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"HEAVENLY BODIES"

A Written Accompaniment to the Thesis Exhibition

by

Edward Allan Bader

A PAPER

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ART

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 Molecular 0609
 Nuclear 0610
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 Radiation 0756
 Solid State 0611
 Statistics 0463

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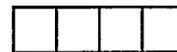
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Transports	0709
Travail social	0452

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Agronomie	0285
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Élevage et alimentation	0475
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Pathologie végétale	0480
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Généralités	0306
Anatomie	0287
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Cellule	0379
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Biophysique	
Généralités	0786
Medicale	0760

Géologie	0372
Géophysique	0373
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Paléocologie	0426
Paléontologie	0418
Paléozoologie	0985
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Économie domestique	0386
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Sciences de la santé	
Généralités	0566
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Alimentation et nutrition	0570
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Dentisterie	0567
Développement humain	0758
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Immunologie	0982
Loisirs	0575
Médecine du travail et thérapie	0354
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Obstétrique et gynécologie	0380
Ophtalmologie	0381
Orthophonie	0460
Pathologie	0571
Pharmacie	0572
Pharmacologie	0419
Physiothérapie	0382
Radiologie	0574
Santé mentale	0347
Santé publique	0573
Soins infirmiers	0569
Toxicologie	0383

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Chimie	
Généralités	0485
Biochimie	487
Chimie agricole	0749
Chimie analytique	0486
Chimie minérale	0488
Chimie nucléaire	0738
Chimie organique	0490
Chimie pharmaceutique	0491
Physique	0494
Polymères	0495
Radiation	0754
Mathématiques	0405
Physique	
Généralités	0605
Acoustique	0986
Astronomie et astrophysique	0606
Électronique et électricité	0607
Fluides et plasma	0759
Météorologie	0608
Optique	0752
Particules (Physique nucléaire)	0798
Physique atomique	0748
Physique de l'état solide	0611
Physique moléculaire	0609
Physique nucléaire	0610
Radiation	0756
Statistiques	0463

Sciences Appliqués Et Technologique

Informatique	0984
Ingénierie	
Généralités	0537
Agricole	0539
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Métallurgie	0743
Science des matériaux	0794
Technique du pétrole	0765
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Techniques sanitaires et municipales	0554
Technologie hydraulique	0545
Mécanique appliquée	0346
Géotechnologie	0428
Matières plastiques (Technologie)	0795
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PSYCHOLOGIE

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Psychologie du comportement	0384
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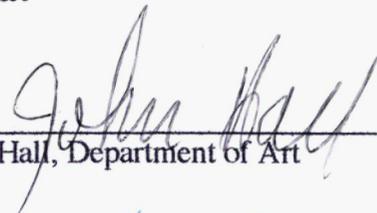


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The undersigned certify that they have viewed and read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, respectively, a Thesis Exhibition and a supporting written paper "Heavenly Bodies". An accompaniment to the Thesis Exhibition, submitted by Edward Allan Bader in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



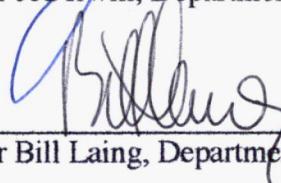
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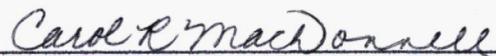
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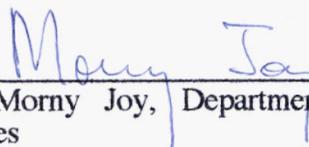
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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the historical and cultural meanings of my visual imagery. It compares and contrasts my use of symbols for the infinite heavens with the finite human body and those of my predecessors and contemporaries.

The first part of the paper examines the rise, the use and the importance of celestial imagery in nineteenth century Romantic art to that of the present day. The notion of the Sublime and its relationship to depictions of the cosmos are discussed. The second section explores the use of the human form as a source of metaphors by which we understand and describe our experience in the natural universe. I examine the use of images of the male body by western culture from ancient Greece to the present day. The paper concludes with an explanation of how my art integrates the unbounded heavens with the bounded physical body.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Peter Deacon for all his encouragement and support over the past two years. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable insights and encouragement from the members of my committee, Carol MacDonnell, Bill Laing, Jed Irwin and John Hall. Finally my family and friends with special thanks to Michael Jorgensen.

DEDICATION

This paper and my thesis exhibition are dedicated to
the memory of my grandmother, Annie Orosz.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Approval page	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Slides of Thesis Exhibition	vii
Introduction	1
I. The Celestial Body	3
II. The Metaphorical Body	10
III. The Antique Body	14
IV. The Christian Body	18
V. The Renaissance Body	19
VI. The Modern Body	22
VII. The Seductive Body	25
VIII. The Creative Body	31
Footnotes	42
References Cited	43
Bibliography	45

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List of Slides of Thesis Exhibition

1. Starfield.....oil on wood.....6 ft. x4 ft.....1992
2. Dawn.....oil on wood.....4 ft. x 6 ft.....1992
3. Ring.....oil on wood.....6ft. x 4 ft.....1992
4. Moon.....oil on wood.....6 ft. x 4 ft.....1992
5. Icarus.....collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
6. Eclipse.....collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
7. Ascend Study.....collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
8. Desire.....collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
9. Matthew.....oil on canvas.....8 ft. x 5 ft.....1993
10. Matthew and Michael.....altered photo-reproduction...22 in. x 30 in.....1993
11. Michael.....oil on canvas.....8 ft. x 5 ft.....1993
12. The Constructed Body I..collage.....22 in x 30 in.....1993
13. The Constructed Body II..collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
14. The Constructed Body III..collage.....22 in x 30 in.....1993
15. The Constructed Body IV..collage.....22 in x 30 in.....1993
16. Sites of Pleasure - Nipple..collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
17. Sites of Pleasure - Ear.....collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
18. Sites of Pleasure - Hair.....collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
19. Sites of Pleasure - Skin.....collage.....22 in. x 30 in.....1993
20. Ascend.....oil on canvas.....5 ft. x 8 ft.....1993
21. The Antique Body.....oil on canvas.....4 ft. x 6 ft.....1993
22. The Christian Body.....oil on canvas.....5 ft. x 8 ft.....1993
23. The Renaissance Body.....oil on canvas.....5 ft. x 8 ft.....1993
24. The Seductive Body.....oil on canvas.....5 ft. x 8 ft.....1993

Introduction

It is very good advice to believe only what an artist does, rather than what he says about his work. (Hockney, 1975, p. 27)

In April 1974, I designed an image for my high school graduation inspired by the poetical text Desiderata, the finished design consisted of a muscular male nude. His face was turned heavenward. His limbs were outstretched. The figure stood in front of a tear-shaped depiction of a celestial landscape. Nineteen years later, a variant of the same design has reappeared in my thesis exhibition Heavenly Bodies. The exhibition consists of a suite of images that depict the cosmos and the male body. The saying: "the more things change, the more they stay the same" could be applicable to myself. After almost two decades of life experience, coupled with the study of art and the production of images, there is a difference, however. For right now the body I depict is my own. I have my hands raised in supplication to the heavens. My body is no longer separate from the cosmos. Instead it is integrated, emerging and disappearing back into a field of stars.

I do not view my support paper as the definitive statement about my art-making activity. For myself the process of creating images is of primary importance. It is the method by which I can investigate and meditate upon aspects of my life, my sense of self and my place in the universe. I see this paper as a tool by which I have been able to explore and examine more closely the sources of my visual imagery, its historical and cultural meanings. In this manner I have been able to compare and contrast my use of the symbols of the infinite heavens and the finite human body with those of my predecessors and contemporaries.

The first part of the paper examines the rise, the use, and the importance of celestial

imagery in nineteenth century Romantic art to that of the present day. The notion of the Sublime and its relationship to depictions of the cosmos are discussed. The second section explores the use of the human form as a source of metaphors by which we understand and describe our experience in the natural universe. I explore, in particular, the use of images of the male body by western culture from ancient Greece to the present day. The paper concludes with an examination of how my art integrates my interest in the unbounded heavens with the bounded physical body.

I. The Celestial Body

The omnipresence of the sky and the celestial phenomena that occurred in the azure heavens of my prairie childhood form the core upon which my art-making activity has been based. My mind is rich in memories of heavenly events such as the prairie sky on a mid-winter's night with the silver girdle of the Milky Way, the dancing multi-colored northern lights, or a lunar eclipse that turned the moon a rusty red. The daytime sky was no less active. On hot August afternoons thunderstorms would roll across the plains. One summer while seeking relief from the heat in the cool waters of an irrigation ditch, my siblings and I were startled by a roar from the North. A brilliant fireball, a meteor, streaked across the clear blue sky and over the yellow fields of wheat. Another time, I observed a huge golden ring around the sun with four beacons of light. My father, a deeply religious man, explained to me that I was seeing angels. Therefore, in my mind, a natural phenomenon, a sundog, was connected with the world of the divine.

The contemplation of nature as a means to experience the divine was the cornerstone of the nineteenth century concept of the Sublime. Edmund Burke, a late eighteenth century thinker, first discussed the Sublime as:

the passion caused by the great and sublime in nature is astonishment; and astonishment is the state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror: in this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other nor by the consequence reason on that object which employs it (Sweeny, 1977, p. 42).

Believers in the concept of the Sublime felt that serious art dealt with the noblest and most powerful themes. Terrible and grand scenes of mountains exemplified majesty, while broad vistas and seemingly infinite spaces provoked a sense of awe and humility.

The notion of the Sublime encompasses a desire for transcendence via mystic union

with nature or its embrace through death (Sunderland, 1975 p. 32).

In the early nineteenth century, the influence of Burke's ideas endowed landscape painting with a new spiritual meaning. With the industrial revolution and a growing emphasis on science, as more traditional beliefs declined; faith in nature became a form of religion (Hirsch, 1969, p. 35). The investment of nature with new significance, coincided with and perhaps instigated the rise of the Romantic movement. Instead of being detached from the world, the Romantic artist was actively involved and sought new adventures with boundless curiosity, reacting to the world around him in an intense, personal manner. The artist saw himself as a lone rebel and experimenter probing beyond the status quo (Hirsch, 1969, p. 29). By investigating and studying the merest leaf or the highest peak one could evoke a variety of emotions (Hirsch, 1969, p. 57). Especially valued were the emotions of fear and awe suggested by depictions of the void or infinity. The result was that the heavens and their celestial bodies became important elements in landscape paintings.

The paintings of the nineteenth century's foremost romantic landscape artists, J.M.W. Turner (1776-1851) and Caspar David Friedrich (1774 -1840) embody these concerns. Turner was fascinated by the golden orb of the sun and its light, seeking to capture in his pictures all its ephemeral effects. Turner studied nature closely. After meditating upon it, he used his observations of natural forms as the basis for poetic metaphors to express ideas and feelings. Friedrich also shared this concern with individual introspection before nature. But his intent was different as he sought to convey Christian and moral truths. He depicted landscape subjects such as the setting sun or the rising moon. Friedrich saw celestial imagery as reflecting God's grandeur.

These concepts continued to be powerful in German art long after Romanticism had waned. Despite successive waves of artistic influence from France - Naturalism, Impress-

ionism, and Post-Impressionism in the late nineteenth century - paintings were still predominantly read as illustrations of philosophical concepts such as Idealism or Romanticism (Dube, 1972, pp. 7 - 17). For example, Van Gogh's vivid landscapes were usually seen as part of the Romantic tradition and understood as expressions of his love of nature, of God, and of humankind (Dube, 1972, pp. 15). At the turn of the century, many German artists rejected the contemporary world of urban culture, and the moral stuffiness and repressive politics of the late Hapsburg dynasty. They turned inward (Dube, 1972, p. 15). Seeking meaning outside of traditional belief systems, many became interested in a transcendental abstraction based on a spiritualized view of nature (Hughes, 1981, p. 299).

A focal point, for several artists of this persuasion, was the Blue Rider group. The Blue Rider was founded by Wassily Kandinsky(1866-1944), in Munich in 1911. Kandinsky was an ardent Theosophist who believed that the Millennium was approaching and a new age of spirituality was dawning (Hughes, 1981, p. 299). The physical world was seen to be losing its importance. The material world clouded men's perception of the spirit. Kandinsky believed in creating an abstract art that would prepare people to think and see in terms of immaterial form (Hughes, 1981, p. 299). Kandinsky wrote in 1912 in his seminal text, Concerning The Spiritual In Art, that the role of the artist was to evoke the basic rhythms of the universe that had an imaginable relationship to inner states of mind (Hughes, 1981, p. 299). Kandinsky was simply restating a Romantic idea in new terms. Paul Klee(1879-1940), a fellow member of the Blue Rider group and lifelong friend of Kandinsky wrote...

The relation of art to creation is symbolic. Art is an example, just as the earthly is an example of the cosmic (Schmalenbach, 1986, p. 24).

Klee viewed the world as a model to demonstrate spiritual truths. In this regard, Klee saw himself continuing the German Romantic tradition begun by Friedrich. Klee's work contains many traditional romantic motifs such as flat mirroring seas, stands of jagged pines, mountains, and the heavens above (Hughes, 1981, p. 299). Klee uses these elements in his 1919 oil, Cosmic Composition. Over a background of colored squares is superimposed a linear framework. The linear elements are childlike renderings of the traditional Romantic icons: Trees, stars, the sun and the moon. In the center of the composition is the sun. Above it floats a single omniscient eye. The eye could be a symbol for the creator of all these things, either God or the artist himself. Klee often compared artmaking to God making creation itself. For the artist contemplation of nature or a painting enabled one to see the divine order of the universe.

Friedrich's influence is seen in the work of other early modernists such as Max Ernst (1891-1976). As a young man, Ernst had become an admirer of Friedrich's work and thought (Schneede, 1973, p. 66). Friedrich's effect on Ernst can be seen in an early work such as Landscape With Sun, 1909, with its schematic approach to landscape. The canvas shows the sun over a plain or the sea. A late painting, A Beautiful Morning, 1965, has a similar composition. The canvas is again divided into two zones: red earth and yellow sky. In the sky a minute blue star floats. The simplicity of this composition reminds one of Friedrich's Monk By The Sea, 1809-10. In this oil, Friedrich depicts a huge limitless expanse of space: The sky and the ocean. It is framed by a narrow band of earth. Here a lone monk stands with his back to us. He contemplates the infinite space. The landscape elements have taken on the symbolic meanings of the Sublime. Humankind, in this case the monk who traditionally renounced the world to seek enlightenment, may experience the divine by contemplating the void denoted by sky and sea. So too, in Ernst's canvases we meditate on the vast space of the heavens. The viewer is left alone to project into the

interstellar vastness, with a single star to guide him. Of the subject matter in these oils Ernst writes that when...

you turn your eyes upwards, you are overwhelmed by the revelation of another, equally wonderful world. The significance of suns, moons, constellations, nebulae, galaxies and space as a whole outside the earth zone have steadily taken root in human consciousness as well as in my own work, and will probably remain there (Waldam, 1975, p. 34).

Ernst believed that the viewer is overwhelmed by the cosmic void and will experience what the Romantics called "Naturgefühl," emotion in the face of nature (Rosenblum, 1984, p. 86). A similar approach to art-making is found in the work of contemporary Canadian artist, Otto Rogers (1935-present). Much of Rogers' imagery, technique and ideas about art echo those of Kandinsky and Klee. Rogers writes that art is a set of symbols that act...

as a bridge between the world of matter and the world of spirit, innovation in the way the elements such as color, texture, and shape are used in relationship to principles such as proportion and movement can lead to an art which is deeply moving and reflective of high ideals (Rogers, 1991, p. 15).

Rogers, a Baha'i¹, believes that art is an act of worship and a form of meditation. He states that "the contemplation of art works, even the works by one's own hand, is a source of illumination and edification of the soul" (Rogers, 1991, p. 19). Rogers can be seen as a contemporary spokesperson for the Romantic tradition, wherein contemplation of the natural world can reveal inner truths. The artist writes that...

One of the most frequent phenomena that artists place before this mirror of the meditative faculty is landscape - so diverse and rich in detail and yet so consistent in its general framework of earth, water, air and sky. The earth... is also the most perfect metaphor, within which the human spirit can travel in the company of the mind (Rogers, 1991, p. 19).

The heavens play an important part in Rogers' work. In Blue Morning 1975, the azure heavens dominate the composition. A series of scattered black points float in this blue field. They draw the viewer to the horizon described by a thin orange line. As in Friedrich's and Ernst's work we meditate on the void. Rogers' semi-abstract depiction of sunrise is a symbol for personal illumination and insight into the divine.

Like Rogers, New York based artist Jack Goldstein (1945-present), has portrayed phenomena such as stars, lightning and the landscape. His paintings are a record of a primal human interaction with nature. They fill the spectator with wonder and awe. Goldstein recasts the nineteenth century concept of the Sublime. Unlike Friedrich, Ernst or Rogers who found the Sublime in the face of nature, Goldstein believes we can locate it in the realm of images produced by contemporary technology. Goldstein's images are appropriated from magazine photographs which draw upon the elements of spectacle contained in movies or television. The artist uses scientific sources such as infrared photography, or computer generated imagery ranging from solar flares to human skin. These sources are seen not merely as information or perceptions of possible experience. Instead they are viewed like nature as an experience that stimulates the imagination. Technology is the absent reference point by which inaccessible experiences and unseeable events are reproduced as seductive, spectacular visual records (Tousley, 1992, p. 89). The subject matter of Goldstein's paintings is similar to those used by Romantic artists to describe awe and transcendence in the face of uncontrollable forces. The artist depicts lightning storms, volcanic eruptions, celestial bodies and the destruction of cities by aerial bombardment. In Goldstein's work there is an absence of a personal touch. Assistants execute the canvases with airbrushes to reproduce the smooth, seamless surfaces that are present in mechanical photo-reproduction, film or television. Goldstein presents the viewer

with fragments of the high technology images our post-industrial culture produces. The artist says that...

the heightened sense of reality in...painting is just about sense of artificiality that undermines any sense of conventional transcendentalism. The pleasure of the beauty of the image is countered by the unpleasure of its elusiveness (Gudis, 1989, p. 32).

Goldstein's work comments on how technology has mediated and transformed our perception of reality. Technology and the mass media, instead of nature are the contemporary means by which we experience the sublime. For example in Untitled, 1990, the artist depicts an image of human skin that has been scanned and transformed into a digital representation. Unlike our nineteenth century Romantic predecessors, who would contemplate the merest leaf, we now meditate on the microcosmic world made visible to the human eye by our technology.

The void has expanded exponentially on both the macro- and microcosmic scale. Thus perhaps in an effort to make sense of these expansions, Goldstein has turned to the one thing whose boundaries we can still define: the body. Goldstein's painting of skin is both unsettling and reassuring. It causes unease because it suggests that our technology has so removed and alienated us from nature, that we do not directly experience or cannot recognize images of our own physical bodies. Instead we relate to the human body in a remote, fleeting manner. Yet at the same time we are comforted by the fact that Goldstein equates the contemplation of a piece of human flesh with that of the celestial void. Both can be a sublime experience. The image of the human body, even in this abstracted, fragmented form, is used as it always has been, as a source of metaphors by which we understand and interpret our world.

II. The Metaphorical Body

In our high-tech world of the Hubble Space telescope, electron microscope and the many possible, alternative universes of computer-generated cyber-reality, humanity still refers to the human body as the primary source of metaphors, to explain and describe our experience. For example: galaxies have arms and electrons leap from one orbital to the next. The grammar of the body corresponds to the grammar of the cosmos (Broadbent, 1975, pp. 304 - 305).

Our knowledge and experience of the body in a large part shapes our understanding of the world around us. Ted Polhemus in The Body as a Medium of Expression (1975) writes:

that societies take raw objects and transform them into artifacts pregnant with social meaning; and of course, the body is the object par excellence for such an exercise for obvious reasons (p. 27).

In Western European culture the body is initially thought of as a static visual image following quite specific representational conventions. It is usually an image made of stone, not flesh, like the Greek Apollo or Michelangelo's David. Next to come to mind are the still schematic images of modern anatomical science. These diagrams are "animated by a physiology which is curiously timeless in that all its processes are seen more as cycles than as histories" (Mac Rae, 1975, p. 63). Only then do we perceive the body as self - vulnerable, loving, eating and excreting- which eventually decays and perishes. It is only after recognizing our own body that we then acknowledge the bodies of others.

Our first perception of the body is as an immobile, upright, basically bilaterally symmetrical form. This contradicts everyday experience. Most of the time we are slouched, crouched, seated, bent in movement, or reclining during rest or sleep (Mac Rae, 1975, p. 63). This convention of seeing the body as symmetrical and upright is of primary importance. Donald Mac Rae, in his 1975 essay, The Body as Social Metaphor, elaborates...

From the symmetry of this erectness we derive our categories of direction- up-down, left-right, before-behind, over-under and beside. Our concepts of relations in space come not only from our binocular vision but above all from our experience of a fixed eye-level above a fixed ground. ... Certainly our ideas of dominance are all connected with the visual dominance of our erect postures. Both our categories for classifying and dealing with space manipulation and organization and our emotions about space and the values we attach to direction in space, derive directly from the body form (p. 64).

Some of the metaphors that arise from this historical conception of the upright human figure are that...

what is superior is up or high and what is inferior is down or low...Right is law, morals, the holy and the strong; left is sinister, profane, weak and (often) feminine. Backward and behind are slow, hence stupid. Forward and in front are active, oriented and intelligent (p. 64).

The human body is not static, however. We experience it also as a dynamic, three-dimensional form moving through space and time. The result is that we can measure our world either through the body's movement or by its dimensions. Ideas of measure, proportion, and scale originate from the human form. Man "really is the measure of all things if only because we have nothing and no one else through which to experience the

world from inside outwards" (Mac Rae, p. 64). The body envisioned as static and experienced in kinesthetic motion is itself a source of metaphors which we can use in our interpretation of both nature and culture. An illustration of this is the symbol of Vitruvian man as depicted by Renaissance artists, notably Leonardo da Vinci. The image originates from the ancient writer Vitruvius (Walters, 1978, p. 101), and consists of a nude male, standing with limbs outstretched. The figure is inscribed in a circle and a square. This likeness contains many of the Renaissance's varied notions about the body. The figure has two focal points, the first being the head, home of our main sense organs and the seat of reasoning; and the second being the pelvic area. The groin or navel whose center coincides with that of the geometric frame, makes reference to human physical needs and appetites. The visual tension between these two centers "symbolizes the basic antagonism between the spiritual and animal nature of man" (Arnheim, 1982, p. 99). The other key element is the use of mathematical figures, a square and a circle, as geometric symbols of perfection. This superimposed geometry refers to the Renaissance belief in the metaphysical significance of the body's proportions. The ideal body reflects the proportions of the whole universe. Thus Vitruvian man was a symbol of the harmony between macrocosm and microcosm, God and humankind (Walters, 1978, p. 101). Vitruvian Man shows how metaphors derived from the body are complex yet clear.

Like the body itself, these metaphors exist in society and history. Most of them predate modern biology and science, a creation less than five-hundred years old (Mac Rae, 1975, p. 63). The use of Vitruvian man as a symbol of human perfection is rooted in what Kenneth Clark, in The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form, 1953, described as...

the diffused memory of that peculiar physical type which was developed in Greece between the years 480 and 440

B.C. and which, in varying degrees of intensity and consciousness, furnished the mind of Western man with a pattern of perfection from the Renaissance to the present century (p. 35).

This illustrates how the notion of the body as a "pattern of perfection" (Clark, 1953, p. 35) is based on a...

communally, shared knowledge of how a "healthy", or a "beautiful", or an "erotic body" is defined by the members of a particular society (or a group of people within a society) (Polhemus, 1975, p.27).

Margaret Walters in The Male Nude: A New Perspective (1978) brings to our attention that in Western culture it is men who have used the male nude of a "peculiar physical type"(Clark, 1953, p. 35), as a symbol to define what is "ideal". She writes...

it would be possible, if paradoxical, to argue that in Clark's initial definition, the nude is always male. It is the male and not the female body that becomes a symbol of order and harmony between human and divine, the male that embodies man's supreme cultural values. However hard Clark tries to distinguish a celestial Venus from her purely erotic and earthly sister, the fact remains that there is no female equivalent to Apollo or Christ (pp. 12 - 13).

This insight reveals to us that the male nude can be read as a sign of masculine power, embodying the values, ideals and aspirations of patriarchal, Western culture. Therefore to understand contemporary images of the male body it is necessary to examine influential, historical precedents.

III. The Antique Body

From today's Calvin Klein "boy-toy" models, to the Renaissance's David, to their ancestor, the antique Greek's Apollo, the representations of the male body in Western art follow a certain set of conventions, contain particular metaphors, and embody specific thoughts and ideas. The nude, athletic male is the "peculiar physical type" (Clark, 1953, p.35), Western culture views as the ideal. It has long symbolized our culture's highest aspirations and values that originate in ancient Greece.

The central image in Greek art from its archaic beginning to its decline was the body of Apollo. Apollo was envisioned as a perfectly beautiful nude male. As the god of light, he embodied the ideas of calmness, clarity, reason and justice (Clark, 1953, p. 55). In Greek culture Apollo was the symbol of the idealized self (Walters, 1978, p. 39). For the Greeks, abstract ideas such as Truth, Beauty and Goodness were believed to make themselves known through visible signs such as material success, great accomplishments, and physical perfection (Wright, 1980, p.250. The beautiful - "Kalos", was equated with the good - "Agathos", and bodily beauty aroused an almost religious awe (Walters, 1978, p. 44) for it was seen as evidence of god-like moral and intellectual pre-eminence. The patient development of the body by athletic exercise and its testing in competition was viewed as the root of all virtue - "Arete", and a metaphor for self-development (Wright, 1980, p. 25). The ancients placed great emphasis on displaying, perfecting, and evaluating the body in competition with other men. The great athletic contests, the Olympics, were more than a sporting event. Instead they had great cultural significance extending into the areas of citizenship, ethics, religion and philosophy (Wright, 1980, p. 25). As most Greek cities were in a permanent state of war readiness, athletics served to prepare the young male citizen for military service. For the Greek male the gymnasium was the center of his personal, social, and communal life. The cultivation of strength and health was an act of

piety (Wright, 1980, p. 25). The joy of athletics was not in the doing; instead the winner took all the honour and glory. The loser experienced shame at his physical failings and felt the contempt of others towards his weakness (Wright, 1980, p. 25). In ancient Greece...

weakness is suppressed, or caricatured, because it is feared. ... Youth, strength and beauty are permanent only in stone or bronze. Investing everything in bodily values, the Greeks are haunted by a sense of instability and impermanence...For even the most triumphant hero will finally meet a younger more powerful man. Death lies in wait for everyone; but even an untimely death may seem more preferable to the slow decay of strength and the humiliations of senility (Walters, 1978, p. 45).

The perfected body was of utmost importance as it was seen as the "essential being and the soul a mere shadow" (Walters, 1978, p. 44) for after death, men were mere phantoms concerned only with the fate of their corpse and their memory on earth.

Thus Apollo, symbol of the ideal man, was depicted with a mature, graceful body that integrated the two other prevalent physical types in Greek art. His image combines the adolescent body of Ganymede, full of promise of virile strength, with the hard, muscular body of Herakles on the verge of decay (Pronger, 1992, p. 158). Apollo's image was derived from observations of the gymnasium's athletes combined with the fifth century Greek discovery of mathematical proportions as the foundation of beauty (Wright, 1980, p. 25). The representation of Apollo is therefore a human construction of an abstract, ideal body which takes "the most sensual and immediately interesting object, the human body, and puts it out of the reach of time and desire" (Clark, 1953, p. 50).

A fine example of Apollo as the ideal physical type is the Poryphoros by Polykleitos, c.450-440 B.C. Polykleitos was a sculptor of athletes who codified a system of

mathematical proportion that could be applied to the human form (Richter, 1959, p. 120). The sculptor depicts a square jawed, broad-shouldered youth whose body has a slight twist as he rests his weight on one leg, while the other is to the side and backwards. In one hand he holds a lance, while the other is lowered. The figure is nude because Greek athletes wore no clothes. Nudity was viewed as a sign of civilization that set them apart from their barbarian neighbors.

The influence of geometry can be detected in Polykleitos' carving of the torso. It is rectangular, with square pectoral muscles, a row of well defined abdominal muscles and exaggerated obliques, which lie above the pelvis and mark the junction of the thighs and the torso. This sculpture is a combination of natural observation tempered with an overlay of mathematical idealization. The result is a serene image, full of refinement, with the implied potential for movement that is a paean to the power of physical beauty as a mirror of the divine.

In the fourth century B.C., the Greeks, disillusioned and spiritually exhausted by the Peloponnesian War, questioned the high ideals, clarity and reason symbolized by Apollo. Increasingly Greek art focused on the personal and emotional content inherent in a subject (Uhlenbuock, 1986, p. 11). The body of Apollo was replaced by the overly muscular body of Herakles. The myth of Herakles' twelve labours and his persecution by the goddess Hera were seen to portray the human condition. In earlier times, Herakles' rough, defiant character, and "his propensity for fits of rage and almost unbridled violence" (Uhlenbuock, 1986, p. 10) were seen as excessive, the opposite of the Apollonian ideal. At a later date, Herakles was seen instead as a tragic figure. Persecuted, and in spite of human failings, his indomitable spirit and passion for order and justice enabled him to endure severe emotional and physical stress before finally receiving his just reward (Uhlenbuock, 1986, p. 11). The image of Herakles' weary, overdeveloped body became a

symbol of human suffering and salvation, its appeal lasting not only through the Hellenistic and Roman eras, but surviving in the guise of the biblical strongman Samson into the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and beyond (Clark, 1953, p. 254).

IV. The Christian Body

With the decline of Hellenistic civilization and the advent of Christianity with its contempt for the unclothed body, representations of the male nude disappeared, for the naked form was associated with sex, sin and death. As Christianity developed its own iconography, the thoughts formerly expressed by the nude found new forms. Apollo, Herakles, and the other antique gods and the ideals they embodied appeared fully clothed in "timid and pitiful disguises, so that their real significance is lost" (Clark, 1953, p. 255). Images of Apollo's divine clarity and Herakles' tragic suffering were supplanted for over a thousand years by Christ's crucified body. The likeness of Christ, Son of God and embodiment of the divine who had become human, was a lodestone for Western culture. The male body was again a controlled, canonized symbol of the divine. The word had become flesh, but the flesh was hated. In stark contrast to the serene, muscular body of Apollo, the body of Christ expresses pathos and pain. The image of the Crucifixion, its origins obscure, evolved from early representations which show Christ naked save for a loincloth, erect, frontal and emotionless, to the emaciated, writhing, tortured bodies of the German Gothic (Clark, 1953, pp. 306-309). Christ's body is stretched, sagging, scarred, mutilated and violated. Christ's image was used as a meditative tool to stimulate one's faith, remove one from daily routines and awaken the consciousness of one's spiritual nature. In Christianity, the body was the soul's cage that was to be transcended. The afterlife and its promises of salvation and escape from earthly suffering was the primary focus.

V. The Renaissance Body

The hostility to pagan beauty prevented most attempts to adapt the nude male body to Christian themes. But during the fifteenth century in Italy the rise of a Christianized Neoplatonism resulted in a revival of imagery depicting the naked body.

Renaissance humanists applied the platonic idea that love of physical beauty may lead us to love of the divine, so celebrating the strength and beauty of the human form was analogous to worshipping God (Walters, 1978, p. 79). The combination of an interest in antique imagery with the medieval habits of symbolism and personification resulted in a revival of the male nude as an appropriate subject for art.

As in ancient Greece, it was through observation of the live male body that artists developed their knowledge of anatomy and proportion. A renewed sense that sublime concepts could be expressed by the naked body resulted in the male nude being used as a metaphor for revealing spiritual beauty. The gothic body of Christ was laid to rest and the classical body of Apollo was resurrected in its place.

The work of Michelangelo (1475 - 1564) is a celebration of the nude male body as a reflection of the divine. Margaret Walters (1978) notes that Michelangelo's...

personal preoccupation with masculinity makes explicit the masculine bias of both classical and Christian culture. The commonplaces of the Christian myth are taken with absolute, intense literalness. God creates man in his own image, is incarnated in the male body and takes on masculine flesh again when he comes to judge the world. Divine power - passing from God to Adam and reflected in the artist's own genius is paternal, is phallic (p. 29).

Michelangelo's combination of traditional Christian themes with Neo-platonic teachings, which he had assimilated in his teens, provided the rationale by which he could depict the male nude and endow it with spiritual as well as personal meanings.

Apollo, as the ancient image of the idealized self, returns to life in Michelangelo's sculpture of David, 1503. The artist's interest in philosophy, naturalistic observations and knowledge of the antique result in David being an expression of both the classic model of man and the Renaissance concept of the individual. The artist identified with the biblical story of David. David, the young shepherd boy who goes out alone to prove himself to kin and countrymen and wins everlasting glory was to Michelangelo a symbol of his own artistic struggles (Walters, 1978, p. 138). The Greek notion of testing one's self to achieve "arete" (honor), also comes to mind. Stripped nude, a sign that he is God's warrior, the form of David's torso echoes that of the ancient Greek Apollo. David assumes a similar stance to Polykleitos's Apollo. The figure is also a unique individual. His limbs are long and gawky like those of a real adolescent. His face is anxious and frowning, not serene like his classical forebear (Walters, 1978, p. 139). David has enlarged hands with swollen veins and muscles that belong to a stoneworker, not a classical athlete. Michelangelo's identification with the biblical hero is confirmed by the inscription on David's arm: "David with the sling and I with the bow" (Clements, 1968, p. 46). By the blending of antique with Christian thought, the artist uses the male body as a metaphor to convey deeply felt, personal thoughts and emotions.

Another example is found in the artist's many depictions of Christ's resurrection. This theme fascinated Michelangelo as it was a way of exploring his...

dread of death, and the wasting away of the mortal body. It reflects his deep unconscious wish for the magical undoing of the suffering that awaited the sinner after death. (Liebert, 1983, p. 284).

The Resurrection , a chalk drawing in the British Museum is the apogee of the artist's investigation. The risen Christ with his Apollonian body, a mirror of the divine, conforming closely to our modern ideals of physical grace (Clark, 1953, p. 399), drifts slowly heavenward to become a guiding light for the artists following in Michelangelo's wake.

VI. The Modern Body

Fortified and inspired by Michelangelo's example, countless artists produced thousands of images of the male body. The male body was depicted as mannerist decoration, portrayed with a fleshy sensuality in the Baroque, feminized during the Rococo period, recovering some of its vigor during Neo-classicism only to wither away into the lifeless academic nudes of the nineteenth century.² The male body became one of the many devalued symbols that no longer embodied real human needs and experiences (Clark, 1953, p. 52), with the result that the sanctity of such notions as "ideal" beauty was attacked. The nude body, both male and female, was distorted, dehumanized, dissected and disembodied as it was assaulted by the successive movements of cubism, futurism, surrealism to almost completely disappear during the hey-day of high modernism. There was a clear trend: until mid-century, there was a retreat from the body as a source of fascination for visual artists. Images of the male body however, are not totally absent in twentieth century art. Various artists have used it for a number of reasons ranging from nostalgia to the pressure of sexual feeling.

The body of Apollo can be found, for example, in the many paintings and prints of the American artist and illustrator Rockwell Kent (1882 - 1971). For Kent the classical well-muscled body was the perfect icon to express the obsession early twentieth-century, American males had with displaying Vigor and Manliness (Traxel, 1980, p. 22). Interest in these concerns was a product of the frontier mentality and the nostalgia resulting from its closing (Traxel, 1980, p. 22). The wilderness and athletics provided the most convenient arenas for display of these ideals.

Therefore, in much of Kent's oeuvre, athletic male nudes are placed in wild northern landscapes contemplating the earth or the heavens. The artist's discovery of the poetry,

prose and graphic work of William Blake encouraged Kent to use the classical body as a symbolic motif to express metaphysical concerns. In the oil, To The Universe, 1919, the artist has painted a nude male who has short blonde curly hair and the ideal Apollonian body. The man stands with his back towards the viewer and his arms outstretched. The right hand touches an icy clear waterfall. In the left he raises a silver chalice, toasting the azure heavens. The Apollonian body, traditional metaphor of both masculine power and divine reason and light is echoed by the pristine clarity of the landscape the figure inhabits. To The Universe is a joyful restating of the nineteenth century concept of the Sublime being found in nature. For in this canvas, like those of Friedrich, a lone finite human is contemplating the divine symbolized by the infinite void of ocean and night sky.

The integration of the male figure into the landscape was also a concern of Canadian artist John Clark (1943 - 1989). Trained as a modernist, Clark assimilated many diverse influences such as Matisse, Picasso's classical figures of the nineteen-twenties, de Chirico and Philip Guston. Clark was "astutely aware of the irreversibly altered role of figurative content after the impact of modernist abstraction" (Nowlin, 1989, p. 3) and its emphasis on surface and reductive form. Questioning high modernism's precepts, the artist dealt with what he felt was a pressing problem in contemporary painting: "the hidden presence of the void" (Nowlin, 1989, p. 3) His resolution of the formal issues relating to depicting space in a painting while still emphasizing modernism's concern with painting being a two-dimensional object is found in the lushly textured Guardian Of The Valley. Clark depicts, in simplified outline, a male nude with a shepherd's crook in hand contemplating a landscape. The figure seeks to reconcile himself with the world, or possibly the divine, since the Romantics saw broad vistas like valleys as mystical voids. The figure also mingles quite literally for both it and the surrounding landscape are rendered in thick im-

pasto oil. Clark also questioned the idea of union with nature. In many of his canvases he portrays the male figure plummeting to earth. Like Icarus of classical mythology who flew close to the sun, contemporary man is alienated from both the divine and nature and falls from grace.

Images of the human body in vast ambiguous space can also be found in the series of Swimmer drawings done in the early nineteen-eighties by Montreal artist Betty Goodwin. Instead of the static, classical ideal the body is depicted as self; vulnerable, loving, excreting and capable of feeling pain. The human form is fragmented and almost gothic as it is part human and part animal. These delicately rendered bodies float or sink into a transparent, fluid space. These drawings originate in the artist's...

many, many photographs, while I was on a holiday of swimmers. I was clicking the camera over and over again. I came up with images that were a good point of departure for the body being fragmented. Water is all giving but treacherous, I like that dichotomy, it became connected with a whole lot of other experiences in my head (Freedman, 1984, p. 38).

Goodwin's placement of the body in water, symbol of both purity, life-giving yet dangerous allows her to discuss notions of the body's fragility. The human form is used as a metaphor to convey very personal insights into the emotional states and the pain inherent in somewhat tenuous human relationships. Goodwin's work exemplifies how notions of an "ideal" body as a symbol of the divine have been challenged in twentieth century art.

VII. The Seductive Body

The idealized male nude is rare in twentieth century art. The classic body, once a living symbol, has become instead an image of plastic perfection used in seductive, contemporary advertising.

In the mid-eighties, there appeared in New York's Times Square a new modern image of David. He was an over two story tall photographic reproduction of a bronzed, muscular model taken in Greece. He sported a pair of white Calvin Klein briefs. His torso, like the gothic Christ, is marred by a small scar, the result of surgery to remove his appendix. The body of Apollo/Christ had returned, but instead of a symbol of divine perfection and moral edification, it was now an object of desire. As John Berger, in Ways Of Seeing, (1972) has observed...

there are many direct references in publicity to works of art from the past. ... Publicity images often use sculptures or paintings to lend allure or authority to their message. ... Any work of art quoted by publicity serves two purposes... The quoted work of art (and this is why it is so useful to publicity) says two almost contradictory things at the same time: it denotes wealth and spirituality: it implies that the purchase being proposed is both a luxury and a cultural value (pp. 134 - 135).

How ironic it is that the traditionally nude body of Apollo is used as a tool to sell something so mundane as underwear by "playing on and promising to satisfy the spectator's sexual frustrations and material discontents" (Walters, 1978, p. 257). Our modern day David does not confront the viewer; instead he averts his gaze, allowing you to enjoy him as a piece of aestheticized flesh (Ruebsaat, 1993, p. C4). The objectified "ideal physical type" of Western culture is now a source of anxiety instead of inspiration. To feminist critics, the

Apollonian body is a sign of patriarchy as symbolizing all the negative values such as competition, male power etc. associated with the antique Greek and Renaissance societies of its origin. Contemporary advertising images of the male body are perceived as....

clever, occasionally manipulative (coercive) modes of persuasion that channel the gender/power discussion back into the mainstream discourse of Capitalism by adding male sexuality to the array of available consumer products (Ruebsaat, 1993, p. C4).

Modern images of Apollo are aimed at a mainly male audience. With the impact of both feminism and "the decline in the sheer number of manual workers in America, and the tendency to devalue manual work and traditional definitions of masculinity" (Walters, 1978, p. 294) this could explain the leap in popularity of images, especially photographic, of the muscular male. As part of this reaction increasing numbers of men work out in gyms striving to achieve the Apollonian body. Paradoxically...

body-building is the most purely narcissistic and, in that sense, the most feminine, of pastimes. The body-builder's goal is appearance not action. ... The muscle magazines themselves insist that what they do is art as much as sport, and vaguely invoke Michelangelo and classical nudes (Walters, 1978, pp. 294 - 295).

So the David of Times Square retains "key male signifiers - the square jaw, the Adam's apple, upper body strength" (Ruebsaat, 1993, p. C4) and so forth as emblems of masculine gender and power.

To a male homosexual viewer these signs can be read in a radically different way. The body of Apollo is seen as an erotic object: a site of potential pleasure. The male body,

traditionally a sign of patriarchy, is contradicted. Brian Pronger, in The Arena Of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality And The Meaning Of Sex, 1992 describes this as the gay paradox. He elaborates...

by definition, homoeroticism emerges out of the gender myth - a man could not eroticize men if there wasn't such a mythic category. Gender is fundamentally a patriarchal heterosexual distinction:...the erotic confirmation of difference. The essence of manhood lies in its difference from womanhood; the eroticization of gender affinity violates the preeminence of difference and therefore manhood. ...Because it both embraces and violates masculinity homoeroticism is paradoxical eroticism. A homosexual man is a paradoxical man (p. 275).

Therefore the ideal body of Western culture is interpreted in an ironic manner. Instead of being seen as a symbol of divinity, power and patriarchal heterosexual masculinity (one that overwhelms women in observance of the gender myth and to defeat other men) the body is viewed as "an invitation to the mythic violation of masculinity, welcoming the irony and the ecstasy of the homoerotic paradox" (Pronger, 1992, p. 276).

The notion of the homoerotic paradox can be found in the work of contemporary gay artists such as Francis Bacon (1902 - 1992), David Hockney (1937 - present) and Canadian artist Attila Richard Lukacs (1962 - present). Throughout his long career Francis Bacon's primary subject matter was the male body. Men are clothed in the institutional photographs of athletes: wrestlers, boxers, hockey players or cyclists. The males in Bacon's oils are not the serene classical ideal. Instead they are in anguish.

Their faces scream in pain and the body is presented in a constant state of flux, fluid, twisting and moving through space. Bacon's paintings that are traditionally read in formal terms or as narratives are instead viewed by Ernst van Alphen, Francis Bacon And The Loss Of Self, 1992 as a ...

representation of the male body [that] does not construct a masculine identity. On the contrary, Bacon's works show again and again the constructedness of masculinity and the on-going fight against the stereotyped discourse on masculinity. The representations of masculine selves that we see in the paintings do not bestow form on the male figures; rather, they make the figures 'lose their selves'...Bacon's work is from this perspective, less tragic, less horrifying, than is often contended. For the ongoing fragmentation of the body in Bacon's work can also be seen as resistance to the objectifying transformations of stereotypical discourse, especially the discourse of masculinity. The male body ... shows no signs of stability, control, action or production. Thus, the violent tension between body and representation as represented in Bacon's works can be seen as an ongoing escape from the objectification of representation (p. 190).

Attila Richard Lukacs' paintings of young Berlin punks and military cadets have been seen by some critics as critiques or comments on masculinity and the signs used in the construction of patriarchy. Yet the artist himself disavows any one direct interpretation of his work. Instead I would say that Lukacs is painting things that personally fascinate him. As a gay artist myself, I read the images in the context of the homoerotic paradox. Lukacs eroticizes the punks and cadets he paints. In Lukacs' depiction of them ...

there is surely no fretting over masculinity: neither do we find idle idealizing. His representations are unapologetic pictures of muscular, young and quite believable male bodies - which are also bodies full of self confidence and devoid of any "crisis of male identity" (Mays, 1990, p. C6).

The same can be said for the many drawings, prints and paintings English artist, David Hockney has done of the male nude. Throughout his career, in all of his portrayals of the male nude, the artist has been very candid about his sexuality, using a very honest and direct approach, with no trace of idealization.

The homoerotic paradox, I believe, is instead expressed in Hockney's witty and ironic observations on traditional picture-making conventions. Hockney's humorous comment on the nature of pictorial language is the 1965 Portrait Surrounded By Artistic Devices. This painting is based on a drawing of the artist's father and Cezanne's statement that everything in nature could be reduced to the cylinder, the sphere and the cone. Hockney contrasts an almost naturalistically painted portrait of his father with the artistic devices of a pile of cylinders which are shown as merely patches of color.

Hockney's concern with the play between illusion and reality can be also be found in his mid-sixties paintings of swimming pools that have the ...

figurative element of suntanned, nude male bodies, but these were subservient to the main concern, which was with Modernist ideas of surface shape and pattern in the rendering of water (Webb, 1988, p. 81).

In Sunbather, 1966, our modern day bronzed Apollo occupies the top quarter of the canvas. The rest of the image is a depiction of the still surface of an aqua-marine pool full of dancing spaghetti-like lines of violet and yellow. The flatness of the composition is emphasized by the border of unpainted canvas around the picture. This device both makes reference to the painting's photographic sources and is a way for the artist to "make the picture look more like a painting" (Webb, 1988, p. 82), and stresses the essential artificiality of painting reality in two dimensions. Hockney's interest in the synthetic nature of the painted language, I would argue, emerges out of his experience of the homoerotic paradox. As a gay male the traditional notions of gender are seen "as a form, and [the act] of passing (pretending you are heterosexual), the conscious appropriation of forms as a means of survival. It renders the notion of 'naturalness' shaky" (Pronger, 1992, p. 288). Because of the prevailing assumption in our culture that everyone is heterosexual, people

tend to take the resulting semblance for actuality. As a result of being perceived as being straight, "Gay men are sensitive to the interplay between appearance and reality" (Pronger, 1992, p. 120). This sensibility arises out of the history of homosexuality as a hidden world, where irony is used as a remedy for the painful experience of estrangement and spiritual isolation that many gay men experience in their lives.

The Sunbather therefore expresses the homoerotic paradox in a two-fold way. First the content of the canvas is an image of desire. The artist's portrayal of our contemporary seductive sun-god places particular emphasis on the young male bottom which he sees as "the peak of sexual excitement" (Webb, 1988, p. 89). Second, Hockney's ironic use of formal devices to make the viewer aware of the artifice used in the construction of two-dimensional images, is a statement of the chameleon-like manner in which gay men experience the world, where appearances and reality are not what they seem.

The work of Bacon, Lukacs and Hockney all use the male body, which is traditionally read as a sign of orthodox masculinity and give it new meanings by the use of irony. Besides being an image of power, it is also seen as a seductive object : the embodiment of desire.

VIII The Creative Body

My own visual art production, like Hockney's, often explores the dichotomy between illusion and reality through its content and the use of formal devices. The aforementioned sense of spiritual isolation, that many gay men experience, has had a profound effect on the way I perceive the world around me. My sense of being an outsider has resulted in my art being the product of a search to overcome a sense of separateness and instead be an integrated, whole person. Of primary importance has been the investigation of the contradictions between appearance and actuality. The examination of perceptual frameworks, visual and cultural, used to describe so-called reality has been a constant theme in my art.

As previously mentioned, I was born and raised on the prairies, near Lethbridge, Alberta. As a farm child I was exposed to the natural world's myriad manifestations. While working and playing outside, one invariably observed many spectacular phenomena from dramatic sunsets to the infinite stars of the Milky Way. Yet even as a child I felt separate, or different from my peers. Often I would escape and seek solace in the far-reaching fields. My inner emotional states became equated with nature's own many moods. A strict Lutheran upbringing also predisposed me to see nature as a reflection of the divine.

Even though unfashionable in some circles, I view the world with a Romantic's sensibility. A romantic view of nature was reinforced by my contact with two people, Pauline McGeorge and Otto Rogers. In 1974 I left the farm to attend the University of Lethbridge. It was there that my drawing teacher, Pauline McGeorge (1936 - present) opened new doors in the realm of visual perception. McGeorge, an avid gardener and student of Eastern thought, taught me the skills by which to analyze and render the natural

world. Also her teaching methods and philosophy reinforced both my love of and mystic reading of nature.

In her watercolor classes, McGeorge introduced students to the works of Turner, Klee and Ernst. I responded to the work of Turner immediately. I was excited and amazed at his ability to record the transient effects of light and other natural phenomena, many of which I had experienced as a child. Paul Klee's sense of humor, especially his whimsical portrayals of flora and fauna, were an initial attraction. Besides Klee's spiritualized view of nature, I found many of the formal elements used in his oils and watercolors appealing. For example the colored squares in Klee's paintings reminded me of the patchwork of prairie fields. Also Klee's incorporation of arrows, letters and his use of borders evoked memories of road signs and scientific diagrams. In Ernst's work it was his countless depictions of celestial bodies that fascinated me.

In 1976 I saw Otto Rogers', Blue Morning, 1975 in an exhibition at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery. The painting so intrigued me that when I read that Rodgers would be leading a two week session at the 1977, Emma Lake Artist's Workshop, I decided to attend. At the workshop, Rogers introduced me to the Baha'i Faith. Rogers' belief that making art is an act of worship, and nature, especially landscape, is a metaphorical reflection of the divine influenced me greatly.

Inspired by Rogers' work and person I produced many works containing celestial imagery. My early paintings used Klee-like pictographic stars and incorporated fabric, nails, staples and string collaged onto wood panels. By 1979, at the time of my graduation the work had evolved to become mixed-media works on paper. These images reminded the viewer of antique star charts or maps. On pale textured water color grounds, activated by bits of colored pencil or pastel, planet and star forms would float. They were held in place by a delicate lace work of colored pencil grids, circles and borders. Besides their mystical

content, these water colors also made reference to previous historical depictions of the sky. On a formal level my interest in the play between illusion and reality, organic versus geometric, and the notion of framing devices, i.e., the border was becoming evident.

Celestial or cosmic imagery has continued to be of prime importance. In 1987, exposure to the work of Jack Goldstein in reproduction triggered in me an interest in the possible use of scientific material as an image source for paintings and drawings. The States Of Being series involved the appropriation of imagery from popular culture, scientific texts, data and photographs. Unlike Goldstein, whose work explores the notion that contemporary experiences of the sublime may be found in the realm of technology, my work is much more poetic. The 1987, Quantum Leap, ink drawing contains micro- and macro cosmic imagery. At the bottom of the drawing is a row of boxes, which illustrate the various orbitals an electron may choose around an atomic nucleus. The source for these diagrams was a textbook on quantum mechanics. In the large central horizontal image wind surfers are leaping over waves. In many ways this image is a contemporary restatement of Friedrich's Monk By The Sea. Instead of a monk, one has Zen inspired surfers. I see the wind surfers as expressions of an individual in harmony with nature and the elements, ocean and wind. In such a condition the surfer can travel far and wide. In a similar manner if the individual is in tune with himself his spirit may be moved. The ocean and vast sky are, as in Friedrich's painting, a symbol of the divine realm. The wind surfers in this state of ecstasy leap upward full of joy and exaltion. This drawing also talks about how humankind has used various conceptual structures to describe the universe. My interests in these ideas were particularly acute after a crisis of faith where I was unable to reconcile the Baha'i teachings and my own sexuality. On the top upper third of the drawing are three boxes, each containing a different diagram. The right one shows the medieval conception

of the cosmos. The center depicts the Copernican world view and the left illustrates Einstein's theories about time and space. The evolution of each of these world views involved a quantum leap in human understanding, hence the work's title.

The Geometries suite of drawings of the late eighties is closer in spirit to Goldstein's work as the imagery deals with how technology can be a mode of filtering information. In this series of drawings, an icon, a box containing a three dimensional geometric form is situated centrally above a depiction of a television or television screen. The screen presents the viewer with a multi-layered, textured space that obscures and breaks up the geometric form. The small icon, like those used in computer programs, could be read as the Platonic or divine ideal that humans construct. The screen image below is an expression of how our technology is inadequate to achieve the ideal. It also distances us and obscures our perception of the world.

Even more naturalistic work done directly from the motif shows my interest in borders, framing and points of view. The 1990 Lethbridge Project consisted of eighty, eight-by-eleven-inch pencil drawings of my hometown's urban landscape. I consciously tried to record, as if a photographer, what I saw in a direct, unsentimentalized manner. The chosen point of view was unique. In most of the pieces the sky was of primary importance with the edges of buildings or street lamps, electrical poles and wires intruding into the void. This perspective on the world probably originates in the fact that I walk a lot, looking up at both buildings and the sky. These drawings were then exhibited in my studio, located on the second floor of an old office building in downtown Lethbridge. The viewer's response to these works was interesting as many of my fellow citizens had never thought of or looked at the city as an urban landscape. In retrospect, by drawing my hometown, I was also examining my self and finally accepting the city as home, a place of origin. Knowing my roots I could now be free to leave. The vast empty sky can be read as a sign of liber-

ation and freedom. These drawings also illustrate how insignificant, fragile and tenuous human constructions are compared to the prairie's vastness.

The contrast between the constructs of human rational thought and chaotic nature is to be found also in the Flotsam And Jetsam series of oils executed during 1989 - 1990. In these paintings, brightly colored geometrical solids: cones, spheres, cubes, etc., float in dark liquid spaces. One side of the canvas is framed by a border of colored squares. The colors in these squares are a depiction of the painting's palette. Often arrows, positive or negative signs are used. The result was that these formal elements, similar to ones used by both David Hockney and Francis Bacon, shatter the illusions of the picture and draw attention to its artificiality. With hindsight, the geometric forms can be read as symbols of rational, human ideas that are limited compared to both nature and the divine void. I now also see these forms as personages and as expressions of various aspects of an intense emotional relationship I was involved in. The various color moods of the oils, and the way the border, signs and the geometric forms interact are seen as equivalents to inner emotional states.

My interest in framing devices, the conception of technology as a filtering screen and the Sublime in nature find a personally meaningful form in the Signs In The Heavens series. This series of oils and altered photo-reproductions was executed in the first year of my Master of Fine Arts program. The majority of the images are based on scientific photographs of the cosmos. A good example is Starfield 1992. Unlike Goldstein I do not try to reproduce the photograph exactly. It is used only as a reference. Instead of Jack Goldstein's cold, impersonal airbrushed surfaces mine are quite painterly. The image is created by the application of many coats of gesso onto a wooden panel. Upon this ground successive layers of oil paint, glazes and varnishes are laid down. The surface of the painting is further modified by selective sanding, scratching and splattering of paint. The

result is an image of the infinite cosmic void framed by a white border. The border refers to the original photographic source material. Like Hockney's Sunbather its use emphasizes the two-dimensionality of the image, contradicting the illusion of deep space. What is interesting to note is that these oils when viewed from a distance read as straightforward photo-realist painting. The image is full of subtle irony. Although it appears to be photographic, the painting does not portray any specific spot in the heavens. Instead the oil is a double layered simulation of, first, a photo-reproduction and second of a photo-realist painting. It is an illusion of an illusion. It is a totally artificial construction that only visually appears to be true. For me this piece by its use of formal means is an expression of the homo-erotic paradox.

At the same time however, the vast interstellar void, seen through the altered photographs from high powered telescopes is one of the contemporary experiences of the sublime. In this context the work is similar to Goldstein's. Other paintings in this suite, such as The Morning Stars Sang Together 1992, use a light palette and motifs derived from my romantic predecessors, Turner and Freidrich.

In the darker works, the human presence is indicated by the oil's sensuous skin-like surface. My treatment of the surface through sanding, scratching etc. evokes, an association with the lesions, and bruised skin many AIDS' patients experience. The human presence is hinted at in the altered photo-reproduction Michael And Matthew 1992. The naming of two parts of a nebula results in a layering of possible associations. For myself this piece talks about the personalities of two men I was intimately involved with at the time. One was cool and logical, like the blue gaseous cloud. The other is similar to the red cloud: more hot-blooded and passionate. This is another example of my projection of inner emotional states onto an experience of a natural phenomenon.

The body suggested in the Signs In The Heavens suite is given corporeal form in the present series of oils entitled Heavenly Bodies. The inclusion of the male figure against a cosmic ground has a number of sources. The initial impetus came from the discovery of a reproduction of Rockwell Kent's, To The Universe, 1918. The image brought back memories of my 1979 graduation design, with its depiction of a male nude assuming the stance of Vitruvian man, against a tear dropped shape of the cosmos. Kent's image also appealed to me on a purely sensual level. The nude figure with his Apollonian body and beautiful bottom aroused erotic feelings in me. Secondly the image was an articulate expression of the ideal man set in a romantic landscape. Both responses mirrored the divine.

Kent's image also pointed to more contemporary art, in particular the work of John Clark. I modeled for Clark, and was able to closely study his canvases and drawings. His images, especially of figures in the landscape, were intriguing and provided the impetus for the present body of work. The figure in Icarus: The Antique Body 1993 is derived from Clark's work, a Muybridge photograph and images of ancient bronze figures. The image is of a muscular male nude, with truncated arms, plummeting to earth. The canvas is juxtaposed to a jade green panel in which the Greek letter "alpha" floats. This piece was inspired by the death of a friend from AIDS. This event made me aware of my own mortality and the transient nature of my own body. The Icarus myth is in many ways an appropriate metaphor for my friend who lived his life very intensely and, as Icarus, came too close to the sun. Its heat melted his wings and he fell from grace. The color in the right hand portion of the diptych can be read in a poetic manner. The mottled jade green ground is evocative of the patinas on antique bronzes as well as the color of the Aegean sea into which Icarus plunged. The periwinkle blue color of the "alpha" sign suggests the clear sky

from which Icarus fell. The letter Alpha was chosen for its historical and cultural meanings. This letter was used by the Greeks to denote the origin. And as previously discussed, many of our notions and understandings of the male body originate from ancient Greek thought. The term Alpha also refers to the dominant group in a social order, which in western culture has been an orthodox patriarchy. Finally the letter is used to describe the brightest star in a constellation. Thus a connection is made again between heavenly and human bodies.

In the tall, rectangular oils, Matthew,1993 and Michael, 1993 male nudes dive in the cosmic void. The names now have a visual form. The grids, inscribed in Icarus and Michael, suggest those used by scientists to chart falling bodies. Also it is a tool that again deconstructs the illusion.

The diptych Ascend,1993 is a transition piece. It consists of two images. On the left is a figure, evocative of Michelangelo's Resurrection, done in a photo-realistic manner. The right side uses a diagrammatic language. The figures were taken from an instructional book on swimming, and rearranged so that one figure is about to give sexual pleasure to the other. The use of a heavy black line on a thick, lushly painted ground was derived from the work of Clark. This field of lush white paint evokes associations with clouds, water or semen. This canvas, by placing two images side by side initiates a dialogue about dual experiences of ecstasy. The spiritual is compared with the physical. The contrast between dark and light, thin paint verses impasto, and photographic compared to schematic modes of representation are an expression of the dualism inherent in western culture. My interest in the relationship between matter and spirit is definitely a product of my Lutheran upbringing and previous involvement in organized religion. The content of this oil sets it apart from the work of fellow gay artists such as Bacon, Lukacs and Hockney. My figures

are idealized, in contrast to Bacon's fluid, modern bodies or Hockney's and Luckas's seductive nudes.

Yet despite, the metaphysical concerns which are present in my work, I share an interest in how masculinity is constructed. The latest works in my thesis exhibition, The Antique Body, The Christian Body, The Renaissance Body, and The Seductive Body, all executed in 1993 are an integration of my previous explorations. My experience as a gay man is of prime importance. On a more mundane level, my interest in body-building over the past eight years has made me aware of how I can change and transform my physical body. It itself becomes a statement of the homo-erotic paradox as the ...

masculinity expressed in gay muscles only "seems" to be masculine, just as the ornamental columns of post-modern architecture only seem to be classical. Paradoxical masculinity looks masculine when, in fact, if read correctly through an ironic lens, it is the disintegration of masculinity. Gay muscles seen in their paradoxical context are postmodern muscles, a facade that must be understood as a facade. In this way, gay muscles, like postmodern architecture, are camp; the lie that tells the truth (Pronger, 1992, pp. 275 - 276).

My research into the historical and cultural meanings associated with the male nude for the thesis support paper, made me realize that how I see my own body is an amalgam of metaphors. I then sought to give these ideas a visual form.

The models for this series of oils are photographs taken of my own body, the exception being the previously discussed The Antique Body. Posing nude, I had a slide of the cosmos projected onto my own form. These were used as material for The Constructed Body suite of collages. The paintings, The Christian Body, The Renaissance Body and The Seductive Body, were based on these collage studies and consist of an image of the male body juxtaposed with the a culturally appropriate sign or symbol.

For example in The Christian Body, a black cross is placed on a bright blood red ground. The cross is traditionally read as the nexus point between the earthly and the divine. The figure assumes the pose of the crucified Christ. The nude in The Renaissance Body has his limbs outstretched like those fifteenth century illustrations of Vitruvian man. The image mimics the look of a decaying Renaissance drawing. The figure is situated on a ground that suggests both parchment and human skin. The random splotches of dark venetian red can be read as skin follicles or reversed x-ray images of stars. It is placed next to a gold star on an ultramarine ground. This is a reference to early Renaissance descriptions of the Heavens. The murals of Giotto come to mind. Also the connection between the cosmos and the human is reiterated. The final piece, The Seductive Body is the culmination of my investigation into the historical and cultural metaphors that influence how I perceive my own body. A grid composed of color photocopies shows my body in a pose that expresses ecstasy. My image emerges and disappears back into the cosmic field. The use of a lushly colored photograph, the grid and the white border make reference both to my previous starscapes, and the smooth polished bodies present in contemporary advertising. Beside the figure is a pink triangle that is a symbol of homosexuality. The triangle, evocative of flesh, points downward on a black ground. Its downward movement contrasts with the figure reaching heavenward. It is an expression of the tension I have experienced as a gay man in integrating my sexuality with my spirituality. The conflicts, joys and sadness I often feel in my physical, emotional and spiritual life are given visual form in this piece.

The theme of acceptance and integration of my spiritual, sexual and emotional aspects, of myself, are also present in the collages included in the exhibition. Icarus and Eclipse use a mixture of visual images and poetry to portray this idea. The Sites of Pleasure series make direct visual analogies between celestial forms and various parts of the male body.

Celestial forms long equated with the divine are placed besides potential sites of erotic stimulation and pleasure.

I have in a sense come full circle. Nineteen years ago I presented the viewer with an image of the Sublime. The difference in images however is the result of my experiences as both artist and man. In the collages of The Constructed Body and The Sites of Pleasure and paintings such as The Christian Body and The Seductive Body the corporeal and cosmic body now intermingle, expressing my continuing desire for transcendence achieved by a mystic union with nature which I believe will occur upon my own death. In this state my body will dissolve into the stardust it came from.

The Heavenly Bodies exhibition is for me a transient visual document of my search for a better understanding of my inner self, derived from a combination of personal experience shaped by social and cultural factors, and my sense of place in a larger context of the cosmos. With additional life experience I am sure to continue to add to this record in new ways that I cannot at this moment even intuit.

Endnotes

1. The Baha'i Faith was founded in Iran in 1844. It espouses the Oneness of God, the Oneness of All Religions and promotes the unity of humankind.
2. I refer the reader to Kenneth Clark's The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form(1953) and Margaret Walter's The Male Nude: A New Perspective (1978) for an in-depth historical description of the male body.

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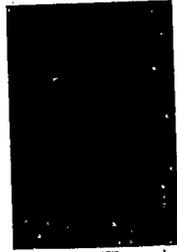
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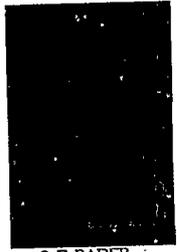
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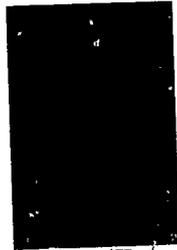
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STARFIELD 1992
oil/wood 4'x6'



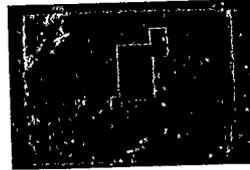
2. E. BADER
DAWN 1992
oil/wood 4'x6'



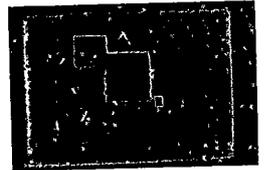
3. E. BADER
RING 1992
oil/wood 4'x6'



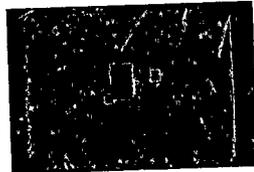
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MOON 1992
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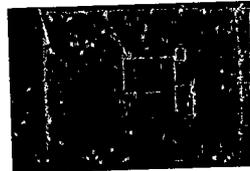
5. E. BADER
JCARUS 1992
collage 22"x30"



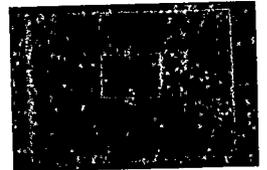
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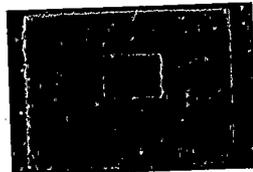
7. E. BADER
ASCEND STUDY 1993
collage 22"x30"



8. E. BADER
DESIRE 1993
collage 22"x30"



9. E. BADER
CONSTRUCTED BODY I-1993
collage 22"x30"



10. E. BADER
CONSTRUCTED BODY II-1993
collage 22"x30"



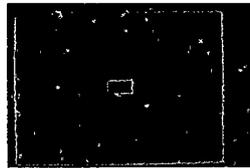
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CONSTRUCTED BODY III-1993
collage 22"x30"



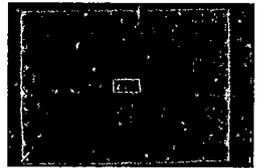
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CONSTRUCTED BODY IV-1993
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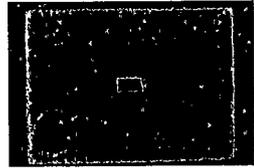
13. E. BADER
SITES OF PLEASURE-NIPPLE
1993- collage 22"x30"



14. E. BADER
SITES OF PLEASURE-EAR
1993-collage 22"x30"



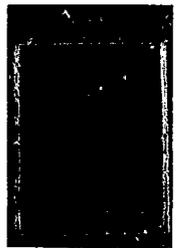
15. E. BADER
SITES OF PLEASURE-HAIR
1993-collage 22"x30"



16. E. BADER
SITES OF PLEASURE-SKIN
1993-collage 22"x30"



17. E. BADER
MATTHEW 1993
oil/canvas 5'x8'



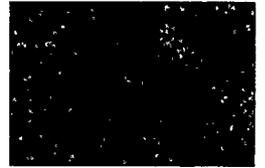
18. E. BADER
MATTHEW & MICHEAL
altered reproduction 22"x30"



19. E. BADER
MICHEAL 1993
oil/canvas 5'x8'



20. E. BADER
ASCEND 1993
oil/canvas 5'x8'



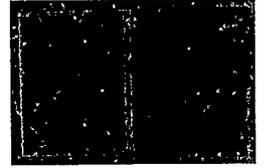
21. E. BADER
THE ANTIQUE BODY
1993-oil/canvas 4'x6'



22. E. BADER
THE CHRISTIAN BODY
1993-oil/canvas 5'x8'



23. E. BADER
THE RENAISSANCE BODY
1993-mixed media/canvas 5'x8'



24. E. BADER
THE SEDUCTIVE BODY
1993- mixed media/canvas