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Francine Scialom Greenblatt
Biography/Autobiography as Historical Context
1992 - Cape Town.

Open Diary - Biography/Autobiography as Historical Context
Francine Scialom Greenblatt. Cape Town. 1992.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To: FRANK
BRENT
ADAM
DANIELLE
JOE
PAULETTE
ANGELA

Per : L'amor che muove il sole e l'atre stelle.
(for: The love that moves the sun and the other stars)

Dante. 1265 - 1321
Divina Commedia. Paradiso, xxxiii. 145.
(ed) Sinclair. 1971.

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INTRODUCTION

Alberto Savinio in his travelogue and wartime diary "The departure of the Argonaut" (1918) graphically expressed reservations about his endeavour.

"I write - that is, I lay out little black cadavres on the immaculate shroud of the page - but this doesn't begin to capture the magnificent innocence of sky and sea"(1)
How inadequate then does a painter feel in attempting to locate belief systems in a foreign medium that is slower than pictures? Words reduce the real experience of a painting to an approximation, and its absence constitutes a kind of willed barrier.

Literary studies proposed that paintings are, independently of how they are interpreted. The nature of art works is in part determined by the art-theoretical context in which they are set. The forced shift in medium, therefore assists this author in questioning some of the familiar mental, visual and emotional landmarks by which thinking has been oriented over the past 20 years.

(1) Savinio A. 1986. The departure of the Argonaut.
Francesco Clemente, Petersburg Press.
Translated by George Scrivani. 1986

Plato warned against the seduction of the "third order representations" of the artist. He described this order at one remove from the real world that is made by people ("the second order") which itself is at one remove from the "essential reality" of the "ultimate nature of things." The artist's manoeuvre not only is at two removes from this ultimate reality, but is also "a thoroughly unsound combination" - and therefore has no logic or reason. This artist however persists in intuitively exploring certain curiosities even if Plato regards this action of representation as trite and of no purpose.

Added to these three orders of representation, there corresponds a parallel hierarchy of practices - of use, manufacture, and representation. "Use" is the privileged category, for it is only in this context that "quality, beauty, or fitness of any implement or creature or action can be judged." As the artist has no knowledge of the object, Plato implied that any action of representation is irredeemable and superficial. (2)

(2) Plato. The Republic. Trans. Desmond Lee. Penguin. 1987.

Effectively, in this diaristic, autobiographic project, in using words to establish another "world of shadows" in response to paintings, a "fourth remove" in Platonic thinking is created - a further step towards absurdity.

A diary suggests an area of intimacy which is fed by one's own sense of personal involvement. Propositionally, this exercise should be "sociable" - not a self-referring display of erudition, but an act of creative discussion in which others can engage. It should equally not be a shrill confessional, rather offer the possibility for the researcher to be researched in a manner that brings together poetic, social and formal practices. In a sense I have retraced my path as through a child's cognitive development. Jean Piaget suggests that the child explores the world

- (a) through action.
- (b) through imagery,
- (c) through language.

Psychologically, my approach in this respect implies a Gestalt bias in that it is largely concerned with "human nature" - how I perceive, how I have grown, and how I comprehend.

Words here are the material substance used to form images. By the same token, images make writing. It follows, therefore, that there is a simultaneity in the relationship between action (the painting) and writing (the text). The ensuing symbiotic relationship between the artist and the writer (in this case, the same person), has been an illuminating zone of activity during the course of study.

A further rapport exists in the fact that all original texts were handwritten and the calligraphic mark/gesture constantly created a parallel activity/rapprochement to the physical act of painting. No sophisticated technology or science had intervened or disrupted the continuum between the familiar 'Body-painting' and the unfamiliar 'Body-writing'.

Questions were raised about the author's expectations of either position. These expectations were based on traditional codes which had required interpretations and messages, and functions and roles to be kept clear and distinct. However, this introspective debate created an oscillation between the two poles which was regenerative.

Timo Smuts asks in "Speaking as a painter": Does our society privilege speech or a type of discourse with a scientific appearance which can produce the locatable, the predictable and the verifiable? In order not to answer these questions, not to dominate in a journey of discovery, not to produce another verifiable result, but in order to insert and retain doubt and to attempt to produce movement and transformation, it is necessary to fabricate and erase other signifiers, other questions,...."(3)

(3) Smuts T. (1991) "Speaking as a painter."
South African Journal of Art & Architectural History,
Volume 2, Number 3 & 4. December 1991, 90.

From the late 1950's onwards Anglo-American literature, which historically had been generally unreceptive to heterodox ideas about meaning, began to be influenced by Continental European philosophical traditions. These ideas stemmed from hermeneutics, phenomenology and structural linguistics. Semiology, or science of signs, seemed relevant to philosophy, social science and literature. Saussure's linguistic theories became part of the enquiry and search for deep structures and recurrent patterns underlying all areas of human activity. Together with post-Kantian legacies of transcendental enquiry into the conditions of the possibility of an activity, general theories about the nature of meaning and communication gradually evolved. Subsequently, such theorising became journalistically dubbed "poststructuralist". This term does not allow sufficient scope to the arbitrariness of the signifier in expressing the instability of all written meaning in writing. Umberto Eco suggests that the licensed view of the reader to "unlimited semiosis" can be misappropriated which leads to "over-interpretation". He explores ways of limiting the range of admissible interpretations (at the risk of being stigmatised as "authoritarian").(4)

Reflecting on the last 2 years, a certain unexpected logic emerged, which created a slippery system out of seemingly absurd and uncontrollable meanings. Art is probably borne as an ephemeral encounter, a series of traces; it may survive in time, but not without transformation and change of meaning. Everything is provisional, temporary. This kind of recognition is an integral part of the process of changing clichéd symbolic codes.

(4) See Collini S.(ed.) Interpretation and overinterpretation. Umberto Eco with Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler, Christine Brooke-Rose. Cambridge University Press. 1992.

Panofsky regards understanding of artwork as a document - a medium of meanings, whether these be peculiar to the artist or even "unknown to the artist", and different from what he consciously intended to express. Thus, any particular viewpoint expressed by the artist in this context is only intended to be propositional in tone.

The diary form underlines the awareness of the irresolveability between art and life, yet it superimposes a personal perception on the appearance of reality in an attempt at integrating with it. Paradoxically however, this endeavour does contextualise the work historically, thus interfering in the desired dialectical journey. Although a linear, systematic, contained organisation of concerns would facilitate the reader, perhaps the slower, brick-by-brick disclosure of pictorial sub-texts is more apt and congruent with a personal methodology of picture-making. In stabilizing its identity, the diary also reduces the artwork to an educational document on one hand, and on the other hand, there is a danger of a self-indulgent and sentimental mooring, which is fraught with nostalgia (which adds romantic, distorting colourations) in this type of format.

Reading another's diary usually elicits feelings of trespass and transgression. Entering into an intimate and private territory attracts the voyeuristic impulse. Art-making can be considered diaristic in the sense that it processes the personally important. It can be argued therefore, that subsequently an audience is implicated voyeuristically in the traditional viewing transaction. A trilogy of concerns incorporating;

- (a) the voyeur in the author
- (b) the voyeur in the content/narrative, and
- (c) the voyeur in the audience

is one of the major themes and subtexts running through my work. Consequently I have included a text which locates my response to personally elaborated systems of meaning for the word "voyeur". In a sense, voyeurism becomes subversive in implicating the audience. This "primitive" quality suggests we are not as "civilised" as we play/pretend. Constant dialogue between protection and exposure, tenderness and violence, is a complicated one which can be threatening in its attempt to dismantle prejudice.

In the title of this dissertation Diary is described as "Open". The suggestion is that there is consent and volition on the artist/writer to be viewed/read, hereby undermining the sense of taboo. This invitation denies any element of victimisation and rather highlights and acknowledges a certain exhibitionistic impulse, as well as the faculty of volition and desire (conation).

There are innumerable stylistic and plastic possibilities of addressing one's concerns as an artist. Formal pluralism allows one to explore aspects of self as an accumulation of selves, as well as commenting on changing sets of social relations. These endless possibilities deny a formulaic approach and make each new painting more difficult as it becomes a different reality with limitless alternatives. The viability of this attitude therefore necessitated that other contemporary artists' oeuvre be considered. I therefore focused on the hybrid approach to artmaking shared by Gerhard Richter and Sherrie Levine. Their working methodology and ideology demands a multiplicity of images/objects to be produced.

Thus my interest in process is indicated attitudinally

- (a) in the mechanics of the voyeur,
and practically by
- (b) the endless, open-ended formal possibilities as described in
Part I respectively.

Man is not a manufactured thing - he has no fixed nature. Reflecting this dichotomy, the diary and the paintings will fluctuate between levels such as the general and the specific, the conscious and the unconscious, the feminine and the masculine, in an attempt to integrate aspects of self.

The architect Louis Kahn describes man as being motivated by two inspirations:

" - the inspiration to live - I see no reason to live unless it is to express.

The inspiration to express is truly a thing of wonder.

And the inspiration to learn, which is really to learn to express, but isolates itself sufficiently to be an urge of its own."(5)

This diary attempts to reflect living, learning and expressing through images and descriptive texts.

(5) Kahn L. (1986). What will be has always been.

The words of Louis Kahn. ed. Richard Saul Wurman.

Accesspress and Rizzoli, New York. 26.

PART I(a)

"VOYEURISM - CONSIDERED AS A PARADOXICAL CITE/SITE/SIGHT"

Great art, irrespective of the form (literature, music, painting) suggests a private universe which is vitally meaningful and compelling to the maker. In entering another's personal space, the reader/auditor/viewer thus begins a voyeuristic transaction.

The nature of existence for the voyeur is eroticised - eroticism seen not as a simple sexual activity, nor the biology of reproduction; rather seen as a psychological quest - a self-conscious activity or a consciously intellectualised feeling. Eroticism is a libidinous, celebratory, life-giving force - unlike pornography which is death oriented, and does not allow for re-entry or re-tracking into a position of options. Freudian theory asserts that the death instinct (Thanatos) is as important as the life instinct (Eros) which, it could be argued, valorises pornography as a positive and generative obsession. Eroticism suggests volition and consent, which amplifies the notion of pleasure - a subversive idea as it openly challenges repression.

The Chambers 20th Century dictionary categorises the voyeur as follows:

"A sexual pervert who derives sexual gratification from surreptitiously watching sexual acts or objects: a peeping tom; one who takes morbid interest in sordid sights."

This stylised caricature implies one who is unsolicitedly interested in seeing rather than doing, and the judgemental and moralising overtones deny the cachet, finesse and nuance of the voyeur. Surely a more speculative network of non-doctrinaire, non-linear and more precarious series of meanings is more appropriate. It is possible that an infinitude of ideas, even the most contradictory, can co-exist as signs within the Baudrillardian notion of idealist logic of consumption. Hence, the voyeur will be addressed through the trinomial approach of

- (i) cite (as in the order of words),
- (ii) site (as in place or position) and
- (iii) sight (as in vision, perception or appearance.)

In citing, language is the common denominator which we share for approximating reality by means of words. Through language we create the possibility of transforming reality into a world. Language becomes a sign system that refers to things, but the words do not contain anything of the things themselves. It follows, therefore, that the "thing itself" - idea, concept, emotion - can never be convincing in language. Paradoxically, the text itself can be "inciting" and seductive, as is the language of the voyeur, both in the sense of the mechanics of words and as a means of encountering the world.

"Perhaps every discourse is secretly tempted by this failure (of finding meaning beyond appearances - viz. inclusion) and by having its objectives put into question, changing its truth effects into surface effects, which act like a mirror absorbing and engulfing meaning. This is what happens initially when a discourse seduces itself; the original way in which it absorbs meaning and empties itself of meaning in order to fascinate others: the primitive seduction of language." (6)

This scorn for depth and desire to circulate on the surface, refers to an aspect of the voyeur. It assumes the posture of the aesthete - one who is alternatively never satisfied and yet always finding a way of being satisfied with virtually everything. The modern aesthete believes that depth obfuscates - no human essence stirs at the bottom of things, and freedom lies in staying on the surface.

The voluptuous utopia of literature suggests an unconscious field of desire and pleasure (un empourprement de plaisir- Barthes), which magnetises the interest of the voyeur. Perpetual re-investment of desire is a necessity of being, and the cerebral lechery and erotic tension of life lived vicariously through text is equally forceful. Nietzsche said that "ultimately one loves one's desires and not that which is desired." (7)

(6) Baudrillard, J. "On Seduction" in Jean Baudrillard - Selected Writings. Mark Poster (ed.) 150.

(7) Nietzsche, F. "Maxims and Interludes" in Beyond Good and Evil. Penguin Books. 106.

George Bataille's view that eroticised yearning is only possible in a sexually repressed context, necessitates a look at other cultures (even if the notion of the "Other" can be dangerous as an exoticizing Bourgeois device.) Ours is a productivist, post-industrialist scenario where puritan ethics as the dominant morality colours our perceptions. It is not possible here to study in depth, forms of eroticized behaviour and their relation to laws, customs and conventions relating to sociological and ethnological mores. However, Foucault's idea that "sexuality as a historically singular form of experience" is an interesting perspective to consider briefly, in order to view our own daily play between **nakedness** and **concealment**, and how each creates a desire for the other.

Ceremonies of magic and ritual relating to regenerative cycles, satisfying instinctive libidinous forces, with no sense of taboo, make certain societies specifically interesting to this author. (8) Indian culture for instance is centred around a polarised site which encompasses Heaven and Earth, Male and Female, and suggests that each human being is a location where the projection of the world is being carried out continually. The metaphysical understanding is that there is a direct relationship between our sexual energy and the spiritual energy of the world. "For the Hindu, worship at the Source of Creation is a sure way of enlightenment." (9)

(8) "This phobia towards incest....gave rise to a series of norms designated to avoid the temptation of sexual relations between members of the same clan. Anything which was prohibited or merely avoided, was known as TABOO. a Polynesian word meaning "prohibited". The origin of taboo is unknown, but it is thought to date from a pre-religious period.

Romé, L. & J. Primitive Eroticism. Omega Books. 10.

(9) Webb, P. "Eroticism in Oriental Art and Religion".
The Erotic Arts. Secher & Warburg. London. 75.

Tantra, or the cult of ecstasy, also focuses on the vision of cosmic sexuality, as does Tao, or order of the world, which brings together the Yin and the Yang in perfect harmony. Socially, different cultures engage in a continually mutating sense of taboos which assert themselves in various ways. Our post-Pagan society forces eroticized energy to be linked to that of transgression, which is fraught with dilemma.

Historically, however, it seems that sexuality managed to link the exterior part of Nature to the most interior and ulterior part of the mind and distance of the Spirit. Herein lies a **desire for wholeness or completeness** which is the essence of the voyeur.

Jean Paul Sartre suggests that consciousness "assimilates" things to itself; their solid structure is "dissolved" into items of consciousness - whether these be visualised as ideas or as manifestations of a will to power, or an "elan vital". For Sartre, as with the voyeur, the transcendent world never comes, and the voyeur is left yearning for a completion which can never be gratified.

There is also a **yearning** for a state of original innocence, and it seems that looking is always a predicate to knowing. Knowledge is not a function of dominion, rather a reception/gathering of emanations. Nietzsche re-contextualised the oriental perspective: "The body purifies itself through knowledge, experimenting with knowledge elevates itself; to the discerning man all instincts are holy; the soul of the elevated man grows joyful." (10)

(10) Nietzsche, F. "Of the Bestowing Virtue".
Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Penguin Books. 102.

For the voyeur, the desire to know, the drive of the libidinal intellect is subtly intertwined in its roots with the desire to be, the drive of the whole person. As with Baudelaire and Nietzsche, there is a belief in concomitant and interactive planes of existence - a belief which in essence proposes that Heaven and Hell are ever and immediately and simultaneously with us.

It follows that the voyeur is in complicity with whatever moral stand is being made. There is no judgemental positioning adopted. Similarly, Sadean libertinism accepts a union of sacred and profane, and suggests that the only limit to both our pleasures and our terrors, in nature, is the body. (Essential personal concern)

Roland Barthes sees Sadean eroticism as "truly a formal language, in which there are only classes of actions, and not groups of individuals, which greatly simplifies the grammar, and second, because it prevents us from dividing Sadean society according to sexual roles." (11)

Foucault's perspective of Sade is also interesting in the way that he historically facilitates the transition from "the symbolic of blood" or sanguinity (as a procedure of power) to an "analytics of sexuality" (as a reinforcing of stamina into contemporary society).

(11) Culler, J. "Critic". Barthes.
Frank Kermode (ed.) 49.

The notion of "original innocence" suggests the curiosity of one newly born. The location is a site which is endlessly intriguing - "car l'interet c'est l'intrigue." (12) There is a dialectic between childhood exploration and adult intention - a conversion of consciousness and unconsciousness. The search for knowledge is part of growth. Heschel speaks of the notion of "wonder or radical amazement" (13) as an awed and splendidly appreciative response to all of reality. The implication is that there is a grandeur and mystery to being, which is beyond the acquisition of knowledge and therefore does not cease when knowledge is acquired. It follows therefore that the voyeur's desire for knowledge is a futile endeavour, which can never be met, and with this realisation becomes melancholic.

In the voyeuristic site, one can experience a dislocated change in scale - an "Alice in Wonderland" sense of re-orientation where the observed is also altered or miniaturised. In dreams, shifts in scale and pace are elements of paranoiac nightmares. For the voyeur these are reflected as an echo of a sense of loss at our own scale. The source of procedures which produces transformation through focus is, in a way, concerned with **performance** - not the sanitized and distanced smooth narrative flow of modern theatre, rather the real-life texture of our own concerns opening up layers of self.

(12) Lyotard, J.F. Que Peindre?
Adami, Arakawa, Buren.
Editions de la Difference. Paris. 29.

(13) Heschel, A.J. G-d in Search of Man :
A Philosophy of Judaism.
Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. New York. 43-85.

Performance also serves as a replacement for primal ritualistic forms which contemporary society has discarded. It is an unmasking of the "I" through true knowledge in an imaginative, suspended space, which creates a kind of surrealist capsule. In the "Manifeste du Surrealisme" of 1924, André Breton asks "..... then why should I not concede to the dream what I sometimes refuse to reality - that weight of self-assurance which by its own terms is not exposed to my denial?" (14)

In this dream-like state of the dark surrealist stage, sound as "matter" has a weighty orality. It is a tangible, palpable, breathless moment suspended in time, where the voyeur pays
"....attention to the activity of sounds." (15)

Voyeuristically, the intentional involvement in any routine, ritual or event amplifies banal reality and prolongs the experience. It is a liberating activity for all the protagonists/actors as it is self-revelatory in its curiosity about knowing, almost knowing and already knowing. The moment is heroized and it nostalgically encompasses memory and the past, as well as illuminating the present as it straddles traditional notions of temporality. (important personal concern)

(14) Breton, A. "Le Manifeste du Surrealisme". Surrealism.
Thames & Hudson 67.

(15) Cage, J. Silence "Experimental Music".
Marion Boyars. London. 10.

Unlike the observer, who views formally, the voyeur views psychologically in a search for "insight". Effectively, the voyeur approaches the reality of being through a "blindness" - in other words, the "unsightedness" of seeing. Inherent in this idea is a demand for the abstraction of elements - not denying their existence, rather amplifying inherent aspects. These abstractions relate and reconstruct in an abstract void - the site of the voyeur. The void suggests a hyperspace articulated by the gravitational pull of focused interest. It is a voluminous, yet claustrophobic space unfilled by visible contents and thereby yearning to be filled.

The voyeur aspires to make the invisible visible - to embrace it and in claiming to be its creator, sets up a series of idolatrous relationships. If **flesh** is incorruptible (the belief of the voyeur), the boundaries that separate man from G-d are thus violated - herein lies the ultimate idolatrous idea. Equally, great beauty in the Greco/Roman sense, can assume the air of divinity. When this sublime beauty is seen in the context of sexuality, then the voyeur - concerned in this case with surface, is implicated in congress with the gods - another idolatrous idea. These are mimetic acts, giving form to the world. In naming, the voyeur saves or redeems the object of the gaze from the continuum of time, and elevates it to another arena, creating perfection in natural disorder. Becoming aware that it is the object of another's gaze, the attended develops a heightened sense of self.

There is a need for the voyeur to "see" things from the inside and the outside simultaneously - to be director and directed. Because of these shifting positions, the classic notion of victimization does not hold - the voyeur effectively becomes the slave to the object of delight. The "I" becomes the "it" and vice versa, and in this way the voyeur becomes actively passive. The "I" as the agent of the action is at the same time the receiver of the action. Parallels with this idea are to be found in Sadean philosophy.

Such role reversals subvert and invert traditional linkages between notions of power and victimization. Nietzsche suggests that we are led by 2 primitive drives: the desire for power and the emotion of fear. In describing fear as the absence of power, he was left with one motivating principle for all human actions - "the will to power." (16)
If one considers the origin of the word "voyeur" as a masculine noun in French, then the notion of gender is pertinent in this context.

Referents to Neo-Freudian theories of "penis envy", in this case, as perceived by a female author/voyeur (the French do not "feminise" this noun) could be interpreted as "power envy". If "powerlessness" is at the core of Freudian femininity, then voyeurism democratises and re-positions these gender imbalances for the voyeur/woman. The Nietzschean idea of a "will to power" suggests a way out of the labyrinth of nihilism. Foucault correctly states that "sexuality is far more of a positive product of power, than power was ever repression of sexuality. I believe that it is precisely these positive mechanisms that need to be investigated, and here one must free oneself of the juridical schematism of all previous characterisations of the nature of power." (17)

(16) Nietzsche, F. Thus Spoke Zarathustra.
Ibid.

(17) Foucault, M. "Truth and Method". The Foucault Reader.
Paul Rabinow (ed.) 62.

The need for self-empowerment can be assuaged by the restorative potential of **fetishising** - the most archaic form of identification. Although the displacement of parts of the body (inherent in the idea) could be considered as symbolic of loss of power, the fetishiser enthrones the object of fascination with the tenacity of the libido. (18) In literature the fetishist is a lover of fragments, quotations, turns of phrase (see page 114 for painterly equivalent). Roland Barthes spoke of his desire to "take responsibility for a certain hedonism, the return of a discredited philosophy, repressed for centuries." In "Le grain de la voix" he suggests a textual pleasure which must be taken and incorporated bodily - a wonderfully subversive idea, especially in a Cartesian scenario.

Narcissism, as an aspect of voyeurism and auto-voyeurism, shares certain concerns of fetishism - both give an insight into the structure of the ego. Psychologically, narcissism could suggest a childhood fear of being alone; self-absorption and self-obsession insure constant and intimate companionship. An extension of the narcissistic drive can be manifest in exhibitionism. The purveyed enjoying the pleasure of the other's gaze is obviously the reverse side of the voyeuristic coin. Barthes suggests that the body expresses our deepest and truest nature, beyond superficial differences of cultural conditions. Through ideas relating to the fetish, narcissism and exhibitionism, the voyeur seeks hedonistic fulfilment. (These ideas will be extended in elaborations on notions of "orgy". Part IIe)

(18) Freud, S. "Development and Regression".
Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.
Pelican Library. 392.

Finally, one could consider that the voyeur has access to any scenario through focus and attention. The implication is that we are living in a "glass house" - accessible to any gaze. This becomes a revolutionary position for the viewed, which ensures a discretion of existence. Aware of the voyeur's interest, one's sense of self is heightened, and one aspires to be at one's "most". This idea is "also an intoxication, a moral exhibitionism that we badly need." (19) The voyeur acknowledges that there are two manifestations of reality - the mortal and the sublime, and that positive and negative forces are always and simultaneously with us. The voyeur suggests an erotics of life as a way of encountering the world.

Perhaps a more comfortable and safe way of negotiating the process of self examination has been suggested here by one's attachment to a system of language. Language can be regarded as a series of strategic positionings which obfuscate the lived moment, and the eternal voyaging in search of meaning is an approximation of convoluted moments. However, the voyeur enjoys the pleasure of contact with the outside "skin" which is formed by these veils and mimetic layers of cite.

(19) Benjamin, W. "Surrealism". One Way Street and other writings.
Thetford Press Ltd.

Ultimately, in the desire for completeness, and in the search for an idealised unity of forces, the voyeur realises the futility of the endeavour, yet is magnetised to continue on the treadmill of yearning. This constant yearning, whether physical, intellectual or emotional, is a mantle which exists over this artist's works.

Formally and pragmatically however, aspects of self have necessitated stylistic evolutions which have meaning only in time. Endless possibilities of pictorial image-making have compelled this painter to physically explore inherent qualities of oil paint. Certain contemporary artists equally raise questions of heterogeneity.

Thus I have focussed on the work of the painter Gerhard Richter and artist Sherrie Levine in order to understand the potential of the hybrid approach to art-making.

PART I (b)

**MULTIPLICITY IN CONTEXT - THE WORK OF GERHARD RICHTER
AND SHERRIE LEVINE**

The great seduction and hence personal resonance of Gerhard Richter and Sherrie Levine's work is that it brings into question canonical conceptualizations of art. Clearly, a number of candidates could have successfully illuminated the idea of contrasting approaches and I am not enforcing a finite, hierarchical order of preference - merely an emotional "interest". Richter (b 1932 in Dresden) is Cologne-based, and Levine (b 1947 in Hazeltown, Pennsylvania) lives and works in New York, thus generationally and geographically they reflect interesting political and cultural differences.

Both share certain reservations about Modernism - however each artist's oeuvre has physically evolved in different directions. Klaus Honnef has described Richter's work as "breaks in style as a stylistic principle". This, together with the fact that he has singlemindedly explored the possibilities of painting over a 30-year period, makes Richter's understanding have specific resonance in terms of the potential of paintings to be conveyors of their own realities.

Levine has been described as "...perhaps the shrewdest of those who redefined the Duchampian joke about the mutability of Context as a statement about the death of art. It was Levine's single insight to see that the utopian styles of modern art had become the equivalents of urinals and bicycle wheels and bottleracks." (20) She has consequently frequently considered issues relating to Barthes' notion of the 'death of the author'.

(20) Varnadoe & Gopnik 1991. High and low.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. 391.

Painting could aspire to the condition of photography, providing not merely a simulacrum of reality, but by becoming a reality itself.

Amalgamation of snapshots into painting relativised and subverted the category of High Art, as it questioned the social origins of certain artistic practices and the socio-economic status of the products' recipients. Use of amateur photography (a device of Richter's from the 50's) also reminded the viewer that these were in fact "ready-mades" and could not be attributed to any particular author. He became both consumer and producer in his exploration of the trace of reality residing in photography and what was for him the reality of painting. (My recent re-contextualisation of personal photographs and memorabilia is concerned with the same debates). Photography has the potential of the ready-made object to free painting from its representational function. The Duchampian notion of the ready-made, by definition manufactured and non-unique, subverts notions of originality and artistic creativity.

As with Richter, I feel that the body of painting consists of a series of layers of reality. In his case, the first layer is photographic, the photograph itself retaining the material vestige of its subject. In subsequent layers, that material vestige is transformed into the material reality of painting itself, and it's details are examined.

Sherrie Levine also addresses issues pertaining to photography, but specifically through the annexation of pre-existing images. In 1981 she literally photographed photographs of great, paternalistic figures in the history of photography. Although there is very little difference between the originals and Levine's in product and content, the displacement of historical context forces the viewer to attach different meaning to images.

In exposing culture's institutionalization of the image, she questions notions of connoisseurship and commodity. When an object is isolated, photographed, framed and positioned in a museum/gallery context, it is invested with greater value than an illustration in a book. Jean Fisher suggests that this process "...transforms the status of the image from information to souvenir." She further elaborates that:
"The Souvenir is that which stands (in) for that which is ostensibly absent; its value is the nostalgic desire it embodies, and is therefore always in excess of that of the thing itself and only relative to the extent of an investment in it.(22)

Sherrie Levine asserts that contemporary art should incorporate "...an almost philological scepticism, should be scholarly, critical and cross-disciplinary, not just a collection of unrelated quotations." (23)

Thus, appropriation of existing works puts Levine in the role of dealer, curator and critic - everything **but** creative artist. (Currently she is more interested in exploring traditions of authorship and ownership, and the dialectic nature between these two terms) Originality becomes a trope - a figure of speech - that element which has historically formed the constant sub-text of modernism.

(22) Fisher, J. 1984. Sherrie Levine. Artforum.
April '84. 84.

(23) Silverthorne, T. 1985. Sherrie Levine. Artforum.
January '85. 85-86.

Although Richter and Levine apply photography in different ways, their actual approach to the medium is illuminating. What is more vital for me however, is the overwhelming hybrid mix of works which constitutes the output of both artists. Richter has maintained a worklist since 1962, which chronologizes over 700 works.

The universal inclusion of all his paintings in this worklist operates in opposition to the distinct subgroups within Richter's oeuvre, which resist analysis as individual units in relationship to the whole. It is astounding to note the volume and thematic variety of his output, especially as the majority of the work is oil paint on classic, quadrilinear, canvas supports.

Sub-groups within his oeuvre are easily identified by their limited characteristics - (photopictures, townscapes, colour charts, greys and sea-scapes) - yet these characteristics are generally perceived in their differences to a common core of artistic activity. This perceived variety of visual products, has segmented work into groups judged distinct from one another and obstructing focus on the artist as originator. Personally, it seems that his pictures have unmistakeable characteristics which make his paintings and methodology instantly recognizable. Within a wider context, his means have hardly been emulated and this suggests an irreducible reservoir of identity that paradoxically makes them the product of one hand, whatever their outward differences and opposition stylistic orthodoxy. I also share a particular affinity towards his stubbornly reactionary stance on a self-imposed insistence on **painting** as a vehicle for artistic activity.

Sherrie Levine's approach to artmaking is also multi-dimensional, however her products manifest in a greater variety of disciplines, (space not permitting elaboration for the purposes of this dissertation). The nature of both Richter and Levine's work is in part determined by the art- theoretical context in which they are set.

Ironically, the destruction which establishes constellations of meaning through time and reproduction, is re-constituted by the physical presence of the two artists' work in a manner akin to Modernism's transcendentalism. Effectively, works at their best, have an auratic presence which forces many theoretical debates to come full circle. One could recognise in the production a strong, Reinhardesque resistance to reproduction and theory, which seems retardataire but perhaps allows a certain resonance to Gerhard Richter's journal entry dated 24.10.90.:

"It does not seem useful that we become fewer and fewer, and come to an end when we have learned so much. Over and over again, later generations have to strive for decades to regain a standard of experience long since reached before." .

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and Watson.
Art in America, March 1986. 145-146.

PART II

Art schools in the late 60's and 70's seemed to endorse specific processes and methodologies in the production of art. Artists, whilst rejecting the rhetoric of the previous generation, kept much of its practice which included the purist avoidance of representation, and the interest in the monochrome field. Since my concerns did not fit into these categories (Pop Art and Photorealism were equally not personally compelling), it appeared that, as a figure-painter, I needed a rationale or some justification for making certain kinds of images. The "crisis of representation" which has been essential to postmodernist thinking, has actually been seen throughout history - it was even acted out in theatres of antiquity, and perhaps Western philosophy can be regarded as a footnote to the Greeks.

Internationally, most modernist critics had banished representational art as inherently sentimental and debased. The Pop movement re-introduced figuration significantly by quoting images from popular culture. However, philosophically, emotionally and formally this was not primarily my milieu.

As Gilles Deleuze said in conversation: "there's no question of difficulty or understanding: concepts are exactly like sounds, colours or images, they are intensities which suit you or not, which are acceptable or aren't acceptable. Pop philosophy. There's nothing to understand, nothing to interpret".(24)

(24) Deleuze G. Dialogues. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam. Columbia University Press, 1987. 4

It was not that I was defiant of the term "mainstream" - rather indifferent to it. However, art cannot be made from life alone, not even from particular psychological methodologies - more than anything else, it is made from art. Irrespective of the artist's démarche, an artist sets out to re-define definitions of art - a process which is constantly, like a pendulum, re-examined through history.

At 25, recently graduated and as a mother of two, reality was overwhelmingly domestic. The microcosm of immediate surroundings had little relation to the outside world. It followed therefore (and possibly as an escapist device) that I engaged in the so-called "figurative" style in order to re-invest quotidien objects with meaning. One was always aware however, that all representational art is about illusion, just as abstraction is a representation. By definition, representational art derives its subject matter from nature - in this case through close observation. However the product is not comparable to the standard of optical projection.

Arnheim suggests that "as long as the deviations are considered compatible with the intention of meeting the standard, theorists have been willing to explain them as the effects of stylistic convention".(25)

(25) Arnheim R. (1972) New Essays on the Psychology of Art.
University of California Press, California, 1986. 160.

(a) Vegetable Series:

In the mid 70's, vegetables or fruit became monumental "quattrocento" forms which were carefully modelled in the round, creating the illusion of organic, space-displacing solids. By co-joining these familiar forms - initially through meticulous pencil drawing from nature - a series of "Object Portraits" were made. Paperworks were invariably tripartite or consisted of 5 sequential drawings; thus establishing an early affinity for certain numbers (3, 5, 7). These newly created hybrids, endowed with legends that identified them as particular personalities, became source material for more paintings. Thus, several single images were made on similar, relatively small formats, (studio space was inaccessible) over a period of five years.

(1) Self-Portrait (1976), oil on canvas 92 x 122cm, introduces the idea of Man as part of the cycles of Nature in the **Taoist** Spirit of Naturalism. Tao is relative to the philosophical context in which it is being used - here the unifying principle of the cosmos, consisting of ceaseless change. Objects are in a transient phase and constantly metamorphising along interweaving strands of existence. The Chinese conceived of two principles of cosmic energy (Yin/Yang) that are constantly opposing yet never separated and are "incarnated as much in the physical and emotional qualities of the human sexes as in the whole enveloping universe. Man and cosmos are inextricably interwoven; and human sexual relations are an image of relationships within the universe".(26)

The centrally -located, wistfully melancholic vegetable alter-ego here is part of a lexicon of totemic creatures which raised questions about **identity** and **sexuality**, as well as exploring the mechanics of traditional painting, in an attempt to reconcile patterns of energy within the individual in relationship to the surroundings.

(26) Rawson P. (1981) Oriental Erotic Art.
Gallery books, New York. 1981. 76, 77



(1) *Self Portrait* (1976) Oil on canvas. 92 x 122cm

(2)The Dinner Party (1979) oil on canvas, 172 x 272cm, is pivotal in releasing me from the allegorical crutch of certain images which had colluded into creating its own symbols, heroes and rituals. This alfresco meal is reminiscent of Manet's "Déjeuner sur l'herbe". It questions issues of **gender**, the difference between **naked** and **nude** (27), as well as inverting traditional viewing transactions.

An aura of theatricality introduced in this work calls to mind Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the "Carnavalesque", where within a literary format he produced a polyvocal metaphor of social reality. (He sees the Carnival as a democratic, inclusive phenomenon where all sectors of society celebrate their common liberation from norms which preserve inequities and distances social classes). This formal, frontal composition suggests a "staged" performance which requires elaborate signifying codes and intricate aesthetic contrivances to fulfil its function. Thus, the Halloween-type heads address my concern with **theatre** and the **mask** as an aspect of self which we offer to the world in an epiphany of the irrational.

(27) Berger J. (1972) Ways of Seeing.
Penguin Books.



→ 2, *Dinner Party*, 1979, Oil on canvas, 172 × 272 cm.

Compositionally, the bisecting horizontal plane of the checkered cloth emphasizes the horizontal/vertical rigour which can be infused with transcendental postulates. Stable, Renaissance, single-point perspective accommodates the realistically rendered hybrid fantasies in a wide-angled, cinematographic landscape. However, the rational, classical world is undermined by the enigmatic "dream-image" creatures reminiscent of Surrealism. The Hermetic Egg which is held by the right-hand figure in the work, encapsulates the alchemical motto "Solve et coagula" (dissolve & coagulate). The idea of changing body into spirit, and spirit into body; to volatilize that which is fixed, and to fix that which is volatile, is a concern of alchemy, but equally essential in dealing with the nature of painting. The androgenous aspect of the protagonists in this and many other personal works, recall Duchamp and Picabia's similar interest in androgyny as an occult signifier.

Theoretically, my task here has been to focus on the pictures iconographically in an attempt to contextualise subsequent work as it meanders to the present. It seems almost presumptuous to attempt to analyse the "Dinner Party" (title refers to the-then-controversial collaborative work of Judy Chicago) as its essence lies in its evocative and ambiguous nature.

The vegetable series of paintings used landscape as a fictional space to site figure and myth. A mirror was created wherein we could recognise personal qualities, fears and dreams, and ultimately our own bodies.

(b) Landscapes

The subsequent series of works deal ostensibly with landscape - the close association between the physical and psychological experience of painting a picture, and the physical and psychological experience of being in the landscape. The German Romantic philosopher Schlegel differentiated between an art which tends to an interior, and that which tends towards an exterior view, seeing them respectively as a poetry of possession and a poetry of desire.

The diptych (3) Cape Winter 1980 (oil on canvas 127 x 160cm) and (4) Protea 1980 (oil on canvas 127 x 152cm) can be considered as

(a) a representation of a state of mind, and

(b) as a representation of a particular geographical place (although not topographical) - a perception of the body in terms of a total situation.

Both are a painterly equivalent of Being-there - a mitigated form of pastoral or poetic landscape expressed by a "modern" sensibility of gestural brushstroke. Schlegel's poetry of desire is celebrated in Cape Winter by a verdant lushness and the sensuality of the male/female equivalents of the vegetation.

To be in the world is to have a **body** or to be a body - it follows that there is no existence without environment. Existentially, it is possible to imagine a non-material world where the familiar body present in the world of space and time can also be a speculative 'spiritual body'. Similarly, being-with-others also implies bodily existence. Sexuality in this context, can be regarded as a desire by an individual to transcend into a unity of being-with-the-other where the ecstatic sexual act would be an attempt at total sharing of being.

"The climactic **ecstasis** of sex by which persons become, in the biblical phrase 'one flesh', belongs within a constant **ecstasis** of a much broader kind whereby two persons interpenetrate each other's existences in innumerable ways and are involved in a 'total contact'. (28)

Thus eroticism becomes a desire for the transcendant through a reconciliation of separatenesses - a need to be not two but one. It reflects Buber's 'I-Thou' relation, rather than 'I-It'; where there is no exploitation by the "I" of the "It", rather a dream for total ecstasy and mutuality.

(28) Macquarrie, J. Existentialism.
Penguin. New York. 1972. 117.



(3) *Cape Winter* (1980) Oil on canvas. 127 x 160cm



(4) *Protea* (1980) Oil on canvas. 127 x 152cm

(4) Protea is an attempt to redeem this strange and exotic plant from the clichéd mechanics of the tourist industry. In reclaiming and recontextualising such a mythic and emblematic flower, one creates a poetry of possession, as well as one of desire - one that fights any "soft" and sentimental attitudes to landscape.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) proposed that angst is the fundamental experience in the making of art. The process is a reaction against the uprootedness of the modern subject, against the "essence" of technology and mass culture. He claimed that imagination and the temporal nature of man are the fundamental conditions that make understanding possible. Heidegger asserts that our relation to Being is manifested by angst. Angst obsesses and oppresses our Being-there since beyond anything we can say it defamiliarises all-that-is (in this case organic objects in nature). It corresponds to the **pour-soi in respect of his being**, of Sartre(29), and confronts us with the Nothing behind all the familiar "things" in our world. Angst is therefore the condition for the disclosure of what-is to Man.

Gradually one then discovers that the privileged mode in which to reveal and conceal this fundamental angst which silences us is precisely the work of art. Foucault extended the relationship between art and experience specifically through his research into madness and from a historical perspective. He speculated that artists, misunderstood by psychiatry, evolved a new relation to the language of poetry which could survive the whole history of the psychiatrisation of madness.(30) Nature seems to have provided the vocabulary, but art/psychology the syntax for the whole body of landscape works from 1979 - 1980.

(29) Macquarrie, J. Existentialism. Ibid.

(30) Foucault M. La Folie, l'absence d'oeuvre. La Table Ronde, 1964. No.196. 16.

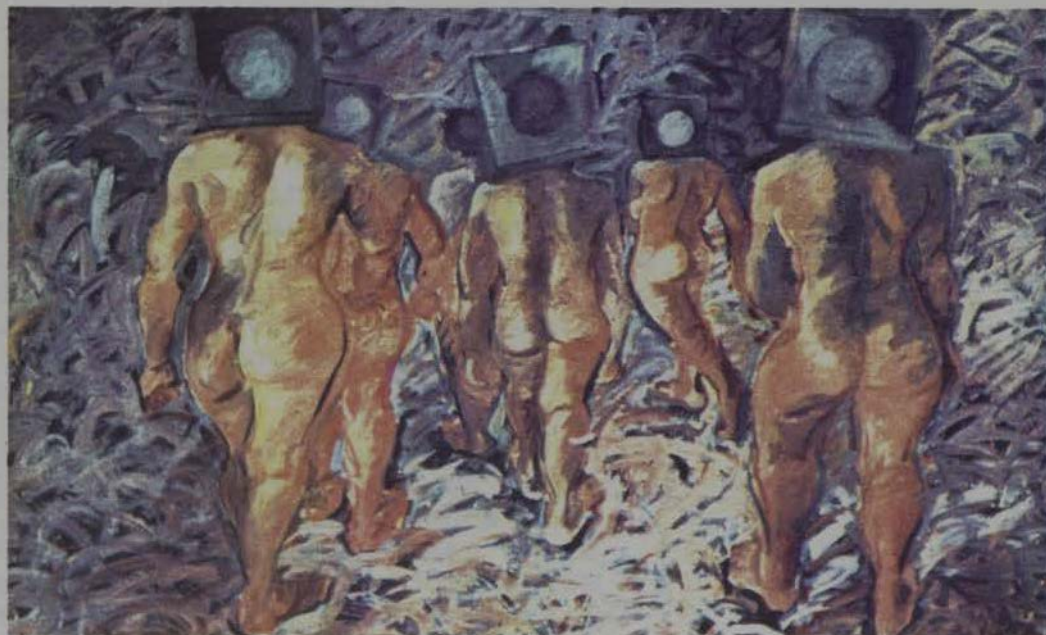
(c) Social Works

Fantastic, imaginary landscapes are extended and become the context for fictitious scenarios where simulations are enacted addressing societal conventions. Thus apparently 'anecdotal' pictures were satirically grouped together.

Gilles Deleuze observed: "Whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines and these lines are very varied in nature - of rigid segmentarity(and) At the same time, we have lines of segmentarity which are much more supple, as it were molecular. Many things happen on this second kind of line - becomings, micro-becomings, which don't even have the same rhythm as our 'History'"(31) This series from the 80's explores how the lines of segments representing human activities cross and overlap from their socially demarcated positions. It reflects responses of this author to the seemingly absurd in the human environment.

(5) Rugby at Newlands(1981) oil on canvas, 120 x 200cm
Formal construction undermines the sacrosanct aura of the institution of rugby. The mordantly satiric, iconographic edge questions the seriousness with which certain groups of men engage in the nation's national sport. Living in South Africa one still felt traces of a colonial heritage which on one hand allowed a predisposition to Puritanism and on the other created a resentment to government interference (or state sanctioning of certain sports). Finally, a "libertarian" position was adopted which reflected deep scepticism of these activities. Satirically, this woman/artist/commentator addressed orthodox, patriarchal values from a different perspective.

(31) Deleuze G. Dialogues. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam. Columbia University Press, 1987. 124



(6) Fashion Show (1981) Oil on canvas. 120 x 200cm



(5) Rugby at Newlands (1981) Oil on canvas. 120 x 200cm

(6) Fashion Show (1981) oil on canvas, 120 x 200cm, equally parodies group obsessions - the desire, by some, to be slender and stylish - a focus on aesthetics, irrespective of intellectual curiosity. The brut, expressionist exuberance of the paint handling plays havoc with socially-constructed ideas of sophistication and acceptability associated with the seduction of fashion and the media. Concerns with revealing and concealing (masking), conformity and gender are highlighted by this image.

Capitalism reproduces its **time** of production in equivalent, exchangeable units. The effect on labour is as Marx demonstrated, to reduce human existence to a mere shell of time. On the surface of society there develops a new pseudocyclical time, which downgrades daily aspects of existence as it expropriates what is left of natural cycles (day and night, work and weekly rest). If one considers "Fashion Show" as the mode of **spectacular time**, (relating to theatre and the spectacle), it can be seen as the time of the commodity and as a commercial presentation. There exists a contradiction between the real irreversibility of labour time in production and the pseudo cycles of fashion. The latter creates a false consciousness of time in the commodity system. The irony is in the fact that the fashion show hereby appropriates the labour system. This newly-formed dominant system even denies the right of people to grow old (pressure of media for eternal youth) and to die. The absence of death in a culture however is only a reflection of the real absence of life.(32) The idea of posturing and **lack** in the living is often explored by this artist. (see 45. "Marionette").

(32) Debord G. Society of the Spectacle. Rebell Press, Aim Publications. 1987

Roland Barthes looked semiologically at fashion in clothes. However his particular interest was "less the project of instituting semiology as science, than the pleasure of exercising a systematics." He claimed that semiology had become a kind of "intoxication".(33) The notion of pleasure relative to text in response to fashion is seductive to this artist.

Barthes also believes that the relations to the object (as in the ball in "rugby" works, the square blockheads in "Fashion Show") are essentially subjective ones. Sartre however would see non-human objects as threatening to one's existence and intrinsically meaningless. For Barthes these accoutrements would also be bearers of signs.

One could consider the object particularly in these Social Works as technologically orientated and reflecting mass fabrication in a consumer society. The object can thus be defined sociologically. Although not technologically fabricated, paintings are also co-opted by the effects of consumerism. Barthes extended Saussurian semiological system (one based on language or **langue**) and stated "The signified is the concept, the signifier is the acoustic image (which is mental) and the relation between concept and image is the sign (the word, for instance), which is a concrete entity".(34) Thus words facilitate, accommodate and elaborate endless systems of meaning relative to the object.

(33) Culler T. Barthes. (ed.) Frank Kermode. Fontana. 1990

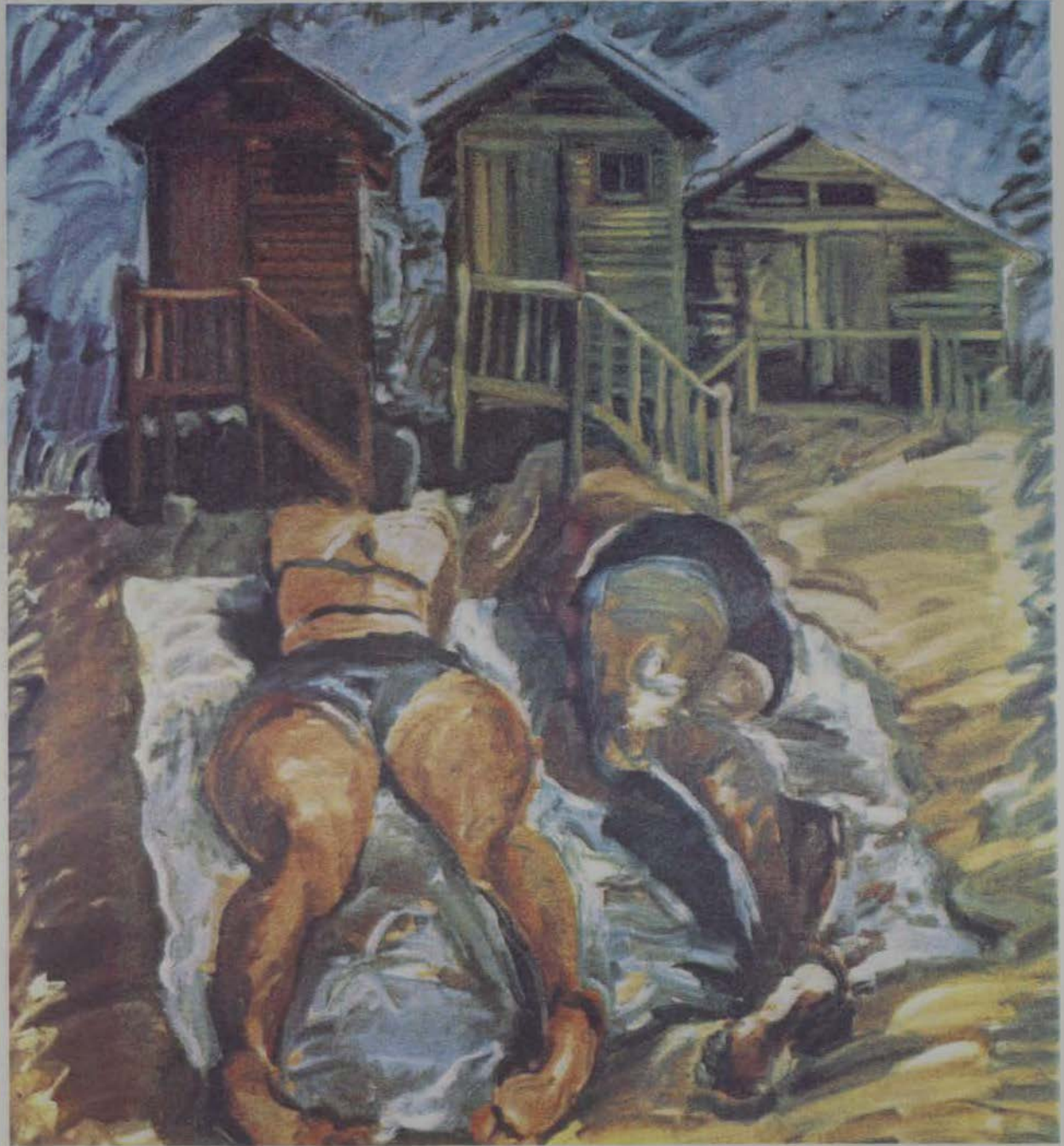
(34) Barthes R. Mythologies: Myth today. Paladin.
Grafton Books. 1987. 113

Apparently neutral (one is aware that the notion of real "neutrality" is a myth) sites were also interesting for certain social commentary, particularly juxtaposed in exhibition context (which created a double juxtaposition). Specific locations were examined from an unorthodox standpoint - creating an unsettling, ambiguous quality which could assist to dismantle clichéd prejudice.

(7) Muizenberg Cabins. 1981 (oil on canvas, 160 x 150cm).

A nostalgic historic landmark - the wooden changing-boxes on the beach of the Indian ocean demarcate the location physically. Effectively, today these wooden cabins only exist in our memory, which acts as a connection between the past and the present. (It is the area within one's internal being and our conception of the nature of human experience and history). In re-appraising these works, there is an attempt at an understanding of how one functions in the present. Our relationship with memory through images is complex and probably has less to do with truth than with contingency, substitution and fabrication. The simulacrum of the 'Muizenberg Cabins' seems more "real" than ever, and the work questions our position relative to a literal and imaginary standpoint.

Architectural elements metaphorically act as indicators for masculine principals, particularly in opposition to the organic, feminine allusions of other objects. The tension which is built up between these elements suggests both an affinity and a contradiction of multi-layered sub-texts.



(7) Muizenberg Cabins (1981) Oil on canvas. 160 x 150cm

Greater resonance and meaning is created both socially and topographically by the following works.

(9) Clifton(1981) Oil on canvas. 93 x 152cm.

(8) Muizenberg(1981) Oil on canvas. 150 x 168cm.

The differences between the socially constructed games people play become immediately evident in these paintings. Unlike emphasis on body-beautiful and an eroticised, coquettish interchange (primarily the currency at Clifton), "Muizenberg" consists of stout, robust figures in unflattering swimwear. Inter-personal relationships, dictated by site, are illuminated by the juxtaposition of figurative elements.

The telephone - forming the heads and faces of figures in "Conversation, Sea Point Ladies" (page 56), could imply functionality in communication, luxury, femininity - abuse of the phone in terms of need, gossip, scandal - or operate purely in pictorial formal terms . Similarly the hot-water flask in "Muizenberg" could suggest function, need and the habits of a certain group.

Subsequently, many other white, middle class activities and "pastimes" equally came under scrutiny, and created visual responses which had an almost cathartic effect on the painter.



(8) Muizenberg (1981) Oil on canvas. 150 x 168cm



(9) Clifton (1981) Oil on canvas. 93 x 152cm

(10) Conversation, Sea Point Ladies(1981) oil on canvas

140 x 160cm, illuminates a love/hate dichotomy in terms of object (telephone) and specific social group. Finally, the whole body of work was controversially shown at the

Sea Point Synagogue Hall - a context which gave the mordant commentary of the paintings a stronger edge. Thus, my already established concerns with **location** and the force of **curatorial attention** were heavily imprinted as a subtext for personal systems of meaning. The notion that architecture and topography can create socio-political overtones which affect readings and interpretations, was stressed for this author by these experiences.

Benita Munitz wrote: "Dealing with the exhibition as a whole, the content of the work is such that I find it hard to think of a venue more suitable. These paintings are a celebration of life not as it is idealized in so many pseudo-religious renderings, but life in the raw...." (Cape Times, June 1981).



10. Consortation, Sea point ladies. Oil on canvas.

(d) The Voyeur

During the early 80's instead of looking outwards, my gaze turned inward and I began to explore aspects of my femaleness. This artist is not the ideal feminist protagonist, however there is certain ferocity in engaging with specific content from a female perspective. These works do not create a passive respository for a man's gaze; rather as active perceiver, this woman painter scrutinizes her own being and often the sexual being. (patriarchal construction of feminity had been one where Woman does not speak - she is spoken.)

Gérard Xuriguéra wrote in Paris "....there is an obsessive fixation with the female body, a sort of feverishly demanded self-confrontation coming from the strange relationship - sometimes fascinated, sometimes repulsive - we live with our anatomy".(35)
Aesthetically sensual, voluptuous female nudes were invariably placed in shallow space, although each figure psychologically inhabited a private space.

The dehumanising character of art can perhaps disappear only when woman stops being that strange, alienated being who can be circumscribed by the gaze.
"In women's new relationship with herself she is Many, or rather she occasionally melts for moments into pure movement. In these moments femininity is as distanced from her as masculinity and the world of stereotyped sex characteristics. It is this movement, which for so long was a dream-like movement, which expands wherever it wakes into consciousness; an external action which becomes internal and thus a mirror-image action, an action which reverses sides as a mirror does".(36)

(35) Xuriguéra, G. Une iconographie de la Volupté. Cimaïse art et architecture actuels. Paris. 1985.178-179.

(36) Lenk, E. The Self-reflecting Woman from Feminist Aesthetics. Gisela Echer (ed.) The Woman's Press. 1985. 53.



(11) *Chambre-à-coucher* (1982) Oil on canvas. 101 x 151cm



(12) Judita's (1982) Oil on canvas.

- (11) Chambre-à-coucher(1982) oil on canvas. 101 x 151cm
- (12) Judita's(1982) oil on canvas.
- (13) Wolpe Invitation II" (1983) oil on canvas, 170 x 332cm.

All formed part of a body of work which concretely introduced the theme of the "Voyeur" to my oeuvre.
(Refer Part I)

Western art has historically regarded the female body through the sexually possessive male gaze. The difficulty for the depiction of the female nude is enforced by the reference, either in imitation or critique, to traditional models. However, this painter searched for the passion to declare forcefully a revolutionary willingness to confront antiseptic classical stereotypes of "permissible" female nudes.

The desire was to bring the sexual content of the nude tradition out of the closet. Woman here has no limits. Historic passivity is not re-inforced, nor is sexualization for the delectation of the male gaze. (The liberating Romantic overtones of this approach recall a strain which began with William Blake and included Olive Schreiner and Rainer Maria Rilke.)

A self-confessed woman/artist/voyeur thus inverted traditional mechanisms of viewing both inside and outside the painted format. The author was equally intrigued by the general paranoia about the **reversability of watching and being watched.** Determinations of sameness and difference (as in the male and the female), and the external and the internal (as in the mask-like faces of the voyeur in juxtaposition with the private female genitalia) were explored in these works. It was a political assertion which attempted to embrace a vision of an emancipated woman, reclaiming eroticism as part of human nature.



(13) Wolpe Invitation II (1983) Oil on canvas. 170 x 332cm

(e) Erotic Works

In the mid-80's, literal, graphic representations of the voyeur were abandoned, but I persisted in implicating the audience voyeuristically by the overt sexual overtones of the paintings.

John Gruen stated: "They appear to be the fantasies of a mind fixated upon the dramas of sexual passion. And yet, the ambiance of this sexuality seems devoid of prurience." (37)

Most work from this period is untitled as I felt that the images were already overstating themselves, and the mystery of silence, privacy and intimacy had to be maintained. The Body is also seen as a social construct. The physical form had been shaped by prevailing attitudes - not only in terms of biology but also gender. There is an awareness of one's own, individual experience of body, and an understanding of the possible manipulation by external forces. These works are celebrations reclaiming one's own turf. This painter legitimizes a feminine desire, sensuality and sexuality in a Baroque body-consciousness. The idea of woman/artist is in a way linked to Battaille's theme of sovereignty - the modernist sublime being not of the hero, but of the artist.

On a carnal level, I addressed primal human concerns: the difference between self and the other, between social and personal, between that which can be controlled and that which cannot. But Body always unites us and separates us - ultimately and irretrievably.

(37) Gruen, J. 1985. Exhibition catalogue.
Gabrielle Bryers Gallery, Soho. New York. 1985.

Pierre Restany describes this vision as "... that of a woman in the plenitude of her femininity, and this exasperated femininity expresses both its self-sufficiency and its solitude: woman in love with her body and who knows how to use it." (38)

The urge to trespass bounds of propriety by bringing bounds of eroticism into the foreground is a liberating attempt to go beyond a destiny of petit Bourgeois parameters, constructed by a patriarchal society.

Figures at this time were constructed into tight, dense, compact structures which suggested orgiastic profusion. Originally in Ancient Greece, "orgy" suggested secret, ritualistic rites in honour of Dionysus, where the focus was on ecstatic experience. [ekstasis (gr.) - the state of being beside oneself with anxiety, astonishment, fear, or passion]. Karl Toepfer prefers to express orgy as a phenomenon which is more precise and complicated (and has greater resonance in relationship to this artist's work).

These scenarios were enacted in a time-frame which spoke of the night - the implication being that day is related to notions of labour, whereas the night is open-ended and allows for freedom and organic evolutions. This temporal preference is constantly a subtext for this author's production.

(38) Restany, P. 1986. Exhibition catalogue.
Gallerie Georges Fall, Paris. 1986.



14 Untitled, 1984. Oil on canvas, 120 x 160 cm.



25

Untitled XI 1984 Oil on canvas 160 x 170 cm



26 Untitled X (1983) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

Toepfer's proposal is that an ORGY is

(1).. a manifestation of excesses which must be hidden to be experienced.

(2)The motives for excess and secrecy have a metaphysical foundation in the desire to get closer to God, to feel a divine energy within the body.

(3).. entails an erotic, carnal pleasure in worshipping someone.

(4)..involves group of bodies ..

(5).. type of aesthetic performance, which develops theatrical qualities to achieve ecstatic effects.

(6)The secrecy associated with orgiastic performance indicates that the dominant function of an orgy is aesthetic, rather than ritualistic or religious... it signifies a current of exclusivity within a society, a magnitude of pleasure reserved only for an initiated class of persons.(39)

The idea of orgy has been exploited in popular, contemporary cinematographic tradition. This medium pervasively incorporates signifiers of aesthetic performance, elaborated by ideas of waste, cost, luxury, torpor, decadence and finally catastrophic social pathologies in the aftermath. Ecstasy, however, is also possible to the extent that life has another, equally intense, public meaning than that which is ecstatic.

(39) Toepfer, Karl. Theatre, Aristocracy and Pornocracy.
The Orgy Calculus. Paj Publications, N.Y. 1991. 10,11.



27

Enthirada VIII, 1984, oil on canvas, 100 x 170 cm



28 Untitled, 1985. Oil on canvas. 160 × 170 cm.

There is a fascination with the "mysterious" authority of painting to mediate the relation between feeling and action which could invent a mode of representation that objectified meaning through formal devices. "Orgy" suggests pleasure and excess, a site of transgression where the magnitude of desire can never be satiated.

Bataille states: "The stirrings within us have their own fearful excesses; the excesses show which way these stirrings would take us. They are simply a sign to remind us constantly that death, the rupture of the discontinuous individualities to which we cleave in terror, stands there before us more real than life itself."(40)

It follows that orgy (as an impossible search for fulfilment) exists as an object of fantasy - a scenario which is represented by many paintings from the mid-80's.

Antonin Artaud's (1896 - 1948) theatre of cruelty(41) (in which the body is the dominant signifier of feeling) proposed that ecstatic experience created a therapeutic condition - a healing - for the pathological body, which through the release of masochistic violence could restore theatre to

a primal ritual function. As with Artaud's oeuvre, I do not make a clear distinction between the body-as-painted image and the body of the spectator - particularly through the complicity of voyeurism. The cathartic potential of these works co-opts all active participants and protagonists.

- (40) Bataille, Georges. *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality*.
Trans. Mary Dalwood. City Lights Books.
San Francisco. 1986. 19.
- (41) Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and its' Double*.
Trans. Mary Caroline Richards.
Grove Press, New York. 1958

The expressionist gesture, strident colour and inner tension (spannung) of the work invoked Restany to describe my women as
"....Ingres' odalisques seen by Beckmann, her nudes express the same brutal and obsessive vitality. She shares with the German painter the same sense of monumentality of the flesh."(42)

(14)Untitled (1984) Oil on canvas. 120 x 156cm.
This particular work is highlighted as it was pivotal in my evolutionary development in terms of resolving pictorial space. Although the format is densely packed with all the appearance of convincing Renaissance perspective - the middle ground has been eliminated. Indubitable Cartesian logic is replaced by the works own pictorial demands - an approach which continues in present work.

In the 1600's Descartes claimed:
"If there is any certainty...it must concern those things which are clearly perceived by the intellect.(43)

(42) Restany, Pierre. Francine Scialom Greenblatt.
La peinture au féminin.
L'union du physique et du mental.
Editions André Sauret - Monte Carlo. 1989.

(43) Descartes from **Second Replies** (VII 146, HR2 42) in
Descartes: The project of pure enquiry.
Bernard Williams.
Penguin Books. 1990. 184.

- (18) "Untitled (1985)" 130 x 200 cm
- (19) "Untitled (1985)" 160 x 170 cm
- (20) "Untitled (1985)" 170 x 200 cm
- (21) "Untitled 1985" Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm.
- (22) "Wagner (1985)" Oil on canvas, 160 x 170 cm
- (23) "Egypt (1985)" Oil on canvas, 170 x 200 cm

are all linked by the inclusion of a black and white checked or striped fabric element. The palette was purposefully reduced to incorporate a patterned flag-political metaphor, male or female equivalent, gamesboard device, religious symbol - all or none of these signifiers - into the paintings. Colour was subsequently re-introduced into the checkered effects (as had been much earlier in the "Dinner Party" 1979). However, the concern with colour as opposed to a restricted palette, as well as the use of black and white as a rapprochement to drawing, is constantly evidenced in this author's production. Similarly, allusions to the night are also in operation.

As always, the erotic subtext is to be read in all the work. Eroticism is to be understood as from Bataille's perspective....."the disequilibrium in which the being consciously calls his own existence in question."(44)

Bataille's heterogeneous writings have a Nietzschean and Sadean origin in the going "beyond" good and evil which is echoed in Artaud's theatre.

(44) Bataille G. Ibid. 31.



180
Untitled, 1985. Oil on canvas. 130 x 200 cm.



Untitled, 1985. Oil on canvas, 160 x 170 cm.



Untitled, 1985. Oil on canvas. 170 x 200 cm



Untitled, 1985. Oil on canvas. 160 x 170 cm.



Wagner. 1985. Oil on canvas. 160 x 170 cm.



Egypt, 1985. Oil on canvas, 170 x 200 cm

(f) Narratives

In the late 80's, these highly charged, eroticised images were re-contextualized into paintings which included greater narrative potential.

The (24) "Play of Daniel" - a medieval operatic reference - 1987 (oil on canvas, 165 x 295 cm) continued the celebration of woman in her full flesh and blood corporeality. Simultaneously, this painter explored ways of unifying the space of architecture, sculpture and the body, while creating a bizarre and elaborate private universe.

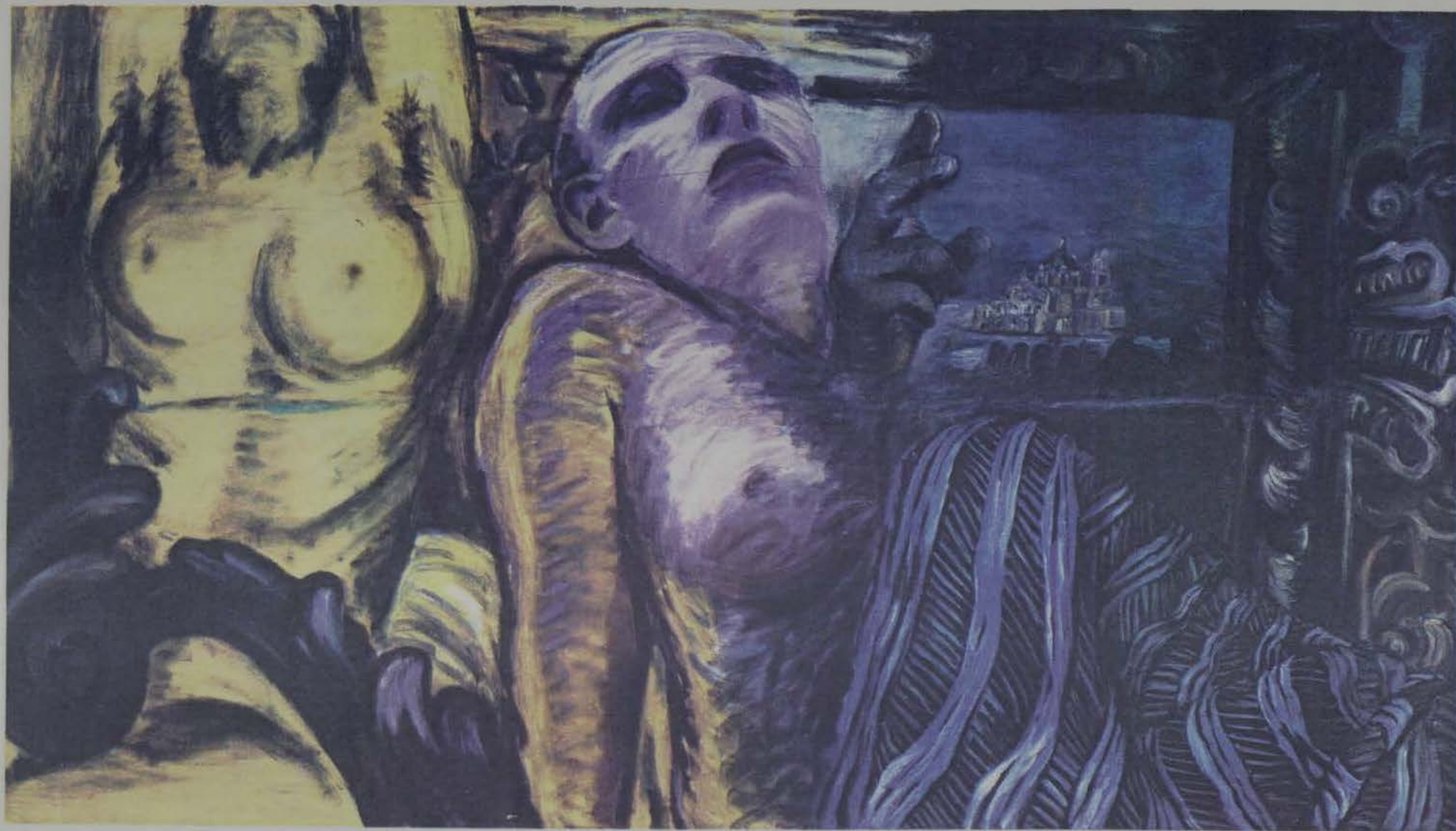
The body hair of the powerful, yellow figure on the left, sets off fascinating social alarms - especially in Western, sanitised, antiseptic, Americanized societies. A woman who keeps her body hair is harder to "deify" in a glamourized, media-conscious milieu. It is thus more difficult to convert her body into a commodifiable "object" which would pornographically jettison her personality, and reduce her sense of power.

The complexity and ambiguity of this work resists instantaneousness of perception - firstly because of the vast, cinematographic, rectangular format, and secondly in the evocative quality of the figures and landscape. These speak equivocally of sexuality and innocence, connection and solitude, the mundane and the spiritual. The trompe l'oeil line or "tear" which horizontally divides the painting centrally, equally stresses heaven and earth postulates.

Baudrillard, always interested in simulations and the orders of simulacra, describes trompe l'oeil devices as: "...not merely stand-ins which have been displaced from the principal scene, but reappearances that haunt the emptiness of a scene. This seduction is not an aesthetic one, that of painting and of a likeness, but an acute and metaphysical seduction, one derived from the nullification of the real. The unreal inversion of these haunted and metaphysical objects contrasts completely with the representative space of the Renaissance."(45)

The male principle is suggested by the architectonic frame-like element which contains an imaginary landscape on the right. Traditional gender roles are questioned by the strength and musculature of the female nudes and conversely, by the lush, beautiful, decorative, "feminised" quality of the geometric/male frame. The implication is that clichéd definitions of gender are inaccurate as each has possible attributes, weaknesses and strengths of the other.

(45) Baudrillard, J. On Seduction. from Selected Writings.
Mark Poster (ed.) Stanford University Press.
Stanford, California. 1988. 154.



Play of Daniel, 1987. Oil on canvas, 165 × 295 cm.

(25) "Leda and the Swan"(1987) Oil on canvas. 165 x 295cm

This title primarily alludes to mythological referents.

However the work makes a case for the possibility of various styles of painting co-existing on the same format in an attempt to resist simple classification.

(Paradoxically this approach also becomes a convention.)

In drawing on, yet subverting the art historical heritage, one can avoid any specific allegiance becoming adulatory. This and subsequent stylistic multiplicity allows access to thoughts from all directions.

Yve-Alain Bois said: "There is a history of forms, structures, writings, which has its own particular time - or rather times: it's precisely this plurality which seems threatening to some people."

- However, a multiplicity of approaches is valid for this artist. The dynamic of visual and critical thought is many-layered, which suggests that human, terrestrial and celestial connotations are interchangeable and equivalent. In this work my main concern is art, an attempt is made to be a craftsperson of ideas, with irreverence and curiosity.

I question definitions of art, originality and artistic technique, by recontextualising elements from N.Y.

Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Tachisme and Neo-classicism on a shallow, blue ground reminiscent of Yves Klein, with irreverence and curiosity.

These 'narrative' works constantly allude to infinite space and freedom which night-time offers. Notions of labour, restriction and deadlines are thus denied.



Leda and the Swan 1988 Oil on canvas 165 x 295 cm

(26) Dreigroschenoper [1987] Oil on canvas. 165 x 295cm

The title is a musical referent to Bertold Brecht's "Threepenny Opera" wherein interpersonal, social scenarios are highlighted by the author. As with all Brecht's oeuvre, no moralising high-ground is adopted, which makes him particularly seductive for this painter.

Three spacial or temporal zones are visually demarcated to accommodate different stylistic concerns. Large, yellow righthand profile (seen again in 'Field-day for Umberto Eco' 1992) calls to mind mystical/ecstatic allusions. The often-used grid-like formation - implying restriction and liberation - metaphorically separates the private from the public as it introduces a mathematical element in the organic whole.

Centrally, figurative conjunctions incorporate cubist, geometric, abstract and anthropomorphic aspects creating a Surrealist, theatrical totality. The top void/heaven/dream space, reminiscent of earlier erotic works, anticipates the Void in 'Marionette' 1991.



Drei Groschenoper. 1987. Oil on canvas. 165 × 295 cm.

(27) Is Flower-painting, Painting? (1987) oil on canvas.

165 x 295cm

The moral dilemma of the artist in the face of the perfection of Nature, and the issue of representation are alluded to in this apparently tripartite work. A stylised, magnified and exuberantly coloured solution is juxtaposed alongside a closely, observed, naturalistic rendition of flowers in the central panel. Renaissance illusion of depth is suggested by the "window" through which figures are seen floating/swimming/ standing in a blue, watery space. On the right foreground, an anthropomorphic plant form is constructed by cubist(46) displacements of space and volume. The trompe l'oeil "tears" created by 2 vertical lines as well as the central "grid" system, demarcate space - formal, physical space of painting, but also the "hyperspace" in operation between viewer and image. Many traditional schools of painting are referred to simultaneously on the same format.

(46) See Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism.
(ed.) William Rubin. Museum of Modern Art.
New York. 1989.

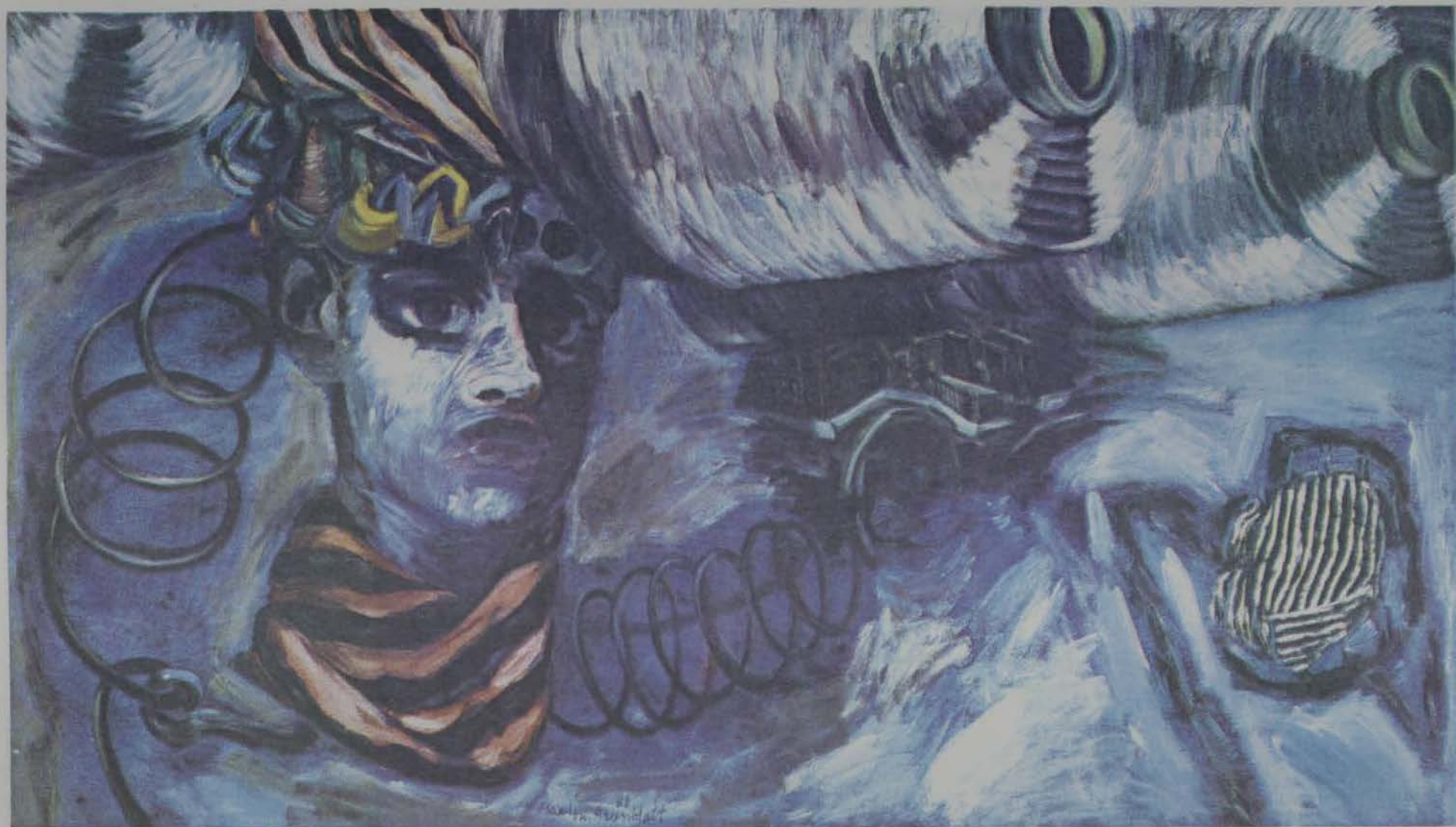


Is it a flower painting? 1987 Giffon Xentrus 105 x 205 cm

(28) Bridge over Troubled Water (1987/1988)
Oil on canvas. 165 x 295cm

Reference is made to a popular song from the 60's by Simon and Garfunkle in this title. Anglo-Saxon audiences understand the metaphoric implications of the name as well as the symbolic iconography. This work marks the "coming of age" in the evolution of the history of unionisation in South Africa. A new chapter was being written by the protagonists in this complex negotiation of power, privilege and economic exchange.

Subsequently, numerous other "narrative" pictures all addressed a variety of concerns in a heterogeneity of stylistic mythologies during this period.



Bridge over troubled water 1987-1988. Oil on canvas. 105 x 205 cm.

(g) Site Specific Works

In 1989 I was asked by the education department of the South African National Gallery to participate in the "Invited Artists Program".

12 Pictures were initiated (all oil on canvas and 160 x 170cm) which would incorporate architectural elements to be found within a radius of 100 metres of the National Gallery. These included the Gardens Synagogue, as well as the National Gallery itself.

The author had always aspired to a 'spiritual' dimension in her painting - irrespective (or in spite of) the content.

It was felt that pictures besides expressing their own reality, should have another worldliness.

Bataille stated that "Human eroticism differs from animal sexuality precisely in this, that it calls inner life into play." (47)

The artist had hoped to sensually incorporate elements from a religious site and speak of spiritual belief systems as:

As with Bataille, "Eroticism is primarily a religious matter and the present work is nearer to 'theology' than to scientific or religious history." (48)

(47) Bataille Georges. 1957. Eroticism, Death & Sensuality. City Lights Books. San Francisco. 1986. 29.

(48) Bataille G. Ibid. P.31.

(29) "Hommage à mon Père" (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

is a double commemorative work.

Symbolically, the 'Neir ha Tamid' or Eternal Light is a memorial to the 6 million Jews who perished during World War II. However, as my father had passed away just prior to the making of the work, the painting evolved as a gesture of love and acknowledgement for the meaning which he has in my life.

The stained-glass windows of the Synagogue are source material for 2 companion works, 'Yom Kippur' (The Day of Atonement) and

(30) 'Rosh Hashanah' (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
(the New Year).

Both attempt to re-invest significance into traditional imagery - in this case, the Magen David or Shield/star/emblem of David. Judaism forbids any form of worship of fabricated symbols as there is a danger of idolatrous exchange.

However, certain images are considered as bearers of meaning. Consumerism has diluted symbolic value by reducing them to memorabilia of the tourist industry. The attempt here is to redeem the symbol and thereby allude to spiritual belief systems.

Other architectural elements (the sacramental arc, exterior facades, organic, decorative mosaics in the frontal apse, as well as arches and columns supporting the ceiling) from the synagogue were incorporated into this body of work. Pictures became containers of metaphoric, symbolic allusions.



(29) *Hommage à mon Père* (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm



(30) *Rosh Hashanah* (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

Similarly, the National Gallery building became fertile, artistic ground of source material. Centrally, at the heart of the actual structure is a little-known, small, wonderfully mysterious, circular wrought iron staircase leading to the roof. Together with a set of "Lovers", this image questions the layers of secrets which exist, well-hidden behind convincing, powerful bureaucratic facades of institutions and corporations.

(31) Handles I and II, (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

Both represent a phallicised and feminised rendition of the actual handles to the main doors of the National Gallery. The lush colour and sensual paint application underscore the erotic overtones of the work. These paintings make a strong case for the cross-fertilisation between abstraction and representation - an ongoing debate in my work. Door handles symbolically suggest the separation between private space and public space, and remind the viewer that one only enters other's personal domains with volition and awareness.

Subsequently, a small (15 x 20 x 12cm) wooden BOX was "decorated".

A trompe l'oeil patina of history and time was simulated with oil paint in a low-keyed, relatively monochromatic palette on the outside of the box. Keys, locks and handles, meticulously painted, created Surrealist overtones of the real or illusory to the object. On removing the lid, one was confronted with a private universe of eroticised figures of strong, brilliant reds. This work was named

(32) "Enter with Volition" and became the precursor of many 2-dimensional works of the same title.



(31) *Handles I* (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm



(32) *Enter with Volition* (1989) Wood.

(h) Musical Referents

Interest in surface and texture was further elaborated upon in a series of pictures of musical allusions.

Thus Homages to:

- (a) Beethoven (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm
- (b) Handel (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm
- (c) Bach (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm
- (d) Mozart (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm
- (e) Mahler (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm
- (f) Schoenberg (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm
- (g) Wagner (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm and

(33) Callas (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm
were organically constructed on identical formats and made use of the same painterly gesture.
Taoists fire/water, sea/sky, Heaven/Hell, male/female and good/evil postulates were abstractly presented in ways which would visually illuminate the significance of the specific composers and soprano, for this artist.
Notions of ~~time~~ which define our transience and mortality are also highlighted by these works.
Anthropology suggests that death-awareness is a fundamental constituent of man's being, and is one of the traits that mark him off from the animal. By celebrating works from the past one is aware of death, but equally of the redemptive powers of great art to give meaning to one's existence.



(33) Callas (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm

(i) Masks

A visit to Japan in 1985 was so overwhelmingly layered, that only 8 years later did paintings emerge which obviously manifested aspects of responses to that voyage.

(34) Noh Masks 1989, oil on board, were minutely and lovingly rendered and suggested the mythical, 'exotic', romantic yearning for the 'other'. Mystery, concealment and revelation, role-play and travesty are addressed by the magnetic, yet illusive power of these Masks.

Claude Lévi-Strauss' "Tristes tropiques" (1955) humanistically documents the kaleidoscopic experiences of a philosopher, traveller and exile. He evolved an epistemological model based on structures of mind, kinship systems and language. He saw every culture as an ensemble of symbolic systems (these were defined by language and determined rules of marriage, economic relations, art, science and religion). These systems expressed aspects of social reality as well as the relations which these two types of reality maintained between themselves and the other.

It is essential to preserve the difference of otherness and resist the totally compromised tendency of civilization.

I sense a sociological malaise in making vast assumptions about the totality of a social group as I have reservations about the Durkheimian concept of "collective consciousness".



(34) *Noh Masks* (1989) Oil on board. 39 x 59cm

Intuitively, it seems that feminists history's reservations of ethno-anthropological and psychological methodologies are well founded. It implies a colonising impetus by patriarchal values which finally co-opts and destroys the alien culture. Jean-Hubert Martin's préface to the exhibition catalogue for the "Magiciens de la terre" (even though well intentioned) surely echos this patronising mentality:

"La question primordiale qui est posée est de savoir pourquoi des objets qui ont un sens précis dans leur contexte d'origine sont quelquefois interprétés, appréciés et valorisés pour un sens nouveau que nous leur avons trouvé. Si l'on peut saisir l'origine du malentendu, ses conséquences sont fascinantes car l'objet reprend une sorte de seconde vie où nous lui attribuons parfois un sens qu'il n'avait pas."(49)

Loosely translated his words read as follows:

"The primordial question raised here is to understand why objects which have a particular meaning within a specific context are sometimes interpreted, appreciated and valorized with new meaning which we have attributed to it. If we can grasp the origin of this misunderstanding, these are fascinating consequences as the object viewed assumes a kind of second life endowed (by us) with a meaning which it did not have originally."

(49) Martin, Jean-Hubert. Magiciens de la terre.
Centre Georges Pompidou. Paris Catalogue 1989. 9.

This exhibition as multi-ethnic cultural megaspectacle, was dangerously seductive in quickly subsuming myriad layers of belief-systems and making these accessible as commodifiable objects for a consumer culture. On the other hand

Bart De Baere's melancholic reservations express my anxiety about these issues succinctly:

"It gives me a sad, sinking feeling to hear traditional Australian aboriginal images simply proclaimed as art. Are they not visual parts of an existing (and to us hermetic) cosmology, rather than a means on their own? Are they not closer to our epics than to our visual art?

Alongside what we call myths and cartography? It gives me a strange, sad feeling because proclaiming them as art seems to me a cheap bargain, paying a pittance to clear the conscience of those who can find no respect for the complexity of that culture.

Declared art, they are pulled into our context, with us telling them how to behave".(50)

It is probably due to a comparable sense of malaise that Noh Masks took so long in the spiritual evolution and physically in the making. The significance was such that it became the precursor for many subsequent works.

(50) Baere, Bart. Why and How - How (and Why).

Volume 1, Documenta IX Catalogue.

Editions Cantz, Stuttgart and Harry N Abrams, Inc., New York. 1992. 41.

Bearing these fears in mind, (35) 'Cover Girl' 1989, oil on canvas, 165 x 150 cm, appropriates (also a treacherous colonising device) the image of a Kabuki actor in full regalia, and recontextualises it in a Eurocentric scenario - both in terms of content and formal construction. It is an attempt to highlight the impossibility of glib **cultural transmigration**. The title parodies Western ideals of stereotypical feminine beauty as Kabuki actors are actually men who enact set, elaborate and ritualised women's roles within a **codified** theatrical framework. Make-up, costume and mask-like face raise questions of concealment and exposure, gender and representation. The framed dislocated out-of-scale head, as well as the trompe l'oeil vertical "tear" maintain the literary allusions of the scene. (Brecht and Barthes also utilised stereotypes to parody and highlight social concerns - avoiding a moralising tone).

We all pass through a successive set of instants in time; they all have a past, a present and a future. However, personally, the past and the future are intrinsically related to the present - memory connects the past forwards, and the imagination projects us into the future **within the lived moment**. Thus this work connects different time zones in the **now**.

(36) 'Operatic' 1990. Oil on canvas, 169 x 170cm, adds to 'Cover Girls'' possible signifiers in a series of musical referents. Images of Mozart Zauberflöte's Papageno and Puccini's Madame Butterfly merge in a Wagnerian pantheistic ground of colour, texture and turbulence. Homages to composers (31. Callas) are thus extended in a different time zone and exploring new 'tempi'.



(35) *Cover Girl* (1989) Oil on canvas. 165 x 180cm



(36) *Operatic* (1990) Oil on canvas. 169 x 180cm

(37) 'Nothing is as it Seems' (1990) Oil and charcoal on canvas, 180 x 169cm. This work proposes that a variety of stylistic and cultural possibilities can co-exist as solutions to representations of **heads** on the same format. Pictorial imperatives convince and redeem this transgressive and polyvocal solution for the painter. The title implies a reaction against orthodox, linear, preconceived theoretic assumptions as well as having a melancholic sense of loss of philosophical and authorial sovereignty.

Works described in this section act as a framework within which current paintings are contextualised. This kind of excluding "singling out" process (obviously many other images were not considered) might imply an unintended hierarchical system of preference. I am aware that the assemblage(51) (or minimum real unit which encompasses word, idea and concept or signifier) presented here could have been a totally different set of converging non-homogeneous elements, which would have indicated a different set of hypotheses. However, certain convoluted systems of communication set up between the writer/painter/critic/researcher/ diarist and reader, can be viewed propositionally and exploratorily.

(51) Deleuze, Gilles. Dialogues. On the superiority of Anglo-American Literature. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam. Columbia University Press. New York. 1987. 51.



Nothing is as it seems. Oil on Canvas 180 x 170 cm. 1990

As Lacan pointed out from a psychological perspective:

"I shall show that there is no speech without a reply, even if it is met only with silence, provided that it has an auditor: this is the heart of its function in analysis."(52)

This 'auditor' - whether audience or Self, assists in the fundamental self-questioning and struggle for expression which reflect the tensions and paradoxes that constitute being. The dualistic reconciliation between the metaphysic of Body and Spirit demands an act of will. Any attempt that pulls the self into a coherent unity is central to the idea of human wholeness.

(52) Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits. A Selection*.
Trans. Alan Sheridan.
Tavistock/Routledge. 1989. 40.

PART III

Although accompanied by photographic reproductions, the Introduction and Parts I and II, have in a sense presented reader-orientated theories. Part III however, will offer a complex strategy of interactions as, if only for a brief period of time, the text will be physically accompanied by pictures in another medium, scale and dimension of space. The act of reading will be a complex transgression between all these disciplines. As this dissertation is an adjunct to the paintings, the question should not be which text has the greatest importance - that of the visual object or that of the linguistic object, but perhaps that each operates within the orbital forces of the other.

The overriding desire in making the work is that the paintings should highlight the artist's primary and profound engagement with chosen material. Making no attempt at "resolution", I have a preference and demand for "unresolved" tensions, as these reflect the contradictions of life. There should be a byplay between image and nothingness which defines the haemorrhaging information systems of the late 20th century - our sense of the slippage between the visual, the conceptual and the real. One cannot work with predictable rigidity - rather strive for fluidity in subject and technique, which is always in search of pictorial re-invention.

(38) Small Mirror(1991) Mixed media on paper, is a lighthearted, preparatory work which irreverently manipulates the possibilities of a variety of substances. A simplified, heavy, black descriptive line is used to define narrative forms in a cartoon-like formulation. This caricatural fantasy manifests as a wide-ranging mix of high and low esthetics, the logical outcome of which is a need to break down barriers and hierarchies.



38.Small Mirror (1991) Mixed media on paper. 22 x 30cm

(39) Mirror 1991. Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm.
Traditional feminist thinking shows that historically, woman's voyeuristic gaze was hidden behind veils, bars of boudoir windows or the rituals of make-up, which in a sense, obliged her to take refuge behind the Mask which conceals the gaze. "The vamp(53) is one of the few female stereotypes who is allowed to gaze uninhibitedly at men." (54) Although a dictionary definition of the vamp is pejorative, it still offers an arena for woman to be a 'player' and this painting echoes literal and metaphoric allusions of seduction.

Baudrillard states that: "Seduction is that which extracts meaning from discourse, and detracts it from its truth Appearances, which are not at all frivolous, are the site of play and chance taking the site of a passion for diversion - to seduce signs is here far more important than the emergence of any truth." (55)

This painting feeds on signifiers of the vamp (black stockings, underwear, high heeled shoes, make up) as well as alluding to a theatrical performance, where all these signs of visual, anticipatory seductions inform the viewer.

(53) Vamp. 1918. Colloq. (abbrev. of VAMPIRE)

A woman sets out to charm or captivate men (freq. from disreputable or dishonest motives) by an unscrupulous use of sexual attractiveness - the shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles.

(54) Koch, Gertrude. Why Women go to Men's Films.

Feminine Aesthetics. ed. Gisela Ecker.
The Women's Press, London. 1985. 109

(55) Baudrillard, Jean. Selected Writings.
ed. Mark Poster. Stanford University Press,
Stanford, California. 1988. 149.



39.Mirror (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

The tradition in pre-Revolution Paris of the sponsored aristocratic "Clandestine Theatre" (56) envisioned erotic pleasure as a theatrical performance, where conventions preserving exclusivity were observed. French Libertine literature(57) sees this phenomenon in relation to the **subversive writing** which derives power from exposing great desire and imagination which culture, ideology and religious doctrine constrain, repress or marginalise. "Monumental descriptions of orgy disclose a mighty **potential** in "rational" humans for "evil" perversity or pleasure - a potential which **only writing** can objectify. Libertine literature constructs an "impossible" realm of fantasy insofar as it is a rigorous **critique** of a moral system which sets limits on the range or magnitude of the "possible", of the desire defining "nature".(58)

Clandestine performance however, is not theoretical and attempts to apply the perspective of "nature" and desire in an experimental manner. It is also a tradition which belongs as much to women as to men (unlike Sadean sensibility) and does not present a gloomy critique or moral high-ground/standpoint in society. This and other erotic works are therefore closer to the tradition of clandestine theatre than to libertine literature.

Compositionally, 'Mirror' is constructed by a rectangular, architectonic mirror/reflector on the right whose geometric stable, monochromatic form is a counter weight to the organic red/orange standing figures.

(56) Capou, Gustave and Yve-Plessis, Robert.

Les Théâtres clandestins. Plessis, Paris. 1905

(57) Moureau, Francois & Rien, Alain-Marc (eds.)

Eros philosophe. Discours Libertain des Lumieres.

Paris : Champion. 1984

(58) Toepfer, Karl Theatre, Aristocracy and Pornocracy.

Paj Publications. New York. 1991. 60

Each however, reflects the other by the North/South rectilinear pull of the imaginary parallel lines in the composition. A counter-thrust is set up by the activity of the central figure. Her application of lipstick implies another mirror to be found outside the picture plane - which thus incorporates the viewer's space.

On the left-hand lower foreground, a head introduces another dimension in space - both literal and psychological. Semiologically, the appearance of this figure is fraught - tearful or distraught, which immediately seduces the viewer into the trap of psychoanalysis. Such interpretation would thus obliterate these signs and aspects of appearance in the search for hidden meaning. This very search in a **hinterwelt**, or in an unconscious, is what Baudrillard believes is meaningless. (Never will we hear the end of hysteria!)

Relating psychoanalysis and the **Mirror** in the title, it is interesting to consider Lacanian research and formulations on this theme.

"We have only to understand the mirror stage as an **identification**, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term.: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image".(59)

The narcissistic exchange between the mirror and the figures in the painting suggests a libidinal re-affirming desire for beauty and completeness. When this operation is unsuccessful and the reflection not congruent with a positive image, the implication is that the effect can be traumatic. (Hand covering face in left lower corner).

(40) Fragments d'un discours amoureux(60) Oil on
canvas.(1991)
(A Lover's Discourse: Fragments) 160 x 170cm

Historically, Barthes had suggested that truthful ideas can be contained in an aesthete's sensibility. However visually obvious this painting appears, the more opaque, semantically it becomes. And although this work's meaning appears to circulate on the surface, the title draws energy from Barthes' affirming literary complexity. This picture makes reference to the simulated condition of the lover who addresses his silent loved object serially (not linearly) in a complex and multifaceted monologue.

Each new chapter is introduced by a word from a particularly significant lexicon of ideas in alphabetic and encyclopedial form. (s'abîmer, absence, adorable, affirmation, altération, angoisse, annihilation, askesis, atopos, attente, cacher,.....) Just as the text is carefully structured, so this painting makes a strong case for composition. Apparent chaos is harnessed together with excessive colour, texture and abrasions (éraflures) of surface. These signifiers of excess suggest a revival of hedonism which challenges intellectual orthodoxy. Susan Sontag claimed that "The formalist temperament is just one variant of sensibility shared by many who speculate in an era of hypersaturated awareness."(61)

(60) Barthes, Roland. Fragments d'un discours amoureux.
Editions du Seuil. 1977.
Title of painting refers to Barthe's original version.

(61)Sontag Susan in Barthes: Selected Writings.
Fontana/Collins. 1982



40. Fragments d'un discours amoureux (1991) Oil on canvas.
160 x 170cm

As with Barthes' texts, this painting affirms the notion of spectacle where the life of desire is full of intelligence and pleasure. The physical appearance and sensory declarations of the work find equivalence between painting and writing. Barthes stated : "the text you write must prove to me **that it desires me.** This proof exists: it is writing. Writing is: the science of the various blisses of language, its Kama Sutra (this science has but one treatise: writing itself"(62) - in my case painting itself.)

(41) Shifted Positions. (1991). Mixed media on paper. 22 x 30cm

is a preparatory watercolour for "Shifting Positions". The play on words between the titles imply a "shift" in time: "shifted" suggests a fixed, set moment in the past, whereas "shifting" is constantly mobile and active in the present.(63) Thus the oil painting literally absorbs and appropriates the original drawing into a new temporal zone. Movement from the present to the past and the psychological, physical and ideological changes which occur during this period (however brief) raise interesting issues of re-presentation. Herein lies not only a disappearance and retrieval of, but also a kind of logic of repetition. Reworking, rethinking and reliving can be regarded as marks of repetition within which this artist explores the co-presence of sameness and difference.

(62) Barthes, Roland. The pleasure of Text.

Trans. Richard Miller. Hill and Wang, New York. 1975.

(63) See 35. 'Nothing is as it seems' for elaborations on notions of **time**.



41. Shifted Positions (1991) Mixed media on paper.
22 x 30cm

(42) Shifting Positions (1991). Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
is the site for questions pertaining to traditional definitions of gender - one is not certain as to whether the protagonists are male or female, or of their numerical distribution in the scenario. The format is horizontally divided with organic figures in the top half and geometric, structural forms below. This dichotomy underscores heaven/hell and good/evil postulates. Because the reader is below the vanishing point, architectonic elements in the lower frontal plane force the viewer to look upward, where a rectilinear "ceiling" visually echoes and connects foreground to background.

This logical geometry could imply a Palladian tradition- (where buildings are raised in tribute to the life of the mind) a reading supported by the relatively restrained nocturnal palette which in turn forces attention to surface texture and tonalities. Decorative motifs, architectural units and the organization of elements recall the spectacle of French 18th Century 'théâtres clandestins' - where pleasure is given and received without moral imperative. It was a democratic, dramatic microcosm where men and women enjoyed equally important roles (historically, a revolutionary position) and as in Artaud's theatre, the body was the dominant signifier of feeling.



42. Shifting Positions (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(43) La chaise jaune (1991). Oil on Canvas. 160 x 170cm

The title refers to the yellow chair in the painting which irrationally co-exists with human fetishised elements in a blue, watery medium. These unlikely, contradictory combinations deny visual expectations of specific meaning. Ambiguity also lies in the narrative dislocations of the work. How many figures are there and how do these apparently disconnected parts connect?

Besides the repoussoir effect of the chair which directs us inwards, hands, knees and compositional thrusts all seem to be held by the implied vertical central motif. Another question then arises - is it a laced corset, a bizarre, gnome-like figure with plumed hat, all, or none of these?

Pigment is loosely applied almost a la prima, (contrary to my usual methodology which favours constant re-elaborations, abrasions and erasures) which creates a quality of translucent lightness. Saturated colour assists in defining elements in their spatial relationship and psychological importance.

Chairs have frequently emerged iconographically as signifiers of furniture (questioning style, period, use, production and commodification) or metaphoric female/male equivalents (are they containers or colonisers of space?) Thus, pictures exploit the arbitrariness of the sign, drawing attention to its own artifice rather than attempting to conceal it.

Equally, **hands** (one being gloved, implying it is concealing and protecting) which besides being important visual signifiers, also celebrate tactile experience.



43. La chaise jaune (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

- (44)Forewards (1991). Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
(45)Sideways (1991). Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

These two paintings although not strategically constructed as a diptich, collaborate successfully as companion works.

Iconographically both declare forcefully the pleasure of the senses as well as expressing a desire for fullness of colour, surface, texture and composition. This is not the site of historic passivity of the tradition of the female nude. Inverted figures (unlike Baselitz who inverts objects as a formal device) in "Forewards" are to be read literally which creates dramatic compositional thrusts. Such positions imply an Anglo-Saxon kind of Kama Sutra. (Idea underscored by titles: Forewards/Sideways - a postscript of physical imperatives.)

Hands and fingers in "Sideways" create an ambivalence between a phallicised and feminised meaning, proposing a desire for the liberation of not denying the sexual life of either sex.

The open mouth (frequently evident in previous work - Untitled (1985), Untitled XI (1984), Untitled VIII (1984)) suggests an unmediated, breathless moment when one's mask has slipped and vulnerabilities exposed - not a tight-lipped, dry, dispassionate or distanced position. This idea is reinforced by the full-bodied and colour-saturated plasticity which aspires to a generosity of spirit through plenitude of form. Dislocated elements on the one hand encourage an idolatorous fetishistic reading, while on the other hand one considers the redemptive possibilities of containment - in terms of social and physical decay.



44 forewards (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

Sartre stated: "If I make an instrument of flesh, it refers me to other instruments and to potentialities, in short to a future; it is partially justified in its being-there by the situation which I create around myself.... Suddenly the body's character as flesh - that is its unutilizable facticity - gives way to that of an instrumental thing. The complex "flesh-as-instrument" which the sadist has attempted to create disintegrates. This profound disintegration can be hidden so long as the flesh is the instrument to reveal flesh, for in this way I constitute an instrument with an immanent end." (64)

(64) Sartre, Jean-Paul. The Body. The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. (ed.) Robert Denoon Cumming. The Modern Library. New York. 1965. 228, 229.



45. Sideways (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(46) Voglio l'anima (1991). Mixed media on paper. 22 x 30cm

Bertolt Brecht proposes that actors should not speak their parts as if they were living it or improvising it, but rather "like a quotation".

He respected artificial theatrical practices. In this way, Brecht wished to highlight problems without propagandistically advocating a solution.

Roland Barthes articulates the same view in language using these fundamental contrasts: "Surface versus depth, outside versus inside, lightness versus heaviness, critical distance versus emphatic identification, mask versus character, sign versus reality, discontinuity versus continuity, emptiness versus fullness of meaning, artificiality versus naturalness." (65) Similarly, I have visually dealt with Kabuki actors and wooden puppets from marionette theatres to "enact" the kinds of charades which highlight personal reservations.

Voglio l'anima (an Italian musical reference, meaning "I want/desire the soul") comprises a carefully drawn puppet/ marionette in fine, black ink line, whose gaze is directed at an abstract, reddish organic mass of pigment - convincing in its "objecthood". Both seem to suggest a potential for life and by implication one is left to wonder how much soul/life is evidenced in those who biologically exist and negotiate in the natural world. Notions of manipulation, power and control are also raised by this work.

(65) Culler, Jonathan. Barthes. (ed) Frank Kermode.
Fontana Press. 1990. 54.



40 .Voglio l'anima (1991) Mixed media on paper.
22 x 30cm

(47)Marionette (1991). Oil on canvas. 170 x 160cm

This work elaborates on the long-standing interests of 'Voglio l'anima' and stylistically and consciously juxtaposes the puppet, which is controlled, with the gestural, improvisational figures which speak of chance and serendipity. These elements question morality and mortality, and the difference between the inner world and another world.

Sartre said: "Consciousness is not what it is and what it is not." (66)

Thus, although this work is textual, it is not necessarily legible - as evidenced by the unintelligible third element or "void" which hovers over the eroticized figures below.

(66) Sartre, Jean Paul. The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre.
Robert Denoon Cumming (ed).
The Modern Library. New York. 1965. 257.



47. Marionette (1991) Oil on canvas. 170 x 160cm

(48)Enter with Volition II (1992) Oil on Canvas. 160 x 170cm

extends the notion of dismembered figuration in an epiphany of sonorous landscape. The super-enlarged, classically rendered keyhole confronts yet contains the viewer into a dark, velvety behind-space. Obvious symbolic value, underlined by the transcendant iconic potential of the circle as well as the central position of this emblematic sign, is reduced by the admonition that the pictures reality/space is separated from the viewer's world/space and one only enters if one so desires.

The three hands - as postulates of the Trinity and a linear equivalent of the pyramid form graphically emerge from an abstract ground. Each hand speaks of a different moment, reading from left to right:

- (a) the languid and the graceful,
- (b) the supportively containing and,
- (c) holding the cigarette, the contemplative.

Taoists naturalism, reminiscent of the (h) Musical Referents, circulates from the organic, turbulent top of the painting to relatively flattened yet luminescent space below. Stylistic differences are thus bound by the possibilities of a spiritual dimension.



48. Enter with Volition II (1992) Oil on canvas.
160 x 170cm

(49) Sempre Chiuso. (1991). Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(50) Peró Apperto. (1991). Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

are companion works in visual, linguistic and intellectual sense. Pictorially, the rapport of colour, gesture and textural surface variety between washes and thick pigment are easily read. Linguistically, however, different reservations are raised. The statement "sempre chiuso" (always closed) has a corollary in "peró apperto" (but, however open) Hermeneutics suggest that although pictures/texts can be hermetic and inaccessible, the viewer/reader **can** enter into the operational zone if there exists the **will** to do so. (Volition)

In "sempre chiuso" metaphoric allusions which semantically seem obvious and banal, visually attempt to redeem by more subtle and obscure implications. Thus architectural, male keys can "unlock" meaning housed in the earth/woman keyhole on the left.

Equally, the abstract, blue masculine form in "Peró apperto" can knock at the metaphoric door of significance which will be "opened" by the door handle on the right of the painting. In this way, voyeurism fosters interaction and not spectatorship. (Keys, handles, doors, grids and locks form part of the repertoire of personal obsessions).

Italian titles highlight other concerns. In formulating this dissertation the invisible practice of translation(67) has constantly been at play - whether it be linguistically, culturally or politically.

(67) Venuti, Lawrence. Rethinking Translation. Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology. Routledge. London and New York. 1992. 5.



49. Sempre chuiso (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

This writer was conscious that translating literature, which had been enjoyed in French or Italian, "effaces the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text: this gets rewritten in the transparent discourse dominating the target-language culture and is inevitably coded with other target-language values, beliefs and social representations, implicating the translation in ideologies that figure social differences and may well arrange them in hierarchical relations."(68)

Semiologically, this painter's work suggests a composite of intertextual possibilities co-existing. Similarly, a polyglot endorses a plurality of languages supplementing each other as no single language can attain the utopian state of total meaning. (One dreams of a place where debate is in French, angst in German, politics in Russian and prayer in Hebrew.)

Literal translation constantly demands reworking language. Similarly my chosen pictorial working methodology compels continuous redefinition. Thus both are acts of translation in an attempt to elaborate a more convincing image or text. And, finally, literal intertextuality is in operation when (as in this dissertation) one is "translating" visual images into images in words.

Equally, any substitutive symbolic act or metaphoric allusion can also be regarded as an act of translation. The convoluted evolution of these paintings has therefore responded to the effects of transculturation - linguistically, philosophically, emotionally and artistically.

(68) Benjamin, Walter. The Task of the Translator, (1923)
in Illuminations. (ed.) Hannah Arendt.
Trans. Harry Zohn. Schocken. New York. 1969. 69 - 82.



50. Peró apperto (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(51) Buddha (1992). Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm reiterates a host of questions of transcendence and notions relating to the other.(69) Figuratively, the precarious tightrope of reconciling figuration with abstraction is negotiated - not as an amoral pastiche of postmodernism however, as there is no sense of parody or rhetoric which normally masquerades the lacking with plenitude.

An overwhelming concern is that no specific painting be singled out in an idolatrous, worshipping relationship of the cult object. Art is part of the continuum of life and an artist's production is to be regarded as an evolutionary progression, not canonically - each part being part of a whole which is part of another whole, which is part of a bigger Whole.

(Duchamp successfully reduced the iconic value of da Vinci's

'La Gioconda', by giving the lady a moustache.)

Similarly in Eastern culture, the idea of a deity is contained in the **potentiality of attributes** (kindness, generosity, compassion, joy, sadness) and not as Christian pictorial symbolism evangelises spiritual formulations. Thus, questions are raised about the dangers of misappropriating cultural and religious belief systems and the exotic, charismatic pull of the Other into a familiar, Baudrillardian, commodifiable object. Differences between these works are echoed by the hybrid visual disparity between

(a) the centrally-located, totemic, highly stylised, tattooed, black and white, smoothly rendered hand which acts as a male/female equivalent, and

(b) the brut, expressionistic (in the German tradition) textured, coloured, cigarette-bearing hand in the top left. Treacherous passages of paint - from the unruly to the controlled are negotiated by visually ambiguous forms such as the central elliptical earring/waterwheel/machine/plant-form - a field day for hermeneutics.

(69) Refer to Noh Masks.



51. Buddha (1992) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(52)Grandmaman (1991/92) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

This title is not literal; it is a temporal reference to my grandmother (grande-mère) who passed away at the time that this painting was in the making. Emphasis on abstraction - colour (combination of the murky with the pure) surface (weathered or luminescent) and subtle composition, together with the cryptic definition of hands creates an emotional space to consider Heaven/Earth, and Beginning/Ending postulates.



52. Grandmaman (1991-1992) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(53)Car (1992) Oil on Canvas. 160 x 170cm

Intellectually one is keen to deny pseudo-mystical or transcendental responses to the occult or any other metaphysical allegiance. However for some months before touching this work, there was a presentiment that a car lay within that specific canvas. Clearly there is no personal interest in mechanical or technical aspects of a car, other than respect for mobility, hence freedom, which it offers the driver. However, after personally being involved in a motorcar accident, this painting began to crystalise on the format. Hence this work speaks of risk - both artistic and physical. Formal visual power redeems the grim scene and proposes some optimism of survival in a scenario of destruction.

Western technoculture has elevated science and the machine into an enshrined position of authority, which this work questions by infusing abstract marks with alchemical powers to transform pigment into some kind of spiritual space.

Although the figurative element is small relative to the total format, the sense of magnitude is great in terms of implied cosmology. Thus, effectively size is not scale. Throughout this production there is a desire for large works to be intimate and small images to be monumental. In order to push this concern to the limits, dimensions have been restricted to a modular almost-square (most boring) unit 160 x 170cm. Memory and perception finally re-organise elements and elasticise scale to create new proportions in the imagination. Baudelaire enjoyed the sonnet form as its constricting limitations allowed the idea to "burst forth" with greater resonance.



53.Car (1992) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

For procedural methodologies not to stagnate into comfortable, clichéd sleights of hand or mannerist manipulations, I constantly and simultaneously work smaller and differently proportioned grounds with a variety of media. In this way narrative richness can be exploited without relinquishing the allusiveness of abstraction and its multifarious manifestations. The subsequent transposition of some of these explorations is also an act of translation.

Response to the intimate, held, close relationship to the paper is very different to the larger, fuller, louder and more tactile (oil paint's sensuality is inescapable) bond with the canvas. Each work subsequently requires a different viewing distance and the rapport between object and audience is constantly re-negotiated within that space.

The diaristic format of this dissertation is a key site for meandering chronologically and emotionally through a visual body of work constructed over a fifteen-year period. During this time, notebooks and sketchbooks were filled as a repository of ideas, observations and intuitions.

Walter Benjamin wrote in **A Berlin Chronicle** (1932) "He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging..... for successful excavations a plan is needed. Yet no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam, and it is to cheat oneself of the richest prize to preserve as a record merely the inventory of one's discoveries, and not this dark joy of the place of the finding itself. Fruitless searching is as much a part of this as succeeding, and consequently remembrance must not proceed in the manner of a narrative or still less that of a report, but must, in the strictest epic and rhapsodic manner, assay its spade in ever-new places, and in the old ones delve to ever-deeper layers." (70)

The following works literally straddle the past with the present by recontextualising the fertile, visual "loam" accumulated through the years, onto canvas supports where the nature of the old will create an "ever-new" place.

Works on paper were created either as a means to an end, or as an end in themselves. The advantage here is that an additive approach, something akin to sculpture, can quickly physically alter the dimensions, proportions and surface of original drawings. Particularly in opposition to the self-imposed restriction of identical canvas supports, the organic and flexible properties of scale are a liberatory device. Constantly changing pictorial necessities thus produced work such as:

(54) Amazonne : (1991) Mixed media on paper

(55) L'Histoire de Bataille : (1991) Mixed media on paper

(56) Triangle (1992)

(57) Margherita II (1992)

Clearly each medium incorporates certain latent properties which, in combination, offer a multitude of effects which become the "loam" for pictorial invention.

Some of these works were loosely transferred onto canvas, where the original intimate hand/eye/surface relationship is invariably altered to a larger, fuller, louder and more tactile event. Each work also requires a different optimum viewing distance and the rapport between object and audience will change accordingly. Sensual, lush surface of big work is such that the viewer is engulfed in an illegible, overwhelming materiality - this mass of substance only becoming legible with distance when forms are "revealed". Thus the desire is that work be read from close and from far, in order that the viewer move from a physical experience to a more varied understanding of the work. In order that the spectator be encouraged in this forward/reverse mobility, small works (demanding close scrutiny) are frequently shown near large paintings - the viewer is thus co-opted into the texturality of adjacent surfaces of oil pigment.



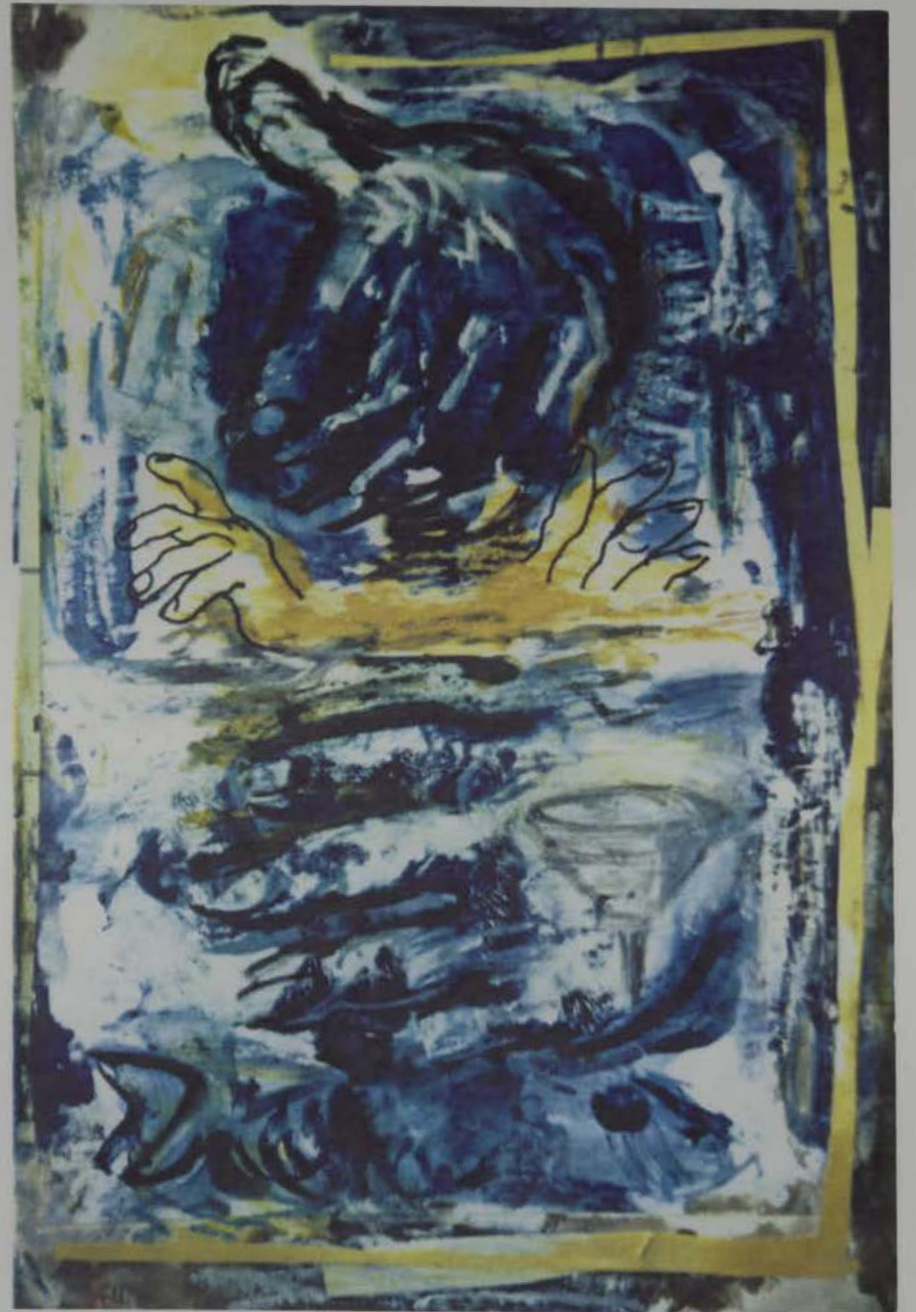
54. Amazonne (1991) Mixed media on paper.



55. L'Histoire de Bataille (1991) Mixed media on paper.



56. Triangle (1992) Mixed media on paper.



57. Margherita II (1992) Mixed media on paper.

(58) *Evanescent* [1992] Mixed media on canvas. 170 x 160cm
attempts to fill in the psychological and physical gap between drawing and painting. In 1921, Herman Rorschach proposed in 'Psychodiagnostics' a theory of **movement responses** applicable to interpretation. Similarly, the viewer here is encouraged to subjectively project into the three dominant "inkblot" shapes on the left hand edge of the canvas, and empathetically determine influences from these perceptions. Ink-as-substance underscores calligraphic marks which crystalise as Taoists cryptograms in the lower half of the frame.

The strong, reverberating saturated yellow becomes a meditative surface echoing the mantra of Tantric Buddhism - "Om mani padme Hùm," where Om = the sound of Central enlightenment, mani padme = 'jewel of the lotus' or 'male within the female organ', the state of completeness, energy enfusing wisdom, and Hùm = a sound of power, forcing mantra into realization.(71)

The nasal humming sound can set up patterns of vibrations, similar to those of the painting, that condense fields of energy in the search for a quasi-mystical sense of aura.

(71) Rawson, P. *Tantra. The Indian Cult of Ecstasy.* Thames and Hudson. 1989. 29, 30.



58.Evanescent (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 170 x 160cm

Collaborations of quotes continue in

(59) Rameses [1992]. Mixed media on canvas. 170 x 160cm.

where Tantric cryptograms are juxtaposed with a Pharaonic profile and Chinese calligraphic marks which extend into hands. Use of black and white stresses the linear, drawing quality of the painting - the implication here being that the hand makes the mark and the mark makes the hand. Physically, a collaged surface creates a close bond with paper works, where actual 'real' properties were subsumed and metamorphosed into a different reality - that of the painting. Seriality and discontinuity exist in the modular grid-like ground reminiscent of earlier work. A sense of mathematics-not-as-science is underscored by the idea of equation between

(a) the hands drawn in black line on white ground being congruent with

(b) the white drawn hand on black ground in the centre.



59. Rameses (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(60) Gropingly II (1992). Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm

continues the exploration of painting-as-drawing as opposed to drawing as painting. Images from sketchbooks as well as other 2-dimensional mementoes of lived moments are physically recontextualised and collaged onto canvas. This layering of images, time and meaning extends the intended diaristic overtones of the work. Eastern respect for the void is applied to negative spaces which at times still their authority in relationship to figurative elements. Subtle differences in mark-making (organic versus rectilinear, defined versus the auratic, awkward versus controlled) attempt to create interest in a traditional approach to figuration. 'II' in the title obviously implies a numerical seriality and sequentiality, however "Gropingly" equally suggests a search - both physical and metaphoric (to grope for meaning). The "badly drawn" downward pointing hand in the lower right figure speaks of apparent sexual physical dislocation and tentative unco-ordination during moments of passion.

Gilles Deleuze in dialogue with Claire Parnet said that "Sexuality can only be thought of as one flux among others, entering in conjunction with other fluxes, emitting particles which themselves enter into particular relationships of speed and slowness in the **vicinity** of certain other particles. No assemblage can be characterized by one flux exclusively".(72) Similarly this painting reflects tempi of sexuality as described by figures-as-body in the affecting cosmology of the picture.

(72) Deleuze, G. Dialogues. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam (trans.) Columbia University Press. New York. 1987. 101.



60. Gropingly II (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(61)Caressing is Shaping [1992]. Mixed media/canvas 160 x 170cm

Just as this work has a hand-made quality in the pattina of collaged elements, so the actual image is being described by the hand - actually by touch.

Sartre felt that: "In the caress it is not only my body as a synthetic form in action which caresses the Other; it is my body as flesh which makes the Other's flesh emerge. The caress is designed to make the Other's body emerge, through pleasure, for the Other - and for myself..... Thus the revelation of the Other's flesh is made through my own flesh; in desire and in the caress which expresses desire, I incarnate myself in order to realize the incarnation of the Other."(73)

Referents to touch, skin, feel are re-inforced by the sensual nature of surface and the tentative, searching, exploratory quality of line before it crystalises in bolder definition. Once again, geometry (in the lower, collaged, variegated surface) is juxtaposed with intuitive, organic line and the serendipitous effects of colour and texture.

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(73) Sartre, Jean-Paul. The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Robert Denoon Cumming (ed.)
Modern Library Books. New York. 1965. 216.



61. Caressing is Shaping (1992) Mixed media on canvas.
160 x 170cm

(62) Field-day for Umberto Eco. (1992). Mixed media on canvas.

160 x 170cm.

The multi-faceted and multi-layered textuality of this work again calls to mind the issue of interpretation. Allusion is therefore made to this semiotician whose complex and intriguing novels challenge questions of interpretation and over-interpretation.

Umberto Eco describes his working methodology as follows: "When I write a theoretical text I try to reach, from a disconnected lump of experiences, a coherent conclusion and I propose this conclusion to my readers. If they do not agree with it, or if I have the impression that they have misinterpreted it, I react by challenging the reader's interpretation. When I write a novel, on the contrary, even though starting (probably) from the same lump of experiences, I realize that I am not trying to impose a conclusion: I stage a play of contradictions."(74)

(74) Eco, U. Interpretation and Overinterpretation.
Stefan Collini (ed.) Cambridge University Press.
Cambridge. 1992. 140.

This paradoxical approach equally describes my ambivalence between my understanding of myself as artist-painter and alternatively as artist/auto-researcher.

Visually, this painting is a key site for contradictions, such as the debate between specific hierarchical positions of style, colour, culture perspectives and belief systems. Black calligraphic gestures recall both Chinese texts and American Abstract Expressionism of the 50's.

Heaven and Hell polarities are symbolically represented by the Mystic's head on the lower left and the Evil/Female/Earth head Spirit on the right.

A large, containing androgenized hand is juxtaposed with eroticized hands below which are, in turn, contrasted with the stylised, cartoon-like drawing of the ritualistic Chen Yen Buddhism's hand gestures in the centre.

Further diversity is added to this hybrid mix of iconographic allusions by the material means of the picture. Paint on unprimed, rough coarse canvas, is juxtaposed with collaged elements incorporating the rough with the smooth, the cut edge with the frayed or torn.

Multiplicity of effects alludes to the endless aspects of self which form the individual. Formal elements can be seen as a metaphor for this work to be regarded as a notational component in the larger body of the total production.



62. Field-day for Umberto Eco (1992) Mixed media on canvas.
160 x 170cm

(63) Kabuki (1992). Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm. extends my cultural, schizophrenic interest in the stylised theatre of the Other. The voyeuristic gaze of the viewer is returned by the superimposed, bizarre, fixed, mask-like face of the actor. This inversion makes the spectator's space the spectacle. Notions of the absurd are extended by the irrational relationship of scale and space, of colour and texture, and the resolved and unresolved definition of line. Questions of gender and identity further obfuscate rational reading.



63. Kabuki (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm

(64) La Cléf de Paulette [1992] Mixed media on canvas.
160 x 170cm.

Together with 'Sempre Chiuso' and 'Peró apperto', this painting forms a trilogy of similar, symbolic interest. Quickly legible, the powerful image conceals layers upon layers of collaged histories. Personal photographic "snapshots" celebrating lived moments are reappropriated and meaning thus becomes hidden or altered with the paint which creates a new subtext. (Unlike the approach to photography of Gerhard Richter and Sherrie Levine). The key has the potential to "unlock" meaning more and more buried (physically and metaphorically) in the picture.

The order of the rectilinear, sequential grid-like system of the collaged ground and the key as compositional device, are balanced by the harassed and laboured surface. Man, in all vulnerabilities and strengths is part of nature and not a manufactured thing.



64. La clef de Paulette (1992) Mixed media on canvas.
160 x 170cm

(65)Mish-Mush (1992) Mixed media. 160 x 170cm
brings together a multitude of images from a host of
sources - either in painterly transposition or literally
with collage. The simple black ground compositionally
emphasises North/South and East/West postulates.

Endless possibilities of historic art references and
symbolic mark-making allusions are examined in shallow
space. Superimposed, pasted elements include a large
yellow, tactile form from a cut-up unsatisfactorily
completed painting from 1991. This transgressive act
of violence was difficult for the maker of the painting
which represented 4 weeks of solid, continuous and
persistent labour. The deliberate action of cutting
through thick layers of paint and canvas was dramatic
and frightening.



65. Mish-Mush (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm

- (66) Cartography I (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm.
(67) Cartography II (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm.

The multi-faceted body of work assembled over the '91-'92 period bears witness to a polysemous approach to art making which defies any linear sense of touring. Interpretation cannot demand a determinate position, rather offers an additional complexity. One's changing relationship to the past can be routed visually, where events are mapped and encoded on a 2-dimensional surface in a manner akin to cartography. Arnheim states that: "a map is an iconic image, an analogue, which portrays certain visual features of the objects it represents." (75)

All aspects of perception are required to read the expressive potential of these surfaces where the continuity of the real world is preserved and no single aspect is hermetically closed off from its context. A map can be regarded as a plan where the viewer is assisted in retrieving information and stimuli from figuration which is interpretive and not a mechanical copy of events or objects. It is not a minute duplication of the real where the new becomes a fetish of the lost object - it is also not intended as a ritual of extermination or the Baudrillardian idea of the **hyper-real**. The real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced; that is the hyper real.....which is entirely in simulation.

Cartography I and II physically appropriate architectural plans and visually re-interpret the forms into ideogramatic sites for the figure.

(75) Arnheim, R. The Perception of Maps.
New Essays on the Psychology of Art.
University of California Press. 1986. 194.

The implication is that paintings are as if abstracted from the moral, esthetic and societal environment in which they are produced. These works emerge out of a private symbolic language which has to be re-mapped with each new painting - a kind of re-organization of the DNA which creates a new and regenerative code of information.

These pictures reconsider distinctions of category - those of painting, drawing or assemblage, and validate a dissolution of boundaries between inherited historic traditions. In 1912 Picasso boldly incorporated a detail from a woven cane seat onto a composition ('Nature Morte à la chaise cannée) and in so doing eliminated traditional notions of pictorial representation. Collaged elements similarly superimpose other realities both physically and notionally onto Cartography I and II.

Baudrillard observed that: "All is presented today in a spread-out series, or as part of a line of products, and this fact alone tests you already, because you are obliged to make decisions. This approximates our general attitude toward the world around us to that of a **reading**, and to a selective deciphering. We live less like users than readers and selectors, reading cells. But nevertheless: by the same token you also are constantly selected and tested by the medium itself." (76)

If one accepts this notion, then these works comply in the sequence of legibility and the economics of the sign. These works strive for an image that is neither descriptive nor anecdotal, moralising or sentimental, pedagogic or decorative. By imbedding figures and obscured passages of print, photographs and images from sketchbooks an attempt to address the notion of image-as-text is made.

(76) Baudrillard, J. The Orders of Simulacra.
Simulations Semiotext(e). Foreign Agents Series.
P.Foss, P.Patton, P.Beitchman (trans.) N.Y. 1983. 121.



66. Cartography I (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm



67. Cartography II (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm.

CONCLUSION

The proposed aim of **Open Diary - Biography/Autobiography as Historical Context** has been to show pictures as having a close relationship with thought. Written text necessitated the use of language - where thoughts are organised around theoretical metaphors originating in structural linguistics. Dealing in another medium also forced this painter to consider conceptual notions as perhaps a more adequate presentation of reality.

Nietzsche anticipated linguistic critiques by considering the relationship of science and language and the coincidence between concept and object. Thought is not necessarily congruent with pictorial image because, as a painter, I stress visual pictorial means over thought which creates ambiguities. However, a relationship does exist between painting, thought (which anticipates language) and language. Many historic philosophical approaches recognised that subjectivity cannot be the foundation for knowledge and therefore solutions were looked for in the realm of language. Metaphysics in a sense was replaced by metacriticism.

This retrospective analysis of personal work has been complicated because any presentation of the past remains essentially incomplete, as new events in one's life obviously alter the perception and intention of historic events. However, understanding of shifting ground opened a constructive polemic dimension - the end of one philosophy anticipates the birth of another, and linguistics offered the tools for formal rigour in analysis. Language, as an instrument of thought, expressed the will-to-signify and obeyed the authority of conscience in the same way that my approach to painting had evolved through the years.

Another symbiotic or reciprocally advantageous effect of language and painting is in the endless possible combinations between intention and intuition, and the mobility which affects both disciplines.

Pavel states that: "Derrida loudly expresses the premature satisfaction of having brought metaphysics, even philosophy, to an end through the examination of its language. Therefore, since the demon of metaphysics has been exorcised, a philosophy, according to Derrida - and to early analytical philosophies - is left with just two final tasks: to construct a formal theory of language, and to expose the emptiness of old speculations."(76)

It can be said that the primary objective of a picture is no longer to indicate or signify in a simple sense. A priority to aesthetic sense demanding **hermeneutic credibility** has more importance than narrative, educational or communicational conventions. The reality of pictorial presence, without the simple **indicative** function of everyday language or illusionistic, naturalistic devices, is what really counts. Ramifications of meaning can be shown in an art-historical approach, after which these meanings can relate to other, concurrent historical phenomena. This approach perhaps suggests a dogmatic, empirical perspective, whereas I hope to have shown that I am equally drawn to the pitfalls of metaphysics. Art work, when successful, should have a physical presence and intellectual and emotional suggestiveness which preserves the vitality of art making. This diary hopefully consists of an alchemy of text and pictures presenting erotic tensions, curiosities, self-doubt and secret yearnings.

Traditionally, in exhibition format, an artist presents an edited, scripted and carefully curated spectacle which implies certain hierarchical preferences. However the choice for this presentation is to show a **total** production of work spanning a two-year study period - a kind of self-portrait with warts and all.

Annually at the festival of Passover, the question raised is: "Ma nishtanah halayla hazé?" (Why is this night different from all other nights?)

Within the context of this dissertation a relevant paraphrase would read: "Why is this Exhibition different from all other Exhibitions?"

Just as Jewish people learn by remembering their past in symbolically reliving the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt, so I aspire to learn from considering as many internal debates as possible in an academic milieu.

Metaphorically, I dream of freedom from any imagined personal pictorial restrictions, just as Passover celebrates the notion of liberation from enforced boundaries. The idea of questions being raised and a multiplicity of possible responses given is equally supported by Talmudic study.

A polyvocal approach is endorsed where totally opposing viewpoints and perspectives are given equal attention.

Thus use of language has been as multi-faceted as attempts at picture making.

Curatorial decisions and juxtapositions, however, are of critical importance in assembling the work physically in space. If seen as a whole, the exhibition should underscore temporal concerns of a diary. **Tempo** is equally demarcated by the contrapunctal effect of one painting alongside another in an almost musical conjunction. Pictures must however also conduct themselves as independent entities and one must confront them as if for the first time. Subsequent inter-relationships will hopefully also be telling and revelatory for the painter - affording a more 'distanced' view similar to the dispassionate approach of the researcher/documentator/ biographer of the **Open Diary**. Paintings should be mutually illuminating as unexpected juxtapositions link past and present.

A vulnerable positioning extends the notion of voyeuristic complicity - the viewer engages in the most intimate and precarious negotiations undertaken by the painter whose mask is down in an attempt to re-define herself in relation to matter. No exhibition can suggest a final perfect form as there are thankfully too many elements at play. Shows should rather reflect the desire to live and the desire to learn made manifest in the best possible means.

As Alice said in Wonderland:

For first you write a sentence,
And then then you chop it small;
Then mix the bits, and sort them out
Just as they chance to fall:
The order of the phrases makes
No difference at all.

Lewis Carroll (1865)

Thus, irrespective of what has been thought, articulated or imagined, the desire is for **paintings** to have presence and the power of accountability - making an art that works on us in secret and in silence. Process for this artist is as important as destination. This path denies anything flamboyant, over-emphatic or underconsidered. The search ultimately is for images which speak of intimacy as well as grand public gesture in the most persuasive, painterly manner.

LIST OF TITLES

PART II

1. Self Portrait (1976) Oil on canvas. 92 x 122cm
2. The Dinner Party (1979) Oil on canvas. 172 x 272cm
3. Cape Winter-diptych (1980) Oil on canvas. 127 x 160cm
4. Protea (1980) Oil on canvas. 127 x 152cm
5. Rugby at Newlands (1981) Oil on canvas. 120 x 200cm
6. Fashion Show (1981) Oil on canvas. 120 x 200cm
7. Muizenberg Cabins (1981) Oil on canvas. 160 x 150cm
8. Muizenberg (1981) Oil on canvas. 150 x 168cm
9. Clifton (1981) Oil on canvas. 93 x 152cm
10. Conversation, Sea Point Ladies (1981) Oil on canvas. 140 x 160cm
11. Chambre-à-coucher (1982) Oil on canvas. 101 x 151cm
12. Judita's (1982) Oil on canvas.
13. Wolpe Invitation II (1983) Oil on canvas. 170 x 332cm
14. Untitled (1984) Oil on canvas. 120 x 156cm
15. Untitled XI (1984) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
16. Untitled VIII (1984) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
17. Untitled (1984) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
18. Untitled (1985) Oil on canvas. 130 x 200cm
19. Untitled (1985) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
20. Untitled (1985) Oil on canvas. 170 x 200cm
21. Untitled (1985) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
22. Wagner (1985) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
23. Egypt (1985) Oil on canvas. 170 x 200cm
24. Play of Daniel (1987) Oil on canvas. 165 x 295cm
25. Leda and the Swan (1987) Oil on canvas. 165 x 295cm
26. Dreigroschenoper (1987) Oil on canvas. 165 x 295cm
27. Is Flower-painting, Painting? (1987) Oil on canvas. 165 x 295cm
28. Bridge over Troubled Water (1987) Oil on canvas. 165 x 295cm

TITLES (Continued)

- 29. Hommage à mon Père (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 30. Rosh Hashanah (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 31. Handles I (1989) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 32. Enter with Volition (1989) Wood. 15 x 20 x 12cm
- 33. Homage to Callas (1990) Oil on canvas. 168 x 180cm
- 34. Noh Masks (1989) Oil on board. 39 x 59cm
- 35. Cover Girl (1989) Oil on canvas. 165 x 180cm
- 36. Operatic (1990) Oil on canvas. 169 x 180cm
- 37. Nothing is as it seems (1990) Oil and charcoal on canvas.
180 x 169cm

PART III

- 38. Small Mirror (1991) Mixed media on paper. 22 x 30cm
- 39. Mirror (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 40. Fragments d'un discours amoureux (1991) Oil on canvas.
160 x 170cm
- 41. Shifted Positions (1991) Mixed media on paper.
22 x 30cm
- 42. Shifting Positions (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 43. La chaise jaune (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 44. Forewards (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 45. Sideways (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 46. Voglio l'anima (1991) Mixed media on paper.
22 x 30cm
- 47. Marionette (1991) Oil on canvas. 170 x 160cm
- 48. Sempre chuiso (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 49. Però apperto (1991) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 50. Enter with Volition II (1992) Oil on canvas.
160 x 170cm
- 51. Buddha (1992) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 52. Grandmaman (1991-1992) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm

TITLES (Continued)

- 53. Car (1992) Oil on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 54. Amazonne (1991) Mixed media on paper.
- 55. L'Histoire de Bataille (1991) Mixed media on paper.
- 56. Triangle (1992) Mixed media on paper.
- 57. Margherita II (1992) Mixed media on paper.
- 58. Evanescent (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 170 x 160cm
- 59. Rameses (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 60. Gropingly II (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 61. Caressing is Shaping (1992) Mixed media on canvas.
160 x 170cm
- 62. Field-day for Umberto Eco (1992) Mixed media on canvas.
160 x 170cm
- 63. Kabuki (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 64. La cléf de Paulette (1992) Mixed media on canvas.
160 x 170cm
- 65. Mish-Mush (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 66. Cartography I (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm
- 67. Cartography II (1992) Mixed media on canvas. 160 x 170cm.

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