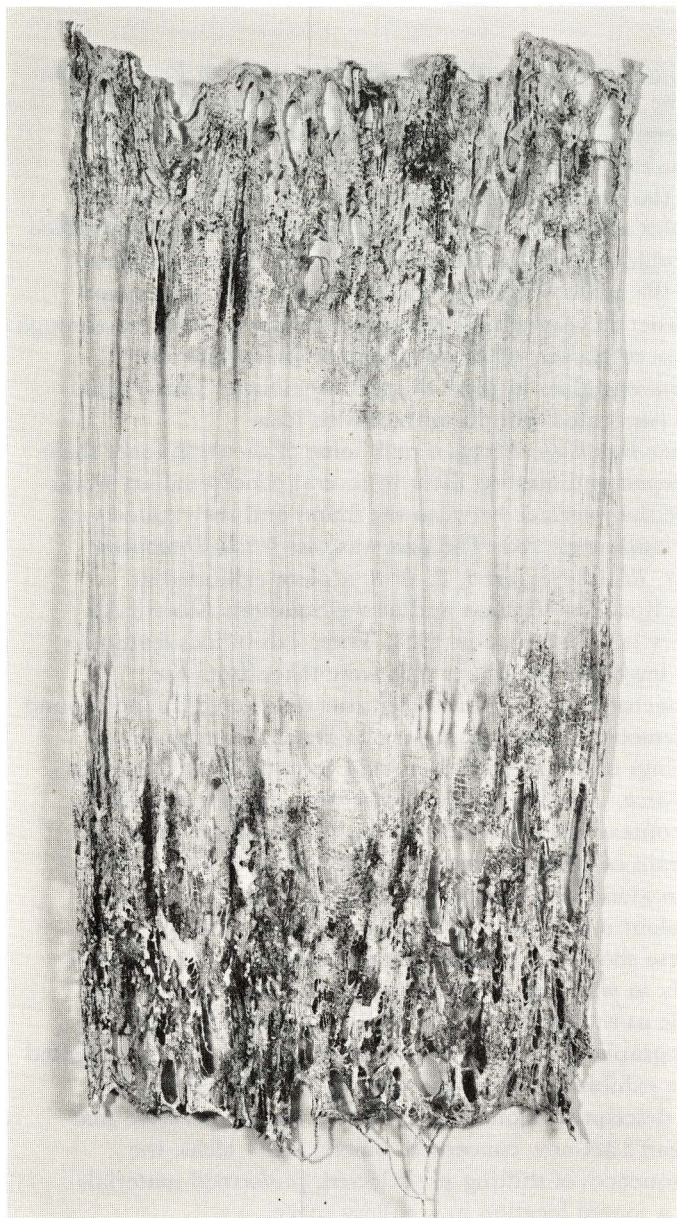
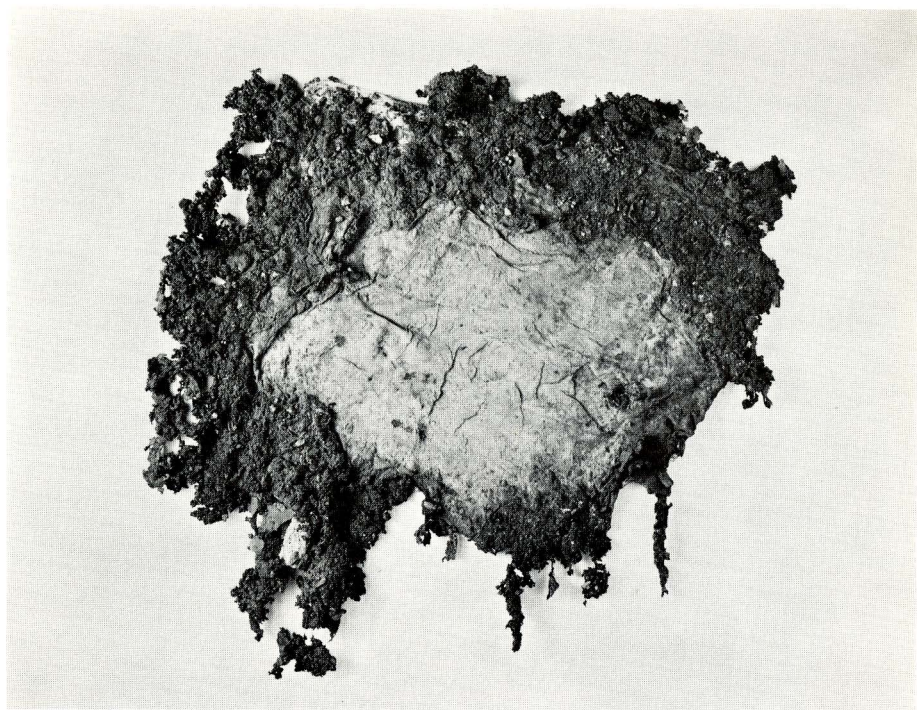


Ann Rosenberg / BEFORE *SOUVENIR*

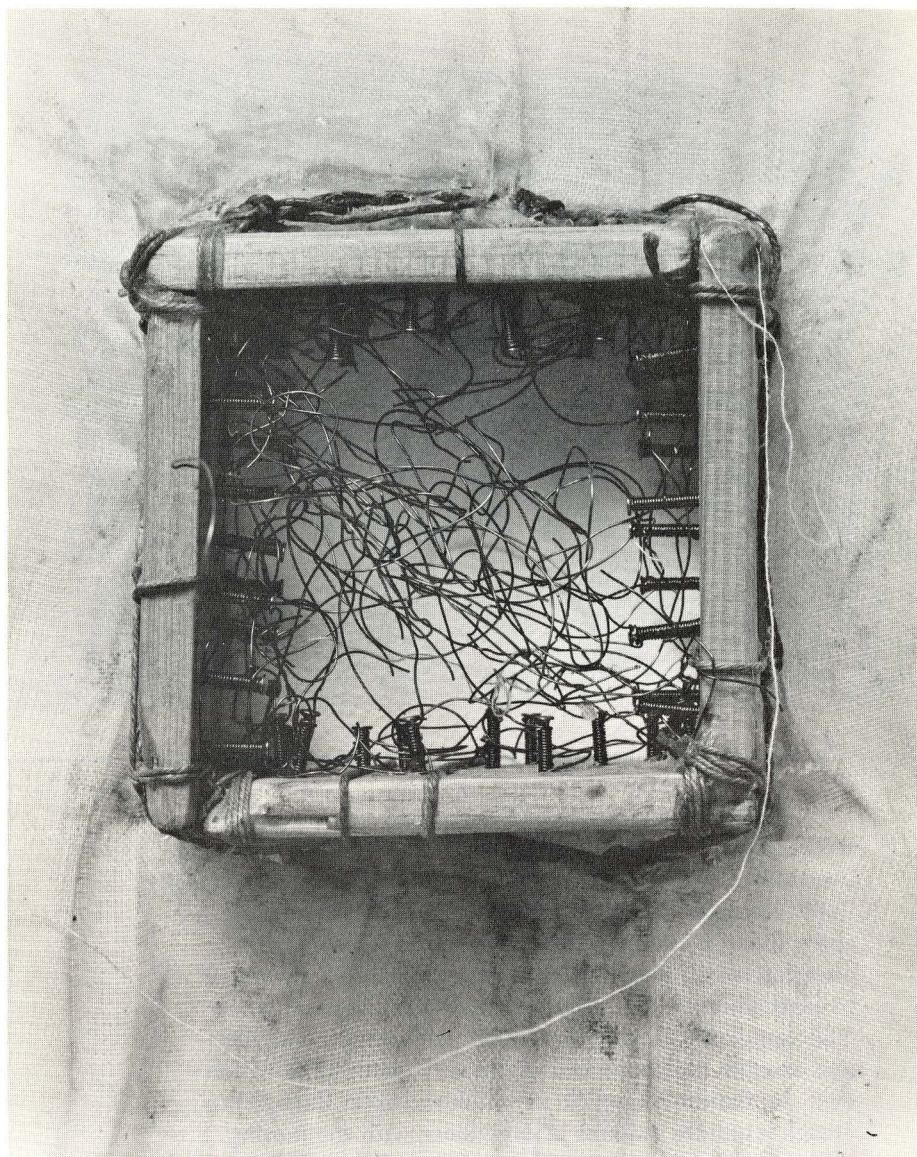


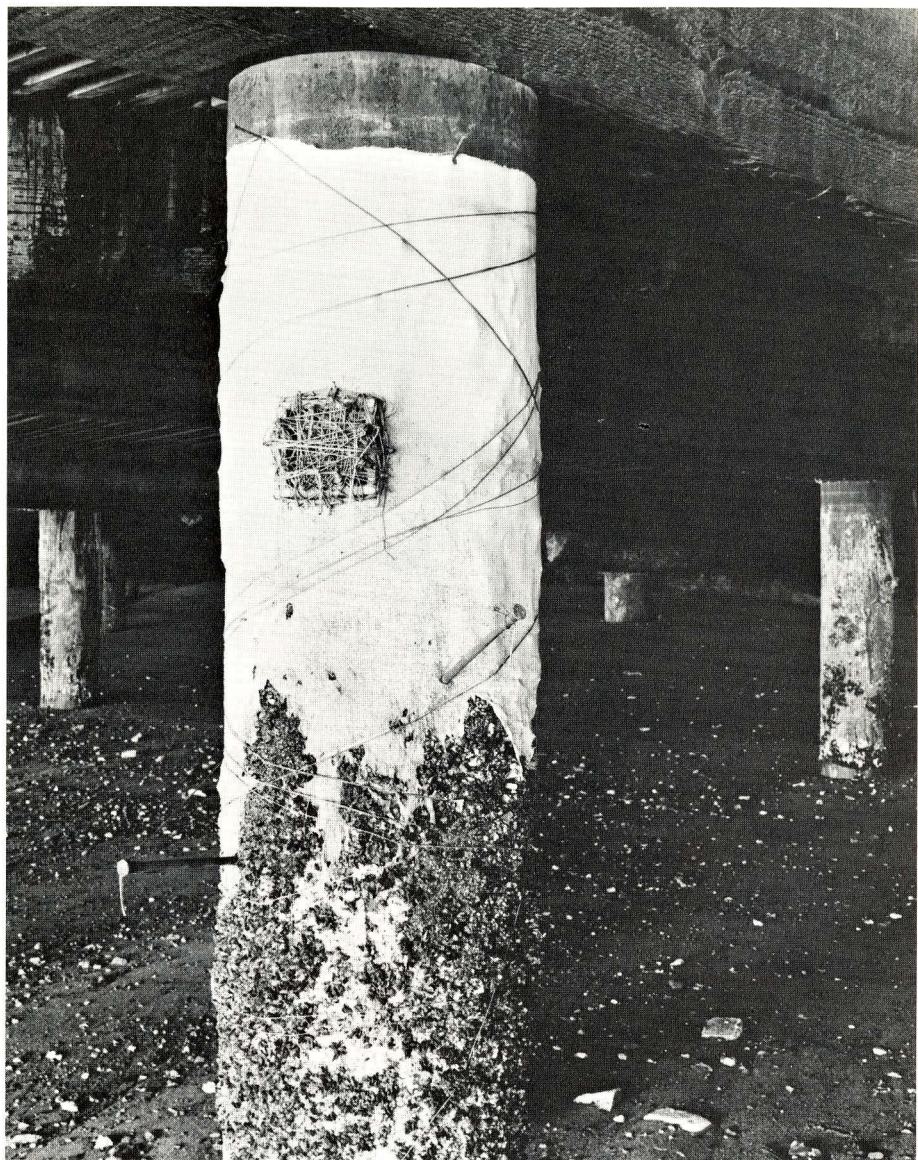
*The Capilano Review* published its first article on Joey Morgan in issue #22. By that time Morgan had mounted *Breathings*, a successful one person show at the University of British Columbia's Fine Arts Gallery in 1979. In *Breathings*, debris from the everyday world was glued and interlaced into complex sculptures with many string-like parts that resembled three-dimensional Jackson Pollock works. These sculptures were the result of Morgan's experiments with process and construction. A unifying ghostly paleness was achieved through her use of plaster, white paint and several white and transparent glues in these diverse assemblages which were more concerned with form than with idea.

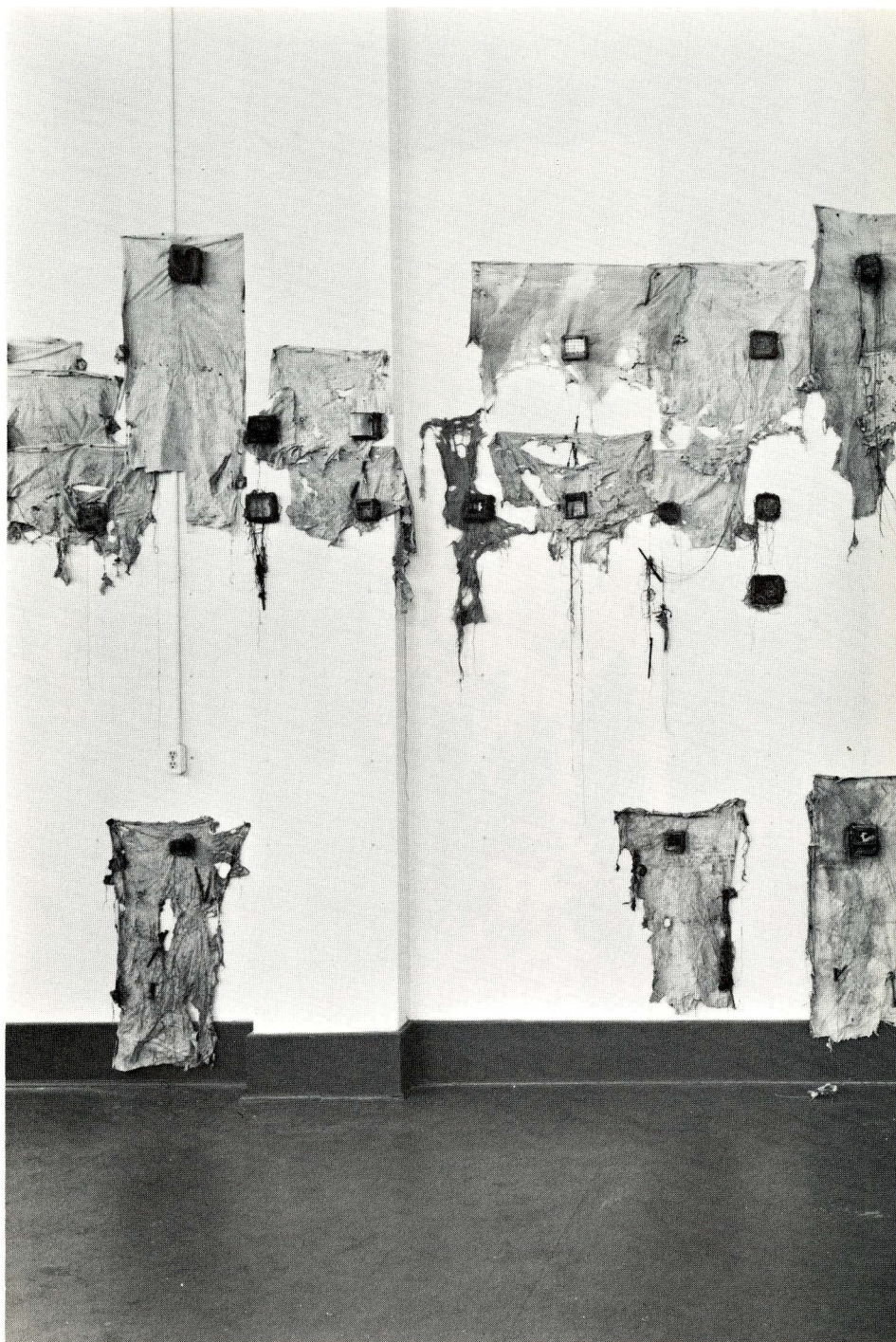
After *Breathings*, Morgan took some of the techniques she'd developed and applied them to several conceptual art works where the interface between the found and the created was consciously explored. The first was the *Jericho Detachment Project: RCAF Hangars 5, 7, & 8*, a piece exhibited at Open Space in Victoria and at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in Lethbridge in 1981. These exhibitions featured large low-relief sculptures that were taken from the architectural and technical elements discovered in and around the demolished hangars at Jericho Beach, Vancouver, buildings that had once been used by the Royal Canadian Air Force. The latex-backed *Lifts* were given a new life and context when removed from their places of origin to the walls of galleries where they became art. They were shown along with soil materials that Morgan had sorted for colour onto glazine and other backings. Also present in these shows was a series of small casts and moulds made chiefly in wax that presented randomly selected pieces of rubble as though they were curios of enigmatic origin. Photographs of the sites that Morgan explored were presented in the exhibitions' catalogue and in *TCR* #22. From this brief description alone, however, it is easy to perceive that Morgan's art now concerned, among other ideas, the consequences of shifting pre-selected, preformed materials from a source location to a gallery space.

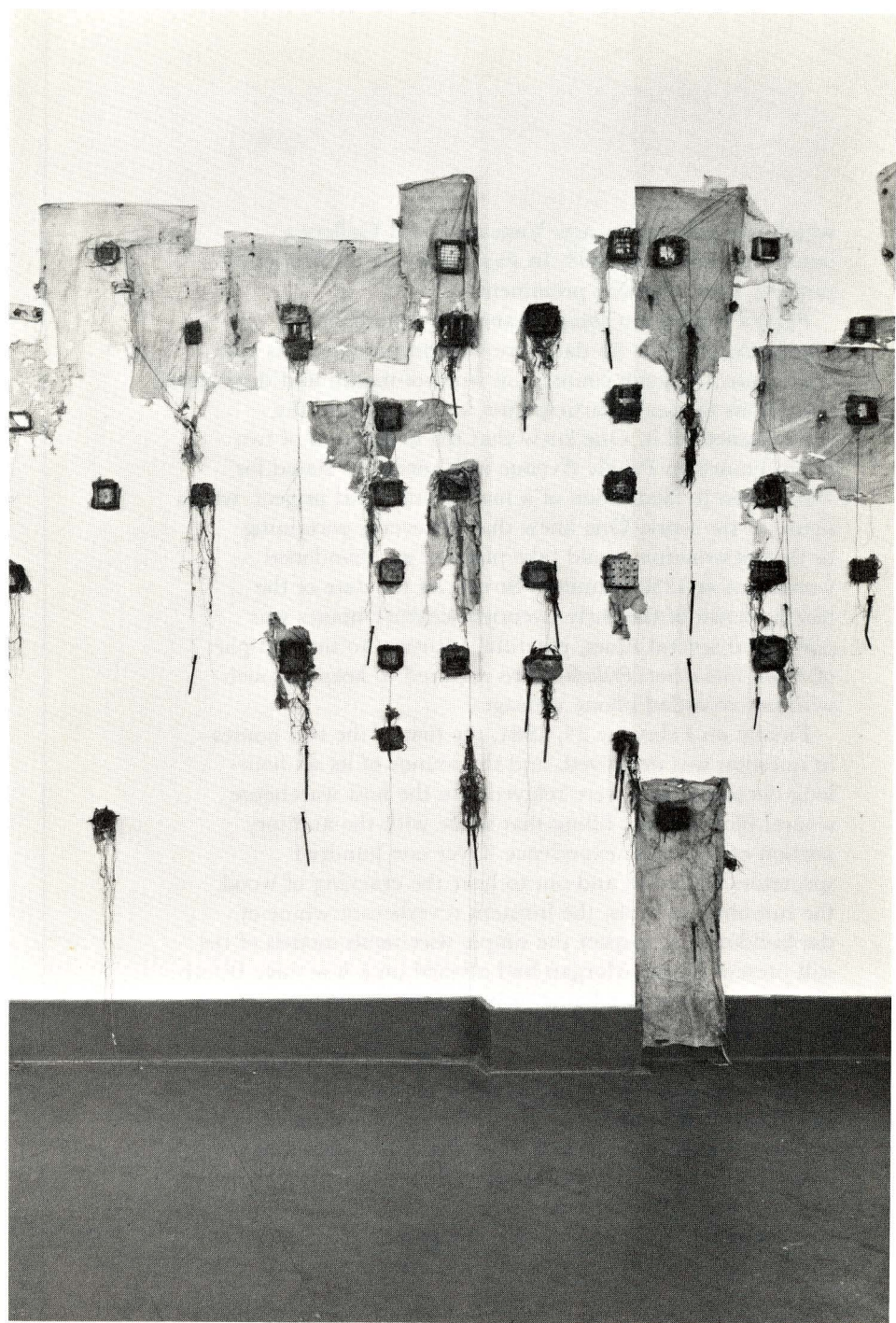


In 1982, Morgan began and completed her second site-oriented piece. In a recent interview, Morgan has described *Tidecatchers* as the *Jericho Detachment Project* turned ideologically “180° around.” In this work she took the ocean-washed space under a wharf at Jericho Beach as her stage. She attached small, muslin-backed boxes made of a variety of materials onto eighty posts by means of spikes and wires. The viewer was sent an invitation that specified the site and charted the conditions of the anticipated tidal action over the month-long cycle in which the artist intended to “catch a certain amount of experience with the muslin, . . . a cumulative experience in a set period of time.” The spectator was invited next to view the tidecatchers (traps and muslin) organized as a two-dimensional grid pattern reading on the walls of the Main Exit gallery in Vancouver, in September and October, 1982. An abbreviated photograph-supplemented installation of *Tidecatchers* (replete with complementary sound track) was shown in the *Vancouver Art and Artists Exhibition*









which was part of the new Vancouver Art Gallery's inaugural exhibit in 1983. In *Fugue*, the next of Morgan's projects, sound figured prominently.

*Fugue's* origins are complex and the two major manifestations of it (to date) are well documented. As with *Tidecatchers*, Morgan counted on word-of-mouth and distributed invitations to create participation in *Fugue* before the performances of it. One knew that the demolition of two of ten houses on Pacific Avenue in Vancouver, slated for destruction in facilitation of a major residential project, would figure in the work. One knew that art events pertaining to that destruction would take place in an abandoned warehouse at 1230 Hamilton Street. As the date of the tearing down of the early twentieth-century houses was postponed several times, potential witnesses to the first part of *Fugue* (*Statement / Prelude*) were required to keep in touch with pre-recorded phone messages.

Finally on February 24, 1984, the first of the two houses in question was destroyed, and the sounds of its six-hour-long decomposition were relayed into the host warehouse several blocks away, filling that space with the auditory portion of an actual experience. Over one hundred spectators drifted in and out to hear the cracking of wood, the tumbling of walls, the insistent reverberant whine of the bulldozer; to inspect the simple wire-mesh models of the still-present houses Morgan had aligned on a low stage before the silent witness of a found-object chair. In the four corners of the gloomy, semi-destroyed warehouse interior were arranged, in consort with other rubbish, still lifes composed of destroyed piano parts, allusions to the two other sound-tracks Morgan combined with a forty minute segment of the first in the several recitals of *Fugue* that were offered as the *Statement / Reprise* on several pre-specified occasions: a recording of a set of ten Hannon piano exercises that Morgan had performed the previous summer; the sounds of an upright piano being slowly prized apart with a wrench.

In November and December, 1984, Morgan presented documents concerning *Fugue* at the Charles H. Scott Gallery at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design: a suite of drawings, superb photographs of the two sites and the edited sound track which evoked the power and meaning of the original events. For Cate Rimmer, who had the opportunity to experience and re-experience the auditory portion of *Fugue* as she acted as gallery monitor, the track became a "metaphor for the struggle between order and chaos," while the piano exercises themselves were indicators of "the order and stability of middle class life." The destruction of the piano implied "the symbolic wrenching apart of bourgeois morality and ethics." The overall menace communicated by the machinery and the deconstruction of the house was allusive of the "forces which threaten" over which we have no control, "the chaos of war or revolution."

Rimmer also commented upon the effect of chance occurrences within the tape, upon the "marvellous image" which is conjured up when, through the roar of the machines, the *O Canada* horn which blows (at noon from the B.C. Hydro building) can be clearly heard, although engulfed in the chorus of ruin and destruction. She noticed the truck that howled past on the street and the birds that "sang bravely (or stupidly)" close to the demolition. The quieting of the demolition noises towards the end of the tape, she thought, was akin to the abating of a storm. In the end, all that remained before the tape stopped, before the gallery was given over again, briefly, to silence, were the quiet, insistent piano exercises. After the chaos was gone, "the bourgeoisie tinkled on with resolution."

In a restaging of *Fugue* that will take place this summer at the Banff School of Fine Arts, Alberta, the viewer will have a further opportunity to acknowledge the force of Morgan's first musical piece.





Morgan's most recently completed installation work, *Souvenir: A Recollection in Several Forms*, took place in September, 1985. As before, Morgan generated interest in the piece prior to the opening by word of mouth and by the distribution of posters announcing the event, posters that had as their major image a photograph of an early twentieth-century, upper middle class bedroom. Some potential spectators also received a booklet of photographs that indicated the work was going to concern Morgan's family relationships. The essay which follows records one viewer's response to the piece. By the time it is published, *Souvenir* will be on view at the National Gallery in Ottawa as part of an exhibition called *Songs of Experience*. It will remain there throughout the summer of 1986.

