

**THE PRESENCE OF METAPHOR IN THE WORK OF SELECTED
CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS**

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is the unaided work of the candidate. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Dick Leigh, my parents Alfio and Tersila Quattrocchi and surrogate parents Gert and Maria Piek.

Abstract

This study examines metaphoric expression as an innovative phenomenon in the creative process and explores theories of metaphor as a model for changing our perceptions of reality. Innovation is taken to be the creation and extension of meaning via metaphoric reference and projection, an imaginative structuring of experience that reinvents reality and presents it as a fiction. While fiction refers to those worlds made in the creative act of producing works of art, worlds refer to both the exterior manifestations of works, as well as the interior world as a source of symbolic worlds.

This study thus explores metaphoric reference and projection as a means by which we understand and figuratively express experience and the role metaphor plays in the creative strategies of my own practice as a visual artist and those of the contemporary British artist Tony Cragg.

In my own recent working practice, in relation to the innovative role of metaphor, the notion of psychic or metaphorical disruption is explored. This is understood as a suspension of logical or literal reference to reality and as the condition for a metaphoric or analogical response to experience. This form of disengagement brought about by psychological and emotional upheaval, allows me to disembark from dominant conceptual and emotional frameworks and corresponds to the semantic openings brought about by metaphoric reference and interpretation. These disruptions manifest themselves as primitive iconic conditions that provide routes in the creative process conducive to discovery, restructuring and invention. In my work this is principally achieved by the activity of drawing. I describe drawing as a mythic activity of attempting to close the gap on an elusive empirical world and as a means of making new worlds. Interpretation or reading the drawings, their surfaces and calligraphic marks, is also part of the lyrical process of making

fictions, metaphorical digressions and progressions towards deciphering and re-organising worlds. These worlds are both virtual and material spaces. In all the work, what appears to be disruptive or discordant brings about the condition for renewal and reorientation in the world.

The work of Tony Cragg (b.1949) is discussed as an example of contemporary art practice where metaphor is evident as a model for changing perceptions. Early in his career Cragg explored scientific models of investigation, as explanatory means for understanding the world. His work reflects an endeavour to 'humanise' these scientific models by making images that function as alternative and complementary 'thinking models' (Cragg in Celant :172). His working process is understood as an attempt to construct a novel referential scheme for our encounters with the physical world of objects both natural and manufactured. His sculptures are thus interpreted as visual manifestations of metaphorical disruption and innovation. Often made from discarded waste, his sculptures emerge from the material ruin of a prior physical order, and an evolving mental order. In both instances, physically and conceptually, they carry traces of former selves, with the potential to extend into something new.

As a loose framework for this discussion, certain theories of mind and metaphor that provide some insights into my own working practice and what I perceive to be those of Tony Cragg, are briefly examined. Principally, these include the theory of metaphor of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, but also some more general views concerning cognition and imagination. These include the early theories of Giambattista Vico concerning the creative role of the imaginative and metaphorical capacities of the mind.

CONTENTS

Declaration	
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	i
Contents	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Cognition: Imagination and Image.	8
Chapter 2 Metaphor: Theories and Attitudes.	23
Chapter 3 The Virtual World of Meaning: Distance and Proximity. The Theory of Paul Ricoeur.	29
Chapter 4 The Virtual World of Representation: Visible Absence. The Work of Tony Cragg.	39
Chapter 5 The Virtual Structure of Representation: Fictive Presence. The Work of Isabella Quattrocchi.	53
Conclusion	70
List of illustrations	73
Bibliography	75
Illustrations	

Introduction

When we ask whether metaphorical language reaches reality, we presuppose that we already know what reality is. But if we assume that metaphor redescribes reality, we must then assume that this reality, as redescribed, is itself novel reality.

Paul Ricoeur (1973 : 85)

This study examines the means by which metaphor contributes to innovation, meaning and renewal in my own working practice and in the work of the contemporary artist Tony Cragg (b.1949).

I draw selectively on some models and theories of metaphor pertinent to its cognitive and creative means and symbolic and material manifestations, in an endeavour to gain insight into the creative strategies of the abovementioned visual artists.

Of the various claims that have been made both for and against the cognitive value and creative capacities of metaphor¹, the claim made for its 'world making' role in poetic language, and in other non-linguistic forms of symbolic expression, and by extension its ability to 'reorganise' and change our experience of reality, is of particular interest to this study². For metaphor, as a component of poetic language, to carry such ontological weight may overestimate its capabilities. However, current research and writings on metaphor give plausibility to the theory that it is not only an embellishing linguistic or artistic trope, it is a defining characteristic responsible for conceptual thought, and other displays of meaning and understanding (Johnson 1987; Danesi 1993).

¹ Since Plato and Aristotle this debate has continued up to the present, usually in rhetorical theory (in the study of figures) and in debates concerning language as a representative medium.

² 'world making' is a term Paul Ricoeur takes from Nelson Goodman's work on symbolic systems, *Languages of Art*.

The idea that metaphor structures thought and language is no longer a new one, but the implications of this have given rise to a number of theories concerning the kind of role that metaphor plays in our processes of understanding and in our way of structuring and representing our experience of the world, that is, making sense and meaning of it. For the artists discussed in this study, metaphor enables a recasting of their experience and understanding of the world and an experience of renewal through making art. The following discussion of some of these theories of metaphor provides an interesting perspective on their work and on how their practice enables a radical reorganising of their worlds. It is not in any way intended that these theories be presented as a fixed framework through which to critically analyse the work, but rather that they provide speculative ways of reading and understanding the work.

In view of the role language and other symbolic systems have in shaping our world, and the inherent gap between signs and things signified, metaphorical reference can reinstate a connection with our experience of being in the world. The nature of this restitution, at least in the nature of the examples of art I discuss, is not mimetic in the sense of re-presenting an image or illusion of a lost or absent reality. It is an endeavour that continually, in the philosopher Nelson Goodman's terms, 'reorganises the world in terms of works and works in terms of worlds' (Goodman in Ricoeur 1979 : 117).

'Reorganising' the world involves both makers and audience in a complex relationship with the fictive world of texts/works³, and the symbolic, figurative means devised in the effort to close the gap on the temporality of the world of our circumstantial and physical experience. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur terms it 'aesthetical grasping of the world' through symbolic systems, fictions,

³ 'works' refers to the products of symbolic systems verbal or visual, (writing a poem, making a drawing, writing a story).

that refer to reality in unique ways in order to reinvent it (Ricoeur 1979 : 117).
For Ricoeur, it is the exemplar of metaphorical attribution in poetic discourse
that allows a suspension of our 'ordinary' received vision, and, by presenting
itself as a display of images, enables us to project a new vision. In his writings
he presents a theory of metaphorical reference within poetic discourse, as a
model for changing the way we present our experience of the world to others.
Within this theory he reconsiders the role of imagination and the nature of the
image in perception and in metaphor. It is the nature of this endeavour that is
relevant to a discussion of the creative processes of the above-mentioned
visual artists, and which forms the focus of this study.

In Chapter Four I give an account of the sculptor Tony Cragg's approach to his work and his view of his role as an artist. Cragg's aesthetic strategies – to achieve new insight, to establish new criteria by which we can re-envision the world of objects, natural and manmade – can be seen to correspond to the strategies of metaphor in Ricoeur's theory. Sculpture is the chosen investigative medium that allows speculation and renewed vision. Cragg states his interests as an artist as survivalist, achieved through poetic invention, and allied to the pursuits of scientific investigation. He takes on the responsibility of contributing to an understanding of the world and bringing about changes in human life (Cragg in Celant 1996 : 118). Furthermore, he believes the work of the artist/philosopher is to humanise scientific theoretical models of the world by making images as poetical 'thinking models' (Cragg in Celant 1996 : 172). These interests are reflected in his description of the artist's role as a combination of objectivity, subjectivity and irrationality (Cragg in Celant 1996 : 118). These three levels of engagement with the world are built into his aesthetic strategy. This involves 'firstorder' empirical experience of the world, the physical intervention in exploring the nature of the material world, and what the artist terms an 'erotic appreciation' of the material world as a 'celebration of life' (Cragg in Celant 1996 : 62, 118). Making sculpture ultimately results in a new referential scheme for engaging with the world. In

his attempts to understand the world and his place in it, he re-models it, and in the process, our understanding of our place in the world.

In the final chapter of this study I discuss my own working practice and aesthetic strategies, finding parallels with, and gaining insight from some of Giambattista Vico's theories of precognitive poetic logic and Ricoeur's suspension of descriptive reference in metaphor. As with Cragg's approach, the starting point for the work is a need to dispense with categories of understanding and conceptual models in order to renew a connection with the world. The experience and activity of drawing is a process of reconnection. The initial phase, prior to my making artworks, is characterised by a withdrawal or suspension from direct or empirical engagement with things and with the engendering of an interior world. I attempt to account for sources in my work via an exploration of cognitive and psychic disruption, as the condition for renewal, whether this results from metaphoric attribution as a process of suspension, or as a form of recategorising and remodelling concepts. The process described is a path from dis-engagement as a primitive 'iconic' state to the invention of a visual language that reinvents and reconnects with reality through fiction.

The literal and conceptual interpretative progressions and digressions towards an image or recognition of an object, inherent in the drawing activity, I regard as a metaphorical path towards a reconnection with the world of physical and temporal experience. The catalyst for a reconfigured experience is preconceptual engagement, a breaking of the threads of a prior connection provided by rational thought categories and language. Renewal is made possible in the manipulation and deciphering of graphic marks that make up the surfaces of drawings. The resulting images are analogical surfaces, metaphorical maps, tracing and plotting states of physical, emotional and conceptual understanding, states that become the visible shape of fictive symbolic worlds.

Metaphors lie at the heart of the constant struggle against the limitations and inadequacies of language and other symbolic expression as the link with reality. This occurs whether the desire is for compatibility between expression and an objective world, or, for expression that transcends any so-called compatibility with a so-called objective world.

An account of metaphor is essentially connected to an account of meaning and understanding in expression, and these in turn are related to ways of constructing and presenting experience symbolically, or to use Ricoeur's terms, 'reaching reality' (Ricoeur 1979 : 117). Metaphor can generally be characterised as both a disruptive and a constructive phenomenon in thought and its linguistic and visual expression, and it is in this paradoxical sense that it is creative.

Before embarking further on a discussion of models of metaphor, it might be useful to point out some important and helpful distinctions concerning the study of metaphor itself (Gibbs 1999 : 36 - 41). Most accounts or theories of metaphor have situated it at the manifest stage of figurative artefacts, as expressions in language or visual art, the level at which they enter cultural discourse. Not many accounts have recognised the role of metaphor at the level of the formation of schematic mental projections (Gibbs 1999; Johnson 1987). To an extent this is the reason why metaphor has not always been taken seriously in cognitive theory.

A distinction can be drawn between the processes of metaphor, or, how we produce and understand metaphor in language (or images), and the products of metaphor, that is, the meanings we infer from understanding or interpreting an example of metaphor. Both of these require different theoretical descriptions. The first can be explained as a mental capacity or as a cognitive conceptualising function, which gives rise to linguistic tropes in various forms

of expression. The second has to do with metaphoric reference in language, as a type of representation that becomes part of cultural discourse.

A distinction is also made between 'metaphoric processing' and 'processing metaphoric language'. Metaphoric processing is a way of understanding or interpreting any situation, text or object, not necessarily specifically designated as metaphorical. It can be seen, then, as a particular approach to perceiving or reading the world and its objects, including cultural objects, which can result in a metaphorical interpretation of the material. This *modus operandi* or cognitive strategy, in the absence of obvious metaphorical tropes, can also be described as a particular way of making sense of what we experience⁴. This can be, more broadly termed, poetic understanding or cognition, and may lead to metaphorical expression and statements in the form of poetic texts, images, concepts and so forth.

The processing of metaphoric language, however, is prompted by more explicit cues, in the form of figurative tropes, in statements in language, or in images, which lead directly to metaphoric or poetic readings or construals. This becomes even more obvious if it is recognised that a work falls into a specific genre category where one would expect to find these, for instance works of poetry or allegory. This kind of processing of metaphoric statements incorporates various interpretative strategies, broadly, as attempts to extract meaning from such works or statements, or more specifically, as a strategy of literary or aesthetic criticism and analysis.

The bearers of metaphor can be non-linguistic. A metaphorical concept, as a product of mind, can present itself in non-linguistic forms, as sounds, images, objects, rituals and so forth. These different manifestations of metaphor may

⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss refers to a cognitive strategy of this kind as the logic of the *bricoleur*, using the term *bricolage* to describe this analogical way of responding and interpreting the world via metaphorical relationships which are improvised conceptual structures to understand reality. (Lévi-Strauss 1966 : 263). Chapter 1 of this study describes Giambattista Vico's notion of 'poetic logic' which has similarities to Lévi-Strauss's notion of analogical thought.

require different strategies for their identification. For the purposes of this paper I contend that, characterised as metaphoric, they are all symbolic artefacts presenting analogical structure and encouraging metaphorical or imaginative insight. The processes of metaphor and its products, and the metaphoric processing or interpreting of experience are consequently important to this study.

CHAPTER 1

Cognition: Imagination and Image.

Imagination is not, as its etymology would suggest, the faculty of forming images of reality; it is rather the faculty of forming images which go beyond reality, which sing reality. Bachelard (Cited in Gaudin 1971 : 15)

Until recently, metaphor has traditionally been studied as a linguistic phenomenon, and approaches to it have been concerned with the relations between language and reality and the value and necessity of metaphoric meaning in our linguistic accounts of reality, particularly the nature of reference in expression. Conceptions of language and thought have traditionally rejected metaphor on the grounds of its association with emotion, ambiguity, and aesthetic value, that is, the intervention of human subjectivity, rather than what is perceived to be objective cognitive value. If metaphor is acceptable only as an aesthetic enhancement to expression, and is confined to poetic language which in turn is relegated to the realm of the superfluous and fanciful, then it cannot have any lasting cognitive significance. Furthermore, metaphor, as responsible for the display of images in language which are not traditionally associated with semantics in expression or with conceptual thought, is regarded as a manifestation of 'psychological' features of perception and cognition (Ricoeur 1979 :123). Therefore metaphor cannot contribute to essential knowledge of the world, assuming of course that such knowledge is possible.

Although metaphor is studied most commonly as figurative language, it also has a long history in philosophical debates about the nature and purpose of language and communication extending back to Plato (428 - 348 B. C.) and Aristotle (384 – 322 B. C.). These attitudes towards language have changed metaphor's status in philosophy throughout its history. This status is always

allied to changing attitudes towards the representational aspects of language, its relationship to the world.

The prejudice against metaphor in philosophical and scientific epistemological debate, reflects persistent dichotomous attitudes to the nature of meaning and our means of expressing it. Broadly, these dichotomies⁵ consist of assumptions associated with the rationalist/objectivist⁶ tradition in philosophy that has oriented Western culture, in opposition to certain views of cognition that have valued imaginative structures of human understanding and expression. This tradition culminated in the Cartesian view of the existence of a transcendent mentality, able to give a rational account of an objective reality, via arbitrary abstract symbols and concepts, unimpeded by imagination and subjectivity. Although now seriously challenged, this view is still pervasive in most accounts of relations between thought, language and reality and its representation (Kittay 1987; Johnson 1987). Metaphor is regarded by this rationalist philosophical tradition, as a form of expression that interferes with the 'normal' operation of language as an adequate means of describing or reporting on the nature of an objective world.

The opposing account, associated with Romanticism, of meaning as dependent on context, malleable and subjective, assumes that reality cannot be reached or given meaningful structure without the imaginative devices identified as metaphor, metonymy, mental imagery and narrative.

Recently, twentieth century philosophers have begun to take a more serious interest in the nature of metaphor, particularly in its cognitive role (Danesi 1993; Johnson 1987; Kittay 1987). Moreover, current researchers in

⁵ Johnson lists these dichotomies as mind/body, reason/imagination, science/art, cognition/emotion and fact/value, citing them as influencing the way we understand (Johnson 1987: 140).

⁶ Richard Bernstein defines these views thus: 'by "objectivism", I mean the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness.' (Bernstein 1983: 8 cited in Johnson 1987)

linguistics, and the cognitive and social sciences have made extensive studies of metaphor and now regard it as a fundamental and necessary feature of our conceptual capacity and modes of communication and understanding⁷. A dramatic shift in cognitive science has also challenged the mind/body dichotomy in theories of mind and explored the influence of human experience and understanding and the nature and effect of our bodily capacities on cognitive models of perception (Johnson 1987 : xvi). Greater attention is thus given in the sciences to the notion that 'symbolic behaviour is an extension of bodily experience' as will be seen in discussions later in this study (Danesi 1993 : 34; Johnson 1987 : xiv-xvi).

It is only recently that the study of mind has included, in its focus on rational and computational skills, investigations into the products of the imagination. Now, narrative structuring, metaphoric structuring, imagery and myth are regarded as challenging alternatives to the computational, mechanical models of thought which separate reason from sense impressions and reinforce the mind/body dichotomy. As early as the eighteenth century writers like Giambattista Vico (1668 –1744) had already developed a theory of mind that specifically used preconceptual experience expressed in myth and narrative as sources for understanding language and cognition, in which metaphor plays a central role. Cognitive scientists and philosophers have increasingly begun turning to literature and other cultural products in their inquiries into cognition and the nature of signs. Credence is now given to the role of imagination and metaphorical projection and its symbolic manifestations (Johnson 1987 : 139 - 140).

⁷ The editors (Cameron and Low) to *Researching and Applying Metaphor* (1999) attest to the 'explosion' of interest in metaphor in the last twenty years. They describe the current status of studies on metaphor: 'Metaphor in one form or another is fundamental to the way language systems develop over time and are structured, as well as to the way human beings consolidate and extend their ideas about themselves, their relationships and their knowledge of the world. Metaphor is, as a direct consequence, important to psychologists, sociologists, scientists, humorists, advertising copywriters, poets, literary commentators, philosophers, historical linguists, semantics researchers....' (Cameron and Low 1999: xii).

Theories of symbolic systems that examine how perceptions are organised and patterned conceptually, have discerned a number of ways in which we express the relationships and connections we perceive through our senses, forming the basis of meaning.

Of significance to this discussion, is the symbolically projected kind of perception (one thing 'standing in for' something else) because it involves images and therefore, relates to metaphor. Charles S. Peirce distinguished three types of symbolic perception, the icon, the index and the symbol each of which are applied depending on the 'degree of similarity between the sign and its referent' (Polkinghorne 1988 : 6). The icon 'stands in' by virtue of its resemblance, as in a painting of a tree having an iconic relationship with an actual tree in reality. A part of the tree with a concrete or direct relationship with the real tree, a leaf for instance, is indexical. The symbol has an arbitrary relationship, acquired conventionally, as in the word 'tree'. The sound of the word 'tree', the letters of the word 'tree' standing for the sound, and the actual perceived image of the tree, have no similarity to each other and are culturally agreed upon (Polkinghorne 1988 : 6).

In discussing symbolic mental representations (percepts, images and image schemata) or the way the mind projects its perceptually gained knowledge, the icon or image in perception merits most attention here. It is important to distinguish what is referred to as a particular mental 'picture' or an image of a particular object, from a schematic mental image. The mental picture has a particularly 'rich' visual relationship with a particular referent, whereas the schema is a thought structure with no particular referent. In cognitive science 'schemata' are thought of as: 'general knowledge structures, ranging from conceptual networks to scripted activities to narrative structures and even to theoretical frameworks', the means by which we organise knowledge (Johnson 1987 : 19). While schemata are not templates, they contain many features which are not only visual but include kinaesthetic characteristics, and involve continuous

transformations, associations and generalisations and can be instantiated indefinitely in a very wide range of contexts (Johnson 1987 : 19 - 21). Johnson explains their specific nature as follows:

...they (schemata) do not have the specificity of rich images or mental pictures. They operate at one level of generality and abstraction above concrete, rich images. A schema consists of a small number of parts and relations, by virtue of which it can structure indefinitely many perceptions, images, and events. In sum, image schemata operate at a level of mental organisation that falls between abstract propositional structures,...and particular concrete images (Johnson 1987 : 29).

The role of the imagination in this process of mental organisation and the changing conceptions of this role are important to this discussion of metaphor. Imagination is understood to be responsible for the actualisation of sense perceptions in the form of images and, as the earlier discussion indicates, the precise nature of image or mental representation is debated.

As we have seen, the Western philosophical tradition has pitted the imaginative capacity against rationality. Theories of Imagination are derived mainly from two traditions (Johnson 1987 : 141). The first is the Platonic tradition, derived from interpretations of Plato's writings, in which the imagination is understood as a faculty that can only grasp images of the illusory and changeable 'shadow' realm of the sensory and physical world. Knowledge of things gained from imagination was not associated with the so-called essence of things, but was considered to be associated with fantasy and poetic imagery arising from irrational inspiration. Images resulting from this aroused the same irrational emotion from the audience. The second tradition is based on specific references Aristotle made to the imagination in his writings. As a faculty of mind that mediates between sense perception and reason, the imagination was understood to form images, either recalled (from memory) or from sense perception of the present, and even from dreams.

There is a direct correlation between sense data from the physical world, and the 'phantasmata', that is, images formed by the imagination, which become the content upon which our conceptual understanding operates.

In the former Platonic tradition, the resulting images are sensuous, illusionary and imitative of the decaying physical realm, unfiltered by the mind. In the latter Aristotelian tradition, the images are the result of empirical experience acted on by thought, and they become available to us as the content of knowledge. The Aristotelian tradition was incorporated into early Empiricist philosophical attempts to account for the nature of cognitive processes in which imagination came to be regarded as a faculty mechanically giving rise to images rather than as a creative and inventive process.

During the seventeenth century there was a serious attempt to include imagination in a unified theory of cognition which took account of its mechanical operations in conjunction with so-called artistic genius. It came to be understood, broadly, as an image generating faculty, giving rise to novelty in art, as psychological rather than logical in nature (Johnson 1987 : 144). The Empiricist view of imagination thus gave an account of the link between perception, association, memory and images, but as generating only ornamental ideas that had to be controlled by rational or logical thought (Johnson 1987 : 146). There was no account of a cognitive structure of imagination with semantic import. The 'images' derived were considered to be nothing but the receding memory of sense impressions (Hobbes in Johnson : 146).

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur understands the innovative meaning produced by metaphors in poetic discourse, as 'schematised' by the imagination. His theory of metaphor unifies meaning with the generated images, and manifests as a renewed vision of reality. A more detailed account of this theory follows in Chapter Three.

An important early theory of metaphoric structuring of reality involving the imagination, is that of the eighteenth century rhetorician and philosopher, Giambattista Vico (1668 – 1744). Vico, who was never influential in his own lifetime, has attracted recent interest. He developed alternative ideas to the mechanistic, empiricist mainstream of Newtonian and Cartesian thought. These ideas can now be seen as unique and progressive theories about the origin of language, the mind as an extension of the body, and the imagination as the creative faculty of the mind that gave rise to conceptual, abstract thought. He published his investigations in *The New Science* (1744) but was not translated into English until 1948 and was therefore not widely known to mainstream science and philosophy. Interestingly, this work was earlier read by poets and literary thinkers like Coleridge (1772 - 1834) and later Joyce (1882 - 1941), who were creatively inspired by his ideas (Danesi 1993 : 40; Mali 1992 : 38-9).

Of interest to this study, are Vico's ideas on the nature of signs (images) and how they are generated by the mind. Vico's focus is on the nature and role of the imaginative faculty together with other structuring features of the mind, mainly metaphor, in this process. For him, metaphor and imagination are the transforming processes which 'invented' thought, language and culture, in effect making the mind responsible for creating all social and cultural structures. Vico's ideas are now increasingly being correlated with scientific and anthropological findings (Danesi 1993 : 40 - 43). What follows is a brief account of Danesi's interpreted scenario of Vico's hypothesis for the development of symbolic representation expounded in *The New Science*.

According to Vico, the cognitive faculty of early humans was outwardly expressed in the form of metaphors, symbols and myths, to symbolically transform experience. The imagination, as the faculty for the invention of symbolic images, is considered to be the primary tool for engaging with the world of sense experience. Encoding and mental constructs of a symbolic

form were thought to humanise the world and make it comprehensible for its early inhabitants, explaining natural phenomena like seasons, planets, fire and so on. According to Vico, deposits of myth in our culture constituted the key to understanding the history of the development of society and its culture. This scenario corresponds surprisingly well to contemporary models of mind and systems theories (Danesi 1993 : 57)⁸.

For the sake of conformity, and reflecting a general point of agreement in these theories, the cognitive perceptual functions refer to the structuring capacity of the mind to pattern perceptions into semiotic and semantic systems in culture⁸. Our ability to make connections and build relationships in various ways forms the basis of meaning, and metaphor is given increasing importance in this process. The metaphorizing capacity appropriates information from our perceptions and iconic structures and forges concepts. Later on in this study, I refer to aspects of Vico's model of symbolic expression as 'iconic signs', in a description of the development of iconic imagery in my own drawings.

Vico's most interesting theory was how reflective consciousness and primordial meaning came about in the primitive or preconceptual mind, resulting in fictional patterning of perceptions into models of reality. Danesi describes this process thus:

⁸Evolved symbolic systems involve participation and therefore the intention to communicate information and meaning via manifest expressive means, such as verbal or visual symbols. Systems theories account for the emergence of multiple levels of reality, the material, organic and mental. The mental realm, or realm of meaning and reflective consciousness is the most evolved and is the point at which language systems develop. According to Polkinghorne, this mental realm has produced "a special stratum of the environment – culture and meaning – in which we exist. This stratum holds traditions and conventions to which individuals are connected in a dialectic manner; they provide individuals with a *common symbolic environment* that informs their categories of thought and social actions..." (Polkinghorne 1988: 3). Thus, the realm of meaning is an activity that produces cultural products and artefacts, as a result of acting on the elements of our sensory responses and perceptions from the organic realm. The realm of meaning structures this perceptual experience, connecting things, and forming the patterns of meaning on which systems of language are based (Polkinghorne 1988: 6). Polkinghorne stresses the importance for members of a culture to have a good general knowledge of the "full range of accumulated meanings" in order to properly participate. Furthermore, he says these "Cultural stocks of meaning are not static but are added to by new contributions from members, and deleted by lack of use" (Polkinghorne 1988: 6).

the *ingegno* [*inventive faculty*] emerged to organise the imagination's iconic signs [*mapped mental images*] into structured patterns and models [*syntax, images, narrative*]...iconic signs are stored in the form of percepts (units derived from perception) by the *memoria* [*deep level memory*], the invented structures of the *ingegno*, are stored as "categories"—i.e., as structures derived from combinations of percepts that underlie our models of space, time emotions, etc. (Danesi 1993 : 51). *Note*: italics in square brackets are my own.

According to Vico's model, metaphoric thought is generated through this process, in the interaction between the imagination and the structuring faculty he called 'poetic logic'. Metaphor creates surface level cognition (i.e. a level of mind which can express these concepts in some discernible form) by connecting, categorising, and generating concepts and models, transforming iconic units into concepts and later, semantic systems, Vico termed 'fables' (Danesi 1993 : 53 - 54). These symbolic systems were characterised by metaphor in the form of tropes and myth. The nature of this early metaphorical expression was concrete, analogical and iconic which he compared to a child's first attempts to express things (Danesi 1993 : 65).

Vico based his investigations into the symbols generated by the mind on the interpretation of myths as the first narrative explanations of environmental phenomena, and on the early emergence of signs, as expressions of thought which eventually became language. He constructs a model of the 'primitive mind', which he saw as reflected in the structures of its myths. He says: '(their) minds were not ...abstract, refined...because they were entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions, buried in the body' (Vico in Danesi 1993 : 69).

The images in the primitive mind thus originated from bodily experience. Emerging from this precognitive and prelinguistic level of sense impressions and the body's experience, these first 'images', were transformed by the

imagination into iconic signs (Danesi 1993 : 68). The first external expressions of this deep level of reflective consciousness, were thus visual, they were 'signs, whether gestural or physical objects', and 'writing', a term Vico used to mean pictorial iconic signs or 'poetic characters' rather than alphabetic characters (Vico in Danesi 1993 : 69). In this internal form, the iconic signs are models of perceived referents in the world. They only later take the form of externally represented referents, in visual form.

In the initial stage of outward representation, according to Danesi, the body becomes a 'signifying system' as a gesturing, posturing, kinetic instrument, eventually, using 'hand signs' to make drawing movements and marks on rocks, walls and clay, later incorporating tools. This would eventually become symbolic writing, like cuneiform, and culminate as alphabetic writing and more elaborate pictorial images (drawings) (Danesi 1993 : 70).

A perceptually and physically based iconic mode of thinking and being, was later transformed into a conceptual one, based on abstract models of the world. This transformation was made possible by metaphor, a term Vico used to refer to both the mental process and the products it generated in the form of figurative tropes. In character, Vico's metaphor was a kind of catalyst of the mind, which first encoded perceptions into concepts, and as it continued to do this, created a platform from which to produce increasingly complex models out of the initial simpler concepts. These models were genuine products of mind, independent of the context of the immediate sensory experience, no longer as close to their source (referents) as the original concrete iconic signs, but an entirely new fictive world with its own rational syntactic and semantic system. This system of meaning concretely represented in an increasingly complex way, and in time included the presence of independent symbols like hieroglyphs, pictograms and alphabets, grammar systems and all the verbal

tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony and so on)⁹. The latter are the many conventional ways in which metaphor figuratively connects initial perceptual domains and secondary conceptual domains. Metaphor can be said to have created a space in the mind that could generate a virtual world, or 'fables' as Vico referred to them. These are equivalent to Ricoeur's fictive images resulting from metaphoric schematisation, or the fusion of meaning and image.

Surface level cognition generates externalised symbolic expression as language and culture, displayed as visual images, narratives, rituals, play and other patterned forms of expression. According to Danesi, from current theories of iconic thinking, it appears that pictorial representation developed out of gesture and preceded vocal language. Archaeological records show the first expressions of thought are visual and kinetic, not vocal (Danesi 1993 : 68).

Vico distinguishes three forms of language media or symbolic expression, each developing in three separate corresponding 'ages' of humans. The so-called age of gods used concrete metaphorical language based on gesture and expressed orally as myth and as pictographic writing; the age of heroes invented a more conventional, symbolic language less dependent on direct correlation; the age of humans produced a highly conventional language of signs (the alphabet).

What is significant about Vico's notion of culture is that these cultural manifestations become the source of stimulus upon which we later act and continually form new representations, a form of intertextuality. In this sense, early humans were makers of their own worlds, their own system of truths, and of their society, visible in social customs and institutions, which in turn

⁹ These tropes are classified according to traditional rhetoric and can now be defined according to more contemporary practice.

reflected the structure of their language. Metaphor, as described by Vico, is a way of thinking about events and of being in the world, a primitive 'poetic imagination' that was the foundation of culture and a creator of worlds. Metaphor can be thought of as generating the materials to construct worlds.

Culture is defined by Danesi as 'an agreement to live together on the basis of communal "sense-making"' (Danesi 1993 : 80). Metaphor uses this system of agreement in order to generate new meanings, but by continually providing the conditions for undermining the conventions sustained by the system. Vico acknowledges this subversive and transcendent nature of metaphor, in that metaphor invents alternative identities, institutions and cultural artefacts in opposition to those entrenched in society by authority. His ideas challenge the view of progress as a linear movement and formulate instead a cyclical spiral movement of progress, assimilation and decline in which metaphor is a catalyst.

The thread of Empiricist accounts of the imagination emerges as a more unified theory in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in which he provides a solution to the problem of unifying images and abstract concepts. The theory initially follows the standard Empiricist view, claiming that uncategorised and singular perceptions must be unified by some factor in the mind that can bridge the gap between percepts and the formation of concepts. The role of forming images, recalling past images and recognising and associating images or mental representations (sense percepts, images) into categories, is given to the imaginative faculty.

In addition to this reproductive form of mental representation, Kant cites the imagination as a factor that makes it possible to go beyond privately structured realities, in order for experience to be shared in a public domain of knowledge. The imagination as 'productive', unifies conscious states into a kind of objective ground to which our experience is always subject. This 'general

structure' transcends empirical experience and generates schema, categorical patterns that are imposed on the content of experience. Productive imagination, as a unified structure of consciousness, schematises experience. A schema is neither an image, nor a concept, but a mediating activity that can generate content figuratively, and link images and concepts (Johnson 1987 : 149). This schematising nature of the productive imagination has been influential in Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, particularly regarding his notion of the image as a fiction and not as a replication of perception.

Ricoeur has described 'image' in terms of a theory of metaphor, which opens up new ways for the image to refer to reality. The image in traditional philosophy has been associated with perception, a mental representation (percepts, images or concepts) derived from sense impressions and excluded from meaning or sense. The image is thus understood to 're-present' an empirical presence, to appear as a replica of what has been perceived. Imagination is seen as an associative function that merely establishes similarities to enable this representation. Ricoeur establishes a more pivotal role for imagination and image in the metaphorical process. He draws on Kant's account of schematism and productive imagination as contributing to creative, cognitive organisation, by synthesising image and concept in the notion of a schema. Ricoeur, quoting Kant, remarks that the schema provides images for concepts. Ricoeur explains: 'in the schema, the liaison between logical component and sensible component, or if one prefers, between the verbal and the non-verbal movement of the image, is effectuated' (Ricoeur 1979 : 126). Ricoeur proposes that images are derived from language and not from perception and he uses poetry as an example of language that displays images, in order to construct his theory.

In metaphor the image is understood as 'discourse assuming the nature of a body', or discourse as 'a quasi-bodily externalisation' (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 142), not as a perception attached to language but as meaning embodied *in*

language. The semantic innovation characteristic of metaphor generates images in language, that is, it gives a figurative form to meaning. The imagination is intrinsic to the new meaning or semantic innovation invested as image. In order to establish the semantic role of the image Ricoeur attempts to fuse meaning in expression (sense as objective content) and its representation as 'mental actualisation' or image, within a theory of imagination as the 'schematisation of metaphoric attribution' (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 147). Imagination is the 'apperception' or conscious insight into the new predication of the metaphor. The resolution is the new meaning that comes out of the new metaphorical 'congruence', made possible by imaginative insight. The imagination, as productive, assimilates the differences in the terms, ideas or domains that the metaphorical statement draws together.

The 'pictorial' dimension of imagination, is well explained in I. A. Richards' well known description of the union of sense and figure, as tenor and vehicle, or semantic innovation visualised. Ricoeur's words for this relationship are 'the conceptual import and its pictorial envelope' (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 147). The difficulty here is to explain how schematisation of the predicative assimilation is displayed as iconic. In order to explain this Ricoeur must re-define the nature of the image:

By displaying a flow of images, discourse initiates changes of logical distance, generates rapprochement. Imaging or imagining, thus, is the concrete milieu in which and through which we see similarities. To imagine then is not to have a mental picture of something but to display relations in a depicting mode (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 148).

The icon is the fusion between image and language, the matrix from which new meaning emerges. Image is not associated with or attached to meaning, it is a 'reading' of the relation (attribution) through the iconic matrix. The 'concrete milieu' is the matrix from which meaning (icon) emerges.

The images are elicited, produced and 'read' in the context or structure of poetic language, the fictive work. Image becomes an iconic presentation of new meaning in figurative discourse, in the framework of language. New meaning in language generates new images. Fiction is the context in which imagination can be productive. 'Imagination at work – in a work – produces itself as a world' (Ricoeur 1979 :123). Thus images are discussed in the sphere of language as fictions and not in the context of perception as mental pictures of absent referents. For Ricoeur fiction as a 'work' is something 'wrought', writing a poem, telling a story, making worlds.

CHAPTER 2

Metaphor: Theories and Attitudes

To acquire a feeling for the imaginative role of language, we must patiently seek, in every word, the desires for otherness, for double meaning, for metaphor. Bachelard (Cited in Gaudin 1971 : 21)

Metaphor, has been described as 'a "tool" that the mind uses to explore reality and to give order and coherence to our otherwise chaotic experiences' (Danesi 1993 : 124). It can also be said that this ordering capacity gives rise to metaphors 'internally' as conceptualised models, as well as 'externally', most commonly, but not exclusively, in the form of verbal or linguistic tropes. At its simplest, as a fundamental feature of thought and expression, metaphor is essentially a comparative and connecting mode to establish similarities between dissimilar things in our thought and experience.

Metaphor first appears as a specific term (from the Greek words *meta* 'beyond' and *pherein* 'to carry') in Aristotle's studies of language in his *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* to refer to a way of expressing comparisons. As a component of language in traditional rhetoric, metaphor was classified as a trope or figure, among others such as synecdoche, metonymy, simile and so on, a stylistic elaboration on the basic or literal use of language. The word *trope* means a turn or twist, and indicates a disruption of the system of what is considered normal or common meaning assigned to words, what Hawkes refers to as 'the common practice of ordinary speakers' (Hawkes 1972 : 2). In a context of a given community of language users, metaphors and other tropes rely on the receptive experience of a reader or audience, who participates in the exchange of meanings within the common symbolic structures of that community.

If language is the primary symbolic system for organising and constructing our experience of reality, it at the same time establishes a consensus, a system of values in our culture, through which it proceeds to shape our world. Figurative meanings eventually become part of the usual meanings, as 'dead' metaphors, cease to challenge, and then reinforce value systems. However, novel and challenging figures can force categories of thought open into new configurations. The power of metaphor is this transformational ability, its possibilities for the unexpected in the combinations and categories it is able to produce, thereby also ensuring that meaning does not remain fixed in certain value systems. This characteristic is itself metaphorically expressed by the original Greek meaning of the word metaphor – 'to carry beyond' – in the image of a transporting vessel in which meaning is carried into another territory.

Aristotle's views on language essentially rested on distinctions between literal and non-literal ways of thinking and speaking. He classified language, in order to distinguish its different intentions or strategies, as logical, rhetorical or poetic. Figurative language, as a departure from the literal, introducing a substitution based on similarity, was in his view dispensable to the essential meaning of a statement but was suitable in poetic discourse. The faith in clarity of expression and reference is a result of Aristotle's adherence to the idea that language has a stable relationship with the objective world to which it refers, it does not alter reality. If the ambiguity in language, resulting from the use of tropes, was acceptable only in poetry, and not in statements dealing with truth, logic and cognitive meaning, then, according to Aristotle, it could not result in knowledge of the world or self-knowledge. There is an implication here that creative language is not necessarily involved with an intention to communicate knowledge and that it can be regarded as subversive to a coherent worldview.

Attitudes towards metaphor, in later Western thought, can be said to have been defined by Aristotle's ideas, which form the basis of some of the debates surrounding its usage and purpose in language and thought (Danesi 1993 :123). In fact, Aristotle's understanding of metaphor – an analogous comparison between two concepts, words or entities, introducing a similarity between previously dissimilar things – has not undergone any fundamental alteration, at least within the 'objectivist' view of meaning. This is called the comparative or similarity theory of metaphor, in which the properties of one domain are compared to another domain and found to be 'like' or similar to each other and are able to mutually enhance each other, for example, old age is like winter. For an appreciation of later theories of metaphor, it is important to note that in comparative or substitution theories, the metaphoric transfer reveals similarities that are perceived to already exist in an objective world. Furthermore, according to the comparative theory, as deviations from reality usually described and understood in literal, objective terms, metaphors are understood in terms of the restituted original/literal meaning. Thus the semantic novelty of the metaphor is interchangeable with and can be paraphrased in 'literal' terms and cannot be regarded as creative or innovative.

Although Aristotle acknowledged that metaphor was important psychologically, even that it had some cognitive force, he still regarded it as an essentially decorative enhancement of expression by means of comparison and substitution, most suitable for poetic expression and rhetorical persuasion. To truly describe reality one must, in his view, use literal propositions.

The long rhetorical tradition after Aristotle, upheld this restricted view of metaphor in the increasingly rigorous rules and taxonomies it devised for language use. Within the philosophical traditions of logical positivism, language was viewed as indispensable, but unreliable unless it developed procedures for determining the verification of scientific statements, and figurative language was regarded as highly unstable. This was the dominant

stance held until the Romantic movement began to challenge and erode the restraints imposed on language, in particular its creative capacity and enhancement of language (Hawkes 1972).

An entirely new understanding of mind emerges with Romanticism, in which the imagination plays a unifying role. A conception of metaphor was introduced, characterised as the linguistic expression of the operation of the imagination. In this description by Coleridge (1772 -1834), he speaks of the power of imagination to 'reveal(s) itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects' (Coleridge in Hawkes 1972 : 43,44). Significantly, Coleridge's understanding of imagination, which he terms 'synthetic and magical', meant that far from it presenting pre-existing qualities about things, it acts on, and gives shape to the world. Implicit in this metaphorical fusion is the creative participation of the reader in the process of reconciling conflict and diversity, out of which brand new perceptions come, a foreshadowing of contemporary ideas concerning the reader as a contributor to meaning rather than as a passive receiver of ideas. Also important to this discussion is the imagination as the faculty that combines the 'idea with the image', implying a semantic role for figurative language. The fusion of the imagination and metaphor has affinities to Vico's ideas in the *New Science*, of which Coleridge had made a study in the early 1820's (Mali 1992 : 1).

The continuity of these notions of creativity in metaphor was provided much later in the twentieth century by the writings of I.A. Richards. Richards is one of the few theorists who regarded metaphor as underlying all thought processes, which give rise to explicit linguistic metaphors. Perceived reality is 'a product of earlier and unwitting metaphor' (Richards in Johnson 1987 : 69). Richards concentrated more on metaphor's specific operation in language

than on its ontological role. His use of the terms tenor and vehicle to refer to the dual components of a metaphor also reinforces the semantic component of poetic language as the union of the image with concept.

The philosopher Max Black can be credited with the first serious philosophical analysis of metaphor after Richards. The significance of his theory to this discussion, lies in his assertion that meaning is generated by metaphors, in an 'interactive' process, whereby the domains of meaning implicated in the metaphor are not interchangeable existing similarities, but whole systems of meaning, which together create additional, new meaning and extend conceptual boundaries. Metaphors create similarities rather than exposing those already there and therefore constitute the structure of experience. Black describes it in this way: 'some metaphors enable us to see aspects of reality that the metaphor's production helps to constitute. But that is no longer surprising if one believes that the "world" is necessarily a world *under a certain description* – or a world seen from a certain perspective. Some metaphors can create such a perspective' (Black in Johnson 1987 : 70).

In his study, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur refers to and attempts to integrate a number of the more recent theories of metaphor such as those of Richards, Black and others (Ricoeur 1978 : 4). As we have seen, some arguments present the traditional view of rhetoric, that metaphor is merely embellishment with no inherent semantic or referential value in discourse. Other arguments present metaphor, in contradiction to these traditions of classical rhetoric, as an intrinsic creative strategy in language that interferes with conventional or agreed upon meaning, with profound implications for language as a commodity. The ambiguity of meaning and reference, the difficulty of the exchange of meaning, as well as the innovative productivity of metaphor is revealed by these arguments. Ricoeur has stated his aim as showing how metaphor, because of ambiguity and imagination as intrinsic factors, is able to effect a redescription of reality, not just a re-presentation.

Ricoeur cites metaphor as 'the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality' (Ricoeur 1978 : 7). In this process, what is the nature of reference? How do metaphors refer to objects and reality outside language? What is the nature of representation and role of the image? What is the place of the author and reader in this process?

In the next chapter I give a selective presentation of Ricoeur's understanding of metaphorical reference which functions as a framework for my understanding of metaphorical attribution and meaning in examples of art works.

CHAPTER 3

The Virtual World of Meaning: Distance and Proximity

The Theory of Paul Ricoeur

The ideal source is not some mythical event that took place before the verbal expression, but a text which is a tissue of words and images and meanings... a musical space in which a theme develops its own variations. Italo Calvino (1999 : 240)

Although language is generally regarded as unstable in its reference, the philosopher, Ricoeur pursues a theme, in his examination of the metaphorical process and the meaning it produces, which aims to present metaphor as the exemplar of creativity through language. While Ricoeur is concerned with the problem of reference in discourse generally, he is primarily interested in poetic discourse as a particular means of relating to the world. His theory of metaphor, and the nature of its reference, is seen to work at the core of language, in particular poetic expression and its figurative nature, in which our sense of reality is continuously re-invented.

Ricoeur's interpretation of metaphoric signification as 'iconic', provides an explanation for the semantic role of the image and the paradox of the suspension of literal reference in the creation of new meaning, and is thus presented as the source of invention in poetic discourse. Ricoeur does not contradict the dichotomy between the poetic function and the referential function proposed in literary criticism¹⁰. Rather, he proposes a paradoxical strategy in poetic discourse as ambiguous reference, or to use Jakobson's term, split reference. He thus proposes the capacity of metaphoric language, to not only reach reality, but to change it as well and in so doing, our experience of being in the world. Simply put, his theory of metaphor presents

¹⁰ Critics such as Roman Jakobson and others, emphasise the self-referential nature of poetic discourse (Ricoeur 1979: 142).

a kind of reference, inherent in poetic texts, that generates new realities for makers and readers/audience alike.

Ricoeur regards metaphor as the exemplar of creativity and its process as a pattern for reading and interpreting poetic texts. Reference in discourse enables a reconnection with the world, and 'it is because there is first something to say, because we have an experience to bring to language, that conversely language is not only directed towards ideal meanings but also refers to what is' (Ricoeur in Valdés 1991 : 6). However, in saying something about the world, metaphors and poetic texts are not descriptive or literal, instead they suspend literal signification and reference to reality that is assumed in normal language use. Metaphorical reference becomes indirect and ambiguous. A tension is set up between a literal sense and a metaphorical sense, creating a split reference in the statement between the ordinary and the fictive.

Ricoeur extends the notion of expression as poetic discourse, to the term 'works', to encompass other representational or symbolic systems of meaning, and the term 'fiction' to indicate a category of invented reality (Ricoeur 1979 : 116).

I organise the following discussion of Ricoeur's ideas around the following key topics pertaining to this study: ambiguity in language as a creative strategy; sense and reference, specifically in metaphoric language; meaning and interpretation as appropriation of the world of the work by the reader or viewer; the image as fiction in metaphoric reference.

As stated earlier Ricoeur's main theme is to present metaphor as an intrinsic strategy within discourse that brings about new meaning. Ricoeur compares the creativity in poetic discourse, to other strategies in language with different aims, namely ordinary language and scientific language.

The constant test to ordinary users of language is finding solutions to the problems of successfully communicating information to others, and of avoiding misunderstanding and ambiguity. In other uses, say in scientific applications, the need is to introduce measures that do away with ambiguity altogether so that the 'identity of a meaning' can be preserved (Ricoeur 1973 (b): 75). In scientific language, there is only one context. In ordinary language context is the guide to the selection of sense in which words are used in a given context, sentence or discourse, in order to establish meaning.

First consider Ricoeur's ideas on the polysemic nature of language and strategies for coping with this in order to achieve certain aims, namely creativity. Polysemy is the ability of words to have more than one meaning. This characteristic of words gives economy to language and therefore the necessity for the selective contextual use of words in which sense changes. Context includes, how the word is used in a sentence, as well as how the speech situation influences understanding, by its participants, speakers and hearers. The decoding of a message is interpretation, 'in this broad sense... a process by which we use all the available contextual determinants to grasp the actual meaning of a given message in a given situation' (Ricoeur 1973 (b) : 71). Interpretation always implies ambiguity and the possibility of misunderstanding. Hence, the development of strategies each with different levels of tolerance for ambiguity.

Whereas the strategy of ordinary language is to reduce polysemy for purposes of communicating information successfully, scientific language aims to do away with it entirely in order to 'ensure the identity of meaning' (Ricoeur 1973 (b) :75). Poetic language, however, contains a 'functional ambiguity' (Ricoeur 1973 (b) :72). If we understand poetic language to be the creative use of language for purposes other than communication, then its strategy is polysemy itself, or metaphor making use of polysemy. 'Poetic language is no

less *about* reality than any other use of language but refers to it by means of a complex strategy...an abolition of the ordinary reference attached to descriptive language '(Ricoeur 1979 : 151).

Following on from Richards' idea, that words can only be metaphoric in the context of a statement, Ricoeur bases his understanding of the operation of metaphor on the sentence as a basic unit of meaning, the semantic content in sentences and their reference to a world outside of language. He thus shifts the discussion of metaphor away from a consideration of signs towards a consideration of sense and the communication of meaning through the reference in discourse. As signifiers, words 'have meaning only inasmuch as sentences have meaning' (Ricoeur 1973 (b) : 69). Sentences do not signify, they intend, they designate something about something (predication) and the meaning in discourse is this intention that is directed towards reality outside of language. It is the extralinguistic aspect of discourse that gives it creative potential. 'The referential function of discourse is that it is about things, it points to things, it represents things' (Ricoeur 1973 (b) : 70). Each sentence or discourse is invested with the intent towards knowledge of or about something. Metaphor, however, is a constant reminder of ambiguity, of the fabrication that is a world built out of signs.

Ricoeur is concerned with the presence of the speaker within the intentional aspects of language to say something about the world in a public context of potential receivers of the discourse. Sentences or statements refer and so does the speaker have 'referring intentions' when words are directed at reality (Ricoeur in Valdés 1991 : 5). He explains the reference of a statement as an 'event' of meaning 'because we are in the world, because we are affected by situations, and because we have something to say, we have experience to bring to language'. We therefore express its 'sense' and not just its signs (Ricoeur in Valdés 1991 : 4 - 5).

Meaning only comes about in the process of a refiguration of the intention in the author's statement by a reader. Meaning and intention, for Ricoeur, are never fixed, and are formed in the dialectic between the presence of the work to a reader or audience. Although he perceives the possibility of shared meaning in language and of shared commentary, there is no search for absolutes: 'The dialectic of distanciation and appropriation is the last word in the absence of absolute knowledge' (Ricoeur in Valdés 1991 : 8). 'Distanciation' means the text or work as alienated from a current reader's historicity. 'Appropriation' of meaning is the apprehension of a text or work, as a projected world, by a reader. When Ricoeur refers to the work, as a text¹¹ he also means 'the kind of world' presented by the text to a reader. It is in the precise nature of this world that metaphor plays a defining role.

Ricoeur's understanding of interpretation and his concern with how sense is made and meaning communicated in expression, is thus explained by the dialectic of sense and reference brought to discourse by those who engage in it: 'only this dialectic [sense and reference] says something about the relation between language and the ontological condition of being in the world' (Ricoeur in Valdés 1991 : 5).

In metaphoric statements the mediation of the readers' imaginative 'insight' is what makes new meaning possible. In order to understand and give meaning to what is alien in a statement, the reader appropriates the alien content. Metaphors are responsible for 'alien' or discordant content in statements and it is how this content is assimilated that is important to Ricoeur's explanation of the role of imagination, as productive, in the metaphoric process.

If the action of metaphor is examined closely it is evident how imagination

¹¹ In cultural studies, texts refer to non-linguistic cultural forms as texts. Ricoeur here talks initially about literary texts but extends the reference to works, meaning literature and other artworks.

is involved in this assimilation of discordance and with the production of new meaning. In a metaphor, discordance present in the literal interpretation of sense in a statement, forces us to look for a new signification in the predicative structure. Since the predicate is responsible for producing sense in an enunciation, this is identified as the pivotal point of the metaphorical turn towards new meaning. The resolution to the semantic mystery is the metaphor. The innovative sense and the new reference in metaphorical statements comes out of this resolution produced by the reader. The metaphor lies between the literal semantic content we would normally derive from a statement and the new or alien predicative attribution assigned to the statement. This transfer of sense by the reader disrupts the normative code of predicative attribution pertaining to the customary use of language. The metaphor is the 'solution of the enigma' not the enigma itself (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 :144).

Ricoeur situates the effect of metaphor on sense or meaning, within the paradox of 'sameness and difference' or 'distance and proximity' in the metaphoric system of reference (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 :146). He also gives imagination a pivotal role in this paradox or tension set up in the conflicting relations within the fields the metaphor brings together. This is termed the negative side of the metaphor. 'The function of metaphor is to make sense with nonsense, to transform a self-contradictory statement into a significant self-contradiction' (Ricoeur 1973 (b) : 78).

The metaphor has to assimilate the antecedent order and the new order, the previous incompatibility and the new compatibility, retaining the tension between the two opposing references and meanings. This disorder, in the metaphor, is the source of creativity. It is the reader who refigures the collapse of the literal meaning into new meaning and imagination as 'productive' makes this occur. The production of new meaning by the imagination is the 'positive' side of the metaphor. The imagination,

providing the insight, mediates between opposing remote domains the metaphor connects and in 'seeing' the likeness within the difference, produces the metaphorical meaning.

The intuitive act of imagination assimilates rather than mechanically associates incompatibilities. The imagination produces categories and compatibilities at the level of thought before the formation of concepts, as schema, and as such it is understood in terms of Kant's schematism and theory of productive imagination. Imagination is able to schematise the metaphorical attribution described above:

...imagination, accordingly, is this *ability* to produce new kinds by assimilation and to produce them not *above* the differences. Imagination is this stage in the production of genres where the generic kinship has not reached the level of conceptual peace and rest but remains caught in the war between distance and proximity, between remoteness and nearness (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 146 - 147).

If we reconsider the nature of schema, that it is neither an image or a concept, that it falls between abstract structures and particular images and according to Kant, supplies images for concepts, then the fusion of verbal meaning and image can be explained as the 'schematisation' of metaphorical attribution. It is on the nature of these images, displayed by discourse that Ricoeur's entire theory depends.

The 'pictorial' aspect of imagination must be understood in terms of the figurative nature of metaphors and not in terms of the image as a perceptual residue attached to language. This 'depicting mode' of metaphoric discourse Ricoeur describes as a blurring of the distinction between sense or meaning and its representation or concrete display. This explains the necessary fusion

between verbal and image function in order that the 'iconic' nature of metaphor can be understood:

Imaging or imagining, thus, is the concrete milieu in which and through which we see similarities. To imagine, then, is not to have a mental picture of something but to display relations in a depicting mode. Whether this depiction concerns unsaid or unheard similarities or refers to qualities, structures, localisations, situations, attitudes, or feelings, each time the new intended connection is grasped as what the icon describes or depicts' (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 148).

The debate about the nature of the image concerns the inducement of poetic images and their exact role in predicative assimilation. Poetic images can be induced by any number of procedures and experiences, such as reading, dreaming, delusional states, reverie and so forth. How can they be linked to and made to be intrinsic to the production of sense in language? Ricoeur argues that the most significant images are those 'generated in the thickness of the imagining scene displayed by the verbal structure of the poem' (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 149). He refers specifically to Marcus B. Hesters' 'bound' images aroused by the experience of reading, displayed and controlled by the verbal structure. Similarly Ricoeur cites Gaston Bachelard's notion of reverberation whereby the verbal meaning obtained from reading produces images which 'rejuvenate and re-enact the traces of sensorial experience' (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 :149).

The image, as schema, is generated by language and acts as the lens, screen, filter, grid, to use other metaphors, through which we can read the metaphoric relations (Ricoeur 1979 :127). These relations are expressed as the icon, 'the matrix' of new meaning or predicative attribution. Thus meaning invests itself in an image.

Ricoeur discusses the negative role of the image in reference as 'suspension' of ordinary descriptive reference to create the conditions for the new meaning to emerge. He refers to this as 'primordial reference' that 'suggests, reveals, unconceals the deep structures of reality', what phenomenology refers to as 'preobjective' (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 151-2). Imagination gives this 'suspension' a concrete or visible form and projects a new model to alter our way of viewing reality:

The ultimate role of the image is not only to diffuse meaning across diverse sensorial fields, to *hallucinate* thought in some way, but, on the contrary, to effect a sort of *epoché* of the real, to suspend our attention to the real, to place us in a state of non-engagement with regard to perception or action, in short to suspend meaning...In this state of non-engagement we try new ideas, new values, new ways of being-in-the-world (Ricoeur 1979 : 128)

This state of non-engagement is the dimension of fiction, the context of a work in which imagination can 'play', the condition for new worlds to form. Imagination is this state of absence, *epoché*, where new visions are projected. Fiction is a mode of reference that gives a new shape to reality. In fiction, the image does not re-present things we have already perceived, 'fiction addresses itself to the deeply rooted potentialities of reality to the extent that they are absent from the actualities with which we deal in everyday life under the mode of empirical control and manipulation' (Ricoeur in Sacks 1979 : 153).

In the following two chapters I discuss this state of suspension and the primordial reference resulting from it as the source of invention in examples of visual art. The works are interpreted as iconic statements. These statements, or images of fiction, make no claim to definitive meaning and are understood in the context of the viewer's appropriation of discordance in terms that are meaningful. I discuss the means by which suspension of ordinary reference can be achieved; In the case of Cragg's work this is explained in terms of

metaphoric discordance and new attributions; In my own work the explanation is more speculative and related to preconceptual conditions in which the activity of drawing is understood as a lyrical process of making and reading fictions.

CHAPTER 4

The Virtual World of Representation: Visible Absence

The Work of Tony Cragg

To perceive and to imagine are as antithetic as presence and absence. To imagine is to absent oneself; it is to leap toward new life. Bachelard (Cited in Gaudin 1971 : 21)

In the title of this chapter I use the term 'visible absence' in reference to the work of the British sculptor Tony Cragg. The term refers to two aspects of his work. The first is a reference to an impulse, evident in his practice, to imaginatively suspend conventional, utilitarian engagement with the world of accustomed reality. The second is a reference to the work as an invented category of physical and metaphorical objects, a new form of life. This is not the category of the aesthetic object of cultural life, of objects called 'sculpture', in opposition to the category of objects from the natural world, or the commercial and industrial world for that matter. Nor is it a category of dogmatic statements about the nature of the physical world and our place in it. This new or other category is a result of a reassignment of consciousness and value towards objects, natural and cultural, and our physical and intellectual interaction with them. A consideration of the nature of this category and the aesthetic strategies Cragg employs to achieve his aims, is the subject of this chapter.

Tony Cragg is generally considered to be part of the late seventies generation of so-called post-formalist sculptors (Celant 1996). In his redeployment of found and readymade objects he works within the tenets of Dada that continued into late modernism in the neo-dada assemblages of the American artist Robert Rauschenberg (b.1925) and others. His background in the field

of science before choosing a career in art focuses attention on his intellectual methods and motivations rather than his stylistic ones.

In his working practice Cragg uses analogical models to give new form to first order kinetic experience, thoughts, and linguistic categories. In this sense his sculptures are poetic fictions, imaginative and metaphorical projections, symbolic of his bodily experience and affective states in the world. They rephrase linguistic references to the world and the conceptual categories used in the course of our everyday lives. This is evident in the way Cragg uses materials, in his approach to technology and in his titles for the works.

His images, because they instigate the collapse of established categories, are iconic transformations, redescriptions of reality in the sense that Ricoeur defines this process in his theory of metaphoric reference.

In his role as an artist, Cragg can be said to be engaged in generating myths out of his poetic responses to banal and unappreciated objects and materials. Cragg uses re-contextualising and re-identification as determinants in his work, requiring his audience to participate in the process he sets in motion. We are asked to make new sense of the ambiguity he creates, and our vocabulary of responses is challenged, compelling us to build new syntactic patterns. The use of unexpected materials in unpredictable combinations, presented as sculpture, makes the works enigmatic, even problematic, and is an invitation for a new attribution to be assigned to them. What could be more unpoetic than a plastic detergent bottle (figs. 11 and 12), stained plastic flotsam or a Formica veneer? The conditions the work creates for our response are almost primordial, where logic is suspended, and, in a state of 'non-engagement' (to use Ricoeur's term for the context of fiction) we can meditate in a playful realm, and re-assign value. Cragg's term for this kind of poetic appreciation towards sculptural form and the world at large is 'erotic

response', which describes a subtle respect towards all manner of things we might encounter in our daily lives (Cragg in Celant 316).

Cragg's images are new imaginative models for perceiving the world, reductive instruments for condensing and augmenting reality. Ricoeur explains this augmentation as the result of a deviation from what is thought of as 'ordinary vision', a reality which is prejudicial, concerned with everyday interests and reinforced by our acceptance of dominant descriptions of reality in popular scientific discourse (Ricoeur, 1979 :133). To get closer to a primordial reality, he says, 'we have to amend not only our ideas as to what an image is, but also our prejudices as to what reality is' (Ricoeur, 1979 :133). Poetic fictions put ordinary reality in a state of crisis and break down these prejudices. Cragg's work instigates this crisis of identity.

I have stated Cragg's aims and interests as an artist in the introduction to this study. As an artist Cragg sees himself as part of the process of production in cultural life in general, rather than being engaged in an exclusively aesthetic pursuit. Many of his statements about his work reiterate the need for a profound change in our attitudes and sense of responsibility towards objects and materials from the physical world we are part of, for a variety of reasons. This change is necessary simply for our survival, for processes of self-definition and for the exercise of our intellectual and poetic freedom (Cragg in Celant 1996). He interprets our present approach to production and consumption as irresponsible and power-based, an attitude built into our essentially materialistic, utilitarian relationship with objects and materials (Cragg in Celant 98). These attitudes are embedded in and further generated by our thought and language, and it is at the semantic level that change must be forthcoming, not at the physical, material level. Cragg, however, considers the material level to be the most constant factor in our lives and in the history of our productive and technological relationship with the environment.

The material level is therefore like a primordial touchstone, reconfiguring itself constantly but consisting of the same elemental matter. Our intellectual and ideological criteria and attached linguistic significance are responsible for the change in status or the role materials play in our lives, and for all the metaphysical dimensions we bring to the lives of objects (Cragg in Celant 288). These are the aspects of our relationship with objects that Cragg addresses in his art. The following themes are important in his work: the division between natural and manmade materials; the contrast between old and new materials; what are considered as useful, valuable materials and objects versus the classification of others as rubbish; utilitarian pragmatism versus aesthetic adornment; old artefacts with a romantic 'aura' and the 'banality' of contemporary products.

Cragg, therefore, sees the necessity to remodel our productive and consumptive relationship with the physical world with a view to remodelling our thought. He employs various strategies to achieve this change. Choosing art, or sculpture, because it falls outside of the 'utilitarian power system' (Cragg in Celant 268), he describes the artist's role as mixture of objectivity, subjectivity and irrationality. These three levels of engagement or intervention are present in varying proportions in all Cragg's creative endeavours. He maintains that the intervention of institutions that take control of our production and consumption, constitutes the source of our bad relationship with objects and has to be transcended in order for us to get to their poetic, metaphysical and mythological dimensions (Cragg in Celant 268).

In one respect intervention is material and physical and includes the level of technology used to make an artefact. In another respect, intervention refers to the acknowledgement of the effect of the human intellect on the world, reflecting on things and allocating semantic value. The semantic value we assign in this process is a new attribution, an alteration at the level of thought and language. There is also intervention as 'erotic appreciation' or a poetic

response to the world, expressed as a vocabulary of metaphors. Cragg's simple statement that real freedom exists only 'between our ears', is a reference to a universe of thought and imagination, the source of 'erotic' or poetic appreciation and the matrix for the invention of a new dense, metaphoric vocabulary with which to express these responses (Cragg in Celant 25). It is comparable to Vico's 'poetic logic' and Ricoeur's 'iconic augmentation'.

The arena where change in our relationships can and must take place is language, in that we allow linguistic categories to dominate our relationships but can use it to effect change and reacquaint us with our visual surroundings. We also allow second-hand, pre-digested and regurgitated images and ideas or media presented realities to curtail our freedom. This 'institutionalised' nature of our relationship to things, that is, what our cultural system, as a categorising power, imposes on our environment, is a source of major concern for Cragg (Cragg in Celant 268).

This concern provides the impetus for his approach. His aesthetic strategy begins from a kind of simulated primordial position, and as much as possible Cragg distances himself from cultural norms and tyrannies in order to gain a space in which to practice intellectual and emotional freedom. Although he draws on contemporary scientific methods for investigating the empirical world, his starting point seems to recall the pre-Socratic philosophers' questioning mode. His approach also recalls the games of childhood exploration. I describe his approach as constructive play, a concept I will later come back to in discussions of my own work. Ricoeur discusses play as part of the process of aesthetic meditation whereby 'the seriousness of a utilitarian preoccupation where the self-presence of the subject is too secure' is removed (Ricoeur 1979 : 90). In his working methods, Cragg does appear to want to disrupt the sense of security of our defined relationships with the world and precipitate a state of suspended reality.

The most significant aspect of Cragg's strategy is the requirement that cultural artefacts or events are not his creative starting points. He comments: 'the impulse comes directly from my observations and experiences in the world around me and rarely results out of literature or cultural history' (Cragg in Celant 72). Concerned with the idea of the possibility of achieving an elemental knowledge of things and their connections to other things in the world, he describes his approach thus:

...the need to know both objectively and subjectively more about the subtle fragile relationships between us, objects, images and essential natural processes and conditions is becoming critical. It is very important to have firstorder experiences – seeing, touching, smelling, hearing – with objects and images and to let the experience register (Cragg in Celant 62).

Cragg's early phase of work as a student, first at Wimbledon School of Art (1968 - 72) and then at the Royal College of Art (1973 - 77), reflected this primal level of questioning and empirical investigative approach. The work from this period survives in the form of photographic records of a series of interactions with the immediate environment, consisting of playful and sometimes exploratory encounters with materials, environments and objects. Thus his early approach to artmaking was not aesthetic or craftsmanlike in the traditional sense. The results are not artefacts, nor are they representational images. They can be more accurately described as experimental interventions in the form of simple physical acts such as knotting string and draping it over everyday, functional spaces and ordinary objects, such as a work desk, changing our sense of their purpose (fig.1, 1969). One example of a work shows an arrangement of natural and manmade materials and objects collected from a beach and placed within the squares of a grid chalked onto the slabbed concrete remains of old World War Two beach defences (fig.2, 1970). A small series of photographs show the artist, whose body is used to

give the shape and pattern to a sequence of small white beach stones (fig.4, 1972). In another self-portrait the artist stands silhouetted on a beach next to a line drawing scratched in the sand and mirroring his cast shadow (1971). Another work shows a stretch of shoreline with a series of numerical characters on the sand, fashioned out of local seaweed, like orderly beach detritus (1972).

In these works Cragg is the playful catalyst that transforms our sense of the locations and the materials he finds and presents, organised and reconstituted in unpredictable ways. The element of constructive play in his exploration and manipulation of the materials and objects, is finely balanced by his ostensibly logical, constructive documentary procedure.

Cragg's employment as a science laboratory technician before enrolling at art school, must have had a bearing on the resemblance of his procedures to scientific methods for empirical data gathering, such as observation, categorising, classifying, combining and documenting. This approach is particularly evident in an early work in which he placed a series of found objects in sealed plastic bags like a collection of forensic samples (fig.3,1970). Other works from this period appear to experiment with and test basic laws of physics, such as the stacked and balancing pieces, some of which include the artist as an essential element in the structure (fig.5,1973). In doing these experiments Cragg also shows his awareness of art as an activity in an arena free from the laws of logic that pertain in other fields of inquiry, much like play and games have metaphorically designated areas outside of reality with their own rules of engagement.

Cragg's phenomenological approach was a reassessment of certain traditional and conventional attitudes, what Cragg considered to be relatively unquestioned criteria towards materials in art as well as industry. Perhaps the most important of these questions, which resulted in a major and constant

theme he continues to explore in his work, is the nature of the boundary between natural and man-made or synthetic materials and the hierarchy of value we place on things. This assessment meant questioning the value placed on things, the ostracising of objects and materials by imposed generic terms, or their manipulation by consumerism and utilitarianism (Cragg in Celant 268). His strategy here was to continually cross this boundary, initially, in his selection, use and treatment of materials in unorthodox ways and also in the subtle references made to the traditions of technology.

The mid-seventies, his final years at art school, saw an intensification of this experimental phase. These experiments may have begun as physiological inquiries of the material world, as a gestation period, but they were also laying down philosophical foundations, leading to the questioning of certain themes and conceptual models (and evocations prompted by the materials themselves). Cragg often comments about the place of objects, both natural and man-made, in our lives and experience (Cragg in Celant 1998). Our encounters with things like stones, plastic and wood, initially register their physical characteristics, but all these substances and objects evoke strong association and significance on other levels. Natural materials, by virtue of our much longer relationship with them, generate what Cragg calls a 'balloon of information' in language and thought, containing the metaphysical qualities we bring to them – their history, mythological association, meaning and aesthetic value (Cragg in Celant 288). We still need to forge this kind of relationship with new things produced by contemporary technology, however, for example plastic and other synthetic materials.

Another contrast Cragg explores, is that between old and new materials and our very different intellectual and emotional response to them. Stone, iron and bronze have a very long history in the world and, they in turn represent ideas about progress, civilisation and value, before we even consider them in their current role in production. In contrast our relationship with newer materials,

plastic and polyurethane for example, has its origins in economic pragmatism and consumerism. These synthetic materials, usually substituted for natural materials, are regarded as inferior or merely utilitarian because of their banality and sheer abundance in our lives. According to Cragg, this lack of depth in our relationship to these materials and objects results in irresponsible and manipulative attitudes in which there is a sense that they are somehow unworthy of carrying metaphysical or poetical meanings in the way older or natural materials do (Cragg in Celant 134). They don't contain romanticized associations and metaphorical meanings.

Cragg seeks to rehabilitate these materials from categories of thought and language in which they are trapped. This rehabilitation of materials is an example of a much more profound revolution, perhaps of consciousness towards matter and towards ourselves as part of the material world. Cragg's personal contention is that the practice of art can humanise and interpret models for understanding the universe, such as those provided by contemporary quantum physics as well as the earlier Newtonian models (Cragg in Celant 172).

To discuss Cragg's sculpture within the aesthetic tradition of materials such as clay, marble, and bronze used in the past as a representational medium, means to question the idea of their use in the illusionistic representation of existing objects of our experience. In traditional representational sculpture the materials are vehicles, containments for the enhancement of ideas and images. Cragg's sculptures re-examine this traditional marriage of material, image and meaning, and although he is not the first to do so, as stated earlier his motivations appear to stem from a need to survive a world where empathy is reduced to material progress.

The works from this second early period still revolved around the immediate studio environment, and a few excursions further afield, such as the Isle of

Wight and Wales. These locations were not, however, anecdotally or representationally reflected in the content or references in these works, although this occurs in a later series. The pieces were not so much images recalling experience as the results of certain physical interventions with materials and objects, subjecting them to disintegrating processes such as crushing, smashing, slicing and cutting. These actions were matched by reconstituting procedures such as piling, inter-stitching, and stacking. The works from this phase were notably untitled or otherwise factually descriptive further drawing attention to substances and action rather than any referential or metaphorical content beyond this (fig. 5, 1973).

The choice of materials, although still quite random (collected *en route* to and from home and studio), became increasingly considered when they were used in the works. As a result the works become more discursive, addressing issues and themes beyond their physicality. They still, however, remain playful. Two works, emblematic of this period, are *Crushed Stone* (fig. 7) and *Large Stacks* (fig. 6). They display diametrically opposed techniques typical of this phase of Cragg's development, both of which make use of low technology but show subtle references to a refined artistry in their colours and contrasting textures. The stacks come close to being referential, or rather, metaphorical images, and can be read as storage deposits, analogous to geological strata, the crushed stone having a kind of primordial reference to elemental matter.

Cragg's searching, questioning phase gradually yielded further breakthroughs. A series of works began to take precedence in which Cragg used vast collections of mostly plastic debris from various sources, the remains of production and consumption. Initially Cragg grouped this 'stuff' simply in terms of their natural colour categories, and retaining a minimal approach, did nothing obvious to alter their physical condition. The first important example that he exhibited was *New Stones, Newton's Stones* (fig. 9, 1979). This work consisted of small bits of plastic debris spread out, in a highly considered way,

on the floor in a large rectangular shape. They are gradated in terms of primary and secondary hues and subtle tones. An almost identical work made immediately prior to this was *Spectrum* (fig. 8, 1979), in which the plastic objects are larger but the colours are equally subtly gradated. *New Stones, Newton's Stones*, appears to authenticate these plastic fragments, placing them on the same archetypal footing as rocks and wood, and perhaps also the crushed rubble, occupying psychological as well as physical space.

Using the same materials and formal characteristics Cragg began introducing imagery in further works from this phase. The initial source of these schematic images were things Cragg randomly found among the collected plastic fragments – a toy aeroplane, a plastic 'Redskin' warrior, a moon-shape and so forth (fig. 10). These tiny objects were templates for huge floor pieces that mirrored their shapes, but their presence was altered into an image that had to be reconstituted in the process of reading and associating. These floor and wall pieces were almost pictorial and painterly in appearance and the images included great variety and subtlety of form, colour and texture.

This series of fragment works began including more images and references such as figures, national flags, vacuum cleaners and plastic containers, things incidental to a wider range of Cragg's experience and environment. Cragg began more consciously to expose the limitations of names, territorial occupation and utilitarian categories of materials and objects. He makes subtle references to classification and addresses topics such as colour theory in *New Stones, Newtons Tones* (1978), cultural stereotypes in *Redskin* (1979) and *The Streets Are Full of Cowboys and Indians* (1980), and national identity in *8 Flags* (1980) and *Crown Jewels* (1981) and *Britain Seen from the North* (1981). The titles for the works were much more thematic as well as gently capricious.

The range of found fragments later broadened to include whole volumetric objects, such as vehicle tyres, plastic buckets and furniture parts, and other materials such as wood, metal and rubber, virtually anything that had been used in some prior capacity. One of his earliest of a series of free-standing assembled volumetric pieces, was a work called *Mortus and Pestal* (fig. 13, 1985), a humorous example of found objects being used to construct a secondary group. This giant image is configured out of clearly recognisable and unaltered plastic, metal and wooden things cast out from our daily lives, including bits of drain pipe, machine parts and empty tin and plastic bottles.

Cragg's technique in these works was to use thought, reflection, selection and placement, and the ordinary potential in these objects, to invent something new in the wake of the old. Cragg never entirely discards the object's previous life, but conceives a new grandeur for it we have overlooked because we are so constrained by our utilitarian habits.

In this phase technological intervention was still minimal. In the early eighties Cragg begins a series of landscape assemblages, using more construction, such as building very simple wooden structures out of veneered particle-board. Notably in these works, he begins combining natural stone, lava and granite with man-made functional items, especially furniture (fig. 14). It is sometimes hard to tell what has been physically altered or added to by Cragg in these works and what has merely been used in its found state. Stone is occasionally cut, minimally shaped and representational, and sometimes used as it is found in a weathered condition. These works, some of which resemble clusters of houses like *Shed and Village* (1984 – 5), and *Evensong* (1984), come closest to representing the idea of pictorially organised wholes in the sense of traditional landscape imagery, although Cragg refrained from over-manufacturing them as artefacts. *Biman Wood* (fig. 14, 1985) an installation of a group of all manner of diverse, functional object from large furniture, concrete mixers, suitcases and watering cans, is simply uniformly covered in a film of tiny

plastic fragments, transforming their familiar form into a soft, harmonious and uniform panorama. These works introduce a narrative and somewhat emotive element or evoke journeys and memories of places, evident in works like *Silent Place with Dwelling* (1984), and *Shore Landscape* (1985).

The final phase of Cragg's work I discuss, representing a significant development in his strategy, is the cast works that are manufactured of plaster, iron, steel, aluminium, bronze, glass, ceramic and polyurethane. Cragg comes full circle in relation to the processes of traditional sculpture. The work from this phase shows a high degree of technological skill and control and the materials are traditional to sculpture as well as to industry. Cragg embraces artifice but he also acknowledges the grand simplicity of less self-consciously artful industrial technical skill, evident in cast iron and steel industrial structures and vessels, bringing them into the domain of aesthetic cultural production. The objects he bases his sculptures on have an unquestioned *raison d' être* in their sphere of use. Their transient conceptual domain is gently invaded by Cragg's willingness to carefully think his way through the world, and its objects and materials and to use them to invent an intensified language and vocabulary.

I am looking for associations, images and symbols which could enrich and enlarge my vocabulary of responses to the world I see and even function as thinking models. (Cragg cited in Lampert 34).

The cast works achieve a majestic presence not as representations but as iconic fictive objects leading to 'dreams, to fantasy, and to speculation' (Cragg in Celant 316). The works, as objects, establish a space for themselves in time and place (figs. 15 and 16). As forms of life, they come to represent a primary state of existence in relation to other things in the world. Their presence owes more to conversions in our thought and language than to the result of some physical or technological act of intervention on the part of the artist. It is not the material that undergoes change, but our expectations of the

materials. Cragg offers us a new attribution in the relationship between subject and object.

As fictions, forms of life, these works have evolved, gestated, mutated and 'earned their place' in the world and demand 'a dialogue on the basis of all the other things that are in the world' (Cragg in Celant 142). Even as a sculptor Cragg's interest in objects and materials reaches beyond aesthetics in the usual sense. This ontological demand is stated in his desire to 'make objects that don't exist in the natural or in the functional world', and to use sculpture as a means, on a par with scientific and philosophical investigation, to observe and reflect on the world, to inform and transmit, both information and feeling, and to bring real insight. He feels that the role of the artist/philosopher, in humanising the statements made by scientists, and interpreting their significance for the benefit of others, is equally groundbreaking. In the context of statements about the world made by science and art, Cragg has said, 'I think you have to make images of objects which are like thinking models to help you get through the world' (Cragg in Celant 172).

CHAPTER 5

The Virtual Structure of Representation: Fictive Presence

The Work of Isabella Quattrocchi

There is a kind of river of things, passing into being, and Time is a violent torrent. For no sooner is each seen, then it has been carried away, and another is being carried by, and that, too, will be carried away.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*.

In this final chapter I give an interpretation of my working practice, primarily the activity of drawing. I discuss the origins of a particular cycle of work begun after a long period of disengagement from artmaking, following a personal trauma. Obviously, this retrospective view of the generative stages of my working practice and drawings is intervened by the distortions of memory, but I do not make any claims to absolute interpretations of the process and in this respect this discussion can be characterised as an indeterminate meditation. Therefore, while I do set out to place this understanding of my working process within the traditional debate concerning the nature of perception and cognition and conflicting paradigms of knowledge, I do not attempt to place this description of my practice within a specific aesthetic tradition.

The works under discussion are explored as the results of a state I describe as cognitive disruption, stemming from psychic and emotional upheaval. However, far from seeking coherence as a means of recovery, these conditions were perceived to provide routes to modes of cognition conducive to discovery, restructuring and invention, and eventual reorientation. The initial dis-engagement from empirical experience and retreat into an interior world resulted in the conditions of perception, as much as it is possible to do so, without the intervention of a reflective consciousness. Drawing, through its kinetic and changeable nature, enabled me to explore this psychic gap and state of non-engagement as a source of invention. When I resumed making

drawings, the suspension of logic was the condition for a metaphoric response to the world. I identify this resumption of artmaking with recuperation and describe this state of mind as a preconceptual engagement with the world, not unlike that of preliterate childhood.

I have previously described drawing as a mythic activity, as the dialectic between gestural mark and cognitive deciphering in order to make new worlds. The equation of the poetic and mythic with the so-called child-like 'primitive' has often been cast in a negative light (Danesi 1993 :65). This view is upheld within the philosophical debate, between rhetorical expression and rational expression discussed earlier. This debate is itself embedded in the history of objectivity and reason in science as perceived to be continuously undermined by the opposing history of myth, metaphysics and poetic thought. The imaginative faculty and its resultant metaphoric or poetic expression is thus regarded as a negative intervention in processes of perception and epistemological endeavour.

As discussed in earlier chapters, theories and ideas that run counter to this bias against poetic perceptions of the world and their expression as metaphor – the belief that they at best make only an ornamental contribution to knowledge – have only relatively recently been expounded in the literature on cognition.

The role of metaphor in this debate was also discussed in earlier chapters. The theories significant to this present discussion are Vico's and Ricoeur's theories of metaphor. For Vico, metaphor is a structuring feature of cognition responsible for symbolic expression that in turn orientates us in the world. In Ricoeur's theory metaphor fuses image and meaning in expression and metaphoric attribution plays a pivotal role in cognition and creativity. I discuss Ricoeur's and Vico's ideas to support certain interpretations I have of my working practice.

Although I have identified roughly three phases in my work for the purposes of this discussion, they are not meant to reflect a strictly linear development. A schematic model of the process materialised in the work more accurately corresponds to a cyclical spiral in which ideas and images are recycled and reconstituted. The earliest phase deals with the preconceptual response to both the activity and the symbolic language of drawing and the accumulation of textures, calligraphic marks and iconic images that formed the foundational matrix of the early drawings as well as the later works. The earlier works are described as compounds, derived from inventories of images, with the appearance of narrative structure and content (figs. 17, 18 and 19). The second phase identifies drawings in which certain dialectical issues are realised through possible interpretations and readings of their surfaces (figs. 20, 21, 22 and 23). The third phase concerns a discussion of the extension of the idea of drawing to the use of certain uncustomary materials, supports and presentations (figs. 25, 26 and 27). First, I want to make some general comments about aspects of drawing which have a bearing on the ensuing discussion.

As an activity, drawing is a means of simultaneously making and reading marks. This generalised description serves to narrow my focus to two aspects of drawing which are most important in my work. First, there is the kinetic, calligraphic and material aspect of making marks on a surface, and second, there is making analogies and reading the manifest syntax of marks and spatial surfaces of the drawings and inferring an image, syntax of images and possibly a meaning.

Richard Wollheim, in his book *Art and its Objects* (1980), has used the terms 'seeing as' and 'seeing in' for describing this perceptual and cognitive procedure. He distinguished these terms as involving different intentions. The term 'seeing as' attends to the properties that are presented, the rationale

behind the representation of something, whereas 'seeing in' is looking at what is circumstantially present, like marks or patches on a damp wall, in order to perceive something unintentional. Wollheim's account, however, separates two perceptual and conceptual domains. The freedom of projection and insight involved in looking at marks on a damp wall in 'seeing in' is not required in determining a pictorial representation with its intention of a correct reciprocation between artist and viewer and the correspondence between the drawing or painting and the depicted subject. Consequently, the material re-enactment of experience, in the case of drawing its graphic momentum, is not a primarily significant factor in reading a work and making sense of it. The question arises; to what extent do drawings provide the 'open' conditions for interpretation? I discuss deciphering drawings and their systems of meaning in greater detail further on.

Critical to this discussion are the referential nature of drawings, their constitutive visible marks and the nature of their reference to what is outside their language of visible signs, and secondly, the sense, metaphorical or otherwise, of the experience that is related by the structure of the work and the meaning conferred on the work by the spectator, its semantic dimension.

As a means of representation, drawing poignantly encompasses the dialectic between gesture and indelible mark, temporality and fixation, internal world and public world. Although the starting point of a work might be interiority, a psychological world, the expressed experience is made public through a discourse of fixed visible marks. In the process of drawing, articulating surfaces with lines, strokes and various marks, the artist is sometimes engaged in constructing a legible surface. Philip Rawson calls this potential legibility 'units of meaningful form' or a 'logic of linear connectives' that have a symbolic relationship with experience similar to the marks that form calligraphy in writing (Rawson 1969 : 125). Rawson refers to Chinese brush calligraphy as graphic expression that is able to convey qualities outside of written text,

metaphorical resonance built into the calligraphic conventions that convey and retrace retinues of associative images (Rawson 1969 : 28-29). Drawing has a link to written text, which itself encompasses the aforementioned relationships of impermanence and permanence, as thought, speech, sound and gesture fixed in written word and grammar. Units of meaning in drawing (groups of marks), are comparable to units of meaning in language (syntax). As a system of meaning, like linguistic expression, drawings articulate a world, but made up of visual not verbal symbols. Drawings, with their particular way of materially structuring and presenting experience, establish a visual discourse. Rawson explains the process thus:

...a drawing's basic ingredients are strokes or marks which have a symbolic relationship with experience, not a direct, overall similarity with anything real. And the relationships between marks, which embody the main meaning of a drawing, can only be read into the marks by the spectator, so as to create their own mode of truth (Rawson 1969 : 1).

As discourse in the public domain the work is reconfigured by a reader/audience. The conditions of legibility are not determinate and depend on familiarity with conventions and the degree to which there is a correspondence with a referent. Drawing, as a mode of discourse, may have certain strategies or intentions to assert a certain 'reality' or make reference to reality in certain ways. This 'reality' can be rendered in terms that are descriptive, diagrammatic, topographical and so forth.

...the draughtsman's skill consists in being able to maintain contact with his own associations of form and feeling and to shape his marks and assemblages so as to evoke the appropriate analogy-responses from other people

and that,

all the elements of the work should be shaped so as to evoke determinate responses. (Rawson 1969 : 27).

Visual verisimilitude in drawings generally requires the avoidance of ambiguity and misinterpretation. This kind of representation implies a possibility of commensurability with locatable, verifiable referents and accuracy of description within a unified field. Referents may be present as recognisable entities that act as signposts directing us towards actualities that can be validated outside the work (for example a portrait of a known individual). Mimetic integrity, associated with this means of expression transcribes empirical experience but inadequately expresses temporality, movement and states of mind.

In Ricoeur's theory, metaphor is responsible, through the suspension of ordinary reference to reality, for creating the conditions in which new attributions can be assigned and new models of the world made in the form of a fictive work.

Resulting from this process is a new understanding of the image in perception and cognition, as bringing verbal (logical) and non-verbal (sensible) content together in the notion of the icon, the matrix from which new meaning can arise. This theory amounts to a fusion of two modes of cognition traditionally considered dichotomous (Bruner 1985). The context for this occurrence is the fictive work, the projected world of the artist, a new mythos of reality. This fictive world is not a result of reproductive or descriptive reference to experience but the result of iconic augmentation, a primordial reference through which the artist forms new worlds and new identities. The images of the poet or artist are 'not only shadows or similarities, but ...offer new models for perceiving the world' (Ricoeur 1979 : 130 -131).

Ricoeur links the notion of the poetic image as icon with written characters describing the invention of the phonetic alphabet in successive stages of compression, as the condition for the power of expression to 'capture the universe in a web of abridged signs' (Ricoeur 1979 : 132). Writing and

drawings are iconic images that condense reality into a form that increases their generative force. One can refer this idea back to the operation of a metaphor as schema, a breeding ground or matrix for meanings and concepts. The icon can be similarly understood as containing the generative properties of a cipher, or a code that in certain circumstances is able to project a virtual world of messages. The idea of a hologram might be an appropriate analogy, a set of mysterious signs embedded in a form that is decoded and projected as a three-dimensional image.

The production of a projected fictive world, however, is only one part of a process. The projected world of fiction is only realised and completed by the presence of the work to an audience, the work addressed to someone. The interpretation of the work by a viewer is part of the construction of the work. This second significant aspect of Ricoeur's theory stems from his explanation of the role of imaginative insight in the metaphoric process.

Ricoeur has said of interpretation that it concerns the potential for a work to 'disclose a world' and for the viewer/reader/audience to relate to the work in terms of 'the kind of world the text presents' (Ricoeur 1973 (a) : 86). The work is posited as a virtual presence upon which the audience acts by appropriating meaning. Ricoeur makes it clear that appropriation is not unravelling the inherent content of a work. Like the insight into metaphoric sense the viewer apprehends meaning in the context and conditions provided by the work. Ricoeur explains (speaking here of written texts): 'to understand is not to project oneself into the text, it is to receive an enlarged self from the apprehension of proposed worlds' (Ricoeur 1973 (a) : 87). I discuss my role both as the maker (encoder) of fictive worlds and as the reader and interpreter (decoder) of these worlds and the importance of this dual relationship in my process of drawing and to the structure of the drawings.

Drawing has always been my primary mode of expression, but I do not regard it merely as a process of objective rendering. I describe the process as more like gathering momentos, souvenirs of a journey made through memories and emotions of being in the world. There is an element of play, in making the work as well as reading it. Describing the world of the work of art as a playful presentation, Ricoeur relates the condition of play to the suspension of reference in metaphor and the state of 'non-engagement' created by fiction. The condition of play, precipitated by the condition of fiction and the aesthetic experience, 'is not determined by the consciousness which plays; play has its own way of being' (Ricoeur 1973 (a) : 90). Ricoeur borrows this theme from Hans-Georg Gadamer's ideas in *Truth and Method* (1984). Play transforms the protagonists in the aesthetic encounter with a fictive world – reality, the artist, the work and the audience/reader. In play, the abandonment of everyday reality to the poetic universe, leads to a 'new mode of being in the world' (Ricoeur 1973 (a) : 96). This idea and the remission of control correlates with the notion of preconceptual engagement with the world and psychic disruption in my own work.

In the earliest phase of drawing, in the activity of covering paper with small intense marks, I recognised an affinity to writing, the way our literate selves try to give form to thoughts and psychic states. The illegibility of the graphic marks and the way in which they accumulate into images on the space of a page, and alternatively digress or progress towards legibility stimulated an awareness of the delicate nature of this illusion of logic that was created by a group of lines and dots and how easily this borderline between understanding and confusion could be transgressed. Thus the activity of drawing deals with the problems of deciphering what we are presented with in images and texts, with understanding that is often inexplicable and that comes about through a series of unique connections and insights. These insights are made in the gap that is opened up in perception by metaphoric displacement.

The idea of drawn marks appearing like script appealed to memories of preliterate childhood. I have a strong memory of myself, as a small child, first encountering and attempting to copy the letters and written exercises of my older, literate sisters. There were pages of patterns I could not decipher which I knew meant something, since so much attention was given to the activity of repeatedly producing them. The activity of producing mysterious marks was somehow aesthetically satisfying. The sense of mystery I felt then is similar to encountering a foreign language script, which has more in common with the visual marks of a drawing.

Drawing seemed to be a way of reconnecting with a lost pre-literate psychic stage. Another example of this, is the transformation of the patterns of meaning, linguistic, visual or auditory, when they are decontextualised and desensitised through repetition (incantation) or rote. I am reminded of a form of punishment I received in school which involved writing the same line hundreds of times. The mechanical nature of this activity in the context of a learning environment, resulted in a curious atemporality, what might be described as a psychic gap. Words and sentences were emptied of all meaning or reference turning the focus entirely onto the marks making up the script, the visual pattern of repetition and the repetitive action of writing. I encountered a similar state of suspension attending Catholic Mass as a young child. The litany was conducted in Latin at that time, I think, and later, even when English was used, I still did not focus on the meaning and followed the proceedings because of the familiar repeated sounds and rhythms, like incantations. These situations always opened a door into a conceptual no man's land or mythic time and allowed a free flow of thoughts and ideas, like a dreamtime.

The activity of drawing in such states takes precedence over an intentional articulation or depiction and serves no purpose other than it might do when doodling, the purpose the voice might serve in chanting, actions representing

a dislocation between bodily action and consciousness. This was an accurate reflection of my state of mind and this essentially undetermined approach has by and large remained as a generative part of my working practice and has played a role in my method of drawing and in my choice of materials. I describe it as recording a flow and momentum of marks preceding thoughts and images. This emphasis on the calligraphic momentum of drawing had a direct influence on a series of drawings of water (figs. 23 and 24). These were produced from recall of experience over an extended period, as well as on site. The site in question was a river that I had extensive childhood familiarity with. It was such that I could locate myself on rocks in the middle of flowing water. The experience therefore was of a multifarious assault on the senses. The experience was extraordinarily paradoxical. Everything was in motion and iterative in nature but the effect was so mesmerising as to be almost hallucinatory and resulted in a total temporal, mental and physical disengagement. These drawings have become emblematic and continue to be a source in my work.

Much later, what became challenging was allowing conscious awareness to begin filtering the collection of fields of textures, shapes, calligraphic marks and strings of emblematic images that I accumulated. The point at which I became conscious of recurring images or a persistent attraction to certain marks, objects, spaces and the relationships between them and the possibility of a syntax of images and marks was not momentous but gradual. This resulted in certain signs and images becoming iconic, and these still recur in my work.

In this early phase of my work I did not deliberately choose metaphors for objects, ideas or narrative sequences. The single emblematic images evolved into constellations, accumulations existing in an indeterminate space or medium (fig. 17). They formed into emblematic metaphorical compounds. In these drawings to present emblematically is to present the thing elevated

beyond local incidental experience. The emblems are not particular instances or circumstances, they are atemporal and can be present in the past and the future, so they are without narrative process and must gain significance from context and reiteration.

One of the first of these compounds is a work called *Nocturne*, a title it received at a late stage of its evolution (fig. 18). It is one of the few works to which I have given a title, something I decided to abandon because titles interfered with the evolution and reception of the work. This work developed from a collection of emblematic images into a temporal structure, that is, it took the form of a series of images not unlike a sequence of stills from a film spliced together. It represented a precipitation of thoughts, and as a compound image could be added to indefinitely. This openness and possibility for change and continuity is an essential requirement in all my work. The drawings must have open edges increasing the sense that they could be scrolled and extended both in time and space or joined with other images in any order of precedence. The small emblematic drawings, which I continue to make, are inventories of thoughts and emotions, little souvenir landmarks in a mental topography that is constantly changing and evolving. Each image is a momento of changing memories and circumstances. These singular images and their configurations remain polysemic and require interpretation on each encounter and in each new context. I regard all my imagery as interchangeable and interdependent so I am able to reconfigure it in a number of ways. No work is entirely new, and each should be able to combine with another and spawn further combinations. Ricoeur might say meaning and intention are never fixed. Once a work is made its presence is dependent on a series of unfixed references and appropriations and reaction to it is determined by the experience of whoever is viewing it. Its relationship to other works that might be in seen in proximity – in the studio or exhibition space – is part of its evolution.

As the maker of the work my own flow of responses will be subject to my changing state of mind and the historicity of that state of mind and my inventory of images which arise in relation to my responses to the works themselves. The process is cyclical. If an image or work has an injunction to myself as their initiator, this is proscribed by the polysemic nature of these images as metaphoric compounds. Together with my anecdotal, cultural and historical experience they form a matrix. Each image/momento contributes within a configuration of momentoes.

The middle phase of my work I refer to as topographical in nature (figs. 20 – 24). In attempting to describe the fictive process of making these drawings, I make analogies to certain activities in the real world of action. Marking out a piece of blank paper in preparation for drawing or demarcating a space resembles staking out an iconic territory parallel to real space, like the space set aside for a game. The passage of time during the production of a drawing, covering an area with marks, makes itself felt as out of real time, another dimension, something like a film editor remaking time in the world of the film, which runs parallel to real time and space. Moving a pen across the paper is like traversing a space when walking slowly across the ground taking in textures, surfaces and objects, like a recording camera. Walking in turn induces thoughts about the act of reading a drawing, traversing its designated space and topography.

The drawings are a collection of potentialities. The surfaces in certain examples (figs. 20 and 21) are the only visible record of a path of thought, something that can be returned to as a way of revisiting lost actions, observations, moments and presences. The main pieces discussed consist of a series of large, unframed and freely hanging drawings on paper (figs. 20 - 23). They are topographical in this sense of providing a record of a mental terrain. Even this revisitation is never a stable experience because the matrix of

accumulated images, surfaces and associations are obscure and there are no clear entry and exit points in these drawings.

Several metaphorical connections are made in both literature and visual art, between activities involving movement - like walking, climbing, driving, writing, drawing - and consciousness or a journey of psychic importance. This emblematic image of projection into space and time is also closely connected to the archetypal journey or quest so prevalent in classic allegory. The emblematic topographical imagery associated with this journey appears as paths, roads, rivers, deserts, forests and mountains often in the form of labyrinths in which to find or lose oneself.

In each confrontation the work is experienced as a different configuration. Interpretation becomes a metaphorical journey in itself, bringing to mind the notion of contour maps, which become obsolete even as they are being made because no part of the represented topography of the earth remains static. Drawing is then perceived as an attempted retrieval of what is lost, of refashioning what are reduced to the vagaries of memory and a record of the mythic activity of recording and presenting a world, fixing it as an image. Drawings attempt to become maps of understanding what is disappearing forever. Reading them might be acts of renewal.

In many of the drawings (figs. 23 and 24), the grids that are a part of the surface matrix are a reference to literal marking of space and time in various contexts; in drawing this is often customary when transferring an image from one space and scale to another; the value of space on the sheet of paper is given equal emphasis by the grid. Metaphorically, they are also a reference to codes of control and order, attempts to apply co-ordinates to temporality, co-ordinates for the scanning eye following the original movement of the mark. They can encourage a viewer to scan the surface rather than look at the drawing as a whole, framed object or image, and thereby re-enact movement

and change and refer to extension. The drawing must continually deliver its implied presence, its implicit and explicit aspects. There is no definitive 'is' to be discovered.

The layered surfaces, spaces and images read through other images, encourage a similar continuity (figs. 20 and 21). Objects and motifs in the drawings must exist as constantly shifting between legibility and illegibility, in a limitless series of possible moments. There is no definitive affirmation of a visual reality, only a decoding and deciphering involving the viewer's encounter and what he/she brings to the work. In this way the drawing refers but suspends the descriptive and encourages a metaphorical reference.

This description applies to the final phase of work consisting of a series of large suspended installations made of a variety of materials (figs. 25 - 27). I consider these to be an extension of the drawings done on paper and in their general structure they are based on the idea of a hanging scroll. The materials are used because of their fragile, diaphanous, changeable qualities, and potential impermanence, including the use of growing grass (fig. 26). A sense of continual change and restitution is important, and is expressed in the unconfined structure of the work, the nature of the materials used, and in the way the works are viewed. Like the previously discussed drawings on paper, with their surfaces layered with superimpositions of overlapping images and textures, both confusing the surface but also transforming it, this group of works come into their own in the exhibition space. Read through each other, and appearing to overlay each other, ideas, images and analogies should flow between them in a fluid manner and as much as possible, without a sense of an ending.

The associative relationships and spatial dislocations are often the source of psychic dislocations and new images. It is as if the image is able to change while one is looking at it, during the act of deciphering when unique

connections can be made, when one thinks that one recognises something only to see it disintegrate and be persuaded towards another understanding. This transience not only resides in the structure of the work itself, but it is a catalyst for recognising this condition in ones own conceptual and emotional makeup. I prefer viewers to have as little foreknowledge as possible before encountering the works and do not supply any information such as titles or lists of materials.

These works are meant to evoke presence without monumentality. The work I did prior to this current cycle discussed in this study, was in its intention, more closely related to the tradition of the static emblematic composition, the 'machine' of the unified pictorial space. In these works the compression of narratives into significant representative moments, and the compression of time into a single composed image required paradigmatic reading. The means and method of making these works was also allied to the notion of permanence, the idea of the museum piece preserved for posterity, the work that can transcend history in its protected space of the museum.

Using the idea of a scroll in these current works is connected to the idea of scrolls and books as containers and to some extent protectors of knowledge, perpetuating the myth of origins and continuity. As containers the scroll and book have a number of associations and references. The advent of the book can be seen to mark a change in the relationship between mind and nature, the establishment of a new kind of space. It marks a point of departure from submission to and being embedded in the flow of time. Time and space converge in a book as in the history painting. Whatever is contained in a book, gains an authority of transcendent presence over time.

However, the movement, mental or physical, required to work through a book, implies a logocentricity of forward movement together with an expectation of plot, a beginning, middle and end. In comparing scrolls and books significant

differences are revealed. The book brings disparate material into a whole, forcing the material to be viewed in a particular sequence, or at the very least as related material, it requires opening and working through the otherwise hidden episodic contents, binding affirms permanent proximity of the contents and finality.

With scrolls time is experienced as ramified. The experience is of diffused spaces eerily fading and disintegrating, or emerging and forming. Parts of scrolls can simultaneously be beginnings, middles and endings. In the absence of linear movement there is no denouement. In the hanging works the transparent gauze is a matrix rather than a support in the usual sense that paper supports the materials in a drawing. Drawn marks bond with paper so thoroughly, the ink or colour settles in and becomes like a stain, a seemingly permanent part of the surface. Ironically, in reality very often in old documents it is the acid ink that eats the paper so that space occupied by the letters disintegrates into a series of holes in the paper. The delicacy of paper, the impermanence of live grass, and work that alters as you look at it over time, engages with the myth of monumentality and permanence. These qualities of the materials, in contrast with my earlier attempts to work within a tradition of permanence and preservation, are a poignant reminder to me of loss and the desire for permanence.

The work integrates the impermanent and transient, mainly the grass and gauze pieces and the more permanent drawings on paper. These two modes of work require different energy and represent two states of consciousness. The impermanent is liberating and accepting, the permanent represents the desire to record beyond the author and the moment. The impermanent work corresponds to disappearing speech, existing in memory or reiteration. The experience of the exhibited works is comparable to the transient visit to a place that may elicit a desire for concrete memorabilia, souvenirs of the

transient nature of experience. The two modes of work operate in a dialogue between two different states of existing.

Conclusion

The notion of renewal has been a constant theme in this dissertation and in my own aesthetic strategies and those of Tony Cragg. This theme is reflected in the dialectic – between gesture and indelible mark, temporality and fixation and the internal and external world – that is in turn reflected in our relationship as viewers with the fictive work of sculpture and drawing. Renewal often arouses expectations of synthesis and foreclosure. Myths of synthesis and foreclosure are confronted in these artistic statements, but the ontological reality of sculpture and drawing, as fixed form, is ultimately subject to the passage of time and decay.

In this dissertation the stated intention was to examine the means by which metaphor contributes to innovation and renewal in poetic expression. Gaston Bachelard has described the poetic mind as 'purely and simply a syntax of metaphors' (Bachelard in Gaudin 1971 : 32). The degree to which metaphor contributes to innovation in thought and language depends on one's adherence to a methodology of imagination. Ricoeur's study of metaphor, and by extension poetic expression, can be understood methodologically, as a restitution of the faculty of imagination and its resultant images from its association with sensory perception. The result of this restitution is an understanding of imagination as 'a dimension of language' and consequently as intimately linked with metaphor (Ricoeur 1974 : 318). Thus he comes to metaphors' ontological power of redescription and its 'world making' role in poetic discourse. Ricoeur goes so far as to assert that 'what is changed by poetic language is our way of dwelling in the world' (Ricoeur 1973(b) : 85). For the artists discussed, poetic expression as a means of suspending reality and at the same time renewing connections with it, recasts their and the viewers' way of being.

In these examples of art metaphor exists in the gap between seemingly irreconcilable opposites and embraces the themes of time and loss. That which is represented by the works discussed, their images and materials, reflects this distance as ambiguity. The viewer can freely enter the world of the work, the surface of a drawing, or the aura of the sculptural object, and read illusionistic references into it, or accept the material as indecipherable. This distance is the plight of the artist/reader and is made real in the pathos of reading and construing. Understood in terms of the material nature of artworks, this tension between presence and absence takes on both a heroic as well as a melancholic form; heroic because as makers artists constantly try to reinstate their connection to the world through the material; melancholic because their actions take place in a mythical zone. The suspension of ordinary reality is also the suspension of time. We can begin to see the way in which the desire for rehabilitation is continually deferred by the sense of melancholy inherent in the metaphorical.

Yet these artworks seem to imply a task of commencement for the viewer, in which the world of the work and the world of the viewer can be brought together through the work. In Ricoeur's words 'the internal interplay within works between the received paradigms and the production of gaps' is the place where meaning is made by the reader (Ricoeur 1980 : 149). Both the work and the audience are grounded in a history, firstly, at the formal level of a language of signs, and secondly, at the level of experience. Yet the world of fiction can project us beyond this, if only temporarily. Metaphor, in its allegorical form, brings into proximity our experience of the world as a fiction with other worlds of lived experience: physical, psychological or historical. In the example of the drawn image, all the conventions we choose to understand and accept as constituting a schematic presentation of time and space can project us into new realms of experience. Drawings, as metaphors, are maps referring us to other maps of the world. Their presentation, in the form of a

recurring metonymy or a 'universe of abridged signs' (iconic augmentation), attempts to counter the unfolding horizontal experience of time, the direction in which we (in the West) are accustomed to reading text and listening to stories.

...everything happens to a man (sic) in this very moment of now. Centuries and centuries, but events happen only in the present; countless men in the air, on land and sea, and everything that really happens, happens to me...

Jorge Luis Borges (*The Garden of the Forking Paths* cited in Calvino 1999 : 242)

List of illustrations

Works by Tony Cragg

1. Untitled, 1969. Mass of string.
2. Untitled, 1970. Chalked grid with beach materials.
3. Untitled, 1970. Sealed plastic bags.
4. Untitled, 1972. White stone sequence.
5. Untitled, 1973. Stacked bricks.
6. *Stack*, 1977.
7. Untitled, 1976. Brick and cement rubble.
8. *Spectrum*, 1979. (Detail)
9. *New Stones, Newton's Stones*, 1979.
10. *Redskin*, 1979.
11. *Five Bottles on a Shelf*, 1982.
12. *Green, Yellow, Red, Orange and Blue Bottles*, 1982. (detail).
13. *Mortus and Pestal*, 1985.
14. *Birman Wood*, 1985.
15. *Three Cast Bottles*, 1988.
16. *Modern Types*, 1989.

Works by Isabella Quattrocchi

17. Untitled. 1995. Ink and watercolour on graphpaper.
18. *Nocturne*, 1996. Ink and watercolour on graphpaper.
19. *Islands*, 1996. Ink and watercolour on graphpaper.
20. Untitled, 1999 – 2001. Combined media drawing.
21. Untitled, 1999 – 2001. Combined media drawing.
22. Untitled, 1999. Combined media drawing.
23. Untitled, 1999 - 2000. Combined media drawing.
24. Untitled, 1999. Study.

25 Untitled, 2001. Installation drawing.

26 Untitled, 2001. Installation drawing.

27 Untitled, 2001. Installation drawing.

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