26. Decoration, 1994/95 (Detail).

format as constituting a readymade. Scale is once again an opportunity for vast differences in size and type of mark. As in Untitled II, evidence of investment in the material, of a certain degree of labour, is important. Here too, application of paint is very varied. It moves for example, from thick impasto to being sketchy or diagramatic.

Repetition is foregrounded in this work, both through the regulating of certain kinds of paint-work and through the 'overuse' of iconography. Repetition of iconography is mostly featured through specific images - in particular, the military medals, and jewellery. The use of the jewellery and the medals together, sets up an obvious dialectic, a clearer allusion to gender stereotying than in previous works. I have, however, tried to complicate this somewhat, to reflect the complex relationships between form and content which are of primary concern in these works. I attempt to stress the mark as iconography, as holding as much potential for meaning as the representational elements. This is particularly the case in the way I paint the medals, and in the broad almost flat patches of colour applied with very thick strokes (the blue patch on the lower left and the purple patch on the right). These point to the painted mark as an autonomous element, an object or 'figure' so to speak, which is loaded with as much meaning as the depictions of human figures or military tanks. There are other iconographic elements which have a less stable meaning. These are various objects, as well as human figures. Examples are, the figure wearing the snorkel (fig.26), the almost obscured figure (rather vaguely described through a sort of stippled mark)(fig.25), the little patches of land, or the cone-like object on the extreme left of the format.

The viewing position in relation to this painting is somewhat disorientating. This is perhaps accentuated by the height of the work. The viewer is faced with what in some ways appears to be patterns of mark, which seem to have no logical order on the one hand, but on the other suggest that some kind of system is at work. The disorientation is emphasised by the way in which figure (fragments) and ground compete for attention. In some places, areas that read as 'figure' could also be read as ground Elsewhere, individual objects such as the military medals proliferate, so as to become the ground through their repetition. However, despite the spatial disorientation and the confusion of figure/ground, the painting does have some kind of semantic coherence.



Fig.24. Decoration. 1994/95. Oil and Enamel on Canvas.

Decoration, 1994/5 (fig.24) was started while I was working on Untitled II, and completed subsequently. For me, an important aspect of this work is that I have taken it off the stretcher frames on which it was painted, and left it to hang like a cloth. I have left the cut edges quite uneven, even frayed in areas, just as they were after I had cut the painting from the frames.[3] Through this process I have aimed to foreground the painting as object. In this way I could reflect on the modernist notions of the autonomous painted work, and on the idea of the oil on canvas



Fig.22. Untitled II, 1994 (Detail).

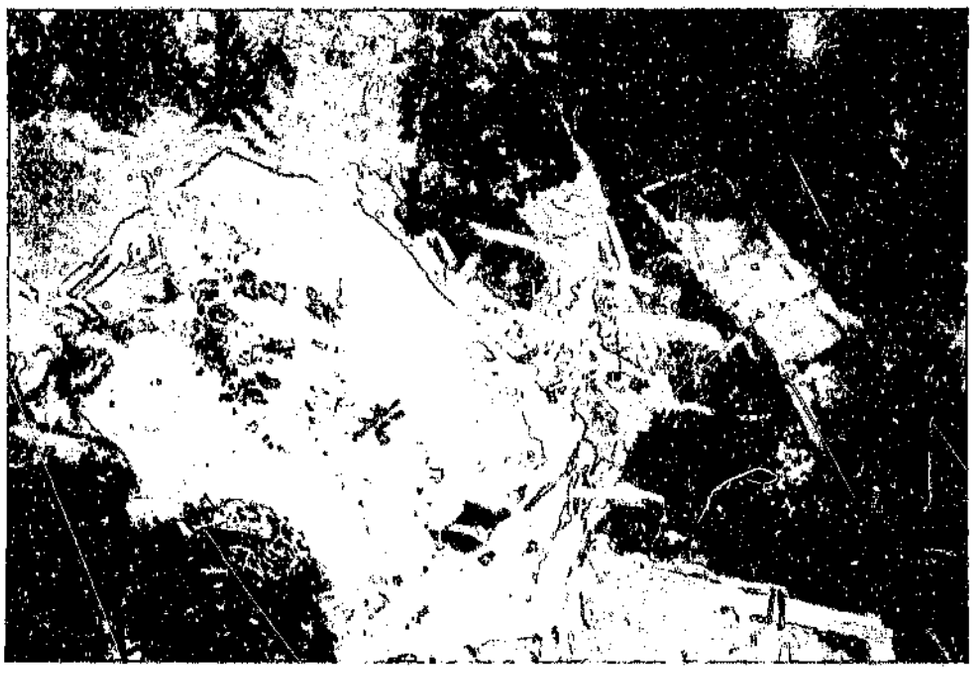


Fig.23. Untitled II, 1994 (Detail).

Here perhaps it is worth noting that Greenberg objected to pattern painting. He saw this kind of repetition as 'death'. His 'achieved unity' (which involves a certain activation of the surface) was considered the ideal abstract form. In this shift between emphasising and denying pattern I try to situate myself somewhere between the pattern painting which Greenberg opposes, and the formalist achieved unity he proposes as the most aesthetically viable form of painting.

The materiality of the painting is of importance here. In certain areas, paint is applied fairly thickly and with large strokes, forming flat or vaguely gestural mark (as for example in the yellow and red areas on the left of the format). Objects or areas painted with very small mark contrast with these passages. At times, paint is applied thinly, almost like a wash, or in small punctuated marks which creates a sort of webbing or meshing on the surface (almost like camouflage). Passages of patterning transform into figurative elements. While these figurative forms are not illusionistically rendered, they have sufficient three-dimensionality and separateness from the ground to disturb the logic of an abstracted, unified field.[3] In one area (fig.22), paint is syringed on the surface to define an object (a lawnmower). This syringing process, along with the iconography of the lawnmower, is deliberately humourous. (Humour, which is included in different ways throughout the body of work, is one of the means whereby a parodic intent is hopefully realised by the viewer).[4]

Evidence of care and labour, an investment in the material, is important for the type of parodic reading I wish to encourage. It works, I hope, to create a more complex sort of parody: through my use of different modes, differentiated mark and particular iconography I clearly parody painting, attempting to undermine the authority of each mode. On the other hand, I invest the painted surface with too much care and overlay for parody to function so directly. Hence, the complex configuration of an *authentic* investment in the paint and a *critical* stance on painting is the axis around which my critique revolves.

However, while the work has pattern, it is at the same time not *a* pattern, as it is not sufficiently regulated. It is not only iconographic detail but also colour which disturbs here. Saturated, high-key colour shapes contrast with passages of subdued earthy colours where tonal values are very similar. It be mes difficult for the eye to settle. While this may be read, on one level, as a purely formal or aesthetic device, the combination of particular iconography and modes are intended to shift these terms of re e.

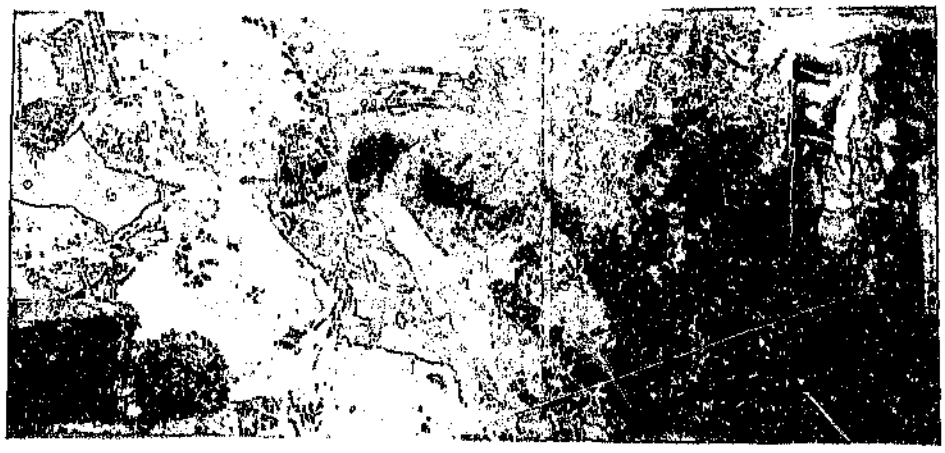


Fig.21. Untitled II, 1994. Oil and Enamel on Canvas.

style of painting. Each mode is so markedly different that its status as convention is highlighted. With this setting up of different modes, quotation could be read as parodic. Parts of the painting, such as the romantically painted 'braai' and surrounding landscape, signal something perhaps more personal, something which (paradoxically) resists the distance of parodic quotation. This is perhaps the first instance in which the directness of parody tentatively begins to be shaped by the more subtle forms which I suggest are associated with metonymic readings.

The demarcation of the format into different parts is important, as I pick this device up again later - in the serialization of the fast-food boxes which is a segmentation or demarcation of a different kind.

In Untitled II, 1994 (fig.21) I continue with the use of different modes of representation. I also explore certain opportunities afforded by the large scale. The painting was difficult for me in a way, as I really felt it to have the appearance of certain Neo-expressionist work. This was both interesting and problematic. I wanted to facilitate a reading of the work which made it difficult to position it as a Neo-expressionist work despite the presence of certain formal features which are associated with the movement. This work became a site for intensive exploration of autographic mark making as a conceptual vehicle. More specifically, this mark-making became something I could use against itself.

Different codes are emphasised by the larger scale, which allows me to make vast changes in size and type of mark. The larger scale is important for other reasons too. My intention is that the scale serves as a vague reference to large scale history paintings (for example, battle scenes). Although it does not have the illusionistic form generally characteristic of these paintings, the 'feel' of these paintings is invoked through colour, swirling mark, as well as figurative elements refering to military culture.

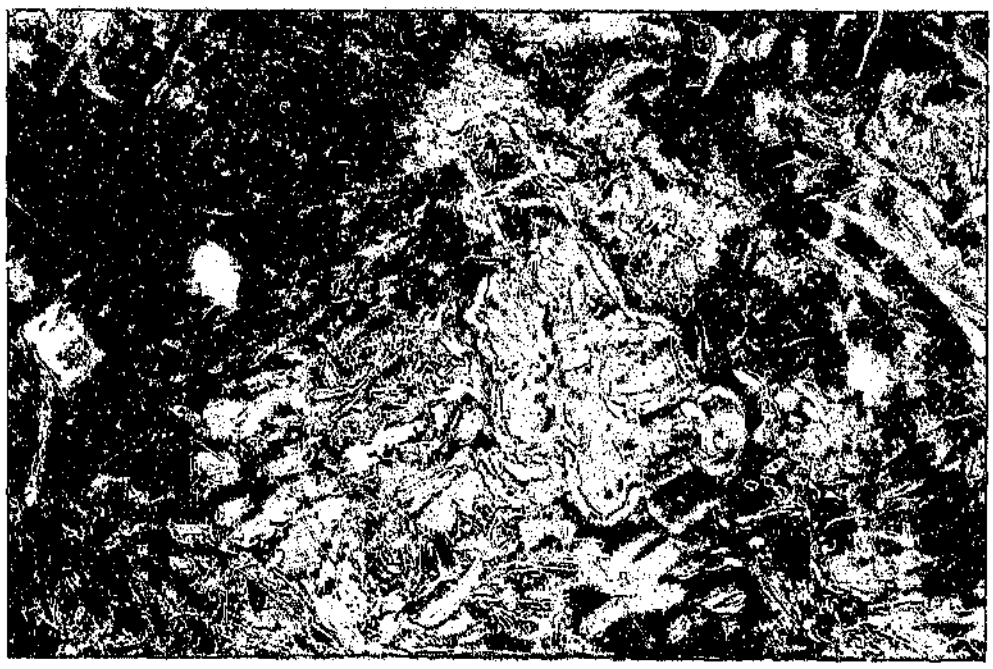
This painting seems more complex to read than previous works. Complexity of reading occurs for a number of reasons. Mostly this is due to the conflation of what can be termed modernist field and postmodernist rupture of this field. This produces a disorientating effect which functions in different ways. Even though a kind of pictorial space is produced, the work also reads as a spatially vague, patterned domain.



Fig.20. Untitled I, 1993. Oil on canvas.

In Untitled I, 1993 (fig.20) the formal and iconographic features are much more clearly marked as constructed. This painting shows a shift away from the unity of ground. Formal devices of segmentation or partitioning characterize this work - it could be seen as divided into several segments. The fracturing of the field, is highlighted by different modes of representation within each segment. These different modes of representation, by way of contrast, seem to make it possible to emphasise the gestural mark as a conscious construction. The modes shift from large abstract shapes of thick gestural mark, to diagrammatic or cartoon-like images, to a romantic naturalistic or impressionistic

The earliest painting in this body of work is the canvas painting titled **Ground**, 1993 (fig.19). While other canvas works had been completed as part of my research before this one, **Ground** seemed to be the first work to show signs of my engagement with expressive codes in a way which pointed to a more productively critical approach to the problematic of expressionist painting. However, while gestural brushstroke is very consciously used as quotation and there is an abundance of activity on the surface which almost 'overflows' the image, the work still conforms to a more or less conventional painting. It could be argued to have the 'achieved unity' characteristic of modernist painting. A counter argument could of course be advanced in that the surface of the painting registers too insistently a competition for attention in terms of the almost equivalent activity of each mark.



Ground, 1993 (Detail).

images and passages from my own works are also used as reference material in later works. These quotations of my own painting are in some cases quite obvious, but in other instances disguised.

Although I have noted the point before, I feel it important to repeat that a major concern for me in these works is the foregrounding of the painted field (and the painted mark) as pre-given. This is articulated most strongly in the later works.

Before continuing, I also feel it relevant to note that the paintings which make up this body of work were selected from a larger group of works. A major reason for selecting these works from the larger group was my feeling that the kinds of intertextual readings I could try to set up by putting these particular works together, would best facilitate the sort of tension I wanted.

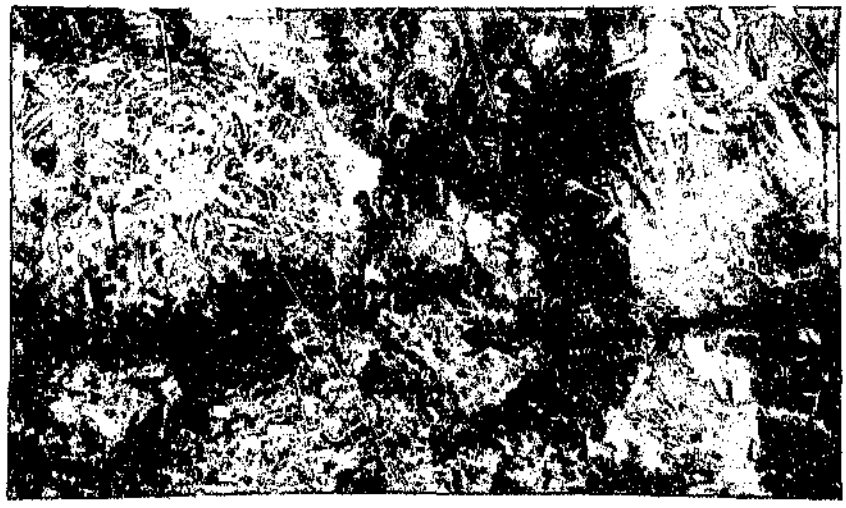


Fig.19. Ground. 1993. Oil and enamel on canvas.

argument which validates the above statement. Rather I am concerned as to how certain strategies of representation might serve to challenge these stereotypes.

I have consciously used the language of high art in conjunction with images and codes from popular culture to comment on this. This conjunction is of course, as I have noted, common within postmodern practice, and is perceived by many critics as more often problematic than progressive.[4] It is my contention however, that a *certain kind* of conscious combining of high art forms and processes with forms and processes from popular culture, can expose their respective languages as convention. This becomes a way of marking the 'natural' expressionist artist's trace as a construction - one which is inscribed with masculinist values.

For me, the most obvious way to deal with these stereotypes seemed to be through particular iconography. My depictions of military tanks and medals, bombs, competitive sports activities and gory cartoons, stress the aggressive 'image' of masculinst culture. However, the inclusion, along with these aspects, of other iconography of another more subtle, almost obscure set of images and forms, is used to counteract a reductive ideological reading of the works. This does not mean that ideology is suppressed. On the contrary I wish it to reflect that ideology works in the subtlest of ways. But in addition to this I hope to suggest that critique for me can not be based on blunt oppositions. It is a radical unfixity of positions that I propose as potentially liberatory. Here the strategies of parody and metonymy operate best. One strategy (parody) makes public a more or less easily read critique, the otner (metonymy) undermines that very certainty. Again, I need to stress that it is the tension between the two strategies which produces a space for a critical re- .rticulation of (neo)expressionist painting.

My reference material for these works is deliberately very diverse. Certain images are sourced from journals such as military magazines, 'women's' magazines, wrestling magazines, and boys' annuals. Others are from advertisments for army toys which appear in comics, as well as actual toys such as mass produced cheap plastic tanks. I have also made use of my own photographic documentation of military museums, army camouflage, and household appliances. The cartoon images are drawn from photog aphs I took of television images, and from actual comic books. These references point to diverse te ual forms or types. Importantly,

images. In these I depict actions which might normally be done in front of a mirror (as, for example, in fig.38). A mirrored, or reflected image, could be described as being simultaneously a *repetition* and a *reversal* of something. The use of these 'mirrored' depictions thus becomes a way in which the painting might be read as parodic. These sorts of connections also constitute the remote but continuous links which facilitate metonymic readings.

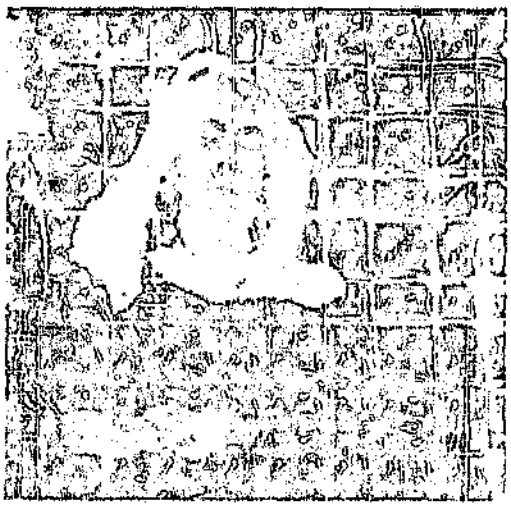


Fig.38. Impress No.4 (Detail).

here through various optical operations caused by the convergence of the painted mark and the holographic surfaces. In certain instances, the painted images appear transparent, with sections of the holographic pattern emerging through, and subtly interfering with, these images.[7] To increase the difficulty in reading certain painted images, many of them are painted in very muted colours and with very slight tonal shifts. These formal manipulations create a visual effect (an unfixable form) which can be seen to suggest an unfixity of meaning. Whereas in earlier works, camouflage is included through actual depictions of camouflage-like patterning, in the holographic works it is the *idea* of camouflage (conveyed through an optical disturbance) which is present.

As with the fast-food boxes, the surface is pre-given, but in this case, there is also pre-given depth (the holographic illusion of depth).[8] The fact that the depth in the holographic field is mechanically generated, could be seen to have an ironic connection to the illusionism of 'conventional' paintings. The relation set up between the pre-given depth and the painted images produces a a certain visual dynamic. This dynamic hopefully produces in the viewer a need to participate, in order to find their own methods of tackling potential meanings in the work.

The holographic configurations make these images visually unstable. With the pattern shifting somewhat and changing colour continually, depending on the viewer's position, this unstable image may be seen to reflect on multiplicity and ambiguity of meaning. I have aimed to produce something of this multiplicity and ambiguity in the canvas works and the fast food boxes, but in the holographic surfaces it is the ground itself which produces a significant shift in viewing and in producing meaning. From some angles and in certain light, the painted images seem very clear, but viewed from a different position they almost become negatives/absences or blank silhouettes within the format. Ironically, the hand-painted, naturalistically rendered images appear at times to have less depth than the mechanical holographic field.

The reflective quality of these holographic surfaces could be associated with the idea of mirroring. In a certain position in relation to the works, the viewer is reflected in the surface. In respect of this mirroring, the small scale of the works is important. Coupled with the optical effect of the field (which makes viewing difficult) the scale encourages the viewer to read the work from close up. The surface as mirror is accentuated by my use of the self-portraits as painted

My interest in using readymade surfaces, led me to use the holographic giftwrap paper for the Impress series, 1995 (fig.37). While the canvas works and the fast-food boxes disturb notions of spontaneity and originality in different ways, it is the holographic paintings which may be seen to effect such a disturbance most obviously, through the juxtaposition of hand-painted image with mechanically generated surface. I would like the mechanical to stand for an increased distance - a distance that would not be associated with the subjectivity of expressionism. This creates some tension, given that these surfaces are so visually unfixable.

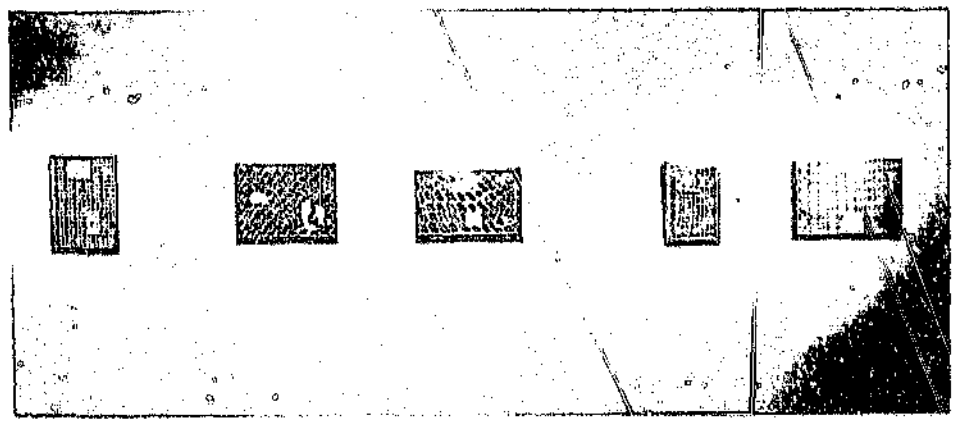


Fig.37. Impress, I - VI. Oil on holographic wrapping paper.

The holographic surface interests me for a number of reasons. As with the boxes, the surface is one which usually (in its conventional or intended use) covers or hides something. (In this case, it is a gift). Again, a connection is implied here to the idea of camouflage, which is realised in a different way to previous works.[6] Camouflage is suggested





Fig.35 & 36. Boxes, 50 -63 (Details).

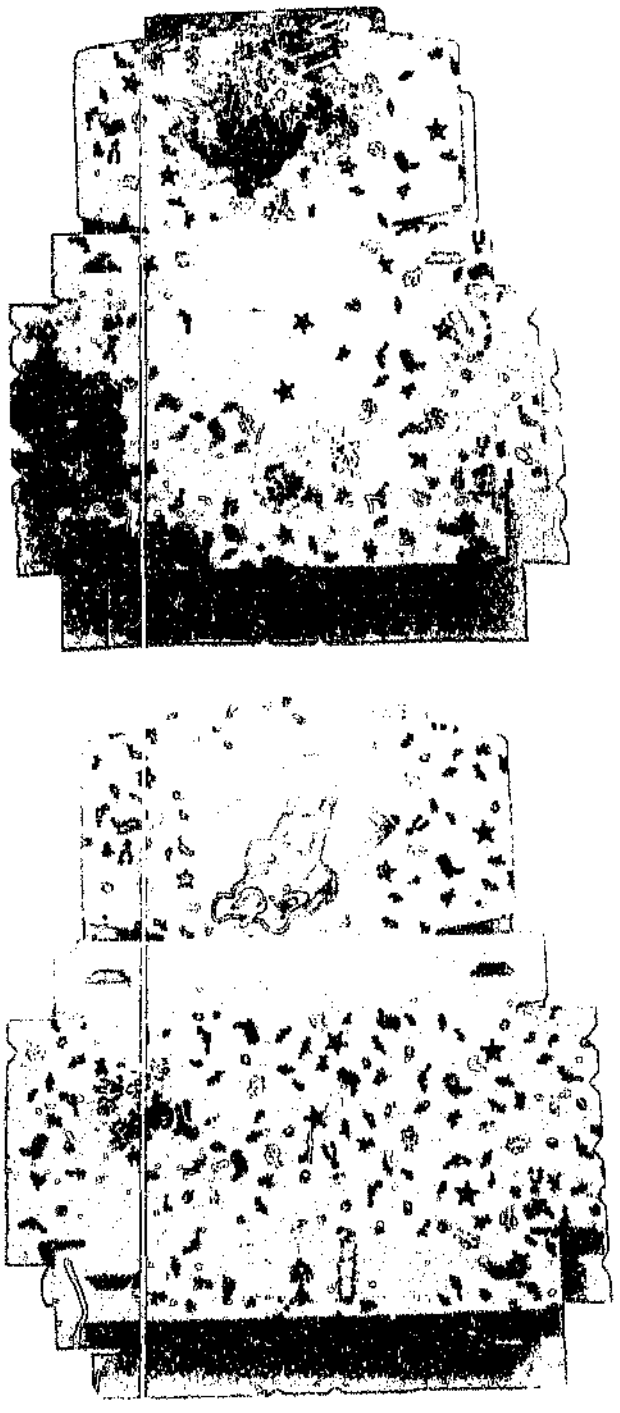


Fig.33 (top). Fig.34 (bottom). Boxes, 50 - 63.

almost tonally 'dentical to the ground, so that it seems almost not to be there at all. Paint moves from thin washes on some of the boxes to impasto on others (fig.33). There are shifts from figurative images to abstract mark. The modes of these figurative elements are very different - some are naturalistically painted, while others, (as in figs.34 & 35) are treated in a cartoon-like way. The more naturalistic modes I include in certain boxes are set up against the more expressionistic forms of painting as a means of marking the issue of the artist's 'trace', of artistic presence. Occasionally I use what I would call 'bad' painting - that is, painting which is deliberately awkward - and play this off against areas which are very carefully painted, and which are more traditionally aesthetic. The relationships produced through the play between all these modes, points to the kind of parody I wish to communicate - one which puts the viewer in a state of uncertainty. A parody which, to borrow Hutcheon's words, is s ewhat "ambivalent or contradictory"(1989:107).

The positioning of the painted images within each box is important. I have deliberately made this as different as possible from one box to the next. So, for example, in fig.32 the image is placed very centrally, while in fig.31 the images sit on the very edge of the format - on a part of the box (a flap) which would usually be a particularly unnoticeable area if the box was assembled.

The variance of the iconography also plays a part in the sort of tension I wish to produce. The depictions of contact sport, an atomic bomb and a braai, for example, could each produce quite clear symbols on their own when related to the pre-given iconography on the surface of the boxes. Other images, or combinations of images are less obviously symbolically loaded, and may appear private or even arbitrary. The combination of iconography suggests a system, but not a system which has resolution as its end. The play between a promise and a denial of a clear system, is part of the tension I wish to set up between public and private. The private meanings which could be described as a sort of secret language, are played off against the public voice of mass culture which the boxes represent. Here notions of the stereotype and of the individual are brought into play, countering one another.

I found it interesting that the flattening out of the boxes (presenting them unfolded) makes them (initially at least) unrecognisable as boxes, and more specifically, unrecognisable as 'Black Steer' fast-food packaging. This is despite the fact that the whole box is visible (fig.28). This 'disguising' of the boxes could be associated with the forms of disguise or camouflage which I work with in the canvas paintings. The particular use of mark, tone and colour occuring mechanically across the surface, accentuated this asscociation with camouflage.

The boxes are presented about 6cm away from the wall. This manipulation of the boxes is done to infer a three-dimensionality, to stress their objecthood. This objecthood in way contradicts the fact that they are surfaces to be painted onto.

The boxes are presented in a serial form, which may (having associations with the production line) be connected to mass production. I have emphasised this connection by numbering the boxes as no's 50 - 63, as though they might be part of a much larger configuration. Seriality further increases the tension set up between the mechanical (commodity) imprint and the hand-made trace of the aesthetic. Although the boxes are repeated in a way which has a 'production line quality', each one is different in the way it has been painted on. Here repetition and difference are constantly played off against each other. Seriality is a form of repetition which gives me the opportunity to repeat, but at the same time to incorporate difference into this repetition. By this I mean that while all the boxes are themselves identical, each one is affected, or acted on, in different ways. In this respect, each box could (paradoxically) be seen to constitute an 'original' oil painting. Owens comments that "[the] contradiction between difference and repetition is instrinsic to the serial mode of production"(1992:118). Interestingly, he suggests that it is within this contradition that the critical potential of the serial form lies (1992:118). What is also relevant about seriality for my purposes here, is that it contains the sort of contiguity that may be associated with metonymic readings.

As the relations between the different treatment of each surface is important to meaning production here, I should like to detail some aspects of the way I have marked these surfaces. A few of the boxes are almost completely covered up, either with broad gestural mark or flat tone (fig.31). Others have limited cover, or depict objects which are very inobtrusive. In fig.32 for example, the painted object (the braal) is

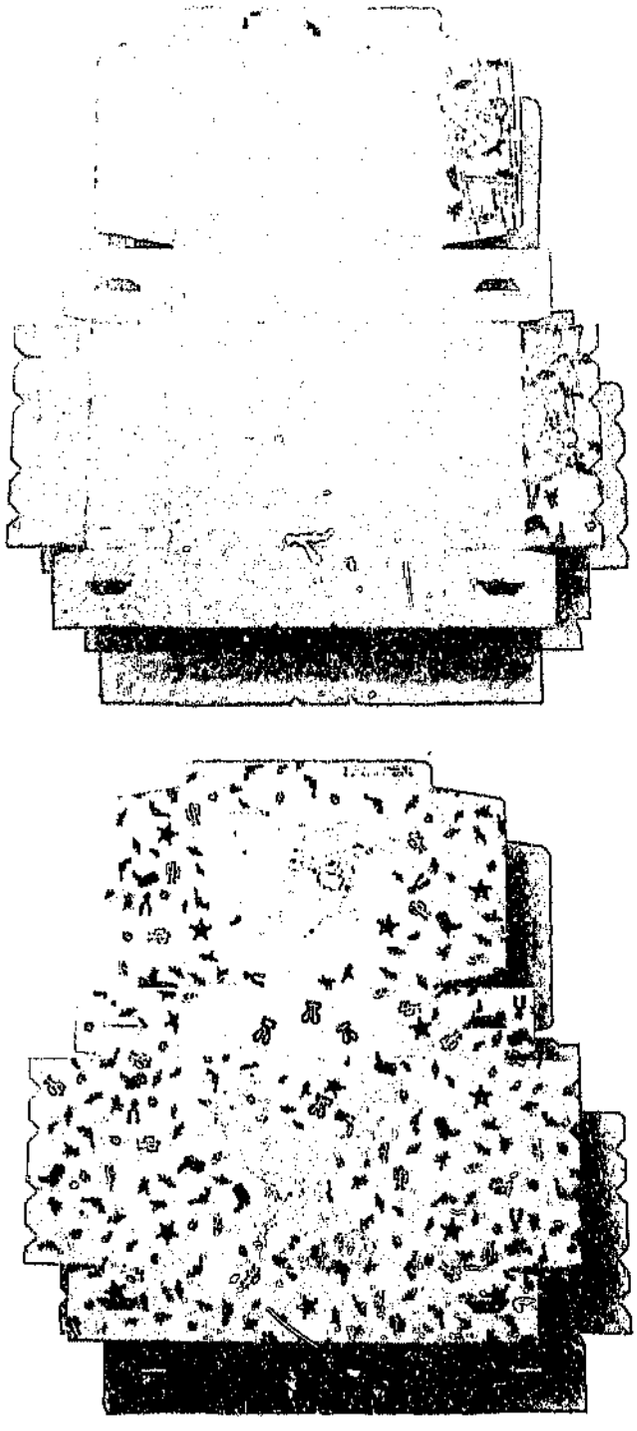


Fig.31 (top), Fig.32.(bottom), Boxes, 50 - 63.

within Untitled III as a whole, is mediated). I repeat this image in one of the holographic works. Through connection between Untitled III and the holographic works, I hope to create a tension between the handpainted field and the mechanically generated field (ground). Similar ideas apply to the image of the computer screen in the block to the right of the microphone.

Before I begin discussion of the holographic and fast-food box works, I need to note certain issues pertaining to the oil on canvas paintings. During the time I spent painting these large canvas works, the idea of gestural mark and well as other modes of representation as readymade language or codes, became increasingly apparent to me. The logical consequence of this seemed to be to use actual readymade objects as surfaces on which to paint. The canvas paintings, while they are in certain ways parodic, do contain the trace of the artist through metonymic connection to the gestural mark and the traditional 'oil on canvas' field. I wanted to complicate these connections further.

I felt a need to foreground a more intertextual reading of my work by bringing other texts, physically (quite literally), into play. Most especially, I wanted to comment on painting itself as being culturally bound, and the canvases as pre-given. The use of mass-produced pre-inscribed surfaces to reflect on painting as culturally bound, contrasts with Untitled III, where a painted reference to *nature* (marked in certain ways) constituted the field.

The conceptual tensions which arose out of the imposition of hand-painted marks or images onto a pre-given (mechanical) surface offered different critical possibilities. The patterned food boxes could be seen to disturb the idea of the white virgin canvas. The pre-printed icons on the boxes mark different representational modes as readymades. My decision to use these particular boxes was based not only on the fact that they are (mechanically) pre-printed with repeated images, but on the specific nature of some of these stereotypical 'masculine' images (guns, cowboy-boots, spurs and medals). They present a 'field of representation', in some ways already quite literally pre-inscribed. This could be seen to reflect my own activity as a painter as being already to some extent pre-given, or pre-inscribed.

used in the self-portrait is of the type more often connected to a greater objectivity than is gestural or painterly style. The handling o. the paint in the self-portrait connects this work to the Impress (holographic) series.

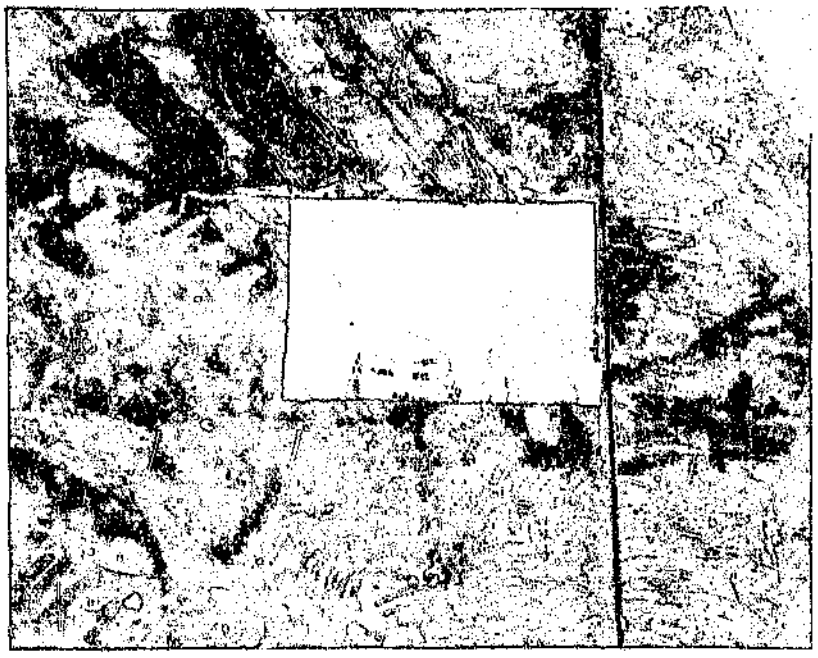


Fig.30. Untitled III, 1995 (Detail).

The microphone image in the rectangle below the self-portrait suggests expression in a different way. It implies expression as mediated. It depicts the mechanisms of mediation - here technology. (This may highlight the fact that all the 'expression' the viewer might assume

The idea of nature is implicit in the reference to land, but it is nature that has been acted on in some way. One could say it is culturally marked. The reference to nature, to the outdoors, can be seen to conflict with the manufactured quality of the fast-food boxes and the 'holographic' paintings that follow. These later works could thus be seen to operate as part of a larger context of meaning production, one in which metonymic links may be drawn between different works across the space of the gallery. The reference to nature as culturally marked reflects on the idea of painting itself as being culturally bound. I take this point up again further on in the chapter.

As in **Untitled II** and **Decoration**, both modernist field and postmodern disruption to this field, could be seen to operate. Apart from the disorientation of viewing position, there are other elements which are included to disturb the idea of the unified field. Impositions, in the form of painted rectangles, are randomly scattered over the patterned field. These create an optical disjuncture. Most of the rectangles are painted onto the surface as though there is no recognition of this surface as already painted. Only the very small shape on the far right of the format has what appears to be a shadow below it. This shape may be read illusionistically as a 'real' object floating above the surface of the painting. All the other rectangles are spatially on the same plane as the field they cover. This very subtle play with opticality hopefully connects this work to the later **Impress** (holographic) series, where opticality becomes a primary concern.

The rectangles could be read in many ways - as signs, as presence, as absence, or as small canvases or pages from a book. They could also be seen to mark the rest of the painting as being itself made of elements which are in different ways 'signs' for painting. The method of painting in all of these rectangles (particularly those which contain images) is very careful and precise. This is important. They need to be perceived as valuable and meaningful, both as engaged labour and in terms of iconography. For instance, the depictions of the microphone, section of computer screen, and self-portrait, each connect to ideas of expression in different ways. The self-portrait (fig.30) alludes to self-expression. It could be seen to comment on an automatic reading of artworks as an expression of artistic 'self'. Ironically, the image in which I depict myself is far less expressionist, in terms of handling of the medium, than the rest of the painting. The more or less blunt illusionistic style

In *Untitled III, 1995 (fig.27)* both iconography and treatment of paint point to subsequent works - the fast-food boxes and the holographic works. I repeat the attention to viewing position which was set up in previous paintings, but here it is accentuated. On the one hand, there is even more of an all-over patterning than is the case in the previous works. On the other hand the work bears more reference to a 'real' naturalistically depicted space. The green and earth colours seem to imply a topographical terrain (fig.29). This is emphasised by the type of mark making and patterning which covers most of the format. Marks and pattern cohere here to suggest an aerial perspectival view. This aerial perspective is not, however, consistent. Certain elements, such as the small figures (soldiers) in the top left corner, or the side views of grass or landmass, destabilise this perspective. In addition to this, the viewing position or orientation of the spectator is potentially made confusing due to the vast mark differentiation (form, type and size).



Fig.29. Untitled III, 1995 (Detail).

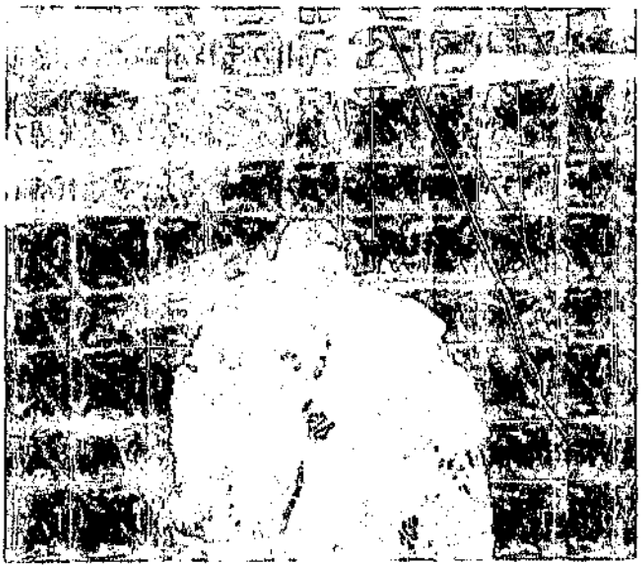




Fig.57. (top) Untitled III (Detail).
Fig.58. (bottom) Impress. No.3. (Detail).



Fig.56. Untitled II (Detail).



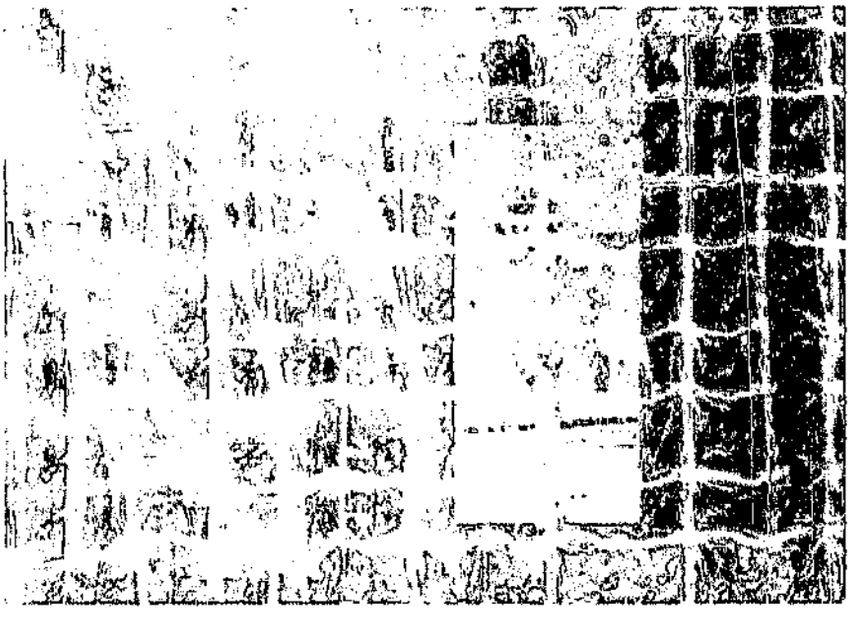


Fig.54. (top) Impress No.5 (Detail).
Fig.55. (bottom) Impress No.1 (Detail).

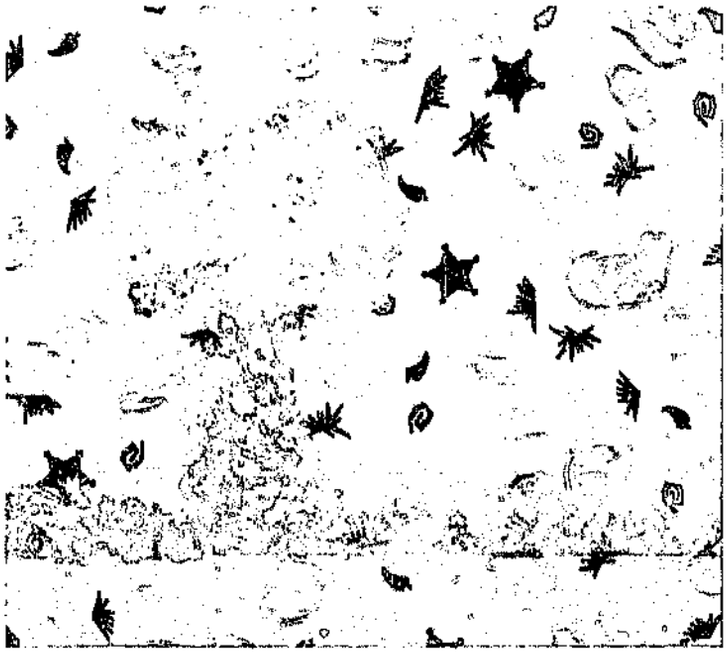


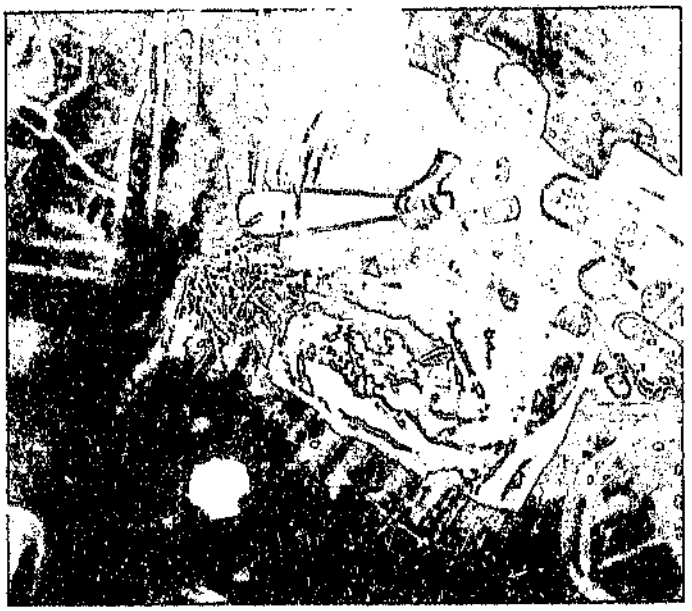


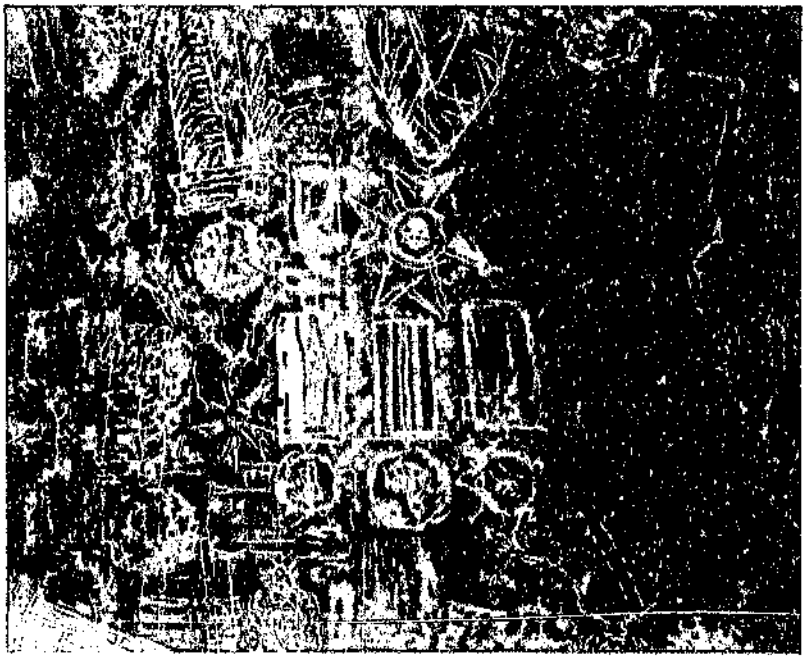
Fig.52 (top) Boxes, 50 -63 (Detail).
Fig.53 (bottom) Impress No.2 (Detail).



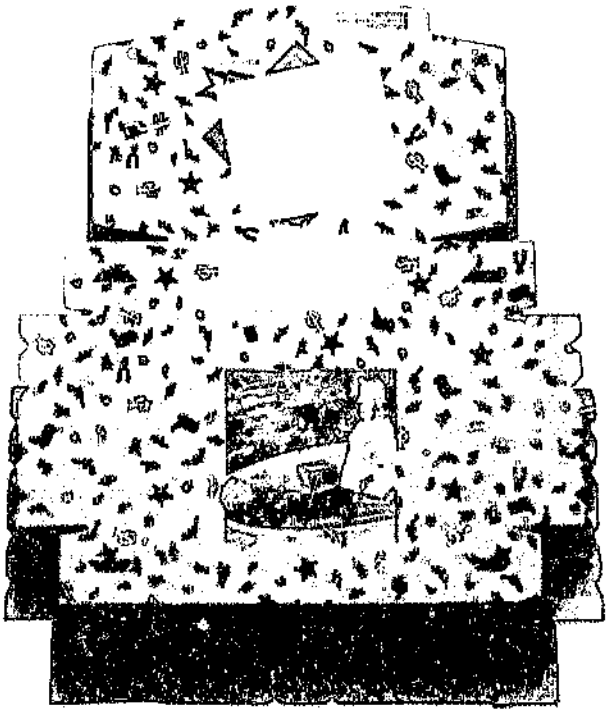


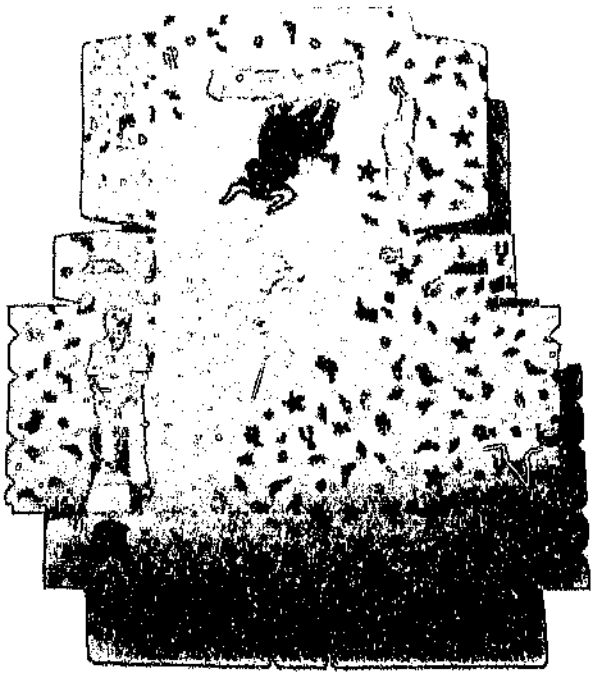
Figs.50 & 51. Boxes, 50 - 63 (Details).





Figs.48 & 49. Decoration (Details).





Figs.46 & 47. Boxes, 60 - 63.





Fig.44. (top) **Impress No.2.**
Fig.45. (bottom) **Ground** (detail).

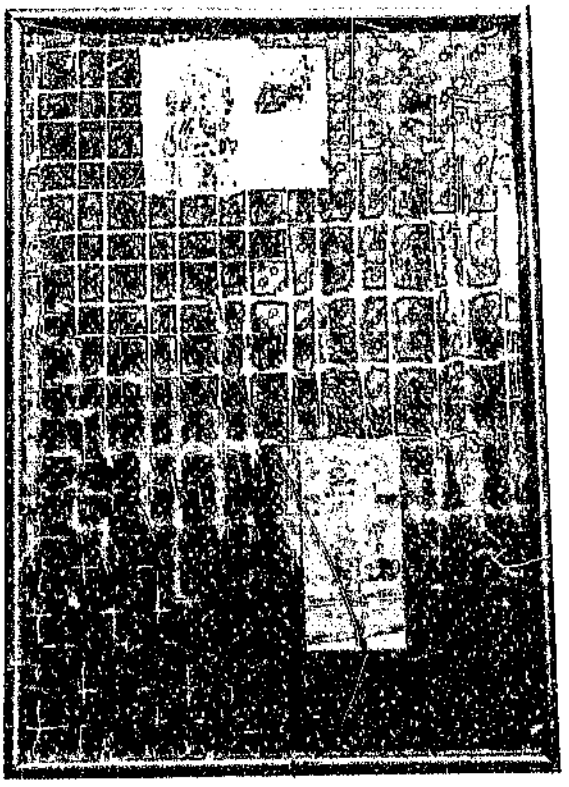
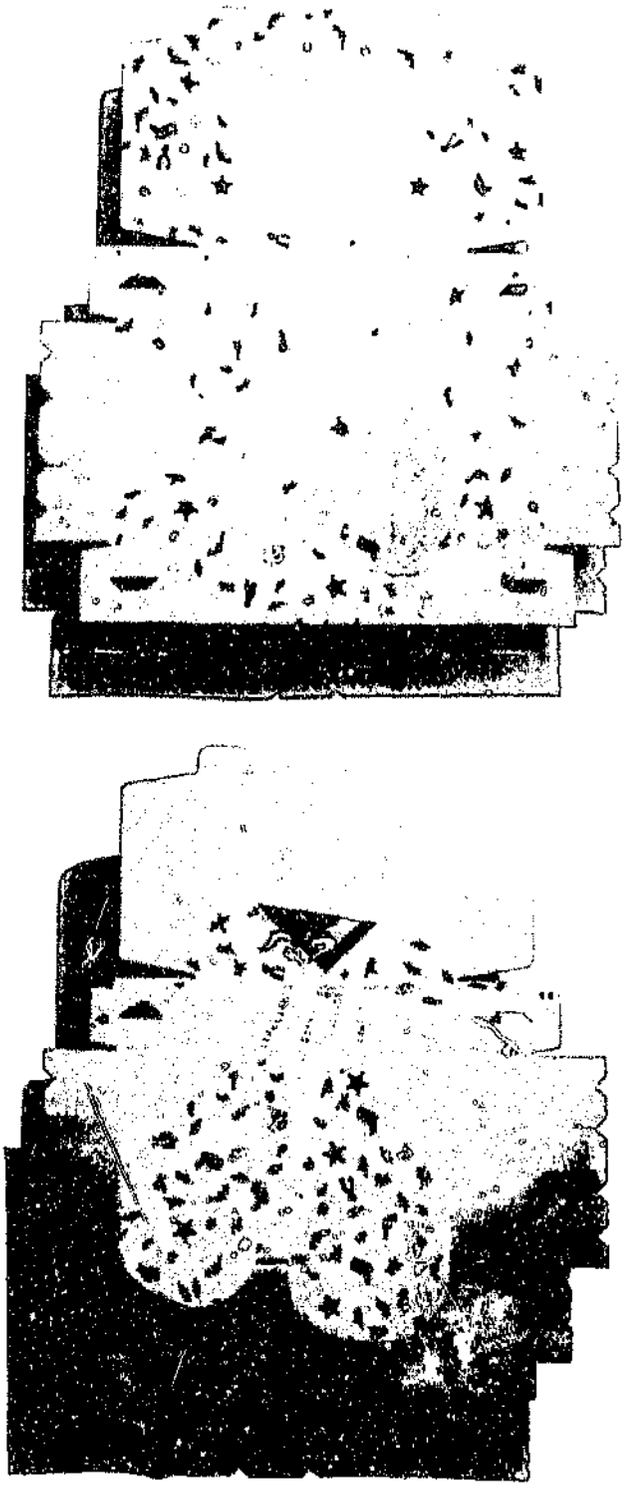


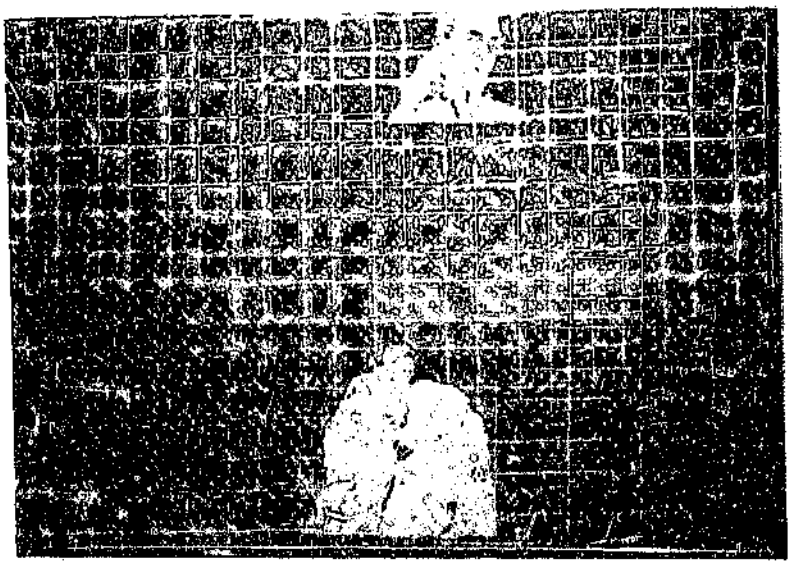
Fig.43. Impress No.1.



Figs.41 & 42. Boxes, 50 - 63.

The instability in the viewing of these works is underscored by the way the photographic documentation taken of the works cannot be accurate, despite the fact that photography is itself a mechanical process. Two photographs in exact light conditions but from slightly different angles (or in identical positions but with altered light) will be radically different (as can be seen in figs.39 & 40). There is an irony to the fact that the camera can make a better replication of the hand-painted gestural artwork than of one which is partly mechanically produced. This could be a way of calling into question the truth value of any mode of representation, be it a photograph of a painting, or, more relevant here, the painting itself.

The unfixable nature of these holographic images generally - which features in different ways (sometimes to a lesser degree) in the more orthodox works - can be seen as primary to my re-articulation of neo-expressionist painting.



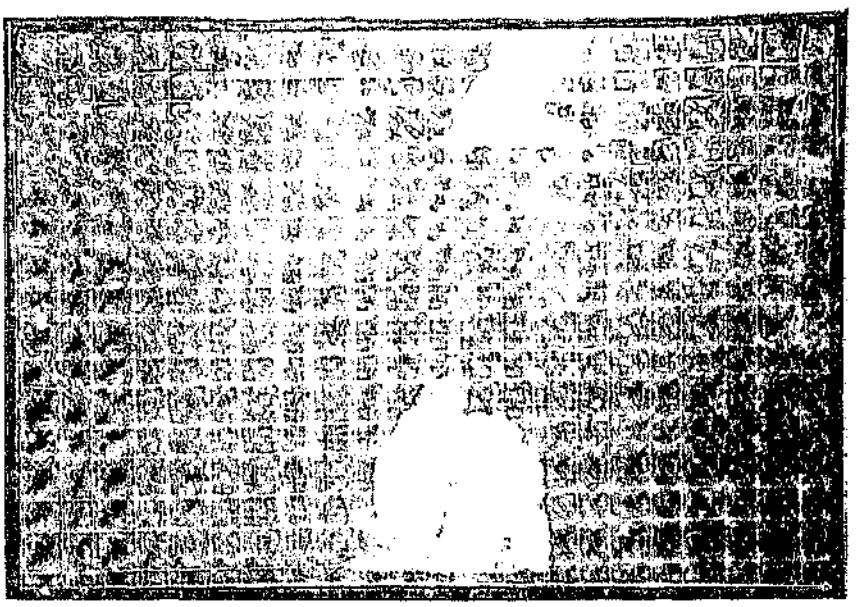


Fig.39.& Fig.40. Impress No.5.

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> *final distinction between what is present in it or absent from it ... Interpretation [may be taken] as the metonymic prolongation of its object"(1995:22) (my emphasis).*

Melville and Readings propose that this kind of interpretation is a sort of "interminable analysis, [which] relinquishes both the promise of immediacy and the comfort of critical distance"(1995:23).

It is on this point, articulated so eloquently by Melville and Readings, that I wish to conclude. The "critical distance" they refer to, has for me effectively done its job in critical postmodernist discourse. But this does not mean, as they quite correctly infer, that a return to "immediacy" should be the alternative. At the same time it should also not mean that one is paralysed as an artist - more specifically, as a painter. Instead, the "critical distance", if perceived as common to critiques of Neo-expressionism, can function to liberate painting as a practice. (Here again, I must stress that some essentialist notion of painting is not intended).

This liberation of painting as a practice, comes from taking the critiques seriously enough to see that the deconstruction of any system is necessary for its reconstruction. Expressionist painting, like other forms of practice, is a system - a system which is not natural but one of convention. Convention can be changed.

strategies which this research process has prompted me to consider for use in future work. These would be for example, exhibiting paintings in spaces other than galleries, presenting my paintings in conjunction with video and photography, in book form, and as objects which double-up as functional items. These approaches would extend the strategies I already employ.

Certain aspects of this research suggest for me the presence of two, in some ways distinct, issues. These two issues reflect two different aspects of the problematic of painting in postmodernism. The one is the issue of the painting as commodity. (The theories of critics such as Foster, Newman, Ratcliff and others highlight this aspect). The other is the issue of painting as representing masculinist discourse (this issue has been reflected here in the writing of critics such as Pollock and Owens). The two issues are to some extent, as I said, distinct, but they are also interrelated. It is perhaps in the recognition of the interrelation of these two issues that a space for a critical postmodern painting practice might be located. I have found the complex notion of commodity/mastery to be of fundamental importance to my practice. This notion has been for me, the most illuminating aspect of theories of painting within postmodern discourse.

To conclude, I wish to refer to a piece of writing which I have found particularly interesting in relation to the position of criticality I have suggested in this dissertation. Stephen Melville and Bill Readings make some points regarding the interpretation of visual art. These points seem most appropriate in light of my emphasis on 'open' meaning, on a sort of ambivalent parody, in which importance is placed on the viewer in establishing meaning, and in which a foregrounding of intertextuality is seen as central. I quote extensively from this text, as it seems to draw together many of the threads which I have followed in this dissertation.

> *"Meaning exists nowhere else than as it arises in the acts of interpretation that accompany and constitute the possibility of perception ... Interpretation is not a move behind or beyond the representation to its hidden [essential] meaning: it is rather a work of prolongation of the object, its extension into* other spaces, other contexts, *and as such a prolongation it does not allow of an easy or*

(The term avant-garde within critical postmodern discourse is commonly used in a sceptical or negative sense. Eagleton however, uses the term avant-garde to denote a critical practice). What is interesting about Eagleton's comment is that it shows regressive and progressive (critical and reactionary) postmodernisms, to not be polarized positions.

I would like to touch on some issues around painting - painting as it may be seen within a South African framework. In this context it is pertinent to reflect on a local artworld phenomenon. At a recent debate (1994) in the Johannesburg Art Gallery titled **'Is Painting in a Crisis ?'**, speakers, who included both painters and critics, conveyed a general feeling that painting was indeed problematic in relation to the present South African situation. Interestingly, one of the key issues proposed in the programme, was the discussion of modernist aesthetics in relation to painting. This debate, while it helped to highlight local feeling about painting, did not solve much. New critical possibilities for painting were not addressed as thoroughly as were the problems that painting carried with it.

I feel it necessary to mention this local situation as a way of marking the fact that a painting practice which aims to be critical needs to recognize local social specificity as much as global concerns. It is also important to me that my own paintings be seen in relation to and as part of, this local context. My painting is in some ways representative of this context, but also, I hope, presents a way of challenging many of the assumptions that are made about painting locally.

What seems to have been an issue about painting in the above-mentioned debate, is its definition. Painting was conceived as being somehow pure (paint on canvas, a framed self-sufficient unit, etc.). What the debate did not take into account was the interdisciplinary characteristics of postmodern practice, and how intertextual engagements might be productive in dealing with the so-called "crisis" in painting locally.

I see the particular way in which intertextuality is borne out in my own paintings thus far, as the start of an ongoing process, in which I make increasing use of methods which foreground intertextual readings. There are numerous ways I wish to go about this. While future works cannot really be called a part of this research, I feel that one's thoughts about new work are an important part of research. Research must after all, lead somewhere. I therefore feel it relevant to list some of the

expressionism in the 80's), but usually these kinds of resurgances are more complicated. Neo-expressionism of course, has not 'died' in the process of change, and is still a significant phenomenon, particularly in Germany. But as the critic David Galloway has noted, as recently as October last year (1995), a different kind of painting now predominates. He has referred to this new work as marking "a 'renaissance' of painting in today's Germany"(1995:138/9). He refers to a number of recent exhibitions which have, as he puts it "lent fresh credence to the assertion 'painting is dead. Long live painting! ... What they,' [the exhibitions] had in common was a renewed belief in painting as an inexaustable field for creative activity, and a presumption that the viewer, however bombarded by new media-imagery, is still capable of a sensuous perception of the picture"(1995:139). Galloway goes on to compare this generation of painters to the Neo-expressionists. "Unlike the shrilly extroverted painters touted as the 'New Fauves', these artists have been able to develop their skills free from the paint or perish syndrome of the boom years [the eighties]"(1995:139).

Galloway explains, to some extent, how exactly these painters might be different. He notes for example, a certain self-conscious use of paint as sign, and a particular use of banal, but significant iconography. It might however be argued that there is still a strain of romanticism which lies behind this painting. The inevitable question here of course remains: how might one ever erase these problems? - and further to this, is it absolutely necessary to erase all these problems to achieve a critical practice?

This brings me back to the tension I spoke of earlier in this chapter, which is set up between viewer and object in relation to, and as result of, the threshold condition. Terry Eagleton is helpful on this point. Like Foster, Eagleton sees a definite difference between regressive and progressive postmodern practice, but his terms of reference are different.

> *There is a difference ... between the 'meaninglessness' fostered by some postmodernism, and the 'meaninglessness' deliberately injected by some trends of avant-garde culture into bourgeois normality (1985:70).*

My use of Neo-expressionism as a term has related to painting which falls within the postmodern period of the 1980's. I have seen this Neo-expressionist practice as reactionary, in Foster's sense. It is a painting practice which, for all its claims, perpetuates (amongst other things) a romantic 'artist as genius' position. It does not question its own tradition or attempt to locate it socially. In spite of the alibi of quotation (parodic or otherwise), Neo-expressionist painting reproduces a hegemonic masculinist discourse. Feminist critics have been useful as regards this point. It is perhaps, as Owens has suggested, at the intersection of feminist discourse and postmodernist discourse that the critical edge of art practice can be most clearly felt (1992:143-156). In art which is informed by this meeting of discourses, what characterizes attempts at criticality is generally the use of strategies - strategies which try to intervene into the hegemonic discourse.

I hope that the strategies I have chosen to explore are equal to the task of producing a critical intervention into the field of normative painting. To use parody in relationship to metonymy has been for me the most effective and appropriate way to register the relationship between private and public signs. I have felt that both need to be recognized to produce critical intervention; to produce tension or conflict between stereotypes (expressed through public language) and alternative or marginalized subjectivities (expressed through private language). In a sense, my 'threshold' position is a way of expressing, or making manifest, Jameson's argument (discussed in chapter three) that conflict between the texts within a work is necessary for criticality .

I have positioned parody and metonymy as (in some ways) in opposition. It is however, important to bear in mind that parody is not resolved or stable even within its own terms. For all the recognition of public signs that is necessary for its reception, it is itself fundamentally ambivalent, or "two voiced" as Hutcheon puts it (1985:69). I see this dialectic between parody and metonymy as part of the tension of the threshold condition.

It is necessary to ask what all this might mean in the 1990's. In this regard it is interesting to note that recently in Europe and elsewhere there has been yet another resurgence of painting. This might well be market related (as, it was argued, was the emergence of Neo-

In relation to maintaining this threshold condition, I should also like to stress that meaning is as much triggered by the materiality of paint and surface, as it is by iconography (or by the way paint signifies as a sign for painting). This materiality - how something is painted or presented - is aimed at holding the viewer, as much as the promise of meaning through iconography. Often I have aimed to make the painted image seductive in quite conventional ways - in terms of surface quality - thickness, colour, edge, detail, etc. But this seductiveness is itself quite unstable in that there is always a certain ambiguity: is this investment in the material 'genuine' or is it a parody? This tension is important.

Writing on Johns's work has been particularly useful in helping me frame my questions on criticality in painting. Orton's metonymic readings of Johns's paintings have been most significant. When I began work for this degree, Johns was not part of my motivation. Now, having reached the end of my research, I have gained insight into a practice which I feel to be of primary significance to mine. This significance is not so much about Johns's work per se - it is rather about the way his work can be used as a model for a critical postmodernist (neo-expressionist) painting practice. More specifically, I could relate Johns's work to my own needs in painting. This is surprising, given that Johns is not usually regarded (as I noted) as a postmodern artist. But perhaps it is not that surprising, if one takes Foster's view that a critical postmodernism is an extention of critical modernism. These views then would make Johns most relevant to postmodern practice. It would in fact suggest that there is not so much difference between postmodern painting, and that which comes after Duchamp, namely modernism.

What then, one might ask, characterizes a critical postmodern painting practice? It is not only a self-consciousness of the language of painting, as this would be more or less consistent with Greenbergian modernist painting. The kind of self-consciousness characteristic of critical postmodernism is that the discipline is not pure, and that originality and authenticity are not possible in the way claimed in modernist painting. Here I cite Foster again:

> *[critical] postmodernist art 'disentreches its given medium, not only as an autonomous activity, but also as a mode of representation with assured referential value and/or ontological status (1984:75).*

quote by way of a negative definition. (It is often easier to define certain practices in relation to what they are not).

> *In the multidimensional and slippery space of postmodernism, anything goes with anything like a game without rules. Floating images such as those we see in the paintings of David Salle, maintain no relationship with anything at all, and meaning becomes detachable like the keys on a keyring. Dissociated and decontextualized they slide past one another, failing to link up into a coherent sequence. Their fluctuating but not reciprocal interactions are unable to fix meaning (1987:36).*

The notion of a paradigmatic pluralist postmodern painting which fails "to link up into a coherent sequence" in relation to its being "unable to fix meaning", needs to be reflected on here. Whilst a fundamental part of my own practice involves questioning fixity of meaning (in relation to both form and iconograpaphy), this practice is marked by complex configurations rather than arbitrary juxtapositions. I need to emphasise this point, even at the risk of sounding repetitive.

Whilst my work involves both forms or images which (arguably) are at once easy and difficult to read, this very ambivalence - or, as I call it, threshold condition - can produce a more *than less* coherent meaning, albeit one which does not conform to the more conventional notions of meaning. In this situation, meaning is produced by the viewer. It is not intrinsic to the image. This is not to say, however, that the image is not consciously manipulated to *condition* reception - to a certain extent at least. What produces this threshold condition then, is the dynamic set up between image and viewer. In other words, metonymic readings may be seen to set the viewer on a 'hunt' for meaning. In this framework there are always sufficient cues and clues to suggest *a* meaning or something *meaningful*, but never enough evidence to find *the* meaning (the fixed meaning). This keeps things on the threshold - the promise of sense in images which are in some ways apparently 'non-sense'. It is important to stress here that these clues are as evident within forms and processes between works, as they are within individual works. In this sense (as I have hopefully made clear in the previous chapter) metonymic readings function across works in the space of the gallery.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION.

I started my research with a kind of scepticism regarding the viability of painting within postmodern discourse. I hope I have reflected clearly enough in this dissertation and through my own painting, that painting is, even after critiques of Neo-expressionism (and more generally, neo-expressionism), a viable practice, a practice with critical potential. This critical potential can and does offer a space for a re-articulation of painting; a space which does not lock painting into a position of being an out-moded discipline governed by regressive notions of transcendence, genius, the masterpiece and other inscriptions of masculinist subjectivity. I have felt it necessary to underscore the issue of criticality in this dissertation. I hope this has not resulted in my having to sacrifice the idea of complexity in relation to both the process of making and of reading my paintings. For me, complexity is an intrinsic component of the kind of critique I aim for in my practice.

As I have used my own paintings in this dissertation to explore aspects of this criticality, I feel it relevant in this concluding chapter to review some of the major points I have raised in this regard, with a view to reflecting on the broader issues at stake in this research.

I should perhaps start by noting the fact that it was difficult to find a discursive mode or framework for this research which could account for all aspects of my practice. This is of course quite common in art practice generally. Words and categories do not, arguably, cover all permutations of visual art. As a means of exploring these permutations further, I feel it useful to reflect again on the sorts of processes I have involved myself with in this research. What I found relevant and exciting about metonymic processes or readings in particular, is their character of 'openness' - the kind of multiplicity of meanings they potentially offer. As I have said, this does not imply an uncritical pluralism of the sort that has (from a critical postmodernist perspective at least) generally become synonymous with Neo-expressionist painting. The following quote by Suzi Gablik from her 'Aesthetics of Duplicity' describes this uncritical pluralism. I use the

7 The regulated patterning on these holographic papers is like a grid. This grid could, through a certain reading, be taken as a parody of the surfaces of the modernist grid.

8 Holographic images are produced by a very complex and exact scientific process. This involves shining laser beam light from different directions onto a photographic surface (such as photographic paper) to make up the image. The holographic image, once recorded, can be reproduced from the negative onto other photographic surfaces. Holographic technology has limited everyday use, but is used for scientific research of various kinds.

NOTES

1 This comment was made in relation to the work of the British painter, Alan Charlton.

2 This issue has already been reflected through my exploration of the interaction between popular culture and high art in particular artworks (for example in Koons's 'Statuary' series and in certain works of Lichtenstein's). To distinguish between imagery from high art and imagery from popular culture is of course not easy in a postmodern context. Images and codes from high art have become part of the language of popular culture. In fact, as Foster puts it "art-historical images ... are so often reproduced as to be almost mass-cultural"(1992:29).

3 The play between an all-over essentially 'depthless' field on the one hand, and a disturbance of this field through either iconography or a particular use of material etc which creates some sense of articulated depth, might appear to be a singularly postmodern strategy. Interestingly though, a similar tension has been found in certain modernist works. In a discussion of Pollock's Number 1 (1948), 1948, Jonathan Harris notes that while the marks of paint laid down are essentially "linear", and while there may be no intention to refer to anything "iconically", this is not to say that the surface does not refer to a certain kind of depth. He continues: "Spatial illusions *are* created, through the viewer's perception of the paint's chromatic and tonal variations. In addition to this, the webbing of paint that constitutes the compositional form recedes and diminishes towards the four sides of the canvas, and the contrast between the canvas underneath and the form upon it also creates a sense of depth and recession".(1993:47)

4 Sandy Nairne notes that "cartoons and jokes are one of the forms in which stereotypes and images are circulated, but humour is a process through which they can be unfixed" (1987:149). Humour as a critical device could be seen as particularly effective in relation to a critique of expressionism. Expressionist (and neo-expressionist) works are, more often than not, serious or 'heavy' in theme, often dealing with emotional extremes and notions of the sublime.

5 Unfortunately, the fact that the edges of this work are cut, and deliberately left slightly uneven, is not easily reflected in photographs. The fact that the canvas hangs from the wall, rather than being stretched, is also denied by the photograph. This note serves as a reminder that these features are fairly marked when the viewer is in the same space as the painting, that is when the painting is seen in 'real' life.

6 The **Collins Dictionary** defines camouflage as "disguise, means of deceiving enemy observation, eg by paint, screen."(Grandison et al (eds) 1991:102). This definition is interesting for the fact that it highlights the idea of paint as a kind of deceit or artifice.

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Author: Burgener Andrea.
Name of thesis: Critical possibilities for painting after neo-expressionism.

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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