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A Visual Presentation of Man Prostituting Himself

Philip Edward Mullen Jr.

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A VISUAL PRESENTATION OF
MAN PROSTITUTING HIMSELF

Philip Edward Mullen Jr.
"

COTTON FIBER CONTENT

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty
of the
Graduate School
of the
University of North Dakota
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

June

1966

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This thesis submitted by Philip Edward Mullen Jr. in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the University of North Dakota, is hereby approved by the Committee under whom the work has been done.

Robert H. Mullen
Chairman

Douglas Kinsey

John Penn

Dean of the Graduate School

236210

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ABSTRACT

This study involves the artistic presentation of the concept that: "Man prostitutes himself and is trapped by his own prostitution." The chief problems of the thesis were the clarification of that concept and its subsequent interpretation in aesthetic form.

Formulation of the basic idea demanded an examination of prostitution in its broader aspects. The use of man's talents for base purposes was considered in the areas of public relations, business, corporation operation, art, education and religion. Then consideration was given to the assemblage as an aesthetic communicative device. This discussion involved the level of articulation available to the assemblage, and the emotive use of non-art objects in art work.

A series of assemblages were projected to communicate the basic concept. The assemblages were first considered in view of their technical and aesthetic qualities. Their execution was then explored in detail. This exploration involved surface quality, material, the physical scale of the work, and the relation of the parts to the total work.

The conclusions derived from this thesis were open-ended but indicated the potential of the assemblage as a method of aesthetic communication or concepts.

INTRODUCTION

The art world seems to be divided into two groups. One group includes the artists and the critics, the other is the public. In the days of the stratified social system, when art was produced for the nobility, these two groups were strongly divided.¹ Today, with a relatively non-stratified social system in America, this gap still exists.

It is my hope, in this study, to examine the means by which this gap may be closed and thereby to aid other artists. My specific method will be to trace my ideas from basic influence to final work. This study is not meant to be a defense of my ideas, but an explanation of the manner in which they were transferred to aesthetic form.

¹Alfred Neumeyer, The Search for Meaning in Modern Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1961), pp. 2-3.

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING THE WORK

Social Pressures Influencing the Work

In the modern world man may be caught in what might be called a compromising society. For example, it is much easier to get a job if you look like an "All-American boy". This means no mustache, no beard, hair not too long, clothes which are what are generally accepted by those doing the hiring or clothes helping to create a "good, clean-cut American look". To secure employment some people who look like individuals are forced to compromise by acquiring the "right" appearance. This type of compromise seems to have far-reaching effects. It does however in itself involve giving up a minor personal honor for value or profit. It might additionally lead to prostitution. Prostitution is "To devote to base or unworthy purposes; as, to prostitute one's talents."² "Base usually implies indignation aroused by the setting of self-interest ahead of duty or honor."³

A view of man, in the role which I would call a professional prostitute, is shown in Murry Teigh Bloom's article, The Great American Build-up.⁴ Bloom relates the adventures of a build-up man and his various clients. The build-up man is a special type of public relations expert who endows his client with those images that he needs to be successful.

²Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1951), p.679.

³Ibid., 72.

⁴Murry Teigh Bloom, "The Great American Build-up," Playboy, July, 1965, pp. 79, 112-117.

Success refers to many sorts of goals, but generally these are business, financial, or power goals. The build-up man prepares the client to do the right things, thereby producing an image that makes news and gets awards. In some cases the client may even be embarrassed because of a realization that reward is of more consequence to him than duty. According to Bloom, many such clients conceal their own ambition by doing things for "the company". One technique in use by the build-up men is client testimony to a Senate or House committee on any trivial subject available. This is then advertized as something of importance. The honor, in this case, is much greater than the deed. Another technique used to elevate a client's image is to have the client receive an honorary degree. In Bloom's article, a public relations man tells how, through negotiation with a departmental chairman, he secured an honorary degree for a client with the stipulation that the client would first donate twenty thousand dollars to the particular school. Some of the ways in which the build-up man works to help a client get his awards are deplorable in terms of motivation. One is the practice of presenting scholarships for the sake of the donor's personal publicity. The motive is obvious when publicity costs are far greater than the scholarship fund itself. In 1934, Stanley Walker wrote about build-up in City Editor saying: "Some of the press agents engaged in this calling confess that it is the most soul-corroding way of making a living known to man."⁵

⁵Ibid., 79, 112-117.

The Bloom article may leave one with the stereotyped view that big businessmen are merely money-seekers. There are, however, all sorts of evidence that man prostitutes himself in many other activities. Absenteeism, because of job dissatisfaction, can be viewed as a symptom of prostitution. This is widespread according to Robert Caleo in his article, "Absenteeism."⁶ Job dissatisfaction could occur because a man is working solely for a pay check or because his boss and/or society are more interested in production than in job satisfaction for the worker. In either of these cases the reward is placed before satisfaction. This is not an attempt to establish blame or even maintain that placing reward first is a bad practice, but this example is used to show the manner in which man can sell himself to gain the reward of money.

Elaine Kendall, in an article called The Cult of Culture, points out many ways in which the art world has become debased.⁷ She writes about the artist's public life as a sell-out to the patrons. She is concerned with the financial relationship of artists to "patrons in the arts," as she calls them. These wealthy patrons can make or break an artist financially; they have a strong hold on the artist and can apply taste pressures for certain ideas, styles, techniques, or developments. They can apply this pressure only when the artist regards reward (fame

⁶Robert L. Caleo, "Absenteeism," Administrative Management, June, 1963, pp. 23-24.

⁷Elaine Kendall, "The Cult of Culture," Show, March, 1965, pp. 27-31.

and money) before personal expression or that representation which he believes is truth. Miss Kendall says that when such artists as Arthur Kopit, Edward Albee, and Andy Warhol, allow themselves to be shown in fashion photos, they reduce themselves to the level of fashion. In addition, they put themselves on a level with other celebrities such as the Beatles, who are also being shown in fashion photos. These artists are trading the cultural position of the artist for popularity. Since it is hard to separate an artist such as Andy Warhol from his work, it seems that he is trading the cultural position of his art for popularity, which is often readily convertible to cash. The reason it is hard to separate Warhol from his work is that his work supports a mass production culture. The work supports assembly line products and the "in today out tomorrow" styles or fashions of planned obsolescence. Due to their presentation of mass culture some artists may feel that an additional communicatory aspect is added to their work by modeling in fashion magazines. Even with this consistency it is not unlikely that Warhol's art work may be reduced to a more commercial and non-individualistic product than he expects. His worship of mass production may, in fact, make his work individualistic when compared to other artists work. If the work is an individualistic expression of commercialism, it is different from commercialism and deserves a different public image. Even if Warhol is willing to have his art viewed as a commercial product, other artists, upon whom his actions may reflect, may not accept this position. If this is the case, Warhol may purposely be prostituting the public image of

many artists. One might also ask whether his position on commercialism is real or is only a product of commercial success.

Success can be very rapid today if an artist has the "right" views and contacts. According to N. A. Fryer, a Minneapolis gallery owner, one appearance on the Jack Paar Show was enough to push artist Walter Keene to national popularity overnight.⁸ This type of situation might tempt an artist to use art as a commercial product instead of a communicative tool.

There are some forms of prostitution that our society, as a whole, seems to support. One of these is planned obsolescence. In The Waste Makers, Vance Packard discusses the American plan for fashions and automobiles designed to go out of style in a few years.⁹ The purpose of this plan is to enable the manufacturers to continue to sell the same product with minor variations year after year. If "manufacturer" is used in its broadest sense, it includes sales department, assembly lines, transportation personnel and the actual owners and operators. Packard reports that Clare Briggs, Chrysler vice president, said that the auto industry has treated the public badly, to say the least. Planned obsolescence is so widely accepted that in 1958 one large manufacturer said: "Manufacturers have downgraded quality and upgraded complexity. The poor

⁸N. A. Fryer is owner and operator of the Windsor Gallery, 5019 France Ave. So., Minneapolis, Minnesota. The gallery deals in prints, including the Walter Keene prints.

⁹Vance Packard, The Waste Makers (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 57, 92.

consumer is going crazy."¹⁰ This implies that a greater value is being put on the manufacturer's reward than on the service performed. In Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, Willy Loman states the consumer's dilemma when he says: "Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it's broken . . . They time them so when you've finally paid for them, they're used up."¹¹

The practice of prostituting ideas or credoes is subtle and difficult to pin down. For example, a man may go to a certain church, because "it's good business." He may introduce his children to religious doctrine this way. He sells his children's religious beliefs for business "assists". Man may further prostitute ideas by using a particular belief as a placebo (a sugar pill) or a pacifier. In religion, this may be manifested in the people Murray Krieger calls Kierkegaard's "men of little heart; those who, evading the atheist's existential obligation to confront nothingness and its frighteningly empty consequences, construct elaborate rational structures based on nothing else: who whistle in the dark as if all were light."¹² This kind of structure could be built in almost any field including science, the arts, and religion. In religion many practitioners stress the difficulty of being a good church member.

¹⁰Ibid., 57, 92.

¹¹Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), p. 73.

¹²Murray Krieger, "Tragedy and the Tragic Vision," Tragedy: Vision and Form, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1965), p. 29.

It is, however, very common to find people using religion as a pacifier. It may be a social outlet, or even more to the point, a method of dismissing their fears. There are some Roman Catholics who use confession to unload their own burden of guilt. If man does in fact sell the truth so that he may wallow in his own greatness, it becomes difficult for him to stand back and view the situation objectively.

Reviewing various forms of prostitution for immediate goals, it seems that the long range effects are negative. The salesman of merchandise that has a built-in obsolescence is also a consumer of such goods. When the college degree becomes a union card that men want to buy it, protest groups similar to the Berkeley Underground may be formed. Although the Berkeley Underground was formed primarily to protest a lack of academic freedom, there are strong implications that attitudes concerning the granting of a degree independent of education were a strong factor. There are those who believe that the requirements for a degree forced the student to prostitute himself to an almost hopelessly big academic hierarchy. According to Michael Miller in Letter from the Berkeley Underground, some consider the universities "an academic assembly line geared to cranking out an endless succession of mindless, faceless robots . . ."¹³ When artists put themselves and their art on a commercial level they subject themselves to fads and commercial control. Observe the manner in which Andy Warhol quickly rose to success or how rapidly Alfred Leslie became

¹³Michael Miller, "Letter from the Berkeley Underground," Esquire, September, 1965, p. 86.

unpopular. If man uses things that are supposedly serious, such as religion, for placebos, how is he going to ever find any truths or devise any values? The prostitution of man and the backlash effect of this prostitution have led me to the belief that: Man prostitutes himself and is trapped by his own prostitution.

The Use of Assemblage as a Communicative Device. --In an article on Edward Kienholz's new tableau, (tableau being a multi-material environmental sculpture), Suzi Gablik said, "For Kienholz, art is an instrument to be put to special use; if it can revise human understanding, it can change the world."¹⁴ Kienholz claims to have started the tableau, "Barney's Beanery," when he noticed the contrast between the customers in a local beanery that he frequented and a headline in the newspaper outside, which read "Children kill children". It referred to the war in Viet Nam. Art for me, as for Kienholz, is a means of communication. The artist should always question his work in terms of meaning. The viewer should also question meaning. This does not mean that one should always question the artist as to its meaning but should contemplate the work asking, "What does it mean to me?"

My choice of assemblage as a communicative technique was originally made because of that which William Klenk refers to, in his doctoral thesis at Ohio State University, as ". . . a heightened awareness of the pictorial scheme and . . . a level of articulation not available with

¹⁴Suzi Gablik, "Crossing the Bar," Art News, October, 1965, p. 23.

traditional means."¹⁵ Seymour Locks says, "The purpose of these objects is to be strong images. They are ideas. Their function is to make the room a new environment."¹⁶ The main advantage assemblage has in creating this environment, (an advantage over more traditional painting or sculpture) is the wide choice of materials that are available to the artist. A heightened awareness may be derived from the tactile experience that both artist and viewer may have when creating or viewing an assemblage. "Tactile" refers to the touch sensations that may be actually felt or imagined as the assemblage is caressed by the eye. The tactile is heightened because of the multiple materials used. George Ortman, who now is a leading assemblage artist, said "The surface of the painting becomes an adventure" ¹⁷

Another strong influence toward working in assemblage was the preoccupation with the object in modern America.¹⁸ Because some of the objects were familiar the viewer seemed to relate more readily than to my paintings. For example, some viewers were, they told me, compelled to find out of what certain areas such as the pillow-like structure or the photographic montage sections were made. I found that a sustained interest

¹⁵William Charles Klenk, Image and Material in College Technique (Ph.D. Thesis, Ohio State University, 1960), p.3.

¹⁶Mary Fuller, "San Francisco Sculptors", Art in America, Vol. 4, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1964), p. 39.

¹⁷George Ortman, "Artist's Comments", Art in America, Vol. 4, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1964), p. 39.

¹⁸"Assemblage at the Frontier", Time, October 15, 1965, pp. 106-108.

was achieved because of the particular materials used. This seemed especially true in the case of bizzare materials, such as a chair back, a magazine rack, or the figures created with wood and canvas. I would like to note that I never use bizzare materials for interest unless I think they actually impart aesthetic meaning. It would be, I think, adequate to say that my final choice of material is always in terms of the meaning it can impart.

CHAPTER II

THE WORK

Technical Aspects

Assemblage as I use it involves varied structural and technical aspects. This section is included to present the processes which I have used to achieve the aesthetic ends of the work. The discussion should be prefaced with a notation of the kinaesthetic and tactile enjoyment which I derive from working with varied materials.

The bases on the hanging assemblages were built to be flat and hard, except in cases where only attachments along the border of the work were needed. Standard canvas was used in some areas and for whole pieces when only side connections were necessary for construction. This practice helps eliminate weight. Doors were also used, but caused a serious weight problem. A stretcher-like frame and masonite were used in most cases. I found it advantageous to put braces or stretchers in front of masonite, so that it could serve both as reinforcement and as part of the visual surface of the assemblage.

The majority of the surfaces were built with wood. I found it structurally advantageous to use new wood predominately, but used old wood for areas that were in prominent view. Old wood was often too hard and brittle for extensive structural use.

The color scheme of the wood was basically black and white. I found that undercoating with red latex gave a richer surface to black areas. On pieces such as "Man as God", I found that a red glaze or transparent

coating over the black worked effectively. It was important to note that latex would chip if used over any other paint. I also found that even though black and white were being used with distinct edges, repainting, dripping, and more repainting between the white and black produced richer and more interesting surfaces.

Metal was used in some pieces basically for lettering. The letters were arc-welded which worked well on areas of metal that were painted. The paint was burned and charred in these welded areas. Welding from the back produced the same burned effect but allowed less actual beading or deposit of metal from the welding rods. After the welding was completed these surfaces were brushed with an electric power brush to remove all loose paint and to create an interesting surface on the metal. A final protective coating was then applied. Plastic spray was effective, although shellac on rough metal was useable. Cast bronze letters were used on one piece. These were made by carving an open face mold (an open mold or one that does not have a top) then pouring molten bronze into it and letting it harden. The letters can then be lifted out of the mold which can then be reused.

Materials such as canvas and transparent curtains were used. These materials were all sealed or protected from corrosive paints such as oil, or completely worked with non-corrosive latex.

Photographic or montage areas of the assemblage were glued with Elmer's Glue-All. Paint thinner was used in many cases to blur or obscure parts of these photographs. "Photographs" refers only to pictures

printed in ink such as magazine or newspaper photographs. Varnish or transparent paint was used to color some of the photographs.

Scraffitto, or scratching through, was used in several cases. This was done by applying a firm undercoat of color. I found that either a very light or dark value worked best. A color having the opposite value (dark on light or light on dark) was applied. This could be scratched through while wet or while dry. The best results for my purposes were obtained with an undercoat of green-red latex which appears dark brown. The overcoat was latex with most of the medium (the thin part) poured off. This was thickened further by the addition of one part sand to two parts paint. One of the non-mixed latex paints was used for the overcoat in this process because the pre-mixed was inseparable. The surface had to be worked wet and fast. It dried in less than five minutes and it was very hard to scratch through when dry. This type of surface application was flexible and bound well on canvas.

General Aesthetic Aspects. --There were certain aspects of my work which distinguished it from that of other assemblage artists. The emblematic or monumental quality of some work was one of the more notable aspects. Some pieces had arc-shaped upper areas that made them appear similar to a symmetrical emblem or monument. This point is explicated in the appendix. Other pieces incorporated the square top with a slight arc. Usually writing occurred on both types thus enhancing the

gravestone or monument-like quality. Gravestones, to me, are man's symbol of prestige, a monument for the dead body.

The totem-like quality of some of the pieces and the primitive feeling that the assemblages had to me was derived from the Indian totem pole. This is further explicated in the appendix. To the Indian, the totem pole was a sign of prestige. For example, one man might present gifts at a potlatch and receive none in return.¹⁹ In some tribes it was considered more honorable to have given more than you received. The man giving the most gifts could carve another section on his totem pole. The totem pole might also have designated a war victory, or show that a man had been first to make a kill on a hunt. Totem poles represented the owner's claim to fame and were actually very close to the importance which a paragraph in a social register has to a member of the "four hundred" in modern society.²⁰ To me it is similar to any symbol of achievement. Such may be a monument, money, a boy scout badge, sexual attractiveness, a college degree, or any other thing, tangible or otherwise, that is a symbol of accomplishment only.

The basic color scheme used was black and white. I used this in two basic patterns. In the first pattern the black covers about ninety per cent or more of the painted areas, while the white fills the remaining

¹⁹"Potlatch" is a feast in which rival leaders try to give more gifts than they receive from each other. The example is used here because it seems similar to some of the displays of wealth that exist today.

²⁰Matthew W. Stirling (Chief, Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution), "Indians of Our North Pacific Coast", The National Geographic Magazine, January, 1945, p. 28.

ten per cent or less. The meaning of black and white for me was basically the same as that used by modern psychologists. Faber Birren, in her book, Color Psychology and Color Therapy, defined the impressions and associations of black to be ominous, deadly, depressing, mourning, funeral-like, and negation of spirit. White was generally associated with pure, clean, frank, youthfulness, or brightness of spirit.²¹ I preferred these psychological meanings because I believed they tended to state the true reactions of modern man. With this sort of black-white symbolism in mind, the implication of the ninety per cent black to ten per cent white relationship was perceived by me to be a dominance of the death, or the negation of the spiritual aspects of man over the aspects of the pure, clean, bright spirit.

In the second pattern the white and black were considered to retain, generally, the same meanings as in the first. The white was made to appear destroyed or in the process of destruction. It took on a more ghostlike quality for me than the white in the other pieces. The effect was the suggestion that they might actually turn black if they were kept long enough. Some of them are more black than white. "Hollow Men: The Way the World Ends", shown in the appendix, is a good example of this.

The image which occurred with the most frequency was the faceless man. Although my particular presentation was somewhat unique, the faceless man had been used by many artists such as DeCirico, Oliveira, Munch,

²¹Faber Birren, Color Psychology and Color Therapy, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1950), p. 143.

and Moore, as well as the near-faceless men in the works of Lester Johnson, George Segal, and Balcomb Greene. Even primitive man used faceless figures. The general effect seemed to me to be that of a man who lacked individual identity. The generalized man was important to me because it represented the lack of identity that I believed man attains by selling or prostituting ideas, actions, or any part of his total make-up, for symbols of achievement.

The trapped or encased condition of the figure was used to show man as unable to move. This was used to imply man's condition as one which limited his mobility physically, mentally, and spiritually. It actually represented that which I called "totemic death". By "totemic death" I meant the loss of those parts of a man that must be sacrificed in order for him to gain symbols of achievement. For example, a man who gave up his own religious beliefs to join another religious group, so that he could make better business contacts gave up a part of himself. He was in a sense letting the part he gave up die. When a part of man was allowed to die in order that he might receive awards, I referred to this as "totemic death".

A similar term which I coined was "totemic world". This meant the part of a man's existence that was involved with acquiring symbols of achievement. Intrinsic to this idea was a notion that each person lived in many different worlds. Some of these worlds did not even seem to overlap. For example, a mother may have been a student, a secretary, a consumer, and a bad driver. These areas may overlap but could generally

be regarded as different worlds. The world of the totem-seekers is one of the many worlds in which a man may live each day.

In general, the assemblages for me had a feeling of death (i.e. negation of spirit) containing the remains of a purity and brightness of spirit. In some cases there was a feeling that the process of decay was actually in motion negating the spirit and turning it black. There were also strong implications that the environment was too overpowering for man; that he was forced into submission.

Aesthetics of the Works. --This section is divided into four parts. Each part is about a group of works. I will discuss here the four significant groups of assemblages done between April, 1965, and January, 1966. The four groups are the totem group, the totem with revised wordings, the decaying humanity group, and the anti-war group. Each group will be illustrated by two major works.

The Totem Group. --The assemblage titled "Totem" was a fusion of the trapped, faceless man with the totem. The black used on the entire figure, large portions of the base, sections of the trap, the letters, and on the chipped away sections of the metal, was meant to enhance the creation of a single total image. The wings (arm-like extensions) were attached to further enhance the connection between total shape and the figure. I envisioned the wings as arms that engulfed the figure from both sides. The figure was further engulfed by the various parts of the assemblage that cross in front of him. The purpose of the entire encompassing of the figure was to show man, represented by a figure of general

human characteristics, swallowed by a total totemic world. The entire assemblage was designed to be a monument in size, shape, and inscription.

"Totem: Two Stages" was created to repeat on the same aesthetic level all the statements made or implied in "Totem". There is an additional fusion of a section that represents a rejuvenation of the totemic world. The magazine rack aesthetically functions as a womb protecting its contents. The slats provide easy viewing of such contents but still give a protective shield to them. The embryos, as I call them, were designed with the soft flexible quality that I associate with embryos. They are green-black. Faber Birren says that green gives the impressions of quieting, refreshing, peacefulness, ghastliness, disease, terror, and guilt.²² Due to the black that was intermixed, the green tended to emphasize the more negative aspects such as ghastliness, disease, and guilt. The total impression desired was one of a ghastly, diseased embryo that bore the overtones of mourning, death, and negation of spirit.

The photographs were used to create an effect of unreality by placing a two-dimensional figure on the three-dimensional assemblage surface. The illusion was precise in terms of recognizability but was held at "psychic distance" as used by James Drever in A Dictionary of Psychology. He defines the term as a "degree of detachment of an individual from the practical significance or appeal of an object, particularly, but not necessarily, a work of art".²³ I believe that this "degree of

²²Ibid.

²³James Drever, A Dictionary of Psychology, (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 225.

detachment" occurs when the two-dimensional is viewed in a context to the three-dimensional, since the two-dimensional lacks the walk-around and tactile impact. The lack of these two qualities made the two-dimensional area less available to the perception of the viewer's many senses. Psychic distance was important to the total idea since the figure represented a person not completely in the totemic world. Along with the two-dimensional aspect, her expression of worldly detachment, a trance-like look, added to the psychic distance.

Totems with Revised Wordings. --"Souls for Sale" was built as a more pointed extension of the totem assemblages. The embryo, photograph and rack side and the trapped figure side were reversed from "Totem: Two Stages" in the hope that the piece would read from left to right in stages. I tried to infer a sense of a time sequence in this piece which was not present when doing "Totem: Two Stages". In this instance, sequence was emphasized by applying the word "produced" on the embryo area and "marketed" on the trapped figure area. The idea in this case was to give a production line feeling of orderly progression without a break in the pattern. The production line aspect was enhanced by using more embryos with greater similarity to each other than those used previously. The effect was like a miniature version of the body section on a Ford assembly line. With the addition of the word "produced" by a commercial stencil lettering the factory implication became very strong.

The faceless figure was fitted with a cloth covering and into a more encompassing structure. I wanted this figure to appear more hopelessly and completely trapped than either the embryos, or any figure that occurred in a previous work. This effect implied a certain point in the time sequence when man can become permanently trapped as compared to a time when he is trapped, but not so permanently. The piece implies progressive steps toward man's final entrapment. In short, the piece showed the debasement of man's intrinsic worth; a negation of man's spirit by the enclosing total environment, an environment in which man's soul becomes a product.

In "Man as God" six faceless, trapped figures were included as a series instead of as a single figure because I wanted to evoke a feeling of the repetition and standardization of man. The individual differences are generally minor changes in shirt collar type, tie design or paint drips on the face; yet these minor differences were included to make the figures slightly individual within the framework of a carbon copy quality. The total effect was meant to be an endless succession of entrapped people. The figures were clothed to give them a sense of reality. The shirts and ties were painted so that they progress from the real to the art and back to the real. The shirts as I had purchased them were real shirts. By painting them they were transformed into art. This transformation was important because it put the shirts into a different role than that customarily associated with shirts. They, however, again became shirts when viewed in the context of dressing a sculpted figure. They were at this point shirts in art.

The wording "Man as God" was meant to evoke the notion that man may be great enough to be a god. This was contradictory to the idea of man, as a being, trapped by his environment, if "God" was taken to mean "the Supreme Being" or as in the Christian Science religion, "Incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, . . ." ²⁴ This internal contradiction was left unresolved, although a solution was suggested. The wording "Man as God" was obviously a man-made sign. This meant the viewer was aware of the creation of the individual letters. They appeared to be hand-done because of many inaccuracies in the printing as well as the presence of residue of previous writing and printing. This was a contrast to the lack of awareness of individual letters which might occur when reading accurate print such as that produced by a good typewriter. The idea of this pseudo-real image came from the "Jesus Saves" signs that hang around Minneapolis like fragments of a bygone era.

The figures had a greater sense of real presence because of the shirts and ties they were wearing and their three-dimensionality. Thus, although the piece was contradictory, a solution to this contradiction was suggested.

The Decaying Humanity Group. --"J. Alfred Prufrock" was done on a flat that looked like a picture frame with a small plaque on the lower section. It is intended to remind the viewer of the sentimental old family portraits (the centered, full face views) in which the subject radiates superficial look. The frames often contain a plaque under the picture

²⁴Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1951), p. 355.

with a caption such as: "Capt. Joe Carter-1876". Such portraits were symbols of people who had forsaken ambition for the passive life of the elderly. The subject matter did not evoke this meaning as much as the entire idea of displaying these symbols of the past.

The wording, "I grow old . . . I grow old . . . I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled", is from T. S. Eliot's, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.²⁵ This section of poetry carried the same emotional quality for this artist as that of the centered portrait photographs. It was a way of saying that when a man is old he is going to wear his trousers rolled up at the bottom if they are too long. Although this was fiction it gave the feeling of being true as well as the feeling that the man did it because it was expected rather than because it was desired. It carried the feeling of a man trapped within society and so totally in his own image that he could do nothing but conform.

The surface of the assemblage appeared to be decaying white. This was done because the process of growing old was not a forceful negation of spirit but a decaying of the spirit. This is to say that no debasing positive action was taken by J. Alfred Prufrock. He did not sell himself, but simply allowed himself to waste away. He was not bad or good but simply neutral. He allowed time to waste or prostitute all potential positive action that he might have taken. With the exception of the face and frame the surface of the assemblage was made white but appeared in the process of becoming black or negated.

²⁵T. S. Eliot, Poems (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928), p. 14.

The scale of the piece was small so it would give the appearance of a sentimental family portrait. The figure was again trapped. This was done to imply that man is trapped into acting in the manner an old person is frequently expected to act.

"Hollow Men: The Way the World Ends" was influenced by and built around certain sections of The Hollow Men, by T. S. Eliot. The poem reads:

" . . . This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar . . ."26

These words seemed to indicate that man in all his great ideas and cosmic conquests is in fact fooled; he is merely a small power. When I carved this into the cement-like surface of the work I found that it produced the effect of an ancient truth which some men might consider similar to the "Ten Commandments" carved in stone. Man is hidden away, as it were, in a dark corner, trying to speak with a power that could end the world with a bang, as Eliot said, but is really only whispering meaningless whimpers.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 95-99.

It has occurred to me that man relates to the universe as the coffee house intellect does to the world situation. Both talk, plan, and are filled with great ideas, but neither controls reality. The imagery used for this relationship was three dark figures in a dark boxed area which occupies the lower third of the assemblage. It was, in a sense, the cellar in Eliot's poem.

The entire assemblage was covered with a dark, transparent, spider web-like cloth, the purpose of which was to add a quality of antiquity and rotting. This symbolizes a rotting of both the ancient truth and the figure in the cellar. It relates a feeling that both had passed into an obscurity which they were neither intended nor expected to enter.

The Anti-War Group. --"Do I Dare to Eat a Peach" was created in direct reaction to the contrast I noted between the problems of the people around me and the problems of those in the Viet Nam war. A section of the American flag was painted as a backdrop to infer the political nature of the subject. The full figure of a dismembered, bloodsoaked, and nearly stripped young female represented the dynamic and horrible aspects of war. This figure was endowed with many violations of privacy and comfort prompted by way pictures and stories from Viet Nam. She represented the civilian who was victimized by the war.

The faceless figure, which strongly suggested a politician, was made to suggest that he was thinking over his own problems. His thoughts,

taken from Eliot's, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, are "Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?"²⁷ The absurd triviality of the thoughts, when put beside the dismembered girl, gave an amazing but realistic contrast. The purpose of the total symbolism was to force, by means of the impelling contrast, the viewer to evaluate his own problems as compared with those existing in the world as a whole.

In the assemblage, "The Waste Land: Death by Water/War", three-fourths of the work was occupied by eight mutilated and bloody babies in an attempt to form one of the most compelling and revolting images I have ever created. This section is simply meant to represent a form of human brutality. Babies are used because they are so helpless and thus they seemed to evoke more empathy.

To prevent this subject from becoming simply another slaughter, a section from T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land was included next to some poetry of my own. My verse was simply a slight modification of Eliot and was placed next to the Eliot to make this obvious. The two, including a short addendum to mine, read as follows.

"Phlebas the Phoenician,
a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls,
and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss . . .

You the Modern,
before you're dead,
Don't forget the cry of children
in the crawl of war.
But rather forget your profit
and loss.

²⁷Ibid., p. 14.

O you who turn the wheel
and look windward,
Consider Phlebas,
who was once handsome
and tall as you."²⁸

Elliot 1922

O you who don't oppose war
and look windward,
Consider the innocent,
who once were as righteous
as you.

Mullen 1966

War causes physical death.
War shows for what they are
many who have suffered
spiritual death.

This section of the work (the top fourth) seemed not only to focus the subject but to tell the viewer, once in the words of Eliot and once in my own words, that he too could find himself in such a condition. It was made as a warning that apathy toward horrible situations may lead to one's own downfall or destruction. This, however, was secondary to the empathic effect of the horribly-mistreated children.

The entire work was enclosed in a glass case. This was done to hopelessly trap the images in a world they could not escape. The glass case also removed the viewer from the children to create "psychic distance".²⁹ A secondary but pertinent symbol was the encasement of most of the babies in stockings. This gave each a sense of individual entrapment. The stockings physically appeared to be womb-like, but they threatened rather than enhanced safety.

²⁸Ibid., p. 80

²⁹Psychic distance, as explained on pages 19-20 is a "degree of detachment of an individual from the practical significance of appeal of an object, particularly, but not necessarily, a work of art."

SUMMARY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

I have attempted to state the philosophical grounds for my art work as well as to clarify the final aesthetic forms at which I arrived. The general social philosophy which is the basis for this work is: Man prostitutes himself and is trapped by his own prostitution. This idea was presented in the technical form of assemblage because it seemed to be my most effective formal method of communication. The work generally presented mankind as trapped in a world of his own debased goals. It was my hope that man would one day free himself from that world.

Future research would be worthwhile in the following areas:

1. Empirical investigation of the power of art as a social motivator.
2. Empirical studies of the tactile impact of assemblage on the viewer.

APPENDIX

"Totem"



"Totem: Two Stages"



"Souls for Sale:"



"Man as God"



"J. Alfred Prufrock"



"Hollow Men: The Way the World Ends"



"Do I Dare to Eat a Peach?"



"The Waste Land: Death by Water/War"



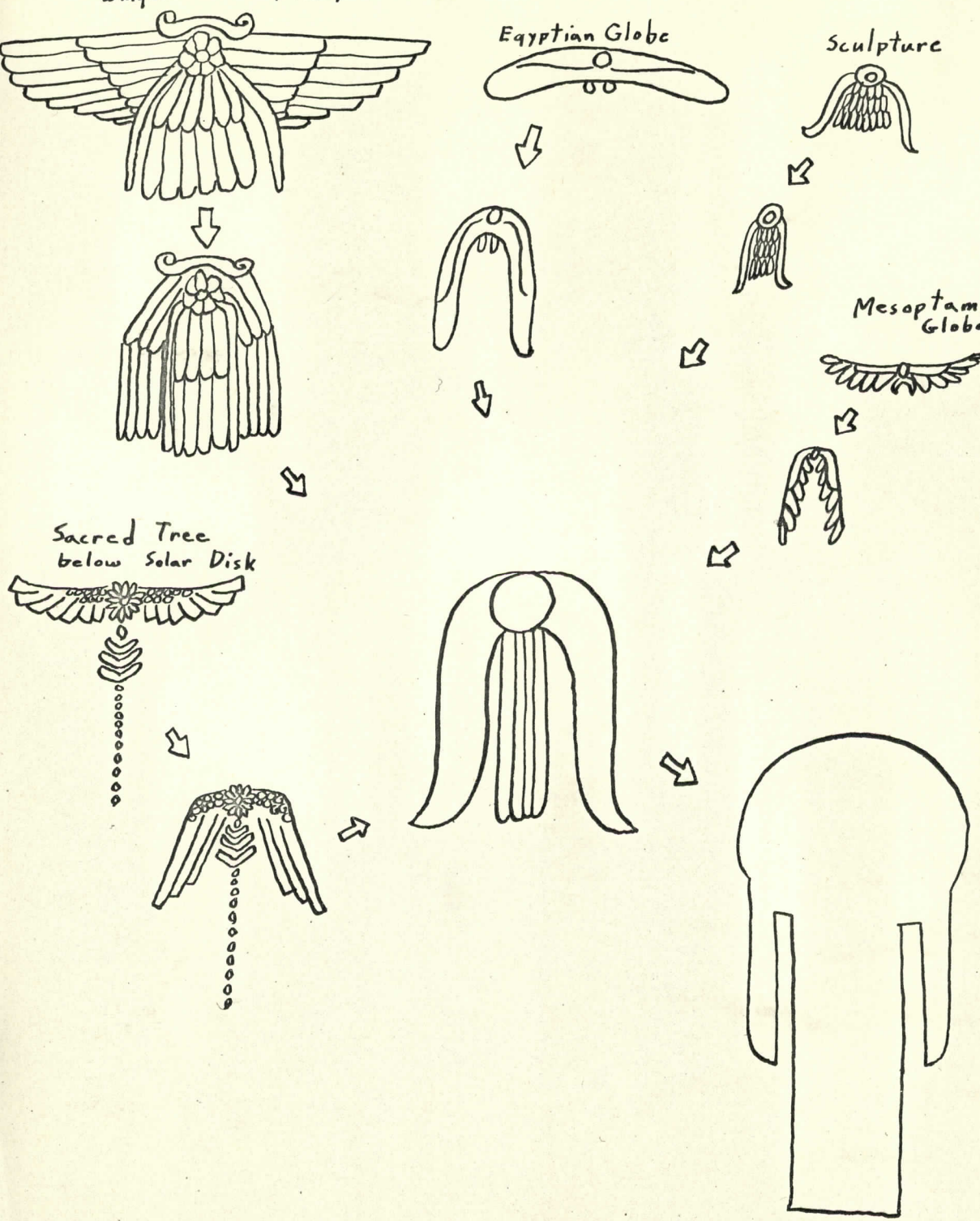
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Egyptian Globe

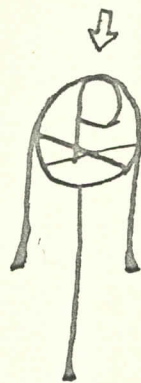
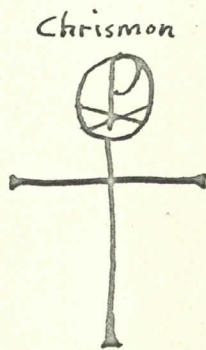
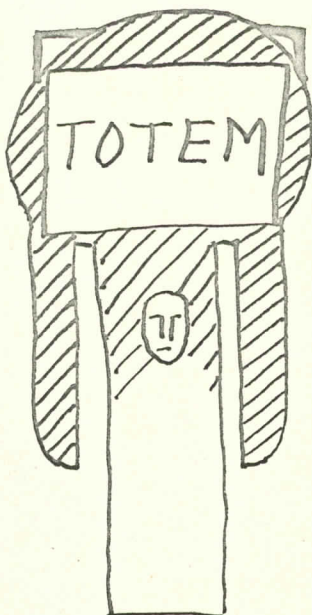
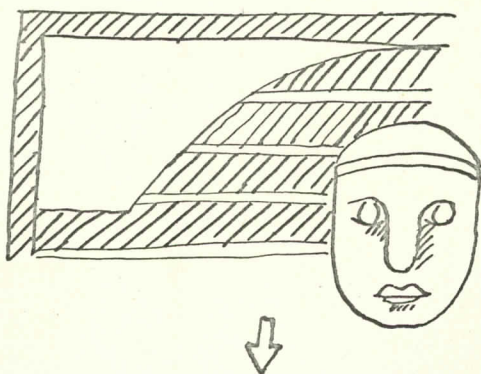
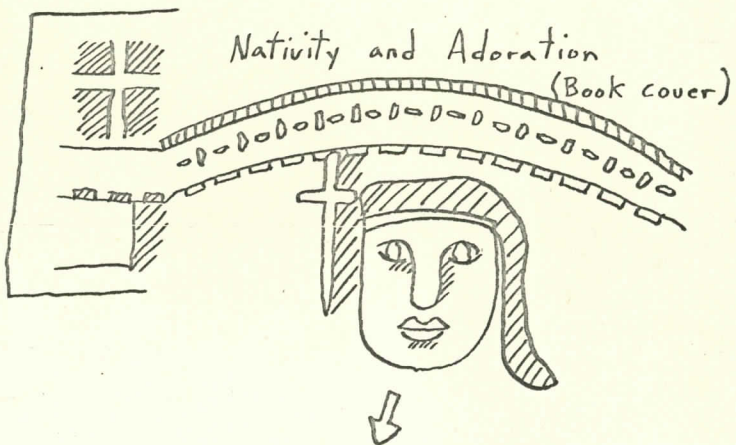
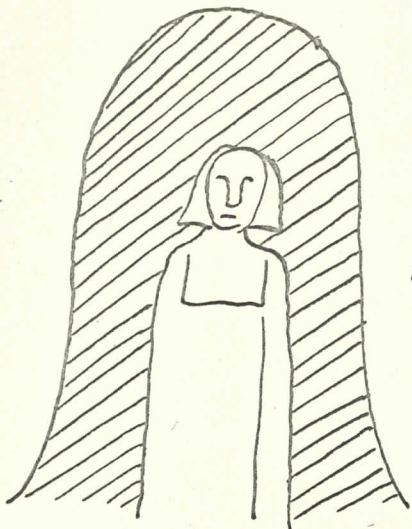
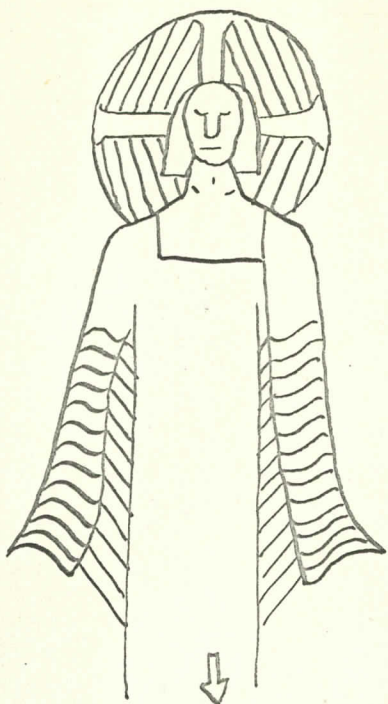
Sculpture

Mesopotamian Globe

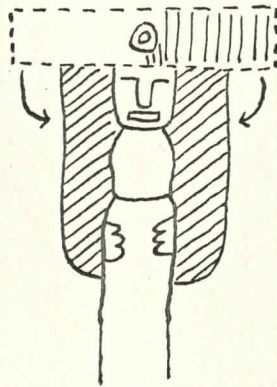
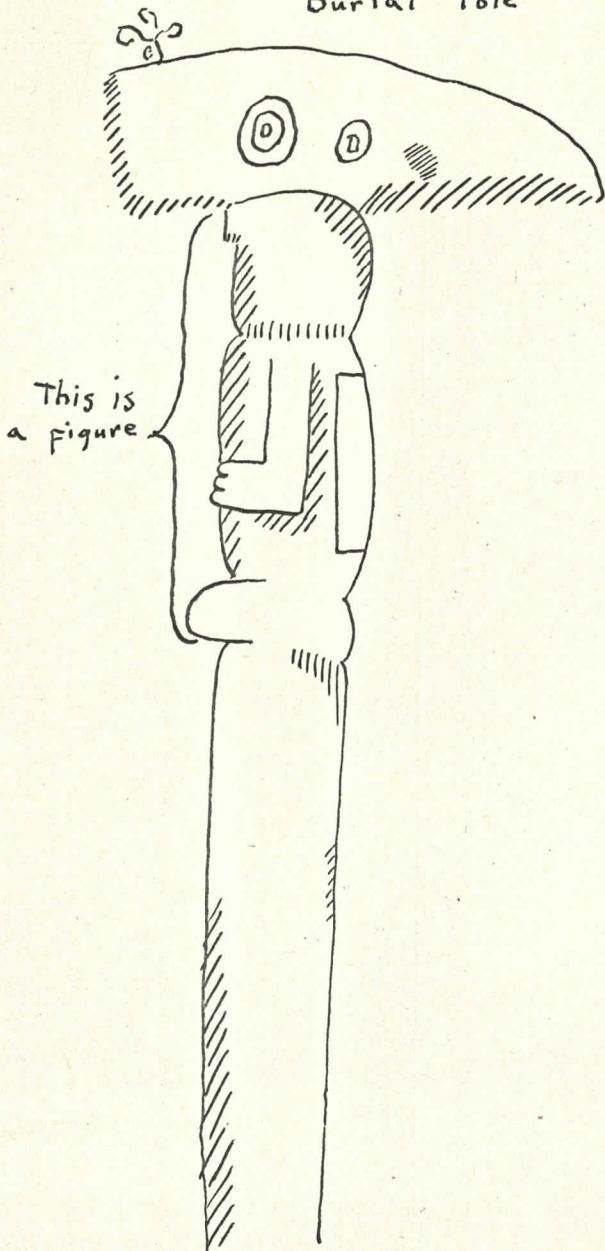
Sacred Tree below Solar Disk



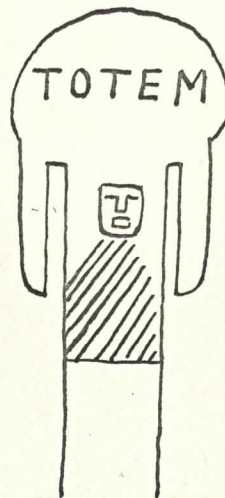
"Majestas" (Detail)
Jacob Epstein



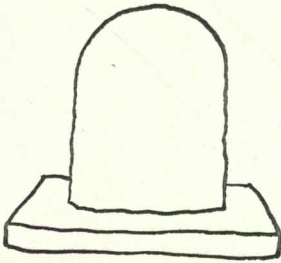
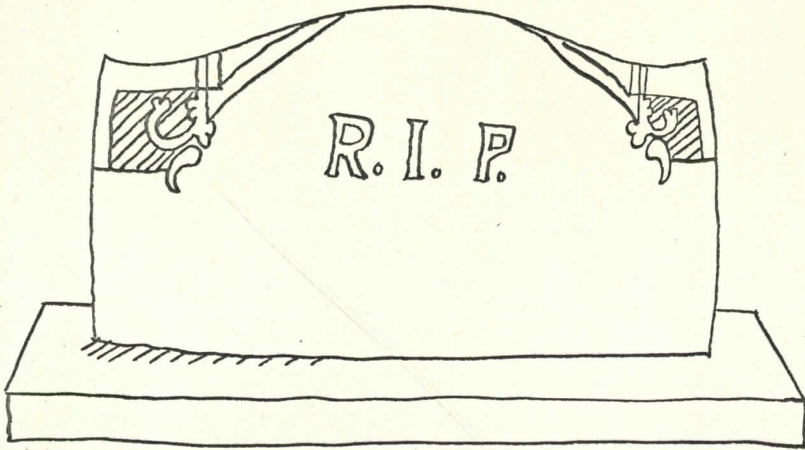
Ancient Indian
Burial Pole



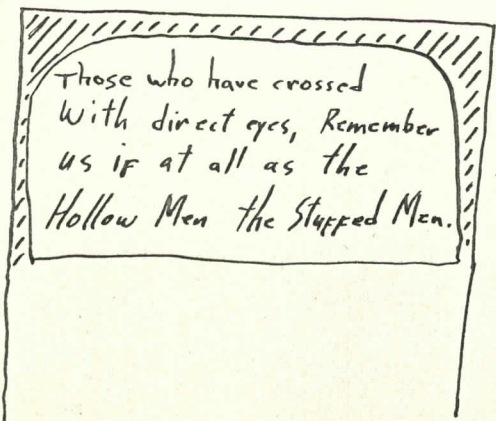
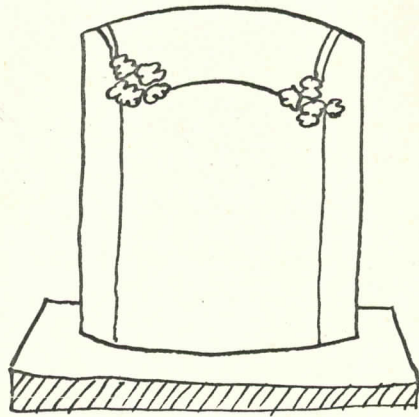
"Totem" →
from indians



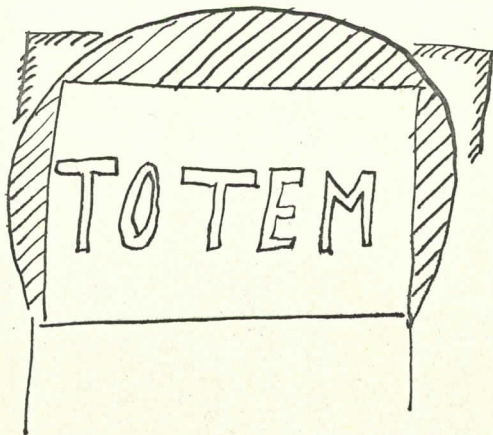
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Guardian 3945
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