



The emotional symbology of natural objects  
by Pamela D Longobardi

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in  
Printmaking  
Montana State University  
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Abstract:

My work incorporates personal imagery that arises prior to rational thought or explanations. Sometimes an image evolves with words in association with it. The rational act of describing an image in terms of "metaphor" or "symbol" comes about only after the image is formed in the mind and given visual reality as an object. Thus, the rational description, though it attempts to do so, does not describe the source of the image directly. The source is emotional, not rational.

The truest origin of my work lies between the unnamed emotional feeling which was its impetus and the meaning which I subsequently attach to the image. Even the way in which the images are drawn comes from the emotive source. The marks, whether made with litho crayon, charcoal, or paint, are intuitive and somewhat automatic. The pictured images are not necessarily descriptive of how the real object would appear in nature, but rather how I feel about my associations with the object and what it symbolizes. The marks feel natural and correct as an extension of that energy.

I record images as they arise spontaneously and these, rather directly and with little editing, become finished pieces. I also recombine and reuse the symbols to form new associations and interpretations for them, and they undergo an evolution themselves. Drawing the images over and over makes me aware of their specific meaning; for example, an elliptical ring or "halo" became the center of a tornado, and then a lake, and then a symbol for the universe.

The connection between the image and the emotion is a psychological one. I am establishing parallels between natural forces and objects in the physical world and the emotional forces that move through and around us. Two objects, a tornado and a bird, represent two aspects of the inner psyche. The tornado (natural force) symbolizes the dramatic and charged emotional nature of the self, while the bird (natural object) suggests the more fragile or fleeting nature of the soul. I am trying to describe the object manifestations of subjective states, or the continuity of human nature and "nature." Though the symbols have very specific and personal meanings to me, I wish to leave these understated. I prefer to allow the viewer to interpret content in relation to his or her own frame of reference and history. My intent is not to give a personal narrative, but rather to transfer an emotional situation or response from the particular to the more universal. Because these images arise outside rational or logical thought, I feel they speak more of the collective pool of human experience than of the particulars of my existence.

The images allude to either specific and intense emotional states or to emotionally significant events. Some of the images arise from a memory of situations and responses connected with childhood or the past and a sort of yearning to recall things that have since changed or have been forgotten. Others arise from more recent occurrences or general life situations and a response to nature. Because of the accessibility of my emotions and their persistence in my life, I tap into this flow as a source of energy and continuum in my work.

I feel a symbol is most effective when its meaning changes somewhat depending upon who is looking at it. An image which I think of as a stick-raft has been perceived by others as a grill or as jail bars.

Both of these interpretations add new shades of meaning to the image and increase its value to me as a symbol.

There is a certain literary aspect to this work, by which I mean the images are intended to be "read," in a way similar to how poetry is read. I work from prints and drawings to paintings and back because they feed each other. Usually as I am working in one medium, new symbols arise that might not have done so in another. I find that the limitations in one material force me to rework images in a new way, thus enriching the image as a symbol.

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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Pamela D. Longobardi

This thesis has been read by each member of the author's graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

11-25-85  
Date

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Approved for the Major Department

11-25-85  
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12-3-85  
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Pamela D. Longstadt

Date

Dec. 2, 1985

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

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## LIST OF SLIDES

- 1) "Silent Witnesses" (1985)  
29½" x 40"
- 2) "The Rope Trick, Three Acts" (1985)  
36" x 70"
- 3) "The Inner Universe Grows Private" (1985)  
29½" x 40"
- 4) "Bearing the Weight of Memory" (1985)  
29½" x 40"
- 5) "When I'm Alone, I Laugh at My Secret Joke" (1985)  
29½" x 40"
- 6) "The Risk of Baring Your Soul" (1985)  
29½" x 40"
- 7) "What We Do Not See" (1985)  
29½" x 40"
- 8) "The Politics of the Small Pie" (1985)  
78" x 59"
- 9) "The Uncertain Waters of Fate" (1985)  
60" x 80"
- 10) "While I Was Asleep, the Fire Escaped" (1985)  
10½" x 12"
- 11) "A Significant Conversation with Myself" (1985)  
60" x 72"
- 12) "Untitled" (1985)  
48" x 72"
- 13) "A Memory of Falling" (1985)  
54" x 72"
- 14) "The Private Island of Betrayal" (1985)  
54" x 72"

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OC185



INTAGLIO

View from this side

1

LONGOBARDI. "THE ROPE TRICK, 3 ACTS". LITHOGRAPH TRIPTYCH. 36" x 66". 1985. TOP



2



INTAGLIO

3

View from this side

14



LITHOGRAPH

4



LITHOGRAPH

5

8

OC185



LITHOGRAPH

6

View from this side



LITHOGRAPH

7



CHARCOAL + GRAPHITE 60" x 80"

8



CHARCOAL & GRAPHITE 60" x 90"

9



COLLOTYPE

10



OIL ON CANVAS

11



OIL ON CANVAS

12



OIL ON CANVAS

13



OIL ON CANVAS

14

































