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# A Symbolic Representation of the Female Figure

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# A SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF THE FEMALE FIGURE

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Believing that the nude does not simply represent the human figure, but relates the figure, by analogy, to all other structures and experiences of our visual world, this artist has chosen to abstract and distort the figure as a means of increasing its impact. It was believed that the eye of the viewer would instinctively look for analogies and symbols from known experiences and would find them. Since, however, the works of this thesis were produced spontaneously and without a deliberate study of symbols beforehand, most of the recognizable symbols happened without conscious motivation, or so this artist believed.

A study of Freud's theories concerning dream symbolism and the workings of the unconscious reveals that man has for centuries held universal symbols for many things in the deep recesses of his mind and that ". . . the knowledge of symbolism is unconscious. . . ."[1] Jung

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[1]Sigmund Freud, The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 165.

also states that man has a symbol-making propensity and unconsciously transforms objects or forms into symbols and expresses them in his visual art.[2] Thus this artist, without deliberately attempting to produce works on the basis of known and understood symbols, has produced a series of works abundantly rich in symbolism.

A descriptive analysis of the symbolism in each work will be given. This will be done on the basis of symbols found in the works of Freud, Jung, and Samuels, as listed in the appendix on page 48.

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[2]Aniela Jaffe, "Symbolism in the Visual Arts," in Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1964), p. 232.

## CHAPTER II

## THE USE OF SYMBOLISM IN ART

Symbols in art can be traced back to the early beginnings of civilization. Art historians believe, however, that the first conscious use of symbols as a means of artistic expression was in christian religious art of the early medieval period. Those artists used animals as well as the human figure to symbolize spiritual powers in their illustrations of Biblical scenes. This use of symbolism became the basis for the further development of symbols in the art of Western Europe in succeeding centuries.[1]

Symbols appear and reappear throughout history, but one of the most powerful influences on symbolism was Sigmund Freud who introduced the use of symbols to interpret dreams in the early nineteen hundreds. The interpretation of dreams, based on a knowledge of symbols, became common practice in psycho-analysis, and the theories were eventually taught in all introductory psychology classes.

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[1]Victor Turner, gen. ed., Symbol, Myth and Ritual, 12 vols. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1973), vol. 4: Symbols Public and Private, by Raymond Firth, pp. 37-39.

Artists like Andre Breton, considered the founder of surrealism, were introduced to Freud's theories, and the world was introduced to one of the most pronounced symbolic movements in the history of art.[2]

The surrealists explored Freud's ideas of free association and automatic writing and opened the way to a stream of unconscious images full of hidden meanings and ideas taken from the subconscious mind. They believed the theory that "symbols are produced spontaneously from the unconscious (though they may later be consciously elaborated)."[3] This led eventually to what is sometimes called "muted symbolism" in which the artist allows the viewer to interpret paintings for himself, letting lines, colors, shapes and textures convey their message in terms of the viewer's own experiences.[4]

Modern artists have been trained to understand the psychological impact of color, line, shape, and texture. They have learned to use certain colors to create mood, symbolize ideas, and express emotions. They are aware that personality traits such as shyness, aggressiveness,

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[2]Jaffe, "Symbolism in the Visual Arts," p. 257.

[3]Carl Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," in Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964), p. 232.

[4]Firth, Symbols Public and Private, p. 45.

awkwardness, and poise can be symbolized with shapes indicative of such traits; that texture or surface character can remind the viewer of certain objects, can make desired effects more vivid or even shocking; and that line direction, type, and width can symbolize such things as aspiration, poise, calm, or excitement. Modern artists have made full use of such symbolism.[5]

Jung says that anything can assume symbolic significance.[6] Creative artists very often solve problems with symbolic images which come to them spontaneously from their inner resources, from the subconscious. The viewer then responds to the symbols on the basis of his own personal experience. Since symbols often express only the essence of an idea or provide only a gleam of insight, the viewer must develop the ability to look with awareness, realizing that:

> The essence of symbolism lies in the recognition of one thing standing for (representing) another, the relation between them normally being that of concrete to abstract, particular to general. The relation is such that the symbol by itself appears capable of generating and receiving effects otherwise reserved for the object to which it refers--and such effects are often of high emotional charge.[7]

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[5]Otto G. Ocvirk et al., Art Fundamentals Theory and Practice (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1975), pp. 44-91.

[6]Jaffe, "Symbolism in the Visual Arts," Man and His Symbols, p. 232.

[7]Firth, Symbols Public and Private, pp. 15-16.

Although the effect of any given symbol may be different for each person who perceives it, there are some common relationships which unite people's experiences. These may be, for example, negative responses to symbols reminding the viewer of areas of his life with which he is unhappy, positive responses to the opposite reminders, and people are often fooled by their senses, seeing only what they want to see.[8] Also, according to Jung, symbols cannot always have authoritatively assigned and fixed meanings because an image is only truly symbolic when its meaning goes beyond the obvious.[9] For these reasons, the artist obviously cannot be entirely eliminated as the interpreter of symbolic works. When the artist uses a variety of symbols in a single work, the complete meaning of their combination may be difficult to grasp without some clue to their message. The artist may also have used what appears to be a symbol or symbols merely as simple sensory detail in the design, eliminating any need for interpretation.[10]

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[8]Mike Samuels and Nancy Samuels, Seeing with the Mind's Eye (New York: Random House, Inc., 1975), pp. 6-7.

[9]Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," p. 30.

[10]Thomas Munro, Form and Style in the Arts (Cleveland, Ohio: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1970), pp. 50-51.

## CHAPTER III

## THE USE OF THE FEMALE FIGURE IN ART

The earliest reproductions of the human figure are found in the cave drawings of artists who believed that such drawings endowed the people they represented with certain magical powers. A common theory is that the males were believed to possess superhuman qualities and the females to have an abundance of fertility when drawn on the cave walls. Although these early stick figures evolved into drawings which more nearly represented the human form, some 3,000 years lay between these early stylized representations and the rise of the Classical Age with its emphasis on ideal beauty, the importance of man, and the humanistically based religion which freed artists to liberate the human form. At that time the Greeks began to depict their gods and goddesses as "ideal" men and women, with unrealistic physical perfections, reflecting the Greek philosophy of the body being ". . . the fountain of all delight and the senses. . . ."[1]

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[1]Mervyn Levy, The Human Form in Art (Great Britain: Odhams Press, Ltd., 1968), pp. 20-25.

Until the fourth century B.C., however, the female figure was kept clothed; only the male was depicted in the nude. Sir Kenneth Clark argues that the female was kept draped for social and aesthetic reasons and that leaving some things to the imagination caused her to be more mysterious and appealing.[2] Levy argues, on the other hand, that it was because the Greek society was mainly homosexual during the Classical Age, and that even when the female was depicted, she was shown with more emphasis on male features and was made to look almost boyish.[3]

During the Middle Ages the female nude was banished from art, considered a sinful, pagan image; and the art of that period reflected the religious fervor with which the people viewed the nude female figure. The breasts shriveled into flat appendages, the belly protruded in a rounded ugliness, and the face mirrored either anguish or a blank nothingness. The church forbade the study of the body, and it was another thousand years before the Renaissance revived the science of anatomy. With the dawning of the Renaissance, a new quest for ideal physical beauty was begun; and, whereas it had been the male

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[2]Kenneth Clark, The Nude (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1956), pp. 112-119.

[3]Levy, The Human Form in Art, pp. 25-26.

figure that preoccupied the Greeks, the female now became the obsession of Renaissance artists.[4]

The seventeenth century finally saw the female form emerge as a person invested with qualities of humanity. Artists such as Rubens and Rembrandt brought life and individuality to their subjects. These men were not interested in creating ideal female beauty; each painted in his own unique style. Rubens' work was the essence of the Baroque style with the effect of dramatizing and intensifying the scenes in which he placed his women, while Rembrandt painted the people of his own native country, showing the true character and appearance of these people, in their own native environments. If his females were beautiful, then they were ". . . beautiful as individual women and not as types, or symbols."[5]

With the dawning of the eighteenth century, artists of the Royal French Court saw the female as a voluptuous toy and painted her as a youthful, sensual, elegant lady. She exemplified the self-indulgence and light-heartedness of the Rococo Age. English artists of the same period gave the world, in sharp contrast, the lewd, obese woman, painted usually into scenes of boisterous and drunken

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[4]Ibid., pp. 33-35.

[5]Ibid., pp. 48-56.

abandon with the soldiers and sailors of the day. These women, in their immodest attire and slovenly appearance, were statements on the besetting problem of the age, ". . . the decay of self-respect that was attributable to . . . the drunkenness . . . that permeated the whole structure of eighteenth century low life."[6]

The nineteenth century brought the establishment of the Royal Academy, life-drawing classes, and the study of the female form as a purely academic consideration. The Realist Movement, which began towards the close of the century, found artists working from living models and placing them in ordinary settings. Courbet replaced the ancient gods and goddesses with real people in works such as "The Bathers." Manet shocked the world by painting nudes which he placed in settings considered to be most improper. He hinted at immorality and vice in his "Luncheon," and the world was shocked by his presentation of the little prostitute in "Olympia."[7]

By 1907 Picasso had shocked the world in a different way. He explored the geometric foundations of the figure, tore apart the familiar and put it back together with a new harmony, and finally broke free of the classical

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[6]Ibid., pp. 59-68.

[7]Ibid., pp. 71-85.

ideal of human anatomy which had been the chief characteristic of European art since the Renaissance. With the use of collage, he moved into a new phase called Synthetic Cubism, and along with Braque ". . . felt free to use any signs, symbols, or visual shorthand of their own devising."[8] Twentieth century artists, inspired by Picasso's daring, were to become even bolder. They birthed numerous art forms which would effect the use of the female figure, but none more dramatically than the Expressionist and Surrealist movements.

The Expressionist painters sought to lay bare the soul of the subject. In an effort to identify with the interior quality and character of each subject, a systematic distortion of both color and form was used to convey the depth and intensity of emotional response to the subject. For the first time, artists became intensely aware of using the visual elements of art to symbolically convey emotions such as suffering and loneliness, weariness and morbidity, and corrupt and twisted sexuality. The human form was often abstracted to the point of being barely or not at all recognizable.[9]

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[8]"The Power of Picasso," Life 65 (December 27, 1968): 52-60.

[9]Levy, The Human Form in Art, pp. 103-106.

The Surrealist movement, bound up with the sexual foundations of Freudian theory, used the female figure to delve into the realm of the unconscious personality. Based on Freud's ideas that the unconscious is swarming with repressions, guilt complexes, and sublimated desires, artists such as Salvidor Dali used the female nude to depict forbidden desires, hidden secrets, pleasure, and pain. She was painted with beautiful breasts and decomposing limbs to simultaneously convey desire and the fruits of sin and woman's capacity to inspire that sin. Symbolic imagery became the means of allowing a maximum of free play to the unconscious. They exercised ". . . no powers of reason or selectivity in the compiling of their material. . . ."[10]

The symbolism which emerged from Freudian theory and Surrealist art and the use of collage as a technique by Picasso and the Surrealists have had a direct bearing and a tremendous influence on much of what is being done with the human form in art today, and a particular bearing on the work of this artist.

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[10]Marcel Jean, The History of Surrealist Painting (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960), pp. 199-219.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE USE OF COLLAGE IN ART

> Collage is an umbrella term for an assemblage of diverse components and these may be of any origin--animal . . . vegetable . . . or mineral.[1]

The origins of collage can be traced back as far as the twelfth century when Japanese calligraphers were pasting up irregularly shaped pieces of delicately tinted papers and copying poems on them. In the thirteenth century, leatherworking masters made book-bindings from irregularly cut pieces of leather pasted together. By the 1600s western Europeans were cutting paper and pasting and painting on it. During the seventeenth century, Holland became interested in silhouette cut-outs and a number of women artists were recognized in the field.[2]

Imagination became the limit in the field, and there are records of feather collages by Jesuits in Mexico as early as the sixteenth century; and items such as beetles, corn kernels and colored straw were used in the

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[1]Josephine Lom, Collage (New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1975), p. 7.

[2]Robert E. Wolf, Collage (New York: Abrams, 1971), pp. 7-8.

seventeenth century. Butterfly wing collages were found in Europe in the eighteenth century; and by 1896 there is record of such interesting items as a casket covered all over with buttons, hooks, braid, corset stays, ladies' garters and the like. By the mid-eighteenth century, lacy designs cut from parchment paper evolved into the valentines being given on February 14.[3]

Berlin poet, Christian Morgenstern, in the late nineteenth century, brought us closer to modern trends when he cut out large simple shapes of plain or patterned paper and joined them to create fantastic creatures and monsters with juxtaposed shapes which created interesting positive and negative studies. About the same time, collage was discovered as an apt tool for posters and for advertising by William Nicholson and his brother-in-law, James Pryde. They opened an advertising agency and held their first exhibition of collage posters in 1894.[4]

It was in the twentieth century that collage became a developed means of expression for creative artists. It had started as the simple pastime of cutting and pasting bits of paper into pictures--a pleasant folk art; but in

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[3]Ibid., pp. 8-11.

[4]Ibid., pp. 15-19.

the hands of more sophisticated artists, it has left its mark indelibly on the art of today.[5]

It really became a serious form of artistic expression in the hands of Cubist artists, Braque and Picasso. Feeling that the camera had precluded the necessity for creating naturalistic art, they searched to find new meanings and values in art.[6] "On this stage, art suddenly boiled with new possibilities. . . . Easel painting . . . as a technique, became for the first time since the Renaissance no longer adequate to all creative needs."[7]

Early in 1912 the first scrap ever glued into a cubist painting was inserted by Picasso, a scrap of oilcloth glued into a still life, "Still Life with Chair Caning." The design on the oilcloth was an imitation of chair caning and Picasso painted wooden strips around it to make it resemble a piece of furniture. Both Picasso and Braque often used fragments of words from newspapers and finally entire words in early collage pieces. Braque was finally using sand, sawdust, and metal filings in his

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[5]Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh, Collage (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., 1962), p. 3.

[6]Norman Laliberte and Alex Mogelon, Collage, Montage, Assemblage (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1971), p. 7.

[7]Janis and Blesh, Collage, pp. 13-14.

pigment; and he added bits of wallpaper to "shortcut the tedious process of painting such detailed designs."[8] Braque believed pasted papers to be an invaluable aid in laying out colors because they made it possible to separate colors completely from form and allowed both elements to emerge in their own right. Picasso's main aim continued to be "the discovery of novel and startling ideas for the use of collage."[9] He used sheets of music, flowered wallpaper, labels from boxes, matchbook covers, cigarette packages, bits of cloth, and even metal to provide relief for musical instruments.[10]

In 1913 Juan Gris became the third member of the group, and he too used such things as broken bits of mirror, reproductions of old paintings, folded newspapers combined with oil paint and gouache. Along with Picasso and Braque, he influenced the entire cubist movement, inducing many others to try collage. Artists in various movements through the years have built upon what these three started. Their influence spread in spheres ranging from ". . . collage of the superimposed images invented

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[8]Lara Vinca Masini, Braque (London: Hamlyn, 1969), p. 21.

[9]Wolf, Collage, pp. 24-25.

[10]Ibid., p. 25.

by Max Ernst and the Surrealists to commercial advertising."[11]

Kurt Schwitters, poet, painter and sculptor, developed collage into an art medium in its own right. There are not many materials or ways of working with them that he did not either invent or prophesy. He collected from the world's waste--dustbins, garbage cans, trash heaps--to paste into his paintings:

> stickers, stamps, bus transfers, corrugated paper, torn paper, cut paper, transparent papers, postmarks, addresses from envelopes, commercial trademarks and slogans from newspapers and packages, numbers and letters from many sources, coins, cork, cloth, washers, buttons, nails, photographs in whole or part, magazine illustrations, lithographic work, brown paper bags, return addresses from friends and from government agencies, etc., words and phrases . . . crushed silver foil, seals, pieces of wood, rubber stamps, candy wrappers, tarred protective paper, stenciled wood from crates, subway or bus tokens, burlap, perforated tin, art papers, sealing wax, mirrors, matches, wheels, wood shavings, and many others.[12]

Schwitters saw the collage medium as a "liberation from the last remaining shackles of . . . conformity and hardened tradition."[13]

While collage became a major art medium for

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[11]Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Picasso, Fifty Years of His Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), p. 173.

[12]Janis and Blesh, Collage, p. 60.

[13]Ibid.

Schwitters, for Max Ernst it became a philosophy. He discovered ". . . collage thinking and formulated the collage idea."[14] Having studied science and philosophy before he studied art, he turned a keen analysis and judgment upon the vast possibilities of collage. He invented new techniques and came close to defining all contemporary modern art as one kind of collage or another. For example, he realized the technical advantages of line engravings in collages because their lines could be used to conceal the pasted joints; thus parts from different engravings could be assembled to produce whole new pictures where the subject matter could be "altered wildly . . . the ideal way to convey surrealist imagination and symbolism."[15]

Ernst gave us techniques such as Decollage, which means to peel away. Pasted papers are partially or wholly stripped away to leave coatings of paste or glue, or cardboard can be partially torn away to reveal a different surface. He introduced Dechirage which means tearing, and the haphazard deckle edges of torn paper are the result. Fumage, another of his techniques, involved the use of a candle burning, or burning grease, or a smoky lamp to smoke up paintings so that the smoke became

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[14] Ibid., p. 97.

[15] Ibid., p. 98.

amalgamated with the surface. He saw new possibilities in the old process of frottage, where rubbings are taken from surface designs and textures of other objects and transferred into a painting. This latter approach became one of his major techniques.[16]

He was responsible finally for taking his works into the realm of what he called the "collage idea," where works might look like collage but were not. He would use two sheets of canvas sandwiched together with wet paint and peeled apart to create strange and unexpected forms. This is called a mental collage because, he said, "not merely is collage an idea, but ideas themselves (even those originating with different personalities) can be glued . . . and be akin to collage."[17]

The large fading, peeling billboards which litter our countryside, and have themselves become something of an auto-collage, have attracted the attention of modern artists. English artist, Gwyther Irwin, assembles collages using the reverse side of the large billboard posters. He pastes them and allows the colored dye to seep through, along with the rust and soot and grime

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[16]Ibid., pp. 101-103.

[17]Ibid., pp. 107-109.

acquired by time, to produce monochromatic works of art.[18]

Jasper Johns, in the 1950s, started working on newspaper pasted to canvas, painting into this in the encaustic method, then adding things like cans, paint brushes, etc.; and Louise Nevelson has carried the collage idea into freestanding constructions which have become another dimension of collage. Robert Rauschenberg interweaves painting with stuffed birds, flattened umbrellas, puffed pillows, bed covers, neckties and many other things and calls them "combine-paintings," giving us painting--collage--construction--sculpture, with a unity that ". . . confounds traditional criticism."[19] He once wrote that "a pair of socks is no less suitable to make a painting with than wood, nails, turpentine, oil and fabric."[20] Another very interesting modern technique is the one used by Alberto Burri called Combustioni. He holds a sheet of paper which he ignites, and as it burns he drops it onto a surface with slow drying, noninflammable vinyl plastic. The burning paper settles into the wet surface and congeals into chance arrangements which are then covered with more of the clear plastic vinyl.[21]

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[18]Ibid., p. 173.

[19]Ibid., p. 260.

[20]Ibid., p. 263.

[21]Ibid., p. 259.

Collage has been used as a teaching tool since the days when the Bauhaus students were encouraged to make collages to help them grasp concepts of space and material. Maholy-Nagy, who came from the Bauhaus to Chicago, continued to use collage in the School of Design which he set up there in the early 1940s. Joseph Albers, also of the Bauhaus faculty, employed collage teaching in the United States at Black Mountain College and later at Yale.[22]

The kinds of materials which have been used and can be used by the collage artist are obviously limited only by his imagination. The artist has chosen and will continue to use novel and many times unexpected materials which he will arrange either to elicit certain psychological responses from the viewer or simply to satisfy some deep felt need to do or to create something new.

Work and experimentation with collage techniques by hundreds of artists in the first half of the twentieth century have contributed to the creation of an environment which encourages the development of art forms and movements embracing the new materials, techniques, and concepts of our time. The choice of materials may often appear to be strange and will often be misunderstood

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22 Ibid., p. 216.

completely by the viewer, but the artist's right to choose and use them has been proven and must never be denied.[23]

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[23]Laliberte and Mogelon, Collage, Montage, Assemblage, pp. 11-17.

# CHAPTER V

# THE THESIS COLLAGES

## Method of Working

Using the human figure as a point of departure, preliminary ideas were worked out on illustration board. The artist worked spontaneously with cut and torn billboard advertisements, corrugated cardboard, stamped surfaces of acrylic paint done from textured packing papers and nylon reinforced maintenance wipes, colored pencils, graphite pencils, gesso, and felt tip pens. The images gradually suggested a predominate concept which was then developed and completed on masonite panels. Some of the works retained recognizable figurative elements while others were abstracted to the point of becoming only symbolically figurative.

## Descriptive Analysis of Collages

Each piece depicts essentially a different female personality, with the understanding that no woman can be categorized in such simple terms. Thus the concepts and symbols used to depict one personality will sometimes overlap into other personalities. The artist has attempted,

however, to portray a dominant personality trait in each collage. Some of the symbols were deliberately chosen while others developed from the subconscious, with the artist only being made aware of them after the work was completed.

The circle, which became a common element of each collage, represents, according to Jung, the Psyche or Self of the artist.[1]

A list and definition of the symbols used in each piece can be found in the appendix on page 48.

Female No. 1

According to the Biblical account, the first female was made from the rib of Adam, so the male symbols are prominent in this piece. The circle is a symbol of the masculine active principle; and the use of three circles, the number three, is also symbolic of the male. He is further present in the textured shape resembling the male sex organ. The square shape formed by the blue pencil lines is a symbol of the feminine receptive principle, and the roof shape formed by the orange pencil lines at the top is suggestive of a house, another symbol of the female.

The circles further symbolize the unity or

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[1]Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," p. 240.

completeness made possible through this first female. The downward sweep of the blue lines enclosing the square indicates descent and the lines become symbols of the animal nature and the sin brought about eventually by the woman. The blues are symbolic of the devotion and innocence of this first woman, while the warm tones symbolize her warmth and happiness.

Female No. 2

Procreation is a dominant role of the female--replenishment of the earth. Mother-earth is a very common symbol, shown here in earth tones, rolling hills and verdant valleys. Just above center, a mountain is shown wrapping its arms around its pregnant belly. It is enclosed by architectural lines to suggest a house and the enclosure of space, both symbolic of the female.

Female No. 3

Introspection is the chief personality trait symbolized here. There is a feeling of being able to enter in through the arches and travel back into space. The ever present circles are there, enclosing space and symbolic, in that sense, of the female. The top halves of the circles are filled to create domes with turret-like shapes between them, suggestive of a house, again a female symbol. The horseshoe-like shape of the arches

further symbolizes the female orifice; and male sex organs are suggested by the enclosed space in the center of each arch, possibly a symbol of the introspective thoughts of this lady. Red and purple are used to depict the abstract qualities of excitement, sex, danger, death, royalty, and wealth, also some of the possible thoughts occupying the mind of the introspective female.

Female No. 4

The only figurative aspect of this image is an obvious resemblance to the female sex organs. This is an erotic female. The built-up gesso circle, enclosing a large hollow space, is symbolic of the female receptive center, as is the extension of the enclosed space below it, resembling the male sex organ. Numerous other circles enclose space as symbols of both the male and the female, and the hair-like appendages at the bottom add to the erotic effect. The downward spiral created by the purple lines enclosed by red lines signifies descent and the animal nature of this figure.

Female No. 5

This lady is bisexual. The open circles enclosing space symbolize the female, while the closed circles are symbols of the male active principle. The circle within a square represents both male and female; and the strong

horizontal line across the top, which stops on each end and does not seem to go anywhere, is an incomplete bridge, depicting the female desire to be a male. The incomplete circle, formed by the pen lines on either side of the figure, are indications of the fact that this lady is incomplete; she is neither one nor the other. The strong white breast shape on each side is being pushed downward by male sexual shapes, another indication of the battle going on in this female.

Female No. 6

The temperamental female is often pictured as a redhead, with red itself being a symbol of excitement and passion. This particular redhead has a black and white circular head. Black and white are symbolic of the striking contrast of emotions displayed by this lady; and the circle is often a symbol of perfection, an ideal which often causes one to be temperamental. The large red buttock shape was simply chosen by the artist as a figurative element to enhance both the figurative aspects and the design quality of the piece. The strong horizontal line dividing the head from the body symbolizes the serenity and stability which mark the temperamental female in her quieter moments.

could be symbolic of the male sex organ. The hat shape over her head is a symbol of the male and perhaps his dominance, in an unusual way, of her life.

Female No. 9

The word "hop" was deliberately chosen as a part of this gal's anatomy. She is the female who will crawl all over a man, any man, with no apologies. She somehow thinks that men expect this of women. Because she believes that she is supposed to throw herself at a man and offer her services freely, the lines which shape the major portion of her body form shapes symbolic of the male sex organ, her major aim being to get the man "into bed." Red and black are again used to symbolize her preoccupation with sex, passion, and bed-time activities. She differs from the prostitute in that she gives her favors away; she is not for hire.

Female No. 10

The modern sex symbol seems to be the girl with big breasts, lots of exposure, and the glitter and glamour of fame. Here she is symbolized by extremely large breast shapes which dominate the top half of the composition. This often seems to be the chief requirement of a sex symbol, while her other requirements are usually a little more vague. If the viewer should see her in the smaller

purple figure within the larger figure, she has an egg-head, symbolic of the "beautiful but dumb" concept associated with many sex symbols. The halo around her head might possibly symbolize the angelic qualities assigned to her by her male fans, and is also a symbol of the male, himself, who must make her a sex symbol through his acceptance of her qualifications. The glitter and glamour of her life are symbolized by the sequins, the wealth and fame she often acquires are symbolized by the purple; and the confusion which often surrounds her, as she tries to justify being seen mainly as a sex symbol, is symbolized in the confusion of color all around the figure. Her sexiness is further emphasized in all of the circular shapes and enclosed spaces, symbolic of the female receptive center; but her personality as a whole seems to be eclipsed by all of the emphasis on her sexuality.

Female No. 11

This lady is cold and calculating. She will climb over anybody who gets in the way of what she wants. These traits are apparent in the stairway and the cool colors chosen to depict her major characteristics. She has a double image to reinforce her personality. She can be seen with the stairway as her body, crowned by the gray circular head and the dignified blue lines; or she can be

seen as one large head with a green nose (the stairs) and blue eyes set behind horn-rimmed glasses, depicting her impersonal approach to the world. The stairs further symbolize ascent and increasing intensity, just as the diagonal lines around the gray circle symbolize agitation and motion. This lady is ever active in her attempts to climb to the top.

Female No. 12

This is the subtle female. She reveals her personality in very subtle ways. The stronger value of this piece is black, symbolic of deep, dark secrets; and while the extensive use of white could symbolize purity and innocence, there is much more. Her face, pictured in the collograph in the center, has no color to reveal any of her secrets. The piece has a number of closed (positive) circles to symbolize the masculine active principle. There are a number of enclosed spaces to symbolize the female receptive center, and the snake-like appendages of hair around the very subtle face are sexual symbols of the male. There is just enough red scattered around in the pins to suggest undercurrents of excitement. In the end, however, this lady is so subtle that the viewer is left to draw his own conclusions concerning her personality.

Figure 1

Female No. 1
16" x 23½"

Figure 2

Female No. 2
20" x 30½"

Figure 3

Female No. 3
20½' x 27½"

Figure 4

Female No. 4
20" x 28"

Figure 6

Female No. 6
21" x 31"

Figure 7

Female No. 7
21" x 31"

Figure 8

Female No. 8
21" x 31"

Figure 9

Female No. 9
21" x 31"

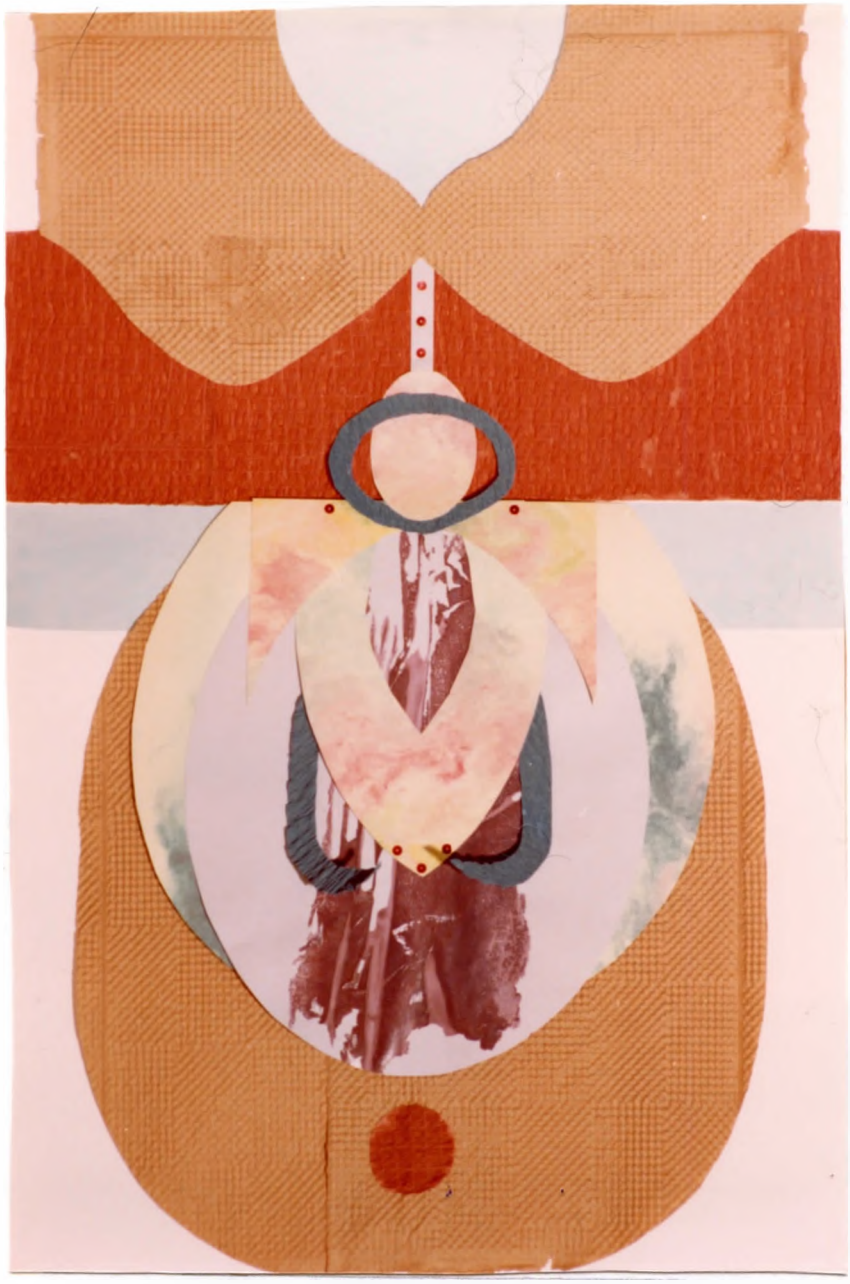

Figure 10

Female No. 10
20" x 30½"

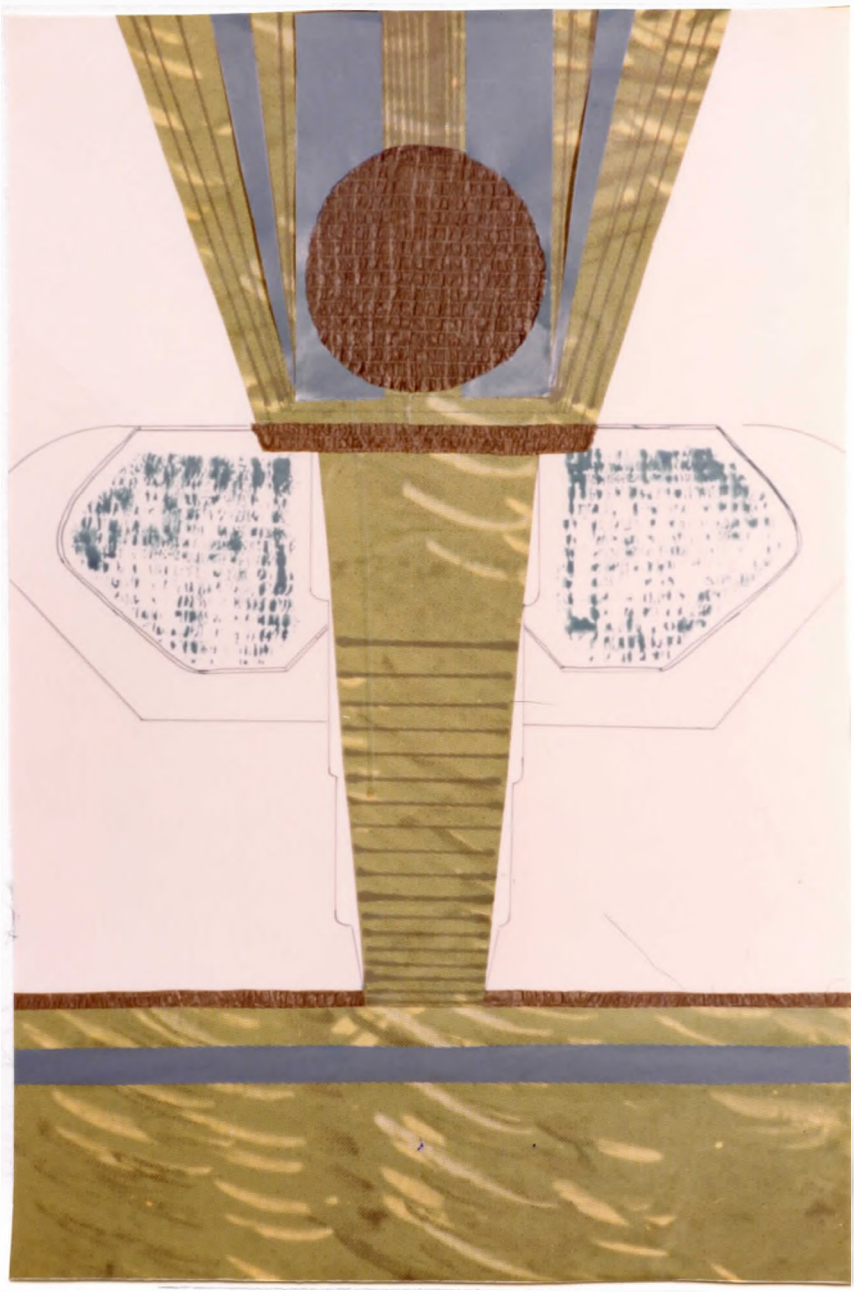

Figure 11

Female No. 11
20" x 30½"

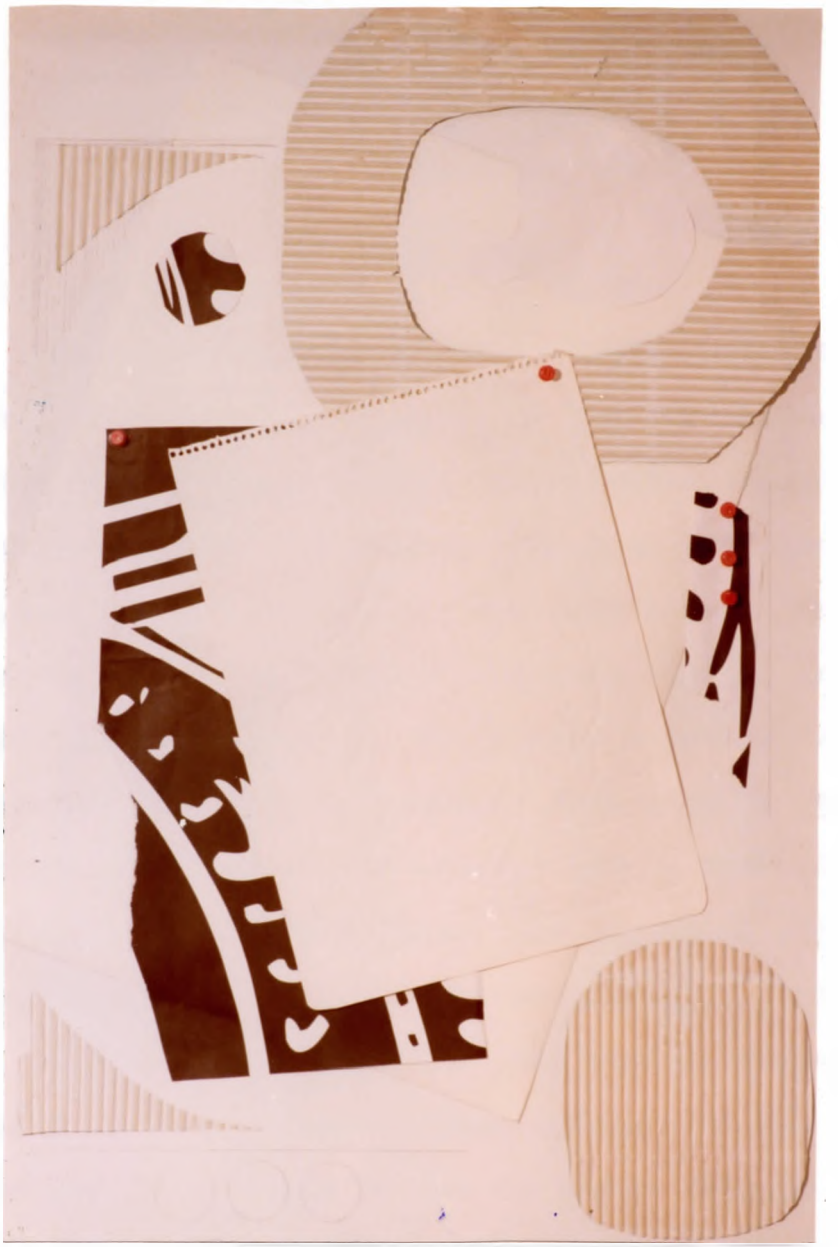

Figure 12

Female No. 12
21" x 31"

# CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

The female figure adapts very naturally to symbolism. When the various parts of the anatomy are abstracted into their geometric equivalents, certain symbols such as the circle, the square, the triangle, enclosed space, etc., are inevitable. For this reason, an artist can work with no intention of creating symbols and, nevertheless, produce several. It is also true that an artist working spontaneously with images that come to awareness from the subconscious will usually create symbolic images unknowingly; and in that sense, the figure or any other subject matter will probably assume symbolic significance.

The collages in this thesis were produced spontaneously to depict various female personalities but without deliberate attempts to use any known symbols. The symbols were found, however, upon completion; and the artist was able to analyze the pieces on the basis of both deliberate and unconsciously produced symbols, deliberate in this case meaning what the artist thought to be her own symbolic associations. Although the artist has analyzed each piece on the basis of the dominant

female quality which she attempted to portray, the effects of certain symbols may be different for each perceiver of those symbols because of differences in background and experience. The viewer should, in the final analysis, be left free to interpret each piece in his own way.

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## APPENDIX

### A LIST OF SELECTED SYMBOLS

1. House--woman or the human figure as a whole
2. Female sex symbols--objects which enclose a hollow space such as doors, gates, horseshoes, etc. The landscape is also a female sex symbol (a reference to "Mother Earth"), her fertility, etc.
3. Male sex symbols--the number 3, things that resemble the male sex organ in shape, snakes, hats and halos
4. Women in general--materials such as wood and paper and objects made of them
5. Someone loved--jewels and treasure
6. Female wish to be a male--bridges too short to reach anywhere
7. Sexual intercourse--ladders, steps and staircases[1]
8. Circle--unity, oneness, the masculine active principle, perfection, psyche (self)
9. Square--feminine receptive principle
10. Rectangle--most rational or most secure
11. Spiral--relationship between unity or multiplicity
12. Ascent--inward journey or increasing intensity
13. Descent--animal nature[2]

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[1]Items 1-7 from Freud, The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, pp. 149-183.

[2]Items 8-13 from Samuels and Samuels, Seeing with the Mind's Eye, pp. 96-97.

14. Red--sin, sex, passion and violence
15. Blue--loyalty, dignity, sadness and serenity
16. Green--growth and life
17. Black--evil and darkness
18. White--purity or innocence
19. Purple--royalty or wealth
20. Muted values--subtlety
21. Geometric shapes--excitement
22. Horizontal lines--stability
23. Diagonal lines--agitation
24. Vertical lines--poise and aspiration[3]

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[3]Items 14-24 from Ocvirk, Bone, Stinson, and Wigg, Art Fundamentals, Theory and Practice, pp. 34, 47-48, 91-92.

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