

INHERENT ECOLOGY
An examination of sculpture

by
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Andries Botha
and
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by
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DECLARATION

This dissertation is the unaided work of the candidate. It has not been, nor is, submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.



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ABSTRACT

I begin by describing Western culture in the way proposed by Fritjof Capra whose ideas remain seminal to my argument throughout this examination. I argue that Western value systems are in the midst of a major transformation, exhibiting an increasing Ecological awareness. I define Ecology as an all-encompassing phenomenon which includes the biological definition of the term as well as the practice of environmental, peace and feminist groups and movements. As such it is seen as a philosophy or approach to experiencing the world which has much in common with many spiritual traditions, contentions and intuitions. I concentrate especially on Buddhism and Taoism insofar as they articulate seminal aspects of Ecology. Situating this notion of cultural transformation and Ecology into a South African context, I interpret Walter Oltmann's sculptures in relation to this, inherently and consciously embracing Ecological concepts and ideas and redressing cultural imbalances with his images and techniques. Andries Botha's work is likewise seen to question cultural imbalances and to pose questions about new and dynamic relationships within society and culture. His work is seen to relate very closely to Capra's ideas. Finally I discuss my own sculptures, noting how they relate to Botha's and Oltmann's works and how I consciously set out to address and articulate ideas pertaining to Ecology and my experience of the world in these terms. I discuss the origins of my images, techniques and materials and the construction of my works, describing how these relate intentionally and intuitively to the ideas which inform my work. My discussion of artmaking in terms of Ecology intends as much to offer a new interpretation of this artmaking as it does to illuminate and illustrate aspects of Ecology. In conclusion I situate this argument in the South African context, discussing how my discourse can be seen to enrich and compliment a particularly South African interpretation of these artists' works which could draw on traditional South African or Christian cultures and traditions.

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PREFATORY NOTE

In this text, titles of artworks appear in single inverted commas with their date appearing afterwards. I have used upper and lower case letters in the same way as the artists. Foreign words and other terms which appear often in the text are placed in italics. Words such as *Buddhism*, however, appear just as they are, because of their frequent use in English. Titles of books, appearing in the text, are underlined. Endnotes appear at the end of the chapter to which they refer. The bibliography appears after the conclusion. It contains many texts which are not referred to directly but which were nevertheless instrumental in both the writing of this text and the construction of the accompanying body of sculptures. I have used the Harvard system of referencing and bibliography. In referencing, the name of the author appears only if it is not mentioned in the same sentence to which it refers. Where only certain texts or essays were used in a particular book, these are listed under the name of their author, the title of the text appearing in single inverted commas. Interviews are listed under the interviewee's name, and references to these are made according to conventions which I establish and maintain throughout. Less formal teaching, which I consider important, is listed under the name of the teachers. The illustrations are listed by title only, and are only referred to by their number upon their first discussion in the text.

INTRODUCTION - ECOLOGY AND A NEW CULTURAL PARADIGM

In this chapter a brief but encompassing examination of the seminal philosophy and origins of ecology within the context of contemporary Western culture¹ will be undertaken. This discourse intends, further, to examine how these ideas can be used to discuss certain aspects of Walter Oltmann's, Andries Botha's and my own sculpture. Specific issues, given fairly broad and simple attention here, will be discussed in more detail as their relevance and applicability to particular aspects of artmaking is suggested. The ideas pertaining to ecology are strongly based on those of Fritjof Capra² whose sources are mentioned here and will be elaborated on as they are applicable in further chapters. The term *ecology* is defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1988) as 'the branch of biology dealing with organisms' relations to one another and their surroundings'. In colloquial terms, ecology has come to be understood as an aspect of environmental awareness. Both of these definitions bear relevance to this discussion, but I will come to define ecology as a much broader term, encompassing a far-reaching philosophy. Such a philosophy, or approach to experiencing and living in our world, has a wide range of origins and applications and as such I use the term *Ecology*.³

Fritjof Capra is a contemporary high-energy physicist whose work concerns atomic and sub-atomic phenomena who, in addition to this, has written and lectured extensively on the philosophical implications of modern science, on parallels between modern physics and Eastern spiritualism and what he believes to be a current transformation in the West towards a culture of greater Ecological understanding and insight. It is in this context of a changing culture that I wish to examine the above-mentioned artmaking, with specific reference to the cultural changes taking place in South Africa.

Capra contends that throughout the 1980's, and presently in the 1990's, we have found ourselves in the midst of a crisis (1982:1) affecting and involving our health and livelihood, environmental and social qualities, economies, technology and politics. We are facing, in this sense, an intellectual, social and moral crisis. Since the advent of nuclear weapons and power plants, we have faced the real threat of total extinction of all life on our planet. Even without the nuclear threat, global ecosystems and further evolution of life on earth are seriously endangered. Over-population and our industrial technologies are affecting animals, plants,

food, water, air, climates and weather patterns. Energy sources and other natural resources are rapidly being depleted. All this, in combination with rampant inflation, unemployment and maldistribution of income and wealth, results in both physical and psychological trauma in individuals and in society. I intend to show how these problems are understood in Ecological terms, and how their root causes, if not their particular aspects, are inherently understood and articulated in the sculpture I have examined.

Capra asserts (1982:5-6) that all these problems are 'but different facets of a single crisis', and that the 'dynamics underlying these problems are the same'. Scientists, politicians, academics and other 'experts' to whom we look for answers and solutions subscribe to 'narrow perceptions of reality which are inadequate for dealing with the major problems of our time.' Humanity's problems cannot be understood, Capra contends, by employing the typical fragmented methodology, characteristic of this narrow perception, which is enforced by academic disciplines and government agencies. Capra suggests (1982:7) that resolution can only be found in a profound transformation of Western social institutions, values and ideas. The characteristic limitations of our current perceptions of reality will be discussed later in relation, and in opposition, to the opportunities offered by a new, broader perception of our situation. This broader new perception and understanding will be described as Ecological, as Capra suggests. The possibility of, and ultimately what Capra describes as the inevitability of, change in Western culture will be examined.

In order to examine this issue of cultural transformation or evolution, Capra suggests we need to adopt an extremely broad view, which sees all human culture in a timespan encompassing thousands of years. Only in this way can we see the 'dynamic patterns of change' (Capra 1982:5) which support the idea that our culture evolves dynamically and is currently in a major period of crisis and transformation. Ancient Chinese and Greek philosophers, such as Heraclitus and Empedocles, proposed the dynamic nature of the universe and human culture. The ancient Chinese worldview, and its expression in the spiritual traditions of Buddhism, Taoism and others, demonstrates a clear awareness of the dynamic and fluctuating nature of the world. My examination of Botha's and Oltmann's work reveals how it inherently addresses this changing and impermanent nature of the world and human cultures, and how it thus inherently articulates aspects of Ecology, especially insofar

as Taoism and Buddhism inform this understanding. My own work will be discussed in the same way, but with the understanding that I intentionally set out to explore issues of relevance to Ecology. It is important to note also that Ecology and artmaking are related here in a reciprocal way in that, as well as Ecology providing a framework for a discourse on artmaking, so too this discourse on artmaking is used to illuminate aspects of Ecology. This lends weight to my argument because it implies that my investigation of the sculpture I have chosen to research has led to greater personal understanding of some crucial aspects of Ecology.

The above proposed dynamic model of the universe is compared by Capra to studies of periods of cultural transformation conducted by some Western sociologists such as Arnold Toynbee whose work is cited by Capra (1982:5). These studies can tell us much about our current state of crisis and transformation. Toynbee,⁴ in his important 'Study of History', writes about cultural transformations (Capra 1982:5). He identifies particular characteristics and occurrences universally applicable to societies or cultures⁵ in the midst of major transformation and evolution. The rise and fall of cultures can be illustrated graphically, clearly showing major climaxes and declines of various factors such as life quality, health, prosperity, social harmony and productivity.⁶

A typical culture, Toynbee hypothesizes, goes through cycles of genesis, growth, breakdown and disintegration.⁷ This recurrent rhythm, or fluctuation and balance, is seen by Capra as a manifestation of the dynamic nature of the universe identified in ancient Chinese philosophy and spiritual traditions, especially Taoism. Consequently, he merges the two models of cultural evolution and change in his description of the current state of Western culture. (A more thorough discussion of Taoism follows later in this chapter where I elaborate on some particular aspects of Ecology). The idea of cultural genesis and growth, and of a fluctuating balance within society, I will show to be central to the work of Botha. Growth and evolution are inherent in the working method of Oltmann and consequently his work encompasses and addresses such ideas.

Our social, moral, political and spiritual crises, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, are characteristic indicators of a declining culture, and, by implication, its possible impending

upswing. Capra (1982:7) mentions an increasing sense of alienation, mental illness, violent crime, social disruption and increased interest in religious cultism - all well documented in the West of the last three decades - as typical social indicators of cultural transformation.⁸

Cultural highpoints tend to exhibit the highest and noblest expressions in art, philosophy, science and technology⁹. We can see evidence of such cultural peaks in the legacies of Neolithic Europe up until the fourteenth century B.C., Greece of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., and the European Renaissance (Further on in this discourse, the relevance of such periods, especially Neolithic and Renaissance Europe, to Botha's work will be investigated). Profound cultural transformations, such as those we are now facing, have not occurred many times previously. Capra argues that only the invention of agriculture in the Neolithic period, the rise of Christianity at the fall of the Roman Empire, and the transformation from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Age are comparable in magnitude to our current period of transformation. The rate of change today, however, is made much more rapid by our improved communication and other technologies. Capra argues that these changes, most importantly Western culture's impending transformation that he proposes, cannot be prevented, but should be embraced by increasing our awareness of them and thus our willingness to accept them. I attempt to show how the work of both Oltmann and Botha acknowledges this changing (or *impermanent* as I will come to describe it) aspect of culture and the world in which we live. The techniques, materials and origins of some of Oltmann's images inherently subscribe to such an aspect of reality. Botha, on the other hand, investigates the fluctuating, dynamic nature of culture and cultural relationships in his sculptures which ask questions and suggest possibilities about such relationships. My own work investigates change as evident in *natural*¹⁰ processes such as growth, ripening and movement. I allow for the possibility of analogies between such *natural* change and personal and *cultural* growth and evolution.

The environmental, cultural, moral and spiritual crises with which we are faced in the 1990's require an adequate response (Capra 1982:1). Capra argues consistently in his writing that such a challenge is met by Ecology and ecological movements which are willing to embrace the necessity for and inevitability of profound change in contemporary Western culture, much of which is plainly evident in the world around us.¹¹

Capra notes that for the first time in recorded history, patriarchy is openly being challenged. The feminist movement, being one of the strongest cultural movements since the 1960's, is leading patriarchy to its slow but inevitable decline (Capra 1982:11). Western culture and its precursors have been based on patriarchal philosophical, social and political systems for roughly three thousand years now. Patriarchy is so all-pervasive that it becomes difficult to understand how far it extends. Certainly the female, and feminine values, have been subsumed under the male and masculine values in terms of religion, ritual, tradition, law, language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour (Capra 1982:11). These ideas are directly addressed in Oltmann's¹² and Botha's work in terms of both the images they choose and the means by which they depict them. Both artists employ craft-derived techniques in the construction of their sculptures which are often traditionally allotted, with inferior cultural status, to women. Although I don't think either artist would call himself a feminist, in their work both of them clearly demonstrate an awareness of and willingness to redress the imbalances with which feminism confronts us.

Clearly, the doctrines of patriarchy have been so universally accepted that they seem to be the very laws of nature, and have often been presented as such. Patriarchy can be seen to lie at the root of our dominant ideas about human nature and our relation to the universe. Recent interpretations of archaeological evidence (Eisler 1988), however, have revealed the matriarchal nature and primary female deities of older precursors of Western culture.¹³ These older cultures provide an important precedent for such a system today in the West. Matriarchal agricultural cultures of this sort are believed to have been peaceful and prosperous for a long period of time and were based not on the dominance of one group, gender or otherwise, over another, but rather on *partnership*, where diversity and difference was not based on inferiority and superiority (Eisler 1987:xvi-xvii). The issue of equality between the genders is one which constantly pervades Botha's sculptures, and one which also finds form in reference to such matriarchal cultures in several of his works.¹⁴ Capra contends that the feminist movement today is gaining power, merging with and assimilating what he calls the peace and ecology movements and, in light of the above, will have a profound effect on our further evolution.¹⁵

Accompanying these changes is a broader period of transition in which we find ourselves.

This is a change in cultural values, or a 'paradigm shift' (Capra 1982 : 11)- an extensive change in 'thoughts, perceptions and values characteristic of a particular vision of reality'. The paradigm, which Capra contends now to be changing, has dominated Western culture for several hundred years, comprising many ideas which are found to be severely limited and in need of revision. This current social paradigm, as described by Capra, incorporates the roots and causes of the imbalances and problems discussed above. Central to Capra's idea of transformation is that this paradigm is being replaced by a new worldview which is inherently and definitively Ecological. It is therefore essential to an understanding of Ecology to look more carefully at what constitutes a social paradigm, and more particularly what constitutes this Western social paradigm and what its origins are. From this point we can see how an Ecological approach to living in the world provides adequate and appropriate solutions to the problems and limitations discussed earlier. An Ecological interpretation of the artworks I examine in this discourse therefore implicitly asserts the relevance of this artmaking to both Western and South African culture.

Capra (1992:35)¹⁶ defines a social paradigm as a 'constellation of concepts, values, perceptions and practices, shared by a community that forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organizes itself'. The limits of a social paradigm are difficult to see or to define until their limitations or deficiencies reveal themselves by no longer providing the best or most adequate solutions and conditions for existence in a given situation.

The current social paradigm, or dominant worldview, in the West has its roots in the seventeenth century, the Scientific Revolution, and later the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, and differs radically from the worldview held in the Middle Ages (Capra 1982:12-13). The Middle Ages' notion of an organic, living, spiritual universe became replaced with a more mechanistic view of the universe. This latter view was brought about first by the new view of earth and the universe proposed by Copernicus and Galileo. At the same time, in England, Francis Bacon, an influential scientist and philosopher, proclaimed that the aim of science was to dominate and control nature. The sovereignty and certainty of scientific knowledge, precise mathematical description and analytical reasoning were proposed and guaranteed by Descartes. His 'I think therefore I am' asserted the superiority

of mind over matter and divorced the two from then onwards (Capra 1982:13). Newton's laws of physics, almost a mathematical formulation of these ideas, remained the solid foundation of scientific thought well into the twentieth century. Newton's world was atomistic: composed of solid, uniform atoms. All natural phenomena could be described by the motion of these particles and their mutual attraction, or gravity. This perfect world machine proposed, and at the same time made more and more unlikely, an external and transcendent God (Capra 1982:13). Consequently the divine assumed a diminished role in the scientific worldview. This mechanistic worldview allowed all phenomena to be explained or defined entirely and only as a sum of their parts. It is sometimes referred to as reductionist, Cartesian or Newtonian (Capra 1982:13).

These beliefs filtered down into the social sciences and came to be the foundations on which our current view of the world was based. This defined and shaped our relationship and attitudes to the earth and the universe (Capra 1982:13). Our God became transcendent, superior and divorced from the earth. That humans have dominance over nature was taken for granted. Nature, now external from humans, came to be seen as an ample, limitless resource to be plundered and exploited (Capra 1982:13). Women, universally identified with nature, were dominated in a similar way.¹⁷ This worldview has asserted the value of scientific, rational and reductionist thought and knowledge, and these have become synonymous with masculinity. The value of such thought and knowledge comes at the expense of traditional, intuitive and holistic thought and knowledge which has in turn become associated with the feminine (Capra 1982:14). High technology industry, progress and consumerism have been encouraged. Life in Western society, because of these values, has become a competitive struggle for existence (Devall 1985:69). The social, political and environmental costs of such a worldview and value system are plain to see. Aggressive, self-assertive values are seemingly encouraged or deemed necessary for survival in contemporary Western culture.

'As individuals, as a society, as a civilization, and as a planetary ecosystem, we are reaching the turning point' (1982:14), says Capra in reference to the transformation he believes to be presently taking place in Western culture. In examining this current social transformation, it is useful to look at the changes that have taken place in our sciences, especially in physics.

It is, Capra believes, in the field of physics, in the first three decades of this century, that this cultural transformation has its roots. Ever since the seventeenth century, physics was the most exact and precise of the sciences,¹⁸ a model in this sense for all the other sciences (Capra 1982:31). However, in the early part of this century, conceptual revolutions in physics, revealed by study of the atomic and sub-atomic, demonstrated the limitations of the mechanistic view, in the sense that all concepts and theories came to be seen as only limited, approximate and relative descriptions of reality; phenomena could no longer be explained completely by a set of immutable, infallible mechanical laws. The physicists responsible for this revolutionary discovery - Einstein, Bohr and Heisenberg - were confounded, their whole view of reality having been altered so radically. The universe, as it emerged from this exploration of atomic and sub-atomic phenomena, revealed itself to be a harmonious, indivisible whole, 'a network of dynamic relationships, including the human observer and his or her consciousness' (Capra 1982:32). The universe could no longer be described as a whole which is only a sum of its parts. This new picture of reality can be described as holistic or relational and the resultant worldview as organic or Ecological. The universe as such is revealed as being similar, even in terms used describing it, to that proposed by spiritual traditions, especially Eastern mystical traditions (Capra 1982:32). In such studies of the atomic and sub-atomic, matter was revealed not as being composed of uniform, solid, material, building blocks, as Newton had hypothesised, but composed instead of vast regions of space containing tinier particles in constant motion at incredible speeds. These particles reveal themselves, in turn, to comprise vast regions of space, operating on a similar principle. The universe, seen in this way, seems to reveal many paradoxes which are clearly not comprehensible employing our linear, reductionist mode of thought. The picture of the universe revealed by these scientific studies is very powerful and beautiful and involves us inseparably in this ongoing process of existence. Berry (1988:33) suggests that this model of the universe is a powerful mythical-image, which could perhaps fulfil a traditional mythical role insofar as such images inform particular worldviews, or what Capra terms social paradigms.

The relationship between the new paradigm as evidenced in atomic and sub-atomic physics and what we today call Ecology becomes clear here. Twentieth century physics tells us of the oneness, the interconnectedness and the interdependence of all phenomena. This is the

same idea that ecological movements of the past thirty years have been communicating, and is also an ancient intuition and contention common to Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Native American and many other ancient spiritual traditions. Ecology, more specifically Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism (see endnote number 2), embraces these convergent expressions of the truth in a broad, all-encompassing set of values and philosophy, which, it is contended by Capra, is becoming an instrumental agent in our cultural transformation. The issue of cultural transformation is given an interesting angle by Thomas Berry. He argues that, formerly, the earth and its civilizations proceeded through their evolution instinctively, almost blindly, but that presently there is an important new dimension to our transformation. Now human beings, collectively referred to as the 'mindsphere', have an active role to play in this evolution or transformation, and this mindsphere has the ability to reflect consciously on this process of change and the decisions which affect it (Berry 1988:19). The destiny of the earth rests, realistically, in our hands and our decisions have an important and responsible role to play in the fulfillment of this destiny. Our technology has reached a stage where through it we are perfectly capable of destroying all life on earth, but at the same time we are equally capable of saving the earth using other technological means at our disposal. Berry, not unlike Capra, suggests that this transformation, and potential for transformation, is more momentous than any previous historical, cultural or evolutionary event (Berry 1988:19). Capra asserts, as noted earlier, that the ecological movement and the far-reaching philosophy of Ecology provide a way of making informed, mindful and moral decisions affecting the future of the earth and its inhabitants. It is important, therefore, to examine the origins of Ecology and the ecological movement, and to look more specifically at their philosophy, values and precepts in order that I may insert the artmaking I have chosen to examine here into such a context, and to assert its value within such a framework.

In the 1960's, particularly in Europe and the United States, the existing social order was challenged and questioned, mostly by younger generations.¹⁹ Capra suggests (1988:10) that this critique was based more on an intuitive feeling than on a comprehensive alternative set of values. Consciousness at this time, he continues, expanded in two directions; firstly towards a new spirituality, related especially to Eastern mystical and spiritual traditions, and secondly, towards a heightened sense of social consciousness, triggered by the radical questioning of authority. This manifested itself, for example, in anti-Vietnam activism, in the

Civil Rights movement and the 1968 riots in Paris, as well as in growing environmental and ecological awareness and also lead to what became known as the Women's Movement and Feminism. The emergence, in the 1970's, of many environmental pressure groups, such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, and of the feminist movement, focussed, consolidated and provided a broad framework for the critique and alternative ideas of the 1960's. The 1980's were characterized by social and political activity of this sort, culminating in the worldwide Green Movement, which is a coalescence embracing the ideology of the ecology, feminist and other peace movements. The Green Movement finds its ultimate expression in Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism. It is Deep Ecology which I find most relevant personally and which is most pertinent to my later discussion of the artmaking practices of Oltmann, Botha and myself,²⁰ and so it is this expression of Ecology that I examine in the most depth.

The term *Deep Ecology* was coined by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher, in 1973. It describes a deeper, more spiritual approach to nature and a more sensitive openness to ourselves and non-human nature (Devall 1985:65).²¹ The foundations of Deep Ecology are not only scientific but are intuitive, proposing and encouraging an experiential relationship with nature, encompassing the interconnectedness and oneness of all phenomena. Deep Ecology sees through the dangerous illusions presented to us by our dominant social paradigm, especially that of dominance: culture over nature, masculine over feminine, wealthy over poor and Western over non-Western cultures. It expresses a need to examine our premises and values, to reject outdated models and to recognize others which have been discarded. Deep Ecology draws on ideas of balance, harmony, oneness and interdependence inherent and fundamental to Eastern spiritual traditions, especially Buddhism and Taoism. It further asserts the value of traditional wisdom and Ecological harmony characteristic of many ancient, primal or pre-industrial cultures, like, for example, Native American cultures. Deep Ecology asserts the need for, and right to, self-realization, particularly in terms of an expanded sense of self as a non-isolated ego, intrinsically and inextricably related to other humans and the non-human world. A central principle is that of Biocentric Equality, an assertion that all life and non-living phenomena have an equal right to harmonious existence and self-realisation, and that all forms of life have equal, inherent and intrinsic value, irrespective of any other value they may have to human beings. There is no hierarchy of organisms with humans at the top. By extension, harm to one is harm to all, and to harm any

others is to harm oneself, an idea common to the practice of Buddhism. Capra expresses the relationship, or lack of distinction, between Ecology and spirituality that is essential to the philosophy of Deep Ecology- 'Ecological awareness, at the deepest level, is the intuitive awareness of the oneness of all life, the interdependence of its multiple manifestations and its cycles of change and transformation... such an awareness can also be called a spiritual awareness' (Capra 1988:113).²²

Particular aspects of Deep Ecology are more important for this discourse on artmaking, and it is these aspects and their practice which I refer to as Ecology. Rather than the particular practices of ecological awareness, it is the sources of some of the intuitions and contentions of Ecology that I will examine in order to illuminate certain aspects of Oltmann's, Botha's and my own sculpture. Specifically I wish to examine the connection between, or the unity of, Ecology and spirituality in terms of an awareness of cycles of change and transformation- a theme or idea which pervades Oltmann's, Botha's and my own work. This awareness is seminal to both Buddhism and Taoism, and it is these aspects of Ecology which inform, for the largest part, my discourse on this artmaking.

Capra describes Western culture in terms of Toynbee's model of cyclical transformation and in terms of the Taoist²³ perception of reality as being composed of dynamic relationships between opposing qualities. This dynamic relationship or interplay, the ultimate essence of reality, is known as *Tao*, or *The Way*, and is in a continual process of change and flow.²⁴ The ceaseless motion of *Tao* is believed to be cyclical in nature, the opposing qualities, or polar opposites, which compose it are called *yin* and *yang*. The images and qualities of opposites which are identified with *yin* and *yang* are taken from observations of both natural and social or cultural phenomena. Seminal to this notion of opposites is the assertion that no aspect of reality can be described as only having *yin* or *yang* qualities, each is an extreme pole of a single whole, and exists only in relation to the other. All phenomena represent, and are defined by, a continuous oscillation between these two poles. Tendencies towards, or transitions between, particular qualities take place in a gradual, unbroken progression. The natural order is one of dynamic balance between *yin* and *yang*. It is essential to realize that no moral value is placed on either quality, but a natural dynamic balance between the two is an inherently moral state. Imbalance is thus unhealthy and undesirable (Capra 1981:185-6).

Ecology, likewise asserts the need for balance and harmony, an idea which it takes from such spiritual traditions as Buddhism and Taoism. Capra suggests that there is such an imbalance in contemporary Western culture, and it is that which Ecology inherently and necessarily addresses. It is essential therefore to examine the particular qualities to which *yin* and *yang* values are attributed, and to see how they can be applied to Western cultural value systems, and ultimately to the artmaking I discuss here.

Capra (1981:18) attributes the following pairs of qualities to *yin* and *yang* respectively- feminine/masculine; contractive/responsive; conservative/demanding; co-operative/competitive; intuitive/rational; mystical/scientific; synthesising/analytic; holistic/fragmented. Many of these pairs have already been mentioned as issues to which Deep Ecology addresses itself (see endnote number 20). Deep Ecology identifies in Western culture a notion of dominance- of culture over nature, masculine over feminine, and Western over non-Western cultures. Clearly we can see here a dominance of *yang* type values over *yin* type values.

This issue of dominance by one set of qualities and values over another clearly represents an imbalance, and it is such an imbalance that I find redressed in the work of Oltmann and Botha, and that which I, to an extent, address in my own sculpture. Both Oltmann and Botha confront, in their images and sculptural techniques, issues pertaining to the masculine and feminine and to the Western and non-Western, particularly African, cultures. Particular formal, technical and physical aspects of Botha's work can be seen to correspond closely to the qualities attributed by Capra to *yin* and *yang*. While Oltmann places opposing qualities in unusual juxtapositions and contexts, inviting and evoking personal response, Botha places such qualities in such a way as to suggest possibilities and to pose questions about their relative and reciprocal values. Both artists employ, in their sculptural activity, processes and techniques which are somewhat at odds with contemporary Western cultural value systems, according thus to these activities higher cultural status by placing them in a *high cultural* context. Both artists assert the important role of intuition and responsiveness in their working methods and the value of tradition, Western and African, to them. I confront in my own work the hierarchical relationship between culture and nature, and suggest, in this discourse, that Oltmann inherently addresses similar issues in his sculpture.

Buddhism is another spiritual tradition on which Ecology draws heavily, and one which I discuss in relation to all the sculpture I have chosen to examine here.²⁵ Fundamental to Buddhism and, in turn, to Ecology, is the idea of the oneness and interdependence of all phenomena. *Oneness* is defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1988) as both uniqueness and wholeness, two apparently contradictory definitions. Buddhism embraces both aspects of this idea in the concept of impermanence. Our world, in both its natural and cultural aspects, is characterised by impermanence, each moment is unique and different from the last. Impermanence, however, is certain and all-pervasive. Buddhism encourages and offers, through the practice of meditation and mindfulness, a way of embracing that impermanence. In doing so, we discover the true nature of ourselves and of our world. I argue that Oltmann's work incorporates and embraces this impermanence in terms of the origins of his images and use of materials as well as in his near-obsessive construction methods. He welcomes impermanence into his work, painstakingly constructing his sculptures from thousands of stitches, each analogous with and experienced in a unique moment. I compare this to a meditational practice not unlike that practiced in Buddhism. Meditation is the practice of mindfulness, or a complete and true awareness, of one's existence and the impermanent nature thereof. This awareness does not imply a retreat from everyday existence in all of its joy and suffering, but rather an awareness of both of these aspects in all manifestations of reality. That Oltmann and Botha address social and cultural issues implies such an awareness on their part. Botha's work clearly articulates an awareness of the social and moral implications of apartheid, as well as an acute examination of human culture in general. Mindfulness, as practiced in Buddhism, is also a much simpler quality which refers to our fundamental impermanent spatial and temporal existence. I find this quality to be present in the experiential nature of Oltmann's work, the painstaking evidence of its slow, rhythmic construction, moment by moment, left clearly to be seen and experienced in an analogous manner by a viewer. Botha's work, in another sense, contains an awareness of the impermanent and unique nature of each moment. He juxtaposes images which are caught frozen in mid-motion or ambiguously interacting, leaving few clues as to their actions of the previous and following moments. Botha does not offer solutions to issues, but investigates or proposes various relationships between polar opposites which he juxtaposes in momentary dynamic relationship to one another. These images and interactions are always subject to the

cyclical laws of change and impermanence.

The idea that Western culture is in the midst of a major crisis and transformation has been discussed in an attempt to demonstrate that our current worldview is outdated and no longer adequate to deal with the myriad of problems we face. It is not suggested that all of Western culture's philosophy, ideology, and technology is completely redundant, but that it is important to realize the limitations and downfalls of this view, or social paradigm, which has brought us to the brink of destruction.

This introductory chapter attempts to show, as Capra suggests, that a solution to current Western problems, which all have a common root, is found in the ideology, philosophy and practice of an Ecological awareness. Ecology encompasses the intuitions, knowledge, discoveries and contentions of modern physics, ancient spiritual traditions, contemporary technology and feminism among others. What all of these diverse sources have in common is an inherent and implicit awareness of the oneness, interdependence and cyclical nature of all phenomena. I assert the validity of the artmaking of Oltmann and Botha in current Western and South African culture by arguing that their work is inherently Ecological in nature. I describe how this sculpture demonstrates an acute awareness of the nature of reality and at the same time shows a clear understanding of its particular manifestations in contemporary South Africa. Both Oltmann's and Botha's works show an awareness of and contain numerous references to many of the sources of Ecology, as well as many less conscious allusions to aspects of it, and in such a way I contend this work to be inherently Ecological in nature.

1. The term *Western* is used here in opposition to *Eastern*, the reason for this becoming clearer as my discussion of Ecology continues. For the sake of my argument, and while I realize this could be problematic, I include South Africa in my use of this term. I do this in order to make relevant the particular cultural models I discuss here to the South African context. I substantiate this argument in my discussion of artmaking which asserts the validity of such an interpretation and application of this term here. I also make particular references to the South African context without delving too deeply into the sociological aspects of my claims.

2. For a complete list of Capra's writings employed in this research, see my bibliography. The theme of most of these writings remains constant throughout all of these texts.

3. This may seem problematic in that other similar terms are not in turn written beginning with a capital letter, but my motivation for this will become clearer when I come to discuss various *schools* of ecology such as Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology. Deep Ecology I find most relevant personally and to this discourse. I therefore use the capital letter in reference to this but do not wish to exclude other practices as well as the more general and colloquial uses of the term. The so-called *ecology movement* refers to environmental pressure and action groups.

4. Toynbee's study is not ostensibly made from an Ecological perspective and is only referred to here in the same capacity as Capra's referral in The Turning Point. No attempt is made to write about the sociological implications of cultural transformation, but this much is necessary to create a context for the following discussions.

5. In the context of this research *culture*, *society* and *civilisation* are largely interchangeable terms, but for the sake of consistency, I will use the term *culture*.

6. Although this is strictly out of this field of research, I believe it is possible to see the contemporary cultural and social situation in South Africa in terms of Toynbee's model of social transformation. According to Toynbee, a decline occurs in cultures after a peak period of vitality. This decline seems to occur because of a lack of flexibility, or an inability to adapt to and deal with particular situations. The culture inevitably becomes unable to pursue constructively the creative process of cultural evolution. The growing or rising culture which follows manifests variety, versatility and flexibility. A declining culture will characteristically display uniformity, lack of inventiveness, perhaps even decadence, which is manifested in many different ways. However, Toynbee observes, during the decline or disintegration of a culture, creativity is not completely lost. 'Creative minorities' (Capra 1982:10) appear, their influence being increasingly felt as the transformation process continues, thus beginning a new period of constructive growth in the culture. These ideas can be borne in mind when

examining the sculpture I have chosen to explore in this discourse, especially in terms of its multicultural reference and flexibility and the redressing of cultural and societal imbalances which it articulates. In such a way, the work of Oltmann and Botha can be seen as being part of a so-called 'creative minority'.

7. This transition from decline to growth can occur spontaneously or as a result of the influence or intrusion of another culture, or through the disintegration of an older generation of the same. Simply expressed, the growth or dynamic activity of a culture is a successful response to a given challenge. The culture continues to grow when a successful response to an initial challenge generates 'cultural momentum' (Capra 1982:8) that carries the culture beyond a state of equilibrium, or static condition, into an overbalance that presents itself as a fresh challenge. This initial pattern repeats itself in successive phases of growth, each successful response producing a disequilibrium that requires new creative adjustments. In a South African context, apartheid can be viewed as the agent which produced a cultural decline. The decline of apartheid, therefore, can be seen as part of a cultural upswing which is perhaps evident in the artmaking examined here. In my discussion of Oltmann's work, for example, I make an analogy between his working method and natural growth and decay. His own description of his working method (personal correspondence, February 1995) describes a similar evolutionary process to Toynbee. Oltmann claims he continually adjusts his works and seeks solutions, practically and formally, in response to their evolution and progress. He in fact describes their construction as 'a broad problem-solving process'. On the other hand he also acknowledges and embraces their inevitable decline or re-arrangement at the hands of the natural laws of entropy and decay.

8. According to Capra (1982:7), historically, these sorts of factors have appeared one to three decades before the central transformation in a culture, rising in frequency and intensity up to the period of central transformation, then gradually falling in frequency afterwards. Violence and other social pathologies have become an everyday reality in South Africa, and without venturing into an area of sociology, it can be safely suggested that such social upheaval may well be compared to what Capra and Toynbee describe here. It can also certainly be said that Botha's work shows a clear awareness of such social pathologies. In particular, I refer to his statement about a latent 'darkness' in society which inevitably reveals itself from time to time (Botha, interview with Ferguson, August 1991). He suggests that apartheid is such a 'darkness'. Also, for example, his use of tyre as a sculptural medium inevitably makes one think of the notorious necklace murders in South Africa during the 1980's and early 1990's.

9. Clearly, the fact that art is mentioned here does provide some sort of a link with my proposed argument. Perhaps it is relevant that Botha and Oltmann deliberately set out to question the status quo of artmaking and the art-world. In that sense we may

conclude that they aspire to a more 'noble' form of artmaking in reaction to a situation where certain traditional Western practices, media, and artists themselves are accorded inappropriate cultural status in relation to erstwhile neglected traditions and producers of art and craft.

10. I use the word *natural* in italics because I find this term exclusive in some senses. I refer in this sentence to processes which I observe in plants, water, air etc., commonly referred to as natural phenomena. I do not however use the term exclusively in this sense. To me, in common with Ecology, *nature* is not something which occurs separate from or exterior to humans. It is something of which everything, unavoidably, partakes, and I use the term as such. This lends strength to the analogies I allow to be made between natural and cultural phenomena by eliminating any schism or dualistic relationship between the two. This idea of an all-pervading oneness is developed in my later discussion of Buddhism and Ecology.

11. What follows is discussed by Capra (1982: 10) as both being predicted specifically by Toynbee's model and as evident for us to see every day in the world around. I mention it here as he does and note too its evidence in my everyday experience, but especially insofar as it relates to the sculpture which I discuss further on in this research.

12. This is particularly pertinent to Oltmann's work where I discuss it in relation to an essay entitled 'Is female to male as Nature is to Culture?' (Ortner 1974).

13. This interpretation refers especially to those cultures around the Mediterranean before they were subsumed by more patriarchal cultures, beginning about three thousand years ago. These original matriarchal cultures, female-orientated agricultural societies, were 'egalitarian, democratic and peaceful' (Berry 1988:143). (Thomas Berry is a Catholic monk who has written a seminal, very powerful Ecological treatise entitled The Dream of the Earth).

14. I refer here to 'Genesis Genesis... Jesus', 1991 where the image alludes to a depiction in the palace of Knossos of a sport which allegedly represented a harmonious relationship between the sexes and human and other animals in this culture. This culture on the island of Crete is believed to have been the latest surviving of Neolithic matriarchal cultures. Also I make reference to the reclining figure in 'allenspraak in Paradys', 1991 which has been interpreted by me and by others as a kind of earth goddess-type figure. Botha suggests that she may be his 'Southern African counterfoil to the Venus of Willendorf' (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview), herself believed to be a female deity of a early matriarchal European culture. Both of these works are discussed in much greater depth in the relevant chapter, where all the references are attributed to their respective authors.

15. Toynbee's hypothesis also suggests that the industrial age we live in is destined to come to an end soon, mostly because of

the decline of non-renewable fossil fuel energy sources. Capra suggests that this challenge is met by the ecology movement and their pursuit of renewable energy sources like solar power. The political and economical effects of this change would be very far-reaching (1982:12).

16. Unless otherwise stated all the following descriptions are taken from Capra's explanation of social paradigms. Some particular references are given where quotes or close paraphrasing is used, or where a point may be particularly contentious.

17. This identification of women with nature is a complex issue which is addressed specifically later in this discourse. How women came to be identified thus is in turn a complex issue, but it seems plausible that this happened because of a more physical involvement with nature and biology in terms of childbirth and rearing. This is rather ironic since this is the same reason, according to Eisler (Eisler 1988:xvi), that woman was seen in Neolithic times as the source of all life and was immortalised as such in the form of goddesses.

18. It is interesting to note here that the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1988) defines physics or physical science as the 'study of inanimate objects' which would seem to relate very closely to Newton's idea of the universe as a machine, all of whose phenomena are explainable in terms of the mechanical laws of physics. I remember being taught in high school that physics was the 'science of measuring' which would in turn relate to the preciseness and infallibility which Capra describes as characteristic of the modern view of this subject.

19. Again, this is basically a summary of Capra's writings, and references are only used for quotes and clearly arguable points.

20. It is important to take note again that I do not refer exclusively to Deep Ecology in this discourse but choose to acknowledge its importance, as well as that of Ecofeminism, by my retaining of the upper case 'E'. See also endnote number 2.

21. What follows is a summary of what Devall and Sessions describe as the distinguishing characteristics of Deep Ecology. Particular references are not made as I am not quoting directly nor introducing ideas to be contested, but merely rephrasing their statements.

22. I do not discuss Ecofeminism in depth because it is not specifically relevant to my discussion of artmaking here, and is in many ways similar to Deep Ecology. However, the issue of women in society and culture is addressed extensively in the work of both Oltmann and Botha. Botha also addresses the issue of women and nature, I contend in my discussion of his work, in a sculpture such as 'allenspraak in Paradys'. Ecofeminism has been simply defined as a 'new term for ancient wisdom' (Mies 1993:13). While Deep Ecology asserts that our present crises are largely the result of Anthropocentrism, the view of humans as superior

to and dominant over non-human nature, Ecofeminism asserts that our problems result not exclusively from this sort of dominance, but equally from the dominance of males and masculine values over females and feminine values. Ecofeminism is as closely related to the shift in our social paradigm as it is to the decline of patriarchy. The split between nature and culture is addressed in Ecofeminism, women having universally been identified with nature and men with culture. The integration of this false dichotomy and others like those between the spiritual and the natural, and art and science, is attempted. An earth-centred spirituality is an important element of Ecofeminism, especially to adherents in America. An immanent, all-pervading spirituality or God, is revered as opposed to a hierarchical, transcendent and masculine God. Lost wisdom and suppressed traditions, like Wiccan traditions and traditional or alternative medicine are important to some Ecofeminists. Ecofeminism proposes a society based on sharing rather than domination and identifies the sacred as being 'located in everyday life, our work, the things that surround us, in our immanence' (Mies 1993:18).

23. It is not necessary to know the history or origin of Taoism, only that it is considered one of the 'Three Teachings' of China (Shepard 1982:2), Buddhism and Confucianism being the other two.

24. The following explanation of Taoism is paraphrased from Capra (1981:185-6), this endnote sufficing as a reference.

25. Most of what follows is based on my personal experience and learning. Buddhism, particularly as it is practiced in the West currently, does not place great emphasis on relevant texts, but more on the actual practice. Meditation is the cornerstone of Buddhism. Buddhism is not, in the strictest sense, a religion, but rather it can be described as a way of experiencing the world, an understanding of one's true nature and a way of organising one's mind accordingly. I have learnt about Buddhism to some extent through reading, but mostly through two weekends I spent at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal. The first was entitled 'The World in a Flower: Buddhism and Ecology' and took place in November 1994. The teachers were Mervyn Croft, a practicing teacher, Mark Mattson, a practicing Buddhist and Deep Ecologist and Richard Boone, a biologist. The second took place in October 1995 and was entitled 'Basic Buddhism'. It was taught by Mervyn Croft and Louis van Loon, owner of and principal teacher at the centre. Subsequent discussions and practice have informed my discourse here too.

WALTER OLTMANN: PROCESS AND RELATIONSHIP

The work of Walter Oltmann is to be discussed in this chapter, specifically those aspects which, I would suggest, inherently articulate Ecological ideas and concerns as set out in the first chapter. This is not to suggest that Oltmann purposely sets out to discuss, convey or question notions of Ecology, but rather that many of the issues which are crucial to his work are open to an Ecological discourse and parallel its ideologies. Much of this chapter is based on personal correspondence and an interview with Oltmann which took place during the first half of 1995. Oltmann's own Master's dissertation, completed in 1984, entitled Elements of Play and Environmental Concern in some Recent Sculpture (submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand for the degree of Master of Arts)¹ was also utilised as a significant source of information. Oltmann's research contained discussions of work done by, amongst others, Robert Smithson and Charles Simmonds, artists whose work has previously been addressed in terms of Ecology.² In his dissertation he also raises some specific issues in relation to his own and to others' works which will be included and interpreted in relation to the broader discussion of Ecology inherent in his own artmaking. Oltmann was at first unsure of what I meant by Ecology, but after some correspondence he felt his work could be interpreted in the way I intended and that the connections I made were valid (Oltmann, personal correspondence, February 1995). The very nature of his working method, the drawing together of diverse elements and the evocative nature of such a process, gives room for diverse and personal interpretation.

Almost anyone viewing Oltmann's work would conclude that the processes and materials he employs are very important to him and crucial to any reading of his work. The meticulous, sometimes obsessive, hand-crafted appearance of his sculptures and the use of unconventional artmaking materials such as wire, draw immediate attention to these factors. It is from that point, therefore, that this research proceeds. The very act of making, and the nature and consequences of the processes employed will be addressed, as will the relationships between process(es), materials and the forms or images produced. The resultant forms will in turn be examined especially in terms of how they evoke or express a dialogue between a number of polar opposites. This dialogue will be seen in relation to a dynamic model of the world, which is central to an Ecological understanding, as presented by Capra. I will show that the

relationship between so-called *polar opposites* which Oltmann's work addresses can be interpreted as an examination of the relationship between nature and culture.³

A focus on Oltmann's work begins with that which he produced for his Master's degree in 1983 and 1984 and includes selected work produced subsequently. Most of this work has largely been constructed from various kinds of wire. The original choice of this unconventional sculptural material was largely practical (Rankin 1994:159). Galvanised iron wire was affordable, easily available and could be worked with very simple tools and methods. Also, wire was used, together with stones, to produce *gabion* structures⁴ which Oltmann found to be increasingly interesting and which formed the starting point for all of the sculpture produced for his Master's degree as well as many subsequent works (Oltmann 1984:100). Wire is an a-traditional material within the context of fine art production. Oltmann was interested in it because it introduced some sort of surprise element and it was 'industrially manufactured and used in a traditional way' (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). Producing sculptures from such a material immediately brought together these two differing traditions and their many respective associations. The use of wire could thus be said to address, or mediate between, different kinds of technologies- traditional, or pre-industrial,⁵ and modern. This idea of mediation between opposites has continued to play an important part in his work and is discussed further. Many of these earlier works include rocks of varying sizes which act as reminders or 'traces' (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995) of the gabion structures, clues to the sculpture's sources, and which remind us also of their properties of durability in the face of weathering that would cause the wire to corrode and disintegrate, and subsequently be absorbed and reclaimed by the earth from whence it originally came. In this way the use of wire and stone in Oltmann's work inherently encompasses an awareness of time, its passage and course, reflecting on the cyclical nature of our world and its natural processes. This idea of impermanence is essential to the Buddhist conception of the world.⁶ Buddhism contends that the world is subject only to impermanence and that the aim of Buddhist practice is to embrace that impermanence and to live accordingly. Buddhism, as has been discussed, contains wisdom, insight and practice which is essential to an Ecological approach to and experience of the world. I will argue that the issue of time, as it is approached and is inherently present in Oltmann's work, embraces and articulates ideas of impermanence and thus allows for this Ecological interpretation to

be made.

More recently Oltmann's sculptures have been constructed from copper wire and from sisal rope, as for example in, 'Trophy', 1995' and 'Third Hand', 1993. These materials embody and articulate both practical and meaningful qualities and discourses respectively. Copper is softer and more malleable than galvanised iron wire, and more resistant to the corrosion which will eventually destroy the iron wire. Sisal is much lighter than wire and can therefore be used to create larger forms, bound by lighter wire, which are not massively heavy or liable to collapse under their own weight. In addition, both copper and sisal have rich histories in terms of their traditional uses, particularly in Africa but also in other parts of the world. Both materials are relevant in that they are still utilised in the present technological era.⁷ Again their usage by Oltmann sets up a dialogue between traditions and technologies. Copper wire, like steel wire, is an industrially produced material, whose principal element is taken from the earth, but which has been in use for much longer than iron wire.⁸

It is through the building up, in a slow accumulative manner, of these many meanings, histories, and traditions inherent in his chosen materials, that Oltmann starts the dialogue and mediation that characterises his work. This examination of contemporary and pre-industrial materials, media and traditions is realised in a sculpture which suggests that they are not irreconcilable, despite their apparent differences. The sculptures instead present them as dynamic opposites, interdependent and intrinsically related. Rankin suggests that 'rather than setting up irreconcilable opposites, the representation seems in its metaphorical ambivalence to shift between them, suggesting the possibility of fruitful communion between potentially antagonistic categories, the possibility of mediation and reconciliation.' ((i) 1995:19). The communion or dynamic relationship between polar opposites, which Rankin describes here as important in a reading of Oltmann's work, is seminal to the Taoist worldview, presented as an important part of Ecology by Capra, as discussed in the opening chapter. Opposites are presented as interdependent, and all phenomena can be described as interactions between the two in dynamic and changing relationships. Particular aspects of these relationships are discussed later insofar as they are relevant to each work.

The techniques employed by Oltmann to manipulate the above materials further convey the

meanings he seeks to articulate. He largely uses various coiling, weaving and netting techniques to construct his sculptures. These techniques are characterized by their slow, repetitive, accumulative, even obsessive nature. These techniques, as well as the materials, are laden with history and meaning which are in turn built into the works. Oltmann never attempts to conceal the way in which he has made a sculpture. Techniques and processes are left evident in order that the viewer may trace the making of the piece, the time taken to produce it, and to ultimately experience the dynamics in a manner similar to that in which it was made (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). In his Master's dissertation, Oltmann wrote of this process claiming that 'the meditative concentration required to perceive these works fully suggests a parallel between the attention needed to make them and the kind of attention needed to perceive them in detail.' (1984:61). This attention, concentration or 'mindfulness' as I will call it, leads to and is appropriate to an understanding of one's position in the world both personally and culturally. This understanding, arrived at in a meditative way, is necessarily Ecological and akin to that offered by Buddhist practice.

An examination and awareness of the sources from which Oltmann draws his techniques reveals their potential significance and role in the experience of these works if they are to be perceived in the manner described above. Basketry, coiling, weaving, netting and related processes are ancient techniques which are common to many pre-industrial cultures.⁹ They have been handed down to successive generations over thousands of years and in the process have accumulated much history and tradition, their employment often having undergone some changes. Many techniques have been used in various different contexts and for different purposes. A netting technique would have been used by a pre-industrial culture in terms of their subsistence, for instance, in the making of a trap or vessel. Many centuries later, a very similar technique was used in fine Victorian lace-work, or in military camouflage netting (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). In this way Oltmann, in a work such as 'Lace Mitt' 1994 (fig.1), draws on all these traditions and meanings, setting up resonances and ambivalences (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). He literally meshes together different techniques and traditions, creating dialogue and mediation between them, and in the process raising and answering questions about gender roles and colonialism, among other issues. 'Lace Mitt' takes the form of a Victorian lace mitt, woven from fine

copper wire. Originally a lace mitt would have been made in the home by a woman. The home in this sense needs to be seen as the traditional domestic realm of a woman¹⁰. The size of the object (1m x 1,5m), however, recalls other forms of netting. The mitt is embroidered with images of insects and firearms. The inclusion of the latter might thus suggest an alternate reading of the woven surface as analogous to camouflage netting used by the military (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). The idea of war, aggression, protection, conflict or conquest is alluded to by these embroidered images. The reference to camouflaging could suggest that the prescriptive gender roles addressed in this work are well disguised in our culture, indistinguishable from the truth they purport to be. So in opposition to the origin of the image of a lace mitt, the embroidered firearms speak of the traditionally male public forum (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). The domination of women by men, and the low status of women's domestic handcraft as opposed to men's public campaigns in war, politics and the nature of their associated artifacts, is questioned in this work.

The insects embroidered, as if trapped, in the netting bring to mind images of mosquito netting such as that often associated with colonists and still used currently when the need arises. This alludes further to the conquest of nature by humankind, characteristic of both the colonial and industrial ages, as described in the introductory chapter. But ultimately, the dimensions of the mitt suggest a fruitful pairing of the opposites at play in this work; an intermingling of the feminine and masculine and of the domestic (or private) and public. Again the idea of interdependence and dynamic interplay is thus realized in a work; dualistic opposites are presented in a condition of reconciliation or mediation. In this work, many of the particular dualisms addressed are those that Ecology addresses directly, and some, such as gender roles and their inherent statuses, are addressed further in many of Oltmann's other works. Ecology equates the domination of women by men, and of feminine by masculine values, with the attempted domination and the exploitation of the earth by humans. This imbalance of values and its restoration in Oltmann's work clearly connects it with Capra's interpretation of Taoist ideas of balance and contributes thus to an Ecological interpretation of his sculpture.

As noted, Oltmann claims he enjoys a 'slow accumulative working method which has an

introspective, meditative or even trance-like character' (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995 and personal interview, April 1995). In a sense, this working method could be seen to 'generate a sense of rhythm through repetition which is somewhat at odds with present-day life and rhythms' (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). I would suggest that Oltmann refers here to the linear, goal-oriented experience of time in the West today in opposition to the cyclical, impermanent nature of time common to, and definitive of, natural processes. The slow, repetitive, hand-crafted nature of Oltmann's work has more in common with the latter and confronts thus the split between nature and culture which Ecology addresses extensively. Oltmann reasserts the value, in the modern world, of the rhythmic or cyclical nature of time through his use of processes which inherently involve such an experience of time for both the maker and viewer of his work. It is this aspect of Oltmann's work that I identify with nature and suggest thereby that he confronts the above-mentioned split by placing these works in the *accepted* Western cultural arena of fine art production.

To Oltmann (1984:9), the world cannot be approached primarily through ideas but only through immediate experience; by which I would surmise he means the actual act and awareness of living in the world, of occupying time and space, rather than simply having ideas of what it means to exist in this world. This accounts for the importance of process in his work and the easy access for the viewer to the process, enabling both creator and viewer to experience the work, like the world, in a spatially and temporally aware way. He asserts that links between humans and the world are only established through an immediate experience of the world, and he attempts to offer such an experience in his work.¹¹ One could interpret his working method as an establishing of form in time and space. This is how Oltmann himself describes 'Cones', 1984- a group of roughly conical shapes, coiled from steel wire. 'Cones' presents its material form as having grown out of process. Space is presented as the product of 'establishing form through time' (1984:122). The fundamental or simple experience of time through the creation of form is further alluded to by the basic or elementary conical forms- I was reminded of Cézanne's instruction to 'Treat nature according to the sphere, the cone and the cylinder' (Lynton 1989:23). This way of working, of establishing form in time and space, can be seen to reflect and embody an immediate or primary experience of the world. Similarly with reference to 'Woven Spiral', 1984 (fig.2),

Oltmann notes that 'The space that the form occupies is presented as a direct product of movement in time' (1984:124). 'Woven Spiral' is very simple in appearance, consisting of many short lengths of coiled wire tubes joined together to form a spiral which rests on the floor. One is reminded of the frequent use of the spiral as much in pre-industrial and so-called 'primitive' art as in the work of Robert Smithson, such as 'Spiral Jetty', 1969-70, in which Oltmann expresses interest (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). Again, the process involved in the making of the sculpture is evident in its form, allowing the viewer to recognize or retrace this act of production. As stated earlier, the type of concentration or attention required to perceive these works is akin to that utilised in their making. Thus the simple spiral form of 'Woven Spiral' offers an appropriately simple experience for the viewer; the interrelatedness and interdependence of time and space is given form in the simple repetitive process used in the creation of a simple, primal form in time and space. This utterly simple action of existence in time and space is analogous to the Buddhist idea of mindfulness and of simply 'being present in each moment'.¹²

In reflecting and embodying such aspects of temporal experience, Oltmann's work can be considered an intervention in culture¹³ in that the sense of 'rhythm through repetition somewhat at odds with present-day life and its rhythms' generated in the making and experience of his work defines it thus (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995).¹⁴ As such an intervention, it appears that Oltmann's work offers a *natural* experience of existence - an experience which I compare to one common in the practice of Buddhism. Significantly, this experience is embodied in the established Western cultural form of sculpture, not only in terms of the processes Oltmann employs, but embodied too in the materials he uses such as galvanised wire and stone. Wire is a product of human culture and industry, derived from ore extracted from the earth, but which inevitably succumbs to natural processes, eventually corroding. In 'Carpet Piece', 1983 (fig.3), for example, one corner of the sculpture is already well-rusted. This sculpture consists of a square mat-like form of tufted galvanized iron wire in the midst of which are bound, with wire, pieces of soapstone. This wire will eventually return through corrosion to the earth from whence it came. The stone, on the other hand, is more durable but still subject to similar natural decaying or erosion processes. It, like iron, has its origin in the earth, and, although quarried, undergoes no significant industrial processes of extraction, and thus is not read here as a product of

human culture. Stone and wire, products of nature and culture respectively, are both seen to be subject to the same natural processes and laws. The different degrees of durability, or conversely impermanence, present in the two elements of this sculpture, make one aware of the passage of time, as do the processes involved in the creation of this work. Furthermore, the idea of overlapping or simultaneous cycles is suggested by the uncertainty present in the image. The stones seem to emerge from the tufted wire, which resembles vegetation, but at the same time the wire seems to encroach upon the netted stones, as vegetation might cover a gabion as it grows older, or as corrosion might encroach upon the wire of such a structure. Oltmann suggests, 'the impression gained is one of the slowing down of time' (1984:110). These overlapping and interrelated natural cycles are slowed down in a sculpture which attains some degree of stasis in the sheltered space of an art gallery. The slow processes evidently employed in its production and the moment of uncertainty present in this image contribute further to this apparent slowing of the passage of time.

Referring to the work of artists such as Mary Miss and Robert Smithson, Oltmann suggests that '... some recent sculpture confronts us with experience in time and insists on the body as a direct measure of space' (1984:7-8). He describes his work as playing a similar role. An experience of this sort of sculpture would, ideally, be offering an experience analogous to that inherent in some aspects of Buddhist meditational practice.¹⁵ In presenting to us a form created in time and space and leaving clearly evident the way in which this was achieved, Oltmann offers the viewer, or perhaps the participant, a spatial and temporal experience of the world and an awareness of our existence in these terms. Although claiming no specific knowledge of Buddhist meditational practice, Oltmann sympathizes with and acknowledges the possibility of making such a link. He agrees that his concentration is unusual in the making of his work. He describes himself as being engrossed and says that this process becomes something 'other than what you normally do' (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). He mentions the focus and attention, or perhaps consciousness, as being directed only on the hand. Buddhist meditation practice implies a similar kind of concentration or focus on a simple action or sensation. Being simply and clearly aware only of one's actions or sensual perceptions, remaining unattached to complex emotions related to the past and present is the way of 'being present in each moment'. The practice of meditation leads to 'mindfulness', which implies not only an awareness of our own existence

in spatial and temporal terms, but also an awareness of impermanence, and very importantly, an awareness of the world around, and of the joy and suffering of our existence in this world. Awareness of the latter is present in Oltmann's work in his awareness of particular cultural and social issues and imbalances which he addresses. An awareness of our existence in all the above ways leads to an understanding of our true natures and this, according to Buddhism, is an effective and compassionate way of living in our world. It is this aspect of Buddhism that bears relevance to Ecology.

The idea of growth or evolution is inherently present in Oltmann's sculptures. At the inception of each work he responds intuitively to what he is doing, without a clear, preconceived notion of how the form is to develop (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). His slow accumulative manner of working allows an element of chance to enter into the making of the forms. Creating form in space and time in such a fashion, as indicated above, can therefore further be seen as defying complete logocentricism or goal-orientatedness; given that logocentricism is the result, or goal, of a linear experience of time. Oltmann's working method can be seen as analogous to growth or evolution, having repetitive and rhythmic aspects which I identify with nature, or an intervention on culture, and which stand at 'odds with present-day life and its rhythms' (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). The final form of some of Oltmann's sculptures is reflective of this approach. A work Oltmann considers important is 'African Group', 1985 (fig.4), in that it ultimately acquired a form or 'life' of its own (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). This work consists of five vertical elements placed next to one another in a shallow arc. The vertical elements are made in wire using a basket coiling¹⁶ technique and could suggest figures or effigies. These are arranged on a tufted wire mat, not unlike 'Carpet Piece', reference to which suggests also the idea of growth. The work seems to evoke the idea of ceremonial or votive forms. He began construction (Rankin 1994:161-2) at the base of each element allowing each to develop organically during the coiling process; each twisting, dividing, joining and tapering naturally, resulting in elements which are plantlike in their form and evolution. Oltmann concedes (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995) that the weaving process evokes for him ideas of growth and evolution, especially in the sense that the slow, accumulative, sequential nature of his working method allows elements of chance and response to enter. It could be suggested that plants develop in a similar manner

in nature, growing in and responding to slow organic cycles. Such a process of growth and response characterizes a plant, determining, for example, the form and size of a tree in relation to its surroundings and the conditions for its growth. The growth and response in Oltmann's work achieves its final realization when he decides that the work is completed. It achieves a degree of permanence in this form, but the cyclical way in which it was realized is always left visible, accessible to the viewer whose experience in contemplation of the work will be closely analogous to the experience of its making. Further, the cyclical or natural aspect of its evolution is always present in the fact that it is interminably subject to laws of corrosion and decay.

That weaving can be likened to growth is perhaps supported by the fact that innumerable similar weaving techniques evolved independently in response to a wide variety of conditions of existence the world over. Weaving can thus be seen as an important and universal part of human evolution or growth- a simple, economical, beautiful and mindful response to a given set of conditions in the world.

As well as being questioned by the processes of Oltmann's sculptures, the idea of logocentrism is approached metaphorically and in the use of particular techniques in both earlier and more recent works. His use of the coiling process, in particular, will be discussed in these terms. Coiling is a basket-weaving process whereby a craftsperson or artist makes a form from any weaving material (from wire, or more recently sisal, in Oltmann's case), starting from a centre or perimeter and winding the material in a circular fashion, binding it to itself with the same or different material, moving towards a perimeter or a centre, in the same way that one would coil a clay pot. The artist does not necessarily proceed directly to a centre or perimeter; in Oltmann's case, he builds forms which are tall, and more recently, representational, on his journey from the outside to the inside of a spiral. Oltmann describes this process as one in which (1984:37) the artist begins from a point, in the centre or on the perimeter of a spiral, and proceeds to either the inside or outside of the spiral which he or she is creating. Oltmann sees this as a development in which an artist moves away from a starting point, but always in the sense that the distance covered is much larger than the actual radial distance from the starting point. The spiral, he suggests, is, for both viewer and artist, a clearly delineated form, indicating a direction from which deviation or

escape is impossible. In this way, given the slow, painstaking work required to build Oltmann's coiled wired forms, the viewer of a work is taken along this spiral path at a pace approximating that of its creation. Thus the path of the spiral, a long, deviating, rhythmical route from outside to centre, is experienced by the viewer who is offered a glimpse of the slow cyclical, non-logocentric experience of creating such a work.

I would suggest that 'Third Hand', 1993 (fig.5), directly addresses this issue of a cyclical or non-logocentric experience of time. Sisal rope is used to coil a large sleeve which rises up from the ground. The sleeve folds over on itself and is elaborately decorated with copper tubing which is stitched onto the sisal like bugle beads. This decoration, writes Rankin, (1994:163) conjures up the idea of ceremonial attire, which adds to the mysterious nature of the work. Coming out of or attached to the end of the sleeve, pointing towards the ground, is a large coiled copper wire hand. Perched on the apex of the folded sleeve is a coiled copper chameleon. The hand appears almost lifeless, definitely hollow or glove-like. The title itself is mysterious and evocative, especially when it is so evident that Oltmann has relentlessly employed his own two hands in the making of this work, openly leaving evidence of his working methods (Rankin 1994:163). Oltmann says that the title suggested itself to him afterwards, and that the work to him is mysterious, 'One doesn't really know' (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). The title suggests a hand to fill or animate the glove. Perhaps this suggests something about how the works determine their own form to an extent and how Oltmann, and by extension his hands, act intuitively in response to this. The element of chance which is inherent in his slow accumulative working method provides adequate opportunity for such intuitive responses (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). Oltmann sees this aspect of his work as 'part of a broader problem-solving process' (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995).

The chameleon is a very mysterious, god-like creature, present in many African myths. The creature, he says, grew quite automatically (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). Its form lent itself to the coiling technique, especially its cone-shaped, piercing, all-observing eye. This chameleon, I believe, holds the clue to an interpretation of the work. The creature's stillness suggested to Oltmann the contemplative nature of art's conception and reception. A mythical reading of the chameleon, of which Oltmann says he was not aware,

sheds further light on this (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). There is a Zulu myth¹⁷ involving a chameleon and a lizard who were sent to earth by the godhead bearing messages of mortality and immortality respectively. The chameleon, by nature slow and apparently not motivated by urgent goals¹⁸, dawdled and meandered in a 'non-logocentric' fashion. Consequently the lizard arrived first with the message of mortality and hence irrevocably affected the lives of beings on the earth. The non-logocentric nature of the chameleon can thus be seen to mirror the way in which Oltmann fashions his sculptures and the experience offered in contemplation of them. The work can be read as a mysterious journey of the maker, or viewer, from the outside of the coil to the centre, or to five centres, each the end of a finger. The journey is slow and relentless, but, as perhaps suggested by the chameleon's eye, enlightening.¹⁹

The dualisms presented in Oltmann's work, discussed earlier in relation to particular sculptures, will here be given more attention, both in terms of particular issues they evoke and in the particular way in which they relate to one another. The exploration of such social and cultural issues can be seen, in this discourse, as a natural or inevitable consequence of the mindful and meditative nature of the processes Oltmann employs in his artmaking, and many of these explored issues have a direct bearing on such an Ecological discussion. Firstly, the issue of craft and craft-related processes and their relationship to art and artmaking needs to be addressed. A Western cultural hierarchy which accords higher status to art than to craft is challenged by the work of Oltmann, even if we merely consider the fact that he is an artist whose work draws heavily on craft-making processes. Oltmann however considers this relationship further by alluding to it in the images he has been producing in the nineties. His craft-derived processes refer both to African crafts and to his own cultural heritage, coming, as he does, from a German missionary background (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). From these origins, he explores the status of craft, both African and European, in the art-world as well as in colonial and contemporary history. Many of the processes he employs are skills traditionally associated with women, such as domestic processes like beading, lacework and basketry.²⁰ In a specifically South African context, many of those processes are associated with erstwhile marginalized cultures and their traditions, like basketry, which have clearly been neglected by patriarchy and the institutions of colonialism and accorded low cultural status by these. The adoption of these into a fine

art context,²¹ an accepted form of 'high culture', questions and changes their social and cultural status and roles. Furthermore, Oltmann explores and sets up a dialogue between particular craft forms in order to explore their meanings. In 'Lace Mitt', 1995, a lacemaking technique, similar to that employed in the making of forms of netting used in military camouflage exercises, is employed to make an object which brings together elements and images from the domestic and public realms. In this way the historical use and metaphor of similar craft techniques is explored and compared. The various issues which are raised in Oltmann's work address Western and South African cultural, social and gender imbalances, the redressing of which is central to Ecology.

Recently, many of his works have dealt with domestic 'home-crafts' (the latter, a term used by Oltmann, personal correspondence, February 1995). By employing these processes in the production of fine art, Oltmann simultaneously questions both the status of craft in artmaking and the status of women in society. Again, the images as well as the processes employed contribute equally to this dialogue. Images like a hat-box, hat-stand or hand-bells²² allude to the home environment. The crafts employed, the images and the surprising use of scale initiate this dialogue, or overlapping, of male and female, European and African crafts, and public and domestic contexts. The relationship between such opposing principles is central to Ecology, which sees the dominance of the former over the latter as symptomatic and causal of the imbalances which characterise our attempted domination and subjugation of the earth and its resources. Rankin argues ((i) 1995:16) that the mediation between public and private worlds is also embedded in the time-consuming, domestic-type processes used to make the sculpture. In reference to 'Mediator', 1993-4 (fig.6), a lifesize copper wire and tubing sculpture of a hatstand, she suggests that it marks 'the domestic threshold between outside and inside',²³ by virtue of its use and physical situation in the entrance to a home. This mediating position which the object occupies between these two realms is in this way akin to that inherent in the process employed in its construction.

Capra²⁴ (1982:245) calls time-consuming, or domestic activities *entropic* processes and it is these which I will describe as being mediating processes.²⁵ Such processes, he says, are typically repetitive, mostly performed by women, racial minorities²⁶ or perhaps colonised peoples, and are always accorded low status, despite their essential role in any culture.²⁷ By

meshing together African and European traditions, domestic and public references, craft and art, and traditionally male and female roles, Oltmann poignantly addresses imbalances in both South African and Western culture and implicitly redresses them in altering their cultural status and imposing what would seem to be, in an Ecological discourse, a *natural* balance. Thus the status of craft is raised to that of high art, domestic objects are given large scale, presence and acknowledgement, and women's or entropic processes are given high status in the traditionally male public forum. Further, African and European crafts are given cultural and aesthetic status beyond that of their traditional domestic usages.

As noted earlier, Rankin suggests in her description of 'Mediator', that the juxtaposition of so-called irreconcilable opposites in the work suggests the possibility of mediation and reconciliation rather than antagonism ((i) 1995:16). These ideas of mediation are present not only in Oltmann's recent work, but, I would suggest, were present even in his first works made of wire. The gabion structures which began interesting Oltmann in 1983 evoke the idea of mediation. Gabions, Rankin suggests, (1994:159) were 'mediating in natural processes'. Gabions are used in the control of soil erosion and waterflow. Their function is both to stabilize and to thus preserve the natural healthy state of the earth as well as to protect the human-made structure alongside which they are placed. They can therefore be seen, for the purposes of this discourse, to mediate between the natural and the human-made. Further, they mediate and exist between natural processes in that they represent various degrees of durability and resistance in the face of natural processes. Oltmann notes that gabions paradoxically suggest their own demise, in that their participation in these natural processes leads eventually to the corrosion and disintegration of the wire from which they are made (1984:100). In this sense, it can be said, Oltmann's works are seen as both mediating between nature and culture, and, as described earlier, as being a natural intervention in culture. The incorporation in his work, of change and impermanence, characteristic of the natural law to which all phenomena in our world are subject, is an acceptance and understanding of what it means to exist in this world as a human, a culture or an artifact.

The relationship between nature and culture is approached further in Oltmann's choice of processes which are often historically derived from the domain of women. Ecology suggests to us that nature is often viewed as being synonymous with things feminine, while the

masculine is often seen as being synonymous with culture. Sherry Ortner presents us with this argument in her essay entitled 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?'.²⁸

She suggests, firstly, that women are identified or symbolically associated with nature and are therefore socially subordinated in a similar way by patriarchal culture. The subordination of women, Ortner claims, is a 'pan-cultural fact' (1974:67). She writes that women are seen as being less transcendent of nature than men, in that they are more active participants in its processes and thus have more direct affinity with nature. This is the result of various factors, the most important for this argument being women's prescribed societal roles. Ortner discusses the factors which tend to align women with nature, but notes, importantly, those factors which demonstrate women's crucial alignment with culture as well. This alignment and identification with both nature and culture, Ortner argues, places women in a difficult intermediate position. Although women have a greater physical involvement in something like reproduction, they possess full human consciousness; just like men, women think, speak, communicate, and manipulate symbols and values. They are thus recognized as a participant in both culture and nature, thus an intermediary between the two, but lower on the scale of transcendence of nature than men. Women's societal situation, often a confinement to the domestic family context, contributes to this. Lactation and association with children who are not yet completely socialized, in many cultures themselves identified closely with nature (Ortner 1974:78), are some of the factors which further identify women strongly with nature. Men are identified not just with culture, but particularly with the 'finer and higher aspects of human thought- art, religion, law etc' (Ortner 1974:79).

It is women's intermediary role between nature and culture that I find relevant to this discourse, especially insofar as it relates to domestic, or so-called entropic, processes, defined by Ortner as child-rearing and socialization, and also cooking. Ortner refers to the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who suggests that, in many systems of thought, the transforming of the raw into the cooked represents the transition from nature to culture. Ortner identifies this as a very important culturalization process. Women's *natural* association with the domestic context (motivated by natural lactation functions) compound the potential for being viewed as closer to nature, but socializing and cooking functions within the domestic context reveal women as a powerful agent of the culturalization process,

transforming raw natural resources into cultural products. I would suggest that activities such as weaving, basketry and related domestic practices can be seen as similar culturalization processes. For a practical purpose, women transform raw natural products into cultural objects essential to subsistence. In essence, material or cultural form is given to entropic, often repetitive, domestic processes.

Oltmann identifies specific issues of prescribed gender roles in a number of his more recent works, especially in that these works can be seen to occupy a similar intermediate position between nature and culture. He gives a fixed high cultural form to this mediation. The mediating metaphor of the gabion is not forgotten in more recent works, whose images might seem to refer less to the objects which originally suggested to Oltmann his sculptural ideas, but references to these gabion structures are still to be found. Stones are present in such recent works as 'Untitled/Crown', 1992-3 (fig.7). This is a tall, crown-like structure making reference to the elaborate beaded crowns of the Yoruba (Rankin (ii) 1995:32). Much of the work, including the decorative reptilian images which adorn it, is covered in beads made of copper tubing. Due to the accumulative weight, and because of the height of the piece, it required stabilization, and so stones were bound into pockets around the bottom of the sculpture. Unlike most of his other works, Oltmann began this one at the top and proceeded downwards (Rankin (ii) 1995:32). The stones function aesthetically, balance the structure, and provide reference to the gabion structures which so long ago influenced his work. A work created for Africus, the 1995 Johannesburg Biennale, entitled 'Transit' (fig.8), closely resembled a gabion structure. Oltmann made wire cages in the form of such articles as mattresses, chairs and carry-bags which were packed with granite stones. These objects appeared to relate to flooding and flight from a natural disaster, both because of the articles they depicted and the clear reference to gabions whose function is often to prevent or control such natural phenomena as flooding. The objects seemed like flotsam, or like people's possessions hastily packed. The weight of the objects (they are lifesize) implies a kind of helplessness or acceptance of the inevitability of such events. As noted earlier, the wire from which gabions are constructed would surrender to the corrosion caused by water; such an object has no choice but to surrender to and embrace the impermanent nature of reality. This piece thus addresses ideas of permanence and impermanence, construction and decay, and clearly relates closely to Oltmann's earliest interest in gabions.

Thus, considering the natural, formal and sociological origins of Oltmann's processes, materials and images, an Ecological interpretation of his work can be made. His art practice is elucidated by a passage in his own Master's dissertation (Oltmann 1984:31-2) and reveals much about the intended role of his works. He refers to certain artmaking practices, specifically those of artists such as Robert Smithson (most of whose work is to be found outdoors, away from the sheltered gallery space), wherein the artist chooses to play direct roles in nature; to live, experience and interact with it, not merely to represent it. Such works are 'in part a product of a dialectic between nature and art, the experience of which incorporates past time and future time into present awareness'. He further suggests, in reference to work by artists such as Charles Simmonds and Mary Miss, that this closeness to nature also has its roots in the interest shown recently by such artists in pre-industrial cultures that did not distinguish art activities from other aspects of their life and subsistence. Their cultivation of cultural relationships to the natural environment allows such artists to believe that the broad-based activity of pre-industrial cultures is still a relevant model.

Oltmann draws on practices, such as weaving, common to such pre-industrial cultures, with a clear awareness of their adoptions by and roles in more recent cultures. He simultaneously questions or reconciles imbalances in contemporary Western and South African cultures. He presents these imbalances as binary opposites which are redressed in dynamic relationships. This dynamic model has been likened to a Taoist, relational or Ecological model of reality as described by Capra. This research has also shown how Oltmann's and a viewer's interaction with his works is experiential in nature. This experience has been likened to that offered by Buddhist meditational practice- a practice which implies an experience of the world greatly relevant to Ecology. The simple mindfulness of the processes used in the creation of Oltmann's work can be seen as analogous to meditational practice, insofar as they generate a temporal and spatial experience of reality, an awareness of and a presence in the moment. Oltmann's 'dialectic between nature and art' takes the form of experiential, hand-crafted works whose construction and existence partake of reality by embracing uniquely each moment and its inherent impermanence, incorporating thus 'past time and future time into present awareness'. Such an awareness does not imply an ignorance of the social and moral conditions, nor of the beauty, of our world. Such an awareness does, however, imply a knowledge of one's true nature and position in the world in all senses. Clearly, Oltmann

demonstrates an awareness of these things. The simple, repetitive, slowly accumulative nature of his work indicates an ability to experience each stitch or turn freshly and mindfully so that patience is no longer an issue in such an undertaking. His works are clearly very beautiful and attempt in this way a redressing of many imbalances in Western and South African culture.

The importance of process and relationship has been presented here and likened to Capra's and Ecology's similar worldview which stresses the importance of relatedness and interconnection over the perception of separate and independent objects and ideas. Ultimately these ideas of Oltmann's are presented in an accessible, often very beautiful, cultural form. Through an accepted cultural practice, interpreted in a highly personal way, Oltmann's oeuvre addresses and mediates between many ideas, such as the relation between the genders, technologies, traditions, cultures, and between nature and culture, all of which are of seminal importance to Ecology. He redresses and mediates between these apparently antagonistic categories in a gentle, mindful and highly committed way, attempting to leave this experience accessible to the viewer of his work, who is free also to interpret these evocative sculptures in a personal way.

1. When Oltmann was first approached about this research, he wasn't too clear or confident that his work could easily be discussed in this way, stating that he wasn't 'sure what you mean by Ecology' (personal correspondence, Oltmann, February 1995). But as correspondence proceeded and we discussed our common interest in artists such as Robert Smithson and Andy Goldsworthy whose works are clearly concerned with aspects of Ecology, he became confident that such an interpretation could be made. (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995).
2. See for example Lippard 1983.
3. This extension of a dualistic model of the world to include *nature* and *culture* was a connection which I at first became aware of in Ecological texts (Devall 1985:65-66) which I adopted in order to discuss artmaking in this way. Later I found it to be present in other discussions of human culture and its products, in for example an essay entitled 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture', (Ortner 1973). Here Ortner also draws comparisons with a Taoist model of the universe.
4. *Gabions* are the stone-filled wire structures, often placed on banks or roadsides to help control erosion and waterflow. They are a common site along South African roads.
5. The term *pre-industrial* refers to aboriginal or native cultures, often African cultures in Oltmann's case. What is relevant to Oltmann's interest in the products of these cultures is the original function and status of them in their respective societies.
6. All that is written here with regards Buddhism, unless otherwise stated, was learned at either of the two retreats I attended at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in November 1994 and October 1995.
7. Oltmann referred to a book 'Red Gold of Africa' (Eugenia, W.H. 1984 Red Gold of Africa: Copper in Pre-colonial History and Culture Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin), whose central theme, he claimed, is the value and worth of copper all through the history of Africa, hypothesizing that it was the most valued metal on the continent. Oltmann is presently conducting research on the use of wire in the construction and restoration of artifacts in African material culture. He has travelled in South Africa and to Europe to see and research objects made and restored in this way (personal interview, Oltmann, April 1995). This research has perhaps led to Oltmann's more recent use of bronze casting in the production of some sculptures ('Hand Bells', 1995), copper being the main metal employed in the making of bronze.
8. The Bronze Age preceded the Iron Age, copper and tin being easier to extract from their ores than iron.
9. These processes were employed in the life and subsistence of pre-industrial cultures. Their cultural function, role and status

is important here, especially in relation to how these sorts of processes are employed and perceived in contemporary Western culture.

10. This is not to suggest that either Oltmann or I consider this just or prescriptive.

11. An important Canadian Ecophilosopher, Neal Evernden, in a similar tone, identifies this idea (1985:29) when he asserts that of greatest value to the environmental movement are people who will attest to their experience of the world (my emphasis). He suggests thus that an experiential relationship with the world is as valid as any intellectual or scientific perception or knowledge.

12. This is a phrase to which I was introduced in my instruction in Buddhist Meditation practice and the development of mindfulness. It is discussed later at greater length.

13. This idea was suggested to me in correspondence with Oltmann (February 1995) when he discussed briefly the work of Andy Goldsworthy, David Nash and Wolfgang Laib. 'I am drawn to their works and find their interventions in nature highly evocative'. It struck me that Oltmann's participation in (and invitation to a viewer to participate in) the previously discussed rhythms within a cultural form, like sculpture in an art gallery, is an intervention of a kind too. That his work addresses specific cultural issues seems to further reinforce the perception of his works as 'interventions in culture'. Whereas Goldsworthy's work inherently addresses issues of time and natural cycles in the conventional realm of nature, ie. the landscape, Oltmann's work, in terms of my interpretation, approaches and partakes of these issues in a more traditional cultural arena- that of fine art in a gallery space.

14. The quote is from personal correspondence with Oltmann. The idea that this sort of time experience is at odds with present-day experience of time is developed in an interesting book entitled 'The Metronomic Society: Natural Rhythms and Human Timetables' (Young 1988). Although the book is not entirely applicable to this research, the central theme is the unhealthy linear, logocentric approach to time which characterizes contemporary Western culture. It examines the natural cyclical nature of time and just how much of our world and culture works on this sort of a basis. The book emphasizes a need for a balance or medium between these two differing aspects of the nature of time.

15. All observations on Buddhist meditational practice are based on the candidate's own instruction, experience and accumulated knowledge through personal discussions with other practitioners. Instruction in Buddhist meditational practice was received at the Buddhist Retreat Centre at the previously mentioned weekends spent there.

16. Coiling is a basket-weaving technique whereby successive rings of a fibre are bound to one another with another piece of fibre to create a form in a spiral-like fashion. In Oltmann's case wire is bound to itself in this way by wire of a smaller gauge. 'Cones', 1984, is an early work which was made very simply in this way.

17. I am not sure of a reference for this. It is a memory I have and seem to long have known it. I have heard the tale told often as an explanation for the fear which some black South Africans have for the chameleon. Apparently this myth is common to the Nguni, BaSotho and other southern African groups.

18. Although a chameleon is obviously motivated by its survival instinct, its motions appear slow and contemplative. This way of acting and moving is obviously very effective and clearly quite successful, but we are concerned here with a human perception of the creature and its movements, and thus, I believe it is justifiable in this discourse to attribute such qualities to the creature.

19. The use of this term seems to invite a comparison with the Buddhist idea of enlightenment although I am not sure it is appropriate. Stephen Batchelor suggests (Batchelor, M. 1992:34) that enlightenment is not 'some mystical state where visions of unearthly bliss unfold, but a series of responses to the question: how am I to live in this world?'. The practice of meditation is held as the cornerstone to these realizations. Perhaps then in the sense that Oltmann's work offers an experience akin to that of Buddhist meditational practice, this comparison can be made.

20. Beading is a technique which he has introduced recently in his work using copper wire. The central column of 'Mediator', 1995 is covered in a chevron-like pattern of short lengths of copper tubing employed as bugle beads. A lacework-type technique was employed in the weaving of 'Lace Mitt', 1995. The coiling technique used in a large proportion of his work, beginning with 'Cones', 1984, is derived from a basket-weave.

21. It does seem significant that these processes, especially the traditionally feminine ones, are adopted by a male, but this is not to suggest that they are lent credibility by this, only that the status of them is questioned by a member of the gender allegedly responsible for this marginalization.

22. These images are found in works which are not examined in depth here: 'Hat Box', 1994 and 'Hand Bells', 1995 and 'Ink Stand' 1995. The hat-stand refers to 'Mediator', 1993-4.

23. The dualistic relationship between interior and exterior is examined in depth in the discussion of Andries Botha's work, especially as it relates very clearly to the Taoist model of the world as interpreted by Capra.

24. Such processes are labelled *entropic* because of their need to be repeatedly performed, often involving ordering or organizing things which inevitably become disordered or soiled (Capra 1982:245). Cooking, washing and cleaning are some examples, the importance of which is obvious. That these tasks are accorded an unfairly low status is not to say that with their proper status they should still be performed by racial minorities or women as discussed in the paragraph to which this endnote refers.

25. The use of the word *entropic* is fortunate in the sense that entropy is something which Oltmann's works consciously and inherently embrace. *Entropy* denotes the natural and unavoidable tendency of objects and systems to proceed into arrangements of ever-decreasing order and organization. Corrosion and decay are some of the causes of such re-organization and redistribution of energy. Robert Smithson, Oltmann's interest in whom has already been noted, also explored this phenomenon.

26. An amendment is necessary here in the South African context where so-called entropic processes are often performed by a racial majority.

27. I am reminded here of the Buddhist idea of mindfulness in every task we perform. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk whose teachings are very well known in the West, talks at length about mindfulness in the undertaking of everyday tasks. In his typically light-hearted but profound way he writes (1990:52) 'Washing the dishes is at the same time a means and an end- that is not only do we do the dishes in order to have clean dishes, we also do the dishes just to do the dishes and live fully in each moment while washing them'. Attaching such importance and worth to everyday tasks immediately changes their value and role in our lives.

28. This essay appears in the 1974 text edited by M. Z. Rosaldo and I. Lamphere.

ANDRIES BOTHA: BALANCE AND CYCLES OF CHANGE

This chapter is an examination of the recent work of Andries Botha and, like the analysis of Oltmann's work, it will be discussed in terms of its relation to Ecology and new cultural paradigms. However, Botha's work will be seen, in particular, as bearing a slightly closer relationship to Capra's writing.¹ This is due largely to the fact that Botha has read and is familiar with The Turning Point (personal interview, April 1995). Although Botha claims his work was not directly influenced by this book, he concedes its importance to him, claiming that on reading this book he found a congruence with many ideas of his own. He cites as particularly relevant to him Capra's model of the world, especially his view of human culture, as being constructed of dynamically related polar opposites- a Taoist or relational model. Although Botha claims he has not yet directly addressed issues of Ecology, he was happy for his work to be analysed in this manner and thought it quite feasible that such an interpretation could be made (personal interview, April 1995). Further research revealed more connections between Botha's work and the ideas which Capra discusses. For example, in his contribution to the 1991 Standard Bank Young Artist Award catalogue, Adam Small refers to the work of E.F. Schumacher². Schumacher³ was an important influence to Fritjof Capra, and I discuss Botha's work in relation to some aspects of Schumacher's writings. My examination of Botha's work draws on many diverse sources, some of which he is familiar with, others of which he is not, but he acknowledges that there are ideas and elements in his work of which he is not consciously aware due to the intuitive and subconscious nature of his working method. Botha acknowledges thus the validity and value of personal interpretations of his sculptures (Botha 1995, S.A.F. lecture).

The sculptures that will be examined in most depth are Botha's large constructed pieces with most attention given to 'Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...', exhibited first in 1990 (fig.9). This work is the earliest of those I will discuss and, I will contend, articulates much of what is relevant to this Ecological discourse and further provides a useful framework for viewing his subsequent sculptures. His smaller bronze works will be discussed insofar as they continue and relate to the dialogue initiated by the constructed works. These works were all produced for and exhibited at Botha's 1991 Standard Bank Young Artist Award exhibition. However, one of his more recent works, 'The Dance', (fig.13) completed in 1995 as part of a larger

continuing epic piece and first exhibited during the Africus 1995 Johannesburg Biennale, will also be analysed.

When experiencing most of Botha's sculptures, one is immediately confronted with their immense scale and size and with the large amount of work required for their production. The size of the works is physically challenging to both Botha himself and to the viewer. This scale and the sense of the vast amount of labour required in their production lends to these works a very strong presence. It is from this point that this research proceeds; it shall be examined how intimately the work inherent in the making of Botha's sculptures is related to his choice of images and materials and how the pieces are a unique amalgam of all these factors and the ideas they explore.

'Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...', 1991 is the first work which generated, on my part, a deep interest in his work. It is also, incidentally, a sculpture which Botha regards as particularly important to him, one which he says he will never sell (personal interview, April 1995). The work is constructed from leadwood, thatching grass and metal and consists of two anthropomorphic figures, one earth-bound and rough-hewn, the other graceful, acrobatic and airborne. The earth-bound figure is made from small shards of leadwood bolted onto an underlying frame, this frame being left visible in some places. This figure seems to be formed from earth, its⁴ arms subsumed by its body; chin and shoulders are on the ground while its knees, in a crawling fashion, struggle to propel it forwards. Botha refers to this figure as 'grovelling' (Botha 1995, Ferguson interview). At the same time as seemingly being overwhelmed by gravity and mass, this dark figure seems to be waking or rising from the ground with an immanent force and energy. This figure owes as much for its origin to Nelson Makhuba's 'Nebuchadnezzar' (Rankin 1991:11) as to Blake's figure of the same title (personal interview, April 1995). Above this figure, seemingly about to enter it through its crown, is the lighter airborne figure apparently engaged in some sort of an acrobatic feat. This figure is made from lightly coloured thatching grass, thatched onto the inside of a metal armature. This figure seems to be plunging downwards, yet leaping lightly or pirouetting over the prone figure. This slightly over-lifesize figure is graceful, athletic and delicately poised.

What is clearly defined in these figures is counterbalanced by less clearly specified features and aspects, and these are equally important in their reading. On examination it appears how clearly parallels can be drawn between Botha's sculpture and Capra's cultural model of the world. Botha's sculpture and Capra's writings both articulate a view of the world and culture as being composed of constantly fluctuating dynamic relationships between opposing but complementary qualities and elements. Capra's views are founded specifically in the ancient philosophy of Taoism, while Botha's seem however to be founded more on intuition and acute observation. Botha, in his sculptures, sets up such relationships of opposing qualities, or attributes, in the realization of a work, but these opposing qualities are interpenetrating and interdependent, each extreme containing elements of its opposite. Taoism contends that all manifestations of the *Tao* are generated by the dynamic interplay of these two archetypal poles, or images of opposites, taken from nature and from the social or cultural life of humans.⁵ No natural or cultural phenomena manifest qualities of either the *yin* or *yang* exclusively. This interplay and interdependence of opposites will be shown to penetrate all aspects - the images, processes and materials - of Botha's work.

His works, Botha contends, do not provide answers or resolutions for himself or others, but they do ask questions and suggest possibilities (personal interview, April 1995). That his works pose questions thus, without giving clearly or categorically defined answers or moralization, further allows them to be given a Taoist interpretation. Central to the Taoist idea that Capra adopts is the fact that the Chinese never ascribe moral value to either *yin* or *yang* qualities, only describing as moral the dynamic balance of the two, in opposition to imbalance which is seen to be harmful (Capra 1981:186). Balance is characterised by a dynamic, slowly fluctuating relationship between the two, while imbalance exhibits lack of growth and dynamism in this relationship.

The use of the pronoun *it* in discussing the figures which comprise 'Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...' is relevant in that it is difficult to assign any specific gender to either figure. If we do, we catch ourselves acting on questionable assumptions. The higher, acrobatic figure seems to be female, but on inspection has no telling female anatomy, only gracefulness, which is a quality we erroneously only ascribe to the female. Similarly, we assume the earthbound figure to be masculine, which, except for its muscular mass (a cliché of

masculinity), is also given no distinguishing anatomy. Further obscuring categorization is the traditional association of the feminine with the earth and the masculine with the transcendental, which would seem to assign an inverted gender distinction to the figures.⁶

Botha seems to explore this connection between women and the earth in another work 'alleenspraak in Paradys', exhibited in 1991 (fig. 10). In this work a less ambiguous depiction of a woman finds form in the bolted tyre construction of the prone female figure, who is attended in a ritualistic way by an animal and a, possibly male, attendant. Her horizontality and contours echo the Kwazulu-Natal landscape, fecund and fertile, and her darkness speaks of Africa and earth.⁷ Rankin suggests that (1991:12) this is Botha's only sculpture, from his 1991 body of work, which refutes the symbiotic balance between male and female principles. She contends that here the female is favoured. The prone form of the female figure, in relation to the more masculine, vertical attendant figure, does however relate it back to 'Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...'. Further, the bolting process employed in her making also recalls this sculpture. I would suggest that this bolting technique as well as the tough, resistant material (tyre) does contribute somewhat to negating sexual categorization. Clearly though, in 'Genesis...'⁸ the figure springing lightly over a heavier mass is reminiscent of images of Minoan acrobats and bulldancers⁹ found in the palace of Knossos on Crete. This unusual culture has been described as one of the last surviving matriarchal cultures of the Aegean basin.¹⁰ In relation to this stands the Christian iconography of the aforementioned Nebuchadnezzar images of Makhuba and Blake. The patriarchy common to many contemporary interpretations of Christianity is widely discussed in opposition to the matriarchy of earlier European cultures in Ecological discourse as well as by Riane Eisler (Eisler 1988:130).

Aside from the non-specific gender definitions which fluctuate between the two, each of the figures in 'Genesis...' contains or embraces similar contrasts within itself. The heavy lower figure, as mentioned before, appears to be simultaneously collapsing under its own weight and expanding or rising to find fruition in another form. The upper figure on the other hand seems to be simultaneously plunging into and pirouetting over the other. Further, each figure contains elements of contraction and expansion, of responsiveness and aggression, and each maintains these qualities in relation to the presence of its opposite in the other. These are

qualities which Capra clearly assigns to the *yin* and *yang* of the Tao, which he believes to be very close to the original values assigned to these opposing yet interdependent aspects of reality by the Chinese (1981:186). Therefore, as well as the whole sculpture articulating what I interpret as a Taoist vision of reality, each of its constituent parts exhibits a similar reciprocal relationship within itself. This draws further comparisons with Taoism which states that every single manifestation of reality is characterised by such dynamically related pairs.¹¹

This point introduces another set of contrasts which 'Genesis...' embraces: that of interior/exterior. Immediately one can see this in the way in which the work is constructed. The wooden elements are bolted onto a metal armature, which they thus contain, while the grass is thatched onto the inside of, and contained by, a similar armature. The idea of containment is investigated; not just containment of materials but also of energy, which threatens to engulf or explode either figure. This interior/exterior pairing is as much metaphorical as literal, and can be expressed as a matching of contractive and expansive principles- a pair of opposing attributes which Capra reiterates as central to Taoism.¹² Botha refers to the external as physical or brutal in opposition to the internal which he suggests rather depicts the more spiritual aspects of human nature (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview). As much as the upper figure is diving into the crown of the lower figure which welcomes it, the lower figure seems also to hold it at bay, or to suspend it at the point of entering. While the diving figure is ready to enter or animate the one below in an almost aggressive fashion, in doing so, it would face the threat of being smothered or entrapped.

This dialogue of interior/exterior is also present in 'Baptism for the fallen... and those taken darkly', 1991 (fig.11), this duality being evident in both the construction and in the images themselves. The ocean, or flood on or in which the tableau takes place, is made of grass stitched onto the interior of a metal armature. This 'water' threatens both to engulf and to suspend or carry the two figures and the fish which holds the more feminine figure in its mouth. The fish appears to be at once swallowing and regurgitating this figure. This introduces themes of birth and rebirth or death (Rankin 1991:12). The use of 'Baptism' in the title reiterates this ambiguity, suggesting some sort of initiation, at once life-affirming and threatening. Botha notes that this work addresses the idea of the mythical flood that occurs almost universally in a variety of cultures and mythologies (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview).

The flood occurs at a time of spiritual crisis where, as well as destroying, it cleanses, nourishes and purifies. The swallowing or regurgitating fish recalls the myth of Jonah and the whale. The fish thus stands as a symbol of both destruction, in its devouring, and of rebirth as in this myth of Jonah. The fish is constructed of aluminium colddrink can tops which are stitched onto a mesh framework. The face-down figure, presumably male, is constructed from small sheets of metal which are stitched around the tracery of an armature, blurring or treading the middle line between interior and exterior. The female figure, on the other hand, is constructed of a wire framework, similarly ambiguous in this dialogue between interior and exterior and, by extension, in the meditation on birth and death which this work initiates. Botha, as was mentioned earlier, talks also of interior and exterior as they refer to the spiritual and brutal or physical respectively (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview), the interdependence of the two being clearly evident in the finely balanced and delicately juxtapositioned figures which constitute 'Genesis...'. This balance or interdependent relationship in the work is evident both in the ideas which it addresses and in its composition and other formal qualities.

'Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers', 1991 (fig.12) addresses the idea of sacrifice, in both a South African and universal context (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview). This work comprises a construction of three merging anthropomorphic figures. The front figure is made of bolted leadwood appearing to collapse and exhaling what could be a final breath. This figure is being supported, or perhaps attacked, by the figure behind, made of wattle bound into a metal framework (This ambiguous role is analogous to that played by the water in 'Baptism...' where there is likewise an ambiguity between the sustaining and destructive nature and role of this third party). This group is attended from above by an angel or bird or fish-like figure, fashioned from a wire framework. Botha claims (1991, Ferguson interview) that the front figure is the 'Slagoffer' or sacrifice of the title. Emerging from this collapsing figure's face is a large spiralled proboscis-like form, possibly depicting a final expiration or last breath, which is made from mesh covered in wax. This element is solid-walled but transparent, it is the interior made exterior, or the spiritual made physical and material (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview). In this sense it could be seen as the manifestation of a sacrifice made for 'higher values' (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview). The pietà-like quality and pathos of the work recalls not only Christ's sacrifice (Rankin 1991:12)

for such values but many other less specific sacrifices, spiritual, political and personal. In relation to Botha himself, perhaps this expiration can be read in terms of the creative process being the externalising of the internal. This issue will be further addressed later in this discussion.

The relationship between birth and death, or birth and rebirth, raised in discussion of 'Baptism...' is also addressed metaphorically in Botha's work. It can be looked at closely in relation to Capra's ideas about Western culture's¹³ current period of transformation, from a culture which places excessive emphasis on aggressive, destructive, expansive and logical principles, to one which acknowledges the equal value of co-operation, responsiveness, tradition and intuition. This process can be seen as analogous to a process of death and rebirth. Botha speaks of the 'inherent chaos' which underlies the dynamic relationship of opposing principles and human behaviour (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview). He talks of this chaos manifesting itself cyclically in imbalances, suggesting for instance that beneath the segregational ideologies of apartheid lay a universal darkness which appears 'secretly' or covertly 'in society from time to time' (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview). This appears to be very closely related to Capra's cyclical model of Western society in which periods of prosperity and decline manifest themselves in a likewise cyclical manner. The 'darkness' to which Botha refers is easily likened to the prescribed predominance in the West of aggressive *yang* values. By extension a balance between this 'darkness' and its opposite is just as likely; I would suggest that the dissolution of apartheid can be seen as a redressing of the above imbalance. A new relationship, or balance, between these opposing principles is expressed in the counterpoise of the two figures in 'Genesis...'. Nebuchadnezzar, according to Botha, is a figure who was haunted by his past, fearing that it would inevitably repeat itself in his future (Botha 1991, Ferguson interview). The hard, tortured surface of the slow-growing leadwood (resulting from the harsh environment in which it grows) from which this figure is constructed reflects such torment and struggle. This is held in balance by the lightness of the thatching grass of the figure above, with its promise of seasonal renewal and new growth. So while Nebuchadnezzar embraces the cyclical recurrence of the abovementioned 'darkness', the other figure holds promise of the similar recurrence of its opposite. The title of this work refers to the idea of beginnings too. 'Genesis' refers to both the creation and beginning of the earth and humanity, while 'Jesus' refers to the beginning of Christianity and

the respective values which have exerted a strong influence on some of the views which characterise Western and South African culture. That two separate beginning points are juxtaposed in this title could refer to the abovementioned recurrent cycles, and is perhaps alluded to in the repetition of 'Genesis'. Capra suggests that Western culture is currently in the midst of such a rebirth or new beginning, transforming itself into a culture with greater awareness of the seminal principles of Ecology, such as the oneness and interdependence of all phenomena.

The two contrasting construction techniques employed in 'Genesis...' are as essential a part of its reading as any other, in terms of their appearance and the metaphor, meaning and history they inherently embody. These processes and materials are chosen very carefully and specifically by Botha for these reasons, both in this work and all others (personal interview, April 1995). Both techniques used in the construction of this piece are repetitive, craft-derived processes. They do, however, have differing cultural origins and associations. Thatching is a process which evolved in many parts of the world- a simple weaving process and one which is quite commonly seen in South Africa, especially in Kwazulu-Natal. This technique was encountered by Botha visiting Bulwer as a young boy and then later in other areas of the Drakensberg at a crucial time in his artistic development (Rankin 1991:7). Thatching is a process which I have observed carried out by both Zulu men and women, but weaving in general is a process which we would tend to associate with women rather than with men.¹⁴ It is relevant however that this process is not clearly attributable to members of either sex.¹⁵ However, I would suggest that the gentle, repetitive nature of the thatching process and its association with contemporary practices such as sewing would tend to relate it to qualities considered feminine in contemporary culture, and I shall examine the work from this view.¹⁶ The bolting process employed in the construction of the lower figure is something we would tend to label as a masculine activity. This becomes particularly relevant when we consider Botha's past occupation as a ganger on the railways (Rankin 1991:4). The hard leadwood is similar in appearance and hardness to the sorts of woods used to make railway sleepers. The process of bolting is aggressive, the piercing or drilling required to make holes in the wood seems a particularly masculine process (This task can probably correctly be assumed to be performed exclusively by males in the laying and repair of railway lines). The sleek, piercing pose and appearance of the upper figure, however, stands

in relation to the soft, yielding quality of the lower. Again the possible polarizations hold each other in a dynamic balance. Botha himself says that the display of gender is an unnecessary polarization when talking of humanity (1991, Ferguson interview). I would interpret this as meaning that one polar quality, principle or aspect of culture or humanity only exists in relation to and in juxtaposition with its opposite. Referring exclusively to one gender in such a context therefore implies, in essence, something which cannot exist.

The issue of gender remains seminal to an interpretation of Botha's work, and it is one which pervades almost all of his sculptures. In accordance with his above statement, Botha seldom ascribes unambiguous gender distinctions to his figures. In a more recent work, 'The Dance', 1995 (fig.13), Botha addresses this issue directly. It must be noted that this piece is part of a larger epic sculpture which is still in progress. It therefore cannot be fully interpreted in isolation, since other elements will obviously set up resonances within and contribute meaningfully to it, just as this element will do the same to them. This sculpture comprises two lifesize figures locked in a dance. They are set on a revolving pedestal. Again, at first, gender distinctions seem easy to make, but on closer inspection several questions arise. The so-called male figure wears a top hat and suit made of small stitched pieces of galvanised iron covering his woven cane body. In opposition to this, the other figure wears a dress of mesh and wax and has skin and hair woven of cane and sisal respectively. These distinctions seem to clearly depict gender, yet on closer inspection there is no clear male or female anatomy. The 'female' figure has no breasts and the 'male' has a slightly swollen, almost pregnant belly and a body which seems altogether soft. Botha says that this belly speaks of 'the fecundity of man' (personal interview, April 1995), as opposed to the clichéd toughness and virility of man in Western art and society. The 'female' figure appears lithe, tough and sinewy, as opposed to the more conventional soft and voluptuous depiction of women in Western art and society. The soft roundness and sensitivity of the 'male' figure is clad in hard iron clothes, unable to express itself, while the tough assertiveness of the 'female' figure is disguised by the flowing lines of the dress which seems almost to drag her down. Thus this work speaks, on one level, of the burden and restrictiveness of gender roles. Here, opposing qualities - tough and yielding, hard and soft, aggressive and responsive - are married in an eternal dance, at once co-operative, competitive and possibly destructive. This is the underlying chaos and marriage of opposites which animates our world, the causes of which,

Botha claims (1991, Ferguson interview), his Standard Bank Young Artist exhibition sought to explore.

I have already discussed some of the images, from Nelson Makhuba and William Blake, which bear relevance to or provided precedents for Botha's 'Genesis...'. As well as these particular works being important, so too are the traditions or cultures from which they stem. Important here is the fact that Makhuba's work provides a South African precedent and Blake a European one. Makhuba's work provides a further precedent in that it is an African interpretation of a European theme and image. The European aspects of Botha's image has other precedents in images from the Renaissance. Rankin expresses it thus (1991:11): 'Genesis...' recalls 'not only Biblical iconography, but the actual compositions of Renaissance art where the Godhead swoops down to perform His latest act of creation' (The culmination of this, perhaps, is the Godhead's recreation of self in Jesus Christ, referred to in the title of Botha's work). The delicate touch of the fingers of the leaping figure on the crown of the other recalls for me the delicate contact between God and Adam in Michelangelo's 'Creation of Adam' on the Sistine ceiling. It was in fact a book on the sculptures of Michelangelo, encountered in the home of a friend, that made the young Botha determined to become a sculptor (Rankin 1991:4). This act of creation is clearly echoed in Botha's reference, in this work, to the act of creation in the production of this sculpture. Botha believes (personal interview, April 1995) that the exploration of both personal and cultural issues and constructs is essential to the creation of a relevant or pertinent artwork.¹⁷ These two aspects which characterise such a work play a role in its conception, but are reciprocally often discovered in the realization of the sculpture. By cultural 'constructs' Botha, I would suggest, means the formative values, beliefs and practices within a particular culture. This is not unlike what Capra describes as social or cultural 'paradigms'. Botha believes an exploration of such constructs essential to an understanding of ourselves and of our culture (personal interview, April 1995). It is important to note here that Botha speaks of a work as arising from relationships or groups of constructs. No work stands as an object independent of these and no 'good' (see endnote 16) work exists without them (Botha 1995, S.A.F. lecture). In 'Genesis...' Botha fuses the South African and the European in both a personal and cultural way by speaking of issues as they affect him personally and how they inform aspects of South African culture¹⁸ and identity. Botha assimilates his own ancestral

origins in Europe and South Africa as well as the lessons and traditions of European and African sculpture and tradition. In this way his work speaks of the different traditions which inform our South African culture. The respective media which he employs are also chosen for this reason.

It is interesting here to look at the small bronzes, all of 1991, that were developed from and relate closely to the larger constructions 'Genesis...' and 'alleenspraak...'. These are entitled 'The fear of Gods' (fig.14) which was developed from 'Genesis...'; and 'Icons and other playthings' (fig.15) and '...a delicate moment in history' (fig.16), which both relate to 'alleenspraak...'. In the bronzes gender and other distinctions are much easier for a viewer to make. The grovelling Nebuchadnezzar figure is clearly male and the acrobatic figure is obviously female, while the features of the prone figure in 'Icons...' define her more clearly as African.¹⁹ Botha says (1991, Ferguson interview) that the nature and the history of the bronze medium allows him to investigate the particular as opposed to the general which he addresses in his large constructed works. The same medium used throughout a work creates a kind of coherence in its presentation which allows for difference and relatedness to be explored in other ways. It allows for elements, figures for example, to contain more distinguishing and distinct features because they are more clearly related and similar in formal terms or merely more similar in appearance. Additionally the medium of bronze carries with it both an African and European metaphor, history and meaning. Botha reminds us (personal interview, April 1995) that bronze casting has as much history in Africa²⁰ as in Europe, although we are more likely to question its use by a contemporary African than European artist. Thus he is able to investigate some of the same issues which his constructions address without their complex and varied methods of construction. In doing this, Botha forces us to question our views on traditional craft and Western artmaking and the status attached to these respectively.

A further pair of related opposites found in 'Genesis...' is that of art and craft. These relate closely to the adaptation of European and African traditions to Botha's sculptural process. This has been extensively explored in relation to Oltmann's work and has been discussed to some extent here as far as it relates to gender roles, but requires further elaboration. Firstly, the materials which Botha chooses are not those traditionally used in terms of a Western

concept of high art production; or if they are, they are not used by him in the traditional way of their origin. Wood has long been employed in the production of sculptures, but only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has it been used in construction rather than in carving. Metal, as well, has only in the twentieth century been used in the construction rather than just the casting of sculpture.²¹ Thatching grass has always had a completely functional use, while wood and steel have been used in the construction of utilitarian objects and other crafts. Botha notes (personal interview, April 1995) that 'high culture' has always limited its media to a few traditions to which a particular status has always been attached. Botha rather turns to the materials or media which to him carry the right metaphor, meaning and history, and to which he responds intuitively. Tyre, as much as relating to rural African adaptation to Western materials (as in the manufacture of tyre sandals or 'izimbadada' by Zulu-speaking people, Rankin 1991:9), was chosen for its power as a sculptural medium, which he became aware of through seeing the tyre debris scattered along the local highways (personal interview, April 1995). The aforementioned prone figure from 'alleenspraak in Paradys' is given power, volume and mass by the use of tyre. This too gives a fresh, contemporary, particularly South African interpretation to the Western tradition²² of the female nude as well as to the adaptation of traditional craft processes in the inclusion of tyre. Botha responded to the toughness and resilience of the material, as well as to its political import from its use in the notorious necklace murders of the apartheid era (Rankin 1991:9). In the adoption of craft-related processes Botha narrows the gap between high culture and everyday life (personal interview, April 1995), making 'elite' high art objects from common and familiar materials and processes. He concedes also that he would be happy if he were remembered only as a craftsman (personal interview, 1995), revealing thus a great reverence for crafts and high quality workmanship. Botha claims that working within a tradition, by definition (and because of the existential needs which stimulate the development of such traditions, I would suggest), brings a great richness of metaphor, beauty and simplicity.

As mentioned above, Botha works not only strictly with so-called traditional craft but with contemporary interpretations thereof too. The simultaneous use of strictly traditional and contemporary craft techniques within the context of high art production obscures the boundaries between art and craft and between high and popular culture. This is analogous to the lack of distinction between art and craft in pre-industrial cultures. These sets of

polarities are maintained by Botha in a balance in the same way that African and Western traditions are offset against each other in his work.

Botha's works further address tradition in that he examines technologies insofar as they relate to him personally and to contemporary Western and South African culture and identity. As with other issues in his work, Botha offers no answers but poses questions and hints at possibilities. The bolting technique used in 'Genesis...' and 'alleenspraak...' relates to such things as the laying and maintenance of railway lines, an activity with which he is obviously familiar through personal experience. Thatching too bears a particular personal as well as more general cultural relevance to Botha. These two techniques can be viewed as representative of industrial and traditional technologies respectively, which relate equally strongly to personal issues and constructs; as mentioned before, the bolted leadwood clearly refers to Botha's employment on the railways while a student, but can be seen more generally as an industrial technology. In 'Genesis...' one technology is not given favour or preference over the other, but the two are rather placed in a balanced relationship, considering thus a balanced application of both. It is important to note the cultural origins of the traditional technology employed in his work, especially within our South African context. The sorts of processes he employs, such as basketry and weaving, are processes which belong to a marginalised or 'neglected cultural tradition' (personal interview, April 1995) in South Africa, namely, an indigenous craft tradition. Capra's discussion of this sort of work has already been mentioned in discussion of Oltmann's adoption of such techniques. Capra suggests (1982:245) that such work, which he calls 'entropic' and is most often performed by racial minorities and women, is accorded unjustifiably low status, especially given its real importance (Capra does not suggest that these jobs should only be performed by women or racial minorities. Also, a special adaptation of Capra's theory is necessary in South Africa since such work was and largely still is performed by a racial majority, not minority). A white South African male employing such processes in the production of fine art, without irony or detachment, reasserts the true status or value of such activities in culture (personal interview, April 1995). This is not to suggest that their being performed by a white male lends them credibility or status, but that his particular feeling towards them and his consequent respectful employment of such techniques offers them a more fitting status. The presence of these erstwhile marginalised cultural traditions, in the accepted high status

practice of fine art production, alters their cultural status appropriately. The value and sovereignty of modern Western technology is almost unquestioned in our culture. I believe that, without moralizing, Botha's work challenges its unquestioned application, keeping it in check with pre-industrial technology, at least in his work if not in life.

A discussion of the various traditions and technologies which inform Botha's work is not complete without an examination of the work and labour which is so integral a part of all of his sculptures. Botha's works are distinguished by the intensity of labour and the fine skills employed in their making. He believes (personal interview, April 1995) that the value and role of labour is often misrepresented or underestimated today. Making things by means of labour and hard work is an activity as old as homo sapiens, he asserts. In our technological age things are made fast and economically and they can thus be alienating to their viewers or users. Botha questions our relationship with made objects. Creating his 'marks of beauty and permanence' (personal interview, April 1995) with a strong human presence, or with the presence of human hands, he provides alternatives to objects made quickly and economically. He believes that the presence of such labour and energy is a very powerful experience for a viewer today. He suggests (personal interview, April 1995) that such slow, laborious work might not, today, seem financially viable in that it takes too long to offer adequate 'returns'.²³ Botha often employs traditional craftspeople to carry out some of the work in his sculptures.²⁴ That his 'style' is not distinguishable from that of his assistants suggests a humility²⁵ and adherence to craft principles, and acknowledges thus their great richness of beauty, economy and metaphor.

Botha believes that in order to understand ourselves and our respective cultures we need to do what we are best at; for creative people such as himself, that is creating (personal interview, April 1995). Botha searches for personal and cultural constructs and meaning 'by way of his concepts, his images, his materials... his techniques: in a word, by way of his person as it is at work' (Small 1991:16). Small is discussing Botha here in relation to an explanation by E.F. Schumacher (Schumacher 1979:114 (Small's reference)) of what he calls 'good work'. Schumacher is here asserting the value of traditional wisdom in the face of Western culture's arrogance which dismisses the entirety of traditional wisdom as 'pre-scientific' and therefore redundant. I refer here to traditional wisdom in light of the value

placed on it by Capra and by Deep Ecology as discussed in the first chapter, and also in view of the strong influence Schumacher had on Capra in his writing The Turning Point.²⁶ Small suggests that the 'sound artist is a "good" worker' (Small 1991:15) and that Botha's humility in the face of indigenous traditions and his belief in hard work inherently makes him such a 'good' worker. Small contends that Botha inserts himself into his 'indigenous time and space' and into a much 'wider reality' which he does by a 'rubbing of shoulders... with "traditional wisdom" ' with a diversity that includes Egyptian, Greek, Indian, Chinese and Zulu sources. Small says that 'traditional wisdom', in Botha's sense, encompasses and includes that tapped from industrial sources (Small 1991:16). Botha's search for a self-identity, personally, culturally and universally, leads him on a journey through all the processes, materials, technologies, and traditions which he considers meaningful and formative (personal interview, April 1995). He believes that self-realization achieved in this way, by exploring one's identity and doing what one is best at, cannot but develop compassion²⁷ in a person (personal interview, April 1995).

The issue of time or the presence of a particular moment in Botha's work is, I believe, crucial to the understanding of its relationship to our own context, albeit personal, cultural or universal. Botha's sculptures always articulate a crucial and poignant moment, his figures perhaps appearing to be suspended between two other moments. Small suggests (1991:15) that Botha's sculptures exist between hope and tragedy. Botha often mentions the word 'pathos' (1991, Ferguson interview) in describing the figures which animate his sculptures and the situations in which they present themselves.²⁸ I would suggest that such a term well describes the feeling which permeates and pervades the uncertain moments of his sculptures. We see this moment in the counterpoise of the two figures in 'Genesis', in the tragic beauty of the sacrifice in 'Sluipmoordenaars...' and in the flow of the honorary or funerary gauze drape in 'alleenspraak...'. What has happened just previously and what is to happen next is not clearly or unambiguously described in the moment which Botha depicts. Botha is not prescriptive, but poetic and questioning. It is this moment, made up of so many others and implicit of so many possibilities, literally in the obsessive repetitiveness of the techniques employed in its creation, and metaphorically in its South African and universal resonance, that Botha creates. This crucial and poignant moment, and presence therein, pregnant with meaning and feeling, is the moment of creativity, conception and creation, caught in its

intimate, delicate balance. Here, the internal or spiritual is made external and visible, as in the expiring breath of the martyred figure in 'Sluipmoordenaars...', manifesting itself in a spiral- a natural concentration of energy (personal interview, April 1995). This spiral reappears as a mask-like object in one of the bronzes developed from this work- 'Some thoughts on loneliness' (fig. 17)- having been discarded, or about to be donned, by one of the two lovers who seem ready to both fuse and dematerialize, to make love or to transcend their earthly existence. In distilling this moment or occurrence from everyday reality and existence, Botha finds the spiritual in the physical and external and in creating his sculpture, he makes the spiritual physical and external. The opposing qualities with which Botha so carefully chooses to animate this moment are steeped in personal and universal meaning, metaphor and history. They are qualities which are present in every manifestation of reality, not unlike the Chinese *yin* and *yang*.

In creating works which embrace basic elements, qualities and aspects of reality and reveal a presence in each moment,²⁹ Botha implicitly compares personal creativity with universal creation, finding the universal in the personal and the personal in the universal. We are witness to this creative moment in 'Genesis...' where one figure is poised above the other ready to animate it with grace and energy, yet held there so delicately, that we know the dominance of one element by the other will ruin this precarious but logical and natural counterpoise. The aggressive and responsive, heavy and light, masculine and feminine, competitive and co-operative and the expansive and contractive, hold each other together and apart in this chaotic yet poignant marriage of opposites. This balance, or presence in a moment, is metaphorically the moment of universal creation and physically that of artistic creativity, animated or created by Botha's literal and metaphorical bringing together of African and Western, pre-industrial and modern, feminine and masculine archetypes, images, resonances, processes and materials. They hold each other in check in this intimate and eternal moment, described in this picture of the universe, in many ways echoing the Taoist model of reality, adequately and beautifully described thus- 'All this is held together in the vast curvature of space, poised so precisely in holding all things together in the one embrace and yet so lightly that the creative expansion of the universe might continue on into the future' (Berry 1988:xv).

In depicting a reality, Botha demonstrates a clear mindfulness of its constituent elements, the bipolar opposites of Taoism and Capra's new cultural paradigm as well as the impermanence and uniqueness of each moment. He examines his own identity, personally, culturally and universally, distilling each from the other and amalgamating them in works which are highly personal, culturally relevant and universally resonant. In doing this Botha creates a spiritual art clearly articulating an all-pervasive oneness and an awareness of the interdependence of all phenomena. He inherently articulates many aspects of Ecology and its informant spiritual and cultural traditions allowing thus for my interpretations to be made.

1. The bases of this research are several writings by Elizabeth Rankin, as well as various others which were collected in the catalogue which accompanied Botha's Standard Bank Young Artist award exhibition in 1991. A recording of an interview, conducted by Lorna Ferguson on 2nd August 1991, obtained from the Natal Museum Services, was also employed in this research. Use was made also of a personal interview, conducted in April 1995, and a talk, and subsequent discussion, delivered during The Spring Arts Festival in Pietermaritzburg in October 1995 (referred to here as 1995, S.A.F. lecture).

2. Small refers to a text by Schumacher of 1979 which I did not use. I refer instead to an earlier, seminal text of his - Schumacher, E.F. 1973 Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered New York: Harper and Row.

3. Schumacher was an economist who is considered a seminal figure in the ecology movement. Capra is interested in his work, particularly some aspects such as that addressed in Schumacher's well-known essay 'Buddhist Economics', first published in 1968. See also endnote number 24.

4. The use of it as opposed to a gender distinctive term is intentional; the relevance of this becomes apparent.

5. It is helpful to be reminded of some typical qualities attributed to opposite poles or to corresponding yin and yang values respectively - : feminine/masculine; contractive/expansive; conservative/demanding; responsive/aggressive; co-operative/competitive; intuitive/rational; mystical/scientific; synthesizing/analytic; holistic/fragmented.

6. This is not to suggest that such roles (i.e. women being identified with the earth and nature and men being identified with the transcendent and culture) are definitive or unchangeable, nor that one is superior to the other, but rather to draw attention to a phenomenon which is fairly universal. Sherry Ortner (1972:67) makes this point too, at first suggesting that it accounts for the universal subordination of women, but going on to argue that their real role is far more important and powerful insofar as they occupy a role also as a mediator between the earthbound or natural and the transcendent or cultural. This point is elaborated on in the previous discussion of Oltmann's interest in the domestic role of women.

7. I am reminded here of expressions like *darkest Africa* and the colonial implications of such expressions. Botha (1991, Ferguson interview) says he remembers telling people, before he made this work, that he was going to create his 'southern African counterfoil to the Venus of Willendorf'. Paleolithic and Neolithic figures of this sort have been interpreted (Eisler 1987:7) as 'early manifestations of what was to develop into a complex religion centering on the worship of the Mother Goddess as the source and regeneratrix of all forms of life'.

8. For convenience sake, 'Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...' will be referred to simply as 'Genesis...' from here onwards. Other works will be treated similarly. Also, because of the long time required to make one of Botha's sculptures, most dates given refer to the year in which they were first exhibited. So, again for convenience sake, this date will be used without that qualification from here onwards.

9. This refers to, for example, the so-called 'Toreador Fresco', found in the palace of Knossos, which, despite its title, is believed to depict a sport or game where young women and men performed together in the central courts of the palace, apparently grasping the horns of a charging bull and somersaulting over its back (Eisler 1987:35).

10. Riane Eisler (1988:29) discusses this culture extensively in her writing on recent archaeology. She describes this culture as technologically advanced and socially complex. She suggests (1988:31) that 'for the last time in recorded history, a spirit of harmony between women and men as joyful and equal participants in life appears to pervade'. She goes on to describe their closeness to nature and their firm entrenchment in matriarchal culture, based on gender partnership and sharing rather than the dominance of one sex, which gave birth to a rich and varied culture, and whose matriarchy lasted until about 1200 BC.

11. I would suggest that a fundamental manifestation of this principle is the dynamic balance holding negatively and positively charged sub-atomic particles together in the required relationship. The following endnote describes, perhaps, the ultimate manifestation of this phenomenon.

12. Rupert Sheldrake (1990:161-2), whose writing is discussed in the final chapter regarding a work of mine, discusses the balancing of polarities in Western Scientific terms. 'On the cosmological level, the primary polarity is between the expansive impulse which underlies the growth of the universe and the contractive field of gravitation which holds everything together'. This is discussed later in relation to the act of creation which is essential to a reading of Botha's work. It is mentioned here simply for the remarkable similarity of terms used to describe the universe by Ancient Chinese philosophy and modern science, a theme which has consistently been pursued by Capra.

13. It must be noted here that, as stated in my introductory chapter, I use the term *Western culture* to include South African culture to allow me to pursue this discourse. The validity of this term, in relation to Capra's model of a transforming culture, is established in my discussion of some South African artmaking which, I intend to show, exhibits analogous evidence of cultural transformation.

14. Again, this is not a rule or a prescription, but an observation of cultural assumptions we tend to make. It can also be seen with regard to Ortner's discussion of women's domestic

roles throughout history (1972:79).

15. It is interesting to note here what Oltmann says about such issues in South Africa (personal correspondence, February 1995). His use of weaving techniques, such as basketry, is related to the fact that all over the world, such techniques are attributable to women. But he notes that in Africa basketry has largely been the domain of men.

16. Capra identifies these sorts of qualities with the *yin* or feminine archetype (1981:189). Again, this is not to suggest that only women should employ such techniques. In terms of Taoism we should remember that every *yin* value only exists in relation to the presence of its opposite. I am suggesting that such 'feminine' qualities are present in both women and men and as such they should be explored and embraced. It would also seem appropriate to suggest that the origin of this craft in pre-industrial culture already suggests a mode of behaviour which is inherently Ecological, bearing in mind the value which Ecology places on traditional wisdom and practice.

17. 'Good' is the term which Botha himself used to describe such an artwork. I take it to mean an artwork which is of high quality and valid in the context in which it is produced. The context referred to, I would suggest from looking at Botha's work, could be personal, cultural, spiritual or universal.

18. *Culture* is possibly a difficult term, but it is used here in order to maintain consistency throughout this research. I decided on the term in the first chapter and it is used here and throughout to mean society, nation or community.

19. The composition of 'Icons...' unlike 'The fear of Gods', is quite drastically changed from 'alleenspraak', the standing attendant figure being left out entirely in this piece, to be re-investigated in '...a delicate moment in history'.

20. An example would be a twelfth century bronze portrait head from the Ife of Nigeria.

21. Wood has been used in the construction of sculptures by Alice Aycock- 'Maze', 1972, for example. Julio Gonzales is credited with making the first constructed, welded metal sculptures beginning in 1931, an example being 'Cactus Man 1', 1939-40.

22. This is not to suggest that this tradition is unquestionable or remains unchallenged by Botha. The a-traditional media, ambiguous qualities and features, and the power with which he imbues this figure, challenge the stereotypes and precedents in Western high art production.

23. This was Botha's own expression. I made a connection between this and Schumacher's writing. See endnote number 25.

24. This might seem problematic in that Botha is still credited as the author of his works, while his assistants receive mention

only in in-depth discussion of them (see Rankin 1991:12 for example). Botha insists however that he entrusts them to make decisions and to find their own solutions while engaged in his work (Rankin 1991:7). Also, he says (personal interview, April 1995) he has recently been trying to bring his assistants to the fore. On a recent trip to Chicago and Amsterdam to produce some works, for example, he took his assistant Greg Streak with him.

25. Although Botha gives a different reason for the derivation of the lower figure in 'Genesis...' from images of Nebuchadnezzar, I believe the following interpretation can be made. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in which he saw a great tree, which provided shelter for many birds and animals, being chopped down. The stump was then bound with bronze in order that it may not grow again. Being very disturbed about this dream he had Daniel interpret it for him. Daniel suggested that this dream was an admonishment, advising Nebuchadnezzar that he ought to learn humility to God in spite of his royal sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar did not pay heed to this and was consequently driven like a beast out of Babylon for seven years. The image of the king in this pose of fear and humility is that depicted by Botha, Makhuba and Blake. Botha could thus be questioning or advising heed to the traditions and constructs which are formative in our lives, or he could be showing his own regard for such things. That the thatched figure is above the bolted one, but also supported by it, could demonstrate the dynamic way in which these two opposing principles and constructs relate in Botha's own life, and that they are humbled by each other in the relevance they have borne to both his personal and artistic development.

26. Capra summarizes the work of Schumacher and the influence it had on him thus: '... Fritz Schumacher, prophet of the ecology movement that was to emerge two decades later, patiently raised his voice of wisdom, emphasizing the importance of human scale, quality, "good work", an economics of permanence based on sound ecological principles, and "technology with a human face" ' (1989:220). It is quite clear that Botha's work can be interpreted as articulating all of the above principles and qualities.

27. A further connection can be made here with Ecology regarding the indispensable role of compassion in such a practice. This idea has its roots in Buddhist practice of compassion or loving-kindness which, only after meditation practice, is the most important aspect of Buddhist philosophy and practice. However, a discussion of this seems to imply an examination of Botha's person which is inappropriate to this discourse.

28. This term allows for a further connection to be made between Botha's work and a Buddhist experience of the world, which again lends validity to my Ecological discourse. It is interesting to note that *pathos* stems from the Greek word for suffering (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1988). Suffering, in Buddhism, is considered to be a fundamental aspect of reality, but, importantly, the complementary aspect is that of joy, which I

think finds expression in Botha's work too. I would suggest that the presence of human labour and the great beauty of Botha's work counterbalance this pathos or suffering which he so often depicts. '...a delicate moment in history', 1991, is such a work, for me, absolutely infused with pathos and beauty.

29. The phrase 'presence in a moment' is one which I have used in my discussion of Oltmann's work in giving a Buddhist interpretation to the temporal aspect of his work. I believe that a similar quality is evident in Botha's work, but present in the images rather than exclusively in the techniques of their production.

TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL SELF

In this chapter some sculptures submitted for my Master's degree are to be discussed specifically in relation to the preceding research and discourse. Particularly relevant to this discussion are the processes common to Oltmann's, Botha's and my own work. Weaving, stitching, wood-work and other related activities are very important to me and their employment in my works is discussed in depth. How these processes relate to my discussion of nature and how they articulate aspects of Ecology is examined in depth. The materials I choose are generally discarded or disused common materials, many derived from parts of motor vehicles. At first it might seem as if my work is strictly concerned with pollution and recycling (for the purposes of discussing my work, I prefer to use the term 're-using'), and while these are obviously concerns of mine, they are not my only motivations. Recycling and re-usage have a very clear and important role in the practices of Ecology, but my employment and re-usage of materials bears a more complex relationship to it. I consider the re-use of material important in that it helps to contribute to a low impact, minimum consumption lifestyle which I find desirable. Further, the materials I choose are almost always available at no cost and are easily obtainable. The formal and aesthetic properties of the materials that I collect, and their ability and tendency to last for reasonable amounts of time, are important factors in my choice. My re-usage of materials offers thus a sensible and sensitive way to pursue my sculpting career. The re-use of materials indicates, on one level, my interest in the practice of Ecology, but through this re-use I choose to investigate in more detail the personal, cultural and spiritual aspects of such a practice.

Both Botha and Oltmann have influenced my work in many ways, especially in their commitment to process and craftsmanship and by their interest in materials considered non-conventional or a-traditional in the production of fine art. My investigation and experience of their work during and prior to this research has proved very fruitful, and my interpretation of their work in terms of Ecology has been essential in assisting me to express what ideas I have about these issues in my own sculptures. I do not imply that my work is only interpretable in the way that I suggest here; I encourage personal interpretations and accept their validity, especially in light of how many connections and resonances I discover during and subsequent to the making of each sculpture. It is important to realise also that issues

discussed in relation to particular works don't necessarily apply only to those works and are often pertinent to a discussion of the entire body of work.

A direct or sensual experience of nature is more often than not the starting point for any of my sculptures. Nature is a term which I use in its broadest sense, being careful not to imply that it is exterior to humans or accessible only through objective observation of natural phenomena. It is, rather, something I understand as being an integral part of myself and of which I am an integral part. Sensual and emotional experiences of natural phenomena are something which excite and stimulate me and which I consider to be as valid as any other experience of natural phenomena or nature. Such experiences awaken the feeling of interconnectedness and oneness with, and in, nature which, I believe, inform my work. Some of my works are unashamed responses to the beauty of natural phenomena and processes. A sensual experience like the shape or texture of an object such as a leaf, or an observation of a process such as ripening or growth often becomes a starting point for a thought process. Such a thought process draws on any information or anecdote which I might chance upon or know, relating to the object or process which I have observed. I often make some intuitive link between these thoughts and materials and processes which I then employ in the making of my proposed sculpture. I don't often understand this link initially, but it feels 'right', as if it is the only solution, and I seldom sway from this. On occasion I find that I gain a clearer understanding of the object I am making and the thoughts and ideas which inform it through some sort of research. I often feel that this lends credence to my ideas about a work and often I find information or facts which confirm intuitions I had and links I made in my conception and construction of the work. I find the objects I make refer quite often to occurrences or passions I had in my childhood, or issues I have always been interested in. In this way the object attains more validity and integrity for me as its construction progresses. Through the process of experience, thought and research, and in the construction of a sculpture I learn about what I feel is my position in or relationship to the world around me and how this world around me informs who I am personally, culturally and spiritually.

In my discussion of each work I recall the experiences or thoughts which provided the starting point for it and proceed to discuss thoughts and ideas which relate to the sculpture, which I have discovered both during and subsequent to its construction. Often it will be seen

that these ideas lead on to and resurface in subsequent works. The process of making is discussed extensively especially insofar as I believe it offers a valuable experience to me.

I address the notions of origins and growth in my work entitled 'Seed' (fig.18). I made this sculpture in July and August of 1994 and it is constructed from truck tyres and red, yellow and clear pieces of shattered car-light protective covering collected from the sides of freeways and streets (These pieces of perspex, for the sake of brevity, will be referred to as car-light fragments from here onwards). I cut the truck tyres into large triangles which were stitched with galvanised wire onto a copper frame shaped like a seed shell. I left one part of this form open, its edges being defined by the edges of the tyres which were torn thus when I found them. From this cavity emerges the perspex element. The car-light fragments were cut and broken into small triangles¹ which were then stitched together with wire and onto either side of a copper spine which functions like the primary vein or spine of a leaf. This element is made to twist as it emerges from the hollow tyre form.

Both literally and metaphorically, a seed is an object from which something originates. A seed is living and contains something new, immanent or latent within it. The form of the work resembles a seed testa² with a fresh shoot emerging from it. I created this work initially in response to the beauty and delicacy of this germination process, specifically in response to reading about certain seeds which require scorching by fire in order to germinate. The bright flame-like quality of the new shoot and the black coal-like appearance of the shell-form refer to this. The interdependence of the destructive nature of fire and the creative process of germination interested me. A germinating seed is not a large object but one which we often find occurring in vast numbers. Therefore, recreating such an object singularly and on the scale of this sculpture (it is just over 1 metre high) lends a different presence to the process, suggesting that this work addresses more than just the simple, natural process of germination, and at the same time drawing attention to such a commonplace but miraculous occurrence. In addition, the form can be read as a pre-industrial tool or arrow head, from which emerges a flame-like object, the analogy to growth and origin being addressed in this reading too. The discovery of fire and the invention of tools can be seen as very important factors in the evolution of human culture. Fire is something which was 'discovered', yet it exists in nature independent of human action, while tools are considered to be an invention

of homo-sapiens. Both of these phenomena have played seminal roles in the evolution and development of human cultures.

In discussion of Oltmann's work the importance of women in the development of culture, or as agents of culturization (Ortner 1973:80), was investigated. Ortner's work was mentioned in reference especially to her discussion of domestic processes, such as cooking, which make women agents of culturization. (This is not to suggest that things such as cooking are or should be exclusively peculiar to women, but that in the history of patriarchy they often have been. This does suggest, however, that the inferior status accorded to these processes results from a misconception of their value, cultural importance and power).

The stitching used in this work can be seen in relation to this. Traditionally we have been taught that men invented and developed tools, but Riane Eisler, (1987:69) in her discussion of archaeology and pre-industrial societies in Europe and Asia Minor, contends otherwise. Her research suggests that women as gatherers, and not men as hunters or soldiers, were responsible for many evolutionary discoveries and inventions, including the use of the first simple tools and technologies.³ She discusses particularly their transformation of raw materials into objects of cultural function. The traditional female activity of sewing is here presented with another culturalizing process which can be attributed to women. Thus sewing is elevated to the status of a process which bears great significance to the development and maintenance of human existence. The juxtaposition of natural and cultural processes and of natural and cultural objects addresses their relationship to one another. In placing these ideas together, I liken natural growth and evolution to cultural development. My use of stitching, in terms of its origins and the nature of its practice (which I discuss in depth later), is related to natural and cultural growth and evolution.

The qualities, origins and properties of the materials also require a re-reading or re-interpretation. The rubber of tyres and the perspex of the carlights both have organic origins, rubber coming from trees and perspex being made mainly of fossil fuels, the latter derived from ancient decomposed organic matter. Both the tyre and this perspex are from motor vehicles, an almost indispensable part of contemporary Western society and without which most of our everyday lives would grind to a halt. By making a natural, plant-like image from

them, their organic origins are rediscovered, and their cultural origin is perhaps subverted. From being a material which would normally be seen as cultural in origin or as 'human-made' these become transformed, through a relatively simple analogy, into an object which is intrinsically linked to organic processes. Alternatively, through a relatively simple process of re-arrangement and construction, the true natural origin of the material is discovered as latent within. Just as a seed holds within it the latent potential for a much larger plant, which would be significantly different in appearance from the seed itself, so too do these human-made materials harbour such a potential for describing an organic form or process which waits to be discovered within.

Rubber and perspex are both tough, durable materials but at the same time have other properties which differ. Tyre is flexible, heavy and opaque, while perspex is brittle, light and translucent. The respective forms made from these materials reflect these differences, yet they both share curves, lines and edges with a familiar natural appearance. The apparently opposing qualities and properties of these materials are presented thereby as interdependent and dynamically related, relying as they do upon this juxtaposition to define and compare these properties and to draw attention to their similarities and differences.

This work, as suggested above, addresses natural and cultural growth or evolution; the new leaf or shoot emerging from a dark shell can be interpreted in the light of Capra's ideas regarding current Western cultural transformation into a more compassionate, Ecologically conscious and holistically oriented society. This could also be read as a symbol of a more personal awakening. The personal awakening is a theme recurrent in this body of work, referring to a burgeoning Ecological awareness and how I find its expression in an experience of the world like that offered by Buddhism.

In a work produced simultaneously, 'Chord' (fig.19), I explored the idea of rhythms and cycles inherent in nature and their manifestation in simple forms. This work comprises two carved rosewood shell-like forms, each the size of a large seashell. They are connected to one another, from the centre of their spirals, by a cord woven of telephone wire. The spiral rhythm of each shell form travels around the spiral weave of the connecting cord and is echoed in the spiral of the opposite shell. The stitches of the weave resemble schematised

waves, and the repetitive way in which they were made parallels the cycle and rhythm of the sea, the colours being made to change gradually like the gradual tidal fluctuations and inherent cycles of the sea.⁴ The chisel marks on the wooden shell-like elements were made to reflect this repetition too.

The piece resembles, to some extent, a communications device of sorts, an idea alluded to by the use of telephone wire. Putting a seashell to one's ear in order to hear the sea is something familiar to many of us. This sculpture thus suggests a communication with (or implicit in) nature by sound or rhythm, one with which we are familiar in terms of oceanic tides and which we are able to experience in the simple act of placing a seashell to our ear.⁵ Rosewood is a wood often used in the making of many musical instruments and it thus further provides reference to sound and rhythm.⁶ The title *Chord* is spelt in the musical sense rather than in the way that would exclusively describe the woven connecting element of the work. The word is however pronounced the same way regardless of its spelling and therefore can suggest two readings. The two shell forms are not identical, but mutually resonate or echo each other's form in the way that musical notes or chords are related and can cause resonance- the tendency of a sound to be reinforced or prolonged by vibration or reflection. Music is also a universal way in which rhythm is reproduced, experienced and celebrated.

Personally the work identifies some formative archetypes and constructs of my childhood. My love for making and constructing objects is due, to a large extent, to the friendship I had with a child who grew up next door to me and the many things we made as youngsters. One of our proudest achievements was an intercom system from one home to the other, made of various scrounged and collected parts. The long cables connecting our respective sides of the intercom were painstakingly made of short lengths of telephone wire joined together to bridge the distance four times in order for our system to work. The sculpture articulates this nostalgia.

Overall this is also a rather bizzare or amusing object; although this is never the sole intention, humour seems to enter into many of my works and hopefully keeps their earnest tenor in check. It was pointed out by a number of observers that the work resembles somewhat a Dr. Seuss-type construction. This was never a conscious aim in the work, but

is a valid possibility as I regard these books, read first in my childhood, with great affection.⁷

I was inspired by new seasonal growth of spring in 1994 to develop a theme which I had addressed in a smaller work of the previous year. 'Waker' (fig.20) consists of a leaf-like or pod-like form made of laminated and smoothly sanded eucalyptus branches. Between this form's opposite rounded and pointed ends, which both sit on the ground, it rises in a convex arc. About one third of the way to the form's pointed apex, another element, made of copper wire and small pieces of car-light, arches up in an opposing but similar curve, ending also in a pointed apex.

The two arcs that constitute 'Waker' were suggested by the shape of the previous season's dying vegetation and the unfurling, rising and growing of the new season's shoots. In this sense the work conveys the seasonal cycles of death and regeneration. Some viewers have suggested that the gentle curves of the work resemble a wave, which I believe is consistent with the idea of cycles and rhythms addressed here. The copper wire is patinated a green colour which is most intense at its high, pointed end, depicting an area of concentrated energy and growth which fades nearer to the wooden form. The randomly shaped pieces of car-light, bound into the woven copper wire, are larger and closer together at the apex, contributing to this concentration of colour and energy. The matted copper wire resembles the beautiful delicate tracery of a leaf's architecture which is the last to disappear in the decomposition of such organic matter. That the unfurling form is smaller and of less volume than the older, drier, slightly duller part, suggests that the old 'dying' growth is not regarded as a less important part of the plant's self-realization, but is, rather, an essential process of plant growth. The death and growth of a plant are thus presented as interdependent processes.

Metaphorically the work alludes to a personal and cultural awakening. This awakening relates directly to Capra's cultural theories discussed earlier, namely that Western culture is in this period of transformation into a holistic, Ecologically aware entity.⁸ The use of eucalyptus wood is personally related to my travels in Australia in 1992, from where the eucalypts originate. These travels played an important part in the development of my Ecological

awareness.⁹ Also personally, the creation of a piece of laminated bentwood is related to my own, unrealised, childhood endeavours to make a laminated bentwood skateboard.

The work contains two dynamically related opposites in the use of traditionally divided work processes - namely, carpentry and weaving - which are commonly perceived as male and female tasks respectively. That the traditionally female activity is represented as rising or awakening is consistent with aforementioned cultural theories which anticipate and note a growing awareness and changing of the cultural status of women and their occupations in current Western culture. This awakening element also, once again, aligns such activities as weaving with natural processes of growth and change.

'Sphere (i)' (fig.21) comprises a tennis-ball sized wire armature, progressively covered by layers and layers of bottle sealing rings, cut to form strips which are mostly red in colour. The plastic elements are woven, apparently randomly, to form a sphere. When I began the work in March 1994, the plastic rings were from two-litre sorghum beer bottles, which I was collecting from bottle stores in and around Durban and Pietermaritzburg. For an unknown reason, they became increasingly scarce, so rings from all sorts of other plastic bottles were eventually used as well. This work was inspired by images of millet and sorghum baskets seen at the 'Transformed Fibres' exhibition in the Tatham Art Gallery in February 1994, and for that reason the use initially of components specifically from sorghum beer seemed particularly appropriate. These baskets were large enough for three people to work inside. I responded to the massiveness of such an undertaking and wanted to create a piece with a similar presence and mass.

The spherical and woven nature of the work I related also to the metaphor, often found in Ecological readings, of the world as a network or web of relationships. At the time I began the work I was reading Orenstein's Reweaving the World, a book about Ecofeminism.¹⁰ After working for two weeks on the sphere, it hadn't grown to anywhere near the envisioned size or mass. I therefore decided to work on it for an hour daily and later, for half an hour as the material became scarcer. Unfortunately, I was not able to maintain a stable supply of the material and thus the work only proceeded in such a way when I had an adequate supply of the plastic. Through a slow accumulative process, the work would grow in mass and volume

without excessively large amounts of time spent working on it for any one period. I decided also to set a time limit rather than a physical size limit on the sculpture- it would continue as long as there was material available and as long as I was working to complete this Master's degree.

It was then that the sculpture seemed to become mostly about an experience of, and in, time. In order to keep the form spherical, I found it at first necessary to continually adjust flat areas and protrusions. It turned out, however, that this tended to create more irregularities, and that the sphere retained its form better if it was made without any shape adjustments in mind, but with a degree of consistency in the weaving method. The meditative nature of the process employed seemed evident even before the work began and became more apparent as it progressed and as I learned more about Buddhist meditation practice. Working on the sculpture first thing in the morning each day is not unlike the practice of daily meditation. The repetitive, consistent, non-climactic action is common to both as well. I came to understand Buddhist meditation practice as an experience of 'being present in the moment'.¹¹ Buddhism contends that fundamental to our world is the notion of impermanence. Each moment is unique and should be experienced thus. Meditation practice embraces impermanence by developing an awareness of one's existence in one's body in each moment, thereby halting the mind's usual attachment to the past and future. Such an experience offers a true understanding of one's nature and the similar nature of the world. Meditation practice involves the simple task of focussing on something such as one's breathing without 'attachment' to the past and future and without making any judgements, but just accepting the simplicity and 'suchness' of this act and the mindful experience of each unique breath.¹² Buddhist meditation practice is often referred to as 'just sitting'. The task of making this sculpture became, at times, a similarly simple exercise. Consciousness or awareness, ideally, was focussed only on the hand and the stitch to be made, with no judgement being made on each since it was difficult to make stitches of differing qualities, and most of the stitches would never be seen in any case. All the previous stitches and those required in the future were not even considered when the sculpture proceeded well. I never felt that patience or impatience was an issue in the process. In this way 'Sphere (i)' may be seen as a non-logocentric exercise and as an experience in time, given form (This issue is discussed in depth in the second chapter on Walter Oltmann). The sculpture could also be read as an

accumulation of lots of small actions which result in a larger whole.

An embracing of the impermanent nature of existence reveals our true nature and inherently articulates the oneness and interrelatedness of all phenomena, specifically in the realization that everything is connected in this way and subject to similar laws of change and transmutation. Such a view is consistent with Ecology in that an awareness of one's true position in the world generates responses and actions which take this into account and are thus inherently compassionate and Ecological in nature. Capra aligns Ecology and spirituality saying that Ecology, in its deepest form, and spirituality are both essentially an awareness of the oneness and interrelatedness of everything (Capra 1988:113).

'Pitch' (fig.22) is a large, rather baroque form resembling a breaking wave which I began in August 1995. Tyres, removed from their central hubs and cut across their widths to become flat lengths, were stitched together, next to one another in a row. Proceeding from left to right, each tyre was progressively further split open, or filleted, through its thickness. The upper section was peeled up and lifted to resemble a wave's pitching crest or lip. This cutting process revealed the organic pattern made by the cut's natural undulations through the orderly layered nylon plies inside each tyre. The left and right sides of the form are screwed onto wooden structures made in the shape of a section through the wave. The work sits on the floor at about knee level. The scale of it suggests a fairly average-sized wave, but the patterns and the curve of the lip seem to suggest a much larger, almost gigantic wave.

The title embraces a number of ideas. Firstly, the lip of the wave is pitching forward as it breaks over the area beneath it. Also, pitch is a black resinous substance which is produced from a tree product. It is therefore similar in origin to the rubber of the tyres, and fundamentally resembles this. Pitch is a substance traditionally used, among other things, to seal sailing vessels (I first remember hearing of this substance in the story of Noah's ark).

Finally, *pitch* is also a word used in describing the nature of a sound; specifically the quality of sound governed by its frequency. This gives rise to the notion of rhythm which is explored in this sculpture. There are several different explorations of rhythm evident here. Firstly the repetition of the tyres, placed in a row of ten. The tread of each tyre comprises a repeated

pattern.¹³ The apparent randomness of the marks revealed by the cut of the knife in the exposed filleted tyres is somewhat illusory. These marks actually reveal the orderly interior structure of a tyre, and thus layers of differently oriented nylon fabric become apparent. There is also a symmetry at work. If the lifted section of the lip is compared with the section below it from which it was cut and lifted, the patterns are seen to mirror one another. The stitching used to join the tyres makes another repetitive pattern. The repetitive process used in the making of the work and the patterns which animate it can be interpreted as a partaking of the rhythms and patterns which comprise or define nature, and which are inherently present in this naturally-derived material.

The frequency of the pattern of each different tread determines how many holes were made for stitches to go through. The number of holes in one tyre did not always coincide perfectly with those of the neighbouring tyre, so sometimes they were joined by single stitches and sometimes holes in one tyre were used to house more than one stitch; there is however, always a consistency in the relationship of stitches to holes between any two tyres. The idea of different frequencies of patterns, sometimes coinciding, sometimes not, is approached in this way. This is seen in nature in the overlapping, coinciding and interacting of certain natural cycles at different times. The tides, for example, which operate strictly according to lunar cycles, relate in another way to solar and seasonal cycles. As well as being dependent on the tides for its qualities, a wave also responds to other cyclical phenomena such as winds. A water wave is a rhythmic event or phenomenon, somewhat dependent on repetition for its identity. The sound of the waves on the shore is a common experience of that phenomenon and one that is often described as a source of comfort.

The metaphorical extension of this image is equally important to its reading. A wave can be seen as a representative of change or of the arrival of something new, as suggested by some of the other works discussed. Capra mentions the frequent use, by Buddhists and quantum physicists alike, of the metaphor of water or of waves (1988:111- 113) in order to illustrate the (Cartesian) illusion of separate unconnected entities (1988:111-113). A wave can be viewed as a single entity, but ultimately the wave is the ocean and the ocean is the wave. Capra suggests that universal consciousness is also often likened to the ocean- a fluid, undifferentiated mass. This metaphor lead Capra to realize the connection between Ecology

and spirituality, particularly Buddhism. Both Buddhism and Ecology imply the awareness of the oneness of all life, the interdependence of its multiple manifestations and its cycles of change and transformation.

In response to the simultaneous simplicity and intricate complexity of leaves which I had been observing and thinking about for some time, I constructed in January of 1995 a work which I entitled 'Window' (fig.23). This consists of a fairly flat, large leaf-like form made from pieces of broken car-lights stitched together around a primary vein-like structure which is made from thin copper rods. The fragments of car-light were used as they were found or else were broken into various polygonal shapes. Holes were drilled in them and they were then stitched together with galvanised wire. The form of the leaf undulates, producing mostly shallow convex forms on one side and concave on the other, which bulge naturalistically between closed shapes formed by the primary vein structure. The shape of the sculpture was based on that of the apparently simple form of a poplar leaf. That the pieces of car-light were largely left as they had been found was due to the similarity in shape of the *cells*¹⁴ of a leaf and, for example, the broken surface of mud which I had noticed. This seemed to suggest an underlying law which governed these structures, and which linked forces or configurations in both broken and constructed forms.¹⁵ Broken pieces of car-light that I found on the side of the road, were often similar in shape to those polygonal shapes observable in dried mud and the cell-like compartments formed between the vein structures in a leaf. When such pieces are joined, the resultant axes, folds and angles reproduce the undulating surface of a leaf with its swells and valleys.

The title 'Window' alludes on one level to the sculpture's resemblance to a stained glass window. The structure was suggested by the incredibly complex design of a leaf which reminded me of the divisions between pieces of glass sometimes seen in a stained glass window. Research revealed some possible connections between the two. The idea that Romanesque and later, Gothic, cathedrals imitated, to some extent, sacred groves in which worship had earlier taken place is central to this work (Sheldrake 1990:33). Sheldrake suggests that the emphasis on height and ever-slimming columns in these buildings represented trees, and stained glass reproduced light filtered through their leaves. He believes that this was closely connected to forms of nature worship or a more animistic religious

practice. He suggests that early Christianity still retained aspects of these practices. This 'hybrid' Christianity came to an end during the Renaissance, when all traces of these earlier religious practices disappeared.

'Window' was constructed, to some extent, for an exhibition which was to take place in the Presbyterian church, now the 'Phemba Kahle' centre, which was recently opened as another exhibition venue of the Tatham Art Gallery (This exhibition eventually took place in the main exhibition area of the gallery). This work, given its title, further implies something through which to look, offering perhaps a view akin to the animistic view mentioned above, where spirituality was perceived as immanent in every aspect of the natural world, or where God was seen to animate all aspects of creation. That the leaf is made in autumnal colours metaphorically suggests some sort of change or transformation in progress, an idea already discussed in relation to several other works such as 'Seed' and 'Waker'.

I explore again the notion of origin, inception and change in a work I call 'Ripple' which I began in April 1995. This work comprises a roughly circular tyre form, close to the ground at its circumference, which rises slightly in a spiral fashion to a point near its centre where a translucent blue and white form points sharply upwards. The pieces of tyre I used were found on freeways and, rather than allowing the treaded side to be visible, the irregularly marked inner side, where they have become detached violently from the tyre belt, has been used. These are stitched together, in a patchwork way, along a spiral copper frame which ends in a rounded triangular shape in the middle from where the translucent element rises. Roughly woven into and between the stitches is a substantial amount of copper wire. A roughly pyramidal blue and white plastic form, is stitched onto the inner side of the aforementioned triangular part of the copper frame. This element is made of stitched triangles of blue polythene and white perspex. Inside the pyramidal form, not immediately visible, I stitched a reflective silver surface, made from plastic silver hubcaps, which increases the translucency of this form by reflecting light through it.

'Ripple' (fig.24)¹⁶, as noted, addresses the idea of beginnings or origins. In water, and metaphorically, a ripple is something that originates in a centre and whose effects move outwards from there. A light blue, simple, water-like form¹⁷ rises out of a heavy rock-like

bed. Again, as in 'Seed' which also addressed the issue of beginnings, the natural or organic origins of a 'human-made' material are rediscovered. This image could suggest that the hard, heavy, dense form, beginning in its centre, is changing into something light and translucent, or that something with these different qualities is arising within it.

The whole work has a kind of topographical or geological appearance. The central pyramidal form resembles a mountain, snow-capped perhaps, rising out of rugged foothills made from rough, rock-like tyre.¹⁸ In many creation myths, according to Lundquist (1993:6-10) there existed chaos in the form of water, which eventually becomes punctuated by a mound of earth, which becomes thus the primordial ground of creation, or in some traditions, a sacred mountain. Lundquist suggests that in almost all cultures, temples are a representation of this primordial mound or sacred mountain. This idea appears in many guises, as for instance in Christianity, the first piece of dry land, Mount Ararat, on which Noah's ark came to rest is such a sacred area of land. Sacred and holy mountains occur in many religions, from Christianity to Buddhism, and are often the objects of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is a journey to a divine source, often involving the ascent of a mountain or some sort of circumambulation, perhaps even through a labyrinth (Lundquist 1993:87). The labyrinth is often representative of the difficult journey of the pilgrim.¹⁹ The spiral path from the outside towards the centre of this sculpture could represent such a spiritual journey. A spiritual journey is inherent in the cyclical and rhythmic relationship with nature which I have discussed in relation to 'Sphere (i)' and 'Pitch'. Here, however, rather than being the solid, stable, end of a journey, the mountain is more ephemeral and lighter than the solid surrounding land. This could suggest a pilgrimage, not to a faraway holy destination, but rather a journey inwards, no distance away at all.

Given the title of this sculpture, 'Ripple', the suggestion is that the path to an enlightenment or insight begins within and moves outwards, or, as we learn from Buddhism, it is in the knowing or understanding and realization of our true nature as intimately interconnected with and interdependently related to all other manifestations of reality. A realization of this aspect of our nature can lead only to thoughts and actions which are wholly compassionate and inherently Ecological.²⁰ This work suggests, then, that an Ecological awakening happens within, its effects moving outwards. Stephen Batchelor (Batchelor, M. 1992:38) suggests that

in order to effect changes towards an Ecologically aware society, not bent on self-destruction, we 'must begin with an inner practice of self-transformation. Learning, reflection and meditation would uproot the tendencies of the mind which are destructive to both ourselves and our environment. We need to be encouraging within ourselves qualities such as simplicity, balance, compassion and understanding. We are each the starting point of a world-order based on these qualities'. This Ecological awakening and new balance or order is presented in the materials and image which are in a state of change; a fluctuation in the balance of dynamically related opposites; light and dark, bright and dull, clear and opaque, hard and soft.

In April 1995, during a trip to Northern Kwazulu-Natal I acquired at a market a hard, conical spiral shell snail which became a small, simple sculpture entitled 'Shell' (fig.25). I made this by covering the shell in woven green and orange telephone wire in the same way that Zulu men sometimes cover their knob-kerries or *izagila*. The sculpture seems to resemble or evoke some sort of marine creature. Midway along the length of the shell, where I began the weaving, there is more orange than green wire, but this relationship changes as the weave moves to either end of the shell, where green is dominant. The changing patterns of the different colours in the weave resemble markings on fish, such as parrot fish which I have encountered while snorkelling in both Northern Kwazulu-Natal and Australia.

In form and technique, this work relates to 'Chord', the shell being a very similar form to one of the carved elements of 'Chord'. The weaving technique used here is slightly different but looks similar to that used in the earlier work, as do the way the colours change. This work too seems to convey aspects of communication. The shell could likewise be lifted and listened to and the telephone wire, again, alludes to this idea. The rhythmic nature of the weaving can be seen in relation to the tidal and lunar rhythms which would have played an integral role in the life of the organism which formerly inhabited the shell. The weaving was begun midway between the shell's point and aperture and proceeded in a spiral fashion in both directions towards its extremities. As the weave approached the open end, adjustments had to be made to cope with the diminishing girth of the shell. These adjustments resulted in the start of another, tighter spiral which is visible around the 'mouth' of the shell. Also to cope with the change in girth at both ends, only orange wires were removed from the

weave. This produced the changing patterns described above. The tassled ends (which are visible) are indicative of how the weave was made and coincidentally resemble, at the open end, the so-called 'foot' of a snail-like creature which would paradoxically inhabit the outside rather than the inside of a shell.

This work suggested to me that a simple rhythm generated by the weaving, following in a spiral fashion the spiral shape of the shell seems to be related in some way to some of the factors which determine or give realization to the form of this sort of organism. Perhaps this demonstrates, very simply, how relationships and processes determine or define the form of natural phenomena.²¹ This work asserted further for me my ideas connecting traditional cultural processes, like weaving, with the patterns, cycles and rhythms which characterise natural phenomena. More personally, this shell was obtained in a remote part of northern Kwazulu-Natal and the weaving was inspired by many fine examples of both telephone wire and natural fibre weaving there, especially a beer-strainer or *ivovo* which I acquired at the time.

The first sculpture I made with both a stitched and a carved wooden element was made after discovering, in April 1994, the work of Martin Puryear, in particular a work entitled 'Greed's Trophy' which inspired me to similarly mix media. 'Maize' (fig.26) is the result of that and represents a slightly over life-size ear of maize or mealie. The outside or husk is made from carved camphor wood, which pulls apart at one point to reveal the kernels inside, made of stitched triangles of car-light; red, orange and clear. Loose fibres, around the kernels and protruding from the top of the mealie are made from copper wire which is patinated green.

Primarily this piece is an image of fertility or fecundity. The maize is depicted as ripe, the kernels literally bursting from the cob, prising the husks apart. It represents a fruitful interaction of female and male elements or principles. The two processes employed in its construction, carving and stitching, are often associated with male and female work activities respectively. This object alludes also to both male and female genitalia, like perhaps a Hindu *lingam*, a form which harnesses features of both the egg and the phallus.

Maize originates in the Americas and has a rich mythology there. Here in South Africa, maize was introduced by colonists, but has similarly acquired an important cultural significance among both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. It is the staple diet of many South Africans and has become very much a 'traditional' food. This work presents a union of old and new traditions and principles, and shows a fruitful union resulting from a new and dynamic relationship between them. It was also made in response to the easy availability of mealies I noticed late into the year, presumably because of the ample rainfall in the spring and summer of 1993 and 1994 in the areas surrounding Pietermaritzburg.

The elegant and economical form of part of a gooseberry pod suggested to me the form of 'Arc' (fig.27), made in August of 1994. This is a small work, roughly the size of a mango, comprising a copper wire frame of two opposing arcs, joined at one end and crossed at the other, rather like a schematic fish. Onto one side of this frame are stitched triangles of blue and white plastic which make a swelling, concave, tapered, boat-like form. The form appears smooth on the inside compared with the slightly horny appearance of the convex outside, due to the more uniform colouration of the inside. This form evokes and resembles, in its pared-down quality and aero- or aquadynamic nature, a bird or a fish. I have noticed a similar economy of form, common to many such naturally occurring objects and organisms, which has been adopted by humans in the manufacture of objects like boats, to which this sculpture also bears a resemblance. The use of triangles relates also to this economy and the use of the least amount of energy to realize and maintain a form (see endnote number 1 for my initial discussion of this phenomenon). This same principle of economy would apply to the maintenance of some mode of behaviour i.e. an aerodynamic form is that which requires the least amount of energy to move through the air. The title 'Arc' describes the nature of the forms and lines in this work, which are similar to those common in, for example, birds and fish. 'Arc' is a term which might also be used to describe the lines transcribed by a bird or fish's motion, and also plays on the word 'ark' which refers to its boat-like form.

'Medium' (fig.28) is a rather unusual work for me in that its form and construction suggested itself to me almost immediately upon seeing the piece of wood which was to become the central element. Almost all the ideas which are discussed here arose during its construction and subsequent to its completion. It was made, in July of 1995, by weaving, with telephone

wire, a form onto a short length of furcate guava wood. The length was cut from a tree trunk just as it starts to fork, beginning a little before the split starts and ending just after the two resultant branches are moving apart. The weaving begins by collaring the thickness of the initial single branch and moves up towards and along the fork, splitting to cover the new separate branches. This woven form terminates in two, partially joined, near-congruent hemispherical elements, which cover the cut ends of the forked branches. The wire from which the form is made changes colour with its progress up the fork, warm orange and white becoming gradually a cooler blue and white as the forms separate.

These two wire forms are similar in size and shape to halved guavas, referring thus to the guava wood onto which they are woven. Like the previously discussed woven wire sculptures, this work expresses, perhaps, the idea of communication. Although primarily organic in form, the sculpture resembles a group of microphones, often seen on the front of a podium. Although sometimes covered in foam, the top of a microphone is often made of steel wire woven in a similar fashion to this. That two 'microphones' become one suggests some sort of fusion or simple and direct communication. The repetitive nature of weaving and its connection to other rhythmic or cyclic phenomena has been examined in discussions of similarly constructed works, like 'Chord'. The sculpture seems also to resemble human, especially female, anatomy, particularly limbs or breasts. The use of a traditionally female activity like weaving in a high art domain proposes a new elevated status for this craft. This work is a medium in that it communicates this realignment of the feminine and the natural with the masculine and manufactured object in its form and processes. Buddhism is often called 'The Middle Way' and 'Medium' refers also to this, given the experiential nature of its making. Very simply, 'Medium' is an object which realizes a synthesis of the process and forms discussed above, and was simply created in response to the forms and textures of the piece of wood.

The expression 'the small blue planet', sometimes used to describe the earth since the first photographs taken of the earth from outer space, suggested to me the idea of making such a small planet. I chose to weave it as a development from 'Sphere (i)' and because I realised I would be able to achieve appropriate textures and patterns in this way. 'Sphere (ii)' (fig.29), made in August 1995, is a small spherical object, about the size of a large

grapefruit. It is made of blue, orange, white and brown telephone wire woven over a light copper armature. The armature is made of one latitudinal and six longitudinal struts. The telephone wire was woven tightly onto the frame and thus is not perfectly spherical, resulting in troughs where the weaving is stretched taut between the struts. Further, the 'sphere' is not as high as it is wide and is slightly ovoid when viewed from above or below, ie. from one of the poles. The weaving was begun at the equatorial latitudinal line and progressed towards the poles above and below.

The piece bears some resemblance to our planet or to a globe. Beginning on the equator, as it were, the colours were divided according to how land and sea are distributed along this line on our map of the earth. Brown and orange represent land while blue stands for the sea, although this is not strictly adhered to- all colours intruding to an extent upon each other. White penetrates and occurs in all areas of the sphere. The white I see as cloud patterns commonly visible in satellite photographs of the earth. At the equator, the pattern produced by the the weaving changes in direction, tending to be counterclockwise in the 'northern' hemisphere and vice-versa. This refers to the Coriolis effects, the name given to the phenomenon of cloud patterns tending to spiral in a clockwise fashion in the southern hemisphere and vice-versa in the north.²² Graphically represented, this phenomenon could be seen to fundamentally resemble the Taoist *yin-yang* symbol. The Taoist idea of the dynamic balance of interdependent opposites has already been discussed especially with regard to its relevance in Ecology. The pattern of the weave does not proceed strictly in opposite ways in opposite spheres, but rather changes directions in keeping with the tendencies of the coastlines of the various land masses to change their general axes, adhering thus to the Taoist idea that each polar value always contains in it some aspects of its opposite, evident in the above-mentioned Taoist symbol. It seemed to my eye, observing world maps, that these changes in thrust or axis often occur at similar latitudes and so lent themselves to this method of weaving, where changes in direction can only be made to occur throughout the the whole circumference of a line of weave and not separately at different points.

The shape of the continents and their relevant sizes was not strictly adhered to or copied, but rather emphasis was put on all parts conforming to a consistent pattern throughout.²³ The

pattern achieved, like those in some Zulu woven wire baskets, is rather like a marbled paint effect. This pattern, especially the spiral patterns at the poles, resembles fractal images. Fractal images are computer generated geometric configurations that repeat themselves on ever-finer scales, often used to describe the apparently random and chaotic form of such natural phenomena as clouds and cloud formations.²⁴

The small fruit-like size of the piece lends itself to being handled or held. The segmented nature of the sphere, due to the underlying armature, suggests further the idea of a fruit. The likening of the earth to a fruit and vice versa suggests an all-pervading oneness.²⁵ The image of the earth as a small isolated sphere in space is one which has only been seen relatively recently, with the advent of space travel. This image lends strength to the Ecological idea of the earth as an entire organism whose resources are precious and finite. The first sight of this image is often described as a profound experience in the history of Ecology.

The ideas addressed in 'Chord', 'Pitch' and 'Shell' are investigated further in a work I made in September and October of 1995 entitled 'Resound' (fig.30). This consists of a relatively flat constructed wooden element onto which is stitched a spiralling cone shape of blue and clear perspex. The wooden element was made by slicing guava logs into two or three centimetre thick sections which were then cut to fit the circumferences of other sections which were subsequently joined edge to edge with dowels and glue. They were arranged to form a ring, undulating and twisting slightly, also tilted into a shallow conical form. Lengths of the same wood were then used to create smooth rims on both the inner and outer edges of the ring. Onto the inner rim, perpendicular to it, was stitched the perspex element which forms a tall, crystalline, conical spiral. The spiral follows a winding copper spine which defines the troughs between the ascending swells. Closest to the wood, the cone is predominantly blue, progressing to the completely clear perspex of the further end.

The object resembles a shell-like form, the wooden element forming the rim or lip around the aperture which is attached to or grows from the stitched perspex spiral form. The wooden structure, seen alone, because of its colours, curves and repeated elements or cells, resembles a tortoise shell. Each wooden section resembles the 'scutes' or horny shields which constitute such a shell. The concentric rings which reveal the age of a tree, or the sections of branch

which comprise this work, are also present on the scutes of a tortoise shell which reveal similarly the age of a tortoise. The way in which these elements are arranged reflects the 'closest packing' principle discussed earlier in relation to 'Seed' and 'Window' (see endnote number 1). The conical spiral element reflects similarly slow growth. A shell is a hard exoskeleton produced by an organism which inhabits and is an integral part of this structure. As the organism grows, the cone is made to grow larger along a spiral path (see endnote number 21). Like the growth of a tortoise shell, this process is very slow. The triangles of perspex are also reflective of the 'closest packing' principle mentioned above. In this manner, the sculpture addresses the idea of growth, particularly a slow, rhythmic kind of growth. This reflects the slow process involved in the construction of this work; despite its relatively small scale (it is about 65 centimetres high), it took two months to complete.

At the same time as resembling a shell, 'Resound' evokes an ear-like form; the wooden part being the fleshy lobe and body of the ear, and the perspex resembling its inner tunnels and the cochlea or spiral cavity of the inner ear. The use of blue and clear perspex triangles to construct this latter element refers to both 'Ripple' and a work of mine from 1993 entitled 'River, skin' (see endnote number 17). The spiral shape of this water-like form recalls a whirlpool or the path taken by water through an aperture. I intended this work to depict, in one sense, the sound made by water as it flows over or around some irregularity, creating in itself ripples, eddies and whirlpools. The rhythmic and soothing nature of such phenomena is one which I have addressed in discussion of both 'Pitch' and 'Chord'. The rhythmic and cyclical nature of the processes employed in its construction and the evidence of such natural processes in its materials initiate a similar dialogue in 'Resound'. The concentric rings in the wooden elements and the use of repeated perspex elements reveals both of their organic origins. The blue perspex was obtained from broken police light covers, and this evokes an idea of sensually perceived rhythm or repetition in the sense of the flashing lights and siren with which such objects are associated.

'Resound' was made to resemble an ear, moving water or a shell-like form. In this sense it can be seen as receptive, generative or reflective of sounds, cycles and rhythms. This rhythmic dialogue does not take place between subject and object or in a dualistic way. All manifestations of this phenomenon are present in a single object. This is to suggest that a

response to natural phenomena, such as the repetitive sound of waves on the beach, the changing of the seasons or simply an emotional response to the beauty of a natural form, is a recognition of such phenomena within ourselves- that we are subject to or interdependently connected to nature 'outside' of ourselves. It is to this recognition, or resonance, as well as to the similarity between the forms of an ear, a shell and the spiral path of draining water, that the title 'Resound' refers. This work, on such a level, addresses the inherent oneness and interdependence of all phenomena, the seminal ideas of both Buddhism and Ecology.

The concentrations of colour, energy and growth in plants in the early spring of 1995 are explored and find expression in 'Pulse' (fig.31), a work which is thus related to 'Waker', but addresses similar issues to those discussed in relation to 'Ripple'. It takes the symmetrical form of five wave-like circles arranged in the concentric manner of a ripple, the whole measuring nearly one metre across. The work is made of triangles of tyre and orange road-cone stitched together with copper wire. The centre of the object is slightly conical and is made from very bright orange material. As the ripple moves outwards, the respective rings are made from darkening material. I found road-cones which were covered in tarmac by their use in roadworks and in cleaning them found that the material was stained to different degrees by this substance. I arranged these triangular elements in the work according to the darkness of their stain. As I moved outwards, with each respective wave of the ripple, the colour of the plastic moved towards black. When it was at its darkest I began working in tyre, which was filleted like that described in 'Pitch'. This tyre, patterned in a surprisingly water-like way with the white nylon of its interior plies, gradually gives way to pitch-black triangles of unfilleted tyre. The overall form of the piece, in its symmetrical, conical and circular nature, retains some of the identity of its component materials- road-cones and tyres.

This work addresses dispersion and concentration of energy, the bright orange of the centre suggesting a concentration of energy which gets dispersed or distributed as the ripple moves outwards. Alternatively, the centre can be seen as a focus of energy which moves inwards and concentrates in the centre. The aforementioned concentrations of colours which I observed in early spring, in the bright greenness of new buds, seemed to be concentrations of energy, focussing on the new season's growth. Colour seems to reflect or indicate the distribution of energy in a plant, the plant's growth and future depending on such an

apparently disproportionate concentration of energy. In a sense, therefore, as well as being concentrated here, this energy moves away and outwards from here.

The title 'Pulse' refers to a rhythmical recurrence or vibration which, together with its ripple-like form, clearly relate it to previous works such as 'Ripple' and 'Pitch'. The notion of waves, sounds, rhythms and cycles has been discussed in relation to these works and applies similarly to this sculpture. A ripple can be thought of as an example of 'broken symmetry' (Stewart 1995:77).²⁶ Stewart compares the disturbance of a pond's surface by a pebble to the electrical and chemical 'disturbances' or stimuli, essential to our survival, which cause our heart to beat. The skin-like quality of the materials in this piece allude to this idea. Stewart likens our universe to a pond's flat surface, the pure symmetry of which is disturbed by a pebble to cause a ripple. The ripple, however, demonstrates a symmetry of its own. Although the grand perfect symmetry of the original surface is lost, a certain symmetry does remain, and where it does is where we recognize a symmetry or pattern in nature. He explains that symmetry is an all-pervasive phenomenon in nature, but that all the time, in all places, tiny symmetries are broken. So in that sense, the great symmetry of our universe is actually, by nature, broken- the result of small breaks in a potential perfect symmetry. Thus the universe is able to continually expand, but still to keep itself in check by virtue of gravity (this is similarly explained in the quote by Thomas Berry (1989: (xv)) used in the closing of the chapter on Andries Botha), and this is suggested by the dispersing and concentrating nature of my sculpture as well. Stewart concludes by saying that 'the same basic method of pattern formation, the same mechanism of symmetry-breaking... governs the cosmos, the atom and us' (1995:91). This work can be thus be seen to address the nature of the universe, its underlying oneness and interdependence, and how this is reflected metaphorically and is plainly evident in everyday phenomena such as the ripening of a bud and ripples on water.

I have presented my work here in order to continue the Ecological discourse used to examine the work of Oltmann and Botha. As well as this chapter clarifying aspects of my interpretation of their work, I hope that this interpretation has illuminated aspects of mine and at the same time continued to articulate the personal, cultural and spiritual nature of the practice of Ecology. This chapter is also, to some degree, a document of a personal

awakening to an Ecological way of living in the world. I have presented Oltmann and Botha as inherently, but not ignorantly, illustrating and illuminating an Ecological awareness in their work. I, on the other hand, set out with the aim of doing that, but embrace still some of the features of their work which I describe as inherently and implicitly supporting this discourse. I have attempted to further demonstrate in this chapter, the Ecological nature of the processes and of the redressing of particular cultural imbalances which feature in all of our work.

1. The use of triangles, aside from its aesthetic qualities, began as a solution to a technical sculptural problem I encountered first in the construction of 'River, skin' in 1993. I subsequently became aware of the universal employment in nature of the minimum amount of elements to produce a large amount of varying structures. Peter Pearce (1978: xiii) calls such structures 'minimum inventory/maximum diversity' systems. These systems maintain and create their structures with the minimum amount of energy. This concept is often expressed in structures which display 'closest packing'- structures of cells, atoms or units such as bubbles are all held together in this way. As well as requiring the least amount of energy, such structures display the maximum amount of strength. If, for example, the centre points of all the spheres comprising a froth of bubbles are joined, the resultant network will be seen to result in a structure of equilateral triangles. The triangle is a form which cannot bend about any of its axes, nor can any of its angles be distorted or changed by any external force. It therefore exhibits the greatest amount of strength by the simplest of means and using the least amount of energy. I am thus suggesting that an observance of natural form, together with the search for a technical solution to a structural problem, resulted in the intuition of a universal natural law.
2. A testa is the coat or covering of a seed, like for instance the hard stripy shell of a sunflower seed, the shape of which suggested to me the form of this work.
3. Eisler discusses pre-industrial cultures which her research suggests were matriarchal, peaceful, co-operative and abundant. She cites the work of many archaeologists and anthropologists and suggests the invalidity of many traditional patriarchal interpretations of pre-industrial culture. She asserts the value of these lessons and their applicability to contemporary Western culture.
4. I was reminded here of Capra's description of the yin-yang balance and how all transitions between and changes in the relationship of the two qualities take place 'gradually and in unbroken progression' (1981:186).
5. This work was in part inspired by an anecdote in a book about natural phenomena (Dennis, Wolff 1992:231). The anecdote tells of oysters taken from their home in the ocean to a laboratory thousands of kilometres away. The oysters' cycle of feeding, which normally relates directly to the tidal cycles of the place in which they live, soon adapted exactly to those of the shore nearby to which their new laboratory home was. This story suggests some sort of communication with marine and lunar cycles other than the easily observable tidal levels of the water in which they live.
6. A piece of rosewood was given to me by a friend and I chose to use it in this sculpture for its size and the deep black-red colour which I was able to recreate with black and red telephone wire which I had. Its history of use in the production of musical

instruments was something I discovered during the making of the sculpture.

7. I subsequently encountered an appropriate interpretation of the work of Dr. Seuss (Ehrenfeld 1993:43) which suggests: 'A common theme runs through many of the works of Dr. Seuss, like a stream running through a checkered landscape, binding together fields, villages, woods, marshes, and hillsides. The theme is that life, as it should be, has an intrinsic order and pattern in which all plants and animals, including us, have a place, a piece of the pattern. Each place is defined; boundaries are established, but the area within the boundaries is always ample because the definition of the piece of the pattern is the same as the description of the natural limits and capabilities of its particular inhabitants'. These ideas of balance, limitations, appropriate behaviour and inherent value and harmony are seminal to Ecology. They also echo some of the ideas of Gregory Bateson, a sociologist whom Capra and others cite as being very influential to the ecology movement in terms of his *Systems theory* (see, for example, Macy 1992:295-6). Dr. Seuss, I would suggest, had a unique ability to be humorous and profound at the same time.

8. 'Waker' is closely related in form and content to a small wire sculpture, made in 1993, entitled 'Turning Point', which referred directly to Capra's book of the same title.

9. Although the continent is massive and the flora and fauna are numerous, varied and mixed in Australia, I felt strongly that I was on an island. The influence and dangers of unchecked alien or external agents seem very apparent in, for example, the large numbers of small marsupials which become extinct through the presence of feral and domestic cats. Our whole earth can metaphorically be seen as a vast island, susceptible to unchecked invasion and exploitation. My time spent in Australia and encounters with young people there who were ecologically aware, contributed greatly to my growing Ecological consciousness. Although this is perhaps not apparent in the work itself, it formed a real part of the thinking around it and is consistent with the whole body of work, particularly those parts which refer to growth and awakening.

10. The metaphor of a world consisting of interwoven relationships is contained both in the title and in many of the essays within this book (Diamond, I., Orenstein, G.F. 1990).

11. This quote is from teaching received at The Buddhist Retreat Centre as mentioned in the introductory chapter.

12. A book which I found very inspirational speaks of meditation practice in this way (Hanh 1987:109). Hanh tells that there are many ways of 'stopping and seeing', and refers to these methods as 'doors for you to enter reality'. Embracing the true nature of our existence allows a perception of true reality, unclouded and unfiltered by the habits and tendencies of our minds to experience the world in a way which does not admit this

fundamental and all-pervasive impermanence into our map of reality. I am suggesting here that my weaving process could be experienced as a similar method of 'stopping and seeing'. I am not, however, suggesting that each moment I worked on 'Sphere (i)' I was completely mindful and focussed. One finds that in meditation practice your mind does wander from the simple experience of sitting and breathing. This, however is an important element of the practice, since an awareness of this wandering implies an awareness that you are not present in each moment. This is naturally an important insight.

13. It was in fact the imprint of tyre treads on a northern KwaZulu-Natal beach which first suggested to me the use of tyre as a sculptural medium.

14. *Cell* is here used to describe an enclosed element or cavity in an organism or structure rather than in the strict biological sense, although the structure or packing of either sort of cell is compliant with the same laws, those of 'closest packing' discussed in endnote number 1 (Pearce 1978:3).

15. Again some research revealed this to be true. In the book referred to in the previous endnote, Pearce describes form as a diagram of forces (1978:xiv). He states that the same forces are at work, that drying or cracking structures obey the same laws which are found in constructed or growing phenomena, and produce always the simplest of structures, whereby the centre points of all the individual cells joined will produce a triangulated pattern, as discussed in relation to 'Seed'. In this way, although not intentionally, this work relates to a small work of 1993 entitled 'Leaf' - a plane tree leaf made of stitched perspex triangles.

16. The title was first suggested by a song by the Grateful Dead. A haiku-like line speaks, I believe, of some of the ideas addressed in this piece-

'Ripple in still water
When there is no pebble tossed
Nor wind to blow'

This was written by Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter and appears on 'American Beauty' released in 1971.

17. This form, or this manner of depicting water, has its origins in the aforementioned work of 1993- 'River, skin'. This was a sculpture depicting a stretch of water made of blue and white plastic triangles. It was made from drawings of light and shadow reflected in water. (see also endnote number 1).

18. The crystalline nature of this element, nestled amongst rugged surrounds, and the notion of pilgrimage or journey to this centre paralleled, by chance, the autobiographical pilgrimage I later read about in Mattheissen's 'The Snow Leopard' (1978). This book addresses notions of Ecology and anthropology but is ultimately the story of a personal pilgrimage made by the author,

himself a practicing Buddhist. The destination of his journey was The Crystal Mountain and its monastery, deep in the Tibetan Himalayas. This book was tremendously informative and inspirational.

19. It is interesting to look at this in light of Oltmann's notion of the spiral in which he compares this form or phenomena to a labyrinth, in the sense that they both inherently involve a journey from the outside to the inside (1984:37).

20. This notion is one I was made aware of during the retreat I attended at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in November 1994, which, as noted before, dealt specifically with Buddhism and Ecology.

21. I subsequently discovered, in Stewart, an explanation which describes similarly the process of growth in such organisms (1995:20) - 'The main mathematical feature of the developmental story is the general shape of the spiral. Basically, the developmental story is about the geometry of a creature that behaves in much the same way all the time, but keeps getting bigger. Imagine a tiny animal, with a tiny proto-shell attached to it. Then the animal starts to grow. It can grow most easily in the direction along which the open rim of the shell points, because the shell gets in its way if it tries to grow in any other direction. But, having grown a bit, it needs to extend its shell as well, for self-protection. So, of course, the shell grows an extra ring of material around its rim. As the process continues, the animal is getting bigger, so the size of the rim grows. The simplest result is a conical shell, such as you find on a limpet. But if the whole system starts with a bit of a twist, as is quite likely, then the growing edge of the shell rotates slowly as well as expanding, and it rotates in an off-centred manner. The result is a cone that twists in an ever-expanding spiral'.

22. The Coriolis effect explains the phenomenon thus: when air currents travel north from the equator the ground effectively slows down beneath them (because a point on the equator has much further to travel, to complete one revolution in 24 hours about the earth's axis, than one closer to the pole, that point on the equator travels relatively much faster than a point closer to a pole). The effective slowing of the ground beneath an air current and the cloud it carries causes it to curve to the east. The opposite is obviously true of the southern hemisphere (Dennis 1992:10-11).

23. It was found when searching for a suitable image of the earth that in order for a two dimensional map of the earth to be made, certain distortions have to be made. There are several accepted versions, the use of which has apparently been politically motivated in the past (Barber, P., Board, C. 1993:13). During the cold war, a version which depicted the Soviet Union as very large and thus more of a threat, found favour in the United States. In my version, by chance, Africa is depicted as the largest landmass.

24. Stewart (Stewart 1995:1 and 9) discusses patterns in nature, specifically fractals, which as mentioned earlier, are patterns which repeat themselves on ever-finer scales. He explains that a large cloud seen from far away and a small cloud seen close up could equally plausibly have been the other way around in terms of the shapes and patterns which make up their physical structure and appearance. This idea of the part reflecting or containing the whole, and vice-versa, is one which pervades both Buddhism and Ecology. This is expressed in the the Buddhist myth or metaphor of the jewelled net of Indra, a net of clear jewels, each of which contains the reflections of all the others, and each of which is reflected in all of the others. This describes the interconnectedness of all phenomena and is known as the doctrine of 'the mutual interpenetration and interfusion of all phenomena' (Batchelor, M. 1992:11).

25. One of the retreats I attended at Buddhist Retreat Centre, focussing on Buddhism and Ecology, was entitled 'The World in a Flower', this name reflecting a similar idea to that of the 'world in a fruit', which I propose here.

26. This book, 'Nature's Numbers: Discovering Order and Pattern in the Universe', mentioned in discussion of 'Sphere (ii)' and 'Shell', explains in mathematical and anecdotal ways, new and unsuspected structures and regularities in the world around us.

IN CONCLUSION

I have presented here a discussion of some recent South African sculpture, attempting to situate it in the context of a changing South African culture, which has in turn been placed into the larger context of changing Western values and concerns. I have suggested that this larger transformation is toward a more Ecologically aware worldview and practices. This is obviously a contentious issue, but one of which I think there is evidence to be seen in many aspects of our everyday existence. The current increase in environmental awareness can be dismissed as merely fashionable, but can just as easily be seen as part of a cultural transformation. However transitory it may be and whatever commercial interests may inform this phenomenon, it does evidence in some way to a changing cultural awareness. I have attempted to show that the artmaking of Botha and Oltmann, arising out of a transforming South African consciousness, evidences an assimilation of Ecological awareness in Western and South African cultures. By this I mean that this work both heralds the transformation and arises out of this situation.

I have contended furthermore that an Ecological awareness is akin to a spirituality which comprises an awareness and perception of the oneness and interdependence of all phenomena, and of the impermanent and cyclical nature of reality. These are views common to the practice and philosophy of traditions such as Buddhism and Taoism. It might seem strange or even far-fetched to propose the presence or practice of such a foreign spirituality in Western and South African cultures, but it is important to realise that this is just one aspect of Ecology upon which I have chosen to dwell in my discourse. This spirituality, in terms of which I interpret and analyse the sculpture discussed here, is related more to a general view than to a particular religious practice. Many of the ideas I have presented as particular to Buddhism, for example, are not particular only to Buddhism, but find expression in other religious and spiritual traditions and aspects of everyday existence.

I could perhaps also have discussed Ecology and this spirituality from a Christian perspective, assimilating the emergent Process¹ and Creation Theologies. In some ways this would have been easier to do, given Oltmann's German Lutheran background and the Christian iconography and mythology often present in Botha's work. Botha, however, rejects

prescribed religious practices in spite of the attempted induction by his family into the Dutch Reformed church (Rankin 1991:9). Oltmann's work explores Christianity to an extent, and recently he has become interested in Gothic Christian artifacts (personal interview, April 1995). We see evidence of this in the Gothic-like finials which surround and frame 'Mediator'. I have already discussed, in relation to my own work 'Window', Sheldrake's (1990:33) contentions regarding the vestigial animistic practices of medieval, Romanesque and Gothic period Christianity. In relation to Ecology, Oltmann's interest in this period of Christianity could be discussed.

It is interesting to note that Capra's most recent book, Belonging to the Universe, comprises a discussion of new paradigm thinking in Theology and science (1992:8). The discussions culminate in discourse on the nature of God, and the applicability and value of Christianity to Ecology and new cultural paradigms. Together, the authors search for and find intuitions, beliefs and ultimately a worldview consistent with Eastern spirituality and this new Theology. Capra acknowledges that recently his worldview or 'path' has come to consciously include Christianity (1992:3).² He acknowledges the importance of embracing this insofar as Christianity is an all-pervasive presence, or part of the environment, in the West, but also insofar as he believes in the importance of a personal relationship to this faith (Capra 1988:5). Early on in the discussion, Steindl-Rast, one of the monks, states that the traditions of Buddhism and Christianity are 'perfectly compatible when rightly understood' (1988:5). Their discussions include a re-interpretation of Christianity's transcendent God, in which God comes to be understood more as immanent (Capra 1992:104), a notion which is clearly more appropriate to an Ecological understanding and practice. Capra acknowledges that ecologists tend to think purely in terms of biology because non-human nature does not possess culture in the sense of self-reflexive and abstract thought and the use of language, symbols and concepts (1992:96). In doing so, ecologists neglect cultural aspects of a worldview. Christianity, on the other hand, has placed its emphasis highly on humans and culture in the sense described above (Capra 1992:71). In such a way these two understandings are compatible and complementary. Buddhism is discussed as complementary to Christianity in that it cultivates an awareness of the non-human cosmos as part of God's plan of salvation. Christianity, on the other hand, complements this view in its elaboration on the social consequences of its spiritual doctrines (Capra 1992:89).

Further, the text which I think most adequately, beautifully and completely describes what I understand by Ecology is written by the Catholic monk Thomas Berry (1988), who articulates what has come to be known as Creation Theology. Even if I had undertaken my discussion from this point of view, I would still have distilled similar intuitions and contentions from such religious practices and traditions and applied them to my discourse on artmaking. Berry discusses, with equal regard and respect, aspects of Christianity, Taoism and Native American cultures which articulate aspects and principles of Ecology. The theme of his writing could be interpreted as the harmonious and compassionate existence of all of the earth's inhabitants, and the oneness and interdependence of all aspects of human and non-human nature. He understands the unity and uniqueness, and the eternal and transitory existence of all phenomena to be manifestations of God. Balance in society, of culture and nature, of Western and non-Western cultures and of masculine and feminine principles is inherent to such an Ecologically mindful and harmonious existence in God's creation. Berry rejects anthropocentrism, but is careful to note that human thought and decision have an important role to play in the further unfolding and evolution of the earth (Berry 1988:19). The mindful perception and redressing of cultural imbalances in Western and South African cultures can be seen as central themes in both Oltmann's and Botha's, and to some extent, my work. Berry, like Capra, assimilates the findings of modern science and physics into his worldview, embracing, implicitly, a new cultural paradigm which Capra claims is rooted in this scientific revolution. In keeping with this, Berry refers to the earth as a 'single, if multiform, energy event' (1988:24). Berry acknowledges the impermanent and evolving nature of the earth, referring to it not as a cosmos but a 'cosmogensis' (1988:28). I have discussed in depth Botha's and Oltmann's inherent and intentional addressing and embracing of the changing and evolving aspects of both nature and culture.

What is important to understand from the preceding discussion of Christianity is that it contains similar intuitions and basic precepts to spirituality and Ecology as I have discussed them in this discourse on artmaking. I have attempted to describe as present, in the artworks I have examined, an inherent and sometimes conscious awareness of fundamental aspects of reality. This acute perception of reality is presented as a balance of interdependent and opposing qualities and values, and images, processes and materials which incorporate and acknowledge fundamental impermanence and transformation. This awareness I have described

as Ecological and thus inherently spiritual. I have chosen, after Capra, to describe this spirituality in terms of Eastern religious and spiritual traditions. It is important, however, to realise that this all-pervasive and immanent spirituality originates in nature and reality and thus reveals itself all the time in many ways. We can only describe and articulate it in various ways, or using various models, remembering that 'the map is not the territory' (Capra 1980:142). The artworks I have examined can be seen thus to articulate or describe a model of reality of which they inherently partake. I have discussed the underlying, implicit and conscious issues of this artmaking as being inherently Ecological, demonstrating what Capra describes as Ecological awareness, an awareness which 'recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the embeddedness of individuals and societies in the cyclical processes of nature' (1988:335).

My discussion of this work with particular reference to Eastern spirituality can be seen as relevant in that it complements and enriches a more obvious examination of this sculpture in terms of Western or South African spiritual traditions. In drawing on essentially foreign spiritual traditions, I situate the work in a global context which enforces the idea of a larger transformation taking place. I have attempted to show the particular South African and the general universal aspects of this transformation as they find expression in certain sculptures. I have suggested that Botha's and Oltmann's (and my own) works arise out of this situation of changing awareness and consciousness, and that they inherently and consciously embrace these changes in a way which heralds the advent of greater Ecological awareness and an all-embracing spirituality.

1. Process Theology (Cobb 1982:322-6) was a name given in the 1960's to a school of Christianity which rejected static modes of thought and sought primarily liberation of thought. This Theology assimilates similar ideas to Creation Theology, describing the physical world in similar terms. Objects or entities in the world are described as events in time and space or occasions 'with relatively enduring patterns' (Cobb 1982:323). Dualities between mind and matter and subject and object are rejected. The impermanence and uniqueness of each moment is understood as fundamental to reality and God is found to be present in both suffering and joy. These terms could well be used in describing aspects of Buddhism, and many of them are particular issues which I have discussed in relation to Botha's, Oltmann's and my own work. Since the 1970's, Process Theology has concerned itself with both feminism and ecology.

2. Shelldrake (1990:155) also states that after a long period of practising and exploring Eastern spirituality, he has recently returned to his Christian roots.

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- fig. 28 Medium
- fig. 29 Sphere (ii)
- fig. 30 Resound
- fig. 31 Pulse

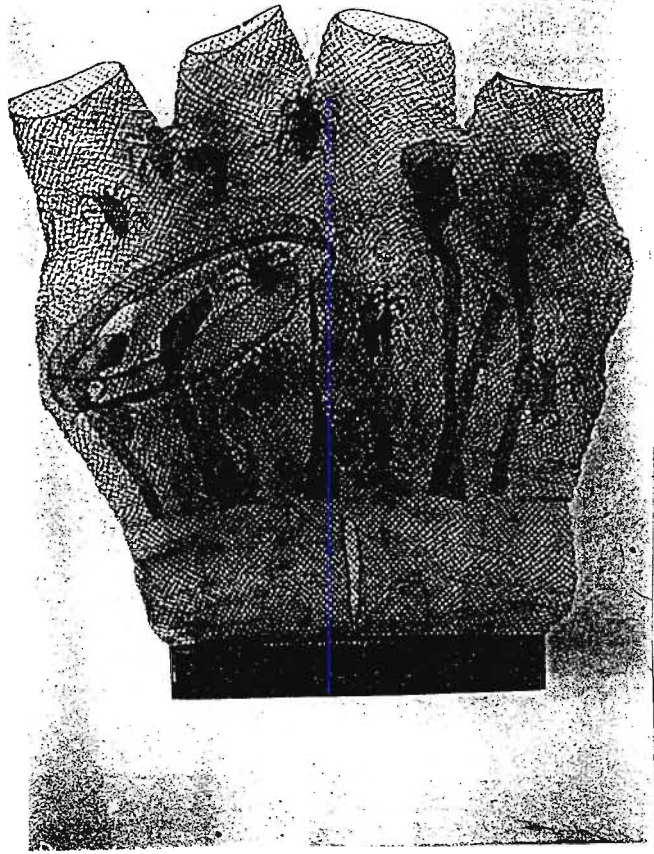


fig. 1

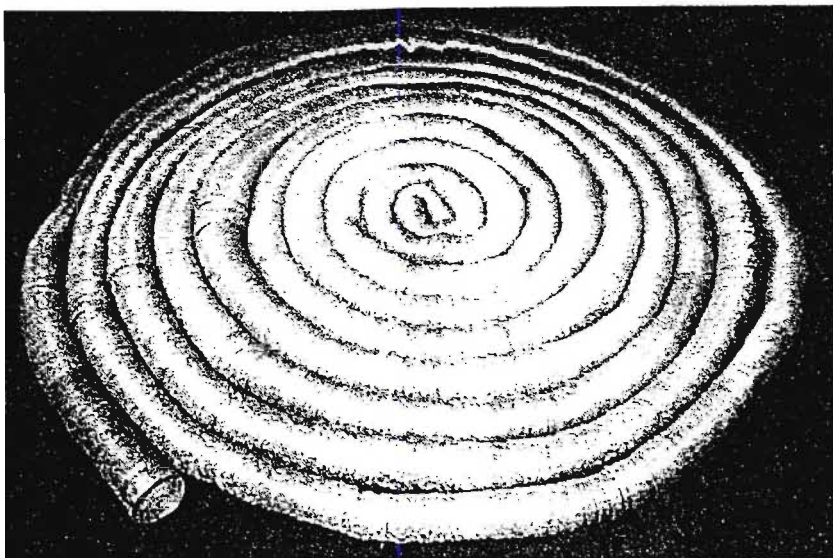


fig. 2

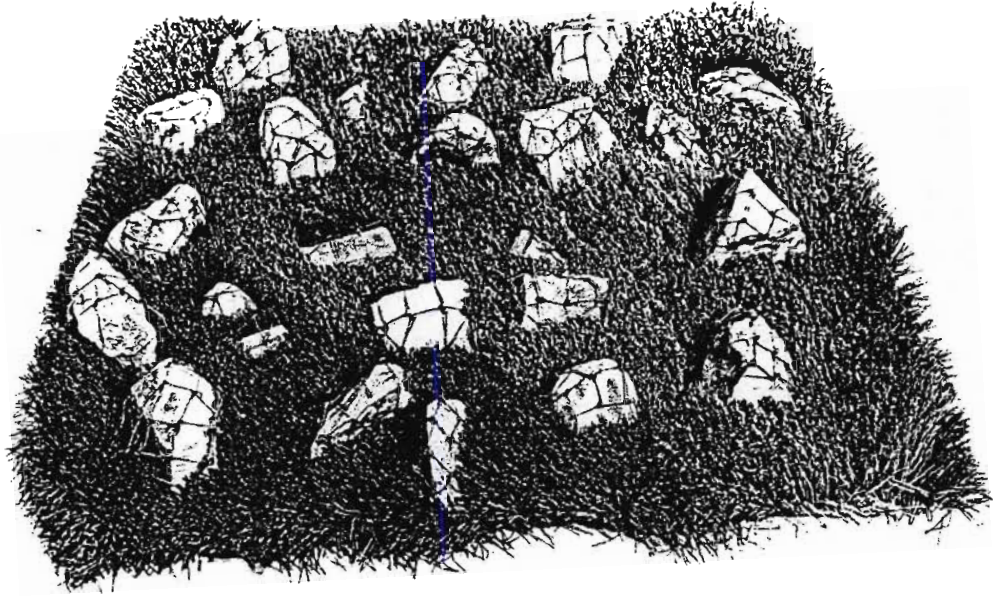


fig. 3

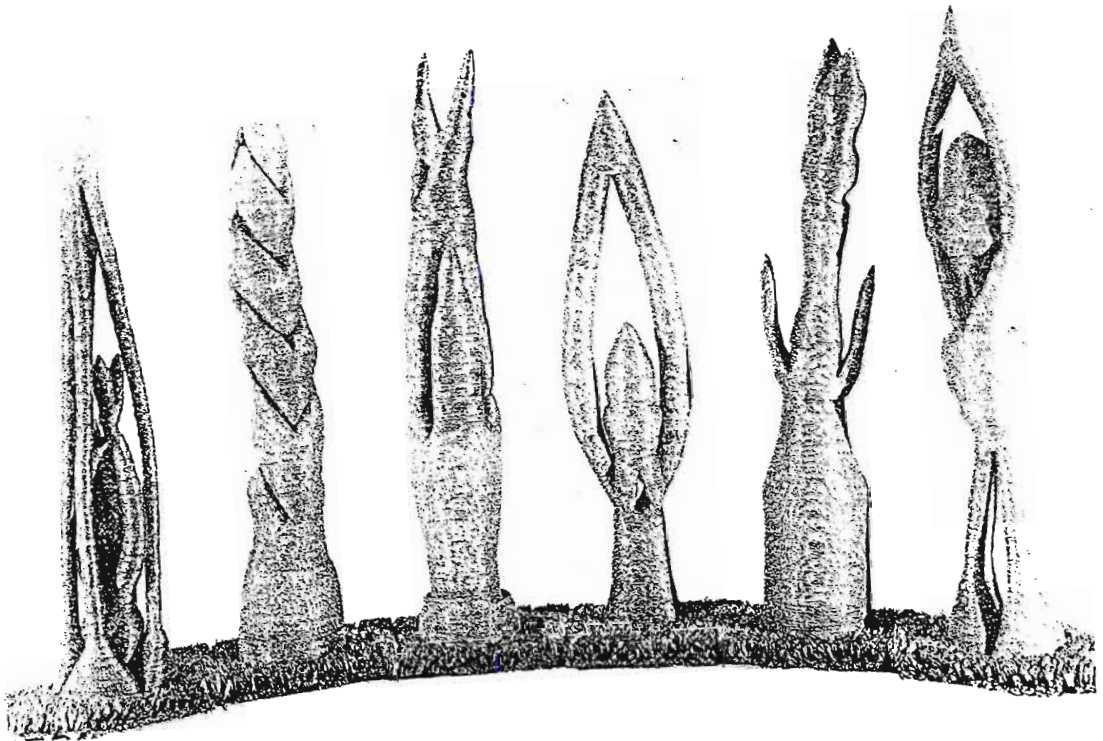


fig. 4

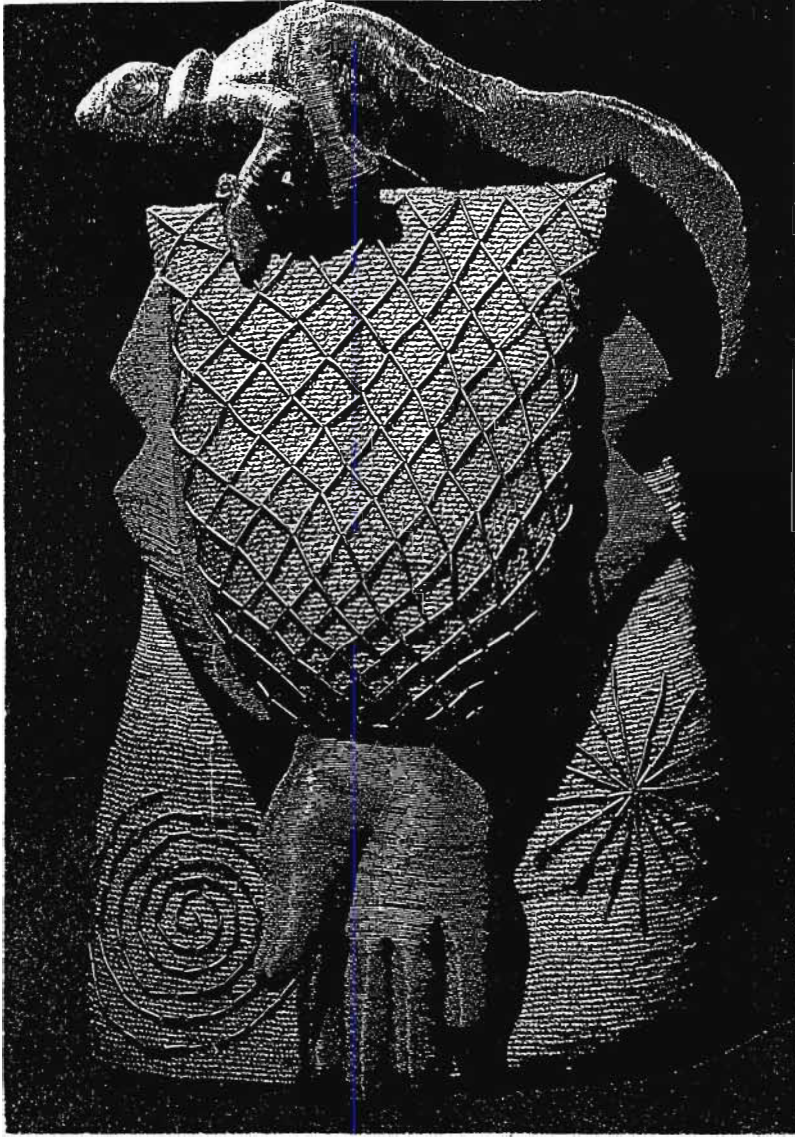


fig. 5

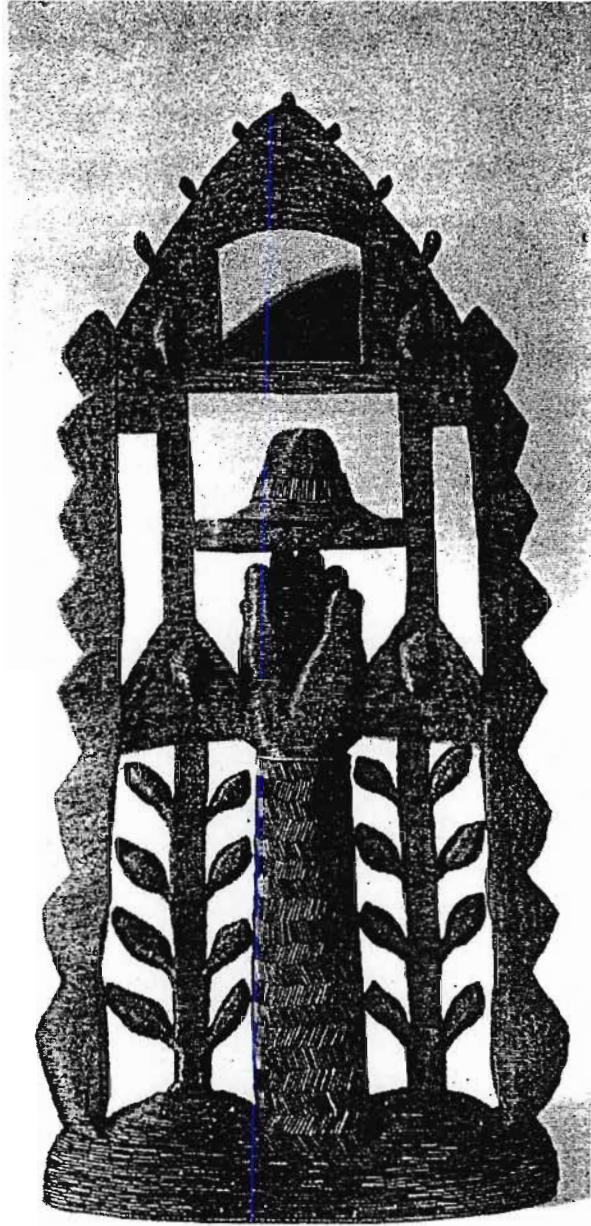


fig. 6

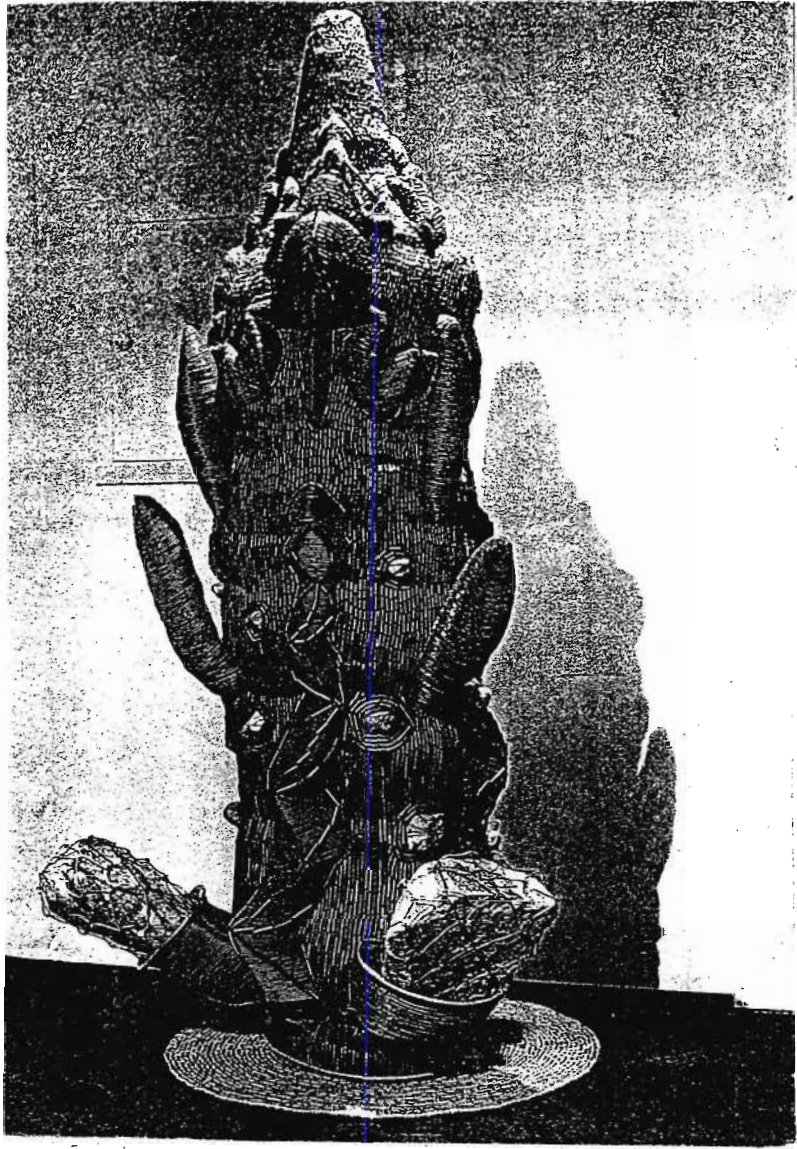


fig. 7

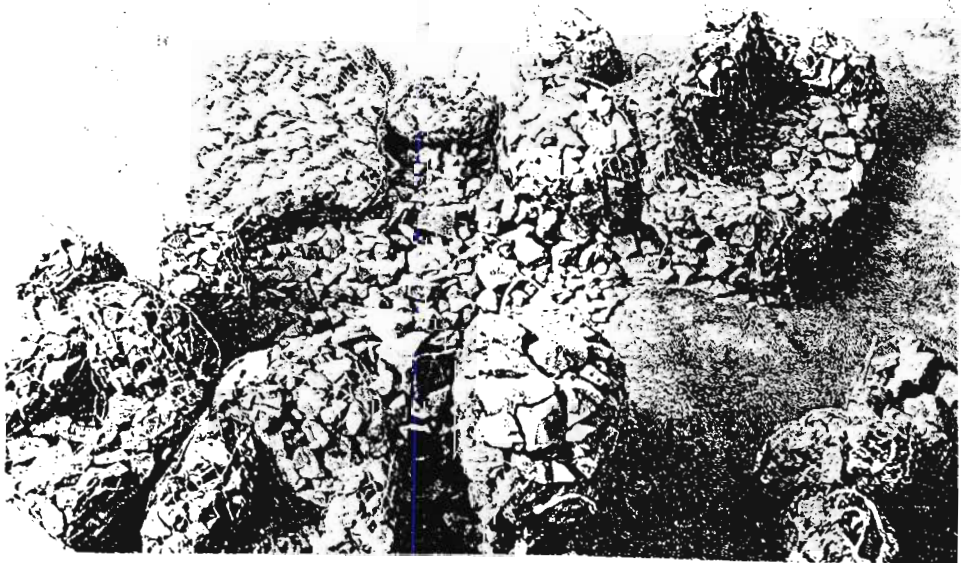


fig. 8

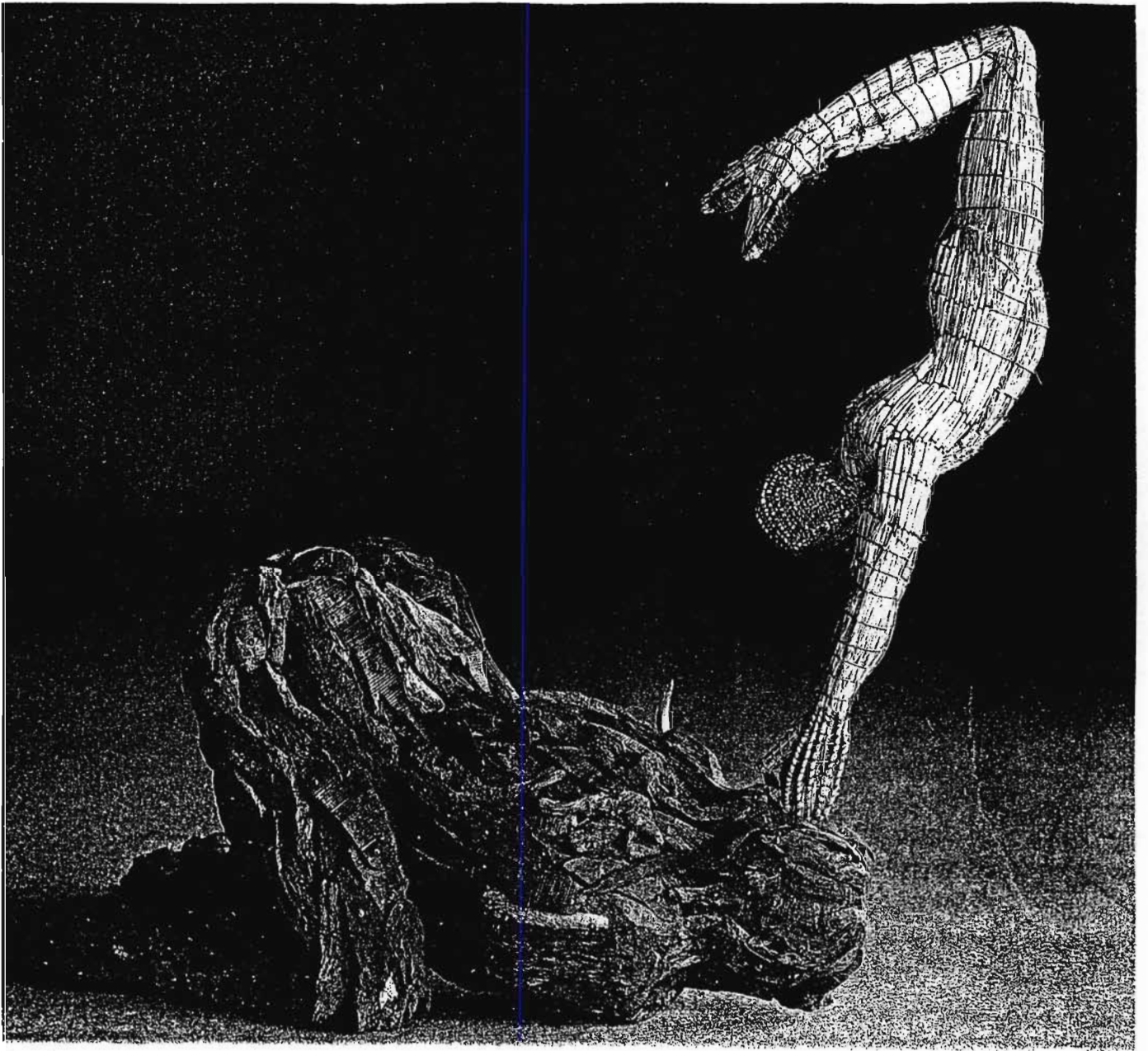
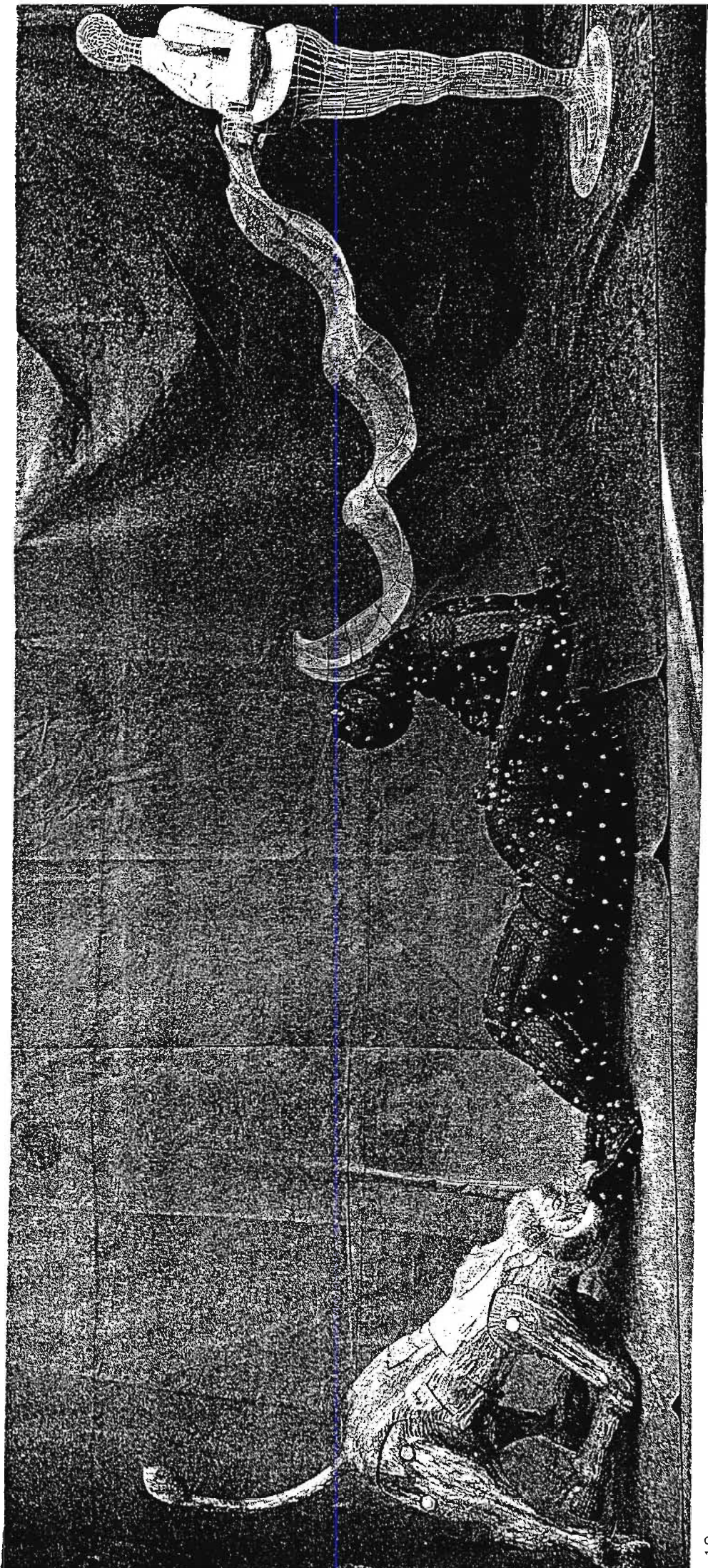


fig. 9



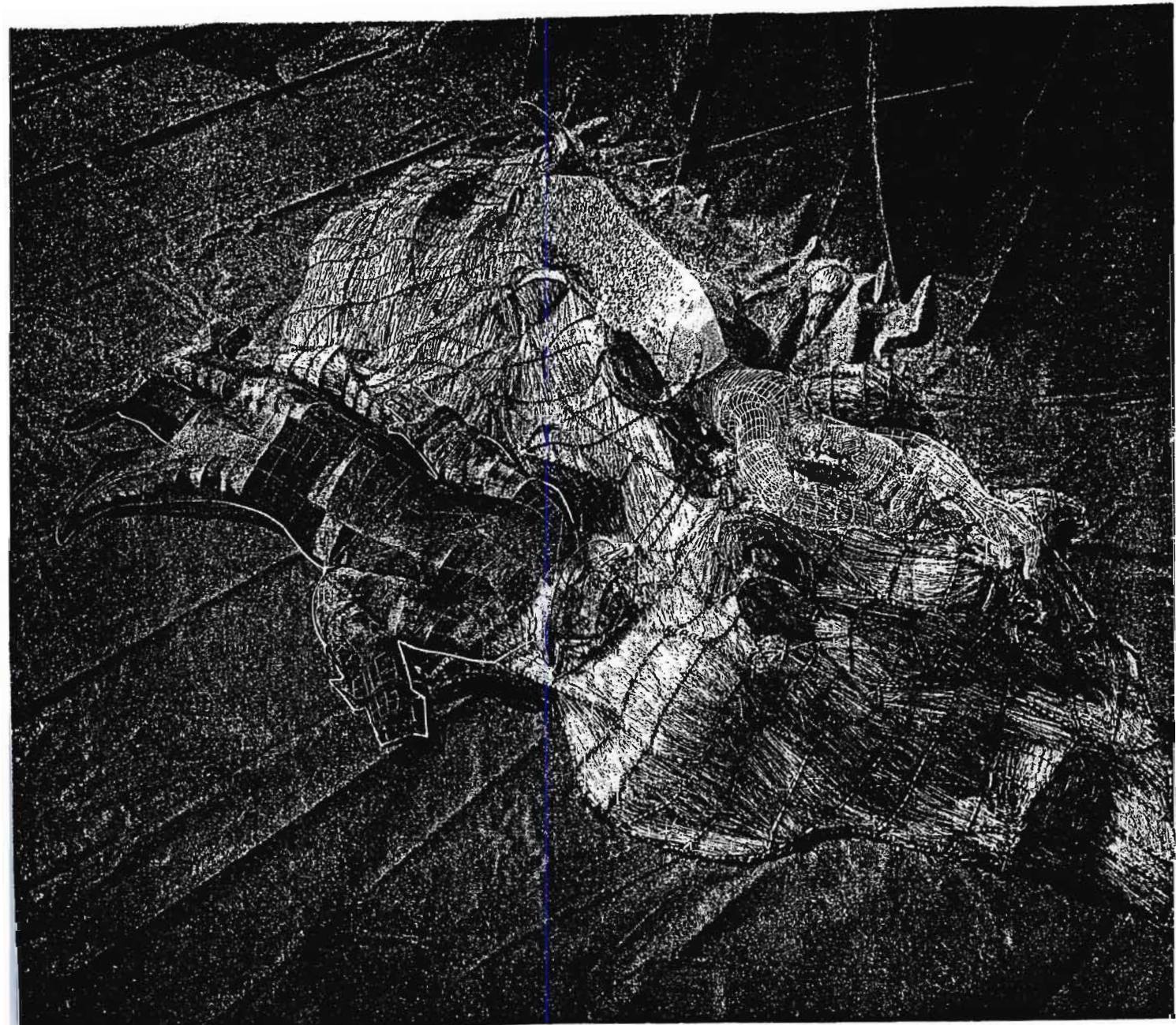


fig. 11

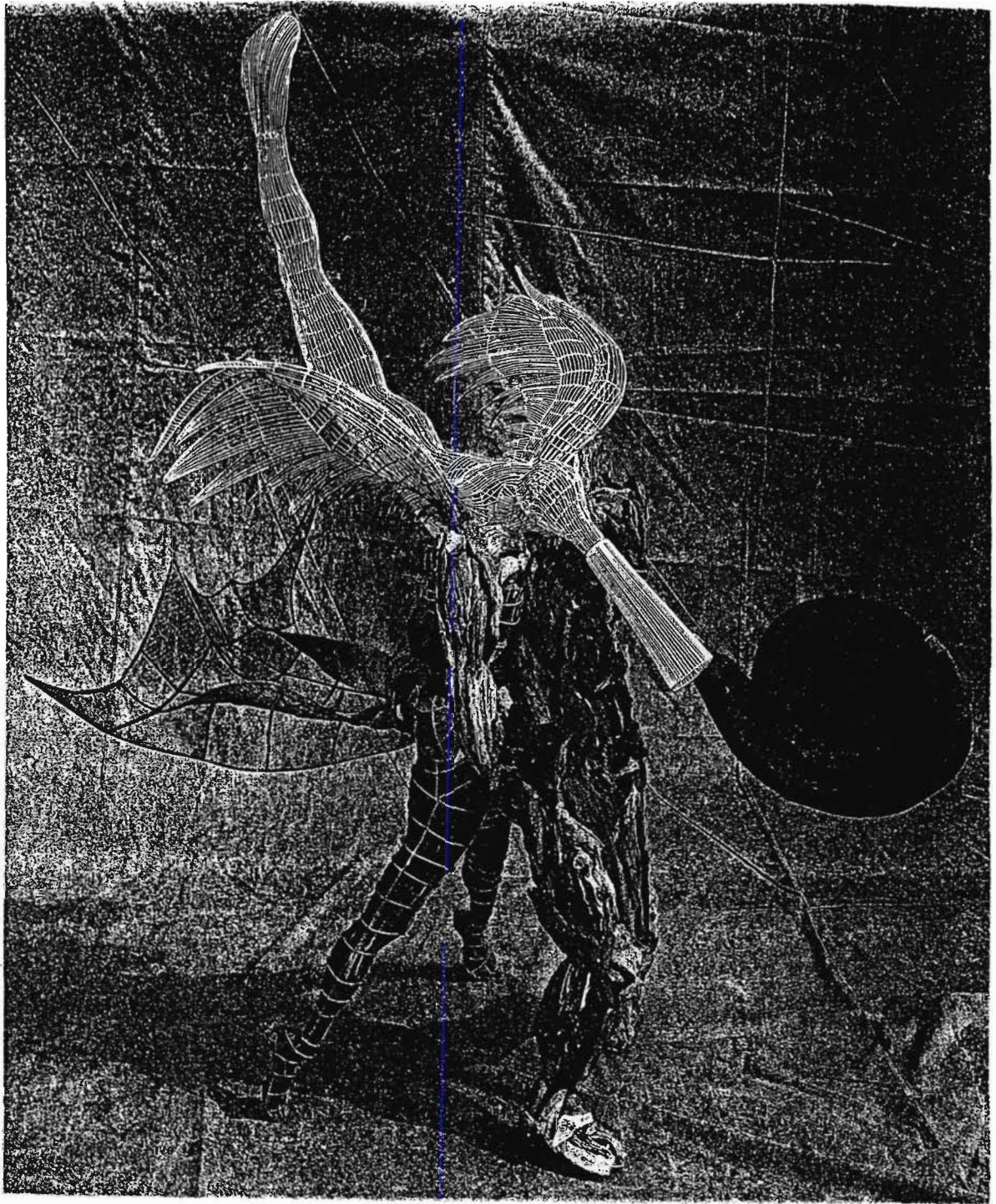


fig. 12



fig. 13

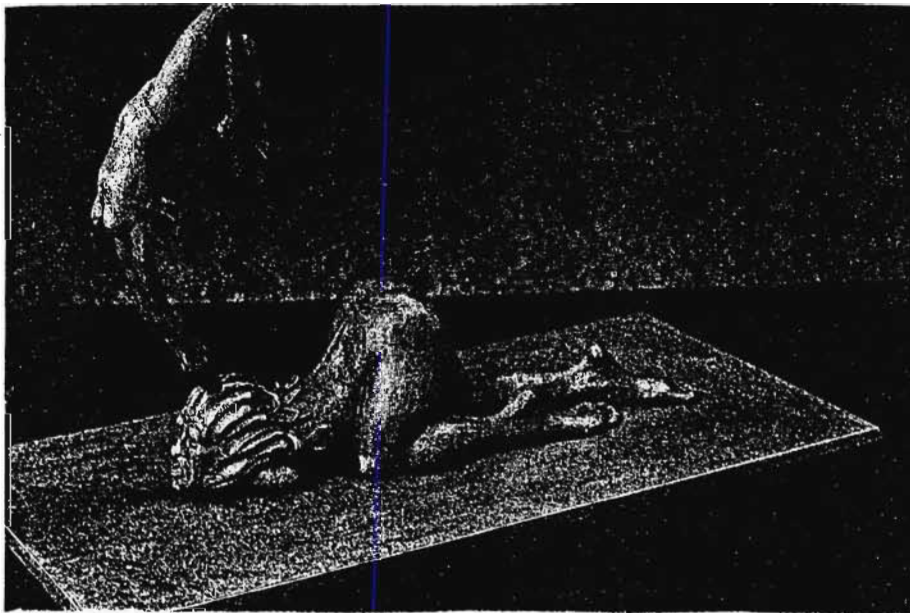


fig. 14

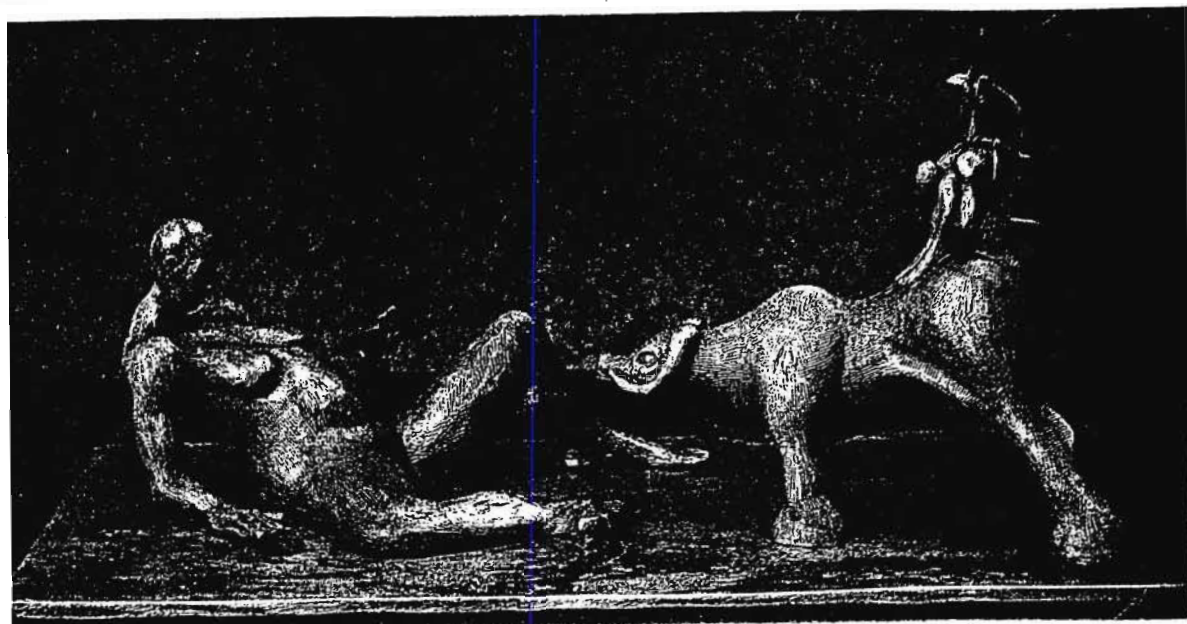


fig. 15

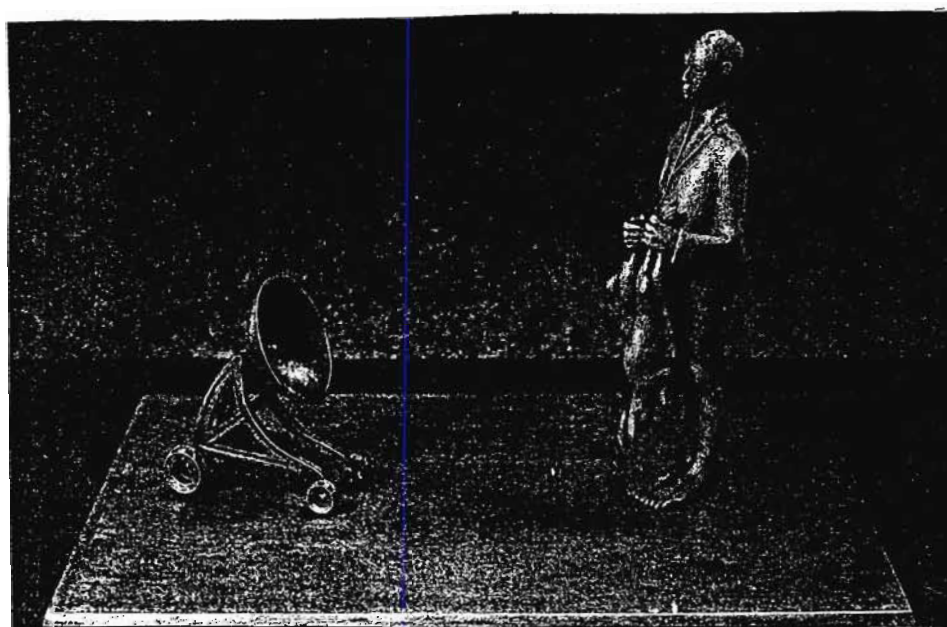


fig. 16

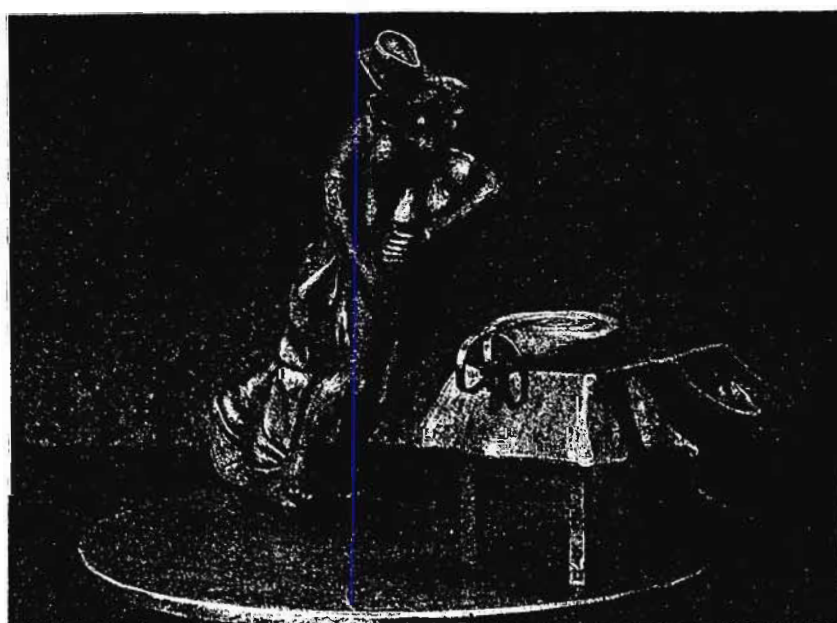


fig. 17

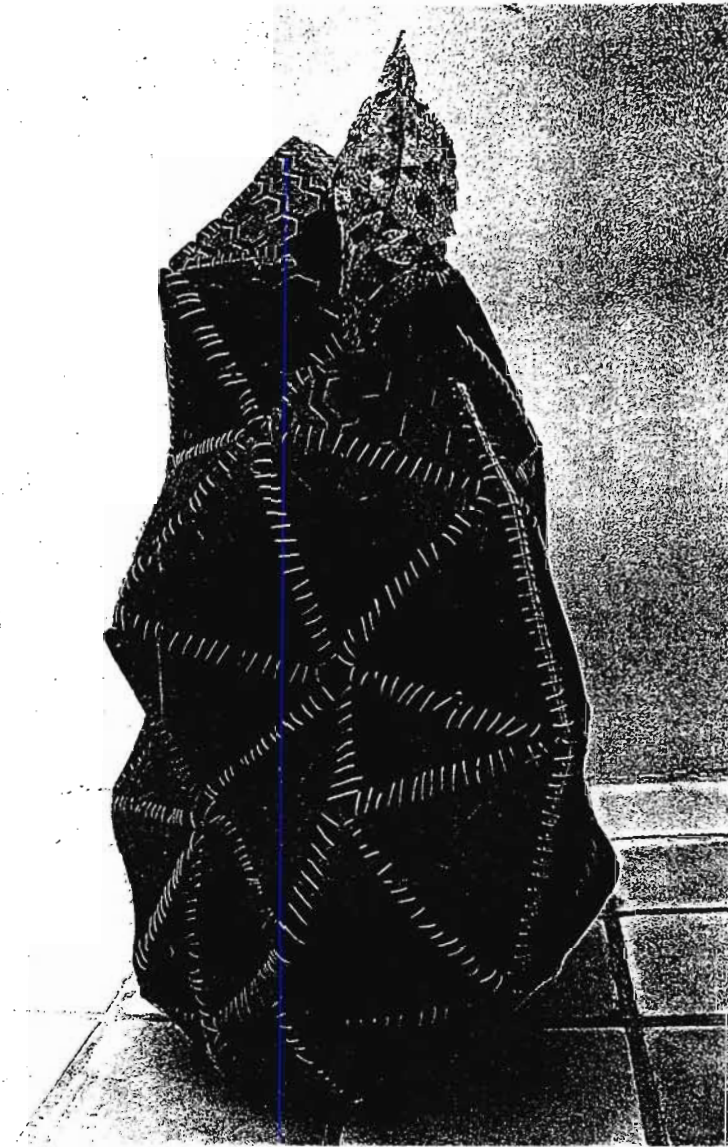


fig. 18

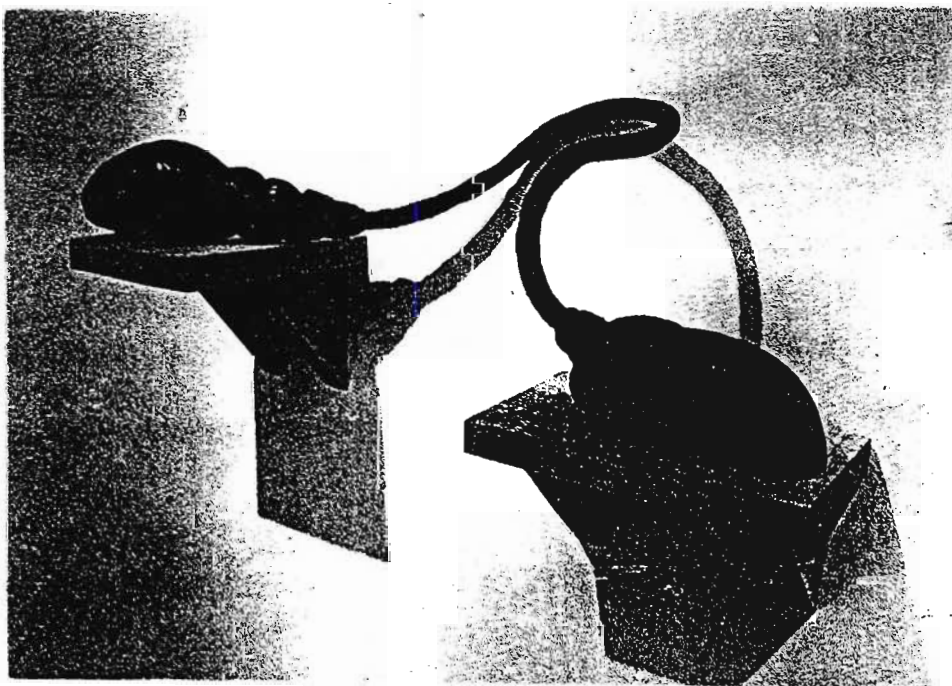


fig. 19

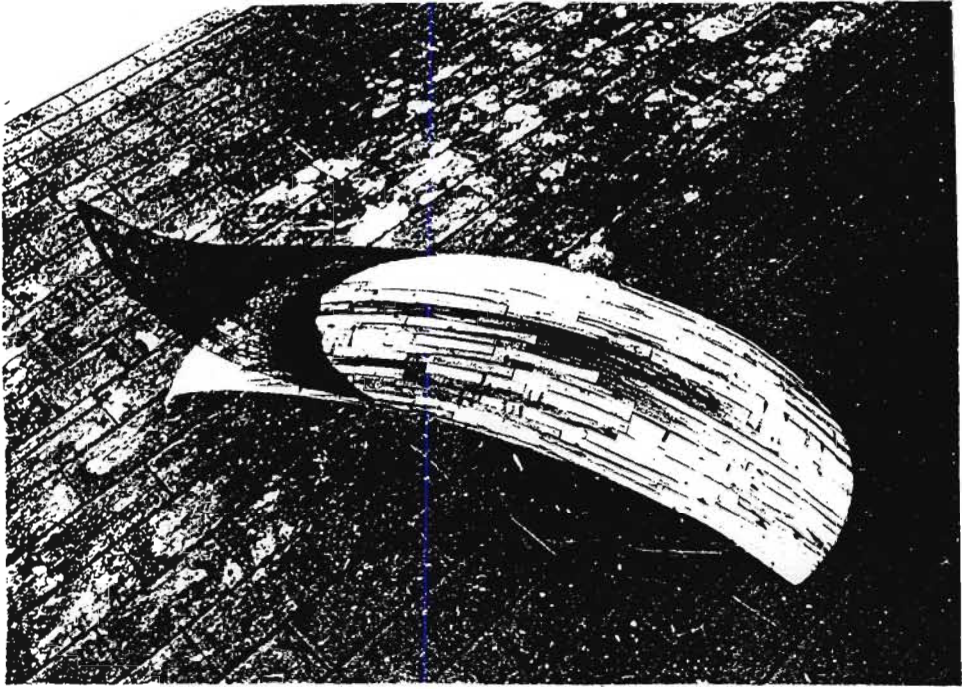


fig. 20

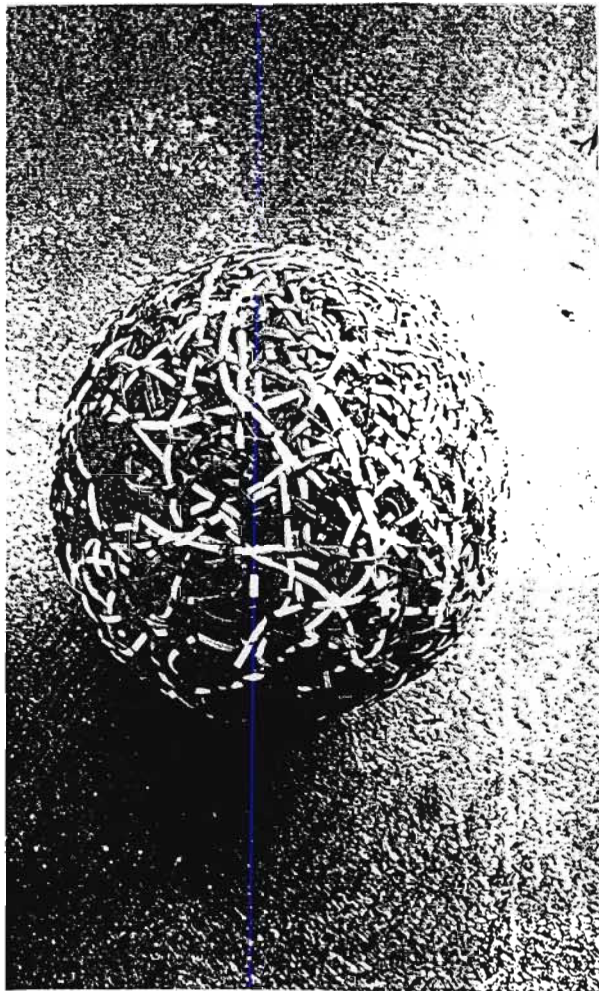


fig. 21

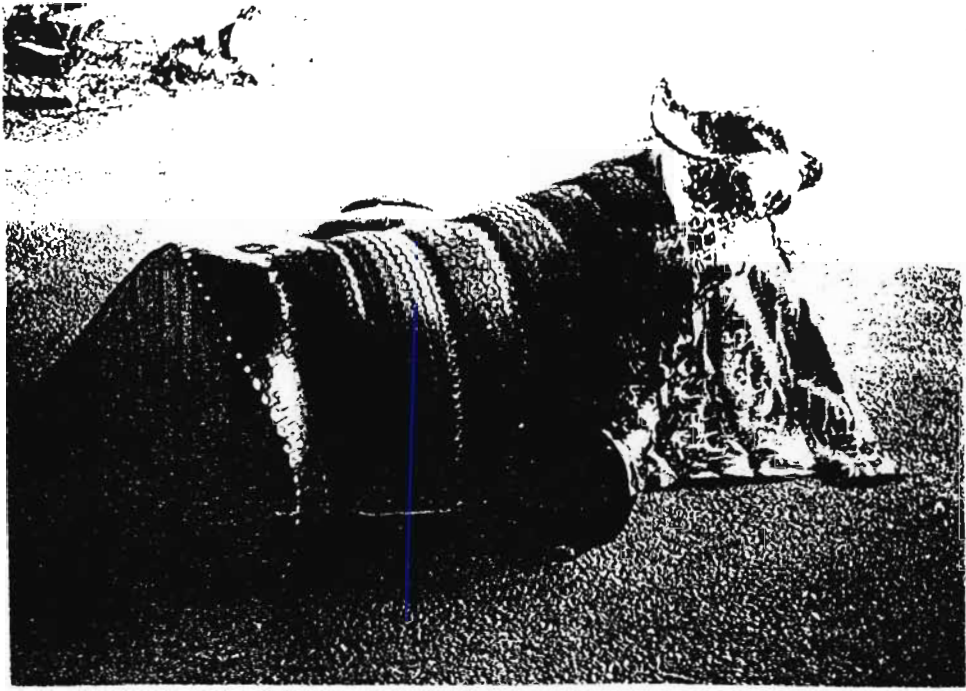


fig. 22

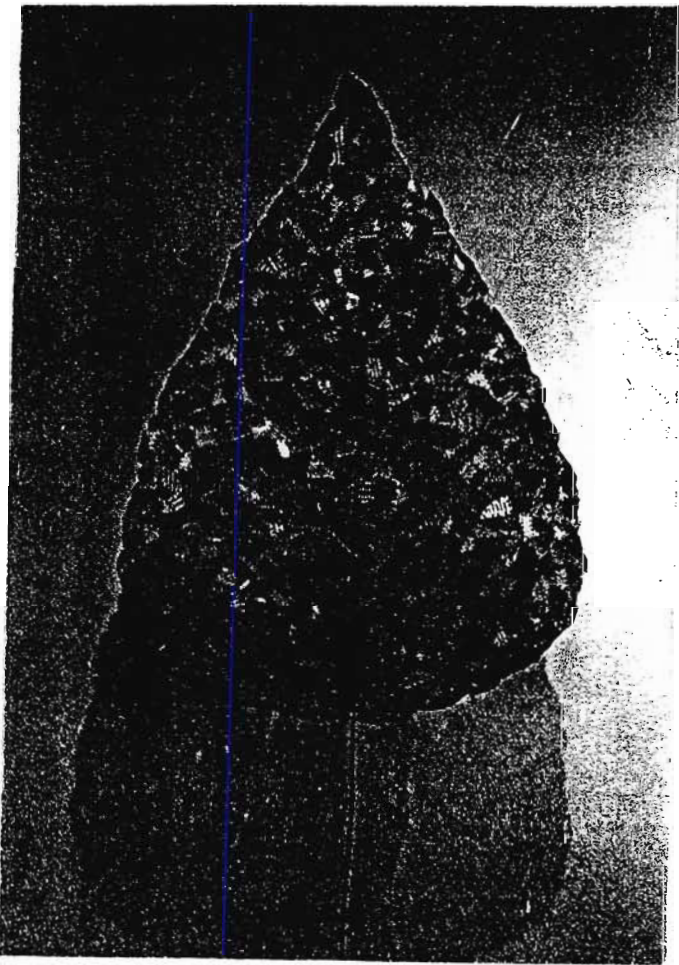


fig. 23

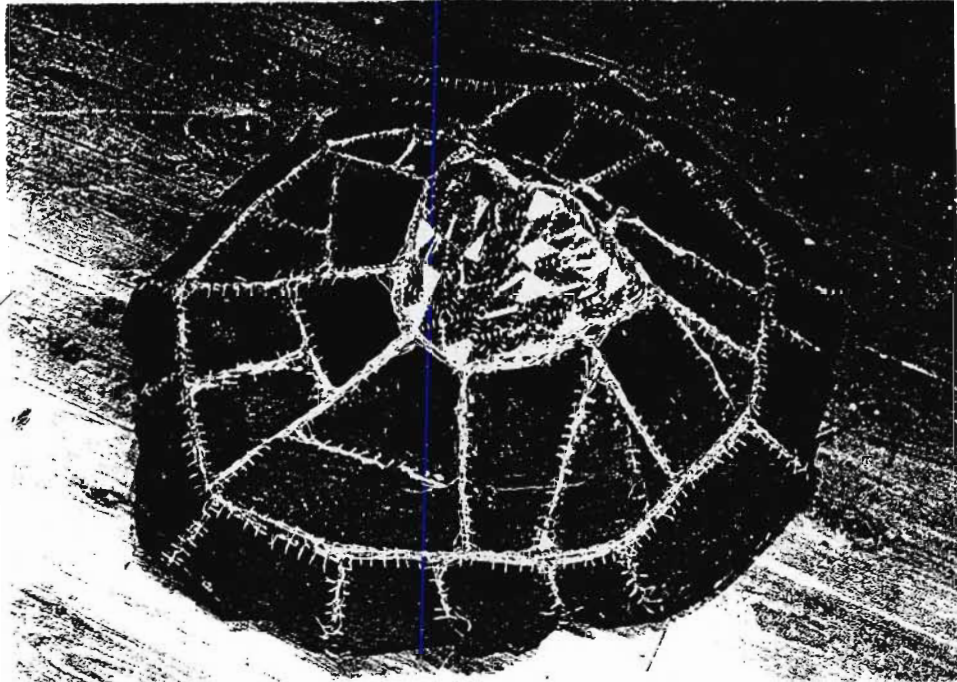


fig. 24

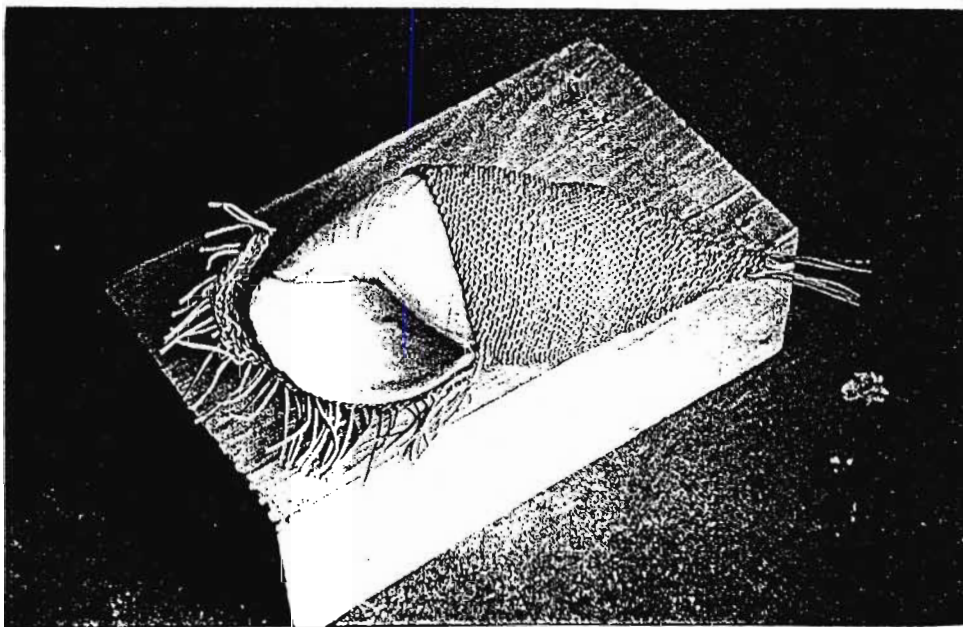


fig. 25



fig. 26

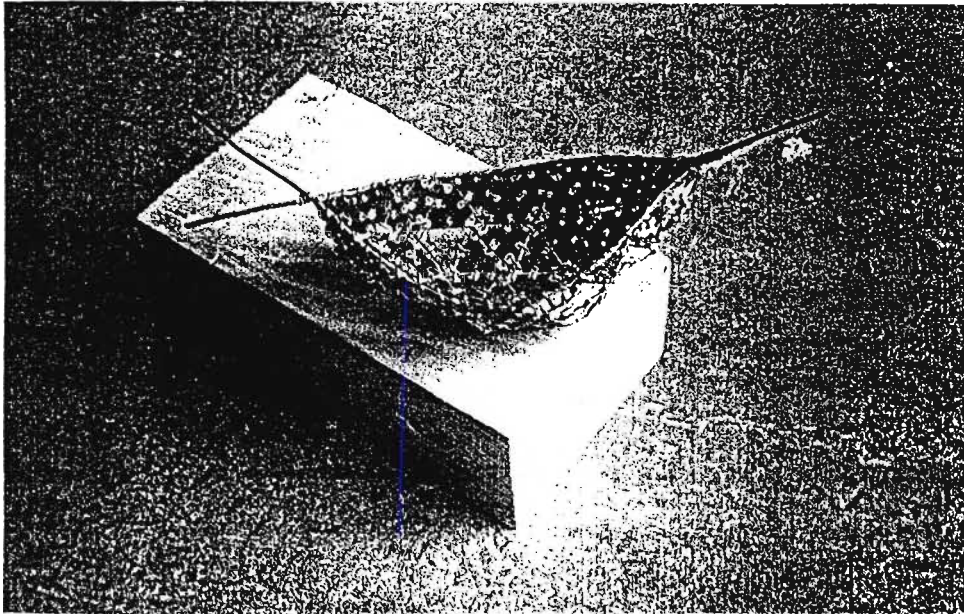


fig. 27

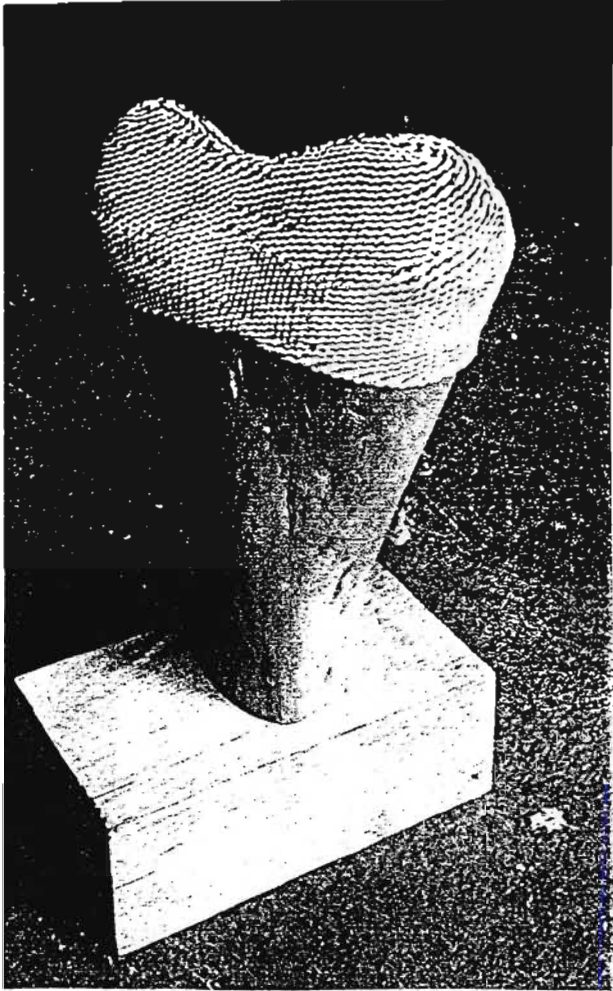


fig. 28

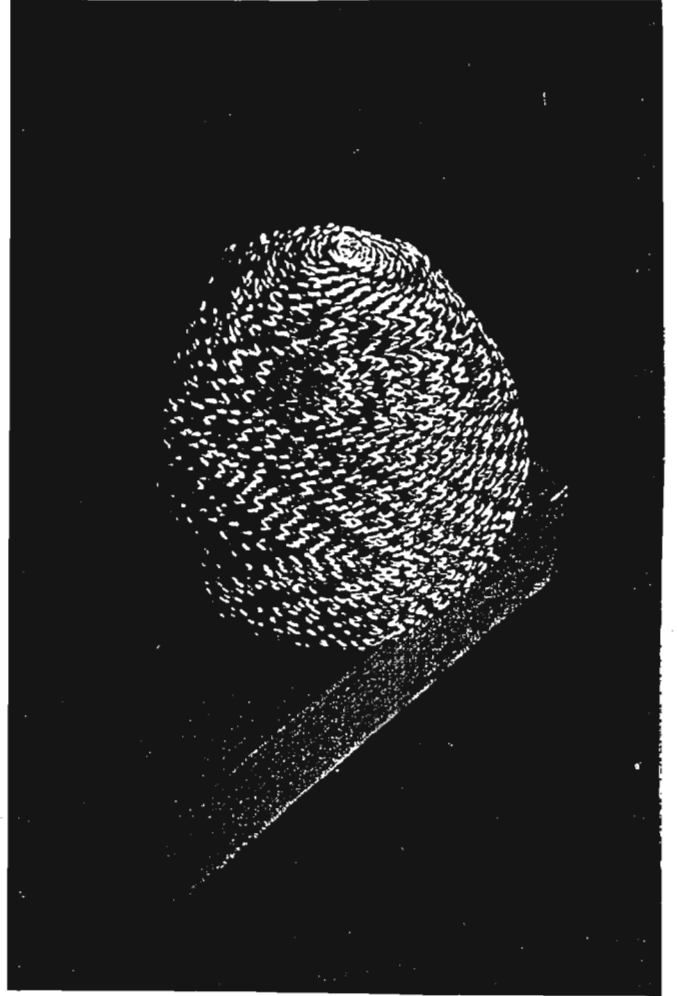


fig. 29

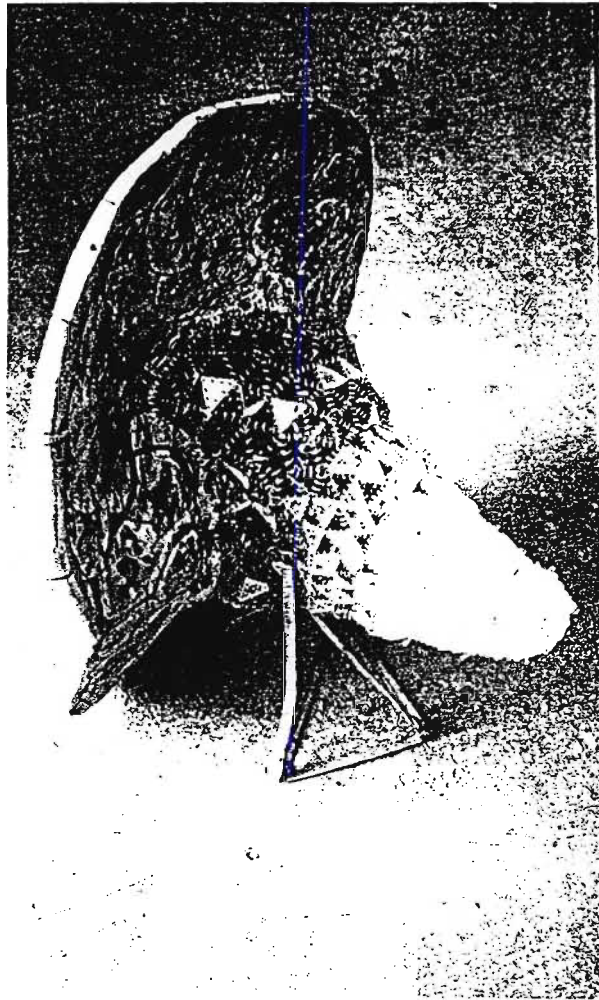


fig. 30

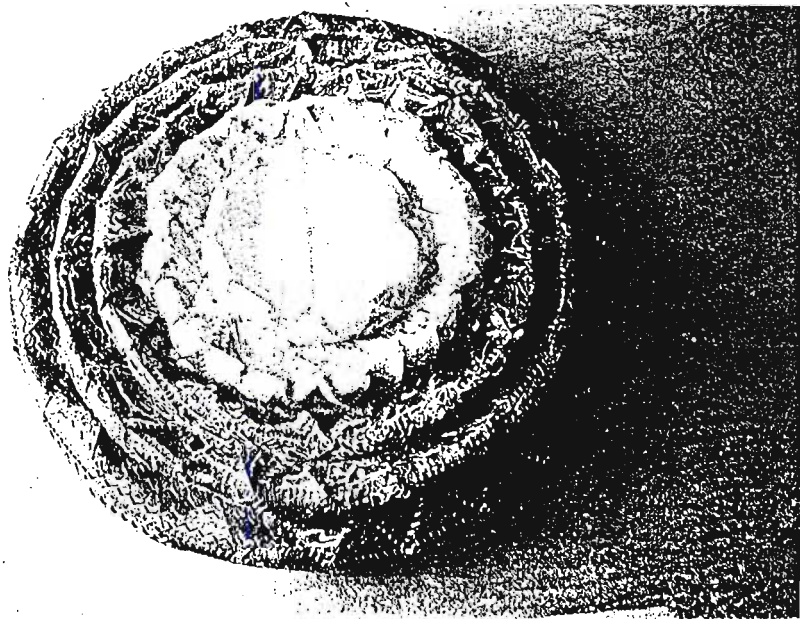


fig. 31