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REPRESENTATIONS OF THE HUMAN FIGURE:], IDEOLOGY, REALITY.

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

Johannesburg 1985

DECLARATION

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

Deborah Margaret Bell

26th day of November, 1985.

ABSTRACT

This research, which consists of paintings and drawings, and a theoretical dissertation, is essentially an exploration of the dialectical relationship between theory and practice.

Both the paintings and the dissertation investigate various ways in which the human body is represented through painterly means, stressing the difference between a cerebral detached vision, and a 'physical' visceral response. These alternative approaches are studied in relationship to the following:-

The development of figurative conventions which reflect ideological principles such as the relative social position of woman, as opposed to men, in western society.

Psychoanalytical theories regarding the importance of images of the body in the visual arts, and the difference between ideal representations which deny certain aspects such as carnality and mortality, which people fear in connection with their own bodies, and representations which exist outside these ideal conventions, and serve as explorations of these subconscious desires and fears.

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude for the criticism and advice given to me by Professor Crump, Terence King, and Penny Siopis, who have all acted as supervisors at different stages in this research.

I would also like to thank Robert Hodgins for his invaluable support as friend and critic.

The financial assistance rendered to me by the Human Sciences Research Council, and the University of the Witwatersrand (in the form of a Senior Bursary) is also gratefully acknowledged.

PREFATORY NOTE.

This dissertation accompanies a body of paintings and drawings which were executed over the period of four years, 1981 - 1985.

The theoretical research undertaken for this degree and the course that the painting followed were closely linked. Initially, the theory and the concomitant reading influenced the directions investigated by the practical work, but the explorative nature of the act of painting presented new concerns which in turn determined the kind of research and reading undertaken: practice and theory were reversed. Eventually however, they were so conjoined that they constituted a kind of 'dialogue'.

Although the subject of this dissertation might be said to be the continuing interaction between the theory and the practical work, the dissertation is presented in two halves. The first section deals with the many diverse ideas that were researched and considered; the second illustrates how these ideas came together in the paintings and drawings, and sometimes to what degree each of the basic ideas is present in, and influential upon, the practical works presented.

Because of the subjective nature of the practical research, and its attendant ideas of creativity, intuition, memory and experience - as well as the subsequent personal analysis and description of the work (which is dependent on the fact that the artist and writer are one and the same person) - there is the problem of the language and style of writing to be used in the dissertation. I have decided, after deliberations over terminology such as 'the candidate', 'the artist', 'the author' etc., that in those cases where personal experience and ideas are central to the argument being presented, that the personal pronoun would most fittingly be used. 'I' am both the artist and the writer, and these are 'my' interpretations and ideas. However, a detached critical style will be utilised where possible.

The work is a device that the artist uses to discover where the boundary between the acknowledged and unacknowledged aspects of his own imaginative activity lies. This remains movable, permeable, while the work is still in progress, but as soon as the work is complete, it becomes defining.[1]

[1] Liam Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge**, p.45.

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INTRODUCTION.

This dissertation is essentially a consideration of how theories and ideologies considered by, and the experiences of, one individual aiming at creativity, became transformed into paintings. Although this was obviously an integrated experience - one of mirrors reflecting mirrors, so to speak, the actual form of this dissertation is divided into two separate halves. Part One is the presentation of a collection of differing ideas and theories, while Part Two is an illustration of how the paintings embody a constellation, or constellations of these ideas.

Thus, in Part One, the theories presented are advanced not as arguments to further detailed scholarly research, but are shown as they existed in the painter's creative continuum: they demonstrate their contribution to the paintings submitted for this degree. As such, they should not read as following a logical linear progression towards a conclusion, nor even as theories rigidly tested for their truth or applicability, but rather as a layering or accumulation of diverse methodologies and theories which reflect a diversity of personal interests.

> A painter's mind is a muddle - a computer.[1]

There is, however, an important thread that weaves through the research: that is, considerations (relevant to this submission) of how images of the body have been *represented* in Western visual tradition.

The point of departure for this submission was an interest in the way in which the female, as opposed to the male, was represented,

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[1] Robert Hodgins, 1985. Private conversation with the author.

and how certain conventions developed in European art, and later in the mass media, which could be seen to reaffirm the relative positions of the sexes in the ideologies of Western society.

However, through explorations in the practical work, and a shift in the painting medium, another concern presented itself. That is, how paint quality could affect the way in which images of the human figure are apprehended. This led to an investigation of the differences between a detached contemplation (or cerebral seeing) and a more 'physical' identification between the spectator and the work.

The paint medium changed from enamel to oil. The different properties of these two paints influenced the way of working. The enamel paint tended to induce a more detailed 'finished' type of painting, whilst the viscosity of oil called for a more idiosyncratic manipulation. This change in paint also engendered a change in scale. The enamel paint, with its ability for descriptive detail was far more suited to a small format, whereas the physical handling 'solicited' by the oil paint required a larger arena. A smaller format invites contemplation, as the eye can remain steady, and absorb the whole scene at once. Looking at a larger scale, on the other hand, concerns the experience of visually and physically exploring the work.

The notion of a cerebral seeing, or the *Gaze*,[2] as I will now call it, was seen to be closely tied to a European convention of painting which makes use of a one point perspective and the technique of

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[2] *This term has been coined by Norman Bryson,* **Vision and Painting**. p.95.

applying paint in a manner where the process of painting is not apparent, so as not to disrupt the credibility of the illusion. This type of painting presents a way of seeing which reaffirms the status of the spectator as the centre and hence 'owner' of the world which is offered to him[3] by the painting. It was also recognised that this 'male' gaze was an important aspect in the creation of the images of the female nude as 'sex-object'.

The opposing means of apprehension, which I shall term the *Visceral*, deals with those aspects of painting that cannot easily be described through intellectual analysis, and pertains to a more subjective 'gut' understanding of a work which is explicated in the manner of its working; and in which the palpability of the paint carries a meaning over and above the subject it is describing.

Unlike the work which invites the Gaze, and offers an idealised vision of the world, paintings which elicit a Visceral response serve to remind the viewer of his/her own body. A study of various theories dealing with a psychoanalytic analysis of art, and how a spectator relates to painting in terms of his/her own body (through concerns of 'inside'/'outside', 'part-object'/'whole-object') suggested that this more 'real' as opposed to 'ideal' response to art could evoke direct physical associations of eroticism, carnality, and mortality.

Although the direction that the practical and theoretical work followed, developed through a symbiotic relationship in which each

[3] And the notion that this spectator is essentially male is a very important aspect of the convention. See Chapter One.

influenced the other, they are presented in this dissertation in two halves suggestive of cause and effect.

However, it must be noted that the dissertation is only part of the work submitted for this degree, so while the theories discussed form the critical base, the paintings must be seen to be concentrations of the research and thinking described in Part One of the dissertation. They should not be seen as justifications or validations of that research: they should be seen as complexes which stand and must be judged alone. This is especially true because each demonstrates a particular relationship between, or hierarchical arrangement of, ideas and ideologies, however equally those must be weighted in the discussion of them.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE: IDEOLOGY

> "The ideal is like a myth, in which the finished form can be understood only as the end of a long process of accretion. In the beginning no doubt there is the coincidence of widely diffused desires and the personal tastes of a few individuals endowed with the gift of simplifying their visual experiences into easily comprehensible shapes. Once this fusion has taken place, the resulting image, while still in a plastic state, may be enriched or refined upon by succeeding generations. Or, to change the metaphor, it is like a receptacle into which more and experience can be poured. Then, at a certain point, it is full. It sets. And partly because it seems to be completely satisfying, partly because the mythopoeic faculty has declined, it is accepted as true."[4]

The origins of this degree's research, both in the practical work, the reading and looking, and the writing, were the fact that *men* regard women, in both the physical and the metaphysical meaning of the word 'regard', in a particular way.

Pursuing this basic interest lead to the study of Feminist and Marxist theory concerning the ideologically determined roles of the sexes. The necessity to find a visual equivalent for these ideas, that is to create paintings from them, brought me to the notions of the *female as sex object*, and the *male as voyeur*, and how these issues are represented, in the visual arts, both in High Art, and the contemporary popular media - of film, advertising, photographs of the paparazzi and pornography.

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[4] Kenneth Clark, **The Nude.**, p.11.

Through the history of Western Art, one is able to study the relative social positions of men and women through the way in which they are represented. Apart from the descriptive stereotyping of their roles, it is important to note the *means* of representation, and how the style and medium, whether in oil painting or photography, was used to reaffirm this status of male voyeur and female sex object.

WOMAN AS SEX OBJECT/MAN AS VOYEUR.

The convention of the Nude, the history of which has been analysed by Sir Kenneth Clark,[5] amongst others, amply illustrates this difference in the treatment of the sexes. In viewing the ideals of this convention, it is apparent that they are the reflection of a male-based culture in which the male nude, whether Apollo, other god, or athlete, symbolised heroic and generally cultural values, whilst the nude as female Venus symbolised the sensual, and values of nature.

The heroic male nude derives its character in part from the god Apollo, who was the god of light and reason and came to stand for the rational and civilised side of man's nature; whereas Venus, as the goddess of love and procreation came to be ified as the *object* of love, and the *container* for procreat being identified as object and container, the female is imm y seen as passive, and something to be acted upon. As John Berger says, "*Men act* and *Women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at."[6]

In Western society the implications of an unclothed woman are generally seen to be sexual. This may be due to the more generalised sexuality of the female body, but is more likely the consequence of a society in which women are considered to be the

[5] Clark, **The Nude**.

[6] John Berger, **Ways of Seeing**, p.47.

property of men. A woman is kept covered so that other men do not covet her. Consequently, when her nakedness is revealed, her sexuality becomes the property of the man who is watching. Female nakedness therefore becomes associated with desire.

Traditional male nudity carries different associations. The male nude is a far more public figure - (the victorious hero displayed in squares, or the suffering Christ figure who is worshipped in church) - and personifies communal pride and aspiration. Thus his body becomes a means of symbolising 'mankind' in general.[7]

Apart from the influence of the attributes of Apollo, the authority of the male nude is derived from the association of virility with strength and potency. This is apparent in phallic symbolism, and can be seen to represent abstract paternal power. Celebration of the male figure is thus central to patriarchal society, and is reaffirmed within Judaic/Christian belief by the idea of man's image-likeness with God the *father*.[8]

Apart from these differences noted within the subject matter itself, there is the question of the intention of the art work. We know that historically in Western society, cultural concerns were considered to be the domain of the male, and that a work of visual

[7] This reading of 'mankind' presumably includes women. However, it would be difficult to read a symbolic interpretation of both men and women into a female nude - her configuration is too consciously sexual.

[8] See Margaret Walters, **The Nude Male**, p.8.

art would have been created for a predominantly male public.[9] We also know that in the early sixteenth century, with the development of oil painting in Southern European art, the female nude (whether as Venus, Susannah or others) gained pre-eminence over representations of the male nude.[10] These two facts imply that the image of the female nude in Southern European painting was developed in a way most likely to flatter the male. The positions and situations in which the nude is generally presented do seem to suggest that this was so.

The idea of the reclining Venus, which has become a popular convention in painting, developed in Venetian art around about 1500.[11] While this recumbent pose can be seen to echo elements of landscape, and reaffirms notions of woman as 'nature', and earth mother, it also carries connotations of passivity, invitation and trust. In representations of Venus, the spectator is invited to look, and regardless of his social standing or physical attractiveness, her enticing attitude assures him of his acceptibility. Even if she seems unaware of his presence, the body of the woman is generally positioned in such a way as to offer it to his gaze, and if she is accompanied by a male suitor, his character is

[9] In this dissertation, the viewer will be generally referred to as 'he', and the model as 'she'. While this type-casting may appear to be sexist, it is an important aspect of the argument presented, which illustrates how historically this was generally the case.

[10] As Clark says, "The predominance of the female nude over the male, of which Raphael's **Judgement of Paris** is the first example, was to increase during the next 200 years until by the 19th century it was absolute." **The Nude**, p.343

[11] See Millard Meiss "Sleep in Venice: Ancient Myths and Renaissance Proclivities." **The Painters Choice**.

minimised so as not to compete with the viewer. In some cases, such as Titian's **Venus of Urbino**, in which the female nude is represented gazing outwards from the canvas, it is as if she is aware of being watched, is aware of *his*, the viewer's, existence, and, because of the intimate nature of looking at a painting, the viewer feels that at that precise moment in time, he *owns* her.[12]

However, too direct an association between the viewer and the female subject tends to mask some of the excitement of being an *illicit* voyeur, so within representations of the nude, certain pictorial conventions developed which allowed the viewer to fantasise the experience of a 'surprise encounter'. Subjects which hinged upon the concept of voyeurism were employed to this end, for example, the stories of 'Susannah and the Elders', and 'The Bath of Bathsheba'. The erotic potential of a naked woman at her toilet, unaware that she is being watched, is clear, as it allows the voyeur to enjoy the specialness of spying on an intimate moment. In fantasy, it also carries the excitement of the possibility of eventual discovery, and the woman's sudden shame at her nakedness. Such shame would heighten the man's awareness of his power, which could serve to provoke sexual arousal.

Within the pictures themselves, the device of illustrating small specific details was used to emphasise the intimacy and immediacy of the moment. In many cases, the erotic content lies as much in the objects that surround the nude, as in the nude itself. For example, in Tintoretto's **Susannah and the Elders** (fig.1), Anne

[12] In the sixteenth century, when this convention developed, the ownership would have been real. Paintings such as Titian's would have been painted for private owners, who could keep such images to themselves if they so wished.

Hollander describes how the detailed naturalism of the discarded smock and fringed towel amplifies the sexual significance of the image, as it shows that Susannah has recently undressed. She is also surrounded by objects such as the mirror (into which she gazes, quite conscious of her charms), a comb, cosmetic jar and necklace - all objects that are made 'visible as the paraphernalia of allure.' In contrast to this 'detailed naturalism', her body is merely an abstraction.

> The erotic message has been shifted to the surrounding emblems; the nude figure itself does not have to convey it. Susannah's body has been more eroticized by her abandoned corset than by any of its extraordinary linear distortions.[11]

The inclusion of specificities of time and place, as well as details of clothes and personal memorabilia, do help to suggest a certain immediacy and intimacy between viewer and subject. As illustrated above, paintings in which discarded clothing, and not drapery, is found in conjunction with a nude figure, (especially a female nude), afford certain excitements, as the presence of these garments implies that the figure has recently disrobed and has been surprised in her nakedness. The erotic impact lies in the feeling that the viewer (or voyeur) is seeing something that is essentially private.

This attraction of a 'fantasy' encounter seems to rely on such a balance between the inclusion of specific details (to 'set the scene', so to speak) and an idealised or 'abstracted' sexuality of the female nude. If her body is described too naturalistically, the nude is no longer seen as an 'object' onto which the viewer's fantasies can be projected, but becomes an individual with her

[11] Hollander, **Seeing Through Clothes**, p.160f.

own demands and desires, and presents her own, and often not 'ideal', sexuality. (This will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three.)

The underlying principles on which the displayed female Nude[14] was painted emerges quite clearly today in the same Nude photographed. Even although the human hand has now been abolished as intermediary, the full purpose of the display is not interrupted. In the 'pin up', the successor to endless Venuses, the aims and ideals that have been discussed in terms of the Nude, remain the same. The pin-up contrives to offer to the spectator the possibility of an imagined intimacy. As John Berger points out, in typical examples of both these modes, the women share a common expression of calculated charm that they offer to the man whom they *imagine is looking at them* (even although they do not know him).[15]

Femininity has become associated with this self-consciousness of being surveyed. Like Berger, Lucy Lippard comments on the fact that women are aware that every move they make in public is supposed to have sexual connotations for the opposite sex. She also goes on to say that:-

> Sex is a way of obtaining our desires and it is also the key to the love and affection that we are supposed to be dependent on.[16]

[14] From here on in this dissertation, the use of the word 'Nude', with a capital 'N', will refer to the convention of the Nude as an ideal, whereas 'nude', will be used simply to describe the naked state.

[15] Berger, **Ways of Seeing**, p.55.

[16] Lippard, "Fragments" **From the Ce**[illegible], p.69.

This notion that an attractive woman is ensured of a man's protection and support, and conversely, that a man's status and ability to protect and provide will secure him an attractive spouse - is the basis of a Western conception of masculinity and femininity. These ideal stereotypes of the powerful man and beautiful woman are common both to popular cinema and advertising.

Erving Goffman in his study on gender roles in advertising,[17] illustrates how gesture, expression, and posture used in commercials reveal and embody the accepted cultural values and ideas of masculinity and femininity. Advertisements depict for us how we *think* men and women want to behave, they have the power to influence our ideas of pleasure, of 'having a good time', and present us with the behaviour models through which we may achieve such pleasure. Commercials can therefore be seen as a process of conscious manipulation through which they reinforce many sexist roles and expectations in order to create a market in which their product can be sold. They perpetuate many of the myths of masculinity and femininity to this end.

> ...while advertisements appear to be photographing male and female human beings, what they are actually photographing is a depiction of masculinity and femininity that is fitted or matched in such a way as to make it function socially.[18]

From the examples that Goffman presents in his book (which may not necessarily be representative of gender behaviour in real life, but nevertheless seem right as *pictures*, and are quite representative as advertising images), he illustrates certain gender 'rules'. Women caress, they never grasp or clutch; men are taller than

[17] Erving Goffman, **Gender Advertisements**.

[18] Vian Gornick, in introduction to Goffman's **Gender Advertisements**, p.viii.

women, unless they are her social inferior, men instruct women, men take control, the man is always alert, while the woman is dreamy, and withdrawn, relying on the man to look after both of them. The examples of stereotypes are endless, but they generally reinforce the concept of men being 'naturally dominant' and women as 'naturally subordinate' or submissive.

Due to the authority of the photographic image, and the proliferation of the media, these stereotypes have now, more than any other time in history, affected a wide audience in terms of their gender ideal. For example, the contemporary western obsession for women to depilate themselves has become accepted as normal, and is even suggested by some advertising as being essential for hygiene. This association of femininity with smooth skin and the lack of body hair may have been borrowed from the 'look' of nude, or may have arisen from the same social base that established the ideal in the first place. Hollander[19] would argue the former. She sees this convention of female hairlessness as having arisen out of formal *aesthetic* criteria, and points out that in males shown in Greek vase painting, pubic hair helps to formalise the actual transition between genitals and body flesh (and becomes a kind of abstract body ornamentation) - whereas the women's bodies have no interruptions of shape, and in fact, the inclusion of hair would spoil the smooth formal transitions which are characteristic of the female form.

[19] Hollander, **Seeing Through Clothes**, p.136.

However, body hair is also directly associated with sexual passion,[20] and the lack of it becomes an indication of 'objecthood' and passivity, and could also imply childhood, and by association, virginity and purity. An abundance of hair is seen as threatening, and has become part of the image of the devouring female, the *femme fatale*.

As John Berger says:

> (.... in the European tradition generally, the convention of not painting the hair on a woman's body helps towards the same end. Hair is associated with sexual power, with passion. The woman's sexual passion needs to be minimised so that the spectator may feel that he has the monopoly of such passion). Women are there to feed an appetite not to have any of their own.[21]

Germaine Greer extends this argument.

> The rationale of depilation is crude. Sexuality is quite falsely thought to be an animal characteristic, despite the obvious fact that man is the most sexually active of the animals, and the only one who has sex independently of the instinctual reproductive drive. In the popular imagination, hairiness is like furriness, an index of bestiality, and as such an indication of aggressive sexuality. Men cultivate it, just as they are encouraged to develop competitive and aggressive instincts, women suppress it, just as they suppress all the aspects of their vigour and libido. If they do not feel sufficient revulsion for their body hair themselves, others will direct them to depilate themselves. In extreme cases, women shave or pluck their pubic area, so as to seem even more sexless and infantile.[22]

It is ironic that women are conditioned to believe that they will be more sexually desirable to men if they suppress those charac-

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[20] In earlier times, women with abundant and uncontrolled hair were considered wanton, but the association of hair and (sexual) potency is not only reserved for women - as illustrated by the story of Samson and Delilah - and is perhaps the subconscious reason for men's vanity and fear concerning baldness. Also, the cutting of hair is a well known symbol of castration.

[21] Berger, **Ways of Seeing**, p.55.

[22] Greer, **The Female Eunuch**, p.38.

teristics that are most descriptive of their sexuality. In her book **Women and Film**, E. Ann Kaplan speculates that women's acceptance of sexual submissiveness is so pervasive that it dictates their sexual fantasies. Like Berger, she suggests that women generally tend to accept the passive role and only see themselves in terms of their desirability for men.

> We could say that as locating herself in fantasy in the erotic, the woman places herself as either passive recipient of male desire or, at one remove, as *watching* a woman who is passive recipient of male desires and sexual actions.[23]

The woman is generally the dreamer, and she arranges events in her sexual fantasies in which things are done to her - she very rarely initiates or dominates the action. Even when she does watch, she does not *own* the desire, she places the responsibility for sexuality at one remove. Similarly, Beatrice Faust writes "sex researches and clinicians agree that 'If a woman sees a sexy picture... she tends to project herself onto the screen, onto the picture and to imagine what it would be like to be that woman'. The woman viewer may even change the story a little so that it meshes more realistically with her own life, making the projection more credible. She also feels 'that she is learning a good few lessons from the woman up there. She will then be able to put the lessons into practice in her own sexual and romantic life'. The male viewer is quite different - 'he objectifies. He takes the girl down off the screen and has sex with her on the spot'".[24] The man therefore owns both the desire and the woman, and his desire naturally carries power with it. "...men do not simply look; their gaze carries with it the power of action and of possession which

[23] Kaplan, "Is the Gaze Male?" **Women and Film**, p.26.

[24] Faust, **Women and Pornography**, pp.29/30. Source of internal quotations not acknowledged by Faust.

is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive and return the gaze, but cannot act on it "[25]

Kaplan goes further to say that voyeurism is linked to the 'scopophilic instinct' (i.e. the male pleasure in his own sexual organ transferred to pleasure in watching other people having sex). She identifies the mechanisms of both voyeurism and fetishism as male operations, yet allows that in representations of the recent women's movement, women have been allowed to assume the social role defined as 'masculine' (but only if the man then steps into *her* shoes, keeping the whole structure of domination/subordination intact). From this she concludes, in answer to her own question "Is the Gaze Male?",[26] that the gaze is *not* necessarily male, but that to own or activate it is to be in the 'masculine' or dominant position.

The stereotypes of 'masculine' and 'feminine' thus seem to be stronger than actual sexual characteristics. This type of role reversal, where the woman takes on masculine characteristics, and the male feminine characteristics, can be found in some feminist imagery. An example in painting is that of the work **Philip Golub reclining** by Sylvia Sleigh (fig.2), in which she has shown herself - the female artist, painting the male nude. However, the male nude is very feminine; the curves of his slight body and his long luxurious hair, are seen as female traits. Also, he has his back to us in a pose reminiscent of Velasquez' **Rokeby Venus** (1657)

[25] ibid p.31

[26] This is the title of the first chapter in her book **Woman and Film**

(so that one is not aware of his sex), and looks coyly into a mirror in which the artist's image is reflected. Sleigh's image, although it is obvious that she is a woman, has a sense of masculine toughness, and it is as if she is making an ironic comment on the dominant/masculine role of the artist, and the 'coyness' of the traditional (female) Nude.

So far, this discussion has centred around the 'feminine' ideal, and how this panders to the male belief in 'rightful' masculine dominance. However, men have also presented an alternative *darker* view of woman which has established its own convention.

Once, Venus was given two personalities. She was either the *Celestial Venus* or *Venus Vulgaris*.[27] The Celestial Venus symbolised love that is aroused by contemplation of the eternal and the divine, whereas the earthly or common Venus represented the procreative principle, and the beauty to be found in the material world. She later came to symbolise earthly, physical desire. This distinction between the female representing either 'divine love', or 'sexual love' is taken further within Christian religion. Woman is either virgin or whore, as typified in the two Mary's, and in the opposites of Eve, who brought about man's expulsion from paradise, and Mary, mother of Christ. One stands for the fallen woman, who was the temptress, and the corruptor of love to lust, whereas the other stands for redemption through spiritual purity, and more specifically through a denial of carnal love (symbolised by her virginity).

[27] According to Clark, this differentiation was initially mentioned in Plato's **Symposium**, when he makes one of the guests assert that there are two Venuses, whom he called Celestial and Vulgar - or to give them their later titles, *Venus Coelestis* and *Venus Naturalis*. **The Nude** p.64

Certain images in literature and art have helped to reinforce this psychological and theological separation of women into two stock types diametrically opposed.[28] Apart from the virgin and the whore, there are the images of witch/saint; nun/succubus; snow white/rose red; wicked stepmother/fairy godmother, etc.. Jung would call these oppositions the two characters of the *anima* - the female archetype.

Jung defines the anima as the personification of all the feminine psychological tendencies within a man's psyche - for example, in vague feelings, moods, prophetic hunches, receptiveness to the irrational, capacity for personal love, feelings for nature, and his relationship to the unconscious.[29] However, there is also a negative anima figure which is a type of death demon, and is responsible for dark moods, negativism, fear of impotence, accidents etc. It is this side of the anima which relates to the image of the femme fatale. Such an image of woman is not restricted to western culture, but is a more universal figure. In the Orient there is the character of the 'poison damsel' - a beautiful seductress with hidden weapons or secret poisons with which she kills her lovers during their first night together. This type of erotic fantasy is seen by M.L. von Franz as a crude primitive aspect of the anima

[28] There are also the polarities of the male character which are based around what Paul Hoch calls the "white hero/black beast" division - apparent not only in mythical and religious figures eg. Apollo/Dionysus; Christ/Satan; but also in popular comic book culture and science fiction. For example in the characterisation of Superman and Lex Luthor. P.Hoch **White Hero, Black Beast**.

[29] M.L von Franz, "The Process of Individuation", **Man and His Symbols**, p.177.

which he believes becomes compulsive when a man does not sufficiently cultivate his 'feeling' relationships.[10]

The denial of women's sexuality (apparent not only in the idolisation of the Virgin, but also to some extent in the insistent passivity of the Nude), has as its opposite, the image of woman as temptress and devourer, whose disquieting sexual presence is used to lure men into danger and destruction. Mythical and historical characters include Eve, Salome, Circe, the Sphinx, and Delilah. This preoccupation with evil and destructive women is a particular feature of late nineteenth-century culture, and the proliferation of the image of the *femme fatale* in both the literature and art of the time.

Although the concept of this dark side of woman was not a new one, the development of the image of the *femme fatale* as such a popular stereotype at this time can be seen to correspond with certain social conditions.

Virginia Allen[11] suggests that the femme fatale was created as a reaction against what men saw in women who were beginning to declare their sexual as well as political freedom - both issues which were beginning to be raised over a century ago. The agitation for such freedom abrogated the control that men had over women, and challenged the roots of patriarchal society. It is also interesting to note that the fascination for images of woman as temptress and devourer developed within the same period of time

[10] Ibid p.179

[11] Allen, **The Femme Fatale: Erotic Icon**, p.x.

as Freud's 'discoveries' concerning female sexuality and his definition of the male fear of *Vagina Dentata*.[12]

The fear of the castrating and devouring power of the vagina is explained by Freud as the male (Oedipal) assumption that a woman's lack of a penis is the result of castration, and that by identifying with this castrated figure, he endangers his own organ.[13]

Some feminist theorists (such as Kaplan), suggest that it is linked to a male fear of the mystery of woman's capacity for mothering, menstruation; and also of 'losing' himself through the sexual experience. However, the strong association of sex with death in the image of the *femme fatale* could also have a historical basis in the material conditions of the time. As Patrick Bade points out, it must be remembered that in the nineteenth century, prostitution was particularly rife, and that there was still no effective cure for syphilis, so these women could quite literally have been seen as the carriers of disease and death.[14] Also, the nineteenth century had its own 'real-life' femme fatales. The character of the *Courtesan* or *Les Grandes Horizontales*, fits into this stereotype.

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[12] Although Freud's theories are unlikely to have had a direct influence on the artists of the time (his **Interpretation of Dreams** was only published at the end of 1899), with the exception of perhaps Klimt, a contemporary of his in Vienna, Partick Bade mentions that the interest in female sexuality was one that was discussed and debated in intellectual circles of that time. **The Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women**, p.27.

[13] Stafford-Clark, **What Freud Really Said**.

[14] Bade, **Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women**, p.9

Women such as Cora Pearl became the 'sex idols' of the time; however, it was their status rather than physical desirability that was sought after. It became fashionable to be ruined by one of these women, and in fact, their reputations were based on the number of lovers they had ruined, or the fortunes they had devoured. It was as if they were a necessary antidote to the totally subordinate role that the wife and mother occupied at that time.

The femme fatale may be seductive, but she has a *cold* sexuality. The stereotypical image that developed is peculiarly androgynous, and with the exception of her long abundant hair, (which can be seen to carry sexual connotation of the genitals) her body is not very voluptuous. (See fig.3) Even the musculature of both her body and face is often more masculine than feminine. These attributes may be an indication of the sexual fantasies of the artists who created them, but nevertheless, they are also an indication of the femme fatale's independence from the traditional female stereotype.

Depictions of the femme fatale were rarely set out as a narrative. She had become an icon (or fetish) in which she seemed silent, immobile, and quite remote. The way in which she has been portrayed can be seen to have been set up in opposition to the icon of the Virgin. The contrasts of the two figures are quite direct, for while Mary remained a virgin, yet conceived a child,

[15] Allen discusses Krafft Ebing's study of hair as one of the most common of sexual fetishes amongst men. Krafft Ebing took Freud's definition of fetishism as being based on an aversion to real female genitals, and apparently did a case study of what he called the "hair despoiler's" - a number of disturbed men who attacked women in public by hacking away at their hair, an act which he saw to be a subverted desire to rape and humiliate. (ibid. p.188)

the femme fatale indulges her sexuality, but always remains, as Allen points out, *barren*. It must be more than a coincidence that this image developed at the same time as the first significant birth control campaigns (which were started in France in the early 1800's).

The femme fatale image has become a popular stereotype on which many women model themselves. Apart from the connotations of the contemporary 'sex-object' which borrows many of its trappings from this image (boots, black panties, high heels, sultry use of makeup etc.), the connotations of having power over a man are considered attractive by many women.

Manet's **Olympia** (fig.4) is based on the figure of Victorine Meurend, one of Les Grandes Horizontales, and as such, it can be seen to fit in with the conception of the femme fatale. But there is one striking difference, Olympia is a portrait of a *real* woman, and it is the shock of this knowledge, which would have been quite apparent to the Parisian public of the time, that caused such a public outcry when this painting was first exhibited. There is also the uneasy fact that although this image does not correspond to the stereotypical type of representation of the femme fatale, it does borrow from the convention of the classical Nude.[16] Here, the ideology of the two are at odds. The idealised, consciously seductive yet mythical character of the traditional Nude is belied by the assertive presence of Victorine Meurend.

[16] This painting has as its prototype, Titian's **Venus of Urbino**, (1538).

By creating a painting which called its convention into question, Manet seemed to question the traditional role of women, both in society and the erotic imagination. This painting served as a reminder to men of the boundary between their everyday appetites and the artistic image. Whereas Titian's **Venus** is heavy with languor, and is inviting, **Olympia** sits up, and asserts her presence by gazing straight outwards, challenging the viewer. Her hand does not tantalisingly shield her pubic area, but sits very firmly on her upper leg and by doing so, emphasises the palpability of that leg. She is very real. Liam Hudson suggests that even if one was unaware of the circumstances of this work, her bold gaze would indicate that she is a whore.

> It is this reciprocity, I think, that must have brought the idea of whoring so forcibly to mind. Prostitutes, after all, were at that time the only women men knew about who, while naked, could appraise while being appraised.[17]

Further, Hudson sees her action of placing her hand on her leg as a protective gesture, hiding that part of her that her male visitor has come to use. This gesture is then judged indecent, as it recognises the indecency of the male visitor-cum-spectator's interest in her. This is a painting in which the spectator's presence becomes part of the work itself. The painting is about a moment of intrusion - emphasised by the cat's alarm - and because the spectator witnesses this reaction, he becomes synonymous with the intruder. The flowers that the maid is offering to her are the flowers that he has just sent in. Here, Manet is violating yet another code, he is violating the spectator's private fantasy in his interaction with an image of a naked woman, as the scenario for interaction has already been set, her 'profession' is stated, and the viewer can not pretend otherwise. It is almost an expose of the relationship between the spectator and the female

[17] Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge**, p.105.

nude, and differs quite significantly from the male viewer's fantasy of a 'surprise encounter' (see p.11) as **Olympia** does not respond with feminine 'shame', but challenges his presence.

Hudson also makes an interesting observation in terms of the treatment of **Olympia's** flesh. One of the criticisms at the time was that she was an 'india-rubber deformity', an association which Hudson relates to modern pornography as he says that there seems to be some inherent tendency when men turn the female body into a fetish, to stress the impermeability of the skin, and to conceive of it as "smoothly resilient like an inner tube."[18]

While the concept of the devouring female may seem to stand in opposition to the woman as 'sex-object' psychoanalytic theory suggests that *both* are conventions that acknowledge a deep fear of women.

> ...sexualization and objectification of women is not simply for the purposes of eroticism; from a psychoanalytic point of view, it is designed to annihilate the threat that women (as castrated and possessing a sinister sexual organ) poses."[19]

This fantasy of male domination is at issue now is examined by many feminists, and has been the focus of much recent theory - especially on the subject of *pornography* - where it is seen as this desire to dominate taken to its extreme.

[18] Ibid p.105. Treating the skin in this way becomes a means of de-personalising the flesh - of making it separate, something to be acted upon, but which will not respond. There is a certain kind of 'dumbness' inherent in such a fetish. The fetish is more an extension of the person using it than something in its own right. It is like a rubber sex-doll.

[19] Kaplan, **Women and Film**, p.31.

In her book **Pornography and Silence**, Susan Griffin attributes the basis of the pornographic imagination on a deep grounded fear that man has of his bestial side, and how it causes him to lose control. When this happens he turns around and blames the woman for tempting him, and uses pornography as a means of punishing her. (In pornography the man is still the hero.) This fear of the knowledge of the body, and the power of nature, also leads to an acknowledgement of mortality and vulnerability, and as Griffin explains, the death of self-image, of pride. She uses as her basis, the concept of woman as nature, and man as culture, and sees this temptation of culture by nature as being demeaning, as culture believes itself to be invulnerable to nature (just as the mind is believed to be in control of the body). The essence of the pornographer is believing the woman to be the vessel of evil (and in this way is very closely tied to Judaic/Christian religion).

> The pornographer, like the church father, hates and denies a part of himself. He rejects his knowledge of the physical world and of his own materiality. He rejects knowledge of his own body. This is part of his mind he would forget. But he cannot reject this knowledge entirely. It comes back to him through his own body: through desire. Just as he pushes away a part of himself, he desires it. What he hates and fears, what he would loathe, he desires. He is in a terrible conflict with himself. And instead he comes to imagine that he struggles with a woman. Onto her body he projects his fear and his desire. So the female body, like the whore of Babylon in Church iconography, simultaneously lures the pornographer and incites his rage.[40]

In that pornography contains this fear of mortality, and base human sexuality, it is also obsessively concerned with flesh. However, its obsession with flesh lies in its trying to reduce the fear of it, trying to 'objectify' it, make into a thing that can be controlled. Griffin explains the attraction of the strip-tease in these terms:-

[40] Griffin, **Pornography and Silence**, p.20.

> Participating in the church's fantasy that it is a woman's body that destroys a man's soul, now the pornographic mind takes out its revenge against that same body which has humbled it. For this is the underside and secret message in the pornographic revelation of beauty: its purpose is to rob the female body of both its natural power and its spiritual presence. So in the striptease, culture realizes its revenge against nature. The mystery of the female body is revealed to be nothing more than flesh, and flesh under culture's control.[61]

In this way flesh becomes fetishised into an object that is removed from its original context, and this 'dumb' aspect of flesh that can become acted upon, is something that it is recognised within the pornographic language.

Such an interpretation of pornography allows for an interesting reviewing of certain conventions. Representations of Adam and Eve can be discussed in terms of how they were used to illustrate the concept of Original Sin, and the weakness and vulnerability of mortal flesh, but it is also interesting to try and decipher the meanings conveyed in the way they interact with each other. The story of the temptation becomes an exposition of woman's fickleness, and also makes her the protagonist in the discovery of carnal love. Also, this story can be seen as a parable about blame. The woman is made guilty of discovering lasciviousness, for which she in turn accuses the snake. A Freudian interpretation of this offers an alternative reading, as presumably the snake would be seen to represent the phallus, and not just the devil. This interpretation can be seen to tie in with Griffin's view on pornography, as it shows man's bestial (as opposed to cultural) nature, as the original sin.

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[61] ibid. p.33

STYLE AND THE VOYEUR

The social licence that voyeurism implies also carries some appropriation of power. The spectator is not only looking at something that is essentially private (an implicit acceptance of the right to witness secret events), and is able to watch someone without them seeing him; but he also has the privilege of a vision that is unimpeded by cluttering objects.

To digress - although on a very pertinent theme - it is worth examining the notion that the single-point perspective, an Italian Renaissance convention based on Albertian perspective, is one in which the artist places himself with the viewer *before* the pictured world, as if to say 'I see the world'. The Northern convention, basically Flemish, is on the other hand, more descriptive. The world offers images of itself as if in a mirror, without the intervention of a human maker, so that 'the world is seen'.[42]

This god-like viewing presented by a single-point perspective, which became the traditional means of spatial representation in Southern European painting, also serves to reaffirm the status of the spectator. When this device is coupled with the concerns of illusionism to erase the physical process of painting, they both manage to contrive to address a *single* spectator, and to make him feel that he is viewing a world that centres around him. Also,

[42] This distinction between these two modes of visual representation is suggested by Svetlana Alpers, in a paper given in conjunction with Michael Fried, called "The Applicability of Literary Critical Methodology to the Analysis of Painting.", at the December convention of the Modern Language Association, 1981. Quoted by Craig Owens, "Representation, Appropriation and Power.", p.15.

the size, and portable nature of the oil painting, helps create a moment when the eye contemplates the world alone - (to paraphrase Norman Bryson) ...a world of silence in which bodies act through frozen gestures at points in which normal vision is unable to immobilise - and a world in which the body of the perceiver is reduced to its optical anatomy and no other sensations impinge on his consciousness. The spectator's Gaze into this alternative existence is not disturbed by the presence of the artist's labour and he can believe himself to be the owner of the scene before him.[43] Bryson stresses that this ability to present the viewer with an image that he feels he can *own* (as it does not bear a trace of the artist's working presence), is primarily a Western, or as Berger would say, a materialist notion of art.

This notion of the Gaze is significant in the philosophy of *seeing* that it presupposes. It suggests a world of wholeness, logic and order, and one that the artist or viewer controls. But as such, it does not surprise or confront the viewer, but exists to please, and offers itself as a possession, which affirms the spectator's status.

> It is this other space of the studio, of the body of labour, which Western painting negates; we are *given* the body with an intensity of disclosure and publicity without counterpart outside Europe, but it is the body in a different guise as picture, to be apprehended simultaneously by the Gaze; the Gaze takes the body and returns it in altered form, as product but never as production of the work; it posits the body only as content, never as source. Compensating this impoverishment of the body, the tradition rewards it with all the pleasures of seduction, for the body of the gaze is nothing other than a sexual mask: the galleries of the West constantly display the Gaze of pleasure, as an archive that is there to be cruised.[44]

[43] Bryson, **Vision and Painting**, p.95f.

[44] Ibid. p.164

This argument is echoed by Berger's premise that there is an analogy between *possessing* and the way of seeing that is inherent in the ability of oil paint to achieve pictorial likeness.[45] The link between the convention of the Nude, and this way of seeing is important, as it helps establish the 'sex' of the Gaze as being male, and also reveals how historically, women have always been viewed by men in a way that attests to men's dominance over them, and allows men to stay where they think they belong, at the centre of the world - the heroes of culture.

Berger further asserts that while the convention of the Nude in art is less important today, the essential way of seeing women has not changed and neither has the use to which it has been put.

The contemporary media have replaced the need for High Art to continue this convention. Whereas traditionally High Art had a 'near monopoly' as a source of images for art, and art fed off art, with the invention of photography, and the subsequent proliferation of public images - in newspapers, advertising, the movies etc. - High Art became only one experience among others.

The single viewpoint of the camera (and the movie camera) works much in the same way as the conventional one-point perspective used in painting, and thus assumes the viewing subject to be an actual bodily presence, and the scene presented to be quite specifically directed at him. However, photography has two major advantages over painting which makes it the obvious means of

[45] Berger, **Ways of Seeing**, p.84 Berger suggests that this 'way of seeing' was not fully established before the 16th century; and that it was undermined by Impressionism and Cubism, and *replaced* by photography.

re-creating the experience of the voyeur. The first is the authority of the photographic image. Photographs are used as *evidence* of an actual event, and the sophistication and speed of the modern camera means that it is ideally suited for capturing 'instances of reality'.

Also, as Sontag says:

> Paintings invariably sum up, photographs usually do not. Photographic images are pieces of evidence in an ongoing biography or history. And one photograph, unlike one painting, implies that there will be others.[46]

This notion that there will be others adds the further dimension of anticipation, of the possible unfolding of a scene, literally achieved by the movie camera.

Secondly, the very reproducibility of the photographic image, as well as the ability of television and the cinema to reach a large audience at one time, means that one image can serve to involve the fantasies of many 'voyeurs' at the same instance. This "...possibility of arranging a scene from the visual pinpoint of view of a single camera's eye - into which angle and distance of vision vast hordes of viewers can be thrust..." is, as as Irving Goffman says, "...a social licence as well as an optical one."[47]

The 'truth' of the photograph manages to enforce further the specificity of the image in a way that a painting could never do. For, even if the viewer is aware of his physical distance (in terms of location and time), from what is being presented, he is always

[46] Sontag, **On Photography**, p.166.

[47] Goffman, **Gender Advertisments**, p.19.

conscious that the photographer must have been there to witness the scene. The audacity of the camera man's voyeurism reinforces the viewer's own excitement. Therefore, while the commercial and the film may offer us many pictured scenes, for example "...that of husband and wife in their bedroom, that no business of acquaintanceship could warrant us seeing",[48] we are aware of the artificiality of the scene, both in that these are parts played by actors, and that we are offered this glimpse from an ideal viewpoint (much in the way of traditional painting).

> Only a peeping Tom of unprecedented capabilities could manage the view. Like readers of what a novel supplies of his characters, the viewer becomes god-like, unconstrained by any need of legitimate social grounds for being privy to what is depicted in the scene.[49]

The role of the documentary, or the *paparazzi*, is quite different. By looking at these images, we are also witnessing the actual presence of the photographer, and the reality of the scene. The role of the paparazzi photographer is essentially to take photographs of the rich and famous *who do not wish to be photographed*. Thus every image (which is published) can be seen as a violation of these people's privacy. The type of image is different, we are not presented with an ideal viewpoint, but rather an illegal glimpse - through bushes, through doorways, or even through the flattened focus of the telescopic vision - of a private moment. For the paparazzi photographer, 'nothing is sacred', he tries to expose the lives, habits and relationships of famous people. These people, are so hounded by 'public eyes', that they start behaving for the camera, and in turn, the photographer becomes interested only in the moment when he can catch them

[48] ibid.

[49] Ibid.

unawares, split open their facade, and become the voyeur on behalf of the public. He is interested in shattering the *ideal*.

The style of contemporary visual *pornography* relies quite heavily on the camera, and the supposed presence of the photographer. However, this presence is only important in that it certifies the authenticity of the event, and allows that it took place in the presence of a third person (or more). Pornography relies not only on the act of voyeurism, but also on the ability of the spectator to make direct identification with one of the participants in the sexual act. Therefore, unlike that convention previously discussed in which specificity of time and place enhance the erotic impact of the image, in that they presuppose a certain intimacy, in pornography they only get in the way of a direct interaction between the voyeur and the sexual image. The pornographer is not interested in the atmosphere of the scene, but is only concerned with the specifics of sex, and the only details that are important, are the genitals. Pornography is noted for its *lack* of 'style' and emotional representation. Only in the absence of directly stated emotions can the spectator of pornography find room for his own responses.[50]

The emphasis is on content at the expense of all other considerations, (which may explain the lack of quality - clichéd language, bad filming etc.), and although it is usually anonymous, and its function is to record rather than interpret and understand, pornography still relies on the concept of the voyeur, and the

[50] This particular aspect of pornography is discussed both by Steven Marcus, in his essay "Pornotopia" in **The Other Victorians**, p268f., and by Beatrice Faust, in **Women, Sex and Pornography**, p.14f.

representation of a 'real' event. This 'realism' which brings the viewer closer to the event, used in representations of the Nude by the convention of including articles of clothing etc. - is stressed in pornography by the 'realism' of sex; where the man is shown in the act of penetrating the woman, so that the spectator can be sure that it really happened. (This importance of the genuine event is taken to the extreme in 'snuff movies', in which the knowledge that the episode filmed in which a woman is mutilated or even killed, actually did take place, creates the major excitement for the viewer.)

REALISM AS A NEW IDEALISM.

Traditionally, the women most frequently portrayed in Western culture were the Virgin Mary or Venus (both set up as ideals of womenhood), or as discussed, their opposites. As stated, both these figures can only be seen as idealisations, conventions of depiction that in their fully developed form had very little to do with *real* people, but were created out of abstracted formulae. However, major social changes in the nineteenth century brought about a new focus on the concept of *realism*, and the desire to represent 'real' men and women in 'real situations'. Yet, this quest for a new realism was not initially separated from certain conventions of art, such as the Nude; and these two interests became fused in an interest in the prostitute, who was frequently portrayed at the turn of the century. Certainly, this interest in prostitution did not develop only for aesthetic reasons as a means of combining an interest in realism with nude studies, but in the nineteenth century the very proportions that prostitution had reached - due to the move to the cities and economic necessity (there being little other employment for women) - had become an issue. Also, in his new bohemian lifestyle, the artist came into close contact with many of these women. This is apparent in the work of artists like Manet, Courbet and Degas, and their work in many ways echoes the developments of the literary realism of the time - of Maupassant, Zola, Flaubert etc.

Whereas prostitution at this time was dealt with with a certain candour and fascination (due to its apparent 'newness'), images of prostitution have come to be used as a metaphor for a 'social malaise'. This is most apparent in works of the Neue Sachlickheit, twenty years into the century. Both Otto Dix and Georg Grosz

use the image of a whore as a metaphor for a corrupt society. Although Degas is considered to have been a misogynist, his images of prostitutes caught in private intimate moments, show a certain sympathy. (See fig.5) Dix and Grosz however, in that they are using these women as symbols of corruption, are not so kind. These women have really become icons of misogyny. Linda Nochlin attacks these representations, and sees them,

> ...as an eminently satisfying trope in patriarchal culture because it does double service. It allows male artists to articulate their hatred of women's sexual being (and their degrading need for her) under the justifying cloak of social criticism. The hate-filled distortion of female bodies, the terrifying grotesquerie of the images of women in the works of Grosz, Dix and others, is presumably sanctioned by a larger social rage.[51]

I regard this attack of Nochlin's as being too harsh, as both Grosz and Dix were also concerned in debasing the ideal of the heroic soldier, which can be seen as a male counterpoint to the demeaning of the prostitute (see fig.6). It is true nevertheless, that they have taken the chauvinist (or historical) position of linking the female to sexuality, and the male to heroism, and attempted to pervert both these ideals. Yet, as Nochlin says - these images do double service - as they also serve as social criticism. Both the crippled ex-soldier and the diseased prostitute can be seen as victims of the social conditions of the time. These images also illustrate the estrangement of sex from pleasure, and the figures in the paintings from each other - a further criticism of an alienating, and an alienated society.

While there are countless images of interactions between men and women in the history of Western art, these depictions are rarely concerned with the specific emotions between the couple, but represent an ideal or describe some historical or mythical event.

[51] Nochlin, "Return to Order" Art in America Sept.1981 p.80

Venus, as the goddess of love, was representative not so much of a woman, but of the concept of love itself. Even Titian's Venuses - those exhausted ladies 'dimpled' with sex - were not presented as real ladies, but rather as objects of desire, and the (male) *ideal* of sexual desire. Twentieth century considerations on the other hand, can be said to be less about these ideals, than the investigation of relationships between people. This may be so for any number of reasons, including a change in the overview of men and women, the invention of the camera, and the new public interest in psychology. As Christopher Lasch mentions in his book **The Culture of Narcissism**, there is a new emphasis on the *interactions* between people.[52] As interactions, these relationships do not embody any abstract concept of love or desire, but are more concerned with a 'real' interplay between two individuals, with their particular social and personal concerns. Investigations of, and images based on, this new interest in interpersonal relationships, have been highlighted by the Feminist focus on the different roles that the sexes play, and the fact that many historical, and up until recently unquestioned stereotypes, were the result of a male-based society. Now, in much contemporary art and literature, even if the woman is still seen as the 'sex object', the man is no longer the hero.

[52] Lasch attributes this 'new' focus on the interaction between *individuals* to a number of factors, including modern society's lack of a sense of both a spiritual and cultural continuity (due to a 'loss of faith' and the fear of an impending nuclear holocaust, as well as the break down of the idea of a cultural heritage as ethnic groups become dispersed, etc.). He attributes the emphasis on 'the emotional interaction between men and women in part on the decline of childbearing as a major preoccupation, which has freed sex from its bondage to procreation, and made it possible for people to value erotic life for its own sake and to see their relationship with their partner as a means of achieving this.' **The Culture of Narcissism**, p.188.

WOMEN'S SEXUALITY.

In the convention of the Nude the woman is denied any passion or sexuality of her own, and in the convention of the *femme fatale*, she has become the sexual castrater or devourer. Both these conventions refuse to acknowledge women's real sexuality. Part of the reason for this could be that traditionally the artist and spectator are male, and are thus commenting on, or responding to something that is essentially foreign to them, and to which they relate only as outside *spectators*. The exceptions to these stereotypes are, as will later be discussed, generally paintings done by men of the women they know and love intimately. These images, in that they express the *emotional* relationship between artist and subject, are often very erotic. Many contemporary feminists such as Griffin, Dworkin etc. call upon this need for an emotional eroticism in day to day life. They see pornography as the outcome of an estranged interaction between the sexes, and the denial of a natural sexuality. Also, they acknowledge the fact that most of the images of women - in art, in the media, in religion - are images that have been created by men and not women; and that the authority of these images (by virtue of their public cultural context), constantly reinforces these stereotypes in a way that influences not only men's relationships to women, but women's concepti n of themselves. There is a move by women in contemporary art to try and break these stereotypes through the use of a more direct and autobiographical mode. However, these attempts still remain a part of High Art and the popular media continues as before.

Germaine Greer's book **The Female Eunuch** is dedicated to an attempt to expose how female sexuality has been masked and de-

formed; and how the idea of 'sexiness' which is sold by the media, presumably desired by men, has little to do with women's actual sexuality. She illustrates how women's sexuality has both been denied and misrepresented by being identified with passivity; and how traditionally the vagina has been obliterated from the imagery of femininity in western society.[53] Often, when the vagina is emphasised, the woman's image shifts from being an inviting sexual one, to one of the overpowering devourer. Vaginal iconology, however, has become part of the feminist art language, and many women are now concerned with an art that is based on their own bodily experience and desires.

So far, these traits of 'masculine' and 'feminine' have been discussed in terms of ideology and cultural conditioning. However, the actual physical differences of male and female, and how these may engender an interest in voyeurism, or not, must also be noted.

In her book **Woman and Pornography**, Beatrice Faust points out how traditionally, response to visual stimulation has been considered a masculine trait, whilst touch is a woman's 'turn on', and 'skin' is seen as vital to female eroticism. And the fact that the majority of pornographic material has been aimed at men (and its related concern of the male Gaze throughout history), may, as

[53] This is emphasised by Christian adulation of the *virgin* Mary. As James Hillman says, "imagine a culture whose main God-image has no genitals and whose Mother is sexually immaculate, whose Father did not sleep with his Mother. This is a collective image, a *representation collective* that rules the culture and leaves a psychological heritage..." **Interviews**, p.75.

she suggests, have as much to do with specific gender interest as it does with sexual chauvinism.

Faust cites (amongst others) the Kinsey report on **Sexual Behaviour of the Human Female**, which is a study of these differences. She supports the findings, which conclude that the sexes generally do differ in their capacity to respond to psychosexual stimuli,[54] but she stresses that the report does not make any hard and fast conclusions concerning male versus female sexuality, and that it is the case of 'most' men and only 'some' women who respond to visual stimuli. Like Kaplan, Faust makes a greater distinction between 'masculine' and 'feminine', saying that gender roles are set around these characteristics rather than the precise physical differences of male and female.

However, she also discusses specific sex differences and relates feminine traits of diffuse touching, the need for intimacy, etc. to the concept of 'mothering'; and mentions the physical fact that the female hormone oestrogen is known to soften and refine the skin. To illustrate this point, she quotes the response of a male-to-female transexual. (I.e. a man who has undergone surgery to 'become' a woman.)

> I do not mean merely the body hair, nor even the leatheriness of the skin, nor all the hard protusion of muscle: all these indeed vanished over the next few years, but there went with them something less tangible too, which I now know to be something specifically masculine - a kind of unseen layer of accumulated resilience, which provides a shield for the male of the species, but at the same time deadens the sensations of the body...[55]

[54] Faust, **Women, Sex and Pornography**, p.33f.

[55] ibid. p.43.

There is a strong movement in Feminist art to explore this 'feminine' interest in touch; and women's intense awareness of their bodies. This is a phenomenon that is mentioned by Lucy Lippard who notes that "the images most frequently appearing in women's art have biological and sexual sources ...."[56] She speculates that the reason for this lies in the fact that women are more obsessed with sexuality than men; both because they have been conditioned and raised to think of themselves and their futures in sexual terms, and because of *their biological make-up*.

Apart from women's sociological conditioning, Lippard queries that the physiological differences between male and female could influence their respective art. For example, through menstruation, pregnancy etc., women are kept in more constant touch with the inside of their bodies than men, an intimate relationship which must in some way affect the images that they make. Also, women's sexuality is far more general, and they are far more aware of their whole bodies; whereas, according to Lippard, men are more aware of their penises.[57]

Further, Lippard points out that the feminine is traditionally represented by the *inside*, whereas *outside* represents male. Whilst these distinctions may be attributed to sociological gender roles concerning cultural power versus domestic interests, they can also be attributed to basic physical differences.

> Traditionally, inside presents female, outside, male. We have broadly accepted the male concern with facade and

[56] As discussed by Lippard in her essay "Fragments". **From the Center**, p.69.

[57] Ibid p.93

> monument, the female concern with function and environment; the male concern with permanence and structural imposition, the female concern with adaptability and psychological needs; the male concern with public image, the female resistance to commercialization the male concern with abstract theory, the female concern with biography and autobiography.[88]

This interest and awareness of the inside is apparent in the work of a number of women artists, who acknowledge the role of interior space, and tend to use central core imagery. These artists display a conscious preoccupation with formal relationships between the inside and the outside. Lippard cites Louise Bourgeois and Mary Miss as examples, and this imagery can also be seen in the art of Georgia O'Keefe, Judy Chicago, and others.

The issues presented thus far suggest a possible dialectic between the conventional male concern in art with the 'outside', the possessive gaze, and the voyeur; and the feminine concern with touch/skin and the 'internality of the body'. These arguments seem to have a basis both in biological and sociological concerns.

The logic of this dissertation (and the paintings completed) appears to be based around the polarities of *sight* and the *body* (or physical experience). But I would like to stress, that despite the 'neat' conjunction between masculine and feminine modes of experience and these two ways of representing the human figure in Western art, there are those examples in history (namely the paintings of Rembrandt, Rubens, etc. which describe this 'internality' of the figure - albeit generally in representations of *women*), that disprove such conjectures. Contemporary images, and the advent of Modern Art, also refute the simplicity of such an argument.

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[88] Ibid. p.74.

CHAPTER TWO: REALITY

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> "If 'sociological' or 'ideological' factors are all-important in a work of art, how can we enjoy works of art of the past even when we know little or nothing about the social condition under which they were produced? Marx's own attempt to answer this question was inept. For Timpanaro, one reason for this 'cultural continuity' is simple: 'Man, as a biological being, has remained essentially unchanged from the beginnings of civilisation to the present; and those sentiments and representations which are closest to the biological facts of human existence have changed little...'"[60]

While issues concerning ideology and representations of the human figure in terms of their sociological meanings (i.e. how these representations could be said to tell us something about the society in which they were made) were the starting point of this research, the paintings themselves pointed to a much more basic communication than that of a social critique. For, regardless of the critical message that the early paintings were intended to convey, the implicit eroticism of the figures became the overriding factor in all the work. This common characteristic of the paintings, which was sometimes at odds with the conscious intention behind the work, prompted an interest in exploring broader theories of why we make images of the body.

[59] 'Reality' in this chapter is based on the fact of the biological constant of the body.

[60] Peter Fuller, **The Naked Artist**, p.23. No source reference given for Timpanaro.

This chapter is concerned with investigating certain psychological theories centred around representations of the human figure and the 'aesthetic' reaction these depictions induce.[61]

As Peter Fuller points out, psychoanalysis recognises that the character and limitations of the subjective world which therapy affects are intimately related to the biology of the human condition.[62]

The importance of the body to art is something that is stressed by many theorists, such as Stokes, Hudson and Fuller - and as Stokes says,

> there is a sense in which all art is of the body, particularly so in the eyes of those who accept that the painted surface and other media of art represent as a general form, which their employment particularises, the actualities of the hidden psychic structure made up of evaluations and phantasies with corporeal content.[63]

However, to dwell on the idea that the *material of art itself* stands for the body, would at this point confuse the issue. This chapter is concerned with how these biological constants are seen to influence or generate images of the human figure.

> As the natural focus of ambivalences and discontinuities, the body is well suited to serve as a symbol or public image.

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[61] Although the concerns of this and the next chapter present an alternative viewing of images of the body in art history (*and the reasons behind their invention*) to those presented in the first, they are not intended to stand in contradiction. Both must be seen as equally viable approaches, and should, most importantly, serve to enrich each other.

[62] Fuller, **Art and Psychoanalysis**, p.23.

[63] Stokes, **Reflections on the Nude**, p.40.

> It allows us to play with potent and conflicting emotions; *and, in the form of paintings, sculptures and photographs,* to do so at one remove. In the humbler exercises of these arts, the body's more complex connotations are ignored. It is idealized, or made to seem absurdly alarming. Only simple boundary games are played, in the spirit of a strip-tease. But the centuries have seen a patient accumulation of knowledge about the more eloquent of the body's ambiguities; and in the works of quality, we confront the body laden with messages that are characteristically two-edged; the shades of doubt and nuance that make it the ideal vehicle for sustained imaginative exploration.[66]

In his book **Bodies of Knowledge**, Liam Hudson, who is a psychologist and not an art historian, says that we make images of our bodies in order to articulate our fears and desires about them. He talks about the body's relationship to the imagination it houses, and believes that we perceive our body in ambivalent terms, as it houses contradictory functions, and demands contradictory responses. For example, there is the dual function of the genitalia - the excretory versus the reproductory functions, which creates the risk of confusing desire with disgust.[65] The duality of *inside* and *outside* creates further ambivalences. We may acknowledge the presence of our internal organs, but we make no connection

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[66] Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge**, p.12.

[65] Ibid. p.10. This seems to be very basic to human behaviour. As anthropologists like Mary Douglas have observed, the symbolic lives of both primitive and more sophisticated societies are organised to a remarkable degree around the oppositions of purity and dirt. (ibid p.9). Also, our fear of what is most dirty is associated with our internal organs and their functions, which although 'clean' when inside, become 'dirty' when they leave the body.

This risk of confusing desire with disgust is a problem which D.H. Lawrence considered to be the basis of the pornographic imagination which he sees as the inability to distinguish between the sex and the excrementory flows, which happens when the psyche deteriorates and the profound controlling instincts collapse.

> Then sex is dirt and dirt is sex, and sexual excitement becomes playing with dirt, and any sign in a woman of *her sex becomes* a show of her dirt.

Lawrence, **Pornography and Obscenity** p.15

between them and ourselves (the sensibility they serve). Sexual intercourse presents a fusion between inside and outside, and the reproductive organs seem to be internal organs which are situated on the exterior of our bodies - yet, despite these transitions, there is still a discontinuity in people's minds between the inside and the outside, between the knowable and the hidden. We perceive these particular features of our body as being dangerous, because they remind us of our mortality, and the strength of the body over the mind.

Hudson views idealised conventions such as the Nude, on the other hand, as *being one-sided*, as they help us to deny those aspects of the body that frighten us.

> Such tidying and smoothing creates an image that we immediately recognise as idealised; and in so doing, we acknowledge, whether we realise it or not, that the alarmingly earthy aspects of the body and its functions are associated in our minds with its untidy detail: its pimples, creases, puckers, hairs, blotches. Crucially, a formal treatment of the body encourages in us the denial that these dangerously particular features of the body are in fact there.[66]

He queries the educational, and also aesthetic import of these conventions, and sees them as *merely playing 'boundary games'*. Fuller offers a similar viewpoint in his analysis on the potency of the image of the fragmented **Venus de Milo**, which he argues, is more powerful by virtue of being broken.

> The Kleinian view posits aesthetic experience as being, in their terminology, intimately related to the working through of depressive struggles. Hence the broken Venus is, with its admission of 'attack', a 'deeper' and more satisfying work than an intact, complete original which denies it.[67]

According to Hudson, it is these images which present one with ambiguities of experience that retain the most strength over time.

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[66] Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge**, p.51.

[67] Fuller, **Art and Psychoanalysis**, pp. 27/28.

He believes in the symbolic power of these representations as they become the arena within which we can then explore our confusions, gain manageable excitement from them, and attempt their resolution at one remove.

Both Hudson and Fuller present the biological constants of *death* and *sexual excitement* as important ambivalences which they feel are bound to shape our imaginative lives. The notion that sexual desire and death are closely linked in our imagination is explored further by Hudson, who says,

> At a fairly straightforward level of interpretation, death is the embodiment of decay, disgust. More subtly, it also signals the annihilation that awaits us in love; the collapse, as Roland Barthes observes in **A Lover's Discourse** of all our most carefully marshalled skills and capabilities.[68]

The link between the two is important, as it points to the double edged nuances contained in images concerning either eroticism or mortality. The one is a reminder of the other.

Fuller also offers the theory that not only is "the human body (in the world)" relatively speaking a constant of human experience, but, so is "the Mother's body (of the eternal world)".[69] This notion is an issue that Adrian Stokes deems to be central to our creation and appreciation of art. He presents this in a discussion on the difference between the *Whole-object*, and the *Part-object* (terms which he borrows from Kleinian psychology), and shows how these can be identified through art.

[68] Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge**, p.56.

[69] Fuller, **Art and Psychoanalysis**, p.126.

As Stokes explains, an infant's first relationship with the outside world, is usually his mother's breast. Yet this is not felt to be altogether separate from himself, and is thus a *Part-object*. Gradually, he will be able to identify her as a *Whole-object*, and through her, be able to identify other people and things - in that they exist, yet are not part of her. Therefore, in normal development, the infant is able to give ground on the question whether there is an outside world which is real, and separate to his own activities. This recognition that there is indeed an outside world that is disjointed and concrete is probably necessary for self-preservation, and an infant's growing integration depends on his realisation of his separateness from this external world. The recognition of other people as whole-objects is thus seen as a goal of development, and as Stokes says, is both a promise of sanity, and a seal on our respect for other human beings.

However, when we have a close, or intimate relationship with someone, we tend to set up a part-object relationship with their attitudes, gestures, facial expressions etc. We may also relate to a person in terms of a specific physical attribute. The act of love-making is also something in which the physical separateness of another human being becomes blurred, and one relates to specific parts of the body, which take on a certain autonomy.

In art, idealised images such as the Nude and other classical conventions which rely on notions of symmetry, balance, and harmony, are seen as whole objects. They offer a sense of completeness, and the ability for *contemplation*.[73] The fact of their

[70] As Stokes says, "the word 'contemplate' indicates at this point a state wherein further projective and splitting activities are

aspiring to an ideal, and becoming established as a convention is important when viewed in conjunction with Clark's definition of the ideal. For, as Clark says, it is "like a receptacle into which more and more experience can be poured. Then at a certain point it is full. It sets. And, partly because it seems to be completely satisfying, partly because the mythopoeic faculty has declined, it is accepted as true."[71] The ideal as such does not offer itself as an experience to be worked through, but presents itself as complete - a removed object for contemplation.

This ability for detached contemplation, for example in the convention of the Nude, is important as it allows us to detach ourselves from our complex emotions of being in the body, and to see ourselves as whole and complete. We cannot discover in our own naked bodies the nude in its entirety, as we relate disjointedly to separate parts of it. Also, we are too self-conscious to be able to observe an image of ourselves in a detached, objective manner. The convention of the Nude, or, as Stokes mentions, the art-school nude, still maintains this separateness, this completeness.

> All endeavour should be to contemplate this object as an entire, together with the surroundings. The face and head are but part of the body for that contemplative work in which we do not seek to reduce the form to the terms of mouth or eye, to the terms of single function.[72]

This self-sufficiency which is allowed the Nude, gives it immense power. The human body seen so complete is, according to Stokes, a promise of sanity.

> at a discount in favour of the wider recognition of the object as a complete object." **Reflections of the Nude**, p.35.

[71] Clark, **The Nude**, p.11.

[72] Stokes, **Reflections on the Nude**, p.6.

> ...I propose that the respect thus founded for the general body is the seal upon our respect for human beings as such (and even for consistently objective attitudes to things as such); an important factor, therefore, *in regard not only* to respect but to tolerance and benevolence.[73]

However, whereas the *ideal* Nude may serve as a vehicle for contemplation, treatments of the body which deal with the part-object, i.e., in which different parts are seen with different intensities and changes in focus, may be responded to on a more immediate and *real* level through identification and experience.

Although Stokes sets up a correlation between the whole-object and the idealised Nude, he does also assert that the art work itself can be seen essentially as a whole-object. Like Hudson's notion of the function of the symbolic, which he sees as allowing us to explore our emotions at one remove, Stokes suggests that the art object allows us to experience 'oneness' with the world,

> ...not dissimilar from the experience of *mystics, of infants* at the breast and of everyone at the deeper point of sleep. We experience it to some extent also from passion, manic states, intoxication, and perhaps during a rare moment in which we have truly accepted death...[74]

However, he believes that very 'otherness' or 'self-suffiency' of the art work prevents us from losing ourselves in this experience.

Both theorists acknowledge the importance of the 'accretions' of images of the body as they accumulate - like a sort of geology - in the history of art, as being important avenues through which we can reconcile the ambivalences we feel about our bodies.

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[73] Ibid. p.4/5

[74] Stokes, **An Image in Form**, p. 177.

CHAPTER THREE: ART

> " I would like my paintings to look as if a human being had passed between them, like a snail, leaving a trail of the human presence and memory trace of past events, as the snail leaves its slime." Francis Bacon, 1955.[75]

Chapter One was concerned with illustrating how art and the media have been employed to reaffirm the ideologies of sex and possession. It was shown how certain techniques of painting and photography were used to this end.

Chapter Two presented various psychological theories of how we relate to the body, and suggested some correlation between the dichotomies of inside/outside, part object/whole object; and that of sexuality and mortality versus the ideal and ideology.

This chapter is a discussion of those exceptions in art which repudiate the stereotypes discussed in Chapter One. Its concerns centre around an alternative means of apprehending a visual image of the human body, and it deals with the notions of the *erotic* and the *mortal* in painting.

Earlier, I discussed the concept of the *Gaze*, which presupposes a certain detachment of the viewer from what he is observing, and thus control over it, and relates to some extent to Stokes' definition of the *whole-object*. As Bryson says, the Gaze is - "Vision

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[75] Bacon quoted in Chipp, **Theories of Modern Art**, p.621.

disembodied. *Vision decarnalised.*"[76] However, both the theoretical research, and the course that the painting followed, suggested another means of visual apprehension, which in part, became the subject of the later paintings. This concern is that of the *Visceral*, which can be seen as that 'carnalised' vision. It is the type of painting that does not contrive to appeal to the intellect or cerebral, *but serves to remind the viewer of his/her own body*. As such, it is that response to painting that allows the viewer to 'identify' with, rather than 'possess' the work. It involves being able to 'see with one's stomach', and is about the 'inside', and the 'part-object'.

In order to discuss this alternative vision of the visceral, and the more physical responses of the erotic, and of fear of mortality in reaction to images of the body, it is necessary to distinguish between images of nudity, and representations of nakedness.

As Anne Hollander says,

> For Christians the corruptibility of the body, dressed or undressed, lies in its *fragile susceptibility to decay and sin*, but the special corruptibility of nakedness among naturally clothed humans lies in its readiness to seem not only erotic, but weak, ugly and ridiculous. If nudity were going to represent anything good besides crude sexual desirability among the much dressed Western Christian nations, art was going to be required to make it beautiful, strong and apparently natural. Moreover, this transformation had to be accompanied in ways that *expressed the beautiful truth of* nudity and also allowed for the requisite sense of its shameful sexuality.[77]

In his book **The Nude**, Clark points out that the Nude is first and foremost an 'art form' or a convention, which carries its own at-

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[76] Bryson, **Vision and Painting**, p.95.

[77] Hollander, **Seeing Through Clothes**, p.84.

tendant meanings *over and above* representations of nakedness. The Nude stands for an *ideal* - and can be viewed in the Platonic sense as a mirror of divine perfection. The concept of the Nude developed out of Greek philosophy, which celebrated absolute nakedness and the belief that the body and spirit are one, and are both to be displayed and worshipped. This element of the perfection of the Nude was emphasised by its formal reduction to harmonious units and its flawless skin.[78] After an initial reaction against all images of nakedness, and then the awareness that nakedness could be used as a symbol for 'fallen man', the art of Christianity began to recognise that this classical tradition of the Nude could also be incorporated into its iconography (under the guise of pagan mythology) to stand for an ideal of the Humanist spirit, and immortal perfection - of man 'before the fall'.[79]

[78] This definition of the Nude may seem to stand in contradiction to representations of the female Nude discussed in the first chapter. However, as explained, I am using the word 'Nude' to stand for an ideal, whether of sexual attractiveness or 'divine perfection', as opposed to the more real and idiosyncratic representation of a naked figure.

[79] The psychological implications of the Nude discussed in the previous section correspond quite closely to its philosophical and religious possibilities as discussed by Clark and others.

FLESH AND MORTALITY

Flesh is one of the most basic metaphors for our mortality. This is recognised within the Biblical[80] myth of the 'fall of man', in that the first awareness that Adam and Eve had of their sin after having eaten from the tree of knowledge, was that of their naked bodies. Nakedness implies defencelessness and vulnerability, and in Christian iconography, nakedness is symbolic not only of a loss of innocence and an awareness of the flesh - but a fall from the 'state of Grace' and 'eternal life'. Once 'mortal', the meaning of the body changes; it is no longer a reflection of God's perfection, but has inherent in it, lust, and fears of ageing, illness and death. It is man's nakedness that separates him from the gods; and nakedness itself becomes symbolic of the 'plight of humanity'.

Within Christian iconography, 'flesh' is also synonymous with sin and corruptibility. The ability to withstand temptations to the flesh, and punishment of it, is seen as a symbol of martyrdom. (It is as if by denying the temptation of carnality, and the fear of mortality, one can become immortal). Flesh, and susceptibility to its delights, is made into the testing ground for man's spiritual integrity.

The scarred and pus-exuding body of Grunewald's **Christ** (fig.7), amply conveys the message of decaying flesh, and the power of the eternal spirit over the earthbound vehicle of the body. This

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[80] It says a lot for Christianity that this is one of the few myths taken from Judaism and the Old Testament that became of central iconographic importance in Christian art.

emphasis on the corporeality of His body, with its suppurating sores, further becomes a symbol of the sins and evils of the world that Christ takes upon himself through His death and acceptance of mortality.

The symbolism of nakedness as a plight of humanity is an aspect that is not only apparent in Christian iconography, but has been taken up within the context of twentieth century Existentialist philosophy to illustrate the vulnerable and pointless condition of mankind.

The meaning of mortality in such Existentialist-based images is however different. Whereas previously mortality stood for man's corruptibility and fragility in contrast to the spiritual ideal and 'promise' of a state of grace, which was attainable through religious devotion - in the twentieth century it is closely tied to the 'loss of faith', and the senselessness of any possible transubstantiation of the body. Flesh has become the last desperate metaphor for something that we cannot argue with. We cannot escape the fact that we have a body, and in the face of our doubts of spirituality, this constantly reminds us of the limitations of our corporeal existence.

This attitude to the flesh is firmly based within Christian dogma, and has found its place in twentieth century representations as a political, sexual or Existentialist symbol, only as an inheritance of the Christian attitude; and the meanings of these contemporary images become clearer through an understanding of Christian symbolism, and the terrifying prospect of decaying 'flesh' once this symbolism falls away.

> Well, of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher's shop I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal.[61]

Elsewhere in this dissertation I have discussed the notion of 'skin' as fetish,[62] as a way of of removing it from its biological context. In this way it is seen separately from the body - like rubber, like leather, in a way that the flesh can never be. Flesh is of the body, and whereas one can talk about 'flaying' or the peeling off of the skin, one cannot separate the flesh. Because if one does, it becomes meat, and reduces the body to just that. This fear of the anonymity of the body as meat, (and morality), is one of our deepest fears concerning our bodies.

Stanley Spencer's **Double Self-Portrait with Leg of Lamb** (fig.8), can be interpreted as conveying this notion of mortality and flesh. The format is tightly packed by the bodies of Spencer and his wife, and in the foreground there is a leg of lamb. The inclusion of this piece of meat is an essential element of the painting (and prevents it being read in the detached objective manner characteristic of Philip Pearlstein's paintings which superficially resemble this work). Here, flesh is just flesh (in the sense of being 'meat'). Neither the artist, nor his wife are portrayed as conventionally provocative or sensually alluring. Their age, and the decay of their bodies seem to be accurately described with realist precision. The woman's breasts are flaccid and scarred by stretchmarks. The description of her scraggly pubic and armpit hair does in no way correspond to the idea of sexual potency (as discussed in chapter one), but is represented sympathetically in

[61] Francis Bacon, quoted by Sylvester in **Interviews with Francis Bacon p.46**

[62] See p.26.

the manner of a small animal. The vulnerability of his genitals is emphasised by his ungainly crouching pose - and his awkwardness is stressed by the inclusion of his glasses with their dangling cord. He is no hero, nor is she a provocative Venus. They are treated equally, and although he crouches over, looking at her, there is no sense of desire. However, ther does seem to be rather a tender acceptance of the fact that they both share their mortality - a common fate.

Spencer's religious convictions are well known, and his strong belief in Christianity could explain such tenderness in an image about mortality. Yet, such a treatment of flesh in an image that does not hold any spiritual promise, has entirely different connotations.

For example, Otto Dix's paintings of the imperfections of the flesh are not to be seen as tokens of religious or passionate imagery, but rather, as emblems of a larger social malaise. Imperfect flesh is seen as an icon of social decay. In many ways, Dix borrows his language from Grunewald, where the decay of Christ's flesh becomes symbolic, not only of His mortal self, but of the whole decay and sin of mankind, whose sins and corruption He is purging through His martyrdom. It is as if in that putrid flesh, all the sins of mankind are focused. Yet, further, in Dix, the open putrid sores (with their implications of venereal disease), can be recognised as the *symptoms* of a decaying and decadent society. (See fig.9)

A contemporary painter who makes images concerning 'flesh and mortality', is Francis Bacon. He acknowledges the origin of these images in his conception of the 'pointless condition of mankind'.

> Also, I think that *man now realizes that he is* an accident, that he is a completely futile being, that he has to play out the game without reason. I think that, even when Velasquez was painting, even when Rembrandt was painting, in a peculiar way they were still, whatever their attitude to life, slightly conditioned by certain types of religious possibilities, which man now, you could say, has had completely cancelled out for him. Now, of course, man can only attempt to make something very, very positive by *trying* to beguile himself for a time by the way he behaves, by prolonging possibly his life by buying a kind of immortality through the doctors. You see, all art has now become completely a game by which man distracts himself; and you may say that it has always been like that, but now it's entirely a game.[93]

This feeling of Bacon's is conveyed in his paintings by the way in which he dismisses the image of the classical Nude[94] and strips his figures of all dignity, often presenting them, like slabs of meat, in closed and unidentifiable spaces. As Hughes says, these spaces become an arena for violence, and in them, "... sex becomes a doglike grappling and all emotions are subsumed in a rage and its hangover, the sense of isolation."[95]

This 'grappling' of Bacon's figures, whether for sex, power, or the 'needle', manages to highlight the way in which these figures are trapped in their fear of mortality.

Images of sex are used by Bacon as images of lust; and the reduction of the body to its 'bestial' side, through *lust*, can be related to the fear of mortality, as it is associated with 'losing oneself' of 'being out of control'. The very wording of these

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[93] Sylvester **Interviews with Francis Bacon**, pp. 28/29.

[94] In some ways, Bacon does continue the tradition by using the *male* nude as an icon to stand for mankind and culture in general. However, this vision of humanity is greatly changed, and the *concept* behind the ideal has been shattered.

[95] Hughes, **The Shock of the New** p.298.

phrases (which have become clichéd descriptions of the intensity of passion), illustrate the ambivalent attitude we have towards such passion. We desire it, yet are scared of it, as we are 'no longer ourselves'. It carries with it a fear of anonymity, of nothingness, which echoes our fear of the flesh.

One of the paintings which was an important influence on my later work and directed my thinking to the relationships between flesh, carnality, mortality - and the corporeality of oil paint, was Titian's painting of **The Death of Actaeon** (fig.10). In this work, the surface of paint, in terms both of its colour and its tangibility, becomes analogous to flesh and seems to trap the figures and drama within it. It was only after long familiarity with the painting that I began to analyse the meaning of the myth, and saw how the manner in which it was painted reinforced its content. The story is about Actaeon, the hunter, who goes into the forest in search of prey. By chance he comes upon the goddess Diana, who is bathing in a pool. Angered at being discovered in her nakedness, she turns him into a stag, and once he is a stag, his own hunting dogs turn upon him, and tear him to pieces. This myth seems to revolve around the idea of carnality, and the idea that the sight of a women's body calls a man back to his own animal nature, and that this animal nature eventually destroys him through the most physical of ways; that is, through the hunting dogs attacking the 'scent' of the 'beast', and tearing at his flesh. A link between carnality, sexuality, and mortality exists,[66] and

[66] This notion th[illegible]akening of carnal desire brings about the downfall of [illegible] central to many myths, including the biblical myth of the creation.

this painting further emphasises it by the fleshy corporeal nature and application of the paint.[87]

[87] Griffin cites this same myth as an explanation of her theory of pornography, in which she further explicates the meaning of Actaeon as a hunter, as being a cultural controller of Nature and that his death *illustrates the actual transience* and weakness of culture, and the inability of man to retain control. This loss of control is paralleled by man's incapacity to restrain the strength of his physical needs and desires, for which he blames woman for arousing them within him.

Griffin, **Pornography and Silence**, p.31.

THE CORPOREALITY OF OIL PAINT

> "Flesh was the only reason why oil paint was invented" - *Willem de Kooning*[88]

> "I would suggest that, in its very sensuality, oil painting helped to initiate an unprecedented form of *imaginative*, creative, yet thoroughly secular art which (though initiated by the bourgeoisie) represents a genuine advance in the cultural structuring of feeling and expressive potentiality." - Peter Fuller[89]

In the first chapter, the use of oil paint was discussed as an 'erasing' medium with regard to its suitability for illusionistic rendering, and the concept of the Gaze. However, oil paint is also a physical material substance, and as such has its own particular quality which can be exploited to emphasise the corporeal and the physical, and which I feel to be partially responsible for the concept I present of the *Visceral* in painting.

Berger discusses the facility latent in oil paint for the creation of illusions of substantiality, and mentions that this very 'materiality' is recognised by Blake in his rejection of it as a medium, in preference for the more 'spiritual' insubstantial quality of watercolour. Peter Fuller extends this argument, and suggests that the corporeal character of oil paint was one of the ways in which men and women began to conceive of themselves in their own image rather than God's.[90] This secular character of the medium is apparent, and as discussed earlier, could be used to reaffirm the materialist principles of ownership and possession.

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[88] Quoted by J. M[illegible] "Stylessness as Principle..." p.115. Exact source details not given.

[89] Fuller, **Seeing Berger**, p.16.

[90] Ibid. p.15

Both Fuller and Berger link the use of this medium to the growth of the *bourgeoisie*.

Thus, this 'materiality' is linked to the idea of the *real*, and not to a spiritual *ideal*. Willem De Kooning's quotation extends this notion. The corporeality of oil paint acts as a reminder of our own corporeality, and of the physical aspects of sensuality and decay, eroticism and mortality.

Further, I propose that the very substance of oil paint itself is like the inside of the body - like masticated food and faeces, and that the special action of putting it on the canvas is reminiscent of the expressive child smearing faeces on a wall. These two characteristics indicate oil paint's expressive potentiality. The uneasy quality of its viscous substance, and its ability to congeal, can affect the viewer on a visceral level (as it carries connotations of the inside with the uncertainty and squeamishness that our insides hold for us).[91] Francis Bacon words this differently, he says

> There is an area of the nervous system to which the texture of paint communicates more violently than anything else.[92]

This curious 'direct' communication is very difficult to explicate verbally, but Bacon's statement suggests that there is an immediacy of identification and a particular *sensation* that the quality of oil paint arouses in the viewer. The idea of the 'gestural' expressive potential of oil paint is far more clear. Norman Bryson describes the medium of oil paint as being potentially

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[91] Acrylic paint on the other hand has a plastic quality that suggests a certain artificiality, and hence 'foreignness' to the body.

[92] *Quoted* by Russell, Francis Bacon, p.32. No source given.

deictically expressive. This word *deictic* is used within linguistics to describe an utterance that contains information about its locus; or as Bryson explains - "Deixis is utterance in carnal form, and points back directly ...to the body of the speaker."[93] One can thus say that the use of gestural paint supplies us with information concerning the artist as *site* of the image, and that the reading of that gesture becomes a means whereby to re-create that site (or memory traces) for the viewing subject.

There are two other quotations by Bacon which, for me, touch on that particular ability of paint to be more than purely descriptive. In one, he makes the distinction between illustrational form (and the illustrational potential of paint) which 'tells' the intelligence immediately what the *form is about*, and non-illustrational form which "works first upon the sensation and then slowly *leaks back into* fact."[94] In many ways this helps to elucidate the meaning of the visceral which I have set up as a central argument of this paper. Later in the same interview Bacon went on to say:

> I don't want to avoid telling a story, but I want very, very much to do the thing that Valéry said - to give the sensation without the boredom of its conveyance.[95]

Valéry also said that the painter takes his body with *him*, and Merleau Ponty (who quotes Valéry on the above), extends this concept by saying

[93] Bryson, **Vision and Painting**, p.88.

[94] Sylvester, **Interviews with Francis Bacon** p.56.

[95] Ibid. p. 65

> Indeed, we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings.[96]

This argument depends on the notion of our 'bodily perception' and the fact that in any experience, the body as perceiving organ, is co-perceived. Thus our bodily experience is important in our concept of 'reality', and the images that we make will in some way be a projection of our own body image.[97] Some psychologists see the hand as having a special role, and stress that it is not a passive agent in the art making process, but rather, an active collaborator. Anton Ehrenzweig suggests that in instances where an artist is forced to struggle and invent, rather than applying well known conventions and technique, the hand then does have a certain autonomy and power, and helps the artist cut through self-conscious mannerisms and preconceived images which would otherwise stifle his spontaneity. He calls this the "Innocent Hand".[98] Other psychologists take this notion further. Rose cites the fact that from intrauterine life onwards, the hand is seen as closely allied to the mouth as it helps to relieve oral tension. Later it carries these tensions from the mouth to the body. The hand of the artist (and brush or pencil), can therefore be seen as a means to carry tensions of love or hate onto the canvas.

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[96] Merleau Ponty 'Eye and Mind' in: **The Primacy of Perception** Chicago, Northwestern University Press 1964. p.163. (Quoted by Rose, **The Power of Form** p.98.)

[97] Leonardo da Vinci apparently warned artists against the inclination to lend their own bodily experiences to the figures they rendered, and suggested that long study (of anatomy, of conventions) would protect them against this desire to project themselves.
Ibid.

[98] Ehrenzweig, "Alienation Versus Self-Expression", **The Listener**, 25 Feb. 1960.

This theory further suggests that the canvas can be related to the body.

> Does the canvas then represent the skin? Clinical evidence suggests that it can. The hand attacks, caresses, builds up, and otherwize touches the canvas as in infancy it carries stimulation from the mouth or other erogenous zones to the rest of the body.[99]

This close relationship between the body and the painting not only in the substance of paint and the surface of the canvas, but also in the projection of body image, is an important one, as it becomes a further means whereby to lend personal emotions, sentiments and memory to the content of the painting. It is one which I believe to be central to my own work.

The ideas presented in this section suggest that the apprehension of a painting relies not so much on the conscious subject of the work, but on the *sensation* that it arouses in the viewer. This sensation has been passed from the artist to the viewer via the painting itself. The 'painterly' or gestural use of paint, can be seen as the 'memory traces' of the artist's consciousness. Munch and Bacon are cited as two artists who, through their paint, their bodies, and their personal experience, manage to make statements that relate to 'the human condition', and affect the viewer on a very immediate level.[100] They are presented as examples of Existentialist painters, who, by painting things as they themselves feel them to be, come closer to touching on the core of 'truth' that is intuitively recognised by others. They do not illustrate, they *identify*.

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[99] Rose, **The Power of Form**, p.102.

[100] Schreiner, **The Concrete Imagination: A Perspective of Selected Works by Francis Bacon and Edvard Munch.**

> Bacon portrays feeling as bodily sentient, living in a situation not an environment. He has managed to separate out and explicate his feelings in paint. His facility with paint manipulation has portrayed what I will call "in'" feelings, of the self "in" the body.[101]

Similarly, Schreiner talks about Munch's ability to reveal sensations as a state of consciousness. "...the artist's sensation is corresponding to every act of memory, expectation, representation, imagination, thinking, judging and volition that can be confined in his sensation field which Munch has bracketed on canvas."[102]

Both artists show an attempt to make the paint and idea be one - and not for the paint to lag behind, or seem merely to be a voluptuous auxiliary to the image. That is, there is a balance between the image and the paint and one cannot be read separately from the other.

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[101] Ibid. p.36.

[102] Ibid. p.46.

THE EROTIC

By discussing the notion of the erotic in this chapter, and so separating it from the notion of the ideal, and also from the concept of pornography (seen very much as an ideologically based convention), I endeavour to comment on two things: firstly, that erotic art relies less on a conventional code, but is the *personal* experience of the artist; and secondly, that the erotic is inextricably tied to conceptions and experiences of *identification* of the body, and does not offer itself as an abstracted viewing. The erotic defined as such relies more on Stokes' conception of the part-object as opposed to the whole-object, and also conjures up images and feelings of the inside of the body.

The images of nudity within [illegible] history which engage me are precisely those that do not [illegible] Stokes' or Clark's definition of the Nude. Rather, I am [illegible]ed in images of the body that are made up of conflicting parts and emotions, dealing with the flesh, skin, feelings of the stomach, where the inside echoes the outside, and there is a disparate focusing on the mouth, the breast, the hands etc.: that is, those images which are not symbolic of an abstract ideal of immortality, purity and truth, but represent the *entrapment* of the mortal flesh and its passions and emotions.

> Rembrandt, it seems to me, painted the female nude as the sagging repository of jewels and dirt, of fabulous babies and magical faeces despoiled yet later repaired and restored, a body often flaccid and creased yet still the desirable source of a scarred bounty: not the bounty of the perfected, stable breast housed in the temple of the integrated psyche that we possess in the rounded forms of classical art, but riches and drabness joined by the infant's interfering envy, sometimes with the character of an oppressive weight or listlessness left by his thefts. There supervenes none the less, a noble acceptance of ambivalence in which love shines.[103]

From this quotation, it seems that Adrian Stokes has read into Rembrandt's female nudes histories and emotions; the body experienced and watched; inside and outside. In these paintings, the female stands for a confusion of desires - she is both mother and lover, virgin and whore. (And the poetry of Stokes' prose seems to open up as many conflicting emotions as the painted images themselves.)

Although, as mentioned earlier, Stokes discussed the notion of the complete idealised Nude as a 'promise of sanity', it is the alternative images of Rembrandt etc, that present one with conflicting emotions and ambiguities which often retain their most vital power over time. However, an image like this, although constructed out of contrary feelings, is still offered to us as a 'stable format'; for, as discussed, Stokes sees works of art as being essentially whole-objects. Hudson further suggests that art, and in particular, images of the body, become the avenue through which we can explore and attempt to resolve our confusions and excitements at one remove. While idealised conventions carry their own messages and meanings (and generally reaffirm some ideological standpoint), it is often images that remain outside these conventions that can be seen most strongly to serve this purpose.

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[103] Stokes, **Reflections on the Nude**, p.36

Berger, in **Ways of Seeing**, isolates certain paintings from within the History of Western art, as having such authority. Like Stokes, he cites Rembrandt, but focuses on Ruben's **Helène Fourment with a Fur Coat** (fig.11) which he discusses in terms of its erotic power. He attributes this power to the highly personalised vision that it presents, based on an intimate reaction to the woman seen. These paintings, of both Rembrandt and Rubens, offer the direct bodily interaction between the artist and his subject as an experience for the viewer to share. This quality of the experience of the body presented depends upon a number of factors, including the treatment of the body as the sum of a number of disparate parts, and not as a perfected whole conceived of through abstract formulae. As Hudson says,

> Within the erotic realm, we deal, not with people as entities or systems, but as fragments: parts of the body; situations that hover in the mind like stills from a film; personal identities that float free of their owners like labels, as they so often do in dreams.[104]

The dynamics of desire can be said therefore to be partially created by the slow moving of the eye across the body, responding disparately from part to part. It is a looking that does not correspond to a detached contemplation, but rather holds the promise or memory of an intimacy.

In painting, such direct experiencing can be created through dislocation and ambiguity. (See previous chapter.) In his analysis of **Hélène Fourment in a Fur Coat**, Berger illustrates how Rubens, through dislocations of treatment gives the body a dynamic which serves to "confront us, not as an immediate sight,

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[104] Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge** p.114.

but as an experience - the painter's experience."[105] Further, he discusses the importance of this dynamic created by the subjective viewing of the body, in which the legs are impossibly joined to the torso. For, as he points out, there is a problem in creating a *static* image of sexual nakedness.

> In lived sexual experience nakedness is a process rather than a state. If one moment of that process is isolated, the image will seem banal, and its banality, instead of serving as a bridge between two intense imaginative states, will be chilling. This is one reason why expressive photographs of the naked are even rarer than paintings. The easy solution for the photographer is to turn the the figure into a nude, which by generalizing both sight and viewer and making sexuality unspecific, turns desire into fantasy.[106]

In describing this image, Berger also illustrates how the impossible relationship between the legs and torso, causes Helene Fourment to swivel around the centre, which is hidden by her dark fur coat. The erotic function of this coat does not only lie in the fact that it appears to be slipping off her shoulders, and therefore holds the promise of her revealing herself to the spectator, (or suggests that she has just covered herself), but the dark sensuousness of her fur also beromes a metaphor for her sex.

Our *incarnate awareness* of the body is so well developed that we constantly read sexual imagery into other configurations, and dislocations and ambiguity make this even more possible. This is amply discussed by Freud in his interpretation of dream imagery and the symbolism in jokes and their relationship to the uncon-

[105] Berger, **Ways of Seeing** p.61

[106] Ibid. p.60
Here, Berger seems to be ascribing the erotic power of the female Nude to *fantasy*, whereas the power of desire lies in its more direct physical experience.

scious.[107] This familiarity also allows that in our minds, parts of the body become interchangeable and can stand as metaphors for other parts of the body. For example, a mouth can stand for a vagina, or an armpit could carry an intense sexual meaning. This interchangeability of parts of the body is an aspect that interested the artist Hans Bellmer. As he says:

> Since we must assume that the entire alphabet of the body is always at the ready in the brain, even after amputation, it follows that parts of the body which lie within the framework I have described (i.e. the chin, the shoulder, the arm) can in addition to their intrinsic significance be overlaid with analogies. These analogies are images of the sexual areas and of the legs and so on, and they have become available because they were repressed.[108]

However, Bellmer's images also rely on a dislocation that tends to violate our incarnate body awareness, and creates a sexual uneasiness which does not remain in the realm of the erotic, but in many instances can be seen as pornographic. He makes use of the body fragment (part-object) as a fetish, and in this way implies a removal and 'objectification' of the body rather than a subjective emotional interaction.

In Chapter One, specificity was discussed in relationship to the erotic in that it helped locate the figure within time and space to allow for a presumed intimacy between the spectator (voyeur) and the nude. However, Berger suggests that specificity in terms of a 'subjective banality' *identifies the relationship of a lover, and not a voyeur.*

> Here such banality is to be found in Ruben's compulsive painting of the fat softness of Hélène Fourment's flesh which

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[107] Freud, **Interpretation of Dreams** and **Jokes and their Relationship to the Unconscious**

[108] Hans Bellmer, **Die Puppe**. Quoted by Kahmen, **Erotic Art Today**, p.64.

> constantly breaks every ideal convention of form and (to him) continually offers the promise of her extraordinary particularity.[109]

This particularity, or specificity, which identifies the naked figure as an individual, binds the relationship between the artist and figure painted, so that the spectator only becomes a witness "...he can do no more" he is forced to recognize himself as the outsider he is."[110]

Not only does the implied intimacy between the artist and his model get in the way of the spectator's fantasy of ownership and possession, but her particularity and 'reality' prevents him from reducing her to a sexual object. *Her specific presence* is stated, and her eroticism lies in her believable tangibility and not in the *idea* of a sexual object.

Hudson makes the distinction between the *Odalisque*, or 'pin-up' which offers the viewer magical access to the body of someone who is *not really there* - and the genre established by Titian, Manet and Degas, which constrains the spectator, as it insists that he enters as himself, and *therefore* subjects *himself* to appraisal. As such, there is a suggested 'reciprocity' in the erotic image, and Hudson suggests that while the Nude is very attractive, it is the Naked that "thoroughly infiltrates our defences."[111]

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[109] Berger, **Ways of Seeing**, p.61.

[110] Ibid. p.58

[111] Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge**, p.54.

The logic of this argument thus far seems to be in establishing a relationship between the erotic, the personal, and the specific. I believe that erotic impact is created by a strange fusion of physical specificity and memory. It is this association with emotions and experience that gives an image its strength, and it is often the specificity itself that prompts such associations. Also, the inclusion of particular physical details (which Hudson mentioned call us to the awareness of our own corporeality and mortality) serve to remind the spectator of his/her own body, and create a certain identification between the spectator and the work.

Lucy Lippard stresses this point. She says:

> At the core of experiencing any sensuous to sexual art is body identification. I have used, out of context, the psychological term "body ego" and Gaston Bachalard's "muscular consciousness" to refer to sensations of physical identification between a work of art ... and the body of the maker and/or viewer.[112]

Images in which the internality of the body is also suggested, strengthen this notion, and the ambivalence of *outside* and *inside* carries with it implications of sexuality. Stokes describes Rembrandt's female nudes in terms of these ambivalences. He accepts the poetry of the contradictory elements of inside/outside, "jewels"/"dirt" which the body represents, and states that it is

> ...important to discover in art the recounting of all aspects that the body has possessed, the inside (as seen from without) as well as the outside. (Thus the glimmering of a tufted finery that clothes many sombre Rembrandt figures can mirror the character of *inner* objects for whose state the individual is massively responsible.)[113]

This notion of 'internality' is recognised by Meyer Shapiro in Picasso's **Girl Before a Mirror** (fig.12). Like Berger and Stokes,

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[112] Lippard, "Fragments" **From the Center**, p.75.

[113] Stokes, "Art and the Body", **The Image in Form:ehp2, .p.122.**

Shapiro recognises a connection between this kind of image and the body 'loved'. As a body loved by the artist, it is a body 'known', and a painting of it serves not to explicate an ideal, but to re-create a desire.

> *Picasso proceeds from* his intense feeling for the girl, whom he endows with a corresponding vitality. He paints the body contemplated, loved and self-contemplating. The vision of another's body becomes an intensely *rousing and* mysterious process. Picasso and other moderns have discovered for art the internality of the body...
>
> Thus the body is represented both from the outside and within, *and in the mirror is still another image* of the body. I think that it is a wonderful magical, poetic idea, to show the human body which is ordinarily represented in one way - in belonging to three different modes of experience, *within* one picture.[114]

This interest in the dynamic relationship between the artist and the female nude became in itself a convention at the beginning of the twentieth century, when there was a move to re-instil the Nude with sexual generative values. At this time, there was a new version of an old myth (partly supported by Freud) concerning the equation of creativity with masculinity, and male virility. Painting the female nude came to be seen as a means of emphasising this association, and the role of the woman changed from being a vehicle of the male spectator's fantasy to acting as a 'sign' of the artist's potency. Her sexuality erhanced his.[115]

The vibrancy and expressive use of paint in the art of the Fauve and De Brücke groups, were means with which to echo the potent

[114] Meyer Shapiro quoted by Lipman , **What Happens in Art**, p.80. No source reference given for Shapiro.

[115] A reversal of the sex *roles in this myth seem unlikely*, as despite the influences of feminism, there is still to some extent the popular belief (supported by Freudian theory) that a woman's creative role belongs to nature in her producing and rearing children. She is not credited with having cultural creative powers as well, as all her time and energy are supposedly directed toward motherhood or its anticipation.

experiencing of the nude, and also served to emphasise the sensuality and sexual receptiveness of the flesh. A further vitality was created by the sexual frisson between the artist and model which served to strengthen the metaphoric link between the 'generation' of painting and of love-making, later illustrated quite literally by Picasso in his etchings **Suite 347**(1968). Here he depicts the intense sexual frisson between the artist and model, and the final etchings in the suite describe the supreme ecstasy of their union - while the artist still retains his palette and brushes in his hands.

A link has already been established between the quality of oil paint (both in its characteristic substance, and its expressive potential), and its ability to represent the corporeality of the flesh and the body. This direct physical metaphor of paint can stress the erotic presence of the body; but also, paint used in such a way that exploits these sensuous and expressive qualities, further enhances the sense of immediacy that reminds the spectator of the artist as *site* of the image; and, as illustrated above, can be used to exemplify the vibrancy of interaction between artist and model.

Willem De Kooning makes use of this expressive mode in his paintings of **Women** (fig.13). However, these works can be seen as reversals of the concepts thus far discussed, for they cannot be said to describe the erotic frisson between artist and model, and the way in which they are painted are not simply suggestive of internal emotions. The outside does not echo the inside. Rather, it is if the body has been turned inside out so that it is the insides - the churnings of the emotions, digestion and organs - that we are confronted with. Woman is shown at her most threatening, as castrator/devourer, and the analogies between mouth and genitals, and the notion of *vagina dentata*, emphasise

this. The direct, gestural application of paint does not serve to stress the artist's potency, but rather becomes a means of showing the enormity of the woman's appetite. She is no longer the focus of the viewer's desire; this interaction has been reversed, so that the spectator has become the attention of *her* rather overpowering desire. She is the *femme fatale* who has been freed from the romanticism of the nineteenth century.

The way of seeing the naked female seems to be set up into two major categories. The first is that of the *voyeur*, who both contemplates (through the Gaze), and objectifies (by reducing the whole female form into a fetish) the woman as sex object. This requires certain conventionalised formal decisions where the body vocabulary of breasts, thighs, skin etc. become ciphers of a larger idealised form - that stand for the fantasy of woman.

The view of the *lover*, however, is made up of a far more personalised vocabulary, and presents looking (in that it is made up of disparate focusing on discrete parts), as an experiencing and not an objective contemplation. As such, the basic vocabulary of the female form becomes jumbled, and carries nuances of ambiguity and poetic metaphor, which become a means of describing feelings and internal emotions. However, as shown in De Kooning's work, conscious dislocations and exaggerations of this body vocabulary can also be used to make critical comments concerning female sexuality.

ALIENATION BETWEEN LOVERS

Liam Hudson questions the need for an artist to make intimate pictures of his wife or lover public. He suggests that this enables the artist to explore and colonise his own feelings of possessiveness and sexual jealousy. Because of this, he believes that the closer the relationship between the artist and his model, the more prepared they are to take 'risks' in terms of the exposure. As such, it is always possible that the artist and model will be disgusted by themselves. He goes on to say:-

> However stern their commitment to a higher cause, few seem capable of proffering full exposure, either of themselves or of someone they love, without the sentiments of *alienation* or dismay rearing up arbitrarily within them.[116]

This may explain, in part, the emotions of alienation which are often present in paintings of lovers. However, this notion of alienation is one which is most blatant in twentieth century images, and therefore must also be looked at in terms of the new psychological awareness and existential questioning and philosophy.

In his monograph on Francis Bacon, Russell discusses the change in Western contemporary beliefs (which he sees reflected in Bacon's work).

> We disbelieve in the monolithic view of human nature; we are not awed - quite the contrary - by the trappings of power; we see human beings as flawed, variable, self-contradictory, subject to the fugitive and the contingent.[117]

Traditional male/female relationships have been questioned in this way. The 'heroic' male figure accompanied by the passive female are interactions which are outworn and clichéd in contemporary

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[116] Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge**, pp.33/4 (emphasis is mine)

[117] Russell, **Francis Bacon**, p.70.

High art. Rather, nudity has come to stand for a new psychological awareness, and the interaction between the sexes is often used as such to illustrate psychological relationships between men and women, and the alienation between the sexes. These investigations are noted in the works of Hopper (fig.14), Kitaj (fig.15), Lucien Freud (fig.16), and others. These three artists are painters whose interest in the human figure continued despite the concerns of the avant-garde and mainstream art.[118] They are also three of the artists painting in this century who have profoundly influenced my own work.

[118] Recent trends in art have, however, revived the figure, and the instability of the present international political situation has prompted a re-look at similar periods of the history of this century, and the concerns of German expressionism and the Neue Sachlichkeit. However, consideration of these recent movements is not central to this argument, and will not be dealt with in this dissertation.



Fig. 1 Tintoretto, Susannah and the Elders, c. 1555.



Fig. 2 Sylvia Sleigh, Philip Golub Reclining, 1971.

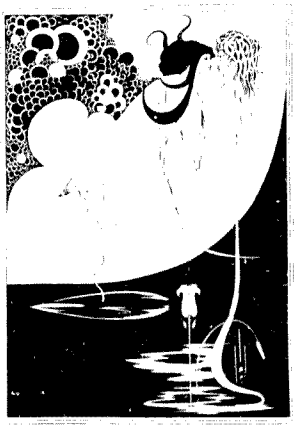


Fig. 3 Aubrey Beardsley, **Salome**, c. 1896.



Fig. 4 Manet, **Olympia**, 1863.



Fig. 5 Degas, The Client, c. 1879.



Fig. 6 Otto Dix, Two Victims of Capitalism, 1923.



Fig.7 Grunewald, detail of The Crucifixion, Isenheim Altarpiece, 1512-16



Fig.8 Stanley Spencer, Double Self Portrait with Leg of Mutton, 1937.



Fig. 9 Otto Dix, Still Life in the Studio, 1924.



Fig. 10 Titian, The Death of Actaeon, c. 1559



Fig. 11 Rubens, Helene Fourment in a Fur Coat, c. 1631.



Fig. 12 Picasso, Girl Before a Mirror, 1932.



Fig. 13 Willem de Kooning, Woman and Bicycle, 1952-1953.



Fig. 14 Edward Hopper, Room in New York, 1932.



Fig. 15 R. B. Kitaj, **Smyrna Greek**, 1976-1977.



Fig. 16 Lucien Freud, **Hotel Bedroom**, 1954.

PART TWO

PART TWO

NOTES ON THE WORKS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE

> "Just as the individual who produces a poem, film, painting or scientific theory has an *interior life*, so too, I would want to propose, has the work he produces."[119]

The early paintings (1981 - 1982) were painted in response to the same question that prompted the theoretical research: that is, that men look at women in a certain way. They were intended (although their final meaning is quite changed) to stand as a *critique* of these relationships.

These works, and in fact most of the paintings submitted for this degree, have as their source material, images of lovers taken from some publicised photographic convention, such as the film still or the pictures of the paparazzi.[120] As such, these images can be seen as illustrations of the stereotypical poses and gestures which could be said to be partly responsible for our contemporary conception of the 'language of love'.

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[119] Hudson, **Bodies of Knowledge** p.45.

[120] Apart from being a supply of already existing images that illustrate stereotypical behaviour, the source material itself is of little importance. There is no record of where most of these images came from, as many of them were scavenged from half-torn magazines, or were even given to me by well-wishers. Although some of the characters are recognisable (eg. Taylor and Burton), their personalities are not important, and often the anonymity of the figures was essential for the using of them.

'Love', here, is not a very accurate word, but is used to cover that particular relationship that exists between lovers, and includes (amongst others) the many complicated emotions of anger, alienation, anxiety and despair.

These quotations of *emotional states in the photographic sources* have all become conventions that we recognise and 'know' as true, and on which we model our lives and responses. This language is constantly being reaffirmed by the media - in advertising, films, novels and television - and which helps to form our knowledge of 'love'. Any personal experience is in some way measured against our vicarious experience of love through the *media* - of how we *feel* we *ought* to behave, and our discourse of love becomes cliched.

> Love. love, love - all the wretched cant of it, masking egotism, lust, masochism, fantasy *under a mythology* of sentimental postures, a welter of self-induced miseries and joys, blinding and masking the essential personalities in the frozen gestures of courtship, in the kissing and the dating and the desire, of the compliments and the quarrels which vivify its barrenness.[121]

The importance of the romantic subject in literature and the arts suggests that people have always yearned for love, and as Barthes says, the notion of the 'amorous subject' is one to which we all respond because of the 'truth' it tells us bout our own experiences; or because we feel that we will discover the truth about everyone else. ("*That's so true, I recognise that scene!*")[122]

The existentialist concerns of the twentieth century and the philosophical shift in focus from man's existence as spiritual being

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[121] Greer, **The Female Eunuch** p.169

[122] Barthes, **The Lover's Discourse**, p.4f.

with at least a chance of a spiritual immortality, to that of merely a biological and ecological accident, has also influenced our notions of love. Love between two people has now become the focus of our spiritual happiness; and many contemporary images of lovers are concerned with the alienated loneliness of two people desperately searching for some intensity. This has been compounded by contemporary notions of sex, and the relatively recent (in post-Victorian terms) sexual revolution.

In his book **The History of Sexuality**, Michel Foucault discusses the importance in the last two centuries of a *discourse on sex*, and says that sex has moved out into the public imagination, and has become *something to discuss and confess*. We have given it a certain power, and look to it as holding a certain truth.[123] Within this century it has become a public obsession, both through the recognition of female sexuality, and the fact that it was given a certain status by Reich and Marcuse (stemming from the notions of de Sade) as being the instrument for our liberation, and the idea that freedom from sexual repression would lead to political freedom. In this way, our attitude towards sex has become one of desperation as we believe it to be a last hope for some kind of redemption. This is constantly reinforced by articles in contemporary magazines that sell because they claim to hold the secret to the ultimate orgasm. Sex in this way has begun to tyrannise, rather than liberate, and the expectations that surround it have helped to cloud personal relationships, because they have placed a heavy burden on the need for each to please his/her mate: the convention of romantic love has long been replaced by the search for sexual satisfaction.

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[123] Foucault, **The History of Sexuality**, p.19f.

As discussed, the paintings completed for this degree are all taken from some photographic source. All of these photographs were selected as already existing images, and at no time did I actually set up a scene, or use a photograph of an event in which I had been part. These photographs in this sense are not about *actual people*, or *real events* (although the source may have been of a specific celebrity), but were seen in terms of the relationships between a man and a woman, and codes of interactions. If any narrative or link is seen between the images, then it is precisely that - a narrative of male/female interactions.

However, despite these 'removed' sources, the *general response* to this work has been centred around the potency of the emotions expressed, and thus the presumed autobiographical incidents that prompted these paintings.

In order to discuss this aspect of the paintings, it is necessary to describe how the photographs were singled out. They were not selected *arbitrarily*, *nor* were they intended as part of a larger system, but each was finally chosen because it fitted into a particular aesthetic, either in terms of the quality of the image, or the evocation of a particular mood with which I identified. Thus, this 'recognition' may be seen as the starting point of the works. Yet, in comparing the source material to the final painting, it is obvious that the images have been *transformed*, and often the *meaning* has changed. The process or reason behind these transformations cannot be defined, and again, the closest means of describing these permutations of content, is to say that each painting developed (or was pushed) until a specific atmosphere was evoked that touched on some *memory*.

This aspect of memory - and a painting's meaning residing in that stumbling across the recollection of an emotion, is the one way in which I can describe the process of the work. Once the mood of that memory was established (whether of a specific lived experience or a quality remembered from films or novels), it became important to push that emotion by creating further analogies through actions, expressions, and the quality of paint itself. This notion of the 'painterly' equivalent was however not apparent in the early work, but was to become a central concern in the later paintings.

The idea that these memories are not only based on direct personal experiences, but are a confusion of this lived experience with a recollection of episodes in novels, films, and even other paintings, is very important. In some ways this denies an autobiographical analysis of the work, but in other ways reaffirms this: 'I' as the author and painter have become the locus of these memories, and the information taken from the photographs has been transformed by my paintings into an inventory of my own experience and knowledge. I have become the 'storyteller' in the way that Walter Benjamin describes.

> ... it is not the object of the story to convey a happening *per se*, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds it in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening. It thus bears the mark of the storyteller much as the earthen vessel bears the mark of the potter's hand.[12a]

[12a] Benjamin, "On Some Motives in Baudelaire" **Illuminations** p.161

The idea of experience is important. As Benjamin says, journalistic conventions e.g. the newspaper and the documentary photograph are about information and not experience. Information is a relatively new mode. It was preceded by narration (the essence of the story, and the painting as opposed to the photograph).

In this way the quite banal reportage of the paparazzi has been transformed, and these images can be seen as that 'material object' that Proust describes as arousing the *"emoire Involontaire*, which is, as he says, "somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect, and unmistakenly present in some material object (or in the sensation which such an object arouses in us)..."[125]

As Benjamin said.

> We know that in his work Proust did not describe a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it. And yet even this statement is imprecise and far too crude. For the important thing for the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection.[126]

The meanings of these paintings as this "Penelope work of recollection" relies therefore on the autobiographic, and the confidence that anything one experiences intensely is quotable. But it also relies on the conventions or 'discourse' of depicting these emotions that we have all come to recognise as 'true'. Thus, in these works, one will find evidence of many stereotypes, ranging from the pin-up to the femme fatale.

While the initial intention had been on the level of a critique, with the notion of the voyeur being an added comment on the role of the conventional Nude, the overriding content of these works resides in their quite explicit eroticism. This erotic charge lies not so much in the treatment of the individual figures, but in the tensions and emotions created by their interaction. The spectator as voyeur relies less on the fantasy of a one-to-one relationship

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[125] Benjamin quoting Proust, ibid. p.160

[126] Benjamin, "The Image of Proust", **Illuminations**, p.204.

between him/herself and the figures, than on being able to identify with the emotion, and attempts at communication between the sexes. The voyeur's relationship to the work thus depends on memories of his/her own experience.

Earlier, I defined the erotic as relying on the emotional as opposed to the ideal, in the relationship of either artist/subject, spectator/subject, or between the subjects themselves. (*Pornography*, conversely is characterised by its lack of emotion.) I present this work as an emotional, and therefore erotic investigation of relationships between men and women.

Through a description of many of the paintings it will be illustrated how the erotic sensuality changes from the initial work, which draws upon many traditional stereotypes, and whose figures have a more classical 'statuesque' solidity, to the heavy, bulky 'hot' figures of the **Mediterranean Affairs**. By the actual process of working, the way in which the figures were treated, changed. Their physicality became emphasised through the paint application rather than their bulk and solidity. This emotional, nervous *smudging* of paint may affect the viewer in an alternative manner. Rather than relating to the figures through their size and sculptural authority, the viewer apprehends these figures through a more personal visceral identification, where the way in which their *skin* is painted comes to stand for the inner turmoil of emotions and feelings. In the later works, the fleshy sensuality begins to cover the whole surface, and the paintings begin to take on their own physical presences. In some (**Parting Is All We Know of Heaven**....., and **The Sphinx** and **The Swing**) the frames themselves become descriptive of flesh, and give the paintings a corporeality that overrides the actual subject matter.

First Series. (See plates 1-5)

These first paintings are entitled **keyhole voyeurism** because of the size of the works, and also the size and positioning of the figures within the format, as well as the clarity of focus

Criticism of this early work is primarily literary. This is the case because of the narrative character of the series, and the emphasis on subject matter. The formal criticism of the paintings themselves, is more on a descriptive level, where the spaces and decorative interiors become a way of setting the scene. There is a certain preciousness in the way these are painted, due to the small scale used, and the careful, detailed painting in enamel, which was then glazed. These are all means which succeeded in sharpening the focus, giving it that small, clear detail that one has when one looks through a small aperture, such as a keyhole. This way of painting can be likened to a clarity of descriptive language. The point being made is that unlike the later paintings, where the physical presence of the paint begins *impacting on* a gut/visceral level, these earlier works are read more as narratives, and the *means* of their execution is not primary.

As with the conventions of one-point perspective, and the visual nature of photography and film, these paintings contrive to present the spectator (and *assumed voyeur*) with an *unimpeded* vision. The way in which these paintings are executed, reinforces the concept of the *Gaze*.

INFLUENCES.

Before discussing these paintings, it is worthwhile to note certain activities preceding the research for this degree because, with hindsight, these can be seen to have exerted some influence on the nature of the work. In the two years between completing an honours degree and embarking on the work for this degree, I had been involved in teaching art at a secondary school level, and had then travelled extensively throughout North America and Europe. One of the influences common to both these activities was on the scale of the work, which may have been affected by the restrictions of drawing in small notebooks whilst travelling, but, more interestingly, shows an influence of adolescent drawing and painting, which would have been acquired while teaching adolescents.

This 'adolescent' influence is noted not only in the size of the paintings, but also in the way the figures are placed very securely within some space - generally a box-like room. The way in which the figures are fitted into the format is also very significant. There is the sense of their feet touching the bottom edge of the paper, and their heads just reaching the top. The illustrative way in which these figures are rendered is also reminiscent of adolescent drawings - where the fact that these people are 'realistic' and seem 'correct', is very important. Whilst these were being painted, I was aware of this illustrative component, and even went as far as making use of books aimed at teaching such representations - of the "How to Draw" variety.

This type of drawing, of 'trying to get it right', leads to a certain clumsiness and awkwardness, which, in viewing the paintings now, is jarringly apparent.

Although all these attributes can be recognised in adolescent work, there are also some similarities in the paintings to those of the Italian primitives,[127] which I scrutinised intently during the course of travelling.

The decorative patterning used in the early paintings is also the result of an interest and note-taking of the interiors of small hotels and *pensions* in Europe. There are some direct references to these types of rooms in the paintings, the most obvious being the green Roman shuttering. This became a significant aspect of the content of the works, as these rooms came to stand for those impersonal, rather shoddy (but still beautiful) cheap hotel rooms around Europe. It was important that these places were not domestic interiors, in the sense of being people's homes. The encounters between the individuals were far more charged than a merely domestic interior would suggest. There are never any personal objects or memorabilia - the rooms are always bare, with the exception of discarded articles of clothing, a chair, a painting perhaps, and a mirror. These objects are quite specific, and became the basis of a symbolic vocabulary that was used throughout this series of paintings.

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[127] There are certain theories which try to correlate periods of cognitive development with developments in the History of Art, eg. S.Gablik **Progress in Art**. *But this is not a point that is being discussed or even supported in this dissertation. The Italian primitives were one of the influences that was noted, and it is interesting that whilst travelling it was not* the contemporary main-stream art that was found exciting, but rather, the works of certain artists that worked quietly, *away from this main-stream. For example,* artists such as Kitaj, Balthus, Stanley Spencer etc., who have subsequently been 'restored' to art.

In the first series, the symbolic vocabulary of the mirror; discarded clothes; type of room etc all help to reinforce the idea of the voyeur, and the Gaze. The type of room has already been mentioned, and the erotic specificity of discarded clothing (thereby implying an act of disrobing which the voyeur may have been privy to), was discussed in the first section.

The Mirror

In all of the **Keyhole Voyeurism** paintings, there is a mirror, or the suggestion of a mirror present in the room. The symbolism of a mirror centres around the concept of vanity. Used within a painting, it also throws doubt onto the role of the spectator, and emphasises his position as voyeur. There is a suggestion that the person standing in front of the painting is not only secretly watching the scene in front of them, but has the potential of watching themselves looking on. This heightens the awareness of the intimacy between the spectator and the painting, as it carries the implications that the spectator may be 'found out'. This notion is something that we know from the movies. There are countless scenes in which mirrors 'betray' someone who is hiding. However, there is an added dimension of involvement, as the spectator is also like the audience watching one of these films, and is therefore aware of the potential betrayal of the mirror. Apart from the uncertainty that the image of the mirror casts on the relationship between the spectator and the work, it also alters the interaction between the man and the woman within the painting. One is never certain of the gaze of the man. Is he looking at the woman, or is he looking at himself? Is looking at her, possessing her, perhaps a way of asserting his identity? After these paintings were completed, the following passage by Virginia Woolf was discovered in **A Room of One's Own** .

> Women have served all these years as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of the man at twice its natural size.[128]

Here, Woolf is suggesting that *historically, woman is man's mirror*. She ties this to the idea of woman's inferiority, and suggests that, by diminishing her in his use of her, man becomes twice his size; his sense of her inferiority is essential for the sense of his own importance. Woman dare not criticise, for if she does so, "the figure in the looking glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished."[129]

Within these paintings, *the woman portrayed does seem to fit into* this role, and is almost always inward looking - pensive, introspective. It is as if she is keeping herself apart from the man, yet at the same time displaying herself to him. (This pose relates very closely to the stereotypical postures of women used in advertising.)[130] A woman friend once noted that these women

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[128] Woolf, **A Room of One's Own**, p.35. In a similar vein, Kaplan discusses *the concept of the cinema screen as serving as a* mirror for the man's gaze. She says: "The idealized male screen heroes give back to the male spectator his more perfect mirror self, together with a sense of mastery and control." **Women and Film**, p.28.

[129] Ibid. p.36.

[130] See p.14

This investigation of the stereotypical postures of gender behaviour is central to Goffmans study in his book **Gender Advertisements**. *Here, with the use of many visual examples* taken directly from advertising, he points out how the stereotypical feminine stance (in masculine company) often involves a removed inwards expression symbolising a withdrawal from reality, and acts as a symbol of the woman's willingness to put her faith in her male partner's ability to cope with whatever situation comes to hand - he is big enough to cope for both of them. This again reinforces Woolf's theory that through passive acceptance of the feminine ideal, women help boost man's image of himself as the hero.

showed an acceptance of doing something for the man to allow him to retain some sense of pride. She interpreted it as a show of love, but a love that has become confused with stereotypical conditioning, and the fact that women feel that they should be giving themselves to men. She noted that even in a contemporary 'feminist' society, it is very difficult for women to deny totally this conditioning, and that this awareness of role behaviour, coupled with the inability to refute it, creates further confusion and problems of natural interaction. On the one hand, this reading corresponds to the idea put forward by Virginia Woolf, but also relates to the response of others who have seen this separateness as affirming a lack of communication between the sexes. The couple are in the same space, about to engage (or just having done so) in love-making, yet there is no connection between them. Both are very self-conscious, the man in looking (perhaps) in the mirror, and the woman in looking inwards, being intently aware of herself. The fact that the man looks outwards at something material, whilst the woman's focus is more emotional, is significant. This seems to tie in with many theories of the differences between the sexes, and their attitudes to love, and pornography (see previous chapters).

In the first painting (plate 1) the mirror is shown quite obviously it reflects the figures back at the viewer/voyeur, and compacts the space between them so that the man leans forward towards the woman in a way that is not apparent in the painted scene itself. Most importantly, the mirror serves to reveal a bed in a space that is off to the right of the picture. This localises the space as a bedroom which would otherwise not be so obvious. In this painting the mirror is used as a device to *reveal* something to the voyeur. (Apart from the mirror the only objects present in the room are two pairs of men's shoes. As the man stands in his

socks, the one pair could belong to him, but the other is a mystery, and could be indicative of a third presence - perhaps that of the voyeur.

The mirror in the second painting (plate 2) is barely suggested behind the woman. The painting on the wall serves more as the mirror, but one that prophesises the action of the woman revealing herself.

In the third painting (plate 3), the mirror *teases*; it serves to reflect back the body of the man who stands on the bed with his back to us. But whilst we see his legs, the framing of the picture manages to censor his genitals from the viewer. There is the sense that if one could bend a little lower, one could see his his body in full. This titillation and implied involvement of the viewer emphasises the possibility of his physical presence viewing the scene.

In plate 4, the mirror is not actually shown, but the woman's stance in front of the basin suggests that she stands there able to see her reflection, and to measure it up against the ideal 'pin-up' in the man's possession.

In plate 5, the final painting of this series, the mirror has two *purposes*. It makes it possible for the gaze of the man and the woman to meet, and it also reveals the painting which is a representation of more idealised nudes.

The Painting within the Painting

In two of these works (plates 2 & 5), there is also a painting which stands in counterpoint to the mirror. These paintings quite intentionally depict a traditional view of women within the conventions of art history, and therefore become a complement to the more contemporary female form who is the subject of the scene. This became a way of playing off the more illustrative prosaic representation of these figures, against the sensuous nude in history.

There are further implications inherent in this juxtaposition. The nude stands as an ideal against which the woman could be measured in the eyes of the man. This is expanded more clearly in plate 4, where the man stands, with his back to the woman, looking at a pin-up image in a magazine. The very act of looking at this idealised sexual image and ignoring the 'real' woman behind him, carries the connotation of criticism. Further, in this work, the woman stands at a basin with a razor in her hand. Although there are morbid implications inherent in a razor, the meaning was intended more directly. A razor is used for shaving. As discussed in chapter one, the lack of body hair is an important aspect of the convention of the nude - both in art history and contemporary images of the 'ideal woman', and the woman in the painting seems to be aware of competing with the idealised image - yet she stares pensively at the razor as if she is questioning the point of trying to live up to this image.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FIGURES.

The Woman

The first three paintings of this series made use of an illustrative convention, and were conscious attempts to re-create the seductiveness of the pin-up girl.

For example, in plate 1, the woman provocatively begins to disrobe, and the way in which she stands - her legs slightly bent and pressed together, emphasises her sexual awareness of herself. She is being appraised by the man, and is very conscious of her attractions. She has a certain provocativeness which is conventionalised, known about. Whilst painting this, I was very conscious of this provocative stance, and took great pains to show the woman's flesh; her legs, arms and breasts showing through her dress. This scene has the charge of her first revealing herself to him. It is a first (and perhaps only) encounter, and is descriptive of an excitement rather than an intimacy.

The next painting (plate 2) also deals with the woman's self-conscious awareness of her charms, and she undresses, glancing downwards at the man as if to gauge his response.

Similarly, in plate 3, the woman poses herself on the bed, and is intently aware of being appraised by the man. In this painting, because of our viewing position behind the man's back, we simultaneously become the surveyors of her body.

The banality of nakedness when not accompanied by the suitable self-consciousness of the female, is to some extent apparent in the last two paintings of this series. Neither of these women are

presented as voluptuous nudes, but stand, quite naturally, in their nakedness. The woman in plate 4, stands quite removed, and shares a certain internal calm that echoes the classical, statuesque quality of a Piero della Francesco woman. However, the conjunction of her naked presence next to that of a fully clothed man, strengthens the notion of the male gaze, and the idea that the woman is there for the man to look at and judge. This concept must have been recognised by Manet in **Dejeuner sur l' herbe**, in which two men in contemporary dress are in the presence of a naked woman. Her nudity immediately makes her more vulnerable, and places her in an unequal relationship with the men. She is there for their pleasure, and her nakedness rather than revealing her identity, has served to define her as an object. (The objecthood of a nude female.)

The body of the female in the last painting of this series (plate 5) however has her source in a far more contemporary image. She has that same self-assured nakedness of Hopper's woman in **Woman in the Sun** (fig 26) and stands, quite contained and self-possessed, looking calmly back at the man who gazes at her through the mirror. She watches him with the same intensity of his looking at her, and is no longer the *surveyed*, in the sense that Berger describes, but stands equally with the man as the *surveyor*. The frank interested return of her gaze prevents the unequal relationship of his clothed presence against her nudity reducing her to an 'object'. While in the previous work, the setting up of the female against the idealised sex image in the magazine was implicit of criticism (due also to the man's lack of interest in her), in this painting the 'idealised' versus the more 'real' carries no such implications. Rather, there is a certain strength in the woman which makes the erotic posturing of the nudes in the painting seem rather ridiculous. Also, the man

seems to ignore this image, and looks through the mirror past the painting, and at the woman in whom his interest lies. This is the most sympathetic of all these paintings, and there is an element of familiarity and knowingness in their interaction which suggests that they have shared some previous intimacy.

The Man

The men in these works are even more stereotyped. They fit in with the convention (often used in contemporary illustration) of the tall, dark, and confident male. The fact that, when clothed, they wear dark suits, only confirms their social status.

In this series there is a resemblance between the physical attributes of the couple in each work. This enables the series to read almost as a narrative, and extends the notion of the 'film still'. However, at no time are the characters meant to be real people, but they are the same in that they stand for a couple - 'a man and a woman' - and if there is a narrative, there is a narrative, not about individuals, but about the interaction between the sexes.

These small paintings can be seen in the nature of 'limbering up for their successors', but certain aspects of them survive significantly into otherwise quite different paintings. For example, the quality of the room in which these relationships take place, never really changes. It is always a rather impersonal space in which neither of them is quite at ease, and this helps to highlight the uncertainty and rather alienated character of their meetings. It is a place that they come to specifically with the intention of love-making. Their privacy is never really assured. This is apparent in the notion of the voyeur, who 'watches through the

keyhole', and in **Omni Animale Triste** (plate 11), intrudes, violating what intimacy there was between them.

This sense of an impersonal space, and a non-specific time (one is never sure of the time of the day in these rooms, although there is a feeling that it is late afternoon - the time of illicit love-making), is one of the things that Steven Marcus notes as being a basic tenet in the convention of pornography. He asks where pornotopia exists.

> These places may be found in books; they may be read about in libraries or in studies; but their true existence is not in the world, or even the world that exists by special references in literature. They exist truly behind our eyes, within our heads... To the question "What time is it in pornotopia?" one is tempted to answer, "It is always bedtime"... In another sense, time in pornotopia is without duration; when the past is recalled, it is for the single purpose of arousing us in the present. And the efforts of pornography in this regard is to achieve, in consciousness, the condition of the unconscious mind - a condition in which all things exist in a total, simultaneous present.[131]

In these paintings, there is the feeling of this 'eternal present'. The time, and the place seem to reside in the tension and emotions that exist between the man and the woman. But it is this emphasis on these emotions that prevents these works from being pornographic in the way that Marcus describes. For Marcus, pornography is not concerned in any way with how people live together, with their emotions and feelings - it is interested only in organs. Emotions are an embarrassment to it.

[131] Marcus, **The Other Victorians**, pp.268-270

While the early paintings were primarily concerned with the idea of spectator as voyeur, and elements of the male gaze within the narrative of the paintings - and the medium or method of painting helped to conspire to this end (in that the process of putting on the paint was erased so that the spectator was only concerned with looking), the change in medium from enamel to oil paint, as well as the larger scale of the work, and the resolution to allow evidence of the process to remain, changed the level of the spectator's interactions with the paint from that of a more cerebral looking to that of a more direct physical sensation.

MEDITERRANEAN AFFAIRS

(3 paintings. Enamel and oil on handmade paper. Plates 7-10.)

The second series, called **Mediterranean Affairs**, can be seen as transitional works between the concerns of the illustrative, the Gaze, and the idea of the Visceral and a 'painterly' experiencing of the work.

Whereas the first series were called **keyhole voyeurism**, this series could be entitled 'telescopic voyeurism'. The voyeur is no longer looking through the keyhole into an interior, but, with the aid of a telescope is spying on couples sunbathing. This sense of looking through a telescope is created by the way the plane has been tilted, so that the figures are flattened onto the picture plane, with very little sense of depth or space between them, as with telescopic vision, everything is reduced to a shallow depth of field.

With the exception of **Susannah Watched** (plate 13), these are the only paintings in which the figures are outside, and not closeted in sordid rooms. This, and the idea of these couples as *bathers*, had an important influence on the colour of these paintings. The physical eroticism of the couple's interaction could be further conveyed through the suggestion of intense heat, and this was explored through using increasingly 'hot colours', until in the last two paintings almost everything was painted in differing shades of reds and pinks. Also, the subject of *bathers*, is traditionally one in which the nakedness of the figure is celebrated; and unlike the earlier series in which the paleness and the quality of naked flesh implied a life spent indoors, and furtive, hurried affairs, in these works, the people are large and voluptuous, displaying enormous areas of sensuous surface which begin to

cover the whole format. Their sexuality is out in the open - a glorification of desire.

This sense of fleshiness is further emphasised by the medium, for it was in these paintings that oil paint was first used. Also, as in the first series, these works were done on handmade paper (four small sheets joined together), and the quality and texture of the paper managed to further enhance the sensuous sensation of skin. This greater sense of 'directness' of the medium is also apparent in the working process. For, in these paintings it became part of the meaning of the work to leave incidences of the process involved in making - of the fresh, spontaneous initial drawing. (In the first series, each piece was carefully worked over so that no trace of this remained.)

For example, in plate 7, the rough charcoal drawing of the man's chest, and the shadow on his upper leg where left quite consciously, as it was recognised that the smudgy crude quality of the charcoal in those areas was far closer to the intended atmosphere than paint could be. Similarly, the clumsiness of the badly drawn bricks in plate 9 was recognised as an important emotional analogy to the tenor of the couple's interaction. In the third painting, (plate 10) the hand underneath the woman's head is a remnant of the initial drawing, and bears very little relationship to the rest of her body in the completed painting. Its shape is not necessarily descriptive of a hand, but could be a flower, a shell, or a claw. This ambiguity is important to the painting - if everything was described in too much detail, some of the resonances would be lost.

The compositional devices used in these works has also changed from a more coherent 'logical' planar perspective, to the use of a

distorted space (partially created through the figures' own bulk), which reads more on an 'emotional' than a descriptive level.

Mediterranean Affairs 1 *(plates 7 & 8)*

This is the first painting in which there is any direct physical contact between the man and the woman. In the other works any contact (or lack of contact) has been through the gaze - the glance of the man, possessing, undressing - always in control.

The plane has been shifted so that the figures, although lying, are placed vertically across the format from the top to the bottom. The top of both of their heads and their feet are cropped. His deck-chair pushes up out of the picture plane, and seems to tilt in such a manner that he begins to slide down towards her. The focus attention is in the centre, and is emphasised by the pulsating redness of his hand resting on her buttocks. This area of focus is also emphasised by the line of both of their costumes (she is significantly only wearing the bottom part of her bikini) which breaks the pinkness of their flesh.

The erotic focus of the work is in his hand, and the colour and size of it becomes a symbol of his desire. The way that he looks at her with heavy lidded eyes and lips pursed in a kissing motion is also full of sexual innuendo - a kind of proposition. The 'sexual' hand is echoed by the treatment of the towel which lies underneath the deck-chairs. It is like red flesh, and is suggestive of female genitalia. (The way in which it is painted is reminiscent of the work of Judy Chicago. See plate 28.)

The subject of this painting is less about the convention of male/female interaction than the feeling of sensuality itself. The sense of passion no longer resides in the symbolic significance of

the objects, but rather, in the way that they are treated. Similarly, it is the manner in which the flesh of the couple has been painted that gives the work an added erotic charge. The use of blue and green colour patches within the pinks implies a certain bruising and play of shadow which enhances its tactility and sense of immediacy. The figures also have a robustness and vibrancy that is emphasised by the pink and the use of coloured line.

Mediterranean Affairs 2 (Plate 9)

The impact of this work relies primarily on the suggestion of heat. It is essentially a red painting, and this use of colour, as well as the associations conjured up by the setting (sun on red face-brick) become a means of describing the intensity of the heat. Looking at this painting is rather like experiencing the throbbing of blood behind the eyes that one sometimes feels in such a situation.

The arrangement of the figures in this work is strange. There is a piling up of flesh - a leg in front of a leg - yet the people all remain quite separate. Again, the man is looking at the woman, desiring her. She looks downwards, quite self-consciously, at the hand on her leg - which may or may not be her own. Ambiguities such as this hand and the strange naked leg in the foreground give the painting a bizarre, disjointed quality, and somehow manage to highlight the sexual tensions and uneasiness within the painting.

The idea of the leg in the foreground was taken quite directly from the original photographic source, in which another image arbitrarily overlapped the first. When the picture was torn out of the magazine, this leg 'became' part of the photograph. When

working directly from photographic sources, one often comes across such fortuitous connections which can then be used.

Mediterranean Affairs 3 *(Plate 10)*
The figures have become even larger, and begin to fill the whole format so that the painting is really about flesh.

The shallow depth of field throws the two figures together, and flattens out the space into which they fit so that he leans over her, and she writhes under his presence, turning sideways, and looks straight out at the spectator. Her hand cups her breast, emphasising the bulk of it, and instead of being a self-conscious, protective gesture, this action becomes some kind of offering. She is offering herself both to the man who looms over her and to the spectator. The man is only important in that he is a fleshy presence, his character is of no relevance.

The dislocations and ambiguities discovered in these works were acknowledged as an important means of expressing the tensions of the emotional interactions, and the solidity and 'over-blown' bulk of the figures was recognised as a device for creating an atmosphere of a puissant, compelling sexuality.

OMNI ANIMALE TRISTE (Plates 11 & 12)

(Charcoal on paper)

In this drawing, the woman swings around. The spectator has intruded. He is no longer the voyeur who watches without being seen, the couple have been disturbed. Of all the images used, this is the most descriptive of the source that it came from. It is based on a film-still, and the freezing of this moment in time is indicative of an isolated incident from a larger narrative sequence. The previous works, although they may have dealt with an act in time - of undressing; of touching; of looking - were not really specific events, but presented these acts more as the 'idea' of them, and are more descriptive of an emotion than an incident. This drawing is very specific in its subject. The spectator has caught the couple out - it is a scene of post-coitus. This sense of immediacy is not only implied through that time 'slice', but also through the manner in which the image has been made. This is a charcoal drawing, and unlike a painting, which normally only shows the final image, a drawing serves as a record *of the whole process, and this 'reading' of the process helps in*volve the viewer at a very direct level.

The accretion of lines, partly scratched out, partly rubbed out, manages to emphasise the corporeality of the figures. This 'ghosting' of lines creates a sense of movement under the man's skin which becomes something warm and living, and suggests the body of someone who has been under tension and is just beginning to relax. It is descriptive of satiated flesh. The softness and furriness of the charcoal mark becomes a metaphor for his warm, moist armpit.

Her skin is also palpable, malleable - bruised. And her mouth - emphasised by the way the rest of her face has been cropped off by the format - is like a soft wound, and like the blankets on the bed can be seen to be symbolic of her vulva.

The immediacy of the situation is further described through formal devices. Again, the planes have been tilted so that the bodies become compressed against the surface. They are forced into a narrow area made up entirely of bed and drapery, and are pushed forward into the space of the viewer. Like the towel in **Mediterranean Affairs** (1), the sheets and blankets take on a meaning that is sexual, so do the curtains. Cloth has become symbolic of flesh.

The sheet metamorphoses into a sleeve, and this along with the shirt and trousers on the dumb-valet, become indications of the process of undressing - and serve as a memory of the act that preceded the scene. Formally, the whiteness of the clothing on the dumb-valet plays an important function. It helps compress the space even further, and also pretends to act as a censoring device. The glimpse of the man's genitals from behind this area is somehow more erotic than if his whole body had been exposed.

The lessons learnt through drawing with charcoal were later utilised in painterly terms. Charcoal, as a medium, invites one to smudge and to build up surfaces through the accretion of different layers of lines and marks. The following work which was completed, **Susannah Watched**, combined this type of charcoal drawing on paper with oil paint applied in a similar manner.

SUSANNAH WATCHED (Plates 13 & 14)

(Oil and charcoal on paper.)

The title of this painting is derived from the subject of **Susannah and the Elders** which was a popular subject in 16th and 17th century European painting. The meaning of the paintings of this time relied not so much on the idea of innocent virtue triumphing over villainy (the parable of the story), or on the potential seduction of Susannah by the elders, but on the notion of Susannah being *watched* by these men. It is a subject which deals with the voyeur - and the excitement that lies in spying on her.

Similarly, the subject of **Susannah Watched** concerns the voyeur, but in this case, he is not illicitly spying but is blatantly contemplating her. The painting is about the uneasiness of the female figure under such a look, both of the man (whose presence is merely implied by the legs behind her), and by the spectator. She is intently aware of being watched, and it is as if she has become trapped between the two gazes. The idea of her being watched is about desire, as desire is resident in the act of looking, of wanting - rather than in the consummation.

Susannah is the object of desire, and the way in which she has been treated - in her pose; her nudity; her flesh; the collapse of the chair - all conspire to convey the sense of this. For example, in the distortion of her body - her rigid arm, the way in which her body twists at the waist (and is 'cut' in half by her bathing costume which carries the yellow through from the background), the line of her breast slicing through her arm - and in the manner in which her flesh is painted.

This is the first painting in which the quality of the flesh was consciously pushed to stand for some interior emotion. In her belly the nervous smudging on of the paint and the rather flaccid corroded character of the charcoal line turns the flesh into the locus for feelings of sexual excitement. The outside becomes a metaphor for the inside, and the spectator identifies with the 'nervousness' of the paint through a corresponding physical uneasiness.

There is a sense of movement in this painting created both by the dislocation of the body and chair, and this way in which the skin is treated. Its painterliness denies an ideal of formalised static flesh, and can be seen to fit in with Berger's notion of of an erotic image, for, as he says, there is a problem in creating a static image of sexual nakedness. This compounds the spectator's identification with the work.

FORM AND CONTENT (Plate 15)

(Oil on canvas.)

There is a photographic record of the preliminary drawing on the canvas done for this painting (fig.34), and it is therefore possible to trace how the metaphors for desire and sensuality asserted themselves through the process of making the work. For example, at some point of the painting's life, the man's hand started creeping up his arm - opening up his sleeve, and became a metaphor for his hand moving up her skirt. Further metaphors are created through the surface of paint and the colour: the treatment of the woman's dress with its 'queasy' colour combination and paint application, can again be seen as an attempt to describe the emotions *within* her stomach, much in the way that the background curtains can be seen as standing for a dark passion. Emotional qualities are also inherent in the differing ways their flesh has been treated - his rather crudely drawn charcoal hands suggest a certain uneasiness, and cautiously touch her heavy, smooth, and voluptuously painted flesh.

A shirt lies on the bed, yet they are both clothed, so it cannot belong to either of them. Its significance is purely symbolic: it has become a metaphor for the act of disrobing.

From the paintings thus far discussed, it is apparent that many of the concerns which have been explored in terms of art theory can be seen or used to illustrate the meanings of these works. While the basic themes of the paintings remain the same, i.e. the concerns of male/female interactions, and the notion of the spectator as a type of voyeur, their meaning does change quite significantly through the way in which they are painted. I do not think that it is necessary to comment on every work that has been completed for this degree, because many of the issues already raised can be seen to pertain to other paintings. Therefore, in the rest of this section paintings will be discussed as they fit into particular subjects rather than being dealt with chronologically, one by one.

WOMAN AS OBJECT

The idea of the woman being *acted upon*, became the subject of a set of drawings which included **She Takes Money**, **Pink Socks**, **Live by Night** and **Double Indemnity**.

In **She Takes Money** (plate 20) the rather 'squalid' greyness of smudged charcoal was exploited to describe a sordid situation. The title of the drawing is further implicit of the situation, and there are also direct clues suggesting prostitution in the drawing itself. Fragments of the word SEX KINE can be read on the neon sign outside the window, and further descriptive elements such as the thin meanness of the venetian blind, and the impersonal tubular chair on which she sits, emphasise the impoverishment of the scene. The room is both empty and has a 'vision/dream' of a bed within it. There is also a shift in vision implicit in the way the window sill is split into two planes, which implies some progression in time - maybe some future in which the bed will materialise. It is a night scene, and the only light in the room comes from outside, a cold light characteristic of neon. All these elements create an atmosphere that is echoed in the relationship between the man and the woman. She gives herself to him dumbly, allowing him to touch her feet with his gloved hands (both his gloves and his interest in her feet being indicative of some fetishistic preoccupation.) It is as if she is offering herself to him as a fetish - something to be acted upon, and she does it dispassionately as it is her way of making a living.

The focus of this work shifts across all these elements - the window, the sign, the suggestion of the bed, the darkness of her mouth, her crotch, his black gloved hands, his face - in

an almost circular motion, and suggests a kind of quick nervous looking, a tension of waiting for something to happen.

In **Pink Socks** (plate 21), there is the similar sense of the woman allowing something to happen to her. She does not take any direct interest, but sits dispassionately whilst someone (a man) outside the picture holds her foot. This is a rather incongruous image, especially as the scale of the hand holding the foot is quite out of proportion to the rest of the drawing. The impact of the image relies on this enigmatic quality, compounded by the sensuousness of the woman - emphasised in turn by the sensuousness of the chair in which she sits.

In **Live by Night** (plate 23), the spectator again intrudes, his hand reaches into the picture to touch the warm clammy thigh of the stripper. It is as if he could no longer resist the temptation. The subject of the work concerns the availability of this woman to be touched by whomever wants to do so. Her role is unambiguous - she is a stripper, a woman who offers her body for the fantasies of men. She is also there to be touched, and this is emphasised by the fact that she is not shown in the distance as something to be looked at, but has come right up to the picture plane where the viewer can 'reach' in and touch her. Also, the fact that only her body is shown emphasises this proximity. She is seen as a 'part object', a fetish and unlike a nude is not there to be contemplated in her entirety but is something to be acted upon. The corporeality and tangibility of her skin is suggested by the rippling and uneasy smudged colours of the pastels, an uneasiness that is further described by the colour relationships of yellow and black in the surrounding room. Also, this is not a private encounter, there is no possibility of any intimacy. The sweaty quality of her flesh; of her corset; of the man who looks

out again at the man who touches her - all conspire to enhance this idea of sex for sale. This image is not about individuals, and with the exception of the man portrayed, who has now become *the outsider, the third person in the triangle* - his role reversed as he is now in the picture whereas the man who touches her is not - is about parts of the body: a hand, a thigh, a breast. This drawing is about touching, about the physical and not the visual, and the hotness of the anonymous pink hand reflects the palpability of this desire.

Double Indemnity(plate 22), is the other drawing in this series, and stands as a counter image to **Live by Night**. This drawing is precisely about the *gaze* - about the voyeur who looks on and cannot act. It is about fantasy and desire, a longing that is stronger by not being fulfilled in the flesh. The voyeur is now in the picture and he is watching a film of a desirable woman. It is a furtive watching, as he sits alone in a darkened room, and one gets the impression that he is a person who is unable to act out his passions in the real world, and is reliant on images for titillation. His shadow cast onto the film image emphasises the one to one relationship between him and the woman in the film, and the sense of a private viewing.

THE FALLEN HERO

In **The Blue Hour** (plate 16), and **Fearful Symmetry** (plate 17), the man is not even granted the tenuous position of 'being the hero'. In the previous works there is the sense (illustrated by Woolf's comment that woman has always acted as man's mirror), that man - even although not obviously accorded this by his partner - believed himself to be in the dominant position. He seems to be blind to any other possibility, or is unaware of the woman questioning this role. While this is quite apparent in the first of the series of **Mediterranean Affairs** (plate 7), it is displayed most obviously in both the paintings entitled **Parting Is All** ... and **I Know About Heaven** ... (plates 18 & 19). The overblown theatrical quality of these paintings coupled with the dramatic and self-indulgent poses of the men (the women in both cases being in the background rather sardonically observing this behaviour), only highlights and makes a mockery of this 'heroic' posturing.

In **The Blue Hour** and **Fearful Symmetry** however, the man has most certainly fallen from his heroic pedestal. This is apparent not only in the way that the man has been depicted, but by the fact that of all the paintings completed, these are the only two in which the woman displays the characteristics of the *femme fatale*.

In **The Blue Hour**, she crouches quite sphinx-like, and seems to 'hover' above the man in the whiteness of the bed. The bed has become the arena for some strife, and the man shifts quite perceptibly away, as if trying to escape the intensity of her emotion. However, in this case, the man can certainly not be considered subservient, but seems to hold the balance (or is the

cause) of her anger and frustration (illustrated by her clenched fist) through his *lack* of emotional display.

Fearful Symmetry, on the other hand, displays an unequal balance (and hence a pun on the word 'symmetry') in which the woman is the most powerful. This inequality is most clearly demonstrated by the relative positions and scale of the figures. Earlier, I discussed how in the language of advertising, and other conventions which contrive to reinforce the ideological positions of the sexes, a woman is seldom shown to be taller than a man, unless he is her social inferior. We are so used to such stereotyping, that in cases where it is reversed, its meaning is quite apparent. For, although the man in this painting is not necessarily her social inferior, her dominant position, emotional or otherwise, is clear. These relative positions are also emphasised through her vital strength and animal potency - further enhanced by the animal-like markings on her dress and the couch, and the allusions to Blake's "Tyger" in the title. She is the devouring female; he, on the other hand, is the supplicant. He appears timid and introspective, and his act of knocking over the teacup only reinforces his clumsy insecurity.

There is a tension within this painting which is created not only by the uneasy colour combination of black and yellow, but also by the distance between them, and the fact that their glances do not meet. All this is held in a balance that the falling teacup will shatter.

SYMBOLIC OBJECTS

Constant reaffirmations of the physicality of the subject, both through the way in which they are painted, and the use of symbolic objects, became a central part of my work. These can be seen to fit into the concerns of figurative conventions of this century which can be defined as 'psychological expressionism', and 'psychological realism'.

In expressionism the means of image making are primary in conveying a sense of man's existential awareness. The expressive use of gesture and paint serves both to further describe the emotional content of the painting itself, and to *deictically* expose the artist's consciousness. Psychological realism on the other hand makes use of details of day to day existence as a means to further explicate the precise psychological state that the figure (the subject-matter of the painting) is experiencing. This was a technique used by Sartre and other Existential writers, and is also apparent in the works of certain painters, of whom Edward Hopper (fig 14) is an example. Alienation is expressed through mundane attention to detail. Places and objects are symbolic only in the reader's/viewer's ability to identify with the atmosphere, and thus the mental state of the person being portrayed. Because of this, certain banal objects have taken on a symbolic meaning which can now be understood quite separately from their original context. The naked light bulb is one such example, and can be found quite independently in the works of Bacon, Kitaj and Guston, where it is used as a means to convey man's estrangement - from himself, other people, and his environment. Similarly, the rooms in which the figures in my paintings interact, whether bedroom or cinema, become a means of highlighting the tenor of

their relationship. However, within these spaces, certain objects took on a further symbolic significance. For example, the image of the empty chair appears quite often in the paintings, and can be read as standing for a third presence, a 'voyeur' - or may, through its emptiness, symbolise alienation.

The heart-shaped chair on the other hand, developed a very specific symbolic importance which was carried through in a number of works - starting off in **End of the Affair** (plate 24), and appearing in both of the paintings titled **Parting Is All We Know of Heaven...** (plates 18 & 19), **Common Intent** (plate 28); and finally in **Broken Hearts** (plate 25), where its significance becomes most clear. It is not intended to be a deep or mystical symbol, and started off as quite a banal image - a chair in the shape of a heart, which was seen to be representative of 'romantic love'.

In **The End of the Affair**, the top of the chair is only alluded to by its back which is shown between the couple, as a type of barrier. Its height in relation to theirs, suggests that the man is holding it, and is either going to give it to her, or to dis d it. **Broken Hearts** (its title derived in part from the fact that the heart shape of the chair's back is split by the division between the canvases), is loosely based on this previous drawing. The chair, however, has taken on central importance, and is the pivot point of the painting. The who man looks intently at the woman (although her glance does not directly meet his), is in the process of pushing the chair down the stairs. The discordant presence of the ugly black chair that appears behind the woman and seems to fall through the doorway, acts almost as a premonition of the banishment of this sensual romantic chair At the bottom of the painting, there is the suggestion of a third person (a man), who

is preventing this chair from falling downwards. The painting is held in a balance, or suspension, at this point in the time sequence, and the three figures form a 'lover's triangle', where the chair as an object stands for the idea of love itself, which is being bandied about.

The image of the tea-cup also became part of the vocabulary of the paintings. It can be found in **Fearful Symmetry** (plate 17), **Common Intent** (plate 28), and **Yellow Still-Life** (plate 37). It carries the connotations of a willingness to serve, and also represents 'domestic harmony'. The fact that in the paintings it is often precariously balanced, highlights the tensions and precariousness of the interpersonal emotions involved.

A NEW BODY-LANGUAGE

The women in the early paintings display a veiled, secret 'interiority'. They are inward looking and tend to hold themselves aloof from the man. This separateness and aloofness stresses the fact of them being complete, and fitting in with Stokes' notion of the *whole object*. As discussed, these early paintings relied on certain conventions of female representations, but as I became more involved in the work, the descriptions of the women's bodies became more personal (although still referring in characterisation perhaps to Gauguin, Hopper, or even Piero), and were painted rather through an awareness of my own body image and experience. Although in some cases I may have used parts of my body as direct model references - making drawings of my hand, shoulder, thigh etc. and thus the figures read as a sum of different 'part-objects' - the relationship was not generally so direct. This emphasis on my own personalised body vocabulary was rather the outcome of an identification of painting the flesh, belly or breast etc. until the painted image became analogous with the feeling or experience of that part of the body. They can be regarded as paintings of the body done from the *inside*.

The male representations on the other hand were based on the intimate knowledge of another's body, as seen from the *outside*. These representations are therefore far more coherent as 'seen' rather than 'felt' images. The men in the paintings are thus far more complete and whole and seen from one remove, whilst the women are more fragmented and 'known', and made up of parts and segments which may be read more discretely as the focus shifts from part to part. On the whole, the men's bodies are more typecast than the womens', and the paintings can, in part, be seen as being involved in a search for a personalised body lan-

guage to describe the female figure, rather than relying on the historical, and generally male, conventions for doing so. In this way, the paintings can be related to the more 'autobiographical' mode of much feminist art, where the identification with the female artist's "breast, belly, flesh, anger, insecurity etc." all become an important element of the work

However, a distinction must also be made between two different types of male representations in my work. On the one hand, there is the characterisation of the male, and these are generally those besuited characters whose importance lies only on the level of interaction with the woman. But there are also those examples where the male treated becomes some sort of portrait, and a more intimate (sympathetic) rendering of an individual. The man seen as thus appears in **Omni Animale Triste** (plate 11), **The Blue Hour** (plate 16), and in the two small drawings - one **Man Undressing** (plate 31), and the other **Nude Male** (plate 32). Here, the 'portraiture' does not arise from a 'drawing of' a particular person, but is rather on the level of pushing the drawing/painting of the figure until it becomes one with the memory of that body, and those thighs, buttocks etc. can be identified as belonging to "...."; and can be seen as an attempt to create a real male voluptuousness.

Apart from the distinctions between the male and the female in the work, and the body seen (but known), or the body as part of me, there is quite a noticeable difference in the way that the flesh is painted. The women's flesh generally seems to be more 'spongy', inviting touch and capable of bruising. The man's flesh is far more contained and separate. Whilst this may be due to the difference between *seeing* and *identifying*, there is that difference (discussed earlier in the quotation from a transexual's

experience), between male and female skin. Also, Russell in his description of Bacon's work, notes this particularity of male flesh. He discusses Bacon's rendering of male flesh in his **Two Figures** which he says:

> ..exemplify, above all, something that Bacon acknowledges in Michelangelo and has never found since in anything like to the same degree: the element of male voluptuousness. On this point he is quite specific: male flesh has a puissance all its own. That puissance is not replaceable: it cannot be counterfeited by women who have a male strength of character, any more than female voluptuousness can be counterfeited by men who happen to have certain female characteristics.[132]

[132] Russell, **Francis Bacon**, p.155.

THE COSI FAN TUTTE SERIES

This includes :-

the **Cosi fan Tutte Suite** (plates 33-36)

Yellow Still-Life (plate 37)

The Swing (plate 38)

The Sphinx (plate 39)

The **Cosi fan Tutte** series was based upon the video of a performance by **Possession Arts** performed in early 1984. My contribution to this performance was both to create the lighting by the sole means of an overhead projector, and simultaneously with the use of this equipment, to 'draw' onto, or affect the scene being performed. Through this medium, by the application of coloured dyes, the overlay of transparencies of the libretto and sc..e, direct drawi.., and manipulation of shapes across the screen, it was possible to create a variety of unusual effects and colours which further enhanced the 'unreal' quality of the performance itself.

The logic of the performance was based on the fact that each performer had his/her own strip of space in which to perform. Apart from the music (from Mozart's opera), there was no linking theme, and each person acted quite autonomously within their own space. The result was a layering of different actions - including for example, a woman on a swing, a man crawling across the floor with a chair on his back, and a variety of separate acts by a dancer, a 'doctor' etc. My drawing cr..ated yet another layer, which however also served as a link, as it 'fell' across all the action. The harsh black lines and crosses that became part of the vocabulary of the paintings, were taken from these drawings, which were greatly magnified in scale when they were projected

into the arena. Similarly, at the time, the large scale of my hand [illegible] projector managed to telescope the whole scene so that the performance seemed to shrink down to the scale of a page, and the figures became like *small puppets* - a quality that was exploited in the paintings. I was the only performer who remained outside the scene, and in that sense could become the voyeur. From this viewpoint, it seemed as if all the disparate actions of the performers fitted into one scheme, and their separateness and non-interaction became part of the meaning of the work, suggesting a theme of alienation and an inability to communicate.

The whole performance was recorded on a video machine, and to obtain the source-material for the paintings, I took photographs of selected parts of the action from the video, where I adjusted the set so as to create harsh colour discordances. (See figs 47, 49 & 50.) These photographs were not very clear, and I made use of this lack of clarity to push these images in a way that suited me, and to read apparent shapes and forms into the blurred, ambiguous images. I also made direct use of many of the 'mistakes' that had become part of the image through the double removal (by the video, by the camera) from the original source. For example, the patterns created by the disturbances of the video frequencies. Thus it was possible, despite the history of these images, and the original intention of the performers, to use this source in a way that corresponded to my interests, and to extract the subject of a sexual awareness and interaction between the characters. The first painting of the **Così fan Tutte Suite**, **Act One**, metamorphosed into a sexual 'Punch and Judy', whilst the last painting **Act Three**, carries the overtones of cabaret, and the atmosphere of Weimar.

Within these paintings, elements that were in the performance, such as the chair, ladder, lighted window, table, globe of the world, and suggestion of a chest of gold, took on symbolic evocations which not only enhanced the operatic effect, but recalled through jumbled associations of such poetic symbols used quite broadly throughout the history of literature and art, certain mythological, religious, or even apocalyptic visions.

The Swing.

(Oil on cottonwool paper, with burnt wooden frame. Plate 38.)

The painting of **The Swing**, is also based on the performance of **Così fan Tutte**, but has become a sexual image in a way that the performance was not. (Not that the performance had no sexual undertones, but the character of it was different - it was one of sexual nervousness and alienation, in which each performer remained in their own space obsessively acting out their own fantasies.) The erotic symbolism of a swing is quite clear, and Fragonard's painting of this subject (fig.51) amply illustrates its significance.

Apart from the erotic implication involved in the motion of swinging through the air, there is a cloying sexuality in this painting which is emphasised by the 'tackiness' of the paint and the uneasy colour combination of sweet pinks with acid green and black. This is all the more cloying in that the figure, and the motion of swinging are trapped within the large black frame, which is suggestive of charred flesh. The soft white flesh of her legs is reminiscent of that of the 'ladies' that populated the indecent 'soft porn' photographs of the Victorian age. It is flesh that is easily bruised, and is rarely seen, as it is usually hidden by soft, heavy drapes - so that when it is revealed it is all the more erotic. The way in which her skirt blows up and covers her face extends the sexual innuendo, as does the way in which the petticoat is painted; like the soft, dark redness of a woman's sex.

The use of black, both in the frame and the crosses of the tables, trestles, shadows etc., is suggestive of bondage, an image which is further explicated by the obvious reference to her black 'fetishistic' boots.

The Sphinx

(Oil on cottonwool paper with burnt wooden frame. Plate 39.)

The significance of **The Sphinx**, is quite different. Here, the suggestion of charred flesh in the frame does not carry sexual undertones, but rather conveys a sense of history and destruction. This reading rests on a number of allusions, concerning amongst others, the Goya-like use of colour, and intense light and shadow, (definitely not daytime light), as well as the obsessive interest in the sumptuous material of the dress, which is held in contrast to the feeling of some unspeakable horror. The title 'The Sphinx', also adds to this sense, as it suggests a questioning, a riddle - the answer to which the woman seems to fear, and recoils against - shielding her face. The hand that covers her face is very crudely rendered, and is rather 'primate-like', and carries evocations of a dumb fear and helplessness. There is also some ambiguity in the way that her arm is treated, as it can be read both as a left or right arm, and this emphasises her attempt to protect herself, as her arms seem to wrap around her body. This sense of fear is further enhanced by the ominous black shadow/shape behind the woman's back - and the starkness of the architecture carries the connotation of prisons and concentration camps. The swing has stopped, and she hangs there above some indeterminate ground, either bog or mud, and her exposed leg, rather than being sexual, has a disjointed vulnerability - a corporeal mortality.

Many of the earlier paintings drew their source-material from images of film, and, in the case of **The Blue Hour**, and **Fearful Symmetry**, made use of a cinematic format: that is, the paintings were organised on the same one-to-two proportion as the film stills themselves. As discussed, the sense of the theatrical was explores in the series **Parting is all We Know of Heaven...**, and an interest in the operatic became the basis for the **Cosi fan Tutte** suite.

All these conventions can be seen to have extended beyond the concern of only the subject matter, and are reinforced by the way in which they are painted. In the first chapter, the style of the photographic or 'filmic' gaze was discussed in detail. However, the scale and positioning of the figures in **The Blue Hour** and **Fearful Symmetry** and the way in which they tend to 'float' in the colour, is very reminiscent of the overblown quality of figures on the cinema screen. The more gestural and dramatic use of paint and colour as well as the theatrical exaggerated frames of both **Parting is All We Know of Heaven...** ties them into the theatre mode. The **Cosi fan Tutte Suite**, over and above being based on a performance loosely organised round the music from Mozart's opera, presents a layering and interaction between people that suggests an operatic drama. The way in which this series is painted reaffirms this operatic effect. These paintings were the first in which I became consciously concerned with the sumptuous quality of paint applied thickly and directly from the tube. This thick use of layers of pure colour (often applied wet-into-wet) in conjunction with the richness of the cottonwool paper on which it was painted, created a surface both luxurious and orrate - and hence 'operatic'.

The final series does not draw directly on any of these conventions. Rather, the couple have moved out into the 'real' space of the cinema, or theatre, in which such conventions are screened or acted. It is interesting that these paintings are the only works which are based on photographs of interactions between real people, (i.e., they are not from film-stills, nor are they paparazzi photographs of the jet set.). They are based on photographs taken by Weegee of people in New York. (See figs.52 & 54.)

The lessons learnt in painting the **Così fan Tutte** series were taken through into these works. These however, were not painted on cottonwool paper, but on canvas, and the thick rich surfaces were built up entirely with layers of paint. Again, this way of painting reinforced the content, as this thick richness of the paint became an additional means of describing the claustrophobic atmosphere of these cinemas, both as stale over-upholstered spaces, and also in the emotion portrayed between the lovers - the carnal 'fleshiness' of their relationship being echoed by the corporeality of the cinema seats.

LOVERS IN A CINEMA

(A group of paintings, two of which have been completed and will be submitted for this degree. Oil on canvas, plates 40-42.)

In the final series of paintings the couple move out into the public space of the cinema, which although appears to be deserted, conveys that rather 'sordid' sense of people slouching in their seats, vicariously experiencing the couple's embrace as well as the emotions on the screen. Placing the lovers in the setting of a cinema plays on the confusion of whether they are being watched, or whether they have become voyeurs themselves. Also, the cinema is a place for fantasy, and in their case becomes an arena in which to act that fantasy out.

In both these paintings, the description of the place was important. The architectural space of 'boxed plush' and decayed luxury creates a sense of sordidness and claustrophobia which is echoed in the interaction between the couple.

The type-casting of the lovers in these paintings is very significant, as they become the kind of people that one can imagine to be caught up in such a situation. Both these paintings convey the sense of the 'matinee performance' - both through the description of an almost deserted auditorium, and the recognition of an illicit affair. The couple could be characterised as the travelling salesman and the suburban housewife.

It is interesting to note the subconscious role of ambiguity in **Lovers in the Cinema (II)** (plate 42) where the arm of the cinema seat behind the man's back transforms into the head of a goat. This was completely fortuitous, and was only pointed out to me

by a colleague when the painting was complete - yet it is undoubtedly there, and is as much part of the content of the painting as those intentional ambiguities. This painting is really about 'lust in the cinema', and the goat is, of course, symbolic of lust.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In many ways, the writing of this dissertation can be seen to have evolved in a manner similar to that of a painting. It required an initial sketch or idea - the consideration of how men 'regard' women - which through a process of a slow accumulation of layers of information (each theory prompting the research and consideration of the next), developed into a complex matrix of ideas; and like the rich and varied nature of the paintings, this 'complex matrix of ideas' eludes definitive interpretation.

There was also a question of what style of language to use in the writing, and I attempted (especially in the description of the paintings) to find verbal equivalents to evoke the quality of these works. However, it is important to bear in mind that the analytical order imposed on the work is not necessarily an exposition of its meaning, as such a critique would follow an entirely different process of logic from the creation of the work itself. Likewise, this discussion is by nature a verbal description of a visual process, and can not claim to explain fully the work in terms of its impact. No matter how thoroughly the emotional content of each painting is verbalised, these descriptions cannot replace the direct interaction between the work and the spectator.

What began as a more or less determinist approach involving a Marxist/Feminist perspective, changed into a more personal consideration of psychological and aesthetic issues. This change in the focus of the reading, coupled with the complexity of the paintings as well as the recognition of the ambiguous nature of my creative process, necessitated a reflexive methodological atti-

tude to the writing of the dissertation. Like the continuous interplay between the paintings and the theories scrutinised in the reading, there is an interplay between these different critical approaches. For example, theories presented from a Marxist perspective (eg. Berger) were found to have strong correlations with certain psychoanalytic theories (eg. Stokes and Hudson). And, in much the same way that the dialectical relationship between the practice and the theory informs the subject of the dissertation, so do these interconnections between the different methodologies and theories.

As both the practical and theoretical research progressed, it became difficult to isolate which was influencing which. A 'dialogue' was set up between them. The defining or recording of this 'dialogue' through the writing of this dissertation marks the beginning of a new 'dialogue' which will be responded to by new paintings. Thus this kind of research is never complete.

Source material and influences.



Fig.17 Source material for Plate 1.



Fig.18 R[illegible] du [illegible]es du Peuple II, 1975.



PLATE 1
Deborah Bell
Untitled 1981
enamel/handmade paper
600 x 500mm.
Collection: Mrs. B. Glenday, Boston, U.S.A.

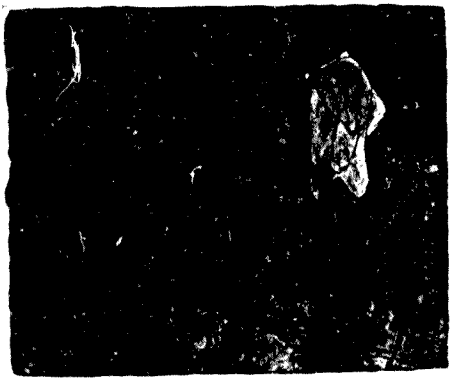


PLATE 1
Deborah Bell
Untitled 1981
enamel handmade paper
600 x 500mm.
Collection: Mrs. B. Glenday, Boston, U.S.A.

Source material and influences.



Fig.19 Source materia[illegible] Plate 2.



Fig.20 Balthus, The Turkish Room, 1962-1966.

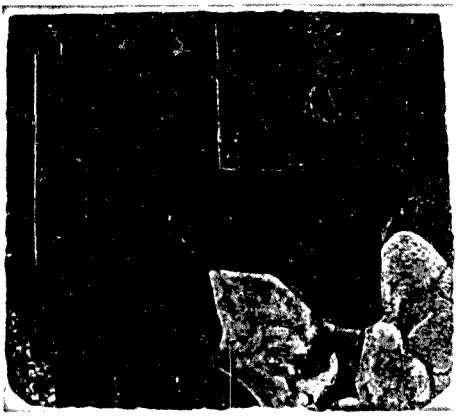


PLATE 2
Deborah Bell
Untilted 1981
enamel handmade paper
600 x 500mm.
Collection: Mrs. B Glenday, Boston, U.S.A.

Source material and influences.



Fig.21 Source material for Plate 3.



PLATE 3
Deborah Bell
Untitled 1981
enamel/handmade paper
600 x 500 mm.
Collection: Mr.M.Le Sueur, Johannesburg.

Source material and influences.



Fig.22 Source material for Plate 4.



Fig.23 Piero della Francesco, The Story of the True Cross, (detail).



PLATE 4
Deborah Bell
Untitled 1981
enamel/handmade paper
500 x 600 mm.
Collection: Mrs. C. Rey, Johannesburg.

Source material and influences.



Fig.24 Source material
for Plate 5.

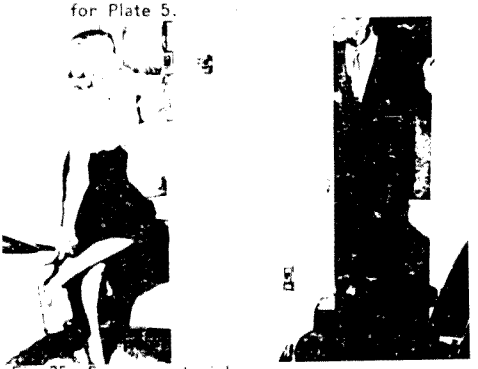


Fig.25 Source material
for Plate 5.



Fig.26 Edward Hopper,
A Woman in the Sun, 1961.

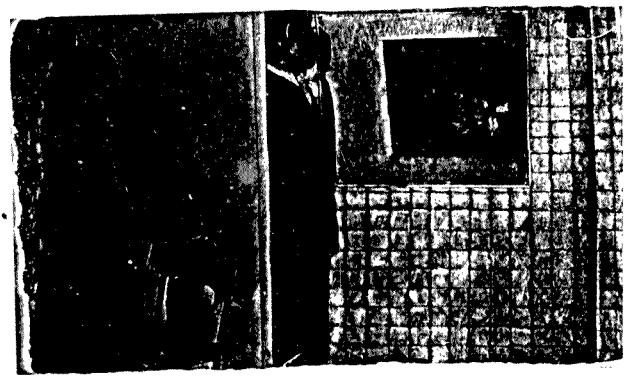


PLATE 5
Deborah Bell
Untitled 1981
enamel/handmade paper
600 x 1000 mm.
Collection: Mr L. Van Schaik, Pretoria.



PLATE 6
Deborah Bell
Untitled 1981
charcoal & pastel/handmade paper
500 x 600mm
Collection: Ms.M.Seidenspinner, Mannheim, Germany.

Source material and influences.



Fig.27 Source material for Plate 7.



Fig.28 Judy Chicago, Primordial Goddess: The Dinner Party, 1972-1978.

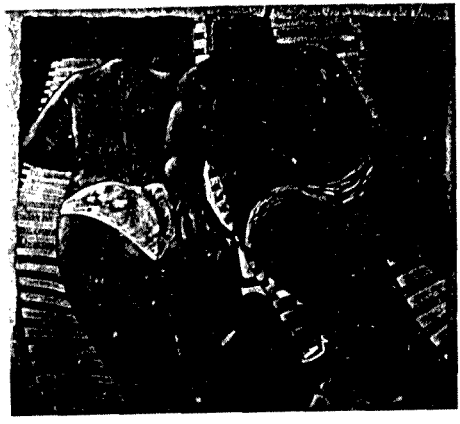


PLATE 7
Deborah Bell
Mediterranean Affairs 1 1982
oil & enamel/handmade paper
c.1000 x 1050mm.
Collection: Mr.L.de Kock, Johannesburg.



PLATE 8
Detail of Plate 7.

Source material and influences.

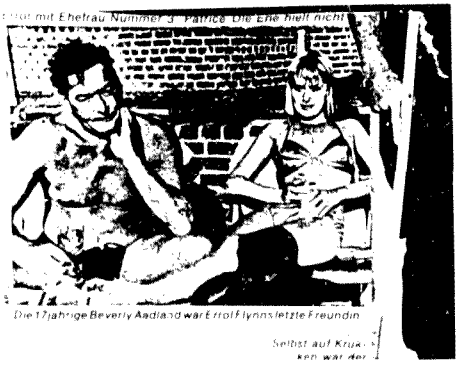


Fig.29 Source material for Plate 9.

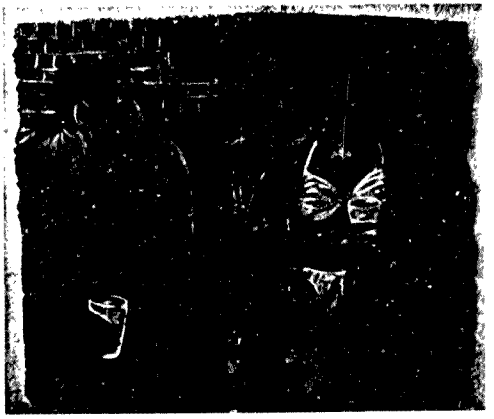


PLATE 9
Deborah Bell
Mediterranean Affairs 2 1992
oil, handmade paper
c. 1000 x 1000mm
Collection: Mr. J. Simpson, Johannesburg.

Source material and influences.



Fig.30 Source material for Plate 10.



PLATE 10
Deborah Bell
Mediterranean Affairs 3 1982
oil handmade paper
c. 1000 x 1050mm.
Coll. Gen. Mr. E. Powell, Johannesburg

Source material and influences.



Fig.31 Source material for Plate 1



PLATE 11
Deborah Bell
Omni Animale Triste ... 1962
charcoal/paper
1200 x 1430mm.
Collection: the artist.



PLATE 12
Detail of Plate 11

Source material and influences.



Fig.32 Source material for Plate 13.

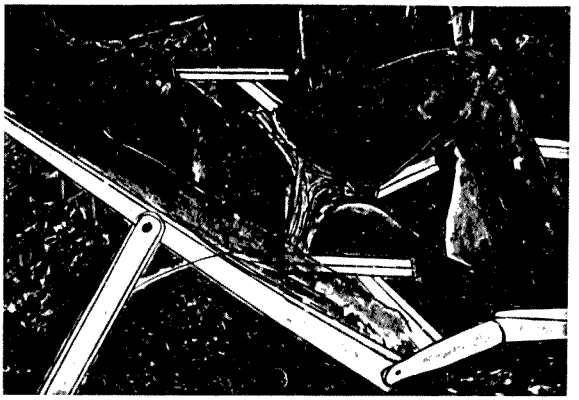


PLATE 13
Deborah Bell
Susannah Watched 1992
charcoal & oil paper
1000 x 1450mm
Collection: Mr. & Mrs. S.J. Bell, Johannesburg.



PLATE 14
Detail of Plate 13.

Source material and influences.



Fig.33 Source material for Plate 15.



Fig.34 Preliminary drawing for Plate 15.



PLATE 15
Deborah Bell
Form and Content 1982
oil canvas
1115 x 1526mm.
Collection: the artist.

Source material and influences.



Fig.35 Source material for Plate 16.



PLATE 16
Deborah Bell
The Blue Hour 1982
oil/canvas
1000 x 2000mm.
Collection: the artist

Source material and influences.



Fig.36 Source material for Plate 17.



PLATE 17
Deborah Bell
Fearful Symmetry 1982
oil/canvas
1000 x 2000mm.
Collection: the artist.

Source material and influences.



Fig.37 Source material for Plate 18.



Fig.38 Source material for Plate 19.



PLATE 18
Deborah Bell
Parting is All We Know of Heaven ... 1982.
oil/canvas with cottonwool and moulded fibreglass frames.
c.1800 x 2200mm.
Collection: the artist.



PLATE 19
Deborah Bell
Parting is All We Know of Heaven ... 1982.
oil/canvas with cottonwool and moulded fibreglass frames.
c.1800 x 2200mm.
Collection: the artist.

Source material and influences.



Fig.39 Source material for Plate 20.



Fig.40 Karl Hubbuch, Improvised Breakfast (Martha), c.1926-1928.



PLATE 20
Deborah Bell
She Takes Money 1982
charcoal & pastel/paper
c.700 x 1000mm.
Collection: Ms.S.Le Sueur, Johannesburg.

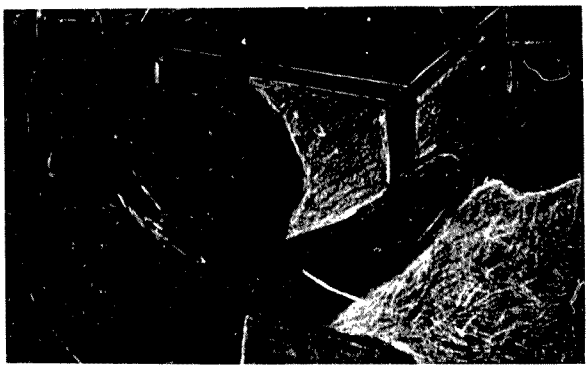


PLATE 21
Deborah Bell
Pink Socks 1982
charcoal & paste/paper
c.620 x 1000mm.
Collection: Ms.L.Roetger, Johannesburg.

Source material and influences.



Fig.41 Source material for Plate 22.



Fig.42 Source material for Plate 23.



PLATE 22
Deborah Bell
Double Indemnity 1982
pastel/paper
570 x 670mm.
Collection: the artist.



PLATE 23
Deborah Bell
Live by Night 1982
pastel/paper
570 x 670mm.
Collection: Ms. S. Klopper.

Source material and influences.



Fig. 43 Source material for Plate 24.



PLATE 24
Deborah Bell
The End of the Affair 1982
pastel paper
700 x 800mm.
Collection the artist.



PLATE 25
Deborah Bell
Broken Hearts 1983
oil/canvas
2 panels, each 650 x 800mm.
Collection: the artist

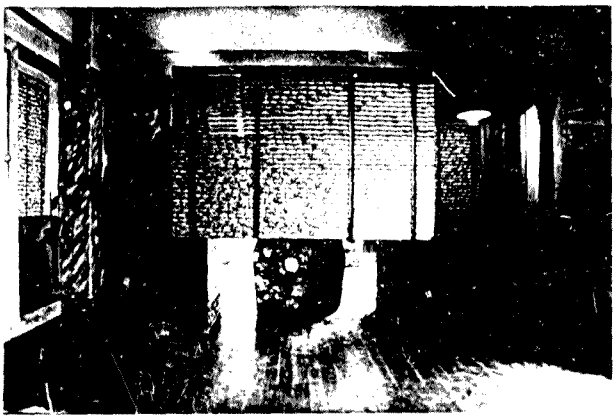


PLATE 26
Deborah Bell
Installation Piece (Possession Arts) 1984
1984
mixed media
1 Glenton Court, Hunter street, Bellevue, Johannesburg.



pr
i
De above

Source material and influences.



Fig.44 R.B.Kitaj, Sighs From Hell, 1979.



Fig. 45 Source material for Plate 29.



PLATE 28
Deborah Bell
Common Intent 1983
oil/cottonwool paper
c.1000 x 1020mm.
Collection: Ms.S.Klopper, Johannesburg.



PLATE [illegible]
Debora[illegible]
Some O[illegible]ur 1983
oil/cott[illegible] paper
c.1000 x [illegible]020mm.
Collect[illegible]n: Mr.T.Read, Johannesburg.

Source material and influences.



Fig.46 Source material for Plate 30.



PLATE 30
Deborah Bell
Self-Conscious Fragment 1982-1984
oil/cottonwool paper
c.860 x 770mm.
Collection: Mr.H.Prins, Johannesburg.



PLATE 31
Deborah Bell
Man Undressing 1983-1984
collage, charcoal & pastel/handmade paper
460 x 590mm.
Collection: Ms.S.Klopper, Johannesburg.



PLATE 32
Deborah Bell
Nude Male 1985
oil & charcoal/handmade paper
500 x 700mm.
Collection: the artist

Source material and influences.



Fig.47 Source material for Plate 33.



Fig.48 Picasso, Minotauromachy., 1935.



PLATE 33
Deborah Bell
Cosi fan Tutte Suite 1984
oil/cottonwool paper
3 panels, each 730 x 870mm.
Collection: Professor A.Crump, Johannesburg.

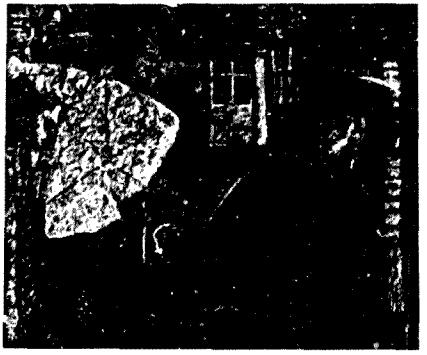


PLATE 34
Cosi fan Tutte: Act One

Source material and influences.

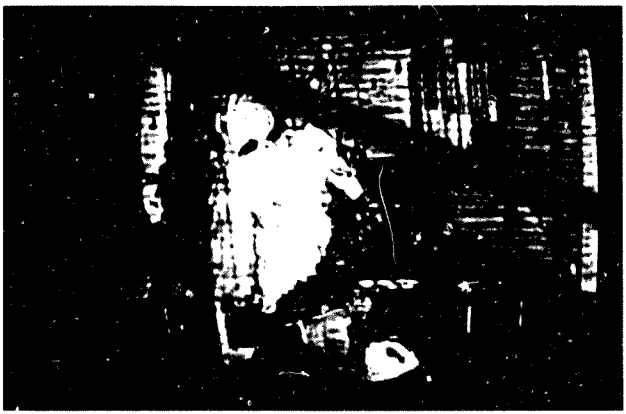


Fig. 49 Source material for Plate 35.



Fig. 50 Source material for Plate 36.



PLATE 35
Cosi fan Tutte: Act Two



PLATE 36
Cosi fan Tutte: Act Three



PLATE 37
Deborah Bell
Yellow Still Life 1984
oil: canvas
800 x 830mm
Collection: the artist

Source material and influences.

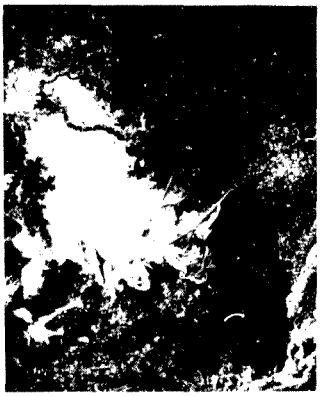


Fig.51 Fragonard, The Swing, 1768-9.

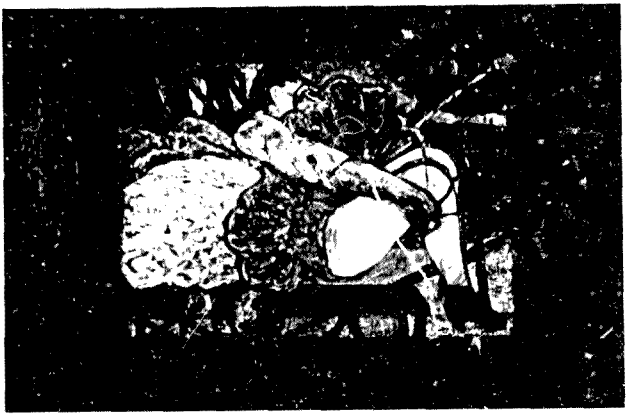


PLATE 38
Deborah Bell
The Swing 1994
oil cottonwood paper with burnt wooden frame
550 x 1270mm
Collection: the artist



PLATE 39
Deborah Bell
The Sphinx 1984
oil/cottonwool paper with burnt wooden frame.
850 x 1270mm.
Collection: the artist.

Source material and influences.



Fig.52 Source material for Plate 40.
Weegee, Lovers at the Movies II.



Fig.53 Edward Hopper, New York Movie, 1939.



PLATE 40
Deborah Bell
Lovers in a Cinema 1985
oil/canvas
1000 x 1500mm.
Collection: Mr.B.van Biljon.



PLATE 41
Detail of plate 45.

Source material and influences.



Fig.54 Source material for Plate 42. Weegee, In a City Bar II.



Fig.55 Gustav Klimt, The Kiss, 1907-1908.

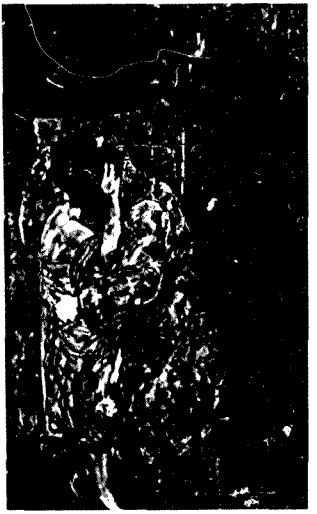


PLATE 42
Deborah Bell
Lovers in a Cinema 1985
oil/canvas
1010 x 1650mm.
Collection: S.A. National Gallery, Cape Town.

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Author Bell Deborah Margaret
Name of thesis Representations Of The Human Figure: Art, Ideology, Reality. 1985

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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