



Greg Murdock / INTERVIEW

I met Greg Murdock after attending the Emily Carr College of Art's Graduating Students' Exhibition, Spring, 1981. We had our meeting at a Water Street Studio. A taped interview about the Templo-Mound Series, was conducted at my house in July. A.R.

GM Being an artist is just what I always wanted to do. About twice a week when I was nine or ten, I'd go to Mrs. Armstrong's basement with about ten other kids. I went there until she decided to stop teaching when I was in grade seven or so. There wasn't much art where I went to high school — the art department had fifteen pieces of construction paper. Then, after high school, I went to Europe for eight months and when I got back, I went to the University of Saskatchewan's Department of Fine Arts for two years. Then I worked and saved some money and visited Mexico. I liked it so much, I ended up studying there for

a year (1978-79) at the Instituto de Allende and there I made bronze, three-dimensional objects, but mostly I was dealing with the fact that I was working in bronze, and that it was shiny.

I decided for various reasons that I couldn't finish my education at the University of Saskatchewan, so I came out here. I'd heard that the Emily Carr had a good sculpture department. I was really lucky because when I got there, there was an exchange program and a fellow by the name of Ray Arnatt came in and he really opened me up. I ended up doing no foundry work, but I did a lot of new ground work designing space-type environments and especially since last summer, I was drawing . . . I guess what I was encouraged to do there, especially by Ray, was to discover what engaged me, what excited me and to pursue those things.

AR And is that when, as you told me before, you began to think about your prairie roots and the way certain objects alter the landscape?

GM Yes in a sense, I was going back to the prairies thinking about the way in which they can isolate things that may be rather insignificant in themselves, like the mounds I was telling you about in front of my father's farm . . . looking at and thinking about shapes like that and realizing that they are as beautiful as anything else — I mean they were shell mounds, storage places for old ammunition, factory bunkers. And so when you looked out over the prairie at my dad's place, you saw these mounds, these formations, coming up. . . . But that memory was not the only thing that got me going, because I was already dealing with shapes that were similar to that. And of course when I was in Mexico, I saw lots of ruins — the memory of them was coming back to me. And perhaps this is a bit strange but worth mentioning, I do dream about buildings. I even have recurrent dreams about buildings and, although I'm a little reluctant to say this in an interview, it's as though I've astrally gone to these sites. It's as though I wake up in them and later, I can articulate

the interior spaces. . . . I don't see any reason why my sub-conscious should be bringing up these interior spaces, and yet here I am dealing with them. Sometimes they are modern; sometimes not. In one dream that I can remember, I just landed at this place and I can even remember what time of day it was, it was early morning because of the way the shadows fell — a sunny morning, and the streets met at a point and on one side there were several buildings, but right beside them there was an elevated plaza with three buildings on it that I've never seen before . . . and in the dream, which might have been quite a long one, I took time to study every building.

AR Are there hints of this dream in any of the drawings TCR is reproducing?

GM No, not really. The basis of those drawings is Mexico. I really thought about that experience, about the temples, the beauty of them, their simple shapes and what impact they have.

While I spent a lot of time with sculpture previously and recently more time on drawing, I can see that I'm extending myself in a two-dimensional format, but I'm dealing with three-dimensional objects. I can probably go back to making sculpture.

AR The pencil is so dark, it's almost like metal.

GM I'm really concerned with the surface of my drawings, working with the graphite, I want to get it very black and shiny like a mirror. I'm just beginning to see that under certain conditions, it reflects light and colour. And when I do those really big shapes, laying on the graphite becomes a physical activity, there's just so much surface to cover. And after you've laid the graphite on — and that's not really easy — you can scratch the surface and do other things with it. So really, I'm learning to work with the medium.

Images / TEMPLO-MOUND SERIES

These *untitled* drawings in graphite on paper measure approximately 22" x 30" (55 x 75 cm) and were completed in 1981.

Photography: Nathen Hohn









