55 FERRIS STREET

55 FERRIS STREET III

Ellen Driscoll
Danita Geltner
Nade Haley
Carol Hepper
Elana Herzog
Robin Hill
Martha Keller
Creighton Michael
John Monti
Martin Myers
James Sadek

Curated by
Frederieke S. Taylor with Joseph Zito

March 14 - April 25, 1993

55 Ferris Street
Brooklyn, New York

Introduction

Eleven artists participate in the third exhibition at 55 Ferris Street. To attempt to describe their work is a little like trying to describe eleven friends, with different ideas, concerns and histories. What they have in common is that they have all landed on the third floor of 55 Ferris Street at the same moment in time. There is no particular theme to this exhibition other than that it presents artists whose work I have followed and respect, and who can deal with the demanding space and scale of 55 Ferris Street's third floor. The eleven artists share, of course, a geography and a specific moment in art history that is reflected in the work in different ways.

Both **Martin Myers** and **Martha Keller** (the only painter in the group) use the cool language of abstraction to create highly charged works. Martha Keller's paintings, with their calculated exteriors, are nevertheless created through personal impulse and choice. Her methods seem far more formal than they actually are. The initial flatness of the painted surface gradually reveals itself as infinite space. Martin Myers' black and white striped towers are in an intriguing area between sculpture and painting, while their scale is somewhere between the human and the monumental. With great economy of means, Myers infuses his monoliths with a surprising amount of vitality and tension — the longer one looks at them the more intriguing they become. **Creighton Michael** translates the gestures of drawing into three-dimensional form. His structures of wood and stretched paper, covered with shellac and graphite, are quiet and self-contained objects. Yet, they emit sensuality and emotion, and have the magic qualities of oriental or African art. **John Monti's** structures are deceptively simple; "dumb" forms such as boxes and tiles are blown up to become part of a complex and absurd balancing act. Ordinary shapes become threatening, hiding we don't know what. The everyday world of Monti is both funny and scary, filled with ambiguity as he plays off references to minimalism and Renaissance conventions such as the sarcophagus and the tomb. **Danita Geltner** creates landscapes out of industrial and natural materials. Combining hotly colored plastic rods with the muted tones of sand and bones, her landscapes are aggressive, geometric reductions of the natural environment. Landscape

features in **Nade Haley's** installation as well. Haley presents a landscape or, more accurately, a three-dimensional topographical map, that we can enter. Haley's field is interspersed with vessels, like pits on the moon. These irrational indentations, randomly placed, refer less to a physical environment than to a personal archeology.

Time and memory have an important place in **Ellen Driscoll's** work. To Driscoll, memory is both historical and psychological. She deals with a "dream world," where body parts and other figures perform ghostly little dances, driven by magnetic forces. The viewer is invited to project his or her own script onto the action and to tap into personal history. Memory features in **Carol Hepper's** hide panels as well. The hide that covers the panels is drawn tightly over its skeleton, like skin drawn over the human skull. The panels contain fragments of objects that refer to body parts, only partially revealed. They resemble a dimly remembered thought, a fleeting impression of something that has happened in one's past, only partially recalled.

Elana Herzog and **James Sadek** use existing material to construct complex structures, with very different results. Herzog's construction is like a giant tinker toy made of discarded furniture such as metal shelving and chairs. But this is furniture that does not invite people — one cannot sit on the chairs, and the shelves are askew. The chairs, rather than serving people, become people themselves, inhabiting an uninhabitable and uncomfortable environment. Herzog's work exudes an atmosphere of disturbance and imbalance. Sadek's assemblages, on the other hand, are inviting and accessible. They provoke an element of delight through the idiosyncratic combination of disparate elements. The structures are transparent; they encourage the viewer to come nearer and chuckle. **Robin Hill's** forms originate from biology and human archeology. They allow for a personal interpretation, triggering different symbols for each viewer. Hill's forms are in a state of suspended animation, they could mutate at any moment. These figures, constituting a kind of human family, are driven from the inside and might expand or contract like the human body.

Frederieke S. Taylor

Ellen Driscoll

In these pieces there is a delicately calibrated barrier established by magnetic force. Forces of both attraction and repulsion are held in a tense equilibrium. There is a constant suggestion that if the threshold is crossed, a dynamic disruption will occur. The force field, largely invisible, is made only partially manifest by the lines of force visible in the iron filings. The subtext of the piece refers to the way things are held or lost in memory by the charge of the intial event or by the charge of the present.

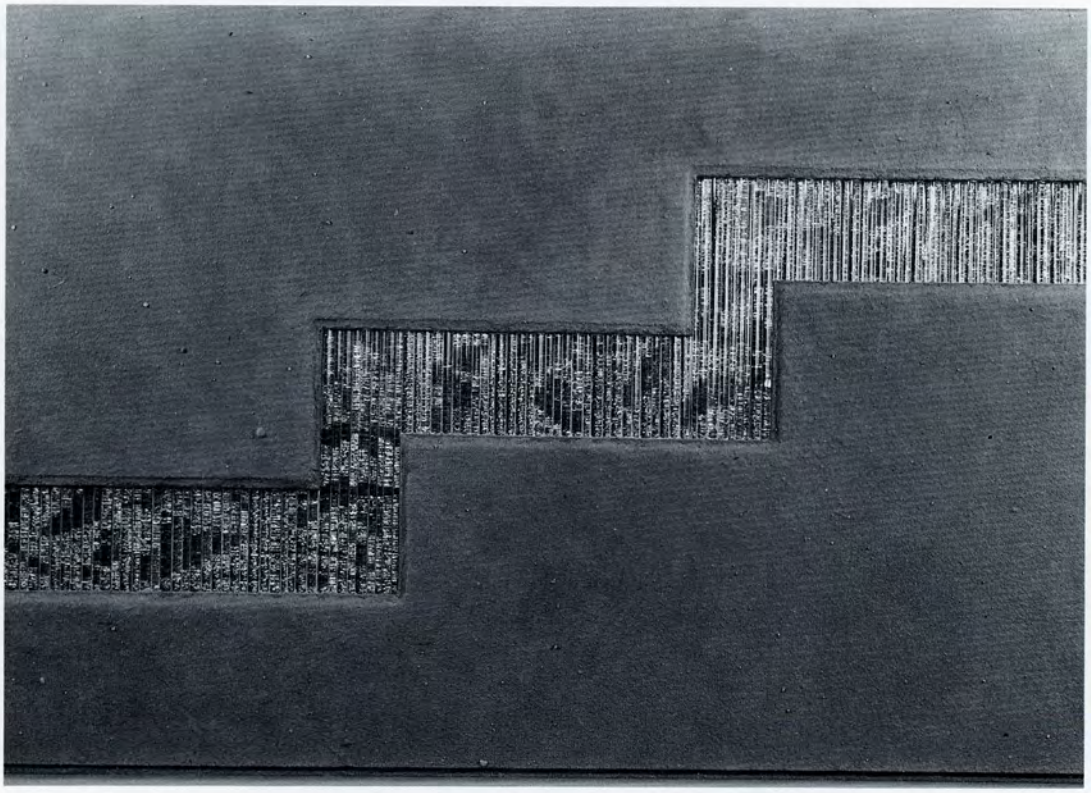
Untitled 1993
8 cast iron electromagnetic shoes on timers 12' H
bed of junk 6' L x 3' W x 4' H

Danita Geltner

The interaction of light is everything. Visual ambiguities play havoc with what is real and what is artificial.

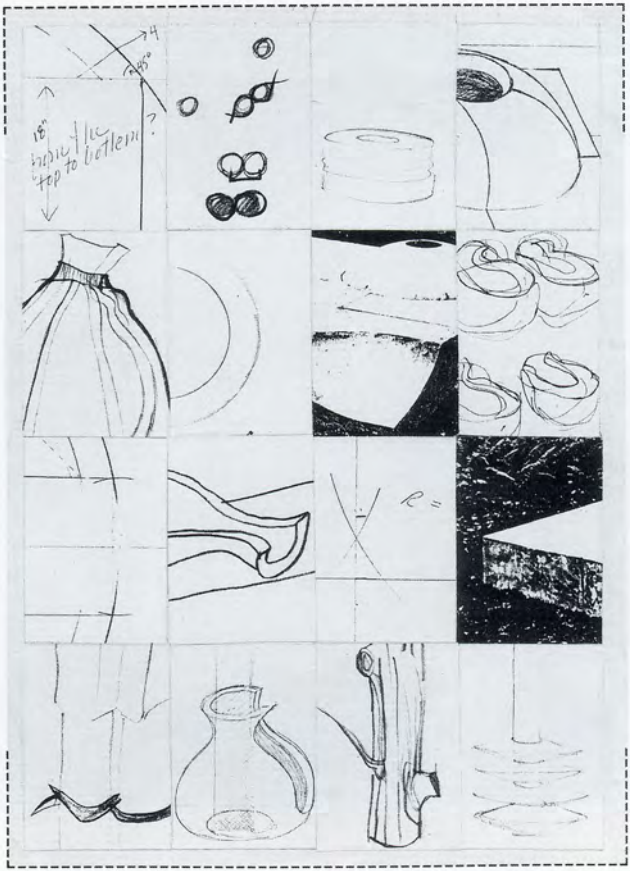
The landscape knows a continual process and at every stage something tangible remains, but just for a moment.

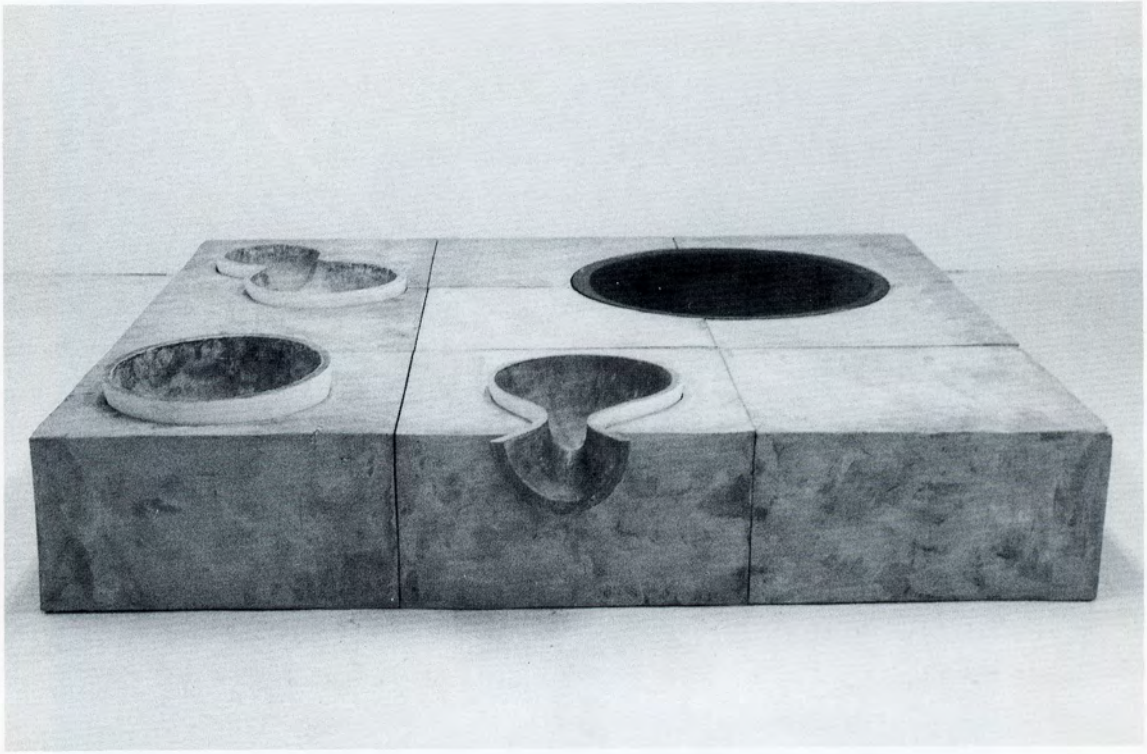
Documentation and inspiration, both forces, lead me; I visualize iconic formations.



Irrigation 1990
Arizona sand, plastic, extruded acrylic rods
59″ x 86″ x 3″

Nade Haley





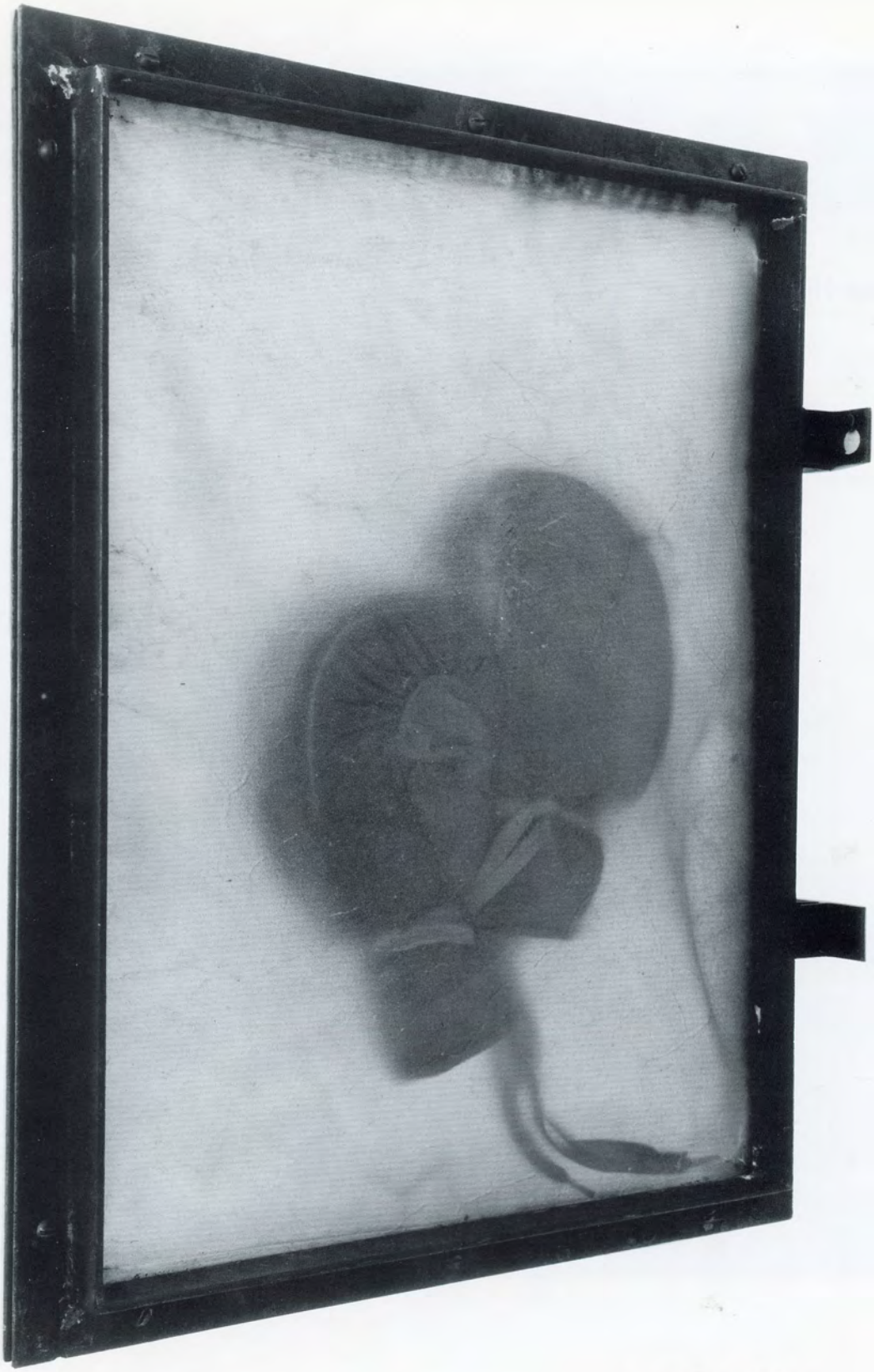
Untitled 1992
concrete & hydrocal
21" x 104" x 95"

Carol Hepper

The work I am exhibiting at 55 Ferris Street has evolved over the past 13 years. Through this period, I have explored the psychological metaphors of both the human and animal body, its structure, its functions, its cavities and their architectural implications. Using organic materials I have also explored the relationship between nature and culture.

In preparing this statement, I found a grant application I had written in 1981 while living in South Dakota. In it, I described my then current art making activities and how I would use the grant. "I initially find or process the materials I use in my sculpture: animal bones, skins, teeth, as well as tree limbs. I am interested in the source and history of these materials. What they were affects how I approach my work. I plan to develop sculpture with structural references to the body. I am interested in how a particular body cavity evokes a larger space more easily entered."

This statement is still descriptive of the general focus of my work, as I expand upon these psychological metaphores. In contrast to my earlier work, however, the found objects are now man-made. Works composed of objects such as boxing gloves or fan blades, can evoke natural and physical phenomena. Although man-made, they still reflect the influence of nature and our corporeal selves.



Heart Attack 1991
boxing gloves, hide, steel

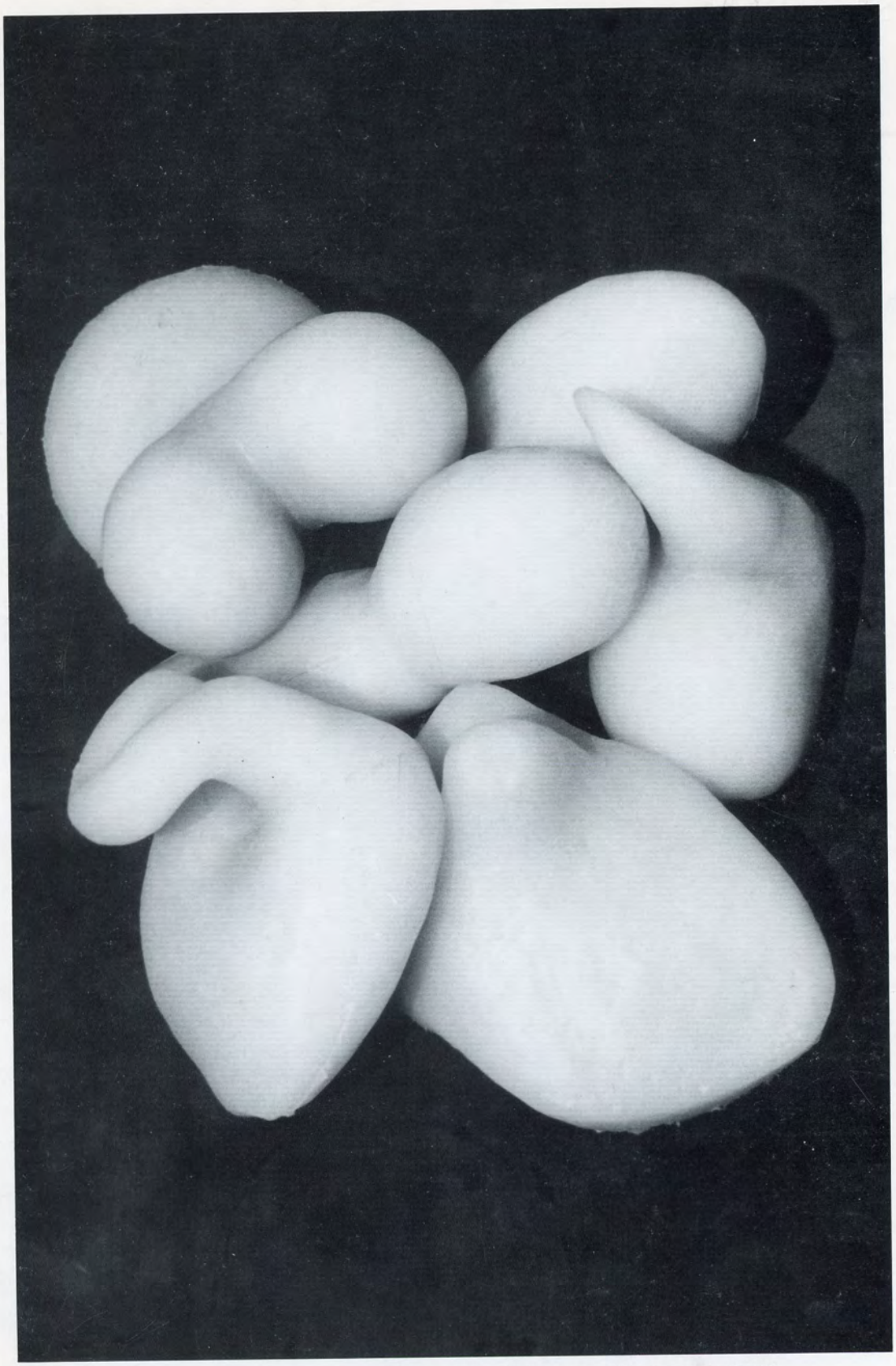
20" x 4" x 17"

Untitled #8 1991
steel shelving, fabric, chairs, plywood, bolt, newspaper
80" x 80" x 52"

Robin Hill

"Nothing explains the genesis of forms, nothing that is, except forms themselves and their encounters with other forms... it is therefore appropriate to denounce the old philosophical opposition between form and matter: Matter is not passive, it is active, and the finished work is born of an incessant exchange between matter and form... this dialectic can nowhere be seen more clearly than in the genesis of the work of art, in the activity that gives rise to it, traces of which remain in sketches, draft, plans, and abandoned projects."

Henri Focillon
The Life of Forms in Art
1934



Prototype for "The Sum of Its Parts," 1993
cast rubber, sheet rubber
6 elements: 10" x 10" x 10" each, dimensions variable

Martha Keller

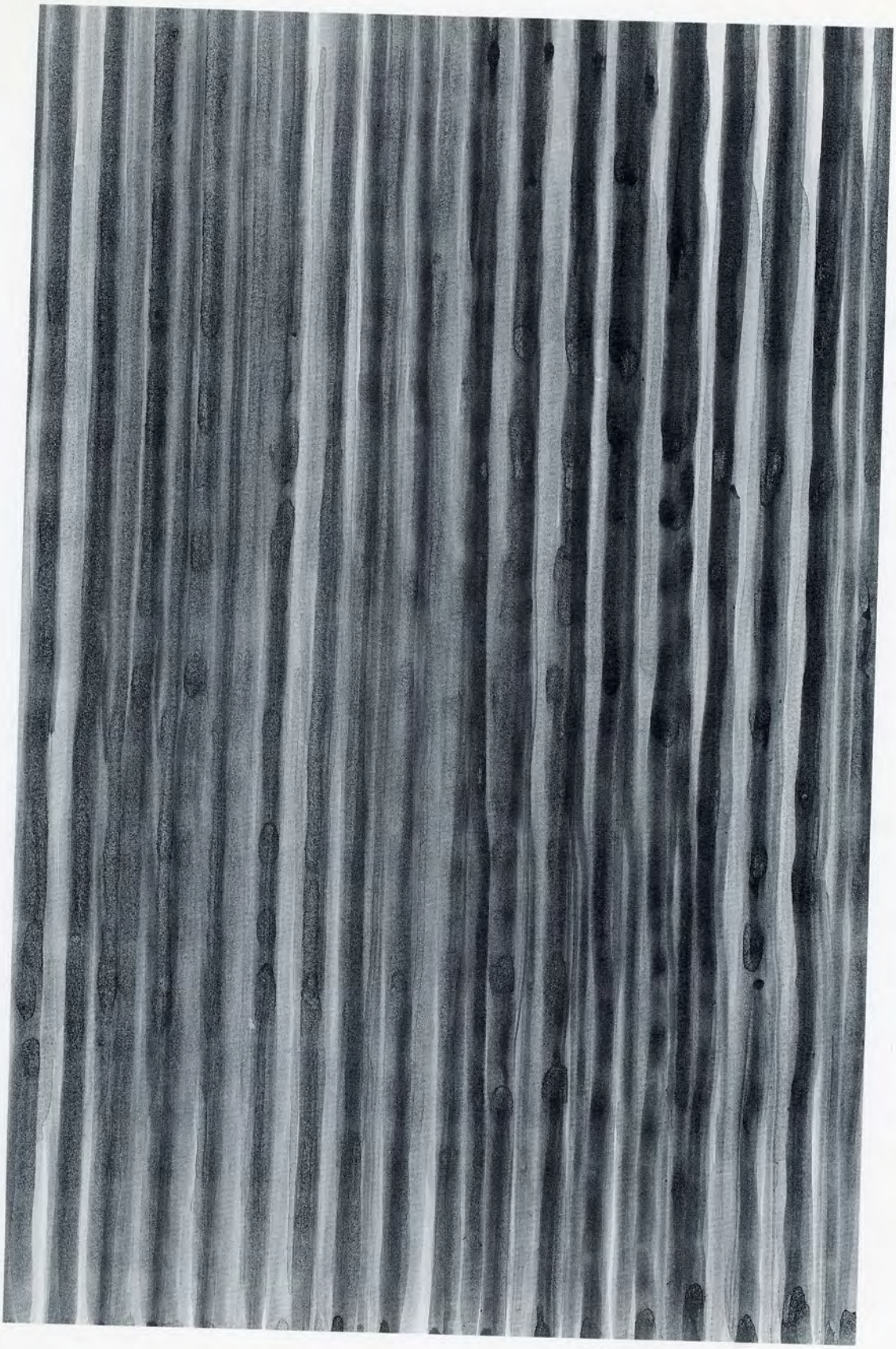
There is a layering of simultaneous realities:

First, the unprepared wall with the chance incidents of years of stain, smudge and paint films. This is the truth of place from which I start.

The painting is the next layer built up of vertical brush strokes floor to ceiling covering 12′ x 35′. I love the monumental awkwardness in such long vertical strokes made intimate by the small intervals of little brushes.

The changing light and shadow create the final layer reflected on the wall. The sun moves daily to pink in the southwest and seasonally around the building. The painted plane is dissolved by light and made evident by it like a scrim.

"La Fabra del Tempo" means "The Time-Maker(f.)" and also means "The Weather-Maker(f.)" in Italian. It is the 6th in an on-going series of "Fabra" paintings.



La Fabra del Tempo
India ink on paper, 12" x 9 1/2"
Actual size 35' x 12'

Creighton Michael

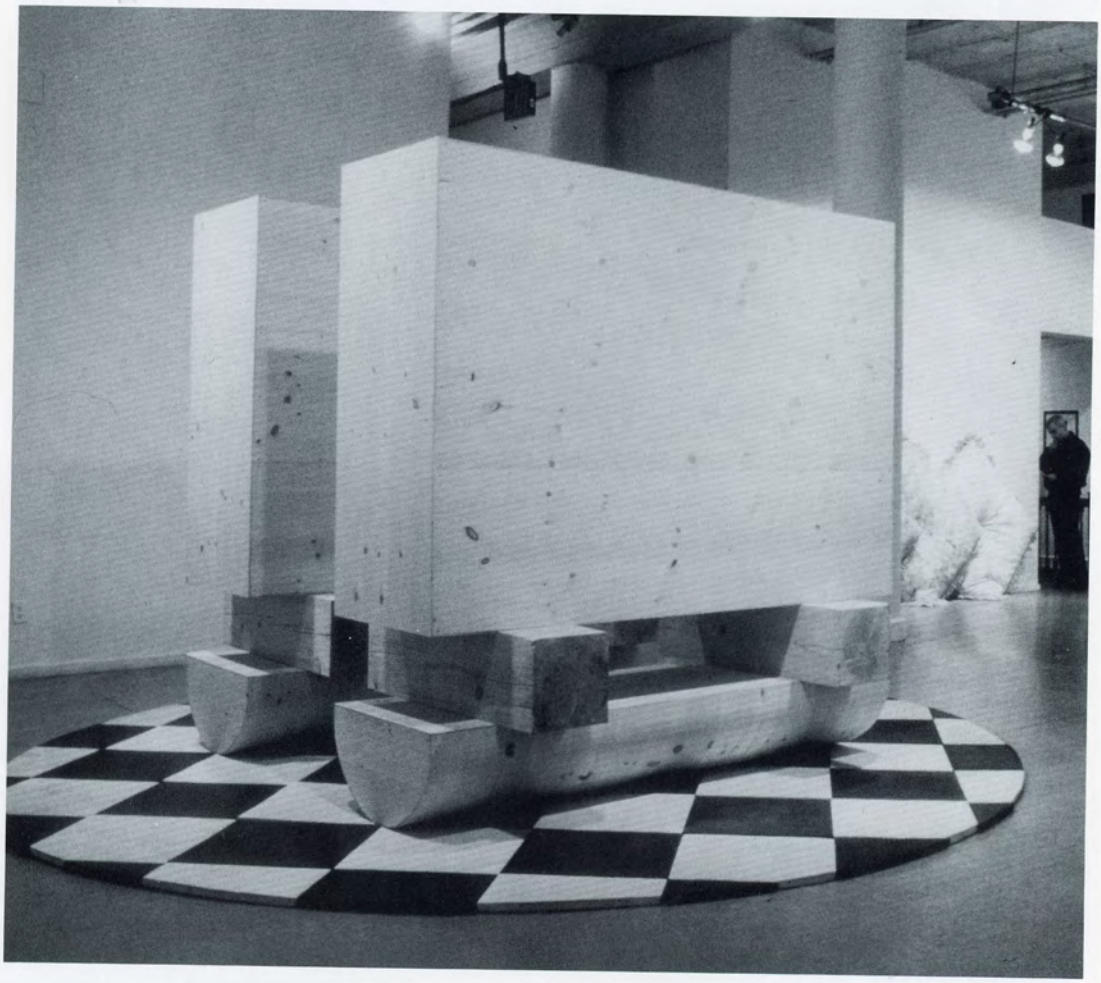
Drawing is the immediate visualization of an idea. A system which manifests an idea either by marks or action in a most direct process. Delineation of form, motion and/or time is the function of drawing.

Palace Map 1993
wood, plywood, shellac, graphite, paper
99" x 98" x 54"

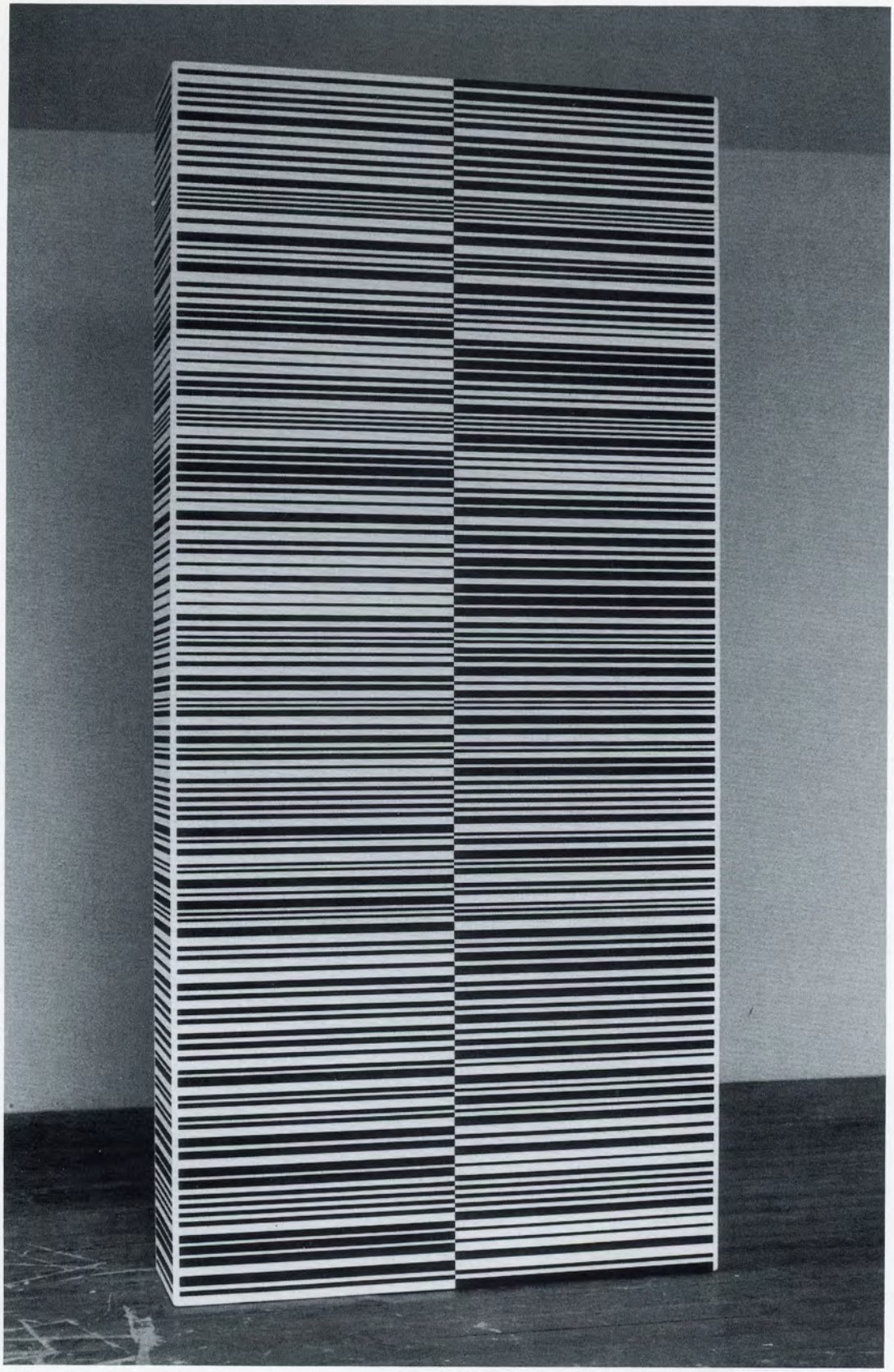
John Monti

For many years my work dealt with the anthropomorphic, a figuration of sorts using structure. Gradually the structure became a skeletal framework that was then "skinned" with plywood—in essence, making a sculpture that is essentially an enclosed void, a hollow box, a container.

Taking inference from various sources such as monuments, tomb sculpture, minimalist sculpture, and container shapes among others, I became increasingly interested in the ideas elicited by these references—their metaphoric, contemporary, and social implications.



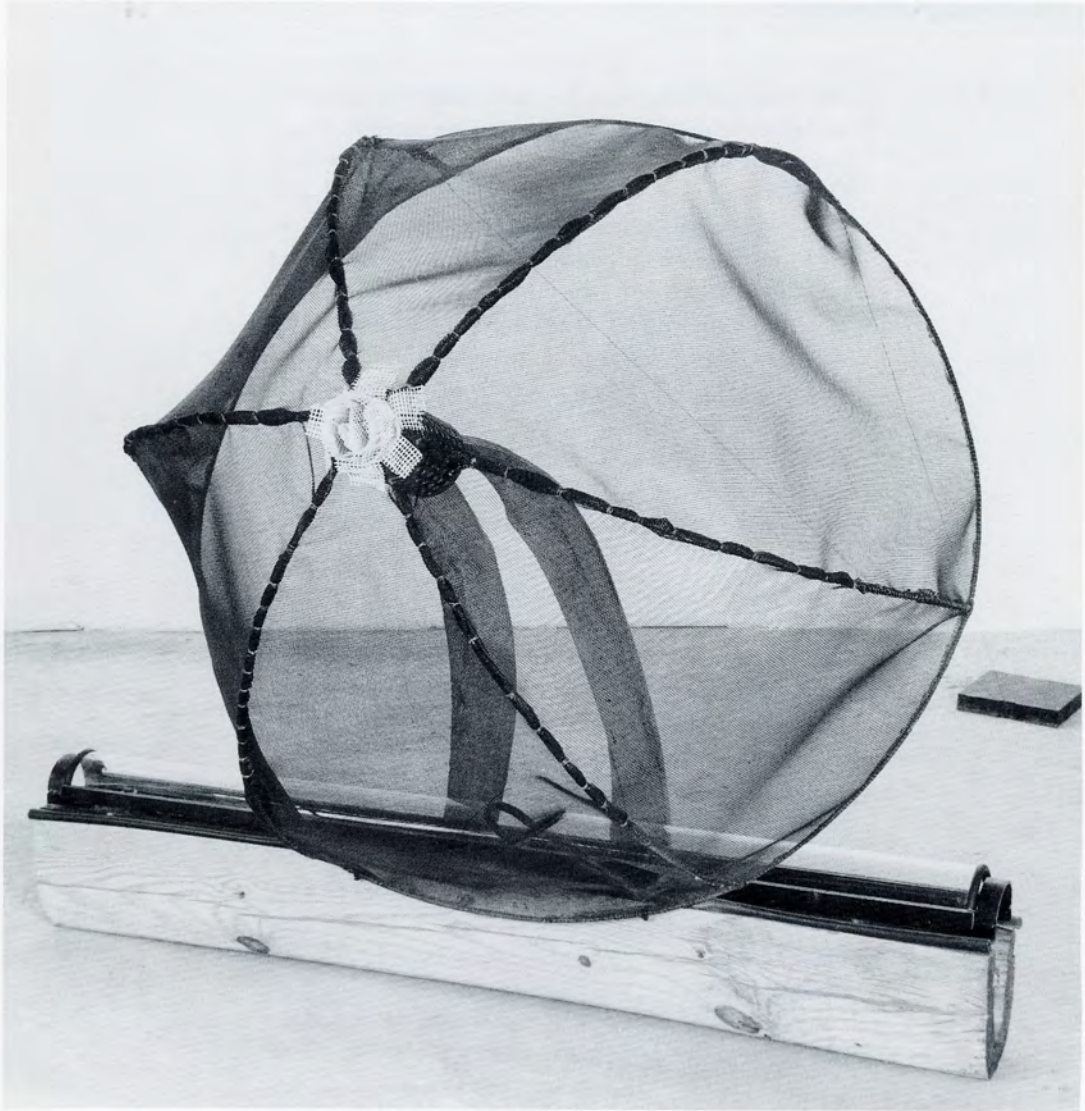
"Rocker Variation" 1991
pine plywood, fir timbers, cast cement tiles
86" x 156" x 156" (13')



Untitled 1992
vinyl and alkyd on birch plywood
104" x 48" x 13"

James Sadek

In my work I use materials, contextualizing them, in an effort to arrive at a visual narrative. Each piece grows out of the residue of an experience filtered through the process of its production. I try to weave form, intellect and intuition into the fabric of each piece to communicate an idea. The synthesis of the three is a sculpture that can be seen and interpreted on different levels.



Loam 1992
wood, plastic, steel, rubber, copper wire and gauze
66" x 60" x 126"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The three exhibitions at 55 Ferris Street have been a wonderful experience for us, and we want to thank everyone who has helped in making them possible. Our first thanks are for the artists, who have participated so enthusiastically in this adventure. With the third exhibition, twenty-nine different artists will have exhibited at 55 Ferris. It was the artists who generated all the energy and support for the shows, and each and every one of them did so in a great spirit of cooperation.

Our next thanks are for Greg O'Connell and Alan Schoenberg who provided us with the use of their magnificent space. They had the vision to let the artists use the space and let us go ahead with our plans, for which we are very grateful.

A beautiful catalog was designed and produced to accompany each exhibition. We want to thank Valerie Greco, Patricia Watkins, Nicholas Bernini, Jennifer Flynn, Brian Leister, and Catherine Bozzo for their invaluable contribution to this effort. The exhibitions will continue to have a long after-life because of the catalogs, which are essential to the program at Ferris Street.

We want to thank the artists who organized performances at 55 Ferris Street. Andrew Topolski arranged for performances by E.B.M.A., and Echolab Ensemble, Jan Kotik, Tom Kotik, Ed Pastorini at the opening of the first exhibition on May 30, 1992. Maggie Manetti who arranged the site specific dance performances on June 14, 1992. Carol Szymanski arranged for the music on her sculpture/instruments at the opening of 55 Ferris Street II on October 17, 1992, and Irene Hultman selected the performances for 55 Ferris Street III on March 14, 1993 with performers Kyle deCamp, Irene Hultman, Dennis O'Connor, Susan Rethorst and Vicky Shick. Our final thanks are for Nancy Princenthal for writing such a thoughtful essay for the catalog of 55 Ferris Street II.

Frederieke Taylor and Joseph Zito

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courtesy of Steven Rosenberg Gallery

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