



In *Unity in Diversity* Hood incorporates a range of pictorial devices. The dark background looks like a theatrical curtain. It sets the stage for a new type of drama that hints at a possible narrative but is ultimately enigmatic. The collage joins two moonscapes, a photograph of a freeway at night with reflected lights, two details of Hood's stained canvases, tissue paper, an image of an Egyptian princess, the Holy Child, and a Rising Christ standing in the middle of the planet Jupiter, which has been split in two. Although there are Christian references in this collage, the work also includes an Egyptian work of art and the contemporary images cited above, thus incorporating references both to art and astronomy and to ancient beliefs and modern scientific convictions.

Some of this work's magic consists of the pieces of a colored and stained canvas that Hood has cut up in such a way as to make it an object on the stage and not the entire production. In this manner Hood pries painting away from its traditional function of transcendent bearer of metaphoric meaning and transforms it into an abstract object that signifies the possibility of meaning. Each element in this collage presents a different type of space: the curtain represents theatrical space, the canvas the nonillusionistic space of modernist art, the sculpted figures fictive space, the moon images both photographed space and outer space, and the freeway at night the nonspace that the French term "no man's land."

This categorical definition of space bespeaks an understanding of our cybernetic age in which objects lose their original context and become grouped as signs. Because of the great quantities of information instantly available to us through the mass media and through data processing systems, we now think in categories and thus are able to make great leaps in time and space. We live in a metaworld in which history, for example, is no longer regarded as the truth but rather as a rhetorical device for presenting an image of the truth, a world in which the consistent space of Renaissance perspective paintings is similarly regarded as only one device among many for picturing reality. In her compilation of pictorial devices and radically varying spaces that arch back, ricochet forward, or remain intransitive, Hood dramatizes the metageneric approach to the world that is characteristic of the computer age. Taken together, the various spatial elements in Hood's collages present a new means of focusing on human culture—of achieving *Unity in Diversity*, in other words, by approaching it cosmically, theatrically, historically, and artistically. The title enjoins us to look for *Unity in Diversity* in this collage, to see in its composite of disparate parts the unity of our own orientation to the world, made up as it is of disparate religious, scientific, and cultural beliefs.

*Excerpted from the catalogue by Robert Hobbs*

# *Dorothy Hood's Collages*

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*Unity in Diversity, collage.*