

Fine Art, Painting.

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF MEAT:
THE RECENT PAINTINGS OF GENE LAMBERT

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FINE ART PAINTING

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF MEAT, THE RECENT
PAINTINGS OF GENE LAMBERT

BY

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'It is seldom that a contemporary painter satisfies the poetic
canon of W.B. Yeats with "implicit passion explicit discipline"'.
'

Patrick Pye,
(The Irish Times, 8-10-91)

INTRODUCTION

During October of last^t year the Rubicon Gallery in Dublin played host to a particularly interesting exhibition of paintings. The artist was Gene Lambert. The paintings were of meat and they were painted in the still life tradition. Now this is interesting in many senses. Firstly, of course, Gene Lambert is a consistently interesting and surprising artist. Since 1981 all his exhibitions have contained surprises. It could also be argued that they have contained some of the strongest art produced in this country in the past ten years. The 'Work from a Ward' exhibition surprised because of the gentle ferocity with which the artist returned to painting so soon after the near fatal road accident which left him partially paralysed and suffering from chronic pain. As the title suggests the paintings were made as the artist was recovering from that accident and had as their subject his own broken body in traction. The recovery process did not end there however and indeed continues until this very day.

Lamberts next two exhibitions, 'ECHO' and 'Work from a Dark Room', heralded a change of medium. He had spent two years learning the zone system of photography, which is very precise and requires the artist to achieve considerable dexterity in every stage of the process, and both these exhibitions were of photographs. The more experimental 'ECHO' concerned themes of urban decay. The second, 'Work from a Dark Room', defied the culturally conditioned attitudes and taboos that deprive the handicapped of dignity. The series was a major success both artistically and politically. It marked the beginning of Lamberts' continued and energetic work in the field of disability awareness which has included the establishment of the Glashanna Mills Trust in 1985 and the fund raising Great Book of Ireland of last year.

Lambert returned to painting for his 1988 collaboration with the poet Paul Durcan entitled 'The Land of Punt'. His contribution consisted of seven large and very ambitious paintings which explored themes of institutional violence, sexual stereotyping

and abuse in a highly inventive manner. Although he now sees some of these works as having not been entirely successful, 'one of the problems of working on a large painting over a long period of time is that if it's a failure, it's a big failure' (1), they represent a very important development which bore fruit in the next series, the 'Still Lives' of 1991. 'I learned a lot from them which I think I've brought to this exhibition which is, to use your word, more focused'.

'Still Lives' represents another new departure in Lamberts work. In the final analysis his work has always referred to pain. Physical pain, the pain which occurs when one is excluded from the normal activities of society and the memory of pain. The subject has always been human however and in these paintings he moves into the more contraversial area of animal pain. The paintings are of butchered meat. This is the second sense in which this exhibition was unusually interesting.

The iconography of meat in art represents a significant challenge to the ways in which we now feel and think about our own bodies, other living things and even nature as a whole. Throughout history the boundaries between humans and animals have been fragile. We share the world with animals and consequently their history is also ours. That history is one of the boundaries being subtly reformed and adjusted. These boundaries are important because they form the basis of many social, mythological and artistic attempts to understand the purpose of existence. Boundaries between humans and animals have historically been vital to people in order to define what it is to be human. As Mary Douglas points out in her study of the importance of boundaries to society, 'it is part of our human condition to long for hard lines and clear concepts'. (7. p162). In recent history anyway meat has been one area where these 'hard lines and clear concepts' flounder.

It ~~is~~ unlikely that there has ever been a time in human history when we were not aware of the similarities between animals' bodies and our own. In communities where animals are eaten tricky problems ensue. For one thing when humans are injured the inside of the body suddenly, and often shockingly becomes visible. It is at this point that meat, that is animals as food, and our own wounds become devastatatingly similar. In our own society which is predominately carnivorous, these thoughts are aggravated by the mass media. Television has familiarised us with surgical operations and invited us to meditate not only on innumerable froms of violence but also about medical responses to them.

Meat is a zone of non-discrimaination between humans and animals and hence threaten the boundaries which organise human identity. Theo Dorgan points to the paradoxical nature of meat imagery in his short essay on 'Still Lives'.

AS PAINTINGS OF MEAT AND FISH THEY BRING US TO
LOOK AT THE RAW MATERIALS OF LIFE IN A DOUBLE
SENSE - WE ARE LOOKING AT FUEL FOR THE HUMAN
BODY AND AT DISQUIETING REMINDERS THAT LIFE IS
A STRUGGLE IN AN ARENA WHERE THE CREATURES WHO
INHABIT THE PLANET DEVOUR EACH OTHER.
(30)

Other carnivorous 'creatures' have always been used to obscure the brutality which humans visit upon other animals however. Mary Midgleys' book 'Beast and Man' highlights this conspiracy:

THE IDEA THAT WOLVES WOULD STARVE IF THEY ALWAYS
GAVE FAIR WARNING NEVER STRUCK HIM, WOLVES, IN FACT
HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN BLAMED FOR BEING CARNIVORES,
WHICH IS DOUBLY SURPRISING SINCE THE PEOPLE WHO
BLAMED THEM NORMALLY ATE MEAT AND WERE NOT, AS THE
WOLF IS, COMPELLED BY THEIR STOMACHS TO DO SO.
(13. p27)

The progress of civilisation has made humans increasingly unwilling to admit their own ferocity, something which we have attempted to deflect attention from by making animals out to be more dangerous than we are. The iconography of meat confronts humans with the ferocity and our deviation from nature. It also brings forward for inspection codes which are integral to daily existence. Images of meat present us with focal points for our meditations on the fragility of all life, our vital and callous violation of it and the absence of sudden violent death.

Gene Lamberts' paintings of meat have been made within the tradition of still life painting. They echo a lineage that goes back beyond modern Europe to antiquity and pre-antiquity. They recall the Spanish and Dutch masters of the seventeenth century. They recall Chardin, Goya, Soutine ... and this is the final reason why these paintings now demand further inspection. Painters of still life have traditionally designed their works to appear as still life and to take their place in a series of work of the same kind. They are made with an awareness of the conventions of the genre and in the knowledge that they will be accepted into that lineage. The still life of Chardin, for example, are highly self-conscious adaptations of still life conventions which were first developed in seventeenth century Holland. In this way all still life paintings enter into the still life series. It is not a chronological or strictly linear series but has historically been able to quite easily cross boundaries of national culture and period to encompass each new case. Lamberts' paintings not only belong to the still life tradition but also to a separate and highly idiosyncratic tradition of meat imagery in painting. This tradition has its beginnings in the darkness of Rembrandt's slaughterhouse of the 'Flayed Ox' of 1655. (Fig. 13). There are many points at which it overlaps with still life and then rebounds once more into very different areas, such as the expressionism of painters such as Francis Bacon or John Bellany. Lambert believes in the continuity of painting techniques at a time when many believe the opposite.

He believes in the language of painting to which each artist must add their own vocabulary. As Dorgan puts it 'Lambert is taking enormous risks with the world of fashion ... they reach deep into the tradition from Rembrandt to Degas, bring back up to light techniques of vision which make the world new again'. These paintings are an important addition to this tradition. They were made with a tremendous love for the craft of painting and for life. This in spite of their being about death.

The following essay examines meat and its meaning in Lamberts 'Still Lives'. They are examined mainly through these three major strands; Lamberts previous^u work and his own intentions, the significance of the iconography of meat in art and the still life series into which these paintings have now entered. It is important that the scope of these paintings is examined precisely because they enable us to respond, both intellectually and emotionally, to the complexities and implications of life and death which are embedded in these images of meat. This essay hopes to provide that analysis.

CHAPTER ONE

SEEING THINGS

Gene Lamberts 'Still Lives' are in many ways at odds with current art practice. They show a healthy¹ disregard for contemporary trends and instead dig deep into the past of a tradition which the twentieth century has declared obsolete. Lambert shows that this may not be true. In conversation he speaks passionately about the importance of art history and the folly of the artist who does not learn his or her craft.

IF YOU LOOK AT POP ART, OP ART OR CONCEPTUAL ART
IT LOOKS INCREDIBLY TIRED ... THE PEOPLE AS FAR
AS I'M CONCERNED WHO HAVE SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE,
WHOSE WORK IS TIMELESS, INCLUDE A NUDE BY FREUD.

He identifies himself with those who have stood against the successive waves of modernism which have indeed threatened to destroy the craft of painting. Lambert reinstates it as a skilled process through which it is possible to see the world more clearly. This was the starting point for these paintings. 'It sounds incredibly old fashioned but it had to do with seeing...I think that's certainly what I've had to do, try and look at things afresh'.

Lambert places great importance on learning how to see and then drawing what you see as opposed to what you know. He is aware that this approach leaves him open to accusations of being a reactionary yet knows that he must remain true to painting. He passionately believes in a form of painting which is reverberating from the human history which has gone into its making and which uncovers a world of sensation and hidden experience. He paints so that things will be seen more clearly.

In making 'Still Lives' Lambert paid tremendous attention to the craft of painting. He approached them using a very limited means, working on a small scale, modelling in mainly earth colours and concentrating very much on drawing, form and tone. The paint was built up meticulously layer upon layer, which for Lambert is one of the main advantages paint has over photography.

He used a variety of techniques such as glazing, scrumbling and chiaroscuro. The paint becomes both the flesh of sensation and the butchered flesh which is put on display. Everything is conveyed under the steady light of understatement. Lambert points out that he approached it very much like a life class approach. As detached as I could in order to avoid the excess of Expressionism. I wanted to look at colour and form, to be conscious of understatement'. There have been many paintings of meat which were more bloody and horrific yet these stilled images elicit feelings of intense compassion and pain. They walk a tightrope between beauty and ugliness. They convey the horror of killing in light of the painters vision of the 'incredible beauty in it'. They draw us into their world.

'Still Lives' is also about seeing things in another sense. They are not only about seeing paint turned into flesh but also the process which turns living animals into flesh. Lambert is a vegetarian on the grounds that he is appalled by the cruelty of the meat industry. This was the other starting point for the series. He visited butchers shops and abattoir and 'Still Lives' represents what he hopes is the beginning of a series which explores the various processes by which a live animal in the field is turned into meat. The series begins at one of the final stages of this process, the butchers shop. The meat on display in these paintings has been made into very specific cuts. The craft of painting looks at the craft of butchery. 'Still Lives' explores a very precise stage in the transformation of animal into meat. This meat is not as unrecognisable as animal as the tightly packaged meats in supermarkets yet these cuts are also about disguising. It is the stage before the supermarket. With this series Lambert is shedding light on an industry which is becoming continually more secretive. In 1986 Peter Cox found that 'it is becoming increasingly difficult to gain access to slaughter-houses. No-one wants outsiders there (particularly not any media) to witness and report the many shortcomings that exist'. (6. p155). This trend has accelerated since then. The meat industry has something to hide.

The newspapers occasionally show various shards of truth tearing through this blanket of secrecy yet as a whole it remains from public view and experience. Lambert is aware of the secrecy, the hypocrisy and the suffering for which this industry is responsible. He connects his reactions to both this and the appalling treatment of disabled people in our society, 'there are two things you can do when you know that there is an injustice. You can remain silent or you can bear witness. I make no apologies, for bearing witness Lambert is now bearing witness to the injustices of an industry whose very purpose is to kill.

Lambert has entered similar territory before. His intention with the 'Work from a Dark Room' exhibition was to make images which would challenge the taboos and stereotyping which exists with regards to the disabled. These photographs reveal the faces who our insecurities blur into anonymity. They show human beings who have names who also happen to be disabled. Each image is a celebration of humanity. Lambert confronts us with our own prejudices and challenges us to re-examine our attitudes to both the disabled and ourselves. The series also included a family of travellers, another group which society overlooks. Most of this family are now dead.

JUST OVER THE SHORT PERIOD SINCE THESE
PHOTOGRAPHS WERE MADE MOST OF THAT FAMILY
HAS BEEN WIPED OUT. IF WE CHOOSE NOT TO
SEE PEOPLE WE KILL THEM. OUR ATTITUDES TO
THOSE WHO WE PERCEIVE AS BEING DIFFERENT...
RESULTS IN OUR KILLING THEM.

These images were very important because they highlighted not only the situation of these individuals but also that of every disabled person in our society. They provided a focal point through which these issues could be discussed for once. Lambert showed that these people were not freaks which is how they are commonly categorised by the hard lines which define what is normal. He prompted the viewer to look at the real causes of disability.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE DISABLED BECAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REASONS. ONE OF THE BIGGEST CAUSES OF DISABILITY IS MAN, CAR ACCIDENTS, WARS. MOST DISABILITY IS CREATED BY MAN.

He also prompted an inspection of the institutions which become the dumping grounds for those people which society does not categorise as normal and the crimes perpetrated against these people. An urgent desire to show what was really going on was one of the major starting points for these images.

I WAS VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMP ON THE ISLAND OF LIROS, WHICH IS WITHIN THE E.C. I FELT VERY ANGRY ABOUT THIS. THERE WAS NO PUBLIC DEBATE. IT WAS COMMON KNOWLEDGE FOR PEOPLE WHO WERE INVOLVED IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, BUT THERE WAS SILENCE AND QUIETNESS. THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO WERE BEING CHAINED TO TREES, HOSED DOWN, TREATED LIKE ANIMALS AND IT'S STILL THERE. SO I HAD SEEN THINGS IN THE INSTITUTIONS THAT WERE HORRIFYING. I KNOW SOME GOOD CAME OUT OF THIS. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I MADE IMAGES THAT HELPED UNDERSTANDING... WHAT I TRIED TO DO WAS SHOW IT AS I SEE IT AND I UNDERSTAND IT AND HOW I FEEL ABOUT IT.

In 'The Land of Punt' Lambert continued this questioning process. Here the themes emerging from the shadows included the aggression of male cultural conditioning, institutional violence, sexual stereotyping and abuse. Durcan's words sharply echo the sentiments of these dark paintings.

AND LAY YOUR HANDS ON THE MOST LUSCIOUS DAME IN Dublin,
DUBLIN, LIFT HER UP AND FLING HER THROUGH THE FRONT
WINDOW OF THE CAFE, A PAIR OF LEGS JUTTING OUT OF
THE BROKEN GLASS.
(28)

Lambert is questioning the very foundations of manhood as we know it and especially the belligerence which is so acutely described in paintings like 'A Pair of Legs' (Fig. 5) and 'Crucifixion' (Fig. 6) in which men divide the garments of a crucified woman. The paintings contain references to the coercive roles of Church and State, all of which are male institutions. John Stoltenberg in 'Refusing to be a Man' makes the point that contrary to the myth that men do not express themselves, throughout history men have persuasively expressed their feelings on a variety of subjects through the form of institutions. Feelings about women, death and absent fathers, for example, have been turned into religions. Feelings about women, wealth, possession, and territory have been turned into laws and nation-states. 'Men have institutionalised their feelings so that whether or not a particular man is feeling the feeling at a particular time, the feeling is being expressed through the institutions men have made'. (21. p93) Gene Lambert recently stated that throughout his life he has been in one institution or another. For quite a large part these institutions have been those for men.

THE PRIESTS, THE BROTHERS, THE FATHERS, THE SEGREGATED
SCHOOLS AND THE VALUES THAT ACCRUE FROM THAT.
THAT WAS ONE THING I RESENT - THE FEMININE SIDE OF
ME WAS TO BE SUPPRESSED.
(50)

The paintings are the memory of the violence of that time and characteristically Lamberts own experience reflects a wider social truth. Stoltenberg informs us that 'male sexual identity is entirely a political and ethical construction' and that 'the male sex requires injustice in order to exist'. (21. p13). If men are to retain their sexual identity then it is vital that they continue to assert their dominance over those who are not male and that all young males will want to maintain this lie. This is achieved through coercion in the form of religion, laws, pornography etc., which have been normalised within our society. 'The Land of Punt' represents one of the most ambitious attempts by a male artist to open these doors which have resisted for so long.

Lamberts' own questioning of male values is very much linked to the accident which he suffered in 1981. Until then his time spent in male institutions had exercised its influence. He acknowledges that he was still quite conditioned: 'A typical Brothers education, believing notions of manhood'. With the accident this identity was removed and 'to really see yourself naked can be quite traumatic and that becomes the subject', Lambert agrees that this process of self-realisation and the physical pain which he has now endured for many years has certainly made him more eager to question the human condition. Pain is his subject. He wants to remove the taboos which surround it and show that many of our ideas about pain are indeed wrong. He believes that the Expressionists view of pain, for example, is extremely shallow, self-indulgent and fails to express what pain is really like. It is important for Lambert that he has maintained a distance from the heat of Expressionism. His view of pain is entirely different. He shows that it is a normal part of human experience and doesn't automatically mean unhappiness. He also purports that many things which are not normally identified as being painful in fact are. There are many types of pain, 'Work from a Dark Room' showed the pain that ensues when people are marginalised and refused a place in 'normal' society. 'The Land of Punt' revealed the pain which men inflict upon the world. Society has also denied the pain of animals in a predominately successful attempt to socialise their killing and the eating of meat. 'Still Lives' is an attempt to show that meat cannot be produced without pain and examine an area of everyday life which nobody wants to confront.

Lambert agrees that the rituals and taboos which surround meat eating in our society help set up a blinker system which encourages other socialised injustices to remain hidden. Meat as food is normalised in the extreme as it is important that that people feel comfortable about something around which so much of daily life is organised.

With 'Still Lives' Lambert provides a focal point through which it is possible to see these rituals more clearly. We are shown that meat is a social and an economic commodity.

IF YOU TAKE AWAY THE MEAT INDUSTRY THEN THE ECONOMY WOULD COLLAPSE. WE CALL PEOPLE WHO ARE SUCCESSFUL AT THE KILLING ON A LARGE SCALE THE BEEF BARONS AND WE RESPECT THEM. THEY'RE PILLARS OF SOCIETY.

Marx believed that much of the value which individuals place on commodities in capitalist societies lay in the fact that they confront them as ready-made objects. They are things which are already waiting to be brought and used. They take on almost metaphysical qualities. Marx gives the example of the table which, although it is made up of only a few bits of wood, 'so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something rather more than the sum total of its parts. In fact the origins of the commodity in capitalist relations of production is pushed aside and the transformation of wood into furniture is hidden by the almost miraculous table. Meat is also a commodity which hides its origins. In fact the element of distancing is more important here than with most commodities as killing is a process in which no 'civilised' human wants to feel involved. Keith Thomas, in his survey of changing attitudes in England during the period 1500-1800, revealed that by the late eighteenth century the concealment of the processes which produce meat had become a necessity for the civilised people which modern urbanisation had produced.

KILLING FOR FOOD WAS NOW AN ACTIVITY ABOUT WHICH AN INCREASING NUMBER OF PEOPLE FELT FURTIVE AND UNEASY. THE CONCEALMENT OF SLAUGHTERHOUSES FROM THE PUBLIC EYE HAD BECOME A NECESSARY DEVICE TO AVOID TOO BLATANT A CLASH BETWEEN MATERIAL FACTS AND PRIVATE SENSIBILITIES.
(24. p300)

Norbert Elias's account of the history of European meat eating in 'The History of Manners' also shows how the civilising process amongst humans which resulted from the urbanisation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries created changes in attitudes to meat.

THIS DIRECTION IS QUITE CLEAR . FROM A STANDARD OF FEELING BY WHICH THE SLIGHT AND CARVING OF A DEAD ANIMAL AT A TABLE ARE ACTUALLY PLEASURABLE, OR AT LEAST NOT AT ALL UNPLEASANT, THE DEVELOPMENT LEADS TO ANOTHER STANDARD BY WHICH REMINDERS THAT THE MEAT DISH HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE KILLING OF AN ANIMAL ARE AVOIDED TO THE UTMOST, IN MANY OF OUR MEAT DISHES THE ANIMAL FORM IS SO CONCEALED AND CHANGED BY THE ART OF ITS PREPERATION AND CARVING THAT WHILE EATING ONE IS SCARCELY REMINDED OF ITS ORIGIN
(10. p120)

The way in which the majority of people come to terms with the problems inherent in eating animal flesh is simply to ignore it and pretend that it does not exist. The process of killing is delegated to an anonymous slaughter-man in a distant slaughterhouse as far removed from our own sensibilities as possible. Today this is something which we are repeatedly encouraged to do by a multi-million pound industry for whom troubled consciences are bad for business. This is highlighted if one looks at the changing language of the meat industry. The fact that meat producers consciously manipulate language was highlighted by this report which appeared in The Guardian newspaper in 1984.

THE EDITOR IN CHIEF OF THE MEAT TRADERS' JOURNAL TODAY URGED THAT THE WORDS 'BUTCHER' AND 'SLAUGHTERHOUSE' BE ERADICATED AND REPLACED BY THE AMERICAN EUPHEMISMS 'MEAT PLANT' OR 'MEAT FACTORY'. ALTERNATIVELY BUTCHERS COULD ADOPT THE IRISH WORD 'VICTUALLER'. THIS WOULD DISTANCE CONSUMERS FROM AWARENESS OF THE "BLOODIER SIDE" OF THE MEAT TRADE, THE EDITOR ARGUES THAT IT WAS

TIME FOR A REVIEW OF MEAT TRADE VOCABULARY IN RECOGNITION OF "A GROWING AWAY AMONG YOUNGER MEAT BUYERS FROM THE CONCEPT THAT MEAT EVER COMES FROM AN ANIMAL". THIS IS PARTLY BECAUSE BUYERS DID THEIR SHOPPING IN THE BLOODLESS AMBIANCE OF SUPERMARKETS. THE MEAT TRADERS' CAUSE WAS NOT HELPED BY THE "BLOOD-SPLATTERED WHITES" OF SMITH-FIELD PORTERS AS THEY STROLLED "IN FRONT OF THE SECRETARY BIRDS". THEY AND BUTCHERS SHOULD BE PUT IN VELVET OVERALLS. "IT WILL REDUCE CLEANING BILLS AND ANY ADVERSE REACTION FROM THE FAINTHEARTED"... A CHANGE OF NOMENCLATURE MIGHT ONLY SEEM A VERBAL DIFFERENCE BUT IT WOULD "CONJUNE UP AN IMAGE OF MEAT DIVORCED FROM THE ACT OF SLAUGHTER". "THE PUBLIC DOES NOT WANT TO BE MADE AWARE OF THE BLOODIER SIDE OF SLAUGHTER", HE SAID. "PERHAPS NOW IS THE TIME FOR CHANGES TO BE MADE". (6. p,p153-154)

Civilised humans find it repugnant to be reminded of the extreme violence which lies behind something as commonplace as a meal. Through the hiding away of intervening stages it is at present very difficult to make a connection between a cow in a field and a beefburger. As Lambert points out 'people cease to see this as once an animal in a field which has gone through the processes of transpiration, marts, castration and these things. They completely forget about death'.

This brief synopsis of prevailing attitudes towards meat is important because they and Lamberts' images play off each other. There is a whole mythology which surrounds meat and distances it from the basic fact of an animal being killed in a very violent way. Lmabert is challenging that mythology and attempting to see beyond it. There are actually startling connections between this and many of the taboos which he has previously questioned in his work. Meat is very much linked to ideas of male identity and power for example. This is why the strength of so many boxers is due to their mythical fondness for steak. Keith Tester maintains that the fact that the great culinary symbol of English national identity is roast beef communicates the idea that 'The English are real "Men" who can tame and digest the power of an ox'. (23. p144).

Lambert has also dealt with people who are outside the pale of 'normal' society and he sees animals as being in a similar situation in that they are part of a society which denies both their pain and the right to live. 'We've come to see animals as a resource which we exploit, not as ourselves being animals that are just part of the equation. We ignore other animals at our peril'.

Lambert challenges us into a face to face confrontation with meat. The meat is framed, isolated and presented in a close up view. The only props are the metal hooks from which the carcasses are suspended seemingly only inches away from our eyes. Meat becomes the sole occupant of the surface across which it stretches, covering and dominating it. Meat for once becomes the subject of our penetrating gaze. Lambert confronts us with something which is normally assigned to the shadows. Isolated the meat assumes an identity of its own, 'I wanted to make a portrait of that joint of meat', and becomes more about death than food.

Lambert displays these joints of meat for our scrutiny just as he scrutinised them while painting. These are animals which have gone through a process which degrades, tortures, kills and then presents them for our consumption. There is no message however, which Lambert sees as self-consciously created propaganda, we are simply presented with these landmarks of our own ferocity, butchered and labelled. This is why each painting was not individually titled but numbered. Lambert has emptied each image of a message so that there exists 'that space where the person makes up their own mind'. He feels this is important. He believes that it is necessary for art to challenge and confront people with the truth. It is not necessary however to create propaganda. While painting Lambert is most aware of making the image and making the composition. It is this scrutiny of the object which is most important to him.

The rest he trusts to the unconscious believing that in painting 'a lot of things look after themselves'. He gives the example of Darwin who became a revolutionary not because he decided to become a revolutionary but because he made observations and analysis which changed the world. Anger may motivate Lambert to undertake a certain project but it is not what painting is about. Painting may however 'lead you down a path where you open the Pandoras' Box and you can see the thing clearly'.

CHAPTER TWO

KILLING

What is it to be human? If it were possible to answer this question with any degree of certainty then it might also be possible to know what the relationship between animals and society should really be like. History shows many fine and failed attempts to establish the truth of our being which have turned out to be little more than partial resolutions of the matter. For Lambert the key thing to recognise is not that humans are just rather like other animals but that we are animals. He maintains that 'we are of the same stuff'. This is a position which he shares with many who have tried to define the role of animals within society. Mary Midgley argued this point in her book 'Beast and Man'. Her argument is that this being true, animals should therefore be regarded as morally relevant subjects whether they are human or of another species. Peter Singer, whose 1976 book 'Animal Liberation' was almost singlehandedly responsible for the contemporary animal rights movement, also asserted this standpoint. He defined as speciesist any person who 'allows the interests of members of other species' (18. p9). Like Henry Salt in the nineteenth century, whose book *Animal Rights* anticipates much of the current debate, Singer set his argument within the structure of the early 1970's black civil rights and women's liberation movements. His idea of animal liberation was very much taken from the political discourse of these other movements. 'The title of the book has a series point behind it. A liberation movement is a demand for an end to prejudice and discrimination based on an arbitrary characteristic like race or sex'. (18. pX). The title given to the first chapter of Singers book makes clear his fundamental philosophy: 'All Animals Are Equal...or why supporters of liberation for Blacks and Women should support Animal liberation too' (18. p11). Just as overriding sentience on the basis of skin colour is morally condemned as racism, or on the basis of sex as sexism, any qualification of the principle of equal consideration on the grounds of species should. Singer asserts, be rejected as speciesism. And if one is being speciesist, why cannot one be racist and sexist as well?

Lambert's approach to animal rights is very similar to that of Singer. He believes that when one considers the treatment of animals one is considering 'by implication the treatment of human beings. We are of the same stuff'. In 1986 Lambert remarked that 'from the very start of my career I have been attracted to creating images of people who are considered to be outside the pale of what we like to think as normal society'. (49). This has indeed been his constant subject. People who are victim to the prejudices of the majority, whether that be the disabled, women or indeed animals. When one examines his work as a whole the fact that he now includes the pain of animals is comparable to the expanding circle thesis which classes and categories of life which are decreasingly similar to the same of the white male bourgeoisie. Henry Salt referred to this when he observed that humanity 'is beginning to extend itself to the lower animals, as in the past it has gradually extended to savages and slaves' (16. p112). Lambert's basic philosophy is humanitarian. He believes that it is people, and not art, who matter most. 'Human beings matter. No matter how damaged as long as they're alive, no matter what age they are; no matter what the difference...'. There are differences between humans and animals yet there are also similarities which humans hurriedly ignore.

We have learned from anthropology how important boundaries are. In cultural terms anthropological literature highlights our attempts to order the world logically in a way which will make every part of external reality intelligible and designate it a place in a taxonomy. This taxonomy is important as it is both the means through which experience is ordered and by which human is defined. It is culture and classification that makes us human and social. As Douglas maintains, 'social rituals create a reality which would be nothing without them'. (7. p62)

The problems occur when these lines of classification are threatened. There are many points at which this happens, where an object can be allocated to more than one category. This creates problems because it is here that social life is threatened with dissolution. One of the most fundamental interstices is the relationship between humans and animals. Culture is a process by which we distance ourselves from nature and animals in an effort to maintain our social distinction. This demands constant effort as animals, and especially mammals, certainly create problems for any clear-cut social classification of the world. This happens in a number of ways. For one, they have bodies which are reminiscent of our own. Secondly they are commonly involved in social life, either as pets or in vivisection as surrogate humans. We also become aware of our oneness with animals when we are injured and suddenly see that we are the same meat as them.

The progress of civilisation marks the process of humanity distancing itself from the animal. As Elias remarked, humans in the course of the civilising process see, to suppress themselves every characteristic that they feel to be "animal" (10, p.120). This is one of the reasons why carnivorous humans must hide their ferocity to the extent of believing that other animals who kill on a much smaller scale and out of necessity are more brutal. Midgley refers to ethologist Konrad Lorenz's belief that "people are inclined to disapprove of carnivores even when they eat other animals and not people, as though other animals all formed one species and the carnivores were cannibals" (13, p.13). There have historically been many objections to our categorisation of species, however, which would infer that human carnivores are also cannibals. Ovid states that Pythagoras was the first thinker in the Hellenic world to advocate a ban on meat-eating. Pythagoras' theories were founded within the Neoplatonist tradition which prescribes that all life is linked through the Spirit regardless of biology. He believed that as the soul is universal therefore it can exist in any physical form and indeed be passed from human to animal bodies. Pythagoras was hereby asserting that there is quite a possibility that animals are in actuality the present physical form of deceased loved ones.

It thereby follows that we should treat animals as our brothers and sisters and that we certainly shouldn't eat them (14. p365). In the eighteenth century Jean-Jacques Rousseau challenged the uniqueness of humanity by pointing out the biological similarities between ourselves and other animals.

ANIMALS THAT LIVE ONLY ON VEGETATION ALL HAVE BLUNT TEETH, LIKE THE HORSE, THE OX, THE SHEEP, THE HARE, WHILE VORACIOUS ANIMALS HAVE SHARP TEETH, LIKE THE CAT ... AS FOR THE INTESTINES, FRUGIVOROUS ANIMALS HAVE SOME, SUCH AS THE COLON, WHICH ARE NOT FOUND IN VORACIOUS ANIMALS. IT APPEARS THEREFORE THAT MAN, HAVING TEETH AND INTESTINES LIKE THE FRUGIVOROUS ANIMALS, SHOULD NATURALLY BE CLASSIFIED IN THAT CATEGORY. (15. p143).

Ideas such as these are very much linked to scientific developments which played a large part in blurring the human/animal divide. Just as astronomy raised the possibility that the earth was of little importance in a vast universe of which it was the centre, the other sciences proved that man was not the centre of life. Biology explored the insides of our bodies to reveal more and more similarities with animals while Darwin traced the steps of our evolution from animals. Man was no longer unique and, in fact, as Keith Thomas observes, by the nineteenth century science had proved that "men were only beasts who had managed to better themselves" (24. p130).

If man and animals are the same, then meat is a zone of non-discrimination between the two. It cannot be avoided that when one takes apart a human or animals body then the similarities between the two became even more overwhelming. The iconography of meat in art has often challenged the "fictive" categories which divide us from other living things and indeed from nature as a whole.

'Still Lives' is about killing. Lambert recognises that he (and everyone) must accept responsibility for that killing, "I suppose the point is that I feel implicated", yet his assertion that we are the same as animals means that this is about more than killing an animal.

He is also asserting that the line which demarcates human from animal is a fictional one which means that these paintings are also about cannibalism and human suffering. Cannibalism is a theme which has rarely been treated explicitly in Western painting. The one great exception to this is of course Gericault's 'Raft of the Medusa'. Of special interest are the still life studies of dissected limbs (fig.12) that he made to familiarise himself to the sights and smells of death which he tried to live with day by day as the men on the raft had. These still lifes are beautifully composed and lit and surely rank among the most striking reminders of our mortality in art. Lambert's paintings have a similar quality. They confront us not only with animal death but also with our own mortality. This happens because meat cannot be classified very clearly as either them or us but is ambiguous. Lambert himself is also more aware of our mortality having confronted both death and the chronic pain which is the reminder of that experience. These feelings are expressed in the 'Still Lives' paintings.

I THINK I HAVE A WOUND THAT OPENS UP EVERY
SO OFTEN AND HAS DIFFICULTY IN HEALING.
I'M VERY CONSCIOUS OF IT IN MY OWN BODY,
MY OWN BODY THAT HAS BEEN DAMAGED AND
BROKEN. I'M VERY CONSCIOUS OF OUR MORTALITY
AND OF BEING OF THE SAME STOCK.

Lambert's images about pain do not have a consciously didactic function. He is simply expressing how he feels as honestly as possible, yet as has previously happened in Lambert's work, his own personal experience reflects a wider social truth. These images of meat are imbued with the strength of the painter's feelings and as such may be likened to self-portraits. They also open up a meditative process on the nature of killing, the status of animals and the fragility of life and of civilisation.

These ideas extrapolate considerably Lambert's belief that by considering the treatment of animals one is by implication dealing with the treatment of humans. These paintings communicate the fact that all suffering is valid and that human and animal pain is one. It is significant that Lambert was looking at Crucifixions in art when he was working on both 'Still Lives' and the earlier 'Work from a Ward' paintings. "I certainly looked at Crucifixions, from the expressionism of Gruenwald and Soutine and of course Rembrandt. Yes, the Crucifixion is still relevant." Francis Bacon, who Lambert has always very much admired, has likened the Crucifixion to "a magnificent armature on which you can hang all types of feeling and sensation", and indeed that "you might say it's almost nearer to a self-portrait" (22. p.p.44-46). Lambert agrees that subject matter can very often be a vehicle citing Cezanne as the great example of someone who changed the way we perceive the world by painting apples. There is, however, a further, more peculiar similarity between Lambert and Bacon in their reaction to the Crucifixion theme and that is that they have both interlocked this, one of the great themes in art, with the imagery of the butcher's shop.

When one looks at the iconography of meat in Western art, it becomes apparent that there have been many episodes where artists have linked the theme of meat with that of the Crucifixion. The most distant example is Rembrandt's "Slaughtered Ox", of 1655 (Fig.13) where the outstretched limbs and strange dignity of the carcass certainly calls to mind the Crucifixion. The intensity of Goya's meat also brings to play a connection with the Crucifixion. Soutine's carcasses, which were very influenced by Rembrandt and his hanging fowl also make the connection. The Crucifixion has been a recurring theme in Bacon's work and in almost all cases he has linked it to meat. In one of his earliest paintings, the 'Crucifixion' of 1933 the three broad strokes to the right of the figure are suggestive of a rib-cage but whether it is human or animal is impossible to determine.

The connection is much more startling in the monumental 'Painting 1946' (Fig. 14) where the huge carcass looming, above the main figure clearly echoes a Crucifixion. In 'Three Studies for a Crucifixion' of 1962 (Fig. 15) the human figure in the centre panel has been reduced to meat while the undulating carcass in the right panel was suggested by Cimabues Crucifixion which Bacon always thought of 'as a worm crawling down the cross' (22. p14). When asked by David Sylvester why he chose the theme of the Crucifixion for this triptych he replied:

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN VERY MOVED BY PICTURES OF SLAUGHTERHOUSES AND MEAT, AND TO ME THEY VERY MUCH BELONG TO THE WHOLE THING OF THE CRUCIFIXION. THERE'VE BEEN EXTRAORDINARY PHOTOGRAPHS WHICH HAVE BEEN DONE OF ANIMALS JUST BEFORE THEY WERE SLAUGHTERED; AND THE SMELL OF DEATH. WE DON'T KNOW OF COURSE, BUT IT APPEARS BY THESE PHOTOGRAPHS THAT THEY'RE SO AWARE OF WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THEM, THEY DO EVERYTHING TO ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE, I THINK THESE PICTURES WERE VERY MUCH BASED ON THAT KIND OF THING, WHICH TO ME IS VERY, VERY NEAR THIS WHOLE THING OF THE CRUCIFIXION. I KNOW FOR RELIGIOUS PEOPLE, FOR CHRISTIANS, THE CRUCIFIXION HAS A TOTALLY DIFFERENT SIGNIFICANCE, BUT AS A NON-BELIEVER, IT WAS JUST AN ACT OF MAN'S BEHAVIOUR A WAY OF BEHAVIOUR TO ANOTHER.
(22. p23)

The Crucifixion has the same significance for Lambert as it does for Bacon. Lambert also feels very alienated from the Church and does not see the Crucifixion in a Christian sense. From a non-religious perspective the Crucifixion is simply an act of violence which one man inflicts upon another. Lambert found that perhaps the most surprising reaction to 'Still Lives' came when a 'priest who visited the show felt that it was like the stations of the cross. That was his response. At first I laughed but in retrospect perhaps he's right'. This is perhaps the best testament to 'Still Lives' power to elicit feelings of compassion on a grand scale, but why do these images of butchered meat echo so strongly either the stations of the cross or the Crucifixion?

A remark made by Stephen Clark in 'The Moral Status of Animals' perhaps throws further light on the subject. Clark argues that it is particularly strange for Christians not to turn away from meat-eating as 'it is open for the Christian... to say that all such sacrifices, all such flesh-sharings were ended with the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice'. (5. p178). For these artists the Crucifixion is simply an event in which one man violently kills another and if, as Lambert asserts, 'we are all of the same stuff', then it holds that each killing of an animal is of the same nature and therefore echoes that 'one perfect and sufficient sacrifice'.

Running throughout Bacons work is this idea of a zone of undecidability between humans and animals. Gilles Deleuze makes the point that:

BACON DOES'NT TELL US TO HAVE MERCY ON ANIMALS,
BUT EVERY MAN WHO SUFFERS IS MEAT, MEAT IS THE
COMMON GROUND OF MAN AND BEAST, THEIR ZONE OF
INDISCERNIBILITY; IT IS THIS "FACT", OR EVEN
THIS STATE, IN WHICH THE PAINTER IDENTIFIES
HIMSELF WITH THE OBJECTS OF HIS HORROR OR OF HIS
COMPASSION.
(37. p12)

Donald Kuspit believes that Bacons painting has an hysterical purpose in that by 'dissolving the everyday appearance, it can help us remember the obscure self, that is forgotten underneath. (43. p,p56-57). That 'obscure self' usually relates to an area of experience where human and animal become one. There are many ways in which Bacon blurs the human/animal divide. The figures of the Eumenides in the 1944 triptych, 'Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion' for example, have necks which are abnormally prolonged and end with animal like jaws while the rest of the body is closer to that of a human. It also happens that the shadow escaping from the body may be that of an animal. Bacon seems to be saying that this is the animal which is hidden inside each one of us.

It is in meat however that Bacon succeeds best in blurring the boundary between what is human and what is animal. He is aware of the threat to classification which wounds present for carnivorous humans. It is here that we become aware of our immense sameness with animals which means that perhaps our history of distancing ourselves from them is no more than idealist deception. As Bacon asserts 'we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butchers shop I always think its surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal'. (22. p46). Bacon has always recognised the potential to be found in wounds. One of his earliest exhibited paintings was 'Wound for a Crucifixion' in which a specimen wound is mounted on a sculptors armature against the wall of a hospital corridor or ward. More recently a wound occurred in the left-hand panel of 'Triptych-Studies for the Human Body 1979' (Fig. 16) in which a red streak scars an otherwise athletic body. It is interesting to note that the mouth, a motif which Bacon has focused on from very early in his career, may also be seen by him as a metaphor for a wound. This is suggested by a line from the Oresteia of Aeschylus with which Bacon has been haunted for some time; 'the reek of human blood smiles out at me' (32. p17). The wounds gapes in the flesh like a smile in the face, a quality which Bacon seems to visit upon many of his painted mouths.

In Bacons paintings many of the figures are reduced to a state of being meat. In his Crucifixions the crucified figure itself is transformed into meat. In his portraits the heads affirm their identity with meat, some of the best of them being painted in the reds and blue colour of meat. Bacon is challenging the authority of the figure because his, as Kuspit observes, 'fluid handling of the faces ' flesh dessocialises it, i.e. makes it no longer manageable as a social mask. The technique in effect unmask and undermines the face by making it too vibrant, expressive and resonant - too much a quivering piece of flesh to serve as a public mask'. (42. p54)

He depicts male flesh like 'meat' on Michelangelo-esque backs. In 'Study of the Human Body' of 1982 the figure is naked except for cricketer's leggings. The figure is mutilated however and has been transformed into a chunk of raw meat as much on display as the joints of beef in Lamberts paintings. This contradicts the social identity of the figure, the only sign of which remains being the cricketers leggings. Bacon shows that the social identity and reality, and therefore our self invented distinctions from animals are not timeless at all. In so doing he is creating the possibility for, as Michael Foucault described a story by Burges:

[A] BREAKING UP OF ALL THE ORDERED SURFACES
AND ALL THE PLANES WITH WHICH WE ARE ACCUSTOMED
TO TAME THE WILD PROFUSION OF EXISTING THINGS,
AND CONTINUING LONG AFTERWARDS TO DISTURB AND
THREATEN WILL COLLAPSE OUR AGE-OLD DISTINCTION
BETWEEN THE SAME AND THE OTHER.
(11. pXV)

This is precisely what Lambert does when he claims that we are the same as animals. He is challenging one of the most fundamental beliefs which upon which our social reality is founded; that we are different to and above animals. It is also what these paintings threaten. Like Bacon, Lambert has also used imagery of wounds in his work. Since his road accident of 1981 he has also had the most directly physical contact with being wounded that is possible. He has had his own body seriously wounded and broken and as a result he has lived for a time with the possibility of impending death. 'Work from a Ward' (Fig. 1) is the product of that time.

IT IT WAS A VERY SERIOUS CAR ACCIDENT AND AT ONE STAGE I HAD TO FIGHT FOR MY LIFE. I HAD TO MAKE A DECISION WHETHER I WAS GOING TO LIVE OR DIE... MORPHINE WAS USED OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME AND I BECAME ADDICTED. SO I LIVED IN THIS VERY UNREAL WORLD OF OPERATING ON THE MEMORY OF FEELING AND PAINTING FOR ME BECAME A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH. IT BECAME A WAY OF TRYING TO PIN DOWN WHAT I WAS ACTUALLY FEELING AND IF THERE WERE NO FEELINGS THERE THEN THAT WAS THE SUBJECT.

The technique used in these small intense panels was very much dictated by Lamberts circumstances. They were painted in flat shapes largely because moving was made very difficult by both physical pain and the effect of morphine. The paintings are the product of the pain which is also the subject. Lambert painted himself in traction, putting the viewer in the position of the victim. We are brought close to the wounded body and the pain, both physical and psychological, which it endures.

Lambert now sees that there are tremendous similarities between these paintings and the 'Still Lives' in which we are confronted with wounded animal bodies. He was not aware of this while working on them and indeed not until 'half way through the exhibition... somebody pointed out that it was like the traction thing again. This wasn't conscious, it was just an image that was in my head and keeps turning up'. It is significant that it was while working on these sets of paintings that Lambert was most aware of the Crucifixion. Each series echoes each other as clearly as they echo a crucifixion. In each a wounded body is held in suspension (Lambert's own body in traction and the dead animals' bodies hanging from metal hooks) and is communicating ideas like being 'dependent, helpless, vulnerable...'. Like Bacon, Lambert moves from images of human wounds to animal wounds, killing and meat, and in the process dissolves the human/animal division so that the meat becomes non-speciesist. While others deny the moral claims of animals and the intensity of their suffering (how else would it be possible for one to permit this violence so that one may remain fashionable in a leather jacket or enjoy the 'taste' of a lamb's leg). Lambert believes that it is just as valid and as real as our own.

EVEN WHEN THEY ARE FLAYED AND IN A LORRY THAT YOU SEE OPEN, I NOW KNOW BY LOOKING AT THEM HOW STRESSED THEY WERE WHEN THEY DIED. PIGS ARE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, AND IF YOU TAKE A HERD AND BREAK IT UP AND THEN PUT THEM IN A LORRY WITH PIGS THAT ARE NOT FROM THAT HERD, THEY WILL ATTACK EACH OTHER AND THE MARKS OF THEIR ANXIETY IS CLEAR ON THEIR CARCASSES.

These paintings communicate the idea that human and animal pain is one. Like 'Work from a Ward' they have all the pain, compassion and 'humanity' of a crucifixion. In paintings like 'Still Lives No.7' (Fig.8) and 'Still Lives No.10' (Fig.9), the Cross is suggested by wires, hooks and a section of wood in No.7 in front of which the meat is suspended. The meat itself becomes a form which embodies suffering. In 'Still Lives No.7' Lambert displays a dead fish. The idea of using fish as metaphors for suffering humanity and of Christ in particular is a very old one. In Christian iconography the fish is a symbol of Christ. During this century, this specific connection has probably been made most strikingly by the Scottish painter John Bellany in his 'Allegory' of 1964. Here the three gutted fish nailed up to dry on posts is treated with all the monumentality of a Renaissance Crucifixion. In 'Still Lives No.15' (Fig.10), which depicts a skate stretched across the picture's plane, Lambert intensifies the connection to human suffering. The skate has appealed to many artists because of its anthropomorphic possibilities. Both Ensor and Soutine in particular have used it in such a way as to suggest human suffering, Ensor's 'Skate' of 1892 being described by Charles Sterling as "monstrously human with its cruel sardonic face" (20. p116). Its striking resemblance to the human face gives it an added emotional charge which is disturbingly conveyed by Lambert in No.15. Unlike Ensor's it is not cruel or sardonic, but has a sadness and poignancy which makes it a difficult image to forget. Lambert's images of meat have all those qualities which he wrote into his description of the 'Work from a Dark Room' photographs.

WHEN THE IMAGE IS STRIPPED OF EARS, CLOTHES,
ARMS, EYES, LEGS, - WHAT IS LEFT? COULD IT
POSSIBLY BE? DIGNITY, SPEED, FRUSTRATION,
DESPAIR, COMPASSION, ANGER, TOLERANCE, LOVE,
PAIN, FEAR, SEXUALITY, HUMANITY.
(27. pXI).

We are the same as animals and therefore each killing of an animal for meat echoes the cruelty, suffering and sacrifice which the crucifixion symbolises. These emotions which are embedded in Lambert's images are the residue from the spirit and suffering of a once live animal which is now displayed in most brutally level state.

CHAPTER THREE

STILL LIVES

The working title of this exhibition of paintings was 'Killing' but it was changed before it reached the gallery to the more ironic 'Still Lives'. Lambert's images of meat belong to a tradition which spans more than 2000 years and the connecting link between this succession of paintings is simply the fact that motionless things form their elusive subject. Still life is not a taxonomic category that is the product of critical analysis which is imposed on works after they come into existence however. Rather it exists in the production of the paintings themselves. Still life painters consciously design their work to appear as still life and therefore take their place in a series of work of the same kind. Lambert renamed these paintings 'Still Lives' for example, because he is aware of the conventions of this genre and of the fact that he is now utilising them for his own means.

Still life forms a coherent series which is not bound to any particular period or national culture. In the case of Chardin for example, this series jumped from the Netherlands to France and from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Although there are enormous differences between the historical and cultural base of Chardin and the seventeenth Dutch still life painters, yet an examination of the paintings reveal that Chardin's are indeed highly self conscious adaptations and modifications of conventions developed by the Dutch. It is important that paintings such as Lambert's are recognised as being part of this series because some of their meaning inevitably comes from the inflections they introduce into the field of previous work.

The subjects which occupy still life's attention have a long history. They belong to a long cultural span that goes back beyond modern Europe to antiquity and pre-antiquity. We know from the villas buried beneath the lava of Vesuvius for instance that the Romans had in their possession a form of painting which very much resembled what is now termed still life. The xenia depicted such motionless objects as platters, fish, seafood and game, all of which would resurface in still life paintings.

It must be established that Lambert's paintings enter specifically into a tradition of depicting food and commodities which has always been the focal point of still life. In the faded and fragmented images of the xenia we see the beginnings of this tradition and the implications which it incurs.

We now possess only a small fraction of the still life of antiquity in the ruins of what once was. Therefore one of the most complete examples of xenia is to be found in written form, namely in the 'Imagesⁱⁿ' of Philostratus from the third century AD. This text was designed to guide Roman students through the paintings of their culture and describes in great depth the paintings supposedly from an extensive collection in Neapolis, ancient Naples. This includes two examples of still life which, we are informed, are the only two of the collection. These paintings tell a very interesting story. 'Xenia II' contains images of meat, presented in a way which recur in much of later still life painting, while 'Xenia I' does not. The division created by the inclusion of meat is culturally significant, and helps us to read subsequent still life's of meat, including Lamberts.

XENIA I

IT IS A GOOD THING TO GATHER FIGS AND ALSO NOT TO PASS OVER IN SILENCE THE FIGS IN THIS PICTURE. PURPLE FIGS DRIPPING WITH JUICE ARE HEAPED ON VINE-LEAVES: AND THEY ARE DEPICTED WITH BREAKS IN THEIR SKIN, SOME JUST CRACKING OPEN TO DISGORGE THEIR HONEY, SOME SPLIT APART, THEY ARE SO RIPE. NEAR THEM LIES A BRANCH, NOT BARE, BY ZEUS, OR EMPTY OF FRUIT, BUT UNDER THE SHADE OF ITS LEAVES ARE FIGS, SOME STILL GREEN AND 'UNTIMELY', SOME WITH WRINKLED SKIN AND OVER-RIPE AND SOME ABOUT TO TURN, DISCLOSING THE SHINY JUICE, WHILE ON THE TIP OF THE BRANCH A SPARROW BURIES ITS BILL IN WHAT SEEMS THE VERY SWEETEST OF THE FIGS. ALL THE GROUND IS STREWN WITH CHESTNUTS, SOME OF WHICH ARE RUBBED FREE OF THE BURR, OTHERS LIE QUITE SHUT UP AND OTHERS SHOW THE BURR BREAKING AT THE LINES OF DIVISION... HERE ARE GIFTS OF THE CHERRY TREE, HERE IS FRUIT IN CLUSTERS HEAPED IN BASKETS, AND THE BASKET IS WOVEN, NOT FROM AILING TWIGS, BUT FROM BRANCHES OF THE PLANT ITSELF.
(3. p.p. 18-19).

XENIA II

THE HARE IN HIS CAGE IS THE PREY IN THE NET,
 AND HE SITS ON HIS HAUNCHES MOVING HIS FORELEGS
 A LITTLE AND SLOWLY LIFTING HIS EARS, BUT HE
 ALSO KEEPS LOOKING BEHIND HIM AS WELL, SO
 SUSPICIOUS IS HE AND ALWAYS COWERING WITH
 FEAR; THE SECOND HARE THAT HANGS ON THE
 WITHERED OAK TREE, HIS BELLY LAID WIDE OPEN
 AND HIS SKIN STRIPPED OFF OVER THE HIND FEET,
 BEARS WITNESS TO THE SWIFTNESS OF THE DOG
 WHICH SITS BENEATH THE TREE... AS FOR THE
 DUCKS NEAR THE HARE (COUNT THEM, 10) AND THE
 GEESE OF THE SAME NUMBER AS THE DUCKS, IT IS
 NOT NECESSARY TO TEST THEM BY PINCHING THEM,
 FOR THEIR BREASTS, WHERE THE FAT GATHERS IN
 ABUNDANCE ON WATER-BIRDS, HAVE BEEN PLUCKED
 ALL OVER. IF YOU CRAVE RAISED BREAD ON
 'EIGHT-PIECE LOAVES' THEY ARE HERE NEARBY
 THE DEEP BASKET, AND IF YOU WANT ANY RELISH,
 YOU HAVE THE LOAVES THEMSELVES - FIND THEY
 HAVE BEEN SEASONED WITH FENNEL AND PARSELY
 AND ALSO WITH POPPY-SEED, THE SPICE THAT
 BRINGS SLEEP BUT IF YOU DESIRE A SECOND
 COURSE, PUT THAT OFF TILL YOU HAVE COOKS...
 I THINK THE PAINTING OFFERS THESE GIFTS TO
 THE MASTER OF THE FARM, AND HE IS TAKING A
 BATH, HAVING PERHAPS THE LOOK IN HIS EYES
 OF PRAMNIAN OR THASIAN WINES, ALTHOUGH HE
 MIGHT, IF HE WOULD, DRINK THE NEW SWEET
 WINE AT THE TABLE HERE AND THEN ON HIS RETURN
 TO THE CITY MIGHT SMELL OF PRESSED GRAPES
 AND OF LEISURE AND MIGHT BELCH IN THE FACES
 OF CITY-DWELLERS.
 (3. pp19-20).

The distinction between these two paintings is that of, on the one hand, nature and on the other culture. 'Xenia I' conjures up a moment prior to cultural intervention when the natural world has not been altered in order to appropriate nature to what is human. The figs 'are depicted with breaks in their skin, some just cracking open to disgorge their honey!'. They are able to break open by themselves without any effort or implement. The food they disgorge (honey) also requires no implement. It does not need to be cooked and indeed would be unaffected by cooking in that it would not be transformed into another state. The objects depicted here are not cultural commodities which have been transformed from, and therefore hide, their natural origins. The basket, for example, 'is woven, not from alien twigs, but from the branches of the plant itself'.

For the basket to have been made of anything else would have demanded cultural intervention which would have produced a commodity which was 'alien' to nature. Furthermore the food displayed here is not species specific. This is what nature gladly produces for its own and we can see that the sparrow is eating what could just as easily be eaten by a human. What is depicted here is not just human food or a diet that marks humanity as being different. Here humanity is part of nature, eats what the sparrows eat and what nature wishes to supply.

In Xenia II the scene is radically transformed as we move from gathering food to hunting. In this painting we see, quite strikingly, the border between nature and culture which humanity has created. This border is physically represented by the cage in which the trapped hare is imprisoned. The hare has been removed from nature and is now 'always cowering with fear', the second hare with its 'belly laid open and his skin stripped over the hind feet' signalling what is fate could be easily be. Unlike Xenia I the objects depicted here are cultural commodities which have been produced through the refinement of nature and the progress is away from nature and towards the culture of the table. Fermentation becomes cooking and baking. Natural foods are transformed into 'raised bread or "eight-piece loaves" ', which are 'seasoned with fennel and parsley and also with poppy-seed, the spice that brings sleep'. Where Xenia I displayed raw foods, the food here requires cooking, 'put that off till you have cooks'. This is the food of man alone and is therefore species^sit and marks humanity as being different to other species. The work of human hands appear in the acts of plucking, testing, organising by number, 'count them, ten' and presumably killing. Hence the lively sparrow eating the figs in Xenia I becomes the heap of dead water-fowl ready for the oven. Animals are taken from nature, killed and turned into cultural commodities.

We are then informed that all this has been done for one man (although more than one animal has been killed) 'I think the painting offers these gifts to the master of the farm'. The description ends with the farm master in a drunken bath, suggesting that this domination over nature generates a negative abundance which culminates in a perverse use of wealth. Not only does it create speciesism but also sharp social division and hierarchy. The final sentence describes the outcome of this progression with the master of the farm belching in the faces of city dwellers. The state of harmony expressed in 'Xenia I' is transformed into a picture of absolute social distance.

These paintings communicate the idea that the degree of human society can be measured by what is eaten; the more meat, the less natural; the less vegetable and fruit, the more social. Consequently the most socialised groups are also the least natural and the most away from nature creates disharmony. After all, meat is something that can only be gained violently. The poet Shelley did believe that at one time there existed a state of nature, like that described in 'Xenia I', where humans were peaceful and healthy and ate only vegetables, fruit and nuts. This did not last however and Shelley asserted that the roots of all social problems led back to a socialised diet of cooked meat. He looked to the legend of Prometheus, who was doomed to torture and torment, and for him it symbolised the effects of cooking and how the move away from natural food brought only suffering and decay because it resulted in meat becoming a cultural commodity.

FROM THIS MOMENT HIS VITALS WERE DEVoured BY THE
VULTURE OF DISEASE. IT CONSUMED HIS BEING IN EVERY
SHAPE OF ITS LOATHSOME AND INFINITE VARIETY,
INDUCING THE SOUL-QUELLING SINKINGS OF PREMATURE
AND VIOLENT DEATH, ALL VICE AROSE FROM THE RUIN
OF HEALTHFUL INNOCENCE.
(17. p,p82-83)

As well as connecting meat to individual illness and social problems, Shelley also connected it to 'Tyranny, superstition, commerce and inequality'. (17. p83). Many painters of still life since those of the *xenia* have depicted meat as a commodity around which a system of commerce has been created. Some of the best examples of this are to be found in the paintings of Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer of the sixteenth century. There is a common thread running through works like Aertsen's 'Butchers' Stall' (Fig. 17) and Beuckelaer's 'The Well-stocked Kitchen (Christ in the House of Mary and Martha)' and 'Fishmarket: Christ Shown to the People' (Fig. 18). In each the foreground is dominated by slithering heaps of meat and fish which are either being sold (as in 'The Butchers Stall' and 'Fishmarket'). These commodities are being attended by butchers, fishmongers and cooks. The final common thread is the most surprising however, this being the inclusion in the background of each of a Biblical scene. Aertsen's painting includes the Flight into Egypt while Beuckelaer includes 'Christ in the House of Mary and Martha' and 'Christ shown in the People'. What is more surprising still is the extraordinary reversal of scale with the meat filling much of the foreground of each picture through which the Biblical figures, small and indistinct, can only be glimpsed. In each case the butchers and the cooks are unaware of the scene with the selling and preparation of the meat. Although these paintings were made through the eyes of class condescension for an upper class urban elite who considered people engaged in activities such as retail trade and cooking to be morally as well as socially inferior, it is still significant that it is the selling and preparation of meat that prevents these peoples access to the spiritual, which is symbolised here by the traditional Bible scenes.

Lamberts 'Still Lives' the Biblical scenes have disappeared but there remains the over-indulgence which this massacre for meat represents.

Lambert also shows that meat is a cultural commodity and that with each mark of the butchers knife we've served another link with nature. By distancing ourselves from other animals and then killing them for meat we are destroying nature.

WE'VE COME TO SEE ANIMALS AS A RESOURCE WHICH WE EXPLOIT, NOT AS OURSELVES BEING ANIMALS THAT ARE JUST PART OF THE EQUATION, WE KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS AND THE IMPACT IT HAS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE PLANET ... WE IGNORE OTHER ANIMALS AT OUR PERIL. WE DESTROY THE PLANET.

This is very similar to the idea communicated by the xenia of Philostatus but Lamberts aspirations go much further than this. The meat industry is larger and more powerful today than it ever has been, and it is to that situation that Lambert is responding.

WITH AN INDUSTRY THAT IS SO BIG IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THAT (THE CRUELTY) CAN BE CHANGED UNTIL PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE SKILL OF THE KILLING, THE SURPLUSES AND THE WASTE THAT IT PRODUCES ...ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN TO A BATTERY OF PIGS OR HENS AND IS UNMOVED BY IT AND CAN'T SEE THE CRUELTY, THEN WE'VE GOT BIG PROBLEMS.

It seems appropriate that to bring to light hidden aspects of the meat industry Lambert chose the medium of conventional still life painting. Still life has historically been concerned with creating a stage on which to display that which is not normally given attention. In his 1952 account of still life painting Charles Sterling made the distinction between 'megalography' and 'rhopography' (20. p27). Megalography is defined as the depiction of those worldly events which are of great importance such as the battles of heroes and the prices of history. Rhopography (from rhopos, meaning small wares and trivial objects) on the other hand is the depiction of that which lacks importance and is normally overlooked. It therefore follows that categories in art such as history-painting may be termed megalographic while still life is rhopographic. Still life has always focused attention on areas of experience which the human urge for greatness relegates to the shadows.

Its subjects include the domestic spaces where food is prepared, the contents of larders, things that are of the least importance in the world. As Norman Bryson asserts, 'sight is taken back to a vernal stage before it learned to scotomise the visual field, how to screen out the unimportance and not see, but scan'. (3. p65) In the majority of still lifes, as in Lamberts, the viewer is forced to discover in the trivial base of life the intensities which are normally ascribed to things of great worth. 'Still Lives' displays animals in their most levelled and base state yet they have been imbued with all the intensity of a Crucifixion. The mastery of paintwork turns these butchered carcasses into unheroic heroes in a space given over entirely to them.

By focusing attention downwards to a world of shadows and 'triviality' still life also assaults the prestige and authority of the human subject. The view of humanity which it proposes is one which is anonymous, undistinguished and creatural. There is no narrative of greatness in these paintings, instead there is a levelling of humanity as it is forced to examine the trail of its everyday existence, food, kitchen spaces and, in 'Still Lives' the callousness of the mass killing of animals for our consumption. Unlike the Crucifixion these joints of meat do not have individual names and have been crafted into specific cuts which will be infinitely repeated. They are the anonymous results of our own anonymous ferocity. There is no coherent narrative or explicit message, each image is just numbered, each butchered carcass is simply put on display. Lambert is also attacking human centrality on another deeper level however. He believes that we are the same as these animals that we casually butcher. We are not different to or above them, 'we are of the same stuff'. He believes that the boundaries which demarcate humans from animals is a fictive one which was created when we began to see animals as a resource (as happened in Xenia II) and therefore each carcass which Lambert displays is as much human as it is animal.

Lambert recognises that the cruelty perpetrated by the meat industry is allowed to continue because people have ceased to see the meat which they eat as 'once an animal in a field which has gone through the process of transportation, marts, castration and these things. They completely forget about death'. These still life paintings of meat force the viewer into a confrontation with the end result of a process which meat-eating makes necessary. Lambert has always concentrated on those who are outside the sphere of 'greatness'; the victim of the road accident the disabled, and his attempting to confront the cruelty to animals (who are most certainly outside the sphere of 'greatness' which has been claimed as human) within the conventions of a tradition which is essentially rhopographic is interesting. It is also highly problematic however.

Still life painting is very much about display. One has only to look at the luxurious still lifes of Willen Kalf to see the importance of display when depicting cultural commodities. When one thinks of meat as a commodity it becomes increasingly apparent that the elements of display used by Kalf in depicting collectable platters etc. were also adopted by those painters who depicted meat. In relation to both the presentation of meat and other depicted meat. In relation to both the presentation of meat and other commodities those very same conventions of display are being used today by the advertisers, calling to mind Berger's assertion that 'it is a mistake to think of publicity supplanting the visual art of post Renaissance Europe; it is the last moribund form of that art', (2. p139). Berger draws this conclusion from the fact that 'oil painting, before it was anything else, was a celebration of private property' (2. p139). This was more true of still life than any other form of painting as it is still life which records the progress of civilisation through the commodities which it produces.

This brings us to the realisation that Lambert has begun his exploration of the process by which a live animal is transformed into meat at one of the final stages. At this stage the animal has been killed, butchered and put on display. Lambert then displays meat, the commodity, as it had been displayed by the

butchers and as such he has presented it at a stage where they have asserted their control over it through the specific cuts which are the craft of butchery.

There is an entire aesthetics which surrounds meat as food which is consciously manipulated by those who sell and prepare it. The cuts which we see presented in 'Still Lives' were very deliberately crafted in order to conceal the animal origins of the carcasses and to make them look appetising and safely dead without any hint of decomposition and decay. Lambert is aware of the importance of cosmetics to the meat industry.

THE MEAT PROCESSORS ARE VERY CONSCIOUS OF THIS. I REMEMBER READING AN ARTICLE FROM THE INDUSTRY AND THEY TALKED ABOUT HOW PUBLIC AWARENESS WAS GROWING AND RATHER THAN PRESENTING STRATEGIES TO PREVENT THIS STRESS (TO THE ANIMALS) BECAUSE IT COLOURS THE MEAT AND MAKES IT NOT VERY AESTHETIC, THEY OFFERED STRATEGIES WHICH HAD TO DO WITH COSMETICS. THEY WANTED TO MAKE THE MEAT LOOK BETTER INSTEAD OF TACKLING THE UNDERLYING CRUELTY THAT IS INVOLVED.

It is Lambert's ambition to show the ^menormous underlying cruelty which is involved in meat production. It remains a fact however that the meat which he displays here has been cosmeticised. (although not as much as that which is tightly packed in conscious-free cling film in the Supermarkets) and therefore part of the story has been concealed.

It is interesting to look at the public's reaction to an exhibition of this nature, which in this case were extreme.

THERE WERE TWO REACTIONS WHEN WE HUNG THE EXHIBITION AND PEOPLE CAME IN OFF THE STREET TO SEE IT. SOME TURNED ON THEIR HEELS WITHOUT GOING AROUND THE SHOW AND LEFT ... INITIALLY I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED WITH THAT BUT OTHER PEOPLE, USUALLY PEOPLE WHO LIKE PAINTING, STAYED AND LOOKED. THERE WERE VERY STRONG REACTIONS ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

Lambert believes that the negative reaction was instigated by the painting's dissolution of the human/animal boundaries, 'we are of the same stuff and I think that did touch people, hence the reaction of the people turning on their heels and walking out, I think was the reason.' 'Still Lives' do convincingly convey the idea that human and animal pain are one and they express that pain passionately and on a grand scale. One is reminded of Goya, whom Lambert speaks of as being especially influenced by, and his paintings of meat which Sterling described as 'the first expressionist still life', (20. p121). He drew this conclusion from the way in which:

THESE JOINTS OF MEAT ... MOVE US TO THE
 VERY DEPTHS OF OUR PHYSICAL BEING ... AT
 THE SIGHT OF THESE PAINTINGS, SEEMINGLY
 SO SIMPLE AND FACILE IN THEIR REALISM,
 WE ARE FILLED WITH A VAGUE UNEASINESS ...
 THESE REACTIONS ARE INDUCED ... SOLELY
 IN THE TEXTURAL QUALITY OF THE PAINTING
 ITSELF, BY THE ALMOST PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT
 OF COLOUR AND BRUSHWORK.
 (20. p121). (Fig.19).

'Still Lives' are expressionistic in the same way the paintings of Goya are. They convey emotion not through romantic idealisation or through the excesses of twentieth century expressionism (which Lambert particularly wanted to avoid) but through their understated realism and the psychological qualities of both composition and brushwork. They convey emotion, they significantly challenge the human/animal boundary and they present us with the results of our ferocity. These results have been cosmeticised by the meat industry however and therefore Lambert's images have been very affected by aesthetic values which are consciously manipulated to hide the cruelty. Lambert recognises this failure however and his original aspirations have remained intact. 'Being crafted. This is a personal failure. The paintings that I wanted to do were in the ab^batoir, but I haven't made it work.' Although he wished for this exhibition to contain images from the ab^batoir, the only paintings that worked were from the butcher's shop.

IT WAS THE NEXT STAGE, THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE OF CRUELTY, CALLOUSNESS AND KILLING THAT I WAS INTERESTED IN BUT I COULDN'T COME UP WITH AN IMAGE WITHOUT GOING OVER THE TOP. IT'S SOMETHING I STILL HAVE TO WORK WITH.

Each one of these joints of meat were crafted in a way which was entirely outside Lambert's control and although he composed and painted them in a way which highlighted things which normally go unseen, these images could still not entirely overcome the cosmeticising which had been imposed on them. They cannot show the actual cruelty which is involved in the killing of an animal but he has passionately stilled the world of butchery for our inspection. If indeed this is the first stage of his exploration of the various stages involved in killing for meat then he has achieved considerably more, in spite of the failures, than may be apparent presently. In these still life paintings, he has successfully confronted us with the stage of the process at which we ourselves become involved in the killing by buying these commodities which have been butchered on our behalf. It is therefore the stage where we must red-handedly accept our involvement.

CONCLUSION

When viewed as a whole Gene Lambert's work of the last ten years can indeed be compared to the expanding circle thesis which recognises a historical process of moral enfranchisement of classes and categories of life decreasingly similar to the white male bourgeoisie. In Lambert's case this process began with the road accident of 1981 and the subsequent 'Work from a Ward' paintings. These images of the artist's gaze extending down the length of his own wounded body in traction and the process of rehabilitation which the artist went through during the next two years were in many ways a starting point. He had to come to terms with chronic pain, learn how to walk, to wash, to dress and all the other skills which he had previously taken for granted. 'I was trying to come to terms with learning how to live - to dress, to cook, to work - the techniques of basic living'. (45. p23). He then extended this fundamental reassessment of living to the practice of his art.

Having achieved a level of self-understanding with regards to his own disability, he now had to come to terms with his changed position within society. As a disabled person he saw that he was treated differently, finding that 'a general attitude to handicapped people is to perceive them as either geniuses or morons' (27. pX). His reaction to this was the 'Work from a Dark Room' exhibition. The accident also resulted in his questioning the male values which he had been learning since he was a boy and seeing how ridiculous it is'. With 'The Land of Punt' he resisted the lie he had previously believed and became a traitor to male supremacy. His work is a spiral by which moral consideration is extended outwards towards categories of life which have historically been rejected from that consideration; the disabled, travellers, women and with 'Still Lives', animals. This echoes his assertion that 'People matter ... no matter how damaged, as long as they're alive ... no matter what the difference'.

In his work Lambert considers passionately the situation of those who do not strive for domination and coercion but are rather its victim. He now gives indication that in the future this extending of moral consideration may reach even further; to the natural environment. He talks about our seeing 'animals as a resource which we exploit, not as ourselves being animals that are just a part of the equation', and 'the consequences of this and the impact it has on the environment and the planet.. We ignore other animals at our peril and thereby destroy the planet.' There is much evidence to suggest that the current green revolution which Lambert describes as 'an interesting phenomena where people are not only concerned for the products but ... with how they are made and the impact and the real costs of the product', is incompatible with meat eating. In both economic and energy terms the meat industry is responsible for a criminal wastage which is almost impossible to comprehend and which the planet simply cannot sustain. Peter Cox, for example, compares the energy used in modern oat or potatoe production to that used in beef production and finds that:

FOR EVERY ONE CALORIE OF FOSSIL FUEL
EXPENDED, OATS PRODUCE 2.47 FOOD CALORIES
AND POTATOES PRODUCE 2.18 CALORIES. BUT
BEEF ONLY RETURNS 0.03 OF A CALORIE - IT
ACTUALLY LOSES 97% OF THE ENERGY THAT'S
PUT IN.
(6. p196).

The meat industry ignores nature, however, just as carnivorous humans also ignore nature. According to Lambert we are ignoring the fact that 'we are of the same stuff' as animals and this is what he wanted to convey in 'Still Lives'. The iconography of meat in art is significant exactly because it challenges the boundaries which human history has created between ourselves, other animals and therefore nature as a whole. It challenges the idealistic dissection which humans practice on themselves by presenting us with signs of our own ferocity and cruelty. It questions the quarantine which hides our killing from sight, this being a result of our inability to confront our ugliness.

This has never truly been the case however. By depicting the actual objects of material culture, which are as much the product of cultural and historical pressures as wars and revolutions, 'the culture of the table displays a rapid, volatile receptivity to its surrounding culture in the mode of inflecting its fundamental forms' (3. p13). This has been the case from the Roman Xenia of Philostratus which described the progress of civilisation away from nature, the luxurious still lives of Kalf which conveyed the abundance of an affluent society, to Lamberts paintings which show the outcome of the civilizing process of the Xenia.

As commodities these joints of meat have been cosmeticised to disguise their origins as once live animals and to try to hide 'the marks of anxiety' which 'is clear on their carcasses '. It is at this point that the paintings fail and Lambert recognises this as failure. He wanted to make paintings from the abbatoirs which showed the actual cruelty and callousness of the killings. The degree of this failure must be examined however because on other levels these paintings are successful. They successfully convey the message of our being 'of the same stuff' as animals. They successfully explore one specific area, that of meat as a commodity, and one particular stage of the process by which a live animal is killed, butchered and turned into that commodity. They show the stage at which the viewer directly becomes involved in the process, i.e. the buying of meat. If 'Still Lives' does not show the callousness (which they do not successfully) then perhaps it is because this is simply not the whole story and although he started near the end it must be remembered that it is impossible to achieve everything all at once.

Lambert now wants to work backwards and to make the paintings that he originally intended to make. He wants to move back to the abbatoirs and to the field. He recently moved to the countryside, Co. Kilkenny, and is now experiencing nature at first hand. 'My view of nature isn't sentimental but there is a hell of a lot of cruelty'. This experience may be vital as he is now attempting to describe the life the animal had before it was reduced to that joint of meat.

Lamberts paintings echo the Crucifixion exactly because they not only confront us with our demands for slaughter but also for sacrifice, both of which are intrinsically linked. Bataille makes the point that slaughter and sacrifice were once part of the same act and actually happened in the same place.

THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE RISES OUT OF RELIGION IN THE SENSE THAT THE TEMPLE OF DISTANT EPOCHS SERVED A DOUBLE FUNCTION, BEING USED AT THE SAME TIME FOR SUPPLICATION AND KILLINGS. FROM THIS RESULTS A DISTURBING COINCIDENCE BETWEEN MYTHOLOGICAL MYSTERIES AND THE LUGUBRIOUS GRANDEUR OF PLACES WHERE BLOOD FLOWS.
(32. p18)

We avert our eyes from the slaughterhouse and meat has been turned into a commodity which has its origins disguised. By painting the commodity however Lambert has imbued it once more with 'lugubrious grandeur' by expressing through each carcass or fish intense feeling of pain, compassion, dignity and fear which are not species specific. Animal pain is as real and as valid as human pain and 'Still Lives' imbues the killing of a helpless animal with all the grandeur of a Crucifixion. The paintings effectively dissolve the human/animal boundary and return us to the realisation that we are implicated in this chain of destruction and could just as easily be its victim.

Lamberts work is fundamentally about using art to see the world more clearly. Having himself being wounded and having been so close to death has made him very much aware of our own mortality and this indeed provides the impetus which makes him so eager to question the human condition. His art is not a silent one. It is confrontational on a very deep level in that it confronts basic elements, whether they be sexist, idealist, or speciist, which create the 'ordered surfaces and all the planes we are accustomed to' (11. pXV). His latest assault 'Still Lives' are part of the tradition of still life, which has itself attracted claims of being a silent art, 'always at the bottom of the hierarchy, unworthy of the kind of superior attention reserved for history painting or the grand maniere' (3. p8).

In making this full circle of life and death of animals he will have predecessors. Soutine, who also painted still lifes of meat for many years, finally moved to the animal itself in its natural living conditions, making what Esti Dunow called 'an evolution in animal imagery' (25. p94). There is also Millet's 'Death of a Pig' which Kenneth Clarke described as 'almost the only great picture of an animal being slaughtered' (5. p60). This is the companion picture to his 'Birth of a Calf'. We are filled with horror and love as we slowly realise that this beautiful calf, the Mother following licking her baby, will probably share the fate of the pig and die violently at the hands of men. This is the reality about which we choose to forget, but today we have made a multi-million pound industry out of it. In 'Still Lives' Lambert confronts us with the results of our institutionalised ferocity but there is still a long story to be told, 'people cease to see this as once an animal in a field which has gone through the process of transportation, marts, castration and these things. They completely forget about death!'. It now seems inevitable that this is not the end, but the beginning for both writer and artist alike.

Notes

Introduction

1. In all cases. ^aaprt from where it is otherwise stated, all the quotations from Gene Lambert in this thesis come from the interview I conducted with him in the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, on December 3rd 1991.

Chapter One - Seeing Things

2. This questioning of the actual existence in nature of either human 'male' or human 'female' as fixed and discrete entities can be traced back to the theories of the American feminist Andrea Dworkin. In 1974 Dworkin assorted that:

THE DISCOVERY IS, OF COURSE, THAT 'MAN' AND 'WOMAN' ARE FICTIONS, CHARACTURES, CULTURAL CONSTRUCTS. AS MODELS THEY ARE REDUCTIVE, TOTALITARIAN, INAPPROPRIATE TO HUMAN BECOMING. AS ROLES THEY ARE STATIC DEMEANING TO THE FEMALE, DEAD-ENDED FOR MALE AND FEMALE BOTH.
(8. p174)

The conclusion drawn from this seems a logical one

WE ARE, CLEARLY, A MULI SEXED SPECIES WHICH HAS ITS SEXUALITY SPREAD ALONG A VAST CONTINUUM WHERE THE ELEMENTS CALLED MALE AND FEMALE ARE NOT DISCRETE.
(8. p183)

Chapter Two - Killing

1. The story be Borge to which Foucault has refering invented a taxonomy of animals including such catagories as 'enbalmed' and 'fabulous'. Foucault observed that he laughed at Borges list but without really getting the joke because what 'is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking that'. (11. pXV)

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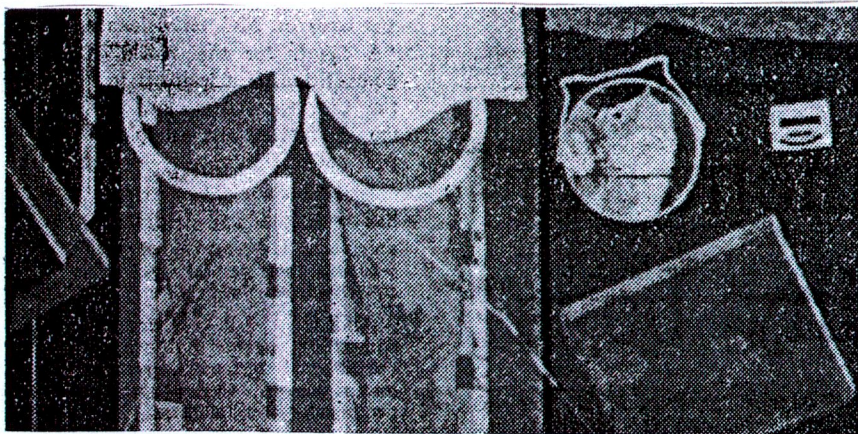
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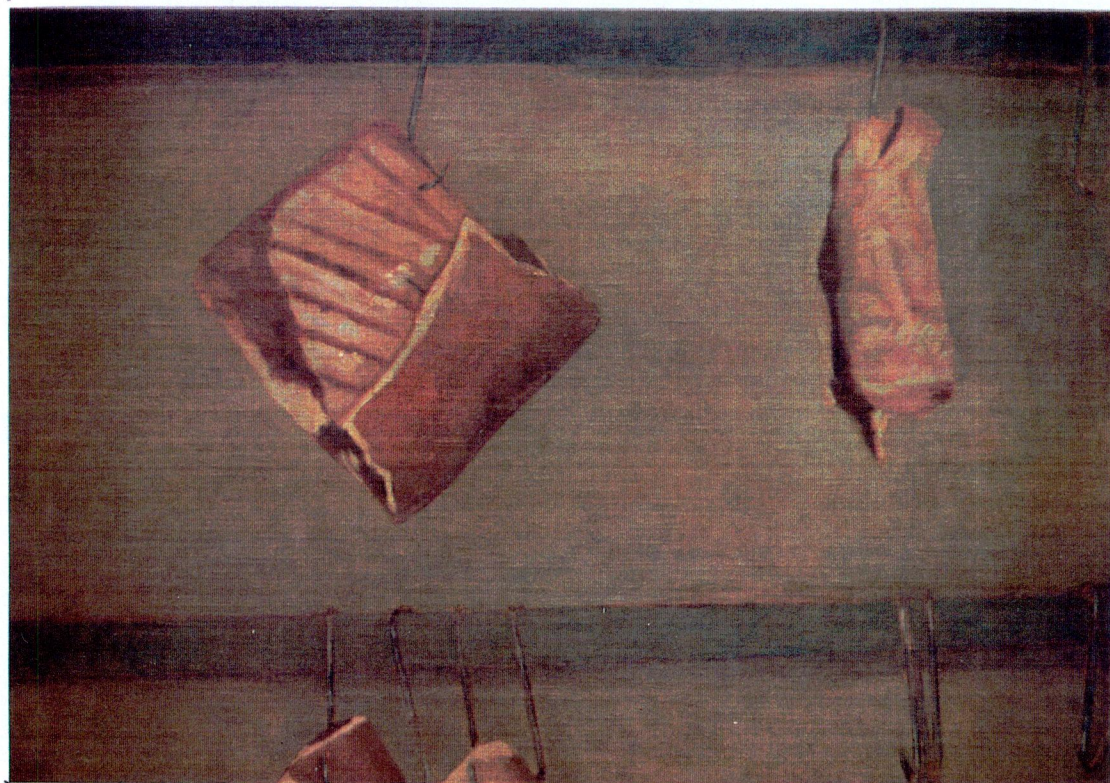
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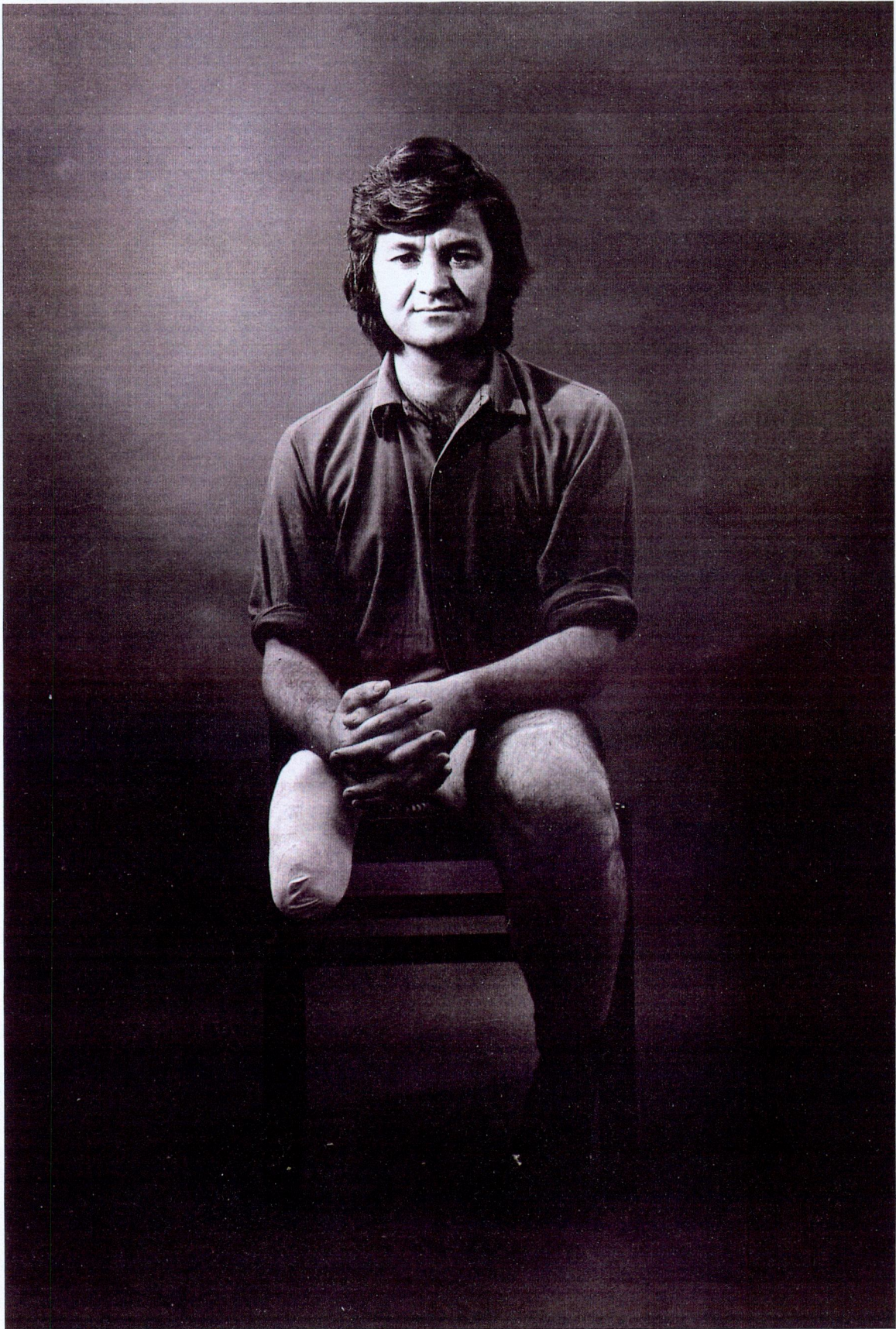
200. 1940. 0001



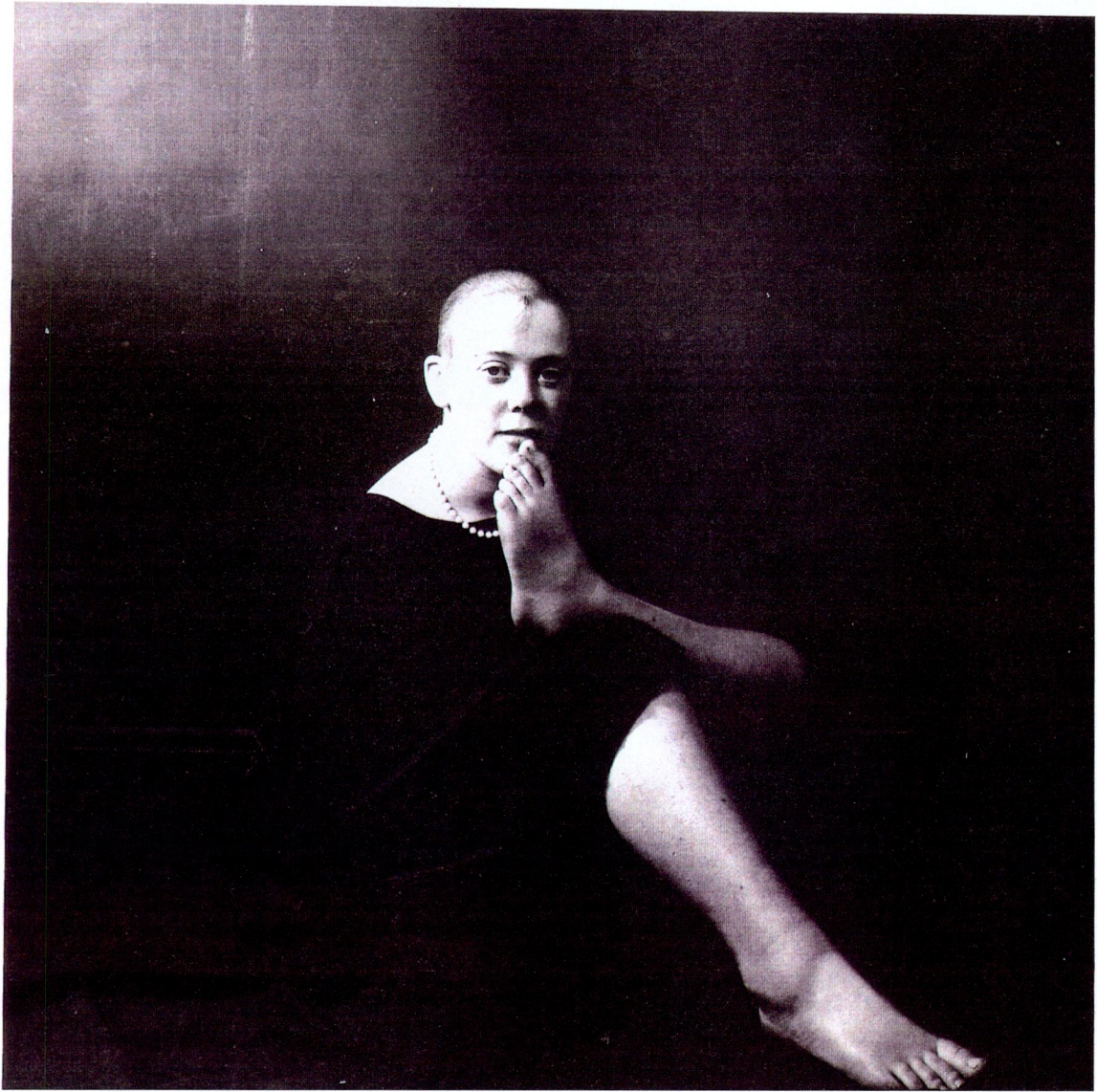
1. Gene Lambert, 'Work from a Ward,' 1981.



2. Gene Lambert, 'Still Lives No.6,' (detail), 1991



3. Gene Lambert, 'Philip (Work from a Dark Room)', 1986.



4. Gene Lambert, 'Mary (Work from a Dark Room)', 1986.



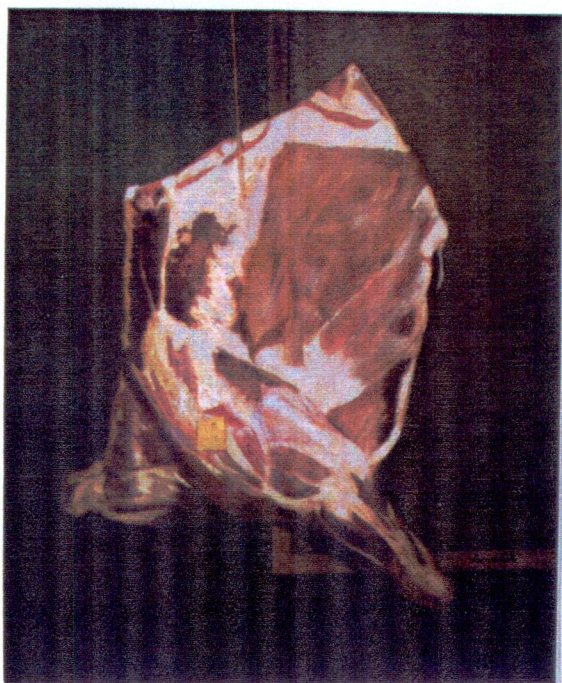
5. Gene Lambert, 'A Pair of Legs,' 1988



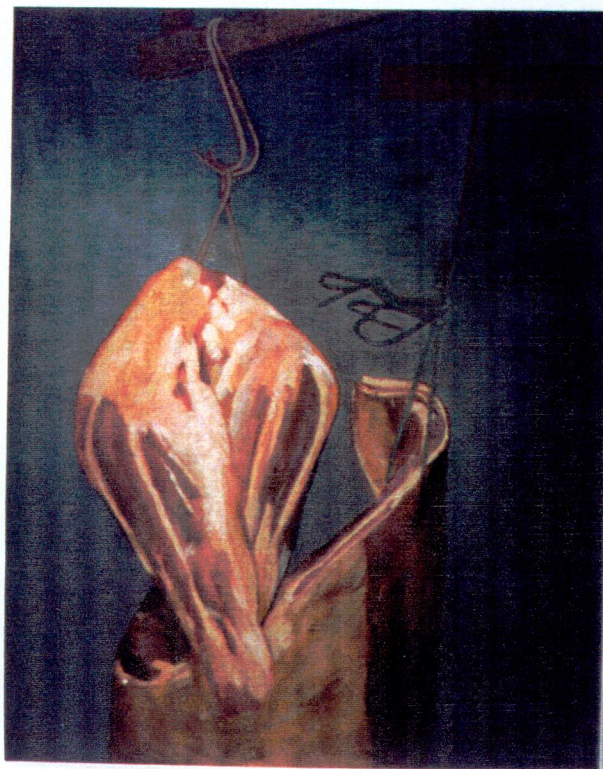
6. Gene Lambert, 'Crucifixion,' 1988.



7. Gene Lambert, 'Still Lives No.1', 1991.



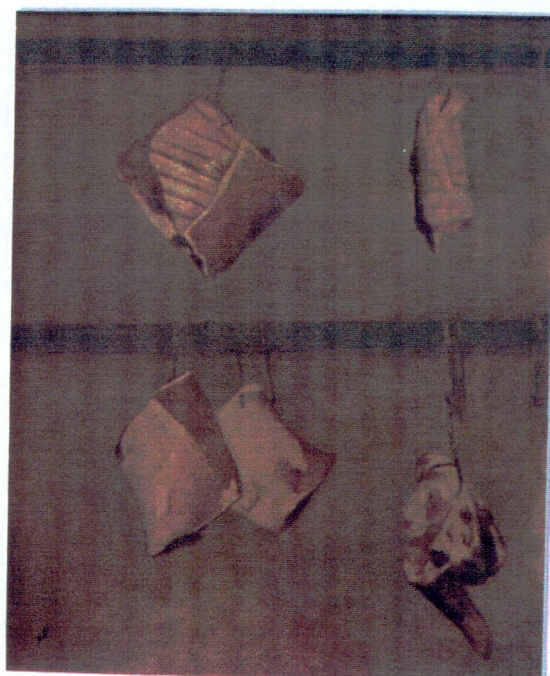
8. Gene Lambert, 'Still Lives No. 7, 1991.



9. Gene Lambert, 'Still Lives No. 10, 1991.



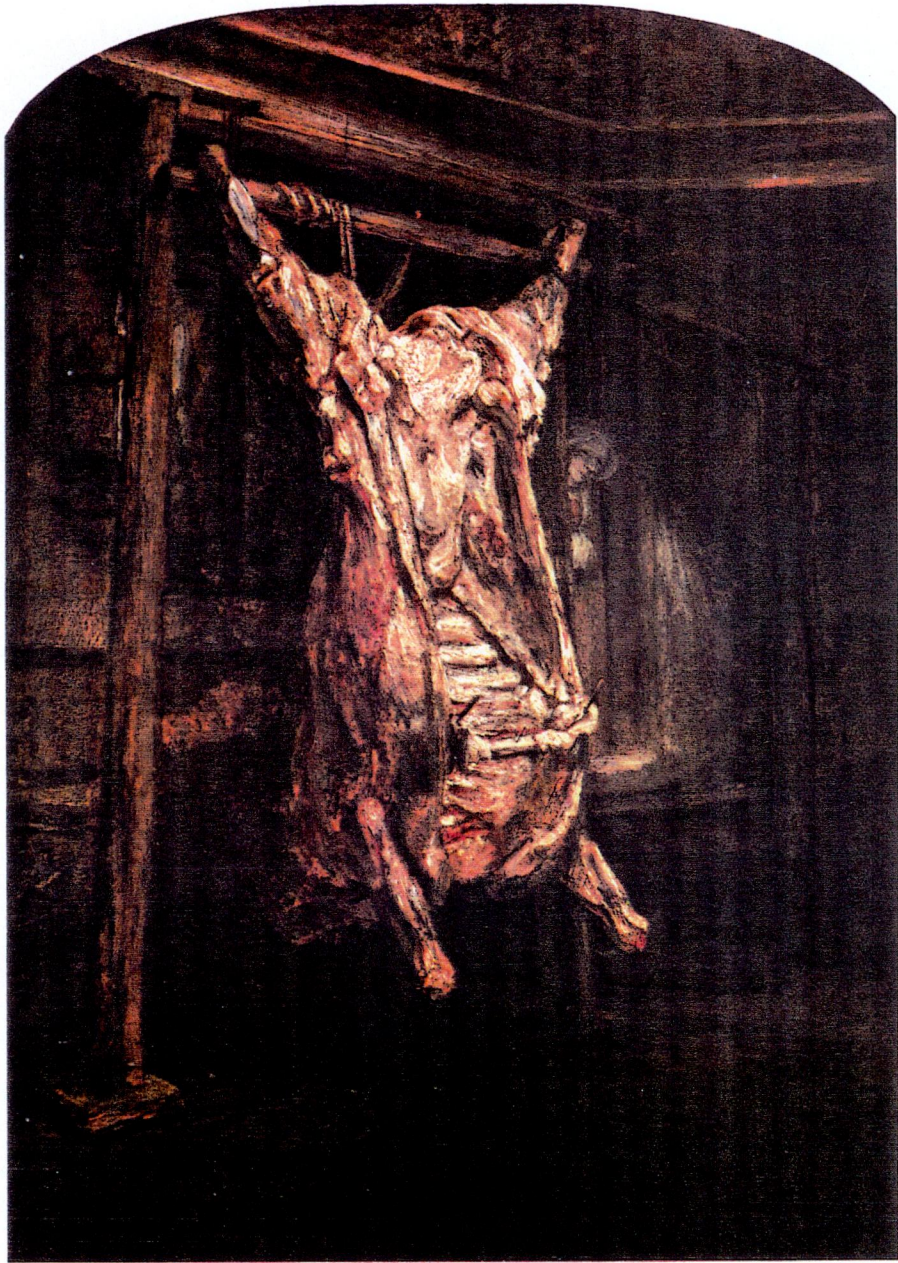
10. Gene Lambert, 'Still Lives No. 15, 1991.



11. Gene Lambert, 'Still Lives No. 6, 1991.



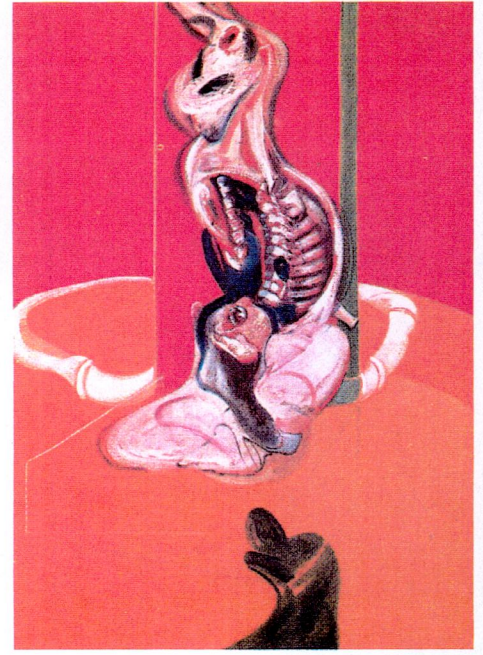
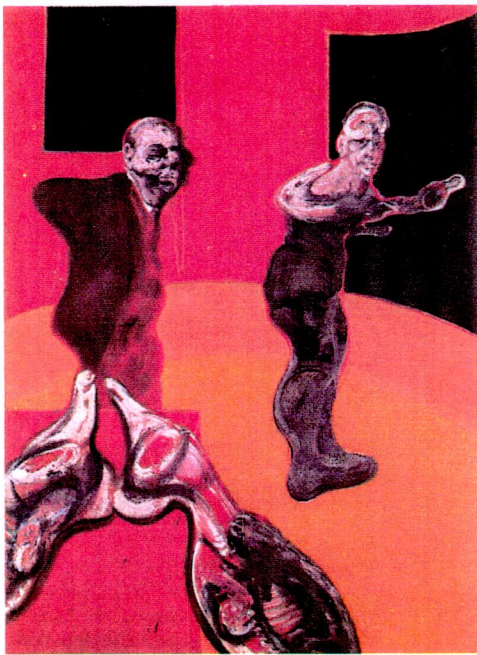
12. Théodore Géricault (1791–1824). *Study of Two Severed Arms and a Leg*. c. 1818.
Oil on canvas, 1'8½" × 2'1¼".
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon.



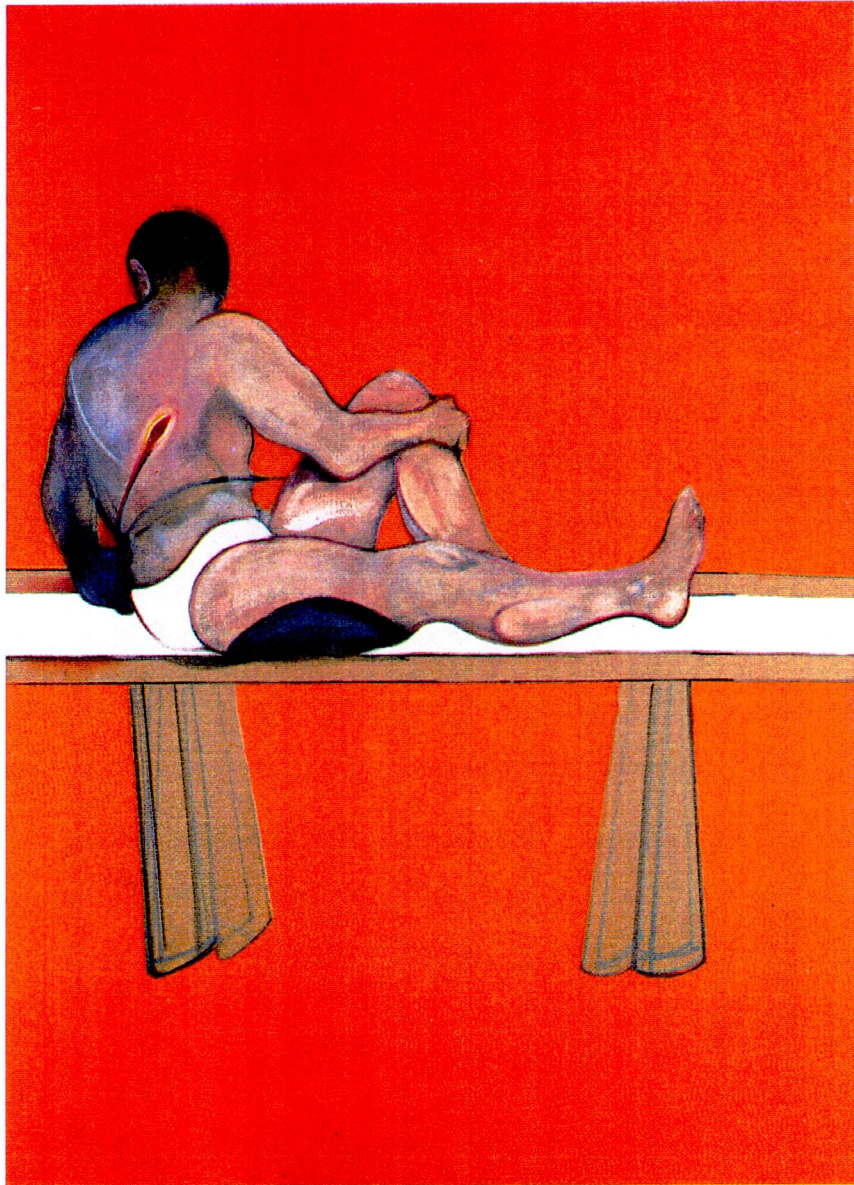
13. *The slaughtered Ox.* 1655



14. Francis Bacon, 'Painting 1946', 1946.



15. Francis Bacon, 'Three Studies for a Crucifixion,' 1962.



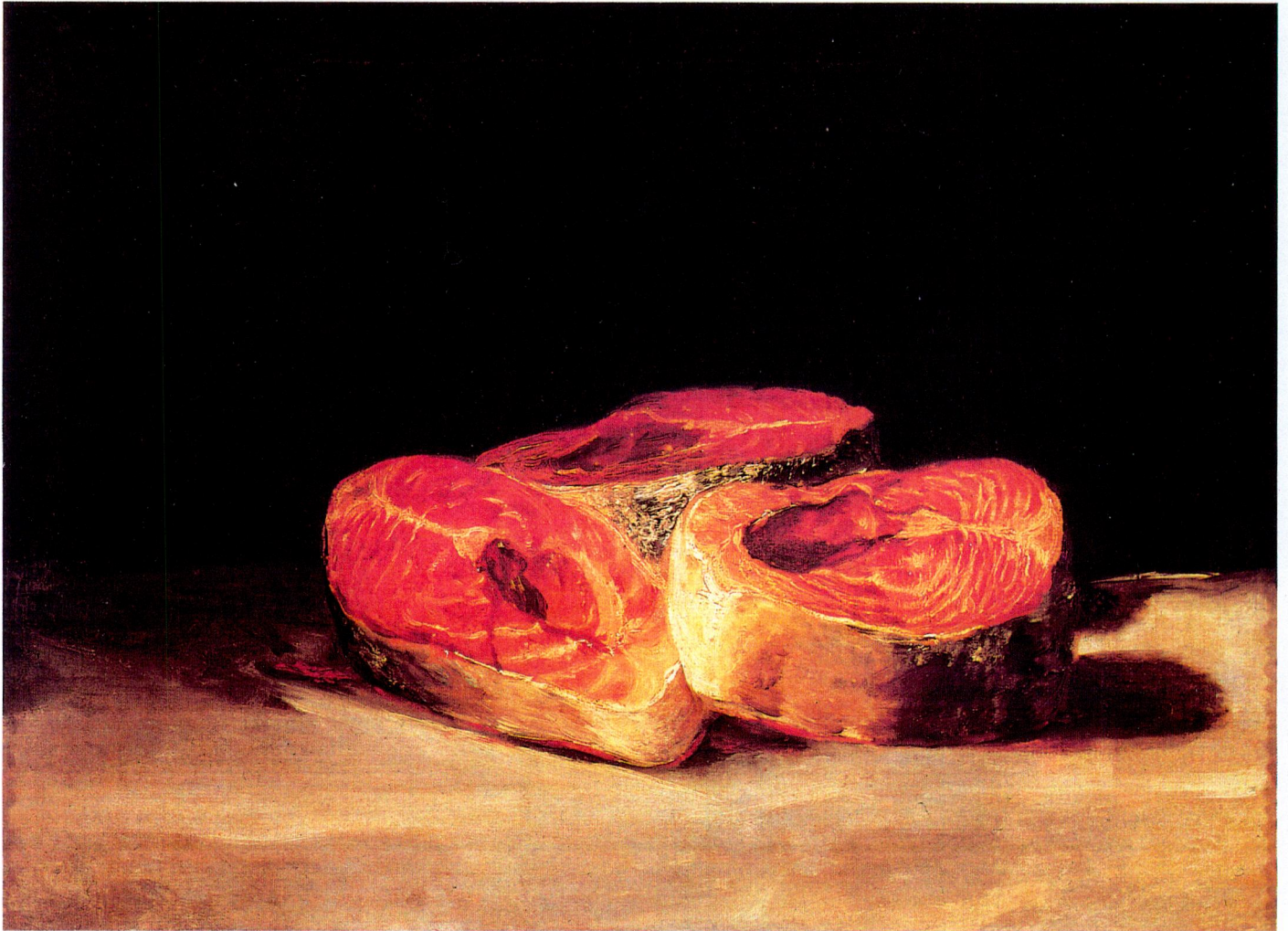
16. Francis Bacon, 'Studies for the Human Body,' (left panel), 1979.



17. Pieter Aertsen, 'The Butchers Stall,' 1551.



18. Joachim Beuckelaer, 'The Well-stocked kitchen (Christ in the House of Mary and Martha)', 1566.



19. Francisco de Goya (1746-1828): Still Life with Salmon, 1808-1812.



20. Jean Francois Millet, 'Death of a Pig,' 1869.

