

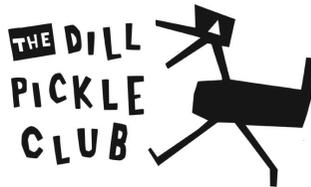
P D X R E P R I N T V O L . I

27 Installations

**Portland Center for
the Visual Arts**

(1989)

DILL PICKLE CLUB | PUBLICATION STUDIO | YU



PDX Re-Print is a series of four publications and public lectures celebrating obscured and out-of-print books on Portland's visual culture. Held at roving venues on last Thursdays in Spring 2011, lectures bring together authors, scholars, activists and community members, who use the books to discuss how we understand our city.

During Winter 2009, the Dill Pickle Club selected 25 books focusing on seminal aspects of Portland's history and culture. These books were sold at a pop-up shop in Old Town as a fundraiser for the organization, and as a way to introduce the local community to the scope of our programming. In the process of our research, we discovered several out-of-print titles that were too cost-prohibitive to carry at the shop, but were still valuable resources in better understanding our urban landscape.

At the time, Matthew Stadler, author of one of the curated books, was driving to New York to purchase a perfect bindery machine in order to start the Publication Studio, an on-demand publishing house. He suggested partnering to reproduce these out-of-print titles as a set of publications and event series.

As George Santayana once said, "Those who are unaware of history are destined to repeat it." These four books document the dramatic changes in Portland over the past three decades. Together, they tell a story that can help us understand our past, as well as help us fully appreciate the quality of life Portlanders enjoy today.

We are very grateful to the Portland Art Museum, 2010 for the permission to reprint *27 Installations* and to Patrick Phillips for organizing and editing the reprint.

The Dill Pickle Club organizes educational projects that help us understand the place in which we live. Through tours, public programs and publications, we create nontraditional and interactive learning environments where all forms of knowledge are valued and made readily accessible. Founded in 2009, we are a volunteer-driven organization, with a shared belief in the vitality of community education and democracy. For more information visit: www.dillpickleclub.com.

Publication Studio is an experiment in sustainable publication. We print and bind books on demand, creating original work with artists and writers we admire, books that both respond to the conversation of the moment and can endure. We attend to the social life of the book, cultivating a public that cares and is engaged. Publication Studio is a laboratory for publication in its fullest sense — not just the production of books, but the production of a public. This public, which is more than a market, is created through deliberate acts: the circulation of texts; discussions and gatherings in physical space; and the maintenance of a digital commons. Together these construct a space of conversation, a public space, which beckons a public into being. For more information visit: www.publicationstudio.biz.

Forward

It was forty years ago that three Portland artists took a ride in a little outboard boat on the Willamette River with a bottle of bad wine and an axe to grind with the Portland Art Museum. They had just about given up on efforts to encourage the Museum to exhibit anything resembling art of the moment. In Mike Russo's boat on that day, Russo, Jay Backstrand and Mel Katz decided, "Forget the museum, we're going to do it ourselves." The Portland Center for the Visual Arts (PCVA) was the result.

This special reissue of *Twenty Seven Installations* by The Dill Pickle Club and Publication Studio opens a window into a vital era in Portland's cultural history in which a clutch of artists, a handful of staff, and an army of volunteers brought some of the strongest, most exhilarating contemporary art and artists of that time to Portland audiences. The exhibitions were programmed exclusively by a committee of artists. And it's a mark of the times that in those early years one of the committee members could call up a New York-based artist, offer him a couple hundred dollars, a room at the Benson, and all the salmon you can catch to come out and create an installation on a shoestring budget, often with donated materials that would be recycled afterward.

From where we stand it's hard for those of us who weren't here at the time to have a sense of the cultural landscape in Portland in 1971. As I write this, we enjoy a robust gallery system showing national and regional artists, adventurous academic galleries and alternative spaces, an art museum regularly presenting work by contemporary artists, resurgent art schools welcoming the community to more lectures by more visiting contemporary artists than anyone could reasonably attend. Imagine a town with at most two galleries showing contemporary art, one of which also sold, among other things, bird whistles. Imagine that the only way, the only way to see work by national and international artists was to go to New York or Los Angeles or look at 2" x 2" color reproductions in an art magazine.

PCVA laid the groundwork and was the inspiration for artist-initiated spaces and institutions to follow, including PICA, Disjecta, galleryHOMELAND, and Worksound. Scrappy, nimble PCVA was proof of concept. And artists and institutions have been recalling it in word and deed ever since.

This catalogue is a record in photo, statement, and anecdote of just one aspect of the programming at PCVA. What it doesn't record are performances of experimental music and dance of works by John Cage, Philip Glass, Pauline Oliveros, by Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, and Anna Halprin. It doesn't tell you that Lucy Lippard drove all over Oregon and Washington to visit studios in the process of curating the Northwest group show, *In Touch*. It doesn't tell you about concerts by jazz greats Archie Shepp, Dexter Gordon, Max Roach. It doesn't tell you about the excitement of sitting shoulder to shoulder on the floor of the gallery

with more than 500 of your fellow artists and enthusiasts to hear Chuck Close, David Antin, or Frank Stella hold forth. It doesn't tell you about shows by Agnes Martin, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg. It doesn't tell you that Richard Serra's "Turnbridge" film was filmed in Portland or that Allan Kaprow recruited a large group of volunteers to participate in his "Routine." It doesn't tell you that when the Fountain Gallery was gutted by a horrific fire, PCVA responded by asking Bill Hoppe to curate a show of regional artists in response. And it doesn't tell you that one reason Brian O'Doherty (author of *Inside the White Cube: Ideologies of the Gallery Space* who exhibited at PCVA under the pseudonym "Patrick Ireland") wrote the introduction to this catalogue is that his initial support as head of the Visual Arts Program at the NEA was critical: sitting with Mel Katz in the lobby of the Benson, O'Doherty told Katz what to write on PCVA's initial NEA grant application.

What *Twenty Seven Installations* does do is provide a view into both a dynamic institution and a critical period in Portland's cultural history. Think of it as an invitation to explore, as Paul Harvey would say, "the rest of the story."

Lisa Radon
18 March 2011

Twenty Seven Installations



Portland Center for the Visual Arts

Twenty Seven Installations

Portland Center for the Visual Arts

Acknowledgements

BY COMBINING A QUEST for excellence with a willingness to take risks on exciting but unproven visions, the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington D.C., and Portland's Collins Foundation have made it possible for PCVA to complete 15 seasons of contemporary art programs. For their constancy and for their support of this publication, I extend our thanks once again.

The commentaries we received from artists have been most appreciated. Their intentions and eye witness accounts are invaluable. Artists, of course, are at the foundation of this organization. Mel Katz, Mike Russo and Jay Backstrand with Lucinda Parker, Orleonok Pitkin and Louis Bunce were involved from the very beginning and were later joined by many others such as Bill Hoppe, Lee Kelly, Anne Johnson, Paul Sutinen, Tad Savinar, Sharon Bronzan and Laura Ross-Paul. There are too many to list here who deserve thanks and applause for their support of PCVA.

Christopher Rauschenberg has my sincere gratitude for lending us his considerable skills as editor and producer of this publication and Maryanne Caruthers-Akin deserves a very special thanks for nearly sixteen years of work as PCVA's staff photographer. She began volunteering her services in 1971 and was still taking photos last week.

Brian O'Doherty, artist, historian, critic and author has been at the forefront of a most exciting period of art history. He was at the helm of the NEA's Visual Arts Program when we set forth our plan fifteen years ago and his support and guidance was invaluable. He has graciously and expertly helped us once again by writing the catalogue's accompanying essay.

Countless personal contributions made the installations and this catalogue possible. PCVA's active and generous board of directors gave money, supplies and skilled and unskilled labor. Student interns and many other volunteers worked long hours for artists in the process of creating their work. Area businesses and associations, such as those who were so generous with help on the Peter Shelton installation, donated expertise, materials and labor and there were so many helpers over the years that justice could not possibly be done in trying to list everyone.

It is, however, possible and essential to recognize the contribution of a very small but invaluable resource that kept the doors open and made the process a pleasure. I'm speaking of the Center's surprisingly small roster of staff members. Everyone who worked for the Center, even for a short time, made a contribution, but fifteen people played all the key roles. David Hauck, Rosemary Hauge, Anna Maria Lopez, Michael Bowley, Rob Range, Linza Bethea, Melissa St. Thompson, John Monti, Mathieu Gregoire, Helen Lessick, Randy Davis, Toni DeVito and David Cohen all made incalculable contributions to the success of the Portland Center for the Visual Arts and the installations documented in these pages. I had the good fortune of working closely with all of them when I joined the staff headed in 1976 by my great friend Mary Beebe. When we last spoke we decided that we'd received far more than we contributed and that there had been great fun in each and every day. Thanks again everyone.

Donna J. Milrany
June 1987

Foreword

I DIDN'T SEE THE FIRST FIVE projects documented in the following pages, but I vividly remember my first look at Donald Judd's work as I turned right at the top of PCVA's three flights of stairs in November, 1974. This room-encompassing expanse of plywood was astonishing. Its height and length, with the familiar smell of fresh wood called forth my child's eye memories of hours spent near my father's workbench. Judd's box pushed the walls, grabbed the ceiling and ebbed and flowed over the dark floor. It confounded and rewarded visitors and delighted many area artists who were investigating related ideas.

That fall, it was my good fortune to begin a thirteen-year association with the Portland Center for the Visual Arts, and all the installations that came after the Judd work were equally astonishing and among our most rewarding efforts. These special temporary projects, designed by artists to exist in a given space and time, figured prominently in PCVA's program history.

In the sixties, artists were challenging the definitions of art, bringing rapid and dynamic change. Artists needed new support-systems for their experimentation and new forums for presenting their work to the public. Artist activities and sympathetic curators and patrons around the country created the alternative (or artists') space to meet these needs and they have served the times well. These organizations prided themselves on flexibility and have been able to operate free of the constraints of the market place and the restraints of most collecting museums.

PCVA was among the very first of these new art creatures, and it was developed in 1971 under the leadership of Portland artists Jay Backstrand, Melvin Katz and Michele Russo. With a year's free rent by warehouse owner Robert Davis, a \$10,000 donation from St. Louis collector Milton Fischman, a \$10,000 Chairman's Grant from the NEA Visual Arts program and about 100 local charter members, PCVA was able to open its doors in November 1972 and presented in its first season two

dozen extraordinary programs, from an installation by Carl Andre, to performance events by Allan Kaprow and Yvonne Rainer, to exhibitions by Lynda Benglis, Jake Berthot, Jack Youngerman and Wayne Thiebaud. There hadn't been so many new ideas put on Portland's plate in the previous five years and in just eight short months the Center established an extraordinary new standard of activity, quality and first hand access to exciting new art and artists.

The Center, however, was a strange animal indeed and (like installation art) couldn't offer the comfort of traditional art world classification. None existed. This was all pioneering stuff and new rules and new language were developed as we went along; "space" not gallery or museum, "environment" or "installation" not sculpture, design or architecture. And with this came a great deal of freedom. And pioneers like PCVA, and/or gallery in Seattle, LAICA in Los Angeles and many others took maximum advantage. Each group tailored programs to meet the special needs identified by artists and dictated by the resources and opportunities available in their communities. The special niche PCVA felt it must fill turned out to be bringing Portland up to date on the dramatic surge of new art ideas that began in the early 60's and to keep it current during the 70's and beyond. With the exception of a brilliant but very small program at Reed College, there had been no leadership in presenting in Portland the exceptional work being made by nationally and internationally prominent contemporary artists of recent decades. It was up to PCVA to present new old masters of pop art, op art, minimalism, conceptualism, expressionism, along with experimenters in installation art, body work,

video and performance art. We also wished to provide a place where the exciting work of contemporary choreographers and composers could be presented as well. These were ambitious goals but the Center has accomplished them and more in its 15 years.

A review of the program history will group names like Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Alice Neel, Frank Stella and Jack Tworkov with Trisha Brown, Laurie Anderson, Ping Chong, Eric Bogosian, Meredith Monk, John Cage, Anthony Braxton and Rachel Rosenthal. Installation artists and established and emerging artists of this region and beyond are represented in great numbers as well. Dennis Oppenheim, Jonathan Borofsky, Alice Aycock, Vito Acconci and Robert Morris all created work for PCVA, as did Seattle's Michael McCafferty and Jim Pridgeon, Los Angeles's Peter Shelton and Portlanders Jerry Mayer and Paul Sutinen. Chuck Close, Louis Bunce, Alan Shields, Bob Moskowitz, Agnes Martin, Jim Lawrence, Tad Savinar, Jay Backstrand and Joan Snyder are all flashes from the imprecise but energetic march that PCVA made through Portland in fulfillment of its mission.

That mission has been to reflect new ideas and interests of contemporary artists as they evolve over time, and it has continued intact throughout these 15 years. Installation art has been part of that evolution of ideas and since 1973 PCVA has contributed as host and carrier to some exceptional artists. Their installations wore radically different faces and crystallized a variety of ideas. When some pre-arranged time span had lapsed the works were destroyed and the materials recycled in the best Oregon environmentally conscious traditions. This catalogue represents an attempt to give some permanence to works which were

intentionally impermanent. "Fortunately, there is no absolute doctrine that says quality is measured by duration," said Rachael Griffin, former curator for the Portland Art Museum, of Dennis Oppenheim's installation. Dennis agreed, commenting that "there is a special energy in these installations which doesn't always survive in works aimed at perpetuity." Even considering that their days were numbered, the works documented in this catalogue and others which could not be photographically reproduced, such as Patrick Ireland's nylon filament installation, were produced by PCVA's staffs with great dedication and enthusiasm. What has been accomplished thus far is offered with one more thank you to the artists.

Donna J. Milrany
Executive Director, 1981-1987

Remembrance of Things Past

Brian O'Doherty

INSTALLATIONS TEND TO BE invisible now, even when people are looking at them. Why? Because ways of looking get mislaid or overlaid and fashion—what follows yesterday—involves a phenomenon not well understood: a kind of obligatory blindness that descends on the objects of immediate retrospection. Fashion lives by this periodic onset of perceptual fatigue. Perception itself, in modern life, becomes both a product and a consumer and consumes mostly itself. The circuit closes with an audible snap and you no longer see what you are looking at. Recent art tends to languish until the way of seeing it gets reconstructed; sight has to be born again. Installations are now in this fix. Everyone can read paintings and students read content as easily as pages from their diaries. Art is back where it should be, in the magic rectangle. And the rectangle settles easily into that familiar old cube, the space that installations romped in for the best part of a decade and a half (1965-80).

Is this a complaint—a nostalgia for the way we were? Of course not. Art can't make its next scheduled stop unless this darkness falls on the immediate past. No one sees the art of the present better than the generation that makes it. And no one adopts a more skewed version of the recent past. The generative force of the new lies in the way in which the recent past is misunderstood. It is not the best of the previous work that provokes the expected dialectical response. It is the *mythos* of that work as it survives the work's generational depreciation. In the early sixties, the New York galleries were light with the rhetorical inflation of abstract expressionism. It was as much weariness at this as anything else that gave the countering response its destructive edge. Nothing invites its own execution more sharply than stylistic narcissism. That narcissism's life can be extended occasionally by irony which, as someone said, is to the twentieth century as sentiment was to the nineteenth. Narcissism is intrinsic to a consumer culture; each escape from it reciprocally cancels itself. Indeed the struggle between art-as-idea and art-as-commodity is the basic dialectic of our field, which

settles uneasily on this necessary paradox. To the degree that it is consumed, the critical content of art is extinguished; to the degree that it is unconsumed, its critical content is ineffective. In the late seventies, the galleries were offering for consumption an art that was already dead. After sixty heroic years in which it had established a social, stylistic, almost moral superiority over every kind of realism/expressionism, abstract art began to mirror nothing more than itself. The pale formalisms in the galleries created a vacuum that sucked in a glut of content. The gallery's appetite, also starved by the art of the seventies, was being fed.

As perceptual laboratory, as arena of dematerialization, as scatter and distribution ground, as server of process, as a builder's lot, as a box interfered with from the inside by structures pitting ceiling against floor and wall against wall, as a certifier of gravity, as ventriloquist quoting everything brought into it, as echo-chamber and kinetic fun-fair, as a darkness spotted and strobed, as false horizon and grand pretender imitating other places, the gallery became not a ground but a figure, not a space but a mutating place, not a neutrality like a frame but content in potency, like the empty canvas used to be. This usurpation of its traditional role was inimical to its primary function, that of showing portable objects in an epicurean sales-room. Installations messed up the gallery, attacked walls, went through the floor, relished corners, beat up on the ceiling. We judge new arrivals by their internal conviction, the force of their argument, the urgency of their need. Why did installations reject the orthodoxies of painting and sculpture?

Imagine a history of post war art written from the year 2,000 by one of our efficient drones. How would installations fare? Perhaps something like this: "In the mid to late sixties, pop art and color field had to a degree reinvigorated painting, though from incompatible attitudes. If one was a revolution in subject, instructed by the lessons of large-scale abstraction, the other pursued the implications of a painting as a self-defining object, also instructed by the example of abstract expressionism. Many painters however, abandoned painting and turned to creating minimal (cf. *Minimalism*) objects deprived of rhetoric, which diminished the role of the maker and emphasized both presence and idea, or an idea as a presence. Out of this situation, which questioned the role of image and metaphor in art, came several important developments: conceptualism, which substituted language for the object; body art, which introduced a new figure-ground relationship, and installation work, which enacted formal, perceptual and esthetic scenarios and anti-scenarios, using the gallery as both locus and subject. These latter genres were displaced in the latter part of the seventies by a return to a variety of painting modes, at the time often grouped under the rubric of neo-expressionism."

Apart from the leaden surveyese, the summary dismissal of genres, the passive phenomenology of succession as if art were a series of apparitions, and the political blindness (which will endure), the survey prompts us to search out the brief references to installations. "Installations", we read, "responded to the diminished options available

to painting, and in a sense could be seen as an extension of collage. Including the observer as a component, they tended to redefine the observer, not as a static entity, but as a participant who completed or shared in the completion of the work itself. Installations declined as a genre when the picture plane was re-introduced as a legitimate arena of discourse. Also, by virtue of their limited time-span, installations raised the issue of impermanence and the temporary. As such they could be seen as an attempt to demystify the idea of art as a permanent value, and thus an indispensable component of the social matrix. This attempt, of course, failed."

This is better (by now the careless reader will think these quotes are taken from a "real" book), but like most surveys, it inters what it describes. Long perspectives heap the past around like a grave-digger's shovel. Retrospective rationalization gives an event a kind of pseudo-logic, particularly if the "explanation" has a closure that arranges the data in a way convincing to the popular mind. Installations as a genre are now deeply misunderstood by most writers, shoe-horned into their box (the gallery as coffin?) with such phrases as *perception*, *involving the spectator*, *impermanance*, and *attack on the gallery system*. Each of these closes off the issues that installations raised, and in some cases, still do.

In any field, change is read as a development of its internal processes, as the pressure of external events intruding on these processes, or a combination of both. The first is a formalist trope, the second is context, and the last acknowledges both. Installations first and foremost sensitized the most democratic of dimensions, old mother space, and did so in a way that was basically anti-formal. For formalism,

once over-praised and now over-abused, may have lasted so long in visual art because it preserved the connoisseur's distance, the sense of an object held at arm's length and seen in a continuum of objects. This included most modernist sculpture, with occasional exceptions provided by surrealism and constructivism. So separated, object and observer held to the classic postures of Renaissance vision despite the radical things happening on canvas or pedestal. In the sixties, some sculptors began making odd connections between wall and floor, and ceiling and wall. I think of these works as a kind of pointing, and what they were pointing at was the gallery itself.

Usually, art has a limited field of force around it; it indicates fairly clearly the spectator's place and motion—the circumference described by the sculpture, the painting's hen-run between close-up and far enough away. The rest of the space around tends to be invisible, since the context—the gallery—is neutralized. Installations made the space of the gallery and its limits visible. There was a superimposition of esthetic and secular space—the space you walked around in had been altered, placing that old workhorse, the spectator, between all the dialectical switches that start up when consciousness oscillates between finding and losing itself. By making an esthetic space partly secular, and by making the spectator intermittently monitor his or her own process of observation, installations tended to make the classic gallery monad of space and spectator transparent. Or, as the actual participant superimposed this conceptual insight on his or her immediate experience, opaque. Space and spectator each had their *doppelgänger* or twin, a doubled spectator in a doubled space. Between remembering and forgetting, each slid together or apart. This unstable situation was not compatible with the classic gallery's pedigree.

There were several consequences. Walls, floors, ceiling began to develop their own esthetics. The confines of the gallery were penetrated by a variety of artworks—going through windows and walls literally or conceptually. Something was trying to get out of the cage to which society had agreed to confine it. There was a sense of expanding vistas—that glimpse before limits snap back into place, but not quite the same place. I don't believe the implications of all this were much understood by artists, who were simply following where their art led them. The rhetoric about escaping the system was, in my view, retroactive. The system cannot be escaped, and the ways of escaping it are not very attractive—living under the benign corporate umbrella, becoming a professional grants-person or a collector's house-pet. But once space became secularized, perhaps democratized, with a spectator (yourself or someone else) swimming in it, the walls of the gallery became porous. Ideas—minimalism's and conceptualism's "mind"—could roam freely into new arenas, asking questions of architecture, landscape and garden design, public spaces and other kinds of neutral media, including the desert, water, air.

The escape (from the gallery) had an exhilaration that at the time seemed like riding the *zeitgeist*. But the mutually understood set of reciprocal agreements that make up the sub-text of "the art world" has a will of iron. Too far removed from them art begins to fall outside the authentication process, conducted through the gallery/museum/collector trinity. Magazines help, as they did in the sixties and seventies. But seen in the secular context of everyday space, art begins to lapse into artifact and, demystified, is less important than its picture in a

book—which restores its missing context. Installations by and large rejected that context, particularly when the installation was site-specific, and thus spoke of place and impermanence. By taking a short-term lease on its own existence, the work added the insult of the temporary. The gallery's white timelessness implied that art is forever—a bourgeois consummation of the Ozymandian dream. Installations suggested that art is short and life is long. There was an intolerable inversion of values here, and it was inevitable that only enlightened galleries would suffer through such a predicament; and that alternative spaces would be found, as they were. In retrospect (how much content is added in retrospect!) many installations implicitly attacked the odious rhetoric of the boutique selling precious relics of the creative process.

The best installations of the sixties and seventies were often didactic. Each installation (an interesting history remains to be written here) declared its attitudes towards walls, corners, ceilings, floors. These components were “quoted” and rephrased in ways that made them visible and thus yield up their neutrality. Summoned as dialectical partners, sometimes, unfortunately, as metaphorical stage props, they thoroughly defined the nature of the gallery box, much as flatness had reductively exhausted the picture plane. Once that was accomplished, installations began to run up against certain problems. The first is practical. Who will let you work in a space from which nothing can be sold? Very few indeed. And work that breaks down the Cartesian preface to all sales (an observer and an object; the connoisseur must be *outside* the object of connoisseurship) seeks not its purchaser, but implicitly and imperfectly, its own socialization in which art becomes subsumed in everyday existence. Such a utopian vision is blocked by the necessary alienation of art from its society to sustain the economic model that enables it to survive. And even if accomplished, would

anyone notice? There is a formidable impasse here, one intrinsic to the way we view our culture.

And what of perception? It is unfortunate that criticism sidetracked much installation work with the idea of “perception” as if such art merely demonstrated perceptual psychology. Perception was too often used in the installation context to praise clever and ingenious ways of shunting between depth and flatness, illusion and disillusion, information and disinformation. This interpretation of perception is installation's analogue of the perfect formal vision. Both isolate vision as a phenomenon peculiar to art-gazing. Perception, a complex system of dynamic feed-backs between information and mind set involving the whole organism, becomes esthetified and thus separated from the very experience it embodies. Isolated, it could be “consumed”. Many installations destabilized perceptual habits, broke constancies, and stimulated relearning. Indeed survival in the ocean of dimension we call space demands sophisticated responses to rapidly changing information. Installations rehearsed these visual habits in a controlled situation, calling into question a host of assumptions on the way our culture stabilizes its world. Installations then, made the spectator re-invent him/herself as perceiver and participant, weighed the problematic nature of evidence, of a specific and unrepeatable set of conditions, thus of the present as an unavoidable component of the work since, in the strictest definition of installations, they had no future. Given our marketing and museum system this was, to repeat, an unstable area. Temporary work attempted to dispense with the easel picture as the unavoidable tradition of Western art, redefine the nature of the art gallery, reform the spectator and to some extent criticism's hyper-consciousness. These aims are implicit to installation work, not external to it. However it is a law of such implicit necessities that they

be rationalized as ideology. Ideology then overtakes art-making and, preceding it, involuntarily argues for its decline while promising to institutionalize it. Can all this be summarized as just “perceptual”? If that be so, then a politics and poetics of perception remain to be written.

It was the alternative space—the definition of which became needlessly confused—that invited installations in. Museums—that is, some of our best curators—followed up vigorously and housebroke them. The non-profit spaces were supported by federal grants; in doing so the federal government, involuntarily, I suspect, aligned itself against the commercial gallery. The commercial gallery, apart from several enlightened dealers who must figure on any roll of honor, could see no great benefit in federal support of either spaces or artists. Federal support tended to lessen the dealers’ monopoly of the flow of talent into the system.

Galleries and, to some extent, museums, control this flow—not too different from the way big-league sports controls the entry of new talent. Commerce makes the art world go around and installations tended to slow the economy. Like conceptual art (which needed a magazine, not a gallery), body art (which had a hard time extruding something saleable and might well have sold the artist instead), and earthworks (which needed low-cost real-estate, often subsidized by dealers) installations virtually refused to socialize themselves for profit. They had little in common with that form of light industry known as public art.

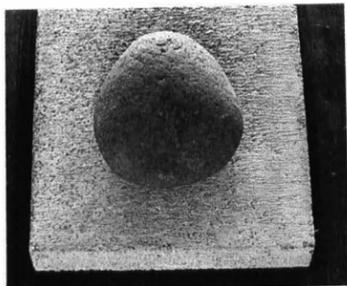
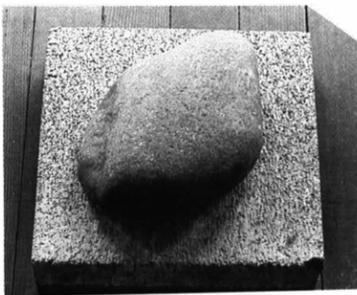
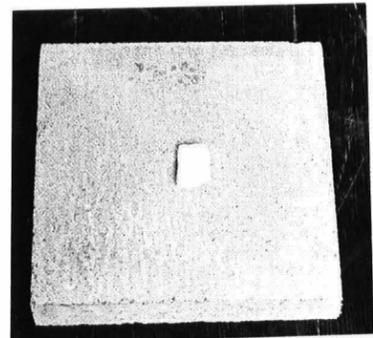
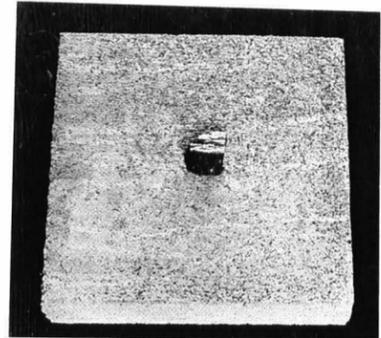
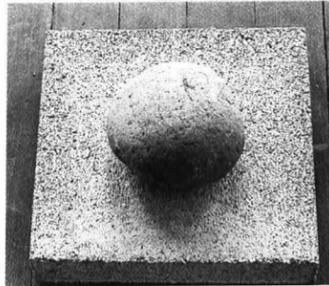
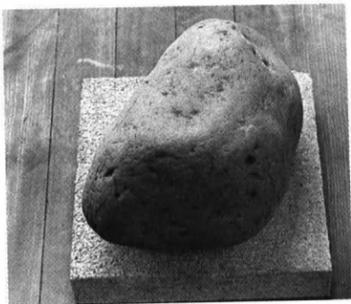
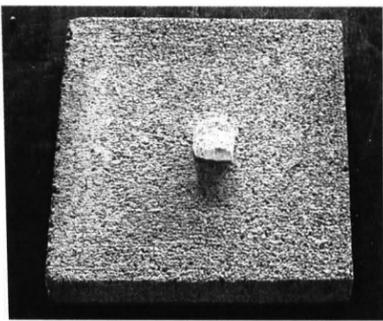
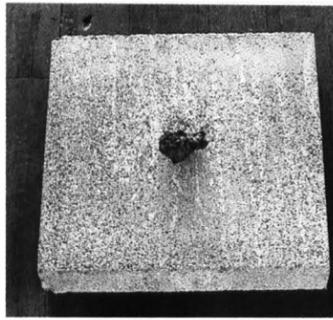
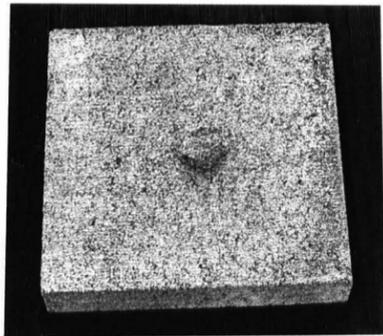
Thus while installations had an implicit, empirical social yearning, they didn’t—apart from a few exceptions that did not become exemplary—involve architecture, city planning, or landscape designing, partly because most architects find visual art user-unfriendly. The international style could tolerate some kind of hardware in its vicinity, where public art often looked like a failed epigram on a failed curtain wall, but post-modern architecture exclusively reserved the right to

comment on itself, forestalling art’s acerbic ironies with its own playful brand. Indeed the only time architecture and art looked at each other was during minimalism, when minimalism’s forms often stimulated the architect’s imagination. A few well-praised buildings were pilfered from minimal art. In architecture, however, minimalism found no reflection of its interests.

How do installations, a curiously ahistorical activity, accommodate themselves to history’s rational nightmare? Installations were an indispensable part of the minimal-conceptual era. They established not a genre, but a *medium* that despite its dubious welcome in most galleries, has proved resistant to standard depreciation, precisely because they are a medium and not a genre. The gallery itself—the total gallery—is now as legitimate a unit of discourse as the canvas. And it is as a medium that we recognize installations, distinct from easel painting or sculpture, though it may involve both. A medium has no style; it has potency. The installation medium retains that potency. The polemic implicit in installations during the period in which they re-defined the nature of the gallery is with us still, but in muted form. The questions raised about esthetic and social space, about the spectator’s place in both, and by implication the artist’s, the revolution indeed, that perception always threatens to deliver but by its nature cannot except to individuals one-by-one—all these ghosts still hover ambiguously in the vicinity of the gallery itself, haunting the process by which art is made, authenticated and delivered.

Carl Andre

144 Blocks & Stones
February 1973

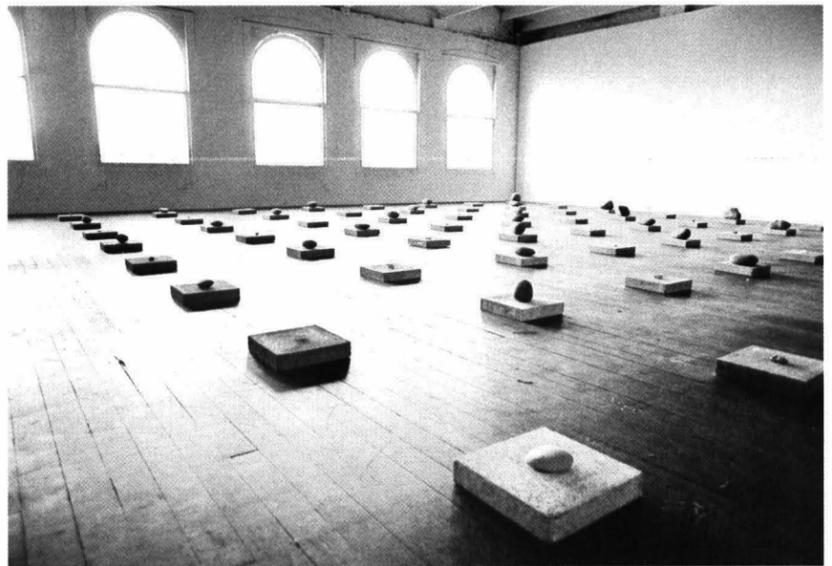


The Carl Andre exhibition was an exciting early moment at PCVA. It was the first "installation" work and a long way from a traditional painting or sculpture exhibition. Carl brought river rocks from the Clackamas? Sandy? Willamette? River and local geological specimens from various rock shops into the gallery where they were arranged in progressions (by size) on cement garden flat stepping blocks placed in a grid on the gallery floor. Carl had quite a few volunteers helping him gather these stones. It was the very beginning of PCVA and he seemed kind of like a pied piper. In a way the flat blocks became the pedestals for small rocks at a time when there was a lot of dialogue about sculpture coming off the pedestal. But the effect of these pedestals was the reverse of most; they created a very low horizon more than they lifted the work up. They also unified the whole installation into a formal garden. It seemed to hover as if by magic. Carl gave this work to PCVA to sell or use as we saw fit. Several of the blocks and stones were given away at Great Art Gambols, but more of them were purchased by collectors with the proceeds going toward operational expenses at times when we were in dire need. Barry Lowen, the important Los Angeles collector, bought a whole large section of the installation and his collection has just been bequeathed to the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. I hope that some of this work, which became a real pillar of PCVA's national reputation, winds up at the Portland Art Museum.

—Mary Beebe

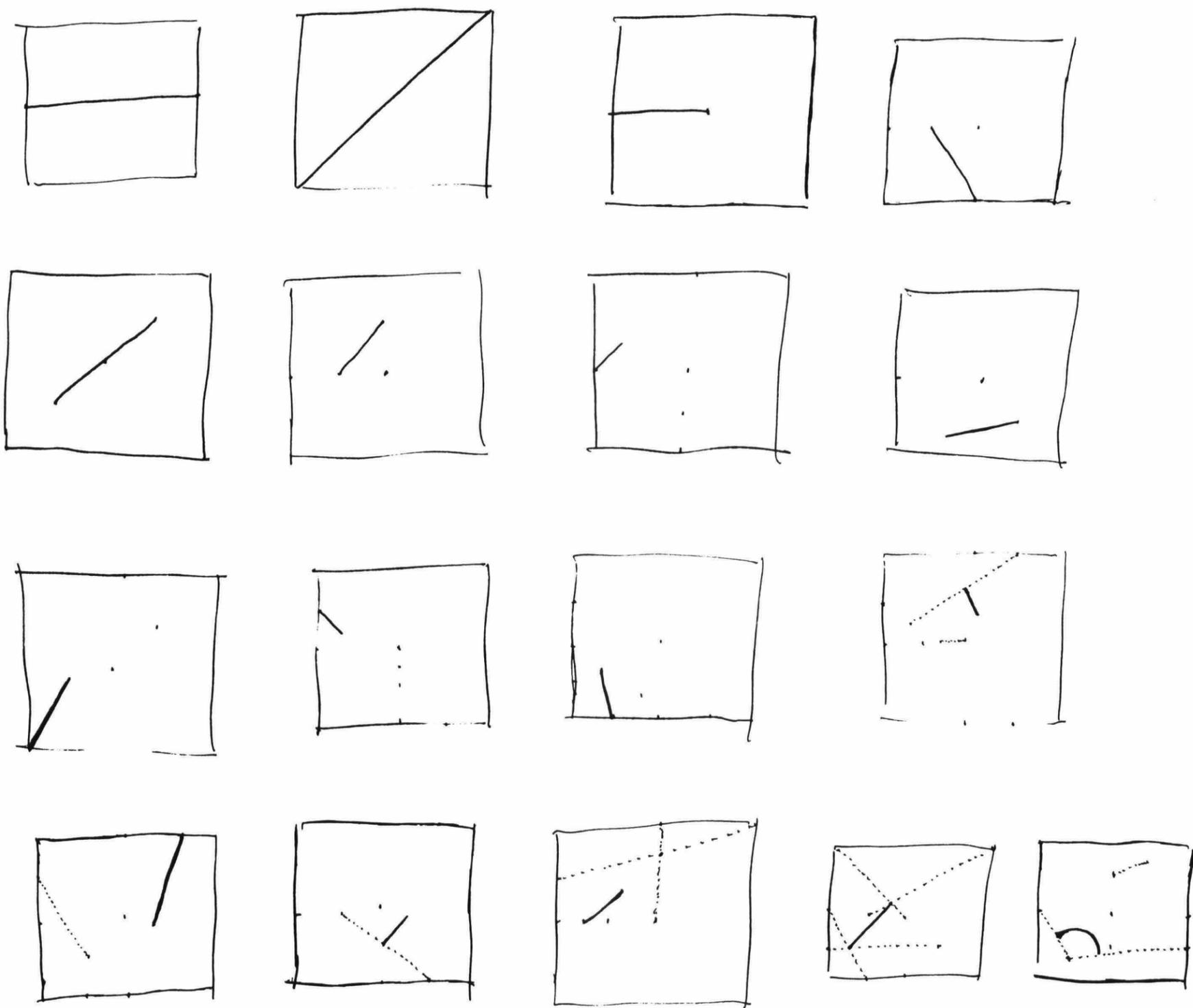
The first time I ever made the long climb up to the third floor was to see the Andre show. I was still in college and considered Andre's work to be the most interesting of anything that was being done at that time. I am sure that we all remember how quiet that show was. I can't remember who, maybe it was Sutinen or Anna, that said they thought this work was the most "Portlandy" piece of art they had ever seen. Anyway, while I was looking at the piece a group of about thirty first graders swarmed into the Center yelling and generally doing all of the usual things first graders do when they're on a field trip. One of them spontaneously got down on the floor and placed his nose right up against the block and was silent for a few moments. After he got up I did the same thing. And what I saw was something I had never noticed because I had assumed the usual upright adult position. What I saw was a wonderful wave-like pattern made by the varying heights of the different stones. It was a wonderful added visual pleasure that had been given me by Carl Andre and a first grader.

—Tad Savinar



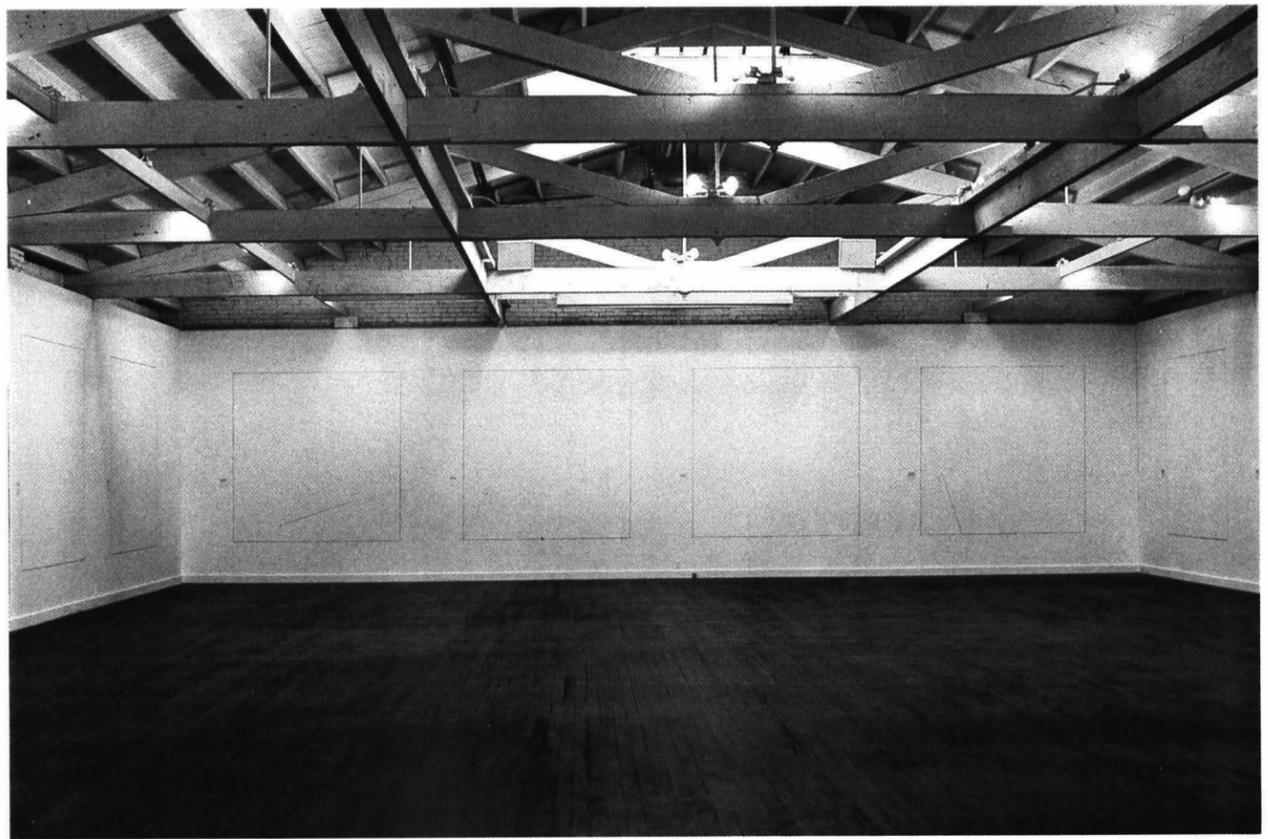
Sol Lewitt

Seventeen Squares of Eight Feet with Sixteen Lines
September 1973



Today's artists often embrace the marketplace, but in the early 70's many artists were more concerned with getting around or confounding it. Sol LeWitt sent instructions so we could draw his 17 squares of 8' with 16 lines on the walls ourselves. Their visual simplicity and clarity was very beautiful to look at, but the accompanying verbal descriptions of their precise placement took enormous mental effort and concentration to follow. These drawings were for sale but what you purchased was the right to place it on your wall and the instructions for how to do so. I can't recall that we sold any, but they were very inexpensive and could now be donated to a museum at a vastly increased value.

—Mary Beebe

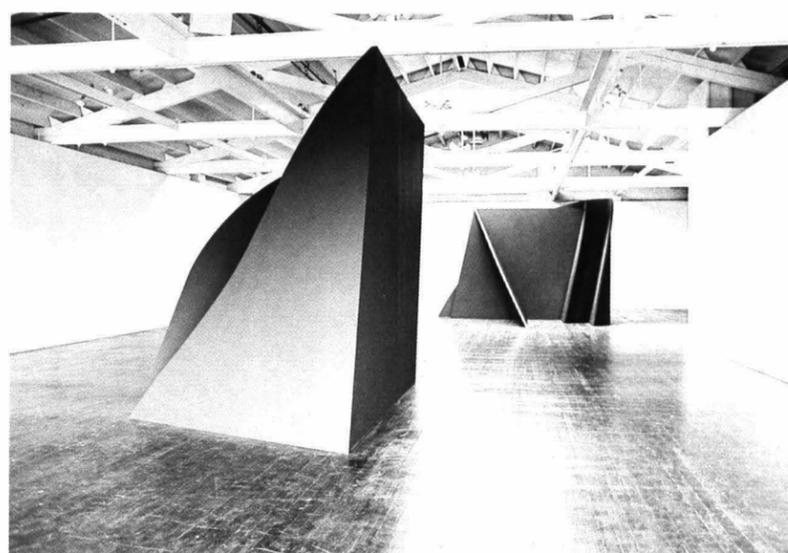


Robert Maki

March 1974

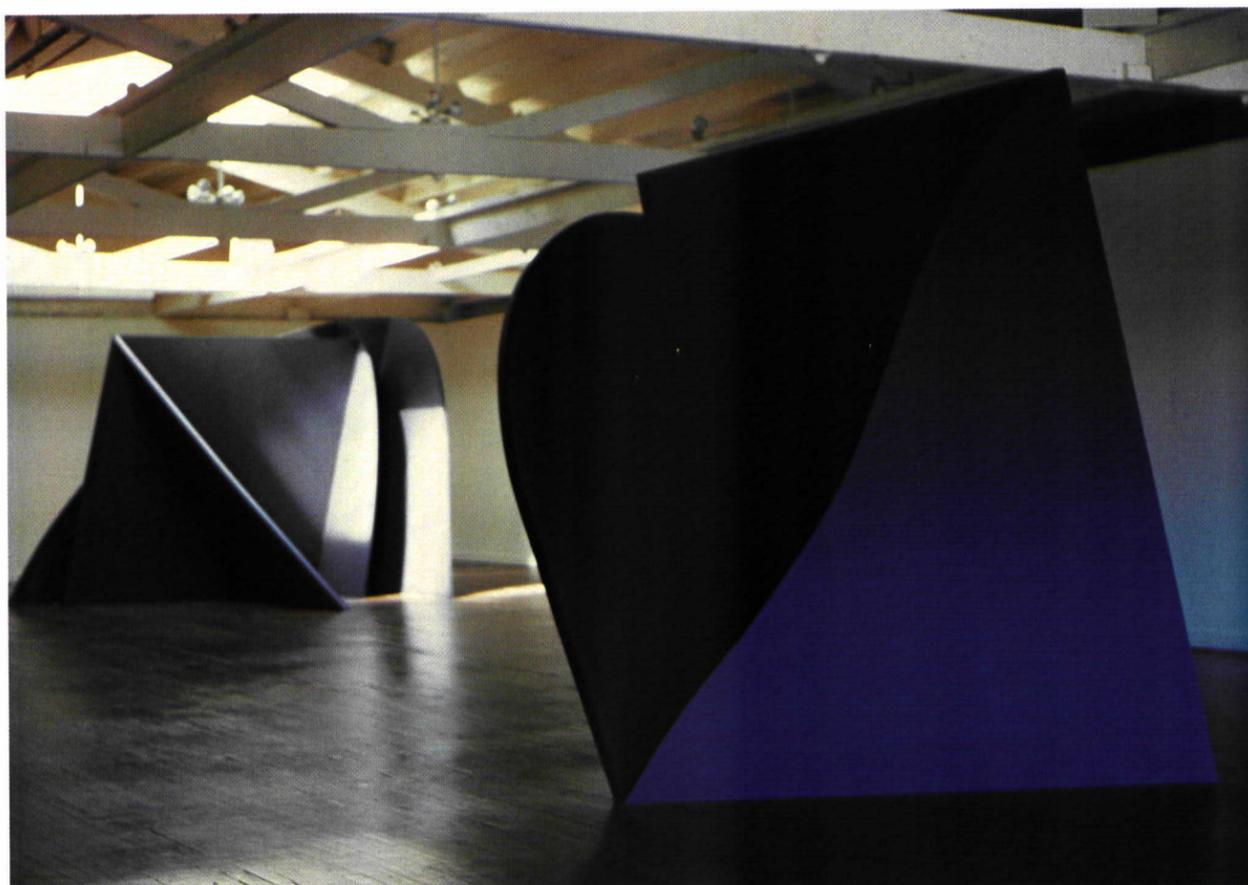
THE PCVA EXHIBITION involved three of the six large-scale illusionary sculptures executed in 1974. Other sites included Humboldt State University in California, St. Cloud University in Minnesota and Seattle Pacific University in Washington. Two pieces, "Center" and "Triangle", were located at PCVA and a third, "E Fold", in the Pacific Northwest College of Art foyer.

From the 1970-73 series, these planar hollow-core constructions, painted dark gray, acted as site, place or situation of a temporary nature suggesting scale changes and permanent siting, either natural or architectural. Considered fragments to their environment, they are continually restructured by light, shadow and viewing angle reflecting the symbiotic relationship between object, space and viewer. As dialectic variations of the Seattle-Tacoma Airport sculpture commissioned in 1972, the pieces at PCVA embodied a concept of structure and extension theory formulated earlier (1966-69) in the linear wood constructions, object series and painted wall panels. The wood constructions tracked, modified and articulated the architectural environment, continually shifting to new configurations as the viewers explored the space. The "Object Series" formalized ideas about visual ambiguity and evolved into a complexity of materials defining line and plane in a series of floor/wall/ceiling installations. The wall constructions restricted the perceptual experience to a bisected sculptural space of 180-degree viewing, and by eliminating shadow effects achieved a hologramlike image engaging both the real and illusionary space. The idea of placing these flat panels in the hillside, singly or in combination, playing contour against contour, provided the means for returning to a multi-dimensional sculpture without displacing space.



Bob Maki was, I think, the first Northwest artist we showed. Everyone wanted to acknowledge that there was strong work going on in our own territory, but the decision of who should/could be first was a very difficult one. We said that it had to be work that couldn't be seen anywhere else. Bob did "lifesize" maquettes in wood of pieces he hoped to build in metal plates. They were almost too big for the space and competed a bit with the beams, but the huge black planes with curves and angles were very beautiful and elegant.

—Mary Beebe



Daniel Buren

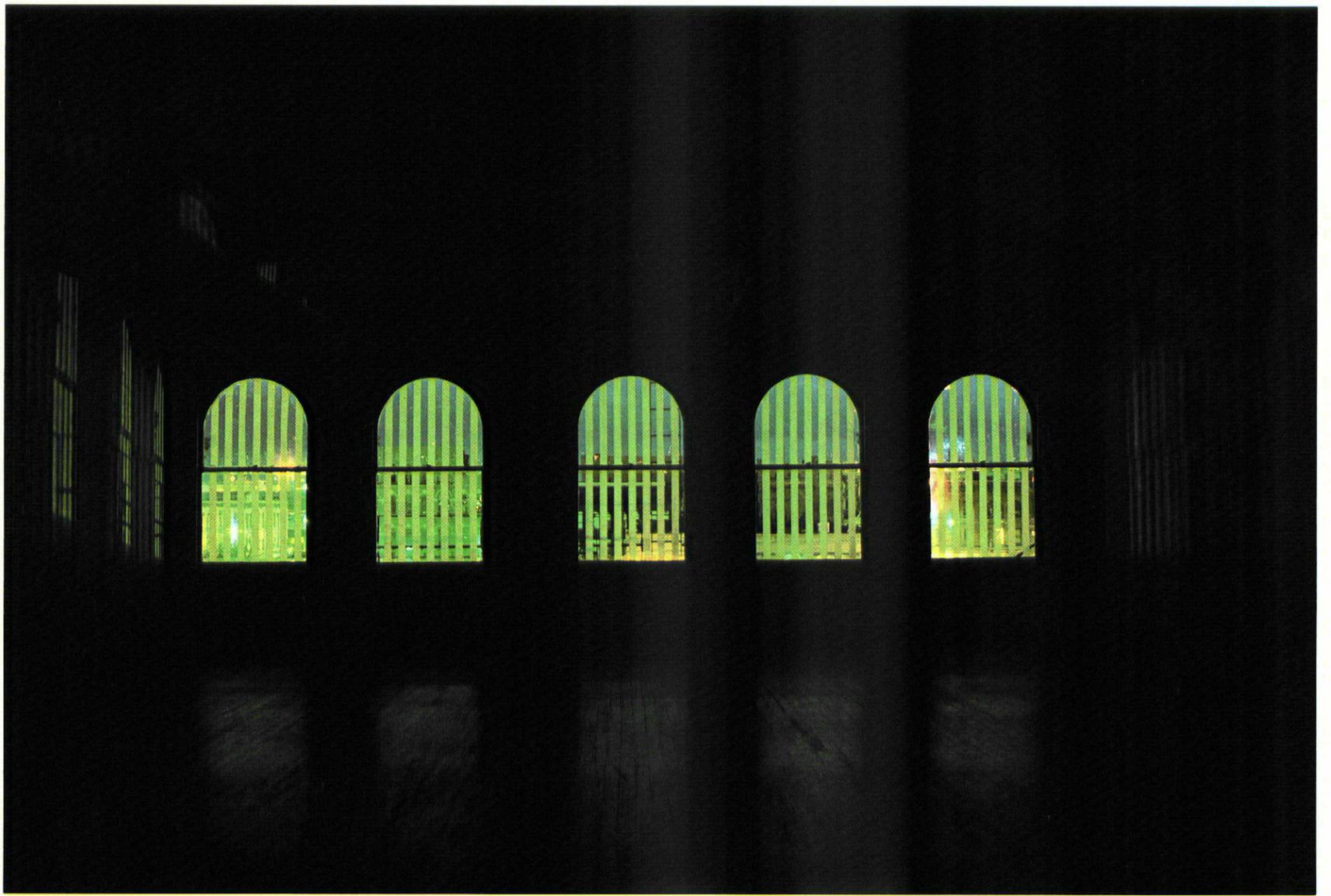
Passage Between
May 1974

THIS EXHIBITION STARTED A series of works about transparency. The exhibition was constituted by the use of two different tools in two different spaces. The tools were: plastic transparent sheet self-adhesive and serigraphed each 8.7cm by a stripe of 8.7cm width of white ink for one part and with green ink for the other. The spaces were one, outside on a billboard situated downtown in a parking lot (green stripes) and the other, inside the Museum space covering all the windows in front of the street (white stripes).

This work was an attempt to reveal, while doing at the same time a visual specific piece, the elements which constituted the piece itself as well as the support and environment making the piece possible altogether. To make the dialectic work, the two places were extremely different one from another. Paper printed with text and image covered by green and transparent stripes, everything becoming finally flat, and transparent glass covered by white and transparent stripes becoming finally tri-dimensional. To be more classical, one can say that one was dealing with painting (outside) and the other with sculpture (inside).

The transparency involved me in a deeper experimentation with the site and environment where a work is done by not only touching and including the surroundings as part of the work but, through the transparency, introducing also the inside of the support into the surface of the readable work, including ipso-facto a disturbance not only on the periphery of the work but inside its "hearth" itself, on its surface. A passage between...





Donald Judd

November 1974



Chris Burden

Natural Habitat
January 1975

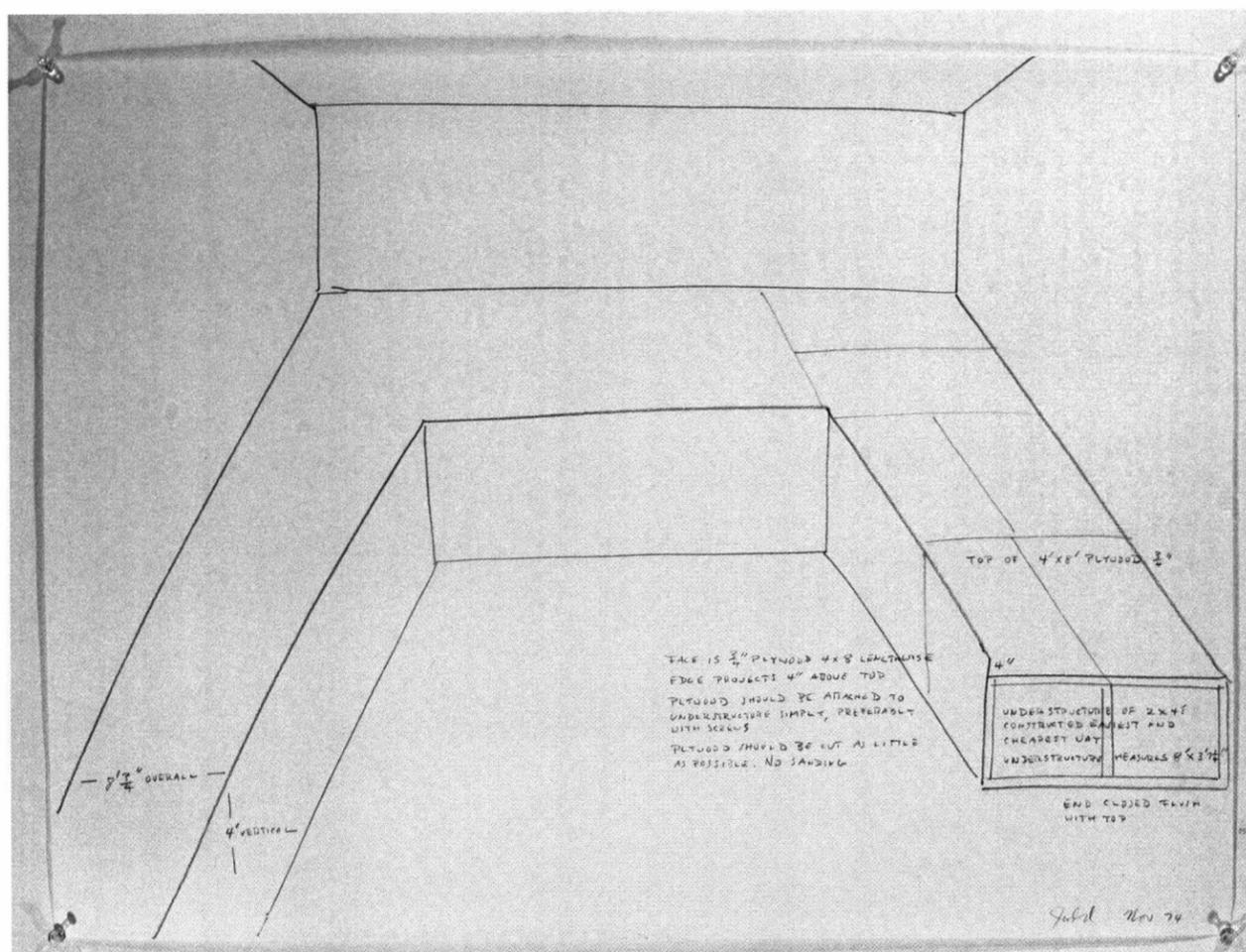


Donald Judd designed his installation from photographs of the space. We produced an astounding amount of gorgeous 1" plywood 4'x8' sheets and built a continuous channel (4' wide, 4' tall and 2" deep) against all the long walls of the gallery according to Don's plans. He arrived and approved and so there wasn't too much for him to do before the opening. Don is a real Scot and plays piobroque bagpipes. I suspected he might be up for a quirky adventure and some tales of the Northwest. He was, so I bought him a bottle of Jack Daniels and sent him off at some pre-dawn hour with Bob Peirce and Bruce West to run the rapids of the high Clackamas River. It was February; I think the bottle was an important addition to the trip. It (and perhaps others) were emptied. I asked only that they return him in time for his opening. He arrived on time in a beautiful red plaid suit and was charming to everyone.

—Mary Beebe

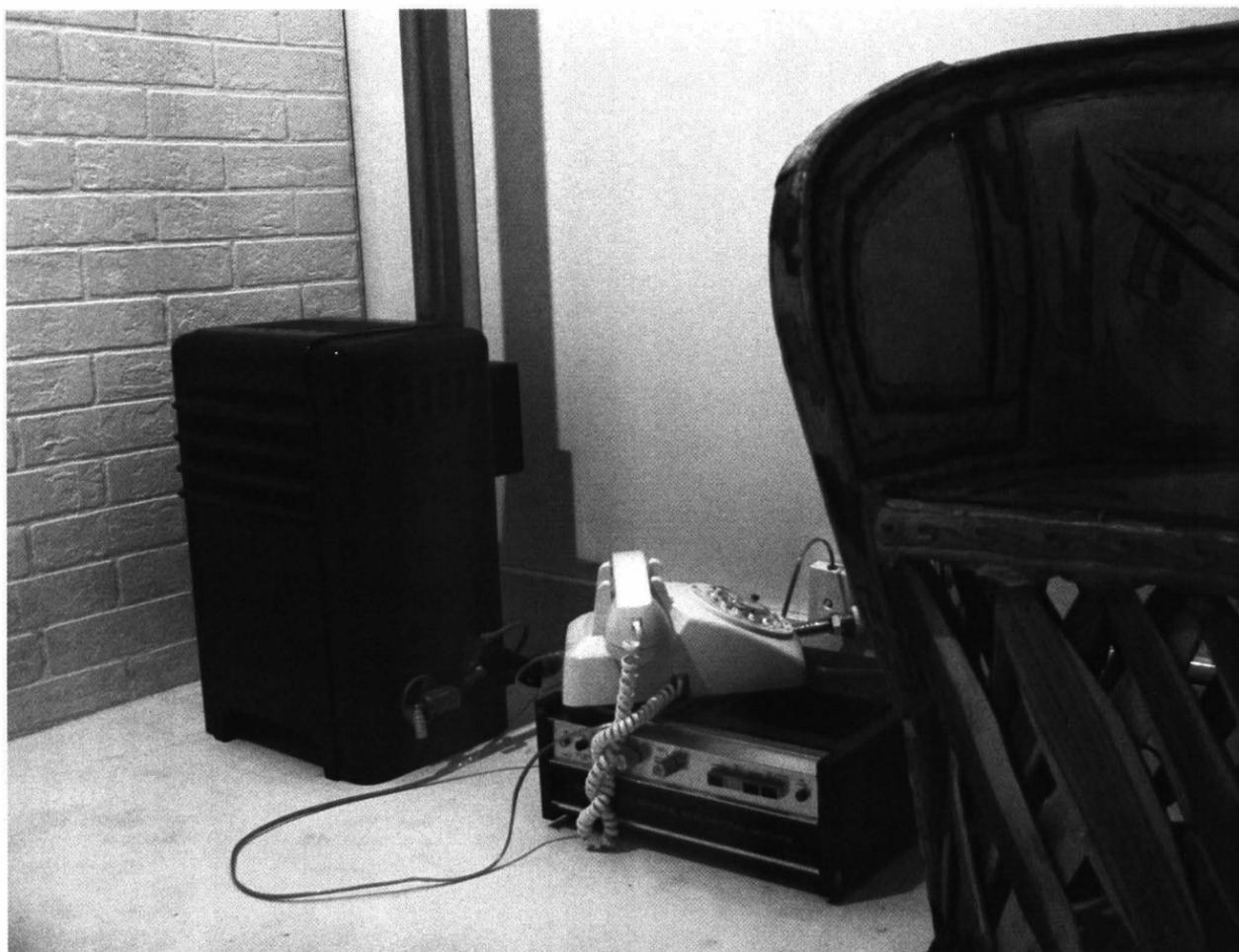
I helped build this piece. I was impressed by the logic of using the materials, 4x8 sheets of plywood, full size—letting the material have its say in directing the proportions of the work. I also was struck by the way that the projecting, "lip" of the facing plywood revealed how thick the walls were and thus spoke of the enclosed volume within the work.

—Paul Sutinen



Chris Burden built an exact replica of his own studio in PCVA and then lived there with his then girl friend Alexis Smith for a week. It was part of a group show of young LA artists which also included Al Ruppertsberg, Bryan Hunt, Michael Asher, Channa Horwitz, and Alexis Smith. Of course, building Chris' piece turned out to be more complex than anyone had anticipated—it was wired for phone and electricity, but I don't think water. It seemed a fairly simple benign piece, rather unlike the Burden work I'd heard about so I kept worrying that there had to be a confrontational "hitch" somewhere. Well, perhaps that was creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. People had stayed up practically all night for several nights running in order to finish the "studio" in time for the opening. Chris was increasingly anxious. About two minutes before people started arriving he painted himself out of his space and declared it finished. Of course the paint was still wet and it was too tempting for one visitor who stepped over the chain and destroyed the fresh new floor. An intense and, indeed, frightening confrontation ensued between the angry, exhausted artist and the taunting, unapologetic visitor. The next night at a public talk Chris apologized saying that his behavior had been life and not art. I can't remember if the visitor apologized, but I hope he did.

—Mary Beebe



Peter Teneau

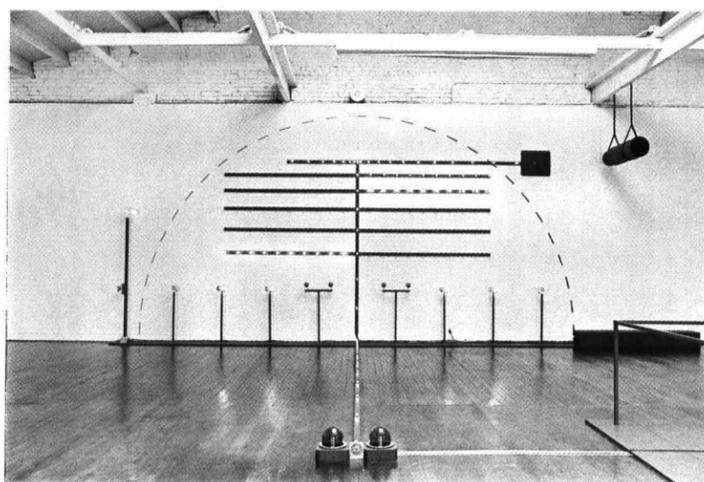
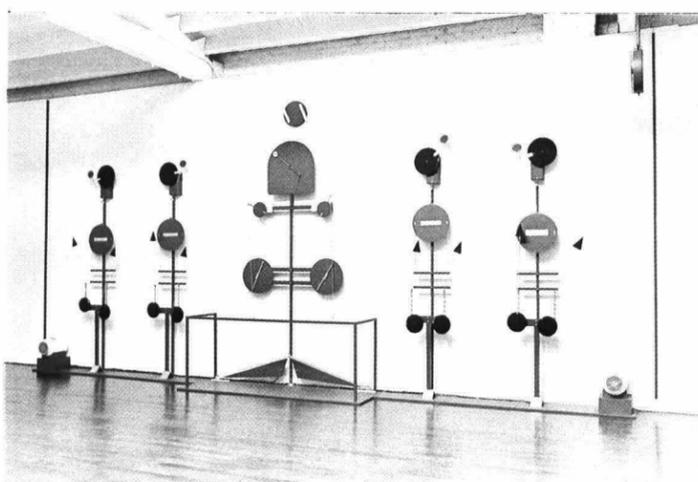
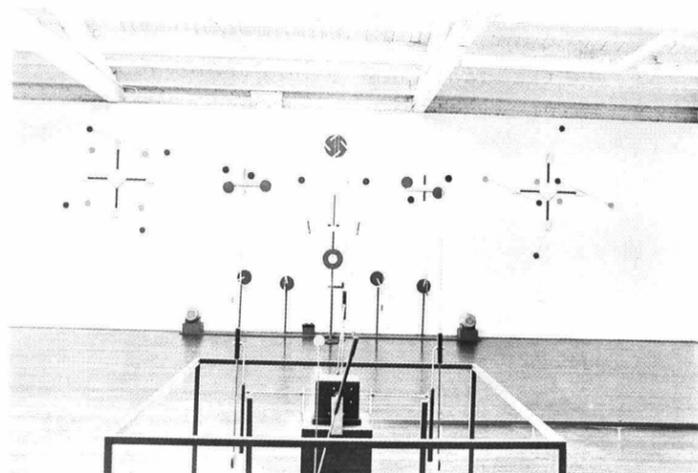
K2-75 Signals March 1975

ALTHOUGH K2-75, SIGNALS on one level involved imagery, it was primarily an investigation of time and synchronization in kinetics. I was attempting to produce a work which included so many various time relationships that the whole functioning piece approached a level of complexity in which it seemed to disintegrate. The context for this happening was hardware, organized rather strictly according to various cross axes and degrees of symmetry. Hence there were clusters of components (sub-systems), each functioning semi-autonomously and capable of producing intermixed events perceived as motion, sound or light changes; synchronization between clusters was achieved electronically, as with individual components within a cluster.

Boundaries between motion, light or sound events were intentionally dissolved. For example, a sound event in one cluster would induce a light or motion reaction in another axially opposite cluster. The type of event in itself was less important than its place in the temporal structure. In the aggregation of different time cycles some were so slow as to produce changes in a threshold zone of the barely perceptible while others were very fast.

My impetus for producing K2 was three questions. What would it be like to move within such an environment, how would people react and what would I find out about time. For an answer something had to be built. Having no precedent this involved accepting the effort as an experiment rather than a realization of a conceived result.

The completed hardware took two years to develop. The environment provided some surprises, some answers, and raised more questions. Other avenues to continue working with time, light, sound and motion in a more concentrated way were suggested. My interest in time as equal with the three spacial dimensions continues.

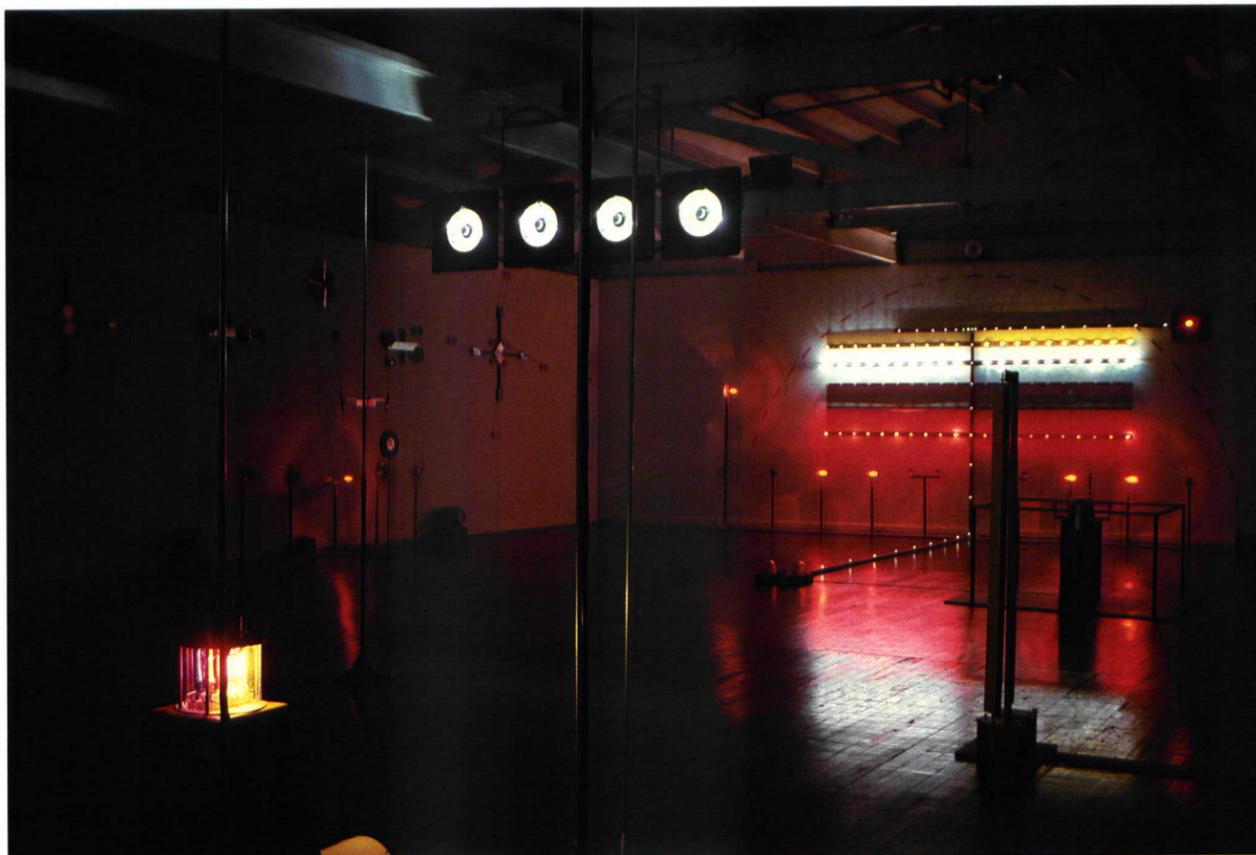


Peter Teneau's installation was a high tech fantasy land. Peter transported the viewer inside a mysterious mechanical world. I don't remember seeing it in daylight. But I made several evening trips to see K2-75 Signals. Standing in the middle of the room there was a sense of animism of these whirring, beeping, blinking, crooning objects. I later experienced something of the same reaction after Jonathan Borofsky spent two weeks putting pieces of himself on the gallery walls, floors and ceilings. Peter later told me that the many elements were intended to interfere with one another and in essence to disassemble or destroy the whole. It had the opposite effect on me.

—Donna Milrany

Peter Teneau did one of PCVA's most remarkable installations—the entire space came alive with evocative light and sound and action. It brought out the most haunting memories of trains and boatyards and airports. It must have done so for everyone, reminded them of their childhood or some wild fantasy come true, because—old, young, corporate, student, conservative, radical, artist or engineer—all responded with amazing enthusiasm. At night it became incredibly beautiful and intense, almost religious. Peter was completely absorbed in building this piece for many months, maybe more than a year. It was a shame we could only have it up for a few weeks.

—Mary Beebe



With its high-tech audiovisual aesthetic coupled with eloquent attention to detail and precision, Teneau's K2-75 Signals was a major influence on my own work with similar media. Perhaps my favorite use of the space along with Vito's Butterfly piece from 1982.

—Ken Butler

Vito Acconci

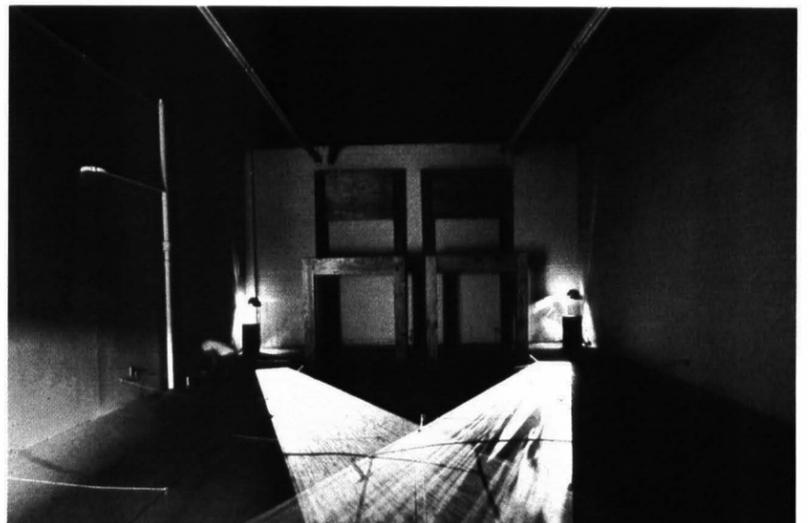
Voice of America

May 1975

A T T H E F A R E N D O F T H E S P A C E are two large wooden chairs, generic chairs, stretching from floor to ceiling—chairs for abstractions, chairs for giants. In front of the chairs, the floor is like a map designed to trip the viewer up: a rope grid, ankle-height, is installed across the gallery—from the chairs, through the ropes, slides are projected across the floor, aerial views of America, changing American landscape. Under the chairs is an audio speaker: one kind of American music drifts into another, from Ozark fiddle to New Orleans piano, to railroad harmonica, cross-country—my voice comes in under the music, the voice of a mythical Mr. America, I'm talking to Mrs. America, we're giving voice to the American dream. Now and then, at the opposite end of the gallery, near the door, there's a flash of light from another slide projector, a burst of light on the chairs: a voice calls out from the wilderness, a response from the children of America, talking back, giving in, becoming American.

When I did VOICE OF AMERICA, the pieces had been in the same general form for the past year and a half: the form of audio installations, rooms with props with sound. For a year and a half I had been away from live pieces: I was no longer a participant (protagonist) in my pieces, the subject was no longer my own person (in relation to itself or to other persons). Audio was a way to 'throw my voice'—to project myself into other roles, to become not-me. But the problem was: I hadn't yet found a replacement for me. It was all too significant, it seems in retrospect, that the pieces took on the aspect of 'movies' (darkened room, projected images): the pieces looked like movies because they presented (whether I like it or not, whether I knew it or not) a kind of dream-space. The space was there for the viewer to experience, certainly, but the content of the space was like a screen that the viewer could never walk into.

VOICE OF AMERICA was one of my first groping attempts to turn 'space' into 'place.' I was starting to sense that, if a piece wasn't going to deal with me, then it was free to deal with the particular location it was in, and the viewers who were part of that location. I was starting to sense that a piece in New York had to be different from a piece in Los Angeles had to be different from a piece in Koln. I was starting to define the source of my pieces not as 'me' but as 'American me' (I was preparing, possibly, for the bicentennial year): I was turning from psychology to sociology, from neuroses to paranoia—my pieces, in short, were starting to be historicized, politicized.

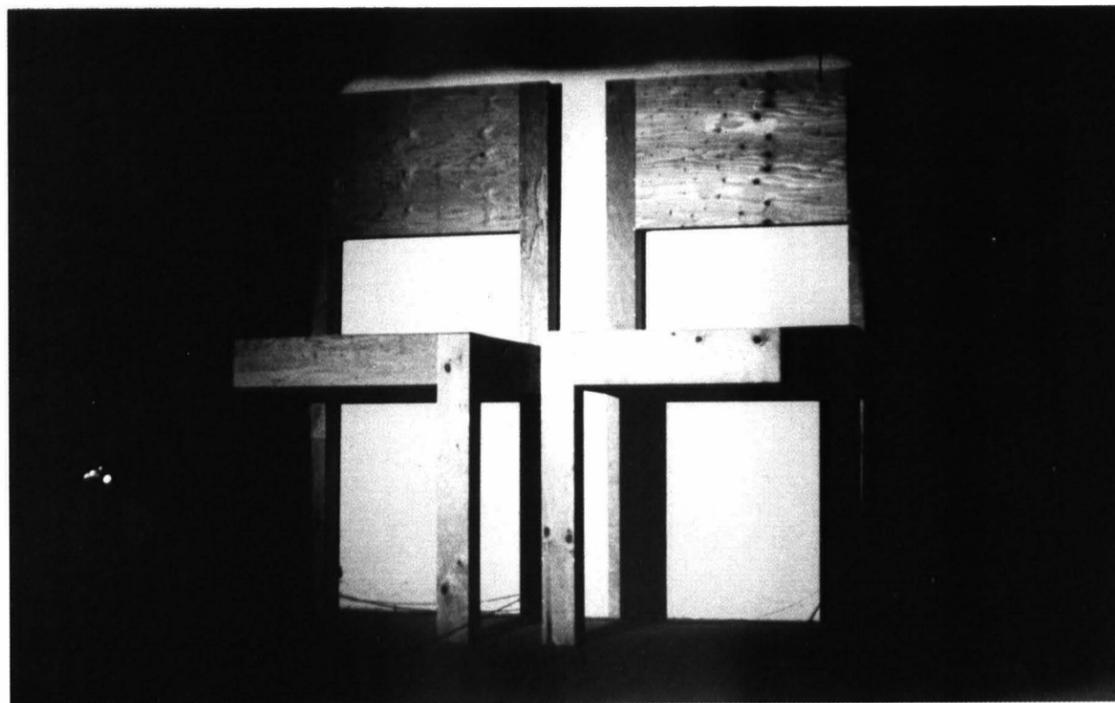
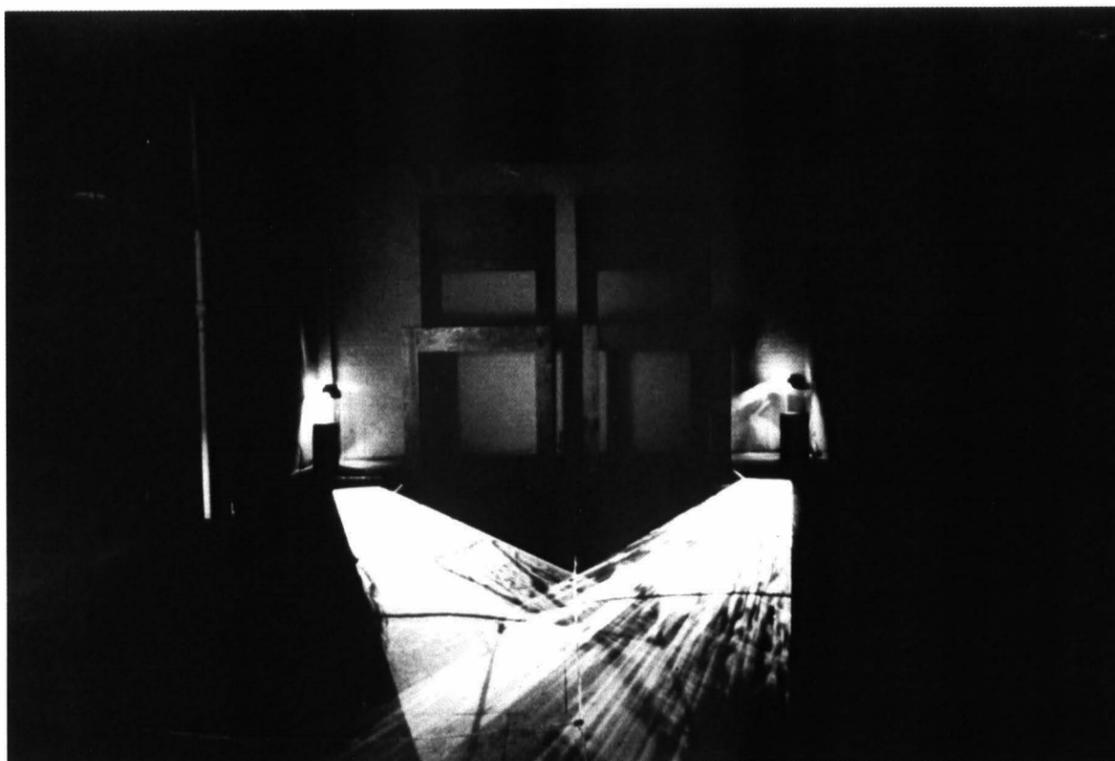


Vito Acconci's *Voice of America* took place in a room we acquired specially for it on a temporary basis from a then apparently friendly landlord! There were two 12' high plywood chairs, like thrones, at one end of the room. Ropes were strung about a foot off the ground in a grid pattern and there were at least two slide projectors projecting pictures through the rope grid (which became almost like latitude and longitude lines) onto the floor. You had to walk through this "map" very carefully and it was not really possible to sit down anywhere. I can't actually remember the pictures very well but there was the most incredibly wonderful and mesmerizing tape which played very loudly. It was Vito talking, taunting, chanting and playing American music of every variety and strain, old and new. He sounded and felt like a sort of national conscience. It seems to me he laid bare some of our myths and false pride and paranoia. It was truly engaging and haunting. People came back again and again and listened for hours. One left feeling proud, not ashamed.

—Mary Beebe

Getting a key and going downstairs to another, private space to see this work, all alone, no crowds, just Vito's voice and the clicking of the slide projectors; stepping through the rope grid quagmire—this was trespassing, eavesdropping.

—Paul Sutinen



Richard Serra

Unequal Elevations
October 1975



Richard Serra ordered and sent ahead three pieces cut from 12" plate steel, each with only a slight variation in size but a similar quality of weight—extremely heavy. They were rectangular cubes: the two which ended up in the installation were 12"x24"x12" and 10"x24"x12", and weighed approximately 1500 lbs. They came up the elevator on pallets ok but the trip up the stairs into the exhibition space was a hair-raising and high-risk venture. I couldn't watch and stayed in the office with the ambulance phone number in clear view until it was over. Good introduction to the artist in this instance, but he turned out to have a heart as soft as his head was tough—just less visible. On the way in from the airport he really responded to first the bridges over the Willamette and then to the old part of downtown right around PCVA. It didn't take him long to figure out the show, two pieces of steel sited along the length of the space, one against the back wall and the other 80' away. Many people said, "where's the show?" but for those who took the time it was quite extraordinary to see the entire space captivated by these two relatively small but extremely powerful blocks of steel and also to realize that you could easily perceive the difference in their size despite the distance between them. At the opening hundreds of people sat on the floor while Richard paced back and forth in the corner and spoke about art and being an artist for three and a half hours in the most personal and compelling way I have ever heard. You could have heard a pin drop the entire time.

A young artist named Seth Tane offered a trip to his favorite bridge. Richard was so taken with the Railroad Turnbridge that he stayed a longer time, we raised a little extra money and he made one of his best short movies. Seth got virtually no credit for his participation and generosity, which had to be a valuable, if difficult, lesson about showing "your stuff" to one of the world's strongest artists.

—Mary Beebe

The most amazing management of space with simple elements that I've seen. The work is gone. It is unintelligible from photographs. People came in looking for a "thing" and found nothing. There were no parts to like. This mute piece gave stage presence to the room itself. Even though I got a lot out of this work, I'm still not certain that I got what Serra intended.

—Paul Sutinen

Dan Flavin

February 1976



Dan Flavin may have drunk all the Margaux in the Benson Hotel cellars—with some help from the quietly amazed PCVA crew. We had an unexpected amount of free time before the opening. When we sent Dan photos of the space, he designed a beautiful and extensive installation which had 24 fixtures in each of the five corners of the space. Since PGE and PP&L had both made their first donation (\$1,000) to PCVA for this show, I decided we'd better not be as cavalier as we often were about permits. It would have been terrible if the show had been closed down with onslaughts of negative publicity. At City Hall we discovered the code required individual plugs for each of the 24 fixtures, installed, of course, by union electricians at high rates and slow pace. A tripling crippling budget (not to mention the opening) loomed...Dan responded with good cheer that he didn't think we should be spending our non-existent money on union wages and he could create just as good, even if not as dramatic, a show with many less fixtures—two in each corner. The result was, indeed, magic, and we tried to be just as cheerful about the disappearing Margaux as he had been sympathetic to our situation.

—Mary Beebe



Robert Morris

March 1977



John Hampton rescued us by donating those huge timbers—or else he sold them to us for nearly nothing and then found someone to buy them at the end of the show. Also I always thought it was one of the most successful installations, artistically, that anyone ever did. It seemed to address all aspects of the space: the beams on the floor relating to the unseen but known beams beneath the floor as well as the beams in the open ceiling above; the mirrors extending the space (in between) as you moved through it; the knowledge that you were in a box-like room could not be gained from the perspective through the mirrors; mirror perception revealed one moving along the beams simultaneously from the front and the back: Fun house tricks requiring intelligence and concentration to disclose the truth.

—Mary Beebe

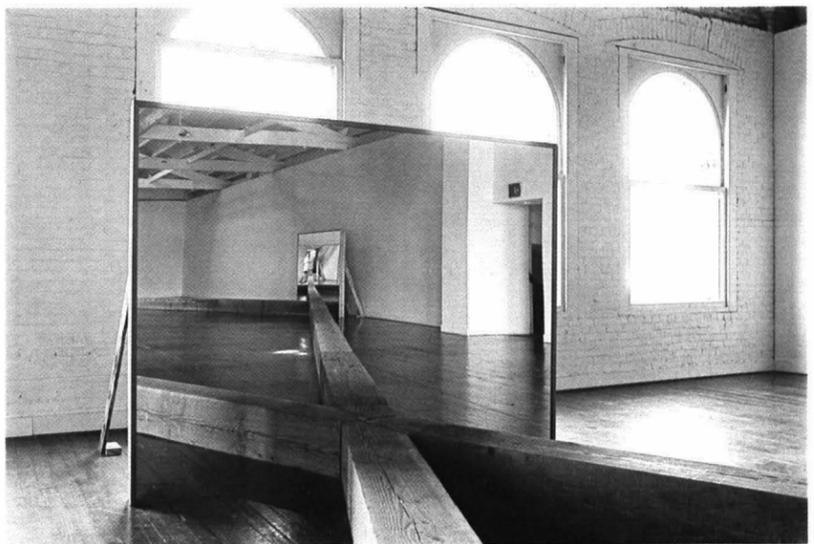
Robert Morris sent his plan and supply list ahead, and the four 6'x8' plate glass mirrors were delivered to the third-floor landing by the glass handlers who got away without bringing them up one last flight of stairs to the main gallery. Not realizing the danger, Rob Range and I carried the mirrors upstairs gloveless and headless. Next the beautiful 12" square beams arrived. The last to arrive was Morris and in the morning work began in earnest. Bob, with chainsaw in hand, and a small group of helpers proceeded to rough out the mitered corners of the beams but sometime in the early afternoon people were tired and there was an accident. Rob's finger was a mess after being mashed under a beam and while

Rob went to a nearby emergency room Bob declared a rest period until more help could arrive. The rest of the process went smoothly and the installation was very successful. Morris spent the day before the opening at a car race with Ray Barnes and then gave a memorable lecture that evening. A few weeks later we produced a Terry Riley concert in the space and used the Morris installation for both stage and seating. People still talk about that concert as a highlight because of the combined magic of Terry's music and the reflections of Morris's dramatic installation.

—Donna Milrany

This piece became, on a couple of occasions, an after hours set for some impromptu musical improvisations with acoustic instruments and percussion and banging on the beams.

—Ken Butler

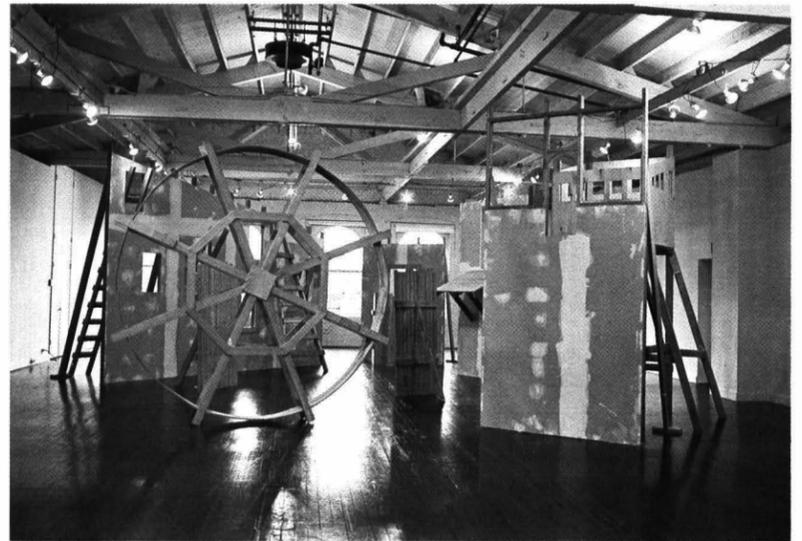


Alice Aycock

A Precarious Method for Attacking an Enemy Fortress February 1978

THE PROJECT ENTITLED "A Precarious Method for Attacking an Enemy Fortress" was one of a number of transitional pieces I built in 1978 and 1979. This particular project related to the outdoor sculpture I built for "Documenta" in Kassel, Germany the year before, in that the sculpture created a theatrical, movie-set environment. In both projects, I was interested in developing a situation in which a person would simultaneously be the viewer/actor/spectator/storyteller within the sculpture. The installation at the Portland Center was the result of my fantasy of playing a game of a pretend, make-believe war, while making references to actual historical Roman and Medieval techniques of war, for example, the use of movable walls for defense. In addition, this project was one of several

in which my interest in technology was initiated, especially in my use of the wooden wheel as a metaphor and symbol for technology. With the wheel, I associated ideas of the wheel of fortune, ferris wheels, carousels, and a rolling wheel of fire, all of which are ideas and associations that frequently occur in my later work in various materials such as steel, glass and with motorized elements.

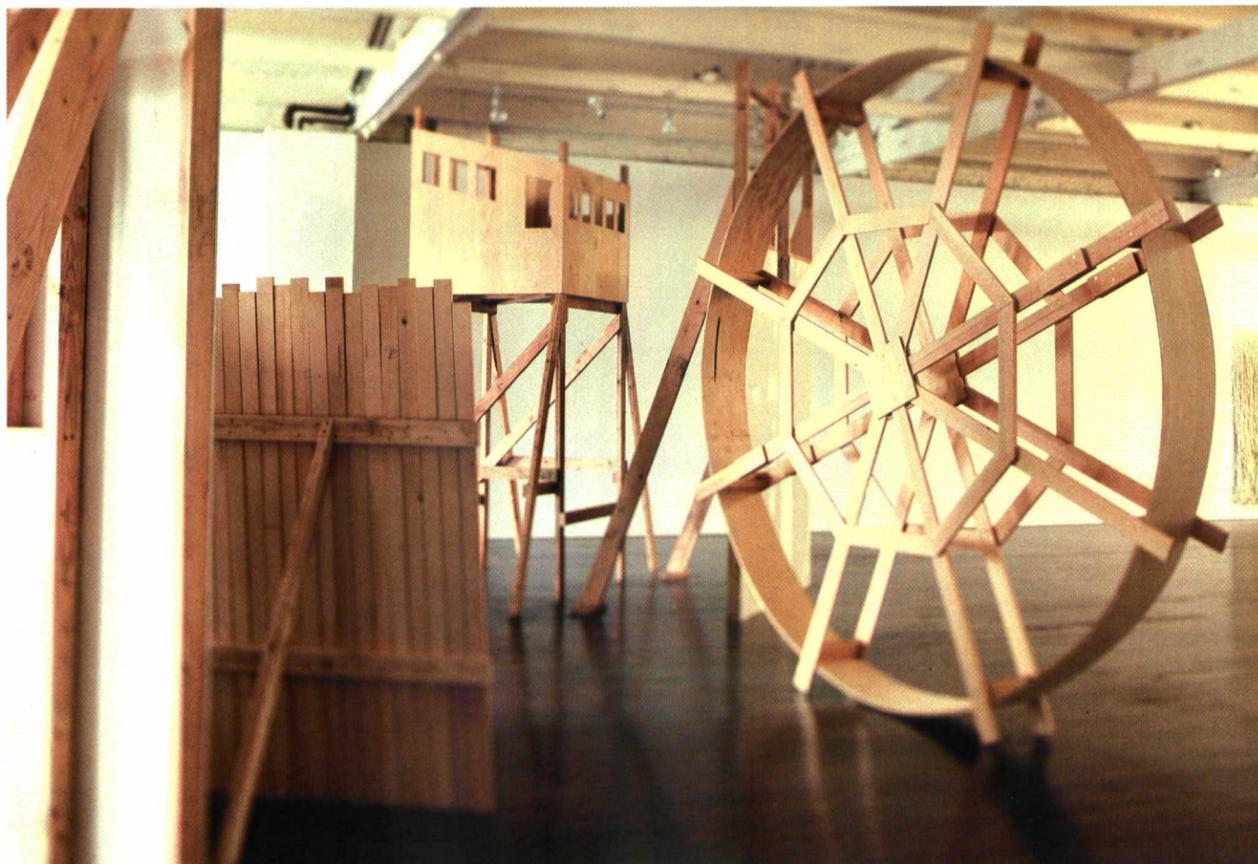


Alice Aycock brought along Tom Farmer, an artist who was at the time working at Artpark, and they began building what looked like stage props. Gradually, something of a fortress emerged and we were soon climbing, peering and hiding in this unsettling settlement.
—Donna Milrany

Alice Aycock's titles really get you going. PCVA's piece was called "A Precarious Method for Attacking an Enemy Fortress" which launches you into a fantastic journey of historic and "how to" analysis as well as a physical and visual exploration of the unknown but somehow familiar. These bare wood images emerged from the floor, like remnants of an ancient story. Sometimes a bit scary, sometimes funny, always haunting.
—Mary Beebe

Alice's work was really serious in a very wacky way. When you first entered PCVA it looked like some kids from the future had been there and made forts. The look was real high-tech but the materials were definitely basic. I remember at the opening somebody tried to climb the ladder and this seemed to remove a lot of tension about the piece. The most amazing thing about watching Alice work was that she did everything wearing a carpenter's apron and high-heel boots!

—Laura Ross-Paul



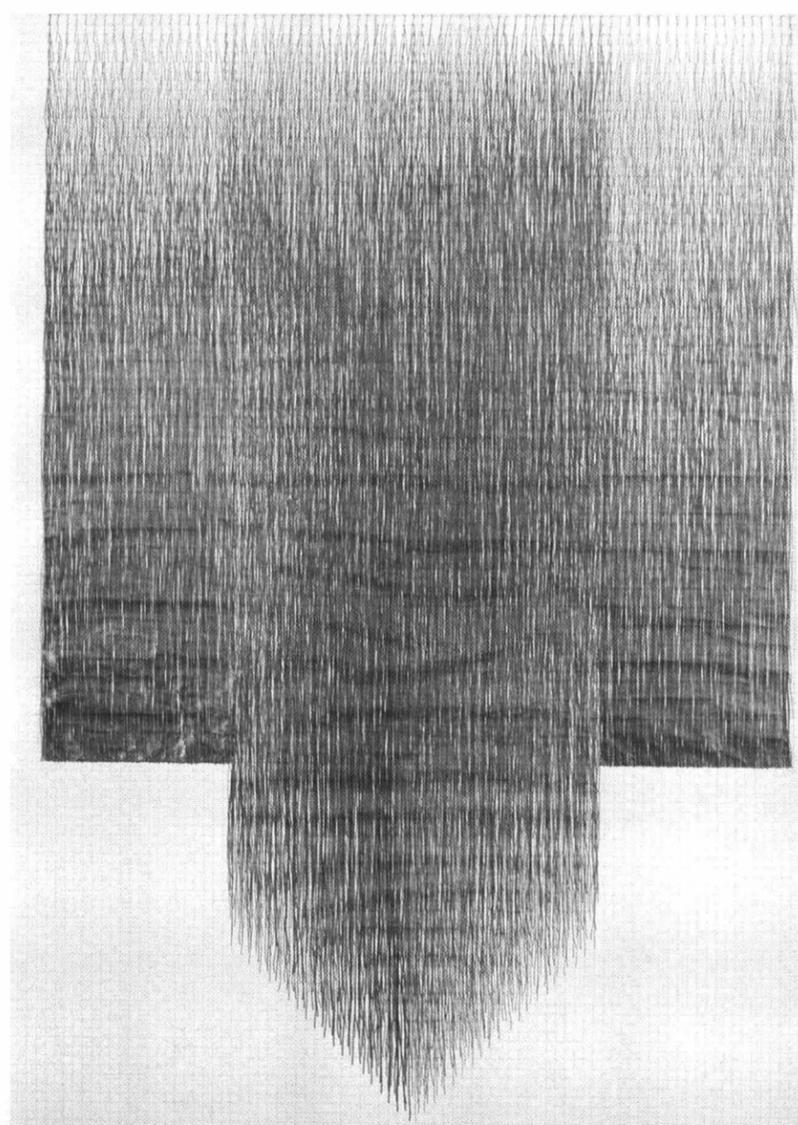
Brenda Miller

February 1978

THE EXHIBITION AT PCVA afforded an opportunity for me to see a group of pieces in all three states of their possible existence; ideally, in their diagrammatic form, actually, in their physical form, and potentially, in their capability of regeneration.

At the time of the Exhibition in 1978, I was completing my work with a numerically linear system which was executed directly on the wall, made with sisal, which acted as a 3-dimensional line: 6400 "lines" were affixed to a wall at one-inch intervals at intersections along an 80-inch x 80-inch grid. Their lengths ran from one-inch to forty inches and the placement of each "line" was crucial to the eventual outcome of the "profile" of each piece.

The size, layout and natural light from the skylight of PCVA was very special and it allowed me to install a whole "set" of variants at one time.



We had the opportunity of collaborating with Portland State University in Brenda Miller's show, which allowed us to present her beautiful alphabet drawings at PSU while PCVA presented the installation of six very large wall pieces. The task of sizing, cutting and tying the sisal into thousands and thousands of knotted strands was formidable but became pleasant work once the process had begun. We discussed "women's work" as we measured, clipped and knotted and Carolyn Cole began talking about Judy Chicago and work on the "Dinner Party" and then there was an exchange about the exploitation of the women who worked on the Chicago project. Brenda's sisal wall pieces were extremely sensory and compelling and by way of congratulating ourselves for completing the strenuous work (and Aycock's installation as well), we treated ourselves to a weekend at Cascade Head, one of Oregon's most photogenic spots.

—Donna Milrany

BRENDA MILLER's wall drawings were an intense and methodical, very careful, undertaking. After days and days of back room preparation with teams of people measuring and cutting and counting, these creatures grew from the walls and fell to the floors. Soft twine hung in various geometric progressions surprised and delighted even the most prudish mind with a sensuality from outright lust to a touch so gentle.

—Mary Beebe

I remember helping Brenda tie her knots with some other women before they were stapled up. Luckily Brenda wasn't real up-tight about getting everything exactly the same length.

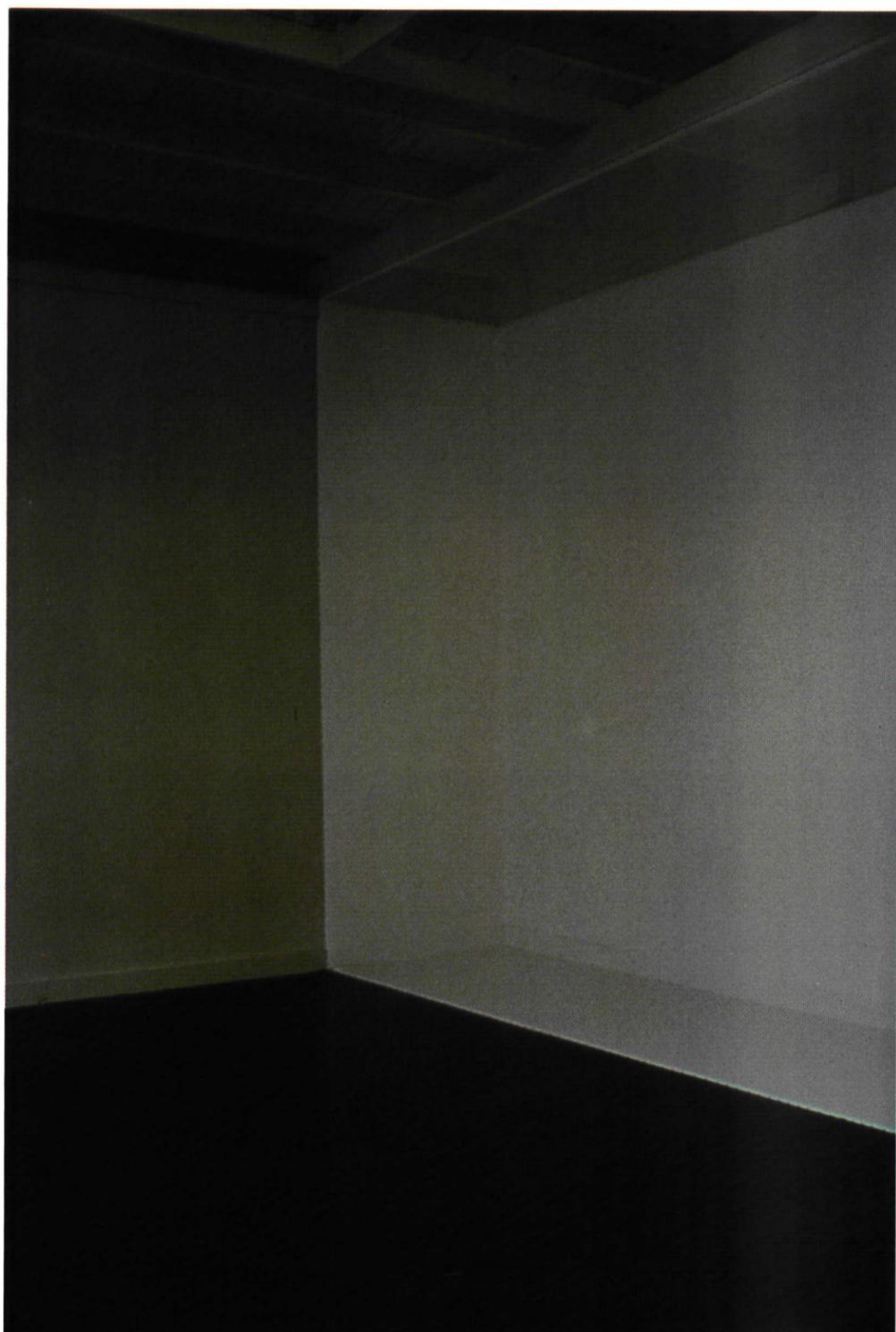
Even when we stapled the knots to the wall she didn't freak out if we missed the mark a little. You just couldn't imagine the effect of how they were going to look when they were done—which was much more precise and elegant than the knot-tying and stapling suggested. For me, those pieces were mostly about the process. It was kind of like attending a sewing-bee which magically turned into an art opening.

—Laura Ross-Paul



Robert Irwin

November 1978



ROBERT IRWIN visited PCVA some time before his show and went away to quietly think for a while. When he returned, I remember, the main thing he wanted us to do was to clean the huge skylight which probably hadn't been done since it was originally installed. It was quite a tricky and dangerous task, but made a remarkable difference in the quality of light in the space if one paid attention—just what Irwin requires (or provokes). On the floor across the center of the space he laid a two by about 1/2" strip. It was barely raised from the floor, but visually it rose to be a wall and really divided the space in half. At the far end of the gallery he put a scrim, about a foot or two out from the wall and the exact same size as it. In doing so he made a nearly invisible wall in front of the actual wall, thus displacing or confusing one's visual understanding of exactly where the boundary of the room was or wasn't, and changing one's sense of the space. At the other end he painted deep, deep blue around the windows and

a foot or two (same distance as scrim was on opposite wall) into the room on the adjacent walls and ceiling. This formed a dark space in which the windows became tunnels, almost telescopes, to the outside. These four very simple and minimal gestures caused you to explore the physical space and in the process examine the nature of the light both inside and outside the gallery and how it affected your perception of the various elements composing the interior (e.g. walls, windows, floor, volume, etc.) Quite a journey when discovered, and certainly one that's made a significant difference in my life.

—Mary Beebe

You almost had to know the space in its usual condition to see what Irwin did. The scrim at one end was luscious and foggy. The black wall around the windows made the windows into "lights." There are more "parts", but I think the work was about a "whole" room, a holistic experience.

—Paul Sutinen



Michelle Stuart

Stone Alignments/Solstice Cairns June 1979

THEN, BLACK LICHEN COVERED basalt...acres of low grasses...an occasional butterfly...killdeer nest and rattlesnake hole...an undulating plateau...in the distance the Klickitat Mountains against the sky. Below the stately Columbia moving in unison with the wind...a big clean space...East Columbia River Gorge near Rowena.

Somewhere between Hood River and the Dalles...old Fort Dalles...early Portage...land end of the Oregon Trail...the rest of the weary journey on rafts...it was a mighty flow then...

Lewis and Clark traded blue beads for five dogs...which they found very tasty...noting the Indian burial vault on Menaloose Island and the beacon fires...Lot Whitcomb...Terry Quints' great great grandfather built Milwaukee City on the river...supposing it would become Portland...while in fact Stumptown...as unromantic as its name...grew into the city of roses...or so they say...but Lot also built the elegant steamboat Independence...white lady of her time...conquering the Willamette and bringing five card draw up the river.

Down the river near Walla Walla the missionary Marcus Whitman returned to find his wife and child massacred by the Indians...change comes hard...a wagon train was a week away...there wasn't to be settling yet in Nez Perce land...the great Chief Joseph negotiated treaties only to see them broken...to see himself broken after the long walk through the Bitterroot Mountains...his braves finally chose Sitting Bull...he died on the Colville Reservation...or so they say...

Now,

After the Appaloosa and the two wooden gates...a mile or so of scrub oak and pine lined with blue and violet cornflowers...or was it ballhead waterleaf or gorman's lovage...balsam root or yellowbells...poison oak or the wild rose...there stands a lone pear tree by a basalt mount...sentry marking entry to the sweeping plateau.

Farther on lies George Selfridges' farm house...the sanctuary of a kerosene lamp in the dark...black night birds and crickets encircling our fire until dawn.

I stand in the wind at four AM every morning to see which notch or triangle on the mountains the rising sun will crown...the same each evening as the sun rests on clouds over toward the coast cancelled only by the Cascades.

Now on the plateau face to the sky stands Stone Alignments/Solstice Cairns...Moon Crater and Aura to the south east...the round light stones and boulders came from Hood River at the base of Mount Hood forty miles south...they were chosen both to contrast with the dark indigenous basalt and to bring the mountain to the river...a form of ritual passage...the transition of spring to summer...marked by water.

Solstice...this cycle in time patterned by time...rocks...records from native American sites are buried under the central cairn...a poem by Han-Shan...a line from Kipling's Song to Mithras the Sun God...“many roads thou hath fashioned: all of them lead to the light”...later I learned that Mithras was born out of a rock...which breaking open permitted him to emerge...The north cairn...the sunrise cairn...the sunset cairn are built on mounds...they form equal angles within the hundred foot circle...they align with the sunrise and sunset on June 21, 1979...sunset cairn also aligns with a beacon on Menaloose Island in the river...it was not determined...I believe it was not by chance.

Indians called Rowena...the place where the sun meets the rain...each day clouds hung low over the mountains during the sun's passage...on the twentieth of June it was clear to project the exact orbit...the moon embraced the sun as it rose in the white fire dawn...on the Solstice from beneath a rock and a flower...hugging the Moon Crater...four Killdeer were born in a small woven nest...they emerged like Mithras himself...Journey in time...sensuous mounds...rounded earth base topped with cairns...flat stones...oval stones...shape matching shape...joined to link the dreamer to the horizon sealed by the sun...a circle of Midsummer light drawing the shadow of a small bird over the silent garden...

MICHELLE STUART came to Portland several months ahead of her show to look around at outdoor possibilities. I introduced her to my brother Spencer Beebe, who was then head of the Nature Conservancy Northwest and knows "the territory" extremely well. He listened to her desires and then sent her off with a map marked with sites she might find interesting. She was enthralled, and zeroed in on the Columbia Gorge Rowena Dell area, about 60 miles from Portland. We obtained permission from the generous owner to "occupy" one particular large windy, dry plateau about 500' up looking out over the Columbia River. It was/is a glorious site. Michelle wanted smooth river stones, from the mountain (Mt. Hood) brought to this river (Columbia).

It was a herculean effort accomplished by an ever changing crew of volunteers. This team lived, worked, ate, and slept on the site. They observed and integrated themselves and Stone Alignments/Solstice Cairns into it piece by piece carefully and intimately.

It is a time piece in which cairns and viewing circles form a 100' diameter wheel and line up with the sunrise, sunset, and true north on the summer solstice. Nearby a smaller circular natural crater was lined with river stones and became a "moon circle". It turned out that the islands in the river directly below were sacrosanct Indian burial grounds.

—Mary Beebe

A litany of stones—the repetition of time, the going round, the gravity of the earth. Time and gravity and the sun.

—Sabrina Ullman

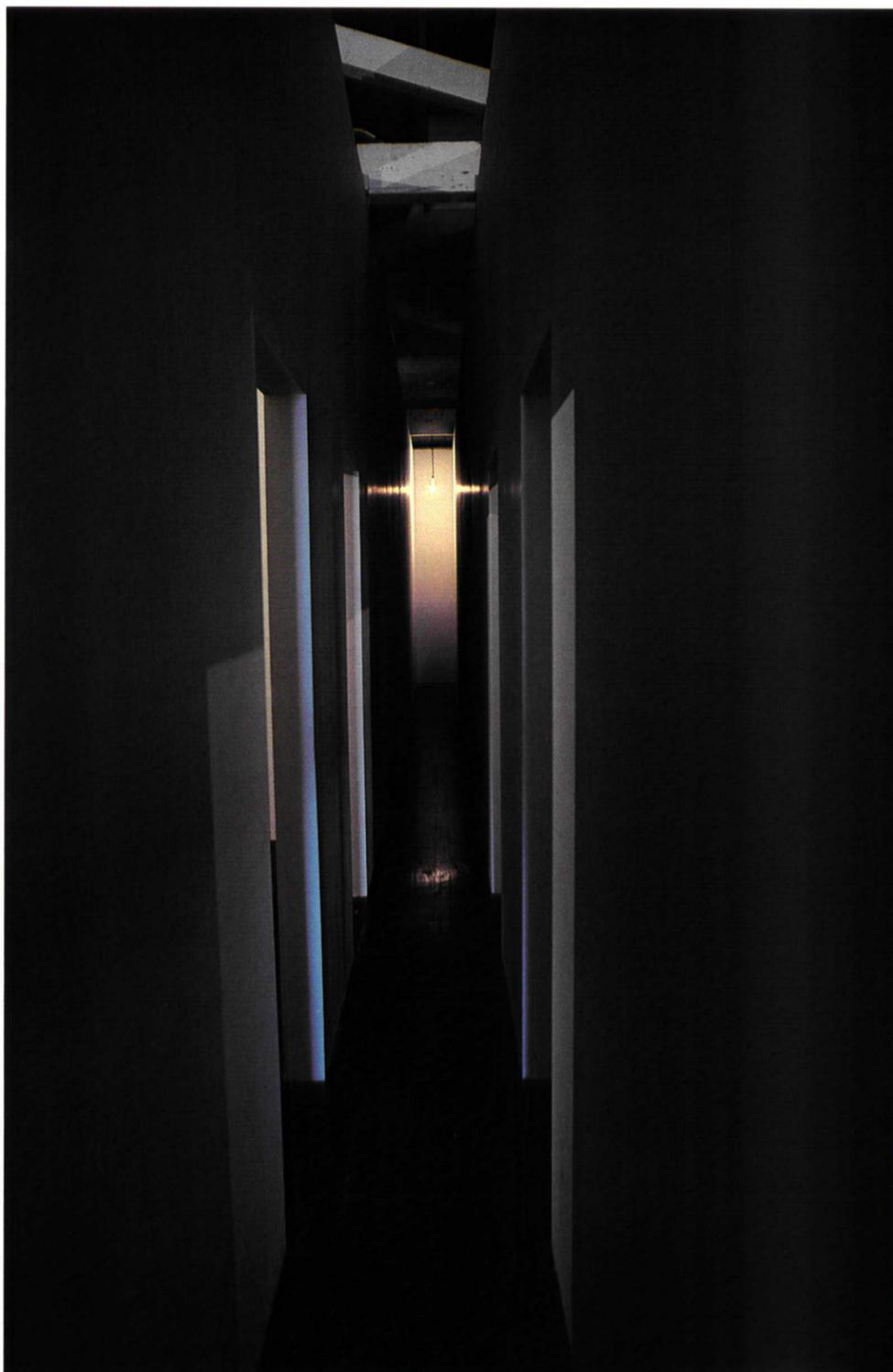


Like a lens gathering things into focus, Stone Alignments/Solstice Cairns is a drawn plan that makes you feel the relationship of yourself to the earth and sky. It reminds us of our place in the infinite system.

—Paul Sutinen

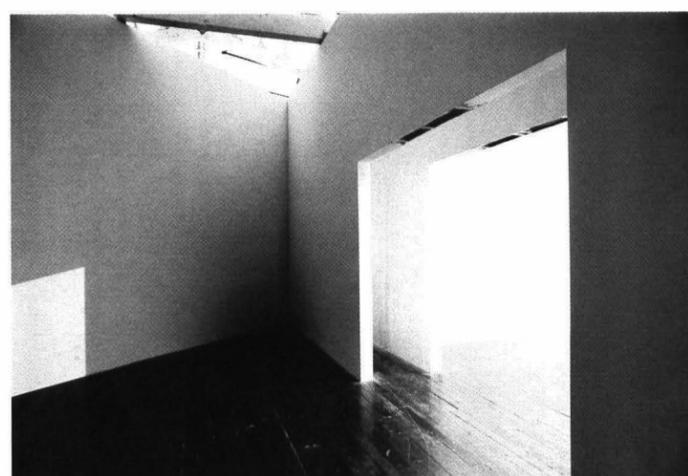
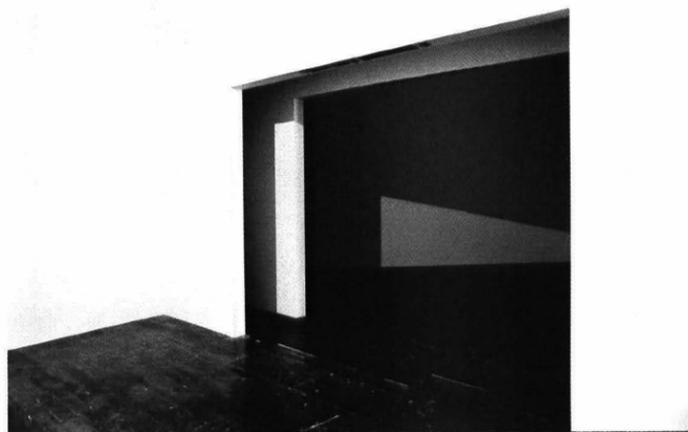
Bruce Nauman

September 1979



The piece was nearly completely constructed by Jim Raglione and myself by the time Bruce arrived. Our plan was a messy sketch which might still be in a file somewhere. Bruce was a little upset at seeing an almost completed piece without having been there for the work. Originally there were to be two lights, 200 W bulbs, one in each room, alternating. Bruce added a third—at the end of the corridor, blinking on a different timer from the others—and said, when we turned it on, that it made more sense that way. Bruce called two weeks after the opening to say he wanted the wall areas between the double entrances to each room removed; cut away but not patched, so that it was visibly an alteration.

—Mathieu Gregoire



Jonathan Borofsky

Installation - I dreamed I found a red ruby
December 1979

I SPENT 14 DAYS WORKING in the space. I made 22 different paintings on the various walls and ceiling structures. Different cut out images, (Ruby, Saturn, Flying figure) were hung from the ceiling and other structures engaged the floor as well. The images represented what I had been thinking about—politics in the outside world as well as my more personal inner politics. I tried to make the entire space feel like one whole, walk-in, three-dimensional painting—like the inside of my brain.

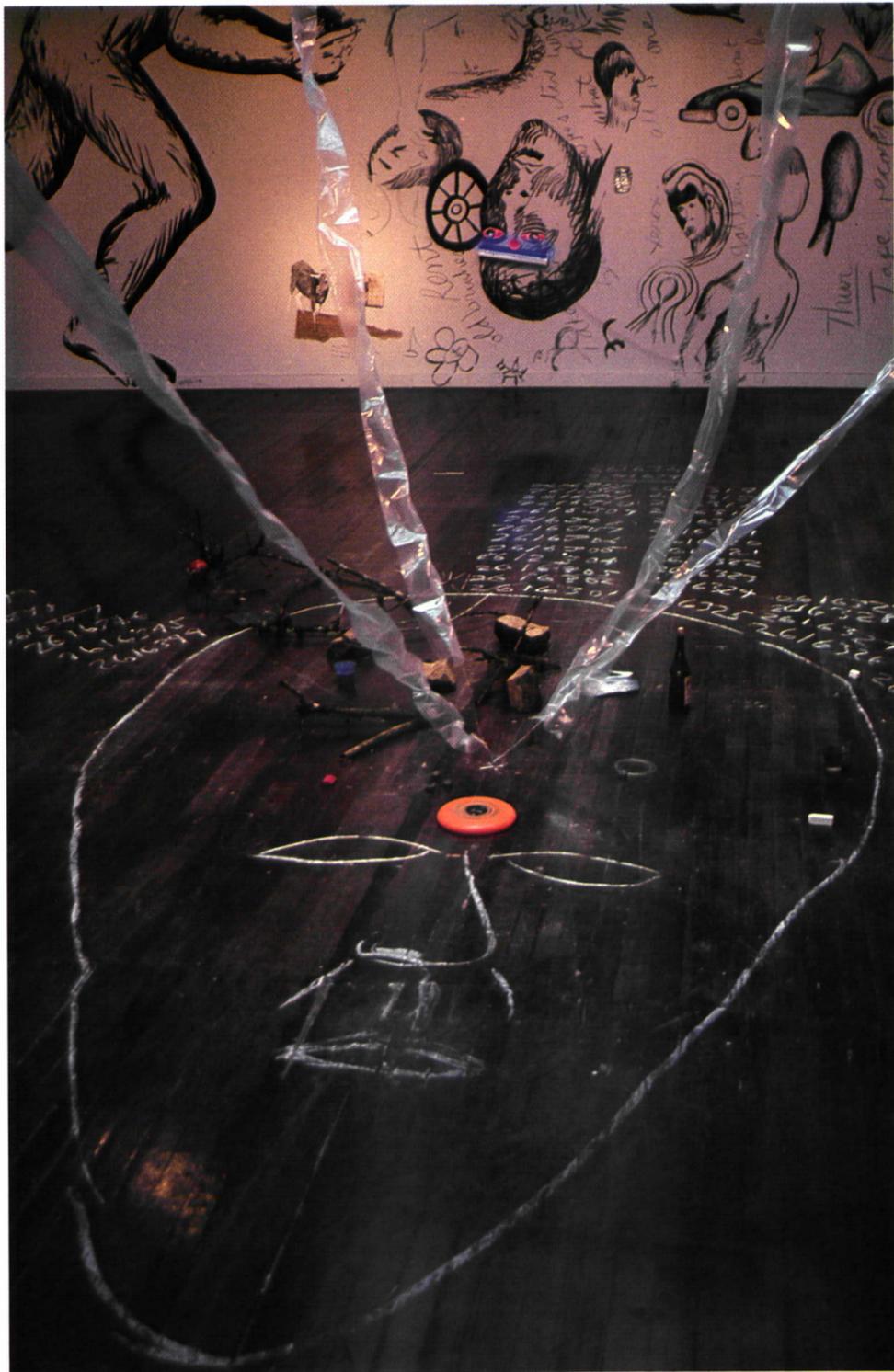


I remember at one exhibition committee meeting someone had brought in some work that Bill thought was just plain stupid, but when it came time for all of us to vote, he voted for this work to be shown. After the meeting I asked him why he had voted for something that he had chastised only a few minutes ago. He replied "If an artist's work gets me to react that strongly to where I really am disgusted there must be some kind of power in it and I would just as soon meet the stuff face to face to see why it brings out that emotion." That show never made it to PCVA. However, a few meetings later I remembered what Bill had said when Mel made a pitch to have Borofsky do a show. I voted for the exhibition even though I thought the work was stupid. Little did I know that I would look back at that exhibition as the most important show at PCVA for me personally as well as the Center. I see it as a landmark exhibition for this reason. The beautiful pristine space had been violated. After years of being a slave to the gorgeous aspect of 5,000 feet of un-pillared space someone (Jon) had come along and said it's not the space, it's what it gets filled with, and I intend to fill it with everything from dreams, to personal stories, to political headlines, to downright fullblown humor. For the first time PCVA was filled with a soul.

—Tad Savinar

His dreams and images are so fierce and insistent. When I walked into the gallery, I felt as if I'd leapt inside Borofsky's psyche.

—Sabrina Ullman



Dennis Oppenheim

The Assembly Line (with By-Products From a Mechanical Trance)
November 1980

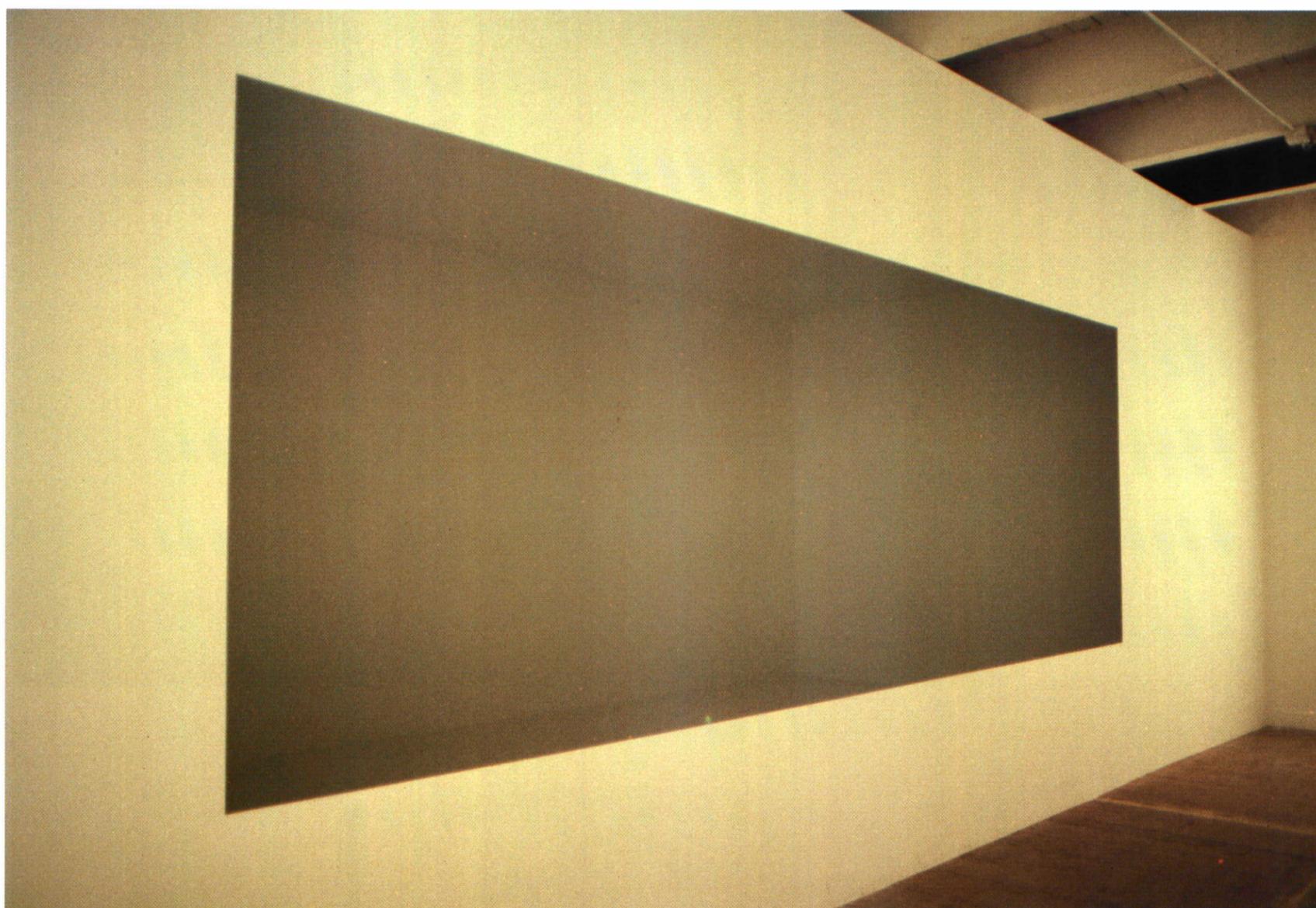


I remember a phone call from Dennis Oppenheim's assistant, Amy Plumb, who had a litany of materials, personnel and expertise needed to create "The Assembly Line (with By-Products From a Mechanical Trance)." It was a tall order and a limited-time-only offer. But when Dennis arrived a week later, a good natured-crew—mostly highly skilled artist volunteers like Barry Johnson and Lee Kelly—had assembled and we had a long list of suppliers for fabric, sheet metal, plywood, industrial fans, vents and the myriad other elements needed to create the envisioned mind machine. Lee gave us access to his well equipped sculpture studio and the Gooddell brothers created huge geometric fabric "lanterns". Barry Johnson was a super efficient construction boss and I even put my brother-in-law, Dennis Samer, to work when he came to town on business. The Assembly Line was magnificent and is one of the few works that is still in existence, having been purchased by Warner Communications.

—Donna Milrany



James Turrell
September 1981



Constructed by Craig Baumhofer and myself from very precise drawings sent by Turrell at the last minute. He had done the piece about five times previously and has done it many times since. Each time it is different, but not by much.

—Mathieu Gregoire

This particular piece is one of the most memorable experiences I have had visiting an exhibition. It was also one of the most influential. There are two aspects of this piece that made a strong impression on me: One was the apparent simplicity of the work. The other was the concept of illusion—an environmental illusion. I liked that idea very much. I like being fooled. It made me want to fool people too.

When I first entered the gallery space I thought it was another big minimal field painting. “So what’s the big deal”, I thought. I didn’t realize “the big deal” until I was about 2 feet from what I thought was the surface.

This same piece was in Seattle at COCA later. One day Larry Reid, who ran Rosco-Louie Gallery, hid inside the work and waited for the next naive visitor. As they approached what they probably thought to be a painting, he jumped out. The story goes that they were quite frightened and Larry was asked never to return to COCA. Now he is the director.

—Bill Will

Light is feeling: when I looked at this work, I felt I had fallen away from myself—like in a dream, where the air is ghostly and thick and the light dense with vapor.

—Sabrina Ullman

I took four students to see the Turrell piece. I sent them in one at a time. Then I had them each write down what they saw. Three wrote, in effect, “I saw a gray rectangle on the wall.” I sent each of these three back in one at a time. I told them to stay until they “saw it.” Each came out with the amazed smile of revelation on their face.

—Paul Sutinen

Michael Glier

White Male Power: Don't Let the Horror Turn You to Stone January 1982

I D E C I D E D O N T H E I M A G E R Y of this installation while reading Newsweek on my way to Portland. I was struck by an unusually revealing photograph of President Reagan. Instead of the reassuring, middle distance shot of a waving raven-haired patriarch, this photo was an extreme close-up of an aggressive, slightly cruel politician with crows feet and high relief, turkey wattles. To this portrait I added Medusa curls and snake hands busily tending Reagan's social agenda.

The impermanence of chalk drawings on the wall allows me to address very topical subjects. Since the drawings are washed away after the exhibition, I can pull images from today's news and not have to worry about their relevance ten years hence. Also, their transience separates them from the marketplace, which makes appreciation of them less complicated.

Usually, a viewer looks into the imaginary space of a framed drawing. In a wall-drawing installation, however, the viewer stands within the drawing. This unusual switch in the physical relationship between drawing and viewer is entertaining. Entertainment is important for engaging the public in a discussion of social issues.

I still feel good about this piece, both as art and propaganda. I'll like the work even more when it becomes irrelevant in 1988.

When I started out to curate what turned into the "Few Good Men" show I had no predetermined idea of what the show would end up being. All I knew was that it had to be cheap and I wanted it to be something new and exciting. Not something we had already seen in *Artforum*. Well it turned into a show in black and white. All the work was produced by men (Robert Longo, Robert Mapplethorpe, Richard Prince, Mike Glier, and a performance by Eric Bogosian) and the core issue of all the work was those artists interpreting various aspects of the male identity. I always thought it was curious that Mike chose to portray Reagan as Medusa (a woman).

—Tad Savinar



Vito Acconci

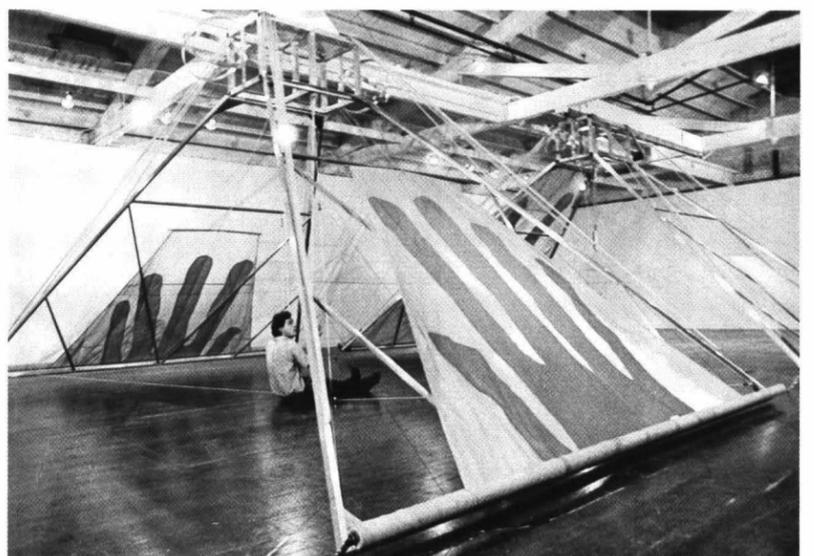
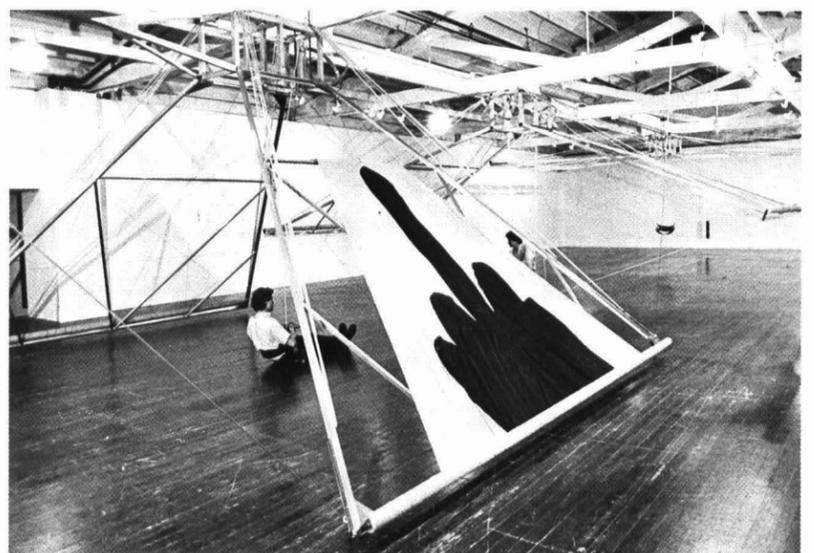
The City That Comes Down From The Sky February 1982

THREE MECHANICAL “butterflies,” made of aluminum tubing: the “flying creatures” are lined up along the ceiling, their wings outstretched, a swing hanging down from each body. When a viewer sits on the swing, the wings swoop down to the ground, in the shape of a tent or a conventional gabled roof. The two butterflies at the end of the room move in toward the butterfly in the middle, which stays in place. Once each wing is down, a ring falls within reach; if a viewer pulls the ring, a shade rises up from the bottom to cover the wing: on the two end butterflies, a black hand gestures against a blue sky with scattered clouds—on the middle butterfly, the hand is red, the hand is cut into with features and transformed into a mask.

By 1982 the pieces had been, for two years, “person-activated”: a piece consisted of an instrument or vehicle to be used by a viewer—use by the viewer resulted in the erection of a shelter, the erection of architecture—the shelter was usable as the carrier of a sign, of an image, of propaganda. What I liked was that a viewer, literally, completed the piece; the viewer, literally, constructed the “meaning” (the poster, the sign) of the piece. But my fear was that the pieces were getting too gimmicky, too caught up in mechanics. The title, “The City That Comes Down From The Sky,” was making me wonder: were the pieces falling into fantasy? were they getting too playful? was reality lost in an atmosphere of carnival? A few months later, then, the movement in pieces was simplified; the movement became as normal, as conventional, as opening a window, as closing a door—the movement became expected and no longer resembled a magic act, a sleight-of-hand trick.

So, in one sense, “The City That Comes Down From The Sky” was at the tail-end of something, the end of a method. But, in another sense, “The City That Comes Down From The Sky” kept something going, confirmed a theme for me: the notion of portability—the notion of mobile homes, taken as literally as possible—the notion of the walking city. This is something that’s still, very definitely, on my mind.

And, in at least one sense, “The City That Comes Down From The Sky” started something: the shelter that is, at the same time, a figure (a person, an animal)—what we’re in as “one of us”—the figure made too large, like a monument, but then becoming usable, inhabitable, so that it’s brought down to earth. “The City That Comes Down From The Sky” should have given me clues; but pieces didn’t start looking like this until two and a half years later.



Much of the piece was engineered as it was built. Innumerable people worked: Claudia Nix, Dave Cotter, Bill Boese... This was physically the most complex and the largest piece Acconci has ever done. Was reinstalled later, very differently, at the San Francisco Art Institute.

—Mathieu Gregoire

Aside from the massive combination of engineering and conceptual intellect expressed in the finished piece, watching and listening to Vito's amazing slide lecture on his work (which seemed to have no end) was a real highlight.

—Ken Butler



Jim Lawrence

Richard Wagner: The Truth of the Matter April 1982

READING BIOGRAPHY, particularly literary biography, has been an interest for several years. I'm interested in information, conjecture, myth, legend, truth, and interpretation.

The Wagner series was my first to use specific research to form a project: reading letters; biographies; diaries. While doing the research and making the pieces, two basic ideas were used as keys: that Wagner was without credentials to make great art and did so simply by willing himself to genius; and his seeking of a lost order—which finally is susceptible to human frailty and tragedy.





Jim Pridgeon

Dinosaur War Room

September 1982

DINOSAUR WAR ROOM was an investigation into the nature of opposing forces. I was interested in the dynamic tension between “reptilian” and higher cortical functions, sense and nonsense language, melodic and aleatoric sound, and positive and negative space. I was also interested in comparing different time frames and references: physically suspended animation versus sequentially moving sound; *The Bacchae* versus the Mesozoic Age. The goal was to intellectually and sensually reward the viewer willing to explore a difficult and changing landscape. Because position determined what one saw and heard, the viewer’s participation completed the piece.

The ideas in the work echoed the oscillation of visual and aural events. The floor plan was a simple cross dividing the room into 4 quadrants. In the zones of Confidence and Despair, Contemplation and Confusion, the stacks and suspended masses of found objects operate to homogenize childhood experiences with the promise of space travel; and the scarlet curtain covering the mountain where desks go to die is rent by a conflation of nuclear forces. Everywhere order and chaos vie for a jumpshot to the future: ascension, orbit, decay; *Godzilla* meets the Marx Brothers; why do the birds keep on singing? Personally, I hated to throw it away, because if I had but one thing to take on a distant journey, I would take this.

Beyond the web of doubt and colors worked close at hand, it is not unusual for me to avoid the lines and do my shopping later; in all, what would I buy? Irrelevant details? I mistrust long messages—documents beyond a dozen words terrify me. I want advertisements; I believe in product understanding. Do you find it comical I believe in *Miracle White*, or are you the idiot crying “Road Beef Heaven” and we the grid-lock on a saucer full of skim milk; or little stones to drain a plant—tiny pebbles from our lips?



I had heard rumors of this guy that was a hospital administrator that was making installations and showing them in Seattle. I had heard stories about him hanging an airplane and a Studebaker from the ceiling in one and was curious. I met Jim and his wife and the stories (and rumors, and more stories) were all true. In the end regardless how Jim rationalized the work, I saw it in one way only. Jim worked as a grants writer in a hospital for an epilepsy research unit. An epileptic attack occurs when there are too many electrical signals coming into the brain and it kind of shorts out. I heard a story that Wendy Gronquist brought her son to see the show at PCVA and upon entering the space her son (who has probably seen every kind of movie, heard every form of music, etc) began screaming "Mommy, Mommy, get me out of here" and dragged Wendy to the door and left. I think Jim's work is about overload.

—Tad Savinar



I like to see a lot of things together. It doesn't much matter what the stuff is if there is enough of it. This observing of mass quantity satisfies some sort of personal subconscious need for me. (I'm sure that this concept invites a multitude of psychological interpretations). I feel very good in stockrooms, garbage dumps, and junk yards. Now that I think about it, I realize that either the objects or the presentation are important because I don't like the supermarket. I guess it must be a random assortment and presentation. Anyway, I felt very good at PCVA in September 1982. I like art that satisfies personal subconscious needs.

—Bill Will

Pridgeon's *Dinosaur War Room* is metaphoric of personal and societal memory; the interface of culture and memory; the trash heap that memory can be, the enormous fraudulence of capitalism; how information becomes meaningless, repetitive.

—Sabrina Ullman



Michael McCafferty

Transient Art For Transients September 1982

A S I F F O U R H U G E C R E S C E N T—shaped cookie cutters had dropped out of the sky and fallen on Portland's Waterfront Park, four, 40-foot arcs appeared on the lawn just below the Burnside Bridge in 1982.

A three-dimensional drawing was made by cutting lines and reseeding with red fescue to contrast with the existing green color. The interior of the crescents were fertilized to darken color and enhance growth. With the full approval of Portland's Parks Department, the arcs were allowed to grow taller than the lawn itself. The varying heights of grass gave the drawing shape.

Originally designed as a temporary lawn sculpture, transients in the area adopted the site as an outdoor lounge. Enjoying the tall grass, they would recline on the sloping hill and discuss aesthetics while sipping on the wine cocktails. The site became a major election issue, prompting bumper stickers to appear around town: TRANSIENT ART FOR TRANSIENTS and TO MOW OR GROW? However, a stampede of mowers driven by Parks Department cowboys prevailed.

Michael McCafferty's piece was created by over-fertilizing sections of grass in Waterfront Park and the idea was to allow the grass to grow long in a large rectangle clearly marked by Michael and helpers. The Parks Department had been very cooperative and supportive of three projects that marked the beginning of our 1982-83 season but they just couldn't seem to keep their hands off Michael's grass sculpture. Everytime the grass would get long enough and the work visible, the gang mowers would come along and obliterate the art. It was terribly frustrating to all of us but Michael was always unbelievably patient. No one can ever accuse the people at the Parks Department in Portland of being underachievers.

—Donna Milrany



Robert Stackhouse

Bones

September 1982

TWO IMPRESSIONS IN THE ground alongside the river, boatlike, they appear to be ancient forms newly discovered, or discarded hulks, either way existing only temporarily; as they will disappear.

“Bones” was a simple construction. The boards were flat on the ground, nailed and glued together and pinned to the ground with long spikes. They conformed to the roll of the ground like a wooden blanket, and to walk on it was to experience subtle movement.

I look back fondly on this project because it was truly site specific. Immediately upon arrival in Portland, budget cuts necessitated using re-cycled lumber, (oak flooring from a old hotel). This led to the simplified and streamlined concept which I redesigned and constructed and completed within nine days.



In 1985 I had reason to ask about 15 different Portland artists to name the exhibition or installation they most remembered. It didn't have to have been sponsored by PCVA but they had to have seen it in Portland. Five of them, independently of one another and from a large list of possibilities, named "Bones," an outdoor site specific work by Robert Stackhouse. Bob had sited hull shapes along the Willamette River. The two pieces were made from used wood and planking which was embedded in the grass of Waterfront Park running alongside the current of the river. They were eloquent archeological remnants and were left in the Park for six months. When they hauled the scraps away, the shadow of "Bones" remained in the sod for several months and was just as impressive.

—Donna Milrany



Paul Sutinen

The Tree in the Tower September 1982

IT IS OF NO SMALL IMPORTANCE that the opportunity given me by PCVA in the Summer of 1982 was the first to provide me with a budget that allowed for any kind of substantial construction. As I toured the waterfront along the West side of the Willamette, PCVA's preferred site for a work, I wondered what I could do that would stand up to the scale of the situation. On one side was the openness of the river. On the other side was the verticality of Portland's central business district. I was actually quite dismayed, walking through Waterfront Park, with its regular planting of uniform trees. I couldn't find a distinctive site. Just as I ended my tour I came upon a single pin oak in the small patch of grass within a circular bridge approach. I knew this would be the site. Later I realized that the piece would have to be vertical. An earlier sketch in my notebook, when fertilized by these givens, grew into "The Tree in The Tower."

This work combined two important symbols—both trees and towers have mythic and mundane meanings. The tower effectively "imprisoned" the tree. But that is a ridiculous notion. The tree wasn't going anywhere. The tree limbs did "reach" out through windows in the tower. That, too, is silly. The limbs don't reach through the windows. The windows were built around the tree branches. We knew that. Is that what we felt?

I'd like to thank Helen Lessick, Michael Jones and Richard Rezac for their cheerful and energetic assistance in constructing this work.



Paul Sutinen's "Tree in the Tower" was one of the most successful site specific works I have ever seen. It excelled at every level. Form. Content. Response to environment. And it was funny. Selina Ottum, Director of the Metropolitan Arts Commission received more calls about "Tree in the Tower" than any other public art project she can remember. We had listed the Metropolitan Arts Commission as a contributor and poor Selina received all the calls from confused folk who wondered if the tree might be harmed (it wasn't) or if the tower was some kind of protection against tree diseases.

—Donna Milrany

This is an example of accessible conceptual art. It has such sweetness, this piece, and I'm very fond of the play on the concept of tree/house.

—Sabrina Ullman

The first time I saw Paul's The Tree in the Tower, I happened to be in a car with a little kid. We were coming off a bridge exit and the kid points out Paul's artwork and asks if the tree had been cold and then asked, "is that its house?"

—Laura Ross-Paul



Peter Shelton

pipegut, waterseat and STANDSTILL
April 1984

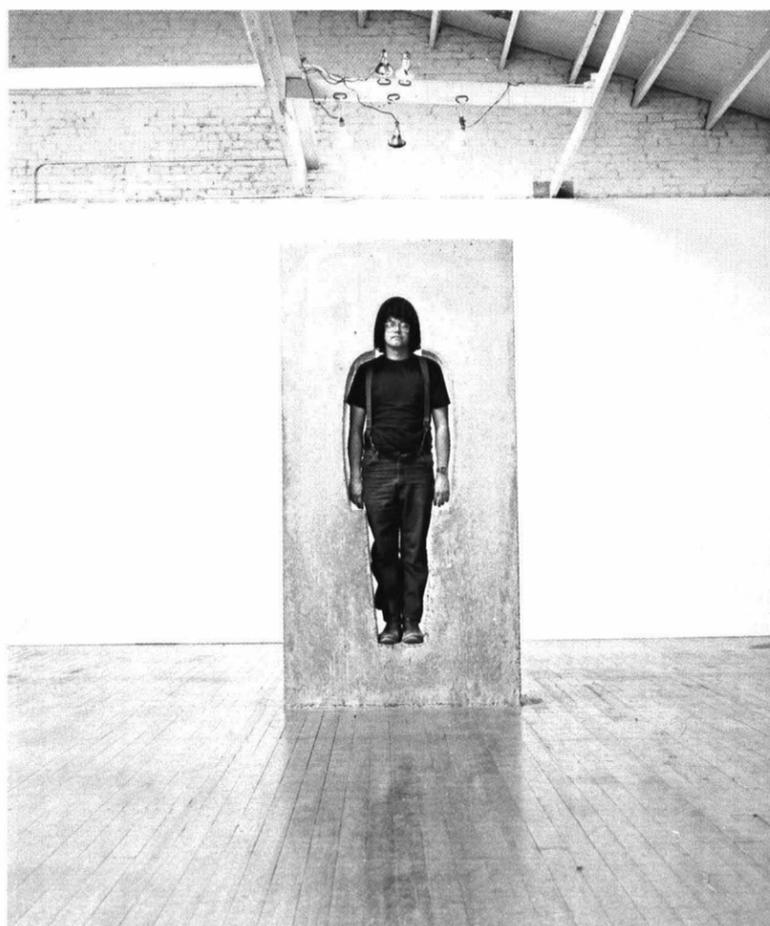
THE COMPONENTS OF pipegut, waterseat and STANDSTILL are derived from three simple postures/lying, sitting, standing. Hanging from the gallery's ceiling, pipegut is a steel framed tube covered with shellacked cloth. A set of tracks running through its 100 foot length convey a small wheeled car upon which one may travel hand over hand. The tube curves slightly so that in the center, the ends are not visible and one is enveloped in the orange-brown glow of the tube's skin. A conventionally proportioned and functional chair, waterseat is made of plate glass filled with water. STANDSTILL is a cast concrete monolith (96"x48"x13") weighing more than two tons with a central negative describing my frontal profile up into which one may step.

I am more interested in the sense rather than the meaning of a work. It's form, structure and scale are often set up so that one's presence and movement are essential in completing the work. That one might literally enter or merge with the sculpture is not so much about any common utility as it is a desire to have the experience understood in the whole body, and thereby, to intensify the dialog and possibly invert the relationship between the subject and object.

pipegut: soft/skin, hard/skeleton, macro/outside, micro/inside, move/work, digest/shit, birth/baby, curve/cycle, continuous/time

waterseat: fluid/water, crystalline/glass, inviting/immersion, threaten/shattering, sit in/womb, sit on/throne, ethereal/it, coarse/me, rest/time.

STANDSTILL: heavy/concrete, light/air, solid/frame, void/center, stationary/tomb, moving through/door, permanent/it, fragile/me, alive/artist, dead/sculpture, outside/hole, inside/whole, momentary/time.



Peter Shelton's installation *pipegut*, *waterseat*, and *STANDSTILL* was the most difficult and costly work we ever undertook. I sought the services of Grant Davis, a structural engineer, to learn if there would be any problem in constructing a two-ton concrete sculpture in our third floor gallery. There was. Davis said the sculpture could only be built directly over one of five main support beams. Peter said no. *STANDSTILL* could not be moved!

Ultimately a tolerant downstairs tenant allowed us to go into his office and build a support structure Grant had engineered to reinforce the floor under *STANDSTILL* in the exact place Peter's plan had dictated.

—Donna Milrany



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