Aspects of feminine mythology and related pictorial imagery as source for the development of a personal sculptural iconography

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Documentation and commentary on the body of practical work submitted for the degree of Master of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town

November, 1992

For my parents

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Acknowledgements

I express my grateful thanks to my parents, Alan and Jill Norman for their continuous support throughout my university career.

My thanks go to my supervisor, Associate Professor Gavin Younge, to Delise Reich and John Nowers for all their help and support, and to Associate Professor Bruce Arnott and Francine Scialom-Greenblatt for their help in editing this dissertation. I would also like to thank David Hefer for his professional photography. Similarly, I am sincerely grateful to Martin Adams, Charley Van Rooyen, Andrew Palmer and Ernest Moses, of the technical staff, who provided both valuable technical advice and the strength to move my heavy sculptures. I would also like to thank Bernard Ross for all his help, encouragement and enthusiasm, and my friend and work-mate, Rozanne Whitehead for her great company in times of cheer and distress.

I acknowledge with thanks, the financial support which I received from the C.S.D., the University of Cape Town Research Fund, the MacIver Scholarship and the Jules Kramer Scholarship.

1. Proposal

The representation of the female figure in Western society has been moulded by such diverse forces as religion, economy and geography, nonetheless, certain images of the female form and representations of feminine qualities appear to be archetypal. One example is that of the *Venus of Willendorf* which has been recognised as a generalised image of women's fertility. This is mainly due to its formal exaggeration of, and emphasis on, the reproductive aspects of women's bodies. A second example is contained in the theories of Jungian psychologists who have recognised the feminine principle as embodied in the myths and pictorial imagery of what is known as the great goddess. They maintain that the symbols and images from these myths are similar to those in the myths, dreams and fantasies of modern individuals.

Following on from these insights the first series of sculptures was aimed at examining women's experience of the reproductive aspects of their bodies in patriarchal society. Generalised images of female fertility were represented through the expressive device of exaggeration. I was concerned to express each woman's individuality by including facial details and gesture. It was also necessary to depict conventionalised elements of patriarchal society. This was achieved through a personification of bestial attributes.

The ceramic medium offered many advantages, among them, its primordial qualities and its suitability for modelling and casting voluminous forms.

An interest in broader aspects of femininity developed out of the study of images of the great goddess. This was facilitated by a reading of Jungian contrasexual psychology which maintains that the feminine principle is a universal psychological element specific to both men and women. The intention in the second series of sculptures was to celebrate this principle. Since it is not gender-related, it was necessary to find imagery other than that of the female figure. The feminine principle is not definable in purely physical terms since it is experienced in the conscious and unconscious mind, in fantasy, and in what is

taken for reality. Abstract symbols associated with goddess mythology were recontextualised in this series and were intended to function on several layers of perception.

The technique of modelling cement onto a metal armature facilitated the bold and celebratory forms chosen to celebrate the feminine principle.

2. Introduction

There is an increasing belief in the necessity to re-evaluate the predominant Western cultural paradigm. Modernism has embraced amongst other things, modes of rebellion, withdrawal and antagonism based on the existentialist belief, stemming from the writings of Jean Paul Sartre, that people neither belong nor are of use to the universe. The philosophies of the Cartesian era, which focused on individual experience have led to the lack of a feeling of wholeness. Humanity has alienated itself from nature, and individuals have become alienated from their unconscious sides, and from one another through anti-ecological, unhealthy and destructive social structures.

Jungian psychologists and mythologists believe that the mechanistic, unsatisfactory and ecologically-insensitive stance of the world has resulted from the repression of the feminine principle and the over-emphasis of the Apollonian male principle by patriarchal society. Whitmont notes that four patriarchal myths underlie this process. The first is that of divine kingship. This began when the directive force of the universe was personified as a male ruler who slayed the enemies of the people and expected heroic allegiance of his subjects. This focusing of the conscious around the centring heroic ego resulted in the emergence of almost totally masculine systems of value. The heroes fought to preserve separateness and individual will, while feminine qualities and what were seen as wayward urges were relegated to the unconscious. The concepts of one god and the centrality of the self are seen in the opening words of the Decalogue; "I am". (Whitmont 1987; 79-80)

The second myth, that of paradise lost, relates to that of the divine king. He was associated with absolute good and the spirit. No graven images of him were allowed to be made and his qualities were not equated with things in nature, whereas earlier gods had also been seen as animals, plants, rocks, stones and places. These had been relegated to dumb creatures and inanimate objects which could be controlled and exploited for the good of the kingdom of humanity. Christian theology, a good example of the myth of the monotheistic divine king, forced a gulf between humanity and nature, and made humanity the centre of creation. Whitmont says:

> Having voided the sacred from nature, we have turned to new gods: technology, production of goods, greater physical well-being. Consequently, our environment is poisoned, resources become exhausted, ecological cycles are disrupted; daemonic powers of the machine threaten us ... We feel like homeless aliens in a senseless, soulless universe. We would like to knock at the doors of authentic existence but find them barred. (Whitmont 1987; 99)

Mythological functioning was terminated by the separation of the human from the divine. The divine king ruled with the orders "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not". Symbolic association was curtailed by limiting the sacred to non-sensory concepts which could not be felt or seen but only thought. Robert A. Johnson in his book *We* says that:

> If we are asked what the soul is, our minds go blank. The word soul calls up neither feeling nor image ... we have pursued our masculine, extroverted values for so long that we have come to see the soul as an unnecessary complication in an otherwise neat and tidy masculine world. (Johnson 1983; 64)

That is, we have lost the divine side of life; the world of myth, dream and vision, and we can no longer shift mind sets to experience a vision outside of the surface reality of the ego's control. The soul manifests itself and the unconscious by means of symbols in dreams, visions, fantasies and the imagination, but we cannot access it because we have lost respect for these symbols.

In the third myth, that of the scapegoat, Christ dies in atonement for the sins of all humanity, resulting in the concepts of sin, guilt, and ethical condemnation basic to Christian theology and post-Medieval Western culture. We feel self-guilt for our 'bad' desires and instinctual urges. Whitmont notes that in the

myth of the goddess and her phallic son-lover consort, equivalent to Pan or Dionysus, destruction and lustful urges, desire and joy, tides of inwardness and emotion, were included in the concept of life, and socially acceptable channels for their relief were included in sacred life. Pan and Dionysus, and the dark side of the goddess represented these destructive, lustful urges. However, in the Middle Ages the phallus represented Pan and Dionysus, and personified the devil, and dark, lustful and destructive urges were suppressed by Christian theology. (Whitmont 1987; 103-7)

The final myth is that of the inferiority of the feminine in the epoch of patriarchal ego development. Belief in the spuriousness of the magical dimension and the greater value of sheer muscular strength was necessary for the transition from the magical to mental world-view phase. (Whitmont 1987; 123) This resulted in the undervaluing of the feminine and the entire magico-mythological dimension.

This dissertation is not the place for a full exploration of how the feminine was repressed. However, what should be noted is a strong, emergent feeling that the dissatisfaction and alienation of people from nature and the cold, rational and mechanistic world in which we live are a result of the long repression of the feminine by patriarchy. Many people no longer measure success in patriarchal, purely capitalist terms. People are beginning to realise that the environment is under threat, and that they need to relate to nature and each other.

Our capacity for relatedness emanates from the feminine principle. Suzi Gablik suggests that through a revival of the values of the feminine we may step back and contact "much vaster realities than the present day consumer system of our addicted industrial societies". (Gablik 1991; 57) Robert A. Johnson, in his book *Ecstasy* accounts for the chaos of modern culture; for example, he says boredom, cynicism and chronic materialism are symptoms of our need for the ecstatic dimension. (Gablik 1991; 85) Our existing myths are leading us to destruction by measuring success in terms of money and power, and notions of dominance; the mastery of humans over nature, of masculine over feminine, of wealthy over poor, of Western over non-Western.

This dissertation and body of practical work is about the rediscovery and celebration of the feminine. Conscious femininity according to Jungian psychologist, Marion Woodman, is an "awareness of living in the world soul". (Gablik 1991; 124) This should not be confused with issues of equal rights and feminist agendas, but rather seen as a belief in the re-emergence of neglected archetypal aspects of the human psyche which would enable more feminine ways of being to be reinstated in the general psychological patterns of society. (Gablik 1991; 124) The practical work deals with poetic aspects of the feminine as related in myth, literature and psychology rather than women's attempt to achieve what men do by being like them. Linda Schierse Leonard says that the "uniqueness of the feminine is subtly undervalued, [in this case] for there is an underlying assumption that the masculine is more powerful". (Gablik 1991; 130)

This work represents a process of discovery. It begins with the representation of women's repression as related to their fertility. An interest in the plastic images of the Great goddess (discussed later) led to an interest in its mythology and to the discovery of the relevance of this mythology to the modern mind. It progressed from representations of physical experience to a celebration of aspects of the feminine which transcend personal, physical and conscious experience. The earlier ceramic works represented the symptoms of feminine repression but the later work supports the realignment of the feminine through its active celebration.

3. Field of study: aspects of the feminine

3.1. The great goddess

The term great goddess or goddess is mentioned frequently in this dissertation in relation to aspects of the feminine. The following section is a brief discussion on the origin of this mythological figure and what is meant by this terminology.

The study of prehistory remains speculative since it is unlikely that we shall discover many 'hard facts' about the socio-religious life of people living at this time. However, this period has been studied through thousands of artefacts and sites, myth and folklore. Myths of the great goddess related to pre-Indo-European culture. They originated in Old Europe, and consistently related imagery and myths from the Near East, south-eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, central, western and northern Europe suggest that the goddess religion existed as a cohesive and persistent ideological system. Some images of the goddess such as the *Venus of Willendorf* [Figure 20] are believed to date back to as early as 30 000 - 25 000 BC. (Gimbutas 1989; 314-6)

Marija Gimbutas notes that the goddess in pre- and early history was a cosmogonic figure; a universal fruitful source. The main themes of the myths and visual imagery of this figure described the mystery of birth, death and renewal of life. The goddess was seen as parthenogenetic or self-renewing and was at the same time, giver of life, death wielder, and regenetrix. She was believed to be the energy of the wells, springs, moon, and moist earth in a symbolic system which represented cyclical, lunar time rather than linear time. The religion was built around the belief that life on earth is in constant transformation, and rhythmic change between creation and destruction, birth and death. (Gimbutas 1989; 316)

The goddess was Moon Goddess, Goddess of the Plants, and Goddess of the Animals. The best known of the moon goddesses were Ishtar and Isis who ruled with their son-lover consorts. As late as the second century AD, Lucius Apuleius described in his *Golden ass,* his vision of Isis who appeared to him saying:

> I am she that is mother of all things, the initial progeny of the worlds, chief of the powers divine, queen of all that are in hell, the principal of them that dwell in heaven, manifested alone under one form of all the gods and goddesses. At my will the planets of the sky, the wholesome winds of the seas, and the lamentable voices of hell are disposed; my name, my divinity is adored throughout the world, in divers manners, in variable customs and by many names. (Whitmont 1987; 41)

3.2. Myth and the modern mind

The practical work relates to the symbols and imagery related to myths of the great goddess. These may seem, at first glance, irrelevant today. However, Jungian psychologists such as M. Esther Harding in her book entitled *Women's mysteries: ancient and modern,* Edward Whitmont in his book, *The return of the goddess,* Erich Neumann in his book, *The great mother* and Barbara Black Koltuv in her book *Weaving woman* argue, that ancient myths are relevant to our lives today, and that the myths of the goddess relate to our experience of the feminine principle.

They have established that myths and rituals are projections of psychological realities. The facts of mythology, discredited by rational science, have been re-established as the facts of the unconscious; that is, of the psyche. They are undistorted by rationalisation since, as Harding notes, the people who created them perceived the world through inner initiative rather than thought. (Harding 1990; 15) The myths were told and retold over time. The personal was eliminated and general themes common to all survived. This provided the knowledge of the underlying inner life of the group, which otherwise would have been inaccessible. These general themes are strikingly similar in widely ranging groups of people, cultures,

times and places. Jung called these the archetypes which originate from the collective unconscious. Whitmont notes that our world-views are products of the myth-making strata of our psyches which enable us to tune ourselves to imaginal and symbolic language. Inner myths and dreams enact human dramas such as birth, death, relationship and the search for meaning. (Whitmont 1987; 101-4)

Harding notes that:

> ... the wisdom of the ages, represented in myths and religious symbols, has without doubt, a larger vision, a longer range than that of any individual. (Harding 1990; xv)

3.3. The feminine principle in contrasexual psychology

To explain further what I mean by the term 'feminine principle', I wish to note that the notions of sexual and archetypal gender should not be confused. The repression of the feminine should be understood to take place in men as well as women, and should not be interpreted as discrimination against women. Jung was the first to point out that men contain recessive feminine traits and women, recessive masculine traits. His terms for these recessive qualities were the animus (masculine traits in women) and the anima (feminine traits in men). The masculine principle has been called Logos, and the feminine, Eros. (Whitmont 1987; 127-30)

In men, the feminine governs the relationship to the inner spiritual world, or the unconscious. Men's consciousness is controlled by Logos. The nature of a man's anima and his relationship to her determines his relationship to women and his inner realm. The feminine acts directly from the unconscious rather than through cultured or developed human personality. The fear of falling into the 'negative, dark side' of feminine power, has largely been responsible for the repression of this aspect of the feminine.

The masculine element in each woman is the inner experience of the father, and of the mother's animus. The positive aspect of the animus provides focus by connecting us to unconscious knowledge. Erich Neumann notes that the impersonal masculine numinosity is represented in dreams and myths as a god, a cloud, rain, lightning, gold, as the sun, or as a phallus which penetrates the woman in animal form, for example as snake, bird, bull or dragon. She is filled with deathly fear of being overpowered by the masculine. (Neumann 1973; 40-63)

The interrelated elements of masculine and feminine, conscious and unconscious, are constantly in conflict in the psyche. Edward Whitmont states that:

> Opposition and complementariness of male and female belong among the most basic representations of the experience of dualism. They underlie the polarities of solar and lunar, light and dark, active and passive, spirit and matter, energy and substance, initiative and receptiveness, heaven and earth. Ancient Chinese philosophy spoke of the Yin and Yang as cosmic principles. All existence expresses their interplay in various proportions. (Whitmont 1985; 128)

3.4. Defining the feminine

One could begin defining the feminine by contrasting it with representations of the masculine. In the Western tradition, the masculine, Logos, or Yang principle has been represented by the mythological, astrological and alchemical symbolism of the sun and saturn, while the Yin, Eros or Feminine principle has been represented by the moon and Venus. The masculine stands for spirit, Logos, creativity and self-conscious awareness, the striving for consciousness and causality. This relates to its association with the sun which rises and sets daily, in much the same manner, providing hours of constant light and darkness. The sun, therefore, relates to time as an abstract measure of action.

The feminine is moon attuned. The moon's time consists of change, process and transformation which is rhythmic, periodic and cyclical. Its time is, therefore, experienced as a quality, not as an abstract measure of action. Lunar cycles painted on the passage graves of Old Europe suggest, according to Gimbutas, in their association with images of the goddess, an early philosophical connection between cyclical, lunar time and the regenerative role of the goddess in the cycles of birth, death and rebirth. (Gimbutas 1989; 284-5)

The moon often has been regarded as the giver of fertility; its light indispensable for growth. It begins small and swells. Its mysterious cycle of light and dark, different every night, has often been associated with that of menstruation. Women, guided mainly by the Eros principle, experience life through cycles. The inner cycle of women's bodies affects their energy and emotions, but also affects men on their contrasexual side.

Barbara Black Koltuv calls her book on feminine psychology, *Weaving woman*. She discusses Penelope, the wife of Ulysses, who wove all day and unravelled all night, ostensibly to keep suitors away while her husband was on his long journey. Koltuv explains that a woman experiences life as an endless process due to menstruation, and psychological and physical changes before and after puberty, pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood and in old age. She maintains that it was probably Penelope's own endless process that occupied her:

> There is no such thing as a completed definition of a woman. A woman is weaving, woven, unravelling, moving female energy and experience. (Koltuv 1991; 114)

The feminine moon side embodies actualisation. It is creative because it brings to birth the creative stirrings of the solar Logos. To be related to Eros means to be orientated to that which transcends per-

sonal aims and ambitions. As described in the Ishtar myth in the following section, the feminine shows as a 'blind force' - being equally and seemingly indiscriminately, fecund and cruel, creating, cherishing and destroying. That is, the feminine also experiences the paradoxical impersonal quality of nature in its more ready acceptance of suffering, destruction and severance, and the necessity to inflict them. The dark phase of the moon has been associated with death while the new and waxing moons have been associated with growth and light. The notion of the moon cycle is fundamental to the feminine and to goddess mythology.

The moon, as one of the oldest symbols of sensuality and the senses, of the soul and body, is a matrix for fantasy and dreams. It has been seen to hold the energies of life. As symbol of the feminine it represents an approach to life which focuses, not on planned striving, but rather on playfulness and the imagination, seeing the worlds of reality and fantasy as two sides of the same coin. While the masculine principle has been associated with rationality, power-wielding,causality, and the intellect, the feminine has been associated with feeling, relatedness, and the capacity to relate to one's inner self. The feminine could be defined as acausal. This emphasis on sensuality and bodily experience results in greater openness to the realms of magic, mystery, and the intangible.

It is interesting to note that these notions also occur in popular fiction. A section of Tom Robbins' novel, *Jitterbug perfume* exemplifies the association of the moon with the feminine, and with lust and ecstasy, while the masculine is associated with rational thought:

> "Is not Pan a male god?" asked Alobar.
> "True, he is, but he is associated with female values. To diminish the worth of women, men had to diminish the worth of the moon. They had to drive a wedge between human beings and the trees and the beasts and the waters, because the trees and beasts and waters are as loyal to the moon as to the sun. They had to

drive a wedge between thought and feeling, between the lamplight by which they count the day's earnings and the dark to which our Pan is ever connected. At first they used Apollo as the wedge, and the abstract logic of Apollo made a mighty wedge indeed, but Apollo the artist maintained a love for women, not the open, unrestrained lust that Pan has, but a controlled longing that undermined the patriarchal ambition. When Christ came along, Christ, who slept with no female, neither two-legged nor four, Christ who played no musical instrument, recited no poetry, and never kicked up his heels by moonlight, this Christ was the perfect wedge. Christianity is merely a system for turning priestesses into handmaidens, queens into concubines, and goddesses into muses." (Robbins 1985; 55-6)

3.5. The myth of the moon goddess

In the excerpt from *Jitterbug perfume*, (Robbins 1985; 55-6) Pan is associated in the above passage with feminine values; with the dark, with ecstasy, and lust. As discussed in the Introduction, he is associated with Dionysus as a phallic son-lover consort to the moon goddess. The myths of the moon goddess are central to the mythology and psychology of the feminine.

Our knowledge of the goddess culture is scanty, though a few explanations appear in the writings of the Gnostic period, or in hymns addressed to Ishtar or Isis. Psychologists have regarded the symbols of goddess imagery as referring to psychological, rather than historical facts.

There are many moon goddesses but they all link up. Throughout western Asia and Asia Minor, the chief ancient deity, the Magna Mater or Great Mother, reigned supreme with her son-lover, for example, Ishtar of Babylon, and Isis of Egypt. The goddess was called the 'mother of the universe' and 'giver of life' on earth. Other examples are Cybele of Phrygia, the Celtic Annis of Ireland, and Anu of western Europe.

The most famous story of the moon goddess and her lovers is that of Ishtar. She was also known as Ashtarte in Canaan, Attar in Mesopotamia, as well as Ashtar, Atargatis, and Artemis. Ishtar was seen as 'queen of the heavens and stars', 'queen of the earth' and of the underworld. Whilst on earth she was believed to be mother of all nature, sexuality and fertility. Her son Tammuz (equivalent to Pan or Dionysus) was believed to be the vegetation itself. Year by year she condemned him to death, even though she loved him, and she and all women mourned his death. She then made the dangerous journey to the underworld to save him. While she was away, there ensued a time of great depression, despair and hopeless inactivity. She was inimical to man, destroying all that she had created. She was called 'destroyer of life', 'terrible mother', and 'goddess of the storms'. She conquered darkness to win back her son and returned to the upper world. At this stage she was symbolised by the new moon, beginning small, with the power to grow and ren-w. All life was restored. Her two-fold nature as the giver and destroyer of life was related to the light and dark phases of the moon. During the waxing of the moon, all things were believed to grow, and during the waning, to diminish.

Psychologists have recognised the dark, destructive side of the goddess as the transformative aspect of the feminine. It seems unbounded, primordial and irrational, and yet, applied in the right manner, it results in creation. Through the pain the dark force inflicts, a peculiar, ecstatic satisfaction results. The feminine embodies the ability to recognise the need for destruction in order to develop further. It is the consciousness of these limits and transitions which results in creativity and change, and flexible human consciousness, joys and doubts. Ishtar embodies the feminine. Through her magic it was believed that humanity could obtain the power and knowledge of secret things. That is, in psychological terms, humanity gains the knowledge of hidden depths of the unconscious. However, while we recognise to some extent that the unconscious is within us, the ancient myths were projections onto regions outside of the human psyche; to actual geographic places to which people might go in a chariot or boat. The myth represented the secret workings of the unconscious, and the rites connected with Ishtar represented a method of gaining a better relationship to it. She is our connection with the unconscious, and she plays all possible feminine roles; she is mother and lover of Tammuz, and daughter of the moon god, Sinn.

Another aspect of the goddess Ishtar was the belief that in her positive aspect she was giver of the gift of human sexuality and attraction between male and female. The union of the two principles was believed to result in divine power, often symbolised by the crescent moon in perpetual union with the sun. Ishtar was described in a hymn as saying that:

> I turn male to female; I am she who adorneth the male for the female, I am she who adorneth the female for the male. (Harding 1991; 159)

This notion may seem anathema to Western thought since science has established that attraction between men and women is based on instincts, but if we consider that the gods and goddesses of mythology represent the unrealised forces of the unconscious, and that the ancients, under the guise of the goddess, were representing the movement of psychological forces, recorded in unbiased fashion, this may be a more helpful way of understanding those aspects of human relationships which are felt to go beyond that which is rationally explainable. Therefore, ancient myths which portrayed the goddess of the underworld as having secret powers, may be understood today, to mean that the unconscious works in secret and mysterious ways. The symbols of ancient religion can be understood as representing the drama of the inner lives of humanity.

The principle of a life of rhythmic increase followed by decrease, recognised by the individual, was the basic philosophy in the *I Ching*, the most ancient Chinese book of religious philosophy. In ancient and contemporary moon myths there is the same rhythm of increase and decrease, creation and destruction, which is accepted as the principle basis for immortality. The Ishtar myth shows the opportunity for new forms of consciousness and initiation to new phases of life, through destruction and renewal. This theme of cyclical return is common in mystical poetry. T.S. Eliot wrote that:

We die with the dying:
See, they depart and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return and bring us with them.
(Woolger 1990; 148)

The masculine and feminine are often symbolized in myths by two characters; a king and queen, or in this case Ishtar and her son-lover. The sacrifice of the son in the Ishtar myth represents the unconscious need to develop a balance in the relationship between masculine and feminine. The clinging of the son to the mother, and his reliance upon her for every need, and the mother's desire to be mothering are sacrificed for a new relationship where the capacity to love is renewed along with the recognition of the individual. It represents the power to say 'no', and not be flooded by the emotions of the unconscious.

The threat of being 'flooded' by the emotions of the unconscious and the unbounded, primordial aspect of the feminine is the theme in T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland*. It deals with the stagnation of the modern western world as a result of the denial of the transformative aspect of the feminine, and domination by the masculine. Based on the Celtic 'grail myth' of the Fisher King, it speaks of a sick world in a century where the concern with the masculine and mechanical aspects of life have choked the feminine and denied feeling. In the Celtic myth the Fisher King and his land are ailing and dying. The moisture from the goddess which can provide life is missing since she is in the underworld. The chalice or grail is the sacrificial cauldron of the moon goddess which bestows regeneration. The mystery of the grail must be achieved by mortal man through courage and endurance.

The end of the drought in Eliot's poem is represented cosmically by the release of tension in the thunderstorm, and emotionally in the surrendering of ego control and acceptance of emotion - a heroic act

showing the ability to stand in awe of the goddess, Eros or the feminine and to accept emotion without being overawed by it. The hero's act is described as "a moment's surrender which an age of prudence can never retract", and in earlier versions of the myth the hero is warned to beware of death by drowning. These fears of loss of control in a moment's action are related to the fear that once the rain (representing the acceptance of emotion) had started, it would not stop until the world was drowned. The winds, fires and floods which threaten in the poem are symbols of emotion. The threat is that once emotion and aspects of the feminine are accepted, these will flood all established rule and order in our culture which has limited itself to the realm of the rational for so long in its attempt to control nature's creative and destructive aspects. This one-sidedness threatens to be overthrown by the feminine qualities which have been repressed and built up in the unconscious. The challenge is to accept the emotion and restore the feminine without being overpowered by it, so that the king and lands (ostensibly our culture) may be saved from stagnation.

3.6. Symbols of the feminine

The symbols discussed below are a few of the many related to the goddess and the feminine. They have been chosen because they relate to the body of practical work.

Many of the symbols representing the feminine are what we call abstract symbols. Lippard notes that it is because of education rather than the lack of it that people today do not understand the subterranean layer of symbolic possibility and meaning. This is because people have been educated through the predominant art-for-art's-sake ethos:

> Now commonly considered a non-communicative and anti-populist mode, abstraction originated as precisely the opposite ... Early abstraction was a collective form understood by everyone in a group or society, and probably constituted the earliest form of written language. (Lippard 1985; 10)

Symbols, according to Lippard, convey several layers of reality and several layers of communal need. They are intermediaries which have allowed the desires and needs of their makers and of their receivers to intersect or merge. Certain forms such as the spiral, zigzag, lozenge and concentric circle have survived to be meaningful to us even if we cannot cite their ancient symbolic intricacies.

Neumann also notes the existence of certain fundamental and meaningful symbols like the spiral, cross, circle and wave. He explains that abstraction is a spiritual, psychic element which combines the essential, the ideational, the transpersonal, and the conceptual. It does not aim to express real forms, or the exaggeration of real features, but an imaginative and essentially different, inner vision. Thus, antithetical modes of psychic representation existed from ancient history. (Neumann 1963; 104-13)

3.6.1.The Moon

From early times the representation of the cycles of the moon was through the light or dark goddess. The three aspects of the moon - the full, new and crescent moons - were represented by pillars of different heights, which were often topped by crescents. [Figures 1-3] The triune goddesses such as the three Ladies of Britain and the Celtic Brigits of Ireland are phases of the great Celtic mother Anu or Annis, and bear striking resemblance to the Magna Dea of the East. The Celtic calendar was calculated according to the moon, rather than the sun, and in many civilisations the moon is the oldest measure of time. According to a Babylonian story of creation, the moon shone forth and confided with the night, to count the days. In China a moon calendar was used until recent times.

The moon was often represented as a chariot [Figure 4] or boat on a journey over rivers and floods. [Figures 4-6] Isis went in search of Osiris in a little boat, and Ishtar built an ark in which to carry her children across the flood. The Egyptian moon boat was self-propelled and guided by the eyes of Horus, which symbolised the light of the moon. [Figure 5] Assyrian pictures showed the moon god Sinn in a little crescent boat paddling across the sky. This image represented the moon's movement across the sky. [Figure 6] The moon itself was sometimes represented as having wings for flying across the heavens. [Figure 7]

Inspiration and ecstasy were often believed to originate from the moon, that is, they are not from Logos, but rather from the unconscious. These were often represented as resulting from the mythological Soma drink, which was brewed by the gods from the fruit of the moon tree. [Figure 8] The moon itself was often represented as a tree. The sacred moon tree is of ancient date and appeared again and again in religious and sacred art. [Figures 9-11]

The light of the moon was thought to bring wisdom and enlightenment and was frequently personified by birds. The most evolved form of this was the equation of the light of the Heavenly Mother with the Holy Dove of the Spirit.

3.6.2.The snake or serpent

The serpent was also closely associated with the moon. Its apparent power of self-renewal in the seasonal sloughing of its skin was felt to be akin to the moon's power to renew itself monthly. The power of immortality was explained as having been brought to people by the moon or serpent and the serpent was often believed to reveal to human beings the power that was concealed in the fruit of the moon tree or the soma which was brewed from it. (Harding 1990; 52-4)

The snake was associated with the gorgon mother or medusa, and with the uroboros. It appeared as a feminine companion and attribute in India and Greece. Since the snake lived below the earth its secret and mysterious existence was linked to the terrible aspect of the feminine, and also to the self-renewing character of the goddess. The belly region of the goddess was often represented by or decorated with the coil of a snake, and the alchemical symbol for growth was the ascending snake. This symbol appeared in pre-Dynastic Egypt, and in many subsequent myths as the ambiguous, divine and numinous spirit of a process of growth whose purpose was inaccessible to human intelligence.

The snake was often the representation of the phallus. Pallas, or Priapus, was worshipped at the temple of Vesta, often in the form of a snake, and Pan was worshipped in a similar manner at the temple of Selene. In myths and primitive beliefs snakes held congress with women and were even believed to result in their pregnancy. (Harding 1989; 54)

Deliberate and consistent associations and repetitions of crescents, snake coils, winding snakes and other symbols are visible on surviving retaining stones of Irish Megaliths in the Boyne River valley. Gimbutas suggests that both a sphere and a snake coil were intended to represent a full moon, and opposed crescents with a snake coil in the middle represented a moon cycle. (Gimbutas 1989; 287) The wavy lines of a winding serpent are believed to have measured time. Each turn was a counting unit on the lunar calendar. There were often between fourteen and seventeen turns which probably represented the number of days the moon was waxing. [Figure 12] Similar winding serpents were seen on antler carvings of the north European Mesolithic and on 5th millennium BC ceramics of eastern and central Europe. Time reckoning may, therefore, have been accomplished by similar methods in all parts of Europe.
These time reckoning symbols were associated with the belief in regeneration from death in funeral monuments and the serpent's life force was at the centre of this symbolism. All these symbols were ruled by motion in a celebration of the joy of life, and were believed to promote perpetual renewal and change of the cosmic cycle.

Gimbutas notes that it was not the body of the snake but rather the energy exuded by its spiralling which was believed to transcend boundaries and influence the surrounding world. (Gimbutas 1989: 121-37) The snake was seen as primordial and mysterious, coming out of the depths of earth and waters where life was believed to have begun. Its hibernation provided a continuity between the underworld and life. Snakes were often accompanied in rock paintings and carvings, by chevrons, meanders and zigzags and they were probably believed to have been the guardians of springs in prehistory. On old European ceramics the snake theme grew constantly, reaching a peak around 5000-4000 BC. Snake representations appeared in the Upper Paleolithic and continued into the Neolithic and Mesolithic periods. Throughout the Neolithic period the goddess was represented with snake legs, or head, or was recognised by the snakes on her back. [Figure 13] This continued through the iron and bronze ages on Crete and the Aegean Islands, and the most famous examples are the Faience statuettes which were uncovered at Knossos. [Figures 14 and 15] Their aprons are festooned with spirals and serpents crawl over their arms, clasp their waists or peer out of their headdresses.

Examples of these beliefs occur as late as the 20th Century where snakes are paid great respect in places such as Malta, Greece and the slavic countries. They live under the floors of houses, are allowed inside and are even fed milk. A snake in the house means increase, happiness and fertility. Snakes decorate the corners of Baltic farm houses, even today, and festivals occur on the day that snakes appear from hibernation, usually at the beginning of February each year. In Scotland this festival is still linked to the Celtic goddess, Brigit, since the snake was supposed to emerge from the hills on the 'day of the bride' or Brigit. There are widespread beliefs in snakes as household gods and guardians of the family, domestic animals and agriculture. The image of the crowned snake as 'queen' or 'mother' continues in folklore to this day and originates in Neolithic times. (Gimbutas 1989; 121-37)

3.6.3.Symbols of energy and unfolding

The spiral was related to the symbol of the snake or serpent. It belonged to a larger group of symbols which represented energy or cyclic time. Examples include circles, coils, crescents, hooks, brushes and combs. Spirals appeared in upper Paleolithic caves, and in association with zigzags, serpentine forms and crescents for millennia afterwards. (Gimbutas 1989; 279).

Gimbutas notes that the spiral as a design in pottery emerged in the second half of the seventh millennium BC in south-eastern Europe and spread to the Danube Basin and eastern Balkans and became very common during the period 5500-3500 BC. [Figure 16] The spiral or serpent force was the goddess's energy, and spirals were often painted on figures, replacing eyes, near breasts or on the back. [Figure 14] The upward and downward movement of the spirals may have been compared to the waxing and waning of the moon. The life force was demonstrated pictorially when spirals turned into plants, especially in Malta and Minoan Crete. Spirals and crescents, or phases of the moon, were themes used repeatedly in Karanovo and Cucuteni vase painting. The spiral often appeared in the centre of a dish or bowl and around it were circles in bands, often 12 or 13, which represented the lunar months. (Gimbutas 1989; 279-81)

The zigzag or serpentine represented water in the prehistoric iconography of old Europe. Gimbutas notes that they were probably related to female moisture and amniotic fluid. The aquatic significance of the M or abbreviated zigzag appears to have lasted in the Egyptian hieroglyph, an M-sign, pronounced mu, and meaning water. [Figure 17] (Gimbutas 1989; 19-23)

3.6.4.Spinning and weaving

Barbara Black Koltuv's association of the feminine with weaving has been mentioned in the section on the moon cycle. Neumann suggests that the mystery of weaving and spinning was linked to the Great Mother who wove the web of life and spun the thread of fate. The theme of women's weaving of fate survives in fairy tales as the dark side of the feminine, and witches are always weaving, spinning or doing other cyclical actions. Kerenyi says of Klothes, the mythological spinstresses that weaving was the expression of the creation of life. (Neumann 1963; 230) The Aegean goddesses of Birth like Eileiythyia and the Morai (Greek goddesses of fate) were spinstresses.

Gimbutas notes that the link between the goddess and weaving is evidenced in the appearance of her symbol on the loom weights and numerous wall paintings of textiles at Catal-Huyuk in Anatolia. [Figure 18] The Greek Athena and Roman Minerva were commonly linked to spinning and weaving, as are goddesses still alive in folk beliefs, for example, the Irish St. Brigit, the Baltic Laima, and east-Slavic Mokosh.

3.6.5.The ship of renewal

As mentioned above, the moon was often represented as a boat, carrying a god or goddess across the sky. Ship engravings were known in Megalithic tombs in Brittany, and Cycladic tombs of the mid-third millennium BC. The fact that they were engraved on inner tomb walls suggests, according to Gimbutas, that they were associated with the cult of the death of nature. (Gimbutas 1989; 247-9) All of these depictions were highly abstract and some consisted solely of bars linked by a horizontal column. [Figure 19]

In Egypt the serpent above a boat symbolised renewal, a cosmic snake, and was often associated with the dying and resurrected Horus. [Figure 5] The ship portrayals are examples of rich ritual practices of the

renewal of nature which were connected with the winter solstice or with the crisis of human death. In Roman times the goddess Isis was portrayed with a ship. The Greek Dionysus, brimming with the vital forces of blossoming vegetation, appeared from the sea on a boat in February, carrying the souls of the dead. The water was seen as a link between this world and the souls of the netherworld. The moon was the ship of the night, and the great lamp, the container of all souls. The ship was also the ship of the dead, and burial ships can be traced back to the Germanic bronze age and down to the Norman period of the great ship tombs. Noah of the Old Testament was probably a form of Nuah, a Babylonian moon goddess, and like Ishtar, he built an ark to save his people. The boat of the Hindus also carried souls to the new world and immortality. After the flood the Chinese moon goddess gave birth to all things. (Harding 1990; 106-8)

4. Art-historical context

4.1. Images of the goddess

The imagery that influenced the first series of work, the ceramic pieces, is that of the small, Paleolithic sculptural representations of the goddess mythology discussed in Section Three. My interest was in the distortion and exaggeration of the procreative, or reproductive parts of the woman's body in sculptures such as the *Venus of Willendorf* (ca. 30 000 - 25 000 BC) [Figure 20] and other Paleolithic goddess figures such as the *Venus of Menton* [Figure 21] and the *Venus of Lespugue* [Figure 22]. These figures are understood to have been generalised images whose power lay in their symbolic meaning; icons that embodied the fecundity of the earth itself.

Since the influence of this imagery relates only to a small portion of the practical work and this dissertation, I will mention only briefly, some of the artists who based their work on it, and limit the discussion to visual representations, thereby omitting the wealth of performance art and ritual associated with representations of the *Venus of Willendorf.* [Figure 20]

Artists whose work relates to this imagery include the Cuban, Ana Mendieta who has been working since the early 1970s; the Canadian, Emily Carr (1871-1945); and the Americans, Georgia O'Keefe (1887-), and Judy Chicago who is famous for her *Dinner table* (1973-9) which was dedicated to the buried history of women. Carolee Schneemann's performances since the early 1960s were an attempt to free women from male-defined pornography and to encourage them to express their own natural eroticism. Another American, Mary Beth Edelson, working since the early 1970s, combines Jungian psychology, feminism, dreams, fantasies, the collective unconscious and politics in a belief system expressed in ancient images which hold their own unique power today.

Frida Kahlo's (1910-54) paintings fuse personal physical sensations with a broader cosmic view. Part European and part Indian, she was immersed in a powerful Mexican sense of solitude, and her painful,

powerful and direct paintings express a longing for connection with aspects of the feminine which reach far back into history and transcend personal boundaries. They usually include figures and images of nature such as plants, rocks and animals. Kahlo's female figures seem to represent giant goddesses and mythological motherhood. The well-known painting *My nurse and I* (1937) [Figure 23] shows a strong, nude Indian woman with the calm face of a pre-Columbian stone mask who suckles the adult-faced Kahlo with an infant's body. The function of the breasts is emphasized and milk drips from the one while the baby suckles on the other. This breast is transparent and the lactating veins become tiny white flowers whose stems lead out through the nipple. The figures are surrounded by giant leaves which seem to be nourished by the milk drops which rain from the sky. The goddess-like nurse figure seems to have the effect of nourishing both baby and nature itself. The mask is believed to be similar to those used in ceremonies to the ancient Aztec goddess Coatlicue. (Lippard 1985; 49)

The work of Louise Bourgeois, developed in the 1930s and 1940s, related to ancient bird and snake goddesses, and recalled 'primitive' rather than modern sources. Abstracting from nature, she created works which corresponded to inner rhythms in her own life, but which also transcended individual experience to communicate collective emotion through form. Her armless, legless, and soft-centred *Stake woman* (c. 1970) [Figure 24] resembles the plump pudenda of the *Venus of Willendorf* [Figure 20] and other old European goddesses with exaggerated buttocks. These figures are often rooted in anxiety as opposed to the calm, ancient counterparts. They seem "terrifyingly vulnerable and vulnerably terrifying". (Lippard 1985; 63) Bourgeois notes that they embody:

> The polarity of woman, the destructive and the seductive ... A girl can be terrified of the world. She feels vulnerable because she can be wounded by the penis. So she tries to take on the weapon of the aggressor. But when a woman becomes aggressive, she becomes terribly afraid. If you are inhabited by needles, stakes, and knives, you are very handicapped to be a self-perceptive creature. (Lippard 1985; 63)

The works described above deal with women's psychological and physical experience of the feminine through representations and distortions of the female figure which originate in figures such as the *Venus of Willendorf.* [Figure 20] The second series of sculptures have as their source material, the abstracted symbols discussed in the section on Symbols of the feminine. My discussion of related artists in this case centres on the work of Joan Miro.

4.2. Joan Miro (1893-1983)

Miro was one of the artists who attempted to represent the unconscious, and to escape the world of rationalism. Influenced by the Surrealists in Paris, and especially by the poets Jarry, Leiris, Desnos, Lautreamont, Rimbaud and Apollinaire, and the writer-actor Antonin Artaud, the world of the imagination played a major part in Miro's work. The Surrealists aimed at a deeper understanding of consciousness through the unconscious and Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams,* published in 1900, was an important source of information for them. Miro claimed that painting had nothing to do with external reality and his visual language was a continuously developing set of signs and symbols, which were often provocatively ambiguous, and elusive of precise definition. This was so since he was speaking in terms of subconscious visual sensations which exist in terms of their own indecipherable reality. To explain further, I quote Miro in conversation with Georges Raillard in 1977:

> For me, when I make a large female sex organ it is as a goddess, as the birth of humanity.
>
> But when that sex organ is a spider and about to devour ...?
>
> That thing like a spider you are talking about, that's really the hair. That looks like spiders, that turns wicked. (Wheelen 1989; 64)

This quote shows the ambiguity which Miro attributed to his signs and symbols. In this sense Miro's work could be called realistic, since nature itself is ambiguous - the feminine embraces the masculine and vice versa, and it is impossible to separate completely, an experience of the inner subconscious and emotional worlds from an experience of the external world of physical reality. On this issue Wheelen suggests that the body and mind, artificially separated by Judeo-Christian belief, send information back and forth:

> Everything the mind experiences originates as an experience of the body, and that is perhaps one of the profound significations of Miro's work. (Wheelen 1991; 174)

Miro made little distinction between signs and personages, and there was often a tenuous link between their identities. He often allowed signs to schematise the human figure - spots, bars, brushstrokes, flat shapes, lines, stars, commas, dots and spirals, are combined by Miro to form his own visual alphabet. Anatomical shapes like heads, arms, breasts and bodies, though freely distorted, also intersperse the work and are visible as signs. Miro believed that signs had no exact meaning and that they produced a magic sense. The signs he used frequently related to fundamental forms of organic nature, growth and movement including the spiral, circle, triangle and anthropomorphic violin shape which refer back to ancient sites and works of art. Whether they originated in hallucinations brought on by hunger, as in the *Dream paintings* of the 1920s or in collages of mechanical objects, Miro's signs always gave shape to compelling human emotions. It is this use of signs to convey human qualities that I have attempted to employ in my own work in order to express notions of femininity.

Despite the abstraction and ambiguity of Miro's work, his original source was nature. Penrose notes that:

> Miro belongs basically in the countryside and nature. It is the world of mountains, animals, birds, insects, flowers, and the stars that have never ceased to enthral him, and his early desire to realise descriptions of nature in landscapes rapidly became transformed into the visions of his imagination. (Penrose 1983; 56)

Another quotation in an article by Gibson shows that Miro made little distinction between man, tree or pebble, in his animistic appreciation of nature:

> When I see a tree, for instance a carob tree, which is a very typical tree at home in Catalonia, I feel that tree talking to me. One can talk to it. A tree is human and so is a pebble. (Gibson 1980; 54)

Miro also explained to Yvonne Taillandier that he desired a mental tension for his work; not provoked by chemical means, but through an atmosphere favourable to tension, for example poetry, architecture (especially that of Antoni Gaudi), music and nature.

Miro's treatment of the image of woman is important to the second series of work. He often associated women with the night, as seen in titles like *Women and kites among stars* and *Women with dishevelled hair welcoming the crescent of the moon*. This is interesting in the context of the associations of the feminine with the moon and night, and the masculine with the sun, discussed in Section 3.4. Miro's women are often surrounded by the moon and stars. This also relates to the belief in Ishtar, the personification of the feminine, as the 'queen of the night' and the stars. The night, however, did not signify darkness for Miro, but rather a brilliance of colour. It provided scenes for the festive celebration of woman in her positive

aspect, and for the expression of catastrophe and destruction in an atmosphere of primeval night. The latter was achieved through the expression of the negative, destructive aspects of the feminine.

The expression of the destructive feminine is especially vivid in the *Peintures sauvages* series of 1934-7, leading up to the Spanish civil war. Although my own work does not deal with the destructive element of the feminine in any specific way, these works interest me because they convey a sense of liveliness. Formally, the elements have gained a more sculptural, solid, three-dimensional quality, accentuated by acid colours and soft gradations. Through these forms Miro uses roguish humour and a lyrical delight in nature to create absurd, violent worlds inhabited by ferocious beings. His use of abstracted, balancing, crossing and interlocking forms is of interest to me. *Woman,* of 1934, [Figure 25] is a combination of anthropomorphic forms; separate elements which relate to each other by slotting into, crossing or balancing on one another. This creates a vital tension, suggesting a moment in continuum, similar to that which I have aimed to achieve in my own work. Single lines denote fingers and hair, and yet remain elusive to exact definition.

Woman's head of 1938 [Figure 26] shows a monster woman with a beak full of sharp teeth. Miro associated women with birds. They have a common softness and allure of colour and grace, but also have commonly destructive diabolical claws and beaks. The bird's ability to fly made it a symbol of transcendence for Miro, whilst women had for him, a fundamental connection with divinity. As producers of life they are possessed of brilliance and belong amongst the moon, stars and birds in the night. This association of women with birds also bears an interesting relation to the bird symbols of prehistory. As mentioned in Section three, the bird was connected with the goddess. Birds, especially doves, were associated with the shrine of the moon goddess and her animal attendants were frequently winged. They represented her transcendent spirit. The moon was often represented with wings, and even the goddess was sometimes winged. The bird also represented the negative aspect of death. The goddess is associated with the vulture in this respect. In Egypt and Anatolia the vulture brought the corpses to the devouring goddess. [Figure

27] During the Renaissance, genii bearing weapons and birds' claws were symbols of voracious impulses which were related to Aphrodite who was believed to enchant and ruin men whom she ensnared in her earthly paradise.

An example of Miro's expression of the positive elements of the feminine is *Flight of a bird encircling the woman with three hairs during a moonlight night* of 1968. [Figure 28] This work is full of a new-found lyricism and the signs are more ambiguous. The composition is extremely simple. The sign of woman moves in silhouette against the golden moonlight whilst above her a bird circles a crescent moon in the night sky with a star. Miro has achieved a scene of great vitality and lyricism through the use of ambiguous signs.

Two sculptures of 1966; *Solar bird* [Figure 29] and *Lunar bird* [Figure 30] are evocative of the roles Miro attributed to the sun and moon. The solar bird is smaller but full of intense energy, propelled from behind and travelling parallel to the ground. The lunar bird seems more wayward and variable and without wings, it is firmly attached to the ground, dominated by upward growth which culminates in the two horns which grow from the crescent of the head. The moon is clearly once again associated with the feminine. Miro attributes to it more mystery, as if all female creatures mysteriously obey its erratic course and disconcerting influence. Once again these pieces show the expression of the feminine by Miro in a manner that relates to traditionally understood mythological and psychological signs and symbols of the feminine.

4.3. Historical links in technical approach: cement and the use of armatures

There are many examples of the use of armatures in sculpture. I have chosen to discuss those of Antoni Gaudi, the Spanish architect who created ingenious forms in cement, and of the South African, Helen Martins' creation, known as the Owl House, because they present interesting uses of armature, cement and surface details.

4.3.1.The architecture of Antoni Gaudi (1852 - 1926)

Gaudi's work is of interest regarding my own for the following reasons:

a) The sculptural qualities of his architecture and the proximity of his forms to natural and organic forms.

b) His use of materials; especially of cement and wrought iron but also his application of colour through the use of ceramic mosaic.

In the *Guell Park* (1910-14) Gaudi developed his method of constructing cement forms. For example, the turrets on buildings were constructed from a thick layer of bricks and concrete, reinforced with iron rods. The resultant work showed the possibility of constructing detailed and complex forms in this manner. The surfaces of forms were rarely straight or flat, but rather consisted of sinuous curves and waves; detailed with complex textures or embedded with mosaics. The long, sinuous, snake-like bench and the roof of the porter's lodge [Figure 31] are examples of this. In order to strengthen and protect the cement and rock used for construction, Gaudi covered the constructed forms with three layers of roofing tiles and an outer layer of embedded ceramic plates and mortar.

Gaudi's ability to create large-scale sculptural forms in this manner is visible in a dragon from the *Guell Park* [Figure 32] and in the chimneys and air vents of the *Casa Mila* [Figure 33], amongst numerous other examples. The dragon serves as a gargoyle for a water cistern. It is built in cement and covered with 'scales' of bright ceramic mosaic. A similar dragon image is used in a wrought iron gate in Guell Park. Gaudi successfully combined the use of rock, cement, mosaic and wrought iron in a visually and formally pleasing manner. The iron was often cast into forms such as twisting plants or waves in a style similar to that of Art-Nouveau, and used as balcony railings, gates or for other detail.

Gaudi's apparent dislike of the monotony of monochromatic colour and his application of colour to cement forms through the use of mosaics is of interest to me, although I have not limited my use of colour to the addition of mosaic.

The sculptural qualities of Gaudi's architecture reach a peak in the *Casa Mila*, built from 1906-10. His intense preoccupation with nature allowed him to assimilate its underlying structures without representing specific natural forms. The rhythm of the building is expressed in its undulating facade, its plant-like railings, and in the roof which is like a landscape dotted with strange surrealist-like chimneys and ducts. [Figure 33] The building creates a paradox in its artificial naturalness and seems more like a giant sculpture and less like a house. My interest lies in these organic forms which create an air of vitality without specifically representing organic forms. Other examples include the spires of Gaudi's masterpiece, the *Sagrada Familia* [Figure 34], and the shell-like spirals of its internal staircases. [Figure 35]

4.3.2.Helen Martins - the Owl House

A similar cement technique was used in what has come to be known as the Owl House, situated in the town of Nieu Bethesda, in the Great Karoo. The house was inhabited by Helen Martins who decorated its interior, and built the sculptures and miniature buildings in the garden, from 1945 to 1976. I am particularly interested in the innovative use of commonplace materials such as wire mesh, cement and broken glass by Helen Martins and her helpers, in the building of the sculptures and other structures. Through these media they created, amongst other things, camels, pilgrims, owls, pelicans, lions, wide-skirted women, sun faces and miniature buildings. (Figure 36)

The sculptures were built mainly by Koos Malgas. He described to Anne Emslie the necessity for a well-made and accurate wire armature on which to model the cement. (Emslie 1991; 65) As in the more famous and well-recognised work of Gaudi, colour plays a large part in the work of the Owl House and this

is achieved through shards of broken glass pressed into the wet cement, and occasionally with paint. The final cement surface of forms not covered in glass was achieved through painting on a mixture of cement and water with a brush. This method of working facilitated the creation of large-scale pieces as well as the achievement of significant surface detail on three-dimensional as well as relief pieces.

5. Creative process

5.1. Series one - ceramic sculptures

This series of sculptures deals with women's experience of the oppression of the feminine as related to their fertility. The works are intended to show the vulnerability that many women who have children feel, but cannot escape, in a world dominated by patriarchal thought. The creative process was initiated by the search for suitable metaphors for fertility, and for the burden of oppression. The term 'oppression of the feminine' as related to the work discussed in this section, means the domination of society by a masculine principle which results in social violence and in a lack of understanding of the relationship of mother to child, and her feeling of loss and helplessness when her own children are destroyed by violence or take part in it.

The sculptural representations of the prehistoric great goddess, for example, the Paleolithic Venuses of *Menton* [Figure 21], *Willendorf* [Figure 20] and *L'Espugue* [Figure 22] are believed to have represented the fertility of the goddess through the exaggeration and distortion of those regions of the female body responsible for conception, childbirth and nurturing. The figures were faceless and had almost non-existent arms and legs, while the breasts, hips, and pubic triangle were prominently enlarged and exaggerated. The intention in the three ceramic sculptures, *Rape*, *Burden 1* and *Burden 2*, was to represent this generalised aspect of women's fertility, and at the same time, to show that women are individuals, physically and psychologically burdened by society's oppression of the feminine. The reproductive aspects of the female body were, therefore, exaggerated in a similar way, but the face of each woman was represented in order to show her burdened pain and suffering. The figures are arched in a position both of strength and exposure.

Symbols of destructive patriarchal power were sought to represent the burden. Erich Neumann maintained that the masculine often appears to women in dreams as a powerful and destructive phallus which enters them in the form of an animal, like a snake, bull or crocodile. It is the numinous representation of

the powerful destructive masculine which the women feels she is too small to accommodate. (Neumann 1963; 40-63) The snake and crocodile in my sculptures are threatening elements. The snake is actively aggressive as it penetrates and rapes the woman, re-emerging through her mouth, while the crocodile sits comfortably on the woman threatening possible destruction. The positioning of the tail suggests the threat of physical harm or discomfort, and a lack of respect for physical and psychological integrity. The final sculpture in the series expresses the futility of defending femininity against patriarchy on patriarchal terms.

5.2. Series two and three - cement and bronze sculptures

The intention in these sculptures was to move away from the direct representation of women's bodies as in the ceramic sculptures, and from the formal limitations of the ceramic medium. A new way of expressing the feminine on a broader level than that related to women and fertility, was found through an understanding of the feminine principle in contrasexual psychology - that is, the feminine as an element of both men and women. The sculptures are intended to celebrate vital, creative femininity, and its associated notions of fantasy and playfulness. They are intended to affirm its strengths rather than to express its oppression on patriarchal terms. An important aspect in my decision to change materials was the possibility of using brighter colours which seemed more appropriate to the celebratory aspects of these sculptures.

It was realised that the feminine could not be expressed purely in terms of the female figure since the works deal with images of the changing and transforming feminine, as related to creativity, sexuality, fantasy, the conscious and the unconscious, as well as to fertility. The use of symbols was explored because of their ability to function on several layers of reality and to convey broader aspects of meaning than descriptive realism. The intention was to develop a symbolic shorthand to represent and celebrate the feminine. The symbols and pictorial imagery of old European great goddess mythology provided a

source for my sculptural forms and symbols. These symbols represented broader aspects of the mysteries of the feminine than those of fertility alone. They seemed to convey the psychological meanings attributed to the myths of the great goddess by Jungian psychologists. They also represented women's own history and psychology, their complexity and elusiveness dispelling the notion that it is possible to categorise women in any narrow way.

These symbols include the spiral, moon/crescent/boat, interwoven or weaving lines, and the zigzag, juxtaposed with more realistic imagery, for example, the wheel, cushion, and plastic fruit, and with imagery which suggests organic growth and physical sensuality. This juxtaposition of realistic and abstracted imagery is intended to express the belief that the experience of the feminine is indefinable on any one plane - it incorporates the conscious and the unconscious, fantasy and what we perceive to be reality, biology and sexuality - and the fact that all of these are in a constant state of flux.

The intention of the series was also to express the experience of the feminine as metaphor for the process of creativity. This may be seen as the metaphorical representation of modern aspects of the ancient belief in the parthenogenetic (self-renewing) goddess. The notion of process is expressed through biological associations in images of growth and sexuality, and through the playful balancing of the forms which suggests that they are in continuous movement and transformation in their relationship to one another. The imagery of the boat, wheel and moon might also suggest that the figures are involved in a journey.

6. Technical data

6.1. Series one - ceramic pieces

These pieces were planned in drawings and clay maquettes, and were cast in plaster of Paris press-moulds. This method was preferred to that of hand-building because the large size and the basic arched structures of the pieces would have made them difficult to fabricate by means of slabs or coils, or to build solid and hollow out afterwards. Experience in previous ceramic work also showed that the press mould method resulted in more successful firing, with fewer cracks and distortions.

The press-mould method necessitated building a clay form of the sculpture from which the mould could be made. The arched nature of the underlying forms of each piece necessitated the building of armatures to support the weight of the clay. Wherever possible the bulk of the form was built up with polystyrene in order to limit the weight of the solid piece. The polystyrene was sealed with P.V.A so that it did not draw moisture from the clay which was applied to it. Where clay was to be positioned in overhanging areas, a series of 'swings' were constructed of pieces of wood hanging from wire. These formed support for the clay so that it did not fall off. Long nails were also pressed into the polystyrene to form a grid structure in order to keep the clay in place.

Once the basic shape was formed, the surface was worked with a paddle and serrated tool. No superficial details were applied and areas with potential undercuts were filled in, in order to facilitate the release of the press mould. Once the form was complete it was determined where the division lines for the mould pieces would be placed. This was important to ensure that there were no undercuts and that the mould could be opened up and then rejoined in a practical order. These lines were marked by a thin, metal shim or clay wall. The clay wall was more satisfactory in that it did not interfere with the surface, but it was often necessary to use shim where the clay wall was too heavy and would not adhere to the overhanging areas. The mould was made piece by piece. Because of the large size and weight of each piece, handles were inserted into the plaster in order to facilitate easier handling. After each piece had set the wall was

removed, registration marks were carved into the plaster, and a thin layer of slip was painted onto the wall surface. This facilitated release when each mould piece was separated and the mould was opened.

Once the mould was completed and set it was taken apart. This was done by wetting the seams of the release piece in order to wet the slip. Wedges were then used to open up the seam. Once the mould was off each piece was cleaned and left to dry out. This was necessary for the pressing and drying of the clay cast. The clay for the cast was rolled out into slabs and pressed into the mould. The separate pieces of clay were joined by scoring the edges, painting them with slip and pressing them firmly together. Once each mould piece was pressed, they were left covered overnight to get slightly hard. The edges of the clay were scored and painted with slip and the pieces were reassembled in the correct order. The seams were worked from the inside by pressing clay into them to ensure that they met and that all air pockets were eliminated. The mould was tied together and kept in place by rope or wire.

Once the form inside was dry enough the mould was removed and the final working of the ceramic surface was completed. Colour was added by painting oxides or ceramic stain directly onto the clay, or onto a pre-applied white slip. Once the form was completely dry it was fired to 1200 degrees centigrade.

The limitations of the ceramic process were the following:

a) Due to the integrated nature of the sculptural elements in each piece, it was impossible to cast these as separate forms and rejoin them after firing. This was important in that the overall size of each piece was limited by the size and shape of the available kilns.

b) The large size (and therefore large weight) and awkward shape of each piece made it very difficult to place these in the kiln for firing. This was worse before the first firing because 'green' clay is heavier than fired clay and extremely brittle. Each sculpture was built on two pieces of thick cardboard placed on a

thick wooden board so that they could be positioned at the kiln door, levelled with the kiln shelves and slid in on the top piece of cardboard. This helped to prevent chipping as the piece was pushed along on the kiln shelves.

c) Although detail could be added to the moulded piece it was generally not possible to add projecting elements if they were not thick enough to stand unsupported. This was due to the brittle and non-tensile nature of 'green' clay. This limited the formal possibilities of these works to large volumetric, rounded forms. The arched structure also demanded a large surface area at the base of each piece in order to distribute the weight and allow for better balance and firing.

d) The ceramic process often produces varied and unexpected results as far as colour is concerned. This is especially so at the high temperatures to which these works were fired. Colour is dependant also upon the inherent colour of the clay as well as upon the applied ceramic stains, slip, and oxides. It is therefore difficult to predict the final colour of each piece.

e) The pre-mixed clay available commercially was very fine with little or no grog in it. Coarsely grogged clay was required for two reasons: 1) Grog helps to stabilise the firing process in large pieces - it is already fired, ground up clay and therefore allows movement of trapped air out of the clay walls, preventing cracks and explosions. 2) Grog results in a coarser texture for surface detail.

6.2. Series two - metal and cement sculptures

The formal limitations experienced with clay resulted in the decision to experiment with a new working method. This consisted of building metal armatures, covering them with wire mesh and modelling directly onto this armature in ordinary cement. This necessitated experimenting with the drying times of cement, with plasticizers, colour both in the cement and on the surface, armature strengths, weight balance, and anti-rust agents.

The first piece, the smallest of the seven cement sculptures, was initiated purely as an experimental piece. This involved exploring how to weld, cut, and shape metal by heating it, and techniques for strengthening stress points in armatures (That is, those points which would have to bear the heaviest weight of the cement; especially the narrow areas where two separate forms were joined together). The creation of different forms and surface textures through the modelling of cement was explored.

The armatures were all made with 5 - 12 mm mild steel rods. Each sculpture was drawn to scale. Each separate element outline was traced on paper. These tracings were used as patterns or stencils against which to bend and match the metal rods. The bending was done in a vice, and where the rods were too thick to bend cold they were heated with an oxy-acetylene torch and bent with pliers. The completed forms were welded together and the stress joints were strengthened with extra welding and by placing support rods at strategic angles.

Once the welding of an armature was completed it was painted with an anti-rust agent. Experiments showed that the non-plastic agents were more suitable. This was because the plastic agents formed a soft, rubbery coat and when the next layer, the wire mesh, was applied, this tended to scratch off where touched by the wire. The wire mesh was applied in conveniently sized pieces and 'stitched' on with thin galvanised wire so that it formed a taught surface for the application of the cement layer.

The cement mixture consisted of one part cement, to three parts sand, and approximately one part water. The consistency could not be too dry or crumbly, nor too wet since this resulted in it running through the mesh, and off areas that were not completely flat. The application of the first layer of cement was difficult since quantities of cement fell through the mesh. This was solved by filling the gaps in the armature with paper or polystyrene, or applying a double layer of wire on larger surfaces. Where possible the cement was applied to horizontal surfaces. This involved moving the sculpture and lying it on its side while working on it. This became more difficult as more layers were added due to the increasing weight,

and the final layers were usually added while the sculpture was in its upright position. Final surface modelling was difficult since the cement tended to fall off when applied to underhanging surfaces, and those perpendicular to the ground. As each layer was applied it was covered to prevent the cement from drying too quickly as this resulted in it becoming soft and crumbly.

Final surface details were applied in numerous ways. The cement could be carved into once it had stabilised but before it became too hard. Objects could be pressed into it, (such as the plastic fruit), or cast into it, such as the barnacle-like projections in *Woman dancing over barnacles at midnight.* Surface details in the form of those in *Conversation 1* were applied by pasting a small, thin slab of cement onto the surface, leaving it to dry slightly, and then cutting out the shapes desired. Further details could then be incised into these raised shapes. The raised lines on the surface of the crescent shape in *Weaving woman* were applied by pressing the cement onto the surface between the fingers. Other details were modelled with a small trowel, as were the smooth, flat surfaces.

Colour was applied by mixing oxides and acrylic pigments into the cement. Approximately 40-65 gms of oxide, or 5-15 gms of pigment were applied to each 2 kilogram batch of dry cement mixture. The first five sculptures were made with ordinary cement and oxides. The final two were made with white cement, oxides and acrylic pigments. Problems were encountered in the drying of the ordinary cement and oxide mixtures. The colours tended to fade as the cement dried, leaving the surface dull and dry-looking. Also the greyness of the cement re-appeared as it dried. This necessitated experimenting with colours varying from floor wax, to shoe polish, acrylic paint and glaze, linseed oil and oil paint. The final solution was to paint the surface with linseed oil and oil paint which soaked into the cement leaving a richer and enhanced colour. The use of white cement and the greater variety of colours available in acrylic pigment enhanced the colour of the cement when it was dry because it was not dulled by the 'bloom' of the ordinary cement. However, the surface remained slightly chalky in appearance and this was also solved by the application of linseed oil and paint.

6.3. Series three - bronze sculptures

These sculptures were cast by the lost wax method. They were made directly in microcrystaline wax, by modelling soft wax or by joining cut-out wax forms.

7. Notes on individual pieces

7.1. Series one - ceramic pieces

Technical note: These sculptures were made by the ceramic press-mould technique described in Section 6.1.

1. Rape

Brown stoneware clay fired to 1200 degrees centigrade.

Height: 630mm Width: 1060mm Depth: 570mm

This was the first in the *Burden* series of sculptures intended to express women's discomfort at patriarchal attitudes to their child-bearing capabilities (As discussed in the section on creative process). The image of the snake as rapist was inspired by the representation of the serpent in the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden. God punishes the serpent for beguiling Eve saying:

> I will make you enemies of each other: you and woman, your off-spring and her off-spring. It will crush your head and you will strike its heel.

He punishes Eve saying:

> I will multiply your pains in child-bearing, you shall give birth to your children in pain. Your yearning shall be for your husband, yet he will lord it over you. (Genesis:3:14-16)

This opposition of snake and woman came about with patriarchy. It overcame the earlier belief in the snake as a protector of fertility and life and was probably related to the overthrowing of the religion of the great goddess and the belief in the all-encompassing fertility of women. The woman is raped by the snake, here a symbol of patriarchy. It violates her physical and psychological being. The woman is extended and exposed as the snake extends through her.

1 Rape

2. Burden 1

Rosso earthernware clay, earthernware brick grog, ceramic stain, oxides, porcelain decorating slip.

Height: 680mm Width: 750mm Depth: 500mm

This is the second sculpture in the *Burden* series. The figure was dealt with the same intentions as that in *Rape*. It is however, more introspective since the woman faces inwards contemplating herself. She bears the burden of a crocodile which seems to fit comfortably on her back. It is carried as a woman might carry a baby but it poses a threat to her. She bears it but must contemplate its dangers and the possibility of the destruction it may cause. The position of the tail which stretches threateningly between her legs suggests the likelihood of her physical violation. The burden is also psychological since the woman seems to knowingly bear it and its possibility of destruction, with little choice, or chance of its removal. The crocodile is her 'baby' in the masculine dominated world of violence where her real children are under threat of destruction.

2. Burden 1

3. Burden 2

Rosso earthernware clay, earthernware brick grog, porcelain decorating slip, ceramic stains and oxides.

Height: 650mm Width: 920mm Depth: 550mm

The symbolism and metaphorical language used in this sculpture relates to that in *Burden 1*. However, the intention was to express the woman's attempt to free herself from her burden. The arms are more fully represented as an important part of her body and she uses them to fight off the crocodile. However, the crocodile remains comfortably settled and seems more threatening to her than she is to it. This work is intended to represent the apparent hopelessness of trying to oppose the burden of patriarchy on its own terms.

3. Burden 2

7.2. Series two - cement and metal sculptures

Technical note: These sculptures were made by the method described in section 6.2.

4. Woman dancing over barnacles at midnight

Mild steel rods, anti-rust agent, wire mesh, cement, green oxide, plastic beads, plastic-coated wire, linseed oil, oil paint, enamel paint.

Height: 2250mm Width: 650mm Depth: 450mm

The imagery is derived from abstracted imagery related to the prehistoric great goddess. The central image is the spiral which forms the body of the figure. The long, zigzagging line from the head of the figure also derives from Old European pictorial imagery. The wire wrapped around this line relates to the Prehistoric spiral, and to images of spinning and weaving. The origin and presumed original meaning of these symbols are discussed in section 3.6.

The intention in the sculpture was to celebrate the feminine as lively, vital and changing. The symbols were chosen to denote the figure of a woman, and at the same time to express a feeling of energy and vitality. The spiral of her stomach represents pent-up, springing energy, as does her alighting position on the rock. The straight legs which hardly touch the ground are also intended to express energy as is the zigzagging line extending from her head. The figure is intended to appear self-absorbed and engaged in her own process or dancing journey. The base of the sculpture was added later when the role of the base in the overall composition had been more fully considered. The notion of dancing over barnacle-like projections suggests a whimsical, pleasurable expression of the feminine.

4. Woman dancing over barnacles at midnight

5. Conversation 1

Mild steel rods, wire mesh, anti-rust agent, cement, green and red oxides, linseed oil, oil paint, enamel paint and plastic-coated wire.

Height: 2000mm Width: 600mm Depth: 890mm

Once again the spiral, related to the serpent or snake comes from the imagery discussed in section 3.6. The other imagery developed from formal elements of this source imagery and from the imagination.

This sculpture was intended to represent the figure of a women in lively conversation, or in a specific relationship with a vital and playful aspect of the feminine - represented by the spiral or snake. The snake or spiral was chosen to represent this aspect as it is associated historically and methodologically with the feminine, and because it appears to contain latent energy. The suggestion of instantaneous change and balance is important to this series of works. The arched body, alertly posed head with spiky hair, and wide open eye all add to an expression of the energy involved in the process. The isomorphous details and inscribed signs refer to primordiality.

5. Conversation 1

6. Conversation 2

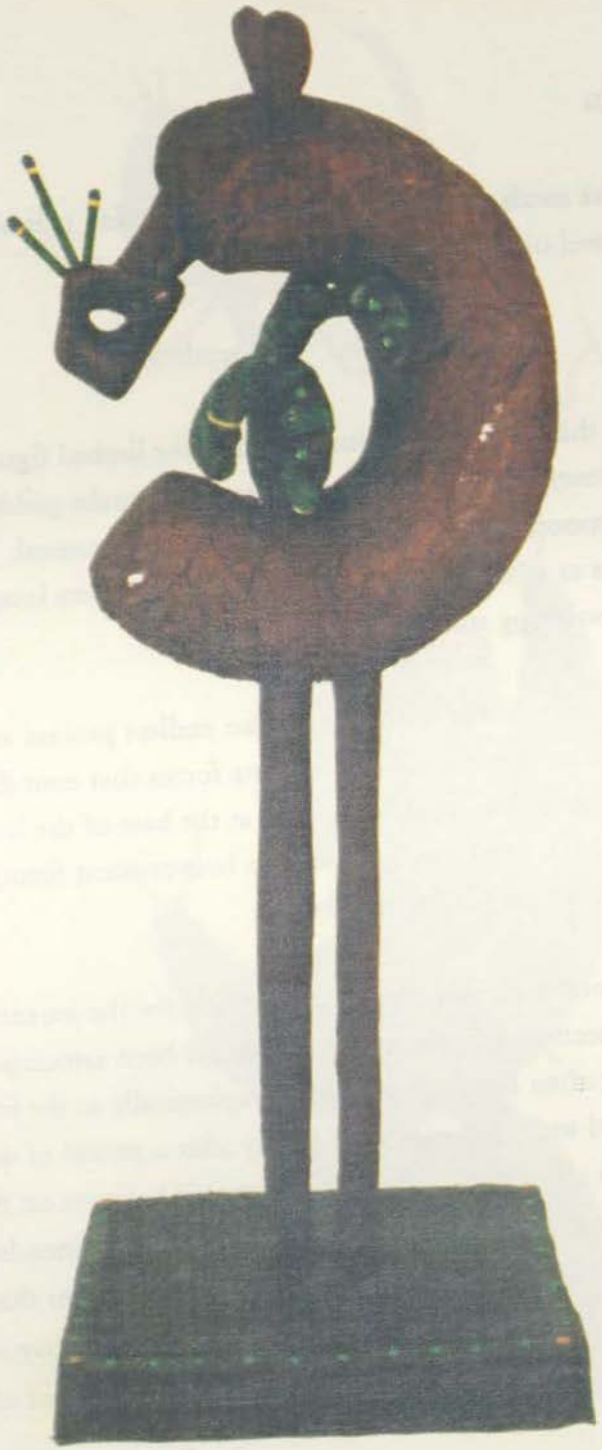
Mild steel rods, wire mesh, anti-rust agent, cement, oxides, plastic beads, ceramic mosaic, plastic-coated wire.

Height: 1950mm Width: 690mm Depth: 540mm

The spiral or snake, and inscribed signs and symbols derive from the sources in prehistory described in section 3.6. The plastic wire wound around the spiral and 'hair' refers to images of spinning and weaving and is intended to enhance the expression of movement and development of energy. The other imagery developed as a progression through rough drawings from the above imagery, and from the imagination.

This sculpture is linked formally and thematically to *Conversation 1*. The figure of the woman almost encloses the spiral-snake, and although the interaction is still lively, it is also protective. The arch of the body also forms more of a circular profile than that of *Conversation 1*. The intention in these two works was to explore different aspects of relationship, the understanding of which has been attributed to the feminine principle. On one level this sculpture may be read as an expression of nurture on a biological level, but the intention was broader than this. The figure may be read as nurturing aspects of femininity whilst simultaneously expressing a frivolous relation to it.

6. Conversation 2



7. Weaving woman

Mild steel rods, wire mesh, anti-rust agents, cement, oxides, plastic beads, ceramic mosaic, plastic-coated wire, oil paint, linseed oil, enamel paint.

Height: 2000mm Width: 1200mm Depth: 900mm

The inspiration for this piece was the image of a snake limbed figure engraved on a rock wall, reflecting the abstracting tendency in some representations of the snake goddess (Figure 13). The boat or crescent shape relates to the moon and to the theme of the ship of renewal. The woven imagery relates to the aspect of the goddess as a 'weaver of life', and to snake goddess imagery where the coiffure was often an interwoven mass of writhing snakes. (Figure 15)

The intention of this piece is the celebration of an endless process and vitality in feminine experience. It represents creative feminine energy in the weaving forms that emit from the central core of the body through woven and zigzagging arm-like tendrils at the base of the head. Energy is exaggerated by the seemingly precarious balance of the figure on the boat-crescent form, and in its turn, its precarious balance and sinking position on the cushion below.

The relation of the moon and boat represents a vehicle for the journey to a full experience of the feminine. As discussed in section 3.6., the moon has always been associated with the changing feminine, and its cyclical process has often been represented metaphorically as the journey of the boat across the sky. It has also been associated with the renewal of energy after a period of decline. The figure, involved in its own weaving process is also part of a larger journey as it balances on the boat. The combination of these images sinking into the more realistically portrayed cushion is intended to remind the viewer that the sculpture deals with the feminine on several layers of reality - from that which we perceive to be reality to the imagery of mythology, the imagination, and unconscious fantasy and dreams. The cushion base developed out of the concern with integrating the base as an element of the sculpture.

7. Weaving woman

8. Princess daisy boat

Mild steel rods, steel piping, steel strips, wire mesh, anti-rust agent, cement, oxides, plastic beads, enamel paint, oil paint, linseed oil.

Height: 2350mm Width: 900mm Depth: 450mm

One of the original sources of this work was a very simple engraving of two divine figures on a vase from a rock-cut tomb in Sardinia in the fourth millennium BC. Their heads are circular and radiating from them are lines possibly representing the sun's rays, plant-like growth or some form of spiritual energy. The bodies are simply rectangular with lines representing the legs, neck and feet. (Figure 37) The moon-boat shape once again relates to the moon and boat imagery described in the section on symbols of the feminine. The 'body' of the figure is derived from representations of the many-breasted goddess.

This sculpture once again represents the feminine as a process or journey. The head of the figure radiates growth and energy and balances on the tip of a curved body which appears to have sprouted a series of breast-like protruberances. These may be read as biologically related to growth but on another level they are intended to represent 'sprouting' and radiating energy. The apparent balancing of the separate elements enhances the expression of pending transformation. The juxtaposition of abstracted and realistic, organic and inorganic forms, is intended to suggest that the feminine is experienced on all levels of reality - psychologically, sexually, biologically, in conscious reality and in the unconscious.

8. Princess daisy boat

9. Soma tree

Mild steel rods, wire mesh, anti-rust agent, white cement, oxide, acrylic pigment, enamel paint, linseed oil, oil paint.

Height: 2200mm Width: 800mm Depth: 500mm

The main source of imagery for this sculpture was that of early representations of the moon goddess as a moon crescent or boat above a moon tree. (Figures 8-11) This crescent or boat form often carried a round shape signifying the full moon. The moon tree was the sacred tree of the goddess and from its fruits were made the mythological soma drink; which was believed to be the source of inspiration and ecstasy. The new moon or crescent was often regarded as the fruit of the tree and when it carried the full moon, it is believed to have represented the full cycle of the moon. The symbolism is discussed in more detail in section 3.6.

In this sculpture the associations of the symbols with feminine process became more important than their denotation of the female figure. The moon boat, containing the full moon, makes a journey over the top of a moon tree. It appears to balance as if change is imminent, and is guided by a small, three-haired, bird-like creature. The bird is a symbol of transcendence, related to the feminine. On another level the tree could be read as a phallic object, and the moon and boat, yonic, symbolising a union of masculine and feminine. Which ever way it is read the sculpture is intended to describe a part of a journey to the feminine.

9. Soma tree

10. The union of the sun and moon on the sea, watched over by a snail

Mild steel rods, wire mesh, anti-rust agent, white cement, oxides, acrylic pigment, enamel paint, linseed oil, oil paint.

Height: 1900mm Width: 1400mm Depth: 820mm

The source of imagery for this sculpture was from the mythology of Ishtar, which suggested that the union of sun and moon or masculine and feminine resulted in divine energy. This was often represented by the crescent moon in perpetual union with the sun.

The intention of the work was to express the positive union and balance of masculine and feminine, and the energy which may result from this union. On a psychological level it deals with achieving a balance of masculine and feminine principles. It may be interpreted as a union between man and woman, represented by the sun and moon. The moon-boat is joined with the sun which seems to propel it on its journey. The precarious position of the moon on the wave of energy it rides is intended to add to an expression of explosive energy. Riding the moon is a spiral-shaped entity - the spirit of the 'issue' of the union.

7.3. Series three - bronze sculptures

These sculptures were made by the method described in section 6.3. Numbers 11 to 14 are the maquettes for the large sculptures of the same titles.

11. Weaving woman

Height: 204mm Width: 71mm Depth: 32mm

12. Little princess daisy boat

Height: 200mm Width: 80mm Depth: 30mm

11. Weaving woman

12. Little princess daisy boat

13. Union of the sun and moon on the sea, watched over by a snail

Height: 185mm Width: 149mm Depth: 53mm

14. Soma tree

Height: 200mm Width: 100mm Depth: 45mm

13. Union of the sun and moon on the sea, watched over by a snail

14. Soma tree

15. Woman dancing on the moonlit sea, her hair blowing in the wind

Height: 145mm Width: 60mm Depth: 20mm

The imagery in the final four small, bronze sculptures developed out of the creative process of sculptures 4 to 14. It is also inspired more directly by representations of the feminine by Joan Miro.

The intention in these works was to return to the representation of the female figure with and through symbols of the feminine. They are again intended to celebrate the vitality of women. In this piece the woman dances on the sea, which is intended to accord her a transcendent and spiritual quality, and this is enhanced by the fact that she dances there, alone in the moonlight.

16. Seated woman with stars

Height: 115mm Width: 80mm Depth: 30mm

The intention here was once again the celebration of the feminine and the female body. The spiralling neck of the figure creates a feeling of energy and a whimsical quality, as does the plaited hair which seems held up by the wind. There is a slight awkwardness about the position of the feet, breasts and hands on the body, which adds to the individuality of the figure. The spiralled neck and incised stars relate closely to Miro's imagery of the feminine, in, for example, a detail from *Barcelona suite IV* of 1944. (Figure 38) However, historically the feminine has been associated with the night and stars, and Ishtar was referred to as 'queen of the stars' when she was not in the underworld.

10. The union of the sun
and moon on the sea,
watched over by a snail

15. Woman dancing on the moonlit sea, her hair blowing in the wind

16. Seated woman with stars

17. Two women with moon and stars

Height: 160mm Width: 66mm Depth: 51mm

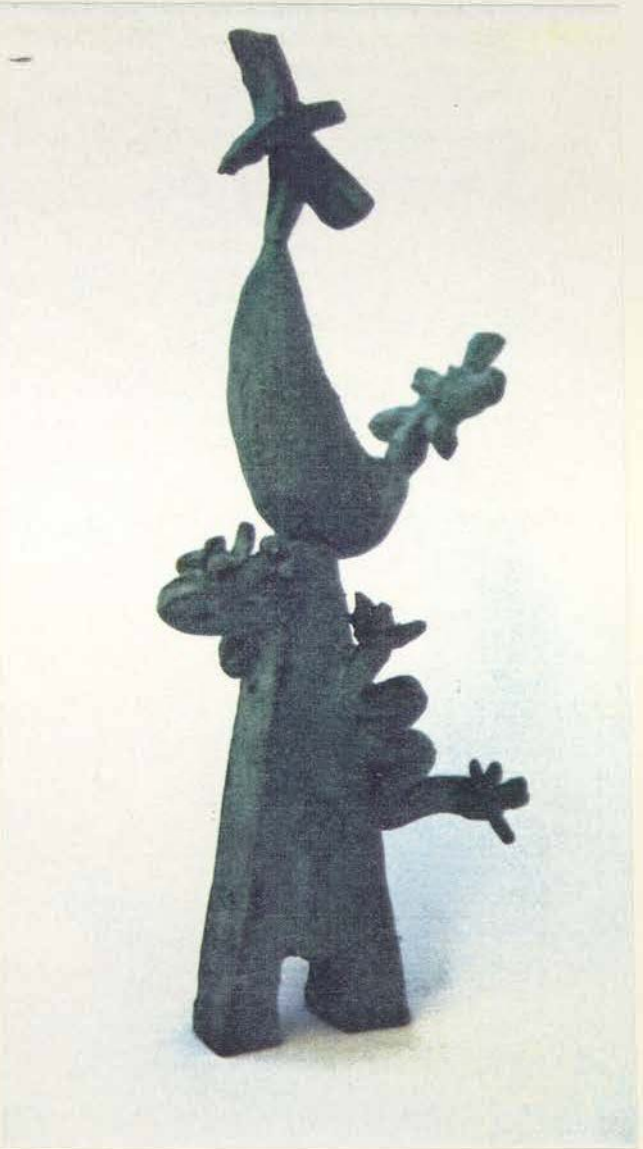
This sculpture is a composition of two women. They are united by the symbols representing their femininity, and yet remain individuals. Once again the symbolism is that of the moon and stars.

18. Woman with moon balancing the sun and stars

Height: 178mm Width: 85mm Depth: 50mm

This sculpture represents a woman balancing the masculine sun and feminine star on a large moon. On a compositional level the figure looks like a scale - the A-frame body of the woman crossed by the moon represents the mechanism, and the sun and star the objects being weighed up or balanced. The woman gains a transcendent quality as she assumes the ability to balance the elements which in other terms represent her transcendence of everyday reality, and achievement of personal wholeness.

17. Two women with moon and stars



18. Woman with moon balancing the sun and stars

8. Pictorial references

Figure 1: The moon deity represented in triune form on a Phoenician Stela. (Harding 1991; 217)

Figure 2: Phoenician moon emblem. (Harding 1991; 217)

Figure 3: A symbol found on the walls of Roman catacombs entitled *The kingdom of heaven.*(Harding 1991; 217)

Figure 4: *The chariot of the moon.* The crescent moon is represented as being drawn by goats. The goddess Cybele in human form is often represented in a similar chariot, replacing the lunar crescent. (Harding 1991; 222)

Figure 5: The *Egyptian moon boat,* within which rests the moon; the crescent holding the full moon within its horns. It was believed to be self-propelled and guarded in its journey by the two eyes of Horus. (Harding 1991; 222)

Figure 6: A *moon boat* from Ut, ca. 2300-100 BC.The moon god is seated in a crescent boat and is paddling himself across the sky. (Harding 1991; 222)

Figure 7: An *Assyrian winged moon,* from an Assyrian cylinder, ca. 18th dynasty. (Harding 1991; 47)

Figure 8: The *sacred moon tree* of Babylon. The lower branches bear torches symbolising the light of the moon. (Harding 1991; 43)

Figure 9: Variations on *sacred Assyrian moon* trees showing gradual conventionalisation to a stump or pillar. (Harding 1991; 43)

Figure 10: *Assyrian moon trees* guarded by unicorns, winged monsters, and lions. (Harding 1991; 44)

Figure 11: *Shrine of the sacred moon tree* from a Cretan gem of the Minoan period. (Harding 1991; 47)

Figure 12: Probable lunar symbolism. The moon is represented as a spiral or snake coil. The winding serpentine forms probably denote waxing symbolism. From Irish megaliths, Boyne valley, ca. second half of 4th millennium BC. (Gimbutas 1989; 287)

Figure 13: Abstracted portrayal of *snake-limbed goddess* from Italian Neolithic, 6th millennium BC. (Gimbutas 1989; 127)

Figure 14: Faience statuette from Knossos, Bronze Age. (Gimbutas 1989; 207)

Figure 15: During the Bronze Age, the crown of the snake goddess is elaborated with a mass of writhing snakes on its back. Middle Minoan 1, Kophina; ca. 2000 BC.(Gimbutas 1989; 208)

Figure 16: Spirals are an important design element on some old European ceramics. On bands from Cucuteni B vases, large spiral heads flank or seem to pull columns of life or columns of cyclic time. These two examples are from the West Ukraine, 3900-700 BC.(Gimbutas 1989; 281)

Figure 17: A catalogue of signs identified on figurines; including V- or chevron signs, cross-bands and dashes within a chevron. (Gimbutas 1989; 12)

Figure 18: Many spindle-whorls of the sixth and fifth millennia BC bear inscriptions including Vs, Ms and zigzags, and these were possibly dedications to the patroness of spinning. These examples are from Dimini, Thessaly; 5000-4500 BC.(Gimbutas 1989; 67)

Figure 19: Figures a-c) *Ship of renewal* images from Scandinavian rock carvings, with serpents, trees and cupmarks; Bronze Age, Sweden and Denmark. Figures d-e) *Ship of renewal* images from Aegean anthropomorphic platters. Syros, mid-3rd millennium BC.(Gimbutas 1989; 248-9)

Figure 20: *Venus of Willendorf.* Austria, Paleolithic. (Neumann 1963; Plate One)

Figure 21: *Venus of Menton*. Austria, Paleolithic. (Neumann 1963; Plate One)

Figure 22: *Venus of Lespugue.* France, Paleolithic. (Neumann 1963; Plate One)

Figure 23: Frida Kahlo. *My nurse and I*, 1937. (Lippard 1985; 48)

Figure 24: Louise Bourgeois. *Stake woman*, c. 1970. (Lippard 1985; 40)

Figure 25: Joan Miro. *Woman*, 1934. (Penrose 1985; 78)

Figure 26: Joan Miro. *Woman's head*, 1938. (Penrose 1985; 91)

Figure 27: Vultures from west-Anatolian Neolithic tomb. Early 7th millennium. (Gimbutas 1989; 188)

Figure 28: Joan Miro. *Flight of a bird encircling the woman with three hairs during a moonlight night*, 1968. (Penrose 1985; 137)

Figure 29: Joan Miro. *Solar bird*, 1966. (Penrose 1985; 190)

Figure 30: Joan Miro. *Lunar bird*, 1966. (Penrose 1985; 191)

Figure 31: Antoni Gaudi. Roof of porter's lodge, *Guell Park*, Barcelona, 1900-14. (Zerbst 1988; 145)

Figure 32: Antoni Gaudi. Dragon gargoyle from *Guell Park*, Barcelona, 1900-14. (Zerbst 1988; 147)

Figure 33: Antoni Gaudi. Chimney ducts and air vents from the *Casa Mila*, 1906-10.(Zerbst 1988; 188-189)

Figure 34: Antoni Gaudi. Spires of the *Sagrada Familia* Cathedral, Barcelona, 1883-1926.(Zerbst 1988; 213)

Figure 35: Antoni Gaudi. Interior view of spiral staircase, *Sagrada Familia*, Barcelona, 1883-1926.(Zerbst 1988; 208)

Figure 36: Helen Martins. *The Owl House*. 1945-76 Nieu Bethesda. Details of Figures and Gate. (Emslie 1991; 43)

Figure 37: Engraving of divine figures on vase from rock-cut tomb, Ozieri culture, Sardinia, 4th millennium BC.(Gimbutas 1989; 48)

Figure 38: Joan Miro. Detail from *Barcelona* suite IV, 1944. (Penrose 1988; 109)

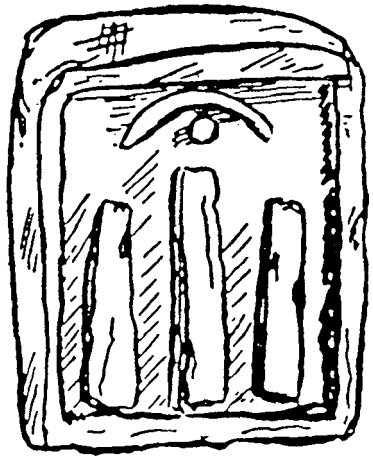


Figure 1

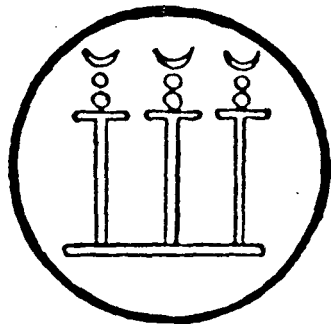


Figure 2

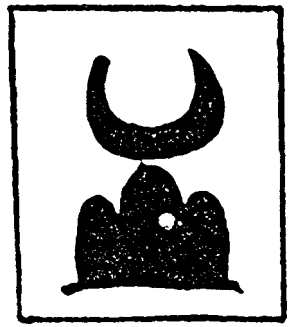


Figure 3

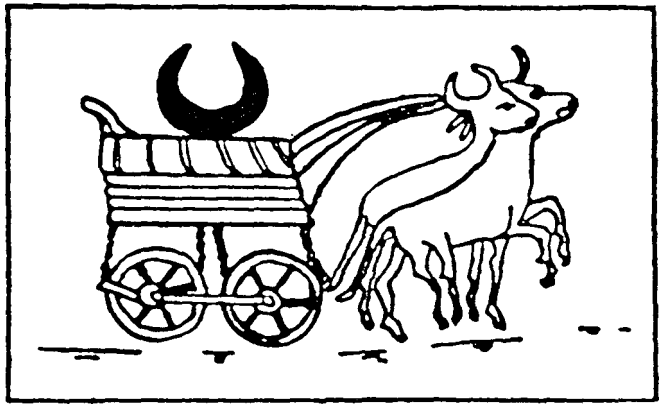


Figure 4

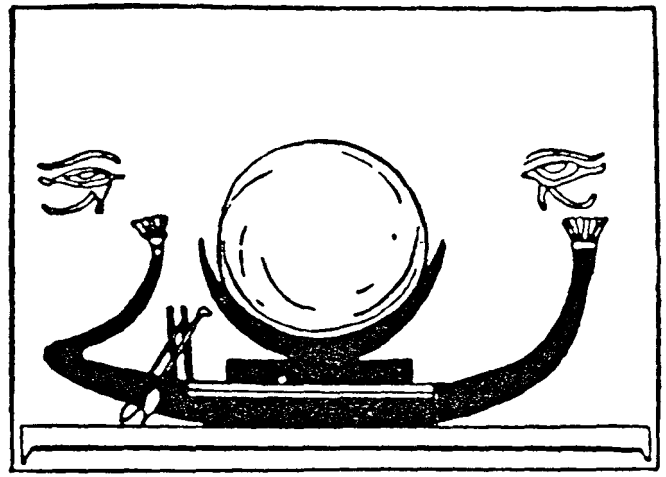


Figure 5

Figure 6

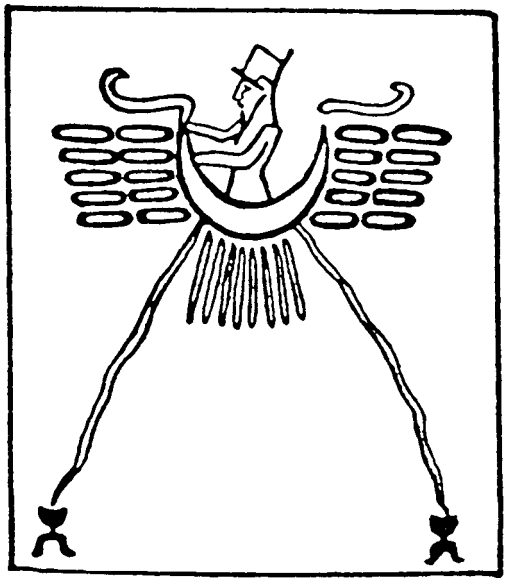


Figure 7

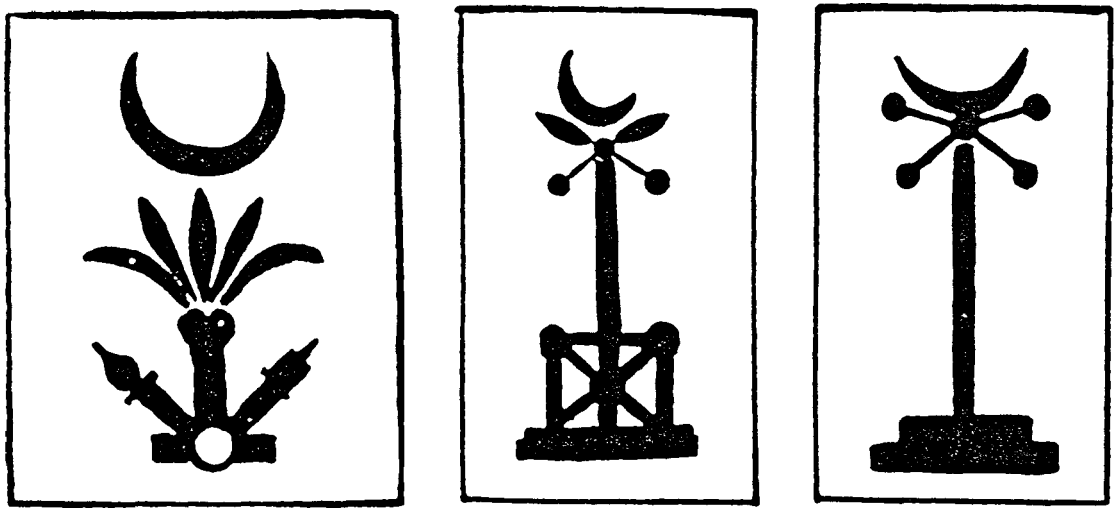


Figure 8

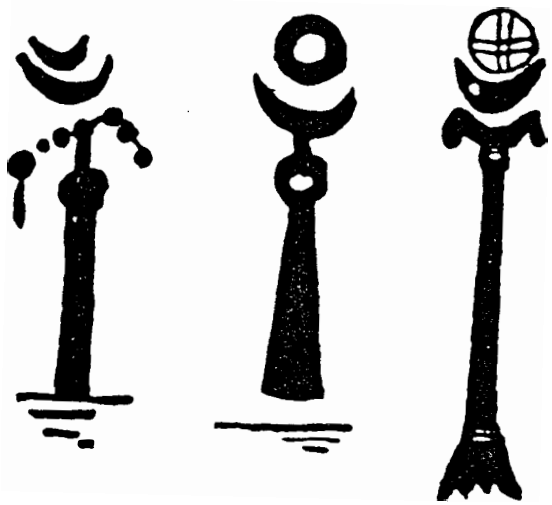


Figure 9

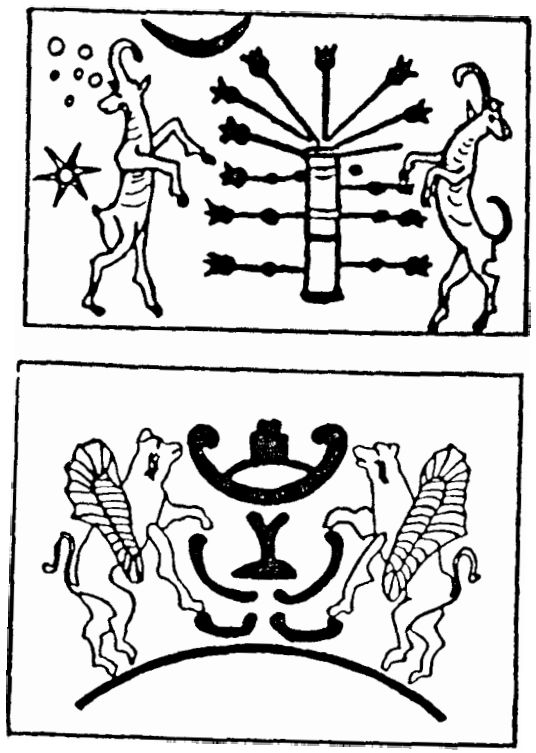
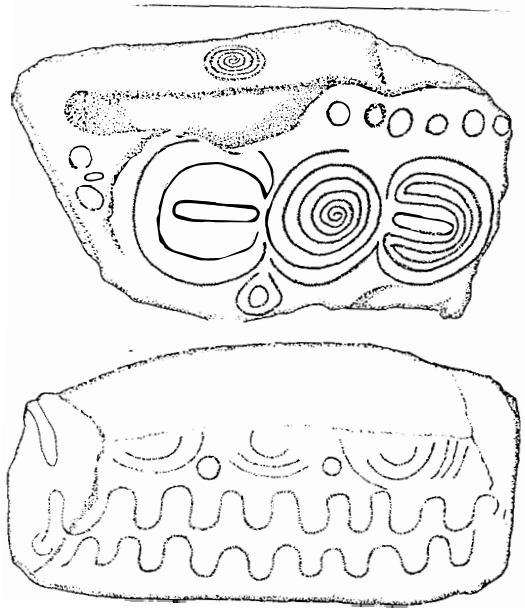


Figure 10

Figure 11



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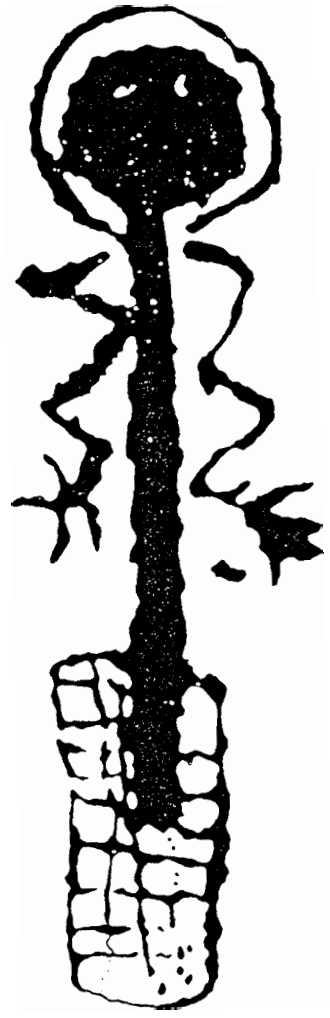

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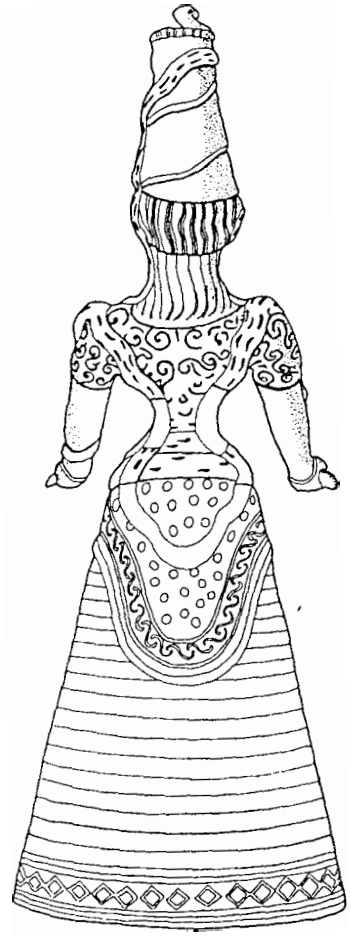

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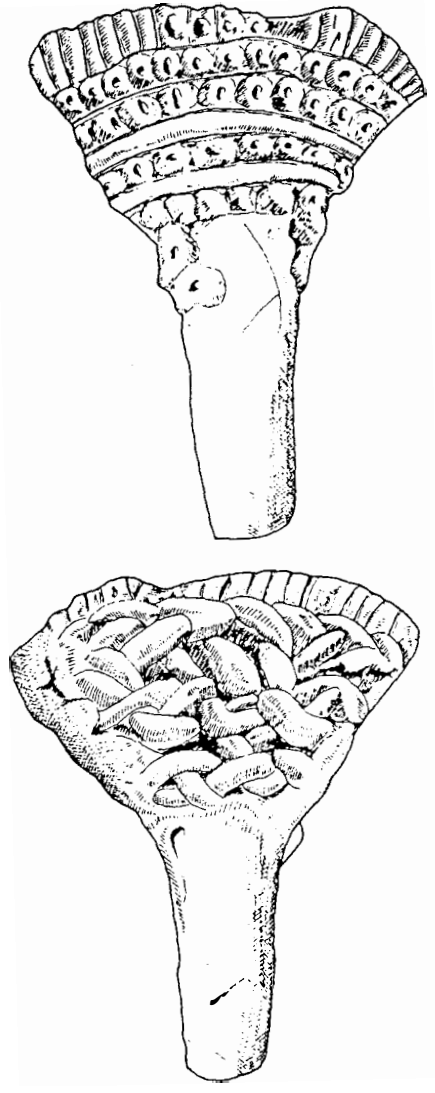

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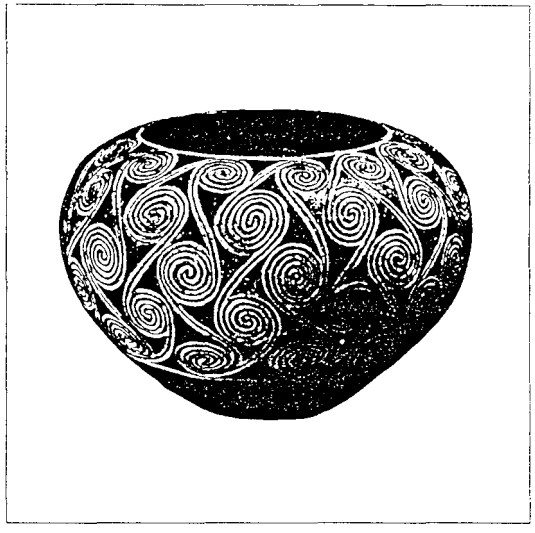

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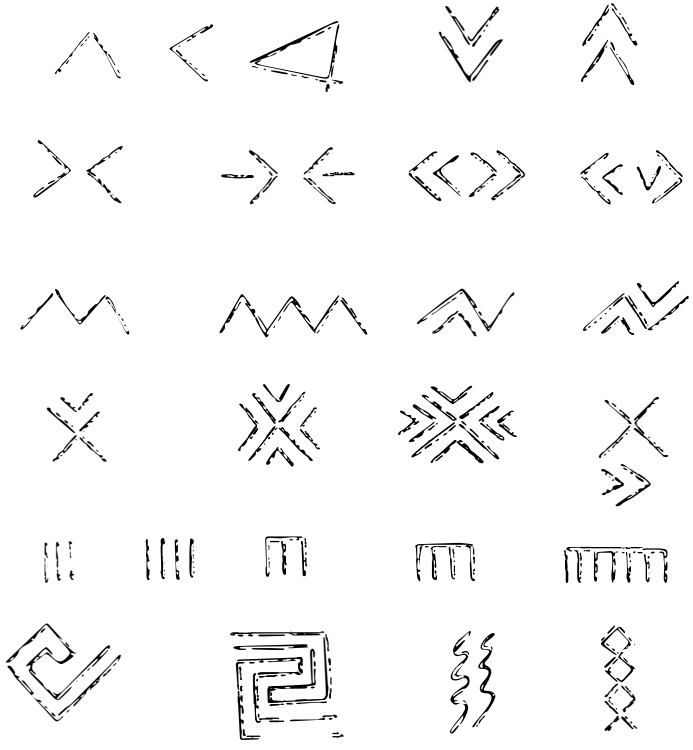

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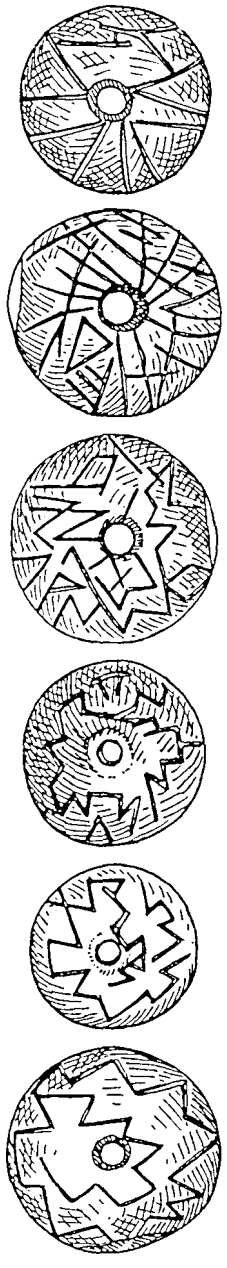

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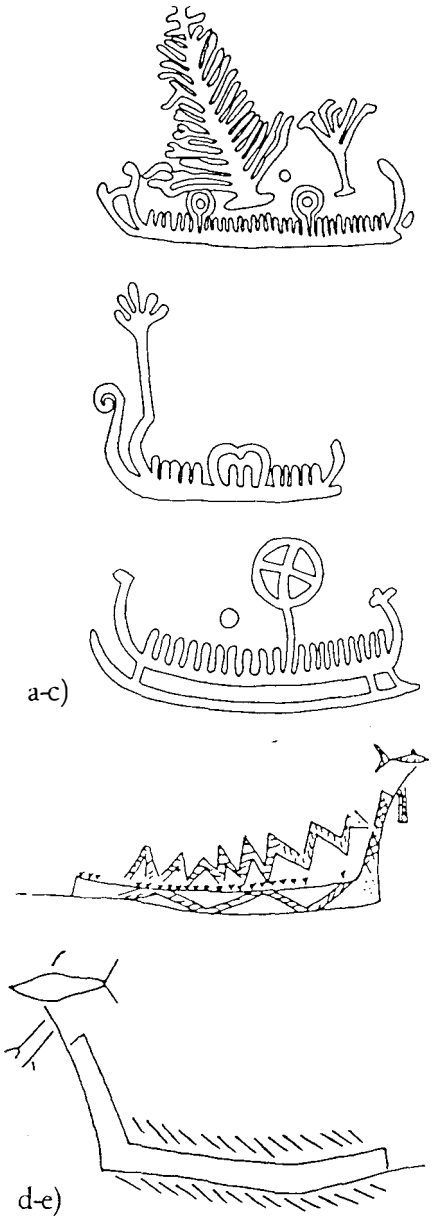


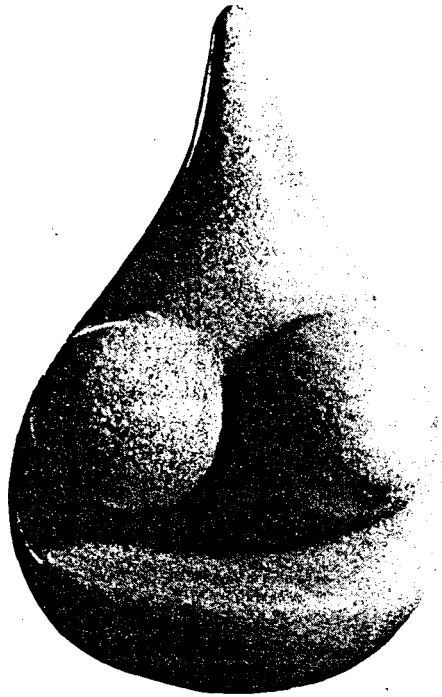
Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22

Figure 23



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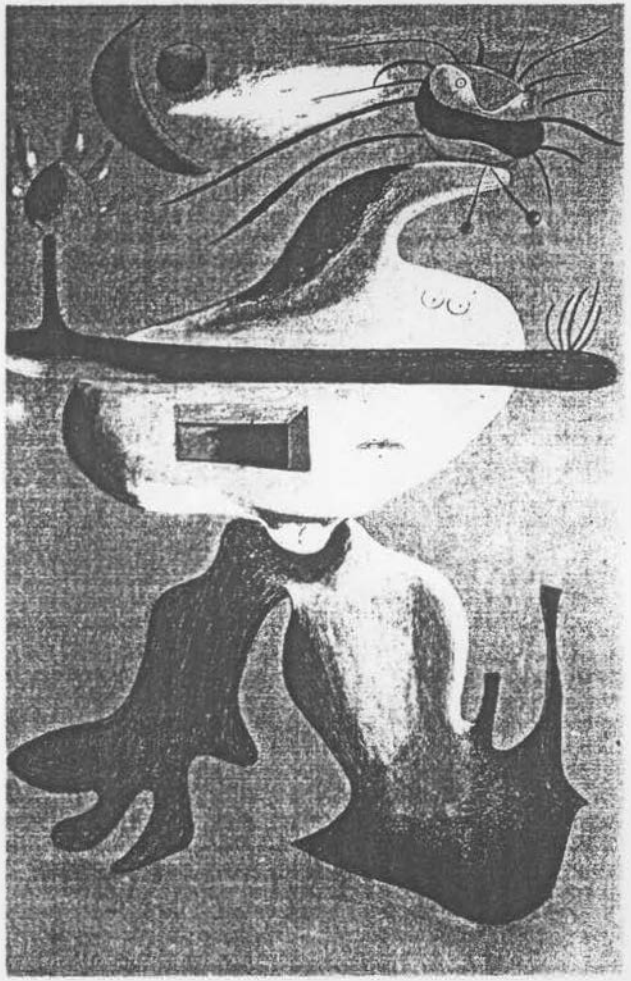

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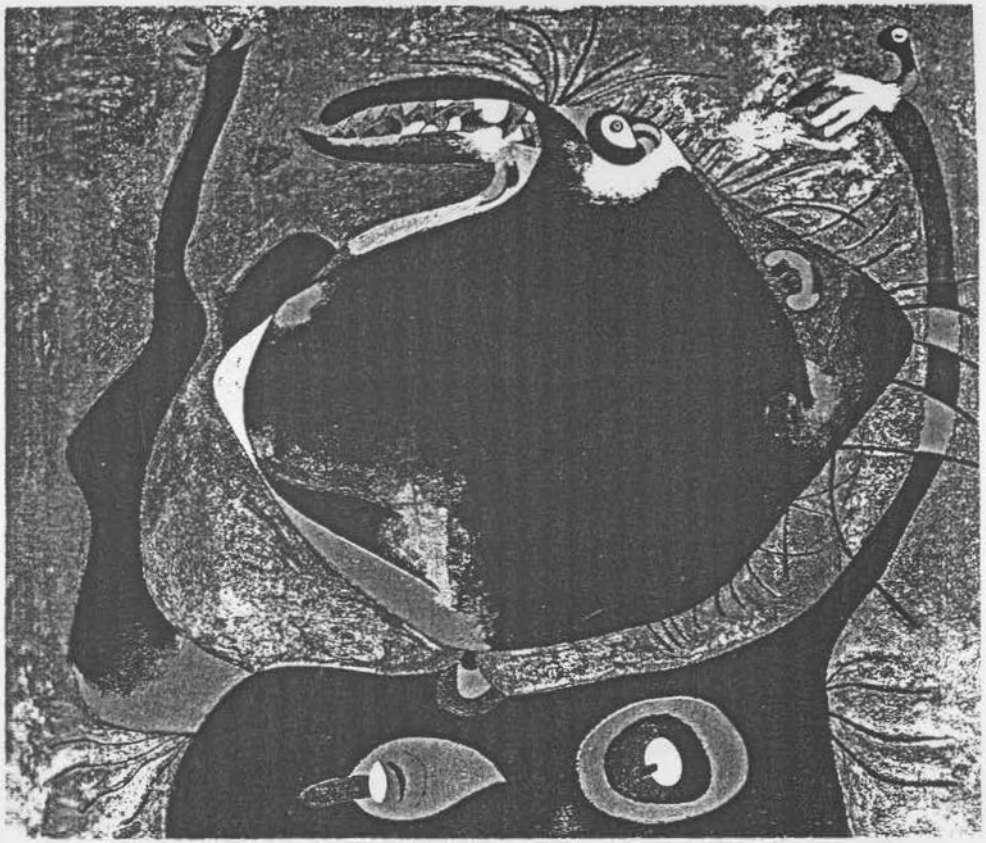

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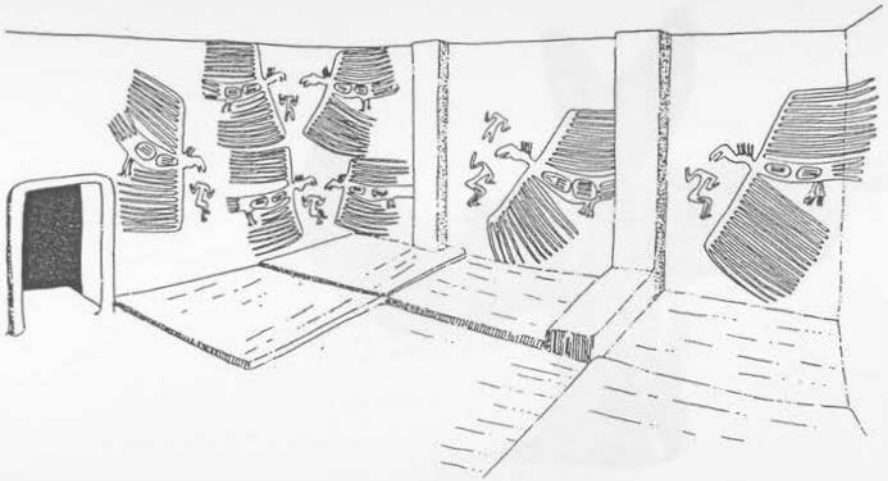

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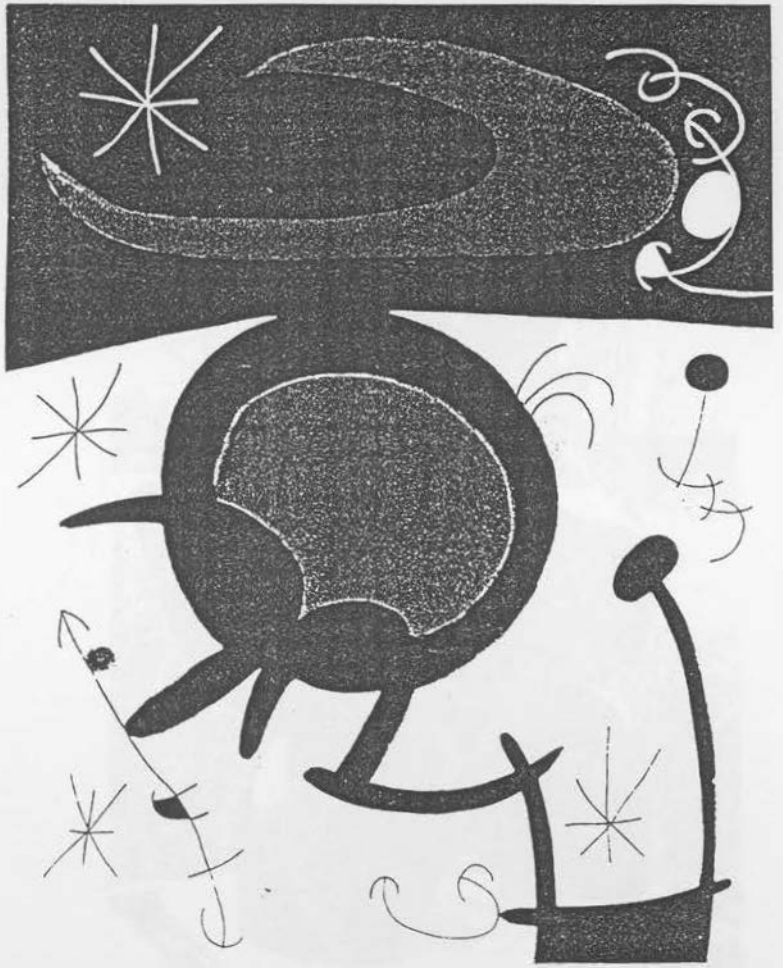

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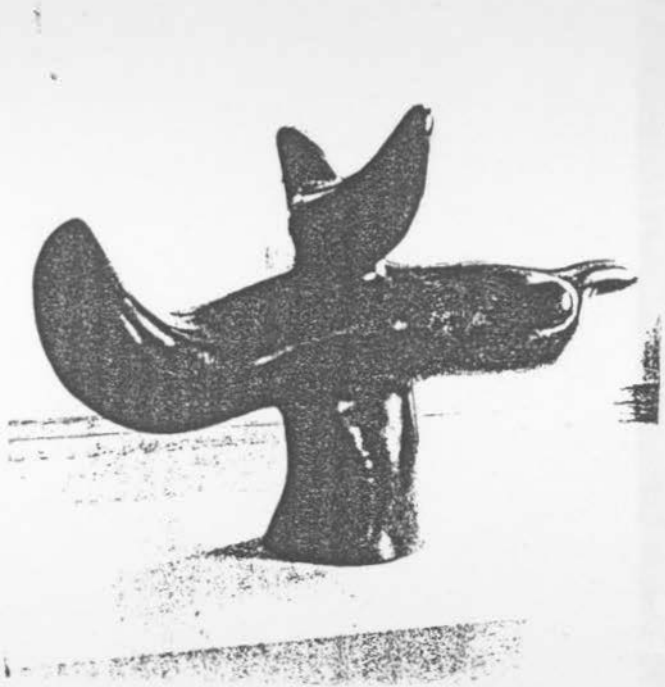

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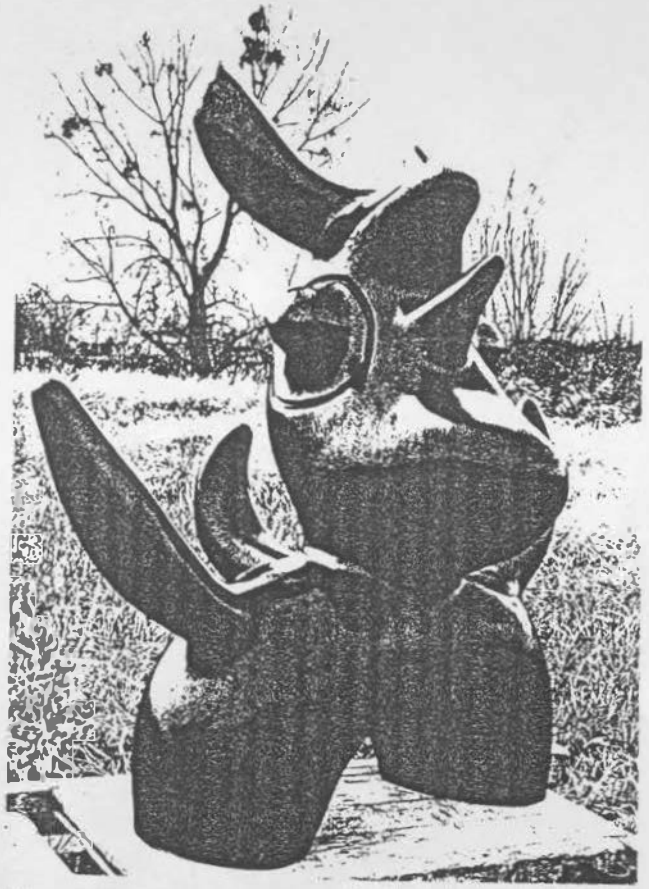

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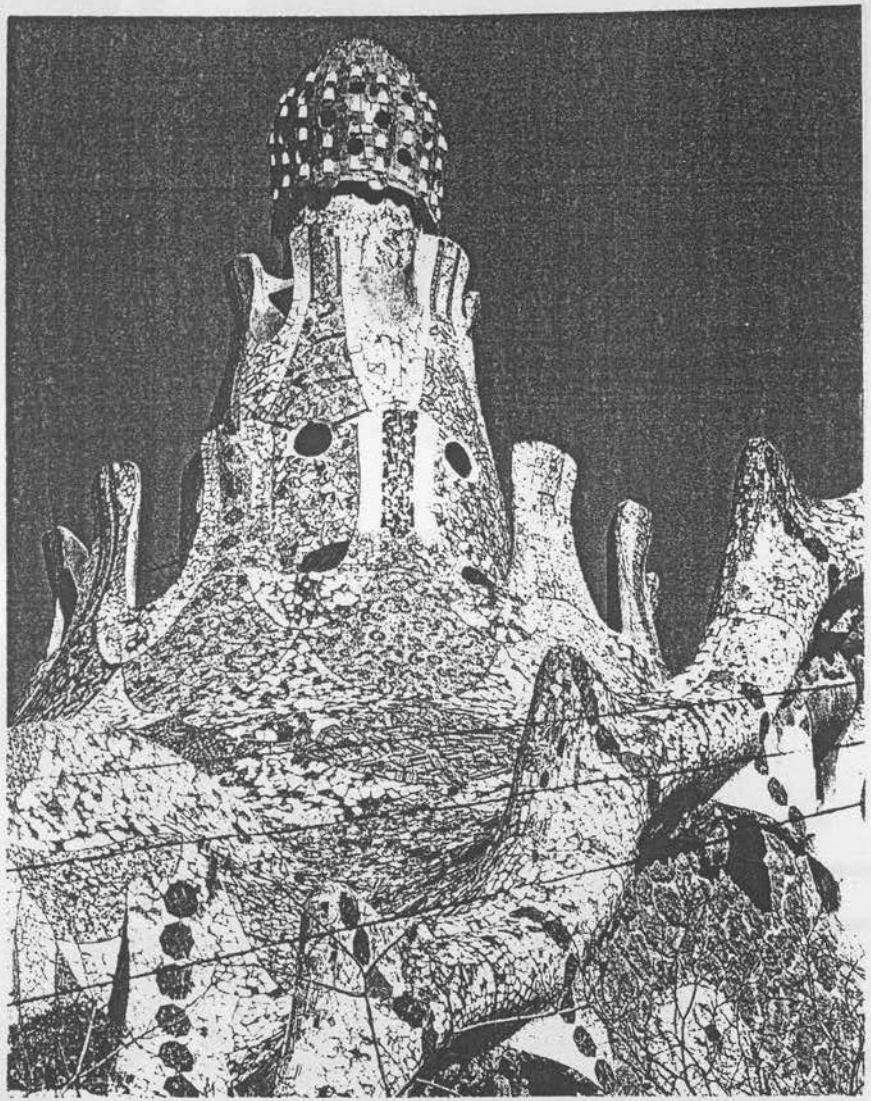

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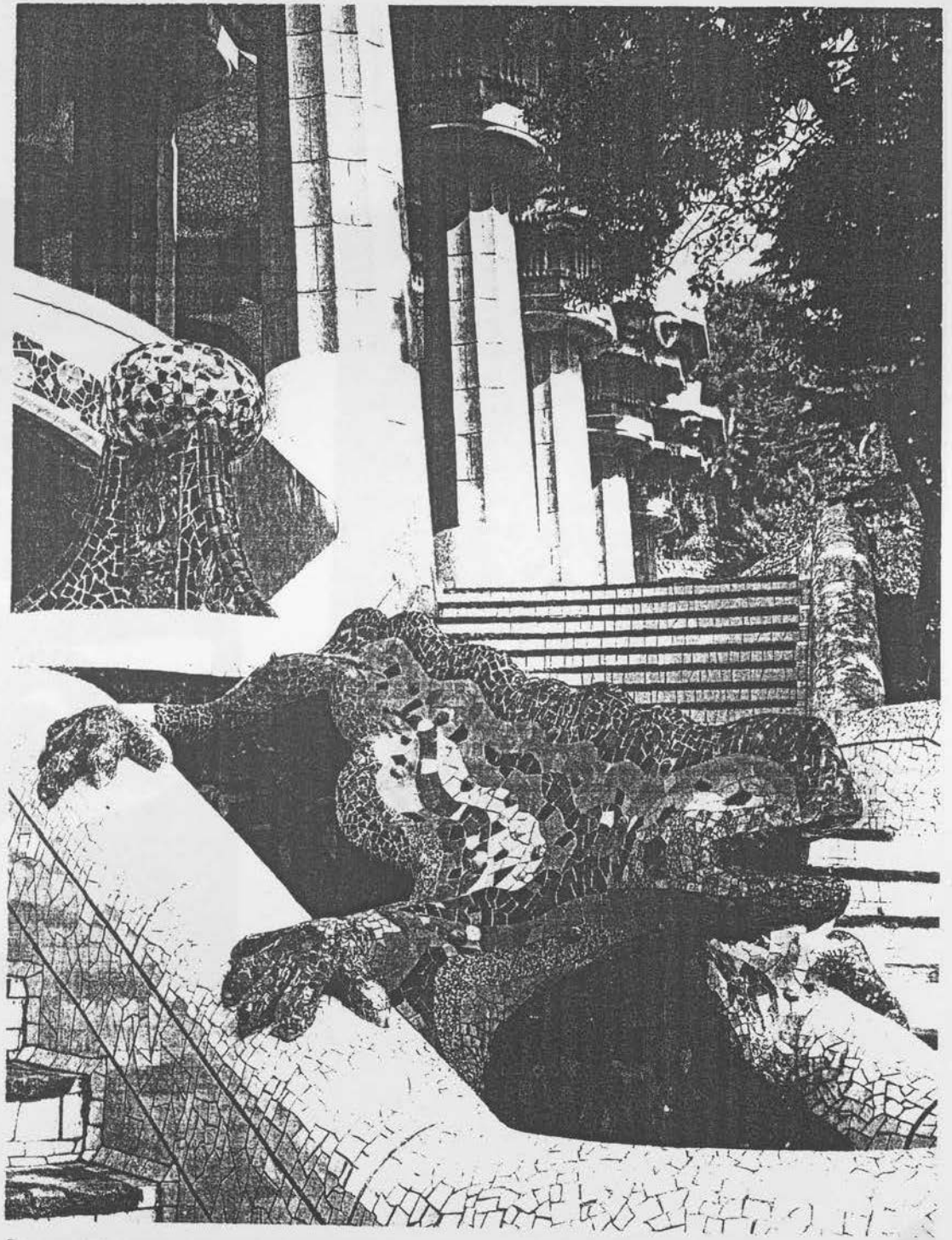

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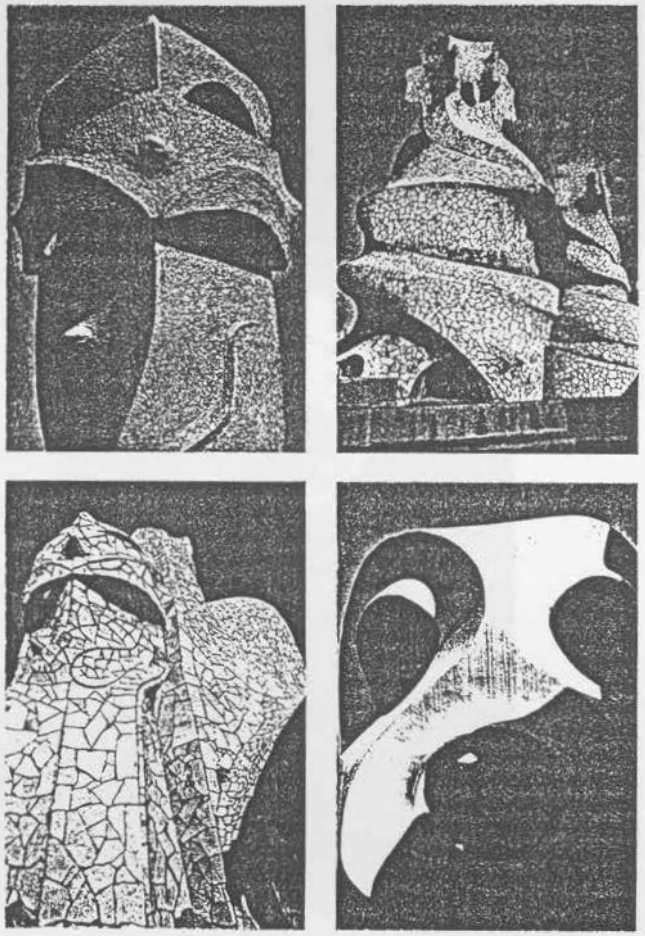

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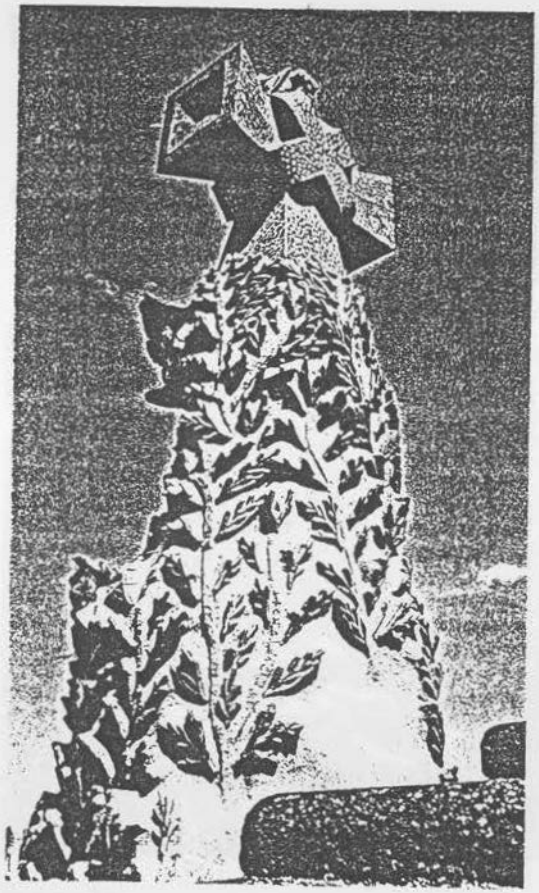

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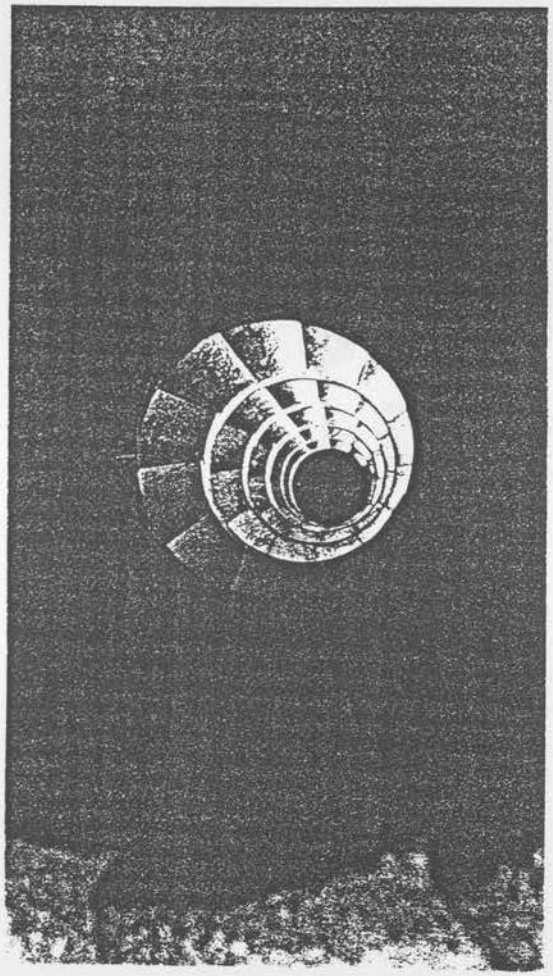

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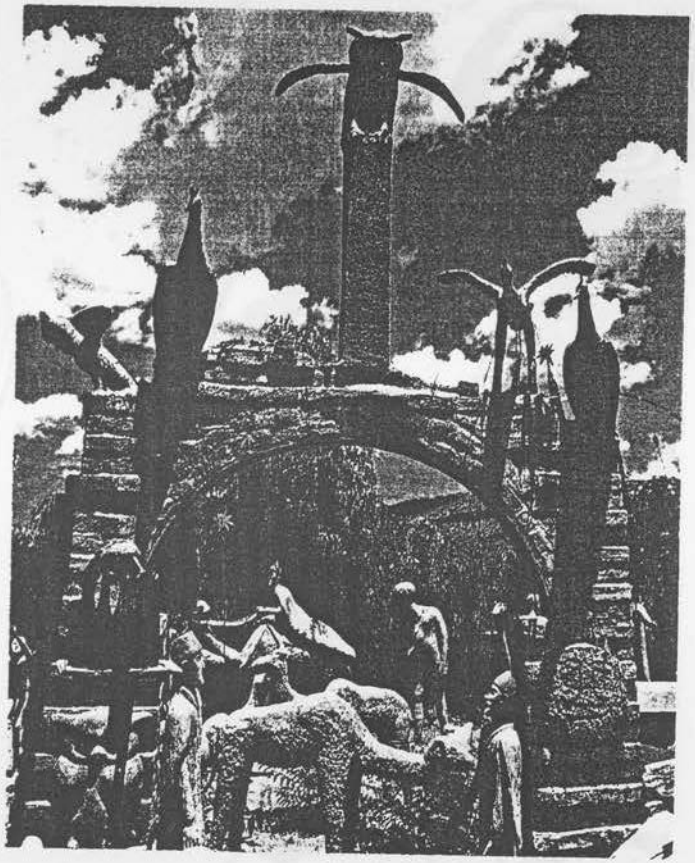

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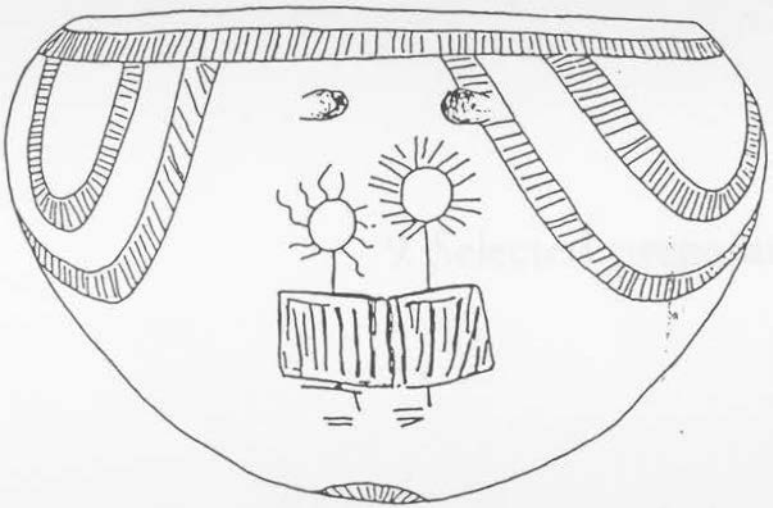

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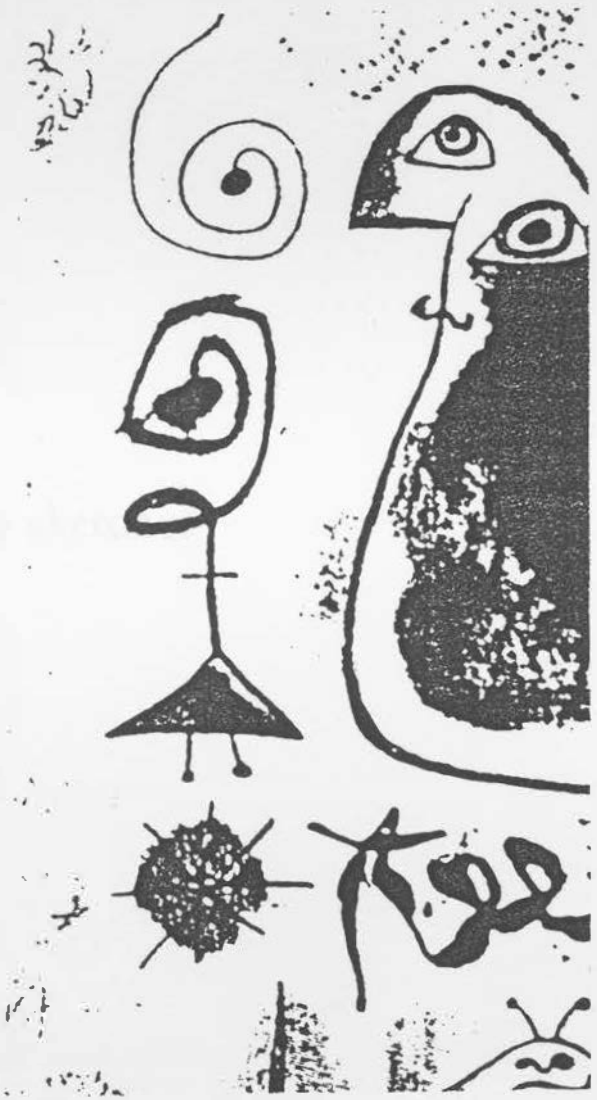
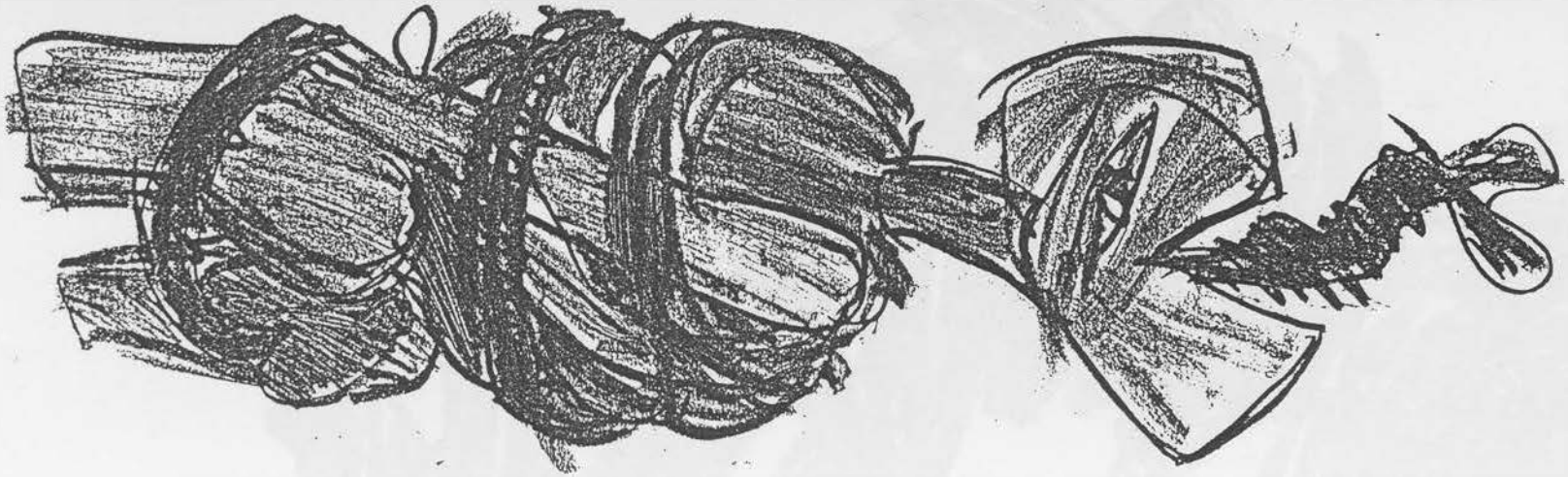


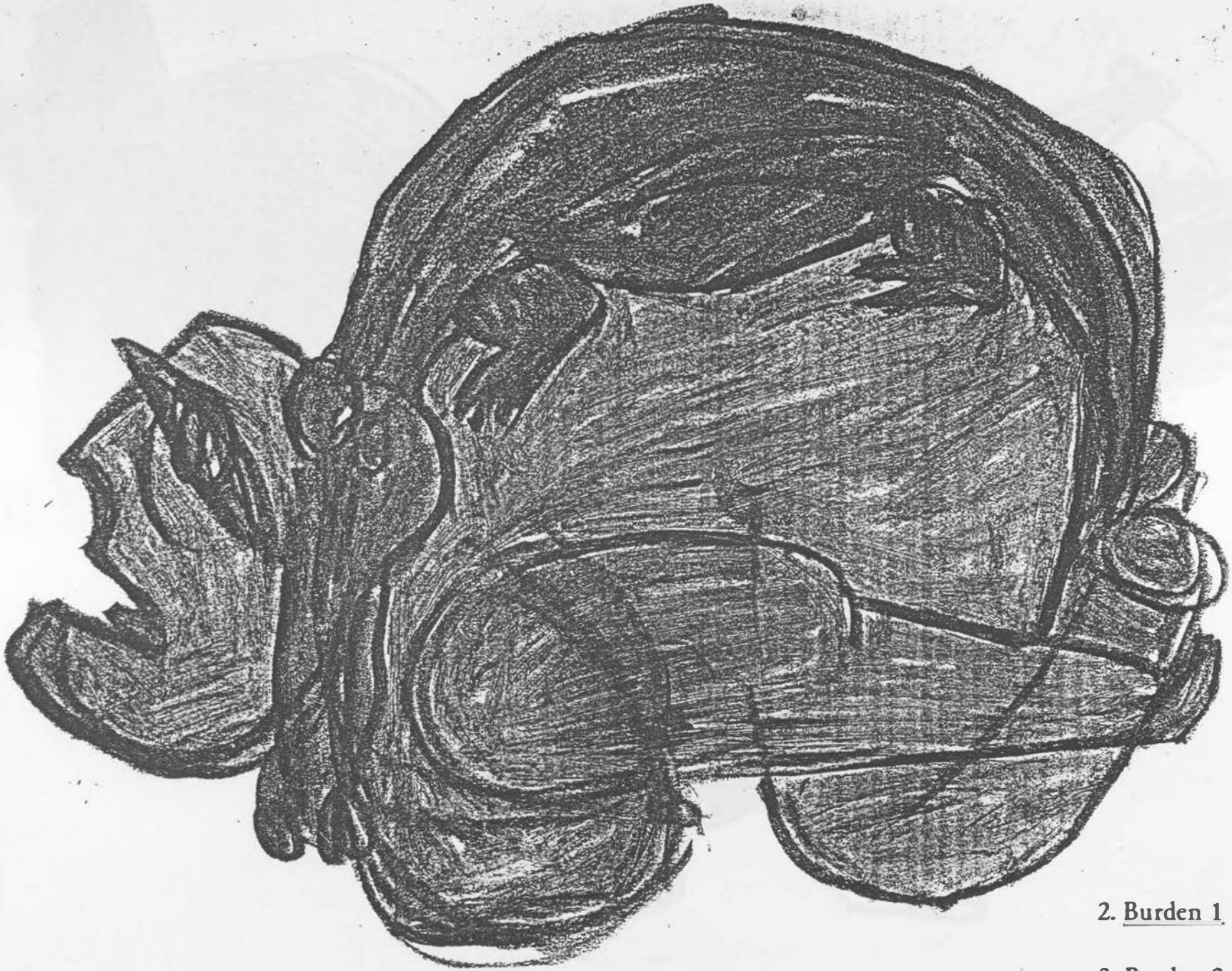
Figure 38

9. Selected preparatory sketches



Series one - ceramic sculptures

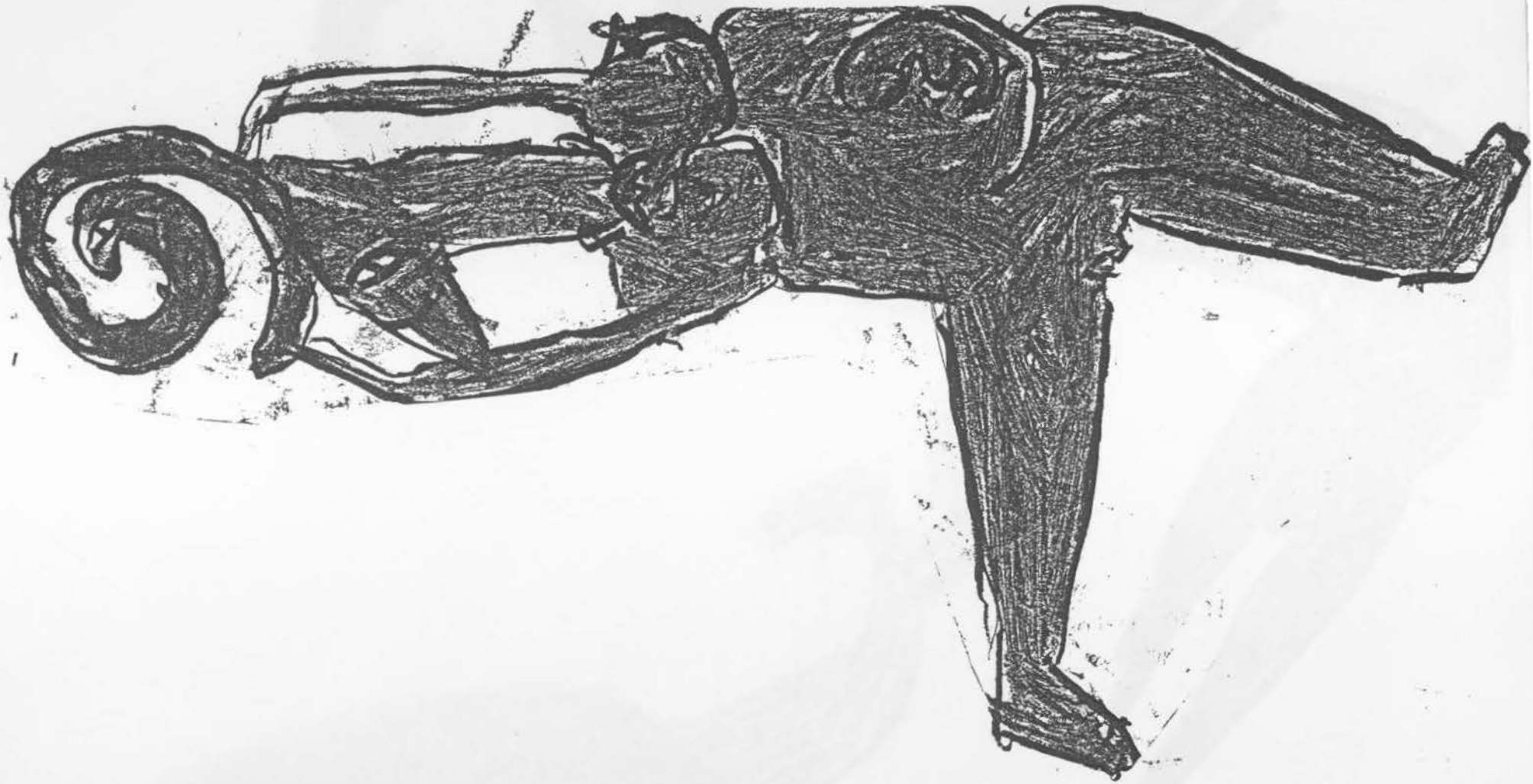
1. Rape

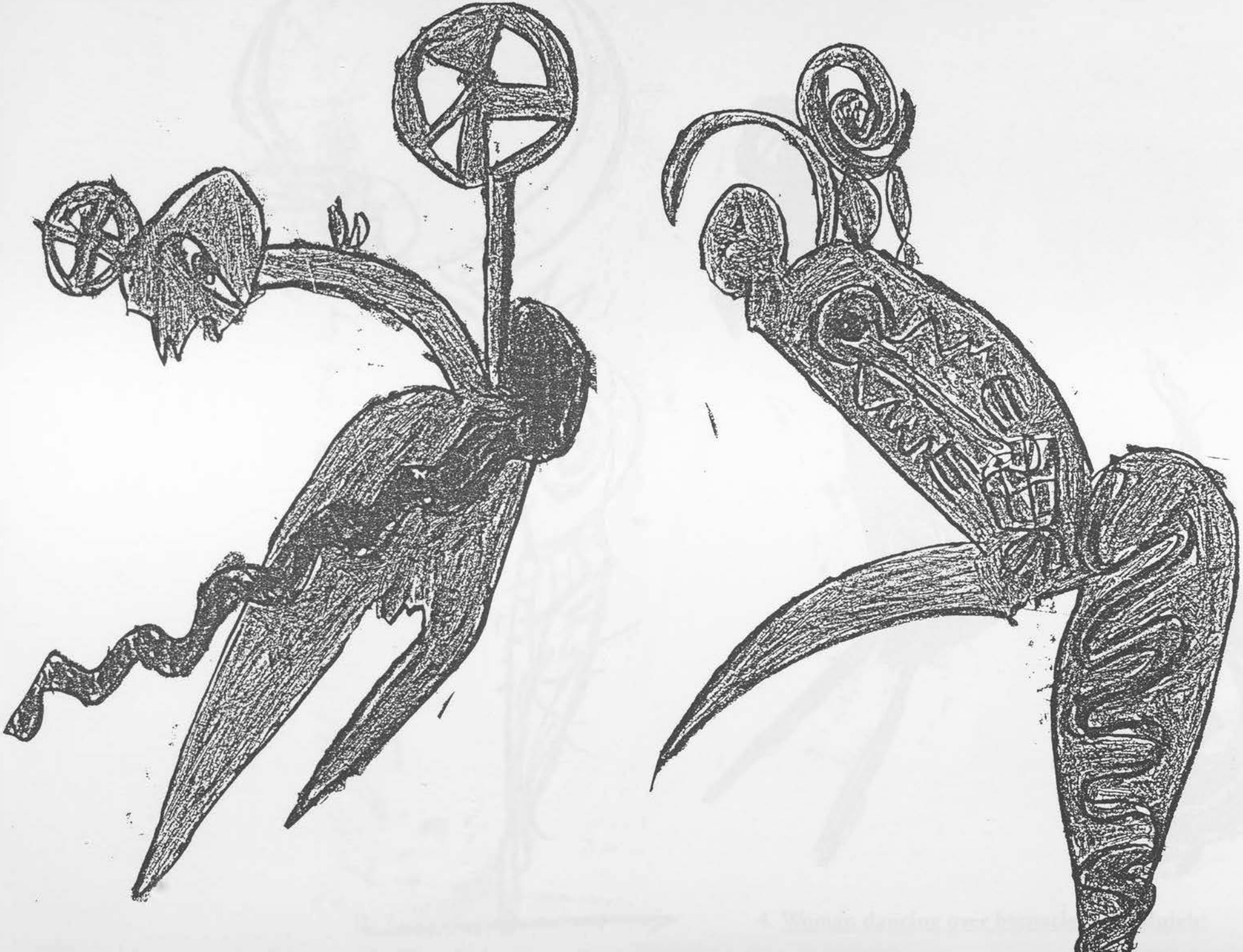


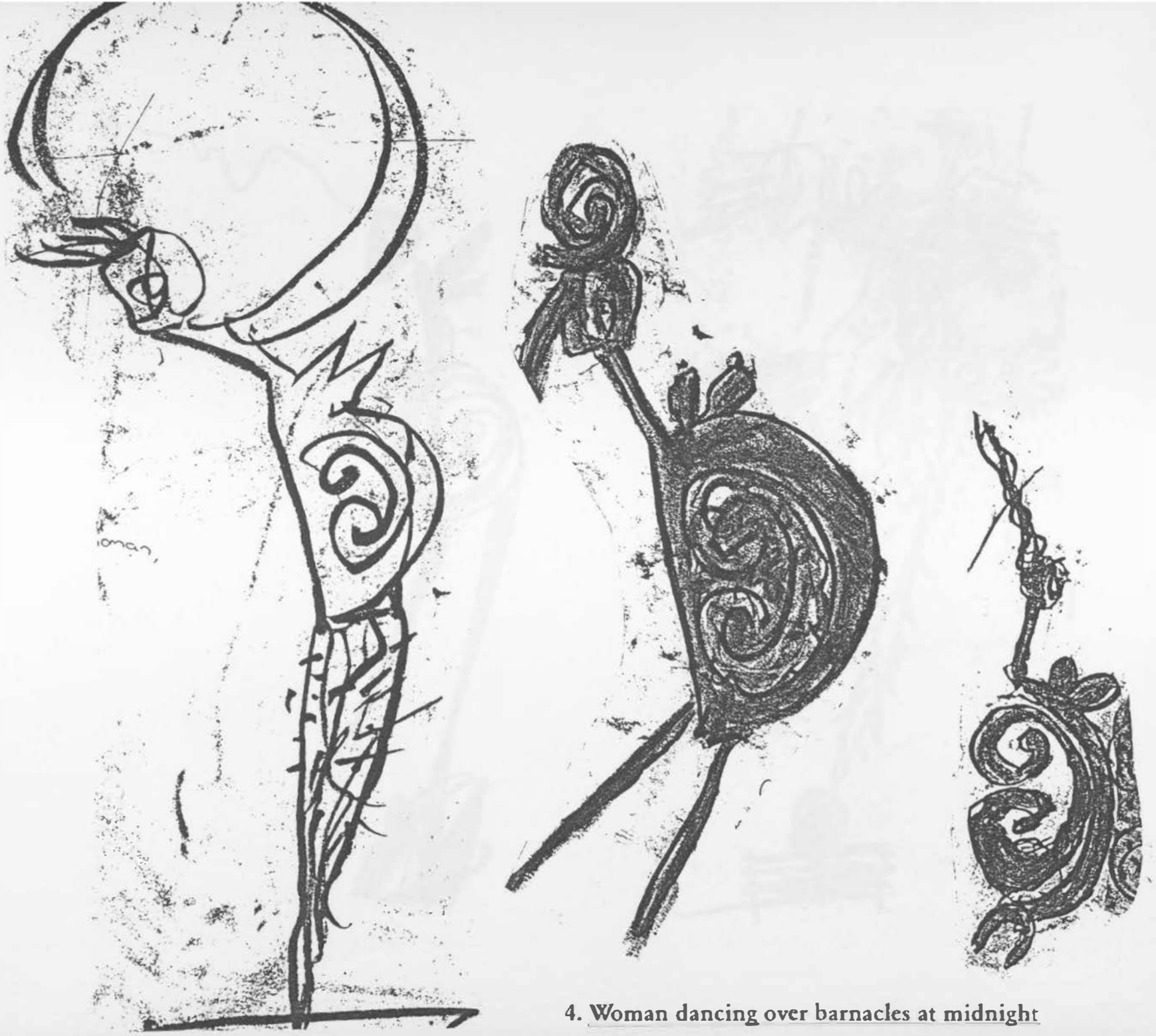
2. Burden 1

3. Burden 2

Series two - cement and metal sculptures





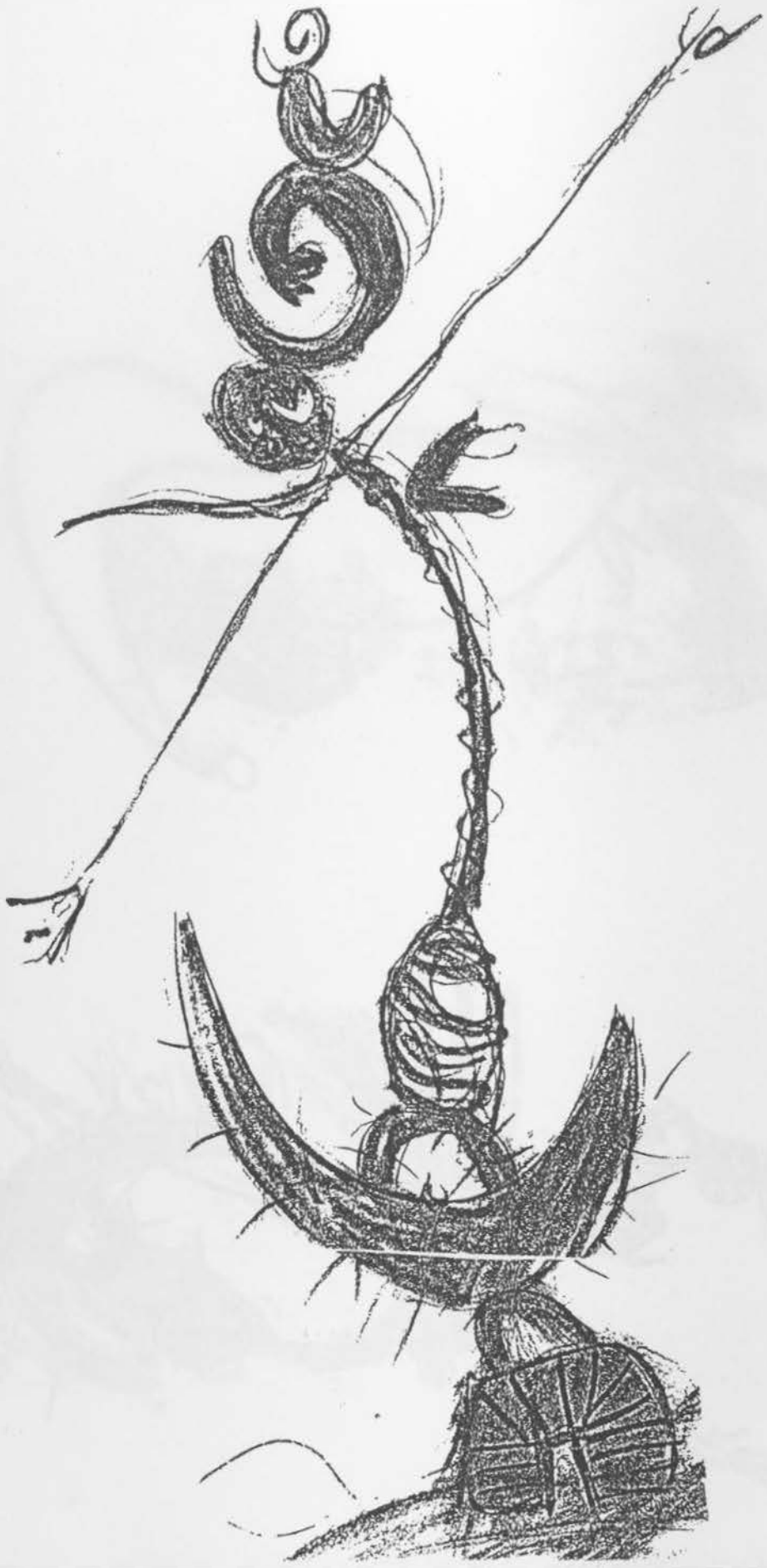


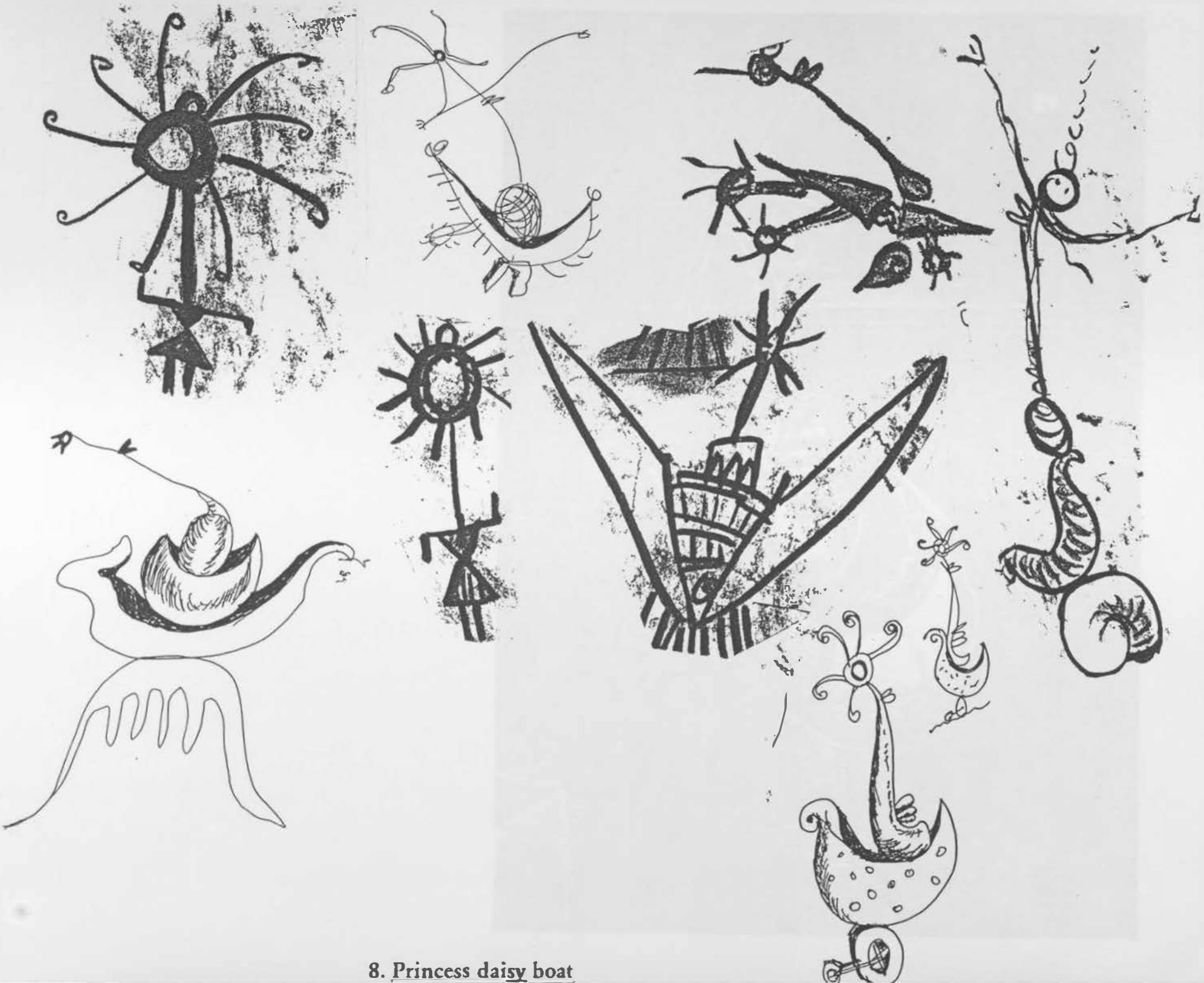
4. Woman dancing over barnacles at midnight

5. Conversation 1

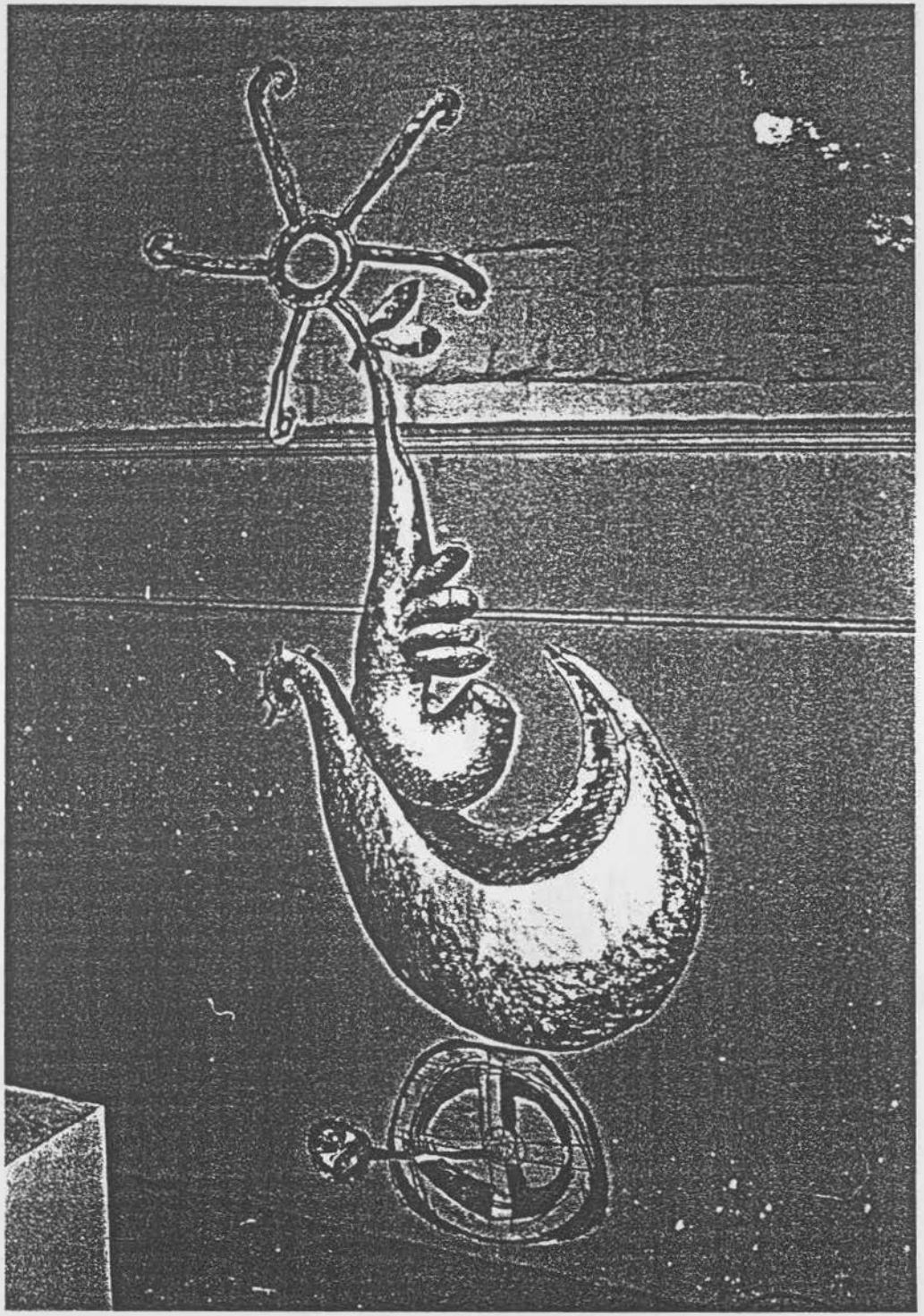
6. Conversation 2

7. Weaving woman

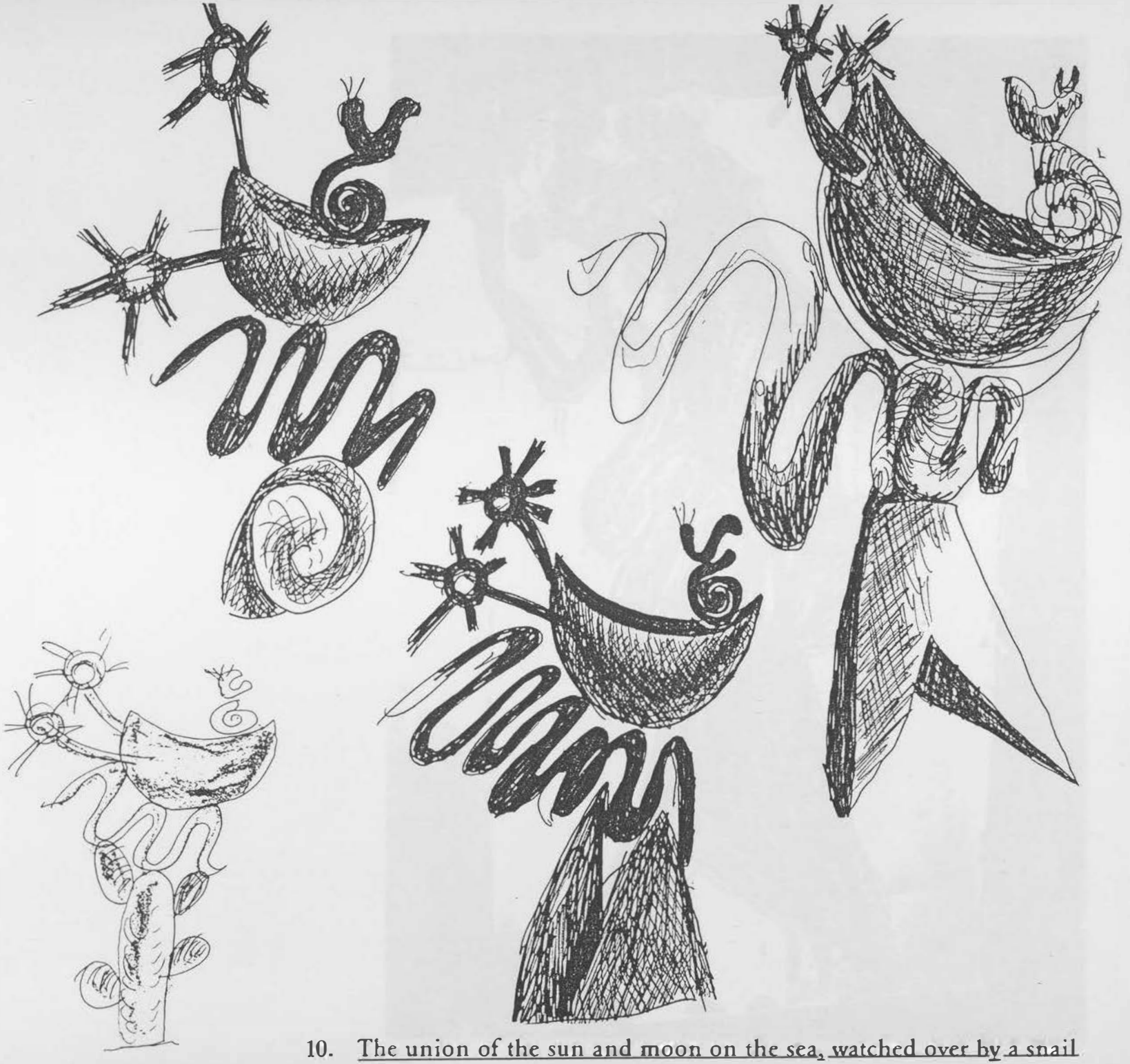




8. Princess daisy boat



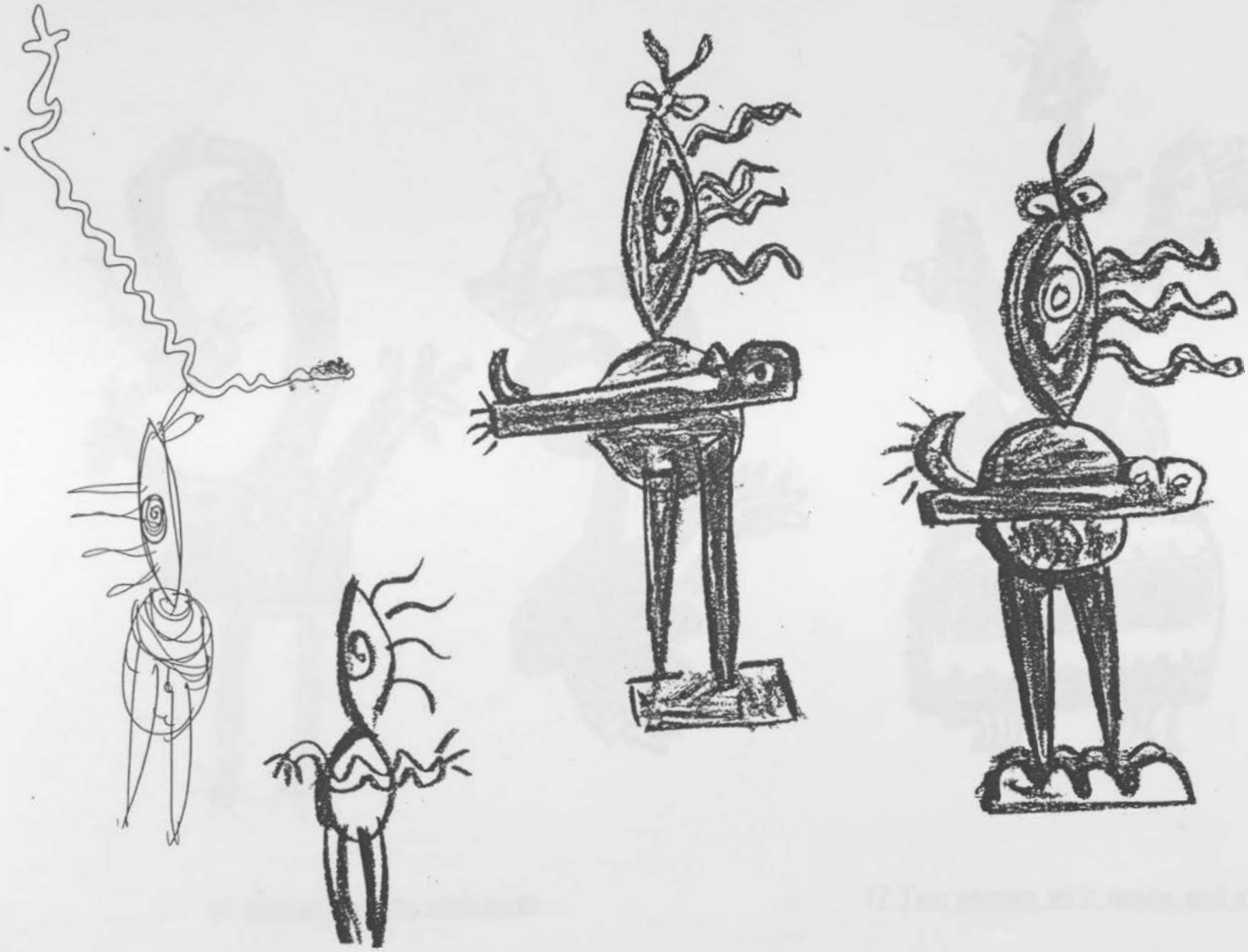
9. Soma tree



10. The union of the sun and moon on the sea, watched over by a snail

15. Woman dancing on the moonlit sea,

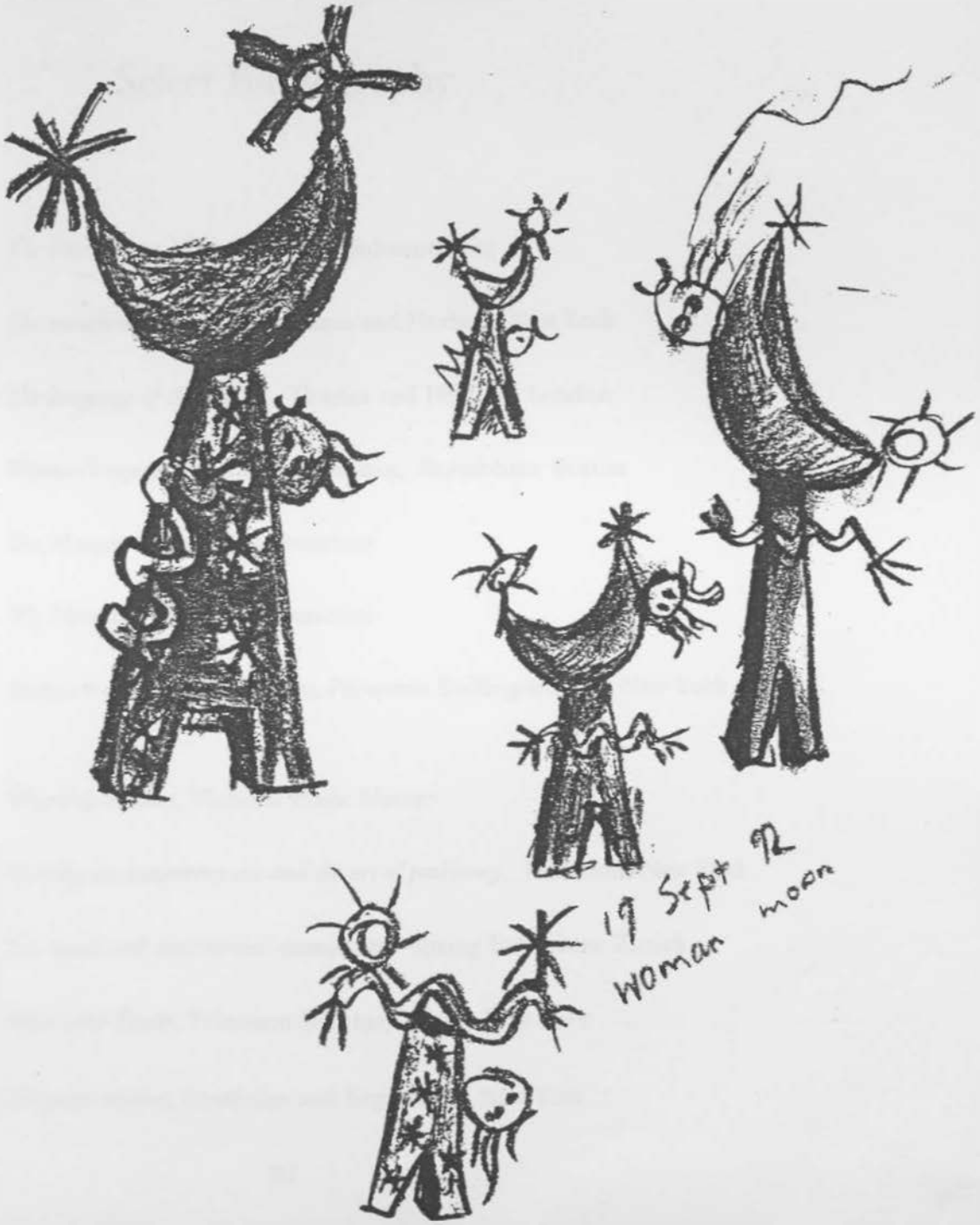
her hair blowing in the wind



6.3. Series three - bronze sculptures

16. Seated woman with stars

17. Two women with moon and stars



18. Woman with moon balancing the sun and stars

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Penrose, R 1983 'Enchantment and Revolution - Joan Miro' In *Artforum*, vol 22, pp. 55-9.