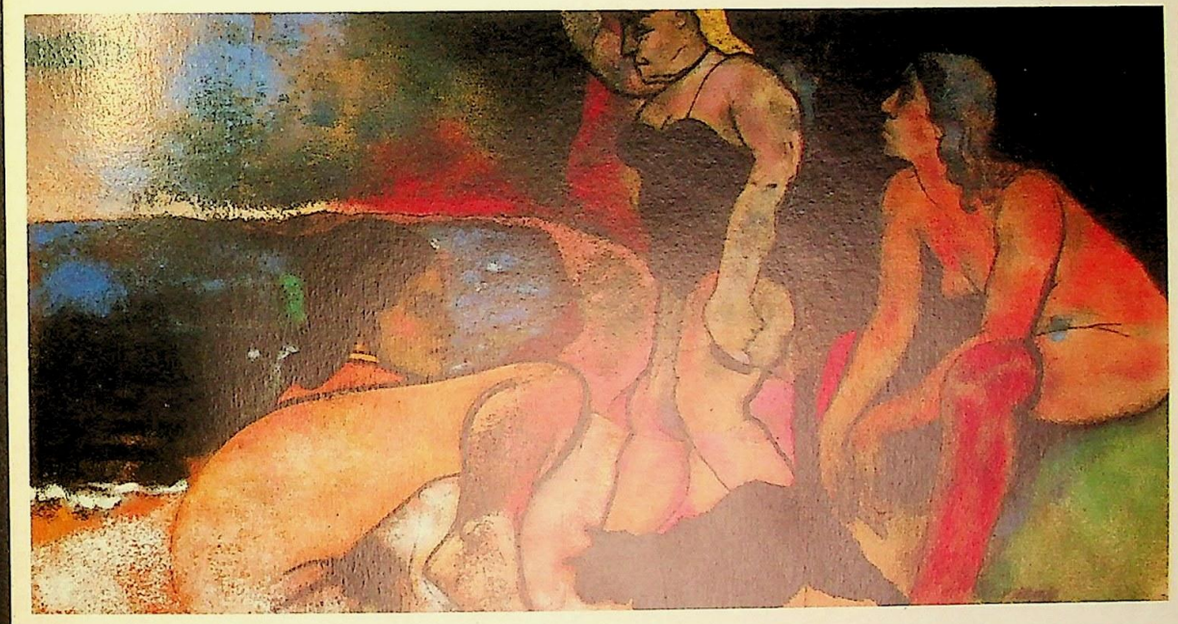
DISMANTLING THE NEW TENT :
The Work of R.B. KITAj.



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DISMANTLING THE NEW TENT
THE WORK OF R. B. KITAJ

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO:
THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN & COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

FACULTY OF FINE ART

DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING

BY

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MAY 1984

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INTRODUCTION

"All form is an effect of character, all beauty of truth....."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

My first encounter with the work of R. B. Kitaj was in 1981 when I came across the catalogue to his 1980 exhibition of pastels and drawings, held at the Marlborough Gallery, London (8th Oct - 7th Nov).

The impact that these works had on me was partly due to the fact that, I, in my own work at the time, was very much concerned with painting and drawing the figure. Kitaj in many of these drawings and pastels displayed similar concerns, some were straightforward life drawings in charcoal and pastels. Works like Marynka 1979 (Fig 60) and The Yellow Hat 1980 (Fig 61).

The artists whose work had interested me most at that time were Cézanne, Degas and Bonnard. The fact that these were historical figures from another era was to some extent disconcerting. What relevance could such work have to contemporary art, or indeed to contemporary life compared to the sophisticated art-practices of the early eighties that I was becoming aware of?

Kitaj's work came as a revelation to me. I felt that here was a contemporary artist producing vital, interesting art, which had as its basis the practice of drawing the figure. However the works that interested me the most, were not the life-drawings, impressive as they were, but works like The Listener (Joe Singer in Hiding) 1980 (Fig 42), Bather (Tousled Hair) 1979 (Fig 40) and the enigmatic The Rise of Fascism 1979 - 80 (Fig 44). These works, while obviously indebted for much of their power to Kitaj's mastery of the art of drawing the human body, also displayed his great virtuosity in the manipulation of both imagery and materials, particularly evident in his use of the qualities of the paper.

In Stephen Spenders introduction to the catalogue Kitaj cited as the artists that had influenced him most in this work figures like Cézanne, Degas, Munch and Picasso. This context interested me greatly. He also spoke of how "after half a digressive lifetime" he had had to "dismantle" his own "unhappy resources and begin to draw all over again."[1]

Since then I have read much on R. B. Kitaj and I have been lucky enough to have seen some of his work at first hand. I have also read many of his own statements and I have discovered that his career has indeed been digressive.

In her essay "R. B. Kitaj in the Larger Picture" Jane Livingston says of Kitaj;

> "Whether or not he fully knows it, Kitaj will not be content to separate his life with all its tribulations and celebrations from whatever it is he achieves on the canvas."[2]

This quote sums up nicely one of Kitaj's distinguishing attributes; he is an artist whose work is inextricably bound with his life, his "condition" as he would put it. Unlike many of his contemporaries Kitaj can not conceive of art as a kind of sterilized, purified, meditative activity, believing as he does that the infinite complexity of life is "the very stuff of art".[3] This is all related to Kitaj's view of art; he believes that the personality of the artist swallows aesthetic criteria and that the subject of a painting can instigate its formal achievement:[4]

> "I have long believed that the personality of the artist subsumes form and content..... This personality or personeity is a driving force in art. It swallows aesthetic criteria."[5]

For this reason it is impossible to truly understand Kitaj's work without taking into account the many factors in the mans life and times and this is one reason why the following study will have a loosely chronological format.

FOOTNOTES

1. Kitaj quoted by Stephen Spender, "R. B. Kitaj an introduction by Stephen Spender." R. B. Kitaj Pastels and Drawings, 8th October - 7th November. 1980 Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd pp. 5 - 7

2. Jane Livingston "R. B. Kitaj in the Larger Picture" Ashberg, Shannon, Livingston and Hyman, Kitaj's Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.36

3. Frederic Tuten "Neither Fool nor Naive nor Poseur - Saint: Fragments on R. B. Kitaj" Artforum, January 1982 p. 65

4. Ashberg, Shannon, Livingston and Hyman p.46

5. Tuten, p.68

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Kitaj's Childhood, Background and Studies in New York and Vienna

Ronald Brooks was born in Cleveland Ohio on October the twenty ninth, 1932. He was raised by his mother, Jeanne Brooks who in 1941 re-married a refugee from Vienna, Dr. Walter Kitaj, a research chemist, the couple were of Russian Jewish origin.[1]

Kitaj showed an interest in art from an early age, he drew constantly, spending much of his time in Clevelands Museum of Art where he attended childrens art classes:

> "As a child, I lived nearby one of the best American museums (Cleveland) and my early years were brightened by that great place... Certain pictures will stay with me for ever. A Bassanio banquet, a Greco Holy Family, Picasso's La Vie of 1903 (which I still look at once a week in a book), Albert Ryder's Death Rides a Pale Horse, and George Bellow's superb boxing epic; Stag at Sharkey's... I lived in that place and took my first art lessons in their children's classes. I remember drawing from the Greek statues and I even remember the names of the instructors and how encouraging they were."[2]

Kitaj's parents were "enlightened working people,"[3] with socialist ideals (some of his mothers friends went off to fight in Spain) and they encouraged the young Kitaj's interest in art.[4]

In 1943 the family moved to Troy, New York. Here Kitaj attented Troy High School (1946-50) his interest in art continued. He was "always drawing."[5] By then he had already begun his life-long self-education in the history of art; at eighteen he was reading Panofsky who's writing was to be a strong influence on his early work,[6] and was keenly interested in Surrealism and the work of Duchamp.[7]

In 1950 at the age of eighteen Kitaj went to sea, working on a Norwegian cargo ship between Havana and Mexican ports. In the same year however, he also spent one semester studying art at the Cooper Union Institute for the Advancement of Science and Art, in New York. Here he studied under The Painters:Dowden, Zucker Farren, and "a spell-binding teacher" Sidney Delevante.[8] Here he also met the painter Robert Gwathmey whose work in the 40's "prefigured the freedom of Wesselman and Kitaj himself".[9]

However Kitaj's stay at the Cooper Union was to be brief, for in 1951 he once more went to sea. Obtaining American seaman's papers, he

worked on tankers to Caribbean and Venezuelian ports. In October of this year he resumed his studies, this time in Vienna at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste,[10] incidentally this was the school where Schiele had studied.[11] His reasons for choosing Vienna are unclear, but his step-father had come from there, and he recalls his grandmother talking to him of the place as a child.[12]

At the Academy Kitaj worked in the studios of Professor Albert Paris von Gütersloh "one of those morbid Viennese Surrealists not unlike Burra."[13] Gütersloh had been a friend of Schiele and as a young man had had his portrait painted by him.[14] Here Kitaj drew from the models every day:

> "rosy with the cold, who were meticulously posed early in the morning (even to the placement of the joints of their fingers)."[15]

Gütersloh worked in his own adjoining studio occasionally coming to"bless" his students. Here too Kitaj studied anatomical dissection.[16] His studies in Vienna must have confirmed and increased his abiding interest in, and passion for, drawing from the human form, which was so important throughout his career and especially evident in his later work.[17] Another influence in this respect must have been the fact that he had, in Vienna the opportunity to study the work of such painters and masterly draughtsmen as Klimt and Schiele at first hand, especially since the work of these artists was not as well known outside Austria as it is today.[18] He also had the opportunity to study many other lesser known Austrian artists and the great Velázquezes and Bruegels in the Hapsburg collection. However these meant less to him than "Kafka and Joycean exile"[19] an indication of his early pre-occupation with literature and literary figures rather than painterly ones, that has been a distinguishing factor in his career and indeed in his work.[20] His abiding memories of his time in Vienna however tend to be of his travels[21] and the bohemian life-style he shared with his fellow students. These and perhaps his constant reading may have had more profound influence than any other factor. In Vienna he met his future wife an American girl, Elsi Roessler from Ohio.[22]

In 1953 Kitaj once more returned to New York, only to resume his seagoing. Joining the National Maritime Union he shipped out mainly on South American runs, to Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Uruquay, and Argentina. He married Elsi and returned with her to Europe on money he had earned from seagoing, travelling, painting and drawing in Europe and North Africa, and spending the winter in Sant Feliu de Guixols in the Catalan region of Spain.[23]

In 1954 he shipped out of New York for the last time. The following year he was conscripted into the United States Army and after basic training was posted to the Armed Forces Central Europe Headquaters at Fontainebleau, living in the village of Thoméry, the landscape around which had been made famous by the Impressionists in their paintings. His spell in the Army was to be brief. Two years later in 1957 he was discharged.[24]

OXFORD AND ICONOLOGICAL STUDIES

In 1958 Kitaj's career as a painter effectively began. On his discharge from the army he availed of a grant under the G. I. Bill of Rights, in order to further his studies. He travelled to Oxford to study at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art.[25]

Oxford was to be very important to the development of Kitaj's art, here he had the opportunity to continue his studies in two quite different fields, both of which were to be important to his work; the practice of regular drawing from the human figure and the study of the history of Art and more particularly of iconology.[26]

During his studies in New York and Vienna, Kitaj had established this practice of constant drawing from the model, a practice which had and indeed continues to have the greatest relevance and importance for his art. It is interesting that in a major retrospective exhibition of Kitaj's work in 1981[27] the two earliest works shown were life-drawings he produced while studying at Oxford. Miss Ivy Cavandish (Oxford) 1958 (Fig. 1) and Ashmolean Drawing (Oxford) 1958. These extremely competent sensitive, if slightly academic drawings testify to Kitaj's early mastery of the activity of drawing from the model.

As we have seen Kitaj's self-education in the history of art had begun early, while he was a teenager in New York in fact.[28] Kitaj's choice of the Ruskin as his place of study may well have been influenced by the fact that at Oxford he had access to the many prestigious libraries of the University. Reading in these libraries, Kitaj came across, in the Journals of the Warburg and Courthauld Institutes, the work of the Warburg scholars; Fritz Sax 1 and more importantly, Edgar Wind, the then Professor of Fine Art at the Ruskin. Wind's work was to be very influencial on Kitaj's thinking and ultimately on his art.[29]

> "Wind certainly was a tremendous encounter in my life. But it was coincidental..... I remember coming on the Warburg Journals in the Ashmolean library."[30]

Wind lectured to unprecedentedly large audiences at Oxford on the interpretation of the work of the great Italian renaissance painters, like

Mantegna, Botticelli and Michelangelo. In these lectures he explained the elaborate mythological contexts of these works. Wind believed that because of the esoteric nature of much of renaissance painting, which was deliberately oblique in its use of metaphor, a study of iconography was required to remove its "veil of obscurity."[31]

Kitaj had been introduced to the subject of iconography by his reading of Panofsky who defined it thus*

> "That branch of the History of Art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of a work of art as opposed to its form."[32]

Iconology was defined by Panofsky as the:

> ".....discovery and interpretation of the intrinsic meaning or content.... apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of; a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion - qualified by one personality and condensed into one work."[33]

Unlike the formalist critics in general, the Warburgians, according to Saxl, saw the study of art not as "a mere history of artistic vision"[34] but rather as only one branch of the cultural history of its time intricably linked with history, politics, literature, religion and philosophy and undergoing mutual influence with these other fields.[35]

This approach to the study of art and its history, interested Kitaj greatly, particularly the concept of the work of art as a carrier of meaning far beyond the concern of form alone. Indeed this attitude has always distinguished his art. As Laurence Alloway has put it in talking of Kitaj's "Pop" work;

> Kitaj's preference as a painter is for an art that is not bound completely to the marks on the canvas. The world outside of the canvas and the routes and chances of connectivity with the painting, is his pre-occupation."[36]

Kitaj wanted to create an art that while being engaged with formal concerns also had the ability to refer to and comment on, issues outside of the work itself whether historical, political, philosophical, sexual or of any other nature. As he put it:

> "The picture always takes over, but you can't help being moved by the great cultural issues peripheral to the picture."[37]

Unlike the formalist art critics like clive Bell[38] who saw the

representative element in painting as irrelevant, Wind declared it to be:

> "....So relevant that whenever we ignore or misunderstand a subject, we are likely to misconstrue the image by putting the accents in the wrong places.....The eye focuses diff-ently when it is intellectually guided."[39]

Kitaj reflects this view in his comment:

> "The more you get to know about any picture your appreciation of it changes."[40]

This interest in the representative element in art and its power as a carrier of meaning reflected a direction already established in Kitaj's own work. When the trend among most progressive young painters in Britain and America was towards an increasing concentration on formal concerns, typified by Abstract Expressionism. Kitaj was developing his art in a completely different direction, exploring the possibilities of using the inherent meaning of borrowed imagery for his pictures. However his interest in iconology was not only intellectual and ideological as we shall see, it was also practical. Iconology or rather the iconological essays, he found in sources like the Journals of the Warburg and Courthauld Institutes and similar publications, also provided him with much of the inspiration and imagery for his early paintings and indeed the format for some.

> "Iconological studies had caught my interest by the time I was eighteen or so in New York. I had read into Panofsky long before I heard of Wind. You see it was the weirdness; the unfamiliar ring of so much of the "art" they would use to illustrate their theses.....If you were a young romantic like I was having been drawn inexorably to modernist surr-ealism and arcane Duchampism as a precocious teenager these studies with their fabulous visual models and sources in ancient engravings broadsheets, emblem-books inconabula, were like buried treasure! .....So one of the first turn-ons had been purely visual....appropriate, after all for a painter....."[41]

Many of the paintings which Kitaj produced while a student at Oxford were based, directly or indirectly on sources from the illustrated essays in the Journals of the Warburg and Courthauld Institutes and similar iconological studies. For example the painting Erasmus Variations 1958 (Fig 2), which Kitaj described as the first painting of any interest he made in England, has as the source of both its imagery and format, a plate (V) from the book; "Erasmus of Rotterdam" by J. Huizinga[42] which

illustrates a number of doodles made by the great philosopher in the margin of one of his manuscripts, which Kitaj had come across in the course of his studies. The source however was not made clear by Kitaj, so that superfically the painting appears to be nothing more than a group of action painting, cartoon-like heads, reminiscent of works by De Kooning in the expressionistic brush work and perhaps of Bacon (their gaping mouths), arranged in an all-over grided composition similar to that used by Rauschenberg in his prints (see Fig 9(b)).[43]

To appreciate ERasmus Variations completely in these terms alone however, is to miss the full sophistication of the painting. When the source of the image is known they take on a talismanic role as autographic samples showing the workings of the philosophers mind. Kitaj, because of his interest in Surrealism was facinated with the notion of automatic writing which was defined by Breton in his first Surrealist Manifesto, 1924 as the key to true thought "in the absence of any control exercised by reason."[44] Kitaj's use of a gestural style similar to that of De Kooning might also be regarded as a comment on the related Abstract Expressionist concept of "gesture". Thus style takes on an iconological significance as both the style and imagery comment on each other.

After his entry into the Royal College of Art in 1960 he continued to produce work based on images taken from these sources; iconological studies. In three paintings Pariah 1962, Welcome Every Dread Delight 1962, and Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny, 1962 (Fig 3) Kitaj uses images taken from the illustrations to a paper Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters by Rudolf Wittkower,[45] which concerned the monstrous races and animals devised by the Greeks as sublimations of instinctive fears. Once again Surrealism provides the key to Kitaj's interest in this imagery and its source, as both surrealism and iconology have in common a concern with psychology. Another example of this is to be had in Kitaj's use of imagery taken from a similar source, another article from one of the Journals of the Warburg and Courthauld Institutes, "The Picture of Nobody: An Iconographical Study".[46] Which provided Kitaj with another character who appears in at least two paintings; Yamhill,

1961 and Notes towards a Definition of Nobody 1961 (~~Fig ——~~). This figure of a man with a padlocked mouth is again of phychological significance; he was a symbol of societies need to have a scape goat.[47]

Kitaj has an abiding passion for literature and this is a constant influence on his work. Kitaj as we shall see became increasingly interested in the idea of a connection between the visual image and wordmatter.[48] In several of his paintings 1960 - 1962 Kitaj comments on the connection between the image and the written word, by quoting American Indian pictographs[49] many of which he borrowed from two studies; a Smithsonian Institute Study; Picture-writing of the American Indians by Garrick Mallery[50] and the illustrations to lectures given by Fritz Saxl's Lectures on the subject of Warburgs Visit to New Mexico.[51] Pictographs from the illustrations to Mallery Study are used in The Bells of Hell 1960. This painting deals with the "Battle of the Little Big Horn" (Custers Last Stand) and combines the pictographs of eyewitnesses with Kitaj's own vision of the event made almost a century later.[52] Reflections on Violence 1962 (Fig 4) also incorporates pictographs from the same source, in the lower right corner. This time Kitaj identifies the source in a pasted-on caption just above the image.[53]

The Red Banquet 1960 (~~Fig ——~~) makes use of imagery taken from the illustrations to Saxl's Lectures including the American Indian pictograph for lightning the snake which is used in the rain clouds. The figures on the far right of the picture are also American Indian pictographs. The setting in this picture is taken from the illustrations to another of Saxl's 'Lectures' Science and Art in the Italian Renaissance,[54] in which Saxl discusses the inter-relationship between Science and Art as a meeting place of two realms of fact; the world of rational experience and the world of magic.[55] To illustrate the contrast between logic and irrationality, Saxl juxtaposed two images side by side; a painting by Salvidor Dalí and a photograph of a le Corbusier villa. The setting in Kitaj's painting is painted from the latter.

The format of the illustrational plates in the iconological essays and books that Kitaj discovered also provide him with a model for the

composition of his paintings. In these illustrational plates, very different images were often placed side by side and Kitaj saw in this a model for his use of the collage method of composition through the juxtaposition of slightly out of context imagery. In some cases the format was derived directly from the format of these illustrational plates, as in the case of Erasmus Variations for example. In one case; Specimen musings of a Democrat, 1961, the pictorial structure is basically a grid and as such reminiscent of Rauschenberg's compositional devices. However it is actually derived from an alphabet table devised by the thirteenth century catalon logician Ramon Lull, again taken from the illustrations to an essay in one of the Journals of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes.[57]

The Royal College of Art
and the British Pop movement.

In 1960 Kitaj entered the Royal College of Art. This marked the beginning of a phase in his development of equal if not greater importance than his sojourn at Oxford had been. It was also to be very significant for a whole group of young painters studying at the college at the time and, through them, for the history of British art as these students represent an important phenomenon: "The third phase of British Pop" [58]

Kitaj has been discribed as the crucial influence on the young artists of this movement, most of whom studied at the Royal College. Older than most of his fellow students, his influence was more profound than any of the teaching staff who; "...remained indifferent when not actively hostile to these students." [59]

The extent of his influence can be judged from the following comments:

> "I learned more, I think, about an attitude to painting merely from watching him (Kitaj). I didn't speak to him very much but suddenly I thought this was something vital in comparison to everything else at the College. In other words the influence wasn't one of imagery but of a dedicated professionalism and a real toughness about painting." [60]
>
> Allen Jones

One student with whom Kitaj developed an enduring friendship during his first few weeks at the College was David Hockney. Hockney also came under the influence of Kitaj, describing him as the artist who influenced him most as one artist to another of his generation.

> "Ron was a great influence on me far more than any other factor; not just stylistically, he was a great influence stylistically on a lot of people, and certainly on me - but in his seriousness too." [61]

Hockney claims that it was Kitaj who helped him when he found himself in a rut as to what to paint during his early years at the Royal College. [62]

At the Royal College Kitaj seems to have worked very slowly and with great care:

> "He drew very carefully with long pauses between each stroke made on the paper." [63]

> "I used to see one image in the corner of his canvas and think , 'thats terrific' but when I came back the next week expecting to see the canvas filled he would be working on the same image." 64

Other students at the Royal College at the time included; Patrick Caulfield, Peter Philips, Derek Boshier and Norman Toynton. They must also have come under Kitaj's influence to some extent. However it would be a mistake to assume that this was a one-way-street, Kitaj himself was influenced by the new interest in popular culture as a source, which was such a vital ingredient of Pop. In two paintings The Ohio Gang, 1964 (Fig 5) and Where the Railroad Leaves the Sea, 1964 (Fig 6) we discover the influence of Pop in the style in which they are painted, and in the use of imagery taken from popular culture, in particular the Cinema, surely the epitome of popular culture. The Ohio Gang in particular reads like an interrogation scene from an early example of the Film-Noir genre, and indeed the painting is for the most part painted in black and white, colour appears almost an added extra. The influence of film is also felt in the composition. The way in which other elements; the figure fleeing in the top righthand corner and the two figures one in a pram and the other pushing it, in the lower righthand corner, are integrated into the composition with little regard for conventional perspective, is once again evidence of Kitaj's use of the collage technique, however it is also indebted to the editorial techniques of film-making, whereby one scene is cut abruptly to another and yet another. These techniques provided Kitaj with another source for his use of "plural energies" in his compositions:

> "Movies must be a prime animating factor for me... I wouldn't mind achieving the scope of films like Lost Horizon or Seven Samural or any number of other pictures... Plural energies engage my hopes for picture-making rather than Less is More (Noland Et al) and Film Sence moves me." 65

In Good News for Incunabulists, 1962 (Fig 7) we find a similar use of a collage technique, derived from film editorial technique. The painting 'cuts' from the central image of the reporter at his typewriter, complete with standard cigarette behing the ear, familiar to us from countless newspaper movies, to what appears to be the sea shore, to the

head of a girl in orange on the upper left, to a distinctly Chaplinesque character on the lower right.

In Where The Railroad Leaves the Sea, we are presented with yet another image familiar from the cinema; the lovers farewell kiss in what looks like a railway station cafeteria. It has been suggested that the female figure is derived from a figure used in danish cheese advertisements of the time.[66] In all, the image looks as though it might well have been lifted straight from countless B movies of the 1930's and 40's.

All of these paintings share another common factor that links them to Pop art; the use of strong, almost gaudy, primary and secondary colours, used in a non naturalistic way, often in large matte areas of colour. This use of colour is typical of the work of most Pop artists as is the frequent use of black and white imagery so reminiscent of pre-war Hollywood film.

At the Royal College of Art Kitaj also had the opportunity of meeting figures from the earlier generation of British Pop, more established figures like Joe Tilson and Peter Blake,[67] who visited the College, Richard Hamilton also visited and awarded the sketching club prize for painting to Hockney and Kitaj.[68] Hamilton was a master of the Montage/ collage technique and must have been an influence on Kitaj's own style. Compare for example Hamilton's Just What Is It That Makes Todays Homes So Different, So Appealing collage of 1956 (Fig 8) to Kitaj's The Ohio Gang 1964. While Hamilton uses a true collage technique (pasted down imagery) and Kitaj's painting is completely handpainted, the use of juxtaposed slightly out of context imagery is very similar, and of course Kitaj also produced many true collages for example Acheson Go Home 1964 (Fig 9).

Another artist who had a teaching engagement at the Royal College and who was to prove an improtant influence on Kitaj was the Sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi.[69] Kitaj formed a strong friendship with Paolozzi with whom he shared many interests and enthusiasms, including; a serious taste for popular imagery, (he was one of the first artists to use 'found objects'

in his work),[70] and a belief in the multi evocative nature of images as testified to by the following:

> "SYMBOLS CAN BE INTEGRATED IN DIFFERENT WAYS. The WATCH as calculating machine or jewel, a DOOR as a panel or an art object, the SKULL as a death symbol in the west or a symbol for moon in the east. Camera as luxury or necessity."[71]

This statement testifys to yet another enthusiasm Paolozzi shared with Kitaj, an enthusiasm for Surrealism, as an interest in symbols and a use of iconography derived from popular culture comprise two important aspects of the Surrealist method.

Kitaj shared with Paolozzi an interest in the use of readymade images, in the juxtaposition of such images against each other and in the contrast between their techniques and the original context of the material. In this respect their technique, Paolozzi in the field of sculpture and Kitaj in that of painting, showed a similarity of method; in using the collage technique they both transmuted the imagery into their own particular medium; in Paolozzis case bronze, and in Kitaj's case oil paint. This had the effect of heightening the contrast between the context of the image within the work of art and its original context.

In 1961 Kitaj took part in an exhibition, The Young Contemporaries (he had already taken part in The Young Contemporaries exhibitions of 1958 and 1960). However the 1961 show was to mark the debut of many of the young artists who were to comprise what Lawrence Alloway called "The Third Phase of British Pop". The exhibitors were mostly a new group of young artists who had studied at the Royal College of Art and included Barrie Bates, Derek Boshier, Patrick Caulfield, David Hockney, Allen Jones, Peter Philips and Norman Toynton as well as Kitaj himself.

In the introduction to the catalogue Lawerence Alloway commented:

> "A group seen here for the first time is of artists (mainly at the Royal College) who connect their work with the city. They do so, not by painting factory chimneys or queues (a reference to an earlier College group, called by David Sylvester the Kitchen Sink School), but by using typical products and objects, including the techniques of graffiti and the imagery of mass communications. For these artists the creative act is nourished on the urban environment they have always lived in. The impact of popular art is present, but checked by puzzles and paradoxes about the

> play of signs at different levels of signification in their work, which combines real objects, same-size representation, sketchy notation, and writing." 72

The references to "the play of signs at different levels of signification" and "sketchy notation and writing" are particularly relevant to Kitaj's work and in particular to one work; The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg 1960 (Fig 10) which makes broad use of all these elements. The painting relies on the use of various symbolic images related to the historical incident referred to in the title. Much of the representation is crudely executed and the ambiguity caused by these two factors is balanced by the use of a printed text pasted on to the picture (upper right hand corner). This makes reference to the imagery represented and the actual event referred to in the title.

Kitaj's relationship to Pop is rather ambiguous he rejects the term Pop with regard to his own work, indeed he dislikes the very term itself:

> "I still balk at the work Pop... Real Pop (not art) bores hell out of me but often when High Camp insinuates itself into recent art the results can be engaging (given the quality, intrinsic and relative of the art-piece at hand) I quess I've decided on occasion in favour of certain Camp themes or passages but not often enough to get pinned down." 74

In the book Pop art by John Russel and Susi Gablik Pop art is described as typically:

> "....Simple direct and immediately comprehensible ..... concrete and legible images where colour tends to be flat and where iconography is extremely explicit."

While our examination of Kitaj's work has revealed that in some cases, for example The Ohio Gang and Where the Railroad Leaves the Sea, his painting style tended towards the use of broad flat areas of matte colour and extremely legible imagery. On the other hand, often his images are very obscure and far from legible when it suits his purpose, the figures in The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, for example, this is often used to provide contrast to the more legible imagery, yet another aspect of his collage based approach. Kitaj's work does not fit in neatly to any definition of Pop art, by virtue of the fact that his art is rarely simple direct or immediately comprehensible and his iconography is anything

but explicit, preferring as he does to mine more, out of the way, iconographical seams. However this is not to deny Kitaj his very important position in the history of Pop and particularly British Pop art, which is due for the most part, to his relationship to the younger generation of British Pop artists and to the older generation of artists like Paolozzi (compare Paolozzi's collage Bunk 1952 (Fig 11) to Kitaj's Acheson Go Home (Fig 9)) Hamilton and to a lesser extent Blake. Kitaj shared with all the artists an interest in iconography, popular imagery from film and commercial art and the compositional devices of people like Rauchenberg and Johns.

Kitaj's interest in popular imagery particularly imagery and technique derived from film, his use of multiple imagery and his associative technique run parallel to pop as does his stylistic quotation of commercial illustration found in works like: The Ohio Gang and Where the Railroad Leaves the Sea, and his use of direct primary colours reminiscent of signpainting. However his interest in pop imagery developed out of a broader passionate interest in all forms of iconography of which pop iconography was only a small part:

> "Pop Art elements in his (Kitaj's) art, when they occur, are simply a bit of the treasury of forms and communication available to human beings; he deplores their isolation, at the expense of other areas of meaning." [75]

FOOTNOTES

1 John Ashbery, Hoe Shannon, Jane Livingston, Timothy Hyman, Kitaj : Paintings Drawings, Pastels, p.7, also Michael Shepherd "Kitaj Observed" Arts Review 29, April 29th 1977, p.288.

2 Timothy Hyman "A Return to London". Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, Kitaj : Paints, Drawings, Pastels, p.41.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.7.

6 Marco Livingstone "Iconology as Theme in the Early Work of R.B.Kitaj" Burlington Magazine 122, July 198, p.491.

7 Ibid.

8 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.7.

9 Michael Shepherd "Kitaj Observed" Arts Review 29, April 29th 1977, p.288.

10 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.7.

11 Ibid, p.41.

12 Timothy Hyman "Kitaj : A Prodigal Returning" Artscribe 25, October 1980, p.38.

13 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.41.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid, p.42.

16 Peter Fuller The Naked Artist.

17 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.28.

18 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.42.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid, p.15.

[21] Ibid, p.42.

[22] Ibid, p.7.

[23] Ibid

[24] Ibid

[25] John Ashbery, Joe Shannon, Jane Livingston, Timothy Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.7.

[26] Marco Livingstone. "Iconology as Theme in the work of R.B.Kitaj," Burlington Magazine 122, July 1980 pp. 488-489.

[27] A major retrospective emhibition of R.B.Kitaj's work was held at the Horshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution Washington, D.C. in 1981.

[28] Marco Livingstone, p.491.

[29] Michael Podro "Some notes on Ron Kitaj" Art International 22, March 1979, p.19.

[30] R.B.Kitaj in conversation with Marco Li ingstone 11th April 1976 transcript revised by the artist December 1979 : Marco Livingstone, p.488.

[31] Edgar Wind : Marco Livingstone, p.492.

[32] Marco Livingstone, p.488. Original source : Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance, New York 1939, pp. 3ff

[33] Ibid.

[34] "Saxl the first director of the Warburg Institute, had written in his Lectures (1957 that after Wolfflin, whose method was based on comparison of styles, the main object of the study of art as seen by the Warburgians was to define it as more than a mere history of artistic vision!" Marco Livingstone, p.491. Original source of "a mere history of artistic vision" : Fritz Sazl Lectures, London 1957, Vol 1 pp. 349-56.

[35] Marco Livingstone, p.491.

[36] Lawrence Alloway "The Development of British Pop." Lucie Lippard, Pop Art, 1970, p.57.

37 R.B.Kitaj; quoted in "Painting Britannia's New Wave" Time Magazine October 1964 pp. 40-45. Marco Livingstone p.492.

38 "We are familiar with pictures that interest us and excite our admiration, but do not move us as works of art. To this class belongs what I call "Descriptive Painting" - that is painting in which forms are used not as objects of emotion, but as a means of conveying information. Portraits of psychological and historical value, topographical works, pictures that tell stories and suggest situations, illustrations of all sorts belong to this class."

Clive Bell, Art Frederic Tuten, "Neither Fool nor Naive nor Poseur-Saint : Fragments on R.B.Kitaj," Artforum, January 1982, p.61.

39 Marco Livingstone, p.492. Original source : Edgar Wind, Art and Anarchy, The Reith Lectures 1960, revised and enlarged, London 1933, pp. 62-64.

40 R.B.Kitaj in conversation with Marco Livingstone. Marco Livingstone, p.492.

41 R.B.Kitaj, Letter to Marco Livingstone, 22nd Jamuary 1980 : Marco Livingstone, p.491.

42 J. Huizinga, Erasmus of Rotterdam, London 1952.

43 Joe Shannon, "The Allegorists : Kitaj and the Viewer," Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.28.

44 Marco Livingstone, p.495

45 Rudolf Wittkower, Marvels of the East : A Study of the History of Monsters, Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, v 1942, pp. 159-197. My source Marco Livingstone, p.491.

46 Gerta Calmann, The Picture of Nobody : An Iconographical Study, Journals of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes XXIII/1-2 January - June 1960, pp.60-104. Marco Livingstone, p.491.

47 Marco Livingstone, p.491.

48 Gene Boro. The British Scene : Hockney and Kitaj. Arts Magazine 38, May-June 1964, p.100.

49 Marco Livingstone, p.495

50 Garric Mallery : "Picture-Writing of the American Indians," Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1888-1889, Washington 1893, pp. 25 ff. Marco Livingstone p.495.

[51] Saxl "Warburgs Visit to New Mexico", Lectures, I pp. 326 ff. Marco Livingstone, p.495.

[52] Marco Livingstone, p.495.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Saxl "Science and Art in the Italian Renaissance", Lectures, I, p.117-124. Marco Livingstone, p.495.

[55] Marco Livingstone, p.495.

[56] Ibid

[57] Ibid, p.495-496.

[58] Lawrence Alloway "The Development of British Pop." Lucy Lippard, Pop Art 1966, p.53.

[59] David Hockney. "David Hockney by David Hockney". Thames and Hudson, 1976, p.42.

[60] Lippard, p.56.

[61] David Hockney, p.41

[62] "The one student I talking to a lot was Ron Kitaj. Ron was slowly doing these strange pictures and I talked to him about them and about my world. And I said well, I don't know, it seems pointless doing it. I'd talk to him about my interests ... and he'd say to me why don't you paint those subjects? And I thought, it's quite right; that's what I'm complaining about I'm not doing anything that's for me. So that was the way I broke it. I began to paint those subjects. David Hockney, "David Hockney on David Hockney" Thames and Hudson, 1976, p.41.

[63] Allen Jones quoted by Mario Amaya. Mario Amaya Pop as Art : A Survey of the New Super Realism, London 1965, p.141.

[64] Ibid.

[65] R.B.Kitaj from an Interview with Maurice Tuchmann. Andrew Brighton and Lynda Morris, "Towards Another Picture : An anthology of writings by artists working in Britain, 1945-1977", p.155. originally published R.B.Kitaj : Paintings and Prints, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, August 11 - September 12, catalog introduction by Maurice Tuchman.

[66] Charles McConquodale, "Edinburg - Two Exhibitions," Art International 19, November 1975, p.26.

67 Hockney, p.43. Hockney tells us that Blake and Tilston visited the college not as teachers but just to see what was going on.

68 Hockney, pp.42, 43.

69 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.8. also Tony del Renzio, "Style Technique and Iconography". Art and Artists 11, July 1976, p.35, 36.

70 Tony del Renzio, "Style Technique and Iconography" Art and Artists 11, July 1976, p.35.

71 Eduardo Paolozzi, Notes from a Lecture at the ICA, 1958, Upperchase, London, n.d.1958. Lucy Lippard Pop Art 1966, p.35.

72 Lucy Lippard, p.36.

73 Ibid, p.53.

74 Brighton and Morris, p.155.

75 Lawerence Alloway, The Development of British Pop, Lucy Lippard Pop Art, p.38.

SOME BOOKS HAVE PICTURES AND SOME PICTURES HAVE BOOKS

The association of Texts with Paintings
in R.B. Kitaj's early work

In February of 1963 Kitaj had his first solo exhibition, at the Marlborough New London Gallery. The show was aptly named "Pictures with Commentary, Pictures without Commentary." The title presumably referred to Kitaj's practice of pasting printed or hand written texts on to the actual surface of his paintings. The title also presumably referred to the extensive commentaries that were printed in the exhibition catalogue.[1]

Kitaj's motive behind the practice of appending notes seems to have been an attempt to make the subject of the painting and the visual references within it more clear. There also seems to have been a concern that the texts should be completely integrated within the compositional structure. Kitaj felt that because of the obscure and esoteric nature of many of the sources of his iconography and of the historical incidents alluded to in so many of the works, it was necessary to provide his audience with certain referential keys to the historical and cultural contexts of these works.[2] This was of course all part of his wish that his work might directly engage "the great cultural issues peripheral to the picture."[3]

The show included many of Kitaj's early works in oil and collage on canvas including; The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, 1960 (Fig 10) which includes as a pasted-on element of the composition, a written text in the upper right hand corner, which refers to the historical incident alluded to in the title.

Another work which made extensive use of pasted-on texts was Reflections on Violence, 1962 (Fig 4). This work includes as elements of overall composition a number of pasted-on texts and captions, one referring to the origin of the American Indian pictographs used in the painting, while other textual material included a newspaper cutting headed; "When nuns may use birth control" is scattered accross the surface. In Specimen Musings of a Democrat, 1961 we find many pasted-on texts laid out in a chartlike grid composition, including a bibliography(three

rows across, four rows up).[4]

Other works in the show (they numbered 22 in all) included Certain Forms of Association Neglected Before, 1961, Nietzshe's Moustache, 1962 Warburg's Visit to New Mexico, 1962, Good News for Incunabulists 1962, (Fig 7) Welcome Every Dread Delight, 1962, and A History of Polish Literature.[5]

One of the essays in the catalogue was by Sorel on the need for a socialist mythology, and in works like The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, and Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny, 1962, both of which refer to martyred radicals, Kitaj seems to have made an attempt to address this need.

Kitaj's use of such methods as the appending of texts and the association of literary material to his work invited controversy and his paintings were critizised.[6] They seemed to be so out of step with the mainly formal concerns of what was then the mainstream of contemporary painting as typified by Abstract Expressionism. Indeed Kitaj seemed determined at all costs that his work should not become merely aesthetic. To add to the critics trouble Kitaj's work seemed strangely at odds with the strongest new movement on the British scene; Pop Art. His work did not share the normal tendencies of Pop, being far too obscure in its sources and references to fit into the mainstream. Kitaj appeared a loner whose work refused to fit neatly into any handy subcatagory. The show was a success and confirmed Kitaj's place among the established younger artists of the British art scene, The Tate bought Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny, in 1962.

In 1964 Kitaj published his views; "On Associating Texts with Paintings" in the magazine Cambridge Opinion.[7] Kitaj stated that it was his belief that the artist by continuing;

> "to associate peripheral material with a work, after the work has left him... may be said to be still working on the painting ...This would help to leave the question of finishing a painting open."[8]

Kitaj pointed out that the title of a work was an example of an association between painting and the written or spoken word:

> "...a title may be uttered in a place many thousands of miles

> away from a work it belongs to and yet the viability of the association cannot be denied. A work may be given a title or a title may be changed (for better) or for worse, long after the painter has given the work up, in which case it may be said that he hasn't given the work up."[10]

Indeed we have a striking example of this practice in the case of a 1958 life drawing to which Kitaj later added the title:"Already in the Third Decade of the 19th Century."[11] In Kitaj's opinion the title was "only one example of an association between painting and wordmatter." He believed that any text could be associated with any painting at any time, that text would also be altered or taken away at any time:

> "If a title may be given to a work, a sub-title or a sequence or titles may be given; a set of notes may be given; an index and/or a bibliography may be given; - complex varieties of textual material may be introduced into the work (onto the painting) or otherwise "given" - ultimately or occasionally coalescing with the painted elements to the extent that they (the textual elements) can in no way be called peripheral. SOME BOOKS HAVE PICTURES AND SOME PICTURES HAVE BOOKS."[12]

Through these methods Kitaj was seeking to connect his painting with the great cultural, historical, political and philosophical issues he wished his art to address. He wanted to utilise what little connection painting had with the written work, the title, for example, and push the boundaries of painting's ability to comment upon these issues out a little further by connecting it to the immense resources and potential of the verbal culture.[13] This was a very radical approach in a totally different direction to most of the work of that time and as such it was open to much misunderstanding.[14]

After 1965 Kitaj ceased the practice of appending texts to, or commenting on his work until almost a decade later when he produced a text to accompany his major painting The Autumn of Central Park (after Walter Benjamin), 1972-74 (Fig 13).[15] (see Appendix)

Having left the Royal College of Art Kitaj continued to experiment with techniques and approach and in 1962 he collaborated with Paolozzi on a construction comprised of an assortment of images including; repeated images of Francas Rude's Head of Christ, a view of the New York skyline; a clock without hands and fragmented photographs and medals of St. Louis.[16]

Similar imagery, most notably the repeated image of Rude's Head of Christ, fragmented photographs of children, marbled and textured paper, and autographed examples of symmetrical stains produced by making ink blots on pieces of paper and then folding them in half, appear in a collage; Errata 1963 - 64, which was later to be made into a screen print. Paolozzi had introduced Kitaj to Chris Prater, a silkscreen printer with whom Kitaj made many collage prints.[17] This medium provided Kitaj with an ideal vehicle for his abiding interest in the collage process, whereby different images and textures could be brought together to produce unexpected and thought-provoking juxtapositions. Another collage that was to become a screen print was Acheson Go Home 1964 (Fig 9a), this and Errata were the first screen prints that Kitaj made.[18] This work, is closely related to Errata in its'all-over' composition and in the elements of which it is comprised; fragments of photographs (in both cases mostly snaps of children), pieces of patterned and marbled paper, printed material taken from books for journals, samples of autographs and marks or stains. His use of autographs and stains reveals an interest in the unique nature of the mark - its relationship to the signature and hence to the written word. In Errata this is commented on by the inclusion of autographed examples of symmetrical stains. In Acheson Go Home, Kitaj includes a similar element; a piece of blotting paper with two ink stains one red and one blue on it and a chart (Centre), probably from some book on etching methods, which seems to represent examples of different uses of hatching and their effects. As in the case of Errata, where these examples of symmetrical stains include the signature of the person who produced them and the date, in Acheson Go Home Kitaj includes the title page of a book with a photographic reproduction of someone (perhaps the

author) on it and a signature (perhaps the autograph of the author).

Central to the composition of Errata we have a caption taken from a book that reads;

> Errata
> The Film illustrated on Page 16 is incorrectly titled "Three Little Girls in Blue". This should read Margie starring Jeanne Crain.

Similarly Acheson Go Home also includes a clipping from a newspaper or book with the heading Acheson Go Home and a few lines in German.

Both of these works seem to be comprised of a combination of visual puns on the complex relationships between the printed image, the mark and the written or printed word. The unique nature of all these even in their relationship to other copies of the same image is commented upon by various elements in both works. In Errata the images of Rude's Head of Christ, although repeated prints of the same image, are each torn in such a way as to emphasise their unique nature. This is compared to the unique nature of the mark as exemplified by the symmetrically patterned stains and these are in turn compared to the unique nature of the signatures on them.

The relationship between the written work and the image was as we have seen a constant theme in Kitaj's work of this time[20] (Some Books Have Pictures and Some Pictures Have Books)[21] and this relationship is illustrated by the caption headed Errata, which in its original context had the function of correcting a mistaken association between an image and a title. Kitaj seems to present this as further evidence of the link between the written or printed word and the image. These collages also reflect Kitaj's bibliomania in their combination of various materials taken from books, including texts and title pages; and the textured marbled and patterned paper that Kitaj seems to have taken from the lining of bookcovers. These works are obviously related to later silkscreen prints that Marlborough Fine Art published in 1970 which included, In Our Time: Covers from a Small Library after the Life for the Most Part, a portfolio of prints many of which consisted merely of reproductions of unadorned covers of books from Kitaj's library. (Bud and Sis, Rimes No.3)[22]

In 1965 Kitaj visited America for the first time in nine years. He had a solo exhibition in New York at the Marlborough-Gerson Gallery. His painting The Ohio Gang was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art. Another exhibition, this time of prints and paintings, was held in California at Los Angeles County Museum.[23]

While in the United States Kitaj painted an important work, Erie Shore, 1966 (Fig 14). This is in many ways a very accomplished work which combines a sophisticated use of Kitaj's collage-derived compositional technique with a sensitive use of figurative elements. There is a strong sense of compositional structure.

The use of broad matte areas of primary colours (reds and Yellows) is heavily influenced by Pop art.

The overall mood of the painting is of discontinuity and madness with strange dream-like imagery held together by a tight structure. The painting is comprised of two panels, the one on the left representing a sea scape on which is placed a small boat with a filing cabinet in it, to the left two figures ascend heavenward, while the upper section of the panel is dominated by a structural device consisting of a system of ropes and pulleys. On the right hand panel are represented our two main protagonists, the disturbed figure of a nurse and her demented patient, in his red and white striped pajama bottoms. The sexuality of the nurse is emphasised by the visibility of her pubic hair under her very short mini skirt. The space they occupy is very ambiguous, an environment comprised of odds and ends; the cubist structure over his shoulder, the strangely out of context 'architectural drawing' windows behind her. The male figure is held up (or held back) by various ropes and chains. Both of the figures are precariously placed in another small boat they share with the partly painted-out image of a bound and submissive female figure. A walrus swims beside the boat. The image is disturbing and seems to owe much to Surrealism, and in particular Ernst's Semaine de Bonté in that it is comprised not just of strange juxtapositions of forms and objects held together by strong compositional

devices, but relies for its power on the seemingly random juxtaposition of imagery and context, much of it disturbing. This is a strange shore indeed, a nightmarish land where nothing fits, nothing makes sense. The mood obviously owes something to Eliot's poetry:

"On Margate sands
I can connect
Nothing with Nothing."[25]

On its completion this painting was almost immediately purchased by the National Gallery Berlin.

In contrast to the broad matte areas of strong,bright colours and the simple yet monumental compositional structures and drawing of Erie Shore, in 1967 Kitaj began to produce a group of works on canvas, in oil, that can only be described as drawings on canvas.[26] The first of these was a double portrait of two base ball players Sisler and Schoendienst 1967 (Fig 15) this work is probably related to a series of drawings of base ball players Kitaj was commissioned to do by sports illustrated at the base ball spring training camps in Florida in April 1966.[27] Kitaj spent much of 1967 and 1968 in California with his family as visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley.[28] During this time he produced a series of portraits executed in a similar style and technique, mostly studies of heads, a double portrait of the poets Kenneth Rexroth and John Wieners. Kitaj also produced single protraits of friends including David Hockney. David at Berkeley (Fig 16) and the poet Robert Duncan (Fig 17) as well as others. Other works of interest that were executed in the same technique were Unity Mitford 1968 (Fig 18) and Passionaria 1969 (Fig 19), both of which would seem to have been worked from photographs, and two tall narrow representations of William Powell as the Thin Man, Dashell Hammett."[29]

These works are important because they represent the beginnings of a renewed interest in portraiture and drawing from the human figure in Kitaj's work, that was to make itself felt much later.

In 1969 Kitaj's wife Elsi died. This was, as we shall see, to have a deep and lasting effect on his work.[30] The following year Kitaj

returned to California with his children, Lem and Dominic. Living in Hollywood, Kitaj made drawings of the film directors John Ford and Jean Renoir as preparitory studies for an epic Hollywood painting which he later destroyed "due to lack of heart to continue."[31] His return to London in 1971 marked the end of this comparitively unproductive period.[32]

Between 1972 and 1974 Kitaj worked on a major painting which was to mark both a turning point in his career and the culmination of many years of work - The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) 1972 - 1974 (Fig 13). This painting brought together a number of different strands that had been present in Kitaj's work; his wish to relate his work to political and historical issues, to embellish it with the resources of the verbal culture and to comment upon a period of history that was very significant for Kitaj and which was brought to an end by the Nazis.[33]

Walter Benjamin represents a most important figure for Kitaj, someone he must find it easy to identify with. Benjamin was a radical critic who wrote extensively on two of Kitaj's other heroes, Kafka and Baudelaire. Like Kitaj, Benjamin was a socialist, a Jew and an exile, a refugee at hazard in the Paris of 1940 from his native Germany. Kitaj also has in common with Benjamin an agnostic upbringing. In recent years however Kitaj has taken steps to educate himself in Jewish history and culture as the Jewish condition has become an increasingly important subject in his work.[35]

The painting is set in the autumn of 1940, in Paris, when Benjamin committed suicide just before the fall of France to the Nazis.

After 1965 Kitaj had ceased the practice of appending notes to or providing commentaries on his painting due to constant misunderstanding of his motives. However in 1971 when The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) was exhibited at the Hayward, he produced a text that was displayed beside the work. (For text see Appendix Page).

The text especially towards the end functions like a poem in that it is suggestive rather than particualr. Kitaj seems to see its function as a means of focusing and reflecting on key ideas and facts to which the

painting alludes and of providing references to the historical and literary background from which it emerged.[36] The clues it gives are however very helpful.

If we look at the painting itself we observe that it shares with most of Kitaj's major early works, a composition based on the juxtaposition of forms and imagery derived from surrealist collage/montage techniques, with little regard for any conventional notion of perspective. Some of the figures appear to exist in a space relative to each other while others seem to be out of context. Most of the imagery is piled up towards the upper left hand corner, the figures mingle and merge with the piled on furniture, this devides the painting diagonally from the upper left to the lower right. To the right of this diagonal the perspective is more conventional as the table tops lead the eye out to the bright blue clouded sky beyond the canopy and the departing figure of Benjamin? To the left of this diagonal the images are "collaged." This piling up of images is more than a mere formal device or solution, as Kitaj indicates in the text it has significance for other reasons; as an equivalent to Benjamin's own 'montage' methods in his writing, and as a representation of The Barricade a subject Benjamin had referred to in his work. Thus the composition itself is given an iconographical function. The subject of the barricade has of course a long pedigree as a subject in painting, from Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People to scenes of 19th century parisian street fighting, most memorably Meissoniers la Barricade 1848, indeed few other cities have seen the erection of so many barricades. Another influence that Kitaj indicates is the movie poster where the montage method was widely used. Yet another may well have been the movies themselves, or rather the editorial techniques of film-making, which was only one source for Kitaj's use of "plural energies".[37]

Although Kitaj seems to indicate that the compositional devices of this work are specifically related to its subject, it is apparent that the treatment of this subject did not represent for Kitaj a change in approach; but rather the subject complimented a method which Kitaj

had often used in the past. The choice of the montage method however seems particularly appropriate to refer to the social ambiance in which this particular pictorial method was developed.[38]

Apart from the tradition of "barricade paintings" already mentioned, The Parisian Café setting has obvious reference to a tradition of painting which is exemplified by Manet's; Musique aux Tuilleries, Servante de Bocks and Bar aux follies Bergere as well as other scenes of Café life by Renoir, Degas and Lautrec.[39]

Red seems to be the predominant colour in the composition(yellow is also used extensively, both are of course Autumnal). There is the red hair of the departing Benjamin against the blue sky, the red clothes of the child in the womans arms on the far right, the red hat of the central figure. This red is again echoed in the upper left hand corner, by the red hat-band of the blue-faced female figure and the red tunic of her customer who offers her a cigarette. The entire bottom strip of the painting, consisting mostly of the frames of the chairs and tables is rendered in this red. At the centre of this strip there is the figure of a lone pickaxe wielding worker, rendered in the same red so that he merges with the furniture. In the text Kitaj refers to the worker as being "away from his class", he is "a stage extra" in this bourgeois world of the café. In the painting the worker, represented by the red of socialism is confined to a role as part of the furniture. He represents "the proletariat" driven out of CENTRAL PARIS (title) leading to the emmergence of a RED BELT (margins of picture). The workers position at the bottom of the composition as part of the furniture seems to suggest that the bourgeois lifestyle, represented by the figures above, is supported by his toil. However the red furniture threatens to undermine the composition, the bourgeois structures it supports.

The technique employed in The Autumn of Central Paris is interesting if not exactly painterly. With a fair consistancy Kitaj uses a technique of staining, often found in his paintings, for example, Man of the Woods and the Cat of the Mountains 1973 (Fig 20) and in later

works like If Not, Not 1975-76 (Fig 32) Kitaj has combined this with a technique of rubbing-in or scrumbling, which produces an effect similar to the way pastel is applied to coarse paper, sometimes superimposing one colour on another. This can be seen in the treatment of the blue faced female figure on the upper left. This combination of techniques evokes the effect of the exposure of a light sensitive photographic plate[40] and produces a mood of nostalgia similar to that of old sepia prints. Kitaj combines these effects with quite slick drawing, that at times seems a quotation of the style of commercial graphic journalism or magazine illustration;[41] "Everyone praises the swift crayon of the graphic artist."[42]

In discussing The Autumn of Central Paris Michael Podro has said that Kitaj:

> "...does not invite attention to the cusine of painting, but to the nerve of the subject matter."[43]

This is not to suggest that the painting does not work on a purely aesthetic level, indeed this painting represents quite a sophisticated achievement in formal terms, but rather that Kitaj does not allow the formal concerns to distriact us from the force of the subject.

The Autumn of Central Paris represents a milestone in Kitaj's career. This painting represents the culmination of Kitaj's use of the collage derived method of composition we find in earlier works. Although his continued use of "plural energies"[44] in later works like; If Not, Not 1975-76 (Fig 32) and Land of Lakes, 1975-77 (Fig 31), is influenced by this technique. The Autumn of Central Paris is the last picture for which Kitaj provided a text to be directly associated with it, it is also the last of what have been called his "martyr paintings"[45] which included such works as The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg 1960 (Fig 10) and Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny, 1962 (Fig 3).

The painting to some extent heralds Kitaj's adoption of a new approach in dealing with the "impossible themes"[46] he wished his work to address. This involved the invention and development of certain "memorable characters."[47]

In Kitaj's earlier work as we have seen he made reference to particular historical and literary figures like Rosa Luxemburg and Isaac Babel and in the case of The Autumn of Central Paris; Walter Benjamin. However in the case of this painting he also introduces us to various types or characters which epitonize certain conditions he wishes to address in his art. The text gives us clues as to their identity; the artist in his various roles!"POET - BEGGAR - DETECTIVE - FLANEUR - POLICE SPY - SECRET AGENT" other characters include "THE PASSERBY,the IDLE STROLLER, MAN WITH PICKAXE" (the worker) "MAN WITH HEARING AID... the "POLICE SPY/SECRET AGENT," and "THE WHORE". Some of these characters appear in later works, for example, the Man With The Hearing Aid in, The Jew....etc (Fig 26).

FOOTNOTES

[1] Michael Shepherd, "Kitaj Observed" Arts Review 29, April 1977, p.288.

[2] Marco Livingstone, "Iconology as Theme In The Early Work of Kitaj", Burlington Magazine 122, July 1980, p.492.

[3] "The picture always takes over but you can't help being moved by the great cultural issues peripheral to the picture".

R.B.Kitaj : Marco Livingstone "Iconology as Theme in the Early Work of R.B.Kitaj", Burlington Magazine, 122, July 1980, p.492.

[4] Marco Livingstone, "Iconology as Theme in the Early Work of R.B.Kitaj" Burlington Magazine, 122, July 1980, p.492.

[5] Michael Shepherd, "Kitaj Observed", Arts Review 29, April 29th 1977, p.28 .

[6] Kitaj was called a "Village Explainer".
Edward Lucie-Smith "A Village Explainer" Listner (London) 69, February 21st, 1963, p.342.

[7] R.B.Kitaj, "On Associating Texts with Paintings" Cambridge Opinion 37, January 1964, pp. 52-53.

[8] Gene Boro "The British Scene : Hockney and Kitaj" Arts Magazine 38, May-June 1964; p.100.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Lawrence Alloway "The Development of British Pop". Lucy Lippard, Pop Art, p.58.

[12] Boro, p.100.

[13] Michael Podro Some Notes on Ron Kitaj Art International 22, March 1979, pp. 18-19.

[14] John Ashbery, Joe Shannon, Jane Livingston, Timothy Hyman, Kitaj Paintings Drawings and Pastels, p.15.

[15] See Appendix. also Podro, pp. 20-22.

[16]

[17] John Ashbery, Joe Shannon, Jane Livingston, Timothy Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings Pastels, p.8

18 Elizabeth Bailey, Pop Art, Victoria and Albert Museum Small Colour Book 13, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London 1976, p.

20 Boro, p.100

21 Ibid

22 Joe Shannon, The Allegorists : Kitaj and the Viewer, Ashbery Shanron Livingston Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.14.

23 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.8.

24 Marco Livingstone, p.491.

25 T.S.Eliot, The Wasteland. Helen Gardner, The New Oxford Book of English Verse, p.885.

26 Toni del Renzio "Style Technique and Iconography". Art and Artists 11, July 1976, p.38.

27 Ashbery Shannon Livingston, Hyman, p.8.

28 Ibid.

29 del Renzio, p.38.

30 "... the sudden death of his wife in 1969 seems to have triggered a new awakening to suffering." Timothy Hyman, Kitaj : A Prodigal Returning", Artscribe 25, October 1980, p.38.

see also : Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman p.27.

31 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.8.

32 Ibid, p.27, 8.

33 Podro, p.19

34 Ibid.

35 Frederic Tuten "Neither Fool nor Naive nor Poseur-Saint : Fragments on R.B. Kitaj" Artforum, January 1982, pp.61, 65.

36 see appendix. also Podro, pp.19-21.

37 Maurice Tuchman "R.B.Kitaj : Filmic - that sounds like a goodish word" Andrew Brighton and Lynda Morris, Towards Another Picture : An anthology of Writings by artists working in Britain 1945-1977 pp. 155-156.

38 Phyllis Derfner "New York Letter", Art International 18, April 1974, p.51. also Podro, pp. 19-20.

39 Podro, p.19.

40 Ibid p.21.

41 Ibid.

42 See Appendix. Also Podro, pp.20 - 21.

43 Podro, p.21.

44 Brighton and Morris (see note 37) pp. 155-156.

45 Tuten, p.63.

46 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.44.

47 James Faure Walker, "R.B.Kitaj interviewed by James Faure Walker", Artscribe 5, February 1977, p.5.

Surrealism, Duchamp, Abstract Expressionism, Rauschenberg, and T. S. Eliot - Early influences on R. B. Kitaj's work.

Kitaj's basic attitude or approach to style is that of a magpie, he is always an impure adherent to any movement or style, preferring to borrow whatever he finds useful rather than be pinned down as an adherent to any aesthetic creed:

> "Two crazy polarities introduced by modernism are that you can do everything (Picasso, Matisse) and that you must stick to a tight (stylistic) corner. I prefer the first craziness to the much safer second one."[1]

This is perhaps one of Kitaj's greatest attributes since it has allowed a great deal of stylistic cross-fertilization to occur in his work.

In many ways Kitaj's primary enthusiasm has always been for Surrealism:

> "I am a grandchild of Surrealism..."[2]

Picasso and Ernst feature as important figures in his development, indeed so to does the Surrealist poet Andre Breton. This attraction to Surrealism had began while he was a teenager in New York.[3] Kitaj saw in certain surrealist methods possibilities that he was later to develop in his work. The most important of these methods was that of collage or montage. Kitaj saw in this method a means of applying his passion for the bringing together of images in surprising and provoking conjunction.

> "Surrealist ideas like bringing images together in unlikely and unfamiliar conjunction (in hope of producing magic), and other such ideas, attracted me when I was young."

Surrealists like Max Ernst provided Kitaj with models for many of the collage devices he employed in his work especially those used by Ernst in his composite steel engravings: (Fig 12)

> "Ernst certainly was the best of the orthodox Surrealists, but most of ERnst doesn't interest me. What does interest me were the great seet engraving collages: The Seimine de Bonté."[4]

Much of Kitaj's work has been collage-based. His use of this method has ranged from the literal pasting down of material, paper, photographs, printed matter etc., which we find in works like the collage

Acheson Go Home 1964 (Fig 9), to the oblique use of the method we find in works like The Ohio Gang, 1964 (Fig 5) and later The Autumn of Central Paris 1972-74 (Fig 13), where the basic composition is derived from the collaging or juxtaposition of various images from various sources, which are transmuted into hand painted images on a single surface. In other works Kitaj combines both of these approaches where he combines images painted in oil on canvas with collage elements; illustrational plates, drawings and printed or hand written texts. Examples of these works include The Baby Tramp 1963-64 and Reflections on Violence 1962 (Fig 4).

Kitaj's sources for his imagery are often similar to those of the Surrealists, like Breton he literally appropriates images from the public world, catalogues cheap woodcut illustrations and newspapers for example. However Kitaj puts such imagery to a very different use than the orthodox surrealists like breton had, as Frederic Tuden puts it:

> "Kitaj may have used surrealist structural devices but his discourse went outward, not inward."[6]

Kitaj was not interested in using such devices to evoke a private hauntingly individualistic dreamworld or in order to emphasise the juxtapositions of madness. He wanted to put these devices to the service of his own intention to connect his art with "the great cultural issues peripheral to the picture," that is to connect it with the historical social and political realities he wished his art to address. Kitaj's use of imagery from popular sources is of course also related to his involvement in the Pop Art movement.

Through his enthusiasm for Surrealism Kitaj became interested in iconology.[7]

> "Warburg was like a Surrealist: he tried to bring odd things together like Breton did: 'Magic and logic flowering on the same tree.' Somehow the two strains came together."[8]

In the illustrations to the iconological essays, which he came across in the course of his studies, Kitaj discovered the raw material he needed in order to apply his immense knowledge of style and his taste for the telling juxtaposition of imagery.

Another artist who was to be a great influence in Kitaj's development

was Marcel Duchamp. His influence is mostly felt in Kitaj's collages and screen prints(for example Acheson Go Home (Fig 9(a))and particularly in works like the corrected ready-mades often consisting of just an old photograph or a page from a catalogue,[9] or in the set of screenprints: In Our Time: Covers from a Small Library after the Life for the Most Part; some of which were simply reproductions of the covers of books for example Bub and Sis and Rimes No. 3.[10]

Surrealism, for Kitaj, is the modernist movement that most interests him. However in this, his understanding of the term Surrealism is very broadly based:

> "The great Surrealists, for me, are not the orthodox Surrealists, who were generally lesser artists, but people like Picasso, Bacon, Balthus and so many other people...."[11]

Another movement that was to be very influencial on Kitaj's work was Abstract Expressionism, even though his work, with its concern with representation, figuration and the introduction of literary elements seems strangely at odds with the formal pre-occupations inherent in this movement. However from his earliest work Kitaj displays an awareness of the issues and approaches represented in what was then the mainstream of contemporary painting. Kitaj's work was:

> "Alive to contemporary ideas, to the problems that gave rise to Pop Art, to the protean quality of Abstract Expressionism, particularly as it is embodied in the work and assumptions of De Kooning."[12]

We find the influence of De Kooning in the use of paint found in works like Erasmus Variations 1958 (Fig 2). Indeed the gestural expressionistic brushstroke employed in much of Kitaj's early work, The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg for example, owes much to Abstract Expressionism as does the contrasting use of broad matte areas of flat colour.

> "Who couldn't have been influenced by Abstract Expressionism? It is in all of us, Jim Dine, Rauschenberg, Johns, it is part of what we experienced , we cannot avoid it. There is no break from one to the other - it is a clear continuation."[13]

For Kitaj the influence of Abstract Expressionism could not be avoided because he saw it as having been derived from Surrealiam.

> "All Abstract Expressionism from Pollock on comes from Surrealism, it is perhaps most notable in Baziotes and Gorky but even Rothko has an element of it."[14]

Thus Kitaj traces a line of development from Surrealism, through Abstract Expressionism to the Pop movement of his contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic.

Kitaj's interest in compositional structures and devices centered around the use of what he called "plural energies" by which he deliberately scattered attention across the surface of his early paintings allowing no element to predominate.

> "Plural energies engage my hopes for picture making rather than Less is More (Noland et al) ...."[15]

Through his use of plural energies Kitaj wanted to provide an inducement for the eye to wander over the surface of his paintings, for the mind to wander. This was connected to the Surrealist belief in:

> "....the superior reality of certain forms of association neglected before, ...in the disinterested play of thought."

as defined in Breton's first Surrealist Manifesto of 1924.[16]

Kitaj took as models for his use of plural energies methods from various sources, primarily the Surrealist collage technique. The all-over compositional devices used by many of the Abstract Expressionists provided him with another model for this. However a more immediate model for Kitaj's employment of these devices; the all-over composition and the grid composition, was the American artist Robert Rauschenberg:

> "Rauschenberg and Rivers were ten years older than me. I knew their work and thought very highly of them, because theirs was such an interesting alternative to abstraction. They both left some mark on my early work as De Kooning had. Rauschenberg had derived from De Kooning Cornell, Duchamp and Surrealism and that context was very interesting in my youth.[17]

These compositional devices had been used by many artists including Picasso, Schwitters and Ernst as well as by more contemporary artists like Johns and Rivers.

A comparison between Rauschenberg's lithograph; License, 1962 (Fig 9B) and Kitaj's painting Reflections on Violence 1962 (Fig 4) reveals the influence of Rauschenberg's use of the all-over composition on Kitaj's painting.

Yet another model for Kitaj's use of "plural energies" was poetry:

> "Poetry weighs for me...plural energies again....."[18]

The Poetry of Ezra Pound and more particularly of T. S. Eliot, was of particular interest to him. His enthusiasm for these poets had begun early in life.

"Pound for instance fires me up and has done since age 18."[19]

In an essay on Kitaj's work Timothy Hyman has said that Kitaj's work gives him the 'sence of a mind roving." This might just as easily serve as a discription of Eliot's poetry;

> What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands
> What water lapping the bow
> And scent of pine and woodthrush singing through the fog
> What images return
> O my daughter.[20]
>
> T. S. Elliot

Much of Eliots poetry concerns itself with a simulation of the way we persieve things in our daily lives. The eye focuses on an object which becomes blurred and indistinct as the attention wanders and the eye focus on another object which in turn fades into indistinction. Clear outlines suddenly become illegible. In a similar way the mind focuses on a distinct thought only to slip back into vague reverie or on to yet another, distinct thought. In Eliots poetry images are evoked only to be let slip back into the shadows again.[21] Kitaj sometimes achieves a similar effect in his paintings. As Gene Boro has put it:

> "The way in which Silhouettes become masses and masses become transparencies in some of his paintings is part of Kitaj's stable world of change."[22]

The poetry of Eliot and Pound provided a model for Kitaj's wish to employ plural energies in his work, and through their use, to encourage the viewer to allow his attention to wander at will over the surface of the painting refusing to direct it in any previously ordained direction. By this Kitaj contrives to simulate the way our perception works in our daily lives.[23]

> "The idea that you can get lost in a picture seems very lifelike because we get very lost in our emotional, worldly lives. I remember getting lost in fontainebleau forest. We lose our way in cities; we get lost in books, lost in thought .....Benjamin said it takes practice to get lost."[24]

Through this use of plural energies Kitaj wanted to produce paintings that would scan in the same way poems scan.

The work of T. S. Eliot also provided Kitaj with a model for his

practice of appending notes to his works, Eliot had provided notes to his great poem The Wasteland.[25] Kitaj saw in this practice a means by which he could link his paintings to the cultural background from which they emerged. This attitude was epitomised by his famous statement

"SOME BOOKS HAVE PICTURES AND SOME PICTURES HAVE BOOKS."[26]

Often, as in the case of the text he provided to accompany The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin), see appendix, these texts are similar to poems in their suggestiveness and ambiguity, hinting at the themes issues and motives behind the equally elusive paintings. Kitaj's titles also show the influence of poetry, they are often ambiguous involving wordplay at various levels of meaning for example His New Freedom or Stage Life of the Dead. Kitaj regarded the title as only one form of association between the painted image and word-matter.

In Kitaj's later work he explored the notion of inventing characters that would epitomise various conditions he wished his art to address. To some extent similar characters are often to be found in earlier works like The Ohio Gang. The types or characters we find in his paintings are often similar to the cast of characters found in Eliots poetry; prostitutes, crude businessmen, victims, exiles, and in the case of one painting Smyrna Greek (Nikos) 1976-77 (Fig 29) as the title suggests a Smyrna Greek character perhaps related to Eliots "Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant." Kitaj's major painting If Not, Not, 1975-76 (Fig 32), is based on Eliots Wasteland and can be regarded as a 'study' toward a fresco based on the Wasteland, that he has been commissioned to paint for the new British Library.[28]

"As in poetry so in painting."[29]

FOOTNOTES

1 R.B.Kitaj in interview with Timothy Hyman. Timothy Hyman "A Return to London." John Ashbery, Joe Shannon, Jane Livingston, Timothy Hyman, Kitaj Drawings, Paintings, Pastels, p.45.

2 James Faure Walker "R.B.Kitaj interviewed by James Faure Walker" Artscribe 5, February 1977, p.4.

3 R.B.Kitaj Letter to Marco Livingstone 22nd January 1980. Marco Livingstone "Iconology as Theme in the Early Work of R.B.Kitaj" Burlington Magazine 122, July 1980, p.491.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Frederic Tuten, Neither Fool nor Naive nor Poseur-Saint : Fragments on R.B.Kitaj. Artforum January 1982

7 Marco Livingstone, p.491.

8 Ibid.

9 Mario Amaya "Pop as Art : A Survey of the New Super Realism, p.140.

10 John Ashbery "Hunger and Live in Their Variations" Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.14

11 R.B.Kitaj Letter to Marco Livingstone 22nd January 1980. M. Livingstone, p.491.

12 Gene Boro "The British Scene : Hockney and Kitaj" Arts Magazine 38, May-June 1964, p.100

13 Mario Amaya "Pop as Art : A Survey of the New Super Realism," p.141.

14 Ibid.

15 R.B.Kitaj in interview with Maurice Tuchman : Andrew Brighton and Lynda Morris "Towards Another Picture : An Anthology of Writings by Artists working in Britain 1945-1977" p.155. First published : Catalogue to "R.B.Kitaj : Paintings and Prints" Los Angeles County Museum 1965.

16 Marco Livingstone, p.491.

17 Letter to Marco Livingstone 22nd January 1980. Marco Livingstone, p.491.

18 Brighton and Morris (see note 15) p.155.

19 Ibid.

20 T.S.Eliot 'Marina'. Helen Gardner, The New Oxford Book of English Verse, p.890.

21 John Ashbery. Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings Pastels, p.11.

22 Boro, p.100.

23 John Ashbery. Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.11.

24 R.B.Kitaj in interview with Timothy Hyman. "A Return to London", Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, Kitaj Paintings Drawings, Pastels, p.45.

25 "Our advanced mileau is engaging and seductive and progressive that .... someone like me would think that if Eliot could append notes to the Wasteland ... I could paste quasi-scholarly notes onto my pictures." R.B.Kitaj in an interview with Frederic Tuten : Tuten, p.65.

26 Gene Boro, p.100. First published : R.B.Kitaj "On Associating Texts with Paintings" Cambridge Opinion 37, January 1864, pp.52-53.

27 John Ashbery. Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.11.

28 Timothy Hyman "Kitaj : A Prodigal Returning" Artscribe 25, October 1980, p.41.

29 R.B.Kitaj in an interview with Maurice Tuchman. Andrew Brighton and Lynda Morris, (see note 15), p.156.

"Dissipation in youth and a redemption in aging not untried before."[1]

From around the year 1974 we find a change in the work of R. B. Kitaj, a shift in emphasis ontothe practice of drawing from the human figure as central to his art, and a simplification of structures. This was not by any means an abrupt change in direction, it could be detected as far back as 1966, and the drawings he made of baseball players, as well as the 'drawn' protraits he produced in oil on canvas in 1967 and 1968 which included protraits friends David Hockney, David at Berkeley (Fig 16) and Robert Duncan. As we have seen the death of his wife Elsi seems to have disrupted his output, however in 1972 he collaborated with the poet Robert Creely on a book, A Day Book for which Creely supplied the text and Kitaj the drawings which were mostly of figures like Pencil Drawing for A Day Book by Robert Creely 1972 (Fig 67).[2]

However the real shift of emphasis came in 1974 and not only represented a stylistic change but in many ways only reflected a deeper idealogical and philosophical change which was reflected in all his work, and which was to ultimately result in his rejection of a great deal of his earlier work as "purile"[3] in favour of this newfound direction.

The tragedy of the death of his wife in 1969 as we have seen, seems to have disrupted his output and broken the line of development within his work, it was not until his return to London from California in 1971 that his:

"Painting and drawing slowly begin to come to life again."[3]

by then the direction of this development had radically changed. This as I have said manifested itself in a return of the practice of daily intense drawing from the model and an interest in simplified pictorial structures. An example of this experimentation with such structures is to be had in the series of works that included Batman 1973 (Fig 21) Superman 1973 and Bill at Sunset, 1973 (Fig 22) in which he experimented with the depiction of the single figure on a tall narrow format. These images were developed from a childs drawings[4] and painted on a very large

format (eight foot tall). In structure format and scale these are as we shall see related to later paintings.

The influence of certain key figures was crucial in this change of direction. On his return to London in 1971, Kitaj stayed for several months with his old friend David Hockney at his house at Powis Terrace. This must have provided Kitaj with an insight into Hockneys brilliant and eccentric style of figuration.[5] In 1975 Kitaj visited the Petit Palais in Paris and was deeply impressed by the pastel works of Edgar Degas,[6] Kitaj had begun to use the pastel medium the previous year and had produced such works as Study for the Worlds Body 1974 (Fig.23) and Study for Miss Brooke 1974 (Fig 24). On his return to London he began making drawings from the model using pastel: "Encouraged by the daily example and urging of Sandra Fisher."[7] The young American artist Sandra Fisher was to be a strong influence in Kitaj's renewed interest in working directly from the human figure. Kitaj had met her on his return to London in 1971 when she too had just arrived from America and had developed an interest in her work which is primarily concerned with the representation of the human figure in drawings and pastels, for example (Fig 25). Another artist with whom Kitaj had also established a close friendship was the painter Frank Auerbach.[8] Auerbach is very well known for his marvellous heavily-worked charcoal drawings of the figure ~~(see Fig ——)~~ which may well have been influencial in the development of Kitaj's own charcoal drawings, but more fundamentaly in Kitaj's increasing belief in the primacy of the human figure as of central significance to the practice of art.[9]

Study for the Worlds Body 1974 (Fig 24) and Femme du Peuple II, 1974 ~~(Fig ——)~~ were perhaps the first works from this ultimately fruitful period. Both of these works resemble movie posters in both mood and content and as such are related to such earlier works as Where the Railroad Leaves the Sea 1964 (Fig 6), The Ohio Gang 1964 (Fig 5) and The Autumn of Central Paris 1972 - 74 (Fig 13).

Study for the Worlds Body is an interesting work to examine in that, not only is it an interesting image but it also reveals Kitaj's coming

to terms with this new medium. The setting is the bleak interior of a room or attic, the coldpale blue daylight streaming in through the stark window to the right. In the foreground two figures, a young couple startled from their embrace by some intrusion, that the man, his back to us, turns his face to see. Both figures gaze past us out of the picture at this unseen presence. The starkness of the room is accentuated by the inclusion of such particulars as a lone clothes-hanger suspended from a nail in the wall behind them and the empty light socket hanging from the ceiling.

Kitaj is experimenting with the medium, the use of the ground and the laying down of layers of pastel one over another. The colour of the paper is basically a warm orange-grey, this acts as the ground and as the basic colour for the man's face with the addition of a touch of pink on his left cheek and a strip of plae blue along the side of his face, where the daylight is reflected from the womans hand. The woman's face is built up of layers of pastel, a layer of pale blue laid down on the warm ground and another layer of pale warm yellow superimposed in its turn on this, the woman's hand upon the man's shoulder is rendered in the same way. The walls of the room are achieved by a layer of bright red superimposed upon the warm ground. The treatment of the male figure is in darker tones of greens and browns in contrast to the woman's pale cool pinks and blues. The mood of the figures seems pensive and the treatment of the stark empty room lends a certain claustrophobic air to the scene which is accentuated by the presence of that dark rectangular shape to the right of the couple that seems to encroach on their space.

Another important work from the period is Study for Miss Brooke 1974 (Fig 24.) this profile study in pastel, of the head and shoulders of a young woman, shows great sensitivity to the play of light on form especially in the treatment of the face. This and the handling of the inherent textural qualities of the medium are obviously indebted to Dega's pastel works. This work is important as it heralds an approach Kitaj was to develop in later works (for example The Yellow Hat 1980 (Fig 61).

In 1976 Kitaj produced an important work The Jew....etc., 1976 (Fig 26),

exhibited in its original state as a drawing in oil and charcoal on canvas. This work represents a seated male figure in the compartment of a railroad carrage. This work is interesting for many reasons,not least being that it represents a link between Kitaj's increasingly sophisticated life drawing and the single and double figure paintings he was beginning to produce.

Kitaj has given some indication of his intentions behind this and other works in which he presents us with what he calls "memorable characters":

> "I like the idea that it might be possible to invent a figure, a character in a picture the way novelists have been able to do - a memorable character like the people out of Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy..... The first figure will be an Arabist....The second figure will be an Orientalist.... I have begun to develop some other characters; a kind of quintessential Jew, a slav, a Mother..."[10]

It seems the Jew.....etc is an attempt to create such a 'Memorable character' a quintessential Jew. The "jewish condition" is a subject of primary significance to Kitaj and his art.[11] A Jew himself he has become increasingly aware of and interested in his Jewish origins and has begun a process of self-education in Jewish history and culture.[12] Furthermore he has expressed a commitment to tackle in his work, such themes as Auschwitz and the murder of the European Jews.[13]

In The Jew....etc the pose of the figure indicates a certain feeling of anxiety, he leans forward, his legs crossed, his hand up to his face, the expression on which seems one of fear. The floor beneath his feet is littered with stamped-out cigarette-ends. Given the title and this sense of anxiety about the figure, one imagaines that this is another of Kitaj's victims, anxious fugitive from some unstated terror, the title and the 1940's style clothes might suggest that this figure perhaps represents one of the many thousand Jewish fugitives from the Nazi regime. Yet there is a degree of ambiguity about the work, that hearing aid that the figure wears creates an uncertainty as to his identity. Is it simply a symbol of his frailty, his vulnerability? Kitaj has used the image before, a man with a hearing-aid appears in The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) (Fig 13) and in the text

Kitaj gives us a clue as to the identity of the Character:

> "MAN WITH HEARING-AID ....THE POLICE SPY/SECRET AGENT (who would hear better with an aid)"[14] (see Appendix)

This information brings the situation of the figure in The Jew ....etc into question. Why has Kitaj not titled the work simply The Jew? Is the expression on the character's face really one of anxiety or could it be of malice? Is he perhaps leaning foreward in order that he might hear better. Among other issues Kitaj has expressed a desire to refer in his work to an agony he sees as comparable to that of the Jewish agonies; The Palestinian Diaspora. In this work perhaps the figure of the Jew is cast in a role other than that of the victim or has Kitaj contrived to create an ambiguous image to represent both hunter and hunted the dual nature of us all. Our deceptive doubleness is another of Kitaj's concerns:

> "I forget who said that everything is what it is and something else."[15]

By allowing such ambiguity to exist in his work Kitaj encourages the viewer to read in a certain amount, "to allegorise" as Joe Shannon puts it.[16]

In terms of drawing, The Jew....etc is a masterfull work, especially in the particularly sensitive handling of the hands. Kitaj not only displays his great powers of observation and his sheer skill in drawing the figure, but also his ability to distort where this benefits his artistic intention. For example, Kitaj has taken liberties with the drawing of the figure's shoulder, exaggerating the distance from the neck to the arm. This however improves the balance of the composition and increases the sense of the figure being hunched. In this Kitaj has put aesthetic and psychological concerns before any merely academic notion of anatomical accuracy. The sureness of the drawing must reasonably be attributed to Kitaj's self-concious self-application to the constant process of drawing from the model. Kitaj sees this activity as being of vital importance in his efforts to tackle broader themes, like that tackled in this work, as he puts it:

> "These impossible themes are very grand and form themselves slowly in the nervous intercourse with other subjects and the regular

practice of direct drawing from people."[17]

While working on The Jew...etc Kitaj was also working on and planning oil paintings and experimenting with various of formats. These works include Moresque 1975 - 76 (Fig 27) The Orientalist 1976 - 77 (Fig 28) Smyrna Greek (Nikos) 1976 - 77 (Fig 29) From London (James Joll and John Golding) 1975 - 77 (Fig 30) Land of Lakes 1975 - 77 (Fig 31) If Not, Not, 1975 - 76 (Fig 32). All these works have in common the influence of Kitaj's constant practice of drawing from the human figure. However Kitaj was exploring the use of various formats and structures. In the first group of paintings Moresque, The Orientalist and Smyrna Greek (Nikos), Kitaj explores the use simplified structures, concentrating on the representation of the single figure and the use of a basically vertical, tall narrow format. In these respects these works are related to earlier works for instance the two tall narrow drawings in oil on canvas of William Powell as The Thin Man Dashell Hammett 1979, and four paintings; Batman 1973 (Fig 21) Superman, 1973, Bill at Sunset 1973 (Fig 22) and Still (the Other Woman), 1974 all of which were based on childrens drawings and all of which share the same format and indeed the exact same measurements 244 X 76.2 (96" X 30") as Moresque, The Orientalist and Smyrna Greek (Nikos).

These works (Moresque etc) are related to The Jew....etc in that, in them Kitaj presents us with some more of the "memorable characters" that he wishes to epitomise certain conditions that have relevance to his own condition, for instance the condition of the exile:

> "All of these will be about lives led outside the places people come from."[18]

The first two of these works Moresque and The Orientalist are very similar in conception and execution, in both we are presented with an exoticaly dressed figure seated before a table or desk.

Moresque (Fig 27) obviously represents the Arabist figure Kitaj has referred to:

> "This first character will be an Arabist. I've always been drawn to those scholar adventurers who went out to the East. I've often read into Burton and Doughty. I will invent him as best I can."[19]

In the painting we are presented with a richly robed figure against the flat plane of a wall or screen, with an eastern or Art Nouveau-style pattern on it. The matte application of paint used in the backdrop is contrasted with the mottled, textural richness of the robes achieved by the scumbling of dry oil paint onto what appears to be a light blue ground. This technique would appear to be strongly indebted to the pastel technique whereby similar effects are achieved by superimposing layers of pastel over one another. THis particular technique is used in many of his works of this period particularly in the treatment of clothes (as in this case) and of landscape. Here its use in rendering the mottled quality of the robes seems eloquent, unfortunately however, in the treatment of the face Kitaj employs a similar technique and this produces an all over texture, a lack of contrast which weakens the painting, as does the small tonal range within the painting.

On the table before the figure rest objects, a saucer and fork, and a book, which is drawn as though it does not rest on the surface of the table, but is tilted foreward towards the picture plane, as objects often are in Cézanne still-lifes. Indeed the surface of the table also seems tilted forward. The face of the figure seems strangely passive, is he in some narcotically induced state or does this simply represent eastern contentment? He holds something between his lips, a cigarette perhaps? (This is not clear), the red floor is littered with cigarette ends. What has he been preparing with this saucer and fork? Again Kitaj leaves questions unanswered.

In The Orientalist we are once more presented with a portrait-type image of a figure at a desk. The setting and costume are again exotic, as the title suggests they have an oriental, indeed Chinese look to them. Kitaj tells us:

> "The setting was inspired by Whistler's Peacock Room....
> The face is largely made up with a little help from
> lottos'Protrait of a Man' at Vienna."[20]

The colours of the figures clothes; cool pinks blues and greens, are similar to those which are in the background. There is something of the chemist shop about the scene, the colours seem acidic. One wonders what

substances are kept in these porcelain bowls and what is that powder in the dish before him on the table? Is it some valuable substance he is in the process of measuring? One thinks of the importance of the role of opiates in oriental culture.

The mood of Smyrna Greek (Nikos) 1976 - 77 (Fig 29) is very different, although again the setting is exotic. The work Kitaj tells us was:

> "....suggested by a recent life of Cavafy, the episode when he lived above a brothel in Alexandria. The background will be a brothel."[21]

Smyrna Greek(Nikos) differs from Moresque and The Orientalist in that it includes more than one figure. However the central figure dominates the composition. The other figures include a prostitute, beside Nikos to the left, her dress and the red light on the upper left identify the setting. There is a third figure a man in the distance, decending the stairs, above and behind them. The number of figures invites a narrative interpretation, yet as usual Kitaj poses more questions than he provides the answers for. Why does Nikos stare out of the picture refusing to recognise the obvious soliciting of the girl? And that figure on the stairs, a satisfied customer?

Kitaj uses colour to provide mood for this forbidding night-time world. The cool greys, blues and greens hint at the dank atmosphere of its ill lit halls and stairways. This strange other-worldly mood is hightened by the inherent ambiguity of Kitaj's treatment of the upper part of the painting; the area at the top of the stairs against which is silhouetted the descending figure. The pastel-like technique of scumbling dry, pale, blue and yellow oil paint, over the darker blue of the ground that refuses to be obliterated, seems to suggest a clouded sky rather than the partially lit plane of a wall, that logic and the tight liniar drawing of the doorframes might suggest. When we read this area as a clouded sky the red light becomes the glowing disc of a strange red moon, This is yet another example of Kitaj's "stable world of change." Less ambiguous however is his handling of the female figure, her sexuality is advertised by the see-through mini skirt she wears, through

which her pubic hair is obvious, this note of sexuality makes the context of the scene clear.

The figure of Nikos was posed for Kitaj by his friend Nikos Stangos, however Kitaj does not regard these works as portraits, he uses many sources in his development of these memorable characters.

Kitaj sees these characters as relying on purely visual means for their expression, despite the fact that he cites as his models for them characters from the world of literature like those of Dickens Dostyevsky and Tolstoy:

> ".....And the fact that this is a model from literature doesn't frighten me at all because that's only somthing I may borrow as a possible usage, when in fact this could be ultimately a visual experience .... you'd have to look at the picture. The disposition of the facial characteristics, or the way the body sits on the canvas would be something you could only respond to having seen it."[22]

Other works that are similar in format to these paintings include a double portrait; A Visit to London (Robert Creely and Rober Duncan) 1977 (Fig 33) and The Hispanist (Nissa Torrents) 1977 both of which are tall and narrow canvases.

The double protrait From London (James Joll and John Golding) 1975 - 77 (Fig 30) has a rectangular format. The profile portraits of the two figures are almost repeated images of each other. The features are rendered with precise representational accuracy. However Kitaj contrasts this approach with his treatment of other elements, as though to remind us lest we forget, that a painting is in one sense, nothing more than paint on a two dimentional surface. For instance the arm of the figure on the right is allowed to taper off in an unfinished blur. The two-dimentional nature of the painting is again emphasised by Kitaj's treatment of the head of the figure on the left, (James Joll) where in the course of painting the picture (compare finished state (Fig 30) with the state in which it was exhibited in Edinburgh in 1975 (Fig 34), Kitaj has decided to leave part of the head incomplete revealing the surface of the tiles behind it. The effect resembles that which one sees in Italian frescoes, like those of Giotto, where the paint has flaked off revealing the surface beneath, on which the image was painted. These

tiles behind the figure echo the grid-like structure of the reproduction of a Mondrian painting which is hung beside them, this seems to be a visual pun on Mondrian's grided compositions. The flatness of the picture is also commented upon by the red ground upon which the figure of Joll (left) is painted. This not only acts as the plane of a wall, but to the left it is broken by a black vertical strip, this frames a scene with two figures and a tree, also painted on the same red ground. These two figures bare no relationship to the perspective of the rest of the painting, and they appear as though they are simply painted onto the red wall. Do they represent a view out of a window or perhaps an illustration of the thoughts of Joll? The two-dimentionality of this area of the painting is contrasted with illusionistic space created by the treatment of other parts of the composition, for instance the desk in the foreground. Kitaj is again commenting on another duality; of course a painting is basically paint on a two dimentional surface, but as Kitaj would say a lot more besides.

Kitaj's use of the scumbled application of dry paint a ground of a different tone and colour is evident in his treatment of the curtained window on the far right. This is a good example of how he often simulates the effects of light achieved through the photographic process.

Two other works from this period that are of significance are, Land of Lakes 1975 - 77 (Fig 31) and If Not, Not, 1975 - 76 (Fig 32) both are landscapes and both share the same square format and the same scale (152.4 X 152.4, 60" X 60").[23]

Both of these works are inspired by Ambrogio Lorenzettis great allegorical frescos Good and Bad Government from the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. Land of Lakes seems to represent Kitaj's vision of Good government. Here we have an uninhabited landscape, its warm colours reminiscent of the middle east. The pictorial space is different to anything we have yet seen in Kitaj's work. There is a primitive quality to the vista we are presented with, strongly influenced by Lorenzettis work on which the work is modeled (Fig 35) as well as certain works by Bruegel. These works seem to have provided a new model for Kitaj use of plural energies, the eye is invited to wander over the surface of the painting, over the landscape, the attention is scattered. In the foreground a cross, a red flag and a building perhaps a temple. The mood of this landscape is of harmony, a harmony presided over by these symbols of Judaic, Christian and Socialist, humanism. Kitaj as a socialist and a Jew sees this humanism as the source of political harmony:

> "Socialism, for me is just another word for compassion. Someone asked a sage to define Juadism, please, while standing on one leg and the sage said it was treating others the way you would like to be treated. It has a familiar ring, doesn't it? Its the ideal justice that used to exercise me when I was young never Marxism which always bored me."[24]

The mood of If Not, Not (Fig 34) is very different to Land of Lakes. Indeed the vision we are confronted with is a strange hell-like landscape populated by the dead and the mutilated survivors of some holocaust. Again the pictorial space is a primitive vista again indebted to Lorenzettis works, another painter it is reminiscent of is Heronymus Bosch in the scattered composition, the dark colour and tonal range, and the mood (see Fig 36). This is however a twentieth century disaster, the bodies scattered about the landscape could easily be our contemporaries. One of the figures seems familiar, the man on the lower left being comforted by that strange nude girl, he wears a hearing aid in his ear.

He has a predecessor in; The Jew...etc and The Autumn of Central Paris. That figure crawling into the picture on the right with his bandeged head and stump, where his arm used to be, is he a terrorist? He seems unarmed but what has he got in that sachel? The sky is dark and ominous in deep greens and greys, suddenly lit up by firey oranges and reds. Presiding over the carnage is "the gate of death" at Berkenau - Auschwitz,[25] surely the mouth of hell. Strewn about the landscape mingled with the broken bodies are symbols of a lost civilization books, a chart or map, the cornerstone of some vanished building, a lamb reminiscent of the image of, the Lamb of God, from countless alter pieces.

As with all of Kitaj's work the meaning is anything but clear, Kitaj tells us that the work is about "human meanness."[26] This painting would seem to represent the opposite to the harmonious vision represented by its companion piece, Land of Lakes. This is Kitaj's version of bad government, represented for him as a Jew and as a socialist by Nazism. In this painting, mans presence has introduced discord, his essential meanness has destroyed the harmony of the natural world; the symbols of civilization and humanism; the books charts etc ., are trampled underfoot and in their place we have chaos.

The origin of the title casts some light on the social and political ideals behind the work. Robert Creely in his introduction to Kitaj's 1977 show at the Marlborough tells us that the words are from a passage from a book in Kitaj's library, Goya In the Democratic Tradition by F. D. Klingender:[27]

> "'We who are as good as you swear to you who are no better than we, to accept you as our King provided you observe all our liberties and laws; but if not, not'. - this formula of the ancient coronation oath of Aragon defines the relations of the sovereigns to their noble subjects in all the kingdoms of medieval Spain."[28]

Kitaj in this painting would seem to portray the concequences of the failure of this proto-type democratic principle. Through Bad government the liberties and laws of the people have not been observed and chaos has insued.

While working on these paintings Kitaj was involved in the process of drawing daily from the human figure. From around 1977 he began to devote himself almost exclusively to the practice of drawing. The work he began to produce not only included many sensitive studies of the model in pastel and charcoal but also more imaginitive works on paper that wonderfully combine Kitaj's increased sureness in drawing the human figure with his longheld ability to manipulate imagery, form and composition. Kitaj began to produce works in series.

The first of these series was of Bather's. These were large pastel and charcoal drawings on paper, of the single figure. The format was basically vertical, tall and narrow, and as such they are related to earlier paintings; Moresque and The Orientalist. In nearly all of these works we are presented with a figure partially submerged in water.

As representations of bathers these works are in a long tradition which includes works by such people as; Puvis de Chavannes, Pierre Auguste Renoir and of course Paul Cézanne. However the mood of these works is very different from that of their historical predecessors. Kitaj's bathers are uncomfortable in this element, they are vulnerable. In Bather (Torsion), 1978 (Fig 37) we have a striking example of this. The figure stands submerged in water up to his waist, both hands brought up to his face in a gesture of anxiety, he stares directly out of the picture but not at us, he has the vacant look of someone plagued by some inner horror. The image is distantly derived from one of the figures of the dambed in Michelangelo's; The Last Judgement[29] (Fig 38), with whom it shares this haunted expression. A similar figure is represented in Bather (wading) 1978 (Fig 39) a negro figure knee-deep in water. We again sence his vulnerability, he is slightly bent over, his hands clasped together, the water is obviously cold, or is this a gesture of pleading? He is another unwilling bather nervous at his impending fate. A third, Bather (Tousled Hair), 1978 (Fig 40) is perhaps the most strangely powerful of them all. A shorter figure than the others the water is above his waist, he has an expression of childlike composure registered on his beautifully drawn face, yet he is surely another victim, someone

unable to believe what is happening to him. The drawing of the whole figure is beautifully handeled. In particular the head and upper body which must surely have been drawn from life because of the great subtlety with which Kitaj handels the features and the tousled hair.

Kitaj has been extremely inventive in his rendering of the effect of the figures being submerged in water in all of these works. He has achieved this by drawing the images on two different pieces of paper stuck down, one above the other (as we look at them). On the upper piece of paper is drawn the upper part of the figure which is out of the water. The lower piced of paper is different in tone and colour to the other. On this lower piece of paper is drawn the distorted image of the submerged section of the figure. Through this distortion Kitaj simulates the way in which objects submerged in water appear distorted. The drawing of the submerged part of the figure is also blurred in order to represent the way outlines of objects in water are often unclear. In contrast to this, the drawing of the figure above the water is more sharp. The most eloquent device Kitaj uses in order to achieve this effect, is the manner in which the upper edge of the lower sheet of paper is used in order to represent the surface of the water. This device is used to disrupt the image breaking it in two. In Bather (Tousled Hair), 1978 (Fig 40) this device is used to great effect, three pieces of paper are used in all. The image is broken just below the chest by the torn upper edge of themiddle piece of paper. This torn edge represents the waved line of the surface of the water beautifully, and this device combined with the marvellously skewed and distorted drawing of the figure below this, eloquently describes the effect of the figure being submerged.

In these works Kitaj displays a great sensitivity to the materials he uses, both pastels and paper. He combines a sensitive use of line and texture with an ability to distort, and to make radical use of the materials including the paper. These drawings while extremely beautiful are at the same time very disturbing in their psychological impact, as Timothy Hyman has put it:

"The general sence of all these images is an awakening to dread."[30]

The force of these works is due to a great extent to Kitaj's subtlety and use of understatement. The way in which the vulnerability of these figures is insinuated rather than obviously stated weighs upon the mind. Another reason for their power as images is due to the inherent irony produced by the contrast between these images and the traditional image of the bather in art; the human body in harmony with the natural world, a celebration of La joie de vivre that we see in the bathers of Renoir, Gauguin and others. Kitaj's bathers are distinctly out of their element. They are reluctant bathers full of trepidation. They are however related to what Kitaj calls;Cézannes; "...clumped hurt, awkward, stilted bathers".[31]

There is a third, much later and if anything more disturbing work in this series; Bather (Psychotic Boy), 1980 (Fig 41), this time the figure is not pictured in the water but on the beach in swimming trunks, behind him the yellow sky and the green sea. He is more blatantly disturbing than any of the earlier works in the series. His body is twisted and deformed, his left arm ends in a bloodied indistinct smudge. The face is a study in insanity.The iris of his left eye is a disturbing pink colour. From this eye, lines of force of pink green orange and yellow, fan out like some form of perverted rainbow, as his psychosis invades the outside world.

In 1980 there was an exhibition of Kitaj's Pastels and Drawings at the Marlborough Fine Art gallery in London. In this Kitaj showed many of the drawings and pastels he had been working on for the previous three years. These included many pastels of the model for example, Marynka 1979 The Yellow Hat 1980 (Fig 42),the Bather series was also included.

This show presented the achievements of Kitaj's years of devotion to the practice of drawing. The works that were most impressive included three that for me represent a synthesis of the various developments within Kitaj's work of the period 1977 - 80. These are; His New Freedom

1978 (Fig 43) The Listner (Joe Singer in Hiding) 1980 (Fig 42) and the large pastel The Rise of Fascism 1979 - 80 (Fig 44) now in The Tate.

His New Freedom is an interesting work for many reasons primarily because of the power of the image, this malevolent creature insinuates itself into the mind. The methods by which Kitaj achieves this are also interesting. The strange degenerate aura she radiates is achieved by the juxtaposition of images to form a single image. The upper part of the face of this figure is taken from a drawing by Rubens of his wife (now in the British MUseum). While the lower part of the face, with its befouled mouth is taken from a still from Dreyer's film; 'Vampyr'. This is Kitaj the surrealist at it again. In this work Kitaj displays the fact that his adoption of this new medium does not preclude methods of picture-making that we associate with his earlier work.

The Listner (Joe Singer in Hiding) 1980 (Fig 42) is again a work that depends for its success on the radical conjunction of images styles and textures. Kitaj presents us with yet another of his memorable characters, a certain Joe Singer whose experiences he is gradually unfolding in this and other works. Here Joe is a subterranian figure crouched in a darkened cavern, his gesture is one of listening , his hand brought up to his ear, his other ear turned towards the surface above. Above him on the surface the innocent life of the world goes on. This strange peaceful landscape seems reminiscent of the middle-east perhaps Palastine. In this landscape a child reads his text. The Listener is once again an image that weighs on the mind and it achieves this as much by its formal qualities as by its suggested narrative. As in the case of the Bathers Kitaj has built up these images on successive layers of overlaid pieces of paper. One masterful example of Kitaj's use of this technique is seen in the way in which Kitaj allows the torn edge of one vertical strip of paper to become the contour for the arm. The figure of Joe in his hiding place takes up two thirds of the composition. The Carravagioesque drawing of the face and hand of Joe is combined with the skewed and summary rendering of his body and is contrasted with the simplified childlike drawing of the landscape and figure above.

The Rise of Fascism 1975 - 79 (Fig 44) is a work of particular significance. As Timothy Hyman has put it:

> "Perhaps no work could be clearer in demonstrating the process by which Kitaj hopes to transform the experience of life-drawing into the creation of emblematic inventions."[32]

The composition consists of three beautifully drawn female figures. The setting is some desolate shore, behind them to the left the deep blue sea above which a second world war bomber enters the picture, a symbol of impending violence. In this work we are presented with a warped version of The Three Fates. The subject of the work is made clear by the title. This is an allegorical work, each of the figures epitomise the types that Kitaj regards as having been the main protagonists in this drama; the advent of Nazism. The grotesque central figure embodies Fascism herself a degenerate Madame. The disturbingly sexual figure to the left is, Kitaj tells us, her "Beautiful Victim"?[33] The third figure on the right is a "Typical European" impassive, apathetic she is a collaborator in this affair. The figures remind me of those found in a much earlier painting The Ohio Gang 1964 (Fig 5) the characters are similar, this grotesque Madame is almost identical to the female interrogater in the earlier work, the "Beautiful Victim" is present in both works and the "Typical European" finds her equivalent in the bemused figure in the 'pram' on the lower right hand corner of The Ohio Gang.

The Rise of Fascism presents us with a vision of moral decay, the decadence that attended the rise of Nazism, in the Germany of the 1930's. Kitaj reminds us of Audens famous statement that no Metaphor can express a historical unhappiness yet one senses that what Kitaj is attempting to achieve in this work, is just such a metaphor or as he calls it

> "an emblematic rememberence of horror and banality."[35]

The power of this image however is not only due to the suggested narrative but also to the formal achievements, indeed these two aspects of the work compliment each other. Kitaj once again makes sensitive yet radical use of the materials. The image is built up of overlaid pieces of paper upon which the pastel and charcoal are applied, the edges of the paper interacting with the drawn lines. The drawing is

probably more assured, inventive and eloquent than that of any other of Kitaj's works. And the qualities of texture and colour achieved through the application of the pastel to the course paper, is extremely seductive. The composition, created by the thoughtful arrangement of forms is forceful and dynamic. In this work Kitaj has truely achieved a synthesis of the various, indeed sometimes digressive, elements we find in all of his works, and through this synthesis he has, at least in this instance, succeeded in his attemp t to create:

> "memorable inventions .... out of this possible depiction of life in the world."[36]

In 1979 Kitaj once again turned his attention to painting, this resulted in works like The Salor (David Ward), 1979 - 80 (Fig 45) The Jewish School, (Drawing a Golem), 1980 (Fig 46) Grey Girl, 1981 (Fig 47) and finally two interesting works of 1981 The Garden (Fig 48) and The Rock Garden (The Nation) (Fig 49).

All of these works have in common an emphasis on the expressionistic application of oil paint. In them the expressive qualities of the paint itself are explored and, to some extent, this use of paint replaces the primacy of line we find in most of his earlier works, as the most expressive element in the work. In paintings such as Land of Lakes 1976 (Fig 31) and If Not, Not 1975 - 76 (Fig 32) Kitaj's application of paint is comprised of a combination of a staining technique and that of scumbling dry paint onto another layer of paint, in order to achieve rich qualities of texture. In these works, form is defined by the use of strong outline. These methods are also found in other works such as The Orientalist (Fig 28) and From London (James Joll and John Golding) (Fig 30).

In The Jewish School (Drawing a Golem) 1979 (Fig 46) however we find a renewed concern with the expressionistic qualities in the use of paint, which is laid down thickly to produce a rich painterly surface. This use of paint is reminiscent of Kitaj's application of paint in some of his very early works, Kennst Du das Land? 1962 (Fig 50) and Erasmus Variations 1958 (Fig 2), for example which he later abandoned for the matte silk-screen-look we find in The Ohio Gang and other works. In 1980 he commented on this new concern:

"I happen now to be disturbing paint much more than I used to.... but I'm just spreading my wings....."[37]

If we examine Kitaj's use of paint in these works we discover a process at work, a process by which Kitaj's reliance on the expressive qualities of line in his paintings, is being gradually replaced by an increased concentration on the expressive possibilities of the paint itself, culminating in his use of paint in two works; The Garden 1981 (Fig 48) and The Rock Garden, (The Nation) 1981 (Fig49). A good example of an interim phase in this process is to be found in the use of paint Kitaj employs in The Salor (David Ward), 1979 - 1980 (Fig 45). This painting is, in subject, format and structure related to the series of pastels of bathers (Figs.39-41) in that it represents a single figure wading in water on a tall narrow canvas. In this work there is still a strong emphasis on the use of strong dark outline to deliniate the form of the figure, however the application of the paint is quite expressive, it is laid on very thickly to give the surface an overall textural richness. In Grey Girl (Fig 47) a work of the following year 1980, which shares the same structure and format as The Salor, the use of outline is abandoned completely, the figure is rendered purely in terms of the expressive use of paint, and indeed the richness and sheer energy of the surface has increased immensely.

The paint surfaces of; The Rock Garden (The Nation) 1981 (Fig 49) and The Garden, 1981 (Fig 48) are extremely rich and energetic to an extent that is unique in all of Kitaj's work. However in The Garden the use of strong outline has not been entirely abandoned as evidenced in the treatment of the trunks of the trees in the background. This use of outline is subordinate to the expressive use of paint.

The Rock Garden (The Nation) (Fig 49) is yet another work that seems to represent the bringing together of many of the digressive strands in Kitaj's work. Compositionally this is yet another example of Kitaj's use of 'plural energies'. Scattered over the grass-green surface of the garden are different elements mostly heads and stones.

Again, the significance of the imagery is unclear, but the subtitle; The Nation, gives us at least some clue as to the meaning of the work.

The nation referred to is surely The Jewish nation, that scattered nation, the only nation to which Kitaj can truly claim to belong. But who are these characters whose heads litter this strange lawn? The features of the head on the upper left seems familiar. His features remind one of the head of the bespecticled figure in The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) or perhaps he resembles more the figure of Nikos in: Smyrna Greek (Nikos) (Fig 29). And that mutilated head (bottom, second from right) surely another of Kitaj's victims of the Holocaust? The gaunt features of head beside this to the right would seem to indicate that she too is a victim? And the sad pensive features of that face in the lower left hand corner? Who are these bearded figures? Elders, prophets? As always the meaning of the work is ambiguous. Kitaj only gives us hints, this is his subtlety again, his understatement, these suggestions weigh upon the mind more strongly than mere facts. The are "rumours of the true things" as, Kitaj tells us, Kafka called his own writing.[38]

FOOTNOTES

1 R.B.Kitaj in interview with Timothy Hyman : Timothy Hyman, "A Return to London." John Ashbery, Joe Shannon, Jane Livingston, Timothy Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.39.

2 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.8.

3 Joe Shannon, "The Allegorist Kitaj and the Viewer" Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.28.

3(a) Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.8.

4 Ibid, p.27.

5 Ibid, p.8.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid, p.9.

8 Ibid, p.8.

9 On his Return to London in 1971 Kitaj began to meet with Anerbach regularly. And in 1976 Kitaj organised an emhibition for the Arts Council of Great Britain called : The Human Clay, in which he showed only figurative work, including that of Anerbach, Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, pp. 8-9.

10 James Faure Walker , R.B.Kitaj interviewed by James Faure Walker "Artscribe,5, february 1977, p.5.

11 Frederic Tuten "Neither Fool nor Naive nor Poseur-Saint : Fragments on R.B.Kitaj," Artforum, January 1982, p.65. also Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.43.

12 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, pp.43, 44.

13 Ibid.

14 Michael Podro, "Some Notes on Ron Kitaj", Art International 22, March 1979, p.20.

15 R.B.Kitaj in interview with Frederic Tuten : Frederic Tuten, "Neither Naive nor Poseur-Saint : Fragments on R.B.Kitaj." Artforum, January 1982, p.69.

16 Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, pp. 17-18.

[17] Ibid, p.44.

[18] R.B.Kitaj in interview : Faure Walker, p.5.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Judith Bumpus "As a Man Sees" Art and Artists 15, July 1980, p.12.

[21] Faure Walker p.5.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Kitaj has also used these exact measurements in earlier works including, Good News for Incunabulists and The Autumn of Central Paris.

[24] Tuten, p.68.

[25] John Ashbery : Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.14.

[26] Podro, p.21.

[27] F.P.Kingender. Goya In the Democratic Tradition London 1968 (2nd Edition), p.18.

[28] Robert Creely, "Ecce Homo" Art International 22, March 10th 1979,

[29] Timothy Hyman " Kitaj: A Prodigal Returning," Artscribe 25, October 1980, p.38.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Tuten, p.68.

[32] Timothy Hyman "Kitaj : A Prodigal Returning", p.39.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.46.

[36] R.B.Kitaj interview with James Faure Walker. Faure Walker, p.4.

[37] Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.40.

[38] Tuten, p.68.

POLITICS AND SEXUALITY
SUBJECTS IN THE WORK OF R. B. KITAJ

In his essay 'Hunger and Love in Their Variations' the American poet John Ashbery says of R. B. Kitaj:

> "....he is constantly scrutinizing all the chief indicators - poetry pictures, politics, sex, the attitudes of people he sees and the auras of situations they bring with them - in an effort to decode the cryptogram of the world."[1]

I have already discussed the strong influence of literature and especially poetry on the work of R. B. Kitaj and his profound knowledge of, and passion for, the two dimentional image ranging from the work of Giotto to the moving pictures of contemporary cinema. All of this only serves to indicate Kitaj's deep immersion in the cultural issues of our time and his deep desire that his work should relate to these issues, as well as to other artforms; visual, literary, or of any other nature which reflect and focus these issues.

Two subjects that Kitaj repeatedly addresses in his work are; politics in the broadest sense of the work, and sexuality. This of course should hardly be surprising, surely no two other subjects are of such interest to the average human being, representing, as they do, two aspects of the human condition. Yet amazingly these are two subjects that have received scant attention in the plastic arts of the declining years of twentieth century modernism and post-modernism. Indeed it seems that with the banishment of the human figure to the role of an onlooker in the field of painting, mans baggage has been thrown after him, his little concerns and obsessions seemingly unworthy of attention for fear of any accusition of indulgence in sentimentality or propaganda. Political and sexual issues have little if any relationship to the introverted purism of formalism. These seemingly are indelicacies best left to other more plebean artforms like literature and Cinema to deal with.

Kitaj is an artist for whom such artificial departmentalisation of cultural issues seems ludicrous, he sees no form of human experience or concern as being unworthy of treatment in an art of painting, someone for whom the ivory tower of modernism has proven far to claustrophobic.

From his earliest work Kitaj has seen fit to address political issues

in his work, often making specific reference to historic events and figures. This is true of works like The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg 1960 (Fig 10), Isaac Bable Riding with Budyonny 1962 (Fig 3) and The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin) 1972 - 74 (Fig 13) which all made reference to martyred radicals, figures that are of historical and political significance to Kitaj as a socialist and as a Jew. These works represent attempts by Kitaj to create commemorative icons to these radical martyrs and to contribute to the creation of a socialist mythology.[2]

In Kennst Du das Land 1962 (Fig 50) Kitaj refers to the Spanish Civil War surely an historic conflict of great significance to Kitaj, representing as it does the classic confrontation between fascism and humanistic socialism.[3]

The political content of Kitaj's work is not however always so explicit sometimes it is implicit. In works like Where the Railroad Leaves the Sea 1964 (Fig 6) and The Ohio Gang, 1964 (Fig 5) the political and historical context are not specific, yet there is the sense that Kitaj is alluding to a deeper political and human malaise than is obviously apparent. One wonders if the strange pathos of the departing couple in Where the Railroad Leaves the Sea, does not symbolise a greater tragedy, perhaps the great Jewish tragedy under the Nazis, (a tragedy never far from Kitaj's mind, as we shall see), where the enforced seperation of people for life was commonplace. And the malevolant ganster-like interrigators in The Ohio Gang? These and the mood of decadence that pervades the painting have been compared to the characters and mood of Brecht's "The Threepenny Opera" in which Brecht represents the gangsterish atmosphere that attended the rise of Nazism in Germany.[4] In these works Kitaj does not refer to any particular historical or political subject as such, but rather uses images and mood to epitomise an era.

Kitaj is a Jew, he sees this as part of his condition and he believes that the condition of the artist is the truest subject in the artists work,[5] therefore the jewish condition is a subject central to the art of his entire career. Because of this fact Kitaj sees the murder of the European Jews as an historical catastrophy central to his art of the

"impossible themes" he wishes his work to address. In recent years he has become increasingly concious of the importance of the Jewish condition in his art and has begun a process of self-education in Jewish culture and history:

> ".....for my part, I think about the Holocaust every day and have done so for many years before my self-education in Jewish identity began."[6]

In his work Kitaj tends to keep his visual references oblique, however in Unity Mitford 1968 (Fig 18), a drawing on canvas, we see an uncharacteristic use of overt political symbolism. The pleasant, almost angelic features of the girls face are suddenly thrown into ironic contrast by Kitaj's subtle placement of the swastika badge on her collar, which almost doesn't appear on the canvas. By this simple device Kitaj strikingly reveals the simple fact that evil, represented most strongly for him as a jew and as a socialist by Nazism, has many faces.

In Kitaj's later work the political and social content is usually implicit and the references are oblique, yet the work is no less concerned with social and human issues, Kitaj has just developed a new means of exploring them. He has achieved this by the development of new figures, or "memorable characters" as he calls them, which enable him to explore such issues, in, what he sees as a completely visual way, without resort to historical or literary references. One of these characters is to be found in The Jew....etc 1976 (Fig 26) where Kitaj presents us with a character he describes as a "quintessential jew"[7] a fugitive from some regime, a displaced person, one of Kitaj's many solitary figures. This work represents an example of Kitaj's attempt, through the practice of drawing from the human figure every day, to tackle these impossible themes. How well he has succeeded in this attempt can be judged by an examination of works like the Bad Faith series of pastels. In these Kitaj manages to combine his increasingly sure figure drawing with his talent for the invention and juxtaposition of powerful imagery.

The insanity of Stalinism is expressed in Bad Faith (Gulag) 1978 (Fig 51) in which we are presented with a bizarre scene; a wretched female figure is about to ambush a mouse (her bait is labelled cheese) and

strangle it with her own hair, the combination of imagery and masterful handling, both in terms of drawing and composition create a profound expression of horrific absurdity.

The Gestapo interrogation cells of Warsaw 1978 (Fig 52) (which Kitaj visited with Hockney[8]), provide the squalid setting for Bad Faith (Warsaw). This cell with its tiny barred window is still haunted by a childlike vision of the regime it represents.

Indeed the Jewish condition is a subject in many of the late pastels in which Kitaj deploys his new mastery of figure drawing. These include works in which Kitaj presents yet another archetypical Jew embodied by a certain Joe Singer, a sort of semi-fictional character whose experiences are gradually being unfolded by Kitaj. In the most powerful of these The Listener (Joe Singer in Hiding) 1980 (Fig 42) we are presented with a subterranian figure crouched, listening, fearfull, in his hiding-place while above him on the surface, the life of the world goes on. This figure seems to represent the forgotten fugative from terror, forever hiding, forever listening, a symbol of the insecurity of the Jewish condition.

This Joe Singer character appears once again in another pastel, Study for the Jewish School (Joe Singer as a boy) which as the name suggests is a study for the painting The Jewish School (Drawing a Golem) 1980 (Fig 46), a work that is of vital significance in any consideration of Kitaj's treatment of the Jewish condition as a subject in his work.

Kitaj tells us that this painting is based on a 19th century antisemitic German engraving which claimed to represent the chaos of a Jewish school.[9] The teacher in the engraving is shown as being unable to control his class and the ink pot on his desk has been overturned. In his painting Kitaj has changed this ink pot into a pot of blood. According to Kitaj[10] the boy in the centre reading his book (the Joe Singer figure in the drawn study) is one of those who will die in the Holocaust (due to his own impassivity one suspects). The boy in blue, on the left, banging his head against the wall is a rebel figure, according to Kitaj, while the boy at the blackboard is drawing a Golem in chalk in the hope that it will

come to life and save the Jews. In fact towards the bottom of the picture this figure does indeed begin to come to life but he will not be fully incarnated in time to save the children.[11]

Kitaj believes that art and indeed painting should have the power to effect life, reality. He is fond of quoting Solzenitsyn;

> "....if words are not about real things and do not cause things to happen, what is the good of them?"[12]

Kitaj would say the same thing about painting. His attempts to make works that are about real things and that make things happen are based on two ideas that provide him with much of the motivation behind his work. Firstly Kitaj's belief that art can provide example for life and secondly his belief that art, in his own case painting, should have the power to bear witness to horror and evil:

> "I've been mulling for years with the possibility of representing the Jewish Tragedy under the Nazis. Arising out of that, I want to try and pretend in another picture, a poetic reconciliation between Arab and Jew. Formalists will laugh at that, but the ancients believed in what has been called the 'type coining power' of art, and so do I.... Artists can coin examples of social well-being (Matisse wanted that)....they should also have the power to bear witness to unhappiness by coining a rememberence of it."[13]

In The Rise of Fascism 1979 - 1980 (Fig 44) Kitaj presents us with an allegory of the moral decay that attended the birth of Nazism the figures in the work represent the participants in that decay, the grotesque Madame, (the fascist), the beautiful victim and the indifferent typical European (who has a counterpart in the Joe Singer character reading his text in The Jewish School). In this work Kitaj is attempting to provide what he calls "an emblematic rememberence of horror and banality"[14] and this is true of much of his work.

In Land of Lakes, 1975 - 77, (Fig 31) Kitaj presents us with an example of "social well-being", his vision of a world of harmony presided over by the symbols of humanism; the cross and the red flag of socialism. While in its companion piece; If Not, Not, he presents us with what he sees as the alternative. The failure of humanism and democracy a hell-like world presided over by the spectre of fascism represented by the "gate of death" at Birkenau-Auschwitz.[15]

Another work Bad Faith (Chile) 1978 (Fig 53) is of interest to us

here for two reasons firstly because it refers to a more contemporary political situation than does much of Kitaj's work, presumably the events in Chile surrounding the overthrow of the legitimate socialist government in 1973. And secondly because of the subtlety of the image. The drawing represents the torso and head of a figure who is probably dead. His outstretched arms are cut off by the edges of the paper. From the gesture his head, thrown to one side, this might easily be a detail of a crucifiction, for he is surely another victim like the figures in Bad Faith (Gulag) and Bad Faith(Warsaw). The most disturbing element in this work is the clock,perfectly placed above his left shoulder, it is upside-down, an eloquent symbol of chaos; this man is not resting, something is dreadfully amis. The sublety of this simple device only makes its impact more forceful. This use of understatement is typical of Kitaj's work, it is an example of what Werner Haftmann has called the "undercurrent of secret terror" in Kitaj's work.[16]

Another taboo subject that Kitaj has seen fit to address in his work is sex. Sex and sexuality are subjects that Kitaj has always addressed, indeed given the figurative nature of his work how could this be otherwise, as an inherent concern in any depiction of the human figure is the sexuality of that figure:

> "Deceptive sexuality is embedded in that character, that infinite complexity, which it can be and has been the job of the artist to try and represent."[17]

From Kitaj's earliest work we see a particular emphasis on sexuality as a key element in Kitaj's strange evocations of situation and mood.

In Where the Railroad Leaves the Sea 1964 (Fig 6) the strange melancholy mood of imminent departure is inhanced and given accent by the undercurrents of sexuality; the kiss of the couple, their farewell embrace the woman's bared brest with the beacon-like nipple. This sense of understated sexuality is used to give accent to many of Kitaj's works including The Ohio Gang 1964 (Fig,5). Here we find the sexuality of the female figures in particular used to give accent to the suggested narrative. The three female figures suggest different states, the seated figure on the left is nude and this combined with the nature of her gesture is used to

express her vulnerability. Her sexuality is contrasted with the more blatant sexuality of her female street-wise interrigator which is advertised by her attire; her bare brests projected by her strange harness like bodice. At the bottom of the painting to the right a malevolent crazed creature made up of loose marks hectically propels along a pram in which sits our second victim, a strange, hermaphrodite mutation, with a male head and a shrunken female body. The steriotyped lack of defined sexuality of the male characters only serves to heighten the sense of vulnerability of the two female victims.

Indeed female sexuality is often used in Kitaj's work as an expression of vulnerability. In Erie Shore 1966 (Fig 14), the vulnerability of the figure of the nurse caused by her precarious position in the small boat with her disturbed male patient is suddenly accentuated by the revelation of her pubic hair beneath her short skirt. A similar device is used in Smyrna Greek (Nikos) 1976 - 77 (Fig 29) where the sexuality of the prostitute figure is heightened by Kitaj's treatment of her see-through skirt and the revelation of her pubic hair beneath it. In Walter Lippman, 1966, the vulnerability of the young girl on the ladder is suddenly heightened by the revelation of her latent sexuality through a similar device. In Erie Shore there is a third figure; a bound submissive female figure in the bottom of the boat and similarly submissive female victims appear in other paintings from around the same period; Juan de la Cruz 1967 and the diptych Synchromy with F. B. - General of Hot Desire, 1968.

It seems generally true that in his earlier work Kitaj is not concerned with the treatment of male sexuality. The male characters, like those hoods in the Ohio Gang, remain stereotyped. Kitaj's casting of the female figure constantly in the role of submissive victim has a sexist ring to it. The emphasis in these works is on the portrayal of sexual psychology rather than on the sexual encounter, however, in his later work there was to be a change in emphasis.

In 1977 Kitaj had a solo exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in London, in which he showed mostly drawings and pastels. One of the distinguishing factors of this show was the amount of pictures which had

as their subject the sexual encounter, often including a third figure who seemed to act as a voyeur. For instance in, This Knot of Life, 1975 (Fig 54), the setting of which is one often used by Kitaj, a dimly lit hallway at the top of a stairs (see Smyrna Greek (Nikos) 1976 - 77. Through the door on the right two figures a male negro and a white female copulate on a bed. While slightly to the left between us and the couple a silhouetted figure looks on. The explicitness of Kitaj's rendering of the copulating figures is shocking. We are unused to such imagery in contemporary art unless it is in the context of Film or the Novel, this imagery seems to belong to the subculture of pornography.

In the drawing His Hour 1975 (Fig 56) we are once again confronted with an overt sexual encounter between a man and a woman and again there is a third figure, a voyeur or fantasist present. The middle aged well dressed voyeur seated in his large armchair looks not at The couple, but into space, an expression of vague reverie is registered on his smiling face. There is a degree of ambiguity about the image; the basic linear treatment of the couple differs greatly from the rendering of the other figure which is achieved in terms of the heavily textured use of pastel. This leaves the viewer in some doubt as to what is happening, is he imagining this encounter or, as the title might suggest, remembering it, or is he infact just another of Kitaj's many 'peeping-toms.'

In The Rash Act 1976 (Fig 55) we have a similar situation but this time it is a female figure that acts as the third party. Again there is ambiguity however. Because of her nudity it is not clear whether she is a voyeur, a fantasist or in fact a participant.

In another work exhibited in this show, Study for the World's Body 1974 (Fig 23) the presence of a third party or voyeur is sensed rather than stated as the couple seem to have been suddenly disturbed by some-one elses presence.

In the case of all of these works one wonders if the voyeur figure may not in fact be a stand-in for the artist or for that matter for our-selves the viewers.

One of the distinguishing things about these works is that in them

the sexuality of the male figure is examined as it had not been before in Kitaj's work. Both male and female sexuality are equally explored and developed. For instance in another pastel from the same period Communist and Socialist 1975 (Fig 57) again we are presented with two nude figures on a bed, a seated woman and a reclining male, with an erection. In this drawing the male figure is represented as passive, even submissive his more exposed suxuality renders him more vulnerable, he is portrayed as primarily the object of her affection.

These erotic sexually-explicit works were criticised as being pornographic and indeed the drawing though assured and sensitive at times can suddenly assume the banality of down-market pornographic illustration. This is yet another example of Kitaj's use of the juxtaposition of styles, and as such is very interesting. However it has been suggested (and Kitaj himself confirms this) that this ambiguity, this position on the borderline between the erotic and the pornographic that gives these works much of their force and poignancy.

Kitaj is open to all possibilities in the persuit of his art and he regards the area of pornography as just another area rich in potential:

> "....I am never turned on sexually by the so-called erotic paintings as I am by hard-core pornography. Now if you could bring that possibility into a picture. Think of all those things yet to be done."[18]

However one of the distinguishing characteristics of hard-core pornography is its banality and Kitaj has often only barely managed to avoid this, by his often (although not often enough) masterful drawing and the fact that he avoids any covert cruelty and makes no insinuations to the viewer.

Kitaj is not the first artist to be accused of producing pornography, Schiele was imprisoned for his 'pornographic' work, and many of Turners erotic drawings were destroyed after his death at the behest of Ruskin. It is true that in certain strains of modernist thought, there is a certain revulsion at the thought of introducing such dirty-linen into the language of painting. This puritanical attitude is not shared by Kitaj who cites such modernist figures as Baudelaire, Degas, Picasso, Proust,

Benjamin as artists (both painters and writers) who drew their inspiration from such sources as brothel-life, it is to these modernists that Kitaj looks for example.

The subject of brothel-life has also come under the scrutiny of Kitaj in his work, for instance Smyrna Greek (Nikos) 1976 - 77 (Fig 29) which as Kitaj tells us is set in a brothel in Alexandria. Two other works that have as their subject brothel-life, are the oil painting Frankfurt Brothel 1977 (Fig 58) and the enigmatic pastel Sighs From Hell, 1979 (Fig 59). These works are not merely studies of an aspect of modern life. In them Kitaj endeavours to show us the 'flip-side' of more political issues he wishes to deal with in his work. In these works and the later major work The Rise of Fascism 1975 - 79, Kitaj endeavours to link the world of sexual exploitation with the era of moral decay which proceeded the Holocaust;

> "There is not exactly an Auschwitz plan but as I said a work "about" the murder of the European Jews. Brothel-life has attracted fellow sleepwalkers like Baudelaire, Degas, Picasso,... to its hellish sighs, at the heart of decaying cities, whose streets would offer up victims to the death transports. I wish I could accomplish some sizzling little pictures... maybe not Auden's impossible metaphor for an historical unhappiness but an emblematic rememberence of horror and banality."[19]

In recent years Kitaj has concentrated on the constant practice of drawing from the human figure in the belief that through this simple practice he may find a means by which to address these "impossible themes." Naturally these drawings from the figure have also become a vehicle for his treatment of the subject of sex and sexuality. In the later pastels Marynka 1979 (Fig 60) Marynka Smoking 1980 (~~Fig ——~~) and The Yellow Hat, 1980 (Fig 61) Kitaj concentrates on a traditional approach to the depiction of the nude female body which owes much to Degas not only in style and technique but also in the approach to the subject. As in Degas pastels of the 1880's the female body is an object scrutinized. In these works Degas attitude was slightly misogynistic and to some extent voyeuristic. One feels that Kitaj at least in part shares this approach. The personality of the model is hardly ever fully explored. In Marynka 1979 (Fig 60) the face of the model is turned away as is the case with Marynka on Her Stomach 1979 (~~Fig ——~~). The most striking example of this is the disturb-

ing pastel After Rodin, 1980 (Fig 62). We are presented with a nude female body or perhaps a corpse on an autopsy slab. The legs of the figure are spread and cropped below the knees by the papers edge as are the arms below the elbow. The exposed gaping genitals are predominant and central to the composition. However what makes the work so disturbing is the absence of any representation of the head. One wonders if this was an arbitary mutilation on Kitaj's part? Is the head of the figure covered by a blanket or sheet or is this infact a corpse from which the head had been severed?

This drawing with its mutilation and emphasis on the depiction of the sexual organs raises questions as to Kitaj's attitude to the depiction of the female body which are not clarified by his pronouncements on pornography. Which after all is often concerned with the humiliation and debasement of the female body. In another drawing The Mask 1980 the face of the standing nude female figure is covered by a scarf or handkerchief tied at the back of the head.

Kitaj's work in this genre has included studies of the male figure, for example the series of studies from the male model which he did in New York in 1979 including Actor (Richard) 1979 (Fig 63), Richard 1979 and a set of three drawings; Sides, 1979 (Fig 64). In these works the male nude is given similar treatment to that given the female nude in the other pastels. In Richard the depiction of the genitals is given particular attention while the face of the sitter is cropped by the top edge of the paper. Other examples of Kitaj's treatment of the male figure apart from Communist and Socialist (Fig 57), The Rash Act, His Hour, and This Knot of Life include nude portraits for instance David (Fig 65), a full length drawn portrait of David Hockney, and Quintin, 1979 (Fig 66) a sensitive study of this elderly male figure.

In Kitaj's treatment of such political and sexual issues he often risks the charge of sentimentality and banality. If sometimes he sails a bit too close to the wind, well this is part of his work's facination.

Kitaj is not prepared to produce an art that is divorced from the realities of his life;

> ".....I've become more interested to prepare an art about what is happening to me in the world."[20]

In order to achieve this end Kitaj has turned to the practice of drawing the figure;

> "....In the hope that these more straight-foreward practices will be a preparation for the clearest expression of my condition, I can manage."[21]

As a Jew and a socialist, Kitaj feels the need to express in his art his political ideas and his Jewish anxiety; "Fascism is my enemy", he tells us.[22] One gets the feeling that he sees himself as potentially sharing in yet another condition, that of the victim. Again and again we find the character of the victim in his work, Joe Singer in the Listener, our friend with the hearing aid in The Jew...etc, The Autumn of Central Paris and If Not, Not. Those frightened bathers, and the victims of Fascist regimes found in the Bad Faith series.

Linked with this wish to express his condition as a Jew, is his wish to comment on issues such as the Holocaust, Black Slavery and the Palestinian Diaspora:[23]

> "....I intend to confront these impossible things in an art because some day, when I'm chased limping down a road looking back at a burning city I want the slight satisfaction that I couldn't make an art that didn't confess human, frailty, fear, mediocrity and the banality of evil as a clear presence in art-life."[24]

Kitaj's own sexuality is another aspect of his condition that he finds it impossible to ignore and ludicrous to attempt to. He rejects the moralist label though, claiming that like all of us there is both a moralist and an immoralist at work in him.[25]

> "One's sexual ship never allows respite."[26]

FOOTNOTES

[1] John Ashbery "Hunger and Love in Their Variations." John Ashbery, Joe Shannon Jane Livingston and Timothy Hyman. Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.15.

[2] Fredric Tuten "Neither Fool nor Naive nor Poseur-Saint : Fragments on R.B.Kitaj." Artforum, January 1982, pp.63, 63 also : Michael Shepherd "Kitaj Observed" Arts Review 29, April 29th, 1977, p.288.

[3] Marco Livinstone, "Iconology as Theme in the Early Work of R.B.Kitaj "Burlington Magazine 122, July 1980, p.496.

[4] Joe Shannon, "The Allegorists Kitaj and the Viewer". Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman. Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.24.

[5] "I take it that ones condition is the truest subject of ones art" R.B.Kitaj : Tuten, p.65.

[6] Tuten, p.65.

[7] James Faure Walker, "R.B.Kitaj interviewed by James Faure Walker," Artscribe 5, February 1977, p.5.

[8] Timothy Hyman "Kitaj : A Prodigal Returning" Artscribe 25, October, 1980, p.38.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Timothy Hyman "A Return to London". Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.46. also Tuten, p.68

[13] Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.44.

[14] Ibid, p.46.

[15] Ibid, p.14.

[16] Charles McCorquodale, "Edinburgh - Two Exhibitions" Art International XIX/9 November, 1975, p.27.

[17] Tuten, p.69.

[18] Faure Walker, p.5.

[19] Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.46.

[20] Tuten, p.65.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.47.

[23] Ibid p.43.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Tuten, p.69. also : Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.46.

[26] Tuten, p.69.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Having studied the work of R. B. Kitaj it is tempting to regard it as devided into two distinct periods in which he produced two seperate and distinct bodies of work. The early work, where the emphasis was on collaging; the radical juxtaposition of images, forms, wordmatter and textures, are "notations, fragments, visual (and intellectual) puzzles." And the later work where Kitaj seemed to be attempting a simplification of pictorial structure and a reinvigoration of the straightforward practice of drawing from the human figure. Indeed Kitaj encourages such a view in his various pronouncements on his work:

> "Collaging emphasizes arrangement, an aesthetic of conjoining at the expense of depicting, picturing people and aspects of their time on scorched earth, which is what I always wanted to represent .....Collaging seems banal to me now."[1]

He describes much of his earlier work as "purile"[2] and speaks of straightening himself out.[3] Given such statements and the obvious changes in method and approach that accompany them, it would be pointless to deny the truth of this shift in the emphasis within Kitaj's development as an artist. However this view of his career and work can, in many ways, be misleading. Although there have been many radical changes in the work, Kitaj's fundamental attitude to it and what he is trying to achieve through it has not changed.

> "Kitaj's preference as a painter is for art that is not completely bound to the marks on the canvas. The world outside the canvas and the routes and chances of connectivity with the painting."[4]

Thus Lawerence Alloway described Kitaj's work in the early 1960's. However in many ways this description would still suffice as a valid description of his work to-day. The concept of the work of art as a carrier of meaning far beyond the concerns of form alone, is one that has always been central to his art, and still is. In his work Kitaj has always endevoured to relate to a broader reality than that defined by the picture frame, and to link his work with the social, political, historical, and cultural urgencies that he wishes to address:

> "The picture always takes over but you can't help being moved by the great cultural issues peripheral to the picture."[5]
>
> R. B. Kitaj, Time Magazine
> October 1964

THis characteristic can also be seen to apply to his later work. In many ways only Kitaj's methodology has changed.

Kitaj was deeply impressed with the capacity of imagery, in Italian Renaissance painting, to communicate amazingly complex levels of meaning, which he discovered through the lectures and writings of Edgar Wind. Kitaj wanted his own work to have a similar capability to address the political and social urgencies that exercised his interest and that he wished to address in his work. The problem that he faced was that unlike the Italian Renaissance artists,

> ".....for Kitaj there was neither a socially and morally charged imagery which he could take for granted and deploy, nor a range of factual reference which he could assume his spectator could take for granted and draw upon."[6]

This problem led him to adopt various strategeys. He began to experiment with the use of the inherent meaning of borrowed imagery in his work. Whereby he borrowed images from various sources, for example; The American Indian Pictographs, which he came across in his reading of the illistrated iconological essays and books at Oxford. In this practice Kitaj was using imagery whose meaning could be retraced through a study of iconography, in order to communicate his various political and social messages. Kitaj employed the collage/montage methods he saw in the work of surrealists like Max Ernst in order to throw these images into surprising and thought-provoking conjunction. However the esoteric nature of much of this borrowed imagery provided Kitaj with yet another problem. In order to fully appreciate the sophisticated levels of meaning behind a work like Erasmus Variations 1958 (Fig 2) for example, the viewer would require, to put it mildly, an uncommon familiarity with a very obscure area of iconology.

In the early 1960's Kitaj attempted to address this problem through the practices of associating texts with his work and actually appending notes to the surfaces of his paintings. Through this practice he wished to provide the viewer with referencial keys to the sources and meaning of this imagery. Through this practice he also wanted to, somehow, connect his work with the enormous resources and potential which

he saw in the capacity of literature, to address the "great cultural issues" that he wished his painting to address, and to involve itself in an intercourse with the political and social urgencies that preoccupied him.

A capacity that painting, particularly the increasingly introspective world of purist abstraction had lost.

> "Painting is unlike literature because language can be part of political action and at the same time saturated in meaning. And the poet or historian can retrace the action through the language."[7]

However in this approach Kitaj encountered one major problem as the critics were quick to point out. This methodology tended to produce works that were extremely difficult and obscure, and as such very much at variance with his stated wish to produce an art that was somehow more democratic, more available to the general public. As one critic put it:

> "Looking at his work one sees a superficial stringing together of images for an elite growing out of an art for art sake esthetic..... The line he gives us might be all right at a cocktail party but is hardly appropriate to an exhibition catalogue when it is so blatantly out of line with his practices."[8]

Kitaj himself seems to have become increasingly disillusioned with these inherent contradictions within his work:

> "In the last few years I've tried to move away from these difficult obscure compositions that many people know me for. I'm sorry they are so difficult."[9]

He had also become disillusioned with the very freedom that allowed him to indulge in these sophisticated practices.[10] Kitaj began to see the solution to these difficulties in the more straightforward practice of daily drawing from the human figure.

> "I came to feel that I had loitered long enough on the edges of the modernist Plae of Settlement for me forward (not back) to drawing the human figure everyday: That natural passage (or so it seems to me) toward the other shore - the deliniation of the face and forturnes and torments of us all."[10]

Through these straightforward practice Kitaj believes that he can somehow achieve memorable inventions which may best express his condition.

Having abandoned his earlier practices due to his disillusionment with his difficult and obscure paintings Kitaj in his later work can be seen to have adopted what is in many ways a more radical and certainly

more controversial approach. He has literally set out single handedly to try and overcome this lack of a shared iconography in painting by inventing his own private one. Now instead of referring to actual historical or literary characters as he had done in earlier works like The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, 1960 (Fig 10) and The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin), 1972 - 74 (Fig 13), Kitaj began to populate his canvases with "memorable characters" of his own invention, characters that embody the various conditions; The Jew, the exile, the scholar, the victim, conditions that he shares in, and that as such are the truest subject of his art. Through these memorable characters Kitaj has attempted to take on major issues, the impossible themes that seem to obcess him, for instance the murder of the European Jews which he treats in works like Bad Faith (Warsaw) 1980 (Fig 52) The Jewish School 1980 (Fig 46.) and The Jew....etc.

These impossible themes are in many ways the same themes that Kitaj has always dealt with in his work. In The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg, and The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin), Kitaj attempted to deal with the subject of martyrdom, these are paintings of victims, in the jewish and radical traditions. In later work,for instance The Bather pastels and the Bad Faith series, Kitaj again deals with the theme of the victim. Often his work deals directly with the Jewish condition and the murder of the European Jews, for example in Bad Faith, The Jew...etc and in paintings like The Jewish School and The Rock Garden (The Nation) both of which were painted over two decades after The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg. It is obvious that the Jewish condition is by no means a new subject in Kitaj's work. Appart from the abandonment of the practice of appending notes onto the work, (that we find in The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg,) the main change in approach that we find in the later work is that the political and historical references within the work are now far more oblique. In his later work Kitaj is dealing with universalities rather than specific issues, these works are emblematic.

Kitaj's renewed interest in figuration and drawing from the model

was not only a reaction to the bookish culture in which his work had been immerced, but was also due to an increased conviction that something had been missing from the art of the past fifty years, something vital something that had everything to do with the modernism of the artists he calls "the protean masters" Cézanne, Degas, Munch, Matisse, and Picasso:

> "I am saying that I cannot concieve any more of art as some kind of game without rules as Duchamp did or 'art as such' as Greenberg termed it."

Kitaj regards such concepts of art as a perversion of the true spirit of modernism, a modernism represented most strongly for him by the work of these "protean masters", a modernism that he sees as fundamentally figurative. Kitaj sees figuration as the visual language of humanity and believes that modernism especially formalism had reached a dead end.

> "But even the artists who are most responsible for these alternatives - Picasso and Matisse and some of those wonderful heroic figures - never really abandoned the art of representing people, never."[12]

The modernism of the intervening years between these figures and now, seem to Kitaj to represent a serious interruption in the connecting vision in all figurative art, from Giotto onward. In his wish for a renewal of figuration Kitaj wanted to reconnect his art with this tradition.

> "The notion of a return to the figure is just media-talk. For some of us, its the only art we know.... I really feel like they had to feel in the past..... how Ingres or Vermeer or Degas or Cézanne must have felt..... that there was one alternative, no other option don't you see to, representing what things seem to look like or through a glass darkly."[13]

Kitaj believed that through the simple step of returning to the daily discipline of more or less discriptive drawing from the human figure, he might connect his work with this rich tradition.

> "I'd like to say something almost blasphemous, especially now: There is only one way to draw which interests me....the ten or twenty transcendent artists who consume my thoughts and my efforts all seem to have drawn in a similar way. Many artists will know what I mean. I say blasphemy because it sounds like a narrow view but Giotto, Piero, Michelangelo or hundreds of years later Ingres, Delacroix, Goya, Degas, Cézanne or in our own time Matisse and Picasso, seem to be trying for very similar achievements within very different sensibilities."[14]

Part of Kitaj's argument for a revitalization of figuration is based on

the belief that a figurative art is necessaraly a more social art. Kitaj believes that to draw the human figure well, is perhaps the most difficult thing to achieve in all of art, but when this has been achieved, then the skill and imagination of the artist may be "seen to be done" by many ordinary people "universed in the half-baked philosophical double-talk in which our very difficult twentieth century art is smothered"

> "For two years now I've only been drawing, with mixed results, most often the single figure, face or body on sheets of paper. When you get it right as a handfull of men have you get the whole world in, like Degas, Dürer, and Hokusai did ....when you get the whole world into a representation of a human form..... you also let the whole world in, and art becomes more social."[15]

Kitaj believes that an essential elitism has prevailed in much of the modernism and post-modernism of the last fifty 'revisionist' years. His championing of figuration can in some ways be seen as a reaction against what he sees as; the ultimately autistic purism of certain strains of modernism, epitomised by formalist abstraction, and its inability to involve itself in an intercourse with the real world. He has become disillusioned with this "great introspective romance."[16] What Kitaj has always wanted for his art was the capacity to be a carrier of meaning far beyond the limited concerns of form, an art that is not bound completely to the marks on the canvas:

> "The modern art ship, as you know has drifted so far out to sea now, so far away from so many people - there are among the modernists people who will defend their practice for that very reason."[17]

In recent years Kitaj has become increasingly anxious that he might achieve inventions that coincide with his condition, believing now as he does that :

> "One's conditions is the truest subject of ones art."[18]

He sees the practice of drawing the human figure as a vital process, a preparation for the clearest expression of this condition he can manage.

> "....making good art is the problem we all have and very few of us, ...achieve inventions which coincide with what we truly are. When that happens I suppose you get good art."[18b]

One of Kitaj's greatest attributes is what Joe Shannon has called his "nerve" his "Raphaelesque malleability and willingness to learn."[19] One feature of his career has been that his work has always invited

controversy, and this has been entirely due to Kitaj's great willingness (when he feels it may benefit his art) to adopt methods and approaches that may be frowned upon by the critics and the self-appointed arbiters of what is fitting in art. Kitaj has always displayed a healthy disregard for the artificially imposed unwritten rules that at times seem to pervade the world of art. In other words,one of Kitaj's distinguishing characteristics is his artistic courage, the courage to make decisions about the direction and development of his work, that are often open to much criticism and misunderstanding. This courage is amptly demonstrated by the way, in mid-career (or as he says himself "after half a digressive lifetime")[20] as an established artist, he has renounced his earlier practices and taken the long hard road of self-education in drawing the human figure.

> "....I am glad I have forsworn the seamlessness in art which is the result of correct behaviour because I do believe in the infinite complexity of life - which I suppose to be the very stuff of art."[21]

FOOTNOTES

[1] Timothy Hyman, "A Return to London," John Ashbery, Joe Shannon, Jane Livingstone, and Timothy Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.39

[2] Joe Shannon "The Allegorists Kitaj and the Viewer", Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels p.28.

[3] Frederic Tuten , "Neither Fool nor Naive nor Poesur-Saint : Fragments on R.B.Kitaj," Artforum, January 1982, p.65.

[4] Lawerence Alloway "The Development of British Pop." Lucy Lippard, Pop Art, London 1966, p.57.

[5] Marco Livingstone "Iconology as Theme in the Early Work of R.B.Kitaj," Burlington Magazine 122, July 1980, p.492.

[6] Michael Podro, "Some Notes on Ron Kitaj" Art International 22, March 1979, p.19.

[7] Ibid.

[8] John Ashbery "Hunger and Love in Their Variations", Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, Kitaj Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, p.12.

[9] James Faure Walker, "R.B.Kitaj interviewed by James Faure Walker" Artscribe, 5 February 1975, p.5.

[10] R.B. Kitaj's introduction to the catalogue Artist's Eye National Gallery London 1980 : Stephen Spender : "R.B.Kitaj an introduction by Stephen Spender" R.B.Kitaj Pastels, Drawings. Catalogue to exhibition 8 October - 7 November 1980 Marlborough Fine Art London. p.7.

[11] Timothy Hyman. Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.39.

[12] R.B. Kitaj : "R.B.Kitaj and David Hockney discuss the case for a return to the figurative .... " New Review, February 1977, p.75.

[13] Faure Walker, p.4.

[14] R.B.Kitaj. "R.B.Kitaj and David Hockney discuss the case for a return to the figurative ....", p.75

[15] Timothy Hyman. Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman, p.39-40.

[16] R.B.Kitaj : Spender (see note 10) p.7.

[17] R.B.Kitaj : Faure Walker, p.4.

[18] Tuten, p.65.

[18(a)] R.B.Kitaj : Faure Walker p.4.

[19] Joe Shannon. Ashbery, Shannon, Livingston, Hyman p.29.

[20] Spender, p.7. (see note 10)

[21] R.B.Kitaj : Tuten, p.65.

APPENDIX

R. B. Kitaj THE AUTUMN OF CENTRAL PARIS
(AFTER WALTER BENJAMIN), 1971

Walter Benjamin was a German-Jewish writer who raised the work of "criticism" to its highest levels in our time. He used strange and difficult methods of bringing together images from texts and from the world, not uninfluenced by surrealism (his disciple Adorno calls them CITATIONS). His cabbalist addiction to FRAGMENTS and the incomplete nature of his work (the Gestapo at his heels) has left behind an unusual legacy in which some say the parts do not make a whole. Adorno said that the PICTURE-PUZZLE distinguished everything he ever wrote. For me he has been almost as exciting and poetic to read as Kafka or Brecht (who was Benjamins friend). He killed himself in that very autumn of 1940 which saw the fall of France. Benjamin's great uncompleted work about Paris described that city in its era of emergent capitalism as a version of hell ("in which the inhabitants of Saturn take a breath of air in the evening"). Baudelaire was Benjamin's prominent guide through that hell and my own picture is set in the autumn time before Benjamin's suicide which foresaw a tyranny worse than any Baudelaire had mocked or Blanqui had conspired against.

As to the general composition of this picture, I had in mind not only Benjamin's own MONTAGE methods (which he considered an 'agitational usage') but also other models in his parlance... See Benjamin on "THE DIORAMA ("for the last time, in these DIORAMAS, the worker appeared, away from his class, as a STAGE-EXTRA in an IDYLL"); THE REVERIE (cafe - life as AN AUTUMNAL REVERIE of bourgeois society); NATURE-MORTE.

The COLLAGE implication in Benjamin's treatment of THE BARRICADE is a paramount source for this composition... Benjamin cites barricade metaphors over and over again such as this one from Hugo's "Les Miserables": "broken irregular outlines, profiles of strange constructions."

There is another influence behind the PILE-UP (BARRICADE) of figures in this picture: THE MOVIE POSTER which arranged figures in this way through many years. This source is not exactly in Benjamin but it does accord with his interest in DREAMKITSCH arising from "shocklike flashes" which he saw the surrealists derive from obsolete popular imagery.

Benjamin thought that the artist is compelled to assume roles that look subversive but are in fact, harmless. POET - BEGGAR - DETECTIVE - FLANEUR - POLICE SPY - SECRET AGENT and above all, BOHEMIAN (he said that the CONSPIRATORS, without exception, belonged to this last group and saw in the real leaders of the proletariat their adversaries).

Hannah Arendt called Benjamin "the most peculiar Marxist ever produced by this movement, which God knows has had its full share of oddities." He was said to have aroused hatred and horrified rejection (not from Nazis alone). Like Hugo, he saw the promise of a democratic future in urban turbulence. In fact, he looked for THE PROMISE OF HAPPINESS in almost everything.

SOME WORKING NOTES FOR THIS PICTURE
SOME BENJAMIN CATEGORIES (use in picture):
CAFE AS OPEN-AIR INTERIOR (past which the LIFE OF THE CITY moves along)
THE SMOKERS
THE PASSERBY (see Baudelaire's poem of this name)
MEN-ABOUT-TOWN
RUMOUR and IDLENESS
THE COCOTTE in her DISGUISES
MARX'S "OCCASIONAL CONSPIRATORS"
TYPES (Benjamin on PHYSIOLOGIES)
THE SWIFT GLANCE

CROWD AS REFUGE (of the criminal, the agent and of love which eludes the poet)
CHANGE (as a guide through city-life)
GOSSIP (errotic and political innuendo, shifting argot)
PROSTITUTIuN(the life of the erotic person in the crowd)
FETISHISM (as the "vital nerve of FASHION")
ALLEGORY ("Everything for me, becomes ALLEGORY" - Baudelaire)

CITATIONS:
PROLETARIAT driven out of CENTRAL PARIS (title) leading to emergence of a RED BELT (margins of picture)
ANGEL OF HISTORY - IDLE STROLLER, face turned "toward the past", blown backwards into the future by the storm of progress while the pile of ruins before him grows skyward (PILE-UP of images)
MAN WITH PICKAXE... BLANQUI'S MEN BENEATH STREETS (use photo of "El Campesino" labouring in France after leaving Russia)
MAN WITH HEARING-AID ... the POLICE-SPY/SECRET AGENT (who would hear better with an aid)
THE DETECTIVE... dreams that he is like an ARTIST ("Everyone praises the swift crayon of the graphic artist")
THE WHORE (woman in large hat)... seller and commodity in one
THE MAN WALKING AWAY..... Benjamin's SUICIDE? (the flâneur's last journey: death.. "to the depths of the unknown to find something new" - from "Flowers of Evil")

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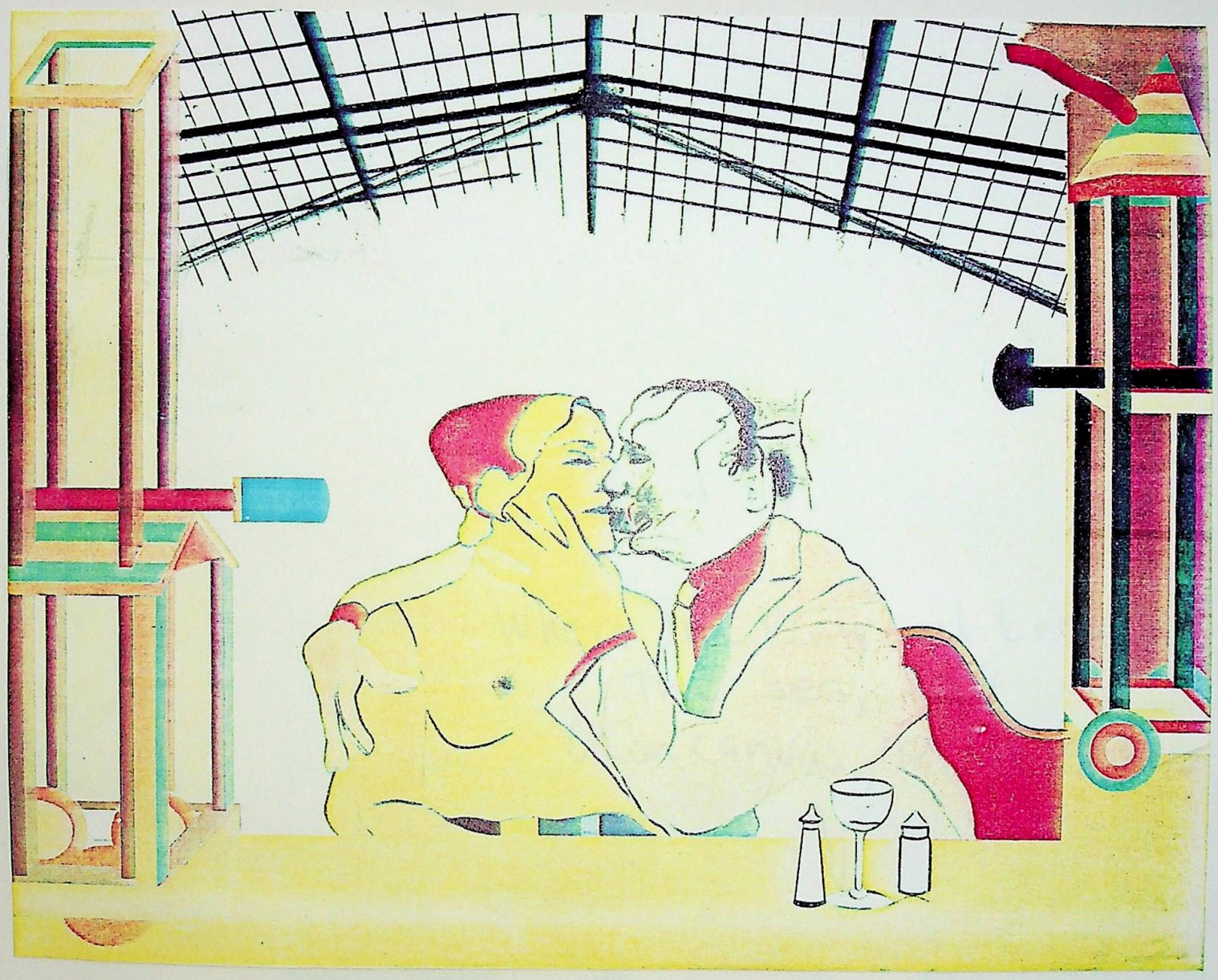
Miss Ivy Cavendish (Oxford)
1958 pencil on paper,
53.3 x 41.6

Erasmus Variations, 1958
Oil on canvas, 104.1 x 83.8 cm

Isaac Babel Riding with Budyonny
1962.

Reflections on Violence, 1962,
Oil on canvas,
152.4 x 152.4 cm.

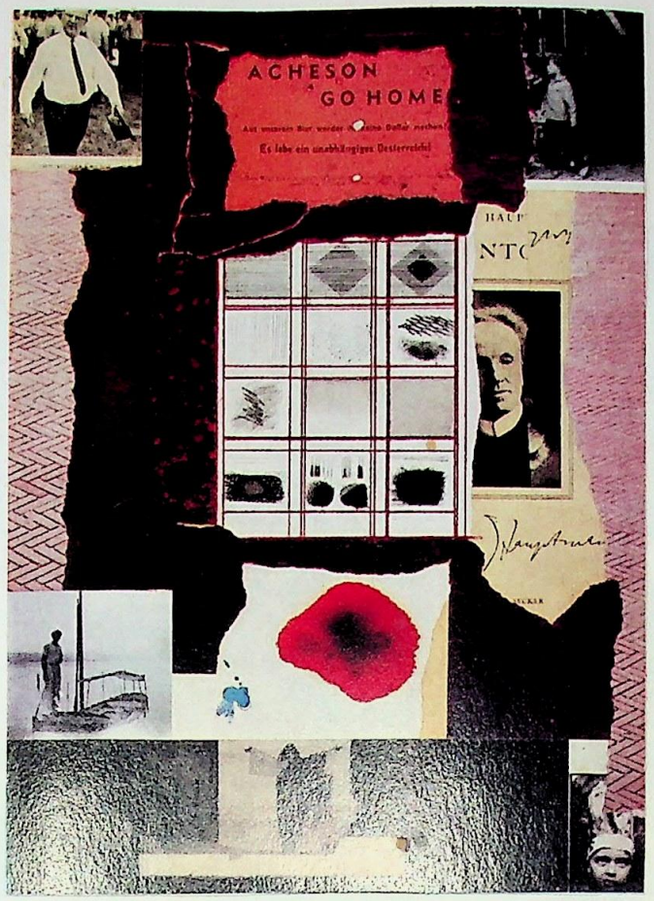
The Ohio Gang, 1964
Oil and crayon on cangas,
183.1 x 183.5



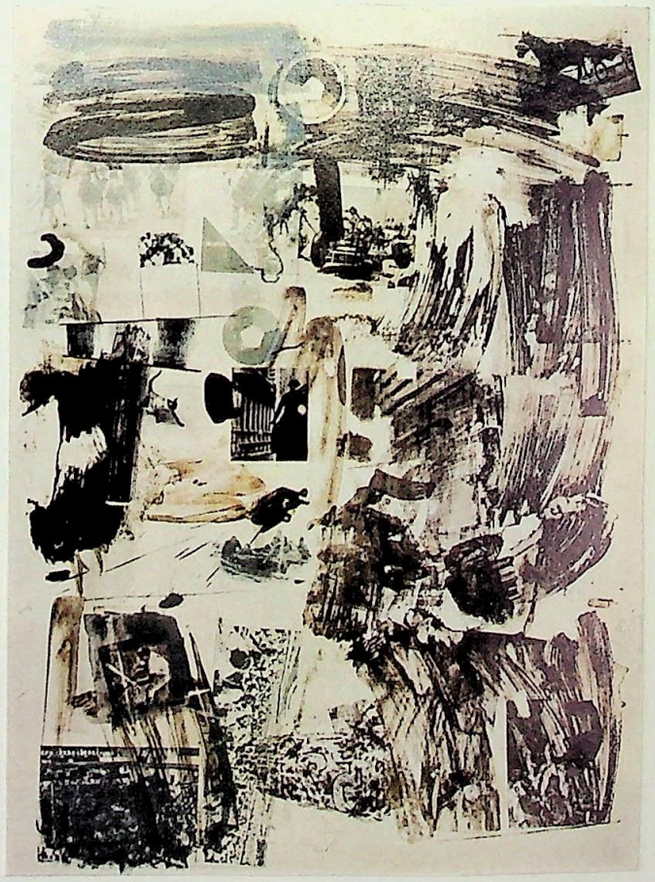
Where the Railroad Leaves the Sea, 1964
Oil on Canvas, 121.9 x 152.5

Good News for Incunabulists,
1962
Oil on canvas,
152.4 x 152.4 cm.

Just what is it makes today's homes, so different, so appealing?

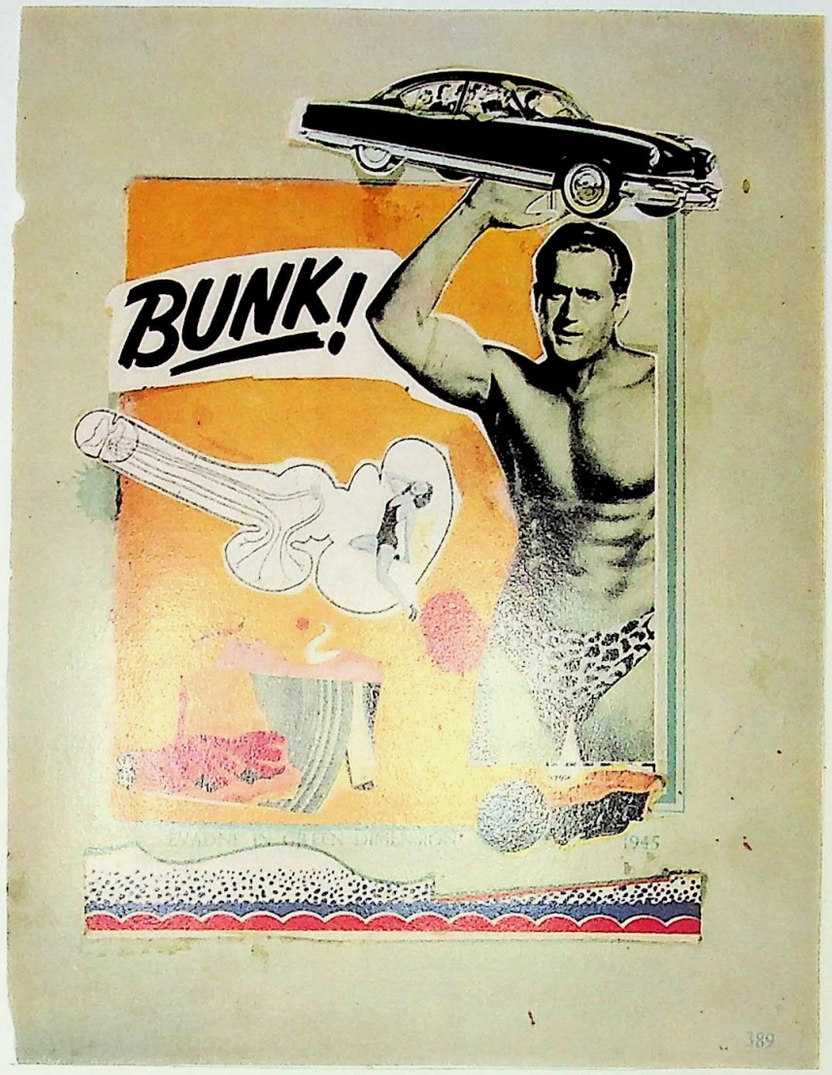


9 ACHESON GO HOME, COLLAGE? 1964.



6 Robert Rauschenberg, License, Lithograph, 1962.

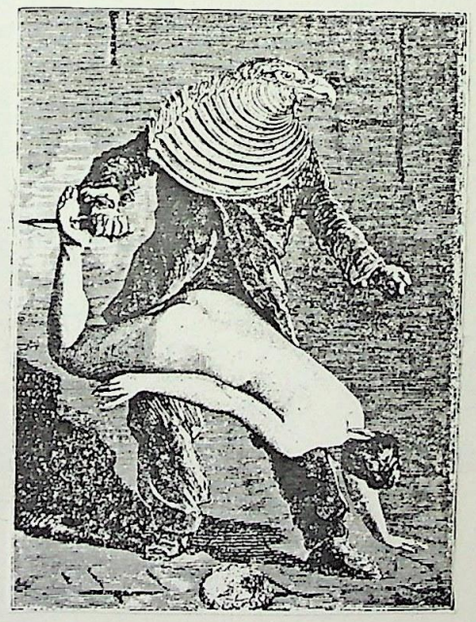
The Murder of Rosa Luxemburg,
1960,
Oil on canvas,
152.4 x 152.4



Bunk !

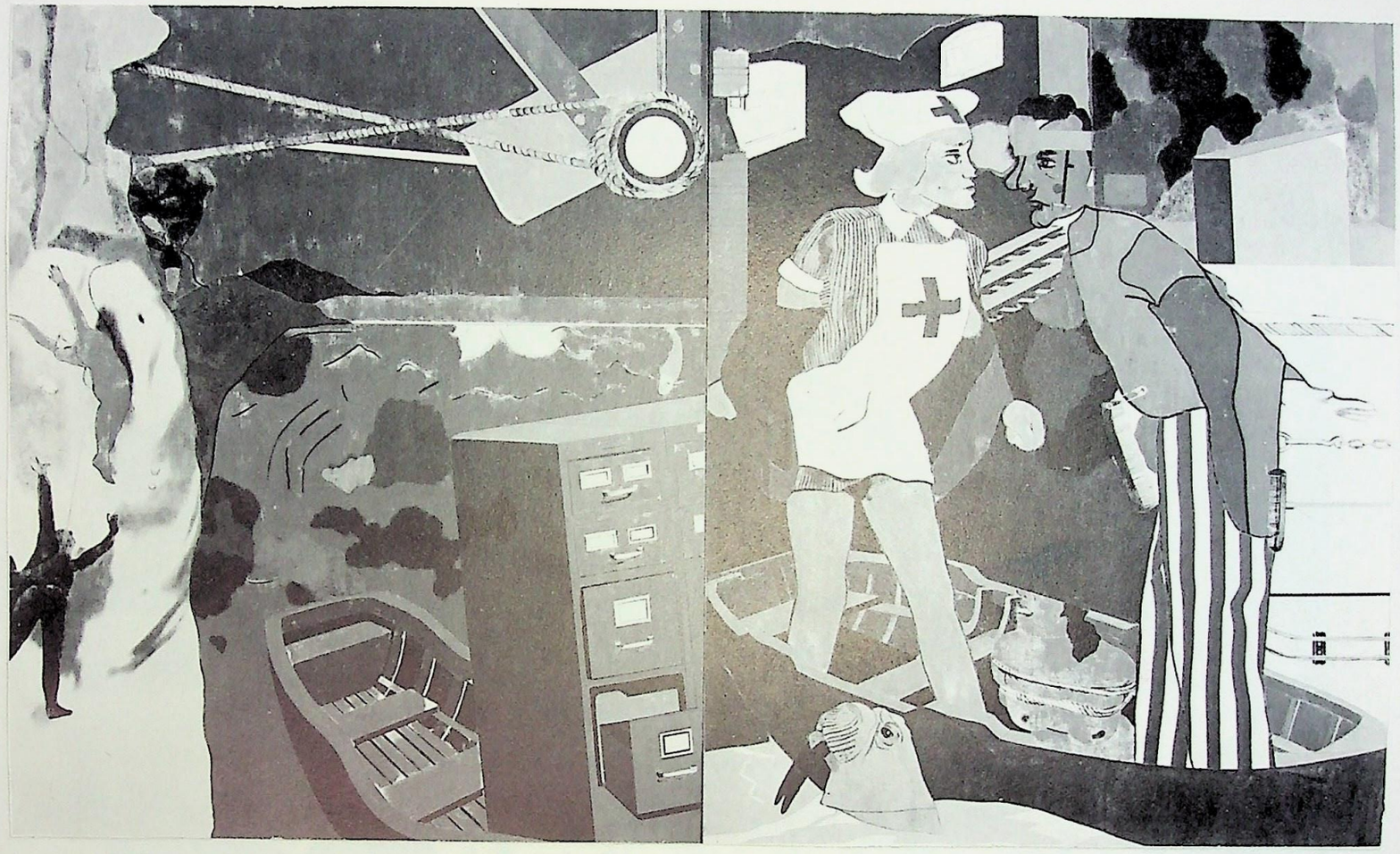
Eduardo Paolozzi

Collage

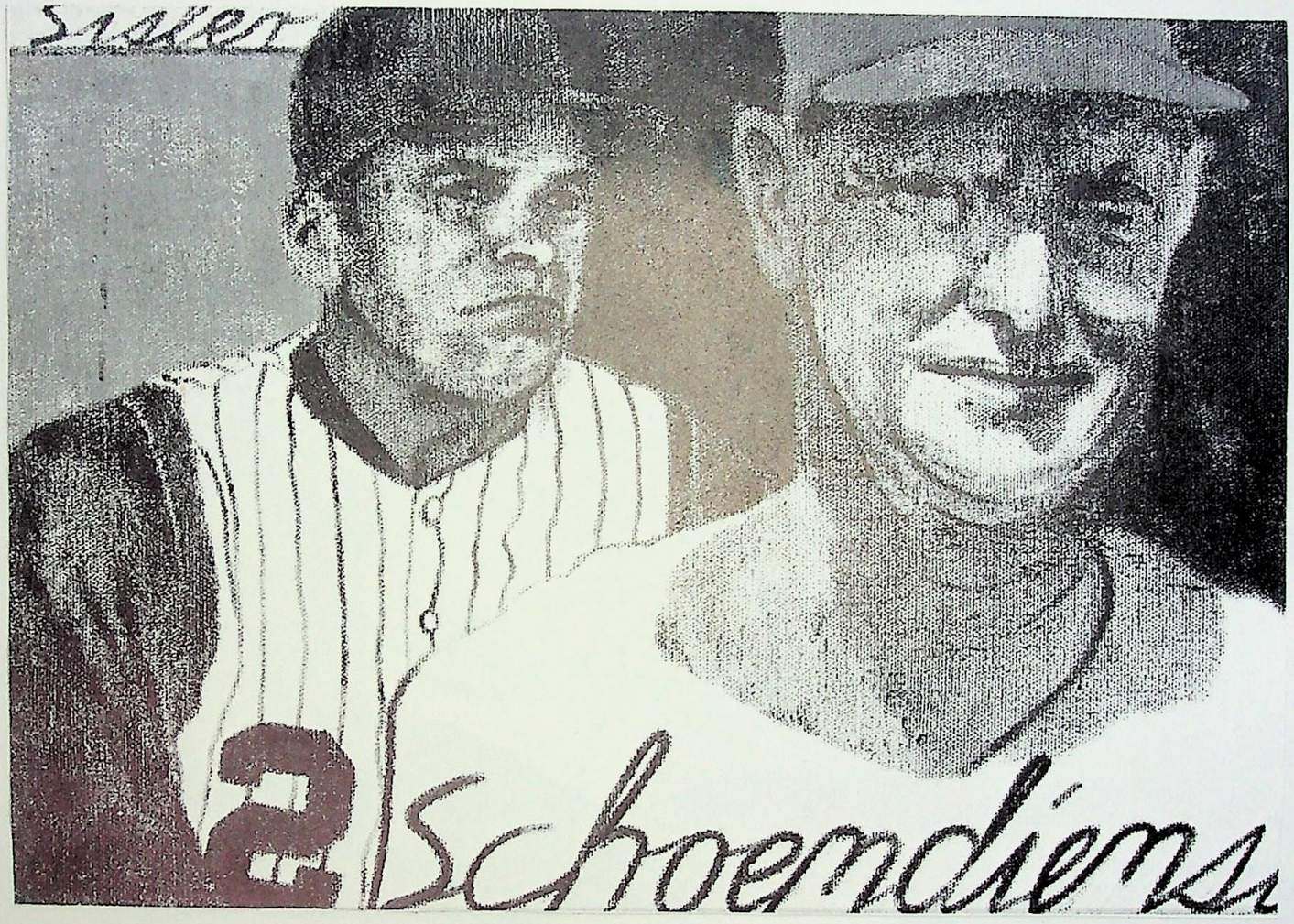


Max Ernst
La Semaine
de Bonte

The Autumn of Central Paris,
(After Walter Benjamin), 1972-74
Oil on canvas,
152.4 x 152.4



Erie Shore, 1966
Oil on canvas,
183 x 305.



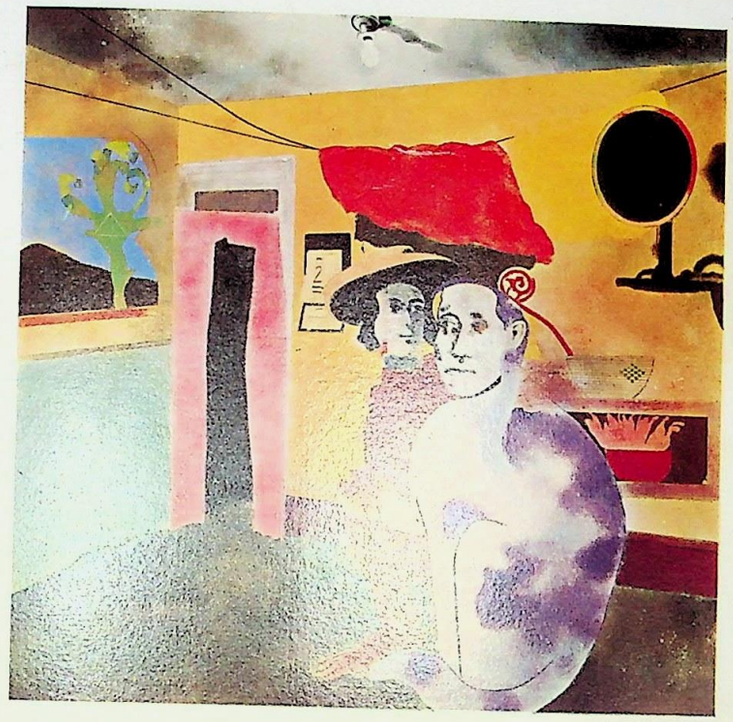
Sisler and Schoendienst, 1967
Oil on canvas,
25.4 x 35.2

David at Berkeley, 1968
Oil on canvas,
25.4 x 20.5

Robert Duncan, 1968
Oil on canvas,
30.5 x 30.5.

Unity Mitford, 1968
Oil an Convas, 25.4 x 20.5

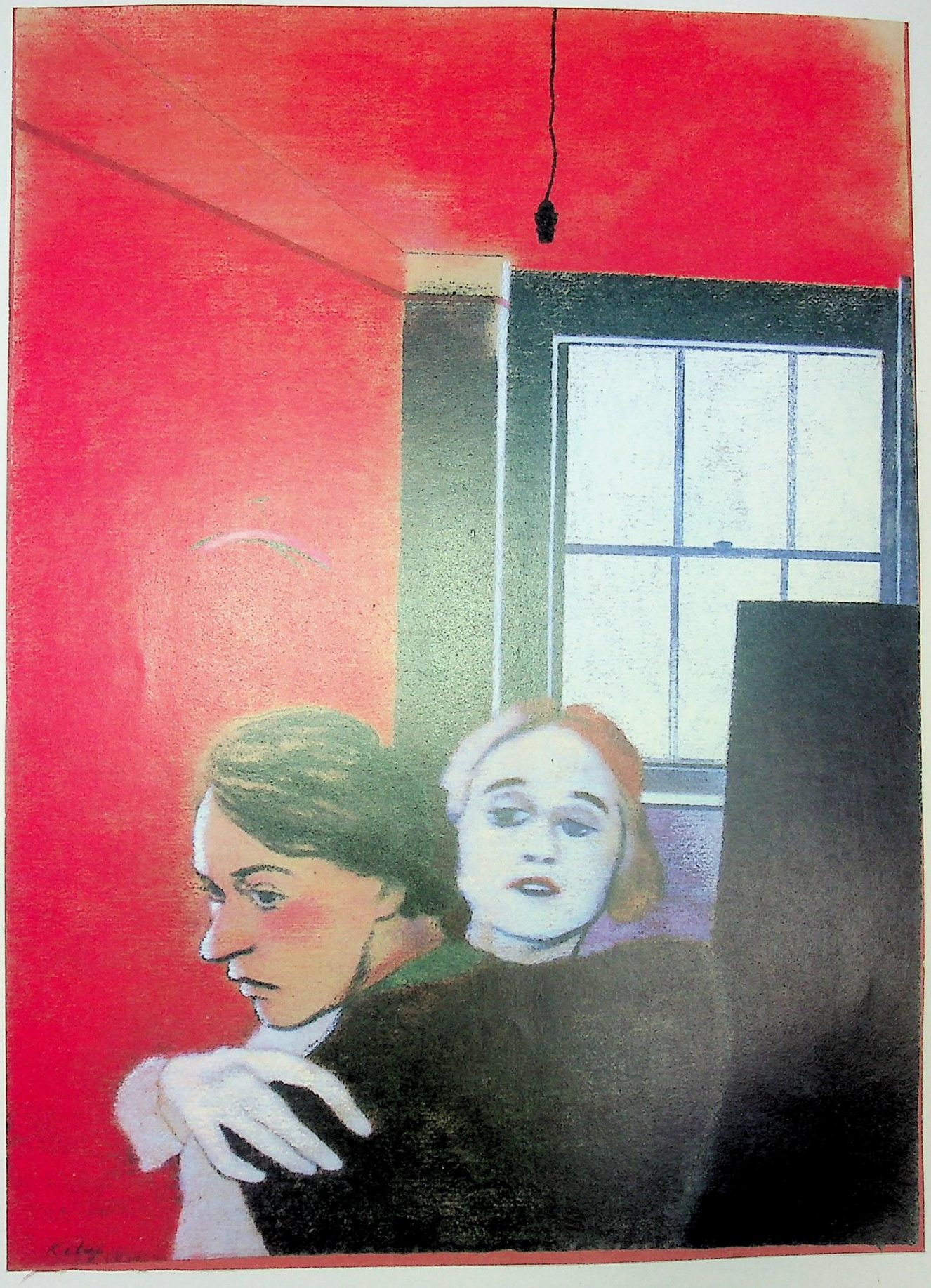
Passionaria, 1969
Oil on canvas,
30.5 x 30.5



Man of the Woods and Cat of the Mountains.
1973 Oil on Canvas
152.4 x 152.4

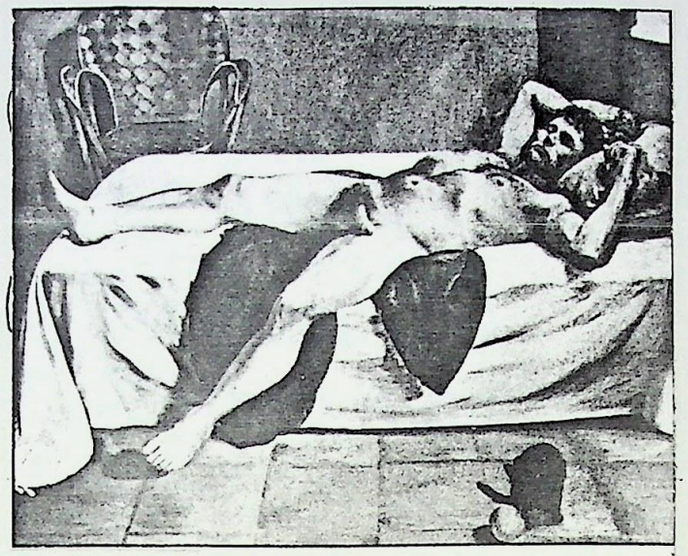
Batman, 1973
Oil on canvas,
244 x 76.2 cm

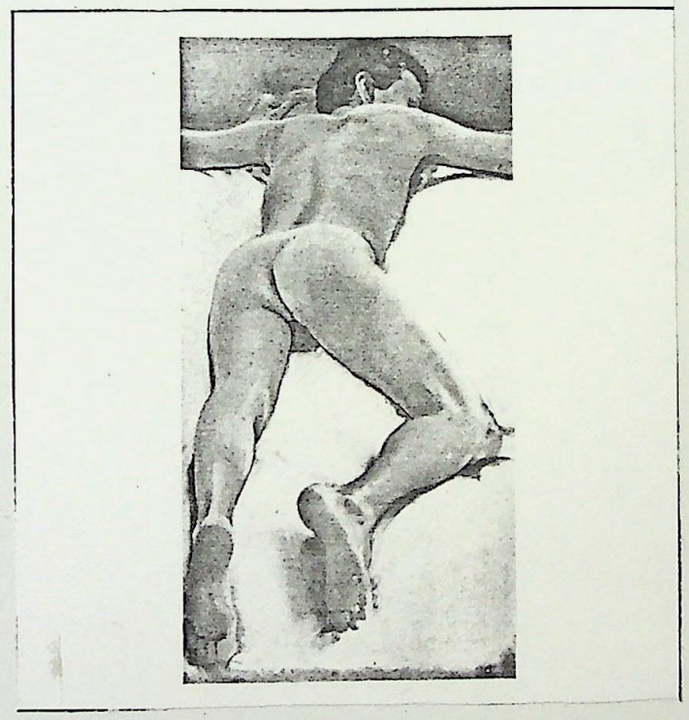
Bill at Sunset, 1973
Oil on canvas,
244 x 76.2 cm



Study for the World's Body, 1974.
Pastel on paper, 76.2 x 50.8

Study for Miss Brooke, 1974.
Pastel on paper,
58 x 39 cm.

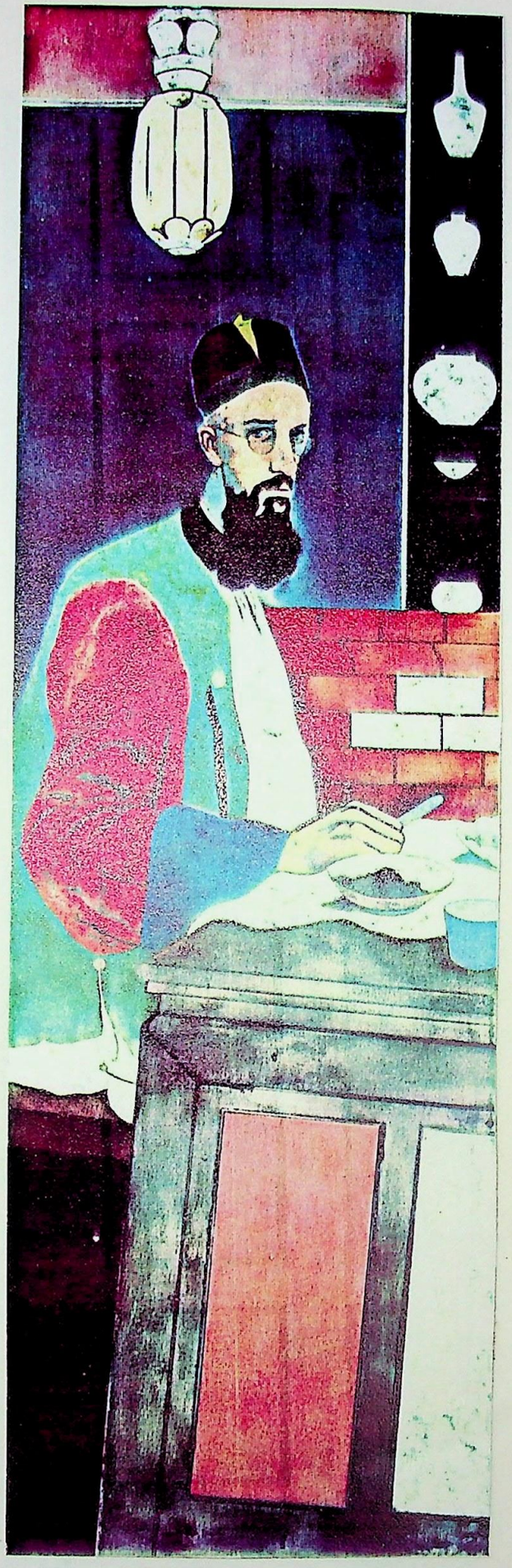




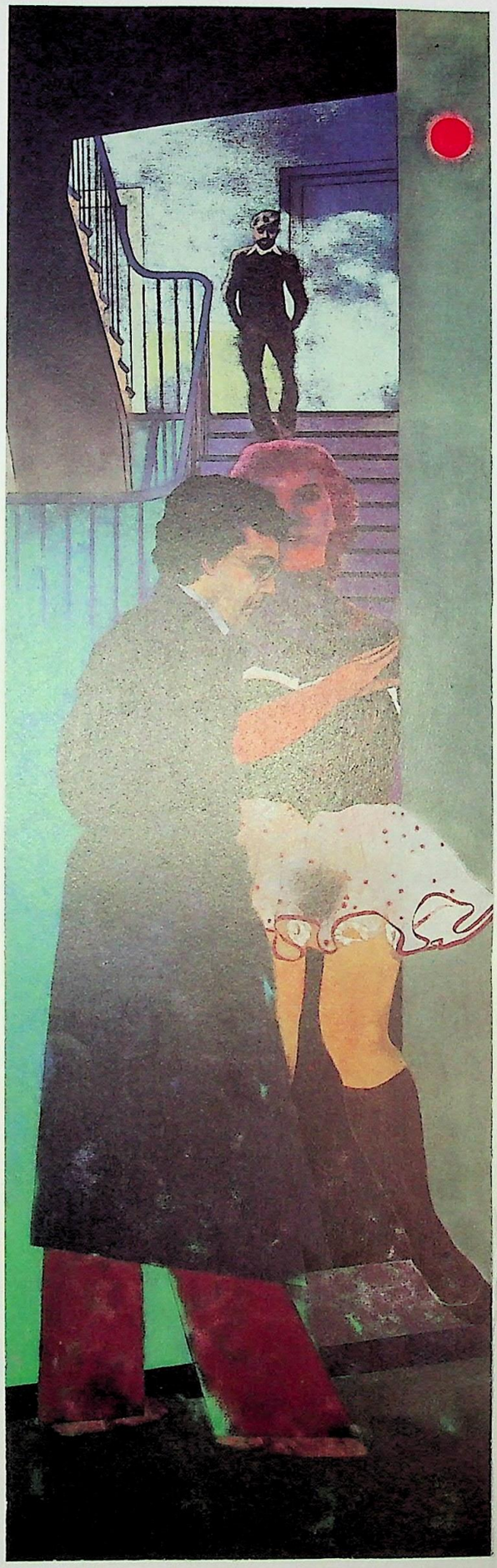
Sandra Fischer
(a) Kitaj in Jerusalem ; Oil on canvas
(b) Terracotta Nude : Pastel on paper.

The Jew ... Etc., 1976
Oil and charcoal on canvas,
152.4 x 121.9 cm.

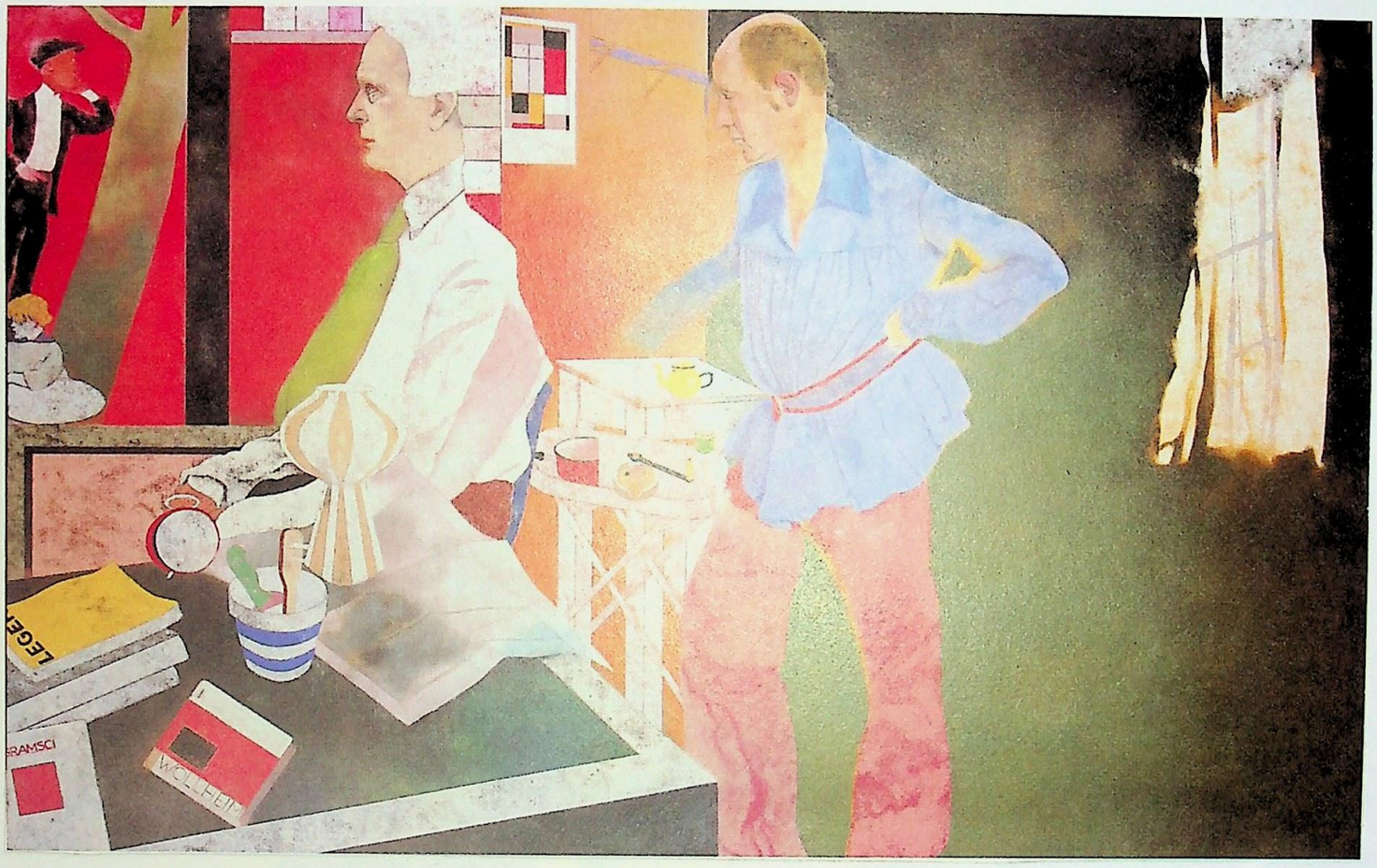
Moresque, 1975-76
Oil on canvas,
244 x 76.2



The Orientalist,
1975-77, Oil on canvas,
244 x 76.8



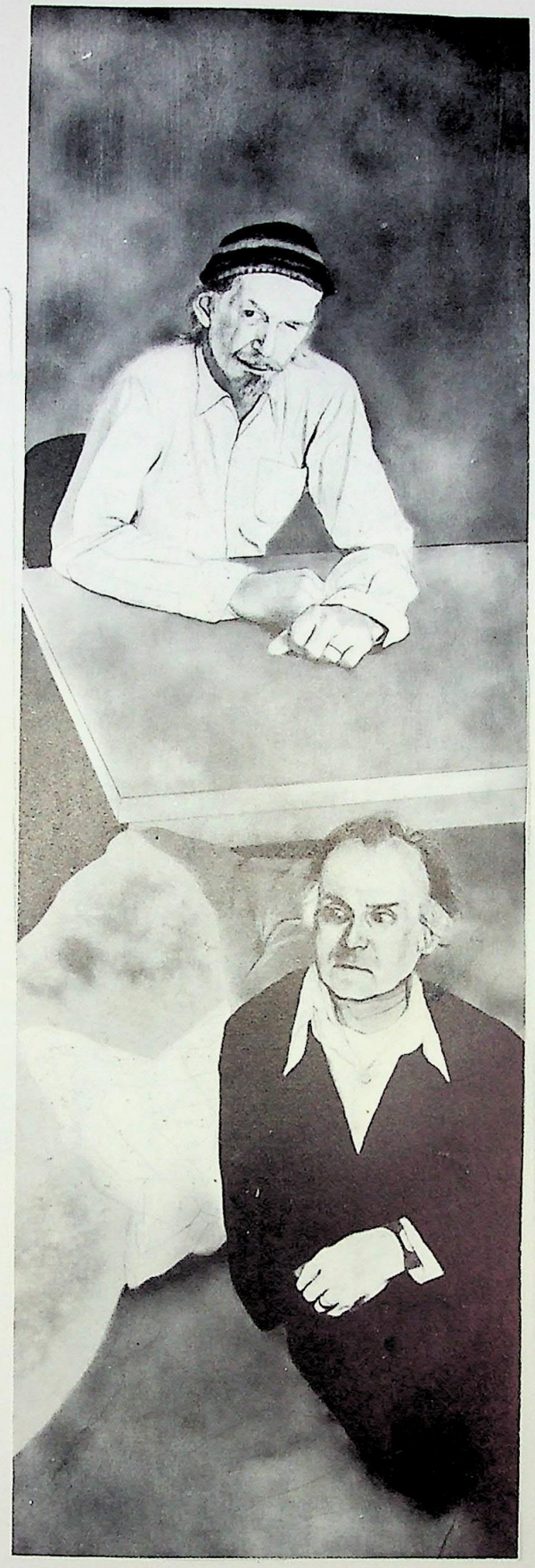
Smyrna Greek (Nikos)
1976 - 77,
Oil on canvas,
244 x 76.2



From London (James Joll and John Golding),
1975 - 76,
Oil on canvas,
152.4 x 244.

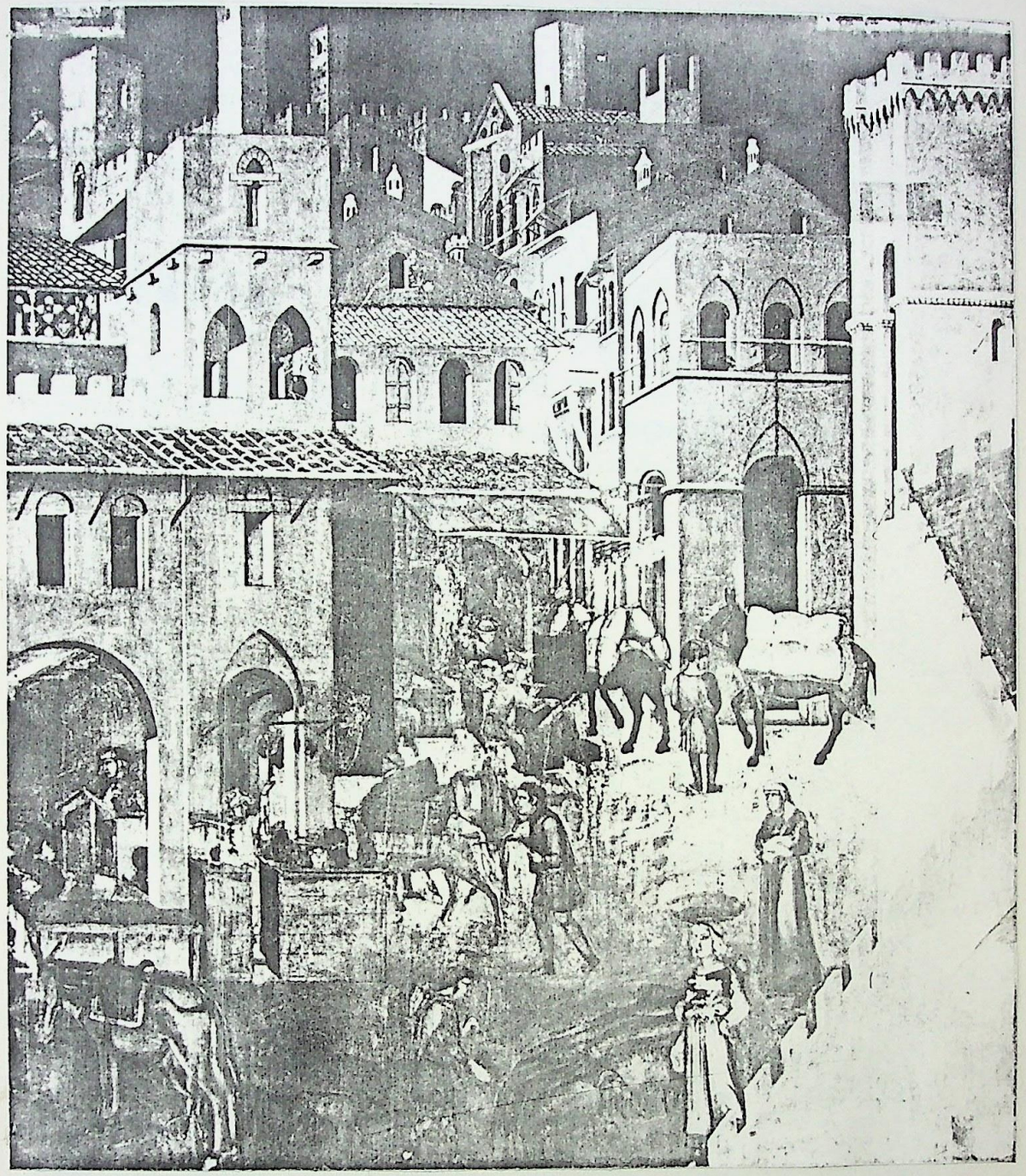
Land of Lakes, 1925 - 77
Oil on canvas,
152.4 x 152.4

If Not, Not, 1975-76
Oil on canvas,
152.4 x 152.4



A Visit to London
(Robert Creely and Robert Duncan),
Oil on canvas,
182.9 x 61 cm.

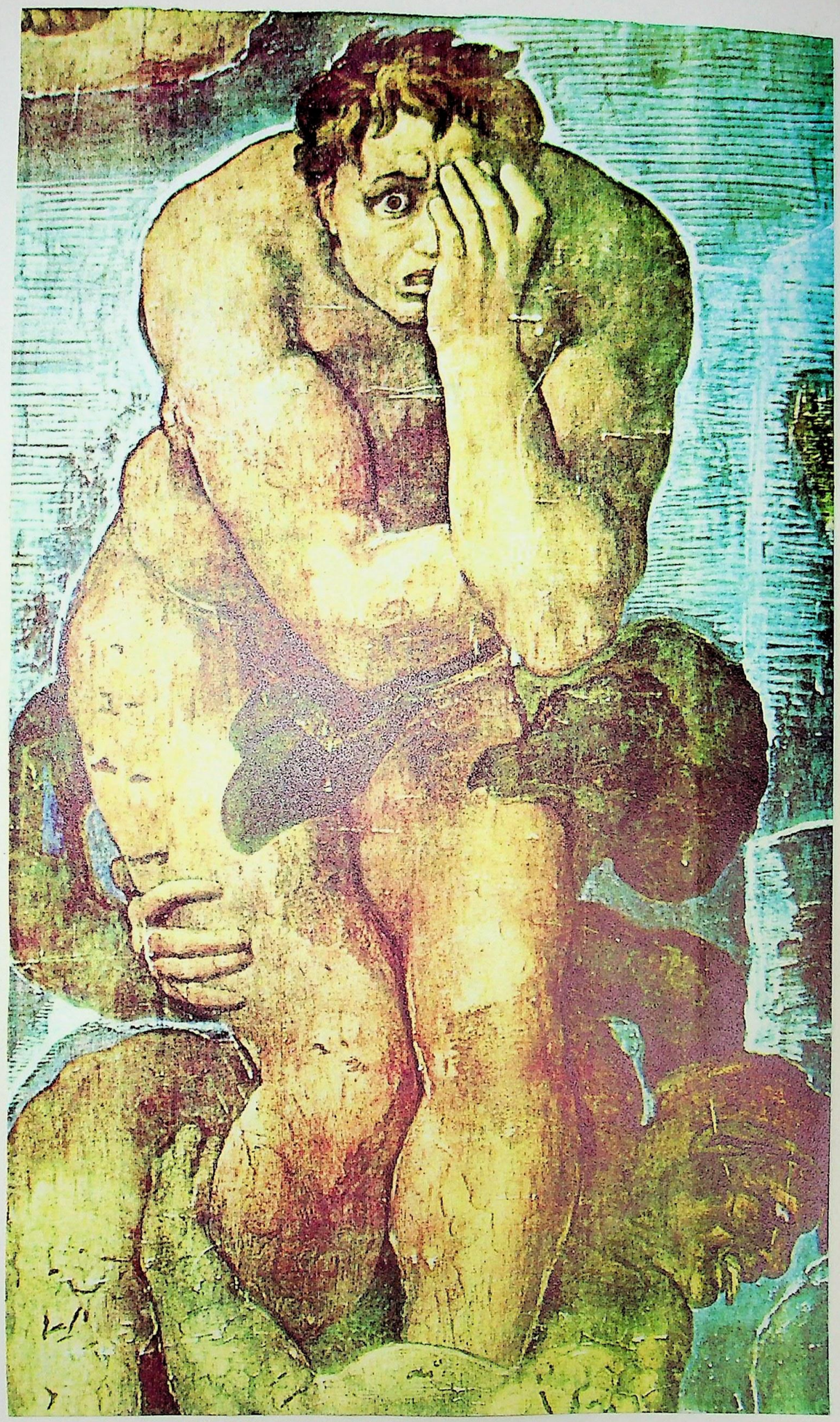
From London (James Joll and John Golding) as exhibited in Edinburgh 1975



Ambrogio Lorenzetti
Detail of The Effects of Good Government :
The City.

Hieronymus Bosh

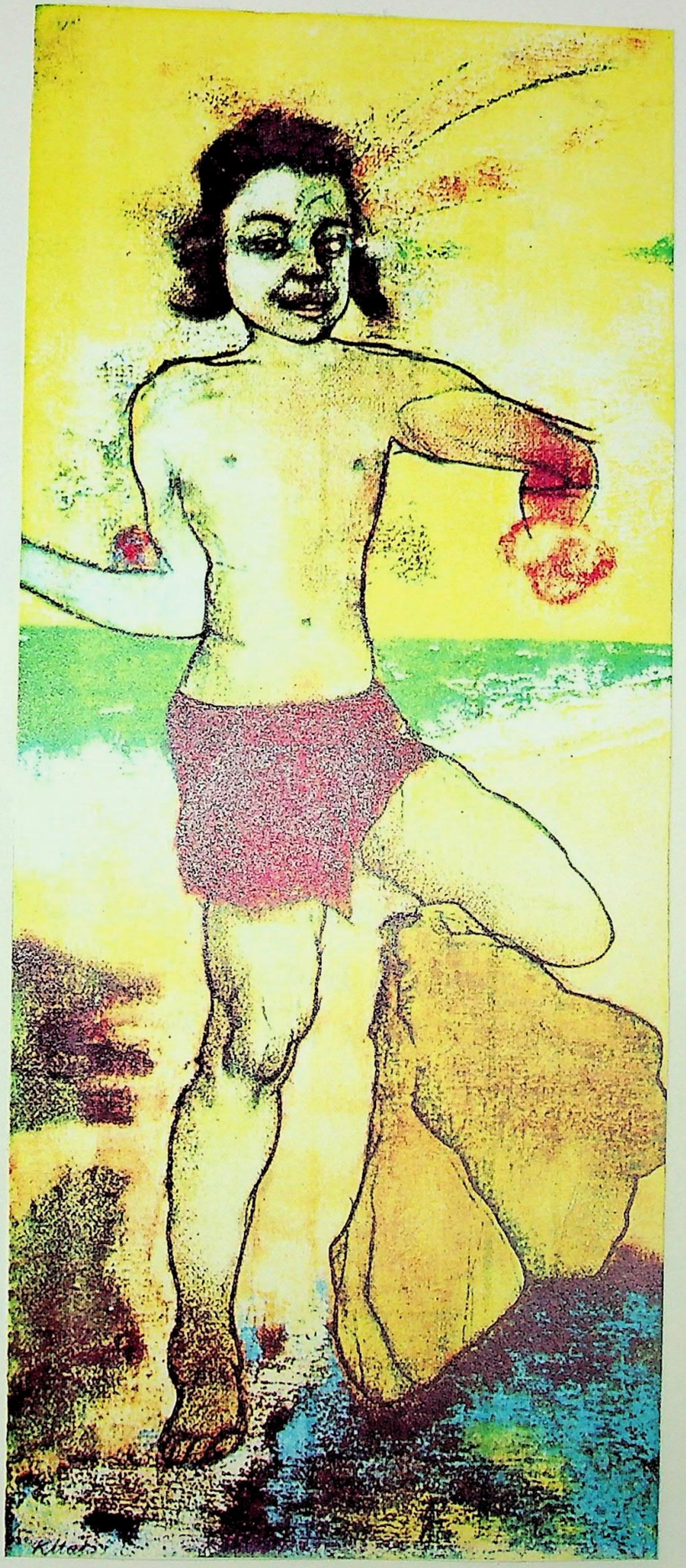
Bather (Torsion),
1978
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
137.8 x 56.8 cm.



Michaelangelo
The Last Judgement
Detail : One of the figures of the Damned

Bather (Wading)
1978
Pastel and Charcoal on paper,
121.3 x 56.8 cm

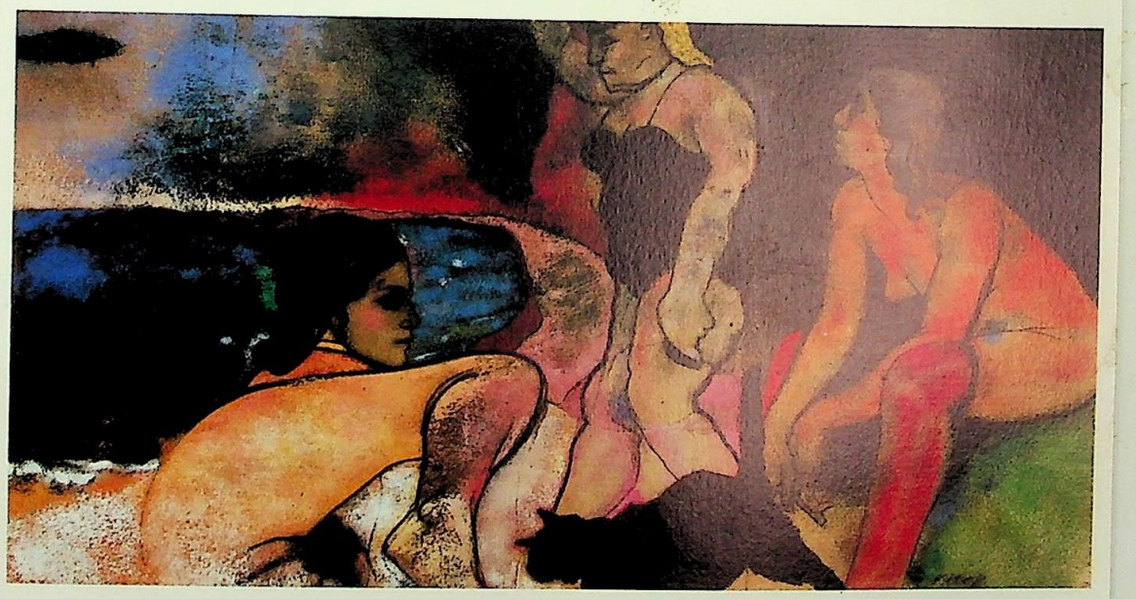
Bather (Tousled Hair) 1978
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
121.3 x 56.8



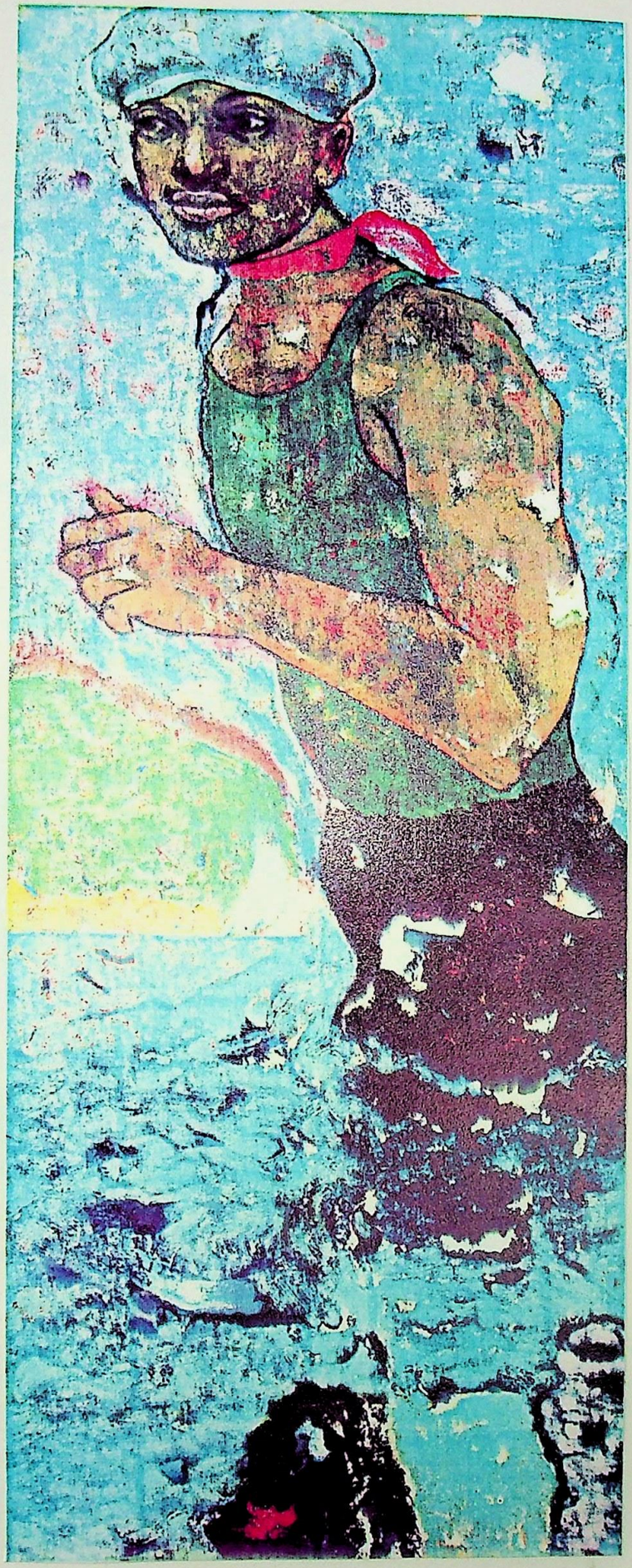
Bather (Psychotic Boy),
1980 Pastel and charcaol on paper,
13⅛ x 57.2

The Listner (Joe Singer in Hiding), 1980
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
103.2 x 108.2

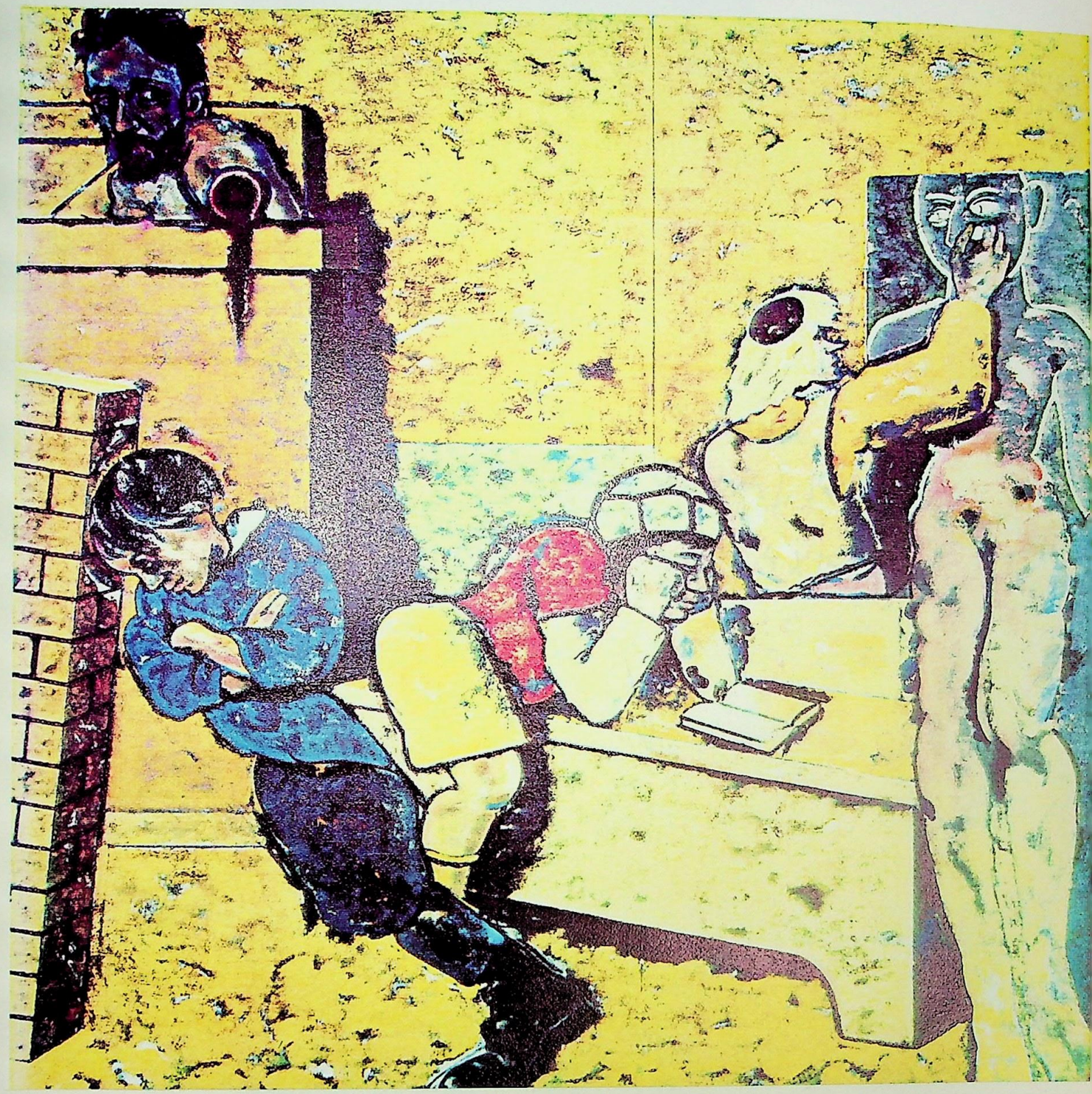
His New Freedom 1978
Pastel and Oil on paper
30" x 22"



The Rise of Fascism, 1975-79
Pastel charcoal and oil onpaper,
85.9 x 158.4 cm

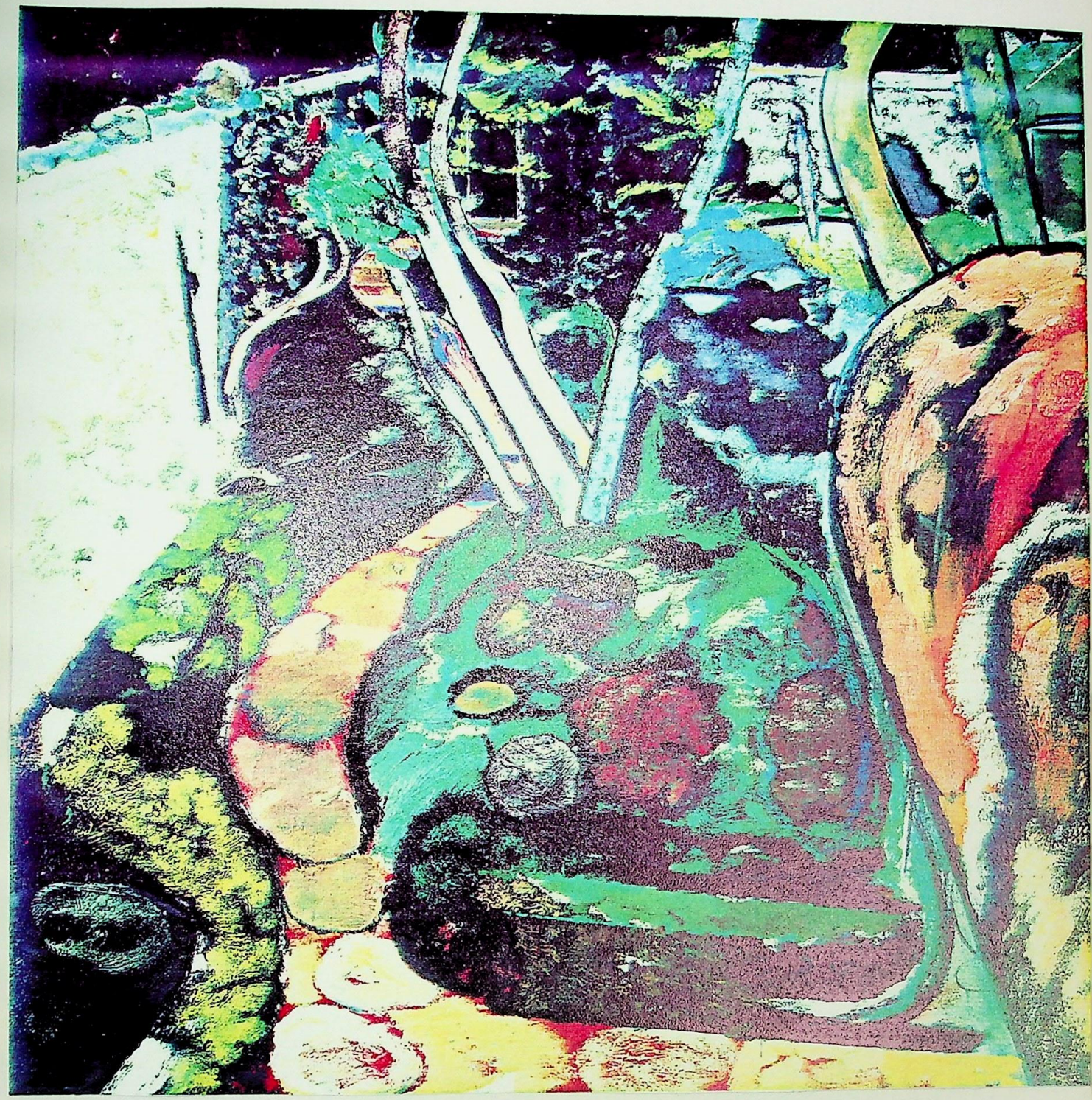


The Salor (David Ward)
1979 - 80
Oil an canvas, 152.4 x 61



The Jewish School
(Drawing a Golem), 1980
Oil on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4

Grey Girl, 1981
Oil on Canvas,
76.2 x 30.5 cm.



The Garden, 1981
Oil on canvas,
122 x 122 cm.

Rock Garden (The Nation), 1981,
Oil on canvas,
122 x 122.

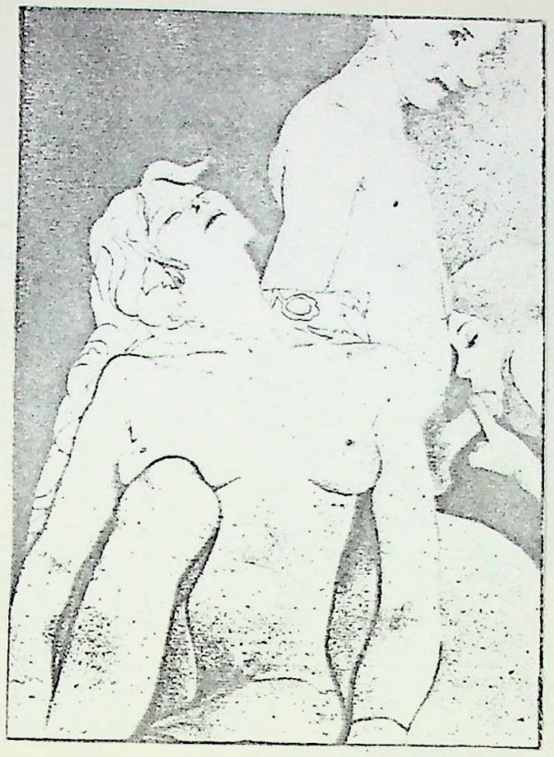
Kennst Du das Land?, 1962
Oil on canvas,
121.9 x 121.9

Austro-Hungarian Foot Soldier,
1961
Oil on canvas,
152.2 x 91cm.

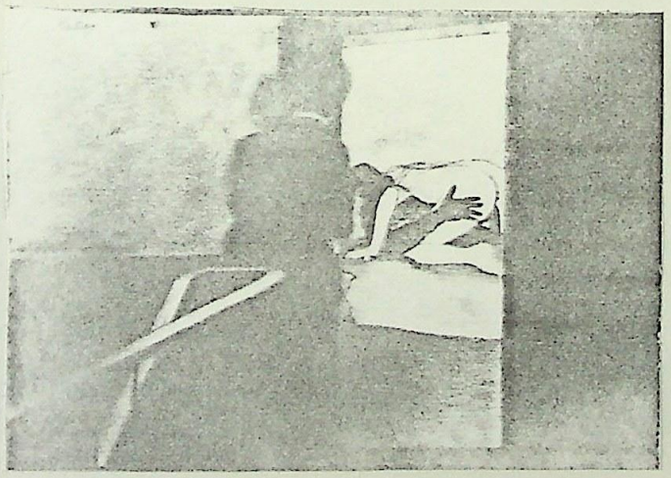
Bad Faith (Gulag) 1978
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
112.4 x 55.9 cm.

Bad Faith (Warsaw), 1978
Pastel and charcoal on paper
109.9 x 58.8

Bad Faith (Chile), 1978,
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
76.8 x 57 cm.



55 The Rash Act, 1976
Original transfer drawing on paper,
73½7 x 52.7cm

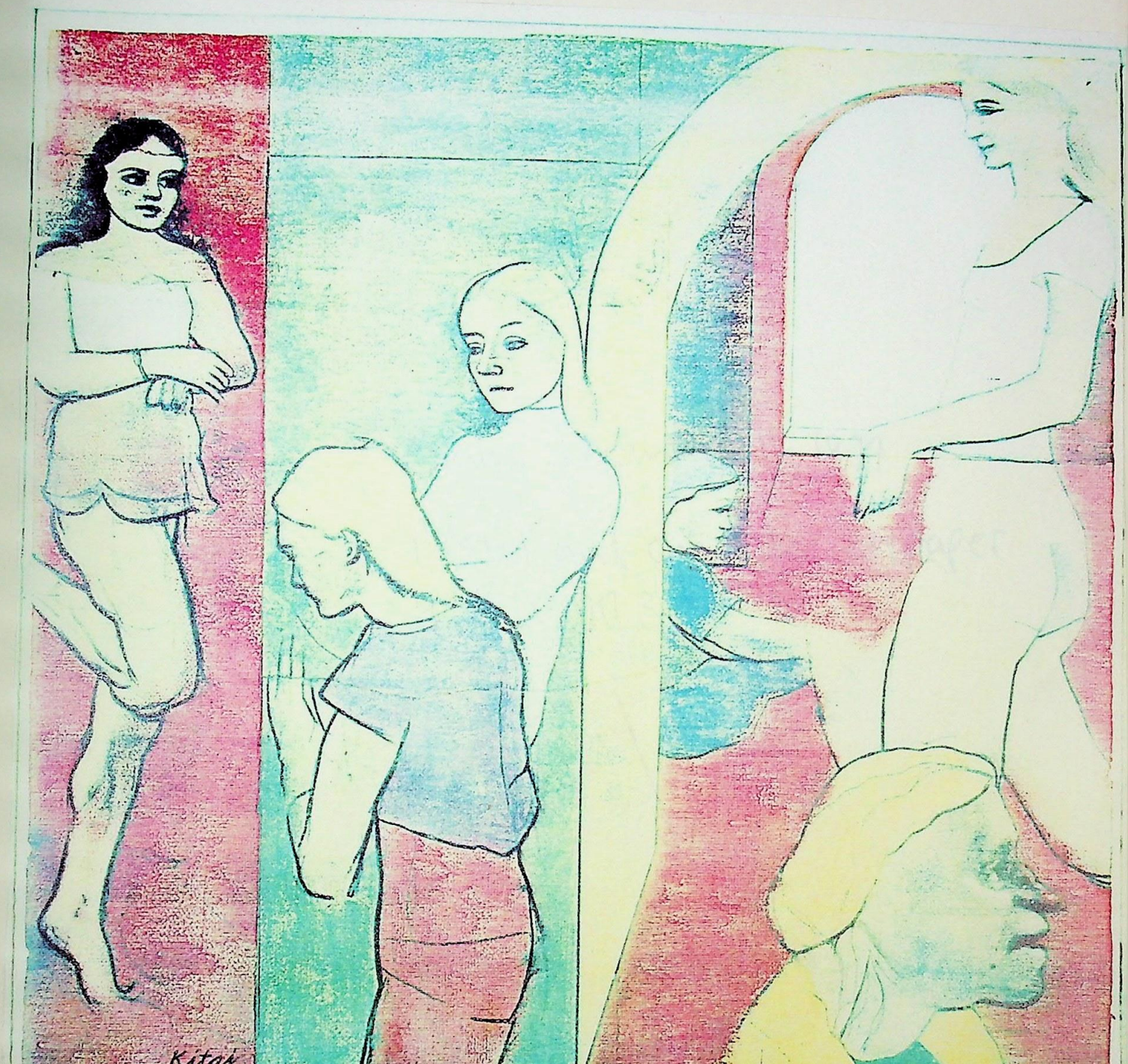


54 This Knot of Life 1975
Pastel on paper
38.7 x 57.2 cm

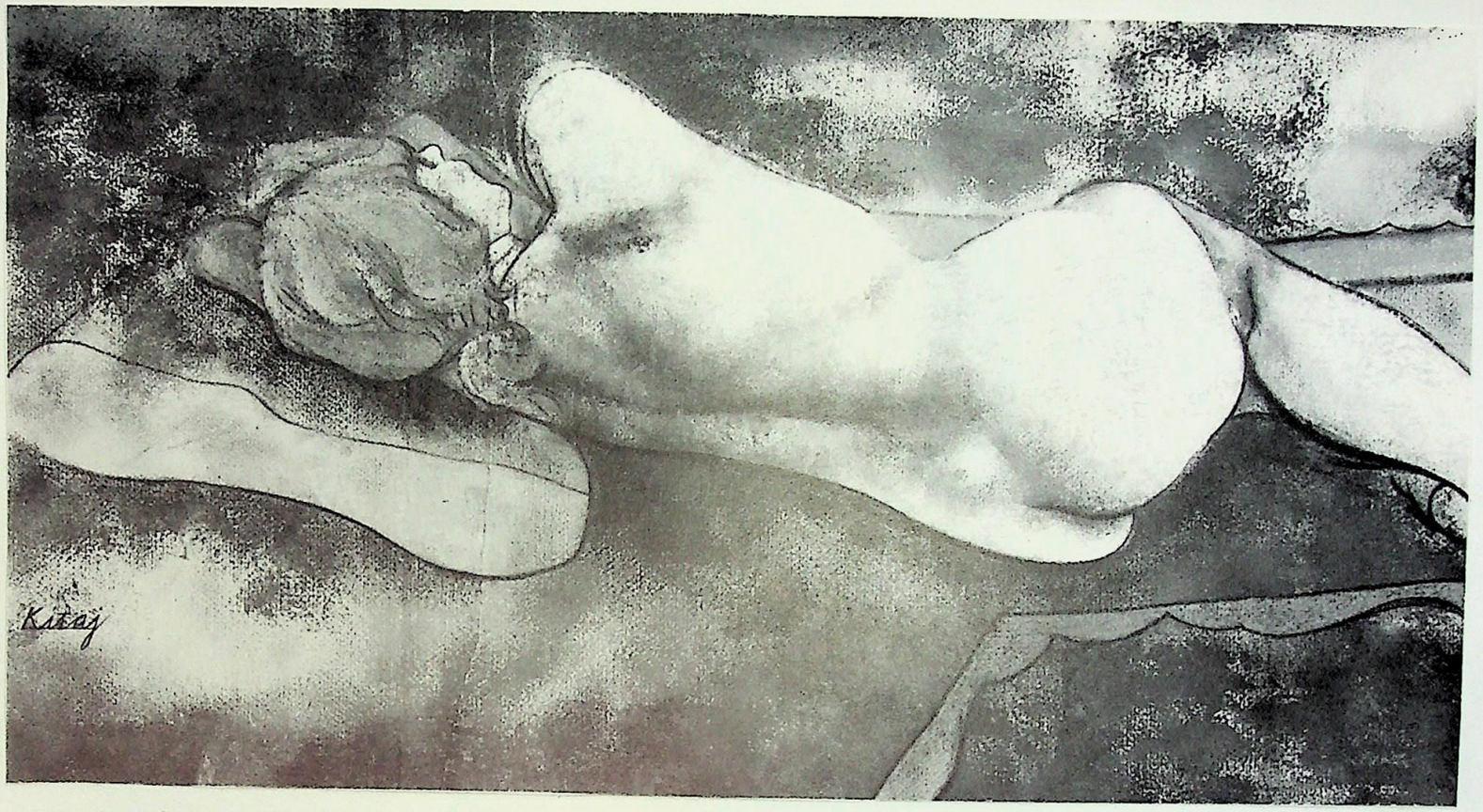
His Hour, 1975
Pastel and charcoal on paper
30.1 x 22.1 cm

Communist and Socialut, 1975
Pastel on paper,
38.5 x 56.5 cm.

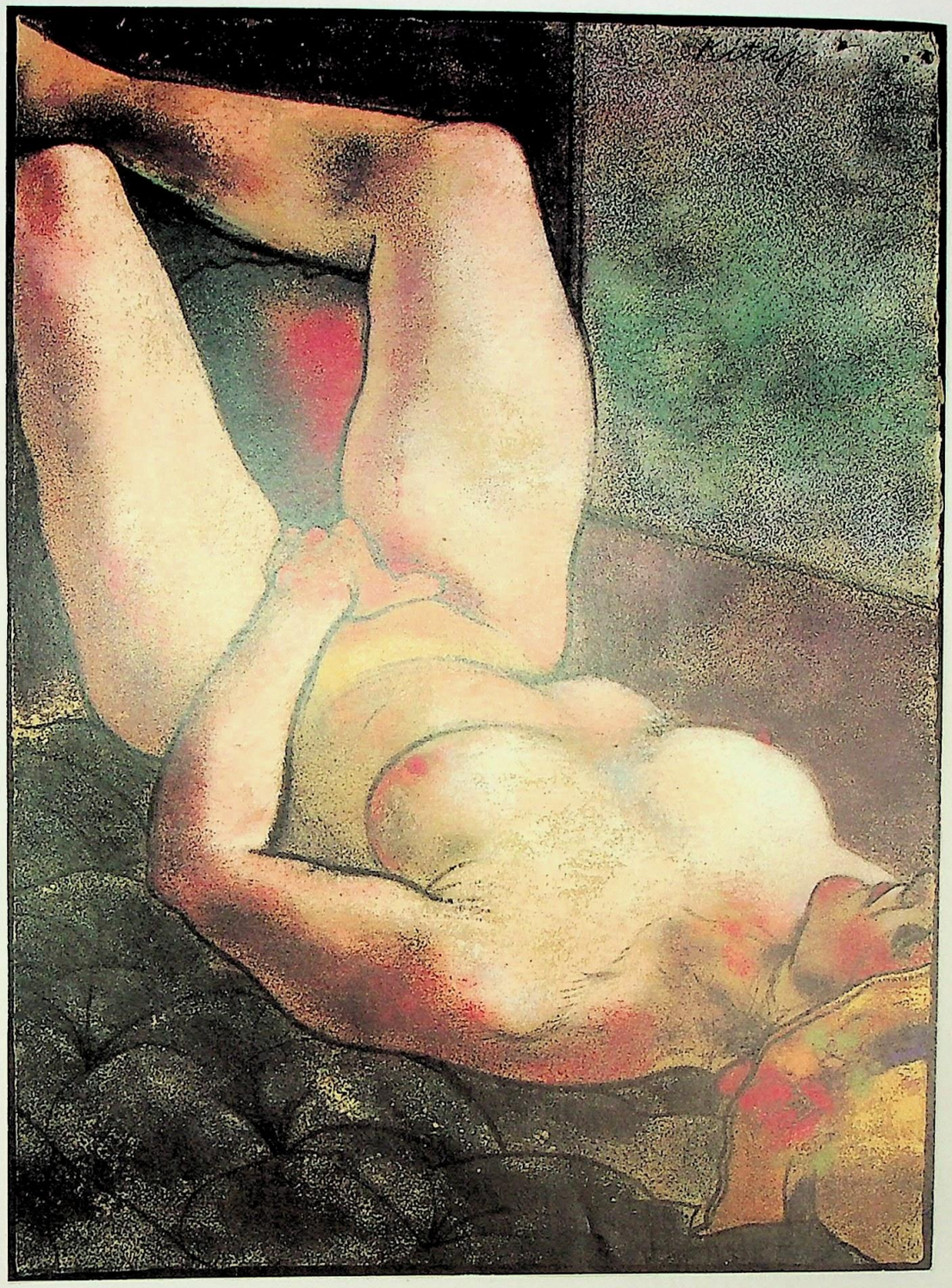
Frankfurt Brothel, 1977.
Oil on canvas, 48" x 60"



Sighs from Hell, 1979
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
97.8 x 100.3.



Marynka, 1979
Pastel on paper,
56.5 x 106 cm.



The Yellow Hat, 1980,
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
77.5 x 57.8.

After Rodin, 1980
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
77.5 x 57.2

Actor (Richard) 1976
Pastel and charcoal on paper,
76.8 x 49.2

Slides, 1979

David

Quintin

Pencil Drawing for Daybook by
Robert Creely 1972
Pencil on paper 61.6 X 41.9 cm