THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

"Between The Leaves of Memory"

A Written Accompaniment to the Thesis Exhibition

by

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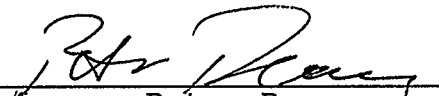
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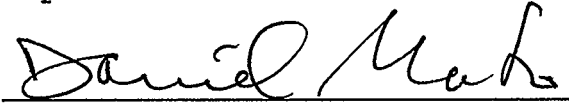
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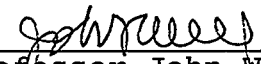
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ABSTRACT

Through the juxtaposition of disparate elements from the past and the present, from my personal memories and documented history, I am attempting with my visual thesis exhibition to inspire in the viewer's mind thoughts of time and the inter-layering of history and memory. My prints allude to the many possible interpretations for historical time as well as the "active" inter-relationship between the past and the present.

As this is a support paper for my thesis exhibition I have chosen to explore the referents which form the basis for the present body of work. Certain influences from my personal past and the most relevant art historic precedents which contributed to the development of my art make up the focus of this paper. The paper will examine how I combined these different influences to develop my current position and how the exhibition attempts to explore and reflect the current direction of my art.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This support paper and my thesis exhibition are lovingly dedicated to Lise Guyanne Mayne.

My partner and friend, you have given tirelessly of yourself without expecting return. Your selfless commitment made possible the difficult years of study. Your lucid criticisms were instrumental in solving problems and have become pivitol in setting the course for unique and challenging new directions. The long hours spent patiently reviewing work was done without reward, as were all the extra jobs willingly accepted. Your belief never waivered. You have given the greatest gift possible and I cannot begin to express the depth of my gratitude and respect.

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Whenever we attempt to interpret a work of art, we are at once confronted with problems that are as perplexing as they are contradictory. A work of art is an attempt to express something that is unique, it is an affirmation of something that is whole, complete, absolute. But it is likewise an integral part of a system of highly complex relationships. A work of art results from an altogether independent activity; it is the translation of a free and exalted dream. But flowing together within it the energies of many civilizations may be plainly discerned.

Henri Focillon[1]

INTRODUCTION

My art reflects my concepts of historical time formed in part from the admixture of personal experiences and art-historical influences. Various artistic precedents affect my art. These precedents can best be understood by examining the work of artists whose formalistic and conceptual concerns had the greatest impact on my own artistic development. The work of Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Kurt Schwitters, Joseph Cornell and Robert Rauschenberg comprises this art-historical framework. I will consider their traits together as a group, since I assimilated their influences simultaneously over a period of eight years.

I begin with a brief overview of these artists' traits and follow with an analysis of three major referential components of their work which have impacted my artistic development.

The Artists

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720 - 78)

This eighteenth-century Italian's etchings commanded my attention in junior college, when I was given the opportunity to study directly from an original Piranesi print. I developed an affinity for the visual information present in Piranesi's work the moment the labyrinthine realm of that first print drew me into its timeless recesses. The print was from a series of etchings entitled the Carceri d' Invenzione, and it alerted my artistic

consciousness to the passage of historical time and the dynamic relationship between events in history.

Piranesi is best known for his romanticized "views" of ancient Rome that were designed to meet the visual needs of eighteenth-century tourists hungry for a nostalgic escape into the realms of antiquity, whether it be a real or imaginary journey.[2] This nostalgic attitude towards antiquity, for which Rome became the European focal point - especially after the excavations at Pompeii (1748) and Herculaneum (1738) - created a style of painting known as the "veduta". Such paintings focused on topographical "views" of imaginary landscapes into which recognizable Italian buildings were placed.[3] Andrew Robison points out in his catalogue of Piranesi's etchings that Piranesi employed his personal interpretation of ancient Roman buildings, that these were not always accurate depictions of Roman architecture, but rather Piranesi's impressions of the "spirit" of the ancient ruins.[4]

Kurt Schwitters (1887 - 1948)

I was drawn to Schwitters' collage "paintings" because to me they evoke a sense of human passage through time. Schwitters, a "fringe" Dadaist painter, poet and sculptor, gathered bits and pieces of human detritus and fused them together to form new meaning. Rejecting traditional modes of composition, Schwitters combined collage and painting to create his now famous abstract Merz pictures. In a letter

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dated from 1921 Schwitters writes:

> When I adjust material of different kinds to one
> another, I have taken a step in advance of mere
> oil painting, for in addition to playing off color
> against color, line against line, form against
> form, etc., I play off material against material,
> for example, wood against sackcloth. I call the
> weltanschauung from which this mode of artistic
> creation arose "Merz".[5]

Schwitters' claimed his, "... aim is the Merz composite art work, that embraces all branches of art in an artistic unit."[6] These composite paintings, or constructions as they have been called, can been viewed as Schwitters' mirrors reflecting symptoms of social decay in postwar Germany.[7] Gathered from life, Schwitters' materials speak not only of their former identity and subsequent displacement, but of Schwitters himself. They evince traits of his personality through the act of choice and placement, becoming personal records and reflections of his thoughts and visual soundings of history. As John Elderfield writes in his comprehensive study of the art of Schwitters:

> Although firmly located in time and space, his
> work seems always to tell not of a vividly
> experienced present but of a wistfully remembered
> past. And this is not just because the period of
> their creation has itself now passed; the
> diaristic, memento-like form of the collages meant
> that they were, even at the moment of their
> creation, records of an expedition in urban
> archaeology.[8]

Joseph Cornell (1903 - 72)

The self taught American artist Joseph Cornell is best known for the small time-capsule like boxes incorporating collage, painting and sculpture. He fashioned these "meta-worlds" from items that evoke feelings of nostalgia, mystery and wonderment. Magazine illustrations and wooden-mounted illustrations of exotic birds, children's toys, photos, and various articles from science are placed in boxes that act like storage cases from which the viewer can visually reconstruct half-forgotten memories, sensing the force of the past on the present.

Cornell's mysterious and poetic nature often merged the worlds of fantasy and reality. A solitary figure who lived a somewhat secluded lifestyle in New York, Cornell was fascinated with the nature of time. Through juxtaposition and selective placement he invested ordinary objects with a presence that instilled his creations with a haunting timelessness. In the introduction to a retrospective on Cornell, Kynaston Mcshine explains that, "...it was Cornell's measuring of time by his own perceptions that allowed him to create an infinity of atmospheres within a small space."[9]

Robert Rauschenberg (1925 -)

The American, Robert Rauschenberg, is the most contemporary of the four artists. As a member of the avantgarde in the 1950's, he developed his artistic tenets

during the period when Abstract Expressionism was the
dominant influence in New York.[10] He embraced the attitude of
risk-taking and the formalistic demonstration of painterly
freedom, (ie. the way they applied paint to canvas) as
evinced by the Abstract Expressionists their preoccupation
with the unconscious - as a source of stimulation for
imagery - ran counter to his desire to document his
environment. After interviewing Rauschenberg the art critic
Dorothy Gees Seckler concluded that:

> While some Abstract Expressionists were nailing
> boards over their windows to shut out the
> distractions of the city, Rauschenberg was drawing
> stimulation from the dramatic contrasts of the
> waterfront neighbourhood.[11]

Rauschenberg links the images within his paintings and
prints using gestural brushwork derived from the Abstract
Expressionists. He uses collage elements that reflect modern
urban-society. The banal elements are presented to the
viewer as multiples of disparate images and are mentally
coalesced in much the same way that we perceive at a glance
the billboards and posters of our media-saturated
environment. Rauschenberg appropriates everyday images
garnered from magazines, papers, art reproductions and
comics, etc., combining multiple layers that reflect the
multiplicity of contemporary culture.

Through my research I have discovered that these
artists share many of the same concepts. However, their

initial impact upon my artistic development was derived from a purely visual appraisal. I have concluded that this purely visual interpretation was formed within the aesthetic context of experiences which stem from childhood, which I will consider after exploring the artistic precedents from the four artists.

PART I

THE ARTISTIC CONTEXT: FORMAL AND CONCEPTUAL MODELS

Historical Elements

Within the work of Piranesi, Schwitters, Cornell and Rauschenberg references are made to historical time in disparate ways. Objects and images removed from their original associations create new visual meanings in the mind of the each viewer while also continuing to actively refer to their origins. These artifacts - implied (drawn) or real (collaged) - *now* act, like autumn leaves collected by school children, as visual allegories suggesting the passage of time.

Piranesi used historical elements throughout most of his work. His depiction of ancient Roman architecture is understandable from a purely practical point of view, when it is noted that he was originally trained as an architect. [12] Due to a frustrating lack of architectural commissions, the depiction of ancient Roman buildings allowed Piranesi to continue to work with the architecture he admired.[13] As previously stated, the economic benefits to be gained from constructing imaginary views of ancient civilizations fostered the use of historical references in Piranesi's prints. This profitable motivation resulted from a desire, as Robert Rosenblum remarks, to escape the "terminal decadence of the mid-eighteenth century," by reflecting on the merits of, "man in an unspoiled primitive society,

whether Western or exotic."[14] Piranesi's artistic decision to
extol the history of ancient Roman buildings and
accoutrements was based on his firm conviction that Roman
art and architecture displayed, "... a distinctive
combination of strength, utility, and beauty," that was no
longer apparent in the Italy of his day.[15] By combining noble
Roman and 18th century Italian architecture, Piranesi imbued
his contemporary work with the spirit of this grand past.16

In comparison, Schwitters' paintings document the decay
of his world through the subtle placement of objects and
words which can be viewed at either a formal or symbolic
level. Unlike Piranesi, Schwitters does not draw from the
past for imagery but instead gathers objects from his own
time: streetcar tickets, cloakroom checks, product labels,
newspaper clippings, and illustrations, etc... . For current
viewers removed in time from the contextual significance of
Schwitters' day, the work takes on historical significance.
This is one of the aspects which first drew me to
Schwitters' work. I recognized how contemporary artifacts
and symbols come with the passage of time to represent a
sense of history, regardless of the artists' original
intent. I have therefore classified the visual items
Schwitters uses as historical elements. They exist as
markers of historical passage. Their present visual
connotation shapes aesthetic understanding, imparting a
sense of time to a work of art.

Unlike Schwitters, the historical elements Piranesi employs conveyed to his contemporary public a sense of their long history. In his **Grotteschi** series, he creates a mélange of disparate objects associated with human, cultural and architectural decay. He brings together a cacophony of historical artifacts which act as visual allegories to imply the noble presence of man in the passage of historical time. Piranesi's desire to meld the grandeur and power he believed was Ancient Rome, to the elements of decay apparent in modern times, indicates, it seems to me, his awareness of the dynamic nature of historical time. Robert Adams, in reference to the **Carceri** plates claims, "... Time falls through all the world of Piranesi, thick and palpable: even his prisons are like vast dark sundials through which isolated and interrupted shafts of day strike to mark off the leaden hours." [17]

For Schwitters the original meaning of each object was unimportant. He explained that:

> "... they lose their individual character, their own special essence (Eigengift), by being evaluated against one another; by being dematerialized (entmaterialisiert) they become material for the picture."[18]

While the passage of time has distanced the present viewer's understanding of the original meaning pertinent to each item, Schwitters' placement of specific objects together suggests he was dependent upon the common convention of

meaning inherent to each for understanding of his conceptual stance.

For example, in her article, <u>An Interpretation of "Hansi"</u>, Annegreth Nill explores aspects of Schwitters' conceptual stance in his 1918 collage entitled <u>Drawing A2: Hansi</u>. Nill explains how Schwitters adheres a Hansi-brand chocolate wrapper to the work and subsequently covers most of the wrapper with an opaque geometric shape and that by this conscious act Schwitters chose to highlight only the last three letters of the name, revealing the German word "ade" or "goodbye". On the right side of the collage he introduces the complete name of the chocolate bar, "Hansi-Schokolade," at the top and bottom of the collage. In the same work appears the word Dresden, the city where the chocolate was made. Nill maintains that through this combination, the sentiment "goodbye to chocolate," speaks not only of the poor state of the German economy and its inability to continue to afford to import cacao, but also of Schwitter's personal obsession with chocolate. [19] The historical elements not only operate at a biographical level but also address the turbulent circumstances manifest in his society. Because these items are "trapped" in time within the artist's creation and now operate in a similar status as museum pieces, they evoke the time from whence they came. Without at least a minimum knowledge of their original meaning, the symbolic reading of the collage work could not

exist. Without this in-depth knowledge, the modern viewer
feels, nevertheless, the sense of time evoked by the
historical elements.

Unlike Schwitters, but consistent with Piranesi's
approach, Cornell confines historical elements within a
nostalgic and romanticized vision. Where Piranesi uses only
two-dimensional imagery, Cornell freely combines two-and-
three dimensional items and images to create miniature
universes. Cornell's historic elements resound with the
experienced evidence of life; fragments from other times and
places. The viewer relives memories of personal historical
passage, as these articles of memorabilia evoke an active
linkage between moments in time. I recognize this as a
method of conveying my own feelings about time.

Cornell's boxes encapsulate items such as old
scientific and figurative illustrations, butterfly wings,
driftwood, sea shells, postage stamps, clay pipes, old
magazine articles and photos, together with mirrors,
children's playing blocks, marbles, dolls, and portions of
old maps. The exterior of the boxes have been given the
weathered appearance of age. By artistically treating the
concept of time and memory in such an artistically all
encompassing fashion, Cornell imparts an overall sense of
timelessness to his work.[20]

Cornell's nostalgic and wistful attitude towards time,
which directed his choice of the historical objects, is

perhaps best understood from comments in his own diaries.
Concerning a trip to the Geographic Society buildings in New
York city, July 15, 1941, he writes:

> ... the buoyant feeling aroused by the buildings
> of the Geographic Society in their quiet uptown
> setting. An abstract feeling of geography and
> voyaging I have thought about before of getting.
> into objects, like the Compass Set with map. A
> reminder of earliest school-book days when the
> world was divided up into irregular masses of
> bright colors, with vignettes of the pictorial
> world scattered, like toy picture-blocks.[21]

And again from the summer of 1946:

> Made in morning mirror pool in bird branch and
> blues sky box. Dawned cool and sunny early
> dramatic light continuing. Sprig of growing mint
> plucked, its pungency bringing back Adirondacks
> with the usual magical experience and unexpected
> vividness. Smell of gasoline brings back days of
> childhood father's boat.[22]

The various historical elements Cornell chose to hold
captive were meant to convey his poetic interpretation of
time and the mysteries of life. Inspired by Symbolist and
Surrealist art forms and his own ineffable spiritual
beliefs, he strove to illustrate his feelings for,
"..everything mythic, everything that related to other
times," through the linkage of images and historical objects
within his boxes.[23] He read obsessively: Romantic and
Symbolist literature had a particularly strong influence on
him. Writers such as: Gerard de Nerval, Eugene Delacroix,

Arthur Rimbaud, Aloysius Bertrand, Thomas de Quincey, and Stephane Mallarme, greatly impressed Cornell. Writings of Nerval and Sigmund Freud inspired Cornell's belief in hypnagogic imagery. The vivid imagery which appears to some people just as they begin to fall asleep was called "hypnagogic" by Freud.[24] Cornell often referred to passages from one of Nerval's works entitled Slyvie, revealing how he felt about the hypnagogic state:

> Lost in a kind of half-sleep, all my youth passed
> through my memory again. This state, when the
> spirit still resists the strange combinations of
> dreams, often allows us to compress in a few
> moments the most salient pictures of a long period
> of life.[25]

Unlike Cornell, Rauschenberg does not choose images for their historical relevance but for their contemporary significance. This is similar to Schwitters' purpose. Rauschenberg's prints and paintings mirror the human environment from which their elements are taken. His work is an, "active protest, attempting to share and communicate [his] response to and concern with our grave times and place."[26] With the passage of time they also instigate the active relationship we share with those moments in history. It is only after the works have actually passed through time that the elements take on an historical aspect, illuminating the time and place in which they were made.

This added association of the active interplay of time

in Rauschenberg's work reveals to the viewer the dynamic nature of the past to impress itself upon contemporary aesthetic sensibilities. I felt the presence of time in Rauschenberg's "documentation" of historical passage and this awareness prompted my consideration of how, in my own way, I could capture this dynamic interaction between moments in historical time.

I use historical elements throughout my art. For my purposes, I define such elements as: symbols which have entered into the public repertoire of the Western world as recognizable markers of history. Within my prints I often include such archaisms as classical columns, archways, building facades, stone walls, ruins, portions of ancient pediments, carved neolithic stones, and human bones. Together with these objects I use images of a more contemporary and personal significance that combine visually to form an active biographical and collective historical relationship.

Perhaps our contemporary attitude towards ancient Greek statuary is one of the best examples of how the dynamic nature of historical time modifies perceptions. The broken, white statues which continue to have so profound an influence on the development of Western art, are not now as they were originally created. Had eighteenth-century artists first seen these statues in their original condition, brightly painted, with all limbs present, the course of

Western art might have been very different. It is now almost impossible to envision these "objects" - in every sense of the word - in their original state. Our aesthetic sensibilities are now deeply ingrained to accept the "altered" image of these historical elements

The contemporary critic and theorist, Craig Owens, claims modern artists such as Sherrie Levine and Robert Longo use appropriated imagery (allegorical imagery) in such a way as to, " ...empty them of their resonance, their significance and their authoritative claim to meaning," and he further explains how, "from the Revolution on, [allegory] had been enlisted in the service of historicism to produce image upon image of the present *in terms* of the classical past."[27]

With quite a different intent, I desire some of the original meaning and significance of the historical elements to exist while also drawing upon their allegorical role as representations of time, or more precisely, historical passage. My aim is not to clothe the present in a romantic guise of the past, but rather to reveal the presence of the past - objects and ideas from history which still exist in our minds or in actuality - as a dynamic and constant force upon the present.

In discussing the relationship between these two conceptual stances in his essay in Modernity and the Classical Tradition, Alan Colquhoun says that:

In the eighteenth century the return to
classicism was always accompanied by elements of
poetic reverie, nostalgia, and a sense of
irretrievable loss. Within the context of this
type of historical consciousness, eclecticism took
two forms which at first might seem incompatible.
On the one hand, different styles could exist
side by side, as when one finds a classical
temple next to a Gothic ruin at Stowe. On the
other hand, one style could come to stand for a
dominant moral idea and be connected with an idea
of social reform.... What is common to both forms
of eclecticism is a strong feeling for the past,
an awareness of the passage of historical time,
and the ability of past styles to suggest certain
poetic or moral ideas. [28]

It is not my intention to convey moral themes. At a
recent conference which dealt with the subject of time, the
artist and writer, Eli Bornstein, clearly described the
condition to which I am sympathetic:

Through the passage of time all human perceptions
are modified - maturing or enlarging through
reflection or experience - so that encounters with
the same art at different times result in
different reactions. Such changes in perception
are sometimes mistakenly attributed to the work,
whereas time itself continually alters our
vision.[29]

By using historical elements I wish to make visible in
artistic terms the interconnectedness and flux of historical
time.

Elements of Text

I use text to communicate my conceptual intentions. In my work, as in that of Rauschenberg, Cornell and Schwitters, text does not act in its traditional position, as narrative to describe a picture image. Words interact with images to form associations which educe the sense of time-passage. In the book, The Photographic Image, Roland Barthes acknowledges such transformations of the role of text in modern art:

> In the traditional modes of illustration the image
> functioned as an episodic return to denotation
> from a principal message (the text) which was
> experienced as connoted since, precisely, it
> needed an illustration; in the relationship that
> now holds, it is not the image which comes to
> elucidate or "realize" the text, but the latter
> which comes to sublimate, patheticize or
> rationalize the image... Formerly, the image
> illustrated the text (made it clearer); today the
> text loads the image, burdening it with a culture,
> a moral, an imagination. Formerly, there was a
> reduction from text to image; today there is
> amplification from the one to the other.[30]

Text is very important to Schwitters. He invented the term, "Merz" to describe his mode of artistic expression. In their book, Collage: Personalities Concepts Techniques, Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh reveal how Schwitters eventually:

> extended this denomination, first to [his] poetry
> - because [he had] written poems since 1917 - and

finally to the whole of [his] corresponding
activities.[31]

Between 1923 to 1932, Schwitters published a small magazine
containing his Merz poetry and articles that, "...
illuminated the path of the poet, artist [and] man of
action."[32]

Because he was interested in word-play and
manipulation, Schwitters accorded personal meaning to many
of his collages through the combination of text and image.
The "Hansi-chocolate" collage of 1918, is an example of this
subtle manipulation of narrative elements for the purpose of
conveying meaning of a more personal nature.

For Schwitters, text had to convey an overall sense of
unity among the narrative elements. Unlike Dada, which
sought to pose disharmony among elements, Schwitters strove
for homogeneity. Schwitters' desire to create the "total
work of art" (Gesamtkunstwerk) - a synthesis of all art
forms - was the artistic goal he sought to achieve in his
collages. It was only natural that in this holistic frame of
mind he should incorporate poetry - in the form of numbers,
old labels, typography and fragments of text - into his
collage works.

Schwitters's use of text is partially influenced by the
ideals of Der Sturm (The Storm), the group of writers and
artists he joined in 1918. The group took their name from
the German periodical Der Sturm. It was founded in the 19th

century by Herwarth Walden (1878-1941) to promote what was then seen as a liberating form of Expressionism in literature and art. Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin was the venue where the artists of Die Brücke, der Blaue Reiter and other avantgarde artists' groups of the period exhibited. In accordance with the writings of August Stramm and the Italian Futurist, F. T. Marinetti, the poetic principles of Der Sturm are based on the manipulation of compressed word-units united in anti-narrative and alogical patterns.[33] The emotional value of words are emphasized more than their capacity to convey information.

The written elements in much of Schwitters' art are disjointed and abbreviated word and letter patterns intended to engender a myriad of feelings through their strategic placement and association. With the passage of time and the modern viewer's lack of understanding for much of the original content for the text the intent of the emotional impact has changed. The text element in Schwitters' work now triggers connotations of history as the present-day viewer gazes at torn pieces of newspaper, bits of old postcards and product wrappers and advertisements. The act of choice and placement also exposes Schwitters' own personality. Schwitters "speaks" to the viewer as a "bricoleur". Levi-Strauss defines a bricoleur as someone who communicates:

> not only with things...but also through the medium
> of things: giving account of his personality and
> life by the choices he makes.[34]

It is in this respect that Schwitters' work becomes an historical referent for the use of text in my work. Unaware of any latent content in Schwitters's work, I was initially influenced by the emotions transmitted by his art. For me the text in his collages conveys impressions of history. His work suggests remnants of historical passage in life or an album of family or personal memorabilia. My awareness of these emotional "resonances" aroused a consideration of how narrative elements might lend a sense of historical time to my work. I recognized that text might not only narrate visual ideas - routine in advertising - but also induce responses in others due to emotional reaction inherent in basic expression and visual convention.

Consider the word *light*. When seen as a visual image, the viewer might not grasp the latent or personal intentions behind its usage, but as text the word will kindle a number of emotions. The agreed-upon definition of the word, commingles with one's own feelings about lightness or darkness, ideas about air, scientific associations and many other possible connotations. If the word is displayed in a bright red hue as opposed to white or gold, the affect on the viewer's emotions change accordingly. According to how it is arranged in the picture - upside down, at a corner, in multiples, written in large format or small, juxtaposed with what other objects, text or colors, etc. - its effect will again change.

Allowing for cultural distinctions, there exists at the most primary levels of emotion a certain degree of common response; visual resonances that artists can manipulate. In his essay, <u>Expression and Communication</u>, Ernst Gombrich, examines the resonance theory. In it he says that on its own, "... the "resonance" theory can only apply, if at all, to the extremes of "natural" symbols,"[35] such as panic and the act of yawning. The theory, as based on expressionist psychological ideology, purports that it is the basic nature of the human mind to comprehend expression, that because it originates there, we do not need conventions to perceive it. Gombrich points out that an Expressionist accepts the:

> effects of forms, tones and colours on man and beast which suggest that the colour red is exciting and slow music soothing. The baby...does not have to learn the meaning of the lullaby in order to fall asleep and the young child need not be told that bright colours are more cheerful than drab ones.[36]

Rather than basic resonance operating on its own in a work of art, Gombrich believes that an interdependence exists between it and structured convention. He insists that:

> The expression of emotion works through symptoms (such as blushing or laughter) which are natural and unlearned, the communication of information through signs or codes (such as language or writing) which rest on conventions [and that] most means of communication and expression in our daily

lives lie somewhere on a spectrum between these poles.[37]

I concur with this reading and I rely on this relationship to inform the use of text in my imagery. It is impossible to predict with certainty the impact from individually-observed elements, but when considered simultaneously with the other components in a work, an artist can perhaps "focus" resonances created through conjunction.

Such is the example of Rauschenberg's use of text which can best be understood in terms of a "rebus". Not only do images in his work suggest words and signs but these have the reverse effect also: text recalls and directs the viewer's awareness of how images form meaning. Rauschenberg's pictures reveal one level of experience and information through an alternate yet related level - text. This interplay clarifies the artist's intent. In his article Reading Rauschenberg, Charles Stuckey says Rauschenberg uses text in an:

> attempt to encompass, without simplifying the
> problem, the coincidences and necessities which
> tie appearance to meaning. Words recall images and
> vice-versa, but the actual mental process involved
> in the visual imagination or verbal interpretation
> of sensation can fully be explored only with words
> and images taken together.[38]

Rauschenberg "directs" the viewer's interpretive choices through the instructive combinations of text and image, the

verbal and visual. In the same way, I try to engage the viewer in this focusing process.

Rauschenberg's 1955 work, Rebus, demonstrates many examples of the visual and verbal play so relevant to his work. The painting is indicative of Rauschenberg's tendency to approach the possibilities of artistic creation with an "anything-goes" attitude. The work is a collage piece that employs a wide range of media in a manner quite different from the earlier, more personal, collage works by artists like Schwitters and Cornell. At the upper left corner the viewer sees the word structure, **"That Repre."** The words spoken sound like, "that repro." They are printed on a torn piece of poster, an object synonymous with reproduction of imagery. To the right is a photograph of "two" male track-runners - one white, one black) - that has been pasted over a duplicate photo of the woman whose face also appears in the torn poster. These visual riddles direct our attention towards ideas of reproduction and duplication. The photographic image of the two runners exists also as a word/image play within a play. On one level, Rauschenberg makes a connection between a race to run and the two cultural races; on another, he traces the idea of a racial race for power or success within the human race. The work is replete with other yet similar examples. The multilevel interplay between image and text reinforces Rauschenberg's purpose and limits the possible interpretations to none

other than those he intends. Unlike Schwitters's images, the conceptual meaning of Rauschenberg's work may continue to be transmitted even with the passage of time. As a kind of artistic reporter, Rauschenberg manipulates imagery and text, bombarding our senses at every level, to document the social nature of the times and his immediate environment.

Through a similar manipulation of mixed realities and connected memories, Cornell guides us into the realm of his imagination. Like miniature theatres, Cornell's boxes present an interplay between text and image; an array of perceptions coalesce and heap up like memories in time.

Cornell was motivated to juxtapose text and imagery by the example of montage as practicsed by Dada and Surrealism. In the first Surrealist Manifesto of 1924, André Breton wrote:

> It is the marvellous faculty of attaining two
> widely separate realities without departing from
> the realm of our experience, of bringing them
> together, and drawing a spark from their
> contact...and of disorienting us in our memory by
> depriving us of a frame of reference..."[39]

Cornell transcends and reverses this process to suit his own style and personality, which runs in a much more positive vein than the more menacing and gloomier side of Surrealism. As he once said: "...I have never been an official Surrealist, and I believe that Surrealism has healthier possibilities than have been developed."[40] Instead of using

disparate realities to evoke a response through disassociation, Cornell uses imagery and text to reinforce formal and thematic associations. As Dawn Ades says in her essay <u>The Transcendental Surrealism of Joseph Cornell</u>:

> ...what he comes to seek is not incongruity so much as a mysterious congruity, a thread of affinities, however intangible, rather than an illuminating spark struck from disparateness.[41]

In an effort to focus feelings within a work Cornell strings together connections and comparisons among visual, textural and verbal cues. While he does not apply titles to most of his boxes and collages, such titles that he does apply - "Homage to the Romantic Ballet, Minutiae, A Swan Lake for Tamara Toumanova, Museum, Les Voyageur dans les glaces, and Jardin de Marie Antoinette" - reveal how every element points toward the direction he wishes the viewer to consider.

Cornell's use of language functions in the form of the Cubist-collage element. His use of text exists both as fragmentary evidence from the real world and as poetic soundings of concepts, sparking the viewer's mind to the subtle connections reverberating throughout his work. Unlike Picasso's iconoclastic manipulation of language, Cornell's use of textual elements - stamps, fragments from newspapers, labels, portions of maps and letters - demonstrates how he utilizes text in a non-confrontational manner, drawing association between text and image to elucidate concepts. In

much the same fashion as Schwitters, Cornell uses any item
he can lay his hands on to communicate meaning, even though
he often felt he did not attain this goal. In his diary he
writes about his mixed feelings about his own work:

> ...satisfactory feeling about clearing up debris
> on cellar floor - "sweepings" represent all the
> rich cross-currents and ramifications that go into
> the boxes but which are not apparent (I feel at
> least) in the final result.[42]

In my printmaking I try to strike a balance between
similar and dissimilar associations of text and image in the
hope of bringing concepts into focus. I often display
narrative elements in reverse or I write them small or
illegibly. I do this when I simply mean to suggest the
appearance of text rather than a specific meaning. This
approach serves to evoke historical associations with text,
rather than to focus the viewer's attention on the actual
substance of the narrative. The text in my prints often
looks as if it comes from another time: it appears
antiquated. Inspiration for this strategy can be seen in the
work of Piranesi. His use of text in the drawing Tavola
Decimaquinta (1767) had a particularly strong influence on
my manipulation of text. The drawing is part of a set of
twenty-five drawings made for his unsuccessful architectural
proposal for the new sanctuary of the Roman church of S.
Giovanni in Laterno. The sheets of layered paper drawn at
the top of the image and the rumpled and curled edges of

false parchment down either side of the image "appear" as real documents. The illusionistic nature of these false manuscripts gives Piranesi's image a sense of historical documentation. The depiction of this type of deceptive image is allied to the technique of trompe l'oeil.[43] Piranesi likely learned to use this "theatrical" style of illusionistic presentation in the studio of Tiepolo, where he is reported to have studied.[44]

With this example serving as inspiration, I recognized that my imagery could incorporate both real (biographical) narrative elements and the type of false illusionism apparent in Piranesi's drawing. In my art when text is meant to be read it either relates directly to the image, invokes disparate concepts to create meaning through association, or acts as a journalistic device relating biographical information pertinent to a theme. I intend the interplay between reality and illusion to infer an analogous relationship to the often subjective interpretation of historical time.

The Influence of Color

The manner in which I use color has its visible referents in the work of Cornell, Rauschenberg and Schwitters. To reinforce the ideas which I am currently exploring, I have incorporated formal aspects of each in differing degrees.

Rauschenberg used transparent colors. This is specifically apparent in his 1974 Hoarfrost suite of prints. The series consists of solvent-transferred images on diaphanous silk chiffons and satins. Rauschenberg noticed how cheesecloth used to clean litho stones retained a blurred image from the transfer-printing process.[45] From this he developed a process involving transfering imagery from magazines and newspapers onto another surface. By placing selected images face down on a receptive surface, then soaking the back with solvents and running them through a printing press, he transferred the images. Rauschenberg began to use this process to print on fabrics and other surfaces, building up successive layers of image and color.[46] The transparent layers of material hang together and the visual effect invokes layers of depth. The dream-like quality educed by the soft transparent colors reveals as much as it conceals. Rauschenberg juxtaposes the soft translucent colors with the harder geometric shapes of newspaper clippings and images of cars, industrial buckets and other forms of machinery from the man-made environment.

In this instance his use of color creates subtle nuances of meaning and depth.

The aqua-blue color in <u>Blue Urchin</u> (1974), ties the imagery together like a mist of gathered memories. Over the surface of this ocean of diaphanous imagery Rauschenberg laid a transfer fabric replete with additional images but in warmer hues. The overall effect is one of richness and depth of color.

Rauschenberg evoked such nuances with his use of color; these inspired my consideration of layers of color as symbolic of the layers of time. In my prints, I build up many layers of transparent color, inserting images between the various layers with the intent of creating parallels between the nebulous nature of historical time and the fluctuating visual information contained within the layered depths of color.

In most of his work, Rauschenberg imparts unity by linking images together with passages of gestural brushwork, which John Cage referred to as Rauschenberg's "hinges."[47] Schwitters also uses color to hinge his pieces of human detritus into single units of meaning. In fact, he regarded the application of these elements in a method similar to the use of color:

> I did not understand why one could not use in a
> picture, in the same way one uses colours made in
> a factory, materials such as: old tramway and bus
> tickets, washed-up pieces of wood from the

seashore, cloak-room numbers, bits of string,
segments of bicycle wheels, in a few words, the
whole bric-a-brac to found lying about the lumber
room or on top of a dust bin. From my stand-point,
it involved a social attitude, and, on the
artistic level, a personal pleasure.[48]

By playing down the constructed appearance of his collages, Schwitters uses color to draw attention to the painterly aspects of his work.[49] This attitude and approach to color is understandable, considering that he began his career as an oil-painter. His collages exist as admixtures of the two distinct forms of expression, collage and painting. An earlier work, the oil painting, Hochgebirgsfriedhof (Mountain Graveyard, 1919) illustrates Schwitters' earlier tendency to, "... paint special, specific moods," [50] and formally link shapes through color. The painting has the look of a collage. The skeletal framework of black lines fragment the picture plane in much the same fashion as Cubism and Futurism. Yet Schwitters' practice of overlaying color coalesces the iconography of mountain, sun and church into a single cohesive unit. Driven by his desire to rid the objects of their Eigengift (individual essence), Schwitters struggled to develop a painterly method that would achieve this end. The collaged forms which stand in high relief draw attention to their presence. As John Elderfield states:

> ... the high relief elements ... were the ones
> which tended to form individual relationships with

the viewer and therefore seemed to surrender their Eigengift less easily.[51]

Through compositional organization and the use of opaque colors, Schwitters provides integrity to the internal structure, avoiding the visual sense of a random presentation of disparate objects stranded on a surface. In his large-scale collages he uses opaque instead of transparent paint to cover and blend the hard edges of each object, thus blurring their uniqueness. He also adopted a similar process to blend the edges of color. Charlotte Weidler, describing Schwitters' work habits, wrote:

> With his fingertips he worked little pieces of crumbled paper into the wet surface; also spread tints of water color or gouache around to get variations in shadings of tone. In this way he used flour both as paste and as paint. Finally he removed the excess paste with a damp rag, leaving some like an overglaze in places where he wanted to veil or mute a part of the color.[52]

His use of opaque paint accords the larger attached components the status of "conventional pictorial elements," transposing real elements into painted elements. This is not the case with his smaller collages, where he uses transparent colors because the edges and size of objects are not as noticeable.[53] In a manner similar to his treatment of text, Schwitters eliminates any feeling of disconnectedness between the found materials and the artistic passages. Schwitters' harmonizing of pictorial elements stands him in

opposition to Dada:

> I compared Dadaism in its most serious form with
> Merz and came to this conclusion: whereas Dadaism
> merely poses antithesis, Merz reconciles
> antithesis by assigning relative values to every
> element in the work of art. Pure Merz is art, pure
> Dadaism is non-art; in both cases deliberately
> so.[54]

In an manner aligned with Cornell's use of text, Schwitters uses color to reinforce formal and thematic associations.

In Schwitters use of color, I recognize potential for enhancing the conceptual position of my work. In Schwitters' more somber range of hues, I see references to the colors in nature and the weathering of human objects with the passage of time. The rusty oranges and burnt reds in the painting Konstruktion für edle Frauen (Construction for Noble Ladies, 1919), the stone and metal-like patina greens and blues in Das Kreisen (Revolving, 1919), and the sun-burnt tans and creams in Mz 231 (Miss Blanche, 1923), all invoke the appearance and sense of mankind's passage and presence in time. In a poem related to Das Kreisen, Schwitters speaks of the ever-changing nature of eternity and mankind's position in it, by revealing feelings about a world where cosmic harmony, once found in nature, is now sensed in man-made machines:

> Turning worlds thou.
> Thou turnest worlds.
> Thou subduest chirping Apyl to the waters the

machine.

Worlds hurl space.

Worlds turn the new machine to thee.

To thee.

Thou, thine the new machine space.

And axles break eternity.

The work, to which we, to ourselves heir, thou.[56]

Schwitters' art has a time-weathered appearance evinced by the sombre colors that he employs. This effect is accentuated through contrast with the small details of bright color which he interjects in almost all his Merz pictures. Cornell also employs this fragmented manipulation of primary color.

Cornell's somber hues form a visual ground, neutral surfaces upon which "moments" of bright primary color resonant. He "paints" his boxes with the objects he places in them. Exploiting visual correlations between a predominant theme and feelings inherent to the colors the objects possess, Cornell envelopes his art with an aura of historical age.

The sections of deep blue, aqua green and amber colored glass that encase works such as: Metaphysique D'ephemera:Novalis (1941), Soloman Islands (1940-42), and the box construction now designated Medici Boy (1942-52), convey images of cabinets and storage cases and the articles contained therein that are synonymous with museums - our store-houses of history. The objects they protect appear as items encased in the amber of time, like insects forever

captured in an aqueous-glass moment. From a journal entry of January 1966, Cornell reveals his viewpoint on the passage of time as it relates to his world when says, "This one day is an "eterniday" in the world I have come to be enveloped in."[57]

In other box constructions, natural objects such as lichen, sand, bark and branches lend subdued and neutral colors, harmonizing the elements to the theme. In the untitled box construction now designated, Mélisande (1948-50) the earthy tones of bark, sand and lichen insinuate the qualities of time and weathered age. As was apparent in the work of Schwitters, Cornell often interjects bright colors into images. In Grand Hotel Semitamis (1950), the overall color theme is light umber and white. Amid the barrenness of the white, Cornell places a brilliantly colored parrot and an inverted ink bottle filled with transparent blue liquid. These contrasting colors are isolated by the void of white paint and yet are connected. On a formal level they compare with Schwitters's work as they create an active visual discourse with the more somber hues. The bright colors of these objects remind me of children's toys aligned on a store shelf or toy box. Like fragments from childhood, Cornell scatters these brightly colored elements throughout his work, invoking impressions of days long-departed, of once favourite objects, now only a fleeting memory, while simultaneously appearing as genuine items from our past.

This aspect of Cornell's usage of color, its juxtaposition and intent, finds an echo in my work. Inspired in part by Cornell's use of color, I sometimes utilize the juxtaposition of limited passages of brighter hues on predominately harmonized grounds. My intention is to raise visual resonances through contrasting colors and thereby insinuate layers of both formal visual activity and conceptually, layers of historical time. Because these colorful passages stand out I am able to parallel this formal condition with the sense of a moment plucked from historical time becoming active in the "now" of the print. As a movie might flash stills from history, I freeze "vignettes" to draw attention, through contrast, to the interdependence and constant flux of moments in time and the infinite possibilities for historical interpretation and recall. The author, S.H. Vatsyayan, articulates this relationship of human memory to the nature of historical time in a lecture given at the University of Rajasthan in 1972 entitled: <u>Human Time</u>:<u>The Time Order of Experience</u>:

> I know who I am through the records and relations constituting the memory which is mine, and which differs from the memory-structure of others. What is externally the 'same' event is experienced by two different individuals in two different ways because the two memories involved place that event in uniquely different contexts, organize them into different memory-structures, assign to them different value and significance, and place them

in different categories for recall.[58]

The Personal Context: Primary References

Although our awareness of time is based on psychological factors and on physiological processes below the level of consciousness, ...it is also dependent on social and cultural influence. Because of these, there is a reciprocal relation between time and history. For just as our idea of history is based in that of time, so time as we conceive it is a consequence of our history.

G. J. Whitrow [59]

My interest in the nature of historical time is rooted in experiences which stem from early childhood, primary experiences which continue to play a vital role in guiding my aesthetic sensibilities and conceptual concerns. Many of the themes in my current body of work find their motivation in attitudes and social influences which began early in my life. I was unaware of their influence when I was young, and only recently did I develop my understanding of personal history, which continues to impact my most recent body of work.

Home-movies - shown in a darkened room on a screen with the sound of an 8mm projector whurring away - were very popular during the 1950s and '60s, the era of my childhood. It was my family's ritual to watch home-movies at every family gathering. The projector would be brought out, the lights lowered and we would sink back into our chairs and relive the moments trapped on the celluloid. I regarded this form of entertainment as merely that - entertainment. I was

unaware of any effects other than the pleasure I got from watching the fond moments of my past paraded again and again before my eyes.

I can't remember when the change occurred. I have a vague memory that I was becoming tired of "living" in and with the past. The "screenings" decreased steadily until they stopped altogether and I forgot about the home-movies that had always been a very important component in my life.

Later, when I began making art, questions such as "Who am I?" and "What am I?" surfaced. These questions were fundamental in imparting a sense of personal validity in my art, art which now dealt with notions of time and history. In this context, I looked back to my childhood. I'd been very happy growing up and I wanted to understand why the happiness which I connected with my youth could still color my self-identity. Did I understand my own history? Was it based in reality and was it influencing my art?

I then recalled the family ritual of watching home-movies. Upon reflection, I began to realize that the continual repetition of selected "vignettes" from my life may not only have altered my understanding of self as I grew up, but it may have formed a false image of my personal history. Watching the same select documents of personal history reinforced the memory of singular events while related circumstances dimmed with the passage of time. I was left with a "fabricated" concept of self, based on the happy

moments portrayed in the films; I say happy, because, as
with most people, our home-movies portrayed joyous events
and times of pleasure, not instances of stress or pain. I
don't deny the happiness I actually experienced. But I
believe that my perception of the degree of happiness was
synthetically altered, and constantly reinforced. How could
I not interpret my past as happy? The home-movies repeatedly
revealed life as it really was! How can I not continue to
feel good about my young life, as my conception of my
personal history is predicated on reinforced memory -
moments of cinematic bliss! However in reflecting on my past
I see the inaccuracy of my assumptions. In Image of
Eternity: Roots of Time in the Physical World, David Park
addresses this false impression when he says:

> It is usual to act as though we knew nothing of
> the future and everything of the past, but this is
> an exaggeration. Records have gaps, are ambiguous,
> disappear, and our own clear memories, if we live
> long enough, often reveal themselves as memories
> of memories, changing further and further with
> each remove.[60]

Thus even the selected "true" moments did not
accurately depict my own past but constructed and
deconstructed my memories. Apart from helping to answer
aspects of my original questions, the search uncovered two
issues that affected my conceptual stance towards the nature
of historical time and its interpretation in my art. I
became interested in the prospect of revealing aspects of

time in my prints.

The first issue I considered was that I might relate the development of my own history to collective human history. I extrapolate from the constructed nature of my past through home-movies - its subsequent interpretation and influence on my present existence - the idea that human history is similarly constructed from layers of biased perspective whose time-dependant interpretation dynamically acts on the present. The means by which we subjectively interpret and record events in historical time continue to influence our present perceptions. From my experience, as the distance from the original event expands the singular nature of the event seems to dominate and related nuances fade. The nuances have occurred, but memory or some form of recorded interpretation of the event - in my case, a home-movie - constructs an altered history which, in turn, reconstructs our view of historical time. This awareness influenced my use of historical elements and inspired the layering color, images and text to invoke the sense of interactive layering I saw in my own "created" history. My prints now allude to the many possible interpretations for historical time as well as the "active" inter-relationship between the past and the present.

The second consequence of the search is my current desire to visually evoke in my work the active nature of the past. In terms of human experience, the home-movies trap

historical time on a beam of light, connecting disparate moments for recall at any point in time. With each viewing, the possibility for an active impact on the present occurs: the recall of the past is enacted, impressions perhaps changed and present feelings or actions are influenced. In my work I use contrasting color, images from different periods in history and various levels of definition to juxtapose images, focusing the viewer's vision through the emotional responses towards particular images. The disjunction between the visually heightened elements produces a dynamic cognitive and emotional complex in an instant of time, blending the past and the present. The literature historian, Joseph Frank, speaks of such an effect in his article, <u>The Widening Gyre</u>. In referring to the way writers such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, Italo Calvino and James Joyce disrupt the sequential flow of narrative in their work - "juxtaposing elements in space rather than unrolling in time" - Frank claims:

> Time is no longer felt as an objective, causal progression with clearly marked-out differences between periods; it has become a continuum in which distinctions between past and present are wiped out. Past and present are apprehended spatially, locked in a timeless unity that ... eliminates any feeling for sequence by the very act of juxtaposition.[61]

This process recalls the random viewing of home-movies which colored and formed my impressions of personal history.

Through the simultaneous perception of disparate images, I
attempt to bring to the viewer's attention the active
linkage between the past and present. I wish to assert that:

> ...time is the ultimate processor in art as well
> as life. Time sifts, selects and discards,
> modifies, confirms or perpetuates all values, be
> they of flesh or paint.[62]

Influenced by the search into my "carefree" past, I now
incorporate the element of nostalgia in my art. I do not
wish to create a longing in the viewer's mind for the "good-
old-days" but rather to gain their attention with the
purpose of arousing an examination into the influence the
passage of time impacts upon personal identity. As in
Cornell's work, the element of nostalgia in my work is not a
sentimental indulgence of the past. Instead I hope to
insinuate the awareness of the poignant feelings which
belong to all of us, suggesting the impressions and
sensations which form our reality, and which also reveal the
impending mortality that is inextricably bound to the
passage of human time. The ability of verbal and visual
impressions to ignite sensations in memory is stated clearly
by Marcel Proust in, <u>Remembrance of Things Past</u>. In volume
2, <u>The Past Recaptured</u>, he says:

> ...something we looked at long ago, if we see it
> again, brings back to us, along with the look we
> cast upon it, all the images it conveyed to us at
> that time. This is because things - a book in its
> red binding, like so many others - as soon as we

take conscious notice of them, become something
immaterial within us of the same character as all
our sensations and preoccupations of that moment
and combine indissolubly with them. Some name we
read in a book in bygone years, for example,
contains among its syllables the strong breeze and
brilliant sunshine of the day when we came across
it.[63]

It is this power of words and images to kindle an awareness
of past experiences that I hope to invest in my art.

In retrospect, both the viewing of home-movies and my
present reappraisal of this activity inspired a deep
interest in temporal issues. My previously-held beliefs
about the past continues to be altered and this changes my
perspective on the present. This situation has affected my
aesthetic sensibilities and the conceptual concerns of my
MFA exhibition.

PART II

The Exhibition: Content and Meaning

*They went down in the cellar with Grandpa and
while he decapitated the flowers they looked at
all the summer shelved and glimmering there in the
motionless streams, the bottles, of dandelion wine.
Numbered from one to ninety-odd, there the ketchup
bottles, most of them full now, stood burning in
the cellar twilight, one for every living summer
day.*

Ray Bradbury[64]

The layout of the exhibit is meant to reinforce the
conceptual issues central to my prints. The prints are
housed in a group of three wooden cabinets at the centre of
a triangular room. The shape of the room echos the three
sided form of the cabinet grouping, which itself symbolizes
the three aspects of human time: the past, present and
future. There is not a specific cabinet for each of these
designations as I wish to imply the interconnected nature of
the three tenses. This format of the cabinets offers the
viewer a random choice of prints to view. Quotes appear on
the walls illuminating the theme of the work. They cite a
variety of writers' thoughts on the subject of time and are
meant - like "moments" in my prints - to focus the viewer's
thoughts. A viewer may first look at a print and then
reflect on a quote while the memory of the print resonates
in the mind or read the quotes, which will then have an
impact when the prints are viewed. Continuing the movement

between cabinet and wall, the viewer's impressions are provoked and channelled through a combination of personal choice, forced interruption and reinforced interpretation. The interactive apprehension of prints and quotes mirrors the interplay of imagery in my prints. The procedure also addresses the randomness and subjective interpretation of historical time as witnessed through the process of memory and selective personal bias.

By juxtaposing the prints in the cabinet with the quotes on the distant walls, I am creating a physical analogy for the distance that time imposes between an event seen and remembered. The amount of time it takes to walk from cabinet to wall allows the dynamic influence of time to alter initial impressions. This idea can be understood more clearly if one imagines the effect the quotes would have if contained within the image rather than on the wall. It is not difficult to imagine how the imagery in the print would greatly color the viewer's impression of the quote, and also the reverse. As discussed earlier, text has an important impact on the viewer. While the print format confines the proximity of text and image, in this exhibit I wish to utilize the space to extend the distance between impressions, allowing time to influence the viewer.

The cabinet is patterned after similar cabinets used in museums for storing archival documents, stamps and manuscripts. While I believe it will convey a sense of this,

I also intend another implication. Each print is stored in a separate drawer, and it is therefore left to the participant to choose which drawer to open first and there after what order to follow. I am again alluding to my belief that historical time is constructed from a multitude of perspectives which are based, in part, on personal biases. In a way that relates to the earlier mentioned non-sequential writing style of James Joyce, and Italo Calvino, the possible combinations for viewing prints encourages an alternate impression each time a random selection of images is made. When displayed in the traditional manner the tendency is to view pictures by moving sequentially along a wall. The use of the cabinet should decrease the possibility for this linear form of viewing.

The quotes engage the viewer in a form of historical inter-play. Like the disparate elements from history juxtaposed in my prints, the quotes, which also derive from various moments in historical time, are intended to educe or "jolt" an active sense of connection between the past, present and future. Similar to the use of text and image in Schwitters's, Rauschenberg's, and Cornell's art, the quotes do not narrate the prints, but interact with surrounding imagery, forming associations and "burdening them with imagination."

Most of the prints which comprise the exhibit are watercolor monoprints with elements of other techniques. The

method I employ to create these prints is a product of my current technical research. I wanted a watercolor monoprint process that would yield a full range of tonal possibilities. Watercolor monoprint methods I had previously used gave only a marginal degree of color flexibility. It became my goal to develop a process that would yield the gentle washes characteristic of watercolor paintings, while realizing the most vibrant hues possible. By applying planographic techniques relevant to lithography, I was able to develop a reliable form of monoprinting. The resulting method gave a full range of color intensities.

In developing this procedure I recognized that the layering of color, which is a characteristic quality, could be manipulated to suggest layers of meaning. The building of images through successive layers of color enhances this idea. The process itself has become an integral component in the way I express myself artistically. Each layer of color impacts on the previous one, suggesting alternate configurations I might explore.

I begin by laying down a single color. Though it is the initial color, when printed it will be on the surface of the print. This is due to the process of reversal that occurs when the image is transferred from the primary matrix to the printing paper. This characteristic demands that I develop my images backwards. That is to say, I start with the surface of the print and end with the underpainting. This is

directly opposite to the development of a painting where the first layer is the under-painting and successive layers of paint build up to the surface. This condition requires constant awareness for the act of layering. Since the colors I use are primarily transparent glazes, such as those Rauschenberg displays in much of his work, I must take into account the mutable affects of one color on another. As the successive layers build one on top of the other I am able to insert imagery and subtle tonal shifts, orchestrating the degree of visual clarity and definition in an effort to convey meaning.

In the monoprint, <u>Aquitaine and The Blue Scarab</u>, (slide No.1) this manipulation becomes obvious through the implication of spatial depth. Contained in the layers of color are images that fluctuate in and out of the picture-plane like disparate moments of history compressed in visual space. Some of the images are hand-drawn, others are images from old books applied with Rauschenberg's transfer method. They all relate to my exploration of cultural roots envisaged within human history. The bones, animal skeletons, Celtic articles, verbal references to my past, and portions of historic writings from the British Isles combine to resonate with impressions of history, of moments trapped together in time. The incorporation of the bone and skeletal imagery contributes a feeling of archaeological history. This expands the context to a more universal theme. These

archaeological elements are juxtaposed with textual references of an autobiographical nature. Many of the writings relate to events which occur at the time the print is made. Others, such as the mathematical formulae, Norse folklore and passages from the bible, relate to archetypal themes in science, mythology and religion. The large calligraphic "A" shape in the centre represents both the first letter of the Greek alphabet and an element of writing. As the Greek symbol "Alpha" it represents "the beginning," which in this context implies the commencement of historic time. When seen as an element of writing it denotes the presence of human activity in history.

Throughout the exhibit, such elements represent signatures of human endeavour within the passage of history. In this manner the prints act in a journalistic fashion. Not only do they display connections between actual concepts and images taken from history, but they also chronicle my impressions relating to the various images, the random thoughts which occur during composition, as well as autobiographical themes.

Eclipse, (slide No.2) also incorporates archetypes but has an even more autobiographical theme. Inspired by the memory of a solar eclipse, the print resonates with sensations of the incident. They combine with my contemporary impression of the event. By bringing the past into the present and combining one into another, I visually

address Henri Bergson's concept of "duration." In the
Creative Evolution, Bergson outlines the concept of pure
duration as the form assumed by successive states of
consciousness, maintained by a constant connection with
former states of being. As Bergson says:

> Our duration is not merely one instant replacing
> another; if it were, there would never be anything
> but the present - no prolonging of the past into
> the actual, no evolution... Duration is the
> continuous progress of the past... And the past
> grows without ceasing... In reality, the past is
> preserved... In its entirety, probably, it follows
> us at every instant; all that we have felt,
> thought and willed from our earliest infancy is
> there, leaning over the present which is about to
> join it, pressing against the portals of
> consciousness that would fain leave it outside...
> Our personality, which is being built up each
> instant with its accumulated experience, changes
> without ceasing... .[65]

Memories of the eclipse I had seen as a boy inspired me to
convey the time-bound sensations which make up my current
feelings for this "shadowy" event. I sought to place my
remembrances alongside my contemporary perspective.

I witnessed the eclipse through folded pieces of dark
photographic film. I remember a large group of people around
me, who were also standing and staring upwards at the sun
through folded bits of celluloid. The day was very hot and
bright. It was the afternoon. An immense black dog was
running in our midst as the sky darkened and quiet descended

upon the group. Looking back, the scene seems very surrealistic, almost nightmarish.

I have tried to portray this feeling with various formal devices. The skeletal image of an acrid-yellow dog stares out from the print, his ghost-like appearance blending with the darkening landscape. A foreboding darkness rims the print, threatening to engulf the entire image. I have used hot, oppressive colors that barely conceal a multitude of dark images fluctuating in their depths. The images relate in a manner that speaks to the effect of "palimpsest," where, "... one [image] is read through another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship."[66]

Other formal elements also reinforce the theme. I've used universal symbols to chronicle the actual historical event. Most of the hand-written text refers to scientific concepts about solar time and eclipses. The word ECLIPSE, which appears at centre-right, focuses the viewer's impressions towards the theme and any connections they might make with the word. Like Rauschenberg's use of word play, ECLIPSE also has a double meaning here, implying how the passage of time eclipses memory, covering it with the shadow-like veil of forgetfulness. The circles which dominate the graphic elements refer to the sun and other solar bodies. They also insinuate visual notation employed by science. The circle element appears throughout my work

symbolizing the interconnectedness of time.

My thesis exhibition visually represents my exploration into the nature of historical time. The prints encapsulate the assimilation of personal and art historical referents and my individual voice. While certain aspects of my art stem from the referents I have outlined I believe my art is not a mere rewording of outside influences. I have tried to understand these forces and to reinterpret their essence into my own unique visual language. The effect they had on my development was to spark within my mind variations on similar themes relevant to humankind. Through my studies into the affect of these influences the focus of my art and its future direction has begun to grow in new directions.

The prints in my thesis exhibition exist as a form of documentation. Like Bradbury's bottles of dandelion wine, they contain moments of personal passage within the framework of universal themes and are presented in the exhibit in a manner analogous to the storage of historical artifacts. I hope each viewer finds a moment of reflection regarding the interrelationship between the individual leaves of our memories.

ENDNOTES

1.   Henri Focillon, <u>Vie des Formes</u>, Trans., by Charles Beecher Hogan and George Kubler, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 1.

2.   Rudolf Wittkower, <u>Art and Architecture in Italy</u>: <u>1600 to 1750</u>, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1958), p. 73.

3.   Frederick Hartt, <u>Art a History of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture</u>, Vol.II, (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1982), p. 276.

4.   Andrew Robison, <u>Piranesi</u>: <u>Early Architectural Fantasies</u>, (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1986), p. 9.

5.   Kurt Schwitters, "Merz letter," Trans., Ralph Manheim, in <u>The Dada Painters and Poets</u>: <u>An Anthology</u>, Vol.II, Ed. Robert Motherwell, (Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 59.

6.   Schwitters, p. 62.

7.   Schwitters, p. xxviii.

8.   John Elderfield, <u>Kurt Schwitters</u>, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1985), p. 92.

9.   Kynaston McShine, <u>Joseph Cornell</u>, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1980), p. 11.

10.   Bernard Rosenberg, <u>The Vanguard Artist</u>, (New York: Arno Press, 1979), p. 14.

11.   Dorothy Gees Seckler, "The Artist Speaks: Robert Rauschenberg," <u>Art in America</u>, (May/June, 1966), p. 73.

12.   Arthur Hind, <u>Giovanni Battista Piranesi</u>: <u>A Critical Study</u>, (London: The Holland Press, 1922), p. 1.

13.   James Allen Hatfield, <u>The Relationship Between Late Baroque Architecture and Scenography 1703 - 1778</u>: <u>The Italian Influence of Ferdinando and Giuseppe Bibiena, Filippo Juvarra and Giovanni Battista Piranesi</u>, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1980), p. 187.

14.   Robert Rosenblum, <u>19th. Century Art</u>, (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1984), p. 14.

15.   Robison, p. 47.

16.   Robison, p. 9.

17.   Robert Adams, <u>The Roman Stamp</u>, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 184.

18.   Annegreth Nill, "An Interpretation of Hansi," <u>Arts Magazine</u>, Vol.55, (January, 1981), p. 112.

19.   Nill, p. 114.

20.   McShine, p. 11.

21.   Mary Ann Caws, "Joseph Cornell: Diaries and Files," <u>Arts Magazine</u>, Vol.65, (March, 1991), p. 42.

22.   Caws, p. 44.

23.   Dore Ashton, <u>A Joseph Cornell Album</u>, (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), p. 10.

24.   Ashton, p. 15.

25.   Ashton, p. 12.

26.   Janice McCullagh, "Image To Collage, Part One: The Newspaper," <u>Arts Magazine</u>, Vol.60, (December, 1985), p. 85.

27.   Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward A Theory Of Postmodernism," in <u>Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation</u>, Ed. Brian Wallis, (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), pp. 205-209.

28.   Alan Colquhoun, <u>Modernity and the Classical Tradition</u>, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), p. 6.

29.   Eli Bornstein, "Of Time In Art And Nature," in <u>Time As A Human Resource</u>, Ed. E.J. McCullough and R.L. Calder, (Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1991), p. 259.

30.   Roland Barthes, <u>The Photographic Image</u>, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 25.26.

31.   Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh, <u>Collage: Personalities Concepts Techniques</u>, (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1967), p. 61.

32.   Janis, and Rudi Blesh, p. 73.

33.   Elderfield, p. 95.

34. Claude Lévi-Strauss, <u>The Savage Mind</u>, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 21.

35. E.H. Gombrich, "Expression and Communication," in <u>Modern Art and Modernism</u>: <u>A Critical Anthology</u>, Eds. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers Inc., 1982), p. 178.

36. Gombrich, p. 178.

37. Gombrich, p. 178.

38. Charles F. Stuckey, "Reading Rauschenberg," <u>Art in America</u>, (March/April, 1977), p. 81.

39. Dawn Ades, "The Transcendental Surrealism of Joseph Cornell," in <u>Joseph Cornell</u>, Ed. Kynaston McShine, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1980), p. 16.

40. Ades, p. 19.

41. Ades, p. 16.

42. Ades, p. 15.

43. Avery Architectural Library, <u>Giovanni Battista Piranesi</u>: <u>Drawings and Etchings at Columbia University</u>, (New York: Columbia University, 1972), p. 13.

44. Robison, p. 51.

45. Mary Lynn Kotz, <u>Rauschenberg</u>: <u>Art and Life</u>, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), p. 162.

46. Kotz, p. 162.

47. Brian O'Dogerty, "Rauschenberg - The Vernacular Glance," <u>Art in America</u>, (September/October, 1973), p. 86.

48. Janis and Rudi Blesh, p. 61.

49. Elderfield, p. 74.

50. Elderfield, p. 22.

51. Elderfield, p. 69.

52. Janis, and Rudi Blesh, p. 83.

53. Elderfield, p. 68.

54. Elderfield, p. 67.

55.   Elderfield, p. 22.

56.   Elderfield, p. 53.

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58.   S.H. Vatsyayan, <u>A Sense Of Time</u>: <u>An Exploration Of Time In Theory, Experience and Art</u>, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 26.

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62.   Bornstein, p. 258.

63.   Marcel Proust, <u>Remembrance of Things Past</u>: <u>The Past Recaptured</u>, Vol.2, Trans., Frederick A. Blossom, (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 1005.

64.   Ray Bradbury, <u>Dandelion Wine</u>, (New York: Bantam Books, 1979), p. 236.

65.   Henri Bergson, <u>Creative Evolution</u>, Trans., Irwin Edman, (New York: Random House, 1944), p. 6-8.

66.   Owens, p. 205.

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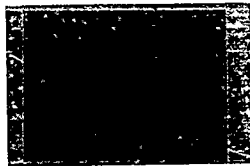Handwritten: *JEREMY MAYNE*
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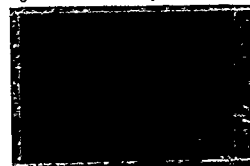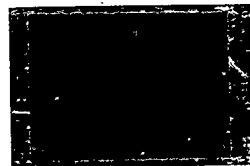Handwritten: *JEREMY MAYNE MFA EXHIBIT 1993 NICKLE MUSEUM CALGARY*

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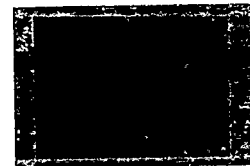WC Monoprint / 1992

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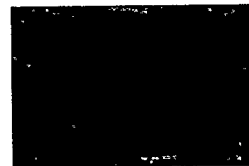
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