

THESIS

A PERSONAL SYMBOLISM

Submitted by
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts
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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION
BY LORI JEAN ASH
ENTITLED A PERSONAL SYMBOLISM

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

A PERSONAL SYMBOLISM

In this series of prints and drawings, I have tried to express a personal vision of two animals that have for some time represented for me a sense of power, beauty and freedom. The horse has been an object of fascination throughout my life and this fascination, combined with exposure to the animal and drawings from life, has yielded a familiarity enabling me to better express the personal significance of the form. The pigeons hold an association with childhood places and again, a fascination with the clean aerodynamic shape and capacity for movement and flight combined with subtle color and texture.

Represented in a straightforward, representational manner with little information given besides the figure itself and the atmosphere surrounding it, the works form an immediately recognizable image in the eye of the viewer. It is hoped that upon recognizing the image, the viewer may feel that there is something more, some emotional living force embodied in the work.

Historically, the horse has been represented in the art of many cultures as a symbol of power, dignity, grace and spirit. These historic influences are apparent in many of the large prints. The theme of the TRIBUTE HORSE was borrowed from an ancient Chinese scroll painting of the same title. The GRISAILLE HORSE I and the GRISAILLE

HORSE II recall the monumental stone sculpture of Greece and Rome.

The pigeons also hold a certain symbolic meaning; the bird represented in flight, not bound only to the earth, a creature of air and rock, adaptable, strong.

Aside from the obvious historical references, there is also an underlying personal symbolic vision, often in response to an emotional state. SKELETAL HEAD - GUARDIAN was created as a sentry, indeed a guardian figure, frightening and unapproachable. The two GRISAILLE HORSES were done in response to an emotional state of entrapment and the triumphant heads rise in rebellion, all tethers broken. THE TRIBUTE HORSE exists as a memorial to a lost friend, the ancient Chinese belief being that the soul of the dead could complete life's journey upon the ceremonial beast. The pigeons accomplish what man cannot hope for; free flight, the ability to detach from the earth. They represent to me a freedom, an ability to overcome.

In order for the images to have any of the credibility of a living presence, there must be evident a sense of potential if not actual movement or energy. This is achieved through the use of textures such as those in THE TRIBUTE HORSE. The application of various layers of textures and the calligraphic quality of the drawing create a rhythm, a sense of direction. The pigeon drawings and the print, ROCK DOVE, show movement momentarily halted, frozen in a particular point in flight. The UNTITLED engraving of a running horse illustrates another approach to the idea of movement. This print was a fantastic exploration of the interaction of bone and muscle that makes

movement possible. The force and direction of the engraved line lend a fluidity and a force of momentum to the figure.

Also important to these images is the scale of the figure, which is as close to life size as the medium will permit. As the scale of the figure increases, the space around it decreases bringing the viewer into close proximity of the animal where he can better sense its inherent power and strength, its living force. The images place the viewer at an angle of observation rarely encountered in the natural world; at the shoulder of a rearing horse or frontally to a pigeon in flight.

The use of intaglio techniques lends itself well to these expressions. Once the lines and tones are deeply etched into the metal plate, portions of the texture are removed, worn down, revealing a softer, rounder, more life-like surface.

The drawings also incorporate a subtractive process as graphite is built up on the paper and then removed, softened and pushed around with an eraser. It is as though the final image were contained within the textures, to be completed as the viewers' eye visually assembles those textures into form.

These are images from the imagination, from the stuff of dreams. The necessary information is drawn from the natural world and molded, scraped away, redefined and adjusted until some sense of the mystery that existed in the initial vision appears in the work. These are not specific breeds of animal, they are not tied to a specific place or

time. They exist more in an emotional realm and hope to spark in the viewer a sense of the indomitable spirit, the restless beat of life.

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The works comprising this thesis
are dedicated to the artist's parents.

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Plate 4. Skeletal Head-Guardian. Intaglio, 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x193.4", 1983.

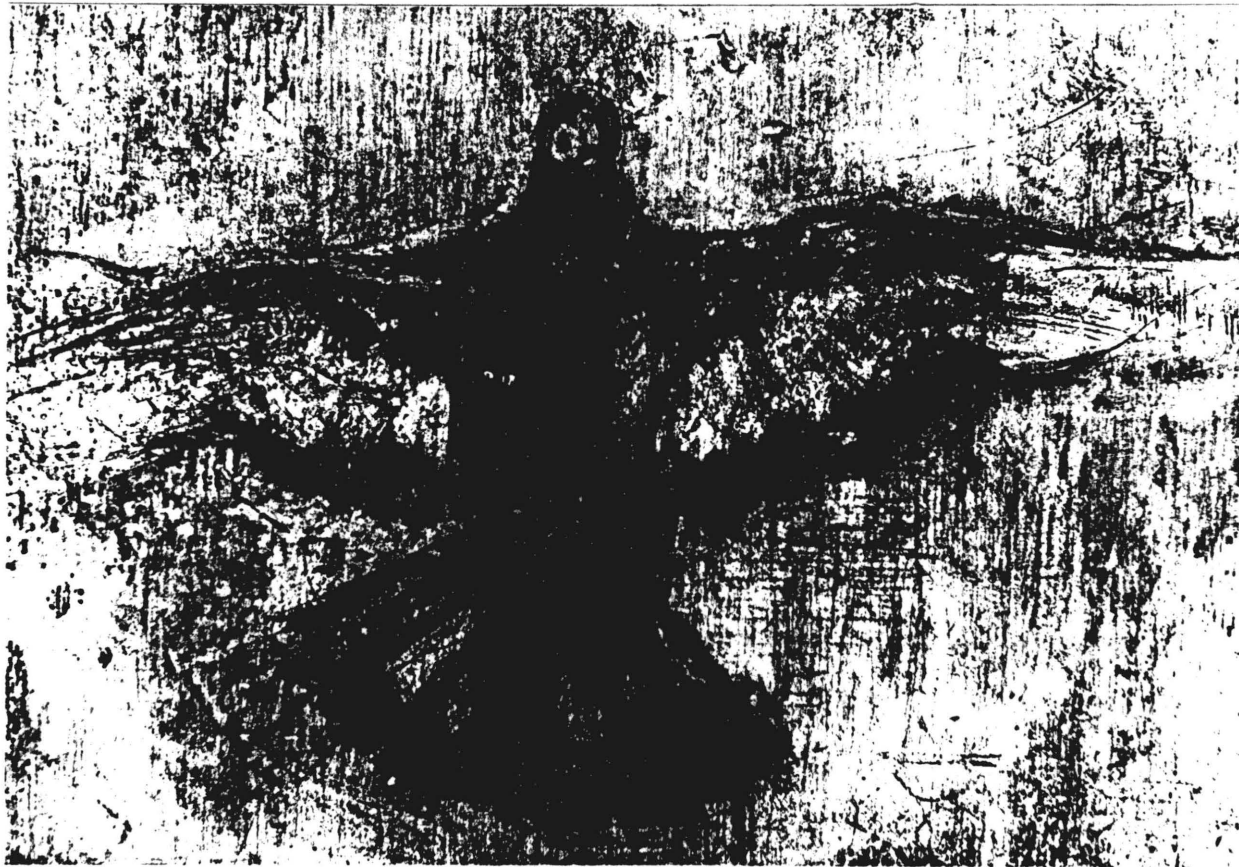


Plate 5. Rock Dove. Color intaglio, 17 1/2"x23'", 1984.

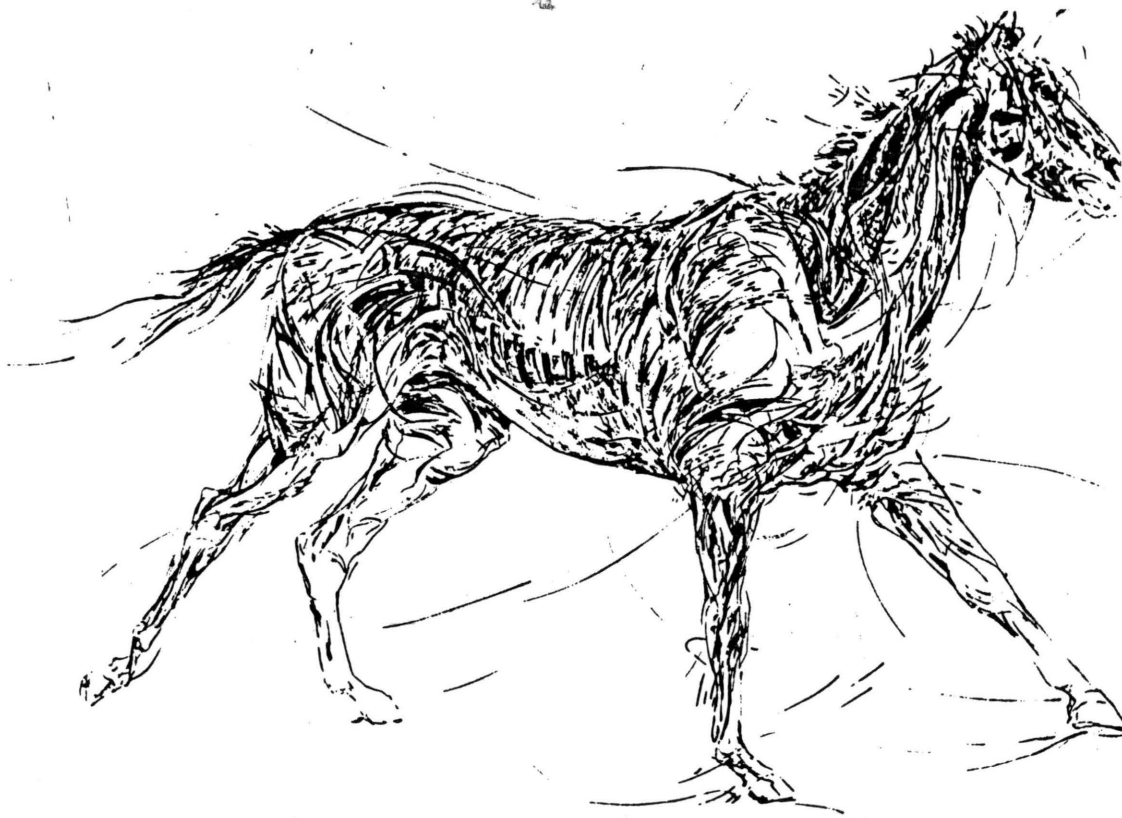


Plate 6. Untitled. Engraving, 24"x36", 1983.

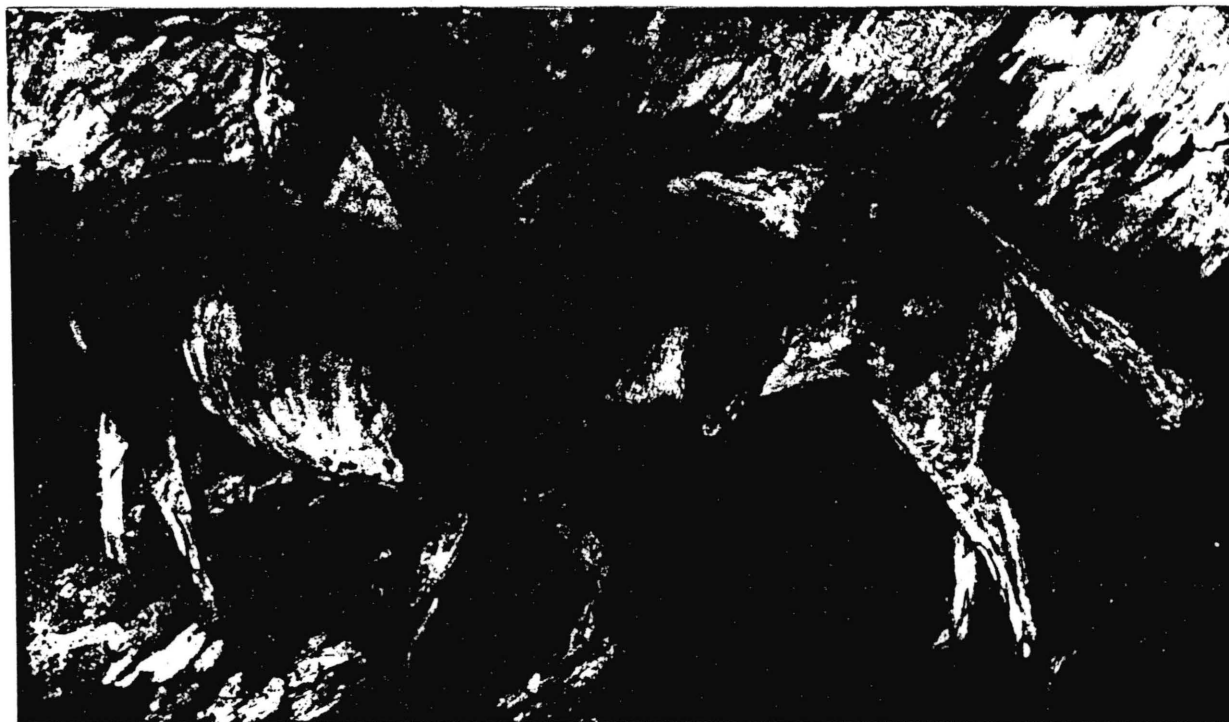


Plate 7. The Mares at Pech-Merle. Color Intaglio, 21"x35 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 1983.



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Plate 9. Equus I. Color Intaglio, 24"x36", 1982.



Plate 10. Blood Horse. Color intaglio, 33"x23 1/2", 1983.

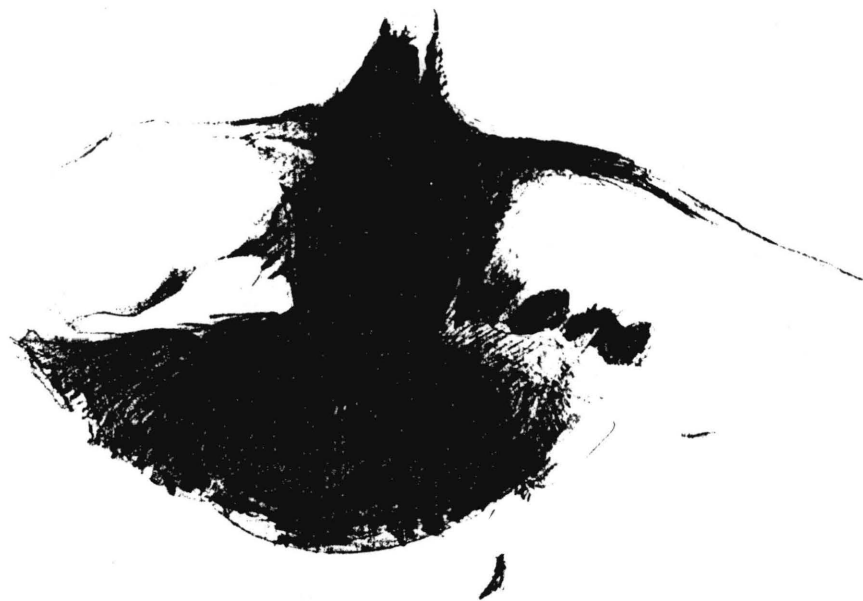


Plate 11. Pigeon Series #1. Pencil, 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ "x30 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 1984.



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