THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

THIRD TABLEAU

by

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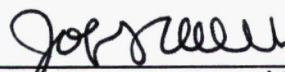
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a support paper entitled "Third Tableau," submitted by Amy Gogarty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This support paper examines a variety of concerns that inform the paintings in my thesis exhibition, <u>Third Tableau</u>. Philosophical, historical, and cultural aspects of representation are introduced in relationship to both art history and contemporary visual art criticism. The analysis of vision as an historical and cultural construct-- visuality--and the various strategies of parody and pastiche reflect concerns that are central to post-modern criticism.

My paintings are based entirely on ready-made images found in the public domain, science texts, and nature guides. I critique notions of originality by examining the visual and literary traditions of quotation and copying. I consider painting as a si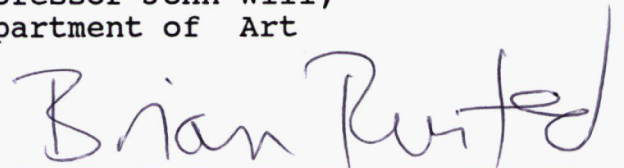gn and thus part of the larger circulating discourse of social signs. I compare the configurations of my work to the taxonomic structures of the museum, the library, and the encyclopedia.

For me, painting enters the ethical realm as it engages our ability to think non-dialectically, or across difference. The writings of Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, and Keiji Nishitani have influenced the formation of my personal aesthetic ethos. Throughout this paper, I discuss their ideas as they relate to my work in the exhibition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

i. A Support Paper to the Exhibition <u>Third Tableau</u>

A physical description of my recent work is easily given: the paintings consist of plywood squares ranging in dimension from one to four feet. They are assembled, for the most part, into configurations of multiple panels. Each panel is painted in a monochrome or restricted palette, and the method of making and surface recall nineteenth-century romantic or illustrative works. Most images are appropriated from pictorial archives that are didactic, objective, or largely informational in nature. Occasionally the images are disrupted by superimposed secondary images or texts. These images are chiseled, drawn, or otherwise layered onto the surface. The carefully lettered texts are also appropriated, and they derive from sources such as nature guides, literature, or philosophical essays.

The "meaning" of these paintings is less easily stated. Like many artists of my generation, my work has been influenced by discourses originating in criticism, psychology, and philosophy, as well as aesthetics and art history. The re-evaluation of modernism and the theoretical claims of post-modernism have irrevocably altered the critical field in which I practice, evaluate, and exhibit my

own work. To suggest that my work is influenced by theory is not to imply that my work "illustrates" a particular theory. Rather, it is to emphasize that both theory and practice stem from responses to the same historical conditions, and that many artists now play a more active role in both theory and criticism. The strict separation of theory and practice dictated by modernism has proven to be both unrealistic and untenable.

My own response to painting reflects my interest in theoretical issues, in reading, and in trying to make sense out of an admittedly chaotic world. In this sense, my work is deeply personal, even though I choose to express my self through found images and texts. I think of paintings more as <u>signs</u>—as amalgamations and configurations of socially-constructed codes—than as records of original perceptions of reality. Likewise, I think of my activity as a painter in terms of my interrupting, redirecting, and thus realigning the constantly circulating social discourse. For me, painting has a deeply ethical dimension which is reflected, in part, by the degree to which it embraces the social and the discursive.

The mannered surfaces and overt romanticism of my paintings might appear to set them apart from disinterested discourse. Ideas, essays, and literature often stimulate the inception of my work. A particular sentence, suggestion, or phrase might connect in my mind with an image or a series of images. The completed work, however, depends far more on

the act of painting--the neurological-physiological process of synthesis that takes place through my body interacting with the work. This act is increasingly informed by my attentiveness to the works of artists from various backgrounds and stylistic periods. These works serve as an enormous and fertile reservoir of material practice for the contemporary artist.

Because my images derive from didactic sources, I became interested in the role of vision in shaping and interpreting information. The critical grounding of vision in its historical and ideological context--visuality--reveals important considerations for the interaction of painting and information. Hal Foster distinguishes a difference within vision: "...between the mechanism of sight and its historical techniques, between the datum of vision and its discursive determinations..." (1988:ix). The project to "thicken modern vision"--to historicize and specify the dominant and critical modes of vision--has proved to be a valuable analytical tool for me. In addition to insights provided by contemporary critics, I found that Martin Heidegger's discussion of vision in the collection of essays The Question Concerning Technology deepened my appreciation of the ethical consequences of image making.

My use of artistically unambitious or informational images refers to the quotation or the copy, both of which manipulate cultural codes and schema. I find myself drawn to unpretentious images that radiate enigmatic associations

upon prolonged contemplation. My use of text and my critique of originality both find their roots in literature, and in the extensive use of often unacknowledged quotations in works such as Lautreamont's Maldoror, Flaubert's Bouvard and Pecuchet, and Borges' Pierre Menard.

I arrange my image panels in configurations that recall other models of organized information: the museum, the library, and the encyclopedia. Each of these is an outgrowth of the Enlightenment and the belief in a rational universe. Each has influenced contemporary information systems, and as an hegemonic model, each has been subjected to "deconstruction" by contemporary criticism. Rather than assume a monolithic, homogeneous, and thus totalizing function for these institutions, I take great pleasure in their multiplicity. Like Michel Foucault, I see the library as an imaginative space in which the fantastic lies "dormant in documents....in the interstices of repetitions and commentaries" (1977:90-91). As taxonomic structures, they represent nostalgic dreams of a fully-legible universe or visionary spaces that open to infinite possibilities. For me, these institutions suggest utopian, rather than oppressive visions, and this utopian ethos underlies my most ambitious activities.

Art can expand our ability to think problematically, rather than pedagogically, polemically, or dialectically. This capacity reveals an ethical potential for painting and all art making. Dialectics and polemics reinforce

authoritarian models, which utilize the language of warfare, capture, and defeat. Problematic thinking unleashes the "anarchy of difference" from the confines of categories that organize, delimit, and privilege acceptable concepts (Foucault 1977: 186). It establishes a sort of freedom towards one's own actions, which are cast as objects of thought, to be reflected upon or "problematized". Through dialogue and "reciprocal elucidation," a shared search for truth is furthered, in which the rights of all speakers are immanent within the process itself (Foucault 1984: 381-383).

Throughout the course of this paper, I shall relate the various topics discussed to my work in this exhibition. In the conclusion, I will focus closely on my own work--not to "explain" or to substitute words for the actual art works--but to encourage the viewer to take an active stance towards viewing and making his or her own sense of the work. It should become apparent that any "explanation" would be counterproductive, if not prejudicial to the viewer's experience. I offer a way of seeing--a map for finding one's own way, which I hope will make the experience rewarding.

II. ON REPRESENTATION: PAINTING AS SIGN

i. Representation, Realism, and Sign

Painting since the Renaissance has been conventionally regarded as a record of the artist's perception, a window opening on to his or her subjective view. Historically, representation has aimed at creating a perfect reduplication of reality--the "Essential Copy"--an image of primacy and autonomy (Bryson 1981:xv). The relocation of painting from the realm of perception to that of the sign fundamentally transforms it from the margins of the social to the centre. The effort to submit painting to the external control of discourse--to make it a "site of the production of meaning"--has been resisted most recently by high modernism and the formalist aesthetics of critics such as Clement Greenberg. And yet, the history of the artistic image is pervaded with textuality, with discourse, and with material practices that include such concepts as schema and copy.

Sign theory is based on language models proposed by the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, (d.1913) and his American counterpart, Charles F. Pierce (d. 1914). For Saussure, all signs were essentially arbitrary and constituted across a field of difference: "In language there are only differences without positive terms," (Saussure, in Krauss 1985:35). The binary sign consists of the material trace (the word, the image), termed the "signifier," and its referent in the world--the "signified." This signified can

be an actual object, an abstract concept, or an absent or immaterial entity.

Pierce further individuated the sign into three types. The iconic sign is linked to its signified through visible or diagramatic resemblance. The indexical sign bears a causal connection to its referent and is typified by the fingerprint, the photograph, or the medical symptom. The symbolic or "unmotivated" sign relates to its signified in a purely arbitrary or conventional manner. It exists only through the symbolizing power of the human mind and is epitomized by the word.

The "natural attitude" towards representation regards the image as the "resurrection of life." Reality is described as what is "out there," which painting represents as "universal visual experience." The history of painting is regarded in terms of the progressive perfection of representation. The natural attitude assumes that representation is ahistorical and primarily perceptual. Images which depart from the "essential copy" (realism) are devalued, and personal style is viewed as a form of withdrawal into a private world apart from the visual field. The natural attitude is inherently hostile to the invasion of the perceptual realm by language (Bryson 1983: 10-12).

A perceptualist model in which schema intervene between the artist's innocent eye and the world is proposed by E. Gombrich in Art and Illusion (1960). Schema may take the form of templates or external apparatus available to the

artist, or mental grids--socially conditioned filtering systems which unconsciously direct the artist's depiction or representation of the world. Drawing on the theories of Karl Popper, Gombrich likens schema to hypotheses, which are continally modified and progressively improved throughout the history of art.

Semiotics exerted a powerful intellectual influence on continental philosophy in the 1950's and 60's, a period characterized by formalism and "high modernism" in the visual arts. Modernism resisted the rational reductiveness and "linguistic colonialism" of semantic analysis by insisting on autonomy and immediacy. Formalist preference for "apoditic" (positive and non-ambiguous) statements suggested a non-referential or entirely self-reflexive system of signs in which the grid served as a "barrier to language" (Krauss 1984: 22). Semiotics eventually entered visual art criticism by way of film studies and the eventual decline of Modernism's hegemony.

Since the 1970's, classical and perceptual theories of representation have been under review. This has been due, in part, to an increased awareness of what is lost, critically, when the social and historical are expunged from the consideration of art. As Roland Barthes comments: "Meaning sticks to man: even when he wants to create something against meaning, or outside it, he ends up producing the very meaning of nonsense or non-meaning" (Bryson 1988: 171). Considered as a sign, a system that articulates consensual

codes, painting is "...bathed in the same circulation of signs that permeates or ventilates the rest of the social structure" (Bryson 1988: xxii). The usefulness, if arguable correctness, of this concept deserves further exploration.

Historically, realism has been tied to the concept of mimesis, in which correspondences are established between the image and the optical properties of the object in the world. The process of imitating the visible world initiates a series of theoretical and practical choices, which are themselves grounded in the thorough study of the stereotypes and historical practices of a given medium (Morley 1988:28). Rather than being a transcendental entity, realism is a product of human activity, cultural codes, and practical norms. Any image of reality is achieved through the manipulation of stereotyped building blocks, which include not only the naturalized codes of the real--the vraisemblable through which any society naturalizes its culture--but also the vast corpus of painting problems and solutions.

Realism in literature or painting depends on the "supposed exteriority of the signified to the signifier"-- the image relates to the "real" world outside the text or image. Found or "natural" meanings rest on cultural codes, but their sign function often goes unnoticed. The Goncourts stated that Chardin painted everything as he saw it, but Chardin's imagery was based on symbols found in sixteenth century emblem books (Bryson 1981: 112). These hidden

meanings were overlooked by his compatriots who demoted his status to the lowest one possible--a "painter of fruit and flowers." Genre painting ordinarily engages the discursive, but it does so anecdotally, democratically, and accessibly. This set it at odds with the rigidly hierarchical power of the French Academy.

Emblem books underlay the allegorical structure of German painting, and in England, the metaphysical works of such poets as John Donne included the meditation on objects. Chardin was appreciated in these countries, where his spinning top recalled the sloth (a man who had to be wound up); carnality was "read" into the image of feathers (tossed every which way by lust); and blowing bubbles "symbolized" vanity ((Bryson 1981: 112). The loss of the immediate emblem repertoire marks the images with a psychological inwardness and subtlety which is missing in the more overtly didactic works of contemporaries such as Greuze.

ii. The Plural Text and the Power of Painting

Barthes characterizes the possibility of multiple meanings as the "plurality of the text" (1980: 3). The writerly, or plural text, demands that the reader become a producer of the text: "The more plural the text, the less it is written before I read it" (1980: 10). Literary description resembles visual depiction in that it "unrolls the carpet of codes--refers from one code to another." Realism consists "not in copying the real, but in copying a

(depicted) copy of the real" (1980: 55). Such activity parallels the painter's use of pattern books or schema, and it emphasizes the conventional nature of any representation of external reality.

Within language, denotation and connotation dovetail neatly. In painting, however, denotation comprises the legalistic cataloguing of meanings or iconographical codes. Connotation, the "trojan horse let into formalism," carries the image into the realm of the social and beyond the grasp of formalist closure (Bryson 1983:68-70). Connotative codes are socially diffused and based on tacit or implicit knowledge of a particular cultural context. They are polysemous, fluctuating, and present within a given social situation.

For Barthes, quotation becomes the essential transaction between the external world and the text, and the only option available to the writer or painter. The already-given codes of discourse circulate endlessly, but the total discursive field is left unchanged. The pleasure granted the reader, or viewer, is that of repetition--re-reading, or re-viewing. This pleasure is interrupted spontaneously and occasionally by jouissance--aesthetic or erotic bliss (Bryson 1983: 142).

I am intrigued by Bryson's suggestion that the real power of the artist lies in his or her ability to alter the image, the text, or the body of discourse through labour. Such a view transforms the artist from a solitary

individual, pursuing and recording private sensations, to someone who works over the discursive material of his or her own society. The artist elaborates or transforms this material and then returns it (the work of art) back into society. New meanings, which redirect the discursive field, are created by the juxtaposition of contradictory codes. Images so constructed are the "effortful and unprecedented pulling together of discursive forms away from their separate locations and into <u>this</u> painting, <u>this</u> image (Bryson 1983: 148). Within the exhibition space, the viewer becomes similarly engaged in the production of meaning. Rather than endlessly circulating existing discourse, painting and all the arts play a meaningful social role:

> The power of painting is there, in the thousands of gazes caught by its surface, and the resultant turning, the shifting, the redirecting of the discursive flow--power not as a monolith, but as a swarm of points traversing social stratifications and individual persons (Bryson 1988: xxvii).

III. CONTEXTUALIZING VISION

i. Seeing and Knowing

Despite its centrality to visual art, within art, vision is often construed as universal, immediate, and physiologically-based. Beyond marginal considerations of the pathological, the hallucinagenic, or the impaired, vision is examined within the rather restricted boundaries of the normal, the disinterested, or the practical. Modernism has internalized a model of visual autonomy which excludes both the ideological and the scientific. It favours immediacy, vibrancy, and simultaneity--the "intransitive verbs of vision, qualities without objects" that constitute the "fetishization of sight" (Krauss 1986: 147). Vision is privileged as masterful, appropriative, and aggressive.

Visual metaphors have long dominated Western epistemology. Even before Plato, vision was considered the superior sense and linked to the spiritual and intellectual, as opposed to the mundane and material. What was paradoxical for Plato--the divine nature of sight <u>and</u> the unreliability of the senses for truth--remained problematic until Descartes. The ancient Greeks believed that the eye emitted light, which linked it with objects of knowledge--an idea that survived until the seventeenth century (Keller and Gronkowski 1983: 213).

Descartes' examination of optics and the human eye laid the "emission" theory to rest. Vision remained pre-

eminent because of its ability to set the world at the greatest remove and to promote the illusion of disengagement and objectification. In order to redeem the efficacy of the visual metaphor for epistemology, Descartes was obliged to separate mind from body. The "inner eye" or "mind's eye" received an inner light: "It is the soul that sees, not the eye" (Keller and Gronkowski 1984: 214). As human vision became increasingly subjected to scientific and mechanistic scrutiny, the active nature of the intellect was protected by means of this radical separation from its objects of perception.

With its passive lens and strict separation of interior and exterior, the camera obscura formed Descartes' model of vision. Early in the nineteenth century, this static and objective model virtually collapsed in the face of many experiments conducted into human vision and physiology. In 1810, Goethe inadvertently annihilated the camera concept with his studies of colour and after-image, which established the human body, temporality, and corporeal subjectivity as essential elements of vision (Crary 1988a:4). Hegel's Phenomenology (1807) located perception within a temporal and historical unfolding. This differentiated it sharply from the theories of Locke and Condillac, both of whom conceived of perception in terms of orderly and discrete sensations (Crary 1988a: 11).

Early experiments into the physiology of vision generated tremendous excitement. What had previously been

considered delusions became the "positivities of vision"; objects of vision became "co-extensive with the body." (Crary 1988: 34) As the observer became itself a subject of study, the body became a "new continent" to be mapped and mastered. By 1826, it was noted that there were different, distinct nerve systems for each of the five senses and that a variety of stimulators could produce the effect of the sensation on the brain. The body's ability to "mis-conceive" was explored by experimenters who misconnected nerves in hopes of enabling subjects to "see" sound or "hear" light. The on-going articulation of vision as non-veridical led to the development of the kaleidoscope, the stereoscope, and possibly late-century experiments with colour and art (Crary 1988: 41-43).

ii. Scopic Regimes

In a world view dominated by scientific objectivity, perspectivalism appeared to represent natural vision. It is often assumed to be the dominant mode within the visual arts. Actually, competing schema co-existed, as studies into northern art have recently shown. Borrowing the term from Christian Metz, Martin Jay refers to historical modes of seeing as "scopic regimes" (1988: 3).

Perspectivalism is characterized by an isotropic, rectilinear, and uniform concept of space, in which visual pyramids tie the vanishing point to the eye of the beholder. With the ascendency of the scientific world view, the

impression of reality was supplemented by increasingly informational, non-narrative details presented to the dispassionate eye of the neutral observer. Some theorists feel that perspectivalism conspired with rising mercantilism and the commodification of oil paintings that became detached from the wall and entered into the capitalist system of exchange. John Berger termed the Albertian window a "...safe let into the wall, a safe in which the visible had been deposited" (1972:109).

Heidegger characterizes the modern age of rationality and technology as the "Age of the World Picture"--an age in which everything, including man himself, is converted into a "standing reserve, an ordering for use" (1977: 24). Cartesian perspectivalism has been widely critiqued for its privileging of "an ahistorical, disinterested, disembodied subject entirely outside the world it only claims to know from afar" (Jay 1988: 10).

The Cartesian mode itself was not uniform. Artists used the rules of perspective quite flexibly, experimenting with curved and multiple-apex spaces. The relativistic potential of a space tied to the observer was apparent to some thinkers as early as Leibnitz. This realization culminated with Nietzsche's observation that if everyone had his or her own camera obscura, then no one transcendental world view would be possible (Jay 1988:11).

The northern visual tradition distinguished itself from southern perspectivalism by presupposing a different

mode of <u>picturing</u> the world, rather than an alternative physiology of perception. The northern paradigm was based upon alternative philosophical attitudes towards knowledge, the human subject, and the prior existence of a world indifferent to the human observer. Possibly the map, with its commingling of words and images, its impartiality towards hierarchy, proportion, and analogical resemblance, better typifies the visual culture of the northern Renaissance (Alpers, paraphrased by Jay 1988:12).

Throughout <u>The Art of Describing</u>, Alpers details the intimate relationship between Baconian empiricism and seventeenth-century Dutch painting. Bacon's emphasis on the observational, as opposed to mathematical, basis of scientific knowledge was echoed in Holland by Constantijn Huygens, Jan Amos Comenius, Robert Hooke, and others (1983: 99). Direct visual analysis, as opposed to abstract mathematical schema, characterized the Dutch attentiveness to the surfaces of objects. In France, as well, scientific and philosophical models impacted on artists in the eighteenth century through the popularization of treatises on vision by Newton and Locke (Baxandall 1985: 77)

A third significant regime can be identified as the Baroque <u>folie du voir</u>, first described in 1888 by Heinrich Wolfflin in <u>Renaissance and Baroque</u>. The Baroque itself is fixed historically to the counter-reformation, but as an alternative to perspectivalism, its "scopic" possibilities have further extension. Wolfflin described the Baroque as

"painterly, recessional, self-focussed, and open," in contrast to classicism's lucidity, linearity, solidity, and closure. The Baroque rejected monocular geometry and embraced a fascination with illegibility and the indecipherability of reality. It revelled in the interplay of surface and depth, in haptic or tactile values, and in "vertiginous experiences of rapture." Philosophically related to Leibnitz's plurality of monadic view points and Pascal's meditations on paradox, it charged vision with the rhetoric of ambiguity, unfulfilled desire, and eroticism (Jay 1988:16 -18).

The eroticized, non-rational space reached its fullest expression in opposition to perspectivalism with the spectacle of the Rococo. "Perspective" implies "distance from the viewer," and for precisely this reason, it was suppressed within the Rococo enclosure (Bryson 1981: 93). Filmy clouds, swirling water, and curving lines described an ambiguous theatre, in which the sexual availability of the figures was suggested by their dislocation in space.

The twentieth century has challenged, if not obliterated, the hegemony of perspectivalism. Cartesian epistemology has been contested in philosophy by hermeneutics, linguistically-oriented structuralism, and post-structuralism. Photography, with its fragmentary index of a prior world, presents a contemporary sanction of Baconian empiricism and the northern tradition. Baroque "madness of vision," celebrated in the media-saturated

culture industry, could be considered the dominant paradigm for late capitalism. This "ocular madness" can be used as easily to manipulate as to liberate those subjected to its spectacle (Jay 1988: 19).

Perspectivalism's repressive features--its complicity with the construct of an isolated bourgeois subject--must be recognized. However, it might also provide the provisional fiction of distancing vision required by some explanatory social-scientific models. Martin Jay suggests that too-uncritical an embrace of alternative regimes could dignify an obsession with material surfaces or a surrender to the phantasmagoria of the spectacle. A plurality of equally viable scopic regimes, rather than any particular hierarchy, will optimize our opportunities for the future:

> In so doing, we won't lose entirely the sense of
> unease that has so long haunted the visual culture
> of the west, but we may learn to see the virtues
> of differentiated ocular experience (1988:20).

iii. Anti-vision, Paranoia, and Radical Impermanence

The sense of unease mentioned by Jay has an extensive history which parallels the valorization of vision. Augustine distrusted the erotic element in vision and "ocular desire." Prohibitions against images abound in various iconoclastic traditions such as Islam and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Terms such as "evil eye" reflect a general scopophobia or anti-vision. In continental philosophy, Bergson's investigations into duration marked a

departure from the dependency on sight, and subsequently other philosophers have examined the shortcomings or potential threat of vision. Some feminists have regarded the visual emphasis as "phallocentric." Merleau-Ponty, wary of the disengaged eye, urged a return to vision "embodied in the flesh of the world" (Jay 1986: 178).

Michel Foucault's ambivalence towards vision is signalled in his early works that trace the linking of vision and power. His major study on insanity, <u>Madness and Civilization</u>, examines how madness became a "thing to look at." For the classical mind, madness was either "blindness" or "dazzlement"; in order to "see more clearly," Descartes shut his physical eyes to "dazzlement." <u>The Birth of the Clinic</u> outlines the growing power of the empirical gaze to objectify and "cadaverize" the physical body (Jay 1986: 182). In <u>Discipline and Punish</u>, Foucault accuses Jeremy Bentham's <u>panopticon</u> of reifying the disciplinary and normalizing function of the omnipresent, sadistic gaze of state power. (1984: 217)

In Jean-Paul Sartre's <u>Being and Nothingness</u>, the gaze of the other radically decentres the subject in a menacing or aggressive manner. The viewer becomes a spectacle to the sight of an intruder, and the "vanishing point" of perspectival space threatens the subject's unitary self-possession . The viewer, in turn, objectifies the other with his gaze. Each is menaced by the mutual gaze; paradoxically, this experience serves to heighten the

subject's alienating and anguishing "sense of being a subject" (Bryson 1988a:89).

For the psychoanalyist Jacques Lacan, vision is socialized, and any deviation is labelled as "hallucina-genic." According to Lacan, social structures, and in particular language, cast a "shadow of death" across the observer. When we learn to speak or learn to see, we are brutally thrust into an entire system of discourse which is indifferent to our individual existences. A "screen" cuts across our visual and subjective field which "mortifies" us. The subject who sees is not at the centre of vision; the subject who speaks is not at the centre of language:

> Vision unfolds to the side of, in tangent to, the field of the other. And to that form of seeing, Lacan gives a name: seeing on the field of the other: seeing under the Gaze (Bryson 1988a:94).

It is compelling, if cautionary, for a painter to consider the implications of the anti-ocular tradition. In my own work, an intuitive sensitivity to the arrogating power of vision partly motivates my decision to block direct access to certain images with text or image "screens." For me, this blocking resembles the cautioning, raised hands of angels one encounters in medieval manuscripts--angels who warn man to ponder the consequences of his actions and disobedience to higher forms of truth.

An awareness of different "scopic regimes" tempers my choice and presentation of images. Connotations arising from images are modified or directed by such considerations

as the implied distance or disposition of the observer, the number and balance of informational elements within the work, and formal versus casual framing of the image. Expressive marks are used as indicators of interpretive or romantic modes rather than as tokens of my subjectivity or self-expression. Thus not only the depicted objects but the codes (or clash of codes) of depiction have semantic value.

The paranoia of decenteredness that stalks Sartre and Lacan is opposed by an alternative visual model in the Zen concept of sunyata, or "radical impermanence." Sartre's visual field is one of tunnel vision, in which subject and object are locked at either end of a framing device. In sunyata, which is most clearly articulated for Western readers by Keiji Nishitani, objects have no self-identity. They can only be described against the field of everything else: "The object opens out omnidirectionally to the universal surround, against which it defines itself negatively and diacritically" (Bryson 1988a:101). Bryson exemplifies this in visual terms with the Ch'an calligraphy tradition of "flung ink," in which the image floats outside the frame, subtended by everything else in the universe, without claim to centeredness.

The text in my painting Diorama:Habitat, "Water does not wet water," "Fire does not burn fire," repeats a Zen aphorism frequently quoted by Nishitani (1982:125). This aphorism implies that the autonomous mode of a thing rests not in the thing being revealed to us, as a representation,

but in its being gathered up or nested in its "home ground,"
its "being-in-itself." Rather than consuming itself through
combustion, fire becomes fire in the act of combustion. We
recognize fire only by its "negative" appearance--an
appearance that reflects its relationship to us in our field
of sensation and reason.

In the context of my painting, I am suggesting the
dialectical opposition between Western science and the Zen
concept of _sunyata_, in which nature presences and is
revealed across a field of interrelated differences. _Diorama_
connotes the Western division of nature into separate
species, each with separate life cycles, which can be
represented as isolated spectacles. Within the museum of
natural history, a single skull represents a complete
specimen, and a single specimen represents an entire
species. The terms "habitat" and "_sunyata_" suggest a
holistic view of nature, in which individual species form
necessary elements within a complex, interrelated biota or
continuum. The diamond form inscribed upon the depiction of
habitat represents the paradox of order revealed and order
imposed upon nature, a paradox suggested by the title.

Paranoia and the terroristic concept of the gaze as
articulated by Sartre and Lacan play a significant role in
contemporary post-modern criticism. For this reason, I have
considered them, and I have some sympathy for post-modern
analyses. However, I feel that it is extremely important

that we go beyond a passive acquiescence to or "naturalization" of this terror.

My ready-made images, schematic drawings, and appropriated texts belong to the cultural screen that so mortifies Lacan. I use these devices partly to habituate or de-terrorize this screen. My paintings become a sort of moral exercize for me, an attempt to see and experience through the models of others without impairing my necessary sense of self or pleasure in perception. Instead of claiming originality, I accept that I work across an already-constituted field. The concept of radical impermanence-- sunyata--the mobile continuum within which I am only distinguished by my (marginal) difference from everything else--suggests a liberating paradigm to underlie the construction of my work.

The Zen model is not open to simple appropriation, but it does provide intriguing possibilities for Western philosophy. Nishitani was himself influenced by Heidegger (Foster 1988: 110), and certain commentators see similarities between Nishitani and both Whitehead and Derrida (Nishitani 1982: xxi). In my opinion, such cross-fertilization is positive and essential. Because I believe that art can play a role in altering the social discourse, and thus the world, this sort of exchange holds tremendous promise for artists such as myself.

IV. IMAGE AND TEXT: THE COPY, THE QUOTATATION, PARODY, AND PASTICHE

i. The Copy

Within modernism, the grid assumed a position of paramount importance as a site of originary purity, authenticity, and self-reflexivity. It symbolized silence and stasis; as a "barricade against speech," it prevented the intrusion of language, narrative, or incident into its aesthetic hermeticism. Paradoxically, it embedded the notion of copy, repetition, and a "bottomless system of duplication" deep within the heart of modernism itself (Krauss 1985: 22).

What became ironic contradictions within the discourse of originality had been central to art for millenia: the stereotype, the schema, the copy, and the quotation. Classical theories of mimesis incorporated consensual traditions or stereotypes into representations of the visible world (Morley 1988:28). Gombrich's <u>Art and Illusion</u> examines the extensive history of the copy or schema within the unfolding traditions of pictorial art. The pattern book, with its various formulaic devices for rendering reality, constituted the primary channel for the transmission of skill and wisdom from master to apprentice.

The copy introduced abstraction into the heart of the most naturalistic rendering. Most artists were familiar with masterworks only through widely-circulated engravings

after original works. Faced with copying a copy, the artist's interpretation of ambiguous areas raised the copy to the level of invention. The sense of ritual, the resonant trace of the master pattern, and the enigmatic mystique of the coded vehicle gave aesthetic authority to the secondary works. Copies bore a "purely formulaic rather than mimetic relationship" to their external referent (Krauss 1985: 125).

Copying is intrinsic to the industry rather than the romance of art. It is the term of demystification, the "view of the bees in their hive rather than the taste of honey" (Krauss 1985: 126). Copying unmasks the conventional as opposed to spontaneous character of culture. It locates art firmly within the province of the psychological, the historical, and the social, as opposed to the heroic and individual.

The ever-present reality of the copy underlying the original was more openly acknowledged early in the nineteenth century. "Picturesque," a term which mediated between the sublime and the beautiful, meant "capable of being represented to good effect in painting," and as such, it formed an essential element in any landscape painting (Lebensztejn 1988: 149). The picturesque countered the libertine excess of the sketch, the generality of which was deemed to give "encouragement to unnatural passions and the transgressive imagination." The sketch was developed by Alexander Cozens and others at the close of the eighteenth

century to incorporate the aesthetics of the sublime, the terrifying, and the infinite.

Joshua Reynolds believed that the sketch stimulated the imagination by allowing it to "fill in" barely suggested details. In so doing, the sketch transgressed the boundary between pictorial and poetic representation and betrayed the very essence of painting: "...that everything shall be carefully and distinctly expressed as if the painter knew...the exact form and character of whatever is introduced into the picture" (Lebensztejn 1988:143). The effect of the picturesque was to civilize, domesticate, and embellish the awe and terror of the sublime. If the pleasure of the sublime lay in the momentary appeal of death, the picturesque and the finished painting glossed over both the fear and the appeal of death.

The picturesque contributed to the rise of an audience that practiced "taste" as an exercise. By mid-century, the appreciation of repetition was repressed in favour of originality, but the copy remained fundamental to the formation of taste (Krauss 1985: 25). The Musee des Copies opened in Paris in 1834 to educate and advance public taste. With the advent of Impressionism, a great deal of labour and calculation was devoted to creating the illusion of instantaneity and absolute originality. The term "original" was applied to the sculptural works of Rodin despite their mass production from plaster casts by assistants. Krauss and others argue that the developing discourse of modernism

depended upon the repression of the terms repetition and copy in favour of originality and authenticity, a repression which served the vested interests of museums, dealers, and collectors alike.

ii. Parody and Pastiche

Post-modern strategies of appropriation, quotation, and repetition of existing images seek to undermine the museum's claim to neutrality and autonomy. Parody and pastiche both involve the imitation of other images and styles. Parody exaggerates the idiosyncracies of a given style to ridicule the private nature of all stylistic mannerisms. (Jameson 1983:113) Such mannerisms reveal their aberration only in contrast to a collectively-recognized normalcy. As stylistic and linguistic norms themselves fall prey to fragmentation by the proliferation of private codes, parody loses its ability to satirize.

The term "pastiche" describes "blank parody," a practice which lacks parody's ultimate aim of satire or irony on account of the the loss of any clear concept of normal against which to measure deviation. Post-modernism suggests that all styles have been invented, all books already written. All that remains for contemporary artists to do is to wander through imaginary museums endlessly recirculating already defunct styles--in a word, to become pasticheurs (Jameson 1983: 115).

I have already mentioned that overturning and rearranging prior codes can alter the existing social discourse. Pastiche has the capacity to invent or recreate lost experience by summoning up the <u>signs</u> of past styles. This satisfies the powerful longing for continuity with one's past that is not merely escapist. Jameson attributes our hesitancy to represent our own culture to the deeply alienating forces of consumer capitalism. He cites alarming and pathological symptoms of a society schizophrenically disengaged from any continuous experience of culture, history, or time itself. As he contends:

> Cultural production has been driven back inside the mind...it can no longer look directly out of its eyes at the real world for the referent but must, as in Plato's cave, trace its mental images of the world on its confining walls. If there is any realism left here, it is a "realism" which springs from the shock of grasping that confinement and of realizing that, for whatever peculiar reasons, we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own...stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach (1983:118).

iii. The Quotation

If the present demoralizes us with its alienating corporate mentality, and the past eludes our attempts to capture and habituate it, quotation may present one possible means of acknowledging our dilemma. Rather than being "parasitic upon reality," (Danto 1973: 7) quotation can indicate a particular political or critical stance. The extended, often unacknowledged, quotation occupies a

substantial place in literature. Of particular interest to me have been Lautreamont's <u>Les Chants de Maldoror</u> (1869), Flaubert's <u>Bouvard and Pecuchet</u> (1880), and Borges' <u>Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote</u> (1964).

<u>Les Chants de Maldoror</u> marshals bizarre concatenations of speech to attack and subvert language. Lautreamont (Isadore Ducasse) parodies Gothic narrative, academic "parlance," and insipidly romantic prose to reveal the incongruity of speech itself. His work contains numerous direct quotations (plagiarisms) from Buffon, Chenu's encyclopedia, as well as from trade advertisements, popular journals, and the like. <u>Maldoror</u> was the source of the quintessential Surrealist metaphor "the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella" (Ducasse 1972: 177).

Flaubert's <u>Bouvard and Pecuchet</u> distills some 1500 books to produce a "farcical version of a critical encyclopedia" (Donato 1979: 215). It tells the tale of two middle-aged copy clerks who, upon receiving an inheritance, retire to the country where they attempt to put into practice knowledge distilled from years of copying. Things written and read become "things to do." Bouvard and Pecuchet have been seduced by the library, the museum, and by the nineteenth century's dream of transparency, totality, and the possibility of perfect representation. In the end, they confront a world of infinite fragmentation, multiplicity, and radical alienation from nature. They

return to copying, a form of "being" the books they copy. Bouvard and Pecuchet truimph over:

> "...everything alien to books, all that resists the book, by transforming themselves into the continuous movement of the book...prolonged without end, without illusion, without greed, without sin, without desire" (Foucault 1977: 109).

Borges' short story concerns two versions of Don Quixote: one written in the seventeenth century by Cervantes, and the other, a mere fragment, but identical in every way to the corresponding passages of its predecessor, written by Pierre Menard, an unknown twentieth-century poet. Through the use of this confoundingly simple conceit, Borges examines the relationship that all writing, all production bears to historical precedent and stereotype. The ontological status of art--as Platonic idea or as material process--is probed by Borges who states that Menard's Quixote is infinitely more subtle, less provincial, and less vulgar than that of Cervantes. In so doing, Borges insists on the shaping power of history and the social context within which literature evolves.

Arthur Danto dissects the many implications of artistic works that quote, imitate, or in other ways recover the work of predecessors. He demonstrates that these distinctions are far from clear or philosophically determinate. In the process, originality is revealed as a dubious, if not impossible objective (1981:36-39).

iv. My Own Use of Image and Text

My own use of text with my images relates to my interest in literature and in literary theories that have permeated much visual art throughout history. My attraction to <u>Maldoror</u> was aroused by my research on Surrealism, and in particular, by the collage novels of Max Ernst. Ernst's three novels (1929-1934) combine collages composed from engraved illustrations to popular science journals and pulp fiction with texts that parody and ultimately subvert traditional notions of the caption. Louis Aragon had referred to the separate elements in Ernst's collages as "words," and Ernst himself frequently collaborated with poets whose work he greatly admired. Ernst's novels reawakened my interest in the imagery of encyclopedias and nineteenth century engravings.

In my own work, I am unwilling to recognize an opposition between image and word. Both relate to the "imagination," to the symbolizing power of the human mind, and to our powerful desire to shape and give meaning to our experiences. I feel a kinship with many seventeenth century Dutch artists who, among others, gave texts a "separate but equal" place in their pictorial representations. As Svetlana Alpers describes the Dutch use of text:

> The inscribed words...seem to take their place not as an injunction, but as one representation among others...They are interlocked, even overlapping, but without clear hierarchy or ordering. They add up to a world, but as we have seen in other cases of Dutch painting, they do not presume to order the world (1983: 186-87).

V. TAXONOMIC MODELS: THE MUSEUM, THE LIBRARY, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA

i. The Museum

Post-modernism commonly debunks and discredits the museum's totalizing and homogenizing drive. It suggests that, within the logic of modernism, museums serve to enforce a patriarchal and moralizing authority over the intrinsic plurality of art's many voices. Museums work to exclude "bad taste" (anything not approved by the current market), and they reify the concept of style as an unimpeachable organizing device. From this vantage point, art history appears as a function of "the most rigorously-organized nineteenth century space of exhibition: the museum" (Krauss 1985:141).

Although this analysis has yielded some very interesting and necessary criticism, I prefer to seek my understanding of the museum in literature that parodies the burgeoning of museums in the nineteenth century. Flaubert's Bouvard and Pecuchet satirizes the entire century's obsession with ostensibly methodical and coherent presentations of reality. The dream of total order--order that explains all events past, present, and future--can be attributed to Hegel's Phenomenology of the Mind (Donato 1974:885). In Bouvard and Pecuchet, this dream is revealed as a hopeless travesty; language is betrayed by its incapacity to represent the world adequately, and the museum

is exposed as an irreducibly heterogeneous bric-a-brac shop. Rather than causing alarm or distress, this revelation is deeply reassuring to me. Despite my esteem for and reliance upon reason, I find it heartening that even the most directed and totalizing efforts have made little headway with Hegel's colossal project.

Manet's <u>Dejeuner sur l'herbe</u> and <u>Olympia</u> are frequently cited as the first "museum" paintings--the first to self-consciously reveal their origins in the public space of the museum, as opposed to "life." Flaubert's literary projects paralleled Manet's ambitions in that they display their origin in the "dream of other books"--in the library or the archive (Foucault 1977:92).

The belief that a displaced fragment could meaningfully represent reality--through metonymy or synecdoche--formed the underlying conceit of the museum. Detached both spatially and temporally from their original context, however, museum objects become recontextualized only through the fantasy of a perceiving subject. The loss to objective science becomes a gain for literary and artistic imaginations. (Donato 1979:225).

Bouvard and Pecuchet construct a museum within their house, which becomes a monument to moribund values. Originally designed to accommodate their research in geology (the archetypal search for origins), the museum proceeds to become a burial ground for residua pertaining to botany, anthropology, religion, art history, anatomy, and the

library itself. Stripped of its sustaining metafiction--
that these heterogeneous fragments could somehow conjure up
an adequate, non-linguistic representation of the world,
this dismal display is dismissed as a junk shop by the
neighbours of the eccentric bachelors .

ii. The Library

Bouvard and Pecuchet's library is but one exhibit
contained within the embrace of their museum. The
spellbinding dreams and imaginative spaces that populate the
musty texts of the library are relished by Michel Foucault.
Within the "clamour" created by endless repetitions,
reproductions, commentaries, and minute facts, the power of
the impossible "grows among signs, from book to book...in
the interval between books" (1977:91).

If metonymy signifies the museum's claim to
realism, metaphor encompasses the essential function of the
library. Metaphor generates paradigmatic selections from
among alternatives with the possibility of endless
substitution. Bouvard and Pecuchet expect to find the same
meaning exhibited in reality that they find in language and
in books, and their many attempts to impose the categories
of language upon the "dispersed phenomena of the real world"
end in disaster (Bernheimer 1974:145). Their substitution
of words for real things permits them to develop elaborate
taxonomies and to endlessly substitute successive ideas,
each of which cancels or invalidates the one before.

Because meaning is totally generated within language, closeted away from the real world of nature that it is meant to represent, all meanings are revealed as irrelevant or misleading.

This truly comic pattern attacks the ability of metaphor to convey truth. Because metaphors are generated independently of reality, within language and the extended discourse of texts, the desires of the two clerks are constantly mediated by the authority of others. "Experts" and "quacks" are accepted equally, as any proposition is granted truth status by virtue of it having been written down. Flaubert died before he was able to complete his "sequel" to <u>Bouvard and Pecuchet</u>. This was to be composed entirely of "found" language, pre-existing texts, labels from tobacco cans, miscellaneous newspaper clippings-- perhaps <u>Bouvard and Pecuchet</u> itself--all copied by the aging but indefatigable clerks who abandon any further attempts to correlate language to the outside world.

iii. The Picture Encyclopedia

The picture encyclopedia can be thought of as a hybrid of the library-museum, a "museum-in-a-book." The same sort of ambition to organize, represent, and extort meaning from the world motivated early producers of illustrated encyclopedias. Jan Amos Comenius' <u>Orbis Sensualium Pictus, or the Visible World Pictured</u> (1658) proposed the use of picture books in pedagogical programs to teach language

skills to adults and children alike (Alpers 1983:94). Francis Bacon and others interested in education proposed to shift language studies from rhetoric to description, and Comenius was one of the first to argue for the seriousness of the activity of visual attentiveness. Vision, considered the primary sense, was a key to understanding on account of its ability to store mental images to be deployed as a "second language."

The <u>Orbis Pictus</u> combines 157 images, their names, and tables indicating sequential categories in several languages. The Dutch considered drawing to be a second form of writing, a concept reinforced by the emphasis on pictures and words. Comenius was particularly influential in the field of pansophy, and along with John Wilkins (subject of Borges' short story "Dr. Jeckyll and Edward Hyde, Transformed"), he explored the concept of an entirely artificial, invented language. Bacon also experimented with pictographs, as used by the Chinese, in an attempt to develop a notational system that was both artificial and referential to the real world. The Dutch linked pictures and language together in their attempts to acquire knowledge of the world (Alpers 1983:96).

Emblem books also endorsed the interdependence of word and image. In the works of Jacob Cats, one of the most famous seventeenth century emblem book makers, verbal and visual depictions were granted equal status. Meaning was made visible on the surface of the page; like <u>Orbis Pictus</u>,

the subject of the emblem books was shared or communal, rather than arcane knowledge. Emblem books underlay many Dutch genre paintings, which displayed a new and more comprehensive articulation of the emblem through their craft. However, the paintings exhibited no greater meaning than did the lowly books. In the Dutch world of representation, meaning was accessible and written in the signs of the visible world (Alpers 1983:231).

Diderot's Encyclopedia, first published in 1751, comprised a huge "ledger" of ownership designed to inventory, classify, and possess reality through its depictions. Diderot wrote that the purpose of his work was to "assemble the knowledge scattered over the surface of the Earth, to explain its general plan to all men...so that our descendents, by becoming better instructed, may as a consequence be more virtuous and happier" (1959:preface). In the enthusiastic world of the Enlightenment, the object was man's signature on the world--the domesticating force that tamed the savage state of nature, and established over it a form of familiar possession (Barthes 1980:33).

Rather than modestly and openly presenting their meaning, as in the case of the Dutch picture books, the Encyclopedia plates display highly-structured and articulated images that beg to be "deciphered" like riddles. Individual plates are often divided into upper and lower registers. In the upper, termed by Barthes "Encyclopedia Heaven," the object is apprehended in a "lively scene," a

vignette, which, while densely packed with syntagmatic information, is reassuring and familiar. The lower register ("Encyclopedia Hell") presents informational units that detail the object's structure, aspects, and constituents. Taken together, the images of the Encyclopedia are circular, as opposed to linear and directional, as is language. The images may be read in terms of synthesis (bottom to top), or analysis (top to bottom). They illustrate not only the entire "trajectory" of the object, but also the rational mind that conceived it (1980:33).

To contemporary eyes, the plates radiate the poetics of the historical as well as the perturbation of the disproportionate and the unreal. Signifying gestures are always overstated; microscopic creatures enlarged many times over are monstrous, and the peaceful order of the vignettes seems to give way to a disturbing, if oblique, violence in the lower registers:

> It is the Encyclopedia's wager (in its plates) to
> be both a didactic work, based consequently on a
> severe demand for objectivity (for "reality") and
> a poetic work in which the real is constantly over
> come by some other thing (the other is the sign of
> all mysteries.) (Barthes 1980:37)

This "other thing" deranges and subverts the rational intention of the Encyclopedia, lending to the images a sort of "wild surrealism."

The "wild surrealism" that furtively overtakes the most ordinary images was noted by Max Ernst while creating his collage novels. Ernst used absolutely ordinary,

stereotypical images to convey the codes of bourgeois convention and morality. His collage works derive their aesthetic impact from the economy of his subtle alterations; the works preserve at once the vestiges of the original content and meaning and the radically oppositional possibilities suggested by his marginal additions. The "aesthetics of dissociation," so cultivated by Ernst, paralleled Freud's investigation of the displacing and censoring mechanism of the unconscious mind. Freud observed this function in dream imagery, jokes, and adult enjoyment of nonsense (Freud 1960:24 passim).

Freud's analysis of compression and displacement informed Ernst's conception of creativity, in which active and passive states alternated to produce works of art. His attraction to banal or "neutral" material reflected a concern for the arrogating or abusive potential of appropriation. Ernst used dissociation and dissonance to create a "contradictory world of poetry within the everyday" (Spies;1971:53). His surprisingly cosmic transformations derive from both the power of his imagination and his willingness to absorb and respond to the suggestive "vibrations" radiating from the original material. In my opinion, Ernst is one of this century's most interesting and creative visual artists. I remain impressed with his ability to draw from a wide spectrum of intellectual and artistic sources, and by the freshness and provocative quality of his resulting work.

VI. MY OWN USE OF READY-MADE IMAGES

i. In Practice

I have always been fascinated by encyclopedias and museums. As the imaginative realms of my childhood became increasingly subjected to the discipline of organized education, these sites never lost their spontaneous, immediate appeal. In a world where physical movement is often limited by political and economic factors, the visionary spaces of words and images beckon--not as retreats from the "real" world, but as theatres in which ideas can expand, circulate, and gain in imaginative stature. Science texts, nature guides, and popular encyclopedias that "picture the world" provide the images for my paintings.

These images serve my needs as a painter in a number of ways. First, although I do not use them self-consciously to "indict consumer culture," I do find myself either unable to or uninterested in picturing my own culture directly. Without becoming overly polemical, it can be stated that post-industrial capitalism privileges an extraordinarily restricted set of values and norms, and it employs an impressive array of powerful machinery to exalt, reinforce, and "naturalize" its own particular ideology and practice. While I feel completely powerless to take on, overturn, or redirect the dominant ideology, I do try to minimize my cooperation with it.

My conscious mining of archives, libraries, and museums is motivated by my respect for individual and environmental diversity. I see my role as an artist as that of one who constantly remembers, refocusses attention on, or reclaims forgotten wisdom. My political and social beliefs commit me to change at the grass roots level, a level on which artists can more directly address individual viewers and stimulate productive dialogue.

I am presently working within an institutional structure, and I often make art from my immediate surroundings. I use images and texts from academic sources to peer beneath the surface of the institution itself--to examine the complex workings and restrictions that arise from its internal organization and mandate. Images which depict or connote the various categories of the university, which is itself a sort of library-cum-museum-cum-encyclopedia, permit me to examine and critique thought which appears to proceed only through those categories. The imperfections embedded in all of these informational models' attempts at transparency, rationality, and totality serve, in my case, to prevent any limiting closure to my work.

When I paint from a depiction, I consider my work to be a sort of "expansion" of the image--a form of bringing it back up to the surface of life. This is especially true if the image is banal, forgotten, or somehow marginalized. I enjoy circulating these signs--allowing for a variety of connotations to come forward or retreat in response to a

given context, or to the interests of different viewers. In order for the images to circulate in this manner, they require a sort of "neutrality" or remove from reality which is less impositionally accomplished with representations than with real things.

All representation involves a sort of violence in the sense that only particular aspects of an object or being are addressed or depicted in a representation. Heidegger defines representation as an "objectifying that goes forth and masters," which stresses the relationship to power inherent in representation. (1977:134)

Within classical theories of representation, pictures, like labels, denote the object in the world that they picture; their sense is completely used up in this act of reference. Depictions, like proper names, are said to have "extension" but no "sense." In contrast to classical theories, art historians such as Erwin Panofsky assumed that representation possessed intension, and that the ability to suggest, connote, or exhibit layers of meaning formed the very essence of the aesthetic sign (Krauss 1985:28).

Intension, or connotation, arises when the qualities suggested or represented by objects are permitted to float to the surface and to signify beyond the immediate particularity of the object. In philosophical terms, intension grants an object or word a conceptual status that permits it to be applied over a "plurality of instances,"

rather than be exhausted in the single act of referring to that thing in the world which it pictures.

I find that stereotypical, informational images, by their very nature--their ambiguity, idealized detachment, and status as coded rather than actual objects--compel associations because they perform their task of denoting so inadequately. As with the traces of emblems in Chardin's images, or the vestiges of the original context remaining in Ernst's collages, the archaic and often baffling qualities of my chosen images hopefully lend my paintings a psychological inwardness or sense that meaning hovers just beyond one's immediate grasp.

And finally, the multifarious images serve, like the tales of the Arabian Nights, to ward off or mitigate the fear of death. As with the picturesque mantle thrown over the awe and mystery of the sublime, the simple representations "domesticate" the chaotic and implacable elements of daily life. They hold reality at that slight distance that permits a somewhat more sustained contemplation, a savouring in time, which remains excluded from images constituted on the basis of instantaneity.

The pleasure I take in choosing and reproducing these images resembles the pleasure of calling forth strange words, of naming, or of repeating a list or litany. In making these pictures, I enter into their movement and "become" them, as Bouvard and Pecuchet "become" the books

they copy. And these simple images become analogues of the simple, repetitious events in my daily life.

ii. Thinking Across Difference: Images and Non-Dialectical Thought

The preamble to this paper might appear overly long and without direct bearing on my work. I have addressed questions frequently asked about my work, namely, the rationale behind my choice of pre-existing images and the inclusion of text. I appreciate that these are distinguishing features of my work, and I have tried to indicate that both activities have rich and fascinating traditions within the history of art. The analysis of visuality--vision as constituted historically, aesthetically, and philosophically within my own Western tradition--has heightened my awareness of the many consequences and possibilities of seeing differently.

Art making enters into the ethical realm for me as it engages our critical processes of thought. Twentieth-century philosophy has focussed closely on and criticized dialectical thinking for its emphasis on categorical divisions and dichotomy. Dialectics traps thought into circular, self-reflexive tautologies that can only be broken open--liberated--through "thinking without contradiction." The ability to formulate thought dialectically simplifies problems, often fruitfully so, but it also suppresses multiplicity and the "anarchy of difference." As Foucault

stresses: "We must learn to think problematically rather than question and answer dialectically" (1977:186).

The tendency to formulate problems narrowly, to conceive and grasp the world as a "picture" is discussed extensively in Heidegger's The Question Concerning Technology. The fact that the world has become a picture at all distinguishes the modern age. Historically, this corresponds to man becoming a subject--a relational centre to all that is in the world.

It is through science and technology, phenomena holding sway in the modern world, that man "sets upon the real" and "orders it for use." The conquest of the world as a picture and the essence of technology lie in what Heidegger calls "Enframing," the predominant manner in which modern man represents the world to himself as a "standing reserve." Enframing imposes a conceptual structure upon the world such that man can only perceive and grasp reality in terms of its radical ordering. While Enframing has granted Western man his pre-eminence in the world, its danger lies in its tendency to dominate and become the only way that nature, the real, and we, ourselves, can ever "presence." (All references to Heidegger 1977: (24-28))

Within Enframing, man and Being confront each other as strangers. This situation also harbours a "saving power," a form of disclosure that occurs as an unpredictable flash of insight, illuminating Being to man. Heidegger calls Enframing the "photographic negative" of the saving power;

the interrelated phenomena are described as drawing "past each other like the path of two stars in the course of the heavens." (33) Thus, despite the ever-present danger, Enframing also beckons through the saving power. This augurs a potentially new awareness, a new relationship with Being, which was not possible before the "world became a picture."

The saving power is fostered by art and reflection (34). Art which has the power to "reveal" is not based in the aesthetic, ("the object of mere subjective experience...an expression of human life," 116) but rather in _techne_, which is not unrelated to technology. _Techne_ can refer not only to the activities of the craftsman, but also to those of the mind and the fine artist (12).

Techne refers to the mind's capacity to reveal truth through reflection and questioning, the "piety of thought" (35). Thinking of this sort differs from the everyday calculating and ordering in that it proceeds through the "sphere of tradition, a learning through what has been thought" (xxxvii). Freed from its task of "ordering for use," reflection is capable of thinking forward, beyond the restricting limitations of immediate necessity, towards an entirely new relationship with Being and the world. Reflection offers "the promise of wealth whose treasures glow in the resplendence of that uselessness which can never be included in any reckoning" (181).

Because of my own interests in ecology, animal rights, and "soft" technology, Heidegger's analysis really

spoke to me. The many difficult problems which face us resist simplistic solutions. The equation of art with techne--with revealing and reflection--seems to open possibilities for artists that transcend single-focus political art, yet which also invoke the socially responsible. I am aware that the "conquest of the world" took place, in part, through the growth and dispersal of the sorts of images which attract my interest. At times, they incorporate the "violence" inherent in any representation, which is most prominent in rational, analytical, "ordered-for-use" depictions. And yet, Heidegger suggests that the way through the "danger" posed by Enframing is directly through the middle: "Where the danger is, grows the saving power also" (28).

Paul Eluard stated: "Images think for me" (Balakian 1959:142). My own thought processes are stimulated by and channeled through the sustained contemplation of images. It is perhaps naive optimism that permits me to think that images can be "liberated" from their role of "setting out before and ordering for use" by reclaiming them for a different sort of thinking. Their danger, in their original context, lay in the fact that they were mistaken for being real, or that the real world could be reduced and "ordered for use" through them. In such a form, Bouvard and Pecuchet endlessly circulated their self-referential discourses which only opened to the real world with

disastrous results. Although this novel is savagely comic, the actual situation satirized by it is hardly amusing.

By radically altering their original context and enhancing their identities as mere fragments of the real, I hope to set these images in situations that invite reflection. By dissolving the categories that originally bound them to an intransigent taxonomy, and by encouraging multiple connotations to rise and form from them, I hope to encourage "acategorical thought." By asking the viewer to construct a "site of meaning" within which to encounter the artwork, I hope to encourage thinking and reflection as active, essential modes of Being. And by accepting-- privileging--art grounded in <u>techne</u>, a form of modest yet powerful revealing, as opposed to the more subjective aesthetics, I hope to reveal possibilities of radical decentredness (<u>sunyata</u>) that are neither threatening nor reductive.

VII. CONCLUSION: MY WORK IN THIS EXHIBITION

i. Third Tableau

In addressing the works in this exhibition, I will make observations that apply to the work as a whole, as well as to individual paintings. The points that I wish to make are of a general nature, and they refer to scale, facture, and configuration of the individual panels. These factors all interact to affect, if not determine, possible interpretations.

I have taken the title for my exhibition from one of my paintings. This does not mean that I consider this particular work to be the summation or central work in the exhibition. It is simply that the title is appropriate for the exhibition as a whole.

"Tableau" suggests the ordered presentation of knowledge according to pre-arranged, rationalist consensus. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the table dominated the major projects of the Classical episteme: natural history, economics, and linguistics. As system of classification, articulation, comparison and equivalence, the table presupposed a system of order inherent in nature and society that could be explicated and made transparent to the inquiring mind (Foucault 1970:74-76).

"Tableau" also suggests the linking together of word and image within a spatial unfolding of representation. The text used in my painting Third Tableau comes from Bouvard

and Pecuchet. The efforts of the two clerks to "picture" the antediluvean world to themselves are satirized by Flaubert, who interweaves the reliable, scientific writings of Cuvier with an outlandish, popularized account by Bertrand. The phrase beginning "Third tableau:" subjectively interprets an engraving included by Bertrand, and it is thus not a transcription of written text at all. (Rene Descharmes, quoted by Bernheimer 1974: 155)

My work often originates in the discoveries of such morsels of literary trivia. The final painting is not in any way about geological history, but the search for origins, the apparently logical (but subverted) reference to the transparent order of the tableau, and the subjective conflation of word and image, reliable and eccentric, do impart enigmatic traces to the work. The impulse to research, inscribe order, and arrange information in patterns that simulate the workings of my own mind are all suggested by my choice of the title for the exhibition.

ii. Scale

Our physical bodies mediate our sense of scale in relationship to our surroundings. In her analysis of the significance of scale to narrative, Susan Stewart asserts suggestively that the miniature, as a model of a world within the world, relates to our sense of interiority, childhood, and the self (1984:44-46). As with the dollhouse, the miniature depicts a proportionate, utopian world, a

"closure of the tableau," laid out in magnificent detail and presented to the transcendent viewer. In contrast, the gigantic refers to an exterior world of disorientation and disproportion, the sublime and consuming forces of nature, and an all-encompassing environment that denies transcendent vision (1984:74).

In aesthetic terms, the miniature suggests harmony and modulation of form, the clockwork charm of the pastoral, and the transformation of unruly and infinite Nature into the neatly framed view of the picturesque. The still and perfect universe of the Lilliputians, "trivial in its comprehensiveness," reflects a scientific concern for pattern, reduplication, and design. In temporal terms, the miniature embodies lyrical time--the perfect interface of past and present revolving in endlessly repetitive cycles.

The gigantic suggests partial vision, the spectacle of public art and state power, and the unpredictability of narrative time lurching toward unknown conclusions. On an ideological level, the miniature replicates private, domestic interiority, while the gigantic reflects social attitudes towards the public life of the city or state. Aesthetic size is thus intimately bound up with ideological and interpretative goals and can not be divorced from social function and social values (Stewart 1984:95).

In my work, scale is represented on two levels that often contradict each other. Scale is determined initially by the absolute size of each panel, from one to

four feet, and by the over-all dimension of the complete work. The tiny panels do seem to suggest interior states of mind, models of reality, or closure. The larger works are more "dangerous": they represent a greater risk for me in terms of resolution and the possibility of misinterpretation. This is most apparent when a similar image relates a smaller to a larger work, as with Slash/Burn and The Swallows Obey. The smaller work is more focussed, journalistic, and conventional. Paradoxically, it can also be read as an intimate statement of internal anguish. The larger work addresses the theme of ecological disaster on a more global scale while it tries to ascertain some role for individual response. Because of the greater length of time invested and the greater variation of elements in the larger works, these works are more polysemous. Their scale and complexity relates them to the external world, a world more mediated by cognitive and impersonal forces.

Additionally, scale is negotiated by the framing of the view or object. Photography has completely conditioned us to telephoto, oblique, and "close-up" shots. The extreme close-up suggests the gigantic or immediately present, while the telephoto presents a miniature, perfect world at the end of a very long tunnel. Neither form of framing suggests "natural vision"; in both, the sense of intimacy, distance, and partial vision fluctuate. In Artemis, the gigantic head of the goddess subtending the picture plane conjures up the mythological or transpersonal

forces of nature, while the more naturalistically framed domestic image that accompanies it preserves human scale and temporality.

iii. Facture

Attention to craftsmanship and facture is frequently discredited within post-modern thinking. Some critics go so far as to suggest that painting replicates archaic or obsolete modes of hand-production that are nostalgic or inherently elitist in nature. This reasoning appears faulty to me, as it only addresses the commodity aspect of works of art. Painting is a complex, cognitive act--a form of labour and process rather than a simple production for consumption.

Any work of value in our culture, whether a piece of music, a powerful scientific theory, or a solution to a complex social problem, is created only through patient and attentive labour. While craftsmanship does not on its own determine the merit of the work, the process of making an image or object can not be severed artificially from the work. Like aesthetic size, facture conveys meaning. For me, the meaning of the work arrives through the process of making; any attempt on my part to predetermine the meaning beyond initial planning stages has met with failure.

My use of highly polished surfaces in which the traces of the paint are effaced or controlled manifests my admiration for nineteenth-century painting and illustration.

I respond to the "absence" of the artist in the face of the work itself, particularly after Modernism's fetishization of the artistic "master touch." Because of the square format and often eccentric framing of the images, my paintings could not ever be mistaken for older works. Facture serves to create a "resonant trace" of archaic or romantic practice, a self-conscious activation of specific codes, rather than uncritical reduplication.

The polished surface imposes spatial uniformity, which serves to bring the panels into equilibrium with each other. Coloured glazes, monochromatic palettes, and the suppression of value difference all contribute to this integration as well. The paintings simulate the Albertian window in which the picture plane itself is closest to the viewer. At times, this plane is reinforced by drips, washes, text, or inscribed images. The tension between spatial recession and the picture plane clearly indicates a Modernist pre-occupation that I willingly acknowledge. Finally, the surface and recessional space impose a sort of coolness or remoteness from the viewer that sustains the sort of quiet contemplation I want for my work.

iv. Configuration

Rather than suggesting limitless series, the arrangements of the panels simulate collections found in museums or libraries. Susan Stewart suggests that to "play with series is to play with the fire of infinity." The

collection meets this threat of infinity with the control and constraint of articulated boundaries (1984:159). Limitations built into the boundaries of my works are fragile, fluctuating, but nonetheless insistent. They are determined by my choice of images, by the energy generated and cross-directed within the work, and by the external configuration of the complete work.

I tend to think cinematographically when framing and arranging a series of images. The viewer is required to reorient himself from image to image and to make a more conscious synthesis of prospects that are combined less obtrusively in cinema. I use this reorientation compositionally as well as semantically to lead the viewer back and through the overall assemblage.

The superimposed images often introduce movement that counteracts or opposes the flow of the primary image. This movement introduces temporality into the matrix of the static composition, as it is literally impossible to grasp the entire configuration in one glance. The temporal is also insisted upon with the inclusion of text, which can be read word for word, for content, or scanned as a pattern or interrupting screen. With this device, I try to suggest the intermeshing of cyclical (lyrical) and linear (narrative) time, movement and rest, fixed and fluctuating meaning.

The arrangement of individual panels into collections is accomplished by trial and error, intuitive decision, and an intense concentration on what the piece

itself seems to be saying. Invariably, my original plans for works go astray or are modified beyond recognition. Sometimes this is apparent when a preliminary study exists. While I don't set out to wander from my original idea, the divagation is inevitable and necessary. It becomes my guarantee to the viewer that meaning must be made, and that this making is a form of labour and struggle that can not be imposed from outside.

Individual panels do acquire semantic value through their position in the series. A small panel can function as an "introduction," setting the scene, when placed at the beginning (the left-hand side) of the work, as a "conjunction" linking larger panels, or as an aside or cadenza when placed at the end. Depending on their placement, large panels can be seen to support, contradict, or transpose the apparent subject matter of the other panels. Sentence structure, with its left to right orientation, provides the initial "reading" for the work, a reading which often obtains in more conventional compositions. Additional interpretations, induced both by the cinematographic flow and by formal devices, often emerge to support or reverse the initial impressions.

The shape of the finished work encapsulates its internal energy and direction. In some more pointed works, such as The Swallows Obey (for Chico Mendes), three large panels present a density that resembles Heidegger's "that which cannot be gotten around." The burning of the

rainforest and similar disasters present us with challenges that can only be worked through with patience and directed attention. The central panel offers temporary respite--not withdrawal into fantasy but support for the need to find ground from which to respond. In other works, such as <u>Crane</u> or <u>A Beauty of Behaviour</u>, the openness in the centre provides a fulcrum for the flowing back and forth of energy in the work. Such works address situations or concepts for which no clear answer exists, or for which contemplation is the most appropriate response. Still others, such as <u>Artemis</u> or <u>Diorama: Habitat</u>, address the nature of dialectical thinking: one image constantly modifies or redirects the intention of the other in an endless oppositional flow. No precise formula can be written to circumscribe these readings, but they partake sufficiently of formal conventions as to be accessible to the viewer.

v. Fin

Throughout this paper, I have tried to provide a <u>mode d'emploi</u>--a set of directions for viewing the work-- and a generalized context within which to understand and appreciate my pre-occupations. As I have repeatedly emphasized the responsibility of the viewer to create his or her own meaning, I hesitate to prescribe specific readings for individual works. This responsibility should be regarded in terms of a freedom, an opportunity, or a generosity

within the work, rather than as an onerous task or as negligence on my part.

I believe that my pre-occupations are shared by many persons and that my paintings embody communal knowledge and values. I see the works as tableaus which mark out a space for the slow, patient, focussing or redirecting of energy away from the tumultuous pattern of our busy lives towards a more universal or essential coming into Being with ourselves and our world. I believe that the aesthetic experience and the making, exhibiting, and viewing of art serve their deepest function in affirming the value of that space and that coming into Being. I count as a success any work which invites the sort of reflection described by Heidegger:

> Reflection... a responding that forgets itself in the clarity of ceaseless questioning away at the inexhaustibleness of that which is worthy of questioning--of that from out of which,... responding loses the character of questioning and becomes simply saying. (1977: 182)

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APPENDIX I: RESOURCES AND LIST OF SLIDES

My painting sources are identified according to their key number (images) or letter (texts) in the list below. This list is intended both to acknowledge my debt to the often anonymous artists and to offer the viewer some insight into the nature and diversity of my chosen material.

IMAGES:

1) <u>American Wildlife Illustrated</u>. New York: H.M. Wise and Co. Inc, 1954.

2) Behling, Lottlisa. <u>Die Pflanzenwelt der Mittelallerlichen Kathedralen</u>. Kiln: Bohlay Verlag, 1964.

3) <u>The Book of Knowledge: The Children's Encyclopedia</u>. London: The Educational Book Co., 1926. reprint:1938.

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8) Lydekker, Richard, ed.. <u>The Royal Natural History</u>. London: Frederick Warner and Co., 1895.

9) May, Stella Burke. <u>The Children of Mexico</u>. Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1938.

10) <u>The Nature Conservancy Magazine</u>. a) Annual Report, 1985; b) May/June, 1988; c) September/October, 1988.

11) <u>1001 Wonderful Things</u>. London: Hutchinson, n.d.(c.1920)

12) <u>Outside Magazine</u>. April, 1989.

13) Sharp, William (artist). <u>Victoria Regia, or the Great Water Lily of America</u>. Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1854. Reprinted in <u>The Democratic Art</u>.

TEXTS:

A) Ducasse, Isadore. <u>Lautreamont's Maldoror</u>. (1869) trans. Alexis Lykiard. New York: Thomas Crowell, 1972.

B) Flaubert, Gustave. <u>Bouvard and Pecuchet</u>. (1880). trans. T.Earp and G.W.Stonier. New York: New Directions,1954.

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D) Nishitani, Keiji. <u>Religion and Nothingness</u>. trans. Jan van Bragt. Berkeley: U. of California, 1982.

PAINTINGS:

<u>Artemis</u>. left panel: 11; right panel: 9.

<u>A Beauty of Behaviour</u>. left panel: 2; centre and right panels: 13; text: B, p.166.

<u>Crane</u>. left panel: 3; centre panel (text) and right panel (image): 1, pp 533-534.

<u>Diorama/Habitat</u>. left panel:10; right panel:7; text:D,p.125.

<u>Jump</u>. all panels (images): 3; text: C, p.195.

<u>Red Bird</u>. image: 10 c) (Lincoln's Sparrow).

<u>Slash/Burn</u>. left and right panels: 12; centre panel: 7.

<u>The Swallows Obey (for Chico Mendes)</u>.image:12; text:A,p.141. The text was plagiarized by Ducasse from Dr. Chenu's 18th century Encyclopedia. Chico Mendes was a Brazilian rubbertapper murdered by cattle barons for his role in gaining international publicity for the plight of the rainforest.

<u>Third Tableau</u>. left panel: 6; centre panel: 4; right panel:8; text: B, p.97.

<u>Plato</u>, <u>In Tarquinia</u>, <u>Tower</u>, <u>Crater</u>, and <u>Brazil</u>: all : 5.

LIST OF SLIDES

All works in this exhibition are acrylic paint on plywood panels. Dimensions are given in inches, with height preceding width.

1) <u>Red Bird</u>. 48" x 48".

2) <u>Crane</u>. Three panels: two outside panels: 36" x 36"; inside (text) panel: 12" x 12".

3) <u>Jump</u>. Four panels: two outside panels: 12" x 12"; two inside panels: 36" x 36".

4) <u>Artemis</u>. Two panels, each 48" x 48".

5) <u>Diorama/Habitat</u>. Two panels, each 48" x 48".

6) <u>The Swallows Obey (for Chico Mendes)</u>. Three panels, each 48" x 48".

7) <u>A Beauty of Behaviour</u>. Three panels: two outside panels: 48" x 48"; inside panel: 24" x 24".

8) <u>Third Tableau</u>. Three panels, each 48" x 48".

9) <u>Plato</u>. Three panels; from left to right: 24" x 24"; 36" x 36"; and 12" x 12".

10) <u>Slash/Burn</u>. Three panels, each 12" x 12".

11) <u>Brazil</u>. Two panels, each 12" x 12".

12) <u>In Tarquinia</u>. Two panels, each 12" x 12".

13) <u>Tower</u>. 12" x 12".

14) <u>Crater</u>. 12" x 12". Note: in the exhibition, <u>Tower</u> and <u>Crater</u> were exhibited together as <u>Tower/Crater</u>.

15) and 16) Installation views of <u>Third Tableau</u> in the Nickle Arts Museum, September 15 – October 15, 1989.