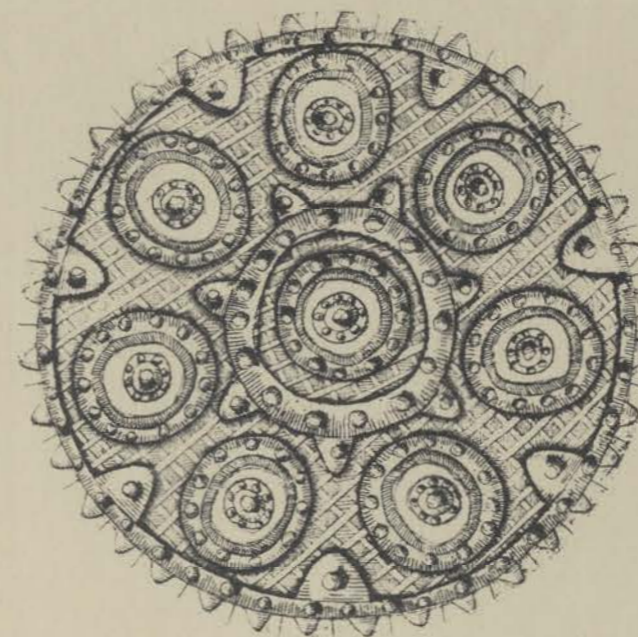


CHORUS FOR CHIMERAS

A series of etchings towards the development of a personal
iconography incorporating symbols, mythologies and ritual.

by

Alma Vorster



Submitted to meet the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Fine Art, at the University of Cape Town.

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Hierdie boek word opgedra aan my pa en ma-Hester.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. SOURCES AND REFERENCES	4
a. Myth and symbol	5
b. Shamanism	18
c. Other sources	31
2. WORKING METHOD AND ETCHING PROCESSES	40
3. INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINTS	46
Series I: DAWN PRELUDES	48
Series II: HYMNS TO HALLOWED FEVERS	52
Series III: OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS	55
Series IV: SERENADE IN MASQUERADE	60
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	65
INDEX TO THE PRINTS	68

PREFACE

Aspects of mythologies, their associated rituals and shamanism, are the subjects of this thesis. In a portfolio of twenty-one etchings, I have modified and recontextualised images from a variety of sources as a means to developing a personal iconography.

Ritual and the creation of mythologies offer humankind one way in which inexplicable aspects of experience can be confronted. Myths are expressed visually or verbally through the language of symbols. These symbols provide a means to transcend the physical world, and to create an environment in which knowledge and understanding of the cosmos is enriched. The rituals accompanying myths, and in particular the role played in these by the shaman, have been of major importance in the development of this body of work.

The exploration of my field of study was principally based on visual reference material and recounts of myths. Source material was derived from rock paintings, ritualistic costumes, musical instruments and other objects found in the rites which accompany the narration of myths of mainly pre-literate societies.

In the section, SOURCES AND REFERENCES, such areas of interest are discussed. Rituals have been an important focal point of my examination of mythologies, as an abundance of symbolical connections to the metaphysical realm are included in them. These take the form of clothing and other adornments, such as headdresses and masks, and a variety of ritualistic objects and instruments.

The meanings of mythologies are distilled, through the participation of the observers or listeners, by personally interpreting the symbols they perceive. Often symbols are obscure and in their understanding assistance is required. This aid is offered by those individuals who, in a given culture, specialize as interpreters - prophets, sages, priests and shamans.

The shaman, as mediator, has been a special concern in my research. I have concentrated on those societies where shamanism is the central religious practice. By virtue of their experience of ritualistic ecstasy, shamans are believed to transcend the physical barriers of time and space to become inhabitants in a metaphysical sphere and participants in the mythology. To enable entry, the ecstatic has to undergo a symbolical metamorphosis during the trance state. This metamorphosis entails a ritualistic suffering, death and resurrection as well as a ceremonial incarnation: an animal or spectral form appropriate to him or her or the occasion. My investigation into the transformation processes has focused mainly on visual references to the animal or mythical beings which aid the incarnation.

As well as the gleaning of symbols and forms from mythologies, and their associated rituals, I have referred to a multitude of designs and shapes from the natural world, including palaeontological and biological sources.

To formulate the information comprising my personal iconography, various interpretative and manipulative

processes were employed. These took the form of drawings and collages. In the section, WORKING METHODS AND ETCHING PROCESSES, these will be discussed. This section is also concerned with the variety of etching techniques utilized in the body of practical work.

In the section, INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINTS, I have mentioned some of the themes developed in the four series. I have not discussed the meanings of each print individually, as I hope that these will, in part, be determined by the viewers themselves, but have tried rather to provide an insight into some of the motives I have had in constructing my images.

A selection of images from my sketchbooks as well as preparatory drawings relating to the final images have been included.

The INDEX TO THE PRINTS, details editions, techniques, sizes and titles of each print.

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SOURCES AND REFERENCES



a. Myth and symbol

Mythologies are the metaphorical and symbolical expressions of the religious and cosmological beliefs adhered to by a specific culture. Through their ritual performance, narration or visual depiction, abstract and mystifying phenomena, such as death, the origins of life and the cosmos, are made accessible and intelligible.

Mythologies make use of familiar images and forms rooted in the experience of the individual or of the society. They embody meanings that lie beneath their surface manifestations and provide a structure through which the spiritual potential of the individual may be realised. Through a process of sanctifying aspects of the physical world, myths create a link between the forces that determine human existence and the forces that control nature and in so doing the physical and metaphysical aspects of life are integrated.

Myths are sustained by symbols. The meaning of symbols and their manifested forms, however, will differ according to cultural or environmental predeterminates. While, for example, symbols for water are found universally, the conceptual insights that the symbol for water brings about may vary from culture to culture. For the ancient Egyptians, for whom desert life rendered water extremely precious, water was a symbol of vitality, able to revive and give life. The ancient Babylonians, on the other hand, experienced continual floods and to them the symbol water signified destruction and death (Fawcett 1970).

A symbol, for example, that illustrates the layers of meaning that a constantly manifested form can evoke is the symbol of the cross. A horizontal bar crossing a vertical bar visually conveys the concept of the joining of two parts. When the viewer interprets the cross, the joining of the bars may symbolise the fusion of earth and heaven. The suspension of the horizontal bar may be read as symbolical of the release from earthly laws such as gravity. This symbol may also be interpreted at a deeper level. For example, Christians interpret the manifested form of the cross as the crucifixion of Christ signalling the unification of the metaphysical (heaven), from which God descended, and the physical (earth) into which God, in the form of Christ, entered and became part of. The symbol of the cross signifies transcendence as the crucifixion also served as the means whereby Christ was released from the physical, enabling Him to return to the metaphysical (Dilliston 1966).

The symbol of the mythical rainbow-serpent, found amongst the central Australian Aborigines, has a variety of meanings for these people. This symbol is commonly found drawn, painted or engraved on stone or wooden tablets. The manifested form of the rainbow-serpent is a collection of convoluting lines. The visible convolution of these lines themselves suggest the flow of water. Aborigines associate the undulating lines on the stone or wooden tablets with the colour bands of the rainbow. The rainbow itself symbolizes water, as there is no rainbow without the presence of water and particularly rain.

According to Aboriginal beliefs the rainbow-serpent not only created the ancestral Aborigines, but carries within its body

the contours of the land. The land is believed to have been amorphous before the creation of the first Aboriginal ancestors. The convoluting lines of the rainbow-serpent thus symbolize the link between the physical world and the metaphysical sphere. The link is established by the symbol's reference to both the physical formations of the earth and the metaphysical sphere, where the earth's formations were created. Another way in which the symbol of the rainbow-serpent serves to link reality with the metaphysical for the Aborigines is the belief that the rainbow-serpent inhabits waterholes and lakes during dry seasons. The serpent thus partakes in reality. When the first rains come, the serpent is believed to move up into the heavens in the shape of a rainbow. The rainbow-serpent thus acts as a symbol of unification between heaven and earth (Roberts 1975).

Not only visually manifested symbols have the capacity for a myriad of possible meanings. In the verbal narration of mythologies, there is often an evocative use of words. According to ancient Egyptian mythology humankind was believed to have been born from the tears of the sun god Re, and the people of the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition believe that humankind was moulded from dust. In both these examples the use of the words, 'tears' and 'dust' can offer an insight into an aspect of the particular culture's perception of humankind. Another example is the symbolic connotations of the words used in the writings of the Jewish mystical tradition of the Kabbalah. These are so multiple and complex that they are believed by the subscribers to this tradition to contain all possible meanings in the world, and thus possess the original ability to create (Drury 1982, Werblowsky and Wigoder 1966).

The references I made to mythologies in my work were eclectic in nature. My information was drawn from a variety of cultures and specifically those aspects I found relevant and personally resonant. Visual source material was selected primarily from photographs and graphic illustrations from the visual recounts of particular cultures' mythologies. These included Australian Aboriginal and southern African San rock paintings. In my research, I also 'borrowed' from the carved, painted or drawn images and designs on ritual objects and clothing. References to ritual costume include painted buffalo robes of the American Plains Indians and cloaks from the Yakut and Tungus of Siberia and the Alaskan Eskimos. I looked at ritual objects containing mythological narrations, for example, drums belonging to the shamanistic cultures of the Siberian Yakut and Tungus and Objibway Indians, one of the largest North American tribes. I also assimilated information from a vast array of ritual bowls, containers, stones and other objects from various cultures.

In conjunction with gathering material from visual mythological sources, I also drew from narrations of myths and rituals recounted in literature. These sources included accounts of mythologies from various cultures as well as 'poetry' related to aspects of myths. I also focussed on the deities and therianthropic forms that populate myths. The multiple symbolical words and images contained in the recounts of myths, and their related 'poems', evoked a personal response in me and served as inspiration for the development of themes and images in my practical work. The following poetic pieces serve to illustrate the rich

symbolical nature of some of the words and concepts that make up mythologies.

SONG OF THE MIMIXCOA

I came from the Seven Caves,
The first place, where magic ruled.
My footprints lead from there,
where the tribes began.

I am born. I am already born.
I was born with my cactus arrows
from the cactus that makes you drunk.

I am born. I came down as song
with my net snare ready.
I was born with my snare.
I was born with my net.

I hold it in my one hand, in one
hand I hold it, with my hand
Oh, with its hand
it will snare.

Aztec (Kissam and Schmidt 1977: 62)

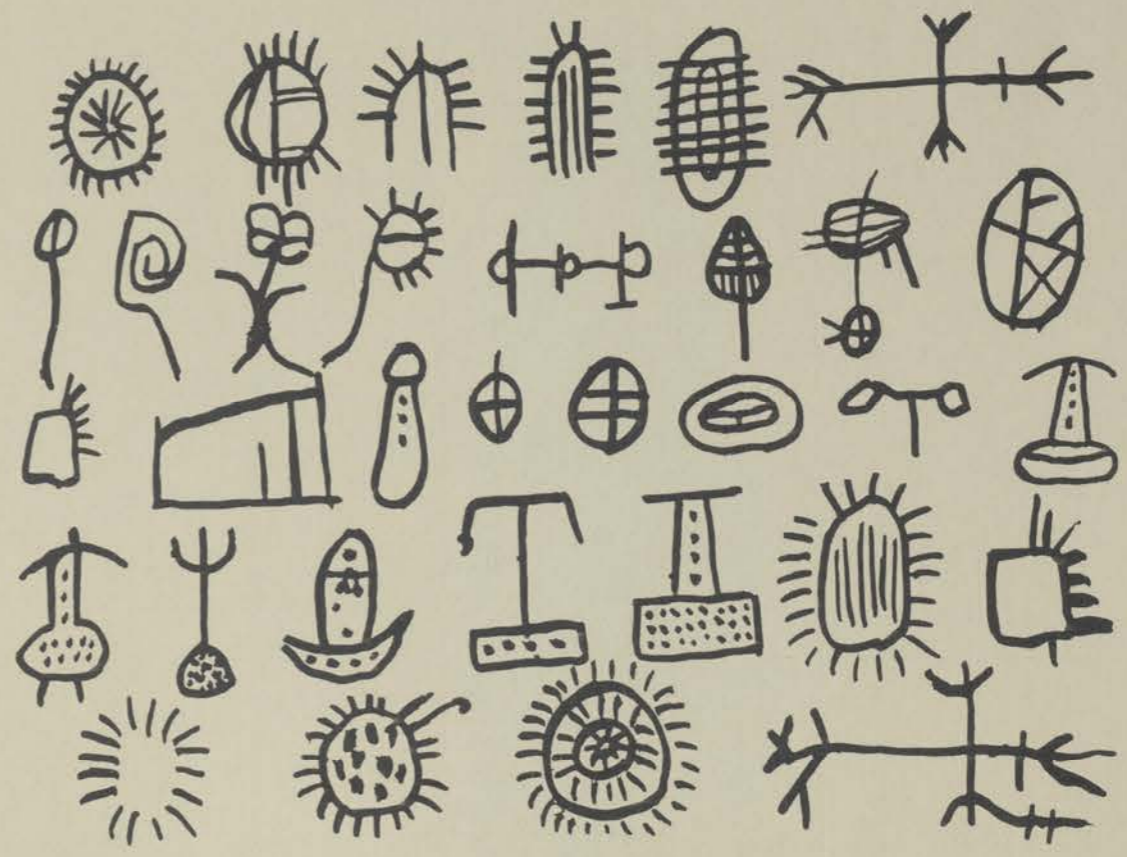
CLOUD SERPENT

Lady of the jade white skirt,
when your four-hundred offspring,
the cloud-snakes, northern stars,
were born, they fled and hid
in caverns of the earth.
Then you bore again,
This time five offspring, named
Eagle-Serpent
Cloud-Serpent
Wolf-Woman
Mountain-Hawk
Lord of the Canal
They entered the water at birth,
stayed four days in the water
to fill out, and grow strong.
When they emerged, our Lady of the Earth,
You fed them from your breast...

Aztec (Kissam and Schmidt 1977: 75-84)

The fire darkens, the wood turns black.
 The flame extinguishes, misfortune upon us.
 God sets out in search of the sun.
 The rainbow sparkles in his hand,
 the bow of the divine hunter.
 He has heard the lamentations of his children.
 He walks along the milky way, he collects the stars.
 With quick arms he piles them into a basket
 piles them up with quick arms
 like a woman who collects lizards
 and piles them into her pot, piles them up
 until the pot overflows with lizards
 until the basket overflows with light.

Khoikhoi (Beier 1966: 22)



First Peyote Song

There were the waves, coming out from the waves, the sea,
and after the sea, came the gods, all of them.

The gods passed by like flowers,
in the form of flowers, coming after the sea
and they came to the placenta
where it springs from the flesh of the womb which bore
them. And from the placenta the cloud,
from the cloud the heavenly temple,
from the temple the deer
who was then corn who became cloud once again
and rained on the cornfield...

(Kissam and Schmidt 1977: 126...127)



My interest in the rituals surrounding mythological expressions, and specifically in the shaman, emerged from my research into those cultures where myth was or is primarily related verbally. In my reading, I have concentrated on such cultures as the ancient Aztec and Inca people of South America, contemporary South American Indians, for example, the Yanomami and Tukano tribes of the Amazon, North American Indians, in particular the Objibway, the Aborigines of Australia, Eskimos and Siberian people such as the Yakut and Tungus among others. In these cultures, the verbal narration of mythologies was or is customarily combined with symbolic and ritualistic practices. These practices surrounding mythological narration have a dual purpose. The rituals or rites not only serve to transmit, from one generation to the next, the social values and beliefs a particular culture adheres to, but also act as vehicles to inform and express the particular culture's sentiments regarding their understanding of the nature of the metaphysical sphere, and the manner of conduct when in contact with this sphere.

The rituals furthermore have as their objective the establishment of contact with the sacred or metaphysical sphere and the realm of mythological imagery. In the rites the words spoken or chanted, the gestures used, the action in the form of dancing, or the playing of musical instruments together with ritual costume and decorated objects, all

function as stimuli, evoking feelings of contact among the people concerned, with the metaphysical sphere. Objects, costumes, the words spoken or sung, gestures and other actions associated with the rituals surrounding myths, are generally regarded as the manifestations of the sacred. Because of their sacred nature, ritual dress and the agents employed in the rituals may generally only be manipulated, worn or spoken by consecrated individuals, who may be priests or shamans. Along with prophets and sages, priests and shamans assist their communities by acting as interpreters of the often obscure symbols of mythologies.





Homage to Tlacahuepan

With shields, you paint nobility.
 With arrows, you write battle.
 Now, you dress yourself in plumes
 and paint your face with chalk for the sacrifice.
 Oh Tlacahuepan,
 You are going to take them with you
 into the realm of mystery.

Oh Tlacahuepan, you are over the princes.
 You cry out, the eagle who is red answers you.
 Like a dancer, who is to die,
 with whistling hands,
 and at the end, to the realm of mystery.

Your song is like a mottled jaguar.
 Your flower is like the spread wings of an eagle.
 Oh my prince, as a dancer, who is to die,
 there in the clash of shields.
 How beautifully you play your drum.

You garland the nobles with flowers of the eagle,
 The gathering of friends, oh dancer, who is to die,
 the wine of precious flowers makes men drunk and brave
 and he will dress himself with his flowers and songs
 in the realm of mystery.

Perhaps the Mexicans are singing there too.

Aztec (Kissam and Schmidt 1977: 104)

Symbols - American Indian



Felt-tipped pens, waterpaint

Aboriginal bark painting from Arnhem Land (Two Sisters being swallowed by the rainbow-serpent)



Bushmen - mythical snake



American Indian

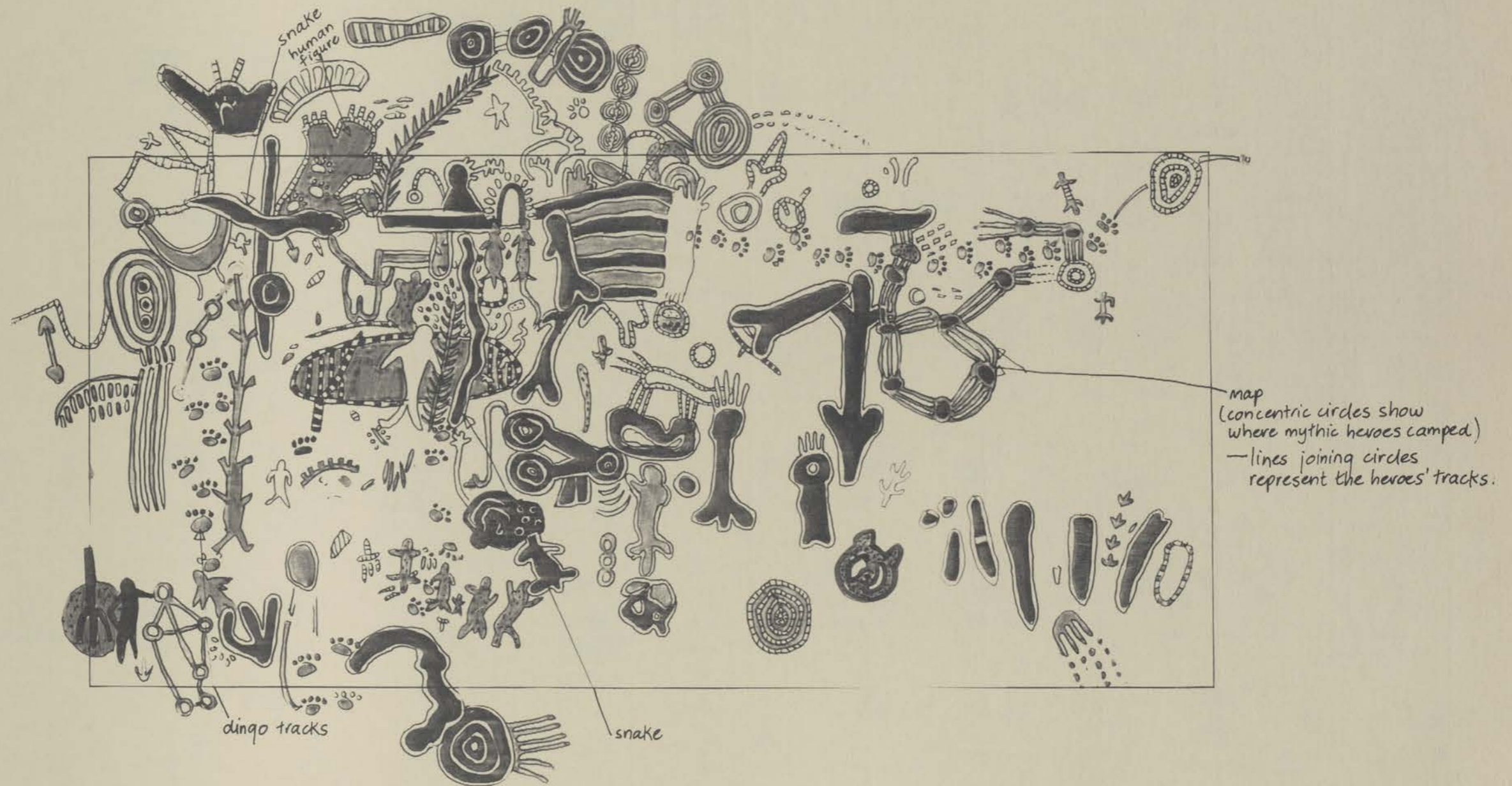


Aboriginal.



Felt-tipped pens, waterpaint

(Aboriginal) Cave paintings from Ayer's Rock, Australia. They illustrate mythic events. (Felt-tipped pens, pen and ink drawings)



African Symbols (pen and ink drawings)

Symbols ① ② simplified / see - sight witness / god / rat of famine / vagabond - useless person / speak / female or woman / virgin / old woman / married woman / baby girl / man / various symbols for man or male.

pollution defilement / hyaena of greed / jackal in brain cunning rogue / turtle keeper of tribal secrets / mamba awake watchman guard / wizard midnight baboon rider / outside / home / family / hut / bride / beautiful / visitor / various symbols for trees / warrior man with shield

hunter / elephant / zebra / crocodile / spear-maker blacksmith / friendship unity / desire / chief / greatness / queen / chieftainess / goddess of creation / truth eating darkness / bird of light serpent of

'son of a bitch' / 'son of bush + wind' (bastard) / life, existence / spear-maker blacksmith / friendship unity / desire / insect - bee diligence industriousness / bird - speed all haste / fire lust - love passion / rain - purity innocence / unity making harmony / break-up death

a wish (flower in brain) / treason / naughty child 'demon spear child' / anger / pleasure joy ecstasy / gossip slander / tribe / divorce separation disagreement / flower youth / star divine - hope guidance / sun - light good health / sunrise birth / sunset decline old age / future

conversation language / totoloshe evil spirit / obedience (hear-do) / father / woodcarver / midwife / mother-larc / war hostility / brain / mind / planter / skilful person / road path experience journey / river tranquility

mother-in-law / home of in-laws / a thing / religion spiritual enlightenment / hope / generosity / mountains longing / distant hills remembrance / witchdoctor - healing / spirit - ena - soul / pregnancy oldest fertility symbol.

time eternity / light / fear terror / nguni (certain tribe) / yesterday / years - / miscarriage female impotence frigidity / man killed in battle / cause of parting / peacemaker / bad woman witch / evil wizardry

proud / secret / killer / in / kraal / we / immortal / eat / unclean / beast / death rottenness used as a curse / birth - also in figurative sense / fertility - abundance / wisdom-silence (finger over mouth) (see all - see little) / madness (insect under skull)

Second Peyote Song

The flowers are flying, they spin around, once around
Burnt Hill, where the Deer and altar were born
from the heart of our father's father, fire.

The gods are talking, they do talk to us and no one
can say what they mean.

But here is the arrow.
You see it stuck in the centre
in the centre of the sacred mat of herbs.
It understands the language of the gods.
There next to it is the snake,
blue Jaikayuave who translates the gods,
who knows the arrow's language.

The rain is born from the altar of herbs,
the rain is set loose and you hear what the gods say:

'Brothers, it's time to make the arrow of rain.
The cord comes out of the mouth of rain, the plumes of rain,
the feathers of arrows, the clouds pile up
and the gods of the four directions take shape.'

They talk among themselves.
They understand each other.
They agree. They all agree:

Viricota, Aurramanaka, Tatei Nakaw, Tatei Urianaka,
Saint Andrew.

They all leap up in the air and spin around the place
where all was born, and fall to earth

where they see the feathered arrow which marks the place
where the deer was born.

There
is his feathery funeral cradle, the sacred altar.
And our brother Tamatz Kallaumari

is stretched out on it,
resting.

(Kissam and Schmidt 1977: 128)



b. Shamanism

In my research regarding rituals and agents employed in the rites, shamans were of special interest. While cultural variations exist, there does appear to be great consistency in the practice of shamanism.

... a common thread seems to connect all shamans across the planet. An awakening to other orders of reality, the experience of ecstasy, and an opening up of visionary realms form the essence of the shamanic mission (Halifax 1982: 5).

The shamans are believed, both by themselves and by the people of their societies, to participate in the creation and perpetuation of the mythology and to have special contact with the metaphysical sphere. It is by virtue of this contact that shamanistic societies believe the shamans capable of performing their symbolic roles. These include activities such as rainmaking, visiting distant relatives, searching for game, communicating with ancestor spirits and, most importantly, that of healer.

Because they are versatile, shamans perform many different services. Shamans are family psychologists, herbal doctors, and fortune tellers. A shaman is not a priest, since he or she does not take orders from a church hierarchy; however, many shamans are pastors, leaders of a flock of believers. There are many kinds of shamans in many cultures. Although some

scholars want to divide them into types such as medicine men, sorcerers, diviners, and so forth, they are all similar in their practice of magic rituals, which do not simply appease superhuman powers, but try to control and direct them (Dow 1986: 7).



In shamanistic societies, contact with the metaphysical sphere is believed to be established by the shamans through the trance state (ecstatic experience). The trance state is found universally amongst the shamans in shamanistic societies. It is voluntarily induced by the shaman either by means of hallucinogenic substances, sensory deprivation, or meditative practices, such as the rhythmic beating of drums, dancing, clapping or chanting. Hallucinogenic substances come in many forms, for example, narcotic beverages extracted from specific liana plants used by the Jivaro of the Amazon jungle and narcotic snuffs used by the Tukano of the Amazon. The ritualistic beating of the drum by the shaman to induce a state of trance is especially prominent amongst Siberian shamans belonging to such groups as the Yakut and Tungus.

The shamans and members of shamanistic societies believe, that in order for the shamans to achieve contact with the metaphysical sphere during their trance states, they have to undergo symbolical metamorphoses each time they enter the trance state. These metamorphoses are inextricably linked to what is believed to be their vocational summons and initiatory ecstatic experiences.

The calling of an individual to the vocation of shaman varies in different societies and may either be through inheritance or by what is believed to be a summons. The summons of a shaman is believed to come from the metaphysical sphere and is announced through external signs. Again the forms these signs may take differ from society to society. They may be indicated by changes in the behaviour of an individual, for example, nervous disorders (common amongst the Yakut),

sickness or physical defects, but more often unusual incidents or experiences, such as a portentous flash of lightning or a dream, may signify a candidate (Eliade, 1972).

In most shamanistic societies, regardless of the manner in which potential candidates are identified, the shaman is not recognized until an initiatory ecstatic experience (the trance state) that serves to confirm the shaman's calling, takes place. The particulars of the shamans' trances are largely determined by their cultural context (Eliade, 1972, Browman and Schwarz, 1979).

Shamans view their initiatory ecstatic experiences as essential because they believe that, through these experiences, they establish contact with and gain access to the metaphysical sphere. The uniqueness of this access lies in the shamans' experience of symbolical suffering, death and resurrection during the trance state. According to the people of shamanistic societies, human beings are only able to enter the metaphysical realm once their souls have been set free from the profane world through death. The shamans, through a symbolical death during their trance experiences, are believed to transcend the profane condition to become inhabitants in the metaphysical sphere. At the same time, the shamans are able to undergo miraculous symbolical resurrections and return to conventional life. Each time shamans induce trance states they re-enact their initiatory ecstatic experiences. Through their symbolical metamorphoses the shamans are considered eligible to act as intermediaries between their society and the metaphysical sphere.

My reference to shamanism, in the preparatory drawings and final images for the body of prints, centred on the symbolical or iconical manifestations of the metaphysical sphere. These manifestations abound in the rituals surrounding the shaman's trance state. The majority of symbolical or iconical forms included in these rites are based on the animal kingdom. I selected as reference material from these rites, those symbols and icons rooted in the animal kingdom, which I found particularly evocative or which had a personal meaning.

The rituals accompanying the shamans' ecstasies are usually public functions where the shamans minutely describe and often act out their experiences during or after trance. Physical manifestations of animals in these rituals are found in the shamans' accessories, costume or body paint and in the references the shamans make to them. These may be verbal, for instance, chants, or through ritual action, such as dancing or mimicking a particular animal.

Animals are often regarded by shamanic societies as deities, a deceased's new form, escorts accompanying souls in mythical realms, or the shamans' personal helper-spirits.

The animal symbols and icons contained in the rituals concerned with the shamanic trance all refer to the shamans' experiences in the metaphysical sphere. The specific connotations of these icons and symbols, and their functions, are varied. The most important function is to declare the presence of a metaphysical sphere and at the same time to announce the shamans' distinctive status - that of those who are believed to be in direct contact with it. The

forms containing symbolic or iconic animal references that I found most stimulating were ritual costume and headdresses (North American Indians, Eskimos and Siberian societies), masks, and instruments such as drums and rattles (North and South American Indians, Australian Aborigines and southern African San).

By donning ritual costumes, headdresses or masks, shamans undergo a visually manifested metamorphoses. To their audiences shamans cease to be associated with the profane world, and are identified with the mythical animals, or the spirits they are impersonating. The extent to which shamanic societies identify ritualistic costume with the wearers (shamans) is illustrated by the Makuna Indians who live in the north-western part of the Amazon jungle. They consider the union of the mask and wearer of such a nature that there exists no independent word for a mask in their language (Trupp 1981).

The shamans' ritual costumes and masks often imitate or contain the animals, such as lizards, or parts of the animals such as feathers, that the shamans are believed to incarnate or encounter during their mythical exploits. The ritual 'cloak', at times, consists of the skin of the animal the shamans identify with. The shamans of the Tukano (Amazonian Indians) particularly favour jaguars as their animal incarnations and don jaguar pelts during their ecstatic rituals (Trupp 1981). The Siberian Tungus and Karagas shamans' costumes are mostly made out of furs and hides, especially reindeer skins.

The morphology of the variety of animal species that make up shamans' masks include fish (often stylized in the masks of the Tukano Indians from the Amazon), wolves (common amongst Siberian people) and jaguars (Tukano Indians sometimes paint imitations of jaguar markings on their masks). Antelope or deer are referred to in many shamans' masks, especially by means of including horns or antlers in their headdresses. Many Siberian shamans use reindeer antlers.

Animal forms that occur most often in shamans' masks and headdresses are those of birds. For many shamanistic societies birds symbolize transcendence through their ability to fly. Many shamanistic cultures consider birds to be 'symbolic of the soul' (Halifax 1982: 86), for example, Eskimo sentiments towards geese serve to illustrate some of the symbolic connotations shamanic societies attach to bird forms.

The goose is frequently associated with the mystic journey to the Other World. Furthermore, shaman and waterbird were essentially analogous, as both were masters of the three realms of existence (Halifax 1982: 86).

These are land, air and water.

Musical instruments shamans choose to use during their trances vary from region to region. Rattles are used amongst San of southern Africa and Tukano Indians of the Amazon, for example, and a drum amongst the shamans of

Siberia and Central Asia. The instruments used during ecstatic experiences have a variety of functions. Sometimes they are used to aid the trancer's concentration and induce the trance state, but often the musical instruments are believed to be voices of spirits or to possess souls which the shaman activates by the playing of the instrument.

Through the shaman's voice, the animal whose skin has been used for the drum tells of its birth, its parents, its childhood and its whole life to the moment when it was brought down by the hunter. It ends by promising the shaman that it will perform many services for him (Eliade 1972: 170).

The decorations, painted or carved on drums or other instruments, are often illustrations of the shamans' ventures in the metaphysical realm and contain multiple references to animal forms and metaphysical beings.

Dance, chant, costume, mask, the objects and musical instruments utilized, the numerous symbols that constitute the shamans' mystical experience, and finally the trance state itself, are all regarded in shamanistic societies as the means by which the shamans accomplish their objectives - to transcend reality, to inhabit the metaphysical realm of gods, mystical animals and ancestors that populate mythologies, and to act on behalf of and for the good of their societies.

"In order to be a medicine man one should find the visions there, in nature. To the west a man has the power from the buffalo. From the north he gets the power from the thunder beings. From the east his strength comes from the spirit horse and the elk. From the south he has the ghost power. From above, from the sky, he will receive the wisdom of the great eagle. From beneath, from the earth, he will receive the mother's food. This is the way to become a wicasa wakan (holy man, shaman) to learn the secret language, to speak about sacred things, to work with the stones and herbs, to use the pipe". Dakota shaman, Lame Deer (Grim 1983: 31)



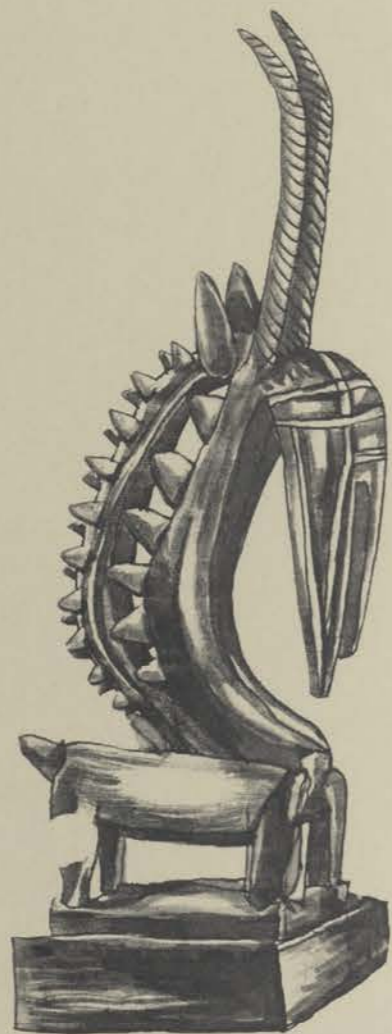
"While I stood there, I saw more that I can tell,
and understood more than I saw; for I was
seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all
things in the spirit, and the shapes of all shapes,
as they must live together like one being"
(Neihardt 1972: 43).



Masks Africa
(pen and ink, bitumen and waterpaint)



Ritualistic Objects. (pen and ink, waterpaint)



West African, Seqani - Kun mask



Dance object, New Guinea



Mask, New Guinea



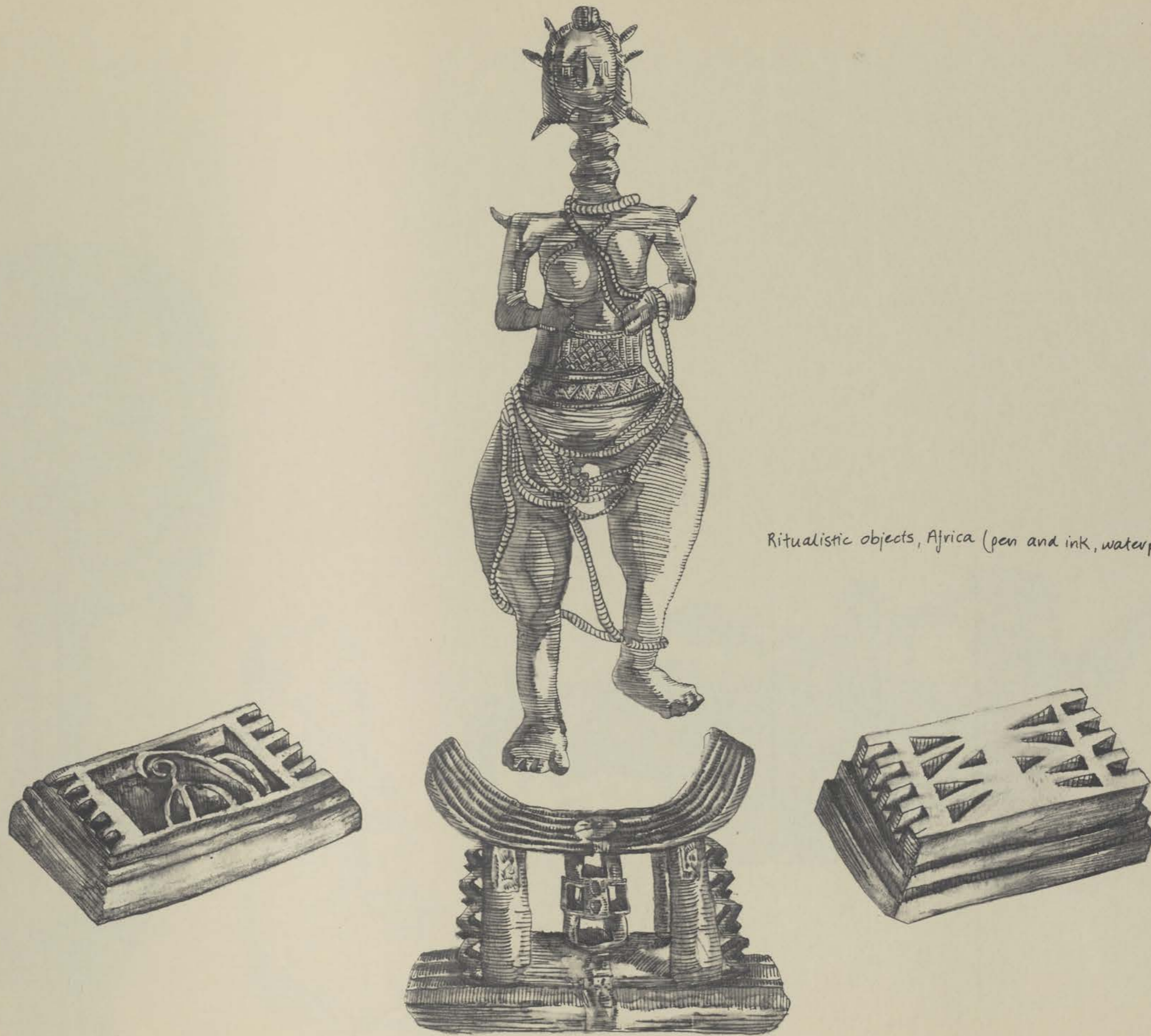
Cannibal forks, Fiji Islands



Drum, Solomon Islands.



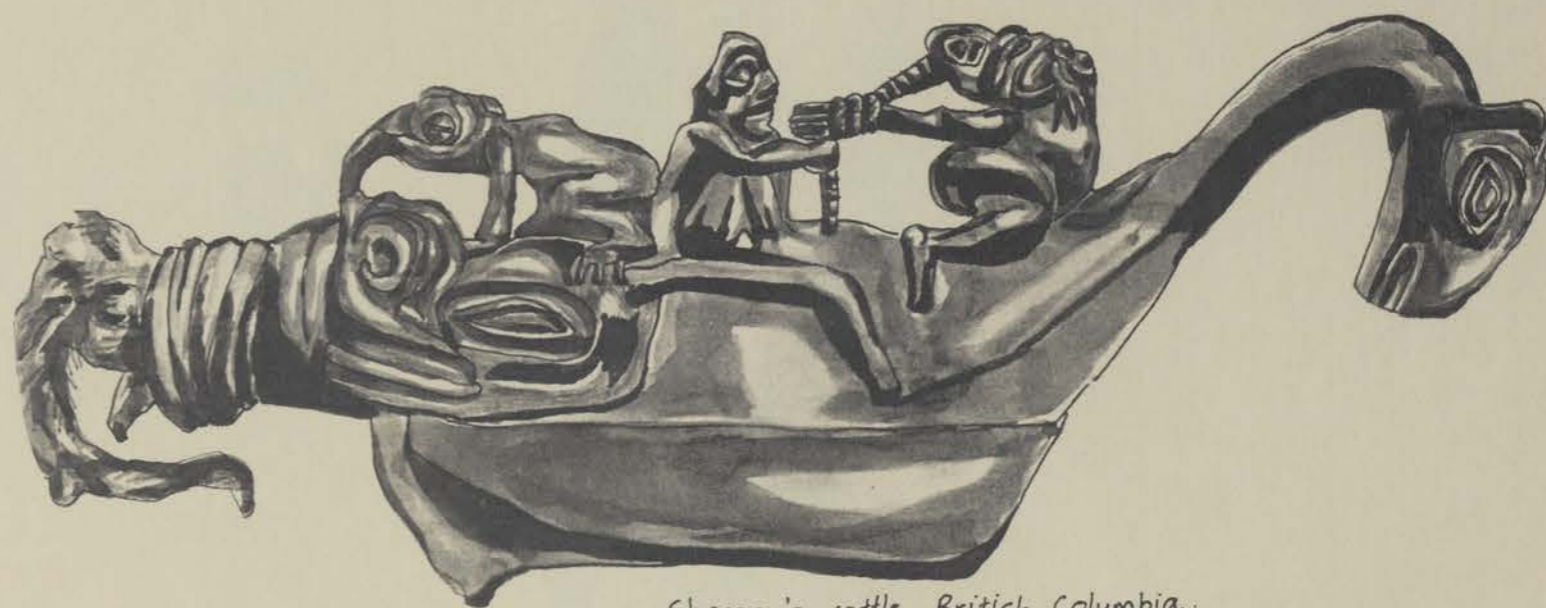
Drum, Solomon Islands, New Guinea



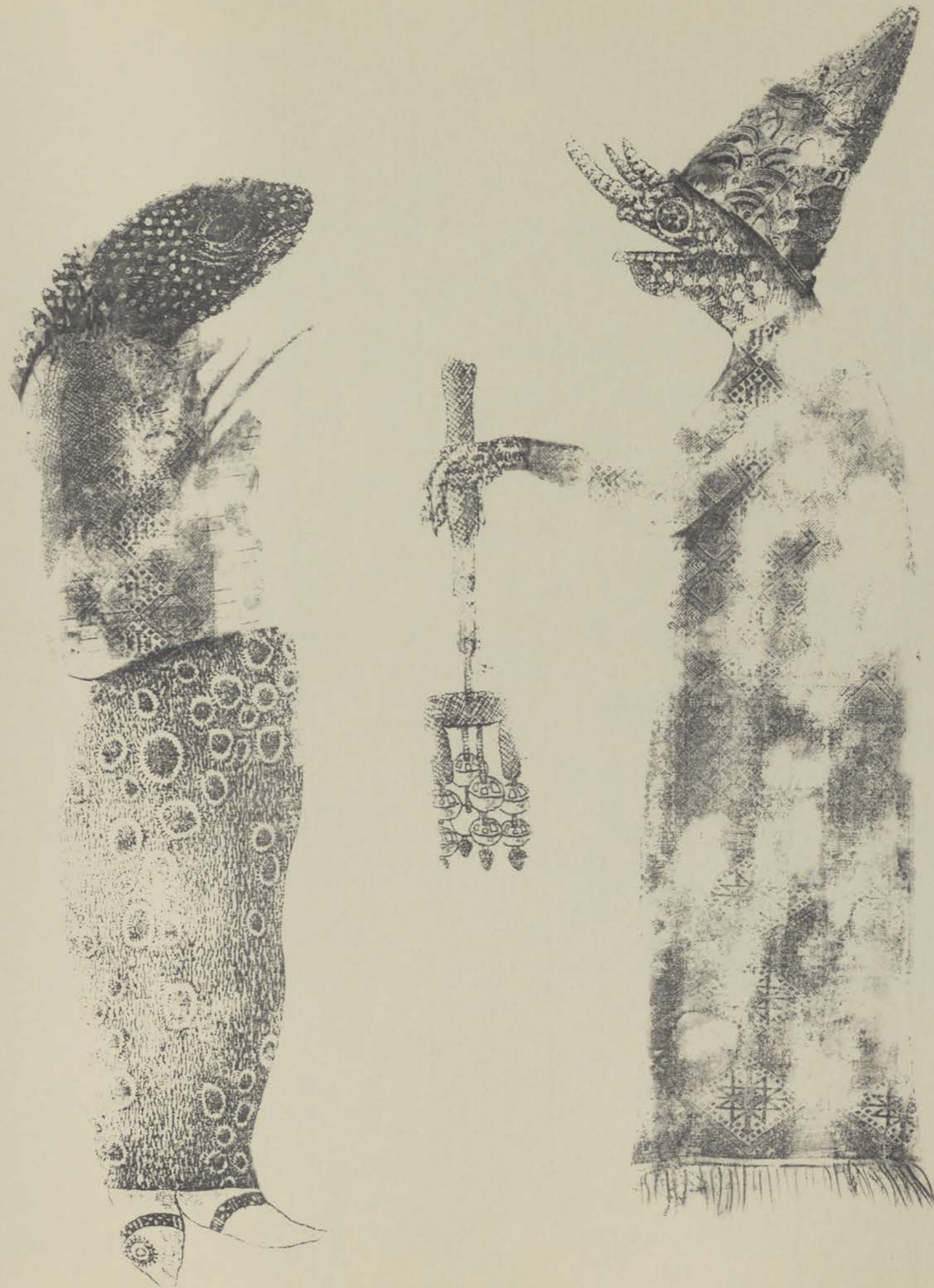
Ritualistic objects, Africa (pen and ink, waterpaint)



Ritualistic objects (pen and ink drawings, waterpaint.)



Shaman's rattle, British Columbia.

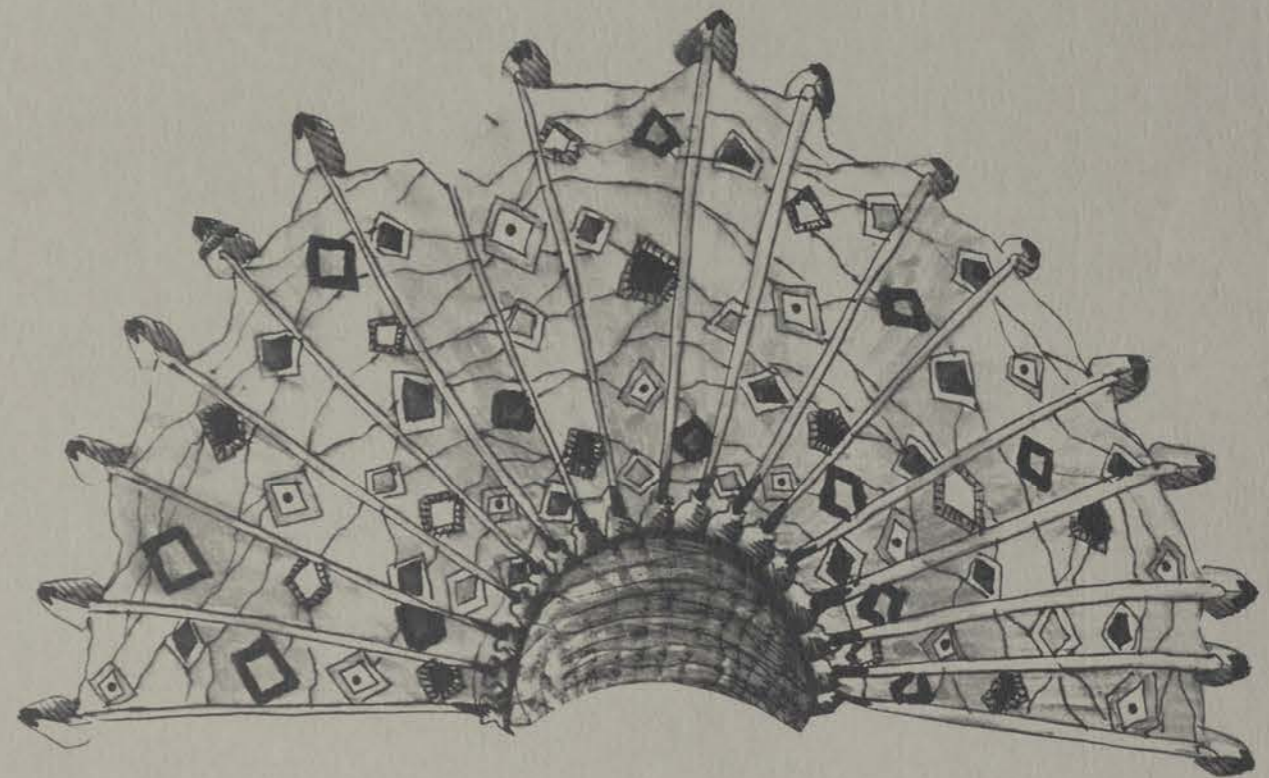


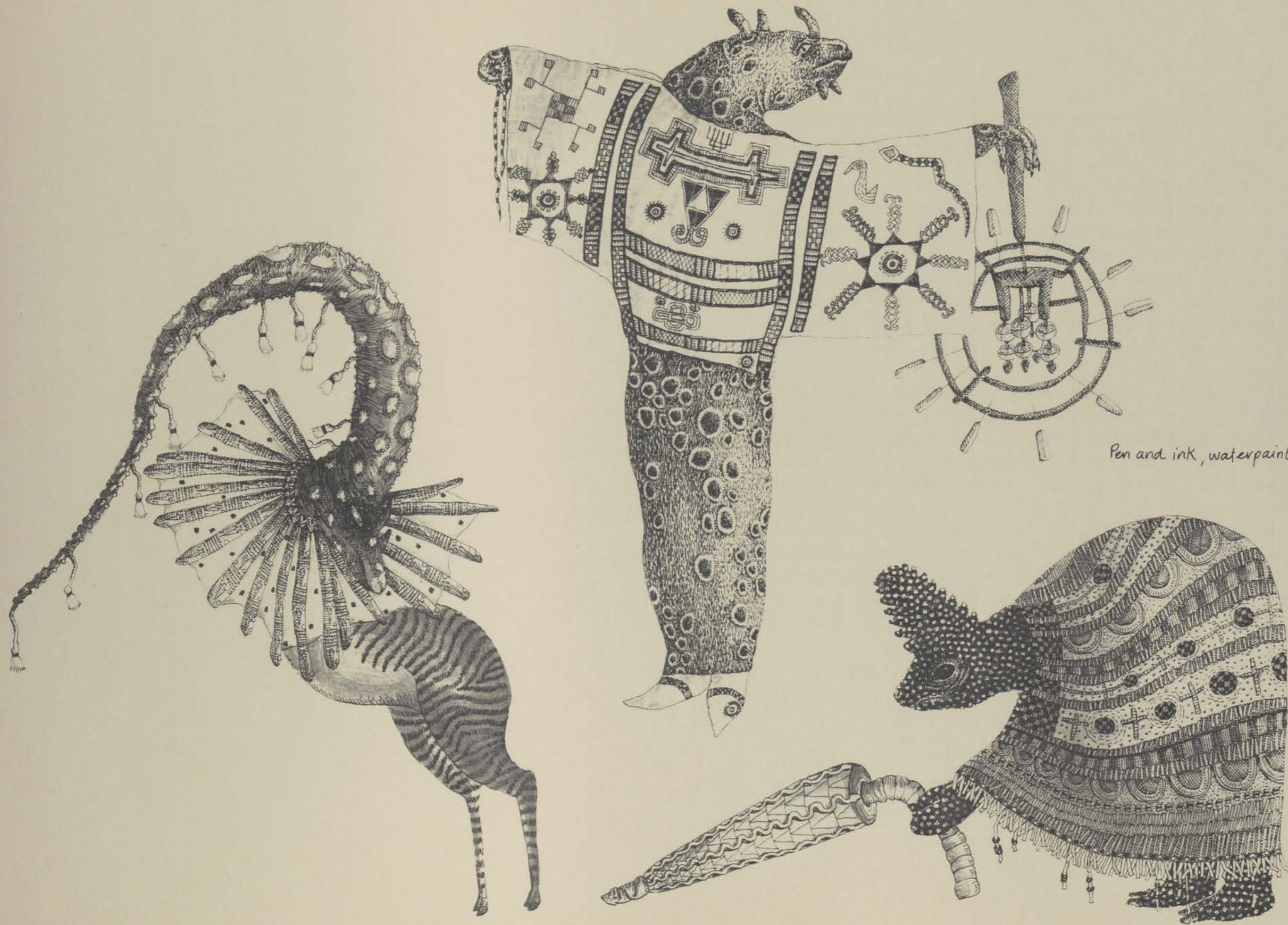
Collage

Nezahualpilli's Lament

...Sound the turquoise drum.
Cactuses are drunk with fallen flowers;
You with the heron head-dress,
You with the painted body.
They hear him, go beside him,
birds with flower-bright beaks
accompany the strong youth with the tiger shield.
He has returned to them.

Aztec (Kissam and Schmidt 1977: 106)





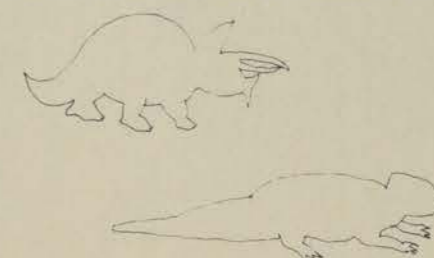
Pen and ink, waterpaint

c. Other sources

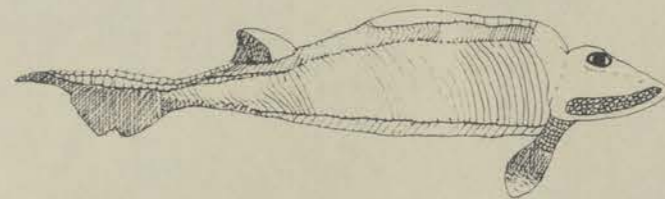
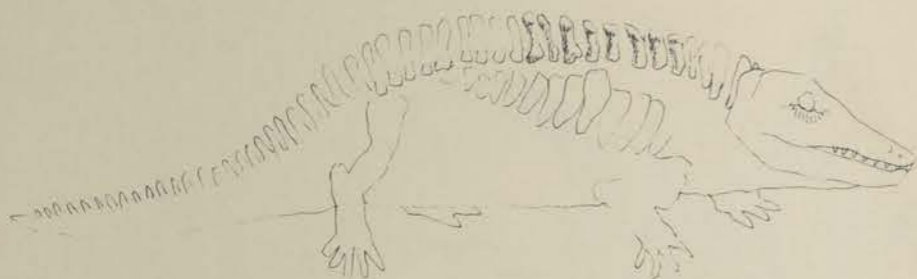
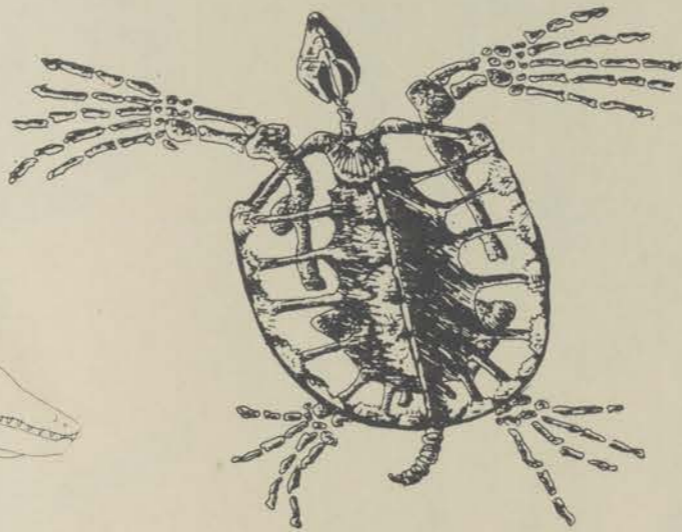
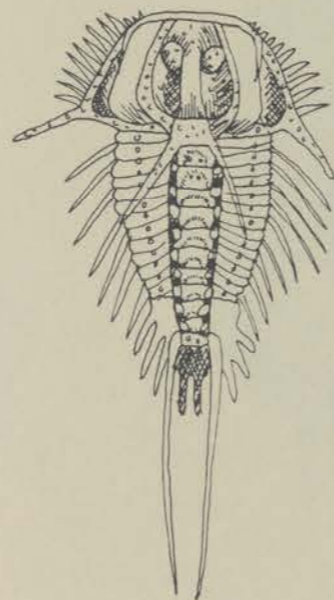
In conjunction with my references to mythology and shamanism, I gathered source material from other sources, as well as from the natural world. Forms of imaginary and fabled animals, especially from the medieval period, were derived from tapestries and textiles. Contemporary African textiles were also incorporated. From 'ritual' objects related to warfare, I selected armoury - shields, helmets, daggers, maces, swords and other weapons. For these, I looked at Indonesian daggers and swords, the collection of battle armoury in the Tower of London and cannibal forks from Fiji, among others.

Information compiled from the natural world was a major area of reference for the construction of the images for my body of practical work. These data were collected from photographs and illustrations pertaining to palaeontology, biology and micro-biology among others. The material contained invertebrates, for instance single celled organisms, sarcodines and flagellate (free living or parasitic aquatic organisms), marine plants and animals such as sea cucumbers, sea urchins, crabs and coral formations. My interest was focussed on the textures and patterning of these organisms.

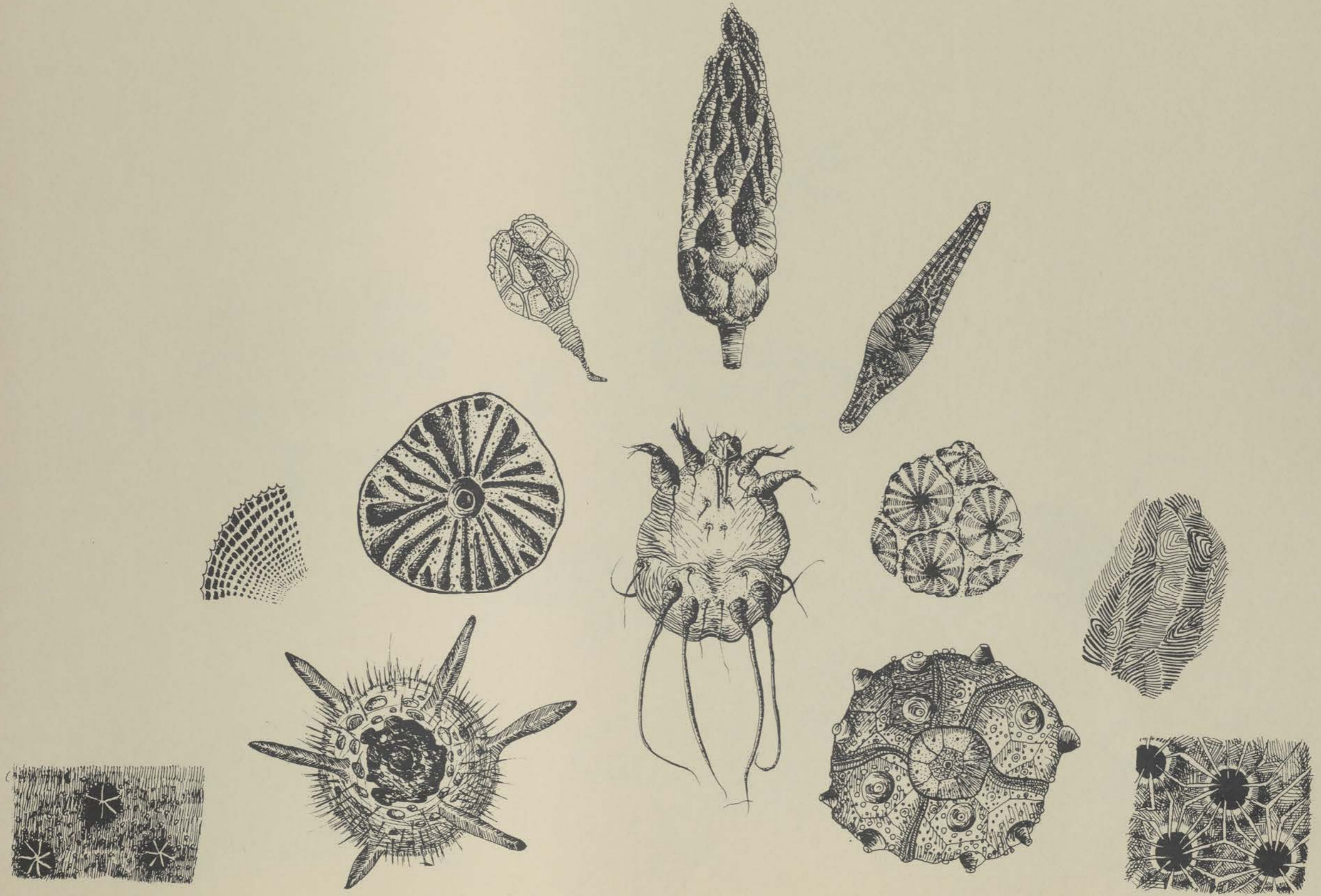
With regard to vertebrates, I have referred to fossils and illustrations of reconstructions of extinct animals. Extant animals included fish, amphibians, reptiles (in particular lizards, turtles and tortoises), birds, and a variety of mammals. The textures and markings of skins were as important to me as the forms of heads, bodies and limbs of these animals.



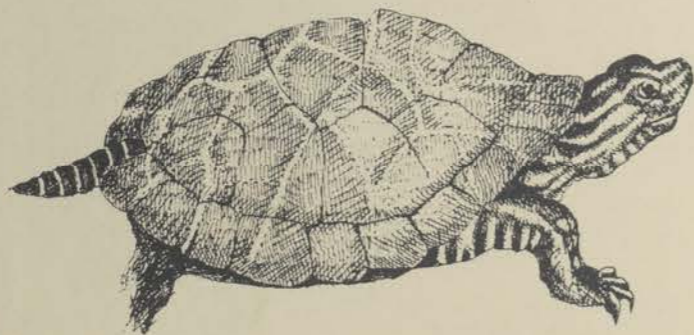
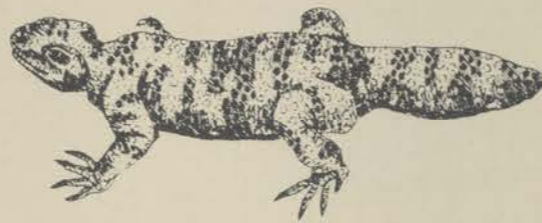
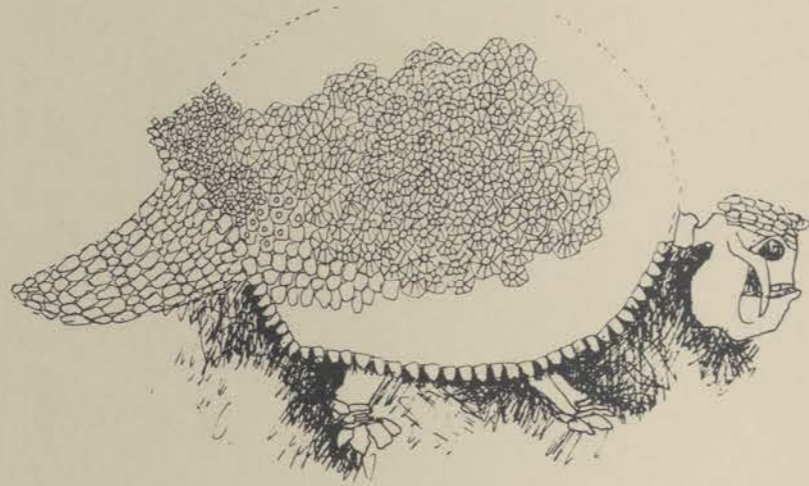
Skeletons.
(pen and ink)



Microscopic organisms and textures. (pen and ink drawings)



Reptiles (pen and ink drawings)



Textiles and Tapestries (pen and ink drawings)

Persian ca. 600



Italy



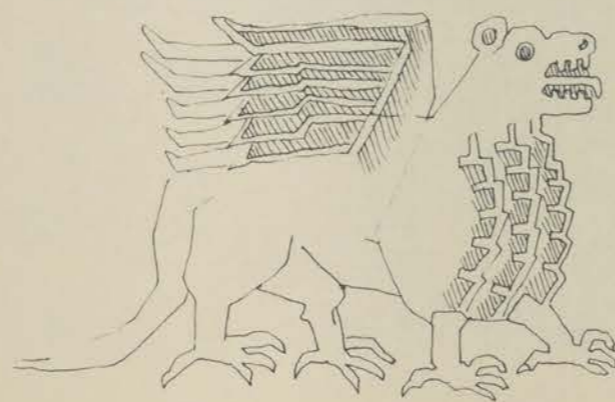
6th/7th Century (Persia)



Bizantine, 11th Century (Persian style)



Scandinavia

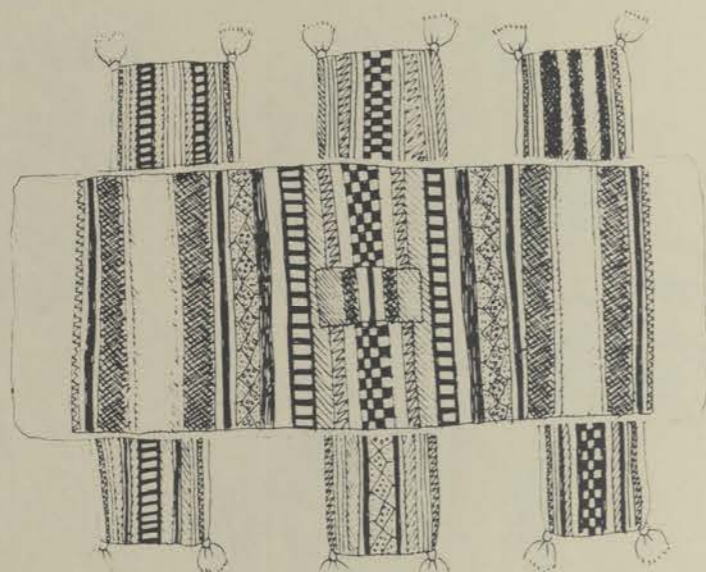


Italy (Chinese influence)

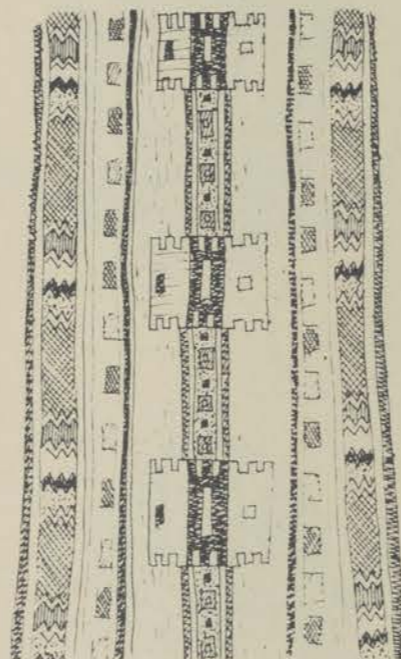


Textiles (pen and ink drawings)

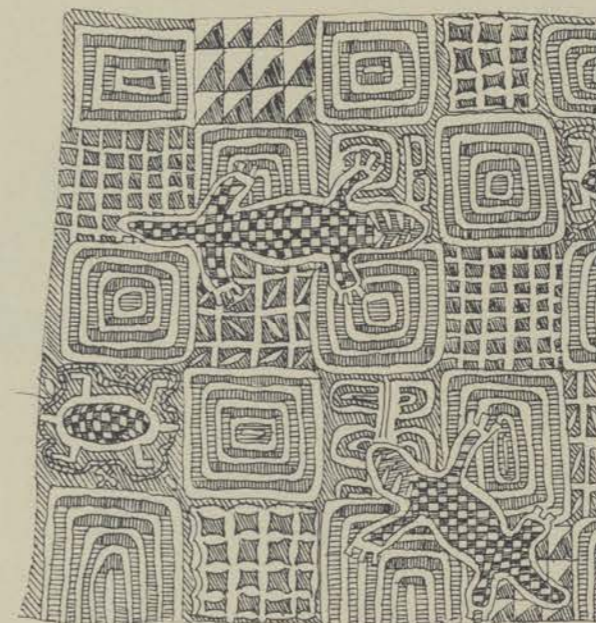
Ibo, Nigeria



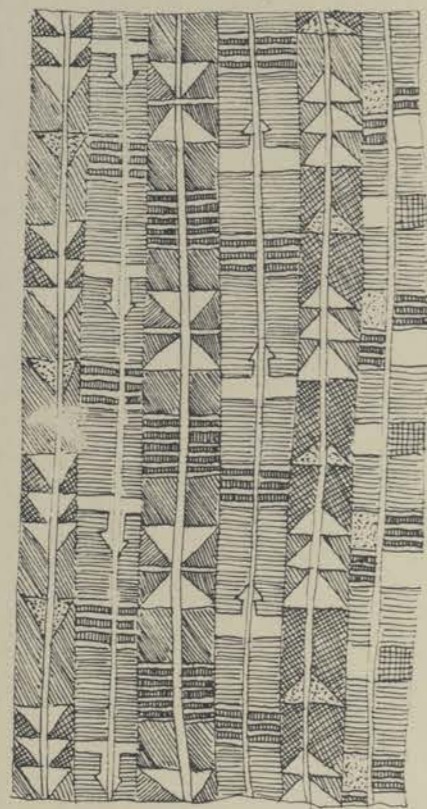
Mzab, Algeria



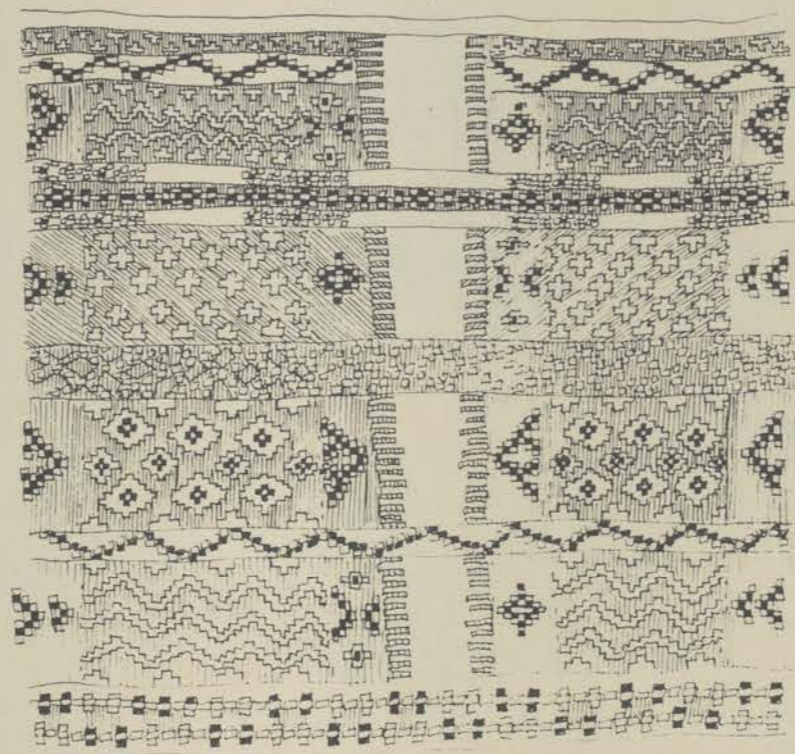
Mende and Sherbo, Sierra Leona



Yoruba, Nigeria



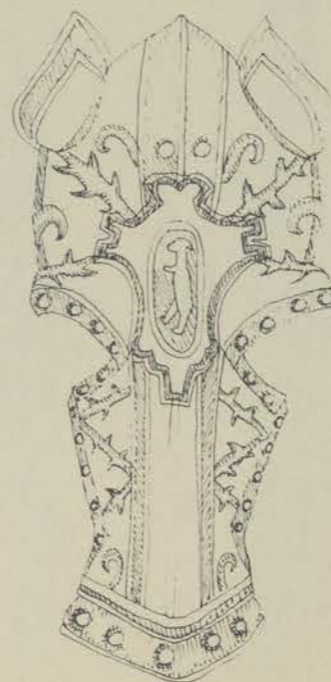
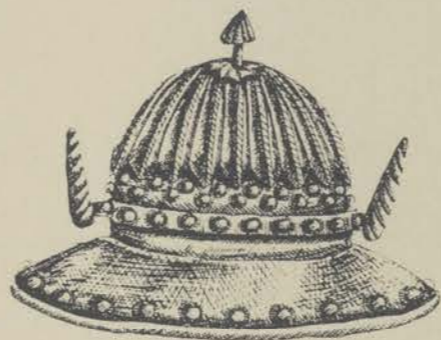
Kabyle, Algeria



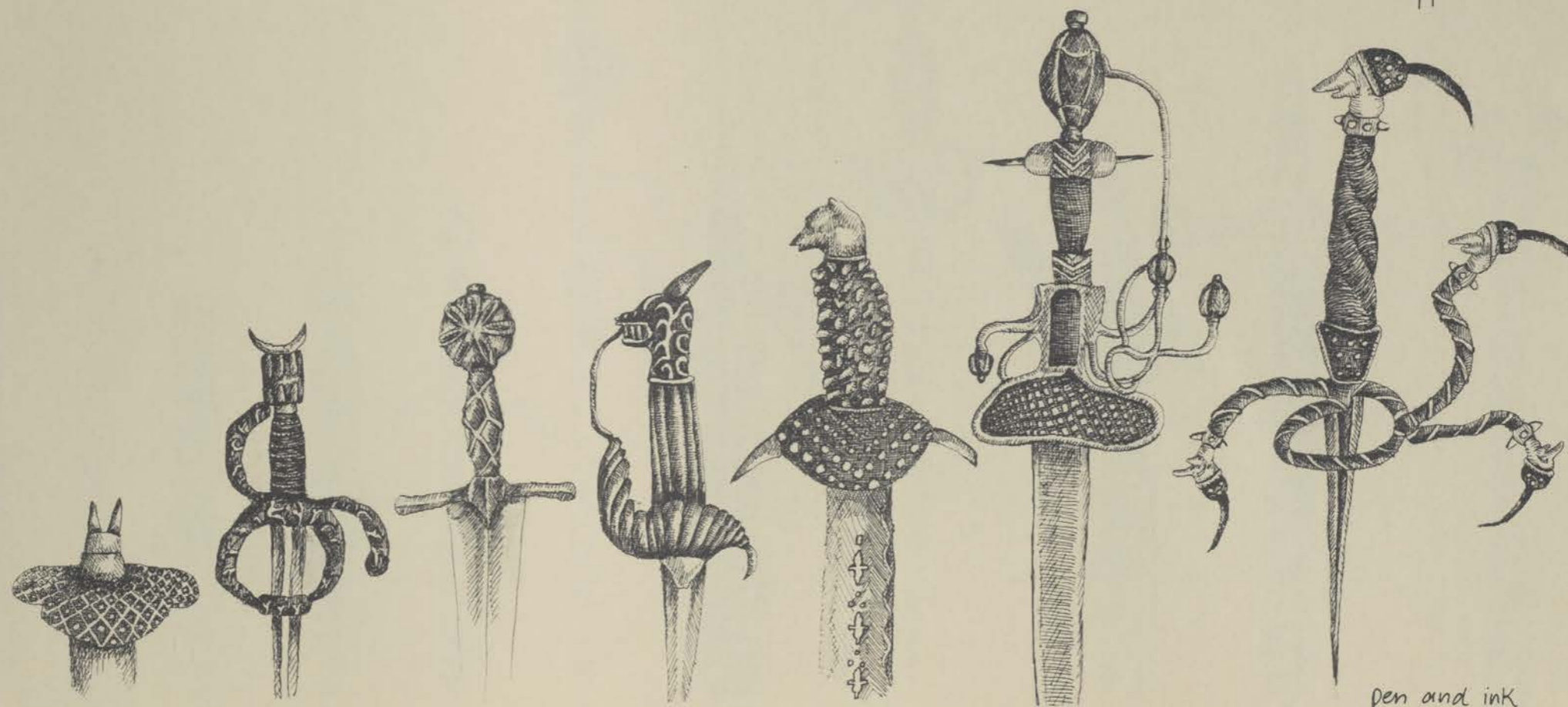
Fulani, Mali



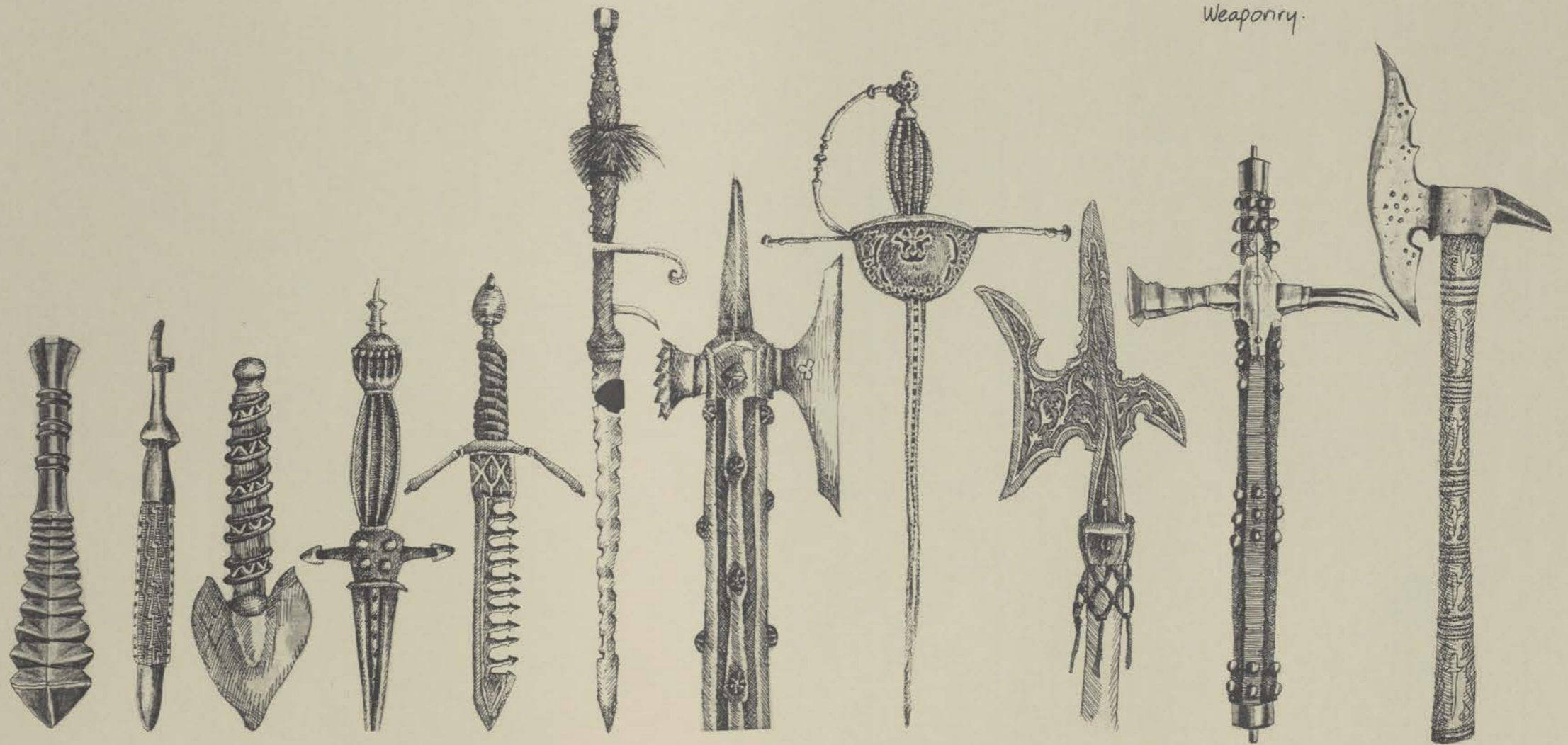
Armoury (Helmets, horse armour and banners)(pen and ink drawings)



Swords and daggers



pen and ink



Weaponry.

Pen and ink, lead pencils

WORKING METHOD AND TECHNICAL PROCESSES



My visual source material was accumulated in the form of sketches and photocopies. The formulation of a personal iconography entailed various manipulative processes in the translation and interpretation of this information. Of primary importance was the process of collage.

The initial collages concentrated on the alteration of extant and extinct animal forms. The natural forms of animals were cut up and separated into heads, bodies and legs. These fragments were rearranged according to the personal connections I saw between parts. In this way I arrived at original animal forms. The heads of birds topped the bodies of dinosaurs, and antelope legs were joined with reptilian heads. In the subsequent collages, I introduced the textures and patterns of animal or plant forms, including microscopic details of these, textiles, and objects, ritualistic or otherwise. My intention, through this process of collage, was to parallel the strangeness and peculiarity of the forms that mythical beings exhibit, and at the same time to develop a personal vocabulary distinct from the source material.

The forms developed through collage assisted in the following stage of the modification process. My collages were interpreted by means of sketches, executed in a variety of media, but especially in pen and ink washes. In these drawings I simultaneously incorporated my own interpretations of the symbols, ritual objects and costumes recovered from mythological sources, as well as other cultural symbols and ritualistic accessories.

Compositional studies of figures incorporated the use of lithographic crayons, charcoal, pencils, bitumen and

watercolour washes. These studies concentrated on qualities of light distribution. In some cases collage was employed using 'exposed' photocopy paper or dark-coloured magazine photographs from which the ink was removed with acetone. This process offered appropriate tonal effects which suggested the morphology of figures.

The preparatory drawings for the individual etchings were formulated, in part, from these collages and sketches. In the case of print II.3, for example, and prints IV.1 and IV.2, I developed the images entirely on the etching plates themselves.

In general, the etching techniques I used were chosen for their ability to enrich the meaning of the images themselves. All the prints were produced from copper plates etched in ferric chloride. The stability of this metal made it possible to deep-etch without losing the sensitivity or crispness of delicate lines. The durability of this metal, and the reliable etching properties of the acid, also allowed me to employ the use of very fine and lightly etched aquatints. In order to focus attention on light and tonal variations in the modulation of forms, I chose to work monochromatically in my prints.

The etchings in series I have a light-sensitive ground base and are the only ones in which I used this process. Each print originated in a rough, unpolished drawing in lithographic crayon, bitumen and watercolour washes on paper. These drawings were transferred on to acetate by means of a photocopier. After detail was added or removed

with a blade, the images were photographically exposed on to the plates.

The etchings were then reworked in hard-ground. Other etching processes were employed, where necessary to complete the prints. The purpose of this process was to achieve added textural and plastic qualities. Essentially a set of portraits, the small format of these prints was chosen to encourage a sense of intimacy.

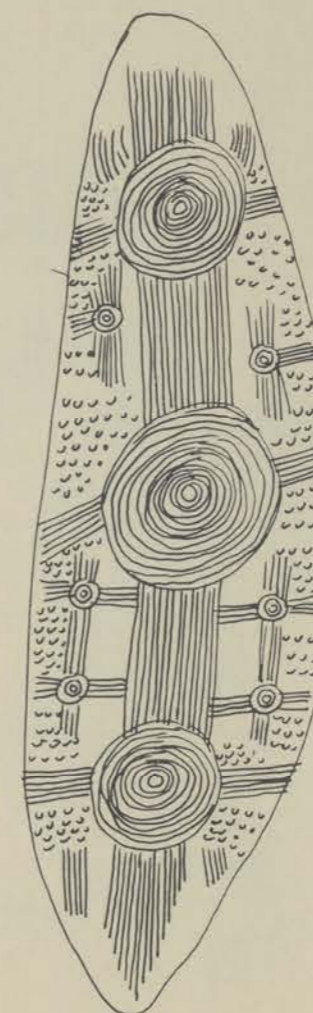
Soft grounds in series II, for example, were lifted by drawing on to coarse vegetable parchment with soft lead pencils. My intention, through this process, was to give an evanescent quality to forms. The use of burnishing with fine grained water-paper to lighten specific areas of aquatint, further contributed to this ephemeral quality. Resin particles were sprinkled on to the surfaces of the plates of prints II.3 and II.4 to act as a scintillating contrast to the velvet-like blacks of the skies. The use of deeply etched line work further contributed to the shimmering 'friction' between lights and darks.

Another way in which soft ground was lifted is illustrated by print III.2. In order to obtain the textural quality of a woven fabric in the costume of the central figure in this print, a portion of fibrous cloth was impressed into the ground.

In the sky of print III.3, the gradation of light was achieved by dabbing liquid bitumen onto the aquatint which was then etched in stages.

Spatial relationships between figures and backgrounds were enhanced, for example in prints III.2 and III.6, by deep etching the sky areas before employing other etching processes. Deep etching was also used to 'emboss' forms on the costume of the figure in print III.7. In the sky of the same print, I experimented with lithographic ink and solvent and water washes. A fine layer of aquatint was applied once the ink had dried. This process yielded interesting tonal and textural qualities.

In general, I focussed most of the technical complexities and detail on the figures and objects. I worked the landscapes relatively simply, so that they would act as a contrast and suggest an atmosphere of barrenness.





Collage





collage

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINTS



CHORUS FOR CHIMERAS, consists of twenty one prints,
divided into four series:

Series I: DAWN PRELUDES

Series II: HYMNS TO HALLOWED FEVERS

Series III: OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

Series IV: SERENADE IN MASQUERADE



I. DAWN PRELUDES

In this series, consisting of eight etchings (I.1 - 1.8), I concentrated on the process of transformation, during which the shaman becomes inextricably part of the persona of the mask he or she is wearing.

Essentially a series of portraits, my intention was to express the specific qualities of different animals as found in the masks, and to attempt to reveal some of the multifarious resonances of the relationship between the mask and the wearer.

In some of the prints, for example, print I.1 and I.3, the transformation process is not yet complete. Mask and wearer exist as separate, but linked entities. In print I.8, for example, there is no distinction between wearer and mask, a complete metamorphosis has taken place.

The animal references in these prints were chosen either for their posture, demeanour, physical characteristics or their ability to express processes of change. The animal on the right of the first print in the series, adapted from a chameleon, for example, was chosen for its ability to mimic its surroundings. It functions not only as a metaphor for the shaman's metamorphosis, but in this context also acts as his helper-spirit. The sources for print I.3, for example, were equine in origin. The decorative quality of armour, associated with battle horses, were suggestive to me of rocking horses. These, in turn, suggested the transportation of a child into a fantasy world. Again, this was used as a metaphor for the shamans' ventures in another world.

Another important consideration in the making of these images was the mood and meanings I could convey by the use of particular animal traits. In the first print (I.1), the headdress is a fusion of many headdresses with similar morphology, and suggested to me the shape and design of a peacock tail. I associated the peacock's performance when displaying its tail with the necessity of the shamans to don their 'feathers' without which they cannot perform their rituals. Another example is the final print in the series (I.8) where the surface qualities of the animal were derived from a lizard skin. The 'cold-blooded' quality of this reptile-like being suggested an archaic, remote atmosphere. My intention was to evoke the timelessness of mythology and, in some cases, its inaccessibility in the absence of the shamanic intermediary.

Other sources for this series included rattles and drums as, for example, in print I.4, where the body of the animal is a drum, the animal itself signifying the voice of the spirit speaking through the instrument. In the print I.5, the costume is derived from the markings of a jaguar pelt. Headdresses contain further animal references. In the print I.6, birds, fox and wolf-like creatures, crown the cap of the being, and in the second print feathers are included.



Compositional Studies

(Litho-crayons, charcoal, bitumen and waterpaint washes)





Studies for portrait series (Litho -wayon, bitumen and waterpaint washes)



Studies for 'portrait' series (Litho-crayon, bitumen and waterpaint washes)

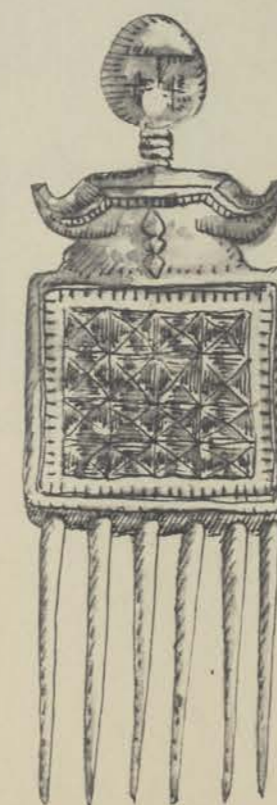


II. HYMNS TO HALLOWED FEVERS

For this series, consisting of three etchings (II.1 - II.3), my central concern was the trance state and the role played by instruments, especially rattles. My intention was to emphasize the close association of the shamans with these instruments and the way in which they activate them as vehicles through which the 'spirits' reveal themselves.

In the central image (II. 2), the shaman is surrounded by his accoutrements. Bird forms, associated with the club-like object, and the halo of light around his head are intended to symbolize transcendence. In the first and third images, the instruments have become animal personifications. In making this fusion of rattle and persona, I attempted to give full expression to the potency of these objects.

All three prints contain references to the unicorn's horn. Believed to have magical and medicinal properties, I have used it as a metaphor for the ability to heal, acquired by the shamans during the trance.



Litho-crayon, bitumen washes



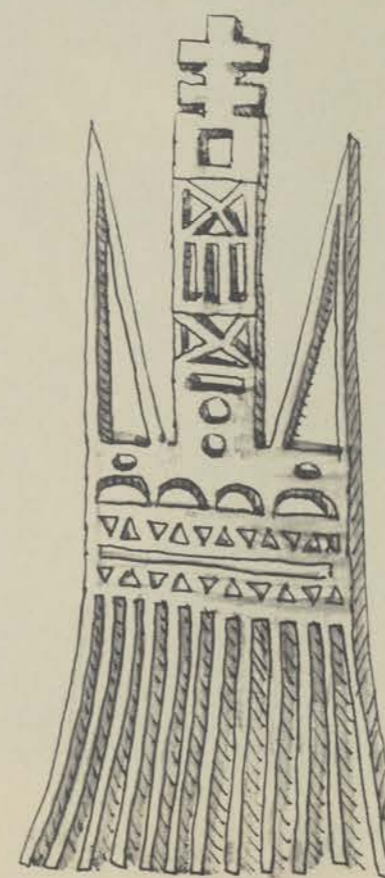
Litho-crayon, bitumen washes



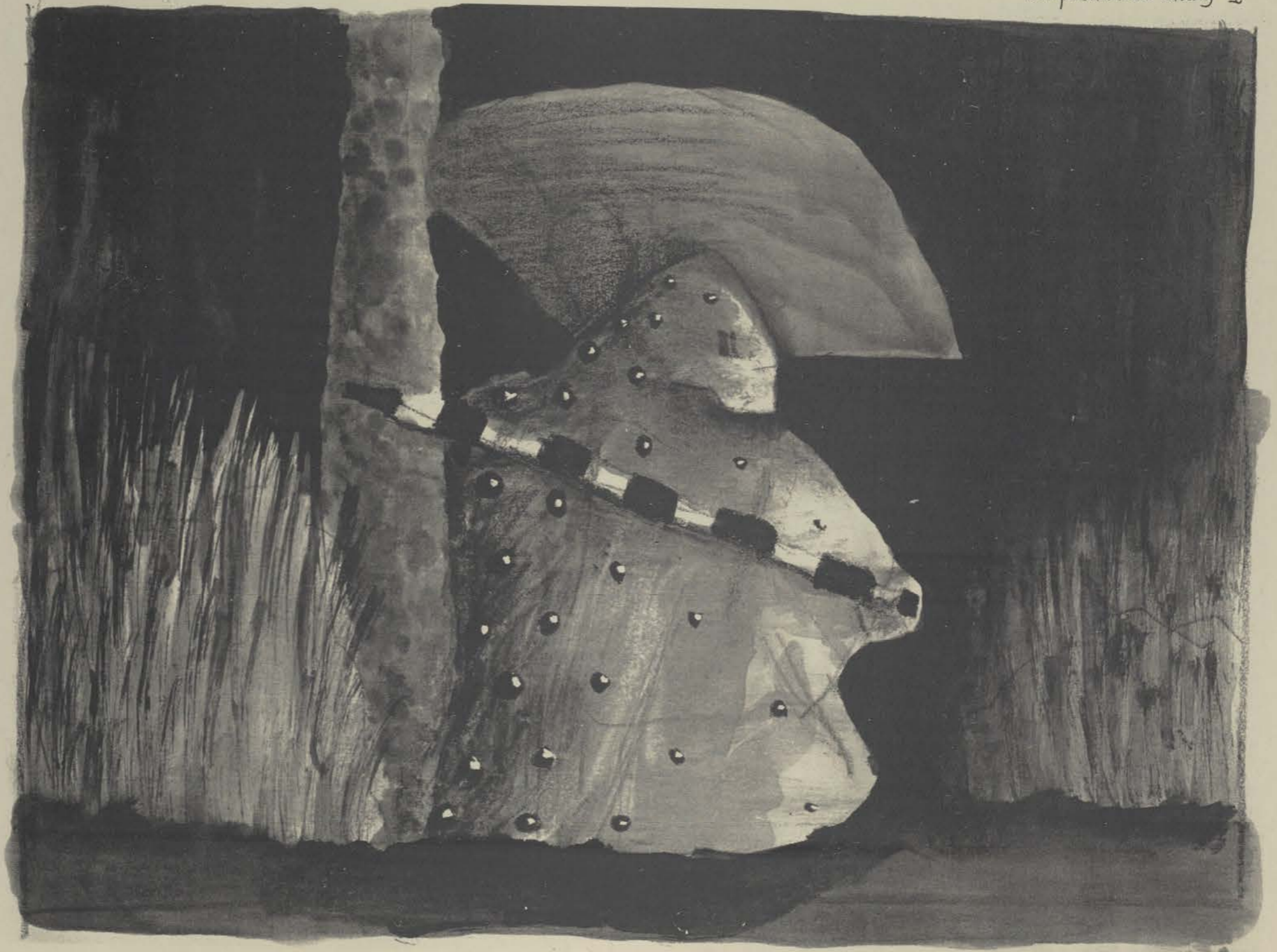
III. OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

This series of seven etchings, (III.1 - III.7), describes a transcendent world. Guides, gods, helper spirits, shamans, their masks and accessories intermingle. Through the relationships I have set up in the images, and using aspects of mythologies themselves as metaphors, I have attempted to give expression to many human needs and aspirations.

Worship is suggested by the temple background to the figures in print III.2, by the structure in the landscape of print III.5, and by the 'solar' disc in print III.7. The need for guidance and instruction is suggested in print III.2 and print III.6. Hope is symbolized by the 'signposts' - the structures in print III.3 and III.5, and fear of the unknown, by the desolate landscapes in which they stand. The need for privacy and seclusion is indicated by the enclosure in print III.1, the fence in print III.7 and the pillars, from behind which the figure peeps, in print III.4.



Compositional Study 1



Litho wayon, bitumen and waterpaint

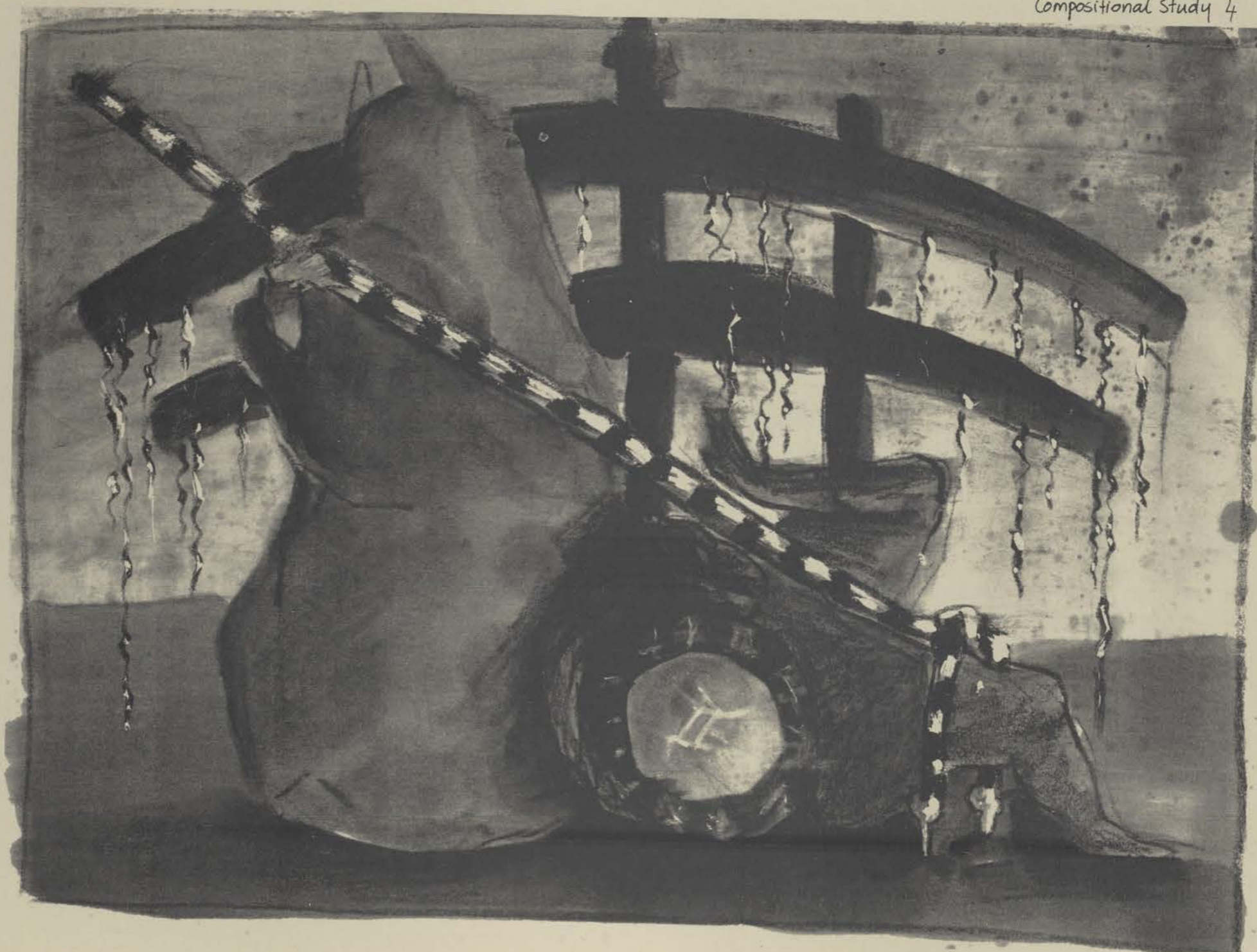
Compositional Study 2*Litho-crayon, bitumen and waterpaint*

Compositional Study 3



litho-crayon - bitumen and waterpaint

Compositional Study 4



litho-wayan, bitumen and waterpaint

IV. SERENADE IN MASQUERADE

This final series of three etchings, (IV.1 - IV.3), is concerned with the theme of creation, rebirth and regeneration. In these prints, I have made use of a formless landscape existing in a half-light of neither day nor night. Scattered through these landscapes are seeds or pods. In print IV.1 and IV.2, they cover the ground and suggest nascency. In print IV.3, the pods, erected on the stone walls and mirrored in the cloak of the foreground figure, are also intended to suggest the sun as life-giver. The theme of sun as life-giver is further emphasized in print IV.2, where the globe on which the figures and objects stand can be read as a sun, a halo of light emanating from its surface, suggesting the dawn of life.

The snake, a symbol of regeneration, appears in print IV.2 and IV.3. In print IV.2 it is indirectly referred to in the central figure shedding its skin and more directly depicted on the ground, and in the two structures flanking the central figure.

Ancestral figures and forms have been included and allude to the incipience of creation. The fish-like form, cleaving to the back of the reptilian masked figure in the foreground of print IV.1, is an evolutionary reference, alluding to the process of succession where one form gives rise to another. The figures in the background of this print are intended to be seen as ancestral archetypes. Each wearing a headdress derived from present-day ritual objects, they act as symbols of a continuum, and as a link between the past and the present.



Solvent washes on photocopy paper, collage and charcoal



Solvent washes on photocopy paper, collage
and charcoal



Litho-crayon, bitumen and waterpaint



Lead pencils



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INDEX TO THE PRINTS





Series I: DAWN PRELUDES

Print: 1

1986

Medium: photosensitive-ground etching,
hard-ground etching

Plate size: 177 mm by 174 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series I: DAWN PRELUDES

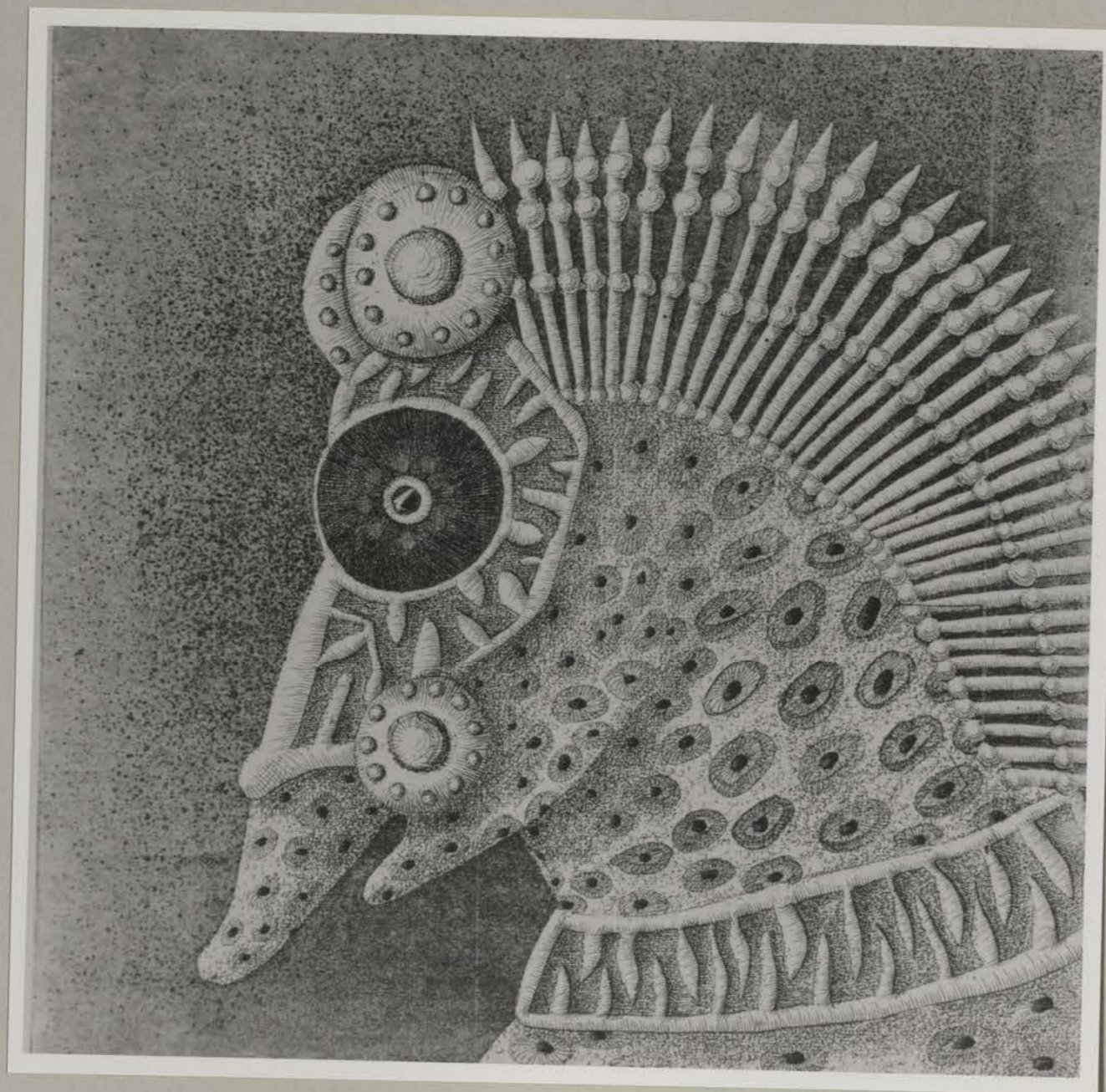
Print: 2

1986

Medium: photosensitive-ground etching,
hard-ground etching

Plate size: 178 mm by 173 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series I: DAWN PRELUDES

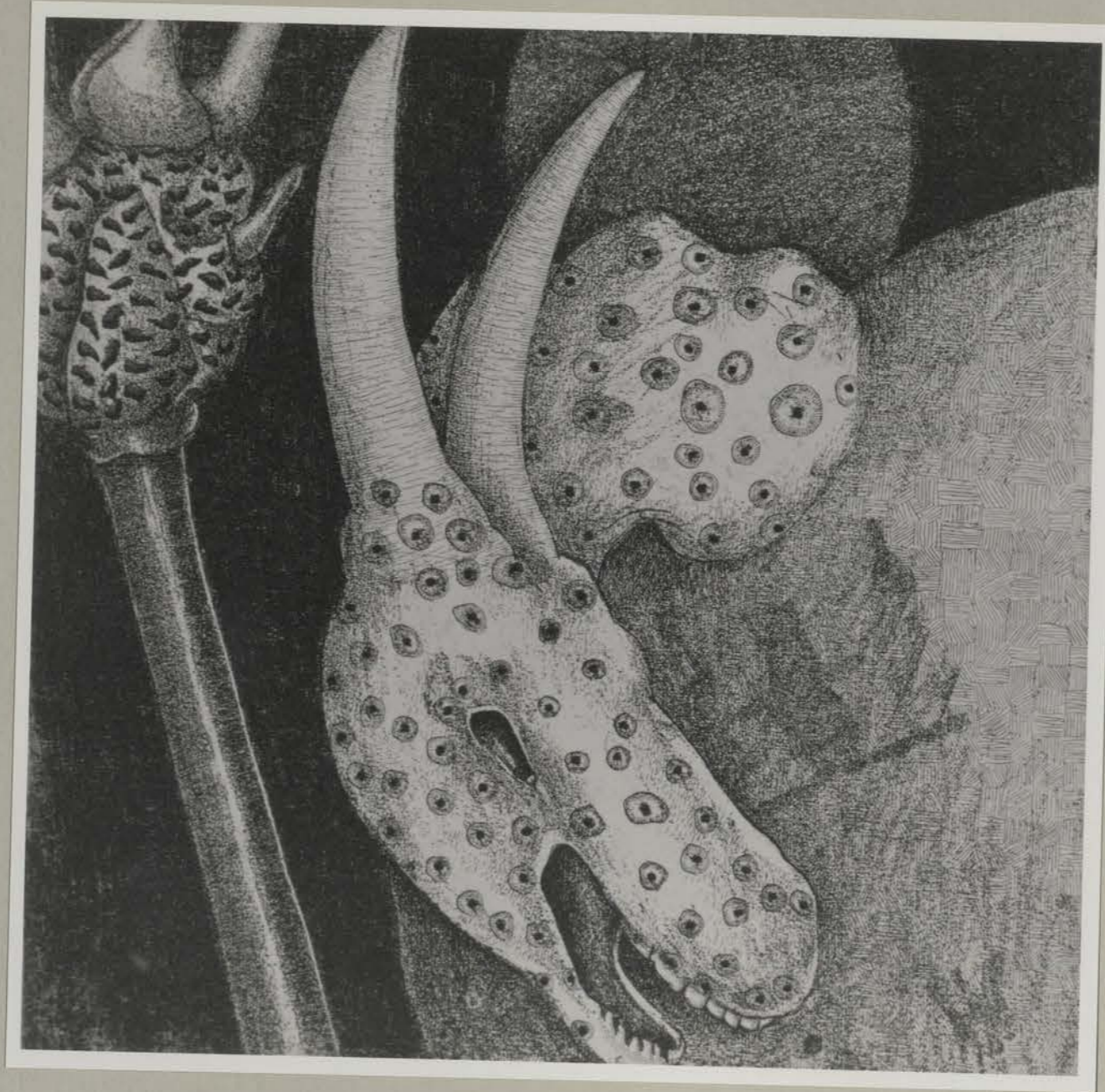
Print 3

1988

Medium: photosensitive-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 177 mm by 175 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series I: DAWN PRELUDES

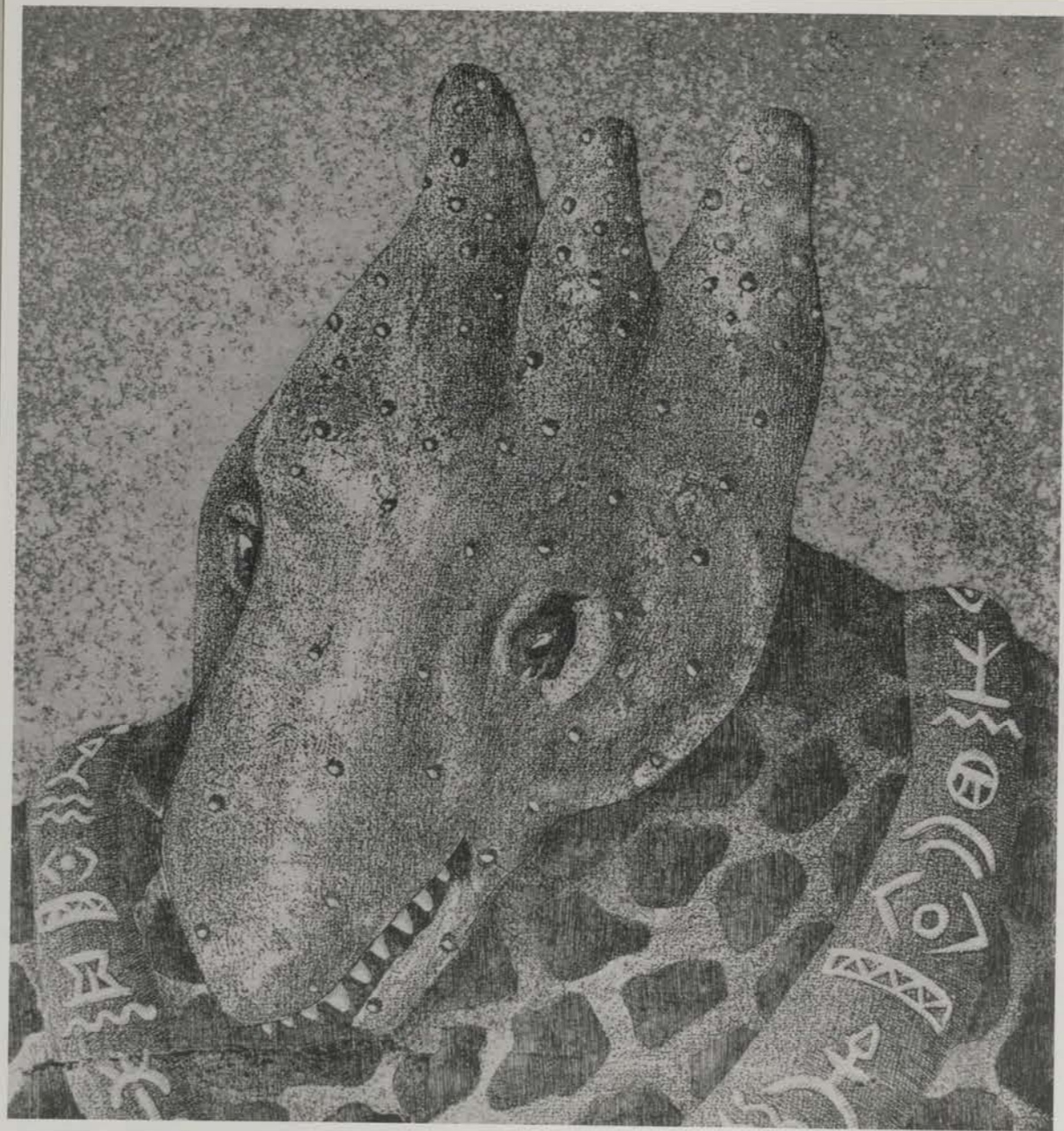
Print 4

1987

Medium: photosensitive-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 177 mm by 175 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series I: DAWN PRELUDES

Print 5

1987

Medium: photosensitive-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 176 mm by 161 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series I: DAWN PRELUDES

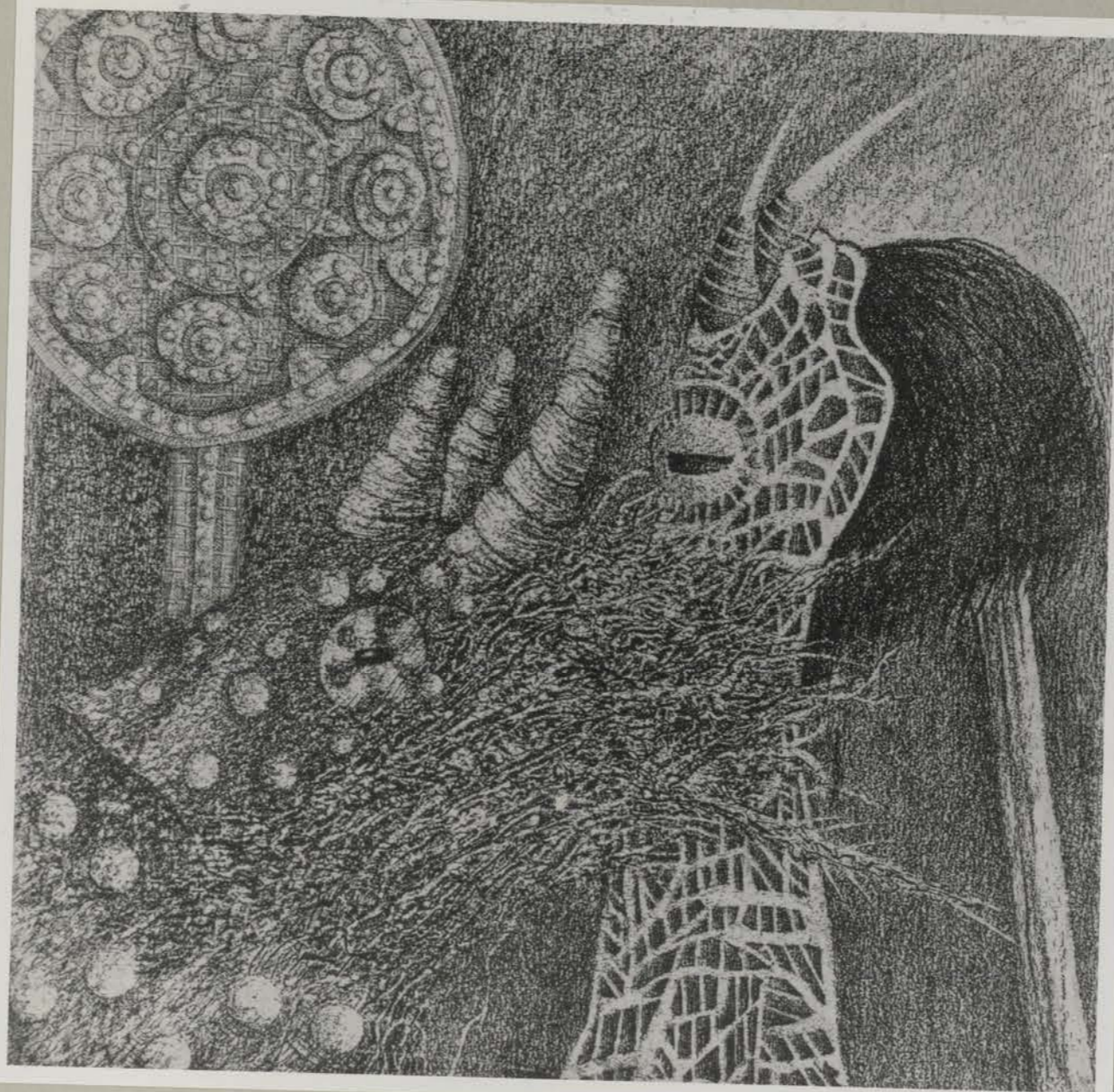
Print 6

1988

Medium: photosensitive-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 163 mm by 175 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series I: DAWN PRELUDES

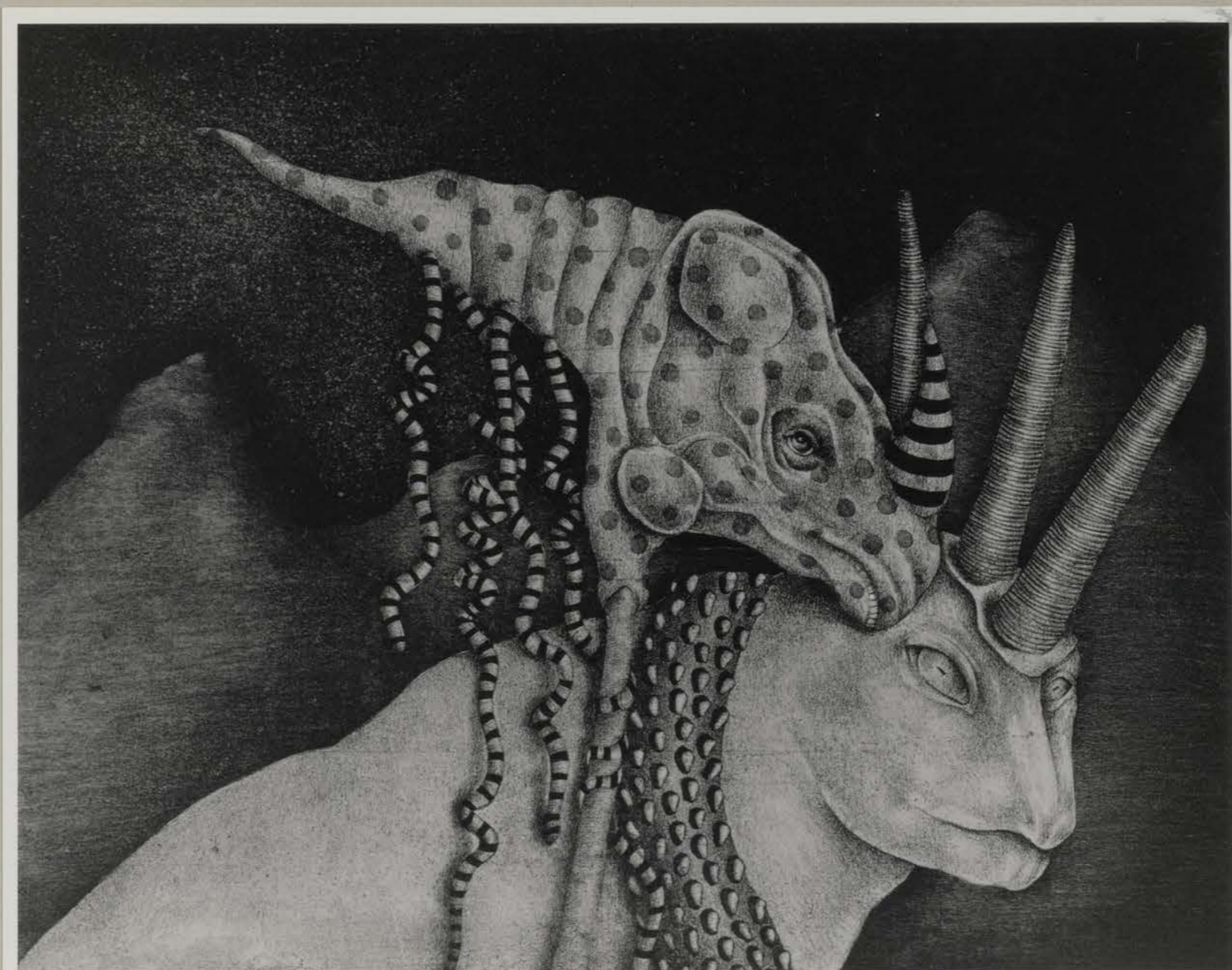
Print 7

1986

Medium: photosensitive-ground etching,
hard-ground etching

Plate size: 174 mm by 172 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series II : HYMNS TO HALLOWED FEVERS

Print 1

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 445 mm by 350 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series II : HYMNS TO HALLOWED FEVERS

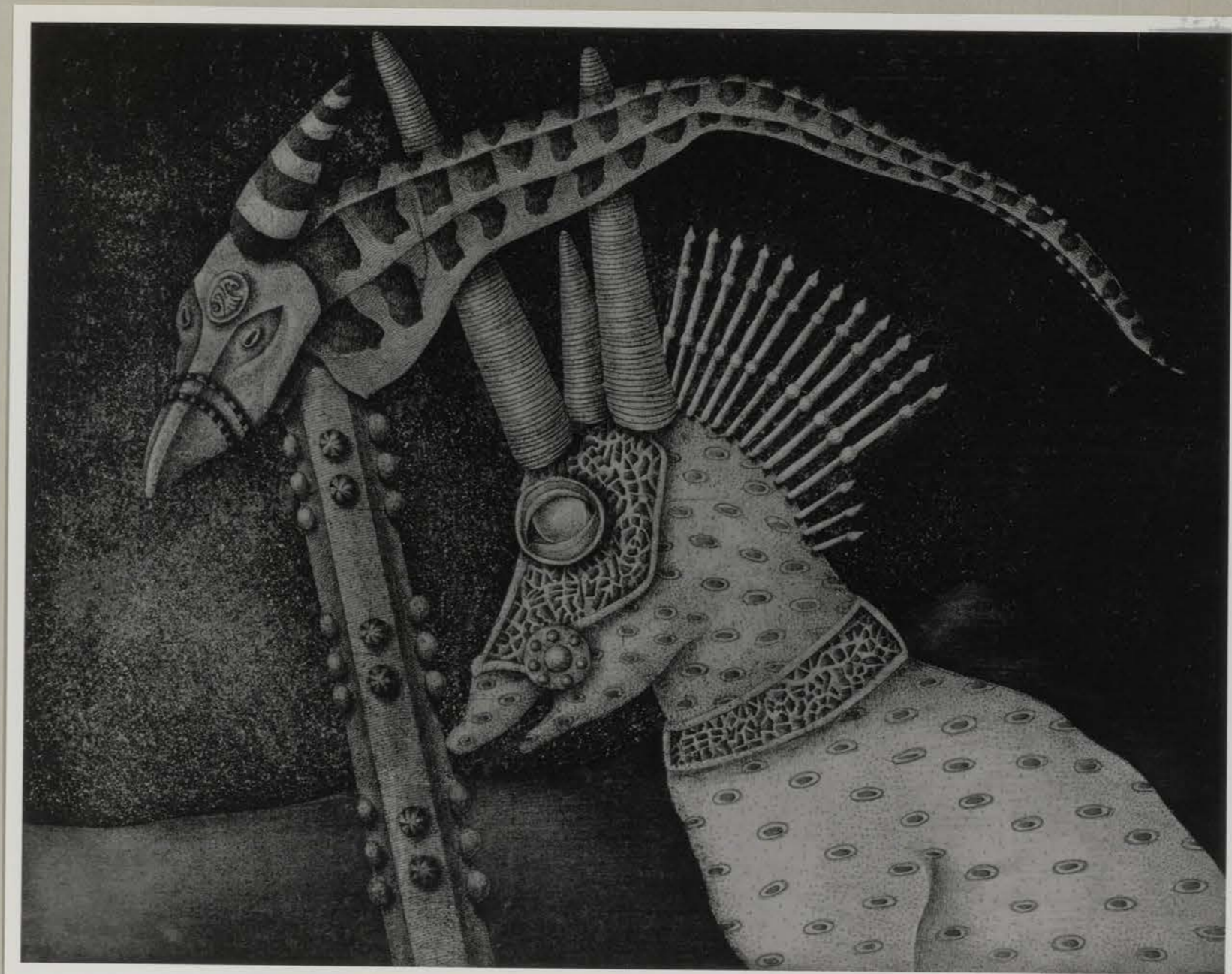
Print 2

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 445 mm by 352 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series II : HYMNS TO HALLOWED FEVERS

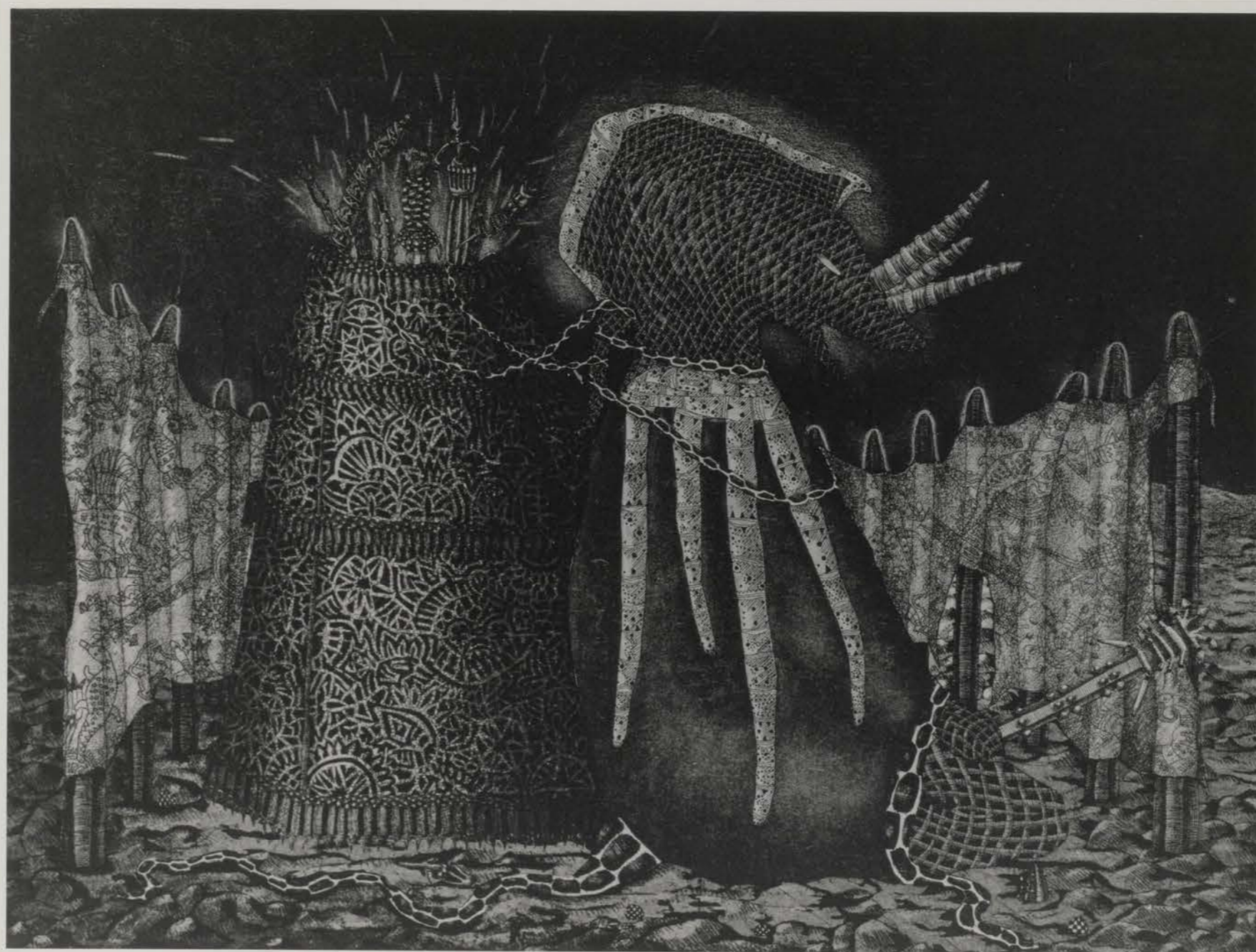
Print 3

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 446 mm by 351 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series III : OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

Print 1

1986

Medium: Soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 365 mm by 274 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series III : OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

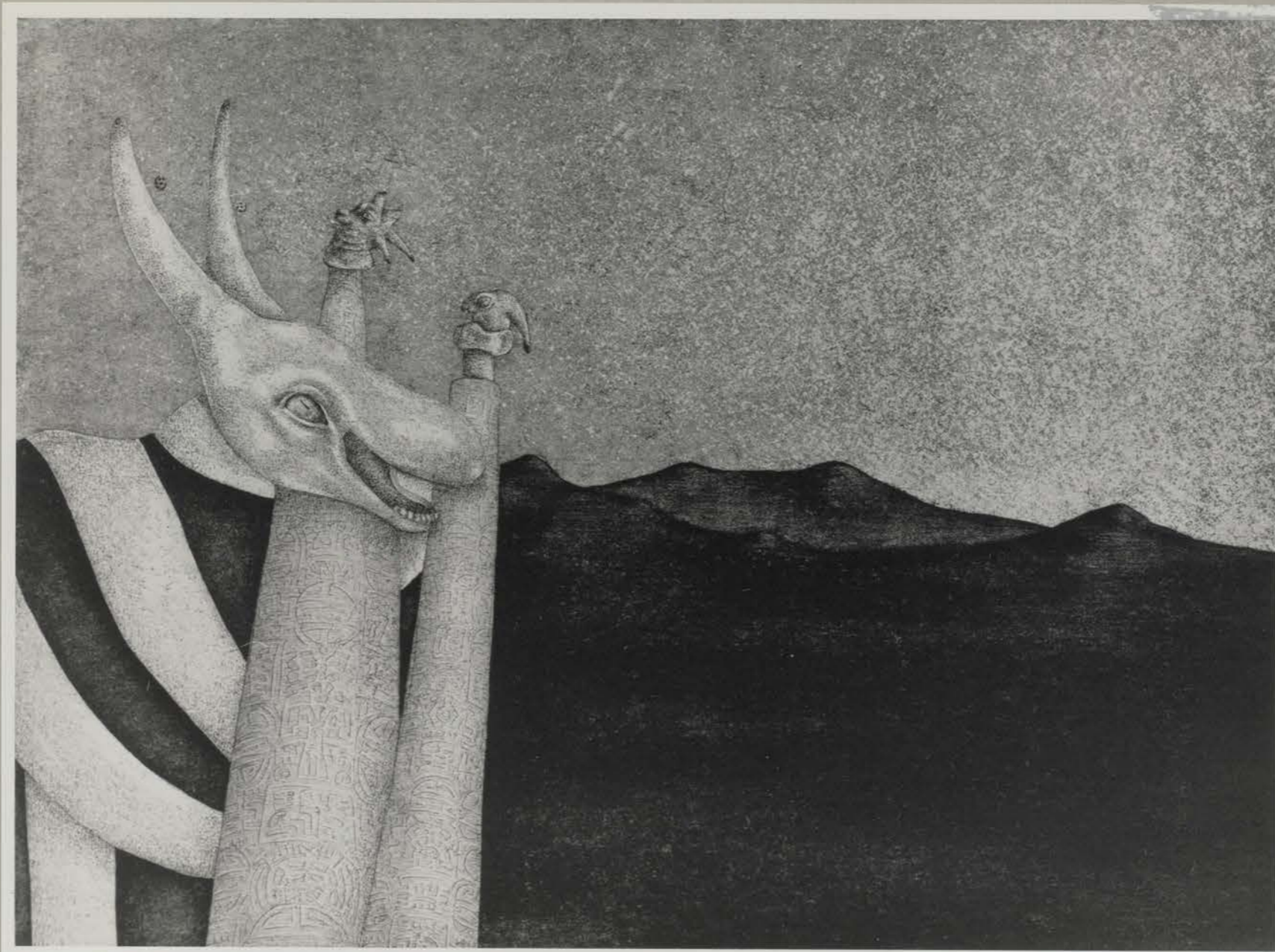
Print 2

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint
deep etching

Plate size: 357 mm by 263 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series III : OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

Print 3

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching
aquatint

Plate size: 358 mm by 266 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series III : OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

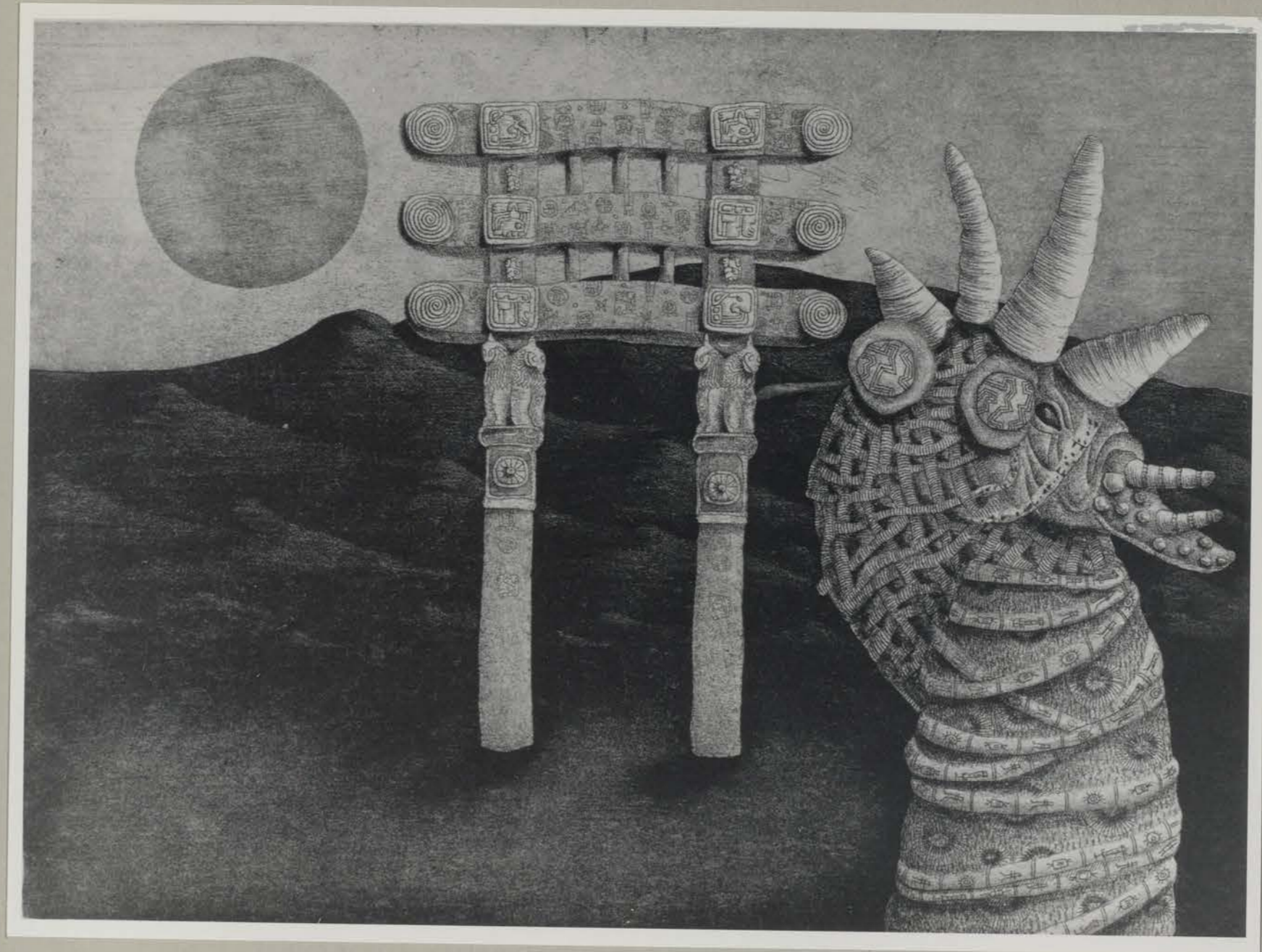
Print 4

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 343 mm by 252 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series III : OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

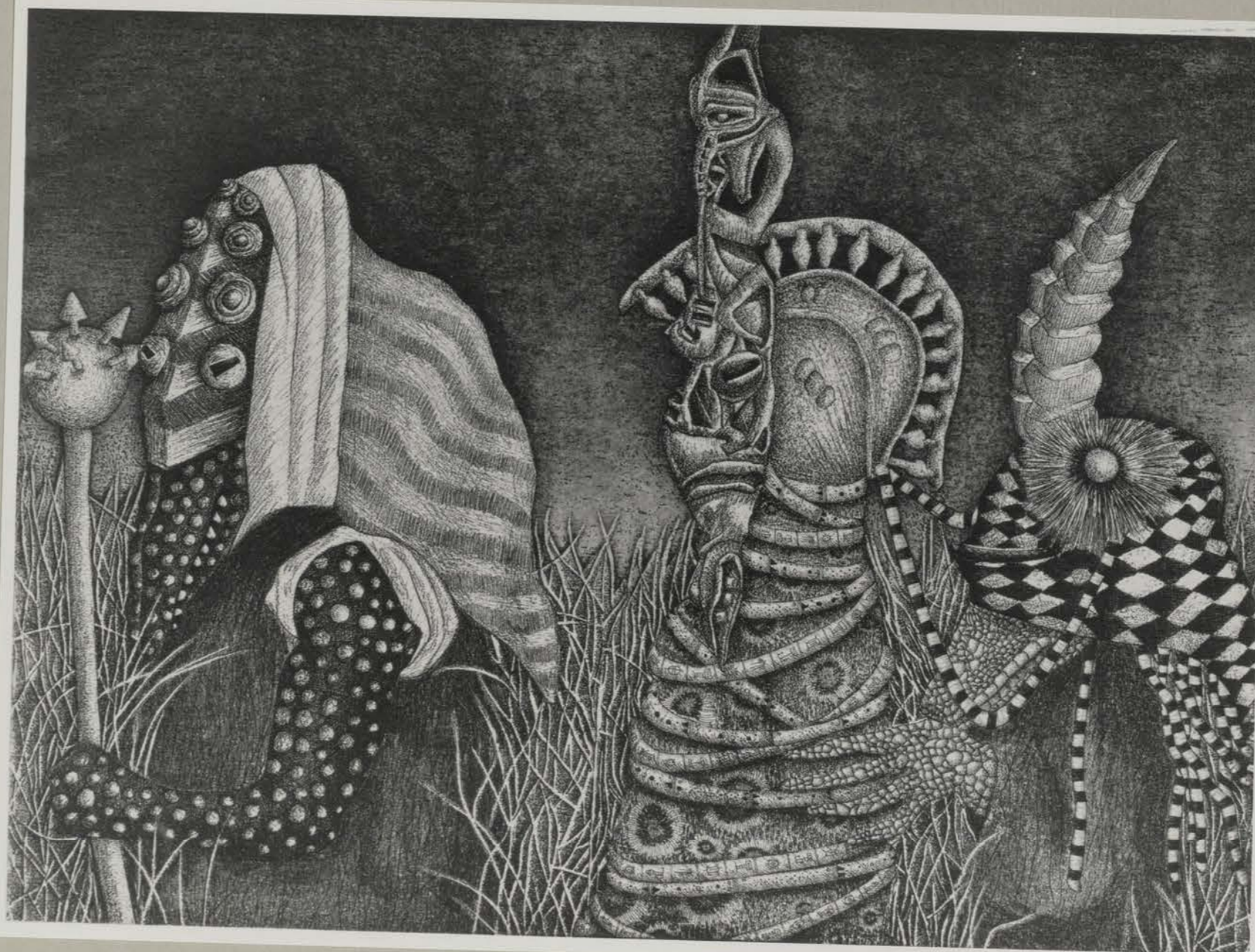
Print 5

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint

Plate size: 354 mm by 261 mm

Edition: A.P.:1; 30



Series III : OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

Print 6

1986

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint
deep etching

Plate size: 356 mm by 259 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series III : OVERTURES FOR GUIDES AND GODS

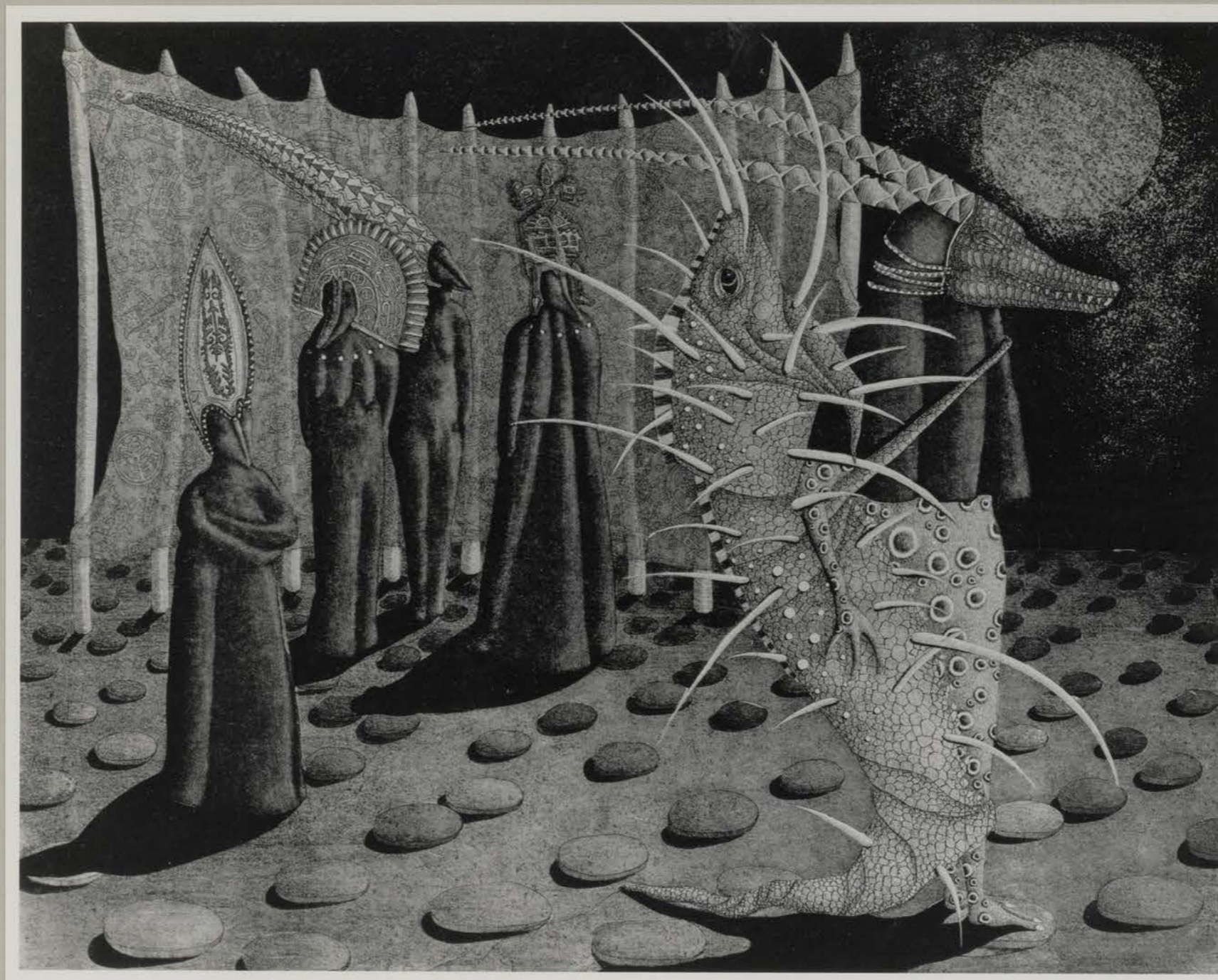
Print 7

1986

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint,
deep etching

Plate size: 352 mm by 265 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series IV : SERENADE IN MASQUERADE

Print 1

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint,

Plate size: 457 mm by 352 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series IV : SERENADE IN MASQUERADE

Print 2

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hard-ground etching,
aquatint,
deep-etching

Plate size: 447 mm by 352 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30



Series IV : SERENADE IN MASQUERADE

Print 3

1988

Medium: soft-ground etching,
hardground etching,
aquatint,
deep etching

Plate size: 447 mm by 353 mm

Edition: A.P.: 1; 30