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Title

"Archetypal Images as Inspiration in the Design of Functional Objects"

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## Introduction

The thinking and feeling processes in human being are based mainly in the use of images, images collected in the memory (conscious or unconscious?) since our early childhood. Each memory has an emotional or affective content linked to it. This collection of memories is able to interconnect either groups of people, sharing similar experiences and giving them the same value (community, race, tribe, etc.) or individuals, sharing feelings by way of similarity or complementarity as is in interpersonal relationships (friends, couples, siblings, etc.).

I begin my essay with this personal statement to expose an idea of what I think is based in common experience. My point of discussion is the use of archetypes in art as a way of representing images with a content common to most people. Archetypes fade away when they are unable to link people and do not represent an inner value anymore.

The selection and representation of this images give to the artist a level of awareness and understanding in the production of his art. My body of work based on archetypal images, tends to grasp personal and collective images giving them a personal expression.

The value that I find in the use of Archetypes is that the artist, responding to a concrete theoretic frame, becomes more aware and conscious of each step taken and is able to find connection with his audience. I will try not to become too involved in the complexity of the psychic process concerning the theory of archetypes developed by the analytical psychology of Jung or the archetypal psychology of Hillman . Nevertheless I will use these psychological theories to support my thesis: "Archetypal Images as Inspiration in the Design of Functional Objects".

The archetypal theory has been developed in Psychology mainly to explain the functioning of the human psyche as is in the work of C.G. Jung, Hillman, Karenji etc. This theory became popular because of C.G. Jung's theory of *Collective Unconscious*. The concept of archetype has not developed as a theoretical system emanating from the thought of one person, like Freud or Jung, instead Archetypal psychology represents the eclecticism and merge of cultures in the contemporary world, that brings an array of images and concepts based more in diversity and multiculturalism than in a unique perception.

My intention is to use archetypes more as an expression or aesthetic result rather than as a psychological mechanism. As an aesthetic expression we can find patterns that evolve and are in a constant change in the same degree as the social dynamism. These patterns are detectable analyzing the subject matter in the artistic representation and the reaction created in the spectator. Psychology tries to understand the mechanism used by the human psyche to produce or create these archetypes. I will try to keep my elaboration away from this field. The purpose of using Archetypal images in design, is to find a source of inspiration based in common patterns in society, to represent and understand the projection of our personal inner world in the collective.

## Archetypes: definition and historical background

Archetypes are the primal symbolic aspects of our own nature. We can best connect with their meaning through analogy with myths, fairy tales, drama, paintings or any other materials which universally evoke clusters of feelings, intuitions, thoughts or sensations. These images act as patterns able to link and unify people: races, cultures, beliefs, nationalities.

The term archetype is derived from the Greek "Archai" that means pattern, usually referred to an original manuscript from which later copies were made. The etymology of the word is instructive: "The first element 'arche' signifies beginning, origin, cause, primal source, principle, but it also signifies position of a leader, supreme rule and government. The second element 'type' means blow and what is produced by a blow, the imprint of a coin... form, image prototype, model order and norm...in the figurative modern sense 'pattern underlying form, primordial form ( the form, for example underlying a number of similar human, animal or vegetable specimen)." ( Jolande Jacobi, 1959)

These patterns or archetypes of concern are portrayed in the arts, religion, dreams and social customs. The metaphorical discourse of myth is the primary and irreducible language of the fundamental archetypal patterns of human existence.

Jung's first use of the term archetype came in 1919, he described archetypes as 'acting living dispositions, ideas in the platonic sense , that perform and continually influence our thoughts and feelings and actions'. For Plato, 'ideas' were mental forms which were superordinate to the objective world of phenomena. They were collective in the sense that they embody the general characteristics of groups of individuals rather than the specific peculiarities of one. For example a



particular dog has qualities in common with all dogs , which enable us to classify him as a dog, as well as peculiarities of his own.

Archetypes are common to all mankind , yet each person experiences them in his own particular way, and has the capacity to initiate , control and mediate the common behavioral characteristics and typical experiences of our kind, even though we are , for the most part unaware of them. As the basis of the usual phenomena of life, the archetypal theory says that archetypes are able to transcend culture, race and time, meaning that we can find the same patterns in different cultural frames.

In Jung's view , as opposed to Plato's, the mental events experienced by every individual are determined not merely by his personal history, with I agree, but by the collective history of the species as a whole (biologically encoded in the collective unconscious), reaching back into the primordial mists <sup>1</sup>of evolutionary time. Jung called this theory *collective unconscious*. Although provocative and useful, is not confirmed on the basis of reliable empirical proofs.

In extending the tradition of Jung(1875-1961) with the theory of *collective unconscious* and of Corbin (1903-1978) with the idea of *mundus archetypalis* and *mundus imaginalis*, we have to go back to their predecessors, "particularly the Neoplatonic tradition via Vico and the Renaissance via Ficino, through Proclus and Plotinus, to Plato and Heraclitus" <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>James Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology: A brief Account* (Dallas: Spring Publication, 1988), 54.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p.4

## Archetypal Images

The datum with which archetypal thought begins is the image, mythical figures that provide the poetic characteristics of human thought, feeling and action, "as well as the physiognomic intelligibility of the qualitative worlds of natural phenomena...that present faces that speak to the imagining soul rather than only conceal hidden laws and probabilities and manifest their objectification" <sup>3</sup>

Myths are themselves extended metaphors grounded in a fantasy that cannot be taken historically, physically or literally. Myths provide an exhaustive collection of culturally imaginative reflection.

An archetypal image is "universal" because its effects amplify and de-personalize, it resonates with collective importance. Each image should be regarded as an individualized and unique event.

The response to a universal archetypal image implies more than personal consequences, rising beyond its egocentric confines and "broadening the events from discrete atomic particulars to aesthetic signatures bearing information for soul" <sup>4</sup>

Archetypal images are the foundation of imagination and fantasy combining such images and interpretations toward the creation of an aesthetic, particular and individual representation with an universal content. They are the "means by which the world is imagined, and therefore they are the modes by which all knowledge, all experiences become possible" <sup>5</sup>

This happens because each psychic process is an image from memories of experiences or from intellectually collected information, giving shape to the

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*

consciousness of the human nature. These images operate as the original meaning of idea "not only 'that which' one sees but also that 'by means of which' one sees".

The demonstration of archetypal images is as much in the act of seeing as in the object seen, since the archetypal image appears in consciousness itself as the governing fantasy by means of which consciousness is possible to begin with. Any image can be archetypal and we can consider the word archetypal as a phenomenal experience that points to the value of the image, "it refers to a move one makes rather to a thing that is." The valuative function of the word "archetype" restores to images their primordial place as that which gives psychic values to the world. "Images termed archetypal is valued as universal, trans-historical, profound generative, highly intentional and necessary."<sup>6</sup>

"Since 'archetypal' connotes both intentional force (Jung's "instinct") and the mythical field of personification (Hillman's "Gods"), and archetypal image is animated like an animal and like a person whom one loves, fears, delights in, is inhibited by, etc. As intentional force and person, image presents a claim (moral, erotic, intellectual, aesthetic) and demands a response. It is an affecting presence offering an affective relationship. It seems to bear prior knowledge (coded information) and an instinctive direction for a destiny, as is prophetic prognostic."<sup>7</sup>

To enumerate or to create a structure of archetypes is a difficult task because they cannot and must not be whittled down to definitions. Their content goes far beyond what can be conceptualized or adequately expressed by words.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 14

Among certain people for certain periods of time a list of archetypes was, however, drawn up. It hung on the main figures observed in the skies or on other stable sets. It was used for ordering the world and the calendar, for organizing the State, for divination or psychological knowledge. Alphabets were originally lists of archetypes.

Our unconscious is a universal memory that contains the archetypes with variations of the original models. Some of the more important models that humans manifest are the hero, mother, trickster, wise old man and woman, God, giant, demon, birth, death rebirth and many natural objects such as trees, sun, moon, water, air, fire. "Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution, not in the form of images filled with content, but at first only as a forms without content, representing merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action" <sup>8</sup>

"The primordial image or archetype is a figure...be it a demon, a human being, or a process... that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely experienced". <sup>9</sup>

There are many ways that an original archetype can be represented. The mother archetype is associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness like mother, grandmother, mother of God, mother earth, church, nurse, university, music (like Ave Maria), Madonnas, fertile fields, landscapes, cornucopia, etc.

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<sup>8</sup>Richard Zakia, *Perception and imaging* (Newton:Focal Press,1994)

<sup>9</sup> R. Hull, *The portable Jung* (N.Y: Viking press, 1971), 72.

The hero archetype remains with us throughout our lifetime, taking different forms: parents, cartoon characters, movie idols, teachers, sportsman, politicians. Evolving or changing with age.

Mythology in general represents a great source of archetypes with specific character, as well as fairy tales and popular legends. Over the history we can find the same role of a character in different places and circumstances, acting according to a pattern or original model- Dionysius, Bacus, Clown, joker, comedian.

## Archetypal Theory in Art

Analytical psychology sees the individual and his work not only as molded by his milieu and his childhood but also as part of a collective psyche situation, being a point of great importance in the social development of arts.

It also states that there are factors of the collective conscious and unconscious that are suprapersonal agencies that influence the life of every individual, and particularly of the creative individual, the artist. I tend to support that more than "suprapersonal agencies" or unknown forces, the social cultural factor provides strong influence in the determination of the personal character.

Several authors such as critics, philosophers and social thinkers disagree with this theory. One of whom is E.H. Gombrich who said that he "never found it easy with Jung's psychology with his mixture of mystical and scientific pretensions."<sup>10</sup>

The term *Zeitgeist*, used by the analytical psychology, is the sum of all the psychic, spiritual, and social impressions that stamp an individual as belonging to classical antiquity, the Christian Middle Ages, or the Modern Age, and distinguish him from the men of all other ages. The cultural canon of highest values determining the culture of the particular age in which the creative individual lives is partly conscious and thus belongs to the collective consciousness of the time. It expresses itself in the religious, ethical, artistic, scientific and social beliefs that are valid for that age. According to Jung, these values are always based on unconscious premises, mostly of an archetypal nature, which are alive and operative in the unconscious of his contemporaries. Personally I tend to rely more on the direct

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<sup>10</sup> E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order* (London: Phaidon Press, 1994), 246.

influence of the environment and the historical facts as an objective influence that molds the human spirit creating a new world of subjective interpretation.

Convictions and actions like religion , knowledge , or of the collective *Weltanschauung* (a philosophical view of the world as a whole) are self-evident for the person who has these convictions and performs the actions. That is to say, they are based on unconscious assumptions that determine his behavior, although the person is ignorant of their existence.

In every culture the symbolical values have a predominant role, and these sometimes cannot be made wholly accessible to consciousness or rational thought: religious beliefs, superstition, nationalism etc. In every culture and every age we can find that its cultural canon is determined by unconscious images, symbols and archetypes. It is not relevant whether they express themselves as gods, ideals and principles , demoniac powers or the certainty of faith and superstitious belief.

The contents of the symbolical values lacking and opposed by the collective consciousness, are necessary for its compensation and are alive in the collective unconscious of the group. "The dialectical law of Heraclitus, the law of enantiodromia , according to which any given position is always superseded by its negation, is grounded on the psychological fact that the one-sidedness of a conscious attitude which has been secured chiefly by repressing or suppressing all contents opposed to it leads to a piling up of such material in the unconscious. Since these contents are lacking to consciousness, its one-sidedness necessarily results in failure to adapt and other functional disturbances. In this sense the repressed and suppressed contents of the unconscious are not merely things that from the conscious standpoint are forbidden and tabooed, they are also

compensatory with respect to the wholeness and completeness of the personality and culture." <sup>11</sup>

The creative individual (artist), should represent not only the highly transpersonal values of his culture (becoming the honored spokesman of his age), but also the compensatory values and contents of which it is unconscious. Being in opposition with the cultural canon of his time by representing the values that are compensatory, he naturally becomes an outsider.

We can see in the relation of artists and the cultural canon that besides the individual differences, a change in the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times, the consensus of thought, feelings and ideas prevailing at a given period) manifests itself mainly in the changing content of art. We can contrast the sacral content of medieval art and the worldly tone of the art of the last hundred and fifty years when landscape, individuals, and objects came to the fore.

A change in the *zeitgeist* can also be expressed in a change in the conception of the form, though the content remains the same, as in the representation of religious subjects during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

A detailed analysis will show that a new principle of form is in reality an expression of a new content. This new content may be developed under the influence of the former cultural canon, but gradually breaks it down by force of the new formal principle becoming tangible and conscious as a new content.

At the beginning of the Renaissance this new experience of reality transformed the old religious content, because the artistic creation became gradually more separated from the sacral content and, a new reality raised under the sym

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<sup>11</sup> Erich Neumann, *The Archetypal World of Henry Moore* (N.Y: Pantheon Books, 1959), 4.



bol of earthly reality "the individual uniqueness not only of things and landscape but of the national differences now becoming visible and of personality itself. Now for the first time there was a true Flemish and Italian Art, a true French and German art, and only now does the portrait appear as something personal and unique, which is not- as in the Middle Ages-stamped only by a collective human situation, e.g., original sin, or by a collective attitude e.g., prayer." <sup>12</sup>

The main feature when we talk about archetypes in artistic representation is that content and form belong together. e.g., In Gothic art the monumental height in the churches represented a heaven-aspiring quality determined by the archetype of the dominion of God (heaven) over humans.

Archetypes are polyvalent and ambivalent. Polyvalent because these primordial images can express themselves and be looked in several different ways, possessing a great diversity of aspects. We can notice this polyvalent aspect in the variety of form in which the image of God is depicted. Ambivalent because each archetype has two faces, good and bad, depending of the attitude of the observer's conscious mind. These two confronted aspects (God or devil), should be viewed in their cultural environment -*Zeitgeist*- and in the attitude of the creative people toward it.

The permanence of archetypes through history depends more on the content than on the form because the archetype's external shape can change along the time but the relation of content and form always is manifested, otherwise it would not be possible to understand or make an interpretation of the archetype.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.,. p. 6

We can see this correlation content-form in the art of primitives, children and developed artists, the form depicted correspond to a content, to different form a different content.

The transition from Modern Art to Post-Modern art can clarify and explain the point that I try to bring in my thesis: using archetypes to create a substantial (meaning beyond the form) and rooted art (emanated from personal circumstances), away from just the formal abstraction.

With the development of technology and industrialization, Modern Art appeared creating a rupture between form-content. Modern aesthetics is characterized by the attempt to define the nature of aesthetic experience in itself. For example The Bauhaus school, with its International style, tried to stay away from the form following a content, keeping form following function, which was highly influenced by the technological development.

Some modern representations such as abstract art, kinetic art, cubism, viewed that art inevitably evolved towards purely formal abstraction looking more for a formalist aesthetic response rather than merging form and content. They emphasize originality and authorship. The development of new styles in the twentieth century as in Post-modernism has shown that artistic representation seeks "spiritual" expression looking to tie content and form, intellect and emotion.

Where modernism stressed the unity and autonomy of the work of art, with both radical and conservative consequences, postmodernism stresses the hybridity of the work of art and its complex relatedness to its context. In Postmodern art, distinctions between art and life are rejected, returning art to life. Reality and its representation overlap and are not clearly defined. They are rather, representations that are experienced as real. In Postmodern ideas "Artistic originality and autonomy are considered irrelevant since images and symbols lose

their fixed meaning when put in different contexts and are appropriated and recycled irrespective of subject matter and traditional stylistic conventions. Instead, issues of identity, marginalized by modernism, are paramount, as in art that incorporate feminist, racial, gender, sexual and environmental concerns." <sup>13</sup>

In the relation of form and content our experience stamps an artistic impression , creating moods and associations.

In pursuing the archetypal element in art one artist will circle round the same center in his work, as in Henry Moore's work, remaining uniform in the subject matter, even with possible variations of expression e.g. a landscape painter or a Madonna painter. Another type of artist as Picasso will orient his development with new contents and new forms of expression.

The incongruity between form and content becomes an essential part for any profound approach to art, since the intensity with which the artist is gripped must also express itself in the intensity and quality of the forms he creates.

An artist not gripped by an archetype should not be able to get a profound result even using the same subject matter of other artists with successful results. The quality of the artist and the depth to which he is gripped has nothing to do with the content of his picture.

Erich Neumann in his book *The Archetypal World of Henry Moore* said: "Although the adequacy of form to content is a problem that can be successfully solved regardless of technical perfection as is proved by the drawings of children and Van Gogh- in the highest form of art, profundity of vision and absolute control of technique go hand in hand. But the adequacy of form to content does not

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<sup>13</sup> Herbert Read, *Art and Artists* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 289.

depend on the conscious discernment and comprehension of the artist , who need not "know" anything about the content to which his work is dedicated. The realization of the archetype that has such a transformative effect on his personality, for good or for ill, is not bound up with any recognition of its content".

I agree with this statement but I think that the artist can achieve more successful work if he becomes aware of the influence of archetypes in the representation. The purpose of this thesis is precisely to unveil and find better sources of inspiration, generating thus an "enlightening" process to consciously produce art with a profound content able to transform the ordinary world with feeling, imagination and sensations that push to an understanding of life.

Archetype is not just a concept; it is an active content that permeates our acting out in life. It transforms, interprets and gives shape to those things that our reason fails to grasp because of intellectual shortcomings, fear, or just ambiguity in opinion.

There is nothing to prove or believe in archetypal images, they just are in the appropriate dimension of each individual. This field , as I understand, comes to fail when they are intended to enclose an explanation, intending to serve a definite purpose like psychotherapy, historical research, origin and destiny...Opinions are diverse, but nobody can deny the power that an image has over individuals, and the response that archetypes are able to generate.

There is not right or wrong. There is just a presence of images acting as in dreams. Sometimes we are unable to recall exactly what happened in the dream but we are able to understand and carry on an after-sensation.

This is a broad field, with a great number of paths to follow, that can go from the shallowness of thought to the deepness of feelings ( or the contrary?).

I intended just to open a way to understand and acquire artistic elements. Sometimes are concise in presence but thin in arguments. An understanding of the mechanism of archetypes can lead to a "genuine" way of representation.

In the same amount the exposure to life experiences and intellectual knowledge is going to be proportional with the amount of images collected. In other words, more experiences more images. All these images can create new archetypal connections that will lead to a better understanding of ourselves and of the world.

## Tarot Cards as Archetypal Structure.

As a said before, archetypal images can be found in myths, fairy tales, stories, legends etc. The specific form Archetypal images take may vary from culture to culture and from person to person, nevertheless their essential character is universal. The difficulty is to create and organize a structure able to include a good array of well defined Archetypes, without jumping randomly in several cultural traditions.

In my research I found that "The Tarot Deck" has an excellent structure of twenty two well defined Archetypal images. I selected this source as a starting point in the production of artistic work which on my consideration offers a good theoretical basis for a creative process. There is plenty of information about Tarot, mainly as a instrument of fortune telling. Although I am not a believer (neither a disbeliever) of the Tarot as an oracle, I used their features (Arcana Mayor) as a design parameter.

The Tarot Card is at least six centuries old and its origin is unknown. It is the original predecessor of the modern playing cards and it has evolved in different ways but even in this mutation the original deck is still in use in Central Europe for gaming and fortune telling.

All sorts of theories and legends have gathered around the cards, because of their puzzling but enticing symbolism and the uncertainty of their origin. It has been said that they came from China or India or Persia, that they possibly were brought to the West by the gypsies, or by returning Crusaders, or by the Arab invaders of Sicily or Spain, or alternatively that they had nothing to do with the East at all and were invented in Europe.

It has been claimed that the Tarot preserves the wisdom of ancient Egypt, the mystery religion of Mithras, pagan Celtic traditions, the beliefs of medieval

heretics, or the teachings of a committee of learned Cabalistic who supposedly designed the pack in Morocco in the year 1200.

The imagery of the Tarot has also been traced to Jung's collective unconscious theory, or to the symbolism of Dante's Divine Comedy.

The importance of Tarot for my thesis is that the cards represent symbolically those instinctual forces that operate in the depth of human spirit, and goes beyond the historical background.

There are twenty two Tarot cards, called "trumps", or "Major Arcana". This is the most common order with a brief description of some of them:

0 The Fool, 1 The Magician, 2 The High Priestess, 3 The Empress, 4 The Emperor, 5 The Pope, 6 The lover, 7 The Chariot, 8 Justice, 9 The Hermit, 10 The Wheel of Fortune, 11 Force, 12 The Hanged Man, 13 Death, 14 Temperance, 15 The Devil, 16 The Tower of Destruction, 17 The Star, 18 The Moon, 19 The sun, 20 Judgement , 21 The World.

0 The Fool: On the spiritual level means the eternal, all-encompassing void, equanimity , dissipation of delusion, detachment, love without judging, intuition instead of knowledge, responsibility without the power, trust.

On the tangible level means receptivity, giving up resistance and ego-centered willfulness, serenity, cheerfulness, silencing unrest, innocence.

1 The **Magician- The Juggler**: On the spiritual level may be interpreted as wholeness of personality, as disciplined search for knowledge, as the capacity and power to deal with events, to use and change the world. He signifies thought that

becomes action, choice of appropriate means, dedication, active will, sacrifice, magic, ritual. On the tangible level indicates reflection before starting a project, initiative, calculated risk taking, to enter into the details of a problem, the facility to put things together, fantasy...

II The Female Pope-The High Priestess: Represents intuition, inspiration, the unity of power, retrograde motion, divine wisdom, strength, faith, inductive thinking, religious and philosophic knowledge, new understanding, reserve, perseverance, patience, compassion, fame, tenacity, memory, mediation. The joy and tragedy of each creative birth, victory over fate.

III The empress: On the spiritual level represents love, fertility, creative imagination, the influence of form on ideas, the bridge between power and knowledge, and the realm of wishes formed and unformed.

On the tangible level denotes the love of the concrete, openness, culture, knowledge through study, perseverance, the readiness to exertion. She represents observations, precision, circumspection, softness, kindness, richness, appropriate use of materials, practical possibilities, fertility, the joy and tragedy of giving birth.

IV the emperor: On the spiritual level represents the objective world, law, providence, expansiveness, clemency, goodness, willingness to serve, good memory, the world of ideas, stabilizing force, rigidity, the masculine strength of the woman.

On the tangible level denotes authority, energy, power, right, perseverance, rigor, firmness, consequence, precision, pertinent work, peace, union, harmony of feelings, pity...



V The High Priest-Pope: On the spiritual level represents striving for redemption, sublimation, understanding faith, *credo ut inteelligam* ( *to believe is to understand*). It shows inner certainty, oral transmission, religious and philosophical wisdom. It depicts the material structure of rituals, conservation, strengthening, constraint.

On the tangible level, this card indicates religious instruction and appropriate practical advice, heartfelt piety, meditation, prayer, veneration, respect for decorum and the accepted forms.

IX The Hermit: On the spiritual level represent immanent justice, the germ that contains the intimation of future development, meditation in stillness and solitude, the wise old man, the searcher, the introverted, distant of everyday occurrences.

On the tangible level denotes self-reflection, self-confidence, self-discipline, courage, solitude, meditation, silence discovery of a secret, tradition, purity, renunciation...

X The Wheel of Fortune: On the spiritual level represents the eternal return, impartiality, victory over the ups and downs of existence through serenity, awareness of fullness and emptiness, fate, good and bad luck, It recalls the decisive instant.

On the tangible level denotes prudence, necessity, determination, will power, courage, openness toward new approaches, going with changing times. It indicates that the fleeting quality of life can be mastered through equanimity, research taking time into account...

This brief description of some cards shows the potential of these images as a source of inspiration for the artistic representation. They are hook to catch the imagination.

It is not an easy task to give shape to these concepts, sometimes abstract others concrete, but I believe that this metaphorical images are capable of offering an stimulus to create a reaction able to open new doors to the imagination and to bring fresh and clear ideas for the artistic proposal.

The use of these images could be seen either as a direct inspiration, that means to represent the image literally in form and content or just suggested. The concept or symbolic meaning brings shape without compromise with the image (Tarot card). Sometimes the viewer could have any conceptual bias but is able to identify and discover a content that is present and that goes beyond of the formal representation.

I am using Tarot card as an structure able to enclose and organize the broad scope that Archetypes have manifested through history . Also the universal metaphorical value in Tarot is very easy to identify by any person even without knowing the Tarot.

The intention in the archetypal representation is to create stages of comprehension or involvement with the artistic work, that are capable of bringing awareness to the viewer of an inner and personal reality as well as merely show a formal aesthetic proposal.

The final expression is just a personal interpretation not intended to find an universal meaning but to find the reflection of the universe in my person: intellectual, affective and spiritual, giving them a perceptive form.

I found that my pieces could be approached in three stages of perception:

The first stage of the approach is basically the appreciation or interaction with the form as an object, considering the aesthetic qualities of it, such as color, texture, shape, balance, symmetry etc. It is a reality, able to be measured or described. It is the approach to the flesh of the work that can be seen in the same way by anyone.

The second stage is when the viewer becomes aware of the conceptual content of the piece. The symbolic meaning, the ideas or intentions that gave the energy to create the piece, this is an intellectual approach that mixes conceptual support with the embodiment of the piece.

The last stage is when the viewer experiences the reaction between form and content and is capable of having a feeling.

These stages should not necessarily happen in sequence; the reaction or experience is multi-directional and depends on the identification-connection of the archetype interpreted by the artist (me) and the viewer.

The work should be open to generate intermingle feelings, reacting with different intensity in each person, all depend in how alive an archetype is at certain moment; that is the nature of archetypes.

## My Work:

I selected three Archetypes, (The Fool, The Wheel of Fortune and The Hermit), that have a lot of meaning to me because I think that there is a connection between them and they represent what I understand and pursue in life.

At the beginning of my thesis, I found myself with the opportunity of making anything, It sounds as the perfect situation (freedom) but in reality is a very difficult one. That is the nature of a thesis work.

This freedom could be very hard to grasp and control, because I did not have idea where to start. To much freedom can paralyze and the time was running.... The best thing that I found was to create parameters to restrain that liberty to be able to take decisions. The parameters were oriented to concrete concepts and goals. The first step was to chose the Archetypes, just considering the attraction that they had over me, and not looking their formal potential. I wanted to make three different pieces in function: a cabinet, a table and a lamp. I also wanted that the function were linked to the Archetype's meaning, the function supports the meaning. And I also wanted to prove my woodworking capabilities and skills, that meant to involve different challenging techniques that could enhance my design.

Having all this came the toughest part: the form. In my design process I am not the type of person that make several different sketches looking for solutions and picking one or mixing them, my style goes to frame myself in one design and work on that idea until I feel is complete. This is not the best way to design but it works for me. I put the design project in my mind thinking on it all the time, discarding what I do not want. Usually something clear comes to my mind, an idea that I "believe" can work. To reach this point I need to have a very clear sense

of what I want (parameters), otherwise ideas come and go without catching my emotion. I feel that I have to fall in love with the idea and believe on it without any doubt. That gives me the energy necessary to work and to see the piece completed.

I think the time frame was short, 7 months, to completed several pieces. I just did two pieces, but at the end I was satisfied with the result.

## The Fool

I made this liquor or entertainment cabinet based in the archetype of the *puer aeternus*, as Jung called it, the jester or the wanderer. I took the name from the Tarot card "The Fool".

Traditionally the fool was a very important character in the courts, who served the king as an entertainer and spy. He knew everything about the intimacies of the court. His costume tried to mimic the king's garment: The crown, the colors, the bauble.

I wanted to represent the integration of people's duality between the outside world (what we show) and the inside world (what we hide) . The union of many kinds of opposites is represented in the fool's motley. In the apparent chaos a pattern is discernible. The fool presents himself as one bridge between the chaotic world of the unconscious and the ordered world of consciousness. This integration brings us to a point of self acceptance and recovers the sense of life. We do not walk in a straight path, although it is in our intellectual understanding that we must achieve the necessity of a fixed goal. The value of blending ourselves in the society makes us forget the openness and the constant change in our lives. We try very hard to accommodate and understand our surroundings relative to our criteria of rejection or acceptance. The fool resolves this duality in conflict,

accepting the opposites as elements that belong to a dynamic totality in constant change without fixed concept or judgmental view.

The fool lives the present moment as the only time to be experienced, in total awareness and fully integrated with his actions. Sometimes we live engaged in memories or expecting the future.

No goal to achieve, everything is a goal, everything is achieved. There is nothing to care about because he has everything at any moment, he cannot lose anything. He is not predictable because he acts according to the moment, not according to his self. He forgets himself in order to know himself and become one with the universe. With his crown he mimics the foolishness of the king, to dare the king's power. As a child his acts flow naturally without the strain of the mind.

When we drink liquor or engage in a game we become loose, our true nature starts to appear, showing regret, joy, competence, laughter, fright, we can become one with our peers, without them there is not a game, there is not a party to enjoy. We as the jester can encompass all possibilities.

The carving in the exterior represents our life path that is not straight, is full of sudden changes and decisions. although it keeps the main direction, that line connects the wisdom of the future with the innocence of the childhood; it represents time. It changes according with the dance of fate. The geometric cabinet shape represents the stiffness of the fixed goal or the fixed exterior that we sometimes show to people, to give them the tools to understand ourselves. The lines in the exterior veneer represent the sequential and cyclical nature of life.

At one end of the path (atop), is the crown, telling us that we have not achieved anything, It is ourselves crowned by nature. The cabinet sits over an inverted crown, at the other end of the path, the rough texture represents our

grounded nature that walks over the floor with humble pants, represented in textured copper.

Inside playful color reminds our playful nature, that could become transparent as the shelves that support the liquor or games, nothing locked, nothing hidden, offering the content as offering trays.

The versatile capacity in the fool still lives in the Joker of the modern card deck.

From the book "Jung and Tarot: an Archetypal Journey" by Sallie Nichols: "There are many less dramatic possibilities for admitting the Fool into our lives. One of these is to admit freely to our own foolishness. Whenever we are able to do this in a conflict or situation, the results are disarming. Meeting with no resistance, antagonism falls on its face, and one's adversary is left making a fist in thin air. More significant, the energy we ourselves formerly spent defending our own stupidity is now freed for more creative use. Whenever one protagonist can open his heart to admit the fool, it usually happens that hostility is dissipated in laughter, and all parties to the conflict end up shaking their heads with Puck (King Oberon's Jester) over the foolishness of mortal man. All in all, the fool is a good character to consult whenever we find that our best-laid plans have gone askew, leaving us hopelessly adrift. At these times, if we listen we can hear him say with a shrug, " He who has no fixed goal can never lose his way".

## The Wheel of Fortune

This piece is based in the Tarot card number 10 "The wheel of fortune". This Archetype depicts an energy system whose essence is motion. Life presents itself as a process or system in constant transformation equally involving integration and disintegration, generation and degeneration.

The concept of "up" and "down", metaphorically as wellness and badness, is presented as a continuum rotation blended to create the action of life that does not exist per se. Everything is becoming and dying, not sequentially in time but all at once, showing the simultaneity of all opposites. It shows the world as a system endlessly beginning and endlessly ending.

The wheel movement is not seen as a repetitive sterile gesture starting at day and ending at night but as a continuous process whose revolution reaches infinity.

There are many pairs of opposites which a wheel dramatizes. For example: motion and stability, transience and transcendence, the temporal and the eternal. If we watch a wheel turning, we see how these opposites function together, how the wide motion of its outer rim, which is its *raison d'être*, would be impossible were it not for the stability of its fixed center.

In this piece I tried to represent the balance or the equality in the interrelationship of the phenomena. This is represented in the tangential relationship between the rim and the top and base; they seem to be in equilibrium, a positive form over a negative space. This balance whose main feature is the emptiness of the rim is achieved when opposite forces -good and evil- become one.



Inside these balanced forms is a stem with a gold sun and a silver moon, that rotates trying to separate them in half showing the dual (opposites) and temporal (sequential) character of human life.

We travel in life from fortune to misfortune and viceversa, from birth to death, from one stage to another. Nothing is entirely good or bad.

The big ring was inspired by a Zen image called "enso" that tries to represent the wholeness of the universe, its empty character and the unification of opposites, the end of the line touches its beginning forming a circle.

I merge this Zen image with the medieval image of the wheel of fortune, to recreate my understanding of the concept of balance, time and duality.

### The Hermit:

This design (in project) represents the tarot card number IX, and its simplicity in form shows the image of a hermit walking with a lamp in his hand. The hermit is a man of few words living in the silence of solitude. He brings us no sermons, he offers us himself. " He is the archetype of the spirit...the pre-existent meaning hidden in the chaos of life"<sup>14</sup>.

"This old man appears to be very human, walking common ground and carrying only his own small lamp to light his path".<sup>15</sup>

The spot character of the light represents the value of the present moment without considering future places or events and detached from the past whose experiences have been assimilated. It only matters to see where he is going to

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<sup>14</sup>C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, C.W. vol. 9, part 1

<sup>15</sup> Sallie Nichols, *Jung and Tarot An Archetypal Journey*, chapter 12.

stand, the immediate present. "His lamp seems an apt symbol for the individual insight of the mystic"<sup>16</sup>.

I pictured this piece as a setting of two pieces: a small bench and a lamp. The bench is linked with eastern meditation tradition, it is not a comfortable sit but a place to be seated properly with the back straight and the legs underneath the bench. The position imposes a meditative attitude as in the Zen tradition.

The dimmed lamp's light has a spot character, right in front the bench. These pieces will be made in wood with a rough finishing, showing the natural and humble character of the hermit. The bent post that holds the lamp can pivot in the same point using ball and socket connection.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.,p.166

## Conclusion

The Archetype theory represents the essential symbolic concepts in humans and It was not an easy task to give shape to abstract feelings and to intellectual concepts.

At the beginning it was quite difficult to grasp the concepts and to understand what I wanted to achieve. I had a feeling or intuition, and it was to recreate or represent in functional objects the psychological content of images found in human iconography.

I started my thesis researching about archetypes and the several approaches to this theory. This conceptual support was very helpful at the moment of designing the pieces because the process of giving form became more clear and consistent with the purpose of the statement.

I feel a big satisfaction with the outcome of my body of work supporting my thesis statement. I could say that the approach was quite successful, having the theoretical information beforehand and making the pieces after according to a well defined concept.

My only regret could be the number of pieces that I was able to make in the time available. I wished to present more pieces to explain better or express my understanding about the potential of archetypes in my artistic representation. That was not possible because the two pieces that I made demanded a lot of time in the execution. I do not regret that, because I wanted to be involved with technical complexity, putting that forward as a part of the pieces. After making such complex pieces I realized that complexity will not be an important issue for me in the future, and I am going to feel comfortable making smaller pieces where the concept can be represented in a strong manner independently of the amount of labor. I think this way can be more satisfactory because the time frame is smaller

and it is possible to keep a higher level of energy in the production process. With big and complicated pieces I demonstrated my capability as a woodworker and at this point of my career I feel that I needed that self assurance of my skills as a craftsman, placing them together with the concepts.

At this point after this experience, I think that it is very important to have a clear concept as a starting point in the artistic work. Sometimes the artistic representation tends to follow intuition and the expression of the spontaneous gesture ,but going beyond this position, I think that there is a clear goal to achieve but sometimes the capacity to translate the artistic proposal in a definite theoretical support does not exist

In my research there was a risk of getting entangled in appealing to psychological theories such as is Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious. For me it was more important to grasp the subject through the values of the symbolic iconography of the archetypes -Tarot cards-.

The artistic experience for me should be lived with an intensity that goes beyond the mere aesthetic or formal approach. There is a big discourse hidden or obvious that in some cases the viewer has to decipher or read. This meaning brings feelings that are productive of memories -past-, wishes of new situations future- or a mirror image -present-.

My goal in life is to integrate emotions, thoughts and spirit in my actions, working consistently as a unified system that is able to define myself and to help me understand the world around me. I feel that in my work I was a little bit closer to achieving that or at least I found a hint of where to go.

A thesis work in a college environment has the advantage of finding the

classmates. This was an excellent advantage for me because of the feedback on the process. There were no big surprises, because each step taken was confronted and revised in order to be consistent.

This interaction can help a lot to achieve the goal in one way, but in other ways I can feel that it could pose the risk of bringing a heavy influence restricting the personal growing process. It demands maturity to keep a balance between the personal opinion, without being obstinate, and the opinions and critics of professors and peers.

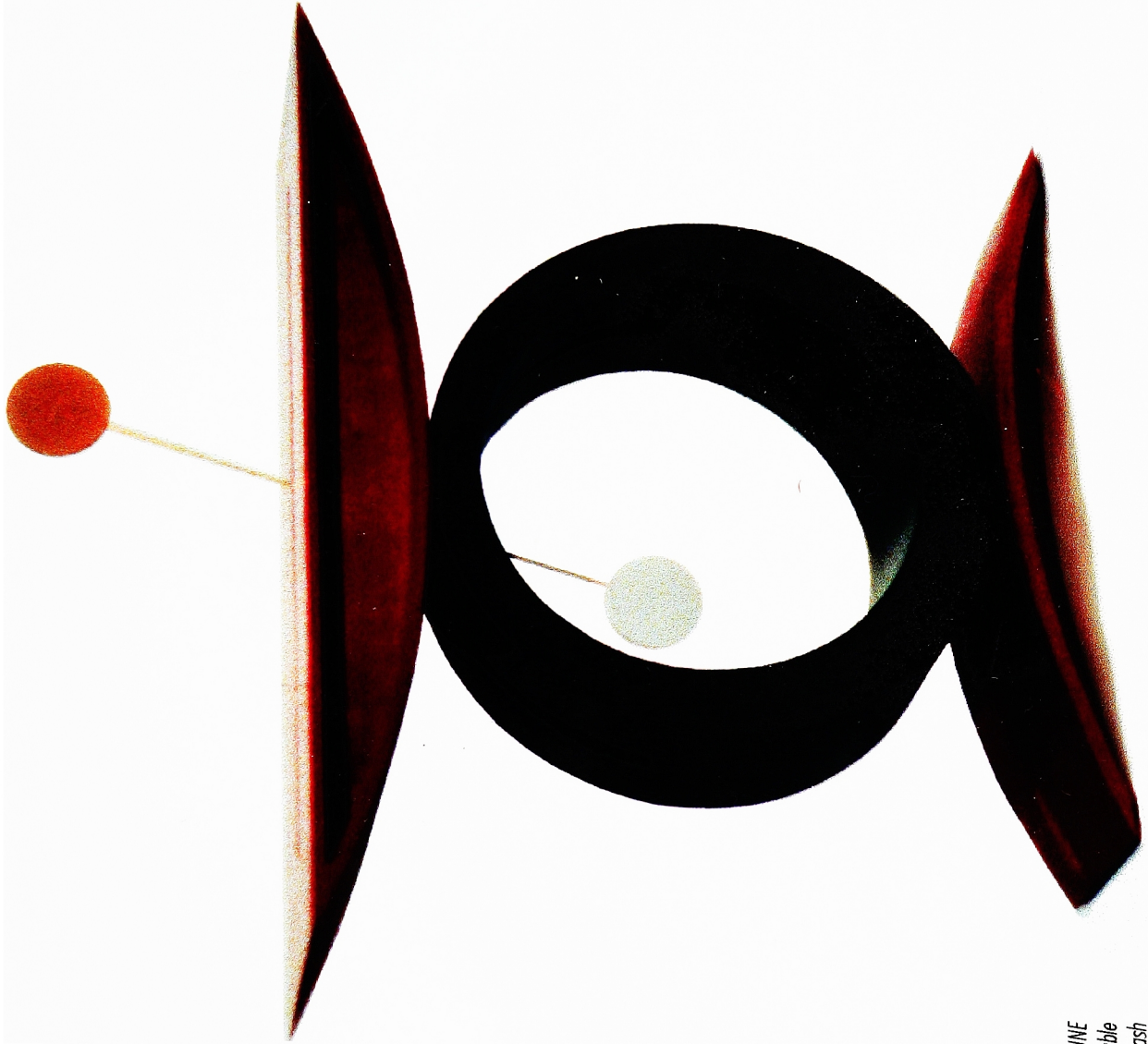
This second part is the harder to overcome after college; how to create or to continue a vocabulary without the feedback of such people, how to be alone. I think it takes a lot of energy to overcome the inertia, to use our own words to create a discourse. This is the future challenge, this is the advantage of having had the opportunity to be involved in an educational program as is in RIT.

I intend to keep the momentum achieved along this path, which is difficult and almost impossible to keep. The fact of knowing this difficulty, makes it as a starting point to concentrate energy in order to pursue and continue the creative personal process. We as artists should be aware and respectful of the capacity of the "real" world to erase the individual expression and to distort our personal discourse. At this point I am facing the necessity to make a living with my career and I feel that it is very important to ponder the offers or the way to go in order to be loyal and consistent with my personal aims and wishes

I discover in my travel through RIT the value of "intensity" in the creation. It means intensity in concept and meaning, intensity in execution and creation and intensity to continue this path, this is the harder part...

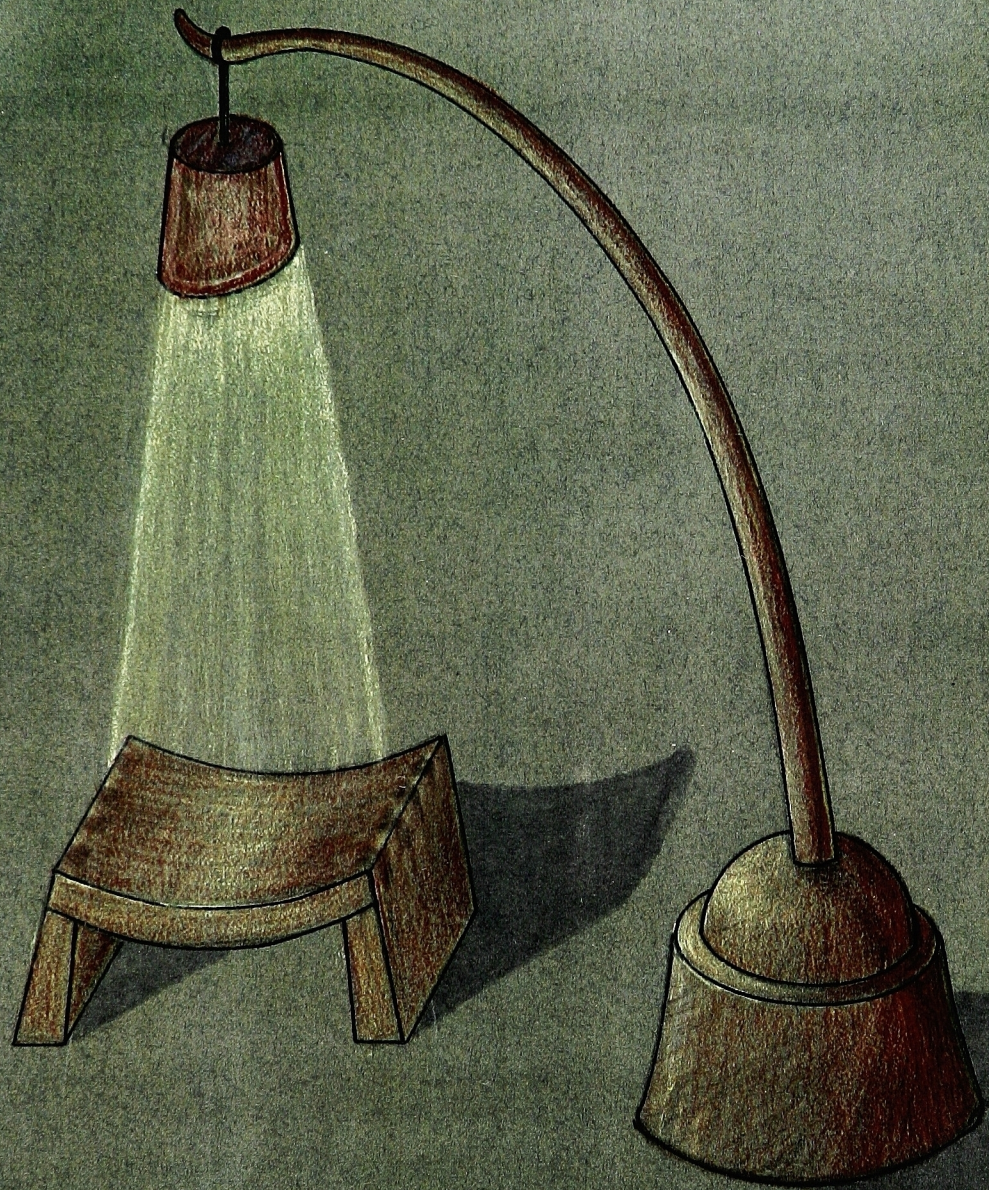


*THE FOOL*  
*Liquor Cabinet*  
*Afromosia, Citrus, Pearwood veneer*  
*Cooper and glass*



THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE  
Clock table  
Mahogany, silver gilded ash





Luis  
Molina 98



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