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**Far Eastern philosophical influences on environmental art,
1967-1987**

Gelburd, Gail Enid, Ph.D.
City University of New York, 1988

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**FAR EASTERN PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ART,
1967-1987**

by

Gail Enid Gelburd

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Art History in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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1988

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Date



Chair of Examining Committee
Professor E.C. Goossen

Rose Carol Long
Executive Officer
Professor Rose Carol Long

Annette Juliano (rec)

Janice Leoshko (rec)

Marlene Park (rec)

Supervisory Committee
Dr. Annette Juliano
Dr. Janice Leoshko
Dr. Marlene Park

The City University of New York

ABSTRACT

EASTERN PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ART

BY

GAIL ENID GELBURD

Adviser: Professor Eugene C. Goossen

Environmental art has developed tangentially to the growth of the influence of Oriental philosophical ideas on American society. These two paths met and cross fertilized a new and vital art form.

This study explains a change in attitude towards form, by artists interested in transforming space into an experience. The dissertation analyzes the development of environmental art and the affect that Eastern philosophical ideas have had on this contemporary art form. Artists and writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Ernest Fenollosa, A. W. Dow, Mark Tobey, Ad Reinhardt, Herbert Bayer, Herbert Ferber, John Cage, Isamu Noguchi, Jack Kerouac, Alan Ginsberg, Carl Andre and Richard Serra are an important part of this study. They set the stage for the Environmental artists of 1966-1985 who are the main focus of this dissertation. These contemporary artists, Walter DeMaria, Patricia Johanson, Richard Long, David Nash, Michael Singer and James Turrell, searched for a new modus vivendi, and

were drawn to Zen and other popularized or Westernized versions of Eastern cultural traditions. They are six of the artists during this period who melded Eastern philosophy into a format relevant to the artist in contemporary Anglo-American society. When these Eastern cultures were transplanted into Western art, traditions of the Western culture were retained; there is a limit to the transplant that occurs. But studying, reading, looking, even misunderstandings or misperceptions, brought these artists to a juncture where cross-cultural transplantation occurred and fresh cultural values erupted. These artists sought to make the different traditions of the world their own. They digested so completely what they have seen, heard or read and translated it so creatively that it is sometimes difficult to trace specific sources of influence on their work. However, the artists exposure to this preponderance of the Far East is undeniable although not always specifically identifiable. The critical question examined in this study is whether those initially foreign ideas have become decisive in the artists' work and form a cohesive unit.

PREFACE

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I would like to dedicate this book to my father, Sidney Alexander Gelburd who led me to excel and to my husband, Joel Meyers for putting it all in perspective.

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INTRODUCTION

History, I think, is probably like a pebbly beach, a complicated mass, secretively three dimensional. and very hard to chart what lies up against what and why and how deep.

What tends to get charted is what looks manageable, most recognizable (and usually linear) like the wiggly row of flotsam and driftwood, and stubborn tar deposits.

--Richard Wentworth

History tends to be circular versus linear and currents are not always the most immediately obvious; the deepest currents are sometimes blurred. Contemporary history is the most complicated to chart because so little of the debris of our everyday society has been cleared away. When we begin to wipe the slate clear the pieces, the individual incidents seem to glisten and reveal new things about the course of our recent history. The period of history which constitutes the twenty years (1967-1987) was robust, innovative, marked by political and social upheaval; ideas from the right and the left collided, crossed, and the pendulum swung back and forth across time. In Art there was Pop, Op, Minimalism, Conceptualism, Modernism and Post-Modernism, or Pluralism. There were however, undercurrents in this period that tied art and society together in ways that are not necessarily at first obvious.

Look at recent history as circular and similar to the image of the T'ai C'hi -- (⊙) one current moves in and the other

complements it and takes over, as they rotate they form a cohesive circle .

Picture 1967 -1987 as several currents moving in at one time:

-- We create man-made environments with a flagrant disregard for nature. Shrinking our usable space, contaminating it, we search for solutions and viable alternatives.

-- The Korean war followed by the Vietnam/Cambodia/Laos conflict brought the Far Eastern cultures ever present to our TV screens.

--Japanese cars were the norm and most everything we owned was made in Taiwan or Hong Kong. Everything from Chinese cooking to D.T. Suzuki and Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance were best sellers.

-- the Beatles rock group adopted a little bit of the Far East in their music with sitars. Meditation, the flower child and a return to nature was but one of the many results of this influx.

--The art world seemed besieged by objects and rebelled against them. One more object in our overly materialized and commercialized society seemed hardly appropriate for this period in time. Artists had been searching for alternatives and developed what is now known as Performance art and (specifically relevant to this study)-- Environmental art.

--A period of interest in Haiku poetry, Frederick Kiesler, D.T. Suzuki, Alan Ginsburg, Tao Te Ching, Gyorgy Kepes, environmental psychology, Alan Watts, Jack Kerouac, Ad Reinhardt, Isamu Noguchi., Gary Snyder, Emerson, Thoreau, Mark Tobey, Zen ...

Caught in these currents many contemporary artists, particularly in the 1970s, moved to the inner reaches of the United States and explored a new way of seeing the world: philosophical ideas from the Far East became a critical part of this process. These artists created what might be called a Buddhist cave in a Southwestern desert-- an art that was intuitive and which incorporated nature as an integral component. They created works of art that were not just meant to be seen but to be perceived. Consciously and subconsciously artists during the fifteen years under discussion absorbed the ebb and flow of the currents noted above and emerged with an experiential art united by ideas rather than style. They transformed space, the traditional spectator, and the very vocabulary of Western art.

This dissertation analyzes Environmental art projects created after 1967 which were integral to the Far East. It explores the sources and development of these forms within the context of societal issues and art historical precepts. The art in this dissertation is classified not according to style, but according to ideas. The works of art have been selected because they reveal an affinity with major tenets of Asian philosophy; and become the "subject" of the art. Moreover, in each case the artist does not create an art in the environment but has moved beyond the objectness of art, and created a sense of presence that involves real space and time -- an art that is experienced as it is viewed.

The first chapters of the dissertation define the parameters,

differances between the major Asian philosophies which settled in the Far East. This study does not deal with all Asian philosophies but rather those ideas which came from India and Southwest Asia and were filtered through the Far East to Anglo-American society. . The major influence on the contemporary Environmental artists were the ideas found in the Far East and hence an overview of Taoism, Buddhism, and Zen in particular are given. The traditional gardens which grew specifically out of Taoism and Zen are also analyzed in order to set the path and form a context for understanding how environmental art relates to Far Eastern philosophical ideas. The historical and sociological section analyzes how this philosophy penetrated into the United States. It is shown that at different times throughout history the nature of the Far Eastern philosophical influence has differed. In the Nineteenth century the artist was attracted by the sheer novelty of the new forms; in the early Twentieth century a distinct aesthetic value was imported, and finally in Contemporary society the artist began to understand the quintessence of the Asian culture, although not necessarily the particular religion.¹

¹Chisaburoh F. Yamada, ed., Dialogue in Art: Japan and the West (Tokyo; Kodansha International, 1976) p.198
Few publications or scholars have addressed these issues. However, David Clarke's recent study (The Influence of Oriental Thought on Post World War II American Painting and Sculpture, Courtauld Inst., 1983) offers a beginning for an analysis of " the trend" that "Oriental Thought" has been important to the works of Anglo-American artists. Clarke analyzes the works of artists such as Mark Tobey, Ibram Lassaw, Seymour Lipton, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Ad Reinhardt and Isamu Noguchi. These artists imported the aesthetic values and pictorial

In chapter 3, Environmental art is defined as one that involves, activates, stimulates, confronts and contributes to the site as well as to the public's perception of that site. The sources for Environmental art are shown as being as far reaching as Nineteenth century American landscape painting, the Vietnam war and Isamu Noguchi. Artists such as Robert Irwin, Robert Morris, Carl Andre and Richard Serra came from a Minimalist aesthetic and moved into open spaces, while also revealing an affinity with Eastern philosophical ideas. These artists had great influence on artists who would increasingly work with the land. They gave form to the surrounding space and led the next group of artists to the "cult of emptiness". The artists represented in this section began to move out of the frame and off the pedestal in order to confront the viewer/ participant and unlock our innate powers of perception. These early " Spatial" projects led to the "Environmental Projects" in this study

The second section of the dissertation deals directly with those artists who during the period 1967-1987 created an art form divorced from the object and related to philosophical notions found in Eastern philosophy. Several artists have been chosen to serve as samples. Just as a fabric swatch reflects

elements into their work, while the artists of the next generation (the subject of this study) have concentrated on the basic philosophical ideas in order to create their own art form. The artists of the period 1967-1987 were investigating the core of Eastern Philosophy. Their work embodies the basic principles of Zen rather than any of the surface imagery. Their work explicates that Oriental thought has finally found its way into the very fabric of Anglo-American art and creativity.

the bolt of fabric, so may certain works of art reflect trends and affinities within contemporary art. The artists who are the focus of this study-- Richard Long, David Nash, Walter De Maria, Patricia Johanson, James Turrell and Michael Singer-- have borrowed from the Zen mind and used nature to create their own distinctly Western art form. Each of the artists are unique in their approach and yet each have sought to establish a relationship with nature, to learn from its history, its mythology, and become again a part of its ecological system. Nash, DeMaria, Turrell created meditative places which combine natural elements in order to create a contemporary correlative to the Buddhist cave. Johanson, Long, Turrell focus our attention on specific aspects of the land in much the same way that a Japanese rock garden does. Singer, DeMaria, Johanson sought to reconcile a balance between man and nature, man and technology, a reaffirmation of oneness with the universe. Hence, what is unique about their work compared with more traditional Western art forms, is the very nature of the aesthetic experience.

CHAPTER I

Some Aspects of Eastern Philosophy Relevant To Contemporary
Art In The West

If the strangest things come together in one place, at one time, in a strange similarity, wonderful unities arise.

---Novalis²

I have often thought that if the West Coast had been open to Aesthetic influence from Asia, as the East Coast was to Europe, what a rich nation we would be.

---Mark Tobey³

Cultural contact between the East and West has increased rapidly in recent decades. We have come to realize that knowledge of ideas and beliefs of peoples from outside our own culture is

²quoted in Terree Randall, Jung and Abstract Expressionism, Hempstead, N.Y.: 1986, p. 1

³Mark Tobey, " Japanese Traditions and Modern Art", College Art Journal, Fall 1958, p.21

essential for the civilized man. The West has become more curious about Eastern thought and ways, and has dedicated more attention to them. Carl Gustav Jung wrote: "It is not surprising if the religious need, the believing mind, and the philosophical speculations of the educated European are attracted to the symbols of the East, just as once before the heart and mind of men of antiquity were gripped by Christian ideas." ⁴ In our contemporary society the West coast (as well as the rest of the nation) has become as open to Asian influence as the East coast has traditionally been to Europe.

The Indian mind is the primary source for Far Eastern philosophical thought and is characterized by its emphasis on inward reality, beauty and spiritual culture. In India, philosophy and religion are inseparable because both are concerned with a search for an Ultimate Reality. Indian philosophic thought emphasizes intuition rather than reason.

Buddhism began in India and then spread to China, Tibet, Korea, and Japan. The two main precepts of Buddhism are Wisdom and Compassion. They are guided by the triple formula of Dukkha (suffering) Anicca (Impermanence) Anatta (Non-Self).⁵ According to Buddhism, impermanence is universal and exists in all things.

All things are involved in becoming, in continuation, in change. Everything is becoming, in process (process is

⁴Carl Gustav Jung, Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, quoted in Hoover, Japanese Culture, p. 223

critical), never static.

Buddhism views the soul of man as void. The identity of an individual consists only of moments of consciousness surrounding the Void. " ...Like a river which maintains its constant form of identity, although in each moment every drop of water in the river flows and never remains static."⁵ Nirvana is described in terms of Nothingness, Tathata and sunyata. Tathata (suchness) is the ultimate spiritual essence. Tathata is to see things as they are in their self nature, to understand them as they are in themselves, without a division between subject and object. The aim is to be able to see things with a pure and clear mind. "When the mind is quiet and peaceful, it is like the flame of a candle in the absence of the wind."⁶ Sunyata, emptiness, is the middle ground between opposites, yes and no, existence and non-existence.

The Heart Sutra, which became very popular in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s proposes two main precepts:
 -the universe is really Sunyata (sunya -void, ta -in state of (hence in a state of being void; the goal is to become one with the void, to be nothing and yet permeate everything
 - the most critical elements of life are karuna compassion

⁵Ananda Coomaraswamy, Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism, (N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1964)p.98-99

⁶ Edward Conze, Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, (N.Y.: Harper and Row), p.100

prajna paramita - the perfection of wisdom?

Taoism began in China and is derived from Tao which is the great Void that contains all energy. In Chinese Thought Tao, translated as "Way", occupies the place of the highest reality. Lao Tzu was the legendary founder of Taoism and wrote Tao Te Ching (The Book of the Way and Its Virtue). Subsequent works by Chuang Tzu's writings further developed and elucidated these ideas. Taoism strives for wholeness, a union of ideal and real, heaven and earth. In Taoism, Tao is the mysterious essence of the universe and yet is beyond the universe. Tao is both being and Non-Being. Within the Tao is the division of opposites , the yin and yang, (feminine/masculine, darkness/ lightness, negative/ positive, passive/ aggressive) All things originated from Tao and all things are produced in the interplay of the two forces of yin and yang. Wu-Wei "non-action" as in Nature, is spontaneous and effortless like a river."The sage penetrates the mystery of the order of Heaven and Earth, and comprehends the principles of nature. Thus the perfect man does nothing, and the great sage originates nothing; that is to say, they merely contemplate the universe."⁷ The favorite simile in Taoism is of water as an

⁷H.G. Creel, Chinese Thought (N.Y.: The New American Library, Mentor, 1964) p. 90

example of wu-wei. "Water is of all things most yielding and can overwhelm (rock) which is of all things most hard." (Tao Te Ching, chapt. 43, p. 21) P'u the uncarved Block, is the other important simile. It denotes the natural state of being, simplicity, purity and infinite potentiality. These Taoist concepts of contemplation and intuition had a significant influence on Zen Buddhism.

ZEN is probably the best known type of Buddhism in the West. It originated in China as Ch'an but became Zen when it was adopted by Japan. After the arrival of Ch'an in China and Korea, (pronounced Zen in Japan), this philosophy rapidly combined with or superseded many of the prevailing philosophies and or religions to become the one that seems to appeal most to the Modern Western mind. Zen is a combination of Buddhism and Taoism and the principles noted above. Zen or Ch'an is comprised of concepts from Buddhism and Taoism. The contemporary Westerners, particularly the artists, see Zen as a montage of these ideas, pulling out the elements that unify them and seem most relevant for their work. In contrast to the Western rationalistic approach, Zen, in particular, stresses silent meditation and intuitive wisdom, transcending ordinary rationality as the key to enlightenment. Zen teaches nothing but points the way. Zen places absolute faith in a person's inner being and it rejects external authority. Zen aims at the awakening of the mind or "Buddha nature" in each person; Zen emphasizes self-effort for mental discipline, and

stresses a mystical union within oneself.

Zen cannot be apprehended through intellectual means it must be experienced: one knows it by not knowing it. "Zen is akin to pure introspective mysticism. Unless we enter into mystic experiences by direct participation we remain outside, turn and twist as we may" Eugen Herigel, Zen and the Art of Archery, N.Y., 1953, p. 9. Zen advises its followers to have direct dealings with their objects, whatever they may be. In Zen there is no separation between subject and object. The aim of Zen is to restore the experience of original inseparability, to return to the original state of purity and transparency.

"If you want to understand Zen, understand it right away without deliberation, without turning your head this way or that . For while you are doing this, the object you have been seeking is no longer there."⁸

Mu is also nothingness, but it is part of our essential self. The Nothingness which was sought is not something that evokes loneliness, or despair or isolation but contemplation. It is like the Hub of a wheel embodying all the force, energy and power - it defines the nothingness. Mu is in nature, but mu is formless. It is the gaps, intervals between thoughts that are reality."In order to be awake to the mind of "Mu", that is to Reality we must first give up our attachment to the conscious

⁸DT Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 360

self which makes us blind to the real self". Reality is beauty itself; it is the essential self. Beauty reveals itself "when the outside and the inside, the subject and the object, become one with the essential self."⁹

Satori is the realization of the essential self. In order to reach this true self one must eliminate the remnants of ones ego. The essential self contains all of the past, present and the future. The past, present, and future are merely states of our conscious mind "we are not in a world of time, but we are time makers." ¹⁰

Characteristically, the Zen mind pays careful attention to the most minute things. The elimination of the unnecessary is achieved by Zen in its intuitive grasp of final reality. Simplicity is an obvious quality of Zen art, to convey the impression of disciplined restraint, of having held something in reserve, a glimmer of the artist's power. Zen art always seems spontaneous or impulsive, never contrived. It is marked by understatement, restraint. It does not yield all its secrets in the first viewing, exemplified by this Haiku:

A little frog
Riding on a banana leaf,
Trembling.
Kikaku (1660-1707)

⁹Shoei Ando, Zen and American Transcendentalism, (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1970), p.30

¹⁰Shoei Ando

There is a very strong relationship between Zen and Nature. Nature must be paid its fullest respect. We must treat Nature not as an object to conquer and turn wantonly to our human service, but as a friend, as a fellow being, who is destined like ourselves to Buddhahood. Zen wants us to meet Nature as a friendly, well meaning agent whose inner being is thoroughly like our own, always ready to work in accord with our legitimate aspirations. Nature is never our enemy standing against us in a threatening attitude; it is not a power which will crush us if we do not try to crush or bind it into our service.¹¹ It is the endless change and flux of man's environment. " ... if Nature is to be loved, it must be caught while moving.... Let us destroy all artificial barriers we put up between Nature and ourselves, for it is only when they are removed that we see into the living heart of Nature and live with it"¹². The arts influenced by Zen seek to penetrate beyond the perceptions of the rational mind and its supporting senses, to show not nature's surface, but its essence.

Zen Buddhism has had significant influence on Eastern culture, in general. Zen ideas are an integral part of Haiku, drama, painting, Bushido (the Way of the Warrior), archery, Judo, Karate, and tea ceremony. All of these arts emphasize the concentration of the mind toward the identification of mind and object and the harmony of mind and body."The right art," cried

¹¹DT Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, p.351

¹²DT Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, p., 361

the Master, "is purposeless, aimless!"¹³

Zen arts play with perception, and remind us that there is more to reality than what immediately meets our five senses. Ultimately we must try to transcend them and art is there to guide us. Zen culture for centuries and continuing today in the West, tries to bring us in touch with a portion of ourselves we avoid -- our non-rational, nonverbal side. Zen art deliberately tries to force our mind to move beyond the surface forms. The art must be internalized. It depends as much on the perception of the viewer/ participant as it does on its own inherent qualities.

The potter for the tea ceremony wants the Zen connoisseur to understand what he has done: to see the clay, to feel and admire its texture, to appreciate the form and the glaze, to draw one's attention to the original elements and a process which is made to seem effortless. In the haiku, simple lines capture an intersection of the timeless and ephemeral. Love in Haiku is directed toward nature as much as toward a man or woman. A flower arrangement is to a large garden what a haiku is to an epic poem -- a symbolic abbreviated form which suggests the larger world. Wabi (understatement) and sabi (the patina of time) can be found in the arts. Zen architecture relates indoor and outdoor spaces, shows a unique sense for handling spaces and using natural materials in a simplified manner which makes it seem timeless. It transcends the utilitarian and promotes

¹³Herrigel, p.34

introspection. Zen quickly became the driving force behind most cultural and aesthetic developments but the Zen garden most clearly exemplifies the Zen principles and most clearly relates to Contemporary Environmental art.

With the rise of Zen in medieval Japan, gardens became deliberately symbolic of the human quest for inner understanding. The gardens were reminiscent of Sung landscape paintings. Zen artists captured the reverence for nature which was a cornerstone of Zen philosophy and the gardens were a way to condense the universe into a single span. The rocks were especially chosen for the garden and represent mountains and crags. The gardener looked not so much for odd shapes but ones that seemed authoritative and monumental. Each possessed a weathered texture displaying centuries of wear. Ryoan-ji, for example, (fig.2) goes beyond a symbolic representation of a landscape to a distillation of the universe. The empty areas both emphasize the stones and invite the mind to expand in the cosmological infinity that they suggest. The interaction between form and space is important. Evoking a sense of infinity in a strictly confined space, is a lesson in Zen nothingness and non-attachment. It expresses a timelessness inspiring contemplation.

The planners of these gardens spent days contemplating various sites, in different weather conditions at various times of the day. They spent time just walking through the site

allowing it to suggest things.¹⁴ Their task was to create a garden which suggests rather than tells. It must be completed by the viewer, interpreted by the participant and be a place for contemplation.

A garden is rarely designed to be seen all at once or from one viewpoint. Rather, like the Sung landscape -- scroll painting -- which is to be opened in small sections and contemplated, the viewer slowly follows a path. The garden seems to be ever changing because each viewer brings his own perception of it. In The Book Of The Tea, Kakuzo Okakuro stressed that true beauty could only be discovered when the viewer completed the incomplete.¹⁵ The garden must "rivet" your attention until you seem to become a part of it -- you fill the empty space. "The vacant space of the garden, like silence, absorbs the mind, frees it of petty detail, and serves as a visual guide -- a means for penetrating through the 'realm of multitudes'".¹⁶ It is the forms, the rocks at Ryoan-ji that define the emptiness. Without them we have no point of reference. The spokes or the outer rim of a wheel realizes the hub or empty space of the wheel, similarly sounds define silence. White expanses in a painting, a pause in poetry, a break in a dance are pregnant with experiences. The empty spaces at Ryoan-ji do not evoke loneliness

¹⁴Langdon Warner, "Gardens", The World of Zen, N.Y.: Vintage Books, p. 103

¹⁵ quoted in David H. Engel, Japanese Gardens For Today, (Vermont: Tuttle Co., 1959)p. 13

¹⁶Warner, p. 105

and despair, nothing is missing or needs to be filled. It is a space left for introspection, contemplation. It is, in more concrete form what was described earlier as sunyata. "...the garden is a " visual koan." It remains in the mind, and, if it can be likened to anything...it is the mind." 17

According to D.T. Suzuki, all the philosophy of the East is crystallized in Zen¹⁸. These are the ideas that came to the West and infiltrated American culture during our contemporary times.

Japanese Gardens, and a brief explanation of the gardens, brings many of these principles into a clearer light. Ideas about the world as ever changing, comprised of opposites and yet with a goal of unity and harmony are found in the garden. The unity which is found in these gardens is because the garden does not avoid opposites but rather balances them. As in the Taoist teachings of the Tao Te Ching, it is the balance of the yin and yang.¹⁹ Landscape art seeks to represent that unity of opposites. The Zen garden stresses self-reliance and discipline. Enlightenment comes not from outside but rather from within and captures the essence of nature. These principles are paramount to an understanding of Zen and Zen gardens. Marked by stark

¹⁷Warner, p. 111

¹⁸Yong Choon Kim, p.120

¹⁹In fact, the Chinese word for landscape is made up of the Chinese characters for mountain (yang) and water (yin). The garden allows the viewer/participant to discover something very elemental in nature and become One with nature.

simplicity, the gardens focus on a few carefully placed forms. These forms, as in Ryoan-ji Garden, become the microcosm of the macrocosm, they are associated with history and the ultimate meaning of the universe. "Each age sees what it is prepared to discover."²⁰ In our age the Environmental artist has discovered these gardens anew and found a true source for his kind of art.

The contemporary environmental artist seeks to eliminate the object and leave the viewer, eliminate the body so that only a shadow remains for contemplation. The lesson learnt from Zen is to experience rather than just see and analyze. Contemporary environmental art, this study will show, does just this. It forces us to experience the art from within ourselves, to perceive it is to participate in it in order to complete the work. It exists as art only as we exist within it. The art works are the Koan -- the unanswerable questions that are posed -- questions that can only be answered through experiences in time and space. They require intuitive answers rather than logical rationalizations and see the source as Asian philosophical ideas, particularly those from the Far East. They are generally unconcerned about which idea has been derived from which philosophy but see them as merging into what they tend to call Zen. These ideas have inspired them to create, through a limited, controlled format, an illustration of what they perceive of as the totality of the universe; to create a Void which evokes contemplation of the Totality of the universe.

²⁰Warner p. 104

CHAPTER 2
A CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE INFLUX OF EASTERN PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS
INTO AMERICA

"2500 years after I have passed away into Nirvana, the Highest Doctrine will become spread in the country of the red-faced people.

-Shakyamuni Buddha to the goddess Vimala as given in Bu-tson's History of Buddhism

"...there is an orientalism in the most restless pioneer, and the farthest west is but the farthest east."

-Henry David Thoreau,

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers

The contemporary artists' interest in Eastern philosophical ideas was nurtured by a gradual influx of scholars, literature, and art into the United States for over a century. Indeed, Shakyamuni Buddha had prophesied of the spread of Buddhism and the doctrines that lead a practitioner to Nirvana.²¹ In the Twentieth Century this concept of inward exploration, of selfhood and the path towards Enlightenment has become popularized and (sometimes even vulgarized) within the United States. Evidence suggests that by the mid-nineteenth century Orientalism had crossed the Pacific and the Atlantic and was found on New World

²¹Shakyamuni Buddha to the goddess Vimala, as given in Bu-ston's History of Buddhism

shores.

Thoreau translated and published one of the first mahayana sutras in America and came to realize, " what the Orientals mean[t] by contemplation."²² D.T. Suzuki "the first patriarch of American Zen " came to America and settled in the United States at the turn of the Twentieth century. World wars moved people around the world and lessened Westerners' hold on their traditional cultural, moral and religious beliefs. By the nineteen-sixties formal Zen practice was available throughout the United States and self-discovery became a mass phenomenon²³. In the nineteen-seventies Tibetan Buddhists, having crossed the Himalayas on foot arrived here by jet. Wars fought in the Far East brought us more information about Eastern cultures, while Americans at home picked up a variety of Eastern philosophical baggage in the states and began to travel more frequently to Japan and Southeast Asia. Now it is for the historian to see how these ideas may have manifested themselves in our culture and what new forms have been derived from this new state of awareness. Has the doctrine been spread and have the artists assimilated the ideas into their own work?

I

1775- 1893 -- The Design Influence

Asian contact with the West has existed since Ancient times,

²²The Dial, 1854 quoted in Rick Fields, How the Swans Came To The Lake (Co.: Shambhala Publications, 1981), p358

²³Timothy Leary, Changing My Mind, (N.J.: Prentice Hall 1982), p. 101-102

however there have been three major phases of Oriental influence on the West in the modern Western world.

- 1- the European Baroque/Rococo period (late seventeenth century) until the early nineteenth century
- 2- the mid nineteenth century (when Japan was reopened to foreign contact and trade) until the outbreak of World War II and
- 3- from 1945 to the present

Prior to the mid Nineteenth Century, Westerners admired and collected Eastern objects such as Chinese porcelains and bronzes, but Western appreciation of Eastern art was not widespread and had little influence on the fine arts. These decorative art objects were incorporated into the interior designs of the Baroque and Rococo period. The objects were regarded as new, exotic and extravagant. However, it was not until the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth century that Westerners began to acquire a real appreciation of Oriental design. In 1775 Carl Peter Thurnberg, a Swedish naturalist, went to Nagasaki, Japan, and working with the Dutch who controlled Japanese trade, began one of the first European collections of Japanese art. ²⁴ Dutch sea captains soon followed Thurnberg's example and by 1806 were exporting Japanese art objects. ²⁵

²⁴ Thurnberg's collection included the works of such artists as Harunobu and Koryusai., J. A. Michener, The Floating World (N.Y. : Random House: 1954) p. 238

²⁵Clay Lancaster, The Japanese Influence on America (N.Y.: Walton Rawls Publication, 1963) p. 36

The relationship between Europe and Japan in the late nineteenth century was complex and fairly extensive. In 1856 Felix Braquemond discovered Japanese prints; a designer for Sevres and Haviland porcelains he admired Hokusai's Mangwa when it was used as wrapping paper! In Paris, Samuel Bing was amassing a large collection of Japonisme, in England, Liberty opened his first shop specializing in Japanese goods. In 1856 the U S Congress for the Department of the Navy published a volume entitled Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas in 1853-1854 under the Command of Commodore Perry, US Navy, and Kinnihan Cornwallus published a book on Admiral Perry's trip to Japan, Two Journeys to Japan . Once A Week, a British periodical popular in America published articles on Japan and Japanese prints during the 1850s and 1860s. Thus in the 1860s , Japan reopened its doors to the world, and the subsequent flow of decorative art objects as well as prints and paintings had a marked affect on the Western art world. The Ukiyo-e prints, (fig. 1) in particular, showed the Western world an alternative rendering of the physical world, a new approach to nature, a new concept of beauty. Japanese art had already come to the attention of Bostonians in Japanese picture books that the architect and painter Edward C. Cabot bought during 1855-1860. John La Farge (the artist) and Henry Walters of Baltimore purchased Japanese objects in Paris as early as the

1860s²⁶. La Farge and the renowned critic, James Jackson Jarves, wrote extensively in the 1870s about Japanese art. The Japanese Mission sent to ratify the treaty between Japan and the United States participated in a parade on Broadway, inspiring Walt Whitman to write the "Errand Bearers" and several minor plays in 1860.²⁷ In 1861 Japanese Fragments was written by Sherard Osborne while Queen Victoria sent Sir Rutherford Atcock to Japan to purchase Japanese art for England. Atcock published several articles on the subject in the Art Journal during the same year. The 1862 Exposition in London brought public acclaim for the Japanese exotica, promoted by the opening of La Porte Chinoise in Paris and The Oriental Warehouse in London. The Paris Exposition of 1867 presented even more metalwork, pottery, lacquerware, brocades, fans, carved enamels and prints from the Orient. Richard Muther notes in the History of Modern Painting that, "the International Exposition of 1867 brought Japan still more into fashion, and from this year must be dated the particular influence of the West upon the East, and the East upon the West." Manet filled his notebooks with sketches of Japanese prints, Tiffany imported Japanese craftsmen, and the American expatriate painter, James Abbott McNeil Whistler, was not only collecting Japanese art but was also writing about it. Winslow Homer and many other American artists who visited Europe

²⁶Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, Winslow Homer (N.Y.: Bramhall House, 1961) p. 100

²⁷ Lancaster, p. 256

during this time brought back Japonisme with them .As Michener recorded, "There was no artist working in Paris who could have remained unaware of the Japanese influence." ²⁸ Indeed, artists such as Whistler and Manet were captivated by not only prints but also the capsulized view in Japanese painting. Toulouse-Lautrec seemed to understand the power of the brush in sumi Japanese ink paintings; a few strokes capture the essence of the figure. The Nabis in France would go even further. Aspects of the Japanese decorative art which influenced the Art Nouveau style penetrated the works of Gustav Klimt of Austria, Edvard Munch of Norway and Emil Orlik of Germany, and even Wassily Kandinsky. Despite the widespread assimilation of Japanese design motifs and techniques in painting and the decorative arts during this period (1800-1890) , the European artists failed to penetrate the real spiritual content of Oriental art.

II

The Spiritual Influence in America

The world Parliament of Religions, took place in Chicago in 1893 and this event has usually been cited as the beginning of the introduction of Buddhism, Eastern spiritualism and philosophical ideas into America. However, the beginnings of this

²⁸ Michener, p. 236

spiritual outlook can be found before that date. Sir William Jones' translation of the Laws of Manu and the essays in Asiatik Researches provided knowledge for Americans such as Thomas Jefferson. Jones' Sacontala appeared in 1805 in the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review which was edited by William Emerson, a minister and father of Emerson. Although the younger Emerson was only seven when his father died, he was left a library containing numerous books on Orientalia which seem to have had as much influence on his thinking as works by Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Carlyle. Ralph Waldo Emerson soon became the spokesman for a group of writers who became known as the Transcendentalists.

The Concordians [referring to the Boston Transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau] were at odds with their age, and they looked to the Orientals as an example of what their own best lives might be. The shadow of industrialism, 'of railroads, mills, and banks' was already on them, and they sought models and inspiration from what they took to be men of a more bucolic and cultivated age. They found what they could not discover in the nearby mill-towns, in ancient Greece, China and India.²⁹

A strong relationship between nature and spirituality found cultural expression in the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. Ralph Waldo Emerson stated that "the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God."³⁰ In 1842 Emerson offered to the 300 subscribers of the Dial, Heetopades of Veeshnoo Sarma as translated by Charles Wilkins. In

²⁹Field, p 60-61

³⁰Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature" 1836 Selected Prose and Poetry, (N.Y.: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1969) p. 3-38

1843 the first copy of The Bhagavad Gita arrived in Concord and had a profound affect on the Transcendentalists. Indeed, neither Ralph Waldo Emerson, nor Thoreau, ever went to the Orient. What they discovered was gained through reading books such as the Bhagavad Gita, (the first book to be translated in to English directly from Sanskrit). Emerson wrote to Elizabeth Hoar of the Bhagavad Gita, "the much renowned book of Buddhism, extract[s] from which I have often admired but never before held the book in my hand." The fact that he would mistake the book for being Buddhist rather than Hindu is symptomatic of the American view of Eastern Religions and the Homogeneity that Americans see in Eastern religions. This homogeneity is in fact the American idea of Eastern philosophy.³¹⁾

Transcendentalism asserted that reality can only be found within oneself. From youth Emerson understood the Oriental concept of "Reality"; that the soul was the same as Brahma, the supreme and eternal essence of the universe in Hindu theology. He wrote in his poem entitled Brahma:

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,

They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;

³¹Fields, p.59-60

I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The Transcendentalists regarded man not as one burdened with original sin but as identical with the soul of the Universe as "the Eternal One": Man can be one with the Universe and can only find reality in the depths of oneself. Within the self is the concept of the two selves within man -- the outer and inner self. To recognize the two aspects of mankind and to seek reality by delving into the innermost self, is also central in Zen Buddhism. Emerson called this inner self "the Soul" or "the eternal One", Thoreau called it, "the perennial source of our life" while Walt Whitman called it "the rare, cosmic, artist-mind, lit with the infinite."³² The inner self is intuition, a profound power and yet merely one of the states of consciousness. Emerson wrote:

What is the Aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded? This inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we all call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote the primary wisdom as intuition.... In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin.³³

Emerson looked to the mental state where man could get in touch with the "Eternal One".³⁴ In this state, according to Emerson,

³²Shohei Ando, Zen and American Transcendentalism, Tokyo:Hokuseido Press,1970) p. 137-139

³³Ralph Waldo Emerson " Self -Reliance" The Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Modern Library Vol II, p. 52.

³⁴The artists today also seek to find this mental state where they and their viewers can get in touch with their own inner beings, to a "primary wisdom" as Emerson called it through intuition or what Turrell calls perception, or Zen calls "direct

man becomes the "transparent eyeball"³⁵ or a "transparent fluid membrane through which the living form is seen, and not, as in most men, an indurated heterogeneous fabric of many dates and of no settled character, in which a man is imprisoned."³⁶ In Zen this would be called "Satori" or "Meihakuri" meaning the clearly purified state or "Dajo ippen" meaning a purified life, deep and transparent state of mind.³⁷

Thoreau similarly sought "to realize his Self, directing his eye right inward, and to find a thousand regions in his mind yet undiscovered". He would frequently practice sitting still "like the Oriental" for self purification in the woods, ³⁸ "growing in those seasons like corn in the night" and "he went and came" with a strange liberty in Nature a part of herself". ³⁹

Henry David Thoreau first came across the Orientalists in Emerson's library. In 1844 Thoreau became the editor of the Dial and introduced to the English speaking world the Lotus Sutra which he had translated from a recent French translation. Rick

perception"

³⁵Emerson, Nature p.7

³⁶Emerson, Compensation, Vol II p. 100

³⁷Shoei Ando, p. 142

³⁸Shoei Ando, p. 146-147

³⁹Henry David Thoreau, "Where I Lived", Walden or Life In The Woods, (Everyman's Library)p. 79

Fields refers to Thoreau as a pre-Buddhist in much the same way that the Chinese Taoists were. He lost himself in nature as the Chinese painters did, by becoming one with nature. Thoreau in some ways demonstrated a most profound understanding of Buddhism; he had no theories but was content to wait and see what was there.

On July 4, 1855 Ralph Waldo Emerson received a book of poems from a relatively unknown poet. Six days later he wrote to Sam Ward about this book called Leaves of Grass. He stated that the book was "so extraordinary for its oriental largeness of generalization, an American Buddha..." He later remarked to F.B. Sanborn that Leaves of Grass was " a mixture of the Bhagavad Gita and The New York Herald " (the Herald being one of the more sensational tabloids of the day.) Upon Emerson and Whitman's meeting, Emerson complimented Whitman, and noted that the work was wonderfully like the Orientals.⁴⁰ Whitman admitted, in his own autobiographical statements found in A Backward Glance, that in preparation for his great work [Leaves of Grass], that he had absorbed Hindu poems along with Shakespeare, Homer, and Dante.

Artists similarly found philosophical, religious and spiritual tenets in nature. Nature was a reverential source for Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt and Frederic Church (fig. 3). Their

⁴⁰ Rayapati, Rao J.P. Early American Interest in Vedanta, (N.Y. Asia Publishing House, 1973) p. 12

landscapes were portraits of God, finding morality in nature and a means to elevate the mind.⁴¹ They sought to embody the sublime in the mountains and the forests. The relationship between the Transcendentalists, and Nineteenth Century landscape painting has been a subject under consideration for many years but the imagery at least parallels the writings of the Transcendentalists. As Sacvan Bercovitch has noted in The Puritan Origins of the American Self (New Haven, 1975, p. 165) "Intermediary between the Transcendentalist and the Oversoul was the text of America, simultaneously an external model of perfection and a product of the symbolic imagination..." This symbolic imagination was translated onto the canvas.

Luminist painting might be considered the visual paradigm of Transcendentalism. In an age of industrialization and expansion the artists became attuned to "spiritualism", Eastern as well as other forms, which were already an integral part of the writings of the Transcendentalists. American Nineteenth Century landscape painters known as the Luminists, Fitz Hugh Lane (fig. 4), John Kensett and Martin Heade in particular, conveyed in their paintings a sentiment similar to those conveyed in the writings of Emerson and Thoreau. Their role was perceived to be that of the Emersonian "transparent eyeball", where the artist was to lose himself in the subject. Although there is no proof that Lane actually knew Emerson-- he left no diaries -- it is

⁴¹Museum Of Modern Art The Natural Paradise, Novak "On Divers Themes From Nature"

difficult to imagine that he did not know of him. These ideas were first presented in John I H. Baur's essay "American Luminism", Perspectives USA no. 9, Autumn 1954 pp 90-98). A part of the philosophic and literary developments of the time, nature was presented as a mirror-like surface which invited the viewer to contemplate the image without the intervention of the artist. Indeed, Emerson had noted in "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England" that there was "a new consciousness... Men grew reflective and intellectual." The artists were a part of this new milieu. For them, matter was an extension of the mind. The Luminists were concerned with measurement and precision and yet it was to produce an evocative extension of the mind. Gene McCormick in a 1952 article on Lane for Art Quarterly (no.4, p 29) noted that Lane was a "strong spiritualist". Moreover, visual comparisons can be made between mid-nineteenth century paintings and Chinese landscape paintings. The expanses of space, use of light, minute details further suggest a correlation with Eastern philosophical attitudes to nature channeled to the artists through the Transcendentalists if not discovered on their own.

III

The Turn Of the Century

While the Transcendentalists were reading the writings of the Orientals, the Orientals were arriving in the West. In 1848 when gold was discovered at John Sutter's saw mill near San Francisco there were very few Chinese in America. But by 1852 the gold rush had attracted 20,000 Chinese, by the end of the decade there were 63,000. Although they brought many skills with them, they were met increasingly by hatred and violence and subjected to a special foreigner's tax. Yet, in 1873 an invitation was sent requesting Japanese participation in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial, America's counterpart to the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867. Japan sent not only objects for exhibition but materials to erect a building for a bazaar and a tea house. In 1879 Sir Edwin Arnold's book, The Light of Asia became extremely popular, going through eighty editions and selling over one-half million copies. Arnold retold the story of the Buddha in a way sympathetic to Victorian taste. In 1878 Sir Rutherford Alcock published the first detailed treatise on Japanese Art in Art and Industries in Japan. The first issue of the Maha Bodhi Journal appeared in May 1892.

Meanwhile, a group of people interested in Japan and

Buddhism was congregating in Boston. In March 1877 Edward Morse (a Harvard Zoologist) left for Japan. He later recruited Ernest Fenollosa to teach philosophy at the Imperial University in Japan. Fenollosa was introduced to the Marquis Kuroda and his collection as well as members of the Tosa and Kano families, formerly court painters to the Tokugawa shoguns. He was helped by two students, Nagao Agari and Kakuzo Okakura. Fenollosa avidly studied the Buddhist temples of Kyoto and Nara and met with the abbot of Daitoku-ji. By 1884 he wrote that he had compiled, what he believed to be, the "first accurate list of art treasures kept in the central temples of Japan."⁴² In turn Kakuzo Okakura, became a member of the Imperial Art Commission and was sent to Europe and the United States to learn about Western Art History. He remained in Boston to promote Eastern art and published Ideals of the East and Book of Tea (which he wrote with Arthur Wesley Dow).

Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) was the son of a Spanish musician who had settled in Salem , Mass. He studied at Harvard and the newly formed Boston Museum of Fine Arts School before going off to Japan to teach philosophy. When Fenollosa returned to America in 1890 he became the first curator of Oriental art. As curator of the Boston Museum's Department of Far Eastern Art, he mounted a series of exhibitions on Hokusai, 16th century screens with gold backgrounds, Samuel Bing's Paris collection and one-hundred Eleventh and Twelfth Century Chinese Buddhist

⁴²Fields, p. 149

paintings from the Daitoku-ji in Kyoto. His most important books include Hiroshige, the Artist of Mist, Snow and Rain (1901) and Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art (1911) (a two volume work published posthumously by his wife). Indeed, Fenollosa was so well thought of by the Japanese that they sent a cruiser to transport his ashes to Japan for his burial!

Fenollosa died in 1908 leaving his wife Mary to finish his Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art. When she brought the manuscript to England in 1912 she met a young American poet named Ezra Pound to whom she later sent many of the notes on Oriental literary works that had intrigued Fenollosa. Pound continued to support the interest in Oriental arts and letters in the Twentieth Century through his own writings.

On June 3, 1886 Henry Adams and John LaFarge set out for Japan. They brought back not only many objects of art but a more profound understanding of the Orient as well. LaFarge wrote " To Eastern directness, fullness, and splendor, the Japanese add a sobriety, a simplicity, a love of subdued harmonies and imperceptible gradations, and what might be called an intellectual refinement..."⁴³. Adams and LaFarge agreed that the Dai Butsu was "the most successful colossal figure in the world." and LaFarge borrowed a Japanese priest's camera to photograph it. He thought that the tombs at Nikko were well worth the journey but he was most impressed by the Boddhisatva Kuan-yin. Upon their

⁴³ quoted in Walsh, Columbia U. Masters Thesis on Homer p. 9, 1965

return, LaFarge conferred with Kakuzo Okakura (now in Boston) about the meaning of Kuan-yin and about its symbolism. Adams meanwhile retained Augustus Saint Gaudens to create a tomb for his deceased wife. LaFarge supervised the project and conveyed to Saint Gaudens the Buddhist feeling that Adams wanted. He showed the sculptor photos of the Buddhas and Bodhisatvas and read stories of the Buddha. Five years later Saint Gaudens completed his now well known Adams Memorial(fig. 5).

Some of the other artists who went to Japan in the late Nineteenth Century, were Helen Hyde (1868-1919), Lillian Miller (born in Tokyo in 1895 and died in 1948), Albert and Adelle Herder (in Japan in 1893), and Thornton Oakley (1881-1953).

Helen Hyde was born in Lima, New York but spent her childhood in San Francisco. She studied art in California, Berlin and Holland and her instructor Felix Regamey, Director of the Musee Guimet introduced her to his passion for Japanese art. After returning to San Francisco she discovered subject material for her paintings in San Francisco's Chinatown. Finally in 1899 Helen Hyde finally went to Japan; her anticipated six month trip lasted fifteen years. She converted a former temple at Nikko into a studio and studied with the last member of the Kano school, Tomonobu. She exhibited and was well received in Japan becoming best known for her images of children in woodblock prints(fig. 6).

Lillian May Miller was another woodblock artist profoundly influenced by Japan. Born in Tokyo, the daughter of the U.S.

Consul General (Ransford S. Miller), she received instructions from Tomonobu Kano, who had instructed Hyde a few years earlier. By the age of twelve she was exhibiting with the Imperial Salon. She came to America and attended Vassar College but soon returned to Japan to study with Bokusen Shimada where she assumed the professional Japanese name of Gyokka(fig.7).

Walter Gay, Adele and Albert Herter all visited Japan and used certain aspects of Japanese aesthetics in their work -- shallow, white spaces, asymmetrical compositions. Thornton Oakley (1881-1953) of Pennsylvania and Edith Emerson of Ohio and Henry Golden Dearth from New England were admirers of Japanese art who incorporated its characteristics into their own work. Henry P. Bowie of San Mateo California visited Japan in 1893 and remained for nine years to study the language, customs and painting. He achieved acclaim in Japan before he returned to America where he lectured throughout the West Coast. In 1911 he published On the Laws of Japanese Painting which put forth the substance of his lectures.

IV

1893-1945

1893 marked the debut of an incessant flow of Eastern philosophical ideas into the United States. The New York Journal wrote:

It is no uncommon thing to hear a New Yorker say he is a Buddhist nowadays. A few years ago such a statement would have caused wonder, but today it evokes no surprise. There are several hundred Buddhists here, and every one of them is

a man remarkable for his intelligence.⁴⁴

The 1893 World Parliament of Religions was the spiritual expression of the Columbian Exposition. The majority of the delegates at the conference were Christian but the Asian religions were also present. The speeches went on for sixteen days , day and night. Soyen Shaku, the first Zen master to come to America spoke at the conference, giving a speech that his student, D.T. Suzuki had translated for him in Japan. (D.T. Suzuki would become one of the main proponents of Buddhism in America.) At one special session the German emigre, Paul Carus, and Charles T. Strauss were introduced and became the first persons to be admitted to the Buddhist faith on American soil. In the wake of the Parliament, The Buddhist Ray was published. This new magazine reproduced articles from newspapers and from other magazines about Buddhism.

The first Japanese Buddhist missionaries to reach the US arrived in San Francisco on July 6, 1898. Dharmapala's first post-"Parliament" tour took him to New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Grand Rapids, Cincinnati, Duluth, Minneapolis, Iowa City, Des Moines, Dayton and Columbus. During his visit to Harvard, William James recognized him in the audience and told him to take the podium, "You are better equipped to lecture on Psychology than I am."⁴⁵

⁴⁴Fields, p.131-132

⁴⁵ Sangarakshita, Bhikshu. Anagarika Dharmapala: A Biographical Sketch, (Kandy Buddhist Society Pub., 1964), p. 78

As Buddhism began to enter America, from the end of the Nineteenth Century to just prior to World War II, American artists began to realize that there was something beyond design elements in Oriental art. Instrumental to this twentieth century change in attitude, was the work and writings of Soyen Shaku, Daisetz T. Suzuki and Alan Watts .

Soyen Shaku was the only Zen master with a real interest in teaching foreigners. In 1905 he returned to America as a personal guest of Mr and Mrs Alexander Russell of San Francisco. Mrs. Russell became the first American to begin Koan study. Soyen Shaku saw America as a natural place for the dharma to grow, and not just in nature but in New York City as well. He wrote:

High buildings stand like a mirage
A heavenly bridge passes over the dragon- waters

It is greater than a rainbow.
The spring breeze has no concern with noises of human beings
I stand alone with the Statue of Liberty.

In September 1906 a second party of Zen Buddhists arrived led by Sokatsu Shaku. A student of his, an artist named Sokei-an, opened a branch of the Buddhist Society of America in New York. He became part of the New York cultural scene. He let his hair grow long, lived in Greenwich Village and translated poems for the Little Review, which he edited with Margaret Anderson and Ezra Pound.

D.T.Suzuki, who had served as Soyen Shaku's translator was born in Kanazawa, 200 miles north of Tokyo. His father and mother died when he was quite young and although his ancestors had been members of the Samurai class, his privileges had been abolished

by the Meiji restoration and Suzuki grew up in genteel poverty. He began his Zen training with Setsumon-roshi Kosen, and Soyen Shaku. He then went to America to work with Dr. Carus on a translation of the Tao Te Ching. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki published a series of English texts on Zen while living in Kyoto. In 1936, at the age of seventy, he left Japan to lecture in England . This secured his reputation in the Western world. He impressed many people, but perhaps most important for the dissemination of ideas was the presence of a youth in the audience named Alan Watts. Watts wrote of Suzuki in his autobiography that Suzuki was, "about the most gentle and sophisticated person I have ever known, for he combined the most complex learning and utter simplicity." Alan Watts, who was then editor of Buddhism in England was born in 1915 in Kent. Watts moved to New York in 1938 and studied with Sokei-an.. He would write numerous books on Zen and Eastern philosophy, books still popular today.

In 1897, Arthur Wesley Dow became interested in Hokusai and sought out Ernest Fenollosa. Dow soon became Fenollosa's assistant and became Keeper of Japanese Paintings and Prints at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Fenollosa's theories helped the landscape painter, Dow, to create a new practical method of art education. Born in Massachusetts, Dow studied art in Boston and Paris . He is best known for his book Composition which had gone through thirteen editions by 1931. The book introduced art students throughout the United States to elements of Japanese

art, No-tan in particular, and the Japanese approach to composition (fig 8). In 1895, Dow began teaching composition at Pratt Institute in New York and then became Chair of the Fine Arts Department at Columbia in 1903. In 1914 a young woman named Georgia O'Keeffe studied with Dow at Columbia. In the early twentieth century, artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe looked for the "aesthetic components of things." Influenced by Dow, O'Keeffe intently read Fenollosa's Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art and brought these ideas with her to the Steiglitz circle, of which she became an important part. Barbara Rose in the New York Review of Books wrote that Fenollosa "was instrumental in reviving the interest in Oriental concepts that the Transcendentalists had begun to explore during the mid-nineteenth century, drawing on European Romanticism and Eastern Religion," and she believes that it is, "Likely that Fenollosa is a missing link between the artists of the Steiglitz circle and the Transcendental writers." O'Keeffe became the missing link between the Nineteenth century and Twentieth century, as well as contemporary art (fig. 9).

Another individual, who had great influence on the next generation of artists, was Ananda Coomaraswamy. Although he elucidated Hindu theories primarily, his writings set the stage and opened the doors that introduced Western artists to Asian philosophic concepts. It is in this context that he needs to be mentioned. Coomaraswamy's book The Transformation of Nature in Art (1934) was, for many artists their first exposure to a different

outlook on nature and an art that was not about illusion. This book, the best known of Coomaraswamy's writings, emphasized participation in the process of nature, and the dynamic character of nature. Coomeraswamy became curator of Oriental art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (a post formerly held by Ernest Fenollosa and Arthur Wesley Dow), giving him a new found access to the American art world. He came to know Dorothy Norman, the art critic, and through her, many artists became familiar with his ideologies. Alfred Steiglitz had contact with Coomeraswamy and through him artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe were surely introduced to his writings. Other artists who were acquainted with his writings included Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Isamu Noguchi, Ad Reinhardt, and John Cage. ⁴⁶

IV

Between Two World Wars

Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, were the two artists who were particularly influenced by Asian philosophical ideas after World War I and that influence carried through to subsequent generations of contemporary artists.

Mark Tobey has been called the "Northwest mystic" and the "Sage of Seattle". Born in Wisconsin in 1890, Tobey first

⁴⁶ Clarke, p.50

exhibited portraits (1917) that he had painted, studied sporadically at the Art Institute of Chicago, and in the 1920s and obtained a position teaching at the Cornish school in Seattle, Washington. Tobey converted to the Bahai faith in 1918 and has readily acknowledged the debt to it in his paintings. The Bahai religion stresses the oneness of the universe. It is a religion which seeks to be universal and although it draws upon many religions, it has a particularly striking affinity to Eastern philosophy. In 1923 Tobey studied Chinese calligraphy with Teng Kuei, a young Chinese artist then enrolled at the University of Washington. Through these studies he learned how to open space and give vitality to a composition. Eventually Tobey travelled to the Far East where the Eastern sense of aesthetics became an established part of his process. After staying with the family of Teng Kuei in Shanghai, China, Tobey went to Japan where he saw No theatre, the Kabuki, Japanese painting and flower arrangements. He spent a month in a Zen monastery in Kyoto learning meditation, practicing calligraphy and painting. Fascinated with calligraphy, Tobey began in 1935 to incorporate "white-writing" into paintings such as Broadway Norm (fig.10) . The calligraphic strokes were made on an amorphous background which suggested infinity. The paintings "conjure up images of the genesis of the universe, the metamorphosis of constellations."⁴⁷ Yet the paintings are frequently about the modern age that we live in, the technology, the rush, traffic and

⁴⁷Clay Lancaster, p. 244

neon signs. Tobey preferred to paint these images when he was far away from the city, sitting in nature, trying to resolve in himself the duality of the universe. The influence of China and Japan was absorbed in order to discover and create a unique form.

Tobey found that Zen released him from the bonds of his rational mind. Combining his knowledge of Zen and Bahai, he re-discovered a close affinity between man and nature which he sought to put in his paintings. Tobey noted of the Oriental influence on his work that the Japanese added to his knowledge of the meaning of the "abstract" and taught him concentration and consecration" the "blending of simplicity, directness and profundity."⁴⁸ Tobey noted that his goal was to allow the painting, as he approached its completion, to take over. Like a Zen archer, who releases the arrow without thinking about it; he is purposeless, the inner spirit takes over. His intellect no longer controls the painting, his inner being makes the final decision. ⁴⁹ He stated, "It is better to feel a painting than to look at it" ⁵⁰

Tobey became known for this white writing, or more appropriately called white calligraphy. His strokes created an ambience of light which became the energy source and the unifying

⁴⁸Nancy Wilson Ross, "What Is Zen?" Mademoiselle, January 1958, p. 116

⁴⁹Seitz, Mark Tobey, (N.Y.: MOMA 1962), p. 31

⁵⁰from an undated letter. cited in "Texts de Tobey", Retrospective Mark Tobey Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Pavillon de Marsan , Paris, 1961, n.p.

element. Tobey stated "...Oriental fragments -- characters which twist and turn drifting into Western zones forever speaking of the unity of man's spirit." ⁵¹ He wished to express a higher reality in his paintings. He created space, a Void, by creating a dense mass of aerated depth symbolizing this higher state of consciousness. Pacific Circle, for example (fig. 11), consists of a warm grey and luminous white background from which red, blue and black seem to emerge from a vortex-- perhaps it is the primordial abyss from which, in the Buddhist sense, life emerges.

When Tobey was a young man his friend and teacher Teng Kuei asked him why Western artists made pictures that, " looked like holes in the wall" ⁵². Tobey learnt to avoid traditional Western illusionistic space defined by perspective, by creating a space where the viewer has no place to rest or focus. Instead, the viewer is absorbed into the web. His paintings convey a feeling of time and place that has to be contemplated to be understood. Tobey wrote:

While in Japan sitting on the floor of a room and looking over an intimate garden with flowers blooming and dragon-flies hovering in space, I sensed that this small world almost under foot, shall I say, had a validity all its own ... which must be realized and appreciated from its own level in space. ⁵³

While painting he let nature take over as he captured the peace

⁵¹Mark Tobey, a comment on Extensions From Baghdad (1944) in the files of the Willard Gallery. Cited in Seitz, Mark Tobey, (N.Y.: Museum of Modern Art, 1962), p. 21

⁵²Seitz Mark Tobey, MOMA, p. 27

⁵³Excerpt from a letter October 28, 1954 Cited in Art Institute of Chicago Quarterly, vol. 49 no. 1 Feb 1, 1955 p. 9

and warmth of the end of summer or the feeling of a Western town or the energy of Broadway. They are not landscape paintings in the traditional sense but each of these aspects of life has its own validity. "The Eastern dragon had been harnessed to Western dynamism."⁵⁴

Far Eastern spiritualism was also invoked by Morris Graves in his paintings. In the late 1930s he was associated with the Northern Mystic artists in Seattle which included the painters Mark Tobey, Kenneth Callahan and Guy Anderson. Like Tobey, Graves created and depicted journeys into the mind ; a Western version of Maya.⁵⁵ He stated that Zen, and its goal of Maya or Nirvana, appealed to him because it stressed, "the meditative, stilling the surface of the mind and letting the inner surface bloom."⁵⁶

Morris Graves was born in Oregon in 1910. He became a seaman and made several trips to the Orient on the American Mail Line. He settled in Seattle, Washington where he created several works for the WPA/FAP. After arriving in Seattle, Graves visited the Buddhist Temple in Seattle's Yesler District, where he met Dorothy Schumacher. Schumacher's family had been familiar with No theatre, Zen tea ceremony, and the philosophic thinking of Carl Jung and Ernest Fenollosa. She introduced Graves to these ideas,

⁵⁴Seitz Mark Tobey, p. 51

⁵⁵Benjamin Rowland Jr., Art East and West, Harvard U. Press, 1963, p126

⁵⁶Ross, "What is Zen" , pp 65, 116

to Buddhism and particularly to Zen. Graves made many visits to the Far East. The first visit was in 1928 to Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong. His initial exposure to Oriental art however came through his visits to American museums. These ideas were reinforced and nurtured by his like-minded friends -- Mark Tobey, Nancy Wilson Ross⁵⁷ and John Cage.

Graves became friends with John Cage when Cage came to work as a piano accompanist for dance classes at the Cornish School of Art. One night Graves arrived at a concert of a Cage percussion composition carrying a bag of peanuts and a lorgnette with a doll's eye suspended in it. Already known for his Dada-like antics, Graves was ejected from the theatre when he yelled out in the middle of the concert, "Jesus in the Everywhere". That evening Graves and Cage were introduced, beginning a long friendship filled with Dada and Zen. Cage recalls that in 1936 Nancy Wilson Ross gave an important talk at the Cornish Art School on Dada and Zen Buddhism. In many of Cage's writings he discussed the importance of these ideas, of spontaneous experience of the irrational rather than logical.⁵⁸ Cage wrote an essay for a 1957 Graves' exhibition in which he referred to the paintings as, "invitations Home, that Home which is never left but ordinarily ignored. Ordinary living conspires to keep

⁵⁷Nancy Wilson Ross is the author of several books on Zen including Buddhism: A Way of Life and Thought, and "What is Zen. Her books became popular with many contemporary artists.

⁵⁸Anna Kisselgoff "Merce Cunningham: The Maverick of Dance" The New York Times 21 March 1982 magazine sec., p., 62

the earth busily separate from heaven, but now and then experience transcends business, revealing in clock-time the timeless time."⁵⁹

By the end of the 1930s Morris Graves had become obsessed with various phenomena of nature such as the moon, snakes and birds. Moon Mad Crow In The Surf, 1943 (fig. 12) is typical of his mature work. The moon, sea, and sky all merge together as the crow gazes at a pale crescent moon. Mesmerized by the light the crow attains satori. It has no external existence and is one with his universe. Graves wrote that:

The artists of Asia have spiritually-realized form, rather than aesthetically-invented or imitated form, and from them I have learned that art and nature are mind's Environment within which we can detect the essence of man's Being and Purpose, and from which we can draw clues to guide our journey from partial consciousness to full consciousness.⁶⁰ In a myriad of traditional Zen paintings the monk is overjoyed by a simple occurrence that transforms him into another state of awareness. Bird In The Moonlight, 1941 (fig. 13), for example, similarly employs an overall calligraphic white writing to represent a cosmic environment and express the conflict between material and spiritual forces. Graves also did a large series of works focussing on the idea of the inner eye with titles bearing that description (i.e., Little Known Bird of the Inner Eye, (MOMA)) He describes these images.

The images seen within the space of the inner eye are as

⁵⁹John Cage, "Morris Graves" reproduced in Kostalanetz John Cage, N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1970, p. 124

⁶⁰Morris Graves from his Guggenheim fellowship application, 1945

clear as 'seeing stars' before your eyes if you get up suddenly. It is certain that they are subjective, yet there is the absolute feeling that they are outside around your head. This is the nearest analogy to the spatializing of the inner eye. 61

This is the void which Graves creates.

Although ,Graves planned to revisit the Orient in 1946 on a Guggenheim grant, he did not actually return there until 1954 . Subsequently, his paintings became larger and more abstract, albeit the theme remained constant. Moreover, his later Plover and Swallow series are more traditionally Japanese in subject matter. Graves emphasized the importance of "concentrated moments of clarity" in these works. " These moments -- must be sustained and permeate the whole being -- for, I find, that one must be what they seek to utter -- for inevitably one utters what they are. " 62

The influence of Eastern art in Graves' work is most obvious in his later use of visual models of the spiritual which can be explained through his interest in Tantrism . The Sanskrit word Tantra refers to weaving and more specifically to the warp and weft of the cloth --"the interwovenness of things and actions....-

⁶¹see David Clarke, p. 43

⁶²Morris Graves in a letter to Marian Willard January 3, 1944 cited in Ray Kass, Morris Graves: Vision of the Inner Eye (N.Y.: Braziller, 1983), p. 43.

The continuity of the interaction of cause and effect.⁶³

Graves' reference to the Tantric cycle is perhaps a reference to the Kundalini, a form of Tantra Yoga in which one's inner power is brought to bear through the central nervous system aided by seven cakras, "wheels of psychic energy", to unite with the Lotus center of the skull.⁶⁴ The Tantra web connotes images found in Graves paintings while the cakras or wheels of various types can frequently be found within the paintings. The later works become more obvious and contain specific references to the vajra, (fig. 14) the Kundalini or mandalas. Even the gander in Gander Ready For Flight (fig. 15) is a symbol that appears in ancient Hindu legend as a manifestation of Vishnu, mainly when associated with Brahma. One myth tells of a wild gander "the sound of whose breathing is the magic melody of the creation and dissolution of the world."⁶⁵ Graves increasingly used these traditional symbols to connote the spiritual. He referred to the Vajra as, "That polarity which is indestructible within time."⁶⁶ He searched for the psychic content of the symbol. Graves said of painting that:

The nature ones fail, because when you are continually

⁶³Nancy Wilson Ross buddhism: A Way of Life and Thought (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980)p. 118

⁶⁴Ray Kass, p. 46

⁶⁵Heinrich Zimmer Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, (N.Y.: Harper and Row 1965 p. 35 citing Matsya Purana CLXVII pp 13-25

⁶⁶Morris Graves Morris graves exhibition catalogue N.Y.: Willard Gallery 1948) n.p.

experiencing nature and then compare what you experience with what you've done, you can't help seeing the limitations in your work. But paintings of ideas continue to be ideas. And these ideas, of course, bear on the way we consciously direct our lives. Buddhism has a marvelous saying -- very condensed, "Thought alone was, is, abides."⁶⁷

V

1945-1960

In the days following Pearl Harbor, everything "Japanese" became suspect. Community leaders and Buddhist ministers were singled out.⁶⁸ Then on February 19, 1942 President Roosevelt signed executive order 9066. The entire Japanese West Coast community was ordered to centers for relocation. By 1943, 110,000 Japanese-Americans, citizens and non-citizens of all ages, were brought to internment camps surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. It was not until July 2, 1945 that the Supreme Court ruled against restricting Japanese-Americans further.

After the war, in March 1947, two writers, Philip Kapleau

⁶⁷Cited in Katherine Kuh, The Artist's Voice (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1962) p.111

⁶⁸ Similarly, in Japan, Americans were rounded up. Robert Aitken, a devoted student of Senzaki, spent the war in a detention camp in Japan. He was introduced to Haiku and was lent a book by R.H. Blythe, Zen and English Literature which had just been published by Hokuseido Press. Blythe had been a friend and disciple of Suzuki and he looked for the core of Zen in traditional English literature such as that by Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Don Quixote, Blake and Whitman. Suddenly he found himself in the same camp with Blythe, an English professor who had been teaching in Korea when it became occupied by Japan.

and Richard DeMartino went to the grounds of Engaku-ji Temple to try to meet D. T. Suzuki. They peered through the glass panelled sliding shoji and watched Suzuki sitting on his knees, Japanese fashion, in front of a Western typewriter, on which he was pecking away with the index finger of either hand. This short, clean shaven old man in a black kimono, wore a Western style green bookkeeper's eyeshade down over his eyes.⁶⁹ In 1949, assisted by De Martino, Suzuki went to Honolulu to the Second East-West Philosophers Conference and taught at the University of Hawaii for a year. In 1950 he obtained a post at the Claremont Graduate School in Pasadena and then went to New York to give a series of lectures at Columbia. At the Columbia lectures, auditors were allowed to attend and included psychoanalysts, artists and musicians: among the audience were Eric Fromm, Karen Horney, and John Cage who attended the lectures for two years.⁷⁰ Indeed, by the latter half of the 1950s Zen had become extremely popularized. Mrs Sensaki wrote that:

Zen has always been credited with influencing Far Eastern art, But now the discovery has been made that it was existing in all English literature. Ultra-modern painting, music, dance, and poetry are acclaimed as expressions of Zen. Zen is invoked to substantiate the validity of the latest theories in psychology, psychotherapy, philosophy, semantics, mysticism, free -thinking and what-have-you. It

⁶⁹Richard DeMartino, "On My First Coming To Meet DT Suzuki" The Eastern Buddhist, new series vol ii no. i aug 1967 p. 72

⁷⁰Cage stated in an interview with Richard Kostelanetz "I think it was from 1949-1951. It was in the Department of Philosophy at Columbia, and anyone could simply walk in. A few people actually took the course, but they sat around the table. The rest of us sat along the wall" Kostelanetz, "A Conversation with John Cage", John Cage, p. 23

is the magic password at smart cocktail parties and bohemian get-togethers alike."⁷¹

Mrs. Sensaki, Sokei-An's wife, tried to educate people about the true nature of Zen and provide a place for its study. She organized the First Zen Institute in New York. In 1953 Alan Ginsberg visited the First Zen Institute, housed in Mrs. Sensaki's apartment in uptown New York. Mrs Sensaki was in Japan at the time, so he took it upon himself to peruse the Zen paintings, books and records in the library. He began reading at the New York Public Library, and discovered the writings of Suzuki, whom he came to greatly admire .

Jack Kerouac also came to Zen via the library. After finishing Subterraneans he went to the library to read Thoreau. "I said I'm going to cut out from civilization" , wrote Kerouac, "and go back and live in the woods like Thoreau, and I started to read Thoreau and he talked about Hindu philosophy. So I put Thoreau down and I took out, accidentally The Life of Buddha by Ashvagoshā. [sic]."⁷² Kerouac's interest in Buddhism continued to grow. He read sutras, Patanjali, the Vedas Lao-Tzu, Confucius, and The Buddhist Bible; he put it all together in over one hundred pages called Some of the Dharma. Kerouac moved back East while he read and re-read the Diamond Sutra , memorized and

⁷¹ Ruth Fuller Sasaki, Rinzai Zen Study for Foreigners in Japan p.2 (cited in Fields, p. 205)

⁷²Jack Kerouac, Subterraneans

recited sutras and carried Goddard's Buddhist Bible ⁷³. He wrote to Allen Ginsberg that

Practicing meditation and realizing that existence is a dream is an athletic, physical accomplishment. Now I know why I was an athlete, to learn perfect physical relaxation, smooth strength of strong muscles hanging ready for Nirvana, the great power that runs from the brow to the slope of the shoulders down the arms to the delicately joined hands in Dhyana, the hidden power of gentle breathing in the - silence.⁷⁴

In 1955 Kerouac moved to North Carolina where he stayed with his sister's family, cut wood, cleared the land and worked on three books, Some of the Dharma, Wake Up (a biography of the Buddha) and Buddha Tells Us., (a collection of translations) -- none of which were published. In 1955, however, he did publish On The Road and later published The Scripture of Golden Eternity., The Scripture...is one of his more successful attempts to express emptiness, non-attainment, and egolessness in American poetry while flavoring it with Catholic saints and heaven. One critic called it "the most direct expression of his Catholic Buddhism ." ⁷⁵

One example from Kerouac's book follows:

⁷³ Jack Kerouac, Subterraneans, was completed in 1952. He then began reading the sutras which are the basic texts of Buddhism, the most popular of which is the Diamond Sutra, Patanjali, Vedas, Lao Tzu who wrote the Tao Te Ching, and Confucius who was the secular philosophy of China, and Goddard, The Buddhist Bible. Kerouac wrote Some of the Dharma in 19

⁷⁴ to Allen Ginsberg Feb 10, 1955, original in Ginsberg archives/ Columbia University Library

⁷⁵Fields, p. 216

Stare deep into the world before you as if you were the void: innumerable holy ghosts, bhudies and savior gods there hide, smiling. All the atoms emitting light inside wavehood, there is no personal separation of any of it. A Hummingbird can come into a house and a hawk will not: so rest and be assured. While looking for the light, you may suddenly be devoured by the darkness and find the true light.

In 1956 Daitoku-ji allowed Mrs Sensaki to open a library and small zendo next door to her house in Kyoto. She had always felt strongly that for anyone to study Zen they had to go to Japan and be free of financial and other mundane concerns. She was finally able to provide a place for study in Japan. Few came but some of those that did included Robert Aitken, Philip Kapleau, and Gary Snyder. In the United States, her home in New York became a place for gatherings, while in San Francisco, Six Gallery was a meeting place for many of the Zen inspired writers who frequently read their work there. They included Gary Snyder, Ginsberg, Philip Walen, Michael McClure, Philip Lamantia with Kenneth Rexroth as the elder statesman.

To the east coast writers, (Kerouac and Ginsberg), Snyder "embodied the mythical genius of the Far East ." ⁷⁶ Snyder spent most of his youth on a small farm outside Seattle, Washington. At about the age thirteen he remembers being overwhelmed by a group of Chinese landscape paintings he saw at the Seattle Art Museum. In 1951 he came across Suzuki's Essays In Zen Buddhism in a San Francisco bookstore and discovered how Taoism, Buddhism and

⁷⁶ Fields, p. 212

Hinduism were interrelated.⁷⁷ In Dharma Bums Kerouac described Snyder (as "Japhy Ryder") and the shack where he read and meditated:

...nothing in it but typical Japhy appurtenances that showed his belief in the simple monastic life -- no chairs at all, not even one sentimental rocking chair, but just straw mats. He had a slew of orange crates all filled with beautiful scholarly books, some of them in Oriental languages, all the great sutras, comments on sutras, the complete works of DT Suzuki and a fine quadruple volume edition on Japanese haikus.... A few orange crates made his table, on which, one late sunny afternoon as I arrived, was steaming a peaceful cup of tea at his side as he bent his serious head to the Chinese signs of the poet Han Shan.

Kerouac, Ginsberg, Whalen, and Snyder spent a lot of time together sharing thoughts, reading Blyths' four volume book on haikus and trading their own back and forth. Snyder and Whalen began attending a study group at the Jodo Shinshu Berkeley Buddhist Church where they met Alan Watts. A special "Zen" edition of Chicago Review was published in 1958 including Kerouac's "Meditation In The Woods", Alan Watts "Beat Zen, Square Zen and Zen" and Gary Snyder's "Spring Sesshin in Sokoku-ji", a poem by Philip Walen and a black and white abstraction by Franz Kline.

Abstract Expressionists such as Franz Kline embodied some of the spirit and ideals of the Zen Boom in the fifties. Their work sought a communion with nature. In Barnett Newman, for example one senses a participation and interaction versus merely a

⁷⁷ Peter Barry Chowka "East West Interview" in the Real Work pp. 93-94

reaction to nature. "Space is where I can feel four horizons "

⁷⁸Many of these artists were influenced by Mark Tobey 's fusion of East and West which was specific, influential and culturally significant to future generations of artists not just on the west coast but those in the New York school as well. Tobey was well received by New York, and even Clement Greenberg in Nation (April 22, 1944, p.495) wrote that Tobey had " made one of the few original contributions to Contemporary American painting." Many of the Abstract Expressionists felt an affinity with Tobey and Oriental art. They were attracted to calligraphy and more importantly, to the spontaneity of the line and the images. They were impressed by the Zen notion of " getting it" in an instant.

Alfred Jensen was also familiar with the Abstract Expressionists and had frequent exchanges with Mark Rothko although he developed his own style. Rothko was holistic, where as Jensen saw the world as a series of dualities. One of Jensen's earliest works My Oneness, A Universe of Colours, 1957, consists of a series of rough bands of color forming concentric circles. His works are about the cosmic forces of the universe, created by simple, almost seemingly primitive images. Yet they are far from primitive. Well versed in modernism, he chose to present profound concepts presented in a simplified manner that is primordial versus primitive. ⁷⁹

⁷⁸Abstract Sublime: Primordial and Infinite" (Read also Kynaston McShine, "Toward the Abstract Sublime"

⁷⁹Paul Brach "Alfred Jensen, and the Abstract Absolute" Artforum 18 April 1980, p. 73-75

The artist frequently associated with the Abstract Expressionists (although not really an Abstract Expressionist) who was the most conversant with Eastern art, art history and ideas, was Adolph Reinhardt. He served as a bridge between the Abstract Expressionists and later Color Field Painters. 80

Ad Reinhardt devoted himself to studying Western and Eastern art history so that within his paintings he might take from each what he deemed as viable and summarize the advances of all art. He agreed with and quoted the theories of George Kubler who wrote in The Shape of Time , "Instead of occupying an expanding universe of forms ... we would be seen to inhabit a finite world of limited possibilities, still largely unexplored." The finite world included Eastern art. The art and art history that Reinhardt considered significant can be found in the chronology that he assembled for his retrospective at the Jewish Museum. Accompanying his personal chronology, he not only mentions Malevich and Mondrian but the fact that 1945 marked the

80 The Color Field Painters of the early 60s, and late 50s, also bear upon our Orientalized environmental artists. Their work is about the essence of existence and the paintings are concerned with our direct perception of them . The empty and neutral spaces evoke contemplation of the Void and the Totality of the Universe. John McLaughlin , for example would anticipate Ellsworth Kelly, Gene Davis and Frank Stella in eliminating self expression for a more universal form. Lawrence Alloway referred to McLaughlin's Hard Edge Paintings. "The definition of the painting as a single visible skin rather than a container of diversified elements like a game board." He created fields that avoid objectification while maintaining the integrity of the two dimensional surface. They evoke not the particulars of our existence but rather its essence, an essence perceptually related to Sunyata or the Void -- the swollen Nothingness that contains "All".

Civil War in China, 1947 India gained independence, 1954 Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam achieved independence. In 1958 Reinhardt visited Japan,⁸¹ India, Persia, and Egypt, and then wrote about the Buddha. In his writings, Reinhardt also reveals his interest in Lao Tzu. In handwritten notes found in the Reinhardt papers at the Archives of American Art, the artist transcribed the following passage from Lao Tzu. " To yield is to be preserved whole. To be bent is to become straight. To be hollow is to be filled ... to be in want is to possess. To have plenty is to be confused." ⁸²

Reinhardt's ideas were shaped early in his career by the vanguard of the 1930s and 1940s of geometric abstraction. He exhibited with the American Abstract Artists and like most of the group searched for "essentials", "simplicity", "purity".. Reinhardt reacted against them in the forties and began looking at alternatives including the work of his new friends, the Abstract Expressionists. Reinhardt also began teaching art and art history including the art of China, India, Japan, and Islam. Reinhardt became interested in Buddhism through his friend, Trappist monk and Zen scholar, Thomas Merton. He came to greatly admire the monotone tradition of Classical Chinese painting. Reinhardt concurred with the Chinese dictum that the idea should

⁸¹Artist Ulfert Wilke, with whom Reinhardt stayed in Japan, recalls that Reinhardt bought a small Buddhist scroll when they visited Nara together. Reinhardt told him that this was the only work of art he had ever bought. see David Clarke, p. 262

⁸²Reinhardt papers , Archives of American Art

exist before the painting, and that a painter should be the hermit/literati/scholar. His paintings are an imageless icon. They are static, lifeless, timeless. " The search for the timeless and the absolute," wrote Barbara Rose," begun with Plato and the various modern forms of Neo-Platonic Idealism from Kant to Mondrian, ended for Reinhardt with the abstract, black 'mandala'." ⁸³(fig. 16). In an unpublished poem called "Mandala" he explores its various connotations and he quotes the "Old Chinese", stating that, "The infinite is a square without angles." ⁸⁴

Reinhardt's black square paintings define for him an Absolute in art, art with no subject, no illusions, no associations, no symbols, no images, no object, an art with all the negatives that he so eloquently wrote of in his many articles and poems.

The "Black Paintings" are perceptually different from traditional Western paintings. Comprised of nine almost monochrome squares of black that formulate a cruciform shape in the middle, they require time to focus. The cruciform shape carries no specific iconographic significance but adds stability to the composition, the black matt surface prevents reflections in the canvas of the rest of the environment. The longer the viewer focusses on them, the more the viewer's state of consciousness and perception of the paintings change. They will not see more but the experience will be enriched as they begin to

⁸³Barbara Rose, Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt, (N.Y.: N.Y. : Viking Press), p. 185

⁸⁴quoted in Rose, Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt, p. 189

look inside themselves. Reinhardt stated that objects of art are not just "things" and that looking in them is not, in the words of Alan Watts "... a situation from which there is anything to be grasped or gained -- as if it were something which one approaches from outside, like a pie or a barrel of beer." ⁸⁵ In a poem entitled "One" Reinhardt wrote

No characteristics except its oneness-
 It is not a thing nor a thing in it
 Neither white nor black, neither red nor green, of no
 color whatever
 Beingless, becoming not, nameless

Where there is nothing but the one, nothing is seen

Primary, unique, underivable from anything else
 Aweful, Unabsolute unapproachability" --
 Supra-rational
 Ideogram for what is beyond utterance, "utterableness"
 Chain of negation, Buddhist "theology of negation" --

.....
 The paintings embody many of the concepts of Eastern culture that the artist had become increasingly cognizant of. Almost invisible except to the initiated and patient eye, the paintings function much in the way a Buddhist tantric mandala would, inducing a meditative state of consciousness. It is gazing into nothingness that may become everything. This is the essence of "Mu", or the Taoist or Zen concept of the Void, the Null set, the Nothingness that may embody everything. The black is symbolically, as well as perceptually, the Void. Reinhardt noted: "When space matter was 'nothing' art was the making of something out of nothing. Now when space, matter are 'something'

⁸⁵quoted in Rose, Art as Art :Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt (N.Y.: Viking Press), p. 218

art is the making of nothing out of something." ⁸⁶

John Cage was also a critical link between the Far East and the American artists. He was decisive in cultivating an atmosphere and a sensibility that influenced composers, choreographers, painters, and sculptors. John Cage became one of the seminal figures in the arts of the 1950s and 1960s. As a musician and artist, he programmed sound generating instruments to produce an aural experience which simulated the random series of noises that we hear from the street. Called "chance" compositions or "chaotic", they are ordered disorder. As early as the 1930s Cage prophetically stated that all noises, including those electronically produced would enter the domain of serious music⁸⁷.

D.T. Suzuki told Cage that he had nothing to say about music, and yet Cage felt that Suzuki had helped him to see music "not as a communication from the artist to the audience, but rather as an activity of sounds in which the artist found a way to let the sounds be themselves" which could "open the minds of the people who made them, or listened to them, to other possibilities than they had previously considered ... To widen their experience; particularly to undermine the making of value judgments." "The testing of art by means of life," stated Cage, "was the result of attending the lectures of Suzuki for three

⁸⁶see David Clarke p. 115

⁸⁷Kostelanetz "Random Notes", John Cage, p. 201

years." ⁸⁸ Cage also attended lectures given by Alan Watts in New York and notes of this acquaintance:

When we first met, we got along very well, then when he heard the music, he said its not necessary to have this kind of music, you can have it perfectly well out of doors without having a concert .. and when I wrote Silence Alan Watts wrote me a letter telling me how much he liked it, and the next thing I knew he was coming to the concerts and enjoying them !" ⁸⁹

Cage began composing music, "with a means that was as strict as sitting crosslegged, namely through the use of chance operations ." ⁹⁰ Rather than make decisions, he wanted to ask questions and be thought provoking ⁹¹. In Zen, if something is boring after two minutes try it for four, if still boring try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two and so on. In " Silence" Cage wrote that boredom can "induce ideas." ⁹² His art, music and writings were about inducing ideas. A Zen tenet that Cage finds congenial is the total acceptance of perpetual reality --the music around us all the time. ⁹³ Zen demonstrated to Cage that there were no boundaries between theatre, music, or philosophy; theatre

⁸⁸Kostelanetz, "Conversation with John Cage ", John Cage p.23

⁸⁹see David Clarke , p. 84

⁹⁰Cage was very interested in chance and saw a source for it in Ryoan-ji. He suggests that the arrangement of stones there was determined by chance. see A Year From Monday, New Lectures and Writings, Middletown, 1967, p. 137

⁹¹ Cage, " The Music of Contingency " an interview in Zero vol iii pp. 69-70

⁹²Kostelanetz Stereo Review np

⁹³Kostelanetz "The American Avant Garde Part II" Stereo Review XXII/5 (May 1969)

existed anywhere and everywhere. Cage wrote in Silence, "Theatre takes place all the time, wherever one is, and art simply facilitates persuading one this is the case." It is "purposeful purposelessness".⁹⁴ The significance of his well known piece "4'33" is in the inferences it makes. The piece has no set notes or sounds, only silence; a silence imbued with the sounds of life that come from the environment surrounding the musician. In other words, Cage stood on stage for four minutes and thirty-three seconds while the audience heard themselves, the sounds from the street, etc. Marshall McLuhan saw the artist as seer into the environment, Cage saw himself as listener into the environment.⁹⁵ The composer's role is to teach people to be attuned to their environment; they will only hear the music if they are prepared to listen for it. He admits that solipsism (the philosophy that only the man is real and all else is a figment of his imagination) characterizes the experience of life and music. Every listener hears something different and therefore the listener becomes the composer.

Like Marcel Duchamp, Cage created art out of materials usually not associated with the discipline. Using found objects, found sounds, Cage influenced such artists as Alan Kaprow, who created "happenings", and Robert Rauschenberg. Kaprow stated that

⁹⁴Richard Kostelanetz, "John Cage: Some Random Remarks", Kostelanetz, ed., John Cage, N.Y.: Praeger Pub, 1970, p. 197

⁹⁵Kostelanetz, "Conversation with John Cage", Kostelanetz, ed., p. 14

Cage "taught us to be free." ⁹⁶ In 1952 Cage staged an untitled mixed media event at Black Mountain College creating what was perhaps the first "Happening" in America. During this event he actively proselytized Zen. Olson, Rauschenberg and Cunningham all participated in the event. The artists involved with the Happenings, who followed his example, dealt with space and time. The "Happenings" had no structure, no beginning, middle, or end. "Their form is open ended and fluid: Nothing obvious is sought, therefore nothing is won..." and then stated that "Happenings invite one to... partake wholly in the real nature of art and (one hopes) life." It may become a state of mind. ⁹⁷ Happenings were a therapeutic ritual, a spontaneous event. As in Earth art, they sought a direct confrontation with reality. Kaprow, in particular looked to the I Ching for inspiration. Citing this book he stated, "If change is central to life and creation, then the frame and box are in contrast to it. Environments are meditative and bring in the sense as well as time and space. Avant garde art is, "a philosophical quest and a finding of truth rather than purely an aesthetic activity." Happenings were a demystification of 'Beautiful'". ⁹⁸

⁹⁶Kostelanetz "Random Notes"

⁹⁷Alan Kaprow "Happenings in the New York Scene" Art News p. 307 (A parallel group in Osaka Japan was the Gutai group)

⁹⁸Kaprow, Assemblage, Happenings and Environments (N.Y.: Abrams, 1966)

Cage's influence extended to numerous artists.⁹⁹ In a statement written for a Robert Rauschenberg exhibit at the Stable Gallery he demonstrated the symbiotic relationship not only between Rauschenberg and Cage but also with the ideas of Ad Reinhardt or Lao Tzu. He wrote:

To whom

No subject
 No image
 No taste
 No object
 No beauty
 No message
 No talent
 No technique (no why)
 No idea
 No intention
 No art
 No feeling
 No black
 No white (no and)

After careful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in these paintings that could not be changed, that they can be seen in any light and are not destroyed by the action of shadows.

John Cage

Hallelujah! the blind can see again; the water's fine.

The negative, the Nothing, embodies everything.

Ad Reinhardt and John Cage were artists to whom the Minimalists such as Robert Morris and others looked. The Minimalists found in their work alternative concepts that could be translated into sculpture and environments. They continued to eliminate the images and the objects, through simple, yet complex art projects. "Indeed," wrote Kostelanetz of Cage, "because

⁹⁹ Cage's "Lecture on Nothing" and "Lecture on Something" delivered to the New York Artists' Club represent only two formal occasions on which these Oriental concepts received a formal airing. see David Clarke, p. 163.

Cage's ideas are so relevant, so multifarious, so revolutionary, so pervasive, it is all but impossible to talk about what is interesting in contemporary art without mentioning his name or considering his extraordinary mind." 100

VI

The 1960s and Contemporary Times

1960 marked a point where Zen became an overt aspect of the arts in New York. By the mid-sixties more than a score of Zen groups, inspired by Soyen Shaku, Sokei-an, Senzaki, and DT Suzuki, had opened centers for learning and meditation. In New York, the First Zen Institute moved into a brownstone on East Thirtieth street under the leadership of Mary Farkas, whose Zen Notes kept track of the emerging scene. In 1967 the Reverend Nakajima, a young Soto priest who had studied in Ceylon, held Zazen in the upper West side. There were Zen groups in Philadelphia, Boston, Washington DC, Chicago, San Francisco and Hawaii. In Los Angeles, by 1967, Maezumi-sensei's group was expanding and in 1968 incorporated to become the Zen Center of Los Angeles. Meanwhile Joshu Sasaki -roshi also began to teach in Los Angeles. The youth of the sixties made its way to the Soto Zen Mission in San Francisco to sit and learn zazen. Shunryu Suzuki told his untutored students to realize that they did

¹⁰⁰Kostelanetz, Stereo Review

not know anything. He stated "In the Beginner's mind, there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few." 101

Tai Shemano-sansei went to New York on New Year's Eve 1964 and found an apartment on the Upper West Side. He began meeting with a small group in a practice room at the American Buddhist Academy. He had known Sokei-an in the forties and DT Suzuki while Suzuki was at Columbia and the group gradually grew. By 1965 Philip Kapleau had returned, after 13 years in Japan, and had published The Three Pillars of Zen in Japan. Chester and Doris Carlson read the book, were impressed and invited Kapleau to visit with them in Rochester, New York. In 1966 Kapleau founded the Zen Meditation Center which became based in Rochester, New York. Increasingly, Kapleau westernized his zendo with English versions of sutras, western style dress designed for sitting comfort and Western Buddhist names. He even asked Yasutani-roshi to translate the Heart Sutra into English in order to make it more accessible to Americans. On July 4, 1976 sesshin from all over the world came to the Catskills in New York State to mark the opening of Dai Bosatsu, the first traditional Japanese style Zen monastery in America. The monastery cost more than three million dollars and was modeled after an ancient monastery in Japan that was now a National Treasure

Yet, the nature of the Zen inspired environment was quite different from the days of Kerouac and Snyder in their shacks. The "Zen Boom" had happened and the spiritual atmosphere of the

101 Fields, p. 230

new generation was eclectic. It was the generation that grew up with Vietnam, and South East Asian wars, which as Sokei-an Sasaki had remarked at the beginning of World War II, have a way of bringing countries together. Vietnam was primarily a Buddhist country. There were mahayanists who had come from China, Zen sects as well as a Theravadian influence from Southeast Asia. Vietnamese Buddhists had become visible participants in the struggle. They offered a real alternative of which the United States had taken notice. The State Department opened an Office of Buddhist Affairs headed by Richard Gard, the Buddhist scholar from Claremont, California, who had been instrumental in bringing Suzuki to the United States. Gard was requested to brief the Secretary of State, Henry Cabot Lodge, on Buddhism. This was the first time that someone in Washington seemed actively sympathetic to Buddhism and Eastern ideas since the days when William Sturgis Bigelow had given his close friend, Theodore Roosevelt, a copy of The Religion of the Samurai along with advice on Japanese affairs.¹⁰² In 1963 Lodge agreed to meet with Japanese and Vietnamese Buddhists. The plight of the Buddhists in Vietnam came to the attention of the general public and mass media on May 11, 1963 with the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc in Saigon. Self-immolation was a rarely used Buddhist practice that had come from China for those who had reached the highest state of

¹⁰² William Sturgis Bigelow was a cousin of Henry Cabot Lodge

meditative perfection.¹⁰³ On May 11, 1963 it was used as an act of martyrdom in Saigon to draw attention to the unpublicized fact that over twenty- thousand Buddhist monks had been rounded up to be killed by the government. Rather than be killed at the hands of the government they resorted to self-immolation during a meditative state. The image of the Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, sitting in meditation, hands clasped in a mudra and his body ablaze became the ultimate symbol of the anguish of the war. This horrifying scene was dramatically brought to American homes via newspapers, magazines, and television. The publicity prompted a United Nations delegation to go to Vietnam to investigate the persecution of the Buddhist monks. The monks were released before the delegation even arrived! Many Americans continued to protest the persecution of Buddhists with sit-ins and demonstrations.

The influence was widely felt in all aspects of American culture. Sokoji and its American counterpart was the San Francisco Zen Center near Haight- Ashbury. Their publication, the San Francisco Oracle included the ideas of Walt Whitman, American Indians, Shiva, Kali, Buddha, Tarot, Astrology, Zen, and Tantra. They printed the Heart Sutra with a two page spread of the Zen Center version with psychedelic borders, replete with naked goddesses. Kerouac wanted nothing to do with this new generation of Zen enthusiasts. Snyder, Ginsburg, Ferlinghetti and Michael

¹⁰³Heinz Bechert and Vu Duy-Tu "Buddhism In Vietnam" The Cultural, Political and Religious Significance of Buddhism in The Modern World H. Damoulin and J. Moraldo eds., (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1976) p. 182

McClure, on the other hand, met at the first Be-In at Golden Gate Park. Even Shunryu-roshi appeared briefly, holding a single flower, along with Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert. Timothy Leary, a former Harvard professor, recast the verses of the Tao Te Ching into a book called Psychedelic Prayers and had taken the Bardo Thodol, the Tibetan Book of The Dead as a guidebook. Influenced by Timothy Leary and Gary Snyder's ideas many participants took LSD as a way to become clearer about the Sutras, Bhagavad Gita and their inner beings. Even D.T. Suzuki in an article entitled "Buddhism and Drugs", which appeared in The Eastern Buddhist, warned that the popularity of LSD "has reached a point where university professors organize groups of mystical drug takers with the intention of forming an international society of those who seek 'internal freedom'.... All this sounds dreamy indeed yet they are so serious in their intention, that Zen people cannot simply ignore their movements."¹⁰⁴

In 1967 Robert Aitken bought a house on the island of Maui in anticipation of his retirement from the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii. Many youths had begun to flock to Maui and Aitken came to know them well. Those from the "yogic end of the counter-culture had a consuming interest in illuminative religion, a sense of wholeness and essence, a love of nature, a devotion to poverty and asceticism, a sensitivity to one another, and a desire to 'get on', that is to practice rather than simply

¹⁰⁴DT Suzuki "Drugs and Buddhism-A Symposium" The Eastern Buddhist vol IV no. 2 Oct 1971 p. 129

talk."¹⁰⁵. At the Eastern Buddhist symposium Aitken was the only contributor who also saw fit to mention the fact that the "Summer of Love" and the drug culture associated with it had occurred during a long and unpopular war in the Far East. "We must raise such questions and accept the likelihood that severe social stress may prompt experimentation..."¹⁰⁶

During this period, beginning in 1965, many more exhibitions of Oriental art appeared. "Yomato-e" was an exhibition at the LA County Museum, while Ancient Sculpture from India was on view at the Metropolitan Museum, and the Singer Collection of Chinese Objects appeared at Asia House Gallery in New York. The Beatles came out with Rubber Soul in which "Love You Too" incorporated Indian instrumentation and "Norwegian Wood" was sung with a sitar. In August of 1966 the US ratified an agreement with seven other nations to charter the Asian Development Bank, and in 1967 alone over 11,000 Hong Kong Chinese emigrated to the US. The Montreal World's Fair held a Kabuki performance and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi with Transcendental Meditation became the spiritual leader of the Beatles. Bruce Lee became the star of the movies showing old fashioned values of good versus evil with a distinctly Oriental flair for correcting the ills.¹⁰⁷. Sri

¹⁰⁵ Robert Aitken "LSD And The New American Student" The Eastern Buddhist ¹⁰⁵, vol IV no. 2 (Oct 1971) pp 141-143

¹⁰⁶ Robert Aitken, Taking the Path of Zen, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982), p. 141

¹⁰⁷ "Swish! Thwack! Kung Fu Film Market", The New York Times June 16, 1973

Chinmoy gave a concert at the Indian Cultural Center in New York and the Beatles' Sergeant Peppers Album was filled with Indian instrumentation as well as claims to have been based on Eastern thought . In 1970 there were six major exhibitions on Oriental Art including the John D. Rockefeller Oriental Collections at Asia Society and Masterpieces at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Traditions of Japanese Art at Fogg Art Museum , Harvard.

As the 1970s began, the United States was moving into Laos, yet lifted restrictions on travel to China, removed a 21 year embargo on trade with China and voted to give the People's Republic of China a seat on the United Nations Security Council while there was an increased immigration of Asians. There were an estimated 400,000 Asians in NYC alone by 1980. The Concert for Bangladesh, to help those suffering after the secession from Pakistan, featured Indian music by Ravi Shankar and was produced by George Harrison of the Beatles. The 1972 Winter Olympics were held in Sapporo, Japan and all eyes for a few days focussed on Japan. Sri Chinmoy published poems, while the Metropolitan Museum held an exhibition of Chinese Calligraphy as well as an exhibit entitled "Beyond the Great Wall of China" in 1973, and in 1974 "New Visions of Classical China" was held at the National Gallery in Washington D.C.. The Tibetan Dalai Lama went on a ten-nation tour to show Buddhism to the Western World in 1974 while in 1975 Sun Myung Moon from Korea organized the Unification Church

By the mid nineteen-seventies the Far East was firmly

planted on American soil. The Far East, the Orient, its philosophies and religions which melded together in the minds of the artists to form what seemed to be a viable alternative. Asia, specifically Japan, India, China, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos had become an integral part of the Anglo-American mind. Few could deny its prevailing influence in every aspect of our culture. It seemed that the Eastern infiltration had come a long way since Commodore Perry or Fenollosa first went to Japan one hundred years earlier. Indeed as one critic has noted,

...Japanese influence and Japanese commodities have become so much a part of American life as to be taken for granted. Who any longer pauses to reflect, when confronted with paper napkins, paper handkerchiefs, or paper packaging, how surprised Commodore Perry was when he first encountered these items in Japan or that they figured so prominently among the gifts and curios brought back to the United States in 1854... The Japanese influence has made a permanent imprint upon the American way of life.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸Clay Lancaster, Japanese Influence in America, (NY:Abbeville Press 1983), second edition, p. ix

CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ART

I want to stitch a thread of connection ... and go back to far earlier work with it. Make a narrative. Claim a development in retrospect. Invent history. The thread of this historical narrative will pass through certain types of emptiness -- focused zones of space whose aspects are qualitatively different from objects."

-- Robert Morris 109

There was a time when people were interested in the bronze sheath of the Statue of Liberty, modeled in the studio. And then there came a time when artists were not really concerned with the bronze sheath but were interested in Eiffel's iron interior structure, supporting the statue. Now artists are interested in Bedloe's Island.

-- Carl Andre¹¹⁰

In the wake of the cultural turbulence of the nineteen sixties and seventies, artists looked not only to alternative philosophies but to an alternative way to express their ideas. A growing disenfranchisement with the materialism in our society was reflected in a growing rejection of the art object. Indeed, the Renaissance tradition in art had been predominantly about

¹⁰⁹Robert Morris, "Present Tense of Space", Art In America vol. 66, Jan 1978, p. 70

¹¹⁰ quoted in Marcia Tucker "Shared Spaces: Contemporary Sculpture and Its Environment", 200 Years of American Sculpture, N.Y., Whitney Museum, p. 215

objects. Art was analyzed in terms of the aesthetics of the particular object -- its shape, size, color. It was not about experience, perception, or scale.

"The Revolution that might raise sculpture up from its present impotency", wrote E.C. Goossen in 1958, "is long overdue and if it occurred might melt down virtually all that sculpture itself had held sacred through its long and once glorious history." The elimination of that "sacred object" has been the revolution. In the European tradition art was anthropocentric. Art and Nature were conceived of as two separate entities. Western art sought an objective portrayal of physical reality from a fixed perspective. But as we continued to create man-made objects with a total disregard of nature, contaminating our environment, destroying rivers, and polluting the air, artists sought to re-capture nature, to learn from it and to in turn create a viable alternative art form that looked past the idea of the statue as a revered object distinct from the land on which it stood.

In the early 1950s Robert Rauschenberg was probing the boundaries when he created "earth paintings" which incorporated soil and grass. In the early 1960s Yves Klein sought to have his art interact with the environment by exposing the paintings to the effects of wind and rain. He also produced sculptures from natural sponges, and made reliefs which imitated natural geologic

formations.¹¹¹ Artists such as Robert Smithson or Michael Heizer preferred to not contribute to the overabundance of art objects that they felt existed. They decided to use the "real space" of the American West and wanted to "create without creating a thing."¹¹² The artists sought to negate the art object as a commodity and to de-centralize the art world away from New York. The artists reacted against "disengaged" objects that had no place of their own, and that failed to belong to any one space. These structures began inside the galleries but were enlarged, expanded, and transformed to exterior sites.

The art that the artists then created was no longer concerned with the object or its structure but rather with the experiences of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision. They created an art form that had presence, approaching theatre when it enveloped the viewer,¹¹³ propelling the viewer to become a participant. More importantly, the artist became a part of the environs in which he lived, a part of nature, creating what we now refer to as Environmental Art.

¹¹¹ Jeffrey Wechsler "Response to the Environment" Alan Sonfist, ed., Art and the Environment p. 260.

¹¹² Michael Heizer, quoted in Hayden Herrera, "Michael Heizer Paints a Picture" Art in America 62 (November-December 1974): p. 92

¹¹³ see E. C. Goossen "The End Of the Object" Art International, 1959, and Michael Fried "Art And Objecthood", Artforum 1967

I

Definitions

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1943) defines the word environment as:

1. act of environing; state of being environed
- 2: That which environs; surroundings; specifically the aggregate of all the external conditions and influences affecting the life and development of an organism.

In this case the "organism" is sculpture.

A more updated version, Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary continues to define the term similarly:

1. something that environs: surroundings
- 2a: the complex of climate, edifice, and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival
- b: the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community"

This definition leads to a more sociological versus purely biological interpretation of the term. Thomas Ford Houalt's Dictionary of Modern Sociology (1977) defines environment as :

- ...all the external conditions, physical and socio-cultural, which can influence an individual or group; sometimes used to denote physical surroundings as distinguished from the socio-cultural; when employed in the general sense, often used synonymously with milieu.
Environmental art, similarly, must deal with all the "external conditions, physical and/or socio-cultural".

Environmental art, as referred to in this text, is an art form

which is complex despite its frequently minimalist imagery. It surrounds and is surrounded, influenced by the very space of which it belongs and influencing our perception of that space. It becomes an integral part of that space. It is wedded to its site and would become a different work of art if it were moved to another site.

The sculpture, in this case, is no longer an object, although it may contain objects; the spaces which are devoid of objects are as critical to the work of art as are the physical objects. The sculptural project contains spaces charged with energy. When viewing an object, the viewer and object occupy separate spaces. While in architectural space, one's own space is not separate but a part of the perceived space. E.C. Goossen noted in 1958, "The re-association of sculpture and architecture, at least a truce between them, could make the difference..."¹¹⁴ The artists creating environmental art are creating a revolutionary forum for perceiving one's own space as well as the space that is perceived. The historical questions prompted by the differences between sculpture and architecture, between the object and the container have coalesced; the contemporary artist has sought options beyond the container and the contained autonomous object. They have looked to new materials for options and old materials for an alternative. They have turned to

¹¹⁴E.C. Goossen "End of the Object" Art International, November 1959

primitive art forms and an age old empathy with the land.

II

Art Historical Precedents For Environmental Art: Primitivism to Modernism

A fundamental dissatisfaction with society, inspired many American artists to search art history for inspiration and many of them looked to primitive art for solutions. In environmental works of art one can see parallels with Stonehenge, honduran and Mayan structures as well as of Japanese gardens. Land projects by artists such as Richard Long, Walter DeMaria, and David Nash have very specific connections with prehistoric structures oriented to the solstice and astrological events as well as to the Nazca line, or the Indian mounds. The contemporary artists seem to have developed an innate appreciation of nature similar to that which guided primitive artists. Robert Goldwater, in "Romantic Primitivism" noted the use of such models from outside the tradition of Western art as early as 1938. "Free to convey to the viewer more basic, universal eternal sensations, the intention of primitive art was less the imitation of nature than the presentation of ideas."

We are at the early stages of an attempt to understand this pre-history. Lucy Lippard noted :

Art must have begun as nature itself -- not as an imitation of nature, not as a formalized representation of it, but as the relationship between humans and the natural world, from which we can't be separated despite our attempts to set up a

technological superstructure to destroy it.... Nature in Western civilization has consistently been linked to the wild, to the unconscious and the irrational, to childhood and to the sexual, sensuous deepest self, to the sources of meaning that continually escape us.¹¹⁵

Indeed, there are precedents in art history of works of art that went beyond being objects in niches or on pedestals. The Greeks concentrated on the religious/symbolic idols of their ideals and created environments for them in the form of temples. The Romans created monumental commemorative works such as the Arch of Constantine and Trajan's Column. The scale of each of these non-architectural structures turned it and its space into an environment. Bernini's plaza outside St. Peter's Cathedral is neither architecture nor sculpture; it is an environment. Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini consistently created some of the most elaborate non-object sculptures. The spaces and niches which he created for his works are as important to the idea as the object itself. For example, the natural light coming in and reflecting on the sculpted light rays in the "Ecstasy of St Theresa" are integral to and part of the piece. Andre Le Notre's garden park at Versailles is an environment because the sum of its parts is more important than any one of its elements.

In America, as elsewhere, during the nineteenth century there was a proliferation of outdoor public sculptures which were monuments to public taste, clearly isolated as objects on pedestals. These were not the precedents for environmental art.

¹¹⁵Lucy Lippard "Gardens: Some Metaphors for a Public Art" Art In America, November, 1981

The real attempts to create environments can be found in the panoramas of Robert Fulton, Morse, and Peale who in 1785 created a landscape show box-- a miniature moving picture. In 1804, Trumbull created a panorama of Niagara Falls and Vanderlyn created the first circular panorama seen in America with his "Versailles". Robert Burford created panoramas in Catherwoods, N.Y.. His Rotunda, included views of Jerusalem, and of Niagara Falls. The trend reflected the vastness of the United States and the newly built railroad. John Banvard's panorama of the Mississippi River was probably the most famous. In the 1860s the moving panorama developed-- they rolled from drum to drum and were accompanied by a talk and a brochure. These panoramas took hours to unroll and contained many views. They were also accompanied by sound.

Other "painters" would seek to create a more intimate and experiential encounter. The Hudson River painters such as Church, or Cole's sequential series surrounded us with ideas and multiple views confounding our usual solitary image of a place. They created large canvasses with extraordinary detail. Large paintings were also presented theatrically. For example Frederick Church's "Heart of the Andes" (see fig. 3) incorporated black curtains, gas lamps and tropical vegetation (1859). In all, these unique works of art sought to give the viewer a vicarious experience of nature. They sought to change the role of the spectator to the role of participant. As each of the senses was bombarded with input, the gestalt experience became more

important than any single aspect of the actual visual image. As we studied them we were not only experiencing the expansive landscape but drawn in to study the minute details so that the experience became an intimate one.

Similarly, painters in the twentieth century took away the frame while sculptors took away the pedestal. The Abstract Expressionists, for example, made the painting big enough to require our binocular vision as well as peripheral vision in order to experience (rather than see) the canvas. Scale became the question in painting as much as it was in sculpture. E. C. Goossen wrote of the issue of the big canvas and Abstract Expressionism. He stated:

Almost as much as the Pyramids, it speaks of itself and itself alone. It is no longer a window to a world, but the world, immanent and autonomous. 116

The overpowering physicality of the Abstract Expressionist canvas created an intimate experience of the sublime -- the sublime as defined by Edmund Burke as power, vastness, limitlessness. 117 Certain of the Abstract Expressionists such as Rothko, Newman and Still, created environments rather than easel paintings (art objects) (fig 17,18). In their quest to create an environment, several artists sought to have paintings hung together so that cumulatively the works would form an environment. This can be

116 EC Goossen "The Big Canvas", Art International 1958

117 Christopher Hussey The Picturesque (New York and London, Putnam's 1927) reprinted Hamden Conn.: Arcon books, 1967) pp 58-59

seen in the Rothko chapel and Newman's Stations of the Cross.
 "... not to overpower the spectator but to make him aware of an
 experience which can transcend a purely aesthetic emotion." 118
 Artists such as Barnett Newman saw Abstract Expressionism as a
 means to reestablishing a connection between man and nature.
 Barnett Newman similarly wrote of Theodoros Stamos that stamos:

reveals an attitude toward nature that is closer to true
 communion ... He re-defines the pastoral experience as one
 of participation with the inner life of the natural
 phenomenon... 119

Newman created voids punctuated by the first marks of creative
 expression through the zips. These artists display a concern for
 space, vastness and silence. They reasserted man's natural desire
 for the exalted, or a relationship with the absolute emotions to
 free himself from impediments of memory, nostalgia, legend, the
 myths of Western European painting. Similarly then, the Hudson
 River/ Rocky Mountain painters, Luminists and Abstract
 Expressionists have polarities of calm and exaltation using the
 panoramic scale of the canvasses.

The painter Agnes Martin expressed the relationship between
 the metaphysical content in painting and earth art. She wrote:

I had an inspiration about a land thing ... It was going to
 be like a Zen garden, or at least something like it, but
 with absolutely nothing alive in it. We have a lot of
 interesting materials where I live [Galisteo, New Mexico].

118 E.C. Goossen, "The End of the Object" Art International
 November, 1959, p. 42

119 From the announcement of an exhibition at Betty Parsons
 Gallery, 1947, quoted in Ralph Pomeroy Stamos (N.Y.: Abrams,
 1974)p. 19

The mountains are volcanic, and there are lot of different kinds of land, some of it very light and very white. I was only going to let the people in this construction one at a time, and if their response to the silence would be good, then I would consider the structure successful. ¹²⁰
 This kind of experiential, direct perception of a work of art is paramount to those artists who have moved beyond the object to the experience.

III

The Twentieth Century

And The First Artists of Environmental Art

Central Park or Prospect Park by Olmstead and Vaux may be considered early examples of earthwork projects(fig. 19). Allowing for an interchange between man and the environment; the park in the city is a viable metaphor for public environmental art. Rudolf Steiner's " Goethenaemum" (1914-1920) coordinated the arts in order to create a total sense of space in Dornauch, Switzerland while Kurt Schwitters ," Merzhaus" (1924-1933) in Hanover, Germany is another early Twentieth century attempt to create an environment. However, Frederic Kiesler, Herbert Ferber, Herbert Bayer, and Isamu Noguchi were among the first artists to consciously seek to create environmental art projects and constitute the early phase of this movement. Working from the

¹²⁰John Gruen "Agnes Martin" Art News 75 (September 1976): 93

middle of the Twentieth century, they moved the object off the pedestal and sought to involve, activate and integrate the object into the real space of the spectator/participant. The art surrounds and was surrounded, influenced by the space in which it existed, heightening the spectators very perception of that space.

Frederick Kiesler (1896-1965) came to the US in 1926 to create an exhibition of theatre techniques. He was a pioneer in combining theatre, film, painting and architecture and was mostly concerned with creating a total design. In 1942 he set designed the gallery for the Surrealism exhibition at Peggy Guggenheim's gallery. In 1947 "Blood Flames", an exhibit at Hugo Gallery, was an exhibition in which Kiesler painted walls, floors, and ceilings with meandering bands and organic shapes and then asked for viewer participation. The 1947 International Surrealist Expo in Paris consisted of a honeycomb maze of exhibitors, which sought to include an atmosphere of water and earth -- synthesizing levels of human perception. Kiesler's lifelong project was his Endless House. Made up of a series of cave like structures and organic forms, he called it "a living organism with a very sensitive nervous system." Its amorphous forms refer to countless myths to be inhabited by several generations at once. "There is no beginning and no end ." ¹²¹ This attitude can

¹²¹Frederick Kiesler Inside the Endless House: Art, People and Architecture (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1964) p. 566

also be seen in Galaxy of 1951 (fig. 20).

Herbert Bayer believed in the totality of design and worked in graphics, painting, architecture and earthworks -- creating perhaps one of the first contemporary earthwork projects.

Born in Austria, Bayer had little formal art training but greatly admired the work of the Viennese Seccessionists and Viennese workshops. In 1919 he moved to Darmstadt Germany where he became familiar with Wasily Kandinsky, Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus. Bayer has always considered the years when he became associated with Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus, his formative years.

As political conditions in Germany worsened during the thirties Bayer felt compelled to move to the United States, specifically to New York. In the mid- forties Bayer moved to Aspen Colorado to help in the development and structuring of that town . Aspen invited Bayer to become a part of what Bayer considered to be the highest aim of an artist -- the visual shaping of a community. The Goethe bicentennial celebration in 1949 became the nucleus for an annual music festival, school and the founding of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies.¹²² In 1955 Bayer created, on the Institute grounds, a park and series of earth mounds linked to create a total environment, working on every detail from the grounds to the buildings and signs.(fig.

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The Institute is a meeting place for scholars,educators,philosophers and business people.

21 a-f). Bayer began with a mound which was forty feet in diameter. Inside he placed a circular garden that can be seen from the top berm of the outer circle or on the inside of a turn on the main road. He then worked on the marble garden adjacent to it , probably using marble from a well known nearby quarry.¹²³ Trenches for the water carried from the nearby mountains meander through the spaces and around birch trees and under bridges to the other areas of the site where there are additional mounds and land depressions, scattered pieces of marble surrounded by brush and/or trees. Bayer called his work an "Environmental Design". Site-specific, it hovers between, " the Japanese garden tradition and today's earth art proposals"
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It is unclear as to how much Bayer may have known about Japanese gardens but friends and close associates of his have remembered that he was an admirer of things Oriental.¹²⁵ Moreover, his associate Walter Gropius, wrote extensively about Japanese architecture and included his comments in a book entitled Katsura : Tradition and Creation.¹²⁶ (Katsura is perhaps one of the most famous and lavishly preserved of the Japanese

¹²³This was suggested to me by the Artist Brad Davis who also lives in Aspen Co.

¹²⁴Marlborough Catalog , Herbert Bayer np

¹²⁵ Interview with his Aspen art Gallery representative, April 1986

¹²⁶According to Patricia Johanson, Tony Smith used to talk about Katsura at great length and was also a fan of Gropius. Correspondence between the author and Johanson, March 1987.

palaces.) The book by Gropius on Katsura was on Bayer's book shelf and is now part of his archives in Denver, Colorado. In this book about Katsura Gropius accentuated the various points about Japanese aesthetics and vision. Gropius wrote that, "East and West must adapt their attitudes and enrich each other, discarding what is weak and obsolete on both sides." He goes on to state that, "We can understand the architecture of nations and periods only as we win an inside knowledge of their way of thinking and philosophy."

Gropius also discussed Zen in his book and stated:

There is something extraordinary in the fact that Japanese culture, which has had centuries of time to ripen and to go through various stages without being interrupted by foreign domination and influence, has culminated in a cult of utter simplicity and austerity. One point of the Zen philosophy interests me particularly, namely, that it considers art impulses more basic, more innate than those of morality and therefore of primary and more permanent importance.

The Zen "abhorrence of purely intellectual reasoning" and their "emphasis on spontaneous response to direct experience", Walter Gropius saw these ideas as strikingly similar to his own Bauhaus concepts.¹²⁷

Our angle of vision has been narrow, because we are interested in the small segments which make up the wholeHe states that by contrast Japanese architecture gives a special view. At most there is a mood which seems to give unity amid the temporal flow; almost never is there an attempt to stop time, as a memorial plaque might stop it¹²⁸ Bayer's environmental art projects which he created for Aspen, Colorado and Bayer's later work in Seattle, Washington are one of the earliest attempts to create an environmental art

¹²⁷Walter Gropius "Architecture In Japan" Katsura pp 204-206

¹²⁸Katsura "Forward"

project and reveal an interest in Eastern philosophy, Japanese gardens, and architecture. Bayer's projects embody many of the principles that Gropius espoused. The Aspen project is made up of a variety of elements, small segments which make up the whole. There is a unity amid a temporal flow as one walks through the site. The segments are comprised of earth, stone, water, and trees -- elements critical to a Japanese Garden. The stone, or marble in this case, is local stone quarried and saved for its timeless quality. It is P'u, the uncarved block, simplicity, purity and left with infinite potentiality. Water runs through the site, linking the disparate elements. The most favorite simile in Taoism is water. The Tao Te Ching notes that "Water of all things most yielding can overwhelm (rock) which is of all things most hard." ¹²⁹ The depressions and mounds create a parallel to the T'ai Chi image which is the paradigm symbol for the unity of the opposites in Eastern philosophy. These represent the polarities of the universe. Each turn in the bend as one moves through the site, provides different encapsualized views of the site. Like the Japanese garden, Bayer has created a condensed view of the universe into a single span. The simple components of the site-specific work are austere and yet they evoke a direct response. They ask for involvement in the piece as the spectator climbs through, walks over and contemplates the spaces. The work is ever-changing and yet it is marked by understatement and restraint. The Zen love of Nature is not its tranquility but

¹²⁹Tao Te Ching, chapter 43, p. 21

that Nature is always in motion, never at a standstill. "...if Nature is to be loved", wrote D.T. Suzuki, " it must be caught while moving and in this way its aesthetic value must be appraised." ¹³⁰ Bayer revealed a strong attachment to nature in a statement he made soon after the Aspen project was completed. He wrote:

Western man, especially in his advance in a westerly direction, has degenerated in his outlook on nature as a source from material exploitation. Our recent history shows us depleting these resources with greediness. Today we realize that the uncontrolled pursuit of this aim must end in exhaustion and disaster, however able man may be to invent substitutes. On the other hand, we try to preserve our wilderness areas and playgrounds for man's recreation with community and civic action.....pagan religions made natural phenomenon into personified gods expressing man's awe before all that man had not made. If a religious, man-to-nature relationship was lost in the wake of progress, then we must capture and develop a balanced attitude between our outlook on the man-made and on the natural. In respecting nature, it will continue to be magical and poetic, beautiful if many times cruel; the artist will not imitate nature but create a spiritual world of itself.¹³¹

Caught between nature and progress Bayer's work reveals his dilemma as he sought to balance these polarities, respect nature and create a spiritual environment. Like Zen art, his art forces our mind to move beyond the surface images, to internalize and perceive the forms. The art tries to bring us in touch with a portion of ourselves that we avoid. It appeals to our non-rational, non-verbal side. As in Zen, the lesson of this art is to experience rather than "see" and analyze.

¹³⁰DT Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, p. 361

¹³¹Alexander Dorner, The Way Beyond Art: Herbert Bayer, 1949

Herbert Ferber was, in both his figurative and abstract work, concerned with the play of light upon the forms in order to create a sense of dimensionality . In the early fifties he began incorporating "calligraphs" into his sculptures, and according to his biographer, revealed at least a cursory knowledge of Oriental calligraphy.

These seem to have been derived from the cursive and running scripts of the Sung and Ming dynasties (960-1644A.D.). These modes unlike Chinese or Roman script laid print-like in a grid, are both expressionistic and three dimensional...To illiterate Western eyes such calligraphy, without its verbal meanings, appears purely abstract. Ferber found in the calligraph a way beyond earlier biomorphic forms and an answer to constructivist and cubist geometry. That he discovered calligraphy strictly on his own is unlikely; it was indeed au courant in painting during the forties -- in the Sumi sources of Mark Tobey's "white writing", in Pollock's linear webs, in Kline's black brushed paintings as well as those of Motherwell, and, by implication in the ideogrammatic pictures of Torres-Garcia and Adolph Gottlieb. But Ferber was the only sculptor of that period to press calligraphic shapes into the service of three dimensional art.¹³²

In 1961 Ferber combined his roofed sculptures and calligraphic strokes into an environmental work. Influenced by a new attitude toward space, suggested by the theatre in the round and John Cage's music, (which contained spaces between the sounds), as well as the large scale of the Abstract Expressionist canvases, Ferber created a sculpture in which the viewer could participate in the piece, to surround and be surrounded by it (fig. 22 a-h). He began with mockups, which he destroyed as soon as they were photographed. However, in March 1961 upon the

¹³²EC Goossen Herbert Ferber (N.Y.: Abbeville Press, 1981), p. 82

invitation of John I. H. Paur, Ferber created the Sculpture as Environment at the Whitney Museum . Ferber invited the viewer/participant to move through the forms. The piece was shown at the Whitney and later installed at Rutgers University. It was perhaps the first environmental art project to receive recognition as a viable art form. George Dennison a member of the college administration who had initially opposed the construction of the piece at Rutgers, sent a letter to Ferber after it was installed. He likened it to a Zen garden and noted that it turned him inward upon himself. He wrote of the spirit of the place.

Your room, like the garden, doesn't ask to be looked at, its all presence and place, and gives itself -- no questions asked -- to those who need this calm, just this lucidity, and just this rational and highly- structured pause.¹³³

Christmas Humphreys wrote that "... the West needs Zen and Japan has it. But the West must have Zen without its Japanese clothing, as soon as Western clothing can be made for it." ¹³⁴ Herbert Ferber was one of the early artists, along with Bayer who found Western clothing for an art steeped in experience and direct perception. They helped pave the way for the generation of artists who became steeped in Eastern philosophical ideas and turned to outdoor Environmental art.

¹³³Letter dated Jan 4, 1969 from George Dennison to Herbert Ferber, quoted in EC Goossen, Herbert Ferber, p. 209-210

¹³⁴Christmas Humphreys, Zen Comes West (London: Curzon Press, 1960, reprint 1970,) p.33

Perhaps the most critical link between East and West as well as from Object to Environment can be found in the work of Isamu Noguchi.

From an American point of view, he [Noguchi] is probably regarded as an artist of Oriental nature, but from our judgement of his works we detect a considerable amount of Western elements foreign to us....Underlying his Japanese works there is the logic, or the illogic of Western construction...."¹³⁵

This statement by the Japanese critic Shuzo Takiguchi reveals Noguchi's ability to merge these disparate cultures.

The Japanese-American sculptor was born in 1904 in the United States to a Japanese father and a Scotch, Irish, American Indian mother and then spent his childhood (until age 13) in Japan. After two years at Columbia University, he attended, in 1923, the Leonardo Da Vinci school in Greenwich Village where he studied sculpture. Noguchi studied with Gutzon Borglum and Brancusi and by 1933 began designing large scale environments. Noguchi worked as Brancusi's assistant while in Paris on a Guggenheim Fellowship during 1927. He found in Brancusi an attitude toward nature akin to that of the Japanese. "Brancusi, like the Japanese, would take the quintessence of nature and distill it, "¹³⁶ Noguchi later wrote. He sought "a larger, more fundamentally sculptural purpose for sculpture, a more direct expression of Man's relation to the earth and to his

¹³⁵quoted in Sam Hunter Noguchi N/Y.: Abbeville Press, p. 101

¹³⁶ quoted in Sam Hunter, Isamu Noguchi, p.35

environment."¹³⁷ Noguchi also spent a month in the British Library preparing for his trip to the orient."¹³⁸ The artist recalls a conversation he had with D T Suzuki about Japanese Gardens while on a train between Kyoto and Tokyo.¹³⁹ Noguchi's mind was open for all kinds of ideas and craved all the information he could obtain.

Noguchi travelled in Japan from 1930-31 and studied brush painting and pottery, returning there for the first time since his youth and concentrated on Zen. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s he began to be recognized as an acclaimed artist (although he met with little financial success). While in Japan he discovered the Japanese garden, its rocks, sand, and moss, water and trees. These would have a profound influence on him. He noted that:

In Japan the rocks in a garden are so planted as to suggest a protuberance from the primordial mass below. Every rock gains enormous weight, and the whole garden might be said to be a sculpture, whose roots are joined way below.¹⁴⁰

Ryoan-ji would become Noguchi's model for many environmental projects.

Noguchi began making proposals for environmental works as early as 1933. His first land project was Play Mountain created in 1933. In the opening pages of his autobiography Noguchi mentioned the influence that the Japanese playgrounds,

¹³⁷Noguchi, A Sculptors World, p.159

¹³⁸Noguchi A Sculptor's World, N.Y.: 1968), p.18

¹³⁹ Noguchi, A Sculptor's World (N.Y.: 1968) p. 40

¹⁴⁰Noguchi, p. 40

gardens and open spaces had on him and his fears of a "vacancy space".¹⁴¹ Monument to Plough was a part of the American fascination with the grand spaces of the west, that idea of the sublime that had captivated the nineteenth century landscape painters. He planned to place a huge stainless-steel plow on a one mile wide mound in the middle of a vast prairie. Noguchi said of the proposal "The model indicated my wish to belong to America, to its vast horizons of earth."¹⁴²

During this period he formed a close relationship with Martha Graham and did many stage sets for her and for Merce Cunningham. In this way he created functional indoor environments which were fully participatory. He had eliminated the object by using light and space. In Cave of the Heart 1946 (fig. 23) Noguchi created a striking corollary between Zen ideas and monuments by incorporating into the set a large rough hewn rock from which Graham performed while attached to a wire sculpture that represented the sun. Combined with the stones that form a natural bridge to the rock the set became a Japanese garden. Diane Apostolos Cappadona further noted that

...the dancer's relationship to the rocks is reminiscent of the Meoto-Iwa near Ise. This is the most sacred place where the male and female co-creator gods came to give birth to the islands of Japan. The "Wedded Rocks" are located in the shallow waters-- the place where the land meets the sea, where man's territory ends and infinity begins. The image of Graham 'attached' to the rock-sun may be said to have visual and symbolic reference to the "Wedded Rocks" at

¹⁴¹Whitney Museum, Noguchi, p. 13

¹⁴²quoted in Sam Hunter, Noguchi, p. 56

Ise.¹⁴³

In 1947, Noguchi, created his best known early environmental art proposal --Sculpture to be Seen From Mars(fig. 24) . Conceived of shortly after visiting the Great Serpent Indian Mounds in Ohio he proposed a series of pyramidal shapes, depressions and mounds which from an airplane or distance from the earth, (such as Mars), the earth mound sculpture would resemble a face. This was one of the earliest modern works to see the earth as the canvas and eliminate all semblance of objecthood.

The suicide of his friend Ashille Gorky deeply affected Noguchi. In an attempt to re-evaluate his own ideas he (through a Bollingen Foundation grant) took off for world travel to visit ancient sculpture at Stonehenge, Mayan and Egyptian sites and in the Asia. He wrote:

I was determined to get away from everything. The reasons I gave myself were varied. On the one hand, I had over the years developed a horror of the politics of art, the narrow outlook of critics and dealers with their pet discoveries and pat judgments (like the rites attending fashion , advertising and the Stock Exchange). I felt myself no part of this, and wanted no part of it. ¹⁴⁴

Noguchi's reasons for looking for alternative ideas and forms bear a striking resemblance to the reasons that the more contemporary artists looked to the East and the Environment.

¹⁴³Diane Apostolos Cappadona, "Stone As Centering: The Spiritual Sculptures of Isamu Noguchi", Art International

¹⁴⁴quoted in Sam Hunter, Noguchi, p. 69

Noguchi spent six months in India and Southeast Asia discovering the Eastern past and its monuments. He writes:

The evidence of the past attests to the place of sculpture in life and in the ritual of communion with spirit, with tranquility. Precepts of the Buddha, like the great temple of Borobudur, are a symphony of sculpture. There is no vaster concept of sculpture than the temples of Elora hewn out of the mother rock. Yet these were all part of a culture long dead. Do the ideas and aspirations that made them, apply to us still?¹⁴⁵

In 1950 Isamu Noguchi returned to Japan still asking the same question and seeking the relevancy of the Japanese gardens and the use of rough hewn rocks in our modern age. He was profoundly affected by the culture which now had to rebuild after a devastating defeat. He used what ever materials he found at hand to create his art and wrote, "Indeed, when all the possibilities of modern technologies are lost, one returns once more to basic things, to basic materials, to basic thoughts. One starts all over again and I think it's good." ¹⁴⁶

Noguchi's success and reputation crossed the globe between East and West. In 1952 he was commissioned to design two bridges for Hiroshima, a project which was part of the reconstruction of that devastated city. In 1956-8 he was asked to design a Garden at the UNESCO building in Paris. Noguchi has called this garden his "Ryoan-ji." The garden is in two parts an upper stone terrace with square seats and carved boulders and a lower area with mounded plantings, pools, as well as paved and grassy

¹⁴⁵quoted in Sam Hunter, Noguchi, p. 91

¹⁴⁶quoted in Sam Hunter , Noguchi, p. 92

areas. The garden has distinctly Japanese elements, natural stones and raked gravel/sand; some of the rocks were brought in from Japan.

He synthesized in the project a traditional Zen garden tradition with his own sense of formal abstraction combining cement blocks with the treasured rocks he found in Japan.

My effort was to find a way to link that ritual of rocks which comes down to us through the Japanese from the dawn of history to our modern time and needs. In Japan the worship of the stones changes into an appreciation of nature. The search for the essence of sculpture seems to carry me to the same end. ¹⁴⁷

Noguchi learned about the Japanese gardens first hand when he was commissioned in 1952 to create his first realized environmental work, a garden for the Readers Digest Building in Tokyo. Working with Uekiya, a professional Japanese gardener he learned about careful rock selection, the symbolic connotations of the elements of the garden and how to use them for his own expressive terms. His trip to Japan allowed him to "renew [his] contact with the earth."

By the 1960s Noguchi needed a larger studio so that he could work with larger stones -- boulders. This was set up in Long Island City where he now has a museum. He began his most productive period. Sky Mirror, was created in 1967. It is a piece of basalt which reflects the sky on its highly polished and slanted top bringing together the varied elements of the universe -- being one with the universe. The basalt is left rough on the

¹⁴⁷quoted in Sam Hunter Noguchi, p. 111

sides. The contrasts of smooth and rough are brought together. The Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza in NYC is economical in elements, using only a few eroded boulders scattered in a seemingly random pattern on concentric circles of granite which are raked (fig. 26). In the summer it is flooded with a shallow layer of water which spouts from two concentric rings of low jets.

Noguchi described the garden:

The chief feature in the Garden is the use of rocks in a non-traditional way. Instead of being part of the earth they burst forth, seeming to levitate out of the ground (at least that is the intention). The ground itself is contoured; it is man made, that is -- it is sculpture. The concentric patterns of the paving may be said to be like the contour raking of Japanese gardens, but they go back more to their Chinese origins of stylized sea waves. The rocks which here become the sculptures are natural. There is this transposition: an unnatural thing of will, as is our whole technological age -- like going to the moon. " 148

The garden bears resemblance to Zen gardens such as Ryoan-ji in its lack of plants and asymmetrical placement of forms as well as the incorporation of found rocks. The arrangement of bricks also echoes the raked sand of the Zen garden.

The garden for the Beinecke Library at Yale University (fig. 25) is comprised of a skin of translucent white Vermont marble with a simple pyramid, a carved ring and a cube perched on a point. It truly combines Eastern and Western elements, objects within an environment. Noguchi wrote of this project in his autobiography, :

The idea started from the sand mounds often found in Japanese temples. But soon the image of the astronomical gardens of India intruded, as did the more formal paving

¹⁴⁸Isamu Noguchi "New Stone Gardens", p.89

patterns of Italy. It became a dramatic landscape, one that is purely imaginary; it is nowhere yet somehow familiar. Its size is fictive, of infinite space or cloistered containment.¹⁴⁹

Hilton Kramer said of the Beinecke Garden, and the Chase Manhattan Plaza that they are "anti-monuments". They really give you a kind of release or spiritual retreat from this sort of overbearing insistent pressure on the monumental." ¹⁵⁰

The Great Rock of Inner Seeking, 1974 at the National Gallery of Art combines Zen ideas with Noguchi's private interpretations. This sculpture comes from Noguchi's desire to "know the stone from the inside out." Sabi and Wabi come together in this piece to create an environment of tranquility and detachment for inward contemplation. One's particularities are to dissolve into the universal experience of the stone. Noguchi stated "I want to find the stone within the stone, and to know the stone from the inside out."¹⁵¹ His concern is for the inner being, the essence of the stone, to know that inner spirit is characteristic of Zen aesthetics.

Noguchi reconciled the East and West. His earliest recollections of Japan are of the relationship with the earth, man and nature. He remembers the sea near his home, the potato fields, the sunsets, his small garden, making carvings out of cherry wood. He stated, "The promise of sculpture is to project

¹⁴⁹quoted in Sam Hunter, Noguchi, p. 152

¹⁵⁰quoted in Sam Hunter, Noguchi p. 154

¹⁵¹Hunter, p. 306

an inner presence into forms that can be recognized as important and meaningful in themselves. Art may be said to have a world of consciousness." Each of Noguchi's spaces invite contemplation and inward reflection. The objects as well as the gardens become an integral part of the space. We do not dwell on the traditional Taoist or Zen symbolism that might be in the work but we feel the space, and experience the ideas, experience Zen. Noguchi stated, "To me art is part of the environment -- it is an element in asymmetrical flux." ¹⁵² Noguchi would become the mentor the hero to many contemporary artists who see in him the freedom to experiment in their own way. No one copies Noguchi, and yet there is always a reverent respect for him.

Carl Andre, generally associated with the Minimalist aesthetic, was one of many contemporary artists who began to deal with experience and space. His work serves as an example of the influence that Eastern philosophical ideas had on contemporary art in general. His move away from the object also influenced many of the artists under discussion. He and Richard Serra are a representation of the link between the object and contemporary environmental land art. Andre admits to having been influenced by his reading of the Taoist text, Tao Te Ching, particularly in terms of his perception of positive and negative space. Lao Tzu, the author of the Tao Te Ching emphasizes the importance of "nothingness". A very well known verse from the Tao Te Ching

¹⁵²quoted in Sam Hunter Noguchi p. 154

follows:

Thirty spokes share one hub. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the cart. Knead clay in order to make a vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you have the use of the vessel. Cut out doors and windows in order to make a room. Adapt the nothing to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the room. Thus what we gain is Something, yet it is by virtue of Nothing that this can be put to use. ¹⁵³

Andre was also introduced to Oriental thought through Ezra Pound Haiku poetry texts and Japanese architecture.¹⁵⁴ He was also a great admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright.

In terms of the Minimalist quality of Andre's work " One could say that Andre has given up everything and yet he has given up nothing.. Andre's art is free to dwell upon the fundamental sources of reality."¹⁵⁵ Andre increasingly stopped cutting into his materials and began using standard units, activating the positive and negative space around them. By promoting unworked material as sculpture, Andre proposes the object's physical existence as an aesthetic phenomenon, regardless of whether an artist can be said to have made it."¹⁵⁶ He encourages us to view physical reality as an aesthetic phenomenon.

P'u the uncarved Block is a critical symbol in Taoist and

¹⁵³Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, translated with intro by D. C. Lau, Penguin Books Ltd., Baltimore 1963, p. 67

¹⁵⁴ correspondence with this author.

¹⁵⁵Waldman, Carl Andre Guggenheim Museum, p. 21

¹⁵⁶ Baker, " Andre", p. 94

Zen philosophy. It denotes the natural state of viewing, simplicity, purity and infinite potentiality. In 1975 Andre displayed his uncarved block series in Los Angeles. Each series consisted of two to five, 36 inch beams of western red cedar standing and lying on the floor in all four directions. Herm (1976) consisted of a single piece of red cedar; the form showed his refusal to carve the block. The art is the single act of placing it. Herm also refers to the ancient Greek road marker that consisted of a square stone pillar supporting a bust of Hermes and hence the title helped make it relate to traditional sculpture. Seeing an object as art takes a commitment; Andre's work as has consisted of selecting and arranging things, such as an unveiling of the uncarved block.

A 1973 installation at the Portland Arts Center for the Visual Arts in Oregon was entitled 144 Blocks and Stones (fig. 27). The work combined materials including concrete blocks and river stones that he found while walking around Portland and minerals indigenous to the area that he found in local stores. He arranged the blocks of concrete into rows of 18, leaving three foot intervals between. He then placed the other elements on top, combining natural and man-made objects. The emphasis Andre places on the materials is related to his attempt to see their "thusness" or Tathata.

Andre indicated his interest in earthworks stating that his "ideal piece of sculpture is a road."¹⁵⁷ He made few permanent

¹⁵⁷David Bourdon, "The Razed Sites of Carl Andre...", p.17

outdoor works until 1977 when he was invited to create a work in Hartford Conn. Stone Field Sculpture, 1977 includes 36 glacial boulders weighing from 1,000 pounds to 11 tons, arranged on a triangular strip 290 feet x 53 feet wide (fig. 28). The boulders vary not only in size but also in color and consistency including granite, sandstone, brownstone, schist, gneiss, basalt and serpentine. They were ordered and yet very simple. The vacant lot, once ignored now invited participation. It became a park like setting inducing meditation. Andre has claimed that this is his own personal reworking of Ryoan-ji. He wrote of gardens: "If one cannot really contain the universe, perhaps, in one's mind, then one of these gardens has the very secure feeling that one is contained in the universe."¹⁵⁸

Taoist concepts of contemplation and intuition had a significant influence on Zen Buddhism and Andre. Andre stated (Domus, 1972) " Well, I think art is agricultural, that is involved with maintaining life and offering people peace and happiness, and these very simple things." Andre believed that art was therapy against the pressures in the world and to get people in touch with their inner feelings. As in Oriental philosophy it meant a cleansing of one's spirit and a calming of the inner being. ¹⁵⁹ Andre stated, "with art, you try as a human being to

¹⁵⁸Whitechapel Art Gallery, Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-78, London, : 1978

¹⁵⁹Carla Gottlieb , Beyond Modern Art N.Y.: Dutton, 1976

create something that wouldn't exist unless you made it."¹⁶⁰

Andre's decision to make sculptures that could "hug" the ground has become one of the keystones of his work. He decided that his work should be "as level as water"¹⁶¹ The most favorite simile in Taoism is of water as an example of wu-wei. Andre began to activate the entire space and exemplify Wu-Wei. "Lever" was an important sculpture in the Primary Structures exhibition at the Jewish Museum. It consisted of 137 unjoined bricks extended along 34 1/2 feet Andre stated "All I'm doing is putting Brancusi's Endless Column on the ground instead of the sky. Andre's works are anti-object and were to be experienced, walked on, to feel the friction underneath your feet. They activate our senses.

Emerson's comments might aptly apply to Andre, "Instead of the sublime and beautiful; the near, the low, the common was explored and poeticized. That which had been negligently trodden under foot by those who were harnessing and provisioning themselves for long journeys into far countries, is suddenly found to be richer than all foreign parts."¹⁶²

Andre's work only exist while we look at it as art. After

¹⁶⁰Lucy R. Lippard The De-Materialization of the Art Object from 1966-1972

¹⁶¹Waldman Carl Andre, Guggenheim Museum exhibition catalog, p. 15. The author states that this idea came about in 1965 while canoeing on a lake in New Hampshire. This critic feels that it is difficult to pinpoint to such an exact event, Indeed the idea could have come through Brancusi, and his earlier pieces were headed in that direction

¹⁶²Ralph Waldo Emerson, Selected Prose and Poetry

the show the pieces of brick or wood or copper are stacked, stored and return to being mundane objects. There is a very fragile relationship between these objects and art, it is a transitory relationship, provisional, tenuous, impermanent, SAMSARA. It becomes art only when we decide to perceive it as such.

The non-relational symmetry of the new American art was named "anaxial" symmetry by Andre in 1970. In it, structural regularity was substituted for balance as the principle ordering of the composition; balance became a critical concern. Similarly, Richard Serra sought a physical and spiritual balance within our urban and technological world.

In 1969 Serra participated in the Art and Technology project with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He worked at the Skullcracker yard of the Kaiser Steel Corp in Fontana, California where he used with massive pieces of steel building huge constructions (fig. 29). He increasingly dealt with the seemingly instability of these various geometric forms and how they are balanced by a central energy or force.

In the Hindu and Buddhist temple the stupa outside represents the center of the universe. It is supposed to be circumambulated by the viewer/participant and understood from each direction. Similarly, the Eastern mystical symbol of the swastica points to all four direction but converges in the center. The image of the Buddha on a lotus petal, or the concept of the mandala is to allow the participant to contemplate

centrifugally. Serra's One Ton Prop and Stacked Steel Slabs (fig. 29) dealt with this issue. In Stacked Steel Slabs (fig. 29) he assembled a pile of hot rolled steel, twenty feet which cantilevered off its axis, threatening to fall and lose its centering. These pieces were concerned with the dynamics of the relationship between the objects and the center, the tenuous quality of that balance.

In 1970 Richard Serra created To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram, Right Angles Inverted, in the Bronx, N.Y. (fig. 30). Surrounded by burnt out tenements the 26' steel circle was implanted in an asphalt street. Half the circle has a wide flange, the other a narrow one. It looks as if, like the buildings around it, that it is the remnants of something that was once there. Philip Lieder noted that the changed flange of each semi-circle was akin to the yin and yang of the T'ai Chi from Taoism.¹⁶³ Indeed Serra admits that his trip to Japan with Carl Andre had a great impact on him. He says that the Circle in the Bronx should be viewed in the same way that a Buddhist garden must be perused, studied, and looked at it for long time.¹⁶⁴ Prior to the piece in the Bronx, Serra had created his first urban outdoor piece in Ueno Park in Tokyo Japan in 1970. That work consisted of two inverted rings. A second, rectilinear work, made in Kyoto National Museum was comprised of one part

¹⁶³Robert Pincus-Witten, "Entries: Oedipus Reconciled: Serra", Arts Magazine vol 55 no. 3, Nov. 1980, pp 131

¹⁶⁴Pincus-Witten, "Entries", Arts Magazine, vol 55, Nov. 1980, p. 131

on the ground and one in the ground.

Serra carries these kinds of ideas to his large scale outdoor projects. This can be seen in a photograph of a piece recently removed, St. John's Rotary Arc (fig. 31) which was built on the vacant land by the entrance to the Holland Tunnel in New York. The twelve foot height of the 200 foot long arc was determined by the fourteen foot height of the pedestrian bridge, from which people could look down on the arc. Once at the top of the bridge the viewer was level with the arc and the top of the trucks.

He wrote:

I have always thought of the Rotary as being a turntable, a cartwheel, a bottleneck extension, a continuation and completion of the New Jersey Turnpike, a highway roundabout at the exit of the Holland Tunnel. And the entrance to Manhattan, a place where cars continually turn and cross lanes in apprehension of changing directions as they enter New York coming from New Jersey, a space polluted by exhaust fumes, a scene of incessant change, a , a place of rush hour glut, a place of disorientation (and permanent rotation) where at various times of the day, the density of the traffic screens the inner center of the Rotary, enforcing the distinction between the inside and the outside of the space so that it seems to open and close with the traffic flow.¹⁶⁵

Like the T'ai Chi the form is always changing and never stagnant, moving in and out of itself. The 200 foot arc is a quadrant of the 800 foot circle. It sets up a series of polarities -- its openness contradicts the congestion of the city, it is horizontal while the city is vertical, it frees the space and moves out and around from the center. It is like the hub of the wheel that Lao

¹⁶⁵Richard Serra " St Johns Rotary Arc" Artforum September 1980, vol ix no. 11 p. 52

Tzu speaks of in the Taoist text, Tao Te Ching.

Thirty spokes share one hub.

Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and
and you will have the use of the cart. Knead clay in
order to make a vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to the
purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the vessel.

Cut out doors and windows in order to make a room.

Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand,
and you will have the use of the room.

Thus what we gain is something, yet it is by virtue
of Nothing that this can be put to use.

In Zen, direct perception is the only means toward understanding
our world. St John's Rotary Arc needs to be experienced within
its prescribed locale in order to perceive the changing nature of
the space; the space seemed to contract and expand.

Serra's works are about heightened perceptual awareness and
interaction. They are about process and the physicality of
objects as well as the space that they occupy. The movement of
the viewer around and through the piece changes one's perception
of it, thus the physical experience of the piece is constantly
changing. Self revelation comes through latent discovery, no
longer based on an external object but through an environment
which focuses on inner perceptive or psychic states. In a field
empty of reference points there is no place left to turn but
inward.

Chapter 4

Nature, the Environment and Zen

In Relation to Contemporary Artists, 1967-1987

The charming landscape which I saw this morning is undoubtedly made up of twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke owns that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is property on the horizon which no man has but he whose eyes can integrate all the parts, that is the poet.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Some poets work with the landscape while others work with space. In an article entitled "Artspaces"(1975)¹⁶⁶, Germano Celant, discussed six types of sculpture/spaces in which the "environment has been involved in art since 1945. These can be summarized as:

- 1- Object-Space which involves a proliferation of mundane objects in art i.e., Schwitters, Oldenberg or a Kienholz piece
- 2- Optical Kinetic Space -explorations in scientific perception, optical/kinetic phenomena i.e., EAT, Magic Theatre Art of 1968 with Charles Ross, Robert Whitman, Stephen Antanokas
- 3-Figural Space -- figurative relationship to mundane objects and

¹⁶⁶ Germano Celant, "Artspaces" Studio International, Vol cx, October 1975, pp 114-122

situations i.e., Segal, Oldenberg "Bedroom"

4- Factual Space -- the space is divided according to its basic two and three dimensional structural elements i.e., LeWitt, Buren, Judd

5- Lived Space -- distinct relationship between the space and human behavior , objectualizing the person

But t he category most relevant to this discussion is:

6-- Experience Space- An area using spatial and temporal characteristics which are determined in relation to one's own body. This kind of space responds to the basic urge to experience ones self as both the fulcrum and border between inside and outside. In such spaces the artist/viewer/participant can discover their own experience. Most of these spaces are meant to be independent of existing architectural elements although a memory of those elements may exist. The environmental artists under discussion help us to perceive and understand our environment and our place in it. They are the poets who help us to experience the landscape , the horizon, the clouds, the sunrise and sunsets, the mountains, deserts, the storms and the lightening. Like the Zen master, they present us with the microcosm of the macrocosm. They help us to experience rather than analyze; perceive rather than objectify.

They see that space can be measured, plotted, estimated but it cannot be understood except in context. The only immediate access one has to it is to perceive it, to experience it and to become the steffage, the context for which it is measured, the

ruler upon which it is sized. Each work intensifies the viewer's relationship to his surroundings and reaffirms his connection with the natural world, to counter the insurgence of urbanization.

"Move through the space, explore it in different ways. Feel it, look at it, speak to it, listen to it, make sounds with it, play music with it, listen to it, lick it etc. Let the space do things to you: embrace you, hold you, move you, push you, lift you up, crush you., etc."¹⁶⁷

The artists who move you to be a part of this experience, to embrace your inner being, and nature include Walter de Maria, Richard Long, David Nash, Michael Singer, Patricia Johanson and James Turrell.

¹⁶⁷Richard Schecher, 1974, quoted in Germano Celant "Artspaces" Studio International CXC 1977 Sept/Oct 1975, p. 114

WALTER DE MARIA

The environmental art projects of Walter De Maria, particularly his Lightning Field, provides the viewer with a forum for contemplating the inexpressible insights of our collective unconscious; providing the viewer turned participant with a forum for contemplating the universe.

Walter De Maria was born in 1935 in Albany, California and from 1953-1959 attended the University of California at Berkeley, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, and Master of Arts degree in art. In 1960 he moved to NYC and began creating works of art such as Boxes for Meaningless Work by using unpainted plywood. One of his earliest constructions was a "statue" of John Cage, which consisted of eight tall dowels in a cage-like arrangement (fig. 32). The influence of Zen through the sages of his era, such as John Cage, were beginning to come into his work. In 1964 he began creating "invisible drawings"--light pencilling of words such as Water, Water, Water. While many artists were beginning to travel west, Heizer was creating Double Negative (1969-1971), Oppenheim's Branded Hillside was done in 1969, and Smithson completed his Spiral Jetty in 1970), De Maria began to utilize the geometric hard-edge style of

Minimalism, but to evoke with it the gestural qualities associated with the Abstract Expressionists on the earth. De Maria was gently marking the earth. He produced his first Western work in April of 1968: two parallel lines, a mile long, laid down in chalk on the Mojave desert in California. Mile Long Drawing (fig. 33) is the only reference point in space and is the key to the meaning in De Maria's art. In 1969, a year after he drew his chalk lines in the company of Heizer, DeMaria executed his Las Vegas Piece. It consisted of four shallow cuts made by the six foot blade of a bulldozer in the central Nevada desert. These cuts form a square, each side being one half mile, two sides extend another half mile at opposite corners. You cannot see the entire configuration at one time but are invited to move along in each of the four directions (North, South, East, or West), moving along a horizontal plane experiencing the work and the landscape. Like Zen art it embodies and conveys the impression of disciplined restraint. Like Zen, the art always seems spontaneous or impulsive, never contrived. It is marked by understatement and does not yield all its secrets in the first viewing.

In 1978 DeMaria opened the New York Earth Room. The project, originally executed in 1968 in Heiner Friedrich's German Gallery as the Gallery Earth Room, (Munich, 1974) became the Large Earth Room, Darmstadt at the De Maria retrospective in the Hessisches Landesmuseum. In the New York version, 3600 square feet were filled with 222 cubic yards of earth, coming to a height of 21 inches. It represented the contained and the

container. Indeed, it remains a part of nature and yet it is a part of the institution of the art gallery, The monumentality of the dirt contrasts sharply with the clean white walls of the gallery setting.

On November 1, 1977, De Maria's monumental environmental sculpture, The Lightning Field (fig. 34 a-e) was completed in its present physical form.¹⁶⁸ Commissioned and maintained by the Dia Foundation, the Lightning Field is a rectangular grid which measures 5,280 by 3300 feet. It contains 400 highly polished stainless steel poles with solid pointed tips, spaced 220 feet apart. Each of the 400 poles measures two inches in diameter and averages 20 feet 7 1/2 inches in height. Standing in twenty-five rows, sixteen poles each, the total piece measures one mile by one kilometer.

After searching in California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and Texas for an appropriate location, the Lightning Field was finally sited in a flat arid basin in West Central New Mexico. The area chosen was flat and had a high frequency of lightning activity. The chosen site is 11 1/2 miles from the Continental Divide and 7,200 feet above sea level. Indeed, even without the presence of lightning, the Lightning Field transforms the natural basin into a sculptural form uniting man and nature. When lightning strikes, man's communion with nature is intensified. The viewer/participant joins with nature in bringing its forces

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In July 1974 a small version of De Maria's famous Lightning Field was built to serve as the prototype for the 1977 Field.

to the ground. The land is not the setting for the work but a part of the work.

Viewing the piece from the air is of no value as the sky ground relationship is central to the work. The viewer must participate in the work, experience the space and the constant changes in that space. The color changes as the sun rises, and is reflected in the polished poles. When the viewer drives up to the piece, in the middle of the day, the poles reflect the sameness of the colors of the ground and sky; the poles are barely visible. But as the sun begins to set in the desert the poles suddenly come alive, blazing with the colors of the sky, contrasting with the duller colors of the ground . When it is not a " Lightning Field" it is a "Lighting Field". As the clouds pass over head the field changes and as the seasons change the piece changes. The sounds of a coyote or a jack rabbit scurrying across the desert changes the field. It is never complete but always in a state of flux, it is transient. It is the embodiment of the Buddhist Middle Doctrine that everything is becoming, in process and never static. As the identity of an individual consists only of a series of moments of consciousness so too does the Lightning Field consist of a series of moments, ever changing.

DeMaria's art plays with our perception of the earth, and reminds us that there is more to reality than that which immediately confronts us. We must transcend "reality"; the art is there to guide us. Like Zen, De Maria seeks to put us in touch

with that portion of ourselves we avoid -- our non-rational, non-verbal side. This Zen inspired art forces our mind to move beyond the shape of the poles. An understanding of the art depends as much on the perception of the viewer/ participant as it does on its own inherent qualities. The Lightning Field must be viewed alone or in a very small group so that the ratio of people to space is extreme and the vastness exaggerated. De Maria wrote that, "Isolation is the essence of Land Art."¹⁶⁹ Like the Buddhist mind the art is characterized by an emphasis on inward reality, beauty and spiritual culture. "When the mind is quiet and peaceful, it is like the flame of a candle in the absence of the wind."¹⁷⁰ It emphasizes intuition rather than reason through the vast isolation. The vast seemingly empty desert evokes a Zen solitude, not loneliness, or despair or isolation but contemplation. The emptiness becomes filled with our own energy. The emptiness is what the Zen literati calls sunyata. Sunyata always exists in some form - it defines the nothingness. sunyata, emptiness is the middle ground between opposites, yes and no, existence and non-existence. The aim is to be able to see things with a pure and clear mind, to see into the center of the emptiness to ourselves. To experience the vast space defined by the poles.

Is it art or anti-art, or does it merely exist?

¹⁶⁹ Walter DeMaria, "Lightening Field", Artforum, 18: April 1980, p. 58

¹⁷⁰ Conze Buddhism, p.100

The Lightning Field helps us to experience the Oneness of the Universe. In our daily life we are generally unable to see this harmony and when we first approach the field we might see it or imagine it as merely 400 stainless steel poles. But it is not merely 400 poles but a field of space, light and color. The whole of Eastern Philosophical thought is based on this absolute which is reached in the world of acintya or "no-thought" where the unity of all the opposites comes together in a vivid experience. A Zen poem captures the experience in the Lightning Field

At dusk the cock announces dawn;

At midnight, the bright sun. 171

At the Lightning Field there is a dynamic balance between the various times of day which create varying colors of light and shadows, affected by the environment and the weather. In the I Ching we read that the natural laws " are not forces external to things, but represent the harmony of movement immanent in them. 172

The Lightning Field embodies the natural elements and forces. The lesson of Zen is to experience rather than just see and analyze. The Lightning Field forces us to experience the art, to perceive it, to participate in it in order to complete the piece and thereby become one with Nature.

¹⁷¹quoted in A. W. Watts, The Way of Zen, (N.Y. Vintage Books, 1957) p. 117

¹⁷²commentary to the hexagram Yu, in R. Wilhelm , The I Ching or Book of Changes , (N.J.:Princeton U. Press, 1967) , p. 68

RICHARD LONG

Richard Long was one of the earliest contemporary environmental artists to leave his mark on nature. Negotiating rights of way, picking patterns in fields by removing swaths of daisies, or walking for a hundred miles in seven days around a fixed point, tidying seaweed into spirals or rearranging pebbles in a riverbed, he redefined standard sculptural conventions.

Long has described his art as a "portrait of the artist touching the earth."¹⁷³ His art is generally known by the photographs on the gallery walls or images reproduced in magazines and catalogues of the walks and tracings on the land. Sometimes he brings some of the stones and lines into the gallery or exhibition space. As early as 1965 Long was developing the vocabulary that is now central to his work. In 1966 in Bristol England, Richard Long cut a circle into the ground, removing an even layer of soil so that he created a lowered circular ground plane. This work entitled Turf Circle (fig. 35) was followed by many similar works including Line Made By Walking, 1967 (fig. 36). This first line in Long's oeuvre was made by walking up and down in a field until the flattened grass could be seen as a

¹⁷³quoted in John T. Paoletti, The Critical Eye/I, (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1984), p.26

line. The placement of the line activates the entire environment around it so that it is not just a line but made up of the entire environment. The imposition on nature is subtle and extremely simple. Just as a single mark on a canvas activates the entire field so the single line or stone on the land can activate the environment. Whether the line is 14 feet long or the length of Walking a Line, Peru (fig. 37) it is a work which brushes the environment and which can not be seen all at once. The totality of the art can only be conceptualized. His work is bound by space and temporality and the implication that there are no boundaries to either.

His walks and the shapes of the configurations of stones that he arranged created either a line, a circle, a square, a spiral, or a cross. He noted in the British Art Today catalog from the Tokyo exhibition. "The circle, the line, and the spiral are employed precisely because of these associations and make them, although privately ritualistic, still universal." In Eastern philosophy these are the universal forms: square - symbol of earth and order; circle - heaven; and the cross encompasses chi (life force, breath), the polarities, all the opposites. These shapes are made from elements of nature such as stones, twigs, chalk, or clay. These marks on the earth are like nature, transitory. The sculpture is made by the place from which it came, Long only seeks to give physical definition to it. Mircea Eliade stated, "The place is never 'chosen by man'; it is

merely discovered by him." ¹⁷⁴ Every place is different and therefore every circle or line will be different.

Long remarked that his work provides, "a state of union between man and man, man and nature." ¹⁷⁵ In serving Nature, Long walked rather than make sculptural objects. "A walk is on the ground, passing by, moving through life. A sculpture is still; a stopping place." ¹⁷⁶ Any area of the world can be the "ground" upon which he leaves his mark, although he is acutely aware of the differences physically, psychologically and perceptually between the different locales. The entire earth and the elements of nature are the material for his art; stones, wood, clay and water recall the experience of walking on the earth. As Long walked he would stop to rearrange the stones he encountered along the way and then photograph them. He used stones as his medium because as he stated, "Stones are the material of the earth." ¹⁷⁷

Long first began working with stones in 1970. While crossing a river in Tennessee, he shifted pebbles in the riverbed to create two lines of pebbles just under the water surface that connected the river banks. In 1979 A Line in Japan was created

¹⁷⁴ Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion (Cleveland, N.Y., 1965) p. 369

¹⁷⁵ art and Project Bulletin, no 128, January 1982, quoted in "Richard Long " The Critical Eye, I , p. 28

¹⁷⁶ Aspects of British Art Today exhibition catalog, (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 1982) p.174

¹⁷⁷ British Art Today , p. 174

on the slope of Mt Fuji. The line slender and open made up of stones that fail to touch so that the light can fall between them. "On some walks the artist wrote," there is a pleasure, from day to day, to never know the sleeping place of the coming night and, having slept there to never see that place again. Similarly with a sculpture: to find some stones by chance, use them and walk on, and never see them again." ¹⁷⁸ Each stone is specially considered and has its own individuality. Like the Japanese garden the stones are carefully selected and placed. (fig. 38) Long is the rolling stone; his sculptures are the discreet signs of his resting places.

In a gallery exhibition of 1982 Long placed five columns of block lettered words, each column responded to one of the five senses. The piece was entitled "Early Morning Senses Island Walk" (fig. 39) and in a terse manner evoked sensations of the experience of his walk on St. Agnes Island. The repetition of the carefully chosen words conveyed sensations and images, extending the viewer's consciousness. It is reminiscent of a haiku such as:

An ancient pond;
A frog leaps in:
The sound of water.

Your mind hears and provokes the senses.

This "word" piece is as directional as his other projects and conveys the same open-ended infinite path. Long is as interested

¹⁷⁸letter quoted in Guggenheim Museum Richard Long, 1986, p. 135

in the nature of experience as he is in the place itself. The art of Richard Long is bound by space and temporality and the implication that there are no boundaries to either. Long's work relates to a sense of time other than that which we relate to in the everyday hectic world of our environment. Experiences, memories and feelings come together. There is the intimation of poetry.¹⁷⁹

In 1967 Richard Long made his first travelling and walking piece. A panel on the wall showed the outline of Britain and was accompanied by six photographs of the ground and sky. The accompanying text read: "A journey, by hitch-hiking and walking, out and back, from London to the summit of Ben Nevis, Scotland --

Two photographs taken at 11 A.M. each day at the position shown." The work had a grandiose scale in terms of space and time and yet it never really existed as a whole but only as a series of moments which made the line and inferred a time of day. The photographs preserve one moment while alluding to an infinite number of other moments in between. The lines in the gallery are determined by the size and shape of the gallery and therefore the work has an infinite set of possibilities. They function merely as fragments of our memory. Nature has its own powers which Long is interested in, along with the "unchartered reaches of the past."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹Guggenheim Museum, Diane Waldman, Richard Long, 1986, p. 44

¹⁸⁰ "Richard Long", The Critical Eye/I, p. 28

Moved Line in Japan involved the artist walking along the ocean. This piece emphasizes the strength of water because it emphasizes that water is continually changing and can overwhelm the land. Long has used water as the footpath for his projects as in Dartmoor Riverbeds. The water seems to carry his invisible footprints to the ocean leaving no trace of his presence. The water is elusive changing the work and yet never taking on a form of its own. It is always transient although the water's force could split a rock. In Eastern philosophy, particularly noted in the Tao Te Ching water is seen as the strongest, most powerful and of course the most yielding of the elements of nature.

Long seems particularly aware of the interdependency of water and land -- the two opposites. Recently Long has begun to create works made of mud. Indeed, mud is the remnants of the merging of earth and water. The artist creates circles on the wall by dipping his hands in mud (fig. 40). Water, which has no form, takes on a form when mixed with its opposite, the earth. It is this merging and yet respect for the polarities which is central to Eastern Philosophy and the image of the T'ai C'hi .

Long's "lines" in England, Africa, North and South America, Iceland, the Himalayas or Peru refer to all of the lines that exist , those Long has marked as well as those marked by ancient cultures. They touch upon each other conceptually. These include the Nazca lines, traced upon barren tablelands above the Polpa

and Ignacio rivers. ¹⁸¹ Long's "Walking A Line In Peru" reenacted that line. The distant past, not so distant past and the sculpture which is now a part of the future converge. As in Zen, the past ,the present, and future are merely states of our conscious mind. "We are not in a world of time, but we are time makers." ¹⁸² Past, present and future all converge in the essential self. The essential self contains the past, present and future and infinity. Long has collapsed time and myths into a single image which is timeless.

As in Zen, Long's work evokes a sense of infinity and expresses a sense of timelessness because they are so impermanent and transient. They are subtle pieces that require contemplation and introspection. His works create a poetic presence that resonates and sends us back to the space walked or the daisies picked. Each place in turn defines the form of the art. The pattern of his piece is laid upon the pattern of the place which is overlaid upon the patterns of time. It is an infinite symbiotic relationship as each is forever tied to the experience of the other. Space and time are the formal elements of the piece. They determine the form and scope of the work. And yet time and space have no boundaries; they project outward and inward in all directions. Time and space create the patina on the sculpture or what the Eastern philosopher refers to as Sabi, the

¹⁸¹These lines were made by taking dark weather worn stones to line the sides of a line of sand and gravel which is the main composition of the site.

¹⁸²Shoei Ando, p. 30

layering of time ultimately tied to the beauty of its imperfections.

The triple formula in Buddhism is of Dukkha (suffering), Anicca (Impermanence), Anatta (Non-Self). Long has spent hours walking in deserted sites in the desert, the Himalayas and Iceland getting in touch with the land that he is in. Devoid of cities, electricity and modern technology he has deprived himself of the use of modern conveniences to come closer to the land itself and the land's history --(Dukkha).Anicca (impermanence) is the critical component in long's work. Conceived of as universal and existing in all things, all the works are impermanent. We exist in a tenuous balance. The field where daisies are plucked will only last as a line until the rest of them die, the line in Peru may last for a very long time but not an infinite amount of time and the circle of stones in the gallery will be removed in time for the next show. Moreover, works such as Quantock Wood Circle, 1981, comprised of willow twigs in a circle, are very delicate, and at any time could simply and easily be disrupted by a viewer turned participant. The impermanence of Long's art reveals the temporality of our own existence. The impermanence of his work is crucial to an understanding of the work. History is only modified by the present and Long's work becomes perceptible only by our present discussion of it epitomizing self and non-self.

Zen is sometimes called the religion of the irrational In art, the Zen master transmits otherwise inexpressible insights

and experiences. The projects, indoor or outdoor, have no point of entry or exit, no beginning nor end (fig. 41). While the scale of the indoor works are determined by the size of the gallery the piece will change as soon as the pieces are picked up and moved elsewhere. We do not walk on these lines except in our mind. Each of them is a path, Tao. Not a path to be physically walked upon but rather a path towards our own self-consciousness.

DAVID NASH

The art of London born David Nash empathizes with the land. Dependent on the site, he piles fallen trees, cuts and fletches branches, marks areas of growth, re-directs waterways, and burns dead wood. The forms and materials come from the land and recommence a cohesive balance between art and nature.

David Nash lives in an old slate quarrying town in Wales and has refurbished an old chapel into a studio and home. The chapel studio is surrounded by five acres of woods which have become his inspiration, his materials, and his gallery. Like the literati/scholar he ventures out into the woods to sleep or contemplate the forms for his next piece. Nature is his inspiration.

Nash began his art career by creating what he has called "slap, splash" paintings at the Kingston College of Art. The innovative works of Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg and Louise Nevelson exhibited in London at that time nurtured his inclinations toward a more experimental art form. Nash has also been inspired by the work of John Constable, Peter Hutchinson, Richard Long, Barry Flannagan and Sol Le Witt and readily acknowledges the influence of Ashille Gorky, particularly the

painter's calligraphic strokes ¹⁸³. Nash embraced the art revolution of the 1960s and the idea that sculpture was about space. He addressed a new audience in order to make an art that was approachable, an art that belonged to the public domain. His art appeals to the unsophisticated viewer as well as the philosopher because it connects us to a primal level and involves direct confrontation of our senses. Remembering climbing on wood piles and into huts as a child, Nash creates an art about the environment, temporality, placement and site. It rekindled a childlike love of nature and the primal relationship to nature found in all of us. ¹⁸⁴ Nash wrote:

I want a life and work that reflects the balance and continuity of nature identifying with the time and energy of the tree with its mortality.
I find myself drawn deeper into the joys and flow of nature. Worn down and regenerated; broken off and reunited a dormant faith revived in the new growth of old wood.¹⁸⁵

He uses the raw materials and debris of nature allowing them to become again a part of the ecological structure of the site after the piece has disintegrated. Nash works with nature rather than against it. Nash stated, "... rather than build my life around a preconceived idea of what art was, I wanted to find what my life was and let the art come directly out of that."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³Hugh Adams, Sixty Seasons Third Eye Center, Glasgow, January 1983. p. 7

¹⁸⁴interview with artist May 22, 1980

¹⁸⁵ quoted in Gail Gelburd, Environmental Art Projects, 1979 (n.J.: Morris Museum of Arts and Sciences, 1979), n.p.

¹⁸⁶interview with Gail Gelburd May 22, 1980

Nash has created numerous indoor and outdoor environments as well as art objects. Each is keyed to the site and is dependent upon the space. The sequence of time is critical in his work which refers to the past, present and future. Even the indoor pieces are made from trees with a history. The tree has gone from being a tree to being revived as an art form to live its next life. The tree has not died but only been recycled. Nash shows that the very process of creating is an allegory of life and death and rejuvenation. Many of the objects, such as the Running Table(fig. 42), combine the environment with the objects of everyday life. The table is a table from a tree and still looks like a tree, although it also looks like a sleek animal running through the trees.

In Fledged Over Ash Dome, 1979, Nash planted 22 young ash trees in a circle and then fletched and interwove them into a 30 foot dome; as they grow they will create" a silver form in winter, a green canopy space in summer(fig. 43 a-c). A volcano of growing energy" ¹⁸⁷ When it grows strong enough animals will graze under it, fertilize it, pounce down the roots and enjoy its shade. He allows the wood to retain its own character while not being reluctant to coax its forms. These pieces become a part of nature .Nash had come to a point in his work where he was " after the randomness and indeterminacy of John Cage and very much wanted the aesthetic to look after itself." ¹⁸⁸ He became

¹⁸⁷David Nash quoted in Adams p. 46

¹⁸⁸Adams, Sixty Seasons Glasgow, 1983

increasingly contemplative and regarded "space as silence "; a silence that reflects the aging process and reflects time.¹⁸⁹ The piece will also embody Sabi, the patina of time and age. Sabi is the beauty of imperfection accompanied by antiquity or primitiveness, rustic unpretentiousness, simplicity, effortless-ness, richness in historical associations. The Fletched Over Ash Dome represents a commitment to time. It will take thirty years to reach a mature state.

Similarly, the Wooden Boulder (fig. 44 a-c) that Nash created and threw into the river at Maentwrog in Spring 1980, has moved several times and has changed color from the algae that now clings to it. Covered by snow in winter and leaves in the fall it continues to crack and change. It too is graced by Sabi. These works specifically relate to the Taoist text, Tao Te Ching. Nash cited this 5th century text in two catalogs, which relate to these and other works by Nash:

The way is forever nameless.
 Though the uncarved block is small
 No one in the world dare claim its allegiance ...
 ...Only when it is cut are there names
 One ought to know that it is time to stop.

So he leaves it to change on its own, create its own way.

In a recent catalog for an exhibition in Glasgow Nash included selected excerpts from various texts. These included Principles of Chinese Painting by George Rowley and the following excerpt from Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching :

¹⁸⁹Adams, Glasgow, p. 27

Thirty spokes share one hub.
 Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand,
 and you will have the use of the cart. Knead clay in
 order to make a vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to the
 purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the vessel.
 Cut out doors and windows in order to make a room.
 Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand,
 and you will have the use of the room.
 Thus what we gain is something, yet it is by virtue
 of Nothing that this can be put to use.
 The Nothing is the space in the center of the wheel in the
 vessel, the air, the energy, the chi. It is this energy, this
 chi, this Nothingness which is integral to Nash's work. The
 Nothing, the simplicity embodies the Everything, the All. He
 adapts the Nothing to thereby reveal the environment, reveal
 All.

In 1980, David Nash made his first trip to the United
 States. With a pioneering spirit he first came to the United
 States to be in the British Art Now exhibit at the Guggenheim
 museum and to construct an environmental sculpture at the Morris
 Museum in New Jersey. He " had a sense of coming to the frontier
 ... When I designed the proposal for my sculpture, I saw myself
 as pioneering ..."¹⁹⁰

The work done at the Morris Museum is a "human stepping
 stone" into the site. (fig. 45 a-c). Nash built a hut (or wigwam)
 with wood cut down from the site and pre-cut firewood that was
 three feet in diameter and six feet high. The pieces of wood were
 placed in a circular conical form. Wedge pieces were cut and
 inserted to insure the stability of the form. A three foot high

¹⁹⁰Interview with the artist May 22, 1980

arched entrance way faced two small bushes. Outside the "hut" Nash cleared a "yard" whose entrance was framed by "ready-made" bushes and stones. The weeds taken from this clearing were piled up to echo the conical hut. Sticks were placed in the ground to encircle the "ready-made" crops (weeds) while another crop was surrounded by a make-shift corral of sticks and branches. From a distance the hut seemed like just a pile of wood but those who were more daring and approached it began to see the whole Settlement and frequently climbed inside. The work was holistic. Once inside it seemed as if you had discovered a secret place. The hot summer sun failed to penetrate the cool hut although the shimmering of the sun came through the cracks and created a sparse pattern on the floor made up of wood chips. Inside it was quiet and peaceful. The viewer/participant was removed from the noises of the rest of the world which seemed to disappear once inside the security of this womb-like habitat. The work of art was a retreat to nature in search of a revelation about the universe, an integral part of Taoism and Zen. Through the "veil" of nature one could come to have a greater understanding of reality. Like the Taoist sage we could merely contemplate the universe.¹⁹¹ The mind was quiet and peaceful, "like the flame of a candle in the absence of the wind."¹⁹² Solitude is important for contemplation and can not

¹⁹¹H.G., Creel Chinese Thought (N.Y.: The New American Library, Mentor, 1964) p. 90

¹⁹²Conze Buddhism, p.100

be public, dramatic or spectacular. Knowledge comes from this solitary experience and participation, loaded with symbolic, mythic, historic, psychological and philosophical metaphors, stimulating areas of our non-conscious being. Nash's hut stayed up for only eight weeks but after it was taken down, and the wood sold off as firewood, the remnants of what was there, what was cleared or raked remained. As time passes these areas of clearing will grow back, still possessing the *sabi* of its existence and a new history, a new spirit of the place will emerge.

Landscape in Eastern and Western art has always referred to man's communion with nature. It is the endless change and flux of man's environment. It represents an escape from industrialization, losing themselves in the distant mountain. Nash created many stoves including a Snow Stove on Kotoku, Japan in 1982 (fig. 46). They are perhaps some of his most thematically successful works since the smoke finally envelops the piece and returns it to the earth. According to Buddhism "All existing things are transient"; are involved in becoming continuation, change and death "Like a river which " maintains its constant form of identity, although in each moment every drop of water in the river flows and never remains static."¹⁹³

The most favorite simile in Taoism is of water as an example of wu-wei "Water is of all things most yielding and can overwhelm

¹⁹³A. K. Coomaraswamy, Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism, (N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1964)p.98-99

(rock) which is of all things most hard."¹⁹⁴ In 1982 Nash was invited to go work in a rural mountainous area north of Nikko where an aged "mizunara" was found for him. He spent twenty days there creating several pieces for the museum (Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Japan) including River Tunnel, a hollow log with a fire burning inside it that was set adrift. He displayed an intent reverence for the materials which "drew comment from the Japanese for the relationship with Shinto ideas."¹⁹⁵ Nash created environments in Japan such as Wooden Waterway, a piece which served as a conduit for this most elusive of all elements. In the catalog for these works he cited from a passage in the Taoist text, the Tao Te Ching:

In the world there is nothing more submissive and weak than water. Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong nothing can surpass it. This is because there is nothing that can take its place. That the weak overcomes the strong, And the submissive overcomes the hard, Everyone in the world knows yet no one can put this knowledge into practice.

His pieces sought to put that knowledge into practice.

In 1979 Nash was invited to be one of the British representatives at the International Sculpture Conference in Washington D.C.. For that project he selected a site in front of the US Capitol where he constructed a volumetric work out of wood

¹⁹⁴Tao Te Ching, chapt. 43, p.21

¹⁹⁵Andy Goldsworthy has also worked with Nash in Wales. Implicit in his art is a constant mystical sense of the earth as the giver of life, a bond with the physical and spiritual constituents of the environment.

logs that echoed the marble dome of the Capitol building(fig. 47). With logs laid side by side he created a hearth -sculpture entitled Wood Stove . The piece took one week to construct; but only one day after its completion the artist set it ablaze. The sculpture burned, but as if in a performance, and the rain began to fall. The heat and water enveloped the sculpture in steam and mist while bolts of lightning seemed to just miss hitting the fiery sculpture. Logs fell as the smoke and blaze now blocked the view of the US Capitol. A crowd gathered --suddenly the firemen arrived with picks and hoses sending the pieces of the sculpture flying in the air. As the firemen rolled up their hoses, the rain stopped and Wood Stove was left as a smoldering pile of ashes. This life and death battle of nature confronted the viewer with a primordial experience of the sights, sounds, and smells of life and death .

Nash was particularly influenced by the Chinese text , Tao Te Ching . In this text the Tao is defined as the great Void which contains all the energy of life. In Chinese thought, Tao (Way) occupies the place of the highest reality. It strives for wholeness, a union of the ideal and the real, heaven and earth. Tao is the mysterious essence of the universe and is beyond the universe. Tao is both being and Non-Being. Within the Tao is the division of opposites , the yin and yang, (feminine/masculine, darkness/ lightness, negative/positive, passive/aggressive) All things originated from Tao and all things are produced in the interplay of the two forces of yin and yang.

Nash created environments in which the viewer was brought into a communion with nature. The viewer/ participant confronted the basics of humanity, home, hearth, earth, growth, death. For Nash, man and nature are inseparable; they are forever bound in a symbiotic relationship of growth, death, revitalization, demise. Nash's work changes and develops a patina, *sabi* by continuously moving through time experiences which are comprised of these opposites. The energy generated by the piece is found in the dynamic interplay of these opposing forces.

MICHAEL SINGER

Michael Singer's understanding of Eastern Philosophical ideas is revealed in his earliest works. The first of his sculptures (dating from 1969-70) were made of steel and milled wood. But in 1971 he began working out of doors with wind-felled logs to create a group of pieces called Situation Balances. Like the works of Richard Long, David Nash and Walter De Maria these works were built in relation to a particular site chosen by Singer.¹⁹⁶ Aiming for "a veneration of nature and a commitment to transience."¹⁹⁷ Singer, like his colleagues preserved the fundamental doctrine of Zen -- a respect for Nature.

Michael Singer's sculptures first received major exposure at the Guggenheim exhibition Ten Young Artists: Theodoron Awards in 1971. These early works evolved out of Minimalism, particularly Carl Andre's floor pieces and Serra's lead -prop pieces in which the object confronts the viewer in an aggressive way. Andre's works were considered "as level as water". and identified the floor as their plane. Serra's works were about balance, gravity and the materials. These ideas coalesced in Singer's works, particularly his outdoor projects. Singer shared

¹⁹⁶ Diane Waldman, Michael Singer, N.Y.: Guggenheim Museum , 1984

¹⁹⁷Waldman, Singer

with these artists a concern for process and an interest in the materials.

Singer began with *Situation Balances* (1971-1973) (fig. 48) to create art out of doors composed of grasses and twigs and oriented to the specific site.¹⁹⁸ (Singer would not return to an indoor gallery setting until 1977.) Singer's work increasingly displayed the harmonious yet precarious balance of nature. Singer places, reed standing upon reed in the water in order to create a loose configuration of the materials. They were sometimes as level as the water (Like Andre) yet precariously balanced as in the work of Serra.

Singer was also greatly influenced by Alan Kaprow who, in 1964, came to Cornell University where Singer was studying. A year later he obtained permission to transfer to Stony Brook University on Long Island where Kaprow taught. He performed in Kaprow's *Happening* called "Household". Kaprow's experimentation with materials and new directions inspired Singer who began to create works of art that related to the environment. He looked to the Salt Marshes of Long Island as well as the lands unspoiled by more primitive civilizations. He wrote:

There is a remarkable harmony between the people of Lake Titicaca Peru and their environment... I wanted to understand this kind of harmonious relationship of vision and life-style of a culture to its environment.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸Diane Waldman, Michael Singer, Guggenheim Museum, 1981,
p. 15

¹⁹⁹Singer quoted in Waldman Singer Guggenheim Museum, p.
15

He also looked to Zen architecture. His own work became about relating indoor and outdoor spaces. Like Japanese architecture he shows a unique sense for handling spaces, using natural materials, and transcending the utilitarian .

At Documenta 1977, in Kassel Germany, Singer created two low lying lattice structures which seemed to hover over the surface and which then mirrored their reflection. The sculptures created a portal to the sun up the hill. This reflection and refraction can also be seen in Lily Pond Ritual Series(fig. 49). Concerned not only with a reverence for nature but ritual as well, "Like magical ceremonies, they function as adjusters, keeping balance within the total milieu....In the largest sense they are ecological dealing with interpenetrating systems -- with man's continuity with nature's flow and his position in its web."²⁰⁰

Oriental art has always been a major influence on Singer's art and way of life. Like the Chinese polarities of Yin and Yang Singer creates visual tensions; the structures are fluent and flexible and yet express a sense of wholeness. Even Singer's indoor works, incorporate a precarious balance, reminiscent of the precarious balance in nature. The balance provides the key to the total harmony of the universe. Like the T'ai C'hi, Singer creates a work which seems to balance opposing forces and to redirect energy. In 1979 Singer had a gallery show in which he displayed his latest work, drawings done with charcoal, chalk,

²⁰⁰Kate Linker, "Michael Singer: A Position In and On, Nature", Art and the Environment, Alan Sonfist, ed., pp. 187-88
reprint of article

and collage.

The drawings have a similar scratchy, linear quality, but as they do not have to support their own weight, they are more freely constructed, lines and smudges often floating independently of each other on the page. Even the drawings reflect Singer's central themes of change and motion within nature. Mark Stevens noted that "Singer seems able to draw with wood, and his sculptures have the rhythmic cadence of Oriental calligraphy..."²⁰¹(fig 49).

Singer stated:

I wanted this [the art] to look accidental, unintended, as though a work of nature. There was to be no human presence; perhaps because I was still trying to understand what my own presence in this natural environment should be. I cut trees so they would split as though a windfall caused such an occurrence. I painted many of the cut ends to conceal the whiteness of the raw wood. It became an absolute rule that there should be no sign of human presence. Part of my obsession about the absence of humans in these works came from the shame I felt about being part of a culture that has systematically destroyed the natural environment. Western culture views man at the top, controlling nature, apart from it. ... In order to experience and learn from the natural environment I felt the need to yield to it, respect it, to observe, learn and then work with it. This early rule that I had, to not allow my presence in the work, was helpful in this yielding and learning process. Eventually I accepted my role in the environment as more than observer, manager, researcher. I understood this role as artist.²⁰²

Singer's understanding of nature bears a very strong relationship to Eastern philosophy, again particularly Zen. He

²⁰¹Mark Stevens " Browser's Delight", Newsweek vol XCII Nov 15, 1978 p. 105

²⁰²Singer quoted in Waldman Singer Guggenheim Museum, p. 17

approached Nature not as an object to conquer but to meet as a friendly, well meaning agent whose inner being is thoroughly like our own, always ready to work in accord with our legitimate aspirations. Singer does not impose himself on nature. The sites that he chooses are out in the middle of unspoiled land and would surely be ruined if the usual flock of gallery patrons trooped out en masse to view the works or through the locked gates of the Aspen Project (fig. 59). To view his pieces requires a conscious effort on the part of the observer to get away to nature. Indeed, a retreat to nature in search of a revelation about the universe -- an integral part of Taoism and Zen. It was then in nature that a person could have a revelation about his own being and place within that universe. Through the "veil" of nature one could come to have a greater understanding of reality.

Between 1975-80 Singer began to use stones as a foundation and as a structural element

[The rocks] become a presence apart from their structural function. The ambiguity between stone and wood lessens. The wood clearly supports certain stones. I sense these stones as symbols containing references to mountains, river, cloud, natural elements.

I take long walks to look for stones that come from walls, fields and streams. Once I have the stones I place them in the studio where I spend a long time determining which edges should be cut. I categorize the stones visually -- vertical, horizontal, diagonal, round sharp, weathered by the air, time honored.²⁰³

Singer's work, like the Zen garden, manifests *sabi* (the patina of time) and *wabi* (understatement). The rocks chosen for

²⁰³Singer quoted in Waldman, p. 21

First Gate Ritual 4/79 made for DeWeese Park in Dayton Ohio (fig. 50) realizes these elements successfully. The stones he added, as in the Japanese garden, are full of their own history and mythology and is generally considered a symbol of the eternal. Singer particularly likes to use slate and granite. Slate is formed when layers of silt laden with vegetation and organisms are subjected to heat and pressure. Traces of these are left in the imperfections of the slate, making it seem more 'alive'. Granite, formed from molten matter deep in the earth is according to Singer "the most enduring and stable stone. " 204

"If nature is grasped as a process rather than an object, then the work's shifting definition within the equilibrium of the atmosphere provides a means of being a part of it, linking man and environment through the action of making."²⁰⁵ Like the Japanese gardens, which CONDENSED THE UNIVERSE INTO A SINGLE SPAN, his rocks were especially chosen. Ryoan-ji for example goes beyond a symbolic representation of a landscape to a distillation of the universe. The empty areas both emphasize the stones and invite the mind to expand in the cosmological infinity that they suggest. The interaction between form and space is important.

Singer's most recent works are low structures reminiscent of Buddhist gates or Shinto shrines (fig. 51). The Neuberger Museum project, a 1977 installation, consisted of a single

²⁰⁴Quoted in Waldman, p. 22

²⁰⁵Linker, p. 189

sculpture, nearly 40 feet long by 20 feet wide which filled a large cavernous space. We are drawn through the space to a natural void. The density of the forms distend into the space. The rhythms of the forms seem to contradict themselves. The viewer circumambulates the sculpture capturing different segments and compositions. As the piece and the process of viewing it unfolds, the viewer becomes explicitly as well as implicitly a part of it. Singer is constantly adjusting his sculptures to suit the environment. "Every moment is different", Singer notes of changes in wind, water, clouds and light.²⁰⁶ Singer speaks of "building an apparatus to see more of what I am, where I am," describing his works as "clues" to his environment. Singer's pieces are positioned so that they capture the light as it changes. He notes that the "structures became instruments for me to watch and learn about my relationship to this place."²⁰⁷ Landscape in Eastern art has always referred to man's communion with nature. It is the endless change and flux of man's environment. Singer's works represent an escape from industrialization to nature. His work is concerned with the subtleties of the changing landscapes and the tenuous balances within it.

Central to Singer's work has been an exploration of balance, movement, and the very nature of the materials. The motion implied asks for a participant who might touch or witness the

²⁰⁶Kate Linker "Michael Singer : A Position In, and On , Nature", p. 189

²⁰⁷Singer quoted in Waldman, p. 17

wind moving the piece, perhaps to disrupt this fragile balance. The pieces he produced in the Florida swamps (pre 1976) and New York State forests became a part of their surroundings and pass almost unnoticed. Precariously balanced, the swamp pieces consisted of reeds and grasses, casually bundled together, loose enough to sway in the wind while being reflected in the water. The influence of the Far East is apparent here as well. The balancing of the forces is central to Eastern philosophy. The use of reeds and bamboo structures versus oak, for example, follows the Oriental tenet of the inherent strength of these materials because they sway and bend in the breeze yielding to natural forces rather than fighting them. Donald Kuspit noted of Singer's work, "The sculpture's flexibility has a didactic point. It suggests the Taoist maxim that recommends, at certain moments, life as a bamboo rather than an oak -- bamboo that bends with the big wind and thereby survives it."²⁰⁸

He creates abstractions which illustrate the T'ai Ch'i -- a balancing of opposing forces. It is the precarious balance of these forms that relates to life and nature while it is the harmonious balance that gives them strength and power.

²⁰⁸Donald Kuspit, "Michael Singer at Sperone Westwater Fischer, Art In America vol 64 July-Aug 1976, p. 105

PATRICIA JOHANSON

Patricia Johanson remembers Ise, Kokadara, Stonehenge, Nazca, Midwestern Indian mounds, Mayan ruins and Angkor Wat. She admits to creating art within an art historical context and to an affinity with Eastern philosophical ideas. "I have been interested in the Orient for as long as I can remember", she stated." My mother took me to the Brooklyn Botanical Garden and its Japanese Garden when I was a child...and now I own so many books relating to the Orient, its obvious that their ideas and designs strike a responsive chord," 209

Patricia Johanson has studied with and befriended many artists who similarly sought to divest themselves of the traditional object in art and to embrace the philosophical tenets of the Far East. At Bennington College she studied with Tony Smith and worked in mid-term in Frederick Kiesler's studio. She studied at the Art Student's League and met Barnett Newman. When she went for her Masters degree at Hunter College she studied not only with Tony Smith again but enrolled in Ad Reinhardt's Oriental art course, and was a classmate of Robert Morris. She "admires Noguchi's sense of the spirituality of nature and its

209 from a letter to the author from the artist dated March 20, 1986

artifacts." ²¹⁰ While at Bennington College, Johanson took a course in Comparative Religions and was impressed by The Way of Life, Lao Tzu and The Teachings of the Buddha. In correspondence with this author the artist notes that she still has the book The Way of Life, and underlined twice, "The way of Nature ... is process and not static. The way is not a path which nature might take, but is the movement of nature itself; it is an effortless movement... like the annual rhythm of the seasons."²¹¹ These words will echo throughout Johanson's oeuvre.

In 1966 Ms. Johanson travelled to Texas and New Mexico where she catalogued paintings, photographs and newspaper clippings for Georgia O'Keeffe. Greatly admiring O'Keeffe, Johanson recalls that O'Keeffe had read and discussed with her the writings of Fenellosa and Lafcadio Hearne, Arthur Wesley Dow and theories of "Notan" while they were together in Abiquiu.²¹² Johanson stated "I think I'm the person I am today because of knowing her."²¹³

²¹⁰correspondence dated 3/20/86, Johanson to Gelburd

²¹¹correspondence between Gail Gelburd and Patricia Johanson, March, 1987, in which the artist refers to a passage in the introduction by Raymond Blakney for The Way of Life by Lao Tzu 4th printing 1959, New American Library, p. 42-43

²¹²Letter dated March 20, 1986

²¹³Interview with the artist 6/19/86 in which she recalled these discussions while she was with O'Keeffe in Abiqui. Johanson is also familiar with the work of the other Far Eastern inspired artists including Mark Tobey, Morris Graves and John Cage and reveals an indebtedness to Frank Lloyd Wright, an architect profoundly influenced by Oriental aesthetics. Her "Swan Orchid House" (1974) might be compared to Wright's "Tirranna" (1956-58) in New Canaan Connecticut in their eccentric spans of curvilinear organic forms that confound indoor and outdoor spaces.

In 1982 Johanson visited Japan and participated in religious ceremonies at Kokadera Temple. She visited Japanese gardens, read Haiku poetry, wrote the sutras, has been to the Chinese opera, and taken Karate; she is aware of Far Eastern culture and envelops it in an art form that reintegrates man with nature in an ever changing spectrum of infinite forms. She has avidly collected rocks, in order to make her own rock gardens and she has observed the reflections, shadows and water that changed the personality of the rock. Johanson's works embody many of these ideas. They are about changes, life, death and growth, and they bring us closer to who we are and our place in the universe.

Stephen Long, 1968, (fig. 52) one of Johanson's earliest projects, reveals her concern with space as an integral part of her work. She progressed from Minimal paintings that extended lines in space to constructing lines that literally vanished in space. Stephen Long consisted of two hundred two foot wide sheets of plywood placed in a straight line measuring 1600 feet in length on an abandoned section of the Boston and Maine railroad bed. Each two foot piece of plywood was divided into three, eight inch wide stripes painted red, yellow and blue. Stephen Long was too expansive to be seen all at once; the whole had to be conceptualized to be perceived. Although the piece was physically static it was conceptually transient and the painted colors changed radically with the fluctuations of the natural

spans of curvilinear organic forms that confound indoor and outdoor spaces.

light and varying weather conditions. Stephen Long was meant to be walked, ever changing as the viewer/participant moved along the piece. 214

Johanson considers Cyrus Field, (1970-1971) (fig. 53) to be her most successful project because " it is infinitely varied (like a person) and never the same twice." 215 . "Cyrus Field" , which the artist has referred to as a "line garden", consists of various materials that wind through the environment. The "line" brushes the surface without disrupting nature. The project includes a marble section--a redwood part and a concrete block part which wind through the dense forest. 216 Like a Japanese garden, Cyrus Field changes as we walk along it and experience it. The marble "line" undergoes radical changes of color, mood and texture throughout the year; white on lush green (summer); white on bright yellow; then red and brown (fall); white on soft white (winter); white on decaying brown; then frail green (spring)" 217. Johanson believes that an artist has to either negate the environment by sweeping it all away with a bulldozer, or put it on a pedestal. The other alternative is to work with

214 The work could not, like many of her later projects, be seen in their entirety except from an aerial view, or as Noguchi in his own project suggested " To be seen from Mars".

215 correspondence dated 3/20/86

216 Johanson was also influenced by Abbott Thayer's book on Camouflage, calling Thayer the "Father of Camouflage."

217 Usdan Gallery, Bennington College, "Patricia Johanson: A Selected Retrospective: 1959-1973" Nov. 27- Dec 14, 1973, Bennington, Vermont, np

the moods of nature, the colors, the seasons, involving questions of empathy, multiple meaning, aging, changing. ²¹⁸ Cyrus Field changes like the sea of the human life cycle. All things are transient, all things are involved in becoming, continuation, change. "So the person is now at the center of the work, " stated Johanson , "and there are an infinite number of 'scenes' instead of one.²¹⁹

"The use of aesthetics as an organizing, living force -- especially in 'non-art' areas," wrote Johanson, "has had few applications in this country because we have tended to segregate art from life."²²⁰ Johanson lures the viewer into the site and then into a confrontation with nature, and ultimately with themselves. As she seeks to free the mind, the art redirects you inward to, "see what things are, rather than what we're told they are."²²¹ This is again Anatta, self and non-self. Nature is like the individual; it consists only of moments of consciousness. "...Like a river which maintains its constant form of identity, although in each moment every drop of water in the

²¹⁸interview with the artist 6/19/86

²¹⁹Unpublished text for speech given by the artist at the opening of the Leonhardt Lagoon, Sept., 1986, Dallas Texas.

²²⁰Montclair State College "Patricia Johanson: Some Approaches to Landscape, Architecture and the City", Montclair, N.J., Oct. 21- Nov. 20, 1974

²²¹correspondence 3/20/86

river flows and never remains static."²²² The Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a model and drawing of a fountain which explores these relationships (fig. 54). The inception of such projects is revealed in her reminiscences:

I had picked these ferns and wanted them to be perfect. I would leave them on the drawing table and would keep throwing them away because the ferns had shrivelled and died. I then started to draw them in whatever state they were. Suddenly it was not just a fern, it was like a person, and you could translate the suffering. There is a whole series which starts with one perfect fern; then the mouse came and made holes in it: then it shrivelled and was like an old person. (The veins of the fern had gone from front to back and they began protruding in different ways just like in older people.) Finally the fern disintegrated and became translated back into the landscape. This is very Oriental because they believe that the Universe is all one piece and that they can look at anything and translate it into anything else. I do the same thing. I only look at a few things. Every time I see my Grandmother, for example, I see her body changing, I see her body becoming a landscape. It is preparing to go back into the earth. It is turning from a structure with a purpose to bones and protruding arteries. I want to be able to translate this fern into something universal...As the ferns shrivelled up, I began to see them as so much more than they were. They were beautiful stretched out and green one day, and then they fell apart -- so I drew the little pieces. My son thought they were ugly and took them out and threw them in the mud puddle, and they were mostly underwater, so then I drew them just like that, lying there in the mud puddle,.... The real creativity is in daily life." ²²³

Johanson reveals the macrocosm by dealing with the microcosm.

In 1960 Patricia Johanson first wrote about redesigning the

²²²A. K. Coomaraswamy, Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism, (N>Y>: Harper Torchbooks, 1964) p. 98-99

²²³interview 6/19/86

world as a work of art.²²⁴ She suggested creating a total environmental design which involved not only aesthetic concerns but ecological, sociological and psychological interests as well. -- " to use aesthetics as a living organic form." ²²⁵ In 1981 Johanson was given a chance to redesign a small but historic portion of Dallas, Texas and the world inside a lagoon. She was asked to submit a proposal for the redesigning of the Dallas Fair Park Lagoon (now called the Leonhardt Lagoon). In the proposal and final commissioned project, she sought to create an environment which reunited man and nature (fig. 55 a-e). In order for the art work to become the instigator for the viewer's experience, Johanson designed an open ended structure, which like nature, was adaptable and flexible. The water lilies exemplify the transience of the piece--in the morning they open, by 2:00 in the afternoon they have closed and the entire lagoon seems to have changed.

The plan of the Lagoon project is based on plant designs, but the rising forms might also be seen as a dragon; they are horizontal, spreading out, while also vertical, rising up; they are peaceful and yet aggressive. Johanson explained, " I often use simple forms from nature as basic structures for large-scale designs because I believe they set up resonances between what is

²²⁴see Eleanor Munro, Originals: American Women Artists, Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1979, p.462

²²⁵from lecture given September 10, 1986

'out there' and our inner selves."²²⁶ It is the idea that the most profound thoughts come out of the simplest ideas. Here Reality is found in plant forms. " On one level it is just a simple image, on another level it is sexuality, on another level it is nature, topography, or mountains, or bodies of water on another level, just color... not color on a canvas but the color in nature, changing because of the time of day and the shadows. "Johanson might create fifty drawings for one project because there are an infinite range of changes that will occur."²²⁷ Her project consists of a series of landmarks which constitute a whole,"... an invisible order that one knew existed." ²²⁸ Water is a primary element of that macrocosm. Water is powerful, it can overwhelm a fern, or a rock(which is of all things most hard). Water is the blood in the microcosmic world of the macrocosm and water is frequently found in Johanson's projects as mud puddles, channels, or waterways to be restored.

In the Fair Park Lagoon project in Dallas Texas. Johanson has transformed a waterway into an art site. Fair Park Lagoon is part of a cultural complex including museums and an aquarium. Johanson has restored an ecologically unbalanced and neglected waterway by introducing native fauna and wildlife to the site,

²²⁶lecture given by the artist 9/10/86

²²⁷interview 6/19/86

²²⁸Patricia Johanson, " Gardens That Are Out Of Sight.. The Vanishing Point Garden", unpublished manuscript commissioned by House and Garden magazine, 1969, reprinted in Patricia Johanson, 1969-1980, Rosa Esman Gallery, February 4-28, 1981

adding paths, vistas, and islands in the water. These create flower basins and fish ponds. At the southern end of the lagoon a sprawling fern-like shape provides a network of bridges and walkways through the islands. The northern end of the lagoon was eroding at the rate of eight inches per year, so here Johanson allows one of the leaf forms to serve as a bulwark. Other portions of the sculpture extend into the water and break the wave action to further hinder erosion of the shore line. The vulnerable section of the shoreline is protected by the sculpted leaf which caresses it. Johanson arrived at a series of creative solutions to a given set of circumstances that directly involved our place within the environment. The garden is comprised of colors, shapes, projections, living plants, animals and the water. Various parts of the sculpture are submerged. Johanson has created "... a design that will change so radically that it will literally become several different works as the spectator changes levels, direction, context. It is really just a series of fragments (parts) that can be put together in any number of ways..."²²⁹ Johanson has created a new environment that combines man and nature. It consists of two main components -- sculptural landscaping and biological restoration. This 240 by 105 foot site was transformed, through art, into a functioning aquatic community. The sculptural bridges and walkways are paths that bring you through the sculpture to stop off points, viewing

²²⁹ quoted in Montclair State College, letter from the artist to Romaldo Giugola, June 1972, p. 6

areas, flower basins and fish ponds, seating areas and observation points. Ducks and turtles, fish, snails, caterpillars, dragonflies and the duck potato plants have found a new home as they continue to complete this living sculptural environment.

Johanson's art is functional, aesthetic and public. A "totalization" of space is achieved by her division of space. Her simultaneous use of large and small scale presents the viewer /participant with the microcosm and the macrocosm. "It is the vast configuration versus personal confrontation with any of an infinite number of intimate details."²³⁰ Single focus is replaced by multi-focus so that the emphasis is on personal experience. -- a keystone of classical Chinese landscape painting and of Zen.²³¹ And yet it is architecture in the truest sense of the term. Architecture as a term is rooted in the Greek "tikto" which is a shaping of space that brings something forth, to make something appear within what is present. Johanson gives us an art which makes us truly aware of the environment and our place within that space. It is a constant and yet it is always in a state of flux like the changing tides of nature. In Johanson's work the spectator is never alienated from nature for as Johanson writes "I am Nature."

²³⁰ correspondence between Gail Gelburd and Patricia Johanson, March 1987

²³¹ Lucy Lippard "Stemming From...", Patricia Johanson : Fair Park Lagoon, Dallas and Color Gardens , Rosa Esman Gallery, March 15- April 9, 1983, p. 12.

Johanson's work is most like the experience in a Chinese classical garden. She presents us with an ever changing microcosm of the macrocosm. Each moment there are new things to see which relate to nature. As in Lao Tzu, nature is process, "it is the movement of nature itself." She evokes a sense of infinity within a confined space, expressing timelessness. It is Tathata -- seeing things as they really are and eliminating the distance between knowing and known, between subject and object. We suddenly come to see the art and Nature with a pure and clear mind

JAMES TURRELL

Jim Turrell once said that the problem with occidentals is that they're so literal:, if we want to know about the nature of the universe, we have to put together all that messy boiler plate technology and go to the moon to pick up some rocks, while the Zen monks efficiently contemplate whatever rock is at hand.²³²

The environmental art projects that James Turrell creates are not about the space or about the universe, they are about your seeing, your perception of the universe and all that can be found in one rock or one installation, or one volcanic crater. They are also the microcosm of the macrocosm. The sites that Turrell prefers are those that have no particular junction, "... spaces that are really only inhabited by consciousness. This inhabiting of space by consciousness is the entry of self into space through the penetration of vision"²³³

While a student at the University of California at Irvine, Turrell created his first Projection Piece, Protoafum, using a quartz halogen projector. These first pieces from 1965 and 1966

²³²Peter Plagens "Site Wars", Art in America 70" "91-2 January 1982

²³³Julia Brown, Occluded Front: James Turrell , Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985, p. 38.

produced flat flames. Concerned that there was too much attention on the hardware and with some of them exploding, the concept was abandoned quickly.

For several months Turrell worked with Robert Irwin and Edward Wortz of T Garrett Airesearch on a series of experiments concerning perception and worked with the anechoic chamber at UCLA, biofeedback devices and ganzfelds.²³⁴ In August 1969 Turrell abandoned the collaboration and went on to experiment with many of the same ideas on his own. Turrell worked on developing an art that was experiential, using the medium of light.²³⁵ In 1969 Turrell's entire studio in California became a "piece" and the "piece" became studio size. Called Mendotta Stoppage, it captured the reflective geometry of the architecture in the room, cars passing outside, and street lights. It heightened the viewers perception of their present environment. When collectors or critics came to the studio they were asked to sit in a completely empty room on small cushions and to look but not speak for about thirty minutes. After a while the various elements began to become obvious, stronger and ever changing. One's perception of the piece was constantly in a state of flux. Turrell emphasized the perceptual ambiguities in

²³⁴ These experiments related to his undergraduate major in psychology and his avocation of flying. They all help him to create his own ganzfelds (used originally by perceptual psychologists to train pilots to orient themselves in bad weather without their usual clues on the horizon).

²³⁵ By the 1970s other Southern California artists were using ambient light and space in order to create environment. These included Maria Nordman, Eric Orr, DeWain Valentine

order to induce heightened levels of awareness.

Turrell is "... an instigator of subtly transcendental or metaphysical states of mind."²³⁶ He is able to provoke exhilarating experiences of the expansiveness of the universe simultaneous to quiet meditation. The viewer responds in a new way to a heightened perception of Reality, thereby bringing the viewer/participant closer to a primordial state. "Light is a powerful substance. We have a primal connection to it," stated Turrell in a recent interview²³⁷. His work directs us towards a clearer and more holistic understanding of ourselves and the world around us. The longer that you look at the pieces the more you begin to realize that you see similar things whether your eyes are open or shut. "I want it to be like the light that illuminates the mind, as opposed to the light that illuminates the eye."²³⁸

Turrell became particularly interested in light and space from his avocation of flying small aircraft. ²³⁹ He is fascinated by flight. "He speaks of the blackness found by those who have flown to the outer limits of our atmosphere-- where there is no air to be lit, so that a progressive darkening of color as one ascends away from the earth prevents us from

²³⁶Theodore F. Wolff, "Introduction", Occluded Front James Turrell, Julia Brown, ed. Los Angeles, 1986

²³⁷Interview of James Turrell by Gail Gelburd, April, 1986

²³⁸Brown, Occluded Front, p.44

²³⁹He also buys and sell antique planes.

perceiving the limitlessness of space."²⁴⁰

Turrell remembers reading, early in his career, Wind, Sand and Stars and Night Flight by Antoine de Saint-Exupery's described spaces in the sky, spaces within space, delineated by light qualities versus clouds or other points of reference, delineated by nature and the environment.

Turrell has created two sky pieces at the Villa Panza which relate to the spaces in the sky he has seen while flying. Blackness closing up the Space occurs in the night in Panza's piece. These were his first sky pieces. Turrell cut an aperture through the roof in order to create a visual "skin" of light at the juncture between interior and exterior space. Panza wrote of them "...looking at the sky is a way to escape banality and the meaninglessness of life."²⁴¹ (fig. 56)

Another sky piece was created at P.S. 1 in Long Island City, New York, 1985-1987. Responding directly to the site, Turrell created a work of art unique to it. At P.S. 1, the inside of the Turrell room is surrounded on its perimeter by wooden benches with slanted backs so that when the viewer sits his sight is directed towards the opening in the center of the ceiling. Is it a Guido Reni Baroque Trompe L'Oeil painting of the sky, or is it in fact the sky? Indeed, the ceiling and roof have been skillfully and precisely cut away to reveal the changing sky and the changing light. Suddenly the sky that we see everyday takes

²⁴⁰Melinda Wortz Turrell, N.Y.: Whitney Museum, 1980, P.11

²⁴¹Panza "Artist of the Sky", Brown, ed., Occluded Front P. 76

on new significance and is transformed into an experience. Turrell has framed nature and re-directed us towards it. We study the clouds, the bird that flies by, feel the changing tonalities of light. Count Panza di Biumo, wrote:

Things are a shadow of the real, which is behind us. Light leads to this hidden beginning; lights are a symbol of life, the metaphysical power that gives existence to everything. If the eyes of the mind are open, we can, while looking to Nature, read man's fate and our individual condition. Nature speaks to us not in a rational way but through the intuition of our deepest being. The universe is not only a huge mechanical system following the mathematical laws that Galileo, and Newton found looking at the stars; it is also the Great Mother, loving us from faraway spaces. We can know truth not by science, which gives only analytical and limited knowledge, but through loving Nature. Our soul is able to overcome rational limits and reach some kind of total knowledge. Loving Nature's endless beauty is the way to reach the truth. Identity of love, truth, and beauty is the way to reach the truth. Identity of love, truth and beauty is the final statement of Turrell's art.²⁴²

Turrell's Space Division Constructions (fig. 57 a-c) similarly created atmosphere, not the illusion of atmosphere. If we reach into the space we realize that it has no tactile, physical quality, there is "nothing" there. Turrell works with light so that it creates an experience in which it seems to have a real physical quality, "so you feel the presence of light inhabiting space."²⁴³ He makes something out of the nothingness of light. Turrell compares his work to a Haiku poem and stated, "The haiku poem has as much power as a symphony. I think that art should not be limited but be allowed its full range of

²⁴² Panza, Occluded Front

²⁴³ Julia Brown, p.22

possibilities in material, form and scale."²⁴⁴ It is like Mu (nothingness)-- a part of everything in nature, and yet mu is formless.

Turrell's sense of illusion however is not about trompe l'oeil. He stated "I like illusion when it is so convincing that we might as well see reality this way-- I like to present to our belief system something that is convincing."²⁴⁵ It is not illusion in the traditional sense of the word because it alludes what is, in Reality, there.

In 1980, at the Whitney Museum exhibition, Turrell created rooms with light projections and with Space Division Constructions in order to create images which in fact are "nothing", at least in the tangible sense. Turrell presents the elements, such as light, rather than creating a mere illusion of light as in Baroque painting. The light is to be viewed and experienced on its own terms in order to enable us to understand the illusions that we perceive. It is a direct perception of light and space. The light that he projects disintegrates the wall, denies the physicality of the wall upon which it is projected. The light becomes the substance, the element with physicality even though it has none. Turrell's pieces "create the illusion of a skin or screen existing between the interior and exterior space, when in actuality we know that it is continuous.

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²⁴⁵Melinda Wortz interview with Turrell, Oct. 1979, quoted in Whitney catalog, p. 10

Is this the illusionistic veil we put up between ourselves and the universe..?."246

Tom Armstrong, in the catalog for the Whitney Museum exhibition compared Turrell to Edward Hopper and wrote: "Both are concerned with the mysteries of light, the elegance of space, and the bewildering situation that each of us confronts in our daily encounter with these aspects of nature."²⁴⁷ Turrell stated; "Light is often seen as the bearer of revelation rather than the substance of the revelation. It is "something" that "illuminated" other "things". For example, we speak of hanging a show and then lighting it, revealing the persistence of the way we actually think about light but light may actually be the content, the "substance".²⁴⁸ "Light is not so much something that reveals, as it is itself a revelation."²⁴⁹ The light is a part of the realm of the mind. Melinda Wortz in the Whitney exhibition catalog quoted DT Suzuki: "The highest stage of Buddhist experience is reached when a man comes to realize that things are devoid of a self substance (form) or that they are not after all final, irreducible realities.... Reality as it is, or Mind in itself, is also called the suchness (tathata) or sameness (samsara) of things, as herein are unified all forms of antithesis

²⁴⁶Wortz, Turrell, p. 12

²⁴⁷Tom Armstrong, Whitney Museum. Turrell, "Forward", p.6

²⁴⁸James Turrell, interview with Melinda Wortz, October 1979 quoted in Whitney Museum catalog, p. 9

²⁴⁹Brown, Occluded Front, p. 43

(ie., form and formlessness) which substitute our actual world of sense and logic."²⁵⁰ The effect of Turrell's art, like that of Buddhist teachings ... is to provide us access to extraordinary planes of perception, or the actual essence of things depending upon how we choose to interpret our experience."²⁵¹ A retreat to nature in search of a revelation about the universe is integral to Taoism and Zen. Through the "veil" of nature one could come to have a greater understanding of reality.

The Roden Crater Project (fig. 58 a-e) is Turrell's most ambitious and important project to date. It will, when completed, encompass all of his basic principles about art and nature, perception and reality. Working in and around a red and black cinder cone of a long-extinct volcano near Flagstaff, Arizona, he will create seven spaces in which to experience the changing qualities of the sun and the moonlight. Five will be on the outside slope of the cone in a side vent, from there a long tunnel will lead into a chamber at the bottom of the caldera, and finally into the bowl of the cinder cone itself. The rim of the cone will be somewhat re-contoured as will the bowl, to enhance the reception of the light. Looking out from the spaces one will periodically see what Turrell calls "imaged events": a moonrise, a solstice event which will work in with daily fluctuations of the sun and moonlight creating ever-changing perceptual

²⁵⁰D.T. Suzuki, Studies in Lankavtara Sutra (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1930) pp 98-99

²⁵¹Melinda Wortz, James Turrell, Whitney Museum, p. 9

environments. Indeed it exploits the site-- the materials the light, its symbolic and emotional qualities. Turrell wants to make us acutely aware of the physical, symbolic and psychic aspects of light.

After approaching the crater and circling around the crater on the north side its complex shape and hemispheric ridge becomes obvious. The tightening spiraling approach and sense of circumambulation is reminiscent of approaches and rituals at a Buddhist temple. Each space inside presents a wide range of a variety of light qualities. We will ultimately perceive ourselves perceiving.

Turrell first conceived of the idea to create a piece involving celestial vaulting in 1972. He flew over several states in his airplane looking for a hemispheric crater. He looked throughout the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean and all the way into Canada and Mexico. In 1974 he found the Roden Crater. In order to begin work on the project he obtained a grant from the NEA Art in Public Places and the Dia Foundation. He moved to Arizona and began the project in 1976, purchasing the Crater in 1977 for approximately 6,000 dollars. The Museum of Northern Arizona gave Turrell office space while Turrell established the Skystone Foundation in order to continue to raise money for the project. Count Panza emphatically stated, "The Roden Crater project is one of the few things that must be made, to prove that the light in the human mind is not gone."²⁵²

²⁵²Count Panza " Artist of the Sky",p.88

The Roden Crater project embodies many of the same qualities found in the nineteenth century landscape paintings of Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, and Frederic Edwin Church, but in a manner consistent with modern technology. Turrell creates a sense of the presence of space, almost as an entity onto itself. The Crater is not an object with presence but rather a space with presence. "For Turrell, a major motivation toward the art act is his desire to express the coexistence of the dream and the conscious, awake state."²⁵³ Turrell stated " I have an interest in the invisible light, the light perceptible only in the mind..."²⁵⁴ The crater will become the cave of the mind when completed in the 1990s.

Turrell compares the Crater project to Japanese gardens: "Of all the gardens in the Japanese culture, the kind that I like very much is the kind where you do not see the hand of man. There are the traditional rock gardens with the raked sand and rock, and then there are those where you can't tell they're man-made. That is very fascinating to me, because you cannot tell where the piece of "art" ends. This is where the ego of the artist begins to dissolve into the grand scale of things. This is the kind of effort I am seeking with Roden Crater-- a piece that does not

²⁵³Melinda Wortz James Turrell, Whitney Museum(N.Y.: 1980) p.13

²⁵⁴Julia Brown, "Interview with James Turrell" Occluded front, 1986, p.13

end."²⁵⁵

James Turrell uses the elements of our environment in order to change our perception of it. His work is likened to Eastern mysticism in which everything is ephemeral. The various spaces at the crater will organize the viewing of the sky, moon, sun, desert. The light will range from subtle nuances from the stars, daily changes of the moon to dramatic color and bold expanses of light from the sun. Other times the light will seem to disappear as if it were "just turned off or vacuumed out of the space."²⁵⁶ Turrell forces us to see the space, see the emptiness, experience 'light'. It is an idea reiterated in the Heart Sutra, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form." It is the "Nothingness" that is the source of energy for everything. Turrell gives us the hub in the wheel, the center of the potter's vessel, and he places us in the middle of it. "My desire", stated Turrell, "is to set up a situation to which I take you and let you see. It becomes your experience." ²⁵⁷ We are left then with only our perception of ourselves within these changing, ephemeral, transient and temporal spaces.

Turrell wrote in The Report on the Art and Technology Program 1967-1971 :

If we define art as part of the realm of experience, we can

²⁵⁵Quoted in Sedona Life, Sedona, Arizona, 4 no. 1 (1979). P 20

²⁵⁶Craig Adcock, see University of Arizona, James Turrell : The Roden Crater Project, , Arizona, 1986, p. 29

²⁶²Turrell interview in Occluded Front, James Turrell, p.22

assume that after a viewer looks at a piece, he "leaves" with the art, because the 'art' has been experienced, We are dealing with the limits of an experience --not for instance, with the limits of painting. We have chosen that experience out of the realm of experience to be defined as "art" because having this label it is given special attention. Perhaps this is all "Art" means -- this Frame of Mind."

.....

The experience is the :thing", experiencing is the "object".

All art is experience, yet all experience is not art. The artist chooses from experience that which he defines out as art, possibly because it has not yet been experienced enough, or because it needs to be experienced more.

All art-world distinctions are meaningless. 258

Turrell provides us with an experience that can lead us to Satori, the realization of our essential self. We eliminate all Art/World distinctions and become a part of the universe. We acquire a new point of view, state of mind, mode of perception. It provides a new sense of reality at the Ultimate level. He epitomizes the Eastern philosophical doctrine, All is one, one is none, none is All." 259

²⁵⁸quoted in Weschler, Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees , 127 -128

²⁵⁹Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, Harper and Row, 1958, p. 151

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

It is probably true quite generally that in the history human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different times or different cultural environments or different religious traditions: hence if they actually meet, that is, if they are at least so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow.

-Werner Heisenberg 259

The history of the mind or the intellect can be found in the history of art. Artists create images which structure their thoughts and Reality takes shape. In the process of shaping ideas many artists have moved from REALISM or imitating physical reality, to a process of "realization" and direct perception of Reality. Their work is about evolving

²⁵⁹quoted in Fritjof Capra, The Tao Of Physics (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984) frontispiece

states of consciousness. Space has been discovered as a viable way to understand and materialize, " Reality". Space is not just as a series of places, but is perceived of as an endless continuum, of emptiness with infinite potential. Eastern Philosophy, particularly Zen, which was popularized in the West during the 1960s, held a new approach to space, a new outlook on Reality. This "new" attitude to Reality and space, promulgated by the Far East, was compatible with an art form that moved away from the object, incorporated nature and was more experiential. This line of thought coupled with the development of Zen in America met in the works of many of the environmental artists of the 1960s and 1970s. The Eastern philosophical influence was unavoidable for them.

Indeed, the 1960s and 1970s were marked by a great influx of Eastern philosophical ideas into the United States. Since the Zen boom of the 1950s and Jack Kerouac days there was a renewed but eclectic spiritual atmosphere. In a period of disillusionment with Western culture these new ideas were easily accepted and this Eastern spirituality widely affected all aspects of American culture. The sphere of influence and the understanding of it had come a long way since the days of Commodore Perry or Ernest Fenollosa, one hundred years earlier. Artists of the 1960s and

1970s were particularly receptive to these new ideas. Looking to artists such as the Nineteenth Century landscape painters, the parks of Olmstead and Vaux, the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists, the sculpture of Isamu Noguchi and more recently the developments of work by artists such as Carl Andre and Richard Serra; the artists moved off the pedestal, off the wall and into nature. When these lines of thought and spheres of influence merge, the basics of Eastern philosophy could be found as critical components in the works of environmental artists such as Walter de Maria, Richard Long, David Nash, Michael Singer, Patricia Johanson, and James Turrell. Each of these artists have moved away from the object, to a communion with nature and an experience that evokes contemplation of our own inner perceptions of the universe. Their works embody the Oriental mystique.

These artists created experiences and realizations of Space in environmental art formats. The images they created were turned inward as the shapes now surrounded the viewer, turned participant. Their work, like Eastern philosophical thought, stresses the idea that there is a unity of things and interrelationship between, objects, ideas, events, experiences; the experience of all phenomena as a manifestation of the Oneness and of the indivisible Reality of the Universe -- be it Tao, Brahman, Dharmakaya or Tathata .

Although we tend to divide the world into its polarities

they are all united .It is never a static balance but a dynamic interplay. Such is the interplay between Zen and Environmental art. Environmental art provides us with an experience in which we can perceive directly that Oneness, that unity, by eliminating the individuality of any object. In Zen there is no separation between subject and object and each of the artists under discussion similarly avoid the discreet object. Even Turrell's Roden crater is not the object of art or the art object. Rather, the art is the experience of being in the crater so that to focus on the crater as the art object would be to miss the art. None of the poles in DeMaria's field would make any sense standing in a gallery as a sculpture. If you concentrate on any one of the four hundred poles at the Lightning Field you might just miss the sunset and the art experience. Richard Long's photos of his "lines" are only documentation of the art . You cannot focus on any single object at Johanson's Leonhardt Lagoon but must feel and see the life of the Lagoon. Similarly, to describe the works of art does not explain them. The artist can only lead the viewer to stand in the center of them in order to direct you to perceive your own being and its place within the universe. Thus, Zen and the art that it inspires deliberately tries to force our mind to move beyond the surface forms. The art must be internalized. It depends as much on the perception of the viewer/ participant as it does on its own inherent qualities. Through a limited, controlled format, De Maria, Johanson, Singer and Long have created an image of the totality

of the universe. Although Long may direct our attention to focus on one line, it represents the line between any two points. Past, present, and future, various locales and cultures all converge to create something new. It is this simplicity, the simplicity of lines converging, which is found in all these pieces, that makes them work so well. The works of these artists direct us to the microcosm which represents the macrocosm. These artists structure the Void to evoke contemplation of the Totality of the universe.

Zen art and this Environmental art plays with perception, and reminds us that there is more to reality than what immediately meets our five senses. Ultimately we must try to transcend them; the art is there to guide us. We force our mind to move beyond the surface forms, to internalize the art. "To pass from the perception of discrete phenomena, of objectsto the conception of invisible agent manipulating these objects according to some cosmic plan, is an advance in human intelligence, in sheer mental capability, for which we must have some convincing explanation. The birth of a metaphysical faculty is involved." 261

Nature provides a forum for experiencing the interrelationships and the Unity in the work of the contemporary Environmental artist. It is an integral part of Environmental art and an integral part of Zen. Lucy Lippard wrote in a recent book about public art, "Art must have begun as nature itself -- not as

²⁶¹Herbert Read, Icon and Idea, N.Y. : Schocken books, 1965
) p. 54

an imitation of nature, not as a formalized representation of it, but as the relationship between humans and the natural world, from which we can't be separated despite our attempts to set up a technological superstructure to destroy it."... Nature in Western civilization has consistently been linked to the wild, to the unconscious and the irrational, to childhood and to the sexual, sensuous deepest self, to the sources of meaning that continually escape us."²⁶² As noted above, landscape in Eastern art has always referred to man's communion with nature. It is the endless change and flux of man's environment that is the key concern in Zen art. A retreat to nature in search of a revelation about the universe was an integral part of Taoism and Zen; it is the *raison d'être* of this art. Through the "veil" of nature one can come to have a greater understanding of reality, losing themselves in the distant mountain. Art that relates to Eastern philosophy or Zen art, penetrates beyond the perceptions of the rational mind and its supporting senses, to show not nature's surface, but its essence. These environmental artists provide us with an experience of a Retreat to nature, and to within ourselves. Walter De Maria brings us to the Void of the desert filled with experiences, spurred on by 400 poles. Johanson leads us into the Lagoon, and David Nash lets us sit inside the empty hut as the sun glistens on us. They give us the cave for our soul.

Each artist creates an environment for contemplation.

²⁶²Lucy Lippard "Gardens: Some Metaphors for a Public Art" Art In America, November, 1981

Michael Singer's recent piece commissioned by the Aspen Art Museum (not far from the Herbert Bayer environment) is secluded in the woods and surrounded by a high fence. The viewer unlocks the gate and views the various components of Singer's garden which includes a large piece of stone and twigs precariously balanced upon each other. That dynamic interplay is there for you to relate to, concentrate on, think about after you have closed the gate behind you. Only when your mind is quiet "... like the flame of a candle in the absence of the wind..." can the piece, like the others under discussion, be truly experienced. Turrell plans to place a stone pillow in the bowl of the crater so that the viewer/participant can lie down in the crater and stare through the aperture to the sky for long periods of time. DeMaria lets no more than six people at a time view the Lightning Field so that the quiet of the desert can be felt, and Richard Long walks his lines in isolation. You must clear and quiet your mind so that you can experience the art. When Zen speaks of transparency, it means this clearing away, this thorough wiping away of the surface of the mind, as in a mirror. But the mirror is never obscured, and even the cleaned mirror always reflects the new and the old of its environment.²⁶³ Indeed, it is what we cannot see that holds the art. The space inside Nash's hut, spaces between the Lightning poles -- the light that fills the space as in the hub of the wheel of the Tao Te Ching. It is the Nothing that embodies the chi, the Void that contains All.

²⁶³DT Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, p., 361

The Zen love of Nature which is also found in the works under discussion, is not for its potential tranquility but because Nature is always in motion, never at a standstill. Nature is to be loved, it must be caught while moving and in this way its aesthetic value must be appraised. To seek tranquility is to kill Nature, to stop its pulsation, and to embrace the dead corpse that is left behind.²⁶⁴ Each of the works discussed in this study embrace this concept. They are each transitory, ever changing. They are involved in becoming. The poles in the Lightning Field change with each time of day, each season, from dust storms to sunsets; there will be something different to see each day or hour in the the Lightning Field, Leonhardt Lagoon, or Roden Crater. Nash ' s hearths set on fire went through a life and death cycle, while the Fletched Over Ash Dome is still in the process of becoming. Many of the pieces involve water because water is spontaneous and effortless yet always changing. The water will change Nash's wooden boulder and cover over Richard Long's path across the river. The water will help the pieces to age as they continue to become, continue the process. The patina of time, or *sabi* will always keep the piece from being static and dead. They are each about a succession of moments in the life of the work, the artist and the viewer.

Zen has no need of things external except "the body" and therefore contemporary Environmental art can come closer to being a true Zen art. "What it does is to delineate itself on the

²⁶⁴ ck chapt #3

infinite canvas of time and pave the way for the flying wild geese who cast their shadow on the water below without any idea of doing so, while the water reflects the geese just as naturally and unintentionally." ²⁶⁵ While traditional sculptors chisel out a form buried in a mass of inert matter, each of these artists transforms his own life into a work of creation, his own space into a manifestation of his essential self. The art of the environmental artist is the shadow of the raven on the ground in the desert, the opening of the waterlilies, and the water racing over the foot prints.

The lesson that each of these artists has learned, which is the critical component of Zen, is to experience rather than just see and analyze. Contemporary environmental art does just this. It forces us to experience the art, to perceive it, to participate in it in order to complete the piece. It exists as art only as we exist within it. Turrell's Roden Crater will not be complete unless we are there to perceive and there is no way to describe it except for as to how we experience it. The art works become the Koan -- the unanswerable questions that they frequently pose - questions that can only be answered through experience in terms of time and space. They are intuitive answers rather than logical rationalizations. "If you want to understand Zen, understand it right away without deliberation, without turning your head this way or that . For while you are doing

²⁶⁵D.T. Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, p. 17

this, the object you have been seeking for is no longer there."²⁶⁶ Like Zen, this art cannot be apprehended through intellectual means it must be experienced: one knows it by not knowing it. The aim is to restore the experience of original inseparability, to return to the original state of purity and transparency.

In discussing, Zen, Taoism or Hinduism with many of these artists it became clear that there is an awareness of Eastern philosophical ideas in contemporary art and society. Few know it or understand it as a Zen scholar might, few understood the full ramifications of it but what has been fascinating and unrefutable and excuses any naivete about the topic is the way in which they have "inhaled" these ideas rather than necessarily making a study of them and infused their art with the essence of Eastern Philosophical thought. Indeed, throughout the history of humanity people have tried to understand " the mystery of Life" and our place within it. Scientist, mystics, poets, philosophers and artists have tried verbal and visual ways to explain some aspect of its nature, its essence. Therefore, what is most significant is that at a point in time in our recent history many artists turned to alternative ideas in order to create an experiential milieu that would help us to better perceive and understand our world. The artists have embodied some of the Eastern yin and combined it with their Western yang to try to create an

²⁶⁶DT Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, p. 360

environment comparable to the totality of the T'ai Chi.

The environmental artists discussed in this study are only a sampling of all those who are aware of Eastern philosophical thought and who experiment with perception. They remind us that there is more to reality than what immediately meets our five senses. Zen culture for centuries and continuing today in the West, tries to bring us in touch with a portion of ourselves we avoid -- our non-rational, nonverbal side. Many other artists either directly or indirectly have tried to create an art that is similarly experiential. Many works created since the mid 1960s are about process, change, and Nature in ways that expand and exemplify the theories of Eastern Philosophy. Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt, Michelle Stuart, Helen and Newton Harrison, Carolee Thea, Charles Ross, DeWain Valentine, Eric Orr, Alan Sonfist, Hap Tivey and Robert Irwin are just a few of the other artists who could easily have fit into this study. They too have been dedicated to an experiential art which evokes a contemplative, inward response. Each of them has also revealed an interest and knowledge of Far Eastern Philosophy in one of its many guises. While these artists may have been simultaneously reading Merleau Ponty or other philosophies, one does not preclude the other. The influences on the works of the artists under discussion are many. For some they include psychology, ecology, existentialism phenomenology, aeronautics. But for each they were a part of an environment which cultivated Eastern Philosophical ideas. These ideas coalesced into an art form which was new and relevant to

the times. Robert Irwin explained: "The kind of change I'm envisioning, [doesn't] simply enter society whole. There's always a process of mediation, overlapping, intermeshing, threading into the fabric. But we're headed there; the complexity of consciousness, its capacity to sustain being in presence in all its rich variety will be growing with each generation." ²⁶⁷ Each generation tries to go beyond the literally visible, to develop the senses. Thoreau wrote "This world has many rings, like Saturn, and we live now on the outpost of them."²⁶⁸ Perhaps the art of this generation brings us a little closer to the center and onto the next ring of inquiry.

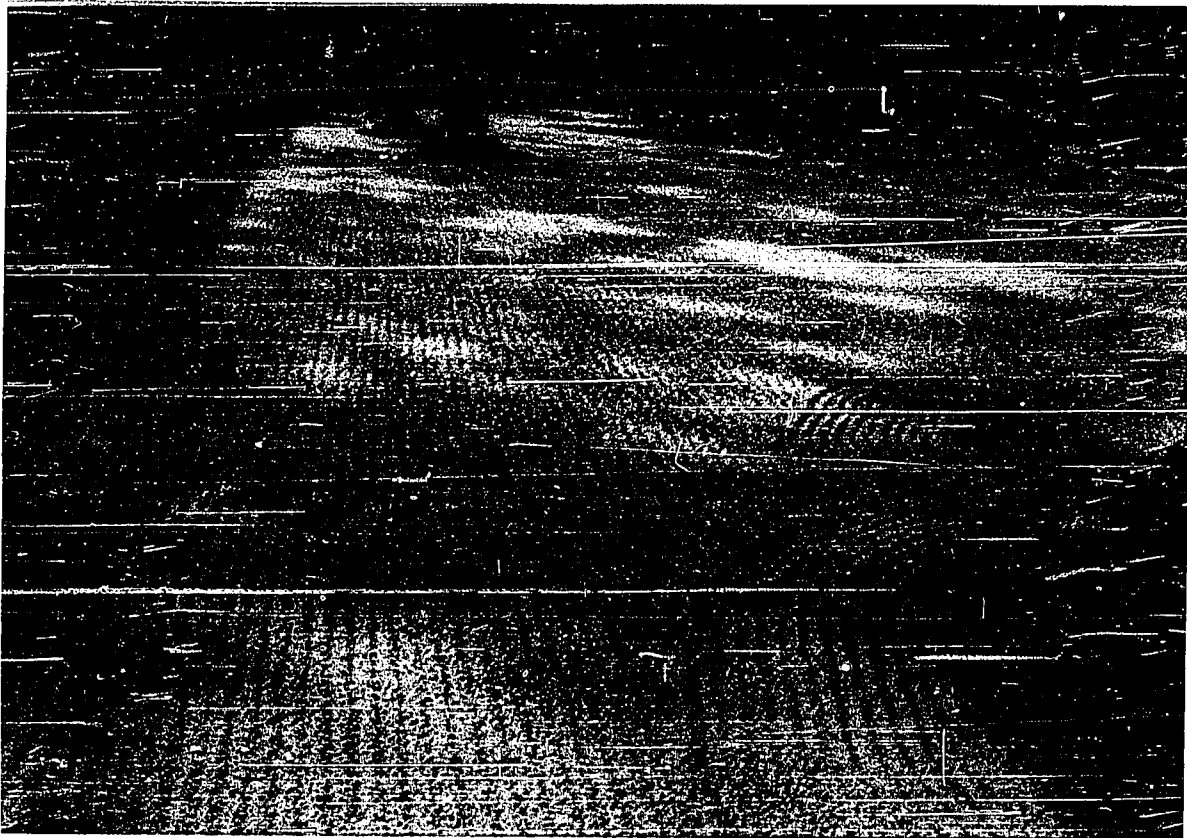
²⁶⁷Weschler, Irwin, p. 181

²⁶⁸ Thoreau, Merrimack Rivers...

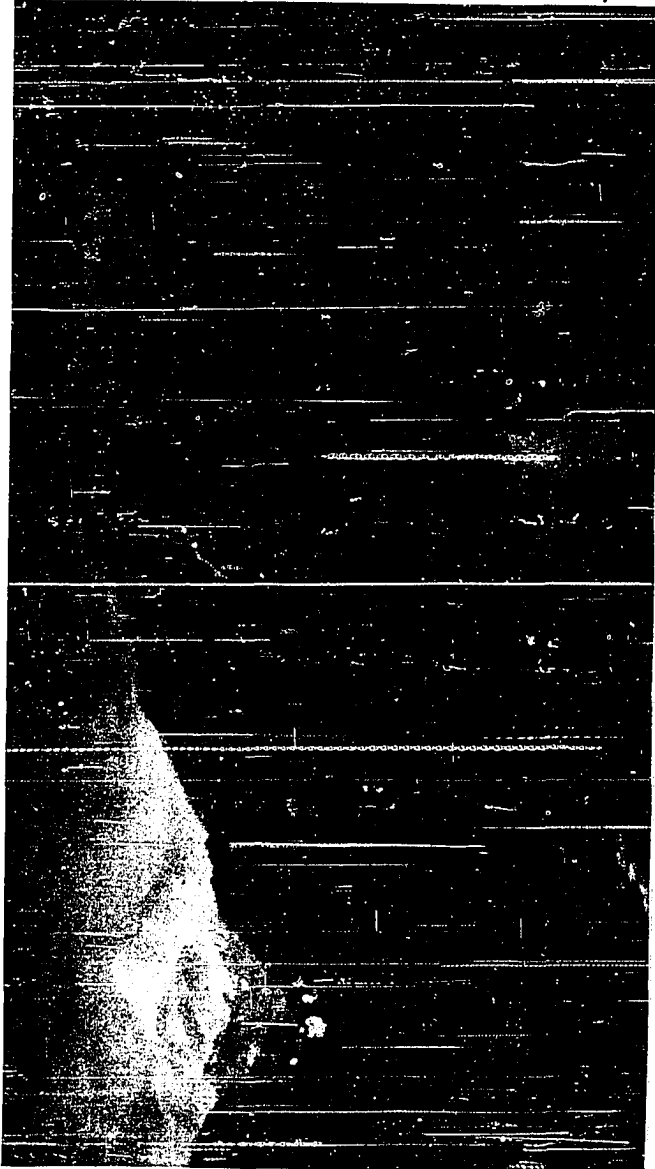
1. Hokusai , The Breezy Call of Incense Breathing Over Morn



2. Ryoan-ji Garden, Kyoto , Japan



3.F. E. Church, Heart of the Andes, 1859



4. Fitz Hugh Lane, Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay Maine, 1862



5. Augustus St. Gaudens, Adams Memorial



6. Helen Hyde, The Bamboo Fence



7. Lillian May Miller, A Spray of Bamboo



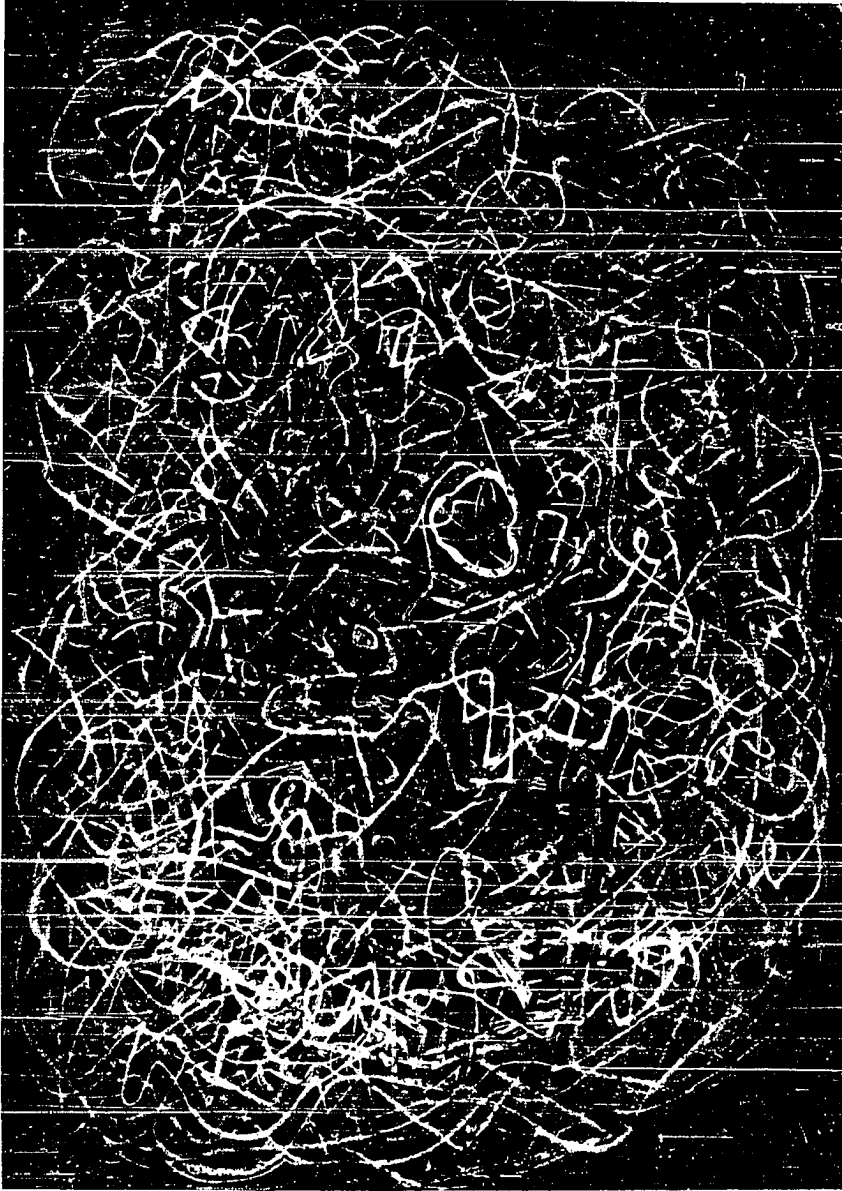
8. Arthur W. Dow, Bend of A River, 1848



9. Georgia O'Keeffe, Blue Poles



10. Mark Tobey, Broadway Norm



11. Mark Tobey, Pacific Circle



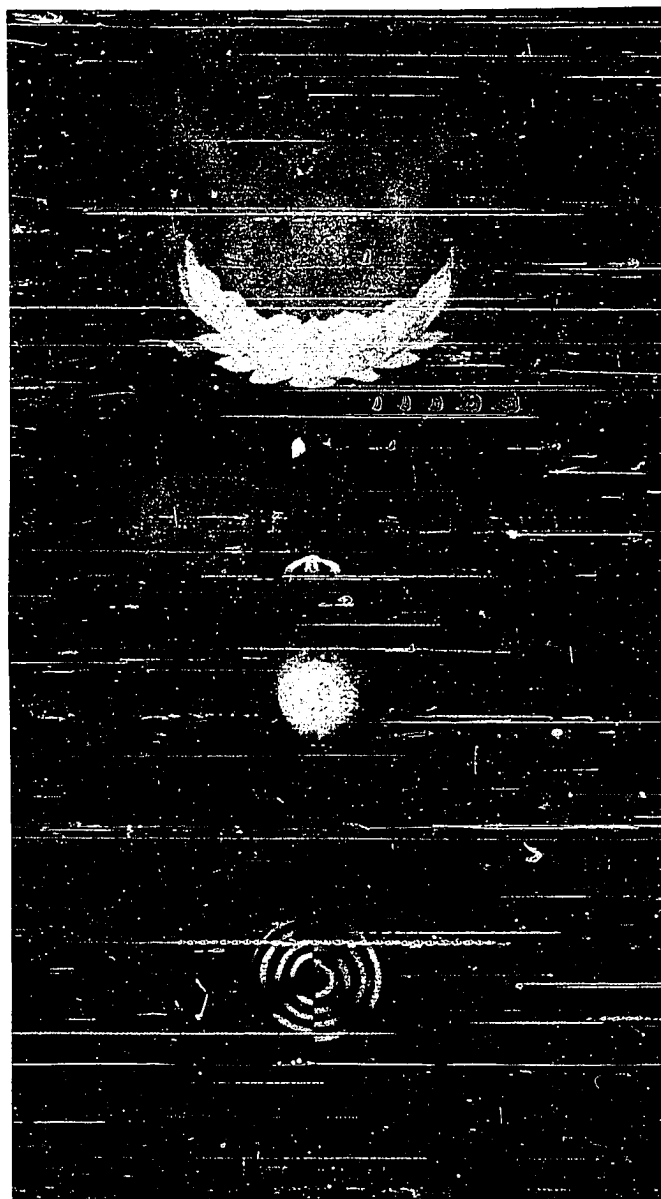
12. Morris Graves, Moon Mad Crow in the Surf



13. Morris Graves, Bird in the Moonlight, 1938-39



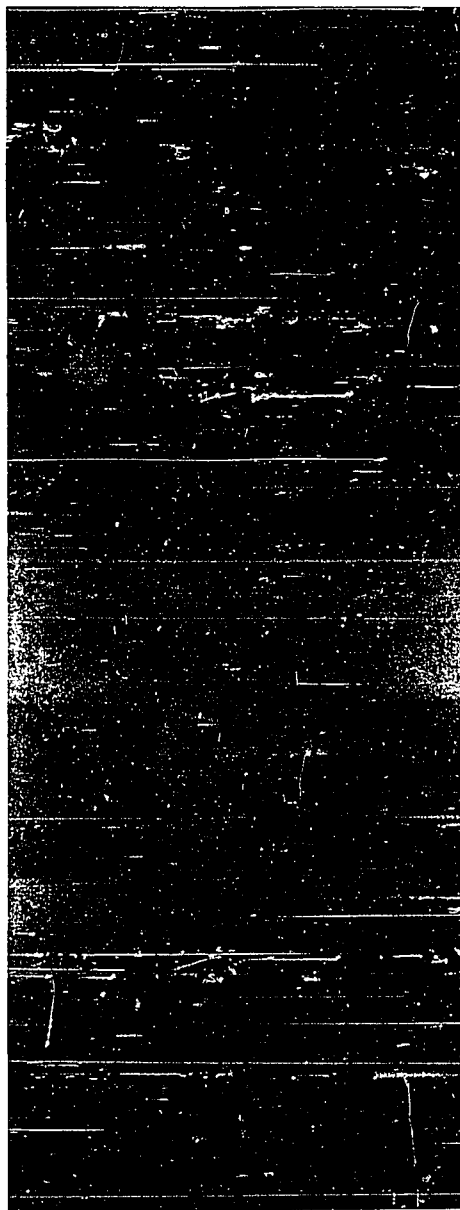
14. Morris Graves, Kundalini, 1953



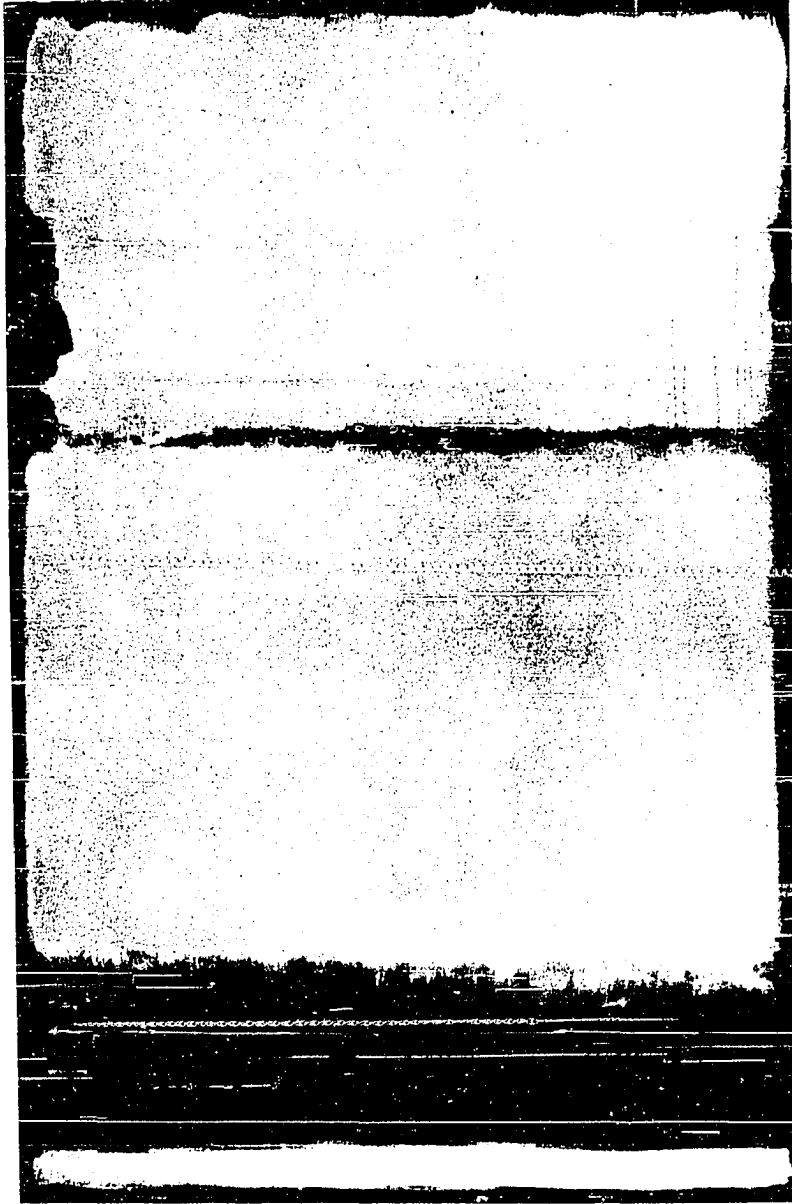
15. Morris Graves, Gander Ready for Flight



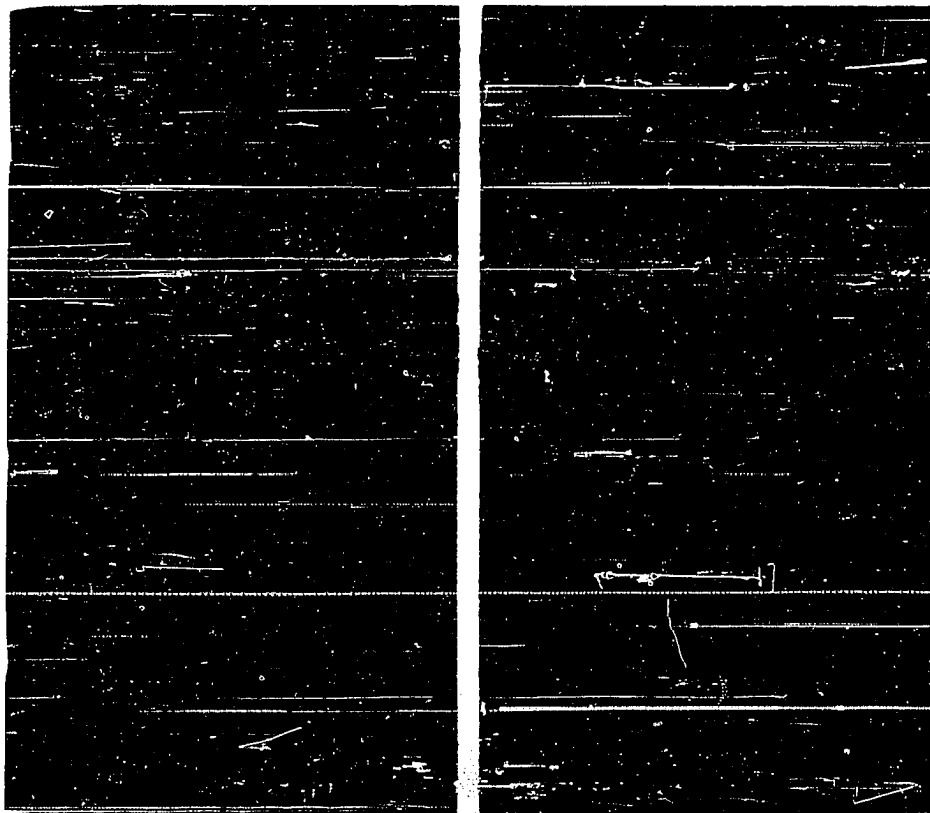
16. Ad Reinhardt, Abstract Painting, 1952



17. Mark Rothko, Untitled, 1951



18. Barnett Newman, Onement No. 6 , 1953



19. Olmstead and Vaux, Central Park



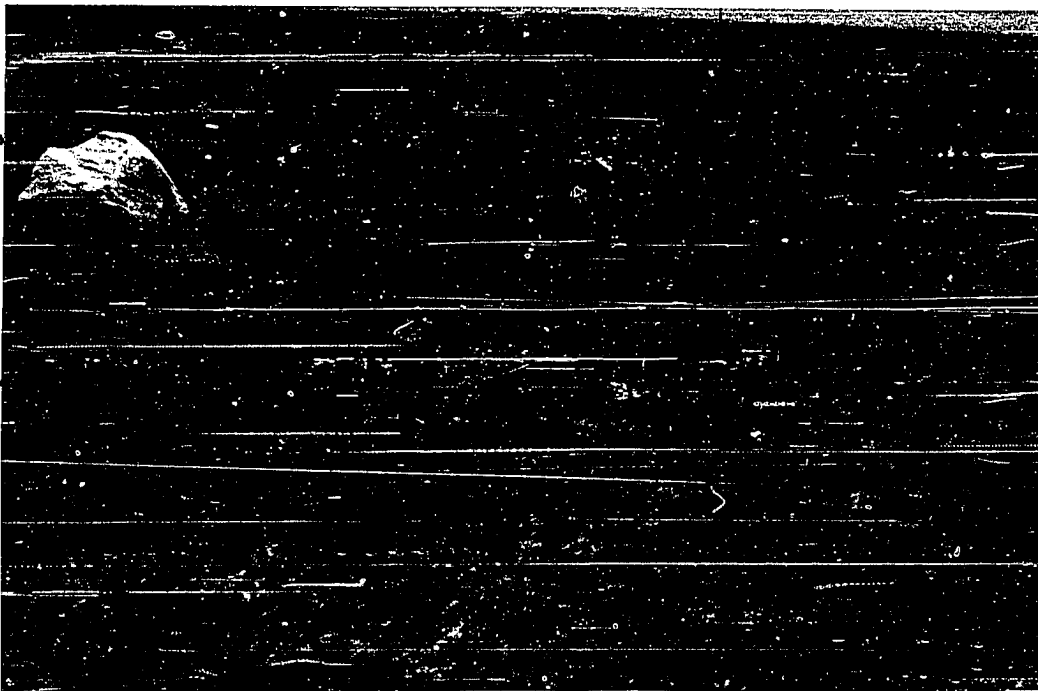
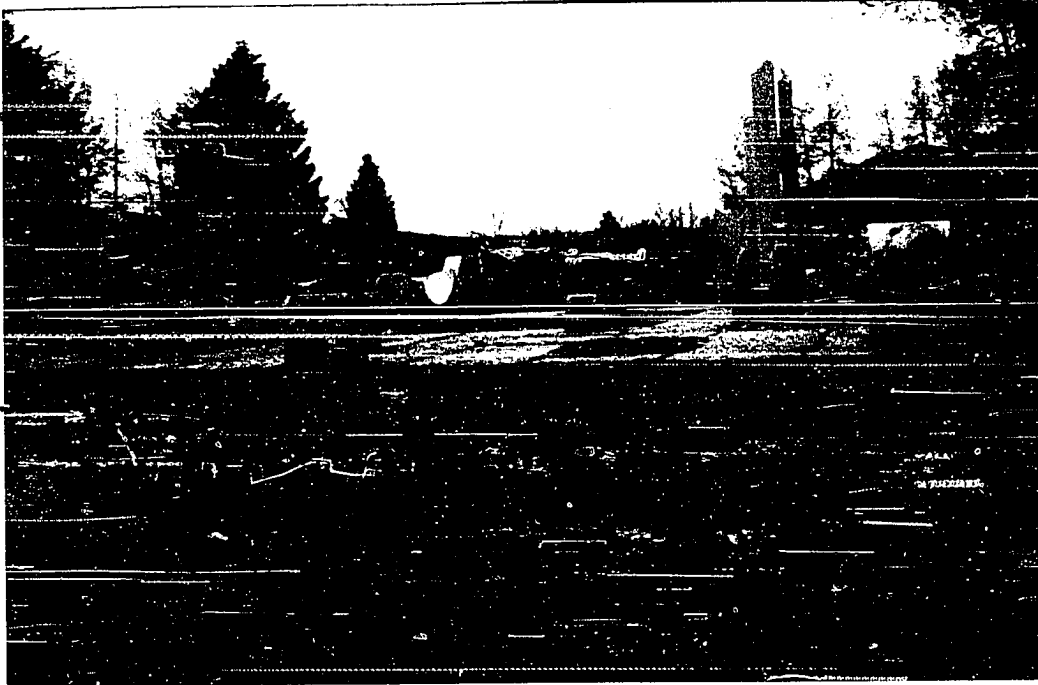
20. Frederic Kiesler, *Galaxy*, 1951

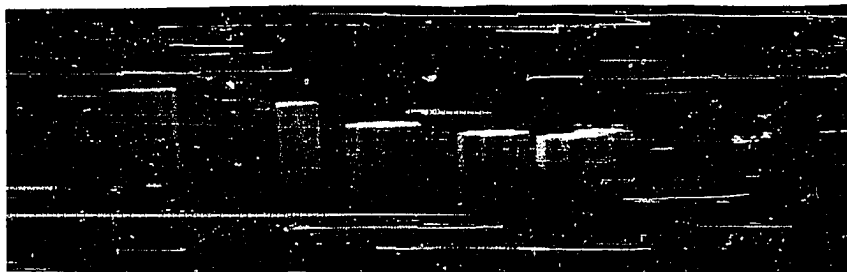


21. a-f Herbert Bayer, Aspen Foundation project



21. a-f Herbert Bayer, Aspen Foundation project

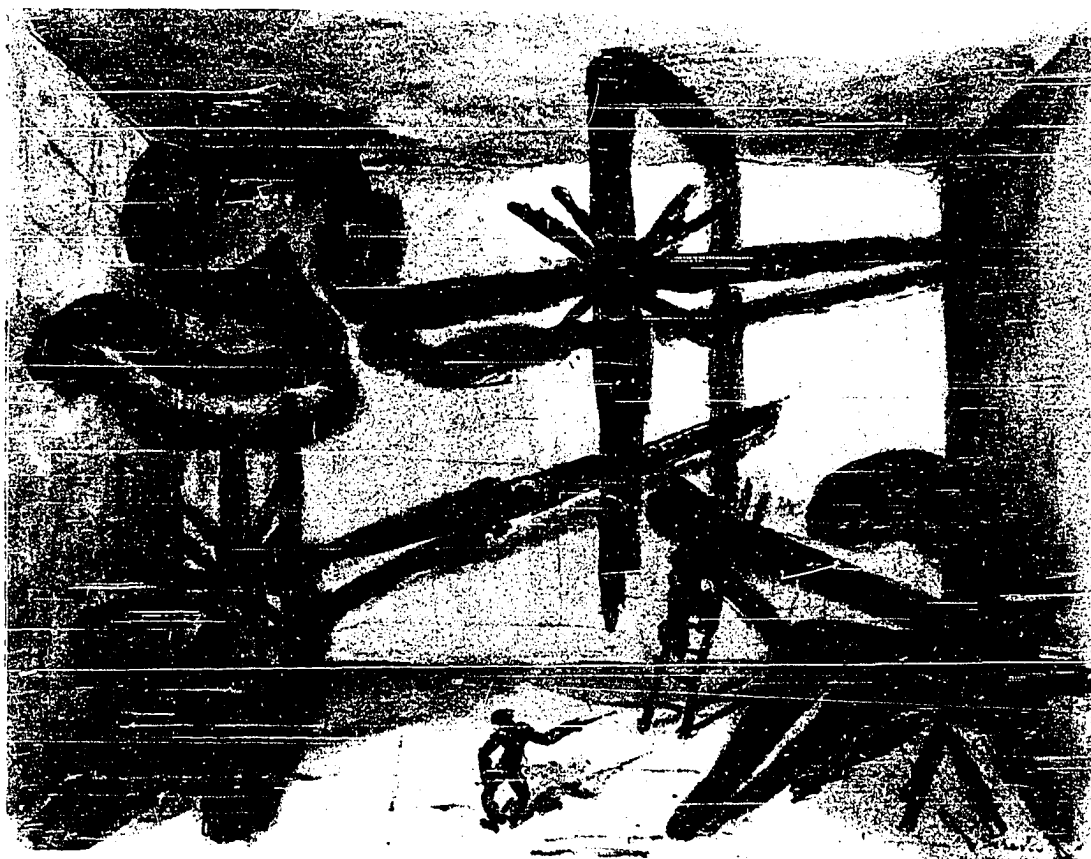


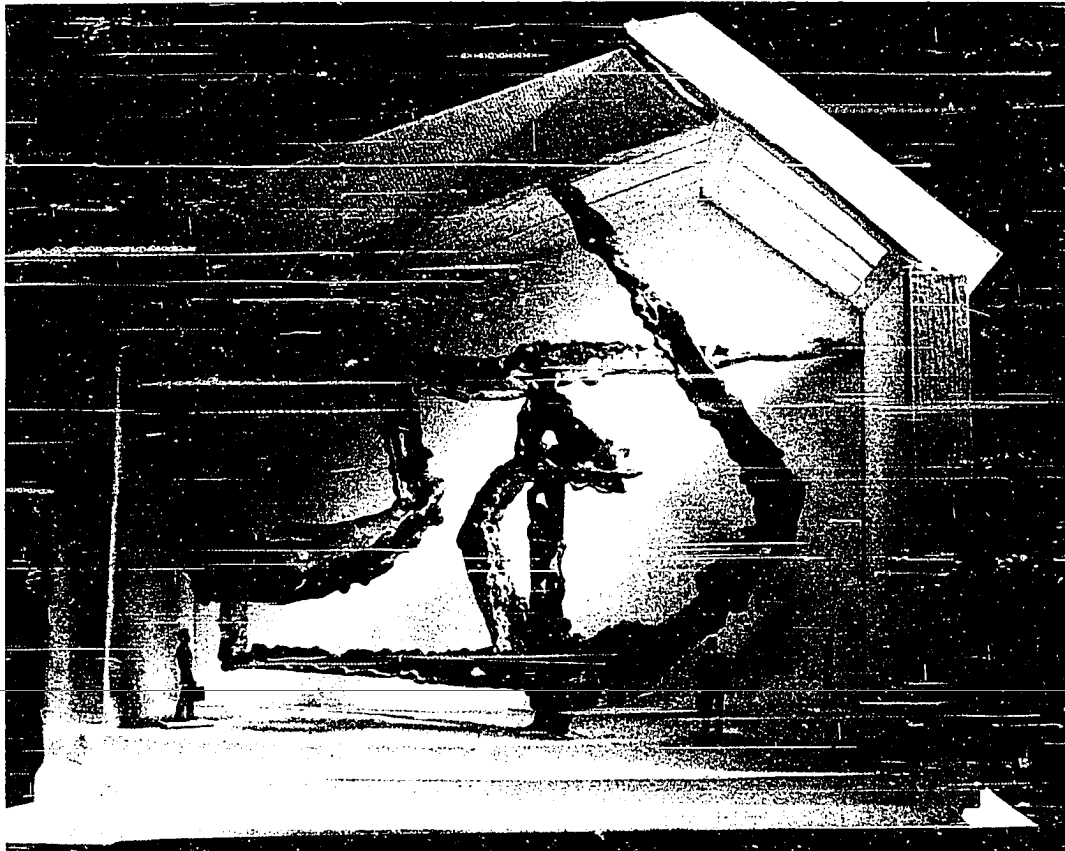


21. a-f Herbert Bayer, Aspen Foundation project



22. Herbert Ferber, *Sculpture As Environment*, 1960-66, model and installation at Rutgers University N.J.



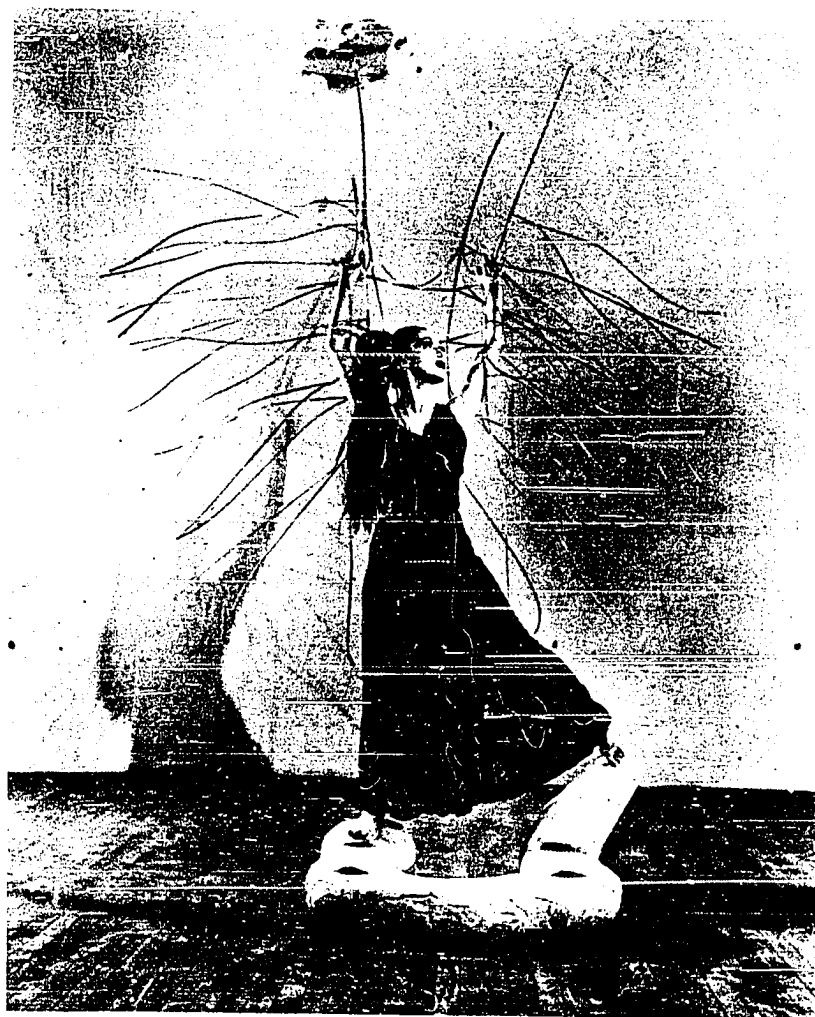




2. Herbert Ferber, Sculpture As Environment, 1960-66, model and installation at Rutgers University N.J.

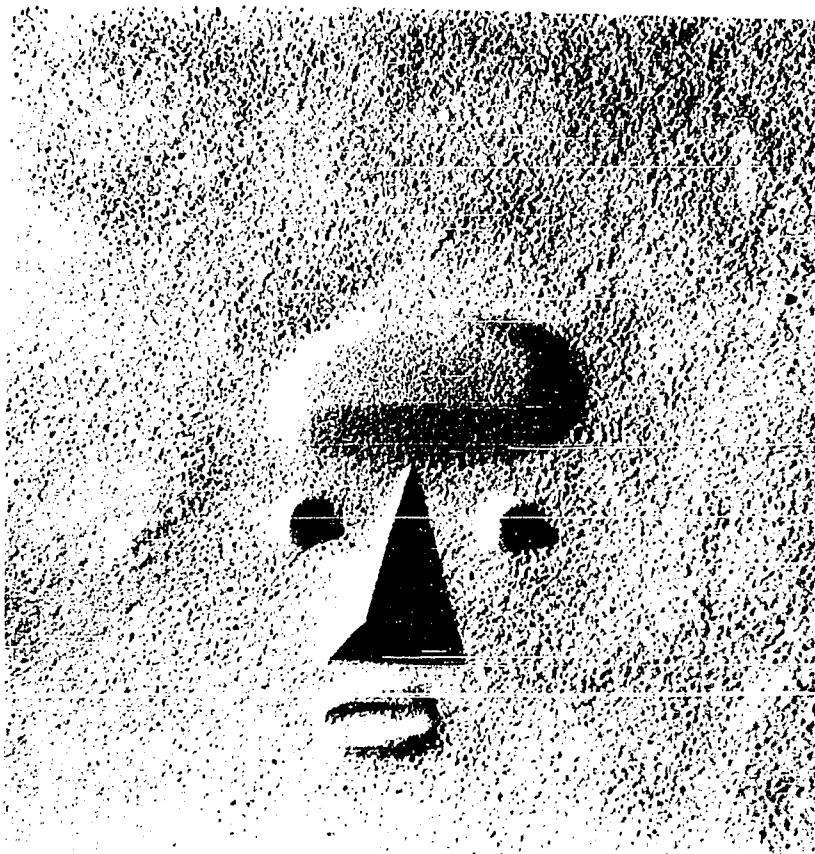


23. Isamu Noguchi, Set for Cave of the Heart, 1946



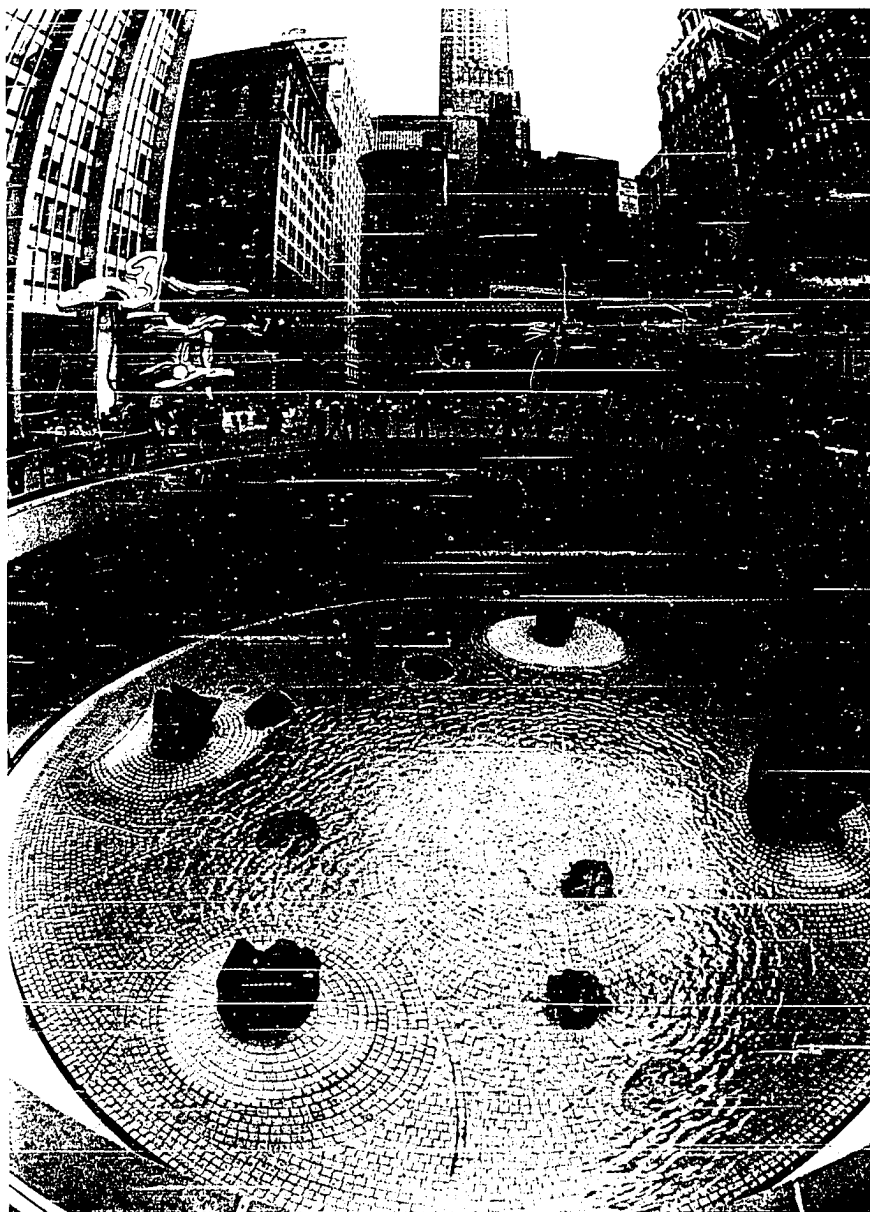


24. Isamu Noguchi, Sculpture to be seen from Mars, model, 1947

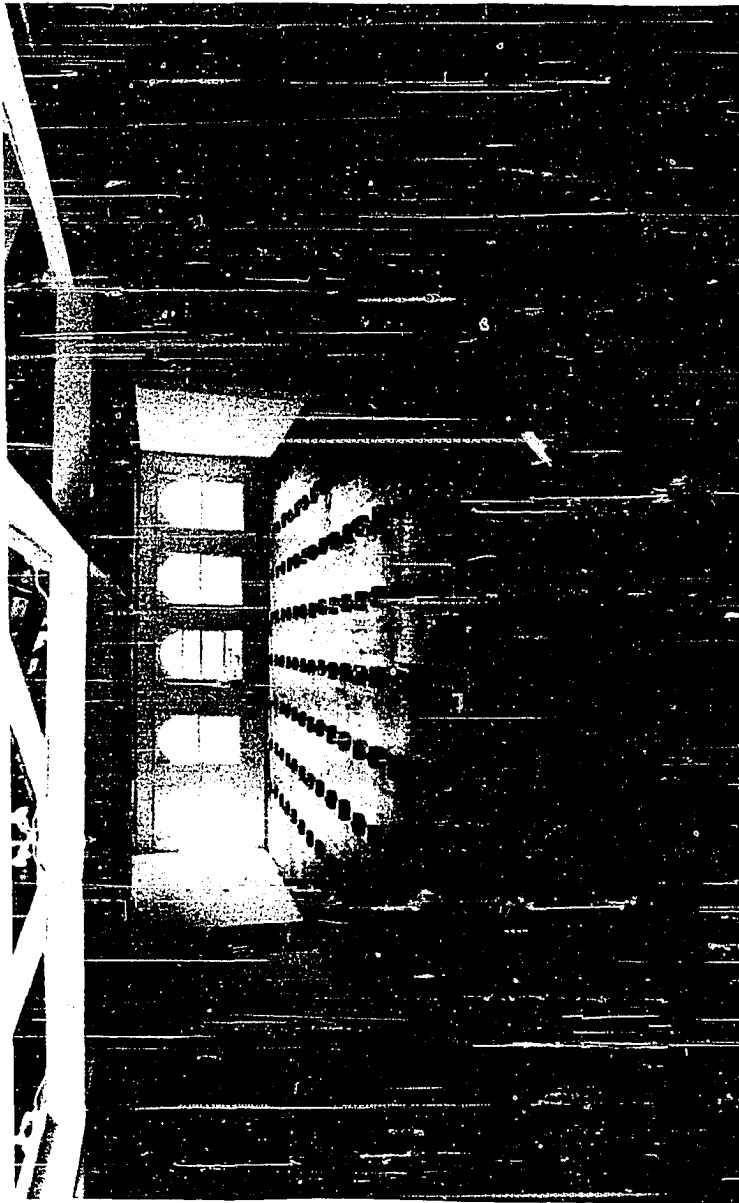




26. Isamu Noguchi, Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza Garden, 1961-64



27. Carl Andre, 144 Blocks and Stones, Installation, Portland Center for the Visual Arts, Oregon, 1973



28. Carl Andre, Stone Field Sculpture, Hartford, Conn, 1977





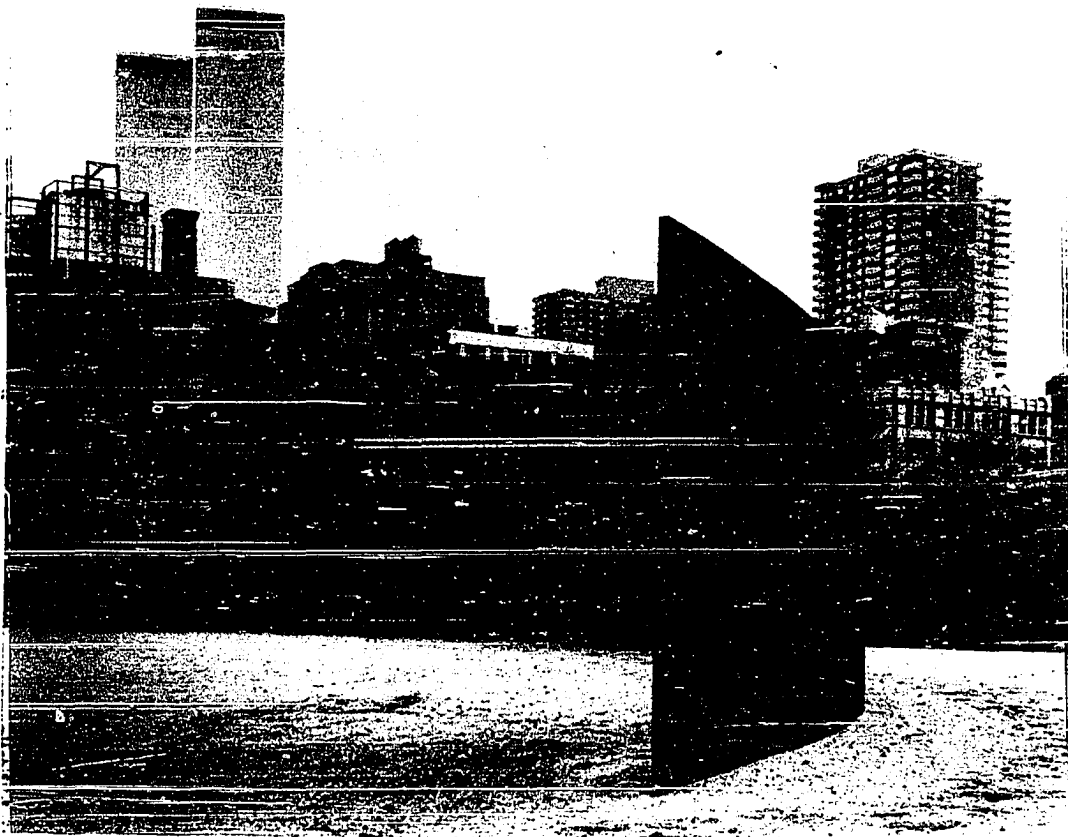
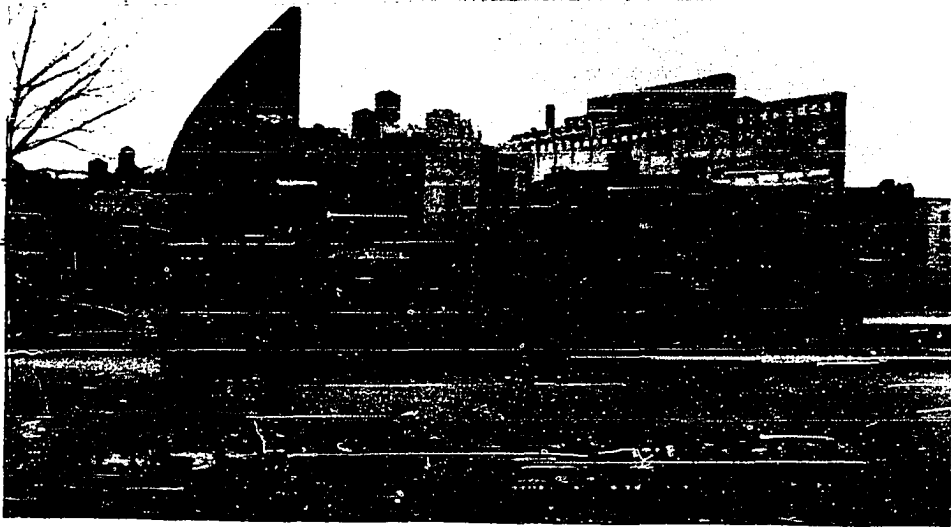
29. Richard Serra, Skullcracker Series, Stacked Steel Slabs, 1969

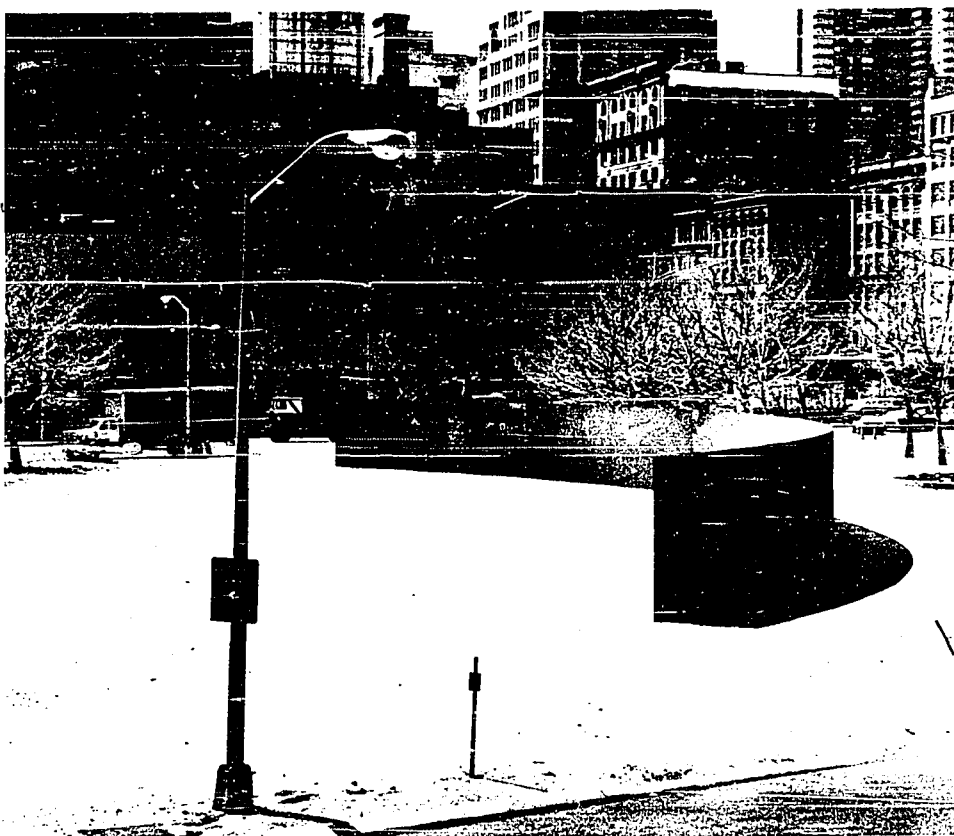
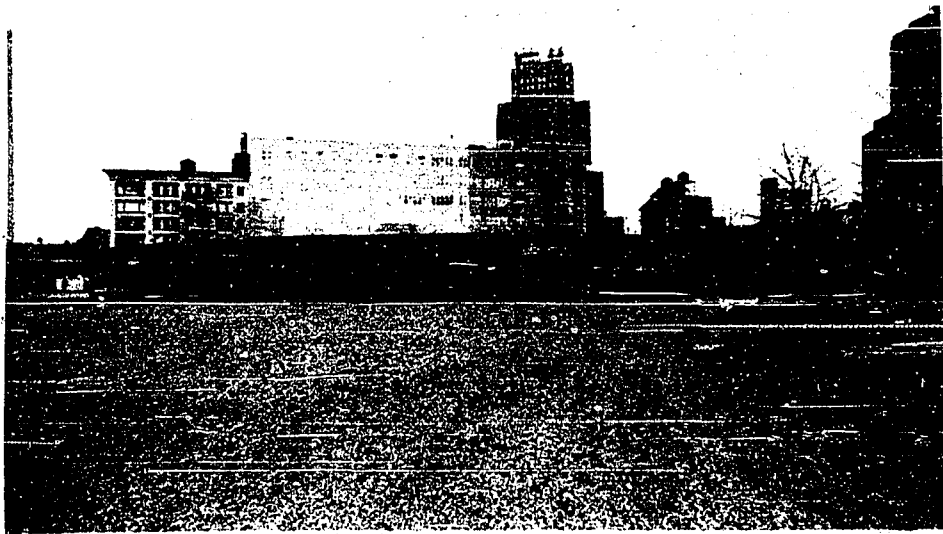


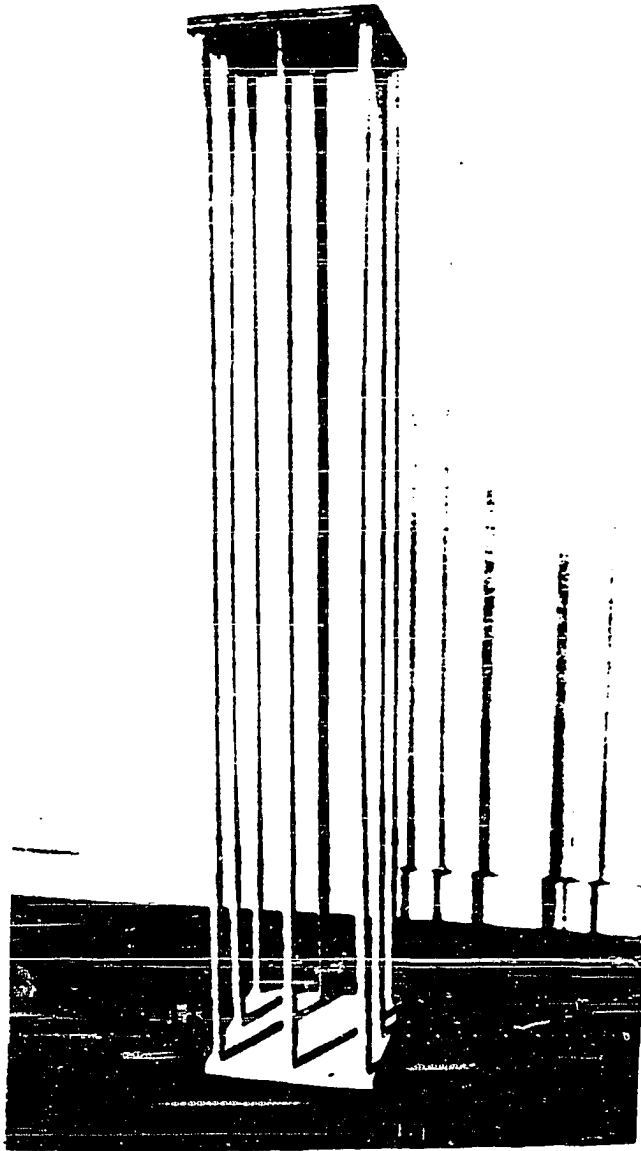
30. Richard Serra, To Encircle. Base Plate Hexagram, Bronx, N.Y., 1970



31 Richard Serra, St. John's Rotary Arc, 1980

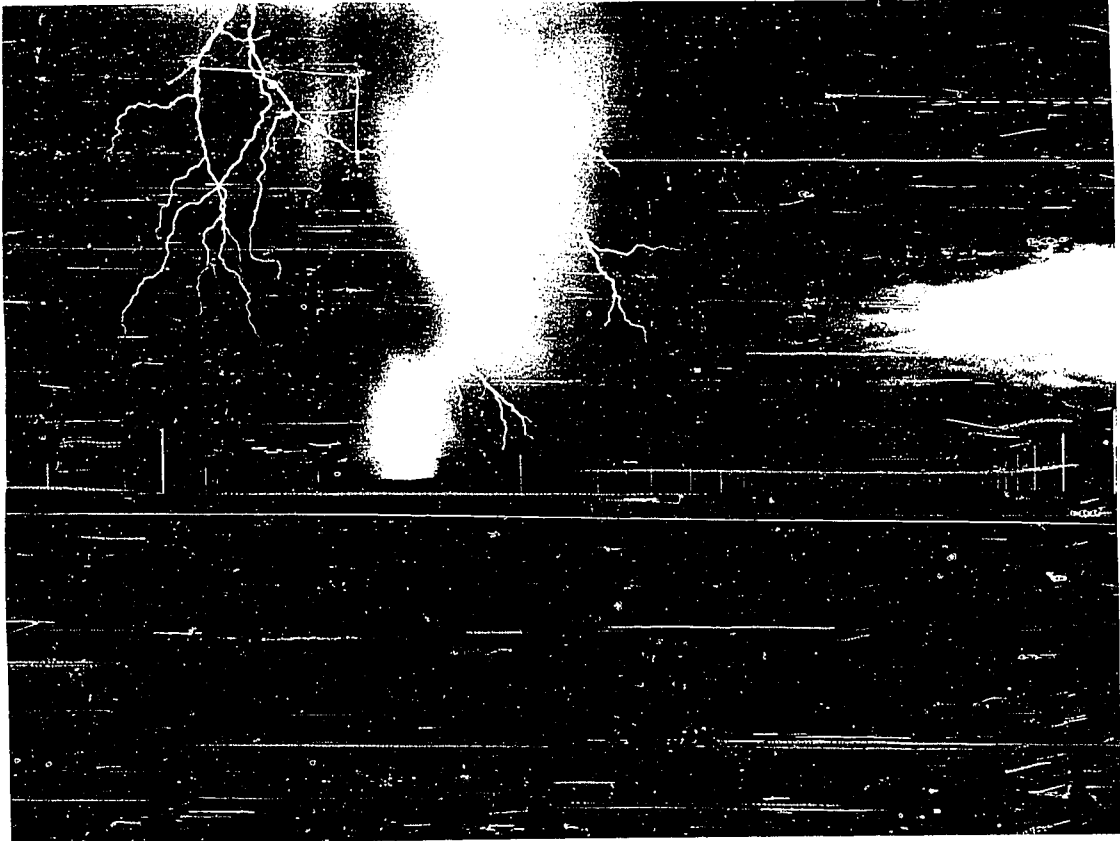


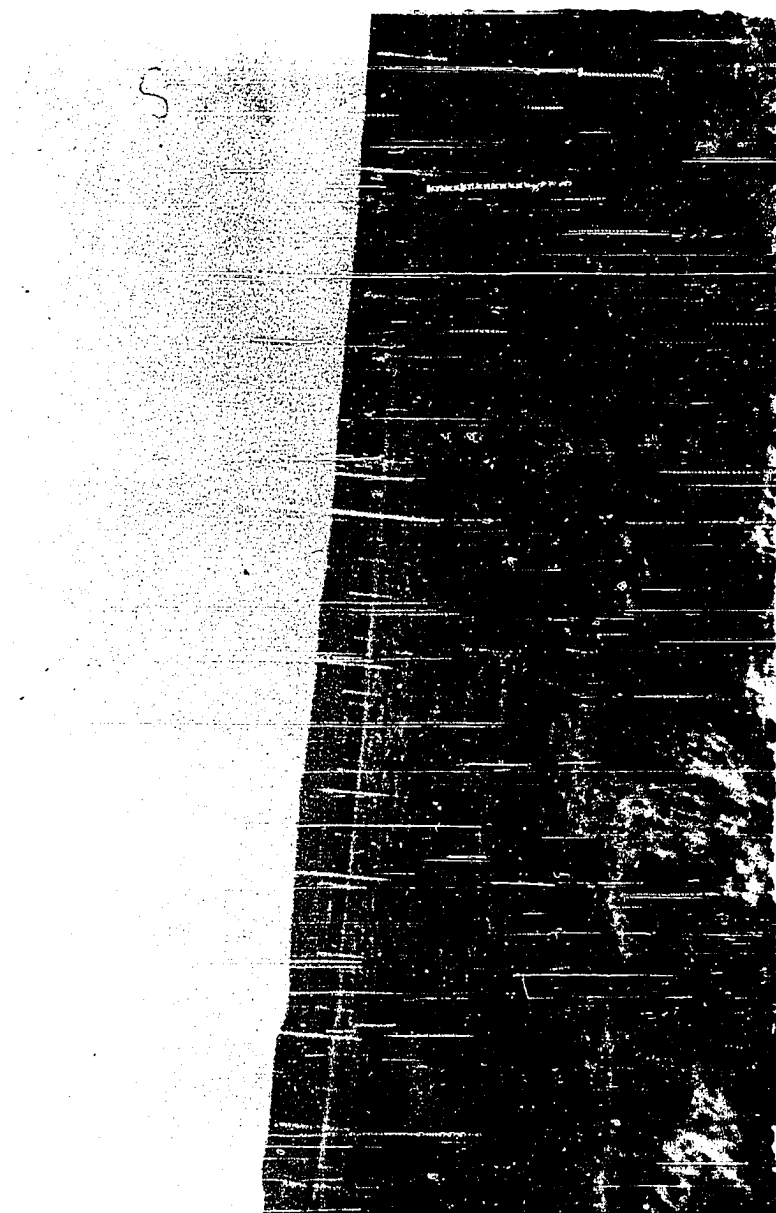




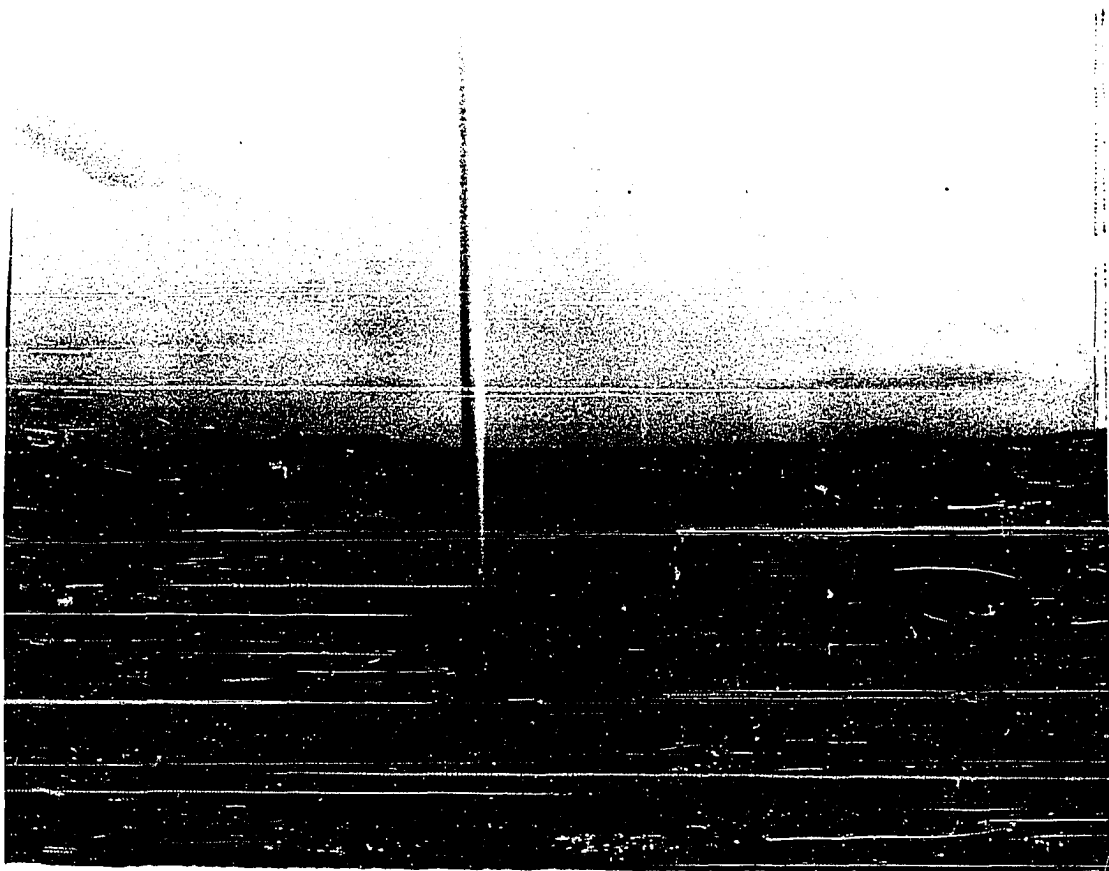
33 Walter de Maria, Mile Long Drawing







34. Walter de Maria, The Lightning Field, 1971



35 Richard Long, Turf Circle, England, 1966



36. Richard Long, *A Line Made By Walking, Ireland, 1967*



37. Richard Long, Walking A Line in Peru, 1972



38. Richard Long, A Line in the Himalayas, 1975

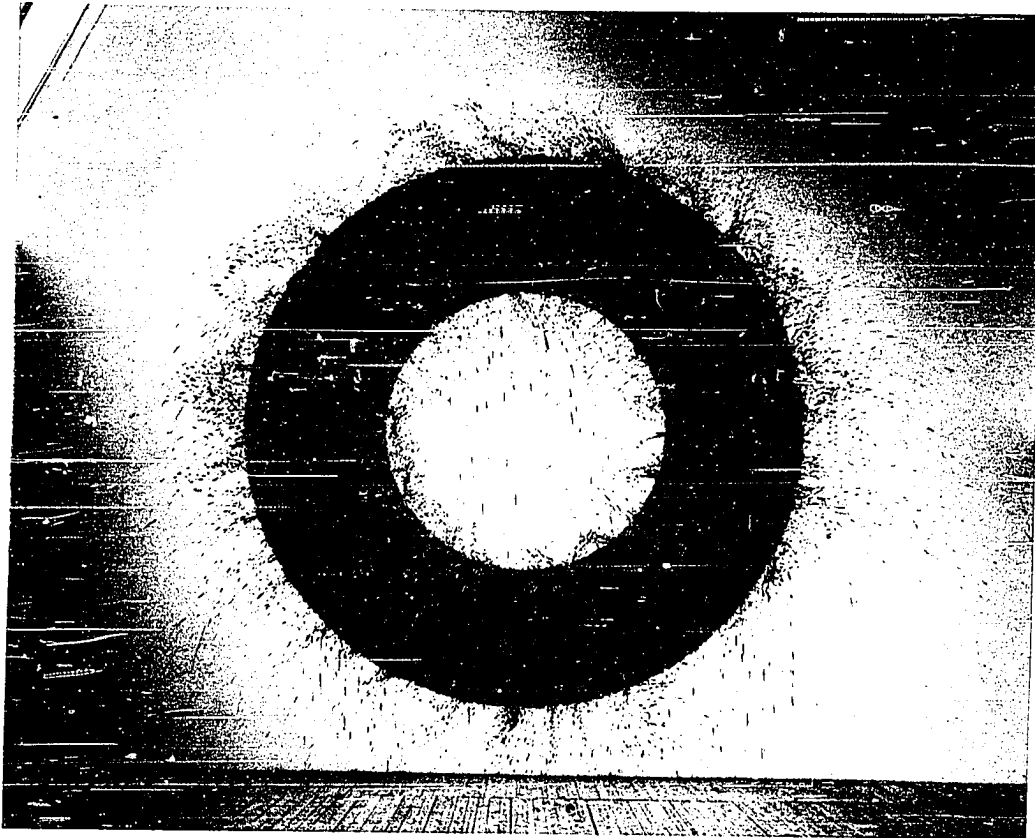


| | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| SUN | HARD PATH | GULLS | FRESH AIR | BLACKBERRY |
| HORIZON | WET EARTH | CRUNCHING | EARTH LANE | LICHEN |
| LIGHTHOUSE | CHILLNESS | DISTANT SURF ROAR | HEATHER | SALT WATER |
| SHAG | GRANITE | BEE | SEA | STONE |
| DRIFTWOOD | HEATHER | PADDING | DEAD FISH | |
| RABBIT | TURF | LARK | | |
| BUTTERFLIES | BRAMBLES | BREAKERS | | |
| NET | BOULDERS | LOBSTER BOAT | | |
| SEAL | WET GRASS | MOOING | | |
| WREN | ROOTS | GOOD MORNING | | |
| PEBBLE MAZE | WARMTH | LAPPING | | |
| DAZZLING FOAM | COBWEB | SWISH | | |
| TALL HEDGE | HARD PATH | COW CHEWING | | |
| | | GENERATOR | | |

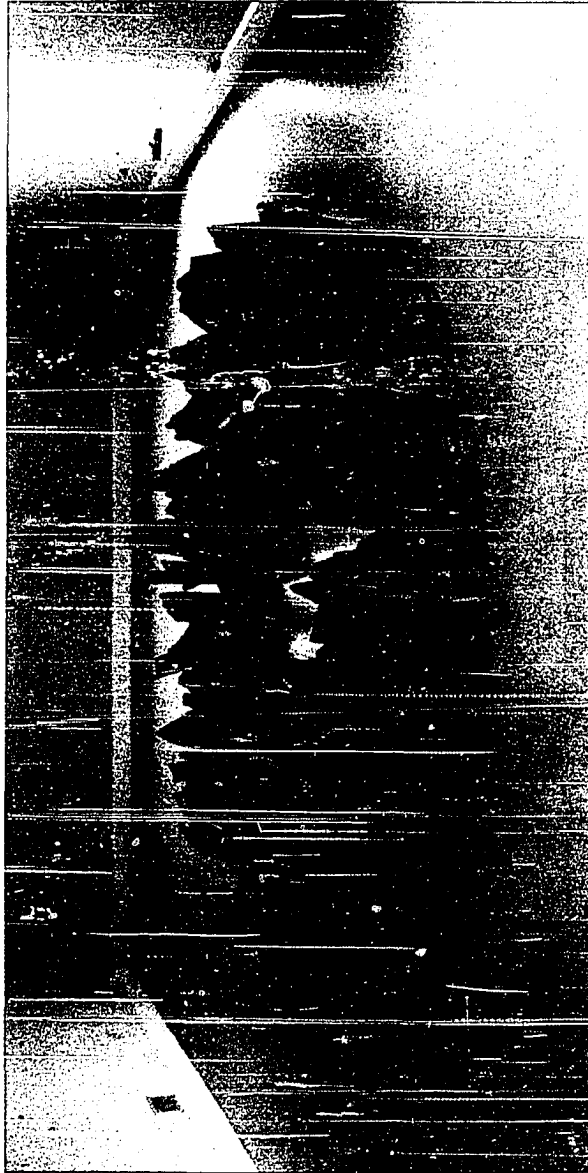
EARLY MORNING SENSES ISLAND WALK

ST. AGNES, ISLES OF SCILLY ENGLAND 1982

40. Richard Long, River Avon Mud Circle, 1985

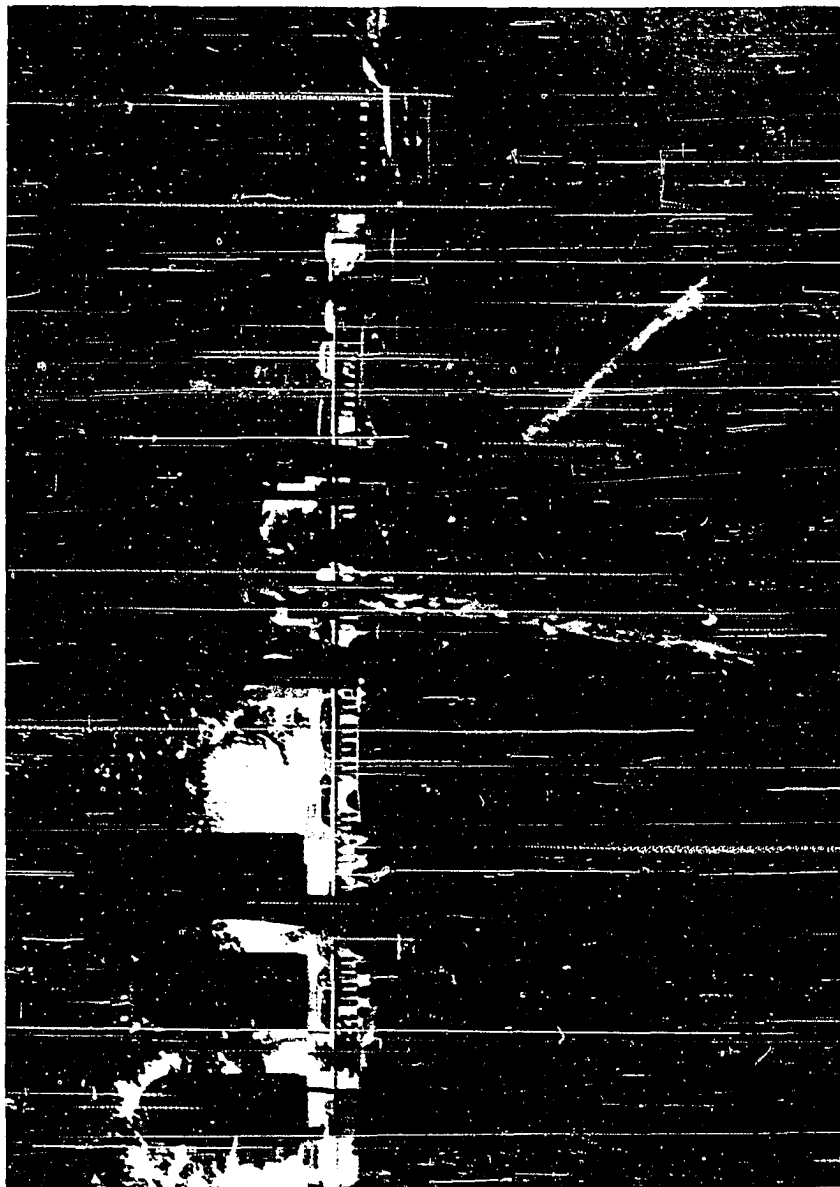


41. Richard Long, Elterwater Stone Ring, Kendal, 1985



ELTERWATER STONE RING
KENDAL 1985

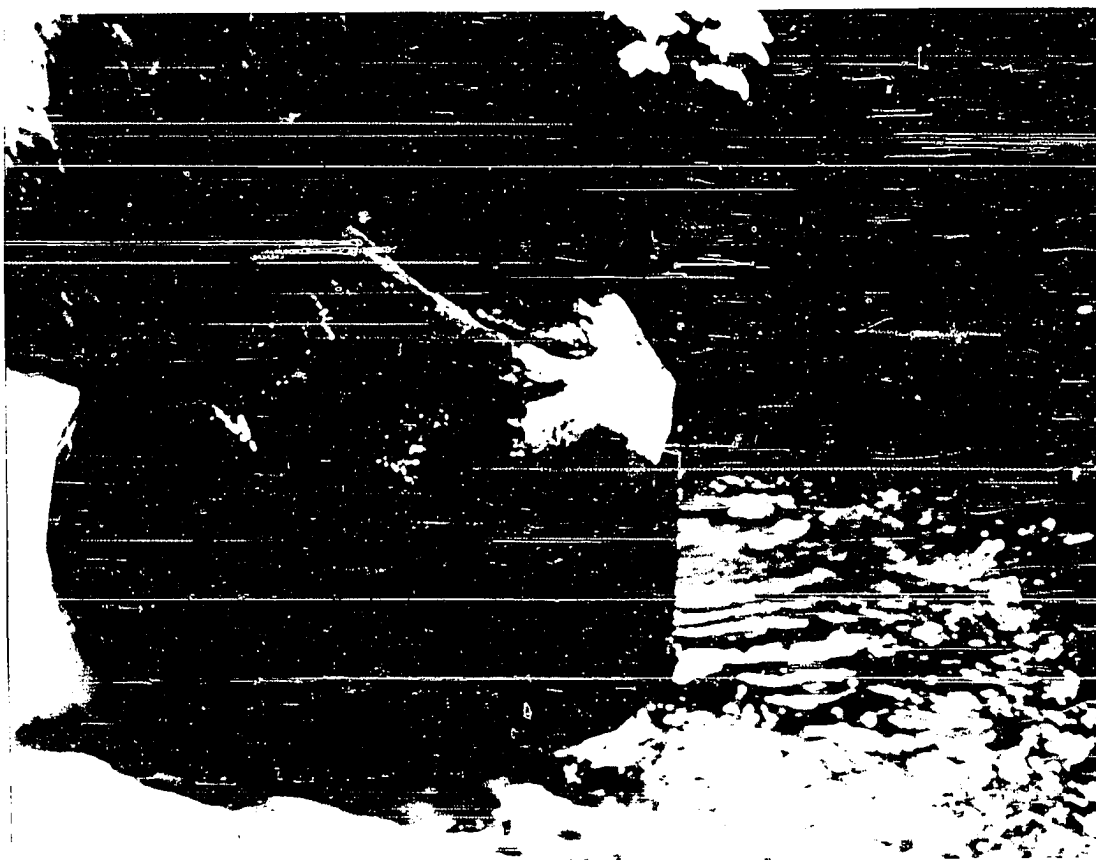
42. David Nash, Running Table, Grizedale Forest, 1982



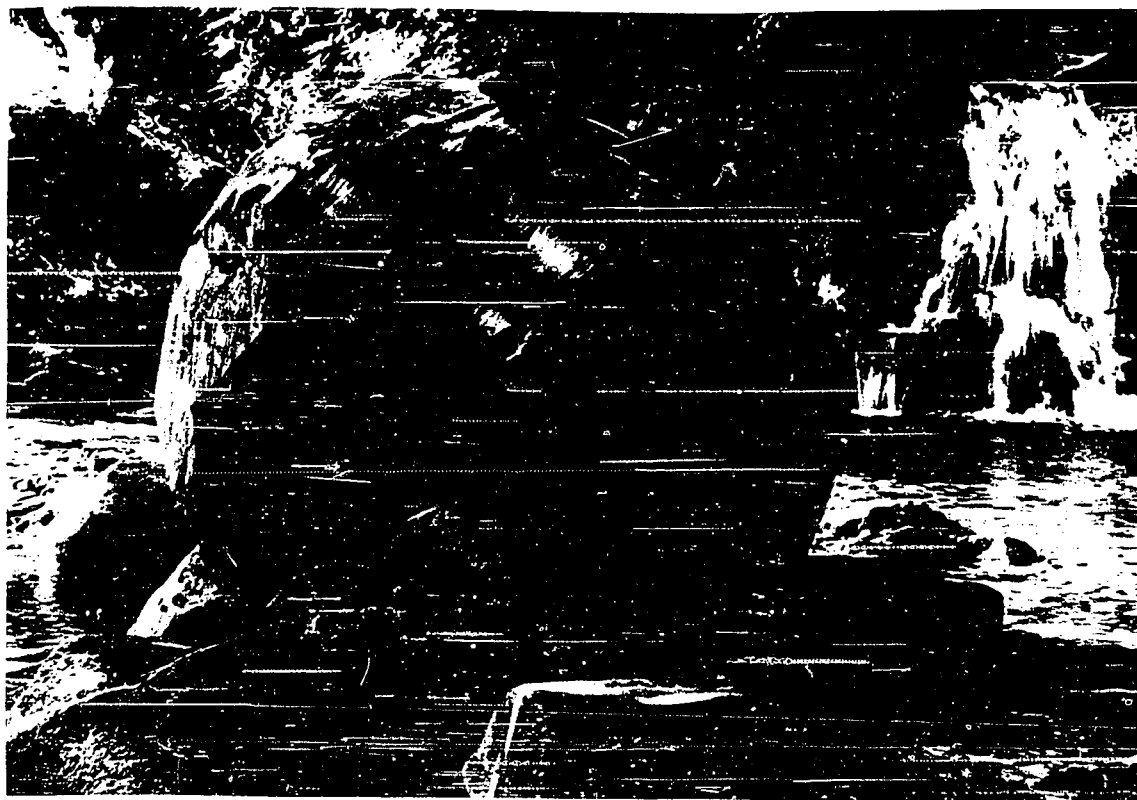
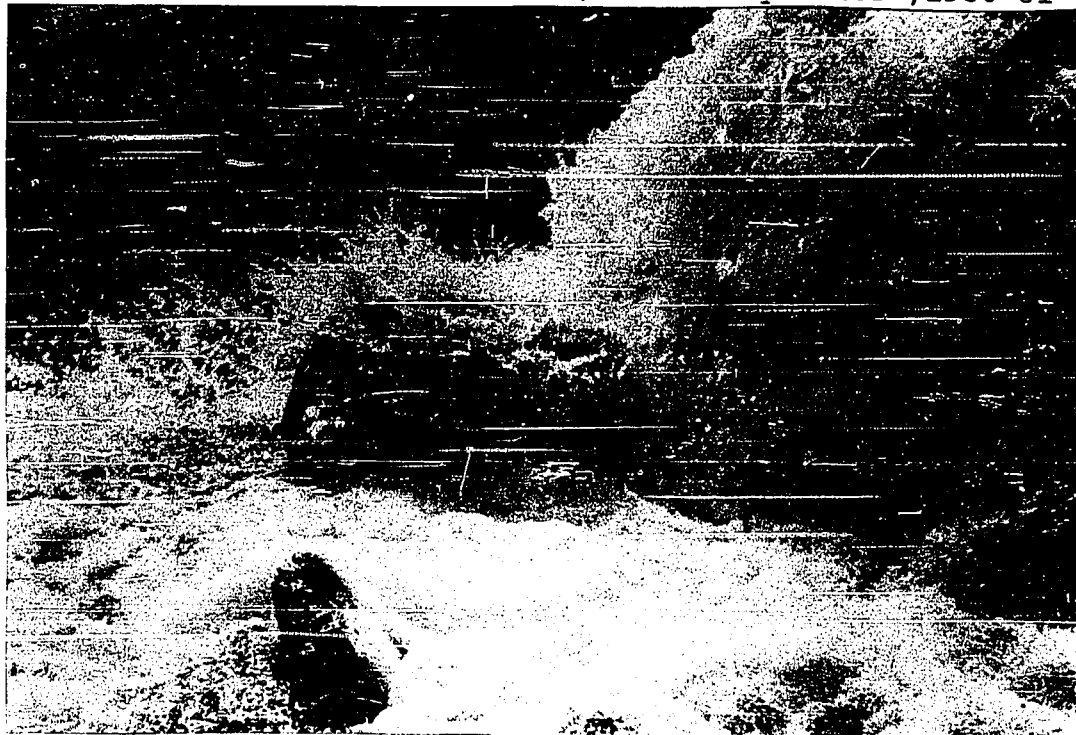
43. David Nash, Fledged Over Ash Dome, Cae'ny Loed Wales,
1980



44. a-c David Nash, Wooden Boulder, Maenturoy Wales ,1980-81



44. a-c David Nash, Wooden Boulder, Maenturoy Wales ,1980-81



45. David Nash, Settlement, Morris Museum, Morristown





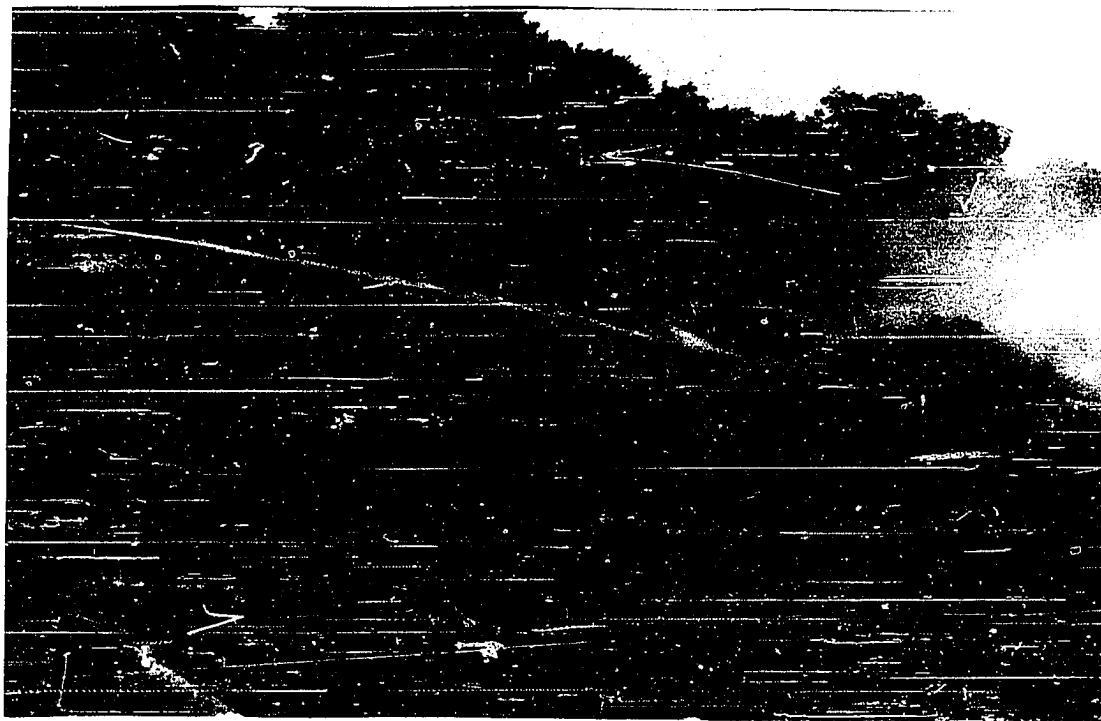
46. David Nash, Snow Stove, Kotoku, Japan, 1982



47 David Nash, Washington Wood Stove, 1980







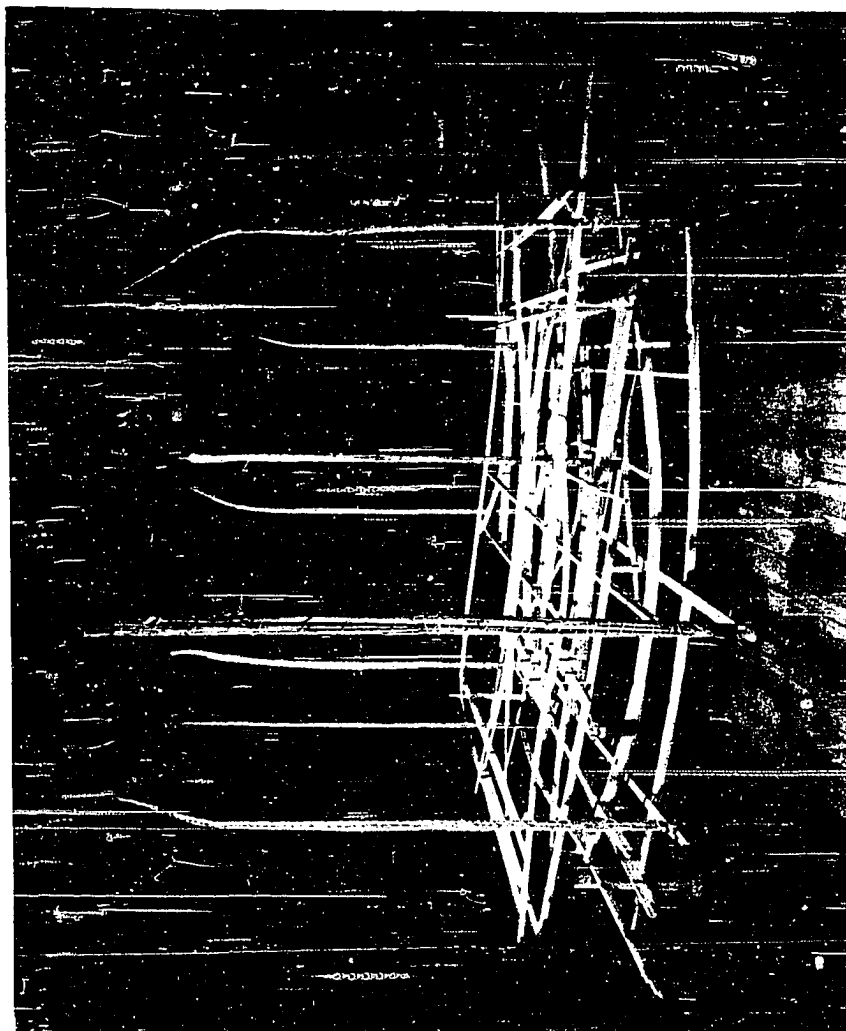
48.. Michael Singer, Situation Balance Series, 1976



149. Michael Singer, Ritual Series, drawing, 1976



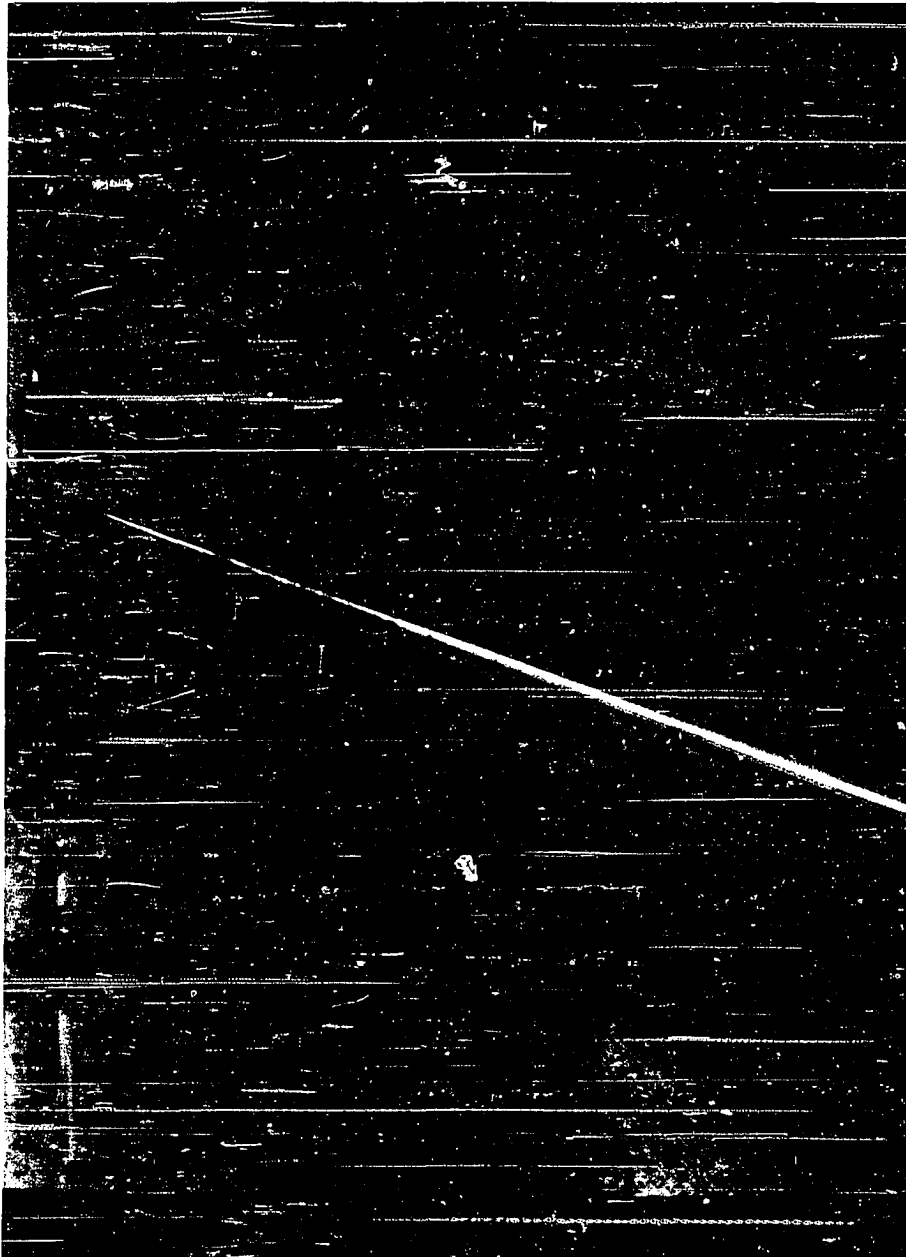
'50 Michael Singer, First Gate Ritual



51. Michael Singer, Seven Moon Ritual Series, 1983



52. Patricia Johanson, Stephen Long.

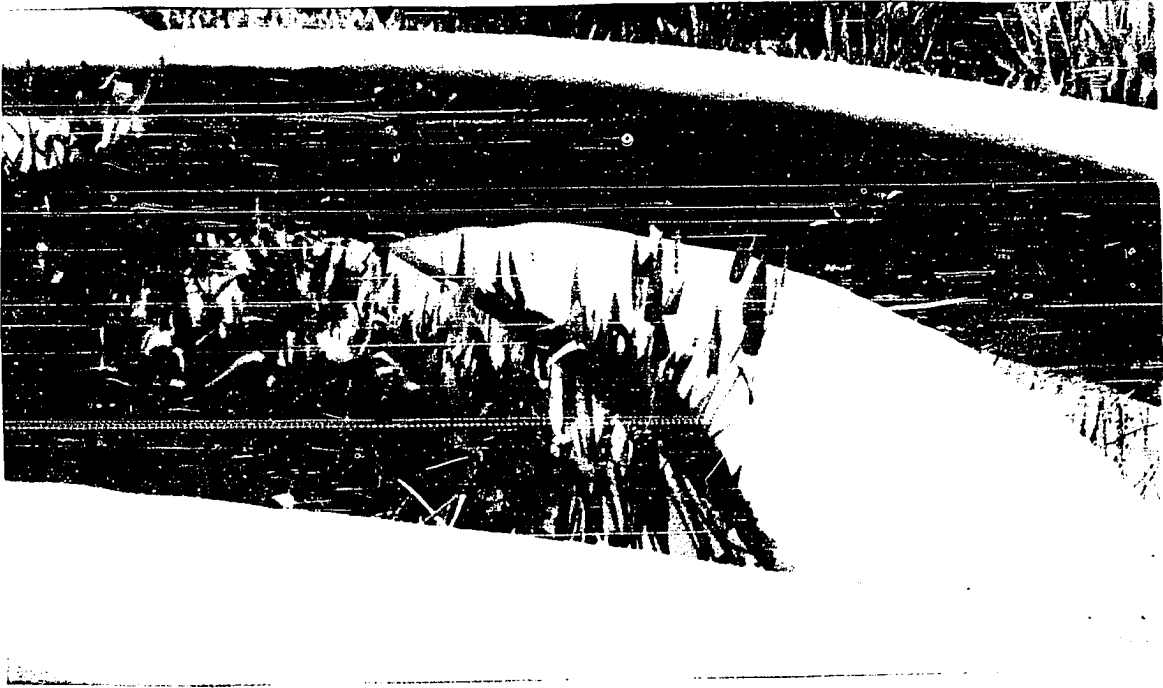


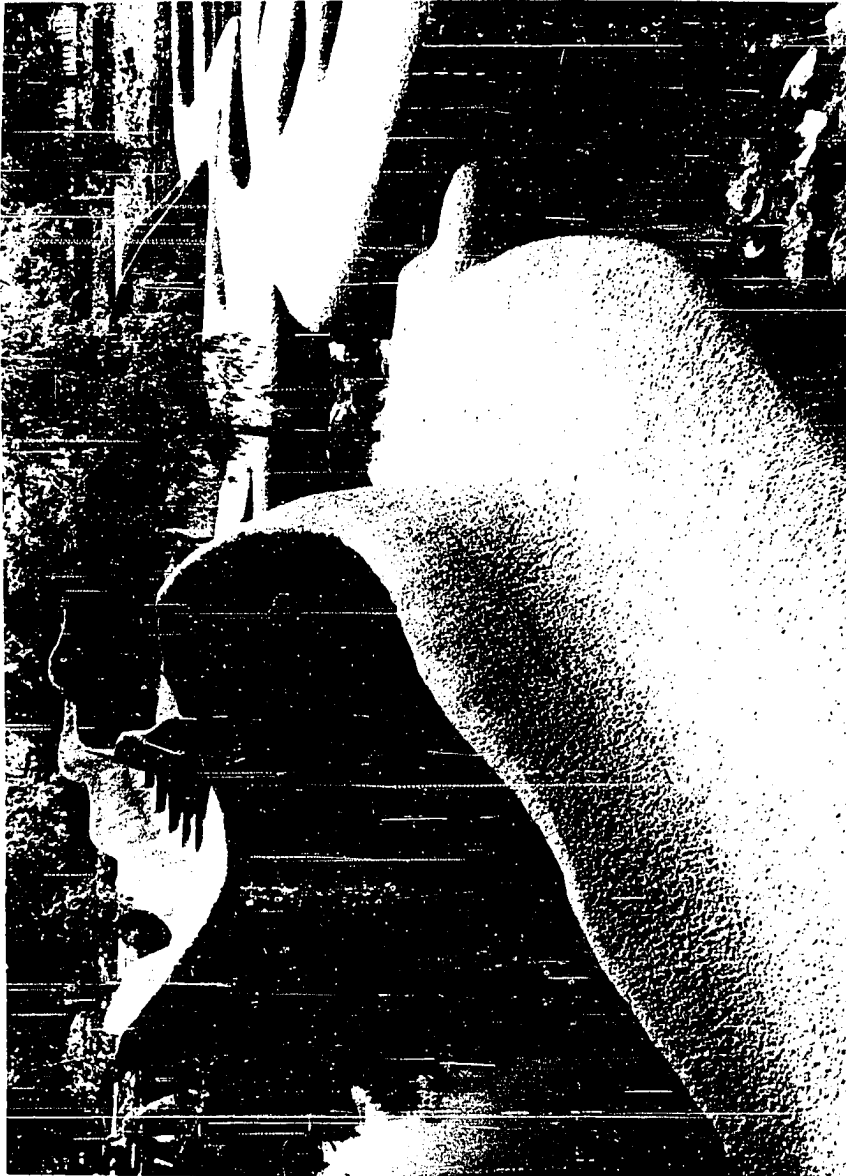
Patricia Johanson, Cyrus Field, 1971



54. Patricia Johanson, Lagoon, model

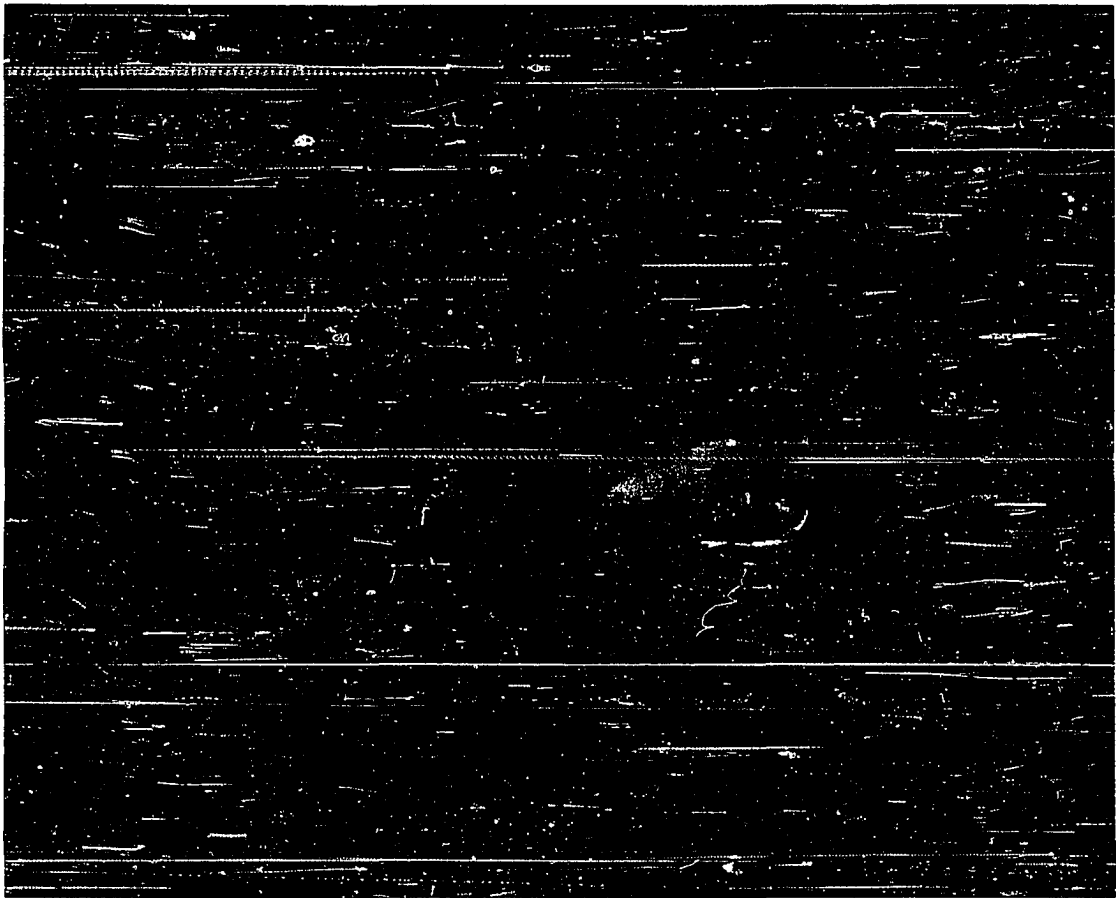




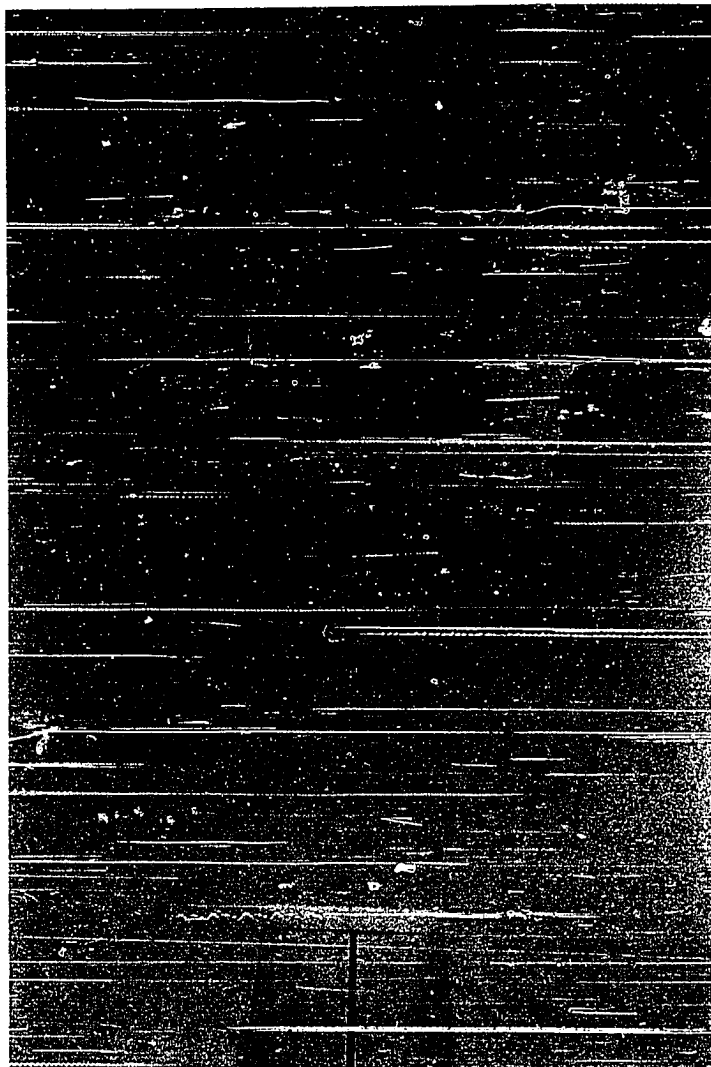








56. James Turrell, Villa Panza Skypiece

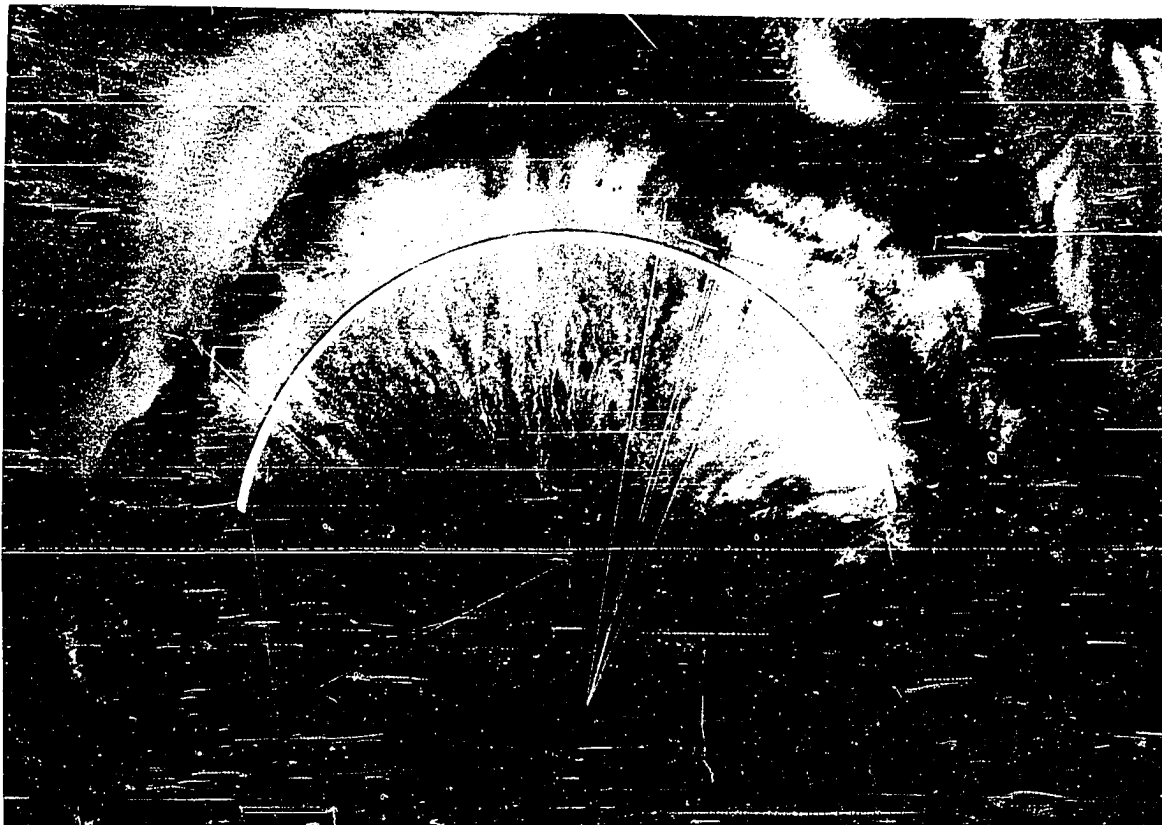


57. James Turrell, Space Division Construction , 1976-82

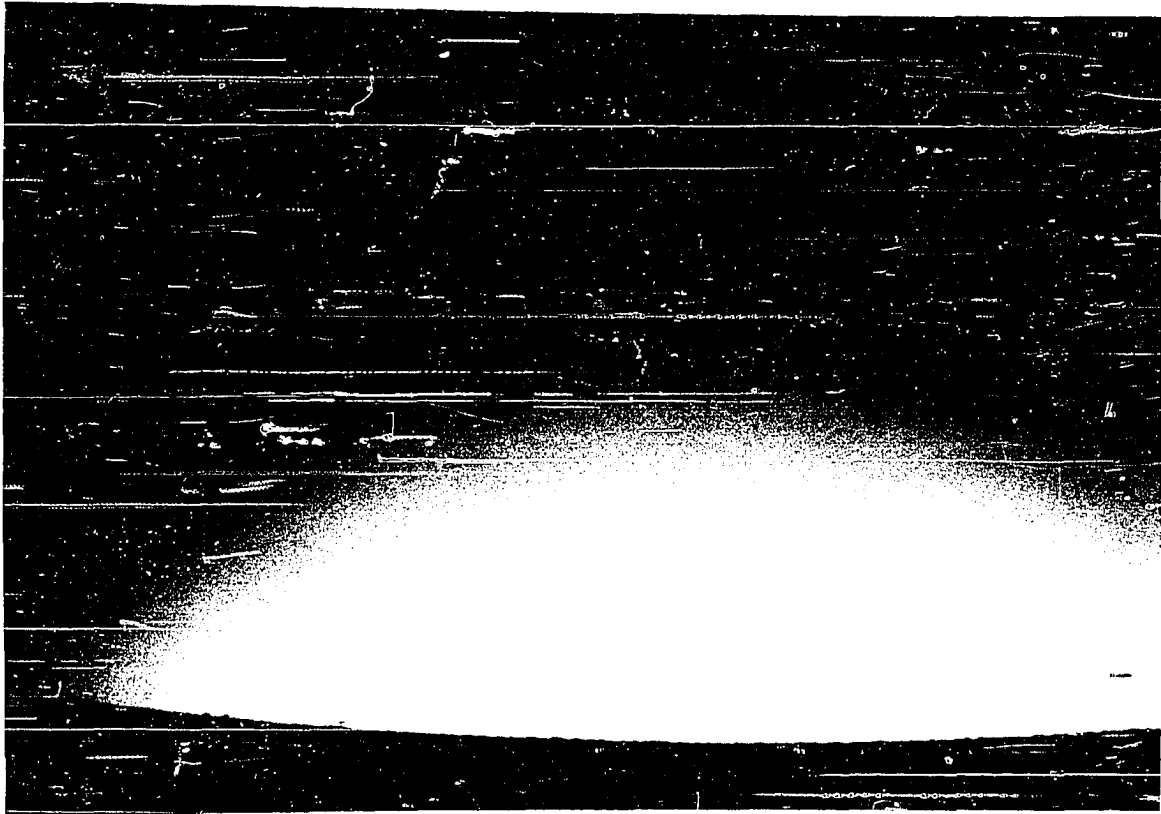


58. a-e James Turrell, Roden Crater Project (unfinished)









Appendix

GLOSSARY

ANATTA -"non -self", refers to the "self" as not changeless but as empty, negating the existence of Self. The idea that the identity of an individual is only a series of moments of consciousness.

ANICCA - "impermanence", all things in the samsara world. All things are transient, becoming, changing. Every effect has a cause and the cessation of effect is possible only by the cessation of the cause. There is no permanence in man's world.

BODHI - Enlightenment

CH'AN -"meditation". the Chinese term pronounced by the Japanese as Zen. Bodhidharma, an Indian monk is the historical founder of Ch'an (Zen) School in China in the sixth Century A.D.. It became even more popular in Japan where it is called Zen.

CH'I - material force, energy matter or substance, it explains physical form, individuality and the actuality of things. Ch'i is concrete and is often referred to as "breath", the inner energy, life force, breath

CITYA -A wholly area.

DHARMA -The wholly doctrine which contains: (1) the final Reality; (2) correct order, virtue; (3) order of things; (4) by extension, the Universal Order, the Law; (5) perceptions grasped by the intellect.

DUKKHA -"suffering", Part of the four noble truths which include suffering, the origin of suffering, the stopping of suffering, and the way which leads to the stopping of suffering. This was first set forth by Buddha in his first sermon at Benares.

I-CHING - A Chinese monk who travelled in India (635-713) and left behind his ideas about life.

KARMA - In Brahmanism, the ritual act or the psychic act accompanying any action of a conscious being. The psychic act determines the course of transmigration.

KOAN - An irrational theme for Zen meditation. It is meant to go beyond reason and logic and make an individual go deeper in order to reach Enlightenment, directing one's thoughts into one single issue.

MAKARA - A sea monster who is the source of all life.

MANDALA - "circle", A method of meditation which focusses on a visual chart or form, usually circular.

MANTRA- spell, formula.

MAYA - illusion

MIRRORS -- when used in Eastern arts refer to the reflections of the real self

MOKSHA -Final liberation from the chain of births and deaths.

MU- "nothingness", A part of our essential self which is formless and found in all of nature, such as the gaps and intervals between thoughts.

MUDRA- A gesture which indicates the nature of some aspect of existence and of an individual.

NIRVANA- Extinction or destruction of thirst or desire. Supreme state of Void, the goal of Buddhism consisting of the escape from the chain of births and deaths and the liberation from all effects of Karma. Also the real world as opposed to the illusory world of samsara.

P'U - the Uncarved block, denoting the natural state of being, simplicity, purity and infinite potentiality.

SABI -- the beauty of imperfection accompanied by antiquity or primitiveness, rustic unpretentiousness, simplicity, effortless-ness, something rich in historical associations.

SAMADHI - Profound meditation in which the psyche becomes fixed.

SAMSARA - The unending cycle of births and deaths; also the phenomenal, illusory world as opposed to nirvana, the "real;" world.

SATORI - Enlightenment, becoming a Buddha, ways of achieving this ultimate goal. Satori is "acquiring a new viewpoint"²⁶⁹ satori is a state or mode of perception in which the habits of logical thinking according to the rules of dualism is destroyed. It is a new viewpoint for looking into the essence of reality. At the satori dimension, "All is one, one is none, none is all." ²⁷⁰

SKANDA -concern for the material aspects of the world, aggregates or groups of elements which compose the physical and

²⁶⁹Yong Choon Kim, p.123

²⁷⁰ Huston Smith The Religions of Man (N.Y.: Harper and Row, Perennial Library, 1958) p. 151

mental being. Comprising: body, perception, form, knowledge.

SUNYATA -the nothingness, the void and ultimately the world in a state of Sunya. Sunya is the void. In the state of being void or to be void. The goal in Buddhism is to become aware of and become one with the Void.

SUTRA-"thread", Works supposedly containing the discourses of the Buddha or his immediate disciples. A spoken text which explains theories by metaphor or exposition. Expresses the main concepts of Buddhism.

TAI CHI- polarities of the universe

TANTRA - A body of Buddhist literature. After Buddha revealed the first sermon called Turning the Wheel of Law in Motion he espoused the four truths and the eight fold path. Tantra is often referred to as Esoteric Buddhism. It is a discursive discourse, a book of method.

TAO - "the Way", the great void that contains all energy.

TAO-TE-CHING - The Book of the Way and all its virtues written by Lao Tzu.

TAOISM - Began in China based on TAO and a union of the real and ideal.

TATHATA- "suchness", the Ultimate spiritual essence, things as they are in their own self nature.

TORI- Gateway to the shrine which symbolically divides the sacred and the secular.

UKIYO-E - "floating world", the Buddhist term for transitory, living for the moment.

YIN YANG - cyclical opposites, the polarity of forces against a background of the Void.

WABI - understatement

WU WEI -"non-action", spontaneous and effortless actions, like a river or water which of all things is most yielding yet can overwhelm a rock which is of all things is most hard.

ZEN - The Japanese pronunciation of Ch'an. Zen teaches salvation through enlightenment which is brought about by meditation. There is no objective Buddha to meditate on in Zen because one's own nature is Buddha. It relies on direct intuition. The techniques of Zen are Zazen, (sitting and meditating) and koan sanzen (questioning).

ICONOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS INCLUDE;

circle - heaven

cruciform - uniting the opposites for a sensory experiences for man, the distinction between subject and object is destroyed in each of these

cube - mind

elephant- untrained mind

four - symbolic number for the four corners of the universe

horse-transporters to enlightenment

open lotus- seat for those not yet enlightened

peacock-bird of flight, of the soul reaching to immortality

spiral- moving inward upon oneself.

square - symbol of earth and order

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