INSTALLATIONS AND THE CONDITIONS OF VISION
THE STRUCTURE OF PHENOMENA: THE PHENOMENON OF STRUCTURE

by

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B.A. Williams College
1975

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Science
at the
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
January 1979

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January 19, 1979

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JUN 15 1979
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APPENDIX
Installations and the Conditions of Vision
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on
19 January 1979 in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science
in Visual Studies.

In the first half of the thesis a basis for the understanding of installations as an art form is
derived from the fundamental processes of perception and the "meaning constituting" capacity of
the mind as described by the philosophical methodology of phenomenology and through the analytic
method of structuralism. A "structure" for visual perception is delineated through the
terminology of phenomenology, and a basis for structural models is evidenced through an analysis of
the human experience of visual phenomena. And a model for the "reading" of the nature of installa-
tions in contemporary art is developed through these "conditions of vision."

The second half of the essay examines the genesis of an installation exhibited at the Center
for Advanced Visual Studies from 15 December 1978 to 2 January 1979 relating it to both
the structural and phenomenological models developed in the above section and to the philosophical
and formal issues at the base of the aesthetic system developed in Japanese Gardens, and essentially
documents, both visually and conceptually that installation project.

Thesis Supervisor: Otto Piene, Professor of Visual Design
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I. The Conditions of Vision
Silence has evocative powers similar to those of darkness; it is a word toward which other words proceed and vibrate. One writes in order to speak less and less, to reach the written silence of memory, that, paradoxically gives us back the world in its coded operation, the world of which each of us is the hidden, irreducible cipher.

Phillipe Sollers
I

Vision, or more appropriately, the conditions of vision (which are our understanding of perception), is not rooted solely in the physical; that is, in the sensory manifestation of phenomena essentially external to us. Rather, the conditions of vision are a condition of our own conditioning, and perhaps more importantly, the conditions of vision are an aggregate collection or sedimentation of all the "sights" held collectively and individually in the world of which we both partake and create. In no small sense the way in which we see ourselves, and others and the world through which we proceed is part of a mental set which is only partly our own, and largely that of the age in which we come of age. A vision of the world is a synthesis of that internal and external set of dynamics, and a world view is a recognition and a formalization of that fundamental dialectic. What follows, then, is an attempt to collect and correlate a certain set of ideas and modes of expression which have surfaced in contemporary art and art thinking primarily within the past 10-15 years and which concern themselves with the way we "see" the way we see. Specifically, the methodology and much of the terminology employed derives from certain branches of phenomenology (that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gaston Bachelard) and structuralism (that of Jean Piaget, Roland Barthes, and Claude Levi-Strauss) and the link between them which is my own understanding and synthesis of these two allayed but methodolo-
"Did you ever happen to see a city resembling this one?" Kublai asked Marco Polo, extending his beringed hand from beneath the silken canopy of the imperial barge, to point to the bridges arching over the canals, the princely palaces whose marble doorsteps were immersed in the water, the bustle of light craft zigzagging, driven by long oars, the boats unloading baskets of vegetables at the market squares, the balconies, platform, domes, campaniles, island gardens glowing green in the lagoon's grayness.

The emperor, accompanied by his foreign dignitary, was visiting Kin-Sai, ancient capital of deposed dynasties, the latest pearl set in the Great Khan's crown.

"No sire," Marco answered. "I should never have imagined a city like this could exist."

The emperor tried to peer into his eyes. The foreigner lowered his gaze. Kublai remained silent the whole day.

After sunset, on the terraces of the palace, Marco Polo logically divergent fields of investigation.

What I should first like to propose then, is the notion of considering art as principally an activity, which, like both phenomenology and structural analysis is an approach, a method of investigating the world and our "place" in it. I want however to see that activity as a dialectical process responsive to the physical space in which it is placed, and intellectually and emotionally reflective of the ideas and concerns of the age in which it exists and communicates. The real nature of the art "work" is not so much as a thing, the object presented to vision, as it is the interface or residue of that activity of investigation in which one finds visible, or intelligible the distinctions and relations between oneself and the space through which one proceeds and the age or time in which one exists. Art in this context can be seen as a code whose deciphering is the activity of speculation (through its perceptual experience), on the "meaning" of what vast and seamless cultural and natural "message" which is the world and our experience of it.

Any even cursory survey of the history of art will make it quite clear that art has never had much of a stable form or formulation over time, but rather it has been a contingent entity dependent upon context more than content to define its "meaning."

It is essentially a strategy for mediating between man (culture) and the world he lives in (nature) and most properly reflects the
expounded to the sovereign the results of his missions. As a rule the Great Khan concluded his day savoring these tales with half-closed eyes until his first yawn was the signal for the suite of pages to light the flames that guided the monarch to the Pavilion of the August Slumber. But this time Kublai seemed unwilling to give in to weariness. "Tell me another city," he insisted.

"...You leave there and ride for three days between the northeast and east-by-northwest winds..." Marco resumed saying, enumerating names and customs and wares of a great number of lands. His repertory could be called inexhaustible, but now he was the one who had to give in. Dawn had broken when he said: "Sire, now I have told you about all the cities I know."

"There is still one of which you never speak."

Marco Polo bowed his head. "Venice," the Khan said. Marco smiled. "What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?"

The emperor did not turn a hair. "And yet I have never heard you mention that name."

And Polo said: "Every time I describe a city I am saying..."
something about Venice."

"When I ask you about other cities, I want to hear about them. And about Venice, when I ask you about Venice."

"To distinguish other cities' qualities, I must speak of a first city that remains implicit. For me it is Venice."

"You should then begin each tale of your travels from the departure, describing Venice as it is, all of it, not omitting anything you remember of it."

The lake's surface was barely wrinkled; the copper reflection of the ancient palace of the Sung was shattered into sparkling glints like floating leaves.

"Memory's images, once they are fixed in words are erased," Polo said. "Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little."

within which its experiencing directs one back to the world and one's place in it. And because the ultimate frame of reference for that experience (as it is for any experience) is the individual, art is no single thing or experience but a process; in short, an engagement with the questioning of one's place and experience in the world.

The specific locus of our concern in considering these visual attitudes of the past 15 years or so however, is in regard to the nature of "installations" or "artspaces" as Germano Celant terms them. Though not new to the history of art, as Celant points out, the tendency towards devising an art strategy or creating an artwork whose form and ideational structure is intended to comprise the totality
The work is not put in a place, it is that place.

of the space in which it is displayed or placed is a phenomenon that has become increasingly more frequent in the post-modern period, and whose efficacy as a specific art form seems to stem from a particular set of ideas concerning perception and the role of nature and the external world in the way we see. Neither purely sculptural per se in form, nor at all necessarily functional in any utilitarian sense, the installation mediates in an area, as much conceptual as physical, between art and architecture, and attempts to activate the totality of the space in which it exists. To the degree that the experience of the space or room in which it is placed must be considered as a part of the experience of the artwork itself, there is a dependence upon the uniqueness of each individual

space in which it is "sited" and an implicit recognition of the essential and formative role of contingency in vision. Thus, the "artspace" which the installation includes "as an integral part of the plastic-visual work does not mean partially "decorating" the surfaces or volumes of a given environment with fresco, mosaic, painting, or sculpture. It means taking on the space in its entirety in order to give it structure or pick out its features by means of a plastic-visual modification. The works I shall be referring to here are not of the type which concentrate on a particular detail while ignoring the whole; on the contrary they are consistent with the shape and structure of the overall space in question.¹ Because the "conditions" of the space are consistently different each time
It's an art of uncertainty because instability in general has become very important. So the return of Mother Earth is a revival of a very archaic sentiment.

the work is shown, or because the work is built specifically and especially for a given space, the form which the work takes is also in a perpetual process of transformation, and for this reason the nature of such work is highly resistant to formalisation, and to a certain extent evades formal analysis. This avoidance of formalisation is essentially a rejection of "ideals" in either art or life and seeks instead an embracing of the external world in a very primal and undifferentiated form with all of its contradiction and disorder and uncertainty as the starting point for any work of art; as it is in fact, for any perception of consciousness. The content of the work must be, and include, that actuality of the experience of being in the world, and the form must be first a "frame" (or means) for revealing that content or reality.

This invocation, or insistence on the insertion of an undifferentiated or non-abstracted "reality" in the work found perhaps its clearest expression in the large scale "earthworks" executed primarily in the far west and isolated regions of the country by individuals such as Michael Heizer and Robert Smithson. Smithson, in particular, was eloquent and very clear that his intentions in working with such "raw matter" as the earth itself and his choice of such isolated and essentially abandoned areas, was very much related to the idea of re-establishing contact with a very primal and fundamental order of the earth and universe. His assertion in seeking this contact is
that it is precisely this undifferentiated and unfiltered matter which is at the base of all "higher" forms of physical reality, and this undifferentiated state is also the point of departure for the development of consciousness. But no matter what the state of evolution, the body cannot realise itself as a separate and unique entity in the world, nor consciousness define a self without the recognition of that fundamental field of undifferentiated matter, and the otherness of the external world as its "reality." One always "is" in relation to . . . And one's present state or position is always dependent upon that perpetual surround of unrefined matter both inorganic and organic, and of the past, both near and distant.

Thus, this abstraction, presented simultaneously with reality, forms for the viewer a durational perception rooted in observation and leading to a higher order of reality. In a closed circuit video situation one is no longer

As the body distinguishes itself from the world through its perceptual awareness of space, the mind constitutes its most fundamental awareness of self through temporality. To "be" is the awareness of the possibility that to "not be" exists, and that "reality" is the fulfillment and acting out of that fundamental perception. "In reality" all knowing proceeds from that very primal awareness of a time that continues on indefinitely before and after one is, or comes to be. Thus the inclusion of the undifferentiated or actual time of the world, which proceeds with indifference, becomes a necessary function for the work to reveal, and to exist within. Video, as a temporal medium naturally embodies a methodology for such concerns and video installations in particular served as a locus.
dealing with images in a temporally finite nature. The duration of the image becomes a property of the room. For much of the most insightful work conceived in this vein. In addition to its temporal dispersion the capacity for instantaneous transmission between image reception and image projection in video further heightened the artwork's capacity for contingency by allowing for the spontaneous interaction of the viewer with the work of art which confronts him.

Similarly, in photography the direct and emotional reportage of Robert Frank found its ultimate existential expression in the seemingly cool neutrality of stance of photographers such as Lee Friedlander and Gary Winogrand who sought to impose no order or constructions between the world as it is and the unblinking unreflective "eye" of the camera. A drive in which

Photography is about facts. I believe the event, whatever it is, is better than any ideas I could have about it. Nothing is so mysterious as a fact clearly described, clearly stated...
the idea was to allow the most complete expression of the way things look in the world on its own terms and not in the terms of the artist's own ideals or imagination.

It is not my intention, nor is it possible to list here all the ways in which this attitude towards allowing the presence of the world, or reality, unselected and un-refined in aesthetic terms by the artist, to enter into the work of art. What the above paragraphs indicate however, is the rather remarkable scope and degree of pervasiveness across a multiplicity of disciplines with which that attitude held through the mid sixties and into the seventies. At the base of these different manifestations of the same attitude lies the unifying notion that throughout the arts there can be found a re-emergence of a profound respect and humility before Nature, and a growing awareness of the limits of human rationalism to explain it, and a greater skepticism concerning the capacity of scientific technology and positivist thought to improve upon it. This "new" awareness and its resultant expression is very clearly related to one of the fundamental tenets of the phenomenological method; namely, that the experience of the world is the "essence" of being. Phenomenology is neither a science of objects nor a science of the subject; it is a science of experience. Intentionality likewise has a double merit: 1) to explode idealism by projecting consciousness towards the world, by placing it in the world, and 2) to assure the connection between contingent lived experience and the necessary meaning of this lived experience.

Perhaps what is most significant about this "existentiel" ideal
In my work as a whole structure constitutes a set of directions for a performance, that is, structure is structuring. In the past I have used the concept of the necessary structure and the contingent event. The contingent event refers to a set of responses generated by a particular structure. At the core of the phenomenological method in terms of installations is that it encourages or supports the notion of accepting the unexpected, or the contingencies of the situation, and working with, rather than fighting against the impure "givens" of the space in which the work is placed. Any work of art, or for that matter any physical or mental construct, which has form (and all conceivable expressions must have some form to be expressed) inevitably "structures" the way in which one sees. But there are those structures which also allow for the contingent event, and those which accept that given and fundamental reality as a model for their own internal construction. In a fascinating article entitled "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America," Rosalind Krauss discusses a series of installation works executed at P.S. 1 in the summer of 1976 which avail themselves of just such a structural strategy. The specific work in question is a series of small painted panels by Lucio Pozzi which were attached to the wall at those junctures where the pre-existing paint of the wall was divided into two separate colours, perhaps for the purpose of directional clarity or whatever function, aesthetic or otherwise, it held for the original school. Not only did Pozzi's panels match the wall colour to the point of near indistinguishability but its internal divisional structure also matched the exact line of division already existent on the wall. In short the painting was as near an exact replication of the physical form of the wall as
one could imagine without simply repainting the same wall. What was shocking about the juxtaposition of panels to the wall was their near invisibility. It was very easy not to notice them; however once one did it directed one's attention back to the wall itself, and for me at least, forced one to reconsider the wall in aesthetic terms previously unthought of. This is indeed a curious kind of mimesis, but one which I think is best explained in the terms of structuralist analysis. The following is from an essay by Roland Barthes entitled "The Structuralist Activity": We see then why we must speak of a structuralist activity: creation or reflection are not, here, an original 'impression' of the world (which a photograph is) but a veritable fabrication of a world which resembles the first one, not in order to copy it but to render it intelligible. Hence one might say that structuralism is essentially an activity of imitation which is also why there is, strictly speaking, no technical difference between structuralism as an intellectual activity on the one hand and literature in particular, and art in general on the other: both derive from a mimesis, based not on the analogy of substances (as in so called realist art) but on the analogy of functions (what Levi-Strauss calls homology)."2 Yet it is precisely the photographic process which serves as a model for such works of implicative structure. It is, very clearly, the impress of the world which surrounds them, which fills and structures their form and is also that which serves as "content" for the higher order of their artistic meaning. As Krauss points out, such work is rooted in the world with which it forms a co-existent bond, and serves in fact as a revelation or reminder of what is 'already there.' "If the surface of one of his panels is divided, that partition can only be understood as a transfer or impression of the features of a natural continuum onto the surface of the painting. The painting as a whole functions to point to the natural continuum, the way the word this accompanied by a pointing gesture isolates a piece of the real world and fills itself with a meaning by becoming, for that moment, the transitory label of a natural event. . . . Paintings are understood then as shifters, empty signs (like the
word this) that are filled with meaning only when physically juxtaposed with an external referent or object."³ Needless to say, Pozzi's work would be meaningless outside of its given context at P.S. 1.

Not all installations are so directly and rigidly tied to the space in which they exist but the point which Pozzi's work so forcefully makes is that intervention and/or a radical changing of the space is not the issue at stake in art of this nature, but rather, that acceptance of it is. Meaning is called forth by a revealing of the space not a re-creation or alteration of it. And it is within this context that the notion of the "contingent event" takes shape. Essentially the "contingent event" is the unpredictable but constantly intruding force of the world, the perpetual implosion of the external into the internal through the process of perception. The "mystery" of such work is rooted in this natural occurrence; it is neither installed in it, nor planned, it is allowed to happen by the creation of a non-specific (in meaning) but highly evocative set of structures. Again Barthes expresses what this "new" attitude toward the "meaning" of the work entails in terms of modern poetry: "Furthermore, the alleged relations between thought and language are reversed; in classical art, a ready made thought generates an utterance which "expresses" or "translates" it. Classical thought is devoid of
Architecture, rooted in the Greek verb "tikto," is never, by this reading a mere shaping of space, but a producing that brings something forth... to make something appear within what is present.

duration, classical poetry has it only in such degree as it is necessary to its technical arrangement. In modern poetics, on the contrary, words produce a kind of formal continuum from which there gradually emanates an intellectual or an emotional density which would have been impossible without them; speech is then the solidified time of a more spiritual gestation, during which the "thought" is prepared, installed little by little by the contingency of words. This verbal luck which will bring down a ripe fruit of a meaning, presupposes therefore a poetic time which is no longer that of a "fabrication" but that of a possible adventure, the meeting point of a sign and an intention."

One of the major results of this
the essential newness of
the poetic image poses the
problem of the speaking being's
creativeness. Through this
creativeness the imagining con-
sciousness proves to be very
simply but very purely, an
origin.

notion of an "installed" or
revealed message or meaning
rather than an imposed or con-
structed "thought" is to radical-
ly shift the focus of constitute-
meaning back from the work
itself onto the viewer. Meaning
develops through one's interac-
tion with the work, and it is
precisely that involvement on
the part of the viewer that is
necessary for the work to
"exist." Again there is an
analogy to literature in general
and particularly to the "nouveau
roman," a form of prose writing
which was developing in France
essentially throughout the early
sixties. In both cases the bur-
den of value (or meaning) is
shifted from the object—-from
the text or construction—-to the
process of the reader's or
spectator's engagement with it.
"Creation" is a function of the
reader and reading is the poetic
art. The artist does not create
art he merely provides the con-
ditions which render that expe-
rience possible. For example,
in the 1942 Surrealist Exhibition
in New York, Marcel Duchamp lit-
rally encased the entire gallery
and the paintings within it in a
complex web of almost impenetra-
ble and criss crossing ropes
physically making the effort to
see a struggle. "What interested
(Duchamp) in the Surrealist exhi-
bitions of 1938 and 1942 was not
so much the given space, full of
objects and pictures, but the
visitors." This "reference to
the user of the field" by Duchamp
is also evidence of the degree of
shifting in sensibility away from
the object as the primary element
of the viewer's attention on to
the process of his interaction
with it, an activity which can
only be enacted over time.

Robert Smithson's large scale earthwork the "Spiral Jetty" has frequently been described by himself and others as "a moment to moment passage through space and time." What is essential in that description is the choice of the words "moment to moment." If as Krauss claims, modern sculpture is obsessed with this idea of "passage" it is necessary to see that "passage" as a function of a "process"; specifically, of the time involved in viewing or rather experiencing the work "in reality." "The illusionism of the new temporal art reflects and occasions reflection upon the conditions of knowledge; it facilitates a critical focus of time." And the temporal commitment engendered and necessitated in the process of viewing or experiencing a great deal of modern sculpture and certainly one such as the "Spiral Jetty" is that of a slowed or greatly extended time sense. This slowed or extended time of the work which facilitates insight through sight, essentially seeks to clarify vision in experience by focusing the viewers attention on his own processes of seeing; as a strategy it finds a remarkable parallel in the notion of the "eidetic" or "phenomenological reduction." "Phenomenology is an attempt to film in slow motion, that which has been, owing to the manner in which it is seen in natural speed, not absolutely unseen, but missed, subject to oversight. It attempts slowly and calmly, to draw closer to that original intensity which is
The first thing to note phenomenologically about perception is that its objective the phenomenon perceived, is a phenomenon of two primary zones, so to speak: the focus and the background.

It may be proposed that the context, or surrounding, of art is more potent, more meaningful, more demanding, of an artist's attention, than the

not given in appearance, but from which things and processes do, nevertheless, in turn proceed. "8

What the nature of this "eidetic reduction" means in terms of artwork, and particularly in terms of installations is that the art object is reduced in importance. Emptied of content, its primary (though not sole) function is to serve as a "frame" for a more in-depth viewing of the space or the world which surrounds it and for the human activity which fills them both. Through its refocusing or re-directing of our vision, it gives us greater access not only to our own particular ways of seeing but also to that of the world at large. Framed in these terms the traditional concerns of foreground and background, figure and ground, become meaningless.
art itself. Put differently, it's not what the artist touches that counts most. It's what he doesn't touch.

as separate entities, but whose synthesis is integral to vision at its most fundamental level. Thus in installations, the surrounding space is not just the "ideal" location for viewing but the necessary and fundamental component of "sight/site."

This inherent dualism in perception with which phenomenology characterizes vision and which the eidetic reduction seeks to resolve, is modelled after and taken from the fundamental operations of the conscious mind, and is expressed in the concept of Intentionality. Very briefly, "intentionality" is the belief that the mind, or more properly consciousness, is both constitutive of meaning in the world and constituted by or dependent upon the phenomena of the world for its own meaning. That is, as

The paradoxical and profound result is that what consciousness intends and recovers without ceasing is the world of which it is a part and out of which all its undertakings (and all reflexion) come forth.
the conscious subject turns its attention to . . . , its very act of attention constitutes a "meaning"; there is, in short, no disinterested or objective vision, because the phenomena or information received from the world has meaning only in relation to . . . , the sum of past phenomena or experiences. Thus the subject cannot "constitute" meaning without having recourse to those past "meanings" constituted in consciousness through its experience of the world. "The meaning makes the subject be, and the subject constitutes the meaning. The subject then, forms part of the circular causality, for it is through the other and makes the other meaningful. But the subject is a privileged point in the circular causality for it is, as it were, the heart of the whole of mean-

ings and centers everything around itself as meaning-for-itself." So in the installation the object or objects and the space in which they exist are interdependent and constitute a "field" for the "meaning" which they can project--and the viewer occupies a privileged point in that it is his intentional projection of consciousness through his experience with the work that activates the meaning or possibility for meaning within the work. This centrality of the viewer as a being both apart from and a part of the work, in its "meaning" or value is a fact crucial to the nature of installations as an art form. Much of what we have described here could also be applied to the traditional theater, or more cogently to performance art, but in those engagements, which are
Reading is essentially rewriting in terms of one's own experience, the filling of the gaps deliberately or unconsciously left by the author.

also involved with perception and temporality, the emphasis is not on the viewer in the explicit manner that it is within an installation or more generally within the static arts as a whole. In theater and performance the "action" is done to . . . or presented to . . . the spectator, and is revealed or "constituted" by the actor/artist(s) and not solely by his own isolated intentional acts of attention to the work and his reactions within it. In this sense, then the "essence" of an installation is the setting up of a tableau or the construction of a situation understood as a "field" for the purpose of the viewer's mental and physical involvement within it. The artist is principally and merely the metteur-en-scene for the creative act.
The importance of space is heightened in the composition as it extends, for the interval between parts becomes a prime element of structure. Emptiness is endowed here with structural properties akin to silence in post-Webern music.

Physically, what the notion of this "open field" suggests is a generally less compressed and specifically placed object, in favor of a more extended and indeterminant structure or system or structures which are as open to the space of the room as they are concerned with opening it. General properties frequently include a sparseness and an extended format which tends to lead the eye or body across and through its elements. The fundamental characteristic however, is the formulation of a point to point movement, of an extension and passage through time and through the space. This motion can be physical or mental. As the work "opens" to its surroundings there is a deflating of the isolation between the work and the space, and an implicit invitation to see in the

An installation presents us with a "thought" room and an "actual" room, and they don't quite fit. When the spectator enters, his own "thought" room is set in conflict with that which the artist offers. Trying to sort them out, to say which is mental, which is real--which is imaged, which
work a relationship with the space as well as simply existing within it. Functionally, it is an explicit attempt (by the artist) to provide the basis for a dialogue between internal and external dimensions of the work in terms of its "form," and to engender a similar dialogue within the viewer in terms of the way it structures his experience of the work.

Internally, the dynamics of this dialogue focus around the idea of a radical dis-locaton or disorientation: in terms of the artwork, between figure and ground, and in terms of the viewer, between subject and object. The content of the "in"side of the piece is, literally, the "out"side in which it exists. Likewise, for the viewer, the body and one's experience of it is the thing in itself—we become embroiled in a tangle of philosophical questions.

When mobile points are used, the artist allows himself to "move" the points in order to create a "field" within a "field." In other words he manipulates the environment in order to construct inside it a spatial entity which is autonomous, thought still tied to the given field.

is the subject of the work for only by looking "out" from ourselves can we envision our own "in"ternal position in the space. Thus "meaning" does not reside solely within the confines of the work, nor is it conferred solely from without by the viewer, but rather is synthesized through their joint interaction. As in perception meanings do not always coalesce, congruities are not always established and facture is as much a component of the work's tension as is comprehension. In the work, as in the world, not everything "means," and the movement between consciousness and object is neither entirely constant, consistent nor comprehensible. But the objective of the work is not necessarily to provide a basis for such meaning which can, in any case, only be constituted within the
The very act of perception is a continual searching for and interpretation of incoming data. From moment to moment things shift in and out of control, from orientation to disorientation.

The Indians' choice of sites seemed based on physical needs—hunting and fishing. Yet a high degree of abstraction was always present. Truly direct art seems to me to avoid viewer's own consciousness; at best it can only set up a potential domain for the interaction which leads to such expansion. Thus the "experience" of the work is that of a "charged field" which is highly evocative though not deterministic. And the dynamics of the "forms" or information which it employs do not seek simply to describe an experience to produce one, but rather to go directly beneath experience and question the very perceptual mechanisms which render it possible. The structure of the work

*The term field here should not be confused with that of the same terminology as employed in Gestalt psychology, which is too restrictive for what is intended here. The notion of "field" here is one that is extensive in time as well as in space, both particular and whole, immediate and slowly unfolding, in short, "... not simply the arch, but the stones..."
the technique of representing abstractions on a portable surface or through portable objects. The petroglyphs were embedded in particular sites, and seemed rooted to necessity.

then serves to reveal its own internal mechanisms as it points towards those of our greater collective experience. It is "a structure which is structuring" and thereby rooted below the work as well as in the work, and the terms which it employs are not aesthetic so much as necessary.

Lastly, this notion of seeking to go directly beneath the "facts" of empirical reality to consider a more fundamental level of experience or consciousness is by no means an activity uniquely manifested within the arts. On the contrary it is the feature which characterizes the physical sciences today and contemporary thought in general. Since Freud's discovery, or, more exactly, "revelation" of the nature and role of the uncon-
Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are "housed."

... neither forms nor content exist per se: in nature as in mathematics every form is content for "higher" forms and every content form of what it "contains."

conscious, there has been a steady and persistent drive to investigate the aspects of human activity at a level below that of the conscious mind. From the literary concerns of Joyce's *Ulysses* and Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* to certain features of Einstein's theory of relativity there has been a consistent and pronounced shift of focus away from "events," and away from the description of physical matter, towards an exploration of the moments between events and the relations between things in physical reality. As a method, this particularly contemporary sensibility tends toward an analysis of the transitions between things; that is, on the process of their unfolding, and acknowledges the depth of our own hidden nature at the same time that it pronounces upon it.

In many ways it is within the disciplines of phenomenology and structuralism that this investigation of the pre-conscious functions of perception and of mind have been most radically confronted, and explained. Phenomenology essentially seeks to describe the structure of our perception and integration of phenomena in the subjective consciousness. And it attempts to do so by focussing on the very lowest level of our conscious experience. Phenomenology, as a philosophy, "is a rigorous science in the sense that is an investigation of the most radical, fundamental, primitive, original evidences of conscious experiences; it goes beneath the constructions of science and common sense towards their foundations in experience. It studies what all the particular
sciences take for granted and what we in "natural" everyday experience take for granted. A "presuppositionless" philosophy is one which will reach what is absolutely primary or most fundamental in experience. A "presuppositionless" philosophy is one which will reach what is absolutely primary or most fundamental in experience. A "presuppositionless" philosophy is one which will reach what is absolutely primary or most fundamental in experience.

Thus, phenomenology is the science which best describes the internal mechanisms of perception in the individual consciousness. Structuralism, on the other hand, posits that beneath individual experience there is a fundamental "human" mechanism or nature which governs or "structures" our epistemological understanding of the world and ourselves. In its analysis, structuralism basically seeks to shed light on the specifically human process by which we, as men, give meaning to things. "The goal of all structuralist activity whether reflexive or poetic, is to reconstruct an "object" in such a way as to manifest thereby the rules of functioning (the "functions") of this object. Structure is therefore a simulacrum of the object, but a directed interested simulacrum, since the imitated object makes something appear which remained invisible, or if one prefers unintelligible in the natural object. Structural man takes the real and decomposes it, then recomposes it; this appears to be little enough . . . Yet from another point of view this "little enough" is decisive: for between the two objects, or two tenses of structuralist activity, there occurs something new, and what is new is nothing less than the generally intelligible: the simulacrum is intellect added to the object, and this addition has an anthropological value, in that it is man himself, his history, his situation, his freedom, and the very resistance which nature offers to his mind. Structuralism then, in its "reconstruction" of the material world seeks to elucidate the fundamental mechanics of thought or more precisely the operational laws of the mind, and its focus is thereby more properly in the domain of the collective unconscious, or pre-conscious.

In attempting to follow this rather torturous and circuitous path between art, and specifically the form of installations, and phenomenology and structuralism one proceeds only to become lost in a thicket of language, and intellectual justice is done to none of the three. The reason
for such a method however, lies in the evocative notion that only in the experience of art does a synthesis between the individual/external focus of phenomenology and the collective/internal analysis of structuralism coalesce. In its own internal dynamics, the installation as a contemporary art form points to the structure of phenomena at one and the same time as it derives a vocabulary modelled upon the phenomenon of structure, and creates a reality of that singular experience which mirrors that of experience itself.

At the level of the poetic image, the duality of the subject and object is iridescent, shimmering, unceasingly active in its inversions.
II. To Sight/Site
The experience of these quietly flowing spaces goes deeper, suggesting that man saw himself and his creations as a normal extension of nature, as part of it—not in fear of and resisting its forces, or enclosing himself to gain an illusory sense of security, but in harmony with them, thus opening himself more and more, becoming one with nature's forms and spaces to a degree of being able to convey to us, in his own forms and spaces, the practical non-existence of the distinction between inner and outer space. After all where is the inside or outside of nature?

Gunter Nitschke
Through the late winter and early spring of 1978 my work was involved in three principal areas which seemed frequently to be mutually referential, though not necessarily related. These three projects were: an essay on the critical writings of Robert Smithson, entitled "Writing Art: Language and Intent in the Criticism of Robert Smithson," an installation project executed in an essentially empty and abandoned factory space on the fourth floor of Building E-40 on the edge of the M.I.T.
Kublai: I do not know when you have had time to visit all the countries you describe to me. It seems to me you have never moved from this garden.

Polo: Everything I see and do assumes meaning in a mental space where the same calm reigns as here, the same penumbra, the same silence streaked by the rustling of leaves. At the moment when I concentrate and reflect, I find myself again, always, in this garden, at this hour of the campus, and a study of the forms and characteristics of the Japanese Garden as an architectural and cultural manifestation. In many ways the experience and ideas developed through my involvement with these three projects have coalesced to form a basis both conceptually and formally for many of the ideas behind my most recent installation work, a project entitled "Cypher," and exhibited at the Center for Advanced Visual studies from 15 December to 2 January of this past year. What I should like to do then, is to rather briefly and schematically list some of the issues and concerns that were of interest to me in these three projects and to discuss briefly how their synthesis led to the "cypher" project. Before beginning I should also note that documentation for both the E-40
evening, in your august presence, though I continue, without a moment's pause, moving up a river green with crocodiles or counting the barrels of salted fish being lowered into the hold.

Kublai: I, too, am not sure I am here, strolling among the porphyry fountains, listening to the plashing echo, and not riding, caked with sweat and blood, at the head of my army, conquering the lands you will have to describe, or cutting off the fingers of the attackers scaling the walls of a besieged fortress.

Polo: Perhaps this garden exists only in the shadow of our lowered eyelids, and we have never stopped: you from raising dust on the fields of battle; and I, from bargaining for sacks of pepper in distant bazaars. But each time we half-close our eyes, in the midst of the dim and throng, we are allowed to withdraw here, dressed in silk kimonas, to ponder what we are seeing and living, to draw conclusions, to contemplate from a distance.

installation and the "Cypher" project are included in the Photographic Appendix: plates 1-4 are of the E-40 installation, nos. 5-9 are of "Cypher."

My principal interest within the essay on Smithson was centered on his writing, or more specifically, on the place his writing held with and within his work as a whole. In most cases an artists' writings serve as the locus for a more formal definition or explication of the thought which motivates their visual work. In this sense it is an "after-thought," a concretion or expression which follows the initial or principal expression of their visual work. This was not so true in the case of Smithson, however, for there was a very real effort in most of his writing to radically go
Kublai: Perhaps this dialogue of ours is taking place between two beggars nicknamed Kublai Khan and Marco Polo as they sift through a rubbish heap, piling up rusted flotsam, scraps of cloth, wastepaper, while drunk on the few sips of bad wine, they see all the treasure of the East around them.

Polo: Perhaps all that is left of the world is a wasteland covered with rubbish heaps, and the hanging garden of the Great Kahn's palace. It is our eyelids that separate them, but we cannot know which is inside and which outside.

beyond the analytic and explanatory, and to merge the act of reading with a more direct analog of experience, and specifically, the experience of art. What Smithson's conceptions of art entail are therefore crucial to an understanding of his "reading."

Essentially he sees art as an activity involved in the setting of limits, or defining a specific and directed set of limitations to sight—that is, at its most fundamental level a "siting" of vision. What this set of "limitations" really means then, is a "limiting" in the sense of bracketing or referencing of vision. In a sense this bracketing of vision is a kind of reduction which, like the Shoji screens used in traditional Japanese dwellings and particularly in the tea house, focuses vision on a specific

Aerial art can therefore not only give limits to "space," but also the hidden dimensions of "time" apart from natural duration—an artificial time that can suggest galactic distance here on earth. . . . It suggests the infinite in a finite way.
section of the landscape in order to clarify and heighten one's perception of the relation between oneself and one's place within a greater landscape beyond the immediate view. The idea is that in looking at the world as a whole the spectacle presented is by far too vast and omnipotent to perceive and the variety and rate of stimuli received too great to correlate. Smithson draws an analogy to aerial photography in which everything tends to become a meaningless haze due to the fact that there is simply too much information presented to vision to "see." But simplifies that condition by presenting specific points of reference for the eye and mind to focus or concentrate upon, and thought to extrapolate from. It is a limiting function, but one whose point is to limit external vision in order to expand mind. The physical gives rise to the metaphysical.

What these "limits" demand however, is the necessary construction of an "object" or a "system" which detaches itself from the world in order to render it communicable or visible; in short an abstraction. The "limits" of art then, are essentially a system of correspondences which are abstractions from the world and yet refer us back to it, without imposing themselves upon it. This feature of non-imposition is critical to Smithson's method, and it is essentially that which is the determining factor in the selection of materials, and forms in the visual work (a structure which is structuring). The com-

The Buddhist sense of place is most clearly expressed in their sand and rock gardens, in which consciousness of space transcends the forms. The world of desire of form and non-form is created only in the mind, here we are concerned with the void which is not of rational or analytical conception, but an existential experience of one whole being. The duality of "object" as space is so perfectly overcome in some Buddhist gardens that the onlooker is aware of neither one nor the other, he is made aware of the void, the very nature of himself and the universe.
parison here is to mapping systems, or to the mirror. That is, the correspondences are intended to serve as an empty "frame" or a transparent pane held to sight which redirects vision and which stimulates thought; but because transparent or "void" of content itself, forces one back into the world through the focus of one's own imaginative effort. This recourse to an image of maximum neutrality and the "void" object is central to the nature of all Smithson's work and seemingly to his own philosophical thought as well. Obviously, it is also a concept which shares a great deal with much of Eastern philosophy and of Zen in particular. What is crucial to a construction of this sort and to such a system of thought is the notion of an interpenetration between the form and the non-form: that is, in sculptural terms between the object and the space which contains it (site) in perceptual terms, between the viewer and the thing viewed (sight).

Contained within this vision of an ultimate penetrability between the categorical constructions of the human mind and the undifferentiated formlessness of the world is an acceptance of the unexpected, and the irrational and an acknowledgement of the ultimate meaninglessness of those distinctions. For Smithson the concepts of contingency and the dialectic between sense and nonsense in the formulation of "meaning" were things he expressed best and most radically in his writings. In particular
hyperbole. Each poem is a "grave" so to speak for his metaphors. Semantics are driven out of his language in order to avoid meaning.

Unorthodoxy of this sort is much in evidence in the recorded cases of Zen, which are not fettered by the ordinary rules of language. By saying that language in Zen does not necessarily follow ordinary usage, I do not mean that it is an unlettered or ignorant violation of linguistic rules, but rather that it transcends ordinary word usage because of its non-adherence to the latter. Since the records of Zen cases abound in such examples, it is no wonder that those examples cannot be read--according to the ordinary rules of language or logic. This means that there is present in the Zen records a rule-transcending meaning, which emerges where the regulations have been broken through.

his use of language was artfully constructed around a careful interweaving of a language of intellectual rigor with the irrational or ridiculous. The intention within this internally self-effacing "message" within the text is that of a radical decomposition of language as a system of logic in favor of a non-proscriptive sense of language. A language which makes allowance for contingency within its system of signification, and which does not attempt to lead one to set conclusions nor to reduce the difficulties and contradictions inherent within it, but rather to create a sort of "force-field" of potential meanings and propulsive thought.

It is a reconstruction of language which, in its very structuring, seeks to initiate mental action rather than conclude it, and to stimulate uncertainty rather than vitiate it. So in Smithson's writings one frequently has the sense that the further you advance "in reading" the further you seem from the "point," endings are mere beginnings, and the distinction between subject and object slip continually in and out of focus. Within that undifferentiated field of expression, the burden of "meaning" is shifted back onto the reader and the "arguments" initiated rest perpetually unresolved.

The "thought" is never concluded, and remains "incomplete" within the text itself--and is thereby constantly "in transition" towards meaning in the mind of the reader, who is literally forced to draw his own conclusions. Thus the carefully constructed "sense" of
linguistic structure is transferred into "non-sense" within its own system of order, and then re-constructed by the reader's act of intention to it; salvaged not by logic, but by imaginative release. This process of decomposition, transference, and re-construction in Smithson's writings is essentially the same dynamic that is at work in his system of Sites and Non-sites. The essential aspect of both these works of art, however, is that of their internal incompletion. The non-site refers back to site and forward beyond site to pre-history (or the world as a whole). The work of "art" does not end within the non-site itself but is also considered to be both the site, and the non-site together, but which are obviously "not visible" and "not there" in the same physical space and time. So the work of art can never be experienced totally, at once, and within the same moment, and in fact is never "completed." This total open-endedness of structure within the work is radically anti-Gestalt in its intentions and denies any possibility of formulating or experiencing the "whole" of the work at any one given moment. Rather the object or meaning is "installed" slowly and implicitly bit by bit over time. A strategy which bears remarkable resemblance to the internal structure of the stroll garden in which the path leads one on through a succession of partial views or glimpses without ever fully revealing the whole. Both systems suggest a time structure which is non-durational.

Finally, Smithson's choice and use of materials in all his work was of great interest to me. The materials he chose always seemed simple and direct and evocative, and yet because they themselves were not the subject of the work, nor were they chosen solely for their aesthetic qualities they seemed "rooted in a necessity" which was the very structure of the work. The mirrors, maps, rocks, instamatic snapshots, and even the earth itself were exceptional in their simplicity and commonality. Materials that were of ready access within the world of everyday use. Their economy as means likewise echoed the intentions to which they referred, eschewing both complicated technology and radical alterations of either form or function. Nonetheless there was a highly abstract quality about
them and a certain elegance and beauty that seemed to emerge from a careful concern for their presentation. I liked the idea that they were common objects which, with relatively little alteration were used to serve aesthetic ends in a very direct and unadorned manner. Even within his writings this care for presentation and clarity of structure were evinced. The actual physical form of his articles was frequently of great visual interest, but more importantly their layout served to "structure," quite literally and physically (i.e., through the act of reading) the mental action it sought to initiate. In many ways this direct and unrefined restructuring of common elements suggests a fundamental respect for the pre-existant order of the material world and a desire neither to interfere in it, nor even to change it. There is, in this attitude a deep connection with the Japanese sense of a veritable humility before Nature and at the same time communion with it.

The fundamental characteristic of the garden form within almost every cultural manifestation of it is the spatial/conceptual reading of it as an enclosure; that is, as a space or place removed from the world. This conception also applies to the Japanese garden, with the added understanding that this remove from the world is so structured as to give way to a reflection back upon the world, and is intended to re-orient oneself through the contemplation of

The following examples do not completely exclude geometry; they build up on it, use it when appropriate, transcend it when it is no longer useful. This leads to a sense of beauty dependent on accident and incompleteness, as found in nature. There is no longer an obvious use of form, but a unity of attitude that makes for categories of humanly conceived dynamic and changing structures, analogous to those visible in nature.
The phenemenological world is not the explicitation of a more natural form and order a fuller awareness of one's place in Nature and in the world. The Japanese conception of the garden is also characterized by a profound respect held for nature, and the understanding that true insight and true beauty must be based on the fundamental principles of order inherent in Nature. The role of the garden designer is essentially that of revealing the essence of Nature, and not with the construction of a new order. The garden, then, is a space in which nature is revealed in a limited way to give rise to a fuller vision of Nature as a whole. Essential to this understanding, however, is what the Japanese conception of "space" entails. For, "Japan's history does not include any development of science in the Western sense, primary being, but the foundation of being; philosophy is not the reflection of a more primary truth, but like art, the realization of a truth . . . the philosopher's approach to the world cannot be that of the objective scientist seeking to dominate, but rather that of the lover engaged in dialogue. For him philosophizing is a relearning to see the world.
or related spatial concepts. Space was never understood as a physical factor... One concludes rather from their best architecture that space as an entity does not exist at all. The Japanese sense of space is 'ma,' best described as a consciousness of place... (perhaps) the English word place could be used to imply the simultaneous awareness of the intellectual concepts form and non-form, object and space, coupled with subjective experience. In this way we can get a bit nearer to the Japanese concept of space which (can be referred to) as a sense of place, or simply 'ma.' So--this Japanese sense of ma is not something that is created by compositional elements; it is the thing that takes place in the imagination of the human who experiences these elements. In this sense then the garden is not primarily a space of enclosure but a "place" for reflection and a method for looking deeply into mind. It is an artificial remove in which one contemplates "ma," or the nature of space. Thus the internal dynamic of the subjective consciousness contained in the Japanese sense of place gives rise to an external form in the gardens which can best be described as a network of transitional or progressive "sign spaces."

This sense of "movement" in the Japanese garden is also a physical concept which takes shape from a more or less metaphysical vision of the world, and all things in it as constantly and inescapably engaged in a process of transition. It is a motion which is always en route to someplace else, and which underlies the fundamental instability of all things. This conception of movement is carried into the garden place primarily through the formulation of "paths," and to some extent, by the dry rock river and water forms. Paths in the Japanese garden do not serve primarily or exclusively as physical conduits; many are never meant to be followed, many are not reachable or attainable from the viewer's actual physical positioning and many are not completion, nor arrival at a specific destination, but propulsion or transport from a present state or
The dynamic nature of Taoist and Zen philosophies laid more stress upon the process through which perfection was sought than upon perfection itself. True beauty could be discovered only by one who mentally completed the incomplete.

"place" to another. Many of the paths are intended for sight alone, and their function is primarily to engender transportation in the imagination or mind of the onlooker. Perhaps it goes without saying that resolution of the paths' destination is not important, but rather their "completion" is enacted by the role of the viewer. Thus "incompletion" of vision is one of the fundamental elements of forms and their arrangement in the Japanese garden.

This incompletion of form in the garden is primarily suggested through the creation of sequential views, or sequencing, which also implies instability and motion. The revelation of form, or more precisely of "views" in the garden is never immediate but installed, slowly and incrementally, by a succession of partial glimpses over time. As one "follows" the paths of entry into the garden complex. The "whole" garden and the "complete" view are continually withheld and reduced by their incompletion in order to prolong the time of their experiencing and heighten the effect of their spatial articulation. This principle of reduction for the purpose of heightening effect is called SASHIAI or "mutual interference" and finds expression in many aspects of Japanese art and life. The most obvious case is that of the art of BONSAI, but it is also evident for example, in culinary habits in which a great variety of dishes and tastes, though of limited quantity, are presented to taste. The purpose foreseen in all of these reductions is to engender MITATE,
or a "new way of seeing."

Although, the Japanese garden as a form, pre-dated the introduction of Buddhist philosophy from China, this sense of expanding vision is at the very foundation of Zen thought. Likewise, Zen is a philosophy which originated outside of Japan, but found its fullest flower of expression in Japanese thought and life: just as it virtually took over as the dominant system of metaphysics in Japan, it was also taken over and infused with the very nature of Japan and of the Japanese mind. Thus in a very fundamental way Zen is of the essence of Japanese thought as Japanese thought is at the essence of Zen. So it is useful or rather, necessary in trying to understand

Irregularity here is deformation . . .

... intense color, being a specific element, detaches itself from the whole of the work . . . .

... simplicity as the negation of clutter may be spoken of as "boundless"—nothing limiting.

the garden form to consider the "seven Zen characteristics," necessary for aesthetic release.

They are as follows:

1. Asymmetry
2. Simplicity
3. Austere Sublimity (or Lofty Dryness)
4. Naturalness
5. Subtle Profundity (or Bright Darkness)
6. Freedom from Attachment
7. Tranquility

Asymmetry is characterized by the notion of informality, something free and free-formed. It is a form which denies hierarchies within it and which contains both the perfect and the imperfect. Simplicity means sparse, or uncluttered, unobtrusive in colour, and diversity is avoided. It embodies a search for the essence of things and reduces all things to a single clear
If it resembles something it would no longer be the whole.

instant or instance.

Austere Sublimity or lofty dryness embodies the concept of being seasoned, of great age. Within austere sublimity there is a disappearance of the sensuous and a penetration to the essence of the form.

Naturalness means not-artificial, but it is always the result of a creative act or intent so concentrated that there is no separation between one and the object being formed. It is an immersion of the subject in the object and the form in non-form: when there is no separation between the two the union is "natural."

Subtle Profundity or bright darkness operates by implication rather than direct exposure, it expresses a massive stability. Its principle characteristic is the containment of a calm.
darkness, in which things are indistinct, yet alive and "bright."

Freedom from Attachment means unconstrained in action, and not adhering to rules or regulations. It finds its fullest expression in the idea of mastering the craft and then forgetting it in order to express it.

Tranquility expresses a quiet calm, and is a result of being inwardly oriented. It is characterized by the concept of "rest amidst motion."

These characteristics carry over in some form and in various manifestations throughout all the arts of Japan and infuse them with a sense of spirituality which is endemic to their very nature.

Art works out of the inexplicable. Contrary to affirmations of nature, art is inclined to the concepts which lie behind them are in many ways the intellectual formalization or the externalization of qualities which are in actuality one with the forms that express them.

Somehow it seems ironic that in order to discuss those elemental forms and specific qualities of the Japanese aesthetic, one is forced to first submit to the sort of intellectual and linguistic circumambulation we have developed thus far. It is, in fact, a translation of those forms of essential simplicity and directness into a complexity and obscurity. Like the Japanese who "discovered Newton through Einstein and the pendulum through the transistor" it is the order which seems reversed, and the understanding perhaps overly articulated. What I am driving at is that while the concepts
semblance and masks, it flourishes on discrepancy. . . . Judgements and opinions in the area of art are doubtful murmurs in mental mud. Only appearances are fertile; they are gateways to the primordial.

and ideas within Zen and those embodied within the Japanese garden aesthetic are stimulating and rich in connection with those formulated by Smithson, and are clearly related to the phenomenological and structural models developed in the first section of this paper, they are still, nonetheless, an afterthought and an attempt to stratify and rationalize an experience which is, by nature elusive and mysterious. In short, it was primarily in the act of looking at the gardens and the specific forms and objects which comprised them that a rich field of visual stimuli and associations with my own work, in both conceptual and formal terms, began to develop and found some expression within the E-40 installation piece. The following then are a small, but select, number of specific elements which seem to me to bear some connection both with the E-40 piece and its more complete resolution in the Cypher project.

We have already spoken of the principle of SASHIAI or "mutual interference" in relation to the formulation of "partial views" or sequential glimpses presented to the viewer as the moves through the garden complex. Though not specifically of the same reductive nature the YOGOSEKI or "bound rock" (see figure a) which usually appears at or near the entrance to a garden, is an element which bears strong ideational connection with the "framed" and "bound" (by the black paint) fluorescent tubes of the E-40 piece (see photos 1-4 in appendix). The YOGOSEKI is mystically thought to contain the spirit
of the temple within the garden, but its more immediate and specific purpose is to serve as a kind of indication or indexical sign which announces to the viewer that he is entering the garden complex. But this announcement is more than simply a boundary limit; rather, it indicates, or reminds the viewer that what he is about to enter is not nature but a human and purposeful reconstruction of its essential forms and orders. In structural terms it is an indication of intellect added to the object: in strictly visual terms it is not an alteration of the rock as an object, but rather is a means of "framing" or circumscribing it, of marking it off for the purpose of revealing or pointing to its essence. In a very human and very simple way it "abstracts" that rock from the total environment, signals it out for special attention and yet does so without altering or changing its fundamental "rock"ness. Most YOGOSEKI it should be noted are much less formal in their arrangement than that pictured here, with the rope "bind" very loosely and casually draped over the rock. There is, for me, a complementarity between the function of the rope in the "bound rock" form and the black paint which covers the fluorescent tubes in both the E-40 installation and the Cypher project, and "binds" their light everywhere but in the two narrow slits left exposed approximately one third of the distance from the end of each tube. Although not my intention to consciously respond in such a manner to the YOGOSEKI form, it seems significant to me now that from the beginning I have referred to them as instances of "bound" light. And in fact, their function does bear some resemblance to that of the "bound rock." Without changing the fundamental design of the tubes --they are still recognizable as common fluorescent tubes with all the necessary wiring mechanisms and fixtures virtually unchanged and intact--the blacked out sections simply reduce the issuance of light emitted and tend to focus one's attention back in to the internal mechanics of the light itself, and onto the photoelectric "essence" of its luminosity. It reduces the total illuminating capacity of the lighting system in order to render the "light" itself visible.
The shoji screens, the thin rice paper and wood louvers, which serve in traditional Japanese architecture a function somewhere between that of windows and walls, is another element which makes use of visual reduction to stimulate mental expansion or imaginative release as well as serving a practical purpose. The shoji works as a set of vertically or horizontally sliding panels which can effectively shut off or open up any space for a multiplicity of different functions and views. The screen in fig. b is characteristic of such a wall/window panel partially opened to reveal a specific and limited view of a small garden. Quite literally here the screen "frames" the sight exposed, and by so doing reduces one's own specific frame of reference. It reduces vision (in this case) in order to promote reflection. But the shoji screen is reductive of vision in another sense as well; that is, through its subtle and diffuse filtration of light when closed. Its thin sheets of rice paper provide a warm glow of non-reflective light within an overall dimness and virtual remove from the outside which produces a sense of quiet stillness and inward directed tranquility. The distracting notion and activity of the world is blocked but the evanescence of its insubstantial warmth and light are permitted entry. The overall diffuseness and permeability of the paper is further heightened by the very sharp and clean horizontals and verticals of their wood framing devices.

The industrial design windows of the former factory space that is now E-40 are full horizontal frames which run the length of the wall between each column set, and vertically comprise about three-fourths of the wall plane from floor to ceiling. They are made up of stacked rows of smaller panes, and pivot open and shut much like a casement window set vertically. With the exception of the bottom row, which are clear lights, the individual panes are fitted with a wire-mesh embedded glass whose surface is stippled, and approximately 1/4" thick. The effect is a drastic reduction of visibility through the glass which, while not entirely opaque, could at best be described as translucent. The light which enters then is greatly diffused and yet due to the extensive
quantity of wall space given over to windows, great in volume. Also, due to variations in the pattern of stippling in the glass, (and the figuration of the glass) and the figuration of the wire mesh within which, as the windows broke and were replaced, apparently changed over time with slightly different patterns of the same style glass replacing the old, there was a subtle but perceptible differentiation in the colour of light transmitted by various panels. It was possible to sit and simply direct one's gaze, towards the changing spectacle of light across the window surface, especially at those times of the day when the sun's light was at an oblique angle to the window plane. That, and the relative emptiness of the space, which had been largely, though not totally, cleared of objects (except for those electrical connections, piping systems and machine parts too large or too difficult to remove) suggested a quality of light and its play within the space very much akin to that of the fixed shoji in rustic and traditional forms of Japanese architecture. (See figures c and d—and also photo plate 1 for comparison of shoji to the window structures). I was very much drawn to the diffuseness of the light transmission in the E-40 space and the foil it provided to the sharp edges of the wood frames which held the tubes, but also to the fact that the single bottom row of clear lights (panes) of glass "limited" one's vision "out" to a very specific and narrow frame of reference, dependent upon where you stood, but generally to that of the roof structure of the adjacent building and nothing above or below. Within that relatively empty and abandoned space of the roof the only "change" was a function of weather and the only "activity" that of projection.

Just as the importance of motion in the garden structures flows from the concern of all things being perpetually in transition, the visual points of connection or interstices between forms and spaces is elevated to a level of prime concern and given considerable attention. The "edge transitions" in Japanese gardens are those points at which the elements of form and non-form meet and are co-joined. The purpose of the edge is not to mark distinction between elements of different corporal materiality.
but to suggest their inherent or underlying unity. The variety of expression and means for enacting this transition-less transition in the Japanese garden forms is as inventive and endless as the materials they connect. (See figures e through g.) In the E-40 installation the white sand was intended to serve as a "greyed" or dark foil to the intense white of the light emitted from the slits in the tubes, and as a "whitened" or light contrast to the dark mass of the floor and the black "lines" of the fluorescent tubes themselves. Thus as a surround it served as "negative" space to the light and "positive" form to the floor—and through the interconnection of floor and tubes erases that formal distinction. Similarly, the sand as a substantial element in relation to the light emphasizes the insubstantiality of the light as a thing in itself, but at the same time, by providing a base for the reflection of that light in "lines" across its surface it also stimulates and renders visible a very substantial and formal (in the sense of formative) quality of the light. In relation to the floor, by contrast, the sand reads as essentially insubstantial, spilling out and over the floor surface more like a liquid than a solid, and yet as a "positive" form, visually, it is etched very clearly and formally into the floor space. So the sand functions as a kind of mediating device in the E-40 installation, setting off the "formal" elements of tubes and frame from the "empty" space of the room, but also joining them together through a dialectic of transition whose resolution is their perceptual irresolution and interpenetration.

Perhaps one of the most obvious visual elements of design in the Japanese aesthetic is the interplay between horizontals and verticals. There seems to emerge from within this dynamic of repeated units cut by their inverse structural forms, certain feelings of expansion or internal co-extension in time and space. But on the surface they are simply compelling and elegant forms composed of simple and irregular units artfully joined. (Figures h and i offer some indication of that visual interplay.)

E-40 is essentially a cast concrete and masonry structure;
designed for maximum floor loads, it is a two way flat slab with columns set every 25 feet on a square grid pattern, with mushroom caps where the columns meet with the ceiling. The total area of the fourth floor is approximately 22,000 square feet, most of it at this time, virtually empty of forms, but extremely rich in a variety of textures and distinct but subdued colours; a residue from its service as a carbon paper factory. Because of the extensive horizontal openness of its space and the large number of columns set at regular intervals within it there is a strong visual dynamic between floor and ceiling, and it was my intention to work with that dynamic in the structures I placed there. My original intention in re-working the space of the room was not to construct the single fluorescent light and sand installation shown in photos 1-4 but rather to create a series of island-like "complexes" which detached themselves to some extent from the space and reflected back on that floor to ceiling movement essentially through the use of light, while remaining in a close and low horizontal contact with the floor. A second such complex similar to that pictured here, though somewhat larger, was built using rough 6x6 lumber and two shades of grey and black gravel to fill four "bins" into which a series of incandescent bulbs, which hung suspended from the ceiling were buried. Also included were a series of eccentric ladders placed at irregular intervals between the two sand and light "complexes," with the intention of further accentuating the visual movement from floor to ceiling. Yet somehow neither the ladders nor the incandescent construction seemed capable of competing with the inherent visual rhythms and complexity of the space itself, nor did they seem to integrate themselves with it in the manner that the fluorescent piece began to. As a whole the installation seemed to fail although there were certain rich and unexpected integrations among isolated details of the total space. On the one hand the scale of the objects simply did not seem sufficient to detach themselves from the room in order to render visible their connection with it. Or perhaps the Japanese notion of reduction in size as a necessary requirement for the
engendering a new way of seeing is more universally valid in perceptual terms than we in the west would normally admit. In either case, in both the Japanese conception of visual ordering, and in the models developed from phenomenology there is a strong imperative which asserts that vision always moves from the contemplation of the detail to the whole; and it is true, in perceptual terms, that the eye acts as a relational scanning device constantly shifting its attention from point to point and establishing a composite picture of the whole from the sum of the relations between those points. In E-40, it was not simply the size of the room that rendered the installation there inaccessible to vision but rather the plethora of detail already extant within the space that blocked it. The complexes of tubes, frames and lights, and the textures of gravel and wood were simultaneously too complex and too similar to the visual elements already in the space to separate themselves from it and allow the eye to focus on any one point or form. Perhaps, what the panels installed by Lucio Pozzi at P.S. 1 suggest is that in dealing with spaces of great visual complexity it is generally a form of related or isolated simplicity that will render them most approachable to sight.

Finally, what the experiences in E-40 suggested, and the issues which the Japanese gardens revealed within that work, was a model, both conceptual and formal, which in a very basic way began to define a form and a formulation for the installation which became the Cypher project. The dialectics between form and non-form in the perceptual awareness of any object seemed to dictate the construction of an object that would resist specific definition as . . . , and which would suggest definition only in relation to that which it was not: that is, the space, of which it would, paradoxically, also be a part. What I sought then was a form which would be totally integrated with and within the space of the room, physically holding a very tentative position within that room and yet also be very dominant in the sense of charging or animating its space. Formally, there seems to be a universal and
fundamental connection between "darkness" and "reverberation" which was suggested by the blacked out fluorescent tubes in E-40 and which I was interested in exploring further. In the Zen notion of "darkness" there exists an association with a profundity and calmness that leads to "endless reverberation" or bottomless expression. "... By endless reverberation is meant the in-capability of being totally expressed or exposed, it could also be characterized by the word inexhaustibility, implying, not lack of resource, but the quality of being bottomless." There is clearly a strong connection here with Smithson's termination of the state of de-differentiation and its relation to the experience of art. It is, I believe, a fundamental element, if not the element necessary for the expression of mind into imaginative release that is the essence of "art's" experience.

This is where the phenomenological doublet of resonances and repercussions must be sensitized. The resonances are dispersed on the different planes of our life in the world, while the repercussions invite us to give greater depth. In the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is our own ... Through this reverberation, by going immediately beyond all psychology or psychoanalysis, we feel a poetic power rising naively within us. After the initial reverberation we are able to experience resonances, sentimental repercussions, reminders of our past. But the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface.
III. Cypher
The silence on the floor of my house is all the questions and all the answers that have been known in the world.

Agnes Martin

Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs, and caution arrests, but which starts again when we are alone. As soon as we become motionless we are elsewhere.

Gaston Bachelard
The installation project entitled "Cypher" was executed at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies between the 15th of December 1978 and the 2nd of January 1979. Briefly, the work consisted of a low grey gravel "mound" approximately 18' in length by 14' wide which rose flush from the floor to a height of approximately 12" at its point of contact with the wall into which it butt ended. At a level of 3" above the gravel a row of 12 florescent tubes 8' long and about 6" apart were mounted and rose, supported by small wooden struts, in line with the slope of the gravel. Both the florescent tubes and the wooden supports were painted flat black, with the tube ends and the electrical connectors left exposed silver. Exactly 24" from either end of each tube a 1/2" slit of the lamp was left open, and from which the entire luminous output of the lamp was emitted. The only other element which interrupted the constant but gradual rise of the gravel mound or slope were the wires which completed the circuit from each tube end to the ballast. There were six ballasts; one per set of two lamps, all ballasts were "buried" underneath the gravel of the slope. All lamps, connectors and ballasts were of standard manufacturer's trade stock, and all 12 lamps ran off the same 110 volt A.C. line.

The "mound" itself was constructed of a raked 2x4 frame sheathed with 3/8" construction grade plywood and then covered entirely with gravel. It required roughly 1000-1500 lbs. of gravel uniformly spread to completely cover the frame and sides flush into the floor. Other than these elements which composed the mound itself, and a small box of momentary contact switches to start the florescent tubes, the room was essentially empty.
Yet it was the room itself which was perhaps the most crucial element to the experience of the piece.

As the above description hopefully makes clear, the piece itself was constructed of very few elements and was essentially very simple in design and form. (See photo plates 5-9 in appendix.) There is, in a certain sense, not much to talk about as concerns its specific form—yet its presence in the space engendered a somewhat more complex experience, and its form was, in fact, built to the dimensions of the room itself, and many of its formal elements were intended to relate in a very specific manner to the spatial features of this somewhat unusual space. Thus the form of the mound itself grew out of a consideration of the room and of its eventual placement within it, and was equally reflective of the room as its own form and presence reflected upon the space.

The exhibition room at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies is roughly a square cube, approximately 30'x30' with a partial ceiling on 3 sides of the room which measures 14' from floor to ceiling. (See photo plates 8 & 9.) In the central core of the room and along the fourth wall the ceiling rises dramatically to a height of approximately 25-30' at a sharp angle where it "peeks" into a series of windows which run the length of that central opening and act as a kind of upright skylight.

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.
"But which is the stone that supports the bridge?" Kublai Khan asks.
"The bridge is not supported by one stone or another," Marco answers, "but by the line of the arch that they form.

Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds: "Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me."
Polo answers: "Without stones there is no arch."
One of the most interesting features of the room itself are the shadows which are cast into the corners where the walls and lower half-ceiling meet due to the strong downward infusion of light from the upper story windows (see photo plate 3) and it is, in fact, these shadows which determined the angle of incline from the sides of the slope to the floor.

In a rather unusual way each of the walls is characterized by some particular feature which rendered the placement of the mound against it problematic. The wall closest to the entranceway of the room is graced with a rather ungainly sink which greatly reduces the available wall space, and was in any event out of the question due to the fact that such a placement would have required the viewer to literally back into the piece. The wall directly opposite to the skylight wall (against which the mound was in fact placed) is effectively blocked by a supporting pillar. That left only the skylight wall, which had the unfortunate problem of a large radiator casing running the length of it, and the far wall opposite the door (see photo plate 6), which was problematic in that it was not square to the rest of the room but sloped off at an angle of approximately $100^\circ$ from the far corner. This skewness of angle, however, was not the final reason for deciding against its placement along that wall. Rather, the crucial factor was in the spatial dynamic of the room itself. The dramatic rise of the ceiling opening up the central core of the room and ascending towards an airy lightness seemed to sweep the whole of the room itself up from its windowless and symmetrically enclosed frame. I liked the idea that the gravel slope rose up from the floor in a similar manner and the sense that the upward spread of the light from the fluorescent tubes would not be bound by the room, or rather the lower half-ceiling which ran the length of that far wall. I also was interested in the way that the mound "fit" into that open slot of the ceiling's remove, and did not like the notion of cutting across its central axis perpendicularly. Lastly, I was not interested in presenting a full view of the piece to the viewer immediately upon entry into the space. It was clear even
before it was built that the piece would demand a commitment of time on the part of the viewer to enter into it; both physically to adjust to the low level of light, and mentally to slow oneself to its level of stasis. A relationship which would be less clearly presented by an immediate and frontal angle of viewing. Thus I was left with the skylight wall and the problem of the radiator which I chose to resolve by ignoring. In retrospect, the radiator seems more problematic and obtrusive than I had initially realised. It produced the unwelcome function of "centering" the piece, imparting to it a sense of monumentality which does not seem endemic to it, and also served to destroy the juncture between the mound and the wall which is, of course, a crucial transition. I am not certain however that covering it would have added greatly to resolving these problematic features. What the above indicates is the nature and direction of some of the decisions which entered into the formulation and conception of such a piece. The following attempts to trace some of those issues and elements which the piece itself gave rise to.

In a review of environmental works constructed at Documenta 5 Carter Ratcliff singled out two specific works by Bruce Nauman and Michael Asher for special attention. What he says about them reflects directly on the use of light in environmental works and about the nature of light generally in perceptual and

At its present stage emitted light best demonstrates one of the primary qualities of systems: the tendency to fuse art object
and environment into a perceptual whole. 

imaginative terms; "The reflective power of the white paint Asher used relates precisely to the intensity of the lighting: the white surfaces have as much light as they need to reveal themselves, but no more; dimness is given its own clarity," and relates to the idea of centering and the role of light in developing a sense of body awareness or personal space. "As one edges back and forth in the space, the walls seem to gather light from the gallery. The interior is diffused with a soft private glow, relieved along its curves by faint shadows. The ends of the walls are not visible from the center. One is constantly on the move, finding and refining the limits of the space, only to have one's conception of it undercut by the ingratiating vagueness Controlled by my hands, the light appeared in manifold projections around entire rooms . . . Feelings of tranquility, suspension of normal balance and an increased sensation of space were reactions that viewers volunteered to me after finding themselves in the center of the event. That their everyday fearful nervousness diminished was a sensual effect that I welcomed.

In itself, revery constitutes a psychic condition that is too frequently confused with dream. But when it is a question of poetic revery . . . one is no longer drifting into somnolence.
of the light and the subtle curvature of the wall. Linear and aerial perspective, tonal and coloristic ambiguity, achieve meaning as one moves in the space. This unifies visual and bodily experience, providing a basis for the conceptual grasp of a specific locale. Clearly, there is something about light that allows us remove into an interior region that somehow seems important or necessary. Obviously, theater has long made use of light to create or suggest "mood" and there is ample documentation of man's early attraction and attention to the sun and fire—the fundamental elements of warmth and light. There is a very basic and primal affinity within the mind to low level incidences of light, and contact within it frequently gives rise to imaginative or poetic release. It seems that physiologically a reduction of light into dark, but not total obscurity, is one of the most conducive or immediate vehicles for subjective phenomenological reduction, or removal of self from externality to a more inner directed act of attention. Such intentional acts of remove or retreat have long been prevalent in the arts and philosophies of the East, and it is not incidental that their long involvement with such processes have resulted in such schema as meditation and a wide variety of artistic disciplines for the attainment of such states of inner attentiveness and external remove. Clearly, in the west we are becoming increasingly aware of such fundamental relationships with ourselves,
and their importance, as the pace of our own flux and that of the social environment drastically increases. Art is one of the principal activities which can genuinely respond to such issues today because it is not only reflective of its current social position and tensions but simultaneously relates those external concerns to deep and fundamental areas of psyche below conscious construction.

So in the Cypher project there was something about the quality of light in its relation to the forms and materials of the piece as a whole in the space that gave rise to an experience of surprising calm and tranquility. The recurrent comments of visitors to the work expressed the sense of serenity

... the activity of the surface implied the interior activity so that they created an interest in what you couldn't see.

Because it leans against the wall the empty space is at eye level--a space for contemplation ...

... the interior space is physically inaccessible to you, but it is accessible in that you can project mentally into it. it seemed to impart to them. Although this quality of meditative-ness was not overtly my intention, it was something clearly present in the work once it was completed and seemed to have grown out of the work itself and to belong to it in a very natural and fundamental way. As the quote which introduces this section suggests, there is something about stillness which gives rise to expansion, and it seems that it is the inherently static nature of the mound and its placement in the room which stimulate such experience. Both the shape of the form and the massive physical weight of the gravel as a material suggest immobility, but also confer a concealment or a buried sense of energy and mystery. The mound conceals the floor from view and also the
source of the light's energy; but its more fundamental and profound mystery or concealment is that of its own internal rationale or reason for being. "The greater portion of the symbol will always remain unknown, since it contains within its own essence the "unknowable"; otherwise extension into space would cease. The Essence contained in the essence of the symbol is the irrational core which provides the ever expanding element. This core is the infinity contained in the symbol and can never be translated. This core is absolutely infinite and "unknowable." It extends itself through the mind experiencing itself. It is the zero representing infinite extension . . . "13 The reflection which it invites however, is also one of reflection . . . it is a concealment which is revelatory, for what it is hiding, is also our own mystery.
The brain can be represented as a rectangular matrix of at least two (but perhaps several) dimensions which can be "read" up and down or side to side . . .

"Dynamic imbalances" represented by these schematics are rooted in the perceptual dynamics of the piece itself, but are complex because they form an essentially ambiguous or contradictory field of relationships. That is, the light of the fluorescent tubes . . . it is the logic or oppositions and correlations, exclusions and inclusions, compatibilities, which explains the laws of association, not the reverse.

The mound form is relatively resilient in relation to its surroundings rather than rigid. Both its perimeter and parameter are defined by what is not seen of it as much as by what is seen. It is an implicative form.

The mystery of containment within the form elicited by its low profile and lid-like structure.

Obviously rises upwards yet the tubes themselves, and all their operational mechanisms, wires, electricity, fixtures and supports are clearly rooted down, within the interior space of the gravel mound, and, hypothetically, connected to the ground or floor. Similarly the lines of light which
tubes throw beneath themselves seem etched into and absorbed by the very substance of the gravel which reveals and reflects them—so the light also contains within itself a downward or inner directed movement. The gravel is also clearly rooted in the floor and the heaviness and compression of its massive substantiability suggests a clear and obvious demonstration of the gravity which is at its base. Yet it too implies a sort of contradictory movement within its perceptual field; for the angle of its slope, the point of its contact with the vertical element of the wall, and particularly its low tonal value and colour relationship to the rug of the floor and the off-white of the walls and ceiling produce a floating sensation or a lightness which borders on a certain insubstantiality.
The form reflects the complementary directions of forces in the overall system in which it assumes an active part. The external pressures and currents accompanying those that radiate from hidden points within it are mutually self-evident in the nature of the form. It is a form that is constantly becoming, at each moment serving both as a mirror of its past and a premonition of its future.

The dialectics involved within the forms of this piece are clearly those of horizontality and verticality—and it is precisely those spatial qualities as applied to temporality which activate its projection into the room. That is, there is a duality inherent in the slope of the gravel mound between the vertical element of the wall and the horizontal element of the floor. One is forced to read the movement of the gravel plane as either rising up from the floor to the wall—(a vertical ascent that directs itself backwards away "from" the room; i.e., from the present receding towards the past) or, spilling out from the wall into the room—(a horizontal spread or flow which pushes itself proleptically forward in "to" the space of the room; i.e., projecting forwards through the present towards the future). The relative stability of the fluorescent tubes, in counterpoint, suggests a non-durational temporality or a perpetual present through which the mound slices.

Perhaps what is most significant about this equivalent "visual explanation" of such dynamics within the piece, is the finally inextricable entanglement and interpenetration of the linguistic directionals which seek to define it; i.e., of the absolute arbitrariness of all the "to"'s, "from"'s, "toward"'s, "out of"'s, "backwards"'s and "forwards"'s. For the form which the piece takes in relation to space is that of "no-form" and the position it occupies temporally is that of "no-time" and yet despite that fundamental state of indefi-
nition managed to manifest an aura and a presence which clearly defined a "sense of place" both in and of itself and for those who viewed it.

This "sense of place" is the potentiality for the object's "life-in-the-world" and is a function of its relation to the space in which it exists, just as that same "sense of place" which interaction with the work calls forth in the viewer is a function of their inter-relationship. For me, it is the establishment of this "sense of place" through the sight/siting of a work of art in the space of the world in a manner which is neither obtrusive nor overly reticent which is at the essence of an installation. When the work is successful, it succeeds because it establishes a palpable "presence" which extends beyond the strict limits and confines of its physical form and gives definition to space in terms that are other than strictly mechanistic and explicable. The object takes on a non-physical presence or emanation that is unquestionably "there" and yet insubstantial. "You relate to them the way you might relate to a sleeping person, to the potential energy that is manifested in a dormany state. You sense a space much greater than the volume actually used up, and a reason more fundamental than reason. Chance happenings compensate each other and the "dust of facts" makes an agglomeration which forms a design delineating the human situation in a certain manner, thus making it possible for me to see it and to speak it.
installed view. Cypher
APPENDIX

photographs: 1-4
  E-40 installation

photographs: 5-9
  Cypher project installation
FOOTNOTES


11. Ibid., p. 131.


MARGINALIA


p. 22: Thevanez, p. 86.


ILLUSTRATIONS

p. 50. fig. a  YOGOSEKI, barrier guardstone.  
              approach to Shulzo-in.

fig. b  partially opened Shoji, Bosen Tea Room.  
          Koho-an, Daitoku-ji, Kyoto.

p. 53. fig. c  Shoji. Traditional Farmhouse.
fig. d.  Windows. E-40 installation.

p. 55.  Three Edge Transitions
fig. e  waterway, Moss garden  
        Saihoji Temple

fig. f  detail: silica sand, frames and floor  
        E-40 installation

fig. g  composition of three shades and textures.  
        porch border. Nanzen-ji, Kyoto.

p. 57. fig. h  bamboo fence.  
              Maruyama Park, Katsura.

fig. i  detail: fluorescent tube.  
        E-40 installation
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