
Richard Heipp

Symbols and Signs:
'Tower of Esoteric
Alchemy'

"a conceptual model"

Library Addition
University of West Florida
Pensacola, Florida
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Home: 4420 N.W. 21st St.
Gainesville, FL 32605
904-375-0902
Studio: 4609 B N.W. 6th St.
Gainesville, FL 32609
904-371-7988



5. Description of the work

A library, I believe, presents an ideal vehicle to explore the connections between image and symbol examining the relationships of visual communication. Much of my personal "research" in isolating imagery is spent browsing through library stacks, discovering and creating. I am attempting to represent the excitement and mystery I find contained in a libraries resources and express them through conceptual and graphic metaphores.

Symbols and Signs:

Man's earliest attempts at recording and storing information were in the form of symbols representing significant aspects of life. Perhaps the earliest "library" could be considered the 20,000 year old cave paintings of Europe. Dr. Liz Green, a psychanalyst who has written extensively on the subject of symbols in her book *Relating* notes that symbols and sign have distinctly different functions: "The meaning of a sign is something specific and collective, such as a road sign, while a symbol, on the other hand, suggests or generates an aspect of life where the number of possible interpretations is infinite and eludes attempts to fix or establish a single meaning."

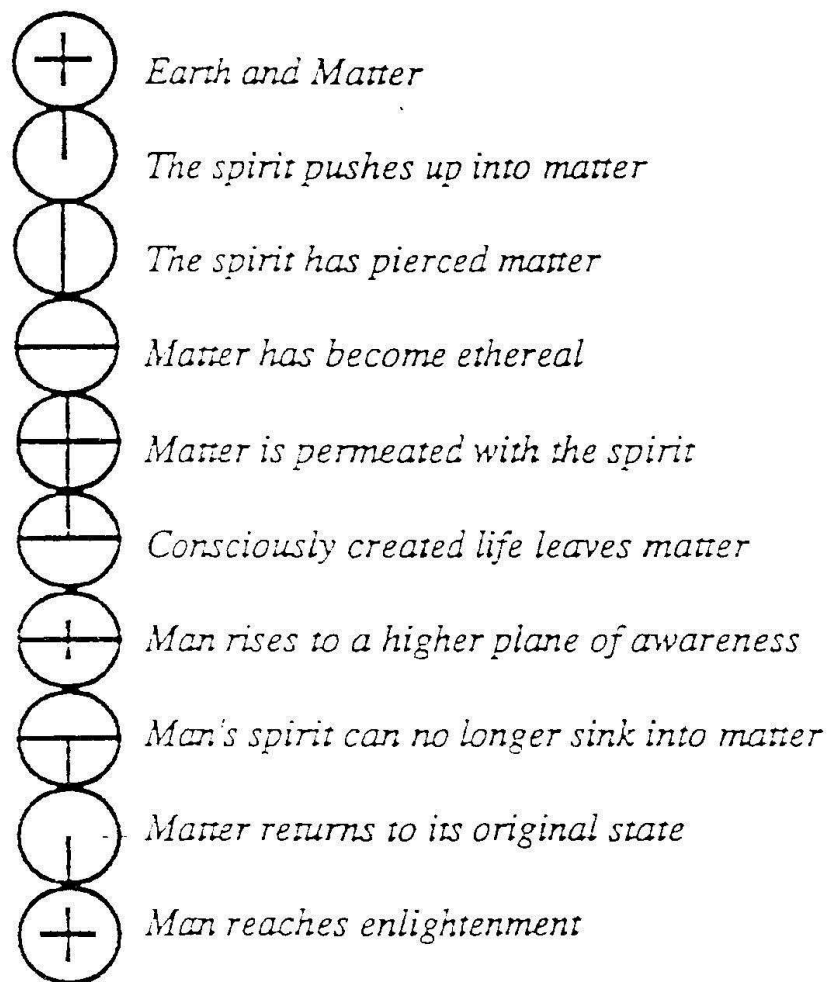
Esoteric Alchemy:

Until the 1700's the science that studied the art of transforming chemical elements and compounds was known as alchemy. Much of this "science" was later devoted to attempting to transform basic elements into gold. However this was more than science. It took on metaphorical and spiritual meanings in esoteric alchemy. The noted swedish authority on symbols Carl G. Liungman states,, "The aim of esoteric alchemy was primarily to improve the state of man...not to turn lead into gold." Please note: no "new age" type spirituality is intended, in this project. Simply a "poetic" metaphore



This search or quest for knowledge, which in turn leads to a plane of high consciousness or spiritual enlightenment, was known as "Esoteric Alchemy." I believe, it represents a rich metaphor for a University Library.

Homers Chain of Esoteric Alchemy:



Knowledge - leads to - Enlightenment

Learning - leads to - Reason

Lead - turns into - Gold

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7. Medium and Method of Fabrication

The Paintings

The upper pair of painted image components (two - 6.5' x 4' ea.) will be painted on air injected polyvinyl chloride (PVC) sheets. This white, opaque plastic material has proven to be ideal for public spaces. It has been rated archival, is light weight, ridged, and impervious to moisture. It is manufactured under several names including SINTRA and TETTOPOR. The panels will be mounted to a cradle support fabricated from strips of similar material. The panels would be painted using acrylic paint and sealed with an acrylic varnish. They could be framed in welded, burnished, clear lacquered steel frames.

The center (4' x 6') painting could be painted as described above. However, I believe it would present a striking installation painted on transparent plexiglass and illuminated from the rear. The entire panel would be encased in a steel frame and electrified using standard commercial light box sign techniques.

The Symbols

The symbol elements would be fabricated metal sign material. These symbols fabricated from 1/4" burnished aluminum, bronze, brass or copper have a satin finish and are coated with a clear lacquered finish to preserve the pristine surface and are guaranteed for life by the manufacturer. These metal symbols are generated using a diamond computer controlled saw by GEMINI LETTERS, Minnesota. The symbols would be installed using standard commercial techniques floating approximately 2" from the wall.

The Chain of Alchemy symbols would be 12" tall. The Eye Chart symbols would be 8" tall.

