OUT FRONT

TOM MARIONI

THE NUMBER OF ARTISTS IN ANY GIVEN PLACE DO NOT MAKE IT AN ART CENTER. AS WITH SCIENCE, AN ART CENTER IS MADE BY A FEW PEOPLE DOING ORIGINALLY INNOVATIVE THINGS. THIS MEANS (USUALLY CALLED "SUPPORT SYSTEM") THE WORD GETS OUT THAT SOMETHING IS BEING DONE THERE, AND MORE INTERESTED PEOPLE COME. THIS EXACT PROCESS WAS REPEATED MANY TIMES AROUND THE WORLD, WHERE THOUSANDS OF ARTISTS ARE LIVING WITHIN A FEW BLOCKS OF EACH OTHER IN AN INCESTUOUS PESTON Cage. It was everyone’s business, an art world that once looked like it would go on evolving forever has come to a standstill. An art world that for thirty years has left itself in the mirror is now showing signs of old age.

NEW YORK IS STILL A CENTER, BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE RENAISSANCE THERE ARE MANY CENTERS. There is the country and beyond the world are finding their identities where they are, rather than going to New York. Today the most significant work being done is that which takes art, music, galleries and art itself's. Region, for a rancher's son in Texas to paint grids like the buildings of New York City doesn't make it. There is a crisis in New York. Those that made it an art center, are traveling, moving out to do their work in other places as the support system widens. And artists from other places are traveling, moving, taking work with them.

AMONG ARTISTS. The main thing this accomplishes is that it makes everyone aware of what has been and is being done.

This network of interaction is much faster and surer than the support system. Artists find other artists who are of interest to them. Museums and art magazines are so involved with fairness to all styles that they cannot sort out what is significant and what is repetition. In fact repetition is more comfortable, so they go with what is familiar. For instance, Lou Ruoneman, for example, was it used up. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago organized a show called "Body Works" in 1971 and it seems that they naively announced as the first show. There were a few shows that were around at the time and one at MoMA. In 1978 the La Jolla Museum had a show of "Body Works." It was listed in the press release as the first. It never occurred to them to ask. The other shows that were also in the shows that were around at the time. In those of which, anyhow, "Body Works" has an important place in American history. In 1974 the even the notion of body work is as extinct as hippies.

Artists lose respect for museums as important places to exhibit when they show old work which is also an old work. Artists who are only occasionally, presented in dubious company, and when the museum spaces are month to month overwhelmingly filled by trivial art. Magazines and art magazines cause confusion by mixing it up with dance, theater, music, and other forms outside the visual arts. To do a series of dances and concerts or something like it, art magazines and publishers, art magazines in other magazines as elsewhere suggests the organizers do not recognize the evolution of sculpture into the other fourth dimension. An example of a museum's treatment of performance art as entertainment occurred this summer at the University of California Museum at Berkeley. They invited several non-museum artists to do performances. The treatment they received was not the treatment performance art (as well as dancers, poets, and performance artists) do in works in performance art. That way we leave New Wave sculptors to do paintings for their museum.

Of course, a painter could become a performance sculptor, or vice versa, and a dancer or musician could conceivably become a sculptor, but because sculptors are now using sound, movement, or language as a medium does not mean they do not need musicians, dancers or poets, nor have all musicians, dancers, poets

SUDDENLY BECOME SCULPTORS. THE ATTITUDES ARE DIFFERENT.

LOT OF THE CONFUSION THAT MUSEUM PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT PERFORMANCE SCULPTURE IS THAT THEY ARE ONLY JUST BEGINNING TO ASSIMILATE HAPPENINGS, AND THEY SEE PERFORMANCE SCULPTURE AS HAPPENINGS WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT WHAT WENT ON IN BETWEEN.

THE HAPPENINGS THAT GREW OUT OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM IN NEW YORK, DANCE IN SAN FRANCISCO, PUNK ROCK IN ENGLAND, AND THE PROCESSIONS WERE ALL AN EXTENSION OF THEATER, EVEN THOUGH SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF VISUAL ARTISTS. IT WAS STILL AN AGE OF PAINTERS, AND THEY THOUGHT ILLUSIONISTICALLY, MATERIALS WERE PROPS, AS IN THEATER, AND THE WORKS WERE USUALLY REPEATED AND SCRIPTED. IT WAS AN AUDIENCE-PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF AN ENCOUNTER GROUP. THE CONCERN WAS: "WHAT IS BEATNIKS, POETRY READING TO MUSIC AND HARD-POP JAZZ—THE LATE '50s AND EARLY '60s."

IN THE EARLY '60s AN AGE OF SCULPTORS BEGAN. PAINTING IN ILLUSION, SMOOTHNESS, ANTI-MATERIALITY, FIRST WITH POP ART, THEN WITH PHOTO-REALISM.


SAN FRANCISCO

THERE IS A STORY THAT MARCEL DUCHAMP VISITED THE SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE, WHICH WAS CONSIDERING OFFERING HIM A JOB AS A TEACHER (THE ART INSTITUTE IS A PRIVATE SCHOOL). THE STORY IS THAT DUCHAMP PAUSED TO WATCH A STUDENT; BILL MOREHOUSE, PAINTING. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" DUCHAMP ASKED. "I'M TRYING TO EXPLAIN MYSELF," REPLIED MOREHOUSE. "KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK," SAID DUCHAMP. SOON AFTER THAT, IN THE '50s, CLIFFORD STILL TAUGHT AT THE SCHOOL, AND THE MOOD BECAME "SERIOUS." THE NOTION OF ART AS A SEARCH, AS PHILOSOPHY, WAS ESTABLISHED. A STUDENT OF STILL'S, RICHARD DIBERNIEN-KORN, ESTABLISHED AN IDENTITY FOR SAN FRANCISCO THAT WOULD BE MOUNTED TO ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM TO DEAL WITH SUBJECT MATTER. BUT HIS DISTINCTIVE USE OF LIGHT IN HIS PAINTING STARTED THE STYLE KNOWN AS BAY AREA FIGURATIVE, WHICH, ALONG WITH FUNK, IS WHAT PEOPLE OF THE STRAIGHT ART COMMUNITY IN OTHER PLACES MOST ASSOCIATE WITH SAN FRANCISCO, EVEN NOW. VARIOUS COMBINATIONS OF BAY AREA FIGURATIVE AND FUNK ARE STILL THE DOMINANT STYLE OF THE MAJORITY OF ARTISTS IN THE BAY AREA.

WAYNE THIEBAUD, ONE OF THE MANY ARTISTS DIE-BERNIEN-KORN DESCENDED FROM, PERFORMED A LINK BETWEEN CALIFORNIA AND NEW YORK IDEAS. THE ARTISTS OF THE EARLY '60s WERE CLEAN AND CERUTAL, OF POP IMAGES, BUT THEY WERE HALOED WITH COMPLEMENTARY COLORS. AS SEEN THROUGH A PRISM OF SUNLIGHT, THERE WAS A VERY CALIFORNIA TREATMENT. THEY WERE STRAIGHT STILL-LIFE WORKS OF COLORFUL COMMON OBJECTS. THIEBAUD WAS THE LAST POP ARTIST TO THRIVE. PEOPLE WERE INTERESTED IN HIS REALISM, BUT REJECTED THE LUSH-
NESS AND MATERIALITY OF HIS WORK. THEY SOUGHT MORE DETACHMENT, AND PHOTO-REALISM EMERGED, AN ART FORM THAT WAS ACCEPTED BY THE MASSES AND PROMOTED BY THE ENTIRE SUPPORT SYSTEM.

AT THE TIME DIEBENKORN WAS DOING BAY AREA FIGURATIVE ART, FRED MARTIN WAS ALSO DOING LOOSELY PAINTED FIGURATIVE WORK, BUT HIS SUBJECTS WERE ANCIENT RUINS AND MYTHICAL LANDSCAPES, WHILE DIEBENKORN'S WORK IS BASED ON LIGHT, FRED MARTIN'S HAS NO LIGHT SOURCE. IT LIVES IN A REALM WHERE THE LIGHT IS IN THE CENTER AND IS IMAGINARY. FRED MARTIN WAS FIRST KNOWN FOR COLLAGE WORK COVERED WITH HANDWRITTEN MESSAGES. HE HAS WORKED ABSTRACTLY AND FIGURATIVELY BYTurns, BUT ALWAYS IS EXPLORING HIS WORLD.

HE WAS THE FIRST MYTHOLOGICAL STORY-TELLING ARTIST HERE, AND HIS WORLD HAS HAD A BIG INFLUENCE ON AN ORGANIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE BAY AREA, A CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DISTANT PAST. THIS MYTHICAL INFLUENCE EXISTS IN SAN FRANCISCO TODAY EVEN AMONG THE CONCEPTUAL ARTISTS.

BEFORE CONNER WAS A FUNK ARTIST OF THE EARLY 60s, THEN HE HAS CONTINUED TO CHANGE AS AN ARTIST, ALWAYS APPEARING TO BE AHEAD OF HIS TIME. A SCULPTOR BY THE TIME I KNEW HIM, CONNER HAS INFLUENCED THE WHOLE GENERATION OF UNDERGROUND FILMMAKERS WHO USE ABRUPT CUTTING, REPEATED ACTIONS AND SURREALISTIC JUXTAPOSITIONS TO IMPROVE THEIR INTENTIONS. CONNER WAS A CONCEPTUAL ARTIST WHO WORKED WITH STRANGE MACHINES. HE KNEW THAT THE PHYSICS OF MATERIALS LIKE FIRE AND WATER, AND THE PRINCIPLES OF GRAVITY AND BALANCE. HE WAS A PIONEER IN THE USE OF THE PHYSICS OF MATERIALS IN HIS WORK. He LEARNED BY TRYING DIFFERENT THINGS, AND THEN HAD A STRANGE WAY TO CONFER WITH HIMSELF AS IF HE HAD A PASSIONATE CONVERSATION WITH A FRESH MIND.

PAUL KOS IN 1969 WAS WORKING OUTDOORS MAKING EARTH WORKS. BEING FROM WYOMING, WHERE THERE IS SO MUCH WIDE-OPEN SPACE, OBVIOUSLY INFLUENCED HIS WORK. HIS EARLY WORKS WERE HUMANS IN THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, CONDENSED INTO SIXTY-FOUR SQUARE FEET. HE WAS ALSO INFLUENCED BY THE PHYSICS OF MATERIALS LIKE FIRE AND WATER, AND THE PRINCIPLES OF GRAVITY AND BALANCE. HE WAS A PIONEER IN THE USE OF THE PHYSICS OF MATERIALS IN HIS WORK.

IN 1969, WHEN I WAS WORKING AT THE RICHMOND ART CENTER AS A CURATOR, I ORGANIZED A SHOW CALLED "THE RETURN OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM." I WROTE IN THE CATALOG INTRODUCTION:

This exhibition of abstract expressionism is a direct extension of the paintings of the 50s; the action is the only dimension. The disciplines are different. The artists exhibit the same love of organic and natural forces, they place a familiar emphasis on the role of accident and chance. The renewed interest in natural forces and raw materials has emerged from a necessity in the destructive forces of modern culture; war, pollution, and the generally widespread ignorance of nature. Another influence is the popularity of drug use, and the religious importance it places on an awareness of our environment.

THAT SHOW SEEMED TO SIGNAL A NEW GENERATION EMERGING IN THE BAY AREA. IT INCLUDED, AMONG OTHERS, TERRY Fox, PAUL KOS, AND MEL HENDERSON. HENDERSON WAS A LINK FROM THE PREVIOUS GENERATION, AS HE WAS PART OF THE FUNK MOVEMENT; THEN IN '69 HE ABANDONED OBJECT-ART TO DO LARGE-SCALE CITY EVENTS, ONE OF THESE, IN COLLABORATION WITH ALF YOUNG, USED 150 YELLOW CABS, TAKEN BY PARTICIPANTS IN ALL PARTS OF THE CITY AT THE SAME TIME TO THE CORNER OF A FIVE-WAY INTERSECTION AT THE CENTER OF SAN FRANCISCO. HENDERSON FILMED FROM THE AIR THE BURSTING SUNFLOWER EFFECT THIS CREATED. HE HAS NOW DROPPED OUT OF THE ART SCENE AND LIVES IN THE COUNTRY, WHICH PUTS HIM INTO ANOTHER GENERATION OF ARTISTS, REALIZING CREATIVE ENERGIES IN AN ART-LIFE FORM.
OF HIS COMPLEX TIME COMBINES, IN '73 HE CONSTRUCTED AN ENVIRONMENT WITH RECTANGULAR HOLES FOR SPECTATORS AND OTHER HOLES FOR VIDEO CAMERAS. FRIEND FUNCTIONED AS AN ENGINEER, MONITORING FOUR VIDEO IMAGES FROM BEHIND THE SCENE, SELECTING ONLY ONE PICTURE THAT WAS SHOWN TO THE PUBLIC. THE ACTIVITY INSIDE THE ENVIRONMENT, PARTICIPANTS DRINKING COFFEE, WAS SEEN BY A LIVE AUDIENCE WITNESSING THE ACTIVITY THROUGH THE HOLES, AND ALSO BY THE CAMERAS Whose POSITIONS WERE AT WAIST LEVEL RECORDING THE MOVEMENT OF THE CUBES. THE ACTIVITY FUNCTIONED FROM TWO SIMULTANEOUS POINTS OF VIEW. FRIED’S CURRENT WORK IS HIGHLY EDITED FILMS AND VIDETAPES OF HIS INSANE ACTIVITIES.

BONNIE SHERK, INFLUENCED BY MEL HENDERSON’S AWARENESS OF NATURE, DID A SERIES OF PORTABLE PARKS AROUND THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO ON CLOSER VISTAS TO FISH, WITH LIVE ANIMALS, TREES AND GRASS. SHE DID A PERFORMANCE IN THE ZOO AT FEEDING TIME EATING AN ELEGANT DINNER IN A CAGE NEXT TO A TIGER. SHE ALSO DID USING LIVE ANIMALS THAT PRODUCED FECES THAT WERE USED TO FERTILIZE PLANT LIFE ON A LOWER LEVEL THAT WAS IN TURN USED TO FEED THE ANIMALS. RECENTLY SHE HAS CREATED A PROJECT IN CORONA DEL MAR, “AN ARTISTIC, SOCIAL, COMMUNITY PROJECT IN THE CITY.”

LINDA MONTANO, AFTER SPENDING TWO YEARS IN A CONVENT MOVED TO SAN FRANCISCO IN 1971. SHE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN SELF-DISCIPLINES, USING DIFFERENT ROLES. IN ORDER TO EXPLAIN ROLES SHE HAS WORKED IN REAL LIFE AS A SALVATION ARMY LADY WITH A BELL AT CHRISTMAS, AN-OTHER ROLES IN THE CITY GUIDE. BECAUSE OF THE HOLY TRINITY, THE NUMBER THREE HAS A SIGNIFICANCE TO HER. SHE HAS PRO- DUCED OUR 1970 BUSKING FOR THREE DAYS: HANDCUFFED TO THIS REPORTER FOR THREE DAYS: WALKING ON A TREADMILL FOR THREE HOURS.

LOS ANGELES

IN THE 60’S THERE WAS NO ART SCENE IN L.A. AT ALL. NOT UNTIL A. L. DID IT BECOME KNOWN AS AN ART CENTER, BUT AT THAT TIME IT BECAME THE ONLY OTHER ONE IN THE WORLD BESIDES NEW YORK. IT BURNED FAST AND EXTINGUISHED ITSELF IN TEN YEARS. NOW IT IS ART CRITICALLY INSUSPENSIBLE. LARRY BELL, HAS MOVED TO NEW MEXICO, AND THE MOST IMPORTANT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEM JOHN COPLANS AND IRVING BLUM, HAVE MOVED TO NEW YORK.

FOR ME THE REALLY PURE LOS ANGELES ART STARTS WITH LARRY BELL, BELL, ORIGINALLY A PAINTER, EVOLVED IN A SHORT TIME AND AT A RELATIVELY EARLY AGE INTO AN ARTIST INTERESTED IN A LOS ANGELES AESTHETIC BASED ON THE USE OF LIGHT AS SUBJECT MATTER. BELL’S VACUUM-COATED GLASS BOXES POSITIONED ON CLEAR PLASTIC FEDERALS ALLOWED THE LIGHT TO ENTER THE CUBE FROM ALL ITS SIX SIDES AND BE TRANSMITTED TO THE VIEWER THROUGH THE WORK, LIKE TELEVISION, THE BOX IN EVERYONE’S LIVING ROOM, A FASCINATING JEWEL FROM WHICH THE LIGHT COMES OUT. LARRY BELL’S BOXES WERE POETIC RECORDS OF THE OPEN SUNSHINE ENVIRONMENT OF LOS ANGELES. BY 1969 HIS WORKS WERE FREE-STANDING PANELS OF COATED REFLECTIVE GLASS BEHIND A GLASS ICEBERG WITH ITS OWN GLASS SHADOW.

ROBERT IRWIN, A PAINTER WHO WAS WORKING WITH LIGHT AT THE SAME TIME HAD FIGURED OUT HOW TO CONTROL OVER IN EVERY INSTALLATION SITUATION. THE PAINTING INCLUDED ITS OWN ROOM AND LIGHTS AS PART OF ITSELF, LIKE A PORTABLE SHRINE. A CON- VEX DISCONE WAS ONE OF THE THREE- SIDED ROOM, WITH FOUR SPOTLIGHTS PROJECTING LIGHT FROM THE CORNERS, SO THAT THE CAST SHAD- OWS BECAME HOMELEFT WITH A PERFECT ILLUSION, THE IMAGES OF SHADOWS AND DISC ALL SEEMED ON THE FLOATING PLANE. LATER IRWIN STRETCHED NYLON CLOTH IN ROOMS HORIZONTALLY OR VERTICALLY SUPPRESS THE LIGHT, CREATING THE ILLUSION OF A SOFTER WORLD ON THE OTHER SIDE. OVER THE YEARS, HIS WORK HAS BECOME MORE AND MORE INVISIBLE TO THE POINT THAT NOW THE SUBTLE CHANGES TO THE LIGHT IN THE SPACE ARE OFTEN MISSED BY THE PUBLIC, ESPECIALLY IN THOSE

HAVE NOT SEEN THE SPACE BEFORE. HIS VERBAL INTEL- LUCTUALIZATION OF HIS ALMOST INVISIBLE WORK HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THESE SITUATION.

IN 1967 DOUG WHEELER AND JIM TURREL HAD A SHOW IN THE PASADENA ART MUSEUM. THESE TWO ARTISTS AT THAT TIME REPRESENTED A NEW GENERATION. WHEELER IS A SENSITIVE OBSERVER OF THE UNIVERSE AN DU: MIUM, AN INTERESTING THING ABOUT THE PHENOM- ENON WAS THAT NEITHER ARTIST WAS AWARE OF THE OTHER’S EXISTENCE BEFORE THAT SHOW.

WHEN THEY SAW EACH OTHER AT WHEELER’S SHOW, WHEELER AND TURREL AS PAINTING, WHEELER WAS THE FIRST ARTIST TO BUILD LIGHT ENVIRONMENTS: ACTUAL SPACE YOU COULD ENTER AND EXPERIENCE THE TOTAL EFFECT OF THE LIGHT. TURREL MAY NOT HAVE USED DIRECTLY ILLUMI- NATED LIGHT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO MAKE IT FRONTAL, TWO-DIMENSIONAL. HIS WORK DEALT WITH COLOR, AND BY COMPARISON TO WHEELER’S SPACES, SEEMED DECORATIVE, BY CONTRAST. IN 1970 WHEELER, TURREL AND IRWIN IN TURN INFLUENCED THEM TO WORK MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY.

RECENTLY IN A SHOW IN ITALY WHEELER BUILT A ROOM TO SIMULATE A SEASCAPE AND CORNERS, MAKING A SEAMLESS WHITE SPACE. THE INDIRECT LIGHTING WAS CONTROLLED WITH AN AUTOMATIC Rheostat GRADUALLY TURNING THE LIGHTS UP TO FULL BRIGHT- NESS OR TO A REDUCE DEGREE. IN 1970 WHEELER, TURREL AND IRWIN IN TURN INFLUENCED THEM TO WORK MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY.

MICHAEL ASHER BEGAN EXPERIMENTING WITH INVISI- BLE AIR CURRENTS, AND LATER DESIGNED ENVIRONMENTS IN THE W. C. HALE HOUSE, USING THE HALLWAY OF THE ENTRANCE FOYER AND THE GALLERY AT PO- MONA COLLEGE, SO THE POINT WHERE THE TWO TRI- ANGLES CAME TOGETHER WAS A SMALL PASSAGEWAY Wide enough for some light of the city through which he created a diffusion of light that graduated it- self from white to black. He has painted two SURFACES (FLOOR AND ONE WALL) IN A WHITE ROOM BLACK. IN A PLACE CALLED THE SAND BLOSTED THE TOSSELLE GALLERY IN MILAN DOWN TO ITS ORIGINAL CENTURY-OLD CONDITION, MAKING IT A BRAND NEW SPACE.

BRUCE NAUMAN IS PROBABLY THE MOST WELL- KNOWN ARTIST IN CALIFORNIA. IN ‘66 WHILE A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IN DAVIS HE WORKED WITH PARCELS OF HIS OWN BODY AS A MATERIAL TO CREATE A FOUNTAIN, QUIRITING WATER OUT OF HIS MOUTH. HE BEGAN MAKING OBJECTS OUT OF MATERIALS LIKE RUBBER AND FLOOR AT A TIME WHEN CLEAN MINIMALISM WAS AT ITS HEIGHT HE WAS THE FIRST SCULPTOR TO USE VIDEO AND HOLOGRAPHY.

AFTER HE MOVED TO L.A. HIS WORK BECAME VERY CLEAN AND MINIMAL BUT MAKING ROOMS, AMONG OTHER THINGS. HIS ROOMS CREATE A STRONG PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON THEIR VIEWERS. HE MADE A PASSAGEWAY LIGHTED WITH GREEN FLUOR- ESCErt LIGHT, A ROOM WITH A WINDOW TO THE NARROW SPACE AND ENTERED THE GALLERY, EVERYTHING THERE APPEARED TO BE RED. THE COMPLEMENTARY COLOR. HE BUILT A ROOM WITH A TAPED-FLOOR THAT WOULD OPEN UP TO HIS SPACE. HE CREATED A ROOM THAT HAD THE LOOK OF THE MATERIAL OF THE WORD, LIKE “WATER” WRITTEN IN GLEAMING DROPS.

ALLEN RUPPERSBERG SINCE 1970 HAS BEEN TELLING STORIES ON POSTCARDS WITH PICTURES OF HIMSELF DRESSED AS MOVIE-TYPE CHARACTERS. IN 1971 HE DID A WORK CALLED “GRAND HOTEL”, A ROOM IN WHICH RUPPERSBERG HAD BUILT SEVERAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT CREATED A NEW STORY IN EACH ROOM. THE PUBLIC COULD STAY IN THESE ROOMS FOR FROM THIRTY DOLLARS A NIGHT AND EXPERIENCE THE WORK IN A ROOM CALLED “GRAND HOTEL” CURRENTLY CALLED “GRAY” BY OSCAR WILDE ON SEVERAL CANVASES, AND
TOLD THE STORY OF HARRY HOUDINI WHILE IN A
STRAIGHT JACKET TO A VIDEO CAMERA. ALL OF THESE
WORKS SHOW THE DIRECT INFLUENCE OF THE MOVIE
INDUSTRY, AN ASPECT OF THE LOS ANGELES ENVIRON-
MENT THAT REACHES THE ENTIRE WORLD.

CHRIS BURDEN WAS A STUDENT OF BOB IRWIN'S IN
1970, AND AT THAT TIME HE BEGAN MAKING TRIPS TO
SAN FRANCISCO TO CHECK OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON,
AND BECAME INFLUENCED BY THE ACTIVITY OF THE
CONCEPTUAL ARTISTS HERE. WHILE HE WAS STILL A
STUDENT, BURDEN WAS MAKING ACTIONS AND CRE-
ATING SITUATIONS THAT WERE DANGEROUS TO HIM-
SELF. THESE SITUATIONS CREATED AN ENERGY
AROUND HIMSELF, LOCKING HIMSELF INSIDE HIS
SCHOOL LOCKER FOR FIVE DAYS FOR HIS GRADUATE
PROJECT WAS A PHYSICAL COMMITMENT TO HIS ART
THAT WAS A STRONG STATEMENT.

In '72, HE HAD HIMSELF SHOT WITH A 22-CALIBER RIFLE
IN AN ART GALLERY RUN BY SEVERAL ARTISTS IN
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA. THE BULLET MADE A FLESH
WOUND AND LEFT A MARK ON HIS ARM; THE SCARS
OF HIS ACTIONS FUNCTION AS GRAPHIC WORKS ON HIS
BODY (THE FIELD). ON THE ONE HAND THE WORKS ARE
SENSATIONALISM, PUBLICITY STUNTS. HE IS REFERRED
TO BY SOME IN EUROPE AS A “PUBLICIST”, BUT ON THE
OTHER HAND THESE ACTIONS ARE THE CONDENSED
AND POETIC ACTIONS OF AN ARTIST MIRRORING HIS
SOCIETY. HE HAS A SCULPTURAL SENSIBILITY AND IS
ABLE TO CREATE A HEIGHTENED ENERGY BECAUSE HE
PUTS HIMSELF IN SITUATIONS THAT PEOPLE WANT TO
KNOW ABOUT, E.G., WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

RECENTLY HE HAS BEEN BUILDING A CAR OUT OF NY-
LON FABRIC STRETCHED OVER A TUBULAR STRUCTURE.
IT HAS NO SAFETY FEATURES, BUT IT CAN BE CARRIED
IN TWO SUITCASES. HE INTENDS TO DRIVE IT FROM
PARIS TO AMSTERDAM, MAKING TWO SHOWS BY AS-
SEMBLING THE CAR IN A PARIS GALLERY AND DIS-
ASSEMBLING IT IN A GALLERY IN AMSTERDAM.

ELEANOR ANIN LIVES SOUTH OF L.A. NEAR SAN
DIEGO. SHE MOVED THERE FROM NEW YORK A FEW
YEARS AGO. SHE SENT OUT POSTCARDS WITH PHOTOS
OF ONE HUNDRED BOOTS PLACED IN DIFFERENT ENVI-
RONMENTS, EACH MONTH OR SO A DIFFERENT PHOTO
WAS SENT OUT. THE BOOTS ALWAYS SUGGESTING FIFTY
INVISIBLE PEOPLE IN A NEW SITUATION: ON THE BEACH,
IN THE WOODS, ETC. SHE HAS ASSUMED THE ROLE
OF CHARACTERS IN PAINTINGS OF THE PAST, LIKE DEGAS'
DANCERS, REMBRANDT'S MODELS. RECENTLY SHE HAS
CREATED THE ROLE OF A KING WITH PERIOD CLOTHES
AND BEARD, AND HAS STARTED TO MAKE APPEAR-
ANCES IN DIFFERENT CITIES IN FRONT OF APPROPRIATE
SETTINGS, TELLING STORIES OF THE PAST.

BARBARA SMITH HAS BEEN MAKING ACTIONS SINCE
1971, DEALING WITH CONCERNS OFTEN VERY MUCH IN
THE FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS. IN 1973 SHE CREATED
AN ENVIRONMENT IN A SHOW CALLED "ALL NIGHT
SCULPTURES" AT MOCA. A TAPE WAS PLAYING, "FEED
ME, FEED ME" OVER AND OVER IN A ROOM SET UP AS A
BOUDOIR, WHILE SHE WAS NAKED ON A BED. THE
ROOM HAD INCENSE, OILS TO RUB ON HER BODY,
CANDLES BURNING, AND FRESH FRUIT TO EAT. ONE
PERSON AT A TIME WAS ALLOWED INTO THE ROOM
FROM SUNSET TO SUNRISE. IT WAS A ONE TO ONE
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PARTICIPANTS THAT INCLUDED
LOVE-MAKING. OUTSIDE THE ROOM UNDER A BARE
LIGHT BULB GUYS WERE HANGING AROUND SMOKING
CIGARETTE, WAITING THEIR TURN TO GO IN THE
ROOM. THIS POWERFUL WORK POINTED OUT THE OB-
VIOUS MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN OUR SOCIETY.
RECENTLY BARBARA SMITH PRODUCED AN EVENT IN
PASADENA THAT WAS AN AUCTION OF HER ACTIVITIES
AND EXPERIENCES WHICH SHE WOULD SHARE WITH
THE PURCHASERS.

CHARLES HILL, LIKE ELEANOR ANIN, TRIES TO RE-
TRIEVE THE PAST. HE SEWS HIS PAINTINGS TOGETHER
ON A SEWING MACHINE, THEN Buries THEM IN THE
GROUND TO SPEED UP THEIR AGING PROCESS. THE
PAINTINGS LOOK LIKE RELICS FROM THE ANCIENT
PAST. IN AN AGE OF SCULPTURE, HE IS PRODUCING
SOMETHING COMPLETELY NEW IN PAINTING. THE NEW
SCULPTORS WORK WITH THE ACTUAL PASSAGE OF
TIME, AND HILL, A PAINTER, SPEEdS UP TIME BY PROC-
ESS, WORKS WITH THE ILLUSION OF PASSAGE OF TIME.

-end-

It is the purpose of Vision to make available information about idea-oriented art. It is an artist-oriented publication, presenting works and material only from artists, each issue devoted to a particular region of the world. In this first issue we have included California artists who have had an influence on the region or the world, and have created work that has the character of the region as well as an individual style. This section of the publication functions like an exhibition space where the artists were invited to show whatever they wanted to represent themselves.
I. Nature. This is the way God built his instrument.

1. Draw the line of the height, A-Z; This is man's stretch between earth and heaven, the taut gut upon which God bows his song.

2. Bisect the height, B-C. This is the point of God's first fingering, the genitals, where he plays His song for the river of the generations flowing from past to future through present.

3. Open the four square fields of life on the genitalian center; the fields' breadth is the length of a man's arm.

4. Draw the vertical diagonals and their reciprocals, D and E, on the full double field of both sides. The intersection of the boundary, F, of the upper reciprocal rectangles with the height of a man is God's second fingering, the place of the heart, the fountain of blood, key of the song of love.

5. Draw the horizontal, G, connecting the intersections of the diagonals and their reciprocals. This is the line of the shoulders. The boundary of the torso, the upper limit of the lands of the earth. On it rests the zone of the head, first of the spheres of heaven.

6. Draw the reciprocals, H, to the diagonals, E, of the rectangles bounded by the heart, the head and the arms. Draw line I to connect the intersections of E and H. The intersection of I with the height line is God's third fingering, the point between the eyes, the brain.

7. And on the seventh day, God rested and musingly bowed and plucked his instrument.
II. History. This is the way God
played His instrument.

1. For twenty-eight years He played
the song of the Past. The genitals
dominate all; they ravage the heart
and overwhelm the brain with
their lustful arms as a cross of
turning fire.

2. For twenty-eight years He played
the song of the Here. The heart
dominate all; its embrace of
never-ending love cares for the
ill and solaces those bereaved by
the genitalian holocaust.

3. For twenty-eight years He played
the song of the Future. The mind
dominate all; it is a crystal of
shifting facets of the learning of lust
and love.

4. For twenty-eight years He played the
song of the Beyond. Wholeness comes;
the logos rises toward an immortality beyond time, and the
eros pours, a living rainbow
spring, to water every morrow.

5. And all four songs were but
notes in the single chord of
destiny which rounds throughout
every life.
NOTHING SEEMS TO PLAY A LARGER PART THAN ITSELF
LISTEN, TOO
552 STEPS INTO THE CENTER (REPEAT BACKWARDS)

TIME = LENGTH OF INDIVIDUAL PURRS
FI = ONE FULL CYCLE CATS PURR

1 = 77 (1-39-37)
2 = 76 (1-18-19-37-1)
3 = 70 (1-16-35-17-1)
4 = 64 (1-31-6-15-1)
5 = 59 (14-15-29-1)
6 = 51 (13-26-12)
7 = 46 (1-22-12-11)
8 = 42 (1-9-11-20-1)
9 = 35 (1-7-18-8-1)
10 = 31 (1-14-8-7-1)
11 = 25 (12-12-1)

ELEVEN DIFFERENT CATS
TRIPLE CROSSES LOOP

This diagram was formed by modifying the 14 tours in the labyrinth into right angles and making the distances between them equal. When joined at the ends as a loop, it forms a triptych of connected crosses and considering the tours from the center to the outside as being opposite to those entering.
TOP: SNOW AND ROCK
BOTTOM: DIAGONAL HOLD
TOP: DRAWING FOR A TOOL: ICE LENS MAKER
BOTTOM: SCISSORS CUT PAPER
ROCK BREAKS SCISSORS
PAPER COVERS ROCK
ICE MAKES FIRE (ITALICS MINE)
1 KINGS, 17:40
"... For example, the Christian concept of the mystical body—all men as members of the body of Christ—this becomes technologically a fact under electronic conditions."


The Astral-Naught Earth Work is a Meta-Physical Sculpture-Poem. The Astral-Naught "space suits" or "envelopes" are designed to symbolize and re-establish the innocence of body and mind as seen through the eyes of a child. Each suit incorporates electronic radio, headphones, speaker and third-eye light thus integrating within, and illuminating the existing communications network. This network is the architectural substructure of "The Temple of the Human Mind" in which the Astral-Naught Rabb-Eyes exist as present-ions of the Mystical Body of Christ.

"In the electric age, when our central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of every action. It is no longer possible to adopt the aloof and dissociated role of the literate Westerner."

Understanding Media
McLuhan, p. 4
McGraw-Hill Book Co.
N.Y. 1964


The "Random House Converters" provide the frames of reference through which to contemplate the Astral-Naughts as living paintings, reflections of yourself beyond the "looking glass." They also point to the literary breakthrough of the Astral-Naughts' embodiment of the "Word Made Flesh.” A set of converters should be installed at each landing site.

The ambience of each site would be a "Kindergarten" sanctuary of mutual trust where the "Divine Audience" would be encouraged to take off all clothes and run like children under water sprinklers in a Baptism ceremony. This is a Baptism of light, a form of Communion in the body. The participation of the highest spirits amongst us in this rite would help serve to reconnect body and mind with the innocence of natural existence.

A Bread and Wine ceremony would be followed by group singing, games, entertainment and dancing.

Each of these nodular events should be objectively covered by local and national media. The Astral-Naughts of the world of painting and sculpture are space-time explorers analogous to the Astronauts of the science world. Thoughtful meditation on the information embodied in these forms will initiate a "small step for man, a great leap for mankind."

"Any artistic endeavor includes the preparing of an environment for human attention. A poem or a painting is in every sense a teaching machine for the training of perception and judgment. The artist is a person who is especially aware of the challenge and dangers of new environments presented to human sensibility. Whereas the ordinary person seeks security by numbing his perceptions against the impact of new experience, the artist delights in this novelty and instinctively creates situations which correct the sensory bias and re-arrangement of the new form. In social terms the artist can be regarded as a navigator who gives adequate compass bearings in spite of magnetic deflection of the needle by the changing play of forces. So understood, the artist is not a peddler of ideals or lofty experiences. He is rather the indispensable aid to action and reflection alike."

Through the Vanishing Point
McLuhan & Parker, p. 238
Harper & Row, New York 1965

Transparent Teacher's Ink. welcomes any enthusiastic response from people with energy, ideas, desire to participate, etc. Write:

Oz-Moses
Transparent Teacher's Ink.
1801 Woolsey Street
Berkeley, California 94703
AKTIN

volume

the

life

addressing the mayor
talking with
LOGIC

two

farm

work

children

changing for myself
Linda Montano, of St. Mary of the Snow Parish, Sanger, was a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Montano. She graduated from St. Mary's parochial school. Miss Montano received the religious habit at a reception-baptism ceremony at the Manhattan, Catholic University College of New Rochelle, Miss Maria de Leon. The ceremony was delivered by the Rev. Monsignor Henry J. Lang, Rector of St. John the Baptist Church, New Rochelle, New York, City, presided. Miss Montano was the first Sister presented and the Rev. Monsignor Lang was the first Sister received.
"Better to sit up all night than to go to bed with an iceberg."

"How glaring it is—and also how frival—-to be an iceberg, shadow..."

"I'm going to make my mark in the life insurance of the icebergs."

"That's why I'm going to make my mark in the life insurance of the icebergs."

"I'll make my mark in the life insurance of the icebergs."

"I'll make my mark in the life insurance of the icebergs."

"To strange what a man may be, and a woman still think him an iceberg.

"Then again..."

"An iceberg, help me! She pranced, to the decorative and to do right."

"A man does not lack behind the iceberg unless he has stood there himself."

"Icebergs die; shadows remain."

36, 37 LARRY BELL

VAN GOGH

THERE IS LUXURY IN ICEBERGS.

WILDE

NEVER TO TALK ABOUT THE ICEBERG IS A VERY REFINED FORM OF HYPOCRISY.

NIETZSCHE

AN ICEBERG CANNOT BLUSH.

ASCRIBED TO HOWEL WALSH

THE ICEBERG ITSELF MAY BE HAPPY CHANCE.

WHITEHEAD

IN PERIODS OF DECADENCE ONLY THE VERY INDEPENDENT ICEBERGS HAVE A CHANCE TO SURVIVE.

DE LA CRÉIX

TODAY'S ICEBERG IS TOMORROW'S CAKE.

DR. R. I. BELL

THE ARTISTIC TEMPERAMENT IS A DISEASE THAT AFFLICTS ICEBERGS.

CHESTERMAN

ICEBERGS BOIL AT DIFFERENT DEGREES.

EMERSON

THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE SHADOW, THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE ICEBERG.

EMERSON

WE ARE ICEBERGS OF OUR OWN AGE, BUT ICEBERGS WHO CAN NEVER KNOW THEIR SHADOWS.

L. P. SMITH

ICEBERG IS THE MOTHER OF SHADOW.

CHESTERTON

THERE IS NO FURY LIKE AN ICEBERG SEARCHING FOR A NEW SHADOW.

CONNOLLY

THE MOST VULNERABLE AND AT THE SAME TIME THE MOST UNCONQUERABLE THING IS THE ICEBERG; IN DEED, IT IS THROUGH BEING FROZEN THAT ITS POWER GROWS AND CAN, IN THE END, BECOME TERRIBLE.

NIETZSCHE

IF YOU THINK YOU LOVE YOUR ICEBERG FOR HER OWN SAKE, YOU ARE QUITE MISTAKEN.

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

THE SHADOW ALWAYS BELIEVES THE ICEBERG LIVES FOR IT.

LICHTENBERG

THERE MAY BE ICEBERGS WHO SET FIRE TO THE TEMPLES IN WHICH THEIR IMAGE IS WORSHIPPED.

NIETZSCHE

IF THE ICEBERG HAD EVERYTHING HER OWN WAY SHE WOULD BE AS INSUFFERABLE AS DOMINANT FRACTURES GENERALLY ARE.

SAMUEL BUTLER (II)

NOTHING IS MORE UNPLEASANT THAN A VIRTUOUS ICEBERG WITH A MEAN SHADOW.

BAGEHOT

EVERY ICEBERG HAS A SECRET AMBITION TO TERRORIZE.

LEC

ICEBERGS ARE TOO OFTEN MERELY LOCAL.

DR. JOHNSON

THE MAJORITY OF ICEBERGS REMIND ME OF AN ORANGUTAN TRYING TO PLAY THE VIOLIN.

BALZAC

ALWAYS MISTRUST A SHADOW WHO NEVER FINDS FAULT WITH HIS ICEBERG.

COLLINS

THE ICEBERG SPEAKS ALL SORTS OF LANGUAGES AND PLAYS ALL SORTS OF ROLES, EVEN THAT OF DISINTERESTEDNESS.

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

IN ANALYZING THE ICEBERGS, DO NOT BE TOO PROFOUND, FOR OFTEN THE CAUSES ARE QUITE SUPERFICIAL.

EMERSON

THE CREDULITY OF AN ICEBERG IS THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL SOURCE OF AUTHORITY.

FREUD

LET NOT THY ICEBERG ROAR, WHEN THY SHADOW CAN BUT WHISPER.

DR. FULLER

AN ICEBERG WHO COULD NOT SEDUCE ICEBERGS CANNOT SAVE THEM EITHER.

KIERKEGAARD

EVERY ICEBERG LIKES THE SMELL OF ITS OWN SHADOW.

ICELANDIC PROVERB

AN ICEBERG TOO GOOD FOR THE WORLD IS NO GOOD FOR HIS SHADOW.

YIDDISH PROVERB

A SPOILED ICEBERG NEVER LOSES ITS SHADOW.

SIR HENRY TAYLOR

DON'T ASK THE ICEBERG, ASK THE SHADOW.

YIDDISH PROVERB

ICEBERGS, I SUSPECT, WERE SHADOWS ONCE.

LAMP

ICEBERGS INSPIRE US TO GREAT THINGS, AND PREVENT US FROM ACHIEVING THEM.

DUMAS

CAN YOU RECALL AN ICEBERG WHO EVER SHOWED YOU WITH PRIDE HER SHADOW?

DE CASSERTS

A BEAUTIFUL ICEBERG SHOULD BREAK HER MIRROR EARLY.

GRACIAN

NATURE HAS GIVEN ICEBERGS SO MUCH POWER THAT THE LAW HAS VERY WISELY GIVEN THEM LITTLE.

DR. JOHNSON

IT IS BECAUSE OF SHADOWS THAT ICEBERGS DISLIKE ONE ANOTHER.

LA BRUYÈRE

THE SHADOW THROWS NO LIGHT UPON THE ICEBERG, BUT ONLY THROUGH THE ICEBERG CAN WE LEARN HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE SHADOW.

ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY

A TASTE FOR DIRTY STORIES MAY BE SAID TO BE INHERENT IN THE ICEBERG.

GEORGE MOORE

IF YOU ARE AFRAID OF SHADOWS, DON'T ICEBERG.

CHEKHOV

NONE THINK THE ICEBERG UNHAPPY BUT THE ICEBERG.

YOUNG

ICEBERGS LOSE THEIR TEMPER IN DEFENDING THEIR SHADOWS.

EMERSON

![Illustration of a shadow and an iceberg](Illustrations_Jan_Webb)
TWENTY QUESTIONS
1. CAN THE INCIDENTAL EVER BE HELD THE EQUAL OF MEANINGFUL?
2. DOES ART EXIST WITHOUT PERFORMANCE?
3. IS EFFECT A REAL MEASURE FOR ART?
4. WHAT WOULD BE THE DISTINCTIONS FOR ART AS AN ACT OF INQUIRY?
5. IF MEANING AND CULTURE ARE CAUSALLY CONNECTED, AND PHENOMENA AND
   PERCEPTION ARE CAUSALLY CONNECTED, COULD PERCEPTION AND CULTURE BE
   ACAUSALLY CONNECTED?
6. COULD IT FOLLOW THAT PHENOMENA AND CULTURE HAVE "MEANINGFUL COINCIDENCES"?
7. WOULD AN INQUIRY OF PERCEPTION THEN HAVE CULTURAL MEANING ACAUSALLY?
8. IS MEASUREABLE MEANING THE PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CAUSAL
   AND ACAUSAL CONNECTINGS?
9. THEN WHAT IS THE MEASURE FOR AN AESTHETIC AWARENESS?
10. CAN MORALITY, FOR EXAMPLE, BE HELD AS A MEASURE FOR ART?
11. BUT WHAT PHENOMENA HAS NO AESTHETIC POTENTIAL?
12. AND WHAT IS THE CRITICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ELITISM AND OBSCURITY?
13. IS THERE AN AESTHETIC IDEAL?
14. THEN WHAT WOULD BE THE IDEAL MEASURE FOR POTENTIAL?
15. COULD ART BE MORE CLEARLY DEFINED BY DRAWING ITS DISTINCTIONS IN OUR INTENTIONS?
16. WAS THE DISTINCTION OF A NONOBJECTIVE ART AN INQUIRY FOR A NON-METAPHORICAL
   THOUGHT FORM?
17. AND CAN NONOBJECTIVE NOW BE TRANSLATED NON OBJECT?
18. THEN WOULD NONOBJECTIVE ART BE AN INQUIRY INTO THE STRUCTURE OF PERCEPTION?
19. AND WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS INQUIRY FOR OUR CULTURAL FORMS?
20. IF THERE WERE ART WITHOUT ARTIFICE, WOULD THIS ART LIE EQUALLY IN THE INCIDENTAL?

ROBERT IRWIN
SEPTEMBER 4, 1975
FALSE SILENCES
I DON'T SWEAT
I HAVE NO ODOR
I INHALE, DON'T EXHALE
NO URINE
I DON'T DEFECATE: NO EXCRETIONS OF ANY KIND
I CONSUME ONLY
OXYGEN, ALL FOODS, ANY FORM
I SEE, HEAR
I DON'T SPEAK, MAKE NO OTHER SOUNDS, YOU CAN'T HEAR MY HEART, MY FOOTSTEPS
NO EXPRESSION, NO COMMUNICATION OF ANY KIND
AN OBSERVER, A CONSUMER, A USER ONLY
MY BODY ABSORBS ALL COMMUNICATIONS, EMOTIONS, SUCKS UP HEAT AND COLD
SUPER REPTILIAN SOAKING UP ALL KNOWLEDGE, COMPACTOR OF ALL INFORMATION
NOT GROWING
I FEEL  DON'T TOUCH

I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THE KINDS AND QUALITIES OF THOUGHTS
I COLLECT, I CAN'T PROCESS
I CAN'T REACT TO OR ACT ON SENSATION
NO EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO SITUATIONS
THERE IS NO REACTION OF INSTINCT TO PHYSICAL OR MENTAL THREATS
YOU CAN'T REACH ME, YOU CAN'T HURT ME
I CAN SUCK YOU DRY

YOU CAN'T HURT ME
YOU CAN'T HELP ME
SHUFFLE THE PAGES
FIND ME A LINE
ARAPAHOE, ARAPAHOE
WHERE DID YOU GO
I BLINK MY EYES
TO KEEP THE TIME
Oracle
Schema Gallery
Florence, Italy
May 14, 1975

The performance was scheduled to begin at 9:30 in the evening. The first thirty-five people to arrive were let into the gallery and the door was locked. The gallery was dark except for one spotlight defining a circular area in front of one of three large windows. In front of each window hung a scrim that extended from ceiling to floor and obscured the window from view. The audience was asked to sit on the floor facing the windows and behind the spotlight area. After a few minutes, my shadow appeared on the scrim and said:

In February I did a piece where I lay on a triangular platform for twenty-two days. The platform was built in a corner high above the gallery floor. During the piece I just lay on the platform. I didn’t see anyone and no one could see me. I didn’t eat, talk, or come down. On the last night, after I had been there for three weeks, I had a dream, a sort of a nightmare. In the dream, I was doing a piece on a large bunk bed. I was high on the top bunk, and nobody could see me. I was always worried that the sheets were coming untucked, hanging down, spoiling the piece by making it look messy. I couldn’t look to see if the sheets were really hanging down, because then someone would see me. All I could do was lie there and worry. Then in the dream, the piece was over and I was down from the bed. I was sitting in a bar with two friends. It was the first time I had seen anyone. I couldn’t talk, and I didn’t want anything. I could talk, really, but I didn’t have anything to say. Nothing interested me. I knew that I was physically alright, but spiritually something had happened to me. It was as if I didn’t need anything anymore, it wasn’t just that I didn’t want it. And it wasn’t like I was crazy—it wasn’t like that. It was like serenity. If there was ever a time when I should have been happy and relieved and want to talk, this should have been it. But it wasn’t. It was like ennui or boredom, when nothing you think about is interesting or fun. I knew that people expected me to be happy, and they expected me to be glad to see them. I knew that it would be obvious that I was distant, and I couldn’t hide the way I was feeling. It was like something had evaporated from me. I was sad and frightened. I realized what was wrong. I no longer had any desire to be part of the real world.

After the dream was related, the shadow disappeared and the audience was asked to leave.
The Ninth Meditation

Years ago an old friend said she hoped we would continue always to be friends even if our lives took us to different places. Some time ago she disappeared from my life as I must have disappeared from hers and I haven't thought of her for years till now. And I hope that she's well but optimistic—because she always had bad luck. Still I don't especially want to see her show up. I don't think I have the energy to pick up threads. Who knows what's become of her life? What she needs of me to make sense of herself—of me—for both of us? I've always admired people who visit the sick, remember birthdays and work for the general good. It's terrific to appear out of the blue, rescue a friend in distress—prefer to appear out of the blue. Good people, generous people, can choose that career, but I'm not a nurse or a professional soldier. I probably let people become responsible for wounding those I would help. But I'm afflicted by the limits of my energy and I worry about time.

The Second Meditation

Like another friend who covers my hand with hers and looks warmly into my eyes, compelling me to acknowledge her sympathy whether I like having it or not. After every complaint about my life or my work or the world's injustice she comforts me, reminds me how far I have come and how much further I will go. Who asked her? Why should I believe her? Is she so wise? In my innocence, in the natural course of events I begin my complaints. Her job is to listen, to agree if necessary, probably do all the things she does do but without suddenly taking on the conscious tone of a doctor or is it the tone of a mother? Either way it is always the tired tone of a servant. Such arrogance! I become alien from the force of my complaints. They lose spontaneity, energy. They become framed, they sit out there between us, facing us, to be somhandled and considered rather than spilled out and discarded. They are, after all, not important enough to require handling. I throw them off and be rid of them. My voice changes from anger to petulance. I can hear the change as well as feel it in my facial muscles. The odd thing is I can like it but I am not brave enough to accuse her. I think after all she will be hurt rather than relieved. The shabbiness of our situation enures me. I step down, I kneel down and raise me. I am no longer a dog in a collar, no longer a horse in a harness.
The Fourteenth Meditation

Years ago a powerful man tried to do me a good turn but he didn't try hard enough. He reported on me to the World knowing what the young suffer from most is silence and he was a gentleman. But he was a busy one. Or lazy. He didn't take the trouble to understand me before he spoke for me. Or rather, he chose to speak of me as I had been once, several years before. He was older than me, at least in the ways of the world and I'm surprised he didn't know you can't parcel out charity. If you can't give enough, better not give any. I may have been new to the world but I wasn't humble. I was furious, wrote him an angry letter, insulted him. Later I got scared. What if he took revenge on me? Destroyed me? I began to worry. It was my bad character. Helpless people often have bad characters. Only happy people, strong people, can afford good characters. Maybe that's why they do everything right. I became political, wrote him a second letter. I was charming, seductive, cried a lot, misrepresented myself and what he had said. I threw myself at his mercy. It was no use, he hated me. I still hated him. I was an ingrate and he had been magnanimous to the wrong person. But now, some years later, I don't regret the first letter, only the second. I worry about it sometimes. What if he kept it and showed it to people? Maybe I was lucky and he threw it away because it angered him and I wasn't important then. Our shared past embarrasses me when I think about it. I will execute him when the time is ripe.

The Thirteenth Meditation

I'm a fortunate age for success. Neither too young nor too old. The young people won't be jealous since I'm so much older. A young and practical person will think. "Somebody must be successful. If it can't be me this year at least it shouldn't be the one next to me. That one, he's been around a long time. He was here way before I got here. He's put in his time, he deserves it, it's only just." The older ones will approve of me because I'm not young. "Look" they will point at me with a certain pride. "No wonder he's so successful, he's not an upstart, but a mature, experienced person. Like us." In the first case I'm not taking anything away and in the second case I'm giving something back.
1975, Pasadena, Calif. Novitiates demonstrate varying degrees of proficiency and enlightenment.
RASHTA CRESTINI, 8 x 12 ft.

LASSE LES BON TEMPS ROULE L. 5 x 7 ft.

MARTA'S OLYMPIA, 5½ x 8 ft.

MAS FINA COMO LA MIERDA DE GALLINータ, 5 x 7 ft.

PAUCHUCOS RICKED IN MY WIND
BARBARA BURDEN'S HOT SEX DREAM, 4 x 7 ft.

MANET'S OLYMPIA, 5½ x 8 ft.

PAUCHUCOS KICKED IN MY WINDOW BUT THEY DIDN'T PUNCH OUT MY LIGHTS (I WAS TOO SMART), 5 x 8 ft.
VITO ACCONCI

1. Making Up
I am a guerrilla fighter, not an artist. This is not a show, but a hit-and-run attack. That isn’t a gallery; it’s a combat zone. . . . I can get to know the terrain here: how to enter, where to hide, the way to escape . . . I am out in the open now, I will meet the enemy and disappear . . . The trick is: keep moving, give the enemy no rest . . . I have to widen my territory . . . I have to set up a new base . . . I have to take another ground . . . (No, look, I’m an ordinary guy . . . take what I can get . . . pick up a show here, pick up a show there . . . keep myself busy . . . I got my troubles like everybody else . . . I have to find a place for myself, that’s all . . . what to do, where to go . . .)

2. The Set-Up
A quick tour through the West Coast: from May 23 to June 7, 1975, there would be four shows—Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco. (But you need some more information, don’t you, before you can make a case. You have to get a handle on the situation; you try to break it down. Listen: “It’s hard to believe, but this is my first trip to the West Coast—okay, I’m a late starter—these will be my first real shows there, the first installations I’ll have put together in person.” Try this: “These aren’t real shows—but only one of them lasts more than a day or two—they’re stop-overs, public appearances—something like advertisements.” Or what about: “Things just seem to happen—once one show was set up, the others fell into place, spurt-of-the-moment—it was out of my hands.” Remember: “There’s no money in this—these aren’t commercial galleries, they’re just space run by artists—look, two of the spaces are run by friends of mine—Sonabend isn’t behind this trip, it’s more casual than that, I’ve arranged it all myself.”)

3. The Gamble
I could claim that the trip was a dare, a matter of honor: to prove I was a ‘working artist,’ I’d obligated myself to do a different piece in each place—watch me, I can do a show a minute—this is the challenge by bringing in my career: I had to keep reactivating my image—I couldn’t afford, then, to miss the West Coast. In turn, I could answer charges of careerism by claiming personal involvement, responsibility: I would have to do the shows because I couldn’t, after all, disappoint my friends.)

4. The Cheat
All the while, I was off the hook: I would be in each city for only three days—no time to worry—there would be no time for a ‘major piece.’ (I could make my non-chalance, then, more purposeful: since the pieces would have to be hurried and sketchy, I could use them as first drafts, as rehearsals for future shows, larger shows. But my purpose could wear down a bit to resignation: I was going West too late; my image there was already formed, through magazines, from early work—I was The Flasher, The Ripper, The Divided Self; the newer pieces, then, would seem like withdrawals, regressions; and since a single show couldn’t reveal the links, the line of development, I wouldn’t be able to live up to my image. So I could jump back, and make my resignation more cynical: I could assume a New York attitude—or at least what I expected a West Coast audience would expect a New York attitude to be—I could shrug off the West Coast shows; they didn’t count anyway. But my cynicism could reverse itself, and turn to paranoia: there must be a reason why the shows had been arranged so haphazardly; there must be a reason, also, why I hadn’t shown on the West Coast before this; I had to draw the necessary conclusions—nobody cared about the work, and I wouldn’t have the time to try and change their minds.)

5. The Pressure
At some point, I’d have to turn away from the external circumstances, back to the work itself. I could claim that the trip was the work, that the terms of the trip reiterated the terms of the work: the trip would move me through public occasions—I could open up, I could hit on a message to tell; the trip would drag me away from each place quickly, making each show precarious, difficult to finish in time—I could be on the spot—the trip would leave me no time between shows—I couldn’t prepare myself, but I could always improvise, the trip would replace one unknown audience with another—I could try to find the right line, the right introduction, I could set up a meeting place. So I couldn’t take the trip lightly; if I did, I wouldn’t be taking my work seriously.

6. The Cards On The Table
The trip would force me to know where I was. The earlier work had my presence to hang on—I faced the viewer, the viewer was there to meet me, to get at me; but my presence narrowed my field of contact—the viewer and I were in a closed circle, we were forced to be private; to bring in the world, then, I took myself out—the pieces gained space, a sense of drift, a complication of levels; but they lost focus, they lost directness—the viewer had no reason to be there, nothing to face; as if to fix a point, then, the pieces needed physical constructions—they were like sets for a state of mind; but the constructions hid the ground, they concealed the gallery—I was in an abstraction, I was in a fantasy world. So I would have to admit, by this time, that I was in trouble. The trip would force me to face up to myself: was I ready to go on working?

7. The Stakes
I could use the trip to recover my losses. The speed of the trip would force me to simplify, to clarify tactics. Since I had no more than a day or two to work on each piece, I couldn’t develop complications; I would have to separate the work into strads—I’d know that another piece was coming up soon, I didn’t have to throw everything into one. Since each installation would have a two- or three-day life-span, I wouldn’t be given the resources for elaborate physical construction; I’d have to treat each space as a temporary campsite, a performance space to pass through. Since the trip was set up like a tour, with a definite route, I’d have to know where I was going; I’d be forced out of generalities (I wasn’t doing a show.) I was doing the ‘portland show’—I couldn’t help having in mind a concrete place. For me, then, the trip could be a way to get back on track: a chance to start a winning streak.

8. The Breather
But all this was too solemn; it had the feel of a ‘last stand,’ of ‘personal salvation.’ I could plan the trip, instead, as a relaxation, a sigh of relief. The trip meant the end of the season; it was a time to finish things off, smooth things out (and, at the same time, toss around some new ideas—I didn’t have to worry about leaving them up in the air—there was nothing at stake yet). Then, too, there were no commercial involvements: I could have the illusion that I was out of the gallery system here—I was a free man—no strings attached—I could do whatever I wanted. (I couldn’t help talking it up, working myself into it; this was the Way West—the wide-open spaces—stake out new territory, start life all over again.)

GHOST TOWN, MARYSVILLE, OREGON
9. Placing myself (1)
First stop, Portland. I could call it The Great Northwest: I could think in terms of density, blue-green, verticality, clouds like mountains; I could hope for the possibility of untouched ground, a new frontier. This was the new terrain of the post-war years, and this was the background, for a piece I had planned earlier, for another space—a piece I had to put off until I found the right context ...

Voice of America: The floor is like a map of America (an irregular grid of string, ankle-height, across the floor, like contour lines, like a map that is turned into a trap—projected over the floor, through the lines, are aerial views of American landscapes); at the far end of the room, opposite the entrance and overlooking the map, are two giant wooden chairs, nearly reaching the ceiling—seats for a mythical Mr. and Mrs. America; from the chairs comes an audiostage—calliope, jug bands, brass bands—like background music; for America; now and then, my voice comes through the music: "Look, Ma, there's America rising, right at our feet"—it's as if I'm owning an American dream, controlling an American minute, at the other end of the room, near the entrance, my voice spurs out interminably—it's like a child's voice, I'm attacking the chairs, giving in to the chairs, each time I speak, a blank slide-projector lights up the chairs like a flash of lightening, like an explosion ...

This was a way, then, to set myself into position for the rest of the trip: a way to get into America. The Portland show was the only full-fledged show, a month long; time enough to stake out a claim, settle down—chairs in the corner of the country, a vantage point from which to look back at the rest of it.

10. Placing myself (2)
Second stop, Seattle. I couldn't get a sense of the place, get a handle to start with; the word 'Washington,' possibly, just seemed second-best here (the word needed clarification: the state of Washington—it's as if the place becomes set apart, a state of mind, an abstraction). I could find no instrument of concretization here, nothing that could fix a piece down—I had to think in terms of presenting a piece, as if in mid-air, rather than doing a piece, on solid ground. This was an opportunity (not quite a place) to build a plastic-sit up parameters of the way of working: I could try out here the prototype of a piece that was all image and no construction, all screen and no solidity ...

A film projected over the floor; film, literally, as ground, as landscape (grass, dirt, rocks, water—shot from above by a moving camera); on either side of the film area, a speaker for an audiostage; sound as background music, as a kind of call across the ground (my voice—I'm singing a series of verbs, a series of adjectives—as I'm calling into existence, moving over the ground, mental states while moving over the ground); in the middle of the film area, a video monitor; video as close-up, as a figure in the ground (the screen is black—my head turns up, periodically, as if rising out of the earth, trying to make myself heard, bringing something back); from the side, slides projected, small, onto the film image: slides as details in the landscape, slides like a flicker, a mirage (conventional objects, objects a person might find in a landscape and take back home as a souvenir, maps, newspapers, newspapers, newspapers, objects, a gun, a knife, an object that has to be read as a clue) ...

The piece was called Body-Building in the Great Northwest. The choice of title was a give-away; it reveals in spite of my stated intentions, I really wasn't satisfied with generalization—I had to talk some flesh into the piece—it was the piece itself that had to be built up. It's as if I expected some magic from Seattle: once I got there, I would know how to put myself into the piece—how to plant myself in the land until I could grow out of it, bearing a new image. (One problem was, I was throwing names around: I could never think of Seattle as the 'Great Northwest'—that name was owned by the place I arrived at first—Portland had used up my preconceptions.)

11. Placing myself (3)
Third stop, Los Angeles. I'd have to keep glitter in mind; I could see only veils of light, I'd think of the Silver Screen; I could build the importance into layers—straig, flesh, universality—that I'd want to fall into, sink in, get lost in; but, then, I could use it as a smoke-screen, a decoy: all the while, I'd be climbing out, up to a vantage point, a critical point—there, below me, I'd have a ready-made target, a culture that seemed to have designed itself for criticism. (I'd have to choose: do I run the streets like a madman, a prophet? or do I stay behind the scenes, writing memoirs, collecting evidence, fiddling around—or, at least, trying to find the right notes—while the city burned?) The piece here, then, would be composed of light—streams of light, flashes of light; as in the Seattle piece, there'd be no hard constructions—it was as if there was nothing to support them here; so the piece would be like a screen without a foundation, a well of air without a bottom ...

12. Placing Myself (4)
Fourth stop, San Francisco. There was no time to think for this one; it's as if I had mentally set a limit for myself—this determined to be 'too much.' (This notion, then, would have to be made use of in the piece: the piece should have the feel of a 'last gasp'.)

So I would save the piece until I got there. The right decision, I could tell myself: San Francisco was cozy, a place to settle down in, wind things up in—some of my closest friends were there, it would be like a homecoming—this was a place for celebration, not for a show. (I had to remember to use, in the piece, the feel of 'community ritual.')

What happened then was: while doing the first three shows, this last show was always on my mind: but it was as if it had to remain vague—it had to be like being a buzz in my ear—in order for it to stay a threat, it mustn't be clarified. (The piece would have to keep this note of 'undercurrent,' 'wave of doom'.)

So, then, I headed for San Francisco with my mind clouded: I had hints for a structure. The piece would stretch over a large space: it would be a kind of shout from one end to the other—or, more precisely, a calling-out, a yearning. (It was as if, after the closed spaces of the other pieces, I needed here a sense of roughness, a break-out.) That yearning, then, would be developed into science fiction—I was thinking of the West as a jumping-off point, a point from which to go still further west. (Before I left New York, I had come across the sentence: "San Francisco is endowed with what is probably the grandest array of physical assets any city ever had"); since I couldn't compete with that, I had to fly over it, into science fiction: I had to keep, at the same time, a fear of destruction, a clue of suicide—after all, if the science fiction failed, if the space-ship floundered, I'd be jumping off into the ocean.)
I had some ideas, too, for the physical look of the piece. I wanted to make a sharp break between ceiling and floor, I wanted a sense of lightness, of openness. I couldn't help thinking of San Francisco as comfortable and clustered—under the storm and beneath turbulences.) Also, I knew I would use slides, as in the other pieces; but here the slides would be blank flashes of light, as if they were yet to be filled, like empty glass vials. (It was as if I wanted to close the tour with future potential—I wanted it to stay open-ended.)

13. Mind Over Matter

The pieces were before the fact; they were schemed out before I landed—the schemes didn't change much once I got into production. The pieces were based then on a Void of the mind, a West inside me: a West that was always before me, that I was moving toward—not a West that I was set down on, that I was moving into.

On the other hand, the texts for the pieces were left hanging; they were written on the spot, at the last minute—I needed to be 'on location,' I had to see the installations rising in place. (It was as if I were waiting for voices—I had to put my ear to the ground, pick up the sound of hoofbeats.) After all, if I had developed the texts beforehand, they would have been foreign: they would have been rooted in enemy territory—the words of a New Yorker thinking West, not a 'New Yorker transplanted.' I had to talk where I was. But, since I was in each place for only three days, I had no time to learn the language, I had no chance to use it. So, the way it was, the texts were scattered over a no-man's-land; I was neither here nor there, I could talk to myself this nor that. I had to admit that, by bringing the West with me, and then skipping town fast, I didn't have to face the facts—no politics, no economic ground, no social ambience—I escaped the West altogether.

14. Shrunken Frames

When I got to San Francisco, I closed myself up inside MOCA; I would spend two days of preparation here, before the piece began. It was a matter of coming to a place and, immediately, forgetting it: I wouldn't be around San Francisco—indeed, I couldn't even be in it. I'd hide inside it—I was saying, let San Francisco go on without me. As it was, as if, after steady traveling, I couldn't stand to see another street, another sky; I wouldn't know what to do with it—all looked the same to me. All I could do was isolate myself once I had done that, all I could do, inside my isolation booth, was go crazy—turn the place upside-down.

Thought and action were the same here; the activation of the piece nearly repeated its preparation. While working out the piece, I wandered around the space—the elevations were working. It looked like a vast stage, a set kept coming back to an area of chairs at one end—this was a make-shift living room, from which I could look out onto the stage as if it were a monstrous TV set; I could settle here a while—it wasn't a space I was looking at, but a 'walked-through space.'

The piece itself, then, rearranged the furniture and carried on the preparation, the put the waiting on another level. The chairs were moved, the living room area, into the ceiling, the chairs, and whatever else happened to be in the space were fixed, upside-down, to the ceiling (the ceiling, now, became the floor). I couldn't be in it— I couldn't move in it, I couldn't see it, I couldn't touch it; I'd be in the ceiling, three slide projectors shot blanks of light, irregularly, through the furniture (what I wanted was the feel of searchlights aimed at another world—or the feel of ray-guns—the feel of appearance and disappearance); there's an audiotape, with one speaker at either end of the space: continuous footsteps, drifting over the space (it's as if it's leading toward a point, along side the viewers)—my voice in spurs, from different directions, in different intensities: 'Calling Ground Control ... Ground Control; A... B... B... Ground Control to C... C... See the beach... The blocks on the last beach... .' (My voice should be like a buzz in their ears as they walk through the space, both in the slides and on a wall.)—I'm也希望 to be a ghost, to be the air through the space, the air through the people inside the space.

I called the piece Waiting for the End. (I have to assume, almost desperately, that I meant something more than just the end of the tour.) It was, in fact, a matter of waiting for the text: I almost didn't want a text, I wanted to skip over words, grasp on to an extra-terrestrial language; the text, then, seemed designed to stay in a preparation stage, as if I was afraid to pin anything down; after all, since I had trapped myself inside the space, all I could pin down was the space itself; otherwise, I'd have to pin myself down. I'd have to finish myself off; to save myself from that, I turned the space on its end, trying for a way out of it; but, then, there was no time to leave the space and bring anything back—the piece was over.

15. Framing Errors

After the MOCA show, I was telling Terry Fox about the origins of the piece; my notions of San Francisco, I said, came from The Doors: When The Music's Over—The End—Break On Through To The Other Side. "But," he reminded me, "The Doors were an LA group."

(That was the melody ringing in my ears; I was off-key, it wasn't the piece it was the Jefferson Airplane: not the Doors' directness but the Airplane's insinuations—not the Doors' frontality but the Airplane's deep space—not Jim Morrison's single voice, on its own, but Grace Slick's voice subsumed into the group, into the cluster. That's what I should have understood here: a sense of grounding—the grounding of the Airplane: their drive, now, almost smothered by multi-layering—a drive that needed a group behind it, a culture to represent—a drive that, once that culture was gone, had to resort to forcing itself, had to become a labored push—it had to keep adding people, in a desperate attempt to keep itself going, swept itself upward—it had to change its name, hopefully becoming a Starship—it lost itself in weight, a weight that churned out a group roar, a muffled roar, taking the place of the scream.)

16. Re-Framing (1)

The pieces were bigger than the pieces; the pieces couldn't live up to the places. The Portland piece avoided the light. By keeping the piece in the dark, and showing slides, I was setting up a stage for America: here was America-in-miniature—an American melodrama, closed up within four walls. But this was an unnecessary substitute; the real America, after all, was just outside the door. (I remember overhearing, in Portland, talk about 'the good work the legislature was doing here'; but I could have no idea what that referred to—I had never found out, really, where I was.) It was as if I sensed that the clear sky would test me: it would force me to face the facts, force me to be more precise than I could ever hope to be; I knew I was isolated—my head was in a cave—the sun would be too much to take—it would blind me, blinking off the snow-capped mountains. So I had to abridge: I turned to history as a closed book; I went underground, into the dark ages. (What I could have done, at least, was to keep on going—go further under—give the underground a reason to be. The piece could have been a reverse image of the undergrowth of America, an America waiting to erupt. I could have placed the piece, then, literally under the ground: it should have been difficult to get to, people would have to dig their way down, worm their way in; even if they refused it, even if they stayed on top, they would know it was down there, still there, getting ready.)

17. Re-Framing (2)

The Los Angeles piece avoided space. By projecting slides from one corner to the other, and so tying the corners together, I brought the space into itself: I made a center. But
the center was make-shift, simulated; it couldn't hold up against the sprawl outside, the stretch of highways—Los Angeles was, after all, a city without a center, not a place to be in but a map to move across. It was as if I was afraid to loosen myself up. I refused to let myself go, into the tide. I wouldn't face the future, I wouldn't read the signs of the times (instead, I projected my own messages onto the walls—I would read what I already knew—I wouldn't let my messages shake me up). By making a center, then, I could mix things together, build something up: I could make color—color of bodies, color of flesh (I was trying to represent bodies, to keep up the image of bodies, when, all the while, Los Angeles was peeling bodies apart, abstracting them). So I wasn't doing what I said in the piece: I wasn't drowning in bodies, I was hiding in them—I was using them to anchor myself down, to keep my own body whole, safe from the pull of the wave around me. By covering myself in color, then, I tried to ward off the terror of neutrality: I tried to forget the sheet of white that was spreading over the city, spreading further, until the city itself became a white film, a white ooze, over everything else around it.

18. Re-Framing (3)
The San Francisco piece avoided people. I could have claimed that, by turning things upside-down, I was reaching for the sky, I would bring down the sky; but all I did was leave the ground, get off the streets. San Francisco, I should have remembered, was the place of street theater: I could have gone into the crowd then, I could have made direct approaches. Instead, I kept out of sight; I drew back and, from behind the scenes, I made announcements, I stated doom—when, all the while, together, we could have been busy averting doom, retracking it into the ocean—or, at least, we could have been creating doom, taking it into our own hands, bringing it down on our heads, willfully. (I could try to claim that I didn't have time for realism, my mind was on something else, I was on the track of science fiction. But San Francisco wasn't the place for science fiction; San Francisco wasn't abstract enough. So I was out of time, out of order: I should have gone to San Francisco first—the last sign of people before the leveling, before Los Angeles.)

19. Breaking The Spell
The Seattle piece—I can't go over that; I never understood Seattle, I couldn't know what I was missing. The piece admitted this: of the four pieces, it was the only one that didn't fill the space—it was kept off in one corner of the gallery—it made no attempt to work itself into the audience. I could claim that this was a way to come to my senses, I couldn't even pretend anymore that I was coming to terms with place; all I could do was throw something in—and drop something off—let it fall where it may—let me out.

20. Anchors
I could claim that the pieces were pretexts: each piece put me in place, installed me in a city I didn't know—the piece kept me busy, giving the place some time to grow on me. My show, then, wasn't a show by me but a show for me—while people came to see me, I would be seeing the city through them. Shoving away from a home ground, then, becomes a matter of scouting, borrowing; I can pick up something from the place and, the next time I show there, I can give it back, re-done by me, inside the new piece that I do then. But, by that time, the place would have changed, and I wouldn't know how until I returned; so what I brought back—my gift, my acquired magic trick—was already out of date; I would always be one step behind.)

21. Out of Frame
"I can't go home again," I said, coming home to New York. I had something to foresee now: 'I've seen the future, and its name is . . . its name is let me see now, its name is . . . Los Angeles!' My mind, then, can be there, while I'm standing here. Now I can be the man for slogans: "There's no room to move in New York." . . . "New York is just another Europe." . . . I can talk away the flaws in my work: after all, I'm in the wrong place here. So, now, I can walk down the street as if I'm floating, as if I'm walking on air: I've talked myself, finally, out of place—I'm nowhere.
From the Fresno Bee, May 3, 1924:

With a piece of orange peel in one hand and a lighted match in another, the objects held about two inches apart, Baldasare Forestiere, world's champion digger, yesterday demonstrated the explosive nature of the oil in an orange skin. "Now watch," he said, squeezing the orange peel towards the flame. The gap between the peel and the match suddenly cracked and snapped as the inflammable gas ignited.

Forestiere had been conducting a party of Fresnoans through his subterranean palace of fifty rooms which he has excavated during the past sixteen years. The work has been finished in the rock, but this vast amount of labor required to convert the raw material into the vision stored in Forestiere's mind almost overwhelms him, he confessed yesterday. "All that I have done is nothing," he pined. "For it required very little money, perhaps $300, but now I have to begin to use cement in large quantities. I have to reinforce the roof where there are streaks of loose earth that break through the rock."

Twenty-two years after this article was written, Baldasare Forestiere died in Fresno of pneumonia that developed as a complication of a hernia operation. He was 67. He had spent 36 years in Fresno, and had completed, alone, with nothing but hand tools and a wheelbarrow, 100 rooms and patios linked by tunnels in Forestiere's world of acres of sand. Sometimes these rooms are one over another, sometimes 20 feet or more underground, yet they are light, open, and full of vegetation.

Forestiere's family had been citrus growers in Mesina, Sicily. He came to America in 1900 when he was 21 years old, with dreams of establishing his own citrus plantation in California. After eight years as a construction worker in the New York subways, he had saved enough to purchase land in Fresno.

But the citrus plantation dream shriveled in the 100° heat of a Fresno summer, and the land he had bought turned out to be solid rock, beneath a thin layer of topsoil. Forestiere went to work as a laborer in a neighboring vineyard, and in his spare time chipped away at the hardpan on his property with a pickaxe. Eventually he had hollowed out a room, where he spent more and more time to escape the heat. The hole he had excavated before he started to burrow into the rock became a patio for the room, and, hauling dirt down to fill planters, he landscaped it so his room would have a pleasant view. This was to be his pattern of building for many years.

He added more rooms, brought down his belongings, built a fireplace and sealed off the living quarters with glass doors and windows against winter's damp. Later he built skylights in many rooms; some of these he covered with glass (removable in summer), others he left open, placing planters under them to catch the rain. As he became more and more involved with his building, he graded the patios so that rain would run into sump pits. He balanced the skylights and curves of his tunnels so that no spot would be dark at any time of day, and he arranged arches, skylights and doors for maximum air circulation.

His method of construction was basically to chip out the rock. He then used the rock he had removed to reinforce areas that needed it, putting the chunks back with concrete. Where necessary, metal rods were also used as reinforcement—these were bed slats, pieces of automobiles and any other junk metal he could find. Some are still visible, but only in unfinished areas. Forestiere's handiwork is very neat. In fact, he is said to have been exacting about it, tearing out and re-doing work by well-meaning friends, who drank his homemade wine and then sometimes would offer their help.

Forestiere never cultivated his land as a business, as he had at first intended, but he had it arranged economically, for subsistence and for beauty. He kept tropical fish in a large aquarium with a glass bottom so he could look up at it from a room below. In his kitchen patio he had a shallow pool where he kept fish he had caught in a nearby river and planned to eat. He had many decorative plants, a vegetable garden, and, most importantly, his fruit trees. Each of these is in a planter and has its own skylight or patio, so the trees are chosen carefully for variety of both fruit and ripening times. Many of his trees are multiple fruits grafted on a single trunk.

His interest in grafting was shared by some Japanese friends who visited him often. During the second world war, when these friends were taken to internment camps, Forestiere renounced his American citizenship—something he had only just acquired by taking the naturalization tests.

Baldasare Forestiere apparently had many friends in Fresno. Perhaps he was considered eccentric, but the tone of the newspaper article I quoted earlier is definitely respectful. The headline of that article is, "Tunnel Artist Builds Cave Resort." Evidently even at that early date Forestiere was thinking and talking about his monumental project that was never finished; a project that testified to his sociability: an underground Italian restaurant, where people could get out of the heat.

He recognized that the automobile had come to California to stay, and in the late 1920's started to dig an auto tunnel to the spot where his restaurant would be. This is not just an ordinary tunnel. It is 800 feet long, gracefully curving, with a footprint alongside and rock-carved benches where walkers can rest, with landscaping—open areas alternating with the actual tunnel. The visitor would drive in, and a man would be waiting to park his car. The customer could then place his order, and walk out into the underground gardens while the food was being prepared. Each table would have its own tree growing out of it, and its own skylight above, and there would be musicians playing on the little stage at one end of the hall.

Before he died, Forestiere had completed the auto tunnel and a network of delivery and service tunnels, pantries and kitchen. He had excavated the hall for the restaurant. His brother finished it with concrete blocks and the rafters and roof from an old barracks the military was tearing down nearby (no skylights). When we were there, the stage was full of Disney-like paper-mache animals, ready for some charity event. The people of Fresno use the hall for parties; there is a vast spook-house made out of Forestiere's
tunnels and rooms on Halloween. In the summer, guides take tourists through, reciting a memorized commentary (excerpts from it appear under the photographs). This is all quite straightforwardly done; the artist's work is mostly not being tampered with, and the owners ("the family") seem to be trying to make it available with a minimum of commercialization. Probably one reason it has not been commercialized more is that there are very few tourists in Fresno. Who would go in that heat for pleasure?

When, at the airport car-rental counter, we asked directions to the Underground Gardens, the atten-
dant couldn't believe we'd come there just to see that. "I used to see that crazy old man when I was a kid," he said, "Bringing that wheelbarrow full of dirt out and dumping it."

It was July, and we arrived at the gardens before nine a.m. of what seemed a pleasant day. We spent several hours down there, feeling comfortable, then emerged about three o'clock to a furnace-blast of air. It was 100° and suffocating. The incredible words of the car-rental man kept pounding in my head during the oppressive drive back to the airport: "Crazy old man."

We will now be entering the home which Mr. Forestiere built. It has a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms and a reading or writing room, a bedroom court and bath. The French doors he did not make, but he did install them. He also brought in the electricity which you see overhead. On the left-hand side of his fireplace is a stovetop which goes sideways. He made this so that when he had a fire in there some of the heat could escape and get the chill off the bedrooms behind. There is another stovetop centrally located over the fireplace, up higher, to act as a draft for the smoke and to carry it to the above-ground level.
The kitchen, which is old-fashioned now, was modern in his time. He had an ice box, now we have refrigerator-freezers. He had a radio, now we have T.V. Back here he has a bank of shelves, a sliding glass window, and a pantry. Here just behind us he carved a seat out of the wall. It's between his stove and the pull-out table which you see here. He could sit here and eat. If company should arrive, so that they would not have to feel uncomfortable because of interrupting his meal, he could slide the table back in, take his food and dishes and put them on the concealed shelves he has on both sides of the table.

Through this door is his guest bedroom. Much later in his life Mr. Forestiere made an arrangement with a woman to live down here to see if she could adjust to underground living. If she could, they would get married. If not, he would compensate her for her time. We do not know who she was or how long she stayed. She did eventually leave. He made her this dresser that you see in front, taking time to decorate it with little stones. Now over here to the back of the room you see a cement aperture protruding. This is where the stovepipe from the fireplace comes through. The cement aperture is made so that it would catch sparks, soot, or ashes that might fly through. Above the fireplace is a hole drilled completely through on a slant and it is aimed at the French doors, about knee high. This is where he kept his shotgun.
As you come across the bridge over the pond on the far side, you see a bathtub. This was Baldasare's bathroom. The tub sits upon boards. Under the boards is a hole that the bath water drained into. Above ground, overhead, he had a metal tank to hold the water. He had a hose attached to the tank coming down to the bathtub. In front of the alcove he had a piece of canvas. Of course, living alone most of the time, he probably didn't need it.

We will now be going into the church Mr. Forestiere created. At the front you can see his podium, and overhead the bell he went to the bay area to get. Mr. Forestiere's older brother, Tony, had gotten married and had a couple of children, and even his younger brother, Joseph, had married a local girl and had started his family, and Baldasare was beginning to feel lonely. So he decided to get married. He asked the girl he was courting at the time to become his wife, and he built this church for them to be married in. But she tacked on the condition that he would have to build her a house above ground. He told her, no, that if she married him they would be living underground.
Finally, when he realized he wouldn't be getting married, he decided he would turn his gardens into a Mediterranean type restaurant underground. He felt it would be a success because people would come to his restaurant because it would be cool and pleasant underground. He turned more to his work, and created an auto tunnel. It starts at Shaw Avenue and goes back to the front of his restaurant where people could get out of their cars and a man could then drive the car away and park it. The tunnel is over eight hundred feet long and he did every bit of it by hand.

The tree you see in the middle of the table is over forty years old. Mr. Forestiere wanted to use cement table tops in his restaurant and he wanted something in the middle like a centerpiece, so he planted the orange tree you see in this one table, which was a model for others which would go in the restaurant. He did not want the tree to grow big, so instead of making the skylight so the sun could get down to it, he made it so the tree would get enough sun to keep it alive but not enough so it would grow tall. Instead of using rods in his table and making it in one piece, he made it in two pieces, so if a tree died or he decided to plant something else, all he had to do was pull it apart and take the old one out and put the new one in.
Here is one of the many planters Mr. Forestiere made. By looking up you can see that he made his skylight a little smaller than the planter. He did this so he could control the rain water and keep it from flooding. The tree you see in this planter is over sixty-five years old, yet it looks like a young sapling. Well, citrus needs a lot of hot sun during the summer time, and the small skylight didn’t let very much in. He kept experimenting throughout his life with his skylights until he hit upon a skylight that let plenty of sun in to make his trees grow vigorously, and yet he was able to control the rain.

Now you can see that even though you are twenty-two feet underground, there is still a lot of light. If you will look up to the top of the tree, along the outside, you will see a ledge all the way around. Mr. Forestiere made this ledge so that when this tree with all its fruit got ripe, he only had to walk around the ledge and pick it from the top of the tree, which is still underground. Now on this tree are seven different grafts, all that still produce fruit. We do not count the bittersweet, which is the mother trunk on which he made his graftings, or the graft that was cut off after his death.