/CHANCE IMAGES/

BY

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THIS BOOK
CONTAINS
NUMEROUS PAGES
WITH PICTURES
THAT ARE CROOKED
COMPARED TO THE
REST OF THE
INFORMATION ON
THE PAGE.

THIS IS AS RECEIVED
FROM CUSTOMER.

THIS BOOK CONTAINS SEVERAL DOCUMENTS THAT ARE OF POOR QUALITY DUE TO BEING A PHOTOCOPY OF A PHOTO.

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Chance imagery has been used by artist throughout history. Notable examples are found in prehistoric cave paintings and weapons, Greek and Roman foliage masks and gem stones, and the works of the Hellenistic painters Protogenes and Nealces. Albertus Magnus' chance image in stone and the gospel book from Saint Medard Soissons are among many in the middle ages.

Renaissance art is full of chance imagery, Alberti wrote about its use, Albercht Durer made pen drawings, Andrea Mantegna used clouds as a source for making images, Botticelli made reference to the stains on walls becoming a fine land-scape, and Leonardo confirmed the invention as a source of imagination. Chance images can also be found in the work of Correggio, El Greco, the Milanese Master (Zendale), and Piero di Cosimo. The artists find these chance images "among the random images of the outside world." "He does not create them but discovers them and makes the image complete."

The major work on the subject in the 18th century is Alexander Cozens' A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape, which influenced the great romantic painters Constable and Turner and played a part in the invention of the Roschach Ink Blot Test. James Whistler's "nocturnes" and "arrangements" carry the use of chance into the 20th century.

The last 80 years of artmaking is full of examples of chance images: The Dadist, Surealists, Abstract Expressionists, and Conceptualists have all used chance imagery.

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The raison d'être of chance imagery is make belief.

The artist who uses chance images chooses from pre-existing

sources and signifies the chance images as art images or

sources of art imagery by making the chance images complete.

Selection of chance imagery is influenced by personality, sub-

jectivity, time and energy, and availability of chance images.

The paintings in this thesis show consist of chance

images created by blind manipulation of pigments the results of

which are connected to form concrete imagery. No attempt is made

predetermine the form of the paintings with reference to content,

context, subject matter, or structure. There is no predisposition

toward any meaning, message, function, significance, nor is there

any attempt to articulate a social, political, or religious philosophy.

The paintings have nothing to do with self analysis nor are they

deliberate realizations of any known subconscious or unconscious

impulses.

The paintings are made with no conscious consideration given

to formal artistic elements and principles with the exceptions

that all the paintings are black, white and gray; that the

paintings are all of the same proportions: $(x/y = \frac{y}{x+y})$, and

the relationship of painted to non-painted canvas is one of equal

area $(x' = x \sqrt{2} \; ; \; y' = y \sqrt{2})$

Pallet knife and brush strokes are used to make blobs and

splatters of paint. (This process is by chance.) Then these blobs

and splatters are connected with lines of paint and thus made into

whole images. The process itself is less interesting than the

resulting images and their relationships to each other, in which

the artist's predisposition toward certain forms becomes apparent, since his choices leave out other equally valid possibilities for images.

The selection of images (looking) and the delineation of images (connecting and drawing with painted lines) is a matter of slection and limitation based on the completeness and obviousness of the images provided by chance operation.

The images that I see as a result of the chance operation are mostly human and animal figures, and this is in large measure the result of the absence of geometry in the initial blind application of paint. At times the figures (complete and partial) seem violent, horrible, vengeful, tortured; at other times, they seem detached, or even ambivalent. Animal figures tend to include rearing horses, loose dogs, sleeping cats, imaginary figures, flying dragons and "devils."

However, I acknowledge that the viewers perception of images may be significantly different from my own. The beauty of this is that the artist allows similar invention by the viewer. It assumes a fundamental though partial denial of will in the artist--his willingness to have images or potential images interpreted freely. This willingness speaks to the viewer who is willing and able to play a kind of open-ended game (play, drama, or comedy) in which the characters form themselves, create their environment, perform their part, and then disappear, ending when the viewer looks away. In this way a continuing fiction of images ebbs and flows unpremeditated by the artist. Of course this method is not very useful if a specific intention is desired in terms of

expression. But in an environment where artistic intentions are articulated ad infinitum choosing not to participate in pre-

mediation has its rewards.

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THE TRANSPARENT WALL

IN ROMAN FRESCO

by

JERRY LINTON

Ideas in art reflect the culture in which they are produced. In the four styles of Roman fresco dating from 200 B.C. through the first century A.D., two alternating ideas can be found that are indicators of different impulses in culture. These ideas are the closed wall and the open wall. Both ideas can be approached in terms of the spatial relationships between the art work and the wall on which it is painted, and the room in which it is placed. In the closed wall, "the wall simply serves to hold a composition which has no relationship to it...(Be it a fresco or a picture), the painting represents a space which has no connection with the real space of the room."[1] In the open wall, the painting occupies the entire wall and room. One type of open wall is known as the transparent wall. The painting, which is the wall, creates the illusion of another world which extends the real space of the room. The effect is a larger space and an airy, light atmosphere. The closed wall was practiced in the first and third styles of Roman fresco, while the open and transparent walls appeared in the second and fourth styles. While the closed wall develops the rationalistic impulse inherited from Hellenistic culture, the open wall, and especially the transparent wall, is an exercise of an impulse which reflects the sense of individualism among the artists and patrons of the time.

The focus of this study will be on the idea of the transparent wall. I will proceed by first giving a description of the four styles of Roman fresco, and point out how each successive style was, in part, a reaction to the aesthetic, religious, and political values that conditioned the style that came before. My discussion will then emphasize the development of the transparent wall, par-

ticularly as it relates to the development of individualism within
the Roman culture. Finally, I will examine the individualistic
elements in a transparent wall painting.

The first style of Roman fresco, which dates from about 200
B.C. to 80 B.C. "is typical of the Hellenistic era, also found
in the Greek world, as at Delos."[2] The style features the closed
wall, and exemplifies a rationalistic sense of proportion and
order. As H. Stuart Jones describes,

> The wall-surface is divided into three
> sections. At the base we find a dado,
> painted either in plain yellow, probably
> representing a wooden wainscot, or in
> imitation of veined marble, as in the
> example here shown. The middle part of
> the wall has stucco mouldings with bevelled
> edges, painted in imitation of coloured
> marble slabs, and terminated by a moulded
> cornice; and above this the wall is painted
> in plain colour. At intervals a series
> of moulded pilasters extend from top to
> bottom of the wall. In this style we find
> no figure subjects. (p. 143)

The second style dates from around 80 B.C. to 15 B.C. and
features the open wall. According to Jones,

> The designs are no longer in moulded
> stucco, but are in imitation of archi-
> tectural forms in order to produce the
> illusion of porticoes, open spaces,
> and c., surrounding the room. In the
> earlier examples of the style the three-
> fold division of the wall-surface is still
> marked; but the dado has become a projecting
> shelf, and the pilasters are replaced by
> columns which appear to stand free from
> the wall. The next step was to treat the
> uppermost portion of the wall-surface as
> an open space, in which vistas of build-
> ings were painted in perspective; thus
> we are invited to imagine ourselves in

> a saloon surrounded by a colonnade and
> enclosed by a low wall above which our
> gaze travels into outer space. The main
> wall may be decorated with imitations of
> framed pictures or of statues placed on
> pedestals resting on the shelf; and we
> generally find a central panel filled by
> a mythological subject....It must always
> be remembered that this mode of house-
> decoration owes its invention to the
> desire of towndwellers for surroundings
> suggestive of the open country. (p. 145)

While the view in many of these frescoes represented natural

landscape, a good number of the frescoes evoke an otherworld which

is left deliberately vague and mysterious. This latter type of

wall constitutes the main content of transparent walls, and points

to private religious sentiments of the patrons and artists (more

on this later). In general, the choice of subject matter and

decoration, and the level at which the paintings engage the imagi-

nation of the viewer, reflect the individualistic impulse at work

in producing open and transparent walls of the second style.

The third style appeared around the time of Augustus (ca. 27

B.C. to 50 A.D.). "This style is characterized by the suppression

of the trompe-l'oeil effects and of the openings in the wall.

This again forms a limited space, being confined to a single plane;

the wall is divided into panels symmetrically arranged around a

large central picture of a landscape or a mythological subject"

(Picard, 50). The sense of equilibrium and serenity in the third

style recalls the rationalism and Hellenism of the first style.

The fourth style (ca. 50 A.D. to 79 A.D.) flourished at the

time of Nero, and lasted at least until the catastrophic destruction

of Pompeii. The fourth style, in reaction to the third, once again

opens the wall and reintroduced illusionism. Particularly in the

transparent walls, "illusionism celebrates its triumph to show
forms in sunlight" (Jones, p. 412). The relationship between
the fourth and second styles is striking, but more important,
the fourth style reflects once again the individualistic impulse
at work.

In a sense, the nobility were partly responsible for both
rationalistic and individualistic impulses of the four form styles,
since they comprised in large part the patrons of art. On the one
hand, their attachment to Hellenism and their desire to import
it to Italy (as opposed to the nationalism of the middle and
lower classes) was an attitude that explained the rationalistic
element in the first and third styles. On the other hand, the
nobility's striving for intellectual freedom manifests itself in
the individualistic expression of the second and fourth styles.
As Picard points out:

> "The important faction of Roman aristo-
> cracy, represented at first by the circles
> of Cataline, Claudus, Claudia, and later
> by groups around the two Julias, Messa-
> lina, and finally Nero, was in open revolt
> against the traditional morality to which
> it was bound." (Picard, p. 104)

The fluctuations of attitude among the noble patrons, between
public aspirations and private sentiments, were reflected in the
frescoes. In addition, Roman art of the period does not exhibit
a unified sense of space. For these reasons, by the time of
Nero and Pompeii (4th style), all four styles found expression
in the frescoes, and it is possible to find a mixture of styles
side by side in the same private residence or monument.

Having given an overview of the four styles of Roman fresco,
I will now focus on the transparent wall of the second and fourth
styles, and explore in greater detail the development of individ-
ualism which accompanies the two styles. So far I have explained
the striving for intellectual freedom of the nobility. This
striving has two important implications: one, it encouraged the
elevation of the social status of artists, which often meant they
had greater freedom of expression in their work. Second, the
intellectual freedom of the nobility often included private relig-
ious beliefs and practices which were represented in the frescoes.

The elevation of artists from the rank of mere craftsmen to
that of emancipated creators originated in Greece, in the 5th
century B.C., during which a diversified literature about artists
and art started to develop. Artists during this period wanted to
appear as gentlemen in dress and behavior. But, despite the highly
developed self esteem of artists, public recognition was lacking.
Although the skills of craftsmen were valued for utilitarian
reasons, the Greeks felt contempt for those who had to work with
their hands for aliving. Moreover leading thinkers such as Plato
and Aristotle assigned to the visual arts a place much below music
and poetry. Nevertheless, in the 4th century B.C. the public
attitude began to change. By the end of the century, a body of
biographical literature on artists developed, which articulated an
interest in artists' personalities and their individual idiosyncra-
sies. By the first century A.D. the stories as well as the Neo-
platonists were beginning to acknowledge that painters experienced
"divine inspiration and ecstacy in their creations." Masterpieces
of art now found eager bidders, and an interest in art and involve-

ment in art criticism became a status symbol. "It is credibly
reported that Alexander and his court painter Apelles were tied by
bonds of friendship."[4]

Since the Romans borrowed extensively from Greek culture, it
would not be surprising if the notion of the artist's individualism
had filtered into Roman culture from the Greek. Roman emperors
such as Nero, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius regarded painting and
sculpture as suitable pastimes for themselves. And Fabullus,
Nero's court painter, was known to have painted in a toga - which
is today's equivalent of painting in a tuxedo. The donning of the
toga signaled, among other things, his sense of the dignity of
the artists (Grant, p. 178).

Fabullus was the chief decorator of Nero's famous residence,
the Golden House. The residence, with its "architectural features,
technical novelties, mechanical wonders, (and) curious gadgets"
reflects an emphasis on novelty which is very much a part of the
Neronian spirit. "But above all the Golden House provided a
fabulous opportunity for mural painters" (Grant, p. 176).

The view in many of these open wall paintings represented
theatrical productions, such as the sacrifice of Iphigenia, a play
in which Nero was said to have participated many times. What
is particularly interesting, from the perspective of the present
study, is that the predominant theme of the surviving murals was
that of the transparent wall.[6]

In terms of religion, Rome is a polytheistic culture, the
State religion being the cult worshipped by the emperor. While
citizens were expected to attend public ceremonies as a sign of
loyalty to the state, they were also allowed a private practice

of their own cult ceremonies. The Roman State was conscious of
its politics, history, and jurisprudential freedoms. It is the
Roman State's value of the freedom of speech that allows freedom
of expression in the religious choices of its citizens.[7] Within
the framework of religious practice, individual impulses of artists
and patrons are reflected most in the second and fourth styles of
the transparent wall.

    Earlier I have noted that the views in the transparent walls
evoke an otherworld which is left deliberately vague and mysterious.
This unique feature has generated much speculation and several
theories from art historians, and the most convincing theory,
according to Picard, has it that the transparent walls most likely
represented the individual Roman family's conception of the tomb
worlds of their ancestors. The fact that these transparent walls
were located in private residences suggests the privateness of
religious sentiment, which is consistent with the theory.

    The fresco of the corridor with larger figures in the Golden
House of Nero by Fabullus, dated 66 A.D., is a beautiful example of
the transparent wall.[8] The thin columns painted on the wall
suggest frames of windows opening out into a space pervaded with
light. The fresco has a shallow depth and very basic illusion-
istic rendering incorporating variations in color values and
a minimum of trompe-l'oeil effects. The painting appears as if
a yellow scrim is stretched across the wall just behind the thin
columns (window structure), and that another space is visible but
not clearly defined. This "space behind the scrim" contains what
appears to be shadows of architecture with practically no details.
However, the illusionistic perspective provided by the archi-

tecture makes for a kind of credible fictional space. Within
this fictional space, figures appear as projections or silhouettes
on the "scrim." The remarkable sense of illumination surrounding
the shadowy forms directs the viewer's gaze into the supernatural
world.

In a sense, both the architectural and illusionistic ele-
ments condition the viewer's frame of mind as s/he looks on the
painting. The window structure establishes connection with the
real world, since "depiction of the everyday motif is more cred-
ible than the depiction of the supernatural" (Sandstrom, p. 19).
But beyond this point, the fictional otherworld engages the
imagination of the viewer, for "it is in the nature of the
aesthetic fiction that the observer adopts right from the beginning
a liberal attitude...since one of his requirements is that the
painting shall make visible for him things that he cannot himself
give form to" (Sandstrom, p. 19).

The aesthetic fiction in painting and the liberal attitude
toward perception are hallmarks of the individual freedom of
choice in the transparent wall fresco. The patron, by exercising
choice in subject matter, commissions into being a work that
represents for him his concept of the supernatural ancestral world.
The artist, in creating an aesthetic fiction of this world real-
izes a certain freedom of artistic expression.

It is unfortunate that this remarkable idea of the transparent
wall failed to survive into later ages. Nature and politics in
part explain its demise. The volcanic eruption that buried
Pompeii in 79 A.D. also entombed a large number of transparent
wall paintings. The unpopularity of Nero is another reason. Nero

was a stimulator of the fourth style of Roman fresco. After his death, the transparent wall was no longer practiced. And his successor Hadrian built his baths above the Golden House, so that most of the residence was destroyed and, along with it, most of the mural paintings.

But perhaps religion was the dominant cause of the disappearance of the transparent wall idea itself. The Christianization of Rome brought an end to the belief in ancestral worlds and with it the motive for its representation in the frescoes. Thus it was that even when Pompeii was unearthed during the Renaissance, and the transparent wall paintings were rediscovered, the idea of the transparent wall was never adopted.

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4) Picard, Gilbert. Roman Painting. Milan: Instituto Editoriale Italiano, 1968.

5) Sandstrom, Sven. Levels of Unreality. Upsala, Sweden: Almquist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, Ab. 1963.

6) Wittkower, Rudolf. "Genius: Individualism in Art and Artists," Dictionary of History of Ideas, Vol. II. New York: Scribners & Sons, 1973, pp. 297-312.

NOTES

[1]Sven Sandstrom. _Levels of Unreality_. Upsala, Sweden: Almquist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, Ab. 1963, p. 16.

[2]Gilbert Picard. _Roman Painting_. Milan: Instituto Editoriale Italiano, 1968, p. 48.

[3]H. Stuart Jones. _Companion to Roman History_. Oxford: Oxford at Claredon Press, 1912, p. 399.

[4]Rudolf Wittkower. "Genius: Individualism in Art and Artists," _Dictionary of History of Ideas_, Vol. II. New York: Scribners & Sons, 1973, p. 299. My discussion of the elevation of artists is drawn from Wittkower's essay.

[5]Michael Grant. _Nero_. New York: American Heritage Press, 1970, p. 178.

[6]For a picture of a transparent wall in the Golden House, see Grant, p. 182.

[7]For a discussion of Roman religious practices, see John Furguson's _The Religion of the Roman Empire_. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1970, particularly Chapter 7.

[8]A good reproduction of the painting appears in Picard, p. 73.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

ILLUSTRATIONS FOR DANTE'S INFERNO

by

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Art 695

Ever since Dante's Divine Comedy was published in 1314, at least 25 artists have illustrated the work in part or in its entirety. Among them, Robert Rauschenberg is one of the latest to have attempted this. Rauschenberg's illustrations cover only the Inferno. In analyzing them I have three questions in mind: What are the correspondences between the written text and the visual representation in terms of content and form? What are the problems and limitations of Rauschenberg's approach? And, compared to illustrations done by other artists (Botticelli and Rico LeBrun), what themes are peculiar to Rauschenberg in his illustrations, and what do these themes tell us about the artist and his time?

I. Correspondences between Visual and Verbal Texts

First, a general description of Dante's work is in order. Dante lived in a world that believed in the mystical significance of numbers, among other things. The structure of the Divine Comedy is built on the numbers 3 and 10, and their multiples. The work contains three cantiches, Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso. Each cantiche consists of 33 cantos, the work totalling 99 cantos. An introductory canto to the Inferno makes up 100 cantos in all. The entire work is written in terza rima, a verse form of three-line stanzas the first line rhyming with the third, and the second line rhyming with the beginning line of the following stanza.

In terms of content, this description will focus on Inferno

since it is the only cantiche illustrated by Rauschenberg.
Inferno, or hell, is a huge, funnel-shaped pit located with
its center beneath Jerusalem. Its regions are arranged in a
series of circular stairsteps or terraces, diminishing in
circumference as they descend. There are nine circles (in
three divisions), with the vestibule making the tenth. The
sinners in hell are arranged according to three capital vices:
incontinence, violence, and fraud. Each of the nine regions
is designated for a particular sin, the lightest at the top
and the most heinous at the bottom. The punishments in Inferno
are regulated by laws of retribution; therefore, they corres-
pond to the sins committed either by analogy or antithesis.
For example, carnal sinners who abandoned themselves to the
tempests of passion are tossed about incessantly in a fierce
storm. The violent who were bloodthirsty and vicious during
their lives are drowned in a river of blood.

The Divine Comedy has many interpretations. Dante himself
says that the first meaning of his work is the literal one.
By this he means that the cantos tell the story of the state
of souls after death, according to the beliefs of medieval
Christianity. He does not mean or intend his readers to infer
that it is a literal story of a trip through hell. Dante's
language is deceptively simple and so is his method. He writes
in the vernacular, exploiting all its force and directness.[1]

The cast of the Divine Comedy, according to James Merrill,
"included saints, philosophers, emperors, angels, monsters,
Adam, Ulysses, Satan, and God. To these Dante added a poet

he revered (Virgil) and a woman he adored (Beatrice), plus
a host of friends and enemies whose names we should otherwise
never have heard, and garbed them in breathtakingly symmetrical
patterns of lights and darks woven from a belief everyone
shared. Even the pre-Christian souls in hell know pretty
much that they are damned for not having known (God) in time."[2]

In Rauschenberg's illustrations, Virgil is represented
variously as an arm or a hand, a baseball umpire, an antique
statue, an astronaut, or a capital letter "V." Dante, on the
other hand, is represented as a helmet, a question mark,
trousers, a capital letter "D," and as a nondescript man.
Most often, this man is a model from an advertisement in
Sports Illustrated.[3] He is covered with a towel, standing in
a room with tiled walls reminiscent of a Muybridge photograph.
He is bare-chested, vulnerable, silent. In some illustrations
only part of the man is visible; in others, two of them are
present. To compare the two main figures, Virgil, Dante's
guide through hell, is drawn more often than Dante, and Virgil's
face is more expressive.

Apart from these images, Rauschenberg also uses a large
vocabulary of signs in his drawings. Staccato-like line
movements and splatters of spray paint indicate noise, confu-
sion, or excitation. Arrows often point toward specific
actions in the scene. For example, in canto 32, an arrow
pointing from a foot to a head corresponds to Dante having
accidentally kicked the head of a sinner. But a more general
function of the arrow is to indicate to the viewer the di-

rection in reading the illustration, which is often from top
to bottom, or diagonally downward, in circular or spiral mo-
tion.

As a visual translation, Rauschenberg's illustrations are
sensitive to the resonances of the terza rima structure of the
poem. Like the rhymes interlock throughout the cantos, so
do incidents and images throughout the illustrations. More-
over, some of the illustrations are in three parts, echoing the
triplicate structure of the cantos and cantiches.

In keeping with Dante's conception of hell as a state of
the soul rather than a real place, the space in Rauschenberg's
illustrations seem imaginary, yet with enough occasional images
of walls, stairs, gates, walkways, and architectural fragments
of this kind that a correspondence is achieved with factual
space. This approach also lends itself to the tradition of
medieval narrative drawings in which a sequence of actions
is represented within the same illustration. The sense of
imaginary space and the medieval narrative tradition combine
in the illustrations to produce a kind of implied narrative.
This allows Rauschenberg to present images as types of sinners
suffering their deserved punishments without rendering the
entire story behind them. Thus the journey of Virgil and
Dante is presented by arrows and images of men, and their
laborious climbing up and down through the layers of hell
is left to the written text. Again, in canto 15, Brunette
Latine, one of the sodomites, is represented by a track-
and-field runner menaced by a tornado, and in this way implies

Dante's story of how the souls of sodomites are confined in a circle of fiery rain and scorching sand, and must keep running in the hope of escaping the torture, and whoever stops for an instant must spend a hundred years without fanning himself in the terrible heat.

Within this framework, the image of the runner expresses what a runner <u>can</u> <u>do</u> rather than what he <u>is</u> <u>doing</u>. This reinforces the Dantean notion of hell as a concept. Therefore, through the method of the implied narrative, Rauschenberg sustains an equilibrium between his images and Dante's story.

Apart from narrative, another form of correspondence presents itself as we follow Dante and Virgil through the nine layers of hell. Going from top to bottom, Merrill says, we sense a deceleration of movement.[4] Merrill's explication and Rauschenberg's illustrations, it seems, offer similar readings of Dante's <u>Inferno</u>. The wind-driven soul of Francesca in canto 5 (illustrated as a whirlpool of spiralling images) gives way to runners in canto 15 (Brunette Latine and the sodomites), then to the painfully walking hypocrites cloaked in gilded lead in canto 23 (illustrated as bound athletes and gold sea shells), finally to the frozen, impacted souls of Cocytus, the frozen lake of hell, in canto 32 (illustrated as heads buried to their chin, and their reflections, in ice).

Another correspondence between visual and verbal texts can be seen in the last canto. Dante arrives at the nadir of hell, "the point through which (he) must pass in order to be

reborn. It lies at the exact center of the earth, or gravity, of the entire Ptolemaic universe."[5] Here Satan sits, the complete reversal of "the Divine Power, the Supreme Wisdom, and the Primal Love" (words inscribed on the gate to hell in canto 3). And Satan is mechanically gnawing on the bodies of Brutus, Cassius, and Judas (represented by the head of a monkey with white eyes and human legs sticking out of its mouth.) As the pilgrim skirts the nadir, everything abruptly turns upside down. This is paralleled in the final illustration in that the viewer may turn the drawing upside down and see Dante leaving hell.

Perhaps the most striking parallel between Dante's Inferno and Rauschenberg's illustrations is the use of the vernacular by both artists - Dante in terms of language and Rauschenberg in terms of everyday images of the 20th century. In a sense it is Rauschenberg's discovery of the present in the Inferno that has translated the 14th-century work into something which can be understood and absorbed by our modern sensibility. In the September 1973 issue of Art in America, Brian O'Doherty defines what he calls the "vernacular glance" in relation to Rauschenberg's art. Essentially,

> it is what carries us through the city every
> day - a mode of almost unconscious or at least
> divided attention. Since we are usually moving,
> (the vernacular glance) tags the unexpected and
> quickly makes it familiar, filing surplus infor-
> mation into safe categories. Casually self-

interested, it accepts the miraculous as
routine...The vernacular glance does not
recognize categories of the beautiful or ugly.
It just deals with what's there. It sees the
world as a supermarket. Easily surfeited,
cynical about big occasion, the vernacular
glance develops a taste for anything....[6]

One can easily detect the vernacular glance operating in
Rauschenberg's Inferno illustrations. The quality of these
illustrations is equal to the other works Rauschenberg pro-
duced during this time (1959-61), and much of the iconography
is repeated in earlier and later works: astronauts, sports
figures, hands and legs, politicians, automobiles, insects,
animals, fish, etc. In particular, Rauschenberg's use of
political figures is prominent in the Inferno illustrations.
For example, in canto 12, Virgil is represented by Adlai Steven-
son who was running for president when Rauschenberg was making
the illustrations. Dante appears as John F. Kennedy who was
elected president in 1960. Canto 12 represents the 7th circle
of hell where the brutal are punished. They are watched by
minataurs and swim in boiling blood. And in this place we
find an image of Richard Nixon, standing for purveyors of
war. Here we note Rauschenberg's commentary on the times
which echoes Dante's judgment of some of his contemporaries.

These politicians, together with other human images, are
the inhabitants of hell. Moreover, they function symbolically
as modern archetypes of sinners: the policeman is a symbol

of authority; the athlete is a symbol for strength and strain-
ing; the politician is a symbol of power or corruption; and
Dante, in his nondescript, vulnerable guise, is a symbol of
every man.[7]

Rauschenberg himself has said that he tends to see every-
thing in his sight. It is precisely his omnivorous appetite
for images that has equipped him with a ready-made set of
scenes for the Inferno. At the same time it would seem that
Dante's rich verbal imagery constitutes a perfectly consumable
source for Rauschenberg, making it possible for him to reenact
what was traditionally a religious myth in a contemporary
social context.

Where color is used, reds and yellows dominate. Yet the
feeling is that they are accents to black and white and grey
paper. This is the result of Rauschenberg's transfer technique
which tends to veil color as well as image. This veil is
thicker in the Inferno illustrations than in Rauschenberg's other
transfers, thus reinforcing the notion of hell as smoky and
noisy. An occasional blue grey appears to contrast the umbers
and pale orange, giving the sense that hell is full of fire
and smoke, glowing and dangerous.

The transfer technique mentioned above is one invented
by Rauschenberg himself. By wetting drawing paper with lighter
fluid and placing photographic reproductions face down and
rubbing over them with pencil or ball point pen, Rauschenberg
could peel the images off the photograph onto the paper. The
deposited image not only has the look of the photographic

source, but it is also characterized by the pressure and
direction of rubbing, which gives a modulated field of tints
and tones to unify the separate images. The sources of the
images are magazines such as Time, Life, Newsweek, Sports
Illustrated, etc. John Cage comments on the effect of the
transferred images in the Inferno illustrations: "It seems
like many television sets working simultaneously all tuned
differently."[8] So amid fire and smoke, and images of the
20th century, the modern hell is revealed.

II. Problems and Limitations of Rauschenberg's Approach

     Rauschenberg's innovative approach to Dante's Inferno is
not without problems. One problem concerns our short political
memory which quickly outdates the political imagery used in
these drawings. After a face or image has lost its political
meaning, it is not usually expressive of the political context
in which the illustrations were undertaken. The second
problem is the limits which the page imposes on the illustra-
tions. Where the verbal text is concerned, owing to the linear
character of language, the meaning of the writing is continuous
in the mind of the reader. Thus Dante's narration of the
events in hell is not limited by the size of the page. However,
Rauschenberg's illustrations are 11" x 14½", and within this
space, each illustration represents one canto. Since the
number of images that can be drawn with any clarity on a page
is limited, the illustration has an inherent problem of
space. As it turns out, some of the illustrations contain

images so small they are undecipherable. A third problem has
to do with Rauschenberg's transfer technique. Because of the
veiled, smoky effect of the technique, the transferred images
are sometimes blurry and only semi-visible.

III. Comparison of Rauschenberg's Inferno Illustrations with Those of Botticelli and Rico LeBrun

At this point, a comparison of Rauschenberg's illustra-
tions with those of other artists may shed further light on
the themes and concerns that are peculiar to Rauschenberg.
John Ciardi discusses the approaches taken by Botticelli and
Rico LeBrun and others in the Dante illustrations. Of
Botticelli, he writes:

> Botticelli tried to illustrate Dante and
> came up with sketches so curlicued and
> rhythmically lilting that they might do
> for a mid-summer night's dance of fairies...
> (Botticelli) did what (he) understood how
> to do without taking the happy trouble to
> understand Dante.[9]

To be fair to Botticelli we need to perhaps understand the
artistic conventions within which he operated, conventions
which designated figures as types, and assigned specific
meanings to gestures, stances, and groupings, which cannot
directly translate into 20th century categories. We also
need to understand that to the Quattrocentro master, the
Divine Comedy was a widely read text among patrons, clients,

and artists. In fact, Botticelli's illustrations of the
work had been commissioned by his patron. So within this
convention, the illustrations did not stand on their own, but
rather depended on an assumed knowledge of the written text.[10]

In contrast, Rauschenberg works within the conventions
of the 20th century, in which Dante's Inferno cannot be
considered assumed knowledge among the painter's diversified
audience, and in which the human figure is freed from its
codified expressions. Rauschenberg is therefore able to
establish an independent response to Dante's work, with the
result that his illustrations are free from narrative
dependence, and achieve a correspondence as a whole, so that
in Rauschenberg's illustrations, Dante's narrative in turn
becomes an undercurrent of meaning, an allegory of the present.

Rauschenberg's downplay of the narrative is taken to an
extreme by Rico LeBrun, who dispenses with the device entirely.
Ciardi writes: "Rico LeBrun succeeds in giving me a graphic
inferno...while faithfully rendering a sense of Dante" almost
exclusively in terms of the human body.[11] The absence of
landscape reinforces the concept that hell is a state of being.
"Rico LeBrun's monstrously distorted images are of Dante's
concept," Ciardi continues, "Hell is not where they are but
what they are. The damned by their absolute insistence upon
refusing God are at the furthest distance from God, or in the
most distorted image of every soul's godliness."[12] For this
reason hell is agony and helplessness. "The agony of meaning-
less and endless distortion is a theme that suggests itself

persistently to the modern man."[13]

Thus the human body in its various forms of distortion is here seen as an "adumbration" of the "inner abyss," "the projected inwardness of all the damned," seen and understood outside of the discursive framework of the narrative.

As contemporaries, LeBrun and Rauschenberg both work within a common set of artistic conventions. Their difference in approach then we must attribute to the individual styles and intentions of the artists. It seems that by leaving out the narrative, LeBrun pictures hell as psychological isolation, emphasizing the intensity of individual agony. Rauschenberg, on the other hand, through the use of implied narrative and fragmented imagery, portrays hell as the isolation of the individual in a fragmented society full of noise and distraction. Hell is less an inwardness than a kind of free floating collective creation larger than man, from which there is no exit.

Free from the narrative, and fixed on the inwardness of hell, LeBrun's illustrations often produce immediate sensual and emotional responses in the viewer. Moreover, stripped of social setting, there is a timelessness about the drawings that drives home the eternity of hell's agonies. Rauschenberg's images, on the other hand, do not create an immediate emotional response in viewers. The viewer has to first supply effort in reading the images and signs in the illustrations. But once he has exposed himself to the work as a whole and, through it, come to realize the context from which it derives

its meaning - a context shared and understood by the viewer - then the work speaks with a unity of purpose that the viewer finds echoed within himself. As a 20th century artist, Rauschenberg speaks to us.

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3) Cage, John. _Silence_. Middletown, Conn., 1961.

4) Ciardi, John. Introduction to _Drawings for Dante's Inferno_ by Rico LeBrun (private publication).

5) Merrill, James. "Divine Poem: Dante's Cosmic Web," _The New Republic_, November 29, 1980.

6) O'Doherty, Brian. "Rauschenberg and the Vernacular Glance," _Art in America_, September 1973.

7) Singleton, Charles. _Dante's Inferno: Text, Translation and Notes_. Princeton University Press, 1979.

8) Vergani, Luisa. _The Divine Comedy - The Inferno_. Lincoln, Nebraska, 1969.

9) _Werk: Rauschenberg_, commentator: William Lieberman. Berlin: Staatiche Kunsthalle, 1980.

NOTES

[1] The present study relies on explications of the _Divine Comedy_ by Luisa Vergani and Charles Singleton.

[2] Merrill, p. 29.

[3] _Werk Rauschenberg_, p. 122.

[4] Merrill, p. 33.

[5] Merrill, p. 33.

[6] O'Doherty, p. 84.
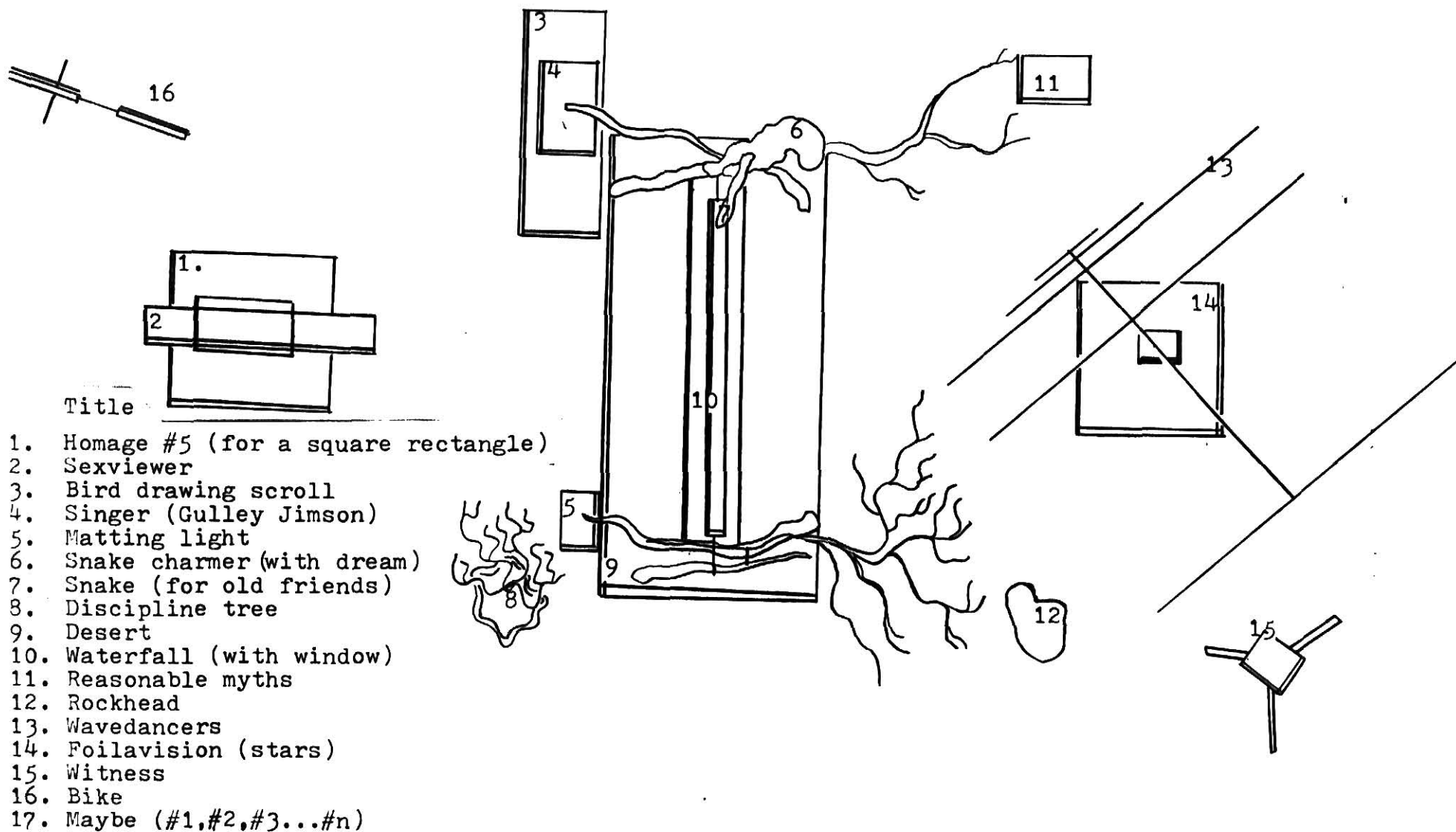
[7] Ashton, p. 11.

[8] Cage, p. 105.

[9] Ciardi, p. 1.

[10] Parts I and II of Michael Baxandall's _Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy_ deals with the patronage system and the artistic conventions of Botticelli's time.
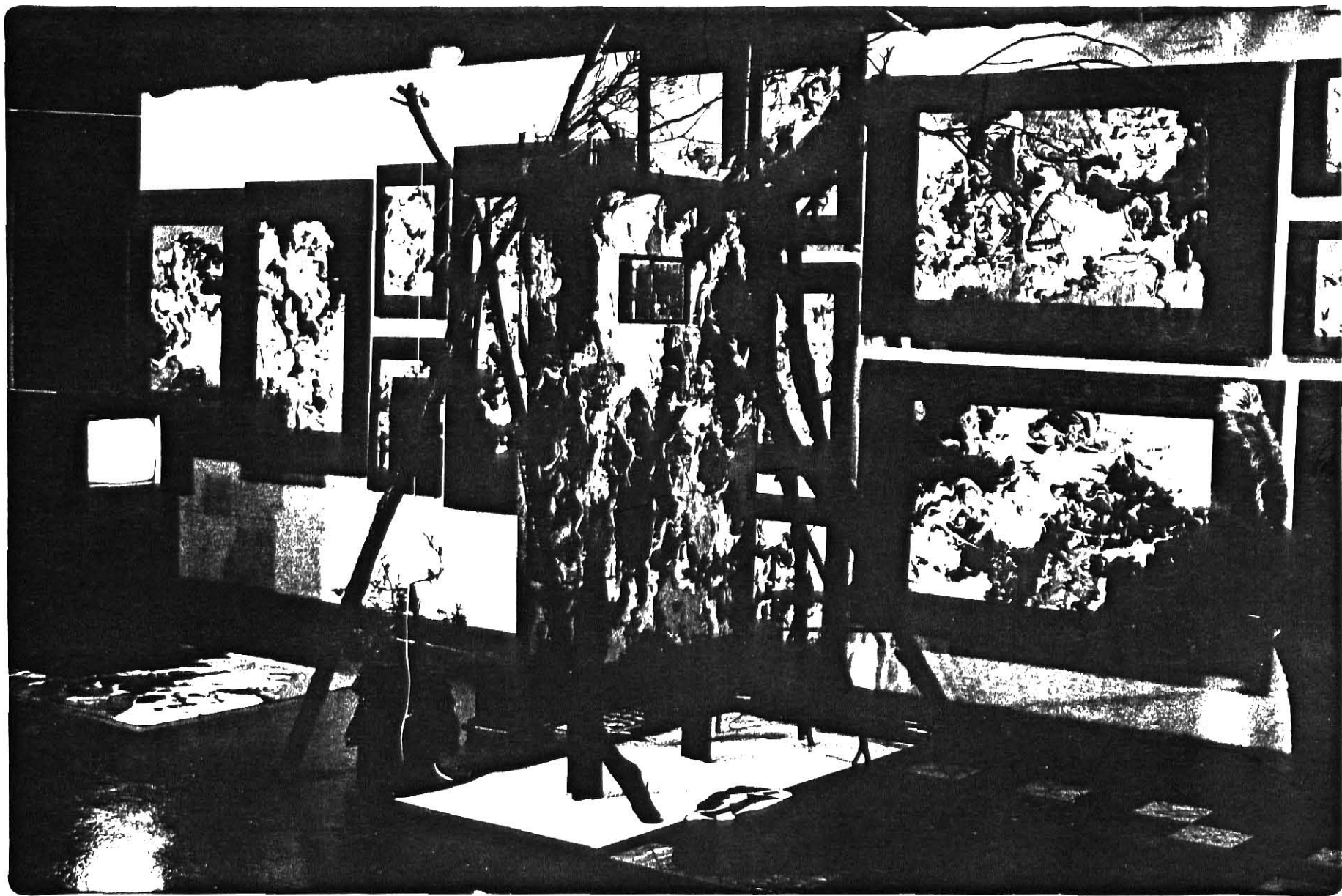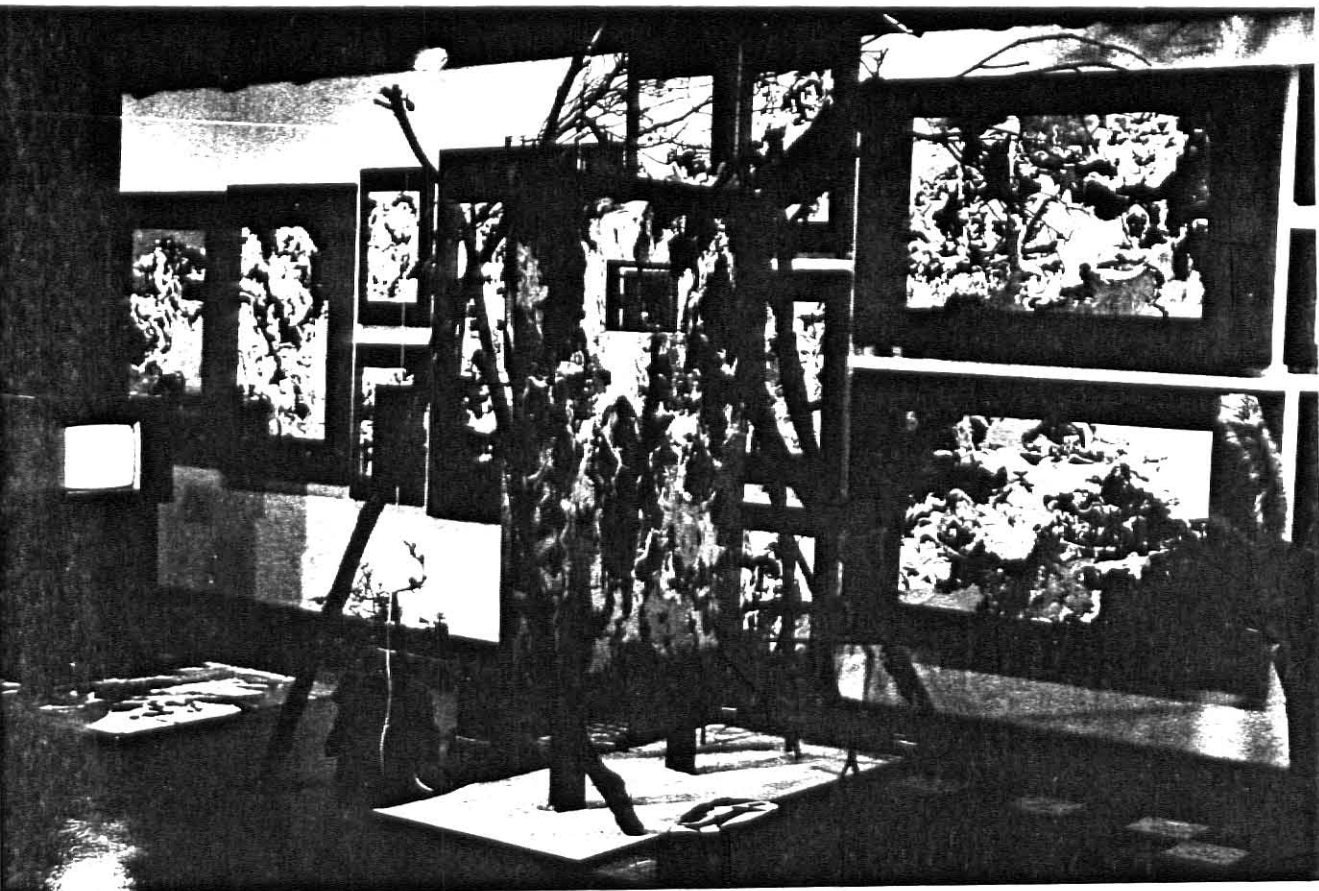
[11] Ciardi, p. 2.

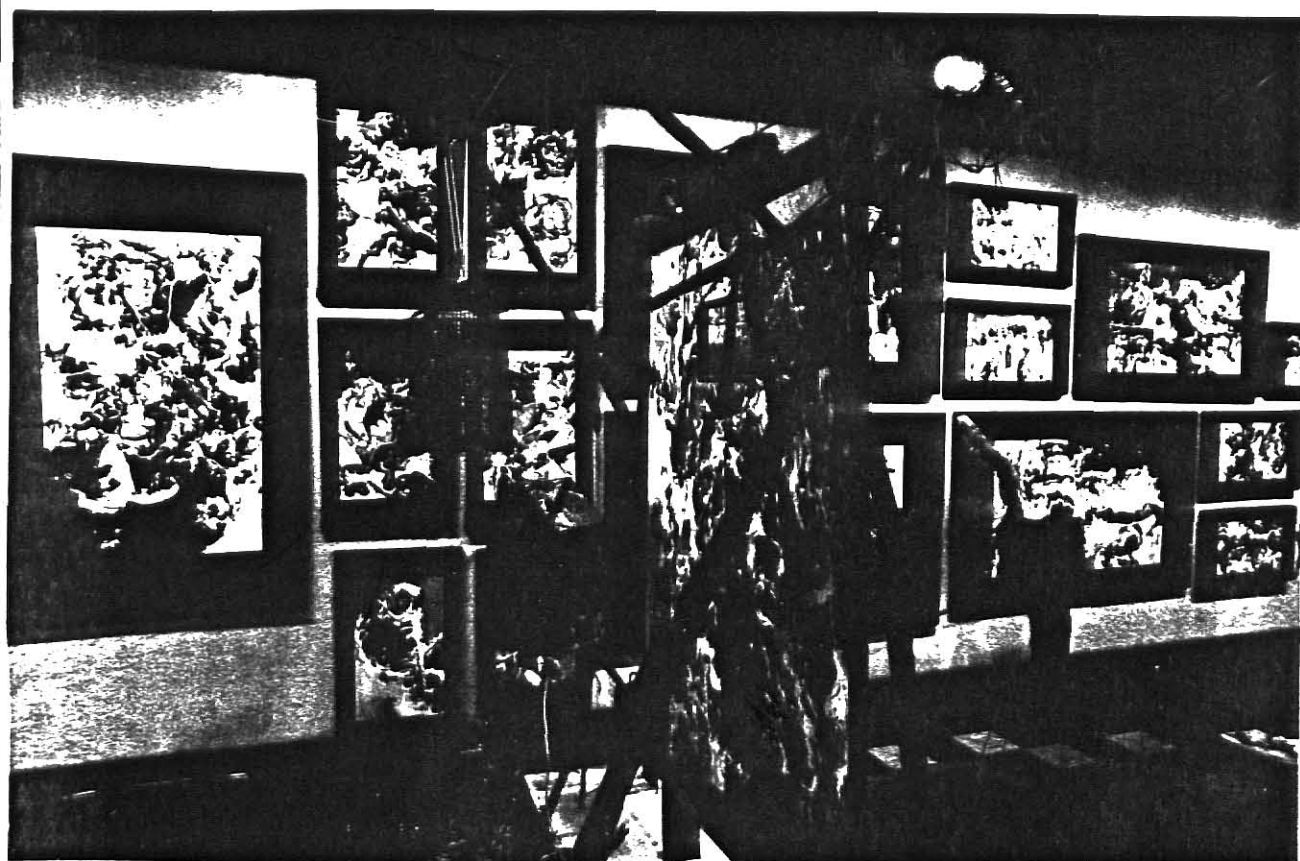[12] Ciardi, p. 2.

[13] Ciardi, p. 3.

Title

1. Homage #5 (for a square rectangle)
2. Sexviewer
3. Bird drawing scroll
4. Singer (Gulley Jimson)
5. Matting light
6. Snake charmer (with dream)
7. Snake (for old friends)
8. Discipline tree
9. Desert
10. Waterfall (with window)
11. Reasonable myths
12. Rockhead
13. Wavedancers
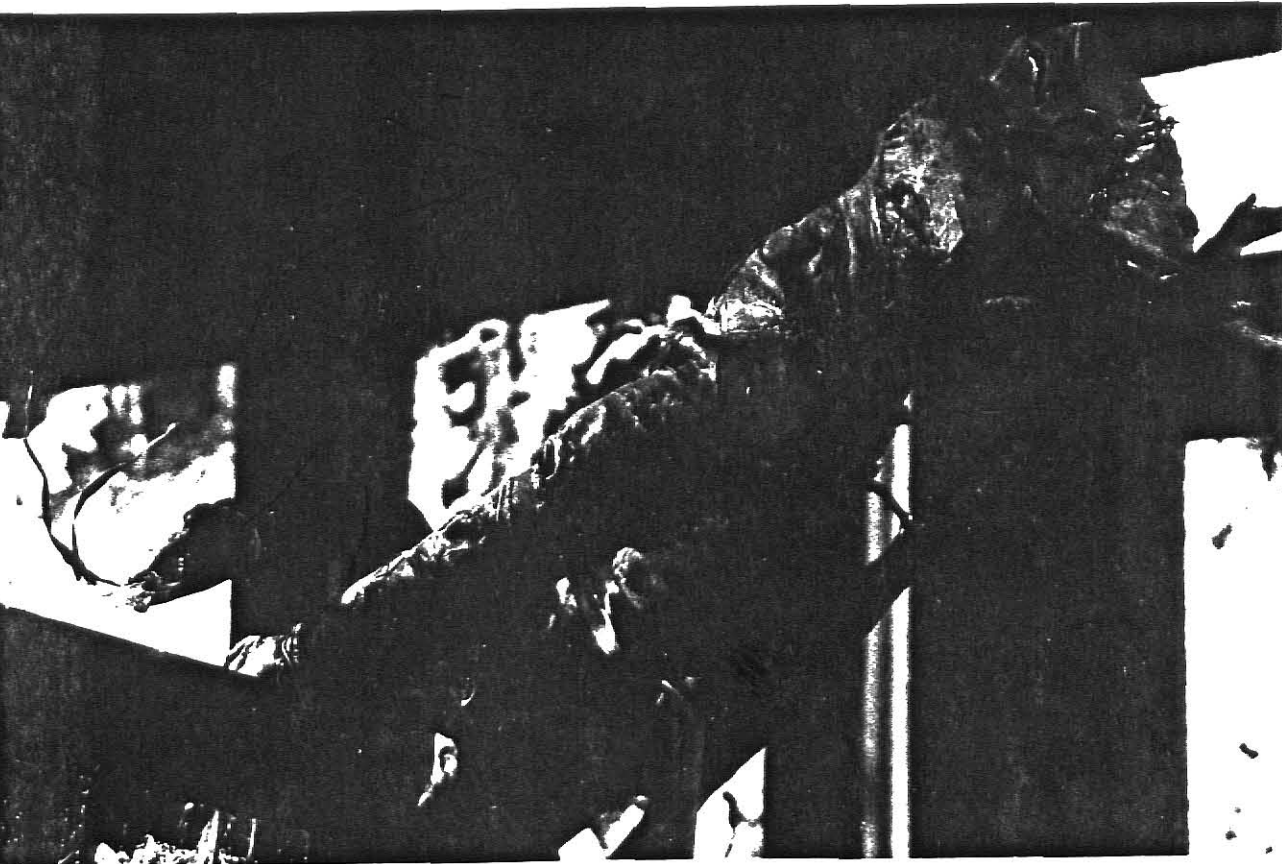14. Foilavision (stars)
15. Witness
16. Bike
17. Maybe (#1,#2,#3...#n)
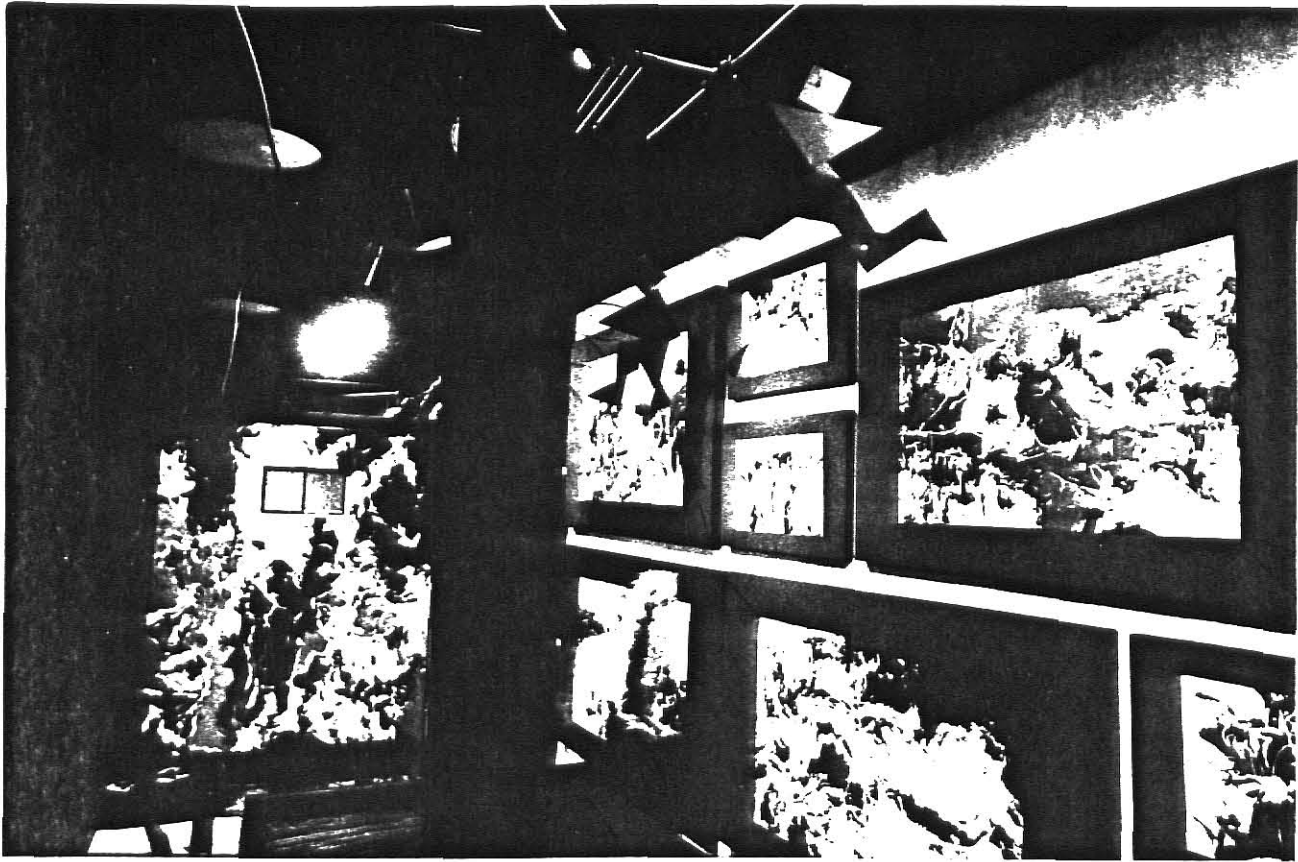
Jerry Linton, graduate in fine arts, has composed a walk-through sculpture as his master's thesis project. The sculpture, which combines many household items along with original artwork, will be on display in the Union Art Gallery until the end of the semester.

Two artists featured in show

By ANGEL KWOLEK-FOLLAND
Art Critic

The current exhibit at the Kansas State Union Gallery is really two separate shows. Two artists, Larry Zvolanek and Jerry Linton, have placed works in the gallery in fulfillment of requirements for their masters degrees in fine arts. Both, in their different ways, suggest the vital range of expression that is possible with visual art. Both also contain an exuberance and energy that is rare in a forum that often suggests the best approach is a safe one. Beyond that, however, the creations have little in common.

Jerry Linton's pieces—actually one large environment—play directly with the emotional qualities of the various elements of his "composition." His work is a darkened room filled with black, white, or gray and objects and paintings. Some of the objects, such as mobile figures cut out of flat black metal or a furry "box" that emits smoke from under its raised "tail," are abstract and suggestive of other shapes or objects.

Other parts of the piece are common enough, but treated in a way that suggests multiple meanings or intentions. A bubbling waterfall accents tree branches, a live black and white finch in a black-painted cage, and white and raked like a Zen Buddhist garden. Painted images of ghoulish humanoid shapes hang from the walls and cover the floor like tiles. A hanging mirrored box competes with a clear glass window, and makes it difficult to tell whether one is seeing a reflection or a real image.

Linton has created a total environment, complete with sounds. The water gurgles, the mobile swishes, and the finch (probably complaining about an invasion of its territory) chirps and whistles. Even the viewers become a moving part of the "composition," as they wander gingerly though the darkened spaces, searching for sense.

Unlike the easily accessible images of Zvolanek, Linton's environment makes demands on the viewer. It asks that the viewer surrender him/her self to a distorted dream landscape, where the normal rules of visual and emotional understanding are twisted and altered, but still hauntingly familiar. The room might be a forest landscape mottled with mud and snow. Or Bald Mountain on All Hallows' Eve. Or even an enormous visual and emotional pun, that asks you to leave convention and humdrum expectations behind. In this, Linton's work is in the spirit of Dada, with an element of Pop or "found" art.

The compositional focal point of this work, almost invisible in the all-black environment, is a kaleidescope that turns the strangely twisted shapes and inferences into a tidy pattern of snowflake precision. The kaleidescope functions as a metaphorical microscope or telescope, a lens that distorts the onfusion of the world into symmetrical patterns. It is only, Linton seems to suggest, our human demand for order that ultimately dictates whether the world is "real" or a dream.

The exhibit will be on view through May 3rd.

Student incorporates unusual elements

By JOHN SLEEZER
Collegian Reporter

Some people seem to like it and some people definitely don't like it, — then there are people who are indifferent about it.

But, whatever you call it, Jerry Linton, graduate in fine arts, calls it art. To be specific, he calls the entire room a sculpture.

The room is in the Union Art Gallery, blocked from rays of light by a canvas wall, and it houses Linton's master of fine arts thesis project.

A bicycle, waterfall, television, a caged bird and acrylic paintings are just a few of the items that are combined to create the seemingly alive sculpture.

Gallery

"I call it a sculpture. If you want to think of it as an environment because there are people in here walking around talking, or looking and saying funny things, or doing funny things or making funny results, that's interesting to me, too."

"It (the sculpture) doesn't just spring fully blown in this environment," Linton said. "It starts out as bits and pieces of what I see and what I don't see and what I think and what I don't think."

Linton said the public should confront the sculpture with a split personality.

"I think the best way to appreciate it is to try to be schizophrenic in the way you approach it — that is, have more than one idea or be more than one person when you're in this environ-ment.

"Try not to set yourself on one form or analogy to follow through and see if this fits or that doesn't fit.

"They are ideas that fit into an artistic system in a lot of different ways and none of those ways are the whole story."

Linton began piecing together the project in November, but items used in building the sculpture were acquired over several years of collecting and thinking.

"Some things are plugged in and remembered, other things are

in living sculpture

computed, and other things are found and kept and all of those things are meshed together in some way."

His painting background formed the basis for the sculpture project in the Union, but Linton went beyond paintings for his project, including three-dimensional pieces such as the waterfall.

"This whole thing started out with paintings, because that's what I was doing before, generally mixed media. But the images that come about in the paintings on the wall are the kinds of images that started it."

Linton concentrated his undergraduate work at Emporia State University in pre-Columbian art and drawing — he was able to travel to South America as part of an ESU exchange program.

"I taught high school for three and a half years and I lived in New York City for about eight years as an artist. I didn't starve, but then I didn't get rich and famous.

"I exhibited in galleries and tried to get my work sold and did odd jobs to get by and be an artist. I did what most people do unless they are independently wealthy when they move to New York."

What Linton didn't want was for his project to be boring or typical of other master of fine arts projects.

"I hate boring art. I wanted to be witty, I wanted there to be humor in it. I didn't want some dry academic problem solving art, that you either have to appreciate it at some ivory tower level or else people just walk up the street and don't understand it at all.

"I don't like that — it's a waste of time. I don't need it. It doesn't have any sense of humor to it at all.

"As artists you come about these ideas through all different kinds of sources that aren't really predictable, unless you're awake all the time."

Not all of Linton's ideas are successful, he said. In fact, many of them drop by the wayside to be forgotten or remembered at a later time.

"Other kinds of ideas pop up here and there and make sense or they don't make sense.

"You can't just dump something in here and have it make any sense; you have to do some editing and that's wlere the artist comes into the thing.

"For everything that's in here there are X number of things that were edited out that aren't necessary. They were also ideas, and had just as long of life as some of these things. But when it came time to decide if they made sense or didn't make sense those ideas or those things left.

"They are filed somewhere, much like some of these pieces are from the past that all of a sudden popped up and made sense in this context."

An item resurrected from the past for this sculpture is a television monitor, which displays changing colors of rectangles on its screen.

"The little computer program for the TV is about three years old. I did that when I first came here (in 1982).

"I wrote up a little computer program on a real cheapo computer that I got from my nephew. The great uhing about it is that they (computer programs) give you a grid to type all this stuff up on, but the TV bends it out of shape into a rectangle."

What began as squares ended up as rectangles.

"That I thought was perfect. That's the difference between doing something that's taking somebody else's work and just mimicking it, and having what you do change by virtue of doing it through a different way or different media.

"I didn't have any use for that when I did it. It was nice to sit around in the dark and watch that thing change colors every once and

Linton

a while.

"My pet theory is that people watch TV for the flashing lights as much as they do for the content. You see people over here in the Union sitting around here all day watching soap operas and it doesn't have anything to do with the content — it's the lights flickering.

"I watch TV for that reason and I watch it because you don't have to do anything during that time — you can just sit and watch TV.

"It changes pattern. It has an art reference and it provides light for the show."

Linton believes his art depicts something Kansas that is missing in it's environment. But some of the raw basis for the project has its origins in Kansas.

"This kind of environment (sculpture) is condusive to what Kansas doesn't have, and that's the kind of intimate space that's calm, cool and collective.

"When artists look around for things to be influenced by, the natural environment plays some role in that. I think Kansas has great clouds, it doesn't have a damn thing on the ground but it has fantastic clouds."

By standing inconspicuously in the gallery, Linton occasionaly tries to hear what people think of his work.

"I like to be in here when other people are strangers and you can overhear what they say. Sometimes they say things that are sort of expected, but it's the kind of unexpected comments that you don't ordinarily hear unless you're standing there.

"Often times people that don't have an art frame of reference in which to put work make comments that don't have a prejudice to them.

"So they'll say things that you wouldn't think they would say or you don't know they'll say or you don't think they'll say."

Linton said two conversations between viewers of his exhibit illustrated impressions people gain from his work.

"Two young women, say 18 years old, come in and they look around and I'm standing in there, and they say the usual words like 'weird' or 'This is cool' or 'I've never seen anything like this before.' Then they say 'Look at those images up there, they're really grotesque.'

CHANCE IMAGES

by

Jerry Linton

B.S.E. Emporia State University, 1970

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTERS REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Department of Art

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1985

This non thesis report will consist of a history of the use of chance imagery in art, a description of how I used chance in the formation of the paintings exhibited in my M.F.A. thesis show, and color slides documenting the show.