Earl Staley: 1973-1983

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organized and with essays by

Linda L. Cathcart and Marcia Tucker

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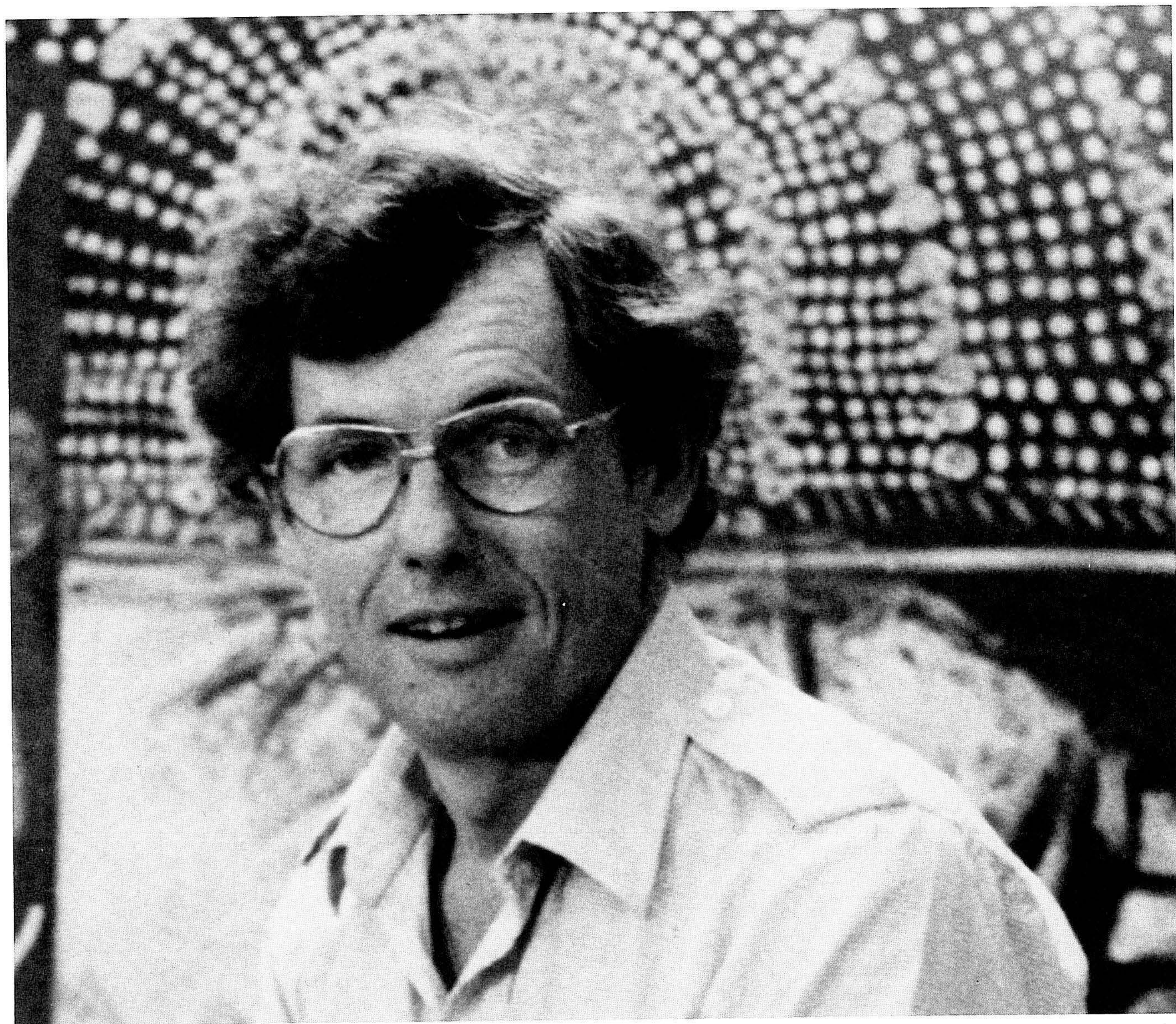


Foreword and Acknowledgments

This exhibition, devoted to the work of Houston artist Earl Staley, represents the cooperative efforts of the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. It is also the second time that we both have been able to identify a mutual interest in an artist, the first being the Alfred Jensen retrospective in 1978, organized with the same spirit of cooperation and vision between the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo (where Linda Cathcart was curator) and the New Museum, both resulting in a major exhibition and catalog. Our collaboration has also included major Ree Morton and John Baldessari exhibitions, both organized by the New Museum, and which travelled to the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. We look forward to continuing the exchange of ideas and exhibitions in the future.

Earl Staley's history with the Contemporary Arts Museum goes back to 1973 with his inclusion in the exhibition, *Private Works,* guest-curated by Ian Glennie. Linda Cathcart's involvement with Staley's work began when she became director of the Museum in 1979. In October, 1980, an exhibition was presented as part of the Museum's Perspectives series, entitled *Earl Staley: Mythologies,* and included fifteen paintings dating from 1975 to 1980. Most recently the artist was represented by two recent works in the exhibition entitled, *Southern Fictions.*

Marcia Tucker first became involved with Staley's work as a curator at the Whitney Museum when he was included in their 1975 Biennial. In January, 1978, a group of Staley paintings was included in the exhibition *"Bad" Painting,* which she organized at the New Museum, and his work was also seen as part of the exhibition *The 1970s: New American Painting,* organized in 1979 by the Museum for the United States Information Agency, to travel throughout Eastern Europe for two years. In 1984, Staley will be represented in *Paradise Lost/Paradise Regained: American Visions of the New Decade,* organized by the New Museum for the 41st Venice Biennale.

The present retrospective exhibition, *Earl Staley: 1973-1983,* gives us the opportunity to share with the public, for the first time, over sixty paintings and works on paper by this prolific and unique artist.

We would like to express our extreme gratitude to the artist's two galleries, Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, and Phyllis Kind, Chicago and New York. In Houston, Marvin Watson, Clint Willour, and their staff have labored long hours to help locate work and photograph almost the entire selection for the first time ever. In Chicago and New York, Phyllis Kind has graciously provided documentation and information to complete the research for this catalog.

In Houston, Fredericka Hunter and Ian Glennie of the Texas Gallery, where Earl Staley exhibited five times between 1974 and 1978, spent many hours with Linda Cathcart going over the photographs of early work and explaining their complex chronology, for which we are most grateful.

The staff of the Contemporary Arts Museum has provided its usual competent and cheerful assistance throughout the organization of the exhibition. Emily Croll, registrar, has secured for both museums the necessary loans with

her customary care, and made all packing and shipping arrangements with the assistance of Michael Barry, head preparator, and assistant preparator Clay Henley; Dana Friis-Hansen, program coordinator, has acted in the capacity of assistant to Linda Cathcart in this project, helping with research and details of all manner with professional skill.

The staff of the New Museum of Contemporary Art has also once again provided essential skills to ensure the success of the exhibition. Special thanks to Tim Yohn for his thorough and perceptive editing of Marcia Tucker's catalog essay, and to Robin Dodds, former curatorial coordinator and Marcia Landsman, who has taken over as curatorial coordinator, for overseeing every aspect of the exhibition and accompanying publication. Ned Rifkin, assistant director/curator, in collaboration with preparator/registrar, John Jacobs, enthusiastically and skillfully took on the difficult task of supervising the New Museum's move to its new home and keeping it operating smoothly while Marcia Tucker wrote her catalog essay; and to Evadne McNeil, who provided a tranquil and supportive environment away from New York in which to do so.

Finally, we are both most grateful to Earl Staley's collectors — most of whom have become his close friends — and to Earl and his wife Suzanne and their friends who all pitched in to help bring this exhibition to fruition.

Linda L. Cathcart and Marcia Tucker

Earl Staley
A Classical Vocabulary

Earl Staley has long been considered to be an eccentric artist. His eccentricity has been attributed to his choice of subject matter and his use of narrative as well as his method of painting. These qualities, however, now seem to the observer of recent art not to be so unusual or eccentric as once thought. Working in isolation and generally outside of major art capitols many artists of various persuasions have been for some time making works based upon themes and myths, using personal incident to create narrative and painting in a bold, broad manner. In 1978, Marcia Tucker organized an exhibition for the New Museum entitled *"Bad" Painting,* which brought together a number of such artists and she included several works by Earl Staley. This exhibition and others which were dedicated to the illustration of pluralism in recent art have given us some background for assessing or reassessing those qualities particular to Earl Staley's art. It seems that indeed Staley's work is eccentric because his career has proceeded contrary to the idea that an artist have a clear, well developed linear progress to his style. The idea that an artist can be identified by a consistent group of pictures does not apply to Staley.

Instead, here is a career that moves forward and backward and sideways all at once. Looking over the body of work, one must keep several aspects in mind at one time in order to delineate relationships and consistencies. Staley himself has no concern for this dilemma. He maintains that his is a position between the folk artist and the court painter — both of whom will deliver upon request. He is a journeyman through art history, plying his trade, though he does admit to complete identification, in most cases, with his subject matter.

For the viewer's sake, it is possible to point out some of his major subjects or themes and describe his recurrent styles. The subjects most obviously revolve around imagery associated with the American Indian, Texan and Mexican cultures and with classical mythology, biblical or operatic motifs and baroque or high renaissance painting. In addition, Staley is tempted to add to or rework a painting if he happens upon a pictorial element he likes, if he feels he has gotten better at making skies, landscapes or cupids or simply if the painting still belongs to him (and he does in fact still own much of his work). Thus it is difficult for the viewer to see the world as Staley saw it when the initial impulse to paint it came. But this is all part of his method, and we must judge his pictures as they stand.

Staley went to art school and matured as a painter when the "crisis of abstraction" was the prevalent discussion among fellow artists. Theory was central to art making — in fact, for the abstract painter, it served as subject matter. Painting was by definition abstract; there was little or no room for realism, which was used by provincial painters or symbolists. Staley's art was then and still is both symbolic and realistic.

Staley recognized that abstraction could and often did allude to what was real. No matter what explanations are given or whether abstraction happened by chance or deliberately, all paintings came directly from the experiences of the artist. He made paintings which were based on ex-

tremely personal situations and which he eventually would evolve into more universal and detached narratives by use of older traditions of art making.

What Staley could not know was that times would change and many viewers would become bored with inbred and self-referential abstractionist painting and that so-called provincial painting would come to public attention as fresh and original.

Staley's experimentation with alternatives to abstraction would be reflected in the decisions made by many of his fellow artists working in the 1970s. Eschewing the look and attitude of abstraction, Staley instead identified with process art or dematerialized art forms which were current at the end of the 1960s. As a result, in early 1972 he collaborated closely with several artist friends in Houston. He says of the experience, "It was like a second graduate school."

Staley is incurably romantic when he talks about working with his two friends. The three occupied a studio together and Staley says they preferred being painters "full-time rather than being teachers and husbands." The camaraderie was important, because Staley was suffering a painful divorce. Staley and his two friends had a very organic relationship, sharing ideas and making some collective works and installations. The funk style from northern California was a particularly attractive movement for them. The mocking "anything goes" attitude was a liberating one. He did a series of very descriptive self-portraits, but he found in the funk style a means to incorporate personal symbols representing his feelings. He put into his paintings all kinds of hairy, figurative images that had a slightly menacing edge. Many of the paintings were made with materials found in his backyard and in the garbage, such as discarded Christmas tinsel and dirt.

Staley's attitudes toward style, which led him toward this adaptation of funk imagery and a childish drawing style, were tempered by his sophisticated reading and study of art history through which he became familiar with the works of artists like Dubuffet. *Dream,* made in 1974, is part of a group of pictures he now calls the "Magic Hill Series" (fig. 1). The paintings are typified by thick, crusty surfaces made by mixing mud in the medium and using glitter on the surface as well as collage elements like wallpaper, cotton and chicken wire.

In these pictures, certain forms begin to emerge — a house-like image, a cactus, a wing shape. These images, Staley realized, had symbolic value, and that value was being negated or denied by the anti-material and process approaches which used non-sensuous materials. With paintings like *Dream,* and *Indian Eating a Cactus* (1973) his interest in becoming an aware, mainstream artist dissolved, and "I decided simply to stop making 'art' and make pictures and tell stories." It is at this point that it becomes possible compositionally to read the paintings from left to right.

As the compositions of Staley's pictures became more traditional, so too did his use of materials. He saw the dirt and glitter of the "backyard" pictures as material able to convey meaning. In *Dream,* for example, by burying images under layers of dirt, he symbolized the Indian and Mexican cultures buried beneath the Texas landscape. The ladder made of dirt reaches toward the sky in a symbolic attempt to link earth and heaven — a shaman's tool also prevalent in the kiva symbols of the Indians.

To his conceptualization of Texas as a landscape, under which he layers the history of the Mexicans and Indians, Staley brought his memories of being an Indian dancer in the Boy Scouts. The ritual this entailed fascinated Staley as a child, and he found its equivalent mystery in adult life in American Indian dances and ceremonies and in the Mexican church and village ceremonies. These two cultures met in Texas, where Staley moved from Illinois in 1965 to teach at Rice University in Houston. Perhaps the anthropological method involved in the "backyard" paintings and the symbols and implied ritual in the Indian paintings were a way for Staley to begin conjuring up the past, excavating for inspiration.

During many camping trips beginning in the late 1960s, to Big Bend National Park in far west Texas, Staley familiarized himself with the native landscape by making watercolors on site. After many occasions of painting the Mexican countryside and assimilating Mexican culture from the north side of the border, Staley began to travel in Mexico itself. Starting in 1975 he made visits that culminated in his

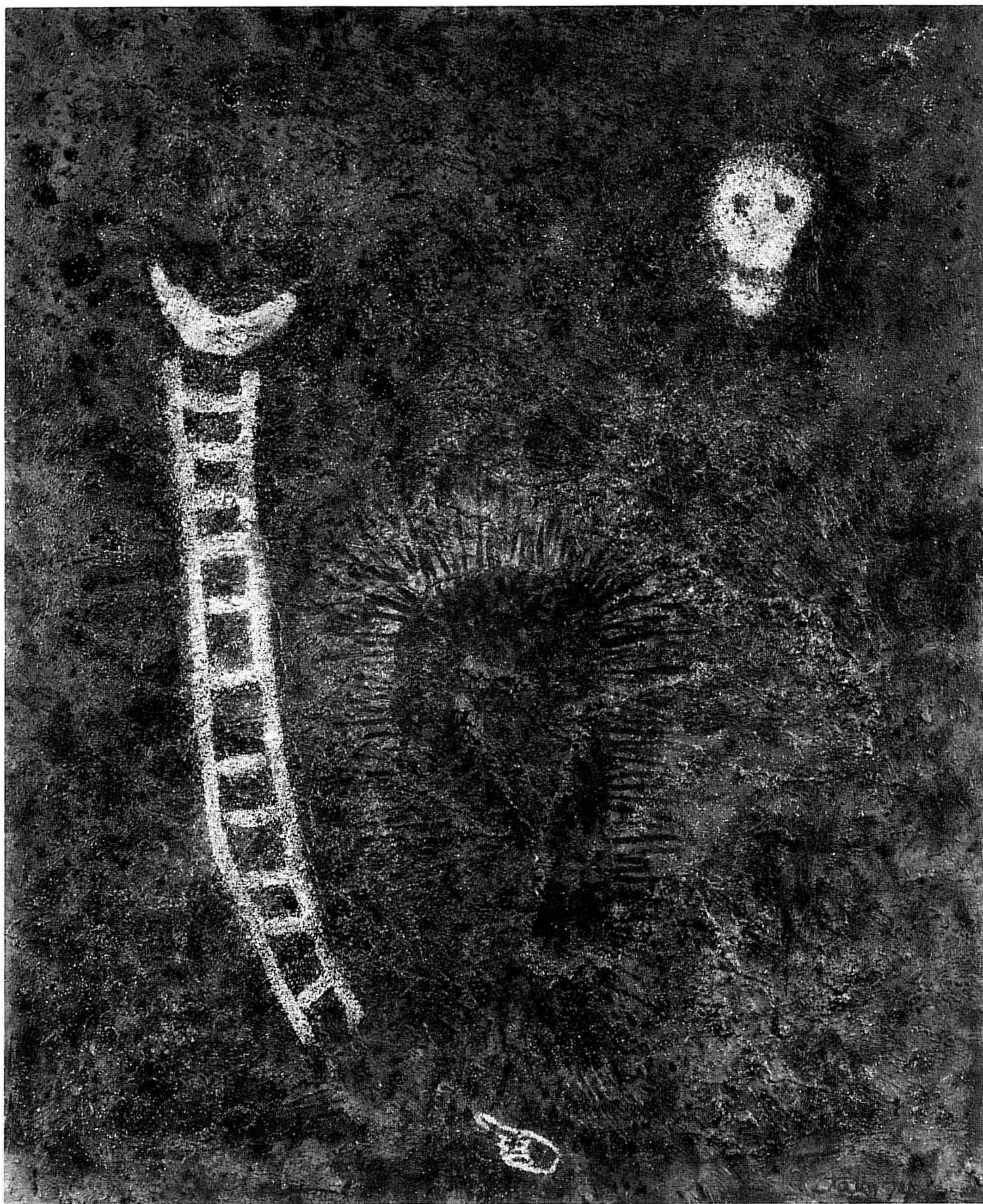


Figure 1. *Dream*, 1974. Acrylic, dirt, glitter on canvas. 46½ x 38½". Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

setting up a studio in Etla outside the city of Oaxaca and living there for six months during 1979. Etla is near the villages where craft-making is the main industry — and where some of Mexico's most famous artisans reside. He observed a lifestyle in which a living could be made by producing handcrafted objects. Again his experiences as an Eagle Scout contributed to his own involvement in crafts. Handicrafts were not as intimidating as the fine arts or the high art of painting in particular. "I saw in Mexico these marvelous people making things which they in turn sold to live. So I said, 'I can do that'." This attitude accounts for the look of Staley's works at this time and it is important to know that Staley ventured into ceramics and leather-making as well.

Rhythmical, sometimes repetitive motifs and implied narratives combined with fantastic elements are found both in the Mexican folk art Staley admires and collects and in his own art of this decade. The subjects of Mexican art are those of life and death made bold, humorous, ironic and colorful. The style is quick and simple. It has a vitality which is spontaneous and genuine as well as traditional. This is in opposition to the consciousness of style found in classical Western painting. But, like the classical picture, Mexican folk art appeals to Staley because it comes out of a system in which the artist or artisan is a tradesman producing a product. There is a vitality of necessity. "Idle hands are the devil's workshop" was a homily Staley kept over the workbench in his studio.

Simultaneously, the influence of Staley's first trip to Europe was sifting through these more direct experiences. In 1970 he traveled to five countries looking at classical Western art. He describes Europe: "It's old, filled up, and modern art doesn't fit over there. You are confronted with a whole other vocabulary, things which are quite confusing and done very well.... I couldn't find out how to do it, use it." He says this trip to Europe "was another graduate school." He was learning all the while.

Landscape can be seen as an important link in Staley's work over the years. In his first direct renderings of landscapes, Staley created canvases that were painted flat and seen as maps from above. They are symbolic maps, and they are maps of how to paint. They exploit both illusionism and abstraction. Some, such as *Map with Cactus: Malevich in a Corner* (1973-74), include specific references to other paintings. The painting is five by six feet — the large size of a modern canvas. The image occupies the whole surface of the canvas and pushes at or extends outside of the physical boundaries. The maps were autobiographical; they were records of places Staley actually had visited, moreover they could be both personal maps and maps of art history.

It is not necessary to separate these elements in order to understand or enjoy the works, because, like the mythologies that followed, they are the product of an additive vision subject to interpretation. Their aim is to clarify and explain the mysteries of life, and, like mythology, they are nonscientific. In some of the map paintings, Staley took advantage of shapes that occurred and exploited them as outlines of Indian heads wearing war bonnets or of explosive hairy cacti — images that had occurred in some of the dirt-encrusted, symbolic paintings. Some of the paintings were of grand scale and played with contrast of ways of rendering spaces — flat and illusionistic. In others, cactus, skull or house shapes still would be integrated into the composition.

Soon the landscapes began to be rendered more traditionally and supported a cast of Indian-inspired characters that owed their shape to the earlier symbols. The figures were imaginary, but the landscapes were truthful renderings of landscapes observed in Big Bend, Texas and Vermont — as in *King, Shaman, Fool* (1975) and *Dancer at Mount Abraham, Vt.* (1975-76).

Staley feels that in about the mid-1970s "the story became more important than the art." Staley was struggling with making art. His subject matter was a powerful and complicated narrative, but he still felt he did not have the skills with which to depict the stories. Art, as he saw it, became a "fashionable act" that he felt he could not keep up to date with. He believed he could not make art stylish enough to compete with mainstream modernism. He began to look at baroque and renaissance pictures, mostly in postcard and book reproductions. Staley says he tried "to make the pictures as nice as possible," and to make respectable

and even conservative paintings. He was, and continues to be, bewildered by the shock they produced in viewers and by their lack of acceptance.

Simultaneously with the Indian paintings, in 1975 Staley began to make paintings whose subjects were taken from classical mythology. At this time he felt that paintings needed stories. "The art simply is there or it's not there. I can't put it in. So you see, I tell stories and I wanted to make them very specific stories." He expanded the ceremonial incidents in the Indian paintings, emphasizing the aspect of narrative in a series of mythological pictures, of which *Phyliss and Aristotle V: The Eclipse* (1975) is one (fig. 2).

The look of these paintings was not considerably different from that set out in *King, Shaman, Fool.* Staley's vocabulary of stylistic devices basically was established in that picture. He found he liked what he called baroque and renaissance space—"opening up the canvas, getting away from the tyranny of the two dimensions." Many of these mythological pictures were enormous, fifteen-foot long canvases. They were stretched up because Staley wanted to incorporate several themes or one grand story in a single canvas. He needed the space to put all the figures in the composition. This new size, however, made him aware that he needed to know how to "harmonize it together in terms of some vast baroque or mannerist compositional device."

In order to compose the pictures, Staley often uses diagonals. By putting two crossed diagonals as understructure in each painting, he found he could plot the figures along their lines and could create the illusion of depth and of space for the action depicted on the canvas. In other paintings Staley further compartmentalized the canvas, and he painted within segments and then connected each compartment. This way he could have both detail and movement across the entire canvas. He would need both for painting the mythologies.

For Staley, the desire to make "great" pictures meant using great themes; however, to make them meaningful he had to begin with some emotional premise. Through the attempted fusion of these two elements, he sometimes achieved the desired results of a picture which he thought to be monumental, universal, emotionally powerful and pictorially successful. On large-scale canvases, he frequently used textbook methods of composition and technique, coupled with a grand theme usually originating in Greek mythology.

Great story paintings or allegorical canvases are typified by a certain look. They are static—their figures do not move, but gesture symbolically. The figures are tied to the landscapes or interiors and to the objects in the pictures by means of the compositional devices of poses or gestures, where the arm or leg, for example, leads the eye to the other elements of the picture. These objects and backgrounds serve also as symbolic elements to heighten the purpose of the figure.

Staley's use of this thinking and technique reveals him as a student. When it comes to his lessons, he is a complete literalist. He believes in studying the methods of successful classical or historical picture making and emulating them. On the other hand, he imbues his pictures with his own personal emotional content. He knows not to copy emotional content but to seek it for oneself is crucial if one is to be a "true" painter. The use of personal emotional content in pictures directly contradicts the making of classical painting where the motif is universal and symbolic rather than personal and emotional. Here the variables come into play, and subject matter too dense, too real, too emotional or too personal has the ability to either subvert or heighten Staley's statements in paint. It is because of this that his seemingly clichéd subject matter can produce either a static, empty, meaningless picture or a great, bawdy, bold and human one.

Staley's tendency to work in a series, or to make a number of works on a certain theme, is most concentrated in the groups of mythological pictures such as the series' *Rape of Europa* (1980-82) and *Leda and the Swan* (1978-80). His reason for doing these groups recalls his remarks about his difficulty in identifying suitable subject matter: "Why search around for new subject matter when you've got one you can play with? And this idea of beauty and the beast appeals to me. It appeals to me as a myth. I don't quite know why a certain myth appeals to me, but I could do this [one] forever."

Figure 2. *Phyliss and Aristotle V: The Eclipse,* 1975. Acrylic on canvas. 39½ x 55". Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Figure 3. *Mermaid,* 1976. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 84½". Collection of Raymond Learsy, New York.

Although Staley professes not to know what appeals to him about the myths, it seems clear that they provide all the things he requires in a picture: a heroic narrative, which enables him to paint on a large scale; fast and furious action, which needs the bold, loose brushwork he generally favors; fantasy, which enables him to introduce unusual color; battle between moral forces or life-and-death struggle, which satisfies his need to introduce autobiographical elements; and, finally, the fact that these themes have been painted many times, which enables him to compare his paintings with those of the great masters.

Similarly, Staley's works share certain characteristics of both subject and style, particularly in the treatment of women, with the paintings of nineteenth-century symbolists like Redon and Münch. Woman is often portrayed as a false mask of beauty and optimism, representing the thin veneer of civilization which covers man's baser instincts. The notion that sexual desire robs men of strength and creativity, but is unavoidable, coincides with the image of woman as temptress. Eve in the Garden of Eden is depicted in *Phyliss and Aristotle V: The Eclipse* and *Adam and Eve* (1977).

It is surprising to hear Staley say subject matter is the most difficult thing about making art, given the importance of it to his work. What he actually means is that he finds composition difficult. It is not the theme or the subject for the picture which eludes him, it is the way to illustrate it.

> A theme will dwell in the back of your mind.... I've had subject matter in my mind for years and I've finally almost abandoned it. I cannot find a composition, I cannot do it, it's like I can't handle it.... Once I bear down on it, I will find the composition, so until you can meet those two demands, the demands of composition and subject matter, then it takes off.

In addition to the "serious" paintings based on mythologies, Staley also was painting pictures which were highly decorative in intent and in appearance. Many of the paintings, based on Mexican subjects and rendered in an exaggerated baroque style — such as *Mermaid* (1976), *Weather Vane* (1977), and *Xochimilco* (1977-80) depict mermaids and sirens (fig. 3). They are paintings about Staley's satisfaction with his life and his surroundings and were inspired by a trip to Mexico's ancient pleasure gardens — where tourists ride in boats decorated with flowers and images — as well as trips to the Texas gulf coast.

These brightly colored, sensual, romantic, highly decorative paintings are balanced by a group of pictures based upon the "Day of the Dead" ceremony, celebrated when the souls of dead relatives are remembered and honored. Staley observed the ceremony numerous times in various places in Mexico. *Lovers Eating Skulls* (1980) depicts a man and a woman trading tastes of the sugar skulls which can be purchased in the market on the "Day of the Dead." This painting shares both autobiographical and emotional as well as compositional elements with other of his works. The lovers are Staley and a friend. "It's me — out of control.... She is much more in control." The diagonal thrusts created by the arms lead the eye up and into the action. Staley says, "I love what's going on with the arms crossing and the negative spaces."

In the series of pictures based on the myth of the *Rape of Europa,* one begins to see Staley's continuing interest in complicated landscape as well as a new interest in natural light. He uses odd-shaped clouds which seem for the first time to be connected to the light which illuminates the pictures. The landscapes which still form the backgrounds to the stories now have more character, and they begin to contribute to the overall mood of the picture.

Staley's pictorial investigations of landscapes helped lead his work out of the Picasso-inspired flatness which had typified it. For example, *The Fall of Man* (1977), *Story of Acteon I* (1977), and *Story of Acteon II* (1977) were all patterned images. The space which held violent action was still relatively flat.

In *The Fall of Man* there are two kinds of landscape: the foreground has a broad, flat, almost abstract treatment, and the background has a harsh, vertical, boldly colored desert scene which is reminiscent of *King, Shaman, Fool* (fig. 4). Further, the painting is divided into foreground and background as well as, by the river, into left- and right-hand sections; the right side is serene, far away and brightly lit, and the left is close, dense and very active. Staley says about

the picture, "The river separates the Garden of Eden from the wasteland. The background — the harsh reds — that's the wasteland — that's where they [Adam and Eve] will be expulsed to." He uses a different painting technique or style to depict the different parts of this drama. This painting is one of the few in which Staley brings together different styles in one plane. However, his use of separate techniques to depict biblical, mythological and landscapes works is typical, because he has developed a certain set of his own rules. Some stories demand one kind of pictorial treatment, others a different style, just as certain things are specific colors. Cupids, for instance, are blue.

> Cupids are supposed to be blue. I am convinced cupids are blue. I have the idea that according to Egyptian paintings, all of the women were always painted yellow and the men were always painted red. I have always liked that differentiation; no problem at all, you can always know.

In addition to his feelings about color relating to certain images, Staley also has a sense that certain actions are more able to be rendered abstractly. In *The Fall of Man,* he says,

> the people are involved in abstract courtship games. I figure that as people get more involved in a courtship, more into a love relationship, they become more and more abstract. They lose their identity and their sexuality. The angel with the flaming sword behind the tree is not abstract. He's real. He's got control of himself.

Pictures such as *The Ship of Fools* (1978-81), *Mazeppa's Ride* (1979), *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (1980), *Saint George Slaying the Dragon* (1980) and some of the pictures made in 1982 and 1983 while the artist was in Rome are based upon a different basic compositional structure (fig. 5). They are activated, swirling with motion. Staley says he was beginning to study baroque space, which is concerned with spiraling volume. Baroque and renaissance pictures share a strict structure, but baroque space is in opposition to the static space emphasized by renaissance painters. He also feels that baroque styles leave the viewer with a heightened awareness of paint handling.

The later Mexican-inspired works are more baroque in composition and often made "after Goya," as Staley puts it. A group of pictures depicting dances and ceremonies Staley observed in Oaxaca, Mexico — pictures like *Boystown, Laredo, Mexico* (1978-79), *An Encounter* (1979), *Ceremony at Etla* (1981) — are particularly theatrical. Staley has a passion for the opera, which is, of course, both visual as well as narrative in nature, and these pictures are a product of that passion. The viewer is set outside the scene — distanced from the action which is brightly lit and centered.

The most recent works generally are based upon Italian landscapes and themes. Staley moved to Rome in 1982, and his newest pictures reflect both that physical environment and the visual influences of the classical pictures Staley was looking at in the Roman museums. He recalls his delight at discovering the rational aspect of Italian art: "There is a great lesson in art history to realize that they knew what they were doing — this extends to architecture and the whole landscape."

These paintings made in Italy remind Staley of the landscapes made in Big Bend. "I make them [the recent landscapes] Italian in that I put elements in that are Italian. These are ruins, hill towns, farm houses and I am working on integrating more and more figures or studies within them." He goes on to describe his admiration of Poussin's work: "Tiny figures in front in this vast landscape is for me, very difficult. At least 50% of what I do is or contains landscape."

For a long time, Staley's works were thought to be strictly allegorical. When he began to paint pure landscapes devoid of figures, it became clear the work had not been perceived clearly, and this change necessitated for the first time a different evaluation of his career. Simply put, those who "never liked" the symbolic pictures now "liked" the landscapes, and others who had been passionate admirers of those first pictures felt Staley's work was now going in a false direction.

Subsequent to the pure landscape pictures of 1980-81, Staley made pictures in both styles and of both subjects, further confusing those "likes" and "dislikes" which were the basis for their responses to his work. However, for the viewers who looked more closely, the break with sym-

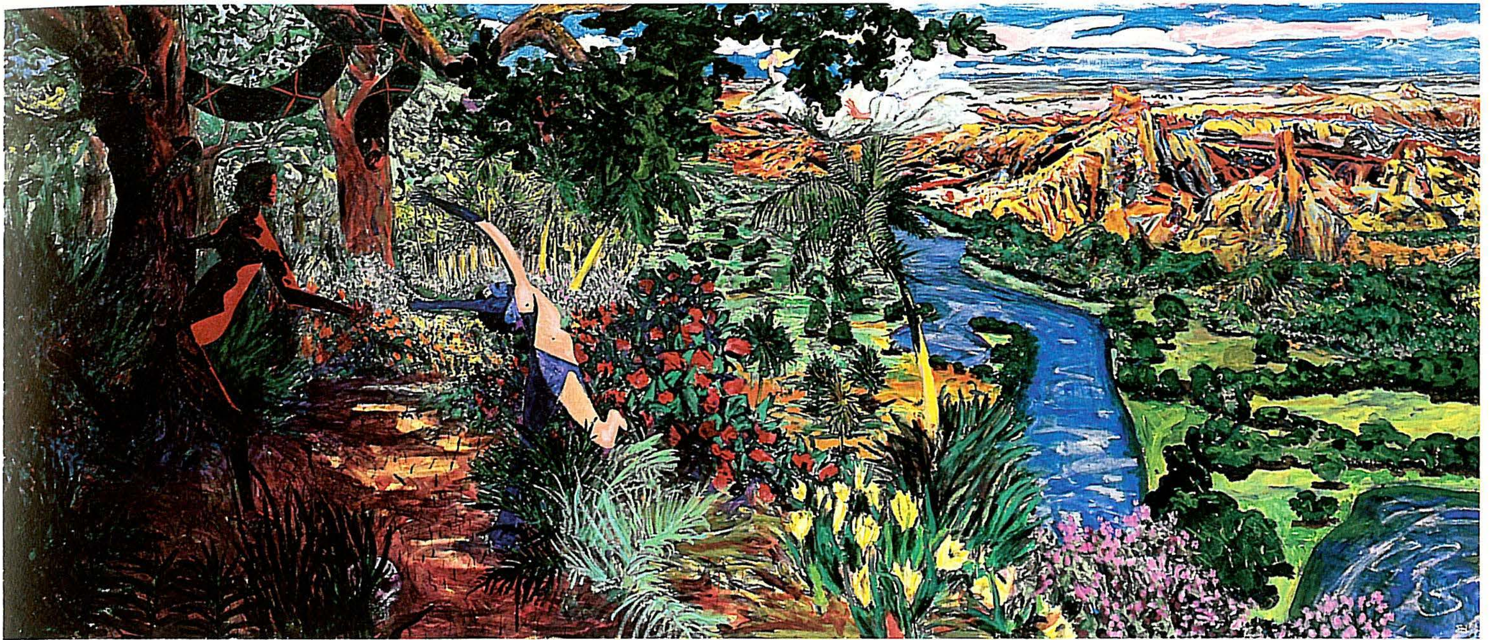


Figure 4. *The Fall of Man,* 1977. Acrylic on canvas. 72 x 152″.
Collection of Balene and Sanford McCormick, Houston, Texas.

bolism, however brief and unsustained, allowed a clearing in the forest, a vantage point and an occasion on which to survey his work and to discover characteristics both unifying and disruptive. Under closer scrutiny, it is apparent that landscape painting was not, in fact, a "new direction" for Staley. He had for some time made watercolors of landscapes on various travels. In the paintings Staley used landscape as background to the allegorical subjects.

Strangely, the landscapes provide the clue to understanding the symbolic pictures. The landscapes are real places, observed in most cases directly and titled by Staley as accurately as possible. The symbolic paintings also are accurate: They retell personal experience. Direct observation and personal experience are the two elements which tie the works together regardless of subject matter. It might even be said that Staley's only subject matter is his experience, his world.

In 1975 the composition of pictures often centered around the image of skulls. The subject of the paintings was not Mexico or death but Staley's divorce. "It comes from Mexico and from a sense of dying—one life of mine was dying—and something is coming out of the skull. The skull has always been a symbol of death and rebirth to me. In general the pictures were made to explain my life to me." This was his purpose and defines his artistic struggle. "It is the only thing that controls and explains twentieth-century life to me."

During a period in our history which many have dubbed the "Me" generation, these remarks about what guides this artist's thinking about his work and why he makes it may not be surprising. His translation of the personal experience into the archetypical situation has led him to seek imagery suited to the subject matter of life—death, happiness, drunkenness, violence, fear, etc. Staley has, as opposed to other artists, chosen to look backward for both this imagery and his compositional devices. His peers, the so-called neo-expressionists with whom his work inevitably will be compared, are also self-involved in their art but they have chosen the mechanical, media-inspired imagery for their medium. Although some do use loose paint handling, it is usually within a formula. Staley takes more chances, includes more variables. Where they have gone cool, Staley has chosen hot.

In very broad terms, Staley can be described as an artist whose originality of vision has come not through the effort to be unique but rather through the opposite. He has tried mightily to take on in style and technique those artists he wishes to emulate, and it has been his clumsiness (often technical, sometimes visual and selective) which has kept him from being a mere imitator or a gracious copyist. Over the years, it has precipitated the development of an extremely personal style. This is not an accidental development of which Staley is unaware; rather, it has been a conscious effort, reminiscent of classical training whereby an artist painted copies of masterpieces in museums to hone his skill. Although he might at times wish it to be different—wish that he might have the skill necessary to paint a Picasso or a Raphael—his work now has its own maturity and presence and a strength which is better for being his own, rather than being anything else. Though he had not been able to set up his easel in the Louvre and had to resort to postcards and other reproductions, he determinedly set up his own apprenticeship.

When Staley painted *Saint George Slaying the Dragon,* he created a picture which has a kind of baroque motion. He was becoming less interested in renaissance space and painting technique. He had applied for the grant to go to Rome and was looking at baroque paintings for ideas, "a more curvilinear idea, which is more baroque—the curve will lead you back into space." This sequence of events is typical of what causes Staley to do one thing or another; what leads him in a certain direction at a specific time almost can be the result of a kind of visual and philosophical process of free association. In 1982 Earl Staley received a *Prix de Rome,* which enabled him to take a studio in Rome. He uses the studio as base camp and began to explore Europe and north Africa as well as to see all the great treasures housed in the Italian museums.

The paintings made since 1982 are predominantly landscapes and mythologies. They are at once peaceful, violent, erotic and religious. He continues to vary his styles as he sees fit. For example, *The Fall of Icarus I* (1982) uses deep

Figure 5. *The Ship of Fools,* 1978. Acrylic on canvas. 67¾ x 113½".
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Figure 6. *The Second Labour of Hercules: The Lernaean Hydra,* 1983. Acrylic on canvas. 62¾ x 47". Collection of William and Virginia Camfield, Houston, Texas.

space, landscape and natural light. The paint handling is thin and the picture simple, whereas *The Second Labour of Hercules: The Lernaean Hydra* (1983) uses a shallow space in which all the action is pushed to the front, the setting is anonymous, the light eerie and the picture painterly (fig. 6). What is to come we cannot know or predict any more than Staley can.

Staley's paintings from 1973 to the present can be described as his attempt to become one with the great masters. In their earliest form the works contain references to the acknowledged masterpieces from all periods of art history. Through the decade described in this exhibition, Staley's work gradually has left off evoking art history by title and appearance; instead, he has now adopted almost entirely the various methods of those he admires in an effort to seal that connection.

Linda L. Cathcart
Director
Contemporary Arts Museum

NOTES

1. All quotes from the artist have been taken from interviews with the author from October, 1980, January, 1983, and May, 1983.

Self Portrait, 1981. Acrylic on canvas. 36¼ x 40¼".
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Earl Staley
Myth, Symbol, Dream

Beached mermaids, skulls, dragons, flying horses, Indian dancers, lovers, demons, and saints; moonlit ceremonies in remote places, exotic animals lurking in forests and swamps, mythological and biblical characters engaged in acts of treason, and heroism; vast, tranquil landscapes and bizarre, disquieting geographical arenas; kings, queens, shamans, fools, cupids, skeletons, angels; dirt, glitter, tinsel, mud, wood, tile, ceramic, stone, paint, leather and metal; acid pinks and purples, limpid yellows and greens, violent flaming reds and oranges, dusty grays and murky browns; figures that writhe and careen across the canvas or gently transport themselves in magical flowering spaces—all these are the components of Earl Staley's pictorial world, presented without cohesive chronology, consistency of style, subject matter or technique, and in complete disregard of the traditional good manners of high art.

Anachronistic even in the art of the present decade, the methods, intentions, and even the look of Staley's work don't really fit our ideas of what art is and how it functions. For example, Staley is a traditionalist in an era of relentless avant-gardism; he has always been a figurative painter whose compositions are based, for the most part, on Old Master paintings or on art historical references of all kinds. Similarly, he uses stories which, rather than being invented, have already been in existence, preferably since the beginning of time. He sometimes does hundreds of variations on a single theme ("Why search around for new subject matter when you've already got one you can play with?" he says),[1] and his work is refreshingly literal. When asked, for instance, why the two halves of a given painting are so dissimilar, Staley responds that the subject matter dictates the technique, so that if a figure is out of control or distressed, the paint application will be distorted accordingly.

Staley's work negates the idea of a teleological development in the career of an artist, whereby work "progresses" from early to middle to late. There is no real sense of chronology in his work since 1973, and although he tends to work in series, these are arranged according to subject matter and have little or no chronological coherence. The size of his work is equally inconsistent, so that a major theme may have variations ranging from miniature drawings to a twenty-foot canvas, and Staley tends to work in any and all media at once.

Finally, there is a strong crafts orientation in Staley's work; the great mythological paintings coexist with innumerable ceramic pots, planters, engraved leather belts, paper ornaments, stone carvings, and cut-outs. Staley has also painted hundreds of tiny landscapes, cherubs, skulls and other subjects on postcards which he mails to his friends as souvenirs, negating the idea of keeping his art to a precious, one-of-a-kind commodity item. The devaluation of crafts skills and the idea that high art and craft do not mix, have become increasingly orthodox in recent years, and Staley's insistence on the continuation of this crafts tradition simply because he likes it is yet another example of his anachronistic attitudes.

Staley is extraordinarily, almost obsessively, prolific, still another anachronism in that prolificness suggests that the

artist doesn't carefully control the work, critically weeding out the aesthetic wheat from the chaff. For every painting in the exhibition, there may be any number of variations on its theme or works dealing with a similar subject, in the form of sketches, drawings, watercolors, prints, and paintings, large and small.

By far the largest body of work consists of the mythological paintings, begun more or less in 1974 and continuing steadily, interspersed with other work, to the present. The myths used range from the more popular and better-known ones, like *Europa and Zeus, Perseus Slaying Medusa,* or *Leda and the Swan,* to more obscure myths like that of *Phyliss and Aristotle,* or to scenes simply depicting the activities of mythological characters, e.g., *Bacchus with Maenads and Satyrs.* Similarly, the Old and New Testament stories range from the specific *(Temptation of Saint Anthony, Susanna and the Elders, Samson and Delilah,* or *Cain and Abel)* to the general *(The Crucifixion, Souls in Hell,* or *Blessed and Damned).* The sources for the mythological subjects come from intensive early reading by Staley in comparative mythology, religion, art history, and psychology, particularly the works of Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung, and the range of knowledge evidenced in these paintings is staggering. In general, the mythological works tend to be large in scale, in keeping with their theme, although studies for parts of the paintings, in every possible size and format, abound. While the myths are of all sorts, there is some emphasis on those dealing with love, including *Cupid and Psyche, Venus and Adonis, The Story of Acteon, Leda and the Swan, Europa and Zeus,* and *Adam and Eve,* among others.

Another major grouping, beginning somewhat earlier (around 1971), consists of works with images or symbols which are imaginary, personal, or derived from fairy tales, Mexican folk arts, or American Indian lore. Their use has a deeply personal significance for Staley, being intimately connected to specific events and incidents in his own life, but they also have, for the most part, an archetypal character, a primal or universal significance transcending their specific meaning. These symbols include ladders, skulls and skeletons, Indians, four-legged dancers, king or shaman figures, and a variety of metaphoric creatures, such as mermaids, cupids, or angels. There are also winged figures and objects, such as horses or houses, plus innumerable cacti and other flora and fauna native to Texas, where Staley has lived most of his life.

In 1979 Staley left Houston and went to live in Oaxaca, Mexico, for six months. Although he had been visiting Mexico regularly for years, he found that the Mexican images he had been using in his paintings throughout the 1970s were extremely important to him, and he wanted to see what effect living and working in that environment would have.[2] As a result of this sojourn, a large group of paintings based on Mexican ceremonies and festivals evolved; these include *An Encuentro* (1981), *Ceremony at Etla* (1981), and some related pieces such as *A Gathering of Wizards* (1979), *Xochimilco* (1977-80), and *Boystown, Laredo, Mexico* (1978-79). What characterizes these works, especially those which specifically depict particular Mexican festivals or events, is their extraordinary use of light; they are all night scenes, in which large groups of people are seen gathered at some distance from the spectator, illuminated as if by magical means, from somewhere within the crowd itself. *An Encuentro* has the dizzying, mysterious light of a Piranesi etching, and *Ceremony at Etla,* depicting a Lenten gathering which occurred in a village near where Staley was staying, has a backlit intensity and a drama which are other-worldly (fig. 4). This is partly due to the contrast of Christian and pagan elements in the event itself, which, in Staley's description, took place both inside the church, where prayers were being said, and outside, where a man dressed as a bull, with firecrackers on his back, was dancing.[3] His stay in Mexico was the first time, according to Staley, that he had lived using only kerosene lamps at night. "I loved the idea of living without electric light, the mystery that came back into the world...this is what I call my very best 'Goya' style."[4]

As well as figurative paintings, Staley has always done landscapes, many of which were painted onsite in Texas, particularly in the Big Bend area, an enormous national park partly delineated by a sharp bend in the Rio Grande river. Staley describes it as a hostile environment with a dramatic, changing landscape. These works, while more

traditional, present a challenge for the artist, forcing him, he says, "to learn how to paint."[5] He accepts the contrast with his other work because, he insists, he never wanted to be identified with one kind of painting in the first place.

Other, less extensive series of work, which also reinforce this attitude, include a group of animal paintings, *Alligator, Turkey Buzzard* (1976-81), and *A Louisiana Painting* (1976-81), which are acutely observed and sensitively rendered "portraits" of wildlife; some still lifes, whose casualness and intimacy are quite moving; self-portraits, mostly informal, which are accurate to the point of caricature and often uncompromisingly revelatory; and a sizeable group of images of lovers, ranging from Picassoesque abstractions to realistically rendered, stupendously romantic figures.

Although Staley's visual sources are clearly wide-ranging, almost everything he does is based, in part or in its entirety, on classical or ancient sources. Sometimes these sources are mixed, so that the figure in a given painting will be appropriated from a Greek stele, the space borrowed from an Italian Renaissance painting, the color from a Mexican folk carving. For instance, the technique and coloration of *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (1980), with its loose, expressionist paint surfaces and deep blues, greens, purples and ochres, contrast with the planar, Egyptoid stance of Joseph and the wall decorations behind him (fig. 1). Furthermore, the space beyond the shallow, stage-like area on which the action takes place turns into a deep, complex Renaissance landscape, lending a quirkiness and theatricality to the story which would be lost were the painting to have a single stylistic source.

Everywhere in Staley's work are hints, suggestions, confrontations and direct borrowings from such diverse sources as Poussin, Titian, Watteau and Fragonard, Giacometti, the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, from such Germans as Cranach and Grünewald, or more recently Max Beckmann, intermingled with Greek, Roman, and Etruscan sources, as well as all kinds of folk art. Mexican imagery in particular abounds, and in some cases figures are taken directly from *milagros,* or votive objects, e.g., the kneeling figure in *A Flying Flaming House Appearing to a Praying Man* (1978).

The most conspicuous contemporary influence on Staley's work is Picasso, and in terms of a multiplicity of styles and sources, sheer volume of work produced, and a strong interest in the craft tradition, there are substantial parallels to be drawn. Stylistically, much of Staley's early work owes a debt to Picasso's. *Weeping Women* (1978), for instance, derives graphically from Picasso's *Bathers* series of the 1920s, and other works or parts of them, such as *Lovers* (1977) or *Two Lovers Surprised by Death* (1978), resemble Picasso's peculiar distortions of the figure, in which two perspectives at once are presented to the viewer. The sense of autobiography which informs Picasso's *oeuvre* is also strikingly present in Staley's, as well as the use of classical mythology as both subject matter and stylistic influence.

* * *

Staley feels that the most important event in his career, and the one which had the most profound effect on his work and his attitude toward it, was his decision in 1974 to "stop making art." This decision occurred, he says, when he first began to make the mythological paintings, and a title like *Dream of Zeus* became more than just an abstraction, but a story to be told. At that time, he was also making paintings with map-like configurations, as though a landscape were being viewed from above. In these paintings, such as *Map with Cactus: Malevitch in a Corner* (1973-74), a tug-of-war occurred between the map as an abstraction and also as a representation of deep space; in fact, he says, these pieces were maps of his own history,[6] in which specifics and generalizations may have been at odds as well. He had also made, around this time, a series of skull images which he describes as "the divorce paintings," marking a difficult transition in his life. At this point, he says, he felt that he had to stop making art because "it had become such a fashionable act that you simply had to keep up to date constantly with what was in the magazines, and that seemed to be self-defeating." Although the work which preceded this period doesn't seem to differ from that which came after his decision, Staley says,

> It just made me feel better. Once I had freed myself from that, I could then start investigating some things which were even more anti-art, by making the work

Figure 1. *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife,* 1980. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 96″.
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York.

> very literal or dealing with compositions which were becoming more involved with different spatial concepts, getting away from the tyranny of two dimensions. I also think we have the right to be any number of people and have any number of emotions and so some paintings are decorative and some paintings are screamingly harsh.

Even more than a desire to break away from the restrictions he felt were inherent in making "art," there was a question of moving from the personal and private autobiography of the map paintings and the symbolic works to a realm in which autobiography transcended itself. He felt that he could no longer be private, that the images had to be archetypal ones. By working with myths as archetypes, he believed, the work could be extremely public without losing its personal origins. The importance of this autobiographical impulse is not simply that Staley can exorcise personal demons through making his work, although this is certainly a function of art making in general. Staley candidly admits, "I do it because it's necessary for me. It's cathartic and therapeutic, but I hope that someone else might like it and that it would give them some enjoyment." His reading in psychology, particularly the work of Jung, helped make Staley feel as though his particular life and problems were part of a larger condition. Thus, the symbolic dimension which characterizes Staley's work, while having its origin in a personal situation, allows it to achieve a deeper level of communication.

The filmmaker Ingmar Bergman, speaking of the genesis of his own work, similarly stresses the importance of autobiography in providing the foundation for a more profound symbolic exchange with the audience, of paying attention to one's "inner voices."[7] An astute observer of Bergman's working methods says that this means according them

> the same respect we give to every other fact of our life. It means to treat the inner demons not as though they were unreal imaginings but to treat them as facts, and therefore to relate to them in a serious way.... It places the person in the midst of the ongoing unity of life while he or she is actively working on the symbolic dimension.[8]

It is interesting to note that Bergman goes on to describe the fact that he uses the same actors over and over again in his films, because the same cast of characters inhabits his dreams,[9] and that further, once the actors have been given the script and it has been read by them, he allows them to speak and act at will, as though they were, in fact, moving through those dreams.

Similarly, when Staley talks about the "literalness" of his work, and describes the way the subject literally dictates the way it will be painted, he is in fact allowing the work of art to take on a life of its own, to dictate its own terms. This accounts for a part of the "inconsistency" which some find distressing in his work and which he sees as a necessary condition of it.

> I'm very inconsistent. The quality varies from one painting to another. One painting is half done in one style on one side and half done in another style on the other.... It is a problem until you look at it and realize what's happening. It's very literal. I figure if a person has fallen down either they're dead or they're drunk. That means they've lost their personality. Real abstract, extremely literal. I love the literality of medieval painting, where there are four little stories going on at the same time, painted in four different styles.[10]

The storytelling aspect of Staley's work is its most characteristic feature and is typical of a Southern sensibility, albeit manifest in a literary rather than a visual tradition. The literature of the South is, like Staley's painting, darkly mysterious, deeply psychological, ironic, complex, and fantastic, exploring behavior and events that are out of the ordinary. Such writers as William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, Larry McMurtry and Harry Crewes are part of a Southern tradition of storytelling, oral as well as written, which was eventually adapted by the visual artists of the region.[11] Staley's love of tradition, then, includes not only that of Greece, Rome, Western Europe, and Mexico, but that of his own region as well.

Storytelling is by definition dramatic, and this sense of drama is also very much in keeping with Jungian theory, which holds:

> In a particular drama a picture or story or image of life is given. Everything that follows the opening curtain is like a projection of meaning for future living; it is a metaphor of human existence. The drama is a dream that complements the spectator's everyday waking life.... It gives realistic visions of justice, of joy, of transformation, which will unify with one's own present life to complete it meaningfully.[12]

In terms of drama, Staley is particularly attracted to opera, in which voice, action, music, and scenic effects mesh equally; this attraction is paralleled in the construction of his paintings, in which the rectangle of the canvas is like "watching opera on t.v. — it's the only way to really see it... Opera is a magical art because all of the arts are brought together as opposed to one dominating another." This collision of worlds, the drama of many elements activating a single space, is afforded a perfect vehicle in the exploration of myths.

There are several views of what myths are: in the simplest sense, they are stories about the Gods; they are also a universal form of expression used to explain events which were inexplicable, mostly events having to do with natural phenomena; and in modern times, they have been seen as an early attempt to explain how the world came into existence.[13] Yet myth was not

> a mere form of entertainment nor was it a mere explanation of matters which troubled the intellect; it was the narration in story form of the universal facts of life to which human beings must adjust themselves...the myths were "recounting events in which people were involved to the extent of their very existence."[14]

In Staley's handling of myths, activity is at a fever pitch; there is a life-or-death drama to his stories, which are often illustrated at the point of greatest theatrical impact. Acteon is depicted at the moment not when he has surprised Diana at her bath but when he is torn to death by his own dogs; Leda is caught *in flagrante* (although at a considerable distance into the picture plane); Saint George and his horse leer at the dragon just as it is being killed beneath their feet; Icarus is seen in mid-air, hurtling wildly to his death. Staley thus penetrates immediately to the heart of the story, to that aspect of the myth in which human beings turn to confront the spectres that haunt them, to meet their challenge with bravery, guile, resignation, or cowardice. These moments of confrontation with the self are archetypal; the story leads to a *denouement* in which each person can see him or herself revealed. Myths thus become "a primary medium for intuitive insights into the ultimate nature of human existence...they are...a means of gaining access to existential truth."[15]

Many of the mythological paintings are concerned with the activities of a heroic figure, whose symbolic significance is complex:

> The evolutionary impulse (essential desire) is represented by the hero; the state of conflict in the human psyche by his struggle against the monsters of perversion. All the sublime or perverse constellations of the psyche can thus be expressed figuratively and find their true symbolic explanation by means of the symbolic victory or defeat of a given hero in his fight with a given monster of well-defined and therefore defineable meaning.[16]

The beast that the hero is most often engaged in battle with represents the *other* in us, the uncivilized, unconscious, primitive part of the human psyche that is at war with the conscious, rational, civilized part, and is generally overcome by it. Figures which combine human and bestial aspects, such as Medusa or the Minotaur, can be even more terrifying, because as transformational images, they represent even more strongly the potential in all of us for the loss of control that such a metamorphosis suggests.

Staley is also fascinated by the juxtaposition of women and beasts, and has done over a dozen major versions of *Europa and Bull* (1980). Similarly, *Leda and the Swan* or the story of Galatea wooed by the cyclops Polyphemus attract

Figure 2. *Dance of Salome,* 1983. Acrylic on canvas. 47 x 63".
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Staley because of the archetypal confrontation between beauty and ugliness (both of which are usually subject to transformation by the gods at a moment's notice). Staley is also interested in the subject as a way of analyzing the nature of love, both physical and cerebral, and in the exploration of beasts as representations of sexuality and the maidens as symbolic of spiritual love seduced by physical love. The original "Beauty and the Beast" story is a universal myth of awakening,[17] in which the maiden ultimately falls in love with the beast's goodness, overcoming her physical revulsion toward him, whereupon he is turned into a handsome young prince; so too are the bull and the swan metamorphosed once again into the ever-changing god Zeus.

In general, love is a prevailing theme in Staley's work. He has done hundreds of drawings on the theme, showing lovers in every possible state of transport. Love is also a primary theme of the mythological paintings, and religious love as well is exemplified by the subject of the Crucifixion. In all these works, the transcendent quality of love, its physical and spiritual nature, its bitter and sweet aspects, are explored. These depictions range from the primal image of *Adam and Eve* (1977) just before the apple is bitten, as well as at the moment of their expulsion from Paradise, in *After the Fall,* to the macabre embrace of *Skeleton with Nude* (1979). Staley says that the mermaid image he uses so often also came from being in love, and that when he told people he was getting married again, they all said that they knew it already, because he had been painting mermaids.

In many of the works, love is tempered by the knowledge of death, which is represented in a direct symbolic way. In a work like *Skeleton with Nude,* for instance, with its terrifying juxtaposition of sexuality and mortality,[18] the allusion is that sexuality is associated with loss of control, and loss of control is associated with death. Staley calls this a "courtship painting," based in part on German *Dance of Death* engravings, but even for him the precise activity taking place in the painting is unclear. Similarly, *Lovers Eating Skulls* (1980) comes from a Mexican "Day of the Dead" tradition in which a couple buys sugar skulls on which their lover's name is written, and then eats the skull belonging to the other; the symbolic reference is to death in life and life in death.[19]

In other paintings, the origins of love are suggested in an oblique way by the use of images with a mythological history. For example, the four-legged creature which occurs in Staley's work of the mid-1970s, e.g., *Dancer at Mount Abraham, Vt.* (1975-76), and which has autobiographical meaning for Staley, has its corollary in a story recounted by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium.* The first beings, so the story goes, were globular in shape, had four arms, four legs, one head with two faces, and two sets of genitals, one male and one female.

> They walked erect, as we do ourselves, backward or forward, whichever they pleased, but when they broke into a run they simply stuck their legs straight out and went whirling round and round like a clown turning cartwheels.[20]

It was Zeus who, perceiving that they were powerful and arrogant, sliced them in two, and then in remorse turned their faces around, pulled their skin over the open part, and tied it in a knot at what is now the navel. The halves, however, stuck to each other so closely that he was forced to scatter them over the earth, "so that to this day, each of us is born apart from the other half. But lovers, having found each other, wish for nothing more than to be welded again into one."[21]

In contrast to the charm of the four-legged figure or the unadulterated romance of the *Lovers* drawings, love in the mythological paintings is often tinged with violence. Staley says that he recognizes violence as despair in our society and therefore paints it, but he thinks romance is an equal part of the society and therefore paints that too. Sometimes love and violence go hand in hand, as in *Judith and Holifernes, Samson and Delilah,* or the *Dance of Salome* (fig. 2). It is particularly evident in the *Phyliss and Aristotle* series, based on a somewhat obscure legend popular in the late Middle Ages and the Florentine Renaissance. An allegory of woman's domination over man, it depicts the aged philosopher on hands and knees, wearing bit and bridle, and ridden by Phyliss (also known as Campaste), Alexander the Great's

Figure 3. *Man in a Skeleton Costume,* 1979.
Acrylic on canvas. 31½ x 31½".
Collection of Clint Willour, Houston, Texas.

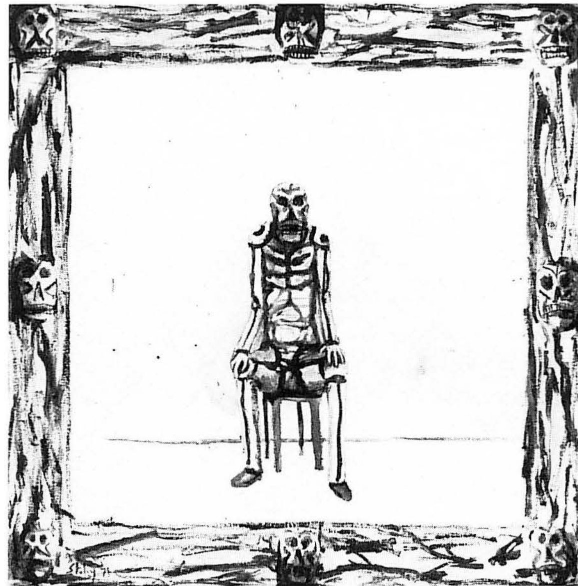


Figure 4. *Ceremony at Etla,* 1981.
Acrylic on canvas. 36 x 48".
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York.

favorite courtesan. Aristotle, who was Alexander's tutor, warned him constantly about women being the undoing of strong men, and in revenge Phyliss seduced him and as proof of his love insisted that he allow her to ride on his back.[22] Staley's versions of the subject are sensuous and eerie, set against a backdrop of lurid pinks, purples, acid greens and yellows, the figures pared down to near skeletal apparitions, as though they had been riding thus through eternity. Clearly, not all depictions of love that interest Staley deal with the seduction of women by men.

Staley says that he has always done self-portraits, but they rarely appear in his work in traditional form. For example, *Man in a Skeleton Costume* (1979), a painting in which a tiny figure is isolated in a white space, surrounded only by a painted frame embellished with skulls, is, in fact, Staley (fig. 3).

> The skeleton is sitting for his portrait. The mask I own. The skull and costume I remember from dances in Mexico. I presume it's me![23]

The man in *Lovers Eating Skulls* is also Staley, and it is perhaps because Staley's own birthday falls on the same day as the "Day of the Dead" celebration that so many of the self-portraits appear in this guise, although he also figures, unrecognizably, in paintings like *Ceremony at Etla,* where he is one of the observers on the right. In a monumental three-panel painting done in 1975, Staley presents the figure appearing in each panel as an alter-ego, which "has four legs and is moving very fast. He is the shaman and he is the skeleton Death, and he is the King (of the modern world); he's also a fool"[24] (fig. 5-7).

A recent self-portrait, done in Rome, is one of the few major works of this kind that is an overt self-portrait. In it, Staley is shown dressed formally in suit and tie, lifting a grotesque mask of Bacchus from his face. The portrait is at once ironic and wistful; Staley peers out quixotically, perhaps a bit apprehensively, as he grasps the mask by its mouth (see page 22). The two sides of a pesonality presented here seem to be in contradiction even to themselves; the artist is somber, conservative, controlled, while the mask, or artifact, is rowdy, leering, exuberant, with a flame-colored face, verdant hair, and crown of purple grapes, the paradigm of sensuousness and abandon.

Just as Staley's use of self-portraiture is unconventional, so too is his insistence upon the continuation of a landscape tradition in his own work, although his landscape paintings and drawings seem, at first glance, to differ markedly from any of his other work. First of all, many of them are done on site, particularly the small ones, although they are often finished in the studio, and they appear to be more realistic than any of his other paintings, and more consistently rendered. They are, in fact, quite classical in appearance, with an acute awareness of changing light and shadow, atmospheric conditions, and nuances of coloration and form. Though Staley's work usually incorporates some form of landscape, the paintings and drawings which are purely landscapes are for him just as problematic as figure paintings, and just as difficult to imbue with a sense of liveliness and drama.

Despite the realism and delicacy of the landscapes, Staley doesn't work from photographs because, for him, sketches provide a more accurate idea of what the scene is really like. Moreover, he insists, "I don't paint exact photographic images. I paint dreams. I paint your dream image of what a landscape is. I paint everyman's Big Bend, everyman's Italian landscape. A landscape in Tuscany. A view of the Chisos mountains. The specific locality is not important. It's an archetypal image, that's all."

Most recently, because he has been living and working in Rome for the past two years, Staley has begun to integrate figures and stories into the landscape (rather than vice-versa, as he did in the mythological paintings), in what he calls a "Poussinian" idea. Tiny figures have begun to inhabit vast landscapes, and occasionally, as in a recent series of paintings entitled *Grotesquery with Landscapes* (1983), Italianate statuary frames as many as nine completely disparate landscapes, one a field, one a villa in a distant valley, one a sunset, one a series of lush hills and cypresses, and so on. These particular paintings are an odd pictorial reversal of Staley's usual landscape mode, since the space is almost surrealistically disjointed, each tiny landscape having its own particular space, depth, perspective and atmosphere,

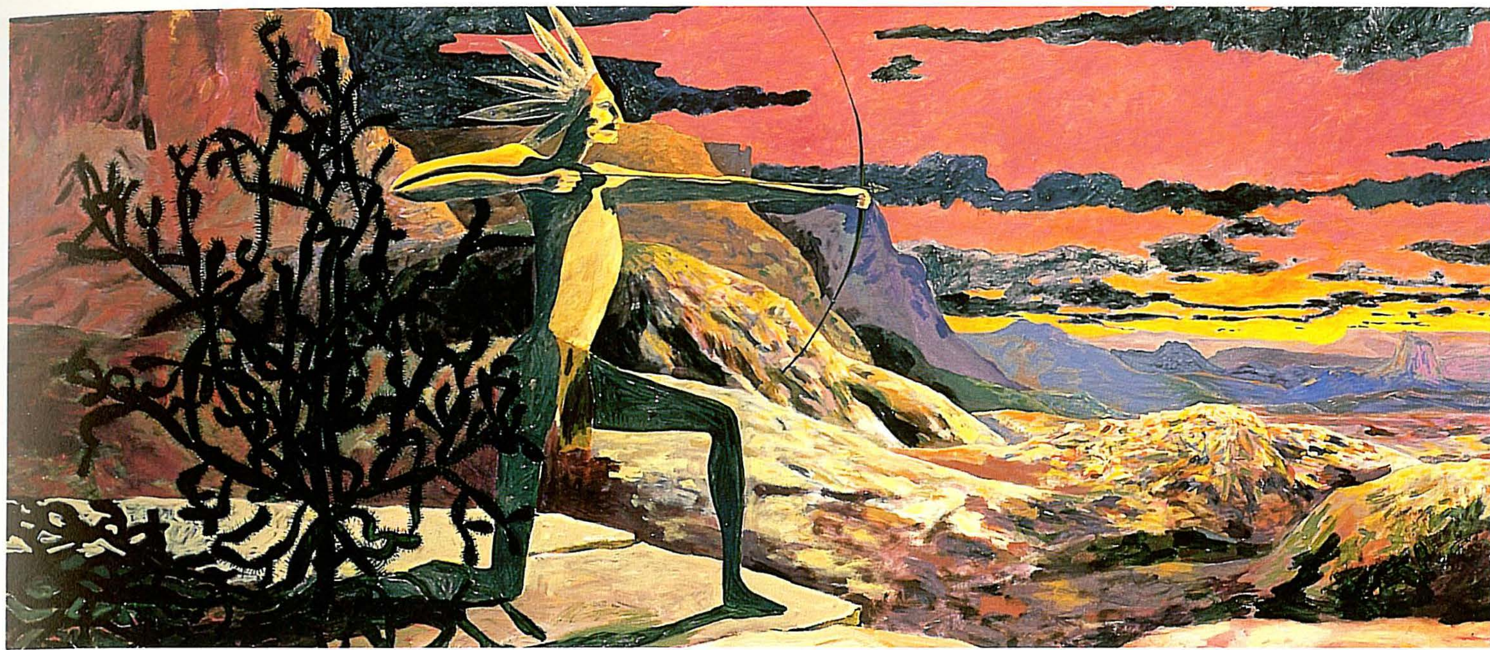


Figure 5. *King, Shaman, Fool,* 1975. Acrylic on canvas. Three panels; 66½ x 156½″ each. Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas. Detail; King.

Figure 6. *King, Shaman, Fool,* 1975. Acrylic on canvas. Three panels; 66½ x 156½" each. Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas. Detail; Shaman.

Figure 7. *King, Shaman, Fool,* 1975. Acrylic on canvas. Three panels; 66½ x 156″ each. Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas. Detail; Fool.

separated from the others only by a thin trellis of statuary. The sculptural figures themselves are distorted and unreal, combining nymphs, gargoyles, satyrs, cupids and classical nereids. In contrast to these hybrid works, the slightly earlier *Storm over Chisos* (1981), *Mule Ears Peaks III, Big Bend, Texas* (1980), or *The Rio Grande at Lajitas, Texas* (1980) are virtuoso renderings of incredibly vast, beautiful and awesome southwestern regions; Staley's artistic progenitors in this case are Turner, Constable, Hobbema, and Van Ruisdael.

Thus, in the landscapes as well as in the Mexican ceremonial scenes, animal paintings, or lovers series, Staley does in a less obvious way what he has done in the mythological paintings; he has provided, from a specific personal experience, event, locale, or story, a way of relating the specific to a more profound or universal experience. That is, he has provided the work with a symbolic dimension which removes it from the realm of simple narrative, representation, or autobiography.

Staley's fascination with stories, legends, myths, dreams, symbols, and archetypes indicates that he is clearly interested in a kind of communication that takes into consideration the public at large, but this is difficult to achieve without pandering to public taste and sacrificing the elements of risk, self-exploration and experimentation in his work which are essential to him.

Staley has stated unequivocally that he is a "populist." He is willing and able to do anything requested of him in terms of his work and feels challenged rather than upset by the idea that some people prefer one kind of work to another, or will ask him specifically to make a pot or a belt or a portrait or a small landscape.

> In Mexico I saw these marvelous people making things which they in turn sold to live. So I said, "I can do that." I have many sides. Why don't I go back to do other crafts that I did in Boy Scouts? Ceramics look interesting and people have always urged me to make them pots, so I'll see if I can make a pot. I just figure I'll do what you want. As long as you know what it is I do, I'll attempt anything, but I can only work to my optimum ability.

The crafts tradition is, of course, a folk or populist one, held in disdain for the most part by makers and purveyors of high art today. Staley once again sees it as yet another challenge.

> You know, I'm supposed to paint somebody's bedstead, the headboard of a bed. Well, so did Polaiuollo. You look at so much Renaissance painting, and it's a wooden board about so long, and it came from a wedding chest. Now it's a great treasure. Once it was a banner that was carried by Signorelli, and now it's hanging in the Brera Museum in Milan!

Staley feels strongly that there is no such thing as contemporary "originality," that every artistic innovation can be found somewhere in use in the past as part of everyday life, that even such monuments as the Great Pyramids were created from something more mundane, in this case, says Staley, imitating the shape of the mountains south of Aswan.

Such connections between art and lived reality are scarce in our contemporary world, and Staley's unwillingness to stick to high-art styles, subject matter and media, or to control the amount of work he produces, his embracing of "bad taste" (which sooner or later, he says, becomes "good" taste), and his interest in what the public wants, make his work and his attitude toward it seem truly idiosyncratic. The artist Martha Rosler, however, in a provocative article addressing the problems of audience for the contemporary artist, analyzes the situation thus:

> In our society the contradictions between the claims made for art and the actualities of its production and distribution are abundantly clear. While cultural myth actively claims that art is a human universal—transcending its historical moment and the other conditions of its making, and above all the class of its makers and patrons—and that it is the highest expression of spiritual and metaphysical truth, high art is patently exclusionary in its appeal...[25]

In the tradition of modernism, she says, art disclaims any sense of responsibility to any audience, "a ban that was part of the romantic picture of the artist as utterly alone, unas-

similable within bourgeois social order, and finally, uncomfortable in his own existence."[26] Staley's view is the opposite:

> Along with being a populist, I consider [art] a business. Making images, selling images, is a business. I don't want to go back to teaching to keep my art pure. I don't like purity anyhow.

Staley is particularly interested in the question of patronage in this regard, citing the interaction between artists and patrons in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

> We always think we have to be completely free and completely original. Not really. Perhaps originality can grow out of having some degree of responsibility. I see patronage as very much of a challenge, but there are no patrons any more. Patrons set up a specific philosophic background for what was going on, whether in architecture or painting or sculpture. And it became part of a thought pattern. Now it's the private, internal thought of the artist which is important. I prefer the interaction.

This sense of responsibility, of not being separate from an audience, is in perfect accord with the work itself, since it does, by its very nature, attempt to address the broadest possible public.

* * *

The loss of a mythical sense that characterizes the modern world makes Staley's work, addressing as it does precisely this question, both an anachronism and an antidote of sorts. We are living in the midst of what one writer calls "a crisis of the imagination. That we have lost somehow the protective covering of accepted myth structures seems generally agreed. We have suffered what... Jung terms 'an unprecedented impoverishment of symbols'."[27] It is perhaps this crisis which accounts in part for the resurgence of figurative painting in recent years, a resurgence which could be seen as an attempt to reinvest the world with meaning, to bring again to the visual arts a sense of the totality of human endeavor. The return to figuration after so many years of a prevalent non-objective visual vocabulary, however, runs the risk of inauthenticity and alienation, if and when figuration becomes merely fashionable and empty symbols are created.

Staley's long-standing use of a symbolic vocabulary, because it evolved autobiographically, as an attempt to understand himself in relation to his own time, and outside the art community *per se,* represents an authentic, albeit somewhat isolated attempt to recoup a larger world view through his work. It is encouraging that, as the sociologist Mircea Eliade writes,

> we have seen that myths decay and symbols become secularized, but that they never disappear, even in the most positivist of civilizations, that of the 19th century. Symbols and myths come from such depths: they are part and parcel of the human being, and it is impossible that they should not be found again in any and every existential situation of humanity in the cosmos.[28]

Staley has taken symbols which are deeply personal, yet which have ancient, classical sources, and used them in his work in a contemporary way. Ironically, because he isn't interested in representation, but in dreams and archetypes, his work has been difficult for many people to accept. Although he feels that there has never been overt hostility to it, he realizes that it is difficult for some viewers to understand how the idiosyncratic distortions and inconsistencies of the work can be reconciled with the classical motifs and traditional iconographies he employs, or for them to become used to the humorousness which occasionally results from such juxtapositions. On the other hand, many of the works can be disquietingly familiar or truly disturbing. Such earlier works as *Skull's Dream* (1975-76), *The Bound Man* (1979), *Skeleton with Nude* (1979), or the Mexican scene paintings with their dramatic, silhouetted figures and mysterious goings on have a dreamlike and occasionally nightmarish quality, temporally suspended, silent, distanced, and profoundly moving.

Staley emphasizes repeatedly that he paints dreams, not representations, and considering the influence of his extensive reading in Jung, it is essential to an understanding of his work to know that in the Jungian scheme

> dreams are viewed, not as symptoms of a sickness, but as visions or images of meaning. Dreams are taken to be pictures of health and wholeness. The dream-vision points to a future vocational drama, a cue to future plot-action that will fulfill present personal predicaments.... A dream...is a magic mirror, projecting our vocation for personal meaning.[29]

Dreams are a way of experiencing the symbolic dimension of the world in personal terms, and it is the symbolic dimension that is "the source of the material from which works of art are made."[30] When the symbolic dimension is perceived in transpersonal terms, we have entered the area of myth; "it is myth because it touches what is ultimate in us and in our lives, expresses it symbolically, and provides an inner perspective by which the mysteries of human existence are felt and entered into."[31] Thus, the mythological dimension represents the whole of life, the striving for a total world view.

When Staley paints *The Fall of Man* (1977) or *Fall of Icarus I* (1982), he is dealing with more than just the Biblical or classical story as a pictorial vehicle; such work addresses the larger questions of each individual's fall from grace, acquisition of knowledge, or crisis of belief. When we are presented with such strange, haunting images as a pale, leaping Indian, cacti under his feet, racing over the earth at its summit, or the maniacally grinning four-legged *Dancer at Mount Abraham, Vt.* wheeling ecstatically through an Edenic landscape, or the tiny, vulnerable figures asserting their fragile presence in the timeless and majestic vistas of *King, Shaman, Fool* (1975), we are face to face with the images of our own relationship to the land and to ourselves; we are reminded of who and what we are, and what we have become. *Phyliss and Aristotle, Europa and Zeus, Triumph of Galatea* (1982), *Venus and Adonis* (1982) are indeed those tales of seduction, passion, betrayal, usury, and revenge that link us, in our modern world, to the ageless and immortal lovers of the past. And the heroism of Perseus or Hercules, the foolhardiness of Acteon or Icarus, are poignant reminders of our own courage or fragility.

Myths, symbols and dreams are as essential to Staley's work as they are to our lives. Mythology in particular

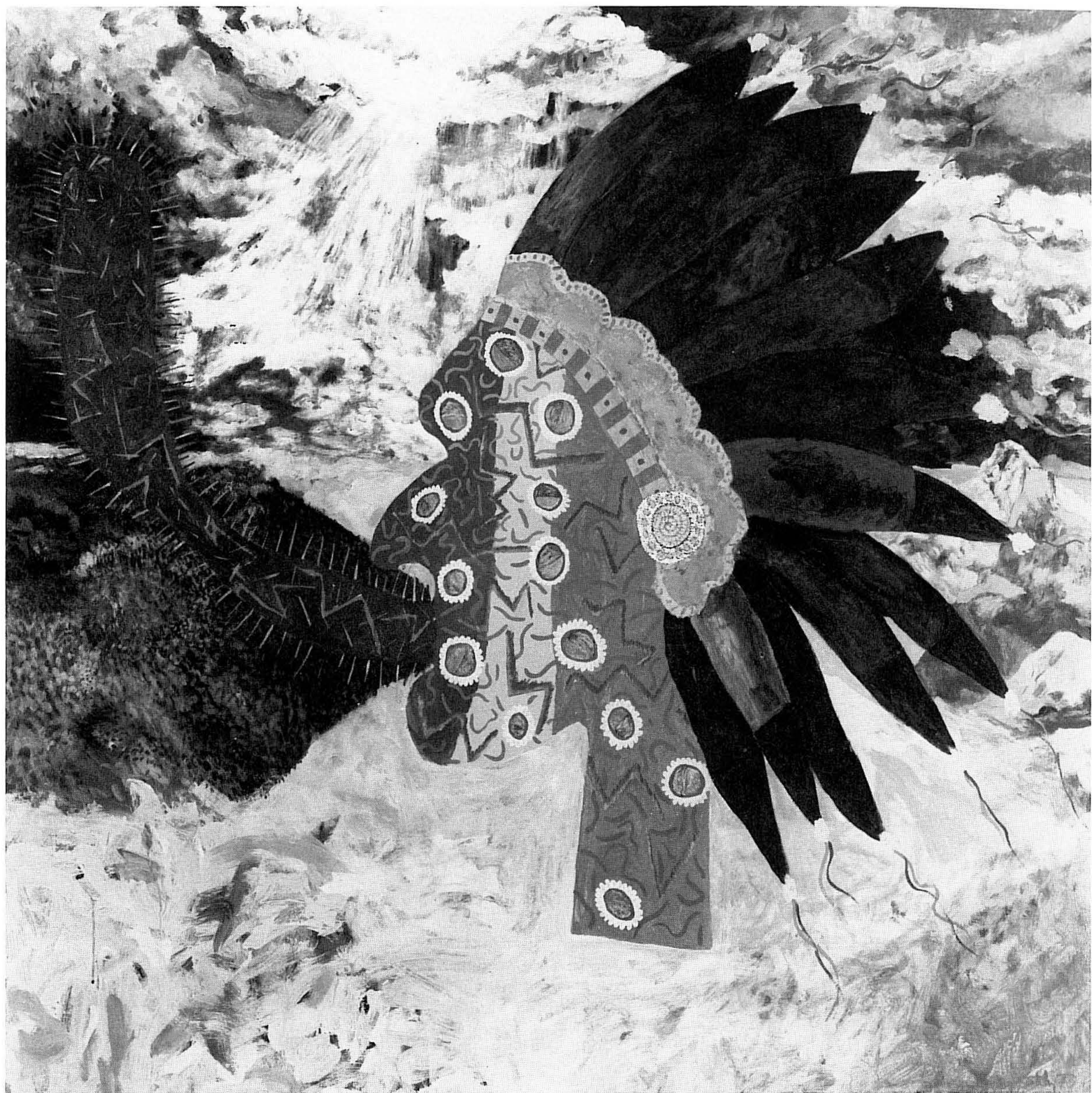
> is not a peripheral manifestation, not a luxury, but a serious attempt at integration of reality and experience.... Its goal is a totality of what is significant to human needs, material, intellectual and religious.[32]

The wide-ranging, inclusive quality of Staley's work, his insistence on freedom from aesthetic rules, his emphasis on the power of observation to identify essential elements in our own lives and surroundings, and the incorporation of this quality of passionate observation into the larger schema of myths, symbols, and dreams which are fundamental to the structuring of human life — past, present and future — make the work meaningful outside the boundaries of art alone. Myth, symbol and dream are, in Staley's work, "signs that point the way to the possibility of knowing who we really are."[33]

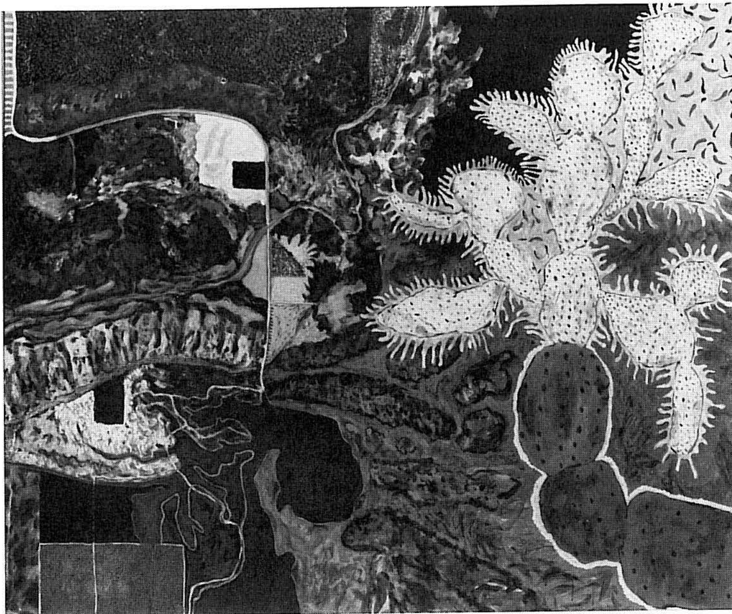
Marcia Tucker
Director
The New Museum of Contemporary Art

NOTES

1. All quotes from the artist, unless otherwise noted, have been taken from interviews with the author in the Spring, 1983.
2. Linda L. Cathcart, unpublished interview with the artist, Jan. 5, 1983. Referred to hereafter as "L.L.C. interview."
3. L.L.C. interview.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Ira Progoff, "Waking Dream and Living Myth," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion*, ed. Joseph Campbell, N.Y., E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1970, p. 189.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 191. This and subsequent quotations have been slightly altered, where necessary, to conform to non-sexist language guidelines.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
10. Clearly Staley feels that there is considerable art historical precedence for such inconsistency; for example, Picasso painted in many different styles at once, and Rembrandt also built up one area of the painting heavily, and left others loosely brushed, as Staley points out.
11. A figurative, purely narrative painting style was prevalent in the South and in Texas long before it became popular in New York, but it was not taken seriously until it became co-opted by the mainstream. Figurative and narrative styles were also common in Chicago and in California, but Chicago's style was less purely narrative, relating more to the comics and kitsch artifacts than to literary sources. California's figurative style, on the other hand, was a manifestation of the psychedelic phenomenon which was popular there in the late 1960s, or else it was part of the ongoing non-narrative West Coast figurative tradition which included painters like Nathan Olivera or David Parks. The work of the painter Joan Brown is an exception, and stands alone as an early forerunner of mainstream figurative work today.
12. David L. Miller, "Orestes: Myth and Dream as Catharsis," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion*, ed. Joseph Campbell, N.Y., E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1970, p. 37.
13. John F. Priest, "Myth and Dream in Hebrew Scripture," in *Myths, Dreams, Religion, op. cit.*, p. 49.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
15. Ira Progoff, "Waking Dream and Living Myth," in Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
16. Paul Diel, *Symbolism in Greek Mythology*, Shambhala Press, Boulder and London, 1980, p. 19.
17. Joseph L. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
18. In French literature, orgasm is sometimes associated with death; it is occasionally referred to as "le petit mort."
19. *Skull's Dream*, for Staley, specifically refers to one life dying and another emerging from it. (L.L.C. interview)
20. Joseph Campbell, "Mythological Themes," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion, op. cit.*, p. 151.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
22. James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, revised edition. Icon Editions, Harper and Row, N.Y., 1974. Revised edition 1979, p. 31. Representations of the subject can be found on Italian Renaissance frescoes, tapestries, and in 15th century German prints.
23. L.L.C. interview.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Martha Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, Makers: Thoughts on Audience," *Exposure* 1, no. 1, Sprint 1979, p. 10.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
27. Stanley Romaine Hopper, "Myth, Dream, and Imagination," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion, op. cit.*, p. 113.
28. Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols (Studies in Religious Symbolism)*, trans. Philip Mairet, Sheed Andrews & McMell, Inc., Kansas, 1961, p. 25.
29. David L. Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 32.
30. Ira Progoff, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
32. James Barr, "The Meaning of Mythology," *Vetus Testamentum*, ix., 1959, p. 3. Quoted in John F. Priest, "Myth and Dream in Hebrew Scripture," in *Myths, Dreams, Religion, op. cit.*, p. 51.
33. Richard A. Underwood, "Myth, Dream, and Contemporary Philosophy," in Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

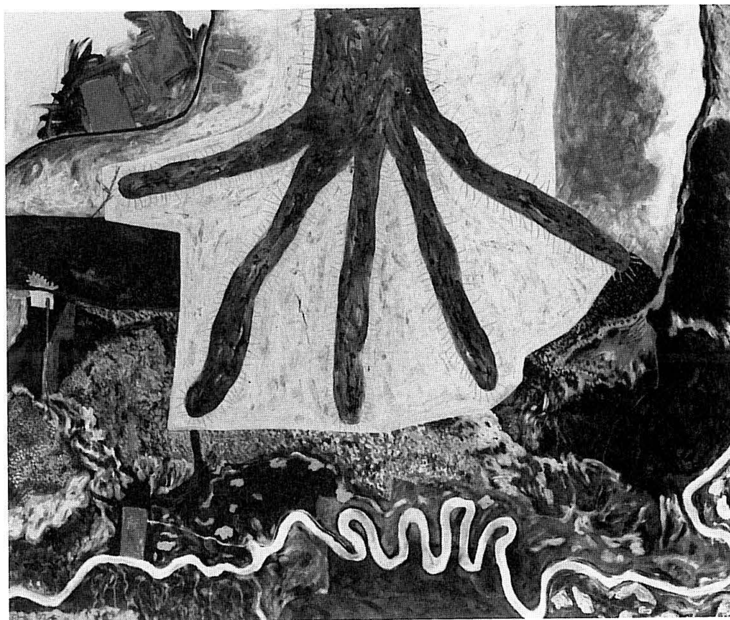


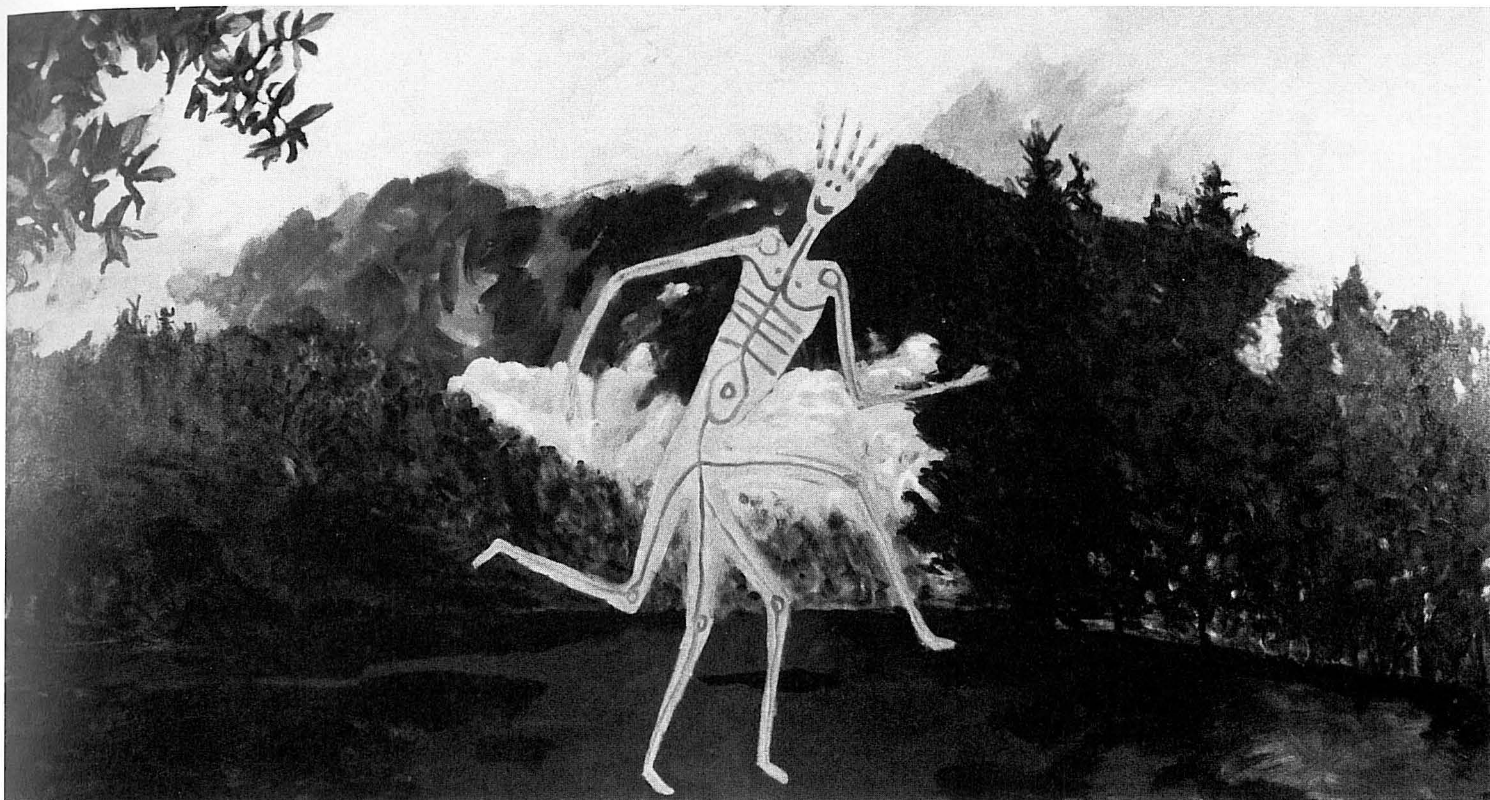
Indian Eating a Cactus, 1973. Acrylic on canvas. 66 x 66". Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.



Landscape with Cactus, 1973. Acrylic on canvas. 60¾ x 72½″.
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York,
and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Map with Cactus: Malevitch in a Corner, 1973-74.
Acrylic on canvas. 60½ x 73″.
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York,
and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

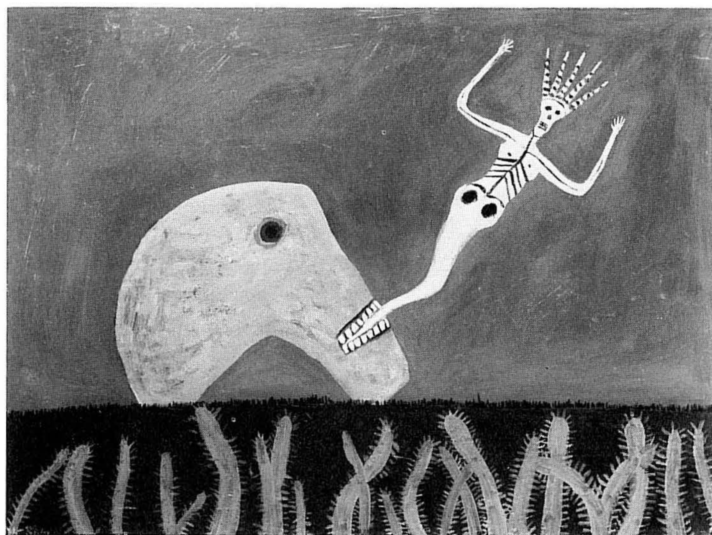


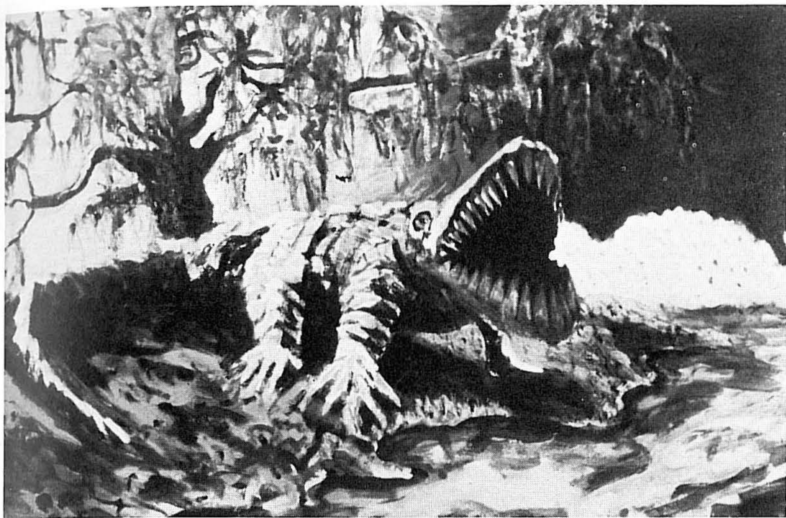


Dancer at Mount Abraham, Vt., 1975-76. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 121". Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Progress, 1975. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 144".
Collection of Roberta Hammond, Houston, Texas.

Skull's Dream, 1975-76. Acrylic on canvas. 18 x 24". Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

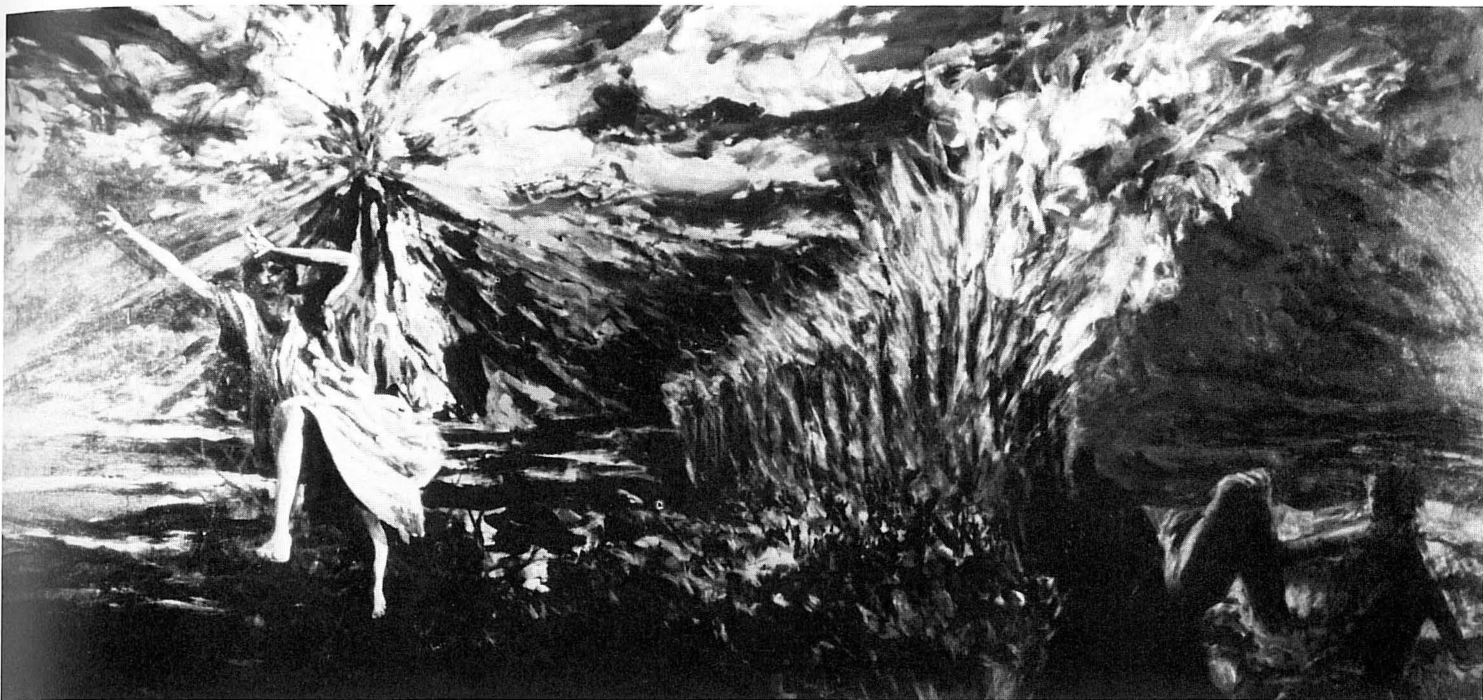




A Louisiana Painting, 1976-81. Acrylic on canvas. 34 x 52".
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Roy S. O'Connor, Houston, Texas.

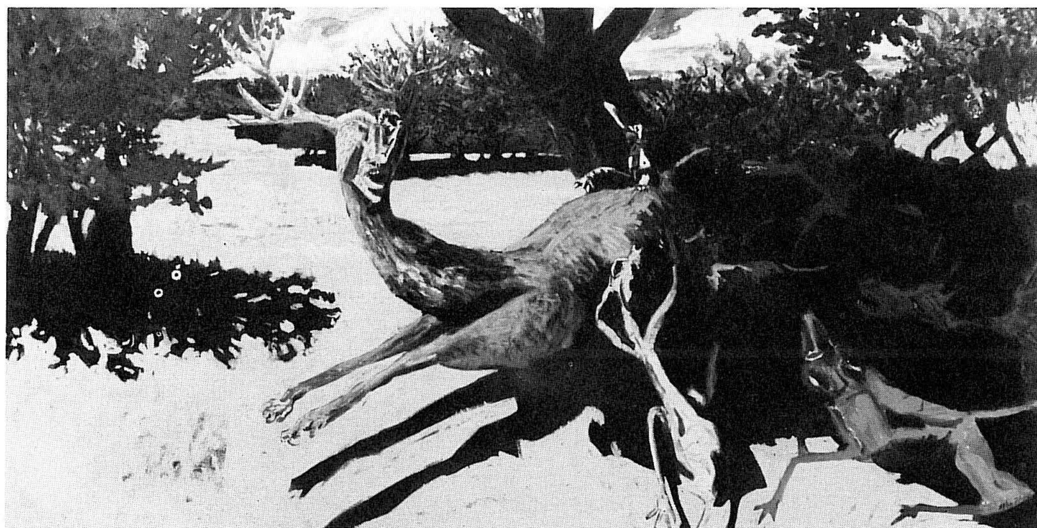
Turkey Buzzard, 1976-81. Acrylic on canvas. 47½ x 54½".
Collection of Marvin Watson, Jr., Houston, Texas.

Adam and Eve, 1977. Acrylic on canvas. 54 x 48".
Collection of Joe W. Nicholson,
San Antonio, Texas.



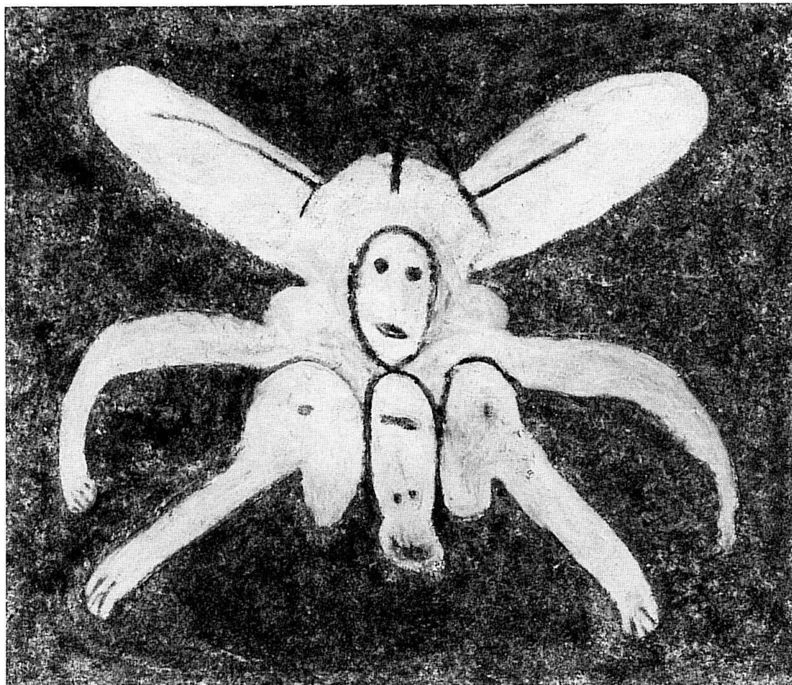
The Last Day of Pompeii, 1977. Acrylic on canvas. 72 x 145".
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. E. Quinton Davis, Houston, Texas.

Story of Acteon I, 1977. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 120".
Collection of The Chase Manhattan Bank, New York.



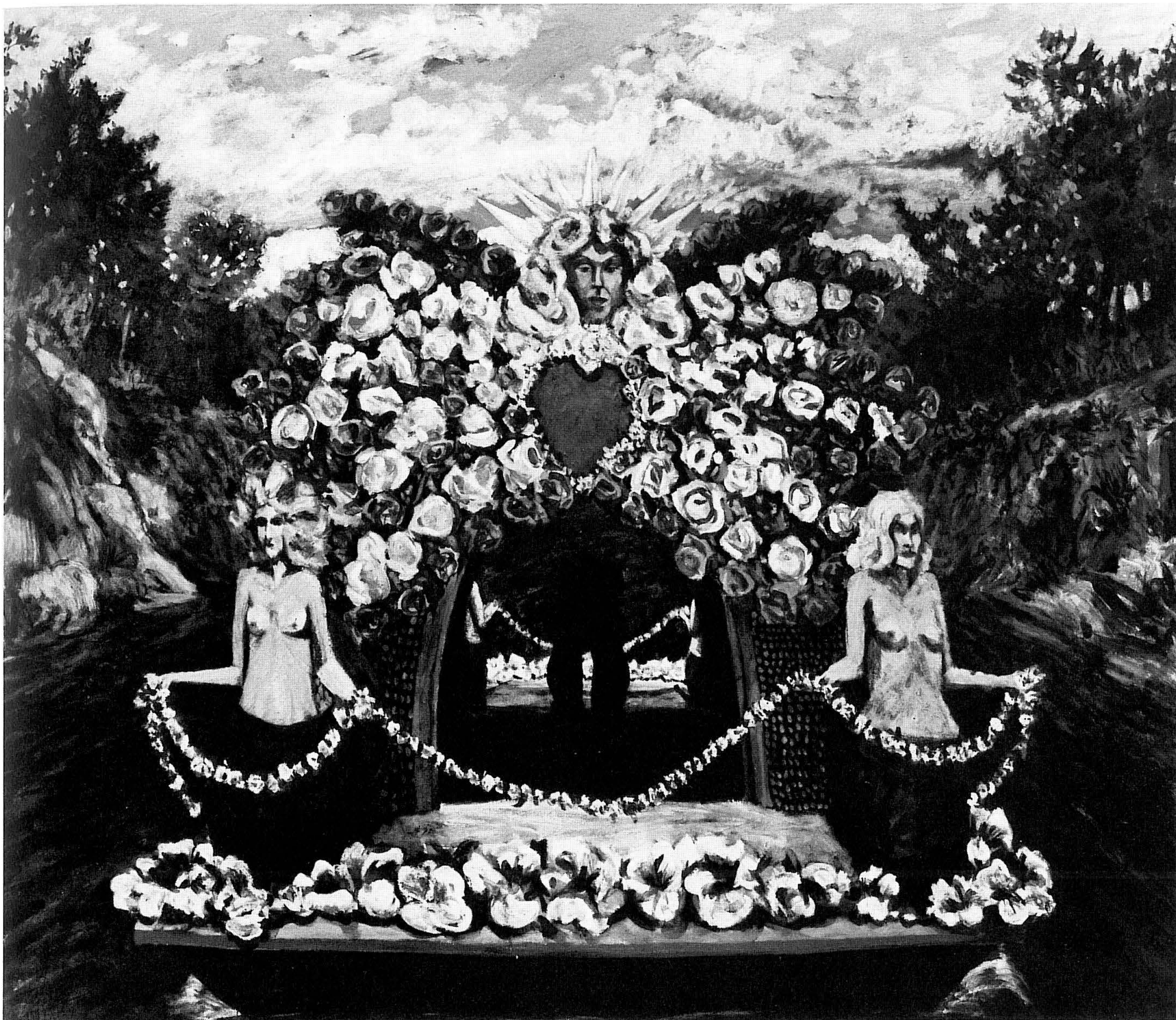
Story of Acteon II, 1977. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 120".
Collection of The Chase Manhattan Bank, New York.

The Temptation of St. Anthony, 1977. Acrylic on canvas. 72 x 156¾".
Collection of the San Antonio Museum Association, San Antonio, Texas.

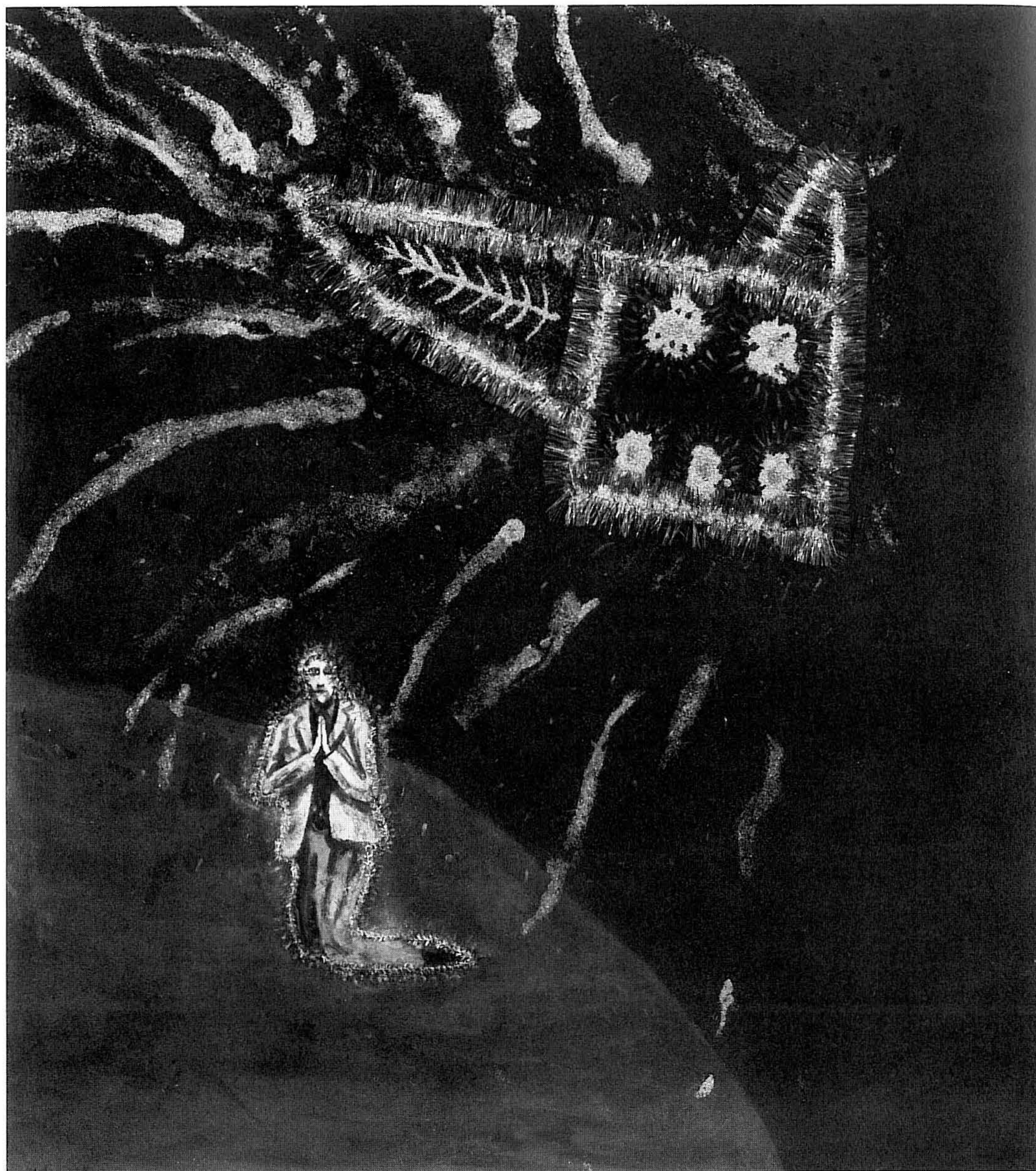


Lovers, 1977. Acrylic, dirt and glitter on canvas. 47¼ x 55¼". Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Weather Vane, 1977. Acrylic on canvas. 36¼ x 48¼". Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York.



Xochimilco, 1977-80. Acrylic on canvas. 46½ x 55".
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York.



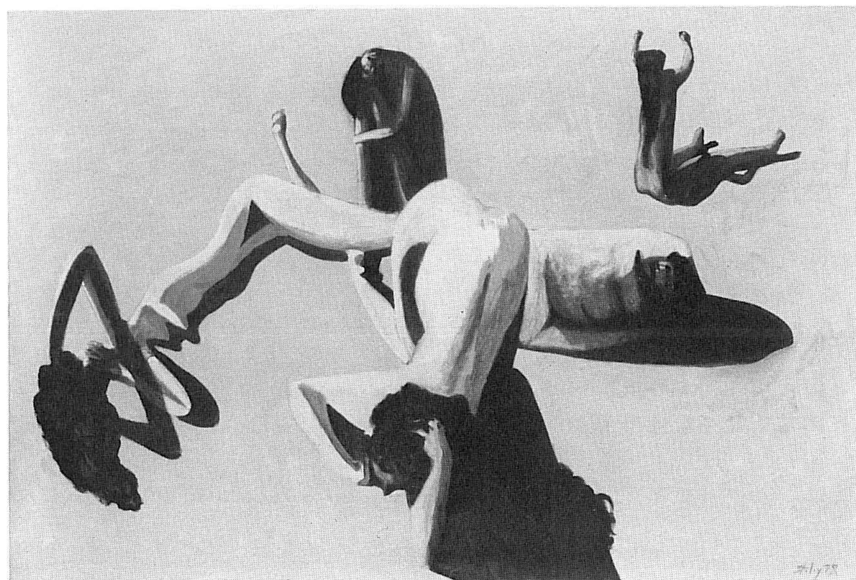
A Flying Flaming House Appearing to a Praying Man, 1978. Acrylic, glitter, tinsel on canvas. 54 x 48". Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Boystown, Laredo, Mexico, 1978-79. Acrylic on canvas. 59 x 120". Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Leda and the Swan I, 1978-80. Acrylic on canvas. 54 x 42". Collection of Dean Luse and La Rue Green, Houston, Texas.

Leda and the Swan II, 1978-80. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 108".
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

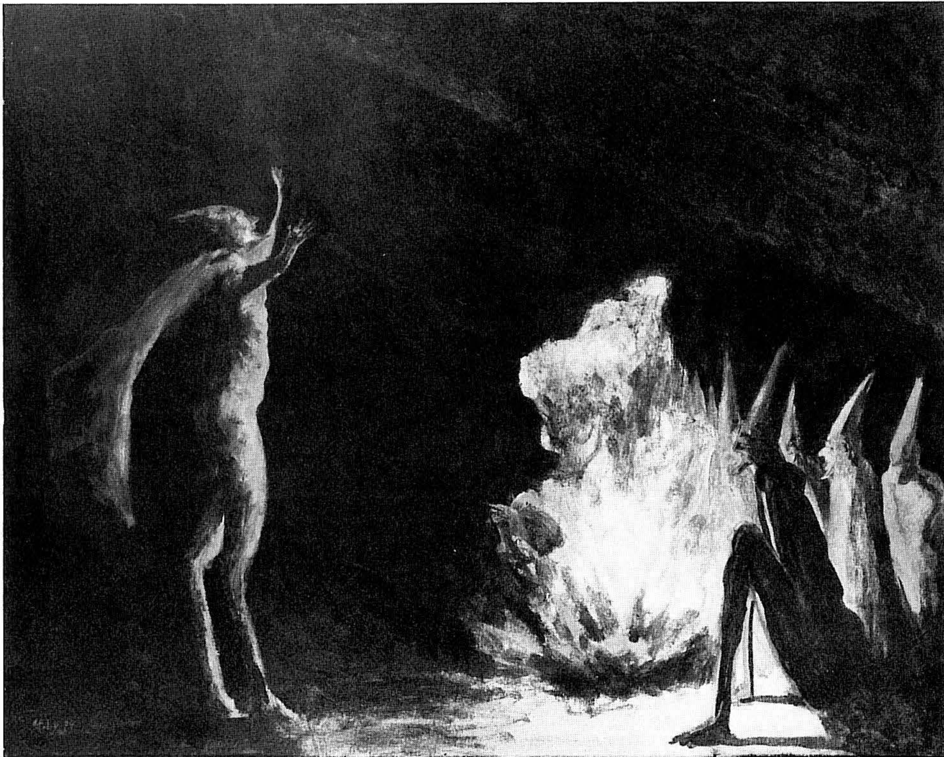
Two Lovers Surprised by Death, 1978. Acrylic on canvas. 36¾ x 48½″. Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.



Weeping Women, 1978. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 72″. Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

The Bound Man, 1979. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 72".
Collection of Bob Wilson, Houston, Texas.

An Encounter, 1979. Acrylic on canvas. 15 x 30″.
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York.



A Gathering of Wizards, 1979. Acrylic on canvas. 24 x 30″.
Collection of Cynthia Morgan Batmanis and
Michael Batmanis, M.D., Houston, Texas.

Skeleton with Nude, 1979. Acrylic on canvas. 32¾ x 32½".
Collection of Dee Wolff, Houston, Texas.

Mazeppa's Ride, 1979. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 72".
Private Collection.

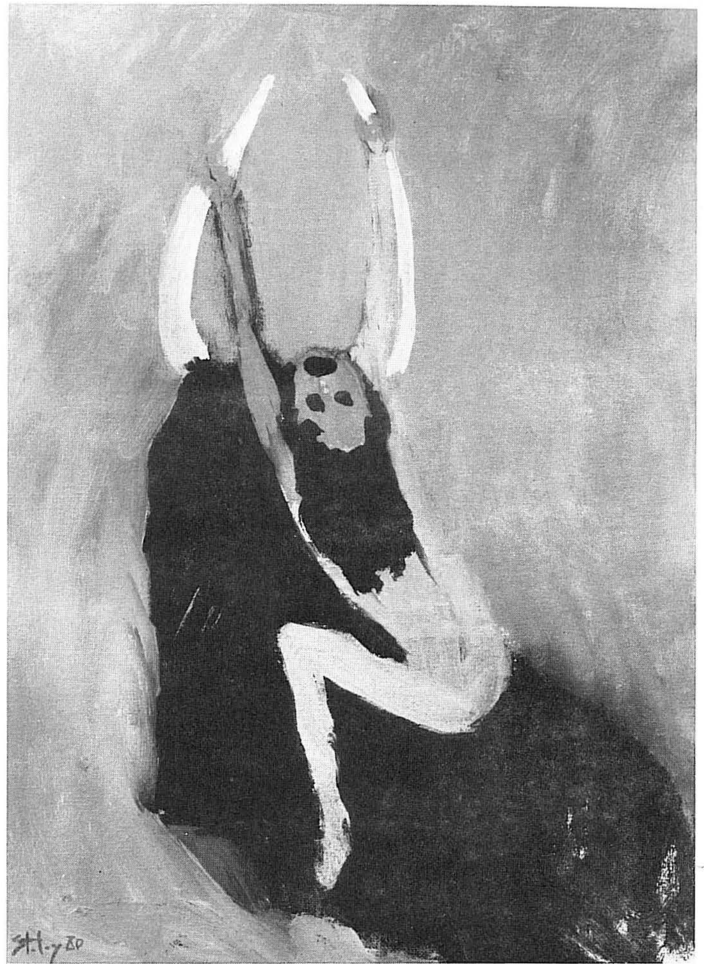
The Studio/Night, 1979. Acrylic on canvas. 47¾ x 71¾″.
Collection of John and Mary Margaret Hansen, Houston, Texas.

Lovers Eating Skulls, 1980. Acrylic on canvas. 36¼ x 58¼". Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Europa and Zeus, 1980.
Acrylic on canvas board. 15 x 30".
Courtesy of the artist and
Watson/de Nagy & Company,
Houston, Texas.

Europa and Zeus I, 1980. Acrylic on canvas board. 18 x 24".
Collection of Sonny Burt and Bob Butler, Dallas, Texas.

Europa and Bull Studies, 1980. Acrylic on canvas board. 16 x 12″.
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.



Europa and Zeus (Study), 1980. Acrylic on canvas board. 14$\frac{5}{8}$ x 10$\frac{15}{16}$″.
Collection of Laura Skoler, Maplewood, New Jersey.

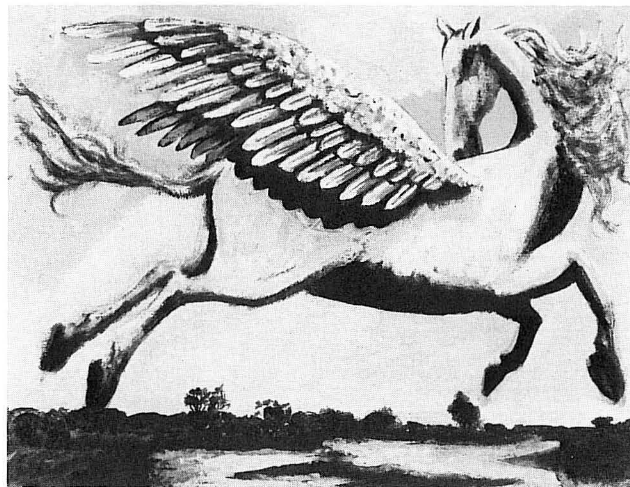
The Rape of Europa, 1980. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 54".
Collection of Ms. Leslie Renauld McGrath, Houston, Texas.

The Rape of Europa II, 1980. Acrylic on canvas. 47 x 55".
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Rape of Europa III, 1981. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 59½".
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York.

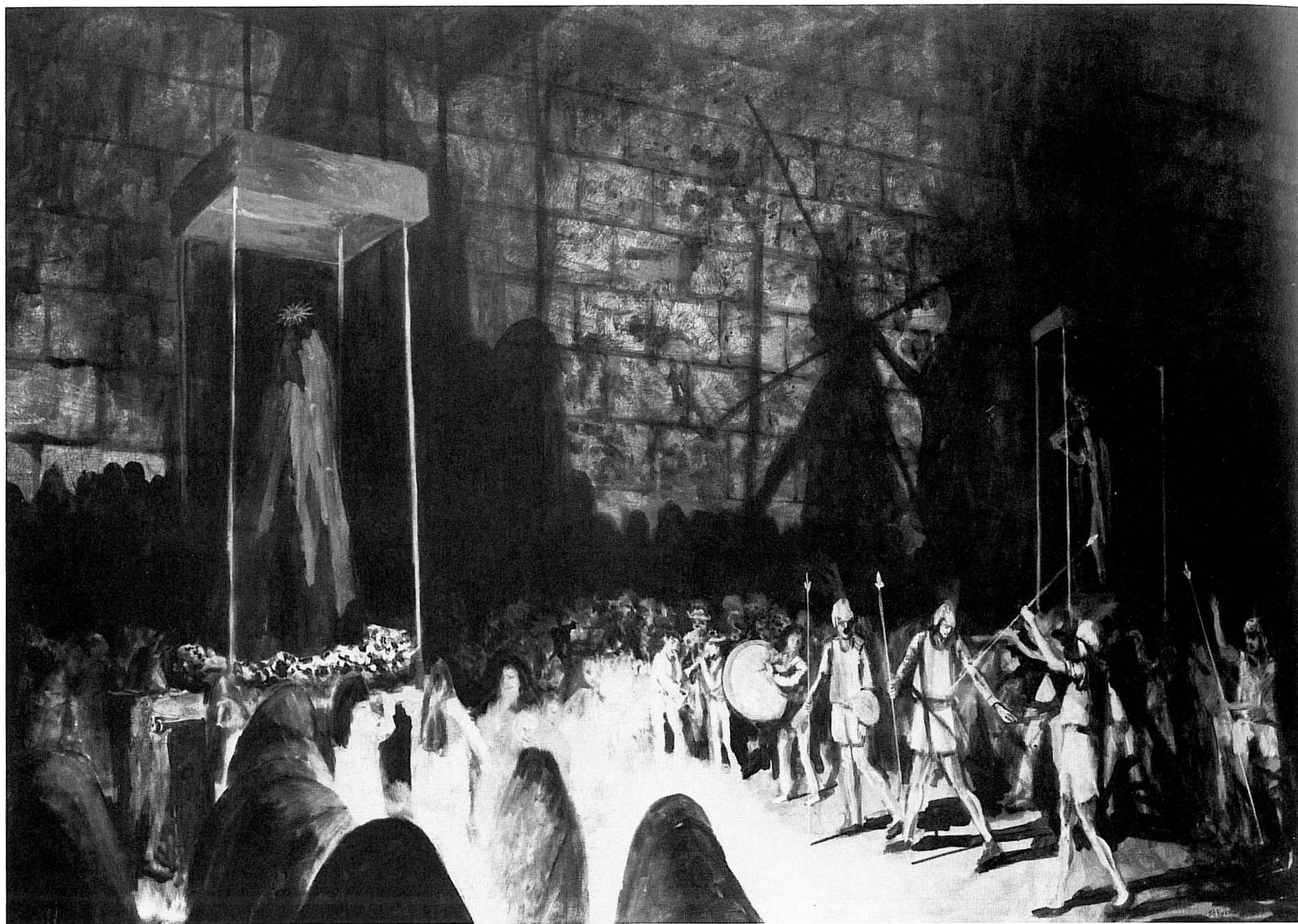
Rape of Europa IV, 1982. Acrylic on canvas. 58¾ x 62½".
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Saint George Slaying the Dragon, 1980. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 72″.
Collection of Marvin Watson, Jr., Houston, Texas.

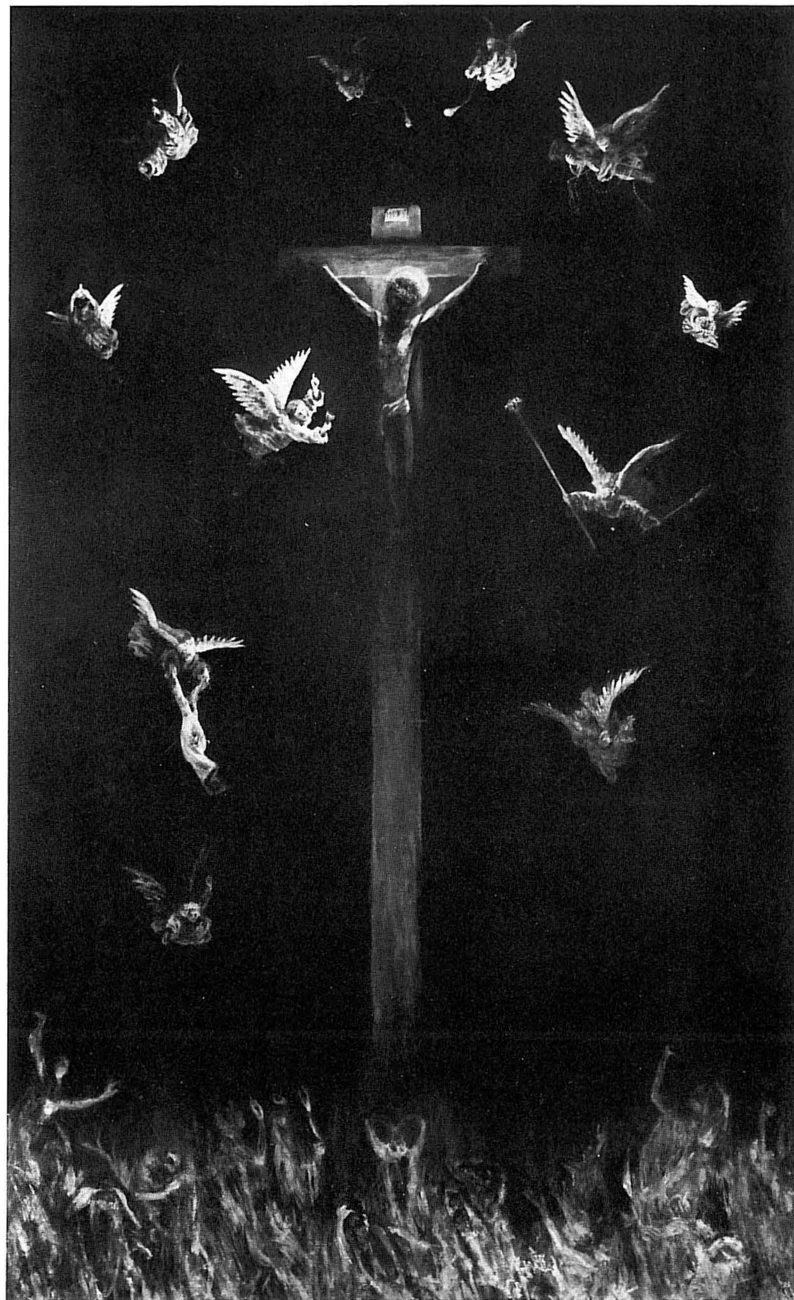


Study of a Winged Horse, 1980. Acrylic on canvas board. 12 x 16".
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York.

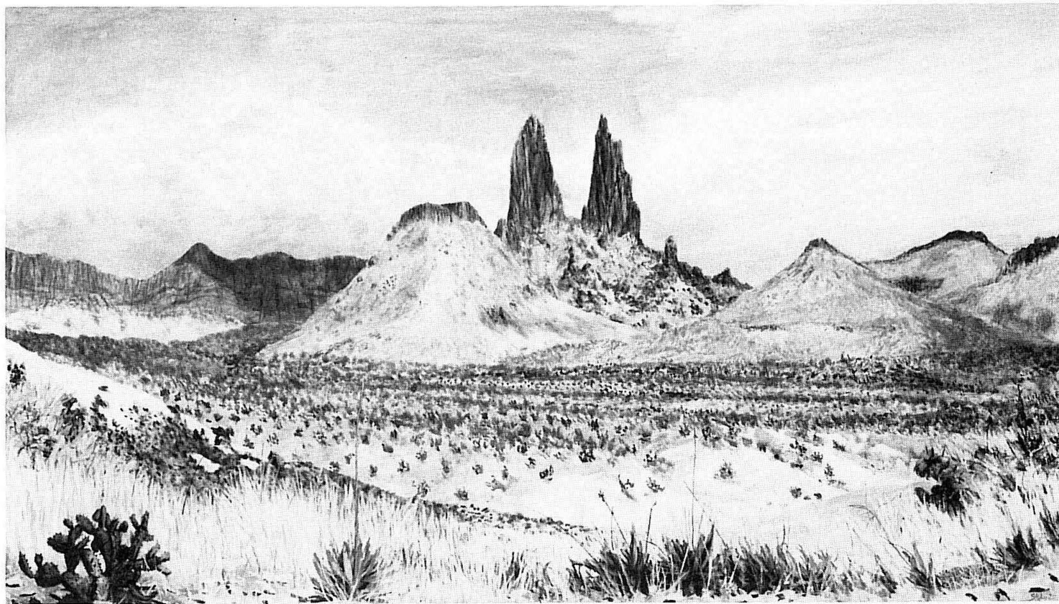
Suzanna and the Elders IV, 1980. Acrylic on canvas.
36 x 48". Courtesy of the artist and
Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.



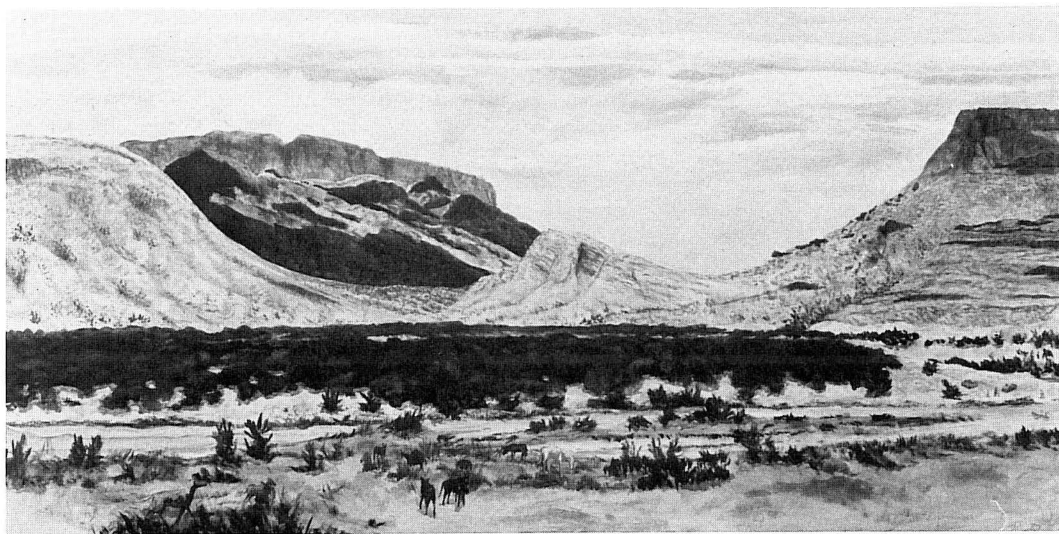
An Encuentro, 1981. Acrylic on canvas. 59¾ x 83¾".
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.



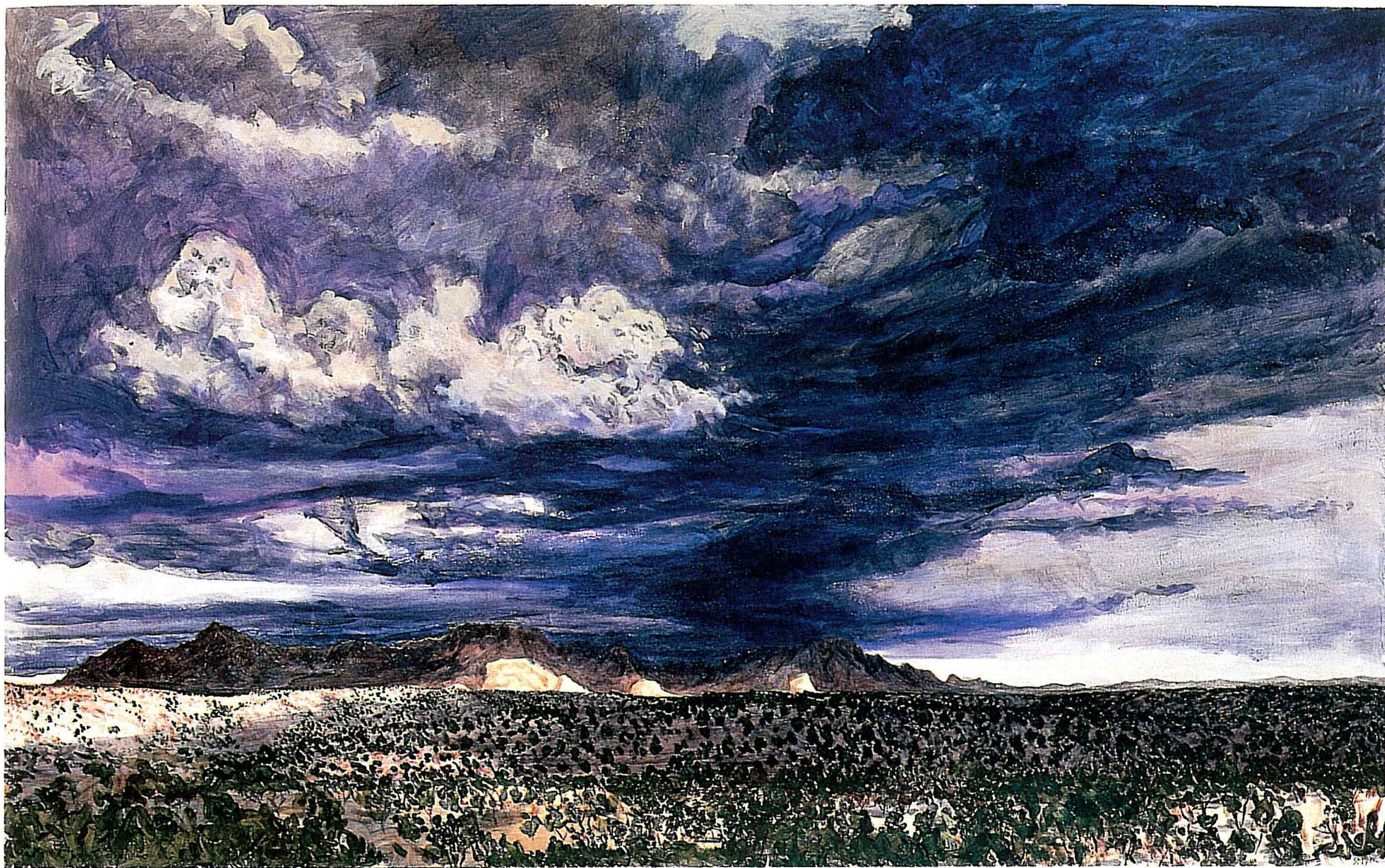
Crucifixion with Angels, 1981. Acrylic on canvas. 83¼ x 51¼". Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.



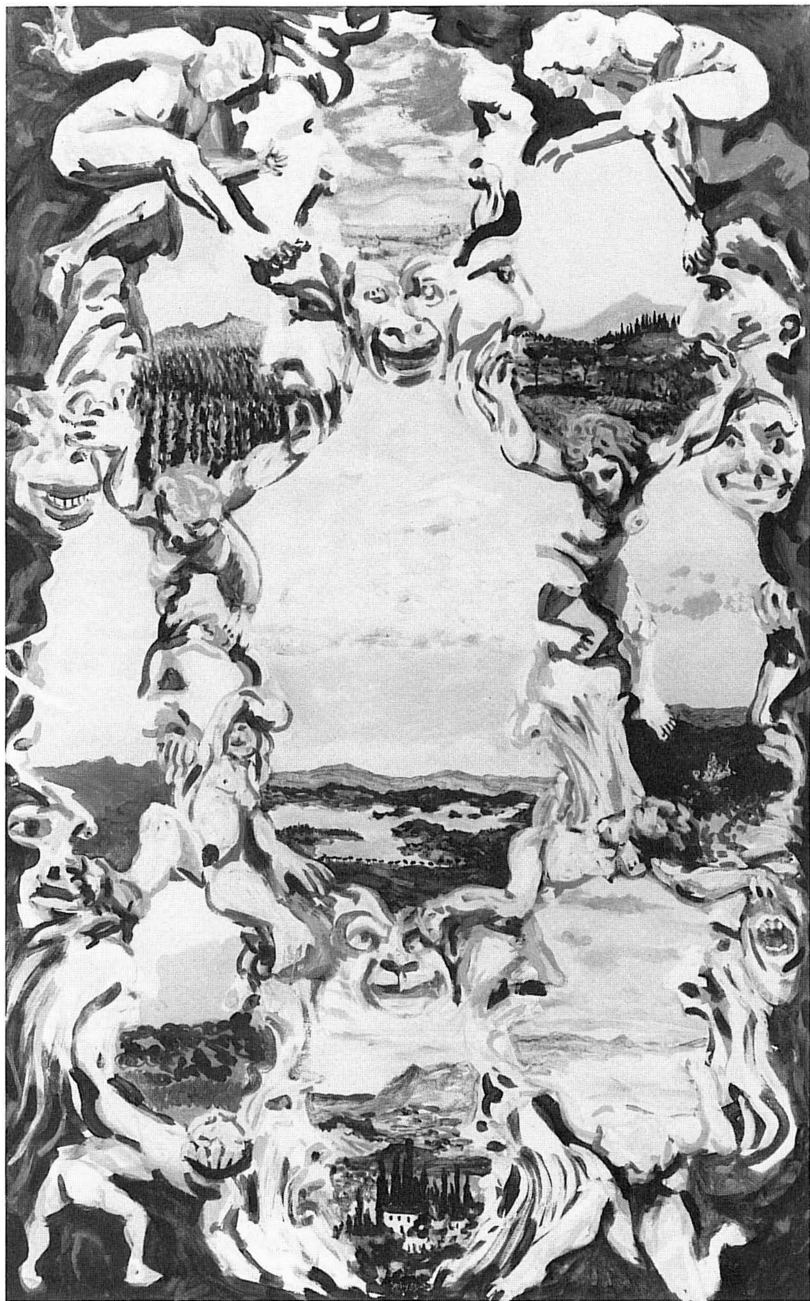
Mule Ears Peaks III, Big Bend, Texas, 1980.
Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 85″.
Collection of Post Oak Bank of Houston.



The Rio Grande at Lajitas, Texas. 1980.
Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 120″. Collection of
Wilson Industries, Inc., Houston, Texas.



Storm Over Chisos, 1981. Acrylic on canvas. 59 x 96".
Collection of Helen Elizabeth Hill Trust, Houston, Texas.



Grotesquery with Nine Landscapes, 1983.
Acrylic on canvas. 63 x 39¼".
Collection of Clint Willour, Houston, Texas.

Hercules and the Nemean Lion, 1983. Acrylic on canvas. 39 x 63".
Collection of Marvin Watson, Jr., Houston, Texas.

Venus and Adonis I (Adonis Leaves Venus to Hunt), 1982. Acrylic on canvas. 47 x 62¾".
Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr., New York.

Venus and Adonis II (Adonis Gored by the Boar), 1982. Acrylic on canvas. 47 x 62¾″.
Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr., New York.

Venus and Adonis III (Venus Mourning Adonis), 1982. Acrylic on canvas. 47 x 62¾″. Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr., New York.

Bacchus with Maenads & Satyrs, 1983. Acrylic on canvas. 51½ x 83¾".
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

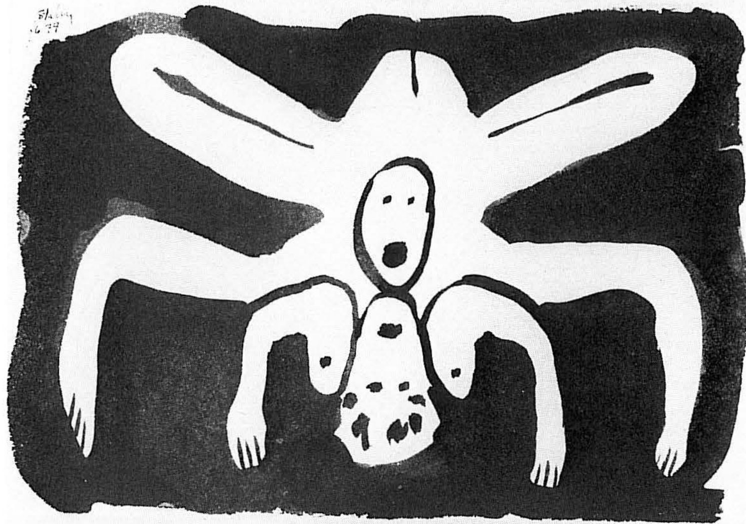
The Boar Hunt, 1982. Acrylic on canvas. 57½ x 83½".
Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr., New York.

Fall of Icarus I, 1982. Acrylic on canvas. 39¼ x 63".
Collection of Guy and Darla Comeaux, Houston, Texas.

Triumph of Galatea, 1982. Acrylic on canvas. 58½ x 61½".
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York.

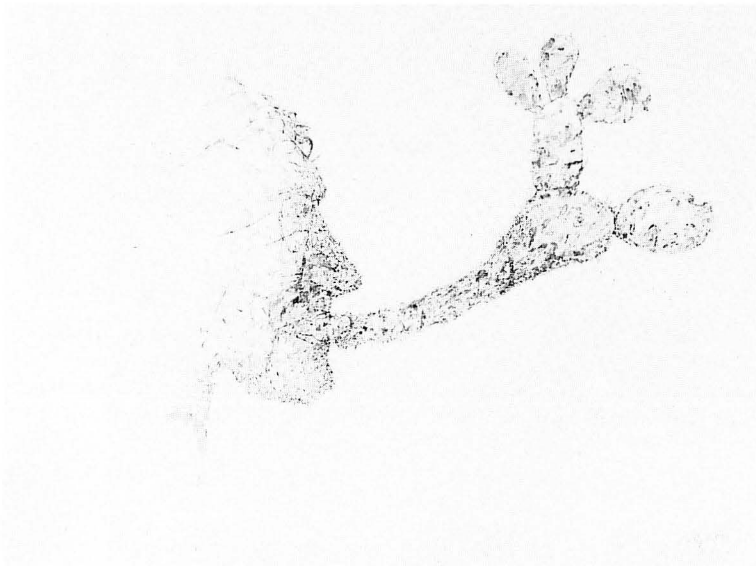
Skull with Snakes, 1974. Ink on paper. 25½ x 20". .
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Warrior II, 1976. Ink on paper. 26 x 19". Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.



Lovers (2), 1977. Watercolor on paper. 6½ x 9½″. Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Cupid I, 1977. Watercolor on paper. 12 x 9″. Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.



Head with Cacti from Mouth, 1973. Ink and watercolor on paper. 22½ x 30¼″. Courtesy of Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas.

Earl Staley: 1973-1983

Works in the Exhibition

Height precedes width

PAINTINGS

Indian Eating a Cactus, 1973
Acrylic on canvas, 66 x 66"
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Landscape with Cactus, 1973
Acrylic on canvas, 60¾ x 72½"
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Map with Cactus: Malevitch in a Corner, 1973-74
Acrylic on canvas, 60½ x 73"
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Dream, 1974
Acrylic, dirt, glitter on canvas, 46½ x 38½"
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Texas

Dancer at Mount Abraham, Vt., 1975-76
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 121"
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

King, Shaman, Fool, 1975
Acrylic on canvas, three panels; 66½ x 156½" each
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Phyliss and Aristotle V: The Eclipse, 1975
Acrylic on canvas, 39½ x 55"
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Progress, 1975
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 144"
Collection of Roberta Hammond, Houston, Texas

Skull's Dream, 1975-76
Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24"
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

A Louisiana Painting, 1976-81
Acrylic on canvas, 34 x 52"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Roy S. O'Connor, Houston, Texas

Mermaid, 1976
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 84½"
Collection of Raymond Learsy, New York

Turkey Buzzard, 1976-81
Acrylic on canvas, 47½ x 54½"
Collection of Marvin Watson, Jr., Houston, Texas

Adam and Eve, 1977
Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 48"
Collection of Joe W. Nicholson, San Antonio, Texas

The Fall of Man, 1977
Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 152".
Collection of Balene and Sanford McCormick, Houston, Texas

The Last Day of Pompeii, 1977
Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 145"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. E. Quinton Davis, Houston, Texas

Lovers, 1977
Acrylic, dirt and glitter on canvas, 47¼ x 55¼"
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Story of Acteon I, 1977
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 120".
Collection of The Chase Manhattan Bank, New York

Story of Acteon II, 1977
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 120".
Collection of The Chase Manhattan Bank, New York

The Temptation of St. Anthony, 1977
Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 156¾"
Collection of the San Antonio Museum Association, San Antonio, Texas

Weather Vane, 1977
Acrylic on canvas, 36¼ x 48¼″
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

Xochimilco, 1977-80
Acrylic on canvas, 46½ x 55″
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

Boystown, Laredo, Mexico, 1978-79
Acrylic on canvas, 59 x 120″
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

A Flying Flaming House Appearing to a Praying Man, 1978
Acrylic, glitter, tinsel on canvas, 54 x 48″
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Leda and the Swan I, 1978-80
Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 42″
Collection of Dean Luse and La Rue Green, Houston, Texas

Leda and the Swan II, 1978-80
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 108″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

The Ship of Fools, 1978
Acrylic on canvas, 67¾ x 113½″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Two Lovers Surprised by Death, 1978
Acrylic on canvas, 36¾ x 48½″
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Weeping Women, 1978
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72″
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

The Bound Man, 1979
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 72″
Collection of Bob Wilson, Houston, Texas

An Encounter, 1979
Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 30″
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

A Gathering of Wizards, 1979
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30″
Collection of Cynthia Morgan Batmanis and Michael Batmanis, M.D., Houston, Texas

Man in a Skeleton Costume, 1979
Acrylic on canvas, 31½ x 31½″
Collection of Clint Willour, Houston, Texas

Mazeppa's Ride, 1979
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72″
Private Collection

Skeleton with Nude, 1979
Acrylic on canvas, 32¾ x 32½″
Collection of Dee Wolff, Houston, Texas

The Studio/Night, 1979
Acrylic on canvas, 47¾ x 71¾″
Collection of John and Mary Margaret Hansen, Houston, Texas

Europa and Zeus (Study), 1980
Acrylic on canvas board, 14⅝ x 10^{15}/16″
Collection of Laura Skoler, Maplewood, New Jersey

Europa and Bull Studies, 1980
Acrylic on canvas board, 16 x 12″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Europa and Zeus, 1980
Acrylic on canvas board, 15 x 30″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Europa and Zeus I, 1980
Acrylic on canvas board, 18 x 24″
Collection of Sonny Burt and Bob Butler, Dallas, Texas

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 96″
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

The Rio Grande at Lajitas, Texas, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 120″.
Collection of Wilson Industries, Inc., Houston, Texas

Lovers Eating Skulls, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 36¼ x 58¼″
Courtesy of the artist, Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York, and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Mule Ears Peaks III, Big Bend, Texas, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 85″
Collection of Post Oak Bank of Houston

The Rape of Europa, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 54″
Collection of Ms. Leslie Renauld McGrath, Houston, Texas

The Rape of Europa II, 1980
Acrylic on canvas″ 47 x 55″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Saint George Slaying the Dragon, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72″
Collection of Marvin Watson, Jr., Houston, Texas

Study of a Winged Horse, 1980
Acrylic on canvas board, 12 x 16″
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

Suzanna and the Elders IV, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Ceremony at Etla, 1981
Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48″
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

An Encuentro, 1981
Acrylic on canvas, 59¾ x 83¾″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Rape of Europa III, 1981
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 59½″
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

Self Portrait, 1981
Acrylic on canvas, 36¼ x 40¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Storm Over Chisos, 1981
Acrylic on canvas, 59 x 96″
Collection of Helen Elizabeth Hill Trust, Houston, Texas

Crucifixion with Angels, 1981
Acrylic on canvas, 83¼ x 51¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

The Boar Hunt, 1982
Acrylic on canvas, 57½ x 83½″
Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr., New York

Fall of Icarus I, 1982
Acrylic on canvas, 39¼ x 63″
Collection of Guy and Darla Comeaux, Houston, Texas

Rape of Europa IV, 1982
Acrylic on canvas, 58¾ x 62½″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Triumph of Galatea, 1982
Acrylic on canvas, 58½ x 61½″
Courtesy of Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

Venus and Adonis I (Adonis Leaves Venus to Hunt), 1982
Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 62¾″.
Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr., New York

Venus and Adonis II (Adonis Gored by the Boar), 1982
Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 62¾″.
Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr., New York

Venus and Adonis III (Venus Mourning Adonis), 1982
Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 62¾″.
Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr., New York

Bacchus with Maenads & Satyrs, 1983
Acrylic on canvas, 51½ x 83¾″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Dance of Salome, 1983
Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 63″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Grotesquery with Nine Landscapes, 1983
Acrylic on canvas, 63 x 39¼″
Collection of Clint Willour, Houston, Texas

Hercules and the Nemean Lion, 1983
Acrylic on canvas, 39 x 63″
Collection of Marvin Watson, Jr., Houston, Texas

The Second Labour of Hercules: The Lernaean Hydra, 1983
Acrylic on canvas, 62¾ x 47″
Collection of William and Virginia Camfield, Houston, Texas

DRAWINGS

Untitled (skulls), 1971
Watercolor on paper, 20 x 14¾″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Head with Cacti from Mouth, 1973
Ink and watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Head with Cacti from Mouth, 1973
Watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Shaman's Map, 1973
Watercolor on paper, 22¼ x 30″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Skull with Cactus, 1973-74
Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30½″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Skull with Cactus, 1974
Ink on paper, 30 x 22″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Skull with Snakes, 1974
Ink on paper, 25½ x 20″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Skull Mountain, 1975
Ink and watercolor on paper, 22 x 30″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Skull Riding a Palm, 1975
Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30½″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Study for Moon Dance II, 1975
Colored ink on paper, 30 x 22″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Untitled (skull), 1975
Watercolor on paper, 9 x 12″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Warrior, 1975
Watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Warrior: Am. Quilt Design, 1975
Watercolor on paper, 24 x 18″
Collection of Marvin Watson, Jr., Houston, Texas

Alligator Skull, 1976
Ink on paper, 19 x 26″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Indian in a Shooting Star, 1976-77
Acrylic on paper, 24 x 18″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Skeletons Dancing, 1976
Ink on paper, 19 x 26″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Skull with Palm, 1976
Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30½
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Warrior II, 1976
Ink on paper, 26 x 19″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Cupid I, 1977
Watercolor on paper, 12 x 9″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Cupid II, 1977
Watercolor on paper, 12 x 9″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers (1), 1977
Ink on paper, 7¾ x 10½″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers (2), 1977
Ink on paper, 6½ x 9½″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers (3), 1977
Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers (4), 1977
Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers (5), 1977
Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers (6), 1977
Ink on paper, 7¾ x 10¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers (7), 1977
Graphite and ink on paper, 8½ x 11″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers Sculpture Study, 1977
Graphite on paper, 10¼ x 15″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Lovers Sculpture Study, 1977
Graphite on paper, 13 x 9½″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Studies of Lovers, 1977
Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Study for Indian Weather Vane, 1977
Watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Running Indian, 1978
Watercolor on paper, 9 x 12¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Untitled (dancing Indian), 1978
Watercolor on paper, 9 x 12¼″
Courtesy of the artist and Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Exhibitions

Researched by Sally Gall, with Lynn Hurst and Clint Willour.

Born in Oak Park, Illinois, 1938. Attended Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington (B.F.A. 1960) and University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (M.F.A. 1963). Lives in Houston, Texas and Rome, Italy.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1960 Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington

1963 Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

1964 St. James Episcopal Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

St. Louis Junior College, Missouri

1965 Downstairs Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri

1966 Downstairs Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri

1967 Louisiana Gallery, Houston, Texas

Rice University, Houston, Texas

1968 Cedar Rapids Art Center, Iowa

1970 Meredith Long Gallery, Houston, Texas

1972 David Gallery, Houston, Texas

1974 Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, Texas

Texas Gallery, Houston

1975 *Minor Arts,* Texas Gallery, Houston

1976 Loft-on-Strand Gallery, Galveston, Texas

1977 Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi

Oaxaca Watercolors, Texas Gallery, Houston

Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, Texas

"The Meeting of East and West" and other pictures, Texas Gallery, Houston

1978 *Recuerdos,* Texas Gallery, Houston

Texas Gallery, Houston

1980 *The Big Bend,* Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Earl Staley: Mythologies, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas (cat.; essay by Linda L. Cathcart)

A Print Retrospective, Little Egypt Enterprises, Houston, Texas

Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

1981 Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

1982 *Mediterranean Sketches,* Sewall Art Gallery, Rice University, Houston, Texas

1983 Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

Watson/de Nagy & Co., Houston, Texas

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1958 Bloomington Illinois Art Association

1959 Bloomington Illinois Art Association

1960 *29th American Graphics Show,* University of Kansas, Lawrence

Ball State Drawing Show, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana

Bloomington Illinois Art Association, Indiana

Bradley National Print Show, Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois

1961 *Ball State Drawing Show,* Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana

1962 *Ball State Drawing Show,* Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana

Delta Art Exhibit, The Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock

National Exhibition of Contemporary Art, The Oklahoma Museum of Art, Oklahoma City

32nd Springfield Exhibit, Springfield Art Museum, Missouri

1963 *20th American Drawing Exhibition,* The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia

4th Dixie Annual, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Alabama

9th Mid-South Exhibit, Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee

1964 *20th Central Illinois Exhibit,* Decatur Art Center

Faculty Exhibition, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

10th Mid-South Exhibit, Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee

1965 *21st Central Illinois Exhibit,* Decatur Art Center

Faculty Exhibition, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

National Academy of Design, New York

1966 *Faculty Exhibition,* Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

Kansas City Art Institute Invitational, Missouri

Ontario East Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

Print Invitational, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota

Print Invitational, Lindenwood College, St. Charles, Missouri

1967 Ontario East Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

1970 A Clean Well-Lighted Place, Austin, Texas

Cranfill Gallery, Dallas, Texas

1972 *The Document Show,* David Gallery, Houston, Texas

The Tattoo Show, David Gallery, Houston, Texas

1973 *Made in Houston,* Louisiana Gallery, Houston, Texas

Private Works, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas

1974 *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in Houston,* The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas

1974 Houston Area Exhibition, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, Texas

1975 *1975 Biennial Exhibition: Contemporary American Art,* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (cat.; foreword by Tom Armstrong)

The Classic Revival, Lobby Gallery, Illinois Bell, Illinois (cat.; travelled to Lakeview Center for the Arts, Peoria; Quincy Art Center, Illinois; Mitchell Museum, Mt. Vernon, Illinois; Illinois State Museum, Springfield; University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, Michigan)

1975 Houston Area Exhibition, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, Texas (cat.; juror's statements by John Franklin Koening, Ellen Lanyon, and Marcia Tucker)

North, East, West, South and Middle, Moore College of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (cat.; essay by Peter Plagens; travelled to Pratt Graphics Center, New York; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Fort Worth Art Museum, Texas; La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California)

5 Painters: Dallas/Houston, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas

1976 *Houston Designer Craftsmen 1976,* Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, Texas

The Philadelphia Houston Exchange, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (cat.; essays by Suzanne Delehanty and James Harithas)

TEX/LAX: Texas in L.A., Union Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles (cat.; introduction by Frank Brown; travelled to Union Gallery, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona)

1977 *The Amarillo Competition,* Amarillo Art Center, Texas

Dimensions, Art League of Houston, Texas

1977 Houston Area Exhibition, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston (cat.; introduction by William A. Robinson; juror's statements by Walter Darby Bannard, Lynda Benglis, and Henry T. Hopkins)

Houston Center Competition, Assistance League of Houston, Texas

Southwest Tarrant County Annual, Fort Worth Art Museum, Texas

1978 *Art of Texas,* John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Art of Texas, The Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago, Illinois

"Bad" Painting, The New Museum, New York (cat.; essay by Marcia Tucker)

Beaumont Invitational, Beaumont Art Museum, Texas

Cowboys, Indians & Settlers, The Art Center, Waco, Texas (cat.; essay by Paul Rogers Harris)

A Glimpse of Houston: Works on Paper by 9 Texas Artists, Newport Harbor Art Museum, California (cat.; essay by Betty Turnbull)

Little Egypt Enterprises, Moody Gallery, Houston, Texas

1979 *Doors: Houston Artists,* Nina Vance Alley Theater, Houston, Texas (organized by The Houston Festival; cat.; statement by Trudy Sween; travelled to The Art Center, Waco, Texas)

Eight Teachers, William A. Vinson Branch, Houston Public Library, Texas

Fire, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas (cat.; statements by James Surls and the artists in the exhibition)

From Allan to Zucker, Texas Gallery, Houston

Invitational Art Exhibit, Crooker Center, University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas

Made in Texas, Archer M. Huntington Gallery, University Art Museum, The University of Texas, Austin (cat.; introduction by Becky Duval Reese, essays by Janet Kutner, Ron Gleason, and Tom Livesay)

On the Right Bank of the Red River: Contemporary Art in Texas, Root Art Center, Hamilton College, Clinton, New York (cat.; foreword by Rand Carter)

Texas Prints '79, Galveston Arts Center Gallery, Texas

Wood in Art, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (cat.; introduction by William Agee; essay by Norma Ory)

Young America: Painters of the 70's, organized by The New Museum, New York, for the International Communication Agency; cat.; essays by

Allan Schwartzman, Kathleen Thomas, and Marcia Tucker; opened in Budapest, Hungary and traveled to various Eastern European countries)

1980 *1980 Houston Area Exhibition,* Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, Texas (cat.; introduction by William A. Robinson, juror's statements by William C. Agee, Linda L. Cathcart, and Harris Rosenstein)

Houston at Dallas, 500 Exposition Gallery, Dallas, Texas

Landscape Show, D.W. Gallery, Dallas, Texas

1980 New Orleans Triennial, New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana (cat.; introduction by William A. Fagaly; essay by Marcia Tucker)

A Spiritual View, Rothko Chapel House, Houston, Texas

Watson/de Nagy & Company, Houston, Texas

Watson/Willour & Company, Houston, Texas

1981 *Annual Drawing Exhibition,* Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Collection '81—The Road Show, Assistance League of Houston, Texas (cat.; essay by Ron Gleason)

Directions 1981, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. (cat.; foreword by Abram Lerner; essay by Miranda McClintick; travelled to Sarah Campbell Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston)

Salute!, Nina Vance Alley Theater, Houston, Texas

A Texas Group Show 1981, Charles Cowles Gallery, New York

Two Views of Houston, San Antonio Art Institute Gallery, Texas

1982 *Four Foreign Academies,* American Academy in Rome, Italy (cat.)

Figurative Images: Aspects of Recent Art, Georgia State University, Atlanta

American Study Center, Naples, Italy

Art from Houston in Norway 1982, Stavanger Kunstforening, Norway (cat.; introduction by David Brauer; travelled to Tromso Kunstforening, Norway, Christiansand Kunstforening, Norway, Oslo Kunstforening, Norway, Stavanger Kunstforening, Norway)

Beast: Animal Imagery in Recent Painting, Institute for Art & Urban Resources at P.S. 1, Long Island City, New York

By the Sea, Barbara Toll Gallery, New York

Hearts and Flowers, The Art Center, Waco, Texas (cat.; introduction by Paul Rogers Harris)

The Human Figure, Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, Louisiana (cat.; statement by Alexandria Monett)

Houston in Dallas, Mattingly Baker Gallery, Dallas, Texas

In Our Time: Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum 1948-1982, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas (cat.; essay by Cheryl A. Brutvan with Linda L. Cathcart and Marti Mayo)

Little Egypt Enterprises: Selected Prints from 1974 and Limited Edition Ceramics, Harris Gallery, Houston, Texas

New Figuration in America, Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin (cat.; introduction by Gerald Nordland; essays by Russell Bowman and Peter Schjeldahl)

A Sense of Spirit, Lawndale Annex, The University of Houston, Texas (cat.; essays by Jana Vander Lee and John Perreault; travelled to Brown-Lupton Gallery, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, and Acrosanti, Arizona)

Texas on Paper, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas (cat.; essays by Cheryl A. Brutvan and Linda L. Cathcart; travelling to University Art Galleries, University of Colorado, Boulder, Shore Art Gallery, Abilene Christian University, Texas, Tyler Museum of Art, Texas, Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York, University of Arizona Art Museum, Tucson, Amarillo Art Center, Texas)

The 37-Hour Show, Alfred E. Glassell School of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas

Quattro Academie Stranicie, Museo del'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy

1983 *Creatures in Print,* Corpus Christi State University Center for the Arts, Weil Gallery, Texas (cat. foreword by Danny O'Dowdy; introduction by Amy Conger)

New Art from a New City, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria (cat.; essay by William A. Camfield; travelled to Galerie an der Stadtmauer, Villach, Austria, Museum of Modern Art, Vienna, Frankfurter Kunstverein, West Germany)

New Figurative Drawing in Texas, San Antonio Art Institute, Texas

Santa Fe Festival of the Arts: Four State Survey, New Mexico (cat.; essay by Ellen Bradbury)

Southern Fictions, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas (cat.; introduction by Linda L. Cathcart and Marti Mayo; essays by William A. Fagaly and Dr. Monroe Spears)

Texas Images & Visions, Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas at Austin (cat.; essay by William H. Goetzmann; travelled to Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, Amarillo Art Center, Texas)

The Zoo Show, Clifford Gallery, Dallas, Texas

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