



CIRCE

a Homage to James Joyce

a collaborative exhibition by

Allen Hessler and Mark West

March 4-27, 1985

Gallery 1.1.1., School of Art, University of Manitoba



MAN BECOMING SWINE



MEETING OF STEPHEN AND BLOOM

JOYCE AND THE POWER OF LOVE

The notion of an exhibition concerning James Joyce was a consequence of the broadcast of "Ulysses" on February 2, 1982. This Radio Telefiche Erin production, marking the centenary of Joyce's birth, was a catalyst for me, allowing me to enter the work. I can not help making an analogy between that thirty hour broadcast and a majestically flowing river. This immersion into Joyce's world had the effect of magic upon me as I was being tossed about by this never ceasing river of words. For one who was not familiar with the work it was a truly sensual experience. In this situation the conceptual meaning of the words was overshadowed by the musical aspect, i.e. textures, colour, rhythm. This powerful impression compelled me to study the text more carefully in order to find out just what was going on. And so one is drawn into the world of Joyce as one who is entering the labyrinth. Intuition told me that there was something in all of this, and so I asked Mark West if he would help me to work towards an exhibition inspired by the Circe section, to which I was particularly attracted.

Being attracted by the multiplicity of the novel, which I somehow equated with "modernism", I thought that an idea for an exhibition could be to use the Circe section as a springboard to define modernism. As a beginning, to formulate this definition, I latched on to the idea that modern work seemed somehow to draw directly upon life in order to find the stuff with which one could make art, (Duchamp's sense of eliminating the distinction between art and life). It was on this point of trying to fit Joyce into a package that I met disapproval from my collaborator Mr. West. Joyce, during his life, stood apart from movements as such, and through his achievement he occupies quite a singular position. After much discussion it became clear that to drag modernism into the picture would be like opening Pandora's box. So it was decided that the exhibition would rather pay homage to Joyce's achievement.

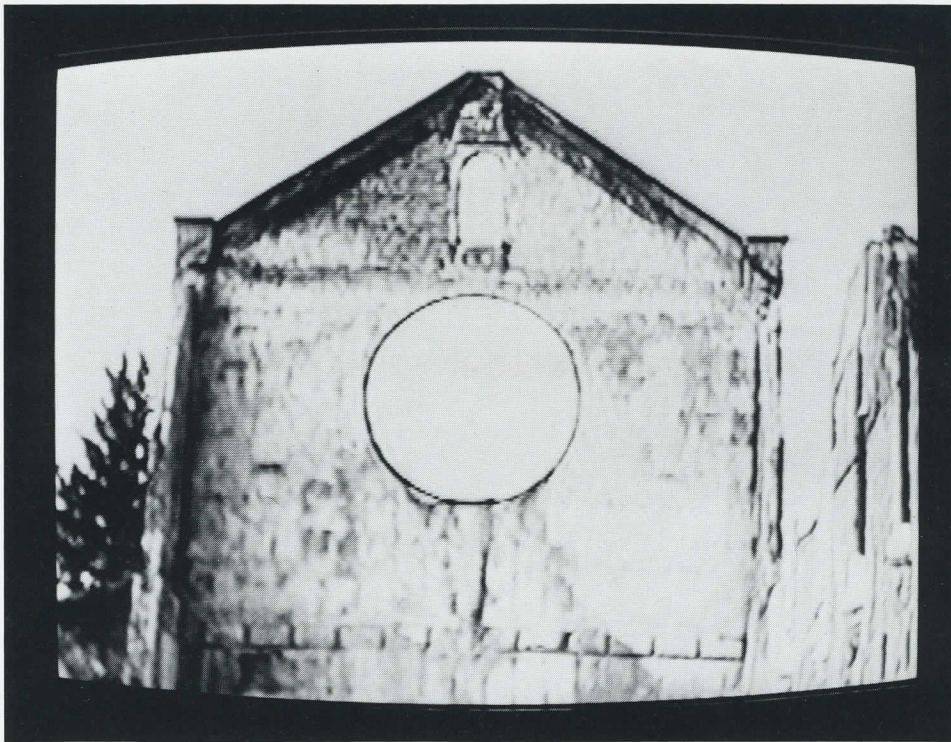
My first consideration in creating paintings inspired by a literary work was the danger of simply illustrating the text. I was not interested in this, but I wanted to make paintings in the Joycean spirit. I must express my gratitude to Mr. West for acting as my mentor and for acquainting me with the man. The spirit of Joyce is intertwined with the power of love, goodness and dignity. James and Nora, like Bloom and Molly, seem to be two spirits intermingling in a sublime unity. Bloom, like Ulysses, is saved from Circe's magic by Moly. Man can become an angel and man can become an animal, the choice is between the lamb and the pig. Joyce was always choosing. His treatment of the Circe myth appealed to me because it draws attention to the hierarchy of man's spiritual evolution. With its connection between the classical myth and the modern world "Ulysses" achieves a timelessness reminiscent of Di Chirico's paintings but with the intricacies of the book of Kells.

As always, I offer my efforts to Martine, Clara and Emmanuel.

Allen Hessler, January 1985



CIRCE



VIDEO IMAGE FROM CIRCE A HOMAGE TO JAMES JOYCE



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VIDEO IMAGE FROM CIRCE A HOMAGE TO JAMES JOYCE



VIDEO IMAGE FROM CIRCE A HOMAGE TO JAMES JOYCE



Macintosh



ULYSSES



VIDEO IMAGE FROM CIRCE A HOMAGE TO JAMES JOYCE



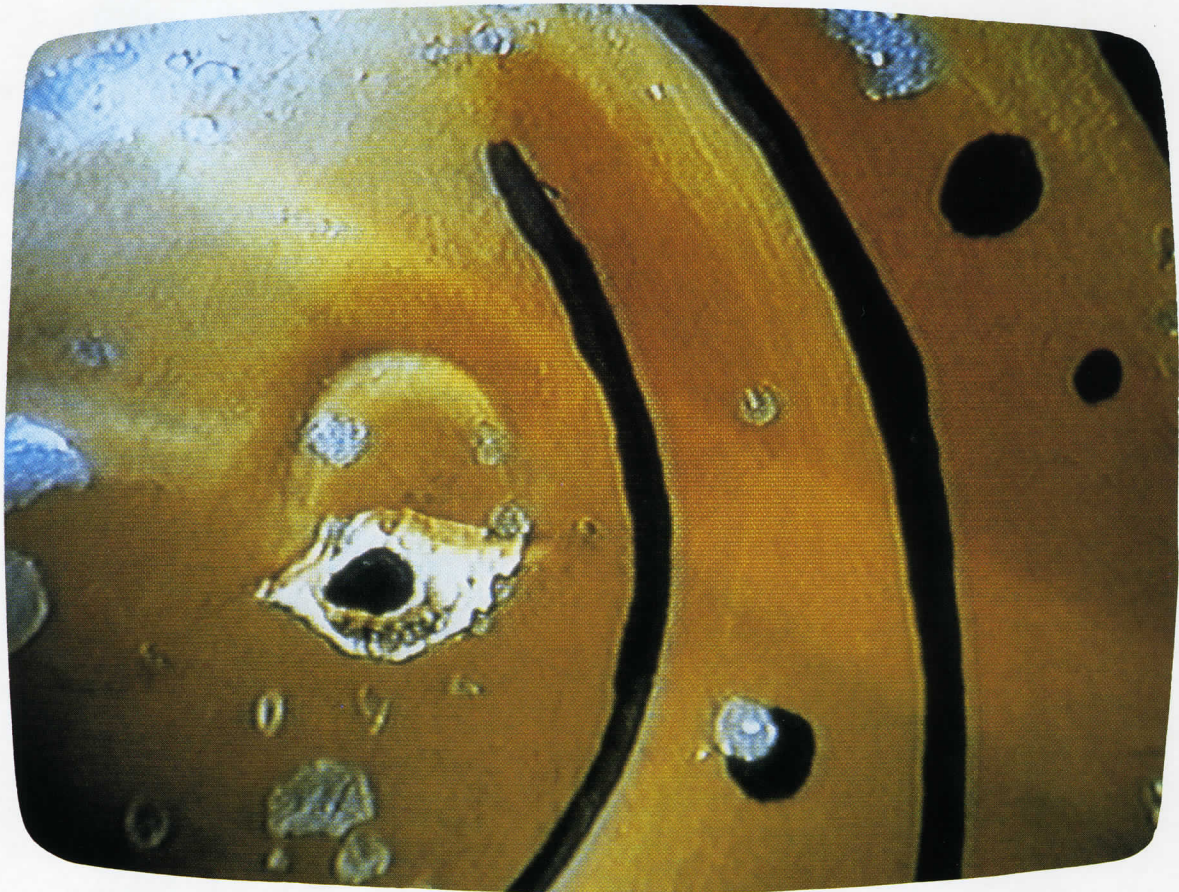
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Allen Hessler telephoned me in January 1984 and asked me to write and orate a public lecture on James Augustine Joyce (2 February 1882 - 13 January 1941) as part of an exhibition in homage to Joyce. The abyss into which this kind request silently sped was the first symptom of my dislike of public speaking, a *horror*, and in this instance especially so due to the very complex, dare I say *Championship*, grade of scholarship nosing the court. I proffered several alternatives, we knitted brows, and soon a piece in prose or possibly a sequence of poems was settled on. I was not sure how to treat Joyce's *Nighttown* episode and remain within the thematic circle of the exhibition tentatively called *Circe*. I foresaw that an attempt to imitate or echo, mimic, emulate, cite and shadow, juggle, parody or mirror such an exquisite text, or anyway *do-as-Rome-does*, would be rather like a tyro priest hoisting dummy host at Eucharist. And so I determined to work up a poem comprised of narrative elements taken from Joyce's heroic life and work. The narrative poem, such as it is, quickly outgrew my first plan of eleven, then thirty-three stanzas, and hardened into a fatidic forty-four triplets.

The thirty-six minute video, completed on 2 February 1985, became in many ways the body, bones, and inner organs from which the

two wings of the exhibition, Allen's and my own, radiated.

It was ten years ago, in the British Museum Reading Room, under butter slabs of light, that I read the twenty odd volumes of Joyce's manuscripts, in crayon, in pencil, typescript, blindscript, in seablu and nightblack ink, opposite or beside my unshakeable *doppelgänger*, a young nose-picking and flatulent musicologist. My admiration for Joyce did not begin there, but always I walk alone, resolved to go slowly through the twilight of a decade, and after much circumspection in all things, find myself today, turning to that hand.

My previous rather casual homages to Joyce were simple annual affairs involving one or two friends. But for my couleurborator's ambitious idea, John Hubbard and I, along with my wife Nevenka, might have chimed golden glasses of J.J. & son, over a lovely dish of pork kidney, this June, in full content, interrupted perhaps by an Overseas telephone halloo.

This homage has given me occasion to contemplate, once again, in different company, the contour of Joyce's mettlesome life and work, to hang upon those antlers, the sigla of my affection.

Mark West
4 February 1985

WORK IN EXHIBITION

PAINTINGS AND PRINTS

CIRCE, 1985, 13½' x 8', oil on canvas

ULYSSES, 1985, 6' x 5½', oil on canvas

Macintosh, 1984, 4½' x 3', oil on canvas

THE MEETING OF STEPHEN AND BLOOM, 1984, 5' x 2', oil on canvas

MAN BECOMING SWINE, 1984, 36" x 24", oil on canvas

RUDY, 1985, 20' x 12", woodcut

KING EDWARD'S BUCKET, 1985, 30" x 22", serigraph

THROWAWAY, 1985, 30" x 22", serigraph

VIDEO

CIRCE A HOMAGE TO JAMES JOYCE, 36 minutes

POEM

HALF PAST SIX, a narrative poem in forty-four triplets

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are happy to thank Myriam Carpenter, Debbie Fitzpatrick, Matthew Meiers, Will Parrott, Nevenka West, and Stephen West for their help with the video.

Thanks to Peter West for catalogue photographs.

Thanks to Dale Amundson and Zared Mann of Gallery 1.1.1., and special thanks to Grace Thomson for encouragement.

Financial assistance of the Manitoba Arts Council is appreciated.



MARK WEST AND ALLEN HESSLER, 1985

