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ASPECTS OF VIOLENCE AND DISQUIETUDE IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY THREE-DIMENSIONAL HUMAN FIGURATION

JANE ALEXANDER

VOLUME 1

ASPECTS OF VIOLENCE AND DISQUIETUDE IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY THREE-DIMENSIONAL HUMAN FIGURATION

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Arts University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Fine Art.

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ABSTRACT

The research for this degree consists of a theoretical dissertation and a practical component of sculpture and photo-montage. Both components examine violence and disquietude in environmentally related, life-size human figuration with reference to Realism. In this dissertation, examples of the sculptured works of Duane Hanson, George Segal, Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin Kienholz, Mark Prent and Malcolm Poynter have been selected to illustrate polarities of medium and concepts, and to demonstrate the way in which violence and disquietude have been handled by these artists.

Both components of the research investigate the relationship between the art object and levels of reality resulting from the process of interpretation. An attempt is made to assess the functional properties of this particular facet of socially conscious art by referring to its capacity to engage a wide spectrum audience. The various ways in which technique may influence communication are considered. The examples are examined in terms of formal distinction from, and continuity with, urban and natural phenomena, and in terms of degrees of stimulation, involvement and conditioned responses elicited by different types of communication.

The technical materialization of concepts in the selected artists' *work* is initially examined in relation to the urban environment. This is followed by consideration of variables within the social context of the viewer which are proposed as significant issues. The stimulation and arousal inherent in violence and disquietude in both human experience and art are considered. A brief examination of these issues as they relate to the candidate's work is included as an appendix to this research.

DECLARATION

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

JANE ALEXANDER

30 day of March 1988.

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PREFATORY NOTE

This dissertation accompanies a series of sculptures and photo-montages completed in 1986.

The theoretical research undertaken investigates various issues that were relevant to the production of the practical component. These focus on questioning communication through figurative form, the impulse to consider violence and disquietude in art, and the way viewers may respond to such representations.

Artists that have a large number of related works were selected for discussion in preference to local artists, in order to examine the relationship of form to the theme. This is considered appropriate for the following reasons:

- the quantity and consistency of their work in relation to violence and disquietude,
- the life-size, environmental aspects of the artist's work,
- a comparatively objective view of violence and disquietude in relation to form, unconditioned by a self-conscious attitude to violence in South Africa,
- the fact that South African artists working with related issues have based formal considerations to a large extent on American and European prototypes.

This study therefore aims to identify lucid qualities of form and representation. These would also be relevant to a politically oriented art.

The following method has been applied for the format of the dissertation:

1. Footnotes have been used and consist of source, reference and explanatory notes, numbered sequentially according to each chapter.

2. Although examples of artist's work have been referred to in the text, certain illustrations have been omitted. This has been done in instances where an illustration is considered unnecessary due to the similarity of the example to one represented, or due to the brief reference made to the work.

3. The illustrations, both for the text and the documentation of the candidate's work are presented in a separate volume. Illustrations of the individual artists' works have been placed in sequence according to their appearance in the text. These are followed by reference illustrations, and the documentation of the candidate's work.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study of violence and disquietude in this dissertation is concerned with the evocation of these phenomena via a range of expressive techniques in certain contemporary sculptures and environments. These techniques include hyper-realism,[1] or the literal depiction of violence and/or disquietude, as well as a sense of violence and/or disquietude produced by formal and expressive means of figuration. Violence and disquietude, are therefore, not necessarily subjects but the products of the subject matter. Disquietude, the deprivation of tranquillity, may be the by-product of violence. The artwork may operate as an interpretation of violence and disquietude, or as a catalyst for disquiet or a sense of violation. Thus either may be represented or effected benignly, or through a sense of force, by assaulting the viewer's expectations or complacency. The term 'violence' is used to convey not only physical force inflicted with the intention of imposing suffering, but also intensity, vehemence and impetuousness including forms of psychological violation.

The evocative properties of material, form and composition in relation to actual urban experience are also examined.

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1 Hyper-realism refers to the illusionistic representation of natural form.

The urban environment, while forming the basis of the subject, extends to the physical properties of the works. These include life-size scale, and heightened realism,[2] found objects and body casts.[3]

Selected examples of the human figurative sculptures of Duane Hanson (1925-), George Segal (1924-), Edward Kienholz (1927-) and Nancy Reddin Kienholz,[4] Mark Prent (1947-) and Malcolm Poynter (1946-) are considered. These examples are not intended to represent the complete range of conceptual possibilities in which violence and disquietude have been or may be used in three-dimensional figuration. Nor is the examination of these works comprehensive of all the conceptual investigations made by these particular artists. The research is instead intended to include consideration of the capacity for both the artist and the viewer to relate to violence and disquietude in a particular manner

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2 'Heightened realism' refers in this context to the degrees of verism in the works, both representational and evocative, which relate directly to the actual world of experience. This is primarily distinguished from other forms of Realism through scale, and spatial and material analogies to actuality.

3 All the artists discussed make use of the body cast. A mould is taken from a living person and is either used directly in this form or as a negative form from which a positive form is cast.

4 The Kienholz works have been attributed to both Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin Kienholz since 1981 by the artists themselves although Nancy has been involved in the work for much longer. For purposes of convenience, artworks will be referred to as 'the Kienholz works'.

and medium. Therefore those works that most suitably demonstrate this point have been selected.

Common to all the artists' work selected is a direct relationship of scale, proportion and occupied space to human experience within the urban environment. Duane Hanson creates Super-Real[5] replicas of typical American urban human beings, clothed and arranged as illusory occupants of daily environments. The figures are usually presented as such within the gallery environment, either free standing or combined with furniture or objects that relate to occupation.

Similarly George Segal derives his figures from daily urban experience, but emphasizes the formal aspects of material and composition. This is realized in monochromatic non-illusory life cast figures, combined with reductive colouring and detailing of both the figure and environment. Environments may be demarcated spaces with referential details, or self-contained spaces incorporating found and manufactured objects, operating as a backdrop to the activity of the figure. Only particular aspects of the subject are this suggested.

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5 Super-Realism refers to the stylistic trend of the 1970's of hyper-real painting and sculpture. This emphasized the priority of the image. The sculpture of Duane Hanson is associated with this movement with reference to technique.

The tableaux of Edward Kienholz function as both reconstructed fragments of the urban environment, and/or the formal arrangement of urban derived components. This may ultimately operate as a metaphorical interpretation of aspects of urban experience or as a direct interpretation of particular urban phenomena. The tableaux do not necessarily include a human figure. Whether or not they do, a human presence is implied throughout the environment rather than only via expressive qualities within the figure itself. A variety of methods are used in the realization of figures and environments including both representational and abstract forms.

The sculptures of Mark Prent represent qualities of the human condition in a technique related to hyper-realism. The configurations include credible urban environments and the semi-fantastic interpretation of the human being and its context. The works combine both urban and primal human concepts on familiar forms or in familiar environments and their subsequent distortion.

The figures of Malcolm Poynter operate as personifications of societal structures and their relationships. The figures are not usually placed in environments but on formal structures or bases. The cast figure is treated in various ways creating an organic and anatomical impression of urban material, objects and substances. Formal

qualities are often emphasized by colour, texture and the substitution of human features with associative equivalents.

These artworks are all broadly executed in a Realist mode. Realism is not identified in this examination with the naturalistic depiction of form, the exception being the technique of Duane Hanson's sculpture, and to some extent, that of Mark Prent. For the purposes of this investigation, divergent stylistic trends within Realism are also not considered. The term is used to denote the form of representation without idealization, and the depiction of actuality. Cognizance is taken of Nochlin's definition of Realism[6] as formulated in relation to nineteenth-century art. Here Realism rejects the fictitious, but acknowledges and focuses on forbidding or evaded aspects of life.

In this dissertation, the subject is approached without the assumption that socially oriented realism necessarily attempts or effects the promulgation of a political

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6 '...to give truthful objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of contemporary life.'
NOCHLIN, L. Realism. London: Penguin Books, 1971, p.13.

attitude or of social amelioration.[7] Realism therefore refers to the identification of the essential aspects, both descriptive and/or evocative, that reveal a particular quality of violence and/or disquietude. This is indicated through representational and physiognomical expression of forms situated in spaces analogous to urban reality.

The degrees of realist technique, the relationship of the object and subject to reality, and to the spectator, are examined in so far as they determine a direct level of communication. This is effected by recognition, identification, confrontation, intrusion and interference. In relation to these processes, the communicative properties of realism, when depicting violence and disquietude are examined in terms of provocation, entertainment, voyeurism, morality and seductiveness.[8]

The possibility exists that the sublimation of violence and

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7 'The term "social realism" has been used of art movements, particularly a movement in the second half of the nineteenth century, which have concentrated upon a realistic depiction of ugliness, misery or poverty either in support of a political theory or in the interests of social amelioration, to arouse men's conscience, to stir up indignation or pity, etc.' OSBORNE, H. Aesthetics and Art Theory: an Historical Introduction. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1968, p.81.

8 'Seductiveness' refers to the allure of sensuous or refined form, the frisson of curiosity-stimulating imagery, or of the confrontation of socially prohibited experience.

disquietude in the sphere of the aesthetic ultimately has the potential to perform a social function; it may acquire a socially productive value and induce constructive dialogue with the viewer in a confrontational capacity. It may identify or elucidate the value of violent and disquieting concepts or incidents. However, because of the close interaction between visual techniques used by the artists being discussed and urban phenomena that are not concerned with the function of art, attention has been paid to certain correlations between the two. Reference will be made to artistic communication in relation to phenomena such as visual communication in commercial fields; for example horror in cinematography, the media and pornography. It must be assumed that a socially conscious art, operating on a direct level of visual communication does not depend on the moralistic assessment of social images or theoretical appreciation.[9] Therefore, the way in which the spectator may have been introduced to such images is considered in relation to the works.

The interpretation of the selected artworks is thus distinguished from assessment designed to relate to specific events or particular moral issues (with the exception of The Holocaust, George Segal). For the most

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9 Socially conscious art by implication attempts to reach a wide spectrum audience and therefore, does not require a historical or theoretical background for its appreciation.

part, the artworks deal with general social situations concerning human responses that are ambivalent in character, or situations in which the viewer's response may have been manipulated in various ways. Consideration is given however, to whether or not the work is critical of social or moral values, and therefore didactic, as well as to limitations in the function of art in this context.

To assume that disquieting art could effect social changes would suggest the inevitability of a direct dialogue on a moral or a subconscious level. The slant of interpretation intended by the artist may be identified through the particular manner in which the subject is interpreted and materially realized. This will be assessed through discussion of for example, the moral interpretative approach and realization of the subject in the tableaux of Edward Kienholz, and ambiguities in the expression of Mark Prent.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS ART

Attitudes to socially conscious art are directed by particular historical, contextual and idealistic criteria associated with the communicative intention of the art object at a particular time. Gustave Courbet's (1819-1877) confrontational realism of the nineteenth century was concerned with revealing aspects of human sociability such as the class divisions of rural society.[1] In the pre-industrialized atmosphere of didactic realism, Courbet's work communicated a potential social threat and intellectual disturbance to the diverse audience who frequented the Salons.[2]

As images of deliberate social protest, the photo-montages of John Heartfield (1891-1968) operated as an immediate form of communication. The montages, created out of photographic documents of contemporary figures and propagandist imagery in National Socialist Germany, related directly to the official culture which dominated all major

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1 Courbet rejected the idealization of nineteenth century classicism and romanticism in favour of realism in which the worker and peasant were elevated in scenes of daily life, for example, The Stonebreakers (1849). The painting consists of a young and an elderly man at work, depicted with unemotive objectivity.

2 The Salon, the only public exhibition of any standing at the time, was attended by a broad spectrum audience.

communication systems. The montages were published in the weekly Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (entitled 'Volks-Illustrierte' from 1936) until 1938.

Socially conscious art in the second part of the twentieth century, (primarily accessible to a commodity oriented specialized audience), has demonstrated through its realism and the revolutionary aspirations of the avant-garde artists, that art provides examples of radical and critical attitudes, or reinforces already existing values. Both the domination of mass communication systems by the media, and commercialism, significantly restrict the social identity of the art image. This is in part due to the fact that the public responds readily to propaganda and commercially designed communication systems, and partly because certain art images operate within similar boundaries to the media and commercialism.

Historically, socially conscious art is frequently associated with political events, and the promulgation of particular attitudes. This is discernible in Pieter Bruegel's (the Elder, c.1525/30-1569), The Carrying of the Cross (1564). The theological implications of Christ's Passion are secondary to a social statement about human violence. Christ is swamped in a crowd of apparently distracted human activity. He is a minor incident in a scene of death and injustice. This interpretation may be

seen to relate to the artist's attitude to the brutality of Spanish rule and the Inquisition in the Netherlands at the time. In the foreground of the painting is a raised wheel which was used for torture and execution. The wheel motif is repeated as a compositional device in curved and circular arrangements of movement on the route to Calvary.

Paintings and graphics of Goya (1746-1828) depict the effects of the French occupation of Spain (1808-1814) under Joseph Bonaparte. The Uprising at Puerta del Sol on the Second of May and The Execution of Madrileños on the Third of May (1814) were painted after the withdrawal of the Napoleonic troops in 1813. The Second of May depicts an incident typical of the Spanish guerrilla campaigns and compared to The Third of May is documentary. The latter is more concerned with confrontation in which terror, anguish and brutality are compositionally presented to accost the viewer. The Disasters of War (1810-1813, published in full in 1863), never intended for publication during Goya's lifetime, were a personal account of what the artist witnessed. The majority of the graphics represent observed actuality through raw depictions of the brutality such as I saw this (Yo lo vi), What more can one do? (Que hay que hacer mas?) and This is worse (Esto es peor).

Picasso's (1881-1973) Guernica (1937) is specific to the bombing of that town in April 1937 by German bombers flying

in support of General Franco's regime. Picasso, an active partisan of the Spanish Republic at the time, responded with this symbolic interpretation of the event. A mural by the artist had been commissioned for the Spanish Government Building at the Paris World's Fair and Picasso commenced Guernica after the bombing. It was thus intended to arouse public reaction against war, and more particularly, General Franco. Many motifs in Guernica had been explored in previous works; for example the bull represented as a brutal and violent force in The Dream and Lie of Franco (1937).

Social realist paintings in America in the thirties, including work by Charles Burchfield (1893-1967) and Ben Shahn (1898-1969) explored the political and economic crises of the Depression. Opposed to capitalism, Social Realism attempted to expose and protest against injustices to the working class. The works of the Mexican muralists of the same period, Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949), Diego Rivera (1886-1957) and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1898-1974) demonstrated that art was a means of social protest and could interpret the aspirations of a free people. The images of John Heartfield, George Grosz (1893-1959) and Otto Dix (1891-1969) created during the Nationalist regime in Germany, are also of the broad genre of social criticism, in reaction to political incidents of that period.

The specific historical and political events associated with these examples reveal that social protest, whether personal or public, was intended. The degree of association is limited. The two-dimensional format also distances the viewer, enabling the work to be interpreted as criticism which conveys individual opinion on a specific event. The identity of a two-dimensional art work is that of an intermediate object; the artist adopts a direct role as mediator, reflector, commentator and interpreter. The degree of deviation from verist depiction makes the work more or less referential to real events, but the affectivity of expression does not vary according to this. In addition, the historicism of political events and their depiction in art can be viewed as the retrospective assessment of socio-political process in history. One may accord a comparatively significant role to art as a medium for the documentation and communication of societal relationships at a particular time.

Violence and disquietude in sculpture are located in themes of mythology and theology, for example Antonio Del Pollaiuolo's (1432-1498) Hercules and Antaeous (c.1475), or Donatello's (c.1386-1466) St. Mary Magdalen (1455-56). More recently works such as Giacometti's (1901-1966) Woman with her Throat Cut (1932) reveal the capacity for sculpture to confront the issue of violence in the twentieth century. The figurative realist sculpture of the

second part of the twentieth century is however, distinct both in its physical realization of ideas and its social objectives. This is particularly true of the works selected for discussion.

Historically, sculpture sustained a formal and material distance from the viewer which was achieved by the tradition of the self-contained object on a pedestal, and the use of materials such as bronze, marble and wood which retained their physicality. In the transition from traditional modes of formal realization to new methods and techniques of representation, exemplified by the diversity of media in the twentieth century, (environments, performance, the use of found objects, polyester resins et cetera) a radical shift of perception is generated. The status of the three-dimensional object has been redefined. Attitudes to violence and disquietude have become more generalized, thus broadening the conceptual status of the works to include social issues such as anomie and alienation. Urban experience unique to the twentieth century has created its own range of social issues. Images not based on particular events, and therefore not morally or critically defined, allow for spontaneous and unconditioned communication. The capacity for association with such images is not limited and response may be elicited in various ways. In examples of work by the artists selected for discussion, there is the potential for both form and content to appeal outside of an exclusively

intellectual comprehension or moral appreciation. This is promoted by realist devices and environmental integration of the objects.

The concept informing the work, is that of ritual, the use of the tableau motif and illusory devices, or allusion to games, entertainment, theatricality, confrontation, deception and titillation. These in turn relate to social illusory amusements such as the Tussaud waxworks[3] (London, Amsterdam), The London Dungeon, or the Grand Guignol theatre (Paris). The artworks transcend, to a greater or lesser extent, the transient immediacy of theatre or performance and the illustrative nature of museum display. In the light of the possible range of reactive interpretation and intention, the works assume an undefined status. The limitations of the role of an art object and its potential for communication within the gallery and social environment are challenged. By being uncommitted to conventional presentation within the gallery environment or, for the most part, conceptually restricted to particular events linked to notions of engaged criticism, the works are open to a range of interpretation and function.

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3 The Tussaud waxworks in London includes a 'chamber of horrors'. Effigies of well known mass murderers are replicated in illusionistic environments. Features include darkened scenes illuminated by sudden bursts of light, a kinetic hologram depicting the electrocution of a convict, tolling bells and screams emitted from concealed areas.

Where an image appears through the nature of the subject (violent or disquieting) to be of didactic implication or of any other constructive moral value, the particular manner with which the subject is realized affects interpretation. The work may, through equivocal associative devices, operate to stimulate curiosi /. The fact that the image is produced in the context of fine art may thus be superfluous. The image may function as a superficial visual stimulus, interpreted not for its artistic properties, but for example, its capacity to arouse curiosity or to reveal unfamiliar or censored aspects of reality with clarity. These issues will be pursued in the following discussion.

CHAPTER 3

VIOLENCE AND DISQUIETUDE WITH REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF FIVE SELECTED ARTISTS

The following examination of examples of the work of Duane Hanson, George Segal, Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin Kienholz, Mark Prent and Malcolm Poynter does not purport to be an exhaustive examination of their output. Attention has been paid to tne artist's selection of subject and the technical and conceptual development of themes. The manner with which this affects interpretation is suggested through comparisons within the individual artist's oeuvre. The information presented is largely factual and critical. The implications of these figurations for an interpretation of violence and disquietude are examined in Chapter 3.

Duane Hanson (b.1925)

The figures of Duane Hanson are moulded from human subjects and cast into polyester resin (early works), polyvinyl or bronze.[1] Subjects are selected for the appropriateness of their social stature and physicality. The refined cast figure is polychromed in oil paint, clothed and given hair

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1 Bronze is not used for its traditional formal properties but for the purposes of durability. It is treated in the same manner as the synthetic figures, i.e. realistically painted with hair and clothing added (see fig. 14).

to mimic actual human form.[2] The early polyester figures were fitted with wigs. The vinyl figures are injected with individual hairs (including body hair), a process facilitated by the pliability of the material. Bronze figures are cast with recesses in the heads which are filled with vinyl to accommodate the same technique for head hair.

Although Hanson's work is aligned with the Super Realist style of representation, the figures are distinctive within the movement. Individuality is emphasized and there is a socially conscious interpretation of the subject (the American middle and lower classes). Hanson works with unidealized figures, integrated into the human environment. These factors contrast with the pictorial priority of the Photorealist painters and the classical idealism of John De Andrea's hyper-real youthful nudes. Although sometimes situationally inappropriate, Hanson's figures easily blend into the actual human environment. In the interrupted illusion - the point at which the figure is identified as an object - the viewer encounters the isolated duplication of an aspect of commonplace human reality. By selecting and separating the typical human being from reality, its prototype is given an objective value.

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2 The mould taken from the castee may be altered to combine sections of anatomy from another subject, or refined and altered by the addition of wax detail, integrated into the final mould.

The figures may be loosely defined into two categories of violence and disquietude; those which represent violence and disquietude through the direct depiction of it, and those which are engendered with these phenomena through non-specific depiction.

Hanson's early work dealt with direct representation of socio-critical themes such as Race Riot (1969-71; fig. 1), War (1969; fig. 2), Drug Addict (1974; no illustration) and Derelict Woman (1973; fig. 3). Race Riot consists of a historically typical juxtaposition of black and white figures in physical conflict. A white police figure is represented as the dominant violator in that his black victim is immobilized beneath the imminent blow of the poised baton above him.

The sense of violence and energy inherent in such a confrontation is denied by the static nature of the action implied. The unmodified use of realism does not evoke the brutality depicted, nor does it investigate the political implications. Similarly, War, a group of 'dead' and 'dying' soldiers, and Motocycle Accident (1969; no illustration), a 'bloody' victim entwined with a motocycle, are theatrical and narrative in character. It may be assumed that these works are intended as confrontational. The illusory nature of the technique however, emphasizes the spectacle of such incidents, an aspect of disaster that

appeals to the viewer's curiosity. Although there is a particular quality of stasis in Race Riot, an act of violence or violation has a terminal point at which one identifies the possible effects that accompany and conclude the action, such as the potential for interference or death. There is, (as with reports of media violence) no need to consider the incident beyond this point.

Another urban-based phenomenon, the state of anomie is depicted in Bowery Derelicts (1969-70; no illustration) and Derelict Woman. The human identity and social status are recognizable through descriptive devices applied to figures who adopt relevant poses. A far greater sense of uncontrolled physicality is evident in Man in a Chair with Beer (1973; fig. 4) than in Derelict Woman. It is depicted by a state of anatomical collapse and unconsciousness, and the soiled tee-shirt, beer can, watch and chair are secondary details of context applied to an already established mood. The figure not only evokes a familiar image of urban reality, but also creates a sense of the way the viewer intrudes on guarded privacy. The spectator automatically invades the figure's oblivion. This factor may produce an additional level of interpretation; an uncertainty of the figure's identity and an analytical attitude toward his social presence.

Hanson's less morally conscious works are not concerned

with presenting the viewer with drama, but with revealing disquieting attributes of urbanization through a more objective reality. A quality of disquiet is indefinite and not categorical. The source, terminating point and origins of such an effect are obscure and must be consciously sought.

The figures in this category of Hanson's work are stationary human products of particular cultural and social structures, primarily the middle and lower classes. They are devoid of the allusive, and are consistently unidealized, possessing a scrupulous inclusion of class attributes and physiognomical detail. Individuals are created to conform to general typologies. Whereas Race Riot is, as documentation, descriptive with physical action displayed, the static individuals (discussed in the following examples) express human experience revealed through inertia: that which is typical and enduring of habit and isolation. The depiction of isolation or alienation, meaningless occupations, mass-material culture and the excesses of indulgence, achieve a tension absent in the more aggressive works. An ambivalence of both empathy and repugnance is present.

Seated Old Woman Shopper (1974; fig. 5), appeals to emotion through sentimentality. A sense of despondency and weariness is reflected in the figure's expression. This

sentimentality is crudely contrasted by the mildly undignified slump of the aged figure who guards her shopping bags between her legs. The floral dress, the handbag with a picture of Paris and the clutched tissue become pathetic appendages to what might otherwise be the expression of a merely sombre human condition.

Sunbather (1971; fig. 6), devoid of the sentimental rendition of the previous example, is a cruel exposure of urban values and excesses. The voluminous oily form, synonomous with roasting flesh and surrounded by accoutrements of indulgence and gluttony, depicts the vulgarity of consumerization unsympathetically.

Urban 'grooming' and the wish to aspire to dignity and refinement, is suggested by curlers and a hairdryer in Housewife (1969-70; fig. 7). This is contradicted by the splay-legged figure deformed by the hairdryer encasing her head, and the stained coffee cup with cigarette ends in the dregs. The figure reads a magazine which displays an article entitled: 'I nearly turned into a banana sour-cream cake, before I lost 33 pounds'. Without deviating from reality, the configuration gains a quality of caricature, probably produced by the exaggerated detail. The coffee cup (detail; fig. 8) alone conjures a disquieting image of what the whole configuration describes. More subtly than in the forementioned examples, there is a senselessness and

unsentimentalized pathos in Lady with Coupons (1982; fig. 9). This is suggested by more selective implications; the coupons, her stance and engaged expression.

A malicious pleasure may be derived in observing these urban peculiarities, particularly examples such as Sunbather which appeal to cruel humour. A disquiet is caused by the depiction of unself-consciousness projected within a self-conscious society. The manner with which society typecasts the individual into a nonentity is asserted by representing people as an object. The stereotypical figures, uncommitted in their psychological expressions, allow the viewer to respond to a social situation without the existence of emotive characterization.

The works are cruel in so far as they reveal an apparent lack of awareness or indifference in the figures which are contrasted with a sense of vulnerability perceived externally. Joseph Masheck comments that the Supermarket Lady (1970; fig. 10) 'deserves the life that she's so sure she enjoys',[3] and compares the work to Woman Eating (1971; fig. 11).

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3 Masheck, J: 'Verist Sculpture: Hanson and De Andrea', in: BATTCOCK, G. ed. Super Realism: a Critical Anthology. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1975, p.201.

> We are asked to respond solely on the grounds of her offensiveness to taste, when it is clear that she is simply unpleasantly poor. To find her funny or even offensive is to exercise actual uncharity, even if on an artificial object. 4

Yet to find either humourous is uncharitable in that both poverty and offensiveness are typical of the vulgarity and pathos produced by urban constraints. Humour is a human means of dealing with and dismissing disquiet.

The gestures, the unprotected stances and the manner with which people elect to present themselves visually, or the particular ways in which age or disproportion are groomed to visual effect, are epitomized by Seated Old Woman Shopper, Sunbather, and Lady with Coupons.[5] These characteristics are neither humourous nor dignified, and can be portrayed by the technique of hyper-realism with uncomfortable accuracy.

A third similar type of figure is produced by Hanson, emphasizing isolation through the adjuncts of dignified pathos and implied heroism. Kirk Varnedoe distinguishes these works from the artist's other figurations.

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4 Ibid.

5 Other typical examples are Florida Shopper (1973), Shoppers (1976) and Tourists (1970).

> By contrast, those characters who maintain a sense of self generally do so only in the context of drudge labour... and only via a retreat into disconnected pensiveness. They thus gain a certain dignity in their impassive survival of routine, at the cost of enduring melancholy. 6

He comments on the irony of the popularity of these figures in view of their critical content. He attributes this to the amusement property of illusion. The level of engagement is however, augmented by the 'dignity in their impassive survival of routine' and the 'enduring melancholy', expressed through unfixed stares or wistful glances into nothingness. Little sympathy is evoked by the Janitor's (1973; fig. 12) contemplation of the floor, the introspection of the Slab Man (1976; no illustration) or the composed stasis of the Lady with Cleaning Cart (1980; fig. 13). 'Impassive survival' and 'enduring melancholy' are not revealed through the absent expressions or through the figures' physicality, but rather through the writer or viewer's knowledge of such experiences.

A related series of figures, three black male labourers, all cast from the same person, are uncharacteristically (in Hanson's work) refined and heroic. They are partly uncovered, classically proportioned men holding a window squeegee, a mop (Custodian I, 1984; fig. 14) and a paint roller. The figures are positioned and composed like

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6 VARNEDOE, K. Duane Hanson. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985, p.24.

portraits of victors after a battle. This quality both alleviates the pathos of other figures and asserts a sense of dignity in the 'impassive survival of routine'. Considered in conjunction with other Hanson figures, these three males also imply an awkward racial message.

In the context of this third category of works, Harold Rosenberg's broad statement concerning Hanson's realism is particularly apposite.

> Once the illusion is dissolved, what is left is an object that is interesting not as a work of art but as a successful simulation of something that is not art.... One admires Hanson's Businessman neither as a sculpture nor as a concept but as a technical feat.... Illusionistic art appeals to what the public knows not about art but about things. This ability to brush art aside is the secret of the popularity of illusionism.... But for art to depend exclusively upon reproducing appearances has the disadvantage of requiring that the painting or sculpture conform to the common perception of things. 7

This is to some extent, true of all the works.

While it may not be Hanson's intention to draw attention to the moral aspects of urban social issues, the conceptual stance and consistency of his work certainly implies it. Hyper-realism in this context therefore carries certain limitations. The figures are most likely to induce

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7 Rosenberg, H. 'Reality Again'. In: BATTCOCK, G. Super Realism, op. cit., p.138.

transient amusement and entertainment, through illusion and the evaluative curiosity of being human - assessment that does not identify with the implied criticisms. The medium of representation, and attention paid to detail encourage analogy to a museum diorama of tribal habit and custom and as such, operate as curiosities or factual demonstrations of man in his habitat. Any imposing disquiet effected by this form of realism is most probably the momentary disorientation produced by an apparently real object that is simultaneously counteracted by its peculiar stasis. In this sense the consistent latent violence and disquietude in the artist's work is stalled by the spectator's immediate response to deception.

George Segal (b.1924)

The configuration of George Segal are of a similar urban consciousness to those of Hanson in the depiction of working class or commonplace existence. They differ vastly however, in their formally evocative properties.

Models are cast in sections using burlap or gauze soaked in 'hydrostone' (a type of industrial plaster). These pieces are manipulated in the assembly and detail is accentuated or de-emphasised. Figures are generally left white in the original material although works have been cast in bronze, and figures have been painted in flat primary colours. The figures are placed into environments made up of selected

objects and/or facades. Through a reductive method of representation, presenting expanses of predominantly flat colouring in the figure and environmental components, a particular quality of the subject and its existence is emphasized.

The Butcher Shop (1965; fig. 15) is typical of Segal's self-contained pictorial environments. Only the essential components of the butcher's shop are included in the compressed space. An austerity is produced by the single white figure with butcher's knife, and the single hanging bird on the racks, placed above a pile of others. A compositional cohesion of objects and space is achieved by the formal arrangement, framed in the frontal view by a glass window. The full occupation of the narrow space by the butcher when viewed from the side, adds to this compactness of the image. The vicious properties of the actual knife, held by a benign cast figure are highlighted by the arrangement, with the figure's reflection in the black formica tiles of the background creating an uneasy stark depth in comparison to the compressed space.

The smothered quality of the human form, effected by the cast and its painterly surface, produces an uncomfortable disjunction with reality. In contrast to Hanson's verist approach, Segal's figures identities are blurred, features are masked and ambiguities explored. Levels of reality are

examined through the formal interpretation of the figure in relation to the subject. Because of the reductive method of environmental representation, the occupied space of each work is given an equal pictorial value to that of the figure. This, as a compositional device, integrates and separates the configuration's three-dimensionality from reality.

The generalization of the individual's form is the essence of Segal's iconography - the anonymity and alienation of the individual within the structures of urbanization. This is often depicted as more than one unrelated individual set against typical urban structures such as The Restaurant Window 1 (1967; fig. 16). In this work the human form is treated as a generalized component of the environment, devoid of the specific and individual.[8]

The formal cohesiveness of composition and uniformity of material components objectify and elevate familiar urban mundanities to the status of symbols of urban alienation. Simultaneously, the material properties of the figures reduce them to components of equal value to those of their stark manufactured environments.

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8 Other related examples are Subway (1968) and To All Gates (1971).

The figure in Woman on a Bench II (1980; fig. 17) is both a formal device interrupting the horizontality of the geometric bench, and an anonymous person whose features and stature are sufficiently evident to arouse empathy. Her crumpled surface texture and lifelessness are disruptive contrasts to her natural posture on the bench. Likewise, the lack of actually defined identity or stature reveals in the figure the characteristic anonymity and isolation more literally depicted in other works.

This sense of the alienated individual is most apparent in the figure groups where an absence of interaction emphasizes this condition. This is partly achieved through technique, but particularly by the natural depiction of the behaviour of human beings as dictated by social structures such as The Bus Riders (1962; fig. 18). With the figures removed from the vehicle, an absurdity is revealed whereby each individual is merely an isolated component of a formal arrangement of compliance.

This technique of representing typical urban mannerisms objectifies the reality into a confrontation with the insignificance of the individual and the peculiar constraints of urbanity. Some of the most imposing of these works are those which imply movement in a combination of figures such as Walk, Don't Walk (1976; fig. 19) and Rush Hour (1983; fig. 20). An absence of interaction is

augmented by the curious effect of figures apparently trapped in motion, and by the established sense of suffocation and lifelessness created by the cast. Part of the quality of alienation derives from the technique and part from the situations in which the figures are represented, engaged in as a result of urban constraints and related to mechanical action.

The Hustle: The Four-Hand Pass (1980; fig. 21) depicts a different aspect of motion in that the figures are composed in deliberate interaction. The two figures are represented in physical contact, dancing. The stasis of these figures frozen in action, contrary to those of Hanson, is evocative because of their allusive rather than mimetic quality. The poses are awkward, almost teetering. This in itself, complements the static implied movement. The stark juxtaposition of the isolated expressionless figures within a lurid environment reflected in the large expanse of mirror, creates a mild sense of threat instead of the expected joviality. A vibrancy suggested by the bright red painted walls, the reflective ball suspended from the ceiling and the concept of dance, is coldly countered by the actual depiction of detachment.

When Segal combines colour and sensuousness, as in Corridor (1975; fig. 22), a sense of actuality is sustained. An intrusive quality is induced by the seductiveness of bright

primary colour and the naked form partly revealed by an open door. Underlying the allure of the work is a disquieting air about the figure's isolation, created by her undefined identity and the cold blue of her colouring.

In all these works, it is Segal's formal devices and arrangements which identify the alienated urban individual. By altering not reality, but the means of visual perception of that reality, it is objectified and heightened. The very basic elements of urban conditions are effectively contained by the simplification of the reality. Even The Bowery (1970; fig. 23), although comparatively dramatic, is menacing not for the social context it represents, but for the detachment implied by the relationship of the two figures within that social context; a formal interpretation rather than emotive representation which would be predictably apposite to the theme.

Segal also draws directly on the drama of violence for his subject. In two works concerned with violence and war, The Execution (1967; fig. 24) and The Holocaust (1983; fig. 25), it is the earlier of the two that begins to reverberate with the reality of war-related violence. In reviewing an exhibition entitled 'Protest and Hope' (New School Art Center, 1967), Harold Rosenberg isolates this work as a 'contribution to political consciousness', in that a mood of reflection is induced, 'precisely the mood

belonging to art and dissipated by the mass media.'[9] The configuration consists of a figure hanging upside down against a bullet-perforated backdrop with three figures collapsed in the foreground, 'like girls who had flung themselves on a lawn.'[10] In distinguishing a quality inherent in art from the mass media, the following may be observed. The dramatic impact of the subject is diverted by this 'girlish' quality, and by the formal integration and removal of the subject via cast form. This is sustained by the material autonomy of the work and the select elements which form the environment. The visual reality is translated into an objective interpretation that diverts simple curiosity concerning death, to death as a state of violent non-being. The subject is depicted through associative devices rather than sensational imagery. This is achieved primarily through the visual impact of remnants of human form created by the cast. In this sculpture, the plaster cast medium assumes the identity of a symbol of body material, not unlike actual death, and implies the preservation of its substance via bandaging or embalming.

Conversely, Sam Hunter sees 'Segal's most powerful and

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9 ROSENBERG, H. Artworks and Packages, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p.165.

10 Ibid.

disturbing figure group'[11] to be The Holocaust, commissioned by San Francisco's Committee for a memorial to the six million victims of the Holocaust. He comments that the work 'offered the gripping and eloquent testimony to the Nazi slaughter of the Jews'.[12] In the same manner in which the victims of The Execution are unspecific, The Holocaust does not evoke the reality of its subject's origin. While The Execution operates effectively as a general statement concerning war and violence, details of The Holocaust based on images from that period determine its context. This aspect is reflected particularly in the heaping of 'bodies' but not through expression as a whole.

Both compositions include the conventional references to persecution such as bullet holes and barbed wire which respectively evoke associations of confinement and slaughter in the context of political violence. It is, however, the 'corpses' of The Execution that define the concept. In The Holocaust the figures detract from it. The isolated figure in this work, 'the lone survivor... strangely detached',[13] peers tragically through the barbed wire. Despite the quirky exactism of casting the figure

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11 HUNTER, S. and HAWTHORNE, D. George Segal. New York: Rizzoli International, 1984, p.132.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

from an actual surviving victim, it is a simple emotive depiction that attempts to contain the reality. From the representation of the figure, a contemplative disquiet is expressed, but as such, does not impose the context of the genocide on the viewer, nor a sense of 'survival'. The heap of 'dead' figures composing the 'chilling scene',[14] cast from well endowed live models instructed to adopt positions they felt to be imaginatively appropriate, appears to be as much an awkwardly sensuous arrangement of slumber as it is of death. Compared to documentation of the events of the Holocaust (see figs i, ii), the work bears an ill-adapted resemblance; a contradiction established through this ambivalence.

The inclusion in the final work of allegorical references such as the female figure holding a partly eaten apple, 'an ample, earthly figure, suggesting nature's abundance even in death, a Persephone image of renewal',[15] diverts the work even further from the reality. The sentimentality of including such an inappropriate note of hope in close association with the group of 'bodies', confuses the already diluted impact of the image.

What is perhaps revealed by this work is that this reality

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

could never begin to be adequately represented in a way that does not rely on overly sentimental devices or sensationalism (with the exception of those images produced by victims at the time). Alternatively, as Hunter suggests, it is a work that is motivated by a sense of social morality, sincerely executed, and may be accepted as socially and aesthetically productive. Its perceived quality may derive from the viewer's support of the 'message'. The work is thus interpreted as becoming art by virtue of its contextual status.

Segal however, must be credited with having de-sensationalized the Holocaust as subject. He does not refer to the sordid aspects of the event that arouse curiosity as is seen in film. The depiction of Holocaust incidents, for example Holocaust (written by G. Green, produced by R. Berger), a 450 minute series depicting the genocide, may be seen to divert moral interpretation to the public's fascination with this sort of extremity, by contrasting prolonged simulated violences with an emotive narrative. More appropriately perhaps, reference made to the genocide in the television series Sins (written for television by L. Heath, produced by S. Krantz) appears to depict related violence entirely as a dramatizing device. The Holocaust was after all intended as a memorial and is more than adequately associative for the concerned viewer. As a visual image, it does not exceed this level of engagement.

Violence and disquietude in Segal's work may be seen to be inherent in his technique, particularly when applied to the representation of commonplace urban activity. This is partly due to the viewer's familiarity with the image's content, and partly due to the curious displacement of that reality via the cast and reductive methods of representation. Even if the viewer's attention is not drawn to, for example, the violation of the individual's significance within the urban context, the figures present a menacing reflection of existence with which the viewer may identify. Segal, at best, effects a simple social commentary which is functionally productive in that it is capable of inducing reflection.

Edward Kienholz (b.1927)
Nancy Reddin Kienholz

The Kienholz works are generally referred to as tableaux although certain works are not composite in character. A distinction has been apparent between those works constructed in and concerned with the American context, and those produced in Berlin,[16] particularly a series of works entitled The Berlin Women. The American works generally make use of the tableau format, and are densely detailed, representational, and derived from vernacular experience.

16 Work is produced in both America and Europe annually.

The Berlin Women are more sculptural in form, comparatively objective, abstract and austere.

Both bodies of work are virtually consistent in the configuration of ready-made objects and constructed components including body casts, integrated into an environmental format. Environments may be formed of self-contained closed spaces such as Roxys (1961; figs 26, 27); rooms containing figures and furnishings, or as an open-sided environment such as Still Alive (1974; fig. 28). Use is also made of the independent object as in The Bronze Pinball Machine with Woman Affixed Also (1980; fig. 29), in which a single object is presented on a flat base, or the open formal arrangement of objects, particularly the Berlin works, such as The Rape of the Grey Speckled Bird (1979; fig. 30).

The works are concerned with urban conditions and societal constraints such as alienation and anomie in relation to the individual. They are both specific and general, dealing with various levels of reality. Subjects generally suppressed by convention form a large part of the conceptual basis for the works. These are characterized by the relationships of life and death, carnality and the passing of time. Roxys, a recreation of a once existent Los Angeles brothel of 1943, reiterates the past and the particular, but simultaneously evokes qualities of a

general and contemporary nature. This is also characteristic of works representing individual experience such as Sollie 17 (1979-80 fig. 31). Although Sollie 17 relates to a specific geographic context, Spokane (State of Washington), the work is a generalized interpretation of social conditions. In Roxys the violation of the individual as a commodity is timeless, as are the enduring aspects of age and isolation depicted in Sollie 17. Both the historical and the contemporary are expressed in the Kienholz works through evidence of a human presence and residue.

Human figuration is inconsistently formulated. The combination of body casts and photographic portraits is particularly characteristic of later works. Framed portraits are mounted onto cast figures in Sollie 17.[17] Earlier works are more consistently metaphorical or abstract implying particular aspects of figuration, being unmimetically composed of objects or structures. The women of Roxys are composed of mechanical and manufactured objects such as a sewing machine stand, a bed pan, dolls' heads and mannequin limbs. Miss Cherry Delight (fig. 27) is represented only as a reflection by a detached pivoting mannequin head set into the frame of a dressing table

17 Other works in which this technique is used are In the Infield was Patty Peccavi (1980) and Portrait of a Mother with Past Affixed Also (1980-81).

mirror. The coital couple in While Dreams of Sugar Plums Danced in their Heads (1964; fig. 32) are depicted as two pink cylindrical bodies crossed beneath irregular spherical heads. The couple is also photographically depicted as a reflection on a resin-dripped dressing table mirror. This mirror image is of actual human figures. The State Hospital (1964-66; fig. 33) patient is duplicated within the form of a neon speech bubble. The figures are conspicuously bandaged, exaggeratedly emaciated forms, soaked in resin with transparent fish bowls as heads. Two black fish move within each bowl.

The figure in the Kienholz works is also evoked through its absence. Stuffing pulled through a tear in an anatomically suggestive cushion, is a physiological implication of figuration in the Illegal Operation (1962; fig. 34, 35). A stuffed bird is substituted for a woman in The Rape of the Grey Speckled Bird. Still Alive consists of a loaded rifle programmed to detonate at an unspecified time and facing a portion of a domestic interior. The spectator becomes the human element when seated in the chair that faces the rifle. Likewise, the spectator becomes part of the figuration in The Pedicord Apts (1982-83; fig. 36), an illusionistically foreshortened hallway of locked doors through which conversations and sounds may be heard.

The works are uneuphemistically aggressive in their

representation of characteristically sordid, or facaded aspects of reality. This effect is only partly produced by the content depicted, and is primarily revealed by the immediacy of the formal means used. Less immediately associative devices of metaphor, representation and symbol expand on the established theme. Subjects are intensified through a range of visual and sensory stimuli which are simulations of experience. The works are both intriguing for their ability to evoke the familiar, and repellent for the visual aberration of that familiarity.

Objects and/or figures that are represented are integrated into their environments by conventional formal composition or commonplace representation. In addition, supplementary techniques are used to heighten the degree of realism. These include smell, tactile and visual effects, restricted or dictated means to viewing the work, sound et cetera. These devices both serve to integrate the different components of the works and to integrate the whole with reality. The State Hospital smells of lysol, a radio plays in While Dreams of Sugar Plums Danced in their Heads, and devices on the women of Roxys can be activated.

One of the most consistent integrating devices used by Kienholz, which operates as both a visual and tactile stimulus, is the characteristic congealing of components. This is achieved through the dripping and staining of

objects and surfaces throughout the work. In some areas it may be a very conspicuous dribbling of materials such as paint or resin, and in others a more subtle technique which suggests a kind of human residue all over the environment. Max Kozloff describes this technique particularly appropriately:

> Not only are his textiles, stained, filthy, dried out, pilled or unraveled, but his woods and metals and plastics are heat-cracked, rusted, and shellacked, as if by some unspeakable sexual mucilage. If at times his objects are coated by a velvety flock, it only connotes dust, or the insides of caskets. 18

This technique also operates as a kind of violation of the actual object, a humanizing of sanitized manufactured environments.

The women of Roxys, dripped and stained with substances, evoke a sense of having been excreted or ejaculated upon; the congealed surface of the cat held by the figure in The Wait (1964; fig. 37) suggests putrescence. The Birthday (1964; fig. 38) in which both the figure and furnishings are painted a continuous grey, induces a clinical anonymity in the environment, with the grey resined surface of the figure in The Rhinestone Beaver Peepshow Triptych (1980; fig. 39) denying the figure its sensuality. Sollie 17's environment, deliberately dirtied and stained together with

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18 KOZLOFF, M. Renderings, 9th ed. London: Studio Vista, 1970, p.246.

details of neglect such as soiled crockery stacked in the basin, is carried through to the figures in the viscous appearance of the surfaces, creating a tactile continuity between figure and environment. Likewise, the staining in The State Hospital of figures, mattresses and the pan, and the soiled fabrics of the Illegal Operation are suggestive of human residue, and anatomical and social decay.

Levels of voyeurism, complicity and intrusion are predetermined features of visual access to the works, partly conceptually induced and partly environmentally determined. The tableau motif suggests a spectacle, a visual arrangement intended for titillation or entertainment. The subject, which is generally surreptitious, such as guarded or secluded practice, induces a sense of violation of privacy and personal experience. The process of viewing the work has a quality of happening upon the incident. The open door to Sollie 17's room has an accidental quality to its viewing access. Such devices are also used more literally. The State Hospital can only be viewed through a grating set into the door, imposing an active role onto the spectator. The spectator can seek out the erotic thoughts in the heads of the figures in While Dreams of Sugar Plums Danced in their Heads,[19] and can deliberately overhear the

19 Eyepieces have been set into the heads through which clusters of naked figures can be seen.

conversations at The Pedicord Apts.

The spectator complies with the institutionalization of the victim in The State Hospital, complacently views The Rape of the Grey Speckled Bird and the emasculation of a black figure in Five Car Stud (1972; fig. 40). Where seclusion characterizes an environment, the spectator invades the sequestered space by staring at 'Sollie' in is sordid environment or intruding on The Birthday. This is determined with the accuracy of actual human intrusion into privacy.

Despite the drama caused by both the subject and sometimes by the image in the works, both a superficial sentimentality and sensationalism are avoided by a consistently underlying cruelty. They are, however, simultaneously seductive, empathetic and moral. The works conform to essential rather than peculiar human properties. The spectator is lured to the object by an expectancy to be entertained by aesthetics, by the format of the object (the tableau), by familiarity, by being drawn into participation with the work and by curiosity. The parameters of association and experience are then expanded by the form of represented experience which is synaesthetic, descriptive, evocative, representational and symbolic in quality. Where Segal and Hanson sanitize the sordidness of their subject, Kienholz imposes a repugnant literalness of that reality.

One of the most consistent Kienholz themes is that of the violation of women as commodities. As a self-contained environment, Roxys draws the spectator into participation. This becomes a kind of game for the spectator who is a visitor to the house, received (by implication) by the boar skull headed Madam (fig. 26) who occupies the main room with some of the women. The room is an environment of hospitality, left over from the past but operating in the present. It is furnished and dimly lit, a nostalgic depiction complete with details from the forties including dated magazines, the song playing on the juke-box and a photograph of General MacArthur. Prurience is suggested by the women but denied by their actual form. They are represented through implied active components of experience. A bed pan metaphorically represents the receptacle nature of Cockeyed Jenny with Five Dollar Billy's pelvic thrusts suggested by the treadle action of the sewing machine stand on which she lies. The figures are each representative of different assets. A visit to Cockeyed Jenny was a euphemism for an expedition of father and son to a bothel to lose the son's virginity. Cockeyed Jenny is in part a pedal-opened dustbin which, when opened, reveals the word LOVE - representing the boy's confusion.

Diane Poole, Miss Universal is derived from the barracks joke about "the girl being so ugly you had to put a pillow

case over her head to have sex with her".'[20] The figure is a grotesquely masked compressed torso fitted with mannequin legs and a row of limp breasts. She is seated with two puppets, 'which indicate her ability and need to manipulate men into interest'.[21] Symbolic references may be obscure to the uninformed viewer but the realization of the figures contained by the humanized environment is sufficient evidence to sustain a current moral rhetoric.

The Rhinestone Beaver Peepshow Triptych is a comparatively formal arrangement depicting the woman as object, 'the ultimate in voyeurism, fantasy, emotional anonymity and sexual degradation'.[22] The figure is centrally bound at the ankle, seated on a ladder, viewed through a framework with a panel at each side. The first panel contains an arm representing the male handing a rodent to the female, a metaphor for his aggression. By gestural implication in the sequence from left to right, the woman receives his aggression and reflects it onto her face by means of a hand mirror (a photograph of the rodent's face covers hers).

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20 Reddin Kienholz, N. Roxy's and other works. Edward Kienholz. Catalogue. Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst e.V. Bremen, 1982.

21 Ibid.

22 Reddin Kienholz, N. The Berlin Women. Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin Kienholz. Catalogue. Dobbert Galerie Berlin. Reprinted from "The Kienholz Women" catalog, Galerie Maeght, Zürich, 1981.

The third panel, an enlarged photograph of the rodent's eyes, represents the voyeurism of society.

Robert Silberman, reviewing the work, states:

> The use of low-life subjects can be mere slumming under the guise of compassion. Artists who choose to deal with prostitution and pornography in their work risk having what is intended as a critique become a lurid attraction indistinguishable from the practice being condemned.... The crude exuberance that figures so strongly in Kienholz's early art here gives way to a combination of elements so blatantly unsavory and preposterous that he loses the tension between realism and artificiality. 23

It appears that Silberman considers that the work operates too closely to an actual peepshow, perhaps interpreting the beaver metaphor as a crude analogy. However, any association with the level of pornography effected by a real peepshow would seem remote. The focusing on a grey, resin-saturated black booted female, formally posed in an abstract environment, could be seen to acquire a comparative sense of dignity by not developing lewd aspects of gesture and representation. Likewise, the metaphor of the rodent serves to heighten the sense of violation to that dignity without directly affecting the figure.

Conversely, The Bronze Pinball Machine with Woman Affixed Also develops the visual appeal of sensuality and

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23 Silberman, R. 'Imitation of Life'. Art in America. March 1986, p.143.

eroticism, vulgarized by its blatant and crude implications. The work is composed of an operating 'Playboy' pinball machine with an attached portion of a female figure with exposed genitals. The components attached to the machine have been cast and refined into a highly polished bronze. A bronze ruche has been placed around the machine which as a formal device integrates the figure and conceptually adds an element of femininity to the work. The allure of the precious metal, the refined forms of the figure and the qualities of the machine itself are crudely stalled by the precept of implied copulative action and the blatant display of genitals. The work was based on the observation of boys playing pinball with their 'pelvic thrusts, twisting etc.', they were 'symbolically fucking the machine and more directly the women on the lighted glass screen.'[24]

The kind of cruelty with which Kienholz denies eroticism in the previous works is applied in the denial of sentimental stimulation or the pleasure of aroused pity in the following works. The Wait depicts the tragedy of the transience of life and the isolation of ageing. A female is centrally placed in a pictorially arranged domestic interior. Photographs - remnants of the past - are distributed on a table. A large portrait of a man has been

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24 Reddin Kienholz, N. The Berlin Women. op.cit.

placed over the figure, supposedly the now deceased husband, dominating as ever. Gold figurines in jars hang around the figure's neck representing aspects of her existence, like a clinging to that which is past and precious, a l which is simultaneously depicted as a burden. Death is implied throughout the environment by the fading colouring and formal placing of the objects as might occur in the laying out of a corpse or the deceased's possessions. More directly, it is represented by the bones visible in the limbs and skull of the figure, (placed behind a portrait which together form the head) and the resin-stiffened cat. The lifelessness of the arrangement is emphasized by the inclusion of a live canary. Nostalgia, isolation, and the imminence of death are suggested by the finality of the portrait that is depicted as unemotionally terminal. The sentimental implications of the subject are denied by the transience of material existence directly linked to decay.

Sollie 17, a work of a similar theme, includes urban confinement as an accessory. To view the work, the spectator must pass the public convenience and public telephone, complete with scribblings, to reach the open door to Sollie's room. Entry is curbed at the doorway by means of a curved perspex sheet which provides limited visual access to the room; one cannot see behind the door. The work is repellently typical of superannuation and

isolation, represented through three versions of the same figure. Details of physical ageing are represented in the photographic portraits placed the figures, carried through to the thinned and sagging forms of the cast figures. The three figures of 'Sollie' demonstrate the passage of time. He is engaged in different activities that reflect the complete spectrum of his limited occupation. Sollie can be seen standing at the window looking out onto a black and white photographic view of Spoka. , lying in bed reading with his hand in his underwear, and seated on the side of the bed playing solitaire. The personalized stained environment is violated by the viewer's intrusion. The work is alluring for this intrusive access, and repellent for the accuracy with which the reality is defined.

Where victims and violence are represented in the Kienholz tableaux, the viewer is denied the full spectacle. It is incomplete for the omission of the focal point of the subject, but threatening for its unseen presence. In The State Hospital, this is produced by the anonymity and abstraction that interrupts the otherwise reprusentational and extended sensory experience. The viewer is denied the victim's identity which is part of the curiosity-stimulating nature of violence. The violation of the figure is depicted by its bonding to the bed, and intensified by the confinement to the cell. An overt

suggestion of psychological experience is represented as confused thought in the movement of fish in the head, and the reiteration of the figure's reality in the neon speech bubble over it. The bonding and confinement act not only as devices of immobilization, but as symbols of permanence.

The spectacle of the Illegal Operation is limited to the aftermath of the event. The only visual evidence of the action is a pan of 'bloody' cloths and instruments, and the cushion out of which the stuffing has been pulled through a verticle slit. However, the furniture, its placement and the anatomical cushion are sufficient evidence of the nature of the event. The absence of the victim becomes the more horrifying aspect. The essential properties of the action, denotive of sensation and physical experience, are represented by the absence of the subject.

The spectacle of rape is modified through the metaphorical evocation of the violence in The Rape of the Grey Speckled Bird. The victim is represented as a bird with applied pudendum, attached to a chair, with its wings outstretched. The helplessness and submission of the victim is indicated through the immobilization of the wings. The aggressor is depicted by two hands attached to the chair which has a penis-shaped back. A double-bulbed lamp which illuminates the scene suggests testicles. The intensity of the implied action is produced by the contrast of rigidity and posture

of the organic form, juxtaposed with the passive domestic articles. The dripping of paint off the hands and bird, down the structures of the chair, is both a tactile implication of soiling and wounding, and a device of formal continuity.

Five Car Stud depicts a lynching party of realistically clothed cast figures in rubber masks surrounded by cars, castrating a black victim in the light of the headlamps. The artist describes the work:

> ...actually there is no Black man... What appears to be the victim is in reality, the three separate White figures (each with part of the Black's body) shoved up against a central 'pan body'... in a human torso form... filled with black water.... Floating plastic letters spell out N-I-G-G-E-R. 25

The horror of the spectacle is not only its subject, or the partially depicted action, but the grotesqueness of the forms and their effect in this visual arrangement.

> ...the shrieking head [of the black figure] is not in the least naturalistic, but composite of inner and outer form. In other words, the centrepoint and subject of this violently realistic work is - [sic] an abstraction.
>
> Five Car Stud proves the point which the self-styled Realists all miss: that a pictorial reality depends on a tension between the real (the materially actual) and the abstract (symbolism and invention). 26

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25 Edward Kienholz quoted in. Thwaites, J.A. 'Kienholz and Realism'. Art and Artists. September 1973, p.26.

26 Thwaites, J.A. ibid.

The works discussed above present violent incidents. The tableau Still Alive, is a potentially violent experience. The work has an aspect of temptation, partly for the risk factor it provides, and partly for the spectacular nature of that potential realized. This is precisely part of the allure of any risk-taking activity which is deliberate confrontation with violence. The context of reality is controlled. Familiarity and domesticity are suggested by the arrangement of furniture and objects where the spectator may sit in the line of fire; a kind of 'waiting room'. From the opposite side, only the barrel of the rifle is visible beneath a blue light which would flash when the timer is activated. Transcending its emotive properties, the work provides a 'genuine acknowledgement of death',[27] in the true provision of danger.

Levels of reality of an intensity equal to real events are evoked by the Kienholz tableaux. The substance of the event is heightened through the tensions created between interpretation and actuality formed by accurate material and associative equivalents.

Kienholz intends to challenge the viewer's insensibility to social incident and the nature of his/her own existence. Through the acknowledgem[illegible] a morbid presence, its

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27 Quoted from a document provided by Edward Kienholz at the exhibition of the work, 1974 (see Appendix A).

allure, and the consequent confrontation with it, the spectator is invited to explore social conditions which are actual, forbidding and cruel.

Mark Prent (b.1947)

The figures of Mark Prent have hyper-real qualities but differ from the technique as used by Duane Hanson. Figures may be painted but are also pigmented directly in the casting process. Unlike Hanson, Prent's concepts are not based on the common perception of the human figure and they often deviate from actuality. The figures are cast of synthetic resin materials into a mould frequently taken from the artist's own body. The surfaces acquire a heightened realism, particularly in the development of superficial and internal anatomical detail.[28] Surfaces are not necessarily developed as normal flesh but are often mutilated by implication. Unlike Hanson's treatment of surfaces, where hair is injected, and forms modelled and toned to mimic actual live human detail, Prent does not develop this aspect of realism further than selected areas. The physical properties of the material are often used to

28 The male figure in Laughing Pathocyclists (1974; fig. 55) includes heightened disfigurements such as a sense of bruising and rawness. Both the rear figure in This is Dedicated to the Berlin Zoo (1975; fig. 56) and the figure in Drosophila (1984; fig. 41) are depicted as if having had the superficial layer stripped to reveal an underlying circulatory system.

enhance disfigurements. This is achieved by contrasts of translucencies caused by the pigmenting of resin which, despite the subject, creates a rich accumulation of colour.

Figures may be free-standing, composed with or onto objects such as Drosophila (1984; fig. 41) but are frequently placed in self-contained environments. Visual access is often manipulated by the artist to engage the spectator. JOY KCUF (1972; fig. 42) can only be viewed through the scratched areas of a painted window, a hinged window can be opened to view Hanging is Very Important (1972; fig. 43), and a flight of stairs leads to a platform for viewing The Operating Room (1974; fig. 44).

Prent's subjects are verist depictions of violated human form, characterized by the grotesque, macabre and horrific. Images include anthropoid distortion as in the figure in The Operating Room, mimetic representation and structural simulation as in Death in the Chair (1973; fig. 45), and the disruption to representational environments such as the display of human parts in And is there Anything Else You'd Like Madam? (1971; fig. 46).

Although Prent denies any moral rhetoric intended by the works, they have been assigned a humanitarian aim because of the emphasis on the depiction of destructive and forbidding reality. Michael Greenwood regards such an

interpretation of the work as public refusal to attribute less praiseworthy and too terrifying motives to the work. However he continues:

> Tout dans l'oeuvre de Prent heurte la sensibilité du spectateur.... Pourtant il se peut que le choc brutal que provoque l'oeuvre soit en fait le prélude indispensable au processus ultérieur de réconciliation. De plus, il produit même un effet cathartique. Parce que reconnaissables sur le plan symbolique, les visions monstrueuses qui surgissent n'échappent pas complètement à l'entendement humain. Le choc initial fait place progressivement à une sensation de délivrance de la purgation. Le spectateur prend conscience de l'existence d'un autre ordre de réalités, siège du contenu profond des multiples scénarios dans lesquels s'exprime l'imagination fantasmatique de l'artiste. Sous le thème manifeste de douleur, de mutilation et de mort, le spectateur sent la présence d'une énergie transcendante et d'une force vitale qui triomphent des forces de la destruction. 29

While the works are not moralizing in attitude, and may effect catharsis, or awareness of another level of reality,

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29 Greenwood, M. Mark Prent. Catalogue: Musée D'Art Contemporain. Montreal. 1979, p.2.
'Everything in the work of Prent shocks the sensibility of the spectator.... However it may be that the brutal shock provoked by the work is in fact the indispensable prelude to the ulterior process of reconciliation. In addition it produces a cathartic effect. Because the monstrous visions recognizable on the symbolic level do not escape human understanding completely. The initial shock gives way progressively to a sensation of deliverance from purgation. The spectator becomes conscious of another order of realities, seat of the profound content of the multiple scenarios in which the fantastic imagination of the artist expresses itself. Beneath the obvious theme of suffering, of mutilation and of death, the spectator senses the presence of a transcendent energy and of a vital force which triumphs over the forces of destruction' (Free translation).

certain limitations exist, linked to technique and interpretation. A dichotomy is evident within the collective representations of Prent: a distinction in style and image that affects the function of the object. Some images are sensational, to such an extent that they seem not to transcend the superficially horrific. In these works, spectacle dominates.[30] A link to the unconscious or to a consciousness of another order of realities may account in part for the allure and frisson of terror induced by simulated or documented horror, but which is subsequently frustrated by an inability to penetrate beyond a basic level of predictable excitation. The habit-forming property that gives horror its commercial value, and the manner with which commercialism and the media desensitize the viewer to any secondary processes of experience, suggests the ineffectiveness of such experience to be purgative or to arouse to consciousness latent awareness. Thus where certain images of Prent's resemble commercial imagery, they are unlikely to produce the 'transcendent energy' that 'triumphs over the forces of destruction' as advocated by Greenwood. The medium, degree of realism, and the manner with which Prent chooses to portray a concept are in part responsible for superficial analogies, regardless of the concept.

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30 'Spectacle', refers to the transient frisson characteristic of commercial images, media images and amusements which effect strong but superficial excitement.

The roving eyes and reptile texture of The Incurable Romantic (1981; fig. 47), a kinetic dwarf that seeks confrontation with the viewer from its Victorian child's barber-chair, is like science fiction imagery, curious for its assemblage of natural texture into an unnatural figuration. The features of the figure are akin to illusory make-up and texture technology used in theatre and in film production where the objective is artificiality, not reality.[31] This is heightened by the kinetic properties which make The Incurable Romantic operate like a trick or a toy. Imagine Me (1981; figs 48, 49) is a combination of these characteristics. A figure has been placed in a vintage photo-booth which dispenses a sequence of pictures (fig. 49). In the sequence, a woman's face, which begins as a typical photo-booth portrait, distorts into a grotesque disintegrating image of a werewolf-type creature. Likewise, bulging eyeballs, bared teeth and screaming mouths in Thawing Out (1972; fig. 50), Child's Toy (1973; fig. 51) and Aquarium (1975; fig. 52) are symptoms of suggested conditions and as such do not evoke truths of bestiality, eroticism and taboo, but rather curiosities of technological illusion, experiment and horror amusement. Henry Lehmann referring to Aquarium,

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31 This feature of theatrical technology is exemplified by the character Yoda, created by Frank Oz for the film, The Empire Strikes Back, and the werewolf 'costume' by Rick Baker seen in An American Werewolf in London.

comments on this particular quality in Prent's work:

> ...too often Prent lose [sic] track of his goal. In Aquarium, a waterfilled volume containing two bodies, the action is confusing - it's as though Prent became entangled in distracting details such as the halloweenish strings of hair. The sexual ambiguity of this imposing curio does not translate into mystery, merely blur [sic]. 32

Similarly, the use of black leather, chain and studs on the bonding and bracing of Child's Toy and The Brat (1977; fig 53) is synonymous with the commercial aspect of sado-masochism, both as an aspect of pornography (see fig. iii), and as a superficial subversiveness evident in areas of contemporary fashion trends such as 'Punk'. Such elements load the image with aggression which neither examines that aspect of sexuality nor expands the formal dimension of the figuration.

A higher form of communication is suggested by Greenwood with reference to particular works of Prent. He interprets Death in the Chair as destruction.

> Ainsi, l'oeuvre intitulée La Mort sur la Chaise 1973 nous invite à jouer un rôle clé dans une scène d'électrocution en utilisant l'interrupteur fatal qui déclenchera chez la victime les terribles convulsions de la mort. Ce drame bizarre et ambigu illustre l'un des thèmes fondamenteaux de l'artiste, soit à la fois le sacrifice et la conservation d'une victime convenable. Pour avoir tué, le meurtrier doit

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32 Lenmann, H. 'Hostile, but not aggressive'. Montreal Star. 17 February, 1979.

payer de sa vie. Il perd son identité et devient le bouc émissaire de la culpabilité collective. On doit le sacrifier. Cependant on l'investit aussi d'une grande valeur symbolique tout en reconnaissant la présence des forces du mal qui l'animent. 33

Death in the Chair, an enclosed environment, is an elevated kinetic sculpture with a switch box next to a door. The convulsing figure (activated by the spectator via a switch) may be viewed from a window in the door beside the switch box or through a picture window from the front. The work is an accurate reconstruction of an electrocution chamber in a United States maximum security prison.

It is not Greenwood's conceptual interpretation which is in question but his interpretation in relation to the visual image and its kineticism. The value of this work may be founded in consciousness of collective culpability but one doubts that engagement transcends consciously or

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33 Greenwood, M. op.cit., p.6.
'Thus the work entitled The Death on the Chair 1973 invites us to play a key role in the scene of electrocution by using the fatal switch which will set in motion the terrible convulsions of death. This strange and ambiguous drama illustrates one of the fundamental themes of the artist - at the same time the sacrifice and the conservation of a suitable victim. For having killed, the murderer must pay with his life. He loses his identity and becomes the scape-goat of the collective culpability. One must sacrifice him. However he is also invested with a grand symbolic value even while recognizing the forces of evil which animate him...' (Free translation).

unconsciously, the enticement and fulfilment of the dramatic action provided. The Tussaud waxworks include a kinetic hologram depicting an actual murderer being electrocuted. To the extent that Prent's work represents collective culpability, the Tussaud exhibit could be seen accordingly, particularly as the victim is identified in fact. However, actual observation of spectators at the exhibition on one particular occasion demonstrated that the kinetic action and curiosity about the technical feature provided the actual attraction.

In Thawing Out, a partly concealed naked male figure appears to be struggling out of 'ice' with a distorted expression of resistance. Greenwood interprets this work as 'the struggle waged by the vital forces to resist the absolute immobility of death' and states:

> Dans une autre oeuvre sur le même thème Le Dégel 1972 Prent traite du processus de la création dans une allégorie quasi michelangelesque par sa représentation de la lutte menée par les forces vitales pour résister à l'immobilité absolue de la mort. Le réfrigérateur possède plusieurs sens, comme tous les autres éléments servant d'enceinte. Il représente à la fois le tabernacle, l'utérus et le cercueil. 34

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34 Ibid, p.6.
'In another work on the same theme, Thawing Out 1972, Prent treats the process of creation in an allegory almost Michelangelo-esque, by his representation of the struggle waged by the vital forces to resist the absolute immobility of death. The refrigerator possesses many interpretations, as do the other elements serving as enclosures. It represents at the same time a tabernacle, a uterus and a coffin' (Free translation

The expression of the figure, like the distortion in Imagine Me, is also characterized by a familiar 'horror' quality that suggests arbitrary imaginative violence. Viewed in the context of technology, which is made conspicuous by areas such as the illusionistic simulation of ice, the viewer is distracted both by the technological precision and a lack of actual 'struggle' in the figure. John Anthony Thwaites' comment regarding Realism is particularly apposite with regard to this aspect of Prent's image and technique:

> ...that a pictorial reality depends on a tension between the real (the materially actual) and the abstract (symbolism and invention). 35

That tension is absent in the visual reality of the work and exists only to the extent that one recognizes suggestions of it via the technique of hyper-realism. The implied violence proposed by Greenwood in Thawing Out exists by way of narrative but is not amplified by its realization.

Works such as the female figure tableau of Laughing Pathocyclists (1974; fig. 54) evoke analogy to typical commercial horror images. The environment is closed, dimly lit, with a padlocked barn door. Visual access is obstructed by dirty windows, the only access. The room is infested with rats and insects. Comparatively theatrical

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35 Thwaites, J.A. op.cit., p.26.

in form, the environment bears a strong resemblance to Kienholz's The Wait (fig. 37) with the latter apparently being the prototype for Prent's work. Both contain an aging female figure representing decay and physical deterioration within a tableau environment. The use of bone in both figures serves different ends. The bones emerging from under the skirt in the Kienholz figure metaphorically suggest crippling by age and the shrinking of physical form. The collapsed covering material of Prent's female and the exposure of the skull through the simulated decaying flesh deform the figure into a clichéd image of physical atrophy. The image does not reflect reality in the sense that it should be disturbing. The figure in combination with the environment of jars of 'pickled' eyes, teeth and inflated organs has become fantastic: relentless repugnant details and lack of identification with reality results in titillation. The work therefore becomes entertaining for its properties that are not identified with actuality.[36] Where images are

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36 Laughing Pathocyclists consists of two environments, the 'old room' containing the female figure, and the 'new room' containing the male. Both environments contain the jars and both contain framed icons. These icons are facsimiles of a painting entitled 'The Mantle of Veronica' with the usual inscription, J H S. The icon in the old room is defaced by a grey haired portrait with grinning mouth and missing teeth; in the new room by an auburn haired smiling portrait, blank eyed and of exaggerated grey pallor. The new room is futuristic in character and unenclosed. A hexagonal aquarium contains an identical head of the figure in the chair. The head blows bubbles through the nose and ears and is fluorescently lit.

conceptually, visually and texturally conditioned by superficial extremes of repulsion nd repetition, communication is retarded. Unlike the Rainholz, Prent's image is unrelated to the viewer's experience. The whole tableau is reminiscent of those images intended to induce horrific entertainment, of a not particularly terrifying variety. No component of the work heightens the reality, nor complements it compositionally.

It is not simply an absence of tension between the real and abstract that diverts the impact of Prent's work, nor the occasional absence of formal or selective interpretation. It is also the type of human expression. Commercial analogy has been mentioned but there exists also an absence of tension and purpose in the forms of severe human conditions as used by the artist. A detail from a seventeenth century Relief in wax (artist unknown)[37] and a detail from The Corruption of the Bodies by Gaetano Zumbo (figs iv, v),[38] two works depicting decay, may be related to the Prent works, particularly the female figure in Laughing Pathocyclists. The detail from The Corruption of the Bodies illustrates a similar interpretation of decomposition to Prent's, although anatomically and

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37 Relief in wax, polychromed. 17th Century, Naples. Congrega di Santa Maria.

38 Gaetano Zumbo, The Corruption of the bodies, 17th Century. Firenze Musio della Specola.

texturally more convincing. These interpretations compared to the detail from the relief in wax reveal a level of the horrific absent but seemingly intended in many of Prent's works. A tension of reality exists between the repugnant and the sensuous, life and decay; the activity of the insects, rodents and maggots as a form of regeneration which is simultaneously forbidding and actual, and the identity of the figure which still exists as a sensuous individual. This form of ambiguity seems to underlie the intention of many of Prent's works but is negated through a lack of definition.

In other works, some ambiguity is achieved where either the work is conceptually and formally clarified, or aesthetically more resonant. The delicatessen of human parts, And is there Anything Else You'd Like Madam?, The Last Supper (1971; no illustration), and the fridge room of human carcasses, Hanging is Very Important, may reveal truths in the cannibalistic subject by transgressing the taboo of eating human flesh. These works are the only examples noted where Prent has expressed a moral attitude:

> Everyone is feeding on one another. People are stepping over one another to get to the top. There is so much slaughter and killing in the world that we have come to the point where we act like animals, and if we act like animals, then maybe we should be treated like animals and butchered and sold by the pound. 39

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39 Mark Prent quoted in: Fulford, R. 'Isaacs Gallery gets itself in a pickle with the law'. The Toronto Star. 11 March, 1972.

Although it is hardly accurate to compare the kind of slaughter humans engage in with the naturally determined behaviour of animals, the works make a comparatively significant statement. Greenwood identifies the tradition of aestheticizing the display of dismembered animals:

> Dans notre société, l'abbattage des animaux et la cosommation de la viande s'accompagnent traditionellement d'une forme de rituel esthétique. Pour effacer le sentiment de culpabilité qu'entraine l'abbattage, on transforme cet acte destructeur, associé inconsciemment au meurtre, en un acte créateur. Dans les boucheries et les poissoneries l'on accordait une attention toute spéciale à la présentation de la *marchandise*. 40

The objective that these works convey is again limited where the technique of mimicking found environments reduces the work to a display rather than a composition, and the inclusion of grim humour pre-empts a sense of shock entertainment. This is particularly true of And is there Anything Else You'd Like Madam? Conversely, Greenwood argues in favour of the commentative property of the works:

> Mark Prent's obsession with the bleaker aspects of mortality may seem at first to be expressed in images that are altogether too literal, too undisguised by symbolic displacement to be acceptable as "art". Such an impression while

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40 Greenwood, M. op.cit., p.7.
'In our society the slaughter of animals and the consumption of meat is traditionally accompanied by a form of aesthetic ritual. To efface the sentiment of guilt which slaughter entrains, the destructive act, associated unconsciously with murder, is transformed into a creative act. In butcheries and fish-shops special attention is paid to the presentation of merchandise' (Free translation).

> understandable and even justifiable to a point does not, in my view, stand up to a closer examination of the work....
>
> While Prent's art comments ironically on society's refusal to recognise its own fictions for what they are - the substitution of human anatomy makes this point with devastating effect - it still acknowledges by implication the necessity for some internal and external regulative machinery to control the explosive forces of the unconscious, and therefore in the final analysis, performs the redemptive socializing function of art. 41

Yet the literalness of the work would inhibit a closer examination of the work. It is not only the lack of symbolic displacement which may remove the object from art. The question arises whether the replacing of conventional contents of a commonplace object constitutes art, particularly when the motive appears to be shock.

A distinction is evident however, between The Last Supper, And is there Anything Else You'd Like Madam? and Hanging is Very Important. The first two examples depend primarily on their disruption of the familiar by the macabre, with the latter work asserting a grotesqueness through its black humour, its jars of pickled penises, ('prickles'), its sliced white and black breast, noses and eyeballs. To this extent the content of the works is limited to the object's realness and its amusement properties. Hanging is Very

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41 Greenwood, M. Mark Prent. Artscanada. Spring 1972, p.39.

Important is, however, distinguished by an aesthetic quality. Although the environment is conceived as a representational replication complete with spilled sawdust around its locked doorway, the two semi-complete, headless 'choice approved' figures hanging upside down to the right, contain a disquieting allure. A seductiveness is present which is not simply derived from the precision of technique, but from contrasts of the sensuous contours of these two figures, juxtaposed with the more horrific clusters of limbs and sections of anatomy. Likewise the formal arrangement, modified to conform to interpretation rather than replication, complements the figuration. The substitution of human anatomy evokes in the environment a disquiet distinguished from superficial horror, primarily because the focal point, human meat, is not simply treated with sordid realism or amusement.

There are other works which may also be distinguished, where the use of forbidding imagery, more directly linked to familiar reality, seems more purposeful. The male figure in Laughing Pathocyclists (1974; fig. 55) and the figure in JOY KCUF, without a heightened degree of realism, would not necessarily read within the context that they occupy. The deformations are not random mutilations but cruel depictions of real genetic or physiological deformity. The strained figure with artificial limbs awkwardly seated on a commode and the swollen suffocated

figure confined to its wheelchair may be a verist lesson in reality; that of physical deformity concealed and rejected by a society that reveres physical perfection. Despite the distracting detail of the Laughing Pathocyclists environment,[42] the figures serve as cruel and fearsome impositions that confront carefully guarded revulsions to that which does not conform to 'normal', complete or tasteful images of human reality. Although the works lack formal and dramatic aesthetic properties, to some extent they succeed in assaulting the viewer and revealing latent terror.

Yet another group of Prent's works may be distinguished. These are distinct primarily in that they are formally conceived, are environmentally unconfined, and are characterized by a balance of visual association and formal resolution. A heightened sense of reality and violence is produced by the combined presence of elegance and brutality. This ambivalence operates as a stimulus which can be both alluring and cruel. As such, the image is less easily accommodated and more complex means of interpretation is thus required, undiverted by obvious analogy.

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42 See reference note, p.63.

This is Dedicated to the Berlin Zoo (1975; fig. 56), Horsewoman (1975; fig. 57), Ringturner (1975; fig. 58), For Harry (1983; fig. 59) and Drosophila are distinct, not only for a comparative de-emphasizing of spectacle, but also for a relative control of evocative and representational devices. Ringturner is an unpredictably benign figure, a bound figure suspended by one gym ring and reaching for another. Although the figure is incapacitated by the tight binding of the legs, this binding becomes symbolic, and a sensuous investigation of the flexible properties of human flesh. This is complemented by the posture and location in space.

> With Ringturner... Mark Prent achieves beauty. A naked man, bald, deformed of neck, is suspended eternally inches short of the ring he wishes to grasp.... it is the purest (because the most abstract) expression of the horror to which human beings are subject. Neither the ringturner's animality nor his impotence is degrading. 43

Although degradation, damage and brutality are ruthlessly depicted in Horsewoman, a monumental naked female bound to a gym horse, an ambivalence of resolution is produced by the formal balance of the two elements. The figure exudes discomfort and wretchedness through the whole form, a means of expression absent in figures like that of Thawing Out. Simultaneously, the massive strength of the Horsewoman's physical presence seems to contain the brutality. The lack

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43 Chamberlain, R. Mark Prent. Artscanada. May June 1979, p.66.

of superficial definition of the subject so prevalent in other examples discussed, is a catalyst to interpretation and visceral association which has the visual ruthlessness rather than spectacle to fit Greenwood's attitudes. At the same time the image could be viewed for its sexual analogies to pornography in so far as sado-masochism specifically makes use of this kind of presentation of the female figure, that is, bound, degraded, wounded and unaesthetesized.

The sensuousness of human form and its capacity to occupy space in Ringturner and For Harry heightens the devices of human violation rather than exaggerates or exploits them. Fairly obvious images of a sterile white straight-jacket and bandaging on the figure of For Harry become formally integral, textural or tonal contrasts to the darkened anonymous figure.

The eyes and mouths of the figures in This is Dedicated to the Berlin Zoo recall the horror show qualities of other works, but the two voluptuous tensile figures are comparatively abstract, both in treatment and their relationship to the base (a gym box). Emerging from the female, a contrast of movement is created in the rear figure with the superficial activity of its outer layer. The figures are composed, coloured, bound and supported in such a way as to reiterate and counter the geometric

u[illegible]stered base with a resolution that accommodates both the [illegible] of the contours, and the repugnance of the bald [illegible] exposed physiological act.

Drosophila, a figure balanced in a hand-stand on a parallel bar, reconciles to some extent, the many visual and contextual implications of Prent's sculpture. The seductiveness of form and human reference is developed throughout the figure and its formal resolution onto the bar, carried into space by the metamorphosing fin-like limbs. The work is significantly more approachable than other works, independent of the illustration of violence and brutality on which many Prent images rely. 'Drosophilia', (moisture loving), a genus of fruit fly, contains the added 'concerned' reference to the insect's extensive use in generic research.

Greenwood's concept of catharsis seems too ambitious an effect to ascribe to Prent's imagery although the works expose valuable qualities of confrontation. These qualities are, it appears, not realized as humanitarian concerns, moral indoctrination nor sadism, but at best, as confrontation with the human state of being. As such, the viewer may become aware of another order of reality.

Malcolm Poynter (b.1946)

The human figurations of Malcolm Poynter are cast from life, and made from fibreglass and resin. The surfaces are dressed, etched, coated, painted or fragmented and animated by materials such as pebbles, paper maché, plaster, rubbish or found objects such as plastic toy guns and soldiers.

Early works were hyper-real in quality in so far as figures were realistically conceived for example, Chair Piece (1976; fig. 60), a naked female seated in an armchair. Later works include selective naturalistic detail such as facial features and representational human form. Men of War (1980-81; fig. 61) is composed of two naked representational figures darkened by mottled colouring. Nervous System (1984; fig. 62), while retaining the human form, has been abstractly treated with a surface which is entirely composed of toy soldiers.

Poynter's figures may be presented individually, in groups, as head studies or partially formed figures.[44] Compared to the work of Hanson, Segal, Kienholz and Prent, Poynter's work is distinct in that there is a far greater emphasis on

44 Figures are often altered or destroyed and frequently documented as 'details'. It is therefore not always possible to discuss the work in the way that it was presented for exhibition.

traditional figurative sculptural issues. Figures often occupy bases and interact with geometric structures which contain or frame the figure, and the visual implications of violence are generally expressed or amplified by formal equivalents. The figure in Conflict Room, Section 1 Three Line Whip (1975; fig. 63) stands erectly on a platform of planks holding two wooden rods suspended by rope, wound around his hands and gripped in his fists. The rods and rope provide an angular continuation of the figure framing the thickset legs. A circle drawn on the planks surrounds the figure with the feet labelled 'A' and 'B'. The aggression exuded by the representational figure is formally linked to, expanded and contained by the abstract appendages.

Earlier works include grotesque details such as the objects blocking the mouth of the figure in Chair Piece. This use of the grotesque is in keeping with the degree of hyper-realism in the figure, that is the image becomes grotesque because of the direct relationship of human features to actuality. In this work, the figure's representational features are not simply disrupted. A sense of rigidness has been expressed through the physical arrangement, which is contained by the figure rather than illustrated.

Brutality is depicted in the interference to the passive expression of Study for Conflict Room (1975; fig. 64).

Tension is created by the juxtaposition of passivity and the manipulated head with pins that pierce the mouth closed. This device of interfering with a passive figure is typical of implied violence in Poynter's work. Compared to Prent's descriptive anxiousness in the face and figure in Thawing Out, a distinct disquiet is created by Poynter's treatment of passivity by contrasting violation with aggression in a formal rather than fantastic relationship. The brutality in both Poynter's head study and Chair Piece is heightened as an aspect of expression, while in the Prent image it is dissipated descriptively throughout the figuration.

Poynter's works are socio-political in theme and figures generally represent broad social issues, operating as symbols, personifications or metaphors for particular conditions. These are often interpretations of observed experience, and depict applications and representations of varying degrees of power and the manner with which it characterizes societal structures. A sense of aggression and violation is retained throughout the works. It is unemotive in its depiction, formally conceived and frequently superficial in its representation. The figures are sensuously conceived but unerotic. The violation contained by them is unemotively suggestive of anatomical, psychological and physical interference.

A work such as The Edge (1982; fig. 65) has connotations of both violence and social consciousness. It also accommodates the spectator's familiarity with art objects. The work consists of a folded nubile figure, crouched on a raised circular platform. The smooth, consistently mottled surface atrophies across the unsupported fa .. The allure of refined form is denied in the obliteration of identity through the imposed disintegration and the inclusion of fungus in the medium. The figure is a subtle assault on the expectations roused by sensuous form and conventionally refined art objects. The sculpture operates as a metaphoric insinuation of social violations which alludes to a seductiveness in violence.

Poynter often depicts aggression and violation through atrophied surfaces or by interrupting forms or refined areas. This is seen in the decorative component of 3rd Horseman of the Apocalypse (1983-84; fig. 66), and as a form of decay in Leader I (1981; fig. 67) and Collateral Damage (1982-82; figs 68-70, details). In the first example a rich surface has been developed in a patchwork of colour on the smooth figure, with a ruptured texture of toy guns and soldiers forming the headdress. Disintegration is implied in contrast to the ceremonious quality and aggressive association. Figures in Collateral Damage evoke decay more literally in that parts of figures are missing, equating the kind of disintegration characteristic of actual human flesh. The physicality of the material has

also been used in the disintegrating parts, as separations of the form. This is consistent with the more representational depiction of decay. Leader I is distinct in that the figure is for the most part representational and complete. The creased, marbled texture of the surface colouring however suggests also a degree of decay as if the inner functionings of the figure have become divorced from the surface that contains them.

Poynter's socio-political themes are generalized, represented through formalized interactive and isolated gestures. Appendages to the figures, such as clothing in early works and surfaces and environments in later works, have been used in a compositional and abstract manner. These materials have a symbolic property, often ceremonious and decorative in arrangement. The formality and ceremony, recurrent features of the figures, give the sculptures an iconic quality. Simultaneously, life-size scale, materials (such as toy guns) and representational features, integrate the figurations with actual space and experience. Theatricality and a ritual quality are produced by this technique. This artist's work has been concerned directly with rituals;

> ...the kind of rituals we place ourself within... like marriage,... it's very similar to the idea of something like the idea of the tribe in deepest Africa who paint themselves up to go and hunt and by the ritual and by dance and everything their hunting is actually affected. The reality is changed by that ritual. And I

> think things like marriage, those sort of rituals, are used to affect two people and its co-ordinates society. But it's still an illusion. 45

Decoration, ritual and 'tribalism' characterize the figures; it is both western and urban in its conception. Poynter does not attempt to apply African traditional forms to western concepts, but rather draws on that form of physical expression. Cultural values, social conditions and conditioning, and allegiance to structures and symbols are represented through the treated object. This is intimated by both the 'classical' approach to the figures as a prototype, and through the composition, formal containment and interruption of the figure. A fetish quality is achieved through formalities of stance and the decorative use of urban material.

The series of Woman as Fetish Objects (1975; fig. 71, detail) depicts western women ceremoniously. An apparent adaption of tribally-related decoration is suggested by the application of headdresses and body paint. As symbolic decoration, this is analogous to social mores of urban female grooming and presentation, a defacement of the sensuous female form as a result of beautification. The incongruous relationship of the figure to these appendages,

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45 Malcolm Poynter quoted in: Vermorel, F. and J. Malcolm Poynter: Life and Work. (No pagination).

suggests violation in accordance with a set ritual, not unlike what is seen in Hanson's Housewife. Whereas Hanson's figure suggests amusement both as an observation of female customs and illusion, Poynter's figure reveals a hideous undercurrent to a similar theme.

Features such as these become more subtle and abstract in later works. The monotoned, and comparatively representational naked figures are objectified by their relationship or lack of it to actuality. Their stasis and movement have a controlled and formalized character which contains, rather than describes aspects of violence and disquietude. The figure in Confront (1978; fig. 72) approaches the duplicate mirror image with trepidation. The eyes of the figures, complemented by the posture, peer cautiously towards each other. The sculpture's contact with the mirror implies a sense of inevitability or compliance. There is also a sense of determination and awkwardness which gives it authority, and leads it from 'A' to 'B' (letters marked on the platform on which the figure stands).

The contrapposto of Leader I is composed, integrated and linked to the geometric components that are repeated both as a support and as a base. The averted figure simultaneously dominates the object, which as a symbolic and cyclical form, contains it. A sense of amateurish

control and awkward contemplation is created by this relationship of the representational form to the abstract appendages which include a hand held disc. The Men of War complement each other symmetrically. There is confrontation, but an absence of aggression in a quality of subordinated animalism. The violation of the individual, and the brutality of conflict suggested by Hanson's War, is effectively generated through the animation of these 'uninjured' figures.

Abstraction, through devices of surface interruption and decoration intensifies the formalized character, and symbolizes a particular social current. The figure in The State Will Provide (1982-83; fig. 73) is coated in gold leaf. This is disintegrated by a kind of scarring and maiming of the surface which is interrupted with toy soldiers. The figure is thus represented as a personification of political process and organization, with the abstract forms carrying the theme of violation. This technique has the quality of forming an objective interpretation representing the inconsistencies of preciousness and of violation controlled by subservience.

What distinguishes Poynter's work from that of Hanson and Prent is not only a difference in aesthetic intention. The artist examines and represents levels of experience that are concomitant with the basic themes of violence and

disquietude, often within a single figure. The infiltratory capacity to condition and control, the amusement value and the capacity of weapons to elevate status is implied in Turning Point (1983-84; fig. 74). Here a partial kneeling figure is completely coated in toy guns with barrels and handles suggesting a protective headdress. They also form the termination of the armless shoulders. An artificial assertiveness is produced by the 'armour', in contrast to the submissive pose and incompleteness of the figure. Waiting for God (1983-84; fig. 75) likewise a kneeling figure coated in plastic guns or parts, is aggressive in its posture. This is countered and sustained by a martyrized quality produced by the stance, the lack of identity and the atrophying surface of the figure, implying submission to some form of control.

A figure stands to attention in Nervous System with toy soldiers forming an integrated camouflage lattice work across the surface. The intricate texture suggests activated neurons, a frenetic supplement to the amusement properties and bright primary colours of the toys. Colouration and texture suggest some involuntary physiological action out of control. The militaristic formality of the pose is countered by the surface animation and anonymity. These aspects combine to form an image which is seductive for its vibrancy, consistency and pattern, but disruptive for the underlying tension that coagulates these qualities.

East/West (1982-83; fig. 76) consists of two standing figures, linked by physical proximity. The figure at the rear, a black figure heavily 'armoured' in toy guns, raises an undirected dictatorial arm. The figure in the foreground, patchworked with gold leaf and blackness, reflects the image of the rear figure into a small hand held mirror. The figures depict qualities of defensive vulnerability, conflict, power and assertion, which are negated by a comic element that seems to underlie the suggestion of authority.

The properties of socio-political process are symbolically represented by Poynter's works. Reality is depicted through the familiar which is dramatized in form and unidealized by the presence of an underlying foreboding. The violence in the pieces is produced by a sense of remoteness which operates more as an irritant than as an assault. The figures are socially commentative, but critical only in so far as they are selected in the context of a theme. The translation of socio-political themes into ritualized presentation has the property of impartiality. The relationship of the life-size figure to reality, and its sensuous realization as a historical and aesthetic representation reveals violence in social order controlled by degrees of power. The manner in which the figures are presented, with the enticement of the theatrical and ritual, acts as a subtle interference to complacency and

expectation. Neither sweet, nor repugnant, the works are both seductive and cruel for their form, and the precariousness of the social structures and values which they reveal.

CHAPTER 4

VIOLENCE FOR THE PUBLIC

Contemporary socially-conscious realism is often defined by a humanitarian awareness that the way *form* is presented in this art could cause social amelioration. If one assumes socially conscious art's purpose to be concerned with social protest or change, then images may be interpreted from a conceptual viewpoint. In this instance, the image is largely defined in terms of the concept's relevance, and less attention is paid to the appropriateness of the form as a vehicle for conveying that meaning. This has been suggested with reference to the examples discussed, particularly those of Mark Prent interpreted by Michael Greenwood, and views expressed by Sam Hunter with regard to George Segal's, The Holocaust. The properties of violence and disquietude that attract and stimulate the viewer in various ways are often overlooked in favour of interpretations which attribute moralistic or purgative powers to the works.

While the ideas an interpreter may propose, and the artist's intentions should be taken into account, consideration should also be paid to the manner with which the visual image communicates without this form of guidance. The extent to which one's perceptions of the socially conscious art image are influenced by the

expression of partiality in an interpretation, is in a sense, the extent to which visual perception fails to be informative. In the context of socially conscious art, the artist ideally does not rely on a mediator to confirm or explain his intentions, if his intentions aim to reveal a particular attitude. This is not to say that the views expressed by an interpreter could not be a valuable extension of one's appreciation of an art image. Rather, that the interpreter may for example, attribute a particular power to a work which is not founded in artistic communication but emotional inclination.

> In this sense, interpretation is clearly an ancillary activity, *undertaken in order* to accomplish something beyond itself. How great is the confusion latent in this equivocation becomes evident when we observe how different are the primary attitudes of looking or contemplating from those of explaining or explicating, and how different are their relations to the work of art itself. 1

Violence and disquietude as socially conscious realism, could condition a moral or subconscious attitude, and possibly affect communication within society. Barry Schwartz, in the Introduction to The New Humanism states:

> My passion, which may be occasionally rude to other art movements, is for Humanism in art. I believe that unless we respond to its truths, we will be still less capable of a world that gives the highest priority to human needs....
>
> ...the Humanist artist creates a visual

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1 H.D. Aiken. 'The Aesthetic Relevance of Artists' Intentions'. In: KENNICK, W.E. Art and Philosophy, 2nd ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965, p.407.

> experience that, if successful, will stimulate the viewer's sensitivity to the reality of his human environment and the needs of human beings within it. 2

If the visual experience is 'successful', it would not necessarily stimulate the viewer's sensitivity to the reality of his human environment and more particularly the needs of other human beings within it. As with most conscience-arousing incidents, giving priority to human needs is a transient exercise, and a successful visual experience does not necessarily ensure a response to its truths.

Socially conscious art may serve as a source of social stimulation as is suggested by Paul Von Blum:

> The critical dimension of this art has important ramifications. It can contribute simultaneously to moral engagement and intellectual advancement and curiosity.... The engaged posture of socially conscious art also stimulates ethical controversy and resolution, which in itself is an admirable effect in a world that is often pervasively indifferent. 3

These ramifications however, are not the material of social change but rather of an intermediary consciousness which unstimulated could not be sustained. As in Schwartz's statement, it also presupposes that a certain result could

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2 SCHWARTZ, B. The New Humanism: Art in a Time of Change. London: David & Charles, 1974, p.17.

3 VON BLUM, P. The Art of Social Conscience. New York: Universe Books, 1976, p.5.

be accomplished. Harold Rosenberg more adequately outlines the malfunction of art as a medium for social change in an essay entitled 'Art of Bad Conscience' (1969):

> In aiming at public objectives modern art succeeds only in underlining the privateness of the artist's idiom - also that this idiom is charged with references to the history of art, not the history of nations.... A picture that takes sides in a conflict may produce the satisfaction of a ritual act, but for practical results artists had better turn to other professions than painting. 4

The moral and didactic interpretation of socially conscious art as assumed by Schwartz and Von Blum may rest on the notion that art could arouse the desired emotion, and therefore empathy in the viewer, thus affecting his moral attitude. This correlates with the assumption that the central function of this art is to induce this particular kind of communication. To some extent this is pre-empted by certain kinds of images. Hanson's Drug Addict and Race Riot, and Segal's The Holocaust appeal directly to emotions through a particular sense of drama. In order for the spectator to confirm his/her own moral values, an emotional response is predetermined which has nothing to do with the realization of the image. In works such as Drug Addict and The Holocaust, sentimentality and identification could induce confrontation with mortality, intensifying other aspects of experience. In this way, the work may arouse a

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4 ROSENBERG, H. Artworks and Packages, op.cit., p.157.

pleasure in pity, significant for the transient intensification of emotion. In the case of Hanson's works, this is both heightened by the hyper-real form of representation and counteracted by the reassurance of its artificiality.

This aspect of drama is also evident in Kienholz's Illegal Operation and Poynter's Chair Piece although levels of association are less obvious than those of Prent and Hanson. For example, the violence in the Illegal Operation does not depend on the blood soaked cloths and vicious instruments in the clinical pan in the foreground. These details are perhaps the part of the work that draws the spectator initially, but the actual violence exists through the mutilated cushion and the sordid arrangement of the domestic objects. It is this aspect of the work, a subconscious association, that has the capacity to arouse the discomfort intended. The emotional response to an art image may be regarded as a supplementary rather than primary effect:

> There are certain things which it is proper to do with works of art; but these are not done for the sake of a result but, as we say, for the pleasure or satisfaction of the doing. The result of doing what is appropriate to a work of art may be anything under the sun from emotional catharsis to wish fulfillment. But such results are accidental; they have nothing to do with the function of art as such. 5

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5 Aiken, H.D. op. cit., p.405.

The artwork, through the act of expression has been assumed to relieve emotional pressure or displace aggression in accordance with Aristotle's theory of catharsis.[6] This is particularly true of art forms, which through an imposing relationship to reality, such as scale and concept, resemble drama, for example the tableaux of Mark Prent and the violence in Performance Art. Richard Kuhns defines the classical concept of catharsis with reference to tragic drama:

> Participation in a dramatic presentation... confronts the audience with events and feelings that have locations in the experience, conscious and unconscious, of each observer.... The dramatic presence, however, achieves more than a mere mirroring; it "works through" the events to a resolution and coerces the audience to accord acceptance to the manifestly unacceptable. In that resolution a "katharsis", not simply of feeling but of belief and of thought about persons and events, becomes established in the private and public obligations whose competing claims must be recognized. 7

Thus the artwork could also provide a substitute for a life experience and induce comprehension of violent impulse

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6 Interpretation of Aristotle's theory of catharsis: 'The simplest, and most frequently assumed, is that expressed by Milton in the prefatory essay to Samson Agonistes, that it was a power "by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and suchlike passions - that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred by reading or seeing those passions well imitated".' OSBORNE, H. Aesthetics and Art Theory: an Historical Introduction. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. 1968, p.242.

7 KUHNS, R. Psychoanalytic Theory of Art: a Philosophy of Art on Developmental Principles. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, pp.106-107.

through vicarious identification.

Vicarious identification characterizes the particular motivation of the 'destructive' performance artists of the Sixties and Seventies.[8]

> Destructive art, according to its communicants, provides visceral alternatives to violence.... The destructive artists probe their own darkest impulses in the hope that understanding will eventually overcome violence. Ritualized violence will prevent improvised violence (the stuff of daily crimes) from erupting into real life. 9

Herman Nitsch's (1938-) stated intention of ritual slaughters performed by the Orgies and Mysteries Theatre established in 1965, was to induce catharsis through abreaction in the spectator. This was to have been achieved through actions based on the Dionysian ritual 'sparagmos' (dismemberment), (fig. vi).

In a broad sense, the art image communicates in a manner which is influenced by the relationship of form to the

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8 Examples of these artists are inter alia: The Wiener Aktionismus, including Herman Nitsch's ritualized slaughters of the Orgies and Mysteries Theatre, Gunter Brus' ritual defaecation; Scheiss Aktion (1967) and Rudolf Schwartzkogler's self amputations; Der Totale Akt (completed 1969). Gina Pane's swallowing of rotten mince in Body Transformation (1971) and self-inflicted wounds in Action Sentimentale and Psyche (1973), and the slaughter of a live chicken in Ralph Ortiz's The Life and Death of Henny Penny (1966), a symbolic ritual concerning racism in America, are also associated with this movement.

9 Willard, C. 'Violence in Art'. Art in America. January/February 1969, p.36.

concept. Associations relevant to a particular society would condition this relationship. A society's need for ritual and energy (something that could interfere with the monotony of daily life) as well as a fascination with the macabre and morbid, could reduce such ambitious intentions in art to mere melodrama or arousal in which the artist and spectator may indulge. Violent and disquieting images in art and life are likely to engage a far broader audience than art in general. Coercing an audience into acceptance of the unacceptable has the limitation that the unacceptable may become endearing, not for a resolution of some repressive force, but for a sordid attraction to that which merely exceeds the bounds of acceptability. Eventually that boundary falls away and a new boundary demanding a greater extreme is set. The artist assumes a role elevated by commercialism and sensationalism rather than by shamanistic powers, or more particularly, recognition of such powers by the general public. The specialized audience available to particular interpretations of form, and the variety of interpretative and perceptual possibilities that an art image could evoke, irrespective of intentions, are seldom acknowledged. This is opposed to the dramatic plot of narrative that reaches a conclusion, a resolution not necessarily achieved through the form of art objects and actions.

Destructive art and the depiction or expression of violence

could provide, inter alia, an outlet for aggression, or act as a superficial stimulus for curiosity. Depending on the visual image, it may have nothing to do with the social change, morality or catharsis referred to. As such, 'the dramatic impact of an unspeakable deed can be as powerful a stimulant as exaltation at a happy allegiance.'[10] In the same way in which a spectator is lured to an object through a particular spatial, environmental quality and perceptual familiarity, so is the spectator drawn also to particular subjects. Subjects that arouse or stimulate curiosity and emotion, or subconscious and psychical experience, have a certain appeal. This is particularly true of the forbidden, the repressed or the unfamiliar in which regard violence is a lucid source and disquietude an arousing effect. These phenomena may act as physical stimulation:

> In a culture as starved of physicality as ours, the enduring appeal of a good many violent works is not just that they are violent but that they re-immerse us vicariously in physical action. 11

Matters relating to aggression and violence are conditioned by instinctive human responses related to survival, and also by behavioural rationalizations of these elements into the urban context. An ambiguous interchange of values is created within the moral and social system. This

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10 Gassiot-Talabot, G. 'Is Confrontation Possible?' In: CASSOU, J. ed. Art and Confrontation. Tr. by N. Foxell. London: Studio Vista, 1970, p.98.

11 FRASER, J. Violence in the Arts, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.63.

interchange is expressed in various forms of realization as diverse as self assertion, occupation, exhibitionism, entertainment, aggression, allegiance to symbols and codes such as status, patriotism et cetera. In this interchange, such aspirations may serve to legitimize both violence and destruction in the context of propriety, irrespective of actual constructive intention.

Such an interchange (on the basis of a playoff of conditioning and instinct) can be seen in the allure of war. This does not necessarily reflect a rampant urge to work toward the fulfilment of political ideals, nor a desire to terminate human life. It lies instead in the lucidity and intensity of the actual experience, a lucidity which could not be achieved through passive and daily existence.

> Millions of men in our day - like millions before us - have learned to live in war's strange element and have discovered in it a powerful fascination.... The emotional environment of war has always been compelling; it has drawn most men under its spell.... Reflection and calm reasoning are alien to it.
>
> When the signs of peace were visible, I wrote (in this diary) with some regret, "The purgative force of danger which makes men coarser but perhaps more human will soon be lost and the first months of peace will make some of us yearn for the old days of conflict." 12

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12 J. Glenn Gray quoted in: MAY, R. Power and Innocence: a Search for the Sources of Violence, 2nd ed. New York: Dell, 1972, p.145.

The effect may, therefore, be experienced as being positive and beneficial in so far as reality is heightened and a sense of existence affirmed, both in the hyperconsciousness of intensified emotion, and the biological stimulatory effect of adrenalin.

Likewise, the fascination that draws the spectator and the artist to violent and forbidding aspects of reality may be based on a comparable desire for intensity and lucidity; indirectly an act of self-affirmation. An image or experience which imposes disruption on the mundanities of life, or arouses emotional reaction, provides a level of pleasure which is not necessarily a resolution implied by 'catharsis'. The value system adopted by a society does not condition responses to phenomena such as violence, and violence may attain a certain seductiveness. Social norms, in rendering particular urges as taboo, both cultivate a peculiar desire for violence, and deny the potential for a beneficial experience.

Rollo May, in an essay entitled 'Ecstasy and Violence', suggests that one of the reasons that the mitigation of violence, through processes of socialization has been unsuccessful, is that those elements that are 'attractive, alluring and fascinating' have been overlooked:

> We deny with our minds the "secret love of violence," which is present in all of us in some form, at the same time as we perform violent acts with our bodies. By repressing the awareness of

> the fact of violence, we can thus secretly give ourselves over to the enjoyment of it. 13

May goes on to associate violence with a gauge of the individual's 'sense of significance', an experience of 'lesser intensity' but nevertheless related to ecstasy.[14]

> There also occurs a self-transcendence in violence which is like the self-transcendence in ecstatic experience. 15

He continues:

> Everyone has a need for some sense of significance; and if we can't make that possible, or even probable, in our society, then it will be obtained in destructive ways. 16

Socially restricted or censored phenomena may be legitimized as art; the institutions of art are permitted a certain licence. The sense of ecstasy to which May refers may thus be experienced via artistic expression and a constructive value derived in the provision of access. Conversely the viewer may encounter merely lurid qualities of reality, for example aspects of death and sexuality. These could be shown to function as curiosity stimuli; an alleviation of boredom and the monotony of mass experience, and a morbid form of entertainment.

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13 MAY, R. Ibid., p.166.

14 Ibid., p.166.
Historical reference from the Greek: "to stand outside oneself", "beside one's self" or to be "out of one's self", "beyond conventional ego boundaries".

15 Ibid., p.167.

16 Ibid., p.179.

Society's fascination with violence and death is described by Erich Fromm as necrophilic, a situation in which:

> ...sensitivity towards destructiveness-cruelty is rapidly diminishing, and necrophilia, the attraction to what is dead, decaying, lifeless and purely mechanical, is increasing throughout our cybernetic industrial society. The spirit of necrophilia was expressed first in literary form by F.T. Marinetti in his Futurist Manifesto of 1909. The same tendency can be seen in much of the art and literature of the last decades that exhibits a particular fascination with all that is decayed, unalive, destructive and mechanical. 17

Where censorship is lenient, artists are free to indulge in extremes in their imagery. G. Badger points this out with reference to contemporary art forms:

> A whole school of photographic necrophiliacs now may be discerned. We have had pictures of cadavers young and old, ancient and modern, clothed and unclothed, closed and open, in passive and even active relationship to the living.
>
> Such excesses are perpetrated for the most part, it seems to me, in a calculated effort to catch the eye of the public, or more accurately, of the critic and dealer....
>
> This tendency to admit imagery of violence, psychosis, and deviant sexuality into the mainstream rather than the extreme fringes of a communicative medium has not been confined to photography alone. What might be termed the genre of the Sadomasochistic Chic appeared almost simultaneously in the late Seventies in film, fashion, painting, and music as well as photography. 18

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17 FROMM, E. The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness. 2nd ed. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977, p.32.

18 Badger, G. 'Beyond Arbus and Bacon: the photographs of Joel Peter Witkin: Zien, no.5. Winter 1983, p.20.

A differentiation between a necrophilic level of engagement and images that exhibit an attraction to decayed, unalive, destructive and mechanical aspects of reality should be made. Whether or not the Kienholz tableaux achieve a moral or didactic function, or a psychoactive property of elucidation, they exhibit and arouse an interest in these objectives but are not necrophilic. Poynter's works, acknowledging idealism and sensuality corrupted by the presence of destructive elements, effect a sense of omnipresent death and decay that is likewise, not necrophilic in character. The work of both artists produces a sense of order in one's perceptions of social violence and destruction because the artists interpret their visual expression and acknowledge that violence is not simply gruesome depiction or a catalyst to morality.

Conversely, while Prent's sculptures are, to some extent, distinct from what Badger terms the genre of the 'Sadomasochistic Chic', correlations between certain sculptures and amusements, demonstrate levels of violence associated with necrophilic-type entertainment. Electronic amusements in America include 'The Death Race Game':

> This game, which is banned in some US cities, involves being at the steering wheel of a simulated racing car and trying to massacre 'pedestrians' who appear on a screen before you. A 'kill', which is accompanied by a convincing electronic scream, is recorded by a tombstone and the official record at the time of writing stands

at twenty-nine dead in sixty seconds. 19

The kinetic action of Prent's Death in the Chair is reminiscent of this level of activity. Similarly, many of his images, although more skilfully formed, relate to the display of violence exhibited at the London Dungeon (figs. vii, viii). Such exhibitions are publicized to appeal to the public in a particular manner. The distribution pamphlet of the London Dungeon emphasizes violence and horror as the attraction. The British Times Educational Supplement is quoted on the pamphlet, recommending the exhibition for the following enticements:

> A detailed and serious look at the horrors of murder and torture so realistically illustrated, they impress far more than any array of mere objects could ever do. 20

The exhibition is thus publicized in an 'educational' context, promoting the curiosity value, the visual appeal of violence, rather than the historical dimension. Where the historical context is acknowledged, the pamphlet promises 'eerie sound effects and lighting' to 'enhance the visitor's immersion into British History - the dirt, the stench, the decay.'[21]

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19 EYSENCK, H.J. and NIAS, D.K.B. Sex, Violence and the Media. London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1978, p.204.

20 Pamphlet distributed by The London Dungeon, Tooley Street, London.

21 Ibid.

Examples such as this, amongst numerous others including newspaper headlines that boast 'colour pictures' of disasters, highlight the popularity of the visual appeal of violence. The spectator has come to associate this level of engagement with this type of display which must to some extent influence visual association with images such as those of Prent. The fact that they are technically proficient and relate to contemporary phenomena, merely heightens the experience. It is within this context that the concept of catharsis seems particularly inappropriate. The propensity for hyper-realism and blatantly violent imagery to engage the spectator on a superficial level, diminishes the potential for such works to exceed entertainment. As the purpose of commercial horror and amusement is essentially some form of titillation which is not intended to sate curiosity but rather to cater for it, so the Prent images are restricted by this association.

The social implications of such imagery in a broad sense are considered in a study of sex, violence and the media:

> Among the psychological theories that are particularly relevant to the effect of media sex and violence is that of desensitization:.... According to this theory, scenes of violence of gradually increasing severity presented under relaxing conditions should become less and less anxiety provoking. This effect has been demonstrated in a variety of ways and could have serious consequences if for some people aggression is held in check by feelings of anxiety and guilt over its expression.... Rival theories such as the claim that by watching violence, people may become more rather than less concerned with real-life dangers, have not been

> supported by carefully designed research. Similarly, the catharsis theory that aggressive urges may find an outlet through vicarious identification with aggression has not been supported; the very few studies that have indicated such a conclusion are open to alternative interpretations. 22

It is doubtful that many of Prent's works are any more anxiety-provoking than are images in commercial violence or pornography, although for some they will remain shocking and disturbing. The serious social consequences suggested by Eysenck and Nias are unlikely to be induced by his images, although they may be seen to augment such processes. The popular appeal of much of Prent's imagery seems to lie more with its sensational value than some intrinsic social significance or purgative power. On exhibiting Prent's And is there Anything Else You'd Like Madam?, art dealer Avrom Isaacs received a court order to answer charges that he:

> ...unlawfully did, knowingly, without lawful justification or excuse, publicly exhibit a disgusting object, to wit: the objective display of parts of the human anatomy, contrary to the criminal code. 23

With their attention thus drawn to the 'disgusting object', public enthusiasm was aroused at the gallery.

> Thousands have been pouring in - we had to post a security guard. Usually you get maybe 50 people

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22 EYSENCK, H.J. and NIAS, D.K.B., op. cit., p.199.

23 Shields, R. 'Court battle over "human" meat store'. Edmonton Journal. 21 March, 1972.

dropping into a small gallery like this. But we were drawing over 300 even on weekdays.

If a common affective visual language of urban communication exists, it most probably does so through society's particular capacity to respond to the phenomena of violence, the forbidding aspects of reality and carnality represented through media of realism. Spectator involvement is virtually ensured by a violent act or image, for its capacity to threaten, its unfamiliarity and excitative properties. Of this, the artist must also be aware.

In distinguishing levels of attraction, polarities of expression are illustrated by a comparison of two similar works, The Operating Room by Prent and The Birthday by Kienholz. Both works lure the spectator into the role of voyeur. Voyeurism acts as both an erotic enticement and a means to invading the mystery of privacy. In The Operating Room, a female figure with pig-like extremities is clamped with limbs outstretched to a table surrounded by implements associated with surgery. The environment is enclosed and viewed through a glass roof from a platform with stairs at either side indicating the potential for continuous movement past the environment. The image should function through shock, repellent association and visceral

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24 Isaacs, A. Ibid

experience. It could also operate with a sado-erotic appeal, similar to the phenomenon of the 'snuff film',[25] without the obvious anti-social implications.

The erotic is introduced through commercial sadistic association by means of the popular expressive modes of bondage, voyeurism, degradation and pain. This is emphasized by the subtle induction of repugnance by the female figure, depicted as an immobilized voluptuous pig, and the invasive role of the viewer as concealed voyeur. The erotic component of this work is not cohesively integrated with the implication of pain or mutilation indicated by a surgical opening into the right side of the figure. Pulsation is visible in this opening providing a kinetic enticement. The opening provides the only link with the environmental concept of the operating room. The implications of the image and interpretive stimuli are equivocal. The directness of the image's impact, but its simultaneous lack of inducement to explore its significance any further than the immediate and conscious experience - the repugnant or the erotic or both - suggests various levels of titillation. This is re-inforced by the technical expertise which is without formal cohesion.

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25 'In 1975 in the United States, organized crime reportedly sold "snuff" films to private collectors of pornography. In these films, women actually were maimed, sliced into pieces, fucked and killed...' DWORKIN, A. Pornography, Men Possessing Women. London: The Women's Press, 1981, p.71.

Concepts alluded to in the Prent sculpture, are paradoxically particularized and generalized in Kienholz's The Birthday. Violent experience, carnality and urban values are evoked through the ambivalences of negative (pain) and positive (birth) experiences. The tableau consists of an impersonal semi-domestic environment organized around a central figure of a mannequin woman, strapped to an operating table, about to give birth. Connotations of sexuality and associated implications of violation, devoid of the visually erotic, allude to specific experience related by the artist to processes of procreation. Non-visual reality such as emotional and physical pain are depicted by abstract forms such as the bubble fitted over the figure's mouth containing an inverted cock's head, 'a scream' which also alludes to a gag, a coarseness in the sexual act, and aggression in the descent of the head towards her mouth. Perspex arrows bursting out of the subject's abdomen project physical pain through the throbbing of light running through them. The reddening of the arrow tips and the cock's head, highlights by the monochromatic grey of the figure and environment, intensify the violent aspect of the work.

Voyeurism is induced, not by the artist's manipulations but by the viewer's willingness to investigate and absorb the incident. A sense of intrusion is reinforced by devices such as the mirror placed between the figure's legs and the

note lying amongst her possessions, a crude and unsentimentalized personalization of the depiction.[26] The implication is therefore not only of the prurient voyeuristic order of curiosity, but also of a more human kind: the deliberate invasion of socially guarded privacy. Unlike the Prent, the Kienholz confronts and includes these qualities in the spectator's active role instead of endorsing them through immediate visual association. Less seductive in its irregular forms than The Operating Room, disquiet is produced in The Birthday not so much by peculiarity, but by a sense of familiarity, which is then disrupted by the presence of the unfamiliar. The Kienholz work is, unlike the Prent, clearly narrative, but the sensational character of Prent's use of realism malfunctions in the context of art:

> ...art does not need the explicit portrayal of sex and violence... such portrayal is entirely counter-productive, destroying whatever artistic intentions the author may have had. Nudity, extreme violence and cruelty, and extreme suggestiveness of sexual conduct are so arousing in themselves that they draw attention away from artistic integrity,... and reduce aesthetic impact. 27

Whether an aesthetic impact exists in The Operating Room is

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26 Text of the note:
Dear Jane
I couldn't come down now because Harry need [sic] me here
Ma says she might make it later.
Keep a stiff upper lip kid. (ha-ha)
Dick

27 EYSENCK, H.J. and NIAS, D.K.B., op.cit., p.264.

questionable. The environment is a neatly composed, isolated, illusionistic display of visually disjointed concepts and objects.

The nature of stimulation produced by an artwork is identified in relation to the form of expression. Aspects of technique have been mentioned. The manner with which this operates is suggested by Erich Fromm's distinction between the 'simple' and 'active' stimuli:

> If a man is threatened with danger to his life, his response is simple and immediate, almost reflex-like because it is rooted in his neurophysiological organization. The same holds true for the other physiological needs like hunger and, to a certain extent, sex. The responding person 'reacts', but he does not act - by which I mean to say he does not actively integrate any response beyond the minimum activity necessary to run away, attack, or become sexually excited....
>
> What is usually overlooked is the fact that there is a different kind of stimulus, one that stimulates the person to be active. 28

Art is included within this category of the 'active' stimulus' since it could:

> ...invite you... to respond by actively and sympathetically relating yourself to them [stimuli]; by becoming actively interested, seeing and discovering ever-new aspects in your 'object' (which ceases to be a mere 'object'), by becoming more awake and more aware. You do not remain the passive object upon which the stimulus acts...; instead you express your own faculties by being related to the work; you become active

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28 FROMM, E. op.cit., p.321.

and productive. 29

The differentiation of these stimuli is significant to this examination in that either could be perceptually dominant in an artwork, for example in a comparison of the Prent and Kienholz images.

> Stimuli of the first, simple kind, if repeated beyond a certain threshold, are no *longer* registered and lose their stimulating effect. (This is due to a neurophysiological principle of economy that eliminates the awareness of stimuli that indicate by their repetitiveness that they are not important). Continued stimulation requires that the stimulus should either increase in intensity or change in content; a certain element of *novelty* is required.
>
> Activating stimuli have a different effect. They do not remain 'the same'; *because* of the produ[illegible] response to them, they are always new, always c[illegible]ging: the stimulated person... brings the stimuli to life and changes them by always discovering new aspects in them. 30

The levels of interpretation of an artwork may be various, depending on the particular relationship of the visual imagery to parallels in actual experience and their social significance to the spectator. The aspect of repetition characteristic of works by Prent and Hanson, based on resemblance, could be seen on the level of the simple stimulus. In an example such as Duane Hanson's Race Riot, one assumes that the sculpture aims to express the abhorrent nature of violence, as the outcome of racial

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29 Ibid., p. [illegible].

30 Ibid.

tension. One's sympathies are probably intended to lie with victims of racial tension. Although both groups are represented as violators, the inclusion of an authoritative figure, the policeman, implies domination. One may therefore question whether, given a spectator with a certain sensibility, he/she might not identify more readily with the personification of law and order. The expression of violence in the form of hyper-realism here carries an inherent limitation: it denies the stimulus to respond with objectivity, 'to discover new aspects'[31] in the reality both in relation to the technique and the concept. This quality of violent subject matter is problematic in as much as many critics and viewers see socially conscious art as morally judgemental. As such, this form of artistic expression is seen as an act of social propaganda.

It may be argued, as Henry Aiken states, that:

> All interpretations of a work of art are bound to be selective and are bound to be slanted toward a certain mode of appreciation. And because in most cases alternative modes of appreciation are possible, there can be, as a rule, no such thing as a definitive interpretation.... For this reason, any prolonged debate over what is there in the work itself is bound to be futile; and it will be so, in many cases, not just because our individual experiences of a work are not the same, but because the work itself is capable of a number of modes of appreciation, one of which, in principle, may be as proper to it as another. 32

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31 FROMM, E. Ibid., p.322.

32 Aiken, H.D. op.cit., p.408.

The problem arises not so much with regard to one interpretation as being more valid than another. The 'transcendent energy' that Greenwood speaks of could be as much an awareness created by the Prent works, as commercial analogy, and for some, The Holocaust will be an 'eloquent testimony to the Nazi slaughter of the Jews' as Hunter claims. However, the power of violence to stir emotions simply through its presence appears, in a general sense, to condition interpretation to some extent.

Violence in art can be a base or aesthetic experience, or a didactic one. Social amelioration, as it is often applied to socially conscious art, seems to depend on the sensitivities and moral obligations of the individual spectator, and the extent to which the artist manipulates the viewer via interpretation. The transformation of a socially unacceptable incident or concept into one of seductiveness, be it through romanticizing or exploitation of the horrific, does not truly force the spectator to recognize its value. The seductiveness of violence presented through images possessing an aesthetic quality is perhaps a means to heighten consciousness. It arouses emotion, and emotion creates awareness, at least of a subjective quality. It confirms however, that society is unwilling to confront certain aspects of reality, to gratify particular instincts that are undisguised. Coindreau claims:

> These instincts, which are most deeply rooted in the human psyche, are, on the one hand, fear, on the other, the taste for blood and death. 33

The question arises with regard to the depiction of blatant violence in socially conscious art, as to whether an impact could be retained if one were to remove the lurid aspects of the image; that is, could it, or should it, transcend a 'taste for blood and death'.

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33 M.E. Coindreau quoted in: FRASER, J., op.cit., p.10.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

One of the issues that has emerged from this study is that morality plays a role in work that makes use of violent or forbidding aspects of reality. Violence and the forbidding, exist in many peculiar ramifications in society. Provided they operate within the boundaries of social acceptability, they can be justified as agents of arousal. As has been indicated, violence, social atrophy, cruelty and suffering are not only moral issues. They cater also, for desires and attractions which are less easily accommodated than one's sense of moral obligation.

Hanson, Segal, Kienholz, Prent and Poynter have employed techniques that involve the spectator in the actual world of experience in areas the spectator may not have encountered or been aware of, or those in which the spectator may hold rigid attitudes. Their works are not strictly protest works in the sense that such works would be specifically critical in their consciousness. The work of Poynter, although referring to violences of particular political and social structures, does not 'take sides'[1] as such. Likewise, Kienholz, Segal and Hanson reflect reality rather than impose partiality. Works of Prent that do make

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1 ROSENBERG, H. Artworks and Packages. op.cit., p.157 (Full quotation Chapter 3, p.87).

imposing statements, such as the cannibalistic tableaux and the male figure in Laughing Pathocyclists, appear not to be entirely in the interests of social awareness.

The sculptures of these artists are also not the material of social change that many commentators would like to see them as; that is, redemptive. Rather they are the material of a social consciousness in which the spectator can become aware of his environment, explore sensitivities, indifferences and levels of offensiveness as well as pleasure. The works provide a degree of stimulation and entertainment which spectators have not only come to associate with such themes and incidents, but which are perhaps innate. The works identified with contemporary urban experience assume a kind of theatricality and act as a divertissement in an actuality with which the spectator can identify and engage. In certain instances, this may operate as a means to confrontation or active involvement, as has been suggested with reference to the Kienholz works, or as a superficial form of excitation or shock as suggested by particular Prent works, such as The Operating Room.

The aesthetic level of the work and the degree to which it becomes mere entertainment is considered according to the integrity of the image as artistic expression, rather than for its relevance as a concept. The manner in which violence or disquietude is materialized seems to affect the

way in which the image operates. The more obvious the depiction, the more distracting the depicted becomes. The more realistic the technique, the more intriguing the image becomes for its technical proficiency. Violence in itself has been shown to be a source of arousal. Suggested or depicted appropriately, it could prove more alluring than the artistic or moral intention.

A distinction is evident between the works of Prent and Hanson, and those of Poynter, Segal and Kienholz. The formal approach to expression in the latter artists' work does much to expand on the basic theme of violence or violation, but the conceptual objective of the works makes a greater range of association and experience possible. Neither Kienholz nor Poynter for example, simply examines the aftermath of incident or the superficial basis of violent perception. Instead whole areas of the social context concerned are included. The works are not simply acts of confrontation, expressions of the artist's moral attitude, nor amusements. They exist rather as examinations and reflections of actuality in all its aspects. The seductiveness of, and attraction to violence is acknowledged and integrated as a component of the total figuration, without the artists indulging in devices such as horror in the commercial sense. The artwork may not act as a stimulus to social change. The interpretation of social violences in art images, in altering one's perceptions of the phenomena, could however convert

complacent perception into active perception by creating a tension between actuality and artistic interpretation.

Of the artists discussed, only the works of Prent actually evade some level of moral dialogue. Compared to the examples selected from Kienholz, Segal and Poynter's work, there is also a lack of balance among the various elements of Prent's work. This balance is prevalent to some extent in the Hanson works, in so far as what is intended is entirely what is there; there is no equivocality. The alluring qualities in Kienholz, Segal and Poynter's works are controlled. The degree of offensiveness (particularly with reference to Kienholz) is limited, and as much attention has been paid to artistic interpretation as to conceptual identification. This is significant in that neither confuses nor dominates the other.

The limitations of hyper-realism as a conscience-arousing medium have been discussed. One is not horrified nor shocked into *greater awareness* by Hanson's War or Drug Addict. They represent an actuality which does not invade the spectator's conscience or awareness any more than do media equivalents. Conversely, the heightened realism of Poynter's Men of War reveals a far greater sense of actuality through the non-descriptive physical expression of the figures. In Prent's work actuality is not as much the issue as a lack of it. Not only is the technique

misleading, but so is the conceptual origin of the work. In order to be shocked into greater awareness, or for that matter to experience catharsis through artworks, 'a prerequisite of their doing so in any consequential way is that they genuinely carry one out into the real world.'[2]

The tension of violence is not caused by what one sees but by association or implication. In many of Prent's works, despite obvious links, there is no sense of the represented having been founded in actuality or being overtly distinct from base amusement. In a work such as Horsewoman, the spectator is almost invited to derive a pleasure from repulsion. The figure is so wretched, so dominating, so gross that one can, out of choice, overlook any relationship to one's own environment or reality. The fact that the piece has a compositional clarity and resolution makes it all the more confusing. The spectator is coerced into associating taste, or visual appetite, with a violence that has no source or consequence. As an experience, it operates as a means to initiate a particular type of arousal.

One of the reasons a work like UOY KCUF is more significant than Horsewoman, is that one is presented with two aspects of social reality, both of which are generally evaded to

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2 FRASER, J. op.cit., p.48.

the extent that they are denied; excretion and physical deformity. A work such as this makes it harder to ignore social facts. Its presentation as a kind of voyeuristic display, without interpretation, may be to its disadvantage. It operates as a kind of 'peep show'. This tends to distance the reality with which it is concerned. As in a real peep show, the participant can indulge his desires or repugnances while simultaneously denying that they actually exist.

The greatest limitation of Prent's work is that it tends to completely dominate the spectator, at the expense of effecting artistic communication. The images are confrontational, arouse fear and reveal the less desirable aspects of public fascination with violence and cruelty. In itself, this may be significant, but the way the artist expresses it may be unproductive. Where this aspect is underplayed in a work like Drosophila, so are the implications that are generated.

The Kienholz works may be seen to be offensive but more because they reiterate and confront what the spectator knows to be real. At no point do the works operate outside of one's knowledge or apprehensions of the urban environment nor do they aim to merely offend the viewer. Kienholz, Segal, Poynter and Hanson are distinguished by treating victims with empathy. Their sensitivity to reality becomes integrated with the form (to lesser or

greater extents), and the spectator is guided to a particular form of engagement. Simultaneously, there is no absolute necessity for the work to be moral as such. This is not to say that the manner with which these artists deal with their subject leaves no alternative. Rather there exists a clarity in both artistic expression, and conceptual premises.

A successful examination of violence or disquietude in art reveals that a moral intention on the part of the artist is not necessarily evident; nor is an ameliorative role necessarily aligned with the social identity of the image. The viewer may impose what he believes to be proper, or what he would choose to be present, onto the image.

The sanguine attitudes with which violence and the forbidding in art are often approached by both artists and commentators presupposes that morality or visceral experience conditions public sensibilities to assume a particular conformity. Such attitudes confirm the artist's or commentator's moral and social obligations in theory, and the public's should they respond in this way. They also overlook the allure and capacity for excitation in form, and in violence and disquietude, cultivated in the urban environment. A distinction is thus not made between that which creates awareness and that which evades it, nor the fact that enticement could be an intrinsic aspect of either.

APPENDIX A

STATEMENT BY E. KIENHOLZ AND N. REDDIN KIENHOLZ, ISSUED AT THE EXHIBITION OF STILL ALIVE, 1974.

I have long been interested in making an environment that could be dangerous to the viewer. This year's A.D.A. exhibition, with invitation extended by the committee has provided such an opportunity. The piece is called Still Alive and consists of a barricaded space 10 meters by 10 meters, that is guarded at all times against accidental entry. Inside is a steel wall background with a comfortable grouping of furniture (armchair, table, lamp, magazines, etc.) placed before it. Six meters in front of the chair is a black box mechanism containing a live cartridge and a random timer triggered to fire once within approximately the next 100 years. Detonation may be this instant, tomorrow, next week, 14 years, etc. No one, including myself, has any idea when the explosion will take place but if the blue warning light is flashing you can be assured that the timer is running. The environment is completely safe for the casual observer. Danger can come only if one is sitting in the chair or crossing the line of fire at the moment of detonation. The odds are astronomical against injury, but the possibility does exist. Viewers may enter the work only after signing a document stating that they fully understand the risk they are taking. No one under 21 years of age will be permitted entry under any circumstances and proof of age will be required at the gate.

I have been asked with some justification why I would build such a piece. My purpose is certainly not death. Quite the contrary, I would hope that this work may be able to invoke new and positive responses to the wonders of life.

We in the western world are products of a religious, social system that denies any genuine acknowledgement of death. Woven within the fabric of our culture is an insidious trap of outright deception concerning our final personal destinies. The process is simple. A child, daily growing in wareness, finally able to connect abstract thoughts, asks about death. The adult frown, the twitch of the head, the stammer and embarrassment for words communicate all too well, regardless of the actual given answer. Puzzled, the fledgling intellect searches further. Most often seeing someone die or killing some small thing himself the child now makes the connection between that cold never again moving thing and his own death. Fear comes and without proper experience (teachings) the young mind cannot cope with such terrible information. The whole confused

possibility of his life really stopping is suppressed into the unconscious where it lays like a cancer most certainly affecting the resulting personality. Time becomes the daily God, some vague notion of heaven the hedge, and we still fail to understand time in terms of the time that each of us actually has left to live. We run even faster before our fears while Mother Nature shrugs her shoulders in disgust. My own mind tells me that someday I must die, yet in my secret most heart I am sure I will go on forever. I push away the quick flashes of my own mortality ever hoping against hope. True that I speak now of myself, but I would guess that *things* are not so greatly different with you and your most private thoughts - so - having constructed this piece, I will and must enter it at least once. I plan to sit in the chair, facing the black box of death and ponder these thoughts *looking for* answers. Perhaps you can and will find time to join me.

Ed Kienholz
Berlin, 1974

Nancy Reddin Kienholz

APPENDIX B

THE CANDIDATE'S WORK

The practical component completed for this study consists of a body of sculpture and photo-montage. Central to both mediums was an attempt to identify the manner with which violence, aggression, cruelty and suffering are conveyed through and contained by the human figure. This was examined in relation to various issues raised in the dissertation. Of particular interest was the allure of violence, the relationship of violence to sensuous form, aspects of heroism and subordination, and the manner with which life-size human or anthropoid form could express these issues.

Early sculpted figures were concerned with victimization. This was initiated as an undergraduate in a series of figures depicted as carcasses (figs Ai, Aii). Using human and anthropoid form, figures were developed through distortion and the incorporation of bones into the figuration. Bones and modelled plaster were integrated onto steel armatures and painted in water colour. They were coated in wax which was used to equate anatomical material such as fat. Conceptually the figures were limited to the representation of carcasses, hanging or bound and deliberately elegant in their representation.

The early figures produced for this study allowed for experimentation in the transition from the skeletal carcass image to animated human form, and the development of a suitable technique. Body casts were used initially to avoid the weight and fragility of the previously used technique and to establish directly the representational human form. It was found during the process of the works that the cast could be used in various preliminary stages of figuration. Sculptures were not planned in the form of sketches or photographs as it was found preferable to limit creative decisions to the actual formulation of the work. As models could rarely be used for sittings, the cast replaced both the sketch and the model, which allowed for an immediate idea of how the image would operate. This was particularly significant in terms of the scale being used.

Casts were not used in their original form and were taken selectively from a model in order to establish the scale and composition. Hands, feet, faces and heads were not cast but modelled. Areas that were cast, were cut, altered and manipulated into the construction of a hollow structure which was reduced from the scale of the castee to enable the application of anatomical forms, appendages and detail. These forms were supplemented by casts taken from clay shapes, for example the heads cast from a modelled skull form, or roughly moulded strips of plaster bandage joined and shaped during the setting process.

Figures were modelled from plaster which was used not only for its practicality but for properties of the material itself, particularly its absorbent capacity and textural possibilities. Where figures were not oil painted, washes of paint colour, and layers of creosote, waxes and polishes were accumulated, for example Dog (1984-85; figs A6, A7) and National Bird (1983-86; figs A12-A14). Varying textures have been developed on these figures as well as others, including the Butcher Boys (1985-86; figs A18-22) and the figures of The Municipal Crucifix (1986; figs A23-26).

Throughout the production of the work, there has been an interest in anatomy as a means of expression. This has been considered in terms of the extent to which the exposure of internal anatomy conveys association with human conditions, for example, the ambivalences of the carcass image as displayed in butchers' shops, and occurrence in actuality in the form of injury or deformity. A primary reference was the skeleton, and actual animal bone was used for its organic and aesthetic properties, and for its direct link to actual anatomy. This was extended to the use of wings, horns and material that may have been still attached to the bones, as well as to sculpted forms.

The early carcass figures produced as an undergraduate were primarily an examination of formal relationships depicting the combination of stylised external and internal anatomy.

In the transition to animated human form, various additional aspects were explored; initially the most obvious links to the theme. As 'victims', the Untitled (1983-84; fig. A2) series of figures superficially depict injury and distortion. The production of the figures allowed for the examination of how posture and implied movement distracted from or enhanced a particular form of expression, and how surface and detail could be manipulated towards exaggerating or de-emphasizing aspects of the figure. Materials such as hair and fabric were used in conjunction with wax and bone which revealed certain limitations; that is that such appendages detract rather than amplify aspects of violence by supplementing the superficially dramatic aspects of the image.

The early figures and smaller figures like Goose (1984-85; fig. A5) and the West Coast African Angel (1985-86; figs A10, 11) acted as an accumulation of a vocabulary; an identification of methods and forms most suitable for the purpose. In examining related issues in smaller figures, the capacity for the life-size scale to convey certain meanings more appropriately was revealed. As birds, Goose and the West Coast African Angel relate directly to a life-size scale. However, represented as human figures, these two sculptures would have acquired a decorative quality, detracting from the intended expression. Goose was originally a human figure, modified to a bird-like representation.

During the research of various anatomical and physiological human properties, the figures became increasingly representational with greater attention paid to the expressive nature of detail and the relationship of expression to the spectator. Later works such as The Butcher Boys Untitled (1985-86; figs A15-17) and the National Bird dealt with aspects of aggression. Posture and physical communication became primary concerns in the transition from a descriptive to an expressive means of representation. It was found during the progressive de-emphasizing of dramatic concerns that a more actual sense of violence and disquietude was contained by figures such as Untitled and Butcher Boys, than begins to be suggested by figures such as the Untitled series. This is considered to be the result of a greater range of more accurate related issues having been examined within the individual sculpture.

The production of photo-montage simultaneously with the three-dimensional component provided an opportunity to examine environmental and contextual possibilities, including figurative images and reproductions of the sculpted figures. Found photographs such as postcards, media images and the candidate's own photographs were reproduced by means of conventional photographic processes. These were combined in montage to form manipulated representational images.

The use of photo-montage increased the visual possibilities for the sculpted figures. Had it been possible, the figures might have been documented or integrated into composed or actual environments. Simultaneously, it provided a means whereby interpretations of source-material could be explored, particularly in relation to the news media. The photographic medium, as opposed to drawing or graphics, was selected for its illusionistic possibilities. Of particular interest have been the ways in which photographic documentation condition and distort the viewer's perceptions as well as the actual incident.

Specific sources were not used in the sculpted figures in the sense that a particular photograph, incident or motivation formed the basis for figurations. Sources were drawn on from the general social environment and the candidate's experience of it. Therefore where a concept arose from contexts outside the candidate's immediate experience, it was interpreted from a viewpoint within experience such as the news media translations. The particular manner with which the media interprets and alters situations was taken into account.

The news media formed a significant source for the later sculptures and photo-montages, particularly propagandist related images and personages, and the methodologies employed to endow these figures with the appropriate

presence. Attention was paid to the manner in which both hierarchical and unranked individuals conduct themselves, and how these distinctions are physically expressed in different circumstances. Observation of the behaviour of both humans and animals in urban and non-urban environments, in controlled environments such as zoos, and in domestic environments enabled, to some extent, a comparison of behaviours. This created an awareness of not only the social identification that qualifies and evokes peculiarities of violence, violation, aggression or disquiet, but the expressive nature of the physical character that equates, emits and typifies it.

Neither the sculpture nor the photo-montage produced for this degree is intended as social criticism or to promote an attitude. It is intended rather as an attempt to objectify observations of the character of a particular time and place from a particular social context, that is, that which is familiar and part of the candidate's accessible experience. An attempt was made to view aspects of violence and disquietude through devices of communication that would be both accessible to a general audience and particularized by environmental links. The idea that the constructive value of socially conscious art lies to some extent with the ability to reflect the essential and familiar aspects of that reality, without partiality, was of particular importance. Thus where

aggression is examined in figures like the Butcher Boys and Untitled (1985-86), seductiveness, sensuousness and vulnerability were taken as adjuncts to the basic theme.

Aggression, as it is frequently expressed in the urban social environment is also a reflection of pathos and a vulnerable state of being. A threat may exist, but unlike a response to immediate survival, it is not manifest in immediate danger. It is provoked or qualified into a sense of immediate danger: the aggressor appears to be spurred by a sense of superiority which is confirmed by the creation of a victim. This could be identified in direct political contexts but is also too easily determined by partiality. Regarded from a general viewpoint, from attitudes and expression repeatedly observed in the general environment, the basis of more particular political and social issues may be revealed. It is this relationship of aggressors and victims, and the manner with which aggression and victimization is carried by human expression, that formed the primary considerations for this study.

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ASPECTS OF VIOLENCE AND DISQUIETUDE *IN* LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY THREE-DIMENSIONAL HUMAN FIGURATION

JANE ALEXANDER

VOLUME 2

ASPECTS OF VIOLENCE AND DISQUIETUDE IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY THREE-DIMENSIONAL HUMAN FIGURATION

Jane Alexander

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Arts University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Fine Art.

Johannesburg 1988

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PREFATORY NOTE

The medium used for the artworks selected for discussion has not been individually noted with a few exceptions. Due to the diversity of media used by each artist, they are not always listed in reference material. They are therefore, unless otherwise stated, of mixed media. Reference is made in the text to specific materials that are considered of importance. Dimensions have also not been presented as they are often unobtainable or unnecessary. All the works depicted relate directly to life-size scale.

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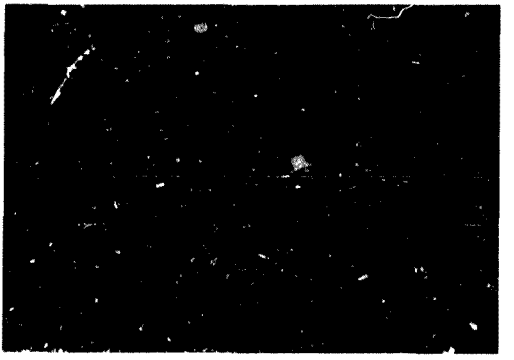
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F.g. 4. Man in a Suit with Beer, 1973.



Fig. 5. Seated Old Woman Shopper, 1974.

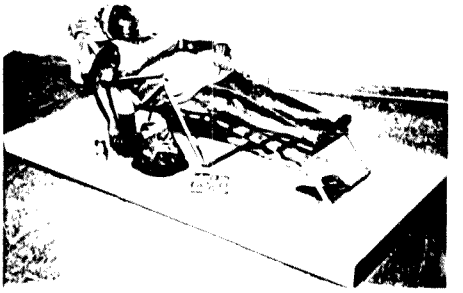


Fig. 6. Supermarket, 1971.

DIANE HANSEN



Fig. 7.
Housewife,
1969-70.



Fig. 8. Detail.



Fig. 9.
Lady with Coupons,
1982.
Polyvinyl, polychromed
in oil.



Fig. 10.
Supermarket Lady,
1970.



Fig. 11.
Woman Eating,
1971.



Fig. 12.
Janitor,
1973.

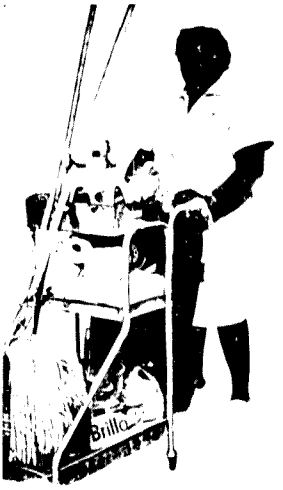


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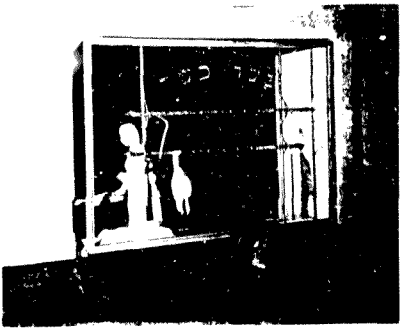


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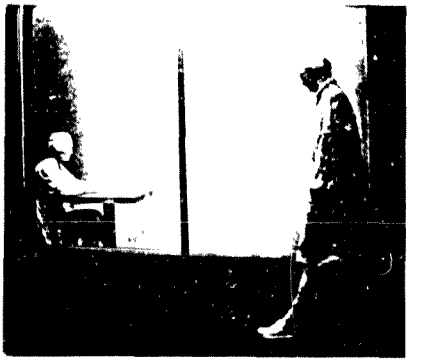


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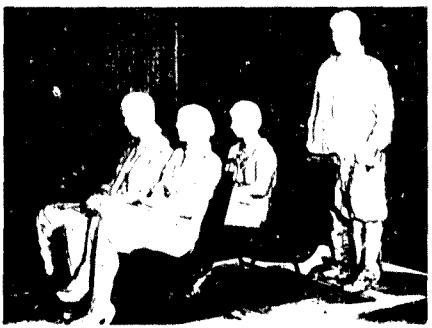


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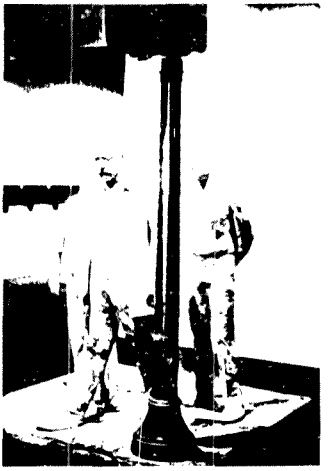


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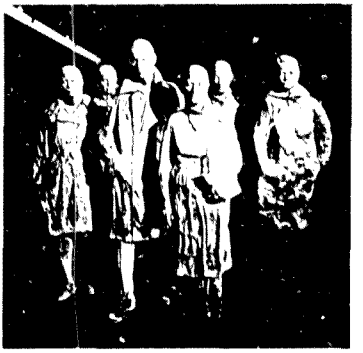


Fig. 20. Rush Hour, 1983.



Fig. 21.
The Hustle: The Four Hand Pass,
1980.



Fig. 22.
Corridor,
1975.



Fig. 23. The Bowery, 1970.

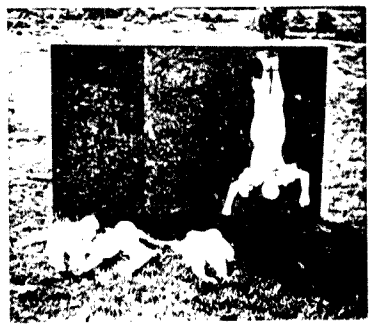


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Fig. 25.
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1981.

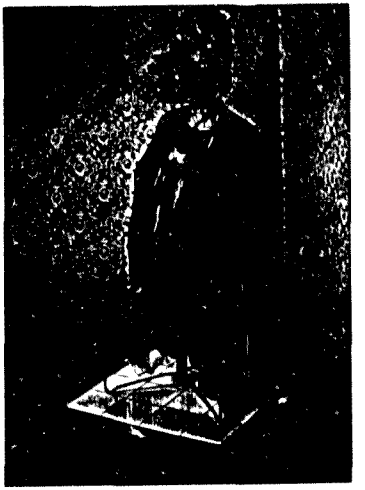


Fig. 26.
Roxys: The Madam,
1961.

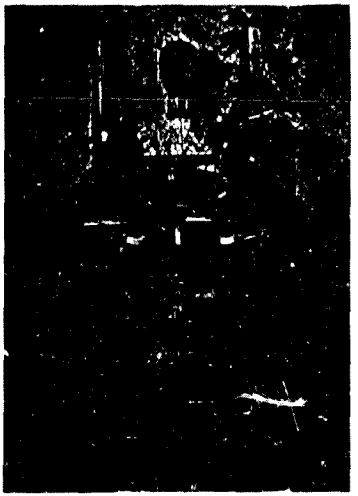


Fig. 27.
Roxys:
Miss Cherry Delight,
1961.

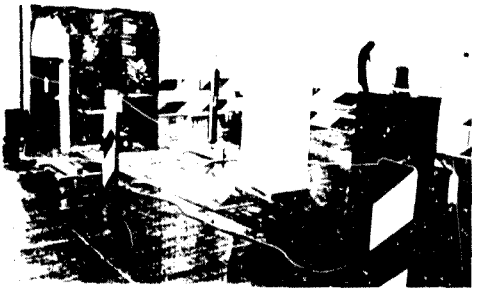


Fig. 28. [illegible], 1974



Fig. 29.
The Bronze Pinball Machine with Woman Affixed Also, 1980.



Fig. 30.
The Rape of the Grey Speckled Bird, 1979.



Fig. 31.
Hollie 17,
1979-80.



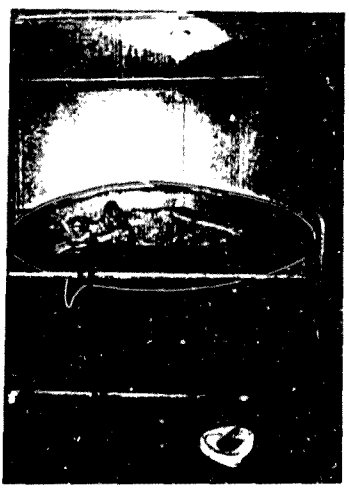


Fig. 33.
The State Hospital, 1964-66.



Fig. 34. Illegal Operation, 1952.



Fig. 35. Portrait.

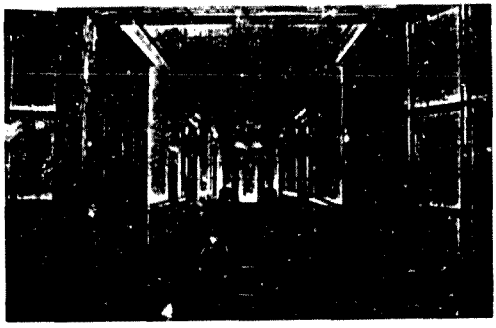


Fig. 16. The Fed-ored Arts, 1982-83.



Fig. 17. The Wall, 1964.

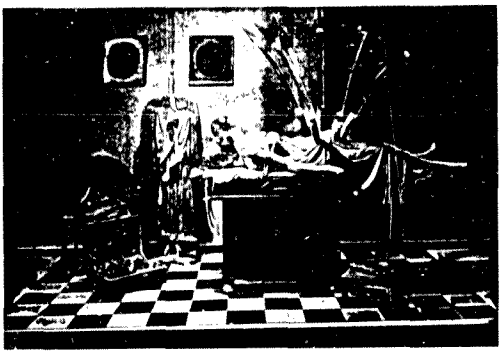


Fig. 38. The Birthday, 1964.

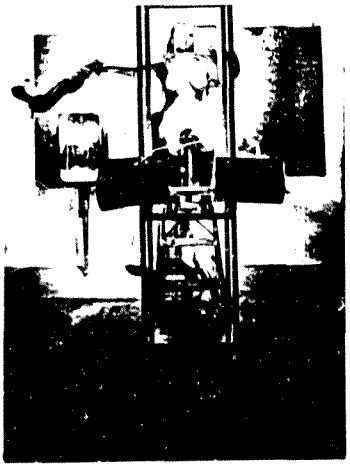


Fig. 39.
The Rhinestone Beaver Peepshow Triptych, 1980.



Fig. 40. Film Car Stall, 1972.

MARK DION



Fig. 41. Drosophila, 1984.



Fig. 42. [illegible], 1[illegible].



Fig. 43. Hanging is Very Important, 1972.



Fig. 44. The Operating Room, 1974.



Fig. 45. Death in the Chair, 1973.



Fig. 46.
And is there Anything Else You'd Like Madam?
1971.

MARK PRENT



Fig. 47.
The Incurable Romantic,
1981.



Fig. 48. Imagine Me, 1981.

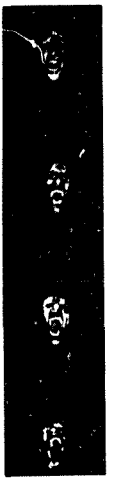


Fig. 49. Detail.



Fig. 50. *Thawing Out*, 1972.



Fig. 51. *Child's Toy*, 1973.

MARK BRENZ



Fig. 52. Aquarium, 1975.



Fig. 53. The Bird, 1977.

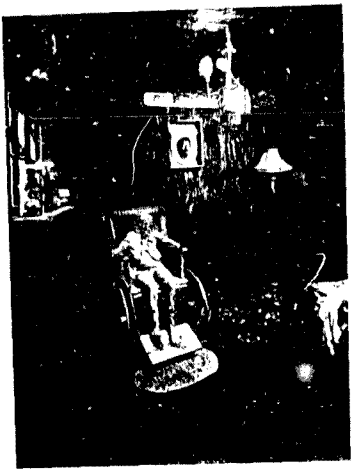


Fig. 54.
Laughing Pathocyclists,
(old room),
1974.



Fig. 55.
Laughing Pathocyclists,
(new room),
1974.



Fig. 56.
This is Dedicated to the Berlin Zoo, 1975.



Fig. 57.
Horsewoman, 1975.



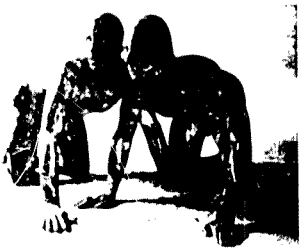
Fig. 58. Ringkreuz, 1975.



MALCOLM [illegible]



Fig. 60. Chair Piece, 1976.



[illegible], [illegible], 1980-81.



Fig. 62. Nervous System, 1984.

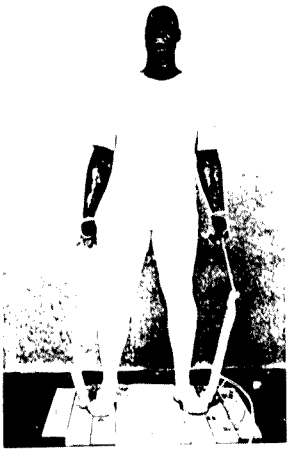


Fig. 61. Family Room, Section 1 (Mixed-media wall, detail), 1984.

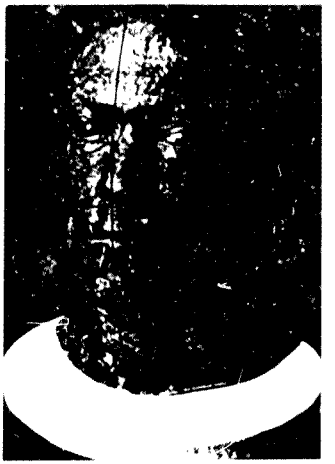


Fig. 64. [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]



Fig. 65. [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]



Fig. 66.
3rd Horseman of the Apocalypse,
1983-84.



Fig. 67.
Leader I,
1981.
Fibreglass, Resin, Paper, Oil Paint, Wood, Steel.

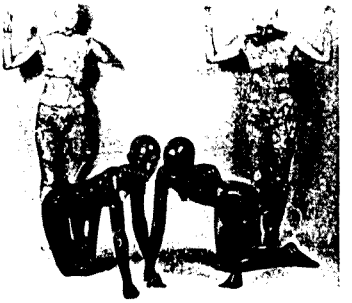


Fig. 68. Collateral Damage, (detail), 1982-83.
Fibreglass, Rosin,
Paper pulp, Cement, Plaster,
Oil glaze.



Fig. 69. Detail.



Fig. 70. Detail.



Fig. 71. Woman as Fetish Object, 1975.



Fig. 72. Confront, 1978.



Fig. 73.
The State Will Provide.
1982-83.

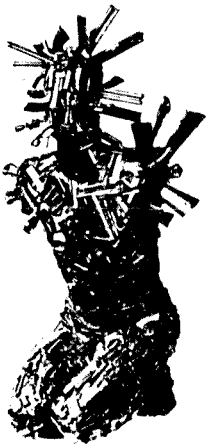


Fig. 74.
Turning Point.
1983-84.



Fig. 75. Waiting for God. 1983-84.



Fig. 76. Fair Wear. 1982-83.

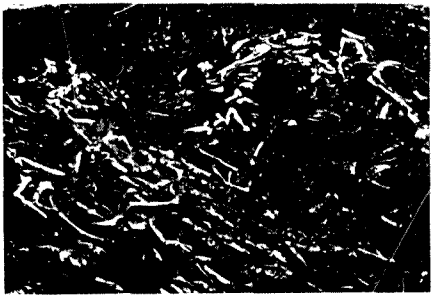


Fig. 1. Belsen 1945.
(Imperial War Museum, London)



Fig. 11. [illegible]
[illegible]

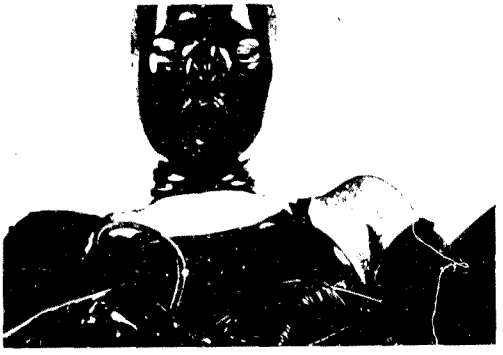


Fig. iii. Detail from pornographic image.



Fig. IV.
Relief in wax,
(artist unknown)
Seventeenth Century.



Fig. V.
Gaetano Zumbo:
The Corruption of the Bodies, (detail)
Seventeenth Century.



Fig. vi. Herman Nitsch:
Orgies and Mysteries Theatre.



Fig. VII.
Exhibit at the
London Dungeon.



Fig. VIII.
Exhibit at the
London Dungeon.

APPENDIX

DOCUMENTATION OF THE CANDIDATE'S WORK

UNDERGRADUATE WORK



Fig. Ai.
Untitled,
1982

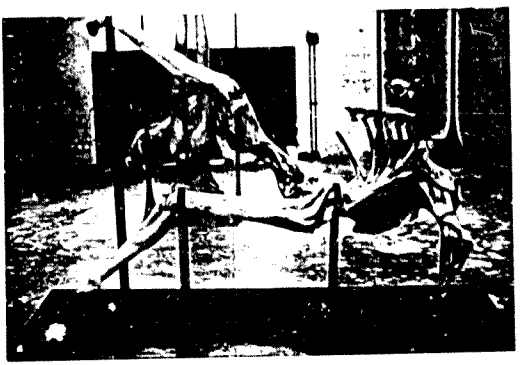


Fig. Aii.
Untitled,
1982.

DOCUMENTATION OF WORK SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN FINE ART.

SCULPTURE



Fig. A1. 5 Torsos, 1983.
Plaster, Bone, Hair, Wax, Steel.



Fig. A2. Hatrilod, 1983-84.
Plaster, Bone, Hair, Fabric, Wax.



Fig. A3.
Domestic Angel,
1984.
Synthetic clay, Wings,
Oil Paint.
340mm high.



Fig. A4. [illegible] 1984-85.
[illegible], Wood, Oil Paint, Wax.



Fig A5. Goose, 1984-85.
Plaster, Goose wings, Bone,
Oil Paint.
970mm high.



Fig. A6. Dog, 1984-65.
Plaster, Bone, Creosote, Wax,
Polish, Oil Paint, Hair.



Fig. A7. Back view.



Fig. A8. Untitled, 1985. Detail. Plaster, Bone, Creosote, Oil Paint, Sand, Wood.





Fig. A10.
West Coast African Angel,
1985-86.
Plaster, Bone, Wings, Flamingo Skull, Oil Paint, Bicycle.
950mm high.



Fig. A11.
Back view.



Fig. A12.
National Bird.
1993-86.
Plaster, Pressure
Ii Print, Wood.

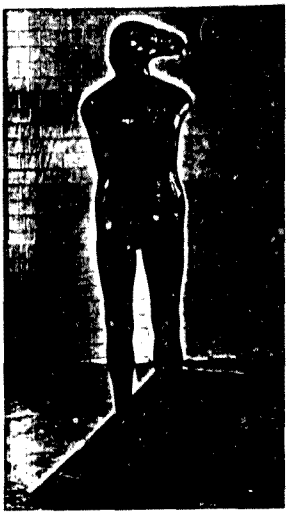


Fig. A13.
Back view.



Fig. A14. National Bird, Detail.

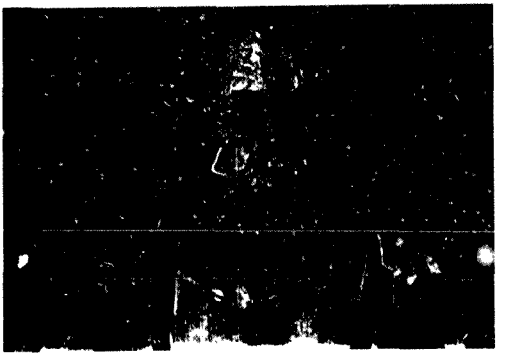


Fig. A15. [illegible]



Fig. A16. Oakland, 1895-96. Front view.



Fig. A17. Back view.

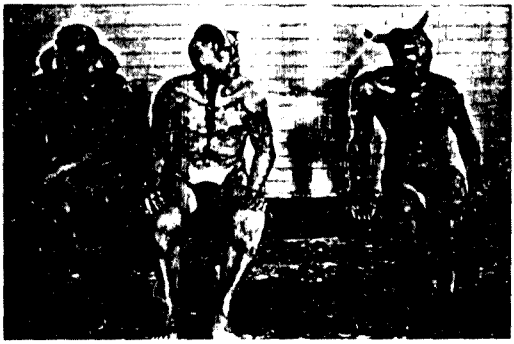


Fig. A18. Butcher Boys, 1985-86. Front view. Plaster, Bone, Horns, Oil Paint, Wood.



Fig. A19. Back view.



Fig. A20.
Detail.



Fig. A21.
Detail.



Fig. A22.
Detail.

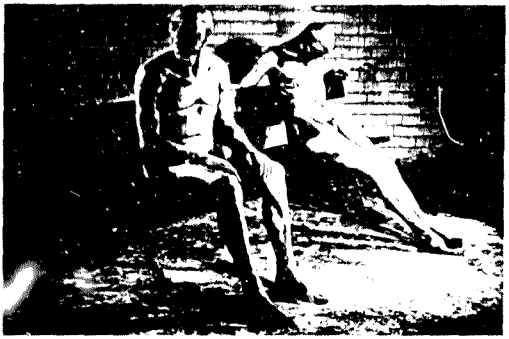


Fig. A23. The Municipal Crucifix, 1986. Front view. Plaster, Bone, Oil Paint, Wood, Aluminum.

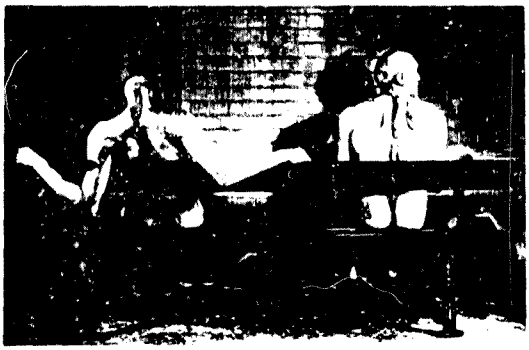


Fig. A24.



Fig. A25. Detail.

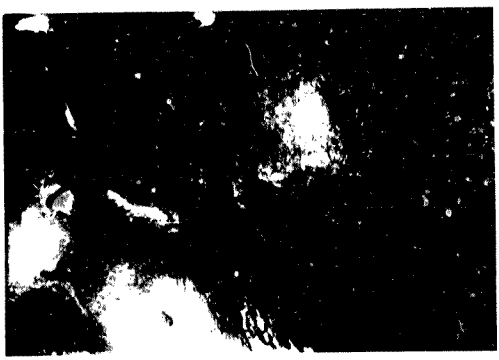


Fig. A26. Detail.

PHOTO-MONTAGE



Fig. A27.
Platform 1.
1983.
24cm x 21cm.



Fig. A28.
Sleeping Man,
1984.
30cm x 21cm.



Fig. A29. Woman in a Two-Piece, 1984.



Fig. A30. Table in Television I, 1984.



Fig. A31.
By the end of today you're going to need us, 1985.
[illegible] mm.



Fig. A32.
Gannet, 1985.
[illegible]x23 mm.



Fig. A33. The Cow House, 1985.
[illegible] mm.

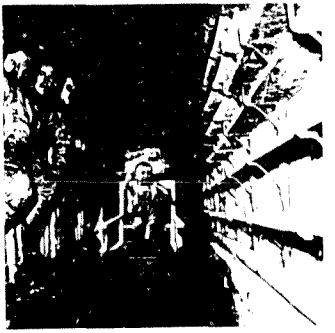


Fig. A34. Cornfield, 1985.
[illegible] mm.



Fig. A35. Untitled, 1985.
x cm.



Fig. A36. Untitled, 1985.



Fig. A37. Ford, 1986.
[illegible] x [illegible] mm.

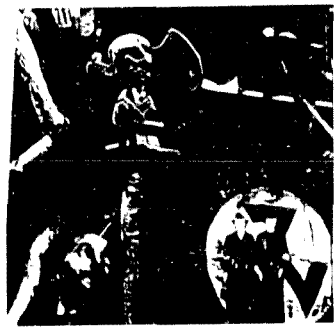


Fig. A38. Jamboree, 1988.



Fig. A39.
Chornobyl Medical Aid Rally, St.Petersburg, 1436.
1986.

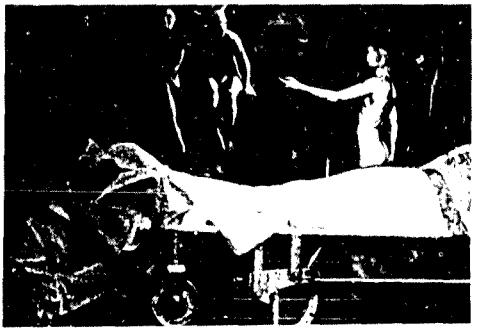


Fig. A40.
'For to me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'
[illegible]
1986.



Fig. A41.
Shepherd,
1986.
[illegible]mm.



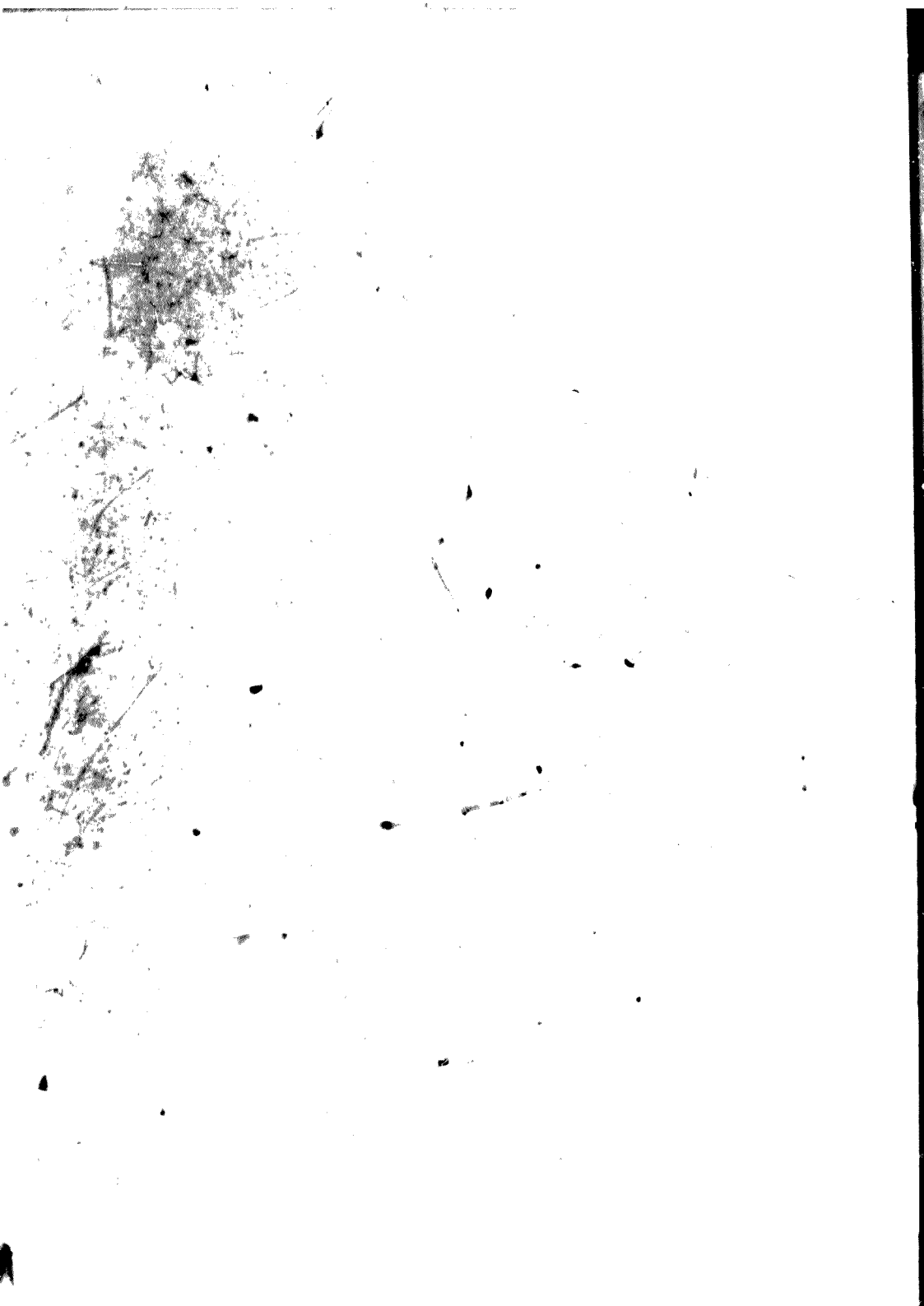
Fig. A42.
Trading was Listless,
1986.
[illegible]mm.



Fig. A43.
Museum Boy,
1986.
[illegible]x240mm.



Fig. A44.
Volk,
1986.
[illegible]x245mm.



Author Alexander Jane
Name of thesis Aspects Of Violence And Disquietude In Late Twentieth-century Three-dimensional Human Figuration. 1988

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