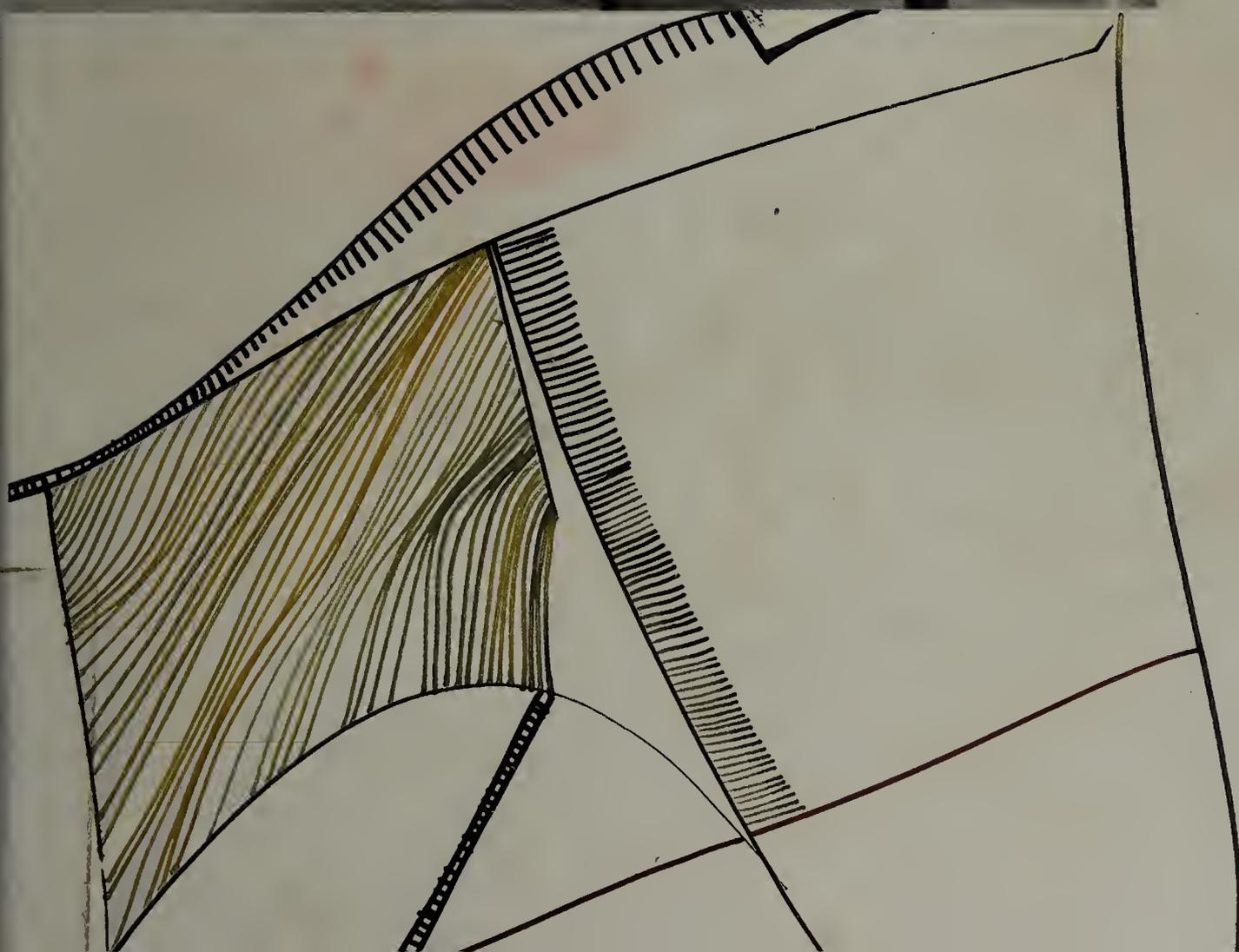




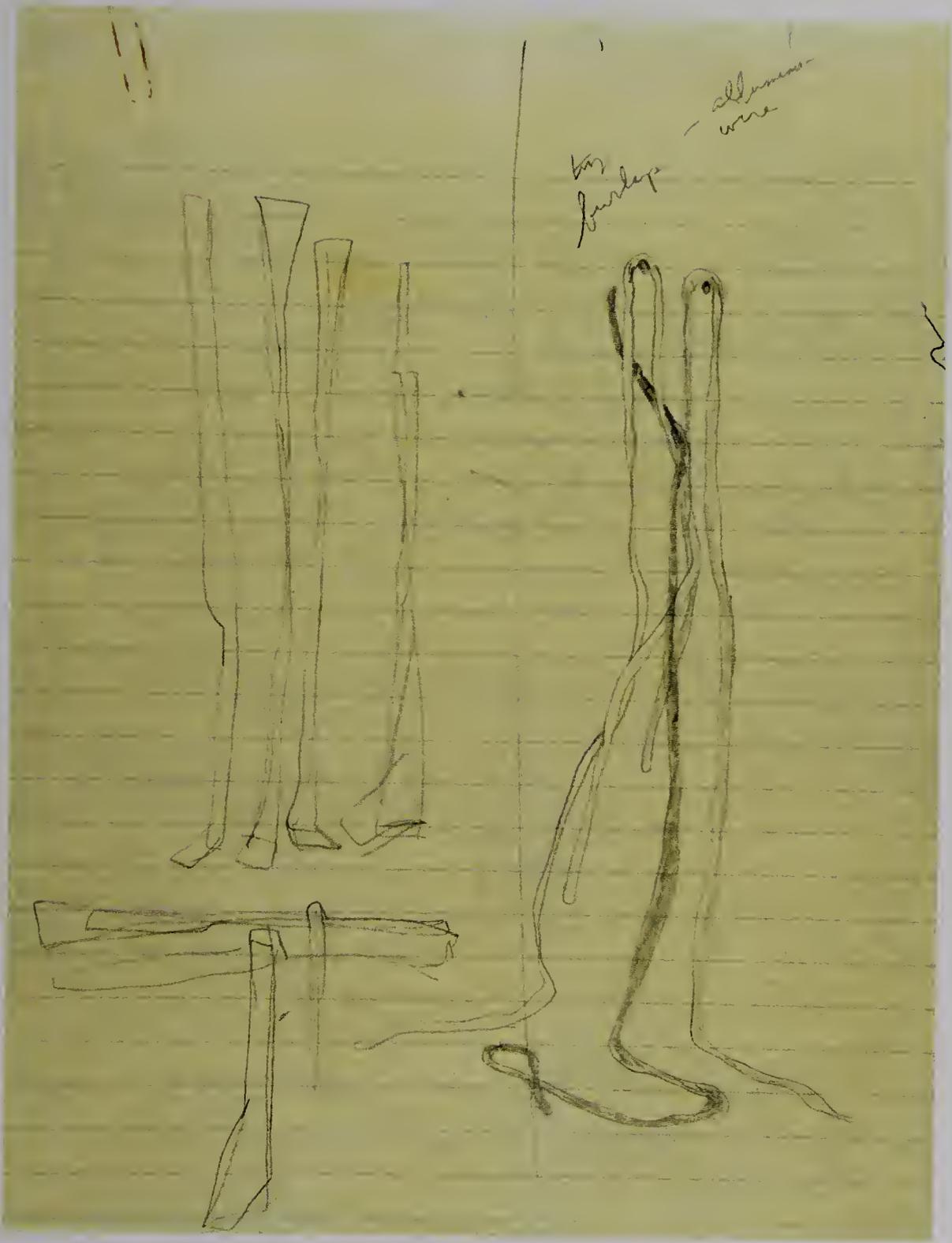
Eva Hesse Drawing

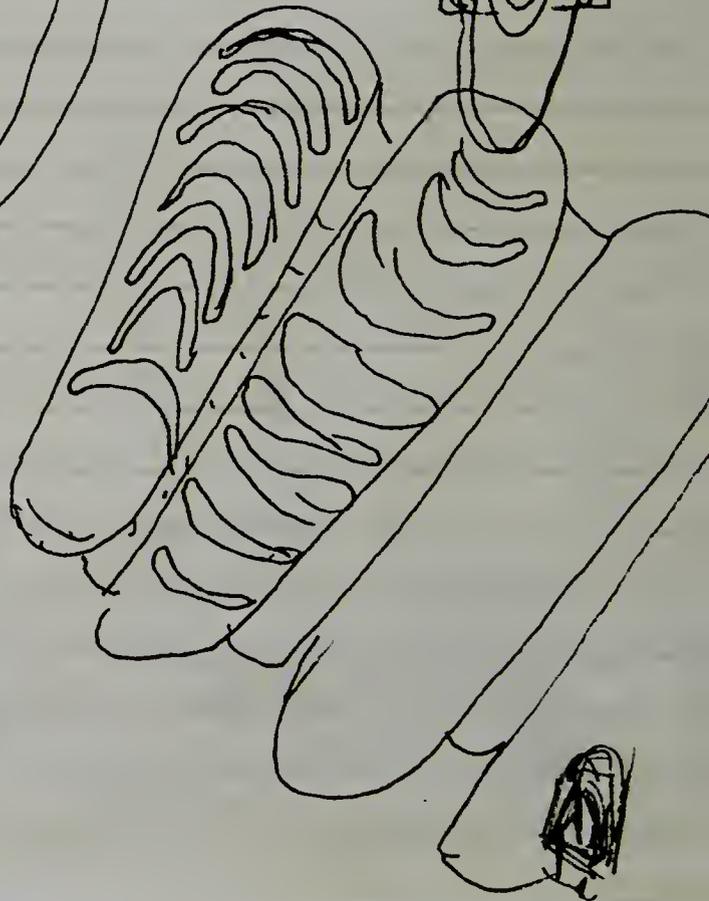
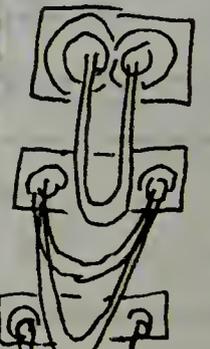
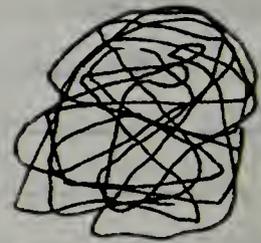
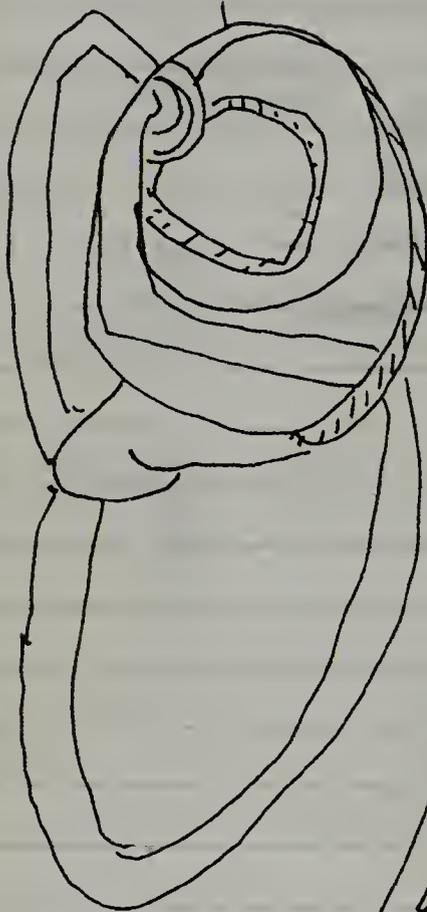
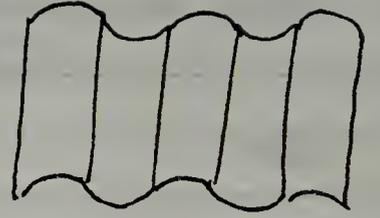
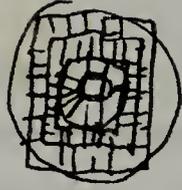
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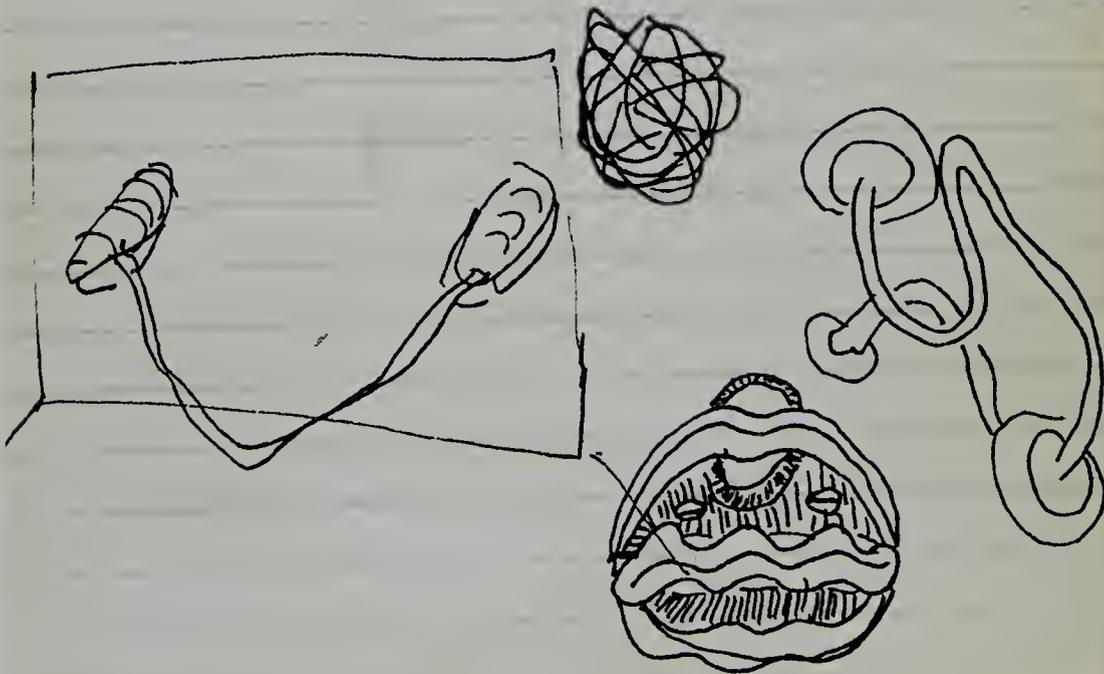
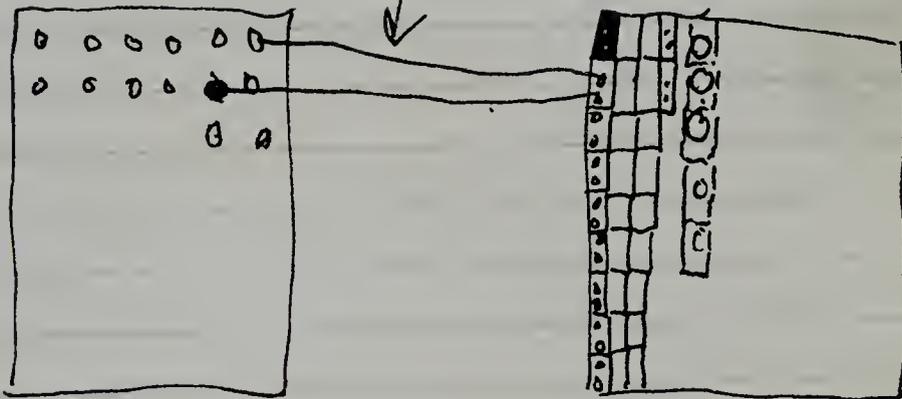


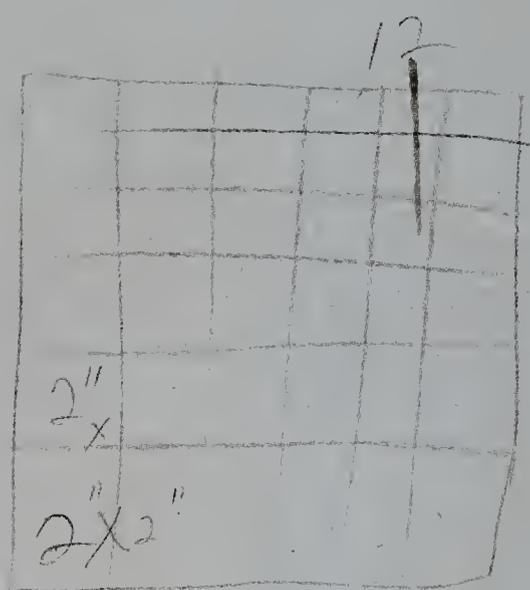
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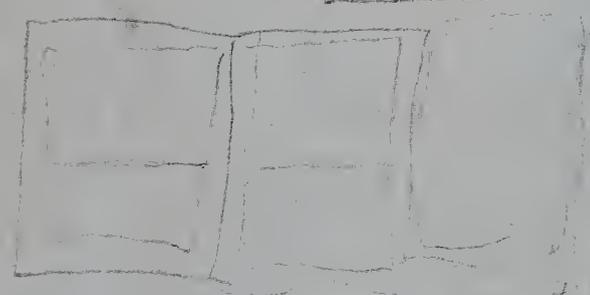


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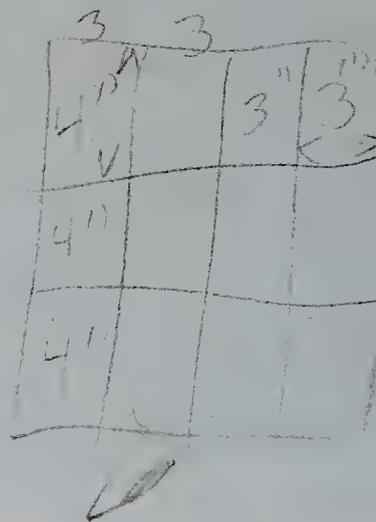




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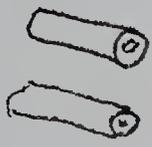
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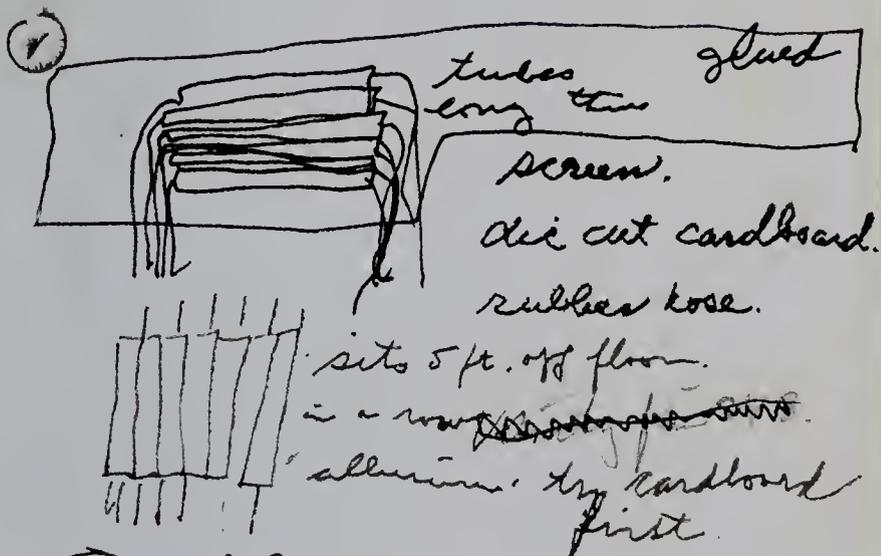
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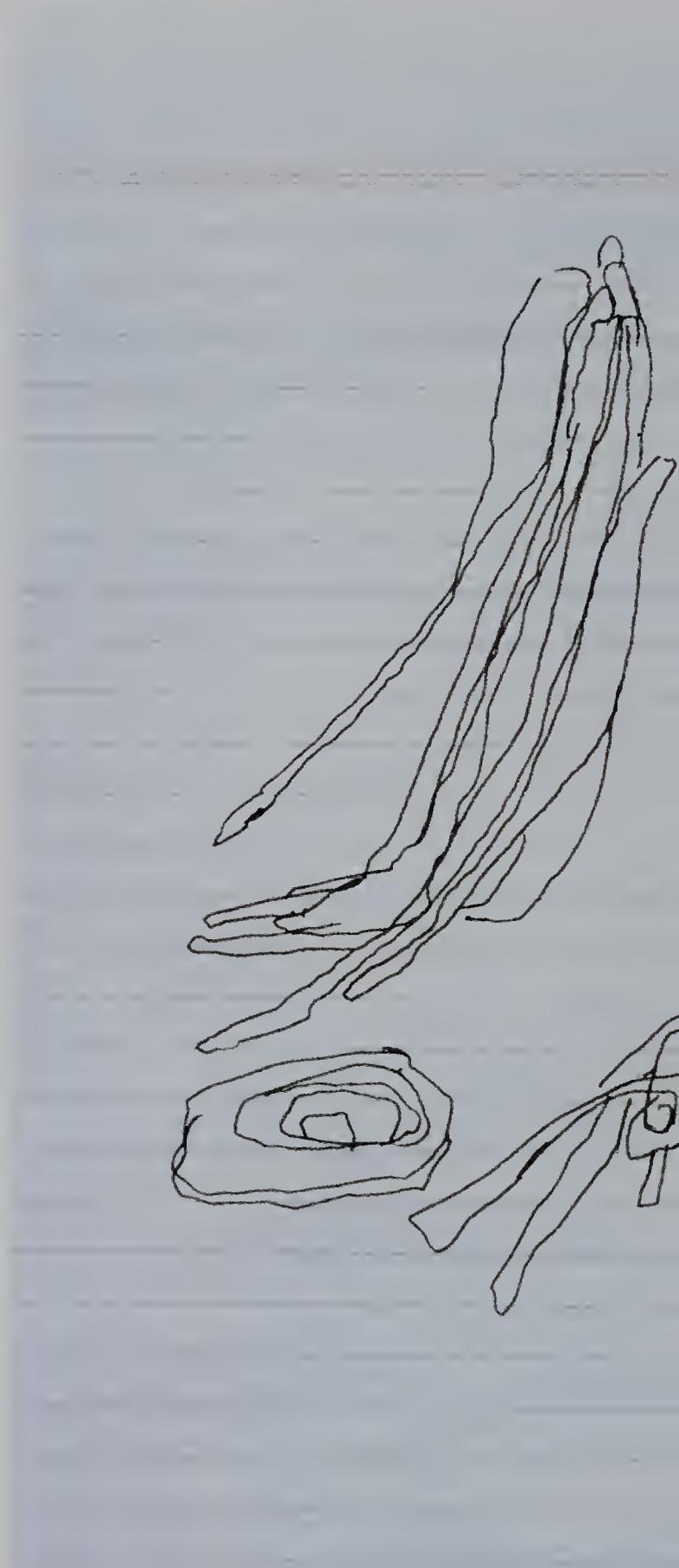

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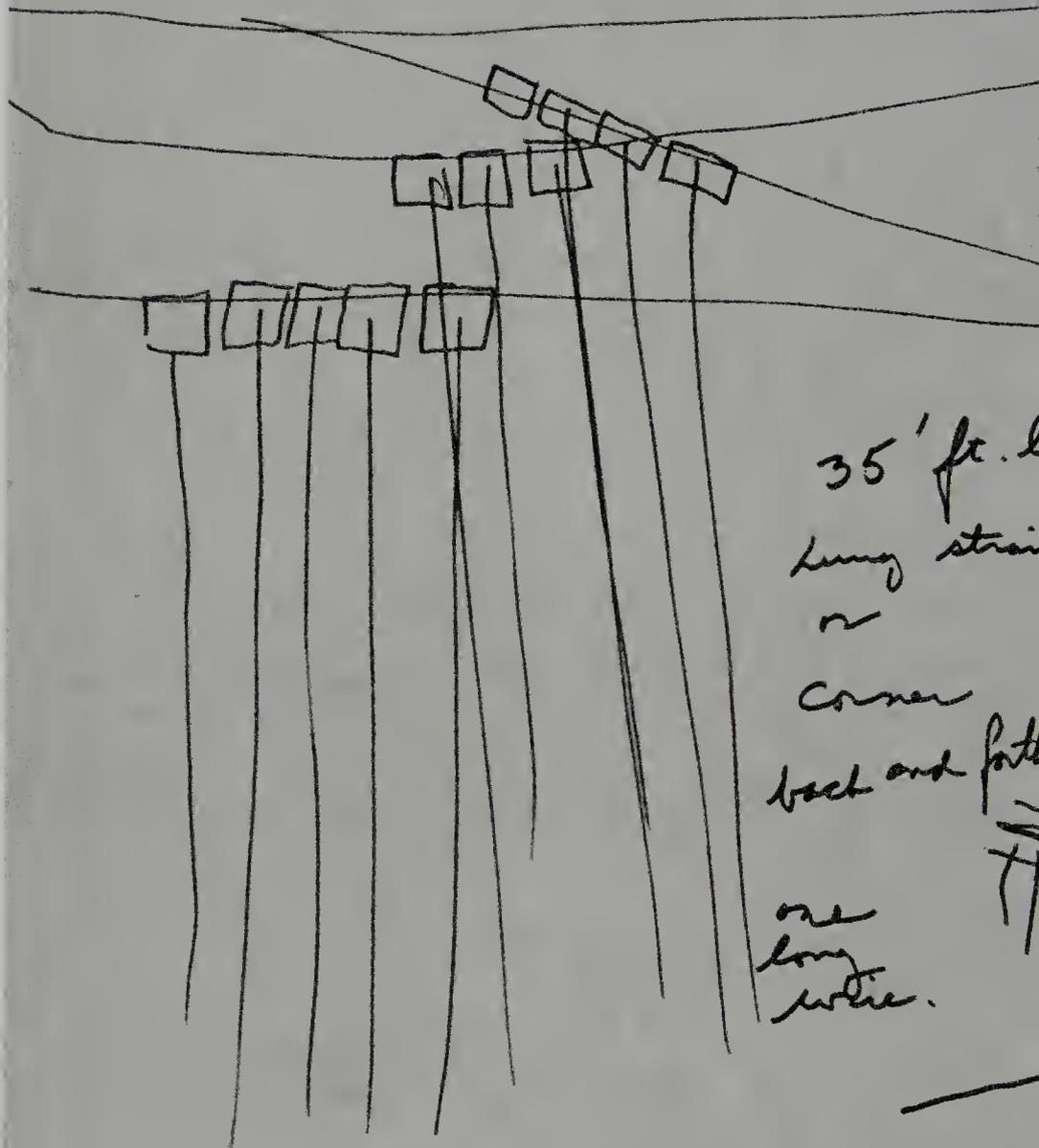
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Figures are incorrect.

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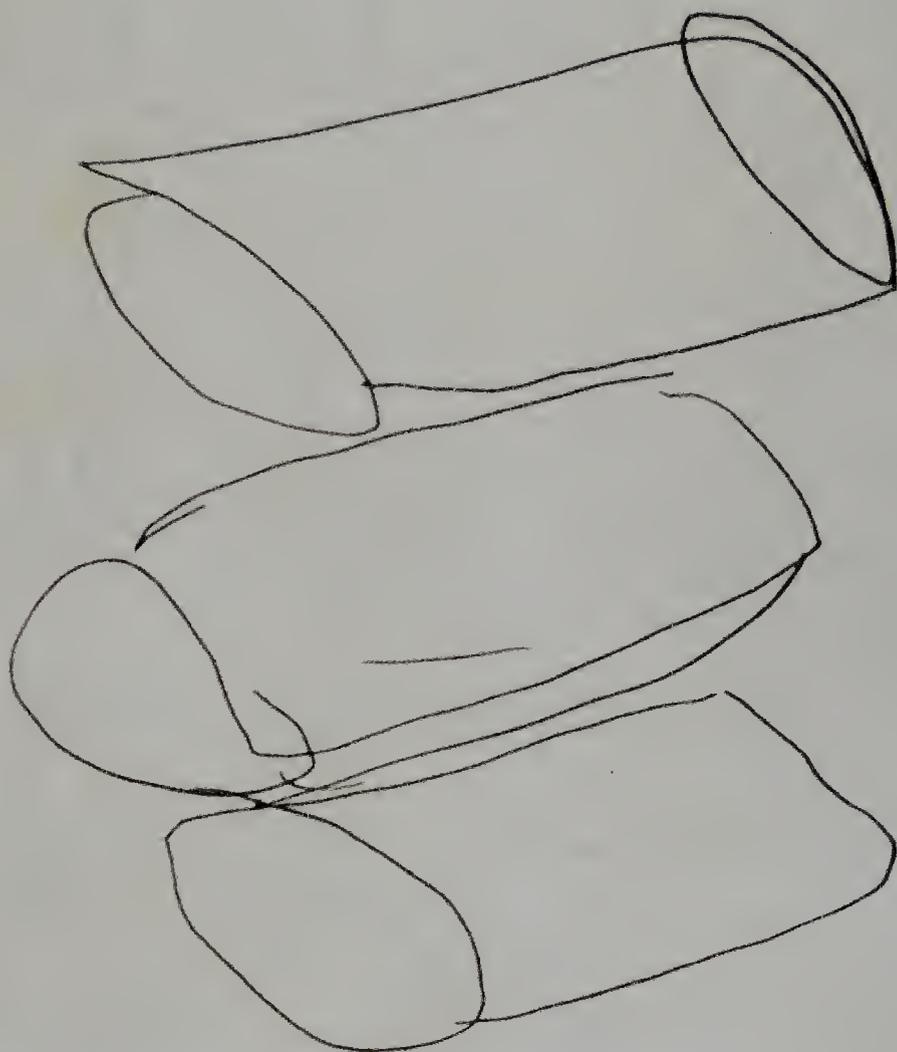
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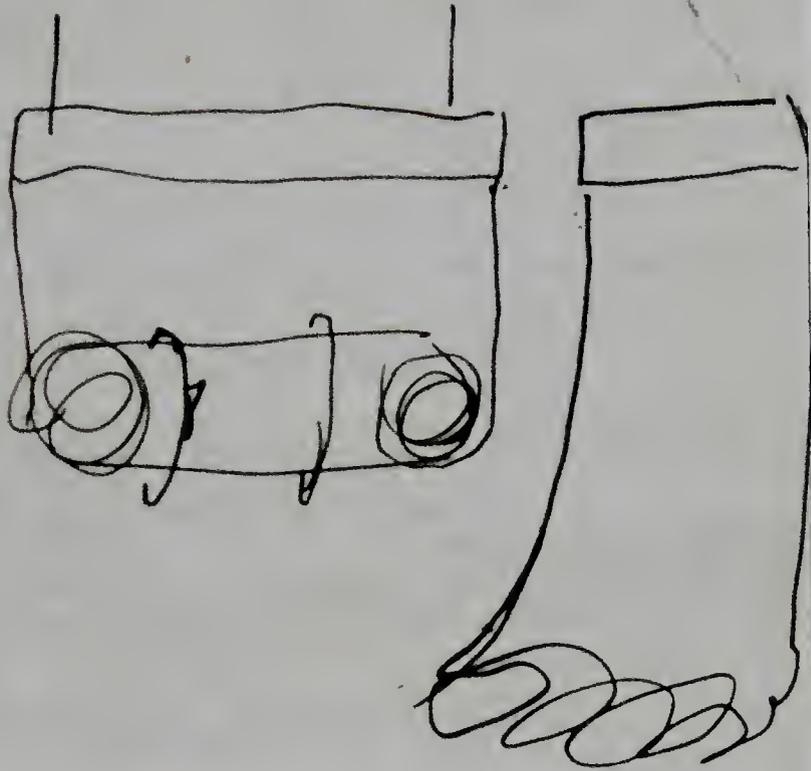


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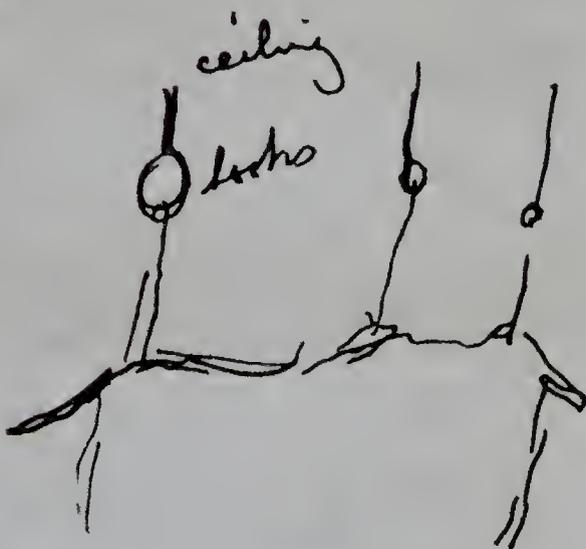
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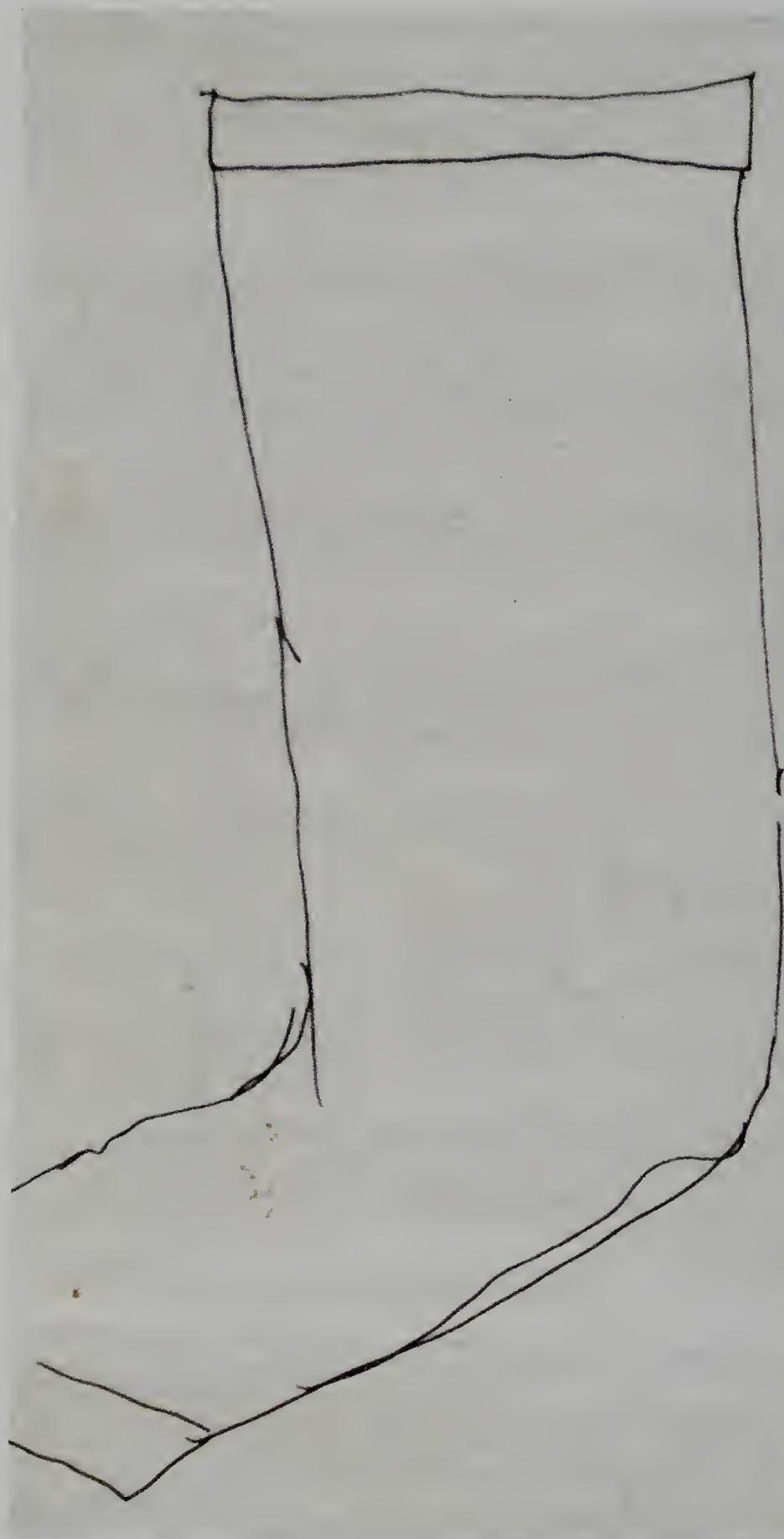


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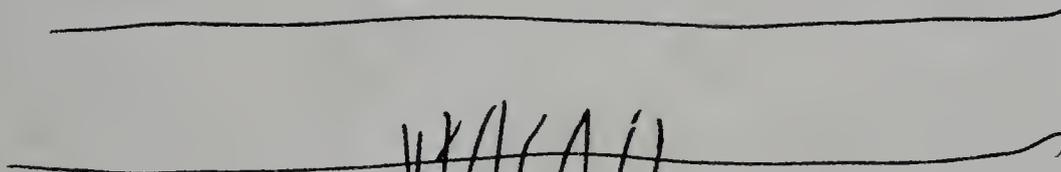
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the
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6

f.g.



f.g. strands
from fibre glass
rectangle.



Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Eva Hesse Drawing*
Organized by THE DRAWING CENTER, New York, and THE MENIL COLLECTION, Houston
Curated by CATHERINE DE ZEGHER and ELISABETH SUSSMAN
Assisted by KATHRYN A. TUMA and LUIS CROQUER

The Menil Foundation, Houston, TX, February 3–April 23, 2006
The Drawing Center, New York, NY, May 6–July 15, 2006
Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA, August 6–October 28, 2006
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, November 12, 2006–February 18, 2007

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Nov. 14, 1918.



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Eva Hesse Drawing

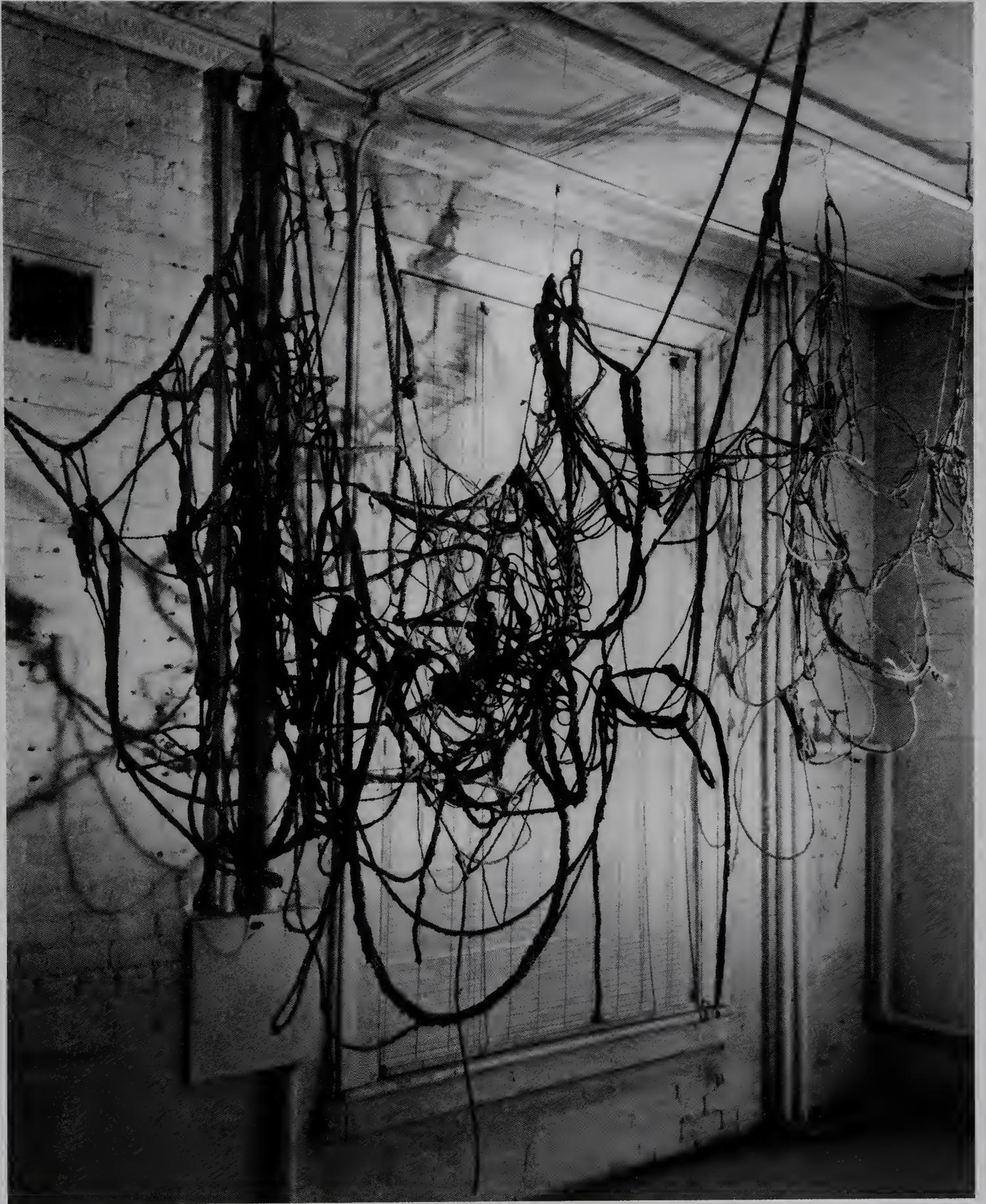
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The Drawing Center New York — Yale University Press New Haven and London



E. Hesse 1962

A



Sponsor Statement

My late uncle Robert Lehman fervently wished that future generations would experience the arts with the same wholehearted enjoyment that he did throughout his life. For this reason, the Robert Lehman Foundation was established to continue his support of the visual arts. Providing leadership funding for the presentation of *Eva Hesse Drawing* exemplifies the Foundation's commitment to helping make possible a select series of outstanding exhibitions, enabling visitors to appreciate and enjoy great works of art. The Foundation is honored to participate in this exhibition showcasing Eva Hesse's remarkable drawings.

PHILIP H. ISLES

President, Robert Lehman Foundation

Acknowledgements

The Drawing Center, New York, and The Menil Collection, Houston, are very pleased to join together in the presentation of *Eva Hesse Drawing*. Our intense and productive collaboration is especially fitting, for works on paper form the core of both institutions in distinct ways, and our commitment to the medium continues to strengthen. The Drawing Center, established in 1976 as the only US institution dedicated solely to the study and exhibition of drawing, is on the verge of an expansion, with plans to relocate to a new building. The Menil Foundation steadily acquired works on paper from 1940 until 1998, from the Old Masters to unique works by major twentieth-century artists, and generous donations have substantially augmented the collection in recent years. Hence, we can think of no better way to celebrate our shared commitment than to present the drawings of one of America's most innovative postwar artists: Eva Hesse. Her expanded vision of the medium of drawing has inspired generations of artists and caused institutions to rethink their approaches to the various art disciplines they represent.

It has been extremely gratifying to see *Eva Hesse Drawing* come to fruition. We wish first of all to express our deep gratitude to Elisabeth Sussman, co-curator of the exhibition, for sharing with us her extensive knowledge of, and keen insight into, the art of Eva Hesse. Elisabeth's passionate dedication to the artist was as important to the conceptualization of the exhibition as the interpretation of drawing carried forward by The Drawing Center. We want to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of Kathryn A. Tuma, former Associate Curator at The Drawing Center, who did admirable research work while overseeing the exhibition's progress before leaving in the summer of 2005. We offer our most sincere gratitude to Helen Hesse Charash, the artist's sister and an enthusiastic supporter of the project from the very outset. We also wish to extend special thanks to Barry Rosen, Advisor to The Estate of Eva Hesse, for graciously lending an understanding ear and then pointing a guiding finger in the right direction whenever we requested. We also take this opportunity to thank Dr. Renate Petzinger and Jörg Daur at the Museum Wiesbaden, who in the course of preparing Eva Hesse's catalogue raisonné have generously shared information critical to our curatorial research.

We have been particularly blessed by the writers contributing to this publication, each of whom has provided an excellent and enlightening essay. For sharing their outstanding scholarship and unique perspectives, we warmly thank Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, the Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of Modern Art, Harvard University; Bracha L. Ettinger, artist, psychoanalyst, and feminist theorist; Briony Fer, Professor of Art History, University College, London; Mignon Nixon, Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London; Kathryn A. Tuma, Assistant Professor of Modern Art, Johns Hopkins University; and Anne M. Wagner, Professor of Modern Art, University of California, Berkeley.

Every exhibition is fundamentally indebted to its lenders, and *Eva Hesse Drawing* is most certainly not an exception. Our profound thanks go to Stephanie Wiles, Director, and Lucille Stiger,

Registrar, at the Allen Memorial Art Museum of Oberlin College, from which the largest part of this show has been borrowed. Their commitment to and assistance with this exhibition project was immeasurable and much appreciated. We also would like to express our sincere gratitude to Louis Grachos, Director, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Judith and Adam Aronson; Doreen Bolger, Director, The Baltimore Museum of Art; Kevin E. Consey, Director, and Constance Lewallen, Senior Curator of Exhibitions, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum; Dr. Hans-Michael Herzog, Curator, and Walter Soppelsa, CFO/COO, Daros Collection, Switzerland; Susan Englander; Maxine and Stuart Frankel; Kathy and Richard S. Fuld, Jr.; Kate Ganz and Daniel Belin; Tony and Gail Ganz; Brett Gorvy and Amy Gold; James R. Hedges, IV; Miani Johnson; Dr. Evert J. van Straaten, Director, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands; Dr. Dieter Schwarz, Director, Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; Egidio Marzona; Janie C. Lee; Peter C. Marzio, Director, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Dr. Marsha C. Bol, Director, The Museum of New Mexico (Lucy Lippard Collection), Santa Fe; Glenn Lowry, Director, and John Elderfield, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Brent R. Benjamin, Director, Saint Louis Art Museum; Louisa Stude Sarofim; Dr. Gabriele Scheidt; Anthony Slayter-Ralph; Barry Rosen; Sir Nicholas Serota, Director, Tate, London; Gioia Timpanelli; Annemarie and Gianfranco Verna; Nancy Doll, Director, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina; and all of the generous lenders who wish to remain anonymous. We also thank Hauser and Wirth Zürich London, particularly Florian Berktold, Director, and Sabine Sarwa, for their invaluable assistance.

Both The Menil Collection and The Drawing Center are very fortunate to have such exceptional staffs. At the Menil, we especially thank Matthew Drutt, Chief Curator, who demonstrated fervent devotion to and expertise in co-organizing the exhibition and coordinating the loans, together with the dedicated support of Clare Elliott, Assistant Curator; Susan Braeuer, Project Curatorial Assistant; and Anne Adams, Registrar. To Anthony Martinez and Brooke Stroud of the Exhibitions and Public Programming department, and Thomas Walsh, Head of Art Services, and his staff—Preparators Peter Bernal and John Spencer—we owe our gratitude. Other colleagues at the Menil who helped realize the exhibition in invaluable ways include Laramie Hickey-Friedman, Assistant Sculpture Conservator; Elizabeth Lunning, Chief Conservator; Steve McConathy, Building, Grounds, and Security Manager; Tim Ware, Facilities Manager; and Laureen Schipsi, Manager of Publications. We express our gratitude to Will Taylor, Director of Planning and Advancement, and his staff—Tripp Carter, Director of Development; Elsian Cozens, Special Events Coordinator; Marta Galicki, Membership Coordinator; Vance Muse, Director of Communications; and Mary Ann Pack, Director of Principal Gifts—for their invaluable efforts. Finally, our sincere thanks go to Kristin Schwartz-Lauster, Assistant to the Director, for her unending support, and E. C. Moore, Financial Officer, and Tom Madonna, Manager-Finance/HR, for their administrative management.

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This exhibition would have been impossible to realize without the institutions and individuals who offered generous financial support. In particular, we would like to thank the lead sponsor of the exhibition, the Robert Lehman Foundation, for its vital support of this project. The remarkable enthusiasm shown by Philip H. Isles, President of the Robert Lehman Foundation, and the Foundation's Executive Director, Francesca Valerio, is deeply appreciated. We would also like to thank the National Endowment for the Arts and Kathy and Richard S. Fuld, Jr. for their major support. Funding provided by the New York State Council on the Arts has been instrumental to the presentation of the exhibition in New York. Thanks are also due to the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation and Judy Neisser for their contributions toward the exhibition catalogue. The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, Marilyn Oshman and the City of Houston are gratefully acknowledged for helping to make possible the presentation of the exhibition at The Menil Collection.

Finally, it is with profound thanks that we acknowledge the Board of Trustees of The Menil Foundation; we wish to extend our sincere gratitude to Louisa Stude Sarofim, President, for her tireless support and encouragement of the Menil and its programs. The Board of Directors of The Drawing Center has shown equal dedication to this historic event; we are deeply grateful to Jean Bollinger, Melva Bucksbaum, Frances Dittmer, James Hedges, Michael Lynne, and Andrea Woodner. The support and commitment of both boards to this exhibition has been crucial to its realization.

CATHERINE DE ZEGHER
Director, The Drawing Center

JOSEF HELFENSTEIN
Director, The Menil Collection and Foundation



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“Child” Drawing

MIGNON NIXON

IF I could go back to the beginning, where it all began.¹

“The drawings then were incredibly related to what I’m doing now,”

Eva Hesse remarked in a 1970 interview with Cindy Nemser, reflecting on a body of work—small intense pieces in ink and gouache using a restricted palette of blacks, umbers, and grays—selected for the exhibition *Three Young Americans* at the John Heller Gallery in the spring of 1961, when Hesse was fresh out of Yale.² Notice that she did not say, “What I’m doing now is incredibly related to the drawings then,” or even, “The drawings then are incredibly related to what I’m doing now.” Instead, through a subtle sleight of tense, Hesse placed “then” securely under the sway of “now”—“the drawings then were,” always already, “incredibly related to what I’m doing now.”

In one, a dense dark circle ringed by a ragged aureole set slightly askew commands the upper right corner of the page while a vertical shaft of greenish light, veiled in black, holds the left edge [16]. An ecliptic image, it oscillates between occultation and illumination, light filtering dense layers of shadow even as darkness blots the light. Here, as in so many other drawings Hesse produced around this time, an elemental collision between light and dark seems to inaugurate the coming-into-existence of Hesse’s art as, precisely, an art of beginnings. For to begin again—and again and again—was to become a defining problem for Hesse’s work.³

1. Eva Hesse Papers, Archives of American Art [AAA], microfilm reel 1476, undated page.

2. Cindy Nemser, “A Conversation with Eva Hesse” (1970), in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon (Cambridge: The MIT Press/October Files, 2002),

3. On the problem of beginning in Hesse’s art, see my “Eva Hesse: A Note on Milieu,” in *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Fiona Russell and Brahm Taylor (London: Ashgate Press, 2005).



[17] no title, 1961







Lucy Lippard called those early drawings “the most beautiful in Hesse’s oeuvre,” even making the claim that “in retrospect it seems that, had circumstances been different, they might well have led her directly into the mature sculpture which they so often resemble,” the so-called process art that Hesse exhibited in her solo show at the Fischbach Gallery in 1968 and in pivotal generational exhibitions of the time, including *Anti-Form* at the John Gibson Gallery, *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* at the Whitney Museum, and *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle in Bern.⁴ “This is the beginning of being fully in the midst of the art world,” Hesse announced in her diary after the opening of *The Three Americans*, and she was right.⁵

Yet, Lippard’s phrase, “had circumstances been different,” sounds a note of regret about the aftermath of that show, and Hesse confirms it. “I shouldn’t say I went backwards, but I did” she told Nemser. After meeting the sculptor Tom Doyle, “a more mature and developed artist” in April 1961, the very month her drawings were garnering appreciative reviews from soon-to-be-friends Donald Judd and Brian O’Doherty, Hesse’s work changed.⁶ It “became less and less skillfully beautiful,” Lippard has suggested, “using more chaotic space, comic strip format, more mechanical line, and harsher color.”⁷ Whereas before she had adhered exclusively to ink and gouache—sometimes applied with the wrong end of the stick, exacting from that implement lines of remarkable fluidity, tension, and delicacy—she now added felt-tip pen, oil crayon, and collage to her repertoire of materials and tools.⁸ Here, hosts of squiggles and scribbles scatter over magnetic fields, fantastic landscapes imagined not in the russets and grays of the earlier ink-and-wash drawings but in a Pop palette of oranges, pinks, and greens⁹ [23]. For Lippard, these changes marked Hesse’s temporary concession to “the brash newness of Pop art,” subordinating “the most personal elements of her art—the ragged line and almost pathetic funny rounded and oval anthropomorphic shapes”—to “a hectic composition which made them lose their ponderous beauty.”¹⁰

For Hesse, too, the earlier drawings were “much more me.” After the success of the drawing show in April and her marriage to Tom Doyle in November of 1961, she became absorbed, Hesse reflected, in “the struggle between student and finding oneself.” “Even at the beginning level of maturity,” she remarked, such

4. Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: New York University Press, 1976; rpt, New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 15.

5. Eva Hesse’s diary, quoted in Lippard, 18.

6. Nemser, 5.

7. Lippard, 20.

8. Hesse used the “crudely shaped wrong end” of a brush to produce the distinctive wavy line seen in some of the small ink wash drawings she made in 1960. See Christine Mehring, catalogue entry in “*Drawing Is Another Kind of Language*”: *Recent American Drawings from a New York Private Collection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 64.

9. Rosalind E. Krauss, *Joan Miró: Magnetic Fields* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1972).

10. Lippard, 20.



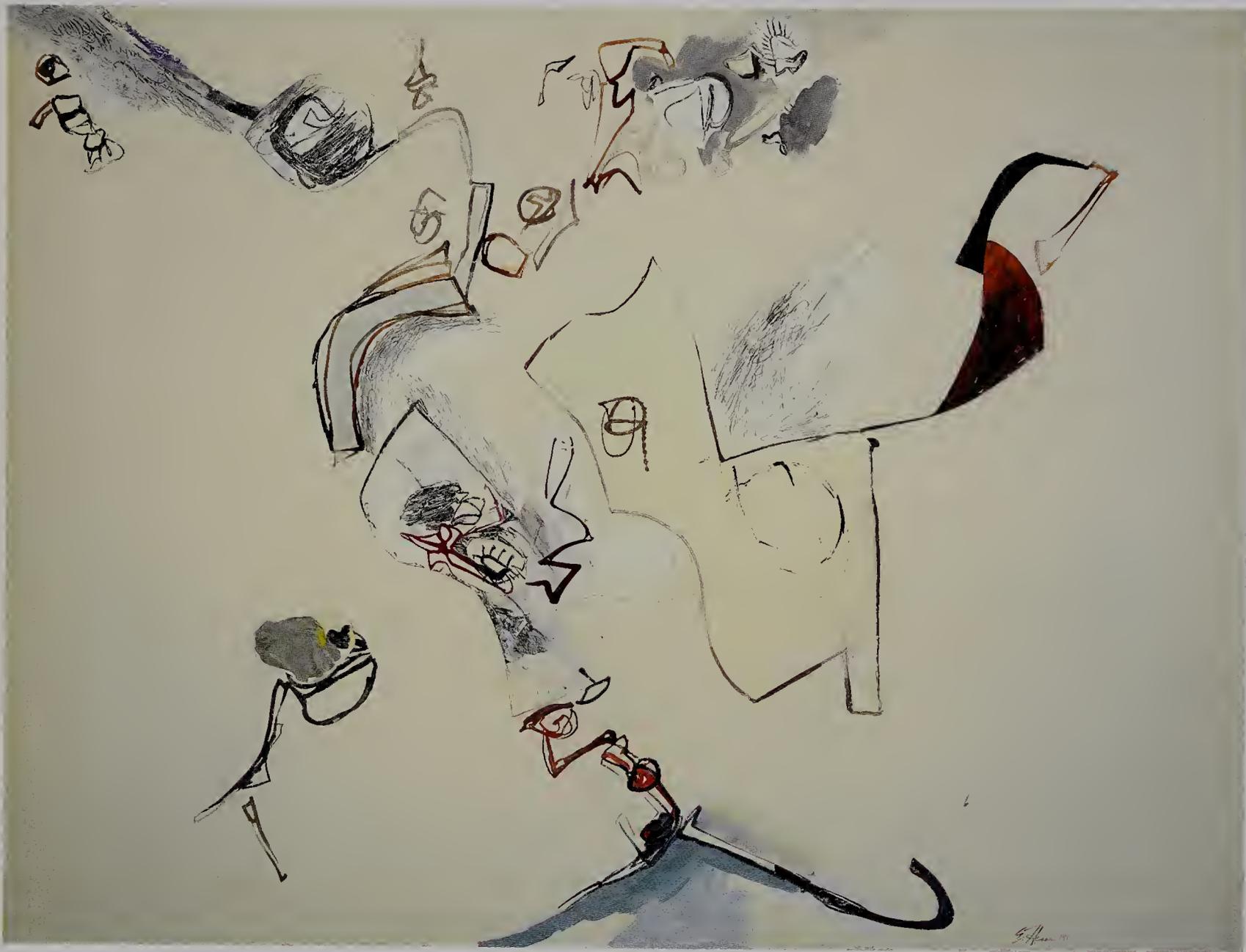
[21] no title, 1964



[22] no title, 1964



[23] no title, 1964-65



a struggle "cannot be avoided. I do not know anyone who has avoided it." At Yale, Hesse recalled, "I was [Josef] Albers's little color student—everybody always called me that—and every time he walked into the classroom, he would ask, 'What did Eva do?'" To be the protégé of the Bauhaus master conferred an enviable prestige while attracting the gendered resentments of her mostly male peers. For the woman who would later record in her diary the transforming effects of reading Simone de Beauvoir on the cultural derogation of women, to be called a "little color student" clearly rankled, and in her interview with Nemser, Hesse claimed to have made few friends at Yale. Even Albers, she remarked, "couldn't stand my painting," and she "of course, was much more serious about the painting" than about the color course. "I loved these problems," Hesse conceded, insisting, however, that she did not do them out of "need or necessity," having resolutely adopted the "abstract expressionist student approach, and that was not Albers's."¹¹

After *The Three Americans*, in the midst of her "struggle between student and finding oneself," as Hesse told Nemser, "I went back one summer again to an abstract expressionist kind of tone—that was really an outside influence."¹² In Hesse's rigorous estimation, anything that was "student," however serious, was less than "self," so even though, while at Yale, an "abstract expressionist student approach" had the virtue of being more driven by "need and necessity" than the color problems set by Albers, it was still a student approach. And it was the danger of retreating to a student mode of work that, by Hesse's own account at least, stimulated the "hectic" experiments of the next phase in her drawing. Attempting to shake off influence, she created the body of work that, within her entire oeuvre, appears to her most discerning critics to be the least personal. Still, even if the diverse corpus of drawings and collages Hesse created between 1961 and her turn to sculpture in 1965 was unlikely, by Lippard's account, "to change the world," it nevertheless both sustained what was markedly individual in Hesse's art—her distinctive touch—and summarized an artistic development that was unhesitatingly reliant on formal training.¹³ Hesse, as Rosalind Krauss has written, "bridled at Albers's limitations, his rules, his dicta, at the monomania of an art 'based on one idea.'"¹⁴ Yet, as much as any artist of her generation, and far more than most, Hesse exploited her artistic education to invent her art.

Take one collage of 1963–64 [25]. A wide, horizontally oriented sheet is divided by a lateral band, trisected into zones of intense color—a red-orange zone at left, a black

11. Nemser, 5. On Hesse's feminist consciousness, see Lippard, *Eva Hesse* and Anne M. Wagner, "Another Hesse" (1996), in *Eva Hesse* October File, 86–193.

12. Nemser, 5.

13. Lippard, 22.

14. Rosalind Krauss, "Hesse's Desiring Machines" (1993), in *Eva Hesse* October File, 50.



[25] no title, 1963-64

rectangle at center, and a lemon-yellow one edging toward the right margin of the page. Each field is in turn subdivided into so many individual units: stacks of rectangles piled precariously high like nursery towers in the red zone; two neat rows of framed miniature abstractions laid out over the black rectangle (with arrows below pointing “this way” or “this way up”);

and, lodged in the corners of the yellow field, four abstract compositional formats—grid, monochrome, cross, and circle. This collage is in turn a compendium of smaller works, a virtuoso demonstration of the capabilities of “Albers’s little color student,” incorporating myriad tiny, meticulous homages to Modernist abstraction, and in particular to the square-within-a-square that was the most readily recognizable format employed by the Bauhaus master. As in the drawings she had shown in 1961, Hesse also quotes her own later work. In the bottom right corner of the page, two ranks of silvery upright rectangles edged with black anticipate the opaque surfaces of those late drawings in which metallic gouache and pencil are combined, producing the clouded mirroric surfaces of drawings such as *Right After* (1969) that, in a final gesture of materialization, hypostasize the monochrome [117].¹⁵

This collection of small abstract studies, however, is also revealed as a serial structure, embodying a pivotal principle of Hesse’s later sculptural practice. Compare it with a working drawing of December 27, 1968 [26], a diagram for a piece along the lines of *Sans I* (1967–68), a double row of shallow latex boxes hanging flat against the wall and extending into the room, trailing along the junction between wall and floor [111.4]. Here, the repetitive principle of the square-within-a-square is projected into three dimensions, the object itself reiterating the geometry of the room, or white cube, that contains object and viewer alike.¹⁶ But even that earlier collage, made before Hesse had begun to experiment in three dimensions through the medium of relief, implies the spatial ambiguity

15. On the significance of “blank space” in Hesse’s art, see Briony Fer, “Bordering on Blank: Eva Hesse and Minimalism” (1994), in *Eva Hesse* October File, 57–85.

16. Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Santa Monica: Lapis Press, 1986; rpt., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[26] no title, December 27, 1968

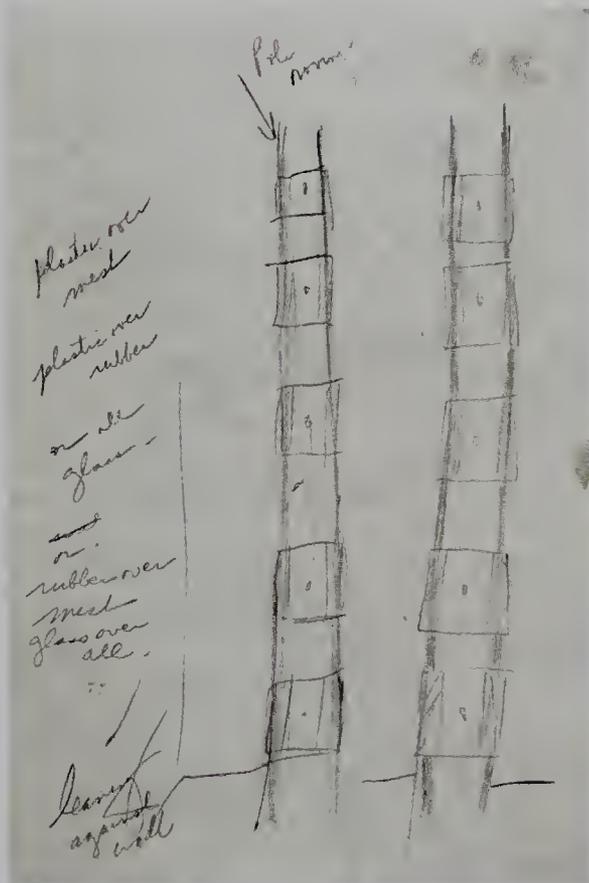


Dec 27, 1968

rubber skeleton of squares. in inside

her later work would so often enact. Its three lateral divisions might, that is, refer either to the wall or to the floor, to paintings or relief sculpture hung in rows along the wall or to rugs or tiles laid out on the floor. Hesse's sculpture would occupy both sites, would encompass objects propped against the wall and spread out on the floor—works such as *Vinculum I* (1969), a pair of skeletal, ladder-like armatures supporting panels of Fiberglass-covered mesh and leaning against the wall [27], as well as square latex mats set directly on the floor, including *Schema* (1967) and *Sequel* (1967–68) [ill. 4].

Hesse's first solo exhibition came in March 1963 at the Allan Stone Gallery in New York and featured a small group of collages that were heterogeneous not only in color and materials (including pencil, watercolor, gouache, felt-tip pen, wash, oil crayon, and several textures of paper, notably cheap sketchbook scraps) but above all in the speed, intensity, and pressure of the marks. Writing in *ARTnews*, Valerie Petersen described the collages this way: "She smashes down on little cut-out shapes, half-erased ideas, repetitive linear strikings, and sets up new relationships. She invents dimension and position with changes of kinds of stroke, levels of intensity, starting and breaking momentum, and by redefining a sense of place from forces which are visible coefficients of energy."¹⁷ A distinctive feature of these drawings, not observed in Hesse's later work, is a vigorous scribbling, a touch that is suggestive of a type of pencil drawing Cy Twombly pioneered in the early 1950s, drawings in which the gestural excesses of late Abstract Expressionist painting,

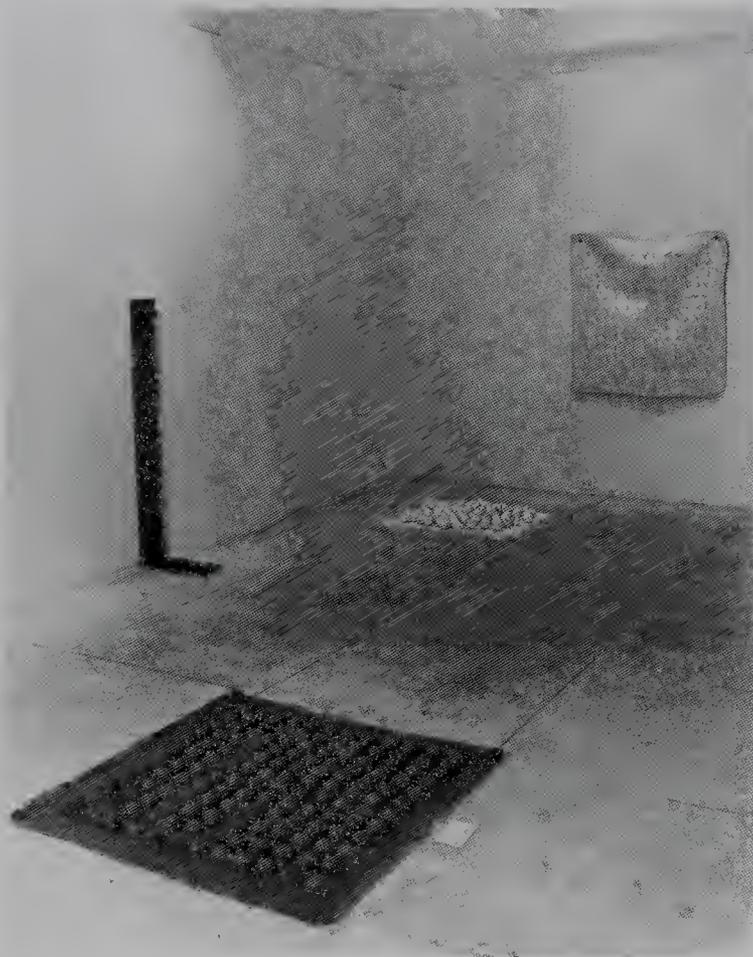


plaster over mesh
 plastic over rubber
 on all glass
 on rubber over mesh
 glass over all

leaning against wall

17. Valerie Petersen, *ARTnews* 62 (May 1963), quoted in Lippard, 22.

[27] no title, n.d.



[ill. 4] Installation view of the 1968 exhibition *Eva Hesse: Chain Polymers* at the Fischbach Gallery, New York (clockwise from upper left: *Sans I*, *Sequel*, *Stratum*, and *Schema*)

relieved of that painting's increasingly labored intensity, evoke instead a kind of unselfconscious scripting. Yet, Hesse's scribble drawings, while explicitly evocative of Twombly, are more restlessly varied, operating, as Petersen observed, at different "levels of intensity," often within a single drawing.

In one, a tangle of rapid black scribble marks knifes through a diagonally split composition that is otherwise defined by its painterly use of color [31]. As if conceived expressly to demonstrate the numerous possibilities for mixing oil crayon on the page to achieve painterly effects, the sheet presents a sophisticated "color study" that is in turn inter-

rupted by a scattering of conspicuously deskilled gestural marks. Combining different modes of touch, the piece is constructed as if to suggest that more than one hand has, as it were, had a hand in the drawing.

Other sheets, less painterly, have the cluttered, palimpsest-like appearance of working drawings. In one, a thick sprawl of cursorily sketched shapes crowds the page [29]. Overlaying this dense array, the crisp contours of a phalanx of more boldly outlined shapes sweeps across the sheet, driving left, in the opposite direction from the ghostly swarm beneath—suggesting, as in the previous drawing, a game of two hands.

In June of 1964, Eva Hesse and Tom Doyle traveled to Europe. They went at the invitation of the German industrialist and collector Arnhard Scheidt, who offered the couple a year's free use of studio space in a disused factory in Kettwig an der Ruhr in exchange for works. (It was the opportunity to acquire examples of Doyle's large-



top: [28] no title, c. 1962

bottom: [29] no title, c. 1962





[31] no title, 1962



[32] ABC, 1964

scale sculpture that motivated the offer; Hesse, as Lippard would remark, “was thrown in as a lagniappe.”¹⁸⁾ This was to be Hesse’s first visit to Europe since emigrating from Germany to America as a small child. Born in Hamburg in 1936, she was evacuated from Nazi Germany to Amsterdam on a children’s train with her older sister Helen in 1939. Later reunited, the family settled in New York City. In

1945, the year they were granted U.S. citizenship, Hesse’s parents divorced. Wilhelm Hesse was soon remarried, to a woman named Eva. In January 1946, the month her younger daughter turned ten, Ruth Marcus Hesse committed suicide. As even this brief sketch of Hesse’s early life suggests—and the testimony of her letters, her diary, and the recollections of her friends confirms—the extended visit to Germany aroused intense anxieties of abandonment, fear, and loss that found their origin in Hesse’s childhood suffering. In a diary entry dated October 19, 1964, she longs for “a new beginning,” forlornly adding, “but that is not ever possible.”¹⁹⁾ In Hesse’s art, however, a new beginning was precisely what was about to occur.

In Kettwig, Hesse befriended the children of her “patron,” Arnhard Scheidt, making drawings both for the children and with them.²⁰⁾ Her datebook records, on November 14, 1964, that she made “3 drawings for ‘children,’ alphabets” and then on November 16 “another ‘child’ drawing, numbers, and ‘adult drawing’ like child’s.”²¹⁾ In the more expansive format of her diary, Hesse reflects on these drawings, firmly conferring on them the status of works. The first one was “colorful—red, blue, yellow, green in squares, each one a letter of alphabet.”²²⁾ The second was made with the numbers one through ten. Hesse’s ABC drawing for the Scheidt children, with its vertical rows of squares, each devoted to a single letter, distinctly recalls the serial logic of her earlier collage work, reiterating the compositional device of painted squares and rectangles arranged in upright rows, but now correlating set and sequence to a preexisting series, that of the alphabet [32]. As in the earlier collage, the page is divided into discrete

18. Lippard, 24.

19. Eva Hesse Papers, diary entry, October 19, 1964.

20. Hesse is quoted by Lippard as referring to the invitation as “an unusual kind of Renaissance patronage.” Lippard, 24. She also notes that Scheidt ended up owning important early works by Hesse.

21. Eva Hesse Papers, datebook entry, November 14 and November 16, 1964.

22. Eva Hesse Papers, diary entry, November 16, 1964.



[33] no title, 1964



[34] no title, 1964

territories. Big “A” at left is boldly outlined against its colored square and framed by a lacy filigree of small cursive as, of varying size and fatness, while the remaining letters are distributed in three uneven rows on the right half of the page, each capital letter accompanied by its lower-case partner in script.

“They are clear, direct, powerful,” Hesse records.

“It set me off again because they are different, just enough, to make me wonder where am I going, why, and is there an idea, or too many different ones?”²³ What the works were different from, but somehow also bound up with, was another type of drawing that, as Lippard observes, “emerged as the central focus” of her production in the same month of November 1964.²⁴ “Clean, clear but crazy like machines” was the language Hesse used to describe these drawings in a letter to her friend Sol LeWitt.²⁵ Small pen-and-ink pieces in which a corporeal plumbing was detailed with a fluid expository line, they were the distillation of a mechanomorphic trend that had, in turn, emerged from Hesse’s increasing use of surrealist imagery and compartmentalized formats in the drawings she began to produce after *Three Young Americans* [33, 34]. From these mechanical diagrams, Hesse began to project a type of relief sculpture—or, as she also called it, with a distinctly Duchampian inflection, a type of “contraption”—that included *Ringaround Arosie*, a work she described to LeWitt as “a dumb thing which is three-dimensional...like breast and penis”²⁶ [ill. 5].

Like the machine drawings’ conjugations of parts, the relief sculptures operate by combination. Objects are glued, wired, or bolted into place, protrude or dangle. This is Lippard’s description of a work called *2 in 1* (1965): “The two cord-wrapped, dark-centered purple ‘breasts’ connect easily with the cord-wrapped mottled white and lavender ground with its very beautiful linear convolutions, but there seems to be no

23. Ibid.

24. Lippard, 27.

25. Eva Hesse to Sol LeWitt, March 1965, as quoted in Lippard, 34.

26. Ibid.



[ill. 5] *Ringaround Arosie*, 1965

Pencil, acetone, varnish, enamel paint, ink, and cloth-covered electrical wire on papier-mâché and Masonite
26 3/8 x 16 1/2 x 4 1/2 in. (67 x 41.9 x 11.4 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Fractional and promised gift of Kathy and Richard S. Fuld, Jr., 2005

reason for the shape underlying the cord; that is, for the flat pink background, which is forced forward by cutout areas in the relief (which also unsatisfyingly cut off the relief form) and the addition of a red ball, which pops out of a hole between the two 'breasts'²⁷ [111. 6]. These contraptions, it seems, conceive the body as infantile: not only because, as Hesse observed, the individual elements, like breast and penis in one, evoke the infantile drives, and so confound sexual difference—which makes breast/penis an either/or proposition—but also because the corporeal conjugations they propose recall the child's earliest fumbling efforts to make sense of the body. The passages in which one part "unsatisfyingly" cuts off another, or "there is no reason for" a particular shape to exist, are suggestive of those failed attempts in which the baby, as the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein contends, begins to think, or fantasize, about the body through the drives—to grasp the breast, for example, as an object that is on occasion "unsatisfyingly cut off," or, more cheerfully, that "pops out"—or to puzzle over features of the body for which "there seems to be no reason."²⁸

In November 1964, as Hesse remarked in her diary, she was pursuing two lines of thought, "different, just enough" to make her wonder where she was going.²⁹ On the one hand, there were the mechanical drawings of corporeal machines suggestive of infantile fantasies of the body, out of which her first relief sculptures would later be generated. On the other hand, there were the alphabet and number drawings in which elementary serial systems were beginning to emerge as a structural principle. Soon, these two trends—the part-object as a fantasmatic logic of combination and seriality as a psychic logic of repetition—would come together to define Hesse's distinctively corporeal contribution to Minimalism. The artist's alphabets and number pieces, Lippard speculated, "may have been a conscious reference to Jasper Johns's number and alphabet paintings or may simply have arisen from the children's play. Whatever the reason, she was making some kind of breakthrough."³⁰ The possibility that Hesse's pieces for the Scheidt children were informed by Johns' investigation of seriality through alphabets and numbers and the possibility that Hesse's serial and machinic works arose from child's play, however, turn out to be equally logical suggestions, and probably inseparable. For long before her arrival in Kettwig, Hesse was accustomed to thinking of "child drawing" as an extension of her artistic practice.

27. *Ibid.*, 42.

28. For a discussion of Hesse's work through the logic of the part-object in the psychoanalytic theory of Melanie Klein, see my "Ringaround Arosie: 2 in 1," in *Eva Hesse* October File.

29. Hesse as quoted in Lippard, 27.

30. Lippard, 27. Lippard records that one sketchbook "contains a drawing by one of the Scheidt children, Karl, and then an 'imitation' by Hesse with some attributes of the machine images but a conscious attempt to make 'an adult's child drawing.'"



[ill. 6] *2 in 1*, 1965

Enamel paint, tempera paint, ink, cord, and metal bolt on particle board
21 1/4 x 27 1/8 x 9 in. (54 x 68.9 x 22.9 cm)

Private Collection, New York

One note recommends using “three colors you think worst combination,” the object of the exercise being to demonstrate that there is “nothing ‘wrong.’” “Change from psychic symbols to material symbols...from depression to elation...from pen to brush to stick...Change from viewing outward to viewing inward. Change *speed*.” This page is headed “Conceptions of the drawing act.”³¹ Among the diaries, notebooks, sketchbooks, letters, datebooks, and lists—lists of words, lists of works, lists of titles, lists of errands, lists of people to telephone or to meet, lists of books read or to be read—in the extensive archive of Eva Hesse’s personal papers, there is a clutch of notes handwritten on lined paper and index cards. There are notes for sessions on “color,” “color vibration,” “collage,” and “the destruction of the image,” as well as several types of three-dimensional work, including papier-mâché reliefs. These are Eva Hesse’s teaching notes.

In the fall of 1968, Hesse joined the faculty of the School of Visual Arts in New York, where her close friend Mel Bochner also taught. By then, Hesse, separated from Doyle and suffering the first symptoms of a still-undiagnosed illness, was surrounded by the artist friends who would sustain her emotionally, creatively, and practically for the rest of her life. But earlier, as a self-supporting art student and then, in 1966, as her marriage was coming apart, Hesse relied on the resources most readily available to a woman of her generation and training: her teaching qualifications. In 1956, while still a student at Cooper Union in New York, where she first took the Bauhaus color course (this time not with Albers but with Neil Welliver), Hesse worked for the Educational Alliance Playschool. In the summer of 1959, after graduating from Yale, she was employed as a camp counselor in Connecticut. She also taught at the New Haven Jewish Community Center, as a substitute teacher for the New Lincoln School, and at the Scarsdale Studio Workshop for Art.

On “Expressive possibilities of line,” find this: “I will make up a story. I will describe forms that can move, walk, jump, describe long shapes, circles that skip and hop. I can sit still or move at 300 miles an hour. Can you paint me?” On color, one exercise proposes “using at least four different hues of black, render the image as colorful as possible” (“ex. Ad Reinhardt”). For a session on “Destruction of the Image,” Hesse instructs her pupils to “take four different elements which constitute your image. Identify + define them.”

31. Eva Hesse Papers, AAA, reel 1477. All the teaching notes and related correspondence quoted and referred to below are taken from this source.

Then, "make 4 new independent images out of them," each of which "must relate in some way back to its original source." Now, "using the abstracted elements from the last problem, combine them into a composition in which each retains its own identity, and yet functions within a total scheme," bearing in mind that "elements can be repeated, can vary in terms of line, shape, and size, and can exist as a positive or negative area." Finally, "using black, white, and grey, try to achieve a tight interlocking network of forms." For this, she refers students to the example of post-Analytical Cubism.

Distributed over the pages of Hesse's meticulous pedagogic plans is the critical commentary of her supervisor, one Mrs. Goldberg, whose insistent interrogatives—"What has this to do with the previous lesson?" "Why?" or even more concentratedly, a lone oversized question mark—suggest a certain skepticism about Hesse's capacity to apply the pedagogic principles derived from an advanced artistic education at the Cooper Union and Yale University, as no less than Josef Albers's protégé, to Thursday afternoon classes for children in the first through sixth grades.³² Hesse remonstrates. "Your attitude when you said, 'you have not received any complaints as yet' strikes me as negative," she remarks dryly, in a heavily edited draft of a letter, assuring the anxious supervisor that, as far as the classes are concerned, "I love it and the children love it." On the subject of the notes, she is measured, precise: "These cards are written as aids to myself and as an explanation to you, however, I do not use the same vocabulary when communicating to the children. I am able to communicate + clarify at their level." Still, even if, for the younger students, classes begin with a story (*Where the Wild Things Are*) that "relaxes first meeting anxiety" and "stimulates interest in phantasy for initial painting," Hesse's lesson plans are ambitious, incorporating not only exercises from the color course but recent developments in her own work, such as papier-mâché relief ("too crafty," is Mrs. Goldberg's verdict on this technique that Hesse transferred from the studio, and a small exhibition at the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf, to the classroom). For one session, the artist even proposed that students attempt—as she herself had done, as Marcel Duchamp had done, and, as it turns out, as little Karl Eduard Scheidt also was to do—an "impossible machine."

In Kettwig, Hesse's sketchbooks record that, in addition to making drawings for the Scheidt children, she drew with them [111. 7]. These are sprawling pages filled with

32. For a chronology of Hesse's teaching, see Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, "Chronology: The Artist's Life," 218–220.



[ill. 7] no title, from sketchbook 1977.52.71A-8

Crayon, colored pencil, pencil, and ink on paper

13 x 17 1/2 in. (33 x 44.5 cm)

Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio, Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977

scenes of soldiers, sailors, riders on horseback, stick figures in top hats, and large round mask-like faces, wide mouths open to display serrated rows of teeth. Warships manned by gun-toting sailors pilot the waves, the vessels emblazoned like pirate ships with the telltale skull and crossbones. There are snug houses, too, set on orderly streets, punctuated by abstract motifs, some bearing an unmistakable touch. The sheets bear proud signatures in thick straight-backed letters: “Karl Eduard Scheidt,” “Sebastian,” and “Gabi.” Some carry a double signature, “Eva and Gabi.” “Adult drawing like child’s,” Hesse recorded in her calendar for November 16, 1964, and one such drawing, made in emulation of a sketch by Karl, incorporates elements of the machine drawings Hesse was beginning to make at this time.

Writing in the mid-1960s, the British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott called the technique he frequently employed in early meetings with his child patients the “squiggle game.” “At a suitable moment after the arrival of the patient,” Winnicott explained, “I say to the child: ‘Let’s play something. I know what I would like to play and I’ll show you.’”³³ What Winnicott liked to play was a drawing game “without rules,” which the analyst would initiate by taking up a pencil and putting marks randomly on a page. “I probably screw up my eyes and do a squiggle blind,” he reports, inviting the patient to “show me if that looks like anything to you or if you can make it into anything, and afterwards you do the same for me and I will see if I can make something of yours.”³⁴ Back and forth the conversation turns, each graphic move by one party generating a reply, or refusal, from the other. The logic of the squiggle game is one of dialogic exchange, so although the trend of this drawing dialogue is toward the patient, “the fact that the consultant freely plays his own part in the exchange of drawings certainly has a great importance for the success of the technique.”³⁵ The active participation of the analyst restricts any impulse “to pounce on material with interpretations” by keeping her or him otherwise occupied in a fast-moving game, an exercise through which the analyst learns about the patient but also proves “that the therapist can play, and can enjoy playing.” And for Winnicott, the model of any psychoanalytic encounter is play, “performed in the overlap of the two areas of playing (that of the patient and that of the therapist).”³⁶

Hesse’s drawings of the early 1960s, made at a time when she was regularly involved in teaching art classes to children, refer freely to her own formal artistic training as well to

33. D.W. Winnicott, “The Squiggle Game” (1964-1968), in *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, ed. Clare Winnicott, Ray Shepherd, and Madeleine Davis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 301.

34. *Ibid.*, 302.

35. *Ibid.*, 301.

36. *Ibid.*, 300.

her experience as a teacher. A heightened capacity, in Winnicott's terms, to play and to "enjoy playing" fostered not only her teaching and research into children's art—her discoveries of the part-object and of an early mode of seriality in alphabets and numbers—but also enriched the culture of dialogic exchange that emerged as a defining feature of the Minimalist and Conceptual circle of artists to which she belonged. For in the community of artists that included Sol LeWitt, Mel Bochner, and Robert Smithson, drawings and small objects were regularly exchanged as tokens of friendship and artistic affiliation. Hesse, for example, bestowed two small reliefs—cord-covered "breasts" reminiscent of *Ringaround Arosie*—on Bochner and LeWitt and, following a visit with Ruth Vollmer to a marine supply store, presented her friend with an object fashioned from the materials purchased there, a stuffed canvas hanging bag trailing tangles of epoxied string. Vollmer, in particular, shared Hesse's interest in children's art. An older German émigré sculptor, she had trained as a teacher at a time of pioneering experiments in early childhood education in the arts, a field in which, as in the nascent discipline of child psychoanalysis, play-based techniques were invented that were to assume a signal importance in postwar American and European culture, particularly in "child psychology" and the progressive classroom. Both the object-relations psychoanalysis with which Winnicott was closely associated (widely popularized after the war) and the educational settings in which Hesse taught were informed by the type of experimental play Vollmer introduced to the artistic milieu of Minimal art through her contacts with younger artists, especially Bochner and Hesse.³⁷ And for Hesse, who shared a professional interest in children's art—an interest held in common, as it happened, with another important older "woman artist" active in New York in the 1960s, Louise Bourgeois—this connection to a prewar German culture accrued particular significance.³⁸

The practice of artistic exchange in New York in the 1960s has often been interpreted in terms of a resistance to the commodity logic of the gallery system that Minimalism and Conceptual art also critiqued and defied in other ways. In 1967, Bochner organized the exhibition *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art* for the gallery at the School of Visual Arts, a show that included contributions by Hesse and her friends "Sol, Mel, Smithson, Judd, Andre."³⁹ By substituting photocopies of drawings, diagrams, and other studio notations

37. On Vollmer's art and the importance of her work for younger artists including Bochner and Hesse, see Anna Lovatt, "Systematic Thought in Drawing, 1965–1979," Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2005.

38. See Eva Hesse Papers, correspondence with Ruth Vollmer. Lippard notes that, "As an artist and as a sensitive and loving older woman bearing her mother's name, also German by birth, also with some tragedy in her life, Vollmer was important to Hesse in a unique way." Lippard, 204. The intimate tone of their written exchanges confirms Lippard's description of the relationship, Vollmer typically addressing Hesse as "Evchen." Louise Bourgeois also taught art classes to children and, in the early 1960s, considered training as a child therapist. For an account of Bourgeois's intensive involvement with the discourse of child analysis and its significance for artists including Jasper Johns and Eva Hesse, see my *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press/October Books, 2005).

39. Eva Hesse Papers, reel 1476.

for the original works (or documents), *Working Drawings* challenged the status of drawing as a unique record of the artist’s hand, withdrawing the autograph mark and so compounding the effects of Minimal and Conceptual practices in which, as Bochner observed, some artists had “ceased to make ‘things’” at all.⁴⁰ This exhibition, like other artist-curated shows of the time, however, also alluded to a dialogic principle. *Working Drawings* documented an intellectual community at work.

In his seminal 1967 essay “Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism,” Bochner claimed seriality as a defining concern of this community. Serial art, he explained, is “based on the application of rigorous governing logics rather than on personal decision making.”⁴¹ In place of the psyche as source, the operative model for expressionist painting, Bochner invoked instead the psyche as system, explicitly including Hesse in the diverse array of artists who “have used serial methodology”—even if the demand that serial art be executed systematically, “without adjustments based on taste or chance,” might initially seem to exclude an artist renowned for her eye and her touch.⁴² How, then, can we understand the apparent compatibility between a priori systems and individual touch in the artistic milieu that embraced “the serial attitude” almost as an ethos?⁴³

For Hesse, seriality had a psychic basis. In her “child drawings,” alphabets and numbers are used to represent the emergence of the subject as, precisely, a serial subject. For seriality, as the psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell has written, is a psychic principle—one that finds its fullest expression in social experience.⁴⁴ Among a child’s earliest social discoveries, Mitchell observes, is its own position within the serial structure of the kinship group. And the realization that one is subject to seriality is, she contends, initially as inescapably traumatic as the loss imposed on the subject by sexual difference. For the discovery that one is, at least potentially, faced with siblings threatens a child’s sense of uniqueness and exclusive entitlement to parental love. Heightened by the appearance of a host of sibling-surrogates in the form of cousins, playmates, and rivals, the anxiety of seriality also harbors a fear of death. To be subject to seriality is, after all, not only to be one in a series of many similar beings but is also to belong to a generation, and so to occupy a place in time.⁴⁵ Alphabets and numbers are the serial systems in which the psychic logic of seriality is written at the time of the child’s entry into the social world. Psychoanalysis, Mitchell contends, is “trapped in the vertical.” Excessively preoccupied

40. Mel Bochner, “Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism” (1967), in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 100.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. Bochner, “The Serial Attitude,” *Artforum* vol. 16, no. 4 (December 1967), 28-33.

44. Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2003).

45. As Juliet Mitchell has observed, “The knowledge of the past (and hence of present and future) starts with the transformation of the perpetual present of repetition (seen so clearly in the compulsion to repeat) into the temporality of seriality.” Tamar Garb and Mignon Nixon, “A Conversation with Juliet Mitchell,” *October* 113 (Summer 2005), 22.

with the Oedipal scene of family life and with the desire and rivalry a child feels for parents, psychoanalysis has neglected the aggression and attraction felt between siblings. This lateral, intragenerational axis of siblings, she maintains, is also the temporal axis of seriality, and so with the traumatic recognition of minimal difference from the sibling—other comes the traumatic foreboding of one's own death. For to accept that one is subject to seriality—to the annihilating sensation of being eclipsed by the other and, ultimately, of being extinguished by death—is, in these terms, to be able to live. It is to tolerate rivalry and mortality and it is, Mitchell suggests—now borrowing from Winnicott—to be able to “use” the other.⁴⁶ Through play, by this account, the subject of seriality learns to turn another's existence into something useful to itself.⁴⁷

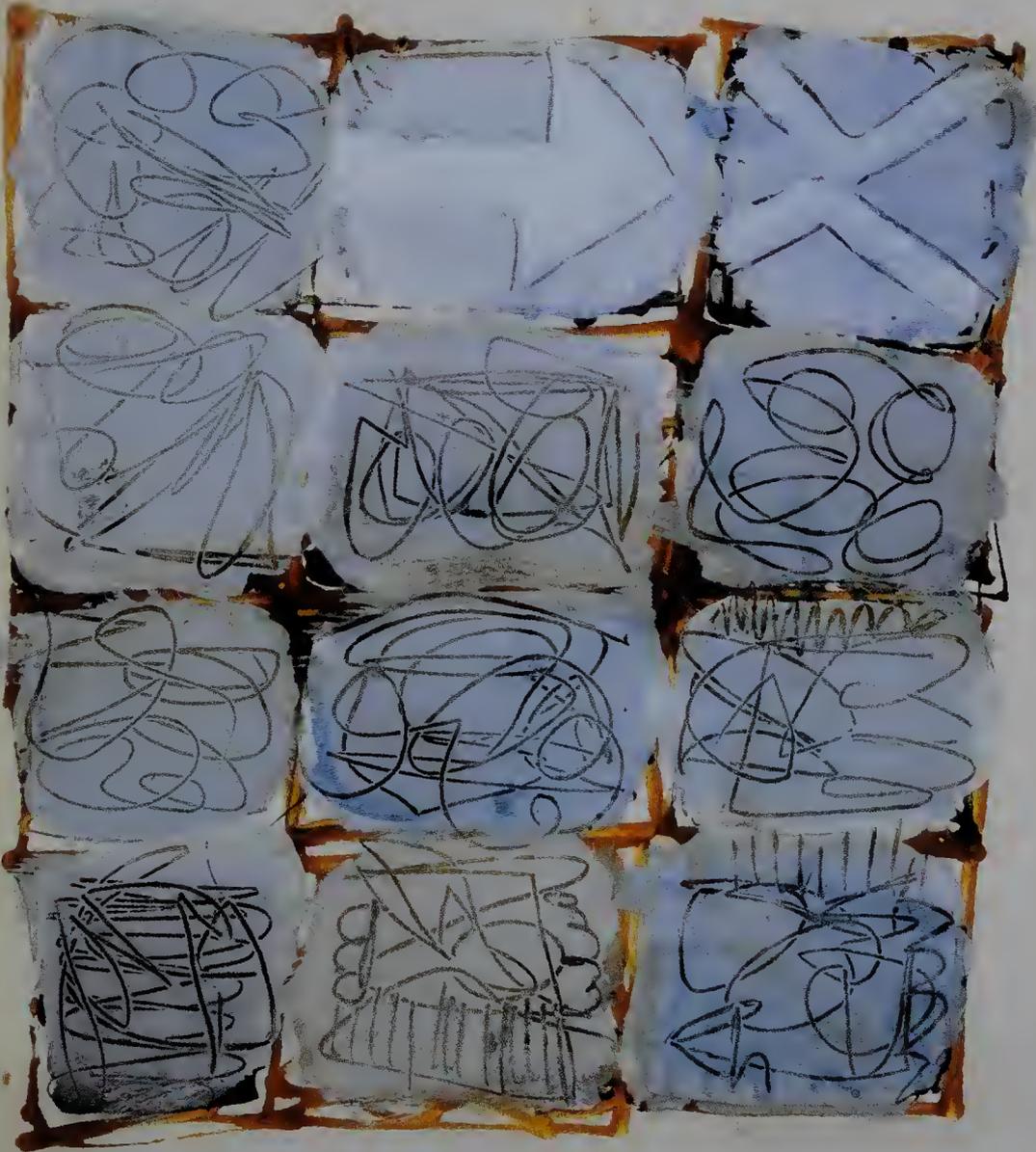
Hesse, as her friend Mel Bochner later remarked, “spent a real apprenticeship” in the art world of the 1960s. But if, for Bochner, “there was an added weight to her work because it seemed to sum up so many of the preoccupations of her time,” for Rosalind Krauss, Hesse's art was haunted by obedience.⁴⁸ “She said, ‘There isn't a rule...I don't want to keep any rules. I want to sometimes change the rules.’” But Hesse's decision to contest the rules of painting “in the most subversive way possible” nevertheless bound her to the conventions of that medium: “She had not simply walked out of its discursive space and slammed the door.”⁴⁹ Hesse herself confirms this. “The drawings then”—made in the early 1960s, when Hesse was a painter fresh out of Yale—“were incredibly related to what I'm doing now,” she said in 1970, after making such works as *Contingent* and *Right After*, works that, as she and Krauss seem to agree, bridle at the rules without abandoning the game. Hesse's distinctive use of formal artistic training to invent her art however can lead criticism to become “trapped in the vertical”—the Oedipal, the intergenerational, the pedagogic—when considering Hesse's work. As exemplified in social terms by her involvement with the circle of artists who collectively, or dialogically, conceived “serial art”—her artist siblings—and in theoretical terms by her special emphasis on the systems that reveal us to be, almost from the beginning, subject to seriality as much as to hierarchy, Hesse's art is, as Bochner suggested, as profoundly serial as any Minimalist form. Embodying a “serial attitude,” it conceives the subject as psychoanalysis was not yet able to imagine it (but as “child drawing” showed it to be): as a 2 in 1.

46. Mitchell, “Theory as an Object,” *October* 113 (Summer 2005), 29–38. Here Mitchell refers to D.W. Winnicott, “The Use of an Object and Relating Through Identification” (1968), in Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971).

47. See Garb and Nixon, “A Conversation with Juliet Mitchell,” 25: “If you are always looking at interrelationality, you're looking at what Winnicott calls ‘relating.’ And we're not always relating, we've also got to ‘use’ . . . You use the other, and that's friendship.”

48. Mel Bochner, “About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner Interviewed by Joan Simon” (1992), in *Eva Hesse* October File, 44.

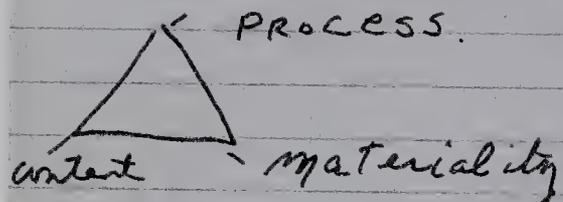
49. Krauss, “Hesse's Desiring Machines,” 50.



Problems in Art.

NON ART

materiality - supervising
the artist. do it then
with them



Some must have the mater-
iality of fibreglass.
edges.



Scale less tight, patting.
vs open + free.

don't pressure self about this
it will come when life style
opens up. It must it will
one follows then, ~~it~~ partially
automatic.

Silicone, thin rubbery
falls.

Drawing as Binding/Bandage/Bondage

Or Eva Hesse Caught in the Triangle of Process/Content/Materiality

Title notes: link, that which binds; bond, tie, connecting medium

CATHERINE DE ZEGHER

Anni Albers, "Material as Metaphor," in *Selected Writings on Design*:

How do we choose our specific material, our means of communication? "Accidentally." Something speaks to us, a sound, a touch, hardness or softness, it catches us and asks us to be formed. We are finding our language, and as we go along we learn to obey their rules and their limits. We have to obey, and adjust to those demands. Ideas flow from it to us and though we feel to be the creator we are involved in a dialogue with our medium. The more subtly we are tuned to our medium, the more inventive our actions will become. Not listening to it ends in failure...What I am trying to get across is that material is a means of communication. That listening to it, not dominating it, makes us truly active, that is: to be active, be passive. The finer tuned we are to it, the closer we come to art.

February 25, 1982¹

Eva Hesse in conversation with Cindy Nemser:

If a material is liquid...I can control it but I don't really want to change it. I don't want to add color or make it thicker or thinner...I don't want to keep any rules; I want to sometimes change the rules. But in that sense, process, the materials, become important and I do so little with them, which is I guess the absurdity. Sometimes the materials look like they are so important to the process because I do so little else with the form. I keep it very simple.

1970

1. The dates of Anni Albers's quotes are misleading: Just because some of her writings and interviews appeared later in her life does not mean she had not voiced her views earlier on as a teacher in the 1940s and 50s.

Anni Albers, who was born Annelise Else Frieda Fleischmann in the Charlottenburg section of Berlin on June 12, 1899, could have been Eva Hesse's mother: Ruth Marcus Hesse differed in age from her by only seven years and was born in Hameln, a small town near Hanover, on May 13, 1906. Ruth and Wilhelm Hesse, trying to rescue their two daughters from the Nazi pogrom on November 10, 1938, decided to send Helen and Eva on a children's train to Holland.² Two years old, Eva would only see her parents again three months later—a long time for a little girl in the midst of a confusing world to be deprived of the presence and care of her mother. Though she was no longer a baby, the cruel delay before the family was reunited was to be a traumatizing weight. This history of infantile dependence and severance—or of “not-being-seen”—had a profound and disturbing effect on Eva's nascent ego structure. As D.W. Winnicott notes, after recovery from such deprivation, an infant has “to start again permanently deprived of the root, which could provide *continuity with the personal beginning*. This implies the existence of a memory system and an organization of memories.”³ Not only can Eva's art be read as an art of beginnings, most apparent in her conscious and repeated attempts to make “adult's child drawing”⁴ [37, 38, 39], the artist is also known for having kept diaries from her early teens on, affirming “her near-obsession with autobiography, or with the past.”⁵

As shattering as the first effect of the separation and displacement had been to “the child's capacity to use a transitional object as the symbol of union with the mother,”⁶ the later effect of her mother's severe depression and absence on the establishment of herself as an individual may have been even more distressing. It is quite clear that Eva Hesse missed being *en rapport* with her mother, as she would later recall: “I used to be alone at night and I used to be terrified. My mother was there but not there—there, but not there. I was shifted from home to home. I was raised in different places and so was my sister. My mother was in and out of sanatoriums.”⁷ When Ruth took her own life in 1946, Eva at the age of ten grew even closer to her father. The efforts she would later make to come to terms with her mother's illness and suicide were inevitably associated with the fear of incest, possibly causing her to interpret her destiny as the heir of her mother's sickness.⁸ Meanwhile, she experienced a growing sense of abandonment linked with the struggle of finding herself, which would determine many aspects of her life and work.

2. Most of the biographical information appearing in this essay comes from Lucy Lippard's amazing book on Eva Hesse; it is the source of all unfootnoted quotations appearing here.

3. D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 97.

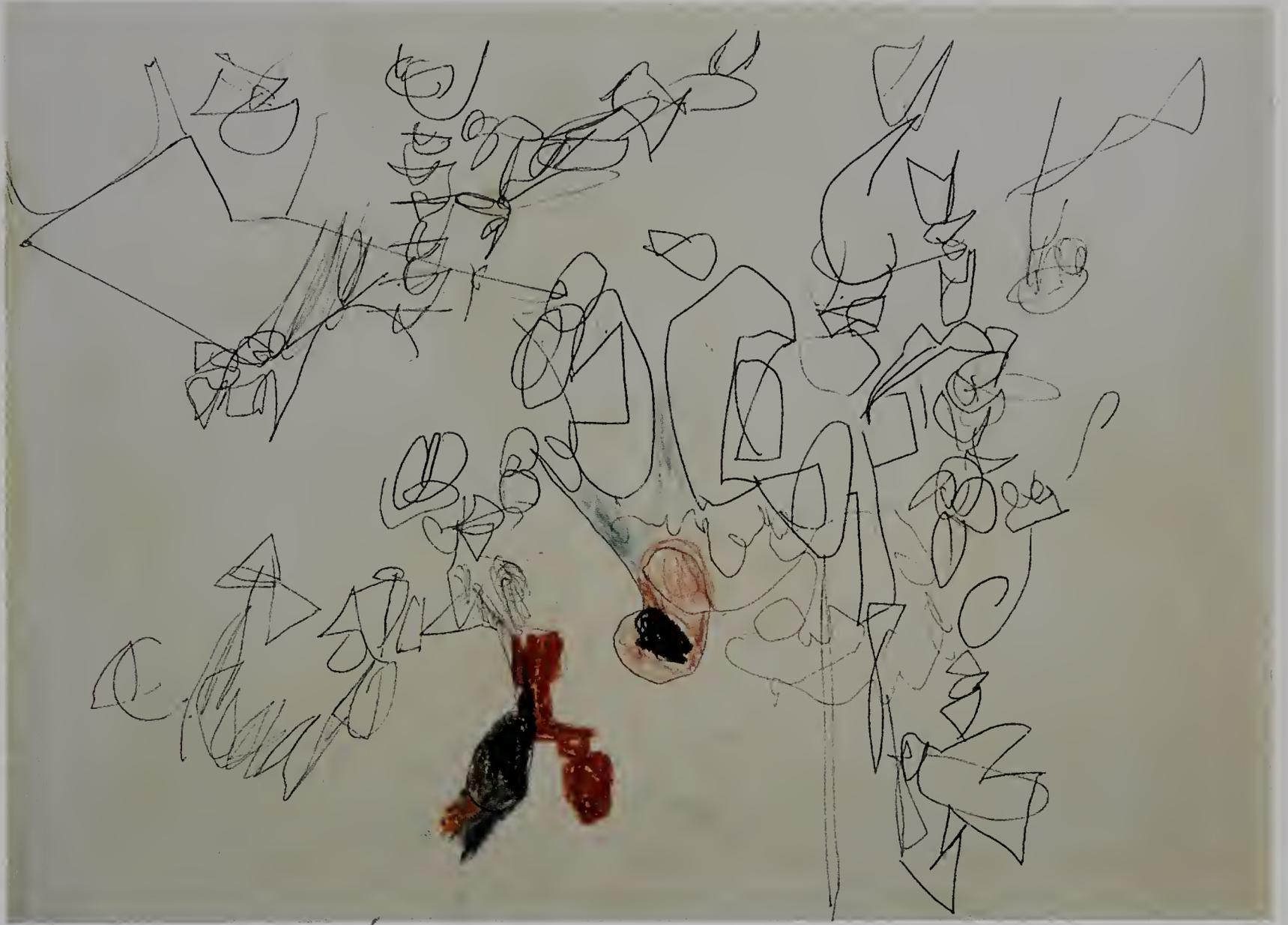
4. See Mignon Nixon's essay in this book, “Child Drawing,” in which she describes Hesse's art as an art of beginnings.

5. Lippard, 6.

6. Winnicott, 97.

7. Cindy Nemser, “A Conversation with Eva Hesse,” in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon (Cambridge: The MIT Press/October Files, 2002), 2.

8. Anne M. Wagner, “Another Hesse,” in *October* 69 (1994): 70–1.









[ill. 8] Josef Albers and Eva Hesse, Yale University, c. 1958

In 1957, Eva Hesse completed her studies at the Cooper Union School and received a stipend to attend the Yale Summer School of Music and Art in Norfolk, Connecticut. In September of that year, she started studying at the Yale School of Art and Architecture, where Josef Albers became one of her teachers [ill. 8]. "I was Albers's little color student—everybody always called me that—and every time he

walked in the classroom he would ask, 'what did Eva do?' I loved these problems but I didn't do them out of need or necessity. But Albers couldn't stand my painting and, of course, I was much more serious about the painting. I had the abstract expressionist student approach and that was not Albers's"⁹ [ill. 9, 10]. Even when Hesse was having trouble with painting, she could always draw, feeling wholly confident with this primary medium. At Yale, she also followed the drawing course of Rico LeBrun, who had a strong influence on her. According to Sheila Hicks, an artist and fellow student of Hesse's, "Albers was about the physical fact and psychic effect, while LeBrun was about spatial relationships in forms."¹⁰ From the beginning, Hesse was an accomplished draftswoman, using a "wandering, tentative, string-like line."¹¹ It was the vitality of her line which was equally thread, together with her tactile sensibility about materials and her ideas regarding space, connectivity, and progression, that was always to fashion her oeuvre.

While following this wandering, tentative, string-like line throughout the work, I came to notice that Hesse's practice was much closer to Anni Albers's thought and work than to Josef Albers's [ill. 16, 22, 25]. Yet neither in Hesse's diary entries nor in her notebooks, working drawings, or published conversations are there any references to a relationship with Anni, though there are several references by the favorite pupil to the father figure of Josef. Perhaps the relationship happened on an unconscious or rather repressed level. As Hesse's mother had been absent, so too would Anni be absent—"...there, but not there." From 1950 to 1959, when Josef was

9. Nemser, 5.

10. Sheila Hicks in a conversation with the author, August 2005.

11. Lippard, 9.



[ill. 9] no title, n.d.

Watercolor and crayon on paper, 12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.9 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London

chairman of the Department of Design at Yale University, Anni no longer had the opportunity to teach, as she had at Black Mountain College, adopting instead the role of housewife and artist and encountering the students only rarely.¹² Some say Josef was not entirely sympathetic to her concerns as an artist, but Anni continued her experiments with textiles for production and worked with the manufacturer Knoll on the realization of her designs and yard materials.¹³

Overlooked by scholars for a long time is the fact that Eva was employed in 1960 as a textile designer by the firm of Boris Kroll, known for its arts-and-crafts quality upholstery, drapery, and tapestry.¹⁴ Textile-designing respectively for Knoll and Kroll (not to be confused) is the only work experience Anni and Eva shared at any point in time. Whether or not Anni played any part in Eva's obtaining work when she graduated from Yale in 1959, designing for jacquard looms exposed Eva to a range of processes and materials, including the weaving grid, which may very well have triggered her inclination to use fiber and textile plotting paper. In any case, it is not a personal connection with Anni that is of concern but a connection in Eva's works with a repressed body of ideas within Modernism that can be seen as accessible through Anni's work.

Worth mentioning with regard to grid-patterned fabrics is another reference to Anni in relation to the early work of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, who was a student at



[ill. 10] no title, n.d.

Acrylic on paper
8 1/4 x 3 3/4 in. (21.1 x 9.5 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London

12. I owe this information to Sheila Hicks, whose work on a thesis about Peruvian textiles allowed her to become one of the few students to grow closer to Anni Albers.

13. Nicholas Fox Weber and Pandora Tabatabai Asbaghi, *Anni Albers* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1999), 174.

14. Linda Norden, "Getting to 'Ick': To know what one is not," in *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, ed. Helen A. Cooper (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 61-2.

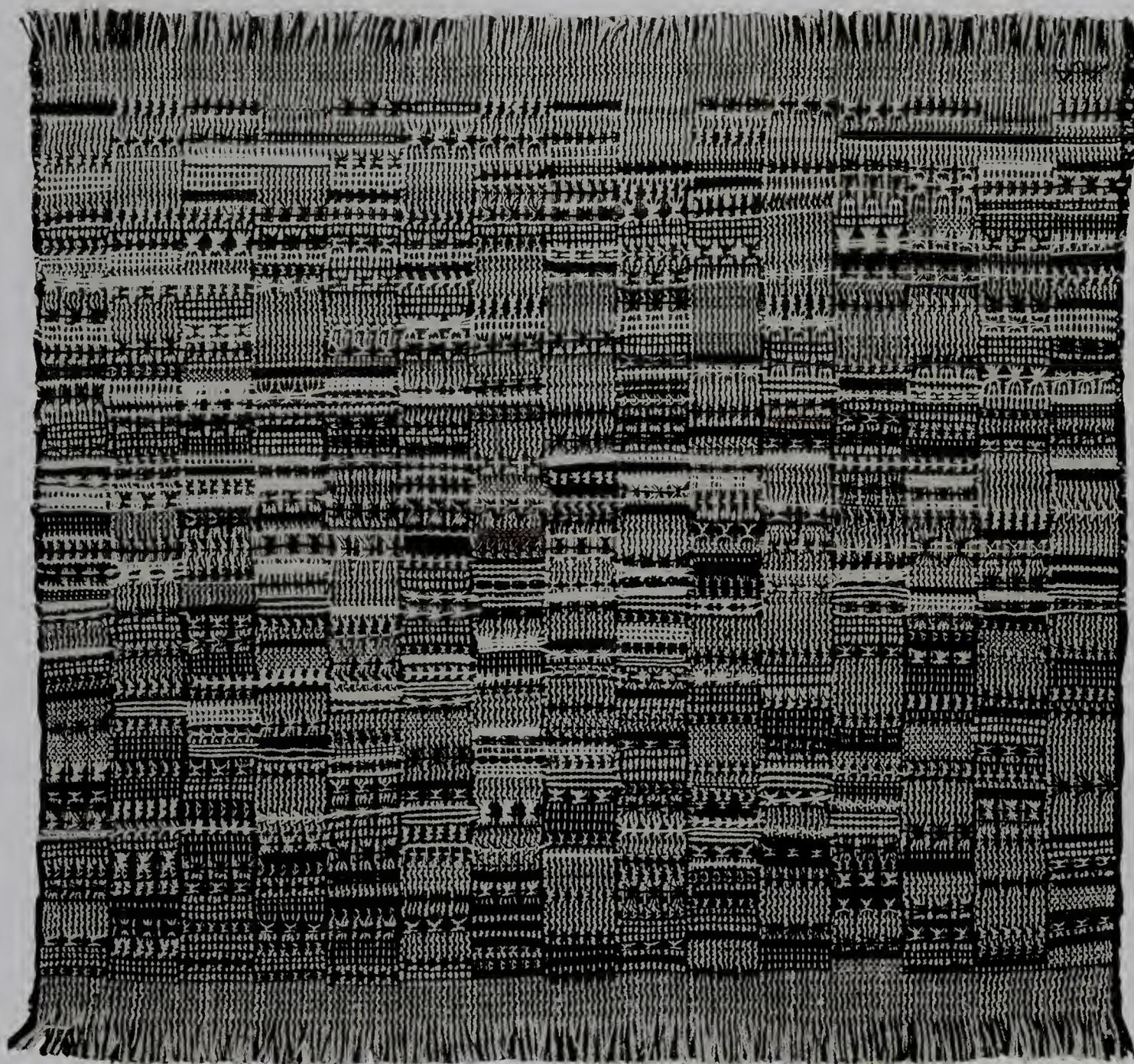


[ill. 11] no title, n.d.

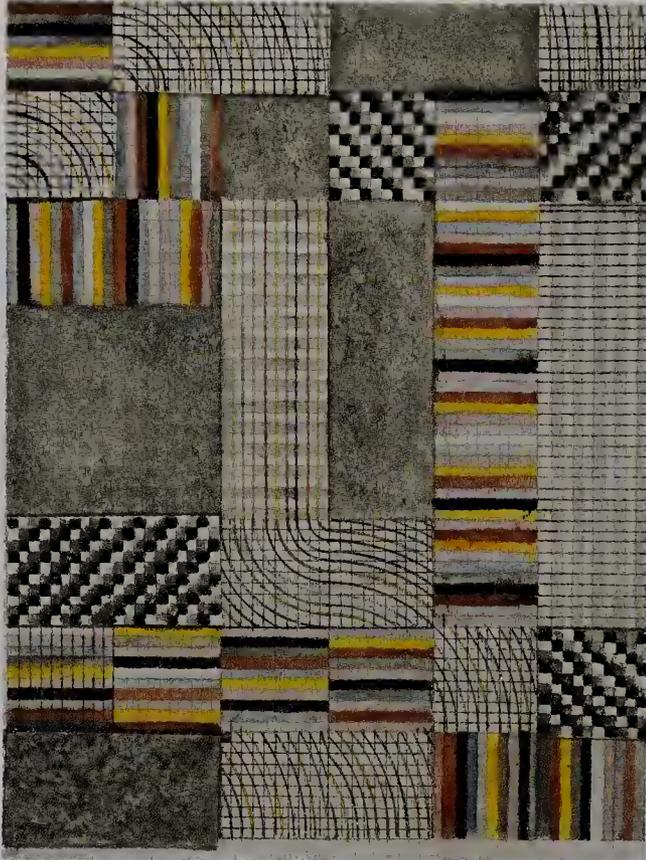
Ink on paper mounted on cardboard

5 3/4 x 4 7/8 in. (14.6 x 12.4 cm) unmounted

The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London



[ill. 12] Anni Albers, *Open Letter*, 1958
Cotton
23 x 23 1/2 in. (58.4 x 59.7 cm)
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation



[ill. 13] Anni Albers, *Design for a Rug*, 1927
Black ink and watercolor over graphite on white wove paper,
collage elements, 12 5/8 x 9 7/8 in. (32.1 x 25.1 cm)
Courtesy of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art
Museums, Gift of Anni Albers, BR 48.49

Black Mountain College in 1948 and who incidentally has often mentioned the formative influence of his mother.¹⁵ In the mind of the imaginative young artist, “Anni Albers’s pictorial weavings could have reinforced an important but at the time infrequently recognized connection: the association between the material of a woven or stitched fabric lattice, on the one hand, and the notion of a gridded pictorial surface, on the other. Rauschenberg intuitively recognized that the abstract concept known as ‘the picture plane’ was, in the material realm, simply a thing of cloth.”¹⁶

Throughout her life, Eva Hesse seemed much concerned with the stage of the establishment of her self as an individual: “My struggle was very difficult and very frustrating. I was conscious of it all the time, and if I ever had any worry in my development, then it was in finding myself. I used to worry: Am I just staying with a ‘father figure’? Where is my development? Is there a consistency? Am I going through a stage and will I reach there?”¹⁷

In painting, Hesse was competitive. She first sought recognition from Josef Albers and then from her male peers, including Sol LeWitt, Robert Ryman, Carl Andre, and Mel Bochner, as well as from her husband, Tom Doyle, though this would not be where her own language was to develop. Hesse wondered: “Why is it that I cannot see *objec-*



[ill. 14] Anni Albers, *Summer* 1928
Photograph by Josef Albers

15. In a conversation, Sheila Hicks informed the author that Rauschenberg used to weave and had once told her that he wove his child’s coat.

16. James Leggio, “Robert Rauschenberg’s Bed and the Symbolism of the Body,” in *Studies of Modern Art 2: Essays on Assemblage*, ed. John Elderfield (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 79–119.

17. Nesmer, 5.



[ill. 15] no title, n.d.

Paper collage on cardboard, 5 1/4 x 4 1/8 in. (13.3 x 10.5 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London

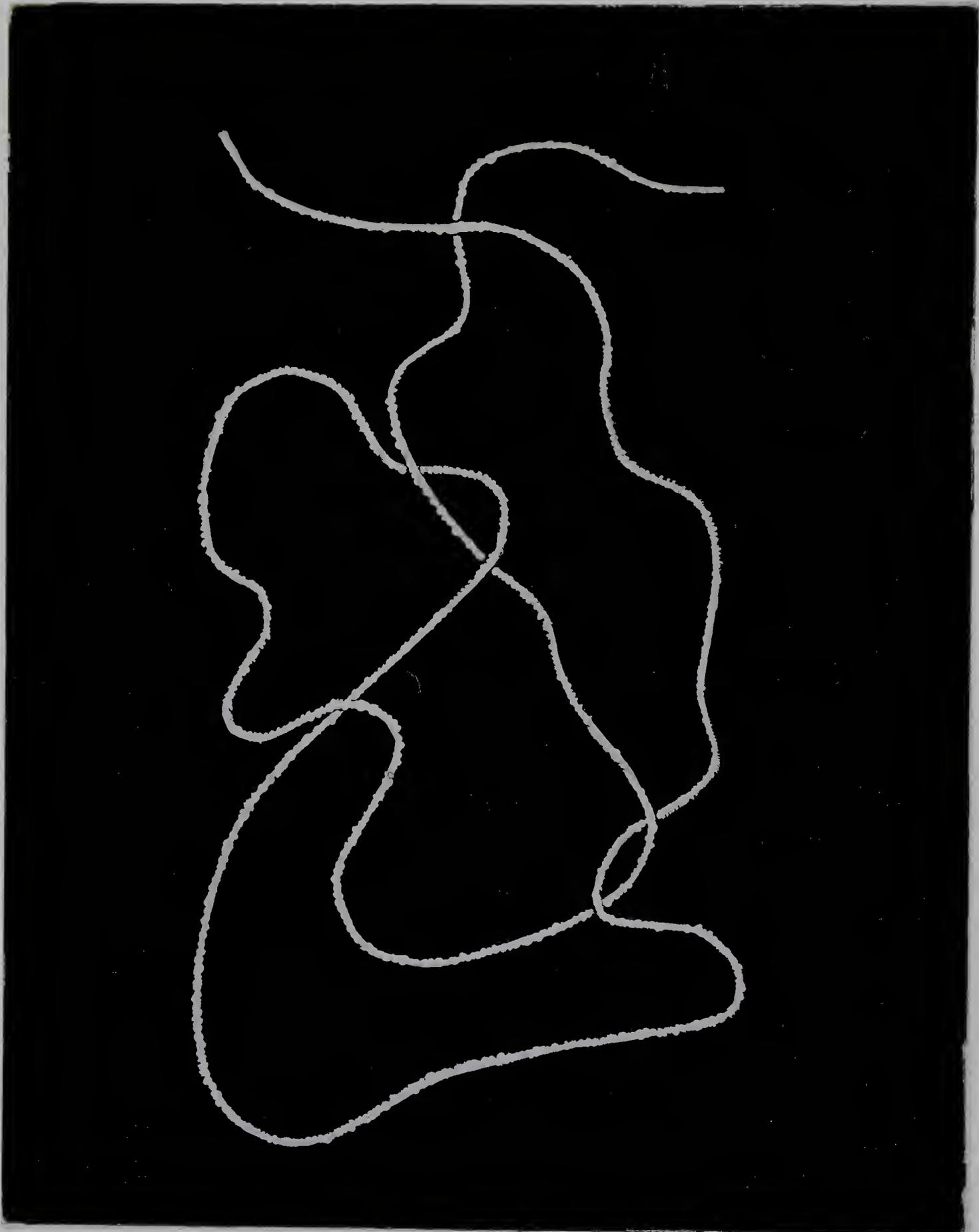
tively what I am about? My vision of myself and my work is unclear, clouded. It is covered with many layers of misty images...I do want to simplify my turmoil."¹⁸ Desperate to establish herself as a painter in an art world dominated by men, she was torn between the use of an old, Modernist, phallogocentric language and her strong desire to inscribe her femininity in her art.

In her diary in 1965, she worried: "Do I have the right to womanliness? Can I achieve an artistic endeavor and can they coincide?"¹⁹ Hesse couldn't do what Josef Albers was promoting in his optical approach to color as a poetry of opposites and things that vibrate. I would therefore argue that she came in many regards much closer to the practice and theory of Anni Albers, perhaps unknowingly—or did she simply not acknowledge it, since weaving was considered craft and not art, and if she would have recognized it, would she have interpreted it as being self-defeating? In this context, it is remarkable that even later any allusion to craft and weaving in the critical discussion of Eva's work is avoided, almost as if it would cast the wrong light on her oeuvre, even though the textile lexicon is a very intricate and crucial one in the understanding of the use of the grid and its intersecting opposite lines. When, in 1992, Joan Simon addressed the topic in a conversation with Mel Bochner ("It now seems evident that many of the things Hesse was doing with rope and twine could be described in terms of fabric and textile art—knotting, tying, wrapping. Even the use of the grid, not as a minimalist methodology, but as the mode for textile designers to plot their imagery into structure for reproduction"), he responded: "I don't think it's necessary to go so far afield to explain those things. My guess is, given Eva's ambition, she would not have wanted her art associated with craft-oriented work. Not for reasons of snobbism, but simply because the intention of the practical arts is so radically different. It's a question of intention."²⁰

18. Lippard, 27.

19. Anna C. Chave, "Eva Hesse: A 'Girl Being a Sculpture,'" in *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, 99.

20. Mel Bochner, "About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner Interviewed by Joan Simon," in *Eva Hesse* October File, 43.



[ill. 16] Anni Albers, *Untitled (Knot)*, 1948
Gouache on paper
13 3/4 x 10 3/4 in. (34.9 x 27.3 cm)
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation



[40] test pieces, 1970

Anni Albers, "Tactile Sensibility," in *Selected Writings on Design*:

We will try to approach material with just this in mind: to discover its inherent surface quality or the one which we might be able to give to it directly by working it or indirectly by influencing it, for instance, through contrast with neighboring materials. We will look around us and pick up this bit of moss, this piece of bark or paper, these stems of flowers, or these shavings of wood or metal. We will group them, cut them, curl them, mix them, finally perhaps paste them, to fix a certain order. We will make a smooth piece of paper appear fibrous by scratching its surface, perforating it, tearing it, twisting it; or we will try to achieve the appearance of fluffy wool by using feathery seeds. What we are doing can be absorbing as painting, for instance, and the result can be, like a painting, an active play of areas of different complexion.

1965

Eva Hesse in a letter to Rosalyn Goldman:

I want to explain what I have been doing. And although I already question validity, worth, meaning, antecedent, etc. I have been enjoying the newness and the work. In the abandoned factory where we work there is lots of junk around...I have all these months looked over and at much of the junk. I finally took a screen, heavy mesh, which is stretched on a frame like so and taken cord which I cut into smaller pieces. I soak them in plaster and knot each piece through a hole around wire...If it were really a new idea it would be terrific. But it is not. However I have plans with other structures and working more with plaster. It might work its way to something special...On the other side it's knots that are seen. It is all white.

December 14, 1964

Hesse's breakthrough in finding her own language was bound to happen in her motherland. In June of 1964, she and her husband traveled to Germany for the first time since her childhood escape, invited by the textile manufacturer and art collector Arnhard Scheidt.²¹ Far removed from the New York art scene, in semi-rural isolation in Kettwig an der Ruhr, a suburb of Essen, she had the opportunity both to retrieve what she had experienced as loss in her past and present life and to freely experiment with alternative ways of creating art. Having struggled unsuccessfully for years to find her own voice through

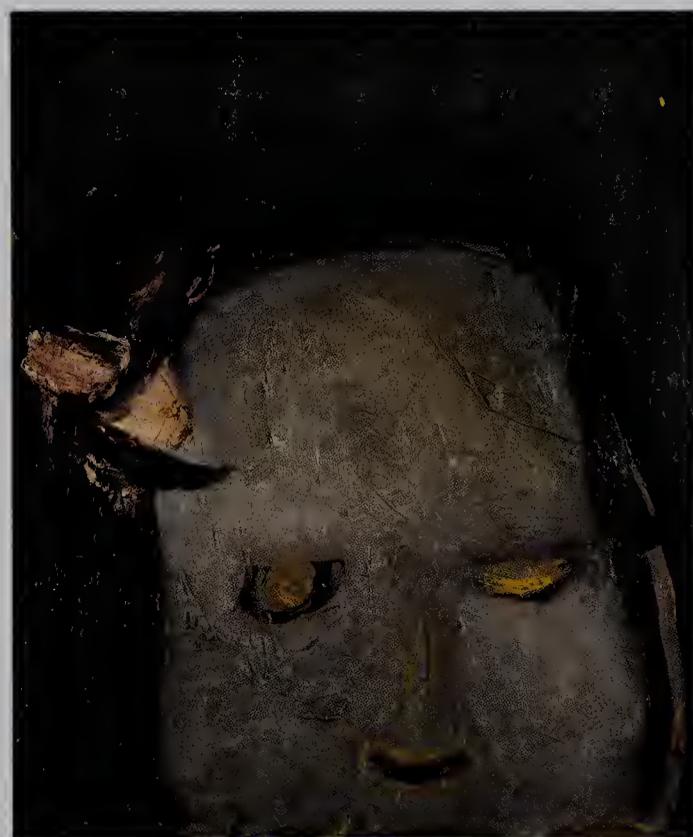
21. Maria Kreutzer, "The Wound and the Self: Eva Hesse's Breakthrough in Germany," in *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, 75.



[ill. 17] no title, 1960
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm)
Private collection, Chicago

painting, it is here that she would choose to refocus her efforts on drawing. During her stay at what she might have experienced as the margins of the art world—though Düsseldorf was close and had a vibrant art scene in the mid-1960s (Joseph Beuys was professor at the Staatliche Kunstakademie there)—she not only picked up drawing, still considered a subservient medium at the time, but also literally, from the factory floor, textile materials, which were equally marginalized and seen as “feminine.”

Incited by the history of and her personal associations with the surroundings—the motherland and the abandoned textile factory—Hesse could now address her early childhood in terms of “being seen,” which in turn would allow her to begin to feel that she actually existed. In the development of the individual’s ego, Winnicott writes, the precursor of the mirror is the mother’s face: “What the child sees when she looks at the mother’s face is herself. In other words, the mother is looking at the infant and *what she looks like is related to what she sees there.*”²² The mother’s role of giving back to the child the child’s own self is crucial in the early stages and if no one person is there to be mother, the infant’s developmental task is infinitely complicated. The absent or unresponsive face of the mother may have led in Eva’s case to the artist’s obsession with self-portraits limited to her face, and face and upper torso, in early paintings that both intimate and picture her



[ill. 18] no title, 1960
Oil on canvas
18 x 15 in. (45.7 x 38.1 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Murray Charash

22. Winnicott, 111–8.



[ill. 19] Hannah Höch, *Schnurenbild*, 1923-25
Paper and string, 11 13/16 x 7 7/8 in. (30 x 20 cm)
Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno

own presence [ill. 17, 18]. The German context, however, allowed her not only to trace the past but also to trace the present in a way that was her own, with “tactile-textile” (to use Anni’s words) materials that were hers—reminiscent of a matrilineal kinship within the Modernist legacy (which might also include artists such as Hannah Höch and Sophie Taeuber-Arp).

“The drawings sustained her all that time,” Doyle recalled. “Her drawings were always fantastic...They were in a way more like sculpture than paintings—the way they related to space—that’s maybe why she couldn’t transfer them to painting. It’s a matter of finding your own material...They were tearing up the old weavings in the factory...We could use anything we wanted. The workers all brought us stuff they thought we’d like—they were breaking up machines. There were miles of string there. The string was really what got her going.” And he added: “This is it, all that tying and everything, it’s really *her*.” During 1965, Hesse followed the materiality and the direction of this new line in her practice—the line as ultimate abstraction common to both drawing with pen and ink and winding with string.

By the end of the year, her inspired experiments had resulted in a magnificent series of “machine-part” drawings and construction-reliefs: “March 1. Ringaround Rosie. April 2. Two Handled Orangekeyed Utensil. April 3. An Ear in a Pond. May 4. Legs of a



[ill. 20] Eva Hesse, c. 1965

Walking Ball. May 5. [blank; later named “Oomamaboomba.”²³] June 6. Tomorrow’s Apples. June 7. 2 in 1. June 8. H + H. July 9. Cool Zone. July 10. Pink.”²⁴ The plain, elegant pen drawings demonstrate a curious conjugation of seemingly automatically shaped forms, unrestrained though subjective, and much more straightforward objective outlines [41, 42]. Juxtaposing mechanical and organic features, the reliefs appear as if energetically combined out of the used materials of pencil, enamel, gouache, and glued cloth-covered wire on papier-caché and Masonite [111. 21, 24, 49, 50]. Always the process involved compulsive winding or bandaging with pieces of cord and cloth. Gradually leaving the picture plane, Hesse was now beginning to venture into the space between the two- and three-dimensional—an attempt to leave painting or to cross disciplinary boundaries? Doyle remembers: “The reliefs started out sort of landscapery and complex. The first ones were more like painting, less jumping off the surface, more building up. Right away though she got much more adventurous about the whole thing and got into the wire and then filling them up with rope. You could date them by the way the color became less and less important. They started out like paintings and ended up like drawings. From the painter-sculptor idea and back to the drawing idea.”²⁵

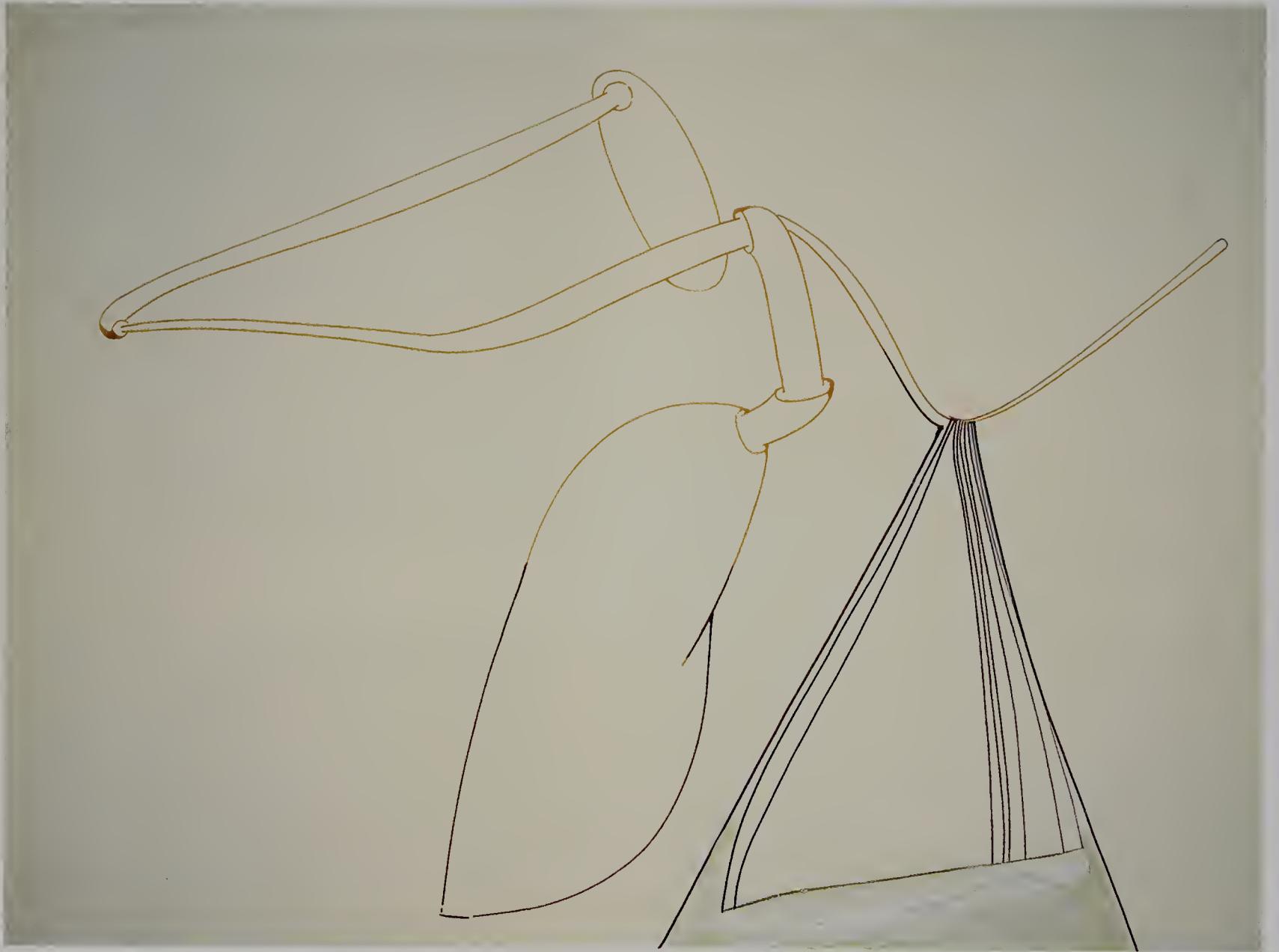
Nevertheless, as Rosalind Krauss has argued, Hesse’s work seems to declare a refusal, or an inability, to leave the territory of painting—or, I would suggest, of drawing. “Hesse’s complicity is here at work in the most corrosive ways, burrowing from within the pictorial paradigm to attack its very foundations...By projecting the pictorial plane into real space, she confronted it with a kind of amorphousness, the threat that a body ‘that suffers in being organized in no way at all’ lies behind the surface of that mirror seemingly ‘pregnant’ with its own gestalt. For the logic of relations she substituted the flux of process, and for the transcendental signified that projects *meaning* onto these relations she presented the dispersed, disorganized subject who is merely the sum of the apparatus.”²⁶ It is a fact that Hesse continued to use the wall as a support or backdrop for the image and, in so doing, insisted on the verticality and planarity of the convention of painting, much as she used the linearity of drawing. The blank space of the page, the canvas, and the wall would remain the generative space of her coming-into-being, occurring in that magical combination of ignorance and irreverence. But while Hesse located her work in what Krauss has called the sublimated, fronto-parallel plane of Modernist opticality, she defied its meaning, “intuitively recognizing that the abstract concept known as the picture plane is, in the material realm, simply a thing of cloth,” which she unraveled, consistently and literally, in her oeuvre.

23. I note that the title “Oo mama boom ba” can be read as a kind of baby talk “Oh mama there [went] boom or fell,” perhaps referring to the suicide of her mother—an interpretation made more probable as Eva made this piece during the month of May when she and Doyle went to Hameln, her mother’s town, and saw the house she was born in and had lived in as a child.

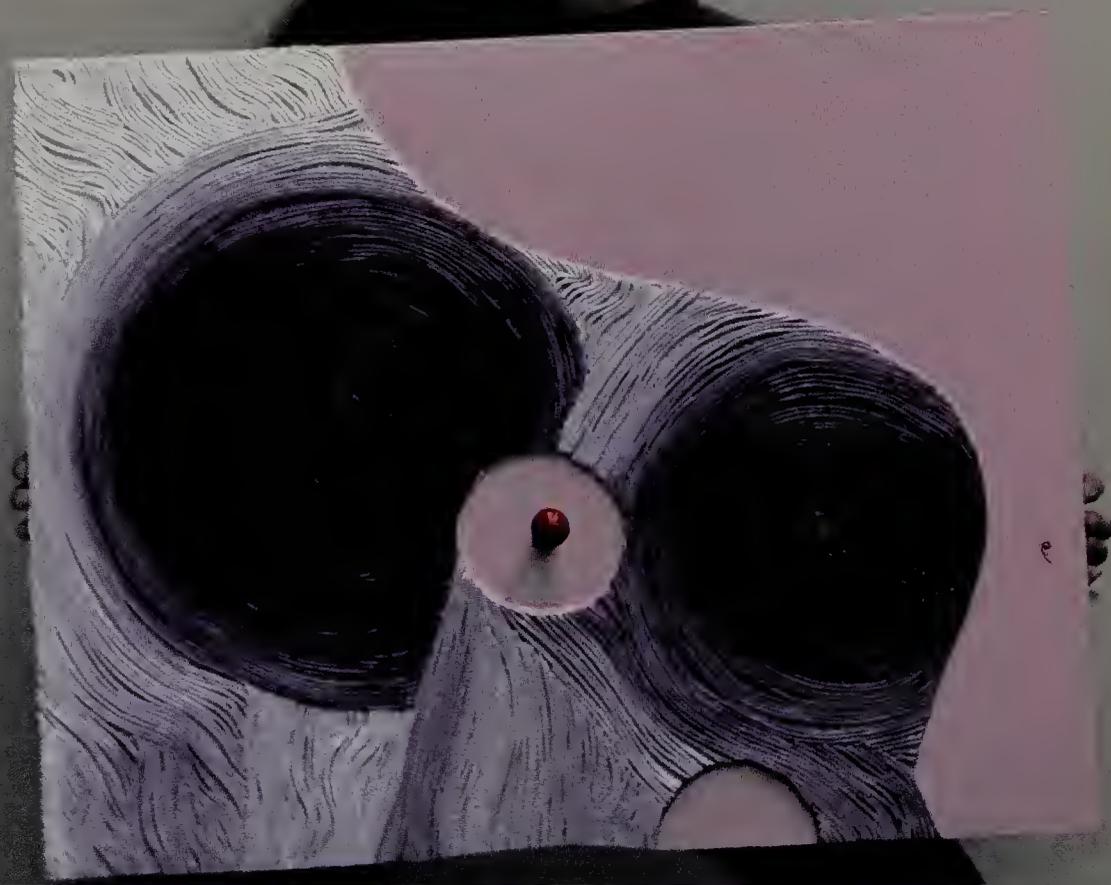
24. Lippard, 38.

25. Ibid.

26. Rosalind Krauss, “Hesse’s Desiring Machines,” in *Eva Hesse* October File, 50–4.







Anni Albers, "Material as Metaphor," in *Selected Writings on Design*:

In my case it was threads that caught me, really against my will. To work with threads seemed sissy to me. I wanted something to be conquered. But circumstances held me to threads and they won me over. I learned to listen to them and to speak their language. I learned the process of handling them. And with the listening came gradually a longing for a freedom beyond their range and that led me to another medium, graphics. Threads were no longer as before three-dimensional; only their resemblance appeared drawn or printed on paper. What I had learned in handling threads, I now used in the printing process. Again I was led. My prints are not transfers from paintings to color on paper as is the usual way. I worked with the production process itself, mixing various media, turning the screens...

February 25, 1982

Eva Hesse in conversation with Cindy Nemser:

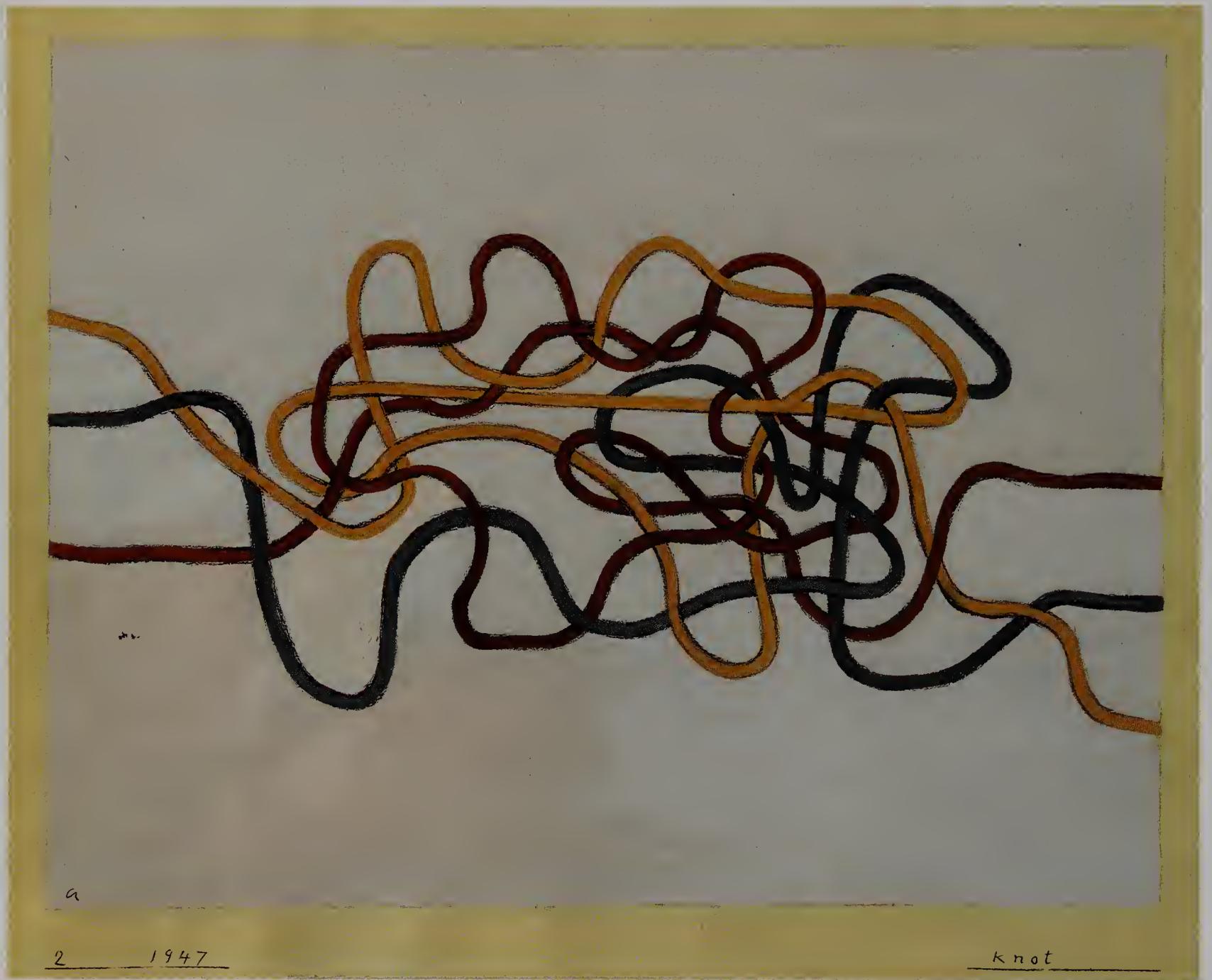
...I had a great deal of difficulty with painting but never with drawing. The drawings were never very simplistic. They ranged from linear to complicated washes and collages. The translation or transference to a large scale and in painting was always tedious. It was not natural and I thought to translate it in some other way. So I started working in relief and with line—using the cords and ropes that are now so commonly used. I literally translated the line. I would vary the cord lengths and widths, and I would start with three-dimensional boards and I would build them out with papier-mâché or kinds of soft materials. I varied the materials a lot, but the structure would always be built with cords.

1970

Two kindred spirits with a sophisticated sensitivity to the tactile and the textile, Anni and Eva were experimenting with lines and cords, though almost in reverse directions, each seeking recognition as an artist: In the mid-1960s, Anni evolved from weaving to works drawn or printed on paper [111, 25] while Eva moved from drawing to works with wire and cord [43]. At the core of their exploration was a refined responsiveness in their procedural interaction with matter as derived from mater/mother—eventually resolving for Hesse the triangle she drew of process/content/materiality into the triangle of father/self/mother.

[ill. 21]

Eva Hesse with her 1965 reliefs *An Ear in a Pond* and *2 in 1*
 Photograph by Manfred Tischer, Düsseldorf



[ill. 22] Anni Albers, *Knot 2*, 1947
Gouache on paper
17 x 21 1/8 in. (43.2 x 51.1 cm)
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation



[43] *Tomorrow's Apples (5 in white)*, 1965

overleaf: [ill. 23] *Detail of Top Spot*, 1965

Enamel paint, metal conduit, cord, plastic pipes, metal hardware and bolt, and wood on particle board
27 1/8 x 21 1/4 x 11 in. (68.9 x 54 x 27.9 cm)

Chara Schreyer







[ill. 24] *Pink*, 1965

Silver paint, enamel, wood, plaster, painted cotton cord, and painted metal button on Masonite
21 5/8 x 25 5/8 x 5 3/4 in. (54.9 x 65.1 x 14.6 cm)

Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Permanent loan from Volkart Foundation

Besides touch and the connecting string line, the most significant element the artists shared in their work was a common fascination with light and color gradation, the latter being characteristic of textile weaving. According to the Chilean artist and poet Cecilia Vicuña, “in the spectrum one color dissolves to let the other be. ‘Love is light’ they say. In the Andes, a color gradation (*K’isa* in Quechua) is a melting process, a transformation. Weaving *K’isas* you are changing perception imperceptibly.”²⁷

From the 1930s on, Anni and Josef made regular trips to South America, where they became acquainted with Peruvian textiles, which they studied and collected. Anni praised the ancient Peruvians for their adventurous use of threads and commented on their “surprising and ingenious way of varying in inventiveness from piece to piece.”²⁸ Josef’s insistence on color gradation in his teachings and his famous series of controlled exercises on the “interactions of color” may very well have been influenced by both their studies of ancient textiles.

Indirectly, their research came to have such an impact on Hesse that she began to apply tonal gradations in many of her works. At first, she used Liquitex to paint colors in all their different tones on the wrapped cords of her reliefs and later on the banded wires of some of her sculptural pieces. This preoccupation with the waning of color, oftentimes from dark to light grays or vice versa, became a distinctive trait in her sculpture from 1965 on. Moreover, in works such as *Ishtar* (1965) [ill. 65] and *Hang Up* (1966) [ill. 30], the progressively accumulated tones, becoming less and less dark, intensified a sense of transformation and ultimately of light. Subsequently, she came more and more to try to convey light not by means of adding paint but in her interaction with the materials themselves, as in such late works made of fiberglass, latex, and polyester resin (on cloth-covered metal wire) as *Expanded Expansion* (1969) and *Connection* (1969) [ill. 26, 27]. As Hesse explained: “Color is whatever comes out of the material and keeps it what it is. The light—I’m not too concerned with it, because if you use reinforced fiberglass clear and thin the light is there by its nature and the light does beautiful things to it. It is there as part of its autonomy.”²⁹

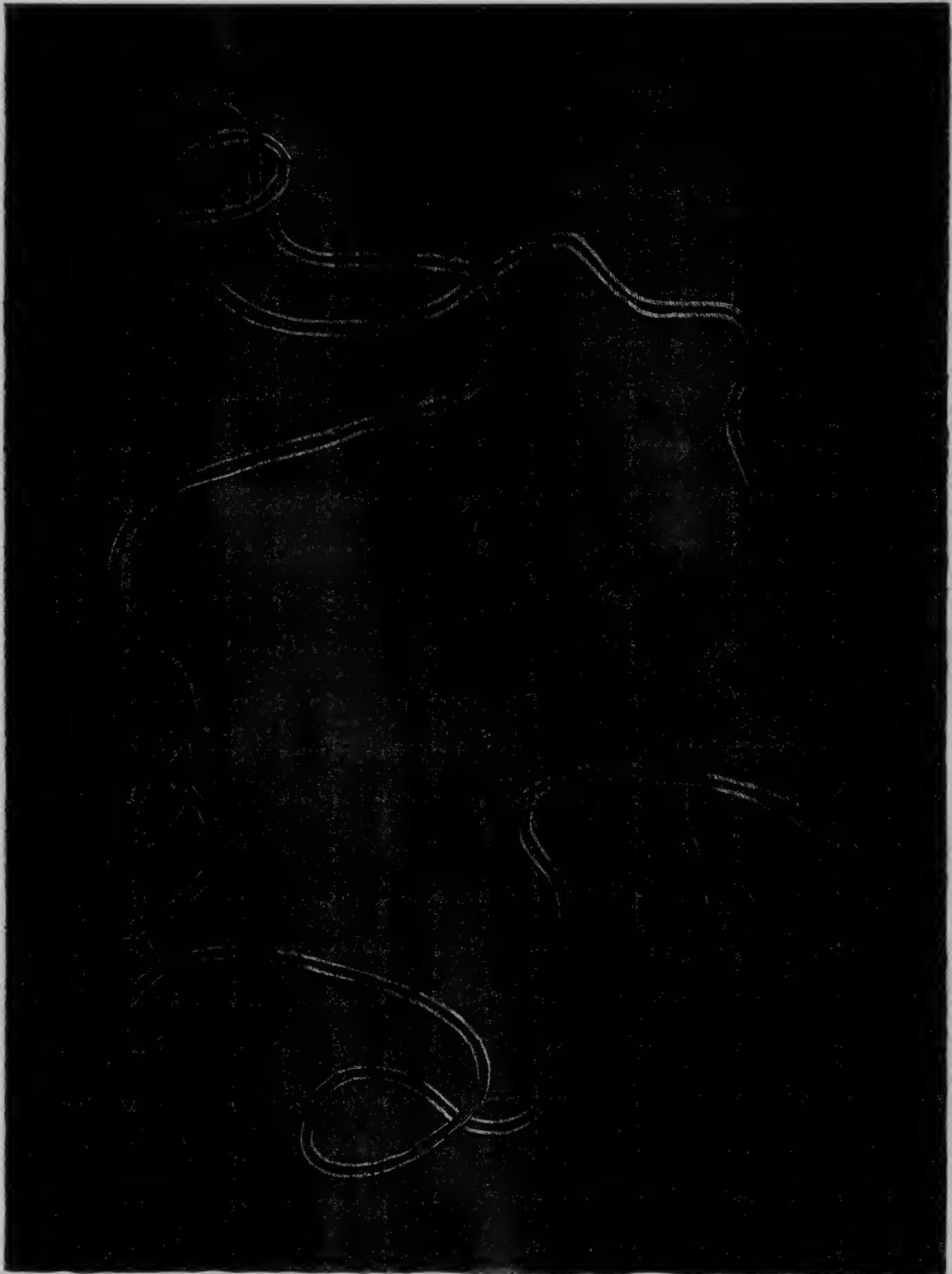
In this regard, it is noteworthy that, as Mary Jane Jacobs has written, “among the unusual directions Anni pursued in the late 1920s and 1930s was the introduction of cellophane and other synthetics, and plastic and metallic threads that added luster and color but were also light reflective. She took these materials further than anyone else at that time.”³⁰ For Anni Albers, working with material was “a listening for

27. Cecilia Vicuña, in *Drawing Papers 34: DIS SOLVING: threads of water and light* (New York: The Drawing Center, 2002).

28. Mary Jane Jacobs, “Anni Albers: A Modern Weaver as Artist,” in *The Woven and Graphic Art of Anni Albers* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 71–2.

29. Nemser, 15.

30. Jacobs, 71.

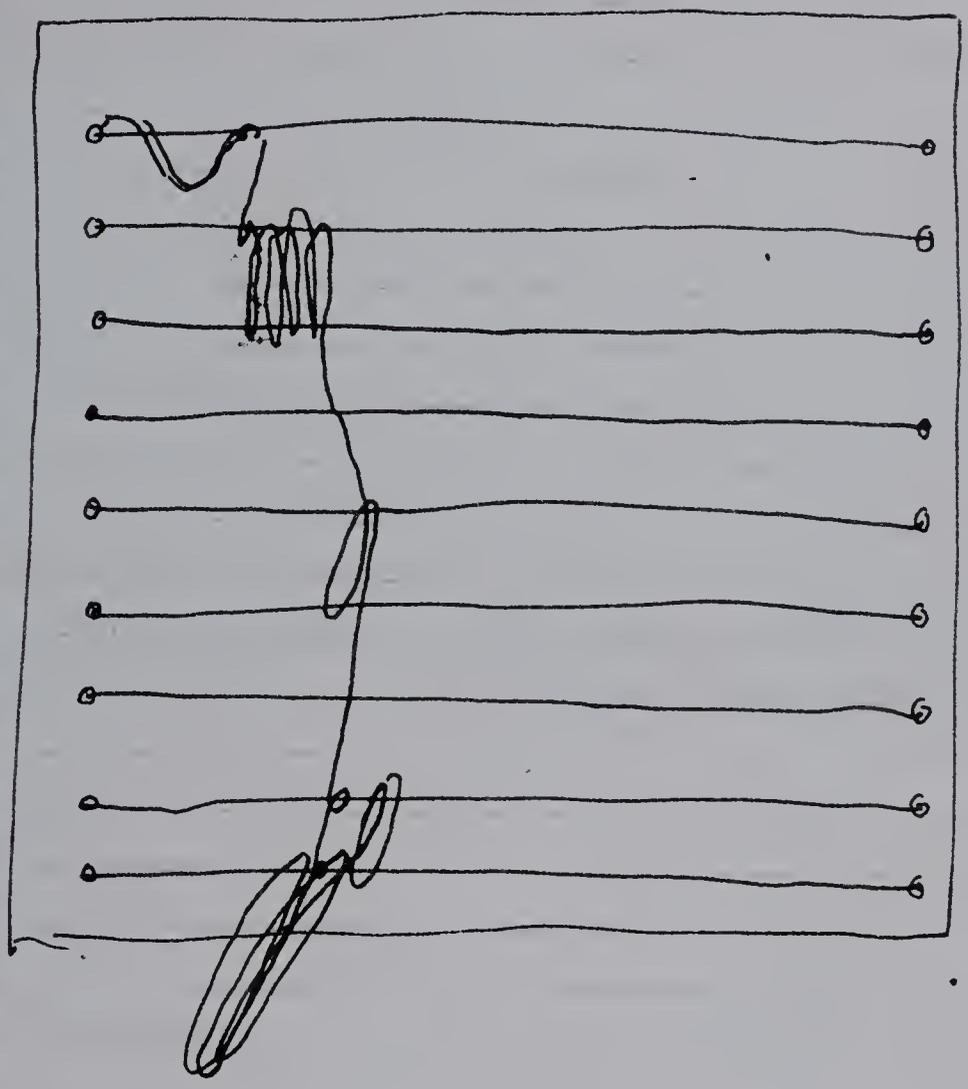


[ill. 25] Anni Albers, *Line Involvement II*, 1964
Lithograph, 14 3/4 x 19 7/8 in. (37.5 x 50.5 cm)
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

right: [44] no title, from diary 1977.52.31, 1966

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the dictation of the material and a taking in of the laws of harmony.” She felt “we had grown increasingly insensitive in our perception by touch,” and promoted exercises to regain this faculty of tactile sense in order “to discover meaning in that of *matière* [matter]”.³¹ About *Contingent* (1969), Eva said: “I started the piece before I got sick, which was last year. It was latex rubber over a cloth called ripple cloth, which resembles another version of cheesecloth. It has a more interesting weave (I guess I have some kind of interest in the material) and reinforced fiberglass—clear.”³² For each, it was not color or light so much as material and its intrinsic qualities that met with their interest and conveyed meaning—an idea of exploration and interaction, of letting the material take its form, that was obviously also part of the painting process of the Abstract Expressionists. Elaborating on his answer to Simon’s question with regard to textiles, Bochner continued: “I think Eva’s major contribution is how actual light trapped in a surface, in

31. Anni Aibers, “Tactile Sensibility,” in *Selected Writings on Design* (Hanover, New England and London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 69–72.
32. Nemser, 21.



[ill. 27] *Connection*, 1969

Fiberglass and polyester resin on cloth-covered metal wire
20 units, each 16 to 65 1/2 x 1 to 3 in. (40.6-166.4 x 2.5-7.6 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles

those late fiberglass pieces, can be used to put an object in a new emotional, physical, and psychological space. I can't think of anyone since Eva who has done it—and I can't think of anyone before her either."³³

Anni Albers, in *On Designing*:

Today a painter can just squeeze a tube and his obedient medium permits him to use it any way he likes—with care, without care, splashing it if he wishes. This outer unrestraint does not provide him with the stimulation and source for inventiveness that may come in the course of struggling with a hard-to-handle material. It rather permits him unrestraint in turn, in every form of formlessness. For many today, introspection then becomes the unfiltered and often sole source material; and thus convulsion is mistaken for revelation. The working manner of the craftsman, dealing with a material that demands circumvention and invention, may well prove to be the stabilizer needed to lead from the too private to more congenerous, formative revelations.

Eva Hesse in her diary:

Making Art. "painting a painting." The Art, the history, the tradition, is too much there. I want to be surprised, to find something new. I don't want to know the answer before but want an answer that can surprise...Just substitute painting...If painting is too much for you now, fuck it. Quit. If drawing gives some pleasure—some satisfaction—do it. Go ahead. It also might lead to a way other than painting, or at least painting in oil. First feel sure of idea, then the execution will be easier.

December 1964–February 1965

In their subtle hybridization of drawing and sculpture, Hesse's reliefs anticipate her later works not only in the way they capture light but also in the way cords and strings dangle from the surface. Tangible lines, these cords literally pull, in their cloth-wrapped curves, the drawing into real space. In *Tomorrow's Apples*, the five colored, cord-wound rods "effectively spring off the surface, leaving behind shadows which appear to bend and shape the topography [of the relief]"³⁴ [43]. Two of her last reliefs, *C-Clamp Blues* (1965) and *Up the Down Road* (1965), minimal as they are in their formal and thematic concerns, appear to foreshadow, in their sparse, protrusive lines, the

33. Bochner, 44.

34. Lippard, 42.



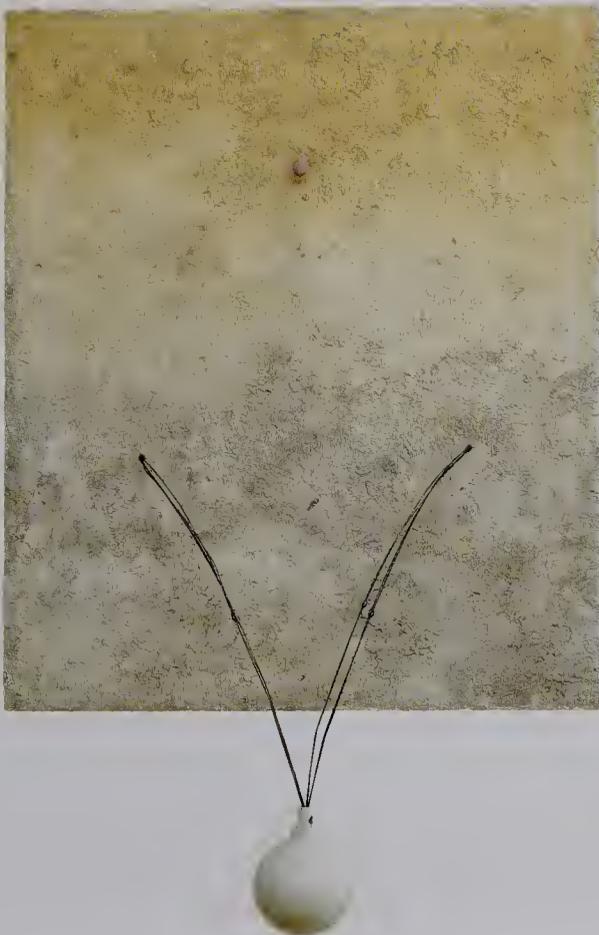
[ill. 28] *Up the Down Road*, 1965

Tempera paint on cloth-bound cord, aluminum paint on Styrofoam on Masonite, 25 3/4 x 19 3/4 x 7 1/2 in. (65.4 x 50.2 x 19 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles

subversion of the conventional relationship between the picture plane, the frame, and the pictorial space found in a work the artist finally considered as challenging: *Hang Up* [ill. 28, 29, 30]. Recalling the subtly graded cord in *Up the Down Road*, a cord-wrapped steel tube projects from the upper left, looping down to the floor and reentering the frame at the lower right. The bound wire follows a similar up-to-down gradation of color.

Excited about her machine drawings and reliefs, Hesse considered them as “real nonsense”—conceivably, this is also the nonsense at the core of the canonical separation of the mediums of drawing, painting, and sculpture—and emphasized the underlying absurdity of her work, as if, sustained by an awareness of her own old open wound, she now accepted the absence of meaning or oneness in her life, turning it into the non-subject of her non-work: in her words “the big nothing”—its “ick”³⁵ as “absurdity.”

According to Linda Norden, “the existentialist affinities of Hesse’s art-life orientation relate not just to Beckett, [Ionesco] or Sartre, whose *Being and Nothingness* is often cited with reference to her, but to Paul Tillich, whose concept of “The Courage to Be” closely resembles what seems to be the driving force behind Hesse’s art.”³⁶ Hers was an existential humanism. Hesse considered *Hang Up* as her most successful “absurd” work: “It is also so extreme and that is why I like it and don’t like it. It is so absurd. This little piece of steel comes out of this structure and it comes out a lot. It’s about ten or eleven feet out and it is ridiculous. It’s the most ridiculous structure I have ever made and that is why it is really good.

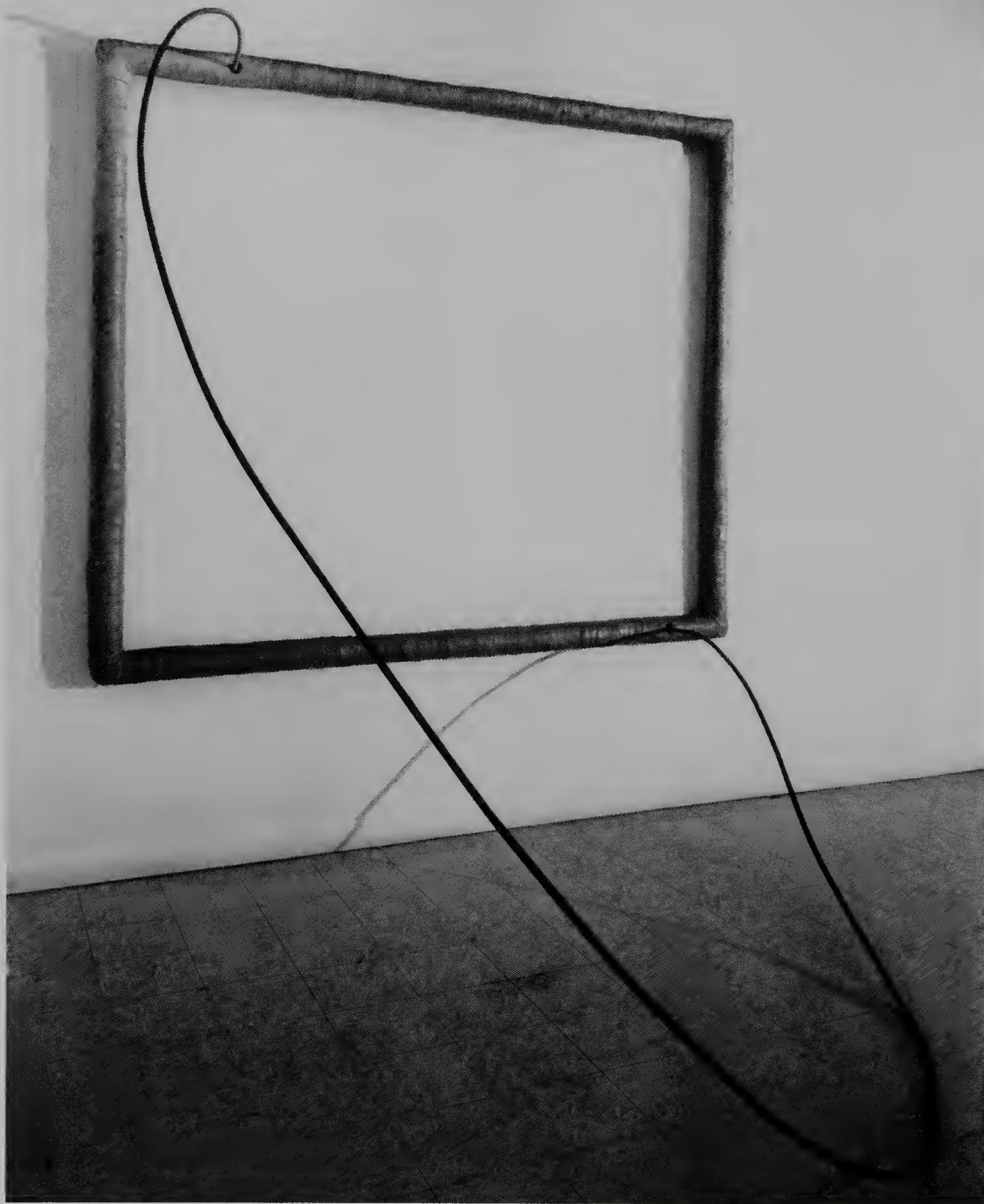


[ill. 29] *C-Clamp Blues*, 1965

Painted concretion, wire, painted metal bolt, and painted plastic ball on Masonite
32 7/8 x 21 3/4 x 9 1/4 in. (83.5 x 55.2 x 23.5 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles

35. The word “ick,” as mentioned in the title of Linda Norden’s essay, seems to me a combination of the German “ich” and the Dutch “ik”—Dutch being the language Eva would have heard in the Netherlands when she was taken there on a children’s train. Both words translate as “I.” Interestingly, since in English “ick” is a word expressing disgust, it communicates what Julia Kristeva once described in *The Powers of Horror* (Columbia, 1982) as: “I abject *myself* within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish myself.”

36. Norden, 64, 73.



[ill. 30] *Hang Up*, 1966

Acrylic paint on cloth over wood; acrylic paint on cord over steel tube
72 x 84 x 78 in. (182.9 x 213.4 x 198.1 cm)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Through Prior Gifts of Arthur Keating and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Morris

It is coming out of something and yet nothing and it is holding. It is framing nothing. And the whole frame is gradated—oh more absurdity—very, very finely.”³⁷ Open wound, wound bandages...at once framing nothing and containing everything—void? “A vacant, absent feeling...A void which [word illegible] to be filled. In either case it is loneliness and emptiness which I constantly feel,” Hesse recorded at a time when she was pondering her “link with mother”—a link central to the formation of her identity, her feminine identity.³⁸ Indeed, some of her title notes read: “link, that which binds; bond, tie, connecting medium.”³⁹

Paradoxically, the nonsense also translated into a desire for sense, for meaning, for communication, since the frequent use of unstructured loops and free-falling cords, in particular in *Ennead* (1966) [111. 31] and *Ditto* (1967), which is reminiscent of breasts and nipples, and the umbilical-like cords in *One More Than One* (1967) and the model for one unit of an untitled work of 1970 [47], can also be read as a reaching out to and an establishing of connections and relationships with the other. As Anna Chave relates, Hesse was distressed over her inability to stand alone: “‘I must get strong enough to stand alone,’ Hesse admonished herself in her diaries; ‘I must live independent of anyone. That is sickness—the part of leaning child.’... But Hesse was ambivalent about the prospect of autonomy; and in her extensive use of cords and strings—the material most prevalent in her art—she found a metaphor for the ties that bound her, for good and ill, to others.”⁴⁰

Modernism had brought with it notions of separation and solitude as being radical in artistic practice and, more generally, in society; and, in fact, Hesse’s desire for empathy and compassion, which materialized in an art of trans-subjective connection, challenged this model of human situations and processes by proposing a different model—one that has been conceptualized by Bracha L. Ettinger since the 1990s as “a matrixial model,” drawing on the image of the intrauterine encounter in the late stages of pregnancy: “The matrix is an unconscious space of simultaneous emergence and fading of the *I* and the unknown *non-I*; it is a shared borderspace in which *differentiation-in-co-emergence* and *distance-in-proximity* are continuously rehed and reorganized by metramorphosis.”⁴¹

It is then no surprise that the expanded field of drawing—drawing in all its manifestations: as writing and sketching in journals, as tracing with pen and ink, as winding with

37. Nemser, 7.

38. Chave, 102.

39. Lippard, 148.

40. Chave, 105.

41. *Drawing Papers 24: Bracha L. Ettinger: The Eurydice Series*, ed. Catherine de Zegher and Brian Massumi (New York: The Drawing Center, 2001).

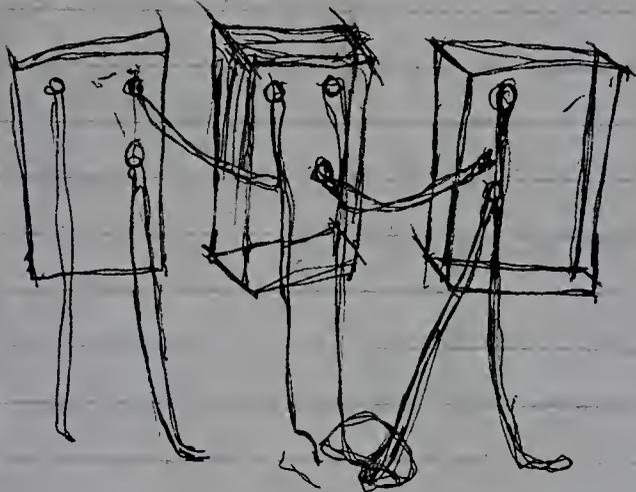
②

fiberglass. hanging walls
+ ceiling. possibility from one to other



③

Bases connected with rubber hoses.



positioning
can be varied

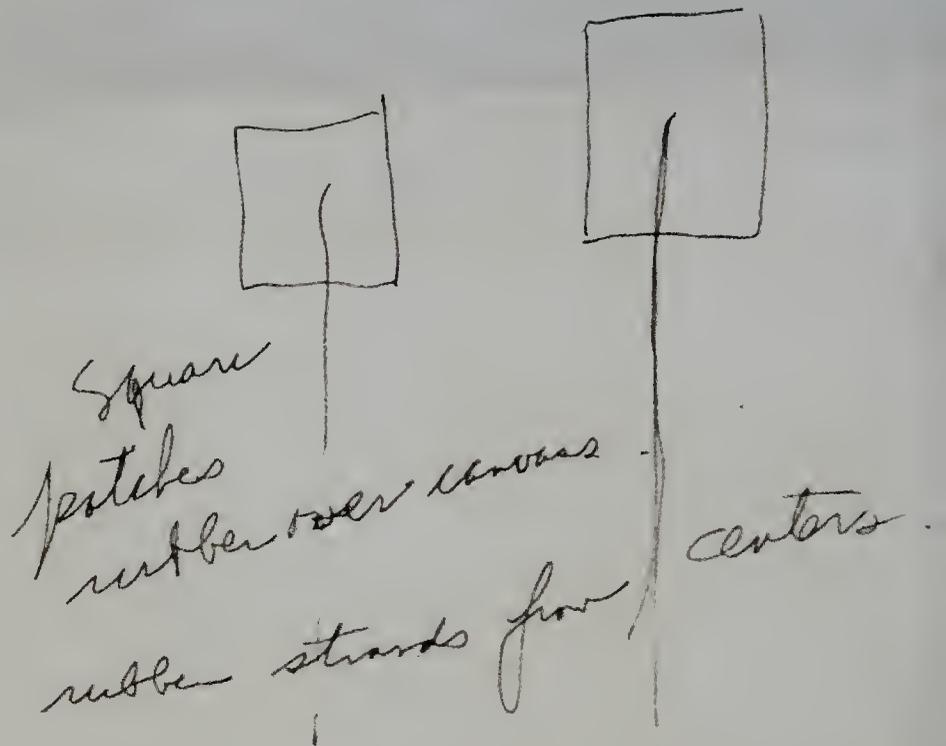
④



[ill. 31] *Ennead*, 1966

Paint and papier-mâché on plywood with dyed string, dimensions variable, panel 36 x 22 x 1 1/2 in. (91.4 x 55.9 x 3.8 cm)
Private collection, Boston

left: [45] no title, 1970



or over mesh. (folded
 in back to hang over
 mesh)





[47] no title, 1970

left: [46] no title, n.d.



39

← 2 Forms

24



wire and strips of cloth, as wrapping and binding, as tying knots, as forming webs suspended in space—became hers. There is a profound connection in drawing between the thought of the decentered, scattered body, associated with fragmentation in the mirror stage, and the reenactment of early experiences of love, loss, and retrieval. As a primary response to the world, drawing is an outward gesture that links our inner impulses and thoughts to the other through the touching of an inscriptive surface with repeated graphic marks. To begin with, the gesture itself is more important than the mark or the gaze. In the act of drawing, the extending of arm and hand away from the bodily axis seems to correspond to the gesture involved in the first separation and exploration processes when the child reaches out to the departing mother—an event Eva experienced so dramatically. Enacting the marking gesture with a crayon, the child follows the mother's movement as she leaves, and afterwards, contemplating the answer of this gesture on the page, identifies with the trace that this action has left for her. "Such an approach no longer presents the world as a projection of the body itself but as a projection of the maternal body from which every human being is originally separated."⁴²

A primal mode of image production, mark making thus stages not only a separating but also a binding in the discovery of the trace. According to this view, the graphic activity of the hand plays a role in attempting to reconstruct symbolically a lost dual identity. With her every gesture, the child secures the absent mother's echoing answer and trusts the page with the internalized mother, which inhabits the child.⁴³ In this transaction, the structural relationship and the inscriptive game organized around separation and attachment are more important than any of their representations. "Love, they say, is the inventor of drawing."⁴⁴ Informed both by rupture and reciprocity, drawing constitutes a haptic space of transition and, because to gesture outwards is not only about the "I exist" but the "I exist in relation to someone else," drawing is a form of intimacy as much as of conversation.

An act of consciousness, the intimate gesture of drawing is a process by which Eva Hesse situated herself in the world, in relation to other people, which in turn provided for a kind of self-recognition. The German experience offered her that transitional space, so necessary for increased self-confidence which she could have found nowhere else. This growing independence, which coincided with the separation from her husband, would irrevocably problematize her relationship to Minimalism when she returned to New York in September 1965. Although Hesse shared a conceptual interest

42. Serge Tisseron, "All Writing is Drawing: The Spatial Development of the Manuscript," in *Boundaries: Writing & Drawing*, *Yale French Studies* 84 (1994): 29–42.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Essay on the Origin of Languages", as cited in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

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in the simple and the serial, her work did not embrace the Minimalists' ideals of a purely phenomenological approach to the object and anonymity in industrial fabrication as a means of expressing the literal, inorganic, and insentient. By countering these ideas with her notions of tactile sensibility and responsiveness to materials, Hesse succeeded in both engaging the Minimalist ideas concerning the processes of transformation—which would lead to her relevance to and inclusion in the movement despite the fact that her practice was eroding it from within—and addressing primitive emotions and unconscious levels of awareness rather than conscious and phenomenological perception. Using materials as various as wire, strips of fabric, surgical hose, and steel tubing, she directed and focused her interests on seemingly more interrelational and restorative aspects of art and life.

It was at that time, Lucy Lippard relates, that Hesse “began to make the profoundly beautiful wash and ink circle drawings [49, 50], which continued through 1968...When she arrived at the circles, a motif already present in the three-dimensional work (such as *2 in 1* (1965) [ill. 6], *Ingeminate* (1965) [51], and an untitled work of 1966 in Mel Bochner's collection [ill. 68]) she may have missed the freedom of the more automatic imagery she had always used, but this could not have lasted long, since she extracted from this very simple formula—primarily rows of circles with or without centers—an endless internal vitality that made each one different.”⁴⁵ Hesse noted in her diary: “I go in 0 circles. Maybe therefore my drawings.” All featuring a graduated scale of grays, the circles are contained in a visible or invisible grid and produce “not a mechanical but a highly *textured* surface,”⁴⁶ as if the disembodiment of the gestural mark in the use of the structural matrix at once gave way to the embodiment of line, most literally in its materialization in *Metronomic Irregularity I–III* and following sculptural pieces.⁴⁷

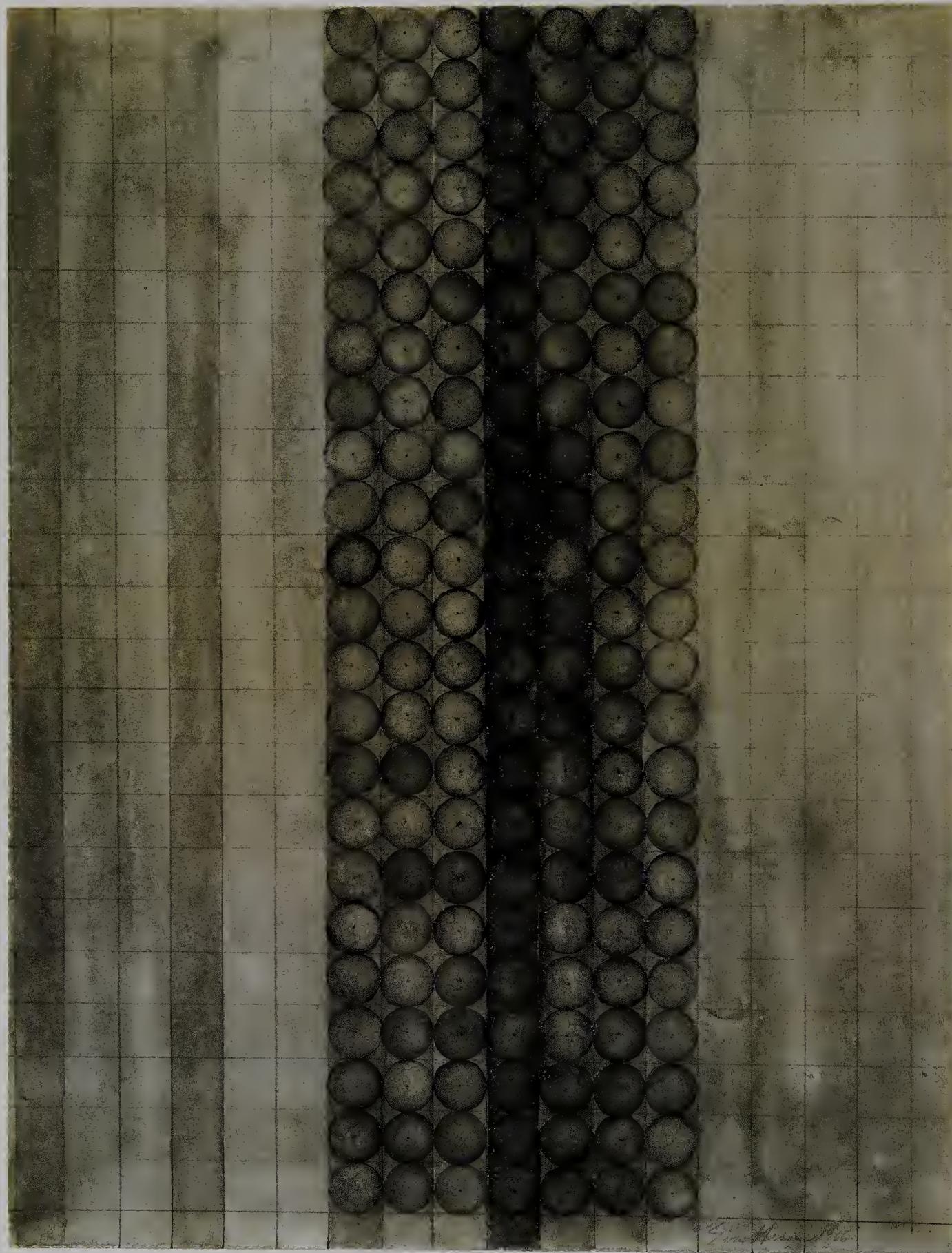
Drawing gray plaques into a grid bearing an uncanny resemblance to the jacquard cards employed for weaving, she made *Metronomic Irregularity II* for the *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition. It was only one month after her father had died in August 1966. In each of the three versions, white cotton-covered wires connect two or three panels (depending on the version), emerging from gridded holes and passing over empty wall space—like material ties embodying drawing's transitional space of rupture and reciprocity [ill. 33, 34]. As a consequence, Hesse's work succeeds in combining the instrumentality of the matrix and the connectivity of the matrixial, with the line always as mediator. “Having used line with this much freedom, but still against the planar surface, she was later able to follow the implications into real space with *Right After* (1969)”⁴⁸ [ill. 35].

45. Lippard, 71.

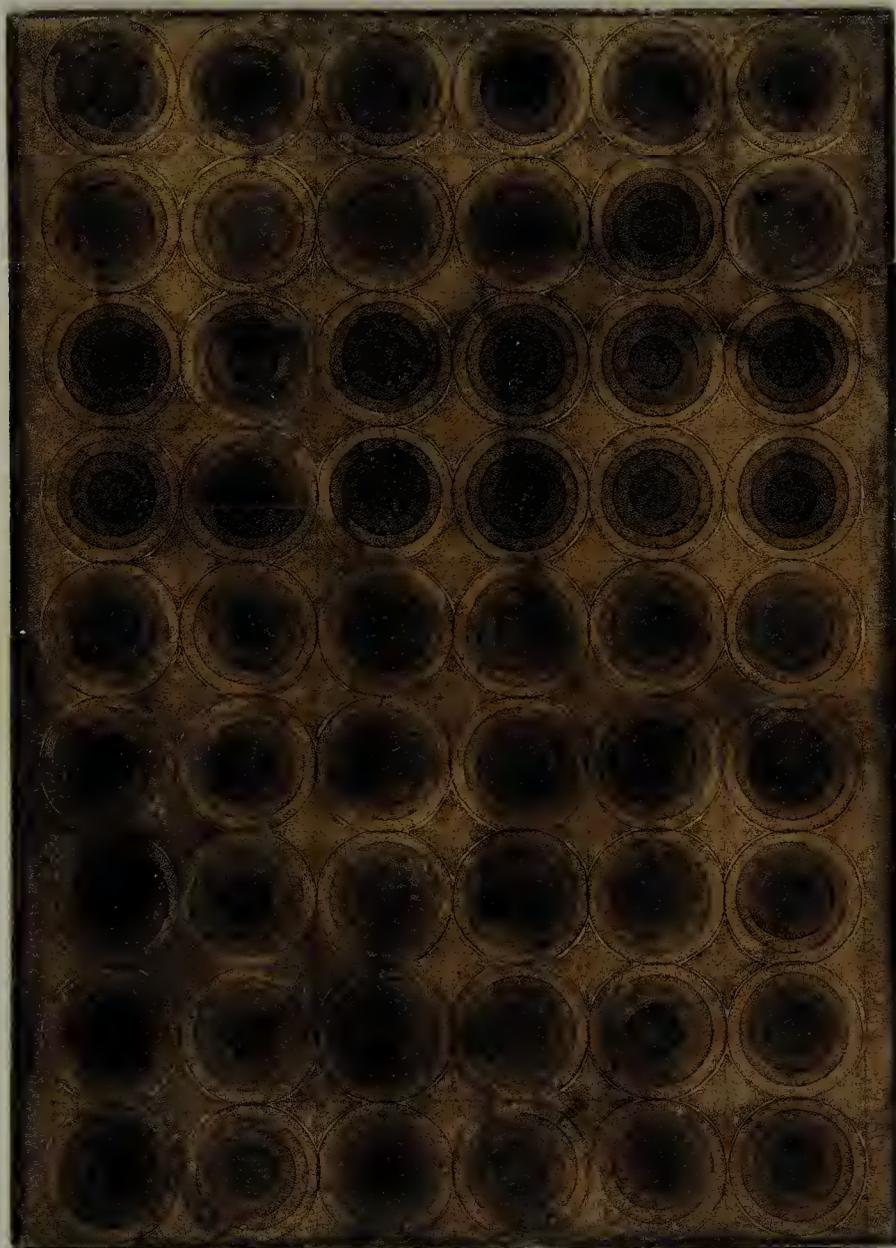
46. *Ibid.*, 72.

47. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's essay in this book, “Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram,” in which he discusses how Hesse conceived of drawing “as a process that served primarily to disembody traditional gestural, linear, and graphic mark making, while simultaneously counteracting that disembodiment with an intensified materialization, if not an actual reification, of linear structures.”

48. Lippard, 79.



[49] no title, 1966





[51] *Ingeminate*, 1965

Anni Albers in conversation with Richard Polsky:

I was often asked here, in Yale, to give a few seminars to the architectural students. And what intrigued me in regard to teaching was that I think something should be reversed in teaching. We always, in architecture, or whatever you do, you start from what there is today and try to explain it. While I was trying to set a task, put the students on absolute zero, in the desert, in Peru. Nothing is there. What is the first thing you have to think of? And build up? And maybe, for instance, something for fishing, or something for the roof. You gradually develop something, inventions, as you go along...

January 11, 1985

Eva Hesse in exhibition statements:

I wanted to get to non art, non connotive,
non anthropomorphic, non geometric, non, nothing,
everything, but of another kind, vision, sort.
from a total other reference point...
that vision or concept will come through total risk,
freedom, discipline.
I will do it

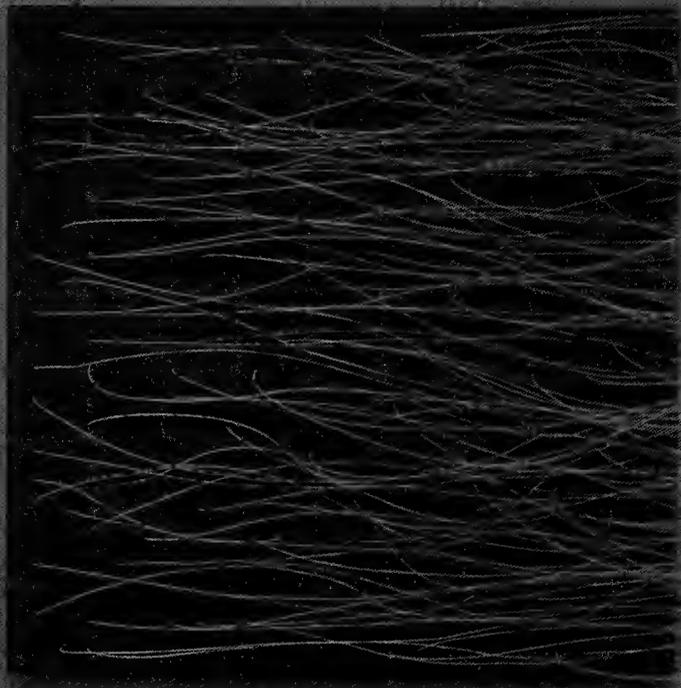
It's not the new, it is what is yet not known,
thought, seen, touched but really what is not
and that is.

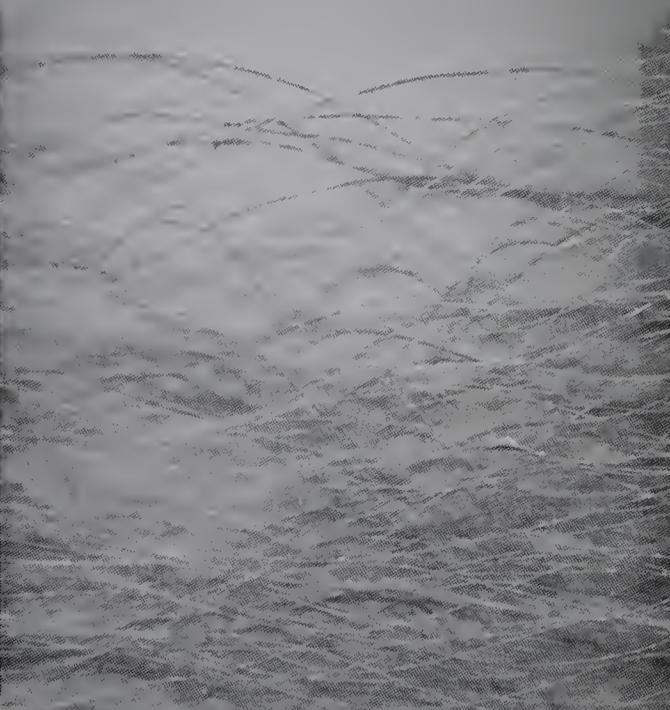
1968

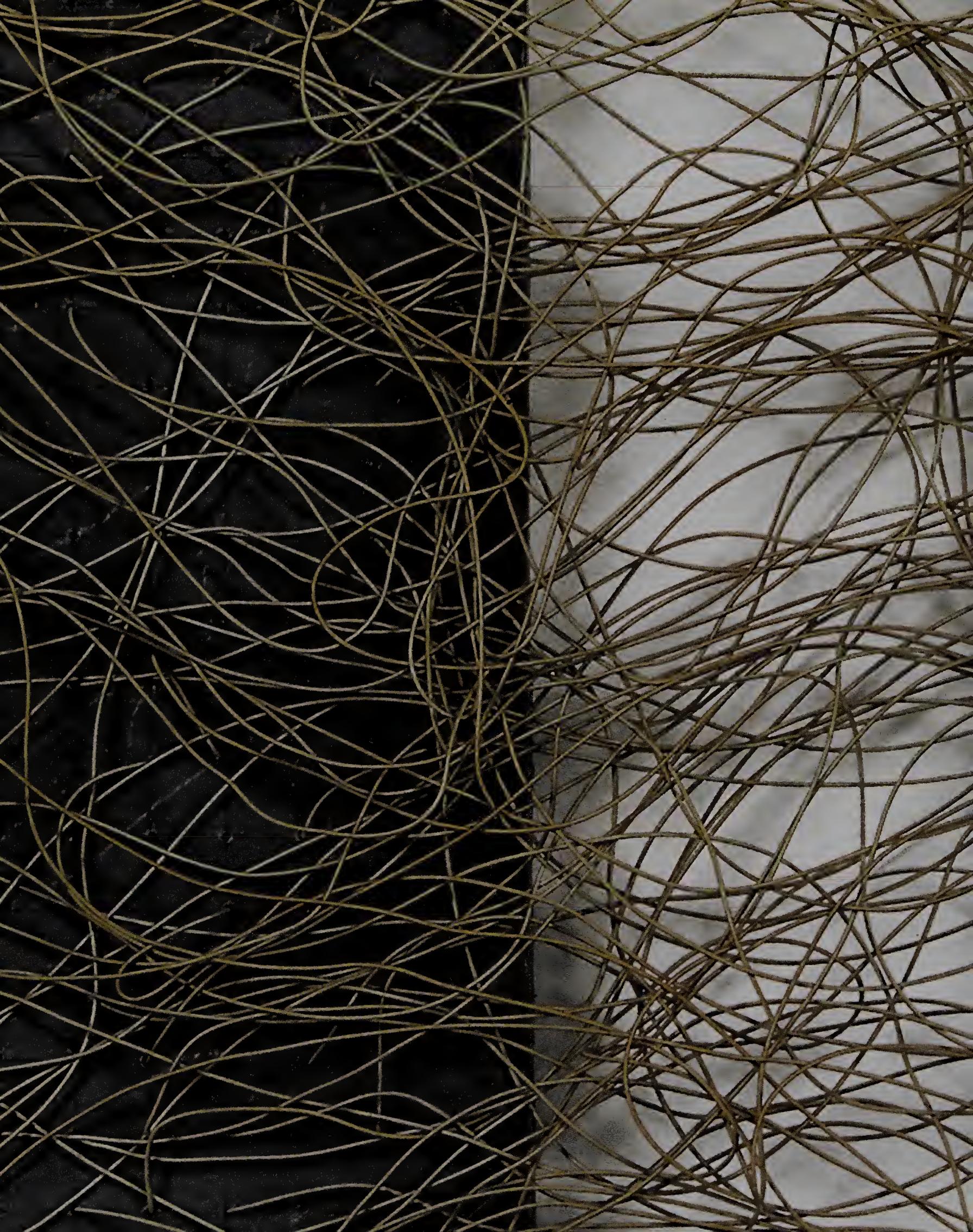
Creating objects whose parts have no fixed order and using flexible and malleable materials, Hesse not only produced *informe* works but also often left the installation of their different parts radically open to random arrangement by others. "Purposely, she conjured a vision involving what she termed 'non forms, non shapes non planned.'"⁴⁹ Speaking of Jackson Pollock, Hesse remarked: "What is more chaotic than those drips, but he made his order out of that, so it was the most ordered painting."⁵⁰ Then later, admitting his importance to her own thinking, she referred to *Right After* as "very ordered. Maybe I'll make it more structured, maybe I'll leave it changeable. When it's completed, its order could be

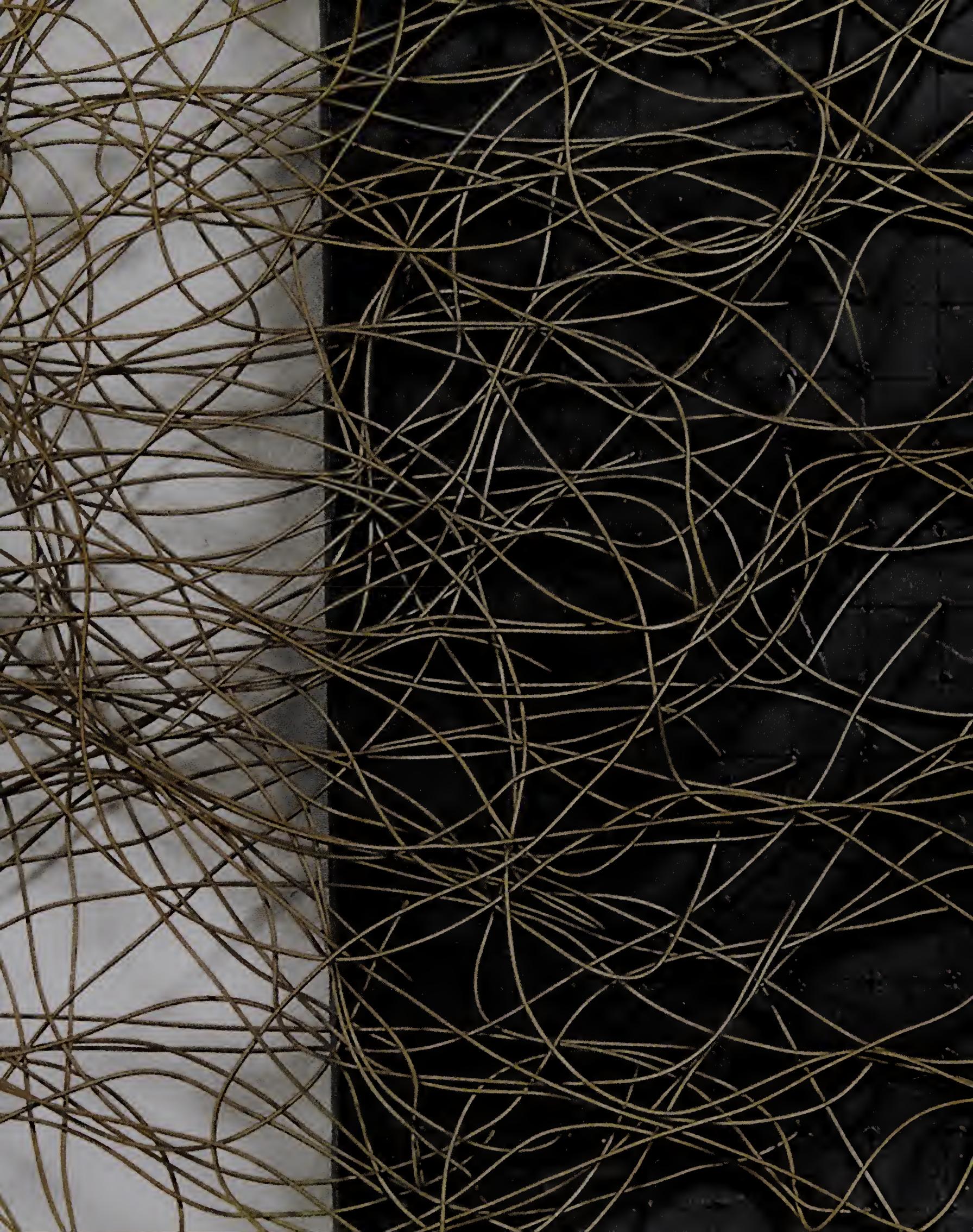
49. Chave, 102.

50. Nesmer.









chaos. Chaos can be structured as non-chaos. That we know from Jackson Pollock.”⁵¹ In this context, Sheila Hicks remarks that weavers are very obsessive people, continuously repeating the same gesture with weft and warp, and always either creating order out of chaos or breaking out of order within the weaving grid.

Avoiding fixed and systematic forms, Hesse favored soft materials and refused not only the use of the rigid, strong, industrial materials employed by her Minimalist peers but also the manufacturing of the work by others. It was only when she became too ill to fabricate her own work that she allowed friends to collaborate with her on some of the late pieces. To her, intimately interacting with the materials, which had “their own rationale,” was crucial, as was the craft sometimes required to make the work (for example, it took her up to seven months to finish *Hang Up*). This labor-intensive procedure parallels the work ethic of Anni Albers, who spoke from the position of the “doer” and “the working manner of the craftsman, dealing with a material that demands circumvention and invention.”⁵²

While many artists at that time “stressed formal and conceptual order, (phallic) rigor and closure, Hesse was privileging (feminine) permeability” and instead of searching for a totalizing system or a way of mastering matter she let the materials be or not be, to the degree of their gradual disintegration and final disappearance.⁵³ Her notes concerning *Right After* stipulate: “hung irregularly tying knots as connections really letting it go as it will allowing it to determine more of the way it completes itself. Make it with at least 2 or 3 of us, connecting from wires from ceiling and nails from walls and other ways let it determine more itself how floppy or stiff it might be. Colors. How much rope/must be rope piece.”⁵⁴ At the same time, by producing works that were made out of separate pieces that together formed a whole, Hesse was incorporating difference while simultaneously stressing mutual dependency and interreliance for the whole to co-emerge. According to William Wilson, in her late work, “Eva caused parts to stand together, but not to do much more than stand together. Her point of view on systems was her perspective on how parts are to be *with* each other. The task was to create a complete whole that was not a false image or example of completeness or of wholeness...For Hesse, gradually to exist was *to stand out and/or with* upon thresholds of the undecidable, uncertain, and uncomplete, with the courage to construct inconclusive experiences of visual moments in transition from meaningless materiality to—almost—*being together with in a whole.*”⁵⁵

51. Lippard, 172.

52. Anni Albers, “Designing as Visual Organization,” in *Selected Writings on Design*.

53. Chave, 107.

54. Lippard, 172.

55. William S. Wilson, “Eva Hesse: On the Threshold of Illusion,” in *Inside the Visible. An Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth-Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine* (Cambridge: The MIT Press; Kortrijk, Belgium: The Kanaal Art Foundation, 1996), 430–1.

Furthermore, for the artist, the primary medium of drawing *speaks* more through its tracing than in its trace, more through its process than as a product. This ambiguity generates an oscillation between drawing's basic concepts of immediacy and mediation, touch and gesture, the tactile and the visual. Being attributed to memory rather than to perception, at the moment of its so-called origin, drawing appears to have exceeded what subsequently passes for drawing itself. Describing the medium, Jacques Derrida writes: "It is as if seeing were forbidden in order to draw, as if one drew only on the condition of not seeing, as if the drawing were a declaration of love destined for or suited to the invisibility of the other—unless it were in fact born from seeing the other withdrawn from sight."⁵⁶ As much as the invisible still inhabits the visible, to the point of being confused with it, the undoing completes the doing in Hesse's ephemeral work: an existence in dissolution or what can very well be read as an unconscious homage to her mother, the unseen and unseeing mother.

Prone to disintegration, her fiberglass and latex pieces remind us of the cyclic transformation of matter and form as well as of the dissolving of the borderlines between representational disciplines. The discourse of 1960s aesthetics, Rosalind Krauss writes, had already been leading to "the issue of the mutual eclipse of the conventions, or institutions, of painting and sculpture as separate modalities of experience...In this way, the minimalist aesthetic came to be deeply engaged with the condition of the literal and the purging of illusionism from the work of art by making everything about the external...More than anything else, minimalism was focused on surface and where the surface stops, which is edge. The most powerful and continuous element of Eva Hesse's work comes from the way it concentrates on this condition of the edge, the way it makes the edge more affective and imperious by materializing it. In this way, the edge that is displayed by Hesse is not focused on the boundaries *within* a painting or a sculpture, but rather on the boundary that lies *between* the institutions of painting and sculpture."⁵⁷

Sharing this focus on boundaries within the Minimalist discourse, Hesse nevertheless carried her art further "in showing that from the position at the edge—the boundary between those two formalized conventions—there emerges an experience of matter that is both bewildering and beautiful."⁵⁸ Following Krauss, Mignon Nixon astutely adds that: "Her art's emphasis on interstitial space also addresses the viewer as a psychic subject, and, through its interrogation of limits, broaches fundamental questions of subjectivity."⁵⁹

56. Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind. The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 49.

57. Rosalind Krauss, "Eva Hesse: Contingent," in *Eva Hesse* October Files, 31.

58. *Ibid.*, 32.

59. Mignon Nixon, "Ringaround Arosie: 2 in 1," in *Eva Hesse* October Files, 210.





As in the process of weaving, Hesse's graded cords and circle drawings address the connection or encounter of things that conventionally can never be together—black and white—in tonal gradations of gray. In her spectrum, “one color dissolves to let the other be.” This union of opposites generates a soft gradation that can be seen as arguing for a model of subjectivity, one not rooted in binary thought opposing self and other, love and hate, aggression and identification, rejection and incorporation. According to Ettinger, as mentioned above, Hesse's work sheds light on the connective capacities of the matrixial sphere of human trans-subjectivity.

For this is what I am claiming in this essay, not that Anni Albers was the only influence on Eva Hesse—there were indeed many others, including Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Ruth Vollmer,⁶⁰ Mel Bochner, Marcel Duchamp, Jackson Pollock, Josef Beuys, Fluxus, Yvonne Rainer, Richard Serra, Hans Haacke, Nancy Graves, Claes Oldenburg and Lucio Fontana—but that both Anni and Eva, like Gego, Lygia Clark, Leonore Tawney, Agnes Martin, Richard Tuttle, Guiseppe Penone, and Anna Maria Maiolino at the time, took a different direction in the arts, promoting a tactile sensibility and introducing a symbolic signifier into culture that would allow for the coexistence of two bodies, of two subjectivities whose encounter is not an either/or. (In her language, Hesse would often link words as if their pairing was mutually necessary, even inevitable: “horse and carriage” or “oil and water”).⁶¹ Countering the Modernist need to recreate the effect of bodily alienation in modern society, Anni and Eva insistently summoned line as link within the sensual realm of touch and gaze contributing to trans-subjectivity. Though their art practices show some formal and material resemblances in regard to textiles (such as in Eva's test piece for *Contingent* (1969) [111. 81] and Anni's pictorial weavings, or in an untitled drawing after the *Accretion* model (1968) where long cylindrical elements give the impression of bolts of fabric [102]), it is not the aesthetic equivalences of their work that are of concern but rather a shared intention—within the common triangle of process, content, and materiality—to create art as connection, relation, empathy.

If in the case of Anni, textile materials came to her because as a woman she could only get access to the weaving, bookbinding, and pottery workshops at the Bauhaus in 1923, Eva was already in an advanced position of being able to become an artist, one who would then have the irreverence and daring to use these textile materials that were still ignored in the arts—a repressed strand of the Modernist trajectory. Compared to

60. Lippard, 204: “As an artist and as a sensitive and loving older woman bearing her mother's name, also German by birth, also with some tragedy in her life, Ruth Vollmer was important to Hesse in a unique way.”

61. Wagner, 79.

the privileged status given to painting, sculpture, and architecture, weaving, like drawing, has been virtually ignored. Following the Bauhaus, both the distinction between and the interrelationship of design and art were greatly elaborated in the work of Anni Albers, who overcame “two fallacious premises: that designing and making art are conflicting occupations; and that work in the fiber medium is categorically craft and not art.”⁶² While women were still “derogatorily associated with crafts, and have been conditioned towards such chores as tying, sewing, knotting, wrapping, binding, knitting, and so on,” Hesse’s art transcends the cliché while at the same time incorporating it;⁶³ in other words, she inverted the means and materials of women’s work into a mode of self-empowerment but also into a new model of subjectivity that would become increasingly articulated and defined during the last quarter of the twentieth century in structuralist and feminist art practice and critical theory.

As Bochner has stated: “Since the demise of strict formalism, a critical language has begun to evolve that can take into account some of things that women like Eva and Agnes Martin accomplished.”⁶⁴ The success of Hesse’s work indicates its innovating relevance to the art and culture of the twenty-first century in so many ways (including, according to Bochner, to string theory) as well as its radicality in anticipating the contemporary collapse of disciplinary boundaries and the hybridization of media. This can be measured alone by the fact that so many critical essays have been written addressing the artist variously as a painter (Rosalind Krauss), a sculptor (Lucy Lippard, Anna Chave, Anne Wagner), and a draftsman. While thirty-five years after Hesse’s death we are still trying to pin her down in a category or convention, she has resisted every major trend and, with the line as a connector and a binder, crossed borderlines linking one “impossible space” to another.⁶⁵ It took women artists such as Anni Albers and Eva Hesse, both of whom courageously defied and refused artistic, academic, and avant-garde orthodoxies, to imperceptibly change our perception and that of generations to come.

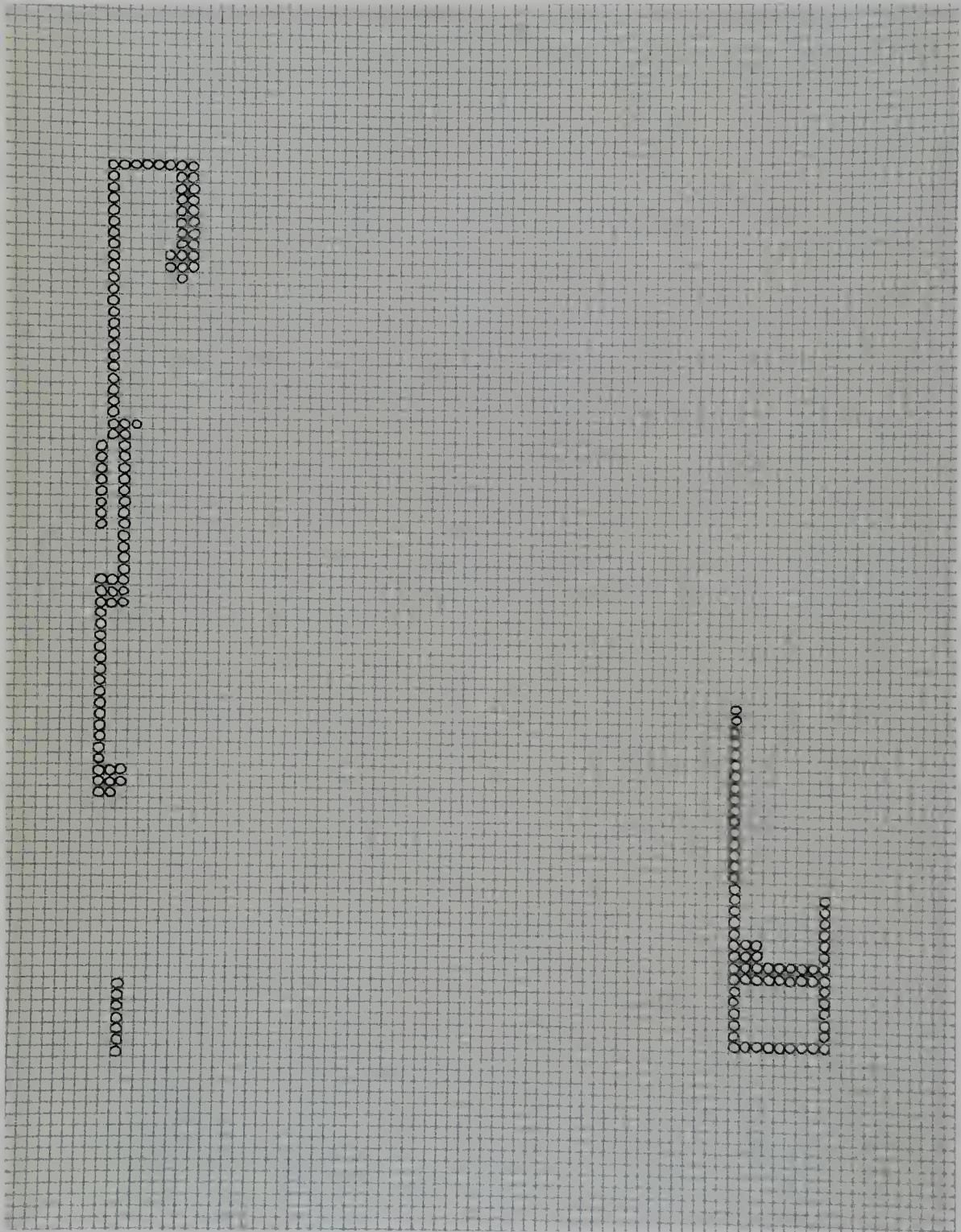
*To my daughter Eva De Jaegere
Kortrijk, August 2005*

62. Jacobs, 65.

63. Lippard, 209.

64. Bochner, 37.

65. Lippard, 190.



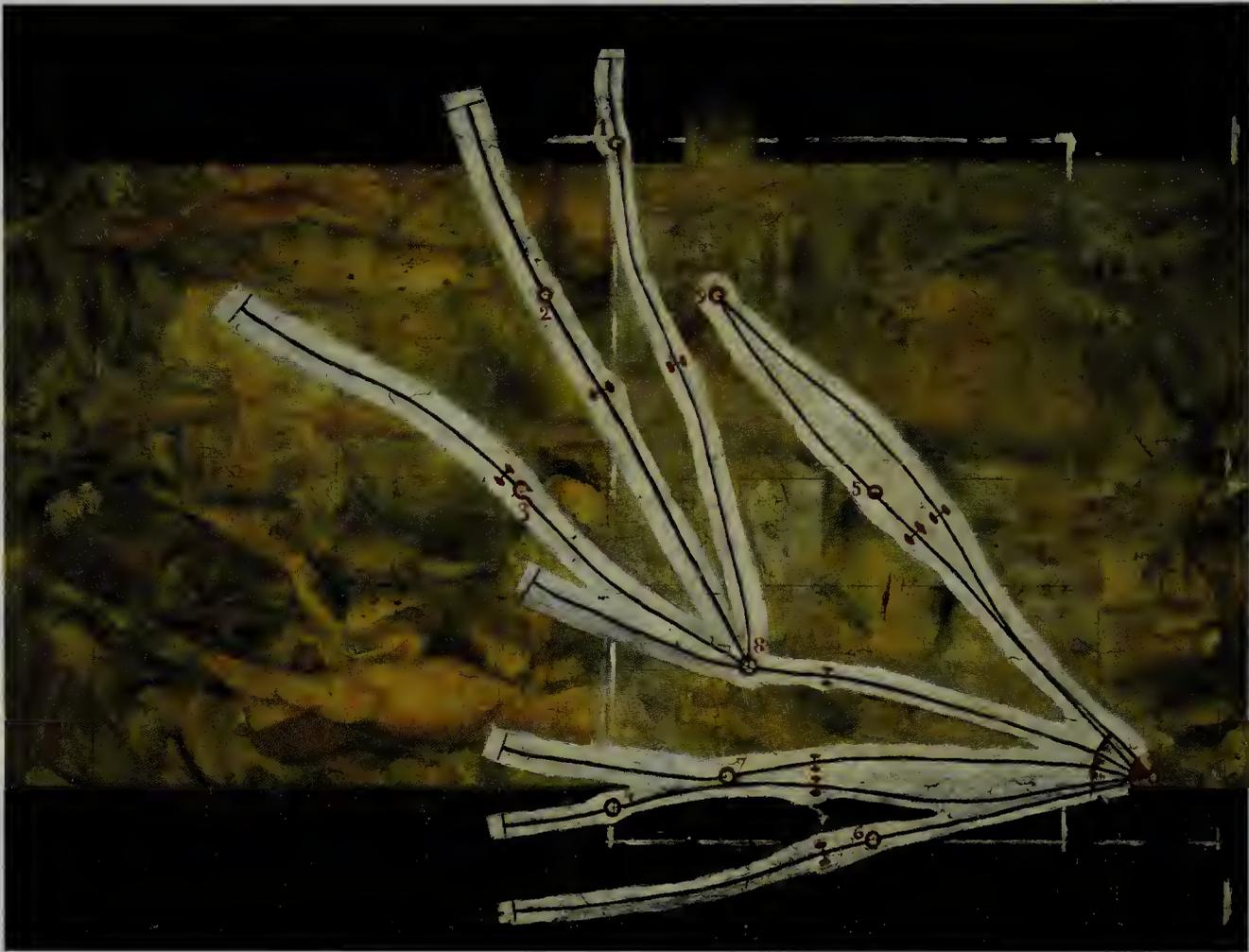
Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram

BENJAMIN H.D. BUCHLOH

Ever since Cubism (if not before), one of the principal dialectical oppositions in the medium of drawing has been between the authentic corporeal trace and the externally established matrix. This opposition between drawing as desire for another corporeality and drawing as self-critical subjection to pre-existing formal or linguistic conventions, between drawing as voluntaristic self-deception (about the availability of unfettered subjective expression, for example) and drawing as voluntary self-defeat (driven by the insurmountability of the pervasive control of even the most microscopic gesture) has determined the artistic stances towards the *grapheme* (individually and generationally mediated, of course).

Marcel Duchamp's painting *Network of Stoppages* (1914) signals the first climax of that opposition, and, with it, the emergence of a new typology of drawing that we will call, for now, the order of the diagrammatic¹ [111. 36]. We would argue that the diagrammatic defines yet another fundamental paradigm and morphology within the gamut of abstraction, yet one that has been largely omitted from its history. In fact, most accounts of abstract art have asserted the historical priority and superiority of

1. As a first elementary definition of the diagrammatic we would suggest considering it to be the one variety of abstraction that recognizes externally existing and pre-given systems of spatio-temporal quantification or schemata of the statistical collection of data as necessarily and primarily determining a chosen pictorial order. The diagram would work in analogue to other orders or schemata that abstraction had recruited for its emerging morphologies in 1912, i.e. geometric or stereometric structures, biomorphic or mechanomorphic matrices, or the matrix of language itself. As with all systems deployed by abstraction, the diagrammatic most likely will operate in tandem with other resources, but it will be sufficiently differentiated from the other types to be recognizable as a distinct position within the gamut of abstract epistemes. The most comprehensive discussion of Duchamp's *Network of Stoppages* is still to be found in David Joselit's *Infinite Regress*, and my brief discussion of the painting is basically indebted to his, even though Joselit did not yet actually introduce the concept of a diagrammatic abstraction there. By contrast, Joselit's brilliant essay "Dada's Diagrams"—which I heard at the Dada seminar at the National Gallery in Washington in 2003 but did not have access to in manuscript form while writing the present work—probably served as the triggering inspiration for my conception of the "diagrammatic" in Hesse's drawings and in those of her predecessors. (The published version is now available in Leah Dickerman, ed. *The Dada Seminars*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2005, 221–40.) His theorization of the diagram is different from mine, as our conclusions differ, though perhaps they complement each other. Yet Joselit's historical account of the emergence of the diagram in the transition from Cubism to Dada, and his discussion of the work of Picabia in particular, are exemplary, and my own account of the mechanomorphs is largely derived from his. Briony Fer, in her excellent recent study of abstraction *The Infinite Line*, actually features a chapter entitled "The Diagram," but the specificity of its focus on Dan Flavin prevents it from generalizing and theorizing a radically different typology of abstraction, as I try to develop in the following.



paradigms of abstraction that are totally opposed to the order of the diagrammatic, celebrating those that supposedly traced the waves of universal cosmic energy and spherical musicality (e.g. Delaunay, Kupka, Kandinsky), or mimetically recorded the body's biomorphic foundation and libidinal flows (from Arp to automatism), or claimed to signal, with their shift towards the non-representational, the emergence of a revolutionary social egalitarianism, anchored in the universal laws of geometry (e.g. Mondrian with his grids and Malevich with his geometricity).

The avant-garde of abstraction wanted to celebrate its "victory over the sun" (to borrow the title of the Suprematist opera)—its defeat of traditional theories of representation, which had implicitly assumed meaning's dependence on an originary source

[ill. 36] Marcel Duchamp, *Network of Stoppages*, 1914

Oil and pencil on canvas

58 5/8 x 65 5/8 in. (149.9 x 166.7 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund and Gift of Mrs. William Sisler

or epiphany, which is to say, on *light*—and its vision of a hierarchical order of transcendental power that considered representation itself to be merely a secondary reflection or shadow of that originary ideal. By contrast, Duchamp's *Network of Stoppages* proclaimed from the start that the diagrammatic would not register cosmic or somatic plenitude or spiritual expansion, nor would it promise acts of psychic liberation or trace desire. Above all, the diagram would not propose a universal language transcending all boundaries of nation, state, class, and gender. Quite the opposite, it would primarily serve the purposes of spatio-temporal quantification, surveillance, and registration. Thus, the diagram added a dissenting voice to the heroic chorus of abstraction, one announcing—eventually aesthetically—the disenchantment of the world and the total subjection of the body and its representations to legal and administrative control.

By painting *Network*, his first fully diagrammatic painting, on an older canvas depicting two elongated Cézannesque nudes, Duchamp made that tendency of abstraction as disenchantment all the more explicit. Rotating the standing nudes from a vertical to a horizontal position, he not only abolished the reading order of traditional representation, he replaced the older painting's episteme of *mimetic* corporeal and anthropomorphic depiction with an *extract* of corporeality, a condensed schema of directional flows and the movement of spatial and cognitive mapping and temporal quantification. Worse yet (from the vantage of traditional narratives of abstraction), since the mechanomorphic diagram covering the nudes seems to deny all sense of drawing as being a performative liberation from the bodily and psychic constraints imposed on the subject in the very process of subject formation, it would not only oppose all expressionist or automatist drawing practices, it would also replace them with the gesture and grapheme of an anti-aesthetic—with the *paroxysm* of drawing, a graphic readymade.

Traditional drawing had not only displayed artisanal and artistic skills—virtuosity and mastery—it had also always enunciated a positive disposition towards the world: planning, projecting, recording, and sublimating having served as drawing's primary purposes and *modi operandi*. But what would be the iconography and the gesture of a drawing that corresponded to the anti-aesthetic radicality of the readymade, given its negation of what had been the medium's most hallowed rituals and the competences involved in the artist's self-constitution?

Duchamp's decision to suspend drawing between the technical diagram, the scientific schema, and the graph of libidinal flows inspired a suite of followers, from Francis Picabia to Andy Warhol. All insisted that drawing from now on could only define itself as a self-effacing mimesis of mechanical, technical, and commercial design. Not only did it seem as though subjectivity had been evacuated from drawing altogether, denying abstraction's promise to articulate a newly emerging subjecthood with the means of non-representational art, these suicidal and tautological diagrams of techno-scientific rationality also appeared to negate even the *desirability* of a self captured in drawing (be it bourgeois and traumatized or redeemed by revolution).

We know from Molly Nesbit's essay on the education of Marcel Duchamp as a "draftsman"² that the teaching of elementary drawing skills at the end of the nineteenth century had tilted dramatically in the direction of instilling a disciplinary and instrumentalizing kind of technical competence (whereas students—to say nothing of artists as "draftsmen"—would have concentrated on the study of nature and, more specifically, the anatomical study and rendering of the human body). The Duchampian anti-drawing would then be seen as the result of the shift from a concept of drawing as the representation of the natural world to a concept of drawing as the definition of technical and functional structures. This is basically an accurate description, and it provides us with a starting point from which to query the fundamental changes that drawing underwent at the turn of the century. What is missing from Nesbit's essay, however, is precisely the question of how the various registers that had been established earlier by a variety of disciplinary formations (i.e. those of the cartographer, the engineer, the architect, and those sciences that needed to visualize themselves in graphs, charts, and statistical records) were eventually converted by Duchamp and his followers into one of the new, suddenly emerging epistemes of abstract drawing in the twentieth century.

To answer that question it might be helpful to briefly consider another episteme converted by Duchamp and others into diagrammatic abstraction, one outside of the conventions of technical and functional drawing: the chronophotography of Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne Jules Marey. One of the most important epistemic-technological constellations in visual culture by the mid 1880s, integrating kinesthesia, temporality, movement, and a reflection on recording devices themselves, chronophotography

2. Molly Nesbit, "Marcel Duchamp: The Language of Industry," in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Thierry de Duve (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991).

would soon enough form an infamous tool of the scientific organization of labor in Taylorism. As is well known, chronophotography would become an equally decisive force in the transformation of drawing in 1913 (namely in its adaptation by Futurism and by Duchamp) and again fifty years later, in 1963, when it was adapted by Minimalist and Conceptualist artists, including Eva Hesse's closest friend, Sol Lewitt, and Dan Graham, who—while not as close to Hesse—was central to the articulation of the ideas of that group of artists and friends at the moment of post-Minimalism.

If asked for an explanation of why both Duchamp and Sol LeWitt recognized the “Muybridge Moments”—as Graham referred to them³—as utterly central to their artistic pursuits when chronophotography appeared to play only an indirect, even minor, role in the work of either artist, we would argue first of all that the model of the medium supplied an uncannily precise prognosis of what would become of the visual representation of the body: The traditional exertion of the body in its desire for and pleasure in movement in painting, the somatic dimension of the subject's physical sense of autonomy, all temporal and spatial activities in drawing until Cubism, would be subjected in the drawing of the diagram to measurement and control. If these artists were searching for a representational paradigm in which the actual conditions of somatic experience and subjecthood under advanced forms of capitalist production and control could be adequately recorded, Muybridge and Marey had provided it.

Not surprisingly, Duchamp was the first to recognize the magnitude of that paradigm and its consequences (the Futurists, as always, were too infatuated with industrial acceleration itself to be capable of understanding the ramifications of that acceleration for the collective conditions of psychosomatic experience or the bodily self in everyday life). But Duchamp knew, as did LeWitt fifty years later, that the discovery of chronophotography in itself was not of particular artistic interest—and the relative banality of its literal adaptation in Futurism obviously proved that point. Where the contact between chronophotography and drawing/painting would spark epistemic insights of heretofore unknown consequences, however, would be in Duchamp's proto-diagrammatic works, such as *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912). Here the newly established parameters of somatic surveillance were mapped onto the most traditional and supposedly most sensuous of artistic genres, which had always promised, and at times even granted, the now increasingly inaccessible bodily plenitude

3. Dan Graham, “Muybridge Moments,” first published in Graham, *End Moments* (Self-published, New York, 1966).

of the (female) nude, a plenitude that had claimed unblocked access to the bodily self as much as it held out the promise of access to the other.

The painting's scheme posed questions that only the diagram could answer: If the conditions of sensory, sensual, libidinal corporeality had become the subject of pure measurement and controlling instrumentalization, what would happen to those artistic conventions and competences that had traditionally facilitated the sublimating desire of depicting the body? Or, to ask the question that all artists re-defining drawing in the postwar period—from Jasper Johns to Piero Manzoni, from Joseph Beuys to Cy Twombly and Eva Hesse—would come to ask: What type of bodily projection or libidinal extension would still be available for the articulation of sublimating desire in drawing if the very sphere and ground of the subject's bodily experience and perception had been decisively reconditioned within those horizons of surveillance, production, and control?

This is then one of the fundamental dialectics that drawing has been attempting to confront and trace ever since: to operate, on the one hand, within a system of bodily innervations that internalize the matrices of advanced forms of reification and, on the other, to pursue an articulation of subjectivity (of the artist as much as of the viewer) that insists on recording the residual and resistant forms of bodily authenticity and psychic autonomy—of an untrammelled gesture against the totality of the pre-existing matricial orders.

Eva Hesse was of course aware of these contradictions, those of Modernism and twentieth-century art, throughout her career: One need only remind oneself of the educational situation in which she encountered these historical oppositions. Studying at Yale, she was “formed” by Joseph Albers in much the same way the Bauhaus master had earlier “formed” Robert Rauschenberg at Black Mountain College and was to have a lasting impact on Richard Serra at Yale slightly later, imparting the systematicity that he still attempted to enforce as a universal foundation for artistic thought in the twentieth century. Albers, in other words, still pursued the project of an enlightenment rationality in artistic production that the radical avant-gardes of abstraction had embraced all through the 1920s and 1930s, increasingly assimilating their artistic languages to either the ruling scientific orders or to the instrumentality of functional and utilitarian production.

Tragically embodying both halves of enlightenment culture in the twentieth century—the utopian Bauhaus aspirations for a new culture of the collective and the seemingly inevitable catastrophic turn of late capitalism towards fascism—Hesse was simultaneously constituted by this legacy and its victim. The artist's subsequent dialogue with her American predecessors in the New York School, beginning with Willem de Kooning (whom she adulated somewhat naively) and then moving on (inevitably if somewhat belatedly⁴) to Jackson Pollock, provided Hesse with the necessary transition from Bauhaus optimism to the postwar culture of trauma.

This Abstract-Expressionist tradition, integral to the formation of Hesse's early work,⁵ still presumed that writing and drawing could convey an unmediated articulation of the self, though whether that self was conceived of in psychoanalytical terms (delivering the automatist *récit* of conflict and trauma or the therapeutic function of graphic enactment) or as a psycho-physiological apparatus (with neuromotoric and phenomenological concepts suggesting that the body transcribes the self in the act of making a drawing) shall remain open for the time being.

What is most remarkable about the work Hesse made after her first Abstract Expressionist watercolors—astonishing drawings done in New York in 1961 without any immediately apparent peer or influence—is the subsequent courage she showed in engaging in a vabanque game of drawing from 1962 to 1965, working through and trying out the gamut of drawing positions that had been developed in the twentieth century. Yet Hesse would play and probe these conventions not only to discover their innate functions and means of signification, but also to question their present or future uses—if not the very possibility and credibility of drawing altogether.

Hesse seems to have partly attained the license to be eccentric and eclectic from her stay in Germany and travels in Europe during 1964 and 1965, where she not only discovered Duchamp, Léger, and Malevich, she encountered the work of numerous artists who were quite eccentric and rather remote from both the historical avant-gardes and the mainstream of postwar aesthetics, both European and New York School (e.g. Pierre Alechinsky, Alan Davie, Oyvind Fahlstrom, Asger Jorn, Bernard Luginbuehl). To mention but one example for now, Hesse was quite intrigued by the work of Jean Tinguely, the only artist among the *Nouveaux Réalistes* to produce any drawings at all. Conceived

4. At the latest, upon the occasion of his retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1967.

5. The artist actually referred, later in life, to her drawings from 1961 and 1962 as "the most authentic embodiment of my creative will": Sabine Folie, "Divergent Vectors," in *Eva Hesse: Transformations. The Sojourn in Germany 1964-1965*, ed. Sabine Folie (Wien: Kunsthalle Wien, 2004), 41.

as mock engineering drawings, detailing the components of his sculptural machines, they must have signaled to Hesse the potential viability of the machinic diagram.

The development of Hesse's drawings between 1962 and 1964 is remarkable first of all for its rapidly alternating adaptation of a variety of historical paradigms. Neither body nor psyche—neither expressionism nor automatism—could claim these accumulations of clumsy graphite streaks as their primary articulation, making them all the more Hesse's own. Deploying automatist graphism in full consciousness of the historical precariousness of any pretensions the method might have to the primordial, she juxtaposed it crudely with collage elements—the one device that automatist drawing had not taken lightly (even though Hesse's collage elements, in this instance, are handmade and painted rather than “found”). Combining drawing and collage in seemingly awkward and clumsy gestures in 1962, Hesse was working through the logic of the profound contradiction between drawing and collage that had been established when Cubism discovered that a found piece of industrially produced paper, inscribed with readymade typographical marks, could easily serve all the functions that drawing had previously excelled at: shading, chiaroscuro, modeling, crosshatching, linear definition, volume. The result, in Hesse's work of the time, is an intense sense of the loss and failure of these traditional functions, making her drawings singularly successful maps of the very trajectory that every artist from de Kooning to Twombly, from Pollock to Jasper Johns—if serious about questions of drawing—had had to traverse in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Reminiscent of the notorious confrontation between drawing and collage in Hans Arp's decision in 1916 to tear one of his drawings to shreds in order to produce a collage that would overcome drawing's innately manual

and organic nature [ill. 38] or in Miro's sudden juxtapositions of sinuous automatist drawing and forced collage elements, the extreme ambiguity, played out in the highly mechanized drawing and the collage element defined as “drawing,” acknowledges that the subject's position and performance in drawing are always already prefigured, dependent on external constellations. The spatio-temporality of the freewheeling subject at work in drawing—measuring and defining his or her proper



[ill. 37] no title, 1955

Paper collage on cardboard

12 3/8 x 11 in. (31.4 x 27.9 cm)

The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London



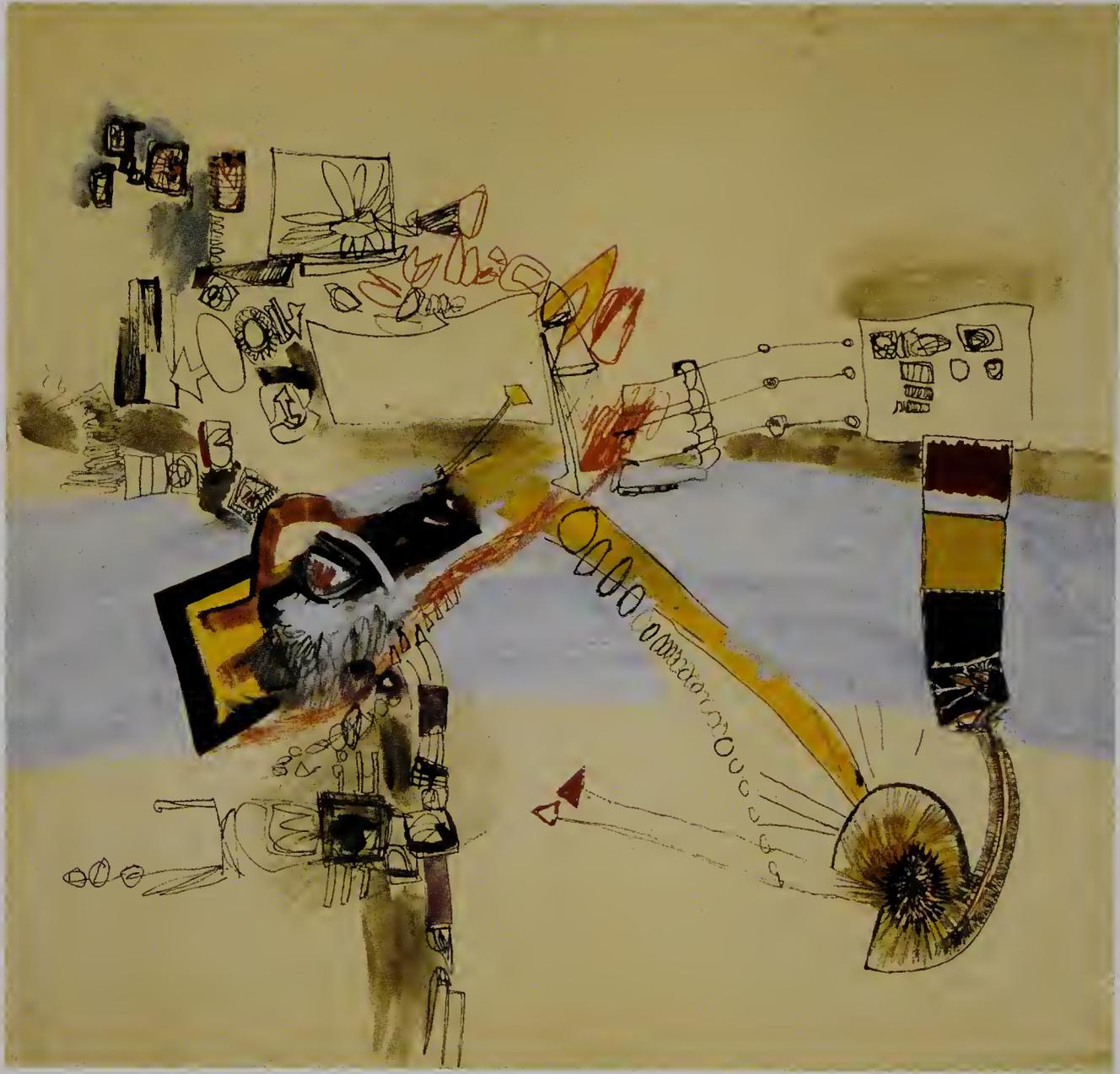
[ill. 38] Hans Arp, *Rectangles Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*, 1916
Collage, 9 7/8 x 4 15/16 in. (25 x 12.5 cm)
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Donation Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach

bodily autonomy and competence on paper—had been suddenly displaced by collage, the diagram's closest ally.

An analogous dichotomy takes place on the level of the iconography of these early drawings. It appears that the dilemma of the New York School—perpetual oscillation between Mondrian's geometricity and cognitive mapping and Miro's biomorphism and libidinal tracing (the Scylla and Charybdis that temporarily paralyzed Ad Reinhardt and froze Motherwell for a lifetime)—also brought Hesse's drawings to a stop from 1962 at least until 1964. In 1962 and 1963, she confronted part objects of the fragmented body (eyes, ears, polymorphous parts) with seemingly intense outbursts of graphic compulsion, demarcating a version of the dichotomy that situated her clearly in a lineage from Arshile Gorky to Cy Twombly. Yet unlike Twombly, who by this time had resolved the contradictions

between graphic flow and arrested somatic fragment/part object through the extraordinary fusion of opposites in his staccato graffiti, Hesse remained unable to reconcile these contradictions. In the phase that came next, the artist worked to exorcise the legacies of Albers' stereometrical models, debunking perspectival order and constructing models of spatial conundra by dividing the monochrome surface into loosely organized clusters of cubes that suggest a simultaneous reading of multiple spatial and perspectival protrusions and recessions. To complete the paradox, she inserted ornamental figures and cartoonish details inside the cubic structures, as though these travesties of the stereometric rigor of the Bauhaus master and his rationalist demands would complete the exorcism.

The bewilderment that seems to have driven Hesse's probing trials of the available drawing conventions was expressed with even greater intensity in matters of composition. Recognizing that the grid had always been suspended between the tabula, the map, and the diagram, twisted and turned into a number of hybrids by artists ranging from Léger to Torres Garcia, from Mondrian to Miro, Hesse, in her pre-1965 drawing work, alternated between these variations on the compositional structure of the tabular grid, sometimes combining them with the emerging order of the





[54] no title, 1964

diagram (at the very moment when Leo Steinberg's concept of the "flatbed picture" was gaining ground). What these drawings of the early 1960s tell us about most is Hesse's acknowledgment of a certain kind of undecidability: Should a drawing at this moment map abstract geometric elements or position objects of representation within a tabular system in the way that specimens are ordered in adjacent drawers? Trace the subject's desire, its libidinal forces, within gestural graphisms or the design of biomorphic forms? All seemed equally valid and possible directions for her to take. Hesse's drawing work—at least up to the dramatic breakthrough of her first major reliefs completed in Germany before returning to the United States in 1965—is thus compelling first of all for its almost juvenile eclecticism, the manner in which she seems to have been trying out all available options, irreverently mixing and matching. Yet that irreverence would ultimately become a radical contestation, querying *all* types of drawing—not just those of the available historical moment—with equal skepticism, interrogating their possible uses in the present and their validity for the future.

This opposition between a seemingly ludic naiveté and a discerning criticality is equally operative in Hesse's investigation of the registers of color. It is easy to see that Hesse was as impressed by her discovery of Gorky's use of color, in a 1964 exhibition in Essen, as she had been with his design and graphisms. After all, Gorky had tirelessly worked through a similar process of trial and error, almost always coming up empty-handed with regard to the possible continuity of chromatic functions, be they denotative or expressive. Yet at the same time, he had come out with a plethora of devices that disintegrated traditional drawing in ways that would deeply influence all draftsmen leading up to Hesse, especially Johns, Twombly, and Oldenburg, most notably through the sudden separation of color from line, making both appear as isolated, if not desolate, elements of a former unity. Another technique was the emphatic foregrounding of drawing as *process*, where the gestural and material variety of the deposits and applications of crayon, charcoal, lead, and/or pigment would become a factor that manifestly determined form.

Hesse's drawings of the pre-1964 moment might at first appear as though they had been made by one of the worst colorists of her generation (though such fusions of crudeness and candor are also the mark of the early work of many great artists of modernity, from Cézanne to Pollock). But this would be an erroneous impression:

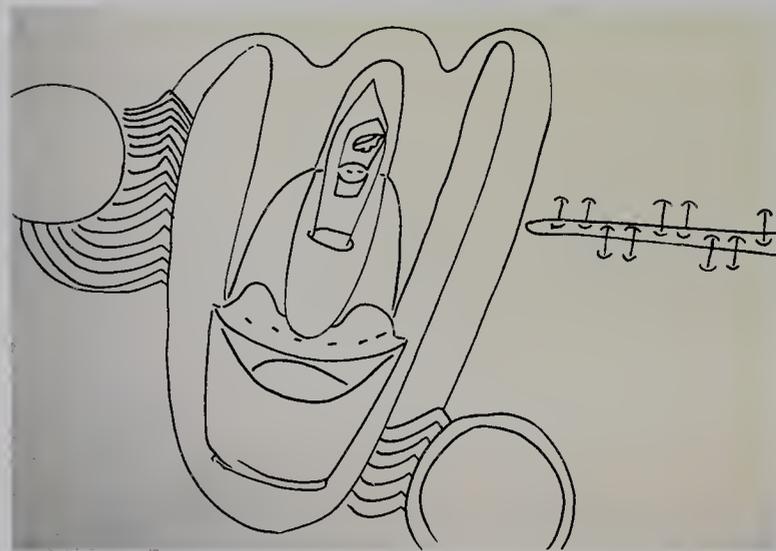
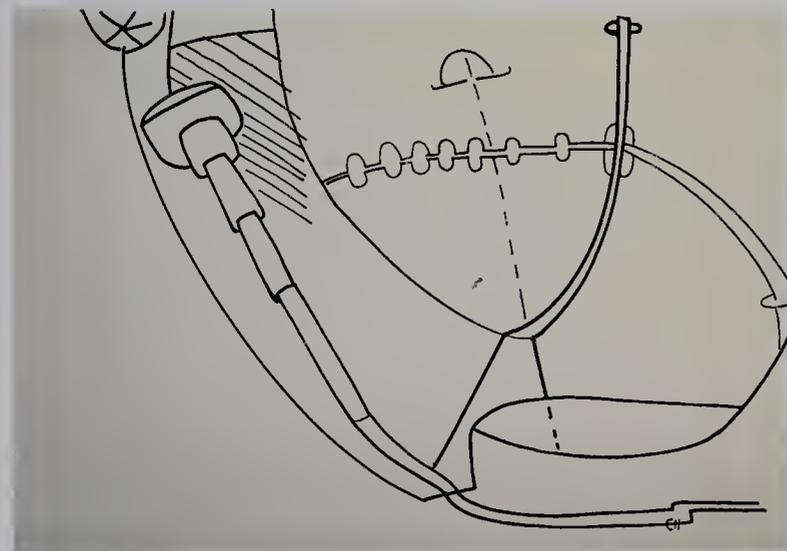
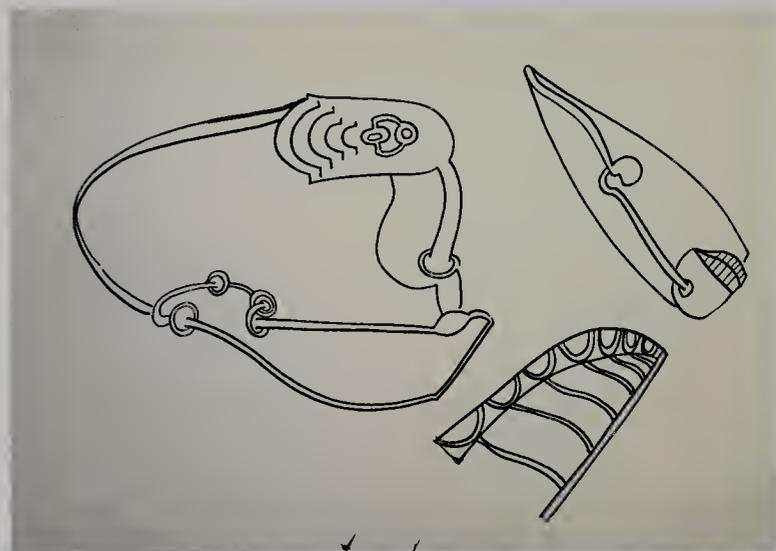
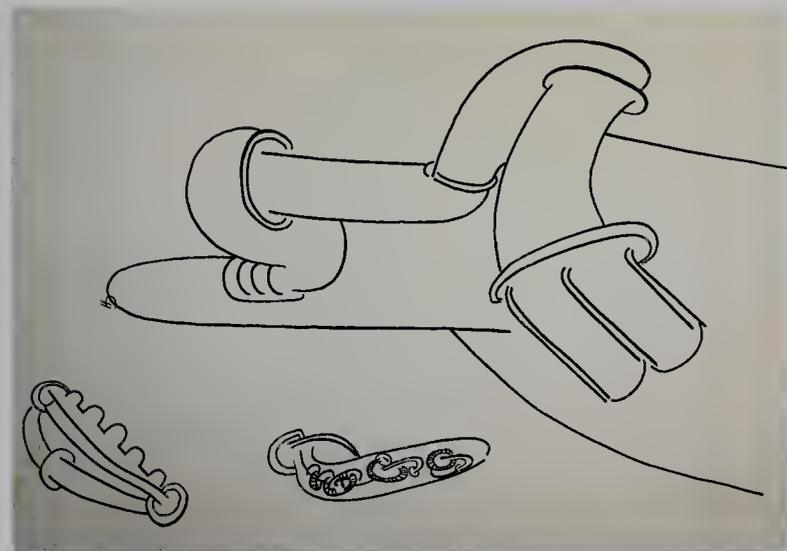
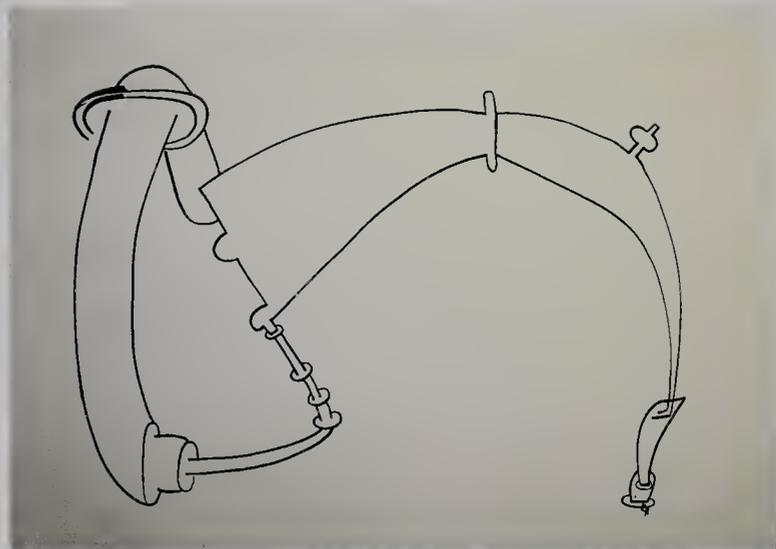
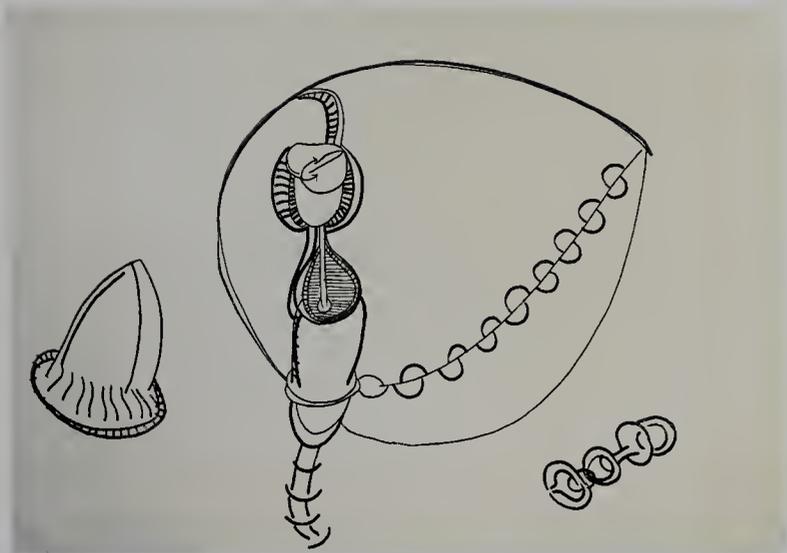
Hesse's use of color at this time was clearly the direct result of her adopting a confrontational approach towards it, allowing her to recognize early on that neither the traditional representational functions of local color nor the expressive functions of symbolic chromatic orders (e.g. Rothko) would have any future viability, not in her work and not in postwar visual culture at large.

Not surprisingly, a diary entry of July 1, 1964 not only articulates her deep discomfort with a traditional painter's presumably natural bond to color (or color's seemingly obvious bond to nature), it gives a prognosis of her predestined orientation to the achromatic: I cannot stand the color I use and yet it mostly develops in this same way. This should change since I decided I like it not. It is amazing how this happens again and again...I end up with red, yellow, blue, green and I hate it. It is dumb, uninteresting, and I know better. I guess I am so involved in creating my own forms that I can't at times be concerned that much. But ironically, they scream in color, and then I am defeated by my own lack of concern.⁶

As with her graphic system, by 1964 all of her color schemes were severed from the traditional functions of denotation. From this point on, color would be displayed like a signal, in the arbitrary manner that is the nature of all "conventional" signs. And if her drawings prior to 1964 had not been followed by some of the most important drawings of the second half of the twentieth century, they might retain for us the charms of the work of a gifted eclectic. Fortunately, though, they betray Hesse's growing understanding—articulated subtly at times, brutally at others—that gesture and grapheme, color and composition, were all wanting, if not outright dysfunctional. None of her discoveries would be worth pursuing much longer, she realized, unless altogether different devices and strategies could be brought to begin a real project of drawing.

We would argue that it is only with the so-called "mechanical drawings," produced in Germany and casually exhibited in 1965 as a cluster of unframed sketches on the wall in the Kettwig greenhouse of her host and patron, Arnhart Scheidt, that Hesse moved closer to this project by reducing the multitude of incompatible graphic, compositional, and chromatic elements of her previous drawings and integrating them for the first time within a fully resolved idiom [111. 3944] . Hesse described these drawings proudly

6. Eva Hesse, Diaries (July 1, 1964), quoted in Sabine Folie, "Just Substitute Painting: That's All," in *Eva Hesse: Transformations*, 23.



all images on this page:
no title, 1965, Ink on paper, 8 1/4 x 11 5/8 in. (21 x 29.5 cm)

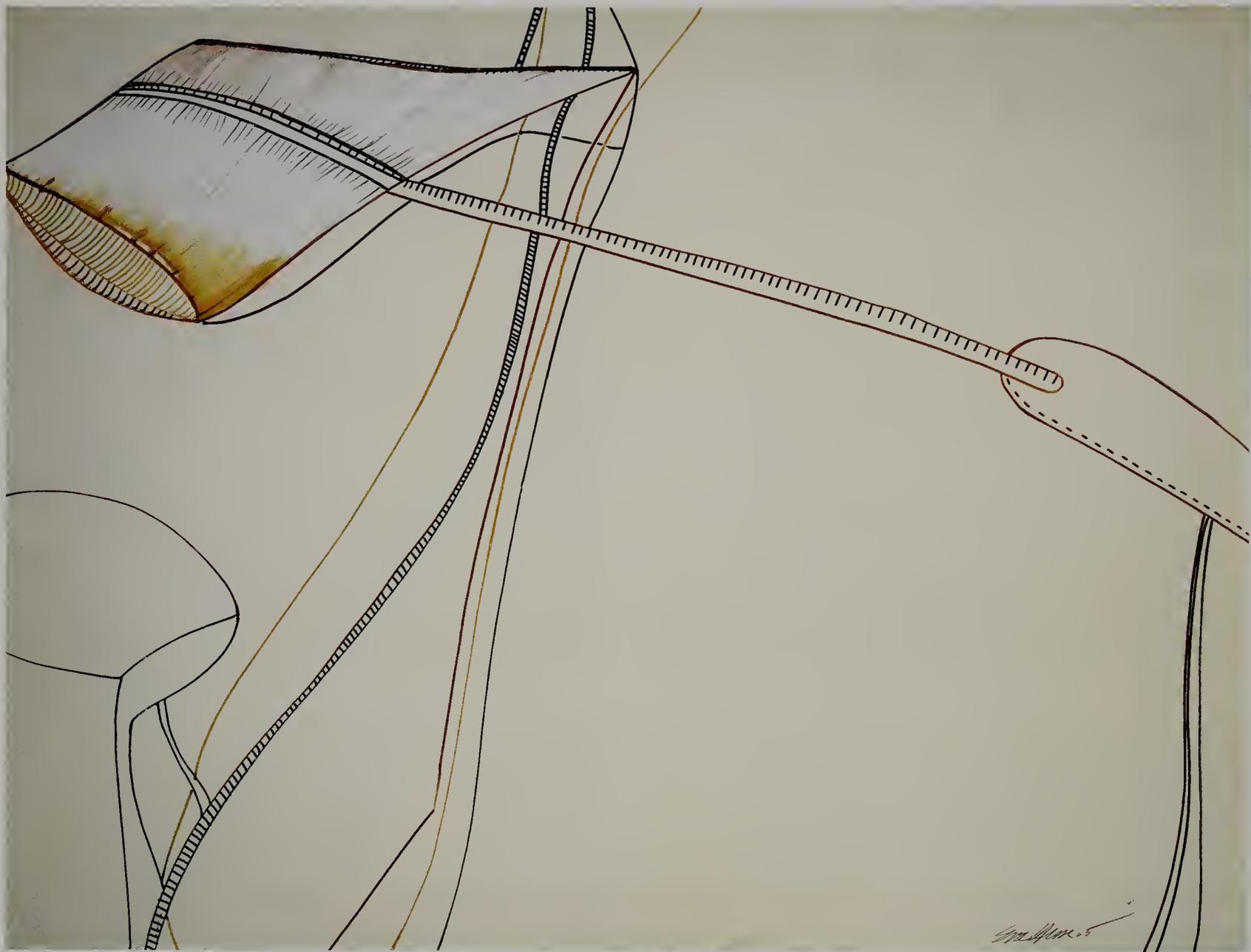
left to right, top to bottom:

[ill. 39] The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London

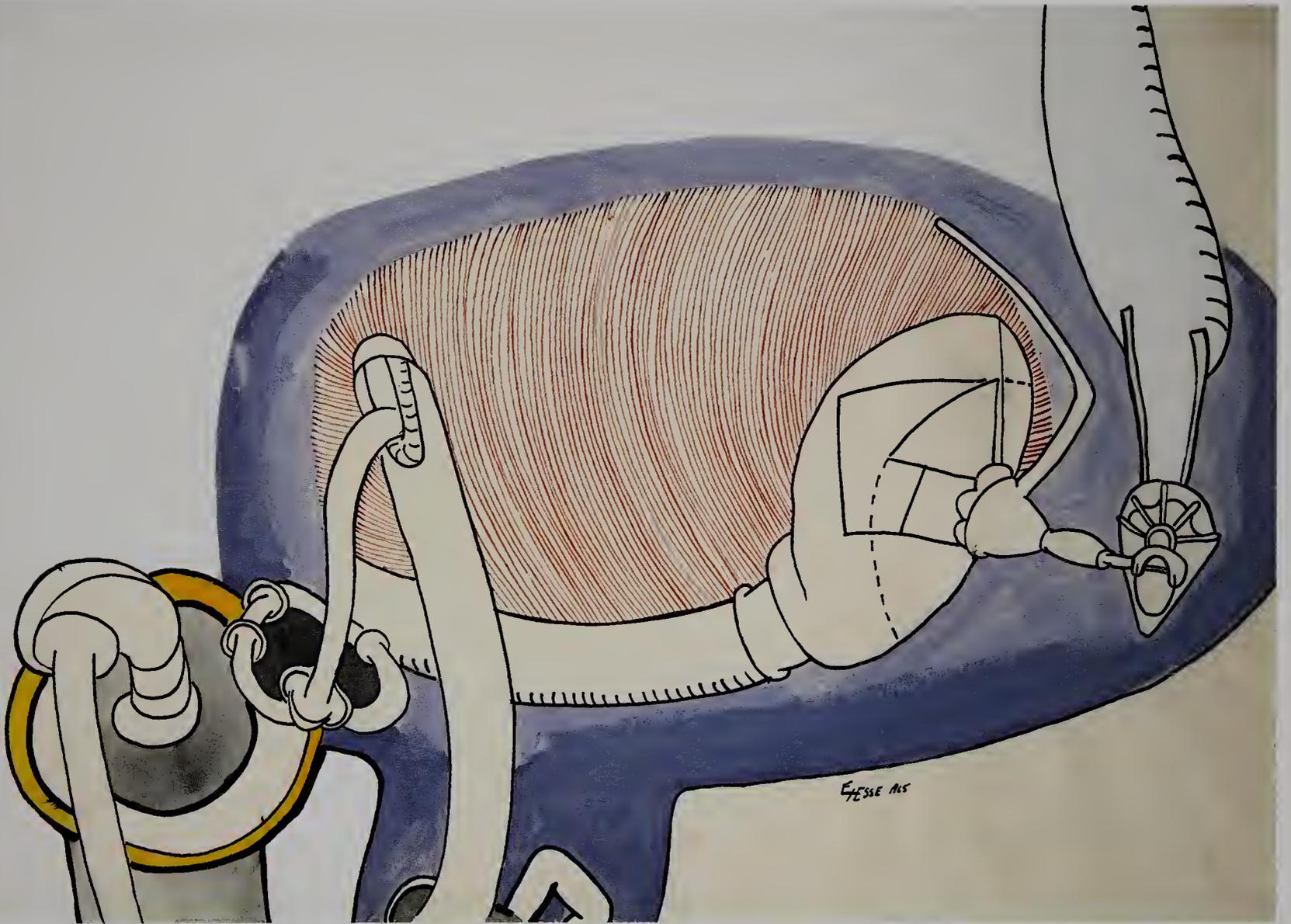
[ill. 40] The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London

[ill. 41] Private Collection [ill. 42] Private Collection, Seoul, Korea

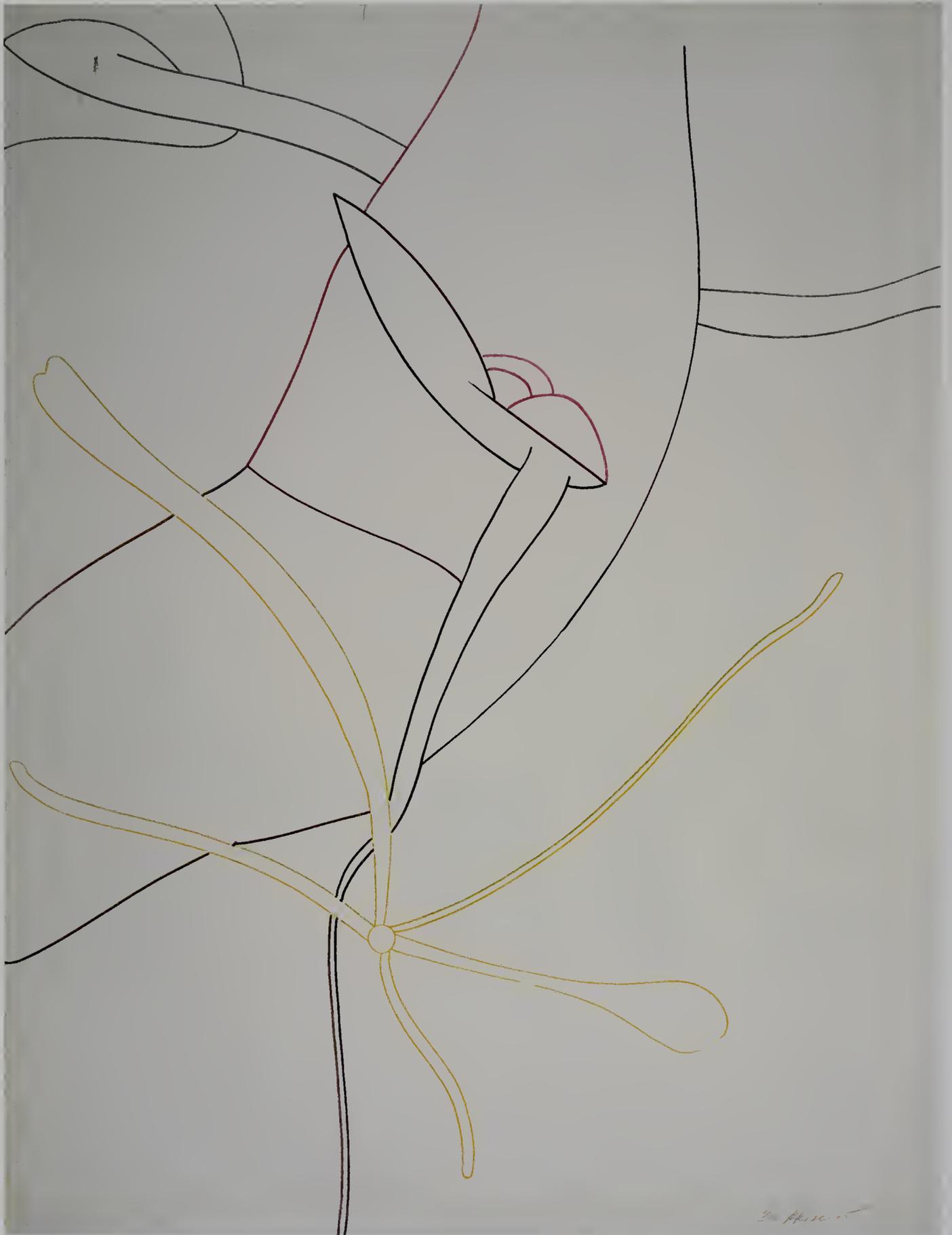
[ill. 43] Private Collection, Seoul, Korea [ill. 44] Private Collection, Seoul, Korea



[ill. 45] no title, 1965
Ink, gouache, and pencil on paper
19 5/8 x 25 1/2 in. (49.9 x 64.8 cm)
Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich

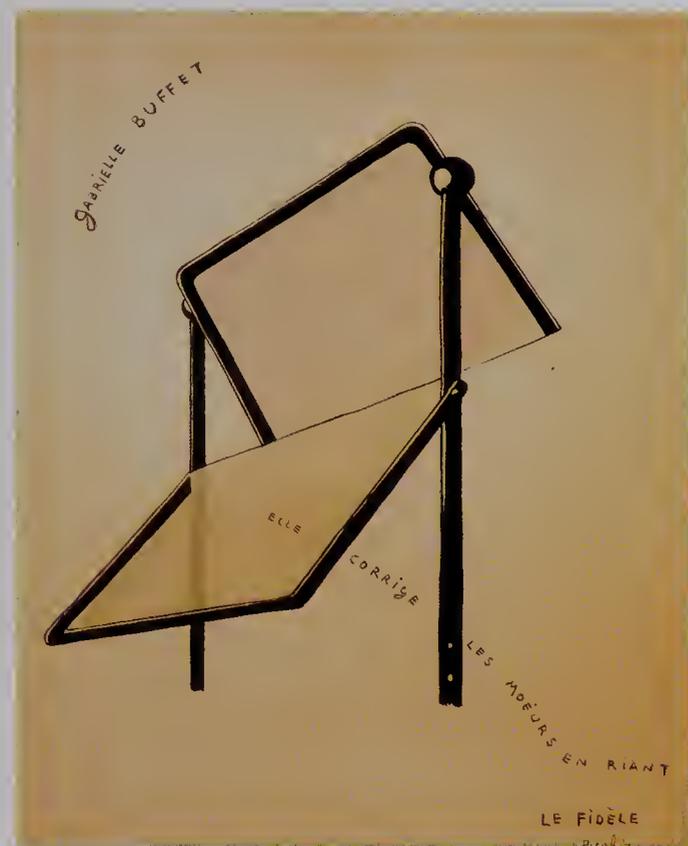


[ill. 46] no title, 1965
Colored ink and gouache on paper
11 1/4 x 16 in. (28.5 x 40.6 cm)
Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich



30. Huse

[56] no title, 1965



[ill. 47] Francis Picabia, *Gabrielle Buffet, Elle corrige les moeurs en riant*, 1915

Ink, India ink, and pencil on cardboard
23 x 18 1/2 in. (58.5 x 47 cm)
Graphische Sammlung, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

in a letter to Sol LeWitt: “Drawings—clean and clear—but crazy like machine forms and larger and bolder, and articulately described so it is weird they become real nonsense.”⁷

The extreme (at least by comparison to their discombobulated predecessors) simplification of these new drawings, reduced to a pure linearity and to a monochrome (or at most bichrome) color scale, indicate that Hesse had finally understood that the diagrammatic would have to become central to the future of her drawings. Furthermore, the surprising compositional strategy of zooming into the figure and cropping it to a mere

detail gives the viewer the sensation of looking at a specimen through a microscope, close-ups of what appear to be commonly invisible natural or technical phenomena.

Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray had synthesized technical plan, biological chart, and neo-classical sinuosity in their drawings, suspending the dialectical forces of the biomorphic and mechanomorphic in almost ethereal transparency—models of diagrammatic drawing for such immediate Hesse predecessors as Johns, Kelly, and Warhol. Yet Hesse gave the paradigm dramatically different readings when she adopted it fully in 1966. In her machinic drawings of 1965, one can detect even the presence of Picabia’s mock bichrome design distinguishing between the black outlines of the mechanical structure proper and the colored outlines that presumably signaled zones of irritation or excitation [ill. 47]. But unlike Picabia’s drawings, contained in the machinic disguises of pistons, valves, and gadgets, Hesse’s present a more ambiguous constellation, as if alternating between the meticulous botanist and the mad engineer—a dialogue perhaps between Karl Blossfeldt and Rube Goldberg.⁸ The sinuosity of her drawings never appears as a celebration of residual biological plenitude or a newly recovered psychosomatic sense

7. (Vienna FN 33. Letter to Sol LeWitt).

8. We know of course that Blossfeldt (and it is not important to even speculate about whether Hesse knew his work at the time) had been studied and recoded by artists since the thirties in totally opposite terms, demarcating the very spectrum within which Hesse now situated her mechanomorphic drawings. On the one hand, New Objectivity had discovered in Blossfeldt’s imagery a comforting similarity between biological detail and technological structure and had considered it as the legitimation for its proper *neusachlich* project to invest the technological with an ontological status. On the other hand, the Surrealists discovered in Blossfeldt’s photographs an uncanny precursor to their pantheistic pursuit of verifying the machinations of the unconscious even within the animate biological and zoological universe. Clearly, neither the *neusachlich* reading of the plant as ontological machine nor the Surrealist reading of the plant as a libidinal animator qualifies as a description of Hesse’s mechanomorphic series in 1965.



pistils and protuberances of vegetal and zoomorphic growths, she imbued them with an uncanny affinity for the inner, if not the private, parts of machines. Their linear elegance and sinuous pulse become all the more discomfiting because the mechanomorph's animation instills a deep sense of the withering body.

Even though it might appear a bit speculative, it is nevertheless productive to compare Hesse's drawings of 1965 for a moment to Ellsworth Kelly's sublime drawings of plants, stems, and leaves from the late 1950s and early 1960s. A grand counter-gesture to his paintings of matricial abstractions and non-compositional chance operations, Kelly's biomorphic drawings had earlier reclaimed the seemingly unalterable elegance of the biological referent, and, more importantly, the artist's hand. Sequestered in the realm of drawing, Kelly's fusion of neo-classical linearity, biomorphic precision, and exceptional competence certainly suggested that the draftsman's skills could still reveal a sense of natural plenitude and sustain an epiphany of bodily presence.⁹

It is impossible to imagine Kelly relishing the insertion of biological details of a plant's pollinating stems, as Hesse clearly did, or deviously focusing on its microscopic growth of hairs. Nor would Kelly ever have fractured his elegantly flowing drawings the way Hesse did, inserting both bio-mechanomorphic details and the procedural data of her hybrid drawings in repetitive denotative acts. Precisely because Hesse randomly staged the reduction of drawing to its most minute units and most elementary, if not banal, functions (as in her random performances of shading, modeling, cross-

9. As Rosalind Krauss has brilliantly established, Picasso's celebration of the neo-classical line in 1915 had at least partially originated in his phobia of Picabia's photographic and mechanomorphic puns on neo-classicism. But Picasso's sinuous lines initially had equally attempted to provide a resistance against the pressures of bodily fragmentation and fetishization. After all, the mirage of the neo-classical holistic figure had always promised at least an imaginary exemption from the subjection of the body to industrial labor and its fragmentation from the impact of fetishization in the commodity exchange. But soon enough, neo-classical linearity found itself precisely deployed as enforcing fetishization in drawing, painting, and most of all, of course, in photography from the 1930s to the 1950s. And the embrace of Ingrisme in the work of artists of the moment of *retour à l'ordre*, and in particular, of Man Ray and countless other photographers of that period, actually only served to conceal the governing principles of fetishization in the pretense to a higher cultural order and supposedly transhistorical tradition. This became of course all the more true when the cult of the neo-classical body came to serve as propaganda, primarily to conceal its final and totalitarian subjection to Taylorist, and eventually fascist and Stakhanovite, principles of extreme forms of alienated physical labor.



[ill. 49] *Domamaboomba*, 1965

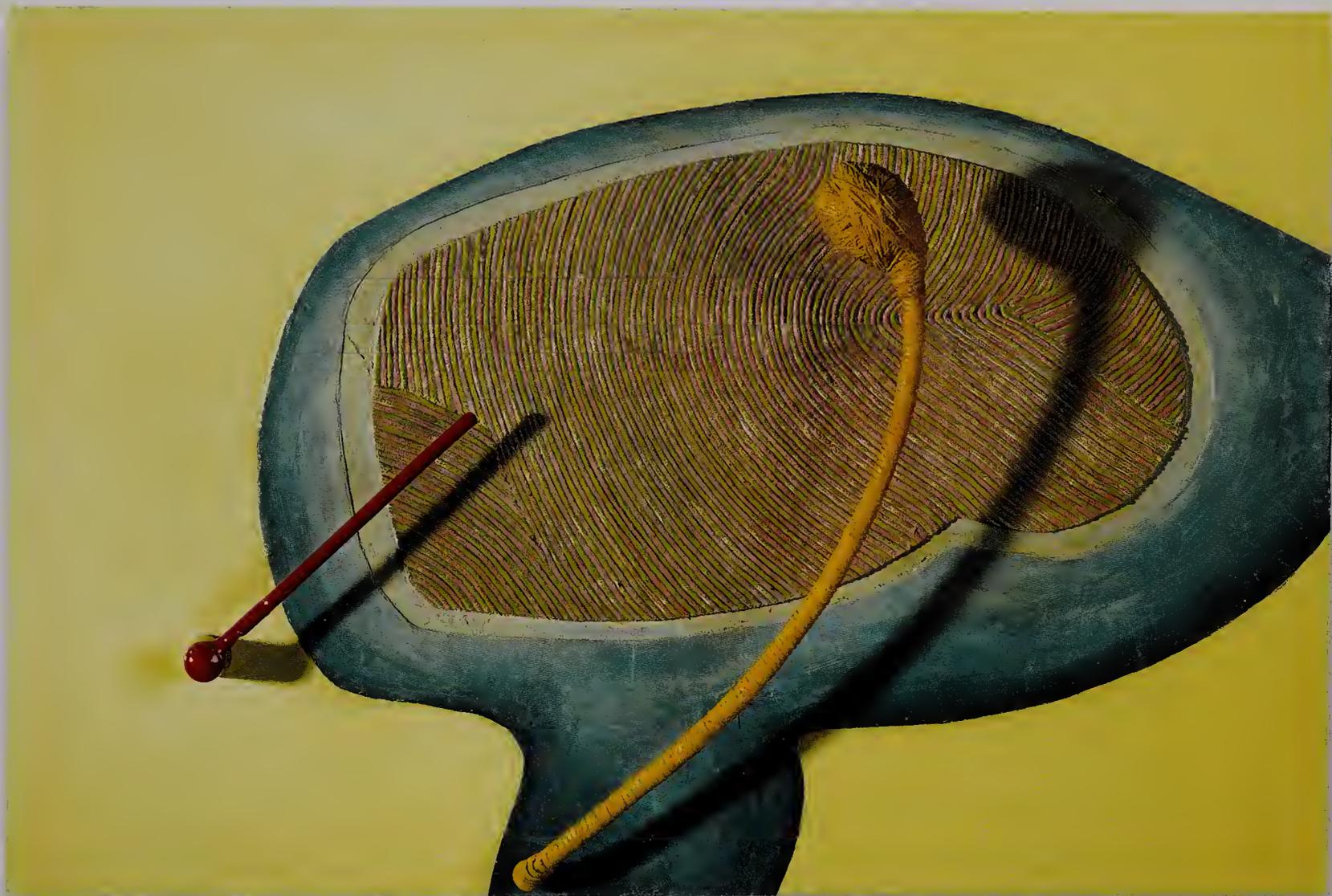
Paint, cord, cord-wrapped metal, and concretion on Masonite
21 1/4 x 25 5/8 x 5 in. (54 x 65.1 x 12.7 cm)
Sammlung Hauser und Wirth, St. Gallen, Switzerland

hatching, et cetera—a paradoxical presence within this techno-naturalist morphology) and because she inserts just enough graphic detail within these tubular protrusions and pods, she prevented the structures from being misread as either a naive attempt to expand the vein of biomorphic surrealism or as a restorative attempt to redeem the corporeal in floral linearity. Quite the opposite: Hesse's staccato of uncanny erotic and repetitive details (e.g. the serialized microscopic strokes) at times seems to be drawn in the manner of a biomorphism of *bassesse*, reminiscent of the grotesque bodily details that Philip Guston quoted at that time from comic strips.¹⁰

The year 1965, then, demarcates the last phase of Hesse's activities as an eclectic apprentice devoted to weaving and unraveling the various strands of Modernist drawing. Coming to the end of her sojourn in Germany, she rapidly completed a series of totally astonishing reliefs that seem to have emerged directly from the drawings of mechano-biomorphic hybrids. Works like *Ringaround Arosie* not only prepared the doubly difficult transition of returning home from home and moving back to exile from exile, they also prepared the transition from eclecticism to the extraordinarily poignant development of Hesse's identity as an artist in her drawings and in her sculptural work, beginning—as the artist stated herself on several occasions—after her return to New York in 1966 with works like *Compart* and *Hang Up*.

The literature has told us again and again (and rightfully so) about the importance of Hesse's relationships with three people: Claes and Patty Oldenburg, whom Hesse met in 1959, and Sol LeWitt, with whom she struck up a friendship in 1960 that was to last for the rest of her life. Delineating the extreme dialectics of drawing between 1955 to 1965, these sculptors also renewed the question of whether sculpture and drawing could still represent the withering anthropomorphic body or if they had to accept a final prohibition of representation altogether. They gave opposite responses: Oldenburg's insight was that the sculptural object could no longer credibly claim its foundation in the anthropomorphic body; it would have to reflect on the loss and the repression of bodily plenitude under the conditions of industrially enforced consumption. Indeed, sculpture could no longer offer any ontological lodging to the self; instead, it had to trace the destruction and disappearance of the corporeal, incessantly situating the subject within the technologically produced readymade matrix and the commodity fetish. At the same time, Oldenburg's dialectical sculpture seemed desperate to redeem traces of corporeality, to

10. This seeming incompatibility between bio-mechanomorphic linearity, neo-classical linearity, and the constraining contours of cartoons and comic strips defines yet another axis of contradiction along which Hesse's drawings operate. It is indeed a grotesque duality that was latent, but quite persistent, in its determinations of drawing in the twentieth century. Beginning with Cubism and Matisse, it became more pronounced in the work of one of Hesse's favorite artists, Fernand Léger, and culminated, of course, in the extraordinary pursuit of this opposition in the work of Roy Lichtenstein. If the amorphous and amoebic design of bodily contours in Matisse's paintings (e.g. *Le Bonheur de Vivre*, (1909)) had reminded the bourgeois subject of the polymorphically perverse foundations of sexuality and of pregenital bliss, then the rise of the body as severely contoured mollusk in Disney comics signaled the immediately following mass-cultural inversion of that utopian promise: It enforced repression by desexualizing the body in animal garb, and by circumscribing the polymorphically perverse origins with the rigid contours of mechanical animation.



[ill. 50] *Legs of a Walking Ball*, 1965
Paint, cord, papier-mâché, and metal on Masonite
17 3/4 x 26 3/8 x 4 1/2 in. (45.1 x 67 x 10.8 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London

salvage the sculptural promise that the vision of bodily plenitude could provide at least residual evidence of an emerging subjectivity.

Sol LeWitt, in manifest opposition to this approach, insisted from the very beginning on the detachment of drawing from any type of authorial presence or artistic competence. His project of a final disembodiment and total deskilling of drawing found its climactic conclusion in the decision to eventually remove the artist altogether from the process of execution by either having the drawing “make itself” by acting out its pre-programmed permutational matrix or, often coinciding with the first shift, having collaborators actually execute the drawing according to its innate diagrammatic system of spatial and temporal expansion.

LeWitt not only established parameters for deskilling the process of production, thereby deconstructing “the hand” (that site of heretofore seemingly guaranteed artistic authenticity and originality), he conceived of a perceptual correlative for the “deskilling” of spectatorial behavior in the process of reception as well. Since LeWitt’s conception voided all spectatorial expectations for libidinal gratification, meandering narrative movement, and liberating or expressive linearity in favor of a fully controlled and rigorously quantified spatiality of administered chance, his work in fact demanded a higher degree of spectatorial agency and competence—of engagement.



The major subtext, however, that linked Hesse’s historical encounters with Oldenburg and Lewitt was the fact that during these years both artists were entangled in extremely complex, and different, dialogues with Jasper Johns.¹¹ After all, it had been Johns, in the mid-1950s, who first worked through the seemingly unresolvable conflict between, on the one hand, a historical, if not ethical, imperative to restrain, if not completely eliminate, figurative and corporeal representation and, on the other, drawing’s desire to sustain and redeem its corporeal ground. Johns had also posed the question of how binding his restraint would have to be:

11. Hesse’s complex relationship to Johns was of course fully established from the very beginning of her public critical reception, to such an extent that Lucy Lippard, in her great monograph on the artist, felt compelled to argue that it had been exaggerated, and she attempted to relativize it. More recent scholarship on Hesse, in particular the outstanding work by Briony Fer in *Abstract Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), and *The Infinite Line* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) repositions Hesse, quite rightfully in our opinion,

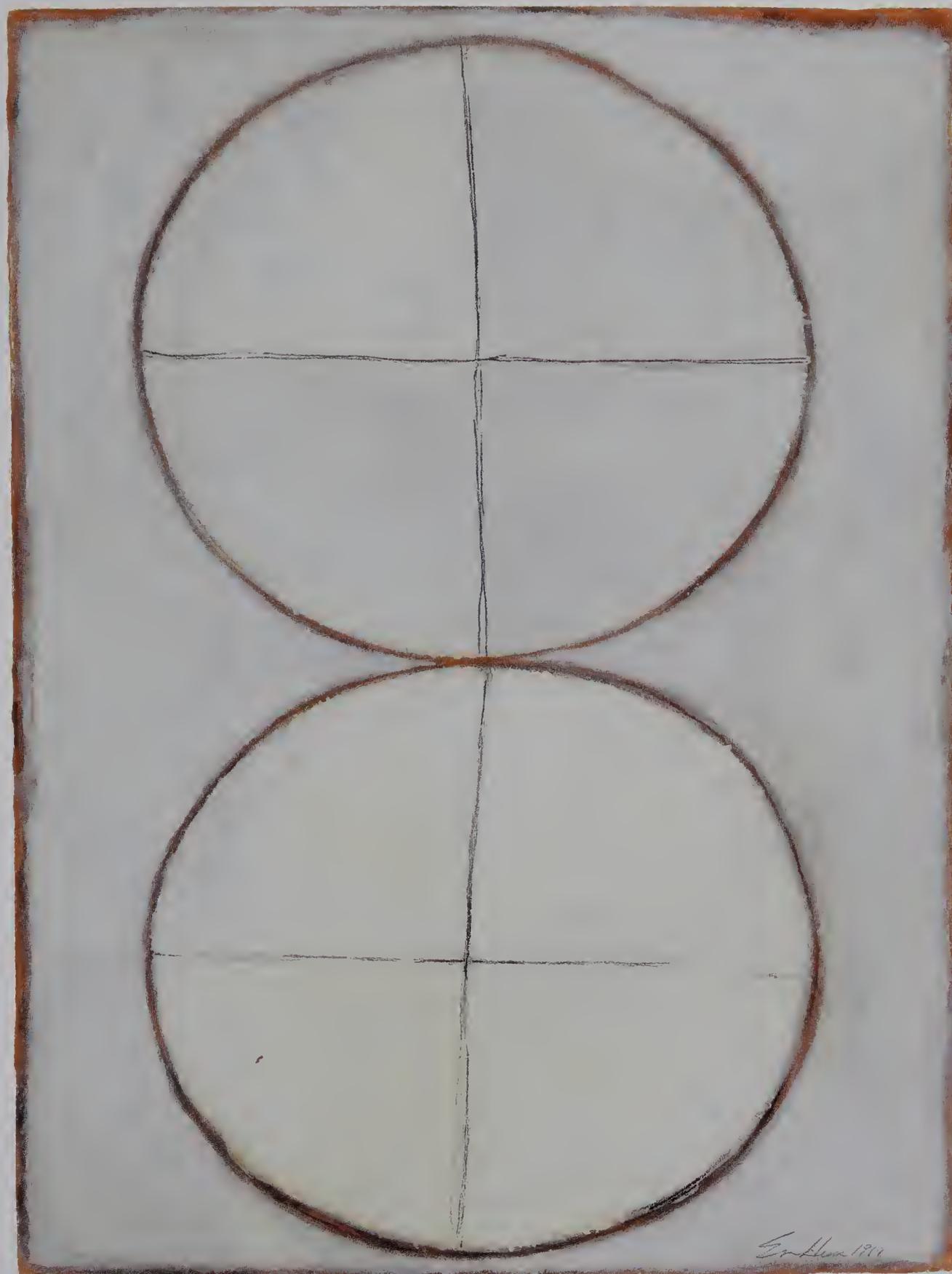
in a direct dialogic relationship with Johns. The late Kirk Varnedoe, in his essay on Johns’ impact on later artists, documented how Hesse’s friend Mel Bochner remembered her response on at least one occasion: “When Bochner first met Hesse, around Christmas of 1965 (well before her Pollock inspired ‘cobweb’ hanging pieces of c. 1970), his first words to her—thinking of the sculpture *Ishtar* which opened her exhibition of that year—were ‘I see you are into Jasper Johns,’ to which she replied ‘Yes.’” See Kirk Varnedoe, “Fire: Johns’ Work as Seen and Used by American Artists,” in: *Jasper Johns* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 102.

[ill. 51] Jasper Johns, *Target*, 1960

Lithograph printed in black

22 5/8 x 17 5/8 in. (57.5 x 44.8 cm)

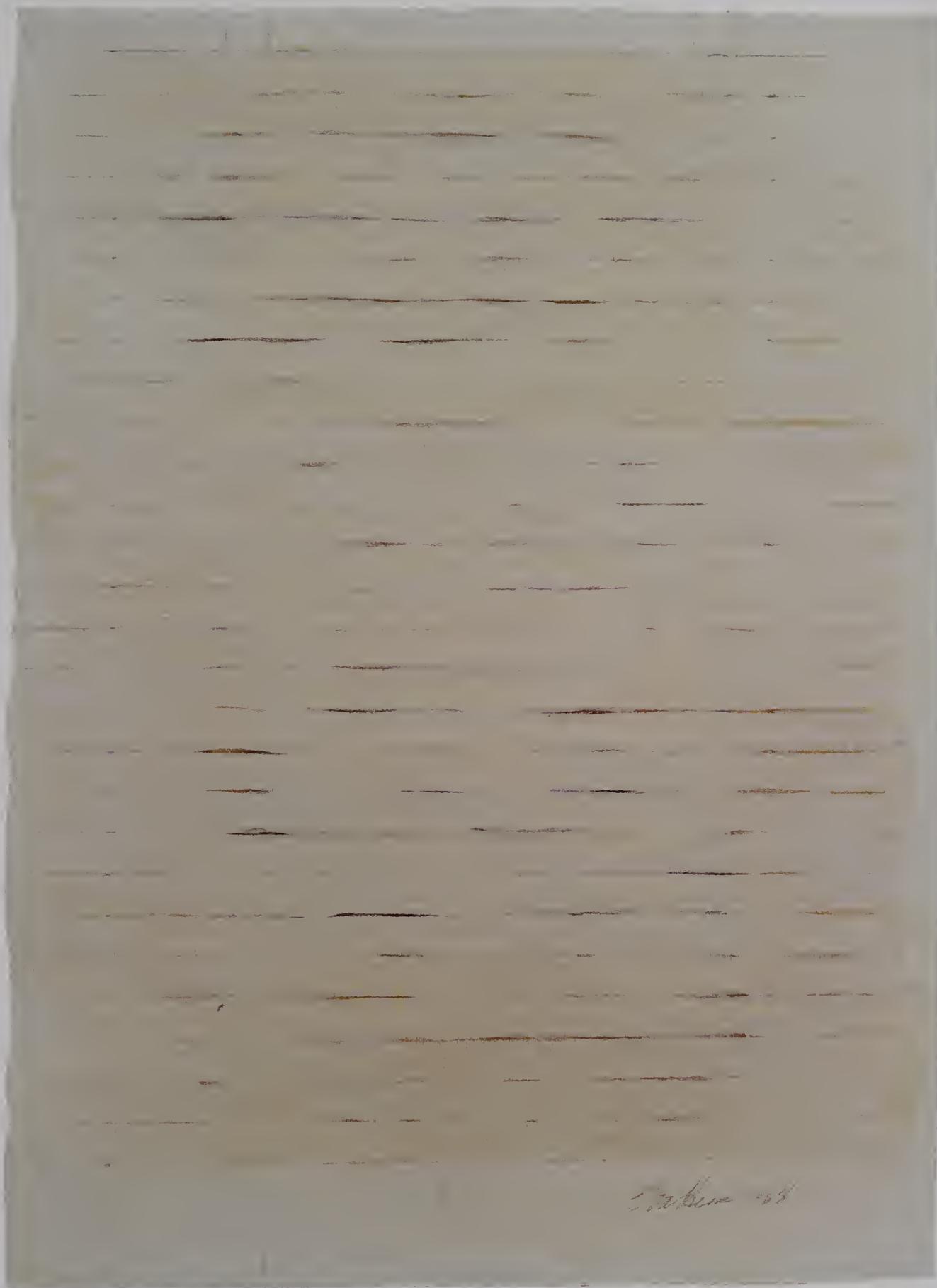
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos



[57] no title, 1968



Geoffrey 1968



To what extent did historical pathologies and prohibitions become aesthetic parameters that, if disregarded or ignored, would inevitably turn any claims for the body's presence into blatant falsities if not outright kitsch? In response to that conflict, Johns developed paradoxical strategies, introducing the extreme fragmentation of both figurative representation and the linear, graphic, performative process of drawing.

Johns had both dissipated de Kooning's tendency to expressively figure and narrate in drawing and fractured Pollock's spectacularized automatist flow with a systemic staccato, breaking down all acts of recording and notation into the smallest possible units. Moreover, these units appeared as though they had been more or less randomly accumulated, not gesturally or graphically positioned according to compulsion or composition, but assembled within tightly circumscribed fields—all of them icons of control and containment (figures, numbers, flags), all of them non-compositional matrices. Notably, these circumscriptions containing accumulations of graphemes were quite often defined by the concentricity of "targets" [111. 51]—the very structure that would subsequently become the matrix for Hesse's mature and most important drawings in 1966 [82, 111. 67].

Finally, Johns' most serious challenge to his peers was his uncanny capacity to mortify the body by seeming to deplete drawing of any index of bodily presence: It appeared as though Johns no longer situated drawing within any registers of psychosomatic wholeness and depth, inscribing it instead literally skin-deep, within surface alone. This extreme withdrawal of the carnal and the corporeal repositioned drawing in the registers of the derma, not the soma. That this was one of Johns' most subversive and complex enunciations was of course heard by Hesse more clearly than by almost anybody who listened to the chora from the closet. The art-historian Anna Chave, citing the feminist critic Susan Bordo, has identified Hesse's motivation in situating her work on the surface of the body in similar (if more general) terms: "...[Hesse's] concentration on the body renders her work not apolitical, but political in another way; for the body [according to Bordo] is '...a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed...The body is not only a text of culture, it is also...a practical, direct locus of social control.'"¹²

12. Anna Chave, "A Girl Being a Sculpture," in *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, ed. Helen A. Cooper (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1992), 109.

Yet Hesse also distinctly rephrased Johns' questions, asking, in effect, whether drawing would have to be situated within the surface of the body to actually trace the insidiousness of repression in a post-Holocaust society, a repression most manifestly enacted in that society's propulsion into consumption. Accordingly, Hesse's drawing from 1966 onwards positioned itself mimetically within a model of mere surface inscription from which all depth had been taken, all substance had been voided. Thus, only in rigorously controlling the surface and by blocking access to any form of compensatory bodily plenitude for subject and sociality alike could drawing act as a manifest instantiation of resistance and remembrance. This congruence between restraint and resistance would become the genius of Hesse's drawings in 1966, her capacity to transform disappearance into the ruling parameter of what drawing could credibly claim to represent: loss and restraint rather than relief and representation—least of all release.

Three distinct formal and material strategies defined Hesse's transition to the most important phase of her drawing (with exact analogues in the sculptural work): First of all, her abandonment of color altogether for the sake of a new achromatic aesthetic; secondly, her conception of drawing as a process that served primarily to disembodied traditional gestural, linear, and graphic mark making while simultaneously counteracting that disembodiment with an intensified materialization, if not an actual reification, of linear structures. Hesse described this strategy herself in similar terms in her last interview with Cindy Nemser in 1970: "The drawings were never very simplistic. They ranged from linear to complicated washes and collages. The translation or transference to a large scale and in painting was always tedious. It was not natural and I thought to translate it in some other way. So I started working with relief and with line—using the cords and ropes that are now so commonly used. I literally translated the line."¹³

The third strategy consisted of her adopting geometric matricial patterns in which all compositional choices were always already predetermined, thereby shifting drawing definitively into the register of the diagrammatic. Accordingly, in the drawings from

13. Eva Hesse, interview with Cindy Nemser, originally published in *Artforum* (September 1970), quoted here from the version reprinted in: Mignon Nixon, ed., *Eva Hesse* (Cambridge: The MIT Press/October Files), 6. The disembodiment of the graphic or gestural act performed by the artist's hand finds its exact historical complement in the reified materialization of line itself, in its concrete deployment as string or wire. Line abandons the hand of its maker and becomes pure process and objective materiality, practically drawing itself. This materialized anonymous lineage originates, of course, once again in Duchamp's post-Cubist sculpture *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913), which had served as a pattern for *Network of Stoppages*. But after Duchamp, lines were consistently materialized in a variety of contexts, defying and undoing the draughtsman's craft: With Arp, Miro, and Calder in Dada and Surrealism, with Logan in Constructivism, and with Ellsworth Kelly's extraordinary string reliefs in the immediate post-war years, a pantheon of precedents had been established by the time of Hesse's discovery of the material. In fact, it had become common to the degree that in 1970, Sidney Janis, always the bellwether of the advanced, consecrated an entire exhibition to the material's use in Modern art, entitled *String and Rope*. It seems therefore a bit naive to insist again and again, as writers on Hesse continue to do to this date, that Hesse discovered string as her favorite material among the discarded refuse of the factory where she worked in Kettwig in 1964 and 1965. We are not even mentioning here the different yet equally relevant materializations of anonymous linear production as pure process in the late 1950s to early 1960s, responding to Pollock: from Rauschenberg and Cage's *Tire Print*, to Manzoni's *linee*, and George Brecht's *Line for LaMonte Young*.

1966 onwards, all elements (e.g. composition, line, grapheme, tone, shading, modeling) are contained within an achrome concentricity, repetitive seriality, or pre-established symmetry. In other words, by 1966, Hesse had devised one of the most confined and controlled approaches to drawing imaginable, an endgame announcing drawing's decisive tendency towards historical disappearance.

It is important for our understanding of Hesse's decisive annulment of color in 1966, in both her drawings and sculptural work, to recognize first of all that we are witnessing neither a renewed commitment to material specificity nor a normative prescription to tolerate only the inherent chroma of materials (not that remnants of this Constructivist ethics-aesthetics weren't still pervasive in Minimalism in general, and in particular in the work of another sculptor who had become a close friend, Carl Andre, especially in his approach to the innate chromatic qualities of his metals). Even though Hesse commented on color in the lapidary, neo-positivist, anaesthetized tone that resonated throughout the writings of American artists in the 1960s, from Stella to Judd to LeWitt, her turn towards colorlessness does not share the attitudes of her peers. With Hesse, the achromatic became more pronounced as an epistemological necessity, if not an ethical imperative.¹⁴

One might be tempted to argue that even in its radical negation, Hesse's achrome aesthetic partook of the legacy of Albers' scientific approach to color. But in the systematicity of her color application, Hesse was denouncing the utopian and positivist promise of scientific rationality: Rather than offering perceptual and cognitive access to the natural and the corporeal (one of the traditional and most important functions of the chromatic), her new aesthetic of the achrome recognized that all postwar production had to operate in a historical situation in which the sheer survival of the body already bordered on the miraculous. Thus Hesse perpetuated and expanded the melancholy of the achrome that had begun with Johns' emphatic embrace of grayness and had culminated in Manzoni's manifesto of a universal achrome disembodiment of the world, a melancholia of loss that would eventually even be extended into the technological and mass-cultural registers of Warhol and Richter's photographic grisaille paintings. Hesse's systematic gradations of gray, rather than merely negating Albers' scientific systematicity of color, now deliberately take on the guise of technical anonymity and neutrality, the diagrammatic order of color in a printing scale or

14. "Color is whatever comes out of the material and keeps it what it is"—Eva Hesse. Nemser, 24.

the tonal chart of photography. Hesse's grayscales exert within the chromatic register (of colorlessness) the same principles of mechanicity that the grid and the concentric circles enact in the formal and compositional registers of her drawings.

While colorlessness and grisaille do not always invoke melancholia, of course—Johns' grays for example seem more defined by epistemological rigor than by psychic disinvestment—it seems clear that Hesse's refusal of color is likely to have originated in a sense of mourning and solidarity with the absent, the denatured, and the destroyed body. Under the conditions of both her personal experience and the collective one, it was probably inevitable that if the corporeal could ever reappear at all in drawing, it would have to figure as achromatic. Similarly, sculptural morphology had to be reduced to mere physical/physiological surfaces and containers, hybrids defined by an uncanny synthesis of material and process, machine parts and body parts.¹⁵

Ultimately, Hesse articulated this historical dialectic with more intensity and consequence than any other artist of her generation, negating bodily plenitude under the historical circumstances of annihilation while simultaneously protecting the annihilated body from fraudulent consolations and substitutions in the products that color provided, to say nothing of the colors that products provided.

As for the second strategy of disembodying and rematerializing gesture and line, Hesse pursued her project with an inexorable logic throughout the following two years,¹⁶ beginning with the extremely subtle, "evanescent" (as Briony Fer has called them) but, as we would argue, proto-photographic serializations of triple or quadruple concentric structures. All of the units in these works are lined up and embedded within a rigorously enforced, yet at times only thinly traced, grid (as though an

15. Claes Oldenburg's work is of course, once again, the breaking point in that history, situated halfway between the process-oriented fluidity of Medardo Rosso and the rigidity of Marcel Duchamp's readymade. Oldenburg's wire mesh and plaster, as much as the lacquer, are viscous surface registers in which the slightest inscriptions are retained. In fact one could argue that Rosso's implicit promise that sculpture would become a matter of innate material processes, surfaces, and textures found its full realization in Oldenburg's work. Every wrinkle and fold, every accidental twist and turn of the material flow articulates the very tension between the rigidity of the fetish and the suppleness of the resistant body. In Johns's sculpture that drama was played out with the self-imposed suffocation of a closed circuit in the manner of Beckett. In Oldenburg's oeuvre, the tragedy of object relations turns into a ribald comedy with Rabelaisian dimensions, and in Hesse's work, the derma of her sculpture would finally acknowledge the body's irreversible condition as mechanical container and traumatized surface.

16. Among the immediate predecessors of Hesse's achromatic work, one would have to point to a figure who embodied that tendency in an almost programmatic way. We are thinking of the "drawings" from the late 1950s of Piero Manzoni, for whom the de-realization of the bodily experience was so decisive that the very idea that a drawing could simulate experience (bodily, psychic, or perceptual) would have appeared as fraudulent. Thus, for Manzoni, drawing had to become not only a fully denatured and deskilled operation, it had to be removed as far as possible from its traditions of being the unmediated recording device of an artistic self in the process of articulating perceptual, cognitive, or psycho-motoric forms of experience in a supposedly unmediated manner. This total depersonalization of drawing found its dialectical counterpart in the reversal of its parameters from private to public: Drawing became an intervention within the space of social relations, anonymous and public, a collective and relational space of experience, rather than a space of privileged forms. It is noteworthy also that other artistic formations of the early 1960s, with which Hesse was in many ways more acquainted, if not involved, would eschew drawing altogether, with Fluxus and *Nouveau Réalisme* being only the most prominent examples. One might well have to inquire more carefully at some point into what the total absence of drawing from those movements might imply (as with Dada, where drawing was equally evacuated from all practices, except, of course, in the diagrammatic versions mentioned above).

abstraction of Warhol's serial accumulations, suspended similarly between the painterly and the photographic). Drawing's micrological element, the grapheme, is now totally diluted in the seemingly mechanical application of washes. When line returns to this type of drawing, as it did most strikingly in several later works of 1967, it appears as a physical lineament. Piercing the paper, materializing itself in the elements of cotton thread or nylon string, line now perforates the surface and protrudes from the traditionally inviolate support of graphic operations. Before Hesse, paper might not have remained immaculate, but it had generally not suffered physical lesions for the sake of the draftsman's inscriptions.¹⁷

To my knowledge, authors on Hesse's drawings have not commented upon the striking dissimilitude between the first group of drawings from 1966 and the second group drawn on graph paper, presumably produced in short sequence of each other, if not simultaneously.¹⁸ These two seemingly incompatible groups are all the more intertwined as the third series of drawings came to feature the material lineaments just mentioned, returning to the exact structural and compositional grids of the concentric circles of the first group.

We would argue that what might appear at first sight as an utterly incomprehensible hiatus in the development of Hesse's drawings might well turn out, on closer study, to constitute an extremely lucid dialectical reversal of the principles first defined in 1966. The earlier drawings had already brought the classically Modernist conflict of figure and ground to the brink of disappearance, since their fully interwoven structures, their inextricable embedment within the surface of the support, and the oscillation between the dynamic concentric circles and the static squared grids had all but dissolved that traditional distinction. Yet it is only as a result of Hesse's remarkable choice of pre-printed bluish-green graph paper for the second group of drawings in 1966 that the figure-ground order was dialectically inverted. In this way, her third fundamental strategy, that of drawing's total reduction to the diagram, is fully implemented in this group. In fact, we would suggest that the prefabricated graph paper now actually assumes the perplexing status of a printed diagrammatic order, simultaneously readable as ground and as figure, relegating if not dominating whatever "figural" insertion it might receive. Any inscription within this given graph structure appears contingent, subordinate, if not submerged to the constraints that the pattern imposes. In several of these drawings,

17. There is of course always a predecessor and an exception. In this case, in regard to the perforation of the paper support of the drawing, one would have to think of the work of Lucio Fontana, who had pierced and lacerated both canvas and paper as early as the late 1940s to record gesture and grapheme within the physical substance of the support. But one could just as well return once again to Arp's 1916 collage in which the laceration of the paper became the primary process of mark making itself, defining the contours of the drawing in a paradoxical destruction of the contours of the support of the drawing.

18. Lucy Lippard simply states that the graph paper drawings were "also begun in 1966." Lippard, 72.

Hesse simply inserts what appears to be the simulation of a planar rectangular figure—merely tautological doubles of the support surface (or asymmetrically placed bars as fractions of it), a mere sheath of inscriptions for the paper's diagrammatic ground and grid. These minuscule repetitive graphemes are neither tracing spectacularized libidinal energy in the automatist tradition nor are they composed according to the Constructivist conceit. They are merely accumulated, and appear to be forced by a compulsive hand into the micrological containers of the printed squares. While these graphemes might be reminiscent of a proliferating biological culture, they might just as much remind us of a statistical graph of a mass culture that remains impassively framed and contained. Paradoxically, it is precisely from these seemingly infinite repetitions of "O"s and "X"s that an unexpectedly subversive force of utter contingency emerges. Like a Beckett text, it is as subversive in its compulsiveness to continue as it is in its dogged insistence on opposing the regulatory patterns of the paper.¹⁹

Hesse's almost microscopic interference with drawing conventions led her to a manifest differentiation of touch and pressure, foregrounding and figuring the differences of density produced by different pens or by different amounts of pressure exerted on the pens when circling the squares' inner perimeter. These features become most remarkable when the differences generate a sudden figure within apparently identical structures. One of the most important drawings from that series [81], a cruciform intersection of a vertical and a horizontal bar, inevitably reminds us of that first icon of the abolition of all perceptual and spatial hierarchies, Kazimir Malevich's *Black Cross* from 1915.

In Hesse's "cross" drawing, the sheath of minuscule circular inscriptions is displaced to the right side of the sheet (the margin on the left is exactly twice as wide as the margin on the right of the figure). In a literal removal of iconic centrality, Hesse enacts first of all the distance between the two iconic formations, or rather, the historical differentiation that Hesse's iteration of that icon performs. But precisely in this manifest act of displacement by repetition, Hesse's drawing redeems the radicality of Malevich's figure, which itself had already distorted the symmetry proper to the cruciform order. Hesse performs exactly the same operations in a second drawing from the same moment, presumably paying tribute to Malevich's legacies as well: Her contribution to the 1960s' fixation on the black square follows the geometric form only to distort it (as had of course Malevich). Her "square" measures forty-five

19. These drawings clearly approach the condition of the conceptual and they parallel, if not anticipate, in many ways the systematic drawings of Hanne Darboven, who lived in New York during the early 1960s and also was a close friend of Sol LeWitt's. Darboven's purely iterative graphemes quantify spatio-temporal units in the guise of elementary handwriting. After all, the linguistic sign is the perfect fusion of the graphic and the diagrammatic order. At the same time, it should be emphasized that Hesse's choice of graph paper does not simply follow the fashion that Conceptualists had developed in their deployment of an administrative anti-aesthetic, from typewriter type to Xerox and graph paper. In manifest contrast to many of these artists who used graph paper for its seemingly un-artistic and functional appearance, Hesse actually took on the found structure of the paper itself and transformed its innate qualities to reach a more fundamental understanding of Conceptualism's fascination with life in a fully administered world.

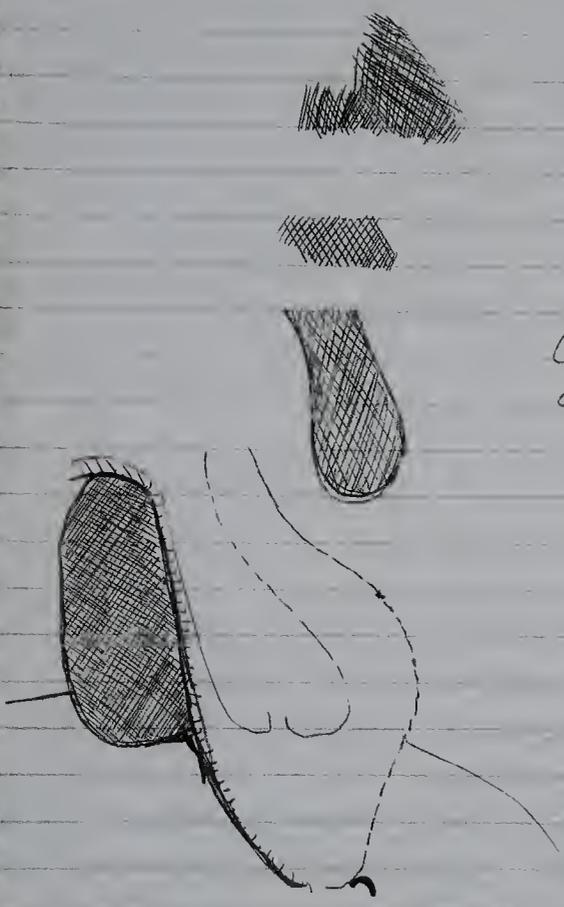
units wide and forty-eight units high, giving the form an uncanny vertical elongation, not enough to reach rectangularity but enough to simulate once again the figure's tautological recovery of the graphic ground. What was the radicality of Malevich's opaque black figure, a surface of refusal and denial (of color, of figuration), becomes with Hesse a transparent network of contingent particles, an accumulation of seemingly infinite and infinitesimally different molecular graphemes—a mass of graphic molecules contained within the pre-established patterns of the paper.

Hesse managed to sublate Pollock's legacy of the all-over composition within a merely cumulative cover of textuality, performing a kind of public anti-automatism. Her deeply seated epistemological skepticism (and her awareness of the necessity of resisting the instant spectacularization of all public declamations of subjective autonomy) finally dispelled even the last claims to make drawing the recording device of an unfettered psychic propulsion that could lead to the liberation of presumably unconscious forces.

At the same time, Hesse transfigured Johns' nervous staccato, which had mourned the loss of gesture in an ambivalent indulgence of the mastery of drawing dislodged. Hesse, in a further reduction, makes drawing the mere grain of a hand.²⁰ And finally, Hesse even supersedes LeWitt's extreme forms of the anonymous deskilling of drawing along the lines of a dialectic of random rationality and performative function, which he had transformed into a system of self-generating and allocentric production. Hesse's drawings on graph paper are as anonymous and unable as the mass of most daily gestures, and they are as obstinate and rebellious as *Bartleby's* distant desire of insubordination.

20. We obviously borrow this term from Roland Barthes's concept of the "grain of the voice."

brand



drawings

lines, dots



rapid

loose

dashes,

washes,

light to dark
gradations

cross hatch



Works on Paper/Works in the Papers

ELISABETH SUSSMAN

The terminology is messy, imprecise: Eva Hesse's "works on paper/works in her papers" is a category that includes lists, lists with drawings, descriptions, memos to herself. In this essay, I will omit the drawings that would normally be included as such in a category of Hesse's oeuvre—drawings of great importance done over her entire career as an artist, from her teenage and young adult years (the 1950s and early 1960s) until her death at age thirty-four in 1970. While this splendid body of work is explored in the current exhibition and book, this essay will concentrate on other works on paper/works in her papers.¹ There is a temptation to call this aspect of Hesse's production "working drawings" since they are all, broadly speaking, a part of her working process, all related to a work or an idea in process. But the term "working drawing" for those familiar with the history of Minimalist and post-Minimalist art would immediately bring to mind the conceptual territory opened by Mel Bochner in his exhibition *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed as Art* at the School of Visual Arts in New York in 1966. Bochner included Hesse in this exhibition with a "working drawing" that fit within his concept, which I take to be of works—material things—that play roles in processes of making or using: musical scores, for example, architectural plans, instructions, diagrams. Hesse's works on paper/works in her papers are not dissimilar to what Bochner meant by "process," but they are better understood as existing in a category unto themselves, performing a variety of functions, only one of which is to be treated, as belonging to that of "working drawings." Indeed, they are not specific links in a process, but rather occupy a looser and more conceptual moment, one perhaps related

1. I want to thank Kirsten Swenson for her help on this essay.

to a “work” but just as likely not. They are the paper records of the liminal areas between thought and object(s).

Hesse’s works on paper/works in her papers are relatively unknown. A series of papers made in various formats that are either part of a book or a single sheet, they were among the items that were left in Hesse’s studio when she died. Instances have been published at various points, first in Lucy Lippard’s exceptional 1976 biography of Hesse² and later in Bill Barrette’s important book on her sculpture.³ Although some of these works on paper have found their way into collections, for the most part everything from this category is held by the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, which is the depository for Hesse’s archive. Judging by what is there (which is almost everything Hesse saved), these works on paper began appearing in earnest in 1964, continuing until early 1970, the months before she died. The beginning date of 1964, it must be added, is somewhat artificial, as it is based only on what Hesse considered salvageable. Indeed, an extant sketch book from 1961,⁴ still in private hands, contains notes to herself on drawings, and one must assume that there are working drawings that go back even earlier than this. No catalogue raisonné includes all these miscellaneous works on paper. It is fair to say, however, that the greatest number of them fall in the six year period between 1964 and 1970.

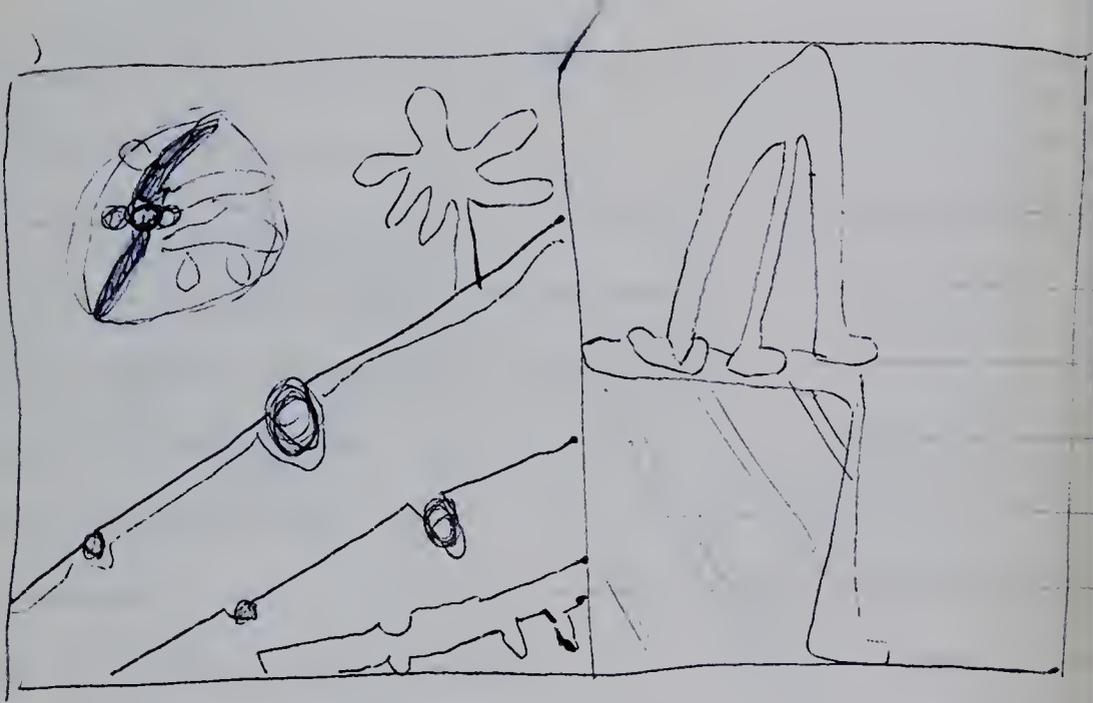
That Hesse was so involved in making drawings and linking them with notations to herself is not surprising, as it has long been well known that she kept a journal, starting as a teenager, in which she wrote long, self-examining entries, including passages expressing her desire to become an artist and lamenting her difficulties in doing so. Mainly the journal was used as a reflection or a working through of thoughts about her own emotional condition. But with these journals at Oberlin is also a collection of appointment books and miscellaneous papers and it is within the latter two categories (the papers) that the group of works on paper emerges.

What is not obvious from a scanning of the Oberlin archive is that her predilection for recording her life and salvaging her papers was in a tradition firmly established by her father, Wilhelm Hesse (1901–66). Wilhelm (he became William upon arrival in New York from Germany in 1939) Hesse had kept extensive scrapbooks documenting his own life and had maintained detailed journals about Eva and her older sister, Helen,

2. Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: New York University Press, 1976).

3. Bill Barrette, *Eva Hesse Sculpture* (New York: Timken Publishers, Inc., 1989).

4. See Figure 66 in Elisabeth Sussman, ed., *Eva Hesse* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 105.

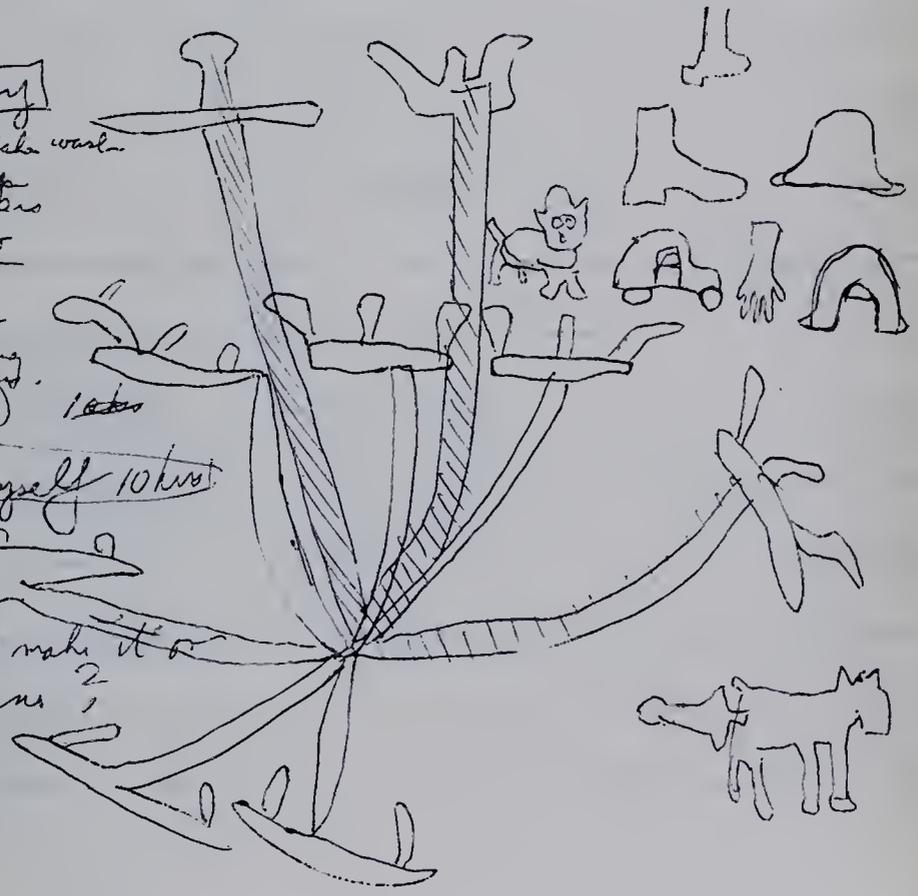


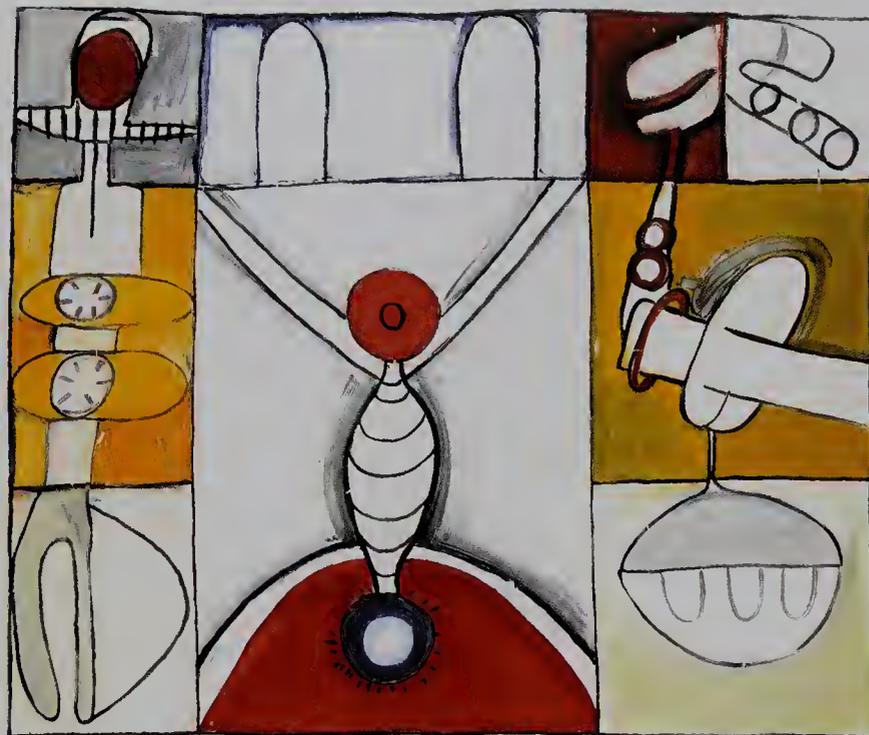
Q Day

- 9: - 9 dishes work
 - 9-13 shop
 - 10-11 letters
 - 11-12 studies
 - 1-2 lunch
 - 3-6 studies
 - 6-8 dinner
 - 8-12 reading letters
- (16 hrs) 16 hrs

for myself 10 hrs

I should make it 2
that's no,





[ill. 54] no title, 1965

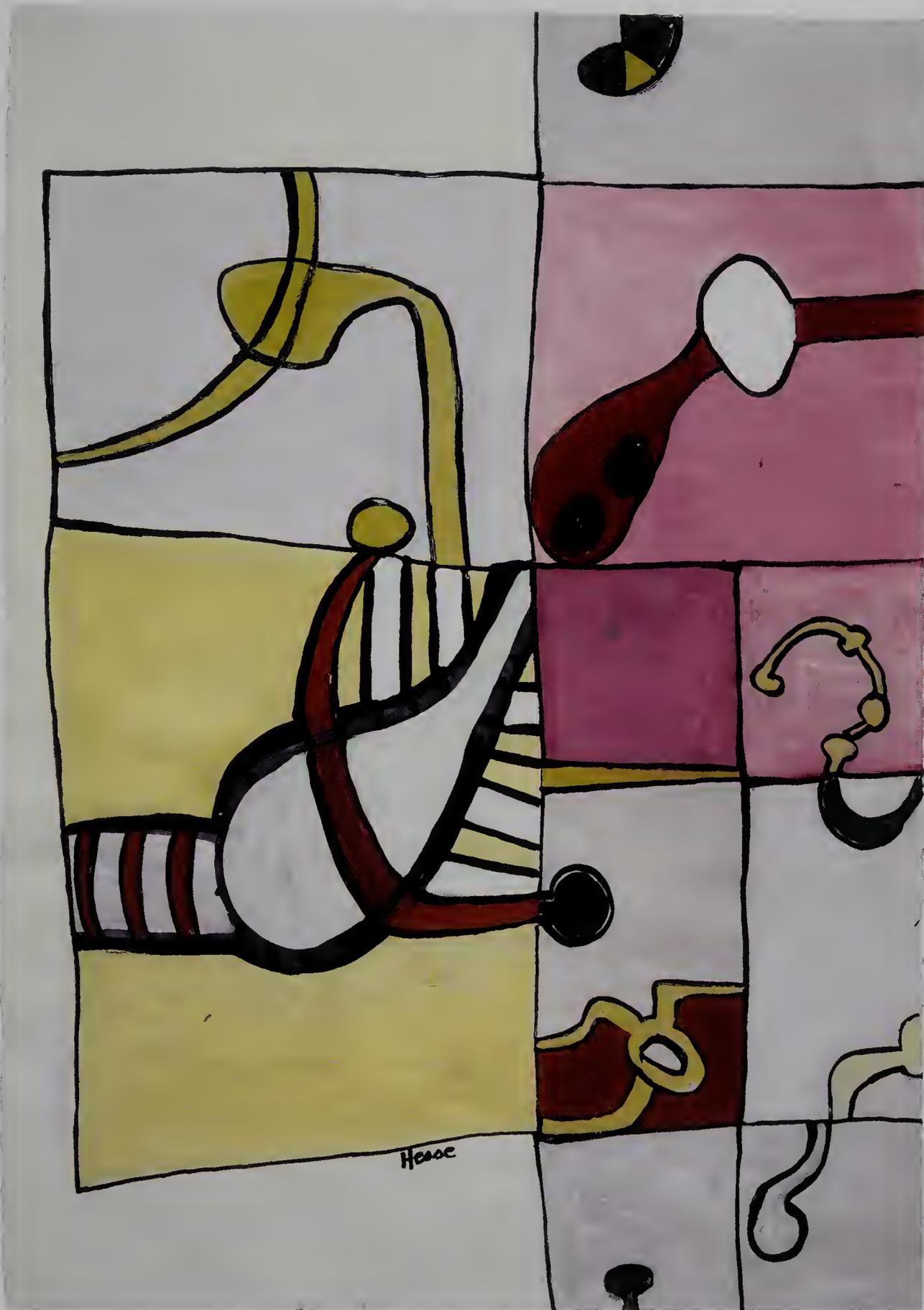
Ink, gouache, pencil, and watercolor on paper
 11 3/4 x 16 1/2 in. (29.8 x 41.9 cm)
 Museum Wiesbaden, Germany

from the time of their births (1933 and 1936, respectively) until each was approximately ten. In these books (always referred to by the family as *Tagebücher*, or day books),⁵ William wrote (in German and English) extensive accounts of his daughters' daily lives and surroundings and pasted various kinds of ephemera (extending from their birth announcements to the doc-

uments allowing them to escape Germany in 1938, newspaper clippings, and so on). It is not unreasonable to assume that the reason Hesse's father kept his journals in the first place was so that there would be—in the future, when they could absorb it—a record for his daughters of the period of history, marked by German fascism and anti-Semitism, that they had survived. In any event, she grew up knowing about these books, and it can thus be said that the idea of keeping books that preserve memory and thoughts was to some extent inherited from her father.

A starting point is a sheet in a notebook found in Hesse's papers, dating to 1964, almost certainly when Hesse was in Kettwig, Germany, with her husband, the sculptor Tom Doyle [ill. 53]. Both artists were guests of Arnhardt Scheidt, a textile manufacturer who provided them with housing and studios in the factory buildings of his family business, which was then being shut down. On the page, Hesse divided the top of the sheet into squares, within which she drew objects, describable neither as abstraction nor as figuration, resembling a group of brightly colored finished works, some gouache on paper and others oil on canvas from 1964 and 1965 [61, ill. 54]. The journal sheet is particularly striking because Hesse's uses for it were so diverse, combining language and imagery in ways that we can speculate are interrelated. Here, in the midst of the imagery, she made a written list that she titled "A Day," where she calculated how

5. These papers are still in the private collection of William Hesse's family.



[61] no title, n.d. (c. 1965)

many hours she spent doing household chores, how many hours she actually got to work in her studio, et cetera. The day, for Hesse, consisted of sixteen waking hours, of which she found that she had ten hours for herself. Then she addressed herself: **"I should make it on that, no?"** Undoubtedly, this sheet shows us Hesse talking to herself. Next to the written list of hours is a drawn shape with hydra arms positioned as the radiating spokes of a clock pointing to the hours of the day. This drawing on the diary-like sheet relates to a form on Hesse's 1965 relief of painted cord and metal on Masonite wittily titled (after a gambling term) *Eighter from Decatur*. On the relief, she attached a found object, a mechanical part (with flexible wire spokes) used for winding cords in a textile factory with flexible wire spokes [111. 55]. Relating that form back to the work on paper and its hourly break up of the day suggests that somewhere in its morphological and metaphorical development, the kinetic object functions as a surrogate for a clock. The surviving notebook entry can be seen, consequently, to catch the movement between thought and imagery and between event and object that will inform the evolution of her sculpture.

Another example is a page, from the same period, on which she wrote **"A Diary,"** an indication of a structural arrangement that pertains to the paintings and drawings of this period, where the surface of the work is divided into square-like cells containing brightly colored biomorphic objects. It would seem that these squares are episodic—like a comic-book rendition of the diary of her life. This group of notebook entries constitutes a visual-verbal diary that turns observations into form, which then begins to have a life of its own. The sheet in question is dated precisely—December 18, 1964—and she wrote **"A Diary"** on the top of it [62]. Also observable is a profile drawing of Doyle, with a cartoon-like thought balloon coming out of his mouth. What he's saying is only describable as question marks and exclamation points. Then the page has various notations in Hesse's hand: **"I will tell you an incredible story,"** in one square, the date (with **"I think"**) off to the side. Again, she plays with clock forms, and writes **"o'clock."** Another little section plays out the well-known children's game about chance and devotion, as she has drawn a four-leaf clover, and then **"4,"** and then **"Forget me not."** In another square she wrote: **"No games, Direct."** Around this, she arranged hieroglyphics describing some event, as well as drawings: a flower, a toy truck on its side, ovals that look like Christmas-tree bulbs, a shoe. Perhaps these are observations of other parts of her daily experience



[ill. 55] *Fighter from Decatur*, 1965
Tempera paint, cord, and metal on Masonite
27 1/8 x 21 1/4 x 7 1/2 in. (68.9 x 54 x 19 cm)
Museum Wiesbaden, Germany

of living with a family in which there were several children to whom she gave some drawing instruction,⁶ which might account for the informal qualities of these notebooks, and of this sheet's looking like a handwriting lesson in the English alphabet. Hence, these pages are rich combinations of diary information, direct school-lesson graphics, and comic-book episodes. It is a merit of the journal keeping that it allowed Hesse to build this inventory through what was for her a habitual activity.

Chronologically, the next sheet of significance in the works on paper is a page from a *Stundenplan*, a book typically used by German students to fill in their schedules. It is broken into blocks of space for each day of the week, and a separate line is allotted for each of the eight hours of the student's day. Hesse dated the page "1965-66" [64]. Time, clocks, and schedules were again on her mind. Here she drew pictures of all the sculpture that she had done in the year after her return from her native land, which marked a very intense period of work for Hesse. She had returned from Germany, come back to live in New York, and given up painting completely in favor of making sculpture. Exasperated by many aspects of her marriage—witness the list of the hours in the day the year before, which apparently did not in fact give her adequate time—she decided to separate from Doyle. The face given to this explosive period in the *Stundenplan* is very businesslike. Giving the precise date when each was made, she drew a picture of every sculpture and wrote down its title. The eleven works thus inventoried were Hesse's first fully sculptural works, all using rubber and string and operating according to principles of regularity and chaos, exuding bodily reference, and emitting absurdist humor. In short, they are brimming with more ideas than seemed possible from the Hesse of a year before in Germany. The *Stundenplan* page began to show Hesse as an inventory maker. It is typical of other sheets within her papers, which collectively functioned for her as a method of keeping track of things, as a type of bookkeeping, archiving, making an inventory. The *Stundenplan* bespeaks precision and control.

The last entry in the *Stundenplan* sheet is for March 1966, the month in which she made nine net bags filled with weights and polyethylene meant to hang on the wall as a cluster of distended biomorphic shapes. On the *Stundenplan*, this work is titled *Not Yet*. The same work (with another title—this time *Solosipstic* [sic]) is referred to on a somewhat later sheet, in another notebook, in this instance on a list of eight titles matched to six works of sculpture, some of which also appear in the

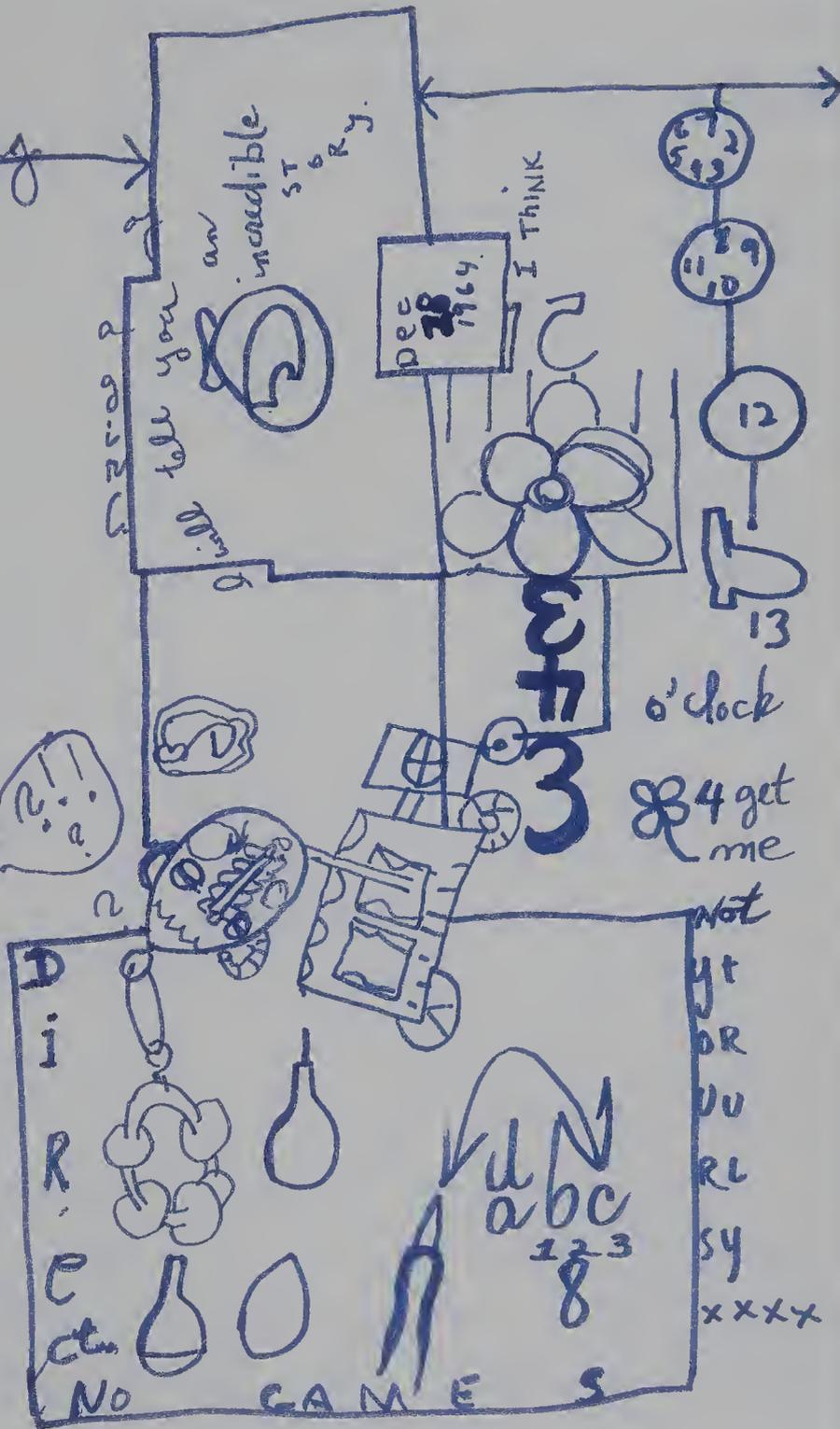
6. I thank Kirsten Swenson for this observation.

[62] no title, from diary 1977.52.28, 1964-65

overleaf, left: [63] no title, from diary 1977.52.31, 1966

overleaf, right: [64] no title, from notebook 1977.52.27, 1965

a diary





SOLASIPSTIC



~~LAOCOON~~

→ LAOCOON 10'6" x



ENNEAD small

→ METRONOMIC IRREGULARITY ^I

MET-RO-NO-MIC IRREGULARITY



→ VERTIGINOUS DETOUR ^{large II}

~~SEVERAL~~

Several DANCE



ingeminate

Stundenplan 1965-66

	Montag	Dienstag	Mittwoch	Zeit
1	Sept. 25 	4 	Nov 7 	DEC "ZSHTEA"
2				
3				
2	Oct 25 			
5		5 	DEC 6 	
6		11 		
3	Nov 			
7	"LONG LIKE"			
8				
	Donnerstag	Freitag	Samstag	Zeit
1	Jan 	"Hang up"	Feb 1 66 	"TOTAL" ZERO
2				
3				
4				
5		"Laucon"	11. 	"NOT" YET
6	10. march 66 	"Structural" Sketches	march 66	
7				
8				



July
1986

(1)

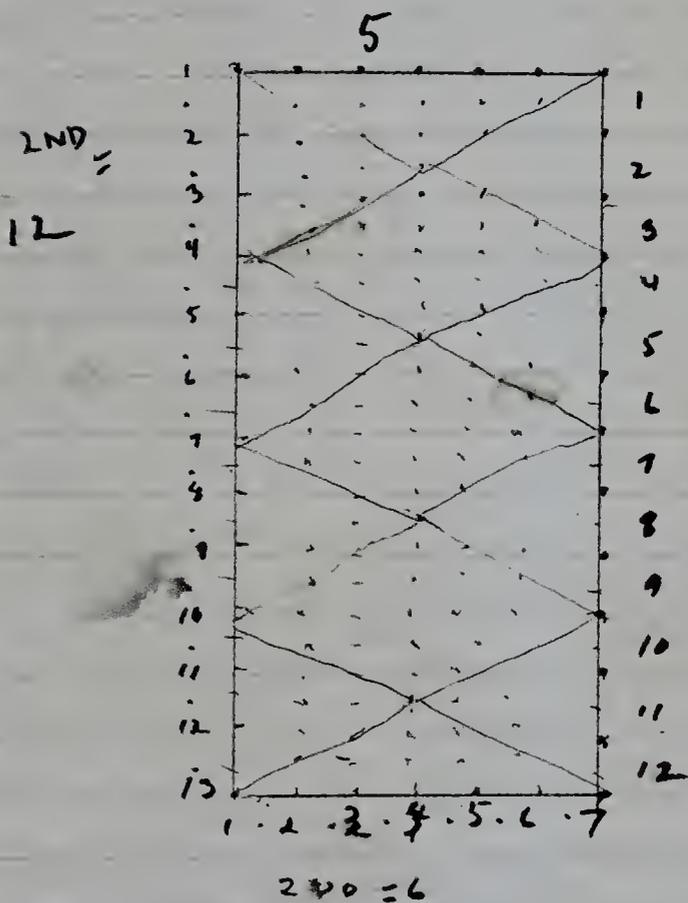


vector board

6 inches \longleftrightarrow wide

12 inches \updownarrow long

2 boards.



$1/4'' = 1$

60 total
○ -
drill
holes.

120 holes

6 inches
in between

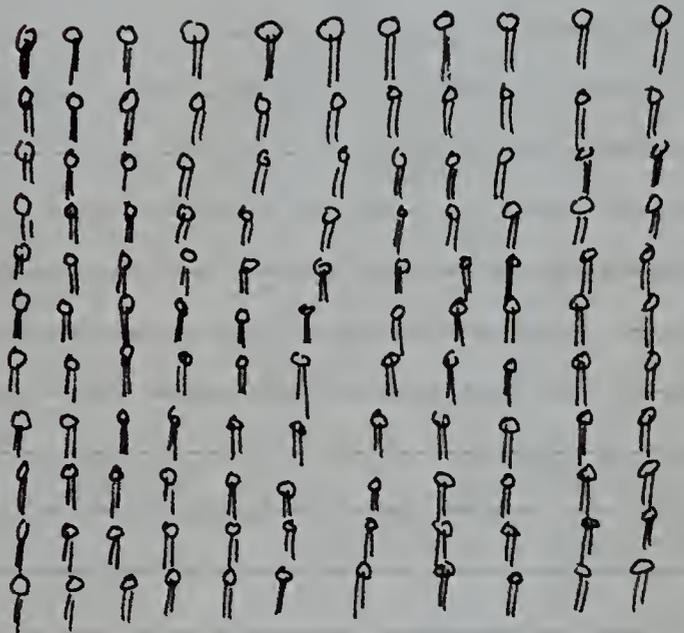
Stundenplan [63]. Like the earlier inventory, this page lists words and objects, significantly adding the misspelled word *solosipstic*, a “term” used with the correct spelling by Mel Bochner in an essay he published in *Arts Magazine* in the summer of 1967.⁷

Hesse’s listing of titles feels like an exercise. This may be too harsh a judgment. Nonetheless, the works that came next were to be altogether more serious. Her notes in these works on paper come to relate to the types of discussions she was having with LeWitt and Bochner beginning in the summer of 1966. Gone is the easy slippage between the language of the diary and form-making evident in the work on paper from Germany. By July of 1966, in addition to changing the nature of the words in her lists for titles, Hesse, talking to herself in her notes, began to use measurement. Numbers, heretofore used whimsically, now mean something; they are useful as calculations. A group of the works on paper contain diagrammatic indications of a switch, a re-channeling of an aspect of practice into the kind of “calculation work” that was the legacy of Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Mel Bochner. Typical are two sketches dated July 1966, one determining the division of a rectangular ground into equal spaces (each accommodating identical circles), the other making calculations, in diagram form and in written notes, for one panel of the sculpture *Metronomic Irregularity* [65]. Hesse, like LeWitt, Judd, and Bochner, based the composition of her pieces on a mathematical structuring. The conceit of *Metronomic Irregularity* is to pass a string through regularly spaced holes on two grid-like panels, a space the size of each panel separating them. Hesse’s sketch is for only a section of the finished piece, but the diagram, which indicates the mathematical divisions of the grid and the crisscross of wire from point to point, conjures how the finished piece will contain both order and chaos. What’s typical here for Hesse is that her work on paper is again a very precise description in both words (she wrote the name of the material, gave the dimensions of the piece and the scale of the drawing, and numbered the points where the holes would be drilled on the boards) and images of her plan: in short, a “working drawing,” very exacting, able to exist as a blueprint of information to be executed by another party, and thus consistent with Bochner’s concept.

Bochner’s exhibition *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things...* named and gave status to a class of materials that he described as drawings that were not necessarily works of art. How can we theorize similar miscellanies left in Hesse’s studio—the papers and so-called test pieces for sculpture? I might call these works the ephemera

7. Mel Bochner, “Serial Art, System: Solopsism,” *Arts Magazine* 41, no. 8 (Summer 1967).

3.



1. holes equally spaced.
2. black rubber hose
3. 5' x 5'
4. 3" thick

scalp-metal surface - paint flat bl.

of the development of an idea. Bochner's *Working Drawings...* exhibition had broadened the encounter with art. As James Meyer writes, "...Bochner solicits the viewer's thought; he exposes the work as a semantic construct, weaves it through a discursive and institutional web."⁸ By looking at Hesse's miscellany we are able to examine the context, the thinking of and making of the work of art. In the period from 1967 to 1969, as Hesse worked on the parallel practices of drawing and sculpture, she took stock, ordered, listed, inventoried. She kept lists related to drawing and sculpture. Hesse's drawings that she considered works of art were typically untitled. Her "inventories" of them, dating from 1968, are summations [67, 68]. These are her records, her accounting of her drawings for herself, records of her property on consignment or given away. As earlier, Hesse was very precise: She made measurements, miniature renditions of the work, and other handwritten descriptions of the features of the drawings. Intimate accounts, these inventories of property are records of a history of making.

Hesse's lists of words that she was either about to use or had already used as titles for sculpture parallel the drawing inventories. These lists also appear to be summations, names attached at the end of the process of making to describe a phenomenon already achieved, one that Hesse decided to name. Her words identify a state that is a parallel to her process. They remain fixed with the works they accompany. Similarly, Richard Serra, at nearly precisely this moment, wrote a verb list, which he described as "Actions to relate to oneself, material, place, and process." Among the verbs were:

"to roll"

"to crease"

"to fold"

"to store"

"to bend"

"to shorten"

"to twist"

Accounting for Serra's use of language as an element of his work, Benjamin Buchloh has observed that Serra's "explicit observation of the procedures involved in the production of sculpture" in the artist's *Verb List* (1967–8) reveals "yet another aspect of the process phenomena."⁹ Like Serra's words, Hesse's titling, as observed in the word lists in her papers, constitutes an attempt to concretize the making and the meaning of her work.

8. James Meyer, "The Second Degree: Working Drawings and Other Visible Things," in *Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible 1966–73* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995), 103.

9. Serra's verb list was published in *Avalanche* in 1971. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Process Sculpture and Film in Richard Serra's Work," in *Neo-Avanguard and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 414.

Drawings 1918 Eastman

(1)

H. 15" W. 11"



dark
green
brown bl.
3 across
5 down

(2) 11" 15"



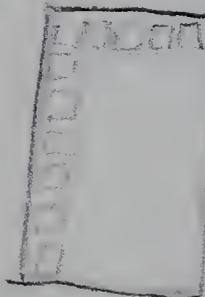
white to white
- spin
2 sections

(3) $15\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ "



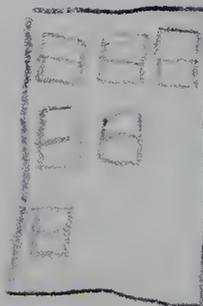
white yellow ochre
5 across
5 down

(4) 15" x 11"



5 across
1 down
all white

(5) 15" x 11"



3 across
3 down all
white film over
double section

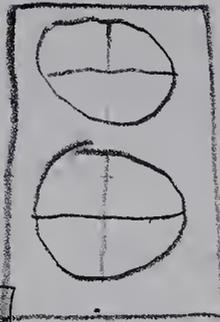
(6) 13" x 13"
OVERVIEW



3 across
4 down all
2 sections
aspex

Eva Reese 1968

7) 15" x 11" H. W white
white

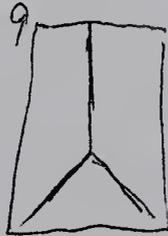


8) 15" x 11"



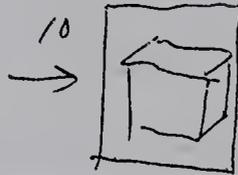
stripes
beige, white

9) 15" x 11"



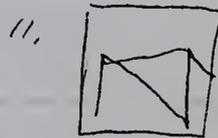
inside accession
pinhead white
simple

10) 15 1/2" x 11"



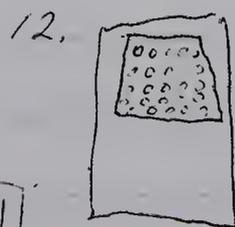
accession
full box

11) 11" x 15 1/2"



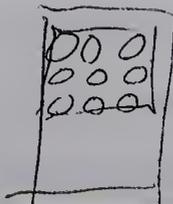
accession
side + inside view

12) 22 1/2" x 15"



large
rubber mat
dots

13) 22 1/2" x 15"



large, circles,

TITLES

□ D

ADDENDUM → A thing added or
to be added
ACCESSION → INCREASED BY
SOMETHING
ADDED
REPEAT ICN 19

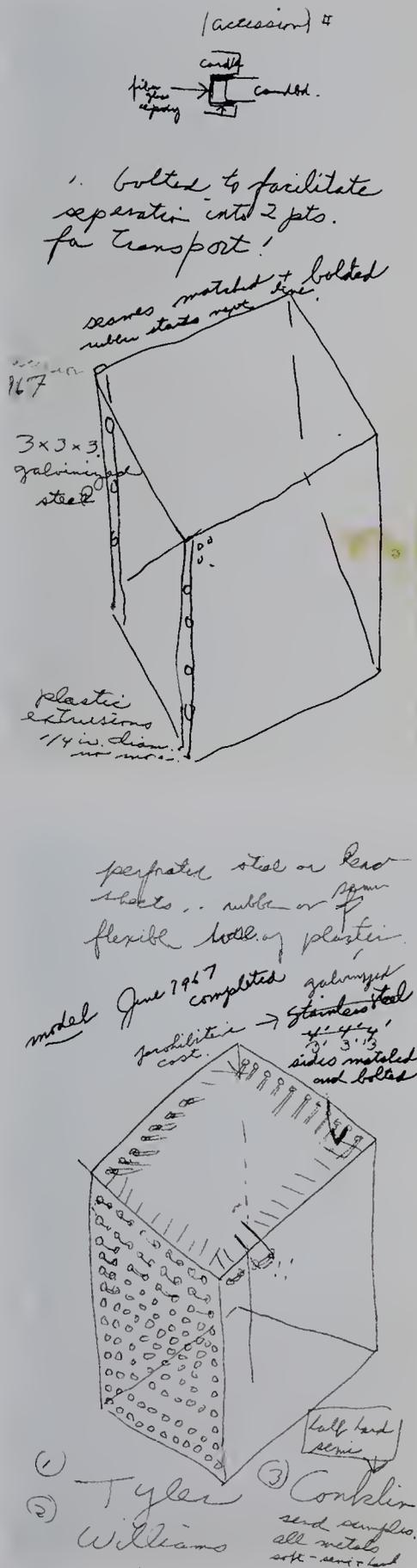
SCHEMA: LATEX SEMI-SPHERES
42" x 42" x 1 1/2"

SANS: LATEX RUBBER 

STRATUM: MAT LATEX R.W.
WHITE POWDERED PIGMENT

Consider, for instance, a list, probably dating to 1968, that she named *Titles* and on which she typed or stamped three words (“Addendum,” “Accession,” and “Repeation [sic] 19”) and handwrote three (“Schema,” “Sans,” and “Stratum”) [69]. All but one of these “titles,” “Addendum,” Hesse used for pieces made for her 1968 sculpture exhibition, *Chain Polymers*, at the Fischbach Gallery. The first three words are to be considered as relating to sculptures that she made with repeating elements. Next to “Addendum” she wrote, in her own hand, “A Thing Added/ to be Added.” Next to “Accession,” she wrote, “Increased by Something Added.” “Repeation 19” stands alone, with no explanation. She then wrote words for which she gave no definition: “Schema,” the name of a sculpture about which she gave the precise material and dimensions, and “Sans” and “Stratum,” the names of sculptures for which she only listed materials. Another sheet from the same period has drawings of thirteen sculptures next to their titles, most of which are again accompanied by their

definitions [137]. “Increased by Something Added” defines the condition of the work *Accession*, of which there were ultimately five different versions, each featuring holes drilled in a closely spaced grid pattern on a cube-shaped surface. On the inside of the cubes, between the holes, extrusions of woven plastic tubing are cut off at equal lengths. While the interiors of the cubes are tangled and dense, the outsides are severe and plain. I take Hesse to have been, like Serra, naming a piece by finding a word to describe the procedures of its making, in Buchloh’s sense. In this way, language—or, for Hesse, naming—was the analogue of process.



[ill. 56] no title, 1967

Pen and ink on notebook paper

7 1/2 x 5 in. (19.1 x 12.7 cm)

Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio,

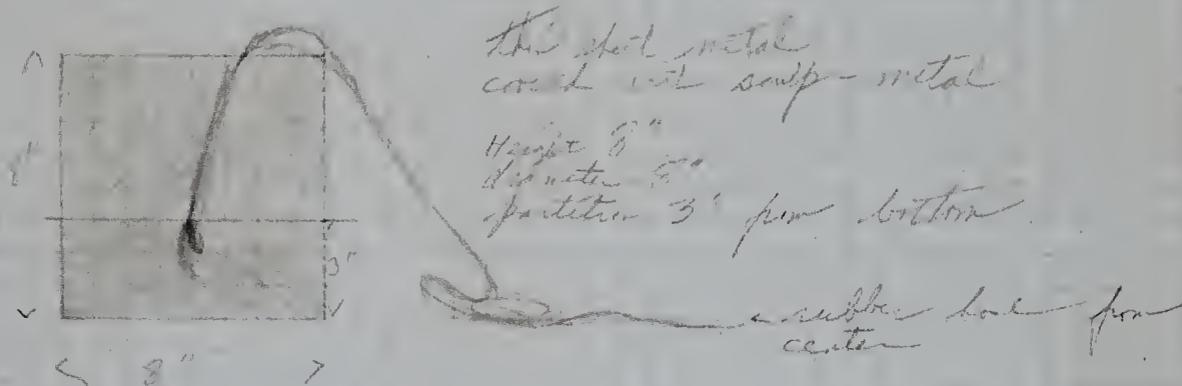
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977, 1977.52.25b

Another step in the broadening of the definition of process is the recognition of the step of the “model,” a step that the artist acknowledged on a sheet relating to *Accession* dated June 1967, by writing the word “model” [70]. Arguably, Hesse’s use of the word related to the identification of the model as a part of process—a stage that artists were attempting to make both conspicuous and transparent—in an exhibition of May 1966 that included many of the Minimalist sculptors, but not Hesse. Entitled *Art in Process: The Visual Development of a Structure* and curated by Elayne Varian at the Finch College Museum of Art/Contemporary Study Wing, the exhibition focused on “not the finished structure but its ‘development,’” as James Meyer has written.¹⁰ Varian showed finished works together with the models and diagrams “used in their execution.” Perhaps inspired by the self-conscious treatment of models in this exhibition, Hesse, with *Accession*, made one that relates to the first of the papers in the series. A subsequent sheet dated by Hesse as 1967 is a written and drawn description for *Accession II*, most likely a sketch for a drawing sent to Arco Metals in Manhattan, where a larger perforated steel cube was fabricated for her [ill. 56].

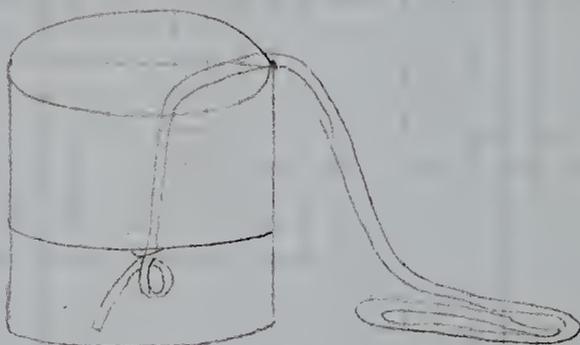
In the summer of 1967, as the sheets indicate, she was continuing to emphasize the importance of models to her process, moving away from a strict brand of Minimalism in the style of LeWitt and looking for more expressive qualities in her work. You see this in the sheets of drawings of *Accretion* and *Repetition Nineteen III*. For example, in *Accretion* we witness a progression: from drawing to model to drawing after model to model turned into sculpture, et cetera. A similar group of drawings, made both before and after the creation of *Repetition Nineteen*, are also interesting

10. James Meyer, *Minimalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 174.

Figure 1407 "repetition nineteen"



19 sections - to be placed at random (in a group) on floor, on low level and not a particular base.



in that some were done as studies for works and others were made after their respective works were completed. For one of these drawings, a preliminary study precisely executed on graph paper [71], Hesse measured a work, which she named “repeation [sic] nineteen,” giving its exact size, and then wrote that there would be nineteen sections to be placed at random and grouped on the floor. Writing about material again—sheet metal covered with sculpt metal—she is discussing a version of *Repetition Nineteen*. The drawings here are very impressionistic, quite different from the “working drawings” in that they are sketchy and loose, more painterly. Both in the drawings for *Accretion* and in the drawings for *Repetition Nineteen* she used gouache—which is, in itself, a clue to the direction that her work was taking: She was thinking about the pieces as material presences as much as formal ones. The interest in mathematical proportioning was dwindling. The serial organization continued, but Hesse was now more interested in what the pieces were made of. *Repetition Nineteen*, as a piece of sculpture, has many different versions that go from papier-mâché to latex to fiberglass.

The next landmark in Hesse’s work came in October 1968, when her show *Chain Polymers* opened at the Fischbach Gallery, the only one-person show of sculpture she ever had. The year leading up to *Chain Polymers* saw the artist’s interest in her materials intensify profoundly, particularly in latex and fiberglass. It was at this time that she began making her test pieces. These are small, varied objects, under six inches, some of which are strange, small, biomorphic, even sexual, forms, others are square shapes of latex or plaster. They are clearly sketches of ideas, even “models,” and can be thought of as three-dimensional working drawings. Their status, for Hesse, was as experiments in the configurations of forms and in materials—in using latex, plaster, paint, string, screen covered with latex, canvas covered with latex, clay, wax, latex covered cheesecloth. Some Hesse formally saved as the four collections enclosed, each in a separate glass pastry case. Many test pieces, found in Hesse’s studio after she died, did not end up in glass cases, however, and are either still with her estate or are part of the collection of the Berkeley Art Museum. They have a strange status: A persuasive argument can be made that these little pieces constitute a hybrid form, a transformation of the model and diagram into a model/sketch carried out directly with the material, a precise capturing of a state that was fluid, expressive, and imperfect, but that could not be captured a priori in a sketch or model. Hesse learned the potential of her materials from her test pieces.

[71] no title, Summer 1967

After the fall of 1968's *Chain Polymers*, where she exhibited four large sparkling, transparent fiberglass works and four relatively large, supple, latex pieces, all based on a similar formal structure of repeating parts, in which the elements differ or are varied by nuanced interferences to an overall uniformity, Hesse began creating the working sheets and notes again. Here she had a sense of what she wanted to do with various combinations of materials. In a letter from late 1968 or early 1969 to Dorothy James, she wrote, "I am asked to be in so many shows, I can't keep it up. I have an assistant, 2 days a week. I also teach at the School of Visual Arts. I live at same place. I am still Eva."¹¹ The sheets that date from the end of 1968 are as a group hard to date with precision or to sequence. They depart almost entirely from the mathematic structure of the early drawings, and are on the whole much looser, much more direct thoughts of possibilities for sculpture.

Hesse's art-making context changed after *Chain Polymers*. While making the pieces for the Fischbach show, she had worked with a single collaborator, Doug Johns, at his shop on Staten Island until it closed in the fall of 1968. At the same time, she was working with latex in her studio on the Bowery, which she did herself, with some assistance from Johns. But over the course of the year that followed, Hesse came to bring assistants in, principally (besides Johns) Martha Schieve and then Bill Barrette. Her working sheets from this time indicate a process that involved a sketch or some written thoughts—which she used to think through her own issues—but no exact measurements or instructions. Assistants were available to talk through the process of making the works that the notes implied. Only occasionally, at the beginning of the process of working with assistants, is there still a sheet—for instance, the drawing for *Vinculum*—that is precise: The work is drawn, the materials are indicated [27].

Beginning at this time, Hesse seems to have wanted to leave more to chance. The drawings became hypothetical, presenting possibilities, desires, and thoughts rather than measurements. Consider, for instance, one page, a drawing of a latex sheet on which Hesse has written "cast on plastic sheets / ? over tubes / wall leanings / or mesh with plastic over" [72]. This sheet could relate to many works. Aspects of it relate to *Aught*, a piece that hangs on the wall, consisting of four identical separate pieces of latex over canvas sandwiched over plastic cloths that hang on the wall. It could relate to *Augment*, a pile of latex on canvas sheets that sit on the

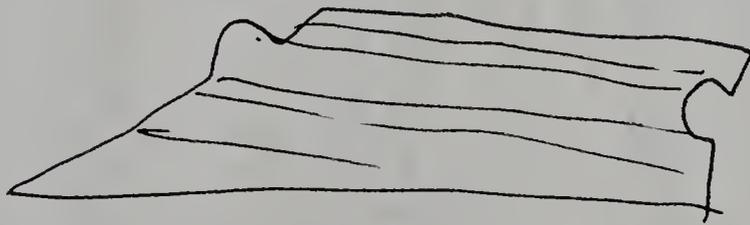
11. Archives of American Art, Lucy Lippard papers, Box 26.

Cast or plastic sheets

? over Tubes

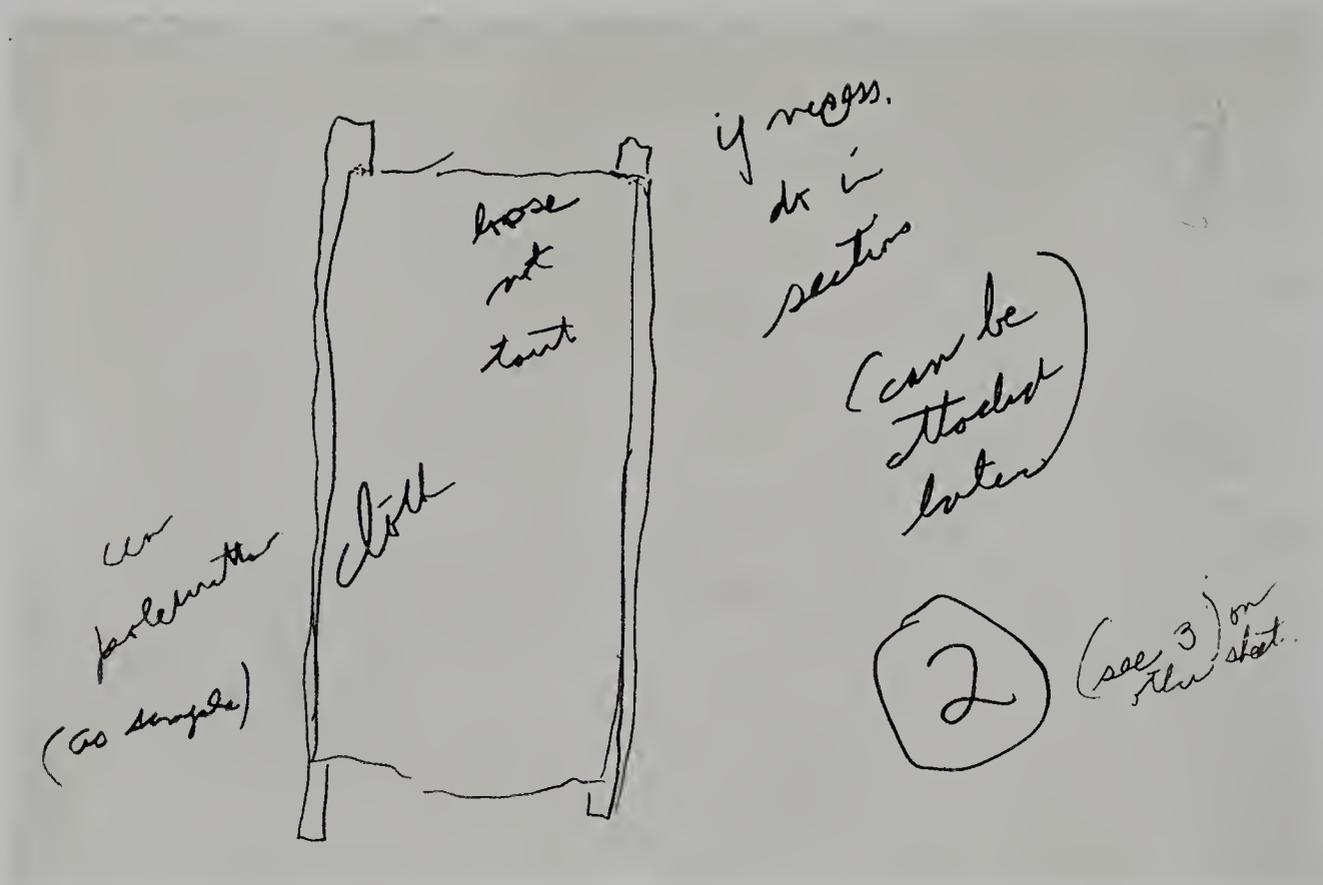
(1)

wall leaning.



or
nest into
plastic over.

floor. It could relate to *Area*, which is a wall to floor piece of sewn-together sections of wire mesh covered with latex. These were all made in the summer of 1968. But the drawing seems to date from later in the year; it indicates a shape that is draped, pliant, collapsed, soft. The sheer sketchiness of the drawing appears to indicate that the material—the coated material—should take its own form as opposed to a precise shape decided on a priori. This would be not so much anti-form but rather a chance for a form to have its own fate and history. The drawing, numbered “1,” is followed by a sheet, numbered “2,” that appears to be a study for what became *Expanded Expansion*, a major piece that Hesse made in her studio in early 1969 for the May exhibition at the Whitney, *Anti-Illusion*, which opened after Hesse had been operated on for a brain tumor that April. In the second piece she draws an individual section of *Expanded Expansion*. She writes (to herself? to her assistants?), “if necess [sic] do in sections / can be attached later / cloth loose not taut” [73]. Another note, numbered “3,” refers to the next step in the sequence [135]. It is a fuller drawing for what the finished piece, *Expanded Expansion*, would look like. On this sheet



she writes, "lots of thin long forms to be used together with rubber or the cheese cloth / can cloth go through the forms?"

It seems that Hesse's way of working at this point resembled that of a film director's way of working with a storyboard, in which he or she visually plots the course of action to be taken. The difference is that Hesse was not always certain about her moves and sometimes just conjectured a possibility. In thinking of how she and her assistants were going to construct a given piece, Hesse provided a series of possibilities and questions in visual form. The question that cannot be answered is where, at this point, these working sheets fit into her process. Do they lead us on a secure path, from beginning to end, to the creation of a work? It might be that Hesse was indicating a more or less precise progression, a sense of working towards or through an idea. But, of course, the process had a looser quality, there would be alternatives, situations could—and should—go perhaps this way, perhaps that way. She was coming to cherish a more inchoate process, as is clear from an interview she did with

[73] no title, n.d.

right: [74] no title, n.d.



plastic (2)
fg.

process
cloth
hung from
ceiling in
form -- resin
added. drips
into place.

work-fourth 17 foot hanging one planned for whitney
 1, stand up on lower section holes to attach to wall not necessarily straight
 can lean forward
 2 center rubber clutched together with rubber wires or cord or staples mixed. nothing
 form however it falls naturally.
 3 top held up or fallen over, either way.



work- fifth ropes rubberized with filler all sizes widths colors connected to
 plastic one i made but reaching closer to what i had envisioned for that piece
 the way it had started before i got sick. hung irregularly tying knots as connection
 s really letting it go as it will. allowing it to determine more of the way it
 completes itself. make it with at least 2 or 3 of us, connecting from wires from ceiling
 ng and nails from walls and other ways let it determine more itself. how floppy
 or stiff it might be. colors. how much rope / must be rope piece.



[75] no title, November 1969

Cindy Nemser in January, 1970: "I used to plan a lot and do everything myself and then I started to take the chance—not the chance, I needed help. It was a little difficult at first, I worked with two people but then we got to know each other well enough and I got confident enough and just prior to when I was sick, I would not state the problem or plan the day. I would let more happen and let myself be used in a freer way and they also—their participation was more their own."¹²

There are many drawings for works that, while never realized, Hesse was obviously thinking about making. For example, on one page, she wrote the word "process," drew a cone-shaped,

teepee-like structure, and wrote "cloth hung from the ceiling, in form, resin added, drips into place" [74]. Sketches such as this one offer a unique record of what Hesse was thinking about in the last part of her life. After she recovered from her first operation, in May of 1969, she was able to resume work in her studio. By November, though often unwell, she continued to make plans for creating work. The final drawings were first done as pencil sketches with written notes and then as drawings accompanied by typewritten descriptions of the works that she wanted to make. Hesse wrote of plans for five works [75]. All the typewritten descriptions and ideas are clear and articulate. They are statements that hover between philosophy and description. A simple summary of these pages will, I think, best allow the nature of Hesse's ability to merge action and intention in these notes to shine forth. For instance, the fourth work she detailed, is a variation on aspects of *Contingent*, completed in November, a work consisting of eight panels of fiberglass and latex over

12. Page 14 of unedited typescript of Cindy Nemser interview, on deposit at Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio.

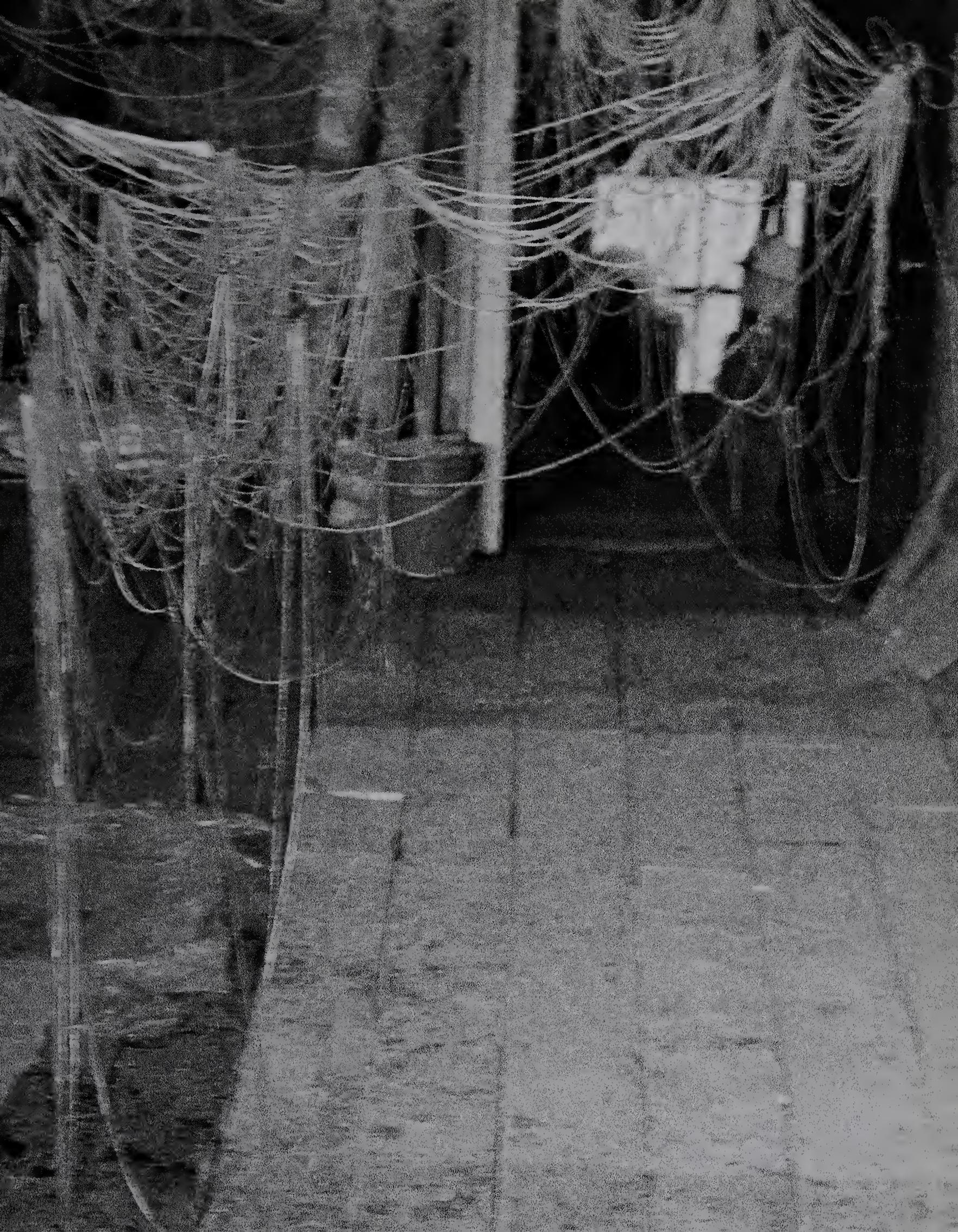
cheesecloth hanging from the ceiling. Hesse wrote: "work-fourth 17 foot hanging one planned for Whitney / 1, stand up on lower section holes to attach to wall not necessarily straight can lean forward / 2 center rubber clutched together with rubber wires or cord or staples mixed. nothing form however it falls naturally. / 3 top held up or fallen over, either way."

Another sketch and typed description convey plans for perhaps the last piece that Hesse herself actually made, an untitled work, also hung from the ceiling, of latex over rope, wire, and string. This time, there are no steps one, two, or three. She labeled it "work fifth." Then she continued: "ropes, rubberized with filler all size widths colors connected to plastic one I made but reaching closer to what I had envisioned for that piece the way it had started before i got sick. hung irregularly tying knots as connection a really letting it go as it will. allowing it to determine more of the way it completes itself. make it with at least 2 or 3 of us, connecting from wires from ceiling and nails from walls and other ways let it determine more itself. how floppy or stiff it might be. Colors. how much rope/must be rope piece."

Hesse could conceptually come up with an idea of the life that she wanted for this work, though she couldn't see it, didn't know in advance how it would complete itself. This was not a measured "working drawing" for a fabricator, but an event, a collaboration, a performance—structured, yes, but open to chance. Hesse had a lifelong habit of drawing, listing, describing what she wanted to do and had done—a tendency to count the hours and quantify her production, to plan, to conceptualize. I have called this a loose diary.

The works on paper/works in the papers are not about intentionality. Rather they are non-hierarchical links, a process that connects and includes moments in art-making. The notes are part of a chain of things—drawings, models, test pieces, sculptural works. They are a part of Hesse's process—a drawing might lead to a work or it might record a finished work. A test piece may be developed into a finished sculptural work. Lists of words might attach themselves to works or simply remain a word in a series of other related words. Lists of words from a dictionary lead to further lists of words. The finished works led to the drawings. Drawings led to finished works. The universe of Hesse's work is made of these non-hierarchical links.







Gaze-and-Touching the Not Enough Mother.

BRACHA L. ETTINGER

“Indeed Hesse had made herself into the specialist of repetition-as-absurdity, which is to say repetition recast from the minimal projection of...impersonal law...into the disruptive subjectivity of an infantilized world...The exquisitely wrought drawings...always managed to escape the realm of conceptual art’s logic and to lodge themselves within the bodily and the obsessional...so many hairs marking the aureoles of so many nipples.”¹

—ROSALIND KRAUSS

INTRODUCTION

Rosalind Krauss has brought together Lacan’s *L Schema* and *objet a*, Lyotard’s *matrix figure*, and Deleuze-Guattari’s *desiring machines* to the realms of conceptual art, infiltrating modernism’s well-established autistic and phallic conceptual tissue with uncanny shadows from an *optical unconscious*.² Against the idea that a conceptual visual space in modern art is based on the autonomy of visuality, Krauss has shown the extent to which it is actually engendered by the body-psyche realm, either in the form of a pulsation that destabilizes “good form” or in the form of drives directed to their part-objects, interconnecting desiring-machines—mouths connected to breasts, for example—laboring to produce. This body-psyche im/pulsive scansion allows the distinct and intact coexistence of inside and outside and guarantees an accord between difference and simultaneity—an accord enabling the distinct and intact coexistence of figure and ground. As an example of this resisting, subversive attitude toward “good form” arising within the scope of modernism from the optical unconscious, Krauss

1. Rosalind Krauss, “Hesse’s Desiring Machines,” in Mignon Nixon ed., *Eva Hesse* (Cambridge: The MIT Press/October Files, 2002), 49.

2. Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

cites Marcel Duchamp's project of re-integrating the visual into the corporeal and restoring to the eye—against the disincarnated opticality of modern painting—the role of a participant in the psychic metabolism of the organism, one exposed, like any other zone of the body, to erotic power. This implies a rethinking of visuality in art in the context of the eye's integration in the primary body-psyche network. With the aid of the concept of the gaze as a lacking cause of desire, which Lacan invented and used to analyze Cezanne's process of painting (deploying the term "*objet a*" to designate the lack that causes desire in the unconscious scopic field),³ Krauss argues that Max Ernst, Duchamp, Alberti Giacometti, and Pablo Picasso invented a figurality of im/pulsation as an alternative to modernist opticality. So many part-objects, then, and, in Eva Hesse's case indeed, "so many nipples," of which the inaugurating nipples—to take these matters from where Krauss has left them for us with Duchamp's



work as a foundation—would for me be Duchamp's nipples: the *Rotary Demisphere* of 1925 [ill. 59] and the *Prière de toucher* of 1947 [ill. 60].⁴ Does not Duchamp invite us there to realize the difference between *touch* (*toucher*) and *gaze*? The "repetition-as-absurdity" of "so many nipples" and umbilical cords is an invitation to think of both touch and repetition themselves as psychic objects of desire that, alongside the lacking object gaze, inform visuality. These different objects of desire are residues and traces of psychic movement. Their source must be the maternal-feminine body and the archaic aesthetic environment that the mother is for the infant. Griselda Pollock

3. See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1981), 118.

4. Annette Michelson connects these works to the logic of Kleinian aggressivity towards part-objects. To cannibalistic and envious mouth-breasts, breasts become "targets." Michelson "Where Is Your Rupture," in *October, The Second Decade, 1986–1996*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 102–3. For Mignon Nixon, too, the destructiveness of the maternal is the most urgent feminist issue raised by the domain of part objects; this the "bad enough mother" might replicate with a smile. Mignon Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother," in *October, The Second Decade*.

[ill. 59] Marcel Duchamp, *Rotary Demisphere (Precision Optics)*, 1925

Motor-driven construction: painted wood demisphere, fitted on black velvet disk, copper collar with Plexiglas dome, motor, pulley, and metal stand

58 1/2 x 25 1/4 x 24 in. (148.6 x 64.1 x 61 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. William Sisler and Edward James Fund



[ill. 60] Marcel Duchamp, *Prière de toucher*, 1947
 Cover for the special edition of *Le Surréalisme* in 1947,
 catalogue of the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*,
 Galerie Maeght, Paris, July-August, 1947
 Modified Ready-made: collage of foam-rubber breast and velvet
 mounted on board
 16 7/16 x 13 5/8 x 2 13/16 in. (41.8 x 34.7 x 7.1 cm)

has shown again and again to what extent the presence and loss of the maternal-feminine body can serve as an artistic thinking tool and the linkage to it as a site of creative energies.⁵ With Deleuze following Freud and Lacan, repetition itself becomes the enigma of originary presence and loss. If a gaze as a trace, as a Lacanian *objet a*, is the absent cause of desire that is invisibly incarnated in painting, a gaze as a Deleuzian virtual object—call it *objet x*⁶—would, to my mind, receive its symbolic value as repetition within artistic practice. I would hereby link gaze and touch with repetition, and conceive each of these invisible

traces as traces of a psychic string rather than of an object, acting and affecting—and, when it treasures, as a trace, remnants of psychic action—as a link *a*. (The trace becomes a link *a* rather than an *objet a*.) The borderlinking movements between all these strings is in itself a matrixial string, and the thread of traces that stem from different sources and connect different partial-subjects is a matrixial trace (link *a*). When such a matrixial trace (link *a*) engages traces of virtual strings it becomes another kind of trace that we can name, following Deleuze, a link *x* of matrixial virtuality.

A link *x* of matrixial virtuality modulates the tension between virtual strings, traumatic strings, and phantasmatic threads (in which unconscious traces like *objet a* and link *a* are accumulated) that are borderlinking between *I* (presubjective instances) and non-*I* (maternal instances to begin with). A matrixial trans-subjectivity absorbs the vibrations of the virtual strings, the traumatic strings, and the phantasmatic threads within a shareable unconscious real to produce new psychic matrixial phantasmatic threads and to enable transformations in the traces (link *x*) of matrixial virtuality itself. Thus, a matrixial copoietic working-through can liberate the maternal instances from different virtual strings.

5. See Griselda Pollock, "Inscriptions in the Feminine," in Catherine de Zegher ed., *Inside the Visible* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996). See also Griselda Pollock, "Does Art Think?" in D. Arnold and M. Iverson eds., *Art and Thought* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2003).

6. See the argument developed by Gilles Deleuze in *Difference et Repetition* (Paris: PUF, 1968).

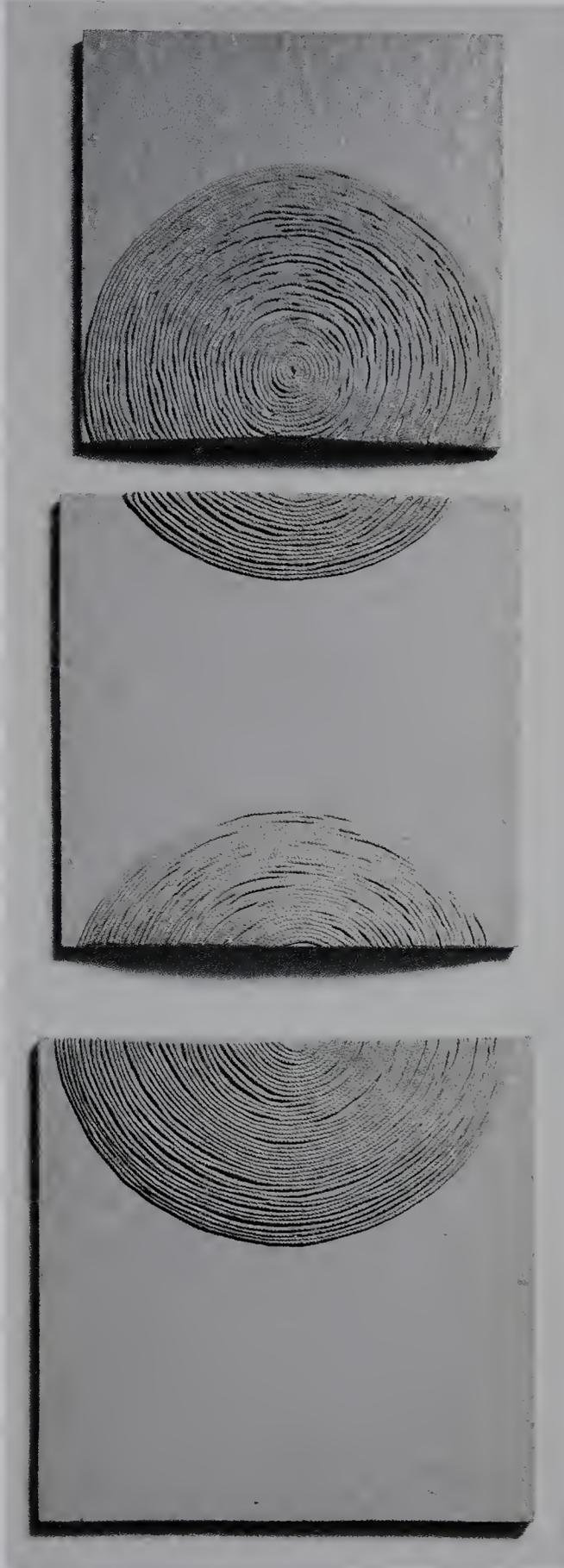
[ill. 61] *Cool Zone*, 1965

Aluminum base and painted cloth-bound cord, Diameter of stand: 15 in. (38.1 cm). length of cord: 45 in. (114.3 cm); depth: 10 in. (25.4 cm)
Audrey Irmes

In the link x of matrixial virtuality, phantasmatic threads resonate with real affective traumatic strings and with virtual strings that are re-attuning with one another and are stretched between *I* and non-*I* to create a virtual resonating intersection that through repetitions “carries,” via artworking, different possible futures while giving life to a series of artworks.

In Eva Hesse’s work, repetition is both based upon and brings about an ever longed for matrixial *gaze-and-touching* string that works both as a kind of psychic borderlinking to the viewer and as a matrixial trace of the phantasmatic thread that connects and differentiates girl and mother. This string and this thread meet with the virtual string of what I name *not-enoughness*. In the human, a virtual not-enoughness, related to the impossibility of immortality, is fixed upon the actual maternal figure who thus becomes the *Not Enough Mother*: the imagined, phantasmatic painful “source” of any sign and manifestation of not-enoughness. The real maternal figure must pay the price of that virtual string with her own psyche. Repetition in art re-opens the path from the phantasmatic Not Enough Mother thread to this virtual string of not-enoughness.

Not-enoughness is a major virtual psychic string connecting *I* and non-*I*, the effects of which are projected onto the real maternal figure, who by virtue of this projection becomes the *I*’s Not Enough Mother, even though with and along that string, *I* and non-*I* always exist partly in continuity with one another, as is the case with all other psychic strings in a matrixial web. A virtual repetitive kernel affectively signals that the



[ill. 62] no title, 1966

Acrylic paint, cord, and papier-mâché on Masonite
 38 x 12 x 2 1/4 in. (96.5 x 30.5 x 5.7 cm)
 Museum Wiesbaden, Germany

not-enoughness in the real is an actualization of a virtual possibility, yet it is the actual mother who in reality gives access to and further produces the psychic connective thread that absorbs the effect of this virtual string and gives it a meaning. This virtual string, which has always already been and will always already be, is interwoven within each matrixial maternal web and demonizes the mother. Yet, the demonization of the mother up to the point where "her" not-enoughness is phallically isolated from the matrixial borderspace endangers the matrixial net of psychic strings. Isn't the foreclosure of the poietic m/Other under the complaint of the mother's not-enoughness one of the names for a kind of hate transmitted from daughter to daughter? The Not Enough Mother is "used" as an imaginary archive of virtual potentiality for lacking in wholeness and mortality, and the maternal figure becomes the unconscious support for the encounter of virtual not-enoughness with reality. A phantasmatic collapse of this entire archive into the actual mother is an endless source of pain. However, beyond the maternal not-enoughness, the poietic archaic m/Other is foreclosed, and a copoietic unconscious string continues to vibrate with her. If artworking is based on the virtual that is borderlinked to the traumatic via shareable psychic strings, artworking that reveals the unconscious transmission between the virtual and the traumatic also treasures a healing transformational potentiality. The artwork creates a potential sphere

in which transformation in a virtual string might come about as a result of a matrixial working-through of the traumatic and the phantasmatic with-in the real.

The trace (link x) of matrixial virtuality vibrates beyond the artwork on the unconscious partially shareable level where partial subjects—self-instances and maternal instances, I and non- I —emerge together. Few unconscious strings and threads connecting different subjects—where each unconscious thread is composed of accumulated events of encounter and of intersecting points of virtual strings, phantasmatic threads, and traumatic strings—are assembled in a matrixial linkage. In Eva Hesse's artworking, the matrixial linkage weaves together the virtual string of not-enoughness with three unconscious phantasmatic threads: the phantasmatic thread of the Not Enough Mother (to which we shall return in chapter III),⁷ the phantasmatic thread of a Dead Mother (Andre Green),⁸ and the phantasmatic thread that assembles the traces of the memory of an actual dead mother. The artwork connects us to the archaic m/Other via the resonance of a link x of matrixial virtuality composed of the linkage between the virtual string of not-enoughness and these three different interlacing threads, intermingled with and approached by repetitions of gaze-and-touching links a in different formal and material ways. Nipples and cords are fragmental traces of gaze and touch (*objets a*) in a dismantled and perforated matrixial sphere. They are residues of traces of gaze-and-touching (links a) that have multiplied to endless material cords via traces (*objets x*) of virtuality embedded in repetition, which have become frozen in a movement from a potential severality to fragmentation and multiplicity and from a potential *fascinace*⁹ (in a matrixial space) to Krauss's "bachelor" desiring machines. The matrixial traces became phallic traces (*objets a*) that are arresting the viewer in *fascinum* (Lacan).¹⁰ As a result of these moves from links to objects, nipples and cords reach the condition of an eclipse "within which one experiences the pity and terror of...eclipse"¹¹ itself when the virtual not-enoughness reaches again and again the Not Enough Mother.

"SO MANY NIPPLES," SO MANY CORDS, SO MANY HOLES,
AND THE PSYCHIC GAZE-AND-TOUCHING STRING AND LINK A

Lacan's psychoanalytic thought concerning both art and repetition revolves around the impossibility of annulling what Freud named "the primary repression," or the

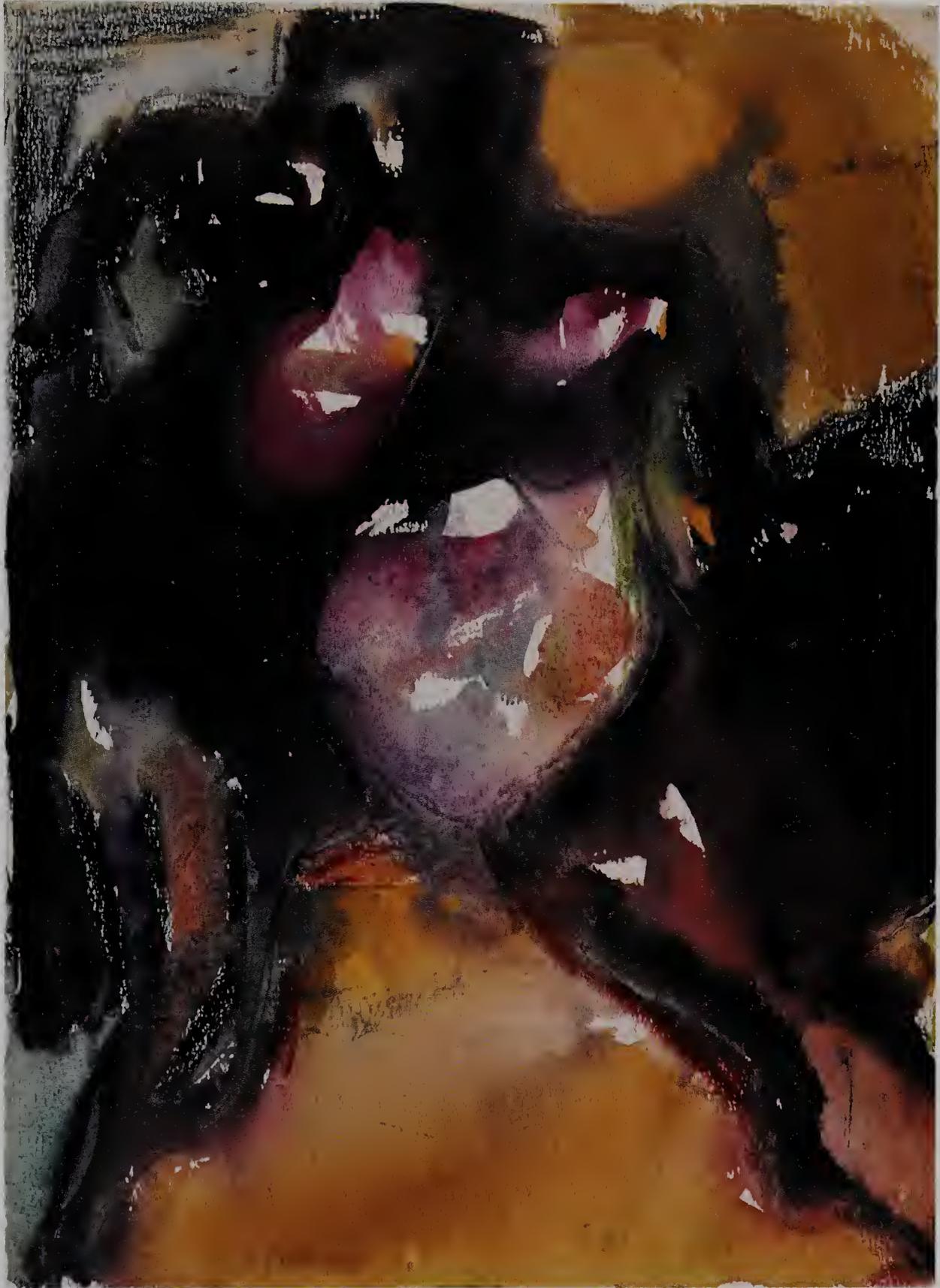
7. Bracha L. Ettinger, "The Not Enough Mother and the Maternal Function." Keynote Lecture. *The International Conference at Shalvata Mental Hospital*, Hod Hasharon, Israel, June 15, 2005.

8. Andre Green, "The Dead Mother," in *Life Narcissism, Death Narcissism* (New York: Free Association Books, 2001), 11.

9. See also my "Fascinace. The Woman-to-woman (Girl-to-m/Other) Matrixial Feminine Difference", in Griselda Pollock ed., *Psychoanalysis and the Image* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2006).

10. See Jacques Lacan on *fascinum* in its relation to the gaze in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 118.

11. Rosalind Krauss, "Eva Hesse: Contingent," in *Eva Hesse* October File, 32.



[ill. 63] no title, n.d.

Watercolor on paper

14 7/8 x 10 7/8 in. (37.8 x 27.6 cm)

The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London

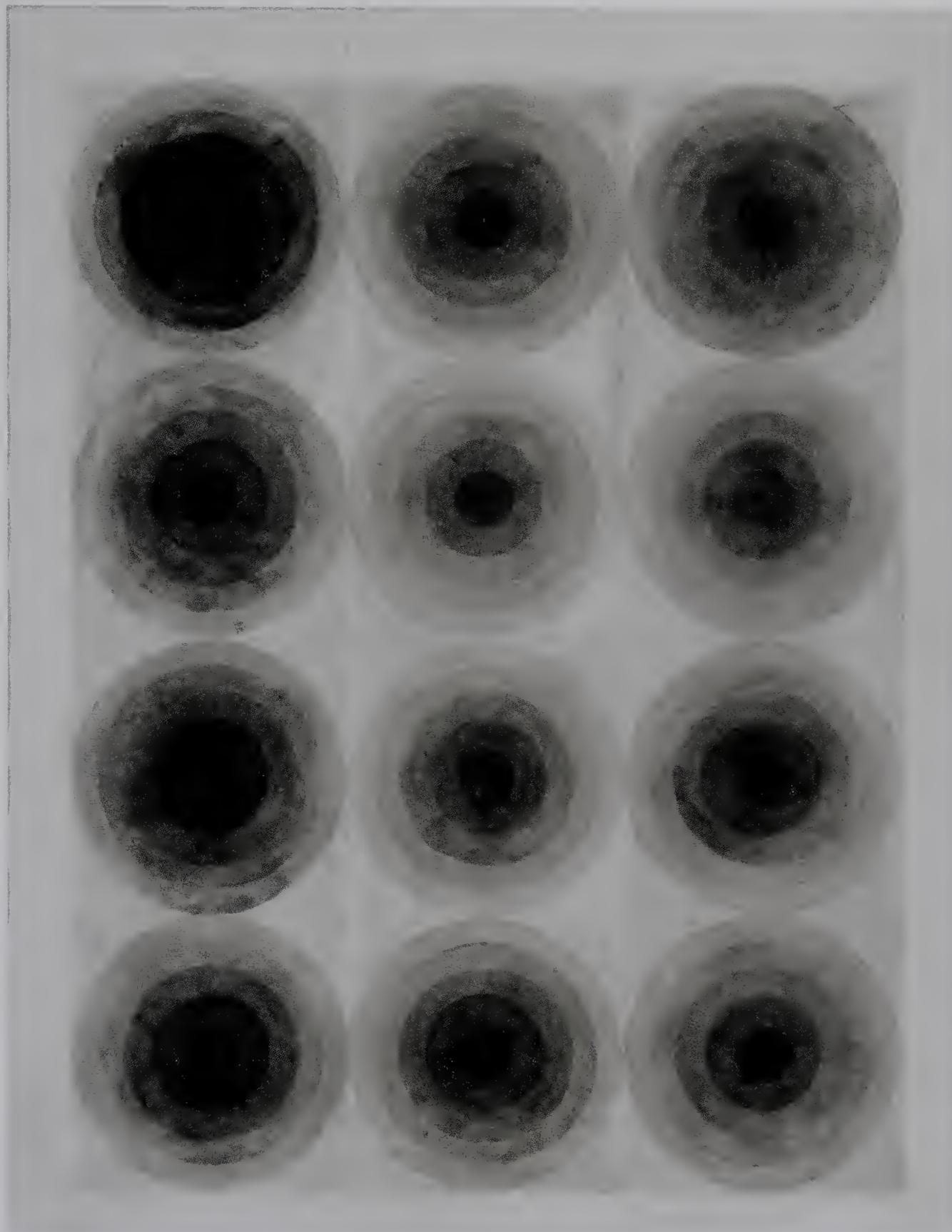
impossibility of accessing the psychic Thing. Freud links the primary repression to the cannibalistic identification with the primordial father. In the matrixial unconscious sphere I have linked the primary repression to the archaic m/Other, and in doing so I have moved from the concept of originary Thing to the concept of originary encounter-event. Traumatic and aching, encapsulated and hiding in an outside captured inside, the Thing's struggle to re-approach psychic awareness is doomed. For Lacan, the Thing finds some expression via the gaze as *objet a*, and some relief in a psychic repetition that enacts the real. The gaze functions as a mental vanishing trace that indexes the libidinal loss and the absence of contact with the psychic originary Thing in the dimension of the optical unconscious. This trace results from an incision that separates the presubject from the Other (the real Other as body, or as the body of the mother, the Otherness of symbiosis) and is therefore cleft from the subject no less than from the Other; it is not directly represented by any image. The *objet a* of the gaze hides behind the screen of phantasm, and it exercises fascinating and horrifying power (*fascinum*) when it threatens to approach consciousness via an artwork, as Freud shows us in "The Uncanny."¹² The gaze puts us in contact with the enigma of pre-Oedipal presence and loss as it signals the primal repression hidden behind the veils of castration anxiety.

For Lacan, the gaze emerges during the primal separation that splits the subject and constitutes it on the unconscious level as desirous of lack. The real Other, considered as a feminine-maternal sensible body undifferentiated from the pre-subject, is situated in the foreclosed Thing that Lacan sees as an undifferentiated symbiotic "fabric" or "bubble" where the presubject is intermingled with the Other. The Lacanian subject begins with a cut in the bubble.¹³ The gaze as *objet a* is then, from the outset, a psychic element intersecting between subject and Other and evading them both, with the archaic body/mother being conceived of as first amalgamated in symbiosis and then forever separated from the subject, itself founded only as a relation of lack to a deficiency in the Other. Lacan's *gaze*, like any other lacking cause of desire, implies cut, lack, and separation, as well as the impossibility of intersubjectivity. All of those are in fact indexed by any *objet a*—be it in the form of gaze or voice or of oral or anal traces.¹⁴ The archaic Thing that stands for the emanation of pre-Oedipal psychic life is the phantomatic threat behind the trace that determines a specific aesthetic dimension, thus distinguishing drawing or painting as art from just

12. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in James Strachey, trans. and ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* Vol.17 (London: Hogarth, 1955).

13. Jacques Lacan, *Unpublished Seminars: (1964-5) Les problèmes cruciaux de la psychanalyse*, analyzed in my "Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Gaze," in B. Vanderlinden ed., *The Fascinating Face of Flanders* (Antwerp: Stad Antwerpen, 1998).

14. The dimension of intersubjectivity slowly disappeared from Lacan's thinking, and he opposed it when opting for "drive theory" against the "object-relations" theory.



any other kind of visual image. However, if the passage between subject and gaze depends on unconscious paths, it is the way we understand these paths—the way we understand subject, object, Other, lack, primary repression, and Thing—that leads to any specific understanding of art. The matrixial borderspace with partial-subjects, strings, threads, m/Other, and encounter-events suggests particular paths and a particular understanding of art. Does the gaze operate in the phallic sphere of drives searching for objects (Lacan)? Or does it operate in a relational sphere? And what if not only object-relations (Klein, Winnicott) and the inter-subjective relational sphere have to be taken into account when thinking the gaze and art but also the matrixial trans-subjective sphere of transmission?¹⁵

The matrixial borderspace is a sphere of encounter-events where psychic frequencies, intensities, and vibrations as well as their imprints and “memory” traces are exchanged and experienced by fragmented and assembled experiencing partial-subjects who are re-attuning their affective strings in co-emergence and co-fading. *I* and non-*I* are linked in trans-subjectivity on a sub-subjective level in a mental resonance “camera obscura.” The psychic cross-imprinting of events and the exchange of traces of mutually (but not symmetrically) subjectivizing agencies—occurring via and in a borderspace where two or several becoming-subjectivities co-emerge—create singular trans-subjective webs of copoiesis composed of transformations along psychic strings stretched between the participants of each encounter-event. Thus, a matrixial borderspace is a mutating copoietic net of strings that further creates transformations in shareable unconscious threads. Matrixial co-emergence has a healing power, but because of the transgression of individual boundaries that it initiates and entails, and because of the self-relinquishment and fragilization it appeals to, it is also potentially traumatizing.¹⁶ *I* and non-*I* co-emerge affectively, and the potentiality of each psyche for differentiating and for non-cognitive or pre-cognitive knowledge stemming from the resonance by way of inspiration is actualized by vibrating along the same unconscious borderlinking strings. A simultaneous differentiation inside the same resonance camera obscura is initiated through sharing the same virtual and real strings. In instances of psychic co-emerging, the *I* grows into being while the ethical horizon of the non-*I* gradually opens up and its aesthetical sense deepens, and vice-versa. *I* and non-*I* share and redistribute co-response-ability in a metamorphic process of re-attunement along their psychic strings. The sense aroused by minimal re-attunement

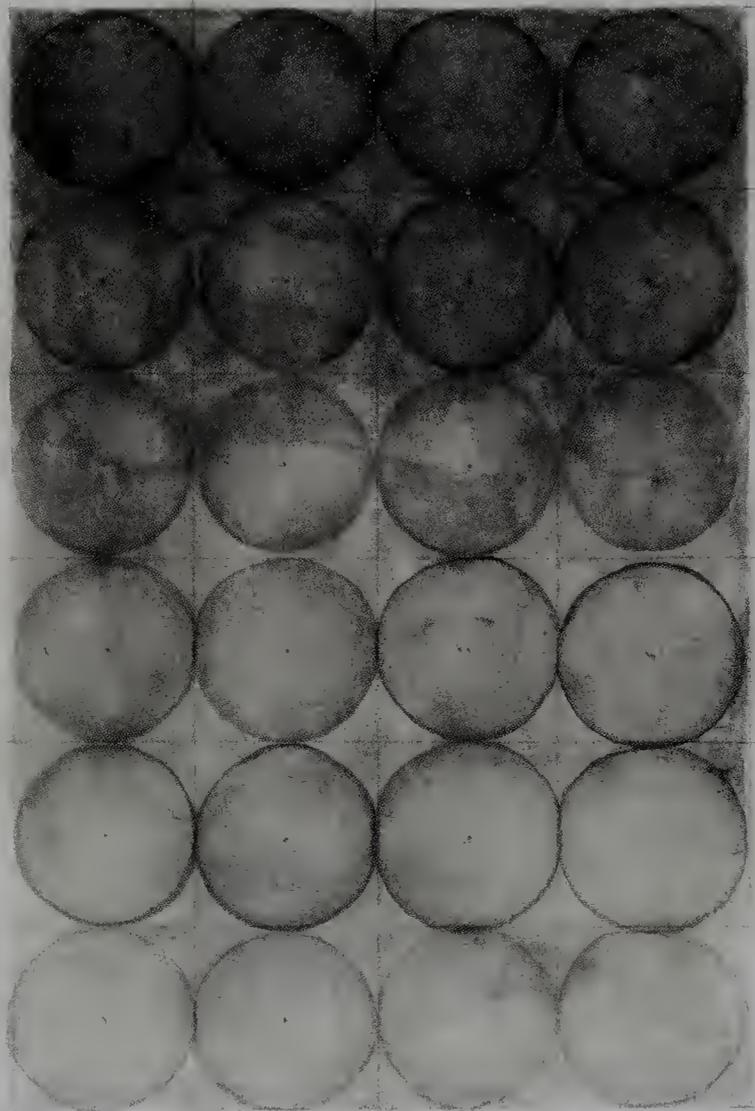
15. I have developed an account of the trans-subjective sphere in a long series of essays written over the last twenty years. I would like to refer the reader to the encyclopedic “summary” of this sphere in my “Matrixial Trans-subjectivity” in *Theory, Culture and Society* 23 (2006): 1–2.

16. See my “Co-poiesis,” in *Framework* 4 (2005), and “Matrixial Trans-subjectivity.”

in distance-in-proximity within the same resonance camera obscura is transmitted behind words and beyond symbolic-phallic comprehension, and we are reminded of Freud's remark regarding direct "psychical transference" of ideas: "One is led to a suspicion that this is the original, archaic method of communication between individuals and that in the course of phylogenetic evolution it has been replaced by the better method of giving information with the help of signals which are picked up by the sense organs. But the old method might have persisted in the background."¹⁷ Thanks to these unconscious matrixial strings—which in a way are similar to those methods by which my mind translates intensities, wavelengths, frequencies, vibrations, and all kinds of resonances and signals that arrive from my own "internal" sources and external perceptions, to make them into feelings, images, and thoughts—my mind also conceives and re-attunes itself with-in the other: It elaborates and translates intensities, wavelengths, frequencies, vibrations, and all kinds of signals and resonances arising in the mind of the other who is in proximity to me, as well as in the world around me, into feeling and also images and thoughts. A knowledge of and in the other and the world arises in the unconscious shareable net of strings. In that aesthetic and ethical way, I know *in* the other and in the virtual strings that connect me with-in the consciousness of the world. When matrixial channels open, we access the knowledge of psychic strings. Not cognizing yet knowing one another on a partial level—by erotic borderlinking; by affective, empathic, intuitive, and even telepathic transmissive knowledge; by erotic investment; by sensual and perceptive sensitivities; and by way of sharing in a field of resonance and influence and in one another's pulsative intensities (sharing in terms of wavelength, frequencies, and vibrations not perceivable by the senses but transmissible, and translateable by the mind, thus creating via virtual, traumatic, and phantasmatic strings co-eventings or encounter-events)—*I* and non-*I* are cross-printing psychic traces in one another and continuously transforming the shareable threads and the matrixial borderspace itself.

In the passage from Lacan's phallic gaze to the matrixial touch and gaze-and-touching, we leave the zone of desire for an object caused by a missing maternal Thing that echoes the Freudian libidinal drives and repressed archaic paternal identification and we move into a sphere where a non-libidinal Eros is laboring for borderlinking with the archaic m/Other as encounter-event, where virtual and real strings intermingle with shared phantasmatic threads. Here the "object of desire" is not a trace of an

17. Sigmund Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis", in James Strachey, trans. and ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychoanalytic Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 22 (London: Hogarth, 1964).



object (*objet a*) but a trace of real, traumatic, or phantasmatic linking (link *a*) woven together with different virtual strings and objects (link *x* and *objet x*) and with phantasmatic threads in a linkage of matrixial virtuality. The trace of desire is derived from the labors of the vibrating strings that connect m/Other (non-*I*) and becoming subject (*I*), a labor of differentiating in transformation and of transforming in differentiation. I have named the processes of such borderlinking within trans-subjective webs *metramorphosis*. In the matrixial borderspace, co-emergence with the m/Other (non-*I*) is not symbiosis, just as the matrixial fabric is not an undifferentiated bubble. Difference in repetition between *I* and non-*I* is here a result of the passage through m/Othernal frequencies and of the sharing of an unconscious resonance with her, where the non-*I*'s unconscious transmissions of particular affects and waves awaken corresponding mind-psyche-body psychic instances, waves, and affects in the *I*. In the matrixial borderspace, reciprocal yet non-symmetrical receptivity for unconscious transmissions constitutes an unconscious working-through. Paths opened within the matrixial sphere inform and transform strings of virtual and real touch, gaze, voice, movement, and breathing and their phantasmatic traces. Psychic traces of such matrixial links *a* inform and transform one another and inform and transform other kinds of traces. The matrixial touch informs the gaze and joins it in a borderlinking gaze-and-touching string. Both the eye and the touching move that connects to the eye within a passionate unconscious network participate in the copoietic urge,¹⁸ the artistic gesture, and the aesthetic working-through, all of which are informed by unconscious matrixial transmissivity.

Touch is a kind of psychic part-object or “desiring machine” consistent with passion for “attachment” (John Bowlby).¹⁹ If we relate to psychic primary partial objects both as objects for attachment²⁰ and as matrixial transformational potentialities for borderlinking—conceived of as born in jointness with a m/Othernal figure in the shareable sphere of transmissions—and not as libidinal part-objects (oral, anal), then the unconscious partial-object of touch, as well as of movement, breath, and smell, can be added to the list of part-objects and *objets a* along with gaze and voice.²¹ They can also be considered as Winnicottian transitional objects that interconnect mother and child and partial-subjects in general. The unconscious touch—be it the touch as part-object (in a Kleinian tradition), as a lacking object (*objet a* in a Lacanian tradition), as desiring machine (Deleuze-Guattari), or as matrixial partial-object and link

18. See my “Matrixial Co-poiesis: Trans-subjective Connecting Strings,” in *Poiesis*, Vol. VII (2005).

19. On the nature of the child's ties to his mother, see John Bowlby, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 39: 35–373, and *Attachment and Loss. I: Attachment* (London: Hogarth, 1969).

20. In the sense employed by Anzieu, Ogden, and Tustin.

21. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar on Jacques Lacan X: Anxiety* (London: Karnac, 2002).

a, borderlinking potentiality, or string—is forever linked to the gaze, the voice, and also to smell, movement, softness, warmth, and breathing.²² This link *a* operates both through the logic of mental traces (their conception in the symbolic and imaginary domains, their meaning being derived from selective cultural filters, et cetera) and through body-psyche time-space experiencing webs that are stretching in the real between trauma and phantasm, chaos and cosmos, presubject and m/Other, and which connect each *I* and non-*I* in severality with real and virtual strings.

In *The Matrixial Gaze*, I describe the matrixial perspective on touch and touch-and-gaze and explain, following W. R. Bion, how touch as an erotic antenna of the psyche gives itself over to the elaboration of borderlines and borderlinking as meaning: “The sense of touch is usually employed as an antidote to the confusion that can be incidental to the employment of container/contained,” writes Bion. “Its use to establish the reassurance obtained from feeling there is a barrier between two objects, a limiting boundary that is absent in the container contained relationship...produces the paradoxical effect that the topographically closer relationship implied by tactile contact is less intimate, i.e. confused, than the more distant relationship implied by the [respiratory, auditory, and visual] models.”²³ In the tradition of Klein, Winnicott, and Bion, Didier Anzieu has developed the notion of the “skin ego” to refer to the mental image of which the Ego makes use during early phases to represent itself as containing psychical contents on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body.²⁴ Here too the skin represents a psychic envelope of contact and separation, and touch is mainly considered through the sensations of being held and being contained via the skin envelope.²⁵ This surface of contact can also turn into a wall of separation from the world.²⁶ However, for the infant, another kind of touch, represented by the contact between mouth and things in terms of feeling-touching, groping, or palpitating—mouth groping breast, to begin with—(and not in cannibalistic-oral terms), leaves psychic traces as well. The contact between mouth and breast, the source of milk, produces at least two partial-objects or mouth-breast desiring machines that have their particular unconscious paths or threads. Early shapes are, for Frances Tustin, “felt” shapes.²⁷ The “shapes” of these felt impressions are however considered as idiosyncratic, a part of autistic experience that contributes to the cohesiveness of the self when achieved through “good enough” maternal containing

22. For the matrixial *objet a* and link *a* of touch and of touch-and-gaze see Bracha L. Ettinger, “The Matrixial Gaze,” in *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2006).

23. W. R. Bion, *Elements of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1989), 95–96.

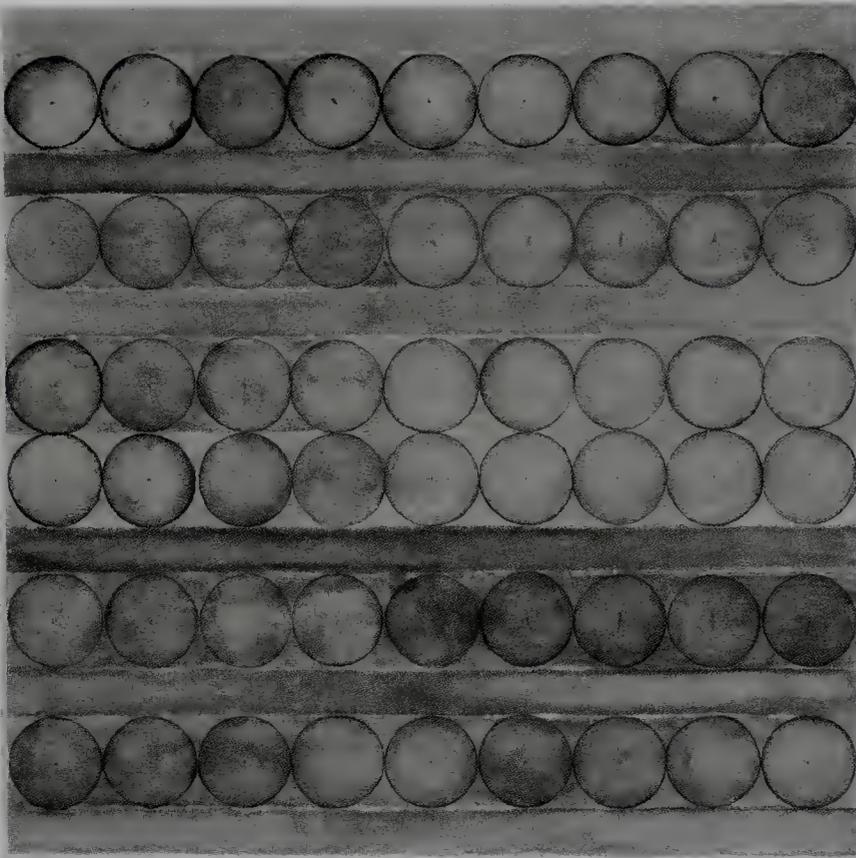
24. Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 40.

25. On touching, see Esther Bick, “The Experience of the Skin in Early Object Relations,” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49 (1968): 484–6, and Didier Anzieu, “Skin Ego,” *Psychoanalysis in France* (New York: International Universities Press, 1980).

26. Barrie M. Biven, “The Role of Skin in Normal and Abnormal Development, with a Note on the Poet Sylvia Plath,” in *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 9 (1982): 205–228.

27. Frances Tustin, “Autistic Objects,” in *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 7 (1980): 27–40, and “Autistic Shapes,” in *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 11 (1984): 279–90.





[79] no title, c. 1965-66

and holding, and which under psychogenetic conditions freeze into “autistic objects.” For Thomas Ogden (following Frances Tustin), the autistic-contiguous position is the most primitive psychological position, organized in terms of sensory surfaces, generated by the individual’s interactions with his objects of sensory impressions. It “coexists dialectically with the [Kleinian] paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions.”²⁸ I am developing the positions advanced by Ogden, Anzieu, and (for

the most part) Tustin toward prenatality and the matrixial trans-subjective psychic sphere, in which psychic erotic antennae that affectively receive and transmit affective knowledge work like vibrating strings. The matrixial trans-subjective sphere coexists with these three positions, but it is also prior to them, since the mother/infant’s matrixial paths are opened during pregnancy by the presubject’s encounter with maternal transgressive mind-psyche waves and by a transconnectedness to her transmissive borderlinking strings, and through the infant’s participation in and reflection of the maternal mind-psyche waves and paths. It is also opened through the maternal metabolization of the infants’ body-psyche via her own body-psyche channels during pregnancy, as well as by the fetal metabolization of the mother’s body-psyche traumatic and phantasmatic threads. The matrixial string of touch has three different and interconnecting referential fields. One is the field of the desire to be held and contained, the second is the borderline quality whereby the whole skin as a surface in prenatal and postnatal re-attunements of distance-in-proximity is intended, and the third is the field of the prenatal and postnatal desire for groping and palpitating, which is the focus of our attention at present but is intermingling with the two others. I recognize the erotic passion to reach the m/Other

28. Thomas Ogden, *The Primitive Edge of Experience* (London: Karnac, 2004), 49, 51.

by way of touching-groping is hereby recognized as informing and partially forming the matrixial position itself. This erotic passion meets with the unconscious compassionate m/Othernal “pregnant” hospitality. The string and link *a* of touch joins other strings and links *a* of breath, movement, voice, and gaze in a matrixial unconscious web where differentiation-in-co-emergence occurs and matrixial threads coexist alongside symbiotic and autistic threads. This matrixial eros of touching must be understood in its difference from a libidinal or aggressive desire to touch. It also must be understood as a knowledge on the trans-subjective level that transgresses relations and communication.

The “always already and always articulating”²⁹ matrixial subjectivity-as-encounter differentiates and subjectivizes partial-subjects that conjoin through matrixial hospitality in an encounter-event of severality, beginning in the ongoing events of the *I*'s encounter with the archaic m/Other in the womb. Inscriptions or traces derived from the string of touches (links *a*) are included within the originary trans-subjective sphere that inaugurates threads of transmission and paths based upon traces of transmission. Such paths exchange unconscious imprints and traces and such threads continue to be re-attuned with other unconscious threads in the *I* and in the non-*I* all throughout life, resonating within new matrixial transferential occasions of encounter-events such as those provided by psychoanalytical sessions and by art-working. An originary metamorphosis connects sensitivities to sensibilities, sensibilities to “psychical transference,” and transmits waves and traces of oscillations of touch and pressure, fluctuations of motions and balance (kinesthesia), changing amplitudes of voices, light and dark variations, breathing rhythms—shared waves, vibrations, and sensorial impressions that participate in the subjectivizing processes of the matrixial sphere. The apparatus of meaning donation and production of the non-*I* (the archaic Other, which is first of all a becoming-m/Other) subjectivizes the *I* (which is at first a pre-natal becoming-partial subject) and participates via trauma and phantasm in the construction of the touch thread for both the *I* and the non-*I* in a matrixial co-emergence. In this matrixial borderspace, traces continue to borderlink so that resonating threads can become new strings. The cross-imprinting, transmitting, and receiving becoming-mother and becoming-subject engender an alliance and turn into partial-subjects in a larger subjectivity, neither collective nor individual, one that transgresses their individual skin-body boundaries. Touch serves as both a primary basis of and a metaphor for transgressive borderlinking and matrixial

29. Pollock, “Does Art Think?,” 134.

transference. At the level of metaphor, we speak of a matrixial link *a* of touch. It captures and transforms the knowledge of being transformed by and of transforming each other's phantasms in the passage through a shared borderspace. The matrixial difference, then, which participates in the primary transformation of the Thing as encounter-event into a borderlinking process, works with touch. Archaic traces of intra-uterine contact have even the force to form a well-crystallized matrixial link *a*, while strings of touch continue to participate in further trans-subjectivization. Since the primary string and link *a* of touch is not bound to the orifices of the body but is un-centered, it represents from the very beginning different qualities than those possessed by oral and anal part-objects and traces of their lack. Since touch is also from the beginning a vibrating string of attachment, it doesn't depend on the structure of drives and is primarily manifested in the relational field. As a psychic erotic investment, the potential for the resonating and re-tuning of several strings and threads of touch together gives itself over to the elaboration of the meaning of metamorphic borderlinking.

We can articulate the gaze, the touch, and gaze-and-touching as matrixial strings with borderlinking potentialities that transgress the zones of the part-object, the *objet a*, and finally of the link *a* itself and reach the dimension of psychic virtuality since the matrixial trans-subjective sphere is a field of resonance where even potential encounters that have not taken place in any real contact but have been from the start sources for phantasmatic aspirations based on virtual strings join the labor of differentiation in co-emergence. Repetitions-in-difference that the matrixial sphere occasions conceal and reveal the way matrixial strings and threads work, with the virtual dimension and the (Deleuzian) *objet x* (which occupies a psychic "space" similar in some ways to Lacan's *objet a*) allowing for some manifestation of the force of the virtual in the symbolic. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze presents the virtual object as the *objet x*. *X* will never be, and never was. *X* is also already always internal. Since thought can't transcend its limits, thinking can't create a psychic truth; something else might bring psychic truth around, and this something else is linked to repetition. The virtual *objet x* is embedded within repetition, which is always already also symbolic.

I read Eva Hesse's demispheres perforated by hanging ropes, her "nipples" with umbilical cords, her endless holes, as just such gaze-and-touching links *a* addressed by the repetition of the failure to borderlink with the archaic poietic m/Other in a

matrixial web that ejected the real mother because of the virtual not-enoughness attached to her. The repetition of the failure of borderlinking gestures, coupled with the craving for the archaic link of gaze-and-touching that is coming to artistic life through the artist's compassionate hand-eyes, posits the potential of the matrixial gaze-and-touching always already inside the virtual trace (*objet x*) of repetition itself. The cords are desperate strings that are striving to touch nipples that are craving for touching but are always going astray with their loose unlinking ends, while the eye, absorbed and moved by the desire to touch, proceeds along and between corded demispheres—"so many nipples" and so many holes with so many umbilical cords—from the one to the other, only to remain, in the end, with the taste of the eclipse of an entire archaic aesthetical environment that failed the infant and extracted her from a matrixial sphere and that repetition itself brings to symbolic-real life. Repetition becomes symbolic of a virtual matrixial gaze-and-touching that enters the real again and again, each time for the first time. In repetition, the symbolic value of the virtual *objet x* is manifested by drawing and painting,³⁰ but the question remains: To what kind of m/Othernal threads and with what kind of matrixial strings did the artist try to connect? And from what kind of strings has she been expelled or dropped loose? And finally: What is the virtual support of the particular matrixial sphere whose strings and threads the artist is trying to weave together again and again?

THE RESONANCE OF A "NOT ENOUGH MOTHER" STRING AND THREAD,
A "DEAD-MOTHER" STRING AND THREAD, AND A DEAD MOTHER STRING AND
THREAD IN LINKAGE WITH THE VIRTUAL *OBJET X* OF REPETITION

The psychoanalyst Melanie Klein introduced the concepts of the "good" and "bad" breasts, which stand for part-objects and "mother." Winnicott introduced the concept of the Good Enough Mother, which Mignon Nixon played with to introduce the idea of the Bad Enough Mother³¹ and the "bad-enough breast." I would like to add to this list of maternal functions and part-objects that are of interest to us here Andre Green's Dead Mother, who is characterized as possessing a "dead breast" or "false breast," and my idea of Not Enough Mother, who offers a "not-enough breast."

Andre Green invites us to realize, along the path opened by the metaphor of primal object loss—which concerns the loss of the maternal breast—the difference between

30. Here again, I am attentive to Rosalind Krauss's statement that different works by Eva Hesse have always remained "paintings." Rosalind Krauss, "Hesse's Desiring Machines," op. cit.

31. See Mignon Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother," op. cit.





the extremely harmful psychic consequence of the real death of a mother “especially when this is due to suicide” and the psychic consequences of a maternal depression that entails the “death” of a maternal “imago,” “which has been constituted in the child’s mind, following maternal depression, brutally transforming the living object, a source of vitality for the child, into a distant figure, toneless and practically inanimate.”³² The detachment of the depressive mother is experienced as a catastrophe to the self. Whether an object loss is a process of progressive evolution or a sudden event, the metaphoric elaboration of its traces creates it retroactively as a unique instantaneous event resulting in a hole in object-relations, a loss of meaning (of the mother, or of another parent) that induces the scapegoating of its imaginary causing element (the father or the second parent). The resurrection of the Dead Mother in transference relations is an attempt to find the cause of the loss of the depressed mother-object’s “dead breast” through repetition-compulsion. The Dead Mother, Green writes, took away with her, not by real death but “by the decathexis of which she had been the object, the major portion of love with which she had been cathected before her bereavement: her look, the tone of her voice, her smell, the memory of her caress. The loss of physical contact carried with it the repression of the memory traces of her touch.” The mourning for the breast of the Dead Mother reflects not an ungrateful “bad breast” full of destructive projections but an “absent breast” which, even when it is giving “can neither be full nor filling.” Thus, a mother equated with “false breast” remains the object of “mad passion”³³ for the infant who secretly looked after and for her.

The Not Enough Mother is not a Dead Mother—far from it. The Not Enough Mother is “good enough” in the sense that she must tolerate being located in the place of virtual not-enoughness though it must unconsciously be as intolerable to her as it is to her child. Maternal not-enoughness is one of the reasons why the girl turns away from her mother, who, from a certain point onwards, as Freud tells us, has never had enough...something. But what? The mother is the embodied representation of a psychic phantasmatic target for an endless chain of complaints and reproaches through which she in fact becomes a Not Enough Mother. The girl’s reproach toward her mother “is rather a surprising one. It is that her mother didn’t give her enough milk...this accusation gives expression to the general dissatisfaction of children...I am not sure whether, if one analysed children who had been suckled as long as the children of primitive peoples, one would not come upon the same complaint. Such is the greed of a child’s libido!”³⁴ Since

32. Andre Green, “The Dead Mother,” in *Life Narcissism, Death Narcissism* (New York: Free Association, 2001), 170.

33. *Ibid.*, 182, 188, 190.

34. Sigmund Freud, “Female Sexuality,” in James Strachey, trans. and ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* Vol. 21 (London: Hogarth, 1955), 234.

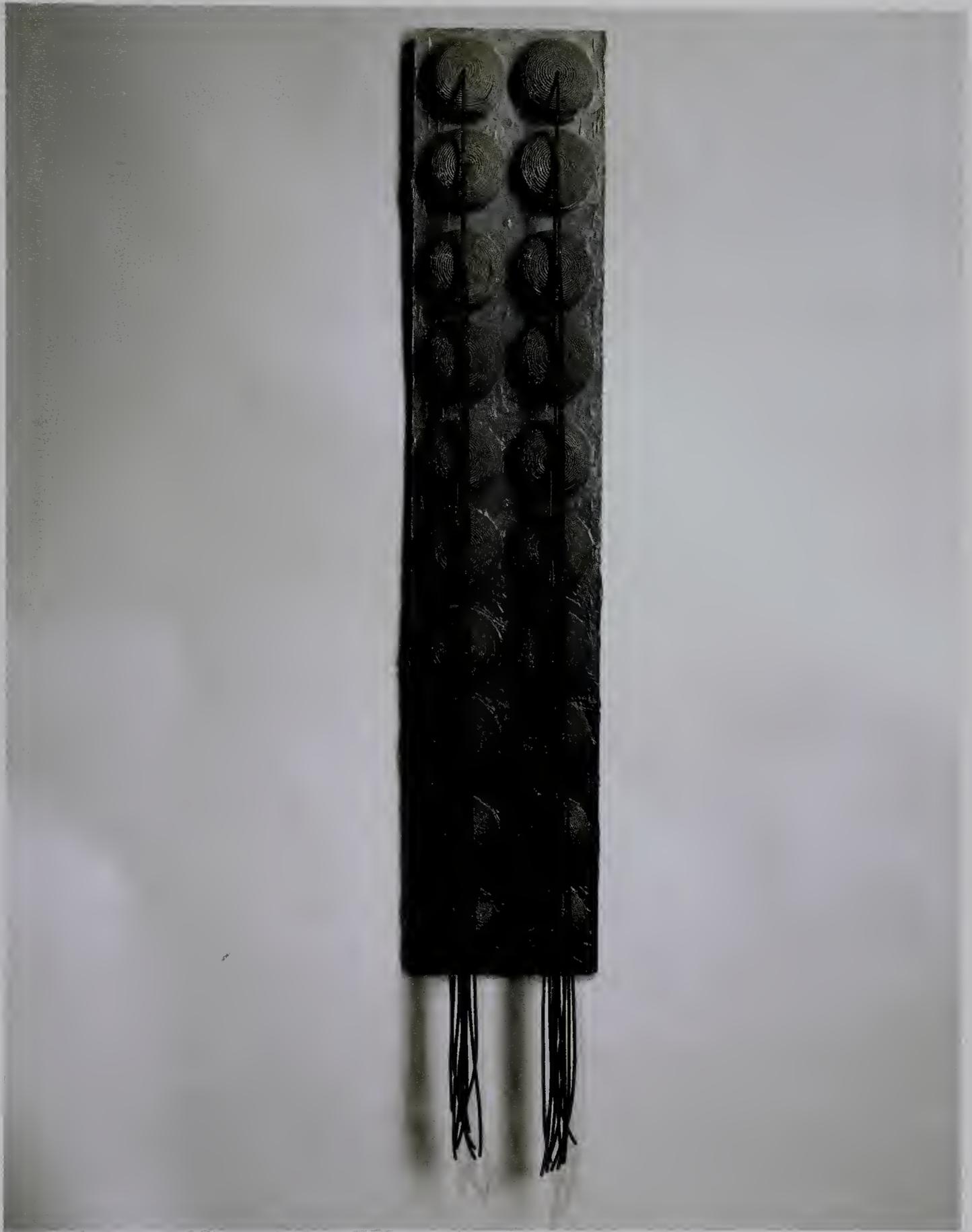
psychoanalysts, in my view, mostly share with their patients the originary fantasy of the Not Enough Mother, denying its phantasmatic quality and its virtual source, and, since the perspective of a maternal subjectivity has mostly been neglected by psychoanalytic theory, this virtual source has remained hidden and each manifestation of the unconscious not-enoughness has always been linked to the real maternal figure, who is continually traumatized by it (and by psychoanalysis itself). Each mother, by virtue of the virtual string of not-enoughness, is a Not Enough Mother though some are more “Not Enough” than others. Yet, only inside a Good Enough matrixial space can the ever insisting virtual not-enoughness slowly unfold. The mother who can tolerate being the constant support for the world’s not-enoughness by becoming a Not Enough Mother is therefore not “bad” and not “dead” though she might be experienced as “bad” due to a return of pre-Oedipal repressions that are always invoking anxiety. The Not Enough Mother is an unconscious thread both for the female and for the male child; it is however the different positioning in the Oedipal scene as well as the different induction in the matrixial sphere with-in the archaic m/Otheral tissue that differently marks and positions the male and the female body-psyche in relation to this virtual string. The interpellation of the archaic m/Other as Thing relates her-it to thanatos. The interpellation of the archaic m/Other as encounter-event links her-it to eros.

The establishing of a fixed and frozen image of Not Enough Mother is equally a product of the difficulties of motherhood, the failings of fatherhood, the disentangling of the contemporary family, social discontent, and the unconscious cultural phallic structuring. The virtual not-enoughness gets fixated, partly for social and cultural reasons, onto the maternal figure on the imaginary level. Psychoanalysis that replicates the Oedipal-paternal move of appropriating, via transference, the love to the mother and splitting the analyst from the not-enoughness thread is further duplicating this imaginary, so that the psychoanalytical working-through itself produces the phantasmatic hateful figure of a Not Enough Mother and then facilitates its projection onto the actual maternal figure. Thus, the Not Enough Mother that is a phantasmatic thread within the function of the Good Enough Mother is pushed toward badness. The Not Enough Mother is the figure to whom the infant endlessly complains, from whom she endlessly asks more, who is never enough for her, who never gives her enough of herself or of things no matter what she does offer in reality. The Not Enough Mother can be claimed as reality for different reasons, and sometimes

indeed the mother is “not enough” in reality, but an important phantasmatic source for its fortification is equally paternal desertion, neglect, or death, for which the infant finds meaning though a demonization of the mother and by eternal attempts to empty her metaphorical breasts of her resources (whereby she joins the “bad breast” Kleinian path) and internally and externally presenting her to oneself as “not enough.” Yet, the Not Enough Mother still functions within the constituting Good Enough Mother because she accepts the responsibility of bearing without “dying” the complaints about her “not-enoughness” that are mixed with the virtual string of the not-enoughness of life itself, thus tolerating that mixture of the infant’s dependency and compulsion to dismiss, discourage, and not recognize the maternal enoughness. It is precisely because the Not Enough Mother is “good enough” that the child can use her repetitively as “bad.” The Not Enough Mother functions as a Good Enough Mother as long as she is available and doesn’t turn by depression into a Dead Mother. Not-enoughness is attributed to the actual mother as long as the infant unconsciously “knows” that she is not risking losing her mother by depression or death. The Not Enough Mother accepts being a support of an infant’s excessive aggressive drives for attention, and in this she is even more than “good enough.” The Dead Mother can’t supply an emotional environment good enough to become a support for neediness let alone for an excess of neediness. The Dead Mother can’t become a nourishing support for the virtual not-enoughness. All these notions—Good Enough, Dead, and Not Enough—enter the search for feminine sexual difference, which is always, to begin with, a same-sex woman-to-woman (girl-to-m/Other) difference.³⁵ The loss of the potential Not Enough Mother by the real death of the mother eternalizes the tension between virtual and actual not-enoughness and an “ideal mother.” A parental figure who actually disappeared in reality and died might still represent a Good Enough Mother that unconsciously carries the Not Enough Mother function. But a parental figure who is both a dead mother and a Dead Mother is a catastrophe to the psyche that might explode the matrixial tissue within which not-enoughness is embedded. Yet, in a repetitive joining together of a Dead Mother thread with a Not Enough Mother thread, unexpected virtual crossings can be recathected, on the condition of matrixially joining the archaic poietic m/Other behind the veils of foreclosure.

It seems useful to me to read Eva Hesse in these terms (though by no means to reduce her work to this search for the maternal). I see her endless search for cording, perforating,

35. On the girl-to-mother feminine difference see my “Plaiting and the Primal Scene of Being-in-Severality,” in *The Almanac of Psychoanalysis* 3 (2002).



[ill. 65] *Ishtar*, 1965

Acrylic paint, cord, and papier-mâché on wood with synthetic tubing
42 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 2 1/2 in. (107.9 x 19 x 6.3 cm)
Private Collection, Switzerland

and “nipples” as in part a kind of borderlinking to a combination of a Not Enough Mother psychic thread, a dead mother thread, a Dead Mother thread, and an “ideal mother” thread combined with strings of gaze-and-touching in repetition and strings of virtual not-enoughness that supply copoietic energy for repetition-in-difference and for matrixial transference between the traumatic, the phantasmatic, and the virtual. More even. If the Dead Mother is a mother from whom you are asking nothing and the “ideal mother” supplies a phantasmatic “all,” such “nothing” and “all” tear the matrixial tissue and keep the subject inside a phallic position of a bachelor machine that can only work between isolation, separation, and self-sufficiency, all those “perfect” sources for the “all” and the “nothing.” In her art, Eva Hesse, who mysteriously turned the metaphor of a woman-lover into a maternal figure full of breasts, asked the maternal-woman for the secret of the absence of maternity (*Ishtar* is the childless goddess of love and female strength [111. 65]), and revealed in the childless-mother with “useless” multiple nipples the secret of female potency. It seems that Hesse was trying to transform her dead mother and Dead Mother into a Good Enough Mother via obsessive artworkings of the Not Enough Mother thread to an extent that the virtual not-enoughness string is accessed and appears behind the visible. Her work comes and goes between the matrixial tissue and the phallic fabric, landing again and again in an “eclipse.” She worked the *objet x* of repetition through artworking touch-appealing breasts and holes and by endlessly weaving cords that link to holes and to breasts on one end but hardly ever link to one another. When ropes that link breasts together disappear, the result is an environment of eclipse and catastrophe. Thus, as Rosalind Krauss has observed, Hesse’s internal and external objects finally do remain celibate desiring machines. The cords hang loosely, the borderlinking gestures fail, the strings hang mostly unjoined, but the different series do not fail to borderlink among themselves and induce a link *x* of matrixial virtuality combined with a virtual *objet x* of repetition, gaze-and-touching strings, and a virtual string of not-enoughness. Through serial repetitions, Eva Hesse’s virtual *objet x* of repetition is revealed between different series of well-defined holes, nipples, and cords, where the archaic matrixial potential functions only via the resonance field created by the recurrence of unconscious erotic attachment hidden within a thread composed of traces of borderlinking to Dead Mother, dead mother, Not Enough Mother, and “ideal mother,” inside which these traces interconnect. But the strings beyond the thread are only vibrating together via the repetition itself. Unconscious paths and threads are thus opened for

metramorphosis first by the artist's and also by the viewer's gaze-and-touching encounter with the virtual *objet x* of repetition. Hesse composed a virtual theater for the scene of repetition. From separate breast to cord to separate hole to breast to cord to nipple, repetition itself creates a virtual matrixial compassionate hospitality where the artist, her art, and its viewers can dwell and be touched by the archaic desire to touch the poietic m/Other and to gaze through touching.

If *fascinace* treasures the psychic energy of the transformational subjectivizing potentiality of a matrixial gaze, a gaze-and-touching has such potentiality as well, no less than breathing, moving, voicing, and also less recognized psychic transferences and sensibilities that traverse and transgress the psyche by way of transmitted mental waves. *Fascinace* is an aesthetic event that operates in the prolongation and delaying of the time of encounter-event and allows the working-through of differentiating-in-jointness and matrixial copoiesis. *Fascinace* can take place only in a borderlinking inside a matrix of a real, traumatic, or phantasmatic compassionate hospitality. Fascinace might turn into *fascinum*, when castration, separation, weaning, or splitting abruptly occurs (*fascinum* relates to the arresting power of the *objet a* and *fascinace* relates to the continual borderlinking and differentiating of a matrixial link *a*). With matrixial cohabitating and cohabituating, behind this triple m/Otherly trans-connection, which is achieved by the self connecting to an ideal, another archaic maternal space pushes its potentiality into the field of vision: the artistic potentiality to create a field of resonance that actualizes compassionate hospitality, where touch constitutes a working-through in *fascinace*.

On the ruins of her own matrixial *fascinace* and of her expulsion from matrixial hospitality, Eva Hesse created through repetition and seriality the artistic compassionate hospitality needed for the appearance of the invisible gaze-and-touching of new strings. In that sense, the four major elements worked by Eva Hesse—breasts, cords, holes, and repetition itself—stand for an attempt at the creation of a space where *fascinace* would occur by matrixial links *a* of touch and gaze and would yield a virtual matrixial *objet x* of repetitive borderlinking. The self as a wounded borderlinking web that sinks inside “dumb guts” is inventing “not enough breasts” by the repetitive desire to touch a “dead breast” with a “dead umbilical cord.” This desire is neither sexual nor oral, and it is not even a desire to see, though it does allow for

visuality. A matrixial *objet a* of gaze-and-touching appears on the screen of vision and fascinates the viewer and the artist as viewer as it works through the unconscious matrixial eros anew, with the forever—almost lost string of gaze-and-touching now vibrating again on the screen of vision and inviting us, on the footsteps of Duchamp's nipples, to touch with a matrixial gaze and to gaze with a matrixial touch, to make visible the invisible desiring machine of gaze, the matrixial string of touch, and the virtual gaze-and-touching eternal repetition-in-difference that is working *with-in* us.

With Eva Hesse, tatters in the metamorphic field that entail pain and failures in borderlinking are aesthetically affecting via matters and forms. The matrixial tatter that returns beyond repetition as an *objet x* dwells in the distance between threads of Not Enough Mother, dead mother, and Dead Mother that eternally repeat their encounter in the psyche of the artist but whose interconnections create transformation and difference in the psychic threads via artworking itself as a space of working via catastrophe toward an ideal through passages within the virtual. The artist is anybody who can extract from the virtual spaces of “internal” psyche and the virtual spaces of “external” consciousness means by which to touch the real of the Thing and of the encounter-event within symbolic repetition and to transform them.

According to Deleuze and Jean-Francois Lyotard,³⁶ repetition works for and with the virtual. For Deleuze and Lacan, repetition works for difference. But repetition also works toward habituation. Repetition labors to create a virtual home at the heart of the uncanny, a new home in which the artist can dwell, made from the passage of her psychic life and all its missed encounters in matter to create form. Anamnesis works in psychoanalysis through an infinite recurrence of an immemorial—yet always present—originary scene, and artwork, says Lyotard, emerges by a working-through via anamnesis to give traces to the invisible in the visible. In art, repetitions in anamnestic working-through do not reestablish the lost object but make present the unrepresentable *Thing*, crypted in the artwork's unconscious, that keeps returning, for its debt can't ever be liquidated. This Thing inhabits the artist as if it dwelled outside, or rather, it is the artist that is de-habitated from her own habitat by it, from her own body and history. If the subject is founded on what Lyotard calls a *recurrent intermittence* of its losses and returns (the on/off beat constitutive of a matrix-figure

36. Jean-François Lyotard, “Anamnesis: Of the Visible,” in *Theory, Culture and Society* 21:1 (2004). In this essay, Lyotard refers to my artistic work, which functions for me as an important lens through which to understand other artists' work.



following the Freudian *fort/da*) it is bound up with disappearance in one and the same movement. Artworks testify to such an event, for which the artist pays in her own affective body. In the repetitions that occur in anamnesis, the return of the same via a “spasm” is never *the same*, for it carries the marks of the peril of disappearance in the appearance. A spasm thus gives birth to an artwork’s apparition amidst recurrence as a threshold. The artist’s gesture that Lyotard refers to is that which creates a space of suspension inside recurrences and contracts recurrences as alternations in a spasm, where an event is repeatedly processed but in difference, and artwork affects and creates a “minimal” soul—an *anima minima*.³⁷ Artworking is tracing a spasm in a suspension that delineates the recurrent intermittence of disappearance in appearance. But what if art triggered a potentiality for co-spasming? And what if the spasm is not a celibate state of birth or a bachelor desiring machine but is a kind of resonating with other spasms in a matrixial borderspace of co-birth? The result would be one of habituating and home-affect, what I have named co/in-habit(u)ating by virtue of transformation in copoiesis: the re-attunement of the vibrating strings between my archaic m/Other and me. The unconscious biography of transmissions of the matrixial

37. Jean-François Lyotard, “Scriptures: Diffracted Traces,” in *Theory, Culture and Society* 21: 1 (2004).

[ill. 66] no title, 1970

Latex and filler over rope and strings with metal hooks

Dimensions variable

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Purchase, with Funds from Eli and Edythe L. Broad, the Mrs. Percy Uris Purchase Fund, and the Painting and Sculpture Committee

recurrences-in-difference and repetition is recorded in the metamorphosis. Co/inhabit(u)ating is inseparable from the subjects' affecting one another and being thus transformed while creating a borderspace for their subjectivity-as-encounter whereby the boundaries of the individual subject are transgressed. The hybrid gaze-and-touching (as *objet a* and link *a*) and the resonance of conjoint gaze-and-touching strings lead to a matrixial *objet x* of repetition-in-difference in that process of co-emerging while differentiating and to a new link *x* of matrixial virtuality.

A link *x* will always evade pure thought. However, something real that acts in art within series in repetition is a working knowledge—a knowledge that belongs, perhaps, to a cosmic consciousness transconnected with our psyche.³⁸ Not a thought, but the artistic working-through that rolls inside repetition, introduces a difference in the virtual in a way similar to that by which a one-on-one psychic transference introduces changes in repetition. The artistic working-through of repetitions touches the real and allows for access to the virtual. It produces virtual intersections and transmissions that find echoes in matter and form. Via the artwork, the artist extracts from the world and from the psyche an *objet x* and a link *x* so that both repetition and virtuality are revealed by form and materiality in the symbolic sphere.

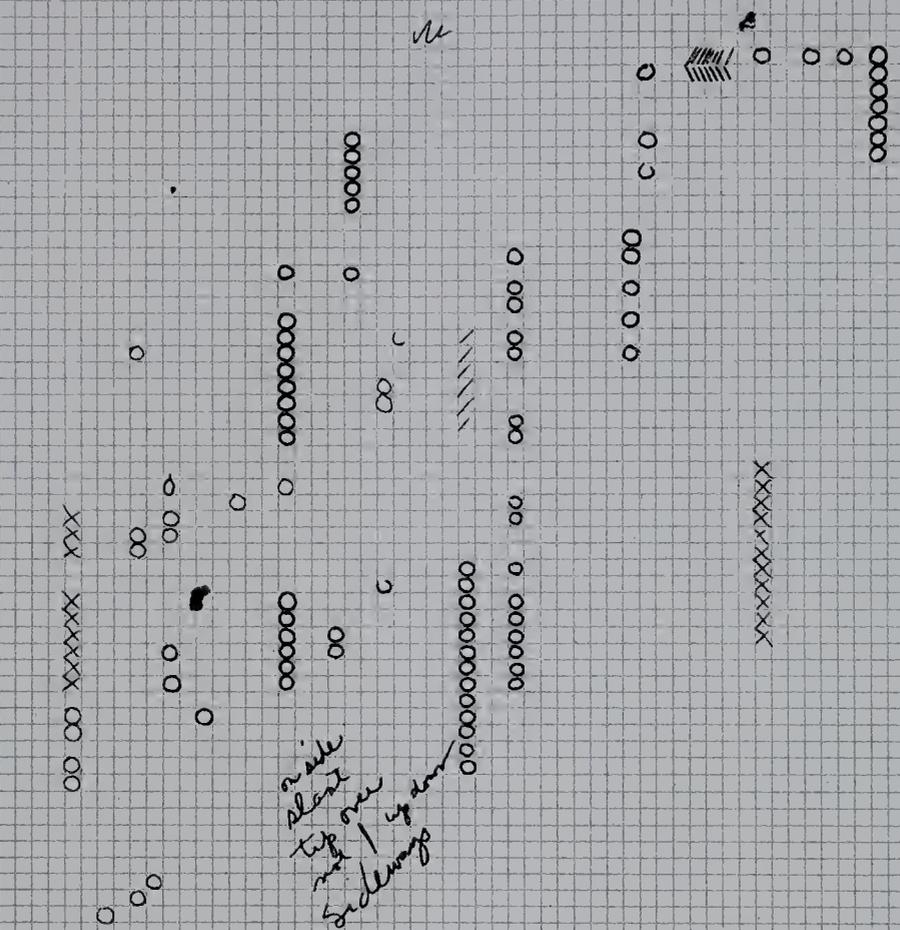
According to Deleuze, the difference that produces a difficulty is the “non-differentiated difference.” Lyotard has tried to articulate the non-differentiated difference in a repetition of a spasm triggered by art. Carrying that repetition of spasm to the matrixial borderspace, we are dealing with the differentiating and borderlinking of a few unconscious strings and threads “belonging” both to the subject and to her m/Other and interwoven with virtual strings. In a borderspace created by different vibrating threads and strings, the aesthetic affect of habituating arises through a certain resonance born from the repetition of a simultaneous psychic co-emergence. In the case of Eva Hesse, an *objet x* of art is revealed in terms of the tension between nipples, holes, and cords that are becoming objects reflecting psychic links *a* and *objets a* of gaze-and-touching. It disperses memory traces of Dead Mother and Not Enough Mother, threads that wake up and rediscover frozen strings that can suddenly gain the capacity to erotically link again through artworking and the artwork. In the link *x* of matrixial virtuality, phantasmatic threads, resonating with virtual and real strings and re-attuning with each other, create virtual resonating intersections that

38. See my “The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,” in Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, eds., *3 x Abstraction* (New York and New Haven: The Drawing Center and Yale University Press, 2005).

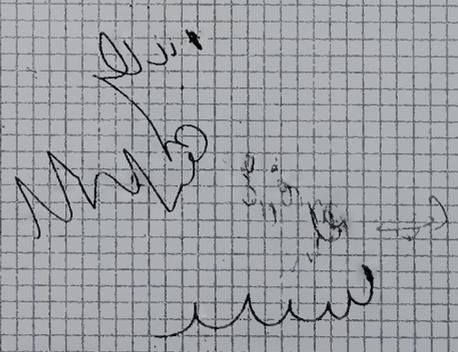
“carry” through repetitions the different possible futures to which artworking gives life and artworks attest. What is it then that is being repeated by Hesse’s “repetition-as-absurdity”? And why “so many nipples” and so many holes and umbilical cords? Demi-spheres, holes, cords, and repetition itself are modulations of the psychic strings of gaze-and-touching working their way to open the passage to the triple maternal field and from it to a matrixial field of severality. The psychic series of Dead Mother borderlinks to the psychic series of the Not Enough Mother and of the dead mother. If for Deleuze these three repetitions work in a coexisting parallel and the virtual object indexes desire created in between the three series, thus pointing to the enigma of the non-differentiated difference, in the matrixial-feminine trans-subjective sphere, the link x of matrixial virtuality opens to the enigma of originary co-emerging and co-fading as an always already potential for differentiation and to the enigma of the copoietic net that borderlinks to virtual metamorphosis. The Dead Mother arrests life. The dead mother is a source of mourning and the Not Enough Mother is a source of repetition and of longing for the *more*. The resonance in their metamorphic weaving produces that particular matrixial *virtual crossroad* where erotic aeriels will continue to weave together different m/Othernal threads to make possible future almost lost co-in/habit(u)ations.³⁹

39. Bracha L. Ettinger, “The ‘Heimliche’: Home-affect and Co/in-habit(u)ation” in J. Crandall and K. Easterling eds., *Suspension*, Documenta X (Munich: Kassel & Schellmann, 1997). Reprinted in *The Matrixial Borderspace*.

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in side
 alert
 tip over
 not / up down
 sideways



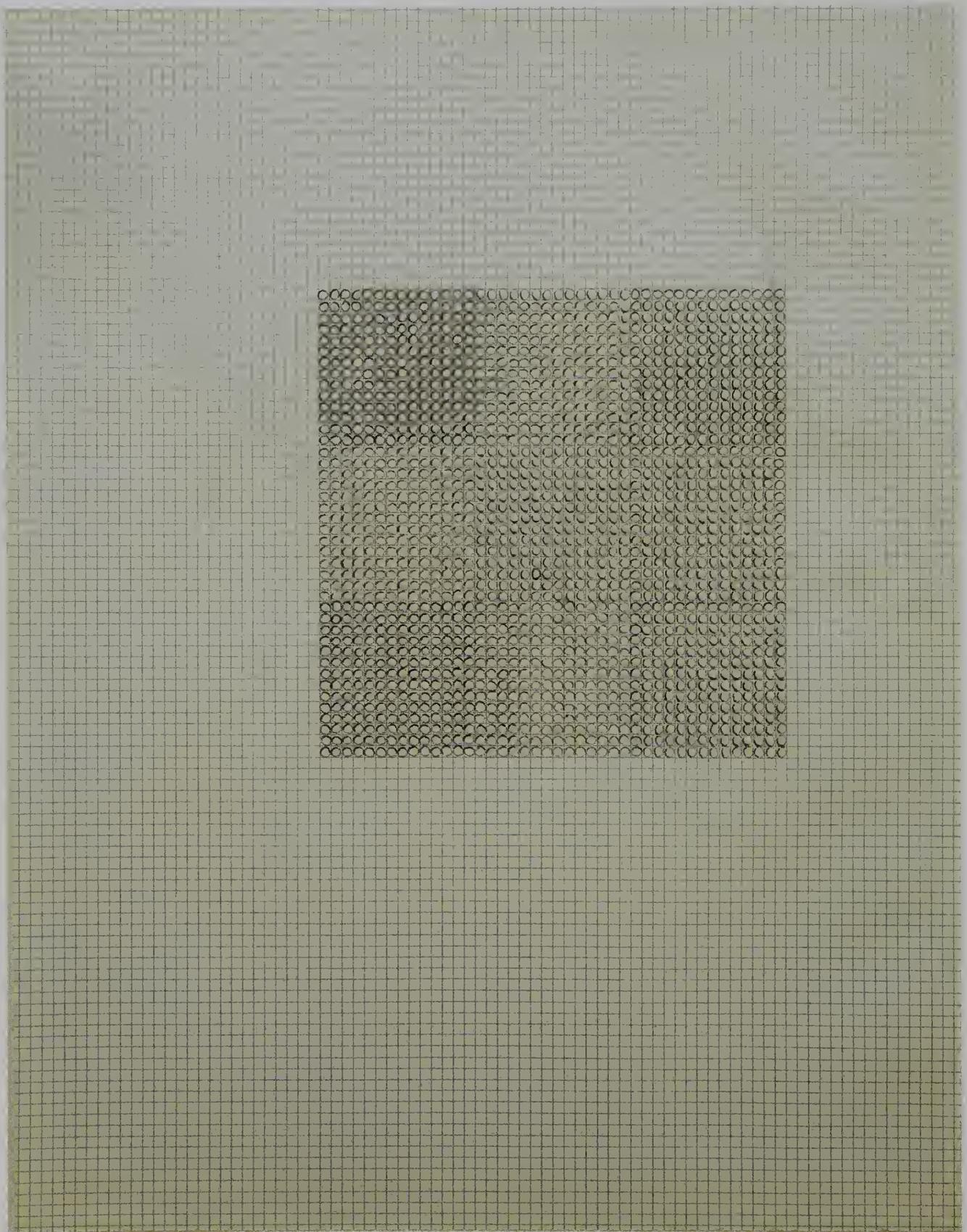
**Eva Hesse's Turn:
Rotations Around the Circle Drawings**

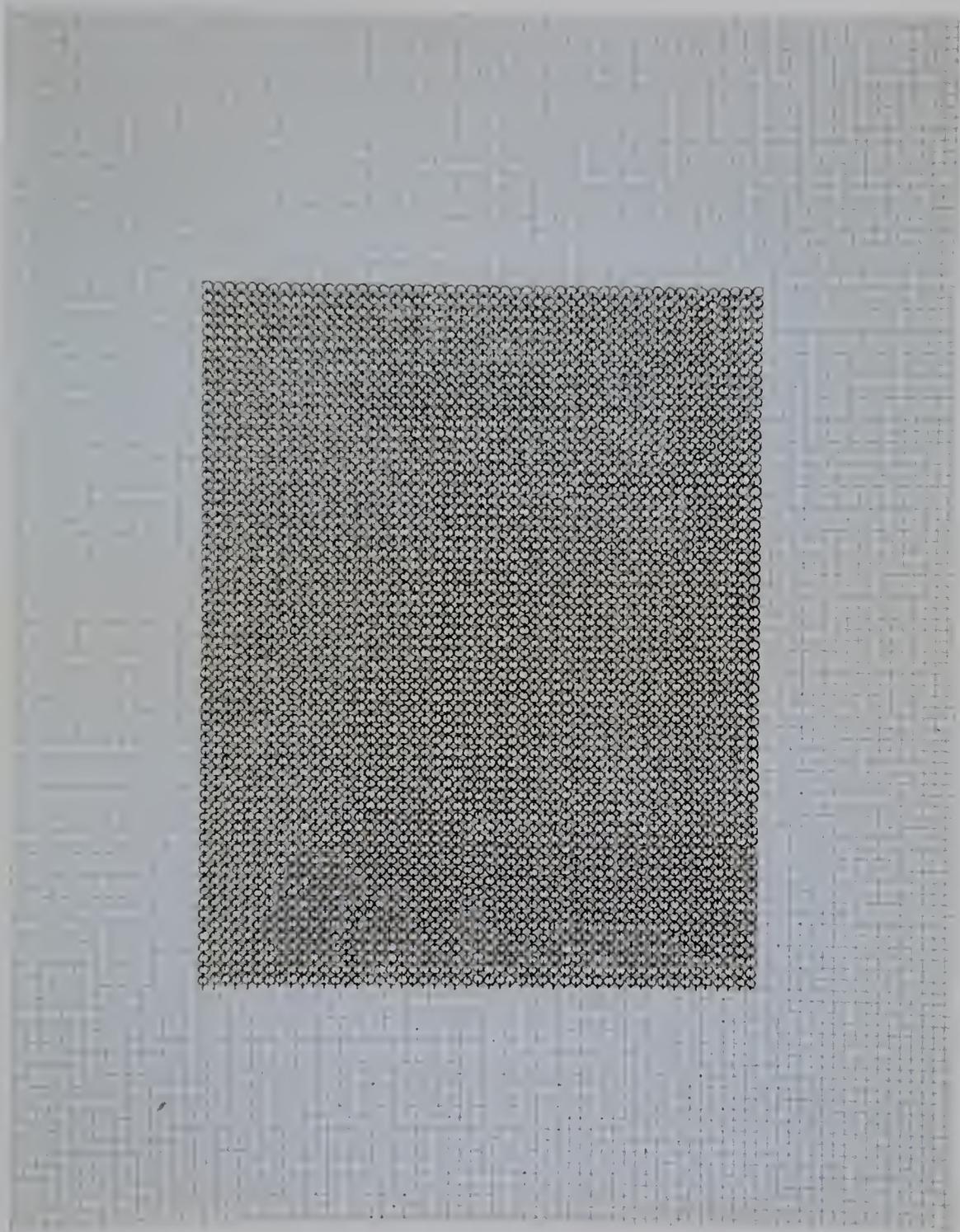
KATHRYN A. TUMA

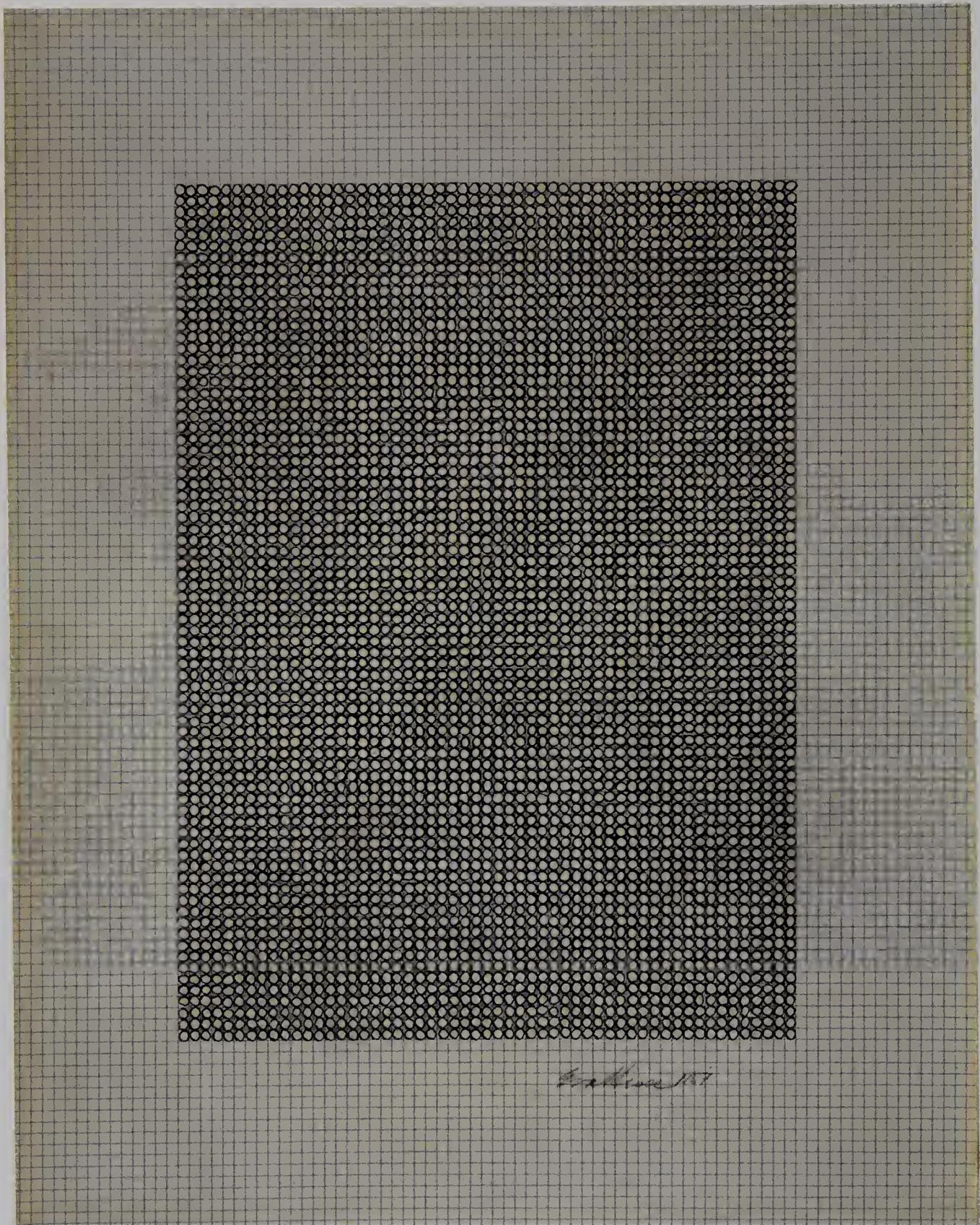
"On side; slant; tip once; not / updown; sideways": These are brief notes that Eva Hesse jotted down on a piece of graph paper on which she had been experimenting with various marks that would comply with the pre-set perimeters of the sheet's small squares [80]. Some of the marks Hesse used elsewhere, for finished drawings she executed on graph paper—small circles that touch the square cells at each edge, tiny crosses whose ends meet the cells' corners. This particular sheet reveals other marks as well, doodles the artist appears to have discarded as possibilities for the graph paper group: a lone parallelogram; single diagonal lines; a patch of hatching at the top of the sheet; some looping freehand at the bottom edge. Amidst these various marks, the list of words, as if obeying their own directive, lists to the upper right, written on a bias at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees. Hesse, as is well known, frequently drew up lists of words and their definitions, synonyms, and cognates, many of which she culled from the large thesaurus given to her by her friend Mel Bochner.¹ Those lists functioned to generate titles for her work and, implicitly, provided a way of organizing her creative thought. Although Hesse would later distance herself from Richard Serra's *Verb List* (1967–1968),² a work whose columnar forms concretize activities to be performed on sculptural materials, many of Hesse's titles correlate conceptually to procedural operations manifested by the finished objects: *Addendum*, "a thing added or to be added"; *Accession*, "increased by something added"; *Compart*, "to divide into parts, partition"; and so forth. Yet the list that begins this essay seems somehow more idiosyncratic than other of Hesse's better known lists, the notations more like private reminders relating to creative

1. Lucy Lippard, in *Eva Hesse* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 204, claims that Eva Hesse purchased the thesaurus herself. Mel Bochner, however, has confirmed that he purchased the thesaurus for Hesse. After seeing the "portrait" drawings that Bochner was doing based on the thesaurus, Hesse asked him if he would buy her a copy. "And so I did." Mel Bochner in a written exchange with the author, October 28, 2005.

2. Cindy Nemser, "A Conversation with Eva Hesse" (1970), reprinted in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon (Cambridge: The MIT Press/October Files, 2002), 20. Serra's verb list was originally published in the magazine *Avalanche* in 1971, though obviously the citation demonstrates that Hesse had seen it elsewhere. By 1968, the two artists had begun to appear together in various process-related exhibitions.







[ill. 67] no title, 1967

Ink on graph paper

11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm)

The LeWitt Collection, Chester, Connecticut

method, or personal instructions for the artist to hold in mind as she explored the nature of her own working process.

It is a curiously displaced list, since it relates in no obvious conceptual way to the interests of her finished drawings on graph paper. There, Hesse seems to have selected the marks that she did—the cross, the small circle—because they were those that most amply fill the pre-established logic of the graph paper's squares. With no slanting in sight, the finished graph paper drawings demonstrate instead a concern with the logic of the grid and the possibilities afforded within it for the repeated hand-made marks: the compositional relationship between the pressure of her pen to generate tonal gradation and the rigid structure of the graphic grid, for example, or a frequent, ever-so-slight off-centeredness to promote visual interest and tension. This compositional skewing—sometimes only by a square or two, as in the LeWitt drawing [111. 67], sometimes in a carefully counted ratio of one-to-two, as in one drawing where the perfectly symmetrical cross within the perfectly counted square lies precisely fifteen cells from the right edge of the sheet but thirty from the left—continues to abide by the fundamental rule of squared-off rectilinearity [81]. What, in this context, is to be made from these apparently unrelated verbal jottings?

In 1966, following her return from Kettwig an der Ruhr, Germany, to the United States, Hesse began to engage directly with the work of her American contemporaries, and the drawings on graph paper have rightly been interpreted as relating to the Minimal art she was seeing everywhere in galleries and her friends' studios in New York. Crucially, this was also the period that marked a decisive shift in Hesse's artistic production, as her work, formerly devoted exclusively to painting and work on paper, began to extend into actual space. Around this time, Mel Bochner presented Hesse with a portrait of herself, composed of concentric circles of words written on graph paper [111. 88], one of several "portraits" Bochner made—the others were of Ad Reinhardt, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson, and Dan Flavin—that featured, or were motivated by, a single word closely associated with the individual's artistic strategy. In Hesse's portrait, synonyms of the pivotal word, drawn from a thesaurus, are hand-printed in block letters turning in concentric circles around it. The central "WRAP" denotes a signature operation in Hesse's sculptural labor up to that point: Cord wraps around balloons in *Ingeminate*, *Long Life* (eventually destroyed), and related



[ill. 68] no title, 1966

Acrylic paint, cord, and papier-mâché on Masonite
9 x 9 x 2 in. (22.9 x 22.9 x 5.1 cm)

Mel Bochner and Lizbeth Marano, New York

works of 1965; cloth wraps around the large empty frame in Hesse's early masterwork *Hang Up* of January 1966 [111. 30]; and cord again coils over papier-mâché to form shallow semi-circles in *Compart* and associated works of the spring [111. 92].

Playing on the way Hesse's artistic process generates a complex spin between the literal and the metaphorical, Bochner incorporated the compression of multiple meanings into the portrait's form, the words wrapping around "WRAP." The circle of words, too, offers a wry observation—rendered with consummate wit in rings of implicit double-entendres—about the artist's personality as much as her work, both of which were complex and multilayered, both where things were "buried, concealed, obscured." Simultaneously intuitive and critically astute, Bochner also seems to have been attuned to a core feature of Hesse's artistic imagination—to her creative process in addition to her concerns *with* process as it related to her investigations into the physical properties of sculptural materials. For, as Elisabeth Sussman has observed, "a viewer cannot just stand in front of the work and read the words, but must swivel around it in a physical act that mimics some of the words used to describe Hesse as she is revealed through the strategies of her work."³ This movement, I think, relates directly to our initial list of words—"on side; slant; tip once; not / updown; sideways"—that speak of a swiveling reorientation of perspective, a rotation that turns on the beholder's spatial relationship to the object, even when the beholder is the artist herself.

Living and working in Kettwig an der Ruhr with her husband, Tom Doyle, Hesse had begun an experiment in building up the picture plane with spiraling coils of cloth-covered wire glued to a Masonite board—a "dumb thing," as she described it to LeWitt, but decidedly three-dimensional.⁴ The work, completed on March 1, 1965, was *Ringaround Arosie* [111. 5], its vertically oriented format containing a smaller circle atop a larger one, tinted in shades of red ranging from the brilliant vermilion of the circle's border to variations in pink, as the coils rise up to a suggestive and provocative tip. Working in relief, using cords and other materials to build up the structure of the surface, Hesse, in her own words, "**literally translated**" line, the line of drawing now realized as material substance.⁵ Her continued pursuit of work in this vein resulted in the group of bas-relief objects that mark a watershed transition toward her mature work, the remarkable body of sculpture that Hesse would produce over the next five years before her early death in 1970. Over the course of those years,

3. Elisabeth Sussman, "Letting It Go As It Will: The Art of Eva Hesse," in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Elisabeth Sussman (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 25.

4. Eva Hesse, letter to Sol LeWitt (March 18, 1965), as quoted in James Meyer, "Non, Nothing, Everything: Hesse's 'Abstraction'." in Sussman, *Eva Hesse*, 57.

5. Nemser, 6.

Hesse would continue work both in and between the logics and conventions of two- and three-dimensional artistic practices. An array of revolutionary turns—on the side, tipping, slanting, not updown but sideways—figure centrally in the evolutionary development of much of that work.

A fundamental function, or operation, in Hesse's creative process takes its place both in, and in the relationship between, her work in two and three dimensions: What I will call a principle, or logic, of rotation. This principle expresses itself most fully in the work Hesse produced as she moved from the bas-reliefs of 1965 through the sculptural work she executed over the next five years, yet it is also evident in the two-dimensional work prior to the reliefs of 1965. Over the course of her career, a gamut of biaxial rotations take place along what was typically a ninety-degree angle. I say "biaxial" (a word that comes up in another list Hesse drew up⁶) because a rotational turn can be seen to occur both in terms of a pivot on the flat—generally moving clockwise—and as a rotation out into space, in which the organizing axial line will be one perpendicular to the edge where wall intersects floor. Such moves, at times amounting to a dimensionalization of the figure into actual space from the flatness of the picture plane, also occur in the inverse, where three-dimensional figures return to renderings on the flat for reconfiguration and re-imagination according to the protocols of traditional illusionistic perspective. In all cases, the logic of rotation reveals itself fundamentally as a process of displacement and disorientation. In terms of the latter, it frequently unsettles orientation in a manner not unlike Bochner's *Wrap*, which requires the viewer to shift perspective in order to be able to "read" or re-read the work. For Hesse, rotational movement may have functioned as a kind of shift in creative perspective that enabled her to distort and disorient her own relationship to an object sufficiently to open up new spaces for as yet unrealized work to emerge.

In September of 1966, Hesse participated in Lucy Lippard's exhibition *Eccentric Abstraction* at the Fischbach Gallery in New York. Hesse's featured piece, which she fabricated specifically for the show, was *Metronomic Irregularity II* [111. 33]. This work has been considered by many to be a linchpin work, bridging Hesse's previous work and the work to come. The first small study for it was *Metronomic Irregularity I*—measuring a mere one by one-and-a-half feet, and a shallow one-inch deep [111. 91]. Constructing the piece out of paint and Sculp-metal on wood with cotton-cov-

6. Lippard, 65.

ered wire, Hesse drilled into each panel a grid eleven holes high and twenty-three holes wide, auguring the circle drawings she was soon to execute. With their unruly and disordered wires connecting the panels, the three different versions of *Metronomic Irregularity* exemplify Hesse's concern with the relationship between chaos and order, already made manifest in sculptural work such as *Ennead* of 1965 [ill. 31] and *Laocoön* of 1966 [ill. 75]. In pieces such as these, in Lippard's view, Hesse "had instinctively understood...how the cliché 'drawing in space' could be reinvigorated with real linear materials—string, cord, wire, rope."⁷ For some critics, however, this quality was not welcomed as a positive aspect of her work. Reviewing the show, Hilton Kramer denounced work like *Metronomic Irregularity II* as "second-hand" and derivative, since it "simply adapts the imagery of Jackson Pollock's drip painting to a three-dimensional medium."⁸ Worse, for Kramer,

What was formerly part of the metaphorical and expressive fabric of painting is now offered as a literal *thing*. A kind of technological positivism triumphs, but at the expense...of a genuine imaginative probity...In this respect, *Eccentric Abstraction* only conforms to a general tendency to substitute the literal for the metaphorical, and to compensate with inflated physical scale for the diminution of imaginative energy...The prose of literal minds effectively displaces the old poetry.⁹

In an interview of 1970, Hesse was quite explicit about the limitations of such a narrow interpretation of her work.¹⁰ The question of how to situate artwork with respect to the conventions of painting and sculpture has proven a site of ongoing difficulty. Rosalind Krauss, for instance, has critiqued Hesse's ostensible "adherence to painting, to its problematic, which is that of the vertical field: boundedness, image-filled, wall-oriented, the vehicle of 'fronto-parallel' address" as a crucial conceptual limitation of her sculptural production.¹¹ Pointing to Hesse's "obedience" to a pictorial logic, despite her discovery of "process," or, as Krauss defines it, the "logic of flows of material" in her erstwhile "sculptural" work, she maintains the artist never managed to escape the "fronto-parallel place of modernist opticality." A work like *Metronomic Irregularity II* "was not a provocation for sculpture but rather organized itself in relation to painting."¹² Although Hesse had, Krauss admits, "decided to contest its rules, and that in the most subversive way possible," she never completely left the ideology of painting behind. "She had not," Krauss underscores, "as so many of her critics suppose, become a sculptor."¹³

7. Lippard, 190.

8. Hilton Kramer, "And Now 'Eccentric Abstraction': It's Art, But Does It Matter?," *New York Times*, September 25, 1966, 27.

9. Kramer, 29.

10. Nemser, 8.

11. Krauss, "Hesse's Desiring Machines" (1993), reprinted in *Eva Hesse* October Files, 49.

12. Krauss, 53.

13. Krauss, 49.

Certainly if Hesse's "literalization" of line were her only contribution to the 1960s aesthetic discourse on the relationship between painting and sculpture, the formidable force of Hesse's originality would not have garnered the critical approbation that it has since her lifetime. In contrast to Krauss's assertion that a kind of "docility...kept [Hesse] fixated on the pictorial,"¹⁴ the specific form of Hesse's spatial imagination in her work in two dimensions prior to the moment in which she broke into space—and that continued after the fact of that break—suggests otherwise. Ongoing formal and logical preoccupations, implicated in the continuity of formal motifs, like the circle, and operational logics, like rotation, pertain both to the realm of sculpture and to work on the flat, even if they were only given expression *as* sculpture after 1965. In Hesse's mature sculptural work, this specific quality of her artistic imagination expresses itself in a way that belongs properly, and ultimately, to neither category fully, for part of Hesse's originality derives from her ability to think in a dimension *between* two and three—in an interstitial zone where the rules and logics of the one conflict with, confound, and displace those of the other.

Around the time of the *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition, with Bochner's gift in hand, Hesse wrote another list that turned on words linked to "circular motion." Lippard has suggested that the artist's composition of this list may have been motivated by Hesse's thinking around her experience of the show:

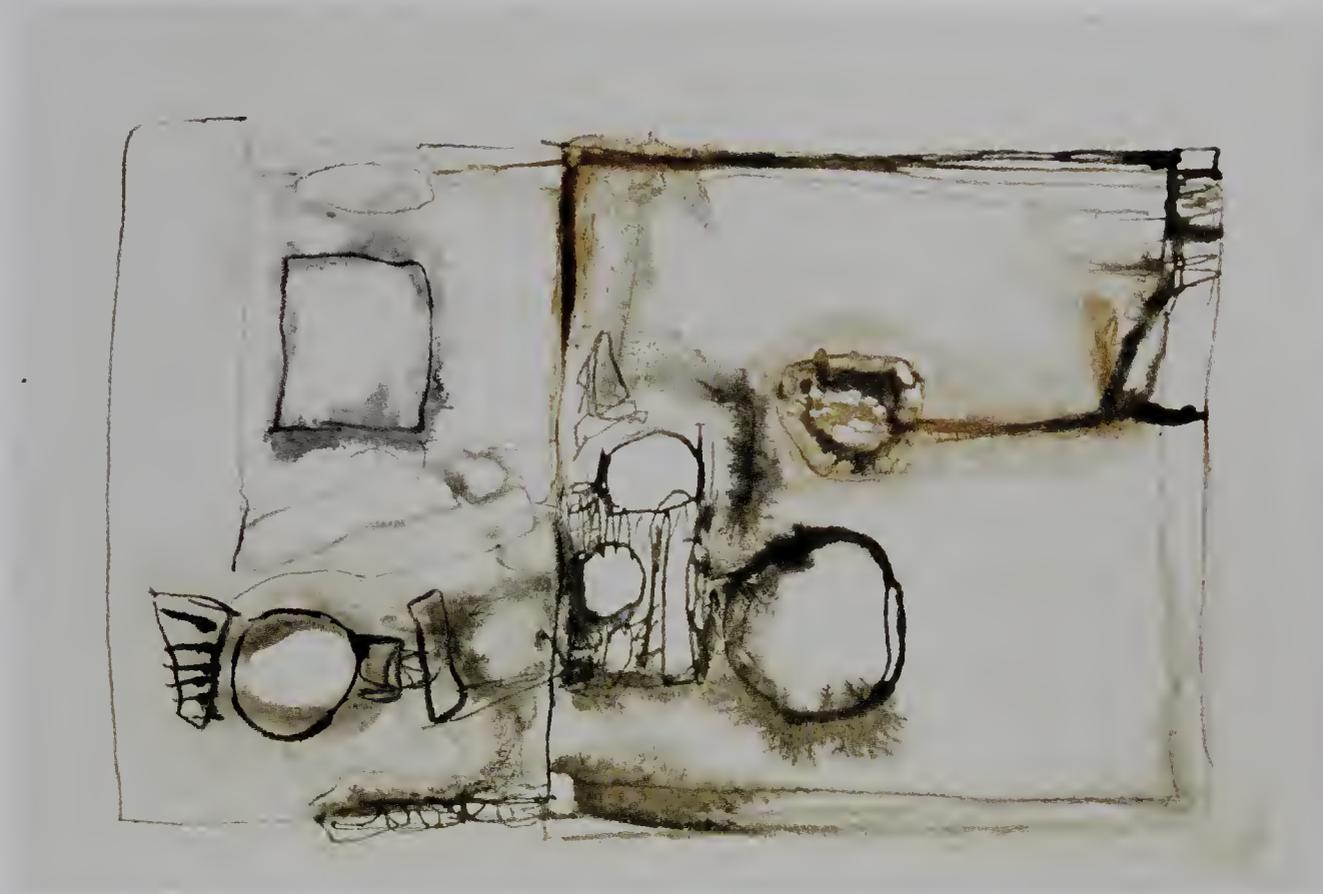
circumnavigation / circumflexion / circuit / evolution / circumscribe /
 circuitous, devious / rotation, gyration, convolution / vortex, mael-
 strom, vertiginousness [sic], vertigo / rotate, box the compass, gyrate
 / unfoldment, evolution, inversion / circle-cordon, cincture, cestus,
 baldric / (complex circularity) convolution, involution, undulation,
 sinuosity / coil-labyrinth / labyrinthine / in and out / eccentric.¹⁵

Reading this list, Krauss associates the "swarm of words zany filling the page," or what she calls the "strange ulalalia of a burble of off-rhymes," to Hesse's concern with the absurd.¹⁶ Yet in the context of an artist who was just at that moment gaining momentum in realizing a unique sculptural idiom, this early list indicates above all a stream of specific artistic concerns, or of emerging ways of thinking, about a fundamental procedural modality that would continue to inform, and perhaps already had been informing for some time, Hesse's work. Among this list of words, we encounter key terms—"rotation" and "gyration" especially—that relate to the list of words on

14. Krauss, 50.

15. Lippard, 65.

16. Krauss, 48.



the graph paper sheet mentioned at the beginning of this essay [80]. “*Rotation*” has been singled out for special attention: Italicized in Lippard’s citation (an emphasis notably elided in Krauss’s text), such emphasis suggests that in her original hand Hesse had underlined the word “rotation,” marking it out as the central conceptual nodal point around which the other words turn.¹⁷

Although this essay concerns itself primarily with work Hesse produced after her return from Europe, signs of rotation can be seen in her drawings prior to that moment. In an undated watercolor, likely a floor plan of one of the apartments Hesse rented, the artist rotates perspective to offer a bird’s eye view of the space of living, the shift in perspective transforming actual, lived space into an abstract composition of loosely geometrical figures [83]. Modern industrial “views from above”—from superior vantages such as the top of a skyscraper or an airplane—are prevalent topoi in American postwar art. Renate Petzinger links the importance of this perspectival shift to Hesse’s work, noting its significance for the boxes and grids that began to emerge in early 1964.¹⁸ In the “box”

17. Compare Lippard, 65, to Krauss, 48.

18. Blazenka Perica, “Specific Objects-Theorie und Praxis im Werk von Donald Judd,” diss. Universität Gesamthochschule Kassel, 1999, as cited in Renate Petzinger, “Thoughts on Hesse’s Early Work, 1959–1965,” in Sussman, *Eva Hesse*, 50.

drawings of 1964, Sussman has further observed, “the artist’s constant shifting of the orientation of the sheets is highlighted,” often through the use of a characteristic device of the period: arrows to both direct and confound orientation. Some arrows emphasize a vertical axis only, as in the Timpanelli sketchbook of 1961. On a later page from Hesse’s diary of 1964–5, however, figures, numbers, and words are oriented to the bottom of the page, to the side, and also to the top [62], as Hesse rotated the sheet in multiple directions as she drew. In a more finished drawing like *And He Sat in a Box*, a collage of 1964, the phrase that gives the work its title is written twice in two different directions, confounding the stability of spatial orientation.¹⁹

The most fascinating and complex indications of what I am calling “rotation” are to be found in the sketches Hesse made in her notebooks, journals, and sketchbooks, now held in the extraordinarily rich cache of the artist’s archival material at the Allen Art Museum at Oberlin College. Drawing for Hesse, as for many artists, was a medium that offered a more open field for imaginative elaboration, where concepts and ideas could emerge and change with relative fluency, uninhibited by the constraining obligation to complete. By her own account, the drawings were always “separate from the sculpture or the paintings.” As the artist explained to Nemser, “I don’t mean in a different style but they weren’t connected as an object, a transference. They were related because they were mine but they weren’t related in one completing the other...It is not wanting to have such a definite plan. It is a sketch—just a quickie to develop it in the process rather than working out a whole small model and following it. That doesn’t interest me.”²⁰ For Hesse, drawing pertained to creative process in a way distinct from how her finished work related to *material* process. A central problematic of her early work was space, a fact that may have contributed to her ultimate turn to alternative materials and mediums. According to Doyle, Hesse’s drawings “were in a way more like sculpture than paintings—the way they related in space—that’s maybe why she couldn’t transfer them to painting. It’s a matter of finding your own *material*.”²¹ It was not until 1969, when she made a set of drawings for *Contingent* [8588], that Hesse admitted the existence of a direct correlation between inaugural idea and finished work.²² This is consistent with earlier reports about the artist’s working process. When Bochner, for instance, first approached Hesse about contributing drawings to his 1966 show *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed as Art*, Hesse told him

19. Sussman, 20.

20. Nemser, 21.

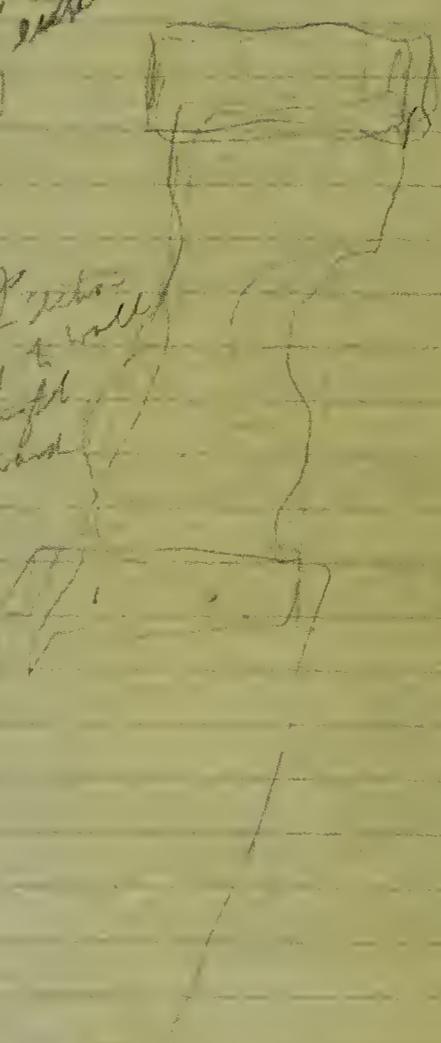
21. Tom Doyle, quoted in Lippard, 28.

22. Nemser, 21. When Nemser asked Hesse about a group of sketches for *Contingent*, Hesse replied that one of them expressed the “first ideas for the piece. This was the original idea and I changed it. It’s the same piece but it’s got all sorts of subtle variances.”

(B) try hold up the
follow up, either way

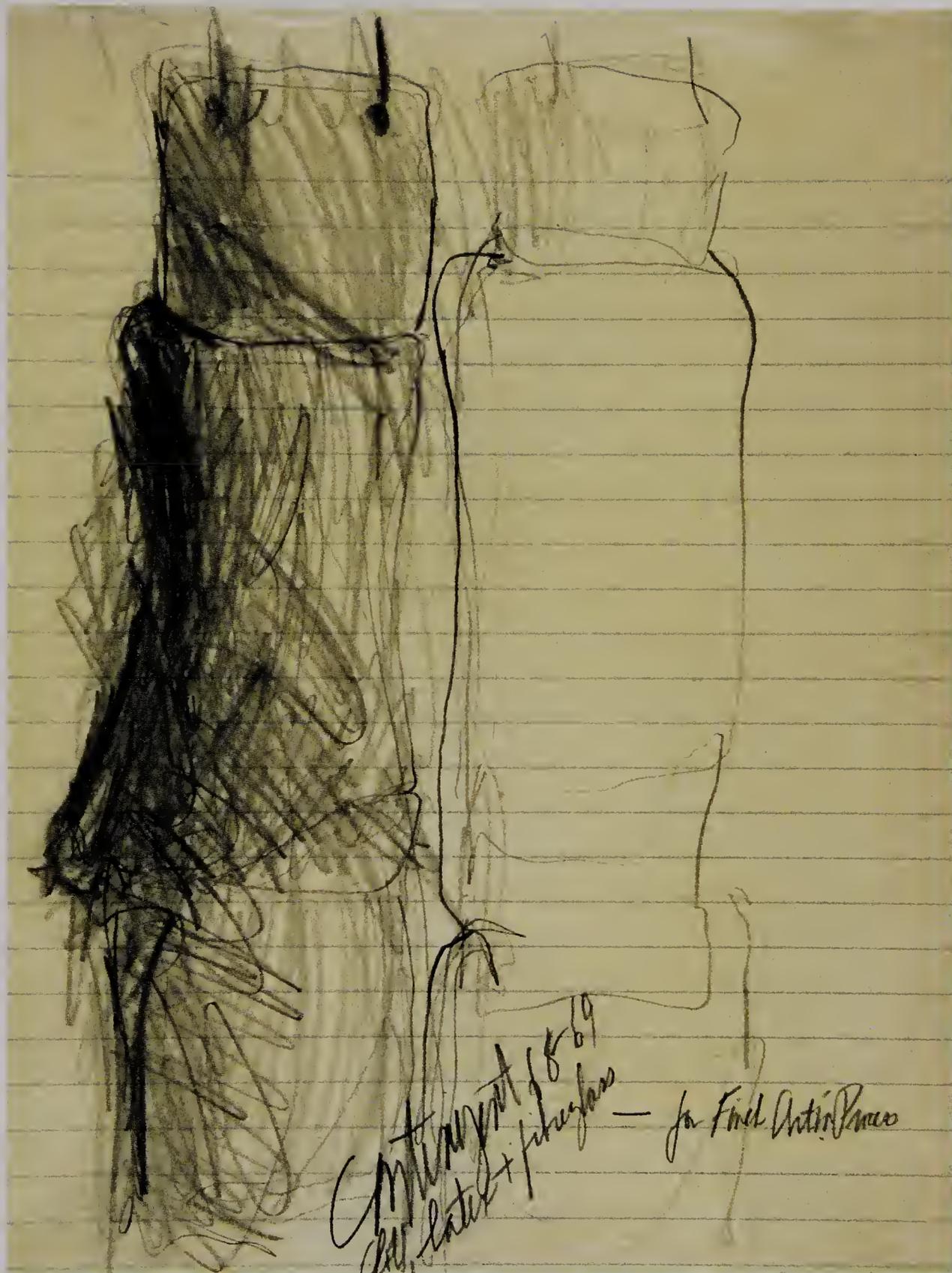
(C) stand up
on hand rest
keep the arms
and necessary
can come forward

(2) center rubber
stretch to handle
with rubber
on cord, strain on
up. when you
know it beyond
naturally

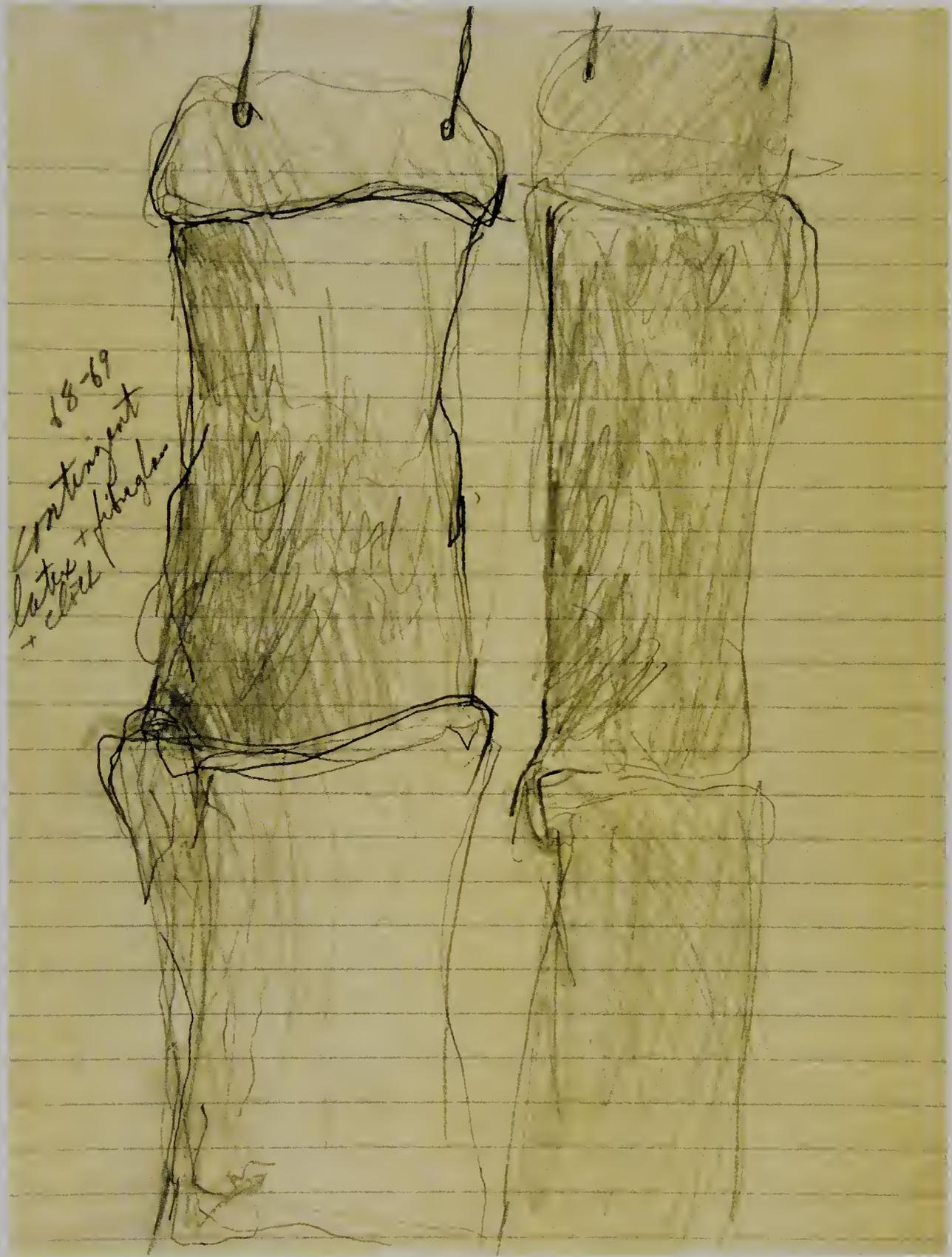




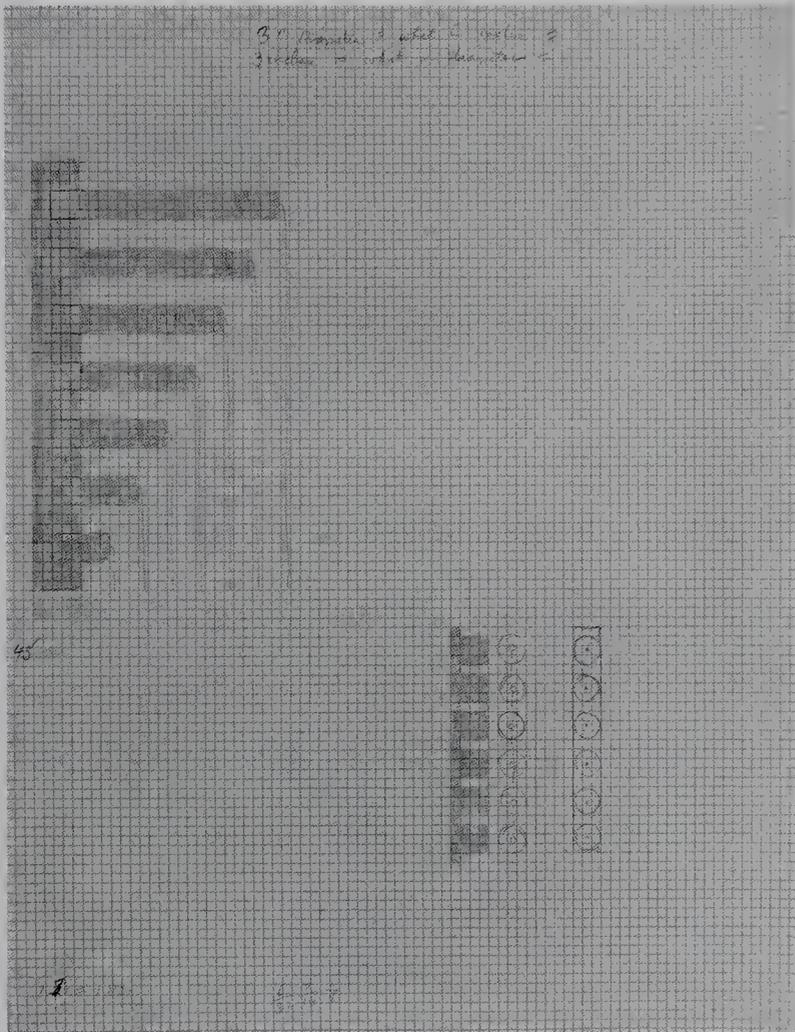
[85] no title, 1968-69









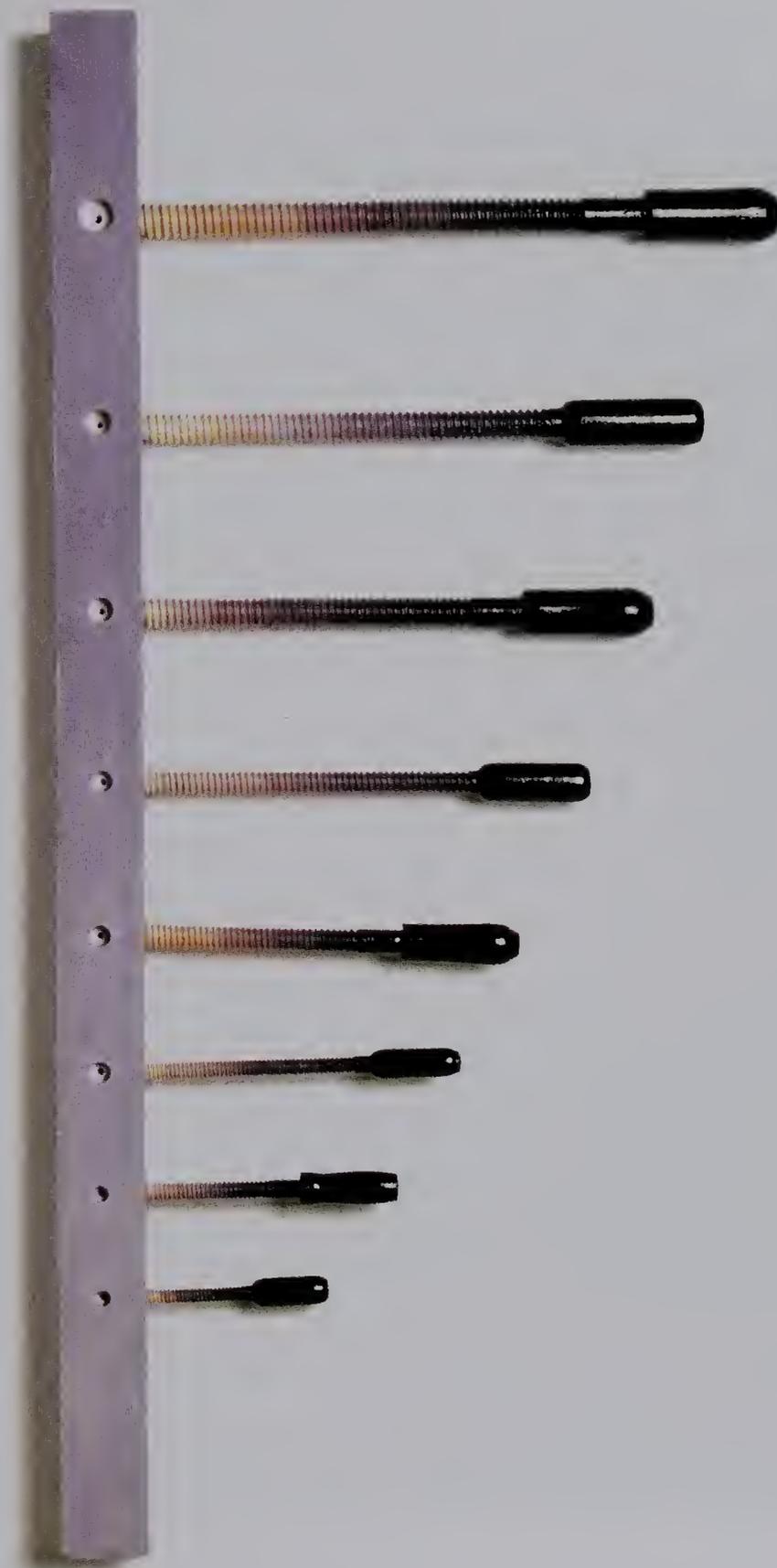


[ill. 69] no title, 1965

Pencil on graph paper, 11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm)
Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Gift of Helen Hesse Charash

Rotation frequently functions as the operative logic that connects the otherwise disparate motifs. Look, for instance, at a drawing on graph paper executed after Hesse's last sculptural piece to involve color [ill. 69]: the so-called "Purple Piece" of 1965 [ill. 70]. Modified to accommodate the abstract rule of the graph paper sheet, an adaptation of "Purple Piece" is set down at the left, where imaginary "strings" have been attached to the ends of what had been eight—the drawing reduces the number to seven—screw-threaded projections, of various lengths and diameters, adjoining a rectangular bar. At the lower right corner of the same sheet we see another version of it, with now six extrusions truncated to equal length. Next to that, two additional

drawings rotate the motif at an angle of ninety degrees. These new views presage not only *Ishtar* of 1965 [ill. 65], which amounts to a vertically oriented doubling of the image, but also *Addendum* of 1967 [ill. 89], a piece where a long bar high off the ground is attached to the wall and from which rubber tubing trails to the floor, representing a further rotation by another ninety degrees. And, in yet another permutation, this motif also relates to the circle drawings executed on graph paper, both with and without tiny "tails" [82, 92]. The "tail" will be further recycled in numerous future works [93], a connection reiterated on a sheet in a spiral notebook in the Oberlin archives [96] where a planar view at the lower right replicates the image of the circle drawings with strings. This sketch is, furthermore, suggestively placed to the right of an attached sheet with a grid of tiny circles. "Purple Piece" is itself, of course, a work one might expect to project from the wall, but it is instead installed rotated, counter-intuitively for its dimensionality,

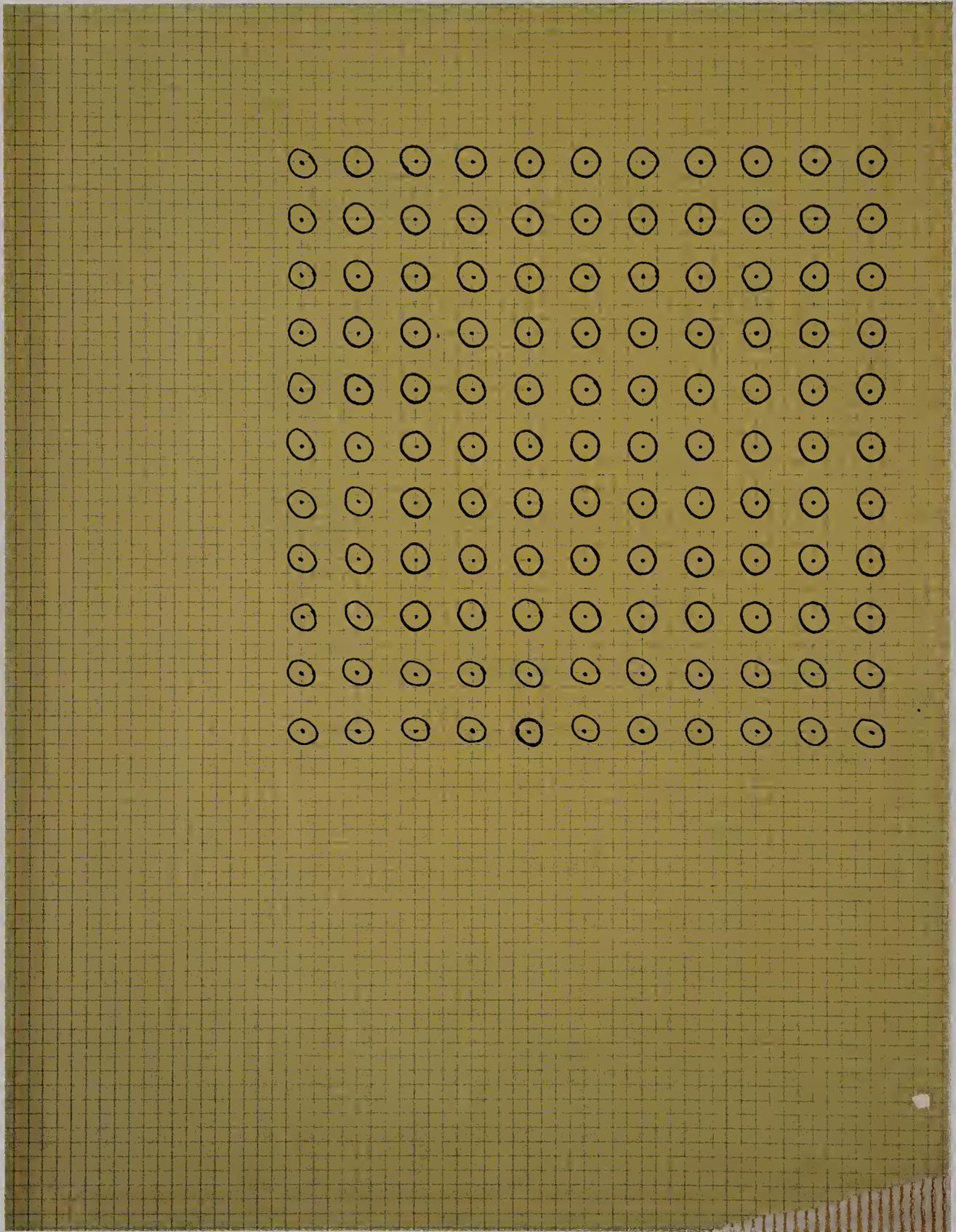


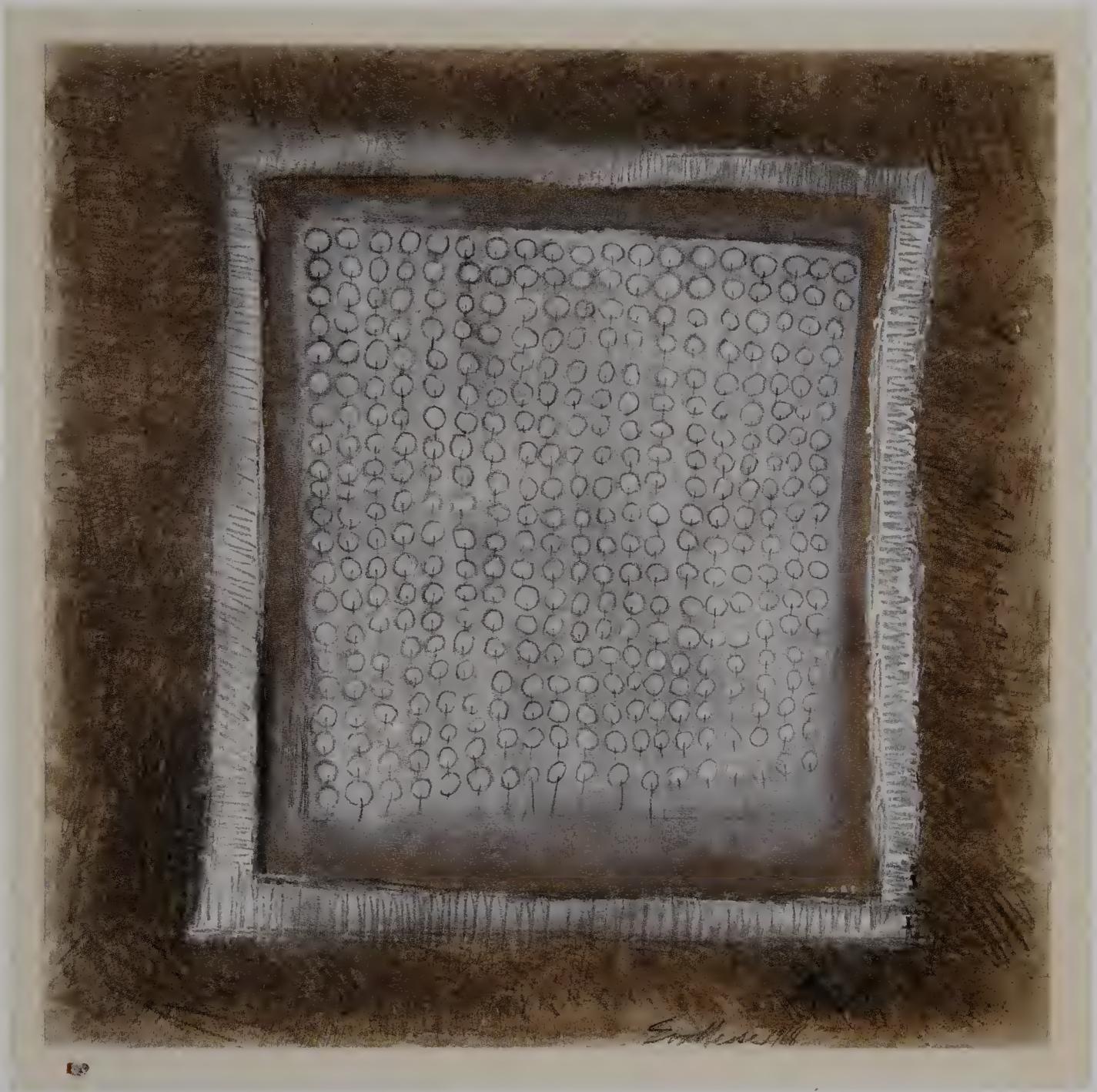
[ill. 70] no title, 1965

Acrylic paint on wood

45 x 22 x 2 1/2 in. (114.3 x 55.9 x 6.4 cm)

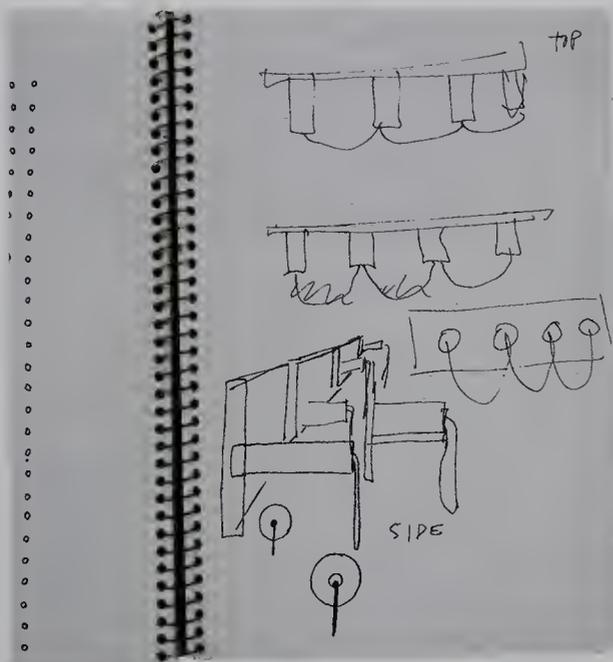
Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Gift of Helen Hesse Charash





[93] no title, 1968

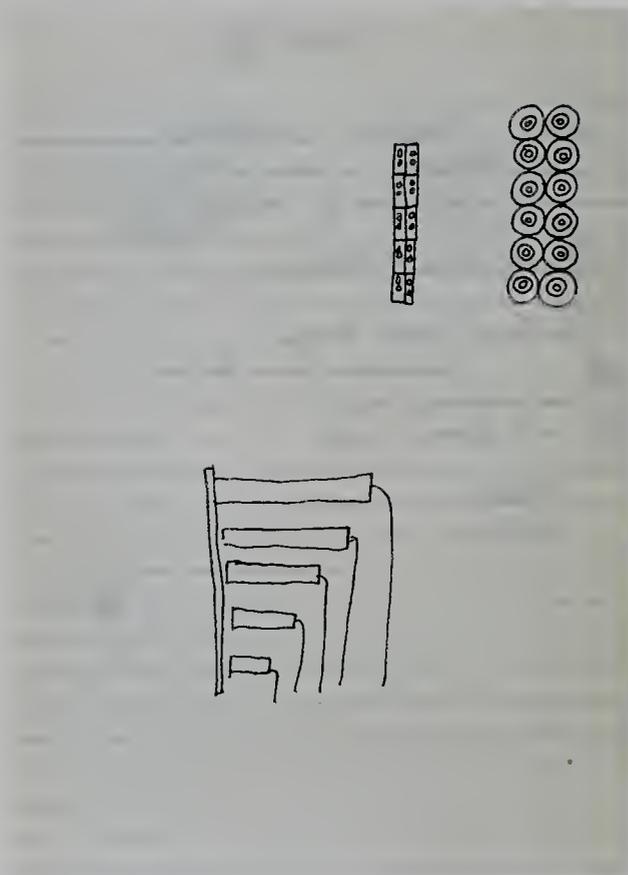
238



[94] no title, from diary 1977.52.31, 1966

to rest flush against the wall. A doodle in the upper right corner of another sketch [95] further presses a rotated drawing after "Purple Piece" toward the luminous concentric circle drawings, exquisitely shaded in tonal gradations of watercolor wash evocative of the hand-drawn grids of Agnes Martin, whose own subtle washes are rivaled by the luminous handmade presence of Hesse's concentric circles [98, 99].

Sculptural works laid on the flat, like *Schema*, can also read as rotations and dimensional realizations of the circle drawings. There are multiple examples where Hesse's combination of rotation, dimensionalization, and subtle reconfiguration informs the creative process that guides her from one project to the next. The circle drawings with extrusions of thread, for instance, inform the initial drawings [111. 71] and, later, the test pieces [111. 72] for the modular units of *Repetition 19* of 1967. In the final versions of the work, the cords have been eliminated, yet were one to view the original test pieces from a bird's eye view—in other words, rotated at an angle of ninety degrees—they would resemble a basic modification of the circles with "tails." Rope-like cords coming out of circles also inform the structure of the elements composing the model for *Accretion* of the same year.

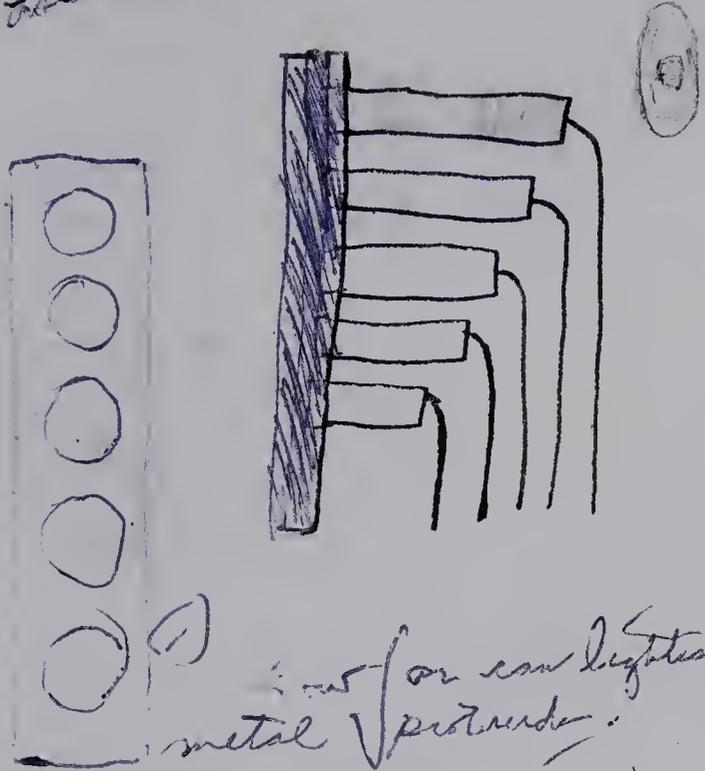


[95] no title, from notebook 1977.52.30, Fall 1966

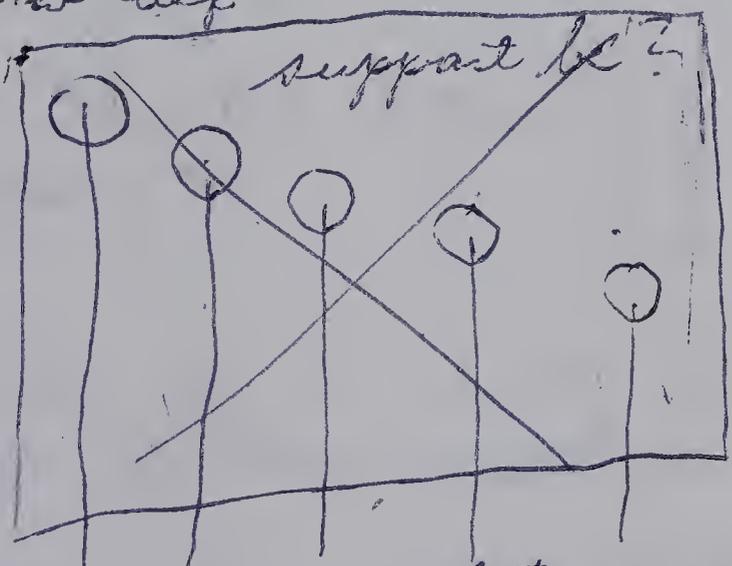
right: [96] no title, c. 1968

In many of the drawings relating to *Accretion*, however, Hesse circles around the problem of the work at shifting angles not of ninety but of approximately forty-five degrees [100102]. In

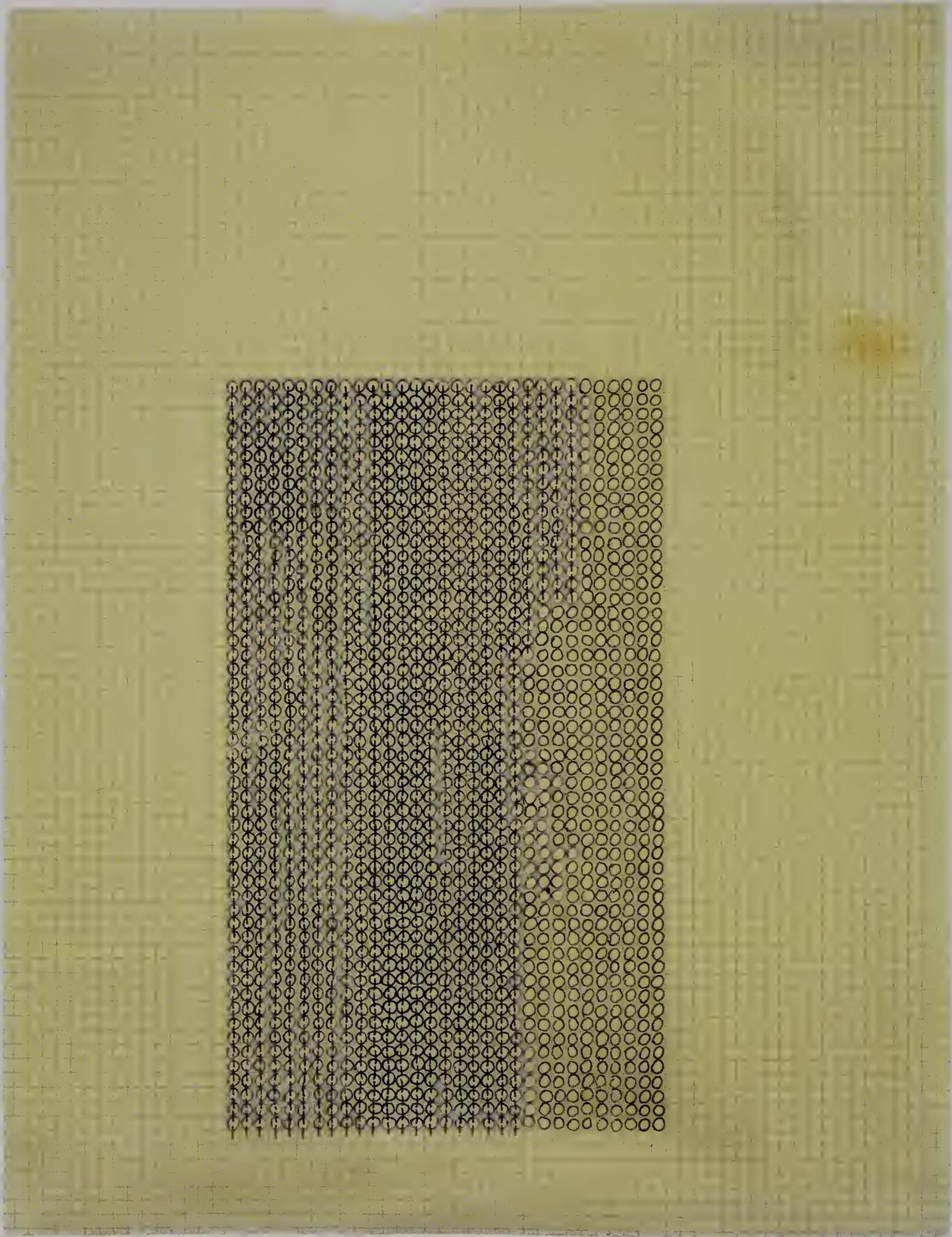
~~work~~



How far can lightest metal protrude.
How deep must the round support be?



③ Height determined by extensions.
④ keep close to square.



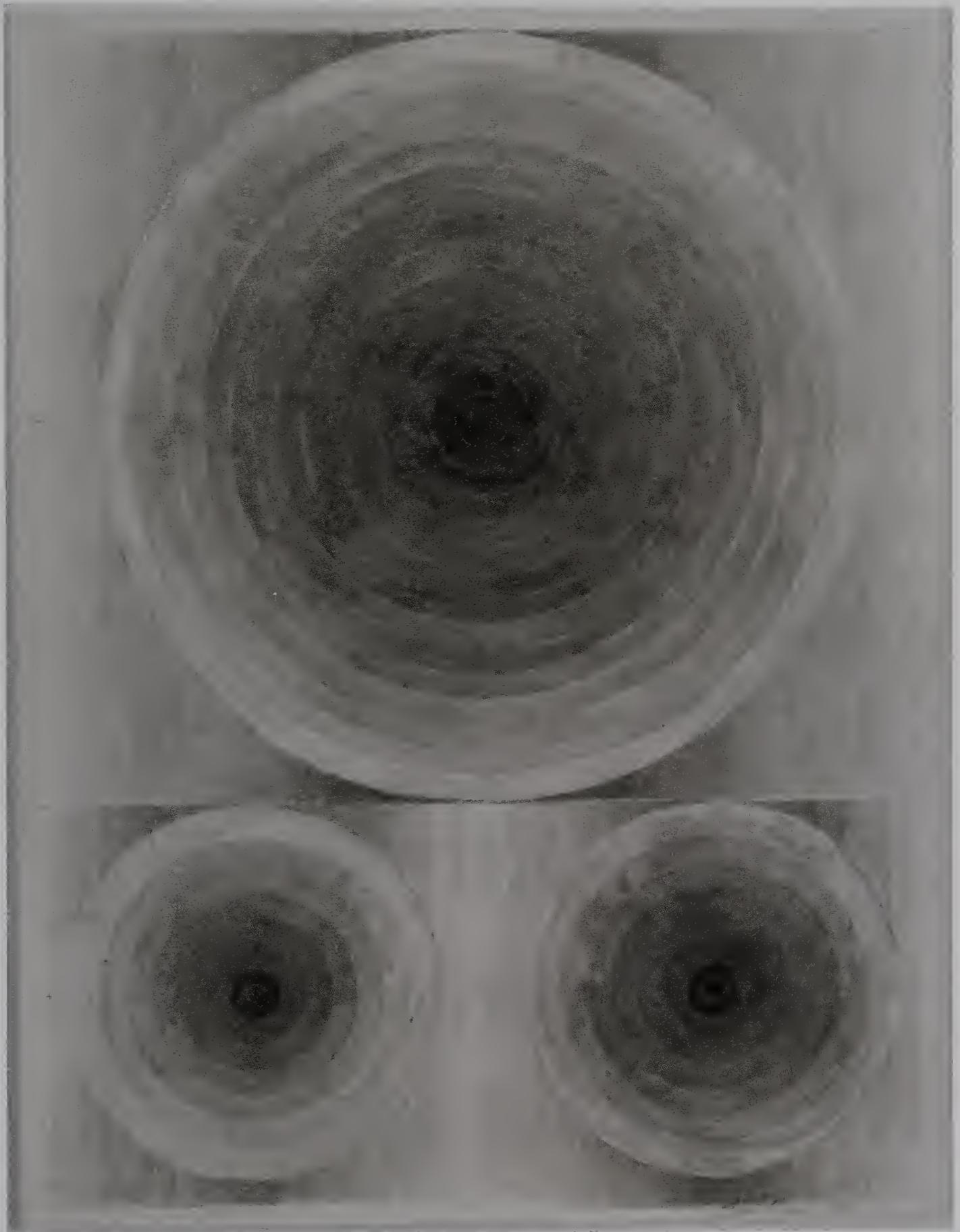


[ill. 71] no title, 1967

Ink and pencil on paper on board with nylon string
14 7/8 x 14 7/8 x 1 1/4 in. (37.8 x 37.8 x 3.2 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles



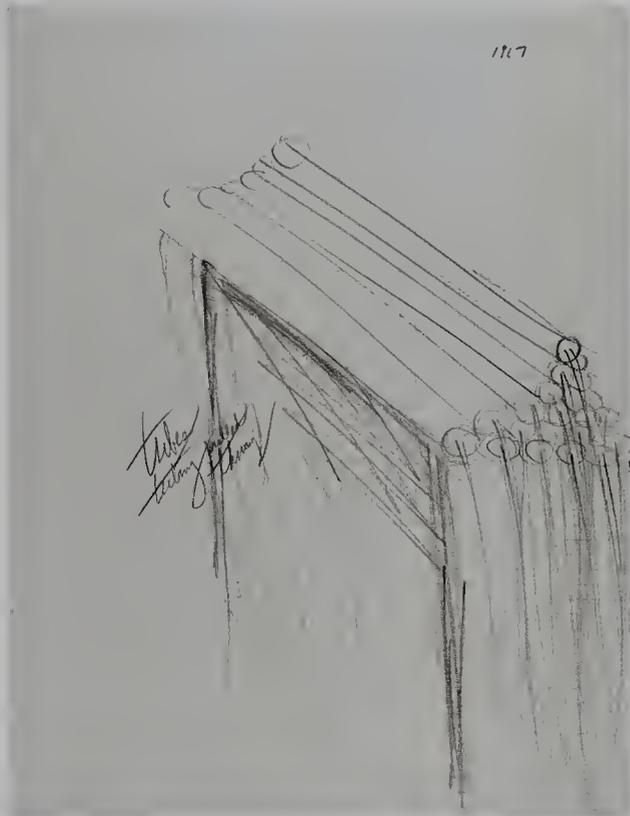
[98] no title, 1966



[99] no title, 1966



[ill. 72] test piece for *Repetition Nineteen II*, 1967
Latex over cotton with surgical tubing
5 1/2 x 10 1/4 x 11 in. (14 x 26 x 27.9 cm)
Norah and Norman Stone



[100] no title, 1967

later drawings, the shift to a more acute view along a forty-five degree axis appears most prevalent in the work on paper that Hesse executed while moving toward, or after having completed, a particular sculptural project. Although most of the drawings after *Repetition 19* verge on a bird's eye view, they never quite attain it, hovering instead at a steep angle from above [103, 127]. Hesse clearly made drawings "after" her sculptures, yet it is difficult to verify which of the drawings relating to specific sculptural works were executed before, after, or in the midst of fabrication. Despite this inherent ambiguity, three gouache and pencil drawings of *Accession* seem likely to have been completed after the sculpture was made,²⁶ and they compare instructively with the early sketches likely done in preparation for the box [70, 111, 56].

Like the sheets relating to *Repetition 19*, the finished drawings after *Accession* rotate around the object from varying vantages, distorting the strict geometry of the cube with views in turn from outside, above, and within the box [111, 73, 74].²⁷ The preparatory drawings, on the other hand, maintain a relatively stable perspective, concerned less with the metaphorical nature of the object than with basic issues of material manufacture.

The use of drawing as a medium to revise and reconfigure finished work should be distinguished from the artist's recycling of motifs, which characterized Hesse's creative process over the course of her entire career. Premonitions of key motifs and formal preoccupations in her later work can be found throughout her earliest drawings. One of her first sculptures, *Laocoön* (1965) [111, 75], echoes a very early sketch of a ladder and the piping hardware in her studio [106], a connection made all the more explicit when compared to a sketch for *Laocoön* torn from a sketchbook [105]; *Right After* (1969) appears presaged in multiple works, including sketches of energetic tangles of lines from 1960 [107, 108] and 1962 [15]; very early drawings of paper bags [129] promise the sagging modular elements in *Repetition 19* [104]; and a drawing of scattered shoes [131] the irregular dispersal of elements in *Sequel* of 1967–68 and *Tori* of 1969.

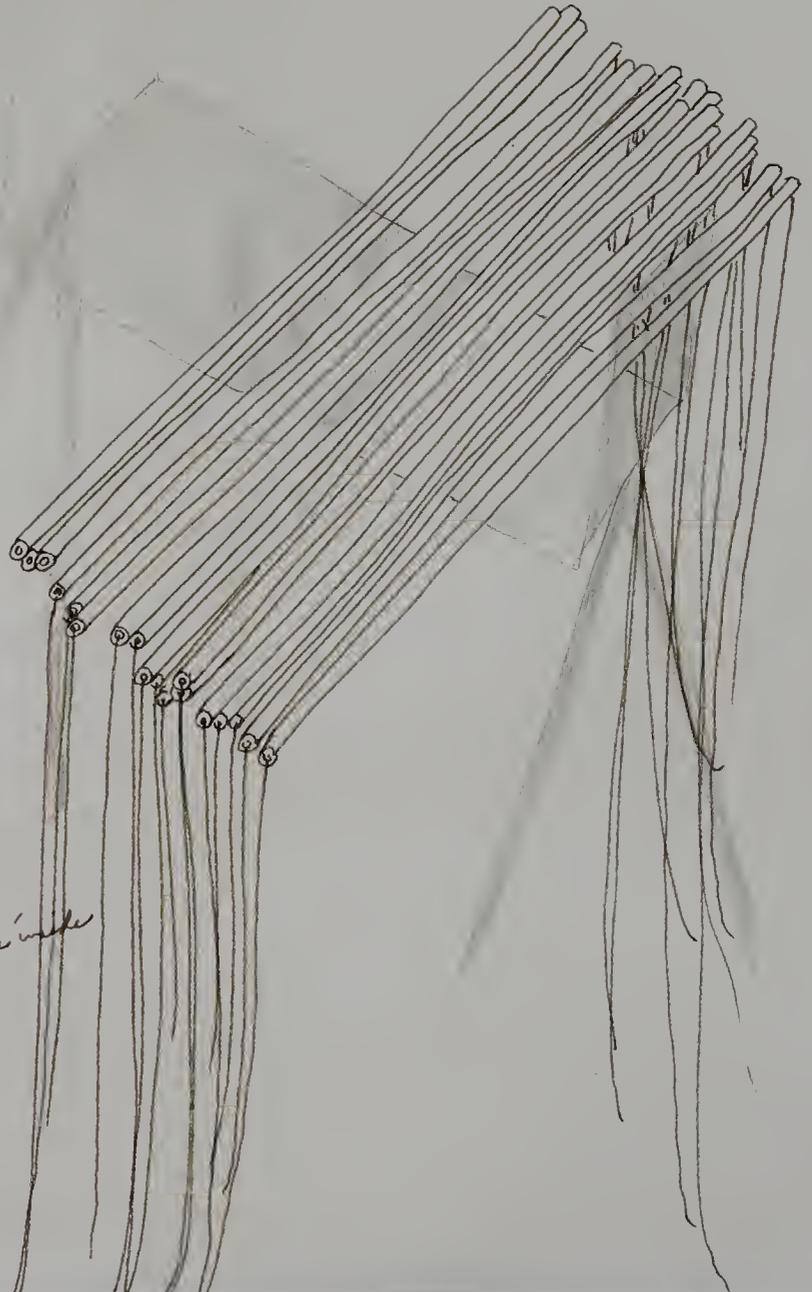
26. As Scott Rothkopf, "Accession," 214, observes, "Given their distorted perspectives and lack of scale or detail, they would have been almost useful as studies for the fabrication of the object."

27. The three drawings were installed together in the exhibition *Eva Hesse: Chain Polymers* at the Fischbach Gallery in 1968.

Structure
45" High

$\frac{1}{2}$ " DIAMETER
41" long.
inside $\frac{7}{8}$ "
outside $1\frac{1}{8}$ "

fiberglass
polyester resin
translucent
slightly visible base inside





One can similarly trace a genealogy from Hesse's reliefs toward the circle drawings and works closely related, both formally and conceptually, through a concern with rotation. Coils of pink-tinted cloth-covered wire in *Ringaround Arosie* return in the group of gray-toned works of 1966—where Hesse “boxes the compass,” as she put it—with the subtle semispherical motifs attaching to various square and rectangular formats in *Compart* and an untitled work of 1966 [111. 92, 62]. The anthropomorphic intensity of *Ringaround Arosie* has vanished, as the grays purge color and the circle's provocative tip has been smoothed out. A later relief, in turn, also relates to *Ringaround Arosie*. In *Eighter from Decatur* [111. 55], repeated arcs of yellow cord have been affixed to a Masonite board, at the base of which a moveable element echoes the breast-like circle of *Ringaround Arosie*. Fixed to that element are spokes at the end of which Hesse fashioned loose loops. This pinwheel-like construction is not static, and can be moved to change orientation. It can, in other words, be rotated.

Rotation in Hesse's work is, however, never freewheeling. Its axes ultimately turn on the pull of gravity, arcs abiding a swing leading from one point to another, from two-dimen-



TITLE .. REPETITION NINETEEN I

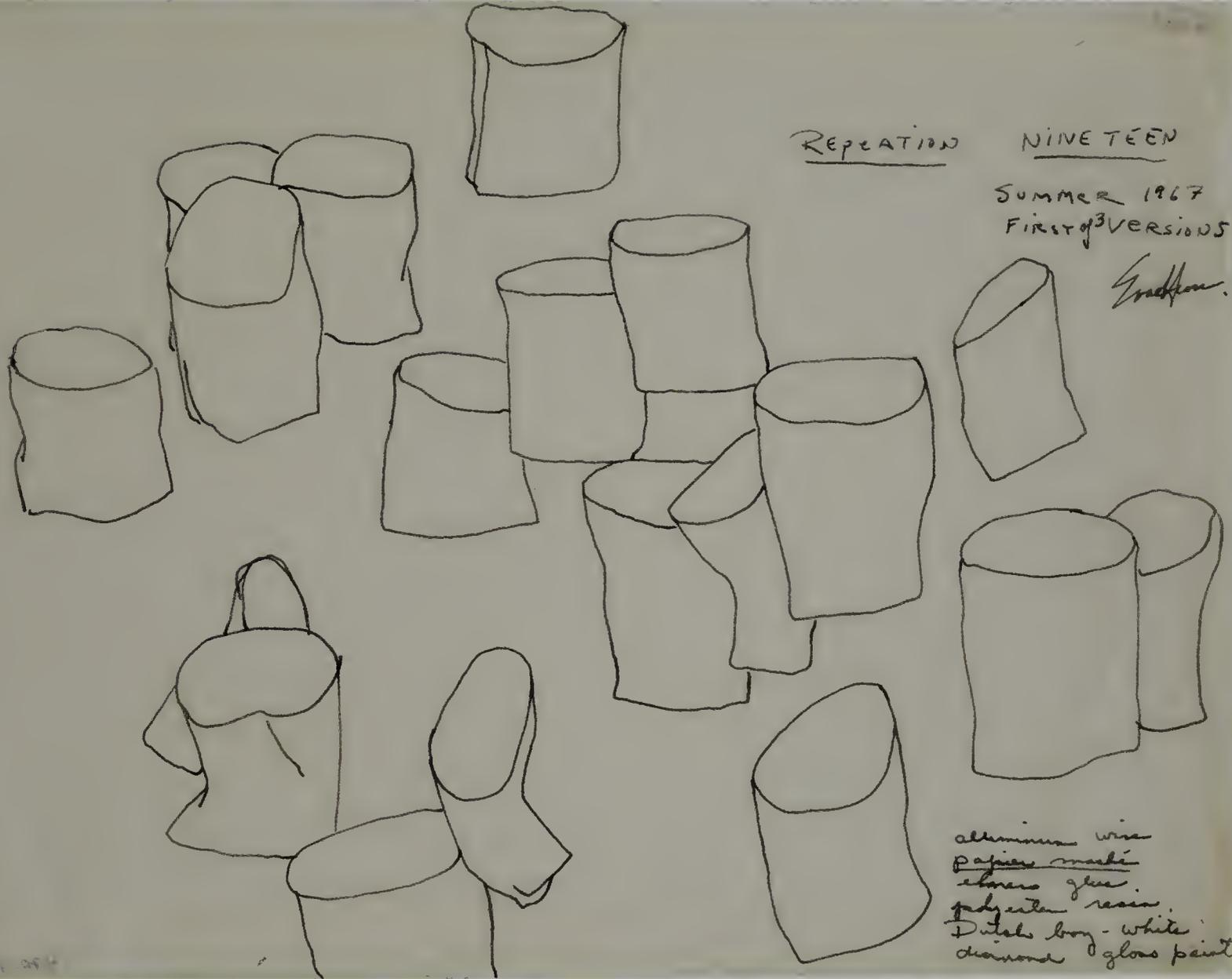
irregular tubes
 approx. 8" DIAMETER
 8-9" HIGH

random placement
 on the floor

wire mesh
 paper mache
 plastic resin
 enamel paint

1st of these 14 pieces
 2nd plus glass
 3rd rubber latched

Ernst Haeberle
 drawing for
 repetition sculpture
 1967

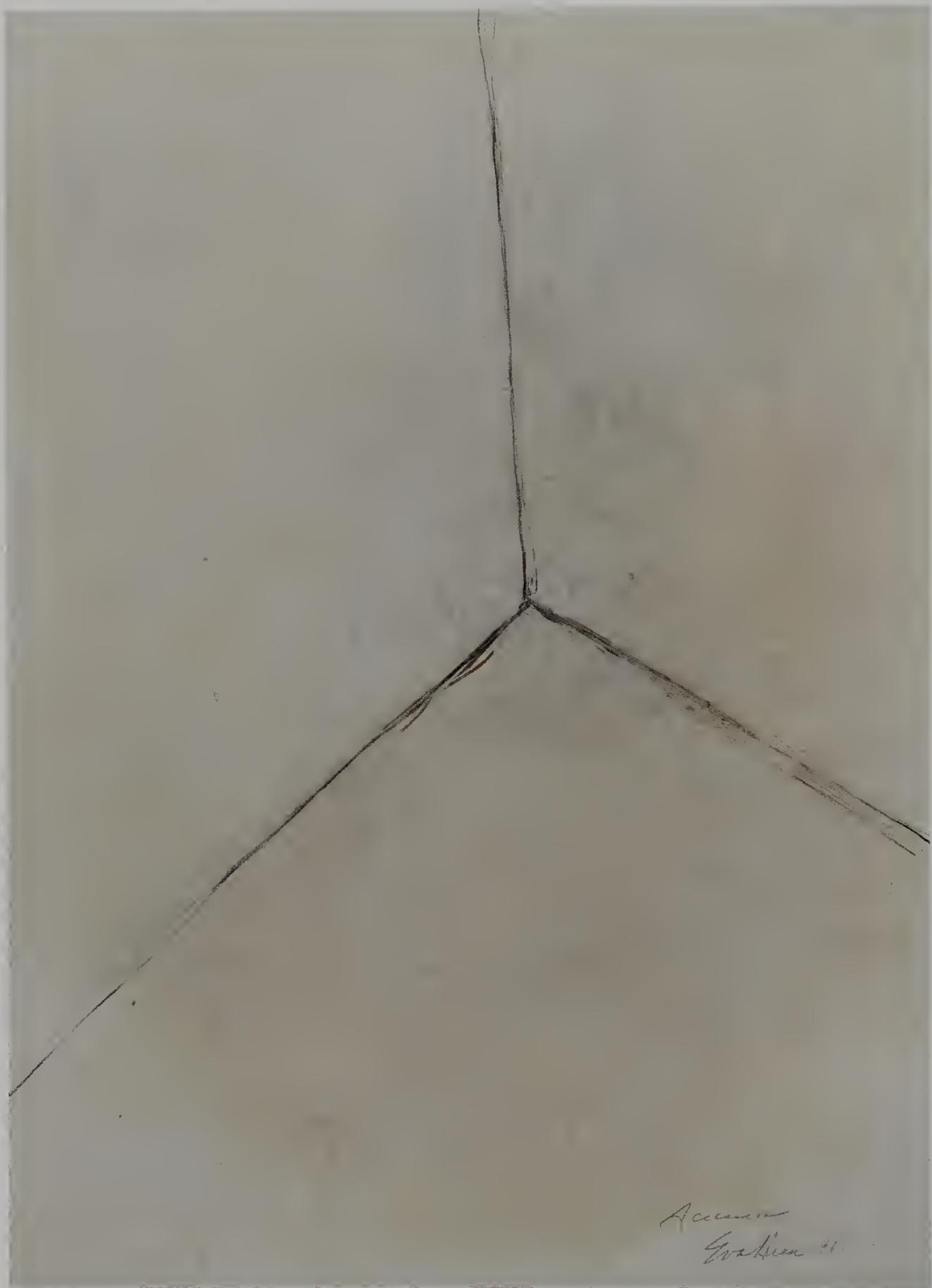


REPEATION NINETEEN

SUMMER 1967
FIRST OF 3 VERSIONS

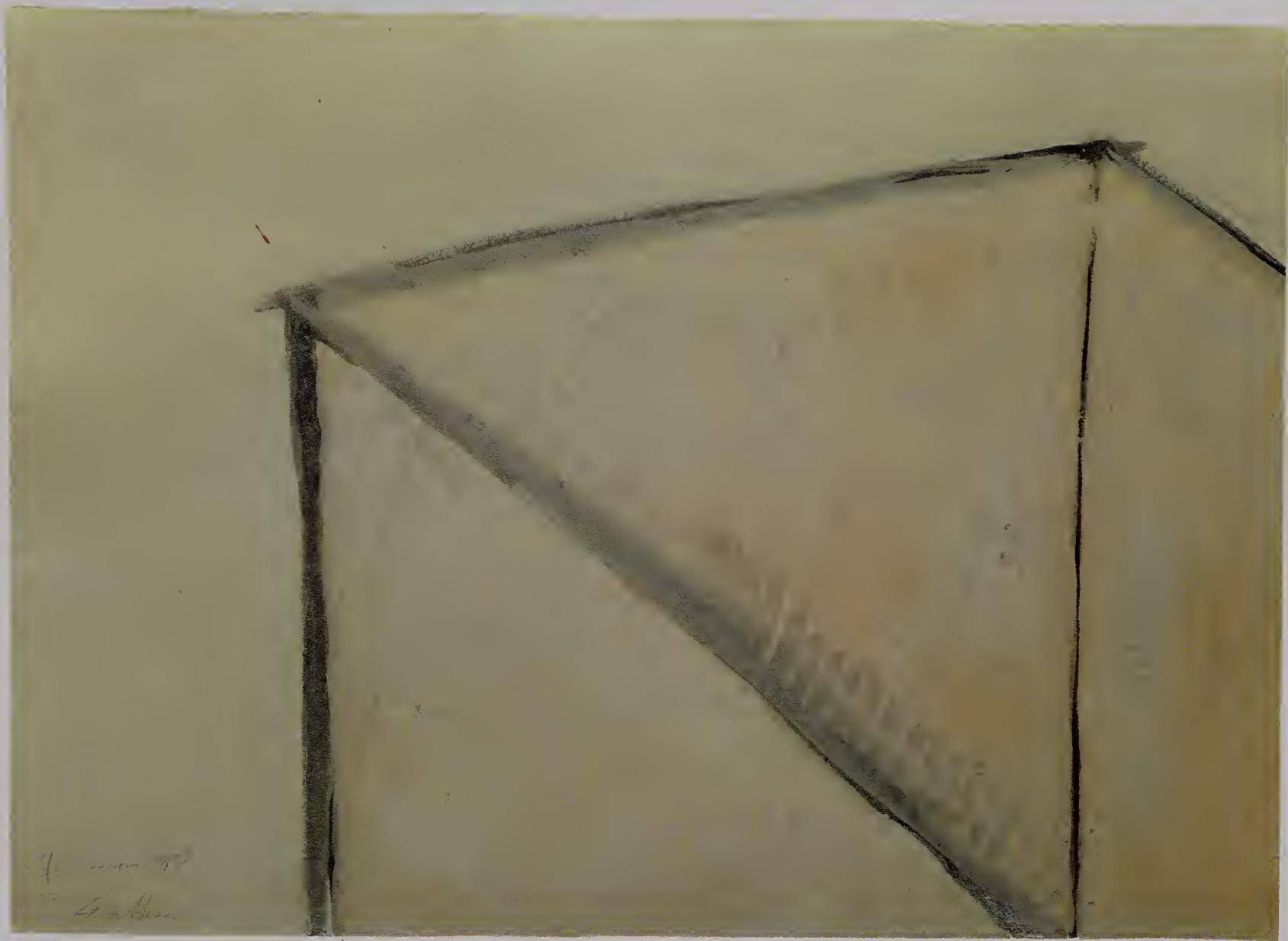
Ernest Hemingway

aluminum wire
paper mache
elmers glue
polyester resin
Dutch boy - white
diamond gloss paint



Accession
Gail Ganz '68

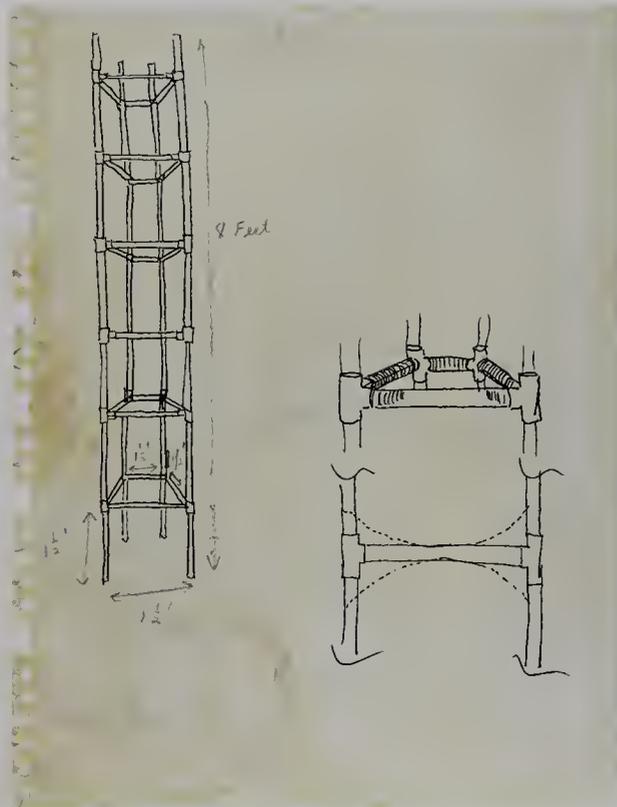
[ill. 73] *Accession*, 1968
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper
15 3/8 x 11 1/4 in. (39.1 x 28.6 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles



[ill. 74] *Accession*, 1967

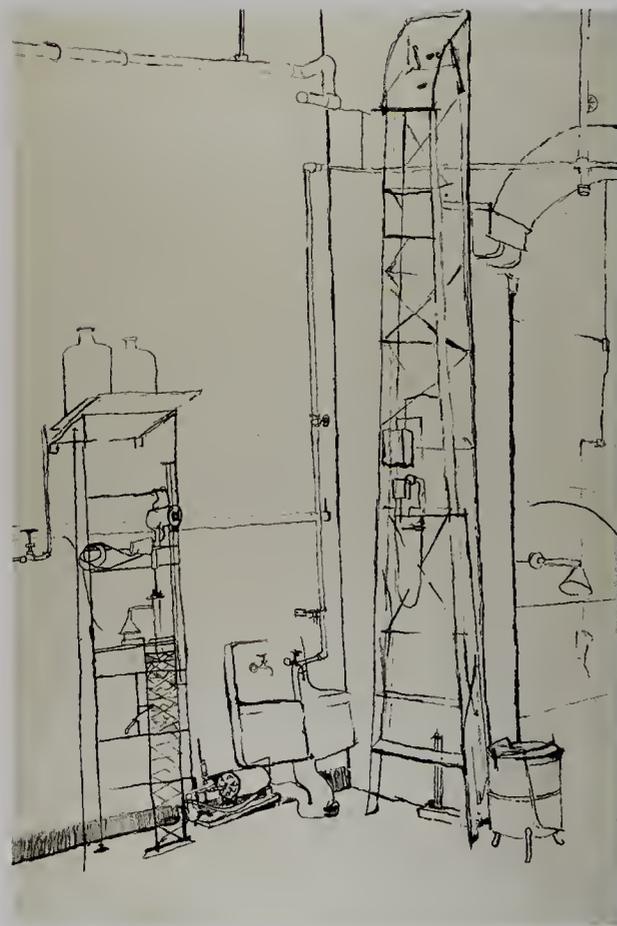
Watercolor, metallic gouache, and pencil on paper
11 1/2 x 15 3/8 in. (29.2 x 39.1 cm)

The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London



[105] no title, 1966

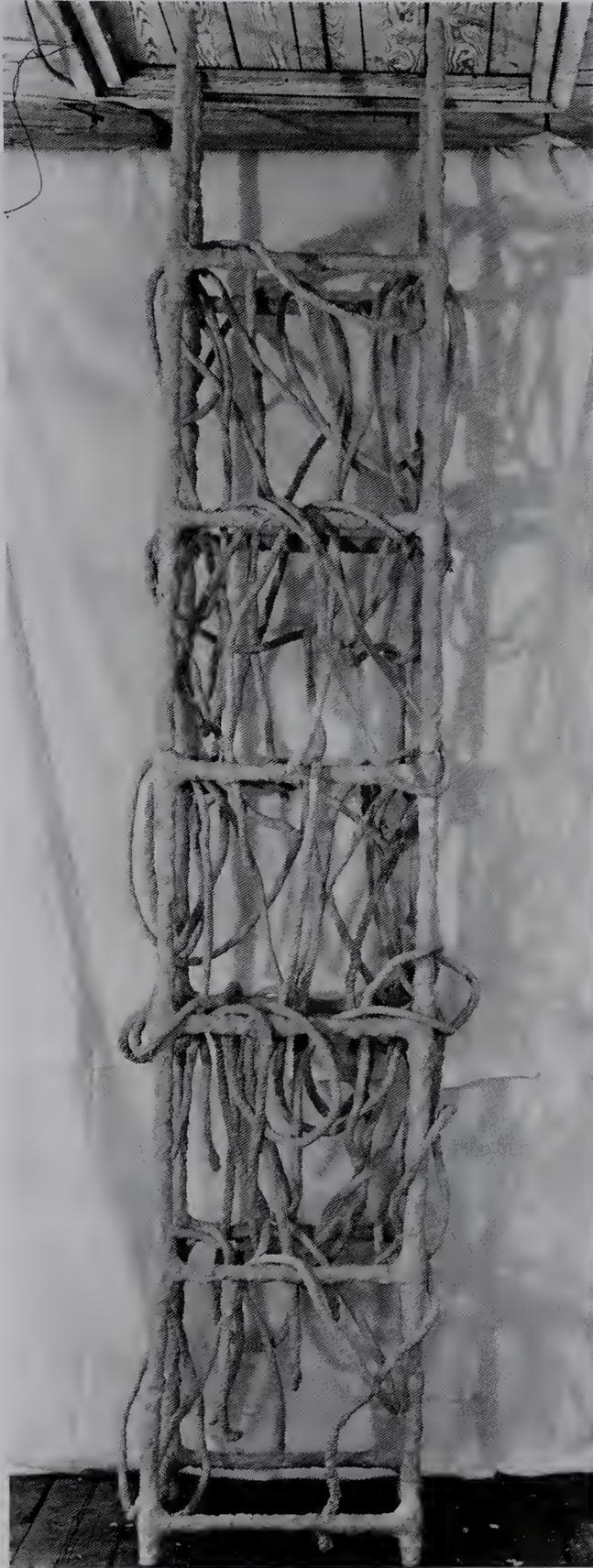
sional work to three- and back. In this sense, rotation relates to the tropes of variability and instability, hallmarks of her late work. Although heterogeneous spaces, both sculpture and work on the flat are keyed to gravitational orientation—paintings and drawings do, after all, *hang* from a wall. This focus on matter, gravity, and space—and to related processes such as piling, stacking, and hanging—is consistent with the process art of Hesse’s generation as theorized by Robert Morris in his seminal essay “Anti-Form,” published in *Artforum* in April 1968.²⁸ In drawings of 1963, Hesse had experimented with what she called “wild space,” in which abstract linear elements appear to float freely over the planar surface of the drawings.²⁹ This body of work exemplifies some of Hesse’s most radical explorations in the destabilization of spatial orientation. Unlike that work, however, most of the circle drawings, despite their apparent grid-obedient homogeneity, cannot be rotated without disrupting the fundamental balance of visual composition. Many possess a visual gravity carefully controlled by formal cues indicating proper directionality. Multiple devices are deployed to orient the pictures in a particular direction, imbuing them with a specific gravitational orientation. Tonal gradation is a prevalent strategy. In one work, the placement of the darkest circles at the top, with increasingly lighter circles moving toward the bottom, suggests a specific downward flow. In another, although the darkest area is now at the left (indicating a rotation, again, of ninety degrees), moving toward lighter shades at the right, the inclusion of a “tail” in the



[106] no title, 1951-59

28. Robert Morris, “Anti-Form,” *Artforum* (April 1968), 33–35.

29. Hesse used the expression “wild space” to describe drawings of this period.



[ill. 75] *Laocoön*, 1966

Acrylic paint, cloth-covered cord, wire, and papier-mâché over plastic pipe, 120 x 24 x 24 in. (304.8 x 61 x 61 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Fund for Contemporary Art, Gift of the Artist, and Gift of the Fischbach Gallery, New York

circles of the darker area serves to confirm correct orientation for the sheet [43]. In both cases, though drawings, Hesse, as sculptor, felt the essential pull of gravity, her attachment to a sense of ceiling and floor.

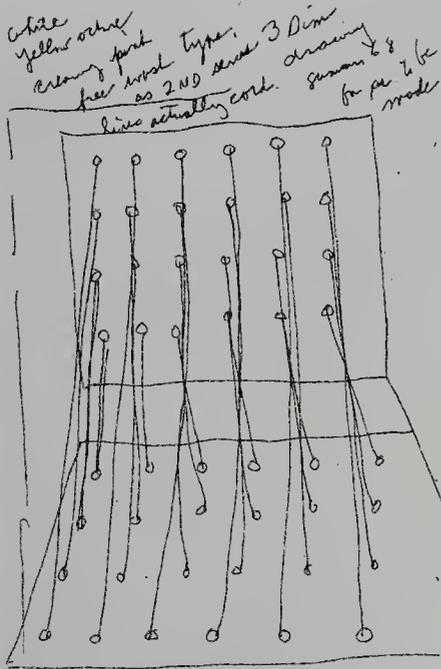
With her bifocal mind of both draftsman and sculptor, Hesse frequently operated in a realm between two different conventions that did not always coalesce. It is, however, in this peculiar and conflicted zone that she often came to her most original conclusions and solutions. Three studies from 1968 [109, 110], for instance, apparently made toward an unrealized project, suggest the basic construction of *Metronomic Irregularity* (1966). In each, the artist attempts to negotiate a relationship between the planes of floor and wall through the use of flat rectilinear elements and cord. Abstract and enigmatic in its placement in space, one sketch leads Hesse to darkly score an organizing horizon line across the sheet in order to secure a perceptual sense of depth. Elsewhere, Hesse utilizes language as a device to orient space: the instructions “top row to furthest hole in front” or “bottom row to closest to wall” indicate that there is a front, as well as a wall, implied in the otherwise ambiguous drawing [110]. While language had been used in *As He Sat in a Box* (1964) to proliferate orientations, language can also function to limit spatial ambiguity: the notation “from floor” verbally instantiates the presence of an imagined hori-



[107] no title, 1960



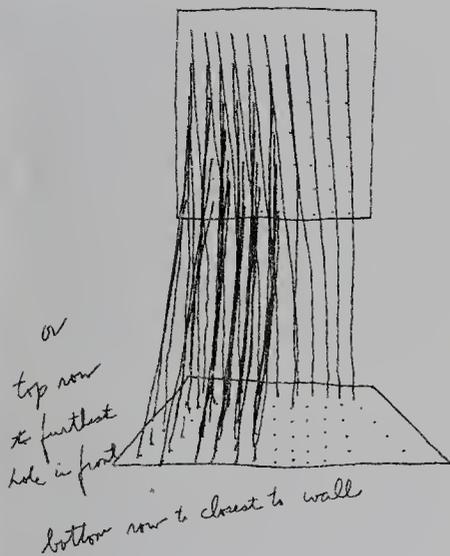
[108] no title, 1960



[109] no title, 1967-68

zontal plane—in other words, a floor—in what would otherwise be a highly abstract drawing relating to what ultimately would become an untitled work of 1970 [111].

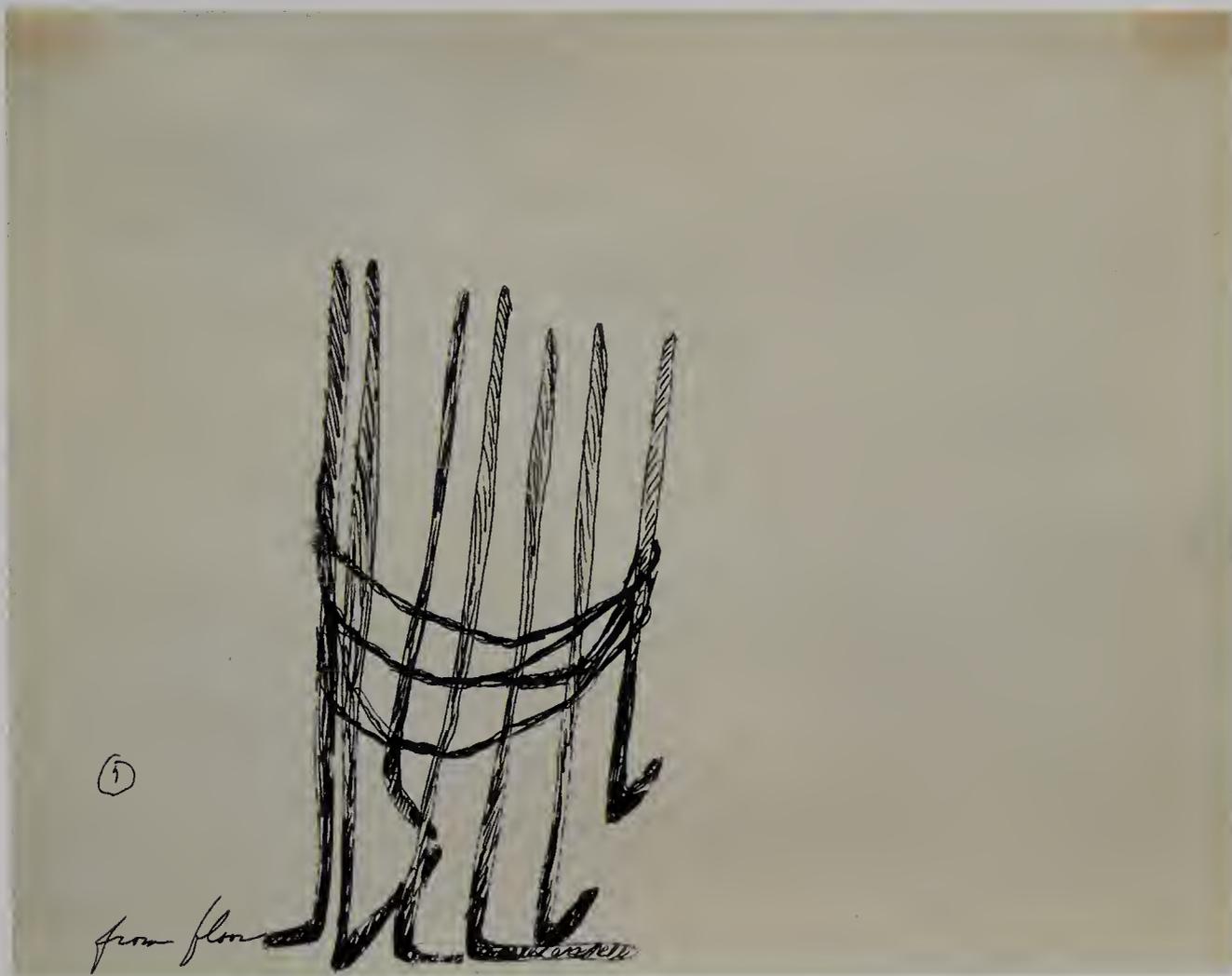
Curious examples of fundamentally irreconcilable spatial confusion appear in the sometimes conflictual relationship between Hesse's drawings and such written notations. We see this in one work, where arrows indicating width are drawn along the horizontal axis of the sheet, as would be conventional [65]. Up/down, however, is designated as "long," despite the proximity on the same sheet of a drawing—to which the notations ostensibly refer—where "up/down" unambiguously signifies height. Another piece provides a more radical example, where a schematic drawing of *Accession* transposes handwritten designations of "height" and "depth." Unless one were to view the box in the drawing from the impossible position of not only above but further angulated by an additional forty-five degrees or so, there is no convention in which the sketch makes sense in relationship to the linguistic cues. In this, the conflict between the language and the otherwise normative perspectival drawing amounts to something like a conceptual reversible cube, since the sketch alone does not fulfill the requisites for true illusionistic reversibility.



As we have seen, rotation can occur as a pivot on the flat, or it can function as a procedure that brings a figure into space. Such moves are far from unique to Hesse's oeuvre during the 1960s, when the problematic relationship between the pictorial and the sculptural object was explored by Hesse's colleagues to so many startling results. One obvious point of reference is Carl Andre, who famously stated that he wished to tip Brancusi's *Endless Column* onto the floor.³⁰ Long before Hesse herself took the leap to the floor,

30. Carl Andre, in David Bourdon, "The Razed Sites of Carl Andre: A Sculptor Laid Low by the Brancusi Syndrome," *Artforum*, October 1966, 15.

[110] no title, 1967-68



the logic of rotation had already taken the form of dimensionalization, as rotation out from the wall realized itself as extrusion from the picture plane: not only in the bas-reliefs of 1965, but also in the earlier untitled painting of 1964 [33], which plays on the relationship between the illusionism of boxes and a literalization of the figure. This work certainly references LeWitt's early wooden wall constructions of 1962, where square motifs rendered on the flat become empty boxes incorporating actual space. Even Hesse's subtle extrusion from the wall by only an inch or two, as in *Metronomic Irregularity*, echoes, after all, one of the great revolutions of the art of the previous generation—that of Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and later Frank Stella, who took the frame off painting and began to concern themselves with the physical dimensionality of the canvas, its tacking margins bared to full exposure, insisting on the object-status of the work.

Other points of reference beg mention. Arrows indicating conceptual movement and the attendant physical disorientation of the beholder surely nod to the work of Marcel Duchamp, whose connection to Hesse is only now beginning to be plumbed.³¹ The key precedent of rotation from the plane of the wall to the floor is, of course, Pollock's revolutionary turn from the verticality of the wall of painting to the horizontality of the floor to, finally, the verticality of the wall again. Pollock is a veritable cliché as a referent for Hesse's work with string and rope, where his skeins of paint become her chaotic tangles of rope, a connection Hesse herself publicly acknowledged.³² Pollock was high on Hesse's mind, as he was on the minds of most of her contemporaries. Yet there were other key rotations in the work of Pollock's generation—subtle yet nonetheless just as astonishing. For what of Rothko, or Willem de Kooning, both of whom, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, rotated their canvases, painting from multiple directions?³³ The drips in some of Rothko's paintings run bewilderingly upwards. In the case of de Kooning, too, gravitational orientation is baffled as paint runs in directions other than down. De Kooning was, of course, the artist whom the young Hesse singled out as the one she “loved most,”³⁴ her earliest “idol.”³⁵ Another deep source for Hesse, Rothko would later return in force as a reference point for her “window” drawings of 1969 [112-118].

During the period when the first of the circle drawings began to emerge, Hesse also created reliefs made of grommets and washers—industrial readymade objects that mimic and materialize the circular motif in shallow depth. Hesse applied the grommets and washers to wood panels, most of which she then coated in a layer of Seulpt-metal. One of the washer works, *Washer Table* of 1967, rotates the idea of the group from the verticality of the wall to a horizontal format. Installed not directly on the floor as Andre might have, *Washer Table* is rather stacked on a supporting base [111.76]. This work has its origins in a gift from LeWitt: a large square table painted white and covered with a gray grid. As Lippard reports, LeWitt told Hesse, “now you owe me a table,” and this was the result.³⁶ The move from shallow relief to something like a visual pun on “worktable” is instructively read in relation to Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* of 1955, a piece that turns that conventionally horizontal object onto the wall. *Bed* not only functions as an ironic commentary on Pollock and the language of Abstract Expressionism, it also, as Leo Steinberg theorized in his study of this “shift”

31. See Petzinger, 42, who notes that the connection was not observed until 1993.

32. Hesse, quoted in Lippard, 172.

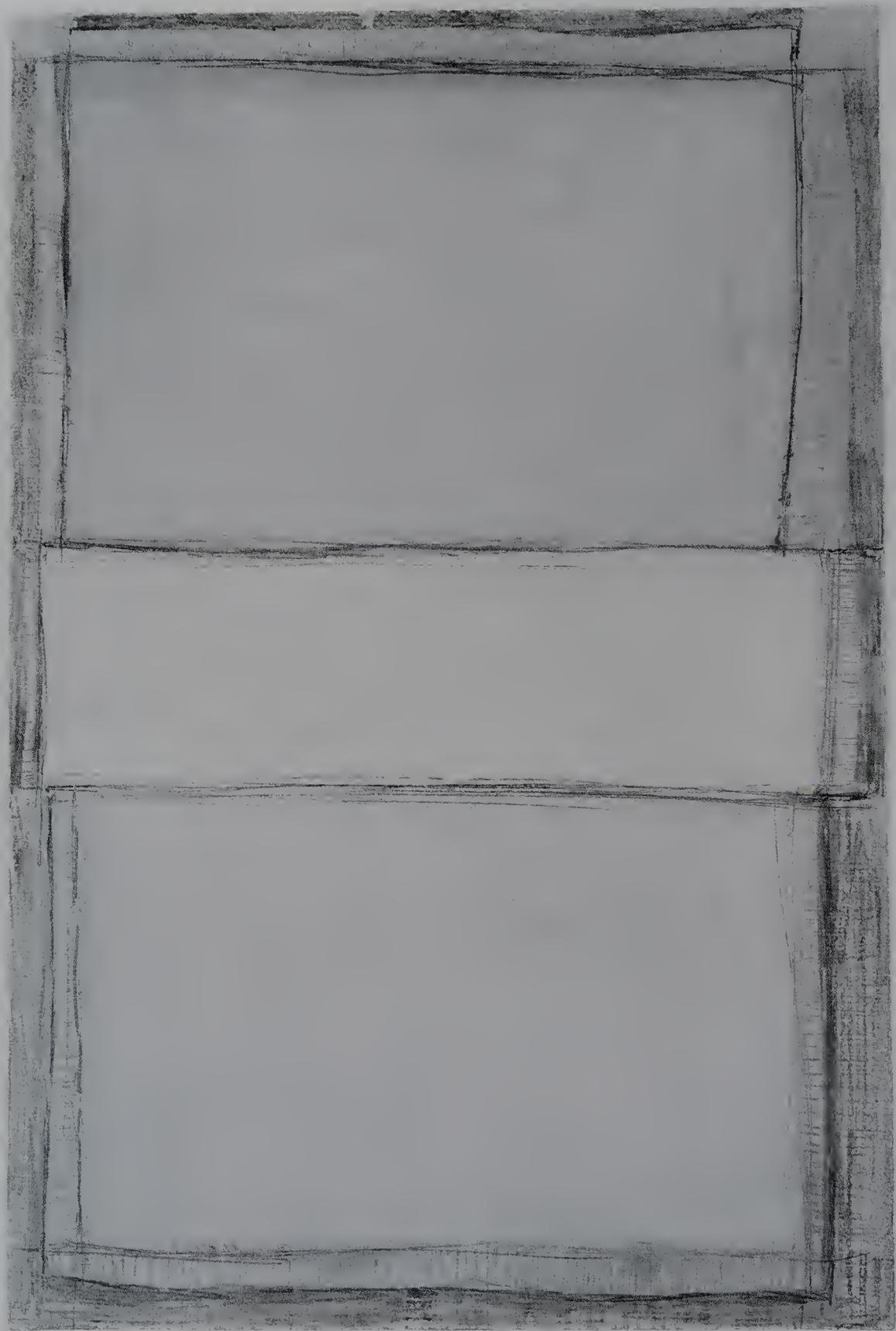
33. See Jeffrey Weiss, “Dis-Orientation: Rothko's Inverted Canvases,” in *Seeing Rothko*, ed. Tom Crow (The Getty Research Institute, 2005). As Weiss points out, de Kooning painted canvases from all sides during the mid- to late 1950s, a practice confirmed by Elaine de Kooning. Weiss notes further, “As Harry F. Gough has observed, the practice partly accounts for the typical dimensions of the artist's large paintings from the period, which are generally eighty by seventy inches—that is, still small enough to rotate with a reasonable effort.” See Harry F. Gough, *Willem de Kooning* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), 74.

34. Nemsler, 23.

35. Hesse's diary (April 21, 1961), as quoted in Petzinger, 47.



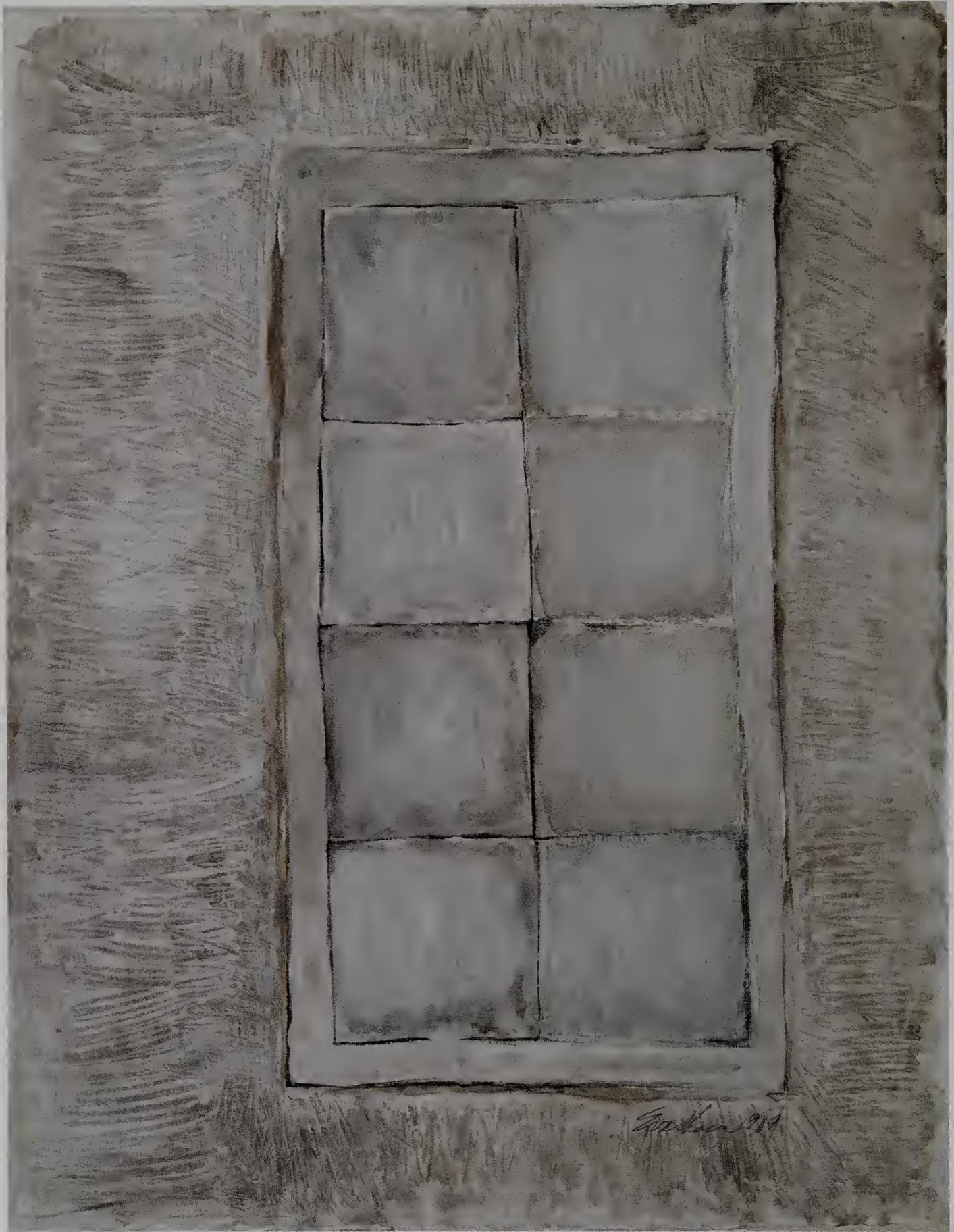
[112] no title, 1968



[113] no title, 1969



[114] no title, 1969



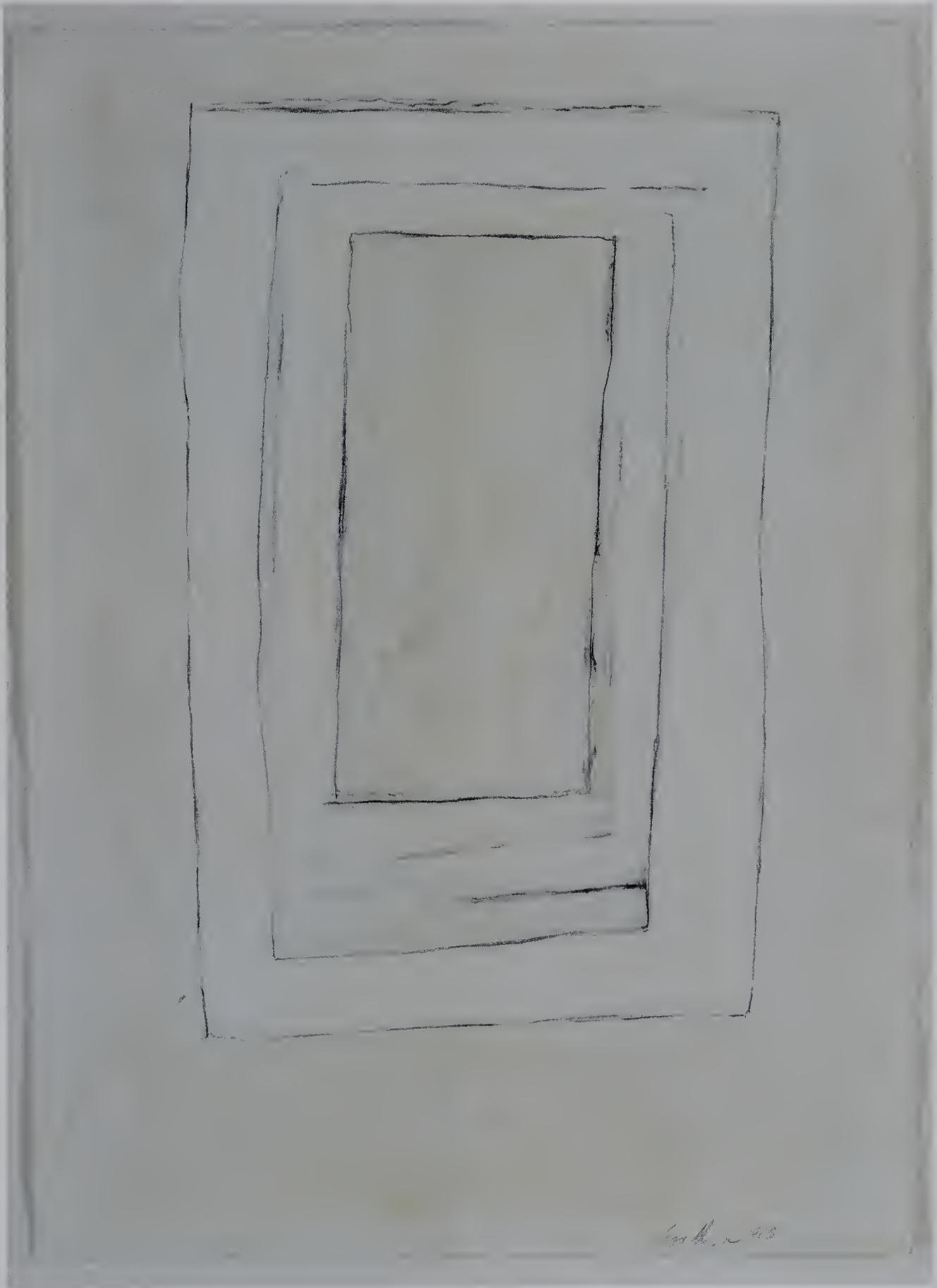
[115] no title, 1969



[116] no title, 1969



[117] *Right After*, 1969



[118] no title, 1968

[ill. 76] *Washer Table*, 1967

Rubber washers on wood, metal

8 1/2 x 49 1/2 x 49 1/2 in. (21.6 x 125.7 x 125.7 cm)

The Lewitt Collection, Chester, Connecticut

in Rauschenberg's work, speaks of a fundamental revolutionary turn in the work of the postwar period. "No longer the analogue of operational processes," Steinberg writes, "the horizontality of the bed relates to 'making' as the vertical of the Renaissance picture plane relates to seeing."³⁷ Steinberg argues that Rauschenberg's "flatbed pictures" make

their "symbolic allusion to hard surfaces such as tabletops, studio floors...any receptor surface on which objects are scattered...The pictures of the last fifteen or twenty years insist on a radically new orientation, in which the painted surface is no longer the analogue of a visual experience of nature but of operational processes."³⁸ This comes close, I think, to what the principle of rotation may have afforded Hesse in terms of her own artistic process: Through acts of rotation she discovered a kind of virtual "bed" of making, a conceptual worktable on which to experiment and play, where process functions as both subject and object of the work. To look at a photograph of a table in Hesse's studio in the Bowery [ill. 77] is to see this idea realized. There, on her actual worktable, we see various items—test pieces, pencils, a plastic box of grommets and washers, a roll of tape, a review from the *Village Voice*, an announcement for a show at Betty Parsons, a periodic table—all arranged on a table overlaid with a black grid, a veritable synopsis of Hesse's life and work as an artist.

As final acts of rotation, Hesse would move from the wall and floor to the ceiling in late work such as *Connection* [ill. 27], *Right After* [ill. 35, 37], an untitled work (the so-called "Ice Piece") of 1969 [ill. 3], and an untitled work of 1970 [ill. 66]. Of all her last works, it is *Contingent* [ill. 78] that proves the masterpiece of the late period. There, eight sheet-like banners of cheesecloth and latex hang parallel to one another at right angles to the wall. While they, too, reference the flat rectilinear format of painting, their rotation at a right angle from the plane of the wall disrupts that relation, configuring a shifting vantage for the beholder to negotiate. As Krauss wrote in one of the best and earliest critical efforts to encapsulate the nuances of Hesse's

36. Lippard, 90. Furthermore, as Scott Rothkopf has observed, "although five of [the washer and grommet reliefs] are perfect squares covered with a grid of identical circular elements, they would rarely look exactly the same if rotated ninety degrees, a shift that their apparently all-over, symmetrical format would appear to accommodate. Instead, this simple rotation reveals the otherwise unobtrusive channels that run between the washers in either horizontal or vertical bands—bits of excess space that slip beyond the grid's regulatory control." Scott Rothkopf, "Circle Drawings and Washer Pieces," in Sussman, *Eva Hesse*, 199.

37. Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). For Yve-Alain Bois, too, the connection to the work of this period is notable. The shift from the verticality of painting to the horizontality of the document "is identical to the transformation Leo Steinberg saw 20 years ago in the work of Rauschenberg. This same shift," for Bois, "is essential to many radical experiments of [the 20th] century, including Cubism, the works of Mondrian and Pollock, and the best Minimalist works." See Yve-Alain Bois, "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility," *Art in America*, April 1988, 175–76.

38. Steinberg, 84.



[ill. 77] Table with the artist's materials, c. 1967

work, “What we see is a series of edges: the edges of planes that self-evidently occupy the real space in which they hang.”³⁹ To underscore the radicality of this (I would say rotational) move, Krauss proposes the hypothetical experience of viewing a group of Old Master paintings installed perpendicular to the wall in such a way that a viewer, facing them, would only see the flat edges of the frames. Alternatively, Krauss offers the example of Holbein’s *Ambassadors*, which utilizes the device of anamorphosis, requiring the viewer, as she puts it, to “gyrate around the work” in order to perceive the death’s head embedded in the painting. Comparing the two scenarios, she writes,

There is a way in which *Contingent*’s own double perspective is something like that of anamorphosis. From the front, the view is of the elements’ edges with their sculptural condition eclipsing that of the pictorial; from a raking angle, one’s perception is of the surfaces of the banners and the planarity of rectangular fields, a perception that foregrounds the pictorial aspect of the experience...In *Contingent*, as in Hesse’s work in general, the issue is that of the mutual eclipse of the conventions, or institutions, of painting and sculpture as separate modalities of experience.⁴⁰

Krauss rightly points out the inextricability of Hesse’s work from the larger context of the 1960s’ discourse on the relationship between painting and sculpture. For Minimalism, in particular, “More than anything else, [it] was focused on surface and where the surface stops, which is edge.” For Krauss,

The most powerful and continuous element of Eva Hesse’s work comes from the way in which it concentrates on this condition of edge, the way it makes the edge more affective and imperious by materializing it. In this way, the edge that is displayed by Hesse is not focused on the boundaries *within* a painting or a sculpture, but rather on the boundary that lies *between* the institutions of painting and sculpture...This focus on the boundaries, on what is at the edges of either an object or a convention, is what Hesse shares with the discourse out of which she made her art. But where she carried her art to a point at some distance to that discourse was in showing that from the position at the edge—the boundary between those two formalized conventions—there emerges an experience of matter that is both bewildering and beautiful.⁴¹

What Krauss calls Hesse’s “double perspective,” I think, relates to what I have argued as the inherence of rotational logic not only between Hesse’s various works but also embedded formally in them. Hesse worked in an interstitial zone between the conventions of the pictorial and the sculptural, and this deep truth about her practice reveals

39. Rosalind Krauss, “Eva Hesse: Contingent”, in *Eva Hesse* October Files, 30.

40. Krauss, 31.

41. Krauss, 32.



[ill. 78] *Contingent*, 1969

Fiberglass and polyester resin, later on cheesecloth
8 units, each 114 to 168 x 36 to 48 in. (289.6426.7 x 91.412.19 cm)
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

itself above all as one circles around the circle drawings, following her rotational cue. Few artists of the twentieth century worked as prodigiously and as productively as Eva Hesse did over the course of her career. Measured in years, that career may have been quantitatively brief, but by any other measure Hesse left a body of work as rich, subtle, and complex as any. Most histories are written out of a weave of ruptures and continuities, and those that have been written about Hesse's artistic life are no exception. Marked by radical shifts and decisive turns—her leap into work in three dimensions inarguably the most significant—certain fundamental preoccupations and concerns mark multiple continuities within her oeuvre. This essay has concerned itself with a specific example of this, not through a form, like a predilection for the tonal gradations that she took away from her early studies with Josef Albers, or a specific motif, like the arrow or the box, but rather through a characteristic aspect of her creative process. There are others obviously pertinent to Hesse's distinct idiom: recycling and collaging would be two ready examples. Here, however, we have seen how rotation informed a fundamental move of Hesse's artistic imagination. Tipping, turning, and rotating, especially on an axis of ninety degrees, was an operation she turned to again and again—not for the purposes of serial expansion, but as a way of disorienting her own imagination and thereby opening the space for the next creative leap.

Rotation in Hesse's work rarely takes place without simultaneous reconstitutions, and I have not been suggesting that the mere act of rotating would have been sufficient to inspire the artist to arrive at a new idea for a project. Such strict serialism might have been acceptable had she been a Minimalist, but Hesse was never simply that. In 1969, reflecting on her past work, she wrote: "I remember I wanted to get to non art, non connotive, non anthropomorphic, non geometric, non nothing, everything, but of another kind, vision, sort. From a total other reference point. Is it possible?"⁴² This essay has honed in on this "total other reference point" that takes its stand in an alternative perspective on the impossible space between two and three dimensions. Lippard suggests that Hesse "used line as a connector, a binder," as a "function...of linking one 'impossible space' with another."⁴³ The line of Hesse's drawing subtends the exquisite contradiction and extreme tension in Hesse's work—its ability to intensify ambiguity to an acute degree—just as the operation of rotation stands, as well, behind the impossible spaces where a new vision of highly ambiguous and at times unsettling dimensions were realized.

42. Eva Hesse in her catalogue statement for *Art in Process IV*, Finch College Museum of Art, Contemporary Wing, New York City, December 1969–January 1970, n.p., as cited in Robert Pincus-Witten, "Eva Hesse: Post-Minimalism into Sublime," *Artforum* 10, November, 1971, 43.

43. Lippard, 190.

When Nemser asked Hesse to address what the circle meant to her, Hesse responded that it related to “a time element...in the sequence of change and maturation” that are implicated in the figure. The circle, for Hesse, was “very abstract....a form, a vehicle.” Distancing herself from anthropomorphizing associations with the form, the artist emphasized that “I don't think I had a sexual, anthropomorphic, or geometric meaning. It wasn't a breast and it wasn't a circle representing life and eternity.” On the other hand, she recalled that with it, as with other motifs, she was “always working with contradictions and contradictory forms...The whole absurdity of life.”⁴⁴ James Meyer connects the logic of the “non non” in Hesse's work to Samuel Beckett, one of her favorite writers.⁴⁵ Meyer turns to *Waiting for Godot* as a point of reference for what he calls the “negativity” in Hesse's work, but perhaps we might also look to a passage from *Watt*, in one of the paradigmatic examples of the absurd in twentieth-century literature, and a rare instance of literary *ekphrasis* that takes as its object an abstract image—that of the circle:

The only other object of note in [the] room was a picture, hanging on the wall, from a nail. A circle, obviously described by a compass...He wondered what the artist had intended to represent (Watt knew nothing about painting), a circle and its centre in search of each other, or a circle and its centre in search of a centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and its centre in search of its centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and its centre in search of a centre and its circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of its centre and its circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of a centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of its centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of a centre and its circle respectively, in boundless space, in endless time...⁴⁶

In the end, Watt performs an activity true to Hesse's form: “Watt wondered how this picture would look upside down...So he took it from its hook and held it before his eyes, at arm's length, upside down, and on its right side, and on its left side.”⁴⁷ Hesse, in her search to see her own art anew, in her turn, would continue to rotate it, in boundless space and endless time: “On side; slant; tip once; not / updown; sideways.”

44. Nemser, 8–9.

45. Cindy Nemser, “An Interview with Eva Hesse,” *Artforum*, May 1970, 60.

46. Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (New York: Grove Press, 1953), 128–29.

47. Beckett, 130.



Sculpture as Sample

BRIONY FER

When Robert Pincus-Witten published extracts from Eva Hesse's diaries in *Artforum* in 1972, the texts were accompanied by two photographs of her models and test pieces.¹ The article was entitled "Eva Hesse: Last Words" and comprised the painful final entries in her diary before the artist died of a brain tumor in 1970. Juxtaposed in this way, the large photograph of the test pieces took on a morbidity that they would otherwise not have had [ill. 79]. The small objects strewn together made of latex, wax, fiberglass, and plastic look like a kind of graveyard. The pathos of their presentation, fuelling Pincus-Witten's narrative, cast them as the debris of Hesse's "troubled life." This was an unfortunate epitaph to an artist whose work was very far from morbid or deathly. If this was work in progress, it had pointed forward to, rather than mourned the loss of, a future. The small pieces were ways of thinking through handling materials. You could see them as a *motor* of her work just as much as her drawings were. Looking at the array of objects in the photograph is like looking through a keyhole onto Hesse's whole approach to making art. They range from completed works such as the canvas-stuffed boat bumpers to test pieces for incomplete works such as the latex buckets to a piece of dried latex in the lower left-hand corner that seems closer to pure matter than it is to what we might think of as an object. In this last instance, the material is in a state of collapse and the concept of sculpture has all but disintegrated. In this last instance, the material is in such a state of collapse that the concept of sculpture has all but disintegrated. Rather than see the formlessness as a biographical matter, the test pieces show how her handling of materials—even when she risked the almost total collapse of the structure—was generative of new ways of making art.

1. Robert Pincus-Witten, "Eva Hesse: Last Words," *Artforum* 11, no. 3 (November 1972). A third photograph was of the wall of Hesse's studio. The morbidity of Pincus-Witten's contribution was noticed at the time and is discussed by Anne Wagner, "Another Hesse" (1994), reprinted in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon (Cambridge: The MIT Press/October Files, 2002), 94.

I want to focus on these small things, which, though they seem to exist below the threshold of sculpture, were clearly a vital part of Hesse's sculptural practice. It is not easy to say what precisely they are. "Test pieces" are what they have come to be called, but it is an odd term, not one, as far as I know, that has been applied to any other artist,² nor one that Hesse herself used. In her notes, she refers to "samples" and to "small pieces"—and indeed, some things that have come to be called test pieces seem more like small works. Hesse makes a distinction between "small" and "main" work, and in her diary of 1966 she notes, "I bought a lot of small extras for small work. I really should do them as inbetween main work."³ The "main summer piece" that she was struggling with at the time was *Metronomic Irregularity II*, the piece she would exhibit at the *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition in September. The word "inbetween," as she strings it together as one word in her notes, sums up something about the small work itself; separate from but connected to every aspect of her sculpture. The word "sample" conveys this sense of a small representative part that has been detached from but stands for the larger whole.

When Lucy Lippard wrote her monograph on Eva Hesse in the early seventies she used a whole host of words: "prototype unit," "model," "test modules," "untitled test-piece." Some of these terms drew on a Minimalist vocabulary, others less so, but all denoted "work in progress." When Joan Simon interviewed the artist Mel Bochner about Hesse, she drew a distinction between "the small 'sample' looking pieces" and the "architecturally scaled works" that she worked on at the same time.⁴ "Sample" suggests trying things out and seeing what works and what doesn't. It has a different nuance from the term "industrial prototype," which, even though it may not make it into production, usually means something mass-produced using industrial processes—which is much less appropriate for Hesse than the more casual "sample." The lack of precision in naming these things merely reflects a difficulty in pinning down what they are. Words to describe them come in multiples, never singly. This is Lucy Lippard on the contents of one of Hesse's glass boxes: "A shrivelled latex fish-like shape cast around a popped balloon"; "a cut skin-like sleeve."⁵ They confound—and compound—verbal description.

I am not suggesting we need a single word to describe these things—but rather that the difficulty of finding the right word is symptomatic of their "inbetween" status as

2. It was the term used by Bill Barrette, who included the "Berkeley Test Pieces" in his catalogue raisonné. See Bill Barrette, *Eva Hesse Sculpture* (New York: Timken Publishers, 1989).

3. Eva Hesse Diary 1966, Hesse Papers, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio.

4. Joan Simon, in her interview of Mel Bochner "About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner interviewed by Joan Simon" reprinted in *Eva Hesse* October Files, 40.

5. Lucy Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), 98.



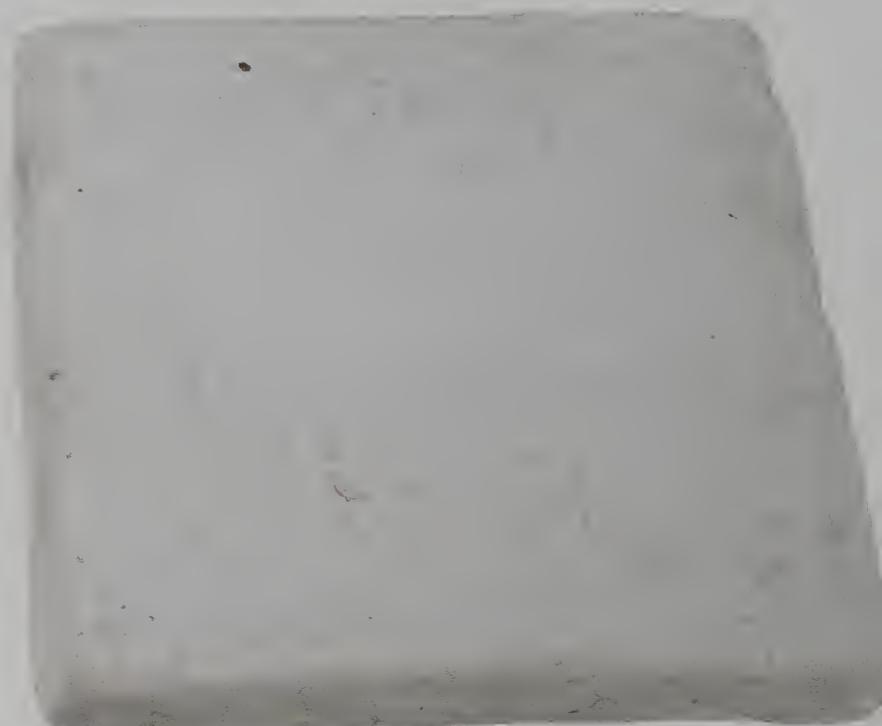
[119] test piece, 1967-69

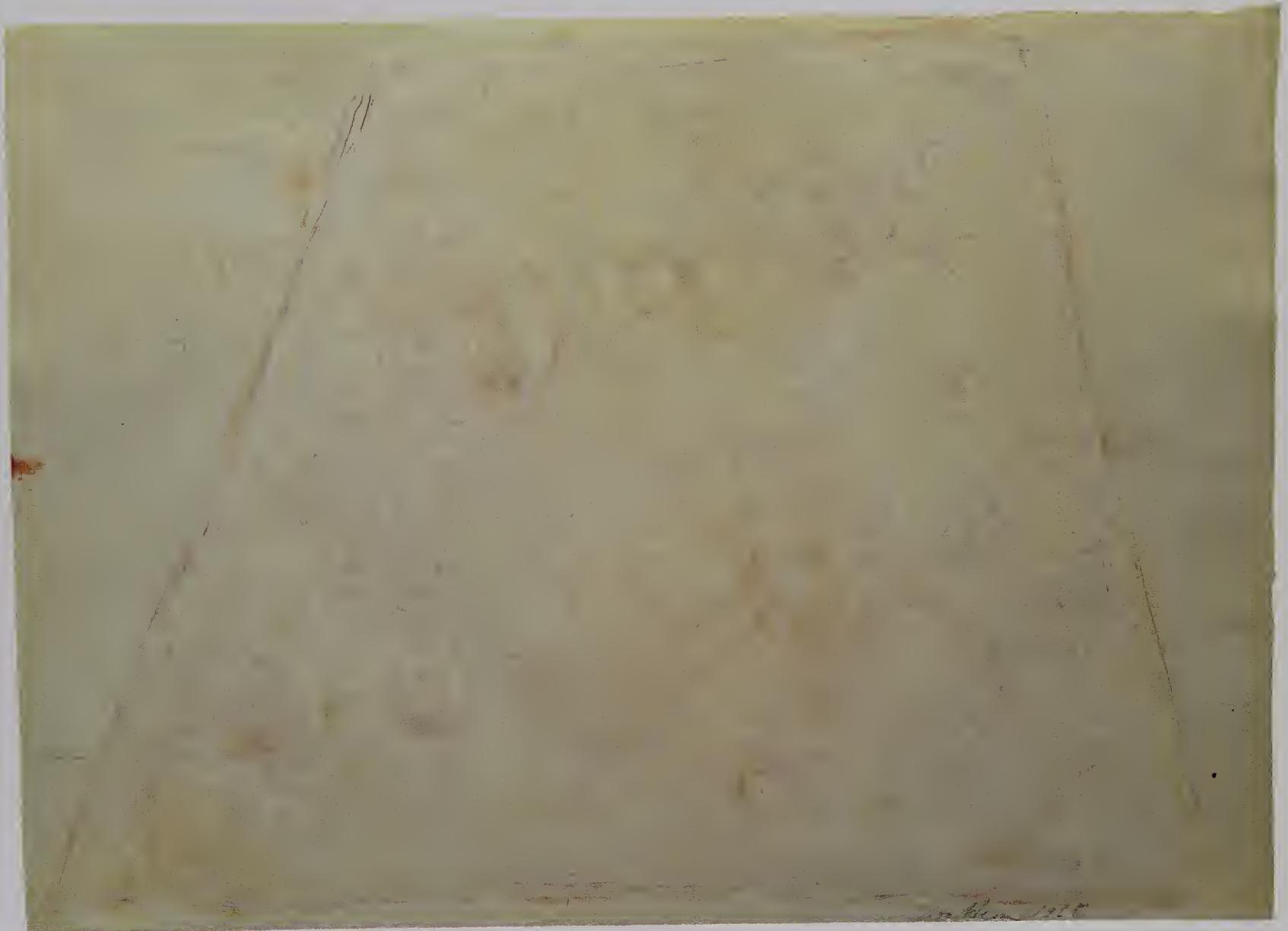


top: [120] test pieces for *Sans I*, 1967-68
bottom: [121] test pieces, 1967-69



[122] test piece, 1967-69





well as their sheer diversity. Some really were experiments with materials pure and simple: Many remained in the studio at her death. More would presumably have been thrown out along the way. Then there are those that she either exhibited or gave to friends—that she presented, formally or informally, to the view of others. The test pieces run the gamut between raw thing and constructed object. None is absolutely brute matter, though the handling is sometimes so minimal as to seem unformed; some so provisional as to seem more like unspecifiable things than nameable objects (under which I would count as nameable something called a “sculpture” or a “sculptural object”).

Any description of the small works needs to be able to internalize this insecurity as well as to allow room for the gradations of difference between them. But I also want to go further to make a claim for the small work as being somehow emblematic of a way of working that represents a radical shift away from existing protocols of sculpture. In part, to describe the test pieces is to describe Hesse’s working method. It is not only a matter of revealing “process” but of how her processes of making rendered the object of art uncertain. Lippard called this “dematerialization”—although paradoxically Hesse achieved this dematerialization of the object of art through an extreme materialism. You could say that the test pieces are the loose ends that have never quite been joined up to an otherwise remarkably taut and coherent body of work. But in a way, that is precisely the point of the work: to examine the dynamic between loose ends and joining things up. Although these works get left out of many accounts, I think Lippard’s provides a model for how to think about them. In her account, the small and test pieces are very much part of the fabric of Hesse’s work. They connect with the finished or large-scale works, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, usually to more than one at a time. Yet they are also somehow always left over, an effect she dramatized by collecting them together in glass pastry cases.

The test pieces connect to the final works or “**main pieces,**” as Hesse called them, but they also connect to the drawings and jottings she made in her prolific notebooks. Some of these were plans and drawings for works that were made, but many were for projects that never got made at all or that failed in one way or another and were recycled. One particularly startling example of this is a drawing that relates to the model for *Accretion* [126]—a work that ends up looking quite different from any of the drawings

and models associated with it. It seems to bear out Hesse's insistence that she really never liked working with a definite plan. Talking about her sketches for another work, *Contingent*, she said to Cindy Nemser, "It was also not wanting to have such a definite plan...[I was] just not interested in working out a whole model in small and following it."⁶ As with the other models she made (you can count them on one hand) they are often a sign of a problematic piece rather than a solution to a problem. This model seems to block her path for a while rather than clear her way.

It is hard even with the advantage of hindsight to see the direction she was going in the cluster of drawings and notes that relate to *Accretion*. It is easier to see the ideas that she dropped. For example, there is one drawing [125] of a large work where a lot of tubes are piled onto a box of huge dimensions—almost the size of Tony Smith's *Die* (1962)—over which Hesse scribbled "cardboard or aluminum." The box is on a massive scale and, despite the randomness of the pile-up on the top, looks too enclosed; if Hesse liked the structure of the box to implode (as in her *Accession* series) this did not seem to open enough to that possibility. On the other hand, there are other drawings for *Accretion* which show rather smaller tubes more casually piled on a trestle table, with the rubber tubing threaded through them falling to the floor. The more casual arrangement is in keeping with the way Hesse would try out different arrangements in her loft. In the end, though, none seemed to satisfy her. The work that she finally called *Accretion* (1968) was made up of series of three-foot long fiberglass tubes that lean against a wall [111. 80]. The ready-made cardboard tubes of her notes have become the mold from which to cast the fiberglass. There is no longer anything threaded through it. In parallel to her drawing, her small test pieces were ways of exploring various possibilities in three dimensions. There are samples that try out different arrangements and combinations of transparent plastic tubing. She would cut the tube into short lengths and then join them together into a stiff flat screen. Spreading tubes out side-by-side basically served as the germ for the idea of irregularly placing the tubes of *Accretion*, which lean casually against the wall. It is a very long way from the sketches and so-called models. It is almost as if the models had to be junked for the idea to come clear.

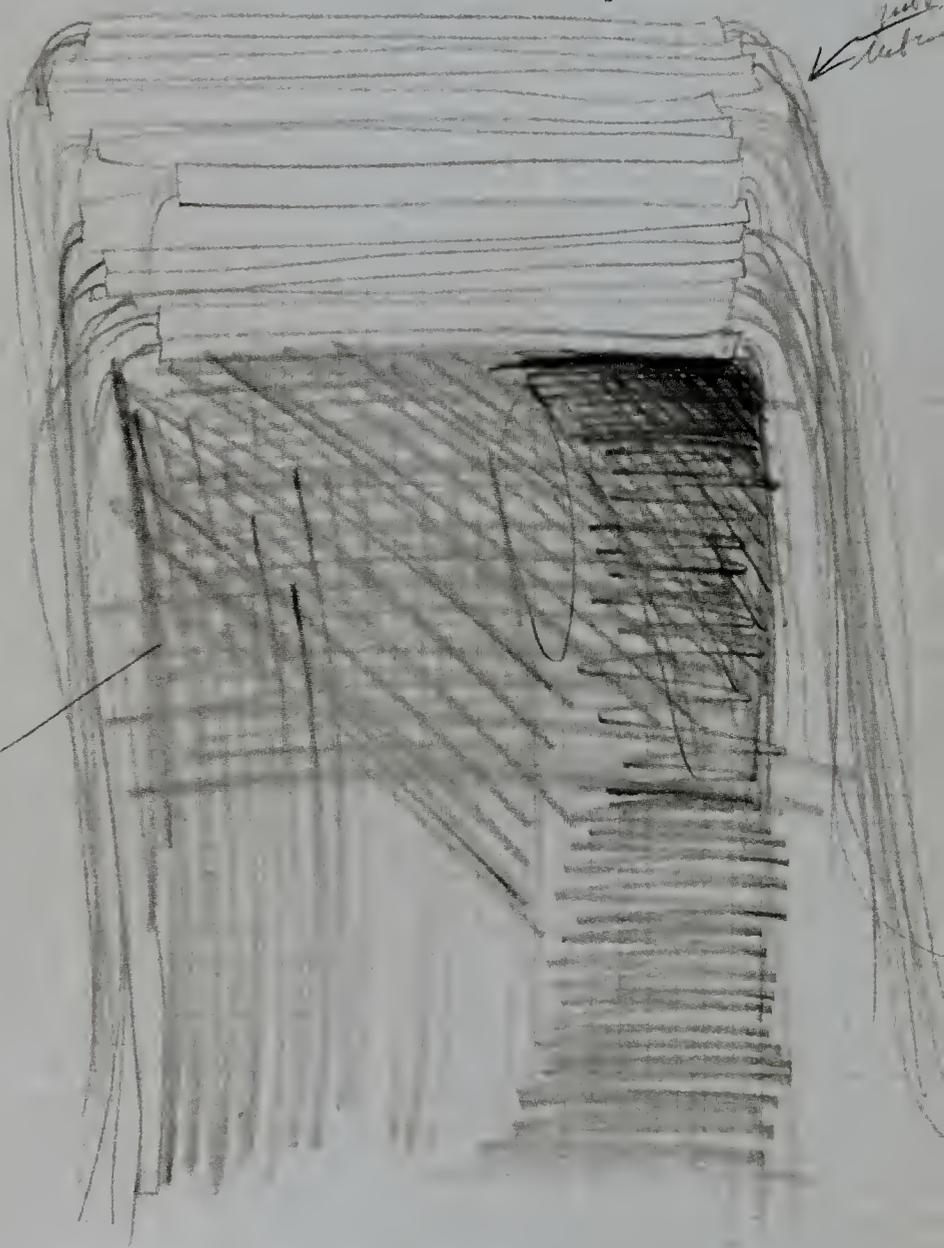
Although *Accretion* was made, like all her fiberglass work, by her assistant Doug Johns, Hesse did not use her drawings and test pieces as instructions for her fabricators.

6. From the unedited typescript of an interview with Cindy Nemser, on deposit at Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio. When it is later edited, it reads slightly differently: "It is also not wanting to have such a definite plan...rather than working out a whole small model and following it. That doesn't interest me"(from interview as reprinted in Eva Hesse October Files, 21).

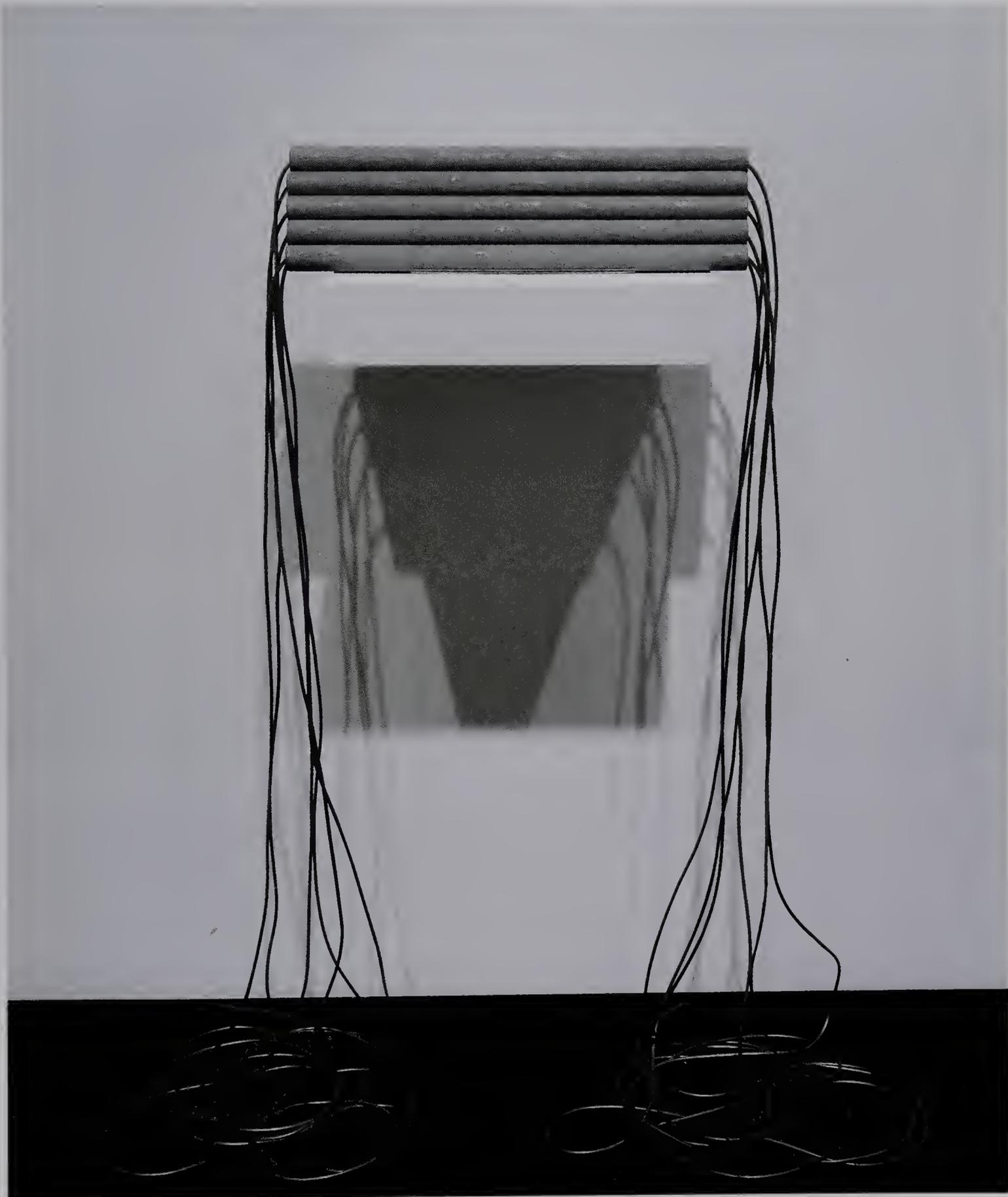
4' long
2" diameter

1967

1967

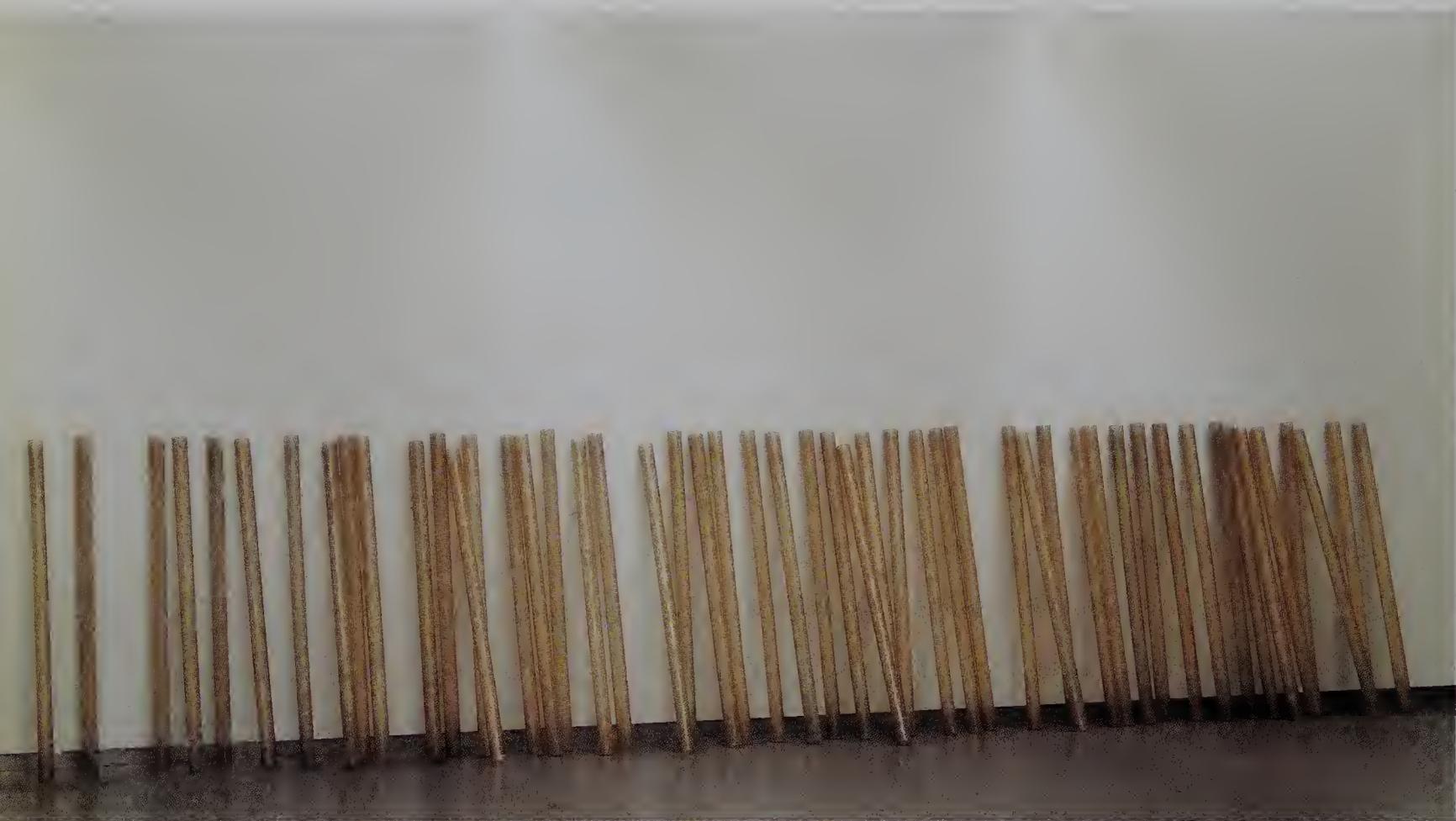


8' long



[126] no title, 1967

left: [125] no title, 1967



[ill. 80] *Accretion*, 1968

Fiberglass and polyester resin

50 tubes, height of each: 58 in. (147.3 cm); diameter: 2 1/2 in. (6.4 cm)

Kroller-Muller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands

They were never specifications. They were Hesse's way of thinking through the handling of her materials. Nor did they function as the kind of "instruction manual" that Duchamp had imagined for his notes and drawings in *The Green Box*—not even for herself. Hesse's is a more fluid, organic model and more intimately bound to the studio and the physical handling of things. The small test pieces show her thinking by handling, by making small samples, just as much as through her drawings. We might ask whether this is any different from what we would expect to find in any sculptor's studio? After all, drawing and making small models was a conventional part of sculptural practice. The answer has to be yes and no: yes in the broad sense that her interest in materials is intensely sculptural; no in that she seldom made conventional models. In the few instances that she did they often marked a failure to resolve something. When they worked they *became* works—as was the case with *Metronomic Irregularity I* (1966), a small-scale model that became the first version in the series and which she traded with Robert Smithson for a piece of his. The driving economy of all her work is to recycle, to loop back to earlier projects and experiments, sometimes even failed ones, to regenerate them and make them into something new. Later, in drawings from 1968, she was still trying to work on laying threads across and down a wall and floor, still picking away at something if not unresolved then incomplete in the *Irregularity* series.

There are various types of failure, and the most interesting for Hesse is when failure is generative. It is almost like a kind of eye of the needle through which she had to pass. Sometimes her objects can be failed pieces but then get recycled as something else. Sometimes they are left as remainders. An interesting example of this are the latex buckets for *Repetition Nineteen II* (1967). There is a *Repetition Nineteen I* and a *Repetition Nineteen III* but *Repetition Nineteen II* was never completed. All that is left are the various test pieces and drawings and notes. There is a particularly fluent drawing on graph paper of the finished piece showing how the cords should spill out loosely from the buckets [127]. And then there are more technical drawings of how this might be achieved. The cord, as we can see from the test pieces, was embedded in a thick base of latex at the bottom of the bucket. She made four larger and several small test pieces which have become orange and opaque but would have been translucent and pale yellow and shiny when they were made. One of the larger ones was exhibited on a shelf in the back room of her *Chain Polymers* show at the Fischbach Gallery together with the model for *Augment* (1968), a pile of latex sleeves, some drawings, and one of her glass cases.



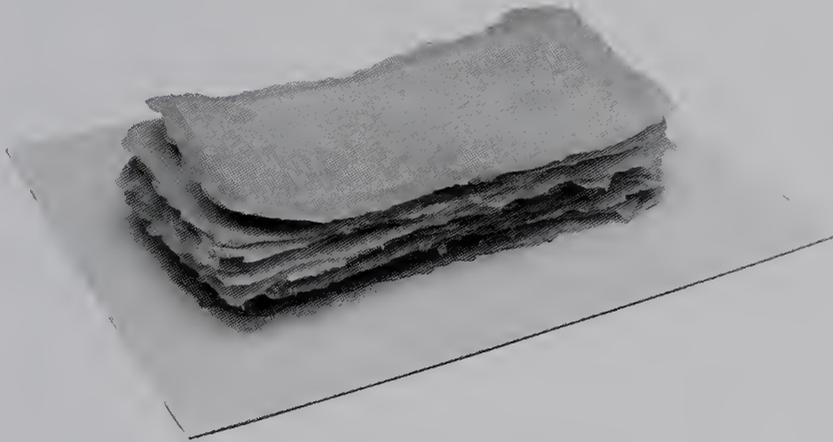
[127] no title, 1967

The various versions show Hesse working through several possibilities, none of which were entirely successful. The first “reject” was a metal version that she abandoned. Then came the latex buckets with their umbilical cords spilling out. These she abandoned but did not throw out. Some were kept, the larger ones sold off separately. When she then decided to have a fiberglass version

made, Doug Johns’ first attempt was far too regular with tubes coming out of the fiberglass buckets and a “horrible failure.”⁷ This was a process of trial and error, sifting through several possibilities, keeping some, junking others. One of the things that emerges in retrospect is how often Hesse started out wanting tubes to plunge, spill out, or protrude in her work and how often she ultimately abandoned them. When, finally, she made *Repetition Nineteen III* (1968) she kept it simple: translucent fiberglass containers buckle slightly in a flexible arrangement. In *Accretion*, slightly later, she would also abandon the cords. It is not always the case, of course, but there is a sense in which trying out and proliferating test pieces allowed her to simplify and strip down a piece. Hesse always called her method “additive” but she did not want to add complexity.

The test pieces got remaindered in the process but didn’t get discarded. She gave one little bucket for *Repetition Nineteen II* to Sol LeWitt who placed it, together with the other little pieces she gave him, in a glass pastry case. Hesse liked the effect and began to do the same herself, crowding them a little more to expand each layer as a field of maximum difference. She exhibited one at her Fischbach show. It seems that Hesse herself thought of these as “small pieces”—and this was a way of making them *work* as a work. They contain little landscapes of objects. I think what we could say is that these are working objects—as we might refer to working drawings—but that they are also works. Or rather, phrased another way, what else could a work be?

7. Quoted in Lippard, 107.

[128] model for *Augment and Aught*, 1968

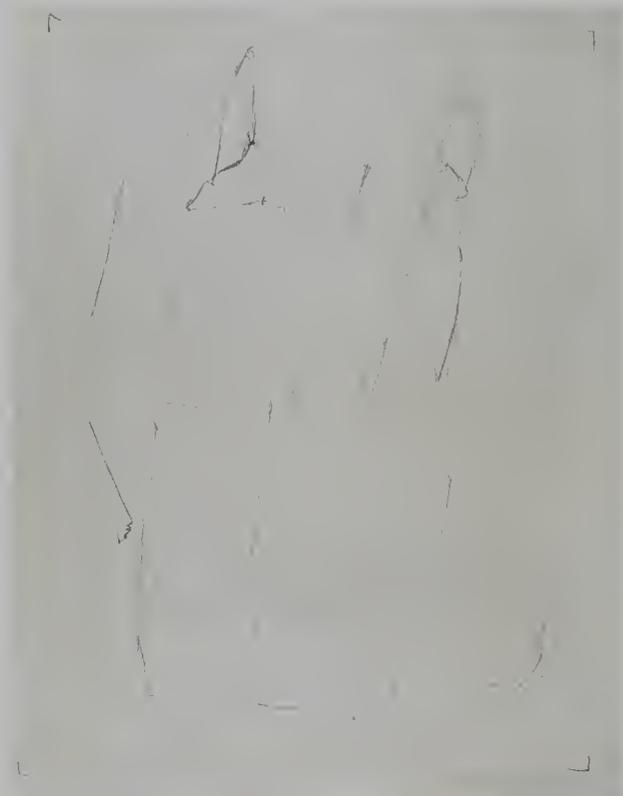
Just as her arrangements on the floor became increasingly flexible, so the object became increasingly unstable and malleable. She describes one of the glass cases in a note of August 1967 as “Three levels—small pieces related by context by box which encloses them” and then lists a range of materials including rubber, sculp-metal, filler, and sand, as well as black

and white pigments.⁸ The relationships between the materials, as much as the things themselves, become the work. Things that might have been failed experiments, or experiments for works that may have not come to fruition, are put to work in a new context. This kind of recycling is entirely characteristic of her working method on the larger pieces.

Many of the little half spheres were experiments in latex, which she began to use in 1967. She experimented with proportions of filler and rubber, as well as with pigment. Some of these she made textured, some she turned inside out to reveal the smooth cast side. *Schema* was the first work in which she used latex, with the textured hemispheres placed on a latex mat. She tried to make another version with latex that had been pigmented white but in the end decided to reuse the white balls in another configuration. She described how she made *Sequel*: “they are cast from half balls and then put together again. They were put together with an opening so that the whole thing was ‘squooshy.’ It was a solid ball but it wasn’t a solid ball, it’s collapsible and it’s not collapsible because it’s rubber.”⁹ The “squooshy” quality has been lost in many of these as the latex has deteriorated and become brittle over time. But we can still see the sheer range of experiment. Some are larger. There is one molded around what looks like a scrunched piece of paper or, more likely perhaps, one of the little paper weights she wrapped with cord and painted in gray acrylic [111. 83]. The little ravines of the paper are imprinted in the rubber.

8. Lippard, 98.

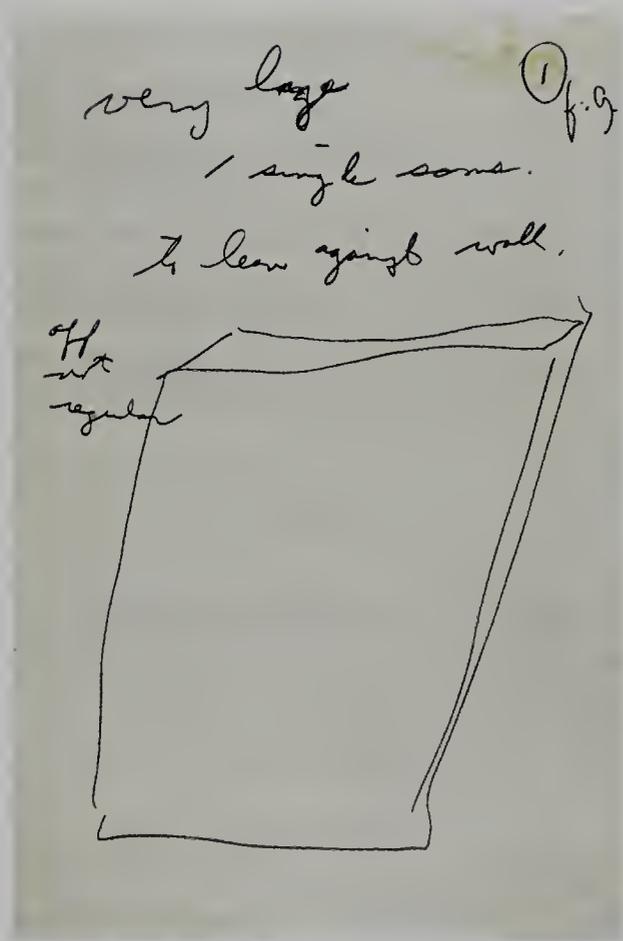
9. Hesse Notes, Hesse Papers, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio.



[129] no title, c. 1954-56

Latex and fiberglass were new materials. Hesse explored how they worked, what she could do with them technically and how they performed in combination. Remarks she made show that she was worried her materials wouldn't last at the same time as she was attracted by their ephemeral qualities. Already in August 1966, after some of her work had fallen apart, she wrote, "I take more care technically."¹⁰ Even then she was insisting that nothing was ever wasted, but each failed attempt allowed her to move on. She thrived on such waste as this. Rather than being merely technical experiments, I think, they are better seen as exercises. One could even relate this back to the method she was taught as a student at Yale under the tutelage of Albers and the exercises he set up to investigate materials—not their inherent properties but how they performed in action. Like color, this was contingent and relative. The artist Michael Craig Martin, who was also taught by Albers, remembered the exercises he devised to control the medium, which meant drawing things like crumpled cloths, giving form, as he put it, to something resistant.¹¹ Hesse's own student drawings of crumpled paper bags are a case in point [129]. You could see the latex hemisphere cast from a crumpled ball of paper as similar, working at the very edge of what the material could accommodate. There is a structurelessness to the little paper ball. The terms "form" and "medium," watchwords of modernist discourse, collapse in the process.

Not all the so-called test pieces are small. There is a test piece for *Contingent* (1969), for example,



[130] no title, n.d.

10. Lippard, 73.

11. Michael Craig-Martin traces to Albers "the search for form in unexplored, often resistant materials in the work of Eva Hesse" in "The Teaching of Josef Albers: A Personal Reminiscence," in *Josef Albers* (London: South Bank Centre, 1994), 48.



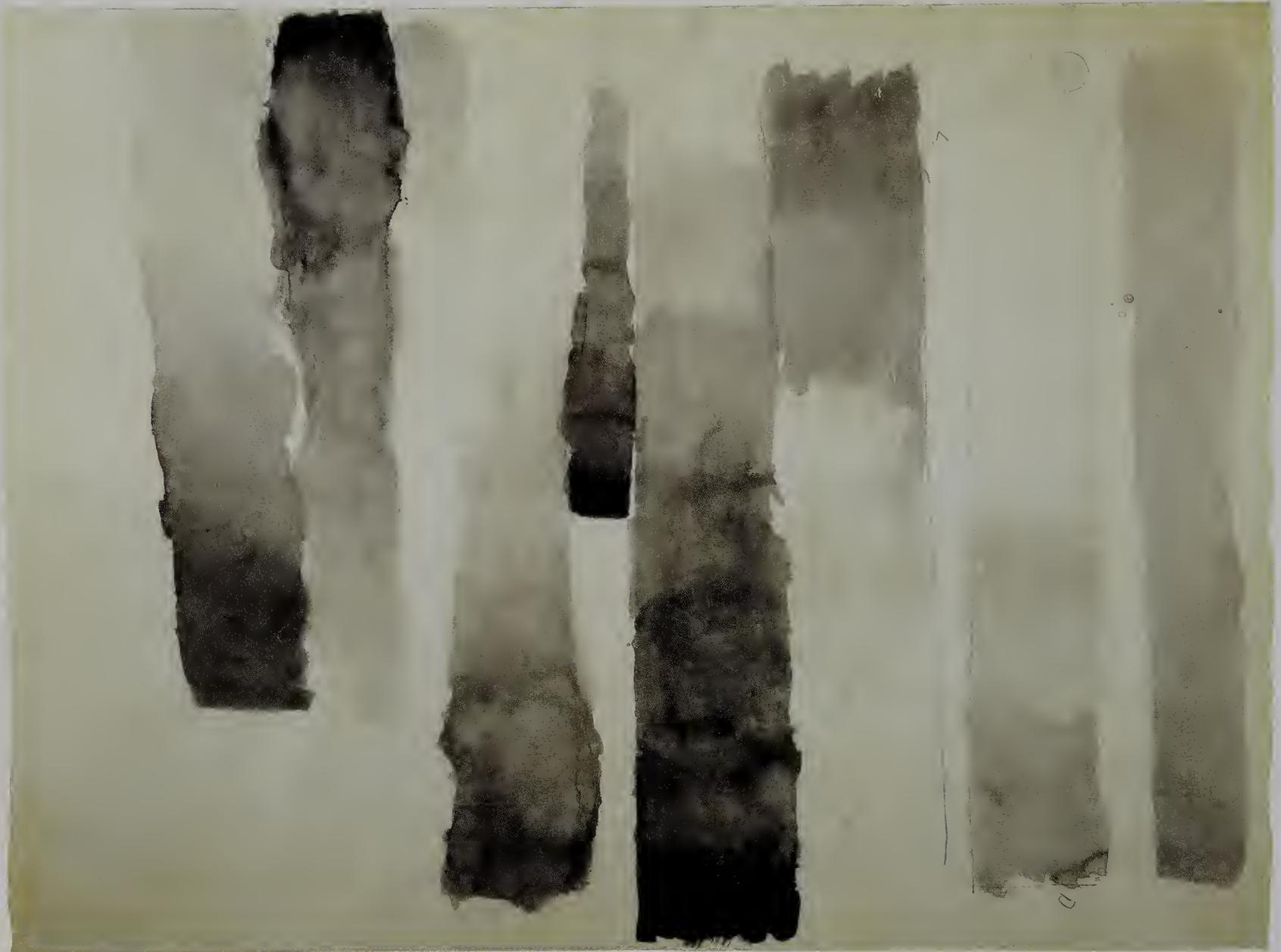
[131] no title, c. 1958-59

that is a large piece of cheesecloth painted with latex and hung over a wooden bar suspended from the ceiling at ninety degrees from the wall [111. 81]. It is exhibited for short periods at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, where it holds its own as a work in relation to the other exhibits.¹² It is sticky in parts but relatively well conserved. It still has a translucency although it has become discolored. It is actually very different

from the final piece, which was made in eight separate panels with fiberglass as well as latex over cheesecloth. In the test piece, you can see her thinking about the gradation from light to dark and dark to light just as she had through the liquidity of wash in the drawing [132]. Actual light is modulated in the semi-translucent, but, equally, semi-opaque material of the test piece. The more layers there are, the more opaque. These add up quite systematically. Working up from the bottom, there is a bar of untreated cheesecloth, then a single layer of latex on cheesecloth, then a double layer and so on. This is Hesse's additive method working towards a kind of serial thickness.

The fact that she gave this so-called test piece to her friend Naomi Spector would suggest that it was not only a technical experiment. Lippard actually calls it "Untitled," which suggests she thought of it as a work, and later she presumably saw it hanging in the apartment of Naomi Spector and Stephen Antonakis. It is very different from the final panels that Hesse made in *Contingent*—but this points to a kind of ambivalence in the work itself, which has in part to do with its genesis. She began it, she recalled, in November or December 1968, and when she collapsed in April 1969 she had completed one section. It was only several months later that, after coming out of the hospital, she was able to take it up again, having the panels completed by Doug Johns and some students. The massive interruption of her illness may have fuelled her uncertainty, but it seems to me to be entirely characteristic of the sheer risks she was inclined to take in her work. In her type-written notes, which ended up as her statement for the *Art in Process IV* show at Finch College, where it was shown in the fall of

12. It is a fragile piece and when the Gallery acquired it, the chief conservator Jay Kreuger said "we decided to treat it as we would any light sensitive object, such as a photograph, textile, or work on paper" and exhibit it only for very short periods. In terms of the object's status, Kreuger's analogies are very suggestive, aside from the conservation issues involved. See "Uncertain Mandate: A Roundtable Discussion on Conservation Issues" in Elisabeth Sussman, ed., *Eva Hesse* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 308.





[ill. 81] test piece for *Contingent*, 1969
 Latex over cheesecloth, 144 x 44 in. (365.8 x 111.8 cm)
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the
 Collectors Committee

1969, she wrote: “piece in many parts. each in itself is a complete statement, together am not certain how it will be.”¹³ It seems there is a kind of flexibility here, that each panel could have been a single work or could combine to set up a serial work. It is almost as if her kind of seriality had to contain within it a high level of coincidence and chance.

Her notes are full of question marks. She writes “then more, others. Will they hang there in the same way? Try a continuous flowing one. Try some random closely spaced. Try some distant far spaced.” Then a little further on, “today, another

step, on two sheets we put on the (fiber) glass. Did the two differently one was cast poured over hard irregular thick plastic one with screening crumpled. They will all be different. Both the rubber sheets and the fire [sic] glass. Be different each time? Why not?”¹⁴ “Why not” seems to be the overriding question Hesse asks herself at this point. Why not a work? Lucy Lippard corrected a mistake made by Robert Pincus-Witten in his Guggenheim text for Hesse’s posthumous retrospective in 1972 when he mistook *Contingent*, as it was shown at Finch College, for a mock-up or prototype.¹⁵ Much of her work was certainly very experimental, but I think the point is a much more far-reaching one—that the distinction between prototype and work blurred. Or put another way, part of the radical nature of the work was to be incomplete. This is born out by quite a lot of work that had not yet been exhibited at the time of her death and which is so open-ended that it is unclear as to how finally she would have envisaged installing it had she

13. Hesse Notes, Hesse Papers, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio.

14. Ibid.

15. Lippard, 165.

overleaf:

[ill. 82] *Contingent*, 1969 (see also [ill. 78])







[ill. 83] test piece, 1967-1969

Natural rubber

2 1/4 x 3 7/8 x 3 1/4 in. (5.7 x 9.9 x 8.3 cm)

University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Helen Charash



lived. From this point of view the test pieces left in the studio are no more ambiguous than some of the larger scaled work.

Benjamin Buchloh has commented on the way Gabriel Orozco's working tables seem to show all the possibilities and impossibilities of sculpture now.¹⁶ They embrace readymades and models, remainders and failures. Out of a group of disparate things new connections are opened up. In an important sense I think Orozco's tables allow us to think of Hesse's test pieces with a fresh eye. I do not mean to elevate them to the status of the finished pieces, but to think again about the very insecurity of their status—and encourages us to see that as generative of new possibilities. Of course there have been other artists who have used small-scale work to large effect, but Hesse's samples and small pieces opened up a radical new kind of economy. In turn we could look again at Giacometti's small or "disagreeable sculpture" as he called it, or Picasso's plaster casts of scrunched up fabric, and/or Duchamp's small erotic objects from the 1950s. It is not only to the objects themselves that we might turn but to the way they circulate, as part of Picasso's private studio economy on the one hand, or Duchamp's portable anatomy of part objects on the other. Giacometti's sense that the smallest thing can be the biggest and the most disagreeable in the imagination is surely not to be underestimated either. Mel Bochner criticized the Yale retrospective of Hesse's work for leaving out these small most visceral objects, shying away from "the little handmade things she put in cases, the pieces that look something like plastic vomit." The more scatological work, he called it, resonant of a sewer system, that "probably makes some people a bit squeamish." The word "squeamish," he thought, was a "good word to describe one's response to her surfaces, particularly the polyethylene and fiberglass pieces."¹⁷ These remarks don't fit easily with the word that Lippard coined to describe the collapse of the art object: "dematerialization." For what could be more material than these small objects? In the face of their excess, the object collapses as a distinct entity at a safe distance.

The test pieces have ended up in a variety of places. The Berkeley Museum in California has a collection of them, with a checklist written by Sol LeWitt describing each.¹⁸ A number were also left in her studio and have never been exhibited, which remain particularly hard to interpret and difficult to date. Circling back to retrieve something that she'd seemed to have abandoned is entirely characteristic of Hesse's approach. It is usually assumed that she gave up using papier-mâché after discovering latex as a material in

16. "Benjamin Buchloh Interviews Gabriel Orozco in New York," in *Clinton is Innocent* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (ARC), 1998).

17. "About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner interviewed by Joan Simon," reprinted in *Eva Hesse* October Files, 42.

18. These were given to the Berkeley Art Museum by Helen Hesse Charash.



[134] test piece, n.d.



[ill. 84] test piece, n.d.

Gauze bandage, paper stripes, yellow pigment, adhesive agent
15 7/8 x 5 3/8 x 5 3/4 in. (40.2 x 13.5 x 14.7 cm)

The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London



[ill. 85] test piece, n.d.

Gauze bandage, self-adhesive masking tape

15 1/2 x 14 3/4 x 5 3/4 in. (39.3 x 37.4 x 14.5 cm)

The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zürich London

1967—but she may well have continued to experiment with it. In 1966 Hesse had made a whole series of works by covering blown up balloons with papier-mâché, wrapping them with cord, and painting them with enamel paint. These were all enclosed shapes, some strikingly phallic, others gourd-like. But she continued to use papier-mâché in her monochrome reliefs such as *Compart*—both in order to create a textured ground and in order to build up the hemisphere that she would then cover with a dense spiral of cord.

There are a number of other test pieces, however, that seem to go off at a tangent [ill. 84, 85]. All the shapes are open, like shallow bowls. They are simple curves that have been molded around a large ball or perhaps a tire or balloon. In her notes from the spring of 1966, she listed as among the ideas for objects she was exploring “large balloon papier-mâché off wall.” This is like a sketch of a description, with the main components in place but little else. It does not quite do justice to the strangeness of these pieces, which are cut square, so they are both a curve and a rectangle at the same time. Corners are folded in on two of them, but rather than enclose a shape as a box does, it is as if these shapes unfurl instead. This was a radically different way of dealing with the relationship between circle and square, which had consistently preoccupied her, from anything else she was doing at this point. It is another way of tackling the compound of circle and square for which Anne Wagner has irresistibly coined the term “squarcle.”¹⁹ From the mechanics of the curved undulations of string mounds in her German reliefs through the circle drawings on graph paper, her preoccupation with the form had always been in the context of square or rectangular frames, even if the circle exceeded or broke its frame. In her reliefs of 1966 she built up convex hemispheres in papier-mâché and then wound spirals of cord over them. In the sample pieces, the relationship between circle and square is so tentative that it has been turned into something quite different, reminiscent of Duchamp’s musing over the word “curvature” in his notes for *The White Box*.²⁰ And whereas she had used papier-mâché as a textured ground in the earlier work, painting over it in acrylic, in these experimental pieces she left the material bare. Rather than newspaper she used wallpaper tape, which she braided in the manner of a grid.

There are even simpler cut curves, curves cut in a rectangle, made of latex painted on stiff cotton mesh. These strips have an extreme bareness about them. It is impossible to know what Hesse had in mind when she made these things. It may be that

19. See Anne M. Wagner’s essay in this volume.

20. Marcel Duchamp: *In the Infinitive--A Typotranslation* by Richard Hamilton and Ecke Bonk of Marcel Duchamp’s *White Box* (Northend: The Typosophic Society, 1999). *The White Box* notes were first published in 1967 as an edition of facsimile reproductions in 150 signed copies.

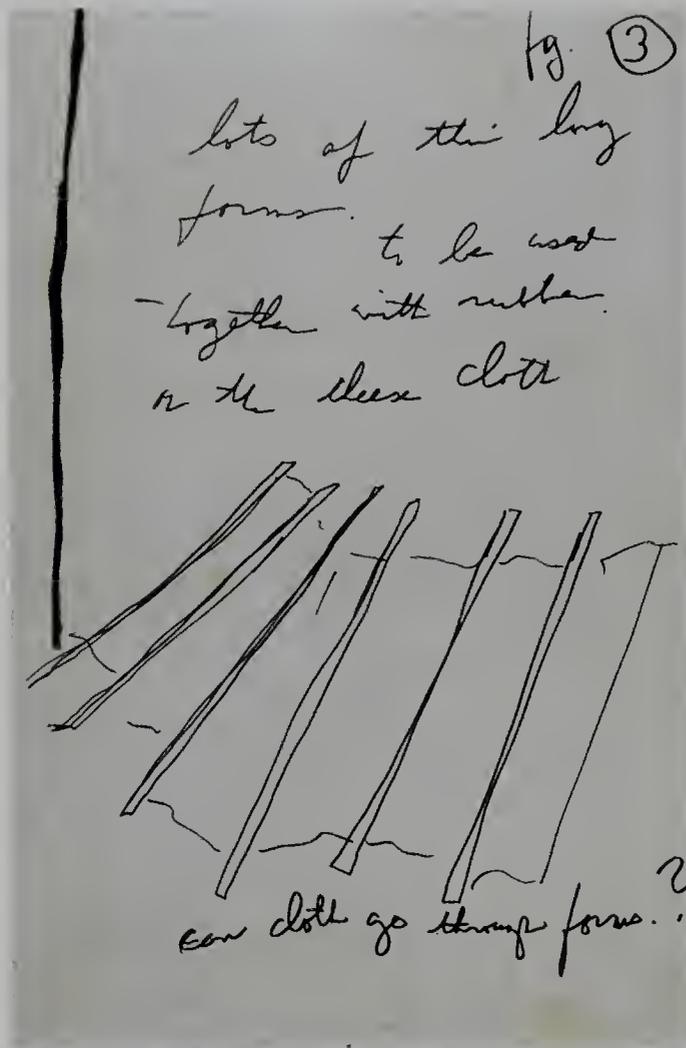
she was exploring lighter more fragile materials that would eventually become the gaping fiberglass pods of a work like *Tori* (1969). Maybe she was exploring how to make partial segments of a sphere. Or maybe nothing as precise as that. Which way up they go is a matter of guesswork—but in a way to ask the question is also to misunderstand them. To see them as having a way up is to see them as complete. Instead, what is intriguing is the precarious way in which a curved fragment sits on a surface. This is to hollow out a sphere and leave a part of it behind, as a kind of leftover or remainder. These pieces seem to have been abandoned: But if they turned out to be something like a blind alley or impasse, it is precisely just such an impasse that seems to have been generative for Hesse, to which she could return and retrieve something from the waste. It fits with the more radically oblique forms and shapes that she was working with at the end of the 1960s.

Hesse made some notes to herself in November, 1968—just about the same time that she was setting to work on *Contingent*—under the heading of what she called “**observations.**” Reporting on her technical experiments, she lists the materials she was working with at the time as latex, wallpaper tape, and balloons. She notes that if the balloon is left inside this causes wrinkles and “**for extreme crumpled wrinkles—cut when wet**” or for the “**larger ones that came out flat. All inside balloon removed.**”²¹ This refers to the shriveled latex sleeves she made, some of which she included in her glass boxes; Lippard had, if you remember, described one of these as “a shriveled latex fish-like shape cast around a popped balloon.”²² Blowing up a balloon, using balloons as mold, making a shape, removing the mold, using the remainder, cutting the shape, courting accidental and coincidental effects like wrinkles—this is precisely the economy of waste that is recycled. This is the “nothing at all” that is at the heart of it all, just like breathing.

As an aesthetic strategy, however rudimentary or provisional, this opening out to make a shape that has neither an inside nor an outside can also be seen to operate in her large scale works—like the big hanging rope and fiberglass pieces that shred the object of sculpture from within, or the seven awkward fiberglass poles of *Untitled* (1970). Clearly, the idea of expansion had interested her for some time and can be tracked in her drawings. It is the very opposite movement from that of the box, which encloses space. Even her glass cases do not function as boxes but, because the walls

21. Hesse Notes, Hesse Papers, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio.

22. Lippard, 98.



[135] no title, 1969

are see-through, open outwards as lateral extensions. Her work entitled *Expanded Expansion* was propped against a wall, although there is also a drawing that suggests she imagined it at one point lying on the floor [135]. The arrangement was like a concertina, able to spread out or compress depending on the length of the wall. Laid out in this way it comes to look more like one of her most enigmatic test pieces: a series of rubber tubes cut in half lengthwise and stapled together to make a kind of corrugated latex sleeve, expanding the surface area [111. 86]. It never lies flat, but buckles up on each side. Things do not literally have to move, or be differently arranged, to trigger this mental and bodily movement, expanding and contracting, scale lurching. I think Hesse was interested in the *potential* to regroup and rearrange and so to change the meaning of something. What she actually does might be as simple as placing some-

thing on its side or placing it flat on a surface, but the action triggers a recognition of a potential openness to change. In 1968, she wrote: “I don’t ask that pieces be moved or changed; only that they could be moved or changed.”²³ In her interview with Mel Bochner, Joan Simon suggested that the relation of “part to whole” in the small pieces is different from in her larger pieces—that in the small works there is “a cumulative relationship among the parts.”²⁴ This is true up to a point, but almost more significant is the emphasis on adding things together to create the possibility of open-endedness, of accumulation without over-complication, of re-arrangement not only of things but of the spaces between things.

I suppose I have also been picking over the debris of her studio. My emphasis on Hesse’s samples and small pieces has been intended to reveal an underlying logic in

23. Eva Hesse, Notes for Milwaukee, June 21, 1968, Hesse Papers, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio.

24. “About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner interviewed by Joan Simon,” reprinted in *Eva Hesse* October Files, 42.



[ill. 86] test piece, 1967-1969

Natural rubber and metal staples, overall: $1 \frac{1}{8} \times 10 \frac{7}{8} \times 2 \frac{7}{16}$ in. ($2.9 \times 27.6 \times 19.7$ cm);
individual units: approximately $5 \frac{3}{8} \times \frac{3}{8}$ inches (13.7×1.9 cm)

University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Helen Charash

her work: sculpture as sample, understood as something detached but representative, like a swatch cut from a roll of cloth. Even the word “piece,” which is a word Hesse uses to describe her work—and which is a word we take for granted meaning “a work”—takes on a different color when thought about in these terms. Like a sample, a piece is self-standing but also a part of something else. A sample also anticipates what might be but is always incomplete. There is something of that incompleteness driving Hesse’s project throughout. As she said in the unedited version of her conversation with Cindy Nemser, “I would like that when I go back to work not to know what the end is going to be.”²⁵ Imagining what it might be like not to know what the end is is arguably a good way of understanding Hesse’s work as a whole. I am not trying to elevate her test pieces to the status of the major works, so much as throw into question the relevance of those distinctions between what is considered major and minor. Concentrating on the small pieces allows us to look back at the large work and see how very precarious it is—not just physically in terms of the materials it is made of but conceptually in terms of what it *is*. A question mark always hovers over it. As soon as you look at the work from this perspective the edifice of the “complete” work begins to crumble. Hesse’s radical idea was that art was *never* complete. Her numbering of works in series suggests how open-ended was her conception of the artwork. And the question is not so much why did she make them all different in the way that she did, or why she recycled her small works in groups in different combinations as she did, but “why not?”

25. From the unedited typescript of an interview with Cindy Nemser, on deposit at Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio.



The Life of Language: How Hesse Named Her Work

ANNE M. WAGNER

This essay asks how language matters to Eva Hesse's ambitions for her art. For it matters somehow: How could it not, when everything suggests the artist's urgent awareness of the power of words? Consider her writing first. Though only infrequently aimed at publication, it is nonetheless vivid and confident, even on those occasions when lack of confidence was her chosen theme. And the same distinct voice persists, whether in her many private journal entries and personal letters, or the more carefully composed statements and occasional interviews in which she publicly shared her thoughts. In all these contexts Hesse's language left its traces, a valuable residue by now much mined as a repository of intentions, misgivings, aspirations, and fears. "I remember I wanted to get to non-art, non connotive, non anthropomorphic, non geometric, non, nothing, everything, but of another kind, vision, sort." In this sentence—a contribution to a 1969 catalogue, it is arguably the most frequently quoted statement she wrote—is to be found the artist's characteristic voice. Her words emerge in quick staccato, paced more by urgency than grammar. Yet the rain of negatives soon leads to a transcendent reversal; only then does it arrive at a quiet halt.

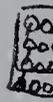
Faute de mieux, written statements like this one also serve as inevitable stand-ins for another now-lost body of Hesse's words. This is her speech in the psychoanalytic sessions that began in her teens and were ongoing for most of her adult life. Exactly how those words were phrased, paced, and uttered, it is harder to be sure.² Yet when it comes to language and Hesse, even these two major modes of production, the written

1. The phrase is taken from the catalogue statement describing *Contingent* published to accompany *Art in Process IV*, Finch College Museum of Art, 1969.
2. In *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 222-235, I consider the relationship between Hesse's journals and her therapy.

CARL ANDRE graph.
VANDER NET. DARK, LASH, SQUARES.

MARCH 1968
SEPIA SQUARES 

sepia, white 999999 

CIRCLE  DK. OUTLINES - for wh. pc. ribbon. 

DOUBLE SQ: 

DOUBLE CIRCLE 

MARCH 68

 Dark wash

 uninked wash

 van de net

 linen white - Gony

 window - Neuburger

 white cubes - Savage.

Rosie-head

not  reserved.

Circles

and the spoken, are not the half of it. It should be remembered that the first critical responses to Hesse's art came in 1961 (she was twenty-five) and have not stopped since. Today her work is afloat on a sea of language, riding the waves of catalogues, doused by critical back-spray. Yet all this critical commentary is, even now, still steered by what her own writing found the means to say. Surely it seems safe to suggest that like many contributors to twentieth-century abstraction, she forged her own special affinity with language and its games.³

The language category on which I focus here, however, has yet to be scrutinized, though it is the most playful of all.⁴ This grouping consists of the titles that, with considerable deliberation, Hesse adopted for her sculptural works: I count fifty-three distinct terms—words or phrases—used for titling, this without swelling the total by double-counting those re-employed for successive versions of a work. Paintings and drawings, by contrast, were almost never given distinguishing names. So the questions are clear. If objects and language were so often paired in her practice, I want to know why. Why, and how? The answer, granted, might partly lie in circumstance and habit. Titles are practical: Perhaps her paintings didn't really need them, given how little they were shown or seen. As for drawings, which of course she did exhibit, perhaps they didn't need titles either, given their precise formatting and exceptional finish, tactics that, like other characteristic devices (repetition, interior framing), grant them a certain systematic, even grammatical organization in and of themselves. Supporting this thesis is our knowledge of how Hesse referred to her drawings herself. When she listed them, for example, as she did in the later 1960s to inventory her production or plan an exhibition, her notations are graphic, technical, and formal. It's the system that matters: Hence medium, dimensions, and format can stand in for each otherwise nameless work [67, 68, 136]. There are some kinds of drawing, apparently, whose syntax rules a title out of court.

In other contexts, by contrast, Hesse "drew" with words. Which is to say that on several sheets, she assembled elaborate, often overlapping and sometimes repeated lists of works, words, and definitions [63, 64, 69, 137]. Their immediate purpose is hard to mistake. The artist was compiling potential titles for sculpture, as well as recording extant pieces after their completion. Such practicalities mattered, given that each sculptural format was calculated and distinctive, its shared strategies of repetition

3. Charles Harrison, in "The Ratification of Abstract Art," *Towards a New Art: Essays on the Background to Abstract Art, 1910–20* (London: Tate Gallery, 1980), 146, levels his sights on an art history that leaves unexamined the writings—particularly by artists—that historically have accumulated around abstract works, according to E. H. Gombrich, "to compensate for the reduction of representational content."

4. In an unpublished essay of 1992, "Eva Hesse, Anima and Art: What Goes On," Naomi Spector considers Hesse's language and titles through the optic of repetition, which she relates to the artist's Jewishness and the impact of the Holocaust on her identity.

notwithstanding. And each distinct object needed careful registry, whether by name or as untitled, when it passed from Hesse's Bowery studio onto the walls of an exhibition or into the hands of her gallery, Fischbach, to be priced, shown, and sold and thus to take a place in the collection of some prescient patron, for example, Victor and Sally Ganz. If these practical ends are counterbalanced by what may look, as lists and entries accumulate, like overanxious repetition, this purposefulness and anxiety are what qualify them as drawing in a conceptual sense. In fact, their inclusion in *Eva Hesse Drawing* (it is the first time they have been publicly presented) only underscores their conceptual identity and role. And in this instance—as is not the case with the more familiar untitled drawings—those that use verbal language are directly connected to work in three dimensions. This means not only that ideas for sculpture formed a distinct concern—a specific realm—within the world of Hesse's drawings, but that from the outset, such tactile ideas, and the language that phrased them, were always directed outward towards an actual public life, with viewers (and readers) in mind. It was under these particular circumstances, in other words, that Hesse's sculpture sometimes felt the urge to supply its own chosen terms of address. Which is to say that the artist seems to believe that language enters our seeing more directly in the case of sculpture than with drawing, perhaps because she understands the latter as having (or being) a language of its own. To establish the sort of seeing her sculpture needed, by contrast—to impose the particular conditions that might allow for it—an appropriate verbal language had to be discovered, and the relevant implications of the new lexicon laboriously spelled out.

Hesse was not alone in her use of titles. Several other 1960s sculptors—including those to whom she felt a close aesthetic connection, Carl Andre, for example, or Claes Oldenburg—also made much of titling, if in subtle or backhanded ways. In the case of Oldenburg, the linguistic strategy is to be apparently prosaic or factual—wishfully, outrageously so. It's the literal title—*French Fries and Ketchup* or *Fried Egg*—that makes the mismatch between Oldenburg's shapeless sagging objects and their everyday originals seem so pointed: The title allows paradigm and take-off to confront one another through the agency of words. As for Andre, consider his use in the 1960s of titles like *Lever*, *Slope*, and *Fall* and the infamous *Equivalent*: All name qualities and capacities that the objects so designated in fact neither possess nor perform. The line of bricks that makes up *Lever* can never lift or be lifted; *Slope* lies low

and flat on the gallery pavement; the steel plates of *Fall* cling tightly to its parent architecture, hugging the flatness of wall and walkway and moving not at all; the eight *Equivalents* may be equal in the number of bricks that make them (120 per sculpture)—hence precisely the same in mass, weight, and volume—but even that information does not make them look any more than generally alike, physical qualities being separable from visual ones: This is part of Andre’s polemical point.

Something deliberate and purposeful is clearly at stake. Both kinds of title, whether apparently descriptive or patently contradictory, do more than merely add linguistic handles for moving works about. And Hesse’s titles similarly signal the fraught relationship between objects and words. In her case the gulf was partly temporal. She named her objects, so she declared, after the fact, for reasons that again were more than practical—or so it starts to seem as she explains her motives and how she proceeds. “Wherever things are to be identified I do title them,” she told the critic Cindy Nemser in the course of their long interview in January 1970, “and I give it a lot of thought most of the time because I don’t like things being called untitled; that’s a sign of uninterest, and I am interested. I try to title them so it has a meaning for me in terms of what I think of the piece and yet it’s just like another noun. I use the dictionary and thesaurus. I use a word for its sound but they don’t have a specific meaning in terms of content.”⁵

Hesse’s way of speaking sometimes risks making her thought sound simple: It does so here. Her meaning, by contrast, is both provocative and deep. Consider what she is actually saying, as well as the implications she seems to try to forestall. First comes her idea of a title as gesture or sign: evidence of her “interest” in her art. Interest here seems to include suggestions of both care and thought; Hesse apparently fears that these might be judged lacking from a work without a title, one asked to stand on form alone. What she aims to name with a title, however, is something else again: a work’s meaning for her—“what [she] think[s] of the piece”—without, however, those implications straying over into the realm of the proper noun. It seems as if what Hesse wants *not* to happen is fixing, labeling. The title shouldn’t give the object its identity. It shouldn’t even try. Her choices, she hastens to assure us, are “just like another noun”: off-the-shelf items, there for the taking, merely used for their sound. Heaven

5. Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), 152.

forbid that they should seem too personal, too pointed. Hence that final disclaimer: “they don’t have a specific meaning in terms of content.” Titles, we learn, can keep meaning secret, rather than telegraph what this or that work is “really, truly” about. All we hear is their sound.

End of story. Or perhaps not. For when we look at one of the lists of Hesse titles—for example, the carefully if inexpertly typed and annotated inventory (it moves from “Addendum” and “Accession” down to “Schema,” “Augment,” and “Aught”), which she set out on a page borrowed from a small six-ring binder—does the list’s lexical litany, word and definition, not prompt us to think again about meaning, to remember just how complicated meaning actually is? So titles don’t have a specific meaning in terms of content? Then what kinds of meaning do they have? If not specific, then general? Or comic or tragic or ironic or contradictory or condensed or displaced or multiple or ambiguous and on and on? If “content” is not to be specified by a title, might the naming word not operate in some quite different way?

Of course it might. Hesse certainly knew this too. I think this is one thing her observations on deploying “addendum” as a title declare. I say “declare” advisedly: She was in fact speaking aloud, recording the Acoustiguide that went with a 1967 Finch College show called *Serial Art*. “The title of this work,” she said or read into the microphone, “is *Addendum*; a thing added or to be added. [This is exactly the definition she gave on her notebook list.] It is titled only because that is preferred to untitled. Explanations are also after the fact. The work exists only for itself. The work must contain its own import.”⁶

I cite this brief statement not merely because it shores up my opening points about Hesse on titles, though clearly it does so. What it does even more powerfully, however, is to introduce us to a title behaving like one, and saying so. A title is after the fact. So, notice, is an addendum: It seems obvious that here a title not only names a work, but also performs both what titles *are* and hope to *do*—they come in after the fact of the sculpture, to serve as a coded signal of how an artist, this artist, feels in the wake of the actions that made the work. And as the thing *to be added*, do they not address some half-felt need or lack? In this case, *Addendum* (1967)—the work the word names—was itself tacked on or added to a series of pieces made in 1965 and

6. *Ibid.*, 96.

pppppp

endum-A thing added or to be added

ession-Increased by something added

REPETITION



ation Nineteen



ge-To arrange in a certain order especially to set in a row or rows. 12x12 grommets F.

part-To divide into parts, partion, subdivide 4 lds F

ass- To form a circle around

ate-To repeat, to do again 20x20 F

ture-An encircling enclosure 1967

INSTANT - QUANTITY THAT DOES NOT VARY

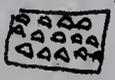
NUMBER EXPRESSING A RELATION That remains the same for some substance in some conditions.

5' x 5' x 5 3/4" WOOD, P.M. RUBBER

DITTO : 1967 SCULP METAL ON PLEXIGLASS 15" x 14 1/2"



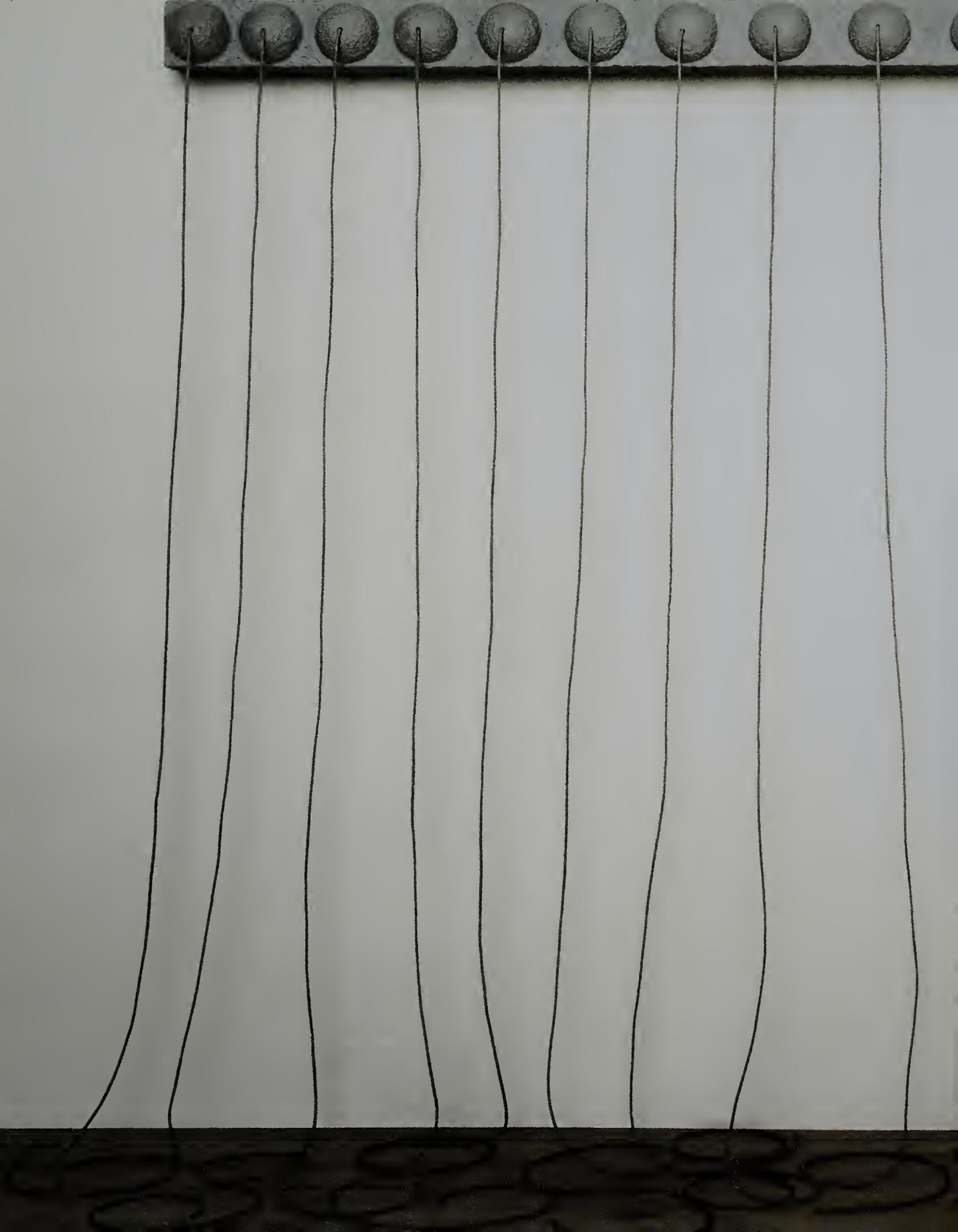
SCHEMA:

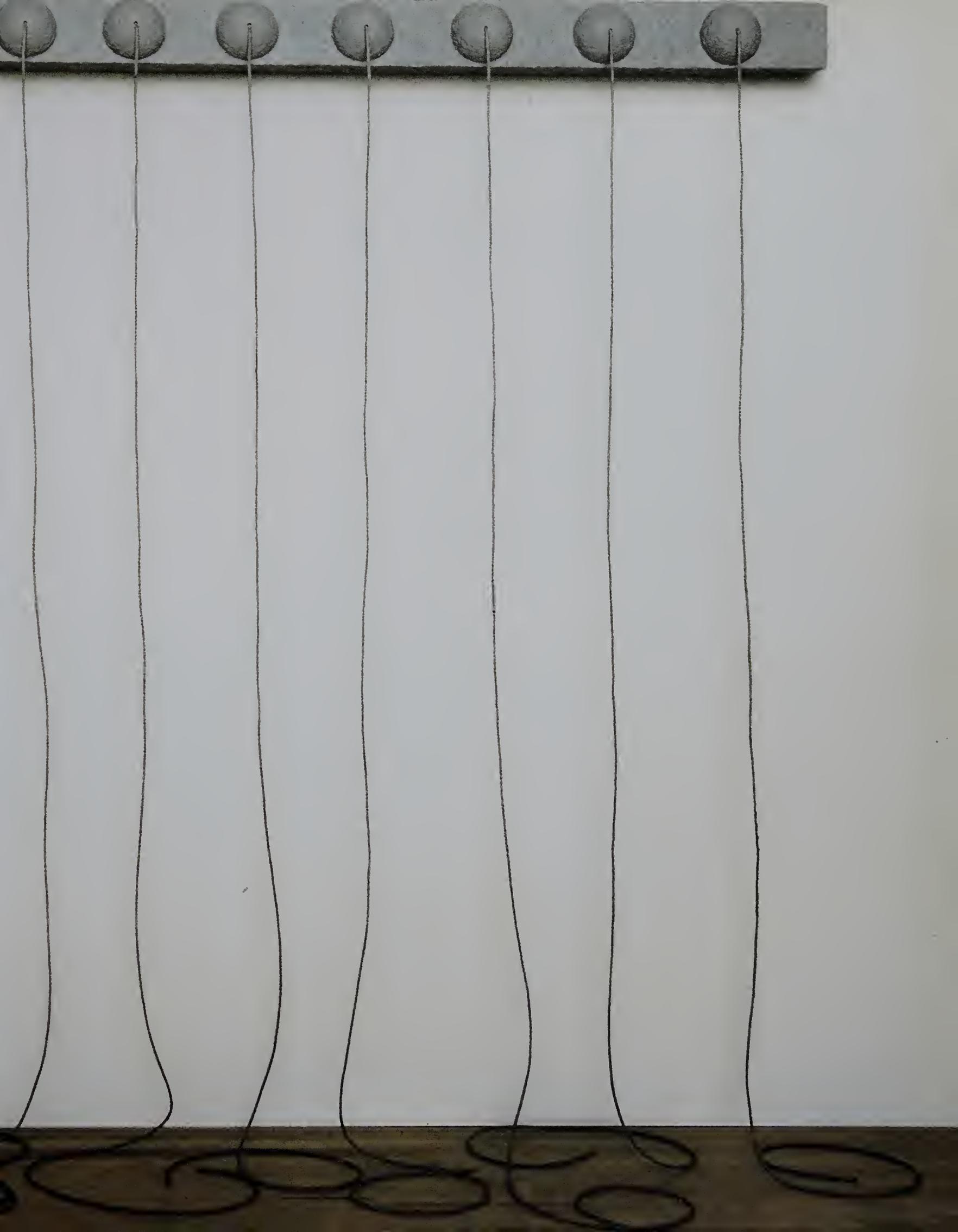


later rubber 1967-68 42" x 42" x 1 1/2"

augment: sheets 20 castelli

aught: wall pc: castelli 4 units





1966, which also use hemispheres and strings [ill. 89].⁷ *Addendum* effectively ends that series. Ends it, extends it, and revises it: all three. The main revisions concern the work's claims on space and its newly quickened sense of pace: Its long stretch—it was long enough (122 inches) to require a full-scale drawing⁸—makes it the first of Hesse's pieces to match the span of the sculpture to the pace of the body. In other words, it asks its viewer to walk in time with its halting step, stopping and starting as each hemisphere erupts in spare bounty, like a parsimonious fountain, and a too-thin line overflows again and again to pool on the floor.

There is one more thing to be added, apropos of *Addendum*. Like many additions, it is perhaps the most important thing of all. This is the observation that in many ways, according to Hesse, titles seem to operate much as words might behave in a simple theory of how language comes to be. There are facts—real objects, material sculptures; words come after. They are “to be added,” with that necessity arising (here the theory gets fuzzy) for a whole variety of reasons concerning absence and necessity—or so I think that those of us with our own interests in language should feel licensed to assume. It is not that I am suggesting that Hesse held exactly this theory or even considered herself as having a particularly theoretical bent. Here I find myself remembering the various moments in Lucy R. Lippard's milestone biography of the artist—they are not infrequent—when the artist is called upon to declare her own alienation from “rigor” and “structure.” Lippard cites her directly so as to demonstrate that recurrent insecurity: “Sometimes I feel there is something wrong with me. I don't have that kind of precise mind or I just don't feel that way. I feel very strongly in the way I feel, but I don't stand on a kind of system...maybe mine is another kind of system.”

Although this citation continues, it promptly takes a different direction: We will follow it further before too long. For the moment, however, I want to focus on one odd circumstance. This is the fact that inexhaustibly helpful as Lippard's study is, and much as it has contributed to the making of Hesse as a historical subject—giving her a legible self—it is hard to escape the conviction that somewhere deep in her heart the writer herself shares Hesse's own sometimes harsh verdict on her limits as a thinker. This fundamental text, after all, is the source in which readers first gained an extended acquaintance with the “personal” or “psychological” quality of Hesse's art.

7. The group includes *Ishtar* (1965), *Ennead* (1966), *Ditto* (1967), and *One More Than One* (1967).

8. The drawing is in the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

9. Lippard, 200.

If there is a consensus apropos of Hesse's production, it started here.¹⁰ This is also the text, moreover, in which Hesse's titles—indeed, her verbal habits and tactics in general—appear in a vaguely suspect light. Consider the moment in the narrative—it is spring 1966—when, according to Lippard, the artist's titles start to change. Here is how Lippard tells the tale: “It was also around this time that Hesse began to search for more esoteric titles, inspired by the recent acquisition of a large thesaurus. A poetic list of possible titles was never used and was replaced by more intellectual words like those drawn from the thesaurus category, ‘circular motion,’ referring to the forms she was using and also, perhaps to my [Lippard's] choice of the word ‘eccentric’ for the forthcoming exhibition [*Eccentric Abstraction*] she would be in.”¹¹ Here follows a long list, which though it contains such rarities as “baldric” and “cincture”—the latter a word Hesse actually did use as a title, defining it as “an encircling enclosure”—also includes such mundanities as “twine, twirl, entwine, indent, contort,” et cetera. Faced with these prosaic listings it is easy to be slightly worried by the way that Lippard seems to stack the deck. “Esoteric” is the warning gun: *Damn the intellectuals; full speed ahead! Climb aboard the bodily express!*—as Lippard, by 1976 deeply invested in claiming (even at the risk of other logics and arguments) the specialized embodiment registered in art by women, was then prepared to do.¹²

About that thesaurus. It makes one further appearance in Lippard's biography, walking on in reference to what the author calls the artist's “inordinate respect for the written word and those who dealt with it.”¹³ Faced with this severe verdict, one might do well to take a deep breath. On the one hand, it seems easy to grant that when Hesse confides to her notebook—as cited by Lippard—“this media of expression has always thrilled me. Because I think when you write you must be intelligent!” she does sound naive.¹⁴ On the other hand, however, Lippard's implications concerning writing, words, and titles often have a curious edge. Take the issue of the aforementioned thesaurus. Lippard writes, “When [Mel] Bochner gave her a portrait of herself made up of a spiral of words she bought a huge thesaurus from which she subsequently chose her titles.”¹⁵ I think this statement is odd. Why is the once-large thesaurus now “huge”? How big could it have been? Are we meant to suspect it was somehow too big? (In my experience, thesauruses, unlike dictionaries, are quite consistent in size.) Is Bochner subtly being given authorial credit for Hesse's interest in words? Is anyone really surprised to learn that in at least some later retellings, we read that the thesaurus

10. Lippard declares herself well aware of the risks of a personal interpretation, and sees herself (6) “treading a fine and dangerous line between the art and the life.”

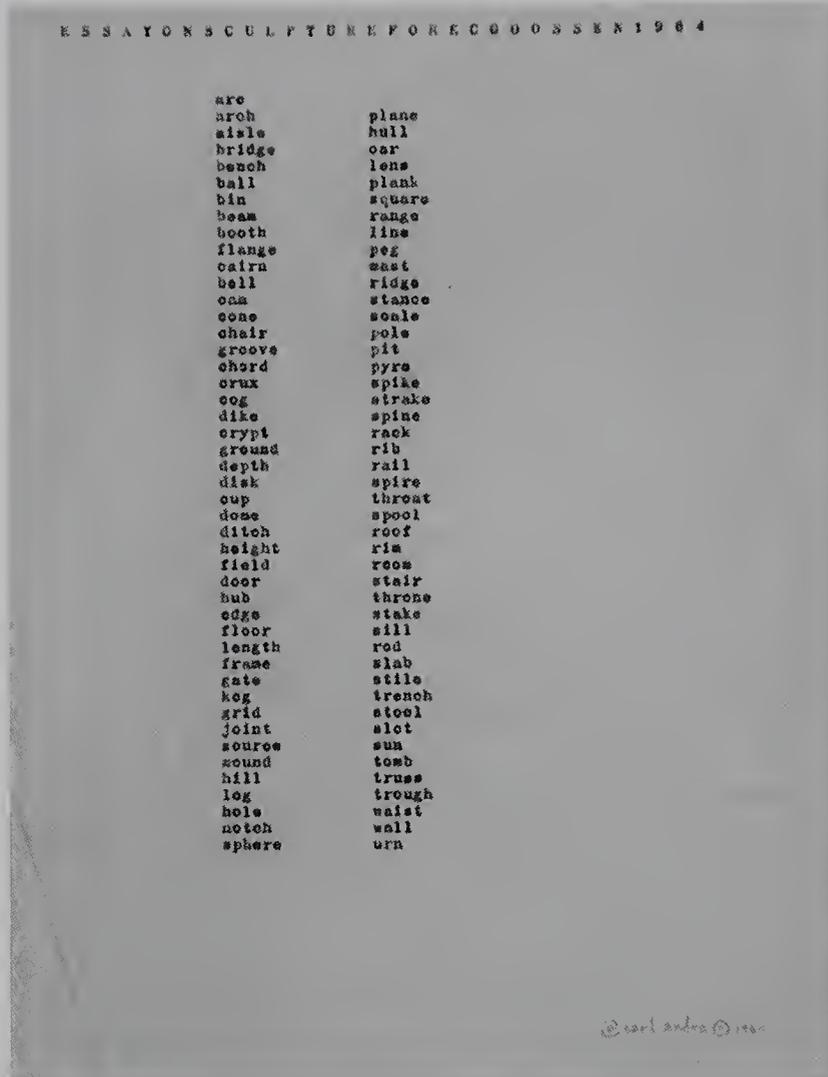
11. *Ibid.*, 65.

12. Lippard's collection, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976) appeared the same year as her *Eva Hesse*. Its earliest texts date from 1971, the year after Hesse died.

13. Lippard, 203.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, 204.



[ill. 90] Carl Andre, *Essay on Sculpture for E.C. Goossen*, 1964

Typed carbon on paper, 11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm)
Emily Fisher Landau, New York (Amart Investments LLC)
© Carl Andre/Licensed by VAGA, New York

itself (big, small, whatever) came directly from Bochner too? In fact, this seems to be the case.¹⁶

To be preferred is the suggestion (which Lippard leaves dormant) that, if the wretched Roget (if Roget it was) was acquired following Bochner's gift of the drawing, the impulse to use it stemmed from the way his image so deliciously equated Hesse—the artist and her work—with a tightly bound and centered sequence of words. Work and artist both: There is no doubt that the format of the drawing makes reference to each. As Elisabeth Sussman has noticed, in Bochner's word-portraits of the 1960s, the chosen shape is always derived from its

artist-subject's signature forms. The title of the portrait—in Hesse's case, *Wrap*—similarly names an artistic strategy, one its "sitter" was known for. Lastly, the whole referential sequence depends on the thesaurus, which Bochner, like Andre and Hesse, amply mined.¹⁷ In the case of his Hesse portrait, the result replaces her signature string with words arranged in a way that oddly both recalls and reverses Roget's claim to "materially assist" his work's users with meanings that expand in an "ever-widening orbit"¹⁸ [ill. 88]. Latent in the circular shape—behind "wrap" and "cloak" and "bury" and "obscure" and "disguise" and "conceal" and so on—are what most writers insist on calling breasts, but what Hesse herself called "compartments." Is it any wonder that she answered Bochner's gift—shades of the potlatch—with a reciprocal offering, a *Compart* given to him in December of 1966 [ill. 68]?

16. According to Bochner, he was indeed the source of the thesaurus. See Kathryn Tuma's essay in the present volume.

17. Elisabeth Sussman, "Letting It Go Where It Will: The Art of Eva Hesse," in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Elisabeth Sussman (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 24.

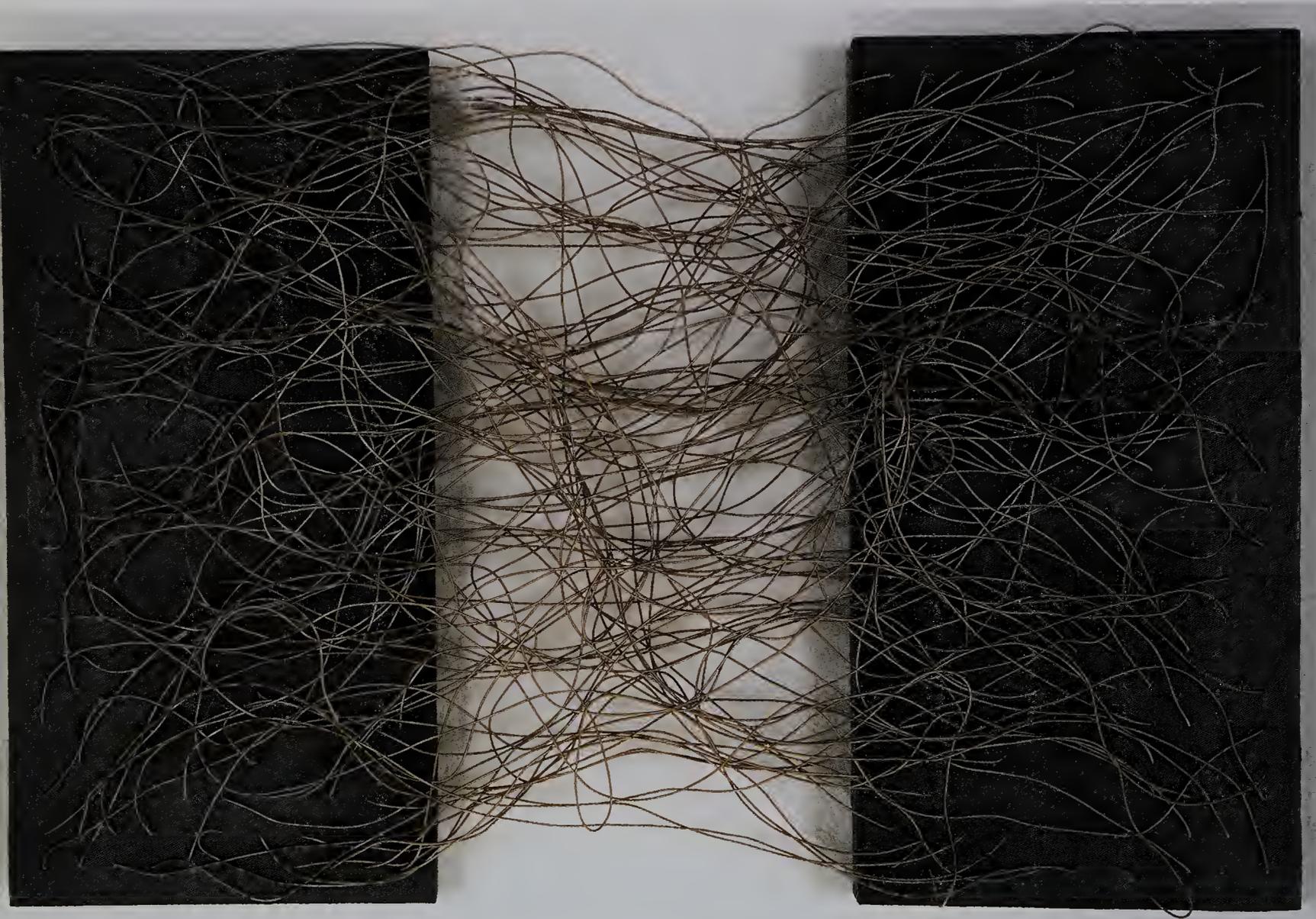
18. Robert L. Chapman, "Foreword," *Roget's International Thesaurus*, 4th ed., revised by Robert L. Chapman (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), xvi.

If Bochner's logocentric drawing seems to have taught Hesse more about what words can offer—that, like string in circles, they too can wrap, conceal, and obscure—it is remarkable that she herself seems never to have made the effort to use this “media of expression” directly as an artistic medium. By these lights, the *Compart* given to Bochner is a come-back, a saying again of what her art is and does and will continue to be. It will be unlike Bochner in *Wrap*, or Robert Smithson in his *Heap of Language* (this drawing too was made on a graph paper grid in 1966), or Carl Andre in his 1964 *Essay on Sculpture for E. C. Goossen* [111. 90]. These are all drawings that bespeak their fascination with the materiality of language as formative stuff, which like glass or earth or logs can be heaped up, squeezed, stacked, and compressed, and so made to speak. For these artists, we might say, words are substitute sculptures, stand-ins miming the work and behavior—the actions and labor—carried out by sculptural things.

Not for Hesse. She stuck to material, physical facts, used them, staged them, reasoned with and through them. It is striking that each one of the linguistic configurations deployed by her contemporaries in these three specimen drawings involves an arrangement or set up that her work carries out. Stacks and blanks and compressions: These are her meat and drink. Next to Smithson's *Heap* might be put the now-unexhibitable *Augment*, with its layered pile of latex-soaked canvas sheets; the same work seems equally appropriate alongside Andre's *Essay on Sculpture*, even while it helps to make the latter work's play with number, length, and letters look a trifle finicky and cute. Andre's *Essay* is cute: One need not be an art critic (as was Goossen) to savor how sharp Andre is about both the newly mundane physicality of sculpture and the potential of words to resemble it, when they can be made to act as ready-made components measured to size. “Arc” to “arch” to “aisle” to “bridge” to “bench” to “ball” to “bin” to “beam” to “booth.” And so on: Stacked like logs, then flattened, the words of “sculpture” are displayed as quasi-physical signs.

Now consider Andre's *Essay* in light of another work by Hesse, *Metronomic Irregularity* (1966) [111. 91]. The title, famously, is an oxymoron whose (non)sense is also at odds with the regular toll of its sound: met-ro-nom-ic-ir-reg-u-lar-i-ty.¹⁹ The pairing with Andre reminds us, not just of Hesse's own engagement with absence, and the push and pull of figure playing off and with its ground; it also shows us how ready Hesse was—how eager—to court and create a staccato a-rhythmia. For Smithson, who

19. Lippard tells us Hesse wrote both “metronomic regularity” and “metronomic irregularity” together inside a notebook cover—when she wrote “metronomic” the second time (with irregularity) she broke it into its four syllables. Lippard, 65. She also breaks “metronomic” into its syllables when listing it in a work in the present exhibition (see plate [3a]).



[ill. 91] *Metronomic Irregularity I*, 1966
Paint and Sculpt-Metal on wood with cotton-covered wire
12 x 18 x 1 in. (30.5 x 45.7 x 2.5cm)
Museum Wiesbaden, Germany

owned this piece, the anti-pattern of the work “evoked the lost tempo of ‘millions of utterances’”— a hum conjured simply with a web of wires crossing and re-crossing in a space.²⁰ “The lost tempo of ‘millions of utterances’” is a typical piece of Smithson poetry: When applied to the sculpture, it summons a language figured in absence, and makes of its grids and wires a tangled circuit board of speech. Not for Hesse the coy compromise to which Andre resorts in the *Essay on Sculpture* when, for the sake of his pattern, he includes “sun” in his fine-tuned list of nouns. Sun? The word hardly fits with his other three-letter choices: “bin,” “cam,” “cog,” “cup,” “hub,” “keg,” “log,” “car,” “peg,” “rib,” “rim,” “rod,” and finally, “urn.” This last word reminds us that Andre is frequently funereal and sometimes romantic, yet the very romantic “sun” still seems an oddity, a lapse or failure of Andre’s customary nerve. In such a conjunction, it is Hesse who emerges as the more intransigent in her sculptural criteria, Hesse who declares, “my works are much closer to soul or introspection, to inner feelings. They are not for architecture or sun, water or for the trees, and they have nothing to do with color or nature or making a nice sculpture garden. They are indoor things.” An extraordinary statement, this. Not only does Hesse lay claim to interiority and the interior, but she also does so to name that “other kind of system” that is hers alone. “I feel very strongly in the way I feel, but I don’t stand on a kind of system...maybe mine is another kind of system.”

I do not think we should underestimate the aesthetic and conceptual intransigence of Hesse’s “indoor things.” Of all the activities often accomplished indoors, high on the list are feeling and thought. Their intersection is the artist’s chosen realm. Thought, for Hesse, must be given sensible (and sensual) form. In this commitment lurks a materialism that might also be linked to language. Unlike the alternative materialisms (and eventual dematerializations) of Bochner and Smithson, for her language too is bodily, a matter of breath and mouth and eye and ear and movement of air coming in and going out of the lungs, of sound falling on ears, of signs reaching eyes. It does not happen in some rational elsewhere, on a grid or in a vacuum; it cannot be made alone.²¹

In linking Hesse’s art with thought and feeling, language and the body, it may help to summon a recent comment made by Carl Andre to sum up his artistic generation: He, Andre, was “the bones of the body of sculpture and perhaps Richard Serra is the muscle,

20. Robert Smithson, “The Artist as Site-Seer; or a Dintorphic Essay,” (1966–67) in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. J. Flam (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 344, n. 20. The phrase came to Smithson from an essay by George Kubler.

21. These few sentences rely on Iain Boal’s contribution to C. Blakemore and S. Jennett, eds., *The Oxford Companion to The Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), “language,” q.v.

but Eva Hesse is the brain and the nervous system extending,” so the artist phrased it, “far into the future.”²² Once again an image of thought and feeling (brains and nerves) describes Hesse, yet as Andre further reminds us, those capabilities can only be exercised as part of a body—in this case, what he terms the “body of sculpture.” In that complex organism, the nerves and brain that are Hesse’s work both direct and respond to bones and muscles (to Andre and Serra), all of them somehow functioning together, adjusting, cueing, and processing in an endless give and take. Brain needs bone and muscle just as much as bone and muscle need the brain. This is because the mind, to cite one philosopher musing in the early 1960s on the topic of language’s embodiment, “is in a relationship of reciprocal exchange with the instruments which it uses, but uses only while rendering to them what it has received from them, and more.”²³

Andre was not the only one of Hesse’s contemporaries to position her art by recourse to metaphors of mind—or to ground those metaphors in his high assessment of her art. It was Smithson who memorably said to Lippard that he saw their friend “as a very interior person making psychic models.”²⁴ Models, that is to say, that somehow epitomize the elusiveness and density of mental and emotional operations—their gaps and erasures, their connections and leaps—by giving them tangible physical form. Smithson does not say that these “psychic models” document or physicalize the artist’s *own* interior processes; he claims only that the psychic—as a look or state—is somehow given accessible form. I think that Hesse’s titles partake in that complex process. To understand it, we need to grasp how they function with the things they name. Take, for one example, the type of piece she termed a “compart”: How might we think of such pieces as speaking to and through and of their chosen word [i11. 92]?

The word itself, oddly enough, names not a thing but an action: “Compart” is a verb, which means to separate or mark out in parts; to subdivide. The term feels odd on the tongue, just because it seems at once so familiar and yet incomplete: If a single word can be uncanny, this is it. When used as a title, “compart” names a key aspect of what Hesse has done in making the objects it designates: Both works present a flattened hemisphere, which then subdivides. Yet they also offer a square, which grows in measured increments. The increasing proportions spell out an even more technical meaning of the word “compart”: to distribute and give proportional relationships to the parts of an architectural design. Yet of course what is most striking about describing

23. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “An Unpublished Text,” in *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 7.

24. Lippard, 2. From an interview conducted in 1973.



[ill. 92] *Compart*, 1966

Acrylic paint, cord, and papier-mâché on Masonite
 48 x 12 x 2 1/2 in. (121.9 x 30.5 x 6.4 cm)
 Oaros Collection, Switzerland

both these operations—both meanings of “compart”—is what is absent; the very aspect of the work the too-short word fails to name. This is the way our minds reach out to fill in the absences opened by the mismatch between the spacing and placement of sphere and square. Ghostly segments of the former float between the works’ physical margins; we can see them plainly as they reach across each gap.

What are the implications here of the square and circle? Let us, following Benjamin Buchloh, call the square as it figures in the *Compart* works “painting,” in quotes.²⁵ This is one way of insisting that for an artist to use the square in the 1960s meant more than simply employing a geometrical format with four equal sides. The square, that is to say, had been nominated as painting’s defining paradigm, the very essence of flatness, surface, and edge. Thanks to an older generation, it had already come to be thought of as the ideal vehicle for modernist abstraction, what in 1967 an elderly Joseph Albers still espoused as a “major man-made form” possessed of a “dominating frontal face.”²⁶ Hesse’s squares certainly cite her teacher—she studied with Albers in the late 1950s, during her two years at Yale—but they also name a practice she is ready (thinking again of Albers) to de-face. To the *Compart* she adds a sign for a sphere. How tempting to call this second motif “sculpture,” given its tactile surface, salience, and swell. A drama beckons, in which “circle” dominates “square,” and “sculpture” trumps “painting”; certainly Albers’s pulsing and layered surface has now ceded to a recalcitrant presence, less an image than a thing.

25. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “From the Aesthetic of Administration to Institutional Critique (Some Aspects of Conceptual Art, 1962–1969),” in *L’Art Conceptuel, une perspective* (Paris: Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1989), 48 ff.

26. Josef Albers, as quoted by Lucy R. Lippard, “Homage to the Square,” *Art in America*, July–August 1967, 52.

What are we to make of what Hesse does with and to the square and circle, to say nothing of their spatial projections, the cube and sphere? If this vocabulary itself was unavoidable—a measure of her ambition, her belonging to the 1960s—her use of it looks new. Both square and circle appear simultaneously, as presence and absence; it is as if we said “square” and the word made sense. It doesn’t; but Hesse’s hybrid—her *Compart*—clearly did. Her sculpture gives “square,” “circle,” and their tense interaction a new semantic force. To gauge their impact, read Donald Judd early in 1967 as he underscored what he saw as the mostly negative advantages of the regulation geometries. They had their uses, certainly: “The main virtue of geometric shapes is that they aren’t organic, as all art otherwise is.” But this was not enough; Judd was even more interested, so he insisted, in the possibility of arriving at “a form that’s neither geometric nor organic”; this would be a great discovery.²⁷ That this was Hesse’s discovery needs insisting: its testing ground was the newly contoured, newly interrupted and disrupted surface of the square. *Compart*—the title—helps to do that job.

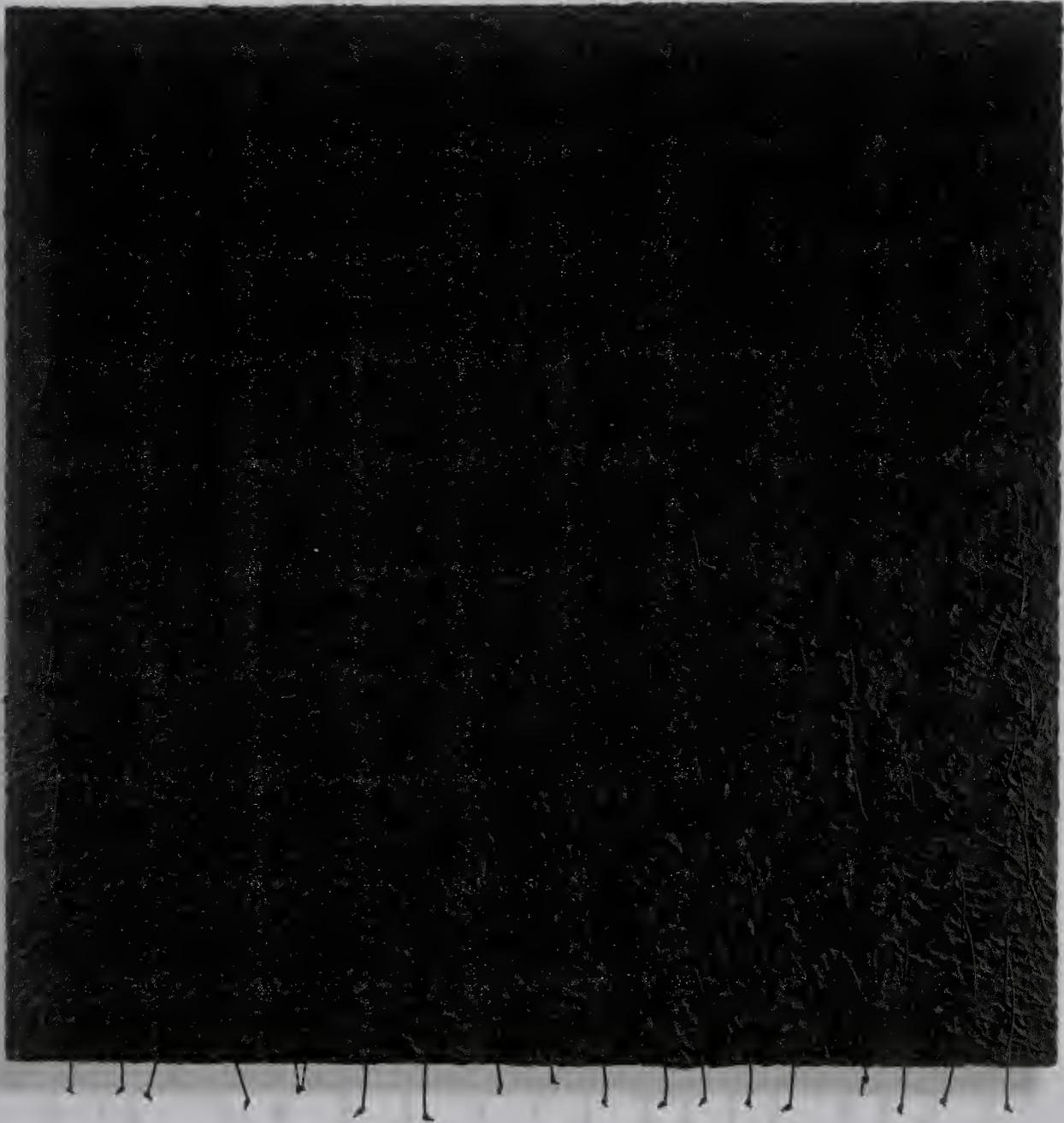
Constant (1967) offers a different case in point [111. 93]. Five feet high and five wide, it’s also more than five inches deep, with a Masonite surface that has been beefed up by a layer of what are probably wood shavings worked into a dry crust of dark gray acrylic paint. A grid of falling rubber tubing extends the surface still further; each tube has been knotted twice, once at either end, as if to stymie both slippage and loose ends. But this is not all: The surface also bears the imprint of the artist’s fingers, which have gone over the surface relentlessly—constantly—both unifying and interrupting its skin.

Skin, crust: Various metaphors are straining at the leash. How tempting it is to call this surface hairy and primal, but then to speak in the next breath of its utter artifice: Hesse has conjured a sci-fi texture worthy of some distant planet where flatness, projection, and depth are permanently at war. This is a surface that summons Smithson enthusing over what he termed “abstract geology.”²⁸ What happens in such places, according to Smithson, is epochal, and cataclysmic: “mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual deposits break apart into deposits of gritty reason.”²⁹ But though this epochal description cannot help but have some purchase on such an oddly animate gridding, Hesse herself did not talk this way at all. On the contrary, *Constant*

27. Donald Judd, 1967, as quoted in Buchloh, 48.

28. Robert Smithson, “A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects,” in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 102.

29. *Ibid.*



[ill. 93] *Constant*, 1967

Acrylic paint and papier-mâché mixed with unidentified materials on plywood with rubber tubing
60 x 60 x 5 3/4 in. (152.4 x 152.4 x 14.6 cm)

Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles





is one of the works that appear on her typed listing, where its title is glossed in straightforwardly mathematical, rather than millennarian terms, using a definition that makes it a noun: “Quantity that does not vary. Number expressing a relation that remains the same for same substance under same conditions.”

The definition seems as opaque as it is straightforward. So does the object to which it was so determinedly applied. Just what is the constant here? The square itself? Its tactile surface? Its protruding and relentless grid of tubing, which projects despite the artist’s painstaking laying-on of hands? Surely what remains constant in this particular set of relations is the sheer antagonism—the radical face-off—that Hesse stages between her work’s various terms: depth and surface, touch and vision, the gridded system with its knotted outreach, and a blind, even brute, feeling for something new. Where do we stand before all this? I think it is right to see these warring systems as staging—as materializing—a deeply conceptual allegory, which bodies forth the artist’s high ambitions for her work. Hesse, so *Constant* tells us, puts a newly literal pressure on the most basic aspects of pictorial and sculptural representation: on maker’s touch and viewer’s vision, on the work’s physical presence and the depth of its content, and above all, on the very idea of something as traditional as a purely or fully pictorial or sculptural mode. None of these artistic constants survive her attentions unchanged. Yet neither is any one of them finally or entirely displaced. To be a viewer of Hesse’s objects means recognizing how intransigently, how explosively, they work within and against what are the most familiar promises and comforts of art. *Constant* issues the key invitation: Come closer...put your fingers there, in the traces of her touches, and now tell me what and if you feel.

Here is the story so far. If language plays a determining role in Hesse’s project—as I have argued via *Compart* and *Constant* and *Addendum*—it does so on its own terms. Her titles mine language not so much for “content” as for its various operations—its vagaries, oddity, and play. Her choices tend towards words that all too often seem or become unstable when they are used as names. They give us either too much or too little; they often need translation; they masquerade as various parts of speech. Make even the most prosaic word a title—think of *Constant*—and it begins to hover oddly between adjective and noun. And as it hovers, we struggle to imagine what about the work so titled it might in fact be said to name, and how. Ditto *Ditto* (1967), another Hesse title;

likewise *One More Than One* (1967), which is similarly redundant, and reflexive. If all these titles were added, as Hesse tells us, it was so they might model versions in language of the contradictory roles and relations that her objects themselves propose.

Now return to Hesse's sculpture, with their titles even more firmly in mind. Consider *Sans II* (1968) [ill. 94]. Here is a work whose sheer physical presence alone might seem to be enough to put the lie to any claim for absence or negation its title could lodge. Thus it seems impossible not to ask exactly what this enormous, and enormously redundant, work—in essence simply a long sequence of apparently identical units—is or does “without.” Doing so launches that special process of response and reflection that, in titling, Hesse often added (like an addendum) to the experience of her work. “Titles,” she declared in 1969, “vivify all for me.” The word is a curious one, odd enough in daily parlance that when it cropped up in Samuel Beckett's writing—the context is *Malone Dies* (1956)—the critic Christopher Ricks was provoked to ask, not at all rhetorically, “What kind of life is there now in the word vivifying or vivified? Now as against a century ago.”³⁰ Perhaps one answer lies in *Sans*. This single title in French is the only one Hesse took from a language other than English and the only one shared with Beckett, a favorite author; as it happens she used it first, the year before Beckett published a short prose piece in French with the same name. A preposition, a monosyllable, a negative: This is a title on the edge of being nothing at all.

In 1970 Beckett rendered his title *Sans* in English. What happened when he did was that the absence opened in French was partially filled: He called his text *Lessness*, a noun.³¹ I think that Hesse, had she encountered this text, would have sympathized with the impulse to make absence substantive—her own *Sans* offers a similar proposal, even while insisting on the sheer presence—the beauty—of the serial voids its open compartments so repeatedly frame. And this whole game of presence and absence, moreover, is one that, when used as a title, *Sans* can catalyze.

“Titles vivify all for me.” Nor does the animating process stop with her. On the contrary, Hesse's titles forge a relationship with other minds and selves. They demand a viewer who will take and use whatever they offer actively, not as translations or synonyms, but as performances with a tone and in a register of their own. Again, it is simple. Her words demand thought. The process feeds on the gaps, connections, and

30. Christopher B. Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 120.

31. Samuel Beckett, *Lessness* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1970). Translated from the French by the Author. Rare in English, “lessness” means an inferior state.

inversions that link and divide objects and words and govern their workings in the world. The mind is to move actively, maybe in flex or spasm some of the time, but still actively (like a muscle, Yvonne Rainer said) thinking with and through language about the special character of what art objects might still be able to offer and deny. If such responses are idiosyncratic, visceral, and contingent, so much the better: At least this is what Hesse's objects seem to say. Make your solitary way down *Sans II*'s long sequence of absences. Notice that each compartment, though empty, doubles and confirms the next. Each, though empty, is enlivened with light; each, though a discrete unit, is riven with a doubling ridge. Each states and restates a purpose that aims to empty painting of its force, so as to keep it more physically present and alive. The endless hum of repetition is Hesse's own anti-grammar, with each small variation of surface the merest inflection, like a quiver or a catch in the voice. *Sans II* makes you linger, if you let it, at its moments of conjunction and abutment, its wrinkles and self-touchings, its rich flattenings, and the flashes in its void. Take Beckett with you, as Hesse might well have, for a sure guide to such experiences—the kind that he called “Unnameable,” but of which he wrote: “For if I could hear such a music at such a time, I mean while floundering through a ponderous chronicle of moribunds in their courses, moving, clashing, writhing or falling in short-lived swoons, with how much more reason should I not hear it now, when supposedly I am burdened by myself alone.”³² These are words that Hesse would have savored, though not as an invitation to pure absence, pure emptiness. On the contrary, Hesse's interest in language seems to have intended to keep absence at bay. Like Beckett's strange music, her words instead help summon what of those states—the absent, the empty—can be materialized for a moment, and even given a name. Hesse, we might say, gives names to her sculpture so as to catalyze more of what the Unnameable is, so that we might see and grasp it too.

32. Samuel Beckett, *The Unnameable*, 28, as quoted in Ricks, 123.

This essay has its origins in a lecture written for presentation as the Phyllis Wattis Distinguished Lecture at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in April 2002. I want to express warm thanks to John Weber, then Curator of Education at SFMOMA, for the invitation to present this lecture, which also served as the keynote lecture for a symposium on Hesse's work, which accompanied the 2002 retrospective organized by Elisabeth Sussman. I would also like to remember the extraordinary and enlightened patronage of Phyllis Wattis, whose contribution to culture in the Bay Area was so transformative and sustaining.



333 List of Works

Eva Hesse was known to dislike the common practice of assigning the term "Untitled" to works without titles. Therefore, in keeping with the terminology of the artist's forthcoming catalogue raisonné, this publication uses the term "no title" for all works that Hesse did not provably name.

The List of Works for the *Eva Hesse Drawing* exhibition is arranged chronologically. Works without a verifiable date of creation have been placed in their approximate chronological place as determined by the curators in consultation with The Estate of Eva Hesse.

[106] no title, 1951-59

Ink on paper
17 3/4 x 11 3/4 in. (45.1 x 29.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1998
1998.21.04d

[129] no title, c. 1954-56

Pencil on paper
14 x 11 in. (35.6 x 27.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1998
1998.21.14

[131] no title, c. 1958-59

Pencil
8 1/2 x 10 1/2 in. (21.6 x 26.7 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse
Courtesy Hauser and Wirth Zürich London

[108] no title, 1960

Black, brown, and colored ink
13 1/2 x 11 in. (34.3 x 27.9 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles

[107] no title, 1960

Ink and watercolor
13 1/2 x 10 in. (34.3 x 25.4 cm)
Private Collection, USA

[18] no title, c. 1960

Ink and gouache on paper
4 1/2 x 6 in. (11.4 x 15.2 cm)
Maxine and Stuart Frankel

[16] no title, 1960-61

Ink and wash on paper
6 x 4 1/2 in. (15.2 x 11.4 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982
1982.105.32

[17] no title, 1961

Gouache, ink, and conte on paper
6 x 4 1/2 in. (15.2 x 11.4 cm)
James R. Hedges, IV

[np] *Ashokan*, 1961

Casein on paper
17 5/8 x 24 in. (44.8 x 61 cm)
Barry Rosen, New York

[np] sketchbook, 1961

Ballpoint pen, graphite, pen, and ink in notebook
with unlined white paper
8 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 9/16 in. (21.6 x 14 x 1.4 cm)
Gioia Timpanelli

[83] no title, c. 1961

Pencil and ink wash on paper
6 1/16 x 9 in. (15.4 x 22.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982
1982.105.12

[np] no title, c. 1961

Ink, wash, and watercolor on paper
9 15/16 x 12 13/16 in. (25.2 x 32.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982
1982.105.17

[19] no title, c. 1961

Black and brown ink and wash
4 1/2 x 6 in. (11.4 x 15.2 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
R.T. Miller, Jr. Funds, 1994
1994.35

[np] no title, c. 1961

Ink wash, charcoal, and pencil
6 x 9 in. (15.2 x 22.9 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse
Courtesy Hauser and Wirth Zürich London

[np] no title, c. 1961

Ink wash with graphite on paper
5 15/16 x 4 7/16 in. (15.1 x 11.3 cm)
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Gift of Sue Rowan Pittman

[15] no title, 1962

Pencil, ink, and felt-tip pen on paper
4 1/2 x 6 7/8 in. (11.4 x 17.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983
1983.109.40

[31] no title, 1962

Felt-tip pen, pencil, and oil crayon on paper
8 3/8 x 10 7/8 in. (21.3 x 27.6 cm)
Private Collection, USA

[28] no title, c. 1962

Pencil on paper
8 7/8 x 11 5/16 in. (22.5 x 28.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983
1983.109.08

[29] no title, c. 1962

Pencil
8 7/8 x 12 in. (22.5 x 30.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983
1983.109.46

- 334 [30] no title, c. 1962
Pencil
5 15/16 x 8 7/8 in. (15.1 x 22.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983
1983.109.87
- [np] no title, c. 1962
Ink, wash, and watercolor on paper
9 x 6 1/8 in. (22.9 x 15.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982
1982.105.26
- [38] no title, n.d.
Collage, ink, and crayon on paper
9 x 11 15/16 in. (22.9 x 30.3 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982
1982.102.23
- [37] no title, n.d.
Collage, crayon, and pencil on paper
9 3/8 x 12 1/16 in. (23.9 x 30.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982
1982.102.25
- [39] no title, 1963
Pen, ink wash, and watercolor on sketchbook paper
14 x 11 in. (35.6 x 27.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982
1982.105.01
- [20] no title, 1963
Gouache and watercolor on paper
9 5/8 x 13 1/8 in. (24.5 x 33.3 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982
1982.105.03
- [53] no title, c. 1963
Ink, watercolor, gouache, and crayon
25 3/16 x 25 15/16 in. (64 x 65.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983
1983.109.04
- [25] no title, 1963-64
Collage, gouache, watercolor, and black ink
22 x 30 in. (55.9 x 76.2 cm)
Private Collection, USA
- [24] no title, 1964
Watercolor, gouache, colored inks, and graphite on paper
19 5/8 x 25 1/2 in. (49.9 x 64.8 cm)
Private Collection
- [21] no title, 1964
Watercolor, gouache, colored inks, graphite, and collage on paper
19 3/4 x 24 1/2 in. (50.2 x 62.2 cm)
Private Collection
- [22] no title, 1964
Colored inks, watercolor, and gouache on paper
16 1/2 x 11 5/8 in. (41.9 x 29.5 cm)
Private Collection
- [33] no title, 1964
Gouache on paper on wood
22 x 22 1/2 x 6 in. (56 x 57 x 12 cm)
Private Collection
- [34] no title, 1964
Ink wash, gouache, watercolor, crayon, and pencil
11 1/2 x 16 1/4 in. (29.2 x 41.3 cm)
Private Collection, USA
- [35] no title, 1964
Gouache on paper
11 x 9 1/2 in. (27.9 x 24.1 cm)
Barry Rosen, New York
- [np] no title, 1964
Gouache, ink wash, and watercolor on paper
25 1/4 x 19 5/8 in. (64.1 x 49.9 cm)
Barry Rosen, New York
- [54] no title, 1964
Watercolor, gouache, graphite, incised lines, and collage on Cornelius paper
25 1/2 x 19 5/8 in. (64.8 x 48.3 cm)
Private Collection
- [32] ABC, 1964
Ink and watercolor on paper on wood
19 2/3 x 25 1/3 in. (50 x 64.5 cm)
Dr. Gabriele Scheidt
- [62] no title, from diary 1977.52.28, 1964-65
Notebook page: blue ink on ruled white paper
8 1/4 x 5 7/8 in. (21 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.28
- [23] no title, 1964-65
Collage, ink, gouache, watercolor, and pencil
78 3/4 x 59 in. (200 x 149.9 cm)
Kunstmuseum Winterthur
- [64] no title, from notebook 1977.52.27, 1965
Ink and pencil on paper
8 1/4 x 5 7/8 in. (21 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.27
- [51] *Ingeminate*, 1965
Enamel paint, cord, and papier-mâché over two balloons connected with surgical hose
Each balloon: 22 x 4 1/2 in. (55.9 x 11.4 cm); length of hose: 144 in. (365.8 cm)
Daros Collection, Switzerland
- [41] no title, 1965
Ink and colored ink on paper
18 x 24 in. (45.7 x 61 cm)
Private Collection

List of Works

- 335 [42] no title, 1965
Ink and colored ink on paper
8 1/4 x 11 5/8 in. (21 x 29.5 cm)
Private Collection
- [np] *H + H*, 1965
Enamel paint, gouache, ink, and varnish with papier-mâché, wood, cord, and metal on Masonite
27 x 27 1/2 x 4 7/8 in. (68.6 x 69.9 x 12.4 cm)
Hauser & Wirth Collection, Switzerland
- [55] no title, 1965
Collage with black ink, watercolor, gouache, pencil, crayon, and ballpoint pen
19 1/4 x 25 1/4 in. (48.9 x 64.1 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles
- [56] no title, 1965
Black and colored inks
27 5/8 x 25 1/2 in. (70.2 x 64.8 cm)
Kunstmuseum Winterthur
- [43] *Tomorrow's Apples (5 in White)*, 1965
Enamel, gouache, and mixed media on board
25 x 21 7/8 x 6 1/4 in. (65.4 x 55.6 x 15.9 cm)
Tate Gallery, London, purchased 1979
- [36] no title, c. 1965
Notebook Page: black ink on white paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.39H
- [np] no title, c. 1965
Black ink on white paper
5 7/8 x 8 13/16 in. (14.9 x 20.8 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
UN97.571
- [69] no title, c. 1965
Notebook Page: black ink and typed letters on white paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1997.52.76.391
- [61] no title, n.d. (c. 1965)
Black ink, gouache, and watercolor on paper
16 1/2 x 11 1/2 in. (41.9 x 29.2 cm)
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1986
- [79] no title, c. 1965-66
Pen and wash
12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.3 cm)
Miani Johnson, New York City
- [44, 63, 94] no title, from diary 1977.52.31, 1966
Notebook page: black ink on ruled white paper
7 3/4 x 5 in. (19.7 x 12.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.31
- [105] no title, 1966
Pen and ink
12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.01
- [5] no title, 1966
Pen and pencil on notebook paper
7 1/2 x 5 in. (19.1 x 12.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.25a
- [48] no title, 1966
Pen and ink on notebook paper
7 1/2 x 5 in. (19.1 x 12.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.25c
- [66] no title, 1966
Ink and pencil on notebook paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.26a
- [89] no title, 1966
Ink and pencil on notebook paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.26b
- [65] no title, 1966
Ink and pencil on notebook paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.26d
- [99] no title, 1966
Ink wash and pencil
12 x 9 1/2 in. (30.5 x 24.1 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles
- [91] *Metronomic Irregularity III*, 1966
Paint and Sculpt-metal on wood with cotton-covered wire
10 x 50 x 2 1/2 in. (25.4 x 127 x 6.4 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles
- [76] no title, 1966
Pencil and wash
8 x 6 in. (20.3 x 15.2 cm)
Miani Johnson, New York
- [77] no title, 1966
Wash and graphite on paper
6 x 4 1/6 in. (15.2 x 10.6 cm)
Janie C. Lee
- [98] no title, 1966
Brown ink wash and pencil
13 3/4 x 10 3/4 in. (34.9 x 27.3 cm)
Private Collection, Courtesy Anthony Slayter-Ralph

- 336 [49] no title, 1966
Pencil and ink wash on paper
11 3/4 x 9 in. (29.9 x 22.9 cm)
Annemarie and Gianfranco Verna
- [97] no title, 1966
Black ink on yellow graph paper
6 3/4 x 4 in. (17.2 x 10.2 cm)
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina
at Greensboro
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983
- [133] no title, 1966
Enamel paint and cord over papier-mâché
11 x 13 1/2 x 9 1/2 in. (27.9 x 34.3 x 24.1 cm)
Private Collection
- [2, 3, 90, 95] no title, from notebook 1977.52.30,
Fall 1966
Pen, pencil, and felt-tip marker in wirebound note-
book with white ruled paper
7 11/16 x 5 in. (19.5 x 12.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.30
- [60] no title, from diary 1977.52.29, n.d.
Notebook page: black ink on ruled white paper
7 3/4 x 5 in. (19.7 x 12.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.29
- [127] no title, 1967
Pencil on graph paper
8 1/2 x 10 7/8 in. (21.6 x 27.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.08
- [np] no title, 1967
Pencil on graph paper
8 1/2 x 10 7/8 in. (21.6 x 27.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.10
- [125] no title, 1967
Pencil on graph paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/2 in. (27.8 x 21.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.11
- [100] no title, 1967
Pencil on graph paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/2 in. (27.8 x 21.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.12
- [52] no title, 1967
Ink on green graph paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/2 in. (27.8 x 21.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.13
- [70] no title, 1967
Ink and pencil on notebook paper
7 1/2 x 5 in. (19.1 x 12.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.25d
- [82] no title, 1967
Ink on graph paper
11 x 8 9/16 in. (27.9 x 21.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Friends of Art Endowment Fund, 1984
1984.48
- [92] no title, 1967
Black ink on yellow graph paper
10 1/4 x 8 1/4 in. (26 x 21 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse
Courtesy Hauser and Wirth Zürich London
- [81] no title, 1967
Ink on graph paper
11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm)
Private Collection, USA
- [50] no title, 1967
Ink wash on cardboard
9 x 6 1/2 in. (22.9 x 16.5 cm)
Museum of Fine Arts, MNM, Department of Cultural
Affairs
Gift of Lucy R. Lippard, Lucy R. Lippard Collection,
1999
- [104] no title, 1967
Pencil and ink on tracing paper
8 7/8 x 11 7/8 in. (22.5 x 30.2 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of the Eva Hesse Estate
- [np] no title, 1967
Ink on graph paper
11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm)
Private Collection
- [78] no title, 1967
Ink wash, graphite, and string on paper board
15 1/2 x 15 1/2 in. (39.4 x 39.4 cm)
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina
at Greensboro
Museum purchase with funds from the Dillard Paper
Company for the Dillard Collection, 1967
- [126] no title, 1967
Cardboard tubes, metal washers, Sculpt-Metal, and
vinyl cords
Cardboard tubes, each 20 1/2 x 1 in. (52.1 x 2.5 cm);
vinyl cords, each 128 in. (325.1 cm)
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina
at Greensboro
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983
- [80] no title, from pad 1977.52.73, March 1967
Black ink on graph paper
11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.73A

List of Works

- 337 [71] no title, Summer 1967
Pencil on graph paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/2 in. (27.8 x 21.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.09
- [109] no title, 1967-68
Pen and ink on ruled notebook paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.16
- [110] no title, 1967-68
Pen and ink on ruled notebook paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.17
- [np] no title, 1967-68
Pen and ink on ruled notebook paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.18
- [6] no title, 1967-68
Pen and ink on paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.19
- [8] no title, 1967-68
Pen and ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.22
- [120] test pieces for *Sans I*, 1967-68
Unfired clay blocks
tan: 15/16 x 2 7/8 x 3 3/4 in. (2.4 x 7.3 x 9.5 cm);
red/brown: 1 x 2 7/8 x 3 5/8 in. (2.5 x 7.3 x 9.2 cm)
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum
Gift of Mrs. Helen Charash
- [103] no title, 1967-68
Gouache, watercolor, and pencil on paper
11 1/8 x 14 7/8 in. (28.3 x 37.8 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of the Eva Hesse Estate
- [122] test piece, 1967-69
Natural rubber and cheesecloth
9/16 x 2 3/8 x 29 5/8 in. (1.4 x 6 x 75.3 cm)
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum
Gift of Mrs. Helen Charash
- [123] test pieces, 1967-69
Plaster tiles
1 x 7 7/8 x 8 1/4 in. (2.5 x 20 x 21 cm); 1/2 x 7
7/8 x 7 7/8 in. (1.3 x 20 x 20 cm)
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum
Gift of Mrs. Helen Charash
- [121] test pieces, 1967-69
Plaster blocks
1 7/8 x 3 x 4 in. (4.8 x 7.6 x 10.2 cm); 1/2 x 3 x 3
1/2 in. (1.3 x 7.6 x 8.9 cm)
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum
Gift of Mrs. Helen Charash
- [119] test piece, 1967-69
Cheesecloth over aluminum screen
3 x 19 x 7 in. (7.6 x 48.3 x 17.8 cm)
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum
Gift of Mrs. Helen Charash
- [np] no title, n.d.
Pencil on graph paper
10 15/16 x 8 7/16 in. (27.8 x 21.4 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.07
- [np] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.55
- [14] no title, 1968
Ink
7 1/4 x 7 1/4 in. (18.4 x 18.4 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.15
- [68] no title, 1968
Notebook page: pencil on ruled white paper
8 13/16 x 5 7/8 in. (20.8 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
UN97.481
- [67] no title, 1968
Notebook page: pencil on ruled white paper
8 13/16 x 5 7/8 in. (22.4 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
UN97.482
- [102] no title, 1968
Ink wash
10 1/4 x 14 1/2 in. (26 x 36.8 cm)
Judith and Adam Aronson
- [58] no title, 1968
Gouache and ink
15 x 11 1/2 in. (38.1 x 29.2 cm)
Private Collection
- [np] no title, 1968
Pencil and colored pencil on paper
13 x 25 1/4 in. (33 x 64.1 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse
Courtesy Hauser and Wirth Zürich London
- [57] no title, 1968
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil
14 3/4 x 12 in. (37.5 x 30.5 cm)
Kate Ganz and Daniel Belin

- 338 [59] no title, 1968
Gouache over watercolor and pencil
15 1/2 x 11 in. (39.4 x 27.9 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles
- [112] no title, 1968
Ink and gouache on paper
14 3/4 x 11 in. (37.5 x 27.9 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles
- [128] model for *Augment and Aught*, 1968
Latex over cotton
Each of the 29 units: 4 1/2 x 8 1/2 in. (11.4 x 21.6 cm); height of stacked piece: 2 3/4 in. (7 cm)
Egidio Marzona, Berlin, Vienna
- [93] no title, 1968
Graphite, brown wash, and gouache
12 1/8 x 12 3/16 in. (30.8 x 31 cm)
The Saint Louis Art Museum
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Edward Okun
- [np] no title, 1968
Ink, gouache, and pencil
15 x 11 in. (8.1 x 27.9 cm)
Susan Englander
- [101] no title, 1968
Ink and pencil on paper
10 15/16 x 8 7/16 in. (27.8 x 21.4 cm)
Maxine and Stuart Frankel
- [124] no title, 1968
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper
11 1/2 x 15 3/4 in. (29.2 x 40 cm)
Private Collection
- [np] *For Gioia*, 1968
Gouache, ink, and pencil on paper
14 x 11 in. (35.6 x 28 cm)
Gioia Timpanelli
- [118] no title, 1968
Graphite and gouache on paper
15 1/2 x 11 in. (39.4 x 27.9 cm)
Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy
- [96] no title, c. 1968
Black and blue ink on white paper
6 7/8 x 3 13/16 in. (17.5 x 9.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
UN97.443Z
- [136] no title, March 1968
Black ink on white paper
6 7/8 x 3 13/16 in. (17.5 x 9.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
UN97.443MM
- [26] no title, Dec. 27, 1968
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.41
- [85] no title, 1968-69
Pencil on yellow ruled paper
8 1/2 x 11 in. (21.6 x 27.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.03
- [86] no title, 1968-69
Pencil on yellow ruled paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/4 in. (27.8 x 21 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.04
- [87] no title, 1968-69
Pencil on yellow ruled paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/4 in. (27.8 x 21 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.05
- [88] no title, 1968-69
Pencil on yellow ruled paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/4 in. (27.8 x 21 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.06
- [12] no title, c. 1968-69
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.45
- [4] no title, n.d.
Pencil on graph paper
10 7/8 x 8 7/16 in. (27.6 x 21.4 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.16
- [13] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.44
- [np] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.49
- [130] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.52

List of Works

- 339 [137] no title, n.d.
Pen, ink, and typed letters on paper
6 7/8 x 3 13/16 in. (17.5 x 9.7 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983
UN97.443.II
- [74] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.51
- [84] no title, 1969
Pencil on yellow ruled paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/4 in. (27.8 x 21 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.07
- [1] no title, 1969
Pencil on yellow ruled paper
10 15/16 x 8 1/2 in. (27.8 x 21.6 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.14
- [135] no title, 1969
Pen and ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.20
- [7] no title, 1969
Pencil and ink on notebook paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.21
- [113] no title, 1969
Gouache, silver paint, and graphite over watercolor
19 1/2 x 13 in. (49.9 x 33.4 cm)
The Baltimore Museum of Art
Purchased as the gift of Robert and Jane Meyerhoff,
Phoenix, Maryland, SMA 1983.59
- [116] no title, 1969
Gouache, silver paint, black ink, and graphite on
paper
22 1/8 x 15 in. (56.2 x 38.1 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles
- [115] no title, 1969
Gouache, metallic gouache, pencil, and ink on paper
22 x 17 in. (55.9 x 43.2 cm)
Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles
- [117] Right After, 1969
Silver gouache and pencil
22 1/4 x 15 in. (56.5 x 38.1 cm)
Private Collection, USA
- [114] no title, 1969
Metallic gouache, gouache, ink, and pencil on paper
22 x 17 in. (55.9 x 43.2 cm)
Gioia Timpanelli
- [np] no title, November 1969
Ink
22 x 17 in. (55.9 x 43.2 cm)
Gioia Timpanelli
- [75] no title, November 1969
Ink
22 x 17 in. (55.9 x 43.2 cm)
Gioia Timpanelli
- [132] no title, n.d.
Ink and pencil on paper
17 7/8 x 23 3/5 in. (45.5 x 60.5 cm)
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands
- [10] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.42
- [11] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.43
- [np] no title, n.d.
Ink and pencil on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.47
- [27] no title, n.d.
Pencil on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.48
- [9] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.50
- [73] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.53
- [72] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.54

340 [134] test piece, n.d.
Gauze-bandage, ground coated with red pigment
traces
17 1/4 x 11 1/4 x 4 1/2 in. (3.7 x 28.5 x 11.5 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse
Courtesy Hauser and Wirth Zürich London

[47] no title, 1970
Reinforced fiberglass over wire mesh and latex over
cloth over wire
12 x 9 x 4 1/2 in. (30.5 x 22.9 x 11.4 cm); length
of cord: 78 in. (198.1 cm)
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Elizabeth H. Gates and Sherman S. Jewett Funds, 1978

[45] no title, 1970
Pen and ink on notebook paper
12 1/4 x 8 in. (31.1 x 20.3 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.23

[np] no title, 1970
Pen and ink on notebook paper
6 3/4 x 3 3/4 in. (17.2 x 9.5 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.24

[111] no title, 1970
Pen and ink
8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse
Courtesy Hauser and Wirth Zürich London

[40] test pieces, 1970
Latex, cotton, and wire
2 units: 84 in. (213.4 cm), 120 in. (304.8 cm)
The Estate of Eva Hesse
Courtesy Hauser and Wirth Zürich London

[46] no title, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 7/8 x 5 7/8 in. (22.5 x 14.9 cm)
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio
Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1977
1977.52.76.46

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Cover illustrations: (front, top) Hesse at work in her studio in Kettwing an der Ruhr, Germany, c. 1964–65; (front, bottom) Eva Hesse, no title, 1965, Ink and colored ink on paper, 8 1/4 x 11 5/8 in. (21 x 29.5 cm), Private Collection; (back) Eva Hesse, c. 1965

Front section illustrations: [ill. 1] Eva Hesse, c. 1969, Photograph by Stephen Korbet; [ill. 2] Eva Hesse, no title, 1970 (see also [ill. 66]) installed in Donald Droll's loft in 1972; [ill. 3] Eva Hesse, no title, 1969, Reinforced fiberglass over cloth-covered metal wire, 22 units, overall 62 ft. x 1 in. (18.9 m x 2.5 cm), The Art Institute of Chicago, Through Prior Gift of Arthur Keating, 1989

Eva Hesse Drawing

Edited by CATHERINE DE ZEGHER

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Eva Hesse (1936–1970) was a highly experimental artist who continually challenged the conventions of her time. For Hesse, drawing played a unique role, providing the nexus between her works in all media. An accomplished draftsman, Hesse began to develop her wandering, tentative line while studying at Yale University in the late 1950s. Her early 1960s works on paper engaged with visual vocabularies from geometry to biomorphic abstraction. In 1965, Hesse combined her tactile sensibility for materials with her string-like line to achieve a breakthrough: her astonishing reliefs, which began to bridge the space between two and three dimensions. Balancing the disembodiment of line with its intensified materialization, Hesse went on to develop one of the most innovative oeuvres of the twentieth century, anticipating the hybridization of media and crossing borderlines linking one impossible space to another.



Eva Hesse Drawing is the first book to explore her drawing process, following her work from drawing to painting and sculpture, but always back to drawing. The book features important, recently rediscovered “working drawings,” which provide an intimate look at Hesse’s everyday practice and methodology, as well as new scholarship on the artist by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Catherine de Zegher, Bracha L. Ettinger, Briony Fer, Mignon Nixon, Elisabeth Sussman, Kathryn A. Tuma, and Anne M. Wagner.

CATHERINE DE ZEGHER is Executive Director of The Drawing Center, New York.

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