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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

SEXUAL IMAGERY
AND THE WORK OF
PATRICK HALL
AND
PATRICK GRAHAM

A Degree Thesis

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

This thesis is an attempt to explore the notion of how the sexual, sensual and erotic manifests itself generally in visual art and more specifically in the work of Patrick Hall and Patrick Graham. For my diploma thesis (NCAD) in 1987 (Celebration : Patrick Graham) I researched and wrote about Patrick Graham and his work in general. It was an attempt to study the whole question of art, artist, the creative process and its consequences. It was only on reflection, long after it was submitted that I felt I had missed something vital. On choosing a subject for this degree thesis my initial choice was to further explore the whole notion of the creative process. I strongly felt this was what I had missed. No doubt this is a serious and necessary line of inquiry I will take in the not-to-distant future. However, with prompting from tutor I found myself with an inquiry into sexual imagery and its relevance in the work of Patrick Graham and Patrick Hall. It has all turned out to be a monumental step in my perceptions and awareness of myself, humanity, God, the god within the human, energy, art, artist, creation, death and so on. It has been fruitful beyond measure. My own sexuality has become something I genuinely feel only prepared to deal with now.

Patrick Graham was perhaps an obvious choice for study as a continuation to my previous text. Patrick Hall was someone who caught my attention with his most recent paintings 'Heart' (Fig 3) and others (1987) which I went to look at on a subtle suggestion from Graham. It was these less obviously direct images which paradoxically gave me the gateway into his previous more direct work.

The source material for this text came out of research into published texts, magazine articles, reviews, catalogues, thesis written by other students on the two artists involved, my own thesis on Patrick Graham (1987), letters received from Patrick Hall (who was in London from November '87 'till January '88), casual

P R E F A C E

The whole notion of sexuality has become very topical in my life recently. It seems the most appropriate subject for discourse at this present stage of my own personal development as an artist, as a human being and as a spiritual being trying to come to terms with the dualities and paradoxes of humanity. I have spent quite some time now, by this stage of my life, exploring the more spiritual and creative side of being. Now I would like to grasp something of the parallel forces which seem to motivate the human, and how this source of energy relates to the previous.

"The vital impulse in all great art can always be traced to the sensual, and this is especially true of the visual arts. A sensual impulse drives the artist to work, urging him to achieve his best: his reward is originality Artistic creation gives concrete objective form to the primary sensual impulse released by the artist's creative urge." (2) This sense of the manifestation of the sensual impulse is not to be confused with the manifestation of the sexual experience, for this is erotic art at its basest and only leads to pornography. Most artists, whether they are aware of it or not, usually make some erotic output in their work whether they are aware of a sexual impulse or not. But also the spectator will have a high degree of varying reactions to it particularly because of its specific content. There is still greater social sensitivity and instability when it comes to eroticism. Although the tolerance of such imagery is perhaps more aparent now than earlier in history, the psychological barriers and defences are still present, filtering and colouring the spectators reception and reaction to the piece. Such imagery usually represents the most personal statement an artist can dare to make.

Sexual imagery is not only an indication of individual freedom but, also of social freedom. But for the most part society has reacted to the possibilities of the freedom offered in such a state by suppressing erotic art, if not externally then by closing itself to

it. Such a society manifests this reaction with moral, religious or sociological scruples. Artists are keen observers though, and whether directly or indirectly this rejection and regulation occurs they do not accept it. Erotic art has always existed. The artist has always outwitted those who wish to suppress it. In the Middle Ages erotic art expressed itself perhaps more sensually than ever before and took refuge in the homes and territory of its persecutors; in the disguise of religious themes. In 1908 Eduard Fuchs delineated that the most essential and potent form of art was sensuality. Visualizing sensuality, he claimed, was the highest most noble form of sensuality, it was eroticism carried to its logical conclusion. "Eroticism corresponds to the sex drive in the way that appetite corresponds to hunger It indicates the measure of freedom that a person has acquired, the extent of his intellectual control over his instinctive and emotional experiences." (3) The erotic refers to the creation of a work of art from an initial sexual impulse, however concealed this impulse may be. It indicates the sensual impulses which are at work in the mind.

With language the human has created a very complex and abstract matrix which distances him from, but, gives a more universal form of relating his immediate experiences. In this matrix our references to the body have become buried even though we constantly use these references "Lost components of meaning lie sleeping, so to speak in our language and thought. And one of the tasks of art is to wake them up and revitalize them in various ways One of the penalties we pay for our abstract languages is that we spend a large part of our life out of touch with direct experience. But artistic metaphor can reach down to a region of recognition and memory which lies below the surface of normal discourse." (4)

Erotic art of the Orient was made by and for people who were aware that the human body, complete with its senses and emotions as well as its intellect, was the organ by which we know our worlds. They represented sex and its functions not for the sake of casual stimulation but for its wealth of reference to actual sexual experience with its pleasures, pain and ecstasy. Of the three countries India, China and Japan, India is perhaps the best known for its overt interest in erotic matters with the 'Kama Sutra'. This was the great Sanskrit manual on all the arts of love written in the second century A.D. Up until about thirty years ago it could only be read in Latin in Western society. But now, along with two other similar texts the 'Kokashastra' and the 'Ratirahasys' has been translated in virtually every Western language. Paradoxically in Indian culture the reverse side of this coin is asceticism which has always been held in extremely high esteem. The cult of pleasure and the reverence for abstinence seem to hold equal value. " Sex is metaphysically serious The force that normally surges through the body as sexual desire is intrinsically divine. Stimulated, hoarded and contained, it becomes a fuel for metaphysical achievement, to propel an ascetic to ultimate release." (4)

Instead of spending this energy in physical sex he turns it around and converts it into a radiant inner heat, called Tapas.

In their myths and folklore the Indians cite three most significant deities, Brahma - the Creator, Vishnu - the Sustainer and Shiva, often depicted as monstrous aggressor personified the idea of the original couple, half-man-half-woman. He was the paragon of male and female beauty combined. Worshippers focused all their passion and desires, including sexual desires onto the image of the adored deity. By cultivating the emotions they transmuted their original base passion into a higher condition known as Prema. This was divine love as distinct from human love and could become identical with the bliss of complete liberation. This liberation is seen to be the goal of all human life and striving. Religious circles were formed in which members cultivated the passion required to fuel their Prema. They engaged in prolonged sexual intercourse. All were agreed that for the purposes of breaking the last bonds of convention and selfhood relations between unmarried partners were best. However, there was division over whether orgasm should be allowed or not. Two groups emerged, one regarding that orgasm would release and waste the accumulated divine inner energy, while the other considered that without reaching its natural end in orgasm the essential passion, and therefore divine offering, could fade. Both kinds were practised.

The most extreme form of this sexual culture was developed among a school of Bengal's poets around the fifteenth century. It was a tradition which evolved from a long pre-Aryan strand, running right through Indian society to later surface in each of the major Indian religions, interpreted according to the religion's central concepts. Being connected with ideas about the body and its mechanism it also emerges in Indian medicine it has become known generically as Tantra, which translates as 'The Thread'. Much yoga and ritual are based upon it. By making their acts divine it lifted them out of the mundane and led them to experience the Great Duality within

their own organisms.

Erotic matters in China are less well understood than in India since Chinese Society has always been more intensely secretive about personal affairs. Chinese texts tend to describe a greater sense of the various kinds of physical movement which will raise the pleasure of lovers to its peak than do Indian which concentrate more on static postures. Movement and change is integral to Chinese ideas about cosmic reality and harmony, which are filled with sexual metaphor. There is one single overriding principle which sharply distinguishes Chinese culture from Indian and Western cultures: Tao, which is a key term to describe the two energies Yin and Yang whose varying dialectic produces ceaseless activity. Yin, which is dark, cold, earthy and moist and symbolized by cloud and valley, predominating at winter and midnight is Female. Yang, which is bright hot, heavenly, dry and symbolized by constellation and mountain peak, predominating at mid-summer and noon is Male. Both are also symbolized by other varying groups of animals and plants.

This great duality is the essence of the Chinese attitude to sex and love. Partners in a sexual relationship seek to establish a balance of the Yin and Yang by absorbing the other sexual polarity. At the peak of a developed orgasm man and woman release charges of Yang and Yin, which are absorbed by the other partner through his or her genitals. Oral sex played an important part in erotic relationships since it is also possible to absorb Yin and Yang essences by mouth. The specific techniques of sexual intercourse were extremely important, which the cultivated Chinese developed to a high aesthetic level. Overtly sexual Chinese art which has survived 'till today is not of very high quality. From literature it has become evident that some of the greatest masters of landscape art did paint overtly sexual images which have disappeared. Chinese artists tended to render the body with a few plain, finely drawn contours which defined the composition. Such erotic art aimed to achieve the maximum effect by means of subtlety of linear calligraphic drawing which rejected volume and bulk as static and

inelegant. They preferred to allow the spectators imagination free rein to complete the image, frequently enhancing the sense of movement in open space with folds of garments drawn open.

The dominant religious cult in Japan was and is known generically as Shinto which means 'The Way Of Gods'. The ancient gods are called Kami. The Japanese were largely influenced by the Chinese, particularly Buddhism. But this was restricted to the Imperial and great feudal courts. The peasantry were treated as a race apart and preserved an archaic sexual culture virtually to the present century. The legends of Shinto share something of this culture. All this was restricted by the twelfth century under the military dictatorship of the Shogunate. This puritanical Samurais code was imposed upon Japanese feudal society. After Edo (Tokyo) became the capital city in the sixteenth century a prosperous city Bourgeoise and a proletariat of immigrant peasants and artisans appeared, who were not bound by the feudal Samurais code. But they were still subject to severe external control by the Shogunate. Women were expected to remain respectable and bring up their families with single hearted dedication. But men pursued personal pleasures as a right. Prostitution, theatre, the arts, etc., were encouraged as recreation, and still is right up until today. It has become a cult of primarily masculine pleasure, which is nevertheless infused with the archaic feeling that sex is still intrinsically good.

Eastern Erotic art in general is meant to convey what it feels like to be filled with desire; to stimulate sexual response. "Indian and Shinto temple sculpture add dimensions of depth and mystery to erotic feeling. The state of being possessed by desire was valued by the patrons of these arts not merely as the prelude to a biological spasm of relief, but as an inner experience of the transpersonal or divine. Sexual love in all its physicality was taken as a means of access to the realm of the psyche where human and divine meet, and the higher self, transcending ego, may flower.

The styles of Indian erotic art emphasize the eternity, sublimity

and vastness of their subject matter. Chinese arts, with their subtle metaphors and allusions, lead the mind into a world woven together by invisible threads of force and significance. Japanese art, especially that of Edo, conveys a sense of the splendour of sex, but reflects at the same time a Buddhist view of the phenomenal and transitory in that splendour". (4)

Between 1895-1899 Sigmund Freud wrote 'The Interpretation of Dreams'. It was from this document that his insight into the use of symbols and their universality came to him. But the essay is important not only because it forwards a coherent theory for the unconscious in man but also because it provided one of the best modes of approach to the darker regions within the human. It is from these areas that much of the behaviour of man seems to originate and not the consciousness. However, perhaps his most precise investigations on sexual imagery as created by the artist comes out of his essays on Leonardo Da Vinci, which he wrote in 1910.

"We should be most glad to give an account of the way in which artistic activity derives from the primal instincts of the mind if it were not just here that our capacities fail us. We must be content to emphasize the fact - which it is hardly any longer possible to doubt - that what an artist creates provides at the same time an outlet for his sexual desire; and in Leonardo's case we can point to the information, which comes from Vasari (1550) that heads of laughing women and beautiful boys - in other words, representations of sexual objects - were notable among his first artistic endeavours. In the bloom of his youth Leonardo appears at first to have worked without inhibition. Just as he modelled himself on his father in the outward conduct of his life, so too he passed through a period of masculine creative power and artistic productiveness in Milan, where a kindly fate enabled him to find a father substitute in the duke Lodovico Moro. But soon we find confirmation of our experience that the almost total suppression of a real sexual life does not provide the most favourable conditions for the exercise of sublimated sexual trends. The pattern imposed by sexual life made itself felt. His activity and his ability to form quick decisions began to fail; his tendency towards deliberation and delay was already noticeable as a disturbing element in the 'Last Supper', and by influencing his technique it had a decisive effect on the fate of that great painting

The second sublimation of his erotic instinct gave place to the original sublimation for which the way had been prepared on the occasion of the first repression. He became an investigator, at first still in the service of his art, but later independently of it and away from it But the research which now took the place of artistic creation seems to have contained some of the features which distinguish the activity of unconscious instincts - insatiability, unyielding rigidity and the lack of an ability to adapt to real circumstances.

At the summit of his life, when he was in his early fifties - a time when in women the sexual characters have already undergone involution and when in men the libido not infrequently makes a further energetic advance - a new transformation came over him. Still deeper layers of the contents of his mind became active once more; but this further regression was to the benefit of his art, which was in the process of becoming stunted. He met the woman who awakened his memory of his mother's happy smile of sensual rapture; and, influenced by this revived memory, he recovered the stimulus that guided him at the beginning of his artistic endeavours at the time when he modelled the smiling woman. He painted the 'Mona Lisa', the 'St Anne with Two Others' and the series of mysterious pictures which are characterised by the enigmatic smile with the help of the oldest of all his erotic impulses he enjoyed the triumph of once more conquering the inhibition in his art. This final development is obscured from our eyes in the shadows of approaching age. Before this his intellect had soared upwards to the highest realisations of a conception of the world that left his epoch far behind it We are left, then with these two characteristics of Leonardo which are inexplicable by the efforts of psychoanalysis: his quite special tendency towards instinctual repressions, and his extraordinary capacity for sublimating the primitive instincts Since artistic talent and capacity are intimately connected with sublimation we must admit that the nature of the artistic function is also inaccessible to us along psychoanalytic lines." (13)

When Freud first began to discuss and expose matters of sexuality in the explicit manner he did, he laid himself in line for the most ferocious and outrageous attack. For the victorian society in which he lived the subject of sexuality was firmly taboo. What amazed him about the images people created, particularly in dreams, was the universality of some of the symbols conjured. He recognized that symbols are very much the same wherever they surface, whether in folklore, myths, legends, dreams, parables or even jokes. We have come so far in history by now with the whole question of symbol interpretation that perhaps Freud's initial observations seem too obvious. He viewed elongated objects such as neckties, knives, sticks, spears, bananas, etc., as symbolising the male sexual organ, the penis; while boxes, chests, cupboards, ovens, boats, cars, etc as representative of the female organ, the vagina. Sexual intercourse was symbolised by such things as a train going through a tunnel or such physical activities as rocking in a chair, climbing, swimming, etc. In a dream a child was a symbol of the genitals, so playing with one's child was a possible symbol of masturbation. Fear of castration may be represented by having a finger or a leg cut off, or even a tooth falling out. A snake was symbolic of the penis particularly if the dreamer was a woman experiencing a fear of sexual intercourse. A pregnant woman's dream of obnoxious animals and vermin was an indication of her loathing of her condition or the event to come.

Specific directions also held several meanings, the left signifying illegitimacy and homosexuality, up and down representing, again among other things, the sexual parts of the body. The breasts were represented by 'upstairs' and the genitalia were represented by 'downstairs'. Freud felt that a confusion in a person at that level of sexuality brought with it a disturbance of the visual field. In not being able to depict the sexual act he recognised bi-sexuality. He used the disrupted images of the 'modern art' which was emerging at the same time as his writings to explore such unconscious psychic processes which were the object of his analytic work. He found that the imposition of sexual positions of symbolic and polarised

opposition on ourselves (male/female) ran counter to the multifarious and bi-sexual disposition which he recognised as barely concealed below the consciousness across the range of normal adult sexual life. The dividing lines are fragile in exact proportion to the rigid insistence with which the culture lays them down. On the visual plane Freud observed that the sexuality of the image lies less in the content of what is seen than in the subjectivity of the viewer. It emerges in the relationship between the image and the developing sexual knowledge of the individual, a relationship which is always one of fracture, partial identification, pleasure and distrust. ". Freud found analogy for the problem of our identity as human subjects in failures of vision or in the violence which can be done to an image as it offers itself to view. For Freud, with an emphasis that has been picked up and placed at the centre of the work of Jacques Lacan, our sexual identities as male or female, our confidence in language as true or false and our security in the image we judge as perfect or flawed, are fantasies Hence one of the chief drives of an art which today addresses the presence of the sexual in representation - to expose the fixed nature of sexual identity as a fantasy and, in the same gesture, to trouble, break up, or rupture the visual field before our eyes." (5)

Our entire physical existence our physical continuity depends on the fertility of our Earth and its animals. For Schopenhauer this sense of continuity manifested itself in the sexual impulse which was most emphatically the root of love of all forms. The ultimate end of all love affairs was the most important quest of all human life: "the composition of the next generation". (6) The sexual impulse, he defines, when present within the consciousness and not directed at any specific individual of the opposite sex is no more than the powerful will to live. When it is directed to another individual it becomes the will to live as a definitely determined individual which strives to come to fruition in the production of a child. What is at stake is the being of humanity. The individual becomes the means by which the will of this being is carried out. Perhaps this alludes

to what Jung was to later call the Collective Unconscious. Egoism is such a deeply rooted quality of humans that it is the one channel which can be totally relied upon with certainty. Hence, the individual assumes he/she is making the decisions related but, is in fact, under an illusion. They are really succumbing to the subjective will of the collective which is very tricky and deceives our consciousness by very skillfully assuming the mask of an objective admiration.

Each individual will only be attracted to those of the species which he/she finds most beautiful. But one only finds most beautiful those who contain perfections which one lacks and imperfections which are also the opposite to one's own. Within this desire for beauty rests the balanced maintenance of a particular type of the species. This Schopenhauer finds is accountable for the fact that everyman experiences a "marvellous disillusion" (6) after the pleasure has at last been attained. The satisfaction of this pleasure has been for the benefit of the species, so the illusion vanishes after the ultimate consummation. Almost every other woman appeals to the man more than the woman he has just loved, for a man can have hundreds of children per year. Contrarily, the woman's appeal increases for she can have only one child per year and requires protection, security and a nourisher after the conception, which the species presumes has naturally occurred in the consummation. Therefore, a man's faithfulness after the act is artificial while a woman's is natural. But the species is interested in maintenance of quality as much as quantity. To this end one finds that with the individualizing of one's love the intensity of that love can reach so high a peak that without its satisfaction all things in the world, even life itself, can lose its value. "Because the passion depended upon an illusion, which represented that which has only value for the species as valuable for the individual, the deception must vanish after the attainment of the end of the species. The spirit of the species which took possession of the individual sets it free again. Forsaken by this spirit, the individual falls back into its original limitation and

narrowness, and sees with wonder that after such a high, heroic and infinite effort nothing has resulted for its pleasure but what every sexual gratification affords. Contrary to expectation, it finds itself no happier than before. It observes that it has been the dupe of the will of the species If now, we contemplate the turmoil of life, we behold all occupied with its want and misery, straining all their powers to satisfy its infinite needs and to ward off its multifarious sorrows yet without daring to hope anything else than simply the preservation of this tormented existence for a short span of time. In between, however, in the midst of the tumult, we see the glances of two lovers meet longingly: yet why so secretly, fearfully and stealthily? Because these lovers are the traitors who seek to perpetuate the whole want and drudgery, which would otherwise speedily reach an end; this they wish to frustrate, as others like them have frustrated it before". (6)

Carl Jung pushed the notions of sexuality even further. His writings were held to be extremely mystical and difficult for scientists, particularly American, to take seriously. His views, however, are now beginning to make more and more sense in contemporary life. Similar to Freud, Jung considered that dreams could convey powerful biological messages from the unconscious but he went further to say that within the dream the sexual content itself could be symbolic. For Freud the dream imagery dealt with the past unresolved, suppressed infantile and instinctual needs. But for Jung the dream dealt also with the present and possibly even future plans, imaginings, hopes and desires of a person. As with Freud and many many other thinkers and writers throughout history, Jung explored the notion of the duality of the human's nature. The human personality, it is alleged, contains equal possibilities for good and evil, sublime achievements and murderous atrocities, transcendental awareness and biological limitations, male and female. Jung considered that the unconscious levels of personality can be a source of psychic wisdom and insight into personality development. This unconscious, he felt, contains unbiased and

accurate judgements about the present moment, about the individuals history and the history of the human race. This latter memory he called the collective unconscious. It is necessary then to integrate these deeper levels of wisdom and knowledge into our conscious self in order to see the real self, reconcile our divided nature and become whole, at peace with oneself and the world.

Jung called the feminine component in man, the Anima and the masculine component in every woman the Animus. Unfortunately, in cultures in which the social conditioning only accepts the masculine in men and the feminine in women one tends to split off the polar aspects of the self. This leaves the person in a state of imbalance in which they are no longer whole. On the other hand the completion of this aspect of the self by engaging one's anima or animus can lead one to an extremely productive and creative state of consciousness.

As with Schopenhauer, Roberto Assagioli, recognises that the sexual drive in itself is neither moral nor immoral but, is a biological function which is pre-moral. He defines three principle aspects in the nature of sexuality:

- "1. A sensual aspect : physical pleasure.
2. An emotional aspect : union with another person.
3. A creative aspect : the birth of a new creation." (7)

Assagioli explored the transmutation and sublimation of these sexual energies and found that such transmutations can take place on two levels: the vertical and the horizontal. The vertical or inward direction is a spiritual synthesis, the union of personality; the negative feminine pole, with the spiritual self; the positive masculine pole. "This polarity is a reality and not just a simple symbolic transposition of a biological fact. It is one of the fundamental aspects of the spirit-matter polarity and is, so to speak, its reflection on the psycho-spiritual level, as sexual polarity is its expression on the physical level." (7) The horizontal or external transmutation process can be divided into

three kinds which correspond to the three aspects of the nature of sexuality.

1. The substitution of other pleasures of the senses for sexual pleasure, cultivating oneself to become extremely sophisticated in matters of aesthetic appreciation.
2. An expansion of one's love to embrace humanity and the supremity of being.
3. The awakening of one's creative activities of an artistic or intellectual nature. "There appears to be a deep similarity between sexual energy and the creative energies operating at other levels of human being. Artistic creation offers a particularly suitable channel for sublimation and many instances can be found in the lives of great artists, writers and composers. One of them, which has a special significance, is that of Richard Wagner." (7)

Such transmutation and sublimation of sexual energies may occur spontaneously but, it can also be deliberately and consciously induced. Assagioli cites five practical methods which can catalyse this induction:

1. A firm conscious control of the drive to be transmuted, in which, however, care should be taken to avoid any condemnation or fear of it, as this could lead to its repression in the unconscious.
2. The active release, development and expression of the various aspects of personal and spiritual love, love for humanity and for the supreme entity.
3. Familiarity, psychological proximity and communion with individuals or groups who have reached or are similarly striving to reach the same goal.
4. The channelling of one's interest, aspiration, enthusiasm and energies into some creative work. This could be painting, writing, drawing, sculpting, music, movement, etc.
5. "The use of symbols. These exercise a strong attractive power on all our energies, conscious and unconscious and specifically foster the process of transmutation. Jung in his 'Contributions to Analytical Psychology' went so far as

There is always a strong link placed between the Expressionists in general and the work of Patrick Graham and Patrick Hall. More specifically the German Expressionists are cited as major sources of influences on their work. Although both may deny for the most part any direct influence whatsoever it is possible that influence might occur on a more unconscious level. More accurately though it is important to recognise that although no influence may be present both artists work is naturally of an inherently expressionist character, albeit owing no allegiance to another Expressionist source but their own lives.

The true function of Expressionism is to represent through the emotional distortion of form and colour, the inwardness of particular things. It represents the deeper inwardness of things as manifestations of a social condition. The systematic distortion of both form and colour constitutes the basis of the Expressionist philosophy. It was through the employment of such arbitrary distortions that Expressionist painters conveyed the depth and the intensity of their emotional response to the subject. They were intensely concerned with laying bare a profoundly disturbing facet of human psychology; the eternal conflict between man and woman. This they expressed in terms of sexual violence, often with the man seeking to destroy the woman in a blaze of elemental fury. They used a nervous type of gesture in their work to symbolize raw, naked emotions. Many Expressionist artists placed great emphasis upon the significance of morbid and often plainly psychotic subject matter. They attempted to reveal the corrupt and twisted sexuality, and the general mood of savage and brutal behaviour they saw in their own society. George Grosz, a German born artist used bitter distortion of the human form to criticize the corruption and decadent sensuality of life in Germany during the years immediately following the First World War. Eventually the parallels became too evident to the Nazis prior to World War Two. The truths in the work of these Expressionist artists became too unendurable - Hitler eventually had

it suppressed.

German Expressionism often shows women in a sense of sensual abandon with groups of lecherous men. The colours are intentionally loud and vulgar in many. The forms are savagely distorted to heighten and intensify the mood of brutish lust. These artists did not set out to reveal a new reality nor invent variations on anatomical representation. They simply made a fearless attempt to show the inward face of sensuality and lust. Through the distortion of the forms of the female body they conveyed a vision of the degradation of spirit implicit in the mortification of the flesh. It was symbolic of the decay of society as a whole. The concept of the prostitute as an analogy of corruption and decay is essentially a Western phenomenon. Its origins lay in the christian notion of 'Original Sin'. A morbid fear of sex rooted in the earliest of the christian myths and extending through the whole of the middle ages with its psychopathic rejection of woman as a figure of sin, is the basis from which emerges the idea of the prostitute as a symbol of evil. She is the ultimate Christian anathema because she is the self-portrait of our secret lusts. Hideous because they are secret and unacceptable except in the secrecy of forbidden relationships.

"Of course in his denial of sex, Western man has not eliminated his desires, only driven them underground. There, in the darkness, they clamour for fulfilment and their very existence in the labyrinths of unconscious personality provided the basis of Freud's entire theory of sexual psychopathology. In dreams and fantasies the lusts of the West bear strange fruits, and, in the embrace of prostitutes, the demented sexuality of christian society seeks the absolution of the damned. Absolution and redemption. Absolution through acknowledgement; redemption through self-abasement. Yet neither is forthcoming. For the West cannot accept the prostitute either as a vehicle of expression and release or, as an equivalent of the confessional. I am not advocating prostitution, only suggesting that whereas the West can find no honourable place for the practice of prostitution, other civilizations of great culture have

invariably accorded the courtesan (as distinct from the common prostitute) a place of dignity and honour within the framework of their society." (12)

In portraying the prostitute as physically hideous, in exploiting the ugliness of the phenomenon, these Expressionist artists make a profound spiritual point which is extremely pertinent to the character of the Western sexual malaise. They show that our only true hope for redemption comes through by exposing ourselves to and accepting the monstrous blasphemy, in its most naked and awful form, of the evil thing we have created deep within us as the image of woman. "The mortification of the flesh at its lowest and most degraded ebb is the point of return to GOD." (12)

"Sex sells" and there is no doubt that this is one of the major contributing factors to the high tolerance shown towards sexual imagery which has emerged in our own society. It sells the product and usually better than any other sales ploy. Therefore, it is only to be expected that in a society where commercial enterprises are governed by the supreme law of economic survival, ie the product must make money, there is going to be an inundation of sexual images. And there is. We have become immunised so the lot is reasonably acceptable by now, to the extent that it has pervaded almost every aspect of society. Any film or artwork with sexual content evokes response and both the content of the work itself and the reactions it evokes are within the grasp of the informed, educated person. The depiction of sexuality in art and film provides not only a vehicle for gaining insight into the artist and his culture, but also the opportunity for the spectator to take a new look at himself as well.

Volker Kahmen has distinguished four different levels in which erotic art may express itself. They are stylistic devices used to locate and interpret the imagery, though they are rarely used on their own but are often inter-related.

"The first device is the symbol. This is a sign which always replaces a word concept, expressing an idea which is known to be behind the visual appearance.

The second device is the deceptive likeness. This device attempts to introduce external reality into the picture. At the same time the composition of the picture has an intrinsic value - whereas if we try to re-interpret the picture, we can only concentrate on one single idea.

The third device is the association. This involves certain social references, but it is largely based on feelings and impressions shared by the artist and the person who is looking at his picture.

The fourth device is the image. It is an object which derives its artistic value from the way it is presented in a work of art. However, this distinction is debatable for the symbol and the deceptive likeness also seem to have intrinsic artistic value." (2)

The use of homosexual subject matter in a confessional, directly personal and often political manner is more prominent today than it ever has been in the past. It is an art imbued with extremities of anger, fury, even outrage and shock contrasted with tender emotions and loving feelings. Art along with life in general is in a constant state of flux and in its changing homo- sexuality has begun to emerge freely and will be obvious in all art forms for the foreseeable future. The overwhelming pent up feelings of anxiety and guilt about being homosexual that have been suppressed are now releasing themselves and further enhancing the scope of visualization.

The choice exists for artists to either look creatively at past traditions and archetypes and reform them for themselves or to work at developing their imagery out of contemporary life and attitudes. Andy Warhol was one of the first post war artists of such nature to break almost entirely from past traditions. In the process he

created new images which for many were to serve as icons for a new age. Many American artists at the time were reluctant to use their own lives as subject matter in their work. Warhol confirmed this by the emphatic although enigmatic avoidance of content in his graphic work while his art films did the opposite. In these films he introduced and questioned sexual identification and gender roles. When a star, Holly Woodlawn, of one such film, was asked "What are you? Are you a woman trapped in a man's body? Are you a heterosexual? Are you transsexual?" (8) Woodlawn replied ". . . . What difference does it make so long as you look fabulous?" (8) This perhaps sums up the enigma Warhol wished to present in his work.

In England in the sixties, despite the relatively free atmosphere being generated and practised in the arts, all homosexual acts between men were still illegal until 1967 with the decriminalisation of sexual acts between men over twenty-one. Suddenly the secret and small subculture opened up. David Hockney was a young art student at the Royal College of Art, London at the time. He painted a series of related 'coming out' images. Afterwards he turned to the homosexual poetry of Cavafy from which he produced a series of etchings. The images were successful because they emphasised a personal tenderness and sensuality going beyond the stereotypical 'macho' qualities of exotic, fantasised, muscular creations and concentrating on the ordinariness of the bodies which suggested either pre- or post-coital activity. This autobiographical theme which continued to inspire much of his work, was never explicitly about sex but contained an underlying theme of homoeroticism. Through these early works he quickly resolved his anxieties about accepting his homosexuality. Later, the German artist Rainer Fetting was to push the exposition of personal experiences even further. He painted portraits and scenes of the homosexual nightclubs of Berlin. His work has an immediate dramatic, almost theatrical quality. He offers the spectator a look at the raw aspect of civilization, "a hint of the primitive ritual of abandon". (9)

Francis Bacon attributes most of the male nude figures in his work to his homosexuality. He recognizes influences from Michaelangelo who he feels made the most voluptuous male nudes in the plastic arts and from the Victorian photographer Edward Muybridge. Several paintings by Bacon have been inspired by the sexual ambiguity in the series of photographs of the two naked male wrestlers by Muybridge taken in 1887. The first of these is of two men either copulating or struggling on a bed and is particularly remarkable in view of the prevailing mood of the time, 1953. "The image of two men wrestling successfully evokes a sexuality that can only safely be expressed in physical struggle. During the early 1950s in Britain there was a spate of public prosecutions against homosexuals which reached a peak in 1953 and 1954. In fact Bacon did not return to the theme of wrestling until 1970" (9) Bacon has never treated his homosexuality as a separate concern in the work, but treats it as just another emotion. Often the sexuality of the figures in the image is one of extreme violence, violence of emotions. It is a condition he has been strikingly aware of since his early childhood in Dublin. It is a violence which expresses the reality of the times we live in. It has rarely been expressed so forcibly and so powerfully than in the searing autobiographical images which came after the gruesome death from drug overdose of his close friend George Dyer in 1971.

"Alone in private personal occupations or in couples, Bacon's subjects recall the horror of a nightmare; their restless turmoil offers no peace. No figure is still, all are occupied with movements and action Bacon, the observer of men, places them on tables, inside the framework of cages, shaving, and even sitting on the lavatory Enigmatically he refuses to acknowledge any specific aim in his work other than that of the creation of images which, he says, he transfers 'as accurately off my nervous system as I can'." (9)

Art in Ireland, in its choice and use of imagery was, until the sixties, perceived by both artists and spectators as a reflection of

art in Britain where, in turn, it was to be a French phenomenon. Where the French were frank, though ingratiating, in their use of sexual imagery the British, being a puritan people, erased sexuality from their work and most other references to reality. Naturally, the Irish, with two or three exceptions, followed suit. Abstraction was used as a device by which to omit life from art. This eventually gave rise to 'Living Art'.

In the early sixties Michael Kane, Brian Bourke, Charles Cullen and others began a movement to embody reality in art. Their personal and social experiences naturally were pervaded by their sexuality which led Michael Kane particularly to the elaboration of explicit images of a psycho-sexual nature. All of this then laid open gateways through which Patrick Hall, Patrick Graham and others could move.

"There is a mutual interest and desire in artists, both in Ireland and abroad, to come to terms with one's own sexuality, that is the physical life as we experience it with often traumatic effects within the realms of emotions and on the spirit The use of sexual imagery throughout history seems on one side to be the revelation of beauty and on the other side the denegration of humanity. Sexual imagery in art seems to be a metaphor to the concept of heaven and hell." (15)

The image is something which only emerges extremely slowly in Hall's painting. It is through passing layers of paint in dialogue with himself that eventually he comes upon memory which is outside his normal process of remembering. The process of reaching this memory is the process of painting. It is a form of remembering which unfolds levels of the being and spirit. He is thus revealing the essential glimpse of reality on which his existence thrives. Reality to Hall has an extremely elusive character. He feels that he tends to dwell more on illusion, never being sure of what is firm ground and what is not. This can lead him to a sense of absolute dread and nightmare. To take him out of this he takes recourse to sex and his whole sexual energy. It is something that can push him to the edge of his identity giving him release into reality since the nightmare and his identity are somehow mixed up together.

Through the paint sexual energy is encountered. What emerges out of all this, though in the imagery, are very simple things such as his mother sitting in a garden, a sun disintegrating into the earth, a man crying and so on. They are things which are part of everyone's experience. Hence, sexuality or that intense love of life is at the bottom of all his work. It is an energy that can be relied upon for transportation to a constructive or destructive end. It is for this quality that it has always been feared. Despite its copy value to the industry of mass media it is a cornerstone to art and reality.

At fourteen, fifteen and sixteen years of age Hall acknowledges he was indeed a very sexually aware person. But then he found that for some reason, which he suspects may be due to the lack of intellectual backing so undeveloped in Irish culture this awareness went to sleep. There seemed to be no way of objectifying and exploring the new found experiences so no progress could be made with them. On his return from college in London his mother soon died. She had become an alcoholic after her reasonably prosperous husband died and so all were now penniless. Oddly enough she died from asphyxiation in a Dublin hospital when the oxygen tank went empty. That whole episode of his life Hall recalls as a sort of dream world which he has not quite figured out even yet.

It wasn't until he was in his early thirties that he became aware of his own sexuality. Up until then sexuality did not enter into his thoughts or fantasies at all and was, therefore, simply not referred to in the paintings in any conscious way whatsoever. In the mid 1970s he began to make images of his own body, of people masterbating, two males coupling and so on. He considered them to be very incompetent attempts to visualize characteristics of sexual energy and homosexuality, but, it was essential. They were images which were at the centre of his own awareness at the time. It was something he was at ease with and becoming increasingly familiar with as it emerged from within, so he gave it an obvious form of expression.

He did not receive much reaction to these images for many years. In 1982 he exhibited five paintings in the Project Arts Centre in a group exhibition titled 'Making Sense/Ten Painters'. One of the images was 'Portrait of a Spanish Lady' (1969) from the time he spent in Spain, the other four were of an overt sexual nature. Two in particular drew a great deal of attention, 'Lover of Horses' (1981) (Fig 1) and 'La Vie En Rose' (1981).

". . . . in 1979 (Hall) had begun to work on his most important paintings to-date - the series of interiors with male nudes. Compared with these pictures the artist's earlier work looks

tentative. They mark a period of emotional release in his life - a period of acceptance of self, particularly his own sexuality.

All of these paintings are sexually charged to some degree. This is especially true of the painting called 'Lover of Horses'. Here we are presented simply with a naked male figure lying on a mattress. But, the figure, because we view him from above, seems inverted. And because the head and shoulders are cropped he seems to obtrude rather brutally into the picture space

With any conventional portrait we would expect the head, indeed the face, to form the area of greatest psychological interest. Here the head has been dismissed as irrelevant and in its place we have the erect penis. There is no subtlety here, no hidden intent - the image simply forces itself upon us whether we like it or not."
(16) 'La Vie En Rose' presented an image of the artist masturbating.

The exhibition toured Ireland the following year. In Sligo it was heavily rumoured that a priest had voiced his adverse attitude to the exhibition from the altar and suggested his parishioners not visit it. In the Crawford Gallery in Cork 'La Vie En Rose' was slashed with a knife. The male body has never been very well accepted in Irish culture. The female body seems to hold a greater degree of reception perhaps due to the unavoidable conditioning of the overwhelming number of images which have employed it as subject matter throughout Western history. But the male body when presented in such a fashion as Hall presents it seems to be difficult for this male dominated society to accept. But, it was not just Hall who was moving in this direction. Most of the artists of that show were using overt sexual imagery. It was a stage that most of them seemed to be moving through both in their lives and work. Hall likens it somewhat to the whole development of sexuality and love in general. "You fall in love with someone, and if you're having a sexual relationship with that person I suppose there's a preoccupation and fascination with sex and the pleasure of the sexual thing first. But then you go beyond the pleasure. There's something more than

pleasure. Its like you can go further and further and a lot more comes into it. Theres the death thing in it as well. Sex brings you very close to death, brings you very close to the edge of your own identity That is, where there is love in it not just a one night stand thing. That's just a physical or a psycho-physical release. But, if there is this love in it you are travelling very far. So its not simply a question of sexual release thats involved. Your own identity is called into question." (17)

From this initial encounter with his own sexuality through the image Hall developed into what became the 'Faust' series of paintings. In these the imagery was still somewhat overtly sexual but, was carried and channelled through the element of myth. They were key images in his development, and they held a sexual tension and power which was to be released and merged with other characteristics of the self in later images. They can be difficult paintings for the spectator to enter. Hall builds the image up from the abstract to the more figurative abstract evident in them.

"In talking about my own painting and indeed about Paddy (Graham)'s painting, those two types of painting which are difficult paintings. If they are allowed to 'scream' the whole approach to it is different to Munch's. Its less obviously figurative. Its less that treatment of nineteenth century tradition. Its more disintegrative paintings are put together more from disintegration, theres a more chaotic element, because our lives are more chaotic. Any semblance of order of the classical universal values that still pertained in the nineteenth century are absolutely gone. They simply have no credibility anymore There isn't that unifying force on any level of society even on the most believing element of society Doubt occupies a much larger part of the human psyche than it did a hundred years ago. There isn't that belief in the human figure anymore. We have far more difficulty in being simple about something, so that we can't even think universal things. We can't state them, we can't see them, we can't conceive them in any way at all, in a way that people have

been able to do for over the last two thousand years of so." (17)

From the 'Faust' paintings Hall moved on to produce another series of paintings called 'The Flaying of Marsyas' (Fig 2). These are indeed a further development of the sexual theme in his life and work. In them the sexual image is still overt and obvious, less obvious than before but, nonetheless it is still playing on a conscious level of investigation. This is a stage where Hall not only questions his humanity in relation to sexuality and death but, very strongly introduces the notion of the artist also. 'The Flaying of Marsyas' series consists of ten paintings in all. They are painted in pink-fleshy pigments with browns, reds, greys and blacks also predominating throughout. Here, also Hall further pushes the myth element. "Myths are about death. In myths someone dies or is born from death . . . 'The Flaying of Marsyas' describes the way vital instincts are rendered at the mythological level . . . Marsyas is brutally flayed alive by Apollo because of his failure to be the most accomplished flute player. We can see in Hall's treatment of the Marsyas theme, the dangers of human emotionality and its excess. Apollo's sadistic fantasy is enacted when he takes his (artistic) success too far into the realms of his own excesses of sexual mastery : Sadism. These paintings are striking both in beauty and violence, a reminder of the brutal disorder which can occur when man (here represented by Apollo), attempts to destroy death through a symmetry of repression and self-repression." (18)

The next major turning point in Hall's development was with his most recent series of paintings 'Heart' (Fig 3). These were painted in 1987 and show a particularly significant step in the evolution of Hall's awareness. The images move more directly to the subconscious and hold an ever more heightened sense of reality and truth than all his previous work. Here sexuality is pushed out of the direct line of focus. Instead the self is pursued in an extremely raw state of original energy. Peculiarly enough it is in these images that life, death and sexuality seem to unite in a coherent force more than ever before. These images have entered more deeply than ever, in his

work, the deep deep silence of being, the silence from which pours forth our energy for life, sexuality and death. More than anything here there is a fantastic mastery of death "Death is a person with whom we must have a relationship. It is by projecting ourselves into the moment of death that we can judge our work and its reality". (19) Death is the secret to energy.

The influence of the German Expressionists on Hall's work, as with Graham, has been minimal, if at all. What he does admire all the same in the German Expressionist use of sexual imagery was the innocence of their direct relationship with their own sexuality. Beckman and Munch is particular appeal to him on this level. However, what influence there is on his sexual imagery comes from further back: Velasques, Goya, Titian and Delacroix. Recently he has been studying with great interest the work of Claude De Lorraine. Paradoxically though he finds the German Expressionists are less likely to delude one or lead one into the nightmare spoken of earlier.

From amongst today's artists he feels Bacon must have been a big influence. But, he does not find Bacon immediately appealing and so considers that whatever influence took place occurred unconsciously. It is Lucien Freud with which Hall finds greater affinity. Freud, he finds, is very close to Velasquez in the sense that in both there exists a Germanic formality. They behave as a stark coldness surrounding a warm flame, a spark. For twentieth century art to succeed in expressing reality it must go about it in an enigmatic way. The enigma is central to Freuds work. It succeeds in this respect. There is no longer room for a straight forward expression of truth, it just does not work.

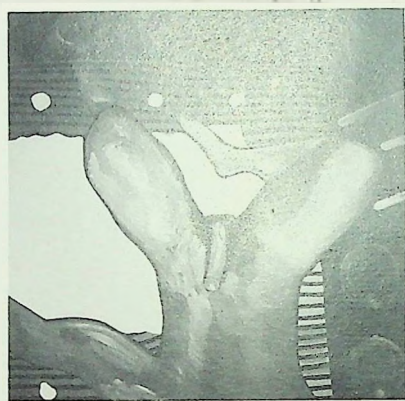


Fig 1 : Lover Of Horses - 1981
Patrick Hall



Fig 2 : The Flaying Of Marsyas No 1 - 1984
Patrick Hall



Fig 3 : Heart - 1987
Patrick Hall

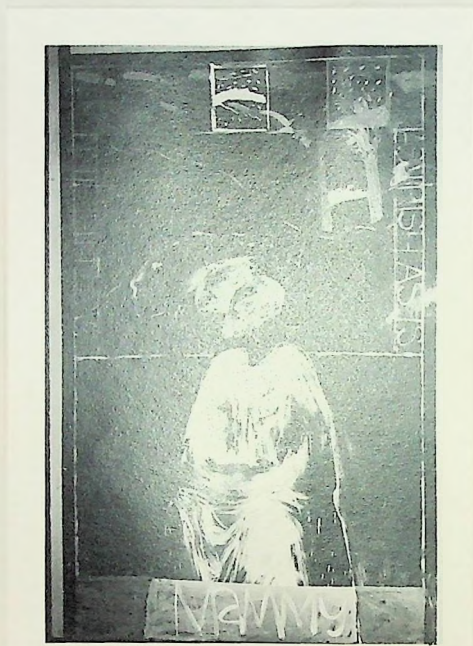


Fig 4 : Ire/land (Mammy) - 1980
Patrick Graham

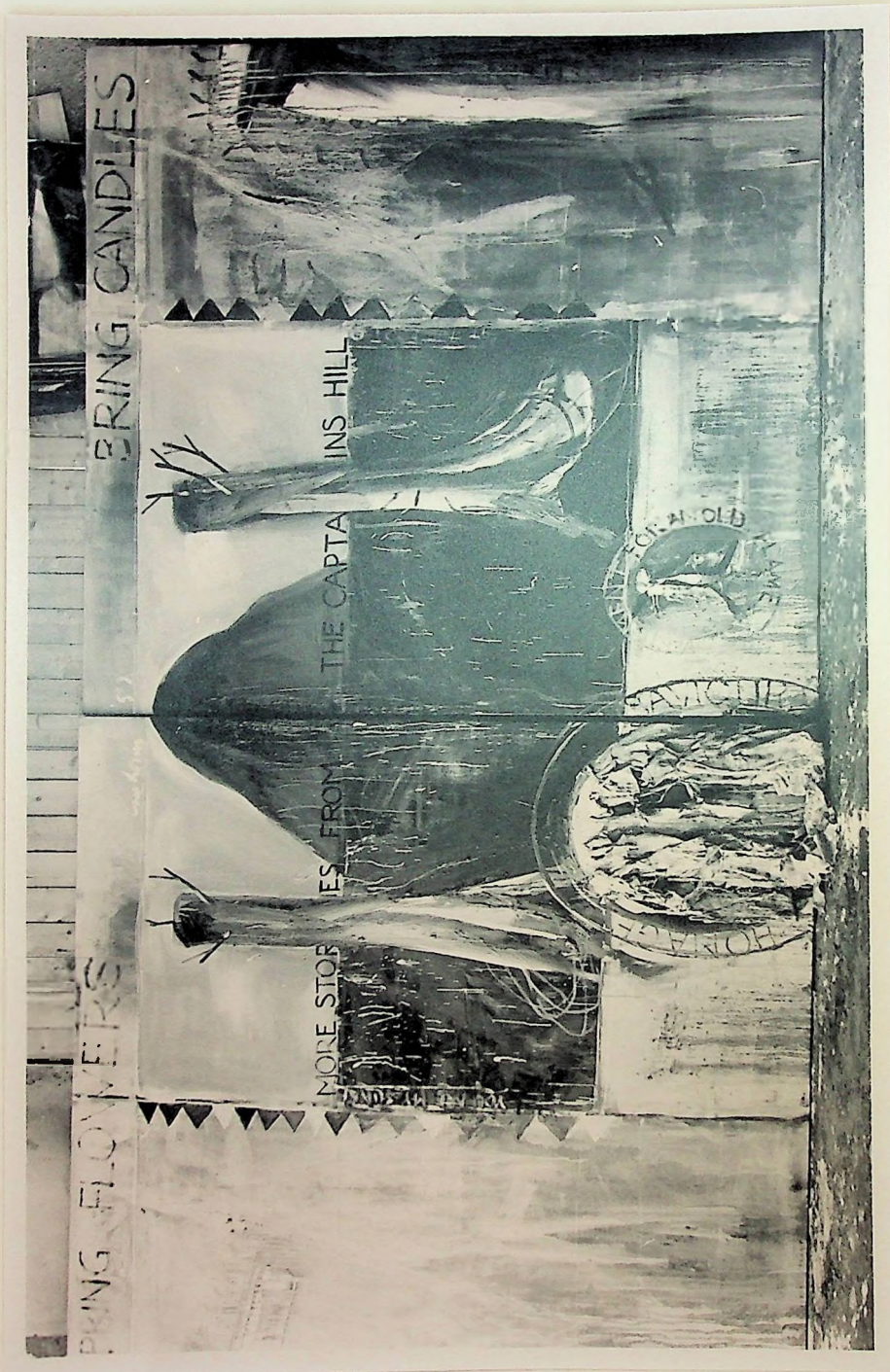


Fig 5 : More Stories From The Captain's Hill - 1987
Patrick Graham

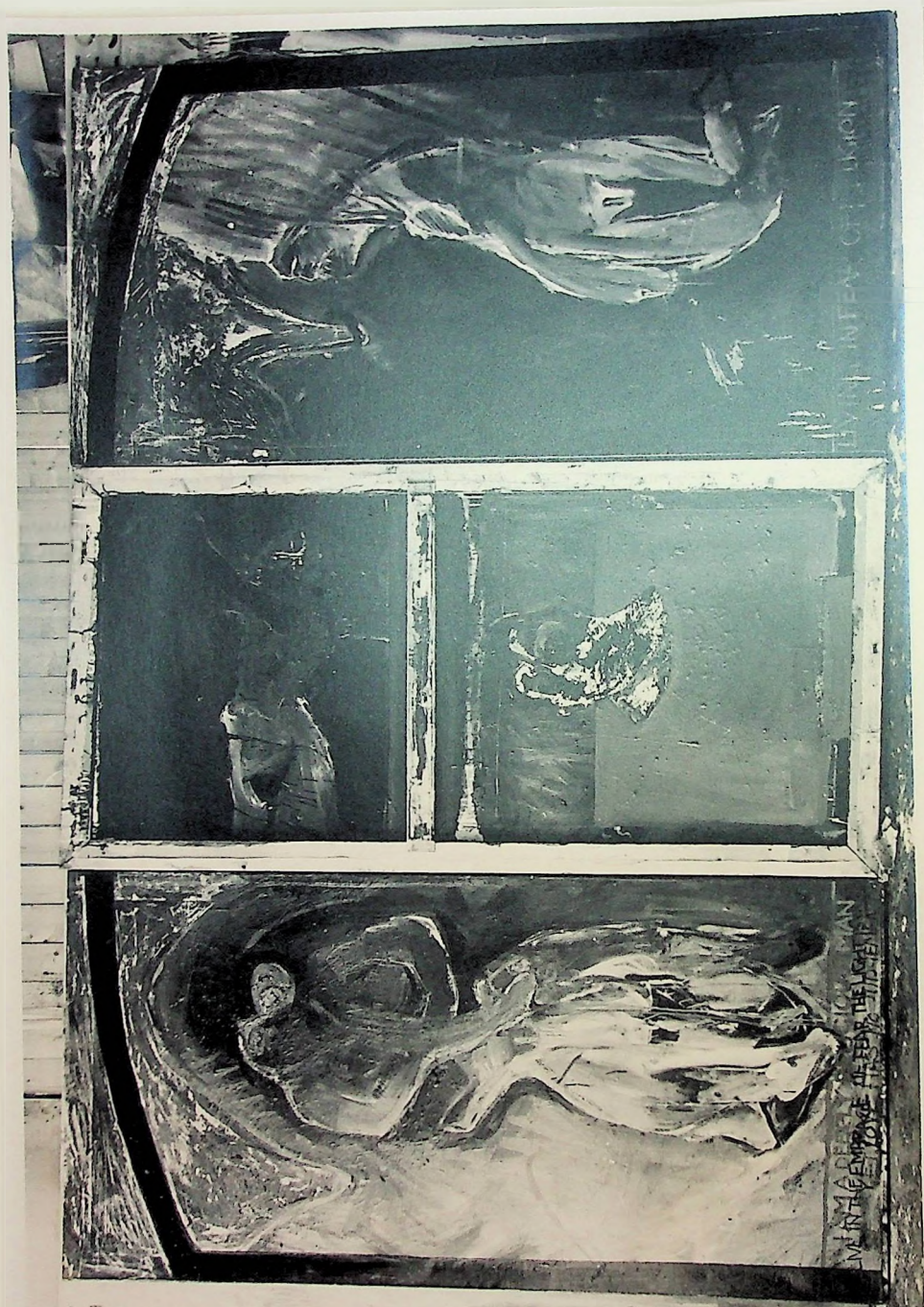


Fig 6 : Penance - 1987
Patrick Graham

There are three basic influences in life which Patrick Graham claims stimulate, motivate and interest him. These are Justice, Painting and sex. Each of these can be subdivided to incorporate all else but these are the bottom line principles, in a manner of speaking. Justice for example could incorporate all politics and religion. Sex could incorporate love. There are of course many areas where the divisions overlap. Justice and Painting also incorporate love, love of humanity, love of the Self, love of a man for a woman, or a homosexual love. All feed and fuel his work.

His work is obsessively autobiographical. One does not need to know Graham nor his past in order to appreciate and understand what is happening in his images. It can be fascinating though, particularly to a student, to make the links back through the paradoxes, contradictions and truths to the original human beginnings of such vision. One of the most obvious presences in his work is the powerful sense of sexuality combined with emotions. It is important to emphasise that his paintings and drawings are never purely about sex but, are concerned with sexuality. That is not to say that he has not dealt with the theme of eroticism. He has. But, although these works deal more with the sexual response, they are never prurient sex nor pornographic.

Graham's work is not a product of this country nor his environment nor his family nor his reactions to them. All these things certainly are of his experience and therefore, do lend themselves most accurately to the tangible manifestation of the driving forces behind this person. He grew up in a typically small Irish Catholic town and family which practised vehemently all the religious and social taboos and traditions. His father being away from this home a great deal Graham found himself in a household dominated by his mother and sisters. This strong female presence coupled with the sexual and religious conflicts that arose within himself left a strong impression and preoccupation with the female image. At the

time it was coped with through an extraordinary sensual communion with the earth. Later it was suppressed and repressed and thus became perverted and frustrated. All was to eventually re-emerge and find balance in the painted imagery.

Graham is intrigued by the differences, and indeed similarities, between male and female. He attaches great importance to the use of the female image in his work either in an effort to comprehend the female nature, both in himself and in others, or as an allegory for other expressions. He has used the female image to represent Ireland. Ultimately, of course, all efforts are for an understanding of his own Self. As a child during the forties in rural Ireland such an impulse was regarded as evil and perverted, distinctly unhealthy. Harrowed by such oppression the female became a kind of threat. It eventually became necessary to overcome and rectify this situation. The painted image was his natural form of dealing with it. The first and perhaps most important of such influences to fall subject to his scrutinization was the mother figure. This gave rise to a series of paintings which he refers to as 'The Mammy Pictures' (Fig 4). Irish fathers, he feels, were greyish, background figures in everyday life while mothers tended to be the moral and religious deliberators. In league with Mother Church they were people who created a claustrophobic atmosphere of inhibitions for all who fell beneath their fold, both male and female, including themselves. Within reason certain forms of violence were acceptable but, the free, natural expression of sexuality was absolutely prohibited, leading to a further stifling of warmth, unquestioning love, basic open tenderness and understanding.

In the painting 'Bogwoman' or 'Memories Of The Land' (no illustration available) there appears a tortured female figure reclining in a "brown organic stormy Irish landscape By putting black stockings on the figure and painting the lower half of the body more tightly, thereby making it more immediately obvious to the viewer, Graham seems to reduce the woman to something predominantly sexual.

This seems to imply that to give her any other sense of identity such as a strong emotional one would be too much for him to have coped with. It illustrated the feeling, the problem he has expressed of only being able, at a certain stage in his life, to cope with women in a base sexual manner and nothing beyond that. The painting also gives a strong, sense of earthy sexuality and the Irish landscape." (10) The Irish land indeed offers a tremendous sense of duality which has caused severe crisis and still causes severe crisis in many today. On the one hand it offers a richness, moistness, undeniable beauty and real magic while also it crushes with the oppression of a dogmatic church, the violence of confliction within national identity, the haphazard provincial, amateurish attitudes of those in politics, a pathetic state of economy and an inadequate educational system. Graham finds that today women need men less than they ever did before. Many men, though, are still rooted in past ideals and are finding themselves with out of date attitudes, consequently relying more heavily on women than they ever did before. Graham portrays an extraordinary sense of respect for the female. Although his images can often deal with them in a stereo typical manner, both maternal and sexual, it is a form of containing the concern and emotion he experiences in connecting with them. "I'll always use women in my paintings, there're the most powerfully emotive thing I respond to." (11)

For Graham the absorbing of the completeness of self into himself is somehow manifested in the relationship with his sexual partner. He sees this relationship as a unique meeting of two individuals. This meeting is tainted by the world's view of relationship which advocates a situation of 'possess and be possessed'. This is the basis of world power - the domination of the species by the species. There lies within the spiritual nature of Self, though, a definite unwillingness to be possessed or to want to possess. And so, contrary to common opinion there is a distinct unselfishness and farsightedness in Graham's attitudes in this respect. The child's dependancy to the parent is an almost pure relationship, 'the dependancy of a leaf to a tree' (14). But, the adults dependancies

are more unnatural, for their source is the worlds conditionings on notions of possession.

Graham is not very well disposed to talking about the Church in respect of sexuality. Its a space he left behind a long time ago and has since had no reason to plough it all up again. He simply gets bored with inferences to the topic. He admits he felt a tremendous need, in his earlier years, to fight the Church and have them fight him. Soon he found that his life and problems were not about anyone else, they were about himself, his death and the intermediary energy, be it sexual or otherwise. He does acknowledge, however, the inaccuracy of religions to use sexuality as a power structure to confine people, to control people, to manipulate and destroy their sense of themselves, to destroy their growing sense of Self. A child examines its own sexuality in a state of absolute innocence. What makes it non-innocent is the intrusion of the parent who is full of complexes about sexuality. The intrusion in the delight of one's own body as a gift, as a beautiful experiential vehicle and the destruction of sex as the celebration and transcendent thing it can be disturbs Graham. The destruction of this celebration gives birth to a furtive pornographic awareness, the voyeur. He will use this awareness of sexuality as a metaphor for nationhood, for people, for any kind of non-liberation - it is the closest thing to him that he can use as metaphor. But he will also explore sexuality for its own inherent beauties, for itself.

Graham never uses sex in purely sexual terms. He uses it as this metaphor for his core feelings about life. He believes it is the most fundamental of drives in life, so naturally if there is applied behind that a certain religious power or a dogma one encounters all kinds of complications which become evident in the way people act and interact with each other in their various relationships. With something influencing on such a huge scale as sexuality it has been paramount for him to come to terms with it in his own life. This has quite naturally emerged on the canvas. It emerges in the search

for innocence, in the search for the freedom to be pure of the world, not to have any of the over-riding negative power influences; be they Church, social or moral.

Sexuality emerges in the work in extremely subtle ways sometimes. The work may not have any obvious sexual overtones but yet, even in his more religious icons, there is everpresent that sexual energy. This is something flush with his own inner nature and indeed his own inner religious experiences. It is comparable to the ancient Oriental use of the body as a vehicle for transcendence through sexuality into god-like states. It is a perception he has arrived at out of despair, as others may also. The choice then emerges to either accept what has been unearthed or to remain with the world's sense of conditioning and ignore this more enlightening, broadening of the self out of fear that it may be sinful, because, of its very nature, it counteracts the world's sense of what is correct.

Death and sex are inextricably linked in Graham's view, as in Hall's view also. Most people are aware of a sexual activity as an act between two bodies, two energies but an essential point seems to be generally overlooked. The moment of sexual climax is a moment of extreme transcendence. It can almost be described as the most religious moment available to the human being while in a world state. It is the moment when all beauty, energy, universal power, self power, the physical and the transcendental can culminate for a split second, when the conscious self becomes nothing except the manifestation of the experience itself. It is a moment of total silence, a vacuum. The only way society seems to have made an attempt at dealing with this inadequacy and repression which itself advocates by making an educational thing out of it.

In such a transcended state the body and the world is left behind for an instant in what can be described as a living Death. "It's an exquisite moment. It can be terrifying. As the French call it, 'Small Death'." (14) In Graham's experience, the energy of his being human when directed in a sexual way becomes a pure energy. It

is identical to the purity of energy he experiences when painting. In that, it becomes apparent that the sexuality in the images is not overt. On the contrary, painting with a volition of such energy which is of a sexual tension the imagery even if it is not obviously sexual has a sexual intonation about it. And perhaps this is the danger or threat people can sense from Graham's work. The greatest threat to anybody is loss or Death. This is the culmination of a sexual relationship though. Unfortunately the majority experience it as a damning sensation out of fear instead of the elevation that it is. Society has conditioned the human into experiencing loss of self consciousness as total loss, it has become a tremendous fear, though few are aware of it. It does not matter that the imagery is political or otherwise, what it deals with is an extremely essential humanistic sense, the humanism of sexuality. This is where the real power of the image can come from.

What Graham vehemently is not advocating is the use of sex in painting as, say, a political statement. "That comes out as what I call erection art. Its about sex, and its obvious, and its affordable. People can afford to look at it and take it and make comments about it, make sexual innuendos and jokes, and it becomes part of the currency of sexuality. I mean, people only joke about things they find terrifying. That reduces it to the level of the acceptable political thing I don't know how else to put it People will obviously refer to it that it is about sexuality, that it states its case quite bluntly. In fact, its about titilation in many ways, or its there to shock you." (14) But, the one image that seems to truely disturb people is the one dealing with sexuality, not in the sense of the political or of titilation, or anything like that, but as a quest to understand its force, its energy and its spiritual dimension. It is this level of investigation which appears to truly terrify the human on a very deep level of subconsciousness because this is the image that is dealing with Death.

It has taken Graham a number of years to find this. In earlier work

he too used sexual imagery in a very immature way. It was a blatantly sexual image which came out of a lack of understanding that the greatest resource the human has is this energy, because it is the Self.

On the question of sublimation Graham is adamant. He finds it is an extremely contrived channeling of this energy. The human, he believes, is both as magical and spiritual as it is earth-bound. To remain in one pole or the other or just somewhere in between does not work well with him. To incorporate both while still alive in the body is the balance required to complete the experience of living. To apply an intellectual restraint in order to sexually manipulate a denial seems to somehow half the experience of living fully human. There is no doubt that to stop a particular activity, to deny oneself a particular activity is an extremely beneficent way to discover more about the nature of such activity. But for Graham such discoveries are better made out of the natural movement of the activity itself. To complete the experience first and intellectualise later gives a more fuller insight, to intellectualise first one cannot know what the natural evolution of such an essentially human experience has to offer. It apparently divides this experience of humanity thus inducing an imbalance in the polarity.

Contrary to common interpretation Graham does not find much influence in the early German Expressionists, particularly on the subject of sexual imagery. He finds Beckman tends to use sexuality more as a weapon. He uses the whore or prostitute in analogies of society and the human condition. Although he does it well, Graham finds Beckman incompatible with his own view of life and death being one. Closer to this ideal is Munch in such paintings as 'Innocence' and 'Jealousy'. But even here there is great distance. Nolde is perhaps the closest any other artist from history can come to Graham's own attitude to this subject. In Nolde's landscapes he acknowledges a marriage of the nature of man and the nature of earth. In this consummation of earth and human there is life and

death. These landscapes come out of the energy of Being and the force of nature. Similarly in Nolde's more figurative work there exists the same kind of realization. But it was the landscapes that really influenced Graham because when he saw them initially he experienced exactly what most people experience with his own work now, he saw them as dreadful, as lumps of painted rubbish which anyone could have done. Basically he was terrified by them.

Today, the only living artist which Graham acknowledges as being one he can relate to with regard to sexuality in a work of art is Patrick Hall. "You know, its his saying, I've put death in my pocket. I know exactly what he means, and I can't explain it."

(14) It is Hall's series of 'Heart' (Fig 3) paintings with which Graham finds himself most able to identify with. He feels Hall is misunderstood to the extent that many, particularly in 'The Flaying of Marsyas' (Fig 2) series seek out an overt sexual interpretation with references to the stripping of flesh, etc. Whereas, in fact, he perceives in them that familiar identification of the death in the most life giving energy of all.

Bacon he feels is more of a performer who in fact is aware of the whole phenomenon but seems to distance himself from it as a source for subjective scrutiny. In Lucien Freud's work he sees a more prurient type of sexuality executed as technically exquisite with a sort of macabre twist. He does not find it has much to offer him on this subject.

With further reference to particular images by Graham on the subject in question 'More Stories from the Captains Hill' (Fig 5) is a painting oozing with this kind of inherent sexuality. A simple enough image on the surface - two large fields of relatively empty space, one on the extreme right and one on the left. A tall tree stump cum figure on each inner side of the two panels with the hill in between. The canvas is cut twice on the lower parts towards the centre clearly indicating in the right hand one a healing wound or a vagina sewn up and in the left one a disembowlement, vomit, excretion

or menstruation. It is an image that is difficult to speak about in itself, as most of Graham's images are from recent years. It is hard to say whether the intense sense of sexuality is coming from these abrupt slits and holes in the canvas combined with the sensuality of the figures/trees which are unusually phallic in their adroitness, or whether it comes more directly from the very obvious hill or protrusion which is painted with equal sensuality as the figures. Perhaps it even comes from out of the playful coloured triangles lining the division between the inner and outer spaces, jagged against those monumental areas of rest. Even the words on the top of the image are somehow highly sensual, 'Bring Flowers - Bring Candles'. No doubt it is a combination of all these aspects of the image and much more which ultimately portrays the energy of both the life and death which carries and is carried by sexuality.

Alternatively in the painting 'Penance' (Fig 6) sexuality is dealt with much more directly and explicitly. This painting in its original state was made up of the right and left panels only. The paint was much more luxuriously laid on with a strong seductive veneer. After its return to Ireland having been exhibited in Los Angeles Art Fair, USA, 1986, Graham reworked it adding the centre panel. Much of the background paintwork was scraped off and reworked leaving an almost shattered image in replace. The figures in either of the extreme panels now stand out more in a raw screeching environment. Somehow it is pleasurable and painful all at once. The sexual identification of the figures is very ambiguous indeed. They display genitals, but none too clearly defined. While standing as monuments of holiness they seem like the epitome of sexual rape. There is contained within them the angel and the whore. They are extremely beautiful beings in their own right, highly seductive. But they kill.

The centre panel is split in two by the horizontal crossbar on the stretcher of the inverted canvas. In the lower half Graham sits cozily 'inside' the canvas looking out at us. He is well protected by the house of cards surrounding. The sexual/death beings can

still catch him here but not in the top half where his sexuality
innocence and death achieve some form of transcendant unification
avoiding all destructive forces by incorporating its nature into
itself without succumbing to its force. Here he becomes the entire
enigma.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

"I do not per-se work with sexual imagery, yet some images might act as metaphors to that or could have subtle sexual connotations. If you mean sexual imagery as a liberal motive then my work is void of this. When sexual imagery finds its roots in emotive realms then my work has plenty, I guess. Sexual imagery as emotive charge is very much present in my work; how else could it be However, I believe it is more in a line, in use of colour sensuality in particular that it comes through rather than depicting a sexual image as such. Making marks on a canvas I could describe as a 'love-making'." (15) From as far back as recorded history goes both visually and literally we find the use of sexual imagery. According to the various cultures and their time in history there have been periods of immense freedom in the expression and interpretation of sexuality and periods of immense tension, denial and corruption of sexuality.

When the human becomes unhappy about something then they begin to question and analyse it. Sexuality has run into its share of this. Earlier civilisations seem to have had a much more healthy rapport on this level. They seemed to easily comprehend the nature of the essential energy we are and its relationship to life, death and eternity. Today, we have in the West, at least, lost that seemingly simple perception. Schopenhauer, Freud, Jung and more recently Assagioli have made some fascinating inroads into the whole nature of our sexuality, its source, consequences and abilities. As much as it is evident in our lives from the second we become physical (we are male or female), it is evident in our art. It always has been there, at times not as overt as other times. But, as mentioned above, it comes out merely by the fact that it is a human with reasonable dexterity creating the image. Whether it comes out fluent or stunted, positive or negative, direct or indirect, it will eventually emerge.

Both Patrick Hall and Patrick Graham express similar interests in

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