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MICHAEL ANDREWS: MYSTERIOUS CONVENTIONALITY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE THINGS ABOUT
MICHAEL ANDREWS HAS OFTEN SEEMED TO BE
THE FACT THAT, IN DISTINCTION FROM ALMOST
ANY OTHER PAINTER OF THE DAY....HE PAINTS
HARDLY ANYTHING BUT MASTERPIECES.

Sir Lawrence Gowing, 1981 (15. p18)

A family sitting down to tea in their garden, party scenes set in nightclubs and night resorts, the shadow of a hot air balloon moving across an empty beach, the artist and his daughter swimming while on holiday, if only a verbal description of Michael Andrews' work existed then this would probably evoke the wrong impression. It would not prepare one for the invention, both in paint and image, which pervades these paintings. One would not be prepared for the complex symbolism, acute sense of selfhood and, above all, the way in which emotion is conveyed while the medium of its conveyance is hidden.

Michael Andrews' subject matter has remained entirely conventional throughout his career. Along with painters like Lucien Freud, Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff, he is part of a British tradition of figurative painting which has persisted in the face of the avant-garde throughout this century. This modern tradition has its immediate roots in the work of Walter Sickert and William Coldstream both of whom have had an enormous impact on Andrews. The development of modern techniques of recording visual information posed a threat to the validity of painting yet these artists have invested traditional themes with a new life and purpose. They maintain that there are some areas of the human nervous system which can be communicated to most forcefully through perceiving paintings. This is precisely why one would not understand the relevance of Andrews' work or the significance these themes might have for a contemporary artist and his audience by a mere description of what he chooses to paint.

In 1960 Andrews wrote of 'mysterious conventionality' (7. p189) a type of art in which those increasingly few painters who still wished to represent the very complex traditional subjects could evolve new purposes and approaches. Human inventiveness of the twentieth century changed the world in many ways and if painting was to survive it would have to respond to these changes. This is exactly what Andrews has done. 'Mysterious conventionality' has surfaced in the art of many recent figurative painters and indeed would appear to be a very necessary component to twentieth century realism. It is a method by which idea and technique become inseparable. In 1953 Francis Bacon highlighted this in the work of Matthew Smith.

HERE THE BRUSHSTROKE CREATES THE FORM AND DOES NOT MERELY FILL IT IN. CONSEQUENTLY, EVERY MOVEMENT OF THE BRUSH ON THE CANVAS ALTERS THE SHAPE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE IMAGE. THAT IS WHY REAL PAINTING IS A MYSTERIOUS AND CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE WITH CHANCE - MYSTERIOUS BECAUSE THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF THE PAINT, WHEN USED IN THIS WAY CAN MAKE SUCH A DIRECT ASSAULT UPON THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. (27. p12)

Andrews maintains a hair's breadth between the reality and its translation into acrylic or watercolour. He describes appearances accurately while subjecting them to a kind of astonished scrutiny, which conveys the mystery inherent in the very act of seeing. Andrews work has a mysterious element exactly because his preoccupations are with painting which is non-illustrational and makes an immediate impact on the nervous system. The forms are always recognisable and conventional but they are the product of this 'mysterious and continuous struggle with chance'. This is a struggle to capture the reverberations from within the appearance. In the act of painting he attempts to create a form which will convey the appearance alongside the complex nexus of feelings and suggestions which are implicit in the subject. For Andrews, therefore, 'Mysterious' refers to the creation of an atmosphere which suggests that which is visible to the eye.

Sir John Rotherstein has said of Michael Andrews that 'None is so elusive as he. Somebody once wrote that he was in danger of being taken for a rumour rather than a person' (1). He is certainly one of the most imaginative and innovative contemporary painters and yet he remains highly elusive and paradoxically relatively little has been written about him. He shuns public occasions and sees even friends comparatively rarely. He also shuns publicity. His work also does not command the widespread appreciation which it so thoroughly deserves. This is mainly due to the fact that, in comparison to other major artists, he exhibits quite frequently. Important works such as the 1964 triptych All Night Long (fig. 5), was only briefly seen in Britain before being bought by the Felton Bequest for the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. He has only had one retrospective exhibition, in 1980, and his last exhibition 'The Delectable Mountain' at the White Chapel Art Gallery in London last year was the first show to be arranged in a British public gallery since that retrospective. It is the first time that the paintings will be shown in any great depth abroad. It is also the first time that Andrews' Australian paintings were to be seen in the same space, the original exhibition in 1986 having only included five of the nine paintings. This exhibition is also important because it is the first time that these paintings were viewed in conjunction with any of Andrews' other work. The Australian paintings are placed between Lights 1: 'Out of Doors' from the series of the early 1970's and the most recent work 'A View from Uam Var' of 1991.

Another reason for Andrews having failed to reach a wider audience is that his rate of work does not suit the gallery system. He works meticulously slowly, paying tremendous attention to observable detail and producing at most two or three big paintings a year. He also works on smaller pieces but he considers these as experiments rather than works in themselves. This is because each painting is a clarified expression of some deeply felt personal experience.

He is certainly one of the most important artists currently working in the figurative tradition yet one might not realise this from the amount that has been written about him or how much his paintings have been seen. He has examined the world in great focus, often against the waves of current artistic fashion and has produced paintings which possess the endurance of their forbearers. This essay hopes to throw light on an artist whose work has too frequently remained in the shadows.

CHAPTER ONE

RE-INVENTING REALISM, A BRITISH TRADITION

AS THE TECHNIQUES OF THE CINEMA AND
ALL FORMS OF RECORDING BECOME BETTER AND
BETTER, SO THE PAINTER HAS TO BE MORE
AND MORE INVENTIVE, HE HAS TO RE-INVENT
REALISM.

Francis Bacon, 1982 (10. p176)

Francis Bacon's commentary on the state of realism in painting made towards the latter half of the twentieth century is very telling. Michael Andrews is a painter working in the British realist tradition. His working life dates back to the middle of the century (1946 to be exact, when he was accepted to the slade as a student of painting) and because of this he soaked up many important influences from the beginning of the century, in particular that of Coldstream who arrived then also to guide the school through one of the most productive periods in its history.

Coldstream believed that art education should specialise in training observational skills in drawing and painting. Michael Andrews' attentive eye for assimilating visual information was stimulated by Coldstream who's career as a teacher was very influential. Coldstream and the artists whom he influenced are predominantly interested in exploring the very complex feelings which surround the act of seeing and the most specific feelings which exist behind each visual appearance.

In much of Andrews work there is a penetrating quality of silence and composure as in 'The Family in the Garden' (Fig. 2) of 1962. This is also a pervading element in the art of Coldstream. In this painting which is very controlled and deliberate Coldstream's direct linear quality and thinness of paint is particularly apparant. The figures are removed from the real world to enable the painter to freely work on them. On a formal level this operation is an essential element^{to} subsequent rehearsals (traces of which will remain in the work) and final performace.

It also helps break down the narrative element which is especially difficult to achieve in the case of Andrews painting which contains five figures as apposed to perhaps Bacon who usually limits each canvas to one figure. The seperation of the figure from the real world in most of the many painters of the 'School of London'.

In conversation with David Sylvester, Bacon explained that the moment a number of figures became involved,

YOU IMMEDIATELY COME ON TO THE STORY-TELLING
ASPECT OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FIGURES,
AND THAT IMMEDIATELY SETS UP A KIND OF
NARRATIVE
(10. p63)

It has only been on a very few occasions that Bacon has achieved this. Lucian Freud accomplished this in 'Large Interior, W. II (after Watteau)' (Fig. 20).

A more conventional theme would be hard to be imagine than that explored in Andrews' 'The Family in the Garden' (Fig. 2). The painting has all the elements of a 'conversation piece', yet Andrews skillfully avoids this and portrays something much more extreme. The figures look neither at each other nor at the viewer, each are locked in their own silent space. Psychological relationships are hinted at but are not explicit. By these means the element of storytelling is expelled and illustration avoided. Since the advent of photography the role of the painter as 'illustrator' has lapsed and the painter of forms must do something more if his art is to be considered valid. Andrews is very aware of this. From his original intention to record his family he has mysteriously uncovered qualities of feeling and tension which lie beneath the superficial appearance^a of five people seated in a garden. He confronts the relationship between the individuals yet they all remain individually seperate and there is no narrative. He creates an artifical structure in which he captures the reality behind the appearance of each person.

Michael Andrews is commonly grouped along with the 'School of London'. These painters share a number of aims which were briefly summarised by Bacon as follows,

WHEN YOU'RE OUTSIDE A TRADITION, AS EVERY
ARTIST IS TODAY, ONE CAN ONLY WANT TO RECORD
ONES OWN FEELINGS ABOUT CERTAIN SITUATIONS AS
CLOSELY TO ONES OWN NERVOUS SYSTEM AS ONE
POSSIBLY CAN. (10. p43)

This statement of Bacon's is very similar to the one made by Andrews in his Notes and Preoccupations (Volume 1, 1952-62) when he wrote by themselves the two words 'Mysterious Conventionality'. The 'School of London' painters have very much in common: an adherence to the great subjects which are the stock of traditional realism. They all use conventional means to represent such conventional themes as portrature, family groups, still life etc. The fact cannot be missed however that traditional realism has exhausted many of its potentialities, and that, as we have seen the advent of photography and other recording techniques have emptied realism of much of the magic and meaning it held in previous centuries. This leaves the twentieth century realist facing a peculiar problem - the problem of reinventing realism to create a form of expression that can be valid in the age of photography and the avant-garde.

This element of tradition is deliberately and often provocatively used, Sometimes to the extent of reworking Old Masters. Auerbach has made a series of drawings and paintings based on Titans Bacchus and Ariande and Tarquin and Lucrece, Kossoff has painted studies from Cephalus and Aurora by Poussin while the best known of such exploration and continuation of images is Bacon's use of a Portrait of Pope Innocent X by Velazquez. For 'The Deer Park' (Fig. 3) Andrews adapted 'Boar Hunt' by Velazquez for the view of a vast park. Bacon like Andrews makes explicit use of literature in his paintings with references for example in titles to Aeschylus and T. S. Elliot. Andrews' 'August for the People' 1951 was entitled after a poem by W. H. Auden. He is commonly influenced by and refers to literary works in his art.

Bacon rarely paints directly from life but by preference from memory and from photographs. By contrast Freud paints only in the presence of the model, who is also well known to him. Andrews' approach has fluctuated over the years but has increasingly become more in favour of using photography as a main source of information gathering. For 'August for the People' he made sketches in Norfolk but the painting was not descriptive of any one place or individual but from reimagined memory.

Andrews' use of paint is usually thin and exact, however his approach to the 1959 Digswell Man was very out of character compared to the rest of his work in that the style was more similar to that of Auebrach or Kossoff. The two large boards were loaded with paint in order to adopt a method of making progressive corrections which was borrowed from the post-Impressionists. The figure presented is of a retarded man Andrews passed daily and sometimes talked to. These meetings were recalled in his studio. Like Kossoff's figures a thick impasto of paint was modified to define this enduring figure. 'The Digswell man' echoes Kossoff's figures as both are presented as landmarks of survival. Kossoff's portraits of his parents and other family members voice a whole heritage of oppression experienced by his family through being Russian Jews. In 'The Family in the Garden' (Fig. 2) Andrews creates an atmosphere which voices his families history together. Where Kossoff's painting is predominantly about suppressed feelings and faltering communication, it shows how a group of people who are physically close can be very distant emotionally.

In every past century artists have assimilated past practises in art and reassessed these virtues to create their own language and make individual contribution to the streamline of tradition. In 'The Family in the Garden' (Fig. 2) Andrews combines Sickerts use of photography and Coldstream's approach to drawing from life.

This painting conveys the theme of the frailty of moments of love and trust between generations which is also highlighted in 'Melanie and Me Swimming' (Fig. 14) 1978-79.

Sickert's most lasting influence on Andrews has been in the use of photography. Sickert has commented,

A PHOTOGRAPH IS THE MOST PRECIOUS DOCUMENT
OBTAINABLE BY A SCULPTOR, A PAINTER OR A
DRAUGHTSMAN TO FORBID THE ARTIST THE USE
OF AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS, OF WHICH THE PHOTOGRAPH
IS THE MOST VALUABLE, IS TO DENY TO A HISTORIAN
THE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY SHORTHAND REPORTS.
(24)

Sickert based his paintings largely from photographs derived from newspapers, magazines and film stills. This approach has been adopted by many subsequent British realists, of whom Michael Andrews is one.

Andrews does not illustrate the photographs but uses them as a focal point or structure which he translates into paint. Although his training under Coldstream at the Slade laid emphasis on the recording of fact through direct observation and the methodical building of the paint on canvas, Andrews soon found that photography suited his needs to gather a broad spectrum of information quickly.

The starting point for Andrews is always with a visual fact and in the working process he defies any limitations which this discipline might impose. He goes beyond the fact only to make it more real in paint, about which Andrews comments in 'Notes and Preoccupations':

THE PAINTING EPISODE IS THE REAL SITUATION
IMAGINED, RE-ENACTED AND REHEARSED UNTIL ITS
PERFORMANCE IS THE BEST POSSIBLE.
(2. p80)

This desire to explore 'the real situation imagined',^{and} to translate that situation into paint which at the final 'performance' returns one more forcefully to that visual fact is something which Andrews holds particularly in common with the other artists of the 'School of London'. This is comparable to Bacon who also works from photographs instead of the sitter as he feels the presence of the person would hinder his distortion of the visual fact. Bacon claims that the sitter would,

INHIBIT ME BECAUSE, IF I LIKE THEM, I DON'T WANT
TO PRACTICE BEFORE THEM THE INJURY THAT I DO TO
THEM IN MY WORK. I WOULD RATHER PRACTICE THE
INJURY IN PRIVATE BY WHICH I THINK I CAN RECORD
THE FACT OF THEM MORE CLEARLY.
(10. p41)

This process of injuring is necessary because he wants 'to distort the thing far beyond the appearance, but in the distortion to bring it back to a recording of the appearance'. (10. p40). Andrews' work may be more true to the likeness of the sitter but ~~this~~ is certainly comparable to his idea of 'the real situation' and then translated into paint.

'The School of London' have an affinity through a commitment and honesty to the material paint, an innate sense of the complexities of trying to depict the 'real situation' in the twentieth century and an avoidance of the illustrational. It does seem that these common points are important enough to create bonds which go beyond the mere personal and professional relationships of these individuals. Such common ground has created a sense of community amongst them, as highlighted by exhibitions like Eight Figurative Painters (which also included the work of Coldstream and Evan Uglow) and This knot of life in 1979. This unity has also been highlighted by comments made by the artists themselves, for example Auerbach's 'Artists usually come in gangs' (2. p73) and Ron Kitaj (who is also sometimes numbered in the group)..

THERE ARE ARTISTIC PERSONALITIES IN THE SMALL ISLAND MORE UNIQUE AND STRONG AND I THINK NUMEROUS THAN ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE AMERICA... IN FACT I THINK THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL SCHOOL OF LONDON.
(21. p28).

These artists, like Andrews, have remained largely unaffected by the successive post-war movements of Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Minimal Art and Conceptual Art. Without exception they have remained committed to traditional subjects which each artist has translated into their own highly individualistic language.

CHAPTER TWO

MYSTERIOUS CONVENTIONALITY

FOR THE SAKE OF FAMILIARITY, WHICH IS MUCH
MORE VALUABLE THAN STRANGENESS, LIVE ANYWHERE
FOR A LONG TIME, EVEN IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE
PLACE.

MICHAEL ANDREWS, 1961 (5, p44)

SCENES OF HIGH LIFE AND OF THOUSANDS OF
UPROOTED LIVES THAT HAUNT THE UNDERWORLD OF
A GREAT CITY.... ARE THERE TO SHOW US THAT
WE HAVE ONLY TO OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE AND
KNOW THE HEROISM OF OUR DAY

BAUDELAIRE, 1846 (12. p45)

It would take nearly two decades before any major painter would produce work of the kind demanded by the maxim of Baudelaire which appeared in his review of the 1846 salon. Contemporary subject matter was considered to have no place in high art and the growing preoccupation with 'realism' amongst painters such as Courbet and Manet was regarded either with uneasy suspicion or scorn.

It may be said that Sickert brought to British art what Degas claimed for the French. Sickert's realism involved the portrayal of every day life, an entry into the domain of the unglittered pattern of social scenes.

Michael Andrews has continued to explore the potentialities of an urban based art. In the final analysis his paintings always refer to the artists engrossment with the contemporary world and with himself. Throughout his career he has explored issues of identity and awareness in an increasingly inventive manner. Bacon's comment '... art is an obsession with life and after all, as we are human beings, our biggest obsession is with ourselves' (10. p63) is seemingly apt when one considers the art of Michael Andrews. Yet Andrews creates a kind of painting which is highly individualistic, extremely specific, thoroughly observed images, which are ultimately symbolic and therefore particularly personal and enigmatic.

From very early in his career the origins of a preoccupation with the individual and modern life subjects are clear. 'London Jazz Club / 100 Oxford Street' dates from when he was a student at the Slade in 1951 and is the forerunner to 'Mature' works such as 'All Night Long' (Fig. 5), 'The Colony Room' (Fig. 4) AND and 'Good and Bad at Games' (Fig. 6) which convey themes of parties and social conventions. These paintings also combine the common element of the social behaviour of the individual. This is apparent in 'A Man Who Suddenly Fell Over' 1952 (Fig.1) which is considered to be his first major work. Andrews has always scrutinised the appearance of things in his paintings but this is always equalled by his desire to also depict what is invisible to the eye. It is this retaining of accuracy of the actual appearance while also creating what he calls an 'atmosphere' which is an ingredient which cannot be captured by merely recreating the appearance. This is his 'mysterious conventionality'.

With 'A Man Who Suddenly Fell Over' (Fig. 1) Andrews questions both his own and the viewers dimensions and dispositions in space. The mans expression is one of alarm not that of despair which is depicted in Bacon's screaming Popes. Andrews desired the effect of a crossing of a hundred expressions upon the mans face. It is a depiction of suddenly felt changing circumstances which arrest the mans previous composure. Here Andrews' aims may be paralleled to Sickert's approach which was emotional and psychological, Sickert sucessfully unmasked spurious pretence and brought art back closer to human values, drawing his audience nearer to life.

Both 'August for the People' and 'A Man Who Suddenly Fell Over' (Fig.1) solidified through a series of rehearsals on paper and canvas. Painting the woman's head, he used photographs for the first time. Andrews percieves the photograph as he would percieve the original experience, his emotional interaction with the subject remaining undiluted. These paintings hold much in common. They are both about older people, big men who are darkly packaged in their suits yet each are in a position where their social composure and identity is under implicit threat.

The man in 'August for the People' is standing in a state of precarious balance which he may lose at any moment. 'I get an image of them in their bathing costume... one had in mind the exposure of these people on the beach' (my emphasis), (15. p8). The men in these paintings reflect Andrews' mental image of his fathers contemporaries in a revealing alternation. In A Man Who Suddenly Fell Over' (Fig. 1) the man's balance has been lost and his social identity is injured. Andrews states,

ABOUT THE PICTURE, I DIDN'T SEE IT HAPPEN
 AS FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER THOUGH I HAVE SEEN
 BIG PEOPLE FALL DOWN, IT'S A CATASTROPHE AND
 AS STUNNING AND BEWILDERING AS THE FABLE OF
 THE SKY FALLING ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE, IT'S
 ABOUT THE COMPLETE UPSETTING OF SOMEONE'S
 APPARENTLY SECURE EQUILIBRIUM AND ABOUT
 THEIR ALMOST IMMEDIATE EFFORTS AT RECOVERY
 AND THEIR ATTEMPTS TO CONCEAL THAT THEY HAVE
 PERHAPS BEEN BADLY HURT OR UPSET WHICH WOULD
 ONLY BE ALLOWED TO SHOW IF THEY WERE BY
 THEMSELVES.
 (7.p188)

A number of parallels can be drawn between Andrews' art and Francis Bacon's paintings. Both artists paintings are about men who are clearly contemporary, and within each person's investigations there is an over-riding concern with dissolving the social identity to reveal the naked reality which lies hidden beneath the disguise of social appearance and behaviour. This is especially apparent in Bacon's version of Velasquez's portrait of 'Pope Innocent X' (Fig. 19). In this Bacon re-assesses this potent portrayal of the most powerful man in the world at that time, 'in the grip of a feeling so intense that the only expression of it brought him back to the beasts' (28. p15). Often Bacon coupled the image of Innocent X with that of the screaming nurse from Eisenstein's 'Battleship Potemkin' so that the Pope is rigid whilst in the act of screaming. Signs of his social identity (the mitre, the throne) remain yet his assumed power has been obliterated and the figure has been reduced to a display of naked emotion. Both Bacon and Andrews depict what is invisible to conventional appearance.

Similarly in Bacon's 'Study From the Human Body' of 1982, the cricketers' leggings are a sign of social identity, of belonging to a certain class and world. The figure, however has been reduced to a chunk of raw meat as much on display as in a butcher's shop, and this contradicts the social identity which the leggings signify. This tension between the social identity and the figure and its naked physicality is a constant feature in Bacon's paintings.

As Bacon's figures are usually presented in solitude, therefore the disintegration of human composure is dealt with privately. Andrews' dissolution, however, takes place in the company of at least one witness, as in 'A Man Who Suddenly Fell Over' (Fig. 1) and often there is quite a large group of people, as in 'Good And Bad at Games', (Fig. 6). Andrews' subjects are not the figure in private, but the personality in public. He explores how the individual relates to the tensions created by the company of others.

In relation to the triptych 'Good and Bad at Games'. Andrews wrote in a letter to Lawrence Gowing in 1973 the following :

I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE VARIABLE EFFECT
A NUMBER OF PEOPLE (INITIALLY A GROUP OF
TEN) HAD ON EACH OTHER, THE CHOSEN
CONVENTIONAL OCCASSION WAS A PARTY AT WHICH
PEOPLE NOTICABLY BEHAVE IN ONE WAY OR
ANOTHER. THIS MIGHT RANGE FROM, OR CHANGE
GRADUALLY FROM STAGE FRIGHT TO INDIFFERENCE
OR BOREDOM, OR SOMEONES' COMPOSURE OR
AGITATION MIGHT REMAIN ALMOST UNCHANGED,
AT ANY RATE I WAS TRYING FOR A DEFINITION
OF HOW THESE FLUCTUATIONS OF SELF-CONSCIUSNESS
SHOWED.
(7. p192)

This statement throws considerable light on how to understand this series and indeed many of Andrews' paintings. He took as his starting point a highly conventional theme of a group of individuals at a party, 'the chosen conventional occasion was a party'(7. p192) yet what he wanted to paint more than the surface appearance of the party was how 'people noticably behave

in one way or another ' and 'a definition of how these fluctuations of self consciousness showed' (7. p192). He wanted to show what is invisible in mere appearance so he had to construct a structure in paint that would somehow capture that hidden reality.

This structure is an interesting one. For the setting a photograph of lighted buildings were silk screened onto each canvas, then modified with oil paint. Torn ragged strips of paper were placed in a row across the image, liberating it from the bounds of figurative convention. He then fixed the outlines of the torn templates with varnish, removed them and washed off the areas of ink underneath. Within these areas he painted the socially characteristic portrayals of his circle of friends. These were largely painted from imagination with the occasional aid of a sketch from life. These haphazard shapes trace his acquaintances transition through the course of the event, some people like Victor Willing flourish throughout, while Andrews himself begins steadily and flounders as time presses on. The women in the company remain comparatively consistent throughout; others dwindle and disappear.

This technique of setting strips of paper on the canvas is interesting as it resulted in Andrews having very little control over the forms which they would produce. This is in contradiction to his normal practice of either working from meticulous observation from life or from photographic reference. This deliberate involvement of chance in the painting process is directly related to the methods developed by Dadism and Surrealism. Jean Arp, one of the founders of the Dada movement made some of the first important experiments in tapping the unconscious in order to produce art. The methods Jean Arp used were actually quite similar to those used here by Andrews, for example he would without calculation tear up pieces of paper and then allow them to fall at random. The resulting patterns were then incorporated into works such as 'Constellation According to the Law of Chance' of 1932. The movement which arose from the ashes of Dadism, Surrealism, was very influenced by the ideas of Freud which resulted in their being even more interested in the forces of the unconscious.

Painters such as Max Ernst often began painting with random drips of colour and also employed a technique called decalcomania by which thinned paint was pressed onto the canvas with a pane of glass and the resulting irregular areas of colour and texture would suggest forms to the artist. Ernst's highly surrealist 'Napoleon in the Wilderness' of 1941 was begun in this way.

Another painter within the 'School of London' has also frequently incorporated elements of chance into his paintings. Francis Bacon may at any point in a painting make random paint marks - throwing, scrubbing or sponging the paint to produce

INVOLUNTARY MARKS ON THE CANVAS WHICH MAY
SUGGEST MUCH DEEPER WAYS BY WHICH YOU CAN
TRAP THE FACT YOU ARE OBSESSED BY. IF ANYTHING
EVER WORKS IN MY CASE, IT WORKS FROM THAT
MOMENT WHEN CONSCIOUSLY I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M
DOING.

(10. p.p.53-54)

Many of Bacon's paintings have been transformed by chance many times in the working, this being very much responsible for the apparent incongruity of imagery in 'Painting 1946' for example.

I WAS ATTEMPTING TO MAKE A BIRD ALIGHTING
ON A FIELD AND IT MAY HAVE BEEN BOUND UP
IN SOME WAY WITH THE THREE FORMS THAT HAD
GONE BEFORE, BUT SUDDENLY THE LINES I'D
DRAWN SUGGESTED SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT,
AND OUT OF THIS SUGGESTION AROSE THIS PICTURE.

(10. p11)

'Good and Bad at Games' is a prime example of Andrews incorporating elements of chance into his work. He uses it in a way very similar to Bacon in that the resultant forms do not look as if they have been made by chance. As is common with Andrews' painting it still looks disciplined and controlled.

It is also Bacon's aim to make paintings using chance which do not look chancey. 'I would loathe my paintings to look like chancey abstract expressionist paintings, because I really like highly disciplined painting, although I don't use highly disciplined methods of constructing it', (10. p92). With 'Good and Bad at Games' Andrews stopped using such highly disciplined methods. The manner in which chance is used here was actually appropriate when one considers the nature of the subject which he was trying to depict.

The very nature of the subject Andrews wishes to portray is based on unpredictable behaviour to a series of visual fluctuations which trace the progress of the participants during the course of an evening. Andrews' method of using accidental irregular shapes from which to form a portrait of this group of people is very suitable as it marks the unknowing sense of what might happen between these people during the time span of the party. It was necessary for this painting to be composed by the imagination if it was to succeed, this device which dismantled to a great extent the element of figural invention allowed Andrews greater access to the imagination than he had ever previously enjoyed. He exploited the chances of the torn templates and within these irregular areas found the forms of his characterisations.

This painting represents somewhat of a landmark in Andrews' career. The inventiveness which he brought into play in 'Good and Bad at Games' set the direction of most of his later work. 'Good and Bad at Games' was the first he chose a working technique which was appropriate to the subject, and this has remained a constant element in his work.

For the 'Lights' series, which follows the journey of a hot air balloon he decided that as the paintings were about air buoyancy the paint should be blown and so he used a spray-gun. When working on the 'Schools' series of tropical fish he used aquarium gravel, sponges and painted the water using watercolour. For the 'Ayres Rock' paintings he brought back grasses, sand and rock from the actual site and incorporated these into paintings as he worked on them in his studio. The sand and rock particles

were infused with the paint while the grasses were used as stencils across which the spray-gun moved to create their ghosts on the canvas.

IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR ME TO BRING BACK,
 APART FROM SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS,
 SOMETHING THAT WAS PALABLY THE ROCK,
 SOMETHING THAT COULD BE TOUCHED OR FELT,
 ALL THESE GRASSES HAVE BEEN USED IN THE
 PAINTINGS.
 (1)

Similarly for the 'Stalking' series elaborate patterns of tone, delicate lights or shadows were traced with lacerated stencils through which splintered paint-patches were deposited.

These techniques are important for Andrews because they do exactly what the torn templates did in 'Good and Bad at Games'. They disrupt the wilfulness of the deliberate brushmarks and create an area which calls the painters imagination to fill.

THE SPRAY-GUN WHICH IS LIKE A STUDIO ASSISTANT,
 WORKS VERY FAST. EACH CHANGE IT MAKES IS QUICK,
 BUT AS IT'S LESS INTELLIGENT, SO TO SPEAK,
 THAN THE ARTIST, IT GOES TOO FAST. ONE'S
 WORKING BLIND A LOT AND SO THERE'S A GREAT DEAL
 OF BACKTRACKING.
 (14. p3)

The brush is still used at some point in almost every picture but through this disruption its function changes slightly. Bacon's observation 'half my painting activity is disrupting what I can do with ease' (10. p91) is called to mind. By 'working blind a lot' Andrews is also disrupting what he can do with ease. These techniques dismantle the figural intention to reinvent the form on the canvas.

All of Andrews' subjects are of a particularly traditional nature. They are often of groups of people, in landscapes or interiors, sometimes a combination of both. 'Four People Sunbathing' ('The people were supposed to have plumped themselves down unceremoniously but formally with respect to their surroundings' (7. p189)).

'The Family in the Garden', 'The Deer Park', 'All Night Long' and others all have this feature in common. In each one however the scene is transformed as Andrews works and reworks the composition to create a mysterious structure in which the invisible thrusts and recoil of each personality in relation to others is made visible. The tense design of 'Four People Sunbathing' (1985) contributes to this feature where figures informal in posture and disposition formally relate to each other and their setting which is entirely invented.

More original, although at first sight more conventional, having no exaggerated form, such as the elongated leg of the central figure in 'Four People Sunbathing' - is the very large 'Family in the Garden'. A bridge between such early paintings and the later more broadly allegorical paintings is 'The Colony Room' here we see what the young artist found in London, which stimulated much of his painterly output for many years.

For 'The Deer Park' Andrews revitalised the spontaneity which he had discovered while painting 'The Digswell Man'. The entire work exemplifies speed, in its sweeping curves and rhythmic movement and its streamlined staircase. The ground floor is open onto the park which seems to be growing light with dawn. As with 'Good and Bad at Games' and 'All Night Long' the framework of the painting seems contrived to provide an appearance of a dream sequence. In the centre is seated a young man whom Andrews has painted with the well-known features of Rimbaud who was a particular influence on Andrews at that time, especially through 'illuminations'. This most solidly painted head becomes the unmoving centre of the whole swirling, fluid, party scene. The title for 'The Deer Park' was inspired by Norman Mailer's novel of the same name. For Andrews Mailer universalised 'The Colony Room' bringing the incident out of one particular corner of London and generalising it.

'All Night Long' arose from 'The Deer Park'. The setting, like that of 'The Deer Park' is part interior and part landscape. This large triptych of brilliant colour portrays the very essence of urbanity, displaying various pleasure seekers enjoying and struggling with a dream-like beauty. Andrews increasingly came to take the urban environment as his subject, in much the way that Baudelaire advised in 1846 'to show us that we have only to open our eyes to see and know the heroism of our day', (12. p45). This approach continued in the metaphoric paintings of this time such as 'cabin' of 1975.

This interest in urban life has taken root in the work of all the 'School of London'. The city of London has provided an endless stimulation for these painters. In particular the detachment of demolition and building sites, wasteland and backlots magnified in the work of Averbach and Kossoff and has also interested Lucian Freud. Michael Andrews worked in a similar vein in his paintings of flats. At this time he daily passed desolate thirties flats which 'reminded him of the empty roosts of some scattered flock' (15. p11). In 'Flats' of 1959 the beginnings of a piece such as 'The Family in the Garden' 1960 can be seen, both technically and conceptually. In each piece his brushstrokes convey the actuality of the object, i.e. in 'The Family in the Garden' the weight of the fruit laden tree branch is embodied in the line of paint. Both paintings display Andrews' urge to document a bonding structure of human life before it crumbles. He wished to paint his family together in an attempt to preserve the group of people before change had disrupted it. In his 'Flats' painting he depicted the core structure which knotted numerous lives before they follow their occupants into dissolution.

A desire to document with particular reverence to common ground for the meeting place of people is found throughout Andrews' work in the form of his parties series, lights series, Ayres Rock paintings etc. The 'flats' painting was the first in which Andrews constructed symbolic habitations for the human states that are his subjects.

In his use of urban environments Andrews parallels many other twentieth century artists who have found their subjects in the city. The triptych 'All Night Long', for example could be paralleled to Otto Dix's 'Big City Triptych' of 1928. Dix's purpose is also to confront us with a truth more fundamental than that of a realistic cityscape. To achieve this he focuses on the human element and how it relates to the environment, just as Andrews' does in his paintings. In Britain there have also been a number of important artists who have taken on the subject of humanity in an urban environment, for example L. S. Lowry, Edward Burra and Stanley Spencer.

In some ways Burra was Spencer's opposite. Where Spencer's constructive vision led him to concentrate on work as a subject, the more cynical Burra concentrated on leisure. Burra's subjects like Andrews' were of clubs and music halls dominated by style and artifice, as in the 'Silver Dollar Bar' of 1955. Roberts too painted modern urban pieces. His paintings of the twenties are dedicated to everyday people who are seen, queuing for buses, reading newspapers in public parks, relaxing in cafes and dance halls, pursuing popular leisure activities like cycling and boxing. His figures possess exaggerated facial features, which add an element of caricature like that of Spencer and Burra. These artists are as the 'School of London', interested in examining human pursuits and interactions in the environment.

Stanley Spencer's art infuses the vision of Blake in his concept of God's purpose on earth. Michael Andrews was born into a devout Methodist family, he now considers himself agnostic. Although his beliefs very much differ to that of Spencer his work holds a feeling somewhat similar to that of Spencers religious apotheosis for the modern world. In Andrews' 'lights' series he dealt with the very symbolic theme of a search for enlightenment and in his Ayres Rock paintings he saw the Aborigines beliefs and rituals as a parallel to the Christian beliefs he was raised with.

In the Ayres Rock paintings Andrews explored the beliefs of the Aborigines in relation to the landscapes he was painting, 'they belong to the rock in the way that something belongs to us' (14. p1) and made icons which are undoubtedly as much about humans as about landformations, 'the landmarks are therefore not just spectacular natural phenomena but repositories of mythology, (14. p4) and by exploring this 'primitive' belief he is thereby bringing them home so to speak, and giving them a place for further contemplation within our society. These paintings open up a lot of questions concerning the relationships humans have with the environment and in that sense have an anthropological function. Culture makes sense of, and controls, a world which humans did not make but, long ago, found themselves thrown into. Humans live a social life which is not the product of genes or innate behaviour, but is how we guarantee and make sense of our existence. We do not see the world naturally, we perceive it socially. Anthropology analyses how societies classify the natural world, how humans understand themselves as humans and examines the impact these social interpretations of being on individual practices. It examines so called 'primitive societies' to understand advanced industrial societies better. Their customs are very much closer to our own than they appear and present us with an enigmatic image which needs deciphering.

Andrews' Ayres Rock paintings, 'had to do with interdependent relationships' (1), he came to understand the interdependence between the Aborigines and Ayres Rock and the whole of their land. Throughout Andrews' work this theme of peoples interdependence and interactions with each other is examined, as in, 'Good and Bad at Games' or 'All Night Long'. Andrews wished to see the rock fifteen years before he actually got to it. Over this period he built up a rich body of work which although very different in appearance actually holds many common threads. In 'Flats' of 1959 Andrews portrays a very different kind of rock coldly moulded from concrete and desolate of its inhabitants, companied routinely by a gang of young boys on their motorbikes, creating somewhat of a new found ritual. This an altogether different relationship to the environment in comparison to the Aborigines relationship to their lands, our western view not only embraces general indifference but also allows waste. Whilst painting the 'Ayres Rock' series Andrews increasingly came to realise the rock had a purpose of redemption for the Aborigines 'just as redemption is central to Christianity, the rock is central to the beliefs and culture of the Aborigines'. (1).

Andrews obsession has always been with human life. Although his urban scenes have no human presence, these paintings still relate to human behaviour, as do his landscapes and even his paintings of schools of fish; all had a wholly human impetus. When Andrews' daughter Melanie was beginning school he saw that parallels could be drawn between the behavioural patterns of a school of fish and human behaviour. He was drawn to fish because social behaviour and group concention concerned him. He kept a large aquarium in which he kept shoal fish in an imitation of their natural environment. The varieties of fish in their tank were chosen for their different 'uniforms'. This coded appearance of the fish he connected with the uniform his daughter would now wear to school.

He now thought being of different species did not make similarity impossible. The opposition of leaders and followers, peaceful and warlike schools, predators and prey became the stimulus of 'School II - IV'. These attractive images of fish were for him another way of exploring the crises of human existence, on this level these paintings are very much about people.

The bright patterns of the fish were an analogy for individuality and conformity. 'Butterfly fish and Damsel fish' is about the identification of social groups by uniform. Within the fish schools Andrews examines systems of interdependence which he saw as related to human behaviour. 'Pike and Roch' is about predator and prey. 'Barracuda and Skip-jack Tuna' (Fig. 13) is about war-like and peaceful kinds of society. Andrews saw that fish communities and our own had much in common, particularly in relation to the ways in which fish are linked to uniform liveries, with school uniform and with conformity.

Andrews relates everything back to a human source within his work. His paintings revolve around highly conventional subjects yet in the final analysis they are always revealed to be complex structures which mysteriously capture that atmosphere which brings to light the unseen.

CHAPTER THREE

THE OBSERVABLE METAPHOR

I FOUND A PHOTOGRAPH OF A BALLOON FLOATING OVER GLOUCESTERSHIRE, AND THAT, TOGETHER WITH THE PHRASE 'THE SKIN-ENCAPSULATED EGO', SEEMED TO ME TO MAKE A PERFECT IMAGE, AND IT LED TO A SERIES OF PICTURES WHICH I CALLED 'LIGHTS'.

(1)

Michael Andrews, 1991.

Michael Andrews subjects are intrinsically traditional yet he belongs, unequivocally, to the 'modern' movement. In conversation with Sir John Rotherstein he has stated that 'in the light of Duchamp I can do without Klee' (7. p189) and that those who have affected him most are 'Auerbach, Bacon, Tim Belvens, and Harry Cohen, Uglow, and Freud...Kitaj' (7. p189). It would, in fact, have been entirely impossible for these paintings to have been made at any time other than the twentieth century. One of the reasons why Andrews' work is so particularly interesting, is the way he uses entirely contemporary methods to represent such conventional themes as people sunbathing, a family sitting in their garden, people in nightclubs and landscape. This, again is part of his 'mysterious conventionality'. As has previously been discussed the development of photography and other mechanical means of reproduction emptied painting of much of the purpose which it held in previous centuries. If painting were to survive it would have to evolve entirely new approaches. This caused some artists to empty their painting entirely of its capacity to report and by this invent entirely abstract art. This approach has its problems and these were highlighted by Francis Bacon in conversation with David Sylvester:

I BELIEVE THAT ART IS RECORDING; I THINK IT'S REPORTING, AND I THINK THAT IN ABSTRACT ART, AS THERE'S NO REPORT, THERE'S NOTHING OTHER THAN THE FEW AESTHETICS OF THE PAINTER AND HIS FEW SENSATIONS. THERE'S NEVER ANY TENSION IN IT.

(10. p60)

Many other artists have felt that recording is a very important function of painting and for these the question has been how to make the painterly record valid in the age of photography. For them the answer has not been to abandon that capacity to record but how to evolve new approaches to recording in art.

Michael Andrews is one such painter. Following the example of Coldstream and Bacon he has over the past forty years methodically developed his own highly individualistic approach to 'realism'. One of these approaches, as we have previously seen and which Andrews holds in common with many other realists, has been the avoidance of the narrative in his work. As David Sylvester wrote of his work:

HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN MAKING EVERY PICTURE TELL
A STORY, AS PICTURES USED TO DO, WITHOUT
EMPLOYING EXPRESSIONISTIC DEFORMATIONS TO
DRIVE HOME THE POINT AND WITHOUT LAPSING INTO
ILLUSTRATION (THE RESULT OF THE PAINTER TAKING
HIS EYES OFF THE CHARACTERS IN THE STORY IN
ORDER TO CONCENTRATE ON MAKING THEM TELL IT,
AND SO HAVING TO USE CLICHES TO REPRESENT THEM.
(15. p49)

In 'The Family in the Garden' he achieved the very difficult task of making a non-narrative multiple figure painting. Increasingly throughout his career an important device which he has employed in order to avoid narration has been the establishment of unusual metaphors. He has used these to continue to explore what has been his lifelong subject, human behaviour. In doing this he has invented a highly complex language to describe the invisible functions of the self. Amongst his depictions of parties 'The Colony Room' is essentially quite a straight forward slice of life. In 'The Deer Park' and 'All Night Long' however he created much more complex and allegorical worlds. These paintings do not just describe a particular situation but they outline a whole society and its mechanisms. For Andrews Nailer's novel 'The Deer Park' (which he was reading as he painted the picture) generalised the specific party which he described in 'The Colony Room':

... THE DEER PARK, THAT GORGE OF INNOCENCE
AND VIRTUE IN WHICH WERE ENGULFED SO MANY
VICTIMS WHO WHEN THEY RETURNED TO SOCIETY
BROUGHT WITH THEM DEPRAVITY, DEBAUCHERY,
AND ALL THE VICES THEY NATURALLY REQUIRED
FROM THE INFAMOUS OFFICIALS OF SUCH A PLACE.
(5. p46)

By creating allegories which do not relate to the specific but to the general Andrews avoids the merely narrative and instead gets underneath the skin of what is present yet remains reasonably invisible at all such gatherings, a society in the grip of it's own pleasuring devises.

With the 'Lights' paintings of the early seventies Andrews' use of metaphors became even more complex and inventive. During the course of his recent BBC T.V. 'Ombnibus' interview he revealed the sorces of this in detail:

READING R.D LAING AND ALAN WATTS, I CAME ACROSS THIS MARVELLOUS EXPRESSION: THAT THE EGO IS A CONCEPT, NOT A THING, IN OTHER WORDS, ONE'S SENSE OF SELF IS IDEA THAT YOU CAN ACTUALLY LIVE AND WORK AND ACT AND BEHAVE WELL WITHOUT. I THEN CAME ACROSS ANOTHER MARVELLOUS EXPRESSION: R.D. LAING OR ALAN WATTS - I CAN'T REMEMBER WHO USED THE PHRASE - REFERRED TO OUR SELF-CONSCIOUS SELVES AS 'THE SKIN-ENCAPSULATED EGOS'. AT THE SAME TIME THAT I WAS READING THIS, I FOUND A PHOTOGRAPH OF A BALLOON FLOATING OVER GLOUSESTERSHIRE AND THAT, TOGETHER WITH THE PHRASE 'THE SKIN-ENCAPSULATED EGO' SEEMED TO ME TO MAKE A PERFECT IMAGE, AND IT LED TO A SERIES OF PAINTINGS WHICH I CALLED 'LIGHTS'. THEY WERE TO DO WITH SLOUGHING OFF THE EGO, GETTING RID OF THE EGO...
(1)

All of Michael Andrews' paintings relate back to the human situation, 'all my paintings have a psychological significance' (7. p92). This is especially apparent in the 'Lights' series, the balloon symbolises the ego and the series as a whole reads like a mysterious journey. On this journey the balloon itself passes over various metaphorical landscapes which are also highly suggestive of various human states.

Andrews had first used buildings to symbolise human states in the 'Flats' painting which he made at Digswell in 1959. In 'Lights II: The Ship Engulfed' (Fig. 8) the ship of the title is the balloon and the skyscrapers of the background engulfed the balloon which represents ego. This image holds much in common with the earlier triptych 'Good and Bad at Games' and the third panel in particular which features the figures 'deflating' against a highly urban background. The balloon reflects the moods in which one feels inflated or deflated, just as the fluctuating size of the people in 'Good and Bad at Games' reflect the circumstances which have either made them stronger or undermined them. In this sense this triptych was an important forerunner to the 'Lights' series.

Nearing the end of this journey the balloon passes over piers and pleasure domes, 'Lights IV: The Pier and The Road', 'Lights V: The Pier Pavilion' and 'Lights VI: The Spa' (Fig. 10). Andrews had equated the sense of belonging which would be the outcome of ego loss with the primal sense of envelopement described by Freud as the oceanic feeling and this may explain the sea ~~imag~~ imagery. The piers and pleasure palaces where a marvellous party might be held are, like the ocean lines Andrews painted in 1971 just before beginning this series as the perfect vehicle for souls, places in which ordinary people can experience the excitement of being at sea without actually using the link with land. They are intended as being a kind of substitute liner. This is very much in keeping with the overall theme of 'Lights', which is after all, a journey towards enlightenment the final aim being the abandonment of ego. The long driveways and piers reaching into the sea in 'Lights' 'IV', 'V' and 'VI' symbolic longing. The imagery whether it be a succession of cars in the night, or the shadow of a balloon moving across a beach is symbolic of journeys. The ego goes through many transformations on this journey. In 'Lights III: The Black Balloon' (Fig. 9) the balloon appears heavy and laden, 'it is an unforgettable image of sinking self-hood' (29. p17).

In the next scene, 'The Pier and The Road', the balloon has disappeared, but one gets the feeling that the ego has not been lost. Perhaps the balloon is at the side of the scene or perhaps we are watching the scene from the balloon itself. The series ends with 'Lights VII: A Shadow' and the artists realisation that the journey achieved no triumphant conclusion. This journey towards sloughing off the ego, getting rid of the ego, has been unsuccessful and the story ends with the acceptance that the bid for enlightenment has failed. Andrews himself summarises the conclusion by paraphrasing Kierkegaard;

WE COULD CHOSE TO BE SENSUAL MAN, AESTHETIC
MAN OR MORAL MAN; WHAT WE COULD NOT CHOSE,
THOUGH WE COULD ASPIRE, WAS TO BE RELIGIOUS
MAN.
(15. p21)

The series is uniquely subjective and as such comprises one of the most highly individualistic achievements in the painting of its time.

After completing the 'Lights' series Andrews continued and indeed continues, to invent highly unusual metaphors which relate to aspects of human behaviour. After 'Lights' followed 'Cabin' which in many ways could be considered an appendix to the previous series. He used the word 'Cabin' with the associations of 'cribbed, cabin'd and confined'. The aircraft is presented, like the 'Liner' of 1971 as a ship of lonely souls. Each painting takes on a highly symbolic quality which the printer consciously manipulates. 'Melanie and Me Swimming', is on one level a depiction of father and child but it is also a highly suggestive metaphor about bridging the divide between generations. In the Ayres Rock paintings the actual rock formations become metaphors for human characterisation and behaviour. 'Laughter' (Fig. 17) of 1985 for example, depicts Lagari, a thick-lipped cave which is a taboo area for men and outsiders. This painting symbolises sexual differentiation and taboos. 'Permanent Water' (Fig. 18) is about being overshadowed, while 'Valley of the Winds' is about 'the possibility of getting lost' (14. p3).

As the title suggests 'The Cathedral, The North East Face' (Fig. 16) is the most monumental piece.

THERE IS BOTH CAUTION AND SEVERITY IN THE
PLACING OF THE GREAT ROCK, AT A RESPECTFUL
DISTANCE, IN THE CENTRE OF THE CANVAS, WHERE
IT WELLS UP FROM THE SURROUNDING FLATLANDS
LIKE NOTHING ON EARTH.
(29. p18)

The experience of being at Ayres Rock is one of colour, heat and indeed emotion. In the painting Andrews harnesses the Rock's delicate luminosity to transcribe his experience of being there,

IT MAKES YOU GASP, THE COLOUR. YOU THINK
GOOD LORD, THAT'S VERMILION WHEN YOU LOOK
INTO THOSE RECESSES... I EXPECTED TO FEEL
AWE-INSPIRED, BUT I DIDN'T REALLY EXPECT TO
WANDER ROUND IT AS I DID AND BE CHOKED WITH
EMOTION.
(14. p6)

The dominant theme however explored in this series of paintings is the inter-dependent relationship between the Aborigines and Ayres Rock. In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue Andrews quotes the hymn which he remembers singing as a boy :

ROCK OF AGES, CLEFT FOR ME,
LET ME HIDE MYSELF IN THEE,
LET THEE WATER AND THE BLOOD,
FOR THY RIVER SIDE WHICH FLOWED,
BE OF SIN THEE DOUBLE CURE,
CLEANSE ME FROM HIS GUILT AND POWER.
(14. p1)

Andrews then explains that what he found when he went to Ayres Rock was in fact a magical incarnation of this hymn which exceeded analogy. 'Everything the hymn expresses metaphorically to Christians is a matter of fact to Aborigines' (14. p1). When speaking of the myths which are associated with the Rock Andrews tellingly states...

THE SPECIFIC MYTHS ARE INTERESTING TO ME
 BUT AS I CAN NEVER HOPE TO KNOW THEM PROPERLY
 I'M CERTAINLY NOT ILLUSTRATING THEM. WHAT DOES
 FASCINATE ME IS THIS SENSE OF IT BEING RIGHT
 TO BE WHERE YOU ARE AND DO WHAT YOU DO: THIS
 COMPLETE SENSE OF BELONGING. THAT'S WHAT I
 ADMIRE AND RESPECT.
 (14. p5)

This 'complete sense of belonging' was something which was very much lacking in the urban settings of the 'Lights' series. The journey towards enlightenment was very much in vain, yet here, at Ayres Rock Andrews found his Rock of Ages. These paintings are entirely non-illustrational yet they explore the fundamentals of human experience in a way that the mere illustration of myths or surface appearances could never hope to achieve. In the 'Schools' series there is also a dissolution of storytelling and narrative, yet they tell very complex stories of human behaviour and community. The narrative has also been dispelled from the 'lights' series yet it tells a story of the artists attempts to disown his egotism. These metaphors always draw on 'conventional' observation i.e. urban and primitive landscapes, schools of fish, party scenes. These images are extremely specific and thoroughly studied, although they function on a mysterious level of penetrating deep inside the cover of appearance and revealing the fundamental aspects of human behaviour.

Andrews always begins with observable fact which is predominantly received from photographic information. Photography has become an essential tool for many figurative painters. Andrews has been using photography with increasing complexity since 'A Man Who Suddenly Fell Over' of 1952. Andrews first engaged photography with his art when painting 'A Man Who Suddenly Fell Over'. In working from photography he does not only use photographs as a source of information. He perceives the document more like one would an original experience and the painted image relates his reaction to that experience rather than illustrating visual documentation. Bacon works mainly from photographs on which he has commented:

I THINK IT'S THE SLIGHT REMOVE FROM FACT,
WHICH RETURNS ME ONTO THE FACT MORE VIOLENTLY,
THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE I FIND MYSELF
BEGINNING TO WANDER INTO THE IMAGE AND UNLOCK
WHAT I THINK OF AS ITS REALITY MORE THAN I CAN
BY LOOKING AT IT. AND PHOTOGRAPHS ARE NOT ONLY
POINTS OF REFERENCE; THEY'RE OFTEN TRIGGERS OF
IDEAS.

(10. p30)

Photographs were again used in 'The Family in the Garden' and indeed to some extent in all of Andrews' work since then. The photographic images for 'The Family in the Garden' were essentially substitutes for preliminary drawings which solved many of the problems involved in gathering the family group to pose for the painting. For 'The Deer Park' and 'All Night Long' photography had become an integral element in the making of Andrews' art. Photography superseded the necessity of preliminary drawings. 'The Deer Park' was composed almost entirely from photographic references.

Andrews not only uses photography, he has also used film images informing 'The Deer Park'. The interior space was influenced by a recollection of the apartment in 'Les Cousins' and by party scenes from contemporary Italian cinema as exemplified by films such as 'La Notte' and 'L'Avventure'. Andrews' use of information from such media seems appropriate when one considers that Andrews' subject is that of pleasure seekers and peoples behaviour. His use of photography accelerated in the following painting 'All Night Long' which was his first work which was entirely based on photographs.

The influence of film and television is important in much of Andrews' work. The 'Schools' series is very closely linked to the development of underwater photography and filming. This sort of imagery has become very familiar to us all since such filming was incorporated into popular television nature programmes. A painting like 'School IV: Barracuda under Skipjack Tuna' (Fig. 13) shows the artist has borrowed from the conventions of underwater camera perspective.

Andrews' use of photography has been particularly innovative throughout his career. For 'Good and Bad at Games' photographs were silk-screened onto the canvas and then worked on with oil paint. While painting the Ayres Rock series it was common for him to project the photographic image onto canvas as he worked. There is a specific form of photography which has especially influenced Andrews' painting however; aerial photography.

Through science and technology our visual and mental horizon was enlarged. Much of Michael Andrews work includes views from aerial perspective which is very apparent in the 'Lights' series which indeed trace both a view of a floating hot air balloon and the scene as it would be viewed from this balloon. As perception involves a nexus of visual and mental information, aerial perception does not only include the visual aspect - aerial perspective, but entails a knotted complex of associations which appeal to a totality of the senses. Light is much brighter in the higher atmosphere above the clouds than in lower altitudes. Artists have always been fascinated by the effects of light on the surrounding world. Aerial Perception enables the world to literally be seen in a different light. The light in which a society and its culture is seen may symbolically describe how that culture perceives itself. In 'Lights II: The Ship Engulfed' (Fig. 8) Andrews peers at the scale and complexity of society today by focussing on the magnitude of lights creating a steady band across the canvas whilst the weighty black ego passes in singular unseen importance. The scroll-lettering sign above the bar derives from a neon advertisement which suggested to Andrews 'Great White Fleet Unite' (15. p66) an expression similar to a community spirit which he felt existed during the sixties. Throughout this series light is explored both conceptually and visually. Andrews makes use of many different forms of light to highlight the scale of our human web - bridges, driveways, skyscrapers, piers, reach to all places.

The modern vision includes images perceived through the eye of the camera, which encompasses a greater spectrum of wavelength than light which is visible to the human eye. For 'Lights IV: The Pier and The Road' 1973 Andrews had photographd of the marine parade and palace pier in Brighton and a postcard of a 'Lido' In Italy. Similarly in 'A Design':The Garden at Drummond from Higher Ground' (Fig. 12) 1976 he had arrial photographsvIEWS of the gardens. Here the figures are put on higher ground, a position just possible by distorting a natural rise. This preference for heightened perspectives in shown in 'Cabin' of 1975, in which he observes an actual jet and landscape it passes over. Andrews uses aerial perspective in the stalking pictures and the Ayres Rock painting, the watercolours he did at Ayres Rock are very topographical.

Andrews has observed nightclubs, fish 'schools', the behaviour of close friends and family, holidays and landscape. His visual language is one which can inscribe his canvases with minute exactness while also pertaining the subtle fluidity. Within his painting he has created a way 'of making a comprehensive statement' (1). Andrews finds himself 'disposed to the object to whatever I'm thinking about and I suppose to what lies beyond it, the world beyond, that's really my activity' (1). Andrews observations and thoughts are transformed into unusual metaphors which, while referring very much to the real world sketch in the outlines of a world which is perhaps more real.

CONCLUSION

NECESSARY LEAPS

IF ANDREWS' SUBJECT IS INDEED STATES OF SELF,
 THEN IT IS FIRSTLY AND MOST DEARLY ABOUT
 HIMSELF.
 (15. p8)

Sir Lawrence Gowing.

EVERY AESTHETIC ADJUSTMENT REFLECTS AN ETHICAL
 PREFERENCE.
 (7. p191)

Michael Andrews.

In the late 1960's Michael Andrews planned a picture which was never completed called 'Necassary Leaps'. He had collected a series of images relating to the alternative life style of the 'flower children' who had gained so much publicity during this decade. Although Andrews was of a different generation to these people he was still deeply sympathetic to their aims. He has himself spoken, in relation to this work, of the necessity to 'make a leap to escape from this admirable escalator of moral values, a leap of faith' (15. p63). He abandoned this work, but these ideas of self-realisation and ego-loss were thoroughly explored in the 'Lights' series of the 1970's. This evaluation of group codes is very much Andrews' continuing concern. He observes what is around him, whether that be the 'flower children', his family, his friends or the city and manipulates these images to express something which is not visible to the eye. This is indeed the essence of his 'mysterious conventionality'.

Since the advent of photography and the avant-garde the realist painter was forced to create a form of expression that can still be valid. Andrews and the other artists of the 'School of London' have in common an adherence to the great subjects which are the motifs of traditional realism. These artists have evaluated past practises in art and reassessed these vices to create their own language.

Coldstream taught his students how to harness observational skills in order to produce a very solid base for drawing and painting. One can see the effect of this in Andrews' ability to produce compositions of immense clarity and precision. When Andrews does use methods which are not entirely traditional, for example using a spray gun, or when he screen prints photographic images or indeed sticks real objects onto the canvas, as in the Ayres Rock paintings, they are used to expand on what can be done with paint. In this manner he uses conventional materials in an unconventional way.

Andrews' preoccupations are with both the contemporary world and his own identity. Andrews has probed whatever particular obsession he had in mind through his painting until a realisation has been reached and 'a comprehensive statement' (1) successfully conveyed. While painting he proceeds slowly and carefully considering each decision towards that final performance, 'the act (of painting) is for me the most marvellous, elaborate, complete way of making up my mind' (5. p35). His work serves an anthropological function, through his very broad series of paintings he has pursued the fundamental foundations of various communities. Such close observation of people's behaviour began with the very hyperbolic scene of 'A Man Who Suddenly Fell Over', in which Andrews satisfyingly discovers that even the most strategic manoeuvring happens on a very delicate pedestal which can topple at any time. Similarly with the 'Lights' series Andrews deals with the concept that 'ego is a concept and not a thing, one's sense of self is an idea' (1). Always in Andrews' paintings the events taking place or scenes depicted are of real significance because they are general and not specific. Andrews makes inventive use of metaphors to outline a society.

In his art stylistic and formal elements are made less important and the over-shadowing concern lies very much in the creation of an 'atmosphere'. For Andrews the 'painting episode is the real situation imagined. Re-enacted and rehearsed until it's performance is the best possible' (2. p80). The work is only completed when this atmosphere has been created, This is why the three panels in the triptych 'All Night Long' were interchangeable

until quite late on in the procedure of the painting. Even through the images were culled from a wide pool of photographic information, the painting had no existing model in reality, the scene was entirely imagined. The artist has to learn the language of this scene as he paints it, 'the final performance' only occurs when the 'atmosphere' has been created, not when the appearance has been described.

It would be impossible to understand the importance of Andrews' work from a mere verbal description of his subjects. He uses a conventional armature and invests it with metaphoric qualities. Andrews' art has covered an expansive range of thematic scope, throughout which thought and feeling with evident introspective and autobiographic truth are equalled. The meticulousness of his observation makes his critical viewpoint of humankind very telling. Both Andrews' exterior and interior worlds are ones in which we move uneasily and self-consciously. This disconcerting uncertainty is tackled in 'Good and Bad at Games' 'by altering the scale of people literally making them change shape' (1) With a fair degree of self parody. He is however more interested in character than caricature, his psychologically tense paintings are created with a subtle form of expression which produces extraordinarily moving works. While his subjects have all the hallmarks of tradition he has learned his own idiosyncratic language in painting with his austere yet enraptured vision. His subjects are an armature on which he creates an 'atmosphere' which describes the reality behind the appearance in paint. This is Michael Andrews' 'Mysterious Conventionality. This is his necessary leap.

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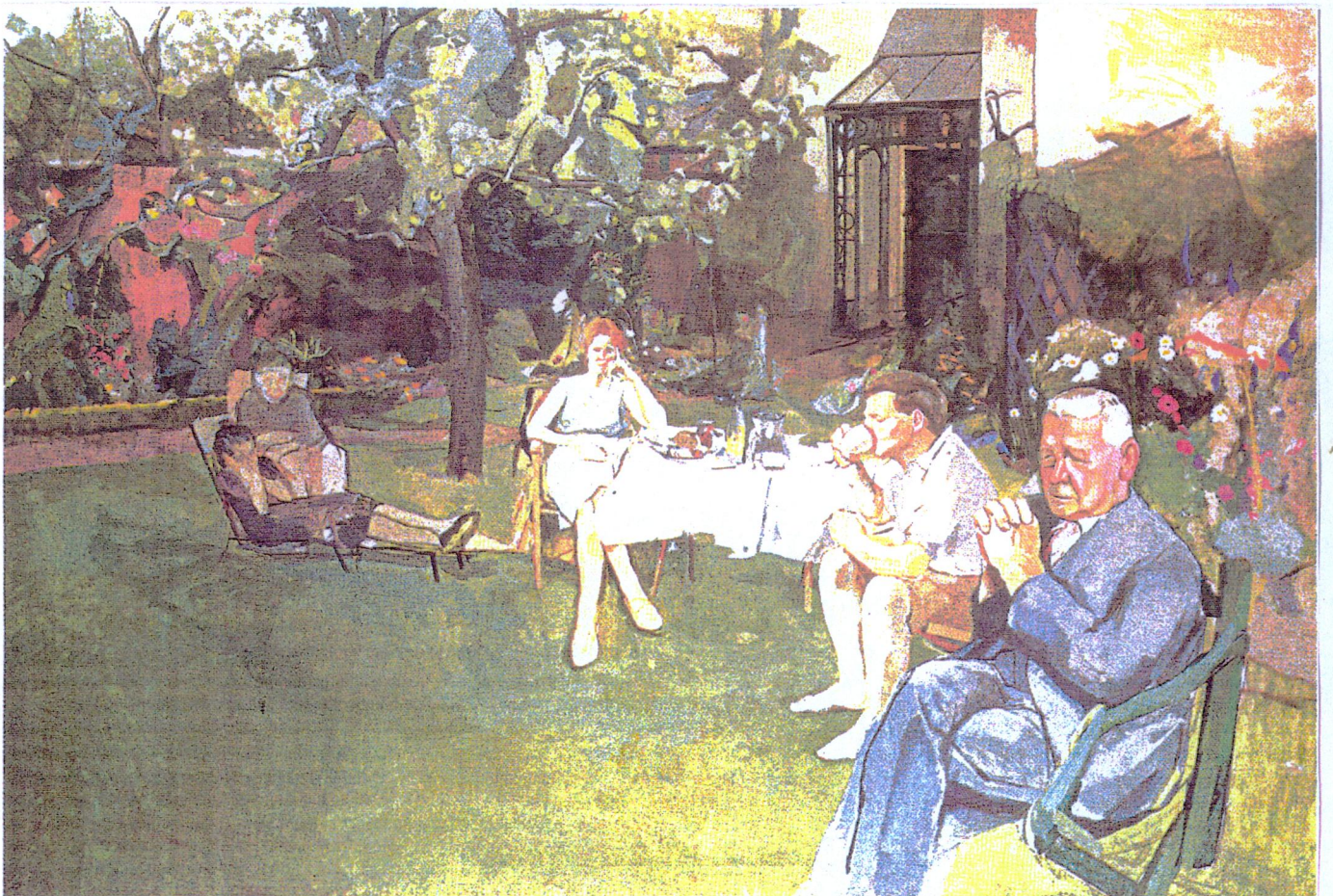
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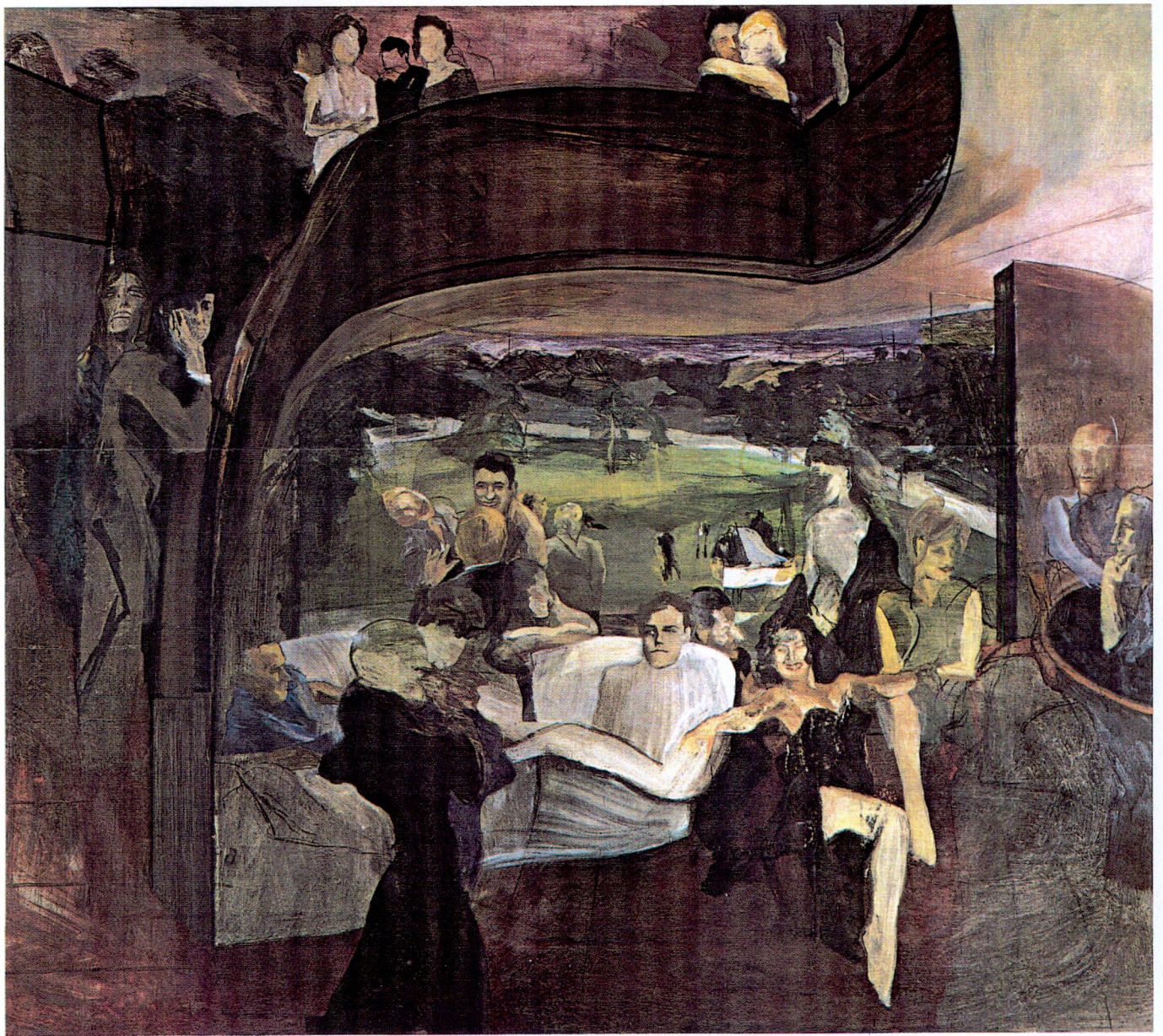
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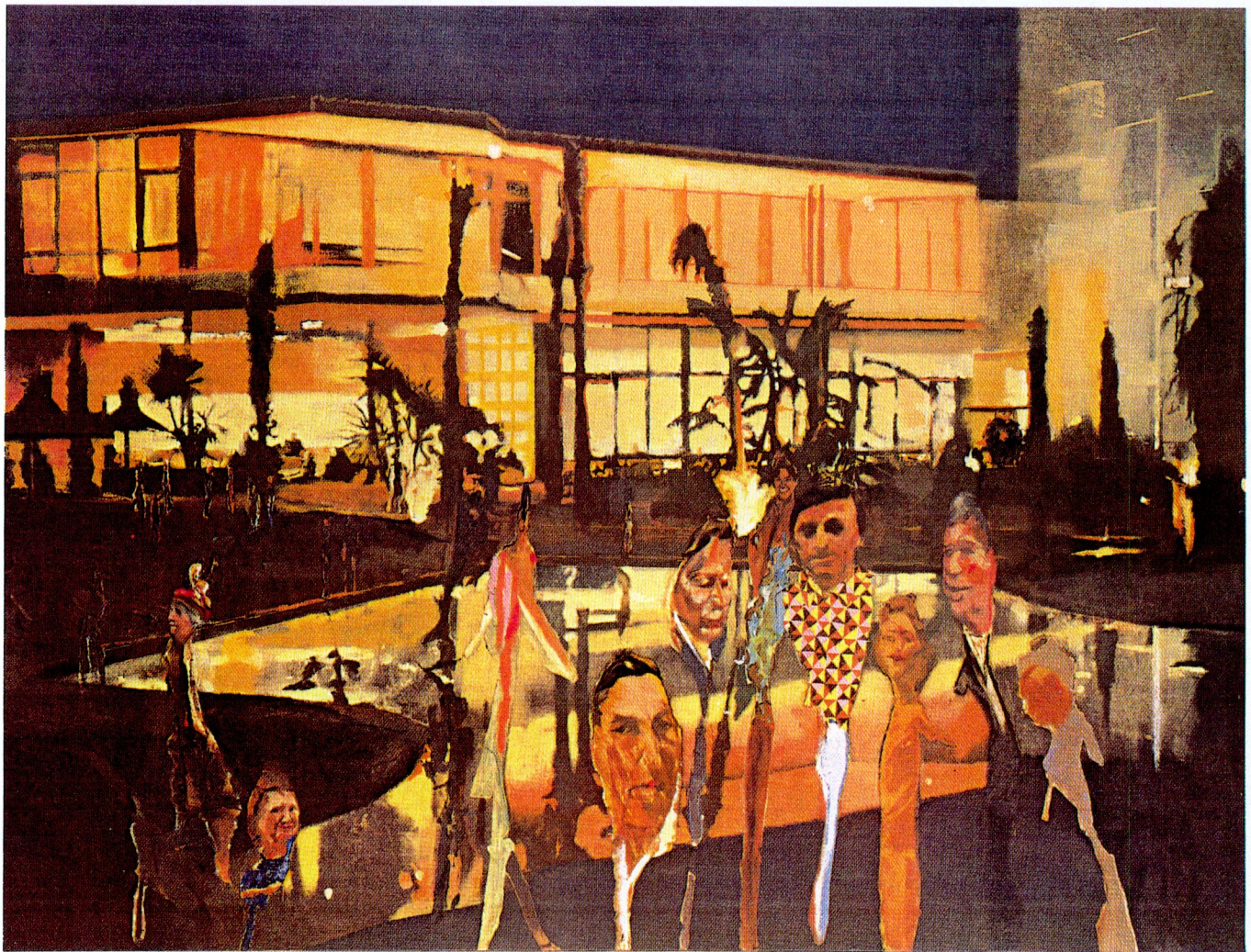
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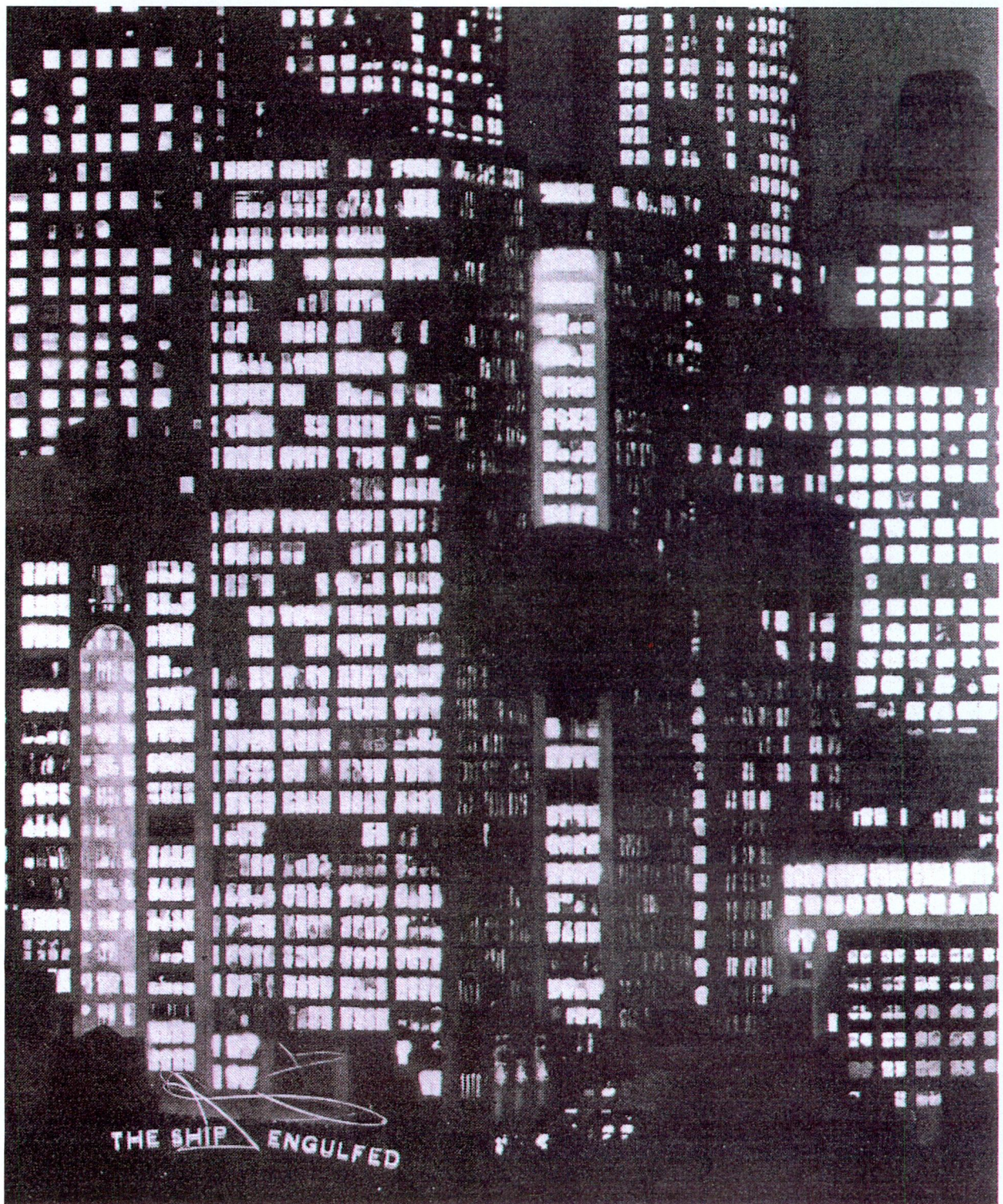
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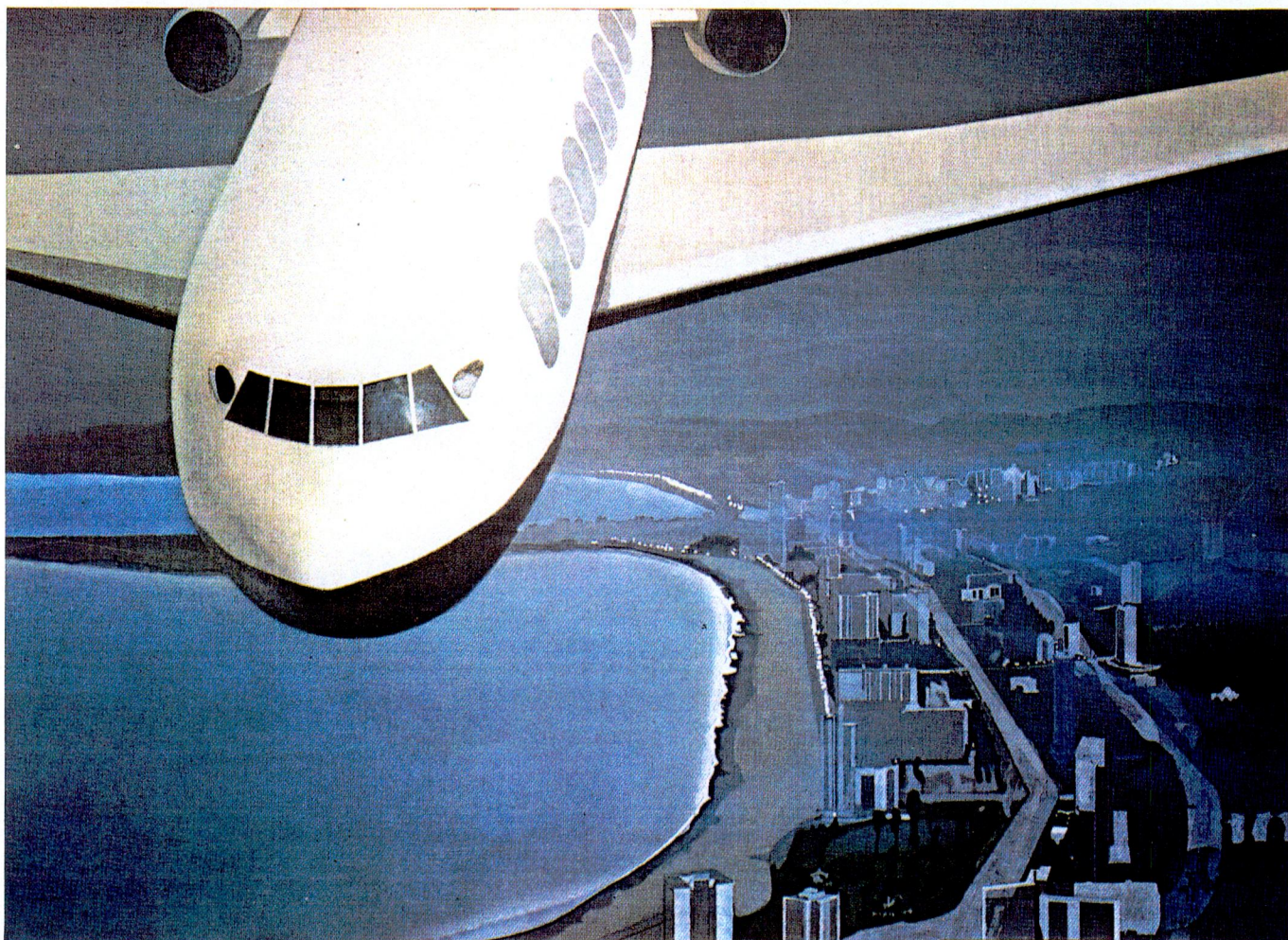
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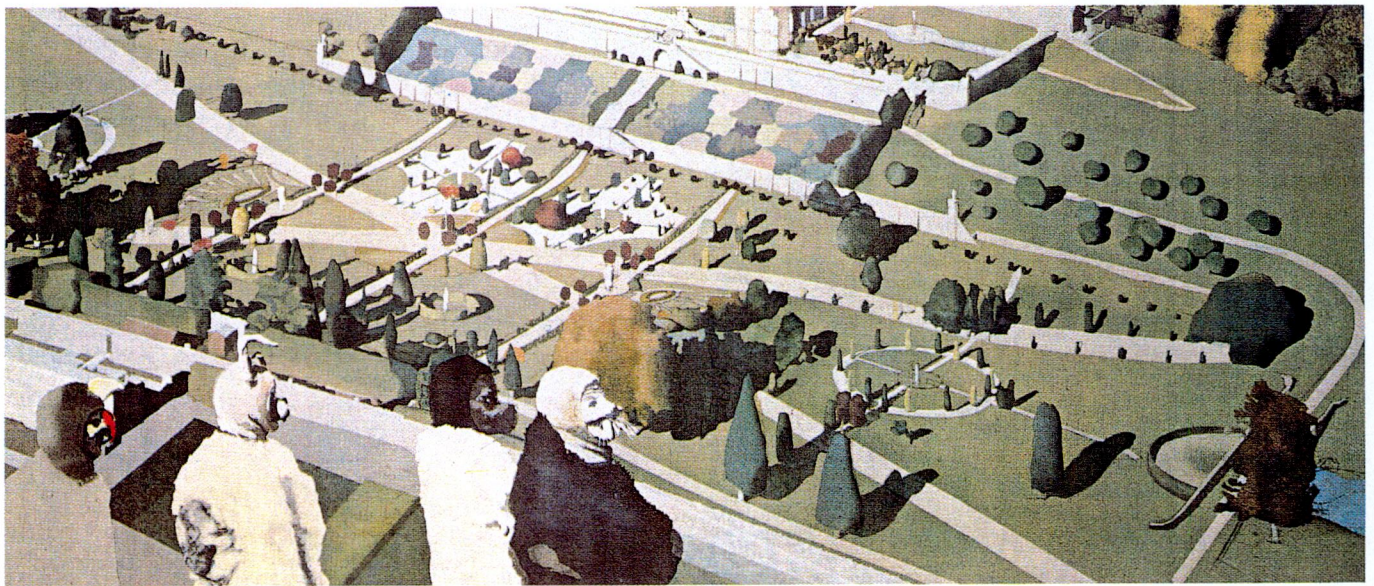
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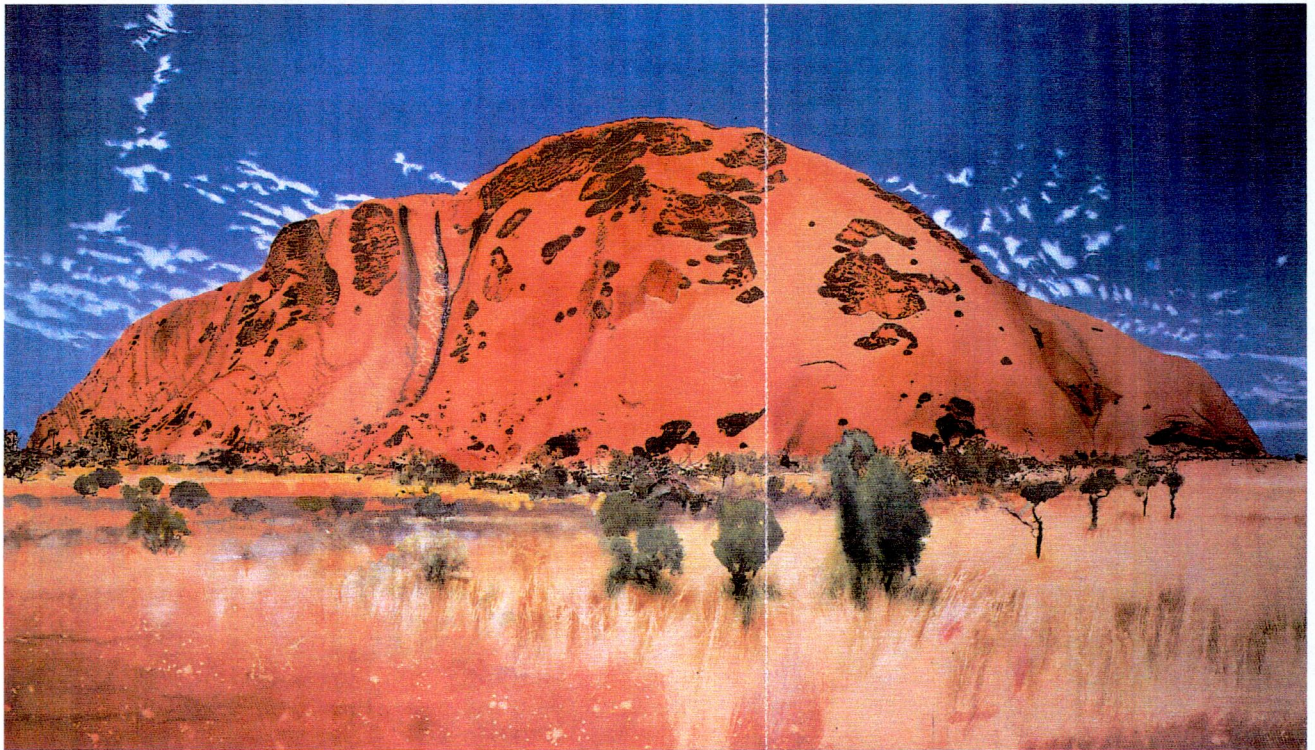
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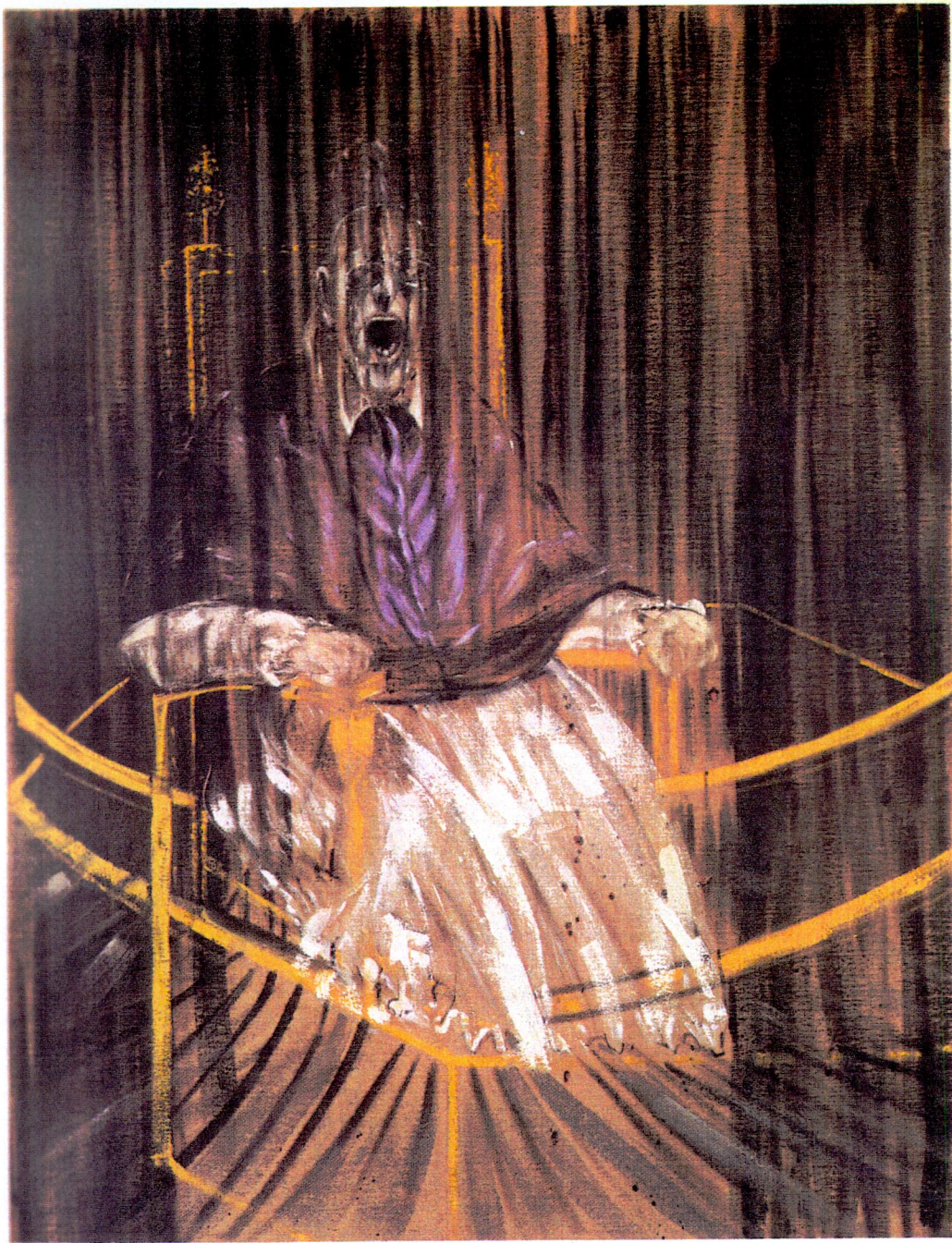
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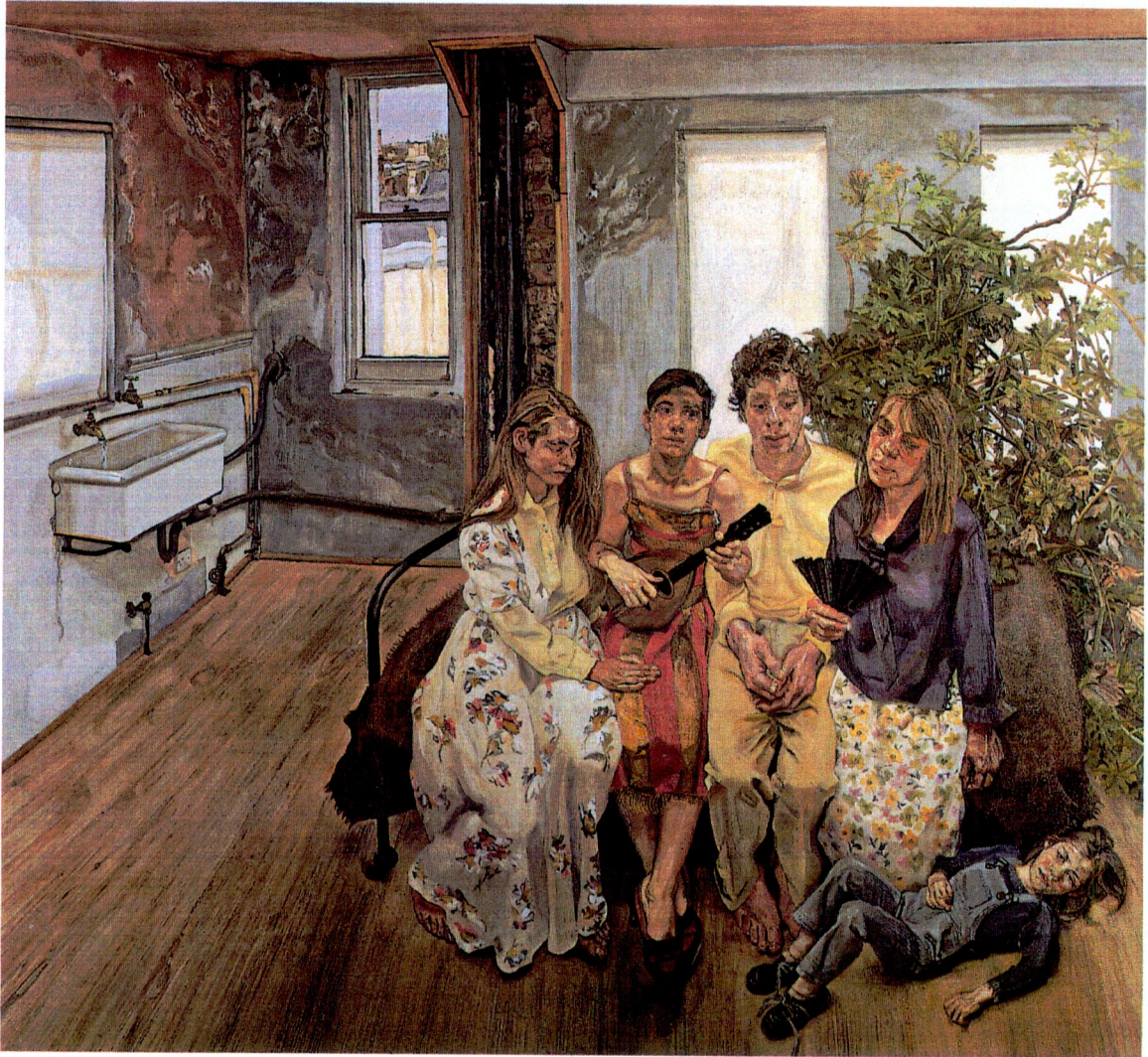
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