

# Meaning Often Lurks, IX



(Top) De Cheseaux's Comet of 1744 (painting), seen March 8 and 9, rising in the east before the sun. How many unappreciated *great comets* across the centuries were metaphorized in the ancient Southwest artistry but taken today rather for "hands," "feet," and "bear paws"?

A *glyphic or painted figure with digits (comet tails or synchrones)*—or a *geometricized figure placed under, or at, a crack or baseline*—or in pottery, where the rim of the vessel can stand for the local horizonline—all these can imply the clock-work motion of the heavens and how a *celestial entity was observed, rising or setting, reflecting the light of the sun.*



"Thus, if we seriously want to penetrate alien [i.e. Not-Well-Enough-Understood-by-Us] cultures to reveal their internal complexity and coherence ..., we must leave the ethno-centric labels ('geometric/'representational') behind...."

*"I maintain that behind every 'decorative' layout lies the hidden visage of a breathing icon giving life (animation) to the design [emphasis added]...."*

**"Perhaps this explains the current emphasis on cultural syntax or grammars rather than the decoding of iconography and symbolism.** Shouldn't we try to escape this mental prison of our own ethno-taxonomy of form...? **Meaning often lurks where we expect it least [emphasis added].**

Hence we need to pursue the 'archaeology of signification,' even in symmetry. Otherwise symmetry analysis becomes mere[ly]... theoretically interesting, but of limited cultural significance...."

[Peter G. Roe, Washburn 2004:98]

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