

MICHAEL SINGER

RITUAL SERIES

RETELLINGS

March 20 - April 25, 1987

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT STONY BROOK

Both storytelling and sculpture are reflexes of an essentially human thing: the ability to order and express the paradox of experience. They are of different media, one uses words, the other is a language without words. But they are informed by the same forces; intent, melody, a complex syntax of reoccurring shapes and images, argument. This is the work of the cognitive mind, the imagination, "a gold-feathered bird."

These stories are from a group of stories that come out of an oral tradition. They are retellings. They are only marked by the storyteller, not invented, like wind which uses the topography of the earth. The wind itself has no voice, only force. And they are not stories about the shape of the world but about the inner shell, the shape of human nature.

RETELLINGS

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There was a man out walking in the woods. Towards evening he gathered himself and turned to head back towards home. He had come to the woods to get rid of a bitterness he found inside himself. It was in him like the acrid smoke of a doused fire. There was a woman he had wanted. He had been bringing her gifts, food, delicate beaded scarfs and gloves and small feathered tools. But she would not accept them. She would not accept his favor and had turned him away. She had been very cold to him. It disquieted him. He could not settle it. And so he went into the woods to rest himself and towards evening, when the light began to change, he turned back. As he was walking he came on a woman standing among the trees. It was this woman. He was surprised to see her there, and uneasy. She stood quietly until she saw that he knew her, and then she laughed. The sound for him was like water running over river stone. She seemed to be happy to see him, so he went up to her and, indeed, she was happy to see him and to be with him. He felt both awe and a sense of order. He talked with her and she responded and he found it good to be with her. Now she was very beautiful and she wore a long fringed dress of beaded deerskin, as supple as if it had been made for her in childhood and had grown with her. He moved close to her and felt it against his skin. They walked along among the pine trees in the evening wood. The evening seemed to stay itself. The light faded like a long season instead of a day.

Now the man wore a piece of braided rope around his arm, a piece of rawhide he kept with him because he felt an affinity for it. As they walked he had taken the thong in his hand and laced it through the lacing holes in the sleeve of her robe.

They walked together through the stand of trees and long shadows played at their feet like wind. But then, over the top of a hill came a child with a dog. When the dog saw the woman his haunches went up. He barked and bellowed and pulled at the rope he was held by.

The woman was as terrified. Like lightening she pulled away from the man, and tried to bolt. He saw that the skin of her dress was covered with sweat. He saw that her eyes were large and filled with fear. He saw that she was not a woman but a deer. It was a doe, a white-tailed deer. But at the joint of her foreleg the man's thong was laced. In her struggle to get away she pulled it to a knot and he held her fast. The man knew he had been betrayed. He was filled with rage. He took his knife from its sheath and would have killed her but she moved so agilely against his rage that he could not strike her. Then his first anger ran down. When he was still, she spoke, and again assumed the shape of a woman. She pleaded, "Let me go now. It is enough. Be calm and let me go. It was you who called me." This made the man weary. He was stricken, he let the thong go. She ran into the woods, flying as a frightened deer flies, with its hooves barely touching ground, leaping, lighter than the world around it, even than the birds who themselves must use wings. And she was gone. The man then became very sick. He was nauseous. He lay down on the ground and felt the last light of the day

like a burning heat. He could not find his way. How he got home he did not know. His people found him wandering, in a fever.

In the days after he was found he became worse. He was like a wild animal. When he spoke he whistled like a deer, and when he moved he pranced like a deer. His people loved him and were saddened by his sickness and by the loss of him to them. They made some ceremonies for him and they purified him. It seemed to calm him. So they had hope and they tried other things that they knew to do for calling someone back. In their attention to him, he recovered.

They said he was always quiet and solitary among them after that, but he had a way with horses. They said it was her gift to him. He always had very fine horses, beautiful wild animals, strong and fast, with natures like waters in the spring when the snow is melting in the high mountains and the rivers glisten like silver bands of light.

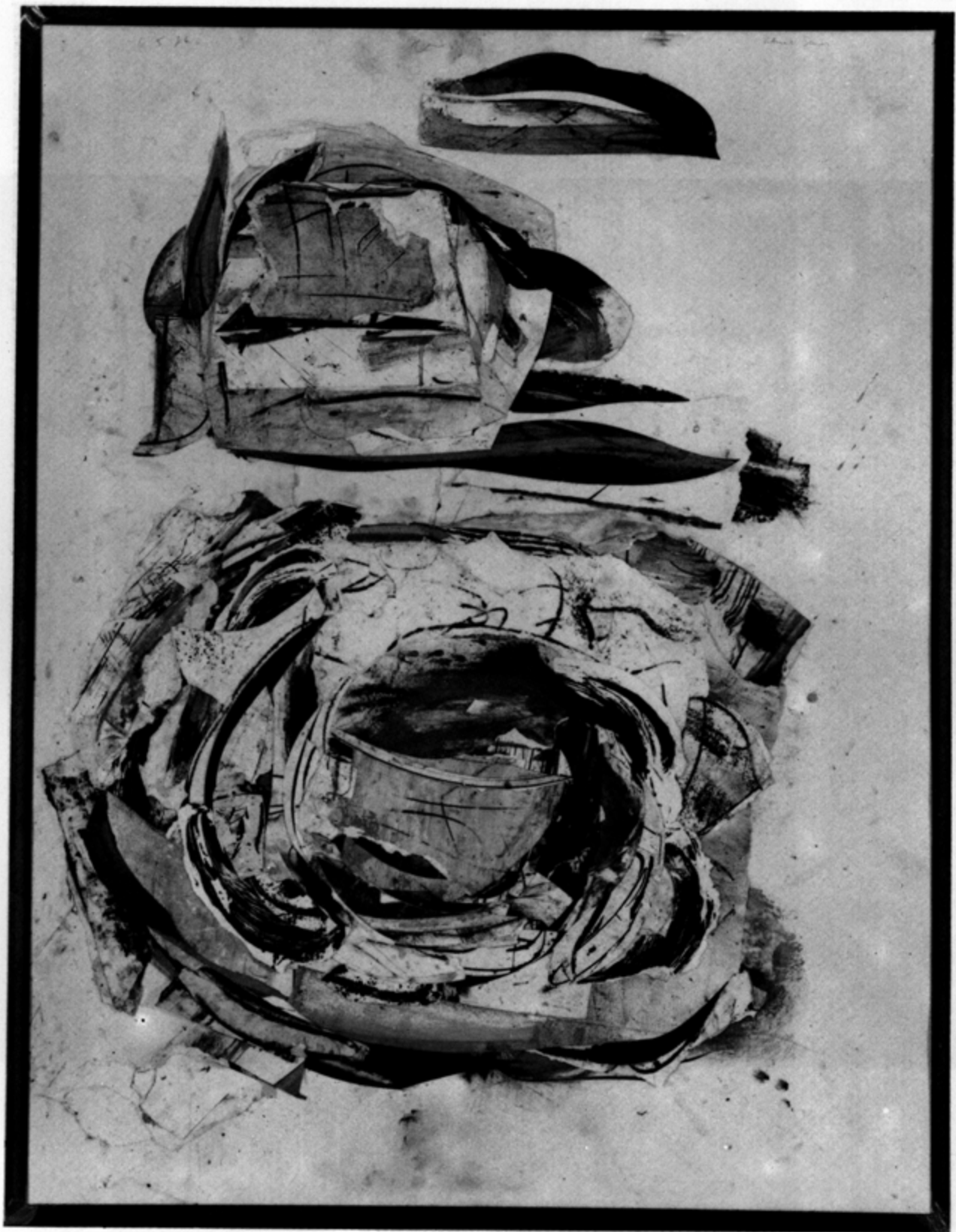
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There was a man who was out hunting. He caught and killed two deer. He was on the edge of an escarpment above the floor of a wide valley, leaning against the rocks with the sun on him. He had cleaned and prepared his kill and was resting and listening to the sounds of the wind whose voice was in the movement of the heated air as it rose and mingled with the broken surface of the hillside. This is the way that the rocks have a voice. Suddenly a woman came around the corner of the escarpment. She was very beautiful and he wondered where her people were and what she was doing out here in the wilderness away from her camp. He recognized her. She was of his people and he had at one time tried to court her but she had turned him away. He felt the memory of the bitterness as she came and sat down beside him, laughing and looking at him out of the corner of her dark eyes. He did not look at her and was very silent. But she sat beside him.

Now he remembered stories of enchantment, he remembered stories of a deer-woman who could trap men inside their own spirit by pulling from them the shape of their desire. He was very silent and he did not speak to her. He looked at her, glancing at her without turning his head. He saw that she had a jeweled necklace. He saw the jewels resembled the calyx of a lily. He saw that she wore a beautiful, supple tan robe. He saw that there was sweat on it. Then he looked down at her shadow and saw that it was not the shadow of a woman but of a deer. And he drew his knife from its sheath by his side. But she guessed him, and fled like the wind or like a stone rolling down a steep escarpment, faster than even winged animals, and bounding. By his side was the vine of a wild morning glory.

Now he remembered stories of enchantment, he remembered stories of a deer-woman who was like the clear cold spring streams, quicksilver and filled with light.

J.M. McDonough



Each individual and his or her own reflection of an essentially human thing. Reaction is not and it is not the product of an emotion. The first of all things is that the one who is the other is a language without words but they are understood by the same logic. Instead of the simple power of reasoning of logic and insight, argument, all is the work of the creative mind, the imagination. To goldfish, you see.

These studies are from a group of studies that were set up in a studio. They are readings. They are only related by the structure of the work.



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CATALOGUE ILLUSTRATIONS





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Rhonda Cooper, Director

CATALOGUE ILLUSTRATIONS

- Page 3 Drawing: **Ritual Series 6/5/86**
Chalk, charcoal, paint, lithographic elements,
and collage on paper, 50" x 38"
Courtesy Sperone Westwater, Inc.
- Page 4 **Ritual Series/Syntax 1986** (installation detail)
Wood and stone, 7' x 30' x 30'
Courtesy Sperone Westwater, Inc.
- Page 5 **Ritual Series/Syntax 1986** (installation detail)
Wood and stone, 7' x 30' x 30'
Courtesy Sperone Westwater, Inc.
- Page 6 Drawing: **7 Moon Ritual Series 7/21/85**
Chalk, charcoal, paint, lithographic elements,
and collage on paper, 79" x 38"
Private collection

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**PREVIOUS EXHIBITIONS AT THE
ART GALLERY**

- 1975 FACULTY EXHIBITION
1976 MICHELLE STUART
RECENT DRAWINGS (AN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
ARTS EXHIBITION)
SALVATORE ROMANO
1977 MEL PEKARSKY
JUDITH BERNSTEIN
HERBERT BAYER (AN AMERICAN FEDERATION
OF ARTS EXHIBITION)
1978 LEON GOLUB
WOMEN ARTISTS FROM NEW YORK
JANET FISH
ROSEMARY MAYER
THE SISTER CHAPEL
1979 SHIRLEY GORELICK
ALAN SONFIST
HOWARDENA PINDELL
ROY LICHTENSTEIN
1980 BENNY ANDREWS
ALEX KATZ
EIGHT FROM NEW YORK
ARTISTS FROM QUEENS
OTTO PIENE
STONY BROOK 11, THE STUDIO FACULTY
1981 ALICE NEEL
55 MERCER: 10 SCULPTORS
JOHN LITTLE
IRA JOEL HABER
LEON POLK SMITH
1982 FOUR SCULPTORS
CECILE ABISH
JACK YOUNGERMAN
ALAN SHIELDS
THE STONY BROOK ALUMNI INVITATIONAL
ANN McCOY
1983 THE WAR SHOW
CERAMIC DIRECTIONS: A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW
CINDY SHERMAN
THE FACULTY SHOW
1984 BERNARD APTEKAR: ART AND POLITICS
ERIC STALLER: LIGHT YEARS
NORMAN BLUHM: SEVEN FROM THE SEVENTIES
EDWARD COUNTEY 1921-1984
CARL ANDRE: SCULPTURE
1985 LEWIS HINE IN EUROPE: 1918-1919
FRANCESC TORRES: PATHS OF GLORY
HOMAGE TO BOLOTOWSKY: 1935-1981
FREEDOM WITHIN: PAINTINGS BY JUAN SANCHEZ/
INSTALLATION BY ALFREDO JAAR
ABSTRACT PAINTING REDEFINED
1986 KLEEGER: METAL SCULPTURE
TOBY BUONAGURIO: SELECTED WORKS
YANG YEN-PING AND ZENG SHAN-QING
EIGHT URBAN PAINTERS: CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS
OF THE EAST VILLAGE
TV: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS
WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT
1987 HANS BREDER: ARCHETYPAL DIAGRAMS

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT STONY BROOK



THE FINE ARTS CENTER

art gallery