

ICONOGRAPHY AND INTERNAL STATES

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This paper can be framed as both a study and a practical proposal, based on experience with a topic related to our craft of Iconography¹ and our Morphology of Impulses². It is a contribution for internal circulation, permitting us license with the language used and allowing us to avoid expanding on the contexts that would be required for readers not specialized in the themes of the School.

It also allows us to publish it in the ambit of all Masters, not just those working with the crafts since we consider it can be inspiring and useful for their Work.

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¹ References for the Iconography Craft are available on the website of the Parks of Study and Reflection, Parque Punta de Vacas <http://www.parquepuntadevacas.org>, In the section activities/workshop: Documents Corfu 1975. And also on the Blog: <http://oficios2011.blogspot.com>.

² On the Morphology of Impulses see:

- Silo/ Psychology Notes.
- J. Caballero/ Morphology.
- L. A. Ammann/ Self-Liberation.

I. PRESENTATION

Making conscious the perception of one's own physicality, adopting postures specific to certain sculptures or statues formed in the tradition of different cultures and relating this procedure with our craft of Iconography, allows us to break with the assumption that the craft is only for those familiar with handling plastic sculpture of the human figure, increasing the possibility for all those interested in a better understanding of their body image and its possibilities of transformation.

To achieve this perception and make it conscious we will form, with our own body, the posture of an icon representative of a culture and we shall make it explicit through a sculptural sketch based on our personal experience of the posture studied. This is the practical proposal that the present study provides.

It is also our interest to propose the study of a practical perception of the space of representation, by linking this space with kinaesthetic and cenaesthetic registers of the body's own spatiality, relating in this way, the experience gained in working with the Morphology Discipline and the phenomena of translation studied in the Morphology of Impulses.

We note that this work opens a field of study that enables another possible look at the vast human legacy of images as translations of internal states and a better self-awareness of our own postural repertoire and its meaning.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE.

To begin with a practice that will facilitate us in this study we shall start by remembering what we have seen in our psychophysical gymnastics in the part that deals with the "observation of body posture and mental state," which is the necessary pre-condition to be aware of our mental and physical state.

Through exercises we learned the relationship between body positions and states of mind. Seeing how a position can induce a state and vice versa a state a position. We also learned to detect harmful habits or inaccuracies in the posture. This we did by observing static and dynamic body positions as part of our self-knowledge³.

All this is highly recommended as a first step and is essential to learn to adopt a psychophysical disposition. Understanding psychophysical disposition as: 1. relaxed and vigilant attention, 2. diaphragmatic breathing, 3. an alignment of the spine and 4. a defined corporal support.

This disposition fulfils the function achieved through warm-ups at any gym.

Our study will emphasize the static body posture.

To explore our own body posture schema we will adopt postures taken from traditional iconography, but we will include ourselves in them, ie not only imitating them but "getting under their skin," registering that we occupy their space. It is to experience kinaesthetically/cenesthetically their form. This which is stated so easily takes practice and some guidance for the observation of both the posture and the registers it can induce.

As an example we take as a starting point the icon or statue of the Greek sculptor Polykleitos called Doryphorus, 500bce. This model establishes a canon of proportion and dynamic equilibrium very different from the expressionless forms of previous periods, as can be seen if we adopt the posture of Kuros in the illustration. This position typical of Greek statuary at the end of the Archaic period, induces a certain rigidity and high or clavicular breathing, and introduces a novelty in the statuary of his contemporaries and predecessors, namely its smile. This detail, although it is not postural, deserves to be addressed. Anyway we will not detain ourselves in the study of this icon but in that called Doryphorus.

³ See Self-Liberation by L. A. Ammann



Kuros – hieratic Image



Dynamic equilibrium, Doryphorus

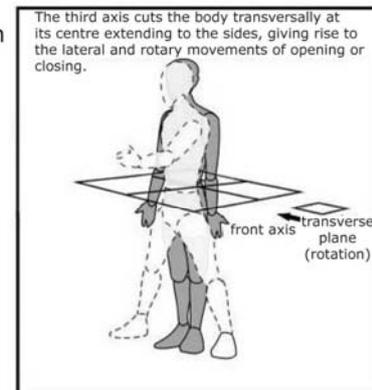
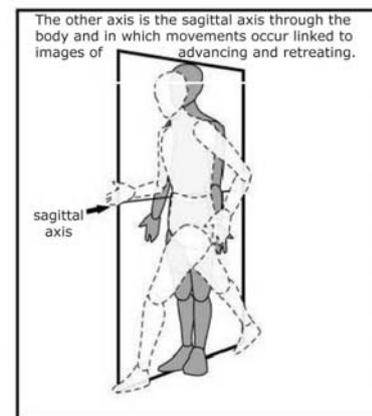
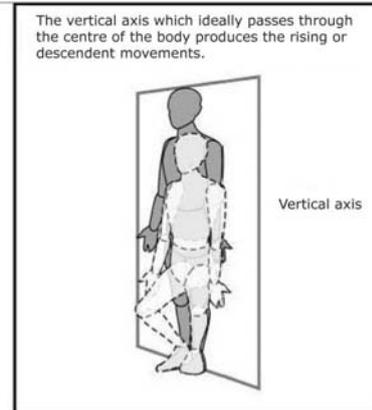
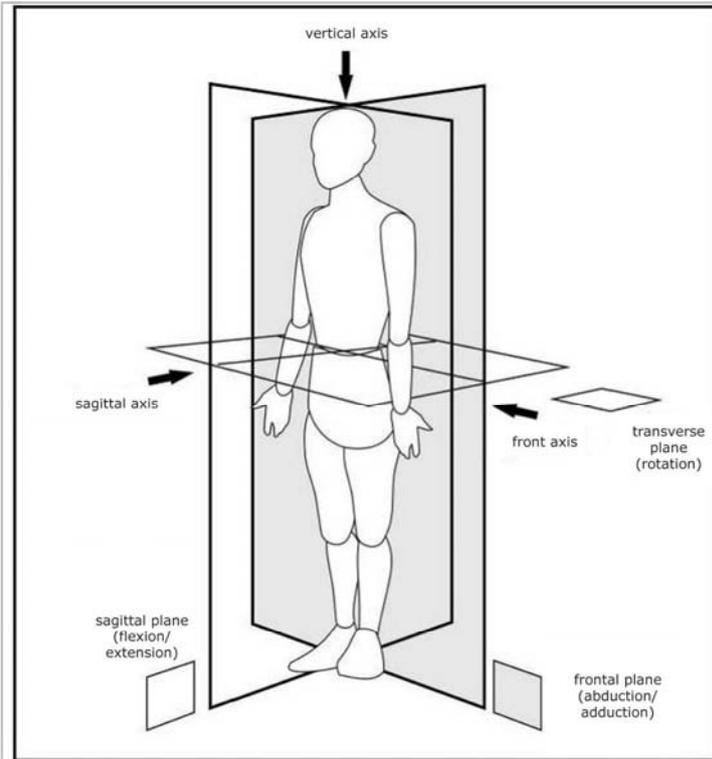
This icon expresses a conciliatory relationship of opposing forces. A unifying expression. In a single action it resolves tension and relaxation, movement and stillness, an upward and a descending force. This is accomplished by moving the centre of gravity by shifting the body weight. Thus the knee on the side which takes the load is able to tense, lifting or moving and/or opening, the other knee makes the opposite movement: relaxing lowering, moving backwards and/or closing. The position of both arms, torso and head complete the equilibrium by counter-position and allow breathing using the diaphragm. The unitive mental state or the resolution of contradictions was by no means alien to the Greek culture of a healthy mind in a healthy body.

We are particularly interested in this icon because the counter-position or "il contraposto" remains a paradigm of reference for different corporal disciplines (both Eastern and Western such as yoga or acrobatics). The counter-position leads each of the parts to turn about itself and perform the action that compensates the other.

To understand through the self-perception of one's own body the psychophysical correlate of each position, the mental state translated and the level of breathing, allows us to explore with another look the iconography of different peoples, not just their external forms and expressions, but getting closer to an understanding from within, with an inner look.

An element that can help us in this exploration and observation of postures is to take into account the three spatial axes that allow us to locate which ones are working and also take into account the system of articulation in play and its work which, as lever, reveal the points of tension at play.

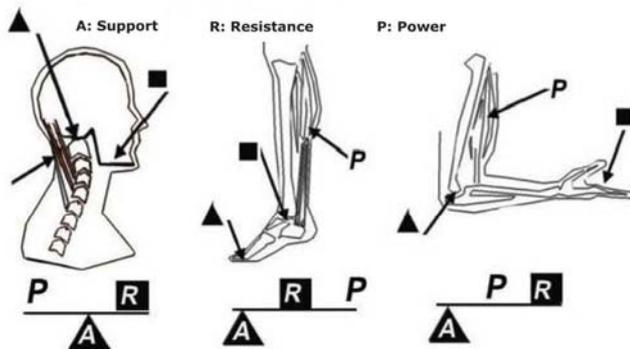
The following illustrations will help us in the study:



The three axes or spatial coordinates express, each of them, a displacement linked to a trace image in the space of representation.

The predominance of movement on one or two axes is reflected in characteristic positions and attitudes.

A determining factor in body posture is the system of anatomical levers.



THREE TYPES OF LEVERS, grade 1, 2 and 3

These diagrams can be useful as we said in the study and classification of posture, but we will illustrate a way to realize in a sufficient but elementary way, a sculptural sketch of our observations which will integrate the experience.

SCULPTURAL SKETCH

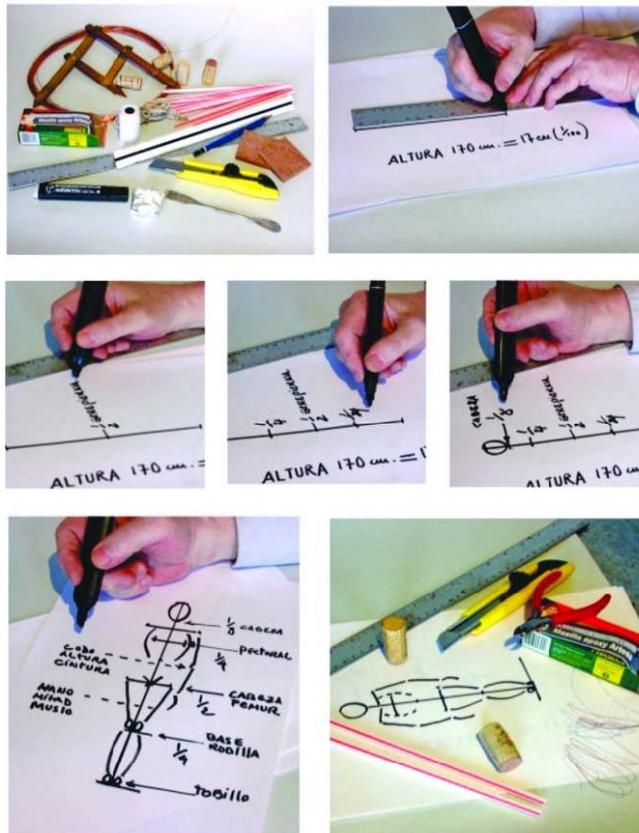
First step: preparing a diagram of proportions to a scale of 1/100 or one centimetre equal to ten.

We work based on our own body, taking measurements of the height (eg. 170 cm) and dividing it in half (85 cm if we follow the example.), then dividing in half again (42.5 cm) and again (21cm) which is equivalent to the height of our head or a "span" (distance from the thumb to little finger with the hand extended)

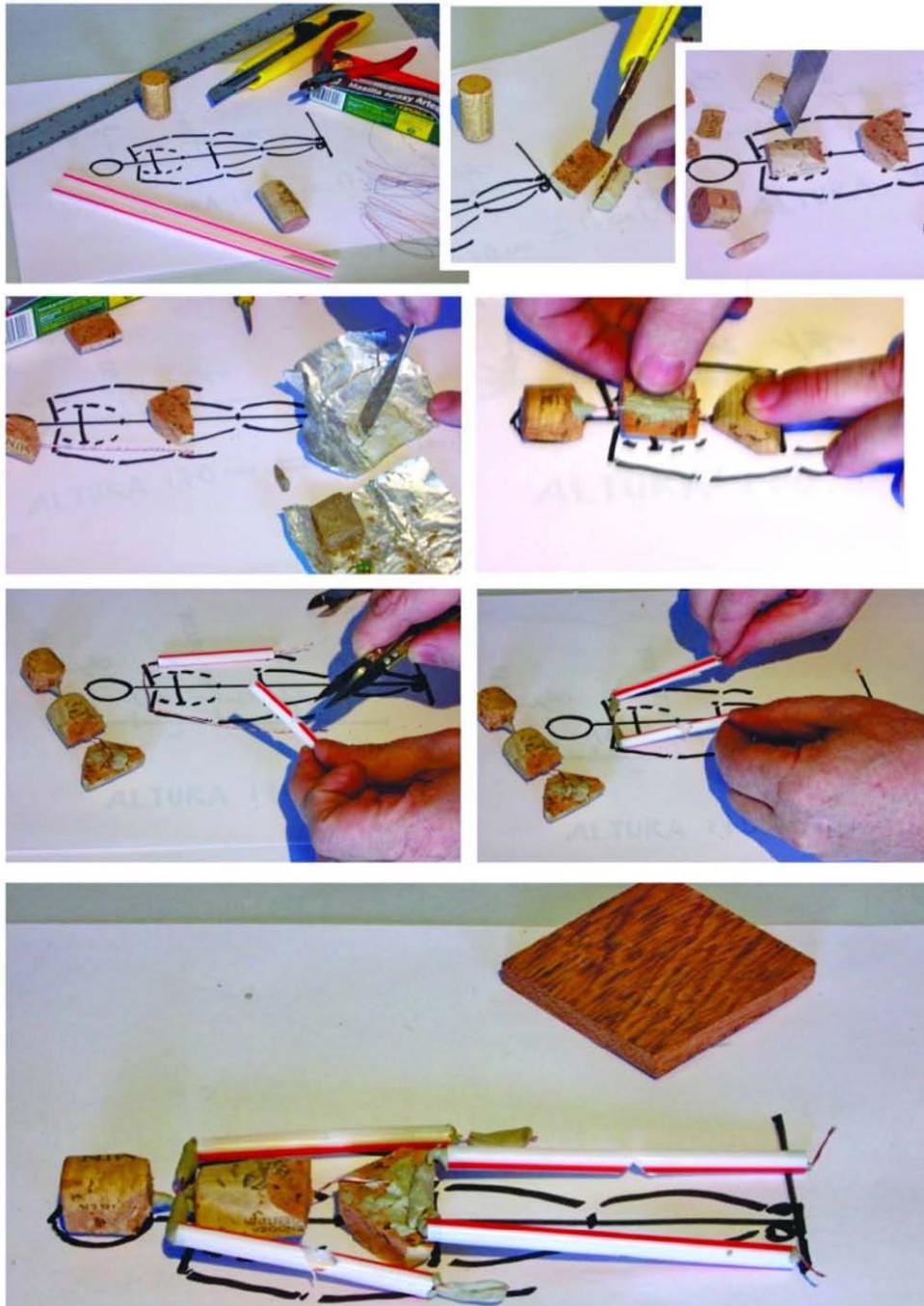
With these measurements we make a design on graph paper, which will serve as the basis for understanding the play of golden or harmonious relations in our own body. For example: If 8 corresponds to our total height, 5 corresponds to the height of the navel and 3 to the arms length (taken from the point of attachment to the pectoral muscles). However if we take the arm as 8 this results in 5 as the distance from elbow to tip of the hand and 3 the part of the arm that contains the bicep. In sum, to observe and relate different measurement combinations will surprise us about our own structure and will show us that although very different from each other we are structured based on the same proportion.

The images show the materials to be used:

- A paper tape or string about two meters long, used to measure the total height first and then folding in half repeatedly until reaching an eighth.
- Paper, pencil, ruler and a golden compass can be a good help.
- Also a scalpel, pliers, wire, epoxy putty, cork and straws to serve for the next or second step of assembly, which is building a three-dimensional structure or skeleton.

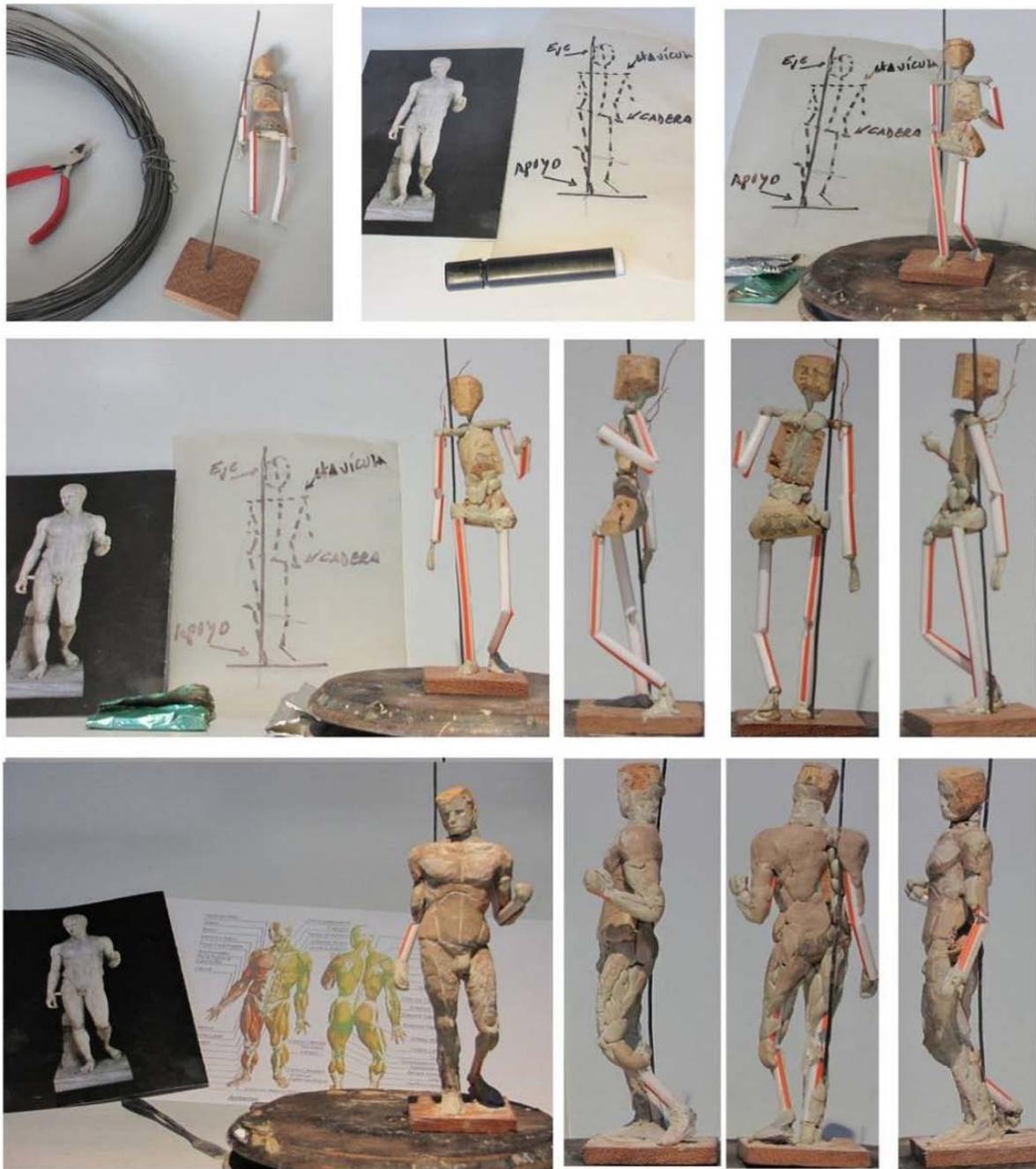


Second step: building a three-dimensional skeleton.



Building a three-dimensional skeleton is very easy as can be seen in the images. It is enough to start by cutting the two corks. One of them we cut in half giving the parts that make the hips and the ribcage. With the other one we cut a piece to a size that we can use to form the head. At the same time we should make some cuts to the model so that it is not cylindrical. Then join the parts with a wire that acts as the spine. Finally we make the limbs with wire to which we give some volume with the straws and join with fast drying epoxy putty.

Third-step: creating the posture and muscle padding.



In this step we need a wooden base to hold an axis of stiff wire (thicker than that used for the joints) that will serve as a reference axis for the figure and as a point of support for creating the postures. It will be very important that the image can be viewed from all angles and that the joints are fixed with small pieces of epoxy, before starting to give volume and anatomical form to the parts of interest.

Clearly it is not necessary to cover the entire image or give it a complete finish, but rather allow it to manifest the character of a study or sketch. We can use a pictorial reference for the muscle structure to help us, but it is better the observation that we can share comparing anatomy and shapes when working with others.

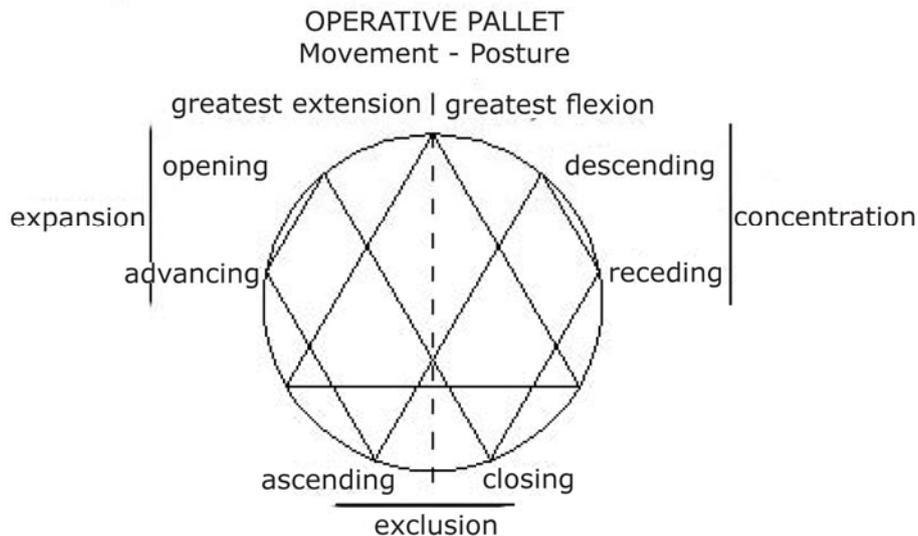
III. SUPPORT DIAGRAMS FOR THOSE WORKING WITH THE CRAFT

Support diagrams such as Enneagram pallets of relationship or process are useful for those working with the craft. As we know, we are the centre of gravity of the craft and are not there just developing technical mastery. We are interested in working in a certain way, and learning to work with our various crafts gives us the opportunity to work with a sense of proportion, with counterbalances, compensations, displacements, transformations, operations that are common to every craft and educate proportion, permanence and precision.

From this perspective we understand these supports help us to operate and consider operations methodically. For this we put together a palette based on the spatial axes and basic movements. This shows us two postural qualities: predominantly of flexion and predominantly of extension. And within them the highest folding and highest expansion. This disposition of symmetries allows us to visualize and remember, as a mnemonic support, the operational scheme to create, propose or transform postures.

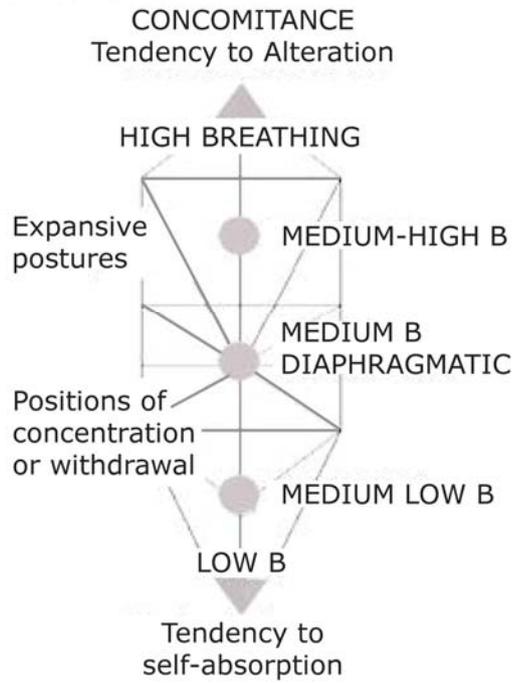
We locate the object of study as a particular case of the apparatus of impulses, and it is understood by its relationship to a representation, and trace image, capable of mobilizing different levels in the centres of response.

- 1 – Location of the object of study.
As a particular case of the apparatus of impulses and translation of the space of representation.



The following diagram shows the simultaneous movement posture where the polarity of internal states is given between the tendencies to altered states and absorption. Emphasizing poses of greater expansion and crouching or the respiratory locations at different heights, which are key in the expression of internal states. Suffice to say, for example, that where we locate the breathing gives us an indicator of where we have the centre of gravity.

2 – Relations of movement-posture with the internal state and breathing.



On the more general operative process we can distinguish a moment of differentiation as the selection and study of the icon-posture chosen. A moment of complementation when we relate the observations and comparisons can be made when developing the concrete image. Finally, the synthesis as the realization of the three-dimensional sculptural sketch as evidence of experience.

IV. SOME EXPERIMENTAL BACKGROUND OF THE CRAFT

Many times to understand a solution it is convenient to examine the proposal or problem that gave it birth. I shall refer to some proposal-purposes that guided the experiences and searches.

In the Iconography contribution of 1975, one of the problems faced was what kind of "model" or image to represent so as not to identify with a particular cultural and temporal pattern, and which was also not a mere outline or abstract sign.

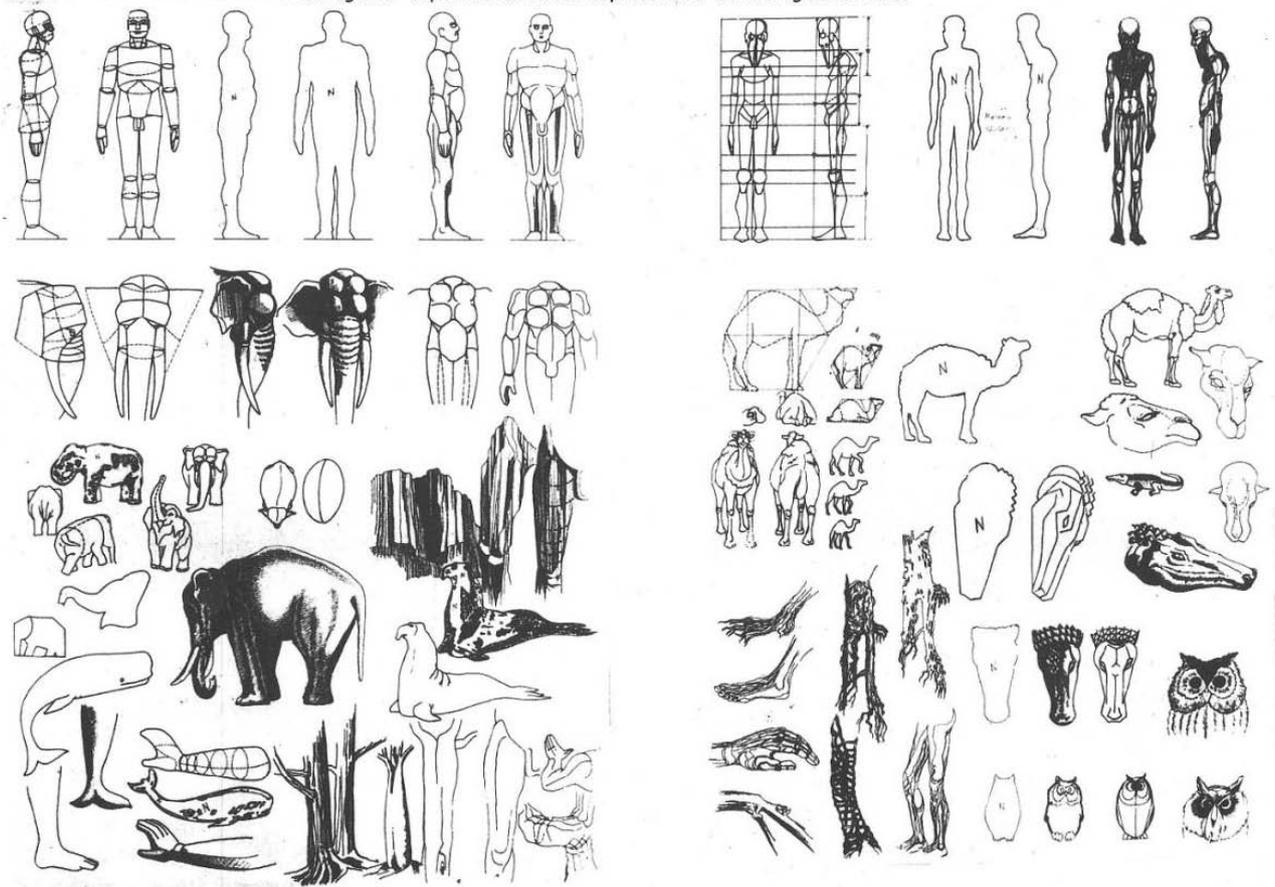
We opted to strip the figure of the racial attributes of colour, ethnic makeup, and finally of the musculature and human anatomical fleshiness, keeping only the structure of proportions more linked to the skeleton and adjusting the structure or framework to the golden ratio. Adding to this structure frames in the form of pallets, to work on the basis of gender, age, character, complexion and appearance, with the convention or rule to operate "filling" these empty forms with images drawn from other realms such as animal, vegetable or mineral, thus leading to a associative channel and closer to an allegory.

These experiments led to some iconographic productions and allowed another look at the existing images in the field.



This mode of operation worked well to give continuity to a traditional solution to the iconography of different peoples and times: working images with formal analogies of similarity. This is something that can be followed very well, especially in the iconography dedicated to the gods and heroes. It's enough to conjure up a few images to meet with wings, horns, animal heads, claws, shells or skins ... etc.. Configuring these images, this way of associative translation and attribution of qualities of non-human forms which place such beings as belonging to another level, is certainly a resource that defies the passage of time, sometimes clumsily and sometimes with poetic flight. In the last decades of the twentieth century and this millennium, we witness the generation of heroes and demigods with biomechanical aspects, such as robots or aliens or x-men with paranormal or super-natural attributes.

. Iconografia -experimentales con copresencias de analogias formales



Years later, in the '90s, we found the theme of developing a human image of an androgynous type and with minimum attributes of identity. Regardless of this time tinged unisex model at the time acting as a trend. In this experiment we call it a "neutral vehicle."

We worked supporting ourselves on a more appropriate reduction of the abstractive channel, without abandoning the figuration and the humanized form, reaching the silhouette. It was as if we were left with the shadow of the image emphasizing the limit or boundary.

From these explorations we were able to produce what we called "imangrama." A set of parts made from flexible magnets which can be arranged in different ways to assemble the human figure in its three flat views: front, profile and semi-profile.

The flat image allows the use of auxiliary pieces that make foreshortening or perspective in the figure.



The work on the sculptural volume of this model put us to solving an articulated figure different from the conventional jointed dolls and that could adopt plastic and humanized postures. Obviously we find that humanizing a "doll" is a recurring theme in iconography and the imaginary of peoples. We will not distract ourselves with references to the abundance of existing examples (just think of Pinocchio). We only took two years of trial and error to find an inspired solution: to release the joints and tensions holding them to remain with a set of forces that tend to self-sustainment.

In this way we conceived and implemented an experimental articulated figure which stands by itself because of the weight distribution of its parts. This production consisting of thirty-seven hollow pieces, cast in bronze and with a weight equivalent in scale, to a human body, we called it "Articulation 2001" on the one hand, to coincide with the beginning of the millennium and on the other, referring to new ways of greater freedom and forms of balance demanded by our times.

ICONOGRAPHY / Experiments: Articulation 2001



We assume that these few examples of Iconographic experiments do not exhaust the proposals but can certainly inspire other productions.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND CONSEQUENCES.

As discussed in the presentation of the work we have opened a field of study and experimentation and hope that soon we can share it with other enthusiasts. As a first conclusion we can say that as soon as we start we move beyond the realm of Iconography. The experience is existentially very rich and with the immediacy of the body, by involving it, links us to a universe of registers that necessarily connects us with various activities in which corporeality can not be indifferent. It's a truism which necessarily invites us to leave the static body to attend to its dynamics, interacting with other fields, such as the representational crafts linked to dance and theatre. Thus the need arises to develop a framework in the context of our crafts and we will.

Translated in London, November 2011

By Jon Swinden and Silvia Bercu

This is a work in progress aimed at facilitating the work in Iconography by non-Spanish speakers. Please send any comments, suggestions for improvement to <openroads@gmail.com>