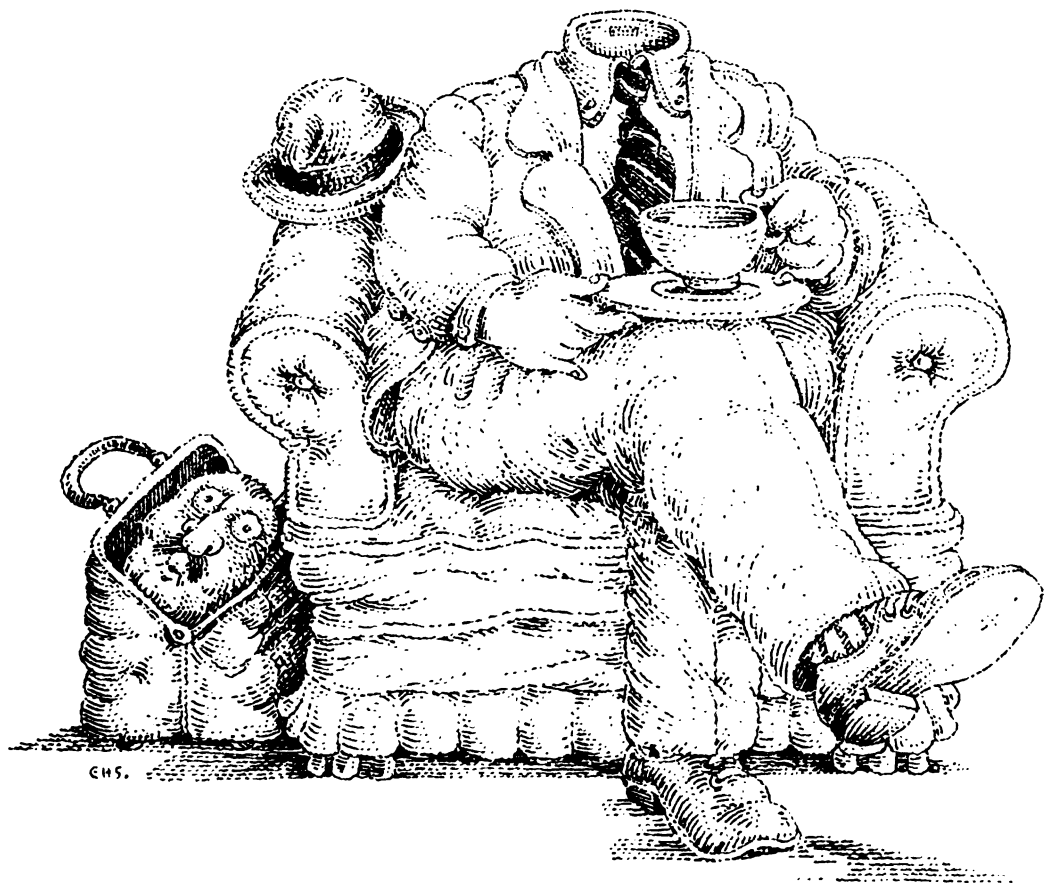


THE ANONYMOUS IMAGE



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May 7 to June 8, 1974
The Renaissance Society
The University of Chicago

Few contemporary American artists have considered the human form to be of central importance to artistic creation. Both Abstract Expressionism, by emphasizing gesture at the expense of form, and the art of the 1960's, with its impersonal aesthetic, have valued artistic considerations above the problem of creating an individualized portrayal of contemporary man. Even the New Realists are not primarily concerned with individuality of form or feeling, although man has become a central focus of their art. Thus, the human figure, in these styles, has been relegated to a small and often insignificant part of the larger artistic context.

This tradition is implicit in the works of the artists represented in this exhibition. They are more responsive to the human image than their direct predecessors, or their contemporaries. But the human form in their work is subsumed by decorative pattern, expressive distortion or anonymous imagery.

Recent images of man, regardless of stylistic bias, share the qualities of generalization, distortion and depersonalization of form. The individuality of the human form is de-emphasized to create a generic man. Philip Pearlstein, Jim Lange, and Horacio Torres frequently crop their paintings to omit the heads of their figures, thus eliminating the most individualizing feature of the body. Their images are purposefully faceless and their torsos stylized. In the work by Torres, the torso, and its drapery, have their own animation and vitality, independent of the form they describe. Although the classically inspired torso and drapery are stylistically different from Jim Lange's jean-clad figures, both

focus their interest on the torso at the expense of the head.

Other artists have different techniques for creating anonymity. Ben Mahmoud paints faces in shadow, and depicts his figures from the back in murky lights. Red Grooms uses caricature, populating his works with cartoon-inspired figures that represent no specific individual. Maggie McCurdy uses repetition to create anonymity. She endows each of her soft sculpture people with the same facial features, and even the same names. This repetition ultimately de-personalizes these otherwise unique people since the individuality of the person is lost in the multiplication of the image. The repetition of the image, or the image in series, of Pop inspired artists creates an anonymity found also in the unrecognizable images of the Abstract Expressionists or the cropped and distorted figures of the New Realists.

Even though the individuality of the image is negated, the expressive force and personality of the artist are not necessarily lost. Expressive content is created by transforming, distorting and fragmenting the image. Although the anonymity of the image remains, an emotional factor is fused with the representation. Paul Lamantia's segmented and surrealist body parts identify no one, but they do convey a powerful expressive force.

Other artists transform and fragment their images, but not as violently and expressively as Lamantia does. William Otton fragments and reconstructs his image with geometric forms. Walter Thompson recomposes his image in staccato rhythms. But this extreme stylization of the forms suppresses the expressive potential. Ray Yoshida places fragmented organic parts together

with inorganic forms in a chart-like arrangement. The organic forms of the human body, and their articulation, are no longer of great artistic relevance. Sexual aberrations are involved in many of the distortions of the human form, as in Judith Citrin's boxes. And witticisms are often an aspect of the transformations, as in Stephanie Levy Howell's sculpture.

The lack of interest in the individuality of the image is partially due to a lack of interest in the reality of the physical presence of the image. Many contemporary artists are concerned with the external form of man only in so far as it reveals something about the interior life of the image, or only to the extent that it contributes to the expressive force of the image. Emotional factors take precedence over external realities. Solitude, anxiety, despair become the pervasive emotional tones of the majority of these images. This is true, above all, of Robert Lostutter's tortured humanity. His anonymous, anguished figures in contorted poses convey this expressive power. Many images stand in solitude or are intentionally isolated even when in groups.

There is a significant undercurrent of fantasy, magic, and the imaginary in these anonymous figures. This is particularly true of the mysterious quality of Lostutter's tortured humanity. Some artists share a mystical belief in the power of the image and speak of their creations as totems and icons. Their source of inspiration has frequently been the totemic images of primitive cultures. Some artists create an imaginary world through their distortions of the human form. In Elwood Smith's and Gladys Nilsson's work, people are endowed with animal-like attributes to create fantastic

images. Often, the world of fantasy created by these distorted human forms becomes decorative pattern as well. The human figure is submerged in the overall decorative framework in the drawings of Krys Hendren. Or the figures are reduced in scale and lost on the surface of the dense paintings of Robert Donley. The figures, as individual people, are not of primary importance and are de-emphasized by being subsumed by pattern. In the works of other artists, the decorative use of the human form takes precedence over any expressive or archetypal interest, as in the boxes of Judith Citrin, where the human form is twisted around a box.

Whether the intent is decorative or expressive, the form remains anonymous. It is rarely heroic, perhaps reflecting man and his role in contemporary culture.

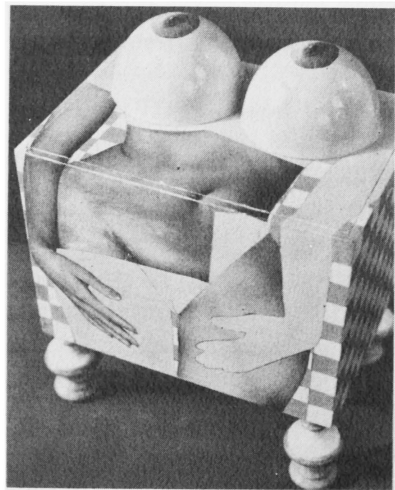
Jean Goldman

Judith Citrin. *Euphrosyne's Daughter*. Wood, feathers, mirror, photo collage, plastic. 1973. 9½ x 7". Lent by Nancy Lurie Art.

Robert Donley. *The Heaven of the Moon*. Oil on canvas. 1973. 44 x 37". Lent by Nancy Lurie Art.

Art Green. *Indecent Composure*. Color lithograph. 1970. 18 x 24". Lent by Phyllis Kind Gallery.

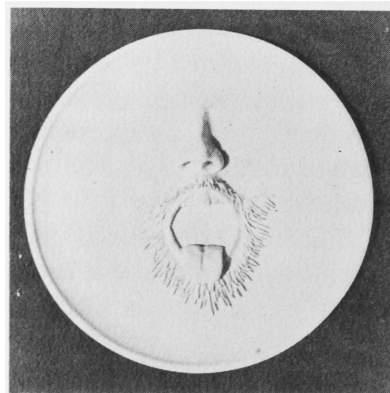
Red Grooms. *Sunday News Rotogravure Section Page 8*. India ink on



Judith Citrin

paper. 1972. 30 x 22". Lent by Phyllis Kind Gallery.

Verne Funk. *Lick your platter clean: A Self Portrait*. Whiteware, clear glaze. 1973. 15" diameter. Lent by Nancy Lurie Art.

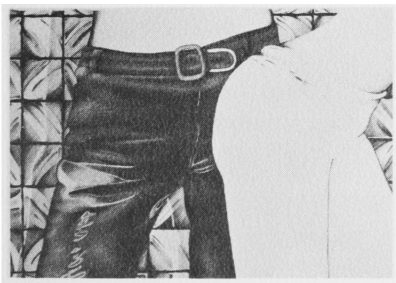


Verne Funk

Krys Hendren. Three pencil drawings on paper. 1973. 11 x 14". Lent by Nancy Lurie Art.

Paul Lamantia. *The Fragile Trust*. Oil on canvas. 1973. 42 x 48". Lent by Deson-Zaks Gallery.

Jim Lange. *Red Pants - White Pants*. Colored pencil on board. 1973. 28 x 35". Lent by Nancy Lurie Art.



Jim Lange

Stephanie Levy Howell. *Someone's in the Kitchen with Julia*. Low fire ceramic and wood. 1973. 24 x 34". Lent by Nancy Lurie Art.

Robert Lostutter. *Map to the Morning Dance IV*. Oil on canvas. 1973. 5' x 4'5". Lent by Deson-Zaks Gallery.

Maggie McCurdy. *Nina VI, Nino VI*. Two soft sculptures. Etching on cloth, mattress stuffing. 1972. Lent by Deson-Zaks Gallery.

James McGarrell. *Wings I*. Lithograph. 1963. 22 x 30". Lent by Alan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago.

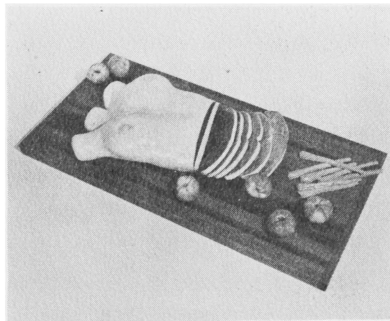
Ben Mahmoud. *Image 4 v 23a*. Acrylic on canvas. 1973. 48 x 48". Lent by Deson-Zaks Gallery.

Gladys Nilsson. *A Big Man*. Watercolor. 1970. 30 x 22". Lent by Phyllis Kind Gallery.

William Otton. *Only her Hairdresser Knows*. Acrylic on canvas. 1973. 36 x 24". Lent by Standard Oil Co. (Indiana) Graphic Arts Collection.

Philip Pearlstein. *Two Nudes*. Pencil drawing. 1972. 19 x 24". Lent by Alan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago.

Seymour Rosofsky. *The General*. Lithograph. 1968. 32 x 24". Lent by Phyllis Kind Gallery.



Stephanie Levy Howell

Barbara Rossi. *Poor Self Trait #1 (Dog Girl)*. Etching with color acquatint. 1970. 10 1/4 x 7 3/4". Lent by Phyllis Kind Gallery.

Elwood Smith. *Merrick*.

Ink and watercolor on plywood.
1974. 49 x 31". Lent by Nancy Lurie
Art.



Maggie McCurdy

Walter Thompson. *Joyce*.

Acrylic on canvas. 1973. 29 x 22".
Lent by Nancy Lurie Art.

Ron Weaver. *Whales*.

Acrylic on canvas. 1973. 48 x 51".
Lent by Deson-Zaks Gallery.

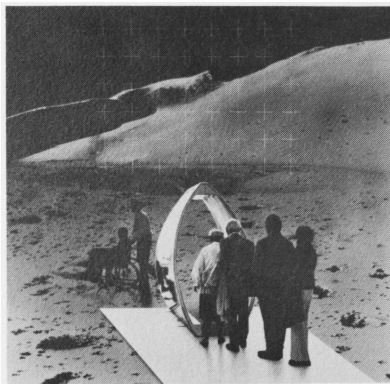
Horacio Torres. *Fragment of Nude
on Draperies*. Oil on canvas. 1973. 50
x 52". Lent by Richard Gray Gallery.

Karl Wirsum. *Draw me tender Foot*.
Crayon and India ink. 1969. 24 x

36". Lent by Phyllis Kind Gallery.

Ray Yoshida. *Analogies #8*.

Collage Drawing. 1973. 19 x 23 7/8".
Lent by Phyllis Kind Gallery.



Ben Mahmoud

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the contributing galleries and lenders to the exhibition. We are particularly indebted to Elwood Smith for his catalogue design and to Richard Born for his installation. The exhibition was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, an agent of the state.

