

# VIOLENCE & DEHUMANISATION

74 The Body in Art & Advertising



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PAGE NO.

-----  
1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

2. PART 1.

2. CHAPTER 1            Cindy Sherman, Robert Mapplethorpe.

5. CHAPTER 2            Robert Longo.

18. PART 2.

18. CHAPTER 1            General introduction to advertising section.

19. CHAPTER 2            Benson & Hedges.

23. CHAPTER 3            Silk Cut.

33. CONCLUSION.

35. BIBLIOGRAPHY.



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To explore this, I propose to examine the work of the body in the world, and to examine the work of the body in the world. I propose to examine the work of the body in the world, and to examine the work of the body in the world. I propose to examine the work of the body in the world, and to examine the work of the body in the world. I propose to examine the work of the body in the world, and to examine the work of the body in the world.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION



TRANSPARANCY. To let the light not on but in or through. To look not at the text but through it.....feet off the ground. Freedom is instability...dissolve the solid meanings...the UNSPOKEN meaning is always sexual. Of sexuality we can have only symbolical knowledge, because sexual is carnal. Death and love are altogether carnal; hence their great magic and their great terror.

NORMAN O BROWN (excerpts from Chapter 16 of "LOVE'S BODY").

The diversity of contemporary visual images seems never to have been greater. Any generalisation, therefore, about current attitudes towards the body as presented in Art and Advertising is bound at best to be less than comprehensive; just as any attempt to impose order on what amounts to visual anarchy and chaos can be only schematic. Nevertheless, however personal a value judgement may be and however inadequate a general formulation may prove, some innate pattern can be discerned. The contention of this paper is, that both fine art and advertising have become almost visual partners in their presentation of the body, and that this presentation veers generally towards the twin poles of violence and dehumanisation.

To explore this I propose to examine the fine art work of New York painter and sculptor Robert Longo and to examine certain advertisements (particularly the Saatchi and Saatchi campaign for Silk Cut cigarettes) in order to show that these tendencies (violence and dehumanisation) are becoming more pronounced, if generally ignored or overlooked.



## PART ONE



## PART 1

### CHAPTER 1

Currently there are two main and important directions in fine art with regard to the treatment of the human figure which seem diametrically opposed to one another. On the one hand are the forms of art which deal directly with central emotive human themes - birth, death, love, hate, in an unprecedentedly direct way. The best examples of this can be found in Performance Art and the German Neu Wilden. On the other hand are forms which dismiss all ideas of immediacy and emotionalism as illusory and which reflect with a passivity and coolness images derived from the mass media and culture in general, thereby fixing and freezing them. Of course I'm aware that there is a lot of art which doesn't deal with any of this but I am solely concerned here with the presentation of the body in art and advertising. However disparate these two approaches may at first appear, there are areas of similarity. In both cases the body's links with eroticism connect to its links with death. What I mean is that a direct connection is made between eroticism, violence (both physical and emotional), and death. If the first form of art shows energy, violation, transgression, the second suggests the frozen perfection of the corpse.

At the cooler side, most of the best examples are artists working in New York, particularly Cindy Sherman and Robert Longo. These two are part of a new generation in their twenties and early thirties who are making art that utilises material that is the fabric of everyday life in the 1980's: the mass media. Included among these artists are Jack Goldstein and David Salle whose source is film (it is no coincidence that several of them are represented in New York by a gallery named Metro Pictures). Both Sherman and Longo use photography in their work, Sherman more directly than Longo. Photography is the language of both the recorder of facts and the merchant of fantasy. It is significant that photography is the favoured medium of both the advertiser and the pornographer. Films and television programmes are transient - they vanish from the screen but photography can be held and accumulated as can film 'stills'.

Cindy Sherman began in the late seventies to turn to the mass media of television, film and advertising as a source for her imagery. Bewigged and costumed, the distracted starlets posing stiffly in Cindy Sherman's early black-and-white UNTITLED FILM STILLS are the vaguely familiar yet unforgettable figures of innumerable 'B' movies. They are also guises for the same person - the photographer herself, who is simultaneously artist, actress, camera operator, set designer and lighting director. These haunting scenarios depict a series of stereotyped women: the housewife, the career girl, the sexpot, the blushing bride. The atmosphere created is more important than the exact action - a sense of melodrama hangs in the air. In the picture shown below UNTITLED FILM STILL NO.100 (Fig. 1), the close up print functions as an establishing shot for a melodrama that takes



place only in the artist's imagination. Sherman's unlikely heroines are laid out as in a magazine centre-fold, but as Rose Lee Goldberg says (29, p.78) they are "not pinups themselves but pinups of potential victims". This vulnerability is evident in the two further examples below, UNTITLED FILM STILLs Nos.92 & 54 (Figs. 2 & 3). Sherman's colour series began in 1980: they increased in size to nearly poster format, and all of them were made in the studio against a backdrop of projected slides. Still cinematic in mood, she stares out of the photographs in a new costume, mysteriously, sadly, in contemplation of an event that we will never be party to (UNTITLED FILM STILL No. 90)(Fig. 4). There is a lingering sexuality, a coy eroticism as she half-sits half-lies around with the viewer drawn so close up to her that it is uncomfortable - just to look at this photograph is to become a voyeur. These images are intimate and vulnerable and seen together they build up a powerful emotive presence. There is, however, something empty and cold about these photographs. They are paradoxical statements, at once seductive and unmoving.

Robert Mapplethorpe's photography could be considered a bridge between the two schools treating the human figure. Because of their cool sophistication, Mapplethorpe's images belong to the school of Sherman and Longo, whereas by their transgression of taboos (although quite mild), they can be numbered among the work of the more passionate artists working currently.

The recent current 'resurrection of the body' in photography and art as well as more broadly in the new cult of the healthy body, does not signify a new healthier or more liberal spirit which might open the floodgates of transgression; neither does it herald any emancipatory or utopian prospect. Set against the current atmosphere of Cold War Politics, sexual repressiveness (a return to fixed sexual roles and attitudes) and a new puritanism which afflicts both right and left, the tendencies which constitute a new 'resurrection of the body' may give the appearance of heralding a new freedom - but this is far from the case.

The 'pumping iron' fashion is distinctly Apollonian in spirit. The image is of self-control; the ideology is self-possession rather than emancipation. Today, hearing the claims of sexual equality and emancipation made by women bodybuilders, one is left with a distinct awareness of the current vogue for materialism and pragmatism, which amounts to little more than a development of the 'me generation' ethic of the seventies. Rather than achieving equality, women seem only to have adopted another form by which to become objects of desire to men. Lisa Lyons never claimed to have realised an ideal of equality or even claimed to have taken a step in that direction. On the contrary, Lyons regarded herself far from the frontline of the war for emancipation and left the arena of bodybuilding championships claiming to be a sculptor whose raw material was her own body.









(Fig. 1)



(Fig. 2)



(Fig. 3)





(Fig. 4)



Although Lyons was photographed naked in Robert Mapplethorpe's book "LADY", she never seems to be truly unclothed. By this I mean that Lyons 'wore' her body like a uniform or, as she was her own raw material, she became her own creation. This obsessiveness with the body is akin to the obsessive nature of restrictive clothing fetishism. Rather than the clothing being the object of fetishism, the body itself becomes so in this case (Fig. 5). The body becomes dehumanised as it nears the unnatural perfection of the machine.

Particularly for women, who have, according to Sarah Kofman ("THE NARCISSITIC WOMAN : FREUD and GIRARD") a privileged relation to narcissism, this fetishistic relationship to their bodies involves the creation of the gym as a new zone of consumption which replaces the passivity of, say, fashion consumption with the activity of exercise. Hardly a radical step forward on the road to real equality.

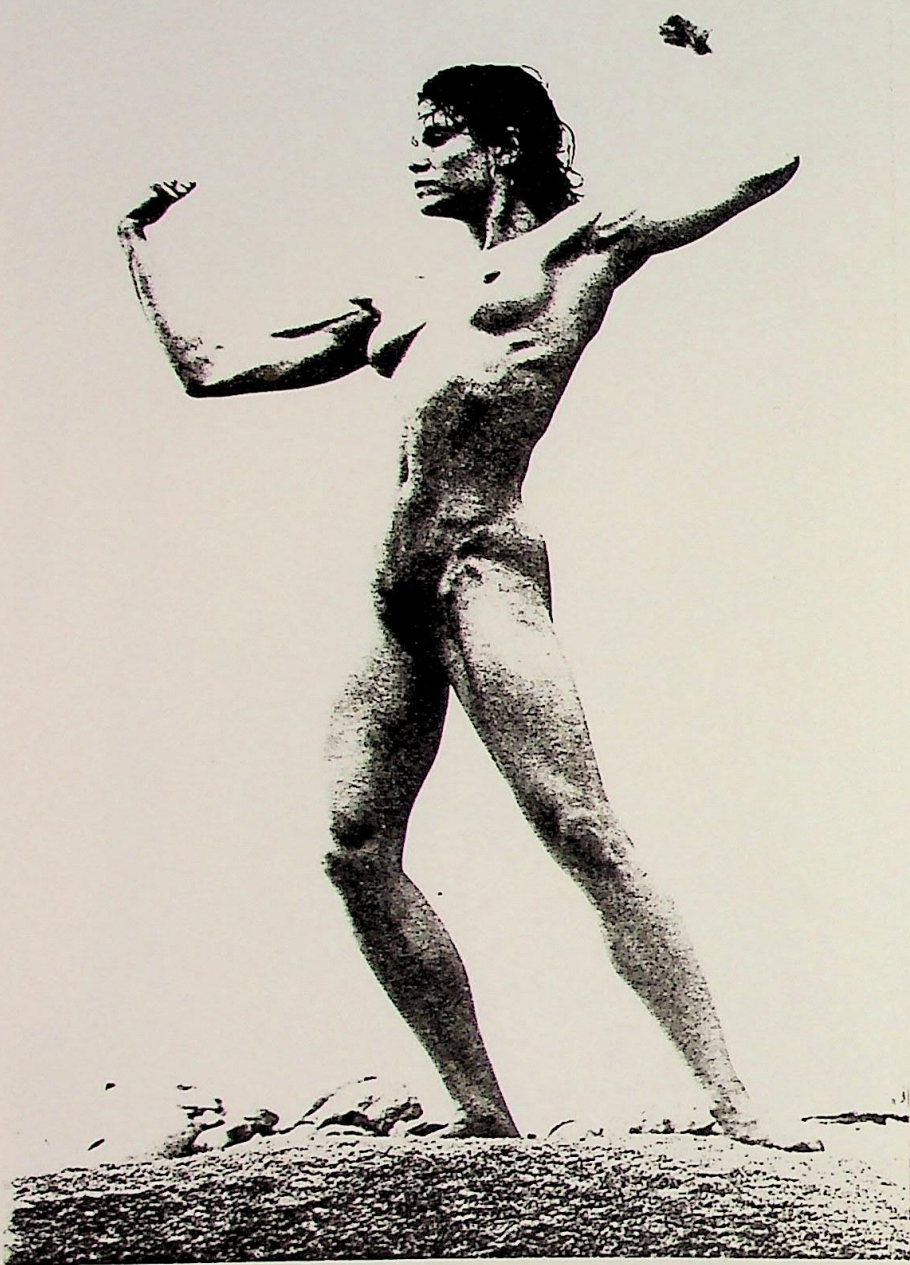
The result of this is, instead of an extension or development of the body, a new 'ideal' is created which is 'worn' like a fetish object (Fig. 6) and as such what is emphasised is lack rather than fulfillment. Mapplethorpe seems aware of this when he poses Lyons wearing the fetishistic head-gear in Fig. 6. He also poses her in stockings and lace which are the more obvious materials of the fetishistic imagination (Figs. 7 & 8).

The new gymnasium-built body is presented as a natural progression from the ideal of the independent woman but is in reality a burial of the true nature of the body in an a-sexual (fetishistic) area of depersonalisation.

"It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself to create a 'hyper-real'. (BAUDRILLARD : "THE PROCESSION OF SIMULACRA")

This quotation of Baudrillard's is especially relevant to Robert Mapplethorpe's work. Mapplethorpe's "passion for the sign" as Bruce Chatwin calls it (5, p.11), constitutes a new order of immediacy in photography. Occupying that space between what Susan Sontag (18, p.105) calls "the point of cleavage between sexual being and full being" (which is pornography), Mapplethorpe's photography and portraiture occupy an intermediate zone between the two schools of art currently treating the body. The depersonalisation of eroticism and the personalisation of portraiture constitute the matrices within which he works. As Alan Hollinghurst says (14, p.12), Mapplethorpe's work contains a "deep nexus where the tendency to see people as objects is both an aestheticizing into sculpture and an eradication of personality which is characteristic of pornography". This aspect of Mapplethorpe's work is shown in the example below (Fig. 9), the very nature of the setting causing us to take a closer look. There is something detached and unreal about this photograph which makes no comment on the events taking place in the extraordinary living room in which the men pose. Both men could be mannequins for all the life they show. Although the taboo of male





(Fig. 5)



(Fig. 6)





(Fig. 7)



(Fig. 8)





(Fig. 9)



sado-masochism is transgressed here, the very detachment of the photographer and the ludicrousness of the setting serves to rob the pose of any real danger or fear.

Sherman and Mapplethorpe are probably the two most well known of this group of new American artists working out of New York today, but I want to examine the work of another member of that group - Robert Longo in greater detail.

## CHAPTER 2

### ONE

Robert Longo's pictures and sculptures have little or nothing to do with the current notion of naturalistic representation. His pictures are more about the freezing of the moving picture down to one 'frame', rather like a pause button on a video recorder. His images exist as filters which are not easily deciphered as to their meaning, but rather actively resist analysis while remaining as lures to a form of evocative suggestion.

Representation is understood generally as the only possibility of grasping the world around us; it is not therefore relegated to a relationship to reality that is either secondary or transcendent. Representation in Longo's art exists not in the guise of realism which seeks to resemble a previous existence but as an autonomous function in itself - "representation as such" as Tatranski has it (44, p.17). What Longo's pictures show, depict and present is what is already another picture or image. And if it seems that we are twice removed from 'reality', from the source or origin, then it must be considered that everything in his work conspires against ever arriving at an origin either within, or exterior to, the work. Longo actively creates or seeks to create what Baudrillard has called the "hyper-real" (see above). Longo's activity involves the selection and presentation of images from the culture at large. But he subverts the standard function of these pictures and removes them from their normal meanings providing a possibility of new readings and new significations.

### TWO

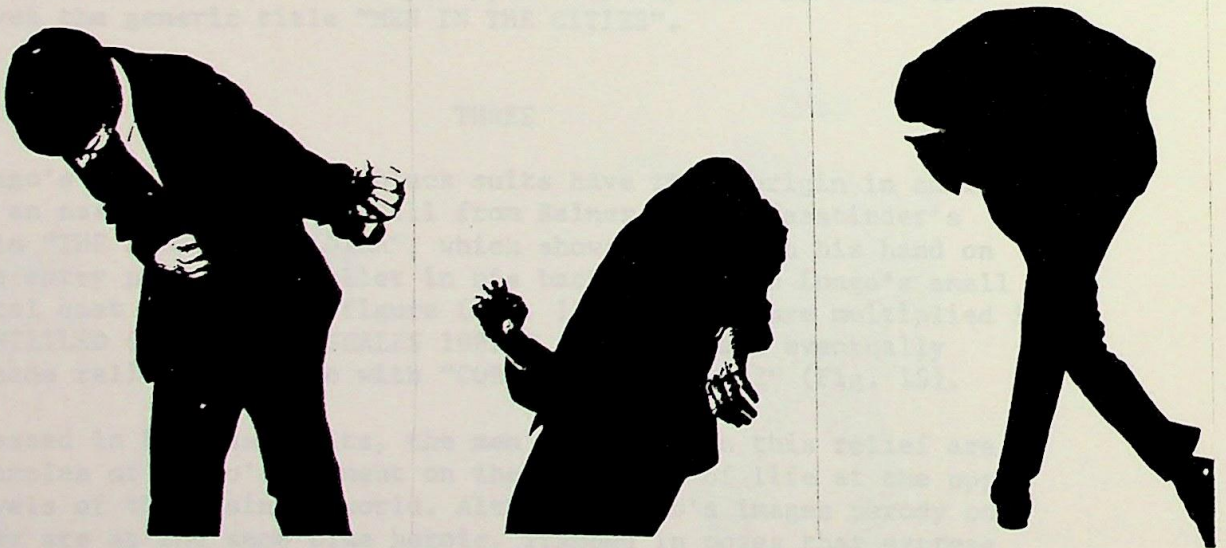
One of the first exhibitions Longo was part of was in 1980 and rejoiced in the title "ILLUSTRATION AND ALLEGORY". This seems to me to be a very fitting starting point for anyone who wants to come to any understanding of Longo's work. Longo uses available information - anonymous 'real-life' finds from movie-stills, newspapers and magazines. By re-using, often in multiple form, images meant to retain traces of a specific past, he uses these



images in an allegorical fashion and they sometimes generate meanings broader than (as well as about) themselves. Unlike illustration, which is meant to provide a relatively straightforward visual equivalent to something or other, usually a written text, allegory complicates matters to convey meaning on more than one level. By doubling, at least, the amount of information - one image standing for an imagined or real other, two images juxtaposed to elicit meaning from each other - allegory requires the viewer to take a more active role in deducing or perhaps even deciphering unstated meaning (not all of which may be intended by the artist), on the basis of the presented evidence.

Longo uses images that can be read in multiple ways and he gives his work titles that move these found images into the public realm. In Longo's three-panelled "MEN IN THE CITIES 1979 - 1980" (Fig.10), a man is seen grabbing his stomach and, sequentially, falling back and twisting around. I will explain the origin of the image further on.

The three large, separate, stark drawings have the momentum and effect of stop-action news photos - high contrast ones, as Longo's figures are completely isolated on white backgrounds - but no explicit caption to say why? Is the man in pain? Has he been shot? Tripped? Or is he merely dancing? The arms and legs angle out towards, and past the edges of the frames. It is unclear whether they are retracting from or advancing towards some unseen danger. The men wear black suits and ties, the asexual sign of masculinity.



(Fig. 10)



In the cinema, death becomes that moment frozen between the vertical and the horizontal just before the man 'bites the dust' (Figs. 11 & 12).

These two illustrations show scenes from "THE WILD BUNCH" and "GUNFIGHT AT THE O.K. CORRAL" both of which are the type generally used by Longo as source material for his paintings. In a review of the exhibition "Pictures" (44, p.17), in which Longo exhibited, Tatranski stated that Longo uses stills from such films as Arthur Penn's "Missouri Breaks". They show that moment between death and life as a man is shot. Maurice Blanchot, speaking about a corpse, said;

"...this splendid being who radiates beauty.... no longer has any relationship with this world in which he still appears, except that of an image, an obscure possibility, a shadow which is constantly present behind the living form and which now, far from separating itself from that form, completely transforms itself into a shadow".

(MAURICE BLANCHOT : "TWO VERSIONS OF THE IMAGINARY").

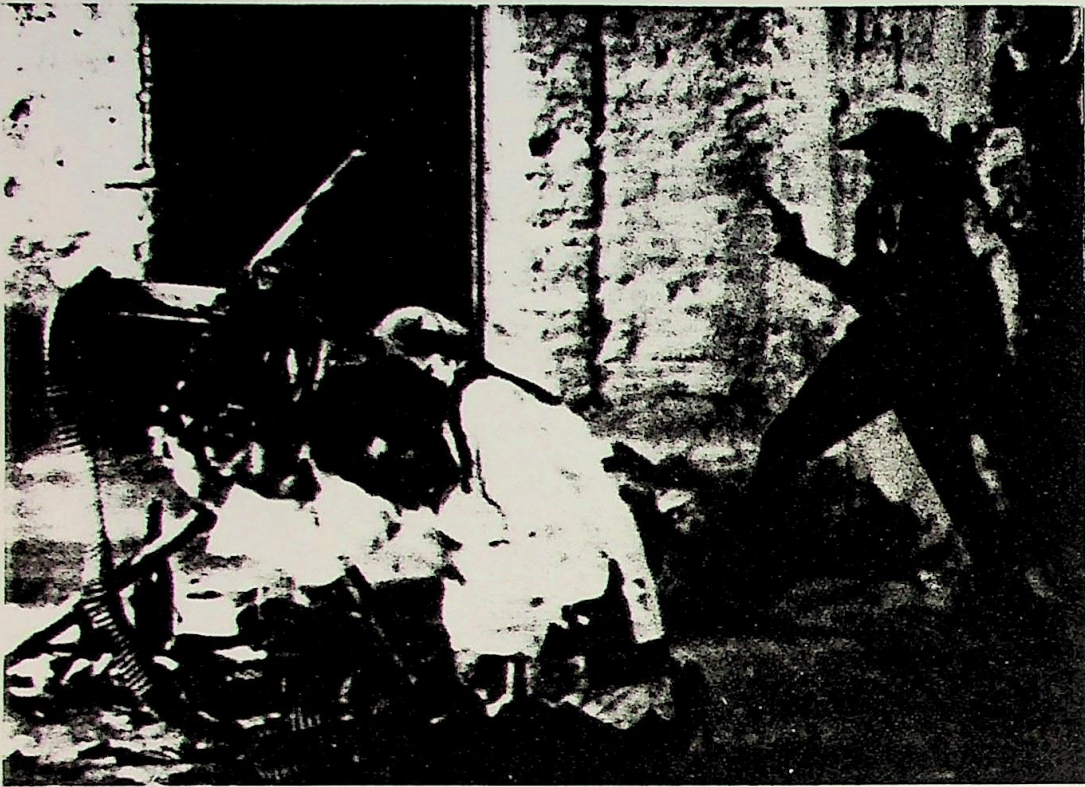
In Longo's work we see his fascination with the corpse, the shadow of death. Longo made over thirty large drawings of men and, later (significantly), women. These figures paraded past from 1978 to 1982 locked into their position of representing subtle differentiations of an urban type. They belong to the rock clubs and bars of London and Downtown Manhattan, to areas of the trendy artworld bordering on fashion and entertainment. The genealogy of their elegance includes B movies, underground fashion photography and black and white television - T.V. from the 1950's, the period revived by the narrow lapels and narrower ties of Longo's men. At first their representation seemed a way out of the herd - a photographic rescue bid to remove and elevate the individual from the crowd, but the images serve as allegorical figures of anonymity, merely ciphers and hence are given the generic title "MEN IN THE CITIES".

### THREE

Longo's contorted men in black suits have their origin in an image of an assassination - a still from Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film "THE AMERICAN SOLDIER", which shows a man with his hand on the entry point of a bullet in his back. Next came Longo's small metal cast of the same figure (Fig. 13). This figure multiplied in "UNTITLED (WHITE RIOT SERIES 1982)" (Fig. 14) and eventually became relief sculpture with "CORPORATE WARS 1982" (Fig. 15).

Dressed in business suits, the men and women in this relief are examples of Longo's comment on the brutality of life at the upper levels of the business world. Although Longo's images parody pomp they are at the same time heroic. Trapped in poses that express dualities - beauty and pain, aggression and submission, they are a commentary (according to the artist) (40, p.157), on "agonised modern man". The negative side is important to Longo as he sees it as what separates his images from the more bland attitudes of 'Pop' art.



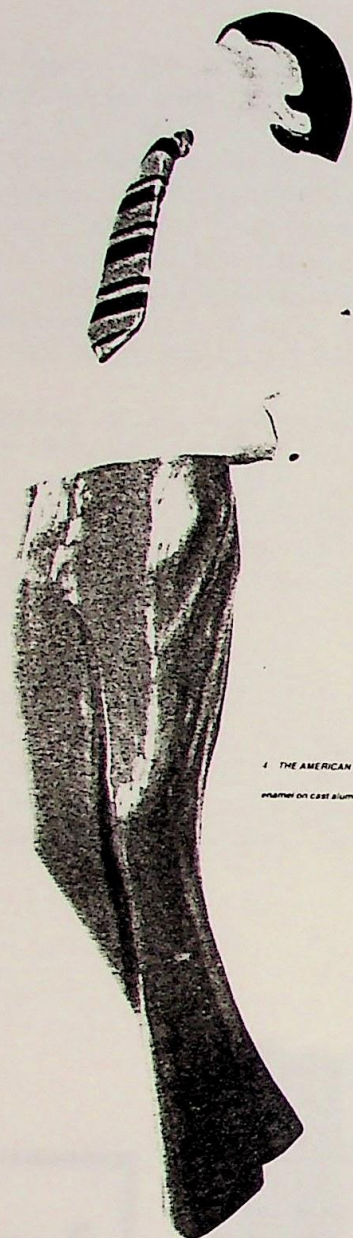


(Fig. 11)



(Fig. 12)





4. THE AMERICAN SOLDIER 1977  
PHYLIS KATTER ON CAST ALUMINUM 28 x 16 x 5 (71 x 41 x 13 cm)

(Fig. 13)



(Fig. 14)



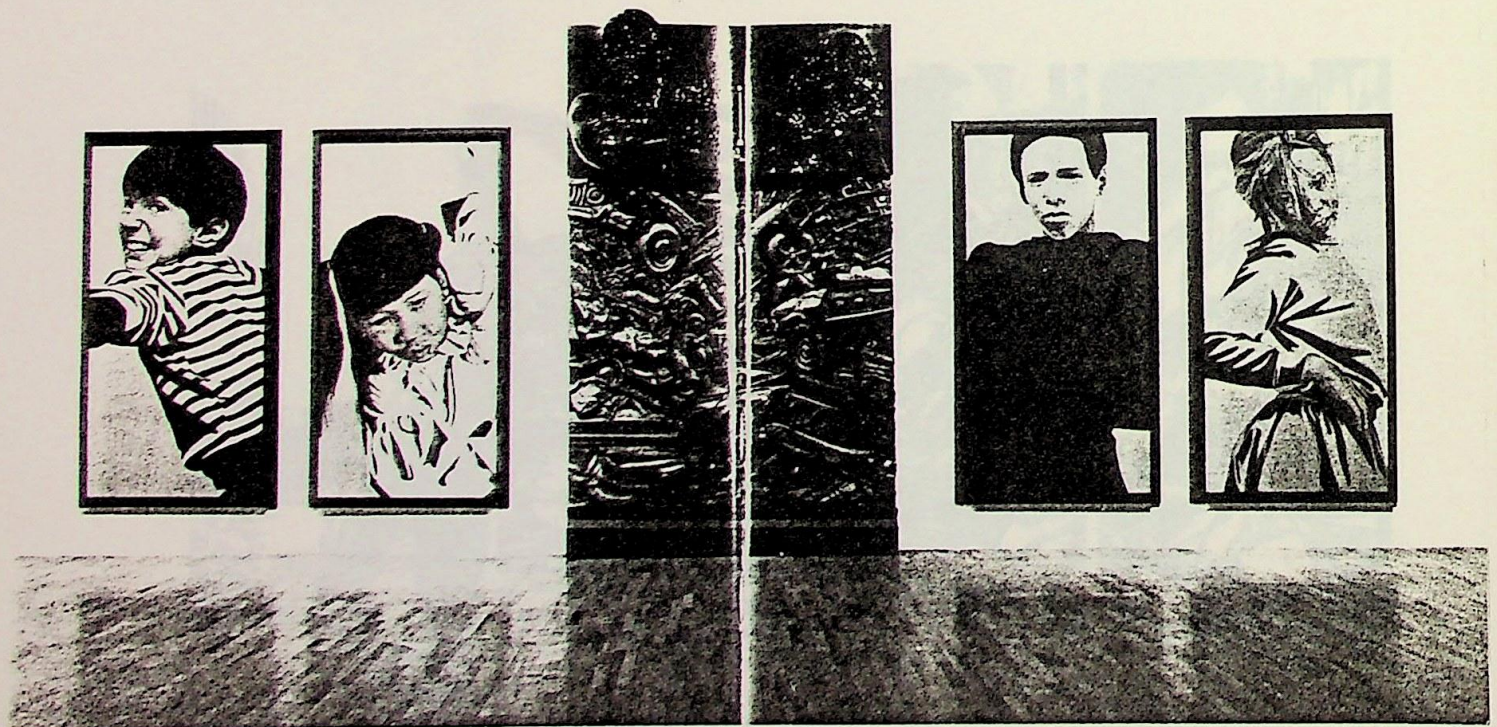
(Fig. 15)



"CORPORATE WARS 1982" (Fig. 15) physically bursts through the frame. The figures seem to be struggling to escape their confines. As if frozen, the bronze congeals the action like quick-set glue. The image is claustrophobic. The effect of the piece is almost nauseous. One feels hypnotically sucked into the work while at the same time repelled by the violence in it. There is no hope of knowing why these people are at war. Longo himself calls this picture a spectacle of "people trapped in metal and fighting forever", (17, p.17). The location is nowhere in particular and time seems to have stopped.

This suspension of the temporal seemed to effect Longo himself because his drawings of "MEN IN THE CITIES" repeated themselves more often than was necessary to make the point. Though "CORPORATE WARS" (Fig. 15) expanded the boundaries of Longo's work, the "WHITE RIOT" (Fig. 14), painted later, locked THAT sculpture back once again into the sequence of the "MEN IN THE CITIES" (Fig. 10).

He finally broke the cycle with "LOVE POLICE : ENGINES IN US (THE DOORS) 1982 - 1983" (Fig. 16), a bronze sculpture which, according to Carter Ratcliff (17, p.19) equates the consumerism of American automobile buyers and their self-definitions. Ratcliff claims that Longo equates the self-images of the man and the woman in the piece and the junked cars from which they emerge.



(Fig. 16)



This work however changes Longo's use of space. Instead of the explosion of violence in the "CORPORATE WARS" (Fig. 15) relief, the violence of "LOVE POLICE" (Fig. 16) is compressed and imploded. The implosion is of cars; it suggests life but in actuality is devoid of it. The ambiguity exists of whether the image portrayed is of a multi-car pile-up or of a junkyard. The crisis moment of multiple death becomes little more than a pile of junk. In the new work Longo is exploring a different kind of space from his earlier isolated indefinite one. Space in the more recent work is closure and compression. The interrelations between the sculptural and the two-dimensional parts of the work have become technically more complex and Longo allows the image to reflect its multiplicity of meaning.

The later work "NOW EVERYBODY 1983" (Fig. 17), is more straightforward. Earlier works never showed the city as a presence; here it makes itself known with a sniper's bullet. A four-panelled drawing shows urban ruin of the Lebanon-Northern Ireland stereotype wherein a sniper could hide. Against this background a bronze man rises up on one foot. His pose makes it clear he is dying - is in the process of death. Longo had come full circle. he started with the bronze cast of the figure from the Fassbinder film still - a figure very definitely shot (Fig.13). Then he opened up the possibilities of reading a contorted figure in "MEN IN THE CITIES" (Fig. 10), returning to virtually the same figure of the Fassbinder film still in the work "NOW EVERYBODY" (Fig. 17). The bronze victim of NOW EVERYBODY closes down Longo's work with an image of the moment that removes the difference between the human BEING and the world - the entropic instant when the body becomes an object.



(Fig. 17)



#### FOUR

Longo's work is very physical even in the nature of its production. The body movements of the models in the photographs from which he makes his drawings are choreographed by tennis balls thrown by Longo. These poses are central to the images. Fascinated by television presentation of the assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan, Longo likes to think of the best of his figures as "dancing the way people die in the movies" (23, p.93). His characters, especially in the "MEN IN THE CITIES" SERIES (FIG. 10), are svelte, tall and sophisticated - their battle with everyday life is civilised and visually pleasing - erotically so. This male image - tall, lean and modish could in psycho-analytic terms be read as a projection of Longo's ideal self-image. The women in the later drawings are executed as the men are and fit in naturally as fashion plates (Figs. 18, 19 & 20). They seem to be simply the token other half of the men.

It has been suggested by Kim Gordon (30, p.25), that the reason Longo's male characters seem so self-conscious is because they are the closest yet (in mainstream art) to a depiction of the politics (with a small 'p') of men having sex. The same person also suggests that the drawing of two men together for the Glenn Branca album cover "THE ASCENSION" (Fig. 21) are depicted in such a way as to suggest violence and rape.



(Fig. 21)

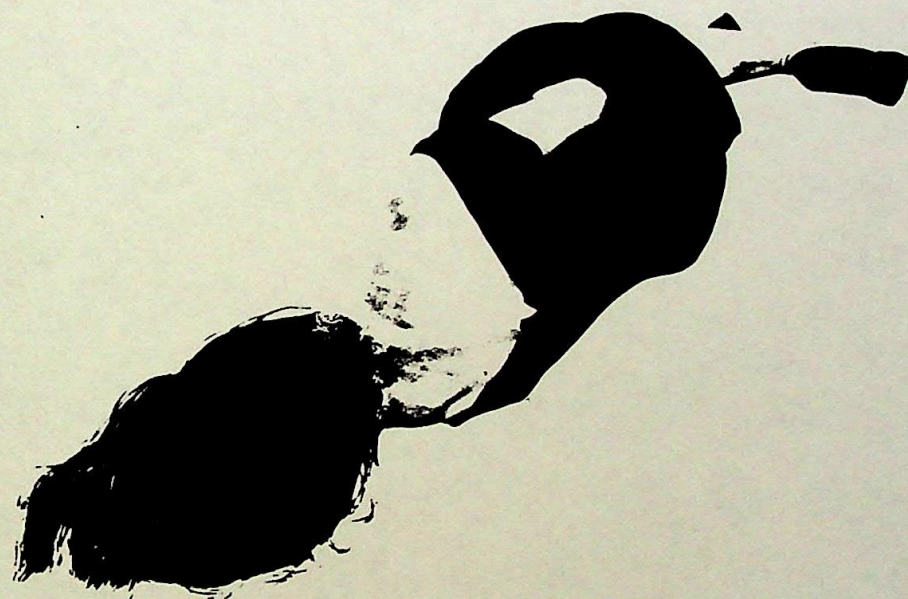




(Fig. 18)



(Fig. 19)

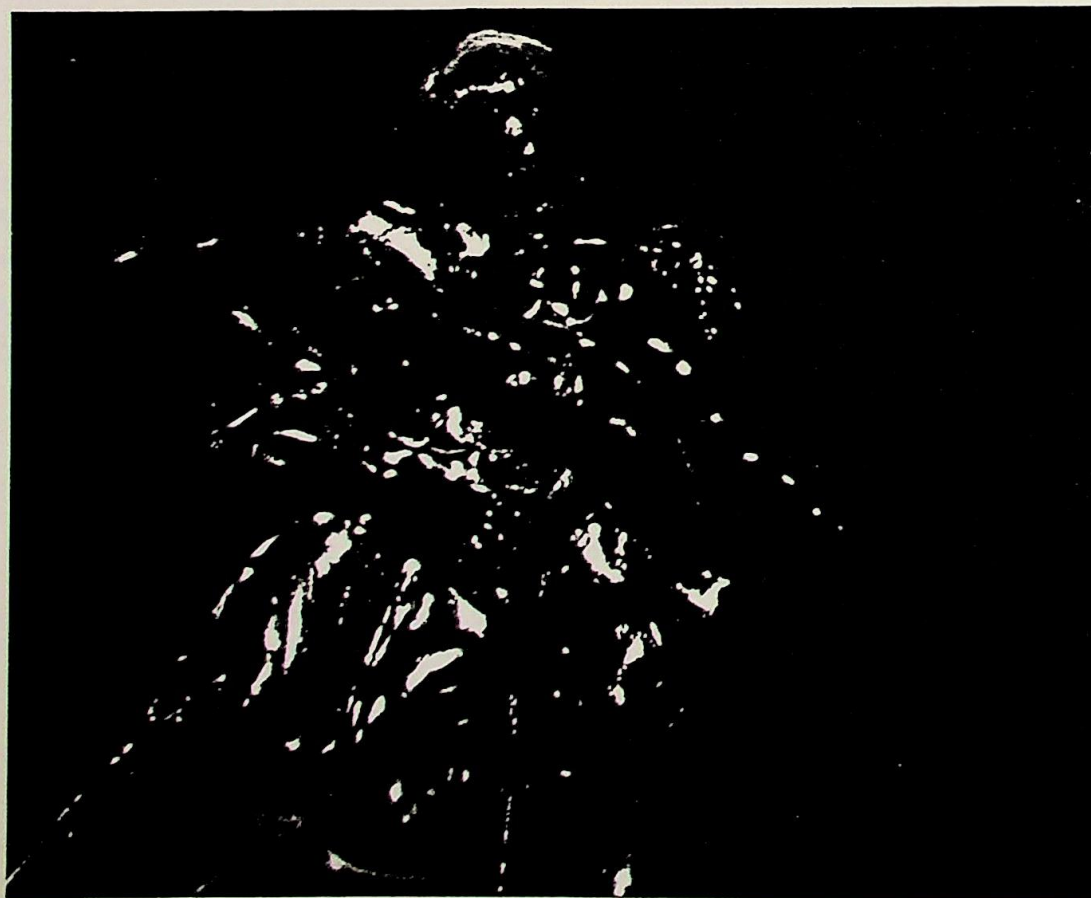


(Fig. 20)



However I find this reading of the image too much to swallow but would be more likely to believe an interpretation of it as depicting sex rather than rape. After all, in film as in art, male physical contact is really only accepted if it is violent (witness the depiction of latent homosexuality as displayed in the nude fight scene between Oliver Reed and Alan Bates in Ken Russell's film of D.H.Laurence's "SONS AND LOVERS"). Longo only suggests a relationship between sex, violence and death by the languid eroticism of his drawings of fighting and assassination. However this is not to say that random images plucked from the culture at large and presented in such a way as Longo does, cannot be representative of rape to a certain amount of people. After all such allegorical images are meant to allow the viewer to make his or her own interpretations of what is presented to them. This is very relevant to when I come to discuss advertising in Part 2 of this paper.

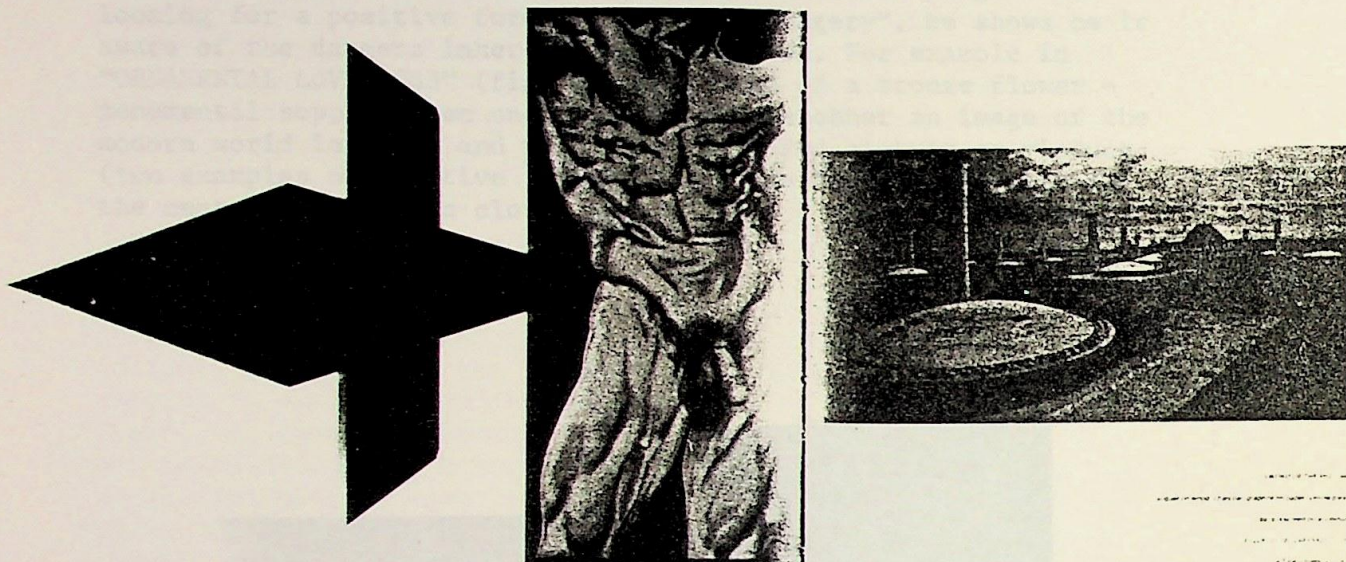
It is here (Longo's images) that the dualities of battle and embrace and the inevitable power struggle between two people are expressed on a primal physical level. This activity is peculiar to men of all ranks (to the general exclusion of women). In Longo's "THE WRESTLERS 1979" (Fig. 22), the two figures are nude and the black lacquer gloss is particularly effective in highlighting their bodies, emphasising the drama and sweat at the same time. In these figures, truncated at the buttocks, no differentiation is made between the embrace of sex and that of violence, and a much better case exists for an interpretation of rape which was given earlier for Figure 21.



(Fig. 22)



Longo can be scathing in his depiction of people who have removed themselves artificially from their 'natural' environment. In "SWORD OF THE PIG 1983" (Fig. 23), a drawing at the centre of the piece shows a spectacle from the fringes of modern culture - a weight lifter.

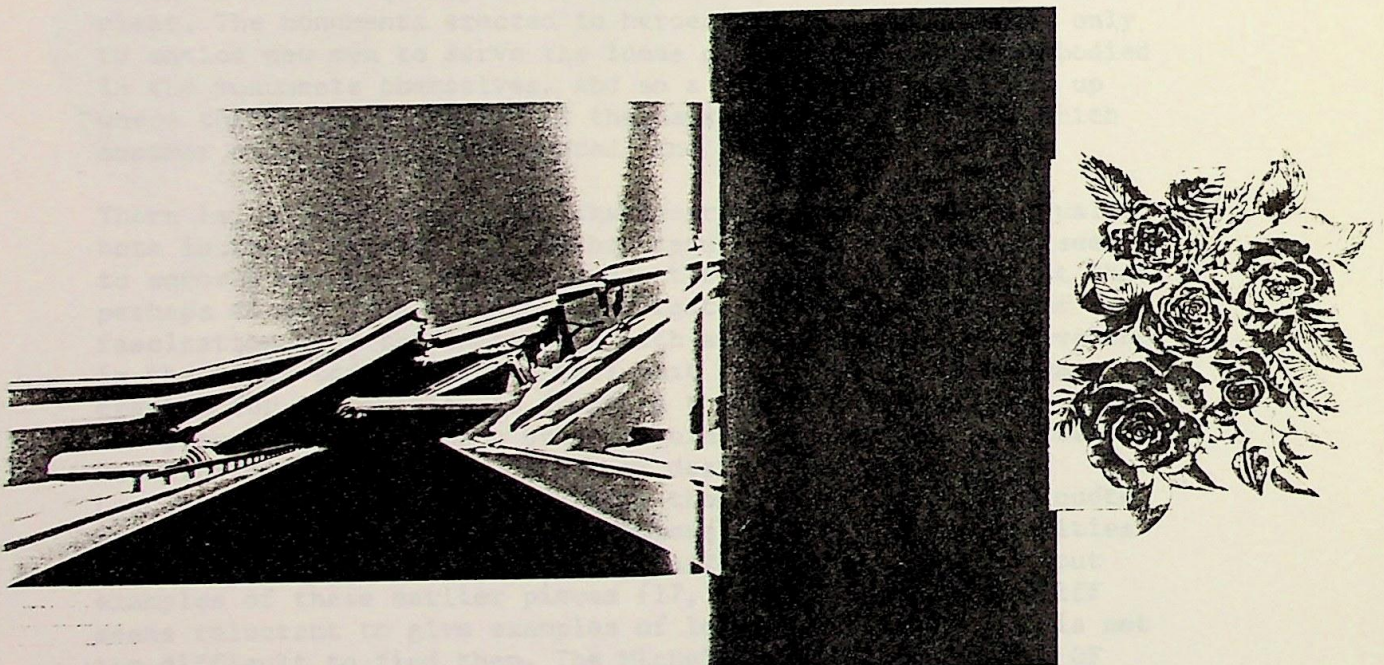


(Fig. 23)

This figure, constructed from photos of several weight lifters slightly over the hill, presents a vision of incipient disintegration. On the left of the figure a sword resembles a church spire under tremendous pressure. The steeple-sword is stylised almost beyond recognition, the weight lifter looks rooted to the floor under the massive force of his own body and the photograph to the right shows abandoned missile silos. "Pig" is American feminist lingo for a man with a destructively aggressive sense of his maleness. These images are disparate in themselves but put together they are a comment by Longo on the equation of masculinity and militarism. Longo has depicted his "sword" as empty and impotent. "SWORD OF THE PIG" displays the individual as a grotesque object, a laborously devised artifact of dubious power. Maleness and its emblems (steeple and missile, church and state) are equally ludicrous.



It is difficult for any artist however, who is concerned with the reproduction and interpretation of modern violent mass-media images to avoid the "aestheticisation" (to coin a word) of such violence. This is a dangerous area and Longo walks a tightrope; "I think the best dance is the way people die in the movies", the quote of his to Barry Blinderman (23, p.93) is indicative of his occasional lapse into shock rhetoric for effect. However it's a dangerous path he treads and when he says; "I want the viewer to look at something that is both beautiful and horrifying. I am looking for a positive force in negative imagery", he shows he is aware of the dangers inherent in such a task. For example in "ORNAMENTAL LOVE 1983" (fig. 24), an image of a bronze flower - monumental soppieness on one hand and on the other an image of the modern world in decay and ruins - a destroyed highway or viaduct (two examples of negative imagery), seem to force the couple in the central panel even closer.



(Fig. 24)

The modern failure of trivialised love and the emotional desert of the modern world are still unable to defeat the couple. This is an attempt by Longo, I suppose, to depict an optimistic view from negative imagery but the whole seems so contrived and sentimental as to negate his intentions.



## FIVE

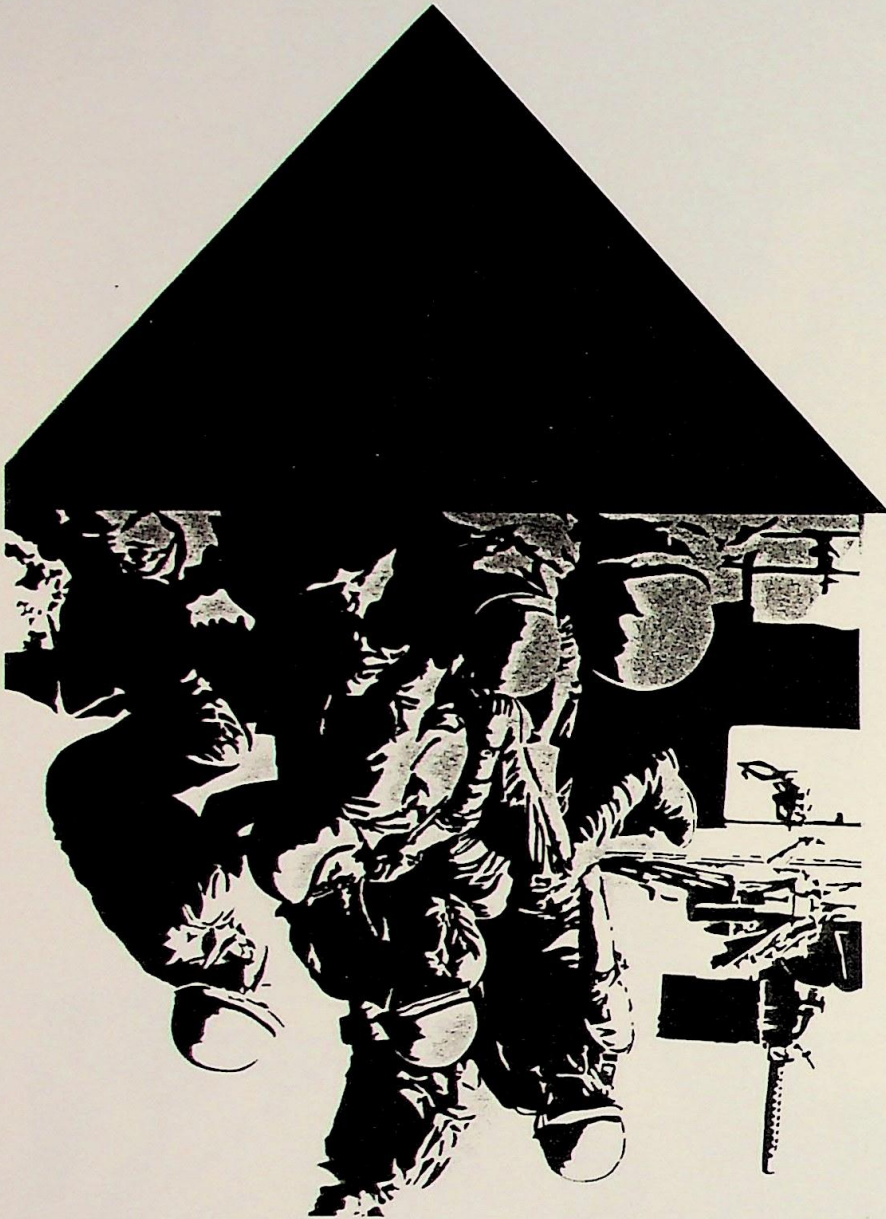
Longo attempts to make monumental portraits of slow death in the urban fast lane. And although we are repelled by images of our own death (because the images Longo uses are universal), we are drawn by the eroticism inherent in the images and the fact that these monuments make us immortal - a strange paradox to say the least. To create art in our time - post Auschwitz and pre-Apocalypse - is a difficult problem and perhaps Longo's approach of allegorical monumentalism, a contradiction in itself I would say (because monumentalism would seem to be basic concepts writ large, totally unconcerned with extended metaphors), is the one way to confront the issue of depersonalisation.

The cause and effect of the monument and the death it depicts is shown to good effect in "DEAD REASONS 1983-84" (Fig. 25) where a pyramid of steel is set against a roughly pyramidal image of helmeted men carrying a wounded or dead companion. The inverted image of the men is literally thrown into shadow by the monument to their deaths. Both the steel (rusted) and the stylised drawing underneath seem equally dead. The meaning of this drawing seems clear. The monuments erected to heroes who have died, serve only to entice new men to serve the ideas of Flag and Country embodied in the monuments themselves. And so a vicious circle is set up where the monument erected is the cause of more death for which another monument must be erected. And so on.

There is, about all of the works described an obsessional quality both in Longo himself and in the viewer - an activity that seeks to uncover meanings that are thought to reside in images but that perhaps do not. The need to investigate what lies behind our fascination with the images of death and destruction so prevalent in the media today seems to fuel what Longo does and this same craving for explanation is there in the viewer also. However in the process of the search other meanings are unearthed. Carter Ratcliff claims that the "dance of death" interpretation of Longo's art is 'too limited' (even though that is a direct quote from the artist himself), and mentions various "implausibilities in Longo's quotations from earlier art", unfortunately without examples of these earlier pieces (17, p.16). Although Ratcliff seems reluctant to give examples of Longo's influences, it is not too difficult to find them. The Michelangelo relief "BATTLE OF THE CENTAURS" (Fig. 26) bears an obvious likeness to Longo's "CORPORATE WARS" (Fig. 15). Rodin's "TYMPANUM OF THE GATES OF HELL" (Fig. 27) also resembles CORPORATE WARS while his (Rodin's) "FALLING MAN" (Fig. 28) is very reminiscent of Longo's figures in the "MEN IN THE CITIES" series. Ratcliff goes on to say that Longo's work cannot be reduced to any meaning "reducible to catchphrases", yet he asserts;

"Images circle and re-circle into view transmuted sometimes and sometimes not...with the flow of the artist's development as convoluted as the cultural terrain through which he moves, the audience clutches at certainties, even if they are only by-products of the artist's methods" (17, p.17).



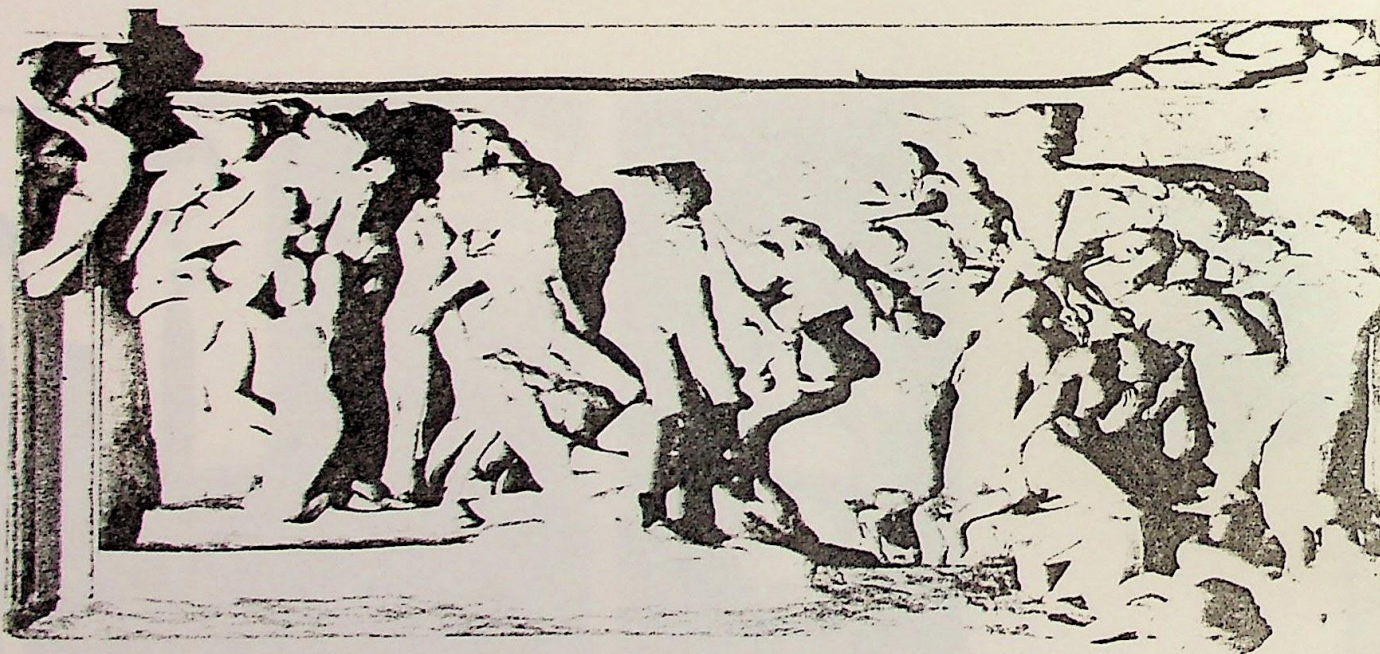


(Fig. 25)





(Fig. 26)



(Fig. 27)

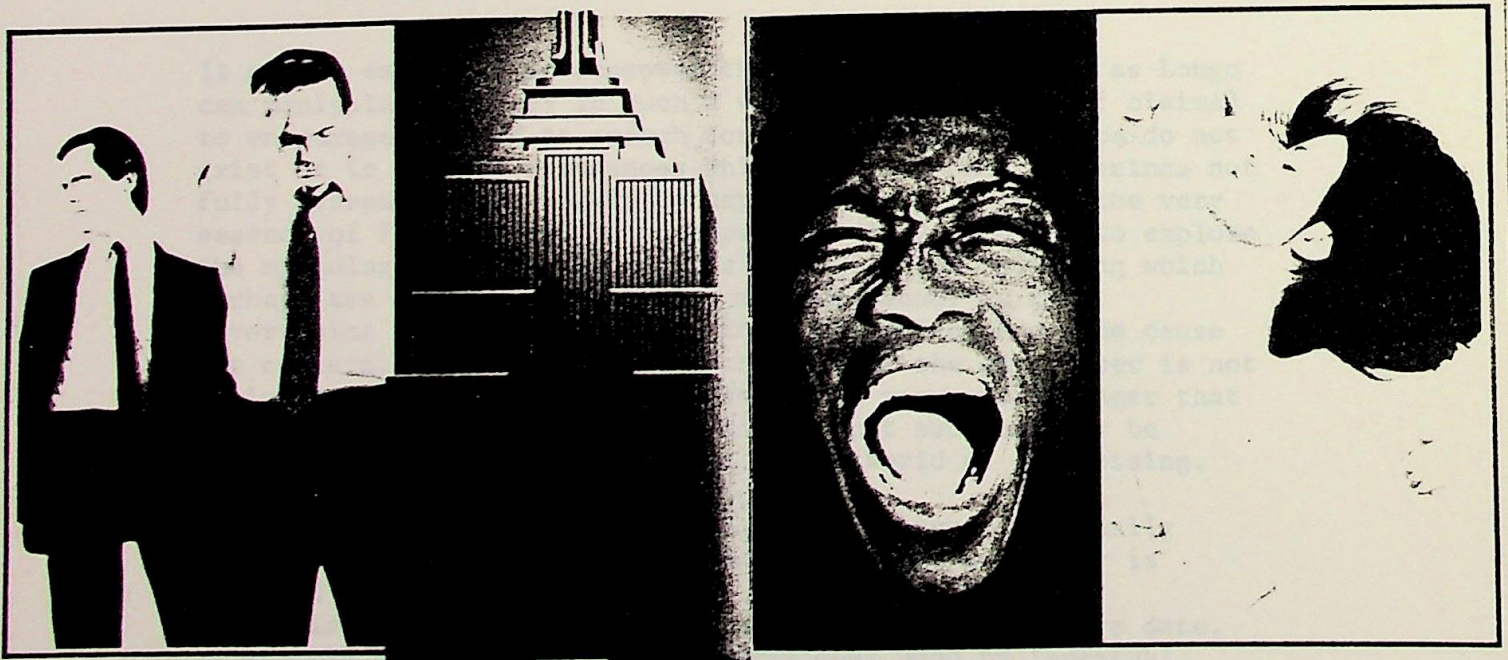


(Fig. 28)



This statement almost DEMANDS that the audience "clutches at certainties" because he seems unable to provide viable explanations which contradict the more widely expressed readings of Longo's work which he seems to find so facile. There seems to be a danger that by delving too deeply into Longo's work in search of 'meaning' the more obvious meanings can be overlooked. This is a fault of Ratcliff's I feel. Joan Simons (42, p.117) is also critical of Ratcliff's overenthusiasm. Ratcliff has written ("VISIONARY IMAGES : EMBLEMATIC FIGURATION"); "what is looked for is usually seen", and Joan Simons says; "he sometimes succeeds in bringing more meaning to the work than it actually offers up to the viewer. His observations often seem truer to the culture as a whole, and to his way of seeing it, than to the specific works being discussed". I have to agree that Ratcliff seems to be searching almost desperately for meanings only he alone can find without allowing the meanings generally agreed on, any credence. This however may be attributable to the privileged position he has as Longo's friend and the writer of the introduction to Longo's book of paintings.

Unlike the use of 'found images' in other modern art (Rauschenberg for instance), the presentation of images in Longo's work is less involved, in my view, with transformation, but more concerned with TIME. They involve the fixed moment, the time of memory, and they evoke those emotions which are fundamentally temporal such as longing, nostalgia, anxiety and dread. In "MASTER JAZZ 1982 - 1983" (Fig. 29), the four panels depict all these emotions and more.



(Fig. 29)



There is the vaguely erotic desire for the woman depicted on the right. However on closer inspection she could be dead and a vague uneasiness surfaces. The nostalgic image of Cassius Clay (as he used to be) is also disrupted by vague feelings of fear because far from the usual pictures of him then, confident, boasting and shouting, Clay's eyes are closed tight and he seems to be screaming rather than boasting. The monumental building is also fearsome in its solidity and depiction of windowless bureaucracy, while the two figures on the left seem to be under some severe strain and look anxious and uneasy. What seems at first glance to show images from the near past evoking nostalgic feelings, on closer inspection reveal more uneasy emotions of fear, unease and dread.

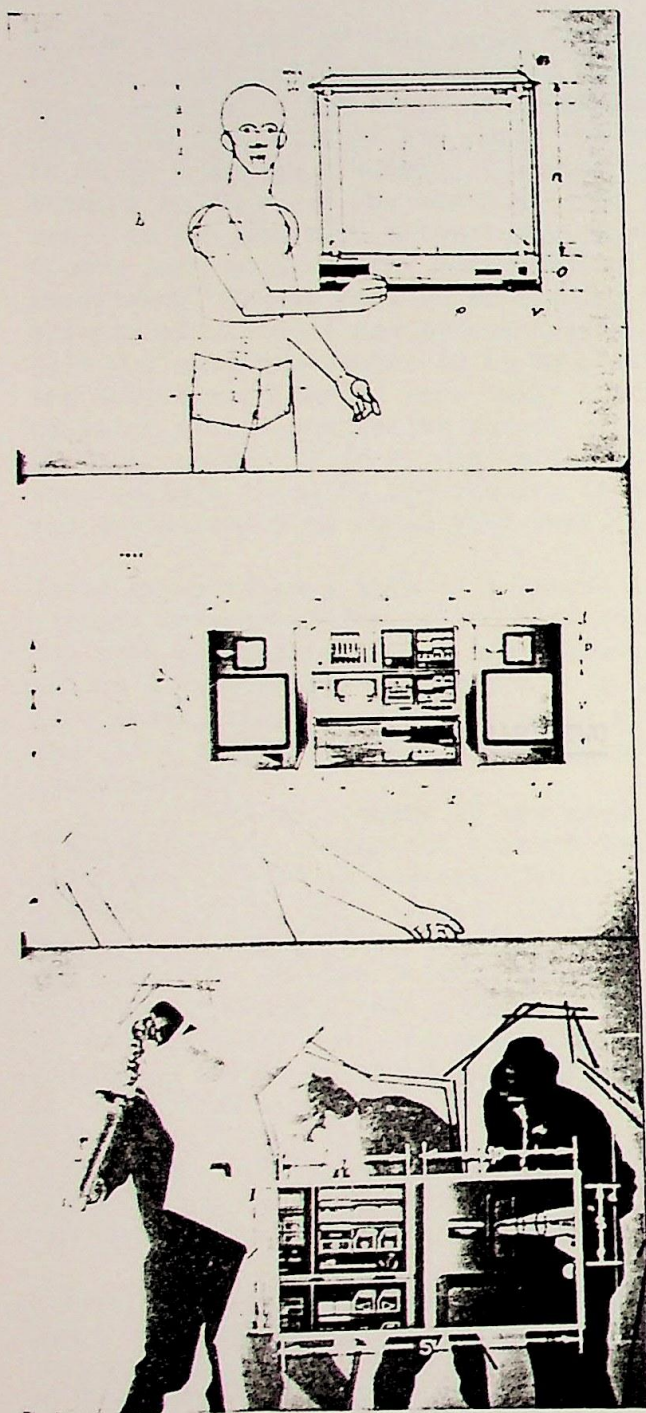
Of course one persistent criticism of Longo is that his is an art of sheer style, concerned only with "look" - a criticism that suggests that we can somehow be free of our own culture, for ours is a culture of style, seduction and thrill. Now to be seduced is to be at once lured and excluded by a false image of perfection. Longo has created, as I said before, a "hyper-real" (according to Baudrillard) by substituting signs of the real for the real itself. Now this hyper-real world cannot be truly represented because as Baudrillard says in "SIMULACRA AND SIMULATION", representation depends on a principle of equivalence between signs and the real. Longo's images have already replaced the real and signify something else. They do not exist on their own but in relation to each other.

## SIX

It can be expected and accepted that a fine artist such as Longo can manipulate imagery in such a way as (Carter Ratcliff claims) to encourage viewers to search for meanings which perhaps do not exist or to set off resonances which may lead one to meanings not fully grasped or previously unsuspected. This to me is the very essence of Fine Art per se - to provoke discussion and to explore the mythologies and accepted ways of seeing and believing which perhaps are taken for granted or misunderstood. In the advertising world however, such image manipulation can be cause for concern, because ultimately the goal of the advertiser is not enlightenment, but profit, and there is a very great danger that what is usually explored in Fine Art cannot successfully be transferred to the generally more facile world of advertising.

I believe that the aesthetic of works like Longo's gradually filters down to the world of advertising. What generally is explored in avant garde video and cinema turns up in a bastardised form in Television Commercials at some future date. An example of this would be the techniques used by 'scratch' video makers such as Laurie Anderson which were soon assimilated by advertisers and used to great effect in the "Hello Tosh, got a Toshiba" advertisement for Toshiba (Fig. 30).





(Fig. 30).

Certainly the attempt at image manipulation which Longo uses so convincingly is beginning to be used in advertising but far more crudely and I wish to discuss this in Part 2 of this paper.



## CHAPTER I

### ONE

In the first part of this paper I examined how Robert Longo used the juxtapositioning of images to create an allegorical work which dealt with the issue of death and dying in the modern world. In this part of the paper (as it is of particular interest to me as a design student), I intend to examine advertising as an attempt to show how the aesthetics of image manipulation have begun to be used more extensively. I also wish to discuss the theory that because this manipulation of images has been undertaken without full understanding or due respect, a crude example of violence and dehumanization has been effected by the Silk Cut advertisements. It is my contention that whether or not the advertising agency were fully aware at the start of the campaign of the suggestive nature of their images and the result of their seemingly clever constructions of colour and image, they were doomed to allow the results to stand, however insulting to and exploitative of women they were.

There seems to be a lack of interest in reading advertisements perhaps because of the belief that commercials are not worthy of the kind of critical fine art automatically attracts. This allows a more sinister approach to image manipulation by advertisers that would not be tolerated in a medium which can quite easily affect all the people. Roland Barthes has said that:

### PART TWO

"This is a mode of representation and meaning construct ideology within themselves through the intervention of codes which are located in society. The ad will use images, notions, concepts, myths, etc. already available in the culture, as an does not simply reflect ideology; it creates it, it invents it. It uses images which are significant in ideological systems and through that already exist and make their own significance of another structure. Its conventional process on our knowledge of the forms of ideology that advertisement employ". (p. 79) (by Barthes).

This excerpt from Barthes is crucial to what I wish to examine further on, particularly the idea that my readings are created and also the fact that the conventional process depends on the knowledge of the ideology employed.

I agree totally with Barthes' argument and wish to use the above quote as a reference for my examinations of certain ads in the future. Barthes also says that these new meanings are "anchored" by the part of the advertisement "limiting some interpretation rather than others and resolving ambiguity or contradictions in the image". This is extremely important because in the Silk Cut ads which I intend to examine further on, this "anchor" is crucial.

It is fair to say that if an image has straightforward text to under its message, there can be very little ambiguity involved.



## CHAPTER 1

### ONE

In the first part of this paper I examined how Robert Longo used the juxtapositioning of images to create an allegorical work which dealt with the issue of death and dying in the modern media. In this part of the paper (as it is of particular interest to me as a design student), I intend to examine advertising in an attempt to show how the aesthetics of image manipulation have begun to be used more extensively. I also wish to pursue the theory that because this manipulation of images has been undertaken without full understanding or due respect, a cruder example of violence and dehumanisation has been effected by the Silk Cut advertisements. It is my contention that whether or not the advertising agency were fully aware at the start of the campaign of the suggestive nature of their images and the result of their seemingly jokey conjunctions of colour and image, they soon decided to allow the results to stand, however insulting to and exploitative of women they were.

There seems to be a lack of interest in reading commercials perhaps because of the belief that commercials are not worthy of the kind of criticism Fine Art automatically attracts. This allows a more sinister approach to image manipulation by advertisers than would otherwise be tolerated in a medium which can quite easily affect millions of people. Roland Barthes has said that;

"ads as a means of representation and meaning construct ideology within themselves through the intervention of codes which are located in society. The ad will use images, notions, concepts, myths, etc. already available in the culture. An ad does not simply reflect ideology; it reworks it, **THUS PRODUCING NEW MEANINGS**. It uses objects which are signifieds of ideological systems and thought that already exist and makes them signifiers of another structure. Its connotational process depends on our knowledge of the forms of ideology that advertisements employ". (1, p.79) (My Emphasis).

This excerpt from Barthes is crucial to what I wish to examine further on, particularly the idea that new meanings are created and also the fact that the connotational process depends on the knowledge of the ideology employed.

I agree totally with Barthes' argument and wish to use the above quote as a reference for my examinations of certain ads in the future. Barthes also says that these new meanings are "anchored" by the text of the advertisement "inviting some interpretation rather than others and resolving ambiguity or contradictions in the image". This is extremely important because in the Silk Cut ads which I intend to examine further on, this "anchor" is unused.

It is fair to say that if an image has straightforward text to anchor its meaning, there can be very little ambiguity involved.



However there has been a revolution in the world of advertising which has effectively dispensed with the need for text in favour of image alone and I believe a great deal of perhaps undesirable meaning is beginning to surface.

In the next section of this paper I intend to explore how and why advertisers, particularly of cigarettes, began using the idea of image manipulation without text to sell their product. To further examine this I intend to look at the ideology behind advertising and the premises on which it is based.

## CHAPTER 2

### ONE

Since the identifying of cigarettes as a direct cause of cancer and heart disease, the advertising of cigarettes has had to drastically re-orientate. Cigarettes could now only be promoted in absentia as any presence would suggest taste and strength and consequently sickness and death. The elements whereby the brand of cigarette advertised could be linked to some undefined sexual prowess (Fig. 31) (as the desire for, and taking of a cigarette, was once equated to the desire for, and satisfaction after, sexual intercourse) (Fig. 32) was now undermined. Fig. 31 uses the line "nobody does it better" to hint at sexual prowess while the words "the pleasure is back" coupled with the hand on the shoulder in Fig. 32 again suggests sexuality rather than just the smoking of a cigarette. The law controlling cigarette advertising expressly forbids the equating of smoking with any pleasurable activity or the suggestion that smoking subtly alters your station in life making you more desirable, powerful, successful, etc. Consequently, a new approach was necessary where the mere presence of the cigarette packet was enough to conjure a set of metaphors and connotations with ideal and sublime qualities. The policy seemed to be to provide the viewer with pure visual images alone with no explanations and rely on a subliminal code to supply the viewer of these metaphors with the desired message. It is this subliminal code (which is accepted by advertisers) which enables them to manipulate seemingly random, enigmatic, or innocent images to produce a desired effect. This code or unconscious reference manual is the result of years of image bombardment through advertising on television, hoardings, magazines, etc. which has built a virtual library of images with which to relate to the advertisements presented. A set of inter-connecting reference lines must be present in everybody which can be triggered by judicious use of imagery. Gillian Dyer has said; "The formation and understanding of messages (encoding and decoding) is made possible by codes - a set of rules or interpretative devices KNOWN TO BOTH TRANSMITTER AND RECEIVER, which assigns a certain meaning or content to a certain sign".(8, p.131) (My Emphasis). This quote will become more relevant further on in the chapter. Dyer also says that there are "informational, simple, compound,



15 mg. "tar", 1.1 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

# Winston

## America's Best.

The Men. The Cigarette.  
Nobody does it better.

Winston  
KING  
FULL RICH  
TOBACCO TASTE

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined  
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health

(Fig. 31)

1 mg. "tar", 0.1 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

BARCLAY

*The pleasure is back.*

99% tar free. **BARCLAY**

1 MG. TAR

Also available in 100's and Box

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined  
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health

(Fig. 32)



complex and sophisticated ads". She states;  
"sophisticated advertisements usually explore hidden or subconscious feelings; subtle associations are made between product and situation, and dream-like fantasies are acted out. The visual imagery may be blurred to suggest a dream or trancelike state and the colours and lighting are those usually associated with dreams or fantasies. Sexuality may be exaggerated and sexual symbolism exploited. Self-indulgence and violence lurk beneath the surface. Women become the imagined fetishes of men - passive, narcissistic, exhibitionist - inviting male voyeurism. Elements of Freudian symbolism are often present in sophisticated ads - animal furs, feathers, leather, mirrors etc." In an ad discussed further on, for Renault cars, all these elements are present.

## TWO

The first people to exploit this were Saatchi and Saatchi, the advertising agency for Benson and Hedges cigarettes. They had to present their product as desirable and satisfying and yet were legally unable to say in what that desire consisted or what its fulfillment was. The qualities the advertisers were trying to promote, i.e. strength and taste, were the very qualities it was forbidden to mention. Consequently the package itself had to refer to its desirability and, hence, the colour gold. Gold is the metaphor for the fire of passion and the very essence of money. Benson and Hedges were not the first to use the idea - in the 1940's "Lucky Strike" was as much a symbol of consumerism as Coke. Lucky Strike meant discovering gold - but only MEANT: Benson and Hedges WAS gold.

It is necessary to go into this in some detail in order to show the reasons and the background to the manner in which Silk Cut cigarettes are advertised by Saatchi and Saatchi and how their approach and Robert Longo's to image manipulation are virtually the same.

The sequence of advertisements for Benson and Hedges which were the forerunners of the Silk Cut campaign seems more like a series of ads advertising advertisements so to speak. The pack is displayed in various enigmatic situations where the viewer was expected to draw the correct conclusions. They are essentially images of absence - the cigarettes have all but disappeared (Figs. 33 - 36).





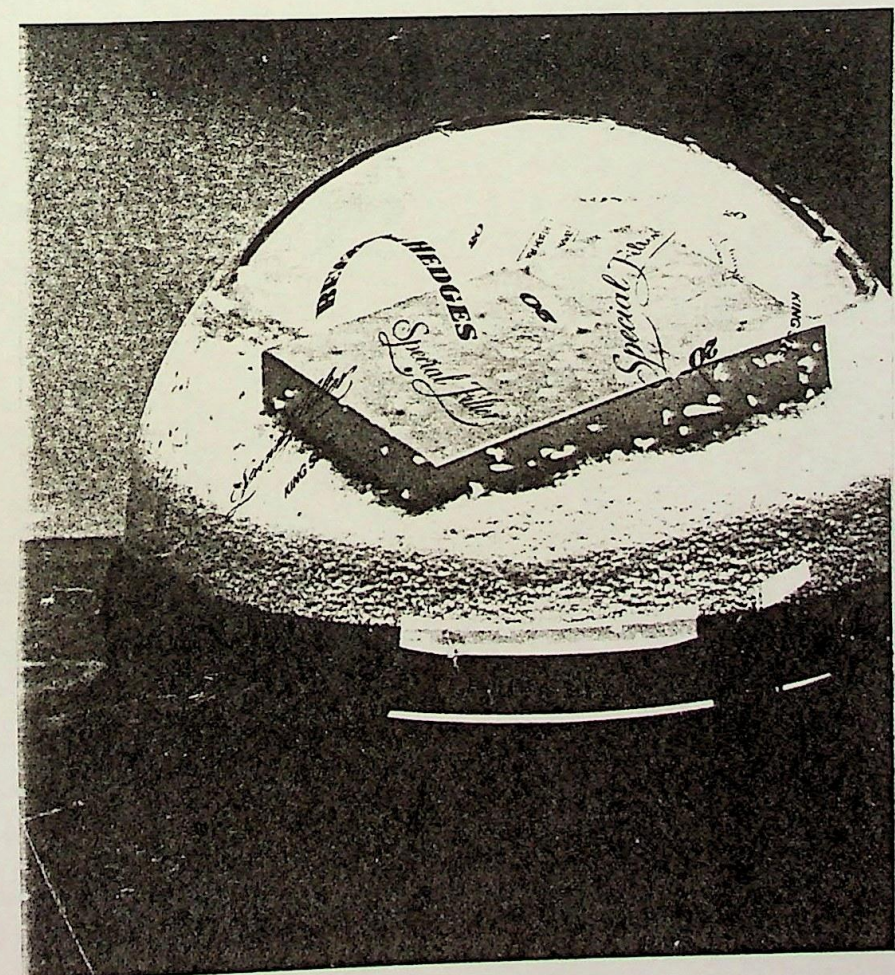
(Fig. 33)



(Fig. 35)



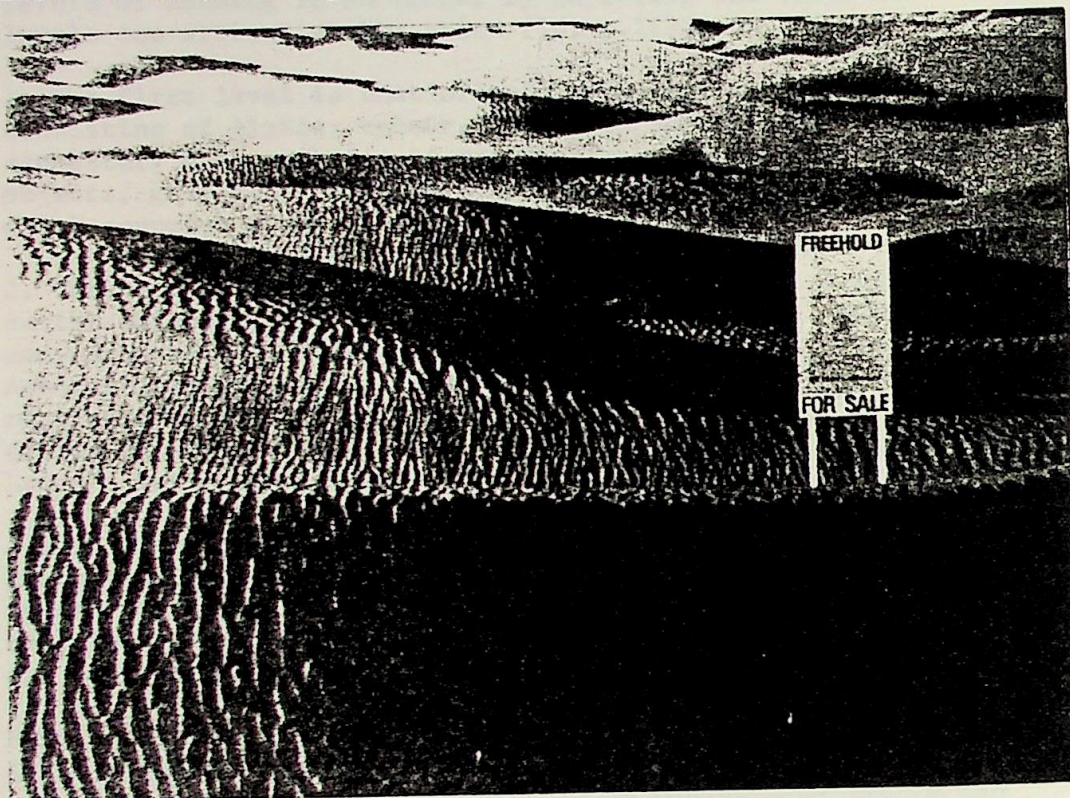
(Fig. 34)



(Fig. 36)



In one advertisement (Fig. 37), the pack is displayed as a hoarding in the desert announcing "freehold for sale". The viewer makes whatever connections he or she likes from the images of sand, desert, gold etc. but the obvious one is to connect the freehold in the dessert to the most desirable land in the Middle East to oil (black 'gold').



(Fig. 37)

All these images of unstated connections (Figs. 33 - 37) are deliberate paradoxes, and are created knowingly to appeal to the deep structural basis that springs from the nature of desire itself. In thus resorting to a basic phenomenological structure of what Conrad Fiedler (25, p.4) called "pure visibility - a silent possessive contemplation of enigmatical metaphors" - Benson and Hedges have not only succeeded in promoting their product in what was probably the last effective way for a cigarette manufacturer but have also opened a Pandora's Box, the effect of which is incalculable. In the next section I wish to examine the idea of codes and the way they effect our understanding of imagery presented to us.



### THREE

The art critic E. Panofsky studied the iconography of paintings and proposed a simple model for the analysis of the subject matter of visual communication. He suggested that there are three levels of meaning in an image. By unpeeling the first and second levels one arrives at the third (16, p.12).

1. The first level is that of primary or natural subject matter consisting of lights, colour, shape and movement and the elementary understanding of representation, whether of people, objects, gestures, poses or expressions and the interrelations which comprise events.
2. The second level is that of secondary or conventional subject matter which relates to the wider culture. At this level motifs and combinations of motifs are linked to themes and concepts. According to Panofski, certain motifs (which carry secondary meanings) may be called images, and combinations of images may be called stories or allegories. This is particularly relevant to Longo's work which is allegorical in the extreme.
3. The third level is intrinsic meaning or content, which is discovered by "ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitudes of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophic persuasion - unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work".

Panofski's iconographic analysis is useful even though he applied it to painting because it describes how a 'level three' meaning can carry far more significance than an analysis on levels one and two might suggest. It is this third level of understanding and meaning which will be relevant when I come to discuss the Silk Cut ads.

### FOUR

We can only successfully understand the meaning of certain advertisements by finding out HOW they mean, and analysing the way they work. It is part of the mythology of advertising that one believes an advertisement to be merely a vehicle for a definite meaning or message. However, the content of the advertisement and the form it takes are not its only factors - there can be unseen 'content' hidden in the form itself. In the Benson and Hedges ad "freehold for sale" discussed above (Fig. 37), the product and the environment are reduced to one colour - gold (a typical manipulation of reality to reduce the world to the two-dimensionality of advertising). This is the essence of all advertising; components of real life - our life, are used to speak a new language - the advertisement's. Its language, its terms (i.e. gold) ARE the myth. The very means of expression reinforces the myth.



The problem arises then when the advertiser who suggests the connections and creates the myth is striving for one meaning or image and the viewer has a completely different set of decoding references brought to bear on the problem.

To start with the viewer's eye is unlike a camera - it does not passively 'accept' an image. Sensory stimuli are explored, selected and organised in what we look at. Even the simplest of images are interpreted and reproduced differently in different cultures. Seeing has more to do with learning and knowledge than with the unambiguous transfer of images to the brain. When we are confronted with an image we 'read' it rather than just absorb it and it is therefore accurate to talk of visual 'literacy'.

Content analysis, a procedure which relies on the identification and counting of significant categories of content can tell us a great deal about ads that we would not normally discover by cursory readings. This basically assumes that there is a relation between the frequency with which a certain item appears in an ad and the interest and intentions of a producer on the one hand, and on the other, the responses of the audience. What the ad is all about and what the producer means by the image is hidden in it and can be revealed by identifying and counting significant features. But sometimes the quantification and counting of isolated elements in a piece of content cannot tell us everything about how meaning is produced in the text (suppose there is no text as in the Benson and Hedges, or more significantly, the Silk Cut ads) nor how the audience understands what is, after all, a complex piece of image manipulation.

### CHAPTER 3

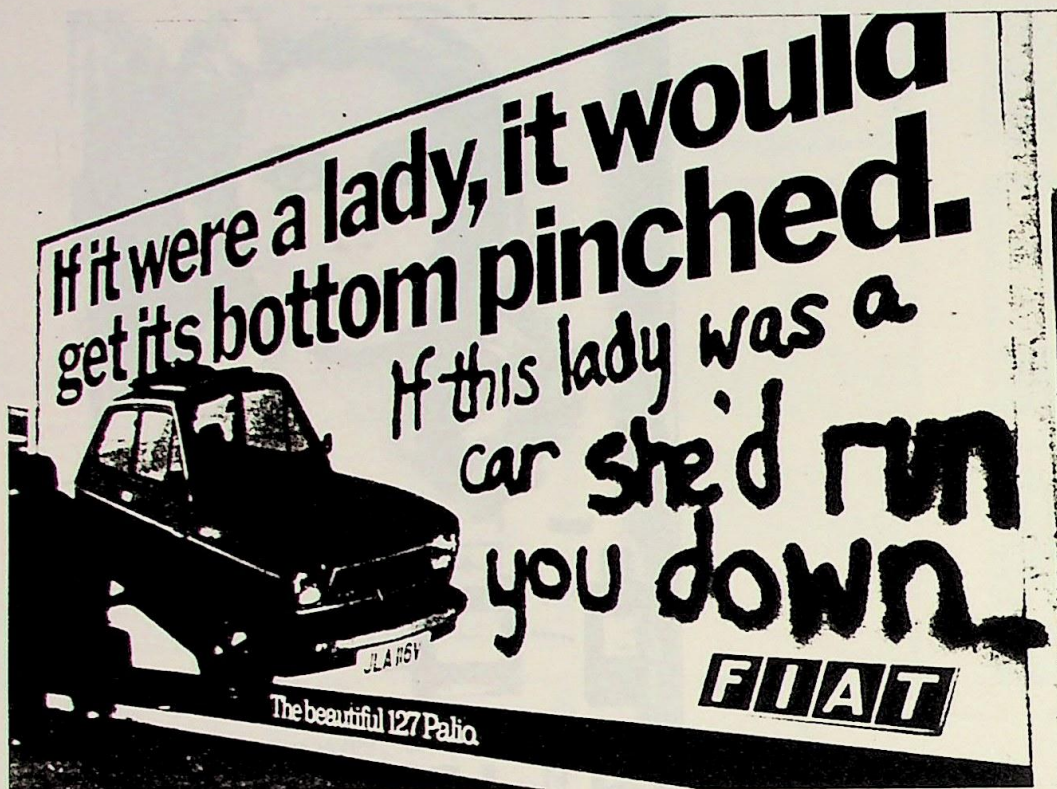
#### ONE

"A sign is something which stands to somebody for something else, in some respect or capacity".  
(C.S. PIERCE from "COLLECTED PAPERS", quoted by Umberto Eco in "SOCIAL LIFE AS A SIGN SYSTEM").

A sign replaces something for somebody - it can only MEAN if it has somebody to mean TO. Therefore all signs depend for their signifying process on the existence of specific concrete receivers, people FOR whom and in whose systems of belief they have a meaning. Since the meaning depends on the receiver, it must depend on the receiver's co-operation. It is he or she who completes the circuit, so to speak, through which, once started, a current of meaning flows.

Janice Winship says "we all, so to speak, bring our social positions with us to the reading of any discourse" (21, p.156). She cites the example of a poster for a car which proclaimed; "if it were a lady, it would get its bottom pinched", and which was defaced with this reply; "if this lady were a car, she'd run you down", (Fig. 38).





(Fig. 38).

This challenge is effective because it uses the same means of representation as the advertisement. But much more significant, I feel, is the way it highlighted the fact that the ad was clearly made by men and addressed to men and that the social reader objecting was a woman. This I think is crucial because it shows that it matters to whom an ad is IMPLICITLY addressed, which may or may not include you.

In the advertisement for CHANEL 5 shown ( Fig. 39), no connection is stated between Catherine Deneuve and the perfume yet a connection IS made. The transaction takes place and we are the ones that enable it to happen - we have a code which enables us to link the image of the bottle of perfume (expensive perfume) and the face of a (presumably) sophisticated FRENCH actress. We give Catherine Deneuve's face its meaning, for use in the advertisement, because it already means something to us outside the ad. That meaning was not created by the advert but we don't realise we have it UNTIL it is used in the advert.





(Fig. 39).

If we look at a more sophisticated advertisement for Renault Cars (Fig. 40), we can see a correspondence set up between the car and the woman's body. The woman is made synonymous with the car through the shiny dress she is wearing and through its colours, and in addition through the highly sophisticated cinematic techniques of dissolves and the montage of images. The silk-clad slinky model lies in a sensuous horizontal position in the first frame of the commercial. Her image dissolves slowly into the image of a car in the next few frames, the curves of her body forming, becoming, the outline of the car.

Subsequent frames show the fragmented parts of a woman; her hands, head, torso, etc. are juxtaposed with, dissolved into, or made to stand instead of the car's instruments, headlights and reclining seats. Elongated fingers and manicured painted nails sensuously touch and caress the control panel and the car's phallic-looking locking system. Woman as a sign, shaped and moulded like a car, her personality stripped, her very essence removed - totally dehumanised and brutalised.

This kind of ad expresses women's sexuality controlled by the gaze of the absent man and is represented by the imagined fetishes which men are supposed to respond to. Women are







expressed in men's terms. As adverts become more obvious in their intent so our relationship to the commodity advertised shifts. The cultural manipulation of women as consumers seems almost to be the reason for the ads themselves not the selling of the product. Baudrillard said in "FOR A CRITIQUE OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE SIGN"; "it is not the passion for substances that speaks in fetishism, it is the passion for the code". He may well have been speaking of advertising today which has so foregrounded the code (manipulation and violence against women) that one might well believe that that alone is its main function.

## TWO

This critique is, of course, applicable to all car advertisements not only Renault. What is different about that and its imitations is a new relationship which is established to the objects of desire i.e. women and cars. By, as I say, foregrounding the code, something of the fear which underlies these culturally formed desires is revealed very slightly. Both the transformation from living body to technological artifact and back again suggest a deathlike continuum. The prospects of conversion of life into dead artifact as the body approaches the ideal, and of the intricacy and subtlety of technological invention gaining a life of its own, represent the dread of commodity fetishism.

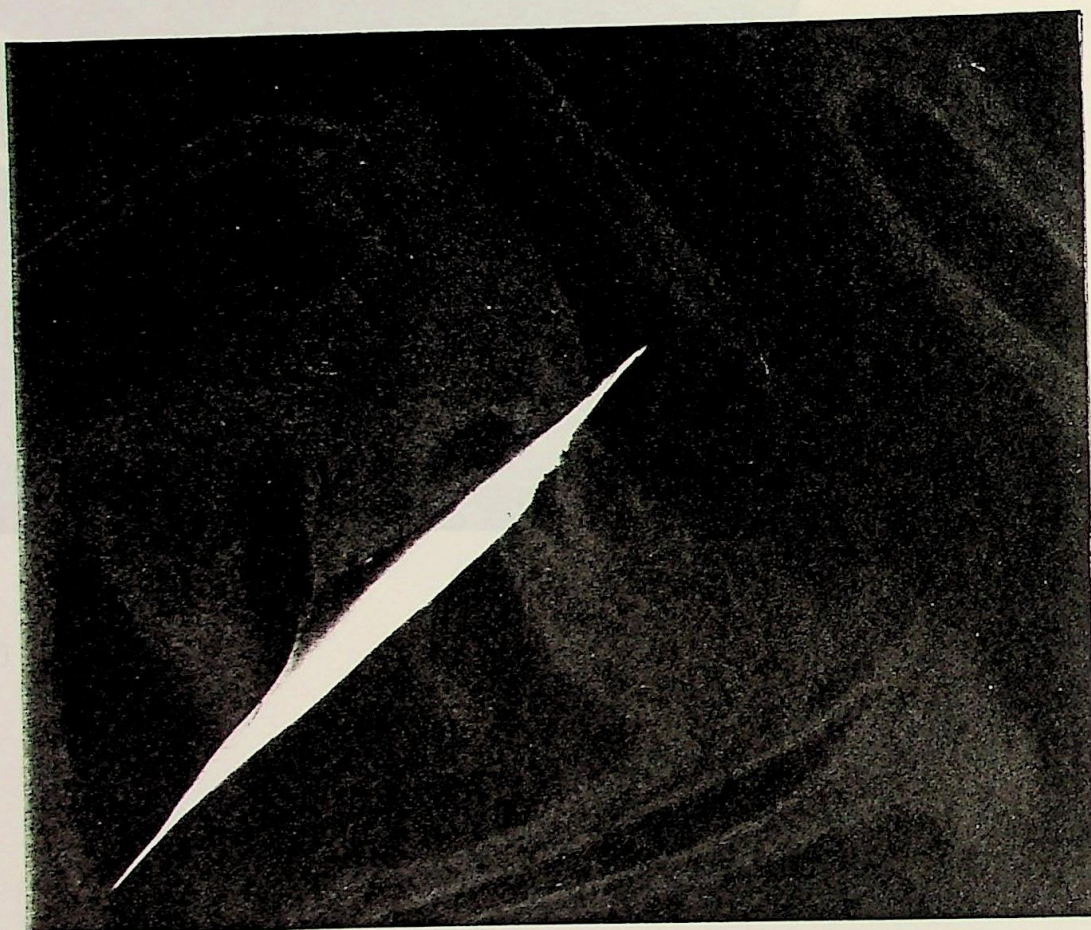
What seems to be happening in advertising is a re-focusing of consumer attention; it is no longer sufficient for advertisements to operate as forms of imaginary access to the products advertised. The product-image is undergoing a transformation from the role of 'transparent' invitation, to a kind of self-sufficiency which, through an emphasis on its opacity and self-regard through gimmickry and technological overkill, now seems to exclude the viewer and evokes a response more of awe than of desire.

Georges Bataille defines the erotic as "assent to life up until death". A dominant trend in new advertising seems to be transgressing that last taboo, the new adverts emphasise an artificial and exclusive aspect of the body. The new overtiness of sexual stereotyping renders 'radical' criticism peculiarly impotent. The sexism is too blatant to be worth pointing out. The person is represented as enslaved by their desires and caught up in a destructive cycle of fashion.

Now consider the advertisement for Silk Cut cigarettes below (Fig. 41). The advert presents a puzzle - what does it mean? Jokes and puzzles in advertising, according to Judith Williamson, (20, p.12), are cases of advertising where certain gaps and oblique references to what is missing put us in a position of access to an absent meaning that may be reached through the ad. "For while there is clearly a mask, there is nothing behind it; it is a surface which conceals nothing but itself, and yet in so far as it suggests there is something behind it, prevents us from considering it as a surface" (22, p.27).



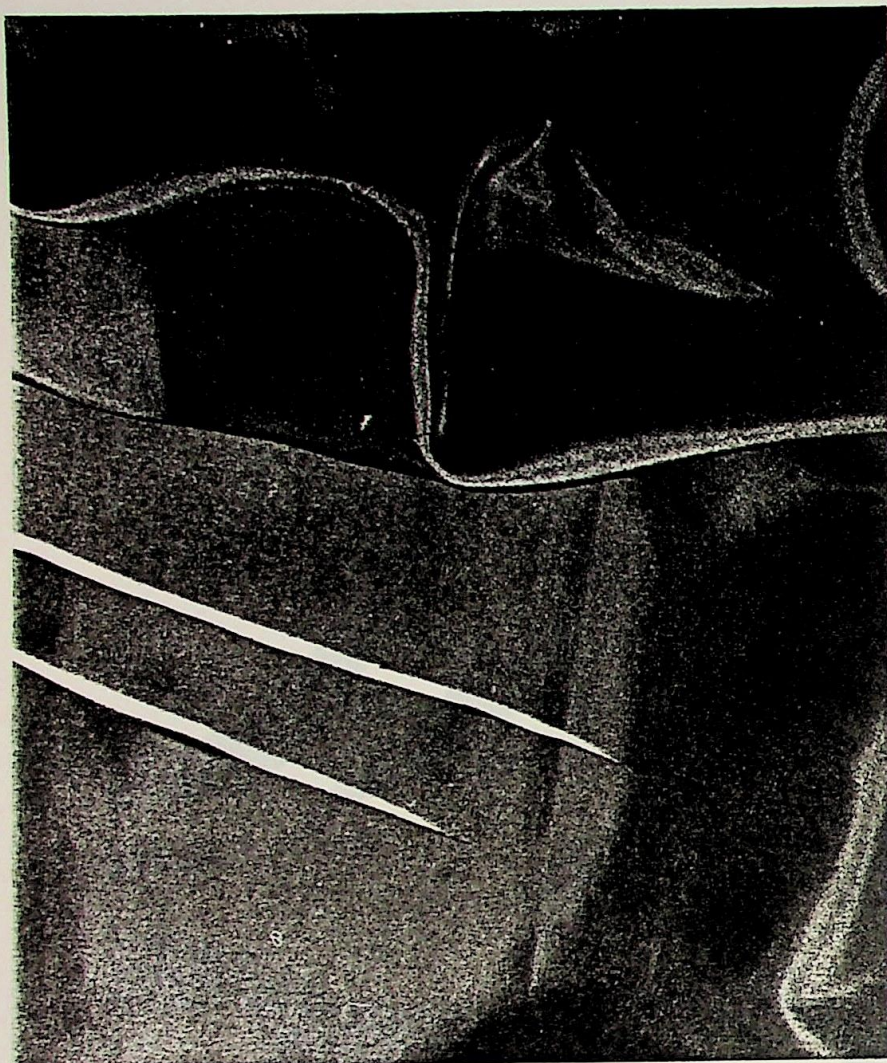
This quotation of Baudry's about art which seems to be more significant or meaningful than it actually is, can also illustrate the idea of how we overlook meaning in an advert which serves us a puzzle to be solved. These ads present their surface to us, which is a puzzle, and when (or by the time) we solve that, we have forgotten or overlooked their latent meaning. The surface of these ads is the mask beyond which we DO see but only as far as the puzzle. The puzzle then prevents us from considering the further meaning inherent in the imagery. An almost perfect reversal of the above quote. The Silk Cut ads are perfect examples of this. The first advert was a cut in purple silk (Fig. 41); then two cuts appeared (Fig. 42).



(Fig. 41).

The next stage in the campaign was different and this is where the doubts began. (Fig. 43) shows a slit scalped in creamy voluptuous silk. The colour revealed is purple. This advert, like the first two, poses a question, with only the government health warning to provide a clue. We feel pleased when we work out the puzzle - cut silk equals Silk Cut. However we are prevented by our conscious activity from the unconscious reading of the meaning which I think is inherent in the form of the image.





(Fig. 42)





(Fig. 43).

When speaking to various women friends of mine about the Silk Cut ads they all expressed unease about them without being able to say exactly what it was they thought was wrong. I then came across a letter in an extremely radical women's magazine which also called the ads into question but this time on the grounds of violence against women. Again nothing specific was stated, just vague feelings of unease with the form the ads took. This prompted me to look closer at the ads and examine them from a different point of view - other than the one of feeling 'clever' at having deciphered what is after all a fairly mundane visual pun. In the ADVERTISING REVIEW OF 1985 the caption under one Silk Cut advert (Fig. 44) reads;

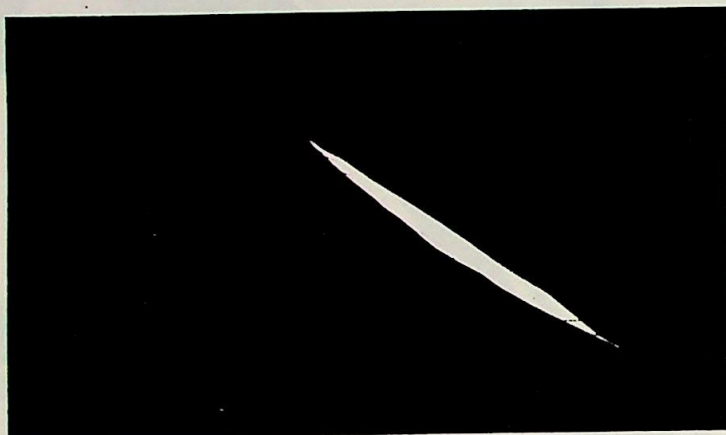
"The Silk is cut. A simple yet stylish way of complying with the restrictive rules on tobacco advertising without showing a pack at all. Not just a visual pun, the picture lends a touch of elegance to a mild brand of cigarette".



370

Silk Cut cigarettes  
United Kingdom  
Agency: Saatchi & Saatchi Compton,  
London

The silk is cut. A simple yet stylish way of complying with the restrictive rules on tobacco advertising without showing a pack at all. Not just a visual pun, the picture lends a touch of elegance to a mild and bland cigarette.



(Fig. 44).

But is that all that's there? If it IS violence against women, then how is it so? Well the colour white stands for virginity, purity, and the colour purple for sex; a few loose threads hint at the cold violence of the deliberate careful cutting and tearing apart - penetration, rape, mutilation. The slit is in the classic shape of female genitalia - half open, inviting, vulnerable? This of course seems extreme - far fetched and ridiculous, but why were the colours reversed - from white slit to purple, from purple silk to white?

Suddenly the adverts received a lot of violent criticism from women's groups throughout England, and one magazine - 'Square Peg' ran an article called "SLIT SILK IS SICK PORN" which had this to say;

"If you're a man and can't give up smoking but want to cut down the risk of cancer, you smoke Silk Cut - and hope your friends don't call you sissy", which at least agrees with the image of Silk Cut as being a mild and bland cigarette given by ADVERTISING REVIEW 1985 (see above)! They go on;

"Not only smooth and cool as silk on the skin but also tough as rape. Clearly to Saatchi and Saatchi, this is the logical progression from after dinner coffee" (43, p.6).

This needless to say had no effect in improving the campaign. In fact the advertisers seemed to capitalise on it and a further series of images appeared more easily equated with violence than the first. (Fig. 45) shows the silk with many razor-like cuts. Why have more than one cut if the advert is for Silk Cut (in the singular)?





(Fig. 45)



The next advert (Fig. 46) showed the slit now widened to resemble nothing more than parted thighs with the added bonus of tousled silk bed sheets. This advert has also been interpreted as being very phallic in shape to give an even more obvious trend of violent male sexuality to the campaign.

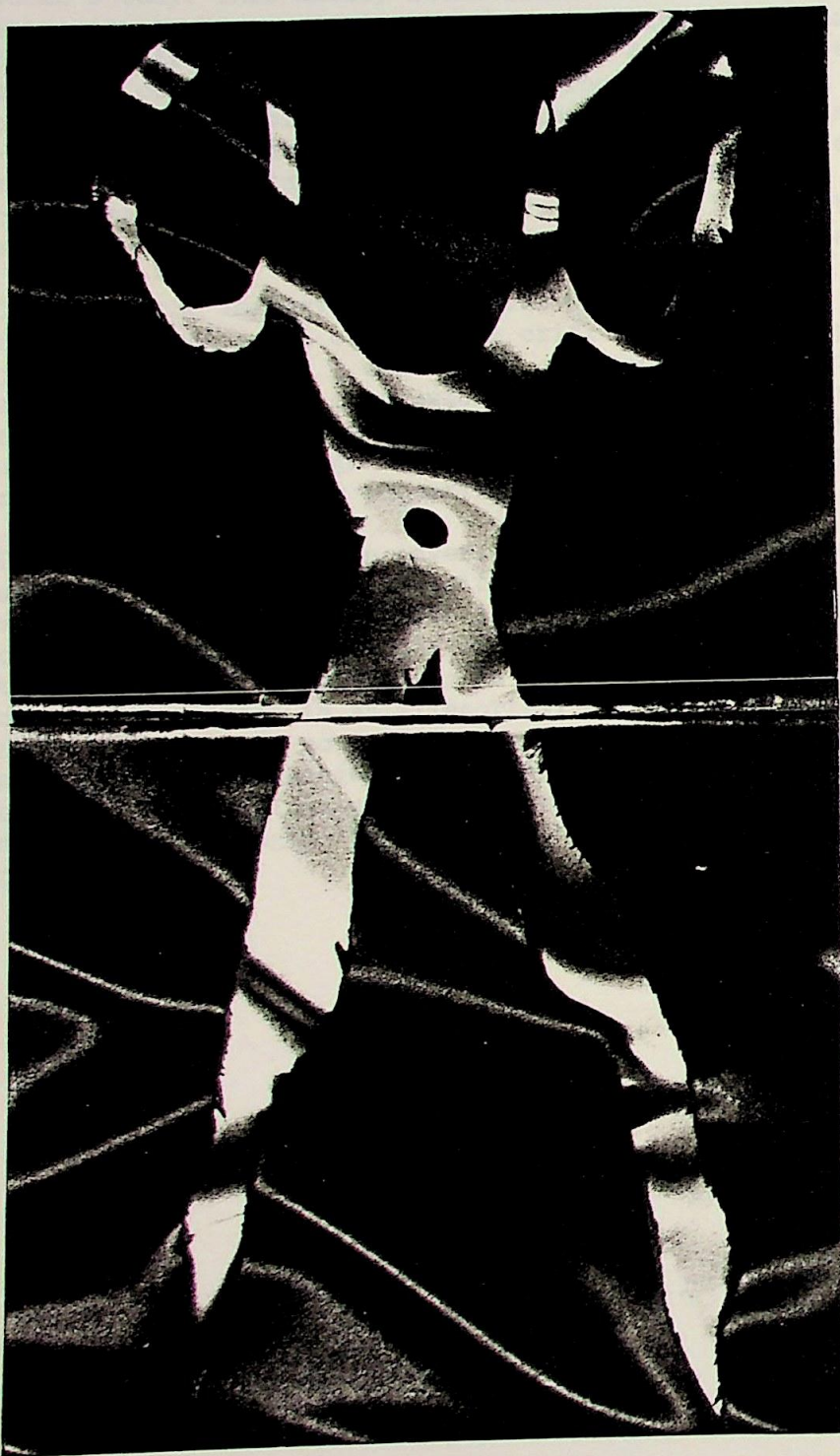


(Fig. 46).

Of course there were still disagreements with these readings and it must be remembered that such criticism of the campaign as there was usually came from very radical left wing women's groups who were more often than not ridiculed in the popular press in England as being virtually insane for the stances they took against these ads. It was pretty much the same response as was received by anyone who criticised the Cadbury's Flake campaign when IT first appeared. The suggestion that these ads contained explicit references to oral sex was laughed at in the beginning, but now it is generally accepted, to the extent that comedians now call the chocolate "Cadbury's Phallic"! The criticism continued to mount with no hint of a denial from Saatchi and Saatchi to the charges of using images of rape, violence and mutilation.



Finally the latest advert in the campaign came out in March this year (Fig. 47).



(Fig. 47).



There does not seem to be any point in attempting to criticise this ad as if the imagery wasn't obvious but surprisingly some people I have shown it to see only a scissors and not a stylised woman's body. This hardly seems credible to me as the imagery seems now to be so overt as to beggar belief. From what was at first a white slit in purple silk (Fig. 41), through two cuts in the same colour scheme (Fig. 42), through the various combinations of colour and the various numbers of cuts (Figs. 43 - 45); the large ambiguous advert (Fig. 46), which seems to be more obvious in its sexual connotations, to the final almost confrontational image of (Fig. 47), the campaign has become more and more overt in its imagery, and consequently less allegorical.

Of course the imagery is accidental or was, one would hope, but I fear that accidental or not, the criticism of the campaign is justified. From what I said above concerning signs, signifiers and codes, I think a conclusion can be reached concerning these adverts. the signs of violence and mutilation are universal for women. But the campaign has been conceived in a predominantly male environment - the advertising world.

It is inevitable that an advert which comes from an environment which is blatant in its exploitation and dehumanising of, and violence against, women, must per se, use a code which consciously or unconsciously continues that tradition. The fact that this code is buried deep in the form of the adverts and uses colour, shape etc. in an allegorical way (perhaps accidentally to begin with), is of no consequence. Because it seems to me by the way the campaign changed, that Saatchi and Saatchi became very aware of the criticisms their advertisements were attracting and deliberately changed their imagery to avail of the extra publicity.







## CONCLUSION

It has always been assumed that the advertising world "borrowed" unashamedly from Fine Art albeit after a gap of three to five years. Techniques which are first used in the more esoteric world of experimental video making, gradually filter down to adverts on the television as I have demonstrated with the "Toshiba" advertisement, above. Lately this gap seems to be narrowing and the use of photographic imagery to conjure feelings of longing, nostalgia, fear etc. now seems to be the general rule both in advertising and fine art.

Because advertising is generally considered too frivolous to be seriously examined, I believe that advertisements such as the Silk Cut ones have had a free hand to produce whatever they desired, virtually unchallenged. Whereas Mapplethorpe, Sherman and particularly Longo have taken images from advertising, cinema and pop culture in general in a serious attempt to generate a dialogue by creating moods of unease and dread, violence and death, they do so knowingly, deliberately, with an expectation of the unexpected, so to speak, resulting from this juxtapositioning of imagery. Advertising in general, unfortunately, dabbles in the fashionable with quick deadlines and tight budgets the main concern.

In the course of this paper I examined the work of the New York school of artists, Sherman, Mapplethorpe and, with particular emphasis, Robert Longo. I showed through works like CORPORATE WARS (Fig. 15), MEN IN THE CITIES (Fig. 10) and WHITE RIOT (Fig. 14), how Longo first used film stills to produce these images of men fighting and dying in an urban ghetto. His later works such as LOVE POLICE (Fig. 16) and NOW EVERYBODY (Fig. 17) refined this theme while SWORD OF THE PIG (Fig. 23) reduced the attack to a more personal scale.

In all the works shown above Longo seems transfixed by violence and death in the modern landscape, and by the juxtapositioning of imagery creates moods and feelings which would not be apparant in the images themselves. This is most obvious in SWORD OF THE PIG (Fig. 23) where none of the three panels on their own would offer up any meaning, but in proximity to one another a powerful statement is made on destructive machismo.

This use of enigmatic images, alone quite innocuous, but together quite powerful, is also the means used by Saatchi and Saatchi to promote their cigarettes Benson and Hedges and Silk Cut. At first with Benson and Hedges they used images of the packs in unlikely positions to conjure up feelings in the viewer, and later with Silk Cut they tried to take this a stage further by dispensing with the packs altogether. This, I believe, is where their downfall lay and I showed how they miscalculated and the result of this mistake.



However a reason for all these images of death and violence and rape and dehumanisation (in the Renault car ad) is harder to arrive at. Of course we live in a violent age and are constantly immersed in imagery of death and destruction on television which, some say, can only inure us to it. But I don't subscribe to the theory that we are living in an age where violence is more vicious or more inherent than before. Only that it is broadcast more extensively enabling far greater numbers of people to experience it.

Technology has so far outstripped our ability to keep abreast of it; images which are within our capability to broadcast to millions of people, are being transmitted in violent three or four minute bursts of extreme concentrated emotion and I think we are incapable of absorbing and defusing them.

Artists like Longo and Sherman seem aware of this and are attempting to take the inherent meanings from the brutal images of violence both on a small scale (MEN IN THE CITIES (Fig. 10), and on a larger one (missile silos in SWORD OF THE PIG (Fig. 23). Advertising is unable to do this because it never stands still. Longo has reduced the insane rush of images to the frozen moment, the point of contact. They can be walked around, absorbed and, hopefully, understood and some of the terror removed from them. There is no such opportunity in advertising where the images are forced faster and faster with a greater and greater degree of subtlety, from the magazine page (read it and discard it), from the billboards and hoardings (pass them in a speeding car) and most powerfully from the television screen at 24 frames a second. It is only gradually that meaning filters out from these speeding images and by then they have been replaced with newer more subtle variations.

While there are people like Longo and Sherman and others like them who are prepared to dissect the mass media for inherent meaning and significance, then the jumble of violent and dehumanising imagery (particularly against women) may be at least partly understood if not, unfortunately, abated.



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