


A STRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF MY ART

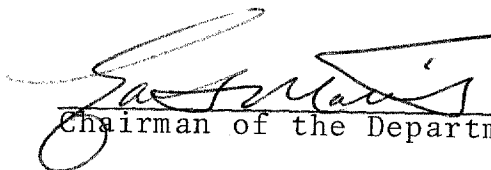
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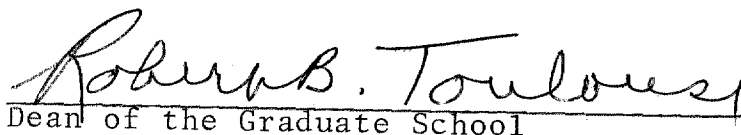
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A STRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF MY ART

PROBLEM IN LIEU OF THESIS

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By

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Introduction

This project is an investigation into the sources of sustained, thematically related images through a series of drawings, prints, photographs and sculpture. Because I have always worked best when I have hit upon an image or set of images of considerable symbolic depth, and because I have generally found such images intuitively, a major portion of this project is to determine if such images can be discovered more consciously. Some questions that will be investigated are: How do I discover a sustained, potent image? Can I track into consciousness what has heretofore been unconscious? Do the times of verbal and visual creativity coincide, or do they occur at discernibly different periods? Can these periods be consciously invoked?

Granted, these are difficult and perhaps nebulous questions, but I hope that working toward their answers-- both through the production of the pieces and the analyses of them--will shed light on my personal creative processes and possibly allow some insight into the creative process generally.

This investigation was conducted as a studio project with the result being a set of works and a written description and analysis of the verbal content leading to them and existent

in them. Instead of a formal diary, notes, project plans, lists of analogous ideas were kept, thus documenting those times of verbal creativity. After the works were completed, I attempted to trace the influence of the verbal content on the visual product, the influence of the intuitive on the conscious.

CHAPTER I

STRUCTURALISM AND THE CREATIVE ARTIST

I. A Description of Structural Analysis

Early in my graduate work, through incidental reading, I became acquainted with the writing of the structural anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss. I was struck with the idea that his methods might produce exciting insights into the analysis, not only in his areas of cultural and social anthropology, music, and literature, but in the visual arts as well. As I understood Lévi-Strauss, his method could be applied to the analysis of the completed art object and to the psychology of the practicing artist.

Because structuralism is a relatively new school of criticism--one of the leading structuralists, French critic Roland Barthes, as recently as 1964 admitted that structuralism was "not a school, not even a movement"¹--some definitions are in order. It is Barthes who has produced the most succinct essay defining structuralism.

After recognizing that the term structure has been for a long time a useful but frequently a jargon word, Barthes instills in the word a new and more concrete meaning:

¹Roland Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity," in The Structuralists from Marx to Lévi-Strauss, ed. by Richard and Fernande DeGeorge (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), p. 148.

We can in fact presume that there exist certain writers, painters, musicians, in whose eyes a certain exercise of structure (and not only its thought) represents a distinctive experience, and that both analysts and creators must be placed under the common sign of what we might call structural man, defined not by his ideas or his languages, but by his imagination--in other words, by the way in which he mentally experiences structure.²

Structuralism is primarily an activity, "a controlled succession of a certain number of mental operations,"³ the goal of which is to reveal an object in its form and in its functions. The artist takes an object in the natural world (here object is defined in its broadest possible sense, including even a verbal or mental construct), "decomposes" the object, and recomposes it in a new way. The result is that between the two objects, the original and the reconstructed one, something new occurs. Barthes calls the reconstructed object a simulacrum of the original. "The simulacrum is intellect added to object."⁴ The activity makes something appear which had heretofore remained invisible or unintelligible in the original object.⁵

To this description Barthes adds, "It is not the nature of the copied object which defines an art . . . , it is the

²Ibid, p. 149.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid, p. 150.

⁵Ibid.

fact that man adds to it in reconstructing it: technique is the very being of all creation."⁶

The method of structuralism involves two functions: dissection and articulation. Dissection is the breaking down of the original object into simple parts which are then capable of being analyzed. For example, one must recognize the individual squares in Mondrian's paintings, how they differ one from the other, noting that the separated parts have no meaning in themselves, they only have meaning in a configuration. When the idea of a configuration enters, the notion of a paradigm also occurs. A paradigm, as defined by Barthes, is a group of units of objects from which one can choose a single object or unit to be endowed with meaning;

what characterizes the paradigmatic object is that it is, vis-à-vis other objects of its class, in a certain relation of affinity and dissimilarity: two units of the same paradigm must resemble each other somewhat in order that the difference which separates them be indeed evident: s and z must have both a common feature (dentality) and a distinctive feature (presence or absence of sonority) so that we cannot, in French, attribute the same meaning to poisson and poison; Mondrian's squares must have both certain affinities by their shapes as squares, and certain dissimilarities by their proportion and color . . .⁷

Articulation, then, is a setting up of rules of association between the dissected parts showing both similarities

⁶Ibid, pp. 150-151.

⁷Ibid, pp. 151-152. The reason I have quoted this passage at length is that this specific analysis is applicable to a series of my "dentality" drawings and to a set of black drawings discussed later in the paper.

and differences. A "battle against chance"⁸ ensues at this second stage of activity. By the repetition of units and the association of units the work of art is constructed.⁹

Barthes concludes that structuralism "manifests a new category of the object, which is neither the real nor the rational, but the functional, thereby joining a whole scientific complex which is being developed around information theory and research. . . . Ultimately, one might say that the object of structuralism is not man endowed with meanings, but man fabricating meanings. . . ."¹⁰ This fabrication of meaning, the function, is more important than the object, the meaning itself. The structuralist, for Barthes, is speaking "the old languages of the world in a new way."¹¹

II. Claude Lévi-Strauss

The "old languages of the world" are myths, and from the structuralist point of view the chief analyst of these myths is Claude Lévi-Strauss. It is necessary at this point to summarize Lévi-Strauss' philosophy as set forth in the "Overture," the introduction to The Raw and the Cooked, the first volume of his major Introduction to a Science of Mythology.

⁸Ibid, p. 152

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 153.

¹¹Ibid, p. 154.

By breaking down a series of South American Bororo Indian myths into their constituent bundles, Lévi-Strauss offers a "syntax" of mythology.¹² He puts scientific assessments into very artistic terms (a practice that has been highly irritating to his fellow social scientists). Lévi-Strauss describes his study of myths as "anaclastic"--that is, the study of reflected and broken light rays. This poetic description indicates Lévi-Strauss' notion that myths build one on the other, that they "irradiate" into groups and symbolically related clusters. In the "Overture" and elsewhere, Lévi-Strauss emphasizes that there is no one true version of a myth; much of its meaning derives from all the versions of it.¹³

[Here is] the very core of our argument: the true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but bundles of such relations and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning. Relations pertaining to the same bundle may appear diachronically at remote intervals, but when we have reorganized our myth according to a time referent of a new nature corresponding to the prerequisite of the initial hypothesis, namely, a two-dimensional time referent which is simultaneously diachronic and synchronic and which accordingly integrates the characteristics of the langue on one hand, and those of the parole on the other. To put it in even more linguistic terms, it is as though a phoneme were always made up of all its variants.¹⁴

¹²Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked, tr. by John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 8.

¹³The Raw and the Cooked, pp. 7-9; Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in The Structuralists from Marx to Lévi-Strauss, pp. 175-176.

¹⁴"The Structural Study of Myth," pp. 175-176.

For his analysis, Lévi-Strauss coins the word mytheme to represent that smallest fragment of mythic meaning. Mytheme corresponds to the linguist's phoneme, the smallest unit of language.¹⁵

By unconsciously using dualities, contrasts, juxtapositions, and changing relationships in their myths, different Indian tribes were able to express their distinctive cultures while sharing a common world view.¹⁶

In the "Overture" Lévi-Strauss states his undeviating intention: "Starting from ethnographic experience, I have always aimed at drawing up an inventory of mental patterns, to reduce apparently arbitrary data to some kind of order, and to attain a level at which a kind of necessity becomes apparent, underlying the illusions of liberty."¹⁷ This "necessity" is the unconscious intent of man's mind.

To find how the mind works through an exhaustive analysis of myths, this is Lévi-Strauss' goal. He reasons:

. . . if it were possible to prove in this instance, too, that the apparent arbitrariness of the mind, its supposedly spontaneous flow of inspiration, and its seemingly uncontrolled inventiveness imply the existence of laws operating at a deeper level, we would inevitably be forced to conclude that when the mind is left to

¹⁵Octavio Paz, Claude Lévi-Strauss: An Introduction, tr. by J. S. and Maxine Bernstein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 26-27.

¹⁶The Raw and the Cooked, p. 8.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 10.

commune with itself and no longer has to come to terms with objects, it is in a sense reduced to imitating itself as object; and that since the laws governing its operations are not fundamentally different from those it exhibits in its other functions, it shows itself to be of the nature of a thing among things. The argument need not be carried to this point, since it is enough to establish the conviction that if the human mind appears determined even in the realm of mythology, a fortiori it must also be determined in all its spheres of activity.¹⁸

More simply stated, Lévi-Strauss is searching for the "constraining structures of the mind,"¹⁹ which are dualities, mediated opposites, a binary system of mental activity.

He conducts this search through the examination of signs, and, he states, "the function of signs is, precisely, to express the one by means of the other."²⁰ He defines myth as the "best possible code, capable of conferring a common significance on unconscious formulations which are the work of minds, societies, and civilizations chosen from among those most remote from each other."²¹ Lévi-Strauss makes a careful distinction here: he proposes to show "not how men think in

¹⁸ Ibid. Compare this statement to one made recently by a conceptual artist: "The brain does not, cannot, act on its own activity. It is only a terminal. It will operate in terms of its structure and the information incarnated in its operant circuits. There is no choice." John Brochman, quoted in Frank Gillette, Between Paradigms (New York, 1973), p. 45.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 14.

²¹ Ibid., p. 12.

myths, but how myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact."²² For Lévi-Strauss this distinction is extremely important: "What matters is that the human mind, regardless of the identity of those who happen to be giving it expression, should display an increasingly intelligible structure as a result of the doubly reflexive forward movement of two thought processes acting one upon the other, either of which can in turn provide the spark or tinder whose conjunction will shed light on both."²³ Again, note the triangular image.

III. Octavio Paz' Claude Lévi-Strauss

By his treatment of cultural anthropology--he writes a myth on mythology--Lévi-Strauss engenders an artistic response to his work; the Mexican poet-philosopher, Octavio Paz, in his thoughtful study of Lévi-Strauss, responds in a very poetic way. Some of Paz' interpretations of Lévi-Strauss are useful as a means of clarifying a great number of very complex ideas.

Paz states that the writings of Lévi-Strauss have a tripart base: anthropology, philosophy, and aesthetics. Lévi-Strauss' reflections on how men, both primitive and civilized, think are philosophy. Paz points out that Levi-Strauss is always conscious of man's place in nature. Paz further calls attention to the dualities in Lévi-Strauss' style, a "language

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid, p. 13.

which is constantly shifting between the concrete and the abstract, between direct intuition of the object and analysis: a thought which sees ideas as perceptible forms and sees forms as intellectual signs."²⁴

The three (again the eternal triangle) major influences on Lévi-Strauss' work are geology, Marxism, and Freud--one a mapping of the earth's ages, the second a mapping of society, and the third a mapping of the psyche.²⁵ By these means Lévi-Strauss explains "the visible by the hidden, . . . the relationship between the sensible [observable by the senses] and the rational."²⁶ Paz sees Lévi-Strauss' purpose to be "not a dissolution of reason in the unconscious, but a search for the rationality of the unconscious: a superrationalism."²⁷

Lévi-Strauss has expanded the idea of structure as the order of facts by overlaying the idea of internal cohesion, "and this cohesion, which is inaccessible to the observer of an isolated system, is revealed in the study of the transformations by means of which similar properties are rediscovered in systems which are apparently different."²⁸ Paz

²⁴Paz, p. 5.

²⁵Ibid, p. 6.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Lévi-Strauss, Leçon inaugurale (Paris: College de France, 1960), tr. by Sherry Ortner Paul and Robert A. Paul as The Scope of Anthropology (London: Cape, 1967), quoted in Paz, p. 10.

clarifies "systems" as "kinship patterns, mythologies, classifications."²⁹

Lévi-Strauss believes that these unconscious categories deal with a meaningful rationality.³⁰ Directly from this belief comes the idea that linguistics can be the model for all anthropological study, for there are the same internal relationships which give language its form and function. Each sign is "made up of the signifier and the signified, sound and sense."³¹ Paz quotes Lévi-Strauss: "In a different order of reality, kinship phenomena are phenomena of the same type as linguistic ones."³² His method, in other words, is based on analogy.

Paz asks, if language--and with it all society, ritual, art, economics, religion--is a sign system, what do the signs mean? A clue to the answer offered by Lévi-Strauss is a statement by the philosopher Charles Peirce: "The sense of a symbol is its translation into another symbol."³³

Following the example of structural linguistics, Lévi-Strauss draws comparisons between myths and language; he

²⁹Paz, p. 10.

³⁰Ibid, p. 11.

³¹Ibid, p. 12.

³²Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, tr. by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), quoted in Paz, p. 14.

³³Paz, p. 15.

searches out the constituent units of each, those phrases or sentences which because of their relationship to each other give an object, character or incident its unique aspect. And Lévi-Strauss finds that a pairing of opposing, irreconcilable terms is repeated over and over in the myths--the dichotomy between life and death, nature and culture, agriculture and hunting, peace and war. The terms replace one another, furnishing a new set of opposites. "No element has a meaning of its own; the meaning springs from the context. . . ." ³⁴

Lévi-Strauss asserts that myth "has for its object the offering of a logical model to solve a contradiction--something which cannot be done if the contradiction is real." ³⁵ Lévi-Strauss maintains that the myth has a life of its own, that "he who tells a myth does not know what he is saying . . ." and that "the same thing happens to his listeners." ³⁶ In the most extravagant statement of the idea, Lévi-Strauss writes, "myths communicate with each other by means of men and without men knowing it." ³⁷

Paz points out that Lévi-Strauss, continuing to develop the triangle as his main icon, turns the five senses into logical categories at the first level, then imposes astronomy on the senses at the second level, and then superimposes on

³⁴ Ibid, p. 37.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 39.

³⁷ Ibid.

that the duality of noise and silence. Lévi-Strauss connects all these levels with culinary metaphors, cooking being the metaphor for culture, a Promethean image, as Paz calls it.³⁸

The center of Lévi-Strauss' philosophy is once again the place of man in the natural world. He believes language is what separates man from nature yet what unites man to man. The model for his system is the word, and the word shapes everything into families of symbols. Paz' extremely valid interpretation of Lévi-Strauss' system is that death is the mediator, the triangle's apex between man and continuing life.³⁹ Here is Paz' reading of Lévi-Strauss:

Death is the real difference, the dividing line between man and the current of life. The ultimate meaning of all those metaphors is death. Cooking, the incest taboo, and language are operations of the spirit, but the spirit is an operation of death. Although the need to survive through nourishment and procreation is common to all living things, the wiles with which man confronts this inevitability make him a different being. To feel oneself and know oneself to be mortal is to be different: death condemns us to culture.⁴⁰

Lévi-Strauss sees no difference in the way the primitive and the modern mind operates--what is different is that on which we choose to focus our attention. In Paz' words, "we [primitive and modern] think different things in the same way. Structure is not historical: it is natural, and in it resides

³⁸Ibid, pp. 48-49.

³⁹Ibid, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 51.

the real human nature. . . . Human nature, while not an essence or an idea, is a concerto, a harmony, a proportion.⁴¹

Lévi-Strauss' idea of time as related to music and myth is another illustration of duality: both music and myth assert time in order to negate it. As Paz quotes Lévi-Strauss, music "immobilizes the time which is passing . . . so that when we listen to it we accede to a sort of immortality."⁴² Myth, being said and done, occupies both synchronic time (simultaneous, or, if the term is allowable, atemporal, time) and diachronic time (sequential, linear time). Like myth, art "reincarnates in two ways: at the moment of the creation and at the moment of recreation," when the observer relives the creation.⁴³ (Paz says the plastic arts repeat this duality not with time but with space: "a painting is space which refers us to another space."⁴⁴) Music and myth, for Lévi-Strauss, "operate on a double continuum, external and internal,"⁴⁵ the first consisting of a historical succession, the other of a psychological time, a visceral time.⁴⁶

In both music and myth there is a "reversal of the relation between transmitter and receiver, . . . since in the

⁴¹Ibid, p. 133.

⁴²Ibid, p. 61

⁴³Ibid, p. 62

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 63.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 63-65.

last resort the latter discovers its own meaning through the message from the former: music has its being in me, and I listen to myself through it. Thus the myth and the musical work are like conductors of an orchestra, whose audience becomes the silent performers."⁴⁷ The artist and his audience are but "two moments of the same operation."⁴⁸

How fitting that Lévi-Strauss has chosen the form of a concerto to write his treatise, The Raw and the Cooked. Myth and music are alike, he says, because they both place "man face to face with potential objects of which only the shadows are actualized, with conscious approximations . . . of inevitably unconscious truths, which follow from them."⁴⁹

IV. Adapting the Structuralist View to Art

In the earlier sections of this chapter I have described structuralism in a general outline. Now there are a number of these ideas of Lévi-Strauss and his commentators that I would like to relate to art; or, more exactly, I will extend the ideas by applying them to art.

1. The Duality of Time. First is the idea that primitive thought does not really differ from the thinking of historical societies; thought is a "mental behavior present in all societies and which in our own is manifested principally in artistic

⁴⁷The Raw and the Cooked, p. 17.

⁴⁸Paz, p. 67.

⁴⁹The Raw and the Cooked, p. 18.

activity."⁵⁰ But Lévi-Strauss recognizes some unique qualities of primitive thought: "The axis of this logic is the relation between the sensible [as known by the senses] and the intelligible, the particular and the universal, the concrete and the abstract."⁵¹ Lévi-Strauss sees that primitive thought "is opposed to history in two ways, as a science of the concrete and as an atemporal logic."⁵² Paz elaborates on primitive man's ignoring of linear time: ". . . primitives distrust history because they see in it the beginning of the separation, the beginning of the exile of man adrift in the cosmos."⁵³

This manner of looking at time can be applied to visual art. Lévi-Strauss' terms, diachronic and synchronic, are indeed particularly apt for art. The making of a work of art involves diachronic, linear time; further, the art object takes its place in history in relation to other art works. But both while the artist is making the object and afterward when the viewer is looking at it, synchronic time occurs. Out of real space, out of real time, the "historicity of the instant"⁵⁴ is erased. And even further, a series of drawings by the same artist involves a fusion of time because of

⁵⁰Paz, p. 81.

⁵¹Ibid, p. 86.

⁵²Ibid, p. 87.

⁵³Ibid, p. 85.

⁵⁴Ibid, p. 88.

related and repeated themes and because of the instantaneous aspect of the works being viewed. Diachronic and synchronic time are both in operation throughout the entire production/viewing span.

2. Process and Nature. The dual concept of time leads to the concept of "process"--that emphasis on the activity of making art rather than the completed, permanent art object itself--so valued by artists and aestheticians today. And involved in the concept of process is the notion of "progress." The duality of progress and Nature is dealt with by Lévi-Strauss; Lévi-Strauss' interpreter Octavio Paz writes:

Our ideal society changes continually and has no fixed place in time or in space; daughter of criticism, it creates itself, destroys itself, and recreates itself as does progress. [And I would add, as the practice of art.] A permanent beginning-again: not a model but a process. Perhaps for this reason modern utopias tend to be presented as a return to that which does not change: nature.⁵⁵

One of the few art historians to apply structural analysis to the plastic arts, Sheldon Nodelman claims that structuralism furnishes "an integrative and holistic viewpoint, maintaining that the reality of the object consists in the full texture of all its relations with its environment."⁵⁶

⁵⁵Ibid, p. 105.

⁵⁶Sheldon Nodelman, "Structural Analysis in Art and Anthropology," in Structuralism, ed. by Jacques Ehrmann (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), p. 81.

Structuralism, writes Nodelman, views "these relationships in operational terms, as modes of action rather than states of being."⁵⁷ Such a view of society and of art neatly falls in line with current ideas concerning "Process Art."

3. The Semantic Quality of Art. Another set of dualities is the dialectic between the visual and the verbal. I would agree with Paz that Lévi-Strauss' belief that music is an "intelligible but untranslatable"⁵⁸ language can be extended to apply to the visual arts, to any of the arts. The modern artist, like primitive man, chooses "totemic" images--images with a potential power for the artist. (It should be noted that Lévi-Strauss makes a strong case that "aborigines do not choose this or that animal species for their totem because of its usefulness but rather because of its qualities and peculiarities, that is, because the qualities can more easily be defined--because of their ability to form conceptual pairs."⁵⁹ Primitive man, declares Lévi-Strauss, does not choose particular animals for totems because they are edible--i.e., useful--but because they are thinkable.⁶⁰) So with the artist in his choosing of potentially powerful images.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Paz, p. 69.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 121.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 122.

But Lévi-Strauss maintains that not all objects have this potentiality. In a series of radio interviews conducted by the French critic, Georges Charbonnier, Lévi-Strauss states:

. . . not any object used any how will do; objects are not necessarily all equally rich in these latent possibilities. . . . it is not every object in itself which is a work of art, but certain arrangements, or patterns, or relationships between objects. It is exactly the same thing as with the words of a language-- in themselves they have very uncertain meanings, they are almost devoid of significance and only acquire a sense from their context; words such as 'flower' or 'stone' refer to an endless series of very vague objects and only take on their full meaning inside a given sentence.⁶¹

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In so far as the work of art is a sign of the object and not a literal reproduction, it reveals something that was not immediately present in our perception of the object, and that is its structure, because the peculiar feature of the language of art is that there exists a profound homology between the structure of the signified and the structure of the signifier.⁶²

And speaking of the ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp, Lévi-Strauss states:

The bottle-drainer in the cellar is a signifier of a certain signified: in other words, it is a device used for draining bottles. If you put it on a drawing-room mantelpiece, you obviously break and explode the relationship between signified and signifier. . . . In doing this, you are bringing about a semantic fission. . . . But the semantic fission helps to produce a fusion since, when you set the object alongside other objects,

⁶¹G. Charbonnier, Conversations with Levi-Strauss, tr. by John and Doreen Weightman (London: Cape, 1969), pp. 93, 95.

⁶²Ibid, p. 89.

you bring out certain properties that it already possessed--properties of harmony or balance, or perhaps weirdness or aggressiveness--if it looks like the bony skeleton of a fish--you bring to light properties which were latent in it.⁶³

Like primitive man's thought as described by Paz, the thinking of the artist begins with minute observation and classifies the dualities, both visual and verbal, which are pertinent. The artist attempts an integration of his findings, using the method of binary opposition. Just as Paz comments on primitive thought, the artist's "process can be reduced to these stages: observe, distinguish, and relate by pairs."⁶⁴ By this means the artist attempts to bring order out of chaotic phenomena. He follows the same logical processes which are at the base of mythical thinking.

4. Viewer as Participant. The work of art is both a visual and a verbal mechanism which is set into motion by the viewer.⁶⁵ The meaning of the piece is not what the artist meant to say but what the viewer sees by means of the work of art: the viewer is the "silent performer."⁶⁶ A kind of "inversion of the relationship" between the work of art and the viewer, the "sender and receiver," is set up.⁶⁷ The viewer

⁶³Ibid, p. 92.

⁶⁴Paz, p. 85.

⁶⁵Paz, p. 68.

⁶⁶The Raw and the Cooked, p. 17.

⁶⁷Paz, p. 67.

himself is signified by the message of the sender. According to Paz,

. . . poet and reader are two moments of the same operation; once the poem is written, the poet is alone and it is the others, the readers, who re-create the poem. The experience of creation is reproduced in opposite fashion: now the poem opens itself up before the reader. When he enters into these transparent halls he takes leave of himself and penetrates "another self" unknown until that moment.⁶⁸

Paz maintains that this phenomenon is common to all the arts, a phenomenon in which "man communicates with himself, discovers himself and invents himself, by means of the work of art."⁶⁹

5. Expectation, Frustration, and Reward. The role of the viewer brings up another aspect of opposing pairs, that of expectation frustrated or rewarded. Paz summarizes Lévi-Strauss on this subject; Lévi-Strauss is again comparing myth and music:

The "internal continuum" is based on the listener's psychophysical time. The length of the tale, the recurrence of themes, surprises, parallelisms, associations, and divisions, provoke in the audience psychic and physiological reactions, mental and bodily responses. . . . Music affects our visceral system in an even more accentuated way: racing, jumping, motionlessness, convergence, divergence, the fall into the void, the ascent to the heights. . . . The charm of music comes from the fact that the composer "holds back that which the listener expects, or gives him something he was not expecting." The

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid, p. 68.

word "surprise" expresses very imperfectly this feeling of "expectation frustrated or rewarded beyond what was foreseen." The same dialectic between the expected and the unexpected develops in poetry. It is a characteristic common to all the temporal arts and which even forms a part of oratory: an interplay between the before, the now, and the after. . . . Now, since in poetry "the sound must seem an echo of the sense," those physiological activities have a meaning; repetition and variation, separation and union, are processes which give rise to reactions at once psychical and physical.⁷⁰

This same "dialectic of the surprise"⁷¹ can be applied to the visual arts as well as the temporal: the task of the visual artist is to introduce the viewer to a condition of surprise, a sense of expecting something that may or may not be withheld.

6. Art as Mediator of Opposites. Again, the basic thesis of Lévi-Strauss is the raw versus the cooked, the opposition of nature and culture. This opposition can ultimately be extended, comments Paz, to mean the grand pairing of life against death with the mediator being spirit.⁷² I would like to substitute for the term spirit the word art, or more precisely, the function of art as an operation of the spirit. I would have it that the mediator between the brief life of the human and the immortality of nature is art, and art is both an unconscious as well as a collective device. This art/spirit has its origins on the side of nature, but its

⁷⁰Ibid, pp. 65-67.

⁷¹Ibid, p. 67

⁷²Ibid, p. 52.

functions and products are on the side of culture.⁷³

In it [the spirit] the opposition between death and life, the discrete significance of man and the infinite nonsignificance of the cosmos is almost erased. Facing death the spirit is life, and facing the latter, death. From the beginning, human understanding has been completely unable-- because it is logically impossible--to explain nothingness by being or being by nothingness. Perhaps the spirit is the mediator.⁷⁴

The spiral occurs again; the circularity of Lévi-Strauss' arguments is dizzying. But Octavio Paz' interpretation of Lévi-Strauss' ubiquitous triangle in which spirit is placed at the apex suggests a way to understand the paradox. To handle this puzzle of the complex meaning of meaning, perhaps we need to learn, in Paz' metaphor, "the art of dancing above the abyss."⁷⁵

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid, p. 143.

CHAPTER II

STUDIO APPLICATION OF STRUCTURALISM

In this chapter two series of works done in the studio--the "Table of Contents" project and the "How To Make a Cow Series"--are described and analyzed according to the Lévi-Strauss model.

I. TABLE OF CONTENTS: A COUNTER PRODUCTIVE PROJECT

The origin of this project was a series of drawings I produced during the summer of 1974. The drawings themselves were suggested by questions on the Graduate Record Examination, analogy questions which set up equations: A is to B as C is to D. Such combinations suggested some ridiculous comparisons (that perhaps weren't so ridiculous; I had just begun to read Lévi-Strauss) such as: knife is to water as edge is to feather. Several drawings on this analogy theme were produced. I included in this series a colored drawing called "Water Table" and later that September did an intaglio print on the same "Water Table" theme.

In early September I began putting together some notes for conceptual art projects. Among those ideas in my September notebook were: "Water Table," "Marble Top Table," and "Table Lands."

My notes took more shape in a few days with these entries:

"Water Table" marble top table
 coffee table
 T table

Document water table
 Water Table, actual lead table

Clearing Table, scraped paint
 (call it) Table of Contents--using a lead
 liner and fill with various contents

Table a motion--a tabled motion
 a tabled emotion?

The artist as tabulator Last Supper? how to indicate?

Seated at the head of the table

(Body Table)

Table land
 Gaming Table

(In palmistry the table is part of the palm formed
 by 4 lines)

Turn the tables or gaining the upper hand

Then followed this chart:

Table---	Tablet---	Tablet---	Tableau
	Big Chief	aspirin	a graphic description
	Moses' Tablets		

The list continues:

Tableau vivant: an interlude where the actors on
 stage freeze, then resume as before
 Table cloth--plaster draped like a table?
 Table hop?
 Table salt
 Table spoon
 Tableware--table dressed in shoes, etc.; a worn table
 Table talk--good for tape
 Table saw--an old fashioned axiom?

Tabula rasa--John Locke--need or opportunity to
 start from a clean slate, a clean table
 Pounding on the table

A few pages further:

Tables are logs
 contrast round objects with geometric, square,
purposeful flatness of the table

Logs are time tables
 Table tennis
 Table wine
 Table lands

The notes became more exact. The September 11 entry
 reads:

Cut out top section of table which is drawn on
 graph paper.

Place actual items in hold, (salt, etc.)

Drop a stone in center of water table--to make con-
 centric circles--photograph tabling a motion.

Tilt table
 Head of the table transposed to headstone
 Foot of the table
 Round table, nights of the round table
 Phases of the moon, silhouette of round table in
 foreground

Landscape with moon rise
 or simply photos of moon phases
 or table photographed at the observatory, telescope
 in background
 or draw moon table, tide table
 or show table during transition

Last supper, mealtime at old folks' home

Through September, a number of the projects elements
 were prepared. I commissioned Hoop's Welding to build a
 table made of angle iron and square tubular legs. The top
 measured 30" x 60". An awkward design of the table with
 views from all sides in perspective was drawn in an industrial

arts style. I reproduced the drawing on the blueprint machine (blue line). I sketched, colored and collaged a number of the blueprints to indicate the various stages of the table. These were ultimately shown with the actual table.

The full list of table changes was set as follows:

- Day 1. Water Table
- Day 2. Tide Table
- Day 3. Table Wine/Spirit Table
- Day 4. Periodic Table
- Day 5. Nights of the Round Table (to be shown on the night of the full moon)
- Day 6. Side Table
- Day 7. Multiplication Table
- Day 8. Table Salt
- Day 9. Tablelands
- Day 10. Game Table
- Day 11. Drafting Table
- Day 12. Picnic Table
- Day 13. Head of the Table
- Day 14. Turning the Tables
- Day 15. Coffee Table
- Day 16. Marble Top Table
- Day 17. Tabling a Motion
- Day 18. Under the Table
- Day 19. Table Talk
- Day 20. Remembrance of Things Repast

Bell Roofing built a galvanized tray with a one inch lip to fit into the table. Bob Luckeman agreed to take documentary photographs of each stage of the exhibit.

A run-through and a photograph session took place in the North Texas State University Art Building gallery anteroom, on Sunday, September 29. About sixteen of the twenty-odd proposed sequences were set up and photographed. Since a few of the sequences were too complicated to assemble twice the photographs were scheduled for the actual date when that element would be constructed.

By Sunday night the first table of the sequence was set up for the following day. "Water Table," with the tray filled with clear water, was shown with an indication of the depth of the water table in Denton County (30-40 feet below the surface of the earth) and a definition of water table (a projecting ledge, molding, or stringcourse along the side of a building, designed to throw off rainwater. 2. The surface in a permeable body of rock of a zone saturated with water.)

Late Monday evening Steve, my son, and I wrapped the twine around the water table producing Tuesday's exhibit, "Tide Table" (Slide 1). Tidelands maps from the U.S. Geographic Survey were displayed along with a notation (freestanding letters) of the average rise and fall of the tides on the Gulf Coast. The blueprint collage made use of a tide chart

for Galveston; this was the exact size of the drawn table top. Bob Luckeman produced an 8" x 10" glossy print of the previous day's exhibit. This was displayed on a brick column behind the table along with a chart entitled TABLE OF CONTENTS, which listed the table titles, and a red dot moved each day to the appropriate title.

On Monday night (12 midnight, October 1) an auxiliary table, a round, topless metal table went on display in the corner of the gallery, along with some moon phase charts on loan from the Physics Department. This stayed up only during the full moon and was entitled "Nights of the Round Table."

For day three I poured two gallons of Paisano wine into the container (the twine having been removed). This day's exhibit was entitled "Table Wine" and had a bonus quality, a ruby reflection on the ceiling, making a "Spirit Table." In addition to the previous days' photographs a definition of spirit table was shown (spirit table. See ceiling. spirit [spīr'it] n. That which constitutes one's unseen intangible being. Often plural. An alcohol solution of an essential substance. An alcoholic beverage. To impart courage, animation, or determination to; stimulate, encourage. [Middle English, from Norman French, from Latin, spiritus, breath, breath of a god, inspiration, from spirare, to breathe.] spirit level. An instrument for ascertaining whether a surface is horizontal consisting essentially of an encased liquid

filled container containing an air bubble that moves to the center when the instrument is set on a horizontal plane).

The first olefactory effect of the series occurred with the table wine. By afternoon the smell was metallic and unpleasant and the galvanized container reacted with the wine in such a way that the color began to dissipate and became a faint rose color, and consequently the spirit table disappeared.

The fourth day's table was entitled "Periodic Table." It was covered with broken egg shells. I had saved eggs for some weeks and The Flying Dutchman Cafe had donated its empty shells for several days also. On the table itself was a periodic table of the elements and a revolving chemistry table of elements entitled "Fun with the Periodic Table."

Day five, October 4, was called "Side Table." A small version of the large table was placed on the right side of the main table, the tray having been removed. The pair might have been labeled "Madonna and Child." On the column above, a short quote from The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin was displayed. A Piece of Great Utility by James Biddle:

The sideboard form as we know it today did not appear until late in the eighteenth century. Side tables had been used for hundreds of years in connection with meals, but it was not until the advent of Robert and James Adam and their school of design in the 1770's that the sideboard table appeared . . . , designed to hold knives, bottles, a plate warmer, water for drinking or washing glasses, and at times even a chamber pot. The presence of this last item is explained by Louis Simond, a French-American, in his 1809-1810 Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain:

Drinking much and long leads to unavoidable consequences (this properly established the sequence of the table wine followed by the side table). Will it be credited, that, in a corner of the very dining room, there is a certain convenient piece of furniture, to be used by anybody who wants it. The operation is performed very deliberately and undisguisedly, as a matter of course, and occasions no interruption of the conversation. I once took the liberty to ask why this convenient article was not placed out of the room in some adjoining closet; and was answered, that in former times, when good fellowship was more strictly enforced than in these degenerate days, it had been found that men of weak heads or stomachs took advantage of the opportunity to make their escape shamefully, before they were quite drunk; and that it was to guard against such an enormity that this nice expedient had been invented.

On Monday, October 7, the exhibit was "Multiplication Table": five small tables, all metal and all with tops removed, were placed under and to the sides of the base table, its tops also removed. A number of school flash cards illustrating various multiples of one, three and five were posted on the column.

"Table Salt" followed the multiple tables. The tray was completely covered with salt, six boxes of A & P non-iodized salt, and the empty boxes were placed on top of the salt. This was the first of the series which viewers played with. People drew whorls and designs and advertising slogans (when it rains it pours) in the salt tray.

On Wednesday the table was covered, salt and all, with a layer of sand and dirt from the sculpture yard. In the center of the tray, with the dirt covering all the salt white margins, I placed a geographic contour map of a mesa-table lands area. (Other similar maps were displayed on the column.) This display was "Table Lands." The sand-dirt mixture was very close in color to the color of the map itself; the two blended to produce a natural-surreal effect. On the map itself, as a sort of happy almost-coincidence, some of the terrain carried the printed names, "Table Top Mountain" and "Salt Creek River."

On Thursday the map was removed and two dried pheasants, a cock and a hen, with their feathers and bright colors in good condition, were placed on the salt-and-earth bed. This was entitled "Game Table." The appearance of this table was highly realistic, in contrast with the minimal "Water Table" of day one and with the punning "Tide Table" of day two.

Friday, October 11, the dirt, salt and pheasants were removed, and the tray was filled with a collection of recruiting folders, pamphlets, posters, and glossy color photographs of happy soldiers engaged in a variety of non-combat occupations. Each photograph included a table in the scene; the table was entitled "Drafting Table." Material for the display was supplied by the Denton office of Army Recruitment. A copy of the old "Uncle Sam Wants You" poster was displayed at the entrance to the anteroom.

On Sunday afternoon, October 13, Monday's table was assembled. Pieces of sod with its grass, leaves, grassburs, Johnson grass, flowers, and random litter were dug from two vacant lots, one on Ponder Street, the other on Hinkle. The squares of sod were placed in the table tray and sprinkled with water to keep the plants more or less alive for the next two days. The title for Monday was "Picnic Table."

The following day the same sodded table was used as the base with an upright tombstone placed at one end. The epitaph on the stone read:

HOLY BIBLE
REV. CAESAR KING

BORN
in 1826
DIED
Aug 16, 1885

"The Lord taketh pleasure in
those that fear HIM, in those
that hope in his memory."

The table was placed perpendicular to the column behind it in order to support the heavy marble tombstone. The day's title was "Head of the Table." When the sod and dirt were removed at the end of this day's exhibit, several grub worms were found alive and wiggling; they had survived the three days' borrowing from the earth.

Wednesday's table was completely cleared of objects; the empty tray kept on the table. Since the day's title was "Turning the Tables," I moved the table at irregular inter-

anteroom. At mid-morning when I came in for another shifting, the table was gone. I thought that someone was playing the joke suggested by the table's title, and so it was. When the table was returned, the trickster placed it on its side, and it remained in that position the rest of the day.

On Thursday, the tray was filled with six pounds of A & P Crescent City coffee. The brand, a mixture of coffee and chicory, was being discontinued, and I bought the remaining supply. Thus the "Coffee Table" had a private if trivial connection with the tombstone of "Head of the Table," and served as an aromatic valediction for the passing of things. (One of the pounds of coffee, a perk grind, was slightly lighter in color than the others, all drip grind.) The anteroom and the surrounding passageways smelled very pleasantly of fresh roasted coffee during the entire day.

Friday's table had the double title "Marble Top Table" and "Tabling a Motion." A little over half of the surface of the tray was covered with marbles, the glassy tiger's eye variety; most were the same size, fifty or so were larger. The light from the spots reflected through the marbles and back from the galvanized tin surface of the tray, making arcs of light all over the table top and on the ceiling. The second title was effected by pushing and rolling the marbles around on the table. I hoped people would move the marbles, and they did. At one time during the day, four of the

building's maids held an impromptu marble shooting match, which drew a good-sized crowd.

On Monday, October 21, the table stood with an empty tray; attached to the bottom of the tray, facing the floor was a drawing (mine) of a hand print with the legend "High Handed, Red Handed, Underhanded." On the floor slightly in front of the table was a 1' x 2' mirror, placed so that the viewer standing in front of the table could see the drawing reflected in the mirror. The stealthy placement of the drawing was revealed in the table's title, "Under the Table."

Tuesday the table remained empty; taped to the underside of the table was a cassette player with three selections from John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Each of the passages contains an appropriate reference either to the tabula rasa or to a table. The voice was that of Giles Mitchell, an English professor at NTSU. The tape was a thirty-minute Memorex. The reading continued more or less uninterrupted throughout the day. The title for the day was "Table Talk." The complete text is as follows:

LOCKE'S TABULA RASA

From an

ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING, 1690

"Book 1. Ch. 2.15. The steps by which the mind attains several truths. The senses at first let in particular ideas, and furnish the yet empty table; and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them.

"Book II. Ch. 1.2. All ideas come from sensation or reflection. Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, a blank table, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE: in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself.

"Book II. Ch. 11, 17. Dark Room. I pretend not to teach but to enquire; and therefore cannot but confess here again, that external and internal sensation are the only passages that I can find of knowledge to the understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the windows by which light is let into this dark room. For methinks the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left to let in external visible resemblances or ideas of things without: would the pictures coming into such a dark room but say there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man, in reference to all objects of sight, the tables of his knowledge, and the ideas of them."

---John Locke

Wednesday, October 23, was the final day of the series. All of the photographs and poster material was removed from the walls. The blueprint collages were taken down, they were completely faded--only a remembrance of the actual blueprint remained, the collaged elements stayed intact--an appropriate winding down for the counter-productive project. The table itself was removed, the tray left in situ on the floor. In the center of the tray was placed a piece of cast aluminum sculpture (mine), a flat piece with the impressions of plates, knives, forks, spoons, a sort of ghostly table setting. The title was "Remembrance of Things Repast."

TABLE JUXTAPOSITIONS

Transitory/Stabile
Rigidity/Fluidity
Geometric/Organic
Utility/inutil
Verbal/Visual
Flat/Sculptural
Conceptual/perceptual
Sensation/Knowledge
Humorous/Serious
Macrocosm/Microcosm

II. THE "HOW TO MAKE A COW" SERIES

A cow on a field of grass is not a bad starting point. Particularly if there is at least one tree about, not too far though, so that the tree and the cow can be taken in at one glance. An upright and a level form. There is here a curious paradox, one of those hints nature drops now and then for man to catch and ponder on, as if nature asked: do you see what I am driving at? The paradox consists in that while the vegetal kingdom is older than the animal, it is on the whole made up of vertical individuals, while the animal kingdom does not produce a truly vertical type until it ceases to be animal and opens out into mankind.

Do you perceive the human prejudice which underlies that whole sentence? It is assumed that the upright form is higher, more evolved than the horizontal or level, simply because it comes at the end of animal evolution; and the fact that it was there all the time in the older vegetal kingdom is tucked in by the way as a kind of paradox. But the fact is that between the two upright forms, the tree and the human animal, the differences are profound.

The tree feeds itself from the lower end upwards and breathes from the upper end downwards. It sheds its waste products from the upper end, down to the earth. The cow--for she must be considered first, before we come to man--the cow feeds herself from the earth at the front, and sheds her waste products from behind, down to the earth. As in the case of the tree, food and waste products come from the same earth, but in the case of the cow they are closer together, and we begin here--we, human beings--to perceive a revulsion at the ways of nature that we have never felt towards the rotten leaves that feed the roots of the tree. Let that feeling of revulsion be stored in our memories for further use. Reproduction in the cow is also relegated to the hind quarters in a higgledy-piggledy intimacy with excretion of waste. We, human beings, also feel sick at this lack of decency and taste on the part of nature.¹

In retrospect, the Table project must have been influenced by my reading of Claude Levi-Strauss, but I did not notice how

¹ Salvador de Madariaga, Portrait of a Man Standing (University: University of Alabama Press, 1968), pp. 15-16.

many dualities it contained until the whole project was finished and I began writing the narrative. The Table cycle began, then, with an unconscious approach; I was aware of certain pairings which were occurring in the work, but I did not consciously choose them.

On the other hand, the set of drawings, photographs and prints which comprise the "How To Make a Cow" series contains multiple pairs and contrasting images that I consciously planned almost from the beginning of the series.

I began the cow series by searching for something humorous to equate with the general theme of cattle or cows. I thought a 4-H Club project might be an appropriate and humorous choice, connected as it is with school activities in this part of the country; simultaneously the idea of making a cow occurred. I liked the double entendre, the sexual connotation that goes along with the idea of creation. I liked the contrast between the sacred and profane: the opposite of the holy cow is "Holy Cow!" And the cow image is so loaded with symbolic meanings that it seemed an ideal vehicle for a sustained series.

A number of such images started suggesting themselves, some original, some from myth and legend, some from literature. I thought, for example, that in this context "milking the cow" could be a way of extracting the essence and incidentally serve as a pretty good metaphor for art. And I was reminded

of the opening lines from James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man:

Once upon a time and a very good time it
was a moocow coming down along the road and
this moocow that was coming down along the
road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo....²


Implicit in the subject of making a cow is the idea of the artist as shaman. Again I had some humorous thoughts of the artist seriously thinking he could make something with the grand, the ultimate meaning. Attaching grand, metaphysical ideas to a cow also seemed very contradictory. I liked having a cow as my totem.


I had been using cow skulls for still life subjects in my drawing classes, and also I had been drawing skeletons (sometimes using X-rays as a base); so the choice of a cow skeleton was one obvious starting point. And I have always preferred images that relate to common household objects--remember J. Alfred Prufrock's lament: "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons"--on which I could superimpose new ideas and images. The "Table of Contents" project is an example of such manipulation of a common object.

Historically the cow has been a vital image both in art and in literature. (It might be worth observing that in earlier artistic epochs the cow is depicted as alive; more frequently in twentieth-century art the skull is all that is

²James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: Viking, 1964), p. 7.

left of a once-fertile icon, as in so many paintings of Georgia O'Keefe.) I had been reading Joseph Campbell's The Mythic Image in which the ass and cow (e.g., in the manger scene) are symbols of reconciled dualities. About the same time I read Alexander Marshack's Roots of Civilization in which Marshack convincingly argues that what were thought to be counts of the hunt carved on animal bones were actually the first calendric notations. This embryonic science with its very powerful suggestion of an early connection between art and technology haunted me for some time. Such speculation suggested another idea: the cow is now used so completely by technology in our own society that its magical, sacred meaning has been, if not entirely lost, at least pushed into the collective unconscious.

The first drawings I did using the cow image were a number of pencil, turpentine and transfer drawings with images of hearts, stars, and the cow skull. The skull itself contains dualities: face-on it is perfectly symmetrical; as the bony remains of a once living creature it is a life/death symbol. I then produced a number of lithographs using those images and adding two numbers, 0 and 5. I added a frieze of 0's with death and nothingness (and simultaneously I was aware of wholeness, death's polar opposite, which the letter 0 can also symbolize (Slide 2). I then added to some lithographs the number 5, also symbolically packed sign. The number can be seen as the beginning of a square  and the closing

of a circle  ; the number contains contradictions, and it can be considered the reconciler between beginning completion, half way from zero to ten. I was aware of the uses that Charles Demuth and Robert Indiana had put to the number 5 and the possible stylistic and symbolic connections of both painters with Georgia O'Keefe.) In my piece, "What Runes to Write," I was working with the notion of the unintelligibility of the numbers used, the paradox of a clearly stated set of signs that is nonetheless ambiguously puzzling.

The next element I added to the cow skull was the word FISH. The dualities there suggested were skull/dry/desert/death contrasted to fish/life/sea/wet. As I was drawing on the lithograph stone, the title "Full Fathom 5" came to me. I transposed fathom to phantom (spirit) and began playing with skeletal implications and the role of the mediator 5 (Slide 3). In both this print and "What Runes to Write," the skull image is very obscured.

The next group of drawings occurred several days later. I had been thinking about using a fish image with a music score. The drawing that resulted incorporated the music score paper collaged to the skull. (The music score motif was suggested by the fact that my husband was working on the text for a requiem mass at this time, and I consider the requiem one of the highest art forms dealing with death.) I had nearly finished the drawing when I decided that it needed some "tight" drawing in the upper section. The incorporation of stenciled

words had been my solution to this problem for a good while. Without really making a conscious decision as to what the word would be, I began writing Liszt; the interior is in fish and Liszt and the interesting combination of sounds appealed to me. Also I was having difficulty with the positive and negative space; they were separating too much. I was going to cut out the skull and begin another collage, but when I had partially cut out the head, physically separated the foreground from the background, the space relationship began to work. I put some foam rubber behind the skull to make the three-dimensional effect even more pronounced. I used actual brads, a reference to western wear, which served the practical function of holding the backing to the bas-relief drawing. I used stitching for a perforated line with no thread. Media used included pencil, eraser, acrylic, gesso, and pastels. The contrast of two-dimensional and three-dimensional effects became the next set of opposites.

At this point I went to the science library to check out a book on bovine anatomy. I came home with eleven books, ranging from (ranging!) descriptions of old cattle trails, branding guides, treatises on artificial insemination and cow diseases to cowboy training books and veterinarian manuals.

Another analogy occurred to me: the artist, as cowherder, is simply trying to compress ideas, cows, into an intelligible unit, the herd. I did another fish/Liszt/5/music score piece, the new dimension this time being an increased

number of skulls (a whole herd) fitted to a four-part grid composition (Slide 4). I used pencil, pastels, and the collaged score paper on grey backdrop paper, encasing the drawing in vinyl with stitched edges. The "encasing" had, I thought, further implications of the death theme.

I used the simulated stitch, repeating the broken line of the music staff. Each skull varies in focus. I was conscious, while I did the drawing, of a musical theme: white spaces equated with rests, the 5's weaving in and out, the alternation of negatives and positives becoming the focal point, variations on a theme.

Some notes concurrent with these drawings are:

the organic source of life in Nordic mythology is the Great Norse Cow.

Io, White Bull and Poseidon--relating to the fish series.

Mother of the Minotaur is Pasiphae; she knew how to make a cow!

King Minos, later one of the two main judges in Hades, commissioned Daedalus to make the maze to trap the Minotaur.

The song from The Tempest:
 Full fathom five thy father lies,
 Of his bones are coral made,
 Those are pearls that were his eyes.
 Nothing of him that doth fade
 But doth suffer a sea change
 Into something rich and strange.

The bones of coral were associated in my mind with cow bones and fish; the "pearls that were his eyes" I connected with the "soul dot," a point of white luminescence I had used in

my much earlier drawings of human skulls.

The next three-dimensional piece began with the explicit use of a sewing pattern; the drawing is titled "Pattern 4-H" (Slide 5). I wrote sewing instructions in both French and Spanish (haut devant, arriba del frente, dóblese en esta línea). The three-dimensionality is much more exaggerated than in the first drawing. I incorporated straight pins of the seamstress into the drawing and again used the perforated line as well as a torn edge.

The pronounced three-dimensionality of this drawing led to the basic idea used in the next four or five works. I sewed actual cow bones--femurs, ribs, vertebrae--into clear vinyl bags (Slide 6). The contrast between the illusory quality, the transparency of the vinyl and the solidity and compactness of the bones was exciting. The juxtaposition of the vinyl serving as the skin for the organic bones was an irony which I liked, and the implication that I had succeeded in "making a cow" was fun.

Further, the bone bags had a two-fold result, the first being the placing and photographing of bones in unexpected places in and around the house. I had acquired an entire cow skeleton, and for two days, Denny Fagan and I photographed the bundles of bones. For example, the bones were placed in a chicken coop with X-rays tacked onto a French door behind the cage (Slide 7); they were placed in the refrigerator along with some roasts and other groceries; they were loaded with

some bone china into the dishwasher; they were laid in an unmade bed; they were stuck down in the toilet, placed in the bathtub with bubbles, laid in the fireplace and in the oven, attached to a bicycle; they were photographed with a variety of color filters in the back seat of a car; they were combined with ice, with jewelry, and with silverware; they were placed under the needle in a sewing machine and in front of a grave headstone marker. For one photograph, the cow skull was set on top of a lead female torso. Finally, some of the bones were photographed alongside sheet music on a music stand.

The slides of these still lifes were very satisfying, the ideas compounding with every different arrangement.

The second result of the bones stitched in bags was that I attached the vinyl-bagged bones to some drawings done with pencil and eraser on large Rives BFK paper. These drawings, three of them, are much simpler, with their single medium and large format, than the drawings which preceded them. But they continue directly the "How to Make a Cow" series. In one drawing a line of four vertebrae bisects the drawing, and a line of 4's is repeated through the design. I chose the number 4 because it is visually analogous to the vertebra shape. I eventually dispensed, in later drawings, with the sewn vinyl bag and simply drew the bag, using colored conté in the bag area (Slide 8).

The second drawing in this style employs a horse skull instead of a cow skull or bones and is entitled "Instructions

for a Cabal." The pun on caballo and cabal was appropriate, I thought, to the shaman role of the artist. The image of the horse skull rotates four times around the edges of the drawing, the center being a black vortex (Slide 9).

The subsequent drawings had as their influence the calendric marks on Neolithic bones described by Marshack in his Roots of Civilization, mentioned earlier. In each of these drawings the skull is replaced by a single bone; one drawing uses a femur, one a forefoot, one a vertebra. The femur drawing takes on landscape associations. The femur itself has a polar shape, a container of opposites. I continued the use of written directions on the drawings: "Insert ready-made bone into slot 2," "penetration angle 6°," the directions having not-so-subtle sexual connotations. The single-bone drawings allude to geological strata. The "Sacral Formula" drawing (long and narrow) is on grey backdrop paper in pencil and chalk; attached in a calendar fashion below is an actual sacral formula written on graph paper. This image was later used for a lithograph with the formula on an overlay of graph paper. Both the drawing and the print were stitched into a vinyl envelope (Slide 10).

Continuing the geographical/geological theme is the "Newbury Ox" drawing (Slide 11). The binary opposites here are technology and nature; the work is drawn on a newsprint image which had been transferred to the drawing surface by means of wetting freshly printed newspaper and running it

with the drawing paper through the press. Compositionally and thematically, the cow in the drawing becomes a map of mythical origins; the cow's pelvis--the top of which has been traditionally labeled the "crest of Ilium"--falls on the latitude lines of the upper right corner. I used heavy layers of gel and acrylic to achieve a leathery look. When I began the drawing, I had in mind the eighteenth-century British pastoral paintings and drawings, another reference to art history. In this drawing there is an ambiguity as to what constitutes the positive and negative shapes. The cow is integrated into the map, which is itself in some places positive, in other places negative.

The next transposed cow drawing ("transposed" because the cow is both cow and something else as well) is called "Construction of a Great American Treasure" (Slide 12). It consists of four completely separated rectangles of large paper, each forming a quadrant of a cow overlaid by a drop leaf table, the swing-out gate legs of the table correspond --in fact, become--the legs of the cow. Another unit of the paradigm in this drawing is the Great Yellow Cow of China (formerly called the Great Red Cow of China, the name changed for obvious political reasons). The cow becomes very abstracted when the four parts are separated. Again a leathery surface was produced by acrylic and rubbing, and a geographical connotation is brought by the use of stenciled letters.

both elements suggesting the mapping of the cow's surface as well as a more general technological reference.

The primary duality of this drawing is, however, the contrast of alter/altar: the cow, a sacred altar piece, has been altered into an altar, a table. I had some thoughts about a Communion celebration using milk rather than wine, a "Masai Eucharist." Even more subtle relationships suggested themselves. I thought of the bathroom as a sacred place, the appropriate room for a vanity table or altar. With the bathroom image came ideas of mirroring, self-image, and self-sacrifice, along with the ideas of purification and ablution. I thought of the cow as muse, as in the sweet musical cows of Chagall's paintings. Keeping with the notion of the sacredness of the cow, I recalled that in Joyce's Finnigan's Wake, the Virgin Mary rides a cow instead of a donkey, the cow being the totem for the Irish "tribe."

Another large drawing followed the "cow as furniture" piece; the image of this drawing is a herd of cattle, with the herd suggesting anonymity. Drawn on grey backdrop paper, the image involves a reversal: both the negative and positive shapes are cow heads; actual dress patterns are collaged onto the surface. Lack of identity is implied by the repetition of the similar cow heads and by the switching of positive and negative shapes. I hoped the drawing conveyed the idea of our culture being so "cut and dried" that we are like cattle only

capable of being herded in one direction or another; given a set of instructions, we follow mindlessly.

My focus changed from drawing to printmaking at this stage. In a series of prints, the first analogy I used was the brassiere/femur contrast. The two objects placed together seemed a good carrier image: the brassiere is a covering of the exterior of the body; the femur is in turn covered by flesh. The brassiere is limp and lifeless when not in use; the femur is rigid and more readily reveals the shape of the leg when "not in use." Of course, brassiere is feminine, femur phallic. I did a lithograph with this pair of images, adding some embossed garters which echoed the brassiere/femur shapes. I also added the etched words, "CULINARY TRIANGLE," in blue to the print. The lithograph was printed on graph paper and was grommeted to the Italia which held the etching and embossing (Slide 13). This means of construction further suggests the idea of how to make anything through the use of mechanical or engineering props.

A good many analogies occurred to me at this point, pairs such as catfish/brassiere, artichokes/skulls, icetrays/vertebrae, even automobile front/oiled Assyrian bull (both macho symbols). All these pairs are verbal as well as visual. The artichokes/skulls idea became a lithograph using artichoke/star pairing. The image of star, I remembered, came from one of the earliest units of the paradigm that I had combined with skull: a trio of skull/star/heart.

The following outline from my notes at the time traces some of the thematic connections of the pair and includes a mediating factor between artichoke and star--the feather.

<u>artichoke</u>	<u>star</u>	<u>feather</u>
Earthborn	Celestial,	Contains elements
Hard outside/soft	spiritual	of both star
inside	Opposite in its	and artichoke
Smooth vs. spikey	physical and	Subject of myths
Birdlike coloration	visual mani-	Spiritual con-
with the breast	festations	notations
of inner section	Ethereal (actu-	Hard quill con-
a more vibrant	ally in the	trasted with
color	ether)	feathery quality
Negative point of		Coloration like an
leaf can be		artichoke
fitted with a		Corresponds in
star point		shape to a leaf
		(artichoke)

The idea of inner and outer contrasts became predominant in my work; I played with the envelope/cow skull pair where the outside container contrasted with the inner container (the skull).

I thought of the stamp on the envelope compared with the stamp on the cut of meat: U.S.P.O/U.S. Choice. And there was the rectangular shape of the envelope contrasted with the organic shape of the animal part. The envelope further offered a good "carrier" for the letters and numbers I use in my work.

The next idea was the combination, peared opposites/paired opposites, the last a term borrowed from Lévi-Strauss. The image was one of three pears forming roughly the shape of a cow skull. I was thinking of the Trinitarian implications and also of Lucas Samaras' pear cutting a knife sculpture.

And following the envelope image, I subsequently did a Bicentennial print with George Washington and the skull, both macho images, both fathers of our country. The skull emerges from the writing and the stamps on the right side of the envelope. George Washington's head is cadaverish; the print is entitled "Cancelled"; the letter is addressed to me, an epistle mori. Here the medium is literally the message (Slide 14).

A second Bicentennial lithograph is titled "All Women Are Not Equally Nice" (Slide 15). The print is based on a double image; seen in one way it is a skull, in another two women form the eyes and nostril of the skull. One woman is dark, one light. At the bottom right are the founding fathers (opposites of the two women) sitting in judgment. The print divides down the center, a formal opposition, and there are x-y coordinates across the middle section (a technological reference).

At this point I consciously changed my interest to some formal problems in drawing. I have been accused of having a horror vacui, and I have repeatedly made reference to the non-separation of positive and negative space. And, it is true, I had never been able to use a large expanse of white, untreated negative space; ambiguity of space had been my prime interest heretofore.

The paired opposites/peared opposites seemed a good vehicle for some new white space drawings. I began by actually

stitching a brassiere onto the drawing surface and drawing a bikini/femur at the bottom of the paper, leaving the intervening space white. Several drawings followed this theme. The next drawing contained the brassiere, drawn this time, with a line of painted pears and two pears in each cup of the brassiere; the line of pears were drawn in revolving states (Slide 16).

The next drawing consisted of a jockey strap (another article of underclothing and also pear-shaped) juxtaposed with a line of painted pears, entitled "Apotheosis of a Jockey Strap." The brassiere as container was further developed in the next drawing, entitled "Synechtoche," a figure of speech meaning the container for the thing contained (Slide 17). This time I paired the brassiere with a colander, an object which denies in a sense the idea of complete containment. Some other drawings were an s/z dentality as one pole of a pair and a cow's jawbone and teeth as the other; a brassiere combined with a pair of pliers; a vertebra combined with a leather glove.

The cow image still interested me, but I felt that the drawings along the paired opposites line were becoming forced. I tried to radically revive my sources. I found a grided cutting board--a foldout cardboard rectangle--, and the idea of graphing a cow came to mind. My notes at the time read:

Graft a cow onto?

Make a reredos out of a cow.

If you graphed a cow you would be alter^aing it to graft it onto a graph to make an alter^ar(ation).

At this point I got into a line of speculation that may at first seem far-fetched and digressive but that became for me an important conceptual adjunct to the entire cow series. The idea of "graphing a cow" led me into geometrical considerations (I had already applied briefly the concept of x/y coordinates to earlier drawings). I posed this problem: find what the cow's sine functions are (a mathematical solution was needed here as much as an artistic one). Consider these associations: the sine of a cow = the sign of a cow = Taurus. Since the sine function is constant and if one could find the sine of one angle, he could graph the whole cow by multiplying the curve of the original angle.

Here my son Stephen provided me with some creative answers to my math questions. He also gave me E. Richard Heineman's Plane Trigonometry with Tables,³ the material from which I adapted for the following sequence. (I may be accused of playing fast and loose in this section, transposing as I am matter from trigonometry and information systems analysis to the visual arts, but again and again I was struck by the similarities and applications of the former to the latter, sometimes with only the slightest imaginative adaptations, sometimes with none at all.) Note this sentence from Heineman:

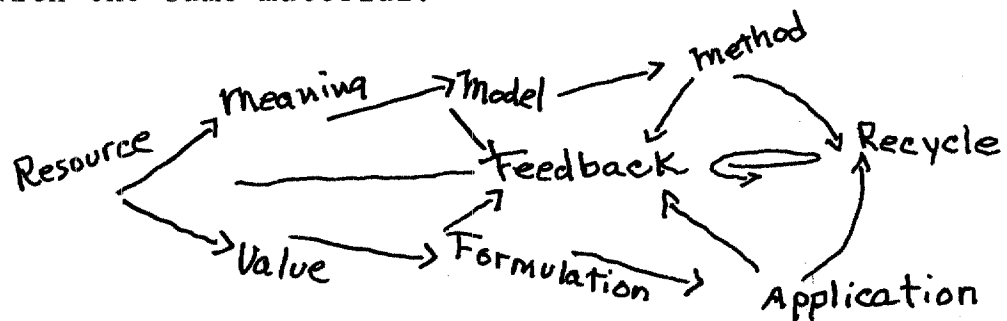
One plan of attack in drawing the graph of $y = a \sin x + b \cos x$ is first to sketch (one the same coordinate system) the graphs of $y = a \sin x$ and $y = b \cos x$ and then to use the method of composition of y -coordinates.⁴

⁴E. Richard Heineman, Plane Trigonometry with Tables (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

The "art" terms in this sentence--sketch, drawing, composition--suggested to me that art, like systems analysis, involves input, output, feedback, and can be viewed in terms of problem/solution.

The "systems analysis" formula might be outlined as follows: 1. There is the original input, the "flash" of idea, a single image. Paul Goodman, the poet and critic, describes how he hits on a first line, a "spontaneous response to an unnoticed actual occurrence. . . . The first line, that is, is analogous to a stroke of wit, except that its content is not repressed malice or lubricity but an unnoticed awareness."⁵ 2. A conversion takes place in the mind of the viewer; it is an internal operation. 3. There is the output stage involving a decision/no decision choice, a pattern following the binary code. 4. Finally, there is the feedback stage which involves criticism; either the viewer or the artist-turned-viewer can serve as the critic.

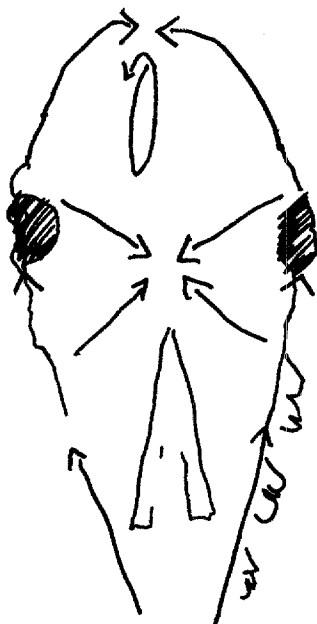
I remembered a model I had seen in Between Paradigms dealing with the same material.⁶



⁵Paul Goodman, Five Years: Thoughts During a Useless Time (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 188.

⁶Gillette, p. 44.

I converted the model to a cow skull by turning it on its axis:



By this conversion, I think I had put Gillette's advice to work: "The failure of old method precipitates new meaning. Optional resource of new method: Convert highly complex conceptions of change into practical models."⁷

This process of changing or transforming information seemed to me to be exactly what I was doing with the graphing of the cow. Could the process be called factoring? These terms borrowed from trigonometry were appropriate: Period--the distance between points on the axis line. Amplitude--the

⁷Ibid.

height which a thing attains. Period is measured as base line; amplitude is height (and negative height or a mirror image, an image flip-flopped on its axis). A graph, the geometricians assert, covers every point ever; this is a pleasing bit of all-inclusiveness! Further, on a graph only things that intersect are true. So if the cow intersects with a brassiere the conjunction is true.

I continued my games of combining cows and geometry:

1 cow = 360° or a whole cow

$1/4$ cow = 90° or a quarter cow (hind or fore)

0 cow = 0° or no cow

The sine of $1/4$ cow or 90° cow - cosine of 0° cow or no cow but

the sine of $1/4$ cow + cosine of 0° cow = 720° cow or two whole cows

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

"And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good." (Genesis I: 2, 25.)

Out of nothingness comes art or cows.

A whole cow = the sum of degrees or angles (approaches or ways of looking)

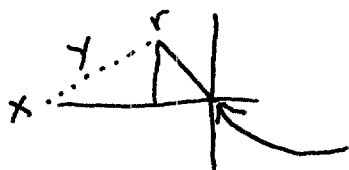
The sine of a cow = $\frac{y}{r}$ where $\frac{r}{y}$ = hypotenuse
 $\frac{y}{r}$ = height

Sine is binary

On a coordinate system (or a grid of "life," art or science), the distance from the origin to the apex (r + height) is the x axis.

"The system of complex numbers is really the system of ordered pairs of real numbers--a first, then a second--(a, b), in which equality, addition, and multiplication are defined in a certain specified way."⁸

⁸Heineman, p. 193.



this is the angle in question

The mathematical term reciprocal = a dual match-up

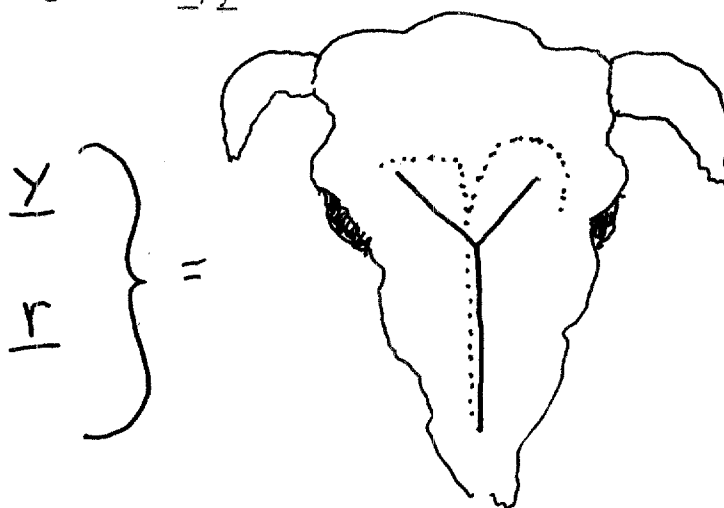
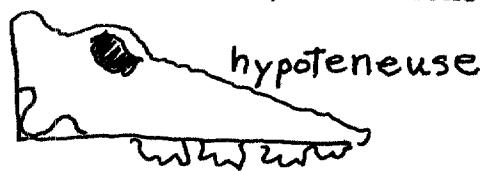
Sine is the opposite of cossecant.

cow - table - table of (mathematical) functions

cosine = $\frac{x}{r}$

tangent = $\frac{y}{x}$

cotangent = $\frac{x}{y}$



In spite of the wildness of the games outlined above, I was dealing throughout with correspondences. Logarithms deal with numerical relationships between every number and its corresponding logarithm. Yet rules for numbers are completely different from rules for logarithms. I see an analogous relationship between art and life.

Along the trails which the "how to make a cow" series took me, every step had a recognizable connection, either visual, verbal or psychological, with the next one. And

though I abandoned the cow theme in the studio at this point, I found it was impossible to shut off cow analogies and references to the "cow kit" in my thinking. It is still a very satisfying game to keep the cow ideas going in my mind.

I felt I was leaving the binary approach behind. I began work on a group of black drawings (later termed the "Magnum Black" series). In one aspect these new drawings were totally negative, both in photographic and in spatial senses, but they were also thematically and sequentially dependent on the white negative space drawings which preceded them. I am going to speak only briefly and generally about these works, only to point out that while I thought I had set the binary approach aside, it was fully, if subconsciously, in operation. The types of dualities changed in that these drawings do not involve a recognizable natural object as the subject; they are primarily abstractions. Here, the main concern was with surface and materials (in radical opposition to the previous works). There was a good deal of experimentation with non-art media--liquid floor wax, paste wax, furniture polish, powdered metallic dust, acetone. I ran multiple printings of the paper through the press while the ink was still wet in order to modify or negate the previous layer (Slides 18, 19 and 20).

The duality between the surface and the depth is a critical one. There at least two spaces, two depths, involved --a surface image and a deeper second-or third-level image

contradiction between surface line and spatial illusion, and there is an actual value change as the viewer moves from one side of the drawing to the other. It is impossible to see all aspects of the drawing at once; it is incumbent on the viewer to move about the drawing, to shift light and to focus his eyes differently to encompass the entire drawing.

This then brings up two more dualities that I discussed in Chapter I, expectation frustrated or rewarded and the viewer as participant, the idea of the viewer being the "silent performer," the inversion between sender and receiver. New ways of perception are called upon. Further, these drawings involve the viewer very directly in the continuous/discontinuous time duality. They demand linear time to look at their various aspects, and they are then simultaneously absorbed in the mind of the viewer.

These were the most time-consuming drawings I have ever done, yet the loss of the sense of time was striking. Another idea appropriate to the black drawings is the one of the viewer "setting them in motion."⁹ A less obvious set of opposites manifested in the Magnum Black series (the title echoes the void being invoked) is the one between pleasure and death, or more appropriately, between "activity and Nirvana"¹⁰--"the art of dancing above the abyss."¹¹

⁹Paz, p. 68.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 126.

¹¹Ibid, p. 143.

I believe this circularity or cyclic grouping of work from the table with its unconscious dualities to the "How To Make a Cow" series and its conscious use of the binary approach to "Magnum Black," closing the cycle by the use of an unconscious dialectic, is valid in Claude Lévi-Strauss' terms.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

Claude Lévi-Strauss warns, in the "Overture," of the danger of the mythmaker (or in my term, the artist) trying to take the conditions under which his own thought operates as the subject for reflection. Lévi-Strauss rightly predicts that the conclusions will be subjective and hypothetical. I tried to think out the assumptions, values and usages that lay behind the cow ideas and to construct the drawings in relationship to those ideas. Of course, my analyses are highly subjective (the prerogative, I hope, of the artist), but I had Lévi-Strauss' very solid philosophy to give me underpinning. I believe that each drawing (like each separate myth) acquires "a certain solidity through being integrated into a series, whose terms can be accorded some degree of credibility because of their over-all coherence."¹

The questions asked in the introduction have been answered to my satisfaction. They are: How do I discover a sustained potent image? Here I will use a Lévi-Strauss answer: I choose an image not because it is edible but because it is thinkable.² I choose common, everyday objects that can undergo

¹The Raw and the Cooked, p. 13.

²Paz, p. 122.

mutations or transformations. The transformations negate the static quality of the object. Static connotes death, and I believe that death is a concept that is much with me. I think that my first association with an object is as a symbol for death which is then transformed to the opposite of death--vitality or sex. I also like an object that can refer, either by similarity or dissimilarity, to other art. Such a connection brings up the opposition between art and technology, paired "opposites" frequently on my mind.

My method of finding out if an object or idea is thinkable--i.e., usable as an image for my work--is to play with it for awhile. Usually this begins at a very unconscious level. Several times I referred to the cow series as a game. C. G. Jung was one of the first of the major psychoanalysts to discuss the important business of creation as play:

Out of a playful movement of elements, whose associations are not immediately established, there arise groupings which an observant and critical intellect can only subsequently appraise. The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect, but by the play-instinct, from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves . . . one can easily regard every creative activity whose potentialities remain hidden from the many as play.³

The second question--Can I track into consciousness what has heretofore been unconscious?--has a double answer. My

³Quoted in Gillette, p. 94.

work in the "How To Make a Cow" series has shown me that the analogical approach to art can be made more conscious; comparisons, dichotomies, contrasts can be consciously planned. But there is a danger of such an approach becoming artificial and stilted when the entire operation is totally conscious. So the second, the more important answer to the question is that there is no need to consciously plan dualities: they will come unasked.

Question three: Do the times of verbal and visual creativity coincide or do they occur at discernibly different periods? Visual analogies, I found, stimulate verbal analogies, and vice versa. I have noticed that I do "compensatory creative thinking," comparable to compensatory dreaming. When I am cut off from a studio situation for any length of time, I am mentally and verbally much more active. Sitting in a doctor's office, taking long trips--any situation which prevents me from art "hand" work or from reading or other physical activity--these are conditions that produce active, creative mental games. Further, when I am stimulated by exciting intellectual ideas, either from conversation or from reading, I come up with dozens of new art project ideas. The two poles of stimuli to production are frustration or boredom and intellectual excitement. (Even the polar answers I am giving to each of these questions attest to the relevance of Lévi-Strauss' thesis.) The focus is in the mind as well as in the eye, like finding certain shaped shells on the beach. When you first

arrive on the beach, you hardly see any one kind. Then after a few minutes of absorption in the hunt you are inundated with your sought-after form. In other words, the verbal and the visual are inseparable.

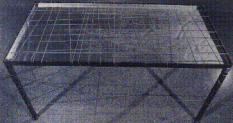
Then, when I go into the studio I intuitively put everything pertaining to pre-planned themes and images out of my mind and try to focus on what colors or materials or basic shapes I am going to be dealing with. From there I let the subconscious take over, and that collection of imagines mundi presides. Expanding Malraux's dictum that "art comes from art," I know that "art comes from everything." To quote from Between Paradigms again, "The brain does not, cannot, act on its own activity. It is only a terminal. It will operate in terms of its structure and the information incarnated in its operant circuits. There is no choice."⁴

⁴Ibid, p. 44.

APPENDIX

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Photograph of a large, dense, and somewhat chaotic pile of fabric or clothing, possibly a bedspread or a large bundle of garments, resting on a dark surface. The fabric is heavily wrinkled and folded, creating a complex, textured appearance. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the folds and shadows within the pile. The photograph is framed by a dark border.



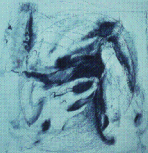














CHURCH	1000
WORLD	1000
REVENUE	1000
EXPENSES	1000
NET INCOME	1000
TOTAL	1000

This is a summary of the financial statement for the year ending 1900. The total revenue was \$1000, and the total expenses were \$1000, resulting in a net income of \$1000.





CULINARY TRIANGLE





1911



1904

1904









