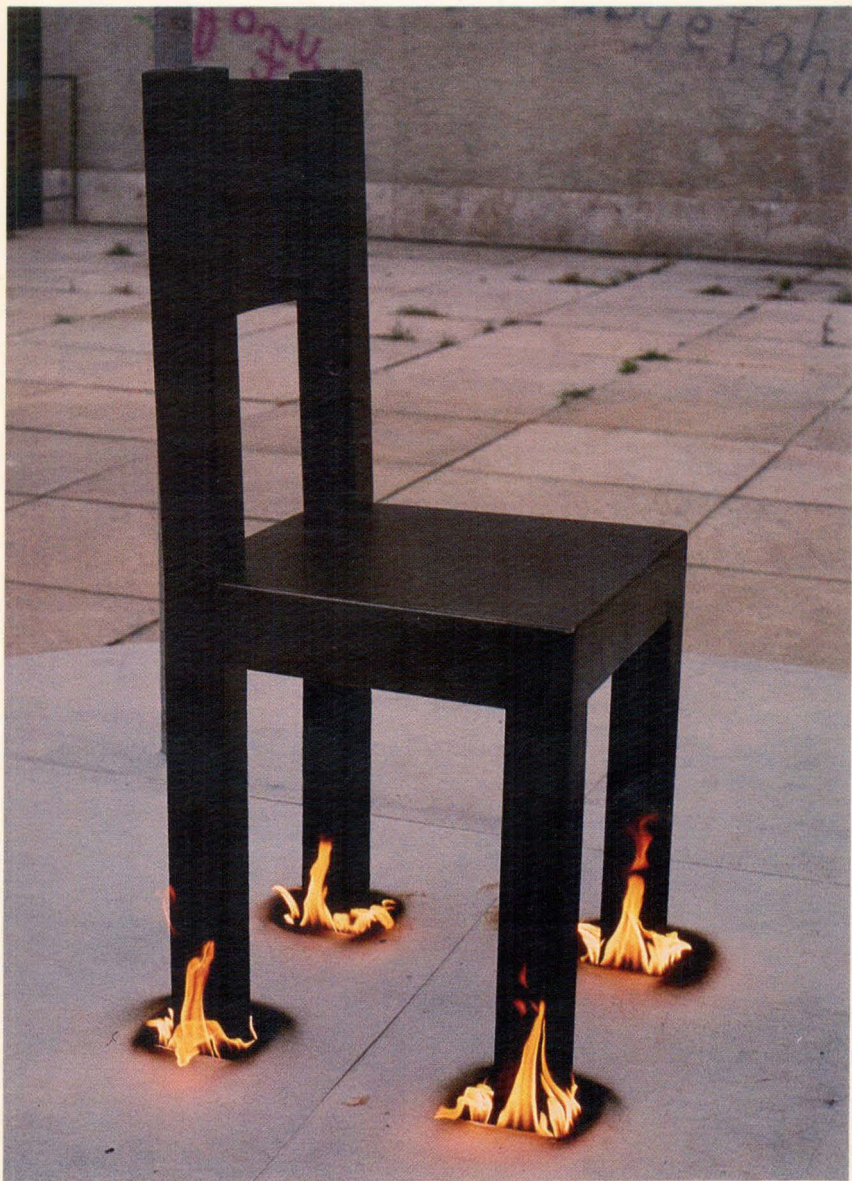


THE CAPILANO REVIEW



sinewy sinuous
the body of language
lies
floats

— DOUGLAS BARBOUR

| | |
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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased by 1.5 million (1990-1999) and is projected to increase by a further 1.5 million by 2010 (Office of National Statistics 2000).

There is a growing awareness of the need to develop strategies to meet the needs of the ageing population. The Department of Health (1999) has identified the need to develop a new paradigm of care for the ageing population, one that is based on the concept of 'active ageing'. This paradigm is based on the idea that ageing is a process, not a state, and that the goal of care should be to promote the health and well-being of older people, rather than to simply manage their decline. This paradigm is based on the idea that older people should be able to live independently, to participate in social activities, and to have access to the services and resources that they need.

The Department of Health (1999) has identified a number of key areas for action in order to achieve this paradigm. These include: (1) promoting the health and well-being of older people; (2) ensuring that older people have access to the services and resources that they need; (3) promoting the independence of older people; and (4) promoting the participation of older people in social activities. The Department of Health (1999) has also identified a number of key areas for research in order to achieve this paradigm. These include: (1) the health and well-being of older people; (2) the services and resources that older people need; (3) the independence of older people; and (4) the participation of older people in social activities.

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Douglas Barbour / EARTH SONG / BODY SONG

ii

By stress and syllable

thru take heart &

haul haul it forth

that first you listen

then begin to speak

love & touch are

speaking here language

will languish

lost to yr coming

if you refuse it recognition

to say I

love you &

know the real

consequences are

never easy

the words

only work if

you name them whole

every stress of every syllable

felt

iii

For "wing of the bird" read
"desire's rising desire"

where into what air
will desire fly
 & what landscape
seek far below

it is language desire enters
language it flies to
 soars over

sinewy sinuous
the body of language
 lies

floats sexual angel
wings beating slowly
awaiting over & over
desire's approach

your approach

do you love language enough

oh then "wing
of the bird" fly

fly oh speak

vi

Go fool, and hatch of the air
some new desire as
empty as the air
foolish
& undirected

the air is clear over the lake
the lake is still
clean enough to swim in

but desire sometimes
“muddies the waters”
invites clichés
& may be empty a balloon
easily prickt

but we are all fools
sometimes breathe
too fully the heady air

the warning was for me
(me also)

vii

With a dry eye, she
turnd to another sheet

another lover language
and another lover

is it pain to see beauty everywhere?
or simply worth the pain

some fragments remain
to tell us
everything she knew
then she knew
then she knew

& now we do
too some
times we do

viii

whatever you have to say, leave
me something to wonder at
something unsaid

it shouldn't be too hard
we both have so much to say
these days

but everything! no
that leaves no room
for intercourse
letting our talk match our bodies
sometimes

so tell me whatever
you have to say
& don't leave
yet don't
leave

Michael C. Kenyon / MR. GUEST ARRIVES IN KLEINBERG

ESTELLE

Estelle's father, to all appearances a successful Toronto businessman, died in 1960, the year she and Owen were married. After settling his estate (to Estelle's surprise, he was considerably in debt), she returned to Kleinberg with a leather-bound photo album and a small package of books. On the album's inside cover was inscribed: *To Lottie with love*. Estelle's mother, who had died when Estelle was four, only appeared in two of the photos. The other black and white faces, in group and single portraits, were unfamiliar, and the album contained no clue to their identity. On the back cover, someone had written: 1922. The album lay around the house for a few years, a curiosity, then, dog-eared and coffee-ringed, was thrown out.

Twenty-one years later, on her return from the clinic, Estelle retrieves the books from the basement. Still in her rain coat, she sits at her desk under the study window. On page 573 of Plato's *Republic*, she finds some dark crumbs of tobacco. These are dry, nearly odourless.

The garden of her house has not been tended in her absence. The roses, untrimmed, run to briar; the bird feeder is empty: the finches and sparrows, even the pigeons (she had cursed the pigeons for eating the smaller birds' food) have left. She watches the March wind wave the unmown grass.

On page 573, underlined, she reads:

Then the master passion runs wild and takes madness into its service; any decent opinions or desires and any feelings of shame still left are killed or thrown out, until all discipline is swept away, and madness usurps its place.

On the kitchen table lies the flute Owen has left. The card, a bright floral motif, says he hopes she is well; he will not be home for supper; some business requires attention at the club.

She puts down Plato, leafs through the Multiple Listings she'd picked up at the office, remembers the appointment, made for her by the secretary, with a woman named Daphne, for ten the next morning.

Brushing the tobacco from the page, she reads a few more lines before closing the book:

When a master passion has absolute control of a man's mind, I suppose life is a round of holidays and dinners and parties and girlfriends and so on.

JOSH AND LUKE

On Monday at six-thirty, after eating dinner with his three brothers and two cousins, Luke pedals quickly the six blocks to the Paradise Plaza. As on previous occasions, the shopping cart lies where he left it at noon: in the long grass behind the oak. He takes from his pocket a length of string and ties the cart handle to the rear mudguard of his bike.

It takes fifteen minutes to cycle to the lake, just over half an hour with the precautions Luke takes. He rides the alleys all the way, at each street makes sure the coast is clear before crossing to the next alley.

Tonight, walking home from work, Gerta sees the boy — a blue bike, a yellow cord, a silver cart — traverse Davenport and enter the alley beside Monty's Plumbing.

On the small dock by the lake, Luke watches the cart sink, without revolving, onto the platform created by two carts laid side-up; watches it slip, until its wheels mesh with the wheels of a fourth cart planted upside-down over the wheels of yet another cart, also upside-down. When the ripples cease, Luke peers into a complex geometry of intersecting lines through which, he imagines, shoals of minnows will pass.

Monday's the last such journey Luke makes. On Tuesday, he's discovered behind the oak, with the bicycle, the cart and the string, by the assistant manager.

On Wednesday, after dinner, his father whips him.

Thursday, a full moon, Luke takes Josh to see the submerged castle.

They share a cigarette on the dock, laughing like crazy at the word: *anorak*. It was my grandmother's, Luke's friend explains, she's dead. He pulls the hood over his head, blows smoke through his nostrils.

ROBIN AND ISAAC

It's not that Gerta's just clumsy, I mean I can allow some lack of physical co-ordination. Isaac squints, closes one eye to align Robin's hip, the curve to the waist, with the system of ropes and pulleys which run from the bed-head to the window frame. He adjusts the hand-winch; the ratchet clicks. From her strained position, Robin smiles and manages a slight bob of the head. Encouragement.

Isaac continues: She's just got these ideas. Like yesterday I discover she's been serving all our sandwiches on *half and half*. Someone orders whole wheat or white and she says: We serve *half and half*, like it's our policy or something. She makes them up in advance, one slice of white and one of sixty-percent. I told her not to do it and you know what she said? Dark and light. Very pointedly. Dark and light.

Isaac backs away to survey the construction of his wife. He unties her right wrist from one cross bar, fastens it to the next higher: O.K.? Again the bob of the head. He cuts another slit in the already shredded satin dress. He removes one silver highheel, placing it at right-angles to the foot, forming a kind of visual support to the ankle/instep relationship.

And I can't find anything in the kitchen; she's rearranged my entire stock according to her own weird logic. The spices are no longer in the spice cupboard. She's got each spice with the food to which she thinks it belongs. I have to try to think like she thinks to find anything.

Isaac watches Robin as he unzips his pants: draped in pink satin, half on, half off the bed, suspended and stretched behind the nylon cord, she resembles a sun star in a crab trap.

Isaac remembers the illustration from Gerta's *National Geographic*.

MONTY AND JOAN

Monty watches Beth step into the Cadillac behind The Pit. Owen, holding the door open, grins at the bartender who's carrying empties into the small lot. Monty teeters down the alley to the front of the building in time to see Mox and Cynthia drive away.

At home, the plumber urinates against the *For Sale* sign, then goes inside. At three-thirty, he places a call to his wife's sister in Montreal. Joan answers the phone.

You're drunk, she says. Monty says, It's me, Monty, I want to tell you something. Just hang on.

While he's fumbling with the record player, he remembers the photographs of The Beautiful Children. Leaving the turntable revolving, he goes into the bedroom to find the portfolio. After ten minutes search, he remembers Joan and goes back to the phone.

She answers after eight rings: I hoped you'd passed out. Wait, he says, do you remember The Beautiful Children? I have them, she says. Oh. Well that's all right then. How's the dog? And how's little Sparky? The dog's fine, says Joan, the bird's fine.

You remember the kid in yellow rain gear? says Monty. He drags the phone over to the stereo, sets the needle on Kris Kristofferson, *The Silver-Tongued Devil*. He hums into the mouthpiece to the end of the song, then rejects the tone-arm. Joan?

He tries the number twice more, then falls asleep on the livingroom floor, in front of the tv. The late show that night is *They Got Me Covered*, with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour. The late late show is *The Unholy Garden*, starring Ronald Coleman and Fay Wray.

DAPHNE AND ESTELLE

Mick shambles along the alley, watches Daphne and Estelle wade through the high grass in Monty's back yard.

721 Pulver Close, Daphne murmurs, I could build my aviary here, against the garage. And put the breeding cages in the workroom.

Crossing three streets, walking Kraft Street for eight blocks, Mick reaches Hill Road. At Paradise Plaza, at the intersection of Hill and Lang, just before Hill becomes the highway north from Kleinberg, he begins his bottle routine.

I left my husband dozens of times, Daphne says, but always returned. I'd spend the night in a small town like Kleinberg, drive home the next morning. Once I overheard Rod joking with an associate about my one night stands. The same associate handled our divorce. As soon as I find a house, my cages will be forwarded, the birds handled with extreme care; Rod's firm will absorb all expenses. Estelle mentions the finches and sparrows she feeds, asks what kind of birds Daphne raises.

Proceeding from the peripheral garbage cans, to the ones within the parking lot, to the containers right beside the Mall doors.

Cockatiels, Daphne says, I've a young pair for sale now, if you're interested. But if you want to teach the bird to talk, if you'd like more of a companion, to have it ride on your shoulder and so on, I'd advise keeping just one, and clipping its wings. The two women stand in the small porch at the front of the house. Daphne has decided to buy; Estelle folds the interim agreement into her pocket, says: I'd like to see the birds, when they arrive. She locks the front door. How, she asks, do you select the birds for breeding? Plato has it, *We must mate the best of our men with the best of our women as often as possible, and the inferior men with the inferior women as seldom as possible, and keep only the offspring of the best.*

Mick trades his bottles at the Super Low-Cost. Mrs. Kreisler, with a cart full of groceries, lets him ahead of her. I hate it, she says, when I've got a few things only, and someone in front has a load and won't

let me through first. Mick nods, clears his throat, lines up the bottles for the cashier to count. Mrs. Kreisler steps closer: Mick steps away. Bending from the hip, she adds, Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands more.

PIER

Pier is on night shift, attending PIMM (Plunger Injection Moulding Machine) number two. The screw rams the melt (the thermoplastic resin, polypropylene) into the cold bricklayers' hod mould. On the floor, fifty-six hods are being stacked by the stacker.

Urgent message to phone this number. Pier takes the piece of paper, follows the foreman into the first aid station. While Pier dials, the foreman sits on the bed, finishing his sandwich. He takes four bites before starting to chew. A Pakistani, wearing a hardhat over an orange turban, opens the door; Pier swivels to face the wall, presses the earpiece to his right ear and covers his left with the palm of his hand: No, I don't know where she is. Could you speak up? The Pakistani, at a wave from the foreman, takes the four pills from the desk top, puts two in his mouth and pockets the others. Shouldn't wind the turban so tight, says the foreman, as the man leaves.

On the wall in front of Pier, a graph shows the productivity increase against the number of injuries for the years 1976 to 1979. When Pier hangs up, the foreman says: I thought she had the baby last month. My trailer's burned to the ground, Pier says, they think Olga may have been inside.

The grass crunches as he runs across the field, past the neon-lit company sign, a twenty foot copy of the 1938 *Wurlitzer* in phenolic resin, *POLY-PLASTICS LTD. KLEINBERG*, sporting a yellow scroll-design of carbon/hydrogen atoms forming molecular chains.

On the Drive-In screen, a well-dressed man drinks in a seedy bar, shows the contents of his briefcase to a famous actress. She looks embarrassed, then leans back in the chair to wave to someone she recognizes. Pier can't see any smoke or flames. If this is a joke, he mumbles.

GERTA

March seventeenth, St. Patrick's day, Isaac begins work at four in the morning. He makes three cream pies, using food colouring (which he finds at the back of a cupboard, behind two large bags of miniature marshmallows) to get the desired effect. His morning special, *Isaac's Individual Irish Omelette*, made in a small shamrock-shaped bowl, contains gorgonzola cheese, green peppers, spinach, and will be served topped with several sprigs of parsley.

Gerta arrives at six; she refuses to wear the green tam. I'll wear the smock, but I won't put that on my head. Isaac asks: What's wrong with it? Gerta looks at him steadily, for a minute.

The omelette is a great success, as are Isaac's black leprechaun jokes. (There's these three black leprechauns, see, one from Detroit, one from Chicago, one from Kleinberg . . .) Gerta refuses to serve the green butter.

At ten, when Daphne and Estelle open the cafe door, Gerta is very pale; one of her rollers has come unclipped, and Isaac sings *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, very loud, from the kitchen.

What's that? Daphne points suspiciously at the green wedge rapidly fragmenting, under the fork of the Indian boy at the next table, then disappearing past the lips, swallowed, with no jaw movement. Gerta replies, Boston Green Pie. The two women order bacon and tomato sandwiches, Daphne's on white, Estelle's on whole wheat, and two coffees.

What a new idea, says Daphne, when Gerta brings the sandwiches. Estelle says nothing. Half and half, responds Gerta, dark and light. The sandwiches have been quartered to form triangles. Two triangles of each sandwich have been turned, the opposites are of the same colour: whole wheat, whole wheat; white, white. Gerta points out that each borders on its opposite colour: whole wheat borders on white bread, the white on the second whole wheat, which shares borders

with the second white, which borders on the original whole wheat. Beneath the butter, bacon, tomato, mayonnaise and butter (the order of these components reversed in the triangles where white is the topmost bread), the same system of borders and opposites is maintained. Gerta looks pleased as she heads back to the kitchen; Daphne winks at Estelle, who adds cream to her coffee. Simultaneously, the two women lift their cups. Dark and light, says Estelle.

CHARLIE AND HIS WIFE

Charlie takes a beer from the fridge, stands by the kitchen window for a moment, opens the bottle, pours the beer, turns: Old Bert's in court next Friday. In my opinion, says his wife, he deserves all he gets. The usual smoke surrounds her. Did you hear, she says, about those kids' trailer that burnt down? Poor dears. Charlie sits across from the tv: Probably smoking what they shouldn't: according to Bert, Kid Kreisler puffs and chokes at the stuff all the time. Oh, I don't think so, Charlie, they're nice kids, she's real nice, I met her in the Paradise, buying plastic forks, poor mite, her little one sleeping baby-quiet in a little papoose thing, like a kangaroo pouch, hanging in front.

Charlie asks, You got the *TV Guide*, hon? You took it in the kitchen, Charlie, you're getting absent minded. She puts a large peppermint in her mouth and chews: We leave for Reno next week. She sighs. Charlie returns from the kitchen, Can't find it. You know, she continues, I think it'd be a real nice gesture to offer those kids the use of our house while we're gone. I can't find the damn thing. It'd give them a month to get organized, what d'you thing, Charlie? I think you're sitting on it. She shuffles to one side of the armchair, I don't know why you bother, you know the programs backwards anyway. She hands him the guide, It'd make me feel good to have someone in the house while we're away. Charlie says, Channel 7, 1:30. I'll think about it.

MONTY AND MOX

Monty drives beside the lake at three in the afternoon to the Blue Mist Apartments. The completion date for the sale of his house is next week.

He parks the van in the lot in time to help Cynthia with the heavy lid of the trash container. Monty holds the lid open; Cynthia deposits the garbage. Fantastic! Monty says, I've seen you dance, you're the best Owen has. Cynthia tells him how to find the manager. I live in town, she points to the third floor, I'm taking flute lessons with Mox.

On the lake, five or six geese land; Monty follows Cynthia into the building, into the elevator. Monty's Plumbing and Heating, he says, there are times when the home plumbing system does not perform as it should. The elevator smells stale; its carpet is threadbare.

Mox is listening to Herbie Mann, *Muscle Shoals Nitty Gritty*: Cynthia dances the empty garbage can around the room, sings, I just met, a plumber, who loves, my act.

Mox, at the table, writes: *KEYS*. Cynthia hugs him from behind, reads: . . . *the touch-piece, the shank, the cover plate. This last is faced with a pad which, when in contact with its corresponding hole, forms an airtight seal.* She says, I told him I'm studying the flute. Her fingers reach down, across his belly: I think I need another lesson.

Some keys open and some close their associated holes. Each key is named for the note sounded when pressed. In the case of a key which at rest is open, the key takes its name from the note given by the next lower open hole. In the case of a key which at rest is closed, this is named for the hole it actually covers.

Cynthia lies on her belly, watching the lake; she finds the water peaceful. Mox has been practising far less than usual.

THE PIT

In The Pit upstairs lounge, Frank draws Owen's attention to Cynthia's breasts as he orders a rum and coke. Owen shrugs and admits that he's slept with most of his strippers: But not with the customers, he continues, keep it in the family, that's my motto. Frank disagrees: That route leads to trouble. Owen gestures toward the door, Not when there's an exception to the rule. Frank turns in his chair.

Beth joins the men. She has on a white satin dress, cut very low. A fat man — a stranger, with a burnished nose, and a tattoo of a bug-hulled ship named *\$ALLY* on his right forearm — says: Whore, from the next table. He's ignored. Then: Whore, in a louder voice, his eyes on the dip of Beth's gown. Frank looks at Owen.

Carl, drinking alone in a corner, lunges across the stage, lands two punches, one into the fat man's neck, the other into the sponge belly. The table falls over; Beth screams. Owen signals to the bartender who, to the sound of splintering glass, propels the stranger from the room. At the door the man whispers, This place is a real brothel. The bartender replies, You can get a drink downstairs, tell the waiter you're Owen's guest.

Carl staggers into the washroom to be sick; Frank and Beth laugh uproariously; Frank takes note that her breasts compare favourably, at least in size, to Cynthia's. Owen looks tired as Mox begins the last set of the night. The bar becomes still; the dancer emerges, stealthily, from right stage.

Two blocks up Bargeld (he has decided against another drink), the stranger meets Mick, with whom he walks (after introducing himself as Owen's guest) for fifteen minutes, in silence. At Lisa's window, they stand together, watching. The window remains dark. When the stranger has left, Mick regards the garbage can, on which the fat man has been sitting, and says, quite distinctly, quite forlornly: Mr. Guest.

WHORLS

Estelle takes her morning coffee to the desk, opens *The Republic* to Part Eleven, *THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND THE REWARDS OF GOODNESS*. The doorbell rings.

The man, dressed in green coveralls, smoking a small curved pipe, is about five feet tall. His face is worn, by weather or by skin disorder, to resemble a last year's rosehip.

G'morning, he says, I'm the Weed Inspector. It's my thankless job to check- Estelle interrupts, Oh, we have some quite interesting ones this year. I'm not, the inspector goes on, so much interested in your weeds, per se, as I am in some bloody long grass. He points to the back of the house where the grass, waist-high, sways.

It's a bylaw, the grass must be tended to. The weeds, you know, can spread. His hands make gentle dispersing motions, from his chest to the extent of his arms. When the weather gets drier, there's the danger of fire. He lights his pipe, shrugs, You'll have to cut it down. A lawnmower won't touch it; try a scythe, or a gas weed-eater. I'll be along next week to check up.

Slightly disturbed by the interruption, Estelle returns to her desk to read about *The Spindle of Necessity* which causes all the planets to orbit. According to Socrates, shaft and hook are of adamant, the whorl a mixture of adamant and other matter.

... a large whorl hollowed out, with a second fitting exactly into it, the second being hollowed out to hold a third, the third a fourth, and so on up to a total of eight, like a nest of bowls. . . . The first and outermost whorl had the broadest rim; next broadest was the sixth, next the fourth, next the eighth, next the seventh, next the fifth, next the third and last of all the second. And the rim of the largest and outermost was many-coloured, that of the

seventh was the brightest, the eighth was illuminated by the seventh, from which it takes its colour, the second and fifth were similar to each other and yellower than the others, the third was the whitest, the fourth reddish and the sixth second in whiteness. The whole spindle revolved with a single motion, but within the movement of the whole the seven inner circles revolved slowly in the opposite direction to that of the whole, and of them the eighth moved fastest, and next fastest the seventh, sixth and fifth, which moved at the same speed; third in speed was the fourth, moving as it appeared to them with a counter-revolution; fourth was the third, and fifth the second. And the whole spindle turns in the lap of Necessity.

In the newspaper, Estelle finds a small ad: LAWNMOWER NEEDS WORK. CUT ANY LENGTH GRASS. CALL LUKE -4274.

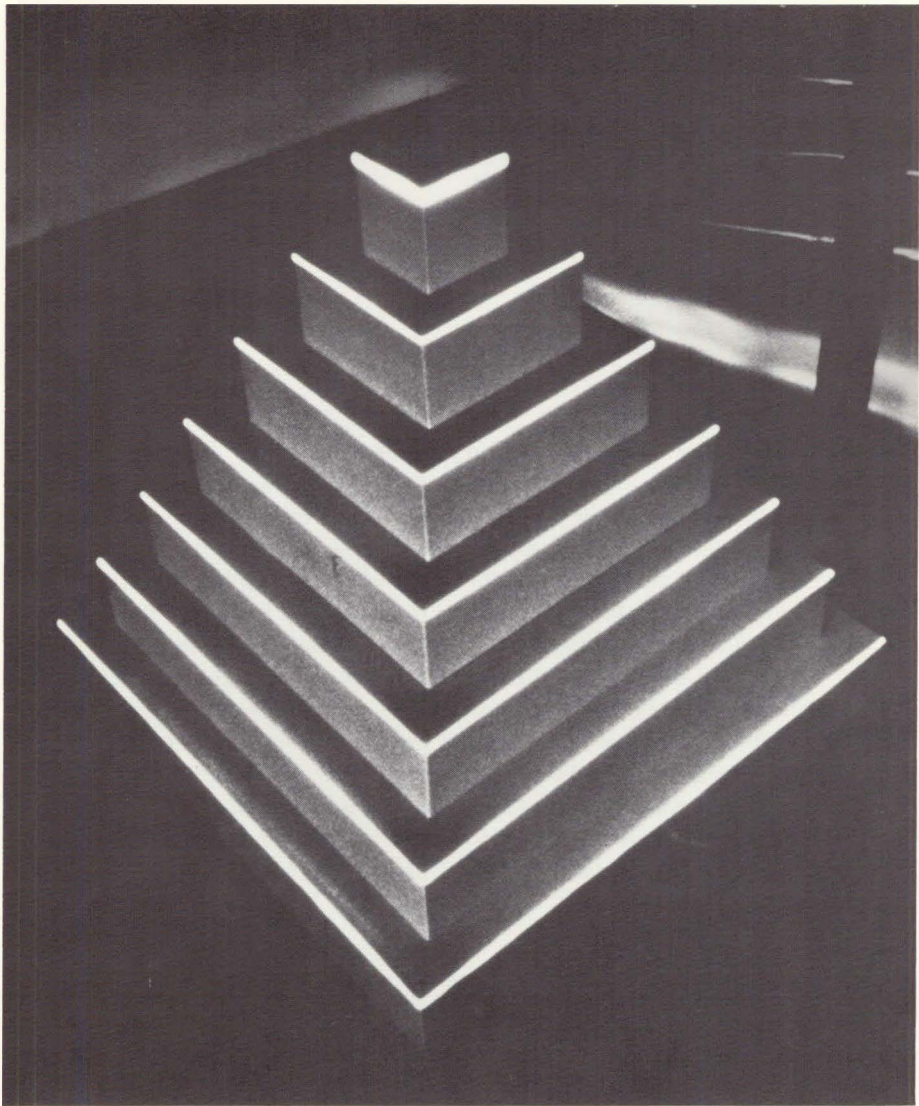
AI McWilliams / RECENT SCULPTURE

PREFACE

In the last two years (1981-3), McWilliams has exhibited four major sculptures: *Suspended Animation* and *Wall* at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, *Axaxaxas mlö* at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and *Ruminations on a Set of Circumstances* at the Kunstverein in Stuttgart. To provide context for these pieces it is necessary to go back to the three-dimensional works McWilliams made in the 60s.

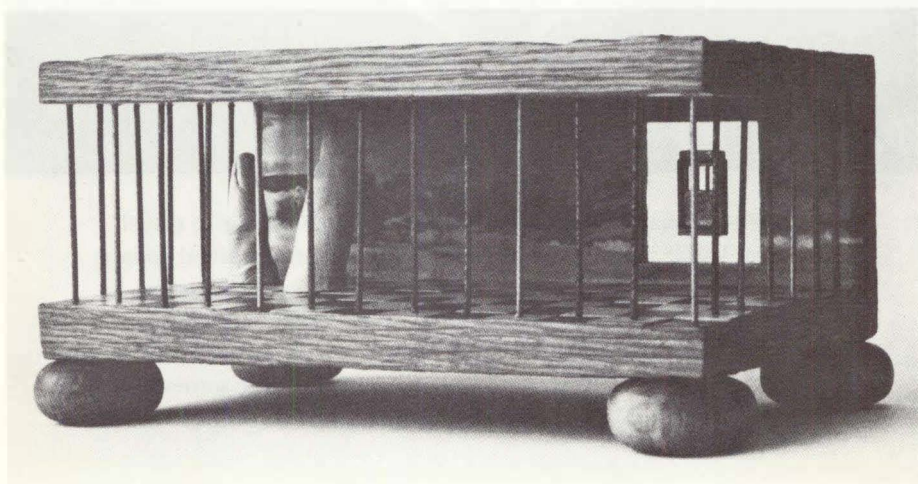
In that period McWilliams, like many artists, constructed objects that fell into the category of Minimal Art fulfilling the "Less is More" dictum established in architecture by Meis van der Rohe's black tower Seagrams Building; in painting, by the deceptively simple red/yellow/blue colour fields of Ellsworth Kelly; in sculpture, by the stainless steel, stacked rectangles of Donald Judd. The first sculptures created in this vein were three untitled works which foreshadow the architectural scale and theme of McWilliams' recent pieces.

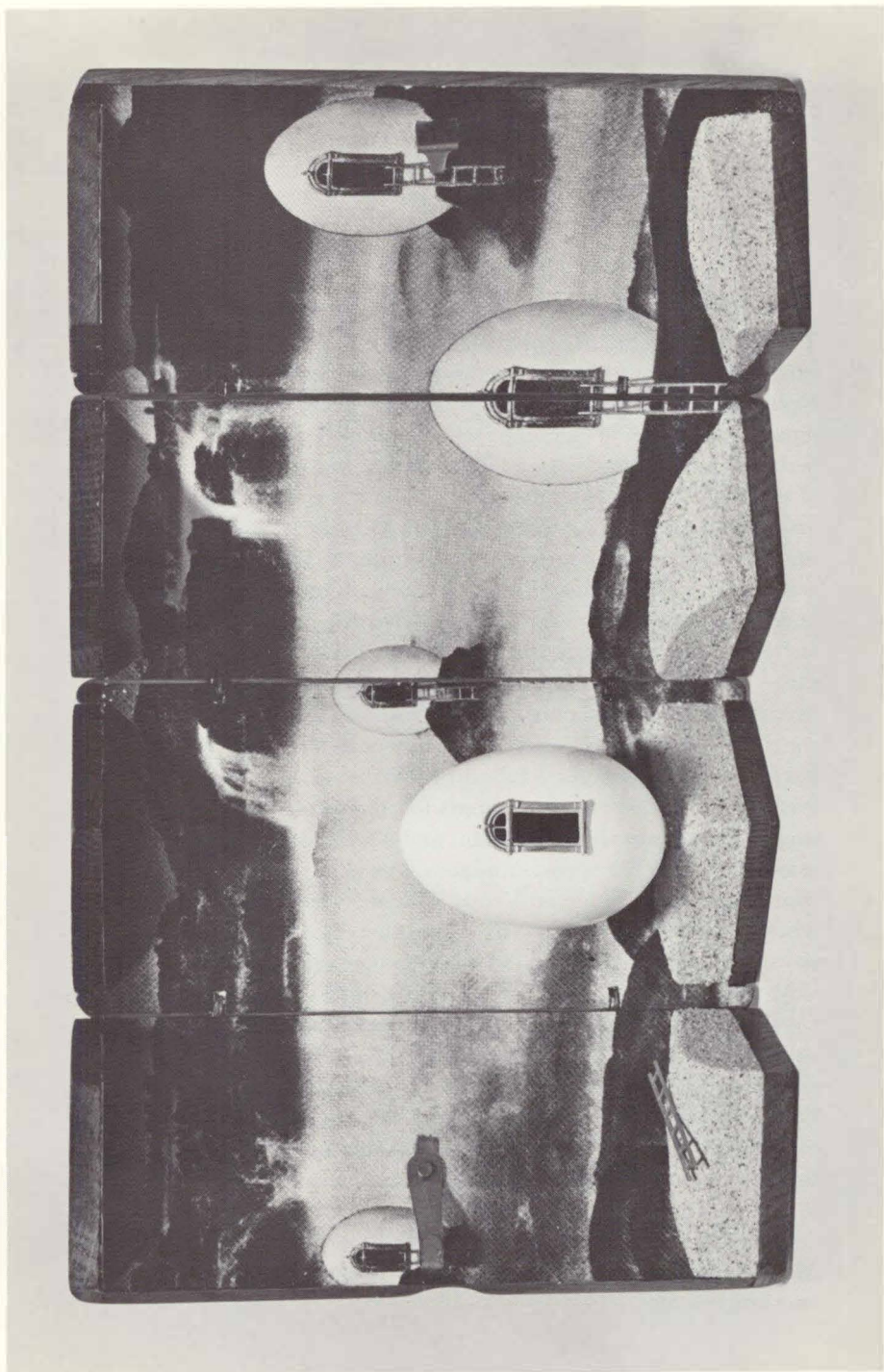
These were a tall, thin vertical red beam, a two-part, overscale blue arch, a seven stage yellow sculpture prescient to the ziggurat of *Axaxaxas mlö*. In the 60s works, enamel and resin gleamed; the mirroring surfaces softened the solidity of the pieces. In the 80s, the copper of *Axaxaxas mlö* and *Ruminations* . . . achieves a similar effect. The 60s works had bevelled edges of plexiglas so that when lit from within these edges read as lines of light illuminated by a concealed source. Now McWilliams uses electric light and propane flame to evoke similar mysteries.¹ There is, hence, a satisfying continuity in McWilliams' art. But at a certain point he moved abruptly away from Minimal impersonality towards the themes and content which occupy him now.



In 1969, a Canada Council grant enabled McWilliams to travel to Europe. While abroad, he made little boxes that contained collage and tiny clues from the foreign environments. When he returned, he was unable to complete the Minimal works he left behind. He committed himself for a decade to works on a small scale that were personal and elusive in content. The earliest of these are somewhat cognizant of the cityscapes, the art he'd seen while travelling.

Ode to Uncle Alex (1972) is a four inch high wooden cage containing a sky-painted backdrop set over a plaza floor. To the left on the miniature white and black tiles of the plaza, one discovers plaster casts of the upper portions of two fingers that serve as monumental sculpture in the environment. Placed on the skydrop to the right is a framed window embellished with a centrally placed unopened (unopenable) door. One is reminded of: European finch cages; the fragments of Classical sculpture; Renaissance perspectives of ideal cities; de Chirico pre-Surrealist cityscapes where sculptural fragments are set near oversized artichokes and undersized people — of everything but of nothing one may lay a finger on. The cage is empty. It expects, wants something that the viewer's imagination can provide, or it exacts from him an agreement with the allusive nostalgia of the piece where the ode, the tribute will not be voiced and where Uncle Alex will be forever anonymous.²

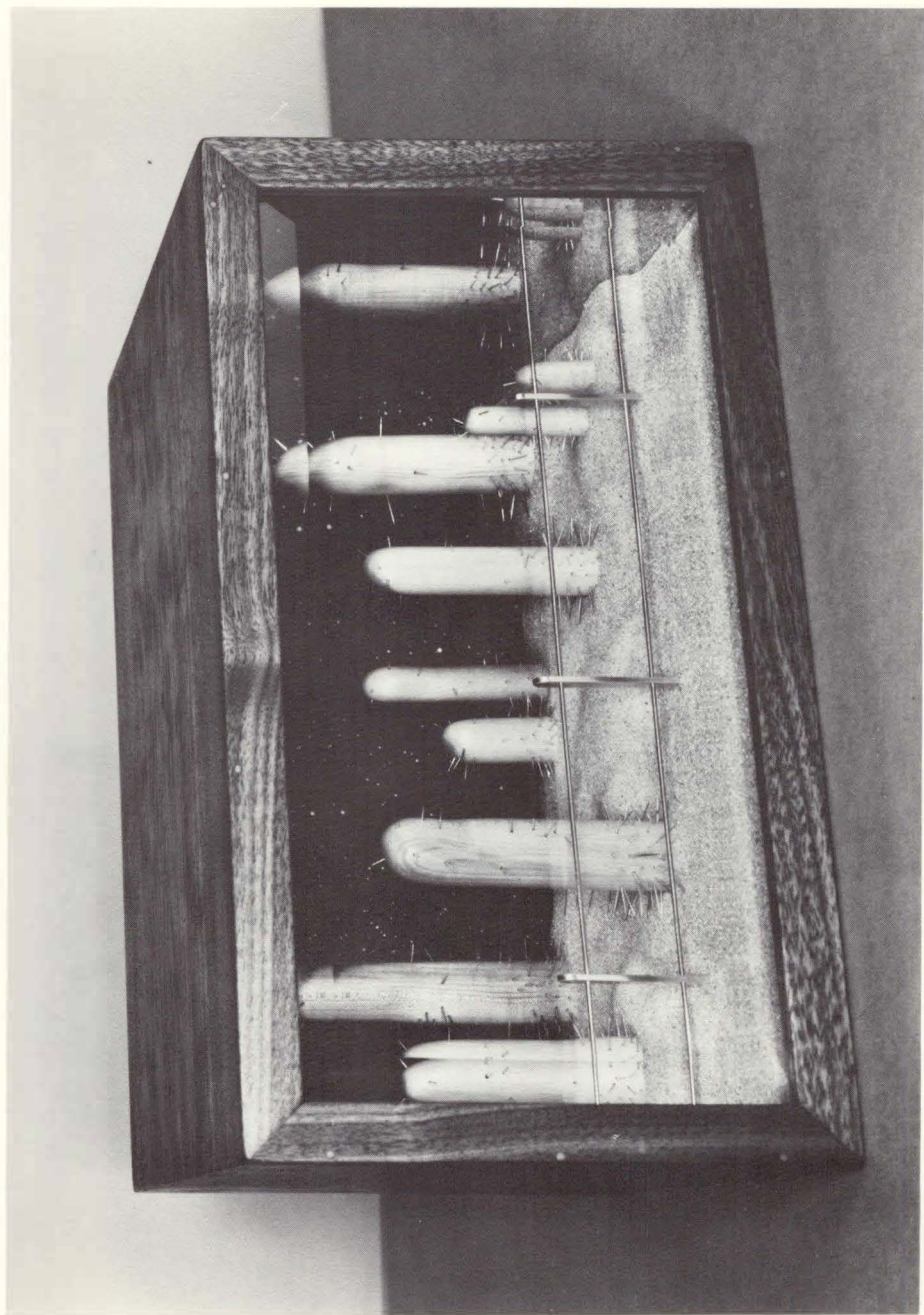


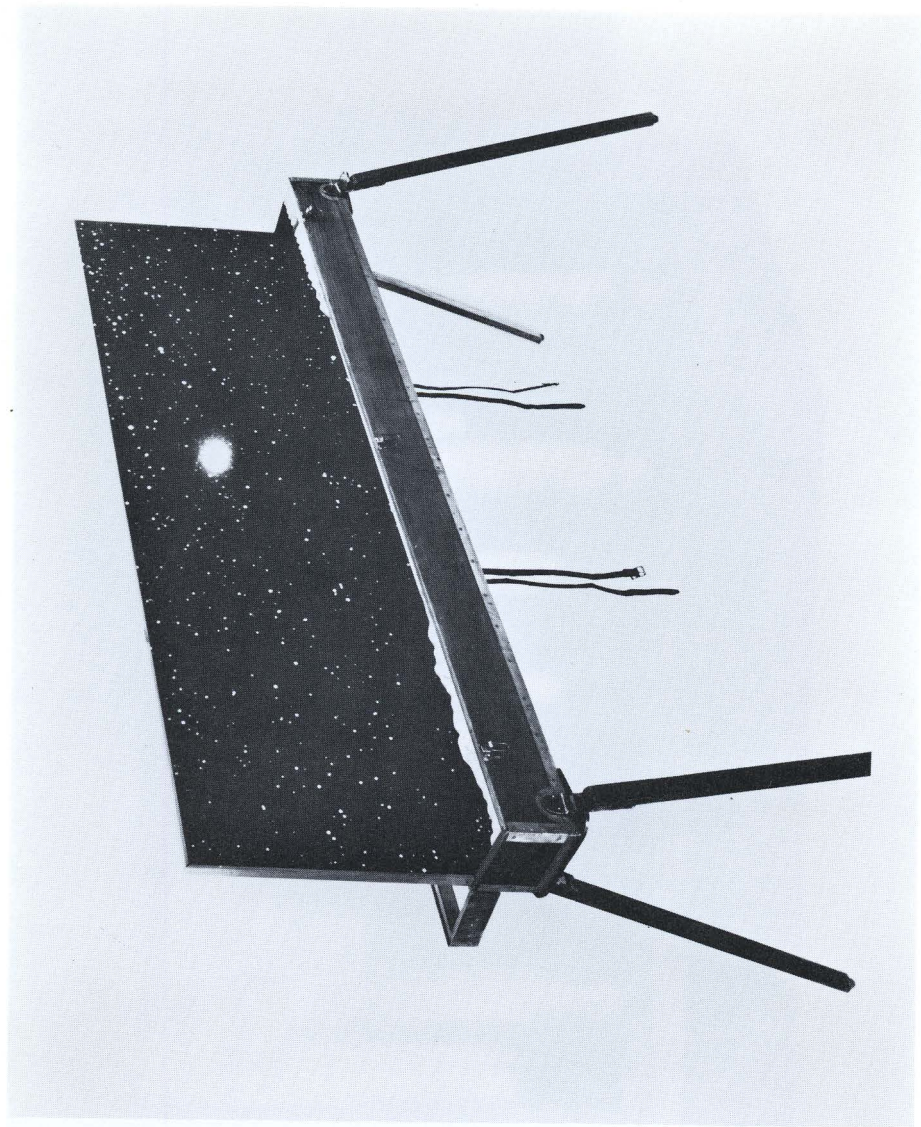


Ode to Uncle Alex was large in comparison to the miniature sculptures McWilliams constructed within hinged walnut shells; sturdy in contrast to the fragile egg houses he made for other works.³ *Eggscapade 1* (1975), when open, is not two inches deep, yet it represents an infinite landscape where recluses in huts perhaps perform ceaseless meditations. The rushing waters, the veiling mists of the landscape are set, improbably, behind the arid, desert, foreground perch of the Egghouse. A ladder discarded to the left suggests that an occupant is trapped within. *Eggscapade 1*, in part, accords with a Surrealist (Freudian) view of inner reality, the unconsciousness which we most freely visualize in our dreams and in our uncensored fantasies. But unlike Dali and Ernst in their early works, McWilliams is not creating art from a need for psycho-sexual examination; his Surrealism is more literary, more controlled. *Eggscapade 1* is as scrupulously particular and conscious as is a short story by Borgès, a fabulist McWilliams admires. It begs a story that the artist creates an arena for, one which the spectator may supply. Each story will be different and it will depend upon the associations the piece evokes: mine will be about religious fanatics; yours might concern life on Venus. The story, however, should not be written down for that would fix it, and thereby destroy the artist-object-viewer chain of sent and received non-verbal communications.

McWilliams' last contained world in a small scale was *Cactus Garden* (1976). A perfect universe resides within this glass-fronted wooden box. A photo image of a night sky sets the illusory scale for giant wooden cacti studded with steel pins set into a sandy garden. Plants, thumbs, phalluses transformed, they are like the skyscrapers of a futuristic city electric-fenced against invasion, fenced to contain the electricity they generate, as the hairs on our necks rise in response to them.

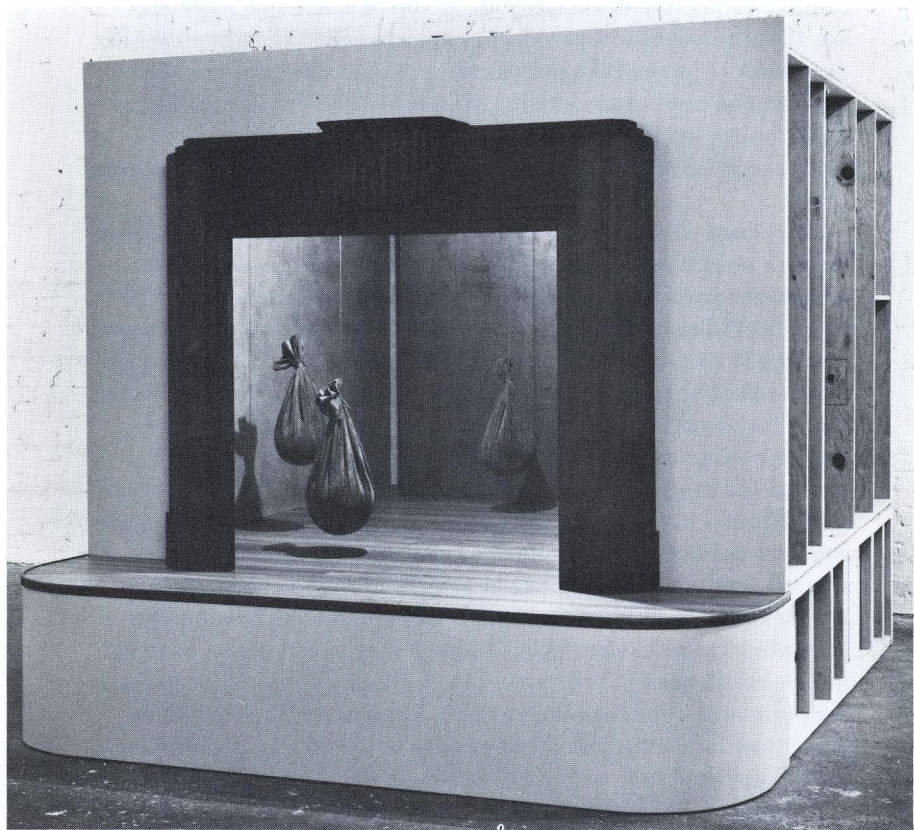
After *Cactus Garden*, with *Moonscape for Mathew* (1977) McWilliams "unboxed" his universes and began to conceive of them on a larger scale.



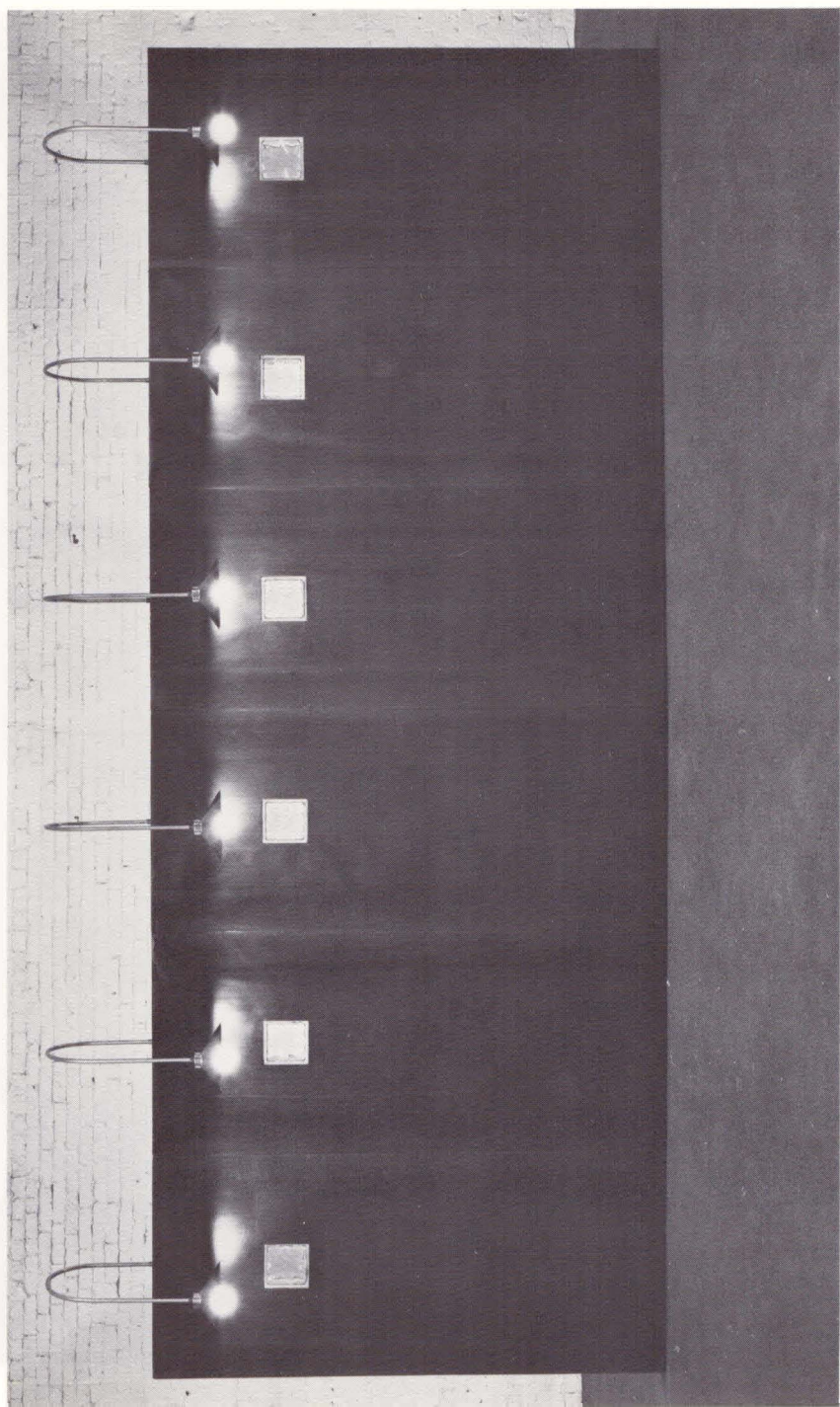


McWilliams equipped a found-object carrying case with a slot-in panel. On the front face of the panel is a representation of a starry sky as though recorded from the vantage point of a satellite. Below, within the box, is a low relief model in carved wood of the crater-marked surface of the moon. On the reverse side the panel is a gridded drawing of the location of the stars and beneath it is a contour map of the moon's terrain. If you like, one side represents art, the other science. One side, infinity; the other, the finite. Neither (and both) represent the real worlds we know. The piece implies past, present and future activity. Who is Mathew? Will Mathew come to tuck the panel under his arm, to carry the case away? *Moonscape for Mathew* brings us to the edge of McWilliams' present work.

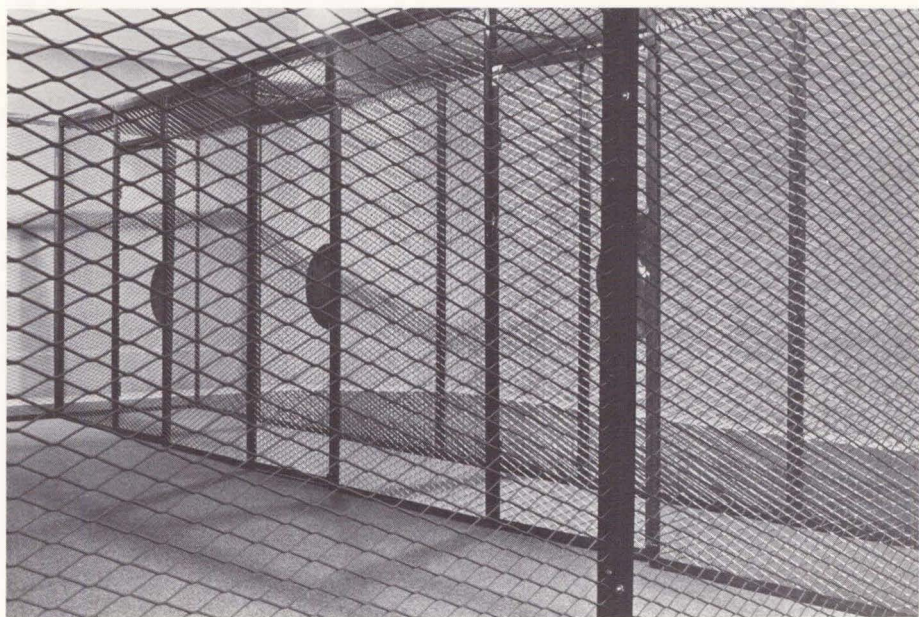
Suspended Animation — the first of the four recent pieces — went through several preliminary stages that link it in every aspect but scale to the portable works it follows. It had its beginnings in 1976 when McWilliams was doing *Cactus Garden*. While his fingers were bleeding from pressing needles into the cacti, he was thinking about Samuel Beckett and a scene he thought he had read. He remembered that a bag came down from the ceiling and a long stick came out from the wings to menace it time and time again until, finally, it stabbed the bag and, at that moment, the stage curtains dramatically shut. His first important conceptualization for *Suspended Animation* was for a small stage-like box with a pin-studded floor.⁴ There was a centrally placed suspended bag between curtains drawn to each side. The next sketch eliminated the floor pins and included two spikes emanating from the side walls as though they would pierce the bag suspended between the curtains. The third sketch reintroduced the floor pins and eliminated the curtains. There were three bags now and a door on the back wall reminiscent of the door in *Ode to Uncle Alex*. Another sketch and accompanying notes suggest that the floor of *Suspended Animation* at one time was visualized as a moonscape companion to *Mathew's* piece. McWilliams checked out Beckett and discovered that the scene he so vividly recalled was almost totally unlike the one he read. The memory served as a stimulation to a number of ideas which ultimately led to the theatre-like environment of *Suspended Animation* as completed in 1981. In this sculpture, a found-object mantle-piece proscenium makes a "life-size" spatial referent for the presumed miniature action one imagines to take place within/among the suspended pigskin bags.



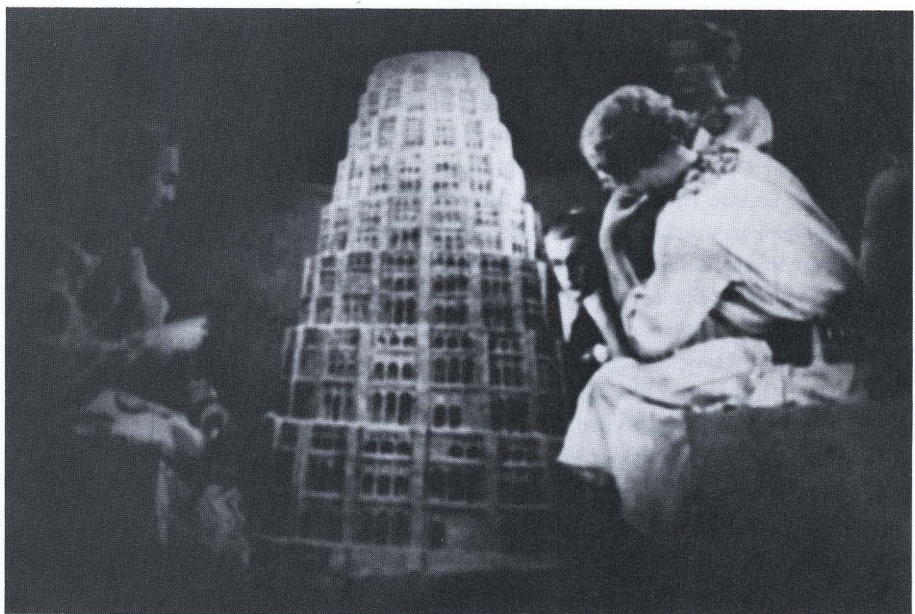
Wall is a free-standing, strut-supported wall with strong allusions to theatrical flats (although it is more sturdy) and to demolition sites where a single outer wall (surprisingly fragile) is all that remains or is all that encloses. *Wall* is in a life-like scale but its accoutrements — opaque glass brick windows, operating electric lights — are improbable and elevate *Wall* from representationalism to mystery. Wire mesh

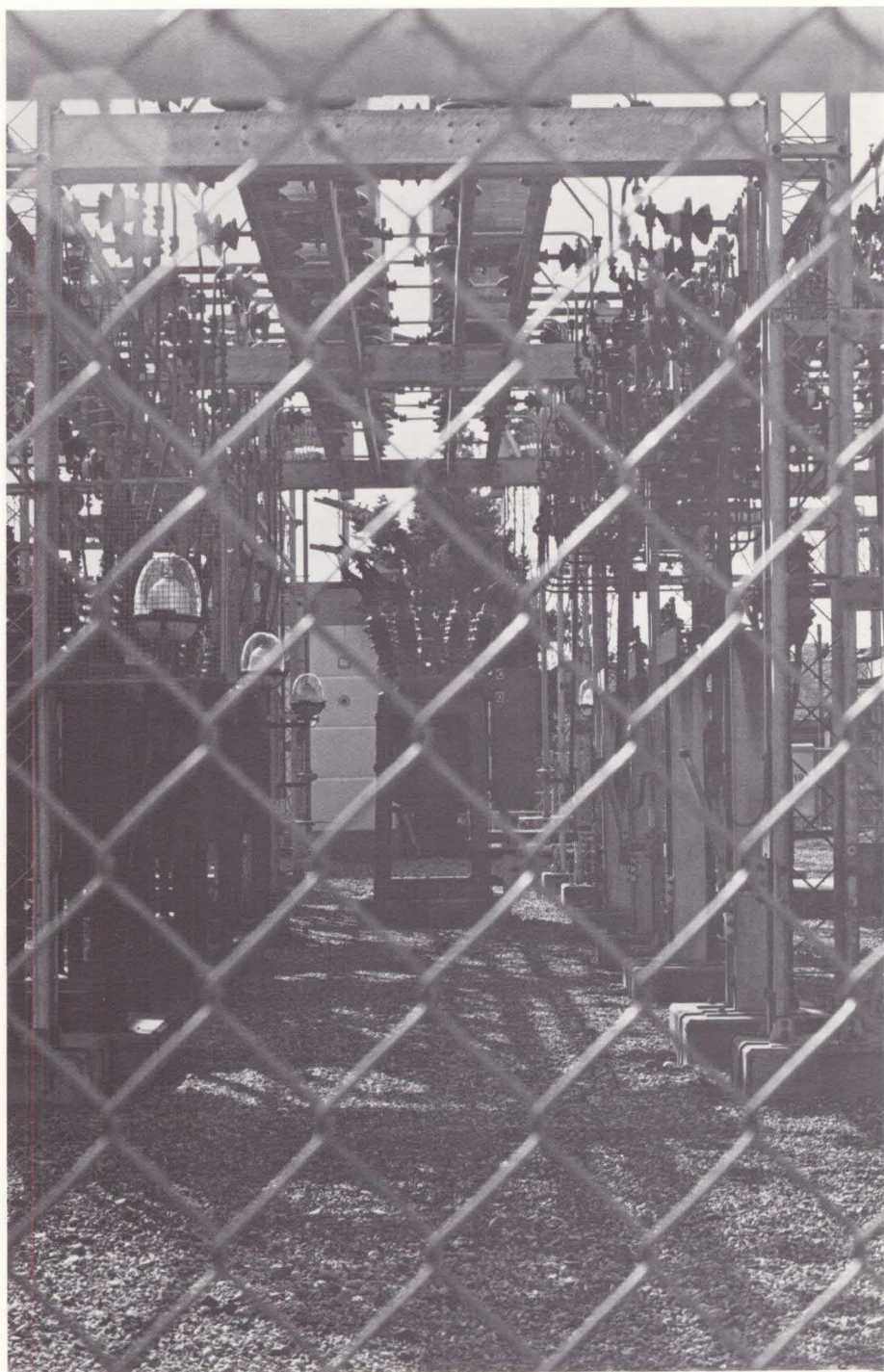






fences and gates lend a similar industrial urban feel to the enclosure for the copper ziggurat at the heart of *Axaxaxas mlö*. This piece is as ambivalently evocative as was *Ode to Uncle Alex*. Is it a compound or a shrine? Is it a site from which there is no escape or does the site bring us into the freedom of a fourth dimension hovering delicately between past and future? As do all his works, *Axaxaxas mlö* reminds us of things we know — in this case, Sumer, Egypt, cemeteries, substations. The sculpture sprang from association as diverse as: Breughel's *Tower of Babel*; the great mosque of Al-Mutawakki in Samarra, Iraq; a scene from a film called "Metropolis" by Fritz Lang. The expanded steel enclosures refer to the electrical substations that for McWilliams are the awe-inspiring equivalents of the ancient shrine, possessors of contemporary energy with forms and wires that offer parallels to our inner (mental or physical) circuitry. A soundtrack of barking dogs (recorded at the Mortuary Temple of Ramesses II in Gournah, Egypt) created a third element for the sculpture and expanded its physical boundaries. The track brought to the work the allusion of Egyptian dog Guardians of the Dead and to me (co-incidentally) the auditory threat of the vicious canines who safekeep construction sites.







Like *Axaxaxas mlö*, *Ruminations on a Set of Circumstances* is a rich, associative amalgam. The past of cathedral thrones is adjusted through the present of office chairs. Where one expects a canopy one finds futuristic haloes, the copper rings.⁵ The overscale chair, fire burning at its feet, is like a throne for God and functions like the ziggurat in the mysteries and ceremonies it implies.

McWilliams believes that his sculptures are successful in the measure that they achieve "a sense of spirit, a presence of their own," quite separate from anything he desired to impose upon them. For him, two very important aspects of "three-dimensional work are space and spatial relationships." By placing things very specifically — objects, perimeters — "a resonance can occur, a resonance that can allow a person who approaches the sculptures different levels of access, and a possibility to become aware of the different harmonies and tensions incorporated there." It is the third person (the viewer) who "activates the piece."⁶

All McWilliams' works from the 60s to the present are concerned with allusions (subliminal and overt), are made of materials which in themselves carry meaning (the glint of steel; the electroconductive power of copper; the rustic simplicity of wood). They bring together elements from the past, present and future. They expect witnesses, interpreters, ceremonial users. Uncle Alex, Mathew, you and me.

ANN ROSENBERG

NOTES:

- ¹ Before McWilliams went to Europe, he experimented with fire pieces in his Empire Building studio using alcohol as fuel.
- ² *Uncle Alex* was a studio mate of McWilliams. Alex McConnell's finger casts are the monument in the plaza. The *Mathew of Moonscape for Mathew* is McWilliams' young son. To know who is referred to in these titles makes no difference to the interpretation of the works.
- ³ McWilliams made sculpture from eggs (real and fabricated) as early as 1971.
- ⁴ There are several sketches for works with suspended bags which precede those referred to, but they are for works that have not the stage-like quality of *Suspended Animation*.
- ⁵ Because of its height, McWilliams had no opportunity to erect *Ruminations* . . . before installing it in Stuttgart. If he shows the piece again, he is considering adjusting the rings so that the arrangement is tighter, more tense. He considered (but has since discarded) the notion of adding a sound element to the work.
- ⁶ Notes from McWilliams' sketchbook.

SUSPENDED ANIMATION

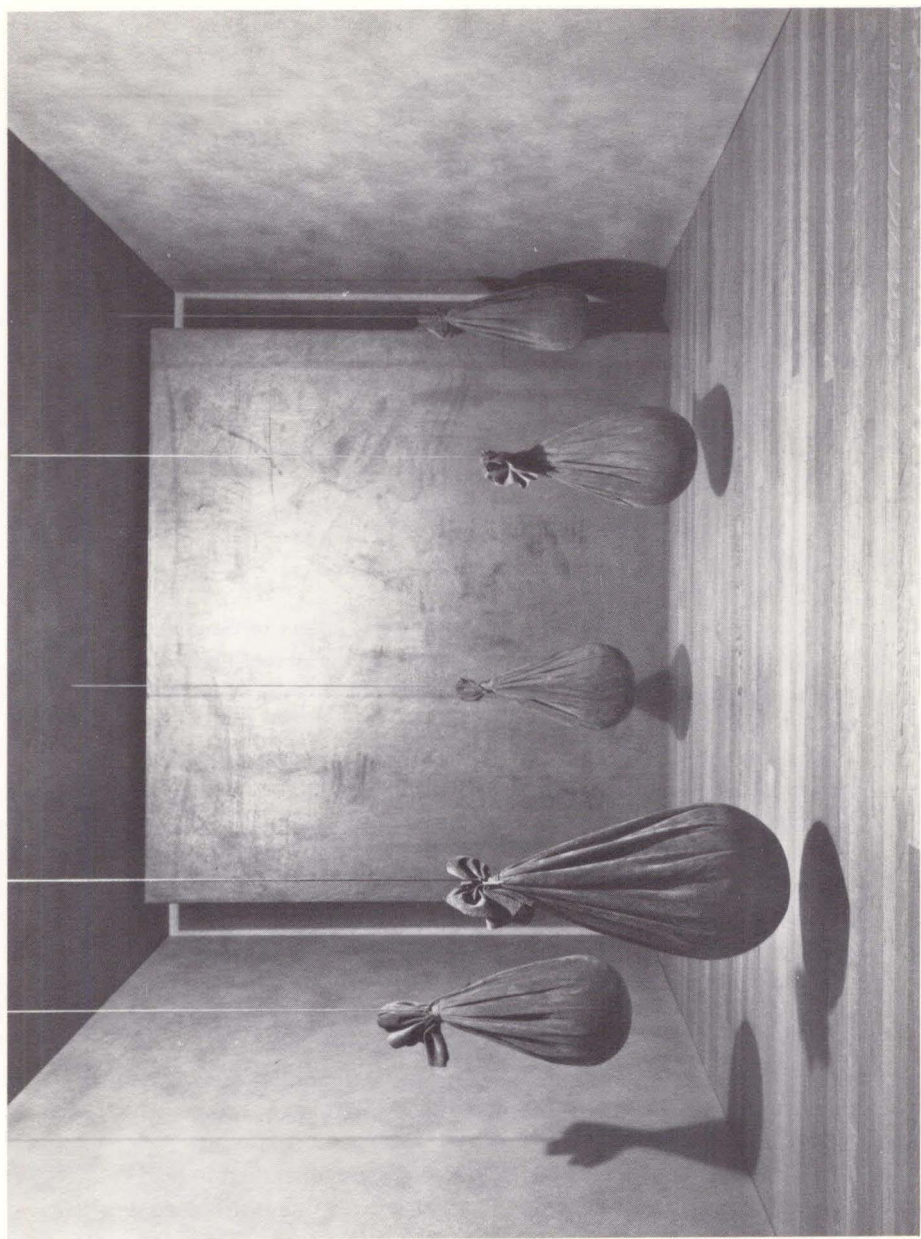
Suspended Animation was first exhibited with *Wall* at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria in 1981. It was set into a false wall.

A small theatre is revealed through a fireplace mantle proscenium. Within the room concealed light illuminates five grey pigskin bags suspended at varying levels from the ceiling. The walls of the room are covered in softly rubbed, grey graphite of exactly the same shade and texture as the pigskin bags. Into the floor a foot in front of the back wall, a flat slab of grey lead has been slotted.

The carefully crafted wooden floor is tilted up and the side walls are raked in to create a distorted perspective that illusionistically increases the interior dimension of the miniature stage.

ANN ROSENBERG





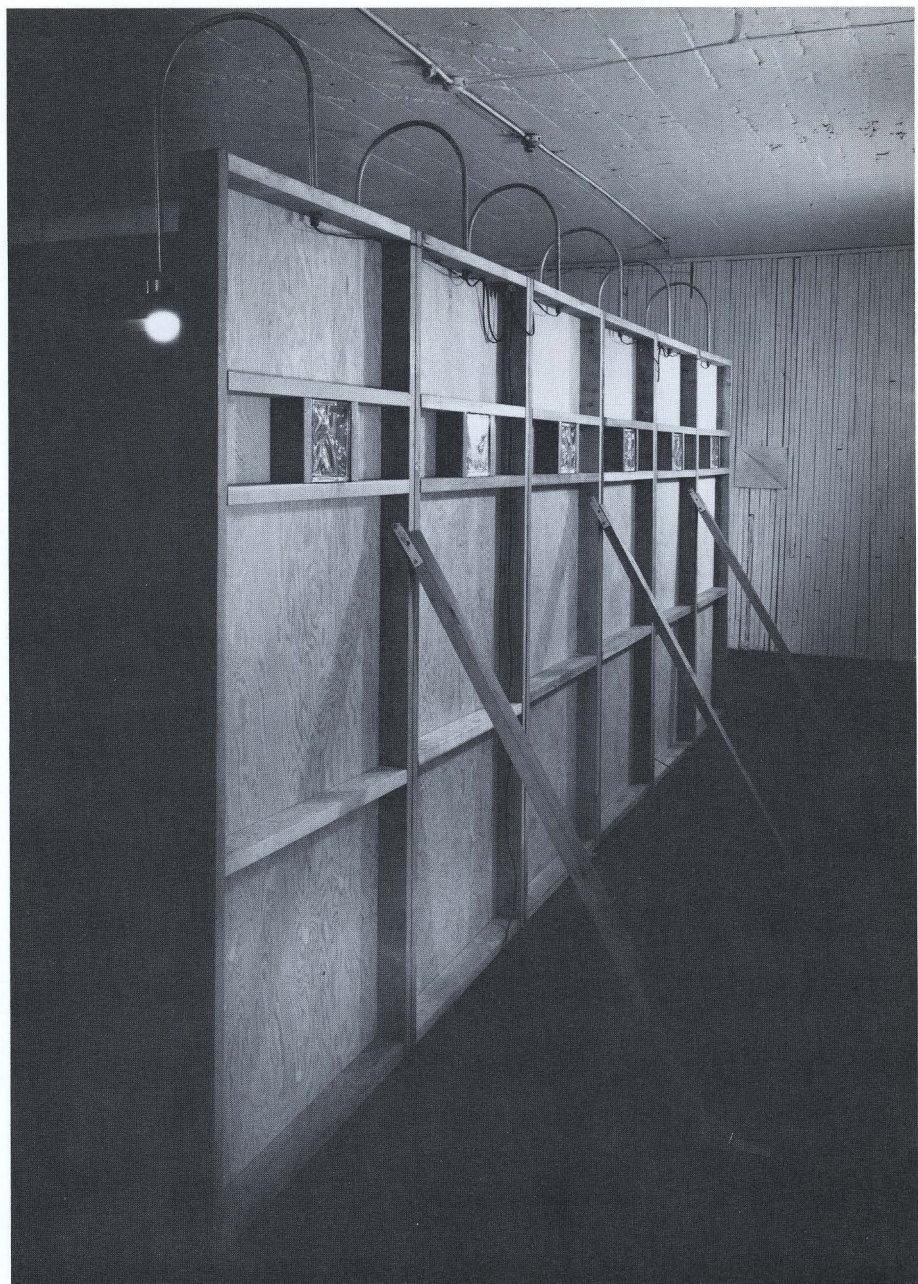
WALL

Wall was built and shown in 1981 at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. The work is approximately 20 feet long, 9 feet high, and varies in thickness from 3 feet (the buttresses) to about 4 inches (the wall itself).

Both facades of *Wall* are important. When installed at Victoria the viewer encountered the back of the sculpture first. The rear side of *Wall* is composed of six panels of highly grained industrial type plywood framed and studded with two-by-fours. Three buttresses are screwed to the floor and support the wall at a point about 5 feet above the floor. Just above this joint square glass bricks are set in a row at eye level, one to a panel. These are held in place by two-by-fours which run horizontally across each panel and also run the height of the bricks on either side. Above this row and just below the upper studs run the two cords which supply electricity to the lamps. These take a curvilinear path under the top edge of the wall and, at the second and fourth stud, drop to the floor where they form a loose triangle which leads to the outlet.

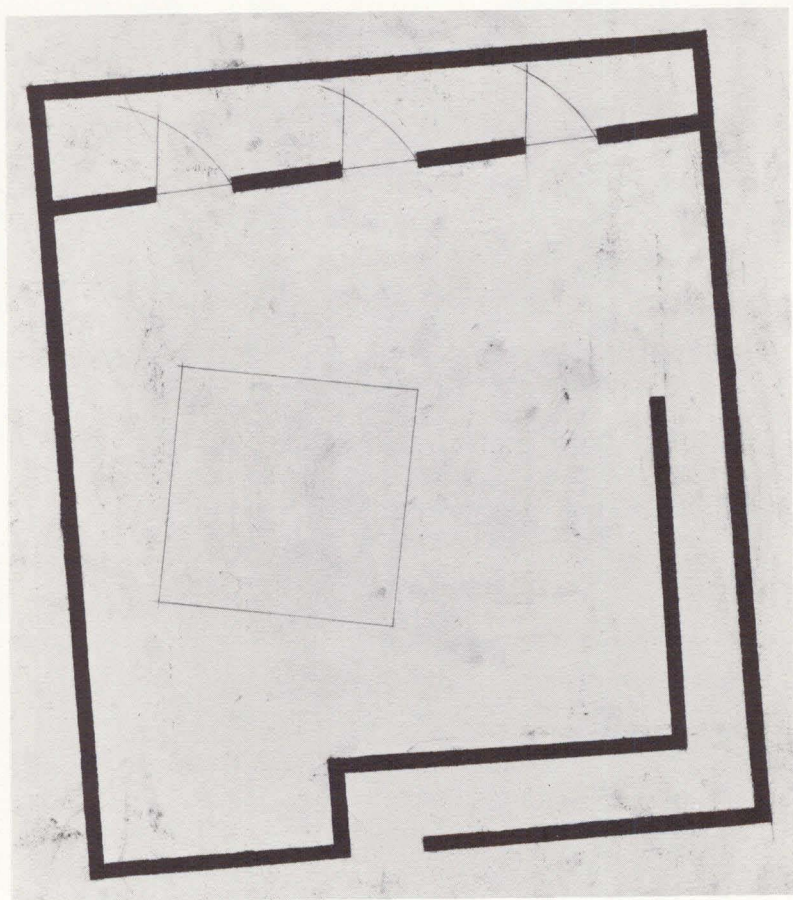
The front of each panel of *Wall* is completely sheathed in lead except for the glass bricks. The divisions between the lead facades become subtle and almost negligible. Above this grey expanse the industrial lamps rise up, curve, and drop to a point slightly above the bricks so that the uneven glossy surface of the glass reflects the light.

AARON STEELE



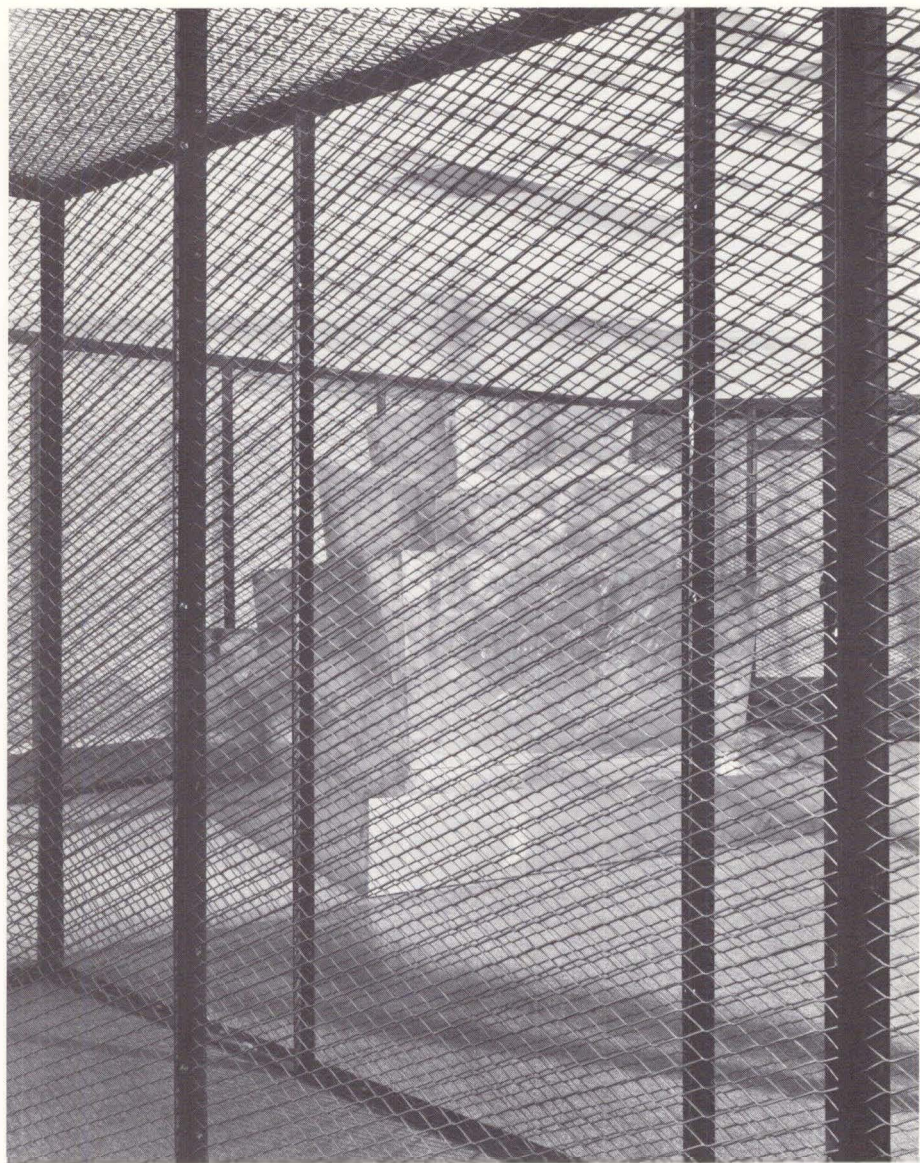


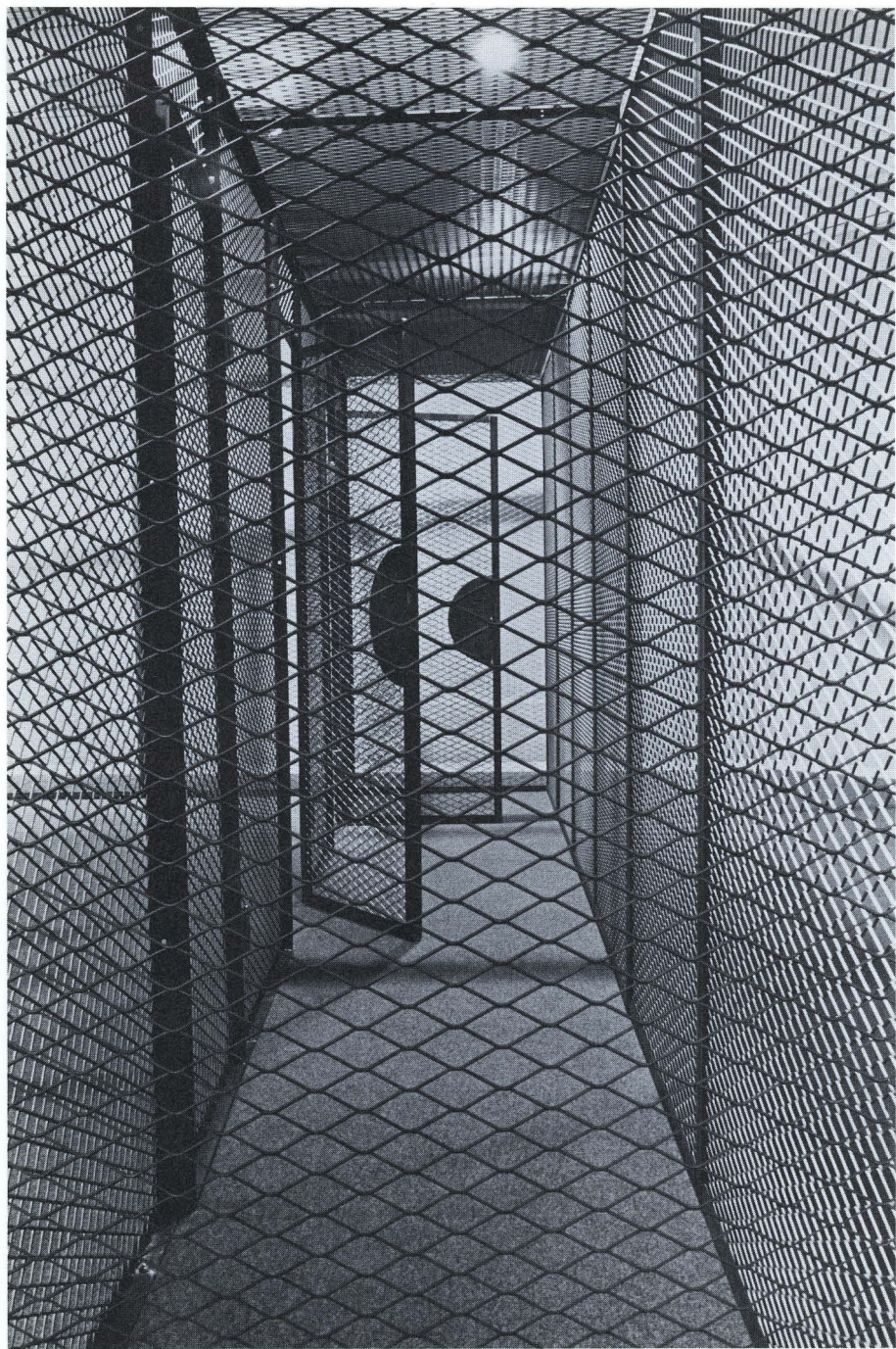
AXAXAXAS MLÖ



This environmental work, executed in 1982, is composed of an eccentrically tilted copper ziggurat within an enclosure of expanded steel fencing on a frame of metal channelling. The fence is made of fifty panels which typically measure $48\frac{3}{8} \times 96\frac{1}{2}$ inches locked together to form an enclosure that is 24 feet wide and 28 feet long. It is shown here as installed at the Vancouver Art Gallery Mise en Scene exhibition.







The viewer-participant enters through an open door (a panel with an opening 32 inches wide) and moves to the right through a corridor that constricts from 36 inches to 33 inches at the point where the viewer must turn to the left, exiting finally through a doorway 30 inches wide through which he gains access into the enclosure.

To the left of this exit sits the ziggurat. It rises in four tilted planes from a base measuring 93 inches square to the top steppe, 39 inches square. It is made of wood laminated with copper.

At the far end of the enclosure three hinged doors (again measuring 32 inches across) lead into a covered passageway. This corridor is as wide as a regular panel at the far left ($48\frac{3}{8}$ inches) but gradually diminishes as one moves to the right to a width of 36 inches. It is at this narrow end of the corridor that the height of the panels falls from $96\frac{1}{2}$ inches (at the entrance) to $84\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

A recording of barking dogs, taped in 1970 at Mortuary Temple of Ramesses II, Gournah, Egypt, echoes from speakers placed at the ceiling, to create an ambient sound for the environment.

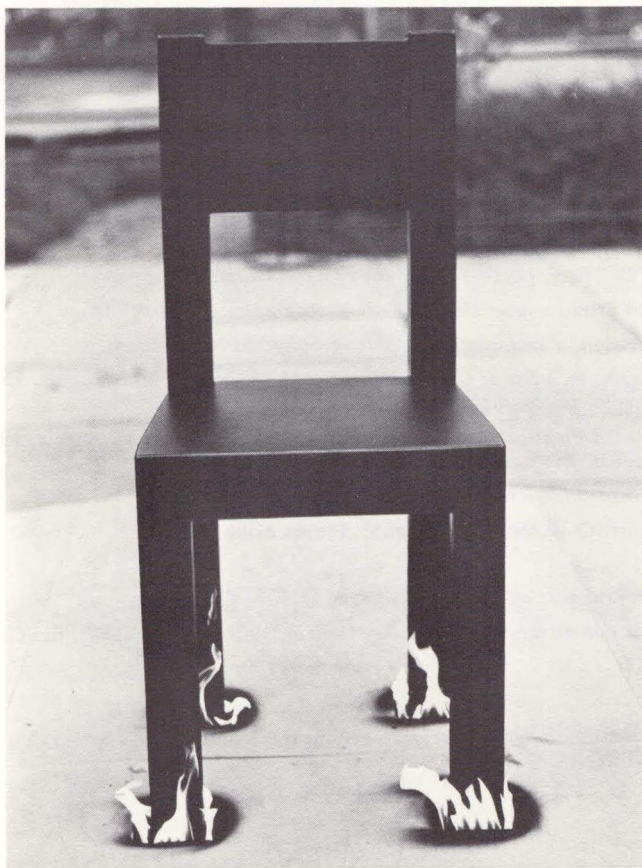
AARON STEELE



RUMINATIONS ON A SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES

This sculpture was installed in the Kunstverein's courtyard during the Künstler aus Kanada exhibition in Stuttgart, Germany, 1982. Four steel pillars rise 16 feet off a circular podium, 11 feet in diameter. The podium's top surface is sheathed in asbestos and its perimeter is embraced by a steel band. Three tilting rings of sheet copper over industrial styrofoam are bolted at varying intervals to the poles. Each measures 6½ feet in diameter. They are 2½ inches thick. Below this series of rings placed centrally on the podium between the poles is an oversized steel chair. The legs drop through the asbestos. They are surrounded by flames from four propane burners, fueled by a hidden tank.

AARON STEELE



IMAGES/

Untitled, 1967, mixed media. *photography*: Al McWilliams

Ode to Uncle Alex, 1972, mixed media. *photography*: Al McWilliams

Eggscapade 1 (doors open), 1975, mixed media. *photography*: Ernest Meyer

Cactus Garden, 1976, mixed media. *photography*: Tod Greenaway

Moonscape for Mathew, 1977, mixed media. *photography*: Tod Greenaway

Suspended Animation in artist's studio, 1980-81, mixed media. *photography*: Trevor Mills

Wall in artist's studio, 1981, mixed media. *photography*: Trevor Mills

Detail *Axaxaxas mlö* at the Vancouver Art Gallery's *Mise en Scene* exhibition, 1982, mixed media. *photography*: Jim Gorman

Ibid.

Great Mosque of al-Mutawakki at Samarra, Iraq from *Islamic Architecture* by John D. Hoag. *photography* (copy): Jim Gorman

Still from Fritz Lang's "Metropolis." *photography*: Al McWilliams

Power Station, Vancouver, B.C. *photography*: Al McWilliams

Ruminations on a Set of Circumstances at the Künstlerverein, Stuttgart, 1983, mixed media. *photography*: Al McWilliams

Suspended Animation installed at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1981, mixed media. *photography*: Trevor Mills

Detail, *Suspended Animation*. *photography*: Trevor Mills

Wall in artist's studio. *photography*: Trevor Mills

Ibid.

Plan for *Axaxaxas mlö*, Al McWilliams.

Axaxaxas mlö at the Vancouver Art Gallery, 1982. *photography*: Jim Gorman

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ruminations on a Set of Circumstances at the Künstlerverein. *photography*: Al McWilliams

Ibid.

bp Nichol / A PARTIAL DRAFT OF
INCHOATE ROAD

I

1

in Choate Road
a car stalled
underneath the bridge i
pass over
another fragment

water spill
the frozen spume of
the river
 runs thru Port Hope
into

winter storm across the lake's imperfect ice
blue gaps in the clouds & snow
older worlder order
o der wrld er wrld
inchoate world

life like lake like
line
lingers

sea to sea
all i needed was
to let the water take me
home

i was taught it as
their history
but it made sense:

2 if by sea (i need

OUT
THERE

4

water music

two rivers
winding thru

winnipeg

ocean & lake

what our music
 our poems come
down to
 the sea in

“everything gives way &
nothing stays fixed”

“the river shines
between the villages”

two translations

see how they wind
this way & that

this name or
another

tracking me

5

"for other waters are
continually flowing on"

& other songs

emptying out

spring into stream into river into lake into
ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

'n ocean

6

in Choate Road
the cars go by
exhaust blue
late january frost

i thot the water spill
a broken mill
going too fast &
couldn't quite connect it

the image

& beyond that
the town &
beyond that the lake &
beyond that

7

this is the world

not these words

not this poem

this is the world

II

1

snow out the window's light
glimmer's outline
ships, a bay
(anchored)

across this page
a light moves
in the water's now
wet blackness of the street
empty stretches snowy beach
reach as far as i can see into the darkness around this bay

window'd prairie sky
empty hole dug
to make a pond the city will not let them put water in &
then the tree 'n trees
mark the twisting course of

these lines stretch across a country a life snow falls birds &
i grow older with every word
every liquid gesture flows from this blue pen watermarks
mark time
my life by
the side of
this bodies these

2

beginning with lead & wood
mark the course of the writing's later
ink as the words begin to flow

late rink lights coming on
shouts of the kids on the frozen water &
later th'aw
flooding spring
hot stretches of summer
falls

ice/water

ice/water

ice

pigeons on the track, a rack
 ing cough ing
 breaths frozen face
 mouth of the assiniboine / the red
 (river) (brick) (engine of the train)
 under the bridge the birds
 nest along the top ledge of
 abandoned factory across the river to
 St Boni face to face
 with memory at the mere's edge
 more'n merely water goes
 one into the other *Y* (see from the plane) those

alphabets these
 rivers

strokes of
 pens together in the plain
 words dried ink dyes
 strained thru books
 the stain of thinking
 the rivers the
 type we were
 down at the mouth
 where the two come together
 watching our breath
 lines of trees
 track across the river tracks we was
 thinking of writing
 vast expanse of white twisting no

4

not so much that but this

not so much then but now

not so much beginnings but beginning

again's a gain

a river arrive
air ver-y cold &

the drift

under the stillness
the silent stretches
a current accrues
air collide us

not so much the river but the riven
moment (more meant to you than

then this

5

out window the light
dammed width of river's length
twists thru the mountains
clouds just below the tops
twist too the two
wind thru &

the river's
ever varied very song the
birds & the snow & the
very hush of the dammed world goes
dawn & on ocean river
lake stream

i was in river

i was lost in lake

i was caught in the twist &
toss in the water

(essential's pull
these pools
perception

falls

all's a damn now
a pulsated
full)

o
 'n tary
o
 'n hurry
o
 'n linger

(so that these rhythms are established
closure (details — what we call a
theme) globular, returning, the
circumnavigation of
the work/world

o)

 'cean 'n stay
o
 'n go
o-ke-an-o
winds thru the poem the
words say slower & slower the
eaupen measure of

(i stood at the edge of o & e

a u (au — “to”) the translation where
e goes in these
l'eau countries

6

in the snow world
slowed wheels rumble
the heaped flow of the crystals grow
around us
white's white shift
slips thru the hung trees
line the slopes of these mountain valleys &
we drift on as the snow mounts
higher climbing
towards an imagined top or ridge
entrances the cloud world hid
to the fall now
thru snow, white clouds
the world be/l'eau

7

o eau (eaucean)

o world (lake
river, path the vowels take
to the sea)

eau io
i 'nvoke you
sometimes
 why?

o beginning gaining
vision of the water
births you int'
o

 wave of speech
sound sine g

s-ing
 ing
 mouther
sonne
 farther

INK o it
!whirl!

giggle mesh

looking for the place the puns flesh out
 the body of speech is
 re vealed, the veil
 drops away
 the dance!
 sheer ecstasy of glimmering
 part icles part airy
 nothingnessence
 flow of grammar hammers in
 my chest, the breath's pressed OUT
 quick liquid spout of
 the wail:
 THOT

a kind of harbour or
 land
 and m and no
 places the eyes rest
 flat/calm/march/day
 — still snow still —
 (did i expect to blow away?)

pair of dice
 — adox

pay the price &
 get your change

“do you have exact change?”
 i can only approximate

vapour

how the words (the selves) twist
 every chance you take

water
 watair

(dew

dawn

deer on the lawn below me

river rushes &

clouds &

(water rides

the passes: the

rocks & twists of

river bubbling up from

earth falling

emptying out (somewhere)

beyond

water

int'

ai'r

o

III

*river riven
wandering the length up & down
when was it i*

quoted myself
into the world

1

word'l get you world

flood of feeling

when the river
overflows its banks
mudder

no fodder now

floating away in a boat from the house
Winnipeg 1950
that fall we nailed a donkey to the wall
just below the window on the second floor
to mark how high the water'd risen

flood was the word i learned
& rain & river, water
drove me out of my world
mother/father
into another

2

ech-

eau

vo-cab-u-lar-y

diction airy or
at best suspect

flood

mud

(wreck

row)

two rivers known
two more as the summer comes & goes

Red Assiniboine
Saskatchewan Bow

wryme

the old wrym
ouroboros

i-row-ny
(set out in a pun t'
cross this
sudden sea)

3

the trick is to know the depth always
& that the surface'll get you there

the flood'll bring the bottom to the top

spins & the spinner marks the spot
the line drops down

the hook's only visible when
you get more than your feet wet

50 copies of the above draft of INCHOATE ROAD were printed in connection with a reading at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, July 21, 1982. Part III sections 4 through 8 have been revised for this publication.

rhy-
wry thm
 theme

two in-
separable
tune

leer ich
(sneer i)

trance forms
within you (around you)

dusk rain on the harbourfront
from the cafe chair
gulls gulled
i am engulfed, flooded with
même mer, 'e says, or
the same more 'e
experienced be-
fore

feelings flow
like a river
the river flowed
like a river at flood tide
watch the lake rise
rainy august night
or maybe ordinary
like a jewel eye
glittering in a real face
sudden surprise of place
the distraction of resemblances

— in land sea
— under ground river
— fire water
— air stream

wa of birth
of water
waltz

wan
(one
(singular ich's istence))

along a rain-pocked river
across this rain-pocked lake

sea
be { gan
gins
a gain

air 'n rain
'n a trance later

two in one
wanders the flood
plain

5

among the bushes
the brush the
rushes the
different rivers i followed the courses of
— Assiniboine, Red, Seine, Neebing, McIntyre, Kaministiquia —
some i knew the proper names of
we called them all “the river”

heading upstream
tracking the beaver dams
flooded bush
collecting bullrushes for
my mother fell
full face in the mud

slow meander of sludge brown water swam in
shit drifting by
sewage from the towns lay south of us

learned those names for water
(sky aspect — storm —
intermixed with elemental fire
the sign for 'loud noise')
understood the local & the universal
but moved too often to make the local my own

i was born from water
bore me away from home
again & again after i was born

6

"i should've been a sailor"

wasn't

7

the contradiction is
to spend your life on land
trance fixed in
the sea

contra the diction is
the land wage
(when the water comes
— sea pun — you pay a
price)

pays

flood

flawed

flowed

(how you move from
imperfection to imperfection in
the world)

my body is water
my life is water

ich eau
ech eau
eau

8

ink eau
ate world

our obra is
the water works
hydro eclectic

tide ties me in this flux
the surface change is
constantly

when the flood resided
i saw we'd lived
under the sea
all those years

i never saw it till
water covered me
clouds blew by
sea 'n
folds of fields appeared in air
I saw the saints there
& here &

i think in ink
particle charged airs
hum

anity
in
anity
an ity world a
pen opens
floods over me

i write from the bottom of a see
step out upon the surface
poetic feet give me access to
stare cases
& where that leads me
floods the white plain page is
ground/sea/sky

inchoate world
words

sequence

“the way,” we say,
“the letters lie”

from THE MARTYROLOGY Book VI Books

the quotations in part I poems 4 & 5 are from Heraclitus, Wang
Wei & Heraclitus respectively.

other writers' lines are echoed
thruout.

Sue Laver / LISTEN TO THIS TRAIN

Waiting.

Hands cold. Red.

Fingertips numb.

Clasp them together, put them between my legs, sit on them. Anything to get warm. Cup them. Blow hot breath into the fists.

Sniffing, pure water.

Eyes starched open.

Close them.

Can't sleep.

Every time I open my eyes I catch someone looking away. Usually a woman, embarrassed to have been caught staring at a sleeping stranger. They nearly always look sorry for you; think you're a run-away. They don't talk to me because I glare at them. Purposefully, so they keep their distance. Most days I can't stand the polite chit-chat you're forced into. Best to be quite rude or hostile and people leave you alone. I only talk to them when I want to complain about how late the bus or train is. They just nod. Always agreeing. I make them uncomfortable.

This woman is big, has a fur coat, smells like a Woolworth's perfume department. She's one of those people who doesn't perform the same bodily functions as the rest of us. Smothers herself in fake odours.

She's offended by me. When I sit up she stands quickly clutching the collar of her coat, licks her ruby lips and skips a few inches away.

When I start rolling a cigarette she flinches. Feels implicated. She sniffs, pats her cheeks with a linen hanky and walks off, wobbling on inches of heel. I can still smell her.

I run my hands over my face, through my hair, rub my eyes. Feel so stiff and tired of this waiting around. Seems I have been waiting for weeks now. Waiting for buses

trains

telephone calls

food

money. Moving in a world of long queues,

people moving only inches at a time, buying tickets

collecting dole cheques

filling in forms

signing our names like it was
some code.

At the dole office they don't like you to touch their pen. I never have one.

There is a huge Victorian clock in this station. Set high up above the information desk. It has a massive octagonal face, big black Roman numerals. I can see the hands move if I stare long enough. I cannot understand why I don't hear it tick. It is ten after eight and I have slept on this bench since six-thirty. I lied to my mother. Told her I had an early train to catch. Couldn't stand to see her face in the morning: bitter, that I was leaving after only two days. Wouldn't be able to eat the breakfast she'd cook, choke on the guilt she so effectively makes me feel with her quietness, her closed face. I'd make promises I couldn't keep and she'd know. And I'd know. And it would make things harder next time. It was easier to slip out in the early morning darkness. But she'd be awake, lying still, listening to me leave.

I put a ring on my sister's pillow. I couldn't leave anything for my mother except a clean table. No trace of me. I felt she was watching me when I left her house. I pictured her staring as I walked into the blue of this morning. I did not look back. I will phone her in a day. We will be polite.

The café is open. Can't help cringing at the thought of a British Rail breakfast. But I think I am hungry enough.

Brit Rail cafés: stained plastic, cracked linoleum, gummed up salt pots, stink of stale meat fat. Nothing feels clean or fresh. The trick

with the food is to hold your breath as you're lifting the fork to your mouth. That way you can just manage to swallow without throwing up.

The old man ahead of me had two fried eggs. They weren't fully cooked, shimmied around on his plate in a pool of days old grease. I took a bowl of faded cornflakes. The old man was pushing his tray with one hand and holding *The Sun* in the other, slobbering over the page 3 *Sun Girl*. He pushed his tray right off the end of the counter. I couldn't see where the eggs went. No one seemed to care. He went back to the end of the queue.

My cornflakes were soft. The tea was luke-warm and thick, coated my mouth and throat. I didn't eat the toast.

I rolled a couple of cigarettes and smoked them both. Wondered why I didn't just smoke in the morning. I enjoyed it more.

The place was packed, noisy, steamy. So many people you couldn't help but feel anonymous. There was a table of sailors not far away. Young men, loud and coarse. They think they're impressively masculine, neatly ironed. They look like puppets. I'd like to see them crying, too sure they will live forever.

There are three women at a table next to them. I think of how early they must have to get up to fix their faces that way. It seems strange to someone who did not bother to brush her hair this morning. And now the sailors are talking to them, waving their arms around and laughing even louder while the women laugh for them, look coy and demure. Makes me sick. If I squint my eyes they all look like clowns. I'd like to strip them bare of their uniforms. All of them.

There are other women, with children or alone. And I try to imagine myself as each of them. A mother, a businesswoman, one of the waitresses, a nun. I cannot, without feeling amused or sad or numb. I cannot see myself other than in this café, at this time, in my body, my clothes, with my memories and plans. I do not feel that I am in any way connected with these people.

But I like these cafés. The noise and smell and dirt. It feels protective.

I heard my train announced. Main stops, Birmingham, Gloucester, Bristol, Yeovil. And then I change for Crewkerne. I'll call Ros when I get there and see if I can stay. If she's not there I'll sleep in town. Call her again in the morning. Maybe just leave right away.

Leaves in ten minutes. I just have time to go to the washroom. I gather my things together and check to make sure I have a penny. I'd like to say goodbye to someone.

Public toilets — underground. Out of the way. As you walk down the steps the stench of piss and disinfectant envelopes you. It's clammy inside. Always water running down the walls, the concrete floor is wet. I put my penny in the slot and push the door open. There is green mould growing on the pipes and back wall. I bolt the door shut. I never put my bags on the floor. I hang them up. I take out a roll of Royale. I make it a habit to carry one. Public toilet-paper feels like wiping your ass with a potato-chip bag.

When I'm washing my hands I remember I do not have my moonstone ring. Max will be wearing it now. She'll be at school. Mother will notice it and be hurt. My tokens of affection for others always highlight the distance between her and me. She thinks I do it on purpose.

It's an old train. Has separate compartments and I'm glad about that. The one I choose is empty. I watch the guardsmen out of the windows.

Every one of them is West Indian. They have big brown faces, round burning eyes, large hands. They smile and slap each other. One of them keeps doing a kind of shoe shuffle, while rolling his eyes and clapping. His head jiggles around unbelievably as he struts and poses. The others are doubled up, wiping their eyes, holding their bellies. One is even lying down, beating the floor and shaking his head. The dancer stops, and bows low, and smiles. He has the whitest teeth ever. They notice me watching and wave, but I shrink away from the window: shy. Mad with myself I look out again, but they are gone. What an idiot I am. I hear the shriek of the whistle and there suddenly is the dancer: standing, smiling, waving his green flag. He makes an O with his other hand and the train begins to move. His head was still jiggling.

and signs and cars.

One day I want to do the length of Britain without stopping off anywhere. Try and plan it so I can get from one point to another without having to spend a whole day in any one place.

At Yeovil I get off and change for Crewkerne. For a few minutes I stand and listen to the porters shouting. I like their accents. This must have been a mail run. There are young boys, stiff and awkward in their black suits, dragging the mail sacks off the train and onto the platform. They yell. As if they are huge distances away from one another. Instructions. And insults. An older man, cap pushed to the back of his head, watches them. Watches me. Drawing slowly on a pipe filled with sweet smelling tobacco. I ask him if this is the right platform for the Crewkerne train.

Aye Miss. 'Ere in ten minutes.

Drawled out slowly. Looks at me straight. And smiles. He pointed to the track on the other side. I knew where the train came in. I only wanted to hear his voice. I only wanted to hear how he'd say it.

Ros lived very near the Crewkerne station. I could walk from there. I phoned and she answered almost immediately.

Hello Ros. It's Janice.

Jan. How are you. Where are you.

Well I'm here actually. In Crewkerne I mean. I'm at the station. I want to visit and stay for a few days Ros. Can you do that for me.

She was silent for a few seconds and I felt hurt.

It's o.k. if it's not convenient. I'm just passing through really. Look I'll phone you later. I'll get a room in town. Don't worry about it. Forget I asked.

Janice — will you slow down. It's just a surprise that's all. Of course you can stay. Can you hold the line a second. It's sort of a bad time to talk. Be right back.

Why was she being stiff with me. My closest friend, once.

O.K. Now, do you want me to pick you up.

No thanks. I'd like to take a walk in town first. So I'll get a cab if I don't feel like walking.

Are you sure.

Yes really. Can I get you anything on the way.

No that's O.K. I just got in from shopping. Janice. I think you should know that Ian's here. He's looking for you.

I didn't answer. He must have been speaking to mother. I put the phone down and picked up my bags. My hands were cold again. I needed to eat. I put my stuff in a locker and went outside to flag a cab down.

Where to Miss.

I got out in the market square. Crewkerne is hardly much more than that. Streets rolling down or rising up to meet in the square. Low tilting cottages and terraces of tall stone houses. Ros' house was on the outer edges of the village. Three storeys of stone and leaded glass. A fortress, hidden by thick bushes and blackberry brambles. Steep, hard-to-climb steps and a huge wooden door in the shape of a lion's head. You had to put your hand in its mouth. It was the only place I felt I could live permanently. Pity it was not mine.

Only ten minutes walk away. Perhaps Ian was already racing to the station. Perhaps I passed him on the way in.

I went to the Coach and Horses for a beer. It's Badger Bitter in this part of the country: strong, sweet, still drawn from a barrel. They make good sandwiches here. Toasted cheese and ham. I am hungry and order two. The barmaid looks around me as if I'm hiding someone.

You expectin' company dear.

No.

Oh. They're both for you then.

Yes. They're both for me.

I could see she was disappointed. Wanting something from me. Something to spin and exaggerate to amuse the locals with when I leave.

There was only one other person in the room. A man alone. Reading the local newspaper. Pretending to. He wants to know why a woman comes alone to a pub and eats two toasted sandwiches and isn't waiting for someone else. Well he can ask.

And I stare at him over the rim of my pint glass. I dare him.

All three of us used to come here. Ian never liked it much. Said it was small and stuffy, old. It is.

But I don't like those bars for young people. They're like huge display cases: You walk to the bar. You're stared at.

Walk to the washroom. You're stared at.

Walk to the juke box. Stared at.

Like we're all cattle with nothing better to do than eat, drink and fuck. A field full of cows. Meat. Trophies. First Prize.

I hate those places. I like small rooms. To squeeze into their corners. For comfort.

All the time I am eating and drinking, the barmaid slyly watches me. I should leave her a note on the table: I MUTILATE BABIES. But I wouldn't have the satisfaction of seeing her face. Maybe she wouldn't be as shocked as I think she would.

So Ian might come here. It would not be a good place for that. He knows those things about me: where I would go, where I would be comfortable, who I want to see. He knows at least that about me. Thinks he knows more. Thinks he knows me inside out.

He announced he wanted to help me. As if I'm his great mission in
life. He tried hard: his shadow shielding mine
his umbrella over my head
his cloak across my back
his arms carrying me
across whatever it was
at the time.

Cared for. Like something over-watered.

His hand lives on my shoulder.
It grips me hard sometimes.
Rides soft sometimes.
Never rests.

And if he came in now. He'd have it all worked out. What the
trouble is. He'd expect to leave. Me attached to his arm.

I'll have to get a room in the village. Pick up my stuff tomorrow. And
go. Head for Taunton.

I got up to leave. The barmaid said goodnight and I pretended not
to hear.

It was raining, drizzling really, and getting dark. I turned eastward
and began the climb up Toberley Lane to Ros' house.

Past the Antique Store
the Green Grocers
the Florist and
the Post Office.

Then only houses, with lighted windows, the occasional face looking
at me. And a cat, black with yellow eyes, who followed me for a
while, mewing loudly, running ahead and waiting to walk with me.
It was hard to ignore him. It would have been nice to pick him up, to
stroke him, make him purr. But I wouldn't want to put him down.
Then what. What would I do with a stray cat. So he left me. Turned
back and went home I suppose.

Past the park it had stopped raining, was only quiet. I sat on the street bench next to the phone box on the crest of the hill. Nine houses down. You couldn't see the house. Only the gate. Ros' old Volvo was parked outside. I sat and rolled ten cigarettes. Smoked two.

Now I am afraid to think of Ian. To picture him. To hear my voice saying. His face. Mine.

I started down the slope. My breathing was tight. I walked around the back of the house to her kitchen door. Ros opened the door before I knocked. You could see the street from her living room. She'd been watching for me. The light behind her was bright. Everything looked crisp and sharp, defined. Her hair was shorter, clipped around her ears and close to her neck. I didn't like it.

Hello Jan. I'm glad you came.

Hi. I don't like your hair.

She stared at me, then turned away into the kitchen. I waited to be invited in.

He's not here and you'd better shut the door.

Sorry. I didn't mean to be blunt.

You don't make much effort not to be.

I said I'm sorry. I'm just tired Ros.

Look Jan. You're welcome here any time. But so is Ian. I don't want to be in the middle of this. I care about you both.

That's O.K. I won't be staying.

You know I didn't mean that.

I wanted to lie down and sleep. It was warm in there and the light hurt my eyes. Won't take off my coat. Can't stay long.

Ros sat with me. Held both my hands and pressed them hard. She kept gripping and stroking, gripping and stroking, working something across my palms.

D'you want to lie down.

No. Thanks.

A car door slammed outside and I pulled my hands away. I stood up. Cool sweat. Room's too warm. Need air.

Ian came rushing in, out of breath, flushed. I watched his face when he saw me. What expression to use. To draw me in. Watched his features slide into place. And lock. I wanted to laugh.

Jan. You're here.

Apparently.

Ros went out then. And left us.

Can I hug you.

I'd rather you didn't.

He sat down at the kitchen table and lit a cigarette.

You're smoking again.

Apparently.

Touché Ian.

And I did laugh.

He looked at me a long time. I knew my laughing was perverse. I couldn't help it.

Ian I know this is hard for you and I'm a shit but just take it will you. Stop chasing me.

Jan all I'm asking is that you'll at least see me. You forget something. I lost too. I understand what you're feeling. What else can I say. I love you Jan. I can help you. We can help each other.

Couldn't stand to look at him then. I have to leave. Have to leave soon. Something clawing me inside. Grips my belly. Holds on and shakes me. I must leave. Count to ten. To twenty. Count to one hundred. Remember that chant. And breathe slow. Don't cry. Shout, but don't cry. Not this time.

And then a touch like fire on my shoulder.

Stepping back to look at him. His touch moves with me. His arm still outstretched. Feel the burn of his eyes. And I look into them. See the change there already. His mouth grey like a pencil mark. Skin stretched taut over bone. And pale. Even now I would still like to curl his thick black hair around my fingers. Not to please him. To please myself.

I didn't lose the child.

What. What do you mean. You mean you're still pregnant.

Don't be an ass Ian. Do I look it. You know what I mean.

What are you talking . . .

There was no miscarriage Ian. Do you understand now.

And I was right to be frightened of his face. Something foul moved across it. Unlocked that pose.

I waited for him to speak but he smoked. He didn't cry and I was glad of that. I won't comfort him. He will not want me near.

I'm not sorry.

When he didn't answer I picked up my bag and went outside.

It was too late to catch a train to Taunton but I could get one tomorrow.

I am sorry for Ian. Ros can look after him.

I felt sick and hot. I needed a bath.

I cut through the park. Listened to the trees moving. I thought of the lullabye that all mothers have sung to their children and I began to whisper it:

Rock-a-bye-baby
On the tree-top
When the wind blows the cradle will rock
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall
Down will come baby, cradle and all.

There were leaves on the ground. I liked the dry sound of them, the crunch of them under my feet.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DOUG BARBOUR is an Edmonton poet, editor and journalist. He often collaborates with Stephen Scobie, and their *Pirates of Pen's Chance* (poems begun with or concealing lines by other poets) was published recently by Coach House Press. The poems in this issue are along the same lines, so to speak. With Marni Stanley, Barbour edited *Writing Right*, an important new anthology of poetry by Canadian women (Longspoon Press, 1982).

MICHAEL C. KENYON is a young Victoria writer. "Mr. Guest Comes to Kleinberg" is one excerpt from a novel in progress called *Every Home Needs a Plumber*. Other sections of this fiction have been published in *Grain*, *Waves* and *Dandelion*; another will appear soon in *Descant*.

Vancouver artist AL McWILLIAMS is known principally through his participation in group exhibitions since 1968. In May, *Axaxaxas mlö* was part of the Sculpture International in Chicago; *Ruminations on a Set of Circumstances* will be included in the vast inaugural exhibition of British Columbia art that will open at the new Vancouver Art Gallery premises in the Old Courthouse in the Fall.

bp NICHOL's *The Martyrology* is an on-going project of writing/poetry. *Book V* was published last year by Coach House Press. Nichol, who lives in Toronto, also composes and performs sound texts with The Four Horsemen. Some of these texts, along with photographs of their performance, will appear soon in an issue of *TCR* dedicated to sound poetry.

SUE LAVER came to Canada from England five years ago. She has been a student at Capilano College. This is her first published work.

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