

THESIS

BUILDING DRAWINGS WITH PATTERNS OF
PROCESSED STEREOTYPED MOTIFS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS
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PROCESSED STEREOTYPED MOTIFS

In this thesis I have explored the process of constructing drawings with patterns of idealized, stereotyped images. This construction process involves three preparatory steps. The first step is to develop the images to be used and transform them into rubber stamps. These either take the form of silhouetted flat shapes or linear contour networks. In each case the illusion of volume is preserved to heighten the object quality of the image. I often do this by selecting a three-quarter, overhead, side view to reveal more than one side of the image and create the effects of overlap and foreshortening.

The second step is to develop a portfolio of patterns from each stamp and combinations of stamps. This portfolio is based on three basic repeat systems -- the square, half drop and half slide configurations. Manipulation of the scale relationship between the stamped image and the surrounding intervals of paper white allows me to develop patterns of various tonal gradations. In the overall composition of the drawing these tonal variations create an illusionistic planar spacial flux in and out of the surface plane.

The last step is to develop contours of larger images which will serve as boundaries, dictating changes in pattern along the surface. As in the stamped images, these are recognizable as ordinary items. In some drawings they repeat a stamped image that occurs elsewhere in the drawing. Most

often these boundaries represent actual geographic contours. These contours conjure up idealized mental images full of political, social, economic, commercial, historical and racial connotations. At the same time they read like flat maps of land masses which allow me to suggest various densities of physical space with images of land, sea and air. As the large contours separate patterns of similar tonal densities the spacial orientation of each plane becomes ambiguous. In such cases the pattern can be seen either as a hole in a front plane or as a front plane which overlaps the surrounding area ("Three Africas"). With these three basic preliminary steps completed I select the appropriate stamps, pattern samples and boundaries to set up the formal system of each drawing.

The individual emblematic image is the basic unit of this thesis exploration. I design these to become symbols that correspond to the idealized images in my mind which combine there to form the narratives of dreams, fantasies and memories. In the drawings they have been graphically simplified to the level of universal representations for objects or things in the external environment. They function as the basic graphic units in the visual construction of each drawing as well as the basic units of association in the narrative context. As symbols, the figures can carry associative meanings like words on a page.

The basis of my narrative approach is in an analysis of the role of pictorial images in the delivery of thoughts, memories and ideas. Throughout the thesis the narrative element presents consistent attitudes and themes. The basic source of the imagery comes from childhood memories of the picture-word books, flashcards and classroom emblems preaching good hygiene, good manners and the three "R's". Also influential are the idealized images of toys and the other elements of the domestic setting

of my childhood: the iron and ironing board, my father's shoe and tie collection, laundry appliances, kitchen utensils... On one level the use of multiple patterns within a single composition makes reference to the juxtaposition of patterns within the domestic setting: wallpapers, rugs and carpets, furniture upholstery, curtains and drapes... This juxtaposition of patterns sets up a visual richness and playfulness of rhythmic movements, textures and value densities from the module -- interval relationships. The playfulness of the benign images and seductive richness of the pattern juxtapositions are sometimes slightly interrupted with the introduction of aggressive or violent images. This apparent incongruity opens up the narrative interpretive possibilities.

The repeated reference to exotic places is also a manifestation of the childhood sensibility. These images of Africa, Egypt, South America and the South Pacific carry with them elements of mystery, adventure and fantasy. Throughout the thesis these benign, fantastic and aggressive images are juxtaposed with the apparent incongruity that is found in a boy's toy chest. There you might find cowboys and indians, farm and jungle animals and toy soldiers with tanks, flamethrowers and bazookas. With this kind of backglance at childhood there are all kinds of incongruous juxtapositions as seen from the adults eyes that don't exist in the imagination of the child. As an artist I am trying to function somewhere between these two states of mind.

Within each drawing the simplification and standardization of each image represented and the means by which they are produced are designed to enhance the narrative character. Formal nuances within each symbol are reduced by eliminating secondary elements of color, texture and hand gesture (penmanship) from the graphic representation. This reductive

process results in a dry, clear image which acts as an instant vehicle for associative reference. The idea of the symbol can be transmitted with as little visual interference as possible. The rubber stamp is employed as a means of reproducing the simplified images within the composition as standardized emblems. The use of these emblems as black patterns stamped on a white surface has an equalizing effect by which the overall network of images in the drawing becomes more flattened and homogeneous. Each individual image is permitted an equal graphic appeal. Nuances of execution are limited to errors in the stamping process: misstamping, bleeding and smearing. Every attempt is made at uniformity so that the narrative character suggested by the interplay of images and associations can function as a primary element in the reading of each drawing. This crispness in execution also allows for clarity in the reading of formal complexities from the integration of several patterns within a single composition.

Repeating the images in constant patterns further contributes to the standardized, emblematic quality. A repeat of recognizable images can suggest the dispensable, replaceable quality of the mass produced object. As merchandise on a display rack, each stamped module in a pattern is alike. Patterns of standardized figures can be read as a metaphor to depersonalization and isolation in a mechanized world. When several are presented together they can also suggest units from which thoughts and sensations are constructed, the storehouses of images in the mind from which are constructed patterns of human experience. The drawings can function as storehouses of images from which stories can be put together. As the designer of these I have presented the particular materials from which a narrative can be constructed. However each drawing only suggests a story by presenting the basic elements, i.e. the pictures of the things

involved. The particular interaction of these things and what might occur is open for interpretation.

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DOCUMENTATION

Fig. 1. Three Africas, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 27" x 42"

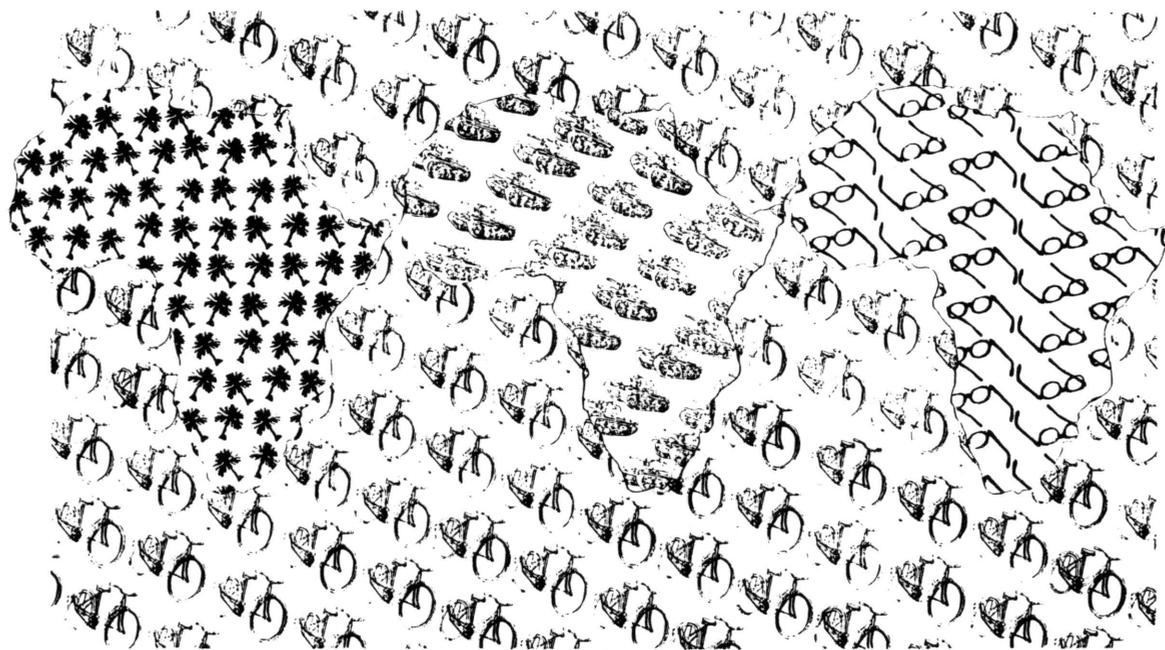


Fig. 2. Blimps Over Africa, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 38" x 31"

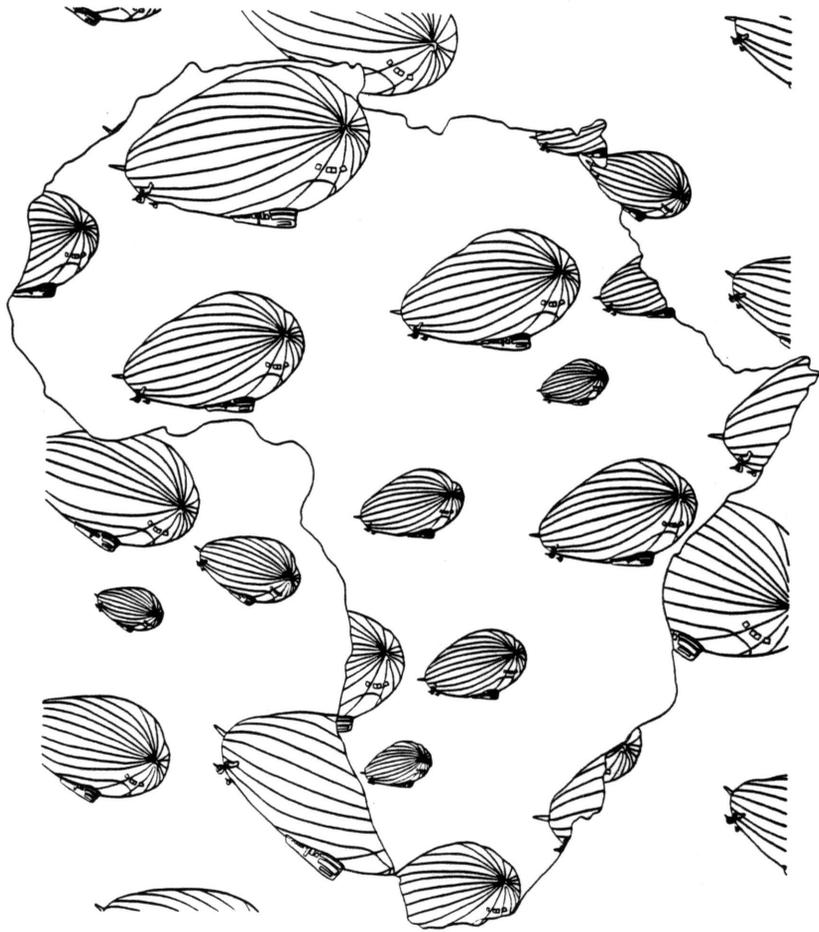


Fig. 3. 3 Fish Africa, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 42" x 30"

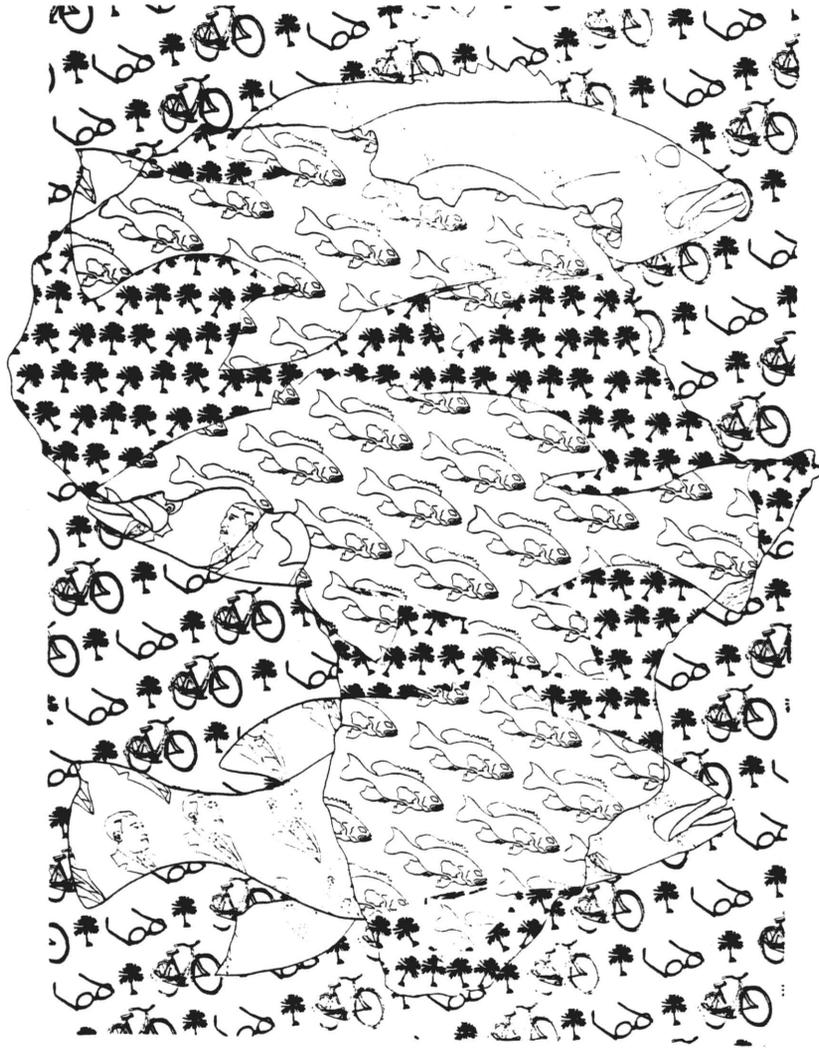


Fig. 4. 4 Loaves, 2 Americas, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 23" x 31"

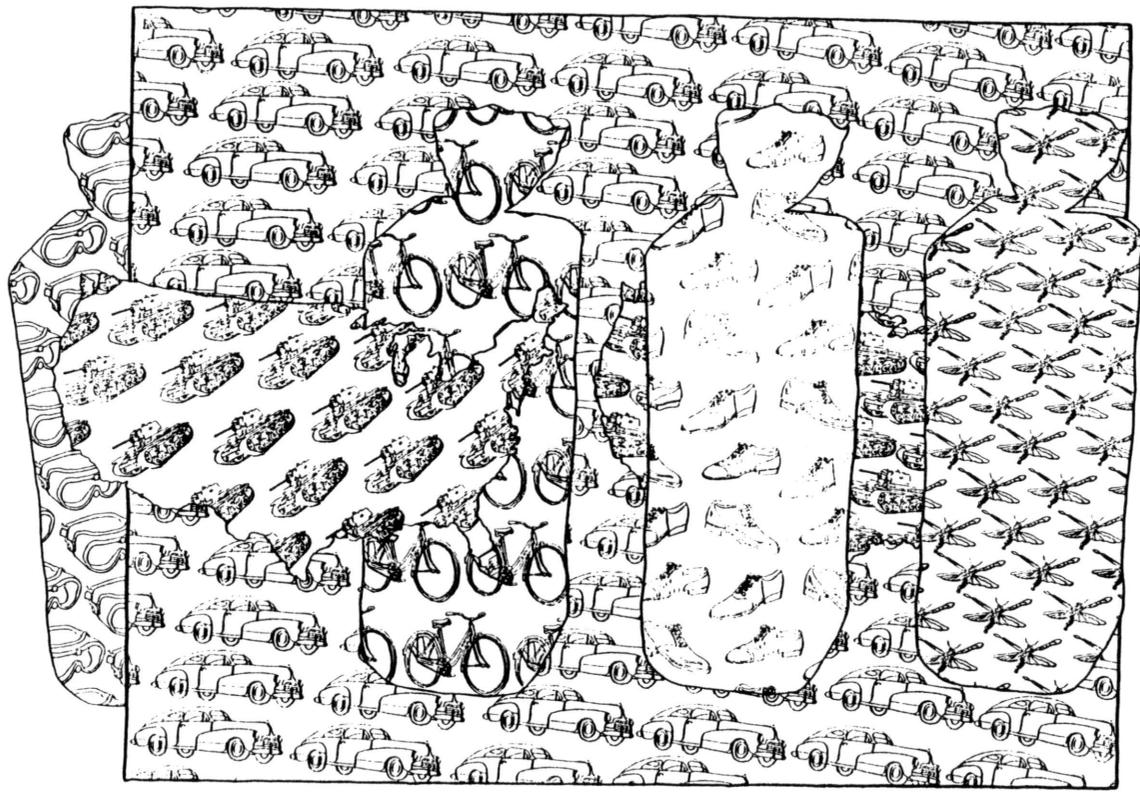


Fig. 5. 3 Loaves, 2 Fish, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 23" x 31"

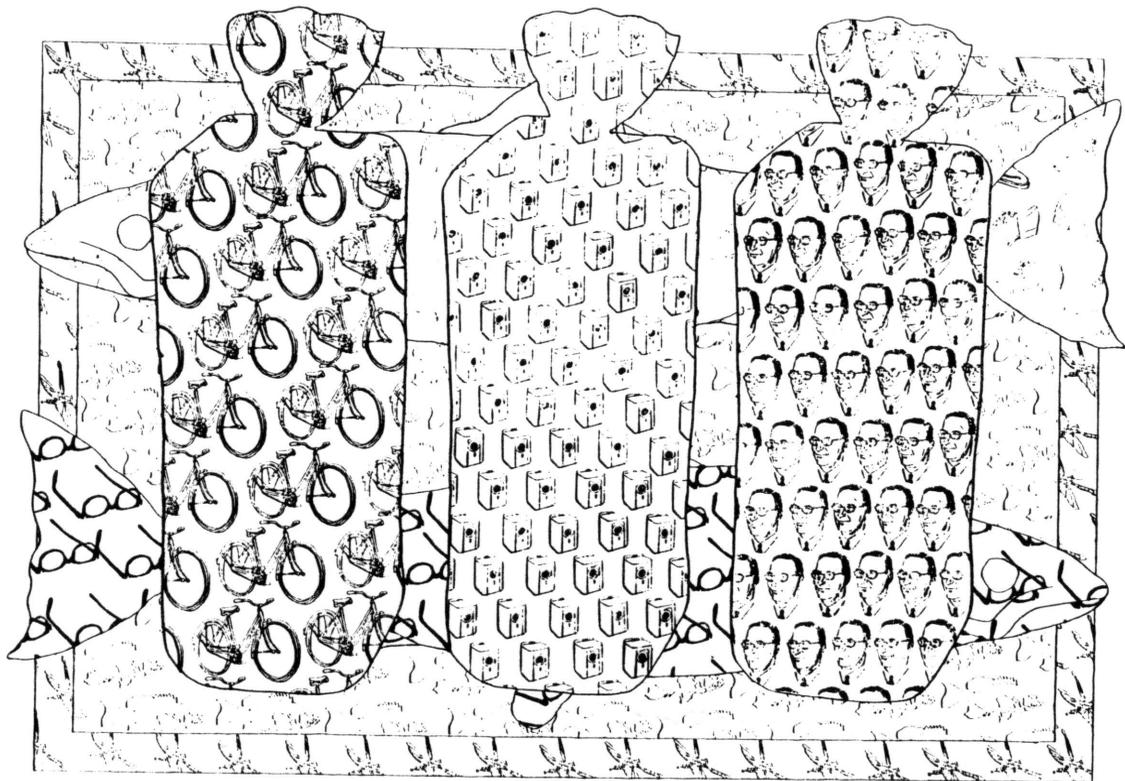


Fig. 6. 2 Pigs, 2 Americas, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 23" x 31"

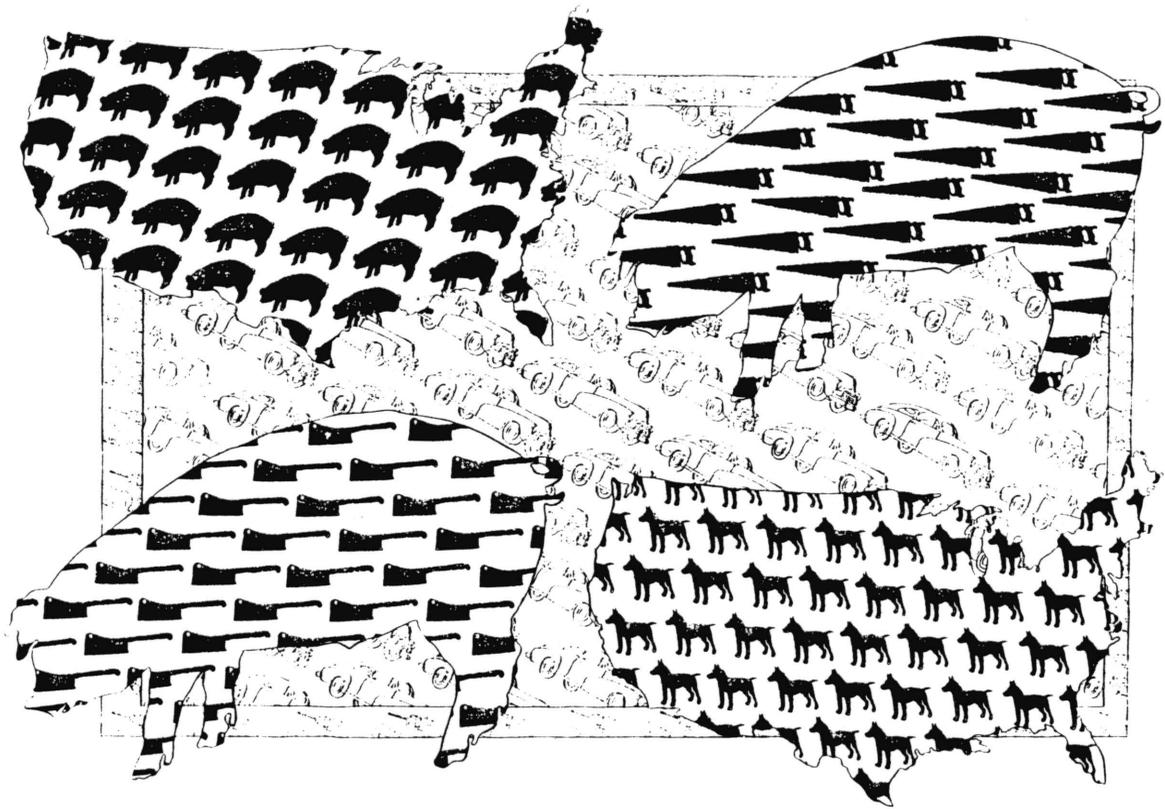


Fig. 7. Southern Living, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 23" x 31"

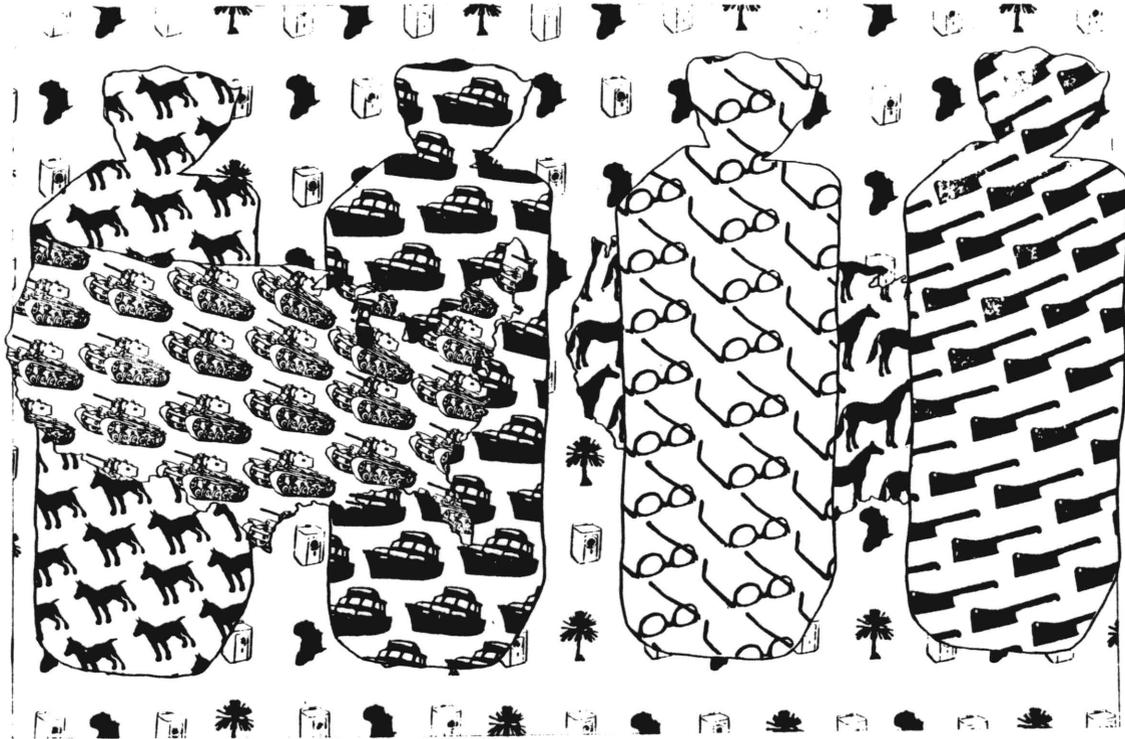


Fig. 8. Afro-American, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 23" x 31"

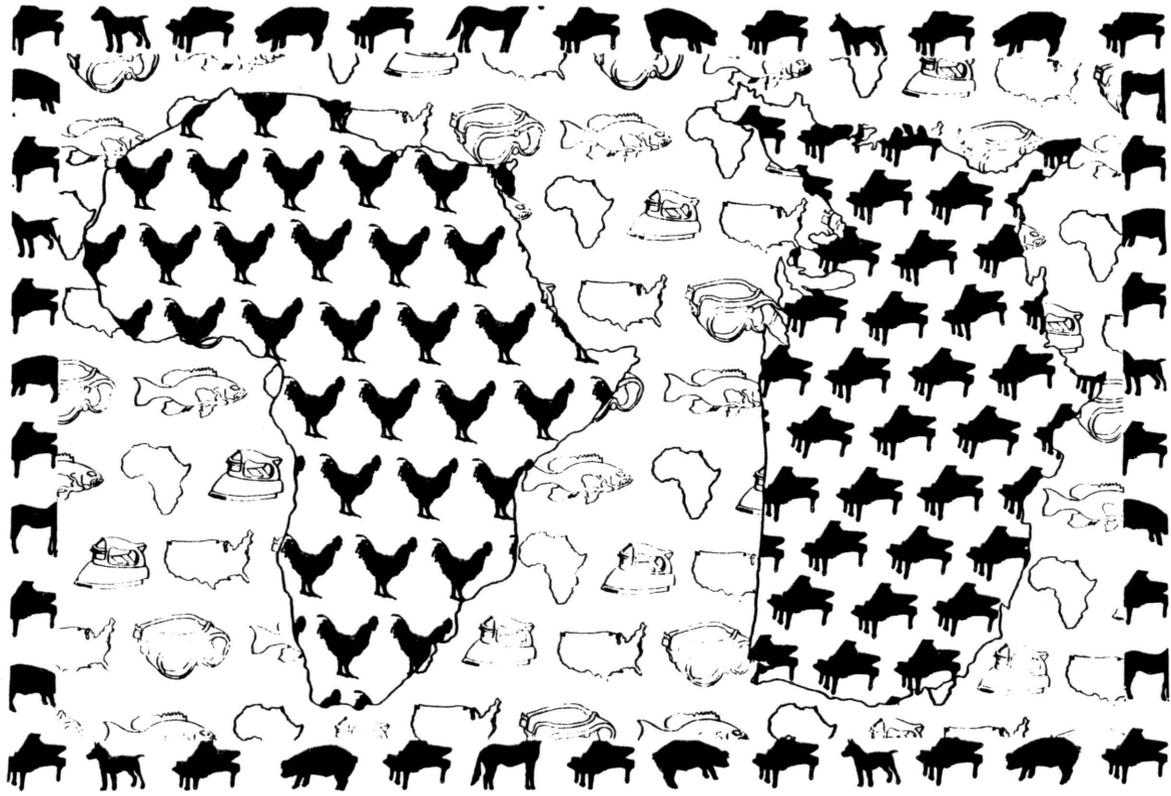


Fig. 9. South American Nights, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 42" x 30"

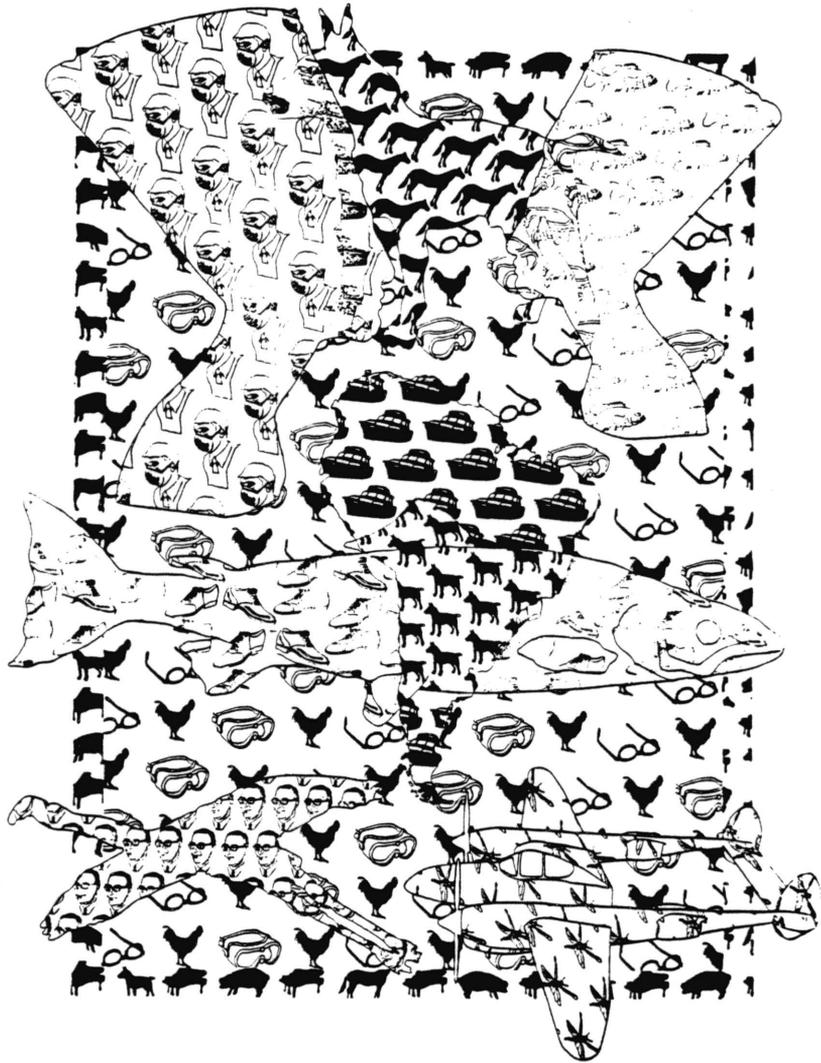


Fig. 10. Nefertitis, Prismacolor pencil & stamping, 23" x 31"

