

THE FALL



A MONUMENTAL ALLEGORICAL PAINTING
BY ARTIST CERNAK

FINE ARTS GALLERY, UNIVERSITY CENTRE'
SANDY BAY

15 APRIL - 8 MAY, 1986

CERNAK

- 1973-74 First lived in Vienna, began studying Bosch, Brueghel, and the Viennese School of Fantastic Realism and techniques of oil and gouache painting.
- 1975-77 B.A. at University of Queensland. Majored in Fine Arts and History. Began a Masters in Urban Regional Planning, and held first two exhibitions – Schonnel Gallery at the University and the Toowong Gallery – before leaving again for Vienna.
- 1977-78 Lived in Vienna, studied further in the museums in Florence and Venice; wrote a book, painted.
- 1978-82 Established the Artworkers Union and helped establish the Poets Union in Queensland. Held twelve exhibitions over this time. Employed as Community Arts Officer for the Brisbane City Council 1981. Exhibited mainly at the Terrace, Design Arts Centre, Young Masters and Spring Hill Galleries, final two shows were the *Immaculate Art* and the *Orpheus* works, before leaving for Sydney. Participated in the Leichhardt Performance Festival, held an exhibition at the Mori Gallery, worked as illustrator for the *Sydney Morning Herald* before leaving for Vienna.
- 1982-83 Lived in Vienna after a period working with a journalist from the *Sydney Morning Herald* in London, Edinburgh, the Orkneys, Paris and Upper Austria. Painted two major gouache series on the thirteen month pagan calendar (in preparation for *The Fall*) and *The Evolution of the Idea of God in the Western World*, based on research on the Merovingian and Lombardian history of images. Briefly studied Russian while working part-time at the U.N.
- 1983-85 Lived two years in St. Kilda painting *The Fall* which was launched in 'The Abbey', Armadale, on 26 May 1985, the culmination of fifteen years of collation of imagery and research. Some resource material and 'maps', guides to de-coding the symbolism and its sources were produced, a video and sound-track made available and a lengthy text written to accompany the 65 foot long canvas. Included in the *Women 150* catalogue. Lectures on its making and meaning in the Abbey and in Colleges were given.
- Painted *The Banquet* as a postscript to the central *Wedding* panel of *The Fall*, presented it with text at the Caulfield Arts Centre in August.
- Painted *The St. Antony Temptations*, moving the traditional theme into the Australian desert and into a feminist framework. A small paper on the background of a St. Antony was produced. Began painting work from the First and Second *Books of Adam and Eve*. Support: Dole and Freelance illustration and graphic work.

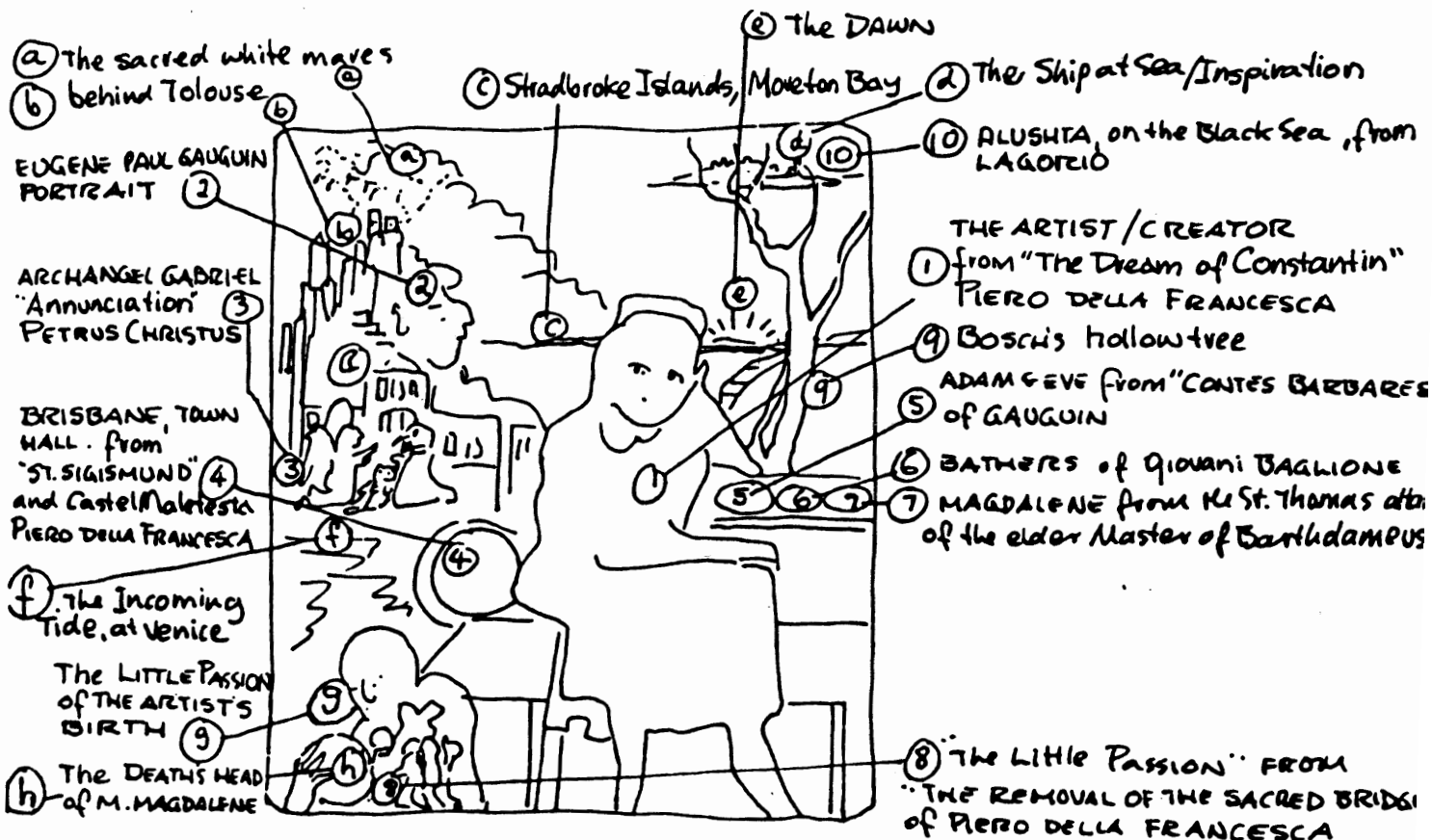
THE ARTIST

I.



GENERAL INTRODUCTION: The thirteen panels begin at dawn, progressing through a day and a night until they reach the false dawn at No.13 (*The Ship of Fools*) which adjoins No.1 (*The Artist*). A number of themes are stated in No.1 which explores the concept of 'a fall' – fall from grace, fall from power. These include the fall of the artist, the fall of the city, of Eve, of Adam, of the (matriarchal) calendar, of Queenship. The fact that the artist is represented as creator indicates both a modern viewpoint and an ancient religious one. The initial meaning of the name of the Goddess (Miryam) = rebellion.

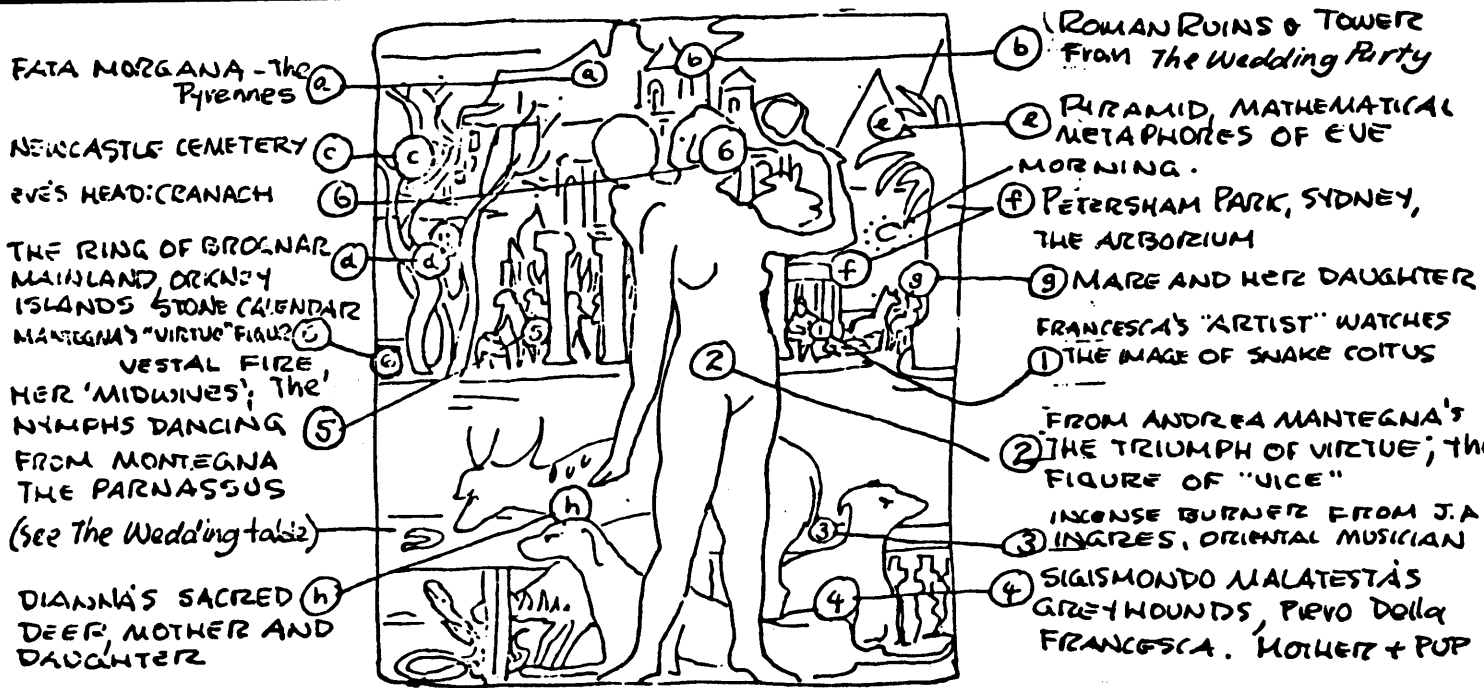
It is important to be aware that this is a circuit, not a lateral painting, and although it is numbered first, No.1 is not independent of numbers 13 or 2. It represents the metaphorical sign before the inspiration which begins at No.2.



EVE] (BETH) - THE BIRTH OF EVE

2.

NO.2: Eve, as the mother of all things - including the alphabet - gives birth to herself. Each of the panels takes some of its compositional elements from its relevant letter of the hebraic alphabet, in this case Beth. This panel has an especially strong construction based on the 'morgenstern' and unlike all the others, could stand alone as an individual painting. This suggests Eve's pre-eminence. Eve herself and all the creatures in this panel are in pairs. The suggestion of parthenogenesis (self birth) is allied to the concept of artistic creativity.

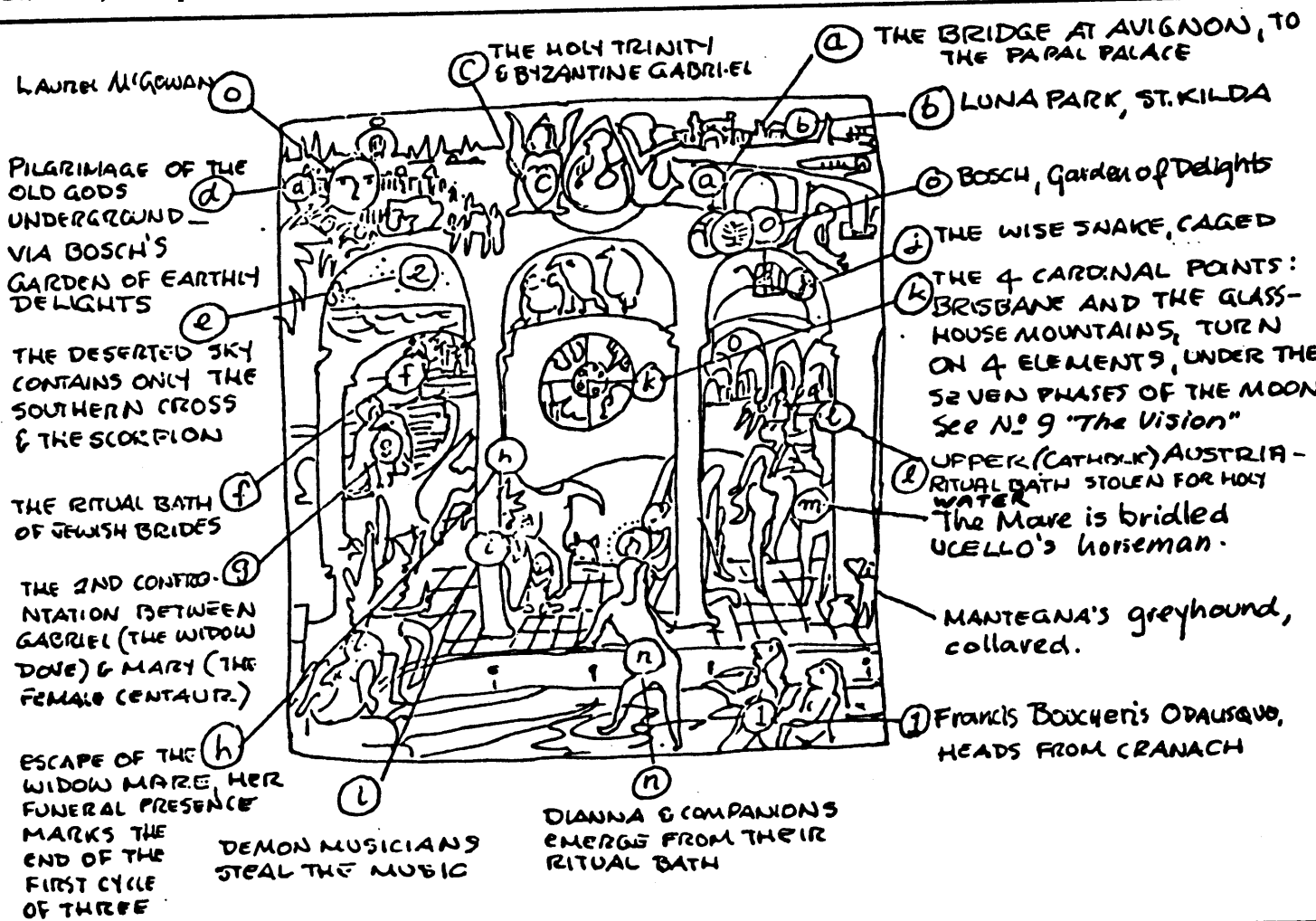


LUCIFER } (GIMEL)

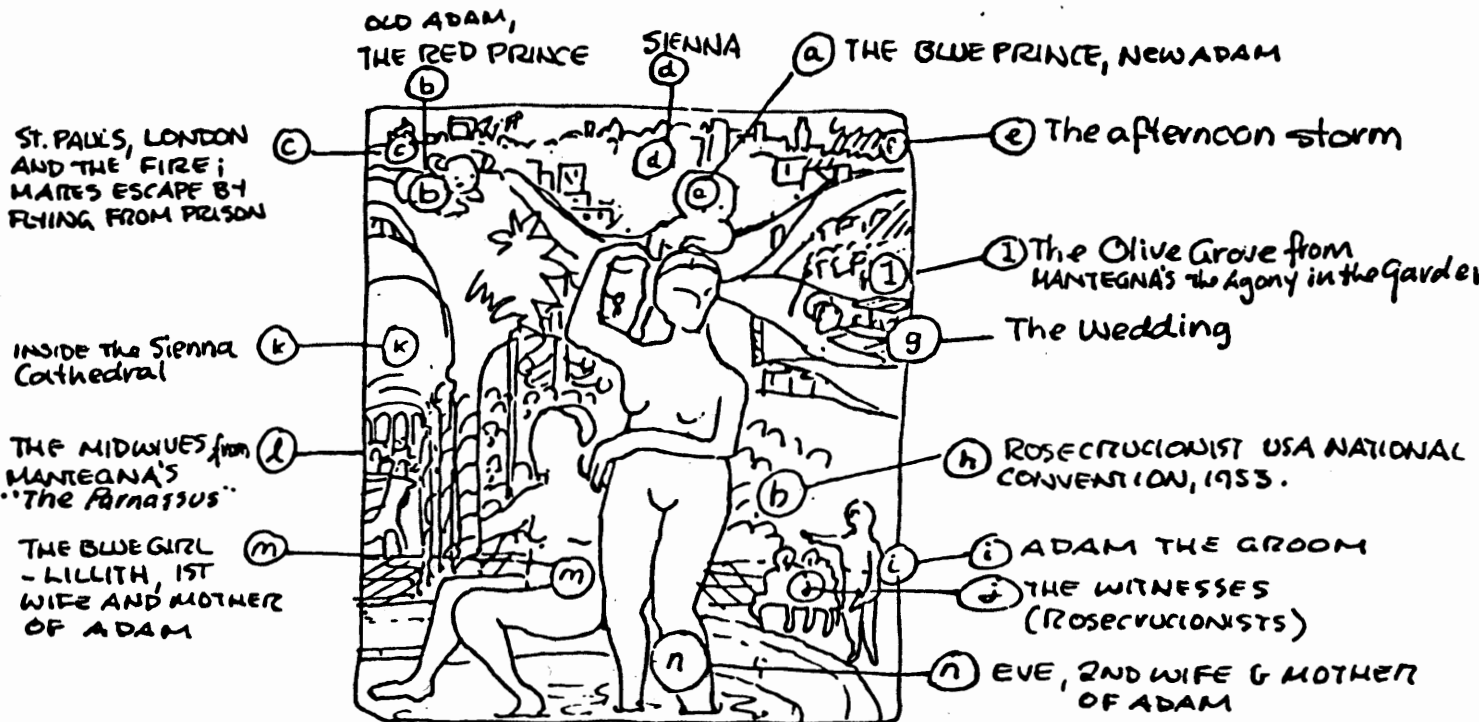
3.

THE THIEF

NO.3: This is the first of three points (3, 9 and 12) at which a specific fall occurs. This panel represents the fall of 'knowledge' of women's secret knowledge insofar as they used this knowledge to control their environment (earth, fire, air and water). The theft of fire symbolizes this fall and the city elements (Brisbane, St. Kilda) are a premonition of the city's fall (by fire) in No.9.



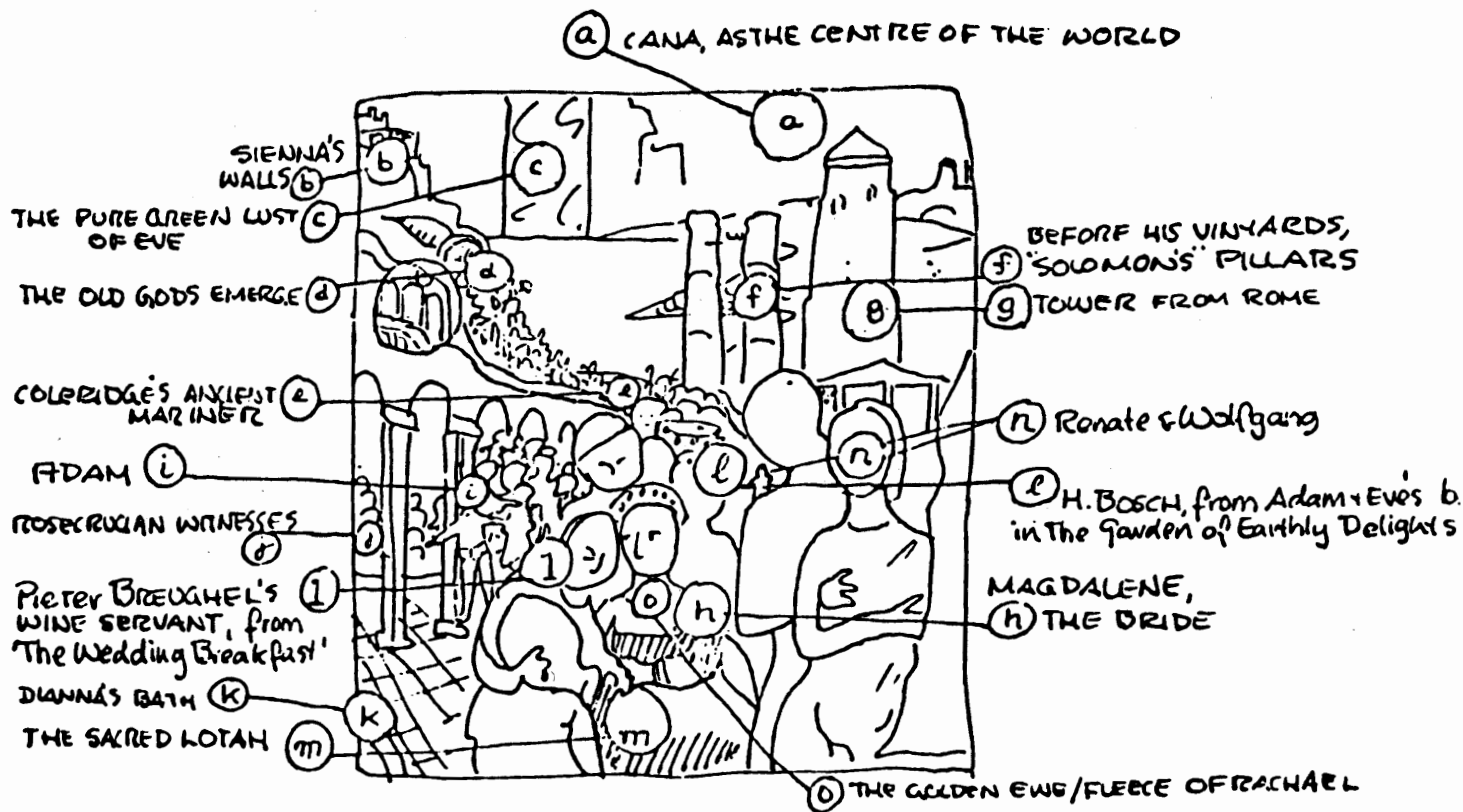
NO.4: Participation and eventually domination by males in family life. Opposites occur which herald the onset of patriarchal society: the two Adams, the two Eves, nature versus industrialization.



THE WEDDING AT CANA

7 (He) THE WEDDING PARTY 5.

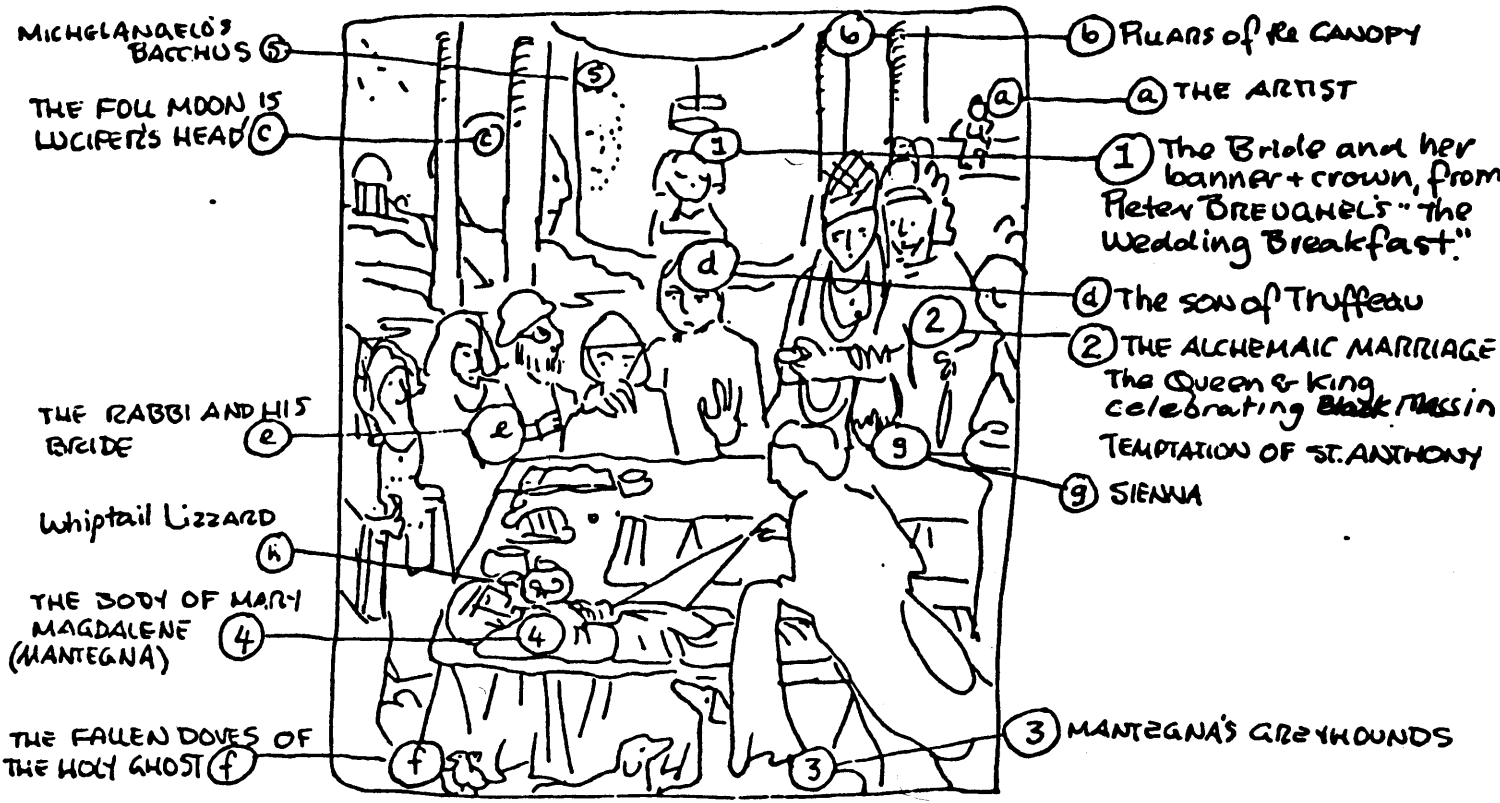
NO.5: The continuation and culmination of the procession which leads up to the wedding. This panel exists as a transition between 4 and 6, from the old world to the new, from the birth of Adam to the Wedding proper.



THE WEDDING FEAST } (WAW) - THE SINEATERS

6.

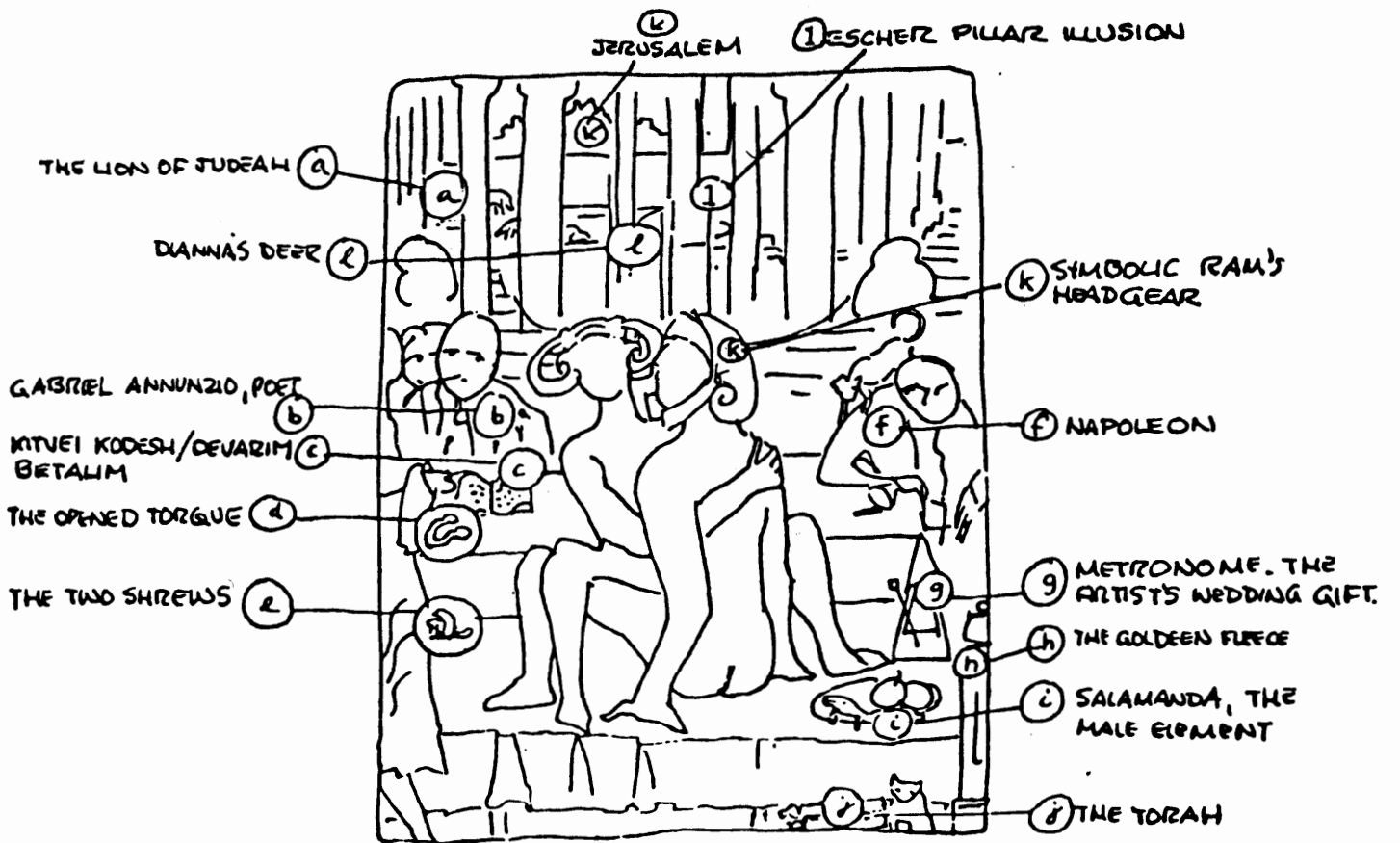
NO.6: This panel and No.7 are the central images (*The Wedding* and the *Celebration of the Sabbath*). *The Wedding* is a legal confirmation of the fall from power, instituting new laws which govern the family. Cf Last Supper.



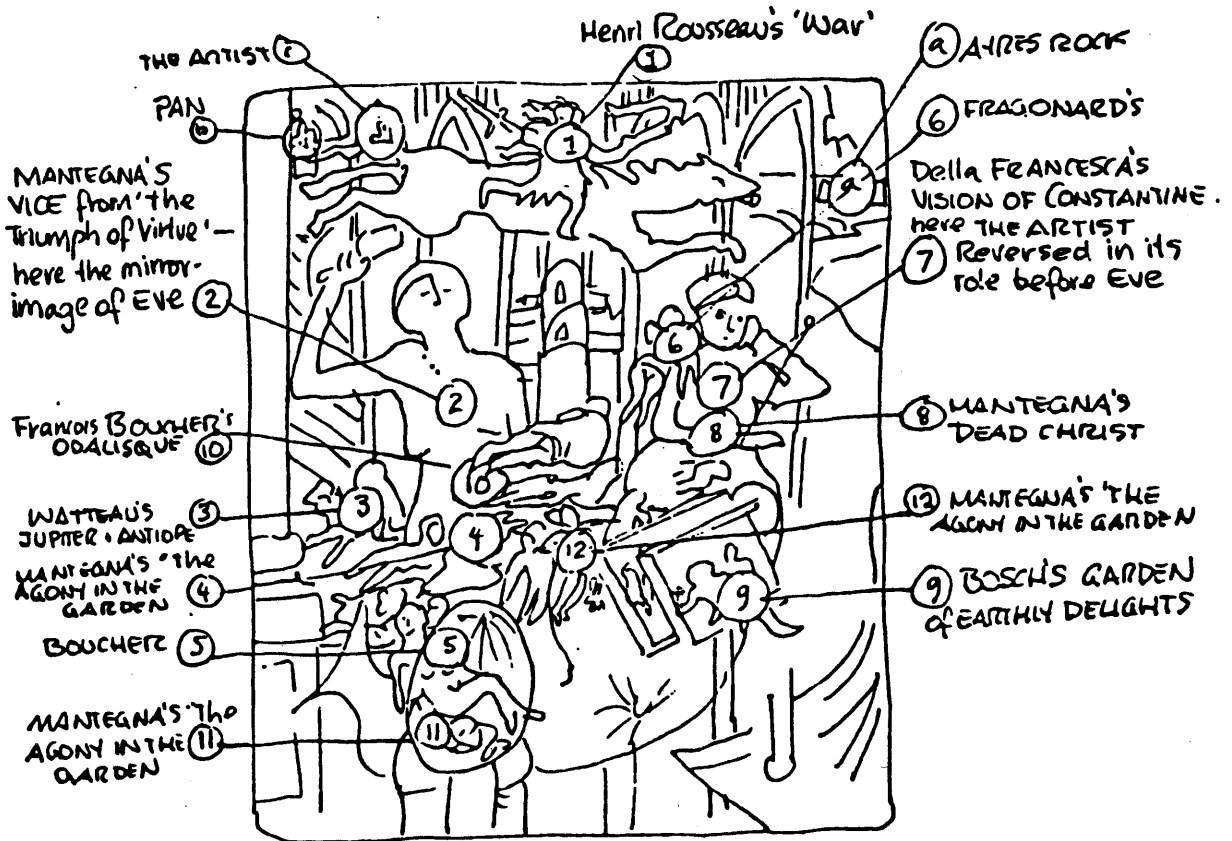
THE SABBATH **י** (ZAHIN) KITVEI KODESH & DEVARIM BETALIM

7.

NO.7: Compositionally very stable, being based on a metronome, a miniature of which is at (9).

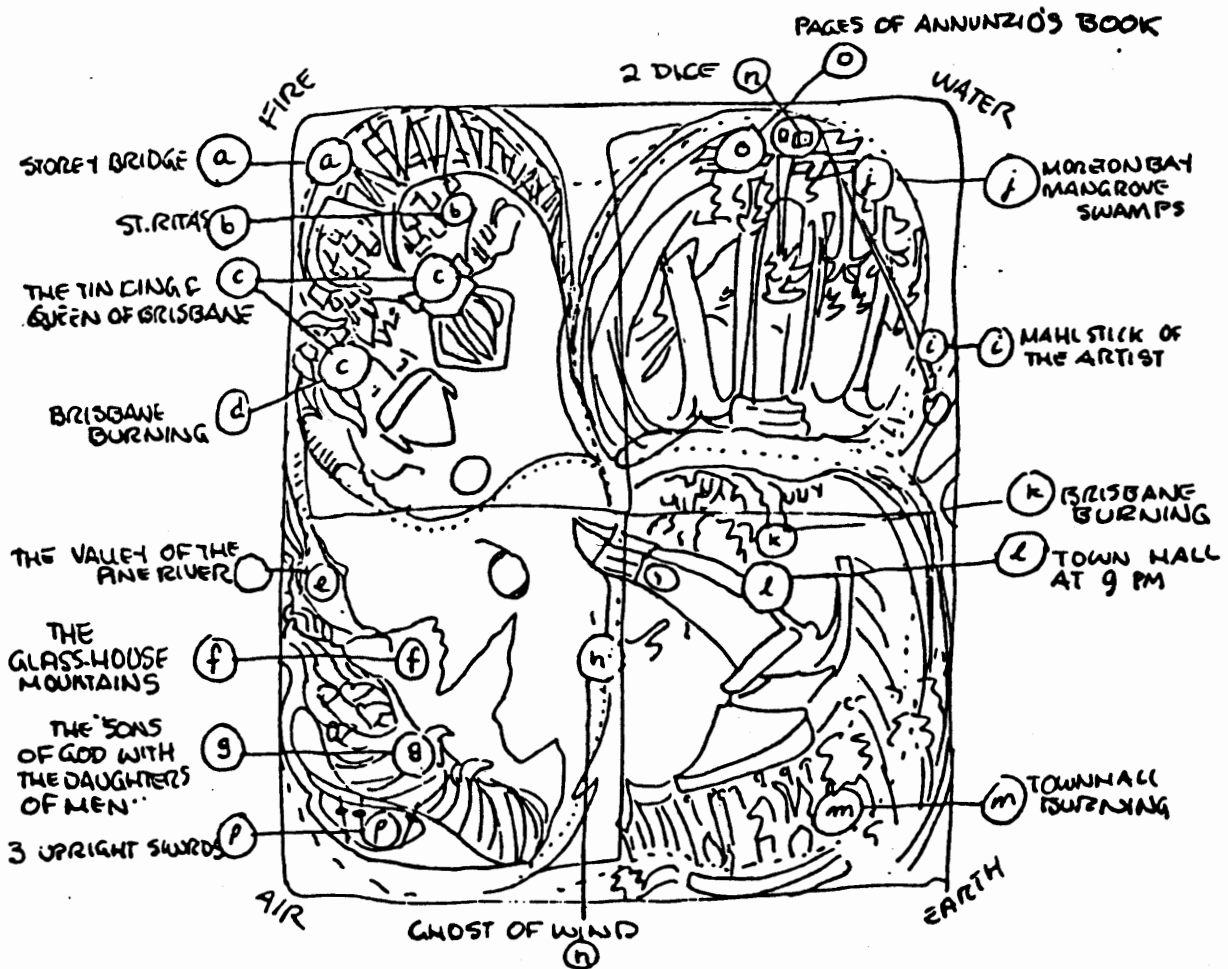


NO.8: Begins the second half of the cycle. Repeats the Holy Trinity Motif from the Lucifer painting. 20th Century characterized by Rousseau's *War*. Images from the Wedding Party reappear, along with the double pillars of the temple. The small sleeping figures refer to the great number of passive and provocatively sexual roles artists have given women as sleepers. Only starlight enters, with the result that the colours are shadowy.



THE VISION (TETH) - THE CITY'S FALL

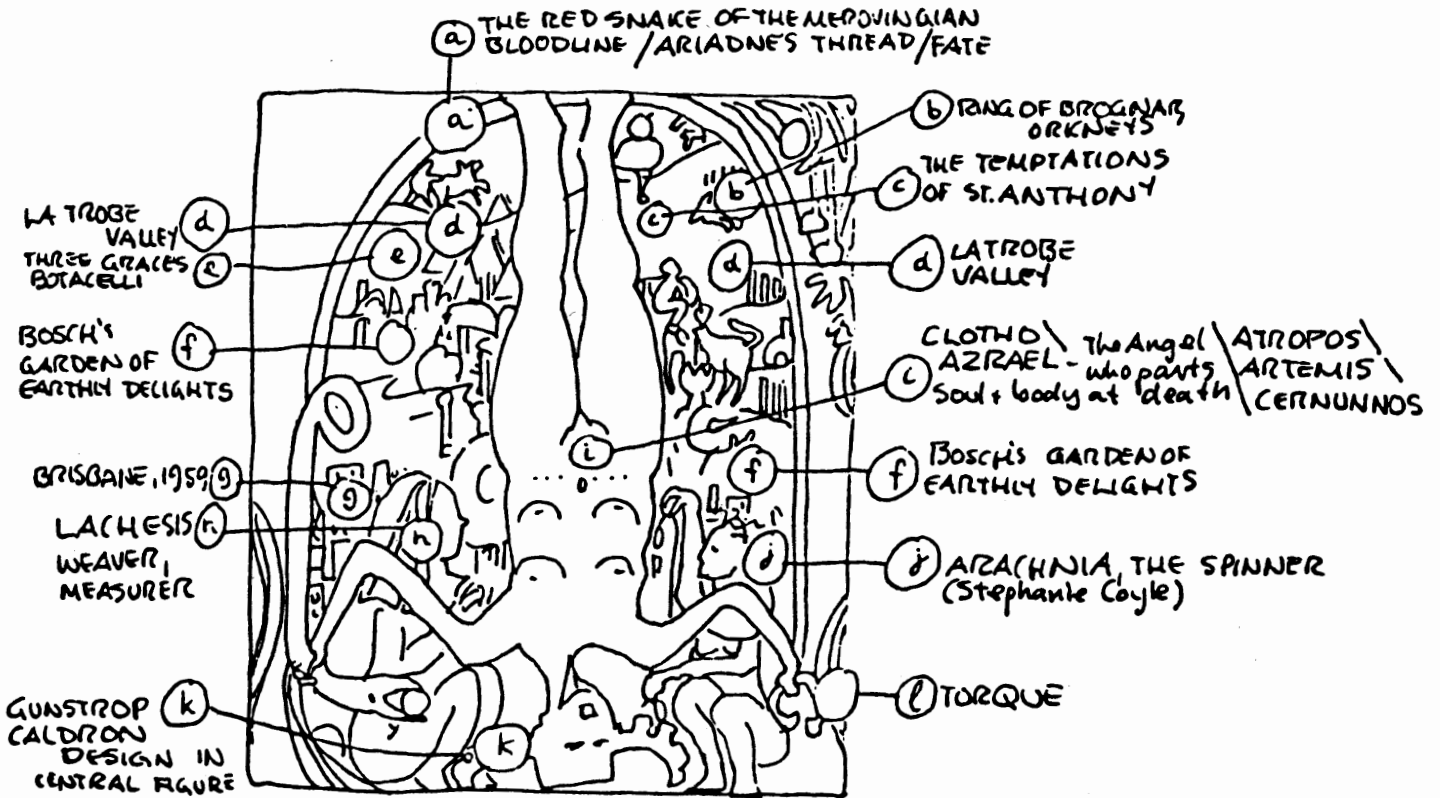
NO.9: Partly done in encaustic (wax). Lucifer reappears in the *Air* section. The vision represents a metaphorical fall: a city that was paradise becoming inferno. The four elements turn on their axis. This panel contains 9 spheres, one of which is the clockface (at 9). Its spinning motion is emphasised by the fact that it may be joined to Nos.8 and 10 either this way up, or inverted.



THE DREAM

(40DH) THE FATES

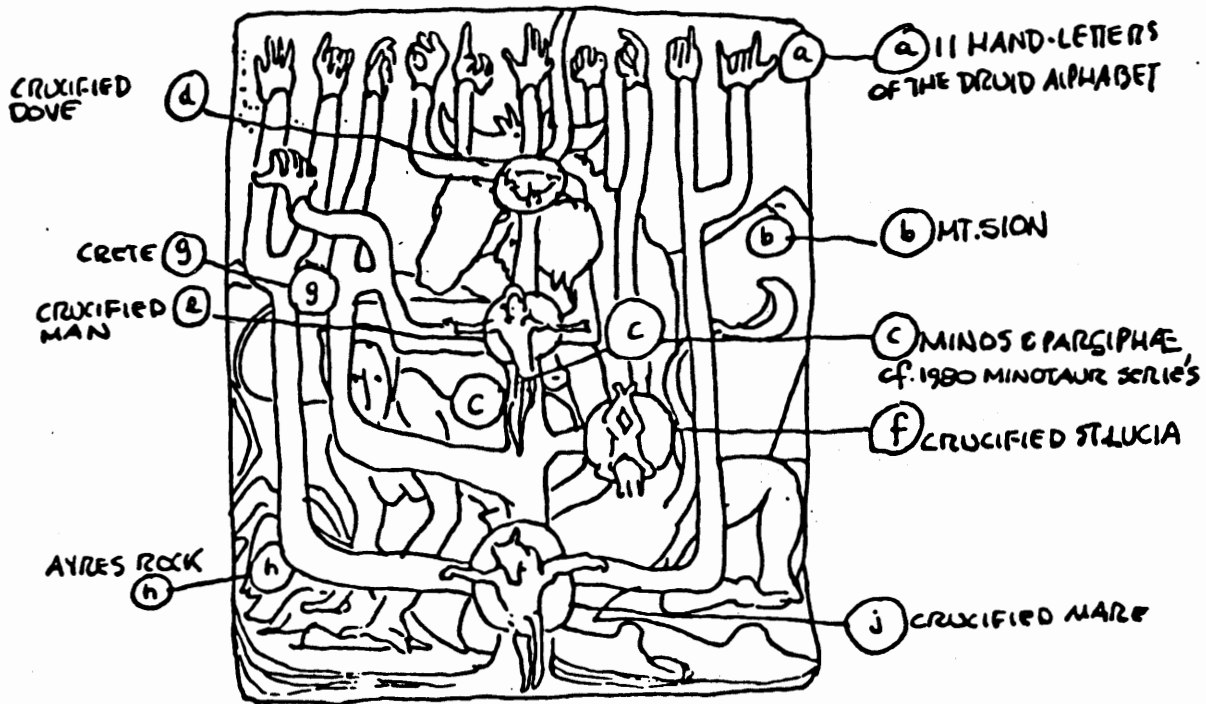
NO.10: Symbolic of the dream-state where the central Eve-like figure stands upright in an upside down world. The images of reality (Brisbane, Latrobe Valley, Orkney Islands) become mixed with the images of the fantastic, as in Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* and the *Temptations of St. Anthony in the Desert*, traditional examples of dream images, chimeras, and fantastic beasts.



THE LAW] (KAPH) THE ESPELIER

11.

NO.11: Symbolic crucifixions, representing the broken maze of the law. The laws of the old gods are symbolized by the golden thread of Ariadne, which led Theseus through the labyrinth, lair of the Minotaur. The Minotaur represents the heart of the maze where an initiate performs a religious ritual, resulting in the conferring of secret knowledge, in this case, the law.

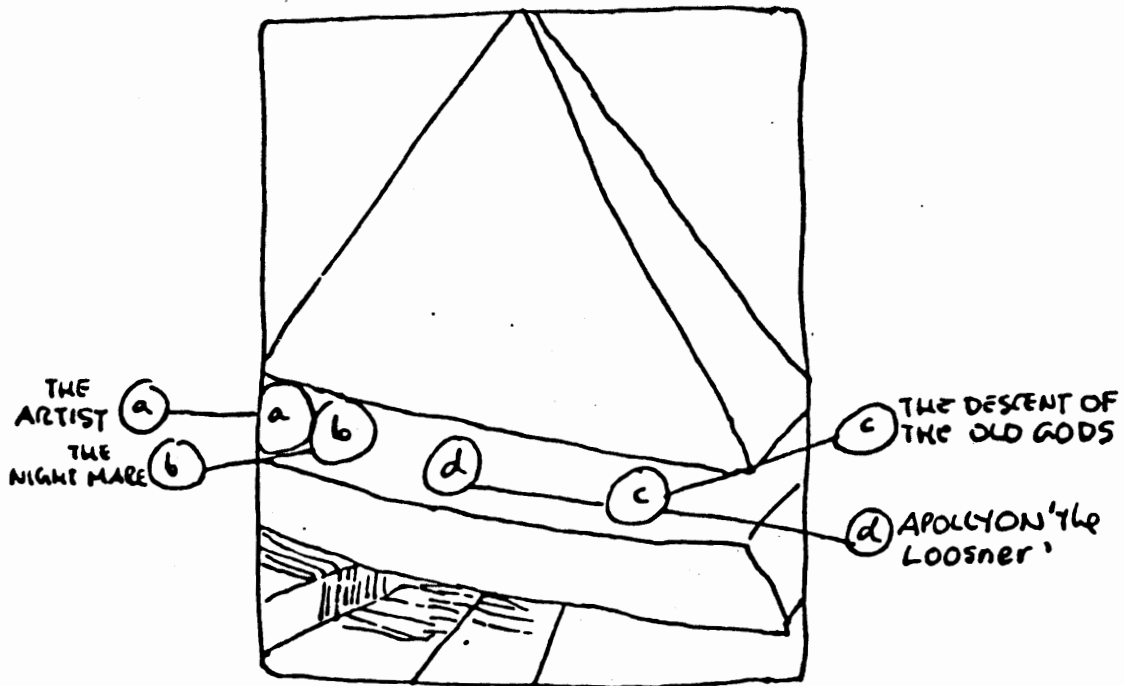


THE FALL

3 (LAMEDH) KINGSHIP

12.

NO.12: Based on a series of previous paintings investigating the theme of a split pyramid, either spilling out or trapping the old gods, this particular event takes place in the darkest hour before dawn, when the old gods (nightmares) are allowed their only dominion in the modern world. Being the simplest composition of all the *Fall* images, it heralds the last and most complicated 13th.



THE SHIP OF FOOLS

77 (MEM)

13.

NO.13: Here, in the light of the false dawn, the mind of the artist is subjected to a grey world of illusions. Alfred Jarry's journeys across land in a sieve (*The Adventures of Dr. Faustroll*) inspired the use of a sieve – here a colander – for what would otherwise have been Bosch's own boat. *The Composition* sources are two paintings by Bosch, his *Ship of Fools* and the *Haywain* (the source of the images of troubadours). The Artist appears for the last time before emerging renewed at No.1. In No.13 the Artist is exhausted, child-like, and reduced. The world of the new gods, the powers of the physical world, has begun to appear self sufficient and self propelling. The Artist is not on the boat, but once more at sea, contemplating illusions.

