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THE ALIENATED IN SOCIETY
IN THE WORK OF EDWARD KIENHOLZ

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INTRODUCTION

A GENERAL OVERVIEW

The work of Edward Kienholz has captured my attention since my entry into art college. Four years later I am still captivated by the work he created on his own until 1972, and thereafter with his wife and official collaborator, Nancy Reddin Kienholz.

This essay is divided into an introduction and six chapters. I have chosen to focus largely on the work produced in America, which offers a critique of life in the country. After spending a summer working and living in America, I feel I have a stronger sense of the victimization and isolation people can experience in that society.

Although the work created by Kienholz in America was a reflection of the time in which it was made, the themes which he addressed still reflect prevailing issues twenty years later.

Edward Kienholz was born in 1927 in a small town called Fairfield situated near the Washington Idaho state border. By 1954 he had moved to Los Angeles and was renting a small studio in the San Fernando Valley. His first paintings were made on plywood. The texture of these plywood reliefs was rough. The sombre tonalities he created remained a powerful painterly element throughout his career. From the beginning, this oozing, corroded surface of a Kienholz work alludes to a scenario of crime. This sense of social crime and human folly was to develop as a central concern within his work.

By 1958, his compositions were becoming more elaborate and they began to protrude from the surface of the wall, until he eventually built one that free-standing on the floor.

John Doe (1959) was the second of his free-standing creations. It combined social commentary with a figurative approach to assemblage. Kienholz had embarked on a worthwhile journey. Two more free-standing assemblages were constructed as partners to John Doe (1959): Jane Doe (1960) and Boy, Son of John Doe (1961).

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Edward Kienholz is an explorer, an inventor, a collector and a poet. The inspiration for his work comes from the horrors evident in the media everyday, the atrocities of murder, rape, racism and robbery. He is frustrated with man's inhuman treatment of fellow human beings. His anger towards the hypocrisy of American culture stimulates his imagination, emotions and beliefs about the human condition.

Kienholz is obsessed with man's failure to confront the diseases of reality. Humiliation, powerlessness, old age, loneliness, racial unrest, the exploitation of women and cold war paranoia are all prevailing themes in his work. However his portrayals are touched with a bleak mute compassion for the sordid, the derelict and the unspeakable. Kienholz continued with his depiction of the horrible waste of life in contemporary American society until 1972 and then returned to this theme in 1979.

Although Keinholtz appears to be a moralist at first glance, his journalistic, almost literary, point of view comes to the fore on closer examination.

Ralph Ellison's poem Invisible Man (1961) bears a resemblance to Keinholtz' work:

I am invisible, understand,
simply because people refuse
to see me. Like the bodiless
heads you see sometimes in
circus sideshows. It is as
though I have been surrounded
by mirrors of hard, distorting
glass. When they approach me
they see only my surroundings,
themselves, or figments of their
imagination indeed, everything
except me.

(Hallie, 1982. p. 119)

Keinholtz deliberately uses qualities of shock in his pieces to provoke his audience. He uses a kind of controlled horror that is evident in the paintings of Salvador Dali.

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Robert Silberman, art historian, says of Kienholz.

These works stand out because of their audacity, their horrific but often humorous views of the world. If in today's art world, they don't appear quite as exceptional as when they first appeared, that is a testimonial of sorts to the success of Kienholz in extending the boundaries of art.

(Rose, 1967, P 41)

Kienholz's concern for surface texture is vital to the success of his work. He coats parts of his objects with polyester resin, which makes them more durable. He is not interested in smooth perfection. He applies the resin in a painterly fashion. It turns yellow when it hardens, enhancing the aura of decay and degradation. His mannequins inevitably appear to be frozen and embalmed in this thick gelatinous layer.

He also uses gray zolotane or sprayed lead on his figures to give the effect of a matt stone finish. The preparation, casting and additions to his found objects are important elements in his work. Kienholz's figures wear wigs, contemporary dress and are finished with everyday accessories. However he is alert to what becomes worn out through too much usage. He is always in a position to examine fresher alternatives.

The illusion of reality is heightened to obsessive intensity. He brings his life-sized plaster moulds to life by attaching tape-recorders and lights to various parts of them so that they can carry on conversations amongst themselves. Kienholz forces the viewer to encounter unmistakeable replicas of himself or herself in unmistakeable simulated real settings.

As the work of Edward Kienholz progressed he rarely created free-standing assemblages which depended on being seen from all around. His pieces are normally mounted on flat stage-like surfaces. The backdrop can remain neutral but sometimes it is an indication of location.

The aspect I find most interesting about his work is the peep show element, his need for audience participation. Kienholz relates to his viewer more than most modern artists. His work would in many ways be unsuccessful without the inquisitive nature of the spectator. It is not until the viewer probes that his work comes alive. The spectator is invited to take a seat in the midst of The Portable War Memorial (1968) and help himself or herself to a bottle of Coca-Cola from the vending machine. The viewer could also sit on the chair that stands in the isolated section of the corridor of Sollie 17 (1979 - 1980) [Fig. 1]

The audience has to squeeze their bodies through a door if they are going to see into the room of this piece. Kienholz clutters his human scale tableaux with letters, photographs and every other sort of item that denotes a place that possesses a history or a patina of use.

Many artists are indebted to the work pioneered by Kienholz in the 1960's.

The following chapter deals with Kienholz's work in relation to assemblage art. I am also going to discuss where assemblage art originally came from and its popularity in the 1960's.

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Fig. 1. Edward Kienholz Sollie 17 (1979 - 1980)



CHAPTER ONE.

THE ART OF ASSEMBLAGE.

The concept of assembling existing material is not exclusive to the modern world. The roots of assemblage art spread throughout the various cultures from pre- Columbian America to the Melanesian islands of the South Pacific to pre-Colonial Africa. Native American artists created objects from fibers, feathers, hides, stone and animal bone. In some African traditions, accumulated natural materials were often symbolically configured to make alters. This created a kind of visual poetry in which metaphors were derived from objects rather than words. Political and social outrage provided metaphorical substance for Kienholz.

The Mexican folk artists convert everyday experiences into works of art. They have no restraints on the materials which they use to create these works. All of these tribes have no pre-existing hierarchy of materials which should define what may or may not be a work of art.

The types of displays found in ethnological museums today can provide a range of potential alternatives to European and American artists. The displays are densely packed. The pieces generally left their places of origin by a series of accidents and the politics of colonial or trade domination. Some items came as little more than objects trouvés. These displays showed that a powerful work of art could be made by stretching bark cloth over a cane frame or that everyday objects like knives or nails, could be incorporated into a carved image. This emphasised that the European tradition of sculpting in stone was not the only one.

Images of death are other prevailing themes in these displays. Skulls in divination, bags containing varied assembled materials, animal fur, claws, pieces of wood, bone and shell all have a disturbing influence and a surrealistic appearance.

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These items possess an ability to shock, as does the work of Kienholz. The power carried by objects from alien societies lies in part in the way in which they appear to transgress, manipulate or even mock the categories and arrangements which we are used to. Attention is given to the unusual, the bizarre and the grotesque. These images are deprived of contextual data because they are isolated from the world in which they are normally embedded. This poses the question, how much is the meaning contained within the object and how much does the meaning change by being placed in association with other items? This area of conflict provides the power of the exotic to surprise, shock and revolt.

Edward Kienholz explores the limits of identity and creates new syntheses. He has the ability to over-ride and manipulate the normal distinctions drawn between objects.

He overcomes the usual way of looking at objects and can avoid the significance usually associated with them. Kienholz' work depends, for its final form, upon the re-use and adaptation of pre-existing forms and pre-formed materials.

The influence of tribal art is evident in the work of Kienholz, but what was the cause for the popularity of assemblage art in 1950's America?

Artists turned to assemblage in an effort to come to terms with their culture. For the Italian Futurists and Russian Constructivists, it was to lionize the promise of modern technology. For Duchamp and the Dadaists, it was to break with the assumptions of the past including the segregation of art from daily life and the emphasis on the art work as the 'unique' creation of the individual genius. For the Surrealists, it was to undermine the emphasis placed on rationality and to heal the dévide between the conscious and the unconscious in the modern psyche. For the Neo-Dadaists and Pop artists it was to come to terms with the growth of mass culture.

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The obvious motive for the use of found material in the 1950's was the simple availability of a bountiful resource. Post-war prosperity sparked by the rise in the production of consumer goods meant a plentiful supply of derelict but not useless materials. New cars, appliances and clothes were purchased every few years. The disposal of the old was almost regarded as a civic duty. It meant keeping up to date with the latest innovations of inventive technology while also keeping the wheels of the American economic machine spinning productively and profitably.

The principal role of assemblage art is to serve as a meditation upon the modern world and its values. Americans judged each other on the basis of their big cars, suburban home, television, washer, dryer, pop-up toaster etc. Consumerism was synonymous with patriotism.

Kienholz said about Los Angeles:

There is an enormous strata of junk here that is usable. In the morning on Trash day I stop to pick up a bunch of stuff that has been thrown away toasters and stuff. And I take it all into the thrift store and the guy says 'Ah, that's about \$10 or \$12 - load and he gives me \$10 - \$12 credit. Really I've got this great deal with him where I trade him for stuff I want.

(Kemper 1989 p. 67)

Kienholz introduces a new twist into the art of assemblage. He does not use objects for their formal properties, but as a reflection of the culture they came from. By encompassing items that had been discarded as useless, he wanted to show the values that American society had adapted. He exploited the qualities of splintered, shredded, crushed, burned, broken and stained to imitate violence.

In chapter two I am going to discuss Kienholz's individuality as an artist and his associations with his contemporaries.

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CHAPTER TWO.

KIENHOLZ AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

Edward Kienholz seems at odds with the canons of the mid twentieth century art scene. His peers include Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol amongst others. Although he belongs in this company, his work is not purely abstract, nor representational. His work stands apart.

Kienholz has also been associated with the Surrealist's use of imagery. For a time Edward Kienholz occupied an eccentric position in American sculpture as did Joseph Cornell.

It is in subject matter that Kienholz differs from the early twentieth century Dadaists and Surrealists. Marcel Duchamp (1887 - 1968), one of the leaders of the New York Dada movement, tended to work in a more detached, theoretical way. Kienholz addressed the topical and the vernacular with an implicit narrative. He knew how to exploit deliberate qualities of shock and sexual irony in a way similar to Man Ray. Kienholz managed to synthesize the techniques of Abstract Expressionist painting, Dadas' irony and absurdity and the Surrealist use of visual metaphors.

Kienholz shares in Dadas' obsession with the found object. Kienholz is in agreement with their belief in the beauty of the banal, the trivial and the discarded. The idea of the fusion of life and art was important to Kienholz. Art becomes more integrated into the world by embracing more of its materials.

Kienholz uses discarded objects to reconstruct everyday environments. His work was until the mid 1970's a confrontation with the darker aspects of contemporary American life. This type of work was generally excluded from the art of the 1950's and 1960's. Other artists offered a different sense of realism. Kienholz was expressing a desire for social change. He was part of a generation where optics, form and space were of primary concern.

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Andy Warhol (1928 - 1987) blurred the line between product and art. During the 1960's he created paintings based on comic strips, coca-cola bottles, dollar notes, Cambell soup cans, disasters, Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe. Like many of his peers, his subject matter derived from commercial art and the mass media. He presented icons of popular culture in a mechanical fashion.

The cool distanced presentations of the Pop artists allowed no place for Kienholz's rawness. He was carrying the load of contemporary life's gore.

Claes Oldenburg (1929 -) and Robert Rauschenberg (1925 -) also wanted to blur the boundaries between life and art, but in a different way from Kienholz. Their idea of extending the art space was an expansion of the concept of Action painting.

They wanted to aesthetize a greater number of activities and spaces previously untouched by art.

As a bid to break down the frontiers between art and life, Oldenburg opened The Store in December of 1961 at the Ray Gun Manufacturing Co. New York. It appeared to be a cross between a theatre, a clothing store and a coffee shop. Replicas of mass-produced objects such as bread, cake, shoes, dresses and shirts were displayed.

The store was concerned with art and fantasy, freedom, change, life and death in life (a theme frequently explored by Kienholz). A mannikin, dressed in white with a veil and corsage, resembling a corpse more than a bride greets her viewers. Although Oldenburg is deeply conscious of death's presence in life, The Store is essentially a celebration of life.

In Rauschenberg's Monogram (1955 - 1959), a stuffed goat wears a car tyre around its belly.

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Edward Kienholz revealed the distance between himself and other assemblagists in 1960 by providing a sly tribute to Rauschenberg and the other Pop artists working in New York at the time.

Kienholz's use of a deer's head in the piece entitled Odious to Rauschenberg (1960) was an antagonistic but amusing allusion to Rauschenberg's goat's head. Kienholz placed a long strip of wood in a cutaway portion of the head which according to him was

" a big kind of tongue that
sticks out"

(Pincus 1990 p. 38)

He motorized it so that it would turn around when its cord was plugged in.

It was advertizing imagery, consumerism and popular culture that remained at the core of the work of artists such as Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg and Warhol, while it was the predicaments of the powerless, the marginal and the victimized in American society that lay at the heart of Kienholz's work.

Edward Hopper (1882 - 1967) asserted in 1933 that

"a nation's art is greatest
when it most reflects the character
of its people"

(Joachimides and Rosenthal 1933 p. 454)

During the 1920's he was recognised as one of the major interpreters of the American scene. He depicted both urban and rural environments, inhabited by lonely, isolated figures. These individuals often painted gazing out of windows, evoke a bleak vision of modern America, a land of alienation.

Kienholz's rooms are filled with the clutter of life, letters, photos, items that possess a history of use. Kienholz's figures provide nightmarish, surrealist relatives to the lonely and victimized who do occupy such places in the real world.

The work of George Segal is often compared to that of Kienholz.

They are similar in formal strategy and both put a strong emphasis on theatricality. The figures of Segal appear withdrawn, uncommunicative and sullen. White and depersonalized, his sculptures are like ghosts. A silence envelops his pieces. Kienholz's pieces

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are a nightmarish confrontation between the viewer and his figures. Segal diffuses context with style. He emphasizes formal presentation over social context.

Kienholz and Segal both did pieces based on American bars. Kienholz created The Beanery [Fig. 2] in 1965 and Segal's The Diner [Fig. 3] was completed in 1966. An aura of loneliness surrounds the two pieces. The Beanery is a recreation of a Los Angeles bar. It is a place where people go to kill time. Each individuals' face is represented by a clock. The time is 10.10. This piece attacks all of the senses except taste. Kienholz concocted a chemical compound which he sprayed daily into The Beanery to give it the appropriate aroma. The mixture included bacon grease, beer and lavatory cleanser. Segal's piece depicts one lonely person walking into a diner, hoisting himself up onto a leather stool and being served by an indifferent waitress.

Environment is an integral part of the sculptures of both artists. Segal's organization of his pieces discourages the audience from entry into the spaces, in contrast to Kienholz's work where we are encouraged to participate in the action.

Kienholz's work is comparable to that of Joseph Cornell, in the sense that they both revitalize memories of their own experiences in their work. Joseph Cornell (1903 - 1972) couldn't live in the present. Things were not real to him unless they were past. He wanted to construct a historical past, a past that moved as a repetitive dream. Unlike the Surrealists, Cornell was not interested in the psychoanalytical interpretation of dreams. He was fascinated by the revival of the dream. Like Kienholz, his boxes derive from the tradition of collage. However he uses collage, not in the traditional sense of fragmentation and reconstruction, but in the acceptance of labels, stamps and advertisements as a way of making art. The element of challenge is between the reality of the objects and the representation of them, not in the collage itself.

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Cornell treated everyday objects as if they were treasures. He valued material not just for its intrinsic value but also as a means of inspiration. He was deeply involved with the postcard, the photograph, the photocopy and the printed reproduction. His library became the material he collected from various souvenir shops. He was interested in optical illusions, particularly those involving mirror imagery. In his diary, on April 15 1946, he wrote

There is a satisfactory feeling about clearing up debris on a cellar floor, sweepings' represent all the rich cross-currents and ramifications that go into the boxes.

(Ades 1980 p. 15)

Cornell's boxes invite touch like Kienholz, his work demands the spectator's intervention. Drawers must be opened and lids must be removed.

Sound is a part of the texture of Cornell's boxes. When his sandboxes are shaken, the sand rustles across the floor of the box. Cornell artificially aged his boxes to illustrate them in terms of decay. Layers of varnish were applied to his boxes to create the appearance of age. He left boxes out in the elements, as well as putting them in ovens, all adding to the suggestion of times past.

The ways in which pieces are made are of prime importance to both artists. The casting and fixing are as important to Kienholz as his objects. Cornell's interest in the craftsmanship of his boxes is evident.

Edward Kienholz is the one major American assemblagist of the 1950's and 1960's who did not change medium. By the mid 1960's Robert Rauschenberg had shifted his emphasis from his Combines to large pictures that employed photographic and printing techniques. Bruce Conner, a West Coast assemblagist, had forsaken assemblage and began making films.

The assemblage artists of the 1950's and 1960's in America wanted to assert the existence of a source of meaning, other than utility, efficiency and modernity. Kienholz wanted to reveal the underlying forces that propelled society. By selecting and juxtaposing objects that had been discarded as useless, he wanted to expose the values of American society. His objects were a reflection of the culture

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from which they came. As a result of this, Kienholz's figures appear to be emotionally mutilated and brutalized. The materials have been savaged by society that used, abused and eventually trashed them.

Kienholz's concern is more with the meaning of the object than the object itself. This depth of significance is what the Pop artists like Lichtenstein, Warhol and Jasper Johns refused to embrace and is what distinguishes Edward Kienholz from his peers.

In the following chapter I am going to discuss the effect Edward Kienholz's memories and experiences had on his work.

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Fig. 2. Edward Kienholz The Beanery (1965)





Fig. 3. George Segal The Diner (1966)



CHAPTER THREE.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ARTIST.

Much of the work of Edward Kienholz stems from the memories and experiences of his own lifetime. He turns these personal experiences into the experiences of the general public. Everyone can identify with his ideas. He turns his memories into contemporary issues so that they are accessible. He describes the effects his memories, experiences and emotions have on his art.

Experiences have a tendency with me to come back to me in four or five years time and then I'll try and sort it out, understand it and usually I'll build a piece from the experiences. And as I find out more and more about myself, I would like it if in some way to make the world better.

(Kemper 1989 p. 95)

He calls his pieces 'tableau' after seeing staged, costumed, stop-action presentations in rural churches and grange halls in his native city of Fairfield.

Kienholz's first environmental tableau Roxy's was exhibited in 1961 at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. Its subject is based on his memory of a visit to a brothel in Idaho when he was a teenager. Kienholz remembered

I went back in memory to going to Kellogg, Idaho, to a whorehouse when I was a kid, and just being appalled by the whole situation - not being able to perform because it was just a really crummy bad experience, a bunch of old women with sagging breasts that were supposed to turn you on, and like I say, it just didn't work.

(Pincus 1990 p. 24)

Roxy's was to be a pivotal work in Kienholz's career. It was to be viewed frontally as if it was a stage in a theatre. Many of his later pieces followed a similar format. Roxy's depicted the dreary existence of the prostitute. Upon entering, the viewer is

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greeted by The Madame (1961) [Fig. 4]. She is a wigged boar's skull, attached to a propped-up dress and is placed upon a pedestal. The morbid aura of the tableau is set. Five Dollar Billy (1961) [Fig. 5] is positioned on top of a sewing machine with a foot pedal. By pressing on this pedal the viewer is invited to become the customer. Cockeyed Jenny (1961) [Fig. 6] is a garbage bucket wearing a bra. Her head is a wig covered lid. A Lady named Zoe (1961) is a tall assemblage consisting of a doll's head and torso with a coin dispensing machine as an abdomen. A leg of a mannequin is her lower half.

The viewer has to piece together the visual and verbal clues to know the details of the prostitutes' lives. A letter concealed in the bottom dresser of Miss Cherry Delight (1961) [Fig. 7] reveals biographical details of her life.

The human scale rooms of Roxy's which housed the prostitutes were filled with props like a June 1943 calender, a picture of General McArthur and magazines of the time, to evoke the era of his childhood. Kienholz makes personal experiences into archetypal experiences.

The State Hospital (1964) [Fig. 8] is based on a mental institution where Kienholz worked as an orderly two years after leaving high school in 1948. He was appalled by the inhuman treatment of the patients by indifferent doctors and sadistic guards. Kienholz recalls.

There was a hell of a lot of a prison aspect to it and a lot of brutality, but much, much dirtier than One Flew [Over the Cuckoo's Nest]. I mean that would have been a model of a mental hospital compared to where I used to work.

(Pincus 1990 p. 64)

The front of The State Hospital looks like a prison cell. A padlocked door with a tiny window makes up the exterior of the human-scale white room. A sign displaying the words 'Ward 19' is fixed to the left-hand corner. The interior of the room can be seen by looking through the window of the door. The bars on the window enhance the prison-like ambiance of the piece.

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Inside, there are two cast figures lying on a set of bunk beds. Each figure is tied to his bed with a leather strap and bracelet. The bodies of the victims of this institution are heavily encrusted with drips and splashes of resin to enhance the aura of decay. The mattresses are soiled.

The subject for his plaster casts was a man named Ed Born, who was dying from cancer.

The piece is an image of tremendous mental and physical violence. It addresses the suffering of the individual in conjunction with the question of institutional cruelty.

The idea for Back Seat Dodge '38 (1964) [Fig. 9] came from Kienholz's own experience as an adolescent. His father owned a 1938 Dodge, which Kienholz borrowed.

There was a girl, I thought
 what a crazy situation: - to be
 that intimate with a person and not
 know who they are. It just seemed
 wrong to me in a way. And then
 I got to thinking about back seats
 and Dodges and the kind of world
 where kids are really forced into a
 cramped space. Like what a miserable
 first experience of sex most kids go
 through [the piece] worked just as I
 thought it would because you see
 the reflection of you in the car.

(Kemper 1989 p. 91)

This scene depicts the sexual experiences of millions of adolescents in America.

The props of this piece, like all of his other works are true to the era of a 1938 Dodge. A racoon's tail hangs from the antenna, an Olympia beer bottle lies on a patch of astroturf. The generic figures passionately embracing in the back of the car represent Everyman and Everywoman. The car radio plays a contemporary tune in contrast to the time in which the piece is set, emphasizing the point that the theme of the piece is renewable.

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Kienholz's own voyeuristic experience of a down-and-out in a hotel in Pasadena was the inspiration for Sollie 17 (1979 - 1980) [Fig. 1].

In truth it started in the Green Hotel in Pasadena, California. The year was 1963. I was walking down the second floor corridor when I passed an open door. Inside was an old man sitting on the edge of his bed playing solitaire on a wooden chair that was facing him. The room was furnished in average, seedy hotel style, and the light was slanting in through the only window in a soft and pleasant way. The thing that struck me as I walked past was the conflicting signals I read from the scene. The strongest came from the man, 'what the hell are you looking in here for? This is my place and you just keep your goddamn nose out of it'. The lesser feeling was 'Oh God, I'm so lonely, why don't you stop and talk a little bit'.

(Pincus 1990 p. 89)

Sollie 17 consists of three versions of the same man in a reconstructed room. The number of figures suggests his isolation in his cramped quarters.

Memorabilia from Kienholz's past became part of the tableau in Portrait of a Mother with Past Affixed Also (1980 - 1981) [Fig. 10]. The striking fact about this piece is the mother's solitude and self-absorption. We see her through an open door. Her face is represented by a photograph enclosed in an oval frame which is densely mottled. She holds a second photograph of herself at six years of age. The arms of a doll are attached to each side of the photograph as if her youth is calling her. The objects of this piece relate directly to Kienholz's life. His baby cup along with his mother's, sits on the shelf. A picture of Kienholz's father as a young man hangs on a wall and then rather disturbingly, we can see a picture of his father in a wheelchair after a stroke. The back wall of this tableau is mirrored. We as the viewers are the subject of the mirror. We are not just gazing at the aging process of another person. We are gazing at something that is happening right now, something no-one can control.

SMITH BROS
BOND

In chapter five I am going to write about the voyeuristic element in Kienholz's work, and his need for audience participation.

SWIFT BROOK
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EXETER BROOK
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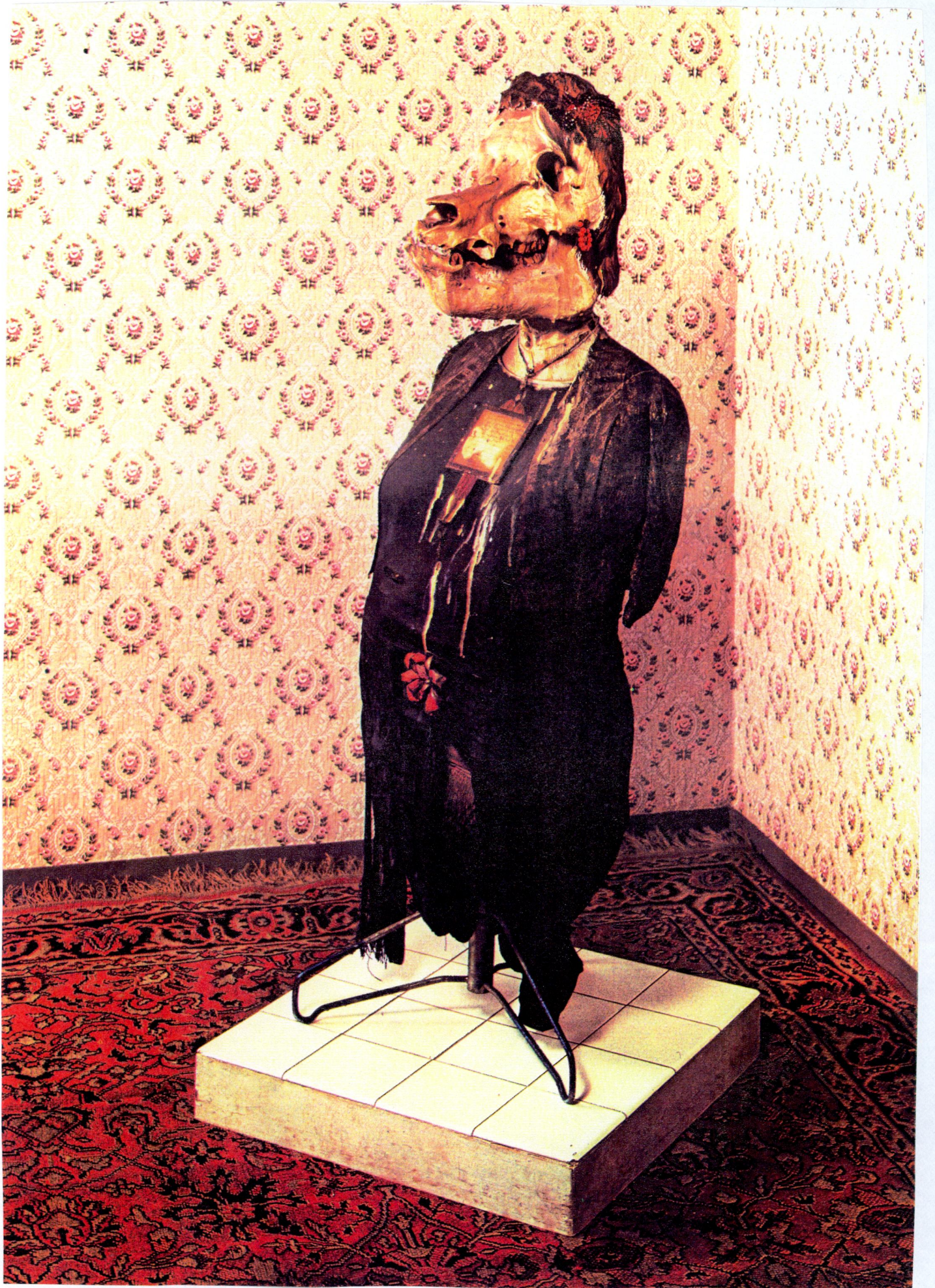


Fig. 4. Edward Kienholz The Madame (1961)



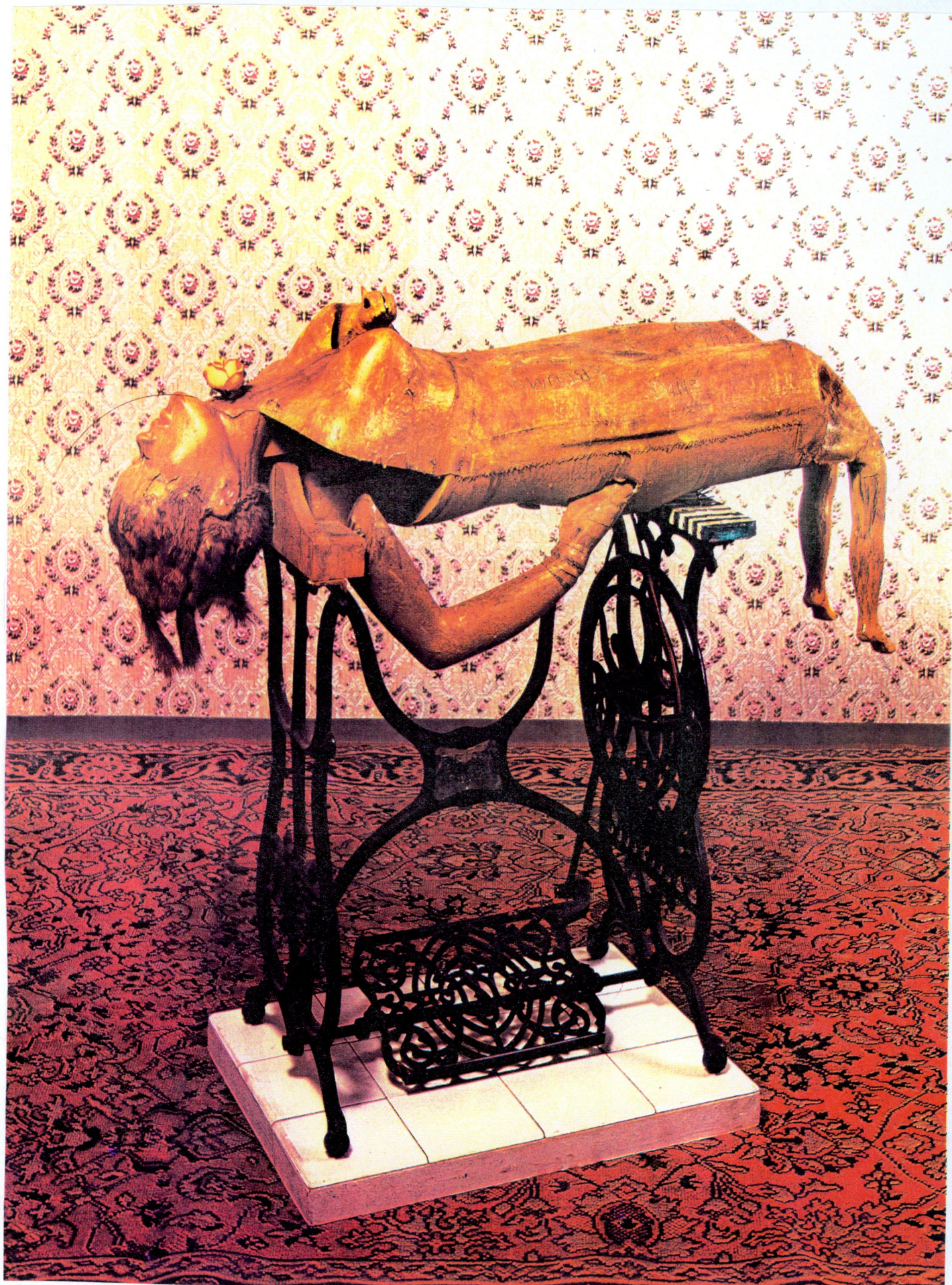


Fig. 5. Edward Kienholz Five Dollar Billy (1961)



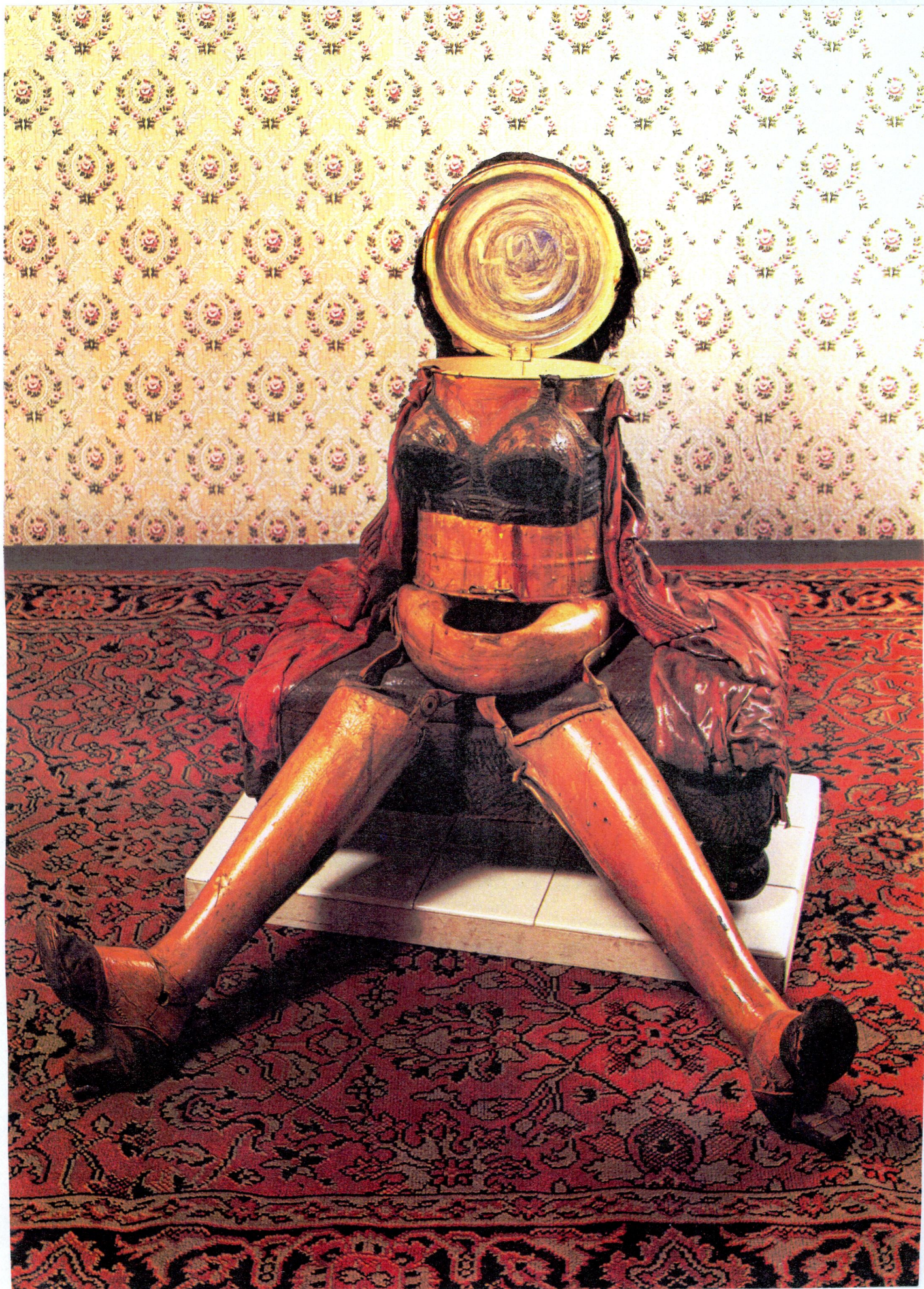


Fig. 6. Edward Kienholz Cockeyed Jenny (1961)



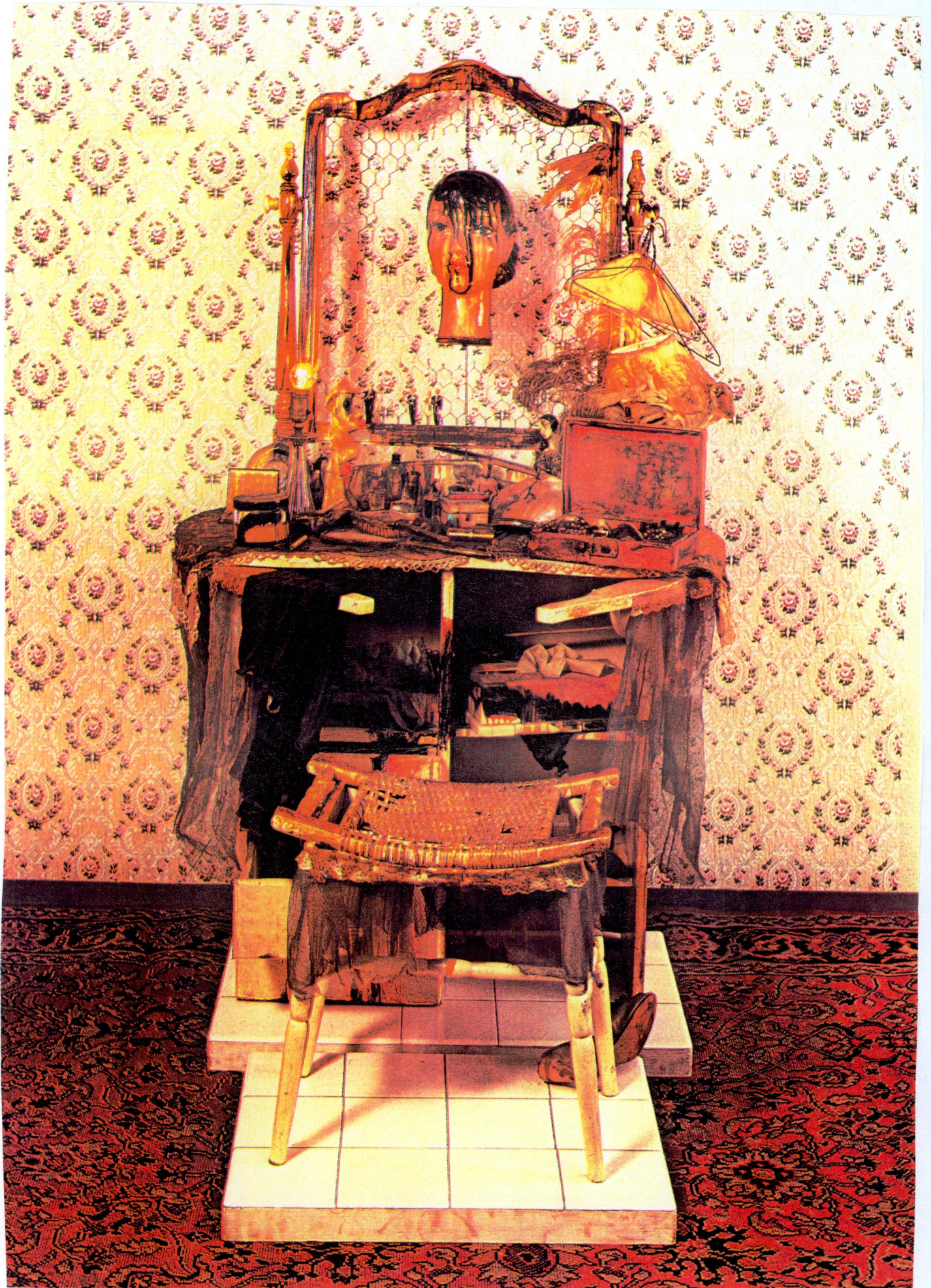


Fig. 7. Edward Kienholz Miss Cherry Delight (1961)



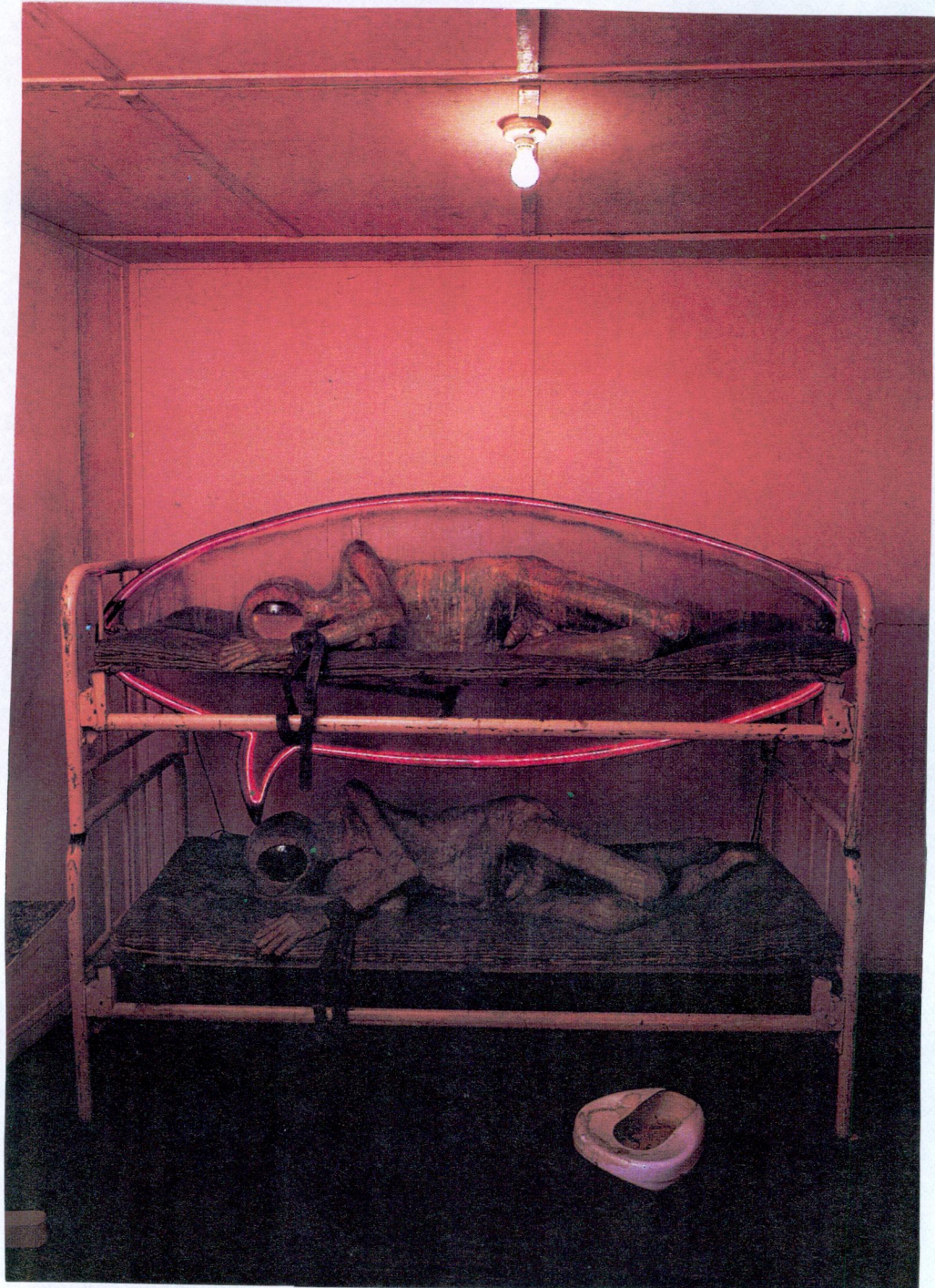


Fig. 8. Edward Kienholz The State Hospital (1964)





Fig. 9. Edward Kienholz Back Seat Dodge '38 (1964)

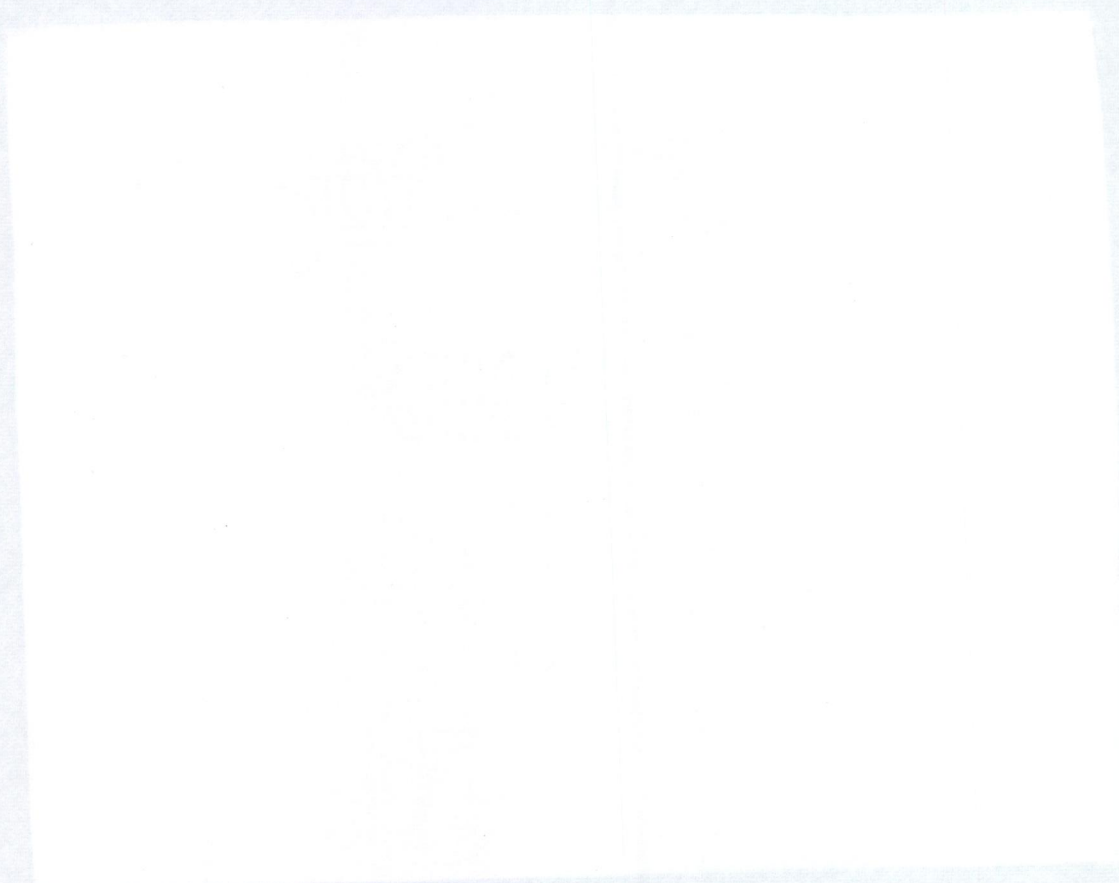




Fig. 10. Edward Kienholz Portrait of a Mother with Past Affixed Also
(1980 - 1981)



CHAPTER FOUR

VIEWER AS VOYEUR.

Looking is a loaded activity in Kienholz's work. His environments are designed so that people can walk around, open doors or activate mechanisms. His aim is to close the gap between artist and audience. The uncovering of meaning is dramatized as a transgression of the subject's privacy.

Kienholz's tableaux draw on the spectator's guilt, repulsion and voyeurism. His first free-standing assemblages present images of victims and victimizers. John Doe (1959) is depicted as the aggressor while Jane Doe (1960) is the victim. She is composed of a female Doll's head attached to a cabinet, containing drawers. This sculpture is covered up to her neck with an ornate bridal gown. The viewer has the option to lift the gown and open her drawers. Inside these drawers there are little trinkets which are metaphors for her sexual secrets. The viewer is forced to assume the role of aggressor if he or she wants to discover her secrets. Jane Doe is the passive victim of whatever amount of attention the viewer wishes to lavish upon her.

In Back Seat Dodge '38 (1964) [Fig. 9] the audience spies on a teenage couple in the throes of sexual passion. The viewer becomes the voyeur by opening the door of the car to discover what is happening.

The generic figures of this piece become almost like real people to Edward Kienholz. He gave names to the couple based on props he found in a thrift shop. He bought a three dollar watch and engraved on the back of it was 'To our son Harold'. He also bought a little pin that said 'Mildred'. The figures were named.

The watch was placed on Harold's arm and the pin on Mildred's dress Kienholz said

I really felt almost like crying
because Harold and Mildred became
real in the process of making them -
real enough that I felt like I betrayed
them by making them subject to the
will of anybody that wanted to
take the handle and open the door.

SWIFT BROOK
BOND

(Pincus 1990 p. 43)

Only the viewers curiosity can activate the sounds behind the six doors in Kienholz's Pedicord Apts. (1982 - 1983) [Fig. 11]. The voyeuristic element is the central theme of this piece, because the audience can only listen at each door by moving very close to it.

The viewer enters a doorway into a lobby, which leads to a hallway. The corridor gradually tapers as the viewer moves towards an exit sign. Along the corridor there are three doors on each side. The doors are locked. As the viewer approaches the doors in order to open them, they are close enough to activate a small gadget that triggers human sounds. The voyeur hears a marital row behind one door, a blaring television behind another, a sobbing woman in yet another. A dog lunges towards another door, reminding the viewer of what he or she is doing, listening to other people's business. There is a clatter of dinner dishes behind another and nobody appears to be home in another.

This tableau has a very dark undercurrent. As the viewer leaves the corridor he or she is faced with a mirror. The voyeur has been seen.

The audience have to squeeze their bodies through a door if they are going to see into the room of Sollie 17 (1979 - 1980) [Fig. 1], as the door only opens partially. There are three different depictions of a tired, lonely, old man in a delapidated motel room, killing time. The viewer looks at him while standing in exactly the same hunched position. Any feelings of superiority that the voyeur might have are killed instantly.

Kienholz termed the television the voyeur's box. The television was the medium by which the Vietnam War reached Americans at home. He asked this question in the 11 + 11 Tableaux catalog entry for his piece entitled The Eleventh Hour Final (1968)

What can one man's death, so
remote and far away, mean to most
people in the familiar safety of their
middle class homes?

(Pincus 1990 P. 67)

EMILY BROOK
BOND

The weekly toll of deaths during the war was etched on a television screen in this piece. The information was frozen dramatically. The mannequin head of a young girl floats in the bottom chamber of the television screen, contrasting with the abstractness of the numbers. The tranquility of voyeurism is broken as our eyes lock on the vivid image of death. This horrific image sensitizes the audience to the cruelties camouflaged by the media. We are forced to look inside the cavity of the screen rather than at numbers.

The television distances people from reality. We are bombarded with horrific images by the media all of the time. Television assures us that these atrocities happen to others. By watching death on the news we consume it. Death becomes a commodity.

Edward Kienholz brings his audience into the life of the victim. He provides us with environments in an effort to preserve life. People don't want to see isolated gore, because this numbs the senses. So Kienholz presents his victims in an environment which tells a story. He keeps his audience's eyes moving. This enables him to maintain the horror of his pieces. Although initially his pieces present an almost unbearable sight, the eye begins to travel, looking for more information. There is a controlled horror in his pieces. The human factor is often in the foreground while the destruction factor is in the background.

The Rhinestone Beaver Peep Show Triptych (1980) [Fig. 12] presents woman as a sexual object. However the theme of voyeurism implicates the viewer. He finds himself confronted with his own lustful thoughts. To the left of the tableau there is a rodent (symbol of man's lustful thoughts) held up by a masculine arm for reflection in a car wing mirror. This in turn is held up by a woman wearing nothing except black leather boots. The rodent motive becomes the woman's face. There is a huge image of the rodent's eyes depicted in the right hand panel. The eyes stare directly into those of the viewer as if he or she was the object of desire. Details of the woman's body namely the metallic mesh of her pubic hair or the zippers of her boots are highlighted by harsh spotlights.

SWIFT BROOK
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Kienholz audiences are often asked to recreate and continue his works' inherent process. The physical presence of people is an important element in his work and the area I find most fascinating. He closes the door between the artist and his audience by creating environments in which people can look, listen, eat, drink and rearrange elements, as if they were moving household objects around.

In chapter six I am going to discuss metaphors and symbols in Kienholz's work, with particular reference to his images of death in life.

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Fig. 11. Edward Kienholz Pedicord Apts. (1982 - 1983)



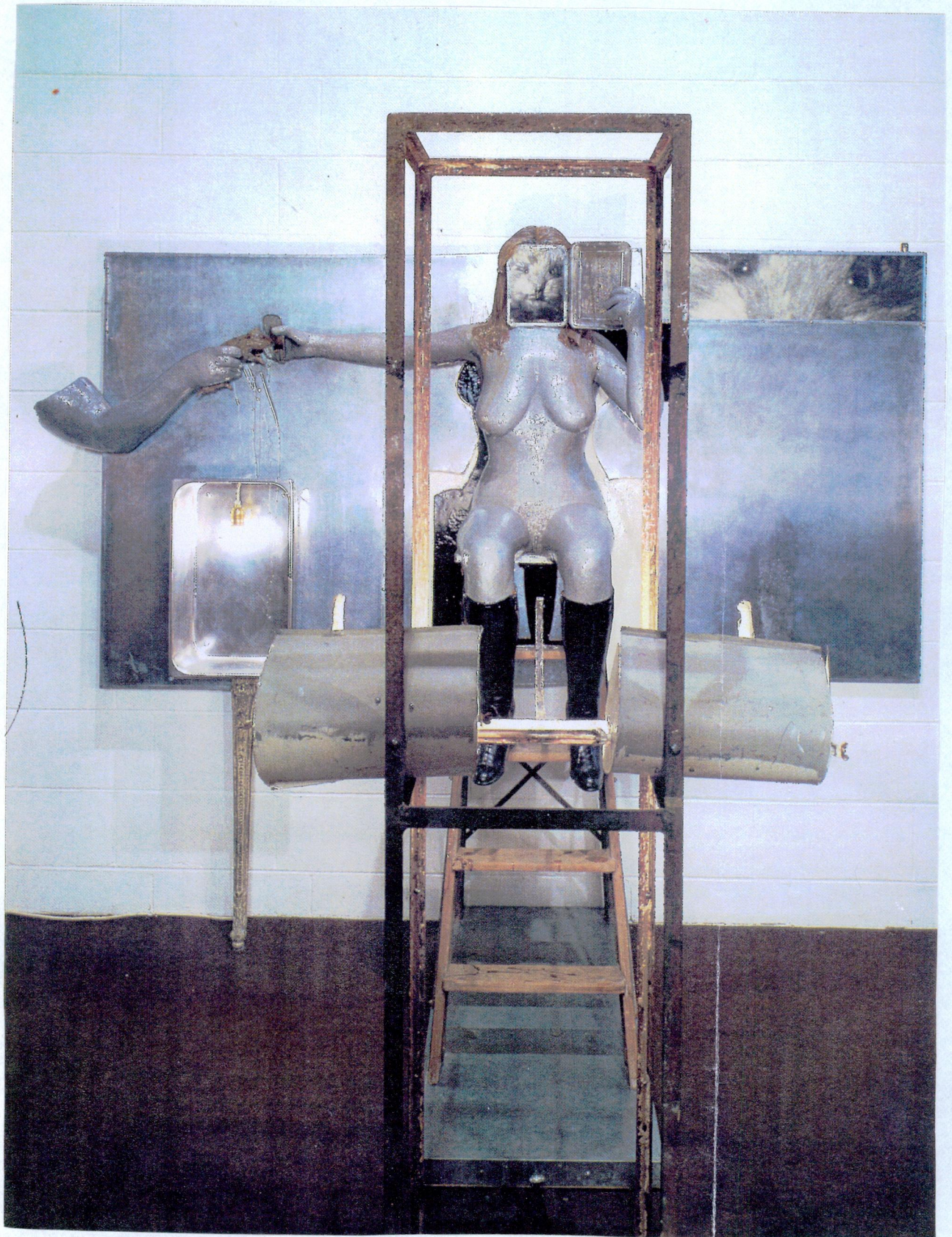


Fig. 12. Edward Kienholz The Rhinestone Beaver Peep Show Triptych (1980)



CHAPTER FIVE

METAPHORS AND SYMBOLS.

Kienholz focuses on the hidden meaning of objects making an entire work, as well as its individual components, function metaphorically and symbolically. He is particularly interested in symbols of death and in the image of the skeleton.

A central theme in the visual arts of Mexico is the concept of death. This expression is seen most clearly in the celebration of El Dia de os Muertos [The Day of the Dead] known as All Soul's Day. The festival has been held on the second of November since the end of the thirteenth century. It was known in Medieval times as All Hallows.

Mexicans have the idea that death and life are complementary. The skull image is popular, with skeletons frequently participating in the activities of the living in a similar way to Kienholz's depictions of man waiting to die.

Mexicans satirize the figure of death whereas, according to the standards of western culture, it must be tragic and feared by the living. This could explain why Kienholz's images of death appear shocking to some people. Stemming from the ideologies of the pre-hispanic roots of Mexican culture, death is a phenomenon as natural and logical as life itself. Death and life are two aspects of a single process. Mexicans establish a friendly relationship with death, but like Kienholz's depictions of death, the relationship is full of subtle irony and mockery.

In western society death is eliminated from life. It is almost impossible to imagine our own deaths and whenever we do so, we perceive that we are still spectators. The unconscious in us is convinced of our own immortality.

Kienholz forces us to face the imminence of death. The Madame (1961) [Fig. 4] of Roxy's (1961) is a presentation of the dead dressed up in the clothes of the living. Her head, a boars skull is propped up and covered by a dress. As the aged prostitute, she is an assembled metaphor like her four companions, of death in life. She is in a state of physical decay and grotesqueness.

SMITH BOND

The Wait (1964 - 1965) [Fig. 13] presents an old woman waiting for death. She is sitting in a rocking chair waiting. Her adult life is symbolized by photographs in the room. Although these photographs were collected in second hand stores and flea markets, we envisage them to be memories of her life. A young man's portrait sits on a table, possibly her husband. A large oval portrait of a moustached man hangs on the back wall. This could be her father. A jar serves as the old woman's head and on the front of the jar there is a picture of a youthful face which we presume to be hers. As this photograph is in contrast with her body, it evokes age and decay.

Her body is made up of hinged bones which poke out from underneath a dress. Her head, inside the glass jar is represented by a deer's skull. She is a costumed skeleton. A necklace of glass jars contains her clouded memories. The woman's sense of impending death is lightened by the live canary. She clings to her cat, terrified of what will happen to her.

Man is waiting to die in The State Hospital (1964) [Fig. 8]. The two cast figures of this piece, each lying on a bed, one above the other, possess lucid bubbles instead of faces. Two black fish swim in each bubble. The audience is looking at men in living death. The hollow spaces within their heads are metaphors for wasted minds. The black fish are metaphors for death and confinement, as they are swimming inside small bowls within each head. Kienholz said about the figure on the bottom bunk bed.

His mind can't think for him
past the present moment. He is
committed there for the rest of his life.

(Pincus 1990 p. 66)

Sollie 17 (1979 - 1980) [Fig. 1] provides a companion piece to The Wait (1964 - 1965), except that in the former case it is an old man waiting to die. He is entombed in his room. The place is sealed behind a wall of plexiglass. Although the image is not as overtly horrific as The Wait, the tragedy of the piece is conveyed by the morbid quality of his photographic head.

SMITH BOND

In Portrait of a Mother with Past Afixed Also (1980 - 1981) [Fig. 10], youth beckons the mother. This is represented by the outstretched arms of a doll which are attached to either side of the photograph which she holds. However she is looking away from the picture of herself as if she is absorbed by thoughts of death and an after life.

Kienholz's macabre iconography of the skeleton is in some ways similar to the figure of the 'transi' depicted during the middle ages. The transi was a decomposing corpse infected with worms and other insects. The figure of the skeleton was characterized by a consistently open mouth kept in a grimace known as a 'rictus'. This term was also associated with a toothless old man, a madman or a corpse affected by rigor mortis. By the end of the sixteenth century the transi was replaced by a clean dry skeleton, a 'morte secca'. Children still play with these on All Souls Day in Italy and all year round in Mexico. This skeleton was not from a hidden world. He leaped, flew and was continually in motion. He was no longer a collection of bones. The skeleton's animation had a disturbing effect, similar to Kienholz's images of the living dead.

Skeletons began to take the place of the dead. All that remains of Thomas de Marchant and his wife Ann Marie de Neufonge depicted on an early eighteenth century German tableau, situated in the Church of Tuntange in Luxembourg, [Fig. 14] is a skeletal couple. The skeleton of the husband embraces his wife, who clasps her bony hands in front of him. The agony of losing everything is portrayed in this tableau. Their individuality is dead.

Giovanni Battista Gisleni's tomb in Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome [Fig. 15] has a portrayal of the deceased, who looks alive. Below is a skeleton behind an iron lattice. Wrapped in a shroud, and his arms crossed he appears dead. However the inscription reads this Gisleni is not dead. This also depicts the opposition between the skeleton and the living. The Baroque sensibility registers the fact that life is empty.

Symbols of death were not restricted to cemeteries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Death symbols decorated objects used in daily life. They were worn in the form of rings, pendants and brooches. The skeleton was divided into small pieces and fastened to the surface of paintings, and placed inside and on top of rings.

In the Musee de Cluny in Paris, at Yale and at the Walters Gallery in Baltimore there are seventeenth century rings bearing skulls and crossbones. These ornaments were given by families to those who attended the funeral of one of their members. These symbols became known as 'memento mori'. The necklace of memories worn around the old woman's neck in Kienholz's The Wait (1964 - 1965) could also be seen as memento mori.

Memento Mori paved the way for 'Vanities'. These were originally confined to religious settings, like the walls of churches, or tombstones, but they eventually made their way into domestic homes as part of the decor.

The 'Vanities' were still lifes or portraits. The objects of the still lifes were captured by painters when the items were losing their freshness and sinking towards their decline. Withering flowers, stale bread and rusted weapons were often painted. The skull in association with the portrait was a familiar subject. These items symbolized the belief that death lies within all living things, a belief that Kienholz presented in his work.

This theme is also evident in sixteenth century tombstones. on the tombstone of J. Zener in Berlin there is a half length portrait of the deceased. In his left hand there is a death's head and he holds a watch (a symbol of time) in his right hand.

Sixteenth century painters examined the theme of death in life in Lucas Furtenagel's The Burgkmaier Spouses (1529) [Fig. 16], the couple see their own skulls when they look into the mirror. Their reflections are a depiction of their old age. They are waiting to die like Kienholz's portrayal of the woman in The Wait

(1964 - 1965) and Portrait of a Mother with Past Affixed Also (1980 - 1981) and his depiction of men in The state Hospital (1964) and Sollie 17 (1979 - 1980).

The hidden presence of death within life is explored in Ambassadors Jean de Dinterville and Georges de Selve (1533) [Fig. 17] painted by Hans Holbein the Younger. The skull is hidden at the centre of the painting and can only be seen from a specific angle.

SMITH BROS
BOND

The macabre images of death in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries turned violent and erotic in the seventeenth century. Flaying became the popular form of torture. There was an apparent sadistic taste for drama, pain and cruelty. These screams and gestures are all represented on Baroque walls. Death became inseparable from pain and torture.

A Saint Agatha by Cavallino (1622 - 1654) is plunged into an erotic and mystical ecstasy. She holds her hands over her bleeding breasts where they have been severed. Her breasts are presented on a plate.

The painters of this epoch took pleasure in distinguishing the colours of a dead body and that of a living body. Like Kienholz, colours of decomposition were of primary concern.

By the second half of the nineteenth century photography had superseded painting and the theme of death in life was still popular. Family albums frequently contained photographs of the dead. However the body was rarely photographed as if it was dead. The corpse was dressed in his or her best clothes, seated in an armchair and photographed with his or her eyes partly open. This particular type of photograph was mainly taken of children rather than adults. The death of children could not be tolerated, so they were photographed as if they were alive.

Kienholz is not afraid to confront death. His tableaux appear shocking to some people not only because of his subject matter but also because of his use of material. The symbol of death was a way of telling time to the people of the Middle Ages. The image of the skeleton was not always shocking. It was natural. Many paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries betray their fascination with death.

Until the early twentieth century, corpses were exhibited for public viewing, particularly in France. The execution of criminals was also a popular spectacle. The twentieth century brought about the transformation of the morgue into a laboratory and the guillotine was hidden behind prison walls.

Twentieth century taboos were a part of life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Edward Kienholz makes his audience think about subjects in a personal sense. We don't just think of the alienated in society as being victims, we think of ourselves as potential victims and victimizers. We as his audience are forced to address not only death but loneliness, old age, racism and women as sexual objects, topics which most people tend not to face up to.

The aura that permeates Kienholz's The Illegal Operation (1962) is [Fig. 18] also one of death. This piece is a sculptural metaphor for the backstreet abortion that would become a reality again if the people against abortion were to have their own way again. Abortion was illegal when Kienholz made this piece. The theatrical setting is an operation room for a backstreet abortion. A single lamp shines down on a shopping cart which is the surgical bed. A stool, a pot with a few medical instruments and a bucket filled with soiled and bloodied material surround the bed. A loosely figurative concrete slab falls out of a military sack. This represents the midsection of the female body.

The fact that the concrete form is not an exact replica of the female body makes the piece even more grotesque. Its shape is dismembered and utterly lifeless, heightening our awareness of the horror of an abortion that has gone wrong.

The Birthday (1964) [Fig. 19] is Kienholz's sculptural metaphor for the heartless male. This tableau again, demonstrates how much drama could be created within a single figure. The isolated figure of a woman is lying on a delivery table. Her alienation is accentuated by her child's father's note.

Dear Jane,

I couldn't come down now
because Harry needs me here. Ma
says she might make it later. Keep a
stiff upper lip kid.

(ha-ha)
Dick.

SMITH BROS
BOND

Arrows painted yellow and red protrude from Jane's stomach as symbols of her labour pains. A plastic bubble, partly painted red covers her mouth, a symbol for her silent screams.

Jane's isolation is intensified by the fact that the viewers of this piece are also voyeurs. There is a mirror positioned between Jane's legs. When we look between the figure's legs to see the birth, we see ourselves metaphorically as both parents and children.

The Gray Window Becoming (1983 - 1984) is also a representation of the lonely, isolated female figure. A cast of a nude woman sits at her dressing table, facing a mirror. One of her hands lies on a replica of a pig's head which is attached to the neck end of a banjo. The instrument is in turn in the grip of a masculine hand. The pig becomes a surrogate male as the female form appears to be whispering into its ear. The vacant stare of the pig's eyes offers no sign of compassion.

The air of isolation is increased by the other symbolically charged objects surrounding the woman. There is a stuffed bird resting on her right arm. A photograph of a young woman's face is looking sadly at the figure of the tormented woman. This could be a reflection of her youth as in The Wait (1964 - 1965) and Portrait of a Mother with Past Affixed Also (1980 - 1981). A sheet of galvanised steel, on her right hand side increases the feeling of captivity and bleakness. A gun lies beside her bible on her dressing table. Is she contemplating suicide?

Edward Kienholz shows his audience what is repellent and ugly in American society. The true value of life is underestimated. People seek power, success and wealth for themselves. They look for these qualities in other people. The lonely and isolated in society are omitted from reality.

Edward Kienholz exposes the psychological and physical forms of oppression and violence that existed in American society. Allen Ginsberg's poem America (1956) echoed Kienholz's disgust with his own culture at the time.

America I've given you all
and now I'm nothing
two dollars and twenty seven cents
January 17, 1956
I can't stand my own mind
America when will we end the human war?
Go fuck yourself with your atom bombs

Allen Ginsberg (1956)

In the final chapter I am going to discuss the various changes in Kienholz's art with particular reference to his move to Berlin in 1973 and the effect this had on his work.

SWIFT BROOK
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Fig. 13. Edward Kienholz The Wait (1964 - 1965)





Fig. 14. Funerary medallion of Thomas de Marchant et d'Ansembourg and his wife Ann Marie de Neufonage, Church of Tuntange, Luxembourg.



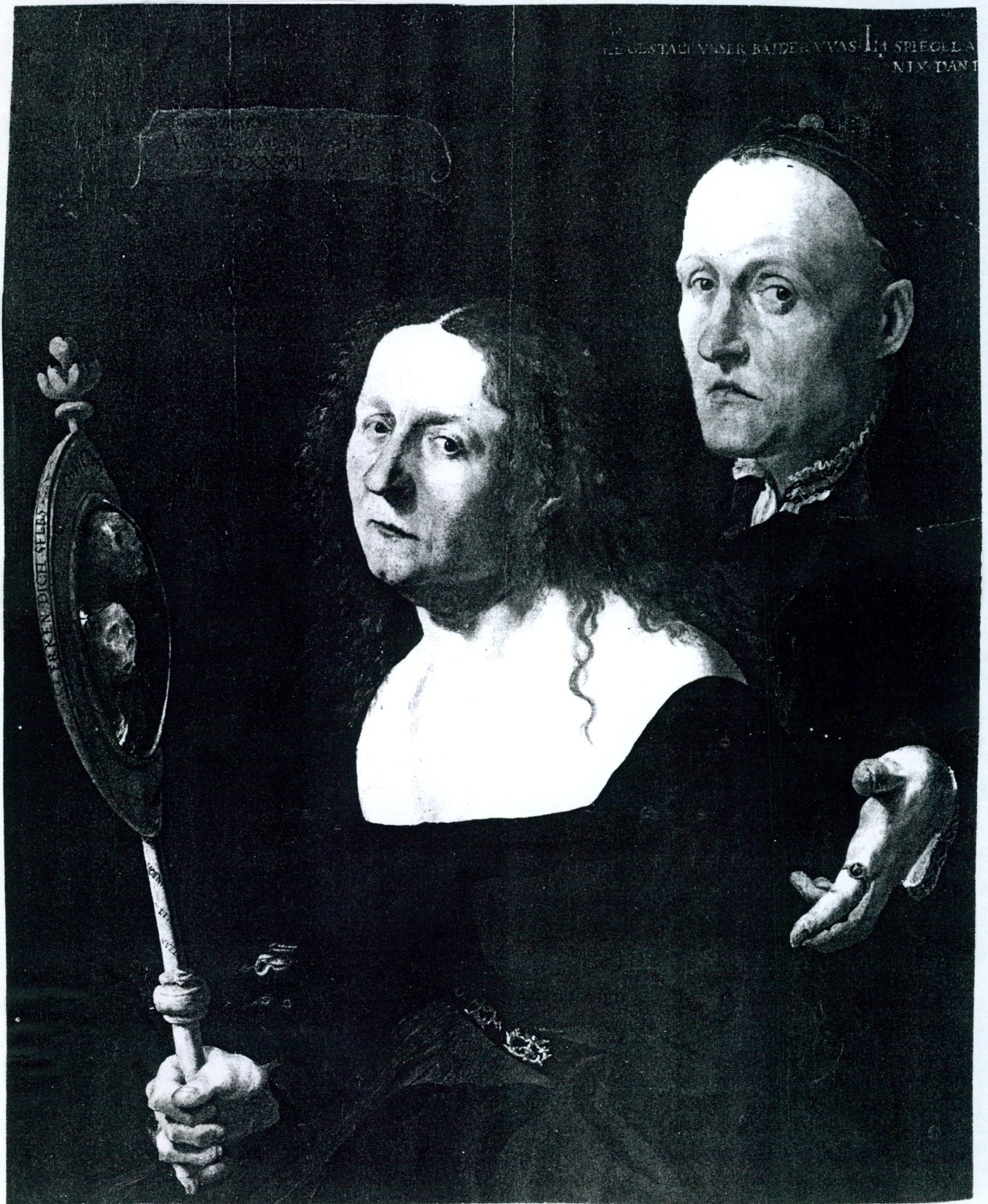


Fig. 16. Lucas Furtenagel. The Burgkmaier Spouses (1529)



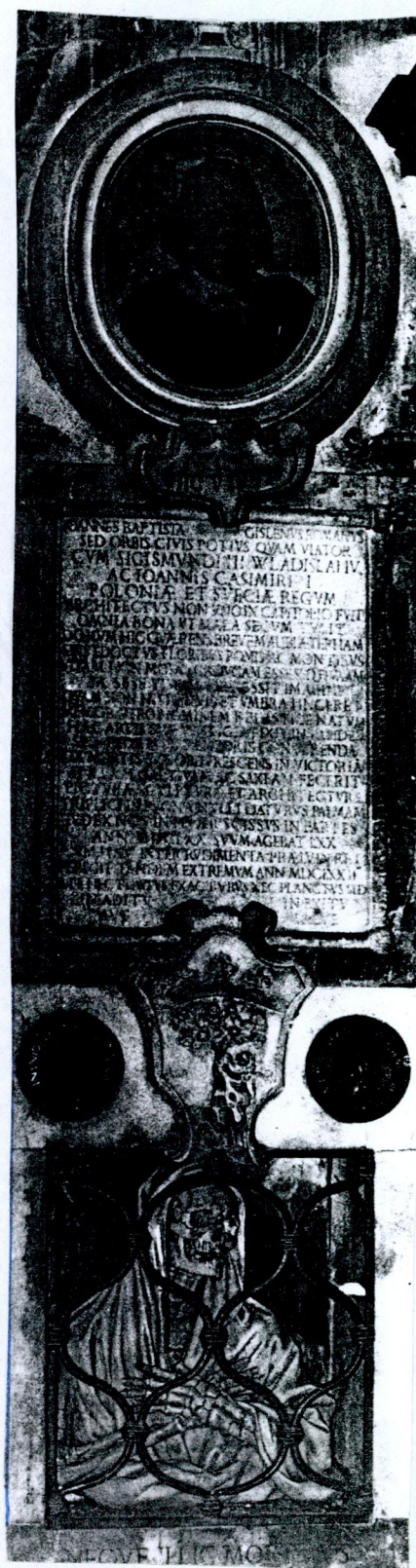


Fig. 15. Giovanni Battista Gisleni tomb, Rome.



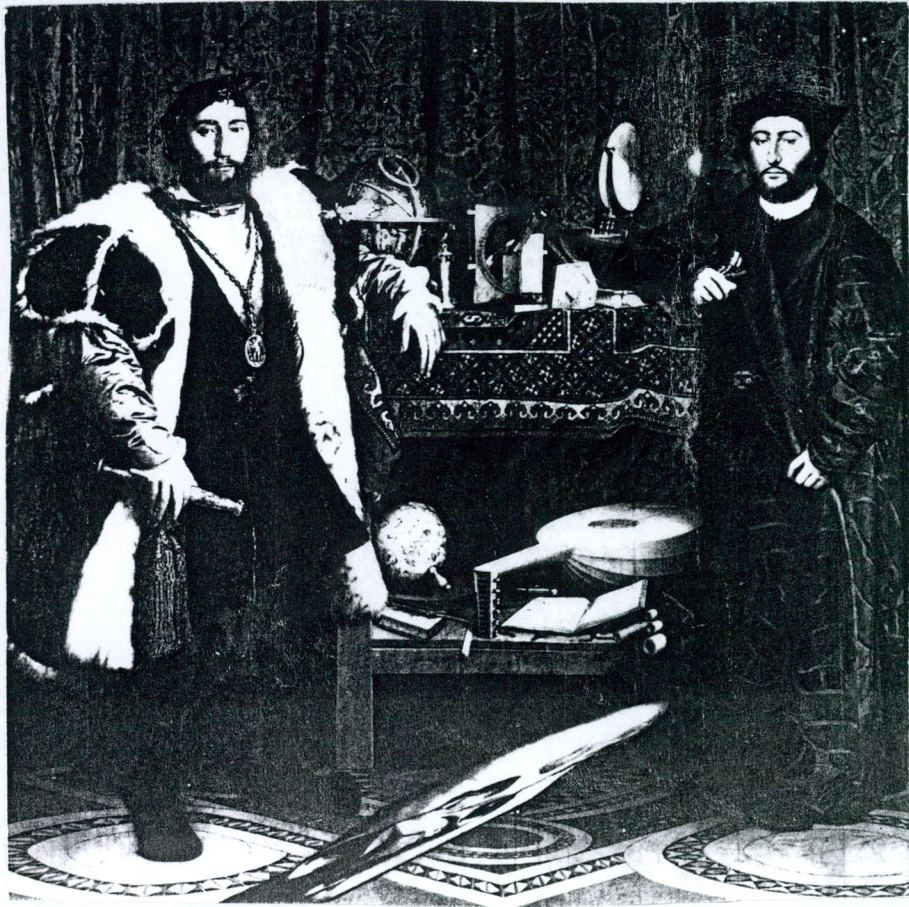


Fig. 17. Hans Holbein the Younger. Ambassadors Jean de Dinterville and Georges de Selve (1533)





Fig. 18. Edward Kienholz. The illegal Operation (1962)





[Fig. 19] Edward Kienholz The Birthday (1964)



CHAPTER SIX .

CHANGES IN KIENHOLZ'S WORK.

Although Edward Kienholz began his career as an artist by creating paintings on plywood, he gradually began to add more and more scraps to form a relief surface. However none of the leading art dealers showed an interest in his work so he established his own gallery. It was in 1957 that he opened the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles with his partner Walter Hopps. Kienholz was to remain a gallery artist until 1961. The year 1959 marked a new era for Kienholz, for it was during those twelve months that he created John Doe (1959). His work of the 1960's developed from this point. The inspiration for his assemblages of this period was anger and disgust with his own culture. He said at that time

"Adrenalin producing anger
carried me through that work"

(Pincus 1990 p. 12)

After Kienholz's completion of The Beanery (1965) [Fig. 2], he no longer felt the need to build every tableau he imagined.

Once The Beanery exists as an
example of my craft'; then I
should be able to trade in just
ideas rather than the physical presence.

(Pincus 1990 p. 48)

During 1966 and 1967, Kienholz concentrated on an idea he had three years previously. That was his Concept Tableau. It was a different approach to the production of his art. He began making framed descriptions of his work accompanying them with bronze title plaques.

It was just as easy to exhibit
them as wall plaques. When
realized, there would be a place for
them to go. I wouldn't have to
worry about storing them'.

(Pincus 1990 p. 51)

Kienholz's customer could buy the description of the work for a fee. In return for an additional fee he would create a drawing and for a third fee he would construct the tableau.

SMITH BOND

However this conceptualist phase of Kienholz's career was short lived. He ended the production of his Concept Tableau in 1967. Technically speaking only two of his conceptual pieces were sold. The Office Building (1964) and The Commercial No. 2 (1964). Only the latter was realized. The former was bought by his former art dealer Virginia Dawn. It was to be in a four or five storey office building, with additional rooms containing sculptural business men and women.

The State Hospital (1964) [Fig. 8] had been a Concept Tableau initially. However he had already constructed it before it was bought by Moderna Museet from Stockholm.

It appears as if Kienholz was a pre-cursor of Conceptual Art. The nature of his thoughts was somewhat different from those of the conceptualists. The completed sculpture was Kienholz's desired result from his Concept Tableau. The conceptualists were interested in inquiry as opposed to object making.

At the end of the 1960's, Kienholz began a series of Watercolours. A series of words were painted at the center of a 12 x 16 sheet of paper. The background was painted in a delicate wash. The watercolour sold for the amount painted on it. One of the first pieces he painted read For Nine Screwdrivers. He traded it for screwdrivers worth \$14.30. He also painted sums of money on the pieces. Kienholz explained the origins of his work,

Why can't an artist just trade
for what he wants without
running downtown all the time
to get it.

(Pincus 1990 p. 74)

His watercolours provided a brief interlude before his return to the horrors of American society.

Kienholz's marriage to Nancy Reddin in 1972 also brought about changes in his work. In a catalogue produced in 1981 accompanying an exhibition entitled The Kienholz Women, Kienholz declared that Nancy Reddin was to receive equal credit for all of the works created since 1972. Although she had never created art before meeting Edward, she soon became immersed in the work.

SAFETY BOND

Since their collaboration there has been an increased use of photography in their tableaux. This emphasis on photographs began with Sollie 17 (1979 - 1980) [Fig. 1] and is continually used in his work today.

Although the basic principles of the work Kienholz began creating in the 1960's persist, his use of imagery is no longer obviously horrific. The emphasis is on poignant rather than grotesque forms. The sadness and tragedy of the world is still powerfully conveyed.

Perhaps the largest change in Kienholz's work occurred during the years 1973 to 1984. He won a fellowship from the Deutschen Akademickischer Austauschdienst to set up a studio in Berlin. His move to Germany in 1973 inspired work on German culture. He moved away from the iconography of American life until 1979 with the Spokane series.

The idea for Volksempfangers' (1975 - 1977) was conceived when Kienholz discovered an old bakelite radio, while he was rummaging through an old German flea market. This piece confronts the way national socialist policies were dramatized for the medium of radio. The radios became metaphorical representations of the German male and his female counterpart. The 'ideal' German wife and mother are signified by old fashioned washboards. They symbolize household drudgery. The bleakness of this piece conveys the horror of Nazi Germany.

Joseph Beuys (1949 - 1986) was concerned with twentieth century man's inhumanity to his fellow man. Beuys described his piece entitled Tram Stop (1976) as a monument to the future. It is also a monument to the history of Europe. It is expressed with a terrible sense of pain which is both autobiographical and general. Anselm Kiefer is also a painter of this German depression. The suffering of Germany is matched by his use of materials:- Straw, sand and ash.

Otto Dix (1891 - 1969) and George Grosz (1883 - 1959) described with horrific accuracy the war cripples, the mutilated and the disabled of World War 1 who had been neglected by the rest of society.

SMITH BOND

It was during his years away from America that Kienholz re-evaluated his approach to his depiction of American culture.

With the opening of the exhibition entitled Ed and Nancy Reddin Kienholz, Human Scale in San Francisco in 1984, the couple were reintroduced to the American scene. There was a radical difference in the tone of their tableaux. The Spokane series [Sollie 17 (1979 - 1980), The Jesus Corner (1982), Night Clerk at the Young Hotel (1982 - 1983) and The Pedicord Apts. (1982 - 1983)] presented society's marginal types in a less grotesque and more straightforwardly human way.

Edward and Nancy Reddin Kienholz maintain two studios, one in Berlin and the other in Hope, Idaho. He describes this decision as follows,

I know I function well in Berlin mostly because I don't have the input of the news constantly, the tv images, news and stuff. I know that when I'm here (in the U.S.) I'm hurt a lot more by the things that go on. Like if there's a piece I want to build, I hurt for it and I don't know how in the hell to do it What happens to me is like when I say I hurt for that I mean, I really hurt, you know, and it gets in the way of my natural ability to function in a lot of ways and the same stuff is going on in Europe, but I can't understand the language. I'm home free - you know I'm happy as a jay bird over there.

(Wight Art Gallery 1989 p. 94)

SWIFT BROOK
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CONCLUSION.

This essay traces the development of Edward Kienholz's work particularly his American pieces, from his days as an artist in the San Fernando Valley in 1954 up until the present day.

I have discussed him in terms of his relationship with other post-war American artists, Mexican Folk artists and Medieval artists. However, he cannot be placed within a specifically defined sphere of art. His work stands apart. His sculpture gains definition not only in terms of itself but by its relationship to reality. His work is not élitist, although he did occupy an eccentric position in the American art scene of the 1960's. His work is accessible to a wide and general audience although his work was not accepted by American culture and its critics until the 1980's.

We experience the tableaux he and his wife Nancy have created as if they were places we have visited during our own lifetime. We confront the troubling aspects of our lives through their work. The viewer becomes as important as the pieces themselves.

I believe that Edward Kienholz is the pioneer of socially critical art. He was prepared to be ignored and disregarded for something he firmly believed in. As a result of this unrelinquished determination and an innovative mind, Edward Kienholz has never ceased to be an inspiration to me. He created a new genre in art which is yet to be defined. So many artists are forever in his debt.

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