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Denaturalized Nature - Strategies of Representation in Selected Works of Penelope Siopis and William Kentridge

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Abstract

American critic Hal Foster argues that conceptions of 'the natural' are not universal, they are historically and discursively produced. There is no unmediated presence of 'the natural' in painting. He proposes 'denaturalization' as a form of critical postmodernist aesthetic which questions universalist tendencies in contemporary cultural production. This research examines selected theories and visual representations of 'the natural' in order to explore different ways in which Foster's notion of denaturalization may be productive in assessing the complexity of critical visual art practice in South Africa.

My approach to the topic is largely fragmentary in order to reflect on and engage with the diverse terms of 'the natural' as manifest in visual art practice. To this end I discuss selected works of contemporary South African artists William Kentridge and Penelope Siopis. While Foster's notion of denaturalization is productive in trying to engage with critical issues of art practice it is difficult, if not impossible to determine if certain works conform with either his notion of a postmodernism of resistance or postmodernism of reaction. I will also explore the notion of denaturalization with reference to my practical work.

DECLARATION

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

M. L. Kapitza-Meyer

Marlene Lydia Kapitza- Meyer

16th day of May, 1994

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Introduction

The term 'the natural' has been traditionally used in western culture to express historically complex and contradictory meanings. Ludmilla Jordanova suggests that this reflects an important aspect of 'the natural' in both theory and lived experience when she holds that "it is ... a fact that nature itself has no stable meaning; not only has the term changed markedly over time, but any one society or social group can simultaneously hold diverse and contradictory views of nature" (1991:56).

Based on these parameters, my exploration of the natural is polyvalent rather than singular in focus. However, there are various themes which run throughout this MA project - both in my theory and practice. One of the themes which has focused my approach to the complexity of the topic is a critical concern with taxonomy. This theme is always present as an underlying structure of my theoretical exploration, and it becomes more explicit in the presentation of some of my practical work where I have tried to displace some of the values associated with taxonomy.

Taxonomy is traditionally viewed as a scientific mode of representation which is concerned with the classification of nature (animals and plants) into, for example, phyla, species, and so on. Classificatory systems of representation are generally based on notions of similarity or affinity, and they tend to homogenize the various objects which they display. Taxonomy has historically been applied to capture the essence, that is, the laws and principles of the natural world. Hence taxonomy implies normative, totalizing and universalist assumptions and aspirations.

The focus of this thesis is on differentiation within the category of 'the natural'. In this sense my approach may be loosely termed taxonomical. However, I do not view 'the natural'[1] solely as a fixed, 'given' category within the discourse of natural

[1]As I will proceed to define my use of the term 'the natural' I will not use scare quotes to mark it from now on.

history. For the purpose of this thesis the term the natural will be defined as a western cultural concept. The natural is understood to be historically and discursively produced: "[n]ature is constructed, constituted historically, not discovered naked in a fossil bed or a tropical forest. Nature is contested, and women have enthusiastically entered the fray" (Haraway 1991:106). This definition of the natural inevitably places it entirely within a (contested) cultural domain.

My concern is to frame the natural in a way which critically acknowledges and situates resonances of the natural in aesthetic and other discourses. These other discourses, namely, ethnological, medical, conservationist, postmodernist and feminist, may infuse visual art representations and practice. As a result of this approach the structure of my research is deliberately hybrid and fragmentary. I argue, that claims to universalist or essentialist definitions of the natural in visual representations are questionable.

Before describing the scope of this thesis in more detail I would like to focus various terms such as 'strategy' and 'denaturalization' which are central to my discussion.[2]

The vagueness which may be associated with a broad notion such as the natural can only be rendered more precise through strategic reference to the concept. Strategic reference implies that ideas of nature should be seen in their historical or current context of production, and that claims to universality which may be implicit in these ideas should be viewed with scepticism. Thus strategic reference suggests a critical positioning in relation to the natural. I associate this critical form of positioning with the notion of denaturalization. My understanding of denaturalization is mainly derived from the writings of American critic Hal Foster who proposes denaturalization as a critical form of postmodernist aesthetic.

Foster's analytical approach is located at the intersections and margins of various discourses. Here Foster uses the term denaturalization rather informally to assess

[2]I will not use scare quotes to mark terms such as strategy and denaturalization from now on, as I will work through definitions of these.

critical activity in cultural and aesthetic production. Judging from the contexts in which he uses the term, denaturalization may be associated with his conception of a 'postmodernism of resistance':

> A postmodernism of resistance, then, arises as a counter-practice not only to the official culture of modernism but also to the "false normativity" of a reactionary postmodernism. ...a resistant postmodernism is concerned with a critical deconstruction of tradition, not an instrumental pastiche of pop- or pseudo-historical forms, with a critique of origins, not a return to them. In short, it seeks to question rather than to exploit cultural codes, to explore rather than conceal social and political affiliations. (1987a:xii)

Foster examines denaturalization largely in relation to the references to (art) history and popular culture that contemporary artists use. He holds that the inclusion of different modes of representation, and/or eclectic borrowings from different sources and discourses in a work of art, do not necessarily imply a critical attitude to questions of representation. Eclectic modes of reference may involve the problem of pluralism. Pluralist modes of reference naturalize rather than critically problematize their references (Foster 1982a et passim).

Criticality, or denaturalization, implies that concepts which may be associated with naturalizing modes of representation are questioned. For example, Foster (1983) argues that (neo) expressionist painting tends to naturalize its mode of reference through its valorization of concepts such as mastery, subjectivity, genius, immediacy. Critical questioning or denaturalization not only problematizes subject and mode of representation but also the *activity* of reference: "To [the pluralist] position, a wide range of art is natural (what, it is thought, is more natural than freedom of expression?). But art is precisely *un*natural - indeed, both art *and* freedom consist entirely and only of conventions" (Foster 1982a:9).

In Foster's terms criticality is closely associated with an imperative to denaturalize. Moreover, critical activity has to be related in a tactical way to the historical context and the wider cultural field in which it operates. Foster (1987b) suggests that

denaturalization which operates outside cultural and historical specificity may in certain contexts involve the danger or risk of fetishism. In the context of a pervasive and uncritical presence of de-naturalized nature, the natural, for Foster, "may regain a certain radicality" (1987b:167).[3]

My use of denaturalization is, however, also informed by other critical postmodernist and feminist writers who view the natural critically. These include Norman Bryson, James Clifford, Ludmilla Jordanova, Donna Haraway, and Toril Moi.

For example, I found Bryson's emphasis on the discursiveness of painting useful for my critical exploration of the natural because the notion of painting's discursiveness may involve the activity of reference in a critical way. Bryson's notion of painting as "discursive practice" and "signifying *work*" implies that painting both mediates and produces discourse because there is

> a flow in two directions, for the painter can work on the discursive material that comes to him, can elaborate it, transform it through labour, and return it to the social domain as an alteration or revision of the society's discursive field... It follows that by having relocated painting within the social domain ... it becomes possible to think of the image as discursive work that returns *into* society. (1988:xxvi)

The modes of this "return into society", the question of how Bryson's 'two way' mediation of painting and discourse may be seen to operate critically will be reflected on in chapters three and four with reference to contemporary South African artists Penelope Siopis (b. 1953) and William Kentridge (b. 1955). In order to locate their practice in contemporary culture my discussion of the artists' work will draw in an

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[3]In the context of a discussion at the Dia Art Foundation Foster poses the following question: "If we are indeed in a partly postnatural moment, might not the natural regain a certain radicality? This question arose for me through recent feminist art: it seemed that it's critique of naturalism or essentialism regarding the representation of women had pushed it into the other extreme- the treatment of women as so many signs to fetishize. A certain ideology of the postnatural is pervasive today, and I wonder if the natural might not be recovered in a critical way. After all it's not always a historically regressive or reactionary term." (Ibid.) This question may indicate a change of mind on Foster's part concerning the critical potential of denaturalization as a critical postmodernist mode of representation. However, I understand the implications of Foster's question as a qualification rather than a dismissal of the term.

eclectic way on a number of issues around the natural which are prominent in contemporary debates[4].

I argue that the art practice of Siopis and Kentridge reflects a strategic reference to the natural. In chapters three and four I will examine selected works by each artist to assess how they engage with the diverse terms of the natural as manifest in specific representations. In chapter three I will use denaturalization to signify a critical problematization of the natural, and of implied historical connotations and values inscribed in the artists' references. Chapter four explores how Foster's approach may, or may not be useful to explore each artist's work by comparing the critical emphases given to the notion of reference by Siopis and Kentridge.

Siopis and Kentridge refer to the natural in complex ways, that is, through iconography, titles, material processes, and other references which they use. Sometimes these references are obvious as quotations, and sometimes they seem more concealed or absorbed into the fabric of the image.

In the works which I discuss, Kentridge, for example, makes critical reference to interrelated conceptions of the natural and history associated with the pastoral genre. He also refers to nature as a resource which is desired, controlled and exploited by capital. Kentridge's "drawings for projection" (Kentridge) suggest that nature as resource not only signifies ore deposits, but also people. I argue that Kentridge unbalances the stability of the capitalist relation of nature and culture by, for example, presenting multiple and conflicting positions in relation to the natural in capitalist culture.

Siopis' reference to the natural is largely concerned with a feminist critique of

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[4]This approach to denaturalization is a somewhat limited application of Foster's use of the term. However, within the limited scope of this thesis this application seems appropriate. A comprehensive application of the term would have required a much more thorough research into, for example, the complexity of historical constructions of certain references, or specific exhibition contexts where the artists' 're-construction' was displayed. This in turn would involve an investigation into the specifics of South African culture at a particular moment in time, and an assessment of what constitute naturalized ideas in contemporary South African culture.

naturalism or essentialism regarding the representation of race and gender. I will explore how she focuses this critique around references to two women: Ida Bauer and Saartjie Baartman. Both women have been subjected to naturalized representations in colonial and, arguably, psychoanalytic discourse. Siopis may also frame her critique of naturalism more broadly as is the case in her use of references to, for example, visual representations associated with the colonial myth of the Dark Continent or through titles such as Terra Incognita. Her paintings suggest various forms of feminist resistance to naturalized representations which will be explored.

In the course of my exploration two other areas of interest have crystallized. These areas include discourses around illusionism and its conventions of representing nature and those around the relation of modernism and the natural. Both discourses will be explored in chapter one.

From the modernist perspective, illusionism is seen to predate modernism, hence it may be regarded as part of a 'premodern' narrative of art history. Bryson (1985a, 1985b) identifies this narrative with "the natural attitude". According to Bryson the objective of painting within the natural attitude is to capture the *external* referent[5] nature through illusionistic representation, or the production of what he terms an "Essential Copy".

By contrast, modernist painting is concerned to reveal nature relative to the *intrinsic* properties of a specific aesthetic medium or discipline, rejecting illusionistic reference to external nature. For example, with respect to painting these intrinsic properties would be colour, scale, flatness, shape, edge, and so on.

In spite of their obvious differences both narratives operate with strong binary

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[5]The ficticious quality of the notion of external referent is pointed out by Frederic Jameson (1987). He notes that the term referent may be implied as "third component" in the concept of the linguistic sign which is divided into signifier and signified. He argues that the "third component would be the so-called 'referent', the 'real' object in the 'real' world to which the sign refers ... But for structuralism in general there has been a tendency to feel that reference is a kind of myth, that one can no longer talk about the 'real' in that external or objective way." (1987:119) The mythical quality of the natural attitude which is based on the notion of external referent will be explored in chapter one.

nature/culture distinctions. This binary bias is instrumental to achieve or capture the ostensibly unmediated presence of the natural in painting. Insofar as this binary bias signifies "the primacy of 'presence', of that which is obvious, a determinable and determinate, framed, 'given'" (Richards 1986:73) it is questionable for it historically may be linked to the valorization of a centred subjectivity, truth, wholeness and autonomy of meaning. In this sense presence may also be associated with what Foster (1989 passim) calls a "phallocentric order of the west". In chapter one I will touch on these implications of presence and briefly note some ways in which this presence has been critically questioned and displaced by certain contemporary theorists.

Binaries are neither universal nor value free (MacCormack & Strathern 1989). In chapter two I explore some of the values inscribed in popular culture images which themselves draw on high art conventions. For my discussion I have selected an advertisement which employs visual stereotypes of nature and culture and metaphorical transformations such as inside/outside, male/female. These stereotypes are used in an instrumental and gendered way to produce the presence of the natural in order to sell a product. This discussion will be interspersed with some commentary on my practical work where I have tried to displace the linear thinking implicit in the images which I quote from popular culture's stereotyped representations of the natural.

In my practical exploration I have emphasized mediations of the natural as contestable field of complex and sometimes contradictory meanings. In chapter five I use the notion of display to signify a frame or forum where these could be tactically re-presented or held in tension. The conventions of display which I discuss include, for example, the modernist grid and its implicit notions of presence. I refer to the grid so as to suggest and displace ideas around taxonomy, such as the ordering, classifying, numbering and naming of nature, which all suggest a totalizing and homogenizing gaze. In my painting I also refer to the illusionistic way in which the objects of *trompe l'oeil* painting are displayed. While illusionism may imply representational accuracy and the notion that truth is scientific and value-free, the arrangement and type of objects in my paintings are calculated so as to invoke what

Baudrillard (1988) calls a "sudden failure of reality". I will also give some attention to natural history displays, the curiosity cabinet, the tableau, as well as displays which involve the representation of parts of the human body. I will explore some of the values inscribed in these conventions and ways in which I have tried to displace or invert these.

Chapter One

Natural Presences: 'The Natural Attitude' and The Nature of Modernism

This chapter focuses on the question of how art, or the mode of its production, could *be (like)* nature (natural), irrespective of subject-matter or iconography.[6] I will selectively explore two narratives - one art-historical, the other modern - which involve this question.

Firstly, I will explore a development of art history which is described as the history of emergent realism. I refer to selected writings by Norman Bryson, who has identified this narrative with "the natural attitude". Nature within this natural attitude signifies an essence connoting notions of origin (which involve nature as external referent) and progress (measured against nature as aspired norm). I argue that the concern of the natural attitude to capture this essence may be associated with what Foster (1989) terms an "act of power". This appropriative act of power involves a 'natural' mode of representation which intricately links the natural attitude with a mythical conception of history.

Secondly, I will look at selected essays by Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg and

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[6]While this is not immediately relevant to the text I wish to note here that this question was also central to the more embracing nature philosophy of Romanticism, with it's terminological differentiation of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. Using the organic metaphor, Schiller, for example, urged that a poet should *be* a plant (in Wimsatt 1972). Wimsatt polemically deconstructs the organic fallacy: "the romantic analogy between vegetable and poetic creation tended to assimilate the poetic to the vegetable by making the poetic as radically spontaneous as possible - that is undeliberate, unconscious" (ibid:68). He argues that in setting up a determining relationship between organic form and subject matter "we have been skirting a sophism: namely the notion that the representation of biological forms in a work of verbal or visual art implies something about the presence of organic or artistic form in that work" (ibid:65, 67). Wimsatt further notes that "by a line of reasoning that starts with biological imagery we arrive at the conclusion that organic form can occur in visual art only by not occurring, at either terminus of a spectrum running from realistic representation to extreme abstraction" (ibid:66). He concludes that the human role as mediator cannot be made transparent, which to some extent anticipates my argument.

Robert Rosenblum, published between 1949 and 1961. These essays suggest theories about various ways in which the natural may be present in modern painting. All three critics seem to agree, that the representation of the natural in modern painting has to do with the manipulation of the pictorial codes of painting, and they reject illusionistic reference to nature.

Premodern and modern narratives are arguably diametrically opposed to each other in their understanding of what constitutes nature as a norm for painting. I argue that they also share certain aspects, such as the stress on the dialectic nature of representation, the notion of nature (essence) as both origin and goal of art and history, and the valorization of representational transparency or presence.

I will refer to Rosenblum's article on nature and modern painting (published in 1984) as a pertinent example of how a concern for 'essence' still pervades contemporary thinking, and to highlight certain problems inherent in modernist presence and the oppositional mode (binary bias) of its construction. I argue that Rosenblum invests both the modern and the natural with an affinity to a vague, ahistorical notion of 'origin' and the 'primitive', an association which prompts questions about modernist historicism as closed, "phallocentric order of the west" (Foster).

I will also briefly note some of the ways in which the 'phallocentric' presence which is associated with the seizure (appropriation) of nature may be disrupted. While Jacques Derrida's (1986) concept of 'différence' denies the closure associated with modern presence, Jean-François Lyotard's (1983) notion of the sublime suggests that modern presence may be re-inscribed to signify a form of critical postmodernist aesthetic.

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Within Bryson's notion of the natural attitude the world is pictured as a natural given 'out there', a presence of pre-existing natural law, unchanging but for minor

modifications on it's surface. Painting in this context operates within a duplicating mode, for it's 'task' is essentially optical and located in relation to that natural given which it aims to reproduce. Nature in its primal, that is, both 'original' and 'unmediated' visibility is used as resource for productions of culture, for painting's function is to

> attend to the surface and to record in minute detail its local manifestations...There will be no immediate question, however, that the reality painting records belongs to any category other than that of nature: it is as the natural that the substratum underlying superficial cultural rearrangement is apprehended. (1985b:5)

Within the natural attitude nature is not only used as external referent or resource which may be copied, or drawn on but also legitimizes productions of culture. It is claimed, within the natural attitude, that both art and nature share the same essences. Painting's ultimate objective is the production of what Bryson terms the "Essential Copy". Underlying the Essential Copy is an appeal to universal visual experience. Hence the Essential Copy implies a transparent, universally accepted, presence of 'the real' (nature) in painting.

The natural mode of representation which is associated with the Essential Copy may be demonstrated, as Bryson suggests, by Alberti's painting/window analogy. Here, the 'objective', transparent relationship of representation and nature is legitimized by a mode of ostensibly exact, unmediated duplication. This mode of representation presupposes what Bryson terms a "monocular body of perception":

> the visual field before [this monocular body] is already two-dimensional, is already a screen or a canvas...The barrier is not...in any sense opaque, nor does it perform tasks of scansion or censorship on the incoming data...Once the image comes to recreate the passive translucence of the retinal interval, the Essential Copy will be achieved. (1985b:11)

The duplicating mode suppresses notions of mediation and traces of the artist's intervention in producing a painting. Nature in the above quote has been

metaphorically transformed and objectified before it is "recreated" by "the image" (rather than the painter). Metaphorical transformations of nature are, for example, apparent in the scientific terminology, such as 'visual field', 'screen', 'data'. These transformations appear to subtly precede the passive recording of nature, thereby concealing the mediations that take place in the process of painting the Essential Copy. As Eugenio Donato has pointed out in a different context "the possibility of a perfect representation of Nature rests ... on a complex series of metonymies and metaphors bridging the gap between the natural object and its representation" (1980:226).

The quest for the Essential Copy and its associated modes of representation sustain a distinct hierarchy of values. Notably, painting's progress or telos is measured in relation to the Essential Copy. Advance is inseparable from surpassing previous achievements and from progressive elimination of 'noise' (as, for example, personal 'style' as inserted between the referent nature and it's ultimate representation, the Essential Copy[7]). Hence, as Bryson notes, "[t]he history of emergent realism is accordingly written in negative terms. Each 'advance' consists of the removal of a further obstacle between painting and the Essential Copy: which final state is known in advance, through prefiguration of Universal Visual Experience" (1985b:6).

In summary then, history or development as conceived of by the natural attitude amounts to the establishment of a hierarchy of achievements inscribed in a "doctrine of progress" (Bryson). In this doctrine nature and history are intricately linked. Nature as normative model is central to the idea of progress which characterizes the linear development of history. Nature in this development signifies both 'origin' (referent) and 'progress' (normative goal). For painting, this relation of nature and

[7]It may be interesting to note, that within expressive modes of painting personal style may be valorized because of it's association with natur implicit in concepts such as 'originality', 'immediacy', 'genius', 'mastery' and 'subjectivity'. Truth value here is attributed to the (evident) brushstroke, the contention being that expressive modes are less mediated by convention, that is, more natural than 'duplicating' modes associated with the Essential Copy. Expressive modes of representation ostensibly allow a more direct access to the artist's 'raw' emotions. However, according to Foster, both expressionism and 'classical' representations are codes, expressionism being "oriented not to reality (the coded realist outer world) but to expression (the coded symbolist inner world)" (1983:80).

history implies a duplicating mode of representation through which the essence of both origin and goal could be captured. Within the natural attitude, progression in painting paradoxically implies progression towards origins.

I have argued that within the natural attitude the history of painting is marked by a concern to capture a given natural essence. The mode of this capture presupposes a universally given consensus for the representation to be perceived naturally rather than conceived or produced: "within the natural attitude...the image is thought of as self effacing in the representation or resurrection of things, instead of being understood as the milieu of the articulation of the reality known by a given visual community" (Bryson 1985a:8). The natural attitude tends to deny the discursivity of painting in its assumption that representation is concurrent with a universally accepted and corresponding notion of (natural and at the same time historical) truth. Because of these underlying assumptions the natural attitude may be associated with a mythical conception of history. For, as Foster notes, myth is "a one-way appropriation, an act of power ... myth abstracts and pretends to the natural" (1989:201).

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Greenbergian modernism with it's rejection of naturalism may seem to present a rupture in the project identified with the natural attitude. However, I will argue that modernism's rejection of naturalism in painting serves to recuperate or re-claim the natural in a supposedly more 'pure' form which is independent from the perceived trappings of illusionism. For example, some late modernist critics (Clement Greenberg preeminent among them) claim modern painting to *be* nature.

The modernist transparency of the relation art/artist/nature which is suggested above has been de-naturalized by certain contemporary critics. For example, Rosalind Krauss (1985) argues how certain artists (of the 1920s and 30s) were engaged in the

constant production of the "mystique of culture-as-nature" (1985:127). Wendy Steiner's association of the natural with the notion of presence most succinctly encapsulates modernism's relation to nature. She argues that "...underlying the natural is the notion of presence ...what modern artists seem intent on doing is perfecting a natural poetry of presence, or showing that an artificial painting of absence is more 'truly' natural than nature" (1982:26).

In elaborating on these contentions I will now explore selected writings by Greenberg, Rosenberg and Rosenblum. In these, all three critics have explicitly positioned their views on modern art in relation to the natural. Diverse though these positions are, all three critics seem to promote presence of the natural which may be revealed through the inherent properties of the medium (painting). This presence of the natural presupposes the absence of illusionistic reference to nature.

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Greenberg in The Role of Nature in Modernist Painting (1961), (first published 1949), argues that "paradoxically" in the evolution of french painting (here represented by Cézanne and Courbet) the effort to "transcribe" visual experience more accurately brought painting to the verge of abstraction. French painting for Greenberg represents an early stage in modernism's shift from visualizing nature in art (the natural attitude) to the direct, unmediated expression of the nature or essence of art itself (the core contention of Greenbergian modernism). As a consequence, according to Greenberg, both art and nature tended to become diametrically opposed. In rejecting mimetic forms of representation the protagonists of Greenberg's modernism, it is claimed, manage to transcend early modernist objectives towards abstraction which still mimetically focused on the optical and tactile (Impressionism and Cubism).

Greenberg's modernism seems to represent a rupture in what has previously been

identified with the natural attitude, the history of art as a project towards achieving the Essential Copy. While the natural attitude presumes a normative natural given 'out there' Greenberg's modernism involves that "naturalistic correspondence should be rejected as a measure of competence or quality in art. 'Representation' was re-identified with descriptive representation and with illustrative subject-matter, and these were devalued relative to 'expression' and to 'form'" (Harrison and Orton 1984:xi). In contrast to the natural attitude the modernist project strives to reveal an essential nature embodied[8] 'within' rather than 'outside' the aesthetic parameters ("expression", "form") of painting. The concern with the nature of aesthetic disciplines such as painting, implies a (self) critical mode of representation in relation to the inherent qualities of that discipline. For, according to Greenberg, "the essence of modernism lies ... in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself - not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence" (in Wallis 1991:xii).

Wallis (1991) has pointed out that the mode in which the modernist pursuit of the nature of each aesthetic discipline was tackled engenders notions of purity and self definition in relation to the medium. This pursuit according to Foster involves that "each art has a code or nature, and art proceeds as the code is revealed, the nature purged of the extraneous" (Foster 1992:190). Painting could, in other words, assert it's presence as nature via what Foster also calls the "manipulation of the inherited 'code' of the medium" (1991:189) that is, for example, the manipulation of colour, scale, flatness, shape, edge. In this way art could be perceived as simulacrum of the natural where the inherent codes of the medium could substitute an absent 'external' presence of the natural. Art could *be* nature given the modernist contention that "the art object itself can be substituted (metaphorically) for its referent." (Owens in Foster 1991:189) Moreover, for Greenberg modernism's concern to reveal the essentially aesthetic nature of painting served as an affirmation of the Kantian disinterestedness

[8]The modernist reference to the painting as (natural and possibly gendered) body, which is for example implied in Rosenberg's writing, seems very complex to me. Griselda Pollock (1992) for instance explores a conjunction of aesthetics, sexuality and colonialism with respect to late 19th century modernist painting. She argues how certain of its formalizations and stylizations may be understood as a sign symptomatic for an "unfamiliarity", a "distance", raising questions about race, gender and otherness.

of aesthetic experience and aesthetic production.

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Rosenberg in The American Action Painters (first published in 1952) coined the term 'action painting'. For him this term is associated with

> the canvas...as an arena in which to act - rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze, or 'express' an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture, but an event. (1968:569)

"An event" in Rosenberg's terms purports to transcend object related modes and iconographic references of a painting: "the image, whatever be or be not in it, will be a *tension*" (1968:570). In short: "event" or enactment claims to function as a mode that transcends pictorial illusionism.

In his article Hans Hofman: Nature into Action (1957) Rosenberg's notion of "event" is more clearly elaborated on. Here, the enactment or "event" according to Rosenberg produces a "sign". The sign for Rosenberg implies immediate expression of the natural properties of the medium, produced by the painter in dialogue with "the immanent energies of the medium", the natural other. The sign is not self-consciously produced by the artist. Rather, the conventional painter/painting, agent/object relationship is subject to a (temporary) inversion. It is the canvas which may metaphorically assume agency when Rosenberg describes it as the site of the cognitive yet not assertively cognitive faculty: "...the canvas is allowed to take over, the painter 'thinks not' nor sets requirements but follows the intimations of the picture's brain..." (1957:55).

In this context I understand Rosenberg's phrase "nature into action" to imply a suspension or even inversion of certain forms of power as, for example, notions of

control and agency traditionally associated with binaries such as painter/painting, culture/nature. An analogous inversion seems to take place with respect to mimetic modes of representation associated with illusionism. In contrast to the natural attitude, where the signified pervades over the signifier, in modernist painting the signifier seems to prevail over the signified. Rosenberg's term "tension" qualifies the dialogical mode of this inverted relation of signifier/signified. His writing suggests that the relation of culture and nature is not natural, but laboured or negotiated by the artist who asserts his own presence in dialogue with the presence of painterly codes. 'Nature' in this process is being constantly challenged to emerge somewhere between the assertive and the allusive.

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Rosenblum in The Abstract Sublime (1961) visually and verbally draws parallels between the romantic sublime and what he calls "some of the most heretical concepts of modern American painting" (1961:39). He valorizes abstract immediacy' as a mode of rupturing conventional representation - or as he says, a brave abandonment of "the securities of familiar pictorial geometries in favor of the risks of untested pictorial intuitions" (1961:56). Rosenblum declares the sublime as the aesthetic signature (or signet) of modernism. In support of his argument he uses a juxtaposition of romantic and modernist paintings to create a semantic type[9] of the sublime. (Fig.1)

Rosenblum claims that certain modern paintings can be experienced *as if* they were nature despite their repudiation of narrative or illustrative representation *of* nature. He holds that modern painting replaces 'convention' by ostensibly unmediated 'experience'. For example, with reference to Clifford Still's 114.5 inches high painting 1956-D he makes the point that scale rather than subject-matter is integral

[9]see Beat Wyss (1992) on the use of *Typus* rather than *Ikonogramm*.

to the experience of the work *as* nature: "We move physically across such a picture like a visitor touring the Grand Canyon or journeying to the centre of the earth. Suddenly, a wall of black rock is split by a searing crevice of light,..." (1961:40)[10]

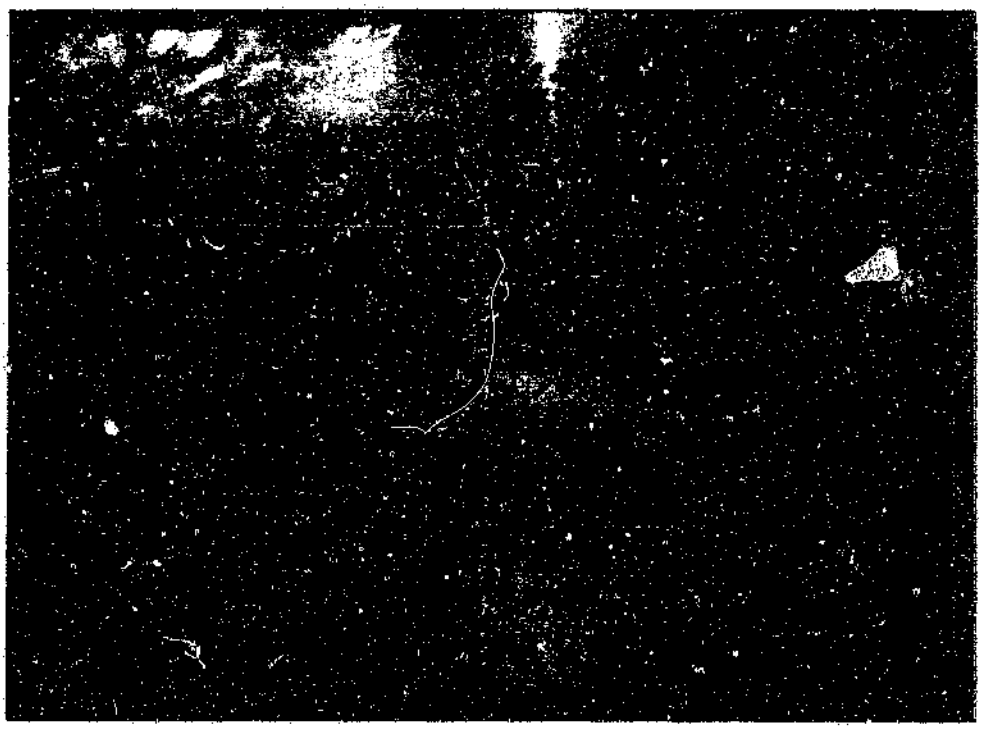


Fig. 1 Pages 40 and 41 of Rosenblum's article *The Abstract Sublime* (1961).

Rosenblum suggests that in contrast to Romantic representations of the sublime, Abstract Expressionism represents a marked change in the typology of the sublime:

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[10]Natural metaphors abound as Rosenblum continues: "...or a stalactite threatens the approach to a precipice. No less than caverns and waterfalls, Still's paintings seem the product of eons of change; and their flaking surfaces, parched like bark or slate, almost promise that this natural process will continue, as unsusceptible to human order as the immeasurable patterns of ocean, sky, earth and water..." (1961:40). This statement did provoke opposition, as a reader's letter in response to his article may demonstrate: "What he [Rosenblum] calls the 'dumbfounding size' of these... paintings,..., becomes ludicrously small in the face of nature as we see it. Has he ever looked out over the sea from a plane 30,000 feet in the air? ... Still couldn't hold a candle to that." (Don David, Editor's letters, Art News, Vol.60 No 2, April 1961). See also Newman's replies to Erwin Panofsky's scholarly reaction to a misprint of the title of Newman's painting Vir Heroicus Sublimis in Rosenblum's article (Art News, Vol 60, numbers 2, 3, and 5, 1961). The Panofsky and Newman controversy reflects modernism's rejection of both scholarly and positivist empiricist approaches to painting. For a critical exploration of this debate see Wyss 1992.

The Abstract Sublime in its most radical form expels the body of the spectator from the painting, making the painting *as* nature utterly immediate:

> In the abstract language of Rothko, such literal detail - a bridge of empathy between the real spectator and the presentation of a transcendental landscape [as in C.D. Friedrich's Monk by the Sea] - is no longer necessary; we ourselves are the monk before the sea, standing silently and contemplatively before these huge and soundless pictures as if we were looking at a sunset or a moonlit night. (Rosenblum 1961:56)

A similar point could be made with respect to Barnett Newman's painting Vir Heroicus Sublimis (1950/1). The painting is reproduced in Rosenblum's article including two beholders dwarfed by the large scale of the work (see bottom left of Fig.1). The inclusion of this photograph may be seen as emblematic of the way in which, according to Rosenblum, the Abstract Sublime of modern painting has transformed the Romantic awe before nature "that gave proof of the divine" into a modernist awe before the (divine?) nature of painting: "What used to be pantheism has now become a kind of 'paint-theism'" (1961:56).

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Both the natural attitude and the modernist theories I have referred to above suggest a powerful connection between the dialectic nature of representation and the production of presence. I have explored how presence of the natural in modern painting may be recognized in the purity of the medium (Greenberg), as dialogical 'event' (Rosenberg), or as Abstract Sublime (Rosenblum). In all of these instances presence involves the absence of an 'outside' referent and is achieved through the manipulation of the pictorial codes of painting. I will refer to Robert Rosenblum's article Resurrecting Darwin and Genesis: Thoughts on Nature and Modern Art (1984) to problematize the continuation of the modern binary bias, the notion of presence, and the manipulation of ostensible value-free pictorial codes into contemporary theoretical debate. Rosenblum adopts a rigid analytical binary model to focus his

reflections on modern painting and nature. His universalist approach, and by extension certain of the modernist parameters discussed above need to be seriously questioned.

The analytic mode evident in Rosenblum's argument is noteworthy in this context in that Rosenblum operates within the polarity of nature/culture as supposedly neutral and transparent analytical category. Nature as ambivalent site of origin, and culture signifying a departure/return to this origin, are the pillars which form the parameters of a closed system into which Rosenblum classifies various forms of modern art. He assigns to art a largely compensatory role: nature being at times valorized over culture (culture is then characterized by a lack/loss of nature salvaged by art's function as "a therapeutic reminder of our own origins" (1982:10)); or culture being valorized over nature (nature then signifies "the origins of our own destructive instincts" (ibid:14)). Also, Rosenblum's reference to the modernist notions of the 'primitive' or 'origin' remains largely uncritical, probably, because his article focuses mainly on modern artists who make reference to 'universal' natural phenomena and symbols such as sun, water, primordial organisms, the Big Bang theory, 'extinct' cultures. Rosenblum refers to these as if they were transhistorically and transculturally 'given' signs or concepts that seem unchallenged in western culture.

Clifford (1988) has problematized the notion of 'extinct' cultures and of the 'primitive' as used in modern art to construct a source, an origin, or an alter ego. He also locates this problematic construction in anthropological discourse. In his questioning of the modernist relation to non-western others Clifford argues how 'origin' and the 'primitive' serve to confirm some new 'discovery' within the territory and linear history of the western self. Clifford and others[11] hold that this modern discovery is largely expressed through a problematic aesthetic appropriation of 'otherness'.

Rosenblum in no way engages this problematic of otherness, origin, aesthetic

[11]see for example Foster's *The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art, or White Skin Black Masks* in Foster (1989).

appropriation. By contrast, in his exposition of modern art he insists on a universalist notion of a disinterested aesthetic purity. His descriptions suggest that nature and culture are transparently 'reflected' in the pictorial language and structure of modern painting which is made up of what he terms "irreducible pictorial units". Line, colour, symmetry, centrality, can be arranged in polarities of, for example, horizontal vs vertical, rest vs movement and so on. Opposing pictorial units may be overlaid 'naturally' with polar gender associations, that is, male vs female, as in his description of one of Mondrian's paintings:

> For...Mondrian, these forces could take on a more heraldic, universal character, in which the majesty of a centralized, lone tree, growing upright like a man against the pull of the horizon, might be translated into symbolic polarities of male and female, of rest and movement, of the force of a living being against the serene expanse of sky and earth. (ibid:13)

Rosenblum's argument employs metaphorical transformations and metonymic displacements in an uncritical if not stereotypical way. He neither draws attention to the factitiousness nor the historical construction of polarities and metaphorical/metonymic overlays. An assessment of these constructions would indeed suggest, that polarities are neither universal nor value free (see MacCormack & Strathern 1989).

Rosenblum's position perpetuates a number of fallacies. His use of opposition such as nature and culture, male and female, as analytical tool is problematic. His views epitomize a kind of essentialism where fixed values are naturalized and art practice is seen in isolation, hovering over rather than being part of discourse. Here Bryson's argument against (Ernst Gombrich's) 'perceptualism' holds true for Rosenblum's analytical approach: "the meaning of the sign is defined entirely by formal means, the product of oppositions among signs within an enclosed system." (1985b:xii)[12] Rosenblum perceives the 'primitive' and 'origin' to be present in modern art. He

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[7]For a critical examination of the concept 'perceptualism' see Bryson (ibid), his introduction to Calligram, or Visual Theory.

structures this presence into an enclosed, oppositional system of signification. Presence here may be associated with a centred subjectivity, truth, wholeness and autonomy of meaning, notions which Foster (1989) identifies with a "phallocentric order of the west". Foster's argument on the 'primitive' in modern art as symptomatic of this phallocentric order is worth quoting at length, because it reflects the general bias of Rosenblum's article:

> Historically, the primitive is articulated by the west in derivative or supplemental terms: as a spectacle of savagery or as a state of grace, as a socius without writing or the Word, history or cultural complexity or as a site of originary unity, symbolic plenitude, natural vitality. There is nothing odd about this Eurocentric construction: the primitive has served as a coded other at least since the Enlightenment, usually as a subordinate term in its imaginary set of oppositions (light/dark, rational/irrational, civilized/savage). This domesticated primitive is thus constructive, not disruptive, of the binary *ratio* of the west; fixed as a structural opposite or a dialectical other to be incorporated, it assists in the establishment of a western identity, center, norm and name. (1989:196)

Foster also associates the notion of presence as naturalized and sovereign form of human consciousness with modernist historicism. In this context presence implies a desire for totality, a (European) master narrative, humanism and a discourse of the continuous embedded in a linear conception of history. Continuity is involved despite modernism's emphasis on avantgarde negation as a mode of rupturing established discourses or conventional representation. Foster argues that

> as the discourse of the continuous, historicism recoups inherently; it conceives time as a totality (whereby "revolutions are never more than moments of consciousness" [Foucault]) and man as the only subject. Human consciousness is at once posited and revealed as sovereign, and discontinuity is resisted, as is any decentering of the subject (whether by class, family, or language). In art, of course the subject of this historicism is the artist and its space the museum; there, history is presented as a narrative - continuous, homogeneous, and anthropocentric - of great men and masterworks. (Foster 1991:190)

The notion of presence as symptomatic for closed systems of representation has been

seriously questioned in critical postmodernist theory. For example, Derrida's concept of 'différance' negates meaning as presence, for here meaning is continually relayed hence cannot be captured (Derrida 1986). In Moi's words the concept entails that "meaning can never be seized as presence: it is always deferred, constantly displaced...in a chain of signification which has no end, no transcendental signified which might provide the final anchorpoint for the production of sense" (1981:64).[13]

The modernist aesthetic of presence has to some degree also been part of postmodernist debates. The notion of presence is for example contained in François Lyotard's use of the 'sublime' and here connotes a critical form of postmodernist aesthetic.

Lyotard (1983) posits the sublime as a theory of the non-representable for both modernism and postmodernism. With reference to Barnett Newman's Vir Heroicus Sublimis, (which Rosenblum also uses as prime example in 1961), Lyotard proposes that "the sublime may well be the single artistic sensibility to characterize the Modern" (1983:38). Lyotard argues for a reinscription of the term: "with the advent of sublime esthetics the stake of art ... was to be witness to indeterminacy" (1983:41). Following from that the modernist narrative for Lyotard involves a break with the imitation of nature towards simulacrum: "the art object would no longer bend itself to models, but would try to present the unpresentable, it would no longer imitate nature but would be an artefact, a simulacrum" (ibid.). The question of the sublime for Lyotard is linked to a radicalized conception of artworks without rules which may produce a presence that is fundamentally disturbing. Radical experimentation for Lyotard may "produce in general an effect of uncertainty and trouble" (1986:58) and, "the retreat of regulations and rules is the cause of the feeling of the sublime" (1986:11). The reinscription of the term sublime for Lyotard also functions as potential agent for criticality: "The avant-garde task is to undo spiritual assumptions regarding time. The sense of the sublime is the name of this dismantling"

[13]Similarly Foucault (1986) associates authoritative presence and transparency. On the complex relation of presence, transparency and colonial discourse see Bhabha (1985).

(1983:43).[14]

The denaturalization or displacement of a 'phallocentric' presence of the natural in certain discourses is a theme that will be pursued with reference to specific visual representations in the following chapter.

[14]To appropriate the concept of the sublime for a postmodernist aesthetic may, however, be problematic. Huyssen has pointed out that the legacy of the concept is historically too ambiguous for it to serve as an "adequate aesthetic category to theorize contemporary art and literature". Lyotard's "turn to Kant's sublime forgets that the eighteenth century fascination with the sublime of the universe, the cosmos, expresses precisely that very desire of totality and representation which Lyotard so abhors" (1990:265).

Chapter Two

Stereotypes and Popular Natures

In the previous chapter I have *inter alia* suggested that presence is a construct which is produced in closed aesthetic, theoretical, and analytical systems of signification. I noted, with reference to Foster's critique of modernist historicism, that such closed systems involve a problematic and "phallocentric" binary bias. The stereotypical and gendered quality of this binary bias in visual representations can be most clearly demonstrated in images 'outside' the realm of art as, for example, in advertisements. Although they are generally not considered 'art' and operate under different conditions of production and distribution, the ideology or aesthetic codes associated with advertisements may infuse visual art practice. While 'outside' of art these forms of popular culture draw on conventions of high art it can be noted that with late modernism, particularly Pop Art, and now postmodernism, the distinction of popular culture and high culture seems progressively eroded.

I will focus the first section of this chapter on one example from advertising to problematize a gendered and instrumental use of nature/culture oppositions. My concern with stereotype and popular images is also motivated by some of my practical exploration where I have quoted such images as well as certain representations associated with contemporary health food industry and other discourses where food is presented as natural. I make reference to three of my works later in this chapter to illustrate the tactical way in which I use various signs and codes of the natural in order to displace the closed, stereotypical, or linear reading suggested in the images which I quote. My displacements generally encourage a double or multiple reading of that what appears obvious, they defer meaning, which as a result has to be continually re-contextualized.

The following Slender Line, Good Health advertisement (Fig.2) was published in a supplement to *The Star*, the *Sunday Star*, september 30, 1990. It is addressed to a female readership.

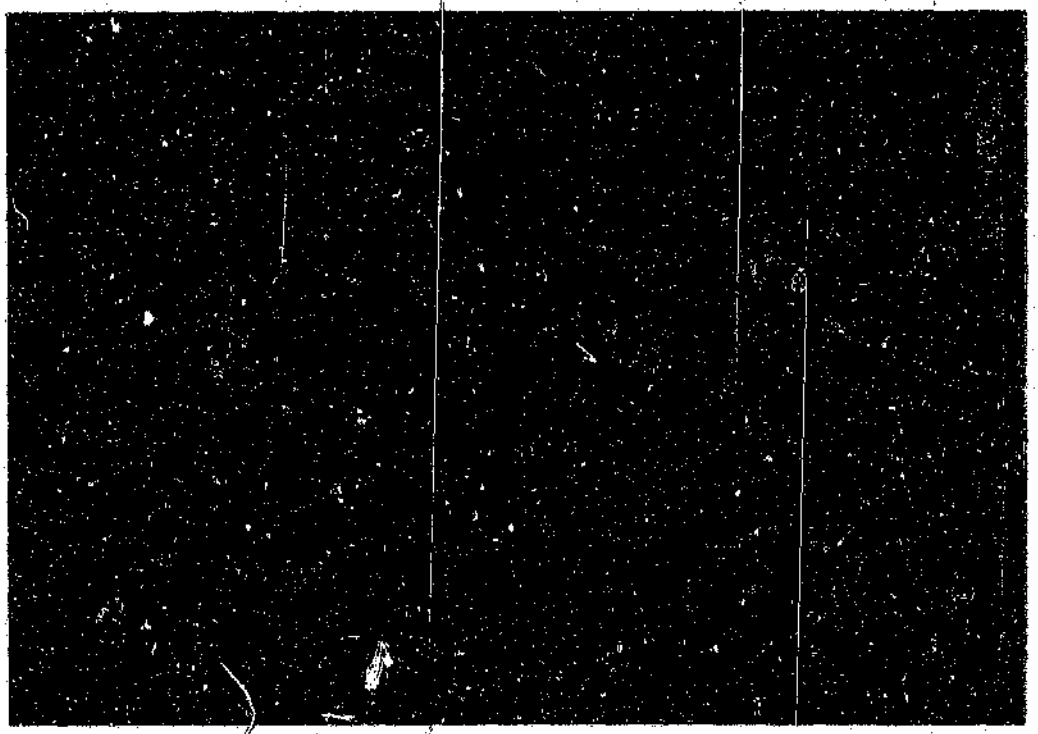


Fig. 2 Slender Line Advertisement

Given the formal structure of the Good Health colour drawing, the following list of oppositions may be compiled:

nature	:	culture
raw food (fruit)	:	processed food (cake)
natural beverage (milk)	:	artificial beverage (alcohol)
rural	:	urban

unpolluted air	:	polluted air
dew drops (on fruit)	:	pesticides (from plane)
primary colour	:	muted, secondary colour
closure	:	openness
centre	:	periphery
interior	:	exterior
temperance	:	excess
harmony	:	disharmony
ideal	:	real

Taking into consideration the left-hand side of the double page ad, the list can be extended as follows

passive	:	active
female	:	male
member of 'Slender Line'	:	non-member
slender	:	fat
beautiful	:	ugly
positive	:	negative

Some critics suggest that diagrammatic renderings similar to the one above could be conceived within a linguistic idiom. For example, MacCormack paraphrasing Leach notes that "the passage from nature to culture is a greatly abbreviated syntagmatic chain of mythic units, forming a metonymic axis from left to right. Reading from top to bottom we have paradigmatic associations, or metaphoric transformation." (1989:7)

The movement from left to right, from nature to culture, has historically often been associated with a hierarchical superiority of culture. However, in the above diagram the metonymic axis has been redirected: the chain developing towards 'goodness' and a higher position in the hierarchical order actually 'progresses' from right to left. Nature, it seems, assumes superiority over culture. Goodness and power, that is, control over woman's body, is connoted with the omnipresent epithet natural in

conjunction with the metaphorical equivalents represented on the lefthand side of the diagram. In short, in this ad the epithet natural valorizes the commodity which it is trying to sell, and this commodity is metaphorically identified with woman.

However, there are certain iconographic details on the 'negative' side which may be seen as being coded feminine, such as the fork placed next to a piece of cake. This detail which has no apparent metonymic equivalent disrupts or confuses the neat antithesis of the overall pattern of the ad and renders the 'negative' side of the approximation a non- sequitur. Rather than representing a subversive rupture this inclusion, together with the association of 'woman as her own enemy'[15], renders the representation which seemed to privilege femininity/femaleness over masculinity/maleness transparent, natural, again: woman (as constructed in this ad) can not really afford to identify male with ugly, fat, negative. Significantly there is no apparent disruption on the 'positive' side.

The use of stereotype, the systematic and instrumental selection of certain connotations out of all the meanings that nature and culture have in western society in this ad is suspect. This is particularly so, as the notion of the natural in this context is used to camouflage the stereotype's function, which, as Craig Owens has argued

> ...is to reproduce ideological subjects that can be smoothly inserted into existing institutions of government, economy and... sexual identity... Stereotypes treat the body as an object to be held in position, subservience, submission; they disavow agency, dismantle the body as a locus of action and reassemble it as a discontinuous series of gestures and poses... (Owens 1984:100)

A similar point is made by Judith Williamson (1983) who explores different forms of representation of nature in advertisements. She argues that in these ideology both creates and locates the subject. The use of stereotype in this operation is significant,

[15]The fork and cake may also be seen to reveal woman's lack of temperance. An old stereotype is affirmed here: within a normative value system that associates beautiful woman with slimness, the desires of the flesh - here for once not explicitly sexual but expressed in the forbidden and uncontrolled desire for cake - must be considered sinful.

for it works to produce *for* the subject an illusory position of choice.

Furthermore, Williamson critically problematizes the mode of referring to nature and the notion of nature as symbol in culture when she characterizes advertising modes as violently appropriative: "[n]ature...is *the* hunting ground for symbols, the raw material of which they are all made. But as nature is ransacked for symbols, it is, of course, transformed" (1983:109).

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The mediations, presumptions, and often linear thinking implicit in visual representations from popular culture and ways in which these could be re-appropriated and used critically in my painting are themes which have been of importance in some of my practical exploration. My discussion of three examples from this exploration is intended to reflect my self-conscious structuring of reappropriated and inverted symbols of nature.

Representations of food can be understood as complex mediators between human beings and nature. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) suggests in his "culinary triangle" that "the raw, the cooked, the ...ited" may be perceived as such. Mediations of food are, for example, also evident in the popular saying 'we are what we eat', where nature not only signifies edible nature but also refers to what is often called internal human nature. I have made reference to these and other notions around food in my carved painting[16] Consuming Desires (1990) (Fig.3). These references are used to strategically subvert certain aesthetics of presence which involve notions of transparency, or the claim that what is depicted is real or obvious. In Consuming Desires my subversion is evident as a continuous play of transparency and simulation, and as incessant layering and relay of meanings. I will describe these processes and

[16]I refer to my paintings on carved wood, or which include painted objects inlaid in wood, as carved paintings.

my reference to the natural in some detail.

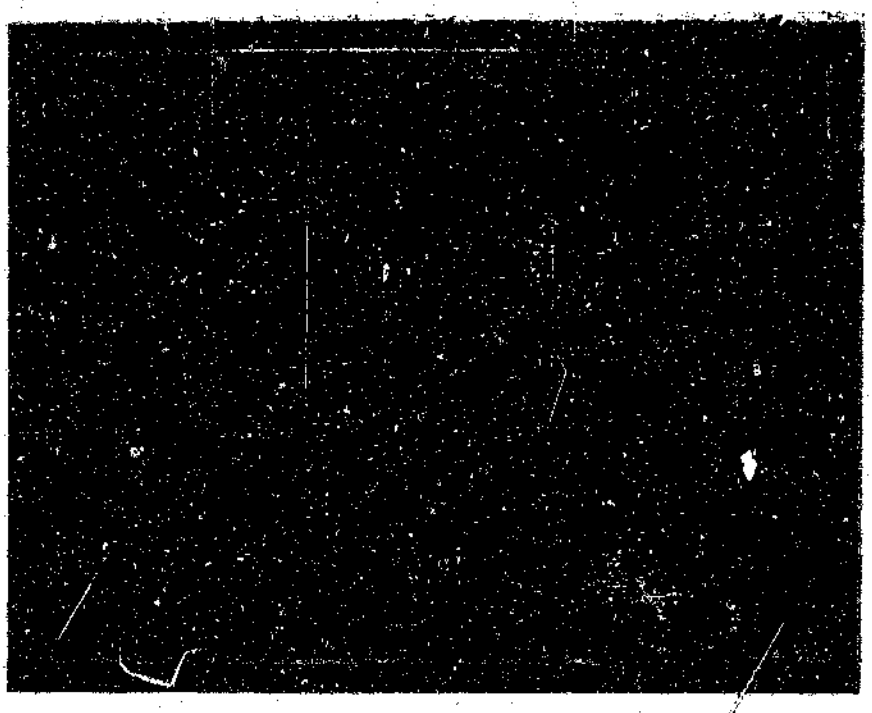


Fig. 3 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Consuming Desires (1990).
Found Objects, Oil on Canvas, Jelutong, 710 x 910 mm. Collection: The artist.

The capture of the natural as implied in Bryson's concept of the natural attitude is suggested in the painterly illusionism used in the depiction of objects on the painting on canvas which is located in the focal area of Consuming Desires (Fig.4). While this illusionism suggests a transparent reading of objects it is, however, only convincing within the parameters of the surface of the canvas. The sides of my painting are not painted illusionistically. They record surfaces and processes which illusionism conceals: these include the material support, the 'raw' canvas, the visible layers of primer, and the washes and glazes of oil paint.

The painting on canvas is mounted onto a sculpted jelutong ground. The intrinsic colour of the jelutong is retained to effect an appearance of the natural (some friends

suggested to me that this surface looks more like leather than wood). Both painting and wood are varnished with unbleached bees wax which is another natural medium which is used.

The brush which is inlaid in the upper right register of the carved painting invokes the natural in various ways. As found object it may be misconstrued as part of the 'real' world, hence ostensibly more natural or immediate than a painted representation of it. Furthermore, the brush consists of genuine pork bristles. I have manipulated this more obvious association of the natural by painting the brush with a leopard pattern, hence displacing the domesticity associated with the pork into the animalistic. The animalized brush for me sustains resonances of the 'rawness' of emotions which may be conveyed through expressive modes and conventions of painting.

Another object which is inlaid into the upper register is a glass animal eye contained in a carved diagrammatic rendering of its lachrymal apparatus. I have obtained the glass eye from a taxidermist who uses such eyes to replace the real ones of the dead animals which he prepares and stuffs into life-like poses. The glass eye in my rendering is doubly displaced, both discursively and physically. Firstly, it is displaced from the discourse of taxidermy into medical discourse, and secondly, the eye plus its apparatus is physically dislodged from its indentation into the carved surface. By extension, the indentation which disrupts the even 'flow' of the carved surface may suggest that all the objects which have been placed onto it cannot be removed without leaving a pronounced mark of their absence.

My reference to discourses where food is presented as natural is intertwined with the various layers of representing the natural, of presence and absence, which I have described above.

For example, my carved sweet 'the natural' (Fig.5) which is placed below my painting is an incomplete simulation of a health sweet with 'no preservatives', 'no artificial colours' (Fig.6). The slogan around an emblem of scales in the Myrmac product suggests, that the sweet is produced by contemporary health food industry in

close cooperation with (the goodness of) nature: 'Nature Planned It ○ Myrmac Made It'. I have modified the slogan, and also the product design: in my rendering a genderless hand feeds a willing recipient of this health sweet. My modification plays on the way advertising adopts an almost god-ordained rhetoric, how it exploits and commodifies conventions. My image could be seen in a quasi religious setting where the notion of health sweet is substituted with a packaged piece of nirvana.

In the painting on canvas which is imbedded into the carved surface I interweave different discourses around food consumption or eating. For example, the representation of the digestive tract derives from a medical illustration and presents a functional view of eating. The (upside down) text in the painting quotes a menu compiled by Holt in 1886. Holt's propagation of entomophagy (the eating of insects) seems entangled in ambiguities around notions of the 'primitive', the 'exotic', 'origin', eating taboos and social relations. His pro-entomophagy argument draws on discourses such as zoology, aesthetics, economics and anthropology.[17] In my quotation of Holt's menu I mainly use the anachronistic lettering of 'Old English'. Part of the text is interspersed with the more contemporary 'Helvetica Medium' which disrupts a continuous reading as well as the sense of how this text may be located historically.

A more direct invitation to eat insects is suggested in the carved, mouth-like, wrapper which *inter alia* contains real insect remains (Fig.7). These insects literally are *nature morte* (dead nature). Similarly, the arrangement of fork and knife on a serviette next to the painting on canvas may be seen as invitation to eat. The arrangement refers to western conventions of food display. The constellation of cutlery and painting associates the consumption of food with aesthetic ingestion, that is, the ingestion of knowledge, of rhetoric, of discourse, of convention, but also of contradiction. This

[17]In his book *Why not eat Insects?* Holt provides a wide range of answers to this question ranging from 'insects are cheap and nutritious food supply for the (English) poor', to 'uncivilized peoples have eaten insects', over 'they are pleasant to the taste' and 'eating (and thereby reducing the number of) insects may be a measure for restoring natural balance'. These answers serve as rationalizations of Western eating taboos which prepare the ground for the presentation of his recipes and menus, which seem like westernized culinary curiosities: Wasp Grubs fried in the Comb, Moths sautés in Butter, Devilled Chafer Grubs, to name a few of the 'atrocities' which I have quoted in my painting.

suggests that the creative aesthetic process is not divorced from lived process.

However, while my display of objects in my work plays with different levels of immediacy or presence, nature, as Lucy Lippard has noted, "is always less threatening when pictured, objectified, reified" (1983b:137). This aspect is enhanced in my work as the carved painting as a whole is contained in a box-like frame, and covered by glass. The frame and glass signify closure, finish, alienation from touch. This signification displaces the openness to touch which is the condition for the carving of surface and objects and the process of making and lived experience, into an implied museum context.

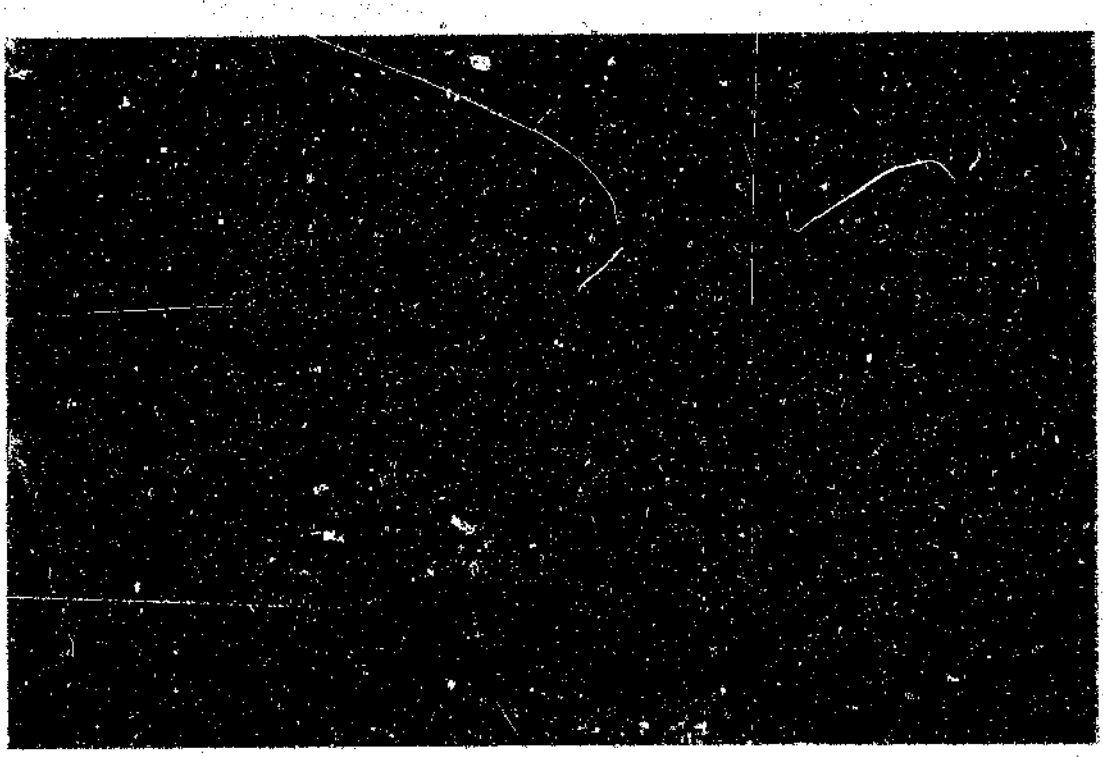


Fig.4 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Consuming Desires, Detail.

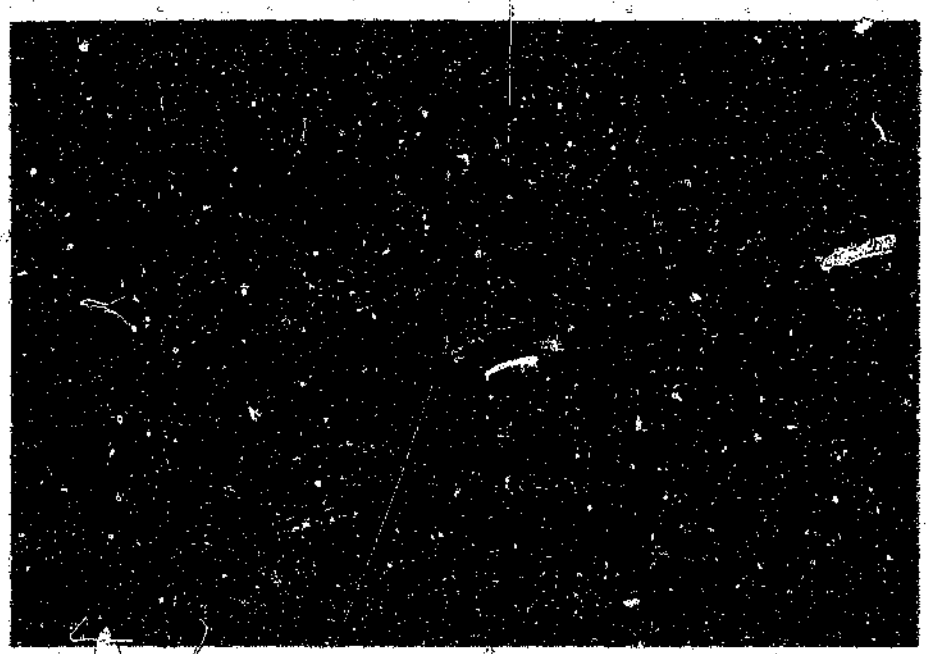


Fig. 5 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Consuming Desires, Detail.



Fig. 6 Reference Material - Health Sweet Wrapping.

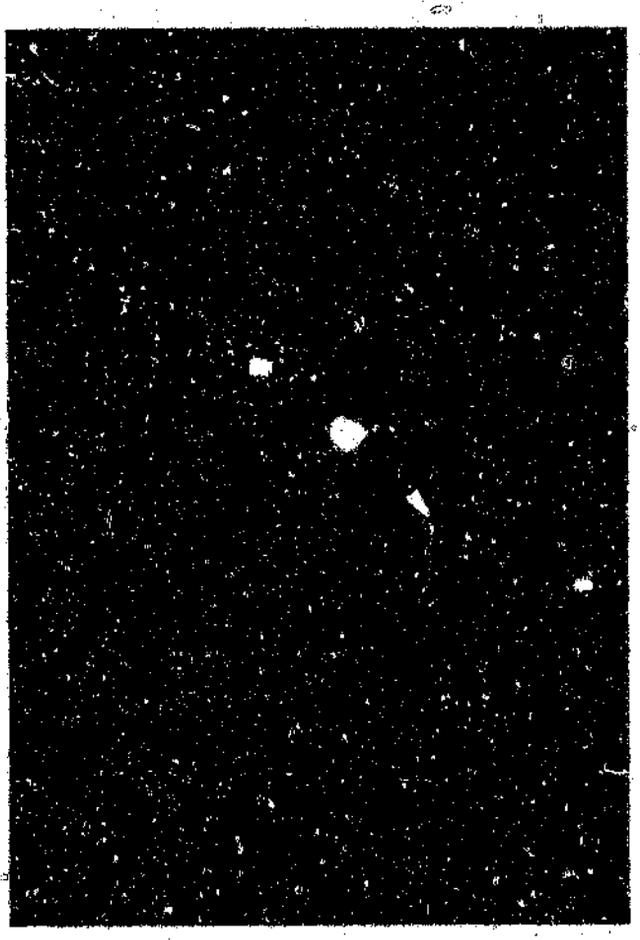


Fig. 7 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Consuming Desires, Detail.

My painting Sublime Landscape and Other Objects (1990) (Fig.8) also reflects my critical concern with already mediated and coded representations of the natural. Here I have made reference to romantic notions of sublimity in conjunction with quotations of a health sweet wrapping called 'the natural'[18] and of a label for a natural juice product named 'Real'. Insect remains, a screw, a bronze shaving also feature in the painting. My pictorial arrangement of these diverse references is intended to produce a sense of contradiction, inversion and rupture of received connotations implicit in these. I will describe some of the implications of my arrangement briefly.

[18]The scales of the Myrmac sweet logo in this painting have been replaced by a partly off-cut self portrait. My logo framing this portrait reads: Nature * Marie(ne)...

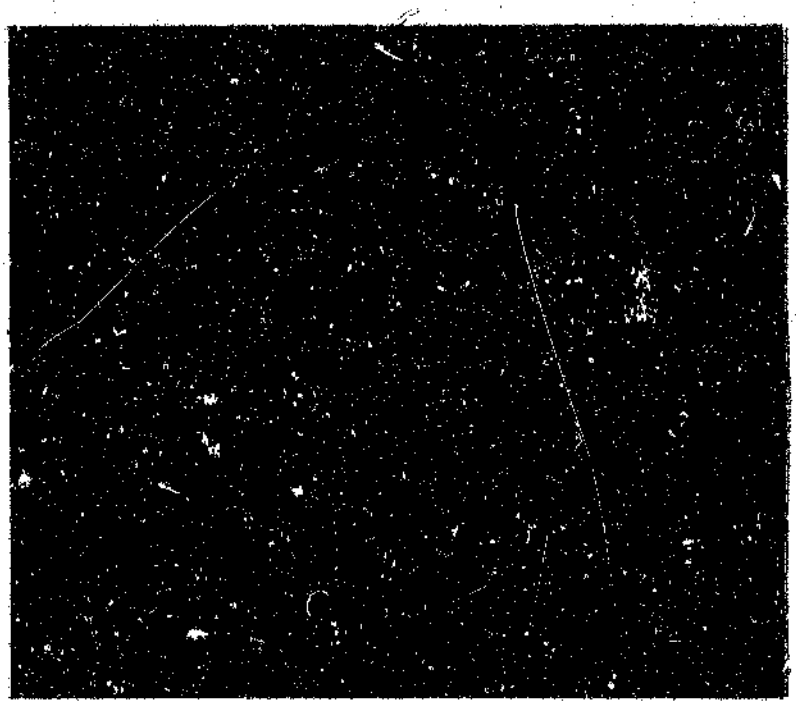


Fig. 8 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Sublime Landscape and Other Objects (1990). Oil on Board, 320 x 380 mm. Collection: The artist.

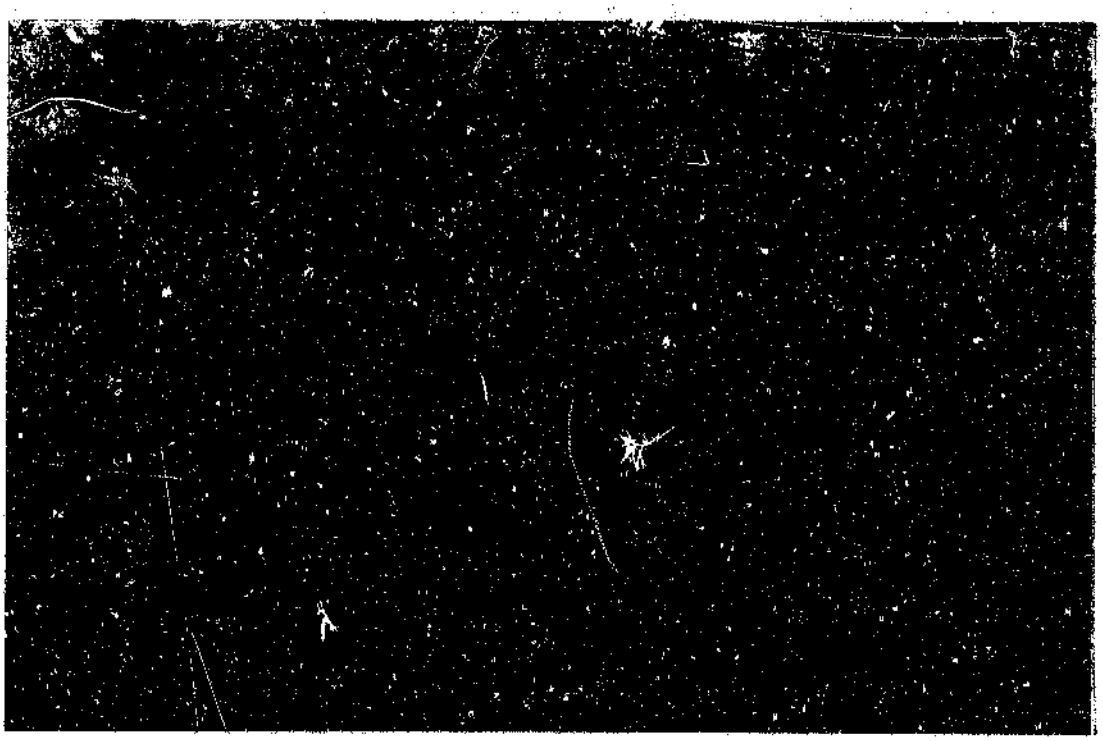


Fig. 9 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Sublime Landscape and Other Objects, Detail.

Most inversions which are produced in Sublime Landscape and Other Objects seem to revolve around the centrally placed sublime landscape[19]. (Fig.9) For example, the notion of aggrandizement and boundlessness of nature which is suggested by it is displaced by the rather reductive and instrumental use of nature as reflected in the design of both label and wrapper below it. The landscape is framed, or metaphorically set up, by the rhetoric of advertising which seems to suggest that it is possible to buy into any kind of ideology.

Moreover, the rhetoric of the sublime landscape: 'rugged, strong, vast, powerful, terrible, generalized' is further countered by the rhetoric of banal objects around it: 'small, smooth, ornamental, graceful, tender'. Both rhetorics echo the differentiation of the Sublime and the Beautiful by the romantic theorist Edmund Burke. Bryson suggests, that Burke's concepts of the Sublime and the Beautiful are "couched in terms whose obvious roots lie in gender" (1990:177). Accepting this association of the beautiful and femininity the connotations of contemporary health food discourse seem to acquire a more suggestive and ambivalent layer of meaning in my painting which is neither reductive, nor banal.

However, the grandeur and desire for infinity suggested in the landscape painting is not without its contradictions. A number of inversions take place in relation to it. For example, in terms of scale, the comparatively large objects which frame the painting seem to minimize the effect of the sublime. Moreover, because the landscape is an actual painting which is incorporated with another, it literally is presented as one object amongst other objects. This further inverts the sense of singularity which may be associated with the sublime.

Layers of coding are also evident on more formal levels. The predominant colour of the painting, blue, is invariably coded as distance (in the landscape representation),

[19]I have painted this landscape using a process of 'blotting' which, as the 18th century painter and theorist Alexander Cozens suggested, follows the principles of nature rather than culture. For reference to the primary text *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* (1785) see Cozens (1989), for a critical reading of it see Lebenszteja (1988).

as surface (in the representation of the painting as still life), and as transparency (in aspects of the iconography). These layers are not clearly distinct. The play of two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality is also reflected in the use of thin washes of paint in the landscape representations which do not conceal the primed surface of the painting. Thin layers are contrasted to relatively more thick, textural paint. Literal three dimensionality is also asserted by the rupture of illusionistic surface which the incorporated painting creates. The play of three-d and two-d is also reflected in my choice of gilded and ornamented frame.



Fig. 10 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Sublime Soliloquy (1991-2).
Cement Casts, Jelutong, Oil Paint, 420 x 670 mm. Collection: The artist.

The third painting I wish to discuss here is called Sublime Soliloquy (1991-2) (Fig.10). It is a carved painting with six inlaid cement casts. Three of these are casts from a reflector for a petroleum lamp. The reflectors from which I took the casts frequently contain stereotypical representations of the natural, some of which I have quoted. These representations provide bits and pieces of sentimentality which suggest

that it is possible to recoup a lost paradise or arcadia which is beyond politics and the contradictions of lived experience. I have tried to displace these universalizing tendencies, the notion of a purity and truth component linked to nostalgia through various other references which I make.

In Sublime Soliloquy there are three stereotypes of the natural which I quote. While my central image mimics a pastoral landscape representation from a reflector, the other two refer to pictures which used to be packed with cigarettes. The reference for the picture on the right is entitled 'The Shepherd's Friend', (No. 117) from the Cinema Calvacade series. The triteness and gross sentiment implicit in the image is most evident in the text which accompanies it on the reverse side of the reference: "...a shepherd...gazes at his faithful sheepdog, Black Wull, the only creature in the world besides his daughter who understands and loves him". My lefthand image refers to a more mundane scene: 'Skukuza-kamp: Kookplek' (No.89) from Ons Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Wildtuine. I have also selected these cliched images for their anodyne qualities: they seem to be able to give comfort to the western mind, to lessen the pain of the real by constructing a fictional oneness with undisturbed, other, natures.

While I am critical of the various fictions associated with these popular images my displacement of these in Sublime Soliloquy is mostly concerned with the givenness of meaning or the sense of unchanging truth which seems so readily provided by the stereotype. By contrast I have tried to hold meaning in suspense, to promise meaning, without ever providing it in a stereotyped way.

My suspense of meaning may be demonstrated in relation to the complex associations in my iconography of the tape. I have correlated each reflector cast with a cast of a tape which signals a shift from a more visual to a more verbal mode of communication. As reference to an audio record the tape may be seen as more obviously discursive in the way it involves (spoken) language. Because of its placement below the image, the tape may also be understood as a subtext, as a record of voices which in some sense add to the reading of the image. This implied reading

is, however, frustrated through the notion of the tape as simulacrum - after all, it is an object deceptively made in the likeness of a tape, not a functional tape which could be 'really' listened to. The simulacrum hence involves an ellipse, that is, an unstatedness, a lack, an omission which prevents meaning from being constructed as complete, as whole. Furthermore, the tape may also be viewed as inaccessible, archaeological fragment. Actually, the edges of both tape and reflector casts suggest, that the objects may have been divorced or salvaged from some other, 'original' contexts before they were inlaid into the painting. This suggests, that meaning in relation to these archaeological fragments can only be more fully grasped in these implicit other contexts, and that the objects have to be de- and recontextualized to make their meaning more comprehensive. Meaning in this sense is deferred to outside the frame of this painting.

Chapter Three

Critiques of The Natural in Selected Works by Penelope Siopis and William Kentridge

This chapter is composed of five loosely connected sections highlighting different ways in which Siopis and Kentridge use reference or quotation. These artists borrow images from popular culture, medical and scientific contexts, (art) historical discourse, and other sources. References which I discuss involve directly or implicitly certain conceptions of nature. These references touch on ideas of the pastoral genre, the colonial myth of the Dark Continent, conceptions of technology in relation to nature, the imperialist gaze, discursive constructions of the gendered body, and of history. I suggest that both Siopis and Kentridge engage with denaturalization - I use the term to signify a critical problematization of nature and the conventional or historical connotations of the references used. Connotations attached to references such as the pastoral are, for example, assumptions about time which may suggest a reconciliation of nature and history. Moreover, the myth of the Dark Continent historically involves patriarchal conjectures about the essence of female sexuality in colonial discourse. More broadly speaking, these connotations involve notions of the control, possession, manipulation, mythification and salvage, of nature.

In my research process I sometimes found it useful to start a section by identifying certain more classical conceptions of nature whereby the natural is necessarily defined in relation to something other: culture, convention, technology, civilization, masculinity, history. While I have problematized in previous chapters the associations of binary thinking with historicism, a desire for continuity, wholeness, truth, transcendence, presence, and closure, I found it necessary to further rethink these more classical conceptions in relation to specific visual representations. Jardine proposes that "...rethinking those dualistic couples means, among other things,

putting their 'obligatory connotations' into discursive circulation, making those connotations explicit in order, one hopes, to put them into question" (Jardine 1986:563). This chapter then also suggests a continuation of my questioning of the modernist stress on the dialectic nature of representation, which I have explored in chapter one.

Binary models have been denaturalized in postmodernist criticism. For example, whilst critical theorists like Frederic Jameson or James Clifford acknowledge that polarities seem indispensable to western thought historically, they also problematize the use of binary systems as analytical tool, arguing that it signifies a closure. Clifford uses an initial binary model only to break open this closure so as to offer a "map...of a historically specific, contestible field of meanings and institutions" (1988:223).

I have adopted a similar approach to explore aspects of denaturalization in this chapter. In my discussion of selected works by Siopis and Kentridge I argue that both artists refer to the natural in a way that critically asserts the cultural construction of the concept. While both artists make reference to dualistic couples, these are not used in an oppositional mode which may signify closure. The mode of their reference to nature may sometimes involve a de-familiarization of dualistic couples and their obligatory or naturalized connotations.

For example, the traditional pastoral, with its pronounced absences of time and history, may involve nature as a background of natural law from which eternal laws may be derived for culture. I suggest that Kentridge's reference to the pastoral connotes an absence of this conception of nature as he posits the pastoral as *ersatz*. The notion of ersatz (replacement, substitute) suggests a less original or immediate access to what it represents, hence implies lack and particular forms of mediation which will be explored.

Siopis' reference to 19th century medical illustrations of hysteria critically problematizes the patriarchal construction of the relation interior/exterior,

symptom/pathology, which are reflected in these. I will explore how her mode of reference to these illustrations involves duplicity (deliberate deception) as a strategy which may be seen to expose some of the naturalizing presumptions of patriarchal discourse.

Furthermore, I will explore how for Kentridge technology is closely associated with a capitalist mode of exploiting nature as resource - and nature here is used to signify not only ore deposits, but also people. Technology is also referred to by Siopis. Here I feel the term describes patriarchal modes of controlling and colonizing the black, female body. Siopis' paintings such as Terra Incognita suggest certain strategies of resisting this colonization which will be explored.

I.

This section is concerned with the relation of nature (constructed as being universal, not man-made but given) and culture (in the sense of man-made convention which is based on agreement). Gernot Böhme (1992b) has pointed out that this opposition of nature and culture is grounded in Greek philosophy where a coherent background of natural law is differentiated from the more arbitrary laws of culture. Böhme notes that the legacy of the two concepts is historically complex and contradictory. However, he holds that the fact of a differentiation of the concepts of cultural and natural order in itself is significant, for the notion of a natural order may function as a critical norm or agency which serves to challenge the '*Willkür*' (or arbitrariness) of the human order. Böhme argues, that seen in this light, the concept of natural was, for example, historically significant for the development of human rights.

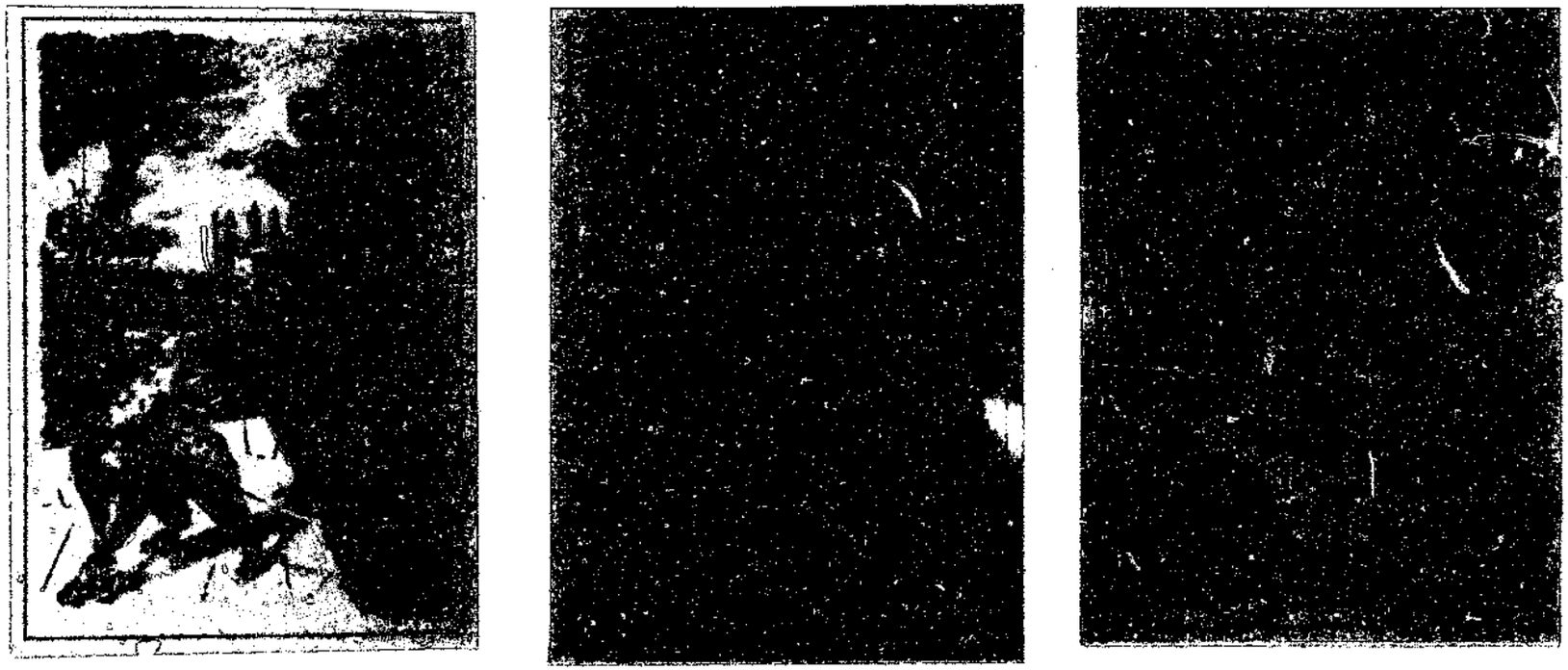


Fig. 11 Kentridge, W. The Embarkation (Triptych) (1986/7). Charcoal and Pastel on Paper, 125 x 82 cm (Left hand panel), 125 x 85 cm (centre panel), 125 x 88 cm (right hand panel). Collection: not cited.

The theme of natural as opposed to a human order has also infused visual art discourse in South Africa. For example, in his drawing triptych The Embarkation (1986/7) (Fig.11) Kentridge engages with this opposition through his reference to a highly conventional yet often naturalized theme, that is the myth of the island of love. Kentridge's specific reference to Antoine Watteau's L'Embarquement pour l'Ile de Cythéra (1717, Louvre) in his triptych suggests that he addresses this myth as historically complex genre: the pastoral. The pastoral traditionally may involve transcendental conceptions of nature as aspired norm for culture, and by extension history.

I will confine my discussion of The Embarkation to the pastoral and explore how Kentridge questions some of its implications. I argue that he denaturalizes the pastoral as a form of agreement that naturalizes the relation of nature and history. This naturalization may involve a process through which what Kentridge frequently refers to as "moments of grace" are posited as universal moments of human consciousness. I argue that Kentridge resists this naturalization by associating the pastoral with the notion of *ersatz*.

Heather Dubrow has noted that the "pastoral has a predilection for binary oppositions so fundamental" that it may take the form "of carefully articulated intellectual debates about city versus country, of rhetorical figures involving the comparison of opposites, or merely of one of the oldest binary oppositions, the debate between two lovers" (1982:118).

The pastoral genre from this perspective is constructed in a dualistic mode. In Watteau's L' Embarquement this genre involves a temporal movement between concepts of nature and convention. This is argued by Gérard Raulet (1987) who holds that for Watteau nature and convention are not represented as synchronic, that is, harmoniously coexistent givens, but that the concepts are differentiated in a temporal sense. Temporal differentiation is *inter alia* conveyed in terms of the suggested movement of a group of people in between fore- and background, the perspectival

structuring of Watteau's image[20]. To appropriate a title of Raulet's writings, the dialectic that is set up appears to play off the humanization of nature and the naturalization of man/woman.

I will loosely use Raulet's notion of temporal differentiation to make some observations on Elza Miles' catalogue introduction to Kentridge's Standard Bank exhibition in 1987, where she focuses on The Embarkation. While her description of these drawings oscillates between a universalist and historical reading of Kentridge's iconography, her emphasis seems to rest on the universal. The implicit binary bias of her reading of Kentridge's drawing may be displaced by the notion of ersatz which, I feel, more appropriately reflects Kentridge's concern with the pastoral as located in the South African context in which he works.

Miles in her essay *An Embarkation* (1987:unpaginated) perceives a dualism involving two levels of reality in Kentridge's The Embarkation . On the one hand she refers to a sense of historical "concreteness" which is reflected in the iconography particular to the South African environment in which Kentridge lives. On the other hand Miles perceives a sense of "poetic reality" in Kentridge's drawings which is "inspired" by and yet differs from Watteau's painting. Miles suggests that Kentridge shifts away from Watteau's temporal rendering of the theme and that the important point to recognize is no longer "whether the pilgrims are arriving or departing", but that "the poetic reality emphasized in each work of the collection is that Cythera exists". She thus replaces the emphasis on movement in time with the notion of presence. The poetic presence of Cythéra for her seems to involve notions of wholeness associated with certain moments of grace or reconciliation when "each pilgrim is looking for his counterpart, his alter ego".

Miles' perception of presence in Kentridge's The Embarkation raises a number of questions which relate to the notion of history in his work. For example, it may be

[20]Raulet (1987) notes that for Watteau the distant island of Cythéra remains '*Sehnsucht*'(longing, desire) which pervades landscape but is not represented as landscape. ("Das Bild ist eine im Nunc erlebte Sehnsucht, die zwar die Landschaft durchtränkt, aber nicht selbst Landschaft ist") (1987:53).

asked if Kentridge's moments of grace really suggest a suspension of time. If so, do these timeless moments resolve the conflict between desire for wholeness and social constraints? Does Miles propose a possible reconciliation of what is often referred to as human nature and South African history? Miles' rather brief presentation (given the limiting scope of the catalogue essay) makes it rather difficult to pinpoint where she is positioned in relation to these questions.

Furthermore, it may be asked if Kentridge's The Embarkation then deals with problems of combining a genre that connotes *Sehnsucht* (desire, yearning for wholeness), as a transcendental moment - with an awareness of the anachronistic quality of the pastoral conception of nature, given the South African context his work refers to. This awareness is stressed by Kentridge when he quite categorically stated that "the state of grace is inadmissible to me" (quoted in Williamson 1989:30). In a statement made in 1991 Kentridge's insistence on the inadmissibility of a state of grace appears more ambivalent. Kentridge seems to modify his position on the state of grace in the later statement when he says

> I take refuge in a sense behind saying everything has been mediated. everything has been humanized or de-humanized or socialized at any rate. So that I am not indifferent to the sublime, to huge mountains, to forests, to the ocean, but it will be at the moment impossible for me seriously to do drawings of that, or paintings of that. (1991:2)

I would suggest that the earlier statement should be seen as a strategic statement, while the other is a personal expression of a (deliberately suppressed) desire. Viewed in the context of other statements made by Kentridge (cf. Kentridge 1988) the strategic statement implies that the inadmissibility of the state of grace has to do with the specifics of the South African context in which Kentridge works.

It is against this social, political and historical background of South Africa that Kentridge's interest in Hogarth is interesting to note. Hogarth, generally represented as fierce critic of the 18th c. British social scene, is known for his concern to critically disclose the factitiousness of mythical constructions and social relations.

Many of his works are marked by a concern to make the 'true nature' of social relations behind the projected conventional facades of his time visible, negating received assumptions about nature as well as culture. By extension, particularly in the later Hogarth, human nature is represented as essentially corrupt(able), both in terms of choice and as a matter of circumstance (Godby 1990).

I propose that in Kentridge's The Embarkation Hogarth's notion of convention as facade which conceals nature has been partly substituted by pastoral conventions of nature as *ersatz*. While the notion of f ade may suggest that it conceals a 'true' (albeit corruptable) nature, the notion of *ersatz* involves absence, declaiming the notion of an essential nature, be it so-called internal human nature or external normative nature.

Kentridge's contemporary pastoral landscape comes across as a pastoral ersatz landscape, an arcadian landscape in ruins. Ruins actually are the landmarks which structure both traditional arcadian landscapes and Kentridge's landscape. In contrast to the ruins of traditional arcadian landscapes Kentridge's ruins are not landmarks which point to some 'other', more profound nature, but they refer back to the industrial and cultural exploitation of the South African landscape. Padkos, picnic spots are ersatz monuments, ersatz meccas of Miles' pilgrims. The trees on the back of the bakki are ersatz relics, natural commodities, souvenirs[21] of the natural to be taken home. Emblems such as Caltex in the righthand panel, do not hint at a nature of a higher order as they might in historical representations from emblematic traditions. The word Caltex quite transparently suggests capital and commodity as well as other material, mundane and coincidental issues. The presence of the caltex emblem, that is, the way it seems to provide meaning without ambiguity, may be seen

[21]This is what Simon Pugh says about the souvenir, connecting but differentiating the notions of souvenir, relic, emblem, monument, and commodity with the rhetoric of the pastoral garden: "The souvenir is the relic secularized, ... whereas the relic derives from the corpse, a presence, the souvenir is 'dead' experience... The souvenir's meaning is always elsewhere, an absence... As an embodiment of an experience a souvenir preserves memory from time, against time... The garden becomes a commodity and the garden walk a museum corridor." (1990:145/6) In Kentridge's pastoral the notion of museum is further demystified by his denial of grandeur attached to either its exhibits or the experience attached to the activity of the weekend outing.

to mask the absence of meaning[22] stated elsewhere in the drawing through the notion of ersatz.

I have earlier noted Miles' tendency to turn absence into presence in her stress on the momentary wholeness of ego and alter ego. Yet when viewing the lefthand panel of the triptych, the idea of pastoral wholeness is difficult to uphold. Here, Kentridge associates the pastoral with a group of formally dressed men posed in relaxed reading attitudes. Given the superior hierarchical position of the group in relation to other iconographical aspects of the panel such as the hyena and the landscape, the pastoral appears to be controlled by these men. They seem to represent a particular privileged section of white society, that is more specifically, the agents of capital[23]. Their poses suggest that they have at their disposal the pastoral as a style they can both adopt (and discard) or indulge reading on. In this sense the lefthand panel produces a shift from a notion of ersatz which involves lack, to the representation of the pastoral as a naturalized pose in which the underpinnings of power are concealed. These underpinnings are, however, reflected in the pictorial structure of the lefthand panel. Whereas the other two panels are multifocal, the lefthand panel presents a hierarchical, dualistically focused, structure, setting off the tonally darkest area of the triptych (the pyramidal arrangement of leisurely posed men) against the spotted hyena on a leash (which, in terms of markmaking corresponds to the treatment of the land). In this context the hyena may be interpreted as nature forcibly controlled. It is neither wild nor tame, yet both tame(d) and wild[24]. The apparent and posed naturalization

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[22]Heinz Schütz argues in the following quote that meaning associated with emblems outside the fine arts traditions is progressively eroded. Emblems here connote consumption, and the erosion of meaning is masked by a rhetoric (a spectacle) of meaning in the interest of capital. ("Im außerkünstlerischen Bereich ist das Emblem zum Warenemblem geworden - Sinnverzehrung tarnt sich mit der Maske von Sinnvermittlung. Vor diesem Hintergrund erfährt das Theater der Embleme seine Reprise ["Erinnerung und Vergewisserung von Sinn"], im Zuschauerraum applaudieren die Agenten des Kapitals." (1989:49))

[23]These agents resemble Kentridge's grandfather who also served as a reference for his protagonist Soho Eckstein. The figure of Soho represents the interest of capital and will be referred to again later in this chapter.

[24]Referring to the iconography of the cat in Kentridge's Hogarth series Godby proposes that the cats "appear to revolt against [social] abomination of nature" ((1990:104), or points out Kentridge's occasional use of "animals as symbols of nature in contrast to the perverted state of the prevailing social order" (1990:112). However, I feel that the hyena in The Embarkation triptych is clearly subject to double coding which does not allow for such a clean differentiation between a natural and social order.

of the group of men on the other hand is mediated through their control of nature. In terms of their dress code and hierarchical position they are physically detached from the environment which they control.

Simon Pugh (1990) succinctly describes the pretensions of the pastoral and the pastoral's relation to time and history. The pastoral for Pugh also involves a series of absences:

> The pastoral offers freedom from necessity, the illusion that life can be fairyland, but only for delimited periods...Life is not, can never be, 'peace, leisure and innocence', but the promesse de bonheur allays the fear of the permanent state of emergency we live in (Benjamin), 'objective despair' (Adorno), in a blotting out of everything known about the later course of history. Such a pastoralist merely pretends...that thought is 'too hard for rustic apprehension', disavowing thought in an attempt to escape 'civilisation'. Sadness is a thorn in the foot, a lover's rejection, a wistful inscription. The magic of enjoyment can only be rediscovered in a dream which releases the pressure of work, releases the bond which binds the individual to social function and ultimately self, a dream which leads back to the pastoral 'elysian regions'...without masters and discipline. (1990:147/8)

In a somewhat sinister way Kentridge re-introduces Pugh's masters and discipline in the form of the agents of capital in The Embarkation. Kentridge's masters are not situated outside the pastoral narrative, but they control it from within. Kentridge hence denaturalizes the pastoral pretensions by re-asserting an absence which is traditionally associated with this genre.

II.

With reference to Emmanuel Kant (who is often associated with modernism, for example, via Greenberg), Böhme (1992b) argues that the natural can be differentiated into two components. One aspect of the natural would be defined as 'inner nature' and refers to the internal processes of the human body, particularly instincts and

emotions. The other aspect could be identified with nature as external referent (what Kant called the "*Gesamtheit aller Dinge vor dem äußeren Sinn*"). Empiricist science in this context is presented as competent only in relation to external nature. Böhme argues that nature in this differentiation becomes the encompassing entity in which every empirical existence is located and that the concept of 'Mother Nature' survives here. (1992b)

Marilyn Strathern points out that according to the empiricist definition nature is "a precondition of existence which provides the raw-materials for life" (1989:195). External nature in this definition represents a resource for culture which can be manipulated. Included in this is the human "bodily structure and capacity and thus human needs and instincts and a non-social environment" (Strathern 1989:195). However, as a precondition for this manipulation empiricist inquiry involves a taxonomical shift in relation to previous, that is, for example, organicist, conceptions of the human body (cf. Le Goff:1989). Nature as inscribed in the body under the objectifying scientific empiricist gaze has to be externalized in order to make it accessible to knowledge. The natural body in empiricist discourse becomes object, foreign, non-self, other, in order to be accessible to rational, exactifying science. As a consequence the dualism of interior and exterior can only be upheld through a reinforced differentiation of a transcendant self from nature. Empiricism "renders the notion of control ambiguous: on the one hand we are part of that system, and on the other able to use its laws for our own purposes, which render them separable and ourselves transcendant" (Strathern 1989:196).

Criticism of the notion of a transcendant self and its relation to power and control has come particularly from French critical writing (Derrida, Foucault) which problematizes 'Man' as being at the foundation of western humanist and rationalist conceptions of the self. Drawing on this critical writing Jardine notes:

> First the "I" and the "we" have been utterly confused: the "I" is several, psychanalysis has shown; and, further, one of the major ruses of Western metaphysics' violence has been the appropriation of a "we" by an imperialistic if imaginary "I"...It is not

> something called the "self" which speaks, but language, the unconscious, the textuality of the text. (1986:563)

Furthermore, Clifford (in Foster 1987b) notes that partly because of the equation of woman with nature which has occurred in a number of discourses, the "unthinking" (Clifford) of nature/culture opposition takes place in feminist discourse. Clifford points out that "women, like *Naturvölker* [nature people], are 'others' who have been naturalized; ... they too have to question - as well as not totally throw out - the qualities imputed to them as natural creatures, natural bodies" (in Foster 1987b:143).

The question of woman as object of empiricist discourse and as 'other' who has been naturalized has been critically explored by Siopis. Her questioning also motivates that she positions herself at the intersection of feminist and post-colonial discourse. It is through certain concerns of these discourses that she makes reference to colonial, medical and other representations of the body in some of her work. For example, her painting Setting (1986) draws attention to diverse constructions of femininity as implicit in her references. Her references to the female body include a medical model (from Wits medical school), her own body, and a quotation of an art historical representation, that is, a detail of Botticelli's Historia de Nastagio (1444-1510) (Museo del Prado). Botticelli's painting depicts an allegorical hunting scene with a nude woman being 'hunted' by a rider and dogs in a forest.

Siopis addresses the question of interior and exterior more clearly in certain paintings and drawings which make reference to colonial notions around the myth of the Dark Continent and the myth of the Interior[25]. In pastel drawings such as Dora and the Other Woman (1988) (Fig.12) and Representations (1989) (Fig.13), Siopis explores

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[25]The complexity of the coding of the Interior has been of constant interest for Siopis and may be demonstrated by the wide range of iconographic references which I can only hint at: Siopis' early 'cake' paintings for example suggest links between woman's biology (vagina) and notions of sexuality; In Dora and the other Woman the box in the lower right part of the drawing suggests a 'quest motif' (desire for knowledge) for woman's secrets in its association with Freud's/Dora's 'jewel-box', which, Siopis notes, "was part of the narrative of the first of her two dreams was interpreted as symbolizing her genitals" (1992); the reference to the medical model in Setting, or the woman with open, pregnant womb in Melancholia (see Farber 1992) questions the interior as an aspect of medical discourse; Siopis' reference to mining in Terra Incognita questions Africa as female (exploited, "raped" (Siopis)) body;

these myths with reference to colonial and psychoanalytic discourses. For example, in these pastel drawings she extensively appropriates images from mostly 19th century discourses concerned with woman's pathology (hysteria) and otherness (race, sexuality). Issues concerning race and gender, such as a critical questioning of the construction of 'difference', 'otherness', 'subjectivity' are engaged by Siopis. These quotations also often suggest the presence of a (male) rational, stable self vis-a-vis a 'problematic' female other.

I will explore the way in which these quotations may imply a patriarchal construction of woman as naturalized 'other' and object of the male gaze. Siopis' reference to these images involves that she positions herself (iconographically, metaphorically) in relation to this male gaze. I argue that Siopis' mode of reference may involve duplicity. Duplicity in my use signifies deliberate deception, and may be associated with the notion of masquerade. I argue that Siopis' duplicity may be understood as a strategy of resistance which is geared to decenter the centred subjectivity of the patriarchal rhetoric which she quotes.

My discussion of these issues will be framed around Siopis' L'Invention de l'Hystérie (1986) (Fig.14) which was produced before the two pastel drawings mentioned above. While L'Invention does not specifically make reference to race, the notion of the mysterious interior which is suggested in the slightly ajar jewel box[26] in the lower register of the work may be seen as a metaphor which connects both colonial and psychoanalytic discourse. Before discussing L'Invention I would like to elaborate on these connections which Siopis suggests works such as Representations and Dora and the Other Woman.

[26]Siopis notes (in conversation) that the jewel box is a direct reference to Dora's sexuality as referred to in Freud's interpretations of her dreams.



Fig. 12 Siopis, P. Dora and the Other Woman (1988).
Pastel on Paper, Dimensions not known. Collection: Private.



Fig. 13 Siopis, P. Representations (1989).
Pastel on Paper, Dimensions not known. Collection: Private.



Fig. 14 Siopis, P. L'invention de L'Hystérie (1986).
Pastel on Paper, Dimensions not known. Collection: Private.

Notions of the myth of the Interior and the Dark Continent in Siopis' pastel drawings Representations and Dora and the Other Woman link two different narratives. One refers to Sigmund Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1904), which has generated a large body of contemporary critical writing[27]. I will refer to Freud's case as *Dora*, but may also use Dora's real name Ida Bauer to refer to the woman who was Freud's patient. The other narrative involves the exhibition of a Khoi-San woman, Saartjie Baartman, in Europe from about 1810. She is popularly referred to as the 'Hottentot Venus'. A significant connection between the two narratives is the metaphor of the Dark Continent which connotes 'otherness' and an essential female sexuality in patriarchal discourse. The metaphor was employed by both 19th century discourse and by Freud. Sander Gilman elaborates this connection:

> ... when Freud ... discusses the ignorance of contemporary psychology concerning adult female sexuality, he refers to this lack of knowledge as the "dark continent" of psychology... In using this phrase in English, Freud ties the image of female sexuality to the image of the colonial black and to the perceived relationship between the female's ascribed sexuality and the Other's exoticism and pathology. It is Freud's intent to explore this hidden "dark continent" and reveal the hidden truths about female sexuality, just as the anthropologist-explorers...were revealing hidden truths about the nature of the black... The line from the secrets possessed by the "Hottentot Venus" to twentieth century psychoanalysis runs reasonably straight. (1985:238)

In his article Gilman sets out to demonstrate how stereotypical conventions of (also visual) representation pervade and are legitimated through various 19th century discourses. He establishes how certain mythologies evident in a number of overlapping discourses (biology, pathology, medicine, social science) assert antithetical 'difference' (white/black sexuality) which is inscribed in a normative teleology of a natural ('lower') to a civilized ('higher') human order. It becomes also clear in his argument that these mythical constructions not only victimized black women but white women as well. Stereotypical and pseudo-scientific representations of black female sexuality were used (towards the end of the 19th century) to

[27]To mention only one collection of critical essays in which *Dora* is used to problematize the notion of 'desire' and gender in the larger context of visual representations see Appignanesi, L. (1983).

discriminate against female prostitutes and lesbians (black or white). The myth of white male superiority was perpetuated through complex technologies of control of female sexuality. Gilman locates the 'dis-ease' associated with female pathology as a "'white *man's* burden'" (his emphasis): "This need for control was a projection of inner fears; thus, its articulation in visual images was in terms which described the polar opposite of the European male" (1985:237).

Alain Corbin (1989) also stresses hysteria as a "man's burden" when he suggests that men observed "with fascination" the 'staging' of this female disease (hysteria), a staging or spectacle which they "sometimes desired, sometimes commanded". He questions if hysteria may have been the "symptom" if not the "therapy" of a suppressed (male) disease which could not be theatrically staged or 'resolved' in the same way as woman's disease was.[28]

While the treatment of hysterical symptoms may reflect a male dis-ease in its respective historical context, the negative values associated with these symptoms in patriarchy have been re-appropriated in contemporary criticism. Siopis in an unpublished paper[29] opts for such a critical re-inscription of hysteria: "As re-read, hysteria, commonly considered the disease of the 'other' is reclaimed as woman's (the other's) dis-ease, potentially both resistant and affirmative, something positive" (1989). In the context of this paper Siopis loosely associates her ideas with the writings of Hélène Cixous and others who stress the political potential of hysteria as a symbolic form of resistance to patriarchal power. As Toril Moi has pointed out,

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[28]The German quote by Corbin which I have paraphrased here is the following: "Die Frage bleibt offen, ob diese ostentative Inszenierung des weiblichen Leidens, die von den Männern zweifellos gewünscht, manchmal befohlen, immer jedoch fasziniert verfolgt wurde, nicht selber das Symptom, ja, vielleicht sogar die Therapie eines männlichen Leidens war..., eines geheimen, nicht theatralisch auslebbaren Leidens." (1989:73)

[29]This 'paper' served as an informal basis for a presentation of her work to Wits Fine Arts students, which I attended in 1989. Several details were also repeated in various interviews, or served as supplementary information for Williamson (1989) or M.A. Theses (Krams, Farber). In this paper Siopis notes some of her sources and references for Piling Wreckage Upon Wreckage, Dora and the Other Woman, and Patience on a Monument - 'A History Painting'.

"Dora's hysteria developed as a form of protest, a silent revolt against male power"[30]. Looking at *Dora* via an "exploration of the 'unanalyzed part of Freud'" Moi argues that the failure of Freud's analysis can be ascribed to its operation within a "pathological division of knowledge" which takes metaphoric and gender-determined associations of masculine, totality versus feminine, fragment, "conceptualized as parallel to the shapes of human genitals" for granted. Moi proposes a feminist strategy of resistance to counter the patriarchal construction of femininity. She suggests that the patriarchal conflation of female genitals with signs for femininity may be undermined. For her "to undermine this phallocentric epistemology means to expose its lack of 'natural' foundation" (1981:73).[31]

Before I explore in more detail how Siopis subverts the ostensibly natural foundation of patriarchal constructions of femininity, I would like to comment on how the scientific gaze fits into this framework. This is important as I argue that Siopis' questioning of the interrelated myths of the interior and Dark Continent also undermines the construction of this gaze.

Both narratives of Saartjie Baartman and Ida Bauer involve notions of the imperialist and scientific gaze directed at woman's sexualized body in a quest for knowledge which implies power and control. As Rebecca Stott has noted in her investigation of adventure fiction: "Freud had spoken of the female psychology as the Dark Continent - mysterious, other, unmapped, to be explored...the search for knowledge is both an imperialist quest...and a sexual quest" (1985:85). Siopis' reference in the background

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[30]In the same context Moi also demystifies the notion of resistance associated with hysteria by drawing attention to "Dora's tragic destiny": "It may be gratifying to see the young, proud Dora as a radiant example of feminine revolt (as does Cixous); but we should not forget the image of the old, nagging, whining, and complaining Dora she later becomes, achieving nothing." (1981:67)

[31]Siopis' concern with this supposedly "natural foundation" is clearly expressed in her paper (19..). Here Siopis states, that Dora in patriarchal discourse is diagnosed as suffering from what is "popularly known as 'woman's disease'". She explains that according to this popular definition and its etymology 'hysteria' is seen to pose a natural as well as physical relation between symptoms of hysteria and "women's reproductive organs and their function". Furthermore, Siopis points out, that "traditional medical treatments for hysteria were physically invasive and often extremely painful. Marriage and child-bearing were recommended as a 'natural' cure". In addition "women were actively discouraged in pursuing an education and an independent career by their fathers and husbands who considered such desires as in conflict with their 'natural' roles" (my emphases).

of her pastel drawing L'Invention de l'Hystérie to André Brouillet's portrait of Charcot at the Salpêtrière (1887) (Fig.15) depicts a 'hysterical' woman as object of this male gaze.[32] I will explore Siopis' reference to this objectifying gaze and to woman's 'pathology' in L'Invention de l'Hystérie, using interior/exterior as an initial model to examine how Siopis positions herself in relation to this reference. I suggest that the relation of interior/exterior in L'Invention de L'Hystérie does not signify a closure. Siopis re-stages the stagings of hysteria in 19th century discourse (cf. Corbin above). This involves that she re-constructs hysteria in complex, quasi theatrical ways from a feminist perspective to signify a de-centred subjectivity which counters the phallocentric epistemology evident in her quotations from 19th century visual images and discourses on hysteria. The implication of herself in this context furthermore suggests that Siopis emphasizes that no body, interior or exterior, exists outside discourse.



Fig. 15 André Brouillet's Portrait of Charcot at the Salpêtrière (1887).

[32]That this gaze may also be linked to representations of Saartje Baartman is suggested in Representations where Siopis quotes the same reference in the form of a photograph in the lower register of the work. The reference is held by a presumably male person and is contrasted to other pictures (mostly caricatures) representing Saartjie Baartman. A magnifying glass is placed onto one of these caricatures which is located on the floor and is partly concealed by the reference to Brouillet. The magnifying glass seems to imply the quest for knowledge which characterizes various 19th century discourses concerned with woman's pathology.

In a photograph that Siopis has made available for my discussion Siopis herself re-enacts a scene from a particular painting in which hysteria is depicted. Siopis pointed out to me that this scene is part of a painting by Robert Fleury entitled Pinel Freeing the Insane (1876) (Fig.15). Here a woman lies on the ground, her body contorted and her head flung backwards. She dramatically exposes her breast. Siopis in her drawing quotes several rhetorical details such as dramatic gestures and poses of this painting. However, her quotation of the figure lying on the ground in the middleground of Fleury's painting may suggest a different intensity of identification with her reference, because it is this pose which she 'mimics' in her photograph. In the photograph she clearly re-enacts the symptomatic and aesthetic coding of hysteria in Fleury's painting by copying the type of dress, the rhetoric of the dramatized pose, and by suggesting the same viewing position.



Fig. 15 Fleury, R. Pinel Freeing the Insane (1876), Detail.

My awareness of the existence of this photograph inflects my reading of Siopis' drawing, even though the perspectival rendering of the hysterical woman in her drawing corresponds more to Fleury's painting than to Siopis' re-enactment in the

photograph. Siopis implicates herself in her reference, placing herself into the workings of the phallocentric discourse which she critically explores. In the following discussion I also maintain that she displaces conventional assumptions about the relation of interior and exterior, objective and subjective by re-staging the 19th century spectacle of hysteria. Re-staging hysteria implies that Siopis self-consciously and temporarily assumes one of the many 'exterior' signs and symptoms of hysteria taxonomized by traditional French psychiatry in the late 19th century. This enables her to also challenge the notion of a natural relation of herself and the two women she refers to.

Carolyn Dean (1986) has noted that "the empirical notation and categorization of symptoms employed by traditional [French] psychiatry assumed an implicit connection between symptoms and causes of psychopathology..."[33] (1986:46). Diagrammatic or photographic representations of pathology in the 19th century hence suggested a natural relation between the representation of hysteria and the way it could be read. Furthermore, Hugh W. Diamond (1856) proposed in a lecture held before the Royal Society *On the Application of Photography to the Physiognomic and Mental Phenomena of Insanity* that photography was able to capture each degree of woman's pathological condition in minute detail:

> The Photographer ... needs in many cases no aid from any language of his own, but prefers rather to listen, with the picture before him, to the silent but telling language of nature - It is unnecessary for him to use the vague terms which denote a difference in the degree of mental suffering, as for instance, distress, sorrow, deep sorrow, grief, melancholy, anguish, despair; the picture speaks for itself with the most marked pression and indicates the exact point which has been reached in the scale of unhappiness between the first sensation and its utmost hight ... (in Fell 1992:82)

Representations of hysteria which fall into the categories described above are, for example, Richter's "attitudes passionelles" and Rummo's photographic tables of

[33]The reading of hysteria as a transparent relation of symptom and pathology was challenged by the early French psychoanalytic movement (from about 1926) where hysteria came to be viewed as a transposed form of repression, and as a symbolic mode of psychic resistance to a specific social and psychological context which was articulated through the body. (see Dean 1986).

woman's pathology[34] (Fig.17) which form part of the iconography of hysteria in some of Siopis' work. While representations such as these then suggest the capture of woman's nature, this nature was also profoundly ambiguous. Janet Wolff notes, that "these cases and images of women 'in excess' of the idealized feminine may operate as threat" to patriarchy (1990:129). In making reference to these images Siopis then also takes advantage of the disturbingly ambiguous undercurrent of these scientific representations.

While Siopis quotes references which in their respective historical contexts presume to be natural, the mode of representation Siopis uses in relation to these involves duplicity. Siopis' re-staging of 'otherness' engages both yet neither of the objective/subjective, exterior/interior polarities of patriarchal discourse. In mimicking a supposedly transparent sign for 'otherness' and pathology in 19th century medical discourse as *rhetorical figure*, Siopis denies or obscures a one-to-one, natural correspondence between a signifier and a signified. Rhetoric implies that the coding of bodily gestures and poses involves mediation through discourse. Hence the literal reading of symptoms which is suggested in her quotation of hysteria from medical (Charcot) and aesthetic (Fleury) discourse is replaced or added to by a figural reading of the same 'text'. The implication of herself in this reading suggests, that Siopis also may aim to uncover complex differentiations of subjectivity which are concealed by the supposedly objective mode of scientific representations in late 19th century discourse.[35]

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[34]This reference from a French book on hysteria titled Invention de L'Hystérie was made available to me by Siopis.

[35]These conclusions owe to my reading of Paul de Man's essay *Semiology and Rhetoric* (1980), where he notes that "...two entirely coherent but entirely incompatible readings can be made to hinge on one line whose grammatical structure is devoid of ambiguity but whose rhetorical mode turns the mood as well as the mode of the entire poem upside down. Neither can we say...that the poem simply has two meanings which exist side by side. The two readings have to engage each other in direct confrontation, for the one reading is precisely the error denounced by the other and has to be undone by it. Nor can we in any way make a valid decision as to which of the readings can be given priority over the other; neither can exist in the other's absence...On the other hand, the authority of the meaning engendered by the grammatical structure is fully obscured by the duplicity of a figure that cries out for the differentiation that it conceals" (1980:131/2).

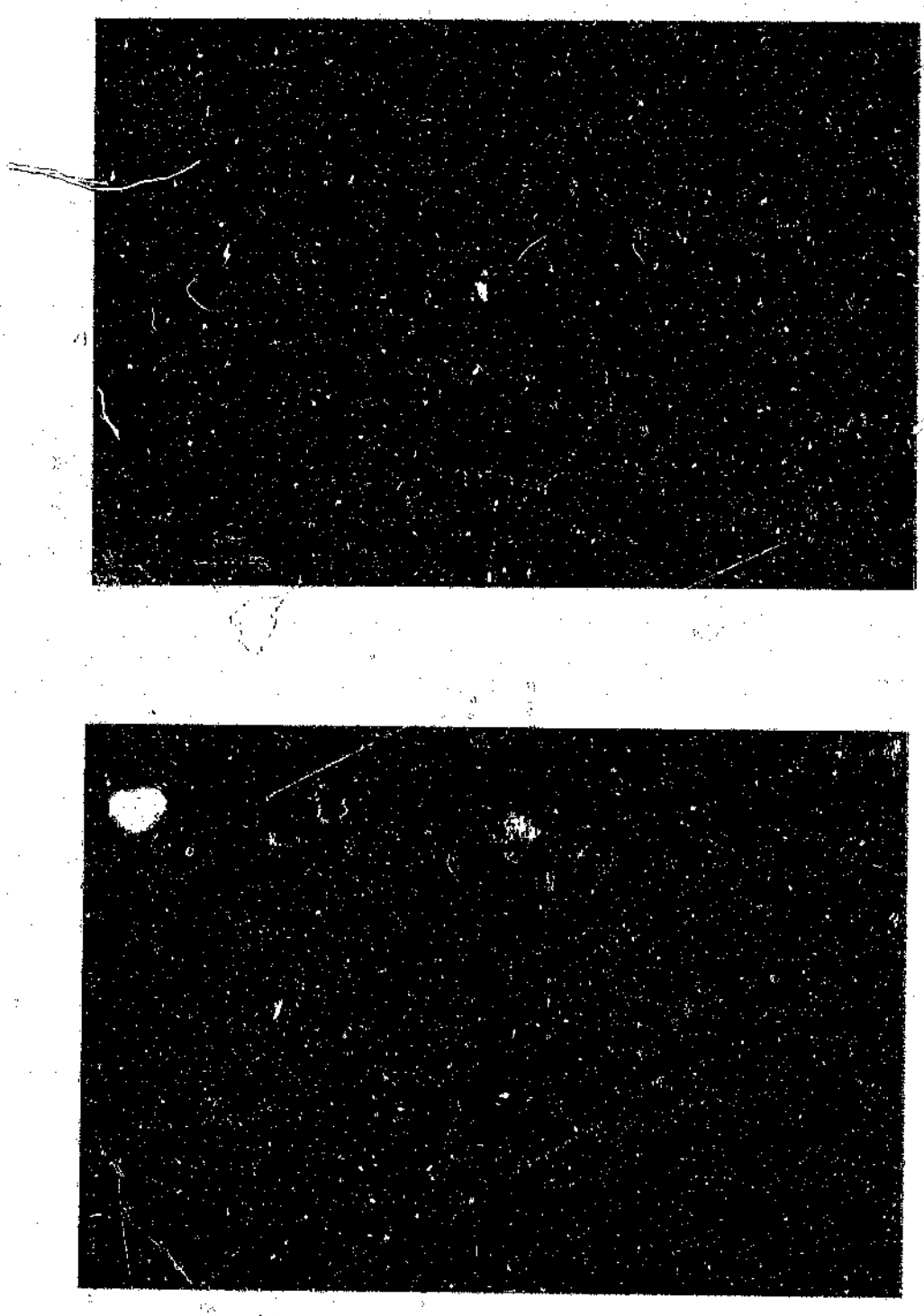


Fig. 17 Top: Richter, Table of Various Phases of a Hysterical Seizure, (1881). Bottom: Rummo, Two Tables from Iconografia Fotografica del Grande Isterismo (1890).

Siopis' re-enactment of classified symptoms must therefore not be confused with the notion of self portrait, where the artist might state an 'interior' affiliation or affinity with Ida Bauer or pathology and hysteria generally. I have argued that Siopis' role playing reflects a feminist strategy of re-inscription and resistance to certain patriarchal values. Her re-staging of 'otherness' aims to expose the presumptions on which patriarchal constructions of woman's nature and sexual difference are based. By involving the notion of duplicity Siopis also puts her own positionality into discursive circulation, broadening her critique of 19th century discourse into a questioning of identity and subjectivity. In terms of her strategy it is then important to note that Siopis implicates herself in her reference, that she herself becomes both subject and object of the re-representation. Her strategy in adopting multiple subject positions may also be associated with postmodernist parody[36].

III.

A taxonomical shift in relation to nature is also reflected in certain contemporary discourses which address the natural in terms of an ecological crisis, debasing (romantic) beliefs in nature's regenerative power by pointing out the limit of resources or the irreparable damage to the environment as a result of human intervention.

Ecological discourses have furthermore contributed to progressively dissipate the separating line between inner (human) and outer (non human) nature. Citing as an example the acid rain affecting the ecology of remote, 'untouched' nature Böhme (1992b) points out that human presence can now be felt in what were considered purely natural phenomena and landscapes. It follows for him that nature surrounding us today is "anthropogenic" nature, not "cosmos" in the Greek sense. Nature is determined by evolution: any recourse to timeless and universal laws derived from

[36]Much could be said/questioned here on the relation of parody and postmodernism, and the way Siopis employs parody. See for example Richards (1986) on Siopis' use of parody. The question of self/identity also informs Jameson's concept of 'schizophrenia' as postmodern feature (Jameson 1987).

nature must be considered futile.

Discourses around the natural today are frequently characterized by anxiety (cf. Eder 1988) and terminologies of loss and salvage. Terms which connote the 'purer' aspects of nature are often valorized over those associated with technology. My discussion of the Good Health advertisement (chapter two) refers to this. In contemporary culture technology is questioned as an 'unnatural' and destructive intervention into nature and the concept of nature as resource for (capitalist) culture which is defined as exploitable non-social environment has become problematic. It may be questioned if the term technology has been replaced by the term ecology as an alternative, more natural, view of environmental control.

Kentridge's representation of land in The Embarkation or his landscapes in a State of Siege generally strongly allude to the notion of nature as resource for capital. In these works traditional tensions between city and countryside, centre and periphery are frequently displaced into a semi-urban landscape depiction penetrated by the technologies of capital, exploitation, industrialization, the media, advertising.

I will explore this technological penetration in relation to two characters depicted in Kentridge's drawings, Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitelbaum. These characters are central to Kentridge's four animated films Johannesburg - 2nd Greatest City After Paris, Monument, Mine, and Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old, produced between 1989 and 1991.

In an exploration of capitals's relation to nature marxist feminist and scholar Maria Mies (1991) holds that in capitalist societies "male self-conception as human, that is as being productive, is closely linked to the invention of tools and the control of technology. Without tools man is no MAN" (1991:77). I argue that while Kentridge strongly associates both of his characters with technology, his protagonists represent two different views on the relation of man, technology and nature in a capitalist environment. While Soho's use of technology may be seen as instrumental and appropriative, Felix' association with technology reflects a more organic, non-

invasive relation to his environment. For both characters desires of various kinds seem to be the driving force behind their use of technology.

For my discussion I use stills from a video record of these films which Kentridge made available to me, and make reference to some drawings for projection which were essential to the production of these films[37]. Some of the drawings were exhibited in conjunction with a video record of his films at the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, in 1992. The majority of the drawings were displayed in the main gallery space without explicitly involving the films while the films and selected drawings were shown in the studio gallery. This may suggest that certain moments of his films could well be analyzed as drawings, fixing a certain filmic moment in time. The drawings nevertheless also reflect a rich record and traces of the animation processes of drawing and erasure, used by Kentridge to produce shifts in his film image. I will look at video stills and drawings interchangeably, keeping these processes in mind and referring to the narrative of the films where necessary. I will also discuss a stone lithograph titled Soho Evangelist of Science (1992) (Fig.18) which was exhibited in the same context as it reflects Soho's views and uses of technology in a pertinent way.

In Kentridge's lithograph at least one of the four images contained in the print may be understood as a self-presentation of the capitalist Soho Eckstein. The top right image which is subtitled by Kentridge "Soho Eckstein, Evangelist of Science", suggests an extension of the way in which the protagonist Soho is seen to project a public media image of himself as benefactor in the animation Monument. (Fig.19) Here Soho is formally introduced by Kentridge with the writing "Soho Eckstein, Civic Benefactor". Soho delivers a heroic speech which precedes the unveiling of the monument to the oppressed. This public event is ironically framed by the massive presence of the 'oppressed', and, judging from the number of microphones recording his speech, it involves high media presence.

[37]For a good description of the way the drawings relate to the films in terms of process see Godby (1992).



Fig. 18 Kentridge, W. Soho Evangelist of Science (1992). Stone Lithograph.



Fig. 19 Video Still from Kentridge, W. The Monument (1990).

In the lithograph Soho Evangelist Soho's use of technology seems conveyed more modestly [illegible] sequential images which seem to present both private and public aspects of the man. The modesty of the small scale litho and less public connotations of the individual images are, however, betrayed by the more heroic connotations conveyed in their subscripts. For example, "Soho's Glass Heart" represents a technological mastery of human biological nature. "Soho Eckstein, Evangelist of Science" reflects the missionary ambitions in a portrait of the Man himself and "Soho's Sun Therapy" refers to a more private Soho. The reference to a box containing some electrical devices in the bottom right image bears no subscript, hence remains rather mysterious or enigmatic.

In Soho Evangelist the personified image of capital (Soho) comes across as fully in control of technology as well as nature. Both are put to the service of Man to enable him to transcend Man's bodily limitations. For example, in the first image technology may be seen to reproduce, imitate and substitute vital biological functions of the body. Here Soho's organic heart is a potential substitute, and, given Soho's self-righteous pose in the following image, a proudly displayed, rather than implanted glass heart. The implication of the technological mastery of biology in turn contributes to legitimize a sense of transcendence and power in Soho's self confident pose in the top right image. This mastery also bolsters Soho's missionary ambitions which Kentridge may imply in the titling of the top right image. Is his "Evangelist of Science" bearer of light in this Dark Continent (Africa) with his miner's lamp attached to his forehead? In the bottom left image technology is implied through Soho's protective clothing when confronting the sun for a therapeutic effect. Technology is instrumental in the way Soho may derive a profit from nature (sun) while guarding against its more destructive powers (UV rays). Furthermore, protective clothing mediates and intervenes in the use of natural (signified today by the term 'alternative') energy resources. Soho's technological armour when confronting the sun may also be read as a sub-text which indicates his alienation from the myth of an unmediated access to nature.

The fourth image of the enigmatic box is not supplied with an explanatory subscript

or a proper name. The resulting (relative) discursive muteness renders the representation of the box rather unheroic if not disquietingly banal if compared to the more calculated presentation of Soho as pretentious evangelist. This may indicate the ambiguities inherent in the notion of the evangelizing of science which can be associated with the quest for power and control in imperialist discourse. The fourth image then may be seen to disrupt the authoritative structure of the previous relationships of text and image, signifier and signified, and the immediate clarity and effectivity associated with technological discourse. At the same time, the dissonant quality of the fourth image inflects the reading of the other images and reinforces their ironic content.

I argued that in the lithograph Soho Evangelist technology for the evangelizing capitalist Soho signifies an incentive to mastery and a propagandistic tool ostensibly employed in the service of mankind. The debased quality of this service is most clearly evident in Mine, where Soho is depicted as being in full command of mining technologies which control human, mineral, natural and cultural resources, all of which emerge from his mine. For what Soho excavates from his mine are not only ore deposits, but also African art and artefacts (Fig.20) and a live, miniature rhino. His capitalist definitions of exploitable nature seem to encompass nature in its widest sense. Such a definition is succinctly provided in the following passage by feminist scholar Claudia von Werlhof who notes that nature in the discourse of capital

> is not determined by biology but by economics... From the standpoint of the rulers ... 'nature' is everything that they do not have to, or are not willing to pay for... This covers everything that can be appropriated through robbery (as opposed to exchange), and beyond that everything they can neither renew or preserve. This 'everything' does indeed amount to almost *everything* - the entire globe, along with its products, commodities and peoples. (in Mies 1991:97)



Fig. 20 Kentridge, W. Soho's Desk with Ife Head (1991), Charcoal on Paper, 120 x 150 cm.

In Johannesburg and Sobriety Kentridge's protagonist Felix Teitelbaum is partly constructed as *Gegenentwurf*, that is, he seems to represent a position which stands in stark opposition to the way technology is used by Soho. Yet Felix[38] does not represent Soho's alter image, that is, anti-technology. For the realization of his complex desires technology becomes congenial rather than instrumental. Felix represents a shift from an exploitative to a less invasive use of technology as a way of engaging with his environment. His actions never seem prompted by material concerns as he seems mainly preoccupied with acting out and gaining pleasure. Felix is often depicted in the landscape or in a home environment and he is invariably nude in these scenes. By contrast, Soho is always depicted in his suit, be it in his public appearances or in his bed. This may suggest that Felix is generally presented from a more intimate perspective. Throughout the films one is, for example, never sure what he does for a living.

Felix's sociable use of technology is evident in a drawing, and a video still depicting Felix 'listening to the world' (Kentridge) (Figs.21 and 22). Here Felix, in the nude

[38]It may be of ironical interest that the name Felix in its Latin derivation means 'the happy one'.

and self absorbed, has hooked himself up to various forms of communication technology with ear plugs. Technology in this context almost merges with the natural body of its user, it serves as an extended ear and in this way seems almost second nature. Felix's communication technologies such as the loudspeakers which may be associated with the gramophone have a certain anachronistic quality. His equipment may at times even suggest animal-like or natural shapes, or acquire a life of its own which contradicts the functional context in which the equipment is traditionally used. For example, Godby (1992) notes that the loudspeakers sometimes resemble bullhorns or are used as fountains. Similarly for Soho, the technological equipment associated with him also does not always resemble the latest high tech model. This could be seen as an anachronism which marks an element of irony within the authoritative representation of the capitalist. However, while the masculine relation to power is generally affirmed in Soho's use of technology, Felix's nakedness and non-invasive use of technology displaces power as associated with Soho by signifying a split of the notion of masculinity.

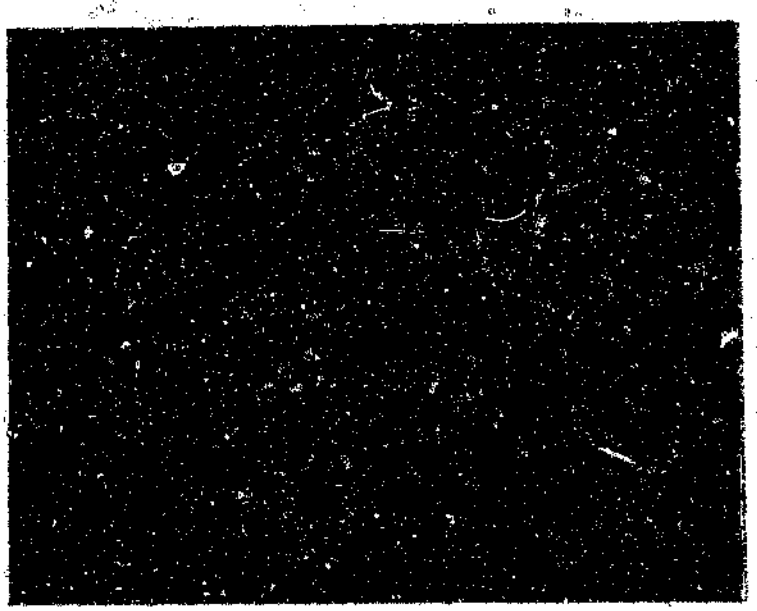


Fig.21 Kentridge, W. Felix Listens to the World (1991). Charcoal on Paper, 120 x 150.

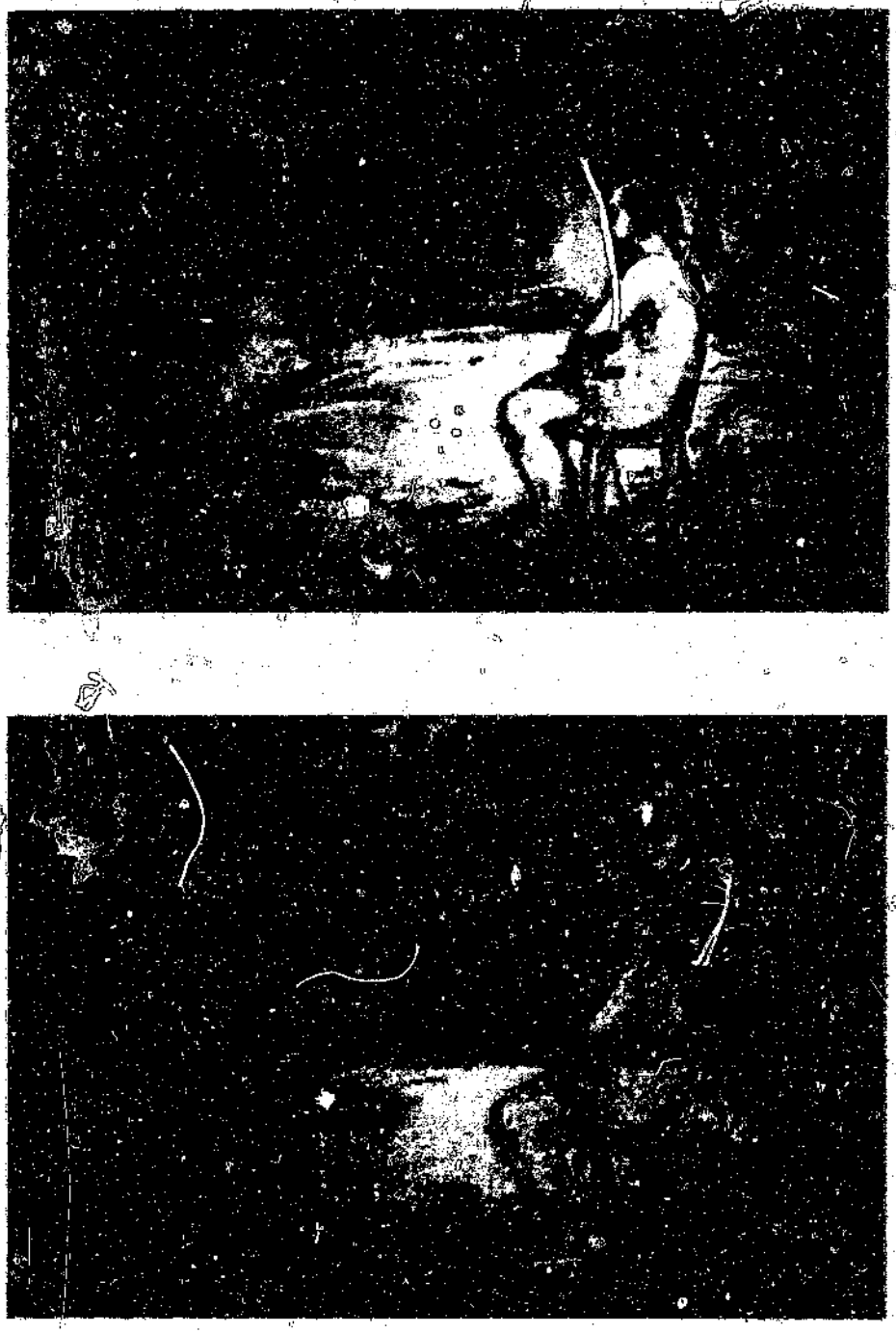


Fig. 22 Two Video Stills from Kentridge, W. Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old (1991).

Furthermore, the way the world is pictured in relation to Soho, stands in stark contrast to that of Felix. Soho's world is associated with commodities, people, territory, nature and other targets to be conquered. By contrast, for Felix it is suggested through an almost global perspective characterized by an exaggerated curved horizon line, a sense of expanse which is troubled only by a few obstacles, an absence of borders, and an implicit continuation of unconfined space beyond the horizon, from where signals of some different life may be received. While in Johannesburg Felix is introduced by Kentridge with the inscription 'Captive of the City', the signals which Felix receives in the context of the more global perspective in this drawing provide a vague sense of 'other' life which is desired and yet absent in the capitalist environment.

In other narrative contexts of the films technology in the form of the telephone also becomes factor and facilitator in the realization of Felix' sexual fantasies (Fig.24). In the form of shared ear phone plugs technology at some stage of the narrative reinforces the union of himself and Soho Eckstein's wife Mrs Eckstein (Fig.25). For Soho on the other hand the telephone signifies business, stress, desire to control and culture devoid of pleasure (Fig.26). Lastly Soho activates the eventual self-destruction of the headquarters of his empire when he places the telephone receiver on it's hook which has turned trigger resulting in a spectacular and quasi sublime flooding and explosion of his building.

I have argued that in instances where Kentridge employs the familiar association of (white) man with technology, the idea of masculinity in the capitalist environment is differentiated rather than stereotyped. The attitude towards technology is complex, and technology seems intricately linked to the realization of various desires. The use of technology represented by the two protagonists is twofold. Technology is an instrument in relation to Soho for actualizing the restless capitalist desire to control, possess, exploit, and collect nature in its broadest sense. Technology in association with the protagonist Felix is suggested as a less invasive realization of complex desires which may, at times, be gendered, and is often associated with absence in a capitalist environment. Both representations of technology are generally not in open

conflict or competition as each protagonist is concerned with his own objectives which do not always overlap. However, conflicts do arise when woman, the object of male desire - in the form of Mrs Eckstein - appears. While I will not discuss this here, I would like to note, that Kentridge uses metaphors such as a fish and water as a visual equivalent of the way Mrs Eckstein changes hands between lover and husband - almost like a commodity.







Fig. 24 Three Video Stills from Kentridge, W. Johannesburg - 2nd Greatest City after Paris (1989).



Fig. 25 Video Still from Kentridge, W. Sobriety, Obesity and Growing Old (1991).



Fig. 26 Video Still from Kentridge, W. Mine (1991).

IV.

In the previous section I have used a traditional definition of technology where, according to the Oxford dictionary, technology denotes the "study, mastery and utilization of manufacturing methods and industrial arts". Furthermore, technology is concerned with a "systematic application of knowledge to practical tasks in industry". A productive use of technology may be seen to rely on three factors: a subject in possession of knowledge, a mastering mode in which this knowledge is applied, and an object or area of application targeted by the subject. This utilitarian definition of technology is closely associated with the notion of productivity and the idea of progress, both of which are not value-free. Within the discourse of technology it is understood that it is only the autonomous subject which can apply knowledge effectively. This autonomous body may be associated with the Enlightenment concept of the male, rational, stable self.

This section is concerned with the way technology and the notion of the self as produced in Enlightenment discourse have been questioned in certain feminist,

poststructuralist, and postmodernist writing. Technology here is reviewed as cultural manifestation which pervades contemporary bodies rather than being understood solely within the term's traditional utilitarian parameters. Jardine (1987) describes some of the cultural manifestations and modes associated with this pervasive technology such as ways of simulating and actually becoming machines, de-naturalized high-tech presentation of food, modes of self-surveillance, body cults and sexual practices. The body, for Jardine, emerges reinscribed with extensive and historically complex political technologies, a view that is indebted to the theories of Michel Foucault. In Jardine's words

> Foucault has left us with a powerful description of how bio-technico power emerged in the 17th century as a coherent political technology. The concern with the human species became a concern with the body to be manipulated, with new techniques of discipline (prisons, schools, hospitals). He has shown us how in the 19th century the classical concern with the species and the body united with a concern for sex, producing new disciplinary technologies and techniques of power, surveillance and punishment. (Jardine 1987:152)

Furthermore, feminists in particular have raised questions about the relationship of gender and technology, which, given the traditional association of technology with man, has often been omitted from discussions of technology and the body (Jardine 1987). While women, historically and currently, are both objectified and pervaded by various technologies, certain feminist strategies of resistance have developed in this context which involve this problematic in a more affirmative way. Donna Haraway, for example, in her A Manifesto for Cyborgs (1990) proposes "cyborg politics" as a feminist mode of "connected thinking and acting" in contemporary culture. She defines cyborg as a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction... a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as woman's experience in the late twentieth century" (1990:191). In her view contemporary culture is characterized by a profound uncertainty with respect to the received stability of interior/exterior, natural/artificial binaries:

> Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms a | machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert. (1990:194)

Haraway argues "for the cyborg as a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings" (1990:191). Haraway in this way suggests a critical re-appropriation of the concept of technology for feminist practice.

The re-assessment of the relation between the human body and technology also has certain implications for aesthetic practice. While modernism generally valued the sovereignty of art and the artist (male self) as a potential site and agency for avantgarde modes of aesthetic transgression[39], the questioning of the autonomous self for postmodernist critics like Foster goes hand in hand with the loss of a natural relation to the tools, modes and objectives of modernist aesthetic production. Foster (1989) suggests that in contemporary culture resistance cannot be defined in modernist terms which reinforced patriarchal values by presupposing an autonomous subject. However, it seems that even the notion of postmodernist resistance to (patriarchal) power itself is put into question by technology when Foster asks: "can the body still 'resist' [power] when it is penetrated by so many technologies and disciplined by so many different techniques as it is today?" (1987b:166/7).

Michel Feher addresses the relation body, power, and resistance within Foucault's genealogical framework and combined with what he calls an "ethical typology of the body":

> So the body is at once the object of power - or the actualizer of power - and that which resists power. But again it resists power not in the name of transhistorical needs but because of the new desires and constraints that each new regime develops. The situation therefore is one of permanent battle, with the body as the shifting field where new

[39]On the relation of modernist 'transgression' and postmodernist 'resistance' which involve different conceptions of subjectivity/self, see Foster's *For a Concept of the Political* in Foster (1989).

> mechanisms of power constantly meet new techniques of resistance and escape. So the body is not a site of resistance to power which exists outside it; within the body there is a constant tension between mechanisms of power and techniques of resistance. (in Foster 1987b:161)

I will explore Siopis' Terra Incognita (1991) (Fig.27) with reference to Feher's notion of the body as a site of battle. This seems appropriate for Siopis (1992) has referred to the main figure of her painting in similar terms. I suggest that Terra Incognita involves references to both mechanisms of power and techniques of resistance which are framed around notions of the naturalized and colonized, black, female, body. Nature in my reading of Siopis' painting is evident on a number of levels. The Latin title alludes to both the western gendered myth of 'mother nature' (lat: *terra*) as well as to colonial myths of the un-known (lat: *incognita*) and mysterious Dark Continent and the Interior. I have argued in section II of this chapter how these conceptions for Siopis may signify woman as 'other' and as object of the imperialist and scientific gaze entailing technologies of subjection and domination. Here I suggest that Siopis in Terra Incognita appears to propose parody as a strategic mode of resistance to these technologies through, for example, her questioning of the notion of originality.

Siopis has noted in conversation (1994) that the title of her work Terra Incognita refers to the notion of "uncharted nature". If one looks closely at the image of both the representation of land and figure in her painting, the ironic quality of this reference becomes immediately obvious. The representation of both land and figure is not uncharted, but it is literally inscribed with references to (aesthetic and historical) discourse. For example, the centrally placed body of the black woman in Terra Incognita is constructed almost entirely from photocopied representations of battle scenes from South African colonial history suggesting tattoo-like inscriptions. Particularly prominent amongst the representations of history is, as Siopis pointed out to me, the repeated and fragmented image of Thomas Baines' painting of the Battle at Blaukrantz. It reflects clear binaries of 'colonizer' and 'colonized'.

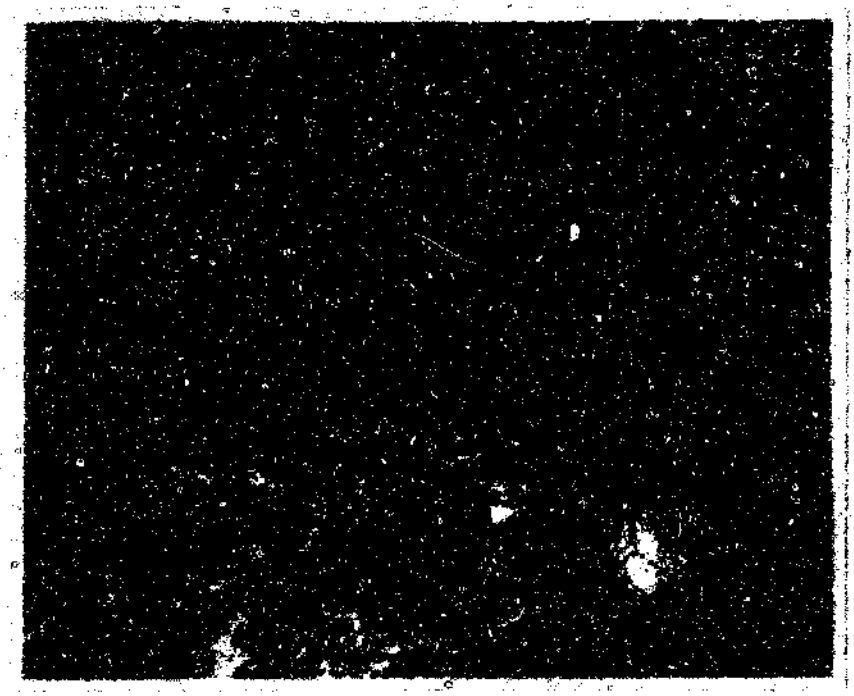


Fig. 27 Siopis, P. Terra Incognita (1991). Oil and Collage on Board, 175 x 165 cm.

Siopis mediates her reference to Baines' painting in various ways. For example, fragments of photocopies are collaged or graded in a way that partly affirms and denies contours, volume and illusionism of the body of the female figure. Siopis: "sometimes it follows the form, sometimes it doesn't" (1992). Sometimes photostats were mounted on cardboard and then stuck down producing a relief effect which suggests rupture and tactility of surface. Moreover, the (metaphorical) contest between a suggested illusionism and various aesthetic modes which disrupt this illusionism - such as flatness and relief, a tension between silhouette and modelled form - is contrasted by Siopis to the more illusionistically coherent representation of the land.

The land, in its reference to discourses around mining, involves the notion of nature as non-social environment and as resource for capital. Siopis however en-genders the representation of the land via the painting's title which also associates terra with ideas of mother nature. Furthermore, the violence inherent in capitalist exploration is associated with gender when Siopis in an interview suggests that the land

representation could be referred to as "raped land, land which has been used in some way or another, colonized, abused" (1992).

While Siopis' reference to mining *inter alia* suggests capitalist mechanisms of power reflected in processes of exploiting natural resources the female figure of Siopis' painting is not construed as uncharted territory, a vacancy to be claimed by (patriarchal) power. Rather, Siopis seems to suggest, partly through the differential handling of land and figure, that power in relation to the figure has to be *actualized, brought about* by various strategies. For example, Siopis notes on the representation of the black woman: "She's a site of battle, a site of contesting something. So if you want to see that she is contesting representation, or that she is a site of contests of representation then you can see the body as being that" (1992) and, "... she is not real. She is a kind of fiction. She is not really a person in that sense ... She is a sign which is the site of all this contestation" (ibid.). Her statements suggest that woman as sign involves the dialectic of woman as battlefield (site) and woman as agency implicated in the "contests of representation". This kind of dialectic renders the notion of the autonomous body ambiguous, for the female figure may be understood as a sign denoting both object of power and actualizer of power.

Siopis does not exclude her own presence as actualizer. Her share in the contest may be partly located in her use of paint. Photostats are not simply used as mechanical replicas which may debase notions of originality associated with references such as the Baines painting. Autographic markmaking pervades most of the painting and most often the paint marks correspond directly, or in some way, to the undercurrent of photostatted images. The autographic here may be understood as an ironic play on modernist figure/ground relationships which were aimed at 'teasing' nature out of a cultural object (see Rosenberg, chapter one). Siopis' ironic mode of reference to this modernist aesthetic, however, precludes modernist presence by asserting a constant tension between the overlapping and conflicting processes her references are subjected to. Affirmation and denial of presence is suggested in the kind of painterly processes her photostats are subjected to, such as integration, beautification, personalizing, editing, censoring, tracing, copying, glazing, concealing, setting into relief,

connecting, rupturing, assaulting.

In Terra Incognita the spaces of the historical, the personal, the feminist intervention, are mutually imbricated in this process and involve a multiplicity of discursive voices and forces. The site for this battlefield is the gendered body.

Siopis (1992) has pointed out that in terms of iconography her protagonist derives a sense of power from partly ironic reference to intended historical 'precedents' like Goya's Colossos or Blake's Nebukadnezar. These references to me suggest an autonomous, powerful, male body, an autonomy, which, as I have argued, is rendered ambiguous in Siopis' Terra Incognita. I have noted that the position of Siopis' protagonist is not vacant or uncharted, but inscribed and pervaded with history and technologies of control. Siopis' references to Blake or Goya then enhances the sense of the protagonist's implicit resistance to and claiming of power. However, a sense of parody suggests the option of leaving behind the mythological 'influence' (the reference implicating Blake and Goya) which conceptually 'frames' Terra Incognita. Siopis' textual self-reflexivity, that is, her consciousness of history and representation as being overdetermined, and her critique of notions of originality, creates an awareness of some of the trappings attached to her references. Self-reflexivity might then open a space for re-appropriation.

V.

Nature and history are linked in complex ways, and a crucial factor qualifying the relation of nature and history in western thought seems to be the concept of time. For example, in section one of this chapter, I suggested, that the traditional pastoral conception of time may involve presence as a conception of time which momentarily suspends the progression of historical time. This presence may reflect a desire to salvage a more pure, but lost (past) state of (human) nature for the present. I observed, that Kentridge's The Embarkation problematizes the return to a purer state of nature. Pastoral presence in this work mainly seems to be present as *ersatz*.

According to Clifford, a linear conception of time and history characterizes western relations to the past. He suggests that "our dominant temporal sense is historical, assumed to be linear and nonrepeatable. There is no return, no going back..." (1987:121). This linear conception of time is intricately linked to Clifford's notion of the 'salvage paradigm'. The salvage paradigm reflects a concern with recuperating the past for the present and with re-instating originality and authenticity in what Clifford calls "endless imaginary redemptions". He holds that historically nature and culture in the west are thought of either in terms of progress or of fall:

> In the west nature is usually seen as the starting point - the raw material - of history. To nature comes tragedy, or happily to nature comes culture; to nature comes corruption, or happily to nature comes development...In this linear history nature functions as origin, as site of the fall, as raw material, and in this system we are all still very much within the 'salvage paradigm'. (in Foster 1987b:142)

Siopis (1989) has associated "the feeling [she] wished to present" in her painting Patience on a Monument: 'A History Painting'(1988) (Fig.28) with a piece of writing by Walter Benjamin from his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*[40]. In the passage she quotes Benjamin displaces and inverts the notion of progress as associated with modernity and a linear conception of history implying a starting point, a site of fall, and the notion of corruption. I have noted, that Clifford's critique of the notion of progress is framed in similar terms. Therefore, I will use two different conceptions of history which are suggested in Clifford's writing to explore Patience. The one, namely western History, which I will mark, for the purpose of my argument with a capital H in this section, refers to the modern notion of History characterized by a salvage mode. The other, *histories*, implies a critique of History and a re-definition

[40]The passage from Benjamin which Siopis has quoted replacing the 'he' of Benjamin's (or Klee's) angel with a 'she' reads: "A Klee Painting, named Angelus Novus shows an angel looking as though she is about to move away from something she is fixedly contemplating. Her eyes are staring, her mouth is open, her wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. Her face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, she sees a single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of her feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But the storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in her wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels her into the future to which her back is turned, while the pile of debris before her grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." (in Siopis 1989:5)

of the concept for a critical postmodern practice which is positioned 'outside' the salvage paradigm. *Histories* involve historically specific and (or) personal narratives. For example, these may involve narratives of 'others' who have been naturalized historically. In these different narratives resistance and independence from western cultural and political hegemony could be asserted[41]. I will use history (lower case) when choosing to leave the implications of the term more open.



Fig. 28 Siopis, P. Patience on a Monument: 'A History Painting' (1988).
Oil and Collage on Board, 198 x 176 cm, Collection: William Humphreys Museum.

[41]A similar point is made by Foster (1985) who says: "For feminists, for 'minorities', for 'tribal' peoples, there are other ways to narrate this history of enlightenment/eradication, ways which ... also reject the reductive reading that the other can be so 'colonized' (as if it were a zone simply to occupy, as if it did not emerge imbricated in other spaces, to trouble other discourses) - or even that western sciences of the other, psychoanalysis and ethnology, can be fixed so dogmatically. On this reading the other remains - indeed, as the very field of differentiation in which the subject emerges - to challenge western pretenses of sovereignty, supremacy and self-creation" (1989:208).

My discussion of history and time in Siopis' Patience will be mainly concerned with the iconography and ideas of display in two focal areas of the painting: the singular female figure peeling a lemon, and the pyramid shaped pile of objects on which she sits. I suggest that Siopis in these areas uses different ways or emphases of referencing. For example, in the pile her differentiation of the idea of time emphasizes the hybrid rather than linear quality of western conceptions of time. In the figure various and oppositional western iconographic conventions of, for example, domestic and public, resistance and resignation, are interlaced. I argue that this suggests western *histories* which invert notions of History and progress as fundamentally linked to power and patriarchy. Siopis' critique of History is framed around references to western perceptions of 'otherness'. While the 'other' is perpetually invoked in this mediated form, these 'others' and their *histories* are marked by a pronounced absence in Patience.

In *The Predicament of Culture* (1988) Clifford argues how the salvage paradigm may be associated with modernist concerns for originality and authenticity, and how these concerns motivate a number of taxonomical shifts involving both art and ethnographic artefacts. Exploring the fusion or combination of the traditionally separate categories of art and artefact in modern museums and exhibition displays, Clifford exposes the "redemptive" nature of the "metahistorical narrative" characterizing the modern. He indicates some of the pervasiveness of salvage modes in contemporary culture when he argues elsewhere that the salvage paradigm

> reflecting a desire to rescue 'authenticity' out of destructive historical change...is found not only in ethnographic writing but also in the connoisseurships and collections of the art world and in a range of familiar nostalgias. In short, the term names a geopolitical, historical paradigm that has organized western practices of 'art- and culture-collecting'. Seen in this light it denotes a pervasive ideological complex. (1987:121)

Clifford (1988) notes that the modern desire to salvage can be associated with a particular aesthetic of museum display which tends to isolate the exhibit. This process may be reinforced by the use of spot-lights pointed at it. He argues how certain combined displays of modern art and African artefacts tend to naturalize and

homogenize rather than contextualize and differentiate various forms of cultural production.

Siopis' pile of objects in Patience may be looked at as a form of aesthetic display[42] of references and objects which Siopis has collected, and then arranged in her painting in a certain way to convey in a particular pictorial context something about History or *histories*. I will focus on Siopis' display of objects and the way individual objects, or the display as a whole, may involve the notion of time. Subsequently I will explore the idea of history in relation to references used in the landscape backdrop, and figure.

Siopis' diversity of objects jumbled together in the pile suggests different conceptions of time. For example, in the reference to vegetables or the model of a pregnant womb time is alluded to as natural processes of decay or becoming. The end of (worldly) time is connoted in art historical associations of the skull as *memento mori*, or *vanitas*; the 'end of art' may be suggested in the stretched canvas turned backwards. Time fixed as a specific (art) historical moment is referred to in the citations of 'original' sculptures such as The Witness by Anton van Wouw. Notions of originality are also questioned in replicas of art (objets d'art which copy an 'original'). These may be seen to salvage western art history in a debased and mass produced form for the present. The iconography of the handbag refers back to Siopis' earlier paintings and in this way may involve the notion of time as personal and professional unfolding. The pile of objects as a whole is unified by a form of painting that is reminiscent of earlier paintings, such as Siopis' still life rendering in Melancholia (1986). Time in this context refers backwards to a previous conception and aesthetic of painting. Siopis' use of well defined, dramatic, shadows pointing into various directions suggests that each object in the pile is individually spot-lit by invisible light

[42]My focus on the iconographic of display in Siopis' Patience should not preclude other levels of meaning and analysis. For example, a consideration of exhibition contexts would be important in a thorough investigation of display. Patience may be viewed differently in the William Humphreys Museum, Kimberley, where it is permanently housed, or in a temporary exhibition at the Standard Bank Gallery entitled *Pictures as History*, where the work was exhibited in 1991. For a crit of this exhibition see Friedman (1991).

sources which do not seem to affect other areas of the painting in the same way. This results in a heightened presence of individual objects in the pile which is also subverted as the bric-a-brac arrangement of objects seldom allows an unobscured view.

Siopis' accumulation of "civilized rubbish and natural waste" (Siopis 1989:4) suggests that all of these objects are discarded things from the present becoming past. Moreover, the ideas of cultural waste or bric-a-brac suggest loss of the connecting master narrative that may have ordered these individual items into a more linear conception of time. While Siopis does not seem to discard all the conceptions of time she refers to as waste or rubbish, she also does not seem to salvage these objects to construct a homogenizing presence.

The conjunction of references in the backdrop is clearly different from the bric-a-brac of references in the pile. The way collages are put together in the backdrop suggests a "cliche" (Siopis) of a perspectivally receding landscape. In terms of iconography the details of the landscape mainly refer to aspects of colonialism - including reference to Saartjie Baartman. Photostatted colonial representations are fragmented and repeated across the representation of the land, a process which may be seen to debase the sense of singularity attributed to the events which are traditionally recorded by the genre of history painting[43]. While the backdrop in terms of iconography seems to refer exclusively to colonial (historical) time, presence is also asserted through the 'direct' quality which may be associated with painterly marks in relation to these representations, and the fact that History has been quoted from then

[43]This is one of the ways in which Siopis may assert the ironical quality of her 'history painting'. Furthermore, as she notes "[p]art of the title 'a history painting' is ... an ironical comment [on] the traditional Western genre of History Painting. That genre's depictions, generally authorized by the State, take on heroic form and are said to be 'objective' accounts of what really happened, who really featured and so on." (1989:5)

current history textbooks.[44]

The figure, in contrast to the pile she is sitting on, is not spot-lit in the same way as objects within the pile are. While part of her body (particularly the face) registers reflections from the peculiar light characteristic of the pile below, the figure as a whole appears as a dark silhouette against the predominantly bright yellow colonial fabric of the landscape. The pyramid shape of the pile which supports the female black protagonist also suggests time (the progress being measured towards the apex of the pyramid). The figure, being placed at this apex, hence may be conceived as a sign for this progress.

However, I feel that, as a sign for the present-becoming-future, the protagonist seems somewhat ambiguous. Despite the figure's more formal coherence Siopis here also combines various sources. As allegorical reference to Historia (the female impersonation of history), the protagonist in Siopis' painting is many, not one. This is suggested by Siopis herself, when she notes that

> while her general bearing (frontal pose, the revealed breast, the pseudo-classical drapery) may be quasi-mythical and heroic (associated with such imagery as ... Liberty Leading the people, the metaphor of 'the mother country'...) her activity in fact inverts the heroic convention. It is modest, contemplative and clearly domestic. (1989:4)

Inversions of the heroic and the domestic in Patience may be seen to question a perceived hierarchy inscribed in History Painting, a hierarchy that also involves other binaries such as male/female, black/white, victor/victim, active/passive, absence/presence. Rankin (1992) suggests that conventional hierarchies are reversed in Patience, and that while conventions of History may foreground "iconic historical events, customarily associated with an individual heroic protagonist - discoveries,

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[44]Siopis says that the representation of the landscape "is literally constructed from historical representations taken (photocopied) from current history textbooks...they include adventurers, missionaries, boers, black warriors, tribal settlements, slaves, workers, British settlers, redcoats, wild-life, rugged countryside, battle scenes... " (1989:5)

battles, and victories, the signing of treaties" (Rankin 1992:unpaged), such works as Siopis' Patience

> are dominated instead by monumental figures representing those whose role in history was perceived as inconsequential - black women who were the victims of the documented heroes, sold into slavery by the adventurers, killed or raped by the soldiers, exploited by the colonial authorities. The significant becomes insignificant, and the unimportant important. Siopis' *reversal* of traditional roles questions the conventional criteria, conceptual and visual, on which our knowledge of society is founded. (ibid) (my emphasis)

Looking at some of the other references which merge in the representation of the protagonist, the notion of reversal of male dominated History with female dominated History, of victims into heroines, becomes more uncertain. The figure itself - as a synchronic association of both heroic liberatory discourse and (black?) domestic labour - is rather ambivalent, given Siopis' general questioning of the heroic as associated with History in Patience.

Other references which coalesce in the protagonist are, for example, a representation of Nubia (Africa) (Fig.29) which, Siopis notes "is part of an allegorical set of sculptures depicting the large continents (social and topographical) of the colonial world. These sculptures are to be found outside the new Musée d'Orsay in Paris" (1989:4).

Furthermore, Patience also refers to an illustration in Harper's Weekly (1868) entitled Patience on a Monument (Fig.31). The illustration depicts "a black veteran mournfully seated atop a truncated obelisk inscribed with a catalogue of atrocities committed against slaves and freemen and quotations from recent anti-black pronouncements" (Honour 1989:244)[45]. The veteran's bodily coding is iconographically similar to that of Dürer's Melencolia I [sic] (1514) (Fig. 30). The

[45]Honour also notes that "partly a satire to the monuments to the heroes and martyrs of the Civil War...the print also helps to explain the form taken by those that were realized - with deference to the white man's views and no reference to the blacks' active contribution to the victory of the Union." (1989:246)

Harper's Weekly illustration seems to use melancholia as a sign which possibly expresses for the 'other' a sentiment of frustration or resignation. The melancholic coding associated with a black man furthermore counteracts the authority inscribed in traditional 'heroic' monuments to history, allowing attention to be drawn to the 'other' histories implicit in the racist inscriptions on the monument. These inscriptions do not 'speak for' the other and their suffering, but, significantly, they reveal atrocities through quotes from racist texts.



Fig. 29 Photograph of Nubia taken by Siopis.

In Siopis' Patience which reflects the source from Harper's Weekly in part of the title, the melancholic coding of the black man is substituted by a woman "peeling a bitter lemon with a knife" (Siopis). The activity of peeling is reminiscent of Lukas Cranach's Melancholia paintings[46]. Siopis' exchange of signifiers (replacing

[46]Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl (1992) analyze the complex iconography of the figure of melancholia using a knife in order to strip a stick of it's bark in several paintings by Lucas Cranach. They suggest in the following German quote that the motif of whittling or peeling may be interpreted as the manufacturing of a magic staff which, according to ancient belief has to be peeled so that no spirits could nestle

'resignation' with activity) in this instant is important, for even if the reference is not specifically to Cranach, the activity of peeling a lemon returns physical agency to the domestic sphere which, as Rankin notes, is traditionally considered more "inconsequential" to the authors of History. However, while resistance in this way may be aligned with domesticity, the domestic is also suggested as a bitter sphere by being associated with a bitter fruit.

The fusion of authority and History associated with public monuments may produce what Clifford (1987) calls a mode of "yielding to History". Clifford notes that History and its associated modes are questioned today. He suggests that history may be re-inscribed in a critical way:

> New definitions of authenticity (cultural, personal, artistic) are making themselves felt, definitions no longer centred on a salvaged past. Rather, authenticity is reconceived as hybrid, creative activity in a local present-becoming-future. Non-western cultural and artistic works are implicated by an interconnected world cultural system without necessarily being swamped by it. Local structures produce *histories* rather than simply yielding to *History*. (1987:126)

Siopis' Patience is largely and seriously concerned with taking an oppositional stance with respect to History. The hybrid nature of her references suggest complex differentiations of time and 'otherness' in western visual representations. Siopis does not exclude her own *histories* which, as I have suggested, she alludes to via quotation of her earlier forms of painting or iconography. Siopis' opposition of the complexity of western notions of time with History suggests that she questions linear temporal conceptions which allow to perceive History as a totality that could be yielded to. At the same time, the presence of 'otherness' in Patience is continuously invoked in the numerous fragmented quotations from colonial History, or when Rankin suggests that the 'other' (black, female) has been accorded a privileged status in the painting.

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themselves between wood and bark. ("Das Motiv des Steckenschnitzens oder -schälens ...dürfte...als Anfertigung eines Zaubersteckens zu deuten sein, der nach altem Glauben geschält werden muß, damit sich »zwischen Holz und Rinde keine Geister einnisten«" (1992:535). The activity of melancholia here is also associated with seductiveness. They furthermore note that Melancholia as sexualized female is most evident in Cranach's Colmar version of 1532 (1992:565).

However, the *histories* of this black, female, 'other', are marked by absence in Patience. She, like the representation of the land, is only 'present' through already mediated references which historically have visualized 'otherness' in western discourse. In the context of what I set out to question using Clifford's differentiation of History and *histories* this for me rigorously enhances the sense of what is absent in Patience: the *histories* of the other. Whose patience then is invoked? Is it patience that is required?



Fig. 30 Dürer, A. Melencolia [sic] (1514)

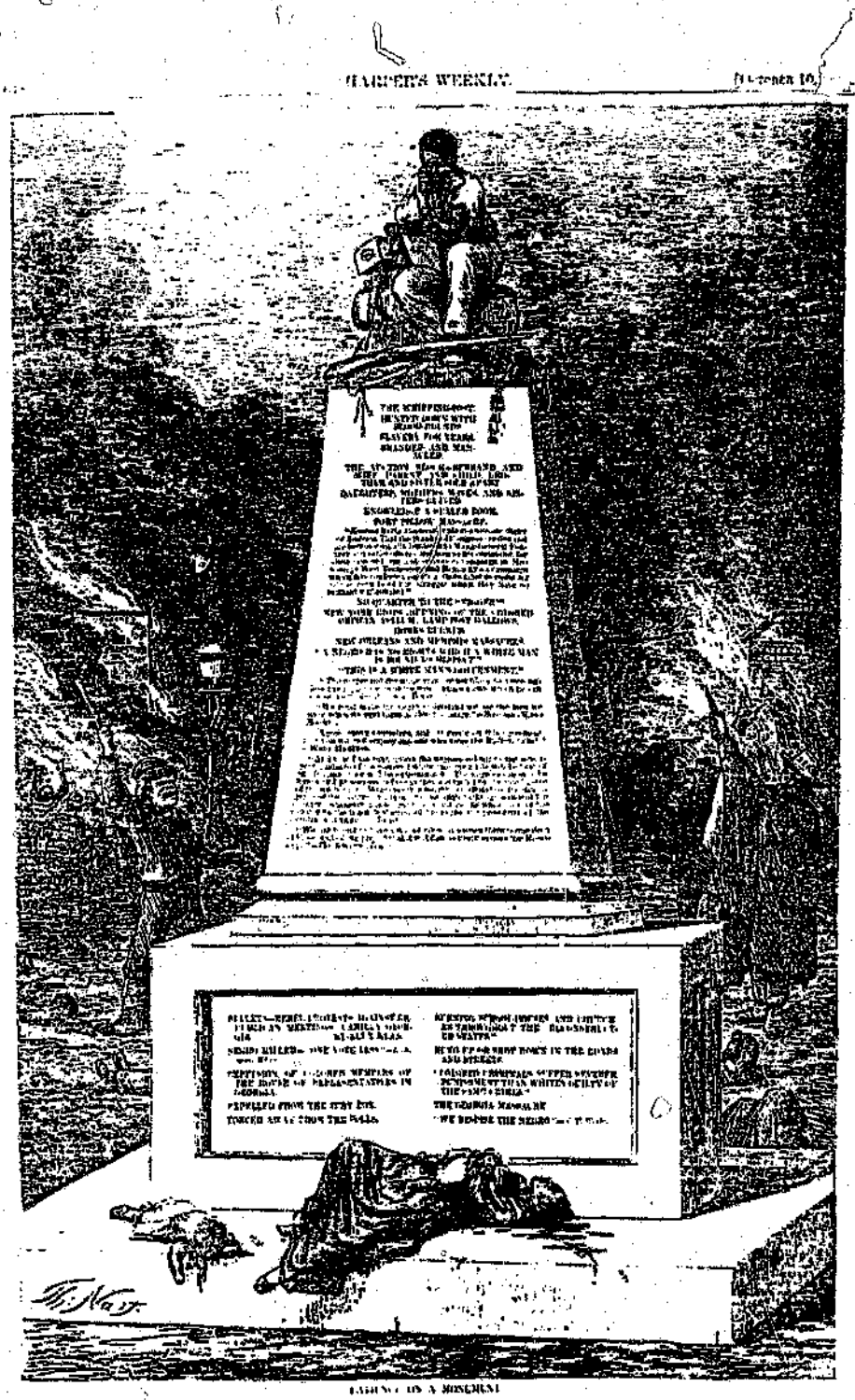


Fig. 31 Patience on a Monument, from Harper's Weekly (1868).

Chapter Four

Positioning of the Personal in Discourse

In the previous chapter I have explored selected conceptions of nature in works by Siopis and Kentridge. Invariably I have noted that both artists position themselves critically in relation to their references. In this chapter I would like to emphasize that each artists' positioning differs considerably in selected instances. While Foster's notion of denaturalization is productive in engaging with these differences, it is difficult to rigidly locate their use of reference in either postmodern or postmodernist practice as defined by Foster. Foster holds that

> Much art today plays with literal and pastiched references to art history and pop culture alike. On the analogy with architecture, it may be termed postmodern. Such art, however, must be distinguished from postmodern*ist* art which is posed theoretically against modernist paradigms. Whereas post-modern art refers so as to elicit a given response and regards the reference as natural, the return to history as certain, post-modern*ist* art refers "to problematize the activity of reference" [Owens]. (Foster 1982:15)

In this way Foster emphasizes that it is the *mode* of referencing which is crucial in an assessment of the critical value of quotation in contemporary visual arts. What exactly are the modernist paradigms he refers to in relation to quotation and reference? How does the postmodernist position differ from these?

In broad terms Foster's writing suggests that within the modernist paradigm the notion of self-referentiality generally contributes to validate the work of art. Underlying the modernist paradigm is the assumption that there exists a universally valid aesthetic language of art, hence the activity of reference here is considered natural. As indicated in chapter one this claim is intricately linked to the valorization

of concepts such as 'origin', 'masterpiece', 'tradition', 'influence' or 'affinity', 'authorship', 'expression', 'style' and 'authenticity'. Within modernist discourse emphasis is largely placed on the artist's presence, rather than on the particular historical and local meanings which, for example, appropriated aesthetic forms from other cultures may involve.

By contrast, the postmodernist artist is critical of modernist notions which presuppose a universally valid aesthetics and a naturalized mode of reference and representation. Foster stresses representation as entirely conventional. His writing suggests that in a postmodernist use of references the artist's concern is to de-code what is (historically) en-coded in these. While references themselves may be infused with the rhetoric of various politics of representation (for example of class, of sexual difference), the *use* of reference, too, is political. A strategic mode of reference is not confined to the realms of art but is part of a critical intervention into contemporary debates.

I feel, while both Siopis' and Kentridge's mode of reference is critical, the way they employ references in their respective pictorial contexts and the emphases of their criticality are different. I will explore some of these differences with reference to the works I have discussed in the previous chapter.

There are various reasons why I feel that Siopis' art practice seems to fall readily into Foster's postmodern*ist* category. In works such as Representations or Patience on a Monument - 'A History Painting' many of Siopis' references are obvious as quotations, especially when they are mediated and integrated into her work in the form of xerox copies. Her painting or drawing is largely about a problematization of the historical content and inscribed values of the quoted images, as well as about a problematization of the activity of quotation itself. For example, images quoted which may be associated with naturalized representations of women are used to be re-inscribed, displaced, subverted from a feminist perspective. Images from colonial discourse are framed from a post-colonial position. More specifically, by assuming an overall ironic stance in her questioning of the genre of History Painting in Patience, Siopis positions herself at some distance in relation to the values inherent

in references to history and modernist conceptions of progress. Moreover, in the unpublished paper I have referred to, in my interviews and in conversation Siopis affiliates her practice with certain theories and issues - like the conventionality of signs - raised by critical feminist and postmodernist debates. This immediately has made it easier for me to locate her paintings - not without some insecurities - in the context of these debates.

Kentridge generally does not use references or quotations in the same way, that is, emphasizing their discursive inscriptions. His use of reference is closely linked to the process in which his drawings evolve and the way this process may reflect or suggest lived experience. In this process he may dismember and amalgamate aspects of his references in a way which renders their original or historical specificity less obvious. Kentridge for example notes that his process of referencing may be associated with

> an Archimboldo thing, you take a whole range of different items and put them together and you see what creature is there. I see the whole way in which people understand the world as being anti-natural, because it has to do with taking fragments and making sense out of fragments... (1991:5)

He further explains:

> I think that within drawing there is the potential of complete radical change of meaning halfway through... for hints of meaning to start emerging, at the side, that are vaguely there, then to suddenly push them into the foreground, which corresponds much more to the way one understands the world... Well one makes sense of any situation, picking up clues at the sides and bits of information and forcing that into a realization or understanding or some meaning". (1991:6)

While Kentridge's The Embarkation invokes and shifts ideas related to the pastoral genre he seems to emphasize the lived contradictions experienced in relation to these by including, for example, reference to his family (in the lefthand panel), to himself (in the righthand panel) or to his immediate environment. The drawing here may be seen as an arena in which the artist tries "to come to terms with reality" (Kentridge in Jephson 1987). Within the contradictory realities suggested in The Embarkation the

pastoral may be associated with yearning or desire, but also with the realization that the pastoral is a fiction which is mediated in various ways some of which associate it with capitalist power. Kentridge's stance in this way emphasizes lived experience rather than the also implicit discursive constructions of the pastoral. Kentridge's interventions into other contemporary practice may be more adequately assessed through an exploration of his workshops, and the contexts in which his films have been screened. To fully assess the critical impact of for example Kentridge's films in Foster's terms then is not possible within the scope of this thesis.

Kentridge also interweaves aspects of personal histories with his more discursive references. For example, his protagonist Soho Eckstein on the discursive level "shares his surname with a particularly vicious Randlord of the turn of the century and is Kentridge's figure of capitalist greed and corruption" (Godby 1991:unpaginated). But Kentridge also personalizes this figure of capital by partly modelling his protagonist on his grandfather. Felix Teitelbaum on the other hand, who, as Godby notes, stands in stark opposition to Sobo, is often modelled on Kentridge himself. Kentridge notes that "at one stage I thought [Felix] was the auto-biographical figure in the films" (1991:11). Kentridge's reference to himself or to his relatives suggests a dispersal of the stereotypical aspects of types such as 'the greedy capitalist' into the complexities of lived and personal experience.

Siopis interweaves her more intimate references tactically into her discursive statements. For example, I have noted in the previous chapter, that in Patience Siopis quotes her own mode of an earlier form of painting while questioning the linear progression implied in modern notions of history. In L'Invention de L'Hystérie she implicates herself in the re-presentation or re-staging of hysteria as 19th century spectacle. Siopis' reference to herself in this context may be seen to support her critique of the construction of subjectivity in (patriarchal) discourse.

In conclusion I would like to suggest that Foster's approach is very much concerned with discourse analysis. In this way I have found his line of questioning useful in exploring conceptions of nature in relation to issues raised in contemporary debates.

However, I found it occasionally difficult to fully adhere to his position in my exploration of the works of individual artists. There are a number of reasons for this. One reason is that his proposed split of a postmodernism of resistance as opposed to a postmodernism of reaction seems too rigid if applied to the works which I have discussed. I also do not feel that Kentridge's emphasis on lived experience as opposed to Siopis' emphasis on discourse necessarily renders his art practice postmodern as opposed to postmodernist.

Furthermore, the way in which the personal has an effect on critical engagement does not seem to figure very strongly in Foster's writing. I feel there is an experiential dimension to practice which Foster does not promote. Clifford tentatively notes, that "discourse analysis [in the mode suggested by Foucault] is always in a sense unfair to authors. It is not interested in what *they* have to say or feel as subjects but is concerned merely with statements as related to other statements in a field." (1988:270).

In terms of my own critical engagement on the level of theoretical writing I found it difficult to articulate my own sense of Siopis' and Kentridge's practice only in the discursive way Foster promotes. This is no doubt due to my knowing some of their intentions. Furthermore, to clearly differentiate, what in the context of interviews are discursive statements, and which are personal expressions is difficult. For example, I mentioned in chapter three, section I, that Kentridge says he takes "refuge ... behind saying everything has been mediated", and that while he may be personally moved by 'sublime nature' in lived experience he considers it impossible, in terms of his strategy as artist, to paint or draw 'sublime nature' because he is selfconscious of the way this convention has been mediated historically.

Finally then, my critical engagement with the artists and issues I have discussed is also motivated by my practical exploration and intended to provide a framework for the reception of my own work which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Displays of the Natural

In the previous chapters I explored selected conceptions of the natural as a contestable field of meanings. I suggested, that there is no unmediated experience of nature in painting. In painting the idea of nature as discursive construction may be represented through different forms of signification.

The mediations implicit in representations of the natural also have been central to the way I have approached the topic of the natural in my practical exploration. In order to explore the natural as a contestable field of meanings I began my process by collecting anything even vaguely associated with it. My mode of collecting has been deliberately pluralist in the sense that I have not structured my approach in relation to one singular aspect of the natural. Objects which I collected reflect aspects of nature which could be connected to various discourses including aesthetic, medical, biological, ethnographic, philosophical, environmental.

My activity of collecting may imply that I was in some sense mapping conventions of the natural as if to find some 'essential' meaning. But, however wide I would target the radius of signification of the natural, I was always caught in the 'anthropocentricism' of objects, materials, and modes. Every object, every process, mode and material used in my painting, is mediated, impure, manufactured, made for human consumption. I found that while nature - because of certain historical connotations - should be referred to tactically and with circumspection, nature in painting is also elusive. Adorno argues, (in Pugh's words) that "representations of nature seem to be authentic only as *nature morte*, as an encoded historical message" (Pugh 1990:146). Adorno also seems to suggest that the natural in representation is 'present', 'authentic', only as dead nature, absence. This sense of (presence as)

absence in contrast to the presence as capture which I discussed in previous chapters is emblematic for my exploration.



Fig. 32 Studio Bric-A-Brac

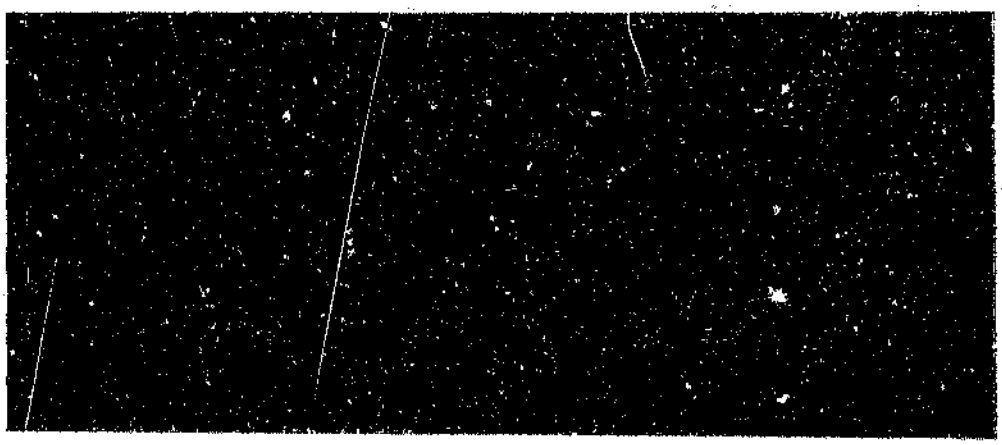


Fig. 33 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Small Inventory (1989).
Oil and Collage on Canvas, 250 x 590 mm. Collection: The artist.

While the accumulation of collectibles has been a consistent activity throughout my practical exploration it resulted in a seemingly unstructured bric-a-brac of significations. (Fig. 32) I have made reference to the notion of the natural as bric-a-brac in some of my early works such as Small Inventory (1989). (Fig.33) However, generally my painting and the form of exhibition of my practical work is more strongly concerned with certain tactical ways of selecting and confronting elements of this bric-a-brac. In this chapter I will explore these strategies with reference to the notion of display.

Donato (1980) suggests that displays (of both natural and cultural artifacts) historically and currently involve "fictions" which are not value free. He argues, that collecting is mainly an aesthetic concern dealing "primarily with the question of selecting and ordering, that is to say with precisely the activities upon which the *Museum* is based" (1980:229). He further notes, that in terms of its genealogy "the ideology of the Museum was first applied to Nature" (ibid.). In contrast to the aimless c[illegible]ection of bric-a-brac and curiosities

> The ideolog[illegible] that governs the *Museum* in the nineteenth century and down to the present has ... been ... to give by the ordered display of selected artifacts a total representation of human reality and history. Museums are taken to exist only inasmuch as they can erase the heterogeneity of the objects displayed in their cases, and it is only the hypothesis of the possibility of homogenizing the diversity of various artifacts which makes them possible in the first place. (Donato 1980:221)

Donato further argues that

> The set of objects that the Museum displays is sustained only by the fiction that they somehow constitute a coherent representational universe. The fiction is that a repeated metonymic displacement of fragment for totality, object to label, series of objects to series of labels, can still produce a representation which is somehow adequate to a nonlinguistic universe. Such a fiction is the result of an uncritical belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments, can produce a representational understanding of the world. Should the fiction disappear, there is nothing left of the *Museum* but "bric-a-brac", a heap of meaningless and

> valueless fragments of objects which are incapable of substituting themselves either metonymically for the original objects or metaphorically for their representations. (Donato 1980:223)

The term display in common usage suggests the placing or spreading out of objects, possessions, ideas, emotions, so that there is no difficulty in seeing or understanding what they mean. Display in this way is linked to the notion of the obvious and to immediacy. In my own use of display I regard the notion of the obvious and immediacy with suspicion for they suggest a language or ideology which denies its mediated status. Displays *are*, as Donato argues, discursive. In this context I use the notion of display to signify a forum where already mediated images or conceptions of the natural could be re-presented, reinscribed, subverted. While I may invoke an appearance of the obvious in my work this reference is strategic and often paired with a sense of unstatedness, lack, inversion, dislocation and displacement.

In my painting I have also made reference to some of the concerns Donato points out such as notions of ordering and classifying, as well as ideas around the fragment. However, in making this reference I am not concerned with capturing what Donato calls a totalizing representation of the natural which erases the heterogeneity of objects which are displayed. The heterogeneous objects, references, quotations which feature in my painting also are not simply bric-a-brac, that is, in Donato's terms, "a heap of meaningless and valueless fragments of objects". There are other associations, both intimate and discursive, I would like my work to evoke.

Before starting on a more detailed exploration of my work around these issues, I would like to give some attention to the kind of references to nature I use. The ways these references are coded or inscribed suggest mediated rather than pure nature, movement in-between the concepts of the natural and the cultural, rather than the fixed extremes of nature as opposed to culture. Sometimes my references may seem banal, stereotyped, common, and also enigmatic, sometimes they seem to reflect a sense of authority which may be associated with the discourses they derive from.

For example, I make reference to fictive bodies such as animalized humans and anthropomorphized animals; scientific representations of plants; texts about natural food; mechanical and medical models of biological nature; mythical and geological, global and aerial views of nature or landscape; popular and found objects with nature motifs; (art)historical or other illustrations of allegorical natures which, for example, can be found on frontispieces for Natural History books.

I also use various materials or substances as signs of the natural, such as minedump sand, soil, industrial plaster, wood from non-indigenous forests in Malaysia (jelutong); highly refined oil paint and more 'natural' watercolours and egg tempera; bees wax, 'raw' organic and nonorganic, fading and permanent pigments and colours; 'rough' or natural matter; set cement, kiln-fired clay; 'rabbit' glue; bronze filings.

In my reference to representational modes I differentiate various degrees of agency, mediation, or control, associated with, for example, the use of paint or colour as 'raw' pigment wash, as intricate illusionistic painting, as miniaturized, agitated or expressive brushstroke; the natural may also be seen to be implicated in the 'ritualistic' processes involved in soaking, warming, mixing, my own primers (generally a chalk and rabbit glue ground); I collage fragments of etchings, use traces, monoprints, casts, 3d modelling and carving, diagrams, found objects.

In my work selected aspects of the above tend to coexist in one format and come into play in varying and calculated degrees. I have generally tried to hold multiple meanings and values which may be associated with the references, quotations, materials and modes I use in tension. Some of the values inscribed in these involve notions such as the exotic, 'otherness', stereotype, escapism, artifice, patriarchy, desire, fetishism, voyeurism, presence or absence. The fictions associated with the natural in some of these references may elicit a desire for an essential truth, certainty, closure. I have already explored some of the ways in which I try to displace these values in relation to selected works from my practical exploration which I have interspersed with the main body of this thesis.

My strategies with respect to the natural for me also involve an experiential and psychological dimension which entails issues around identification and projection in relation to the references I use. Therefore, while I focus the presentation of my practical work on the notion of display the aspects of display which I select to discuss should be seen as being motivated in this way. I make reference to displays of the natural as associated with certain aesthetic conventions such as the modernist grid and *trompe l'oeil* painting. Part of my discussion will embrace taxonomical displays of natural and cultural history, including the curiosity cabinet, the tableau, medical and other body(part) displays.

Conventions of representation in terms of the diverse discourses I explore are intricately linked. For example, Rosalind Krauss notes that the modernist grid served to "collapse the spatiality of nature onto the bounded surface of a purely cultural object" (1985:18). The grid may be understood as a form of "antinatural" display of the natural which paradoxically captures an essential aspect of both nature and art. Referring to spatial and temporal resonances of the grid Krauss argues that

> In the spatial sense, the grid states the autonomy of the realm of art. Flattened, geometricised, ordered, it is antinatural, antimimetic, antireal. It is what art looks like when it turns its back on nature. In the flatness that results from its coordinates, the grid is the means of crowding out the dimensions of the real and replacing them with the lateral spread of a single surface. In the overall regularity of its organization, it is the result not of imitation, but of aesthetic decree. Insofar as its order is that of pure relationship, the grid is a way of abrogating the claims of natural objects to have an order particular to themselves; the relationships in the aesthetic field are shown by the grid to be in a world apart and, with respect to natural objects, to be both prior and final. The grid declares the space of art to be at once autonomous and autotelic. (1985:9)

In my paintings reference to certain aspects of the modernist grid as it has been described by Krauss, is often used in conjunction with references to *trompe l'oeil* painting. Before describing my reference to aspects of the modernist grid in more detail, I will give some attention to this form of painting.

Trompe l'oeil, because of its emphasis on mimetic representation, seems to reassert the dimensions of the real which the modernist grid abandons. However, it may also be associated with what Baudrillard (1988) has called a "sudden failure of reality". This failure - which, according to Baudrillard, is at the same time the "miracle"[47] of *trompe l'oeil* - may be attributed to the way conventions of the real here are self-consciously displaced:

> In trompe-l'oeil it is never a matter of confusion with the real: What is important is the production of a simulacrum in full consciousness of the game and of the artifice by miming the third dimension, throwing doubt on the reality of that third dimension in miming and outdoing the effect of the real, throwing radical doubt on the principle of reality. (Baudrillard 1988:58)

Baudrillard isolates certain characteristic features of *trompe l'oeil* which I have made reference to, particularly in my earlier paintings. These features include

> the vertical field, the absence of a horizon and of any kind of horizontality (utterly different from the still life), a certain oblique light that is unreal (that light and none other), the absence of depth, a certain type of object (it would be possible to establish a rigorous list of them), a certain type of material, and of course the 'realist' hallucination that gave it it's name. (1988:53)

Baudrillard further notes, that "the most strikingly distinctive characteristic is the exclusive presence of banal objects" and, "the detritus of social life, these everyday objects turn against it and parody its theatricality: for this reason they are without syntax, juxtaposed by the mere chance of their presence" (1988:54). These objects are however not passive, "their insignificance is offensive" (ibid.).

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[47]About the miracle Baudrillard notes: "If there is then any kind of trompe-l'oeil miracle, it never resides in the 'realist' execution ... Miracle can never take place in a surplus of reality, but exactly in its inverse, in the sudden failure of reality and the giddiness of being swallowed up in its absence" (Baudrillard, 1988:58).

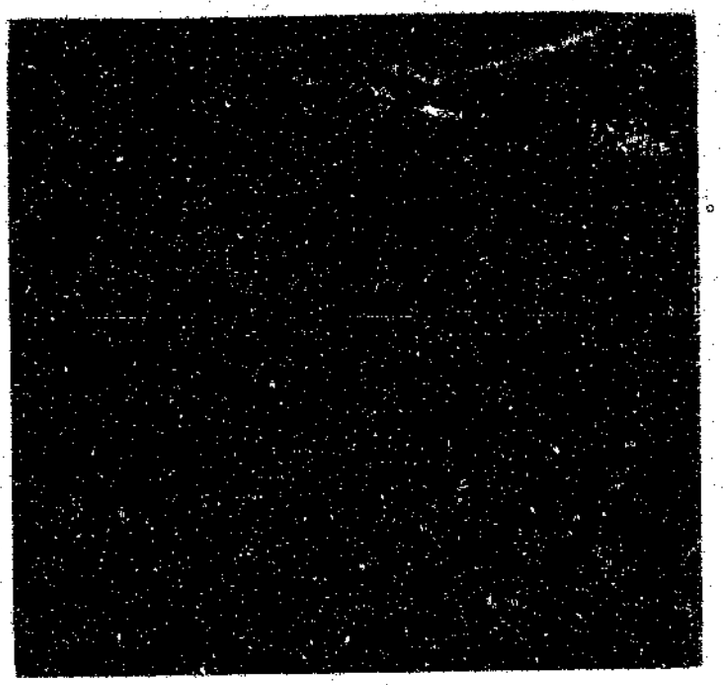


Fig. 34 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Living up to Nature (1989/90).
Oil on Canvas, 330 x 345 mm. Collection: The artist.



Fig. 35 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Where Natures Meet (1989/90).
Oil on Canvas, 400 x 360 mm. Collection: The artist.



Fig. 36 Kapitza-Meyer, M. For Michael (1991).
Oil on Board, 300 x 650 mm. Collection: The artist.



Fig. 37 Kapitza-Meyer, M. A Real Trompe l'Oeil (Simulacrum) (1990).
Oil on Board, 295 x 345 mm. Collection: The artist.

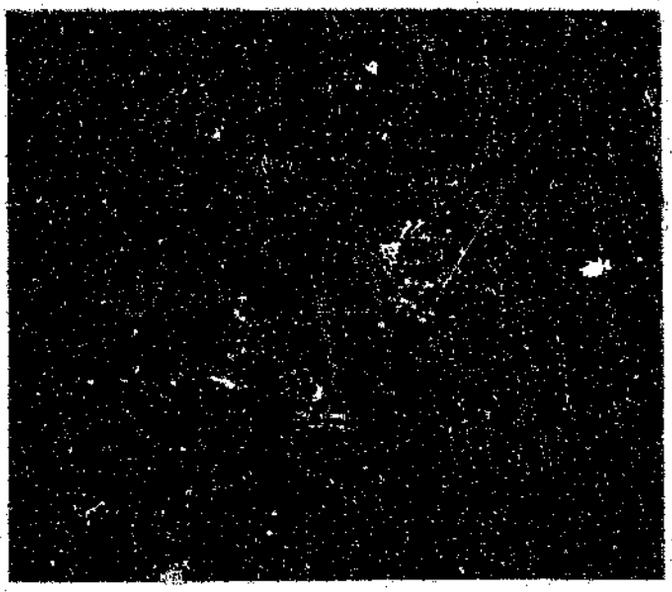


Fig. 38 Kapitza-Meyer, M. An Array of Objects offered for Inspection (1991).
Oil on carved Jelutong, 370 x 420 mm. Collection: The artist.

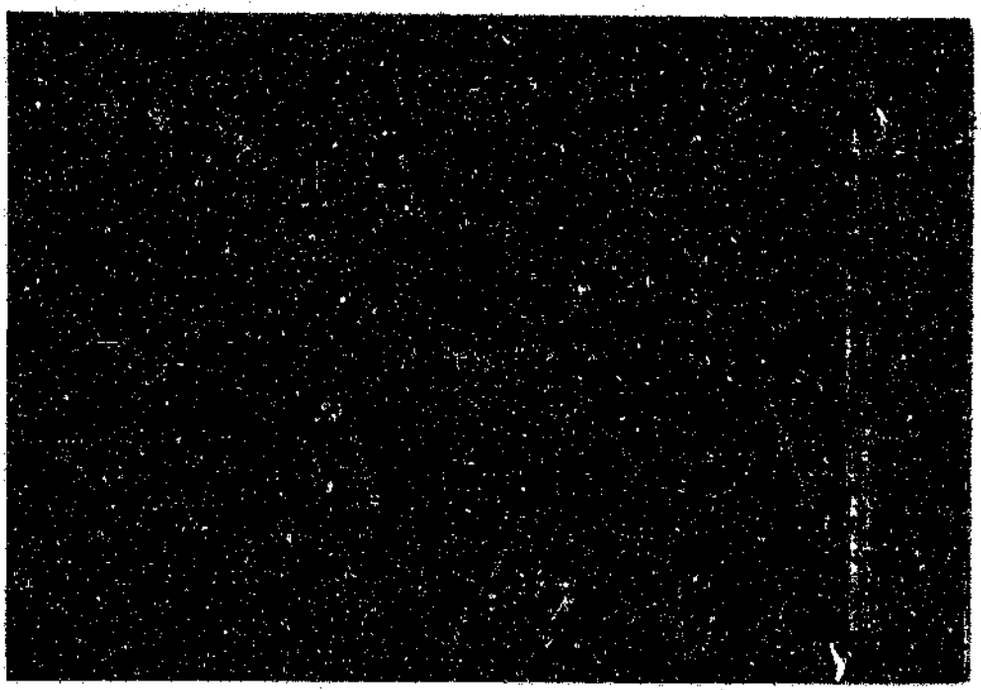


Fig. 39 Kapitza-Meyer, M. A Ballon Perdu (1991).
Oil and Graphite on Canvas, 1800 x 2600 mm. Collection: The artist.

References to aspects of both the modernist grid and to *trompe l'oeil* apply to most of my paintings such as Living up to Nature (1989/90), Where Natures Meet (1989/90), For Michael (1991), A Real Trompe L'Oeil (Simulacrum) (1990), An Array of Objects offered for Inspection (1991), A Ballon Perdu (1991), (Figs. 34-39).

These works generally stress flatness and the lateral expanse of surface, fields of colour or texture. The (chromatic) homogeneity of these surfaces is enhanced through the absence of strong shadows, an absence which reduces disruption caused by the objects placed on it. While the emphasis on flatness, colour, texture may be associated with certain modernist concerns, these fields are, however, confronted with detailed representation. Objects may be painted so as to chromatically or tonally merge into these fields, or they may be rendered quite distinct from that surface. This could suggest different degrees to which the modernist anti-illusionism is denied, opposed, tolerated, enhanced.

The way objects are arranged on that surface or floor invokes a panoramic or aerial view which involves a scanning gaze in control of the objects below. Control is also implied in the way I deliberately position my objects in a frontal rather than oblique way. This parallel arrangement is distinct from single-point perspectival arrangements in that it does not suggest convergent lines, or vanishing points. Furthermore, objects are invariably isolated and placed in a way that enhances their legibility, that is, they are, for example, not painted upside down, and horizontality and verticality of placement is stressed. This, and the suggestion that the often similar scale of objects makes them correspond to some kind of norm, may be seen to heighten the sense of control and an order which is selfconsciously imposed onto heterogeneous elements.

I have, however, also displaced the notion of control in some ways. For example, the objects are not, as is often the case with *trompe l'oeil*, visibly attached or secured onto an upright surface. They seem to float, given that the painting is hung on a wall, and not displayed on the floor or a flat surface which would be more natural

considering the viewing position they suggest and the way they were painted[48]. Moreover, in terms of the relation between objects, they are often arranged in a decentred and non-hierarchical way, which, in relation to their floating quality suggests impermanence of relationships, mobility. This (dis)order is calculated to invoke a sense of the accidental, or the natural, and may be seen as particular to the hybrid quality of objects which have been selected for display.

My mode of displaying objects, questions, or references in my paintings could also be associated with a "flatbed" picture. A "flatbed picture" is a term that Leo Steinberg developed in 1968 in the content of one of the first applications of the term 'postmodernism'. The flatbed, in Douglas Crimp's reading of Steinberg

> is a surface which can receive a vast and heterogeneous array of cultural images and artifacts that had not been compatible with the pictorial field of either premodernist or modernist painting. (A modernist painting, in Steinberg's view, retains a 'natural' orientation to the spectator's vision, which the postmodernist picture abandons.) (1989:44)

My references to grid-like structures, and fields of colour, may invoke the modern, however, these references in conjunction with others like *trompe l'oeil* and the flatbed distinguish my paintings from the modern. Krauss argues that "the grid announces ... modern art's will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse". By contrast, my position in certain of my paintings is informed by an attempt to engage with the interrelatedness of painting with narratives from other discourses. For example, my Three Emblems for Fanny Burney (1989) (Figs. 40, 41) makes reference to the early 19th century poet's writing about her mastectomy and bodily violations. My interest in Burney's narrative concerns the silencing powers of patriarchal medical discourse which became manifest through these violations.

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[48]I generally do not use an easel but a table to place my paintings on. This allows me to position my objects right next to the area where I paint them. Large works such as A Ballon Perdu were also mostly painted on the floor. My friend who was modelling for the figure represented in it was lying on the canvas while I painted her, which also accounts for the peculiar perspective. Distortions don't happen in the same way when I paint small objects.



Fig. 40 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Three Emblems for Fanny Burney (1989).
Collage, Pigment, Watercolour on Paper, 280 x 600 mm. Collection: The artist.

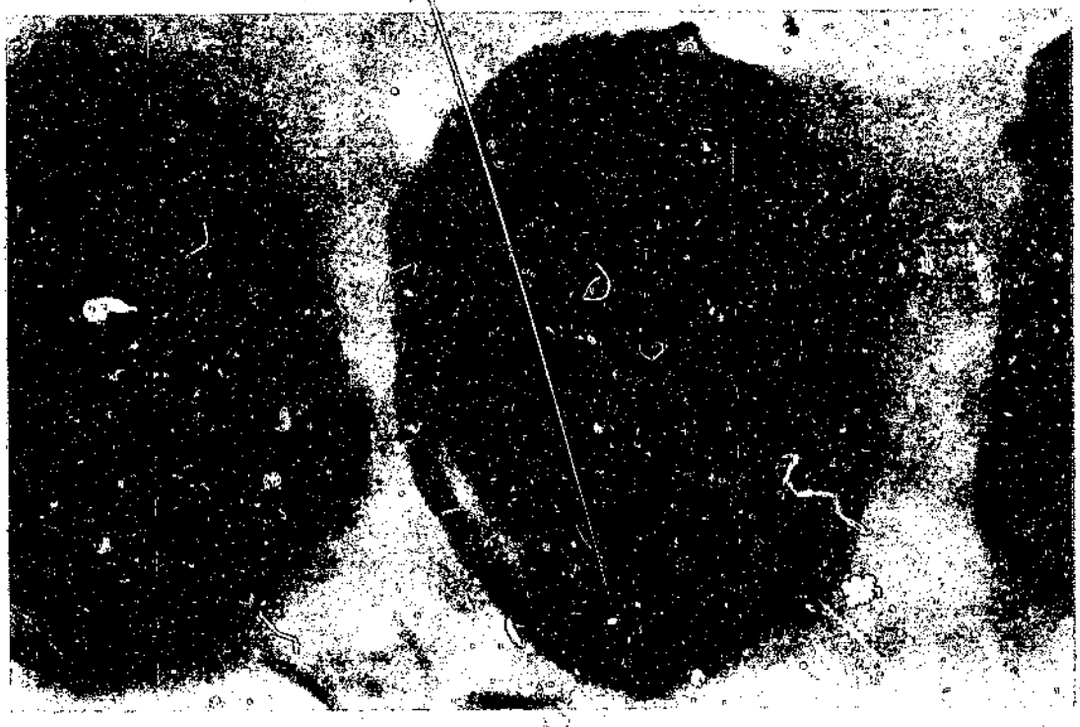


Fig. 41 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Three Emblems for Fanny Burney, Detail.

Representations of the female breast, as Julia Epstein (1986)[49] has pointed out, carry complex significations around femininity and power. In Three Emblems I have suggested the emblematic significance of both the breast and the wound in Burney's narrative as three composite images. These emblems are framed by washes of 'raw' pigment spilling into the whiteness of the ground. The rawness of the medium for me retains resonances of the violated body and the raw flesh exposed by the wound.

The emblems are exhibited, exposed, offered for inspection in a way which suggests conventions of scientific representation which isolate, objectify, decontextualize their exhibit by placing it on a white, supposedly neutral ground. This mode of representation may suggest a controlling, rationalizing, 'phallocentric' gaze. The iconography referred to in the interiors of each of my emblems also invoke various controlling mechanisms of natural and private physicality. However, I also make reference to "ways in which the act of writing, like the act of surgery, can be simultaneously wounding and therapeutic" (Epstein 1986:131).

Each emblem in this way problematizes and also resists the patriarchal gaze. The denaturalization of some of the (patriarchal) silencing mechanisms which may be associated with Fanny Burney's narrative, is inimical to the autonomous "will to silence" that Krauss associates with the modernist grid.

Furthermore, my position differs in another respect from the modernist use of the grid, which, as I have mentioned earlier, aims to "collapse the *spatiality* of nature onto the bounded surface of a purely cultural object" (Krauss 1985:18, my emphasis). I would agree with the modernist notion of painting as a purely cultural object. However, spatiality (the grid) is not itself a natural phenomenon (as it may be for modern art), but it refers to a mode of representation that characterizes western (historical and current) systems of collecting, ordering, and displaying natural and cultural phenomena and artifacts. To see representations of nature purely in terms of

[49] I wish to acknowledge here that Julia Epstein's article *Writing the Unspeakable: Fanny Burney's Ma tomy and the Fictive Body* (1986) has been important in the formation of my position.

an essential, and pre-existing grid-like spatiality which is autonomous and does not trouble or is troubled by other discourses seems problematic. In my use I refer to the grid as emblematic for a pervasive western system designed to capture nature through rationalizations which are mis-taken to be natural.

This use of the grid is reflected in works such as To Dream before so many Beautiful Enigmas (Small Inventory) (1992) (Fig. 42) and Fragment: Numeros et Nomina (Two Hundred Lines of Salvaged Myths) (1992/3) (Fig. 43). My reference to the grid in these works thematizes rationalizations implicit in displays which involve closure by positing a perfect equivalence between reality and the way it is represented. Implicit in this form of display is the idea that a system of rationalizations used to represent and homogenize various objects would allow us to 'read' these objects as (archaeological) fragments representative for a coherent and authoritative totality.[50]

Both works, To Dream and Numeros et Nomina, are concerned to disrupt the false sense of security implicit in the notion of a pre-existing and universal representational system in which various phenomena can be securely plotted and thereby rationalized. Both titles also refer to certain pedagogical aspects involving nature.

The title of To Dream refers to a passage quoted by Donato (1980) in which Michelet describes the pedagogical impact of his youthful encounter with the Natural History museum. Michelet's encounter created a sense of awe and speculative wonder vis-a-vis the exhibits and the sense of origin and history which the display of objects seemed to suggest. To Dream is a small scale inventory of beautiful enigmas, an aesthetic constellation of disconnected archaeological fragments. My reference to both the (small scale) grid and the notion of enigma may be seen to encourage and also delimit the musing and mind travels triggered by the aesthetic display of artifacts.

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[50]The ways in which science as "winning strategy" is invoked in the realm of law, power, politics, has been explored by Serres (in Harari 1980). These strategies are also implicit in scientific modes of display, which hence lead back to sociopolitical realities of power and domination. Serres argues that "science is destined to violence... because it allies itself, at its origin, with requirements of order that are determined by power relationships." (in Harari 1980:48)

In To Dream, this display is also subject to a number of inversions. For example, while the grid which seems to contain or frame the various fragments is painted illusionistically, the objects enclosed by it are physically stuck onto this illusionistic surface. They project forwards, casting real shadows onto the painted grid. The notion of the real which may also be conveyed through physicality is furthermore displaced by the notion of the objects as simulacra which means that they are not in the same way spatially and temporally detached from their origin and function as genuine archaeological finds. In these inversions of the effect of the real (mimesis) and physical reality (the tactile quality of the simulacra) the artifice of the display is called into question.

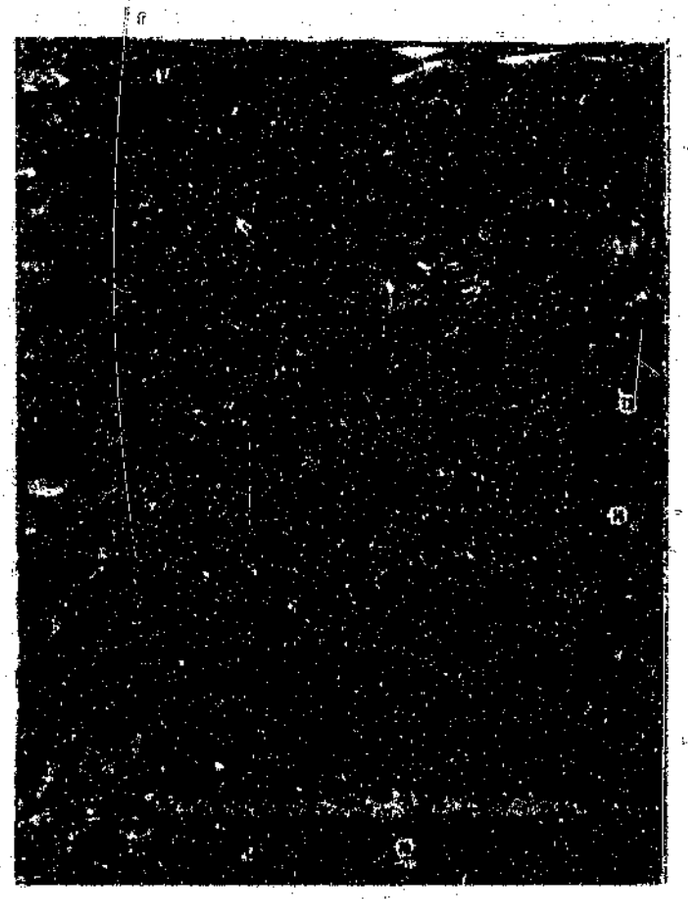


Fig. 42 Kupitza-Meyer, M. To Dream before so many Beautiful Enigmas (Small Inventory) (1992). Cement Casts, Jelutong, Oil and Tempera on Board, 515 x 390 mm. Collection: The artist.

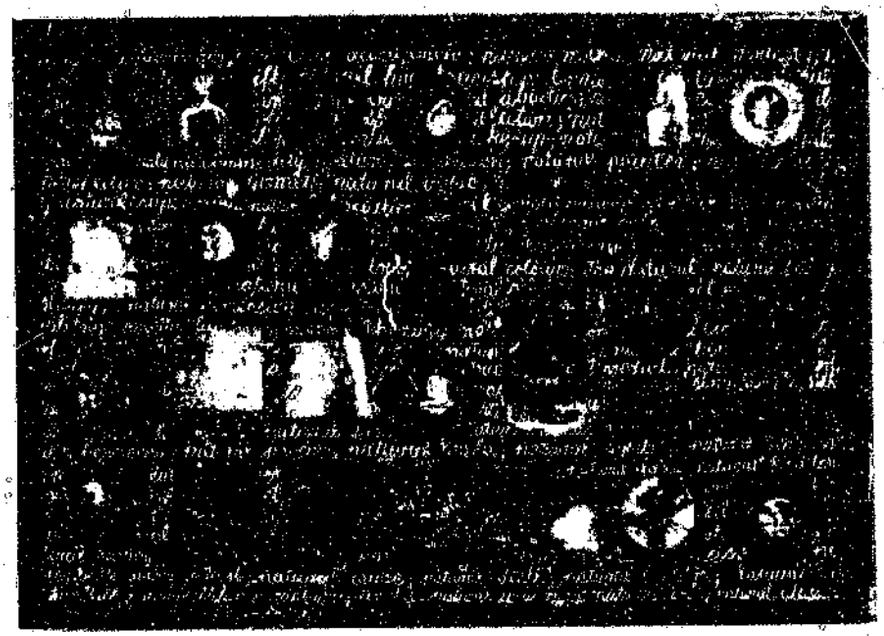


Fig. 43 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Fragment: Numeros et Nomina (Two Hundred Lines of Salvaged Myths) (1992/3). Cement Casts and Oil on Board, 910 x 1275. Collection: The artist.



Fig. 44 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Fragment: Numeros et Nomina (Two Hundred Lines of Salvaged Myths), Detail.

In Numeros et Nomina historical and current uses of the term natural become subject to an educational imposition of writing lines. This line writing accumulates found phrases, commonplaces, stereotypes, truisms, cliches, maxims, expressions, commodities, idioms, concepts, all of which involve the prefix natural. The line writing is superimposed onto traces of a painted grid, and overlaid with a series of fragmentary simulacra (cement casts and small boards, both painted with quoted images which involve the natural).

In the line writing the prefix natural establishes arbitrary similarities and classifications of references such as natural woman, natural superiority, natural birth, natural painter, natural livestock production, natural history of british moths, natural disaster, natural canned fruit, natural theology, natural apartheid, and so on. While repetition of the prefix natural suggests homogenization, the diversity of concepts prefixed natural is also conflicting. The epithet not only fails to establish a connective tissue between signifier and signified, and between words and things, but it also fails to establish a continuity between different concepts, resulting in a multitude of contradictory uses of the term. In the line writing the epithet natural functions as an arbitrary label for various discursive phrases. The label here seems more important than the content and values which the phrases may imply.[51]

Writing lines here can also be likened to an archival preoccupation with the natural where the epithet natural secures nature's presence, while homogenizing and concealing differences of various discourses. In contrast to the 'archaeological' memory of the Museum, where fragments are arranged so as to suggest a restored origin, a decoded, essential truth, or a salvaged past, in this archive only disconnected fragments can be found. In Numeros et Nomina the taxonomizing of the

[51]Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1991) explores a statement made by the ethnographer Washington Matthews in 1893 where he states inter alia that "a first-class museum would consist of a series of labels with specimens attached. This saying might be rendered: 'The label is more important than the specimen'" (in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991:396). She suggests that the valorization of label over specimen in Matthews statement may be associated with a demonstration of connoisseurship where "it is the ethnographer's own expenditure of time and effort - or his or her expertise - that creates value" (1991:369). In my Numeros et Nomina the effort of writing lines seems to place a similar emphasis on "expenditure of time and effort" rather than on the individual 'naturals' themselves.

natural also does not represent a totality for, the more the natural as a discursive 'phenomenon' is named, ordered and classified, the more elusive its meaning and the quest for a privileged origin becomes. The accumulative writing in this way decenters the totalizing gaze and puts the impurity of scientific rationalizations into evidence. Accumulation of notions of the natural in Numeros et Nomina dramatizes and displaces the natural as presence *ad absurdum*. The fiction of the natural as presence (captured) in this process is dispersed into what Donato calls the "infinite, non-natural labyrinthine web of textuality" (1980:217).



Fig. 45 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Liber Naturae (1993).
Cement Cast and Ceramic, 390 x 240 mm. Collection: The artist.

A totalizing presence of the natural is also invoked in my work Liber Naturae (1993) (Fig.45). Here a cement cast of a British passport is displayed on a ceramic 'cushion'. The Latin words *liber naturae* (Book of Nature) have been impressed into this cushion.[52] The passport refers to a naturalized British identity, as well as to contemporary efforts to control people by mastering information about them.

The title of the work signifies a play on the medieval metaphor of the *Book of Nature*. Donato argues that "implicit in that metaphor is the assumption that the world can be completely textualized and, vice versa, that any element of the world can be treated as a textual element" (1980:223). In the 18th century the concept was progressively associated with natural history through, for example, the activities of the Swedish naturalist Linnaeus. In one of the frontispieces to his *Systema Naturae* (1760) Linnaeus is pictured, like Adam in Paradise, involved in naming and numbering the varieties of nature. Nature is alluded to, amongst other things, in the statue of a multibreasted nature (*polymamma*) (Fig.46). Another frontispiece depicts Linnaeus as Apollo unveiling Minerva, who holds in her hands the keys to 'the Temple of Nature'. In my Liber Naturae I make reference to these keys through a physical imprint of a key below the cushion. The absence of this imprint may be seen to signify the absence of Minerva's keys as insignia of authority and the privileged access to knowledge which they connote.

Linnean classification involves normative processes of naming, classifying, selecting, grouping, labelling, numbering, of nature. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes that "for a curiosity to become classifiable it had to qualify as a representative member of a distinguishable class of objects" (1991:392). However, while normative processes of collecting and display may appear scientific, the narratives which connect various objects of the same kind may be entirely arbitrary, unscientific, or, from a historical distance, bizarre. This is particularly true for exhibits which display objects that are

[52]Pratt in Imperial Eyes argues how the revival of Latin - which "was nobody's language" - to systematize nature by the 18th century naturalist Linnaeus can be associated with classificatory systems that epitomize "continental, transnational aspirations of European science" (1992:25). Traces of these aspirations which according to Pratt presuppose a European, male, secular, lettered eye, still seem to be evident today.

coded in multiple ways - despite their homogenous appearance. For example, the teeth pulled by Peter the Great (Fig.47) may be seen both as curiosities or as representative members of a distinguishable class of objects.



Fig. 46 Nature as Paradise. From Linnaeus, Systema Naturae, 1760.

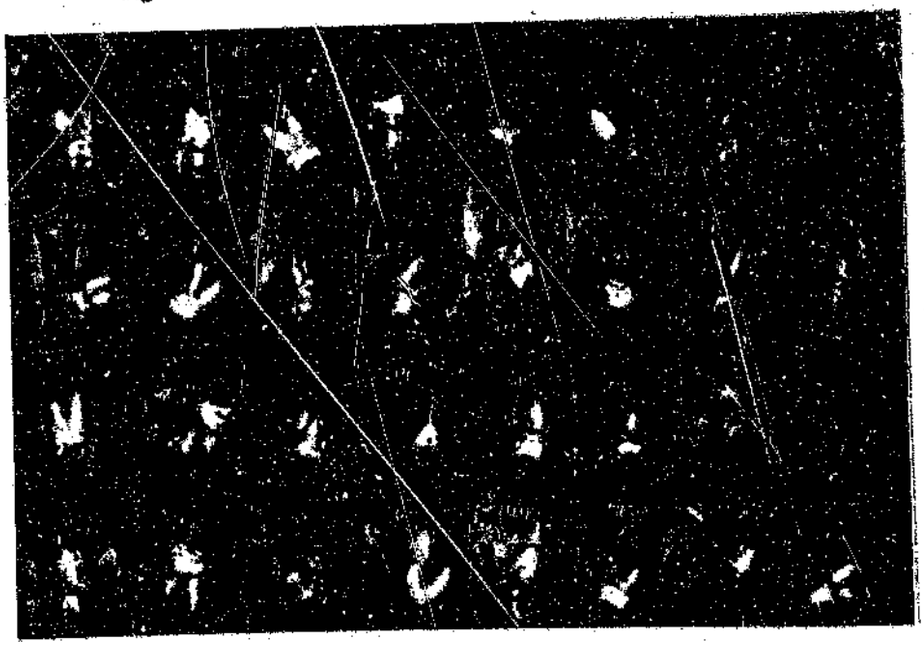


Fig. 47 Teeth pulled by Peter the Great

Peter the Great's collection of curiosities and natural history, as Gould points out, should be seen in the context of the 18th century concern with

> a mode of accumulation and display aptly named the *Wunderkammer*, or cabinet of wonders. Collectors vied for the biggest, the most beautiful, the weirdest, and the most unusual. To stun, more than to order or to systematize, became the watchword of this enterprise. (1992:17)

The example which I discuss from this collection - a box containing thirty three numbered human teeth - seems more clearly concerned with systematization. However, anecdotal commentary supplied in the Leningrad catalogue betray the systematic mode in which the teeth are displayed. Gould notes that

> the exhibit inspired the followed entry in the Leningrad catalogue: "'teeth extracted by Emperor Peter from various persons,' including 'a singer' (number 6), 'a person who made tablecloths' (number 10), 'a bishop of Rostov' (number 23), 'Madame Re who was named the Emperor's nurse' (number 25), and 'a fast walking messenger' (but not fast enough - number 45)." (1992:18)

An awareness of the latent histories associated with the display of teeth does change the way the exhibit may be perceived. While the grid as a mode of scientific display here may contribute to naturalize distinctions of class, gender, and histories, these distinctions are re-asserted by the text which accompanies the exhibit. Peter the Great's exhibit of human teeth reflects a concern with both universal natural history and cultural specificity.

I feel it is in these combined displays of so-called natural and cultural artifacts that certain values inscribed in displays are most evident. Ivan Karp (1991) problematizes this combination when he argues that

> Natural-history exhibits display objects that are not produced by human agents who have goals and intentions. The theory of evolution is used in natural-history exhibitions to explain how species evolve. These exhibitions do not examine the intentions of plants and animals. Problems arise when objects made by humans are exhibited in natural-

> history museums and the exhibitors believe that theories of nature can substitute for accounts of cultural factors such as beliefs, values, and intentions. ... Not only are intentions presumed rather than exhibited, but the history of culture and society is wiped from the record as persons and things become ideal examples of certain types. In this way, the cultural and historical specificity of the human society is turned into an example of a universal natural history. (1991:23)

Historically, human body parts have been used to illustrate themes in a liminal area between natural history, ethics and aesthetics where the displayed body is not simply a reality to be uncovered in a positivistic description of it. This positivist approach is, for example reflected in displays which present dissected parts of animals or humans which may be reproduced in wax or plaster, dried or preserved in alcohol to illuminate anatomical structure or biological process. This is for example the case in exhibits such as André-Pierre Pinson's Anatomie de la Grenouille. (Fig.48)

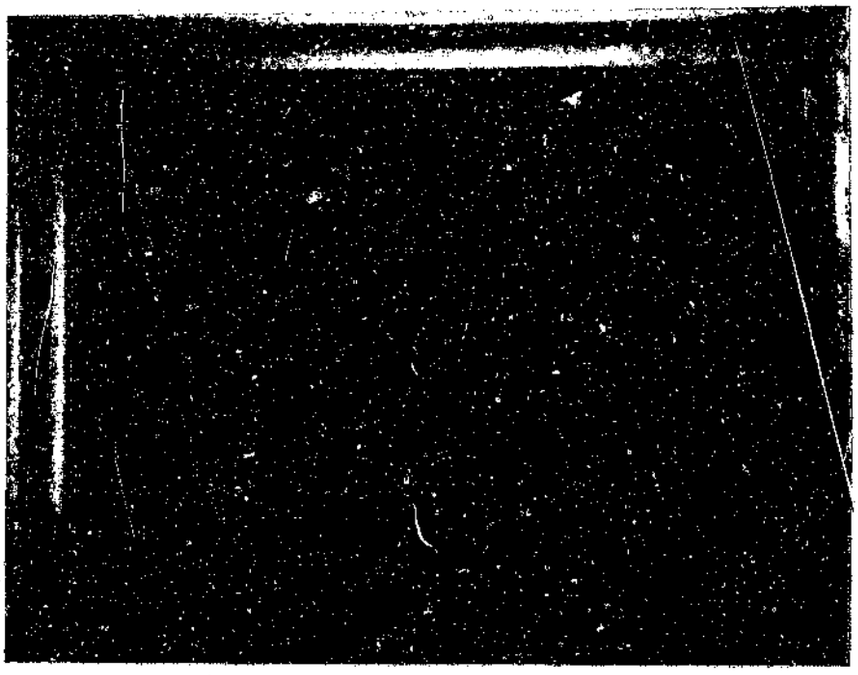


Fig. 48 Pinson A-P, Anatomie de la Grenouille

Baroque emblematic traditions used human body parts to illustrate allegorical and moral themes such as death and the transience of life. Gould describes one of the tableaux created in this mode where

> quotations and moral exhortations emphasizing the brevity of life and the vanity of earthly riches, festooned the compositions, One fetal skeleton holding a string of pearls in it's hand proclaims: 'Why should I long for the things in this world?'? Another, playing the violin with a bow made of a dried artery, sings, 'Ah fate, ah bitter fate'. (1992:31)

The tableau in this context may be understood as a life-like and discursive arrangement of natural objects to produce meaning (culture). Here the mastery of processes which involve the preservation of dead matter in a heightened, life-like fashion enhances ambiguities of live versus dead. Hence the tableau may involve the paradox of motion picture and still photograph. Because of its emphasis on rhetoric the tableau may also be seen as a seductive or manipulative form of simulation. The discursive life or death-like aesthetic of the tableau may be seen to combine romantic seduction with authoritarian subjection.

I have made reference to coded representations of the body in various ways. Some of these representations may be associated with the (historical) bodies I have differentiated in chapter three: the timeless pastoral body, the (male) transcendant and empiricist body and gaze, the naturalized and sexualized female body in 19th century discourse, the objectified, externalized, other body, the body inscribed with technologies of control, the resistant body, to name a few.

In my work I see the body or aspects thereof as emblematic for a lived reality which is constantly produced and tactically shifted in various discursive contexts. I try to invoke these discursive contexts through reference to numerous conventions of representation. These are, for example, gestures or body language, medical conventions of flattening the representation of the body by combining frontal and profile views, aesthetic conventions of invoking flesh through, for example, pinkness, or certain ways of modelling which may suggest living form.

For example, works such as the collage/watercolours Enclave with Sick Nature (1989) and In Natural Waters (1989) (Figs.49 and 50) feature medical conventions of displaying the diseased body which I overlaid with other connotations of the natural. Body Moulding: Exercises for Virility Building (1990) (Fig.51) combines two illustrations from Bernarr MacFadden's five volume *Encyclopedia of Physical Culture*[53] with an image of body moulds and skins displayed in the storage space of a Roodeport taxidermist.



Fig. 49 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Enclave with Sick Nature (1989).
Collage and Watercolour on Paper, 265 x 350 mm. Collection: The artist.

[53]I have made reference to MacFadden's *Encyclopedia* (1928, eighth printing) in some of my earlier work. His 'Physical Culture' is closely linked to a profoundly 'natural' way of living, eating, exercising, healing. One aspect of the natural which pervades his writing is the way he differentiates nature as an aspired norm for men and women. For example, in terms of exercising, men's exercises are geared to *transcend* their nature, while the exercises suggested for women *enhance* woman's nature.



Fig. 50 Kapitza-Meyer, M. In Natural Waters (1989).
Collage and Watercolour, 185 x 265 mm. Collection: The artist.



Fig. 51 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Body Moulding: Exercise for Virility Building (1990).
Oil on Board and Wood, 530 x 460 mm. Collection: The artist.

In medical discourse the representation of skin may be associated with the outer natural layer of the human body which must be penetrated or removed to reveal the interior. This form if representation is often fragmentary, and quite selective with respect to the parts of the body which may be exposed, and which may not be exposed. In this way scientific representation is closely linked to processes of revealing, unveiling and display. Jordanova (1989) has shown the gendered inscriptions in scientific knowledge evident in representations from medical and scientific discourse between the 18th and 20th century. One pertinent example of unveiling which demonstrates the interrelatedness of notions of sexuality, scientific knowledge, and nature is a sculpture by French sculptor Louis Ernest Barrias entitled Nature Unveiling before Science (1899). (Fig.52)



Fig. 52 Barrias, L.R. Nature Unveiling before Science (1899).

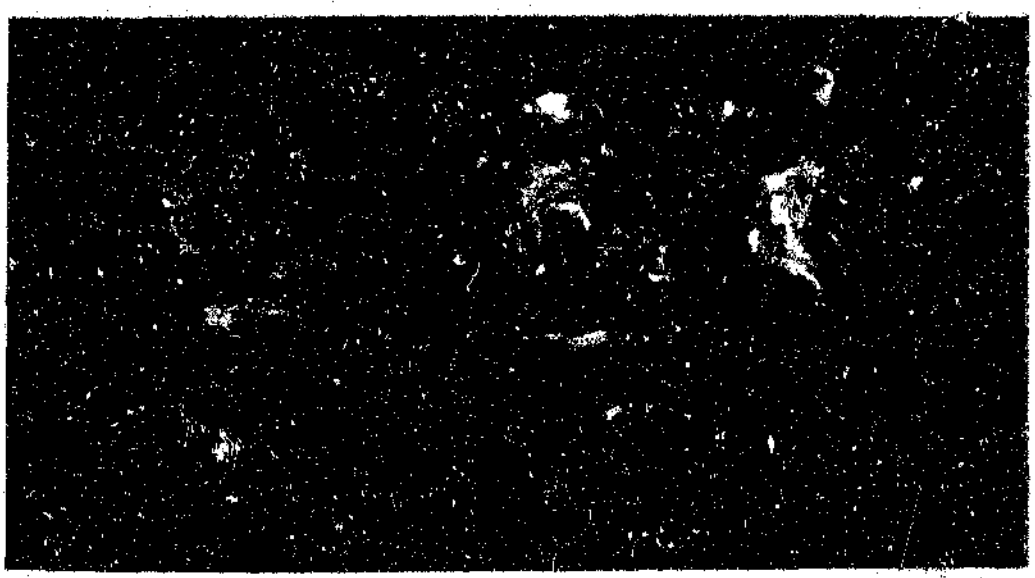


Fig. 53 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Skin Unveiled - Skin Displayed (1992). Found Objects, Cement Cast, Boards, Sand, Oil Paint on carved Jelutong, 712 x 1325 mm. Collection: The artist.

I have quoted a reproduction of this sculpture in Skin Unveiled - Skin Displayed (1992). (Fig.53) I use this reference to Barrias' personification of a sexualised nature that is unveiled before science in an emblematic way. For me it signifies the interrelatedness of ideas of knowledge, possession, penetration, revealing and display which may be seen as forms of patriarchal power and violation of the female body. Visual representations of these ideas, as Jordanova (1989) has suggested, may be associated with an attempt (by man) to capture the essence of the 'other' (woman). Looking, for example, at the complexity of notions attached to the veil in western culture Jordanova argues that unveiling generally presupposes a male viewer and female object (of discovery), and that "unveiling women is an idea that fulfils ... masculine desire allied with fantasies of ownership and display" (1989:96). The genderedness of nature and notions of unveiling is also suggested in the writings of French late 19th century critic Stephane Mallarmé. Mallarmé writes about "nature 'revealing herself' through 'new and impersonal men placed directly in communion with the sentiment of their time'" (in Harrison and Orton 1984:xxiv).

The veil which features in Barrias' sculpture may be seen as a metaphor for the "veil

of flesh" (Jordanova) which has to be removed to reveal and display the interior of the female body. In Skin Unveiled I have contrasted the image of Barrias' sexualized nature rev aling herself to a revealed yet veil-like fragment of a skin which is inscribed in various ways. As fragment, this skin is displaced from the wholeness of the body. Like a 'wounded' artifact it displays signs of complex histories: tampering, alteration, deliberate damage. This skin is marked, scratched, bruised, inlaid, inscribed, explored, and shows signs of cracking. All of these may be seen as signs of its fragility and marks of an other human body imprinted onto the artifact.

Skin in this work is also coded so as to suggest living skin, which in some way responds or asserts its own presence and forms of resistance to these violations. I have used transparent and opaque layers of paint and fleshy colour, illusionistic painting of underlying veins, and physical carving simulating a sense of animated movement, to evoke this feeling of living form. Sometimes the paint has been washed or sanded off to expose underlying layers of primer or 'raw' wood. Some of the objects which have been embedded into the skin seem to merge with it by taking on fleshy qualities.

A series or sequence of seven objects embedded in the lower register of the painting for me suggest several themes which have been central to my exploration. I have used similar objects in a number of my paintings and they have acquired the status of a personalized iconography in my work. I will describe these objects and the themes they suggest for me in more detail.

The first object (bottom left) displays broken pieces of china and the lettering of the word *found*. The fragments of china and the writing are partly submerged into sand. The display associates the notion of discovery with the found archaeological fragment. The sand containing this fragment in this context may be seen as reference to the 'natural' body which conceals, preserves and alters layers of clues to complex histories.

Next to this archaeological fragment is a cement cast of a so-called daisy wheel. As

part of a typewriter the daisy wheel may be seen to allude to the notion of mediation and to power relations inscribed in discourse (meaning in a broad sense the relation between language and the object to which it apparently refers" (Marks and Courtivron 1981:4)).

The fragment of an illusionistic painting depicting a box containing more numbered little boxes refers to notions and values around taxonomy and supposedly natural modes of representation. The painting next to it depicts a person sleeping in a bed which is positioned partly inside, and partly outside of a window. This may be seen to imply the notion of the natural as a site of desire. The fragment of a cement cast of a passport refers to the notion of subjectivity as constructed in discourse, a (historically) naturalized identity, but also fragmented, displaced, unfixed identity. The cast of a tape inscribed with the words *lo tatura.*, suggests issues around Clifford's notion of the salvage paradigm, such as concerns to recuperate, or reinstate the presence, authenticity and originality of aspects of the natural which seems only present as absence.



Fig. 54 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Skin Unveiled - Skin Displayed, Detail.

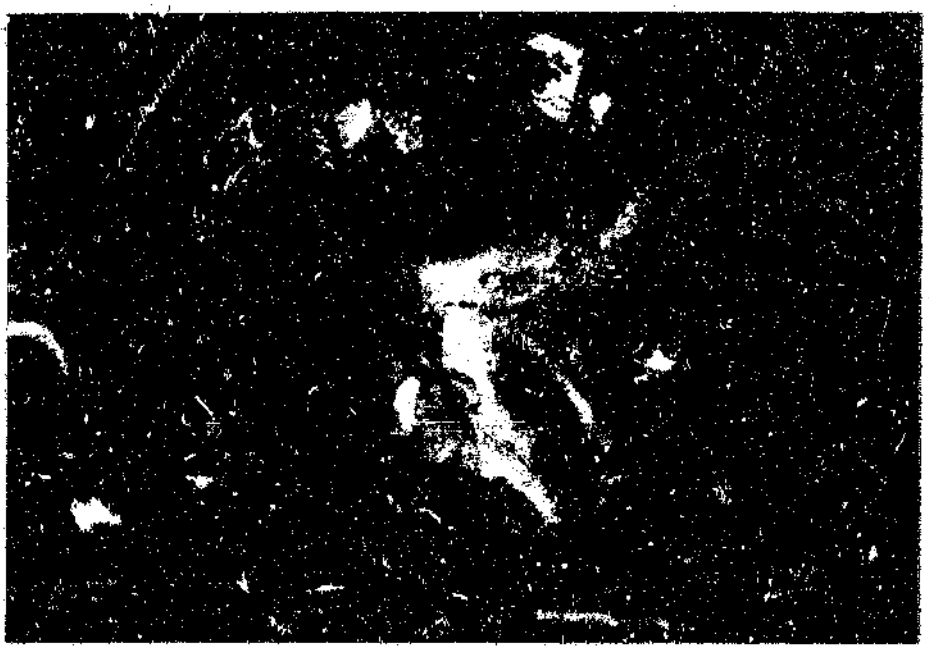


Fig. 55 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Skin Unveiled - Skin Displayed, Detail.

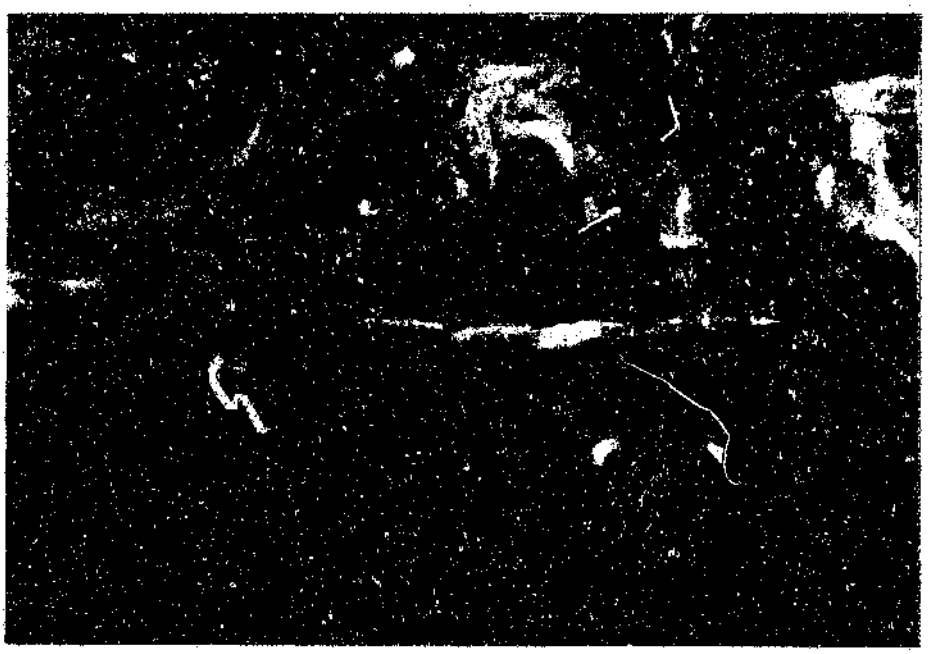


Fig. 56 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Skin Unveiled - Skin Displayed, Detail.



Fig. 57 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Skin Unveiled - Skin Displayed, Detail.

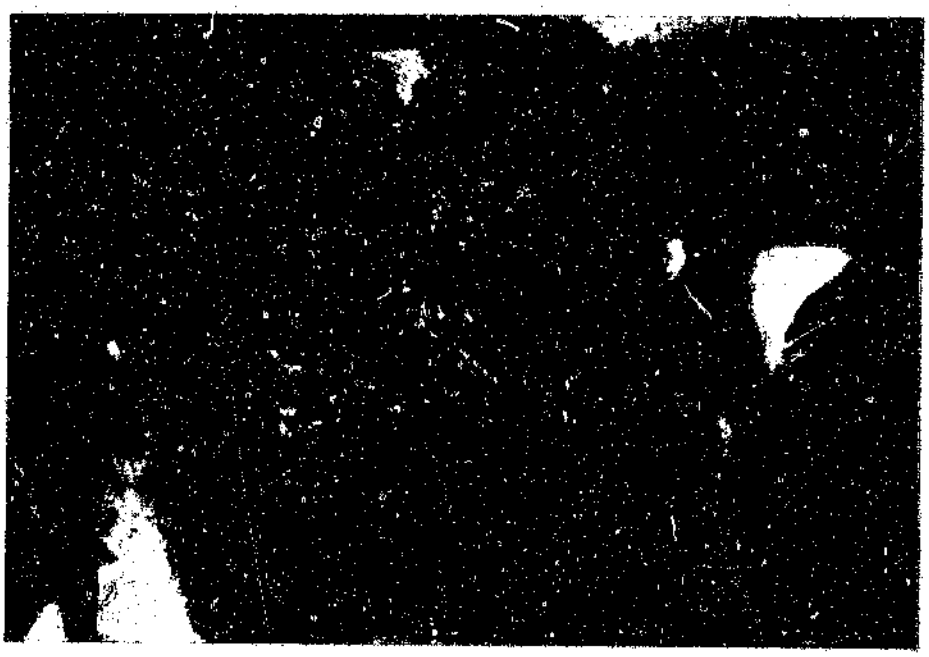


Fig. 58 Kapitza-Meyer, M. Skin Unveiled - Skin Displayed, Detail.

In conclusion I would like to emphasize again that in my practical exploration I am concerned with a strategic arrangement of various mediations of the natural with reference to the notion of display. In my displays I try to avoid means of representation which risk recuperation of my references as natural, unmediated, universally true 'slices of life'. My activity of reference and appropriation is strategic in the way in which I try to denaturalize and contest certain values which may be associated with these references and quotations. Denaturalization in my work involves processes of displacement, inversion, tactical shifting and syncretic recombination of the connotations and values inscribed in these. These processes seem to "simultaneously proffer and defer a promise of meaning; [to] both solicit and frustrate our desire that the image be directly transparent to its signification. As a result they seem strangely incomplete - fragments or runes which must be *deciphered*" (Owens 1980:70).

While I have been concerned with discourse and with the pervasive way in which, according to Foster, "language invades the natural, mediates the real, decenters the self" (1983:81) my paintings may also be understood as what Jameson calls "an imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (in Foster 1982b:17). Foster elaborates on Jameson: "As we know, the real cannot be apprehended directly; we have only (mis)representations of it; so too with its contradictions: we have only 'imaginary resolutions' of them" (Foster 1982b:17).

List of Plates

(please note that all measurements are given in mm. All works are in the collection of the artist.)

1. Culture of the Abdomen (1989). Pigment, acrylic and oil paint on sandpaper and board. 445 x 505.

2. Born Wild Born Wonderful (1989). Letraset, bronze filings, resin, oil paint on sandpaper, 295 x 420.

3. Talking to Nature (1989-90). Sand and oil paint on canvas, 235 x 250.

4. A Landscape (1989). Sand, resin, oil paint on canvas, 980 x 1985.

5. Highveld Bird (1989-90). Sand and oil paint on canvas, 450 x 820.

6. Bric-a-brac with Dog's Bone (1989-90). Sand and oil paint on canvas, 260 x 555.

7. Attic (1989-93). Sand, pigment and oil paint on canvas, 1490 x 2400.

8. Bric-a-brac (1989). Sand, bronze filings, oil paint on canvas, 755 x 1255.

9. For Stefan (1990). Monoprint, sand, pastel, oil paint on canvas, 395 x 620.

10. Natura Naturata (1989). Collage and watercolour on paper, 125 x 160.

11. Wake (1990). Bronze filings and oil paint on canvas, 180 x 360 (triangular).

12. A Glimpse of the Clouds (1990). Sand and oil paint on canvas, 165 x 45.

13. Still Knife (1991). Oil on canvas, 325.

14. Three Cans (1990). Oil on canvas, 170 x 223.

15. Physcultopathic Treatment (MacFadden) (1991). Oil on canvas, 155 x 170.

16. An Imaginary Nature (1991). Oil on canvas, 155 x 240.

17. Mashed Potato Pears (MacFadden) (1989). Acrylic and watercolour on paper, 160x 400.

18. Men Peeping at Natures (1990). Sand, collage, oil paint on canvas, 240 x 450.

19. Duplications (1990). Oil paint on board and wood, 590 x 700.

20. Quieta non Movere (1990). Oil on canvas, 475 x 680.

21. Nocturne (1990). Oil on canvas, 390 x 220 (in two parts).

22. - 24. A Journey (1990). Oil on canvas, 245 x 315, 250 x 350, 250 x 290.

25. Memento (1990). Oil on board, 360 x 360 (octogonal).

26. Out of This Frame (1990). Oil on board, 380 x 565 (oval).

27. Urban Habitat (1990). Oil on canvas, 335 x 530.

28. Severances (1990). Oil on board, 370 x 370.

29. Second Discours (1990). Oil on board, 410 x 410.

30. Skin: Fragment of a Naturalized Body (1991). Oil on carved jelutong, 455 x 405.

31. For J. H. (1993). Oil on canvas, 250 x 330.

32. The Drawer (1991). Found object, oil on canvas, oil paint on carved jelutong, 350 x 1180.

33. The Drawer.

34. The Drawer, detail.

35. Mythomania (1991-2). Found and carved objects, cement casts, egg tempera and oil paint on carved jelutong, 760 x 960.

36. Mythomania, detail.

37. Ear (van Gogh) (1993). Ceramic, Ø 320.

38. My Heart (1993). Ceramic, Ø 335.

39. Colonial Couple (1993). Ceramic, lead, painting on board, 500 x 350.

40. Enclave (1993). Ceramic, lead, glass, found object, oil paint, 310 x 360.

41. Sublime Escape (1993). Cement cast, lead, oil paint, pigment, velvet, 460 x 350.

42. Corporeal Matters (1993). Cement casts, boards, oil paint on wood, 440 x 745.

43. APpROpriatioN (1993-4). Ceramic, Found object, oil paint on carved jelutong, 530 x 630.

44. APpRopriatioN, detail.

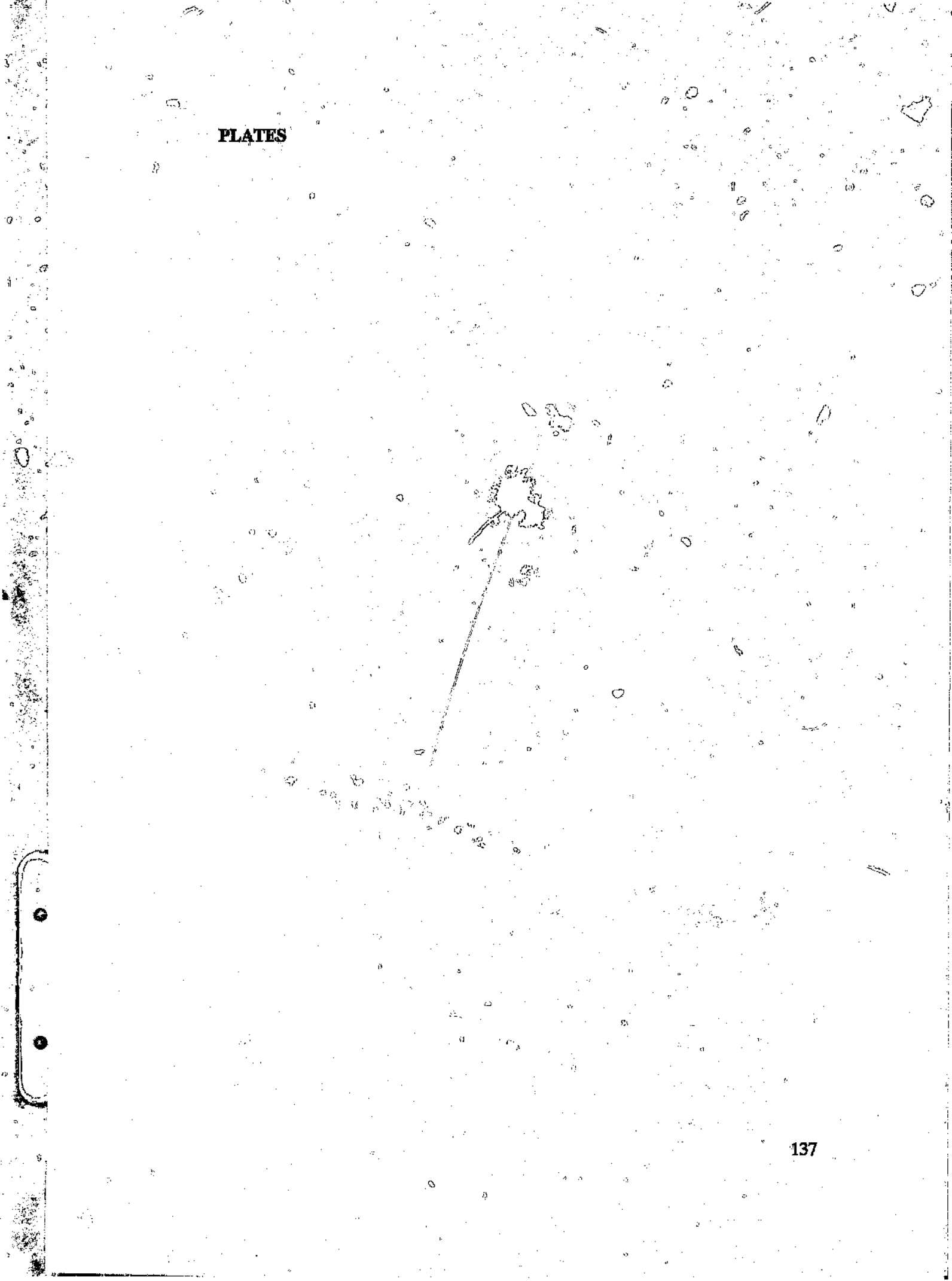
45. And Again (1993-4). Ceramic, bronze filings, lead, paper, oil paint on wood,

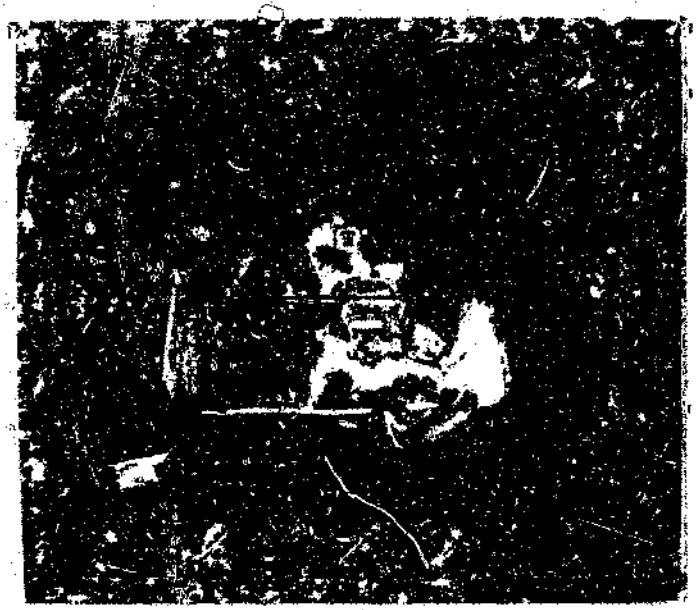
890 x 770.

46. And Again, detail.

47. - 70. Food, Desire, Liquid Agent (series) (1992). Acrylic, pigment and other materials on sandpaper, 295 x 210.

PLATES

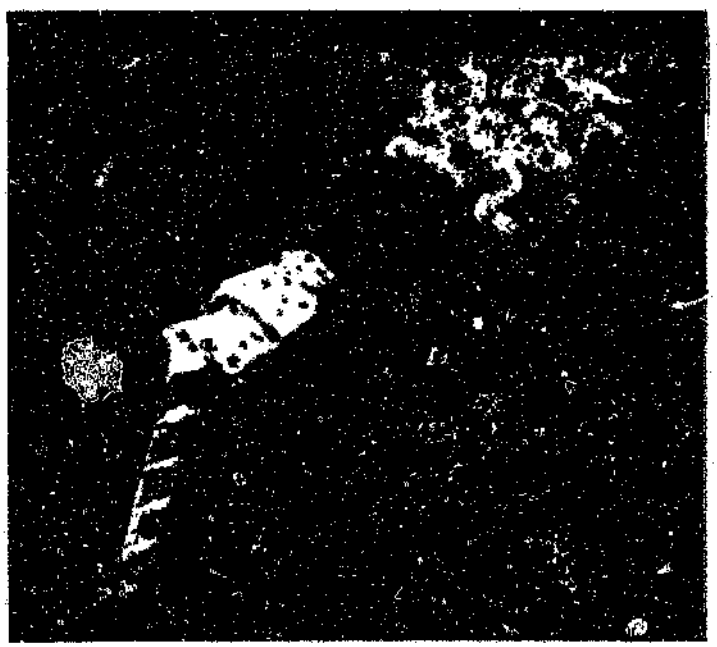




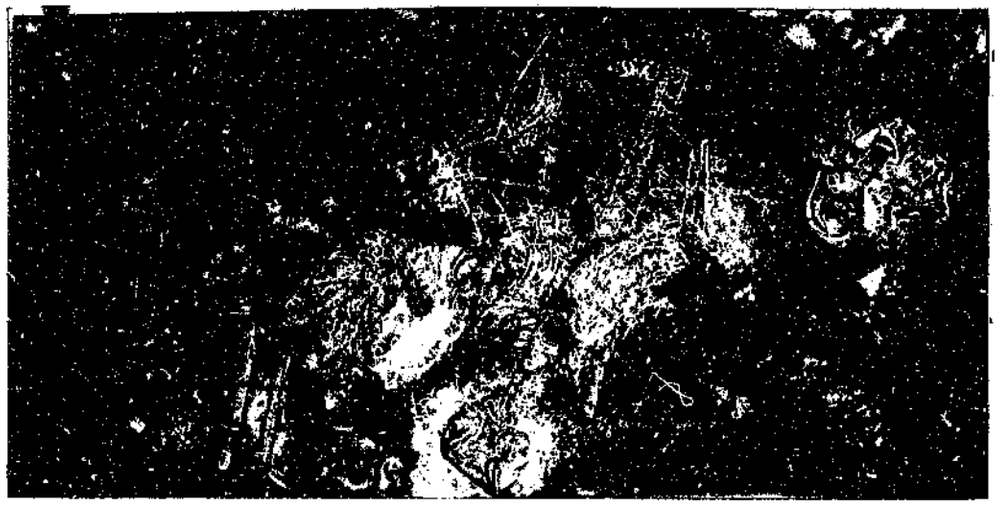
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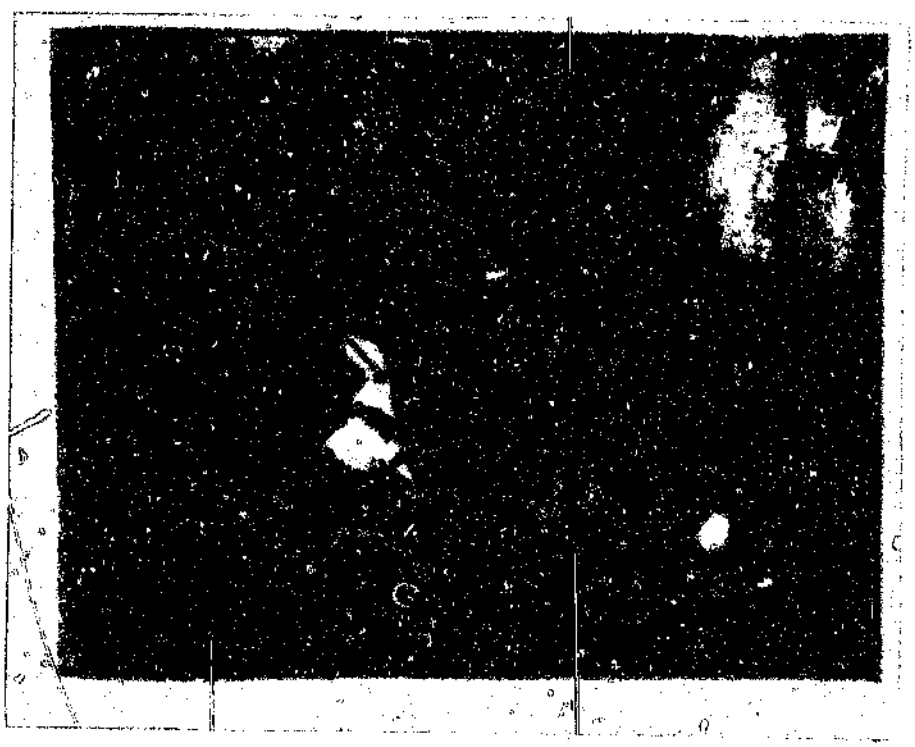
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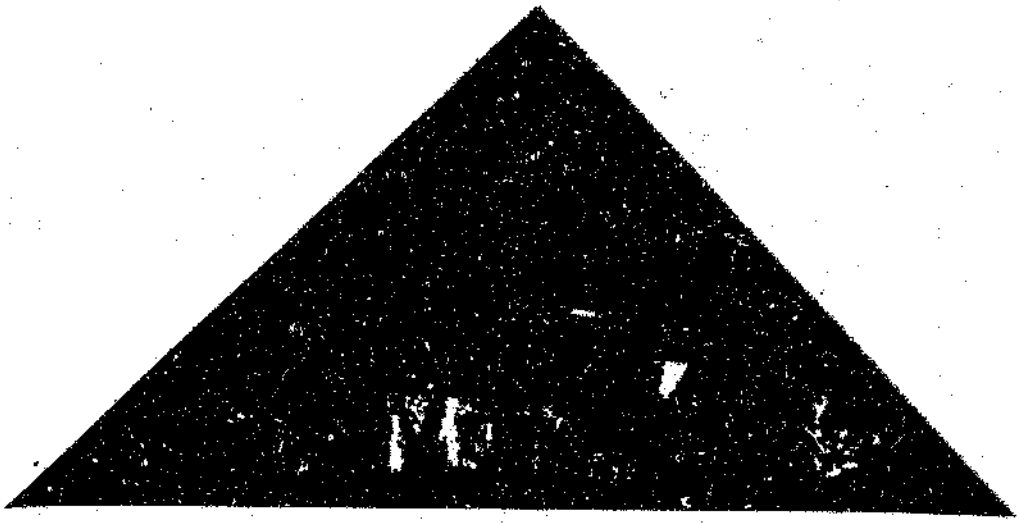
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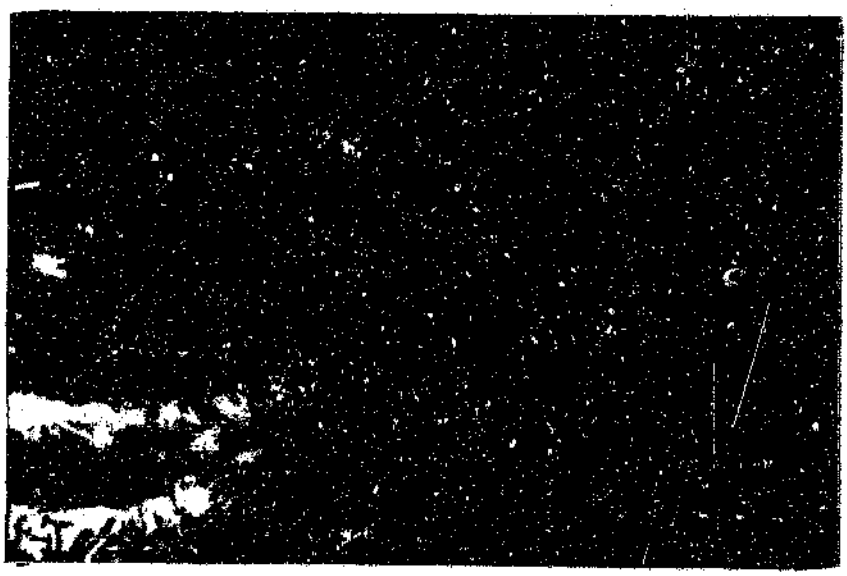
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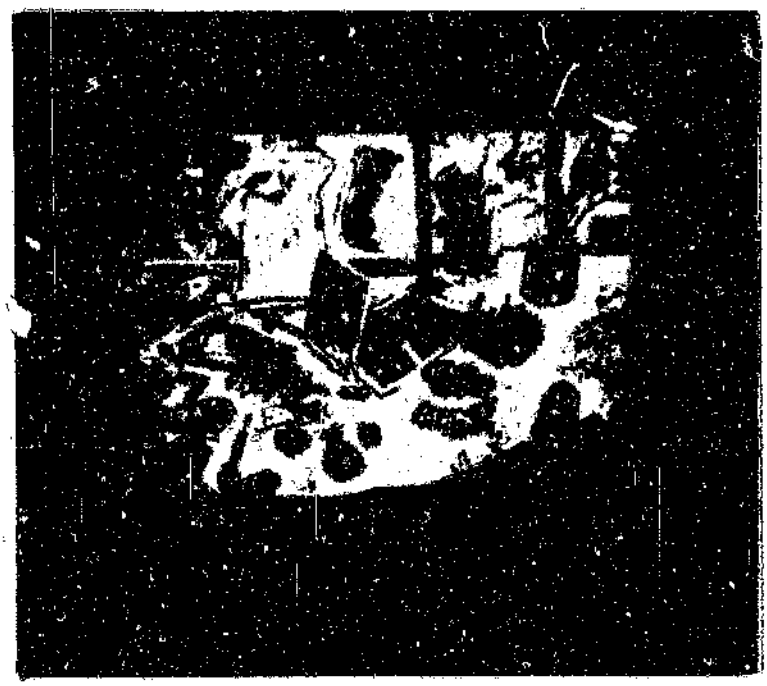
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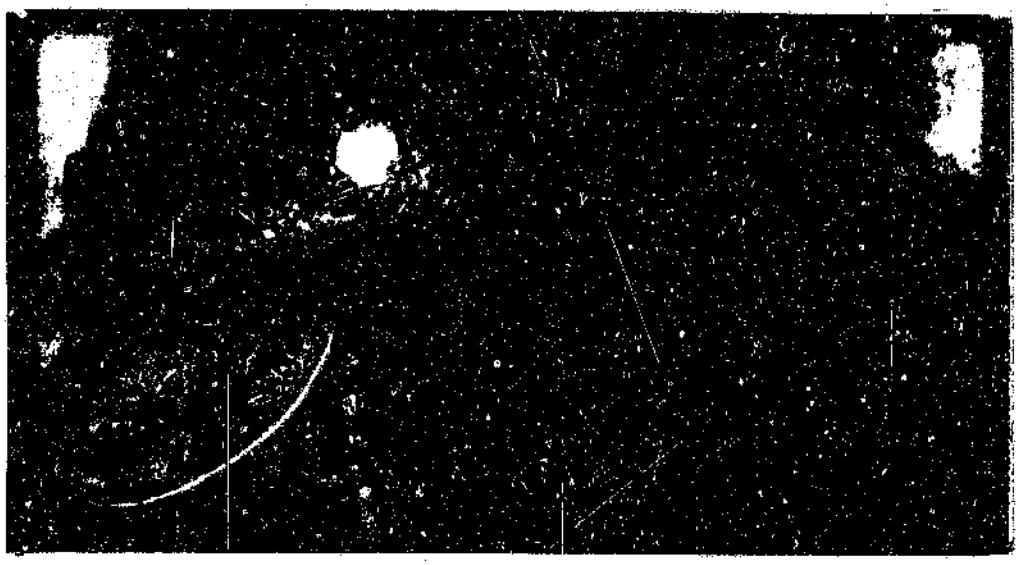
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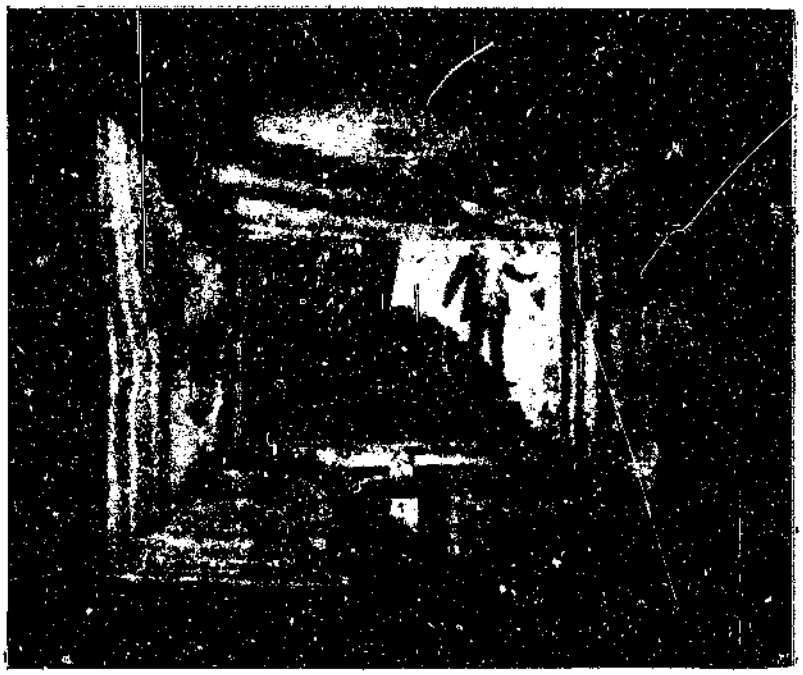
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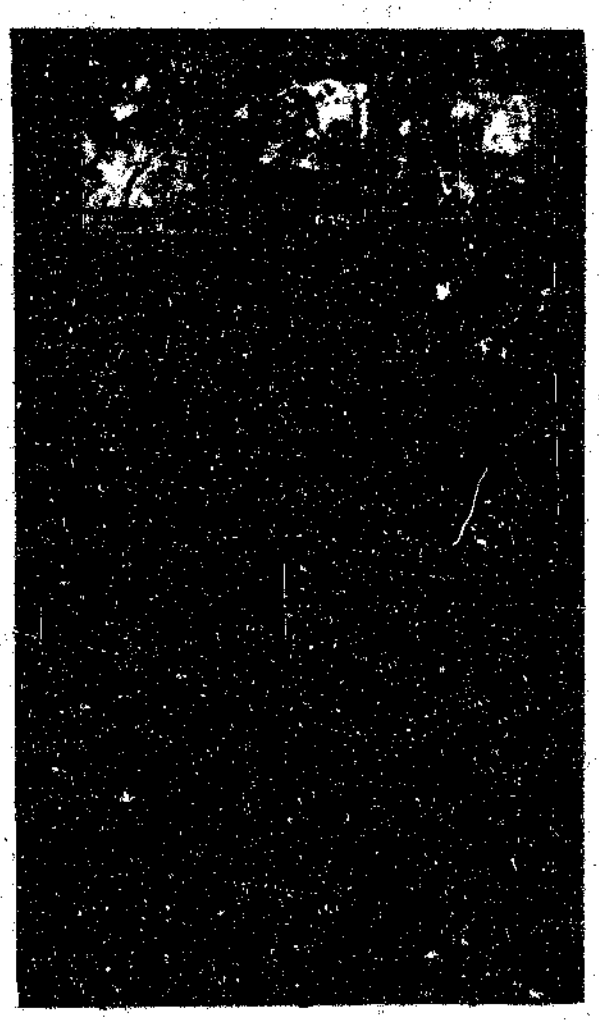
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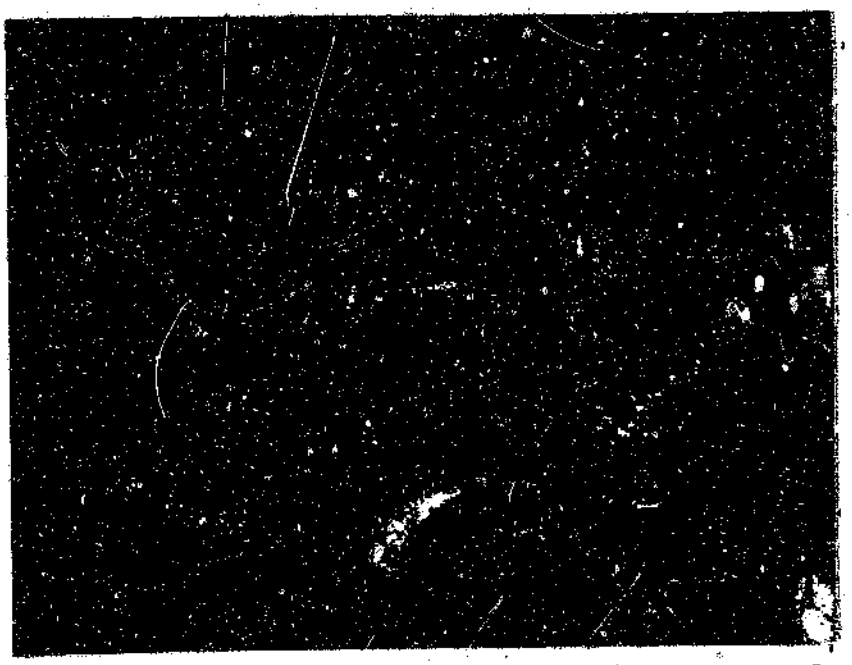
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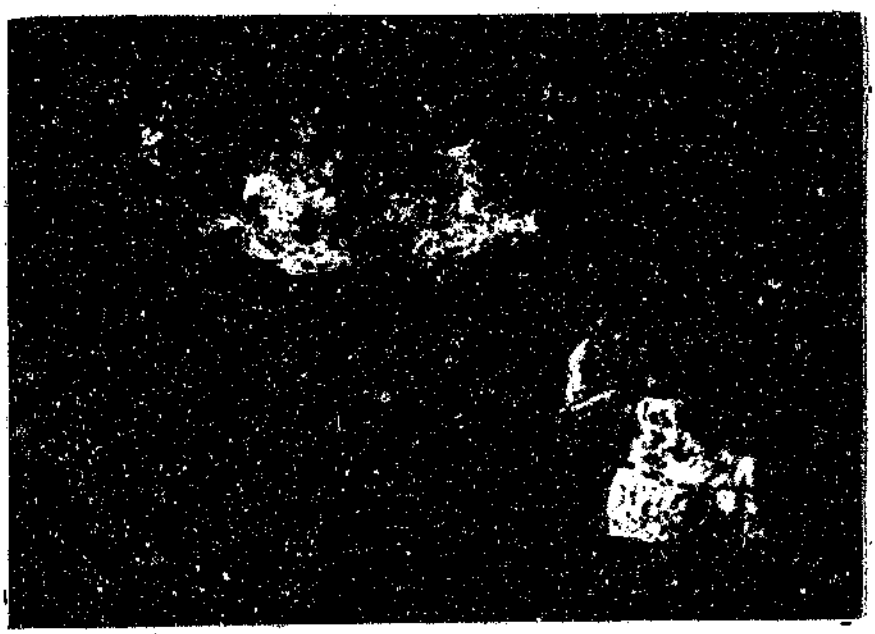
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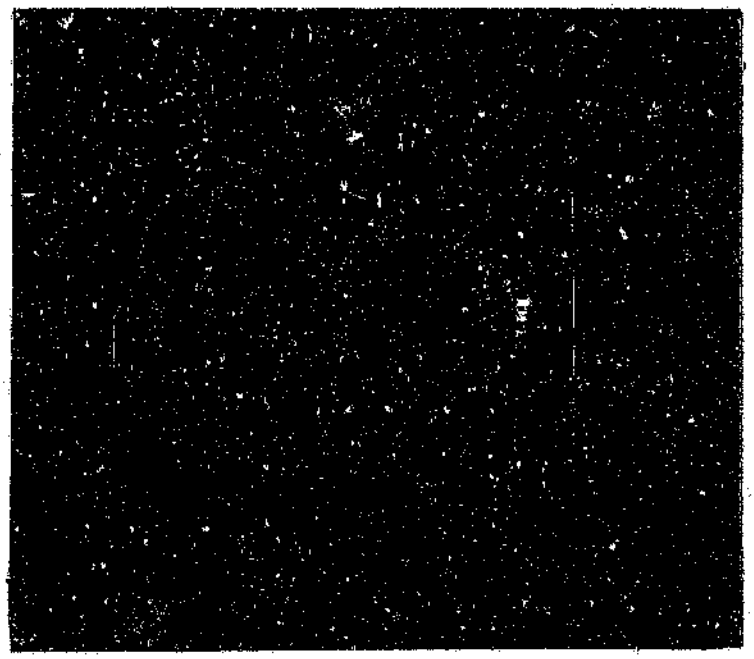
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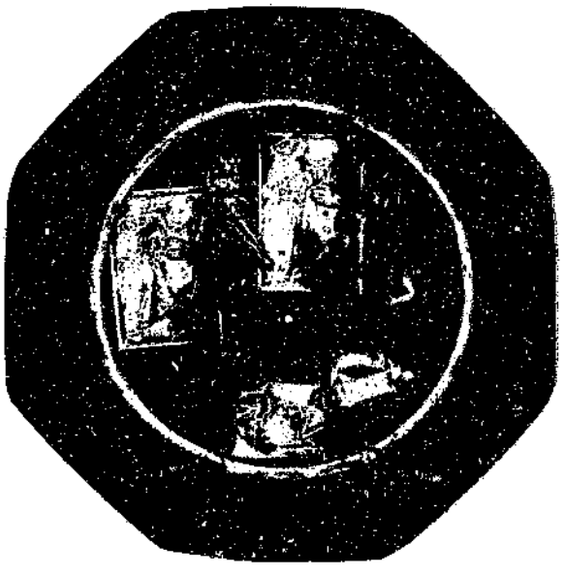
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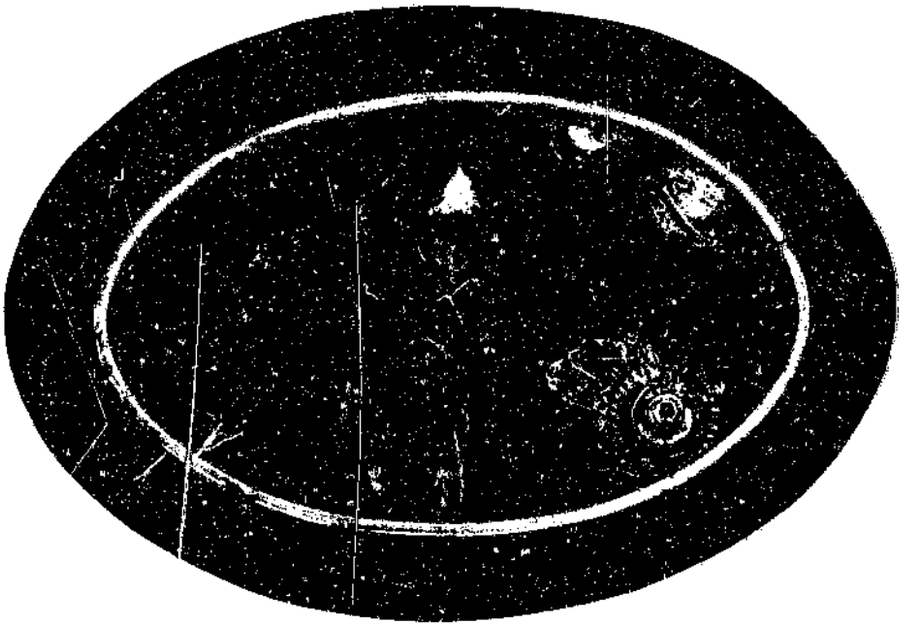
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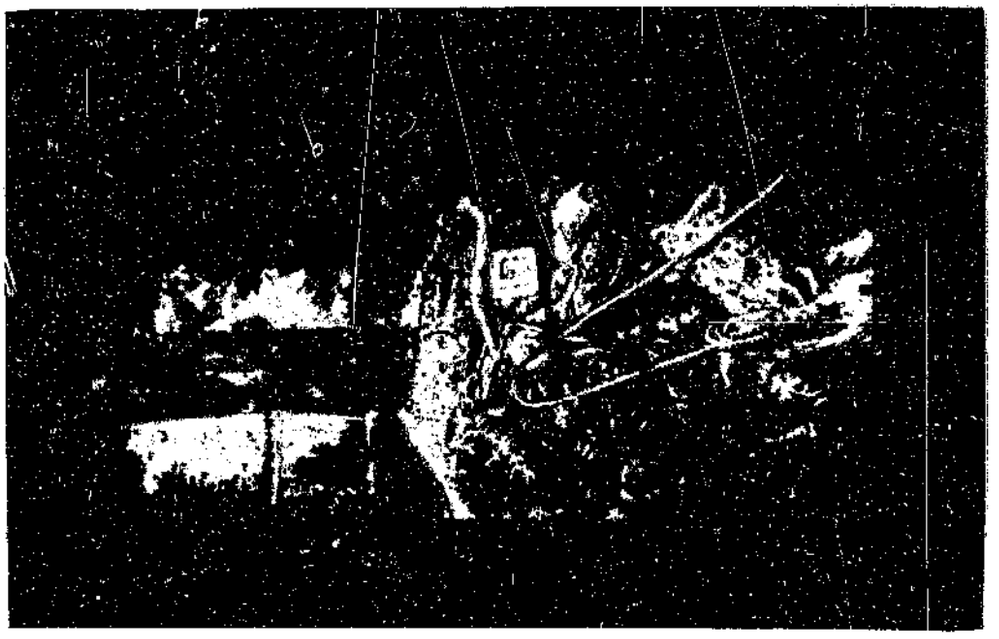
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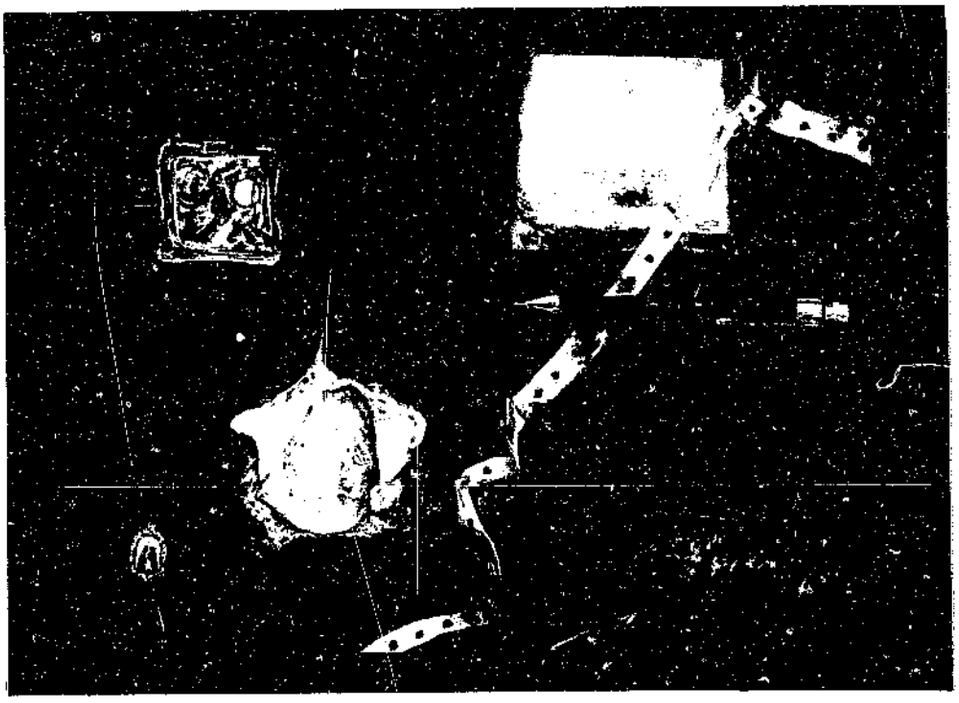
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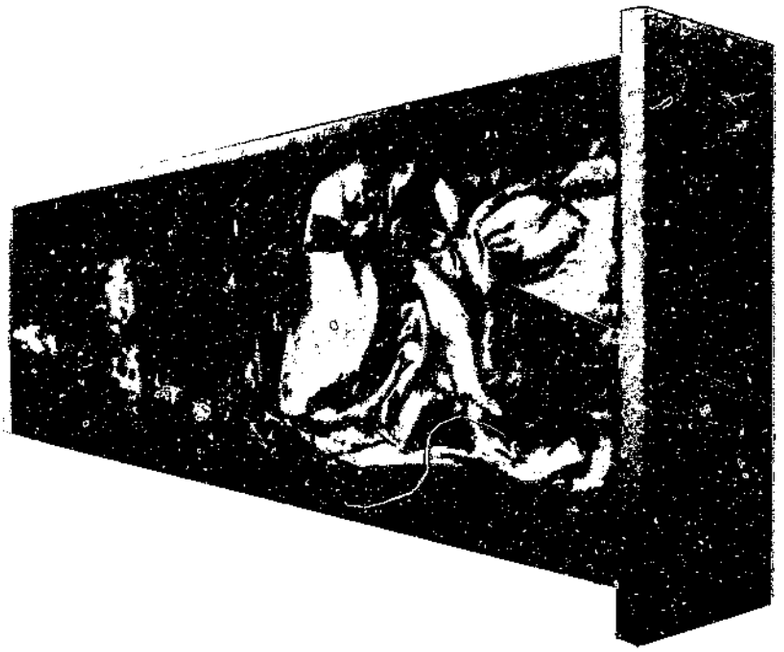
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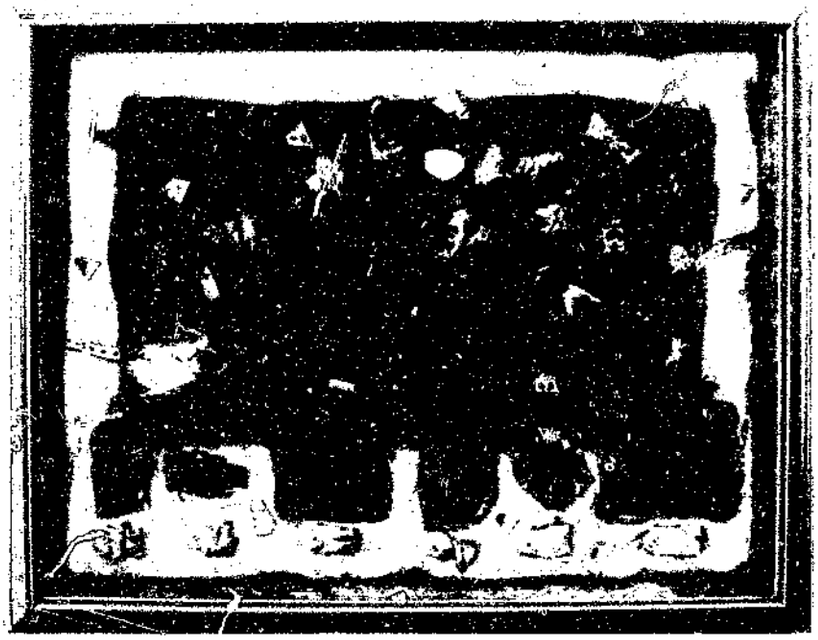
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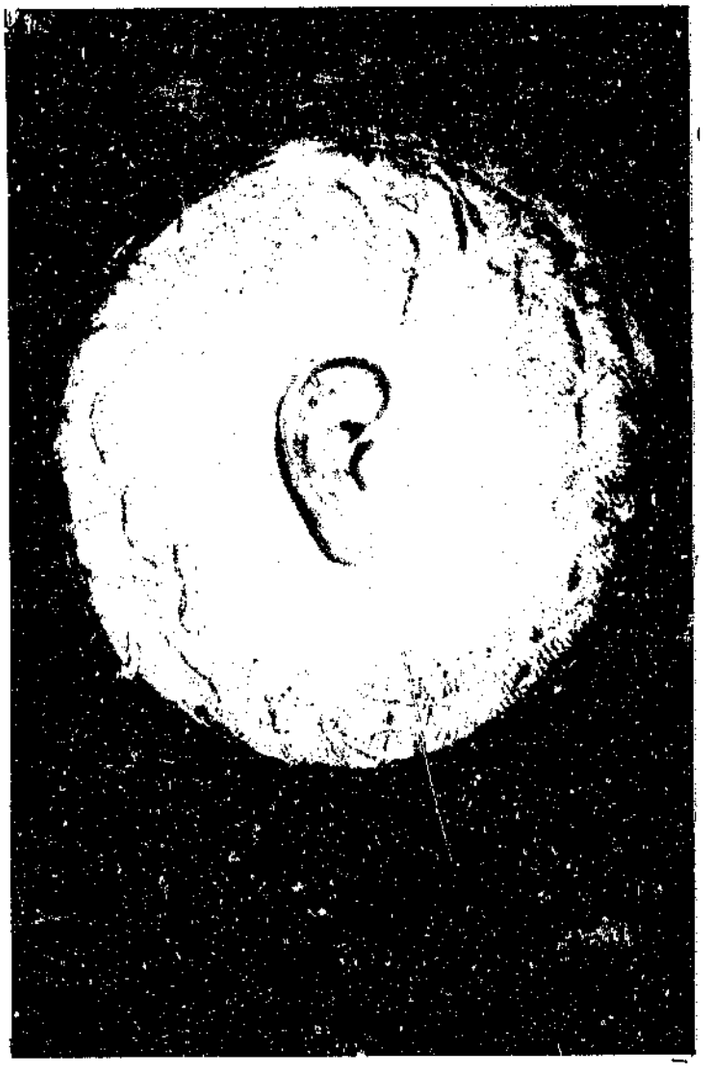
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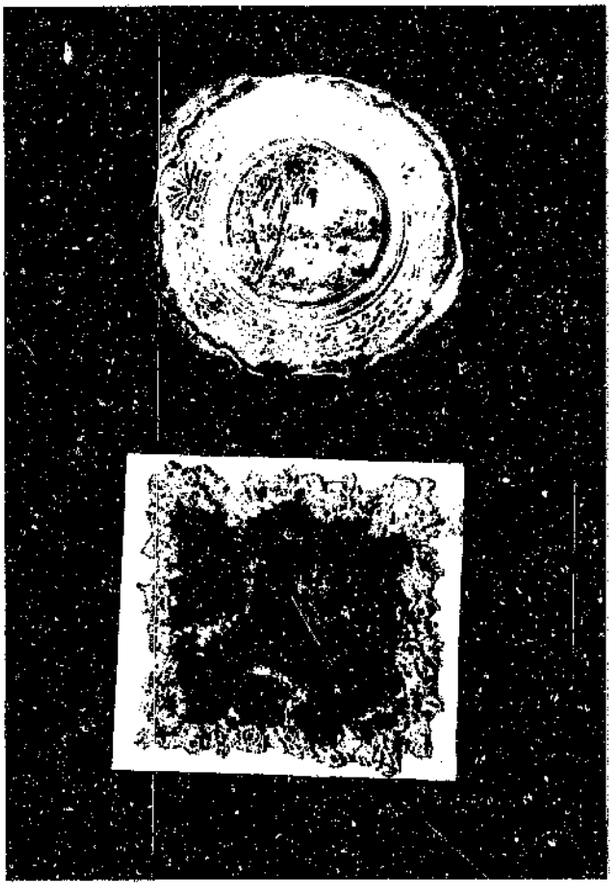
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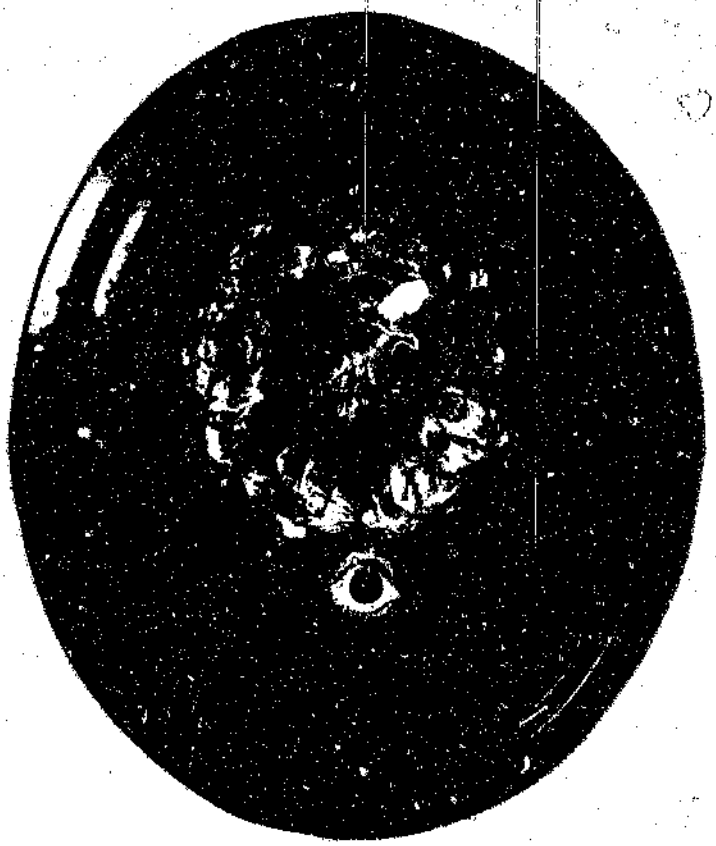
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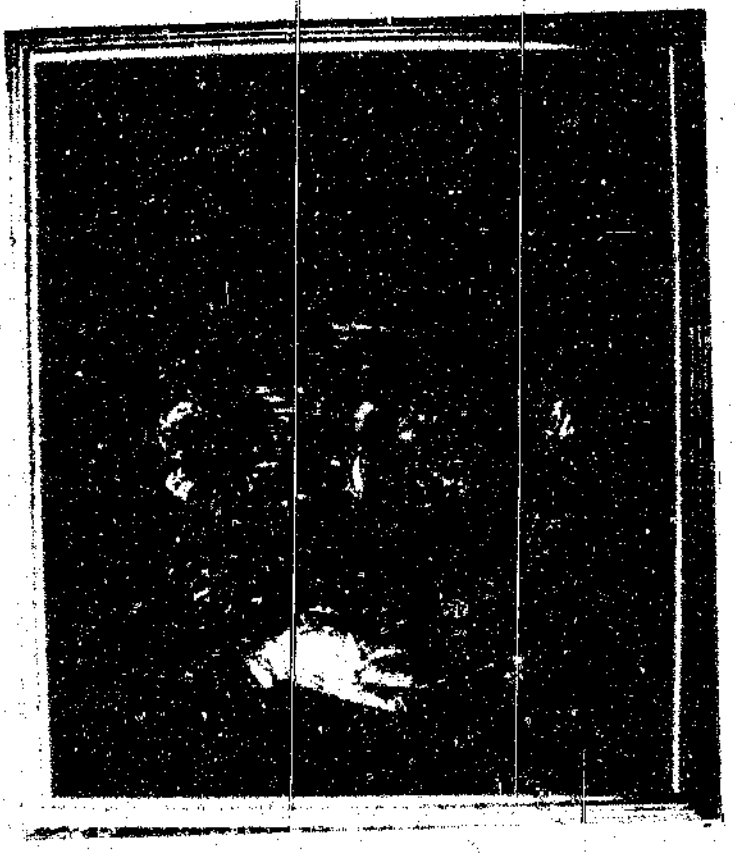
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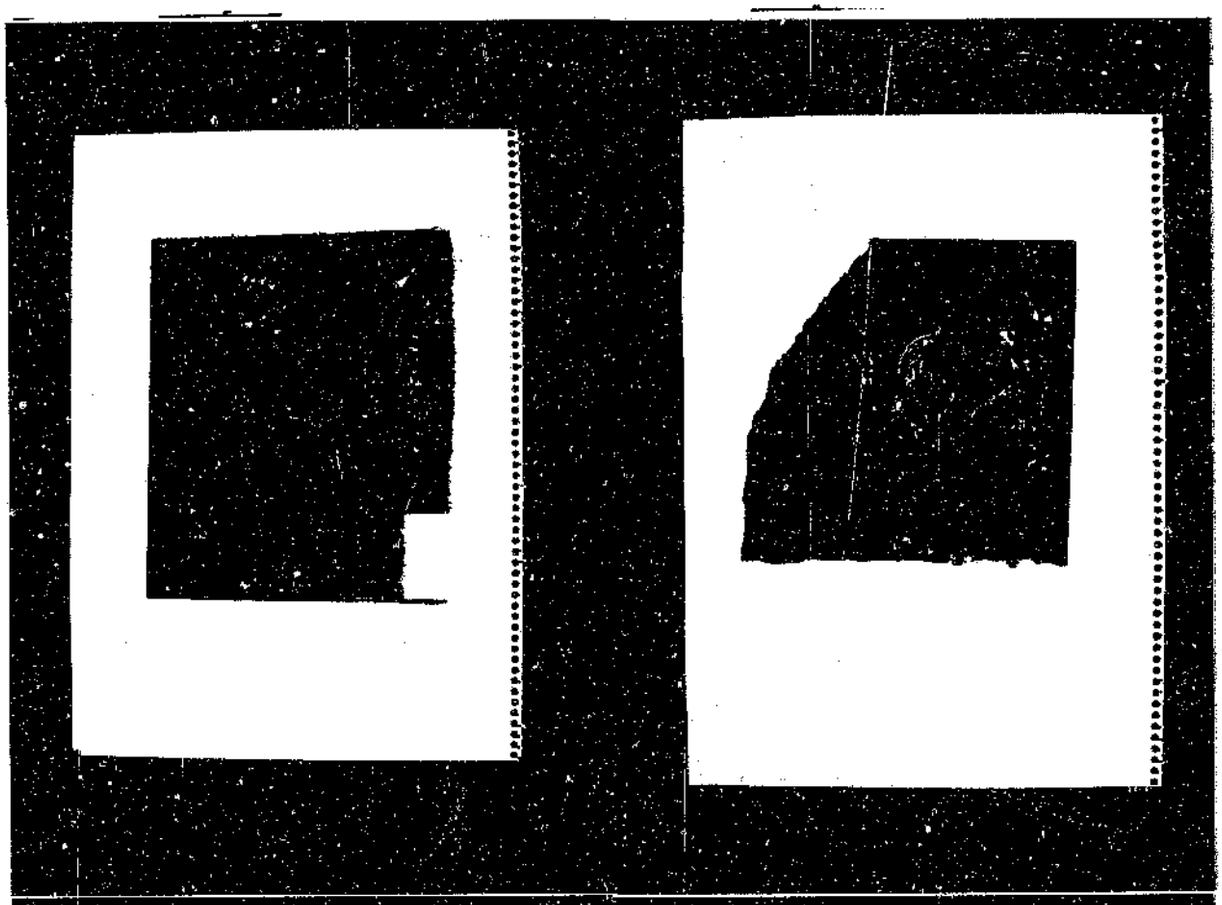
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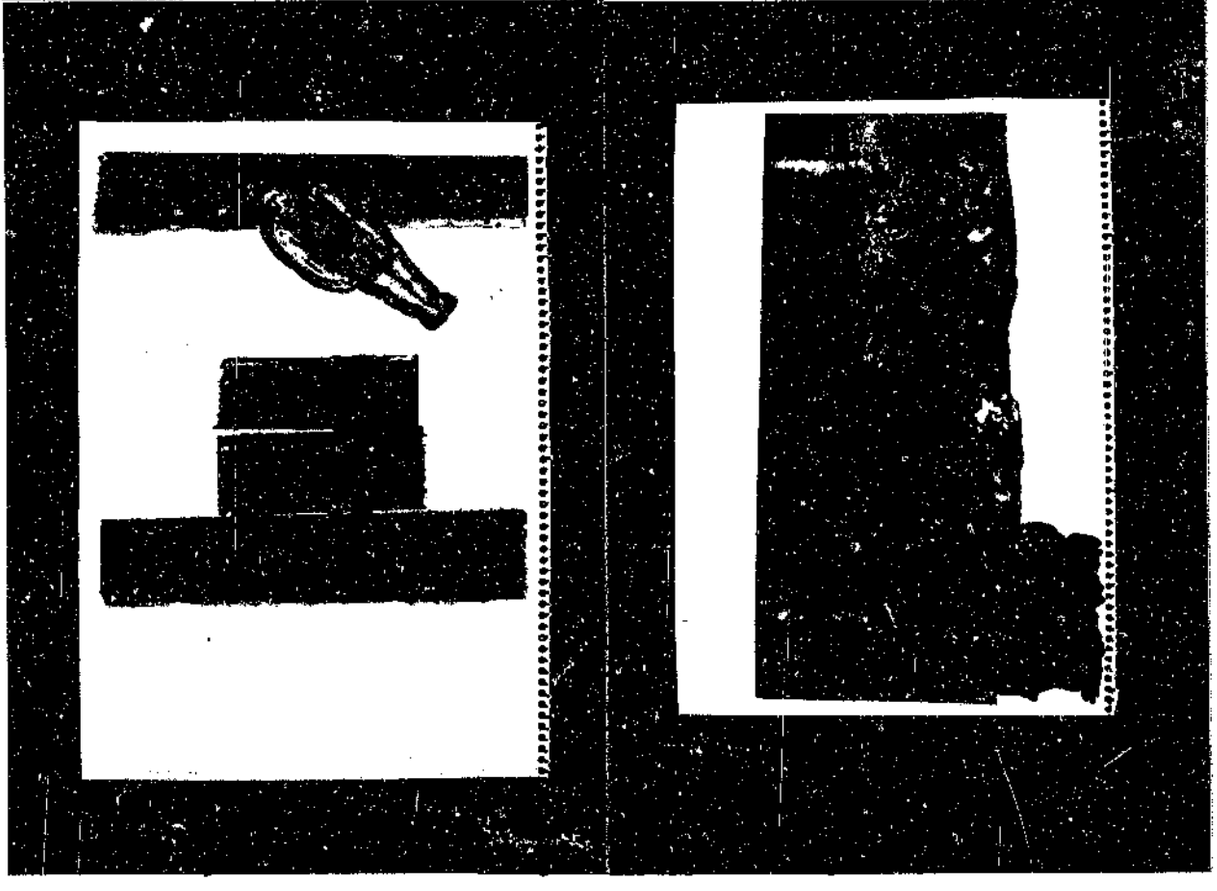


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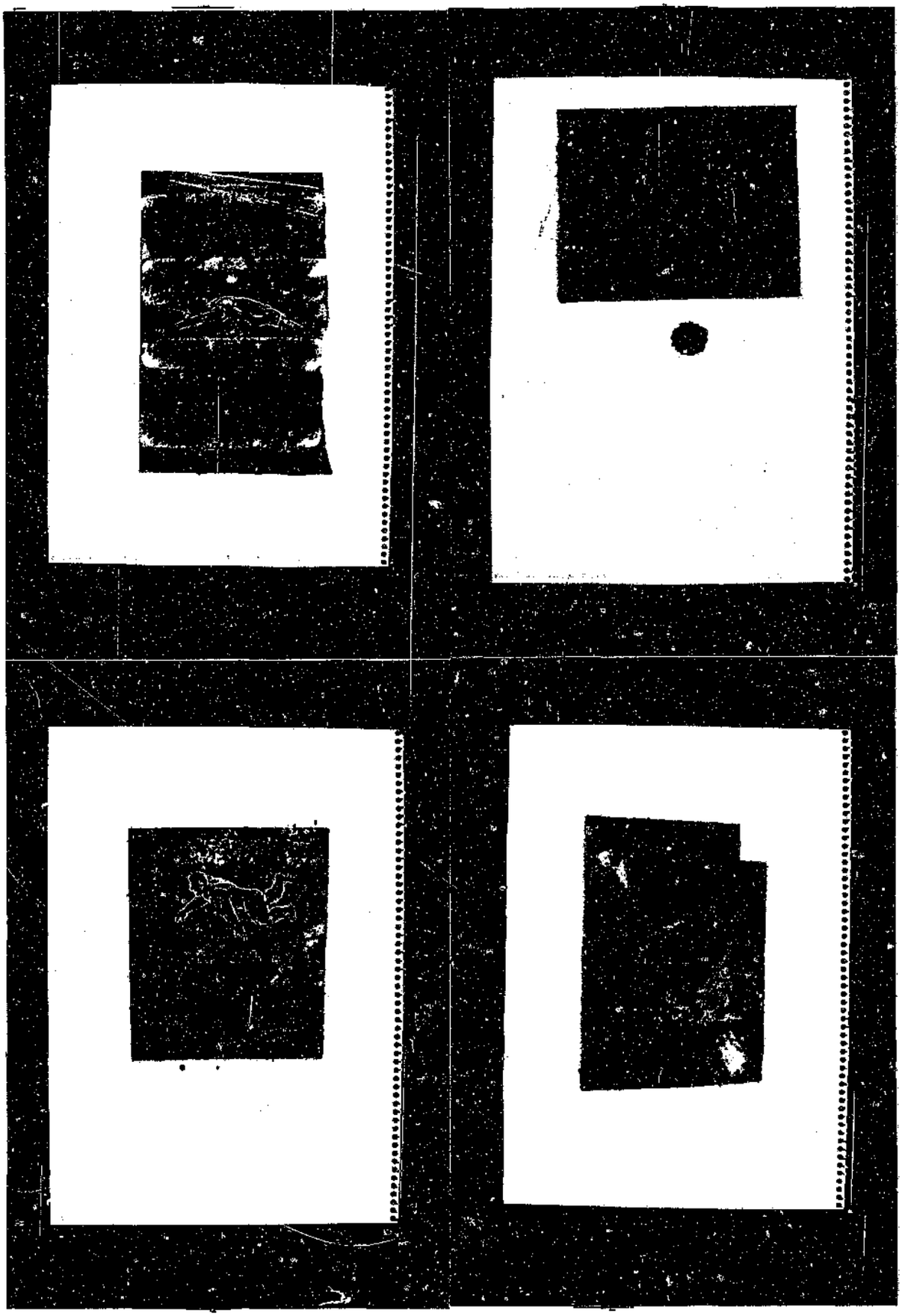
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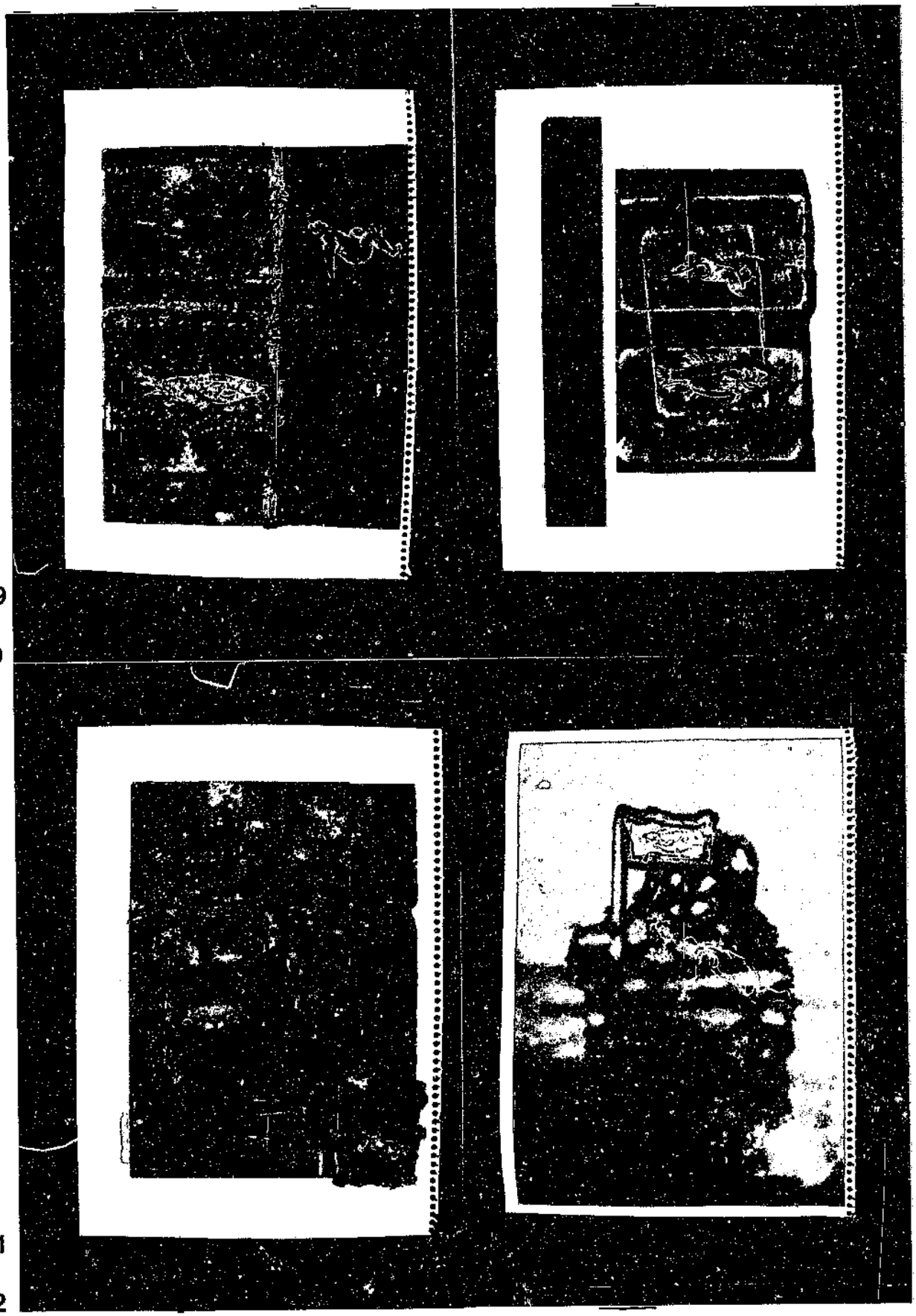


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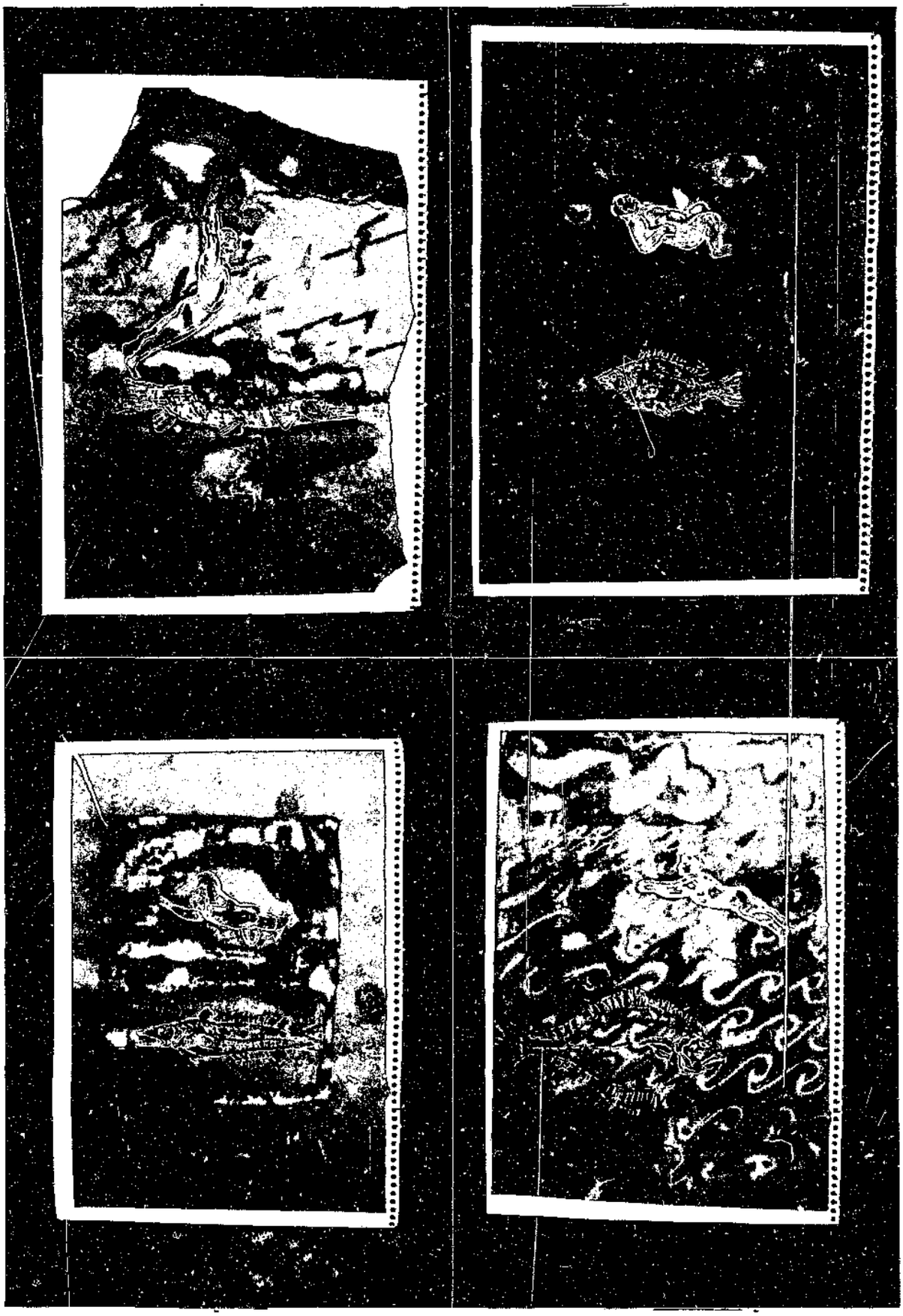


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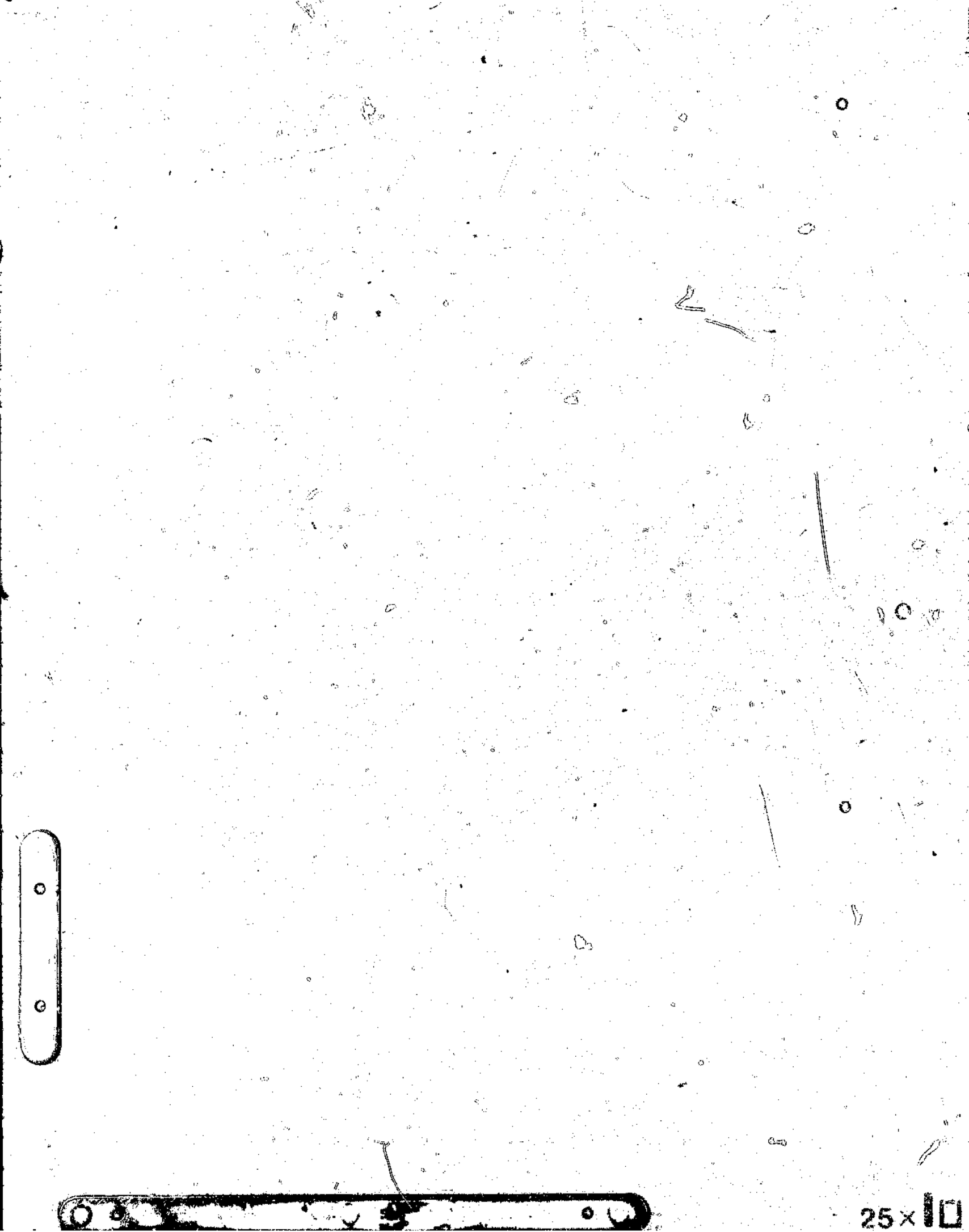
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