

Constructing and Dismantling: N51-113

by

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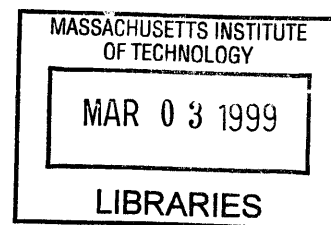
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requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Visual Studies

ABSTRACT

From February 1997 to January 1999, I was provided with a small office N51-113 on the ground floor of building N51. In the spring of 1998 I undertook the construction of a full scale inverted replica of this office as a free standing pavilion extracted from the body of its architectural context. This pavilion, situated at the entrance gate of the courtyard of building N51 was carefully replicated using identical materials and exact scale for every detail. By inverting the walls of my office, interior and exterior surfaces are exactly turned inside-out.

In the fall of 1998 the pavilion was completed and inaugurated unobtrusively to the inhabitants of its immediate neighbourhood. Soon after completion, weather conditions began the gradual deterioration of the exposed drywall of the pavilion's walls, this decreased the organization of the pavilion, while increasing entropy of the inverted room, as it was extracted from the body of building N51, and exposed, allowing the inevitable process of decay.

I realized that every detail event in this process, of construction and entropy, has aesthetic meaning. My subsequent dismantling of this pavilion addresses the issue of time and temporality within the processes of appearing and disappearing.

In late January 1999 I carefully dismantled the pavilion piece by piece, reversing the construction process from the end to the beginning, completing the cycle. Construction and Dismantling mirror each other's temporal sequence.

Thesis Supervisor: Edward Levine

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PREFACE

"I have found you out, O house builder. I have torn down your rafters and walls. I have come out of your house. I am free at Last."

Shakyamuni Buddha, Dhammapada

This statement upon enlightenment emphasizes the dialectic of making and unmaking art and rebuilding a world. It represents the Eastern sense of beauty and idea as actualized in innumerable works of art, which are so radically different from what in the traditional Western art object that reflects the desire for permanence, and human efforts to defeat time. The assumption underlying most Western art making is an effort to repudiate the ephemeral aspect of the physical world. In much of Eastern art making, in contradistinction to the West, is the process of periodical demolition of the world acknowledging the ephemeral quality of own life and then rebuilding the foundation beginning the world again.

My thesis consists of two main parts. The first part "Temporality and Perpetuity" outlines the central ideas underlining the ritual and artistic experiences typical of ancient Eastern traditions and contemporary art practices in order to fully explore and examine this theme as it pertains to my own work.

After the primary materials, the focus of this paper will be my project diagnosis and documentation, which will introduce my work Constructing and Dismantling: N51-113 in three major components - site, process and form.

Part One

Preliminary Essay: Temporality and Perpetuity

Temporality and Perpetuity

Ise Grand Shrine

The Shinto shrine, Ise Jingu in Mie Prefecture Japan, is Japan's most sacred shrine. At this shrine there is a tradition of periodic reconstruction. Every twenty years the original shrine building, known as shikinensengu, is rebuilt. Ise Jingu comprised of two shrine complexes, the Naiku (Inner Shrine) and the Geku (Outer Shrine) which are divided into eastern and western sectors. To accommodate the periodic reconstruction of the shrine building, one sector of the building is in use, while the other portion remains vacant where the former shrine once stood, the new shrine will be reconstructed within the next twenty years. In the empty plot, a small shed is built housing a wooden pillar which is buried in the ground to mark the location of the floor of the previous building. The remaining open field of the plot is evenly covered with white pebbles like a Zen Garden. These two sacred precincts of shrine (eastern and western sectors), which enable the continuation of the periodic reconstruction represent past and present, and suggest both the acknowledgement and transcendence of time.

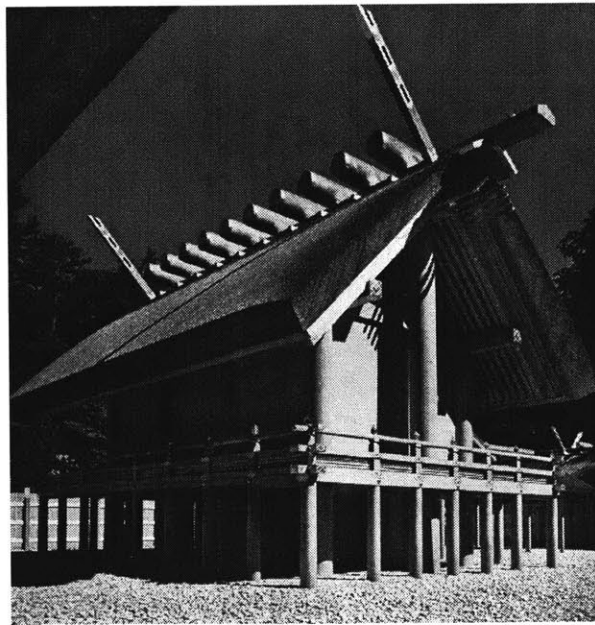


Fig. 1

Ise Grand Shrine

Rebuilding the shrine every twenty years prevents its lingering beauty from suffering the unmitigated effects of time. Within a twenty-year period, even the ridge supports of the shoden, which are most susceptible to decay, are not really damaged beyond use. The system of dedicating a new shrine every twenty years and transferring theshintai, the sacred object in which the spirit of the kami dwells, to a new shoden was conceived as a means of periodically renewing the fresh, pristine elegance of the shrine's sanctuaries. This ideal strives to preserve the vital beauty of the shrine forever.

Watanabe, Yasutada Shinto Art: Ise and Izumo Shrines, p. 51

More than a means of perpetuating the freshness and beauty of the ancient shrines, periodic rebuilding has the advantage of preserving continuity of style and form. When the time comes to rebuild, the timbers, the most essential part of the buildings, are still intact and have not deteriorated appreciably. The old sanctuary therefore offers a reliable model for the newly constructed shrine, which in turn becomes a faithful replica of the old.

Watanabe, Yasutada Shinto Art: Ise and Izumo Shrines, p.51-52

Since 690 during the early Nara period, Ise has been rebuilt regularly every twenty years (except for one hiatus). This successive system of rebuilding a perfect replica of the original shrine each time has retained the unmodified purity of the original wooden structure and form over 1300 years surpassing by far the usual lifetime of the materials. We are always able to see the pristine wooden forms of this traditional architecture as it is always new. The wood of the Ise sanctuary will never be given the chance to rot. This reflects the desire to transcend time while at the same time inwardly acknowledging time.

...archaic societies life cannot be repaired, it can only be re-created by a return to sources. And the "source of sources" is the prodigious outpouring of energy, life, and fecundity that occurred at the Creation of the World.

Eliade, Mircea Myth and Reality, p.30

The concept of the perpetuity of form serves not only to refurbish the architecture of the shrine but also to revive the regal spirit of the kami (deity) within the shrine. The ancient Japanese people stood in awe of the mythical power of the deity (the disembodied spirit of denizen) in primeval forest and demarcated a sacred dwelling place for the kami, was sanctified ground. Although Shinto didn't create these visible sacred icons of the kami, Shinto consecrated the building of shrine for the invisible deities as an imperishable sanctuary that embodies an idea of the immortal gods, in Ise Jingu, in the kami's hallowed domain, derives from Shinto. The hope of resurrection of the kami by renewing the shrine has a cosmogonic meaning, a renewal of the world by reiterating the cosmogony.

...the archaic peoples believe that the World must be annually renewed and that this renewal is brought about by following a model - the cosmogony, or an origin myth that plays the role of a cosmogonic myth.

Eliade, Mircea Myth and Reality, p.42

Some of these apocalyptic images of the End of the World recur in the Judaed-Christian eschatological visions. But Judaeo-Christianity makes an innovation of the first importance. The End of the World will occur only once, just as the cosmogony occurred only once. The Cosmos that will reappear after the catastrophe will be the same Cosmos that God created at the beginning of Time, but purified, regenerated, restored to its original glory. This Earthly Paradise will not be destroyed again, will have no end. Time is no longer the circular Time of the Eternal Return; it has become a linear and irreversible Time. Nor is this all: the eschatology also represents the triumph of a Sacred History.

Eliade, Mircea Myth and Reality, p. 64-65

History is often conceived in the West as progressive and linear, some Western people believe the idea that the beginnings of the world are imperfect and infertile, thus, they attempt to be progressive and evolutionary. Whereas Eastern people arrive at the idea that the beginnings of the world are perfect and blissful. Ritual is an attempt to return to the origin of the world. The sanctuary of the Ise shrine, in contradistinction to a Western conception of history, enacts a process of eternal renewal. It is immutable and everlasting, that is because the kami is believed to live in the cycle of nature that is the origin of the world. My project, like Ise represents a concept of time, that is not linear but circular, not progressive but recursive.

The system of continuously completing twenty-year cycles of reconstruction enacts simultaneously the dialogue between transient and perpetual time.

Art in the Land

From Process Art to Conceptual Art, from Land Art to Environmental Art, in the nineteen sixties, seventies and eighties a group of Western artists have explored time as a function of nature. The earthworks of Robert Smithson, Dennis Oppenheim, Michael Heizer and Richard Long, the environmental projects of Alan Sonfist and Hans Haacke, the ritual process of Wolfgang Laib are relevant to my exploration of the temporal processes in specific sites.



Fig. 2

Robert Smithson: Spiral Jetty

I should now like to prove the irreversibility of eternity by using a jejeune experiment for proving entropy. Picture in your mind's eye the sand box divided in half with black sand on one side and white sand on the other. We take a child and have him run hundreds of times clockwise in the box until the sand gets mixed and begins to turn gray; after that we have him run anti-clockwise, but the result will not be a restoration of the original division but a greater degree of grayness and an increase of entropy.

Smithson, Robert A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey

It was in 1970 that Robert Smithson created his major work Spiral Jetty in the landscape: 1500 linear feet and 6,650 tons of black basalt and limestone rocks and earth that curls into the Great Salt Lake, Utah. He initially had thought of making an island in the Great Salt Lake, but after he visited the lake he changed the idea into a spiral. John Coplans argues the spiral is related to his notions of entropy and irreversibility:

A spiral vectors outward and simultaneously shrinks inward - a shape that circuitously defines itself by entwining space without sealing it off. One enters the Spiral Jetty backward in time, bearing to the left, counter clockwise, and comes out forward in time, bearing right, clockwise.

Coplans, John Robert Smithson, The Amarillo Ramp, p.47

The spiral form which suggests Smithson's notions of entropy and irreversibility, makes them visible as a symbol, and relates it to his notion of time and process. The spiral on the Great Salt Lake is conceived as an extension of the land from the lakeside to the water, as the prolongation of time and space. Since 1972 the jetty has been underwater (Smithson did not anticipate an increase in water level). The form of spiral can be conceived as the stream of water, the passage of time causing the art object to disappear in a whirlpool. His notion of the irreversibility of the spiral reflects his refutations of the stream of time 'going against the stream.'

Other artists such as Michael Heizer, Dennis Oppenheim and Richard Long also have used natural processes to rediscover the ephemeral qualities of life and art. Artists would work out of ice, snow, grass and other natural materials, which through the passage of time would 'disappear' and change their physicality to announce their transience as a function of time. They accept the change of material, even if it destroys the original appearance of their work.

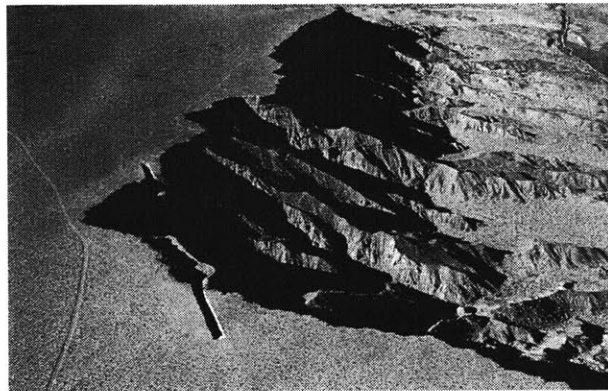


Fig. 3

Heizer, Double Negative

For example, in Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969-) the passage of time will erode the cuts in earth, filling them in and reclaiming the land. In Oppenheim's *Boundary Split* (1968) the natural process turned the cut tracks into the ice on the river which forms the United States/Canada border, repeating the process of natural time. It was the same with his work *Annual Rings* (1968), the schema of curved lines depicting the annual ring of a tree was shovelled out of snow on the both bank sides of the river that forms the United States/Canada border, and was slowly merging back into the landscape when it was snowed.

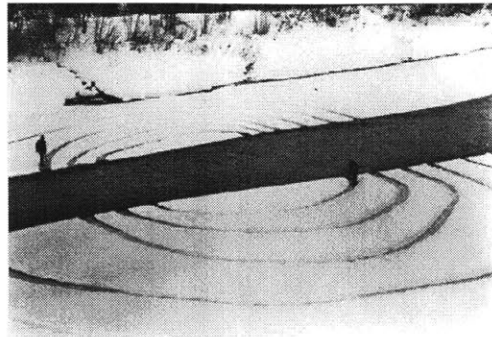


Fig. 4 Oppenheim, Annual Rings

Richard Long's subtle visible walking line across a field *A Line Made By Walking* (1967) traced the movement of time between two points and its disappearance by nature's reclamation. Since 1967 Long has walked in remote and uninhabited districts throughout the world and has made numerous ephemeral sculptures out of rocks and branches by marking simple circles, lines and squares on the ground as sympathetic responses to nature. As time passed these all marks were slowly weathered and finally erased into the landscape. The recurrence of these ephemeral gestures serve to emphasize the form of the circular process of natural life.

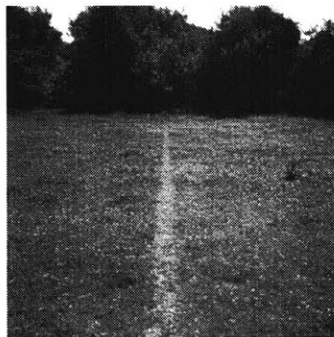


Fig. 5 Long, A Line Made By Walking

Environmental Art

Environmental artist Alan Sonfist employs the process of nature's cycle like a gardener. In the garden there is no 'prime' time. Each season has its own presence and time. It, in one sense, disappears once and appears again within nature's cycles of growth and decay in all seasons. Here, as in Ise shrine, there is a different sense of time cyclical instead of linear time. In Sonfist's earthwork project, *Time Landscape: Greenwich Village*, a parcel of land on West Broadway (1965-1978) in New York City is the recreation of the natural tract of land before colonial settlement initiated changes in the native plants. This gardenesque project recalls a memory of the specific

site that was once there and rediscovers the natural history of the land within the process of planting Time Landscape within nature's recursive cycles of growth and decay in all seasons. Sonfist has created this system of self recuperation of the land, like the rhythm of the seasons in a garden, functions as a perennial process, a nurturing environment.



Fig. 6 Sonfist, Time Landscape



Fig. 7

Haacke, Live Airborne System

In the nineteen sixties Hans Haacke was interested in the issue of environmental and ecological systems. In his works *Live Airborne System* (1965/68) Haacke lured seagulls by bread that was thrown out to a certain spot in the air on the ocean at Coney Island as to construct an instantaneous air sculpture from the combined mass of seagulls. This momentary project is an instance of his focus on the interaction between natural systems and human deeds. It reinforces our relationship and dependence on temporal natural processes.

Ritual Process of Art

Most people who live in modern Western urban societies, are alienated from the world of nature. Since 1977, German artist Wolfgang Laib has made vigorous endeavour to heal the ritual relationships between human and the world of nature. Laib's major work, *Pollen from Hazelnut* and *Pollen from Pine* is the result of his accumulation of pollen which is gathered by the artist into one or two glass jars from the beginning in the early spring for several months (occasionally he collects pollen over two seasons). The process of collecting the pollen by hand in a field of flowers is discernible as ritual response to nature just as Richard Long's process of collecting natural

objects. Furthermore Laib's process of gathering depends on weather conditions. When it is a sunny days and warm, he can collect much. But he gets only a little when it is cold and windy. This labor of continuing for months and months of repetitive same process outdoors, which results in only one or two glass jars of pollen, takes the perseverance.

Laib says:

"From the outside the work seems repetitive, but when you are doing it, it doesn't seem so. You don't even realise it's repetitive. It's just, that's what it is... Next morning the sun will rise again, but you don't think of it as a repetition."

Farrow, Clare Parkett No. 39, p. 78

Laib insists the creative meaning lies in the repetition, in the activity of the continuing labor. Thus, his activity becomes a kind of ritual meditation like Tantra - the recreating process of world. Here repetition leads not to replication but to a new awareness of ourselves and our place in the physical world.



Fig. 8

Laib, Wolfgang

When the amount of pollen is sifted from the glass jars onto the floor making a pollen square or a rectangle, the organic substance of pollen, its monochromatic yellow compels us to perceive the consummation of the beautiful incarnation of natural world. The accumulation of pollen is indescribably beautiful and mysterious, as Laib states:

The pollen is all the things you have said but maybe it is also many more things, things that maybe I don't know and you don't know... The pollen is what pollen is, and I am somehow participating in that, and trying to get close to these things. I could not create something like this. Which is why I make the milkstones and collect and sift the pollen, because I know that there is much, much more than myself...

Farrow, Clare, Parket No. 39, p. 77

At the end of an exhibition, Laib engages in recollecting and in resifting the pollen giving back into the glass jars again. Through these sacred acts of given and offering the ephemeral material of nature, his work represents the value of the aesthetic meaning of life and art. Both are conceived as a recreation and a rebirth.

Traditionally, Western art works exist in an ideal and historical time, that is progressive and linear, separated from natural systems. These artists have attempted to integrate their works of art into the temporal flow of nature in order to rediscover the natural world and return to the origin of the world in which man can at once live, contemplate and dream. The recurrence and the transience of these art events pertain to natural being in a world that changes and recreates itself not evolving but reforming itself. This concept of time is circularity instead linearity.

Circularity of Symbol: Sand Mandala

The Sanskrit word mandala means "circle" in the ordinary sense of the world. In the sphere of religious practices and in psychology it denotes circular images, which are drawn, painted, modelled, or danced.

Jung, Carl Mandala Symbolism

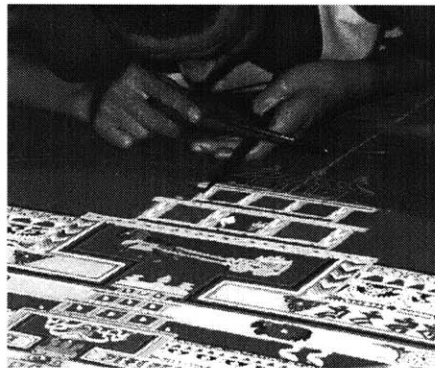


Fig. 9 Sand Mandara

Carl Jung refers to the term mandala as circular symbolic images which are created in innumerable iconographic Buddhist and Hindu paintings, three dimensional architectural models and sacred initiations throughout Asia. Most of the art of mandalas, are the architectural representation of the palace of deities, and are filled with complex but exquisite figures and objects which

are drawn or made in many materials - including sand, clay, thread and butter. For example, the Kalachakra Sand Mandala is drawn with the glorious tints of finely crushed natural materials such as flower petals, rice or mostly sandlike stones without any adhesive used (gravity keeps the sand in place as adhesive). During the initiation in Dharamsara, in India, a mandala is made by monks. A total of seven days' work, is used for the Kalachakra Initiation by the ritual master to introduce the students to the deities in order to integrate each individual student with his/her environment as an indispensable entrance to the esoteric communion. Jung describes the functional meaning of the mandala figure:

In Tibetan Buddhism the figure has the significance of a ritual instrument (yantra), whose purpose is to assist meditation and concentration. Its meaning in alchemy is somewhat similar, inasmuch as it represents the synthesis of the four elements which are forever tending to fall apart. Its spontaneous occurrence in modern individuals enables psychological research to make a closer investigation into its functional meaning.

Jung, Carl Mandala Symbolism

At the conclusion of the Kalachara Initiation, the sand mandala is dismantled skilfully by picking up the each colored sand, one by one, in the reverse order of its making. This reflects the monks' desire to return to the origin of the world by retracing the time backward, regressing to the beginning of time in order to recover their spirits, mind and body. This confirms Eliade's observations noted earlier.

Hatha-yoga and certain Tantric schools employ the method called "going against the current" or the "regressive" (ultra) technique, in order to obtain the "inversion" of all the psycho - physiological processes. In the man who accomplishes it this "return" or "regression" finds expression in the annihilation of the Cosmos and hence brings about "emergence from Time," entrance into "immortality."

Eliade, Mircea Myth and Reality, p. 87

After this process of dismantling the monks carry the sand to the river or ocean, pouring the sand into the water as a form of sacralization. Some of the consecrated sands are dispensed to the people who take it home and place the sands in the water around the foundation of their house for exorcism. By this process, therapeutic rite of passage, the Tibetans not only desire to heal epidemics or to recover the imploding energy of their bodies but also to implore the fecundity of the earth and the regularity of celestial phenomena.

Temporal Monument: Architectural Sculpture

Architectural Sculpture is a contemporary genre of art practice that uses the building components as part of the sculptural context. I have chosen to examine the work of Gordon Matta-Clark because his work most radically addresses transitory of architecture within the process of ruination of building.

Gordon Matta-Clark, cuts, splits, bores and peels the structure of the pre-existing architecture as a kind of architectural sculpture. For example, in the project *Splitting: Four Corners* (1974), a typical American two-story house which had been slated for demolition, Matta-Clark cut a simple straight line which bisected the house vertically from the rooftop to the just above foundation blocks. By sawing the entire building in half, the complexities of the cross sections of walls, floors and ceilings were revealed, exposing the concealed architectural structure. Through cutting and splitting the artist did not intend only to display the interior space (private room) entirely to the outside of this house, but to expose the decayed materials from the inside of these walls, floors and ceilings to viewers. His cuts allow us to visit the early processes and structures. Thus the house becomes a kind of architectural geology allowing us to see passage of time. A building which through time has lost its primary function is further dissected to reveal its incipient forms and structures.

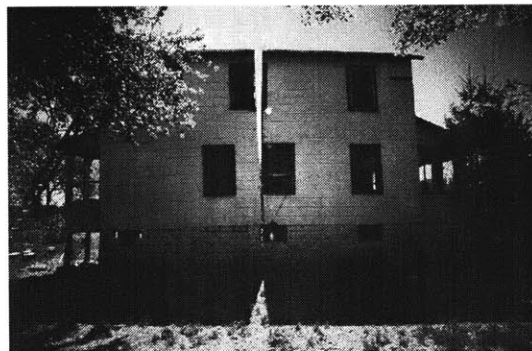


Fig. 10

Matta-Clark, *Splitting*

After the inauguration of this project, the house was left as it was and was demolished in the end. Rain caused unmitigated deterioration of the interior surfaces where the cuts and splits were made. The building showed the effects of the elements over time. And his work acknowledges the transitory nature of modern architecture.

In the same year, soon after this project, Matta-Clark undertook another project Bingo in Niagara Falls. The same kind of two-story house was provided for his project. In this work, one side of the large rectangular facade of the house, that was divided into nine equal sections, and was peeled off, one by one (not in a sequential manner as he planned), remaining the centre of this nine part grid. By removing the facade, these interior rooms were entirely disclosed to the outside, transforming the surfaces of interior wall into exterior wall. In contrast to Splitting, this entirely disclosed interior surfaces were exposed to the elements and the work became entropic. However due to the predetermined demolition schedule (he had only ten days in which to complete the work), this house was immediately demolished. The work of Gordon Matta-Clark is a proclamation of the symbolical destruction of old world. But the idea of the destruction is not always hopeless.

The "movability" of the origin of the world expresses man's hope that his World will always be there, even if it is periodically destroyed in the strict sense of the word. Is this a desperate solution? No - because the idea of the destruction of the World is not, basically, pessimistic. Through its own duration the World degenerates and wears out; this is why it must be symbolically re-created every year.

Eliade, *Mircea Myth and Reality*, p. 76



Fig. 11

Matta-Clark, Bingo

Part Two

Project Diagnosis and Documents

Site, Location, Background and History

Pavilion's site is located on the Northeast side of the MIT campus. The Northeast campus is bordered by train tracks on the edge of the main campus, and is furthermore segregated from the main campus and from the business district and main residential area of Cambridge. As a result of the segregation and isolation, this neighborhood remains relatively undeveloped architectural-ly, socially, culturally and economically. In the fall of 1998, some new commercial and residential sites opened up in this neighborhood which has invited more public interests. However, in spite of these changes, this area still remains stagnant.

A diverse community, in terms of culture, race and occupation, form this neighborhood. The community is composed of university students and factory workers. Mainly, the residents are of the lower working classes. These inhabitants formed the audience of my project. During the project, they observed the process of Constructing and Dismantling of the pavilion; some conversation was made with those who passed by.

Office N51-113 is located on the ground floor of the Southwest side of building N51 which stands on this Northeast campus. A small courtyard, that is positioned in the Northwest side of the building N51, is bordered by Village Street which connects State Street to Massachusetts Avenue. A straight running fence that forms a boundary between the courtyard and Village Street encloses the private property of MIT. There are two entrances to the courtyard. The front entrance which is located at the Southeast side of the courtyard, offers access to the ground floor of building N51. The back entrance gate, which is placed in the middle of the running fence, accessible to Village Street. The perimeter of the courtyard measures 294 feet, and the total area is 600 sq. yards. The plot of this courtyard is evenly covered with, approximately two inches in thickness of asphalt. There is some slight vegetation inside of the courtyard along with a variety of scattered objects. The courtyard is surrounded with the fractured, almost ruptured walls of building N51. The ramshackle building and the dilapidated courtyard (both in the early stages of ruin), cause the whole area to feel as if it is caught in a moment of entropy.

For the past eight years the plot of this courtyard has been intended for institutional and instructional use such as making sculptures and furniture, building art installations and testing building materials. Recently though this plot has not been not actively used and thus not well maintained. Additionally, before my project began the changes of this courtyard, the back entrance gate was always closed. The courtyard was inaccessible from Village Street.

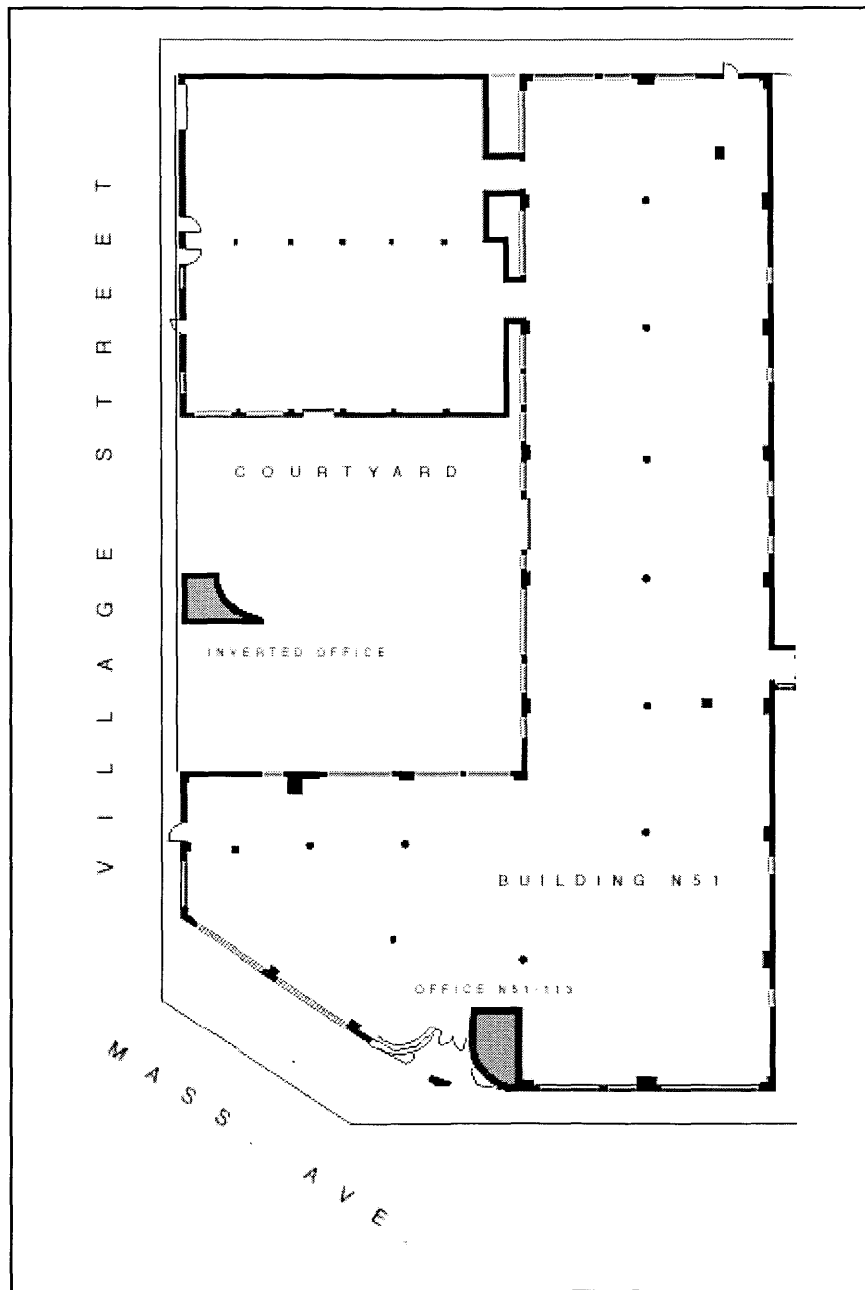


Fig. 12

Site plan

Village Street is a small alley which has been left uncontrolled by local parking regulations for a long time and is freely appropriated by the inhabitants of this neighborhood. Asian grocery across the alley has had trouble with the automobiles. Many irresponsible drivers have left parked cars which obstruct passage into the grocery. At the end of November 1998, the grocery set the traffic signs of parking violation on the alley in the end. However, people often disregard these traffic signs, and the alley is crowded with the automobiles.



Fig. 13

Courtyard of building N51, September 1997

Site and Pavilion

From October 1998 to January 1999 the pavilion Inverted Office N51-113 was installed at the back entrance gate of the courtyard. The temporary pavilion, that was in alignment with the boundary between the alley and the courtyard, affected social, cultural, architectural, economical, historical, and institutional features of this site at the time.

The pavilion's location is characterized by the discrepancy between the alley's accessibility and the inaccessibility of the courtyard. By situating the pavilion's entrance facing Village Street, its interior (which occupies the edge of the private property), becomes accessible from the alley. The "interior" of the pavilion is conceived as an extension of the alley and becomes the 'communal domain' within the 'institutional domain' of the courtyard. Since this alley is an indistinct communal domain, the pavilion's interior accordingly inherits this indistinctness. These changes of boundaries and zones within time have a relationship to Oppenheim's Annual Rings, a work which bisects the river that forms the United States/Canadian border.

This small pavilion is inspired by the ultraminiaturize Shinto shrines and the small Shinto shrines frequently erected by the roadside in both urban area and rural seclusion in Japan. These Shinto shrines are the communal place of prayer as well as contemplation and gathering. In contrast to these shrines, my pavilion is not a sacred place but rather a small temporal pavilion that suggests a little 'change' of domain in this community.

Form and Material

This inverted office expresses my hope in offering the 'given privilege' (my personal office at the building N51) to this neighborhood. By creating a reconstructed inversion of this personal office, I am transforming my personal room into a little communal place for the inhabitants.

In addition to the idea of offering a shared space, I have considered some other aspects. All buildings have interior and exterior surfaces which are built with different materials that have their own distinct texture and their own special properties. For instance, exterior building materials are solid, rigid, stiff, rough and waterproof. Many interior materials are soft, smooth, delicate and water soluble. The materials of walls such as concrete, wall paper and brick, along with the fixtures of walls such as lamps and switches and other ornaments distinguish one wall from another. I inverted the walls of office N51-113; the interior/exterior surfaces were exactly turned inside-out. Consequently, the pavilion's 'exterior' walls marked the distinct features of the interior walls of my office. And the pavilion's 'interior' walls marked the peculiar features of the exterior walls of my office. As a further exchange, I extracted the office from the body of N51.

Since the 'interior' of the pavilion was accessible from the alley, the community members were allowed to see the exterior walls of my office; they were not allowed to see my interior walls, nor were they allowed access to the inner courtyard in which the interior side of my office were reconstructed. Thus my personal interior room was exposed to the institution side but still disclosed to the community side. This pavilion was ambiguously uncovering and covering the secret space simultaneously. In fact, the inversion of my office was offered to this community as a free standing pavilion while my own personal room (the origin of the pavilion) still remained in the institution. The structure and the form of this pavilion were cryptic and mysterious.

The Process of Constructing

In the beginning of February 1998 I investigated the structure and building materials of office N51-113. The materials such as concrete, cinder block, brick and glass block were foreign to my experience. For the first time I employed masonry techniques to carry out an art project. The pavilion is 17.5 feet on the longer interior diagonal and 9.5 feet on the short diagonal. Its height is 14.5 feet on the highest point. This size enabled me to build the pavilion without any assistance.

The pavilion consists of: one permanent wall which stands on the substructure buried in the ground; Three sides of impermanent walls which are built of drywall (for a moment sheets of plywood were used instead drywall) over the framework of 2x4 lumber. These materials are identical with the building materials of office N51-113.

In late February 1998 I undertook the substructure for the pavilion's curved brick wall at the construction site. In the first four days I broke and dug approximately forty inches deep into the surface of asphalt pavement with pickel-axe. This was dug in order to pour a concrete footing. The curved pour drew an arcked bore on the hard asphalt pavement of the courtyard. This simple and primitive bore on the ground looks like a piece of earthwork.

Two sides of carefully made wooden curved forms connected together were installed above the pour. The simple form above the pour created a wooden arc that looked very sculptural. The structure of the form board was made not only solidly but also aesthetically conceived even it was used just for a moment.

In the beginning of March one and one half cubic yards of concrete were poured directly into the form by a truck. The concrete top was carefully made level and had a smooth surface. Perfection at the beginning continued to a perfection at the end. Soon after the concrete cured I poured water periodically during a week's time to make the rigid body of the concrete. When water was poured on the footing, it formed a fine film, a wet surface, on the concrete footing. During the construction process weather conditions caused changes every material-including the concrete and brick. The changes, such as age and stain, suddenly appeared and disappeared again. They appeared as distinctive elements which illustrated the effect of time.

Photographs (p.42 - p.49) show the process of building a permanent wall by piling up cinder blocks, cream bricks and glass blocks. Approximately sixty cinder blocks, eight hundred fifty bricks and two hundred glass blocks were used for the pavilion. In the middle of March 1998 I began masonry work, first laying the cinder blocks and next building the brick wall. I researched and learned masonry techniques on how to mix mortar, and how to use the tools through the daily labor. In a day I could lay a maximum of sixty bricks. Obtaining an accurate understanding of the construction required an intensive concentration and perseverance. From day to day my masonry techniques showed a little improvement. The discrepancies of each course of the brick were necessarily made, and they were to be corrected for the next layer. The brick wall expresses an intense human effort. This is a protective solid wall that attempts to transcend the inexorable, temporal power of nature which erodes its materials. I understood from this how Western architecture is an attempt to transcend time by building 'eternity.'

Traditionally the masonry work is not considered as a technique of fine arts. I tried to use it as an expressive material and technique. On May 25, 1998 I finally completed the brick wall.

In late June 1998, after an interruption, I resumed the construction of the pavilion. The wooden form, that was used to make the footing, was reused to cast the curved concrete structure above the brick wall. I mixed five bags of eighty pounds of concrete with water and poured it into this form. Soon the concrete structure cured and became rigid. I began to build three sides of impermanent walls which are built with 25 sheets of plywood over a framework of 2x4 lumber. For the moment the sheets of plywood were used to prevent the walls from rain. The intention was to take the photographs of this pavilion's completion before the deterioration of the walls. Soon after the completion of the walls, I immediately documented the pavilion. On October 5 this pavilion was inaugurated unobtrusively to the inhabitants of its immediate neighbourhood. In the middle of October 1998 I began to change the plywood into drywall. The refurbishment finished on November 30, 1998.

These diverse materials such as wood, drywall, concrete, brick and glass block have highly differing and conflicting features. The attempt, that was to combine these distinctive materials, creating both the assimilation and the friction of their diversity.

After the refurbishment of the walls, rain caused gradual deterioration of the pavilion's exposed drywall. A month later the surfaces of the pavilion's walls were cracked and fractured. The white wall was full of cracks and caused the disintegration of the pavilion, increasing entropy. The condition of the pavilion's disintegration reflected with the ramshackle building N51 and the dilapidated courtyard.

The Process of Dismantling

To cure the work of Time it is necessary to "go back" and find the "beginning of the World."

We have seen that there are several ways of "going back," but the most important are:

- (1) rapid and direct re-establishment of the first situation (whether Chaos or the precosmogonic state or the moment of Creation) and
- (2) progressive return to the "origin" by proceeding backward through Time from the present moment to the "absolute beginning."

Eliade, Mircea Myth and Reality, p.88

According to Eliade's instruction, I followed the second category of techniques in finalizing my project. In late January 1999, I began the meticulous dismantling of the pavilion, piece by piece, retracing the construction process backwards, from end to beginning completing the cycle. In dismantling every material of the pavilion in the reverse order of its construction, my personal memories and individual experiences during the past year were retraced. I returned to the absolute beginning of my state of mind. These counteractions of the labor, such as the removal of each sheet of every wall, pulling out each brick and each glass block, even the unscrewing of every screw, required complete devotion of my energy and time. It reactivated my body. Each stage of the dismantling was documented daily. The sequence of photographs were also thus reversed. The small section of concrete footing was left as an architectural remain. Many of the materials (brick, glass block, lumber and other materials) can be reused even now. And the courtyard has been reverted to its original state except for the footing which serves as a memory of the process while marking the landscape of what once existed here. The process was complete. I was at the beginning and at the end of my work.



Fig. 14 Office N51-113 exterior view

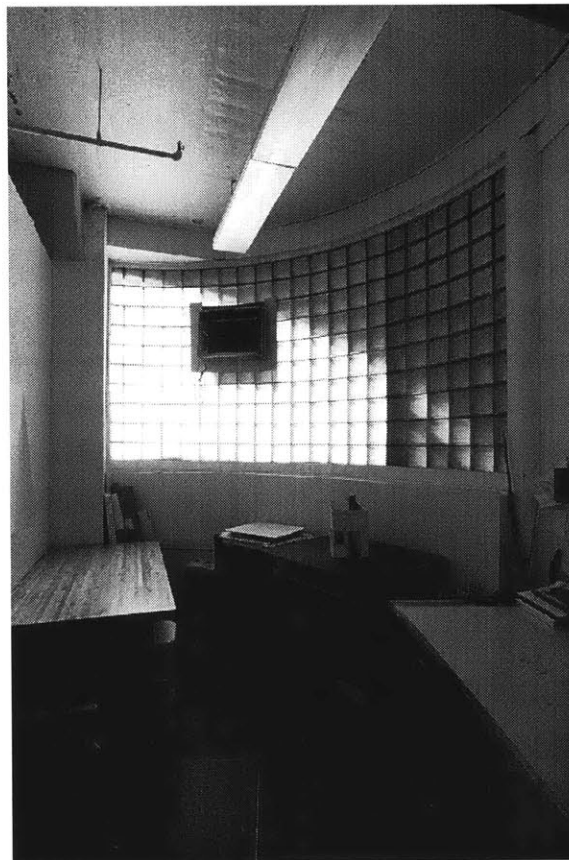


Fig. 15 Office N51-113 interior view

Inverted Office N51-113: Site and Form

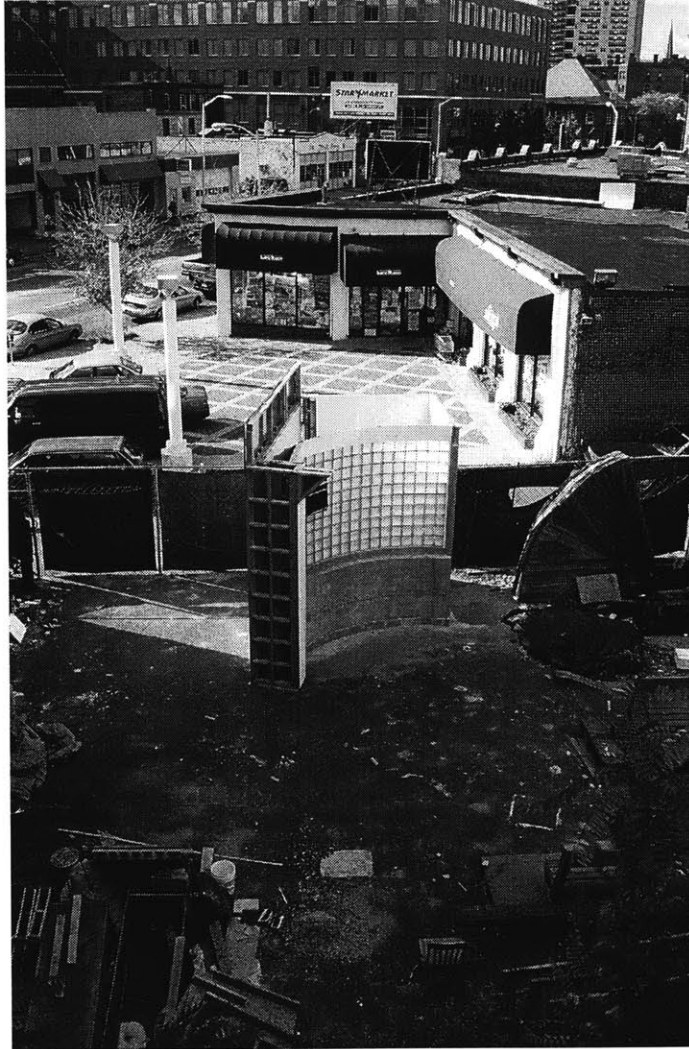


Fig. 16 Inverted Office N51-113 facing the courtyard.



Fig. 17

Front of the pavilion. Fence and the back entrance gate of the courtyard

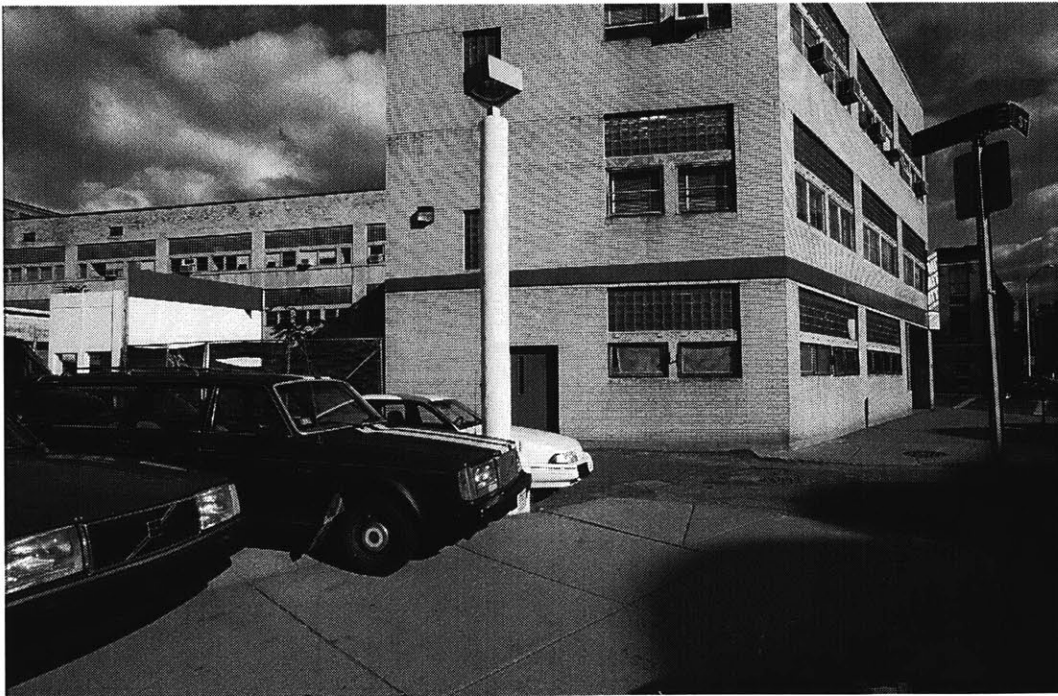


Fig. 18

Village Street and building N51. At left is the pavilion

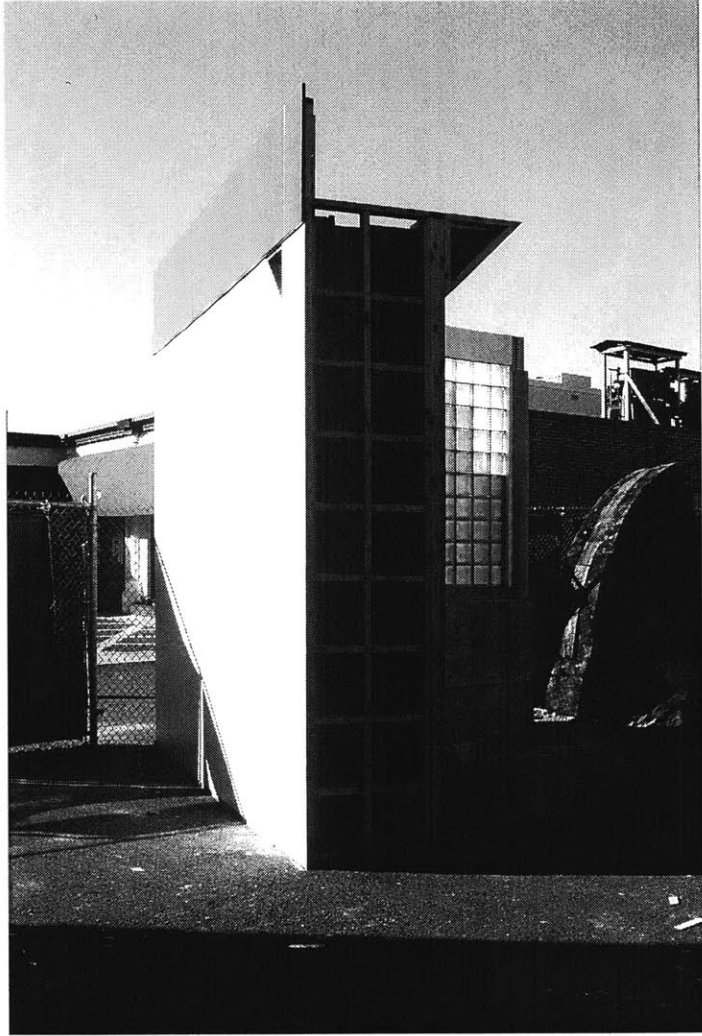


Fig. 19 Side and rear of the pavilion facing the courtyard.

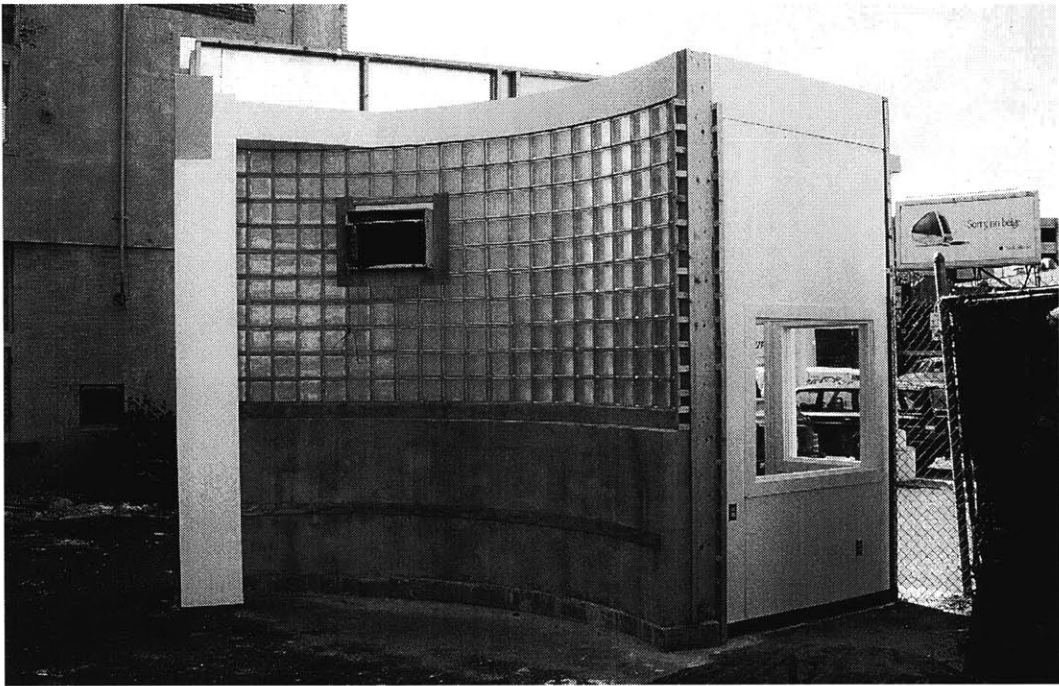


Fig. 20

Rear and side of the pavilion facing the courtyard

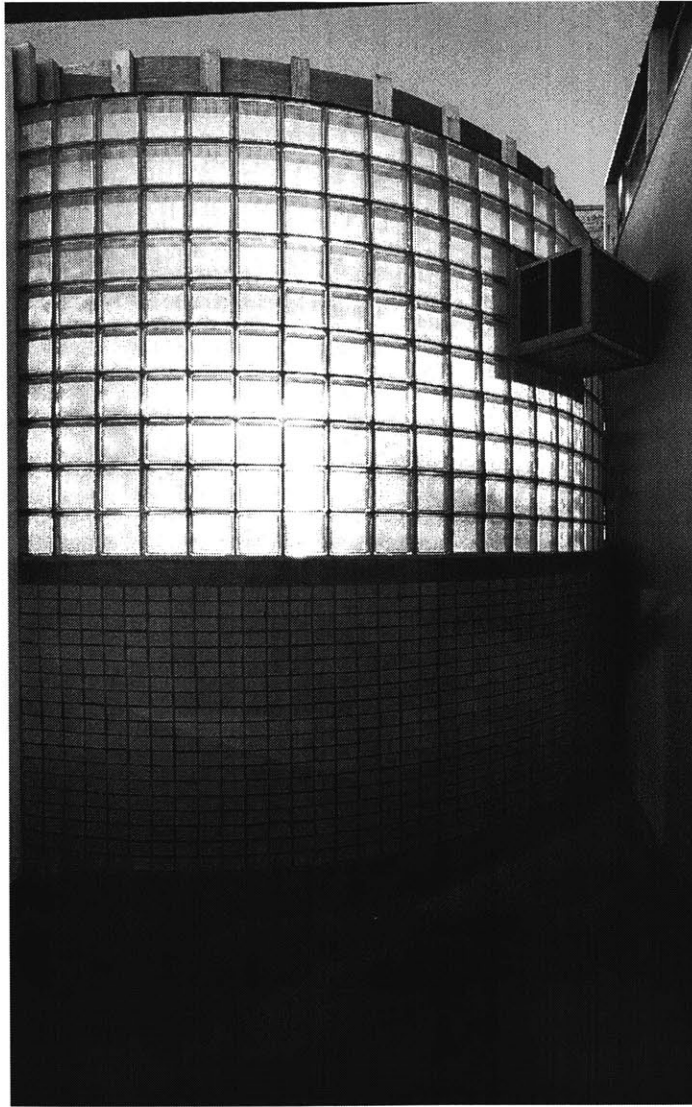


Fig. 21

Interior of the pavilion at night



Fig. 22

Interior of the pavilion, October 1998

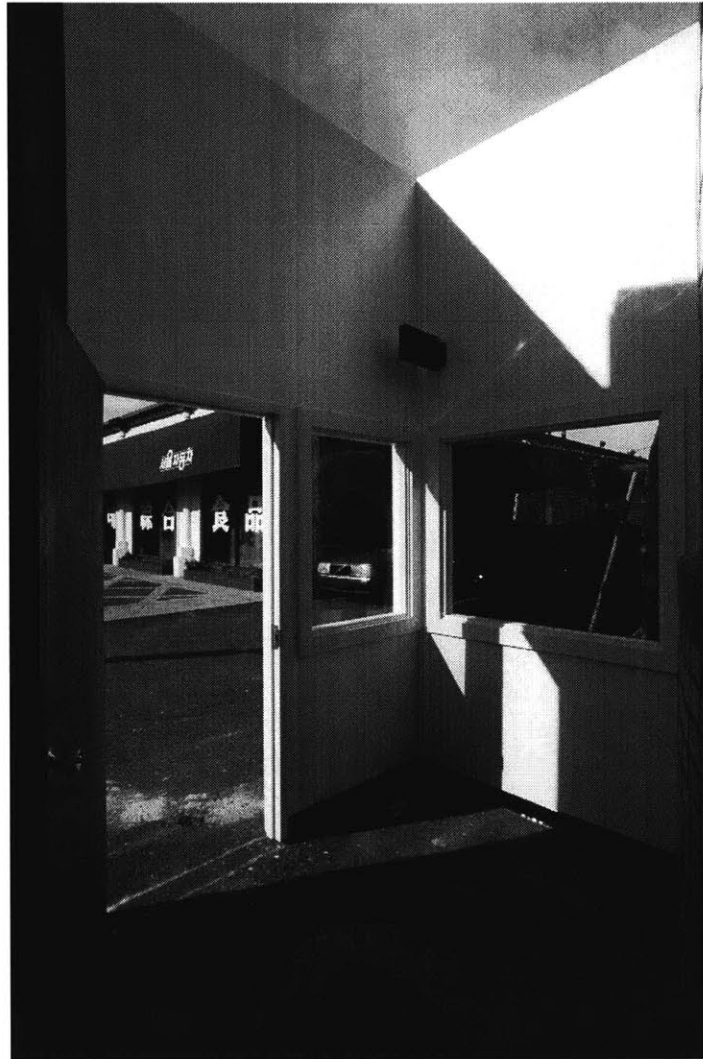


Fig. 23

Interior of the pavilion, October 1998



Fig. 24

Interior of the pavilion, October 1998



Fig. 25

Interior of the pavilion, October 1998

Inverted Office N51-113: Process



Fig. 26

Courtyard, September 1997



Fig. 27

Process of construction, February 1998

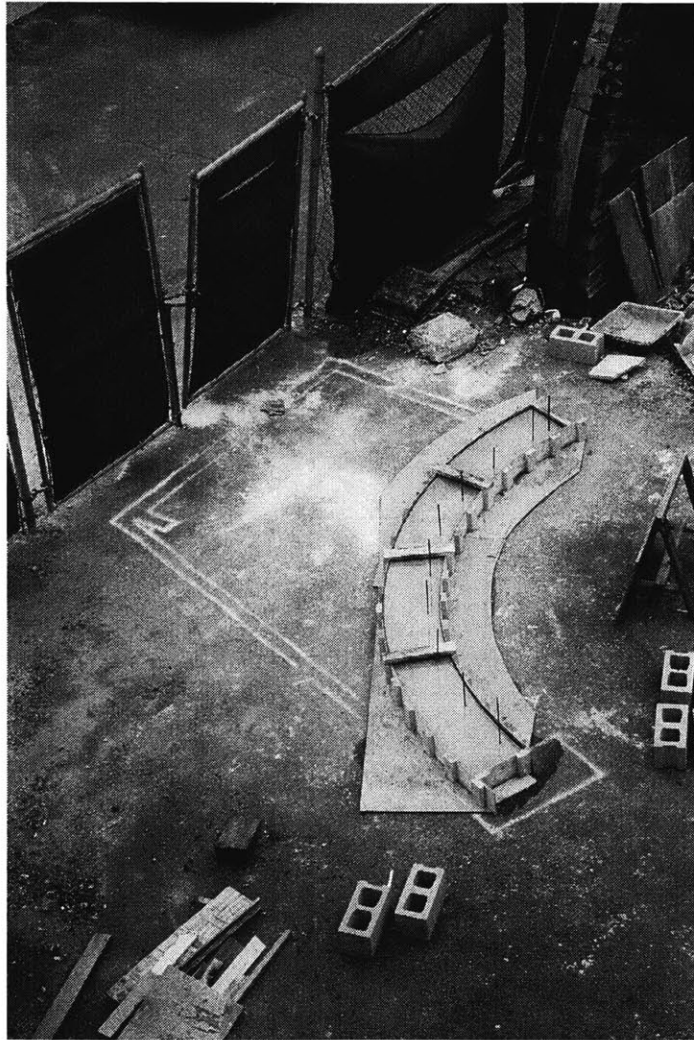


Fig. 28

March 1998

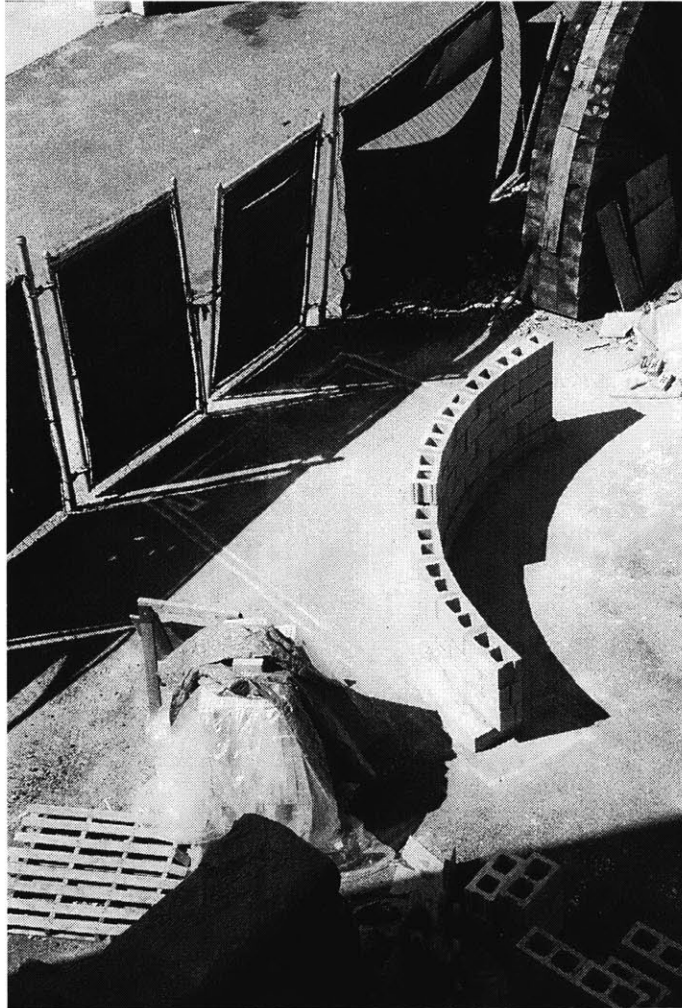


Fig. 29

April 1998

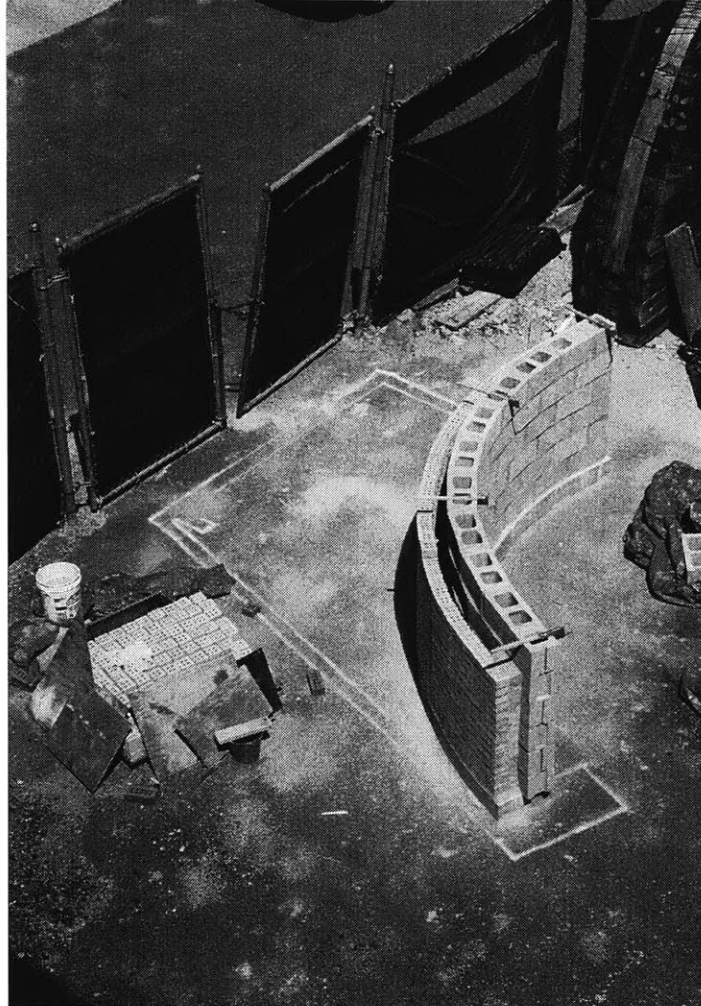


Fig. 30

May 1998



Fig. 31

May 1998

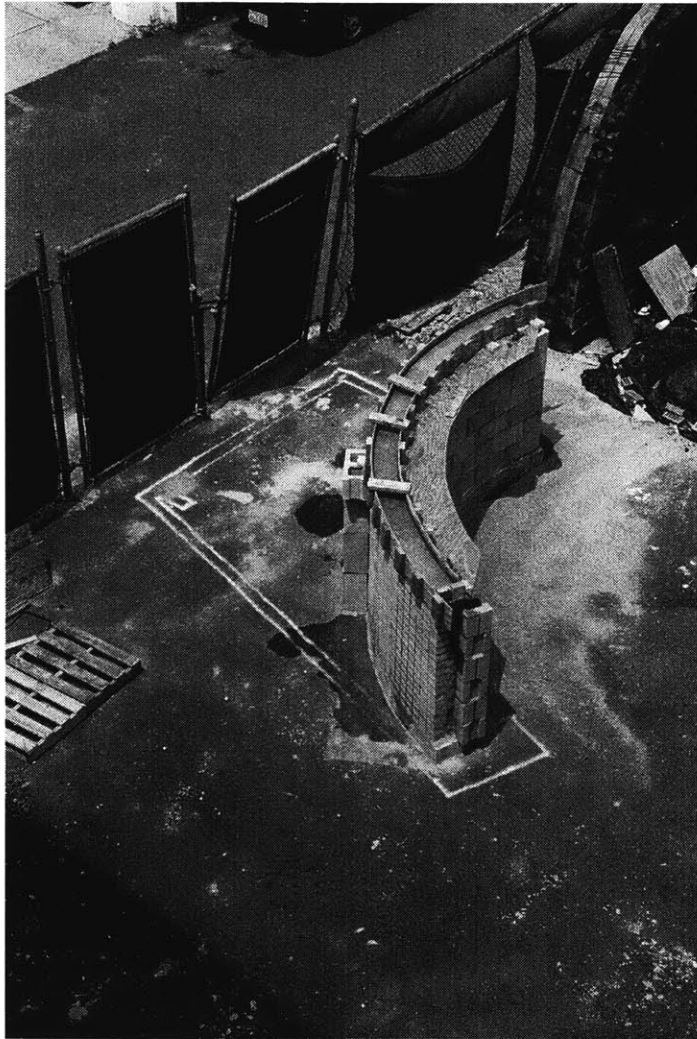


Fig. 32

July 1998

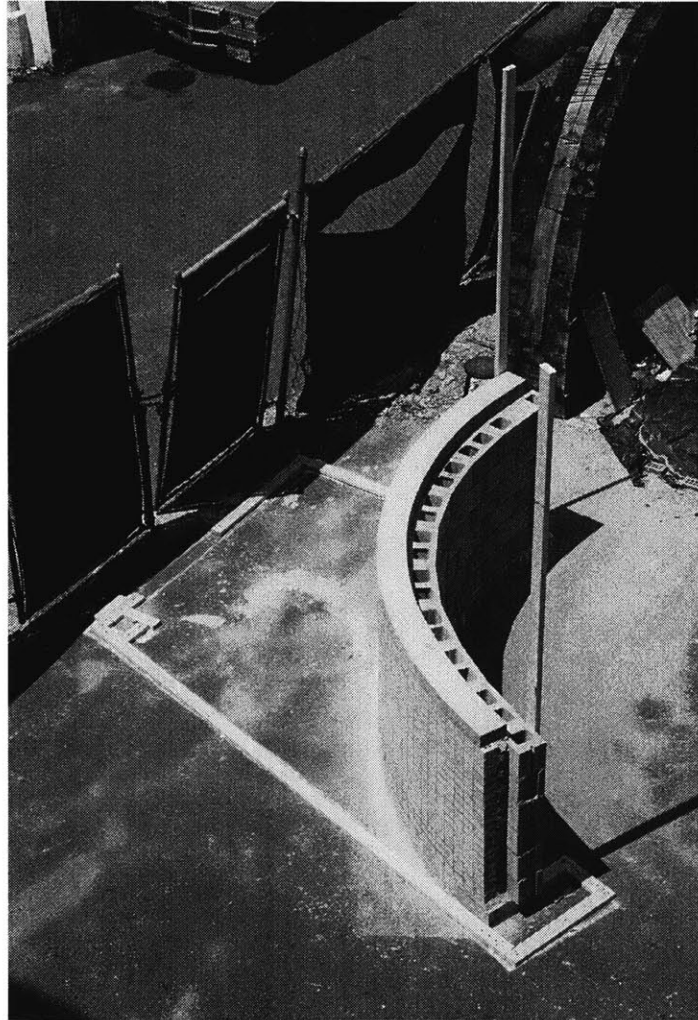


Fig. 33

July 1998

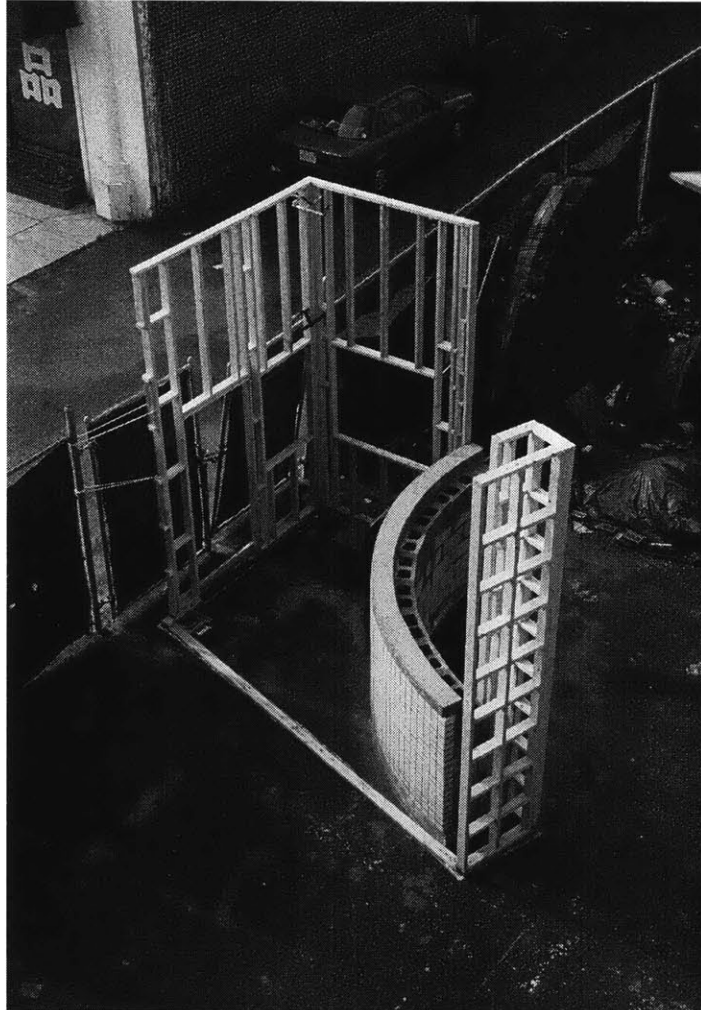


Fig. 34

August 1998

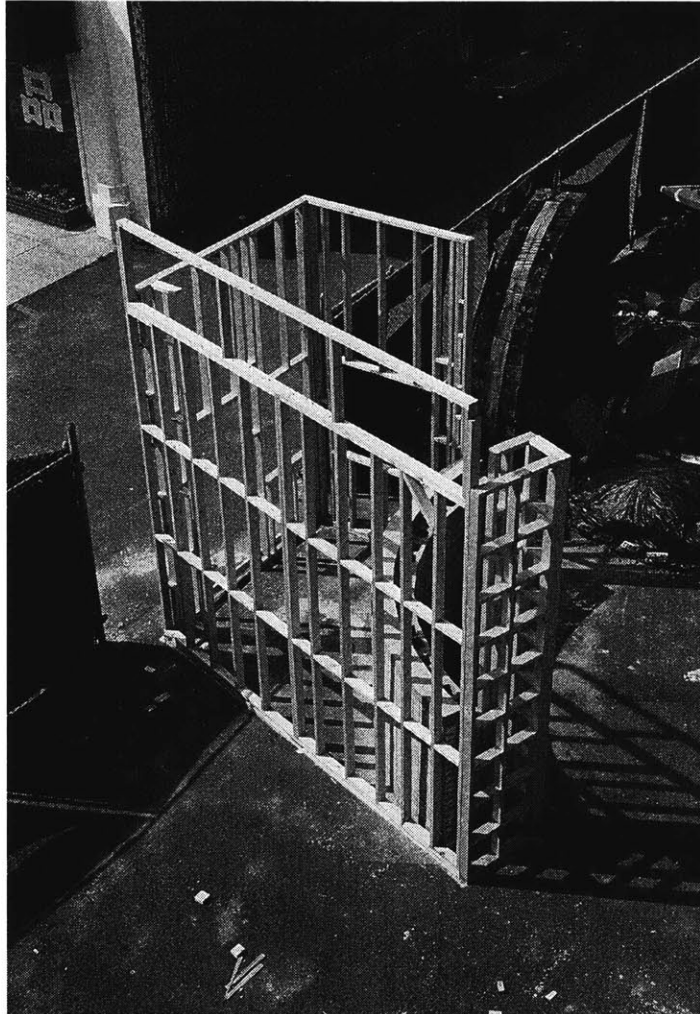


Fig. 35

August 1998

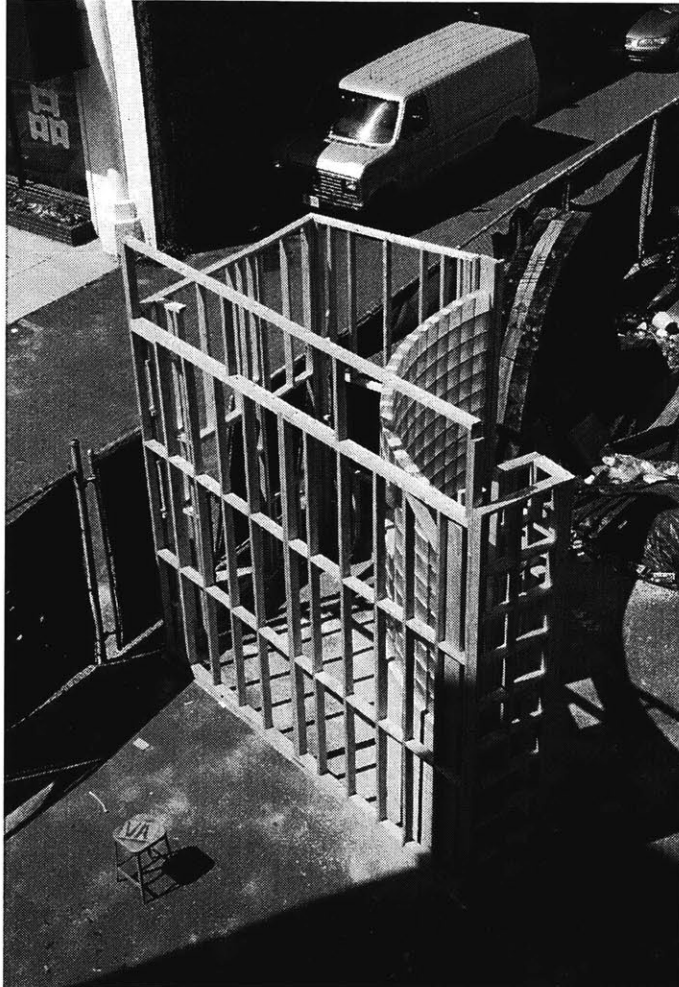


Fig. 36

August 1998



Fig. 37

August 1998

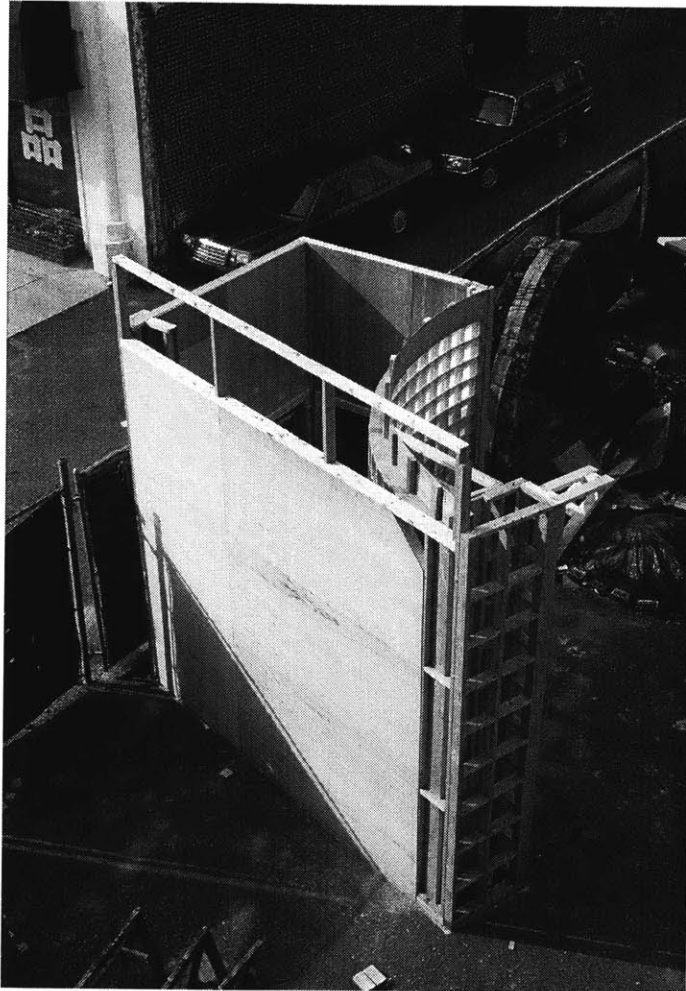


Fig. 38

September 1998

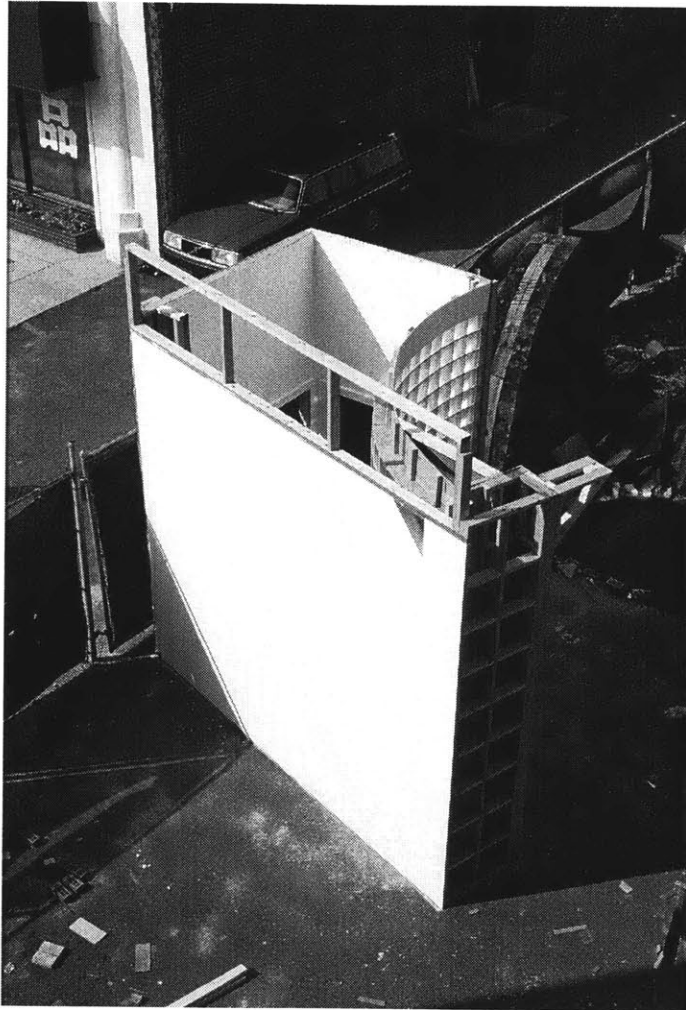


Fig. 39

September 1998

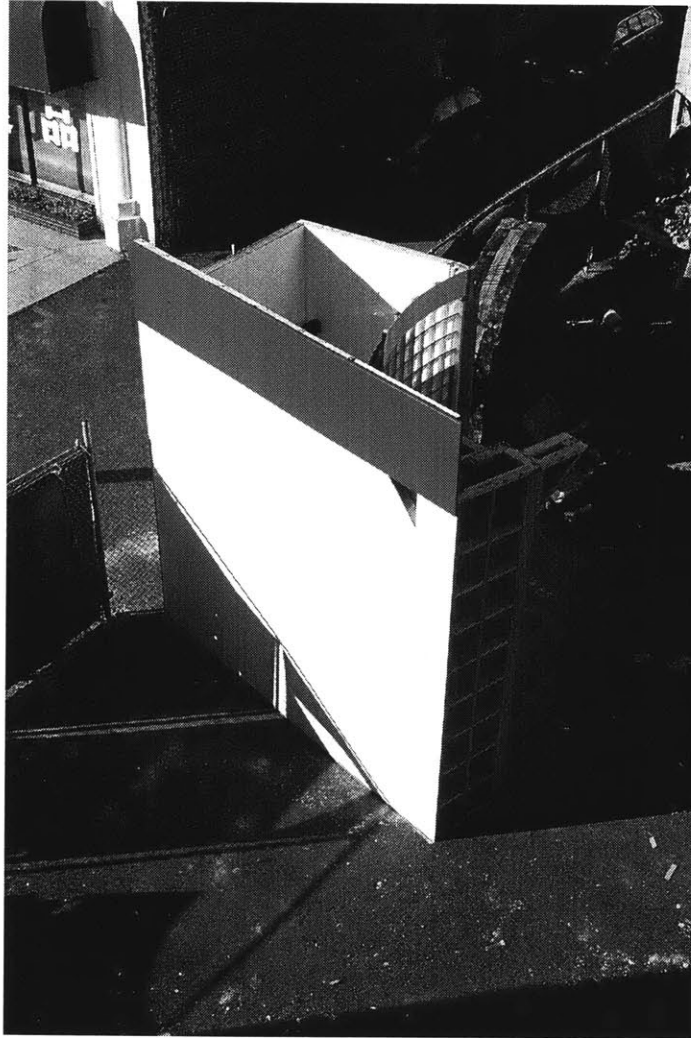


Fig. 40

October 1998

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Photo credit

Fig. 1-11, see the catalogs listed on page 54

Fig. 12 - 40, photographs and plan by Toshihiro Komatsu

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