Row

trajectories through the shotgun house

Projects
AR+D unigroup
Craig Barton
David Brown
Felecia Davis
Walter Hood
SUMO
Sheryl Tucker de Vasquez
WPa (Williams+Pizzini architects)

Essays
Nathaniel Belcher
Stephen Fox
Christopher Hight
bell hooks
Alvia Wardlaw
LaVerne Wells-Bowie
Mabel Wilson

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ROW

trajectories through the shotgun house

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Row: trajectories through the shotgun house
Architecture at Rice 40

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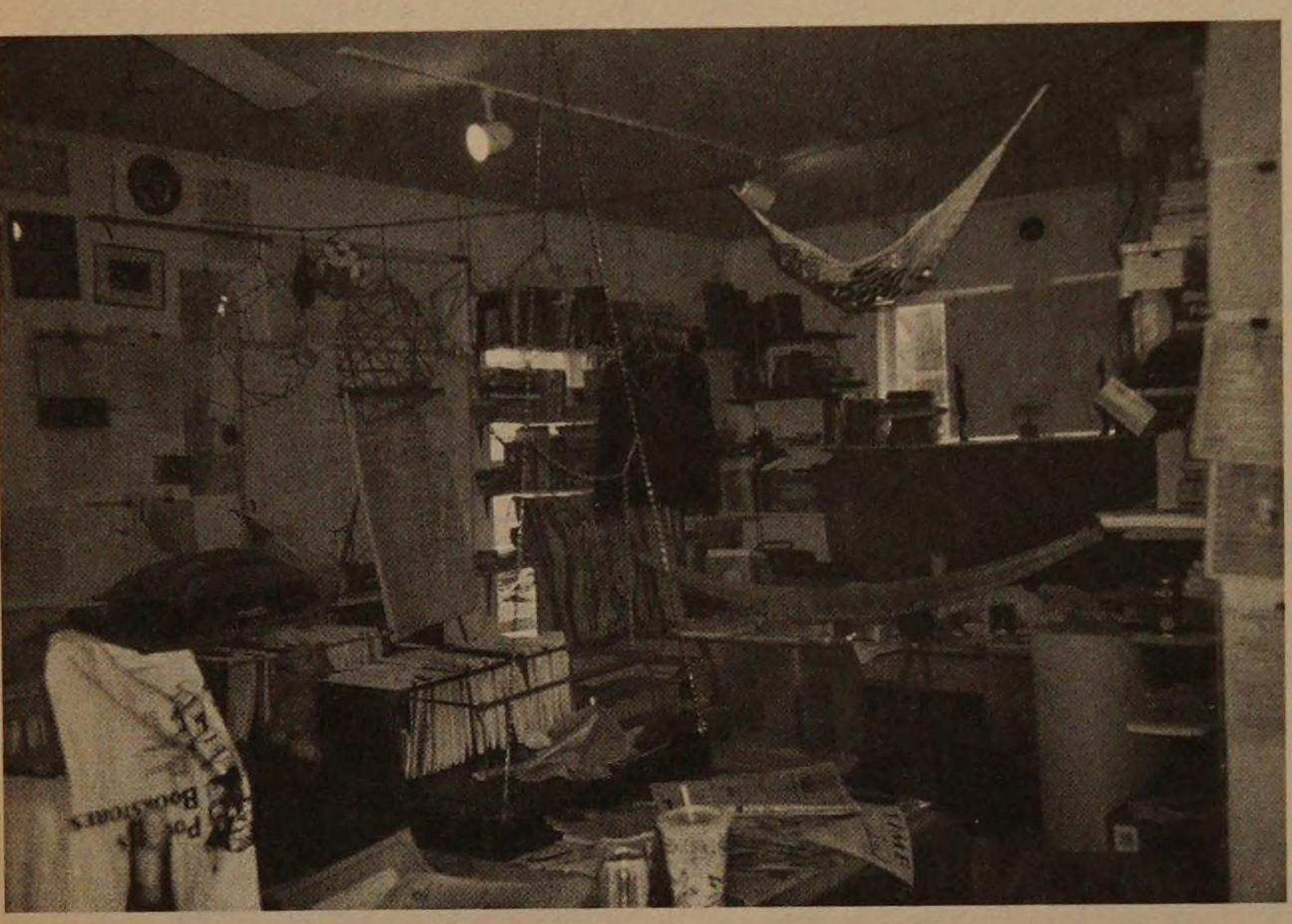
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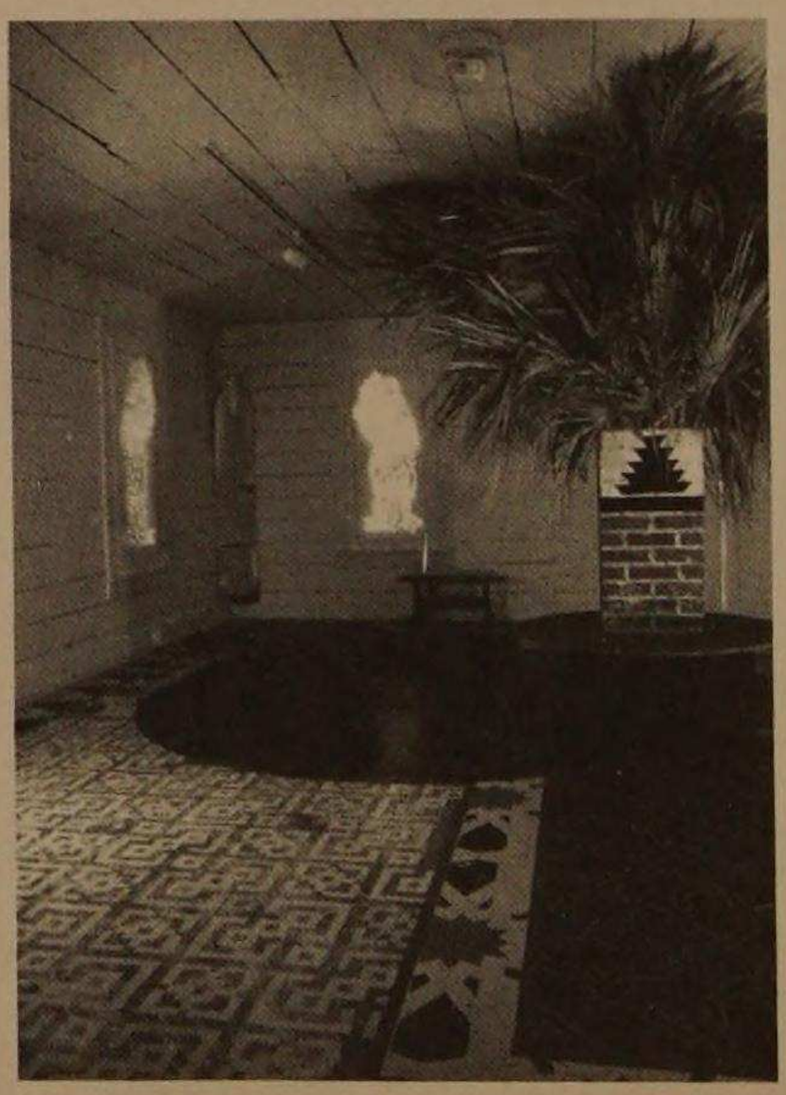
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Clockwise, from top left: Past installations at Project Row Houses: Robert Powell,

Shazia Sikander, Whitfield Lovell , Bert Samples , Tracy Hicks

FOREWORD

Rick Lowe



Project Row Houses was founded in the belief that creativity should be a vital part of every neighborhood. As a way of assuring that creativity remains at the core of its development, PRH established its Artist Projects Program. This program was designed to bring creative minds into contact with our neighborhood both its people and its environments.

Since 1994, we have been privileged to host more than 120 artists from diverse ethnic, economic, and geographic backgrounds. Our Artist Projects Program works to push the boundaries of the traditional definition of art and artists; it seeks to identify creative individuals who go beyond the notion of the artist as strictly an object maker. The majority of the work created through this program is site specific and investigates issues that relate to the people of our community or its environment. Each year we try to expand the program to open new opportunities for our community, the artists, and the public. We opened our doors presenting only African-American artists from the Texas region. By the fall of 1999, through the vision of guest curators, we had worked with artists from around the globe.

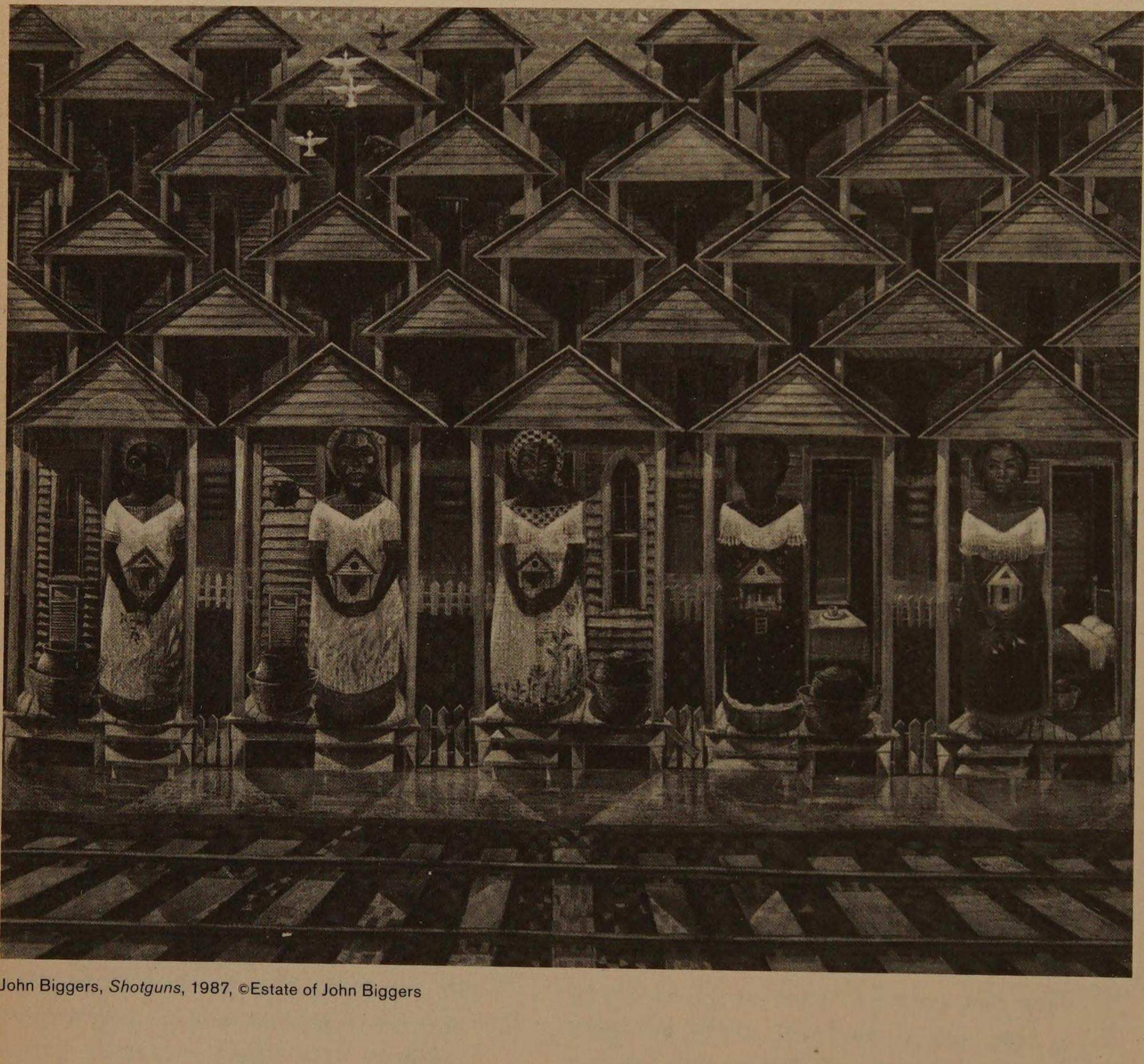
As we experimented with working with local artists alongside artists from different parts of the world, we also explored the possibilities of working with creative people who were not con-

sidered artists by art world standards. We found that this approach brought us wonderful surprises. Having artists who come from non-traditional arts backgrounds, such as Bob Powell, a retired physicist, or Cleveland Turner, "The Flowerman", a neighborhood folk artist, we got a refreshing outlook on how creativity may manifest itself and be shared with others. We also found that working with internationally acclaimed artists such as Fred Wilson and Chen Zhen encourages a sense of respect for creativity without concern for where the artist came from.

In 2000, David Brown and William Williams, two Rice University professors, approached me about curating the work of a group of young African-American architects who work in academic institutions around the country and are interested in southern vernacular architecture. Investigating the meaning of the architecture of "shotgun" houses and "shotgun" communities has always been a part of our effort at PRH. In most cases we have worked with professors and their students from local universities. Our exploration of the housing type and community structure began with studies led by Sheryl Tucker de Vasquez. We've worked with the Rice Building Workshop to explore the essential elements of the "shotgun" house that can be carried into our efforts to modernize the housing type for the 21st century. These and the many other times that we have worked with architects have concretized our desire to heighten the awareness of the significance of the architecture within our community, which are mostly "shotguns" or hybrids of the shotgun house.

After discussing the curatorial goals and reviewing the list of architects David and William proposed, we were very excited. One of the ways that we create opportunities for our community is to bring creative people who have some connection to the African American community, but are working in mainstream institutions, back to our community to share their growth and experiences. We saw this as an excellent opportunity. As a part of the outreach strategy, a symposium was organized to bring still more African-American architects, critics, and historians into a conversation about "shotgun" communities. The investigations of the architects as artists, along with the historians and critics, have afforded new insights into the historic meaning of the "shotgun" community and its meaning in contemporary life.

It is truly an honor to have had such creative minds involved in our journey to understand the meaning this place that we call Project Row Houses. I would like to thank David and William for proposing the idea of doing Round 15 with architects, and for organizing and carrying out one of our most successful rounds of the Artist Projects Program.



John Biggers, *Shotguns*, 1987, ©Estate of John Biggers

INTRODUCTION

David Brown

Like so many elements in black culture, the shotgun house when examined as an object in isolation appears to have limited significance. Its elemental organization of rooms in succession seems to impose an overly restrictive and stifling pattern on living. Consequently, in architecture, the shotgun house has traditionally been presented as an early American house type, albeit a marginal one that is primarily significant as one of a few African-American contributions to America's built culture. The shotgun house, however, remains a significant presence in the landscape of Houston's Third, Fourth, and Fifth Wards. It continues to be an abundant housing resource in these historically African-American neighborhoods, and offers insight regarding alternatives to the enclaves indicative of many contemporary housing developments.

Two contemporary efforts in Third Ward, the paintings of John Biggers and the programs that comprise Project Row Houses reveal qualities and capabilities of the shotgun house that have not been the focus of prior architectural investigations. Bigger's paintings and PRH's re-use of twenty-two rowhouses demonstrate that shotgun houses are community enabling structures. When organized in multiples, they can provide small individual front yards and a communal rear yard that exceed their house plan. As well, the unique organization and modest dimension of the form — the principal consideration of the house in architecture — has a surprising capacity for accommodating a wide variety of ways of living and for operating as an element of black culture. In essence, Biggers' and PRH's efforts reveal that the shotgun house cannot be fully understood when considered apart from the manner in which it is organized and operates in relation to its site, or apart from its cultural basis and role. Prompted by Biggers' and PRH's assessments, the work documented here from *Shotguns, 2001*, a symposium and installation opening held at Rice, Prairie View A&M University, and PRH, emphasizes these aspects of the shotgun house.

Cultural, material, local, and regional histories, as well as preservation issues are introduced in the first three essays. bell hooks considers the significance of the shotgun house in relation to shelter and sanctuary. In this examination, hooks moves back and forth through history to develop links among the understandings of home for black folks during slavery, emancipation, segregation, and desegregation. Stephen Fox emphasizes material culture as he documents the history of the shotgun house in Houston and in the surrounding region. In this presentation, he develops a link between material and social history by reading the presence of the shotgun house as an indicator of the state of working class African-American neighborhoods — measuring their growth

and decline from the late nineteenth century to the present — in relation to political and economic pressures that those neighborhoods have encountered. Photographs by Lewis Watts, interspersed throughout the book, convey the current character — the built environment, the individuals, and the creative expressions — of Third, Fourth, and Fifth Wards that have resulted from pressures such as those identified by Fox.

LaVerne Wells-Bowie provides reflections on shared cultural relations amongst shotgun houses in the US and the Caribbean, and on the challenge for conservation that such relations present — how to make the architecture reveal the intangible and ephemeral qualities significant to a culture's value of it? In Biggers' art and its indications of his experiences in Africa, North Carolina, and Third Ward, Wells-Bowie identifies memory as a vital resource. She then builds on the subject by focusing on the inscription of memory as her principal criteria for critiquing the eight installations in PRH's Artists' Houses. In this process, she describes different kinds of memory and ways that they might be made manifest within a work.

By exploring the geometry and construction of the envelope, manipulating light, and presenting collections of text, images, tools, and instruments, the installations consider the shotgun house in a different manner — by using design as a means of inquiry and speculation. The designers simultaneously look backward and forward to develop installations that operate as archives, introduce activities and rhythms, and create environments for reflection, while exploring the inscription of memory and culture. Each project conducts two intertwined studies of the house — — inquiry regarding its materiality and organization, and its resulting impact and influence on culture and memory through investigations of the capabilities and impact of new materials and organizations placed within it. The resulting projective spaces, which are infused with reflections upon aspects of black culture, are both prompted by the shotgun house and the result of the designers' efforts to elicit new spatial experiences and properties from it.

There is a third mode of design research that these installations offer — the various architectural research interests that each individual or team brings to the project. The ability of the shotgun house to both stimulate and accommodate a wide variety of interests and appropriations becomes apparent in the similarities and differences in the installation designers' work, and in their accompanying written descriptions, which often present connections between their installation and some of their other work. Mabel Wilson's offering of eight memories further demonstrates this ability.

Operating as complementary and alternative directions and resources from those selected by the installation designers, any one of her memories could serve as the basis for a design within one of the Artists' Houses.

In his presentation of the Scattered Housing Competition for in-fill housing in Miami's Little Haiti, Nathaniel Belcher reveals additional properties of the shotgun house as a community enabler and as an urban component. His description of Little Haiti's development indicates that the decades old construction and the continuing presence of shotgun houses and similar structures, as well as economic, social, and political factors, have contributed to the creation of an extended urban field consisting of varying street grids and lot configurations. While this field does not conform to Miami's current codes, the competition demonstrates that it need not be nostalgically preserved or removed as blight. It can continue to operate as a resource and basis for new construction.

Alvia Wardlaw's remembrance of Biggers, whose paintings first explored and revealed the broader multidimensional significance of shotgun houses, elaborates on the significance of the shotgun house to him — as lived experience, as a subject within his studies of Africa, and, through painting, as a simultaneous abstract geometric study and cultural contemplation. Within her reflection, she locates a potential in Third Ward similar to that described by Belcher. She proposes that PRH and others in Third Ward might provide a memorial of Biggers, who was a Third Ward community member, by making a structure that emphasizes continuity, community, and connection — relations between indoors and outdoors, humans and nature, and past, present, and future generations. As she further describes this potential, the challenge seems to be less about providing a new structure, than identifying those qualities in the surroundings, reinforcing them, and opportunistically working with them as sources for evolving patterns of growth and change, which support rather than remove the existing community, to emerge from Third Ward's distinctive landscape.

In its further assessment of the significance of the shotgun house, the work in this document provides some indications of how such a challenge can be approached. As Wardlaw notes, PRH, given its inspiration from Biggers' work can already be said to be a test of Biggers' vision in contemporary culture. Similarly, the contributions presented here are affirmations and extensions of ways that community work, such as PRH's, is assisted by architecture.



Third Ward, Houston, photograph ©Lewis Watts

House Art: Merging Public and Private

bell hooks

All art becomes public the moment it appears in a place where it can be seen without permission by anyone who happens to be in the location where it is on display. The UPS man, the random messenger, the realtor who is selling the apartment on the ground floor and comes in my flat to make a call, or the children who want to know why I have an anthill on my wall (in actuality what appears to them to be anthill is a photo by Andre Serrano titled "Blood and Soil"), all these individuals look at the art on display in my home. As soon as they witness that art it becomes public. Even though it is on display in a privacy, shaped and informed by the principles of ownership in a capitalist society, I cannot control whether or not this art will have a public function or not. I cannot control the impact of this art on the public that views it. Unbeknownst to me, someone may be transformed by a work of art that they see in my home.

Anyone entering the door of my flat walks down a long narrow hallway at the end of which is another photo by Andre Serrano. It is the image of a crucifix submerged in blood. Sometimes folks stare at this work form the doorway and ask if they can come close. At first glance it is not clear to them that it is a photograph. The red is so vivid, the black of the crucifix so dark and the figure on the cross shrouded in shadows. Sharing this work of art with a public whose presence I do not necessarily choose, I am ever mindful of the democratic nature of the gaze — of the way folks from all walks of life look at art when it is on display right before their very eyes.

All art becomes public the moment it appears in a place where it can be seen without permission by anyone who happens to be in the location where it is on display, where it can be looked at freely.

In the past few years I have chosen specific works of art to be used on the cover of my published books as a way of making that art more available, of calling attention to the work of specific artists. A work by Emma Amos, an African-American painter who was a member of the group of spiral along with Romare Bearden and Norman Lewis graced the cover of my collection of essays *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*. Andre Serrano's piece "Blood and Soil" is the cover image of *Outlaw Culture*. Lorna Simpson's photograph "Waterbearer" is on the cover of *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery*. Lots of hands pick up these books without knowing that in some way that they are also being picked by a work of art, being drawn into an art world that is not usually so public. As images of the cover of books these art works become more accessible are made public.

Despite the efforts of the art marketplace and its brokers in galleries, museums, and private collections around the world who want art to be used always

in the service of maintaining class elitism and exploitative hierarchies, who would like to prevent art from being "too public" — who would like to keep art from a life outside the world of profit and exchange, the people — the folk — the culturally disenfranchised find our way to art. Certainly we do not find our way en masses, yet still we come to art. As a working class southern black girl, I found my way to art, to painting and design in the segregated public school. And in the desegregated school of racial apartheid, art classes were one of the few places where there was the assumption that the imagination was a democratic zone and all who entered could create equally. In that democratic space of public school I learned to think about the public nature of art. In that location the boundaries between art deemed "public" and art deemed reserved for a chosen, elite few did not exist.

Refusing to embrace a false dichotomy between public art and art designated not public is a necessary intervention — one those of us who want to sustain the vitality of art making as democratic process must continually make. When we challenge the either/or thinking that pits art which was especially created to enhance the lives of specific communities — often defined as "public art" — against that art which was created either to serve the interest of cultural class elitism or co-opted and appropriated to serve the interests of ruling classes, removing it from the folk even if they have served as the initial inspiration or audience base for the work, we honor the inherently public nature of all art. We challenge the stereotype assumptions that the masses are uninterested in art or unable to value it rightly.

Until those of us who cherish vernacular art practices, particularly folks emerging from specific communities, cease to speak this dichotomy, thus giving it power, we collude in the maintenance of a dichotomy, a schism, a binary that does not organically exist. All art becomes public the moment it appears in a place where it can be seen without permission by anyone who happens to be in the location where it is on display. Architecture, though one of the least accessible art practices, is the most accessible public art in our nature.

Recently, I was asked to speak as a cultural critic about my feelings about the destruction of the World Trade Center buildings before a huge audience. I was reluctant to speak, and felt a tinge of class shame as I feared how I would be judged if I honestly addressed the lack of interest I had in these structures. Even though I live in New York City, not far from the World Trade Center, it was not an architectural structure I admired. It did not impress me. Artists that I know for whom these buildings touched them in the very depths of their

soul wept when they were destroyed. I grieved only for the loss of human life because these structures, these spaces are not the architecture which intimately speaks to me and touches my soul.

One of the endangered architectural structures that touches my soul is the shotgun house. Growing up in the apartheid side, it was the public art that captivated my attention, that called me to bear witness. Whenever I am anywhere, in any city in this nation and I see the architecture in traditional black folks' communities being destroyed I mourn. Traditional shotgun houses hold an architectural legacy of African-American experience that once destroyed cannot be built again. Unlike modern buildings, like the World Trade Center, the traditional shotgun and its context cannot be endlessly reincarnated. I mourn its loss.

I first fell in love with the shotgun house in my girlhood. My family lived in an old Victorian dwelling, all nine of us, but this structure did not arouse my passions. I would go daily and stand on the corner in front of a shotgun house. An elderly lady and her grown son lived there. When the doors were open wide I could look straight through from front to back. And it did not take long for the owner to invite me and show me her precious little house. This intense looking was the beginning of my love affair with architecture. When I was in my early teens I stopped painting images of houses and began to make my first design. In the public school art class we were taught how to design a house but I soon learned that a working class, southern black girl was not destined to be an architect. My parents could hardly tolerate my interest in art, let alone my fantasy of becoming an architect.

This passion for vernacular architecture, shared by African-American artist and curator Rick Lowe, who has been so instrumental in creating and sustaining Project Row Houses, is awakened by a concern with austerity and clean lines. As a structure, the shotgun house is a symbol of architecture created to express life lived in transition, life that is not fixed or static. It is the primal architecture of the displaced person, of one who lives a fugitive existence, always on the move. The shotgun house was for African-Americans a space of transition. One was not meant to live one's life in a shotgun house. It was a space in which one moved into to move on. And this sensibility is embedded in the design. I can still recall the delight I felt as a girl running through this structure for the first time, racing through a shotgun house from the open front door to the closed back door — this straight line movement enchanted. The beauty of this first shotgun house I explored is etched in my memory and is mirrored in

the public art of the PRH. When I first saw theses houses that sense of enchantment returned and I am deeply moved by the collective effort to restore meaningful presence to these structures, to the living legacy of memories they hold, to the historical memory of the communities dwelling in Third Ward.

Whether the topic is real estate in the crude marketplace sense or architecture as art practice, black folks are not seen by unenlightened builders, architects, designers, or handymen as caring for structure. They are not eager to know, these unenlightened architects, builders, designers, the stories architectures tell of our presence in this nation both historically and in the present day, what Sheryl Tucker de Vasquez names in her essay, "African-American Art and Architecture," "that sense of art as the vehicle of revelation."

The traditional shotgun house is more than a powerful marker of the African-American cultural landscape, it is a symbol of a diasporic mode of living represented architecturally around the world by folks moving from enslavement, indentured servitude, rebellion against colonialism, and colonial occupation, into freedom. It stands as a global symbol of liberation. The links that Sheryl Tucker de Vasquez makes between this art form, PRH and John Biggers' work is crucial. For way too long, black folks have not honored our history as told by the structures we inhabit, by architecture and design. Honoring this narrative empowers us to link our real and mythical past to the present, a linkage that inspires artist John Biggers to state with metaphysical clarity: "I see them as I walk the Third Ward of Houston, the rhythm of their shadows, the square of the porches, three and four like beat of a gospel." He describes the ancestral ghost who resides in the shadows of occupied space, daring us to remember and retrieve. A synchronicity of vision and design connects Biggers' paintings of shotgun houses to the row houses of Third Ward. In Biggers' series, he conveys historical notions of home that have been crucial to African-Americans. Our vision of home must be mapped, charted, named.

Most citizens of this country never fully realize the vast terrain that is this nation. A huge number of citizens never leave the zone of their own state, their neighborhood or if they do they travel by plane, and still remain unaware of the vastness of our North American landscape. Plane travel makes the distances seem so close it is easy to forget how far we have journeyed. Driving across country, back in the days when I was younger, a hippie, a bohemian obsessed with free love and the simple life, I was awed by this continent. Riding as a passenger form California to Wisconsin then later driving from California to New Haven, Connecticut were trips that opened my eyes and compelled recognition

of the vastness of our nation, of the contrast between landscapes.

Seeing the different neighborhoods, seeing trailer parks in Nebraska, small shanty-like houses in the deserts of Arizona, rows and rows of cold concrete public housing in New York City, or the beautiful scenic homes of the Los Altos mountains, or the impoverished worlds of East Palo Alto, geographies of home impressed themselves on my imagination. And home could never again be the fixed landscape I had imprinted on my consciousness since birth and growing into young adulthood. In that imagination, home was always configured as a place of safety.

The diasporic experience of black folks has meant that home has always been for us a place of sanctuary, not simply a place of shelter. In the United States the roots of our notions of home begin with colonization and imperialism. The experience of the Africans who came before Columbus and "decided it's a great place to visit but we do not want to live here" took explorations back home, gifts from Native Americans, and their knowledge of another way of life. The experiences of the rare black individuals who followed in their wake and were colonizers hoped to find their fortunes in these new and uncertain lands. Most commonly, however are the recognized experience of the enslaved African brought to these shores with no sense of choosing home, with no sense of chosen exile, with only the trauma of rupture, abandonment, and abuse, for black citizens of the United States. For these individuals it has not been a simple matter to create home.

Any aware visitor who explores the architecture of surviving southern plantations where slaves were hoarded together in tiny cell-like structures mostly of mud and wood, and rarely but at times of brick, can see in these places that there is little that makes one think of home. Indeed, on the Boone plantation in Charleston, South Carolina there are brick structures remaining where slaves resided. Each structure is the size of a very small shed. Before the plantation became the setting for Hollywood movies, the brick huts stood so close together in a row that little sunlight could penetrate inside. The inner landscape of the hut was dark and dank, with square holes where windows could have been. Dug into the earth was a small pit-like hole for fires. A tall person would need to stoop constantly in the brick hut. Like a small, dark cave it did not feel like anyplace one could call home. It felt like what it was — a brick holding pen — a cell — a small prison — a place of containment.

Ironically, when contemporary Hollywood moviemakers arrived, the owners of the plantation tore down some of the brick huts so there was space

between those that remained, space to let in rays of light. This has made the huts seem more inviting. And the tourists, mostly Europeans whites, visiting them could not have imagined humans with warm hearts and flowing blood dwelling in the dark and the dank. They can re-envision these huts as cute tiny doll-like brick cottages with cool mud floors protecting the inhabitants from the hot sun. They look with eyes that choose to remain unaware. Nothing can change the grim spatial reality these brick huts convey, the holding pen, the structures humans create to deny other humans access to home.

A real home is not a dark, dank cell someone with power to dominate throws you in. A real home is a place of shelter and sanctuary, a place where peace is possible. The enslaved Africans brought to the newly colonized shores of North America were this nation's first homeless people. They were allowed to live on the perimeters — the outer boundary of someone else's home. They were outsiders looking in on home compelled by circumstance to re-imagine themselves, their world, their idea of how to live in space. In most slave narratives, the landscape of home is not explored. It is talked about solely as the place where masters and mistresses live. They have homes, the slaves have quarters where they reside.

How to make home in a new place where your body is no longer your own when your body is watched, used, forced to function separately from one's spirit; this is the question the slaves had to answer. The body is our first home, our first covering, our first place of shelter and solace. In Christian mythology, Adam and Eve became more fully human only by opening their eyes and discovering they are not pure spirit; by discovering their embodiment, by awakening themselves to flesh. The clothe their nakedness not solely because they feel shame, but because they want to adorn this background from the spirit, this interior landscape.

Many Africans enslaved in the newly colonized North America craved adornment, a covering for the bodies that were no longer their own, no longer home. When the body is no longer connected to spirit but owned as a place, a property that is owned, then home resides only in the imaginary. It is the longed for landscape. Exiled, diasporic, cut off, the enslaved African dreams of home. In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he describes the wilderness of spirit the slaves inhabited, the all-pervasive sense of homelessness as dwelling "in the midst of houses, yet having no home." Sustained by her dreams of home as she lives imprisoned in a holding pen of her own, choosing to escape from dehumanizing sexual exploitation at the hands of cruel and immoral

white slaveholders in her narrative, *Incidents In The Live of A Slave Girl*, Linda Brent painstakingly describes the place where she seeks shelter. Calling it "the loophole of retreat," she writes: "A small shed had been added to my grandmother's house years ago. Some boards were laid across the joists at the top and between these boards and the roof was a very small garret, never occupied by anything but rats and mice. It was a pent roof, covered with nothing but shingles, according to the southern custom for such buildings. The garret was only nine feet long and seven wide. The highest part was three feet high, and sloped down abruptly to the loose board floor. There was no admission for either light or air... The air was stifling; the darkness total. This continued darkness was oppressive. It seemed horrible to sit or lie in a cramped position day after day. Yet I would have chosen this, rather than my lot as a slave..." Brent is careful to let the reader know that even when she is choosing this confined space it can never be home. It is always and only a place of hiding, a safe prison.

Before the enslaved Africans can find homeplace they imagine home, and they dream. That dream is ever connected to the dream of freedom. When freedom finally came the newly manumitted slaves could begin to think of home. Free people can have homes. Home is any place where the exiled soul finds shelter and sanctuary — a place to return to the union of body and spirit. The free Africans seek home in the southern architecture and mores of the time. In New Orleans black folks lived in tiny houses behind the big houses, the places where they served the needs of mistresses and masters. All around the south manumitted slaves built tiny huts and shacks with scraps, with whatever building material they could find. Sometimes those dwelling structurally resembled the holding pens in which they had been held captive as slaves. However, embedded in the inner primitive architecture was a landscape of freedom, a world where one could adorn and possess with abandon, where one could create the vicissitudes of home depending on changing fortunes and circumstances.

As fortunes increased for the free African-American citizen the idea of home acquired new meaning. Psychologically, the trauma of endless deprivation had created in black folks both excessive longing for material well-being and plenty as well as a craving for making Homeplace. So much so that African-American writers and thinkers of the early and mid-nineteenth century warned their brethren about the dangers of forgetting the true meaning of home. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper had been born a free child in the slave state in 1925. Nurturing her artistic vision she noted the way ideas of home were ever-present among slaves seeking freedom. In her 1859 work, "Two Offers", she warned

African Americans about the danger of seeking material plenty above all else. Writing of home she has her character declare: "In early life, home had been to him a place of ceilings and walls, not a true home, built upon goodness, love and truth... in his home, a love for the good, the true and right, had been sacrificed at the shrine of frivolity and fashion." Using her fiction to teach values, Harper offers her sense of difference between house and home: "Home should always be the best school for the affections, the birthplace of high resolve, and the altar upon which lofty aspirations are kindled, from whence the soul may go forth strengthened to act its part aright in the great drama of life, with conscience enlightened, affections cultivated, and reason and judgment dominant." At the conjunction when slavery is just ending the world of free black citizens who were never slaves intersects most intimately with that of the newly manumitted black folks who must begin anew a search for home.

Africans, both free and enslaved, brought with them to these shores memories of home — a recognition of the diversity in world architecture. We know this from the rare surviving testimony of explorers and slaves who compared and contrasted the world they came to with the world they came from. In his 1789 narrative Olaudah Equiano tells of the world in Guinea, into which he was born, a world where houses had many names. There was the "dwelling-house," a "day-house," and a "night-house." He writes of houses centered around a square piece of ground surrounded with a wall made of tempered red earth. Inside the wall are many apartments. Writing of this enclosure Equiano recalled: "These houses never exceed one story in height: they are always built of wood, or stakes driven into the ground, crossed with wattles, and neatly plastered in the inside, with a composition mixed with cow dung, to keep off the different insects, which annoy us during the night. The walls and floors also of these are generally covered with mats... Houses so constructed and furnished require but little skill to erect them. Every man is a sufficient architect for the purpose." This memory of a landscape where home consists of multiple dwellings remains useful to the once enslaved black folks who in a manumitted world could not only dream of home, but also make these dreams reality.

Before public housing became a common reality throughout the South, the homes of indigent and barely well-off black folks, whether shacks or fine structures built from scratch, were dwellings where inhabitants celebrated their freedom to create and make home. Bright paint, carefully constructed gardens, porches adorned with prized artifacts all proclaimed delight in the making of Homeplace. Found sculptures and nameplates all testified to the pride in own-

ership among those who were lucky enough to have land to make structured homes of their own. From the end of slavery to way past the mid-nineteenth century home was widely thought of by black folks as sacred place, as site of solace and sanctuary. Imagine the pleasure black folks felt in creating home as an interior landscape, a place that expressed joy in being free.

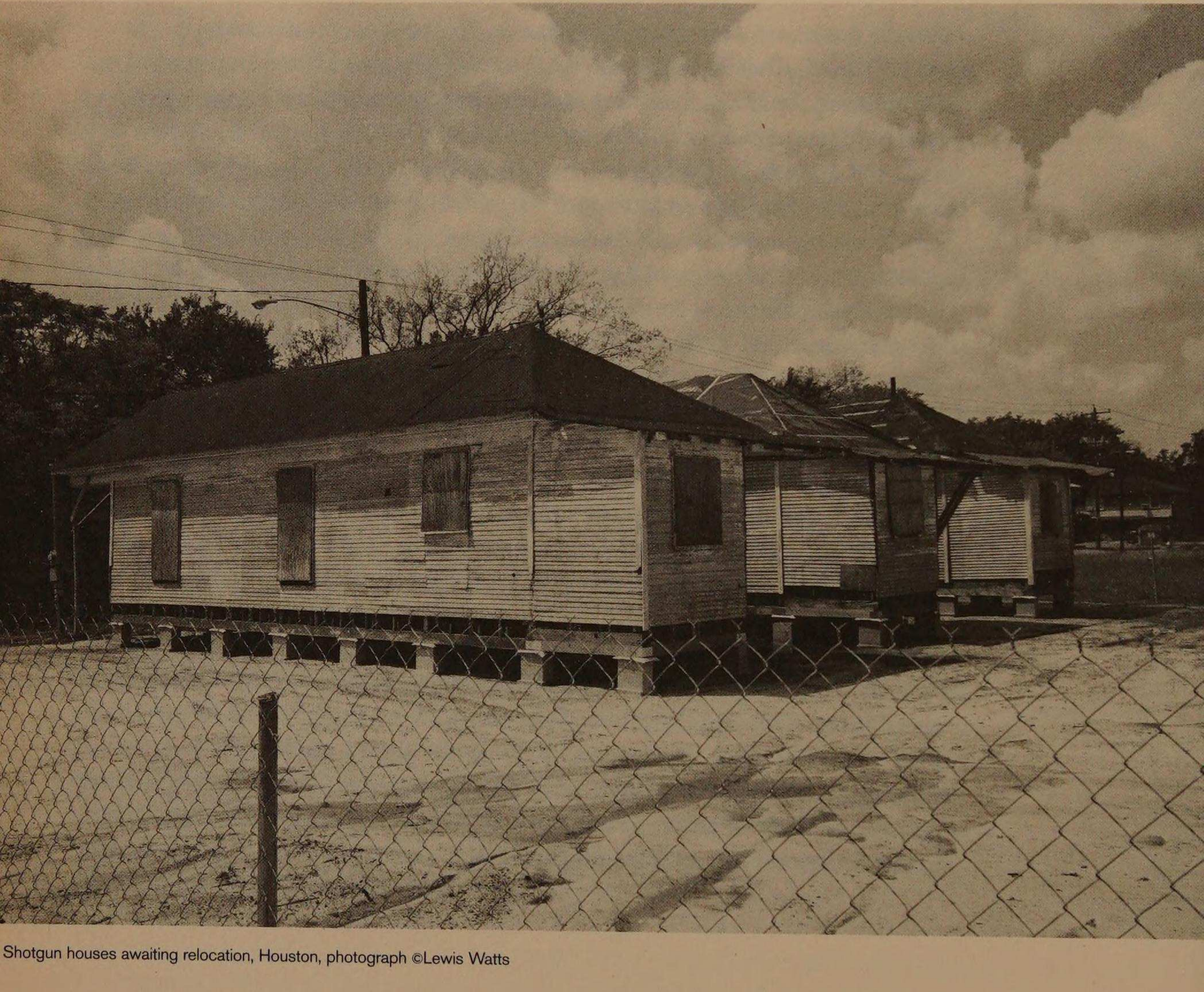
As sanctuary from racial assault and oppression, home was the only place in a racially segregated world where black folks had political asylum and sanctuary. Home was the only place where one could hope to escape the tyranny of racial terrorism. Home was a place of political organizing against racial tyranny. And as a consequence white authority figures acting in a fascist manner could penetrate and invade at will the homes of black folks. Before the civil rights gains of the late sixties, home could be both a place of refuge and a place of danger as the state often randomly chose to violate the sanctity of homes lived in by blacks citizens to re-instill in all black people the lessons of domination that we could never be safe from white power, not even in our own homes.

By the time I was born, in a racially segregated small southern town in the early fifties, black folks talked about home as a place of sanctuary and safety. And even though everyone knew this sense of home could be disrupted by the white fascist state (racist police officers invading and destroying), this knowledge was not foreground. The idea of home as place of repose, as a place for healing and renewal of the human spirit was highlighted. And this is how I came to think of the Homeplace — to imagine and make it. In the segregated world of my childhood, a world where public housing projects did not yet exist in black neighborhoods, the poor and the well-to-do lived together. Streets with beautiful fancy homes might also have clean and dignified shacks. Neighborhoods were sometimes defined by greater and lesser class privilege, but mostly by attitudes of mind about housing. Good neighborhoods were those where folks took care of their homes no matter what those homes cost. Bad neighborhoods were characterized by neglect. Poor black folks who rented from white landowners lived in the worst housing.

When mama finally convinced daddy to buy a small house, she rejoiced. Unlike Baba, her mother, she had no desire to live in old wood frame dwellings complete with rooms added randomly and from necessity. She longed for the new. And so they purchased a small prefab house with low ceiling and tiny bedrooms. However, she shared with her mother the longing to have home as a place of peace and sanctuary — a longing I have inherited as well.

Moving from the rural south, from small town life into American cities, I see African-Americans entering the ranks of the homeless daily. Now that huge housing projects which once served as camps for the urban black poor are torn down without attempts to rebuild or relocate inhabitants, men, women, and children are forced to roam city streets seeking makeshift shelter. For them home is the longed for destiny. Unlike the masses of newly freed African slaves who were our nation's first huge homeless population, this new group of displaced black folks have little hope of returning home. In the large landscape that is the world of the United States everywhere there is uninhabited terrain, abandoned buildings, places where home could be created. Yet there are no relocation plans that offer the displaced a chance to create home again. No opportunity exists to move folks without homes in urban cities to more isolated towns and small cities where shelter and sanctuary might be found, where life might be lived in a different way. There are yet no foster home programs for adults, where those with homes offer shelter to those without home. Creating home in both a small midwestern town and in New York City, I know firsthand that homemaking is far more arduous and costly in the city, both the process of finding shelter and creating a home.

Ideas of home do not seem to vary across our nation or globally. Home is not just the objects we arrange; it is made up of the feelings, experiences and memories we bring to a place. To most people on the planet, the hope of home is always that it will be a place where our spirit can rest. Even among nomadic settlers globally, who make and remake home continually, when intact, home is still regarded as a place of shelter and sanctuary. Home is where we take refuge. Offering to us the promise of soul solacing repose, we imagine home as both a place of rest and place of renewal.



Shotgun houses awaiting relocation, Houston, photograph ©Lewis Watts

The Shotgun Cottage in Houston

Stephen Fox

The shotgun cottage has been a characteristic Houston house type for over a hundred years. Associated especially with working class African-American neighborhoods in Houston and the South, it was a local, vernacular house type that in the last decades of the nineteenth century made the transition to a widely diffused, mass-produced, popular house type.[1]

The shotgun cottage did not figure among Houston's earliest house types. The grid-iron town plan of Houston, surveyed in 1836 at the confluence of Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou, was improved with a variety of other house types. Almost all were of wood construction, with gabled or hipped roofs, as depicted in sketches from Mary Austin Holley's diary of late 1837 and early 1838.[2] A sketch by Holley of Barnard Bee's dwelling illustrates a familiar house type of the southern coastal lowlands: a two-room cottage, raised above grade, with a full-width front veranda inset beneath its side-gabled roof. This type, the Gulf Coast cottage, became the most representative vernacular house type of nineteenth-century Houston. It was adaptable for middle-income housing, as exemplified by the Ruppersberg-Meyer House of 1868, originally on West Dallas Avenue in Fourth Ward and now located in Sam Houston Park. The Gulf Coast cottage lent itself as well to smaller houses, such as the Levy House of about 1866 at 1910 Decatur Street in Sixth Ward. It could become a double house, as at the cottage at 1909 Decatur Street, dated to about 1870. And it was flexible enough to be a tiny house, like the Castanie-Fromm House formerly at 809 Robin Street in Fourth Ward. Part of a row of shotgun cottages until moved from its site in 2002, this appears as a freestanding house on the W. E. Wood Map of Houston of 1869, which shows the outline of buildings on their lots.[3]

In contrast to the Gulf Coast cottage, the most representative elite house type in Houston during the third quarter of the nineteenth century was the three-bay wide, side-hall southern town house, prefaced by a double veranda and in Houston capped by a shallowly pitched hipped roof. One of the few surviving examples is William M. Rice's house of about 1850, now in Sam Houston Park. The earliest house in Houston known to have been built by an African American, the house of the Rev. Jack Yates of about 1870, which stood at 1318 Andrews Street in Fourth Ward until it was moved to Sam Houston Park in 1994, is a three-bay, side-hall southern town house.[4] Although exceptional, both in its size and early date of construction (Yates himself was exceptional; although enslaved until 1865, he had persuaded the family that held him to teach him to read and write), the Yates Homestead indicates that African Americans did not stand outside the mainstream of contemporary material

culture, despite the asymmetries that characterized their relationship to the dominant white culture in the South.

Louise Passey's master's thesis of 1993 on the development of the Freedmantown neighborhood in Fourth Ward contains descriptions from Houston's newspaper, the *Telegraph*, of this newly established African-American neighborhood. Typically, the reports employed derogatory rhetoric, characterizing the dwellings of recently emancipated African Americans as "miserable hovels" and "shanties" (1865) and "huts built of planking and waste timber," although acknowledging that "...a few Negroes... have bought lots and erected some very nice cottages" (1866).[5] An unusually favorable article in 1875 reported "many evidences of thrift and prosperity in Freedmantown. New houses have been built, and still others [are] in course of construction."[6] None of the accounts describes the types of cottages under construction. The Wood Map of 1869 does not illustrate houses exhibiting the oblong shape of the shotgun type, although it does show what were clearly houses built in a row as multiples. But by the time the first Sanborn's fire insurance map for Houston was published in 1885 (the Sanborn maps also show the outlines of buildings on their lots and contain written notations about properties), what seem to be shotgun cottages had been built in Houston. A pair of shotgun cottages on the block of Capitol Avenue downtown, now occupied by Jones Plaza, is annotated with the words "Negro tenements."

The shotgun cottage originated as a U.S. house type in New Orleans, according to the pioneering research of John M. Vlach.[7] Vlach traces the shotgun type to the Yoruba dwellings of Nigeria, via the indigenous *bohío* of Santo Domingo and the *maison basse* of Haiti. Vlach found an example of the shotgun type recorded as early as 1833 in the New Orleans Notarial Archives.[8] On the northern periphery of the French Quarter, one still finds block fronts composed of New Orleanian variations of the shotgun cottage, both single and double houses, with the overhanging Creole *abat-vent* sheltering the sidewalk in place of a front veranda. The transformation of the shotgun from a localized New Orleans vernacular house type to a popular southern house type corresponded chronologically to the extension of railroad networks through the South in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

This can be seen in the Texas-Mexico border city of Brownsville, which the railroad — and shotgun cottages — did not reach until 1904. Brownsville's geopolitical situation on the edge of the South had earlier enabled African Americans to challenge the social construction of racial superiority/inferior-

ity that white southerners had encoded in architecture as in all other facets of daily life. Just across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, in the Mexican city of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, the grandest Victorian house in the city was built in 1885 by the Anglo/Afro-American merchant Melitón H. Cross, whose father, Juan S. Cross, was a South Carolina plantation-overseer-turned-wholesale merchant, and whose mother had been enslaved. The façade and towers of Matamoros's parish church, Nuestra Señora del Refugio, were built in the 1850s to the design of the architect and engineer Bártolo Passement, who immigrated to Matamoros from New Orleans in 1832. The U.S. Census of 1830 identifies Passement as a brick mason and a free man of color.[9] Where people of color were not systematically excluded from civil society, those who attained middle class status appear to have gravitated to the mainstream of contemporary material cultural expression. The shotgun cottage is fascinating because, as it made the transition from a local New Orleans-based vernacular house type to a popular southern house type, it became implicated in the dominant culture's social construction of superiority/inferiority. From a white perspective, the shotgun cottage was socially constructed as "Negro"; from a white *and* black middle class perspective, it was socially constructed as "working class."

A pair of shotgun cottages at 2011 and 2013 Decatur Street in Houston's Sixth Ward, which appears in the Sanborn's map of 1896, illustrates the way in which vernacular house types were adapted to popular architectural trends. The decorative screening and turned posts of the veranda, and the gablets beneath the peak of the roofs, surfaced with fish-scale shingles, represented Victorian flourishes that did not disrupt the spatial and constructional economy of the type. Reproduction in multiples suggests the extent to which such houses were built and identified as tenant (that is, rental) housing. The Stiles Row at 1501-1519 Victor Street in Fourth Ward, owned by a woman, Miss Lauretta Stiles, who was white, seems to have been built in stages between 1914 and 1922, to judge from listings in the Houston City Directory. By the first decade of the twentieth century, whole block fronts, sometimes entire blocks, in the southwest quadrant of Fourth Ward were under single ownership and built out with repeating rows of cottages, both shotguns and the older type of square-planned cottage.[10] These contrasted with such houses as the Rutherford B. H. Yates House of 1912 at 1314 Andrews Street, a late Victorian L-front cottage, and the bungalow type house at 2209 Dowling Street in Third Ward, built next door to Wesley Chapel A. M. E. Church in 1926 as the pastor's house and designed by the African-American architect W. Sidney Pittman. Houston African-American families who attained

middle class status during the segregation era embraced middle-income house types. In the Detering Addition in West End, west of Sixth Ward, there are extremely narrow shotgun cottages. One is the house at 707 Reinicke Street (moved to another site in 2003), perhaps acquired as surplus from the decommissioned World War I U.S. Army training camp, Camp Logan, in what is now Memorial Park.

Houston's cycles of population expansion created a constantly growing market for new housing at all income levels. Working class African-American families seem to have been the primary (although not exclusive) clientele for tenant row housing, whether composed of shotgun cottages, L-plan cottages, or square-plan cottages. The location of rental housing in rows suggests how patterns of residential racial segregation were reinforced, particularly with respect to working class neighborhoods. The African-American neighborhoods in Third Ward and Fourth Ward were the primary locations of housing built in rows. Shotgun cottages were built in other Houston neighborhoods, but rows of such housing were the exception rather than the rule. In such predominantly white working class neighborhoods as Sixth Ward and the West End, shotgun cottages tended to be built singly or in pairs. Thus the row also seems to have acquired racial and class overtones.

In the 1920s, one sees the beginning of a systematic effort by Houston's elite, carried out under the guise of reform, to erase the culture and urbanism associated with the shotgun cottage. The *Report of the City Planning Commission* of 1929 contains two examples. In one the evidence is indirect: drawn from a comparison of an aerial photograph, looking west toward Fourth Ward, showing the new Central Library of 1926 facing Hermann Square, with a perspective rendering showing a proposed Civic Center of public buildings grouped around the library and Hermann Square.[11] The rendering treats the blocks of cottages in Fourth Ward (as well as in Sixth Ward north of the bayou) as a generalized street grid lined with trees but devoid of buildings. The newly-constructed Allen Parkway, a parkway drive following the course of Buffalo Bayou westward from the Civic Center to the gates of River Oaks, appears to run through open countryside. The second example is more explicit.[12] A pair of maps in the report deals with the continued problem posed by the expansion of existing African-American residential neighborhoods once the elite garden-suburban neighborhoods of River Oaks and Riverside Terrace began to be developed in their paths of growth in the mid 1920s. One map shows the "as is" concentration of African-American neighborhoods in Houston. The second shows what supposedly ought to be, including

a dramatic contraction of Fourth Ward, pulled sharply back from Allen Parkway, where it grazed the north edge of the original Freedmantown. The 1929 report, however, could recommend no legally acceptable methods for achieving this urban disappearing act. Ten years later, when the Housing Authority of the City of Houston was constituted, the means were at hand. Using funds from the U. S. Housing Authority, the Houston Housing Authority acquired seventeen blocks of Freedmantown by eminent domain and replaced them with the one-thousand unit Allen Parkway Village public housing complex. Built in stages between 1940 and 1944, Allen Parkway Village was the largest public housing complex in the South. It was restricted to white occupancy only.[13]

What became Project Row Houses, the Frank Cash row in the 2400 and 2500 blocks of Holman and Division avenues in Third Ward, was built about 1939 as planning began for Allen Parkway Village. Although its five-room houses conform to the iconic image of the shotgun cottage with their front-facing gables (reiterated in the decorative gablet framing the front porch) and bungalow-style brackets, they deviate from the pure type by being one-and-a-half rooms wide rather than the single linear file of rooms historically associated with the shotgun type. The repetition of house fronts along the block faces speaks to what is so compelling about the organization of this house type in rows: the capacity of a house so narrow that alone it would be spatially insignificant to form a collective that shapes space urbanistically. It is the strong form of the shotgun cottage that endows these small houses with the presence and dignity that are essential attributes of urban architecture.

The proximity of the cottages to each other reveals their status as economic instruments, built four to a lot (two facing the street, two facing Division, which is actually an alley through the center of a standard sized Houston city block) to maximize site coverage and the investor's return. The narrow intervals between the houses make visitors aware of the closeness with which African-American working class renters were compelled to live, in contrast to owner-occupied houses along Holman Avenue, built one to a lot. Necessity begot ingenuity: the porches and kitchens were located on the west side of the houses, and the bedrooms and bathrooms on the east where they would have access to the prevailing southeast breeze. As bell hooks described in her talk "House Art," necessity also begot the social rituals that domesticated rented houses and turned them into people's homes.[14] The back porch was a space of domestic sociability related to the shared back yard, where the clothesline now memorializes the work that transpired in such spaces, visible in a photograph from the

Report of the City Planning Commission of 1929 with its disapproving caption, and documented by Ellen Beasley in her book on working class urban space in a southern city, *The Alleys and Back Buildings of Galveston.*[15]

This type of urban housing proved amazingly durable in Houston. Row houses were built as rental housing in working class African-American neighborhoods through the 1950s. These houses were adapted, however, to successive trends in the production of domestic architecture and space in Houston, metamorphosing into mini-ranch houses, built at grade on concrete slab foundations, with walls of brick-veneered wood stud construction and interior rooms lit by high-set horizontal windows. Rather than facing the street, rows of such houses tended to cluster around a paved driveway and parking apron. But it was not unusual for these houses to retain small front porches that continued to be used for socializing. Although these ranch houses no longer qualify typologically as shotgun cottages, their descent from the shotgun row is obvious.

PRH has been a catalyst. At the turn of the twenty-first century, it has forced a reappraisal not just of the shotgun cottage but also of "shotgun" culture: of southern working class African-American culture. As Sheryl Tucker de Vásquez observed in her essay on PRH in the journal *Places*, it has been a catalyst for thinking about how architecture can make connections to the places where it is built, as well as addressing such issues as the provision of affordable housing. This effort is represented by the Six Square House of 1998 on Division, designed and built by the Rice Building Workshop of Rice's architecture school.[16] The Six Square House makes connections to other Houston buildings whose designs were predicated on claiming a place culturally through architecture: the house of the architect William F. Stern, The Menil Collection museum by Renzo Piano, and the Live Oak Friends Meeting House by Leslie K. Elkins. These buildings participate in a dialogue on local culture that, while not dependent on the shotgun cottage, engages and includes it rather than excluding and segregating the shotgun as culturally inferior. The sculptor Mary Miss affirmed the necessity of such connections in her 1998 installation *One Hundred Chairs* at the University of Houston. Evoking an academic symposium, her aluminum chairs also call to mind the shotgun sociability of the sidewalks and front porches of nearby Third Ward, making this the only instance in which the University of Houston spatially acknowledges its connection to Third Ward.

The connection between art and life that PRH makes was a constant theme in the art of John T. Biggers. One sees in his painting, *Shotgun, Third Ward #1* of 1966, a row of cottages strikingly similar to those at PRH. In his *Shotguns* series

of 1987, Biggers treated the shotgun cottage iconically rather than naturalistically. He frequently composed the fields of these paintings with repeated, flat, frontal gables to imply the density and weight of African-American culture in the South. Robert Farris Thompson calls attention to Biggers' equally iconic treatment of household items associated with everyday domestic life, reinforcing the representation of the shotgun as a symbol of collective dignity and cultural identity.[17] Biggers' paintings challenge the social construction of the shotgun row as an icon of inferiority by insisting that viewers who might construe it as such reevaluate their own judgments and critically examine their prejudices.

Biggers painted the *Shotguns* series in the midst of a contentious debate in Houston, lasting from the late 1970s through the end of the century, over the fate of Fourth Ward. That his efforts, and those of other artists and architects, to make connections across boundaries of social class and race were exceptional is tragically apparent in how this debate was resolved. Three successive mayors of Houston — Lee Brown, Bob Lanier, and Kathy Whitmire — spared no effort to destroy Fourth Ward, which, when it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Freedmen's Town Historic District in 1985, was one of the last intact late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African-American neighborhoods in a large southern city. Paul Hester's poignant photographs convey the violence wreaked on the low-income residents of Fourth Ward, many of whom had lived in the neighborhood as renters for generations, as the engine of state-sponsored "revitalization" displaced them and, between 1999 and 2003, eradicated an irreplaceable cultural landscape.[18]

I conclude with Houston's newest shotgun cottage, designed and built by the architect George G. McMillin and his wife, Elizabeth, as rental housing in the Sixth Ward Historic District in 2001. The McMillin cottage is one of several neo-shotguns built in Sixth Ward since the late 1990s. Brett Zamore's radical reconstruction of a double-wide shotgun cottage at 4739 Buck Street in Fifth Ward as House 00, completed in 1999 and now occupied by the artist Bert L. Long, Jr., was undertaken with the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation to demonstrate the feasibility of preserving and rehabilitating shotgun cottages rather than scrapping them.[19]

Thanks to John Biggers, Rick Lowe and Deborah Grotfeldt at PRH, and those whom they have inspired, the shotgun cottage has gradually been transformed from an architectural emblem of poverty and shame into an icon of Houston. An overview of its development highlights the ways in which a house type that

has more often seemed like an economic instrument than a work of architecture accrues cultural density and meaning. Its material economy, its reproducibility, its adaptability to changes in architectural style and the organization of domestic space indicate the qualities that made the shotgun cottage such an enduring popular house type. Examined historically, what is so intriguing is the way in which the shotgun cottage has come to be valued for the very attributes that caused it to be scorned for much of the twentieth century. This process of examination and reevaluation is especially notable in Houston because at PRH the shotgun cottage has come to stand for an alternative vision of Houston, not as an abstract field for pursuing profit, but as a city in which people might live lives of mutual enjoyment, edification, and respect.

Notes

This paper is dedicated to the memory of V. Nia Dorian Becnel, historian of African-American material culture in Houston, ardent historic preservationist, and assistant professor of architecture at the University of Houston. Had she not died of a stroke on November 10, 1990, at the age of 41, she would have been at this podium today. It is also dedicated to four Houstonians who have struggled diligently to preserve the contributions of African Americans to the history of Houston: Gladys M. House, Lenwood E. Johnson, Ngeri Shakur, and Catherine M. Roberts.

1. Distinctions between "vernacular" and "popular" often prove elusive. "Vernacular" generally connotes patterns of cultural transmission based on local communal influence. "Popular" generally connotes patterns of cultural transmission based on mass dissemination. In Texas, the arrival of the railroad usually marked the beginning of the transition from vernacular culture to popular culture.

2. Mary Austin Holley, *Mary Austin Holley: The Texas Diary*, ed. J. P. Bryan, (Austin: University of Texas, 1963), 38-39.

3. Matthew B. Cox, "Bettie E. Williams House, 1910 Decatur," *City of Houston Archeological and Historical Commission Landmark Designation Report* (16 January 1997). Thanks to Randy Pace, Historic Preservation Officer, City of Houston, for making information on 1909 and 1910 Decatur available available. Pace's extensive research on the house at 809 Robin Street suggests the possibility that it could have been built as early as 1848. It seems to be a one-room house with a one-room outbuilding, which was eventually attached to the front house by the construction of additional rooms.

4. Rutherford B. H. Yates, Sr., and Paul L. Yates, *The Life and Efforts of Jack Yates*, (Houston: Texas Southern University Press, 1985) 19.

5. M. Louise Passey, "Freedmantown: The Evolution of a Black Neighborhood in Houston, 1865-1880," (master's thesis, Rice University, 1993), 55 and 53.

6. Passey, 117.

7. John Michael Vlach. "The Shotgun House: An Architectural Legacy." In, editors. *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 58-78.

8. Vlach, 62.

9. The racial origins of Melitón Cross parents are based on local oral tradition in Brownsville. Juan S. Cross' biographical entry in John Henry Brown's *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas* (Austin TX: L. E. Daniell, Publisher, n.d. [c. 1891]), 481-82, refers to Cross' children but not his wife. On Passement, whose racial origin was not commented upon when he was memorialized in the Brownsville newspaper at the time of his death in 1868, see "Don Bártolo Passement," *Daily Ranchero*, August 2, 1868, and the *Census of* 1830, Orleans Parish, Louisiana.

10. Kenneth A. Breisch, Freedmen's Town Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas" United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form*, November 1984, Item 8, pp. 6-7.

11. *Report of the City Planning Commission of Houston*, (Houston: The Forum of Civics, 1929),.84-85.

12. *Report of the City Planning Commission of Houston*, 25-27.

13. Stephen Fox and V. Nia Dorian Becnel, "San Felipe Courts Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas," United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form*, December 1987, Item 8, 4-5.

14. bell hooks, "House Art: Merging Public and Private," (lecture delivered at Rice University, October 11, 2001, in conjunction with the exhibition and symposium *Shotguns 2001*).

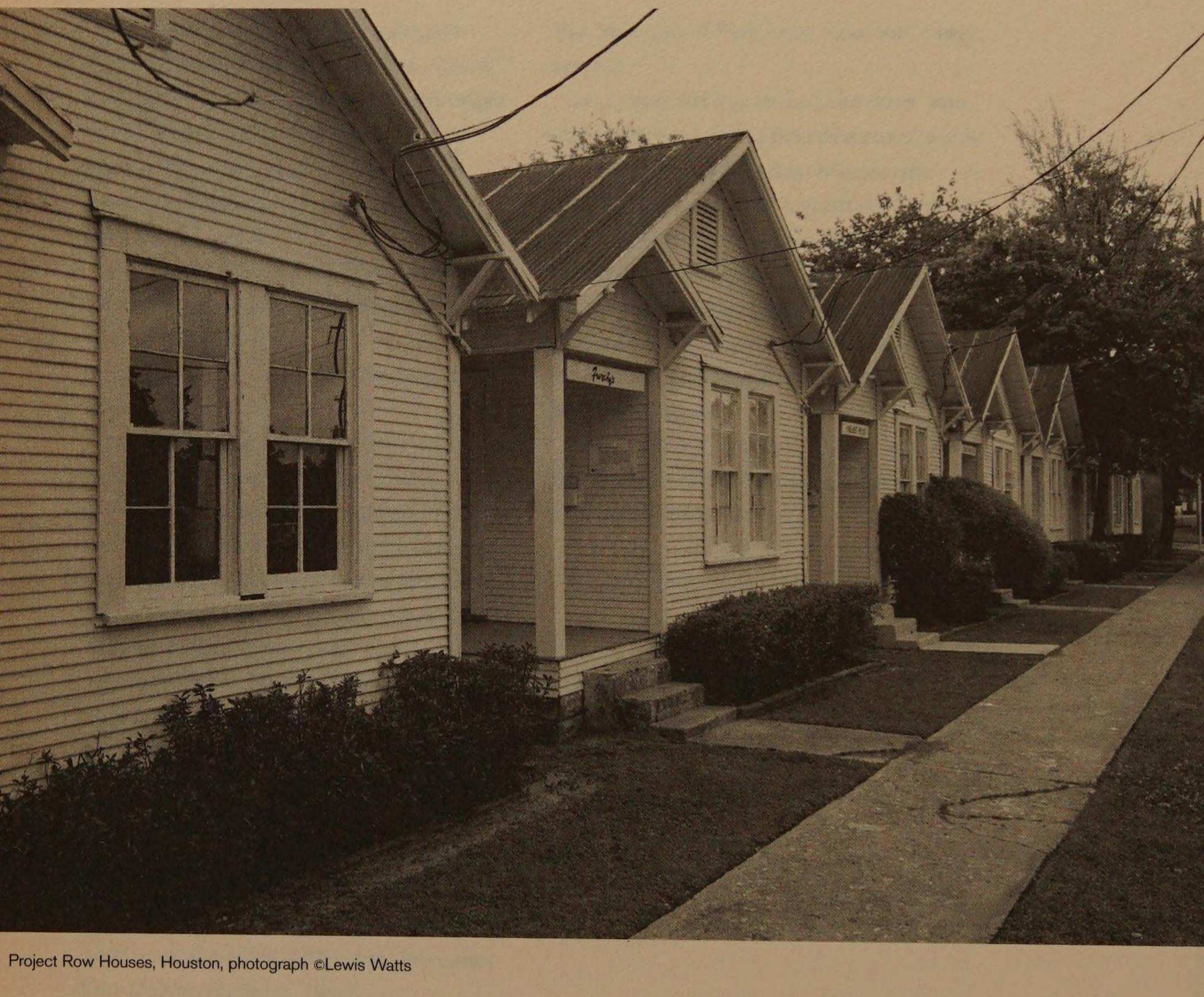
15. *Report of the City Planning Commission of Houston*, 102; and Ellen Beasley, *The Alleys and Back Buildings of Galveston: An Architectural and Social History*, (Houston: Rice University Press, 1996).

16. Sheryl G. Tucker, "Reinnovating the African-American Shotgun House," *Places* 10 (Summer 1995): 64-71.

17. Robert Farris Thompson. "John Biggers's Shotguns of 1987: An American Classic," in *The Art of John Biggers: View from the Upper Room*, ed. Alvia J. Wardlaw, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1995), 108-111.

18. Dana Cuff has coined the term "convulsive urbanism" to describe the process of state-subsidized urban transformation, which since 1996 has entailed the destruction of Allen Parkway Village and Fourth Ward, and the displacement of their residents. See Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

19. Deborah K. Ditesch, "Blast from the Past: Return of the Shotgun," *Washington Post*, 29 July 2000, C-2.



Project Row Houses, Houston, photograph ©Lewis Watts

Above, Beneath, Beyond and Between

LaVerne Wells-Bowie

Like stark white reminders and guardians of the past, the light frame structures of Project Row Houses stand solid and stoic. They say, "step to me right", speaking to us of then and now. Ever present in the work of John Biggers, these shotgun houses are tacticians of connectivity. From Third Ward to the varied cultural landscapes of the black Atlantic and beyond, shotguns house those intangible and ephemeral pulses that remain alive in a collective black memory. Biggers' visual accounts are testimonies of a larger world to which these sacred forms belong.[1] Using repetitive patterns that transform shapes into constructs of clearly identifiable symbols of kinship and community, his work facilitates a relationship between specific site and global context. Explicit and implicit readings hover among existences in New World Americas as well as recollections of past and contemporary Africa. He places the shotgun in a mapping trajectory that affirms an expansive, pervasive black memory.

In celebrating these testimonial vessels the installations of PRH confront a formidable challenge. How can art play a role in cultural conservation? How can the architectural statements of a culture speak of the host community from which their work stems–either vicariously or as knowingly plotted phrases? In the work of John Biggers we are brought to multifarious, yet exact, modes of exchange between culture and environment. The eight installations presented in PRH's 15th Round of Installations are diverse and compelling readings on place — the place of the shotgun, of the community, of insight and invention. Most engaging, however, is the role of the architect as observer, maker and marker upon buildings that already exist and that are imbued with the presence of the past as well as presently evolving histories.

The act of celebrating a cultural site and archetypal realm such as this necessarily expands the dialogue on conservation. Approaches for identifying and naming intangible evidence are at the center of current debates on designating significance. It is an exciting and crucial moment. For groups whose heritage is seeped in intangible practices it is a time to take note and to move beyond the debate. In a similar period of exploring identity and fusion, John Biggers' work came to be structured about the symbolic and spatial importance of the shotgun house. His work now provides a text for our own mappings. This moment of globalization co-exists with an insatiable need to acknowledge and investigate specific boundaries of reference with regard to culture and ethnicity.[2] The shotguns of Biggers bring us to an aesthetic formulated by multiple readings, a magical reality informed by his experiences in Africa and of his own American home environments.



Figure 1. John Biggers, *Above My Head*, 1989. This woodcut symbolically indicates the universality of the shotgun. Here, Biggers illustrates the context of both city and rural environs and houses the archetype in metaphors which extent far beyond any physical context. The Collection of Yvonne Tucker, ©Estate of John Biggers

To envision the Third Ward row houses as a site for critical intervention and inquiry is to similarly occupy a place beyond where these shotguns are specifically situated. This archetype is not fixed. Its extended territories, though geographically circumscribed throughout the black Atlantic, are particular transcendental, spirit-embodying, amalgamations. They are alloy containers with patina voices that carry intangible cultural exchanges. Their essence is, as Biggers understood, far beyond form and formalism and far above and beyond the place where they stand. (Figure 1)

Gullah landscapes off the coast of South Carolina's low country are where I came to know the shotgun as a way of life. Here, more than any other place in the United States, African retentions persisted throughout periods of historic circumstances, including high demographic ratios of Africans to Europeans and periods of relative isolation.[3] From the antebellum time of plantocracies,

to the freed black communities that expressed their presence in cultural practices, including environmental qualities, the Gullah have distinguished themselves as a distinct cultural entity. Patterns in language, kinship, hairbraiding, fishing practices, and much more became regional influences. These practices are very similar to those of the greater Caribbean where population characteristics mirror that black majority; also, a not-so-dissimilar historic backdrop and its resulting cultural influences. Other comparable effects are present in architecture, most specifically domestic dwellings.

Throughout my childhood, summers and Christmases were spent in the low country with family members. Here I experienced the kinship of extended familial environs. Like accounts of Biggers' formative background, I learned that the spatial configurations of family compounds and the life that was lived in, around, and among shotgun houses was tied to cultural practices rooted in an African heritage. The houses often enclosed a common space where communal tasks were performed. In the city this space was organized in a linear fashion, likened to that of Houston's PRH, while in the rural country the communal space was amorphously circular. It was further defined by specific gardening practices and the placement of found objects like shells as decorative elements. Children were welcome to sleep and eat in any of the structures. The porches served as part of the living space, as transitions that extended the small dwellings beyond the confines of built enclosure onto adjacent narrow street fronts and into communal back yards. (Figure 2) Two systems were simultaneously at work and inextricably connected. The physical world of buildings and landscape was annotated by how we lived, by everyday performances tied to time, place and memory. A metaphysical world, established by the spirit of place, insulated our being, yet connected our existences to places beyond.

The interrelations between tangible and intangible exuded a strongly sensed comportment. I, however, did not know the significance of these interchanges until I again met their presence in Caribbean and African contexts and again and again in the American south. Repetitive contact has offered opportunities to examine a larger context of consideration. [Figure 3] Variations on the shotgun and its connections to a specific cultural lifestyle exist from place to place, but the essence — a rather ephemeral characterization — is ever present. The evocation of memory plays an important role.

Is memory a necessary informant for reiteration, for the perception and commemoration of significance? Among the PRH installations several artists positioned their work in the context of their own memory. Experiential sensi-

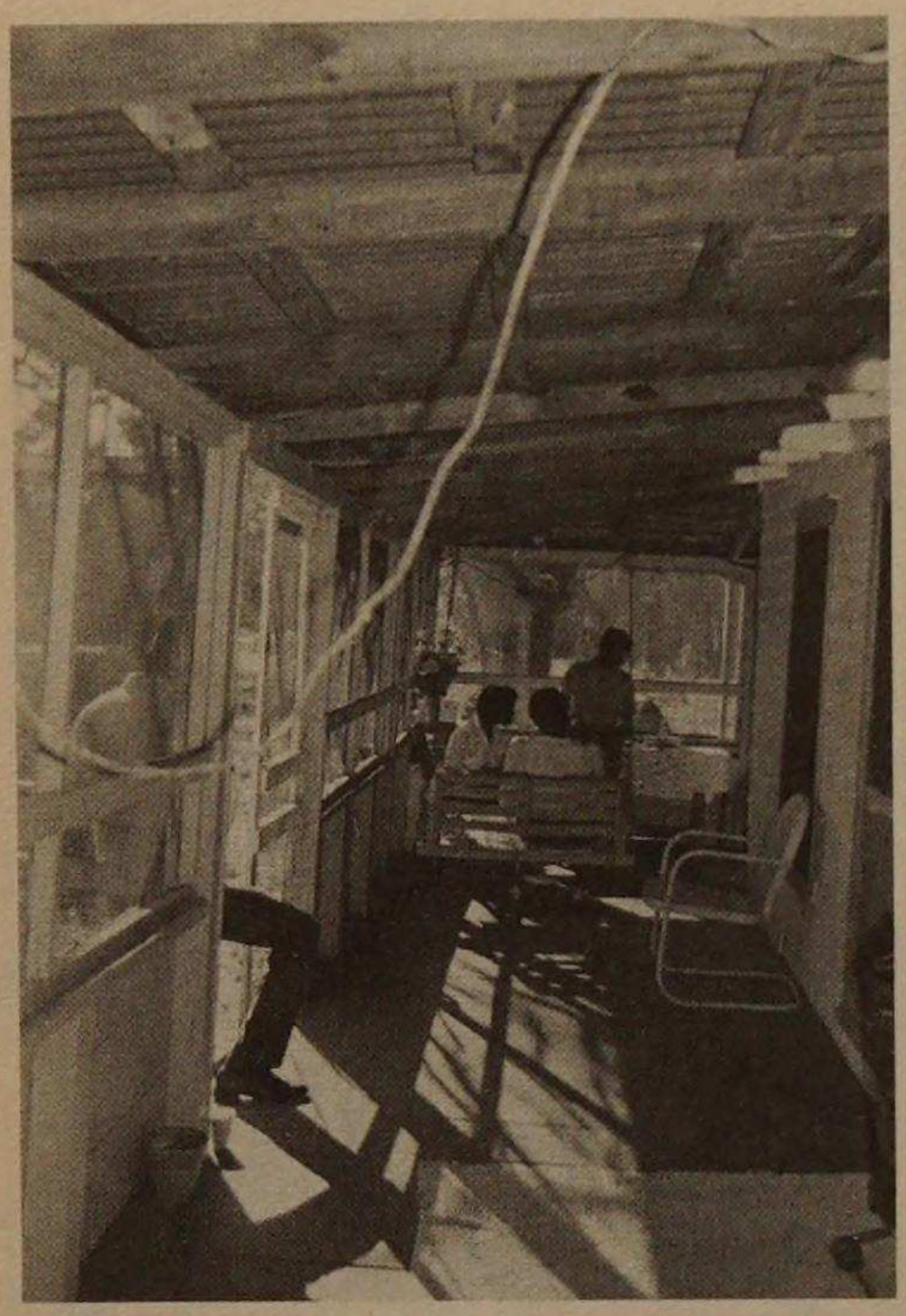


Figure 2. A porch in Daufuskie Island, South Carolina, is wrapped around a shotgun to provide various levels of transitional living spaces. Determined by how they face roads, yards and gardens, the spaces of the porch adapt to the connecting environments, assuming attitudes uses that address spatial and cultural needs. Photograph by author

bilities appear likened to the difficulties of valuating the intangible world that we "know", yet seek to name and clearly mark. That very insight — not only to see and recall what is intellectually learned, but also to know and call upon lived memory — possesses a truly magical reality.

Walter Hood's *Awakening* was keenly informed by the insight of memory. At once he created within a construct of the American city, and within the cultural context of home in relation to African American culture at large. Then, Hood went right to the spirit of belief systems testifying about house as a place where kinship was practiced, a kind of rejoicing in his grandmother's spiritual confluence of house and home. Yellows and orange-yellows shouted with bright warmth. They glowed of hospitality as they introduced representative forms of "beds for our family when we came to visit." The chimney of the house took on the role of a sentry like the servant of the served, a seemingly fond embodiment of his grandmother, Gertrude Hood. Walter's mellowed yel-

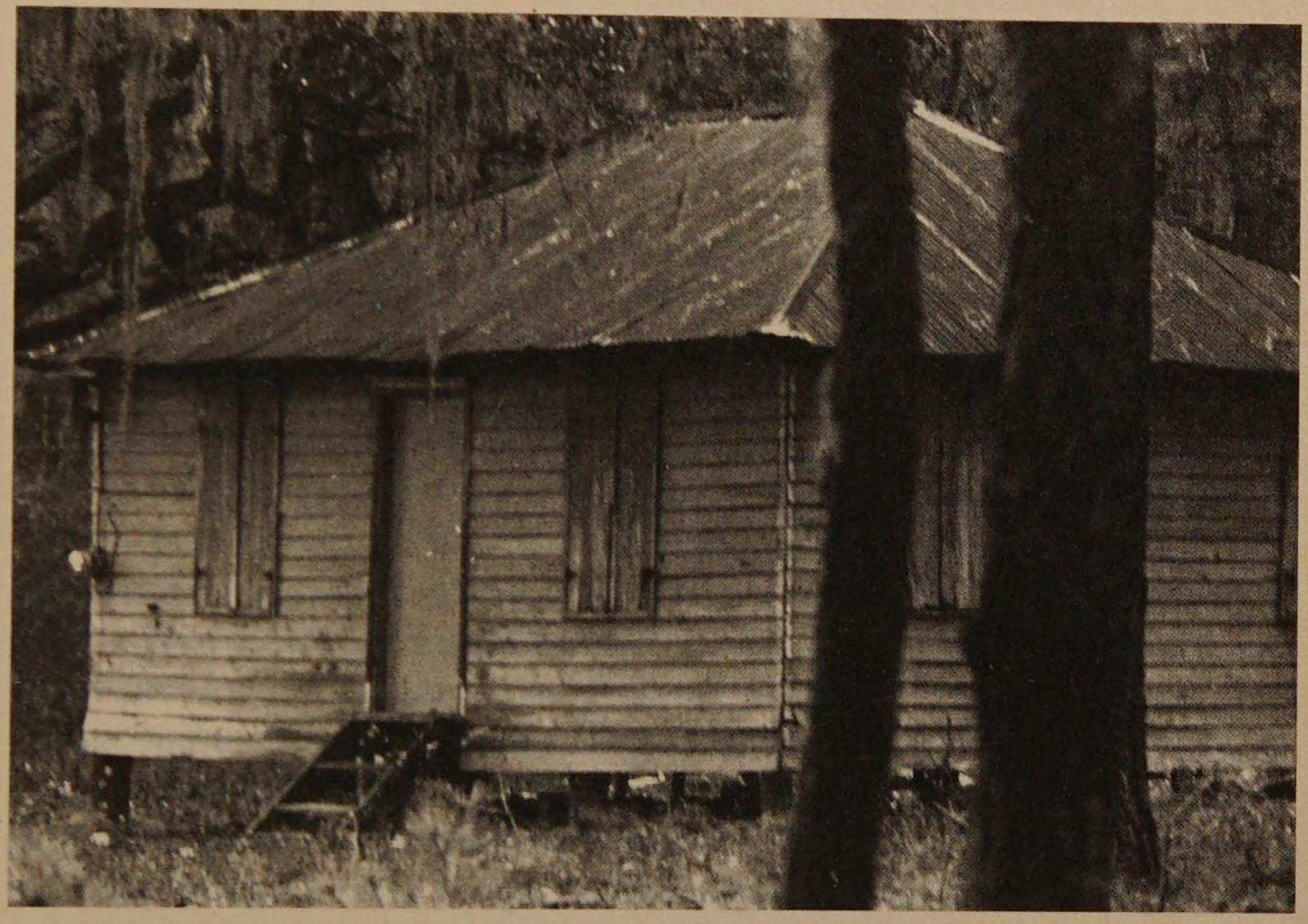


Figure 3. This shotgun on Daufuskie exhibits a core form which is recurrent throughout the black Atlantic. The shotgun takes on a multitude of adaptations that express local conditions. Variations, however interesting, are less poignant than their collective phenomenon of universality. It is this point that Biggers brings us to in his celebrations of the black hut. Photograph by author

low testimony, a tribute to the spiritual specificity of African American life and culture, beckons(ed) participation in a dialogue on transcending intangible qualities into tangible expressions.

The Memory Room of WPa (Williams+Pizzini architects) also constructed a space of introversion that was an homage to both greater citizenship and family intimacy. William D. Williams' and Archie Pizzini's grandfathers were recalled through tools, the technique of craft, and most engaging, the passing of traditions through generations using what is generally termed as "informal" learning and recording. WPa defied such canons by reflecting upon the tectonics of basketry, however ephemeral, as the embodiment of formal documentation. They gave recognition to the connectivity of generation-to-generation ties by creating a memory language using the corporeal presence of craft tools and the authenticity of oral lessons. There was an unsettling feeling of silence in the dark, blue-hued room with its speckles of light merging through the mate-

riality of woven planes. They created a concerted presence–one of natural and artificial light, flecks likened to fleeting moments. A large column basket, the focal point of the space, resisted the systematic structure of warp and weft. In the same manner there was an absence of connection between column, wall and ceiling, though the house renders the feeling of all encompassing. WPa's work valued the act of making utilitarian objects, and the importance of telling and, especially, listening were well-placed components of their memory statement. Perhaps the feeling of void is intended. The strength of WPa's statement would be more tacit, however, if the ominous essence of the space were mitigated by the assuring sounds of crafting.

To call upon an African American spatial aesthetic is to understand an embodiment of all our senses. The associations we hold in our memory of place include movement, rhythm and cadence. *and other latent uses* by David Brown recognized that essence. Like WPa, Brown focused upon craft–that of musical instruments which children in Mississippi make to actualize their initiation into the realm of blues. He further elaborated upon this living legacy through the recognition of blues musician, Wadada Leo Smith. By creating a collaged iconography of person, blues, instruments and space, Brown focused upon the interrelationships of the structure and activity. The chords of makeshift guitars are recalled by an installment of strings (fishing wire) that allow the space of the shotgun to interplay with recalls of homemade instruments. A participatory realm was created, including three platforms that could act as stages. Given the dynamic qualities of this low-tech, quietly placed memorial, its message shouted to include the porch beyond--an already existing platform where such traditional activities are often "staged."

Dressed Windows by Sheryl Tucker de Vasquez delicately turned our attention to the spiritual secrecy that the window often imbues. She provided a place of thought about an element that allows breeze in, keeps it out and is often outfitted to stop intruders. By incorporating their strategically staged positions, dressed in woven materials and engrossed by telltale vernacular fibers, she brought us to the window as a memory forum. Initially, these transformed elements did not seem to make a straightforward statement. Their manipulated gestures, however, composed a kind of beauty from ugliness in a manner that provokes questions about such decorated declarations. That the patterns of light filtering through the window treatments beckoned questions about what might be beyond is clear. However, the forms, which Tucker de Vasquez created to edit their standardized, regular presence, were of a beauty that almost chided

them. Meanings embedded in the palimpsest that composed their particularized reality were not collaged in the homogenous, intersecting fibers used in the manner *Dressed Windows* portrayed the shotgun's windows — either physically or seemingly, metaphysically. Its transcended expression was both curious and decisive.

A bench was placed in the space of the house as a kind of observation post. Exposed beams and white walls further circumscribed boundary and certain exquisiteness. The idea of the work's intention to recall yard *beyond* the window brings to the discourse of the PRH shotguns a salient aura of those that are both near and far beyond. This work, thought from the-inside-out (turned-out-side-in), gently portrayed the spiritual secrecy and intangible boundaries that formulate a rich arena of spaces of the mind that are connected to a collective memory and housed in a repetitive ordinary. Perhaps even more important, *Dressed Windows* called for understanding the realm of the yard as linked to those window elements that stage ideas of connectivity. These systems of windows we were invited to experience as voyeurs of within and without present a particularly defined assemblage. Yet, it was that spirit of aesthetics that longs to be less ambiguous.

SUMO's *Intimate Landscapes of the Shotgun House* was constructed about the synthesis between built fabric and behavior. Its form and format recalled snippets of a culturally informed metaphor between landscape and memory. These moments were interpreted by a medley of light moving quietly and purposefully while a declarative slice, gouged from the floor, screams of another kind of presence. Their inherent strengths were carefully crafted and they delineated a decisive presence of black-ness, a re-call. The light landscapes proposed a cultural and person relation between time and action. Black language, like 'give me a whoppin' projects into the space providing written testimony to the memory. It also spoke to the same kind of violence as the mark on the floor in measured precision. Phenomena of simultaneity evoked high drama and quiet presence, direct and filtered light, reflection and interaction. They composed an interwoven spatial palate of experience that played on many senses. Still, amidst this memory work's quiescent plays of intimacy there was a surreal presence of emptiness. Within *Intimate Landscapes* there was a reiterated being there wherein one felt at once removed and simultaneously imposing upon. This memory composition imparted a feeling of absence that was stronger than presence. Is this message of place a sub-theme of observations and memories that reflect and project the de-construction of community?

Whether conjured from shared familiarity or individual experience, memories are personal. They are intangible individual and communal tools of cultural markings. Again, we can reference the compositional elements and the iconography seen in John Biggers' work. Memory associated with place speaks to cultural values giving them tangible formats. In black constructs this presence is remarkably indelible, yet it is a frequently questioned framework of validity. Whose memory is reiterated? Whose history; who speaks of it and for whom? What determines measures and symbols of authenticity? Black cultural aesthetics are deeply transcendental affects. Its structures are not tied to formal systems of authority. Thus, both investigation and legitimization of criteria are relentlessly called to scrutiny.

We are brought to that space *Between Memory and Amnesia* by the installation of Craig Barton. It posited models of shotguns as repetitive monuments about the memories housed by their prototype. Experiences in the home places were recorded as visitors were invited to tell their stories in chalk on the black walls of this PRH house. The shotgun models in the spaces each contained an object likened to strategies used by Biggers — to call upon the everyday as worthy elements for culturally charged reverence. Biggers also used both color and repetition to speak about the powerful aura contained within the shotgun. Barton gave this environmental vessel a decidedly architectural overtone by employing three-dimensional repetition. There was a starkness of place articulated by the ominous, small scale, basswood houses against a black background. As the space beckoned participation it did not engage color or the scale of personal experience, key informants in Biggers' own expressions of the shotgun as cultural aesthetic that resonates with an existentialism of individual belonging. In *Shotgun* (1987), for example, timeless symbols of African patterns evoke the shotgun's universality. Here, personal engagement is energized by illusive repeating shapes that situate one in time and space, on one level all encompassing (universal and communal) and simultaneously, personal. The arena for telling one's story, testifying, is grounded in the rites of cognitive and spiritual "belonging".

The starkness of Barton's shotgun objects in space, though handsomely crafted and displayed, were presented and thus, experienced at the scale of the architectural critique. But, even as shorthand gestures of architectural communication, *Between Memory and Amnesia* might have been more personally inviting to residents if the houses were offered in meaningful colors or patterns that could intervene in that architectonic sameness of the black and white

rooms that host them. This invitation for re-calling lives lived in local shotguns is a compelling idea — recording the persistence of individuality within a collective African American memory.

Time and individual house histories are tied together by Shawn Rickenbacker in a symbolically high tech flash, *In-Passing*. The movement of clear rods, translucent shielding and projections of color were created by an exciting amalgamation of technology, materiality and an especially dynamic placement of transcending streams of light. Passage, its main concept was offered as a seductive journey with no promises for one's experience beyond. *IN-Passing*, a deconstructed pilgrimage for the mind, enticed the viewer into a space of memory triggered by red spots, a constant column and light fluctuations formatted just so — so as to carry one into an experiential stream of consciousness. Among the installations of PRH, this one especially distinguished itself as illusively effective. It provoked memory to take an uncharted journey. Here, once engaged the mind's eye could not help but wonder on and on and beyond. That one's journey may or may not be specifically related to the cultural construct of the shotgun was cunningly and successfully irrelevant in this work. The space of the mind, in the place of the shotgun, was occupied by a visceral exchange between the vast possibilities of light and the confines of structure. Rickenbacker convincingly offered up the experiential as a non-memory based consideration for celebrating the shotgun.

One Week Eight Hours was a curious and complex installation. Felecia Davis choreographed a soliloquy of time's movement for which understanding requires the knowledge likened to that necessary for solving a complex calculus formula. Situating oneself within this work was dependent upon what is technically understood and yet, still emotionally re-called — what an individual really understands about the transfer of time. The illumination of natural light and the mechanical recording of time intervals illusively graphed light's impacts on space, object and imagery. This house evokes a metaphor of integral follies, featuring light's sensitivity in concert with energy's possibilities and limitations. Particularities that teased the senses were shadows of infinitely small changes that reflect upon memory's familiar re-calling. A ghost-like interrelationship between structure and cultural environment intervened upon the space's referencing techniques. It spoke a language of observations not essential to dialectical articulations of how time plays on memory. Rather, how light plays on time was more clearly and continuously clicking, ever present.

Several of the installations (for one, David Brown's work in PRH's Music and Spoken Word House) needed further participation or development to complete their stated intent. *One Week Eight Hours* appeared to be an ongoing endeavor. The projections that inhabited the space, the constant quiet and continuously clicking projector constructed an "in process" experiential relationship. A persistent void begged to be present — the rich context of the subject, the house, the community, the particularity of culture. Rather, what was more perceptible was *something* about how light plays on time. Perhaps the future speculation intended for *One Week Eight Hours* would have engaged these former issues, bringing their definitive essence to fore. This work's value to the discourse on new ways to celebrate the art of Biggers and the shotgun as an archetype is in the leap of faith taken; a pondering which might be understood as a complex, temporal place-ness.

John Biggers' *Midnite Hour* (1986) connects time to space, to music, human activity (in this case, the depiction of an embracing couple); to specificity of context and yet, universality. It's interpretation of cosmic energy, cultural icons and the evocation of dynamic movement — all contained within the constraints of a two-dimensional surface — brings to mind the place of architectural re-marking as referent for cultural qualities. How they relay black life and black memory as universal constructs is key. His work, so saliently informed by his experience and his ability to re-call and connect, should be more deeply investigated as we continue to define systems that can project and elicit with broad understanding of tangible and intangible conventions.

While centering on principles of aesthetics that inform architectural space, the PRH installations transformed Biggers' patterns of black-ness into new modes of experientially mapped trajectories. Time and movement pose expanded constructions of culture and place. The integration of technology and other creative paths for presenting environmental sensations propose additional modes of thought on the validity of evoking memory; on memory as a validating criteria of cultural essence. As architectural intellects, the installation designers of PRH have brought the role of the architect to directly confront issues of presence. What is valid experience? In some measure the works present a considered "being" as compelling as that of memory's persistent constructs.

Notes

1. For further references to the work of Biggers in light of a universal, existential construct see Robert Ferris Thompson, "The Song that Named the Land" and Alvia Wardlaw, "A Spiritual Libation" in *Black Art Ancestral Legacy*.

2. There have been numerous conferences in the recent past that address ethnicity and cultural specific life ways and environments. Among those that focused upon or to a significant degree included African American cultural and historic phenomena are Craig Barton's *Sites of Memory*, 1999; *Immigration, Ethnicity and the American City*, ACSA, 2000; *Conference on the Arts and Diaspora in Paris 2000, Places of Cultural Memory; African Reflections on the American Landscape*, National Park Service et al, 2001; *International Conference on the Black Diaspora*, Bermuda, 2002.

3. Peter Wood in *The Black Majority* cites the population of 1740 as 39,155 Africans (slaves) to an estimated 2,000 Europeans (whites). See Wood's qualitative discussion and quantitative tables (I, II, III and IV) in Chapter V; "More Like a Negro Country".



INSTALLATIONS AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN DESIGN PRACTICES

Project Row Houses is a public art project combining art exhibitions and education with a residential program for young mothers that addresses a diverse set of needs in Houston's Third Ward. It provides these programs in a cluster of 22 shotgun houses, which introduce a variation of the shotgun house form. The fifteen-foot width of these houses is divided to provide a ten foot wide room with an adjacent support space. On the front this space is a porch that extends the yard into the space of the house. In the middle, the organization flips and the support space becomes a bathroom. With the organization flipping again the support space serves as a kitchen with access to an attached rear porch.

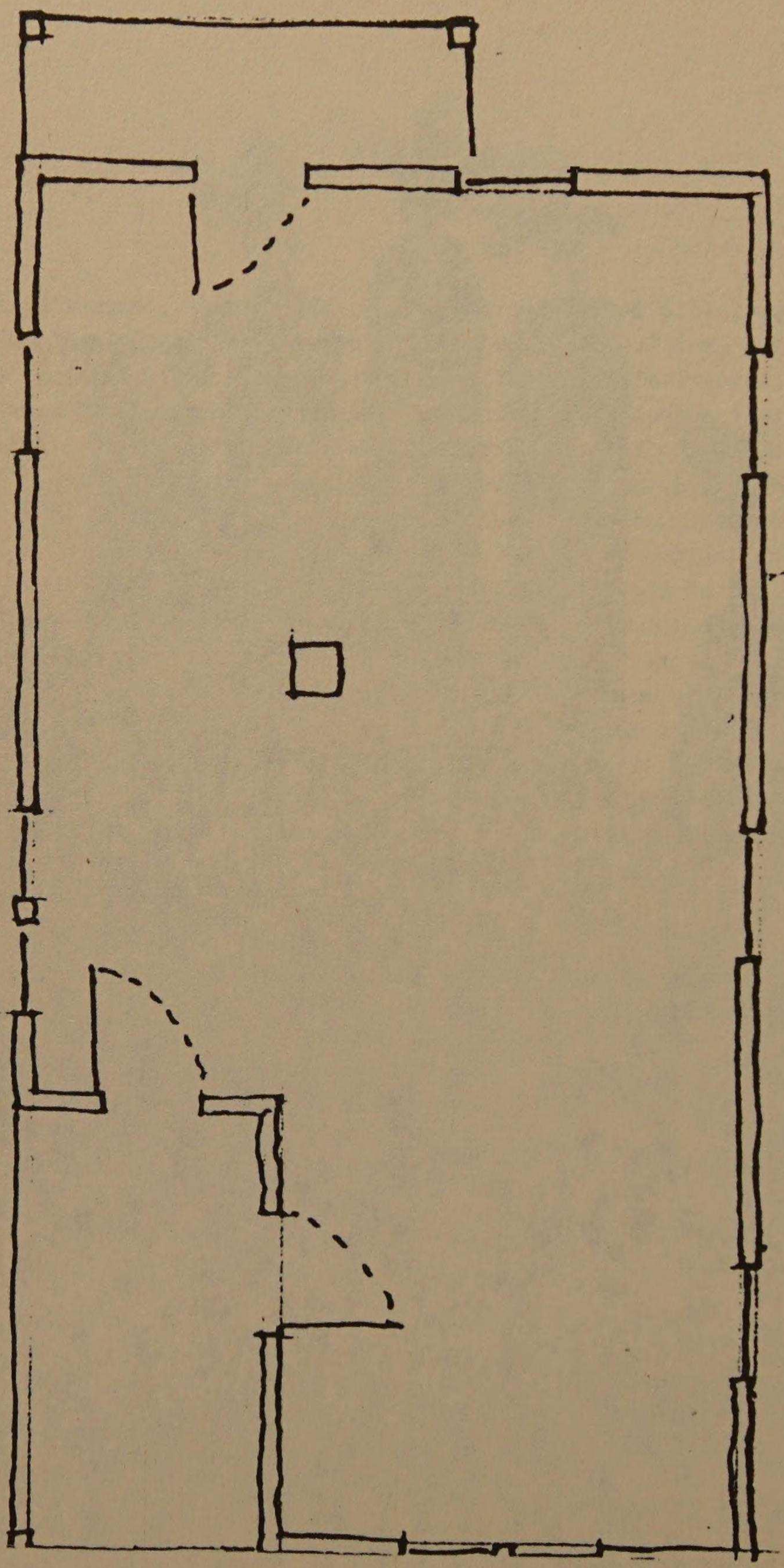
Of the eight houses only one — which Craig Barton worked within — has the original partition walls. The others have been gutted except for the chimney and Six appear quite similar except for some minor variations — exposed rafters, absent side doors, gypsum board covering the original tongue and groove siding as well as the brick chimney. One — the Music and Spoken Word House — has been further modified with a restroom that is accessible from Row Houses' rear yard in order to support the children's after school program.

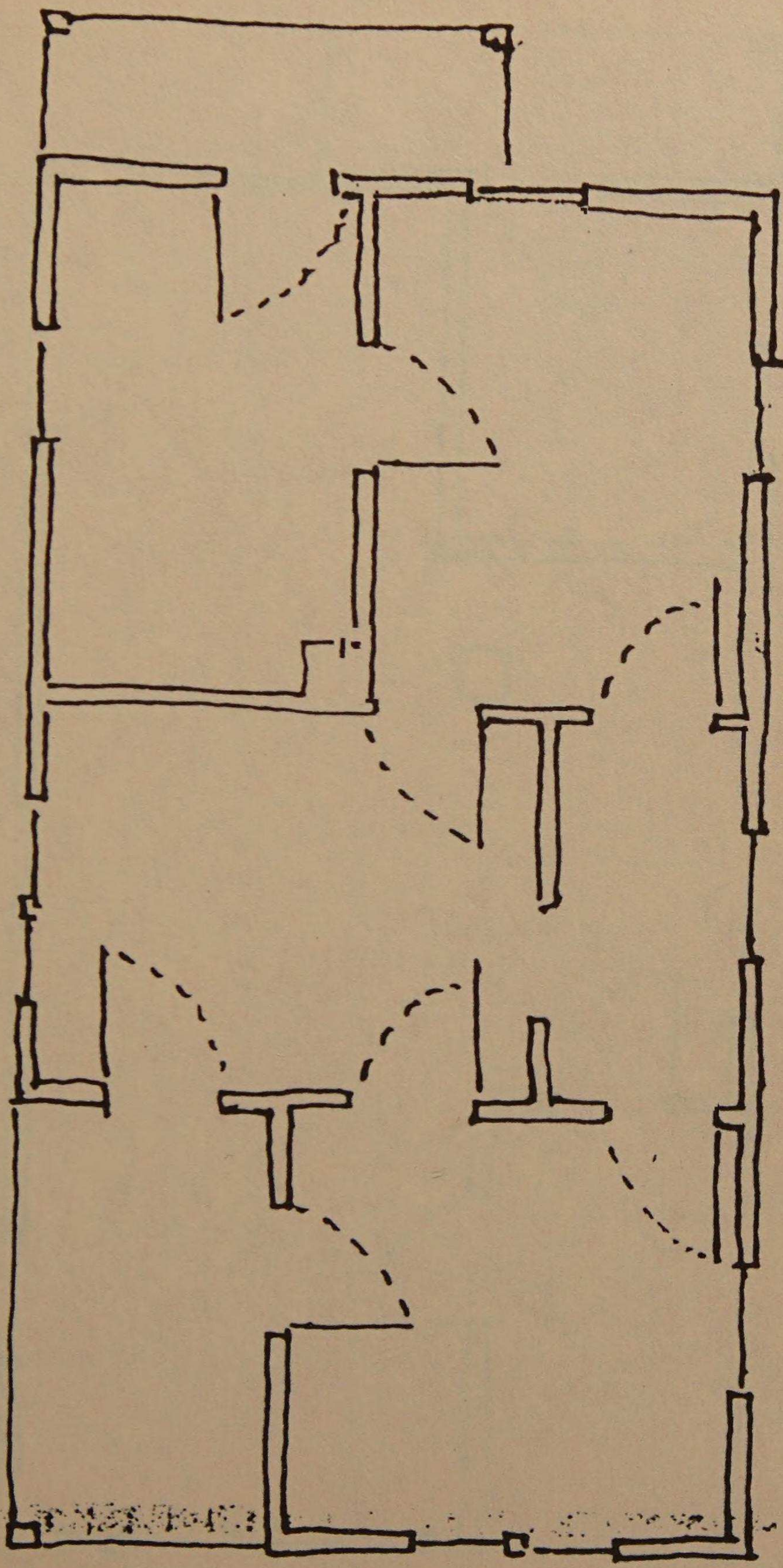
Each participant modified the interior of the house in whatever way that they wanted provided that they return it, in essence, to the state in which they found it upon completion of the round of installations. Installations could begin three weeks prior to the opening; however, given their distance from the site, most participants arrived within ten days of the opening to conduct their installation.

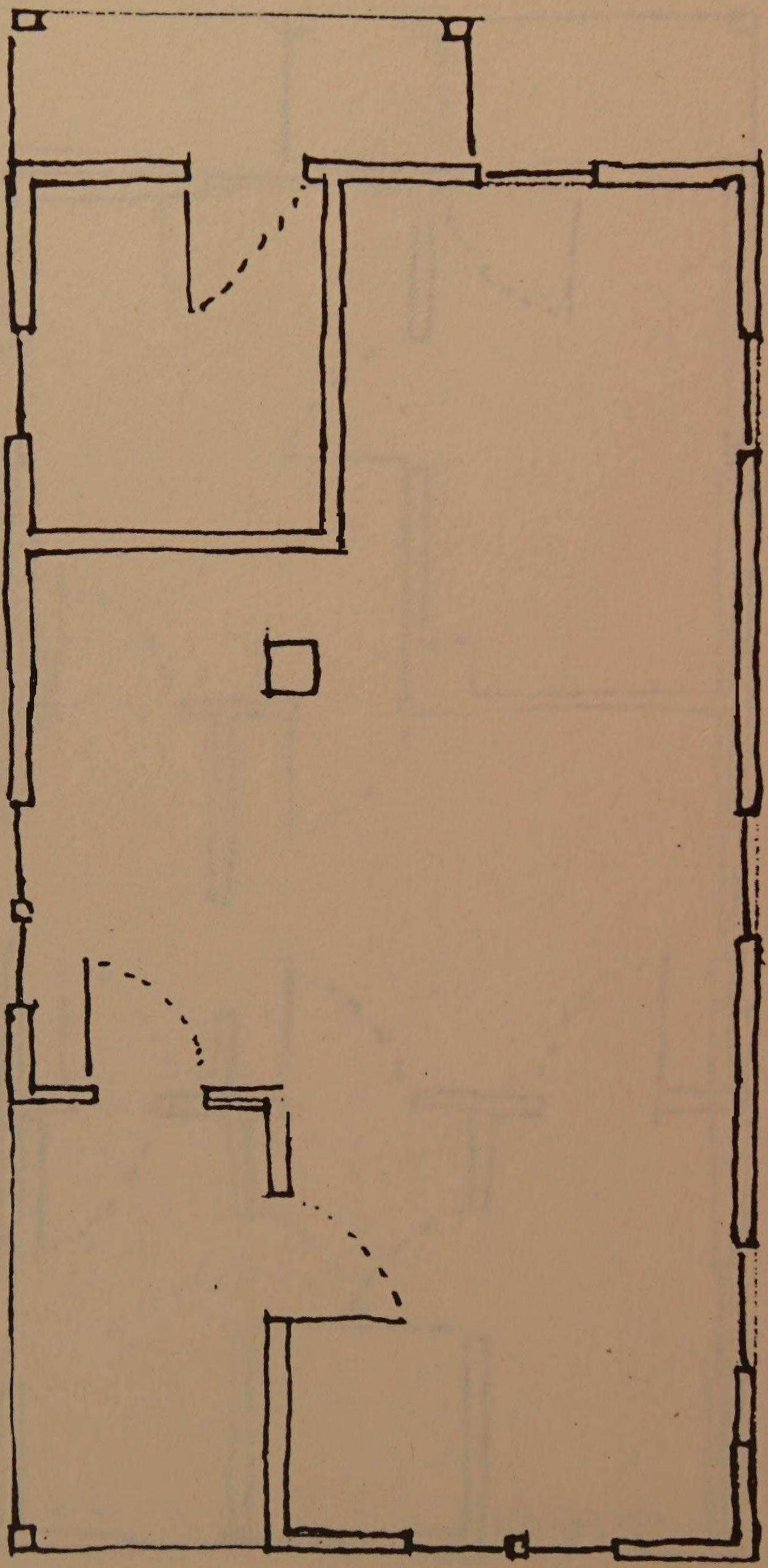
The installations opened on October 13, 2001 and stood for five months until February 15, 2002.

Left: Third Ward, Houston, photograph ©Lewis Watts

Pages 58-60. Typical plan configurations of Project Row Houses' Artist's Houses







AWAKENING: QUILT TOP PATTERNS IN THE THIRD DIMENSION
Walter Hood

ONE WEEK, EIGHT HOURS
Felecia Davis

BETWEEN MEMORY AND AMNESIA
Craig Barton

PASSING TIME
AR+D unigroup

AND OTHER LATENT USES
David Brown

INTIMATE LANDSCAPES (OF THE SHOTGUN HOUSE)
SUMO

BORDERING
Sheryl Tucker de Vasquez

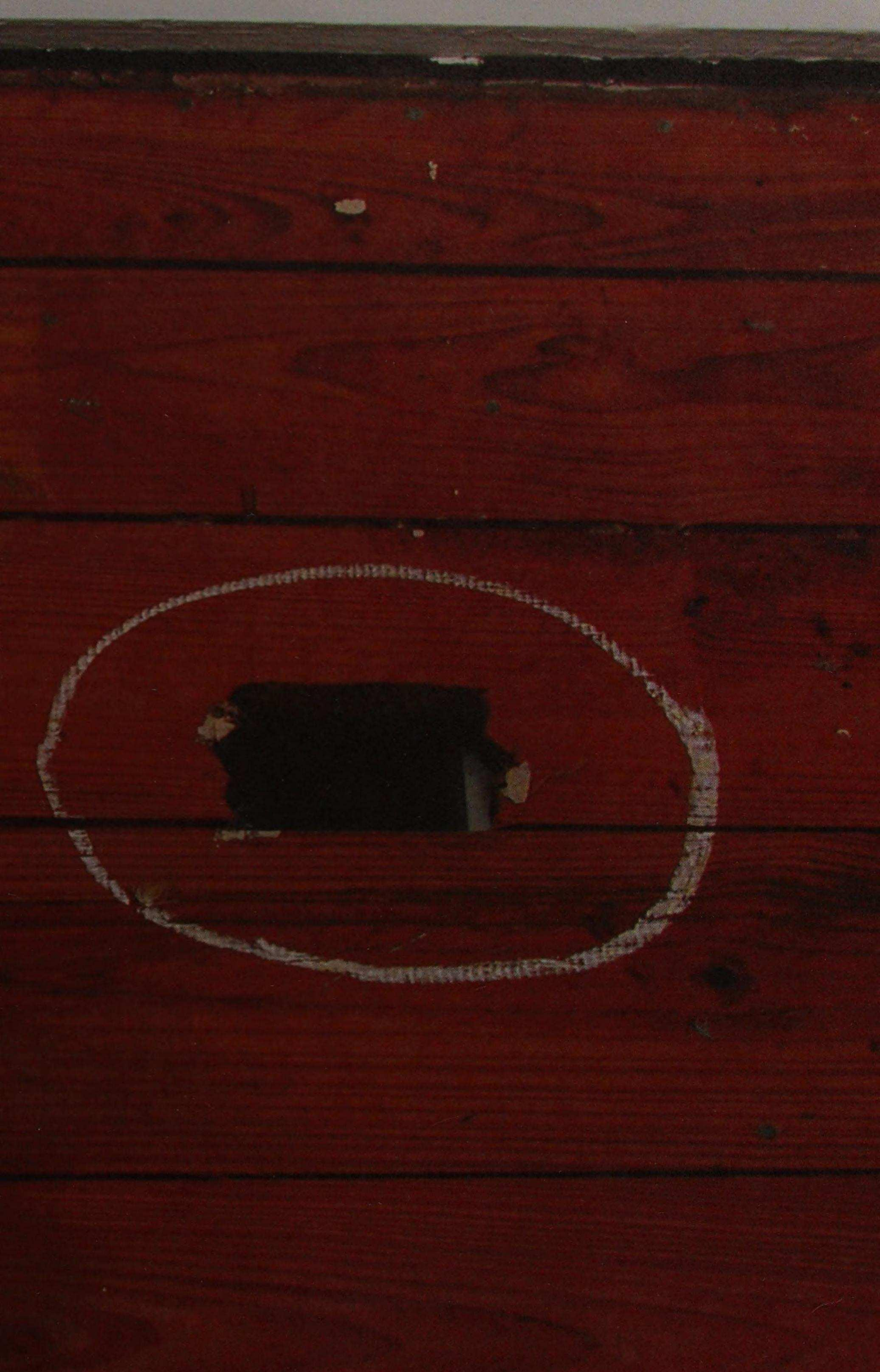
MAKING DO: BEYOND GETTING BY
WPa (Williams+Pizzini architects)





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CLOUDS













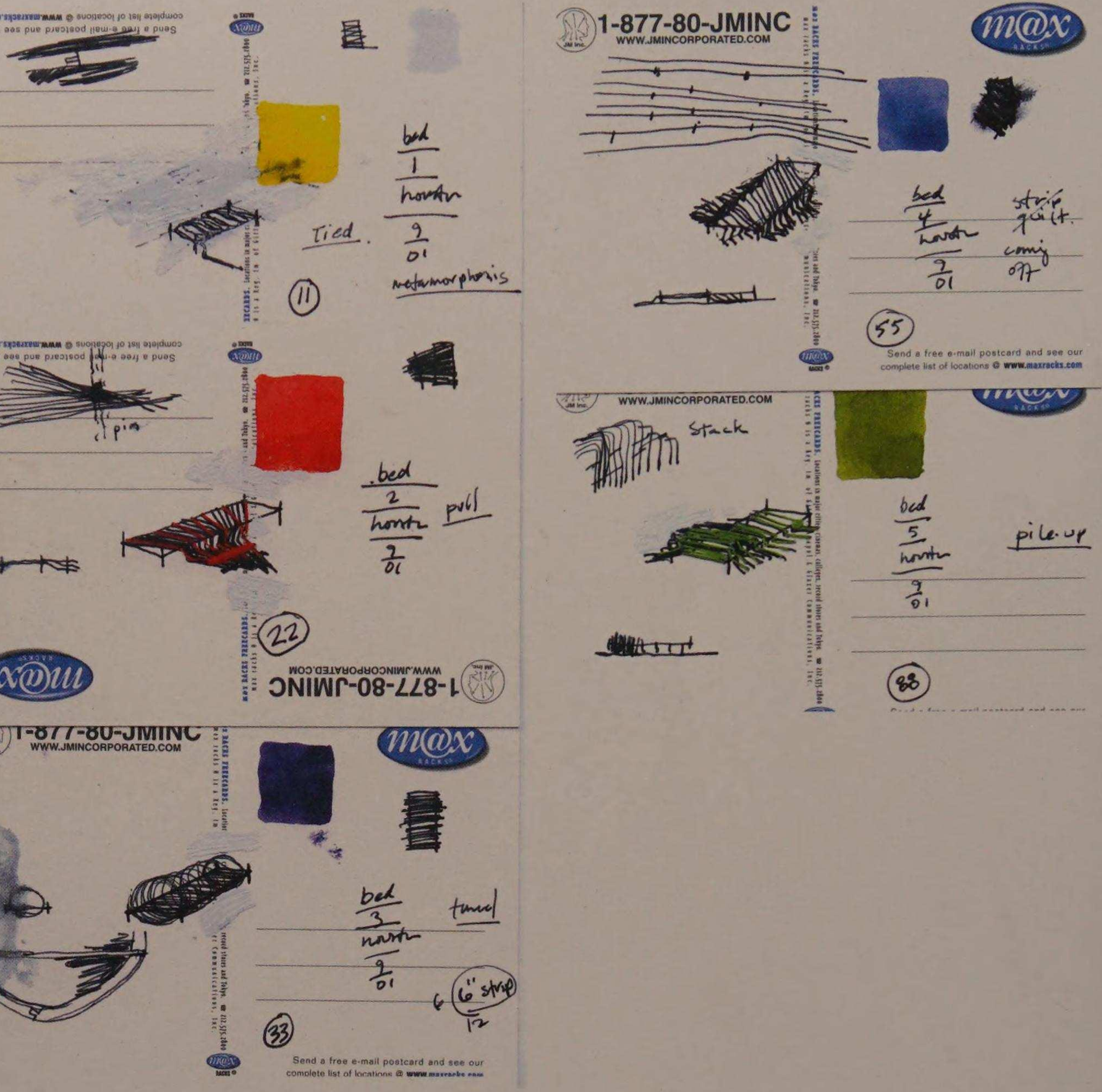


Figure 1. *Concept sketches*, Walter Hood, 2001.

AWAKENING: QUILT TOP PATTERNS IN THE THIRD DIMENSION

Walter Hood

For two centuries, the scale and density of the American urban worker's dwelling reflected a cultural context where labor was king: the African-American dwelling was a place of retreat from the day-to-day work ritual. Their spiritual and artistic culture blossomed, transforming the African-Americans' physical circumstance. Improvisation became a cultural norm. Architecture nomenclature, newly synonymous with belief and experience, defined architecture unique to the African-American community: the "Father, Son and Holy Ghost", "Row" and "Shotgun" house. In *Awakenings*, part of the exhibition, *Shotguns 2001*, five objects serve as reminders of the "shotgun" house's spirit and the material arts that emerged from the African Americans who inhabited them. (Figure 1)

IMPROVISATIONS

Linking concept and form, improvisation as a design process facilitates the freedom to individualize a work. Creativity begins with the imagination drawing from an infinite source of inspiration and knowledge. When confronted with limits and pre-existing conditions, the imagination is forced to struggle, adjusting to accommodate new needs and uses within the set boundaries. Improvisation is fundamental to imagination.

As a design process in the African-American arts and craft tradition, improvisation reveals as much about

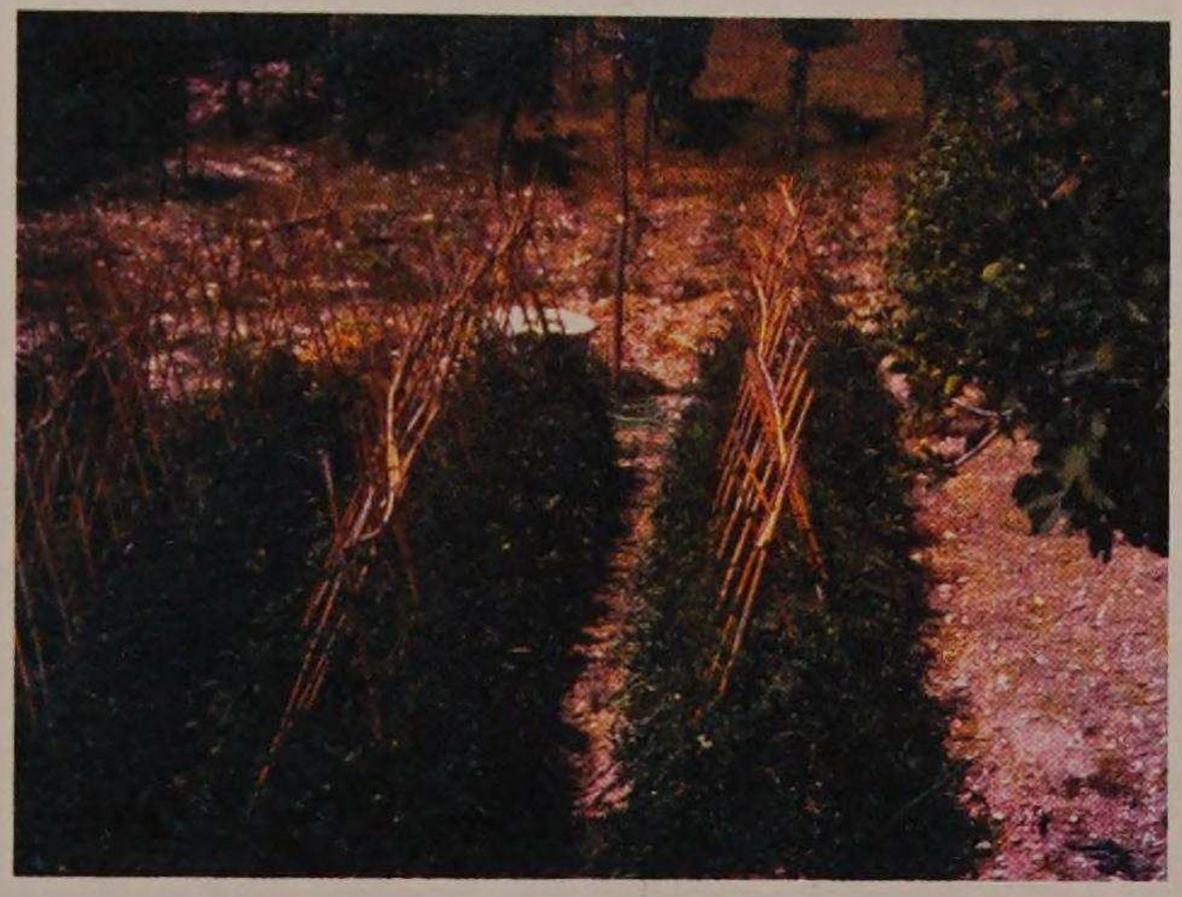


Figure 2. Vernacular Tomato Climbing Structure, Oakland CA, 1992

accepted culture parameters as it does about an individual's creative process: "[S]pontaneous change represents a cultural norm, rather than a single, independent intervention. It is an integral part of the process of African Art to constantly reshape the old and familiar into something contemporary and unique, to simultaneously express one's self and reinforce the image of the community."

Reshaping the old and familiar into new social and artistic products is economical and sustainable. Less becomes more. Invention is an expectation. Self-expression emerges in the struggle to find another side to old and familiar things. The everyday spatial and functional environment and the mundane objects that fill it need no reintroduction. But by closely examining the spaces and objects around us, we can find new meaning in the seemingly ordinary. (Figure 2)



Figure 3. *Climbing Vine Tower*, Oakland CA, 1998



Figure 4. *Street Car in California*, Oakland CA, 1920.

The recognition and validation of existing spaces and objects by the designer also acknowledges that they are products of a community or of a specific time and culture. The attraction to certain spatial conditions and to the idiosyncratic varies between place and people. Once prompted, this attraction can become a vessel for self-exploration. (Figure 3)

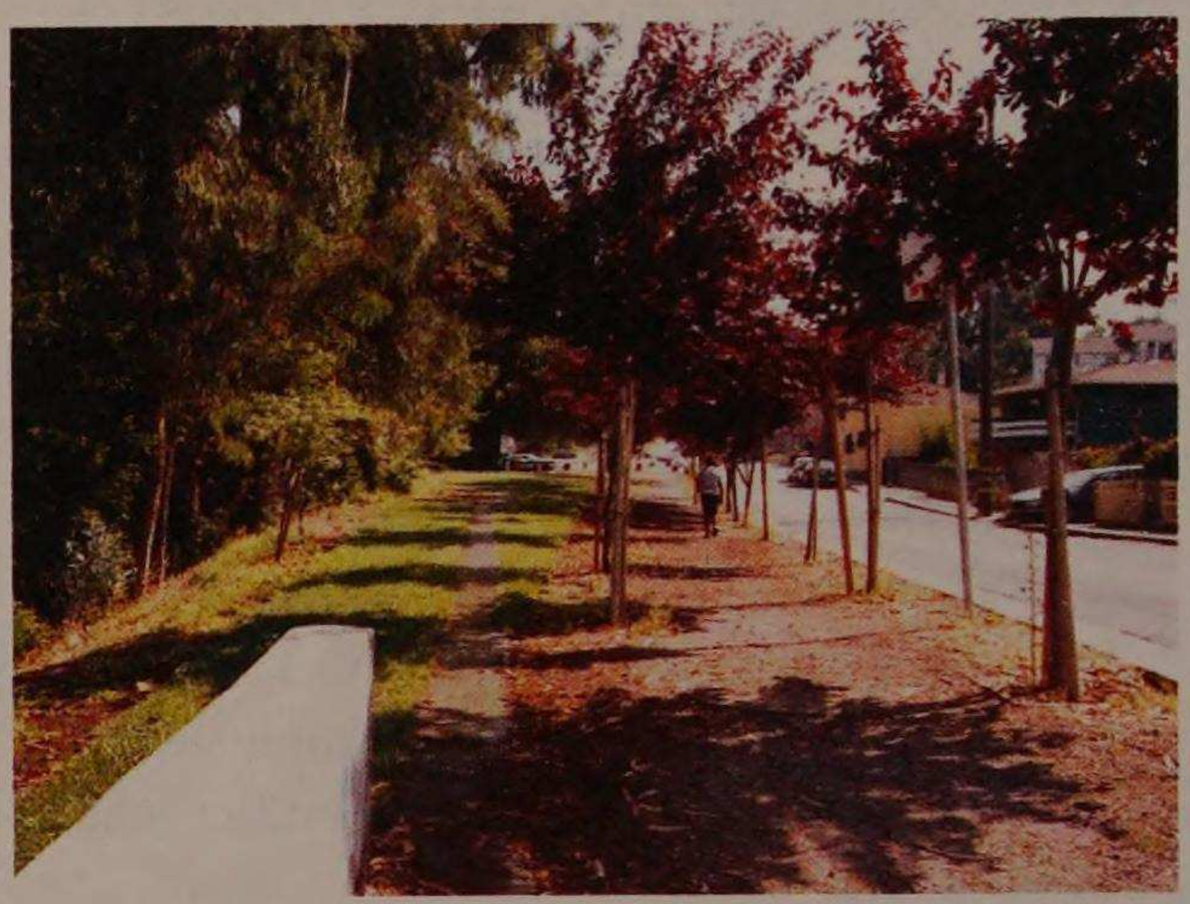


Figure 5. *Purple Leaf Plum Alle*, Oakland CA, 1998.

IMPROVISING LANDSCAPES

The following three public projects typify an improvisational strategy in the design of the physical environment. John Michael Vlach's earlier characterization of the improvisational process is useful in understanding this design method. These projects forged a link between process and product both for me as the designer and for the communities that act upon the spaces. Once the old and familiar were identified, an extemporaneous exchange of ideas between the designer and the community transformed them each into "contemporary and unique" places. The resultant designs are a reflection of both self and of those values and goals presented by the community.[1]

The streetcar rail, part of the streetcar system in the Oakland, California East Bay, was a familiar sight in the early twentieth century. (Figure 4) When the automobile replaced the streetcar, the spaces that once supported rail tracks became voided spaces, fallow right-of-ways empty of objects. A formal alle, consisting of 150 trees, was planted in a double row, creating a new line pattern for three blocks. (Figure 5) The trees are purple most of the year, changing to white in the spring. The working class community that once used the train now walks and strolls along the line.

A public square in downtown Oakland, California, once hosted an observatory. (Figure 6) The space was later transformed into a park for community use. The space has since been reshaped, merging park and square elements within a classical framework. The ground is sculpted to emphasize simple geometries in space. (Figure 7) Picturesque plant

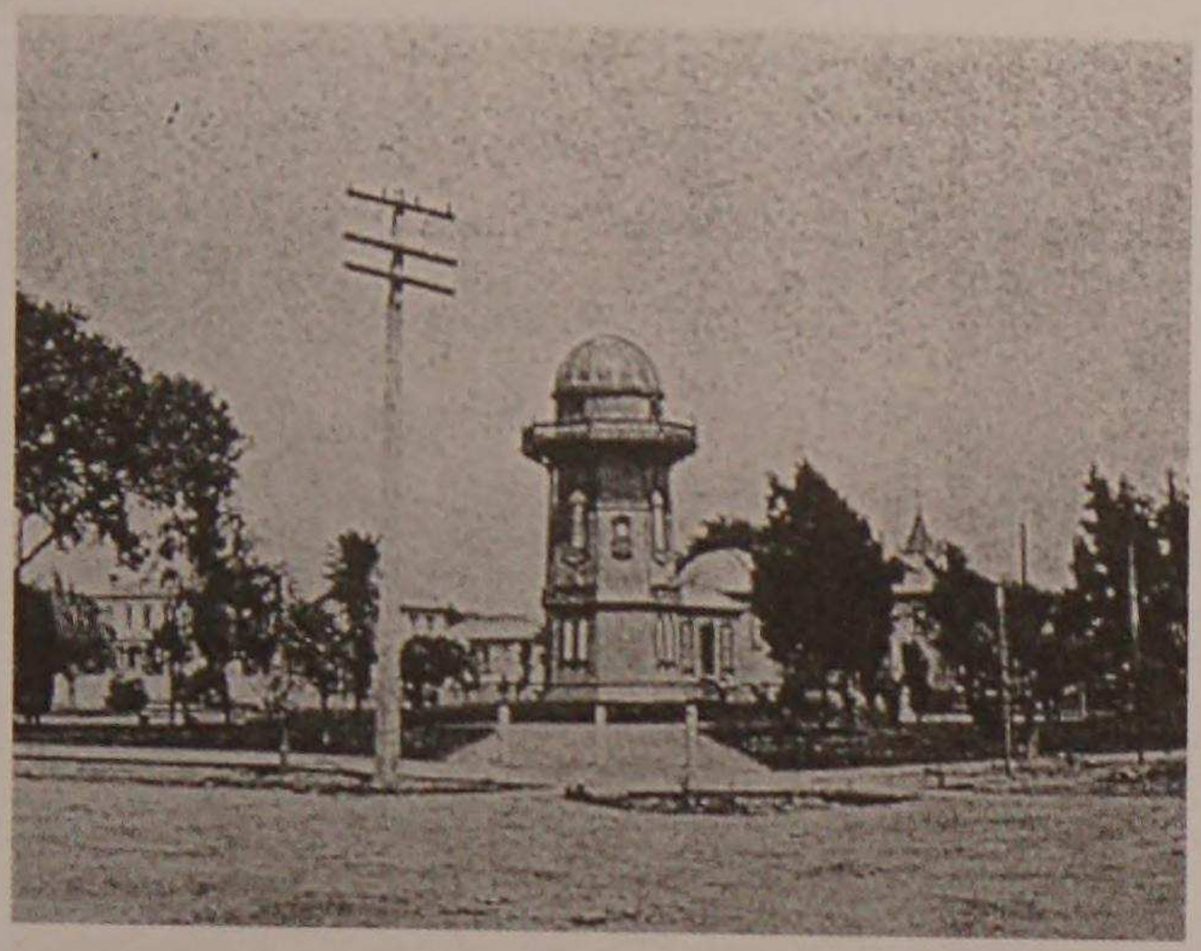


Figure 6. *Chabot Observatory*, Oakland CA, 1905.



Figure 7. *Picturesque Lines and Planes*, Oakland CA, 2001.

ings and the ground merge with flat paved surfaces, compartmentalizing the space for use by a diverse crowd.

An estuary in Oakland, California, was filled and developed for housing and retail. (Figure 8) The space between two roads became a park. Later a freeway structure bridged the adjacent street site and a fountain was placed in the center of the park. The space has been reshaped to create a space that weaves

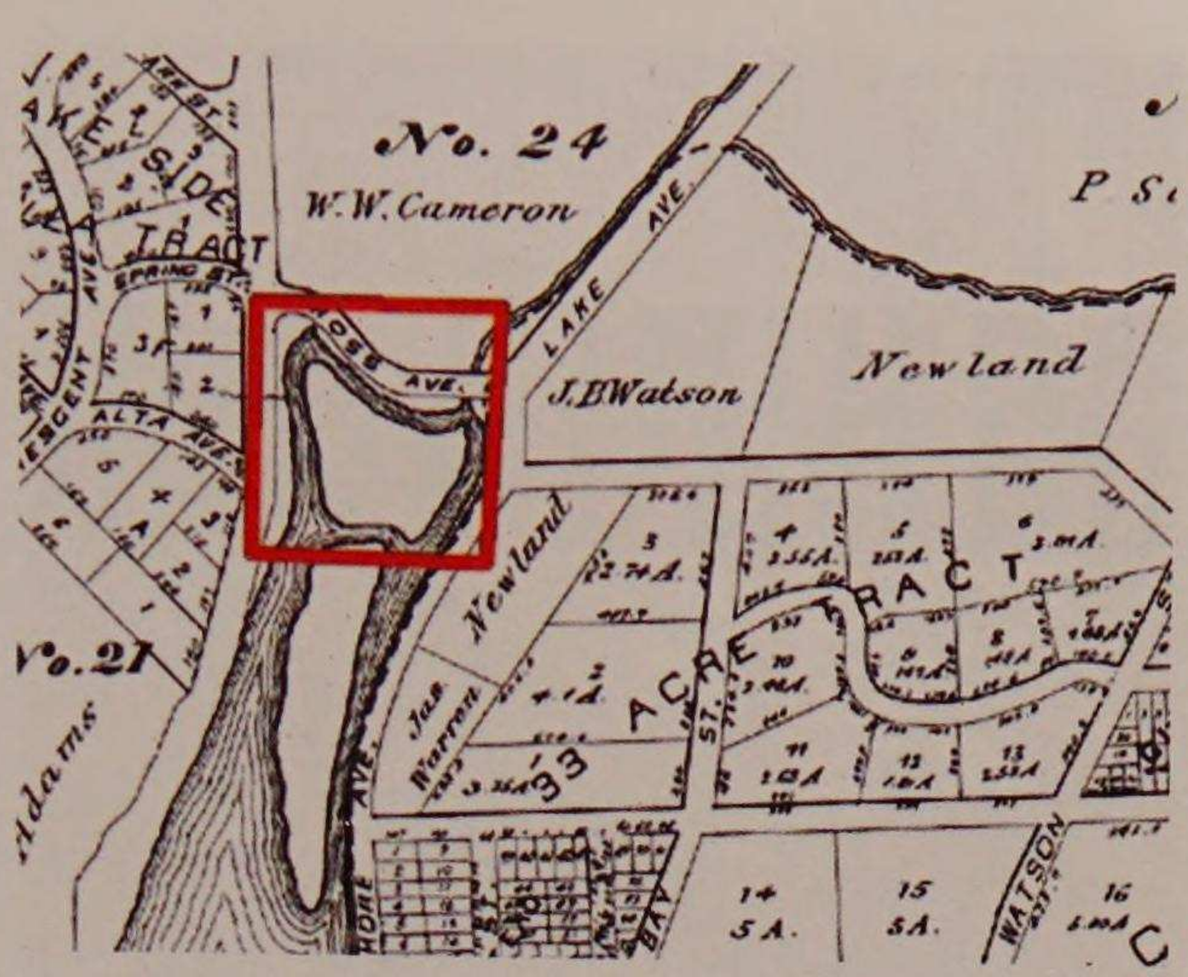


Figure 8. *Estuary Transformation*, Walter Hood, 2001.



Figure 9. *Splash Pad Park*, Hood Design, 2001.

the original cacophonous wetland pattern together with a framework derived from the street and freeway. (Figure 9)

Concepts originate from a specific culture, place, and time. Linking the past and present through an acknowledgement of their connecting history effects cultural change. These examples represent how sites can be interpreted and expressed through the lens of previous uses. More specifically, the old and familiar are the starting point. Old becomes new through abstraction and invention, transforming familiar patterns and practices into new spaces and objects.

'AWAKENING'

Imagine a small building with two doors, one in the front and one that faces the back. Imagine two families living within

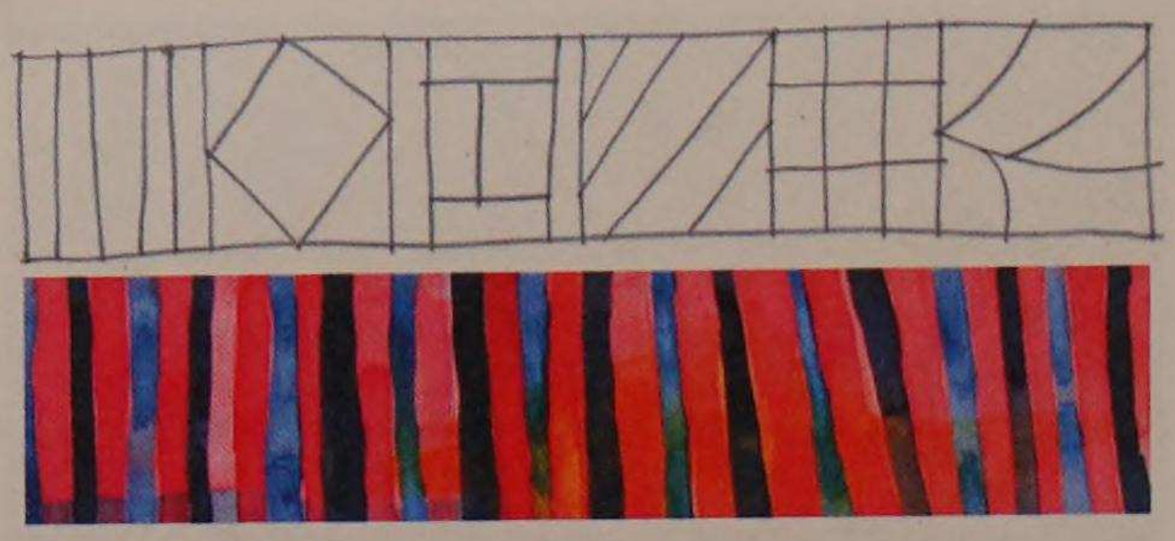


Figure 10. *Classical Frameworks*, Walter Hood, 2001.

the space defined by the front and back door. Imagine beautiful quilt top patterns gracing the beds that sleep three to four children at a time: colors, circles, squares, strips, and diamonds, all pieced together. Within the small building, they awaken the spirit.

"Improvisation is a universal characteristic of imaginative humans."[2] The African-American women who lived within the walls of these small cramped urban dwellings were imaginative humans. They stitched together old and discarded clothing, creating spatial fields of geometry and pattern. These fields followed formal patterns, learned and reinterpreted through a spontaneous exchange of ideas. The two-dimensional frameworks employed in African American quilts provide fodder for an understanding of the improvisational design process. Their classical ordering systems form useful parallels with the design and development of space and object. (Figure 10)

Eli Leon coined the term "flexible classicism" to illustrate this phenomenon in quilt making. He states that "traditional African art (like aesthetic expressions from many cultures) is classical, that is, there are definite forms to which the artist is bound and within which they work."[3] Although each form might be different and perform dissimilar functions, they are bound by

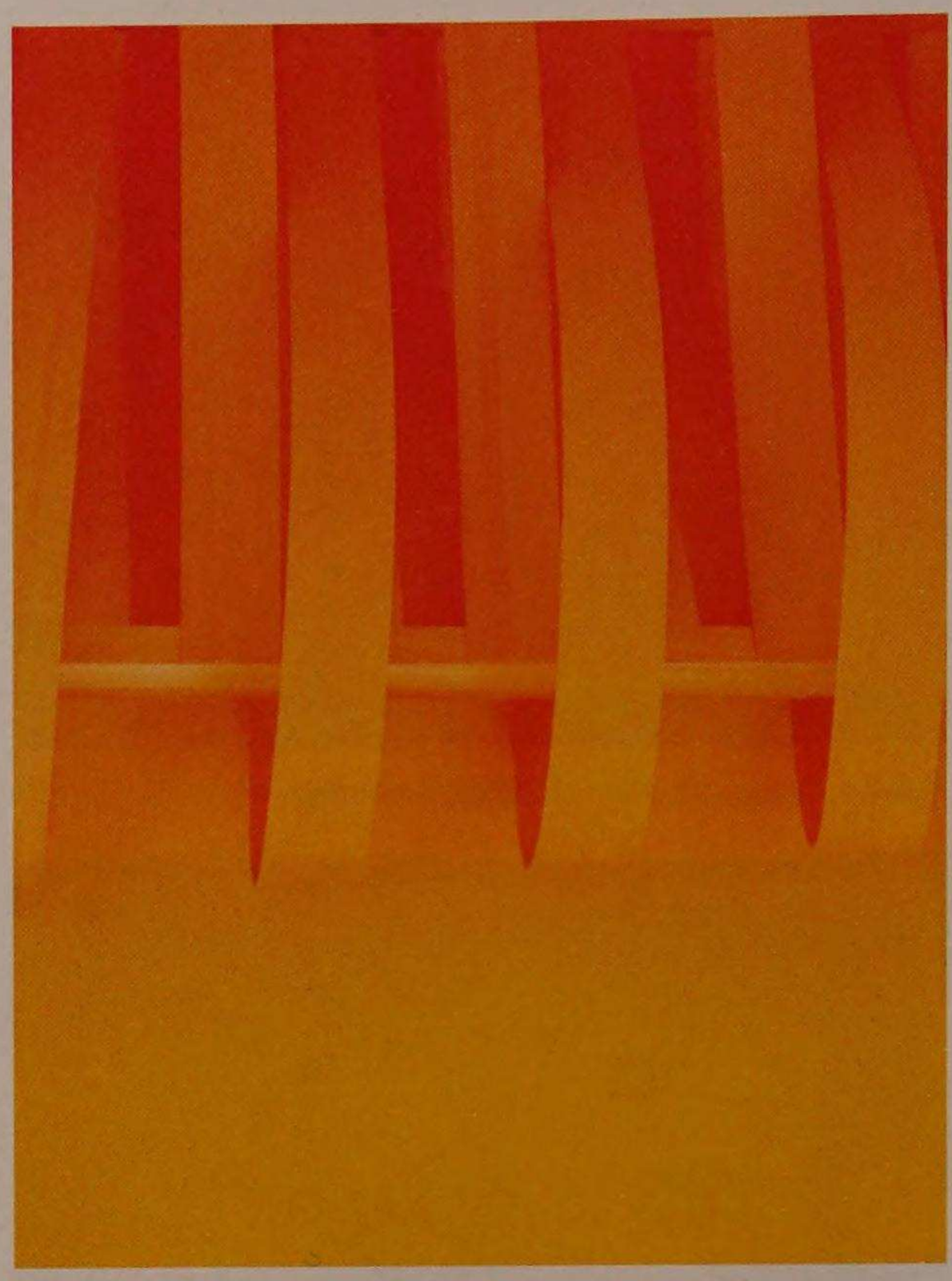


Figure 11-15. *Awakening Installation*, Walter Hood, 2001.

the standards within that particular tradition. He further states that flexible classicism allows a greater scope for individual freedom and expression: "Improvisation is always encouraged, however contained within the traditional bounds."[4]

The installation, *Awakening*, explored the transformation of quilt top patterns that had been improvised into the third dimension. Quilts require rational frameworks for the organization of their patterns; improvisations take place within the boundaries of that specific structural system. In this way individual expression manifested as pattern and form is explored. William Ferris has identified five distinct framework characteristics in African-American quilt making.[5] They include lines to construct and organize, large-scale designs, strong contrasting colors, offbeat patterns, and multiple rhythms.

The installation is first described, and then deconstructed here to reveal



Figure 12.

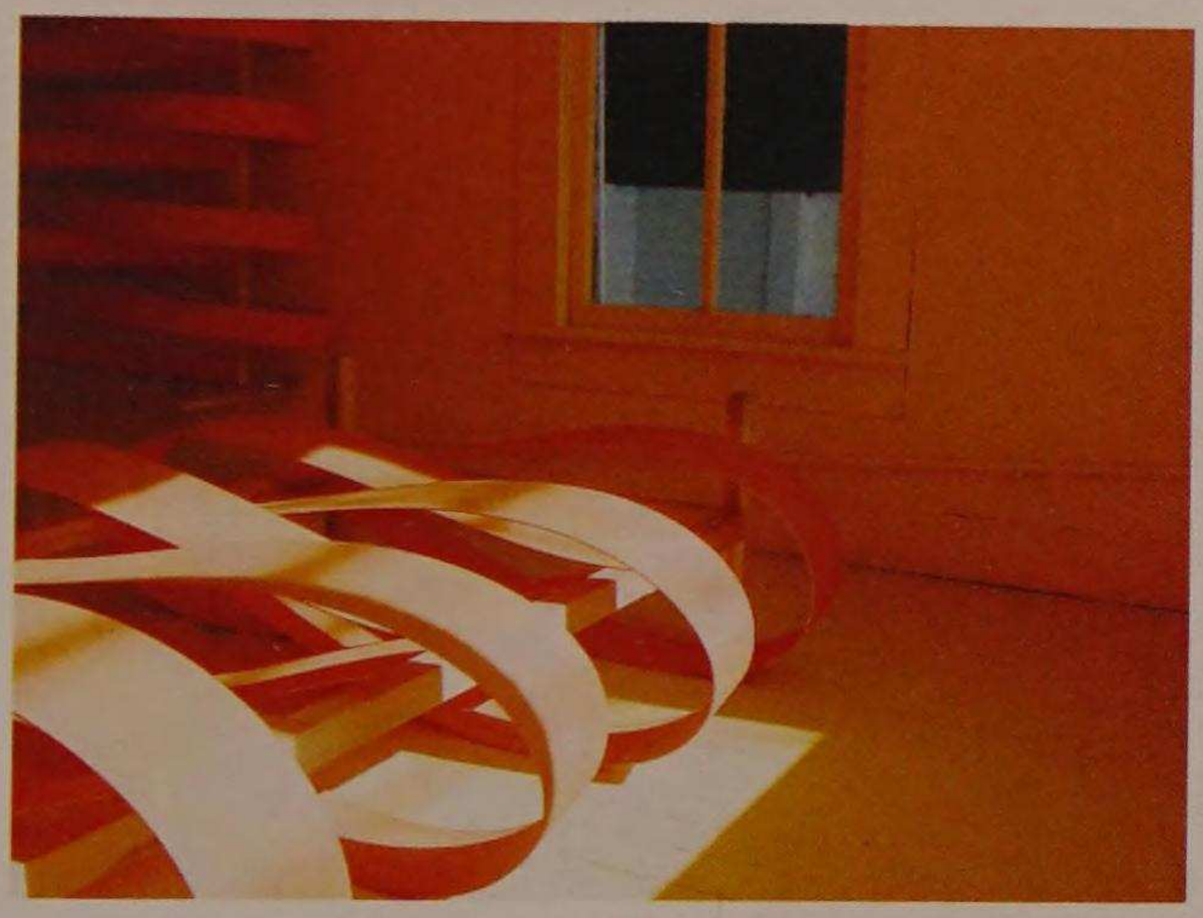


Figure 13.

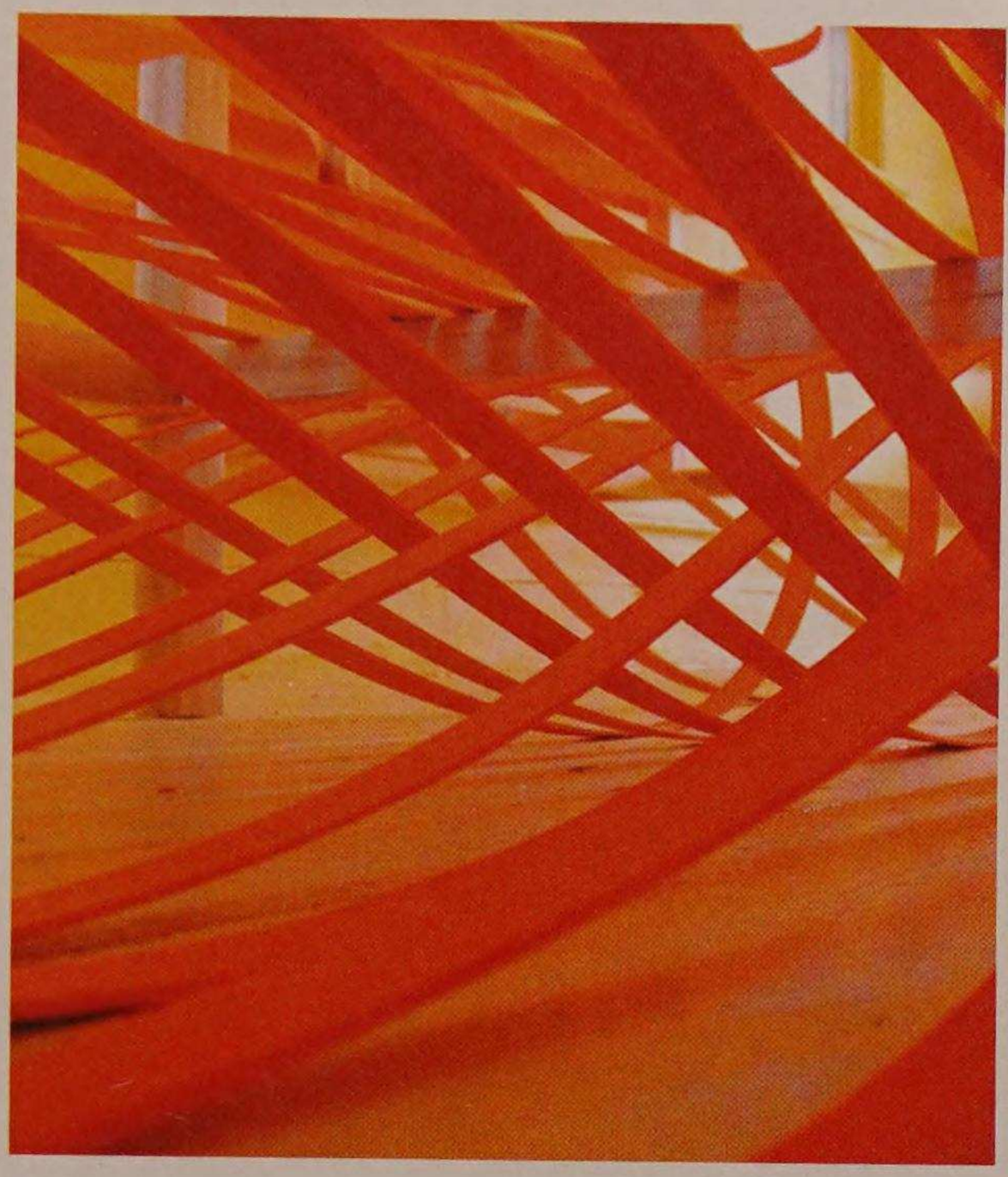


Figure 14.

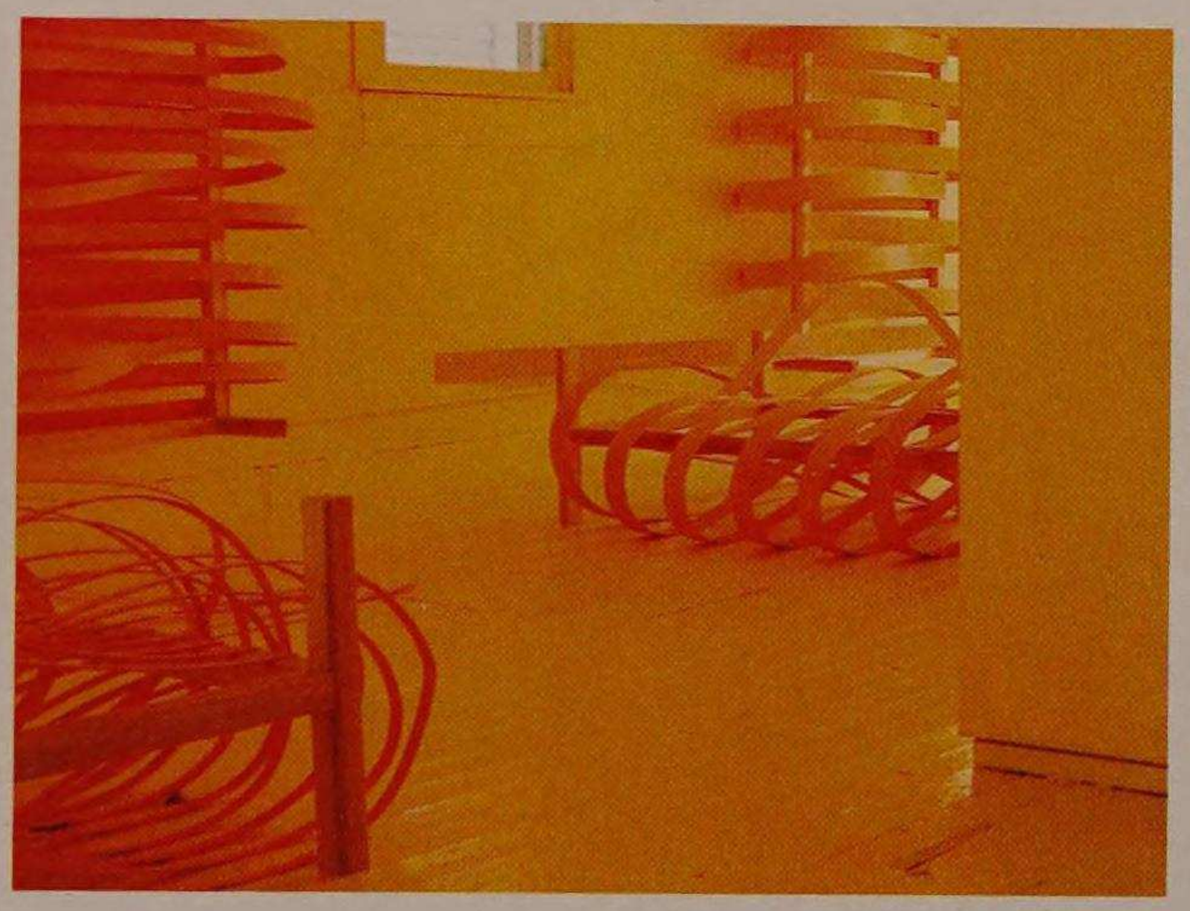


Figure 15.

how five elements of the work met the improvisational characteristics identified by Ferris and so allowed the frameworks of quilt top patterns to become three-dimensional. Starting with a ubiquitous frame that measured three by six feet, five wood frames were constructed of 3x3 poplar wood, connected together using mortise and tendon joints at their intersections, creating a simple structure.

1. **Lines to construct and organize.** Bending poplar was cut into strips measuring, 1-1/2, 3, 4-1/2, 7-1/2, and 12 inches. (Figure 11)

2. **Large-scale designs.** Each structure was an autonomous unit. Even though the structures were incrementally constructed, their scale and composition reinforced the reading of a single unit. (Figure 12)

3. **Strong contrasting colors.** The strips were stained orange to contrast with the natural wood frame and the house's interior, which was painted yellow. (Figure 13)

4. **Offbeat patterns.** The bending poplar strips were wrapped around each frame in the same manner, alternating direc-

tions from one side to another. Pattern became three-dimensional and offbeat patterns emerged as strips extended off the frame onto the floor and wall. The view was shifted to the surrounding context by these offbeat patterns. (Figure 14)

5. Multiple rhythms. Seen together the five rhythmic objects were unified compositionally through their relationship in scale and form. Each view within the room presented a different set of rhythms, patterns, and compositions, depending on the vantage point. (Figure 15)

In both the public landscape projects and the *Awakenings* installation, the improvisational process operates within the context of a limited concept or tradition. Whether starting with quilt top patterns, railroad tracks, or an observatory, the creative process works to connect past, present and future culture to a specific space and time. The new spaces and objects reflect the artist's self in an exercise of invention that extends beyond tradition while simultaneously reinforcing the community context.

NOTES

1. John Michael Vlach, *By the Works of Their Hands* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1991), 5.
2. Ibid.
3. Eli Leon, *Who'd Thought It: Improvisations in African American Quilt Making* (San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum, 1987), 16.
4. Leon, 44.
5. William Ferris, *African American Folk Arts and Crafts* (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall&Co., 1983), 86.

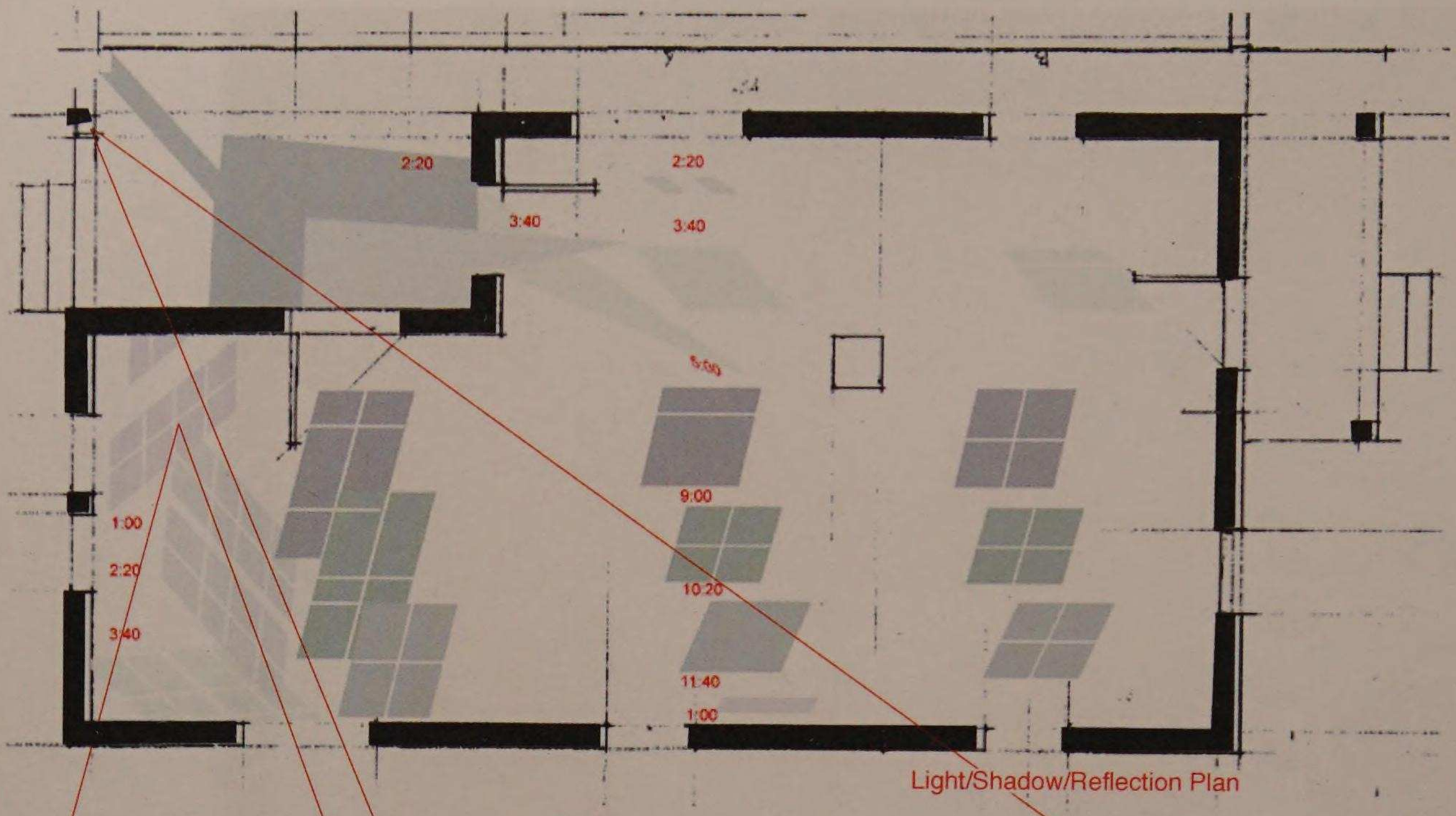

2515











Light/Shadow/Reflection Plan





ONE WEEK, EIGHT HOURS

Felecia Davis

Beware of those who speak of the spiral of history; they are preparing a boomerang. Keep a steel helmet handy. I have been boomeranged across my head so much that I now see the darkness of lightness. And I love light. Perhaps you'll think it strange that an invisible man should need light, desire light, love light. But maybe it is exactly because I am invisible. Light confirms my reality, gives birth to my form... Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well: and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility...

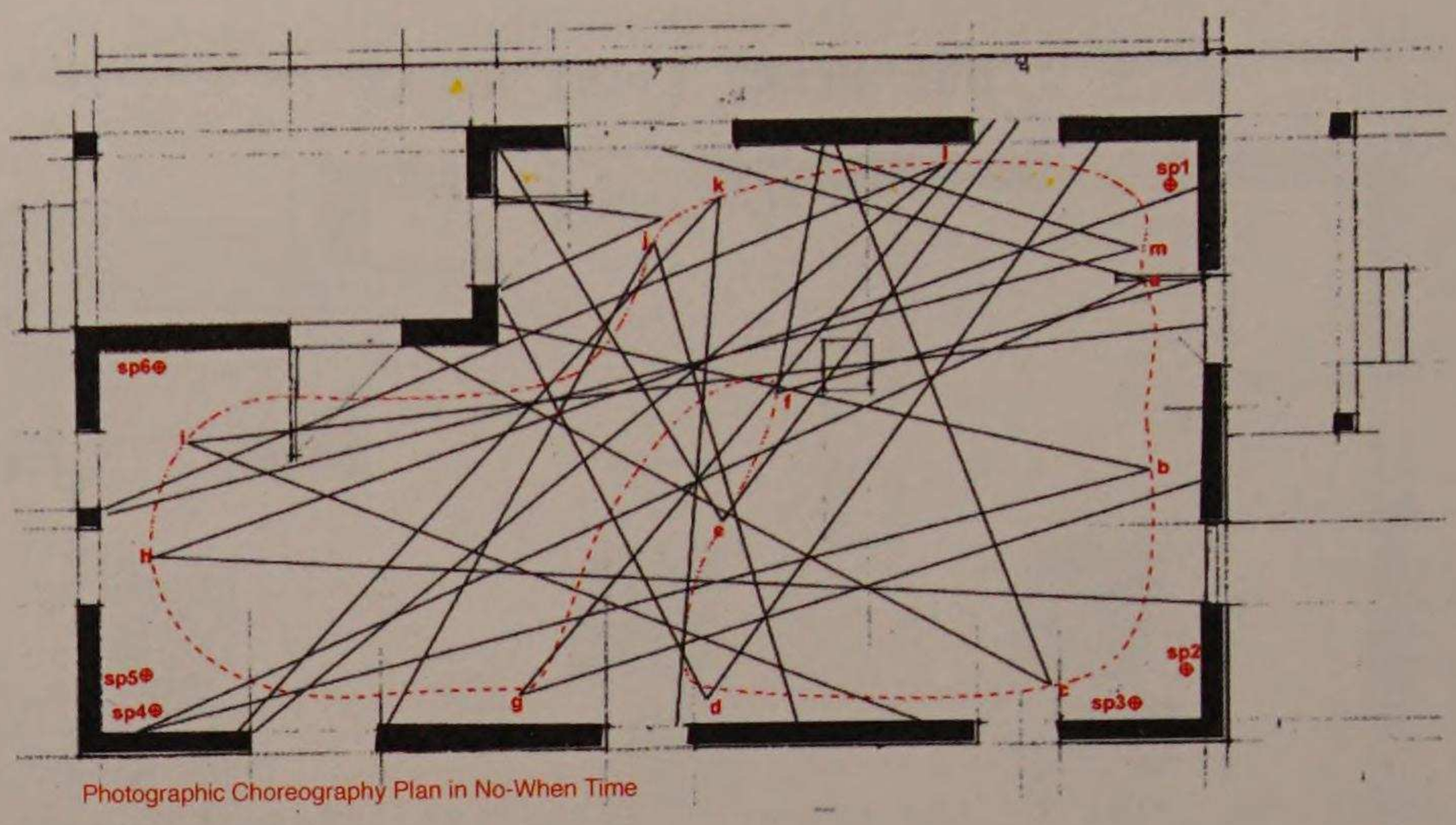
Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he's unaware that he is invisible. Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes you're behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music.

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 1947

Left: Chronology of light and shadow tracings

A shutter-triggered image capture initiated my installation. Its repetition was one of the primary modes of investigating the significance of John Biggers' work as well as looking at how repetition serves to sustain Project Row Houses. Over the course of one week, an eight hour day was divided arbitrarily into six intervals of one hour and twenty minutes, marking time at 9:00 am, 10:20 am, 11:40 am, 1:00 pm, 2:20 pm, 3:40 pm, and 5:00 pm. Drawings were made on the surface of the house where light penetrated, marked at the start of a given interval. The plan was to observe the play of light, shade, shadow and reflection on the "shotgun's" surfaces by photographing and drawing upon the house at each interval over the course of a week.

The photographs were choreographed from six station points; slide projectors were later locked into the same six positions, where they sent out a continuous surface panorama using the photographic shots, creating a shifting, pulsing five-second skin of projected light across the interior of the house. At the end of the week the windows of the "shotgun" were covered, cutting off the interior from the continuity of light to create new imaginary surfaces of projection and places for future speculation. One uncompleted goal of the installation was to work with a teacher at PRH and with students in



Photographic Choreography Plan in No-When Time



Projector 2 9:00am Boomerang Surface



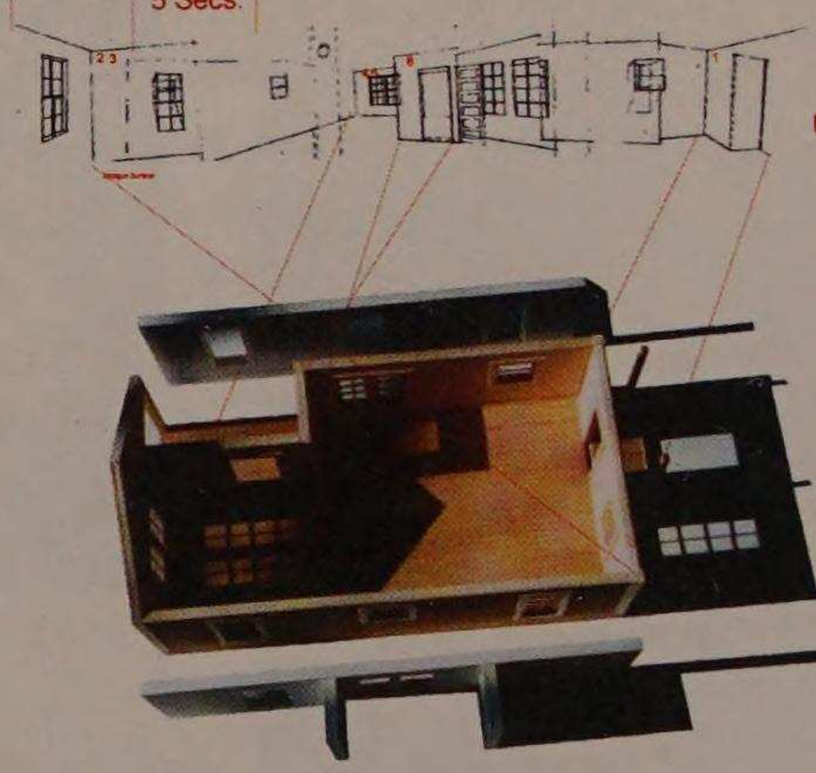
Projector 2 10:20am Boomerang Surface

h i j k l m a b c d e f g



Projector 2 11:40am Boomerang Surface

5 Secs.



Unfolded Surface of House-Receiving Surface

Projection of photographs

the after-school program develop their own panoramic surfaces to be projected within the space. I wanted to investigate the installation as a space for the students to contribute their own photographs, different moments that they might capture.

As a first-time visitor to Houston and PRH, I wanted to try to inhabit this house and to understand the rhythms of this place. Designed as an open and improvisational system based on the photographic shot, the installation documented the house as a full vessel, full of others — some seen and present, many others unseen — including other artists and their traces just underneath the white gallery paint, and residents who resided in the house long before the place became PRH. Through photography and drawing and their intertwining in the installation projection, the installation mapped the movement of light and shadow within the space to create a reflection on the “shotgun”



Phase Two Projected Panorama, Fragments b-d Boomerang

that oscillated between two specific ideas about memory.

INVISIBLE MEDIUM AND DRAWING IN THE BEAT

The first phase of the project, the photography and the drawing, provided two forms of capture — one bearing no physical trace within the space or surfaces yet instantaneous capture of the moment and the other leaving physical traces of failed efforts to mark the house surfaces with a record of the form of the light at the defined moments. The effort to draw the projection of natural daylight proposed memory as a struggle against forgetting, as an act of repetition, similar to the way one performs sounds to learn a new language. Tracing the impossible line between light and its absence as well as the projected shadows within the house was stating presence or an act of graffiti. Because the light moved so quickly, it was difficult to actually draw precisely whole moments and capture them as outlines on the house's surfaces. The light and or shadow was already someplace else by the time one started to trace it, leaving the careful systematic construction of intervals in shambles. Within this space set up between the drawing itself and the act of seeing it, one could speculate on whether the house was the same house or one rapidly replacing itself at the speed of light. Reflections pivoted from the house windows, complete with an invisible axis about which primary light was recast, point for point, into its ghostly twin. In the act of drawing, I began to understand or develop an idea of what a shadow could be in terms of the future, time that had not yet gone through the house. Was a shadow simply a slave to the object that projected it?



Top two rows: Panorama Projector 2, 3:40pm, October 14, 2001; Bottom two rows: Panorama Projector 2, 5:00pm, October 14, 2001

Could shadows be understood as another intersection of place? Was a shadow itself a projective element opening the house to a different space, removing the natural light allowing projections and a perpetual future?

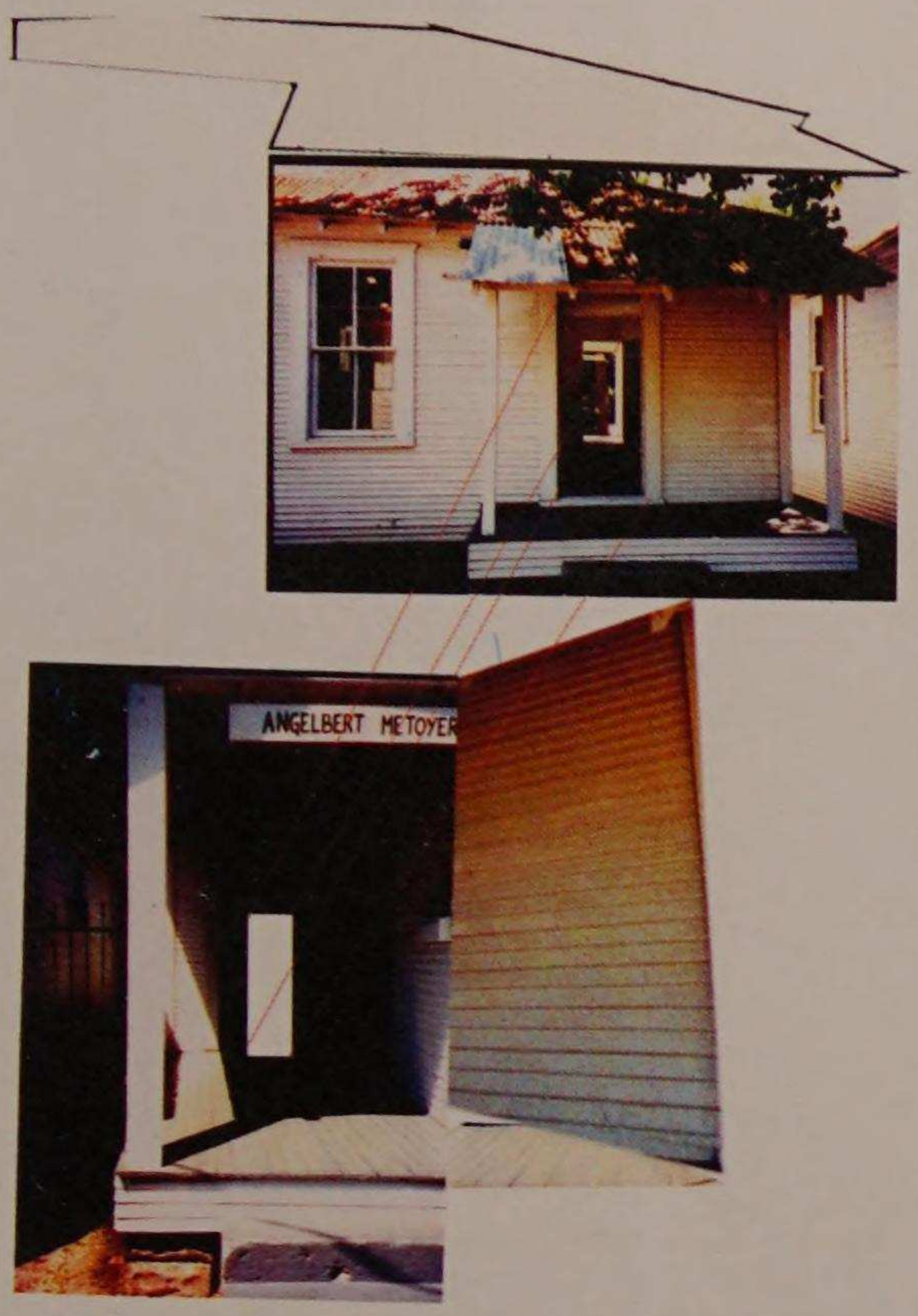
Photographs from the six station points documented the interior, as well as the failed traces, in natural light on subsequent days. Photography developed a proper or clean idea of memory; a formal cut or blockage to trigger remembrance of a specific moment.

The re-projection of photographed moments in a dark house created a luminous, timeful, rhythmic spectacle inside the house. There was a play of memory between two forms of capture as the photographs were projected onto the drawn surfaces. Frequently a drawn surface element might become confused with a projected element, and it was only in the moment of transition between slides that the drawn element might become identified.

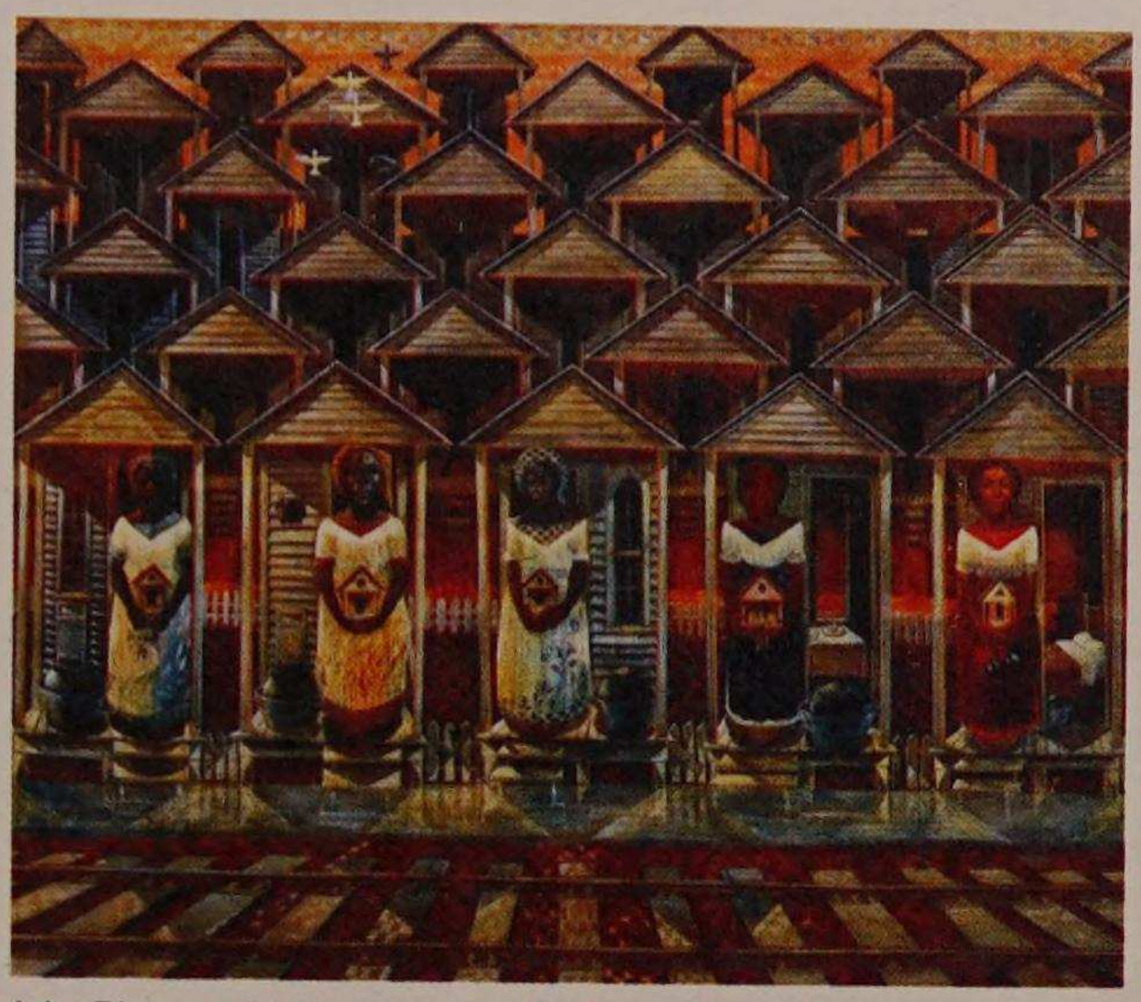
Only the house interior was used to produce the effect of departure from the daily flow of time. Upon entry, time became the rhythm of the projectors, the overlay of moments, drawn and projected. Upon exiting, one returned to that daily flow. The interventions to the interior of the house specifically concerned that which passed through it.

TIME-FULLNESS AND JOHN BIGGERS' WORK

This installation pulled forward some other ideas, such as the implications of looking at places by the time-fullness of space rather than timeless-ness. John Biggers' paintings of "shotgun" houses from the late 1980s are very much about time-full-ness rather than timeless-ness. In *Shotguns*, 1987, depth or space is indicated by the repetition of the "shotgun" house form, symbolizing the daily work that sustains home, family, and community. The overlapping of house forms establishes a flat, rhythmic, textile-like, quality to the painting. Depth and time in the painting, and perhaps space, can be understood



Shotgun View: Front and back of Row House with projection lines



John Biggers, *Shotguns*, 1987, ©Estate of John Biggers

as a collapsing and weaving of the near and far, rather like a reflection in glass, which simultaneously allows one to see that which has passed and what is about to happen. Curiously, the space of the shotgun or the clear view from front to back that gives the house type its name is blocked by the bodies of women, themselves carrying miniature houses in their arms.

An earlier project of mine, *Places of Memory: Walking Tours of Manhattan* of 1998 proposed walking as a way of constructing and finding one's home in the city of Manhattan. This project was based on "Spike" Harris' guide book titled *Negro History Tour of Manhattan* that was written in 1968. The book proposes another way to look at the city, questioning the city as a collective consciousness. As a guidebook that talks about mostly invisible sites, the purpose of this book cannot solely be placed as part of the rising interest on the part of the public in preserved historic places, or to propagate the cult of old places. It is a book about spirit and the persistence of those who were historically persecuted. Its stories and narratives are about making a home in a place that has tried to forget these particular histories. The book is not about historic artifacts so much as it is about events, people, and places. In the *Walking Tours*, "home" was defined as a series of distinct, separate locations seamed together to create a whole. Manhattan thus was reconfigured as a series of transitions, a space of being in time. Walking (repeatedly transitioning load from one foot to the other, leaving space and returning in a place) rhythmically reconfigures one's place moment to moment. Walking creates a plane of continuity in spite of the "invisibility" of the physical place, or missing historical artifact and documented African-American presence in the city. Walking is the act of making intersections, colliding with an infinite number of events or spaces, some making sense, some completely illegible until another time.



Installation detail of floor pattern

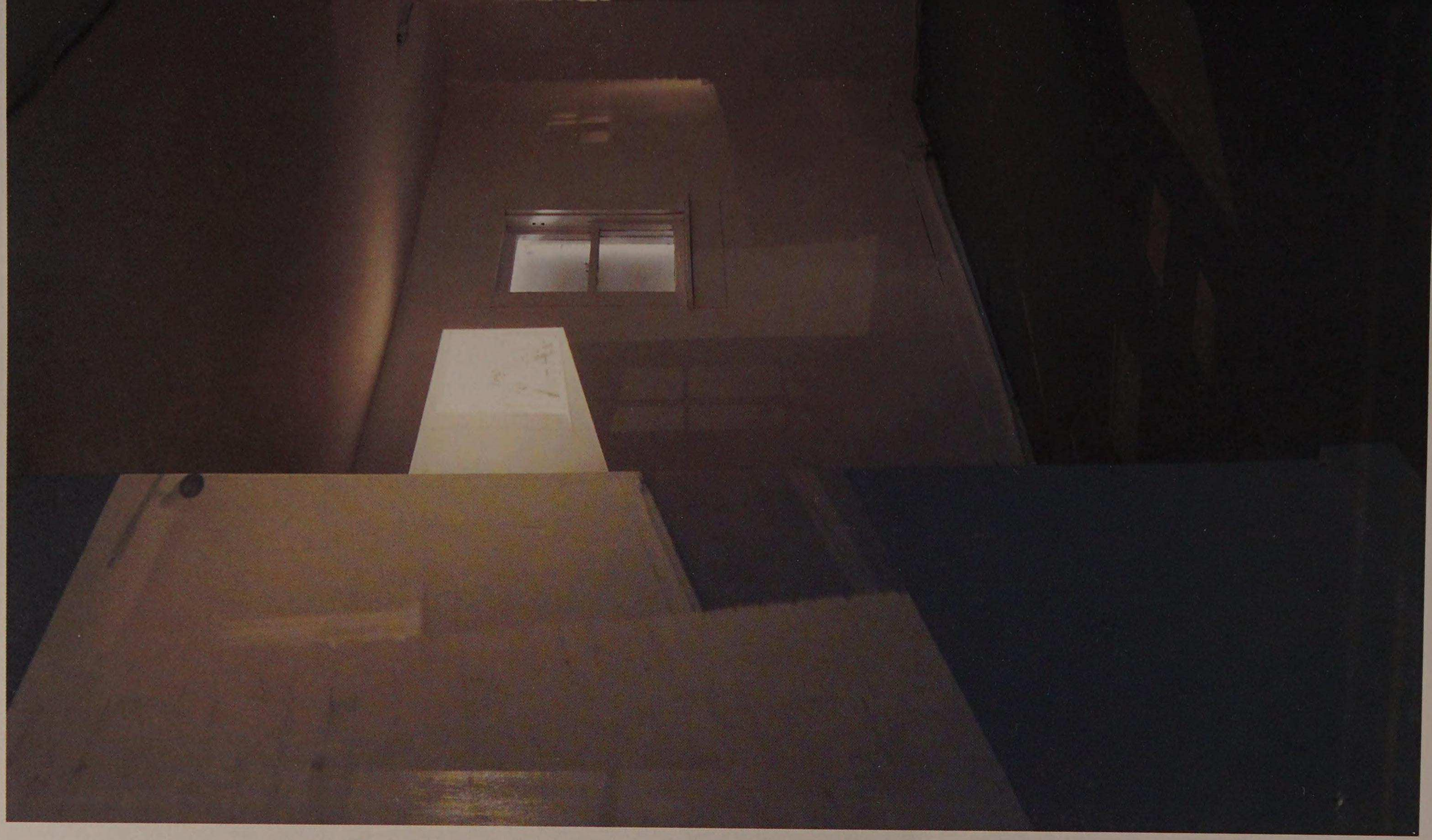
The PRH installation project is related to the *Walking Tours* project in that it uses a framework, a camera shutter in this case, to rhythmically and repetitiously mark time. The PRH project, like the *Walking Tours* project was focused on forgetting, not remembering. Forgetting abated by repeated acts: in the case of *One Week Eight Hours*, it was through the photograph, in the case of the *Walking Tours*, it is through the narrative and style of the walk. Both worked around the absence of historic artifacts or objects in the case of the *Walking Tours*, and in the case of the "shotgun", re- projection and repetition to present that which remains beyond recall.

DEVELOPED SURFACE

Drawing on architecture, tracing the division between light and shadow makes a mark, a cut in time, that is otherwise invisible or impossible to actually have as a moment. Nevertheless, it was this graffiti that became the memory, a complete fiction of what was actually happening at the time. Rhythm and repetition as the structures for an intervention, of drawing and of photo-



graphing, were direct ways of inhabiting the space and acknowledging the fiction of a cut in time to make a mark, to make a memory. The remembrance of the house is a process that is not representative of a singular or particular moment or specific individuals and their lives as in John Biggers' painting. The open house seen through daylight does not represent a single aspect of black culture but rather effects a process of being part of this Diaspora, a process of passing through in time, understanding the tactical, improvisational nature of life. The darkened house is a medium that effects a cut in time or trigger providing space for the projection of the imaginary and trigger for multiple individual fictions.









RE?

WHERE DID YOU PLAY?

-Outside IN THE YA
ON THE ROOF
TOSSING LEAVES
AND PEBBLES TO
CONFUSE THE
KIDS ON THE STREET
Dig ground at th

Street
Mud
CAKES
MA
29

AND
RBIES
VAMES

T

in the

BETWEEN MEMORY AND AMNESIA

Craig Barton

If the walls could talk, what would they say?

I love you G-MA

Would they speak to me of sorrow or of joy, of triumphs or of tragedies? We played mudcakes and marbles 29 years ago...

Could they help me to understand the obstacles that were overcome or tell me of dreams that were deferred?
So many stories so little time

Would the walls, floors, ceilings, and windows speak of the house as a building or of the home as a place where secrets were shared, victories celebrated, and dreams nurtured?

Coloring books on the floor while granny was in the kitchen

South room installation of *Between Memory and Amnesia*

If the walls could talk, what would they say?

My dad used to live in one of these houses.

For African Americans the vernacular landscape of small buildings, defined less by patronage than by cultural practice, is perhaps the most compelling tool with which to plug the "gaps" in the narratives of American history. We are all familiar with the more formal monuments and memorial landscapes constructed in cities, towns, and communities across the nation to recount selective aspects of their history. As instruments of both public and private patronage these landscapes inevitably minimize the contributions of marginalized cultural communities and are all too often mute about the presence of African Americans. Traditional monuments often do not speak to the lives of African Americans. To understand the depth and complexity of African-American culture a different type of monument is necessary. The daily life and rituals of black folks are most eloquently described in the landscapes of vernacular buildings which comprised black communities.

The "shotgun" houses on Holman Street and in the surrounding area are deceptive. Old and sometimes dilapidated, they have chimneys that are crooked, roofs that are a bit worn, and porches that sag. They sit so close together



Installation in progress

that when you stand between two houses, you can touch each one without extending your arms. At first glance they seem to be simply a neighborhood of aging frame houses, an anachronism rooted in the traditions and values of Jim Crow.

John Biggers saw something different. Biggers grasped a complex cultural landscape structured by the "shotgun" house, and the rhythms and patterns of black culture. Gable end to the street, the house has a simple massing and graceful proportions. The deep porch connects the life of the house to the life of the street. Though the houses appear to be nearly identical from the street, the families and stories they contain are distinct. These places are distinguished not so much by house number, location, color, or any other particular physical attribute, as by the stories that they tell.

If the walls could talk, what would they say?

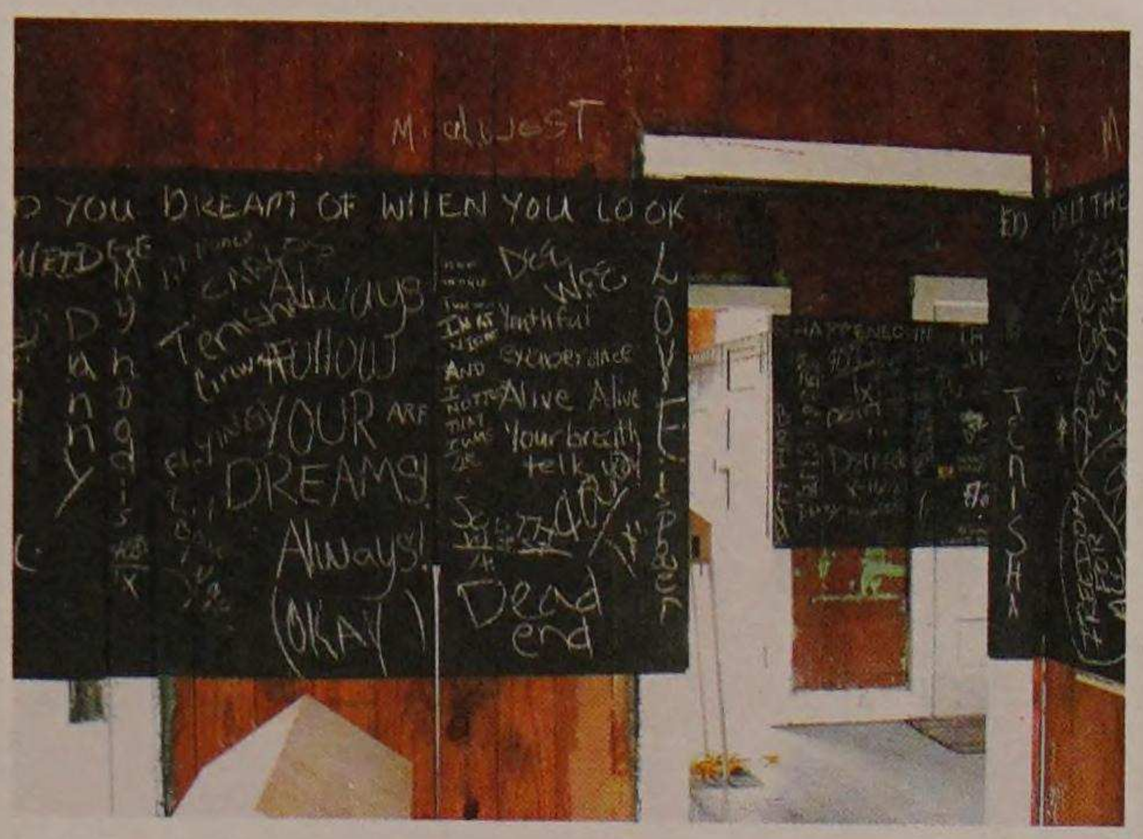
My grandmother made teacakes here.

Monuments offer palpable content memorializing the places, people, and events that constitute our public history. In a sense these houses are a kind of monument to African-American life in Houston. Though worn and often battered, they tell the small stories of family lives that are rarely chronicled in formal interpretative landscapes, and have forged bonds to a larger collective memory of a complete and largely self-sufficient black community. These houses stand in eloquent testimony to the families they housed, the lives they supported, and the dreams they nurtured.

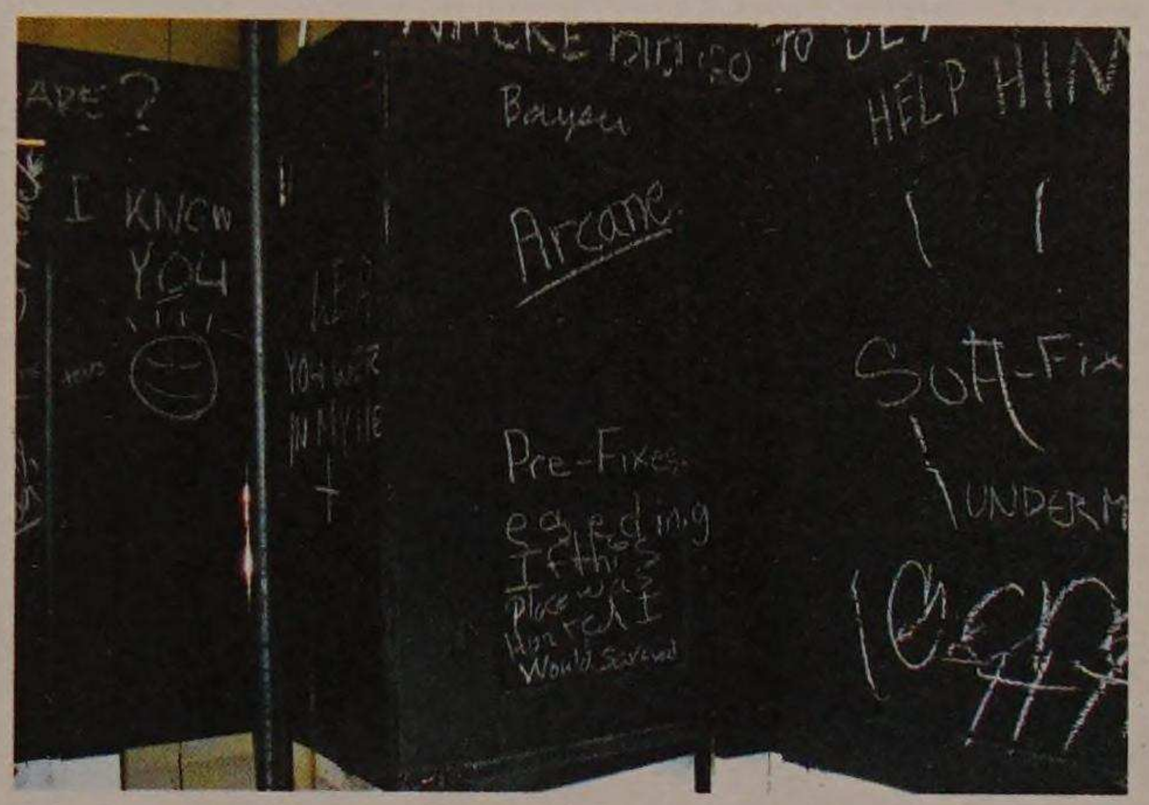
We know of the power of buildings to convey a sense of place and of time



Interior of Row House Model



Walls of southern room



Walls of former bathroom

through their material, details, and location. At the Holman Street "shotguns", the materials, and the details are critical to the house's interpretative power. The shape, form, and proportions of the "shotguns" powerfully evoke the memories of the former residents. If formal monuments offer palpable connections to the collective memory of the dominant culture, these houses serve as powerful links to the collective memory of the African-American community.

These houses and others like them are critical monuments in a cultural landscape in need of interpretation. They help tell the stories of people often invisible in traditional historical narratives. Through the stories of the people of Holman Street, we can glimpse briefly the life and routines of an African-American community. The house, its rooms and surfaces, serves as a witness to an earlier moment in the neighborhood's history. As the walls, floors, windows, and ceilings are given voice, they offer powerful testimony.

If the walls could talk, what would they say?

Here yesterday
here yesterday
here today

Pages 106-109: Transcription of spontaneous wall text

[ENTRY ROOM] What kind of work did they do? Raising children. Sierra. Forgive forgive forgive. Salaam salaam forgive. Two B. ARF sex life. Danny. Jesus was our help. j.mitch. care of 02. who was the landlord! Joep was here! What did you hope? get a BMW To want for others. Home is where the heart is. Love salaam peace. House: (hous) Noun. A structure as a dwelling for one or more persons, especially a family. Home: noun. A dwelling place together with the family that occupies it. A household offering security. Memory: the mental faculty of retaining and recalling experience. Amnesia: partial or total loss of memory. Only time tells. Who lived here? Danny McNeal . Am I welcome? Richard Artrouve cette expo. Sympa. Marie. My dad used to live in one of these houses. Tenisha Conway and Danny McNeal. Red was here. Louis Miguel. Hope inspiration and a positive attitude. Irene Vazquez. Derricka Watson. Arch 334. How long ago? South west 4/sho. Sunnyside tx. Cha-cha rose. I love you G-MA! And the fairy godmothers 10-14-01. Y las otras languas? And the other languages? This is our time. Tenisha. Retreat, repair, return, regenerate. JWF 10-14-01. What things happened in this room? To infinity and beyond. What to do? Black is beautiful. 01-01-02. Big Mo. Cole was here. Danny. Derricka 08-16-87. want for others as you want for yourself. Forgive. J. Mitchell class of 02 southside. Jessica. Want for others as you want for yourself salaam. To want for others as you want for yourself forgive. Hold it. I hid in the corner, I found you.FRONT ROOM What happened here? Love tentions trials frustrations. Hope against hope against hope that by God's grace there children will see, have and be more, thank you, Jesus. Amen. They will something a long time ago. To want for others as you want for yourselves salaam! Danny. Christina. What did you see when you

looked out the window? Love. I was here and you were not. Now you are here and I am not. Home life love lil' flip. Yvette was here. What am I doing? Laillahaillala. Here yesterday, here, yesterday and today. M.C. Henry. So many stories, so little time. Clouds. Peace. A hole. Do you know me? So were we. We were here and it was good. Who knows? Love me always. This is right. I love U. Forgive & love. You will see what I show you. Row houses. My friends playing. Not when I had the chicken pox and big mama wouldn't let me go and play. Granny's fresh clean crisp sheets on the line swelling with the gust of a gulf breeze, spring 1967. Tree and hope. Do you know when it's your time? Who dreamed here? Is this survival? Live life today. My grandmother made teacakes here. What are you doing? Lil red did huh? How old is this house? Dreamed of freedom without race. J.dog Kitty Christina forgive. O.K. Mr. and CR. What did they dream of? Peace. A time. Mi madre. It's a time to be thankful and grateful. 9+9=18. 4+4=8. Arf. A roof + floor +door+window+family+love+ desire=a home. Gail pernice rogers. Who loved? Pat-n-david. Lil' Jenny. Who built it? My daddy and mom. This is a part of the past, never forget. Abba! Could you live here (yes) we all dreamed here at some time. Who fought here? Mamma and daddy often! Truth lil' red didn't. peaceful thoughts. Enemies of God. Stephanie. Southside. Tenisha A*K*A sexy C'ne Jasmine love hope and faith Who died here? My old unbelieving spirit. Not me Derricka not me tenisha not me Christina. I said Jesus said lil' red. Danny. Danny McNeal. 1 July 02 [BATHROOM] What did you share? My room nothing knock on wood Ashley 2001 how may orgasms were true communication Toys smiles Leroy you were in my head Where did you go to be alone? Bayou arcane pre-fixes if this place was honored I would save you

suf-fixes under my bed Where was the mirror? Where I went to be alone the back of me!! In my mine in my room up your but and around the mike on my bedroom wall Where was the tub? Love more live more your future is your hands Yo no se hablar ingles. Happiness one life two live Ashley Armstrong whs 4 What did you think about? That money said lil' red I was a boxer I love Mitchell being a baller tenisha said that I love Mitchell arf kick drugs out of America I was going to the park Leroy cool boys my mom is mean! Alexa Suf-fixes Pre-fixes [BEDROOM] What did you dream of when you looked out the window? High school danny willow south west texas my hood lil' red carlos always follow your dreams arf o.k. I'm at night and I not really that I was o.k. dead end south west youthful experience alive alive your breath love is power tenisha tenisha sunrise negros freedom for all jesus is the place and the way mid west third ward What secrets did you share? None life happened while I was planning o.k. south west texas south west texas I see my past I know my future how good was the food yum yum help! Erica jesus loves U Where did you play? Outside on the roof tossing leaves and pebbles to confuse the kids on the street play ground at EP on Dowling in the yard at 2111 Hampton Street we played mud cakes and marbles 29 years ago Coloring books on the floor while granny was in the kitchen, climbing in the chinaberry tree, crawling in the dirt under the house, in the water, outside Who slept here? Life is never what it seems to be. Love is life JAY Derricka God's people your mom I don't know the souls of man what is your name? Irene danny in my bed lil' red did make your bed+lie in it What did you hide? My diary behind the car I was Kristina K What was the rent! My valuable stuff the restroom my dreams under the bed secrets ten pounds

per hour did the toilet flush yes a dream became reality reality turned back into a dream beautiful place M.T.B. duh! Hola latinos HHS c/o "02" Where was your bed? For me to know and you to find out Behind the door at home in my room at home HHS MC ZJ statebound 12001 Jesus is really right here train track me owl what life really about! [KITCHEN] Where did you eat? Mom's chicken fried steak fried fish pizza stupid in the kitchen do not open door pizza greens take the time to smell the roses restorant Where was the stove? Jesus brought us through learned to pray here right here no over there no right here Lauren Jame's and What stories did you hear? STZ4ever "please" by Lashaonte Hand enter do not enter trusted in Jesus wuz da deal? III Fourth ward love wins tom sawyer my granny taught me how to scramble eggs I love you baby faith inertia-how has it changed you life baby! Time here big red third ward texas what's for eating praise the lord for a way out What's your question? What's the deal baby? Who are the twins? Who lived here? Were they happy here? How did they love here? How many friends did you have? Did you hear about What was your favorite meal? Veggie burger at Houston's fried fish with baked sweet potatoes pizza bread lasgana apple pie biscuits and cream gravy breakfast oatmeal and toast cookies chocolate cake with chocolate frosting raman noodles everything grits and eggs and gravy fried chicken baked chicken dressing peach cobbler grilled chic lemon cake with lemon icing fried chicken and okra hot water corn bread gumbo lumpia! If my mind is mine, and what I see is all that there is and I don't see you do you exist? PORCH If the walls could talk what would they say? To want for others as you want for yourself salaar. To want for others as you want for yourselves. Forgive (I love you!)

I or more person especially a family

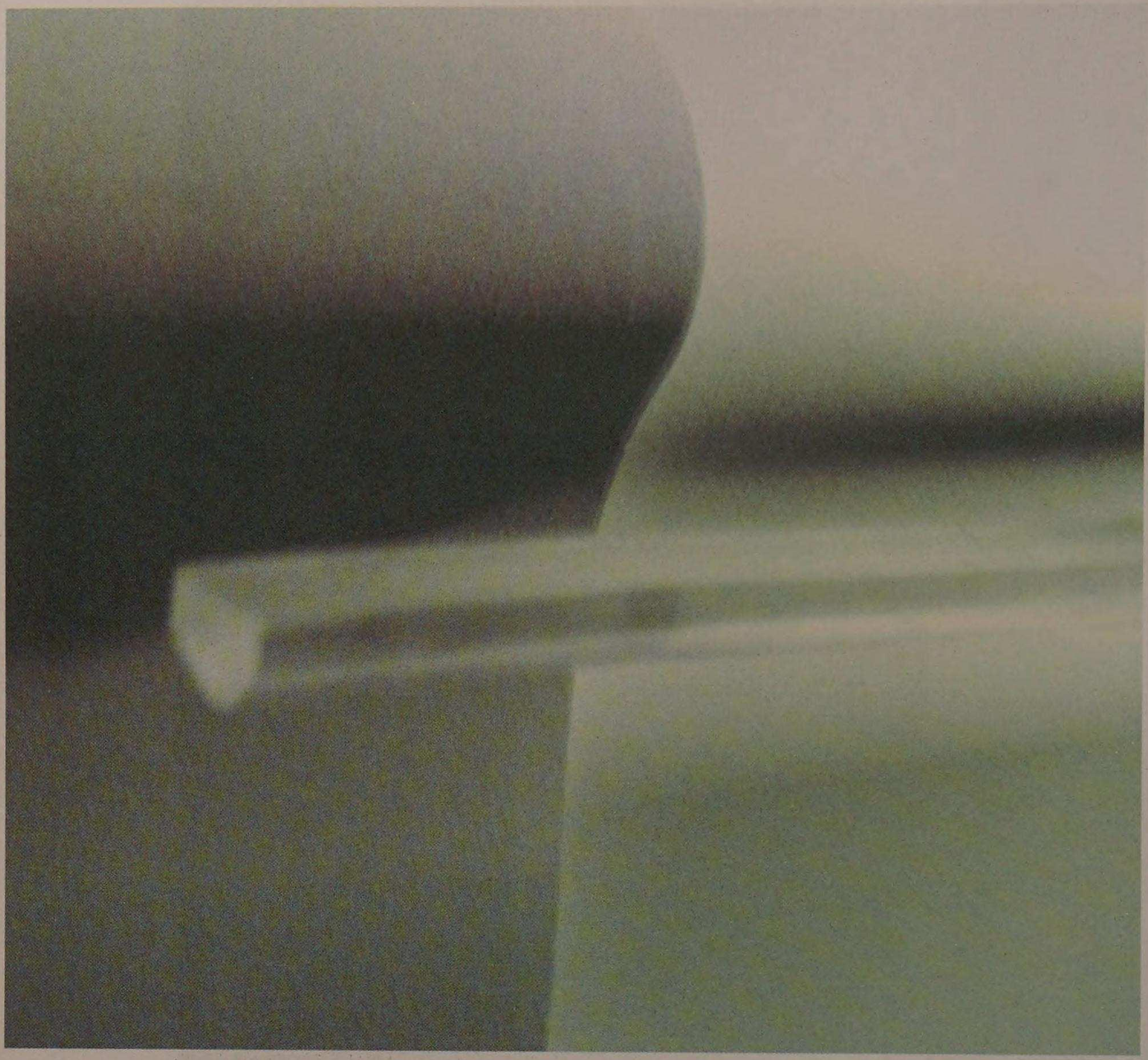
home (hōm)
n. A dwelling place together to be
family that occupies it. A household
offering security

memory (mĕm'ə-rē)
n. The mental facu
and recalling ex
AMNESIA (am-nē'
n. PARTIAL OR total
LOSS MEMORY




WHAT
1000
AND


WHERE DID
Arcane
Pre-Fix
eseding



Sculpted acrylic and carved foam in *Passing Time*

PASSING TIME

AR+D unigroup
text by Claire Tancons

For the past five years, Shawn Rickenbacker and AR+D unigroup have been seeking means to arrive at fluid and evolving spaces. Their working concepts-synergy, hybridity, morphology-sometimes recall the rhetoric of sci-fi movies, and sometimes the language of the weather forecast-atmospheric, ambient. From sci-fi movies these concepts probably retain only the desire to enhance our perception with special effects. From the weather they retain everything, from changes in light to the quality of air to the movement of masses. Inspiration stems from daily life sensations and actions that are both contradictory and complementary, such as fighting and love-making. Means range from the casual to the sophisticated. When seeking out materials that would best produce fluidity or render a certain form, Rickenbacker has said that he "felt like a tailor making a suit," the concern being the fit, form, movement. The fabric of a woman's dress whose translucence makes the skin visible, although not in its details, inspired the choice of material for a curtain. When creating an overall view of a new project, AR+D chooses the most elaborate software and computer programs and the most unconventional fabrication available to simulate visions yet to be materialized.

It is probably a reticence to categorize the product of their endeavors as architecture, design, or art that allows AR+D to move freely from the demanding requirements of a bio lab (Bio Lab, New England, 2001 — unbuilt) to a gallery renovation (Project Space Gallery, Columbus, Ohio, 1999 — entry door, wall and ceiling treatment) or an art installation. However different the purposes may seem, the same ideas of flow and flux, movement, and performance are woven into the materials and shapes that characterize each project.
It is certainly their willingness to engage technologies in a way that does not overlook the tactile and the sensual that allows Rickenbacker and his team to make sense of abstract concepts, such as space and time, and render them accessible to the general public.

This is so peaceful I could die here

An older black woman spoke as she looked at the bits and pieces of carved foam and sculpted acrylic that Rickenbacker and his team had just finished installing in one of the former "shotgun" house turned into gallery space by Rick Lowe as part of Project Row Houses. Unable to characterize or name the materials, seized by a vision relying on the combined effects of sophisticated techniques and transformative materials, she nonetheless made this declaration. Behind a translucent white lay the fluid movements of streams across waves, created with triangular-shaped horizontal elements and curvy protuberances spurting out of the wall.

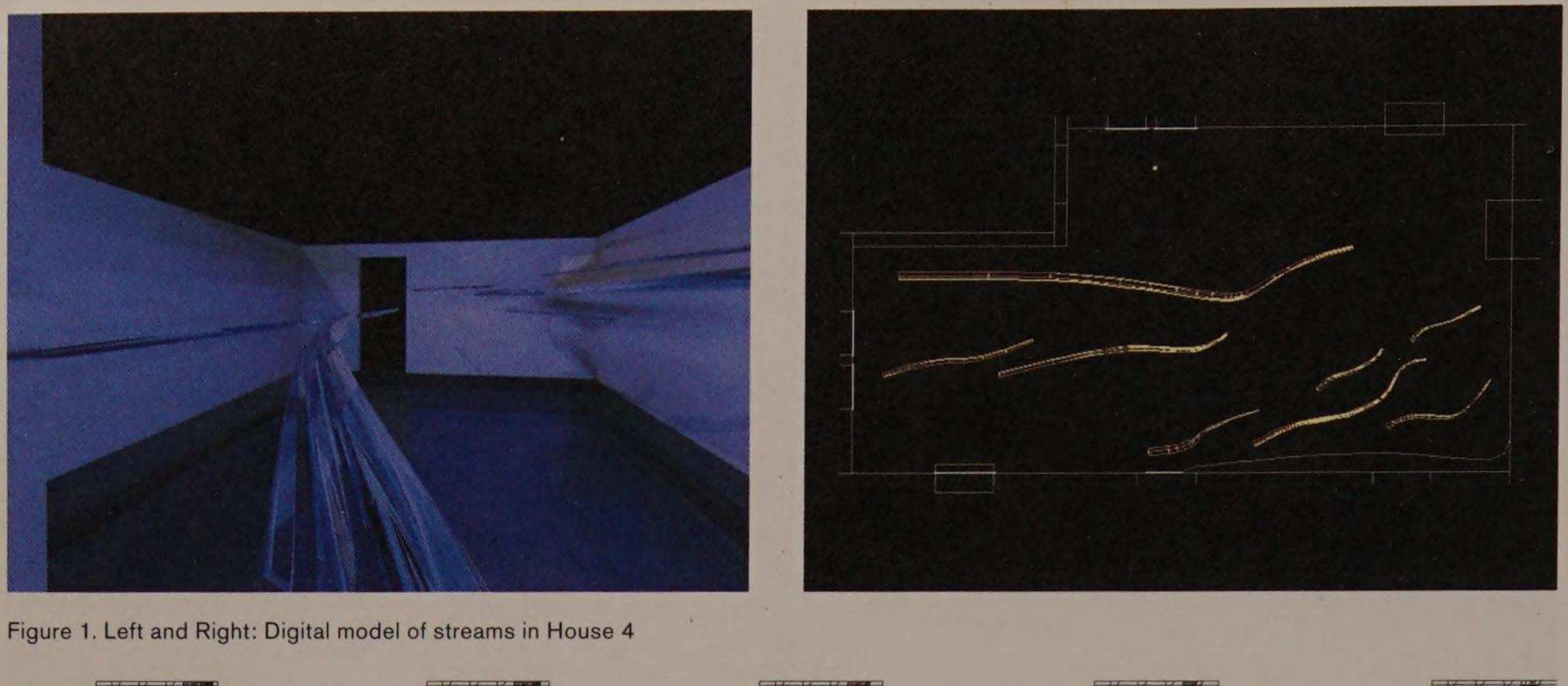
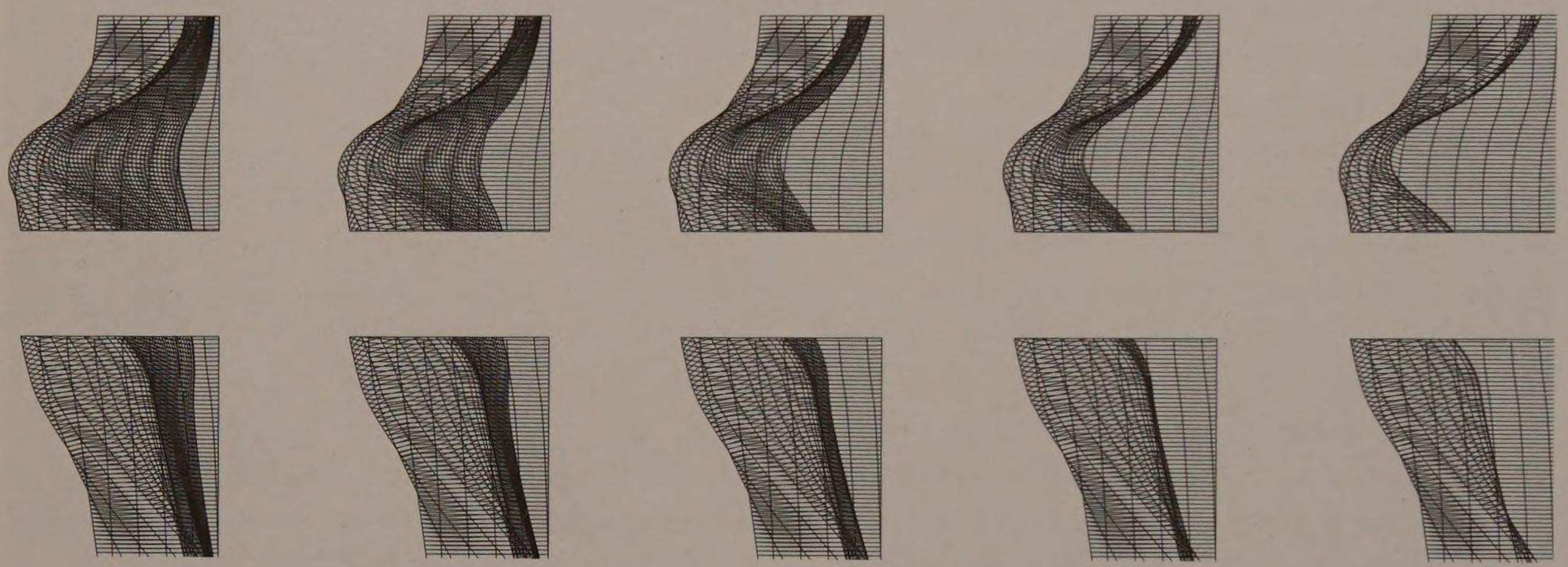


Figure 1. Left and Right: Digital model of streams in House 4

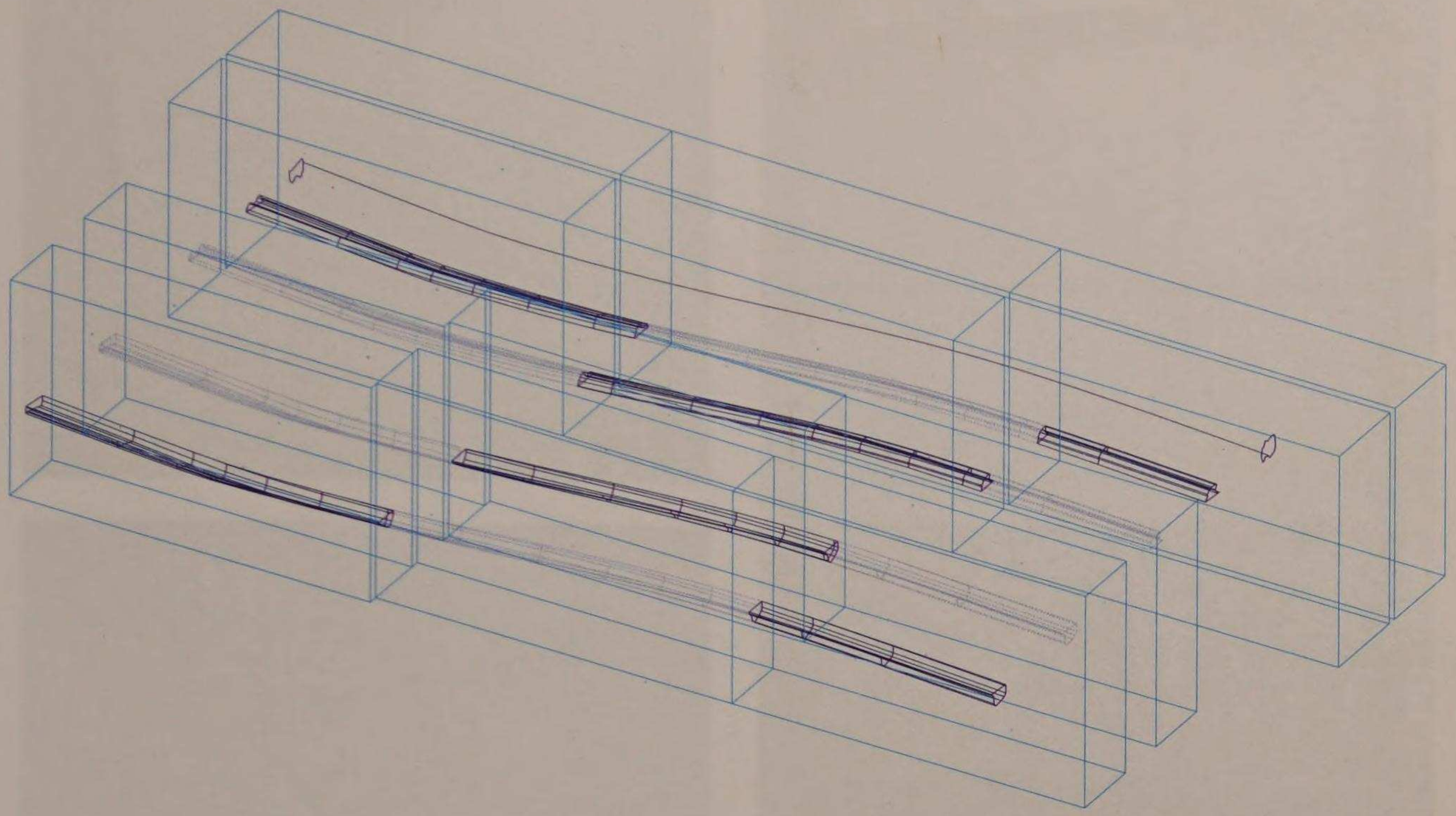


Construction drawings for wall mounted carved foam surfaces

It is often said that one can choose to die if one is at peace with one's past and memories. The past and its corollary of memories, lost or remembered, shrouded or kept alive, are reflections of the passage of time. Instinctively the older woman had grasped the meaning of the installation whose title she probably did not then know: *In-Passing*.

Time, as much as space, relies upon objects in order to be made visible. Since the dawn of time humans have been making objects in an attempt to materialize space. In turn, these objets through their decay, have attested to the passage of time. The effects of the passage of time are easily represented: we can recognize them in the wrinkles on a human face or the patina on objects. But truly attempting to show the passage of time rather than its effects, to show how space is shaped and defined by time, is more challenging. Time vanishes, space evaporates, and those who are given the ability to grasp such phenomena are deemed supernatural — not just the artist, but also the scientist, the former bringing our senses to a state of completion, the latter taking our mind to the limits of the understandable.

Today, digital technologies are used as much to simulate a reality of remarkable veracity as to create unreal environments that challenge our everyday perception of color, form, space, and time. This unprecedented control over sensation and information, and the unsettling emotional and psychological states that they produce are now so pervasive that these technologies have



Stream drawing of translucent acrylic bars constructed for installation

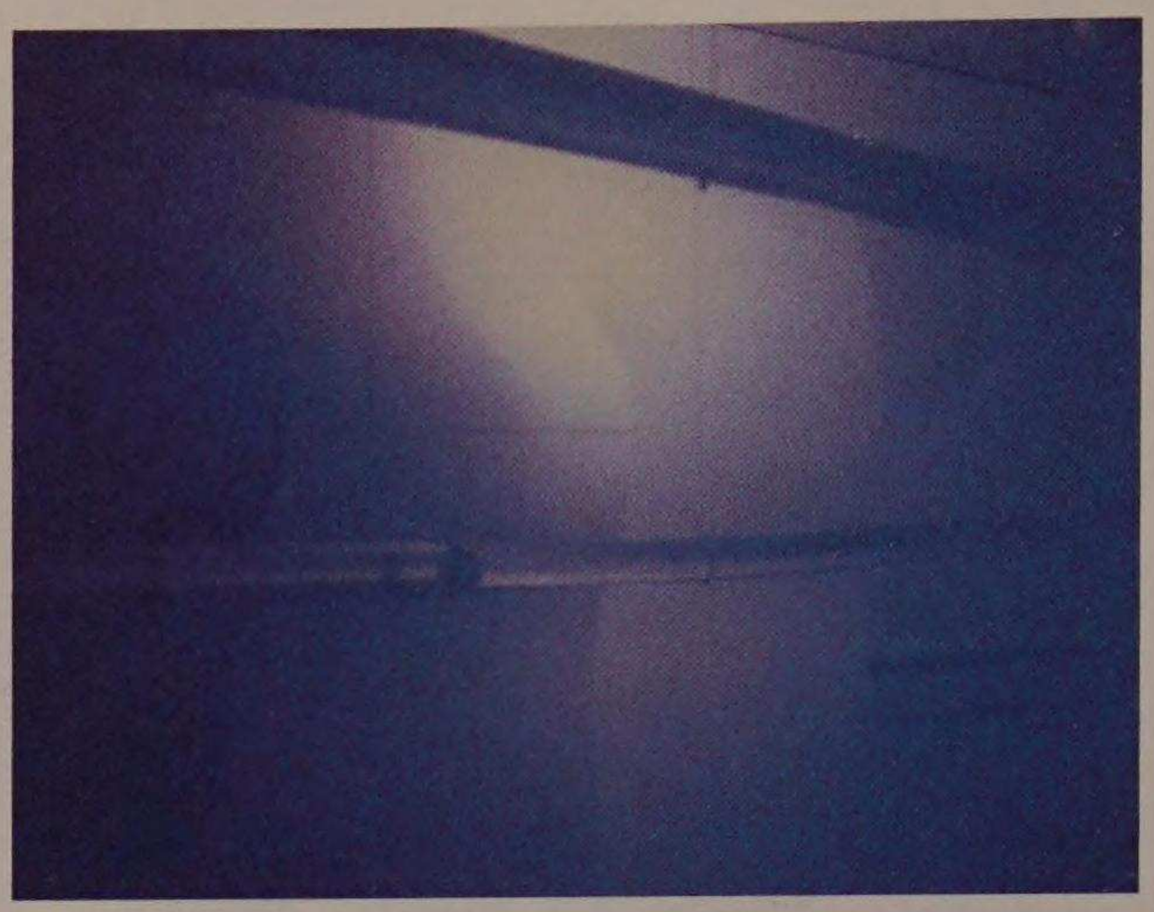
assumed the supernatural mantle once given to artists and scientists.

Part artist, part scientist, Rickenbacker used digital media in creating *In-Passing* to realize a vision of the invisible. First, several images of the potential installation and its performative elements were produced on the computer from different viewpoints and under different lights. In House 4 (Figure 1), streams have taken over the entire gallery space; their original triangular shape-chosen for its three separate yet essential surfaces that could be manipulated-appears to blur as they are made to travel and rotate through space. Closely related to experimentation on the performative qualities of materials, the digital forms were also used to integrate different data relating to a chosen material. In this particular case, the basic triangular shape of the "shotgun" house rooftop, depicted in countless numbers of John Biggers' paintings, was first submitted to the subtle formal transformations calculated by a computer program and then transferred into acrylic. The process resulted in the seemingly endless appearing and disappearing streams. The protuberances on the wall were obtained from soft variations of the same computer-generated form. Streams and wall were placed behind a translucent curtain, a filtering responsible for the optical illusion of movement.

Lights and their resulting colors were used as much for their materializing as de-materializing qualities: they were allowed to reflect (materialize) as much as absorb (de-materialize) forms. Their changing effects created phenomena simi-



Figure 2. Door for Project Space Gallery, Columbus, Ohio





Above and right: cinematic images of *Passing Time* installation

lar to those of fluctuating atmospheric conditions.

What digital effects could simulate but real-time effects could only prove was the ability of the installation to reveal movements that in turn would provoke reactions in the viewer. "Performativity" was sought not only in the movement of the various objects the wall seemingly pulling away from the streams as they came towards it and vice versa, but also, and more fundamentally, through the inherently transformative qualities of the materials.

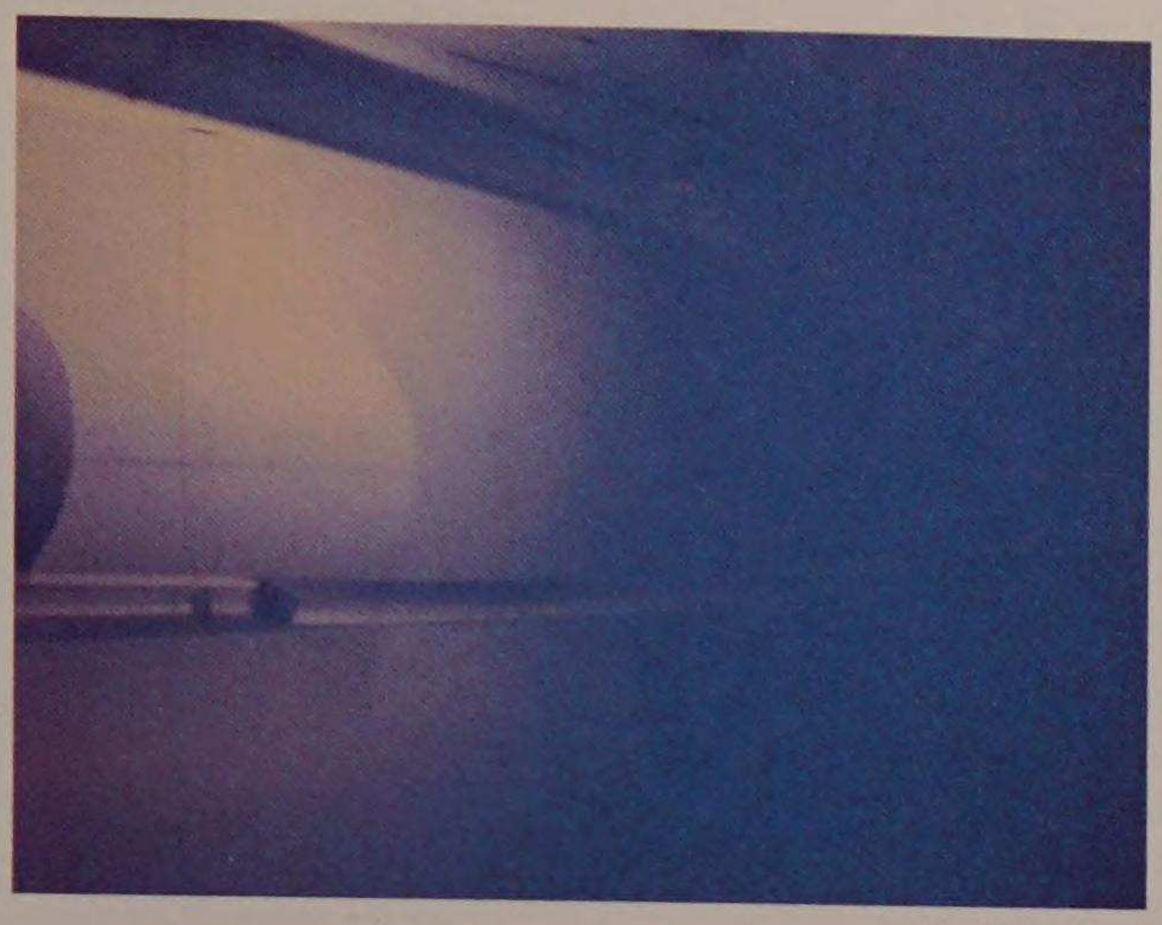
In-Passing was a work the viewer had to engage with. Walking back and forth was needed to witness the transformations; from this prolonged movement and a squinting of the eyes might come a heightened awareness of the thing seen.

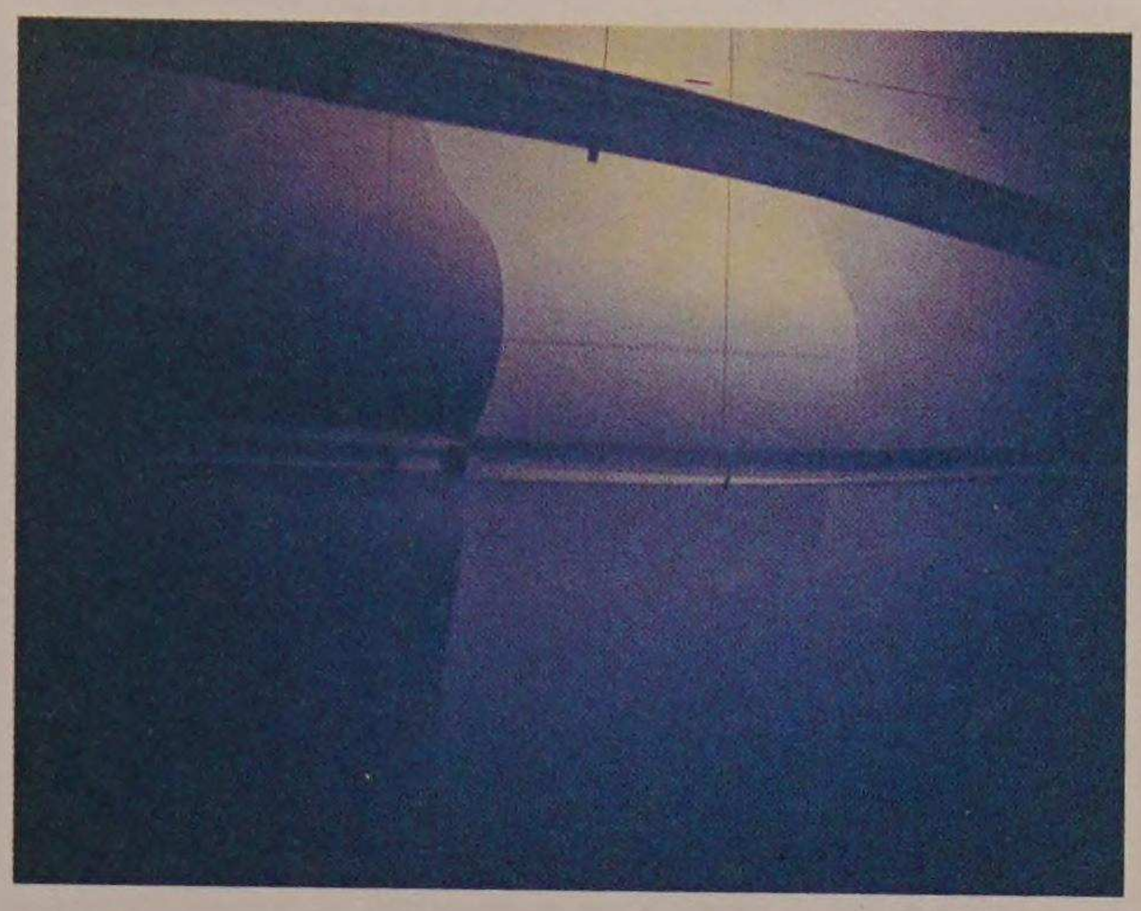
An installation of physical engagement, *In-Passing* also proved to be of historical, if not political engagement as well.

HOUSED MEMORIES

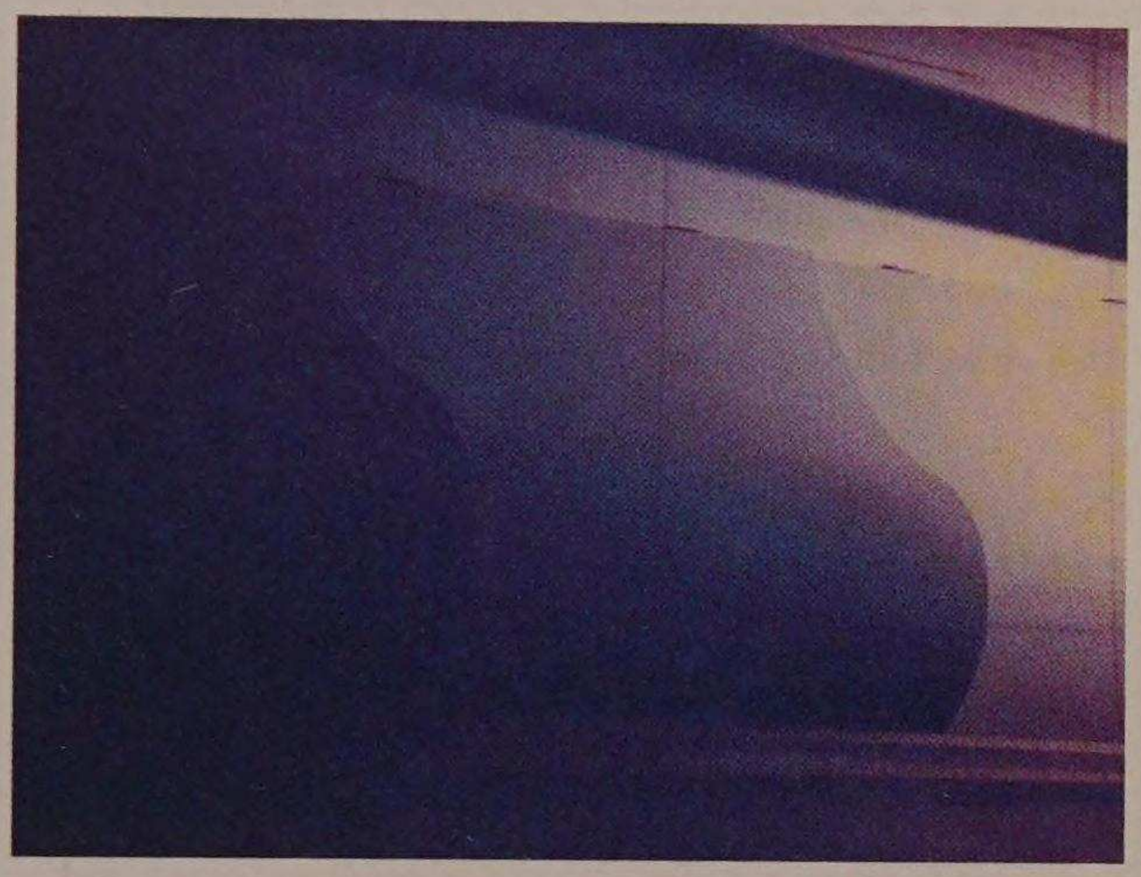
An important part of the installation, the setting of the "shotgun" house, allowed for a reading of a past, memories, and passage of time specific to the southern African-American experience. Space was not only formal but also contextual.

From a formal point a view, the roughness of the existing materials of the gallery-uneven wooden floor, red brick, aged material on which time has left its imprint-contrasted with the sleekness and fluid quality of *In-Passing*, creating an interesting tension between old materials attesting to the passage of time, and new materials attempting to







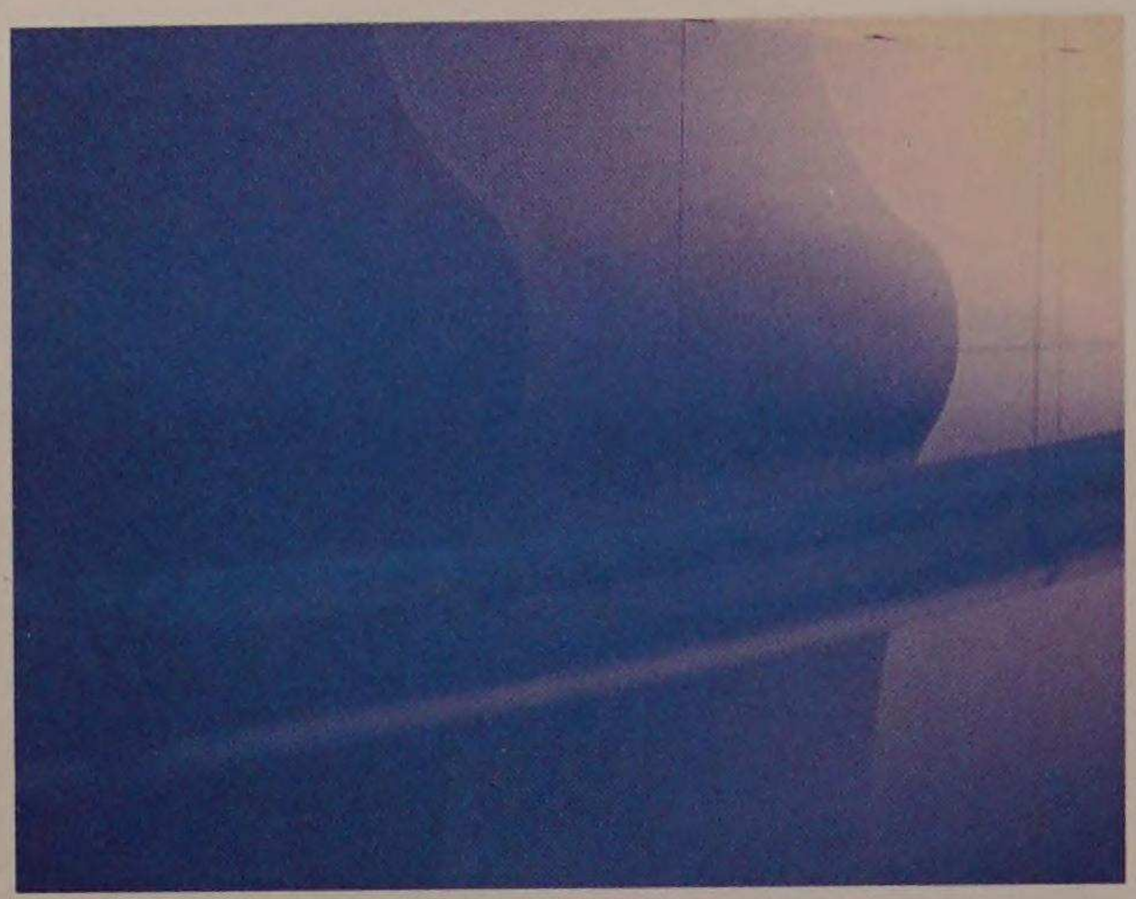


capture the essence of time. The ghost-like quality of *In-Passing* was also reminiscent of the door treatment for *Project Space Gallery* in Columbus, Ohio (1999, Figure 2) particularly striking in the photograph, which shows the shadow-ghost of a woman behind the steel mesh, a solid yet permeable material.

From a contextual point of view — with reference to the work of John Biggers and the very setting of the installation in a typically black form of southern dwellings — one can legitimately wonder how much of the African-American notion of time and passing time, and the African American's contemporary relationships to memories of a not-so-distant past, can be revealed through the work.

For some, experiences of the space of the house might seem to be universal, while for others it might refer more specifically to the memories of a people that has gone through the curses of slavery.

First, whether one considers the installation as the space contained between the curtain and the wall or as the space expanding outside of the curtain and embracing the whole gallery space, it can be argued that *In-Passing* was a metaphorical house. Basic elements of a house, wall and floor in particular, were used, deconstructed, and reconstructed. This is not to take on the essentialist position that an architect cannot build anything but a house. But it does acknowledge a European tradition particularly relevant to architecture that was expressed by French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in *Poetics of Space* (1964), when he wrote that the house is a place of choice to house memories. If





Left to right: Further cinematic studies *Passing Time* installation

In-Passing was not a house *per se*, it was definitely a place that allowed for the housing of memories.

However, beyond this somewhat bourgeois tradition (in which it is assumed that everyone grew up in a house and could spend days daydreaming in the attic) lies another tradition of the house as a space where memory is built and subsequently released: the haunted house. This is a house where the remembrance of past events disrupts the slow and presumably flowing passage of time. A house where walls are made to speak, much like the walls of *In-Passing* whose salient elements served as spaces for yet-unheard stories. A house where furniture can move, just like suspended streams can flow.

Among the numerous stories of haunted houses in the African-American literary tradition of the post-slavery era, that of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) has particular resonance to the *In-Passing* piece. Set in Ohio in 1873, Beloved is the story of a former slave, Sethe, who had escaped from Kentucky eighteen years ago while pregnant with a baby girl and accompanied by her three young children. She gave birth to her daughter Denver and saved her two boys but cut the throat of her little daughter to keep her from being returned to slavery. The place where she finds a dwelling is the house of her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, at 124 Bluestone Road. But the house is haunted, haunted by the ghost named Beloved, allegedly Sethe's murdered baby.

In the same way that Rickenbacker and AR+D deconstructed a house to strip it of all but its fundamental elements, so did Baby Suggs reconfigure the plan of her house. Because she did not want to remember her journey as a slave towards the back door of the kitchen, she turned it into a toolroom and built a new kitchen in the house itself, very much against the domestic principles of the time.

Baby Suggs wanted "to keep the past at bay". However, while changing the plan of the house did allow Baby Suggs to avoid thinking too much about being someone's servant, efforts to prevent collapse back into the past did not prove to be effective against Beloved.

In a haunted house, the dead and the living inhabit a space where time is constantly disrupted by events whose very nature is uncertain. In stark contrast to Bachelard's ideal home space, this is very much a political space where issues related to memory are problematized as they deal less



with the building of memory than with its release.

In-Passing reconciled those two traditions through a careful blend of both universal and contextual references to the passage of time through space. The move towards the universal was made with the decision to use the shape of the "shotgun" house rooftop as a formal element only — in other words, when abstraction was chosen over representation. The recontextualization was made by using the space of the former "shotgun" house not merely as a place to locate an installation, but as an anchor point for features relevant to its unique setting, such as the specific seasonal light of Houston reflected in the web of the installation.

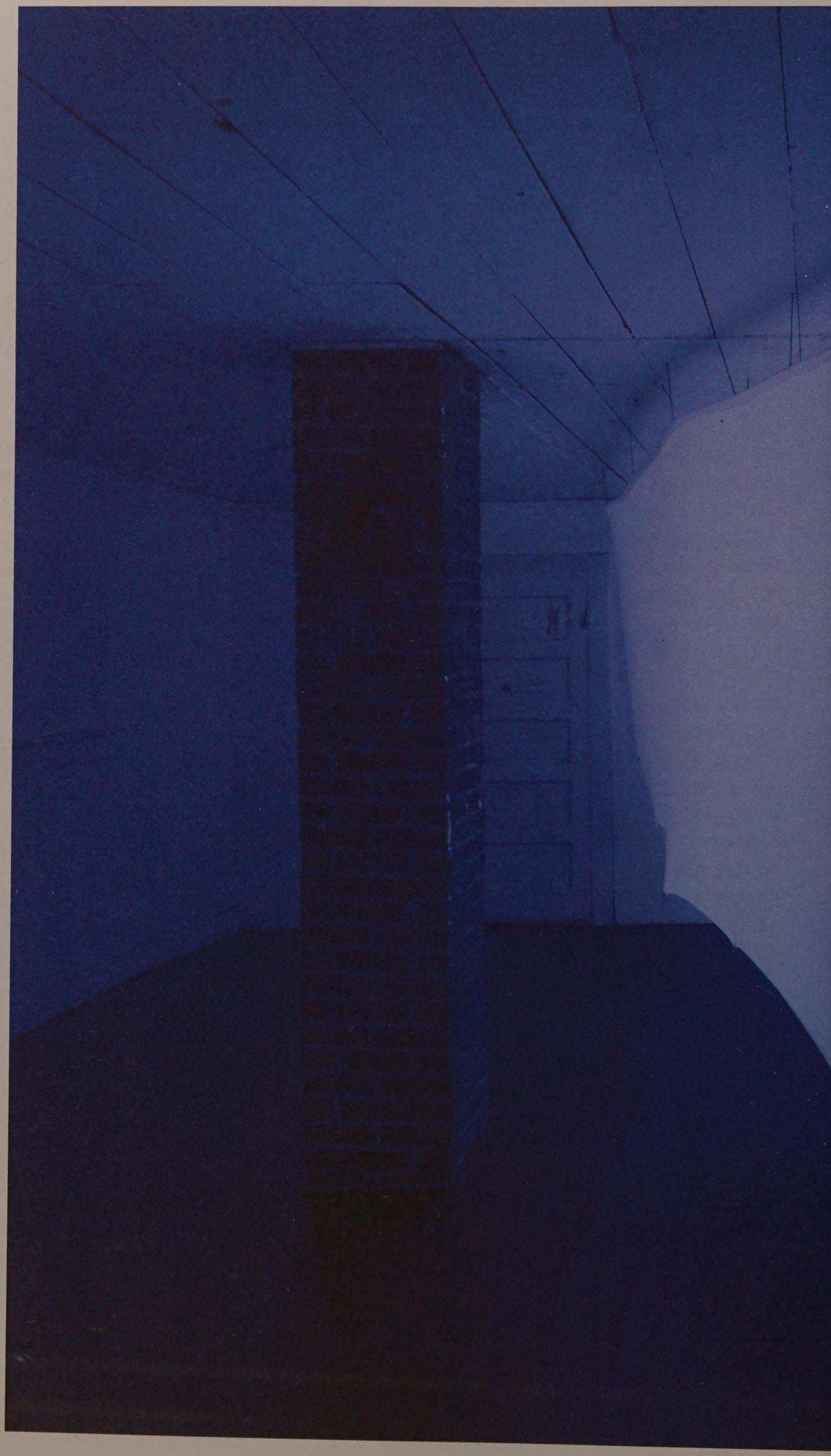
Special effects created by digital technologies may provide us with new means to compensate for senses initially imperfect and gradually atrophied by time. Concepts offer useful crutches to theorize on space and time. *In-Passing* belongs to those creations that blend ideas and techniques for a surprisingly apprehensible and comprehensible result.

Pause.
"What are you doing?"
"Oh, I'm just passing time."

This answer, recalls Rickenbacker, is what African Americans of the South would give when asked about their occupation of the moment.

Entrenched in the everyday, *In-Passing* is undoubtedly very contemporary and yet in debt to a past and place when time was not always so leisurely spent.

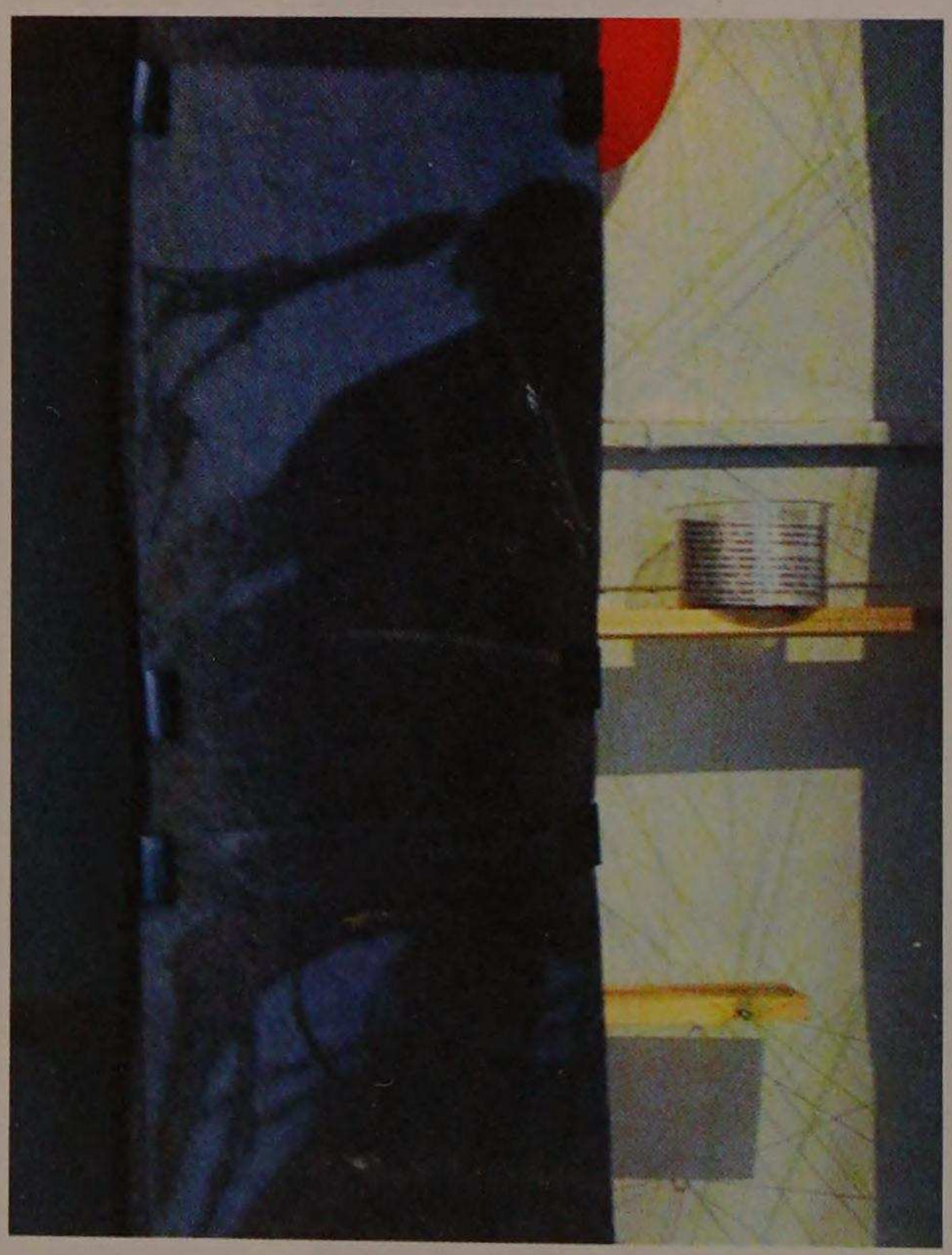
Editors' Note: The timeframe outlined in this essay reflects Tancons' discussion with Shawn Rickenbacker and review of AR+D unigroup's installation in 2002.











Photographs from MECA performance at Music and Spoken Word House, 2001

AND OTHER LATENT USES

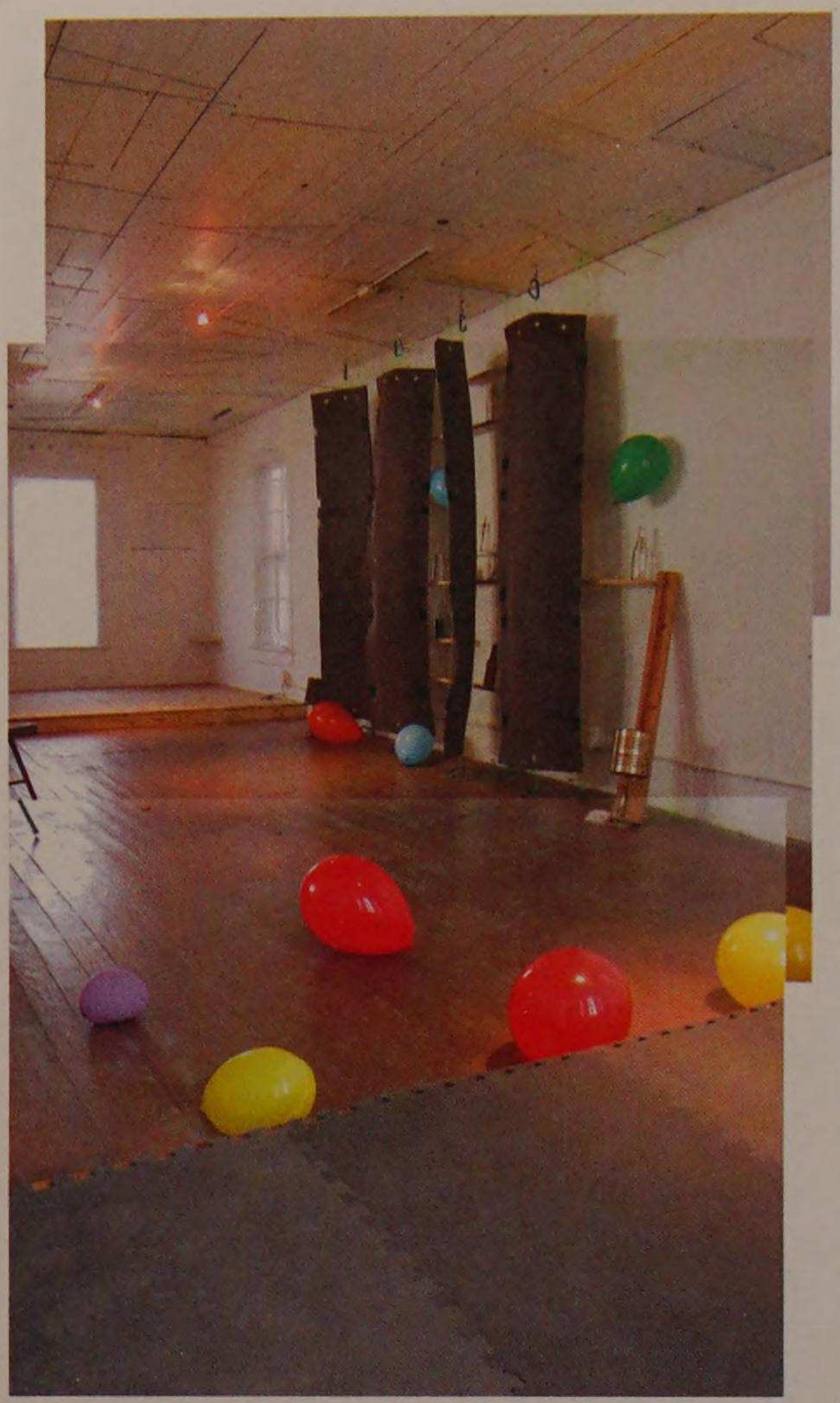
David Brown

In rural Mississippi, children stretched wire between nails in the walls of their homes to create make-shift guitars. The primary intention behind this inventive childhood musical play was to learn the blues. However, rather than simply develop a mastery of the blues, Mississippi native Wadada Leo Smith has continued to investigate the potential of objects beyond their intended uses for the making of a wealth of improvised music. Like his fellow members of the Chicago-based Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), Smith makes music that incorporates the full range of sound that he can encourage from his primary instrument, the trumpet, as well as a host of other horns and found instruments. The installation in Project Row Houses' Music and Spoken Word House developed the architectural potential of playing with the latent properties of materials and forms, suggested in the guitar play of children and the efforts of the AACM, to create a playing environment comprised of variable rather than fixed relations between making music and listening.

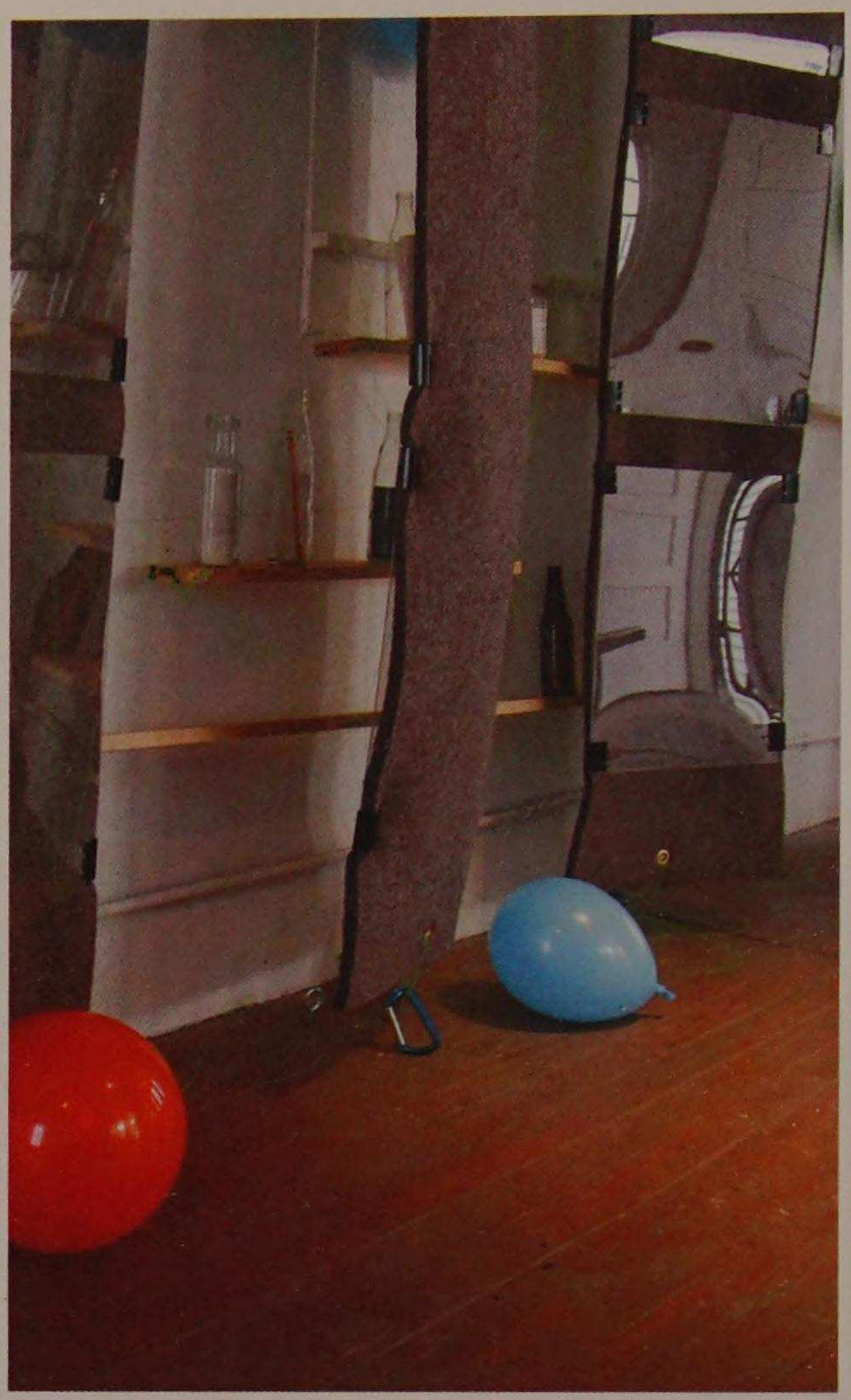


Figure 1. Fishing line installation

While Smith and other children in Mississippi used wire to produce sound, the installation took advantage of the ability of string to provide further definition to three zones in the space without disturbing its existing acoustics. Planes, formed of fishing line (Figure 1) wound around pairs of two-foot-long threaded rods and tied to eyelets that followed the joist spacing, hovered just below the ceiling plane. A general rule — that the front end would have more gold fishing line while the rear end would have more blue — informed the hanging of the panels. Additionally, the panels directly above two platforms were angled down toward the front and rear walls. The intent was to introduce a shifting and shimmering presence that would escape easy detection, but when noticed could operate as an area of attention. The use of different colors of fishing line, each designed to have maximum visibility in



Platforms at either end of space

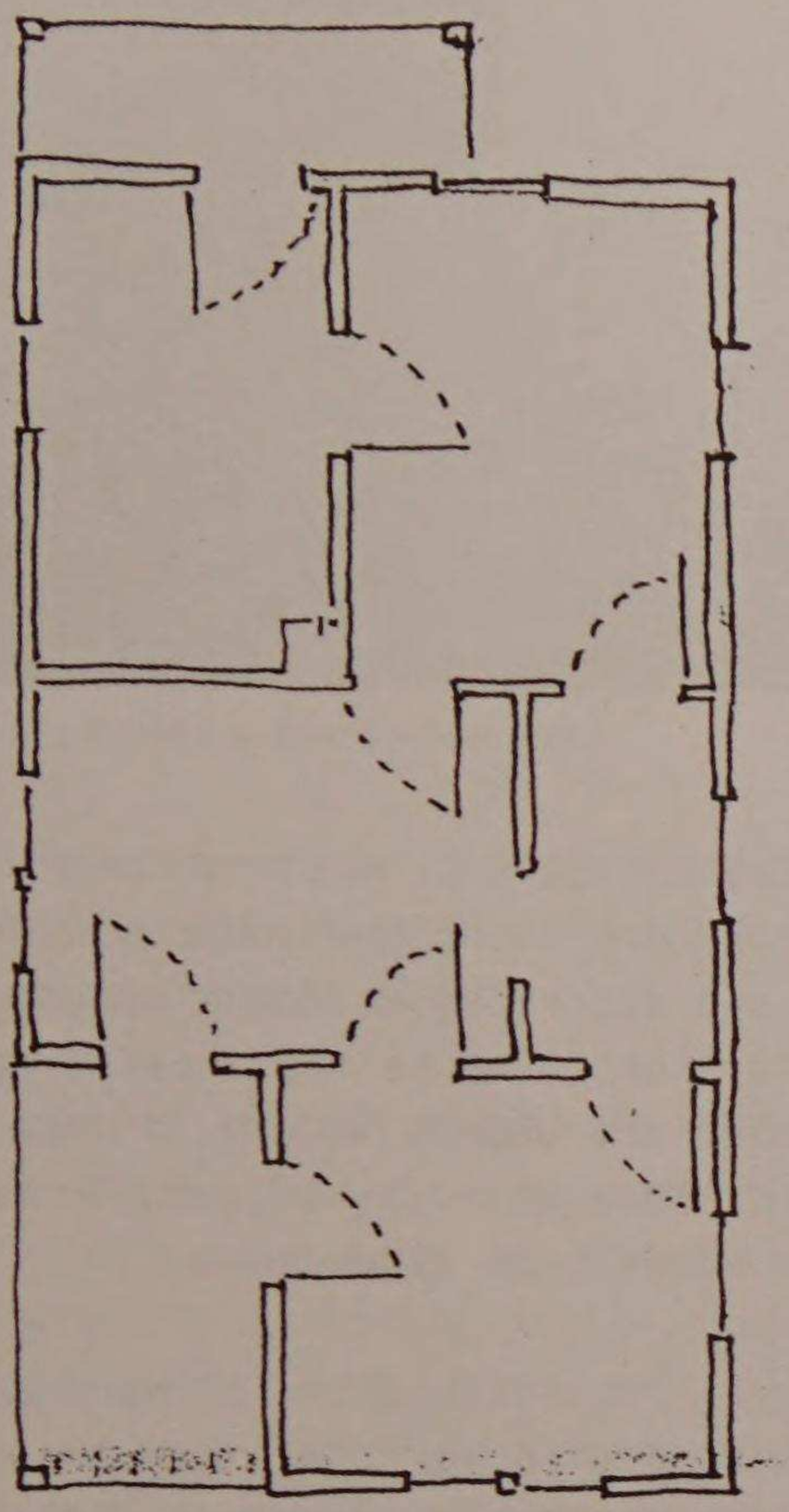


Felt and acrylic acoustic panels

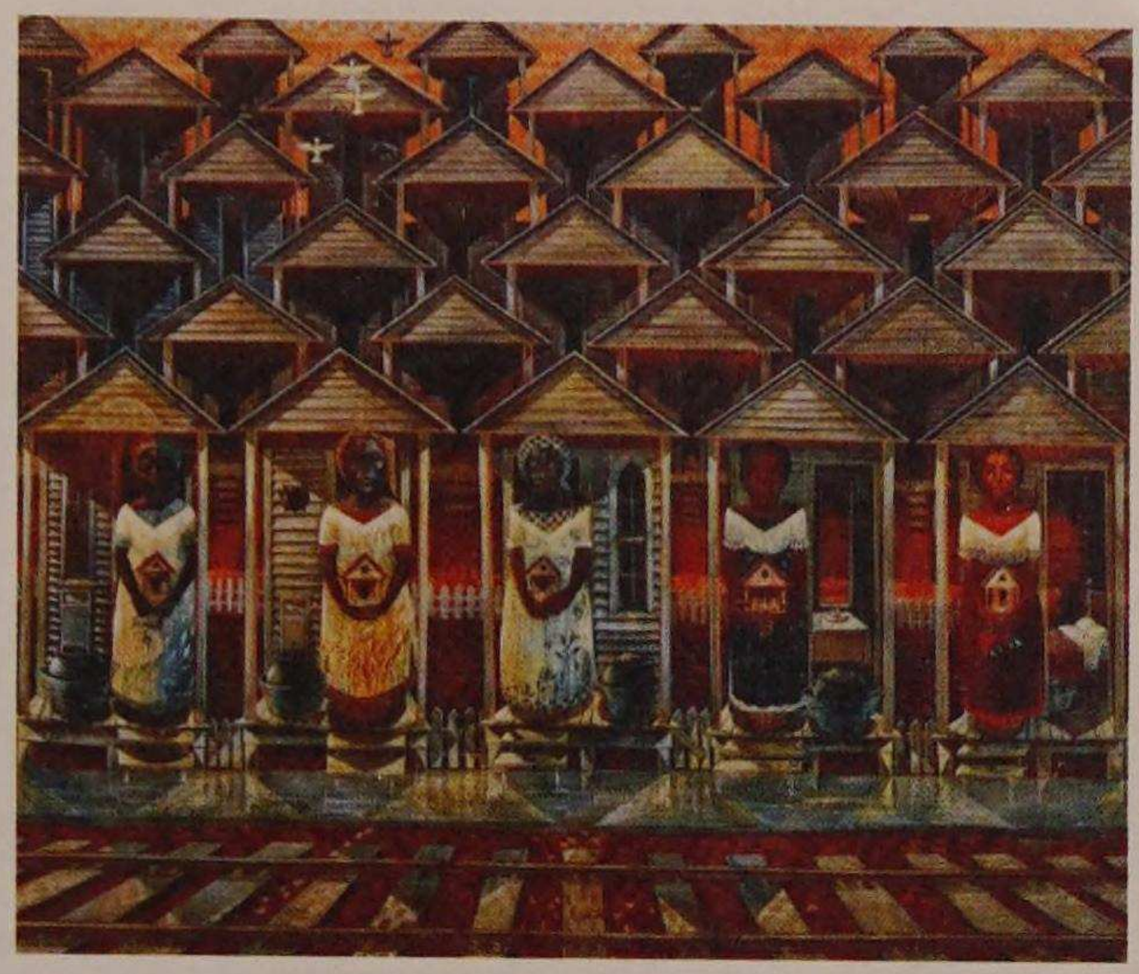
daylight and low visibility in water, enabled these variable qualities because of their differing refractive characteristics: in daylight the gold line was dominant, while at night the blue line was highlighted by the halogen bulbs of the low-voltage lighting. The result was that the area of attention changed in response to the time of day.

The introduction, sparingly, of fluorescent green fishing line in the ceiling plane created additional highlights. The same green line was used exclusively in a vertical plane of string and shelving along the wall at the center of the space. Four felt and Plexiglas panels hanging in front of this wall or across the ceiling provided some acoustic manipulation of the space. They could be rotated to vary the acoustic absorbance and reflectance. The panels and the string wall reinforced the center as a distinctive zone that was comparable to, yet distinct from, the raised platforms at each end, and contributed to the ambiguity of how each zone should be used.

In the previous layout of this space, a raised platform was positioned at the front end to serve as the stage area. Fixed tables surrounded by chairs filled the remaining floor area to provide audience seating. By removing the fixed tables and adding a second platform in the rear of the space, the understanding of what constitutes stage and audience areas blurred. Either end could operate as an elevated stage. The two ends could also operate as elevated seating areas overlooking a center stage. Any one zone could be used individually or in combination as the stage, and each



Plan configuration of Project Row Houses' Artist's Houses

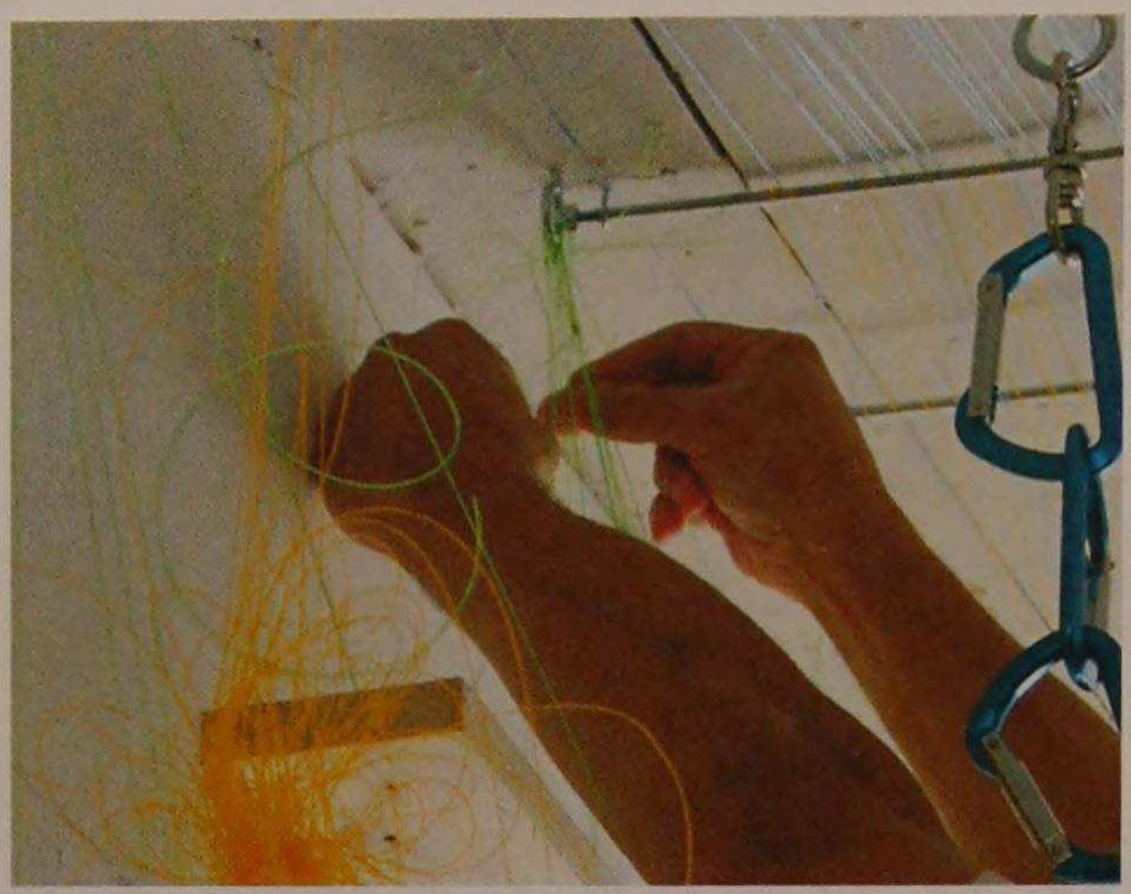


John Biggers, *Shotguns*, 1987, ©Estate of John Biggers

permutation offered different qualities. Additionally, all of the zones could be used without distinction between areas for playing, and areas for listening and observing. The low-voltage lighting system running the length of the space that permits fixtures to move easily to define desired points of concentration facilitated this variable usage.

The installation thus, without introducing partition walls, returned this open volume of space to the organization of a shotgun house. Spatially, the shotgun house places an emphasis on action and variability. By providing a repetition of rooms in succession, it physically structures relations between the rooms but does not prescribe how the rooms are to be used. Alvia Wardlaw, while writing of the role of the shotgun house in Biggers' "visual belief system," notes, "Within its modest confines, generations of black families learned to prevail and to create order."[1] This order is not intrinsic to the form, but emerges through activities within these spaces as such interactions are modulated and modified by the resilience of the form's enclosure. Although the space, proportion, and organization of this house inevitably impacts and modulates the activities inside, the inhabitant decides what actions take place and where they occur within the sequence.

Part of the potency of Biggers' canvases is their ability to communicate this process of creating an order, which occurs in the overlap of various temporal modes. At least three forms of time are present in Biggers' painting *Shotguns*, 1987: the extensive duration and constancy of the house's typological form, the generational rhythms of its inhabitation, and the daily events that are accommodated but unspecified by the type. In the fourth house, an opened front door reveals a cup of coffee awaiting a visitor on a dining table, while the viewer looks through the front door of the fifth house into a bedroom. Subsequent orders are left to speculation in the first three houses where women stand in front of their respective doors. The various orders





Above and right: Manipulation of fishing line during the installation process

that emerge within the houses are only fully discernible through engagement. Borrowing from Maya Angelou, Wardlaw describes these non-apparent orderings as "deep talk."

Zora Neale Hurston reveals how the manipulation of language and sound has been a rich resource in black culture when she writes in *Their Eyes were Watching God*:

> *[The evening] was the time for sitting on porches beside the road. These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sound and lesser things. They passed nations through their mouths.*[2]

On porches and in other places, African Americans have gathered, and through inventive language use and storytelling, they have made assertions of mobility, variability and change to contest circumstances that consistently limit or deny their agency. Elaborating on the manipulation of language in "Characteristics of Negro Folk Expression," Hurston identifies the use of what she terms "verbal nouns" and "double descriptives" in black folk language. *Cook-pot*, *sitting-chair*, and *chop-axe* are among the compound words that she describes as nouns embedded with action "because the speaker has in his mind the object in use." Since the use of these objects is commonly known, these words seem redundant.

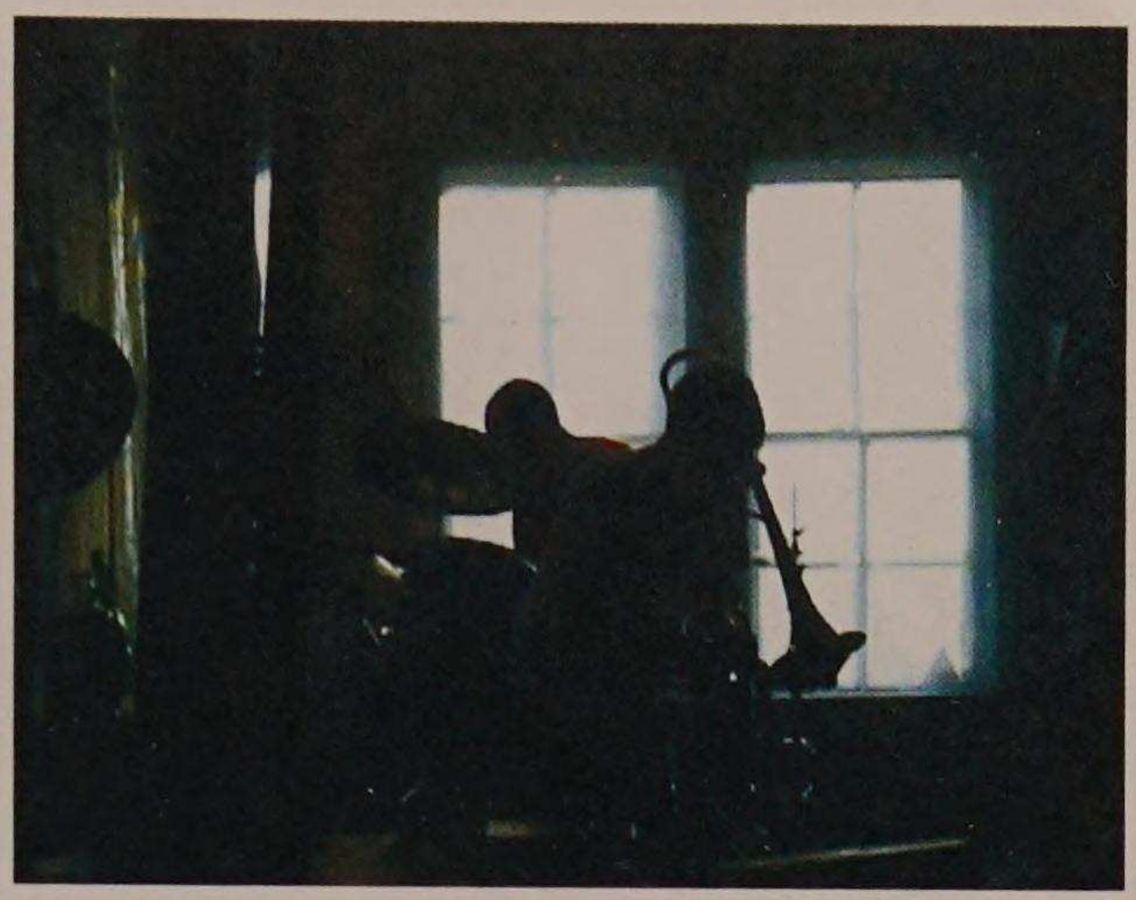
However, identifying the primary action affiliated with an object has two vital implications: that an object is capable of accommodating and participating in a multitude of actions, and that an object possesses dimensions that only reveal themselves through actions.

Through the study of conceptions and processes that facilitate improvisation in jazz, similar orderings and their design implications can be identified. Understandings of composition, the body, time, and space in jazz suggest at least four design considerations:

— Forms and resultant shapes
— Variable and complex subject-object positions
— Moments laden with diverse temporalities, and
— Encouraging latent properties of materials and systems.

With their emphasis on developments in time, active negotiations, and collaborative and provisional structures, such considerations possess the potential for





Above and right: MECA performance video stills

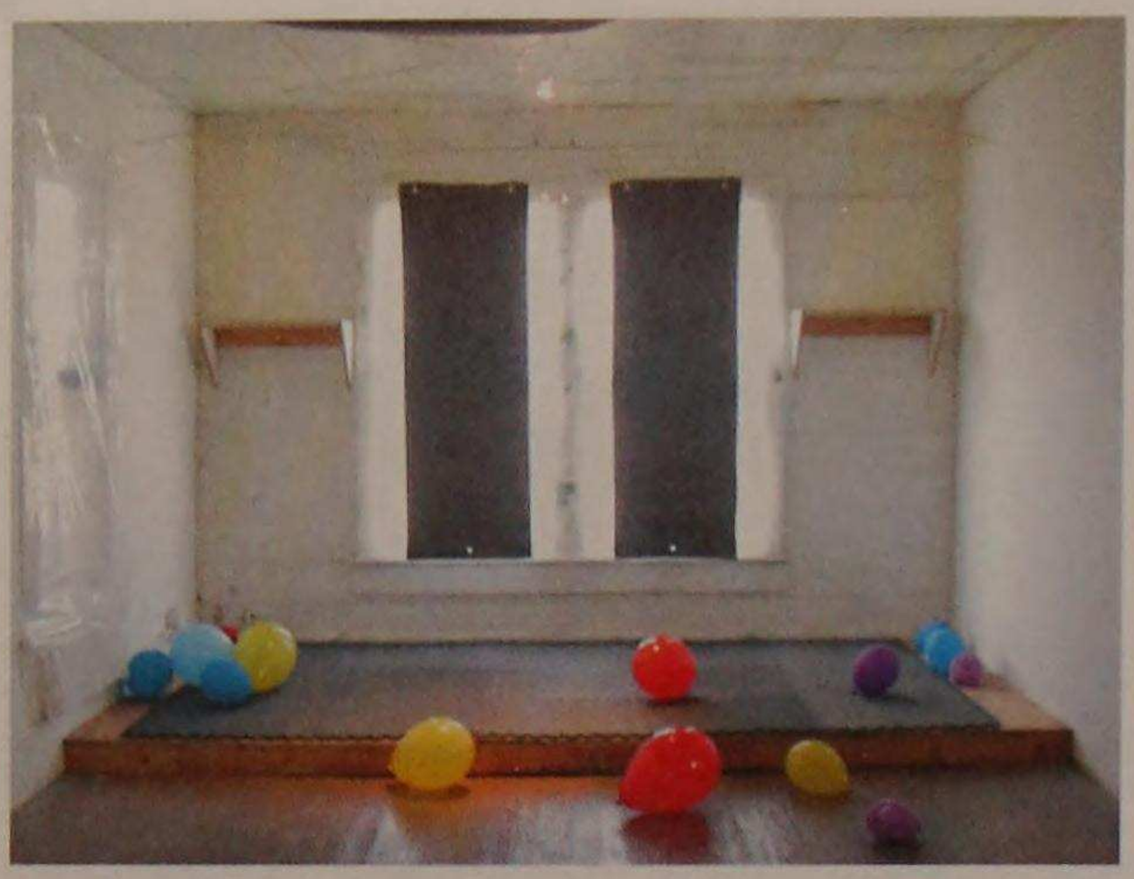
enabling more inclusive environments, accommodating individual, collective, as well as autonomous actions.

Prior design investigations of these considerations include a proposal for the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C. In the design, twenty overhead glass planes are etched with quotes by King. Sunlight projects the quotes onto a ground surface of rough and smooth stone. The smooth surfaces mark significant dates in Civil Rights history. Each marker is positioned to align with a particular quote for a few hours each day at specific times of the year. The form thus yields a shifting field of shadows, a dynamic shape, within which other shapes momentarily emerge as the field washes across the plaza. Viewers and passersby further manipulate these fleeting shapes-within-shapes, and become directly implicated in the monument, as their shadows are cast across the text that they might seek to read.

The design's response to the programmatic focus of Project Row Houses' Music and Spoken Word House operated as investigation and homage. The efforts of Smith, Anthony Braxton and other AACM members such as Roscoe Mitchell, George Lewis, and Joseph Jarman provide compelling insights regarding object behaviors, languages of the body, and ways of diagramming and notating music that can inform design. Their work was reflected in the selection of fishing line, as well as the ways the installations other elements were articulated. Many details of the installation emphasize mutual dependencies. The fishing line and rods, fishing line and shelves, and felt and Plexiglas panels modified and acted on one another to form the ceiling, wall and acoustic screen.

The AACM's work was also referenced in bottles and balloons stored in the fishing line wall. AACM members developed the use of "little instruments" such as kazoos, bells, and whistles, as well as everyday objects such as hubcaps as sound sources that augmented their use of traditional instruments. Each balloon was inscribed with a diagram by Braxton and stored in a container that was labeled with the following passage from *Forces in Motion* by Graham Locke:

> *Towards the end of the lecture Braxton refers to his Composition 25, explaining that at one point the musicians are required to rub balloons as part of "a multiple sound/fabric environment."*
> *"Why balloons?" someone asks.*
> *"Well, I didn't have enough money for the electronic equipment that could make those kinds of sounds,' he replies. "I'm interested in the expanded reality of sound opened up*





Above and right: Stage with acoustic panels raised and lowered

by the post-Webern continuum, but I'm restricted to using cheap materials. So, you know, I was walking down the street one night and I thought, 'Hey! I gotta have balloons!'"[3]

Similarly, music diagrams, liner notes, prose, and pencils placed within the bottles further communicated aspects of improvised music and suggested multiple manners in which these everyday objects could be musically engaged.

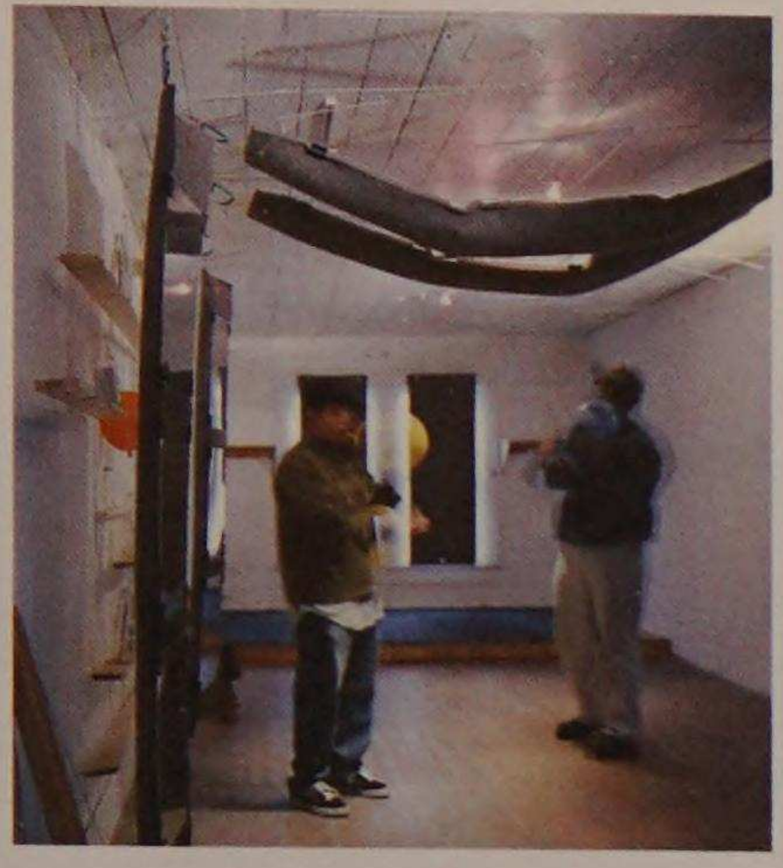
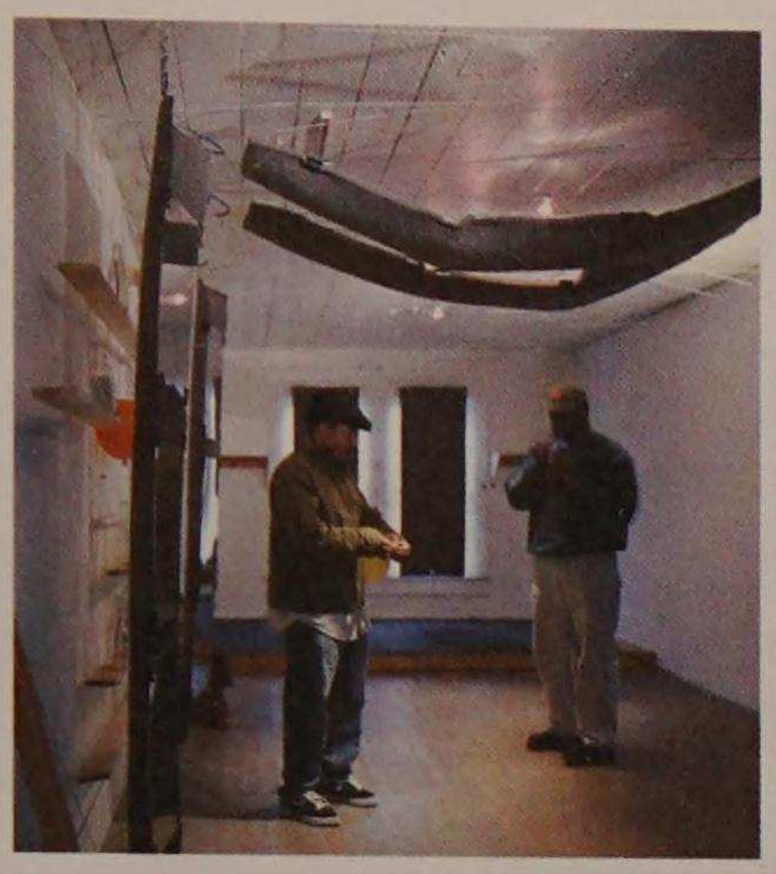
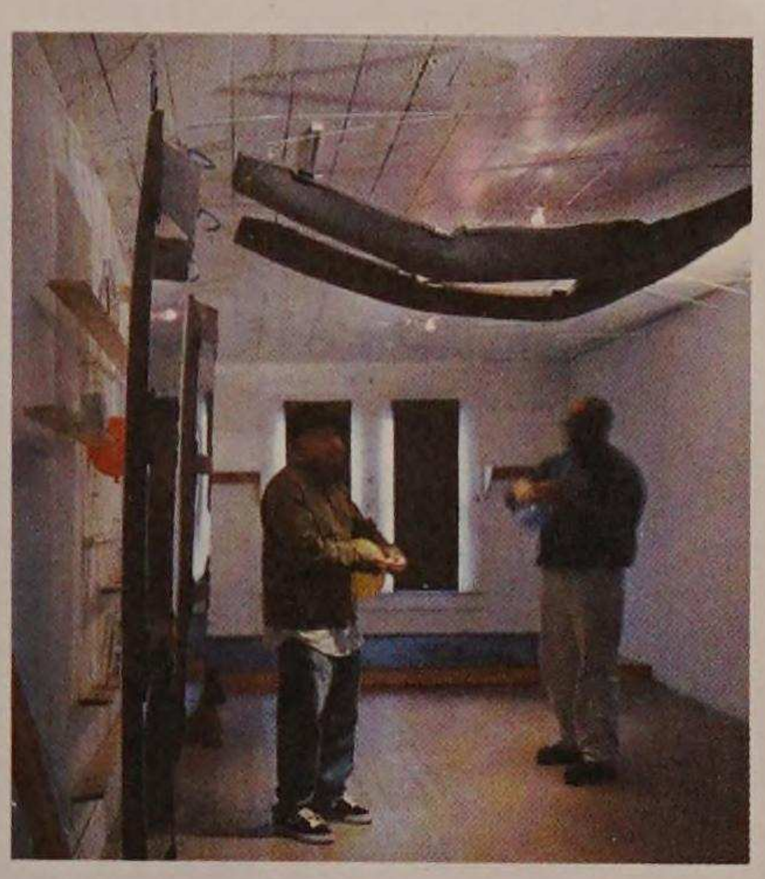
The instruments were intended for actual use to stimulate a range of ideas regarding making music for those who chose to initiate their own musical play. Through the manipulations of the architecture and the instruments to suggest ways that they were actively at, or could be set to, work, the installation was, like the King memorial, a field of active elements with which participants could interact. The installation provided an opportunity to explore how such fields might impact and inform the shape of the activities within it and through playing visitors might actively develop new orderings.

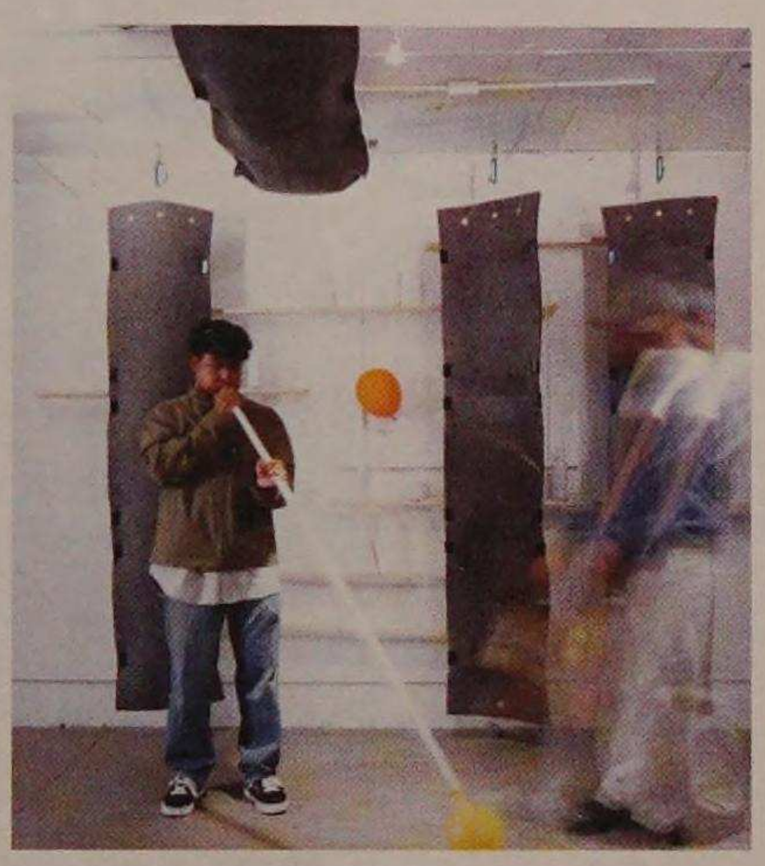
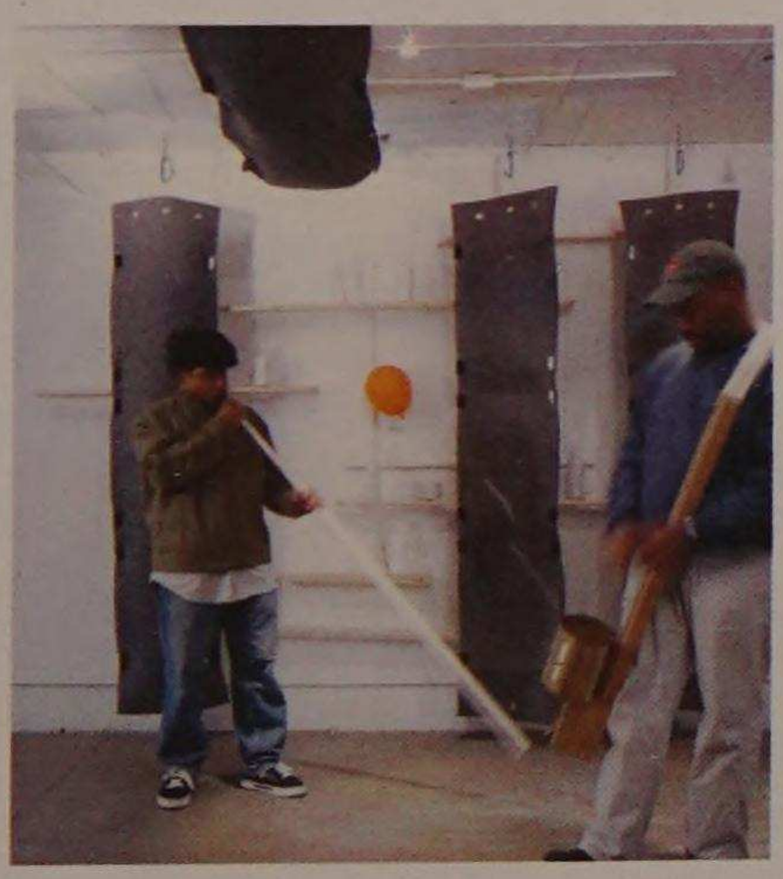
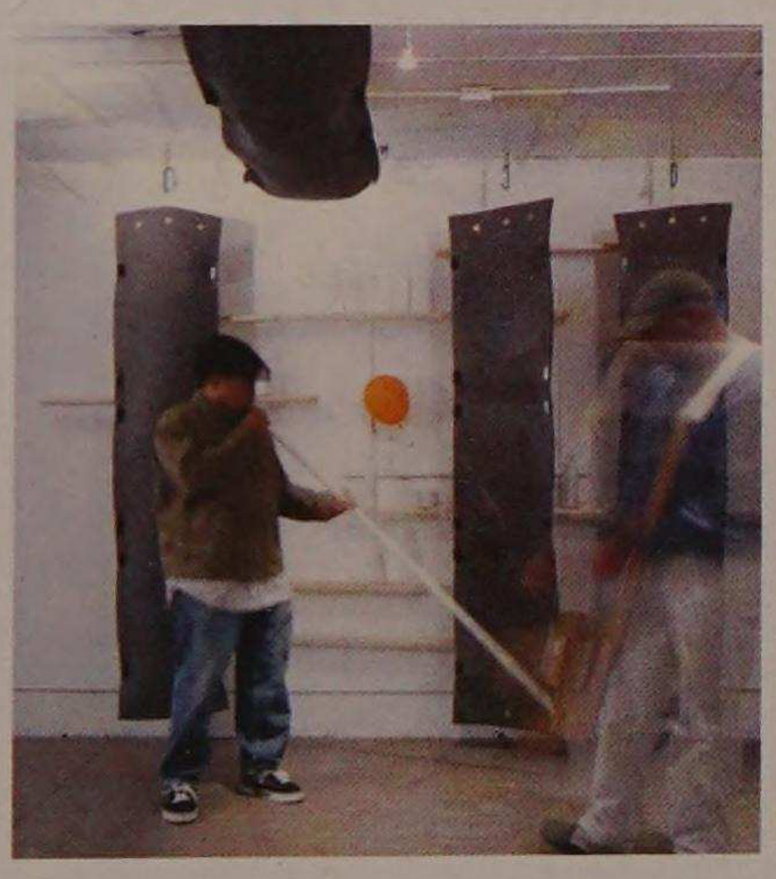
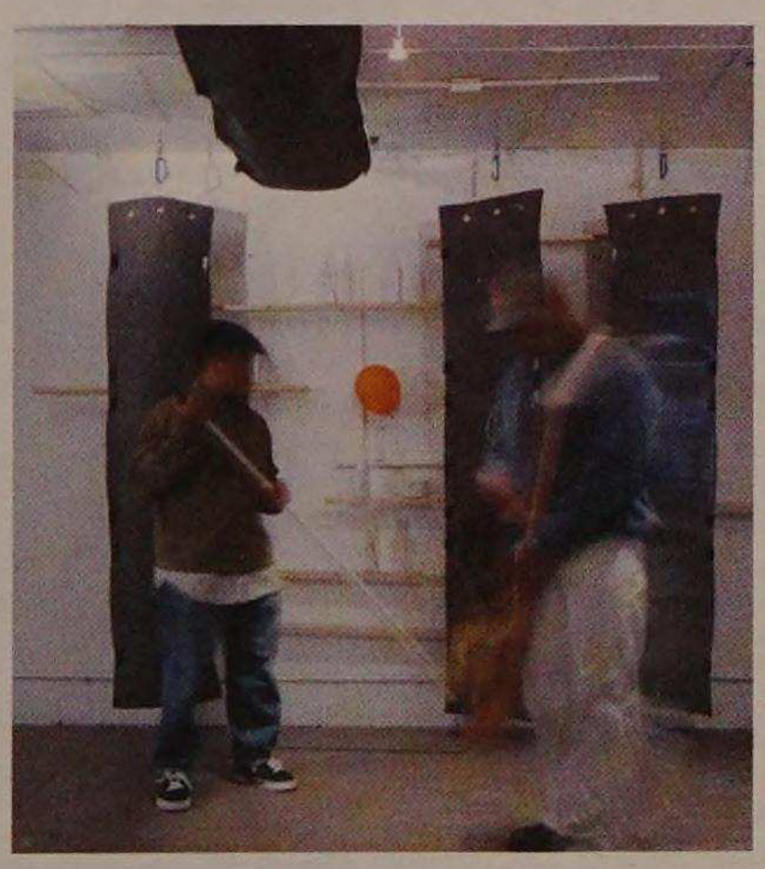
NOTES

1. Alvia Wardlaw, *The Art of John Biggers: View from the Upper Room* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), p. 63.
2. Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp. 9-10.
3. Graham Locke, *Forces in Motion: The Music and Thoughts of Anthony Braxton* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989), p. 27.

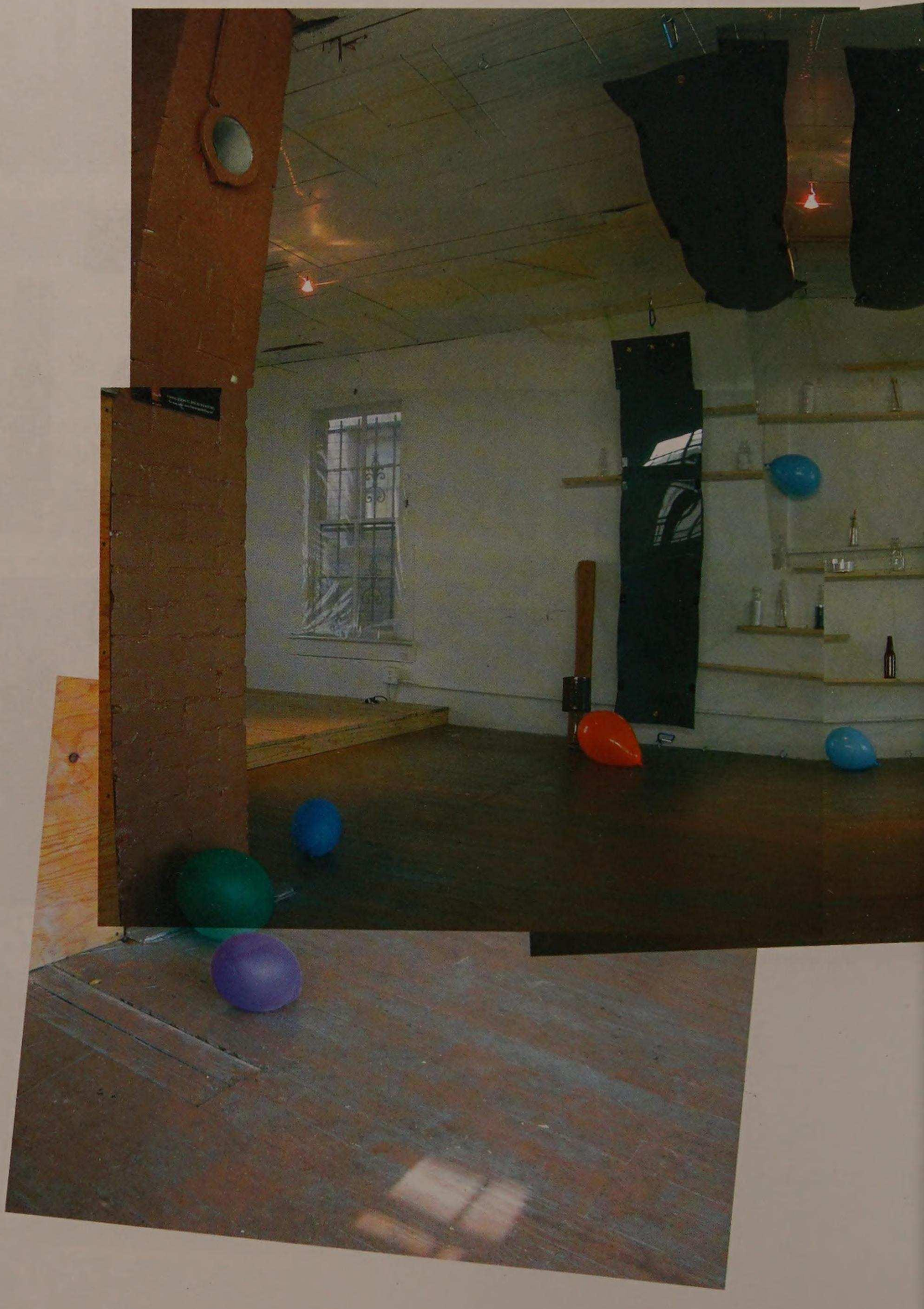
PROJECT TEAM

David Brown, Darshan Amrit, Sara Stevens, and David Stockwell with additional assistance from David DaPonte and Troy Gooden

Play within the Music and Spoken Word House







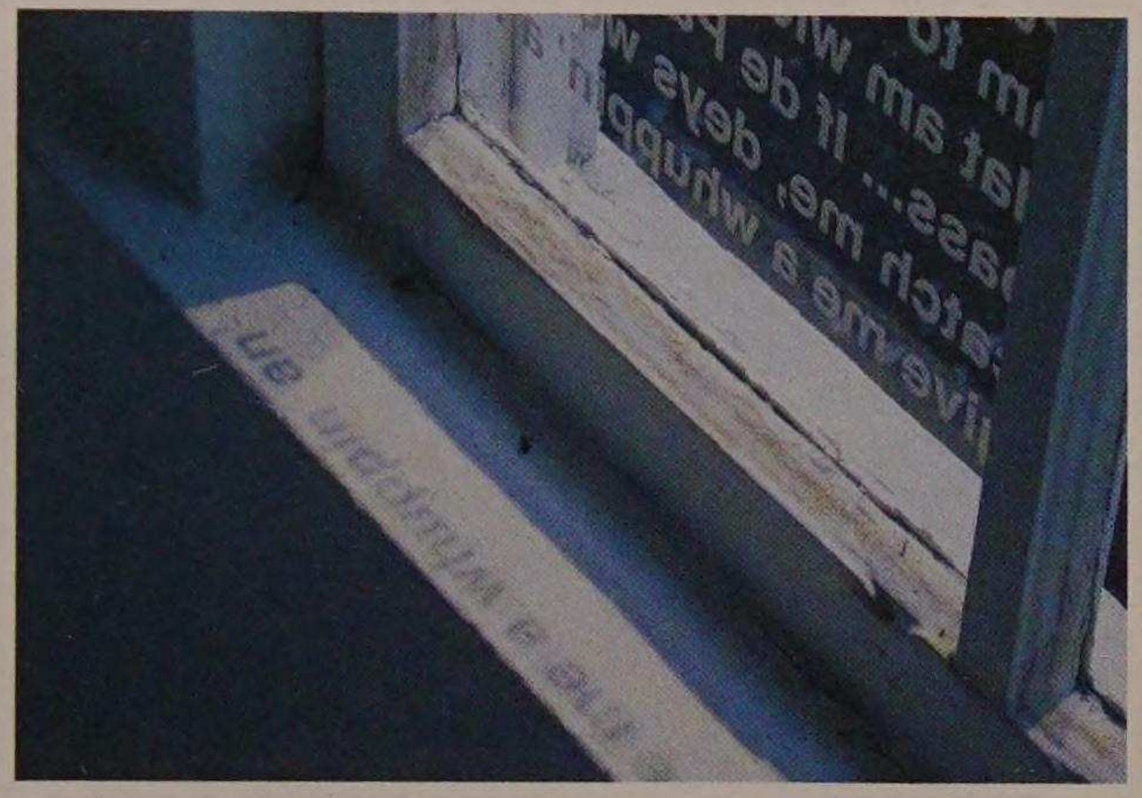




INTIMATE LANDSCAPES (OF THE SHOTGUN HOUSE)

SUMO

The found interior condition of House 2 was an emptied-out volume. All interior walls had been removed, the floor was painted a neutral gray, and the walls were painted white following modern art gallery standards. Though whitewashed, it was neither isolated nor empty. The doors and windows, rooms and porches of the adjacent houses aligned creating connective paths, as the strong Houston sun instigated a play of light in and around the houses.



Above and left: Projection of text on House 2's surfaces

The observation of natural phenomena at House 2 rekindled an interest in spatializing a series of shadow paintings that were a reflection on the alienating aspects of *black* and *other* identities as fixed in relation to a culture of visual spectacles. In contrast to Intimate Landscapes, the paintings addressed the erasure of the interior or subject to a condition of extreme exteriority. "*...Caused a sensation*" rendered no image, just a framed word rendered in shadow: "SHOCK," "SHOCKING," "SHOCKINGLY".

Darkness is generally defined as an absence, whereas light is defined as a presence. By casting shadows into the foreground while substance inhabits the background, the shadow inverts this relation in the traces inscribed.

Despite the small size of the space and the generic quality of the 'shotgun' house, it is imbedded with provocative histories — for example: the origin of the name 'shotgun'. In our installation at Project Row Houses the 'shotgun' house became a medium to reflect on the dynamics of both external and internal black landscapes.

The installation engaged the physical house in the play of several metaphoric houses (or states): knowledge, reflection, light, and darkness. These states were not explored through the construction of metaphors, but in the material slippage between them: how light may be translated as illumination, illumination translated as knowledge, and knowledge translated as reflection; or how both light and darkness may be equated with death or life. Seen as more than singular instances, the states modified each other as they re-mapped the shotgun

Pages 140-41: Histories from the WPA Slave Narratives projected on House 2's surfaces.

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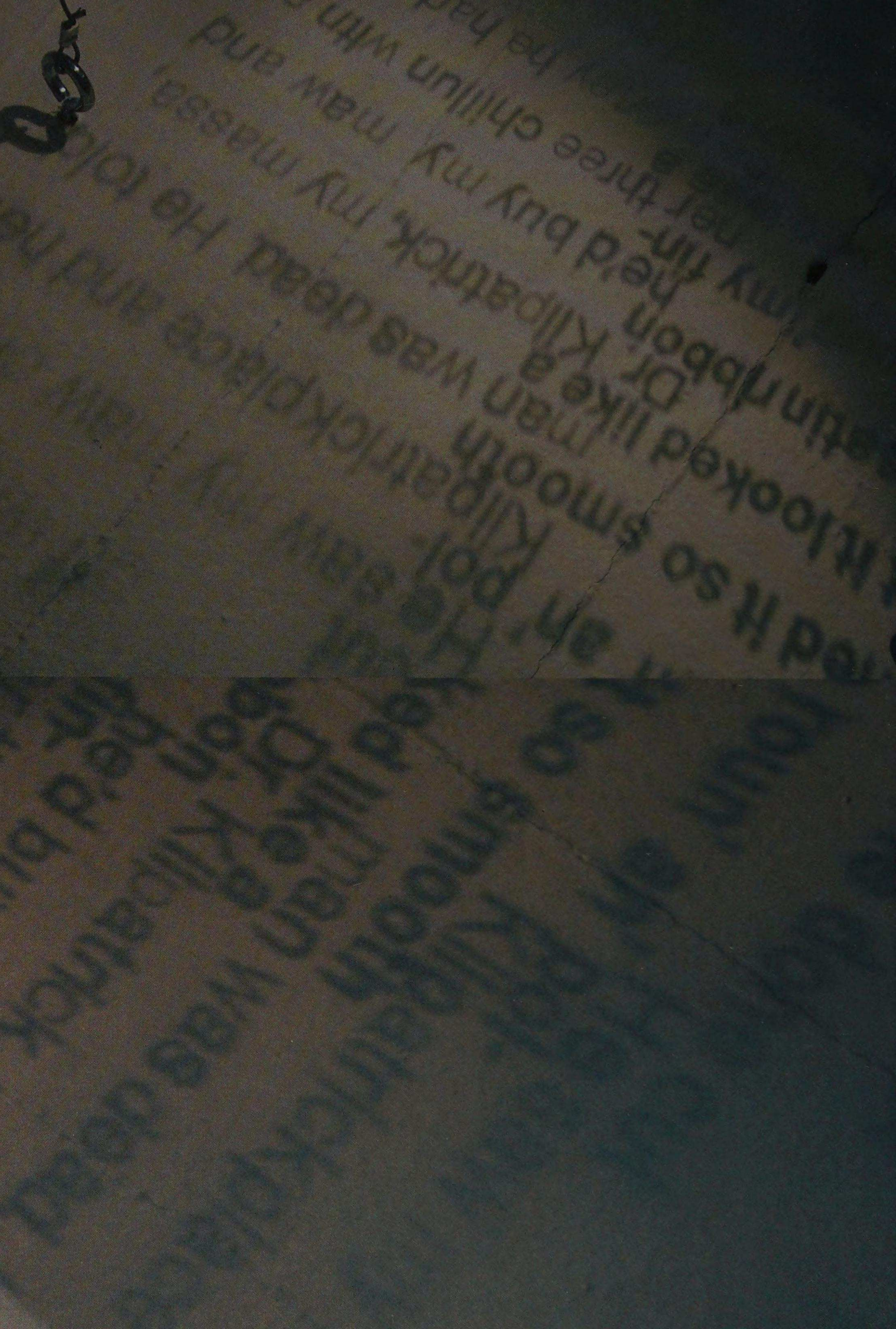
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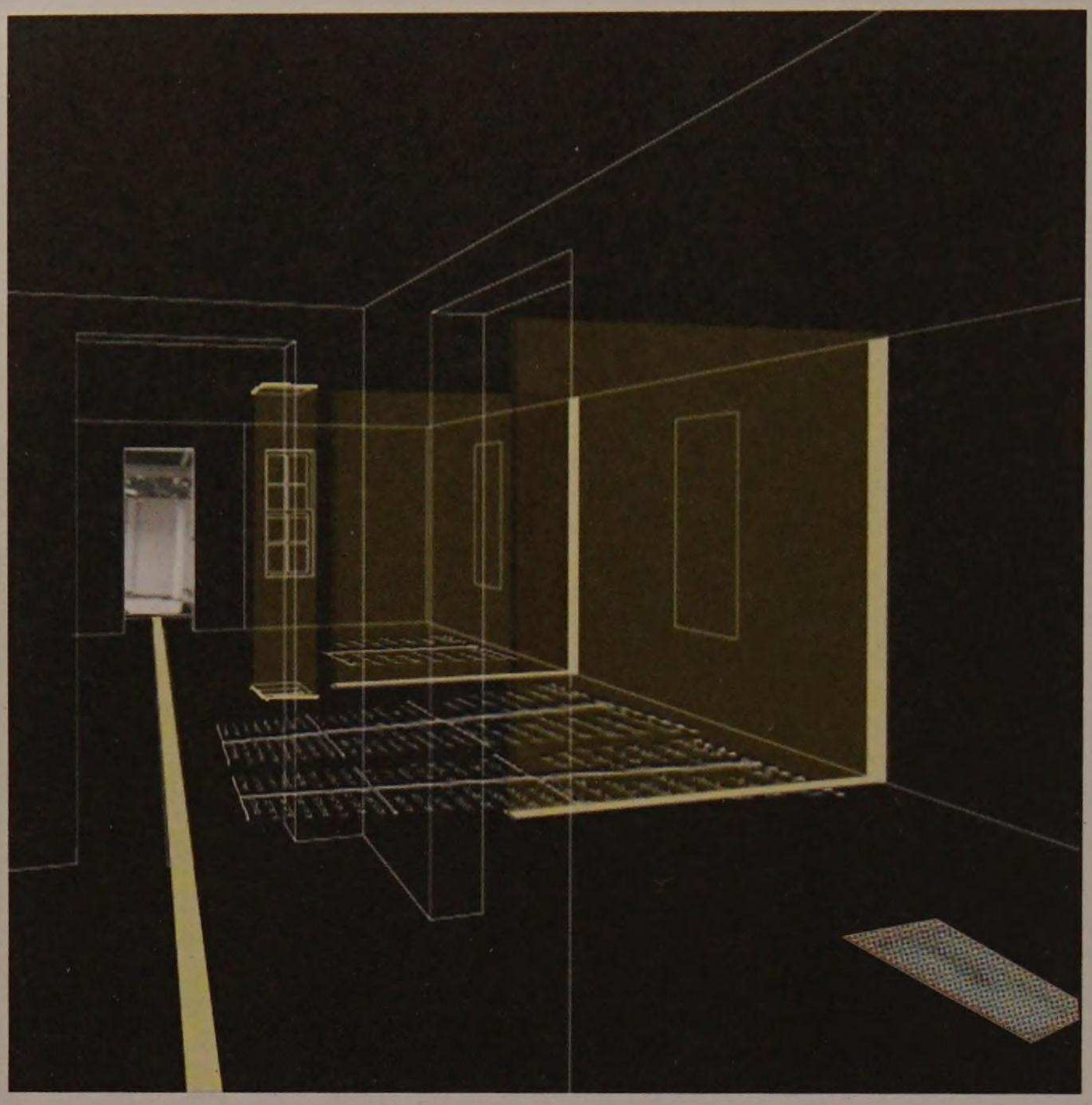
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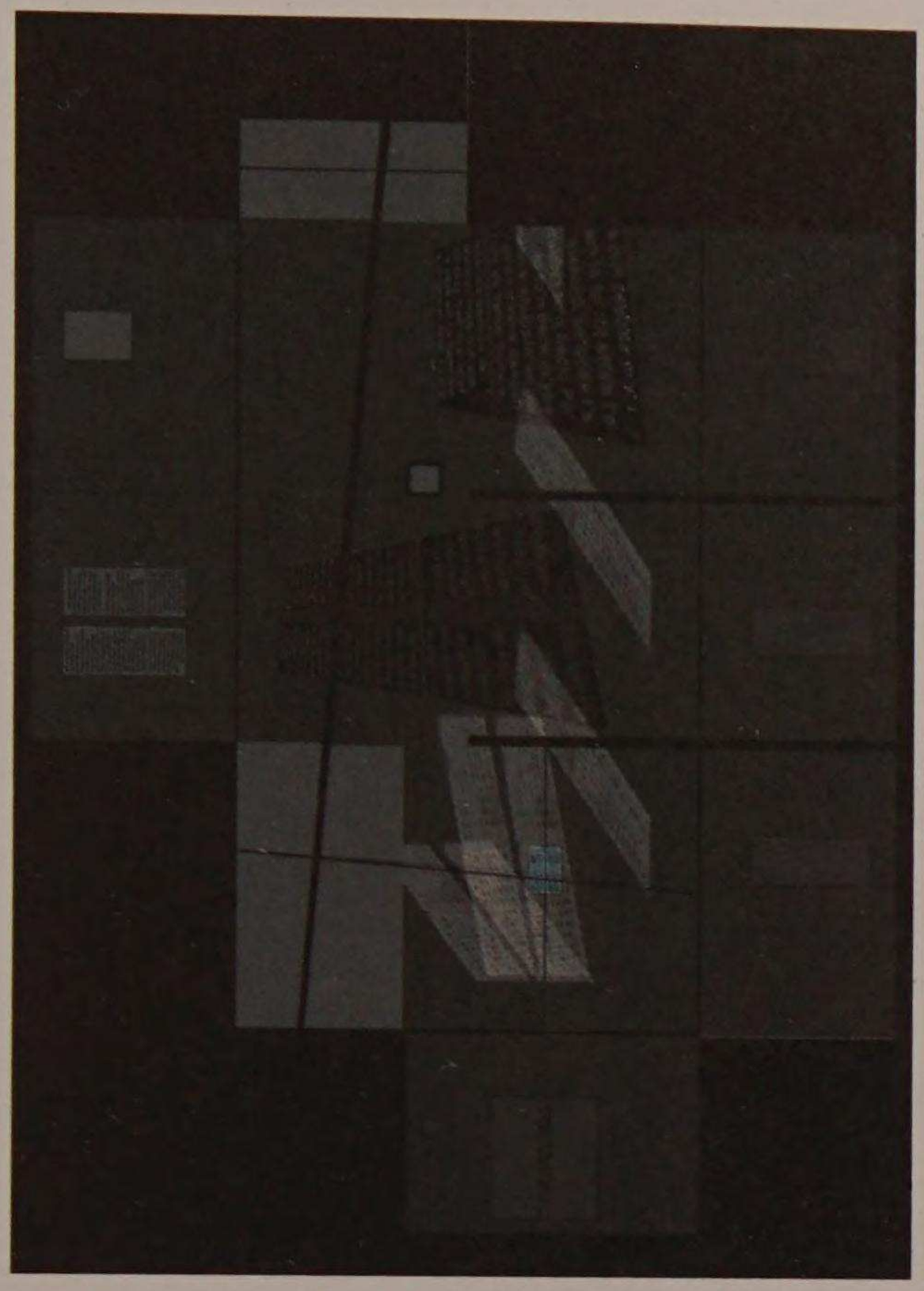
Conceptual drawing of House 2's installation

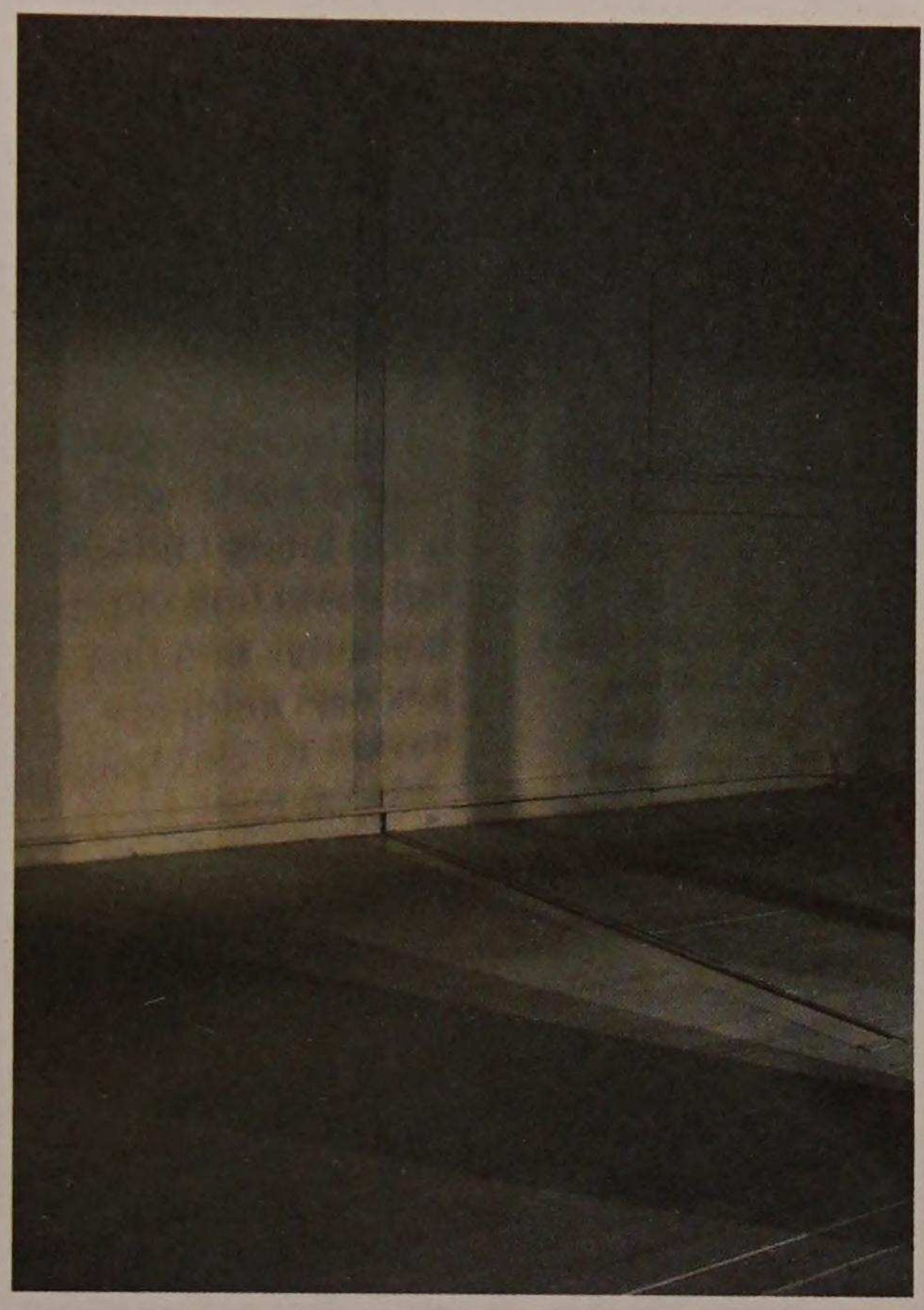
house in order to reveal within it a landscape of intimacy and connectivity.

Light, shadow, and reflection were the materials through which we mapped the areas of field, hearth, and self within the topography of the 'shotgun' house. These zones were inscribed through the overlap of boundaries and narrative to counter the dominant paradigm of describing subjectivity through representational objects and objective history. In the installation, 'field,' 'hearth' and 'self' described the internal and external reaches of domestic space. In the expansion of the definition of domesticity it is possible to conceive of slaves inhabiting a private domestic space or entertaining a private self.

Through the research of Jon Vlach that references Rhys Isaac's studies on the secret paths of slaves in countryside and woods surrounding plantations in Virginia, we became aware of the idea of a plantation landscape determined by slaves. Isaac suggested that slaves set up alternate systems between plantations, across fields and within the undeveloped marshes, woods and waterways surrounding them, building clandestine and loosely structured networks that crossed property lines.

Vlach extended Isaac's observations into his own analysis of southern plantation architecture. He constructed a typological genealogy which traced the shotgun house back to slave dwellings, and then further back to traditional wood dwellings of Western Africa. His descriptions of the possible spaces of agency for slaves fueled the desire to locate these traces. Could one begin to make connections between the communities of the enslaved Africans and the communities of southern blacks to the communities of the contemporary black diaspora who shared similar domestic spaces? In search of these traces, we looked to the accounts of former slaves.





Left: Projection study. Right: Faint projection of text on House 2's surfaces by means of natural and incidental light sources

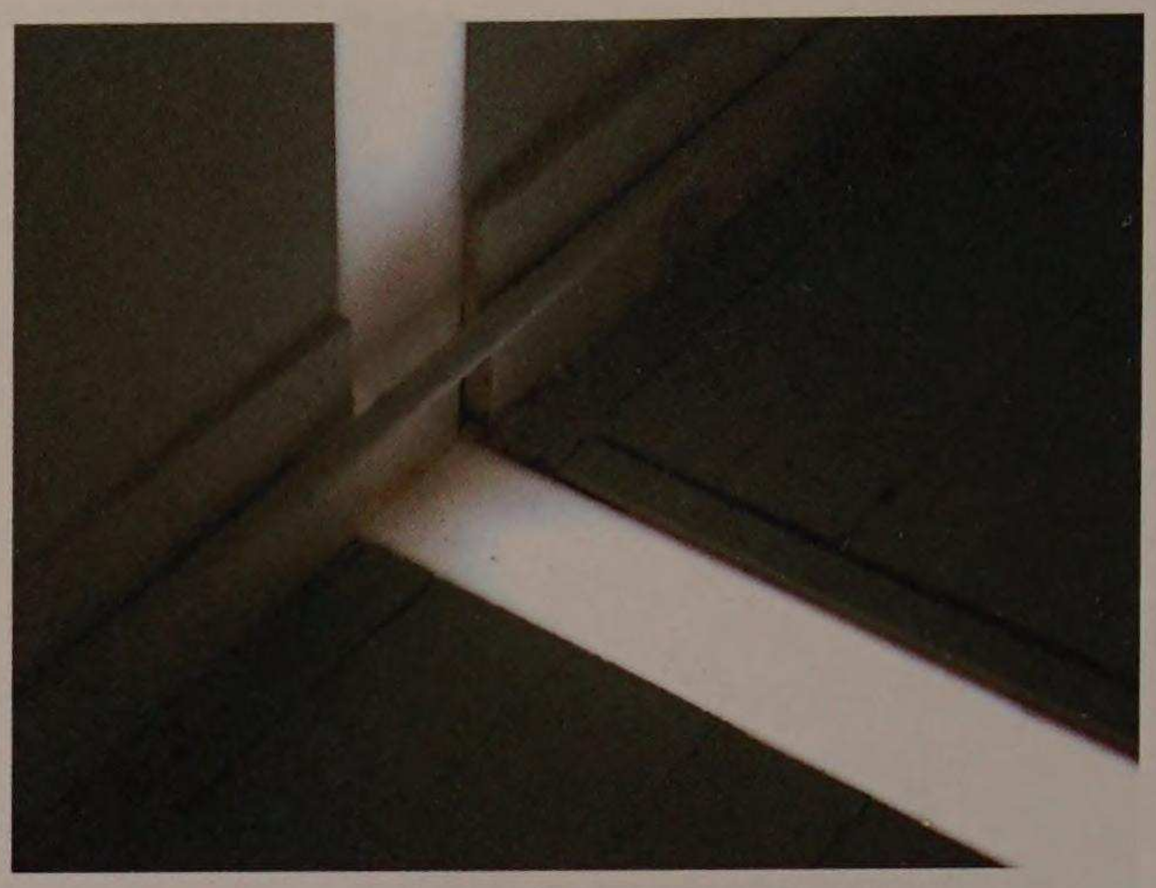
Working with the topographies of field, hearth, and self, we searched through the "WPA Slave Narratives" and other first hand accounts for words that hinted at the ability of slaves to override the controlled landscape of the plantation. Words of pride or skill, of commitment, of desire or concern, words that in some way express will — the very thing we take for granted that the chattel slave system denied.

The narratives revealed that certain types of questions were or were not asked of the former slaves. Still, in reading the narratives, there are moments where it is apparent that the thoughts and feelings of the enslaved were not wholly subjugated. These revealing words were then mapped onto House 2. Words that described attitudes toward self-determination were located at the breezeway. Words that described attitudes toward romance and loving commitment were located at the hearth. Words that described attitudes toward coming together outside the auspices of the plantation laws were located in the field.

The shadows were cast to evoke the dynamic of interior black landscapes. Reliant on a body to intercept a light source, the shadow's shape refers back to the body that cast it. It is proof of the substance of the body. These words were the bodies — the substance — that cast shadows within the shotgun house. The overlay of narratives recounted the self-determination that existed within everyday spaces of the hearth, the field, and the self, while extending the domestic realm through the windows and beyond its walls.

Light entered in the house in precise lines redrawing surfaces and relations or as a filtered atmospheric effect. To create the light-lines within the house, cuts were made into its structure to contain and conceal light sources. The cuts into the existing house revealed





Above and right: Cutting and removal of wall portions, later filled by light-lines, developed along lines of visual and physical movement

a taxonomy of construction: old plumbing lines, electrical lines, wood joists and studs, the dirt and debris below, and the passage of light underneath the raised floor. The violence of the incisions was erased once the cuts were sealed. The light-lines both suggested boundaries and evoked their absence.

One door-to-door light led from the front porch through the house to the communal alley shifting occupants between public and private space in rapid succession. Within the interior, horizontal and vertical lights re-inscribed rooms while maintaining an openness and connectivity that have characterized black interior landscapes since slavery. A digression at the main entry was inspired by the second entry. Here a floor light created a field of attraction and escape. Here, the text related the need to “steal away” and knowledge of the danger in doing so.

To create the shadows within the house, natural light from windows was filtered with perforated boards and text. This softened the exterior views into fields of dots that pixilated the movement of the wind in trees beyond onto interior surfaces. White window text disappeared against the white exterior wall of the adjacent house as its shadow took body on interior surfaces. By using white text with white walls, we both blurred and re-inscribed the interior boundaries of the house. The shadows were a contradictory form of whitewashing. Rather than neutralizing surfaces and events, the shadows revealed them.

Right: Vector of light from front door.













BORDERING

Sheryl Tucker de Vasquez

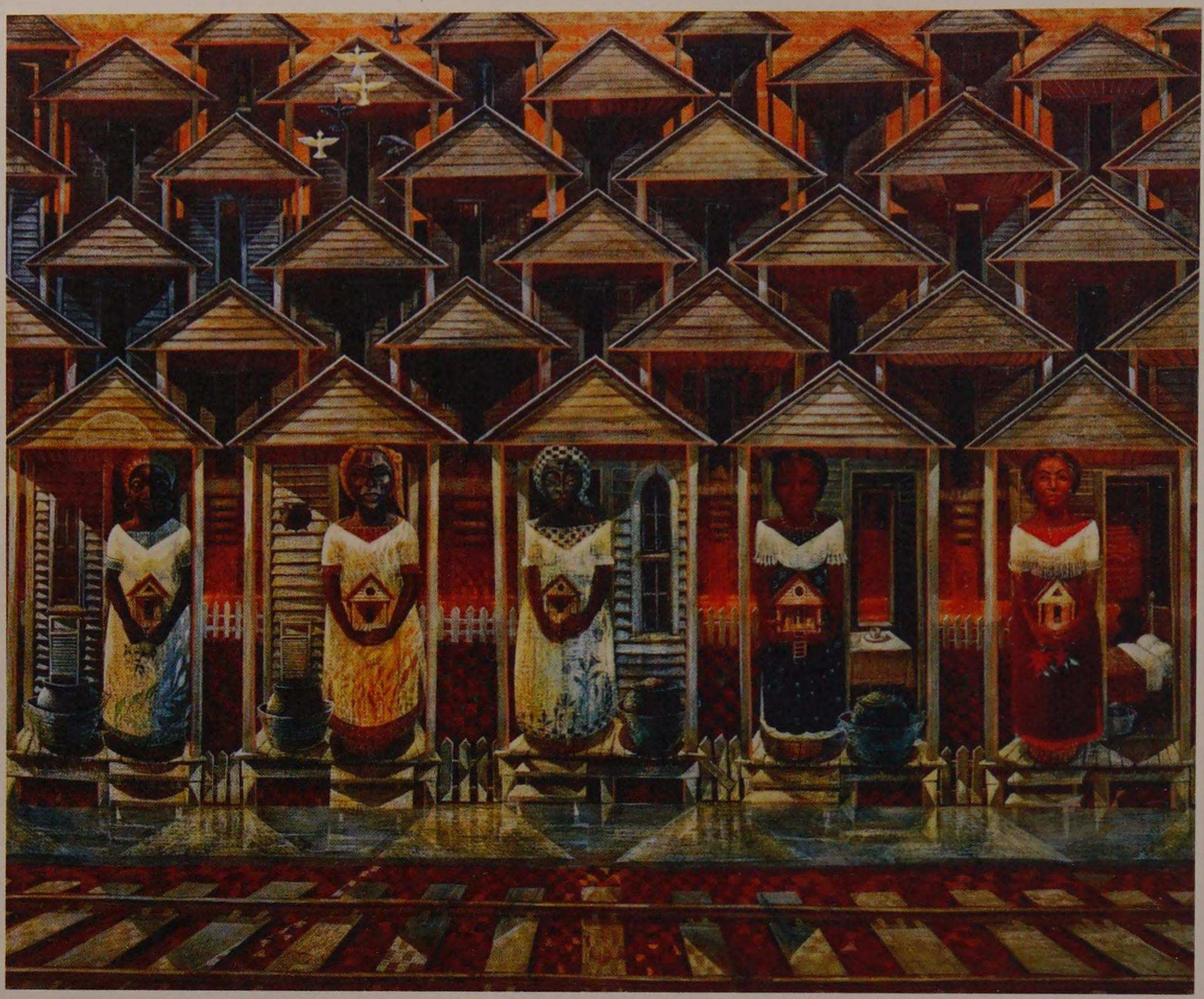
For he now knew what Shalimar knew: if you surrendered to the air, you could ride it. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

In Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, Milkman inhabits a borderland: between African and American, between past and present, between the physical and the metaphysical. Like the process of memory itself, this border stitches together fragments of matter and spirit, southern geography and West African culture to provide roots to the rootless and create a dwelling space in the midst of a wilderness. This border is not a clean line of demarcation, but a fluid, ever-shifting construction of the psyche in which the boundaries of time and space fold and collapse into a single dimension. Morrison gives voice to this borderland — the realm of the in-between — that is the dwelling place of the African American. It is the condition of this "*in-betweenness*" that I want to embody in my own work. I am interested in creating the conditions that allow the consciousness to take flight — to move freely between dreams, memories and spaces that question the reality of things that we assume to be true. As with Morrison's poetic imagery, many of my architectural explorations express a desire for boundlessness.

Left: Detail of stacked cedar strips in window projection

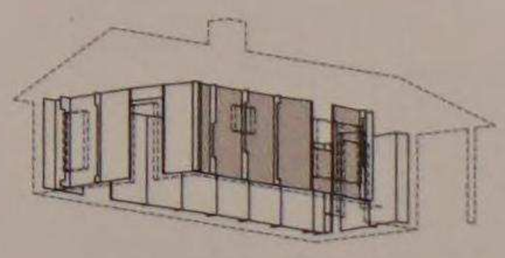
"African-Americans are a very practical people, but within that practicality we also accept what I suppose could be called superstition and magic which is another way of knowing things. To blend those two worlds together at the same time is enhancing." Toni Morrison, quoted in "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation," in *Black Women Writers*

Many contemporary African-American yard artists draw upon the in-between condition of this border and with it the memories of belief systems that survived transport from Africa to the Americas. American cultural historian, Grey Gundaker, writes that for the early African American the establishment of a dwelling place meant building a secure place not only for one's children, but also for one's ancestral memory. Spirits were not only to be feared, but could also be called upon for healing and guidance in earthly matters. The landscape depicted in Biggers' "*Shotguns Fourth Ward, 1987*" emerged from a collective memory of a protected dwelling: the "dressed yard" in which domestic elements are transformed through contact with natural elements into protective charms to ward off evil spirits that might threaten a household.[1] In the hands of African-American folk artists, discarded household goods take on new meanings beyond mere make-do decoration. Hung from trees, brightly colored bottles are believed to bring

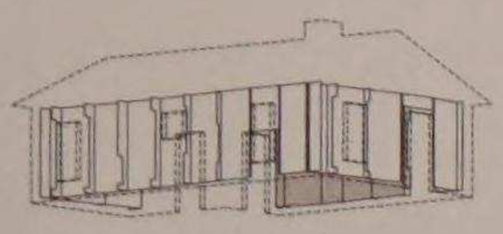


John Biggers, *Shotguns*, 1987, ©Estate of John Biggers

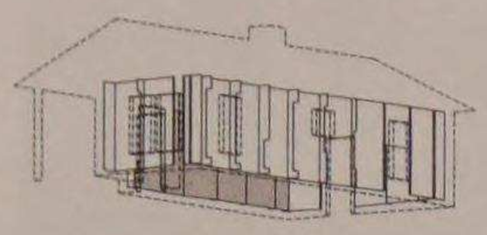
rain, make trees bloom, create luck and entrap evil. Articles like broom straws and rice grains act as sieves filtering evil spirits. Paths through the yard are made to meander and in many instances the doors in the linear shotgun are shifted out of alignment, because "evil travels in straight lines." Robert Harper, who lived only blocks from the Project Row Houses site, continuously transformed the three-dimensional collage of wheels, pin-wheels, shiny CDs and hubcaps in his front yard. Objects that move in the wind, like Harper's wheels, are decorated and treated as talismans that communicate the power of unseen spiritual forces. Harper's dressed yard acts as a kind of visual prayer and the aesthetic experience lies with the ability of the viewer to perceive an otherworldly presence. Created from salvaged, discarded objects, this yard work reveals the connection of our everyday lives to our existential essence. In Third Ward, the window is a space where not only inside and outside meld, but where the inner life of the inhabitant and the outer dimensions of the world intertwine. Where the physical protection provided for by layers of plywood, metal fencing, cardboard, aluminum foil, screens and newspapers leave off, elements of spiritual protection — roots, grave dirt and stones — pick up. These multi-layered constructions create three dimensional sieves that filter out excessive heat and light, flies, and mosquitoes, as well as human intruders, while still permitting the occasional cooling breeze. Activated by light and air, the windows



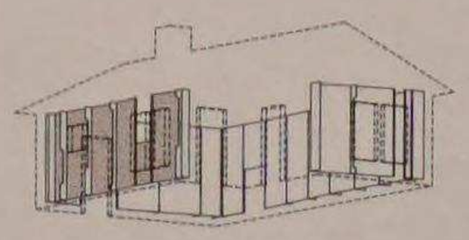
AXONOMETRIC - NORTHWEST VIEW



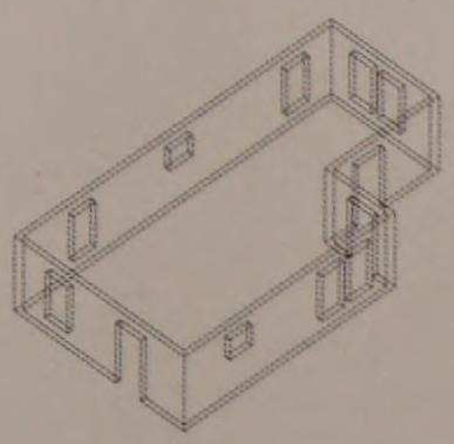
AXONOMETRIC - NORTHEAST VIEW



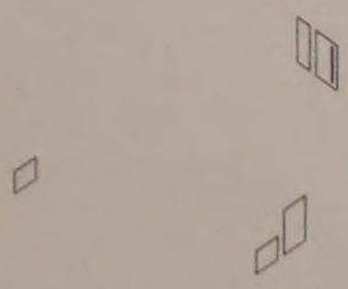
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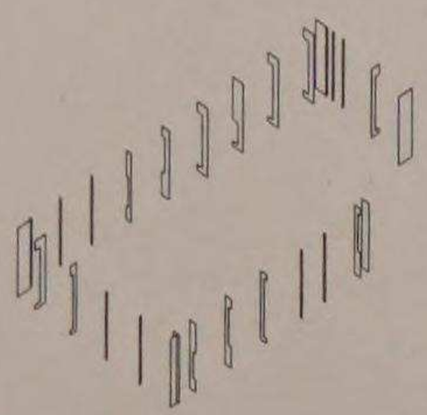
AXONOMETRIC - SOUTHWEST VIEW



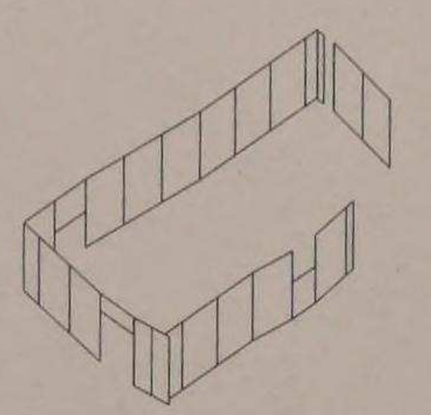
EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC - WALLS



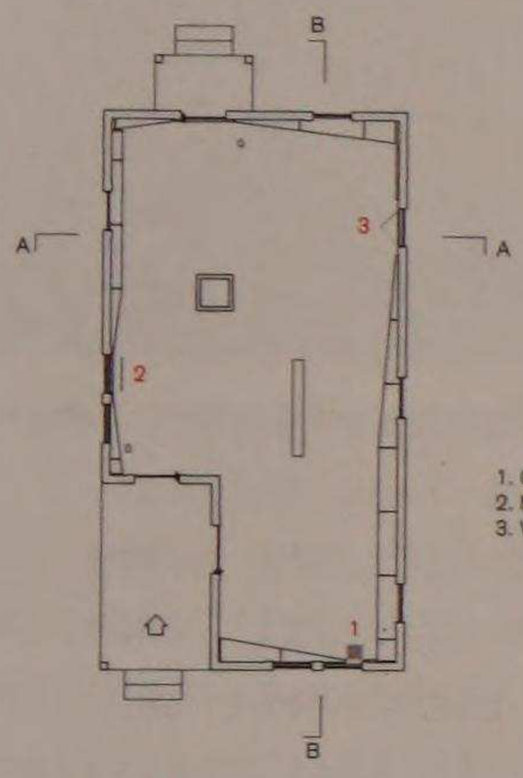
WINDOW COVERS



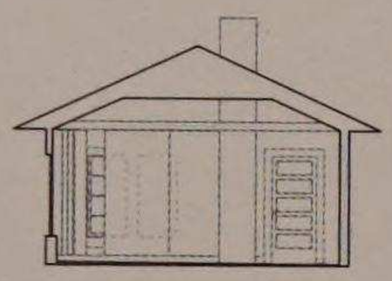
SUPPORT FINS



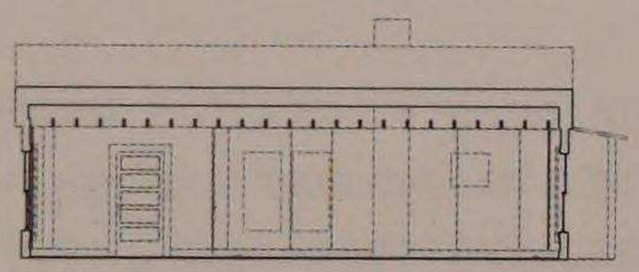
TRANSLUCENT SCREEN



1. CORRUGATED CARDBOARD LIGHT BOX
2. METALLIC TAPESTRY
3. WOODEN PRAYER SCREEN



SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B

Installation drawings

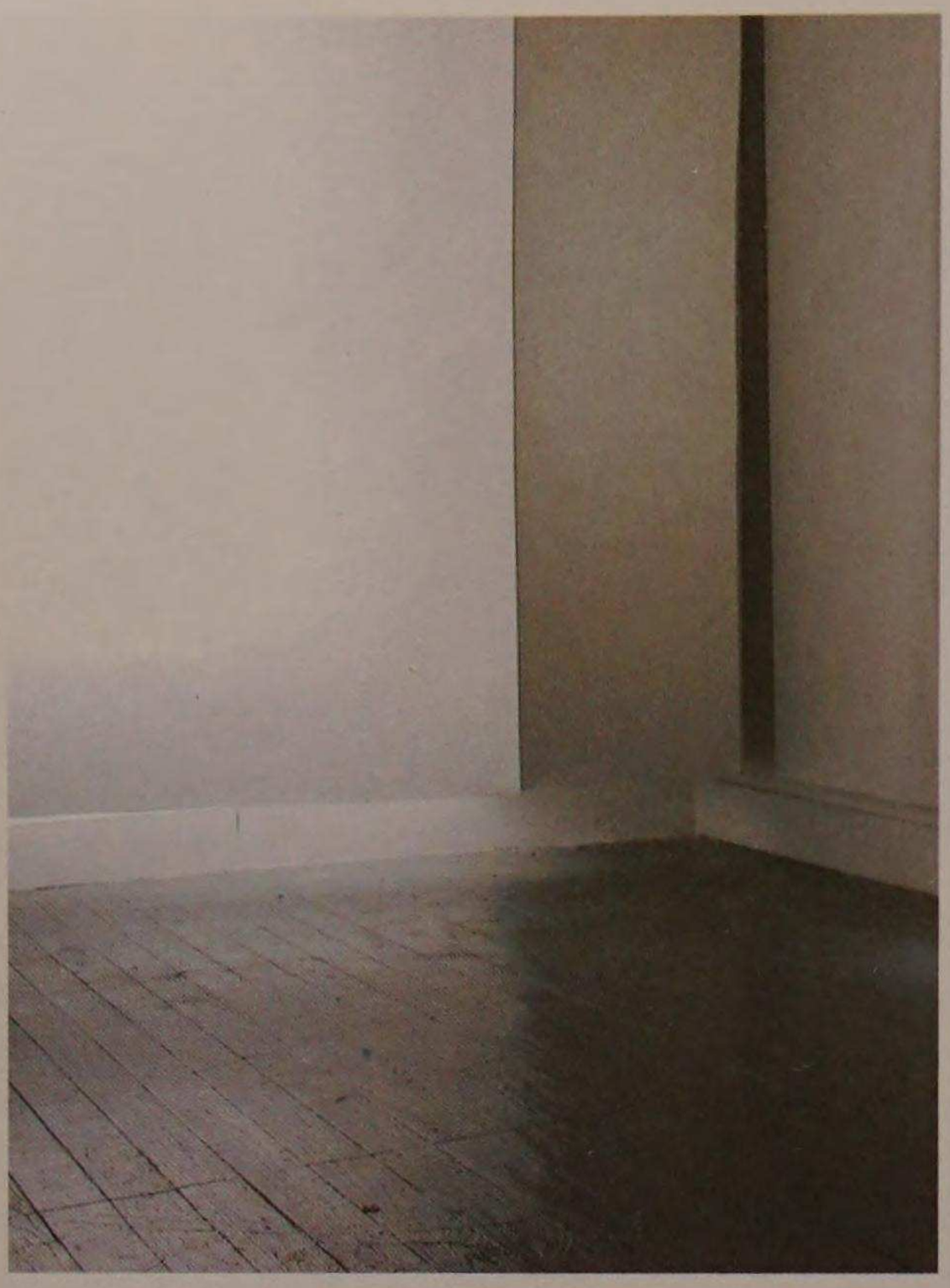
create richly textured moments of light and shadow.

Ghosts killed my mother... She was walking cross the yard with this neighbor friend of hers and they both looked up and saw a woman coming down the road... when the woman got near, the neighbor called out howdy and soon's she said the word, the woman turned into a white bull. Right before their eyes. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

PRH is a spatial unfolding of artist John Biggers' paintings in which the shotgun house is a powerful symbol of the African-American cultural landscape. In Biggers' paintings, the narrow, gabled elevation of the shotgun house, with its surrounding spiritually protected landscape, is a mythological archetype that gives form to the collective African-American experience. The modest house form is abstracted as a temple-like symbol and domestic chores are treated as sacred rituals. Seemingly charged with the accumulations of long-gathering ancestral energy, Biggers' portraits of shotgun houses suggest a transcendent metaphysical relationship between people, house, and place. Biggers paints the borderland that is the dwelling place of the African American.

Nothing ever dies does it? No, nothing ever does. Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Preserving only a red brick chimney as a trace of its past life, the installation site was tiny — a 600 square foot "shotgun." Emptied of its domestic con-



White butcher paper modulates light intensity

tents and interior partitions, the house possessed the slightly uncanny quality of a ruin inhabited by unseen presences. Windows and doors filled each wall and besides the solid verticality of the chimney, the most striking presence in the denatured house was the ever-changing pattern of light and shadow that moved across the painted gray floor. I wanted to capture this moving light in a way that would magnify the emptiness of the house.

Substituting for scrim fabric, white butcher paper was wrapped along the interior edge of the house folding in and out of the plane of the existing walls until, encroaching upon the entry, the original walls revealed themselves. Trapped behind the surface of the paper, the patterns of drifting light and shadow that had been on the floor became more apparent when folded up into the vertical plane. Wall surfaces that appeared opaque and solid in the morning hours gradually dematerialized as the sun moved across the sky. One wall and then another began to glow before slowly becoming opaque again. Twilight brought unexpected effects: the bluish light of the street lantern and the yellow light reflected from the brightly painted walls of an adjacent house were captured by the paper walls. Wrapped in the white glowing surfaces that muted the details of the peeling paint, window sills and door jambs, the house recalled the idea from ancient Greece of *temenos*: a domain and event set apart as sacred or official. The veiled walls acted as both event and structure: a structure in that they set off the house as a sacred domain, and an event in that they exaggerated the passage of time through ever shifting patterns of light and shadow. The architecture of the house took on the qualities of the temporal, and temporal conditions of light and shadow were brought into the realm of material. While from a Western perspective, the walls might be associated with the *temenos*, from within African-American cultural traditions, they might be thought of as having been *"dressed"* for the spiritual protection of the inhabitants. Unseen presences were given a fleeting visibility through light.

Having left only three windows unveiled, the house took on the ethereal aura of a cloud. A white washed bench invited the viewer to sit and to reflect on the passage of time. The view was turned inward to the space





Above and right: Triangular window projection

of one's own recollections of home, domesticity, and security. The house was transformed into a space in which matter and spirit, past and present, dreams and reality were allowed to converge into a single continuum.

> *He was flying. He flew. You know, like a bird. Just stood up in the fields one day, ran up some hill, spun around a couple of times, and was lifted up in the air. Went right on back to wherever it was he came from.* Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

Memories and dreams come to us in fragments: a texture, a scent, a sound. We remember in fragments, interpret these fragmented recollections and then reconstruct whole remembrances in our imaginations. Inspired by the windows in the surrounding community, the window projections presented themselves, like the house itself, as remnant of its past life. Isolated by a background of glowing white, the window projections appeared to flow as if in a dreamscape. These isolated window projections were in themselves constructed from a collection of smaller elements. Depending on the viewer's distance and vantage point, what appeared to be solid were revealed to be penetrable and light filled. From the earth's surface clouds appear as solid floating masses, but flying in a plane we see that clouds have the quality of fog. If we were able to zoom in even closer we would understand clouds as a collection of individual water droplets that have clung to dust particles. "Reality" is a function of one's vantage point: not simply one's physical location but also one's past experiences and memories of those experiences. The aesthetic experience of the house occurs at the junction between the two.

Constructed from cut and stacked cedar strips, a triangular projection was placed in the rear section of the east wall. From the door it appeared to be a solid mass, but upon closer inspection became a collection of wooden strips. The tactile quality of the stacked indi-

vidual components invited touch and emitted the faint scent of cedar. The most fragmented of the three windows was a collection of staples that were strung along wire bars inverting the relationship of solid to void in the much more substantial wooden projection. Hung over the window at the entry, when the door was opened the fragile construction would sway in the breeze. On the south elevation, a six foot long rectangular, cardboard projection was constructed from multiple layers of cardboard. Corrugated cardboard was thinly sliced, turned on its edge, stacked and glued to create diaphanous screens. Sections of squares and rectangles were cut out and then layered to create varying degrees of transparency and translucency. While its visual counterpart of the chimney remained mute, the construction encouraged the viewer to look beneath the superficial layer to see its multiple dimensions as they revealed themselves over time. Solids and voids appeared within solids and voids and matter took on the dynamic quality of the ephemeral. Solid and void, matter and energy became interchangeable. At night electric lights transformed the window into a lantern. The physical gaps between the collections of elements that covered the windows provided psychological gaps of entry that allow the viewer, as does the house, to fill out the space with one's own imagination.

Notes

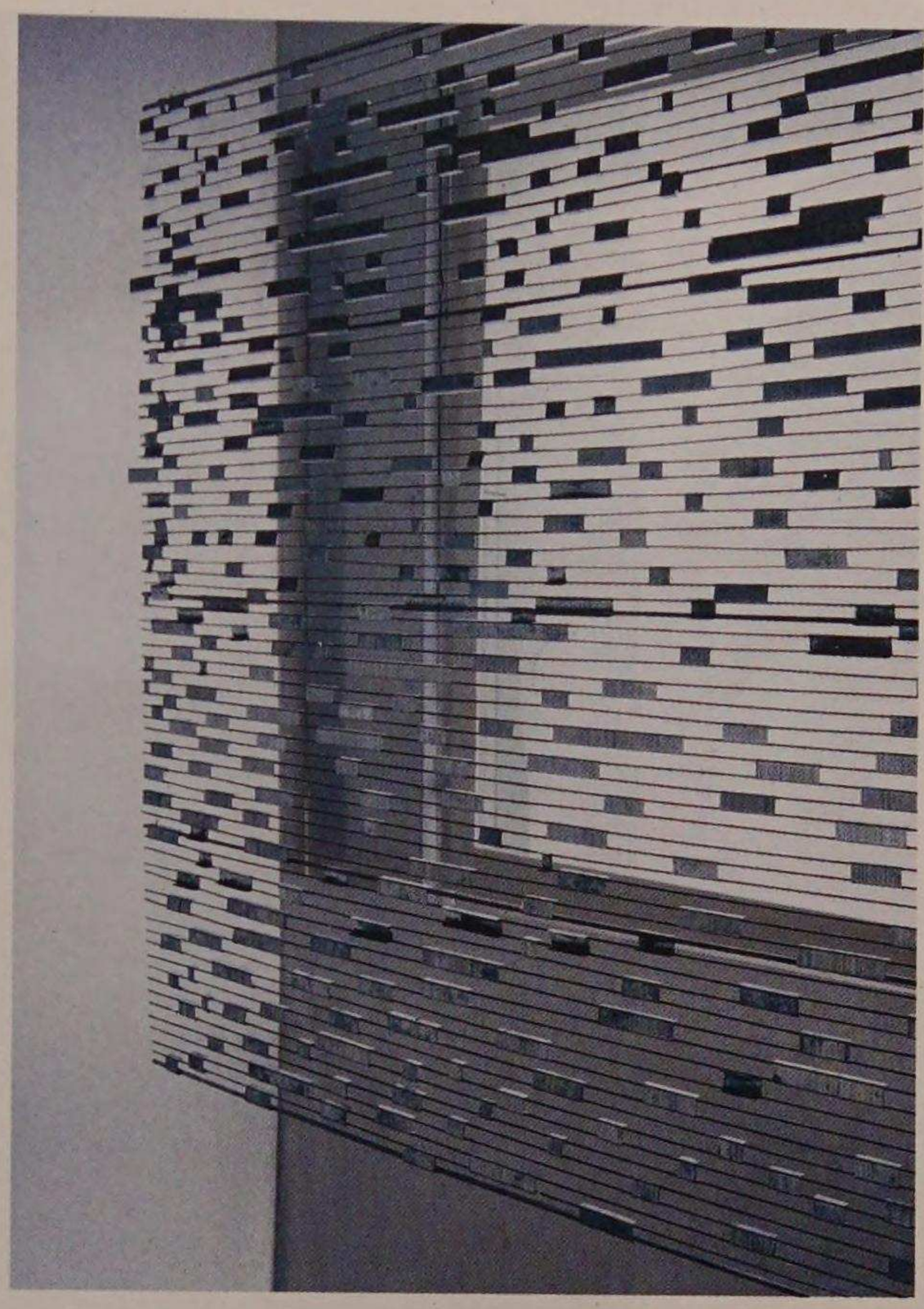
1 Gundaker Grey, "What Goes Around Comes Around: Temporal Cycles and Recycling in African-American Yard Work" *Recycled Re-Seen: Folk Art from the Global Scrap Heap*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1996), 79.

Credits

Design and Installation Team: Sheryl Tucker de Vazquez, Jose Vazquez, Jason Anthony



Left: Cardboard window construction



Right: Staple window construction

Pages 158-59: *We are now in a better position to understand the nature of chora as paradigmatic architectural work, again recalling its importance in the myth of Daedalus. It is simultaneously the work and the place, its ground or lighting; that which is unveiled, the truth embodied by art, and the space between the word and the experience. It is both a space for contemplation and a space of participation – a space of recognition. Chora, an empty gap that is not nothingness, assumed by commonsense to be the exclusive space of action is the meaning of architecture.* Dr. Alberto Perez-Gomez, *Chora: The Space of Architectural Representation*

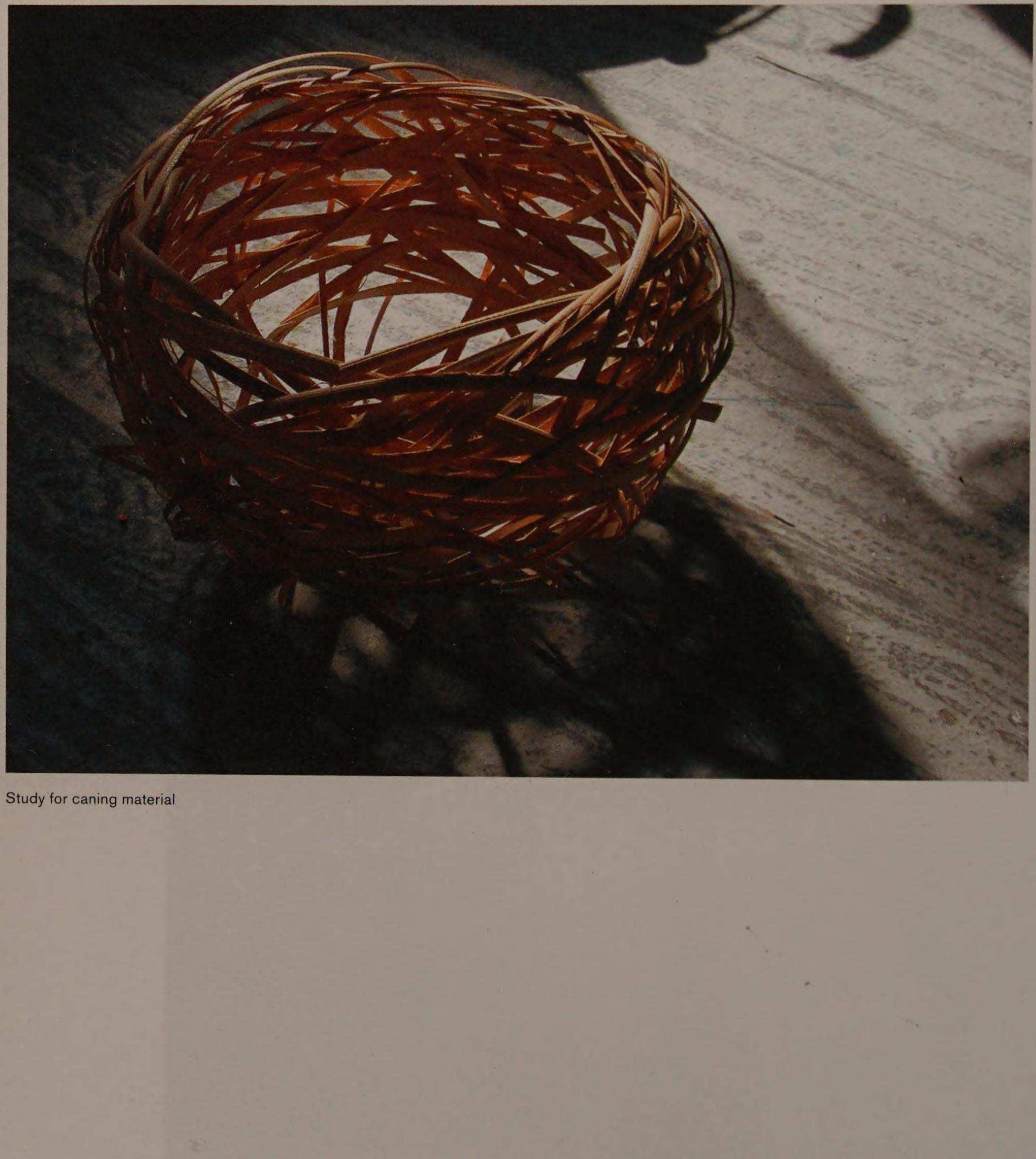
Pages 160-61: *One cannot dream profoundly with objects. To dream profoundly, one must dream with substances.* Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*











Study for caning material

MAKING DO: BEYOND GETTING BY

WPa (Williams+Pizzini architects)
William Williams and Archie Pizzini — principals

WPa: A MINORITY FIRM, BLACK AND HISPANIC

The act of making something out of nothing reveals the spirit of human creativity and the frailty of purpose in a disposable society. While there is salvation in knowing how to work within one's means, the idea of doing things "properly" mocks those who refuse to define "properly" as working within existing architectural canons. For WPa, being resourceful is a mantra of hope, not an apology. Derisive terms like "nigger" and "jury rigging," used to describe the procurement and use of items not found in product catalogues and lifestyle magazines, expose our profession's slavishness to consumer culture and the icons through which it is sustained.

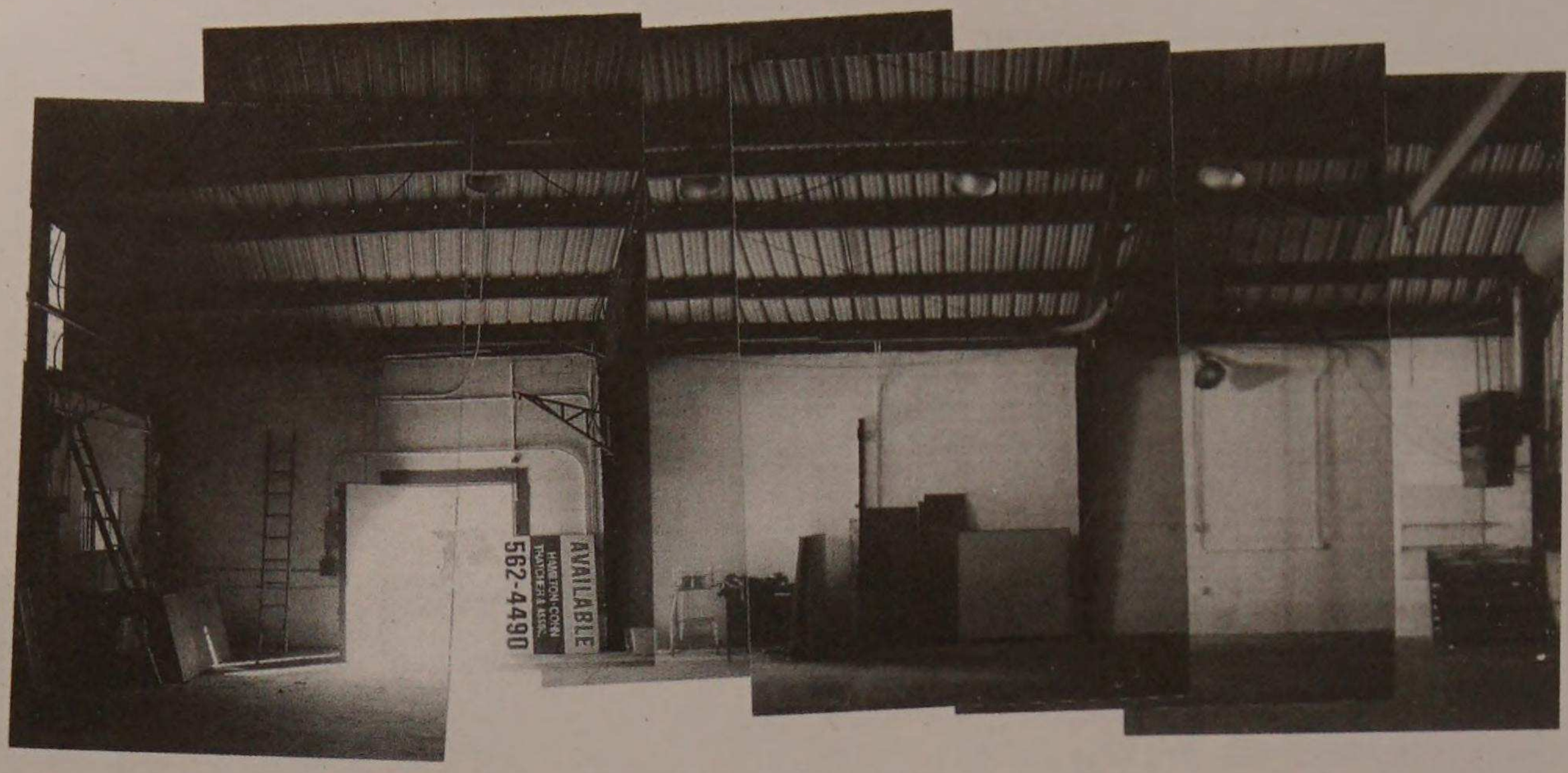
Architects who advise their clients in ways of consumption are not new, and are perhaps necessary, but the more recent complicity with which architects participate in the peddling of a select and canonical set of manufactured goods is disturbing. It also raises the question: who benefits from the architect's discerning taste?

The goal of WPa is to *make do*, not in the pejorative sense of getting by, but of making something happen. In architecture, making do is applying available materials in unique and intriguingly inappropriate ways. Making do is thinking outside the box for those whose search for refuge in the box has historically been denied. For WPa, this choice is emboldened by the fact that our clientele typically cannot afford such limited characterizations of architecture. Architects should refrain from promoting an architectural caste system. WPa simply *makes do*. Making do, at its best, reveals utility and amplifies the intrinsic value of materials. Although often a source of its inspiration, making do is not an act of desperation. It is the ability to make something happen that was never intended, and to find value in those things where use was intended, yet never fully realized. The architect who *makes do*, is making a living, dynamic architecture that is never fixed and is always adjusting, coping, architectin(g).

The alternative is an architecture that defines our wants instead of fulfilling our needs, an architecture that teaches us how and what to consume — poorly.

IT'S NOT JUST A BLACK THING

Like making do, rasquaschismo, or rasquache, a term used in Chicano art, finds value in everyday objects of utility. Rasquaschismo and making do are both political and aesthetic terms that are acts of will and resistance. What separates both terms from the low/high art discourse of kitsch is the appropriation of everyday objects as opposed to their affirmation. Like making do, rasquaschismo is a resis-



The site of the OCUCC was a formerly prosthetic factory, a bus repair facility, and a storage hub for decommissioned cabs

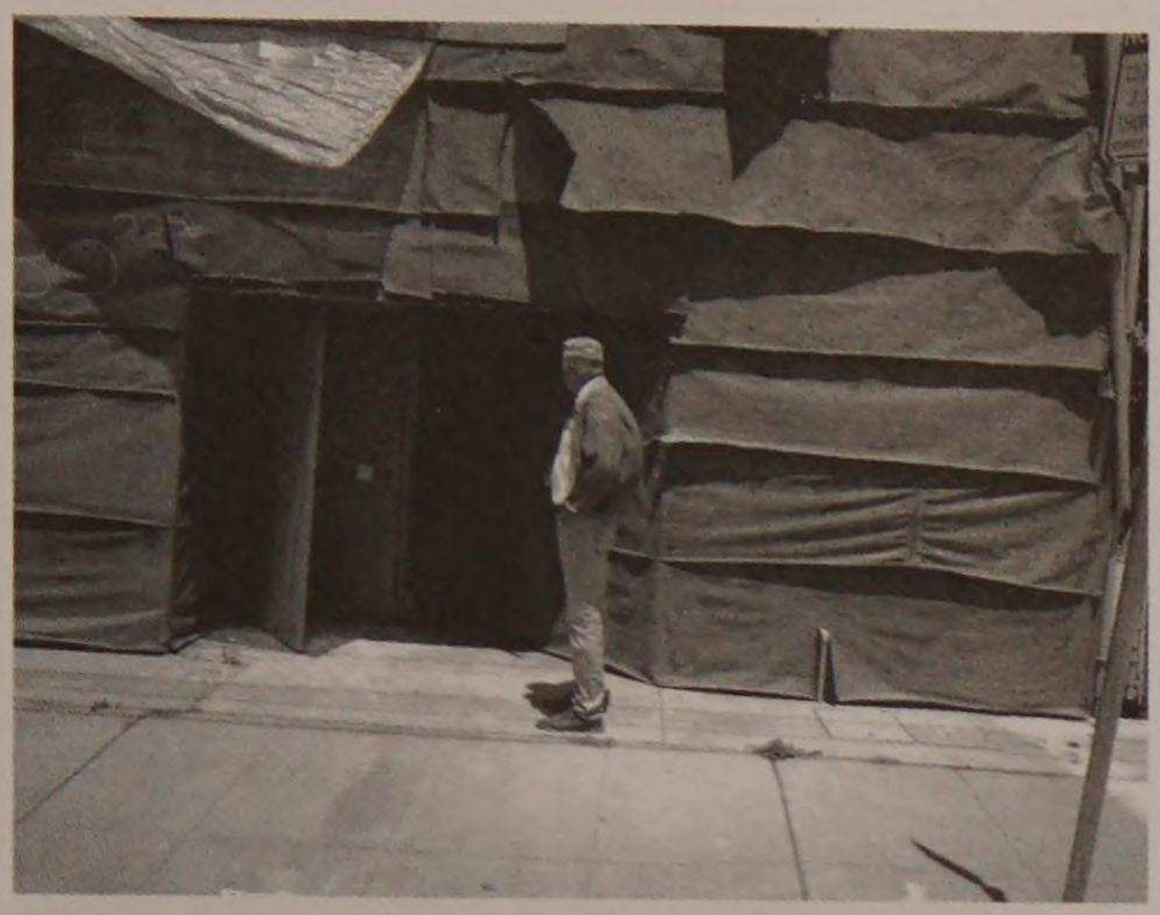
tant and resilient act of making. It is a verb as well as a strategy of using "stuff" to elucidate questionable notions of superiority as they relate to design and life.

These notions of superiority attempt to devalue the work of those who resist the purchase of good taste. We believe those who have the least often need design the most, and that our current system, propagated in no small part by the academy, suggests that only those who can afford taste have the desire and aptitude to define it. These definitions link taste and the ability to consume. Moreover, one must consume the "right things." In fact, a whole generation of publications, from *architectural digest* to *wallpaper*, exists solely to help aesthetically challenged individuals in their ways of consumption. In a profession increasingly dominated by catalogues, there is little space for resistance or resilience. There are, however, ample precedents in other artistic disciplines.

THIEVING

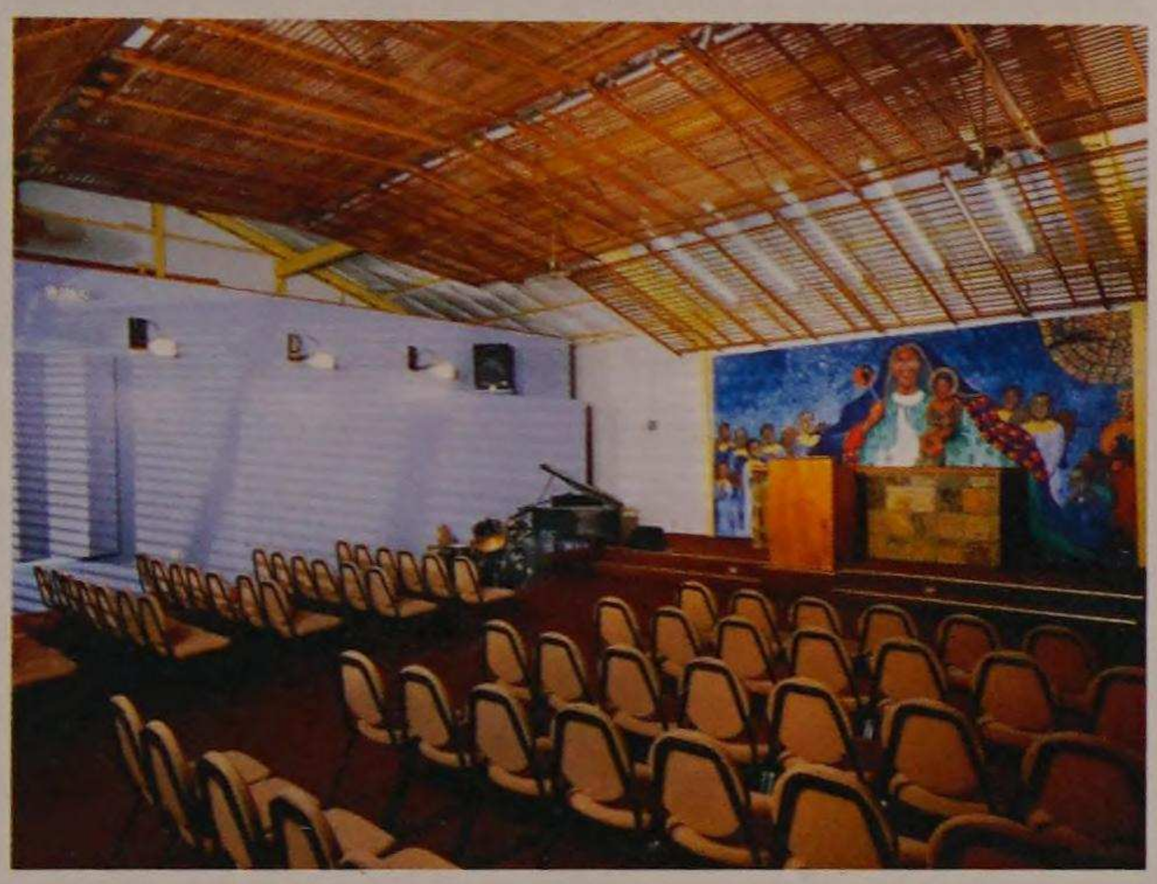
In many of these disciplines, t.s. eliot might describe making do as the desire to steal rather than borrow in the way that great poets do with words. We prefer to describe it as a practice of thieving. Thieving is making do in practice and spirit.

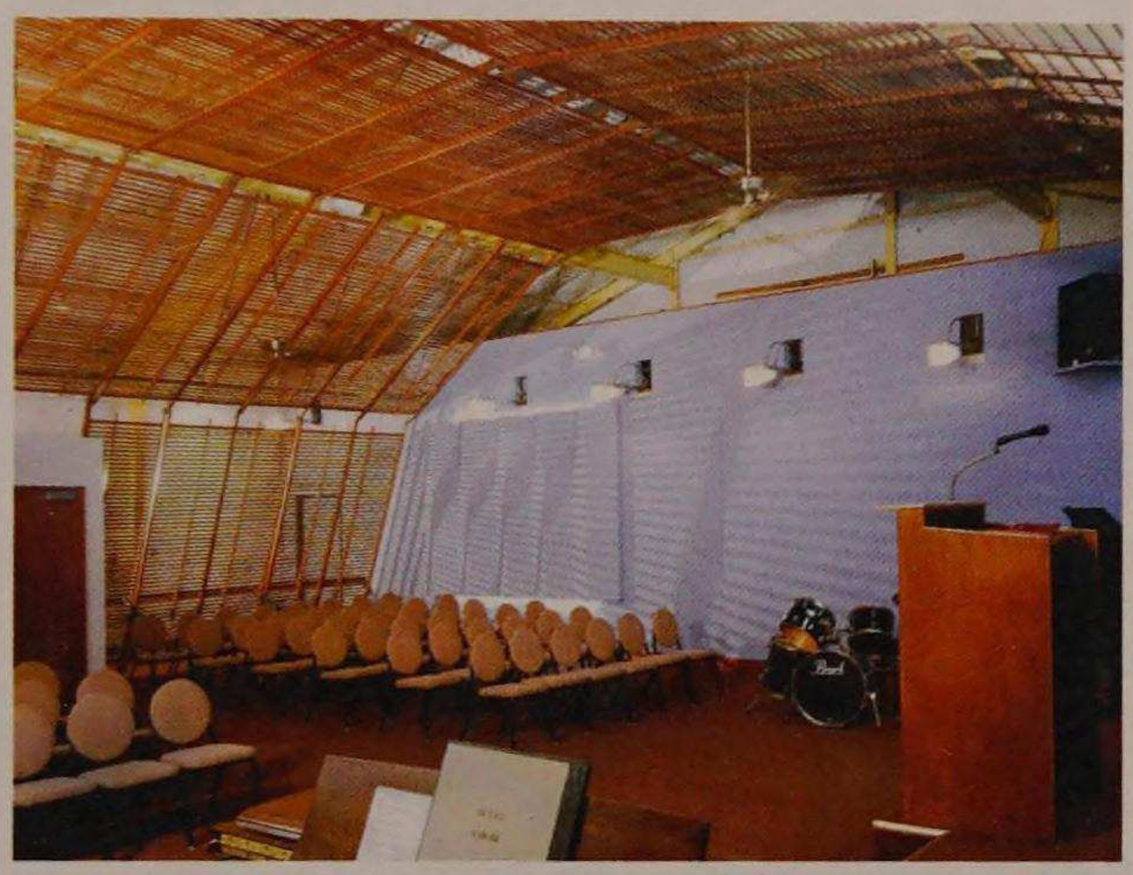
Scatting, a form of music popularized by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, replaces musical instruments with human voice. In the case of Ella Fitzgerald, it is a form of resistance: I do not want your instruments. For Louis Armstrong, it was a display of creativity and resilience: I do not need your instruments. Similar analogies can be made to other black music traditions, such as playing the spoons and the advent of the human beat box. In art, artists have appropriated everyday objects in ways that are critical — such as Duchamp's urinal — and practical--like folk artist Cleveland (Flowerman) Turner's House in Houston's Third Ward. So while examples of *rasquaschismo* and making do exist in art and music, there would appear to be few examples in architecture. This is in part because the modernist myth of progress and the self-perpetuated myth of the avant-garde are best served by a future less common and accessible to those outside the profession of architecture. This results in an architecture in which prescribed





Above and right: Exterior of OCUCC prior to construction, community involvement was integral to the project's development





Above and right: Interior views of OCUCC

formal expressions have primacy over value and values.

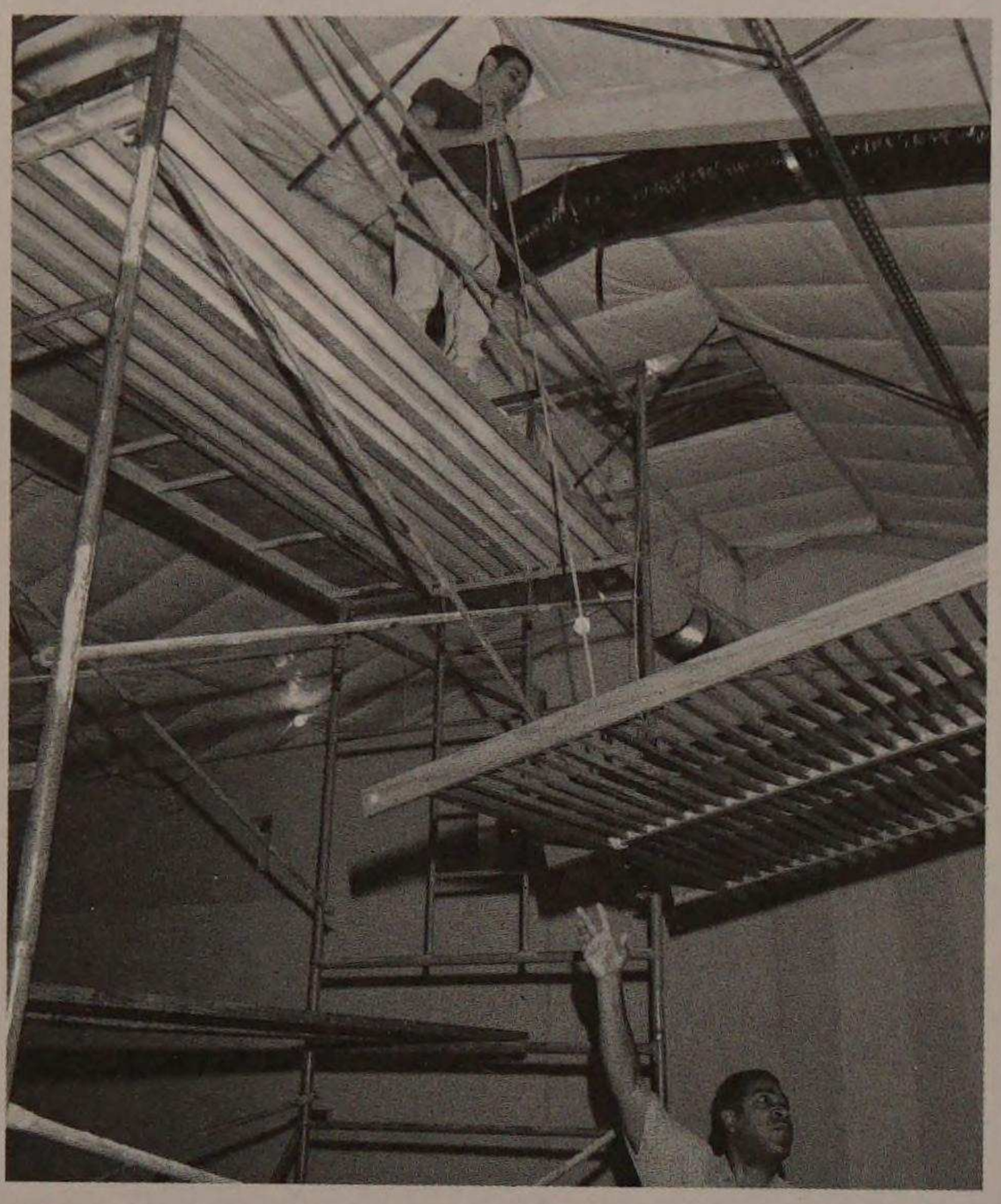
We use materials for their intrinsic rather than canonical value, and thieve site conditions, ideas, and "stuff." In our work, several instances of thieving while making do are evident. Three projects that reflect this form of practice are the Oakland Community United Church of Christ and School (OCUCC), where we thieved the site; the Flip Flop House, where we thieved the idea of affordable housing; and the Memory Room Installation at Project Row Houses, which thieved all three: the site, ideas, and "stuff."

OCUCC

Building community through design and making do as a force of will were critical to the design and construction of the Oakland Community United Church of Christ and School (OCUCC). The OCUCC was a project born out of the frustration of a small group of black ministers. These ministers returned from the Million-Man March in Washington D.C. (October 16, 1995) with a renewed commitment to affect positive change in the black community. They purchased an abandoned butler building armed with hope and little else. They believed the building was used to make prostheses after WWII. More recently, the building housed a bus repair facility and eventually became a final resting place for inoperable cabs.

OCUCC secured the loan with guarantees from approximately twenty local churches that agreed to cover the payments should OCUCC fall on hard times. The OCUCC took 130 consecutive week-





Above: Two views of construction of wooden ceiling structure

ends, or approximately two and a half years, to complete with volunteer labor, donated materials, and about $60,000 in cash. The breakdown of cash expenditures was $25,000 for the mechanical system, $9,000 for paving a parking area, and $10,000 for exterior stucco. This left $16,000 for all other project-related expenses, including the provision of food for volunteers.

The project includes an administrative bar with offices for the pastor, and a classroom bar, which also serves as changing rooms for the choir. These flank the sanctuary. A wooden *Kente cloth* attaches to both the ceiling and



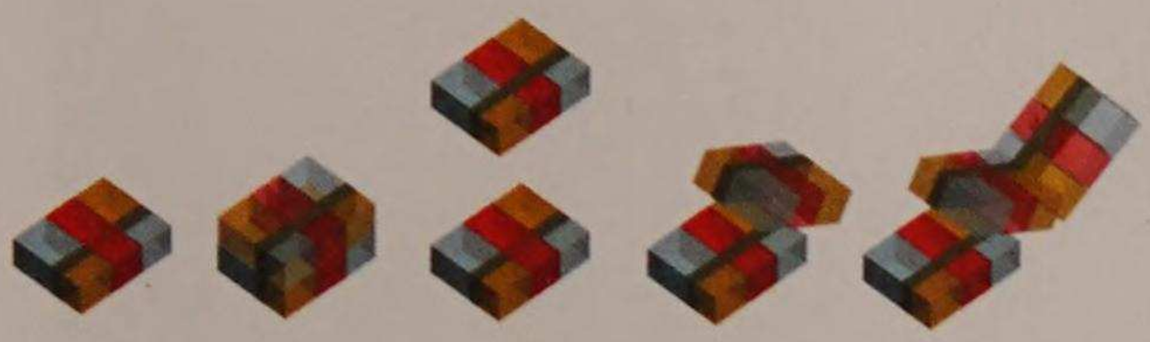
OCUCC wooden ceiling structure completed

the floor to define the sanctuary and create a narthex. Ensuring the fabrication of the ceiling involved several people working together, and at the same time helped increase the church's membership ten-fold. This was our way of building community through design.

The OCUCC was an exercise in thieving a shelter for production, as well as a challenge to the previously understood idea of repair, which included fixing buses and the provision of false limbs. Now the OCUCC repairs souls.

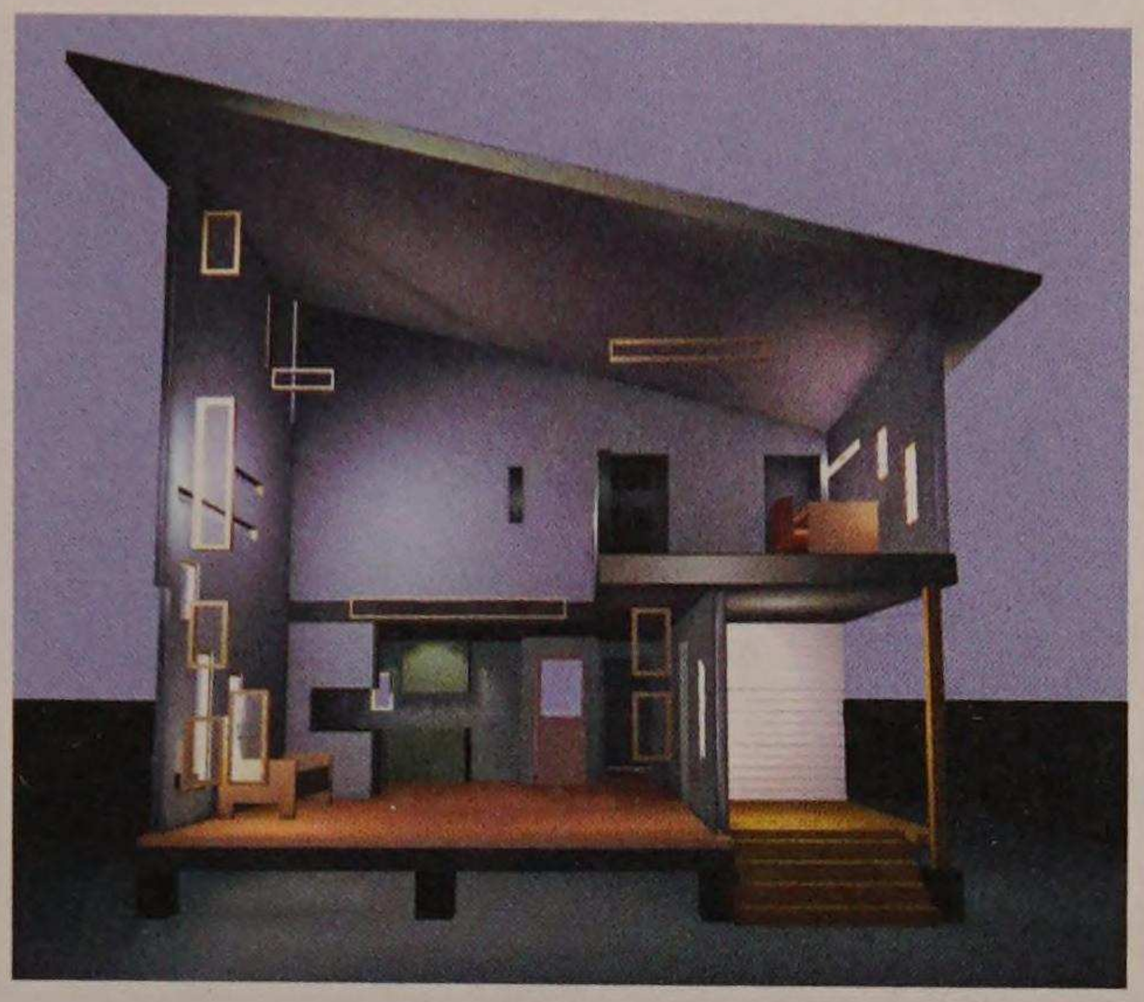
FLIP FLOP HOUSE

A 1,045 square foot single family home with three bedrooms and two baths expands or contracts around a tightly organized core. This allows living spaces to receive light and air from three sides. In addition, the literal flipping of the first- and second-floor plans around the core creates a generous porch on the front side of the house as well as a carport on the back. On the second floor, the flipping produces a double height space over the living room and a rear deck off the master bedroom.





Above: Flip-flop House diagram of volumes; Below: Flip-flop House exterior view on site in the Fifth Ward, Houston





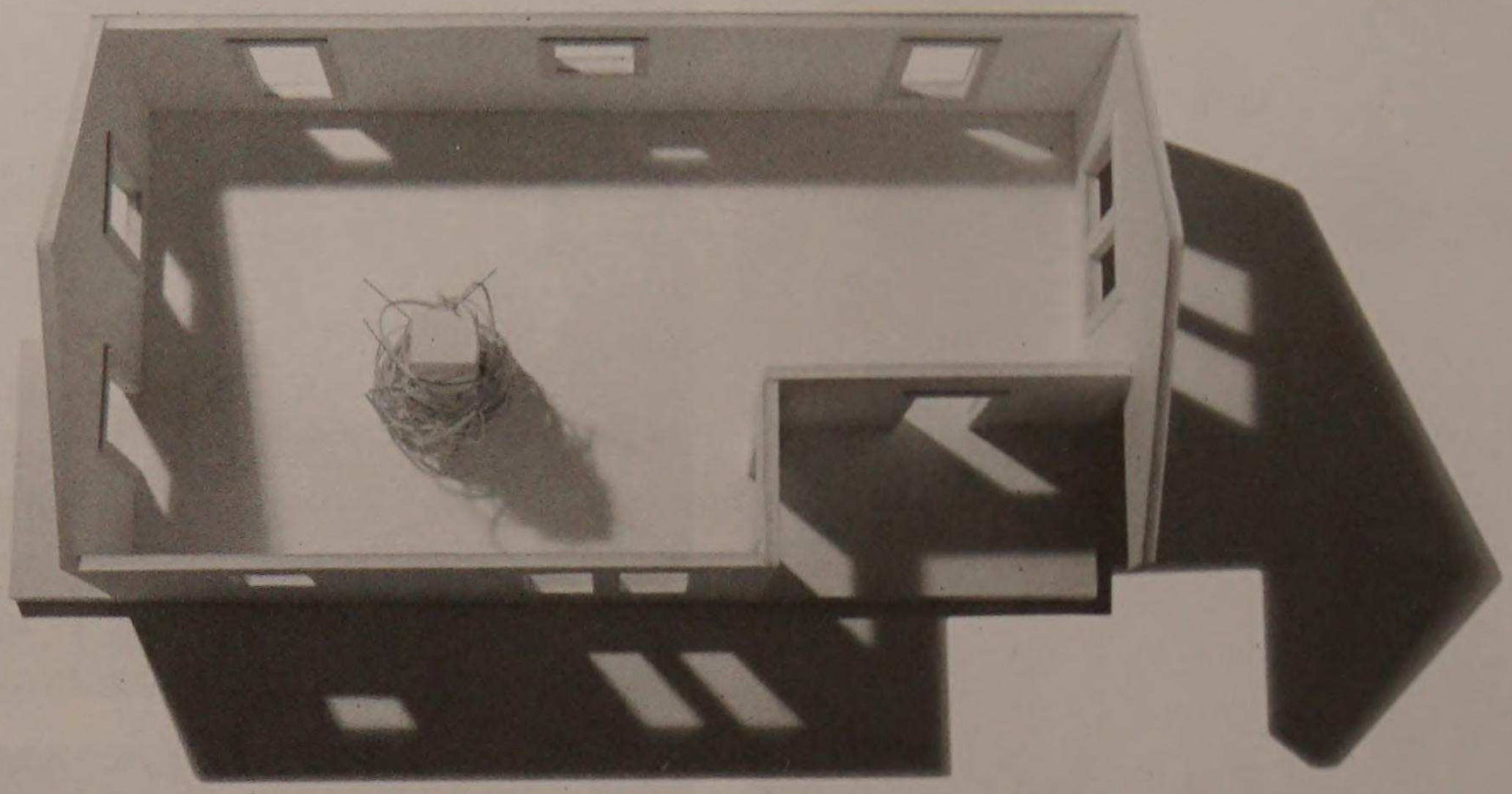
Above: Flip-flop House section perspective; Below: Flip-flop House interior view

Architects often approach the challenge of affordable housing as the task of making a home that is cheaper and faster. In this project, we designed an inexpensive home that is livable and sustaining. We are also concerned that the economy of affordable housing is, at the very least, a conspirator in producing the conditions that bring about the need for such housing. For instance, it is impossible to build a window for less than you can buy a mass produced window. However, if the question is how we invest in affordable housing solutions that help ameliorate the root cause of poverty, then we must consider the environmental, social, and economic impact of our decisions. One way that we addressed this was to design and arrange two types of economical, site-built windows. This gave preference to laborers as opposed to corporations and allowed much more control over the depletion of resources in both this and other communities. The first window is a long vertical window that conveniently fits between conventionally framed wood studs. The second window is a horizontal fixed pane that sits between the framing and the partially removed siding.

This design questions the approach to affordable house design. Earnest attempts by architects to produce spatially flexible and satisfying prefabricated houses provide more benefit to the sellers of these fabrications than to the families that live in them. The construction of affordable housing should be an opportunity to return capital to community, and should never be a tool to extract capital. The architect's role is to design an entire process that strengthens, not weakens, community.

MEMORY ROOM

The memory room was a reflective space. Shared memories and objects pass from







Above: Model of Memory Room installation. Below, left and right: Details of caning.

generation to generation. The memory room provided for these revelations in both material and light. The basket column held tools that have passed from grandfather to grandson. The tools themselves have witnessed the passing of both technique and values related to craft and citizenship. The wicker basket reflected an era when the act of making objects of utility was often the site of a generation's learning and listening. The floor was sanded to release the witnessing that years of paint have confined, and the pattern of the original walls was restored with light in the ceiling above. A key component in the design of this project was the use and misuse of cane. Cane, the material used in wicker furniture and baskets, was hung between the floor and ceiling by clothing pins. This exploited the inherent properties of cane while showing the possibility of alternative forms of use. It was synonymous with the values associated with making do and rasquaschismo. The memory room was both resilient and resistant.

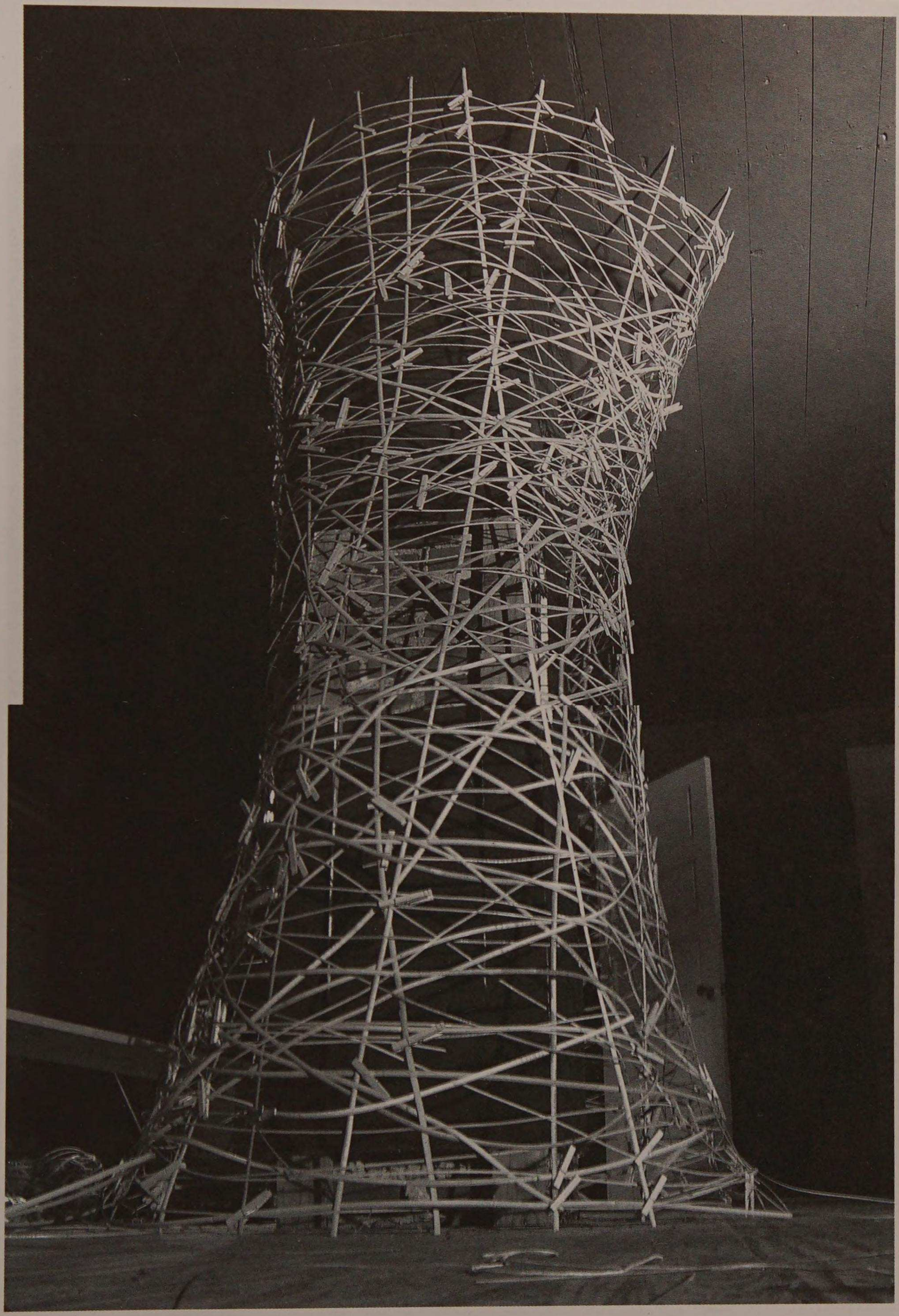
NOTES

Tools: Antonio Mugica 1904-1963

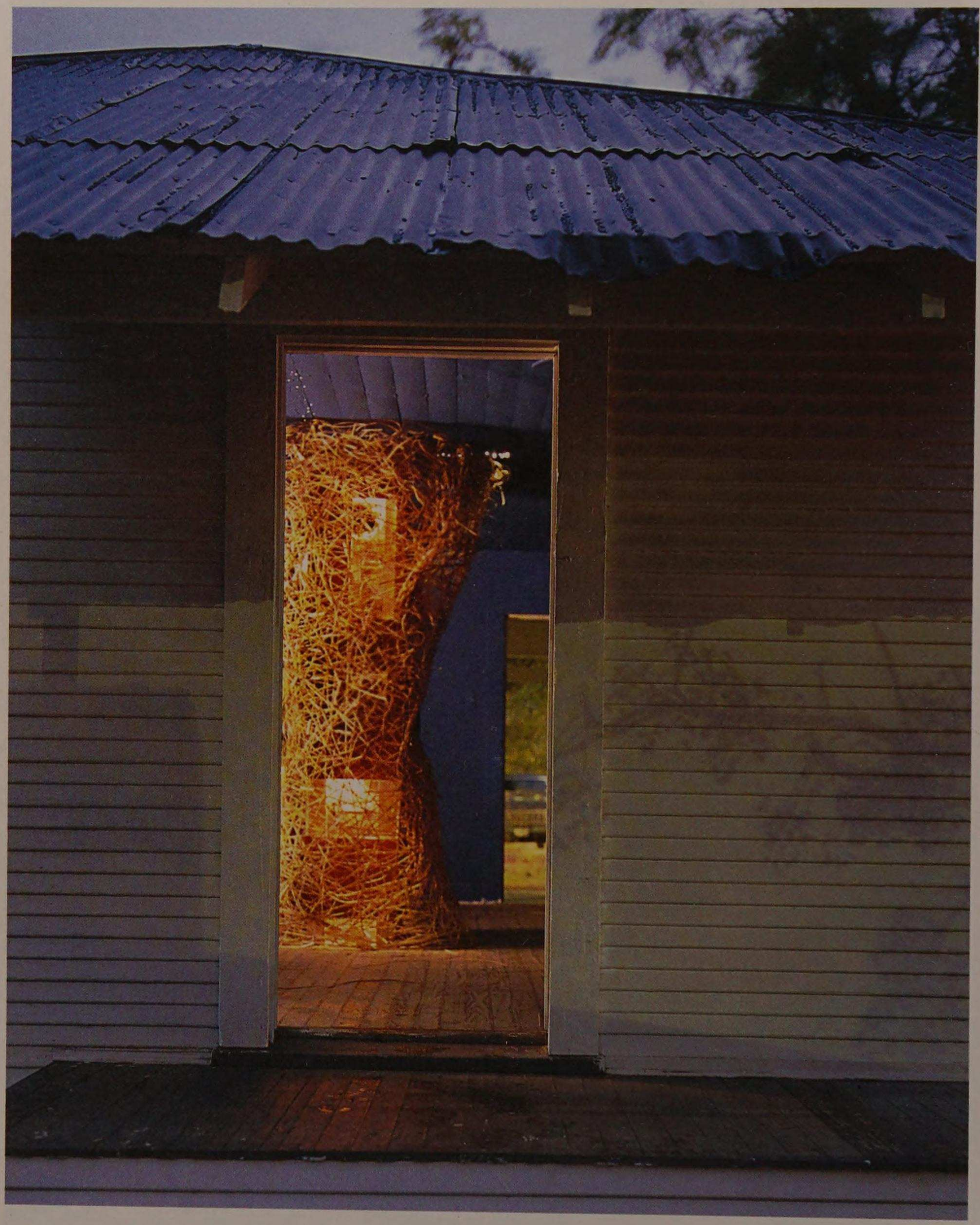
Stories: William Henry Williams 1905-1994

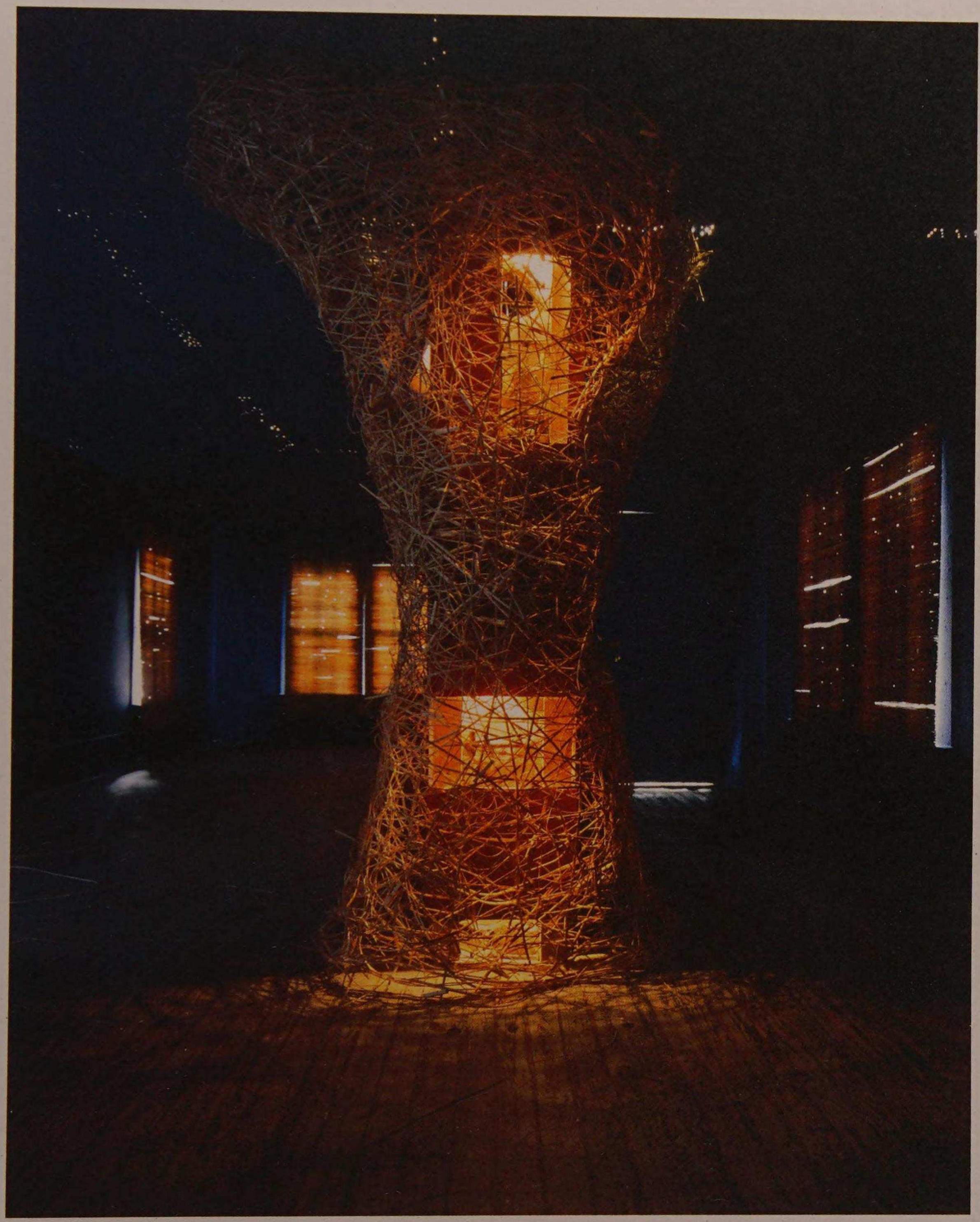
Project Team: Archie Pizzini, William Daryl Williams, Heidi Werner

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Rice School of Architecture students Mike Kross (column), and Scott Allen (lighting). And, of course, Our Grandfathers.



Caning structure under construction









If we were a People much given to Revealing Secrets

Mabel O. Wilson

Project Row Houses has "restored" twenty-two small shotgun houses in Houston's Third Ward. As with the renovation of a president's birthplace, the refurbishment of a plantation house, or the sprucing up of a city hall, the restoration of a building scours away all accretions of time and use. This transformation freezes a structure's appearance in a particular period or style that experts have deemed historically relevant. Often historic associations, municipalities, or civic minded individuals undertake the caustic measures of scraping, repairing, and repainting a building, to facilitate the visitor's, typically a tourist, quest to visualize, imagine, and remember a place at a certain period in time.

But for many people who visit restored sites, the act of remembering or "memory work" involves a complex array of unscripted associations and experiences. Memory as an engagement with the past does not halt the passage of time. Quite the contrary, memory can never fix or suspend time. A memory of someone, someplace, or something is never recalled in the same manner twice. While remembrance draws upon the past, the act of recollection always occurs in the present. Held within a repository of the past, memories are reconfigured and transformed through the act of remembering.

Remembrance can either be experienced individually or be shared collectively. As philosopher Edward S. Casey has characterized, there are many sorts of memory work: *individual memory* which draws from an individual's personal experiences; *social memory* which defines a shared history of a particular group, a family, or a neighborhood; *collective memory* which draws diverse groups with no established kinship or association together by way of a specific event; and public memory which sets memories literally in place, at a location deemed for public remembrance such as a monument or memorial.

Not restored to an exact "past," the eight houses that comprise PRH offers their visitors a myriad of pathways through which to connect with the history of the houses and their own past. What follows are memories provoked by visiting the houses.

Neighborhoods

To its residents, the streets, blocks, and houses of a neighborhood offer a powerful sense of place and belonging. Occasionally legislated by law, as with the municipal designation of ward, or sometimes defined through a natural or man-made limit such as a river, a highway, a railroad track, and in some cases a wall, neighborhoods for blacks were not only designated by physical boundar-

Left and previous page: Row Houses, Houston, photographs ©Lewis Watts



Figure 1: Porches, Memphis, Tennessee, photograph by author

ies, but also thrived because of the rich, dynamic lives of their residents. Familial and social bonds were vital to forging a sense of community. The identity of a place also emerged from the flurry of activities that happened within its confines. Going to work, walking to the store, meeting a friend, playing a game, or gathering to celebrate a birthday, wove a tapestry of goings-on across a neighborhood's sidewalks, streets, and porches.

But what happened to a neighborhood when people moved away? As someone once said "people travel like packages." And, as with the post war's great migration that witnessed the relocation of scores of blacks from the impoverished Jim Crow South to bustling industrial centers of the North, sometimes whole neighborhoods could "just up and move away." Collectable and transportable, memories of a neighborhood never withered and died. Instead, they traveled along with the residents, tucked away in the memory of the people who possessed them.

Porches

A syncopated dialogue permeates the air as you stroll along a sidewalk in a black neighborhood. Its cadence sounds akin to: "good morning, ma'am," followed by "good day, sir," then another, "good evening, sir," to return to, "good



Figure 2: House, Greenville, North Carolina, photograph by author

morning, ma'am." These lyrical exchanges from the street to the chair infuse the parlance of porch life (figure 1). As platforms of social engagement, what sociologists label as "social space," porches function as spatial seams stitching the public realm of the neighborhood to the domestic sphere of the house. Snappin' green beans or taming those "naps," routines of everyday life unfold on the public stage of the front porch.

Homeplace

In the South, people often call the place where one grew up and the locus of family roots, the "homeplace." At family reunions, the homeplace is the site for family gatherings, fish fries in the yard, and late night "do you remember when" sessions on the front porch.

Homeplaces can travel like people and packages. Anywhere you collect objects of remembrance, such as model ships and family photographs, or anyplace you practice rituals of everyday life, cook fried fish from old recipes or make lye soap; all of these things serve as spiritual entrées back to your homeplace.



Figure 3: House, New Jersey, photograph by author

612 Roosevelt Avenue

The last time I walked through the succession rooms of the "homeplace," the house in Greenville, North Carolina that the Outterbridges called home, I remembered (Figure 2). I remembered the sweltering summer afternoons we spent cooling off on its porch with my maternal grandparents Mama and Daddy OO. I remembered how my brother, cousins, and I hid behind its garage and slipped beneath its crawl space while playing "hide and seek" in the thick Carolina nights. I remembered many things, some big, like my grandmother's death, and some small, like helping her mix a batch of sugary sweet ice tea in the kitchen located at the rear of the house. Thinking it might be the last time I would visit the "homeplace," and rightly so because a year later the house was

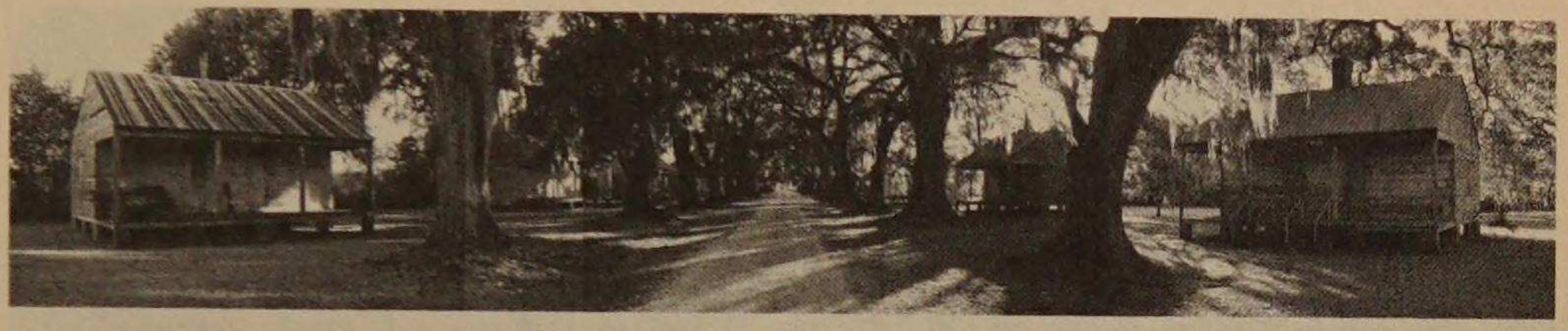


Figure 4: Nineteenth century slave quarters of Evergreen plantation, New Orleans, photograph by David Brown

sold, I wondered if the walls told another story of this homeplace, this house, this home?

As I peered into a closet near the front door and pushed away the clothes hanging there, I exposed the right wall of the closet. This wall was unlike the other two walls — it was covered with wood siding, slightly peeling and painted a dull green. What I had discovered was the wall of the first house, the first shotgun house to which had been appended the second part of the house where I now stood. And at that moment the past seeped into my present and saturated my memory forever — one house became two, a family, and home.

Kitchen Alchemy

It sits stacked on the shelf of my kitchen's lower cabinet. It's not quite black, but it's getting there. It also sits on the shelf of a lower cabinet in my parent's house in New Jersey — it's beautifully seasoned, black, and gleaming (figure 3). It also sat on grandparent's kitchen shelves in North Carolina. It was always brought out on Friday evenings. "It" is that big, black, gleaming, beautifully seasoned cast iron pan, best utilized for frying fish. Fill it with Crisco oil to about 1 inch deep, dredge the whiting through breadcrumbs, quickly fry, serve, then, "gather children 'round and bless this food."

Silent Sentinels

Directed by the plantation's manager, David and I drove our rental car behind the splendidly restored mansion known as Evergreen. Just up river from New Orleans and along Plantation Alley, the stately mansion sits atop high ground. Acres of tall sugar cane surround the white columned big house. The cultivation of this still popular crop continues to provide the income necessary to keep Evergreen's cabinets of silver sparkling and its garden parterres neatly pruned.

About a quarter mile down the road and past the main house, we drove to where the "other" houses stood: the silent sentinels. Unlike the lovingly restored big house, these back houses were abandoned a long time ago. We roamed

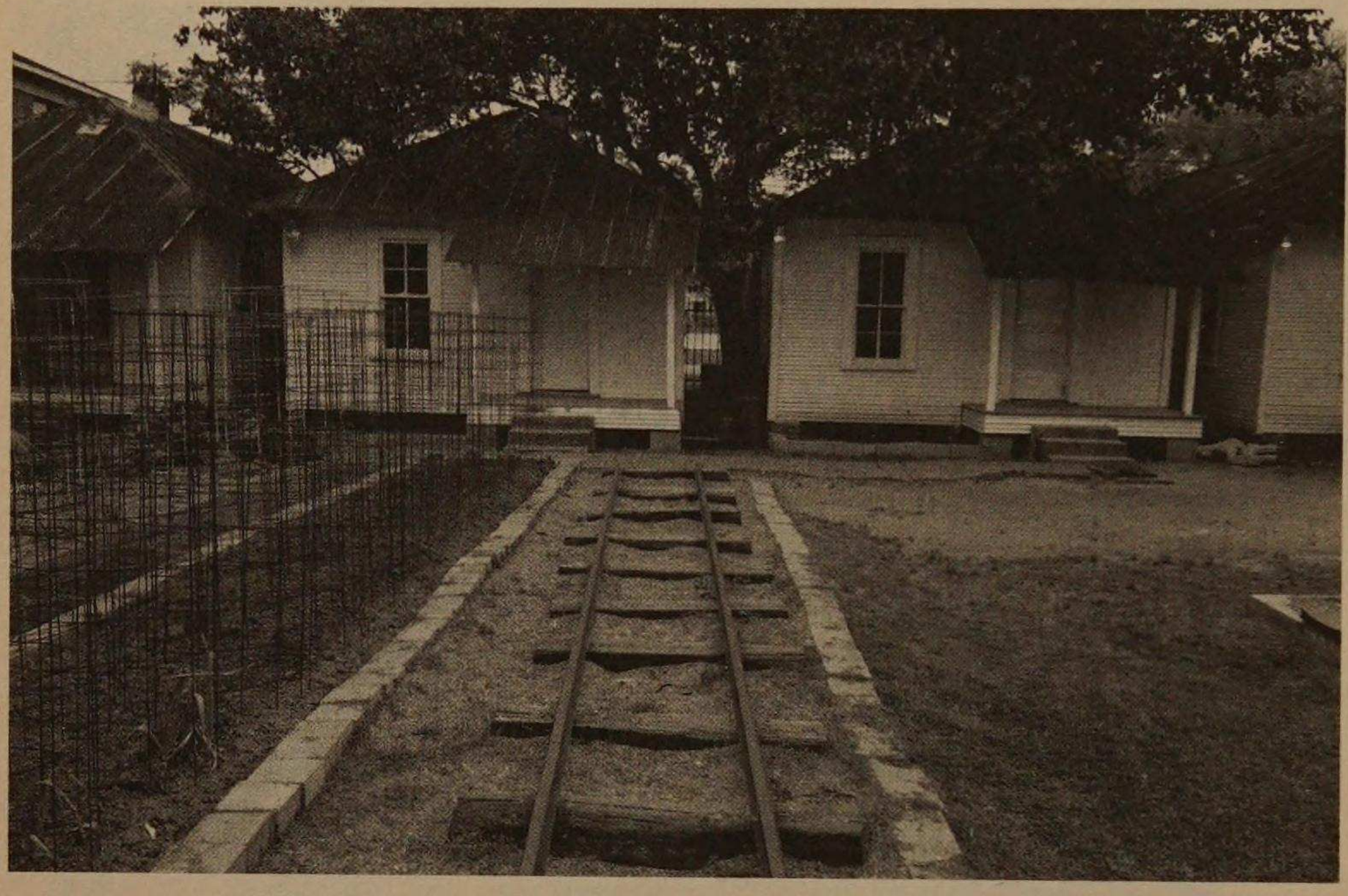


Figure 5: Project Row Houses, photograph ©Lewis Watts

through and around these twenty-five or so cabins that made up Evergreen's "dependencies." The cabins comprise one of the few extant slave quarters still in existence in the United States. Neatly aligned along a wide path framed by majestic live oaks, each cabin had a pitched roof and front porch (Figure 4). Some of the cabins were made up of two rooms, but most of them were made up of one room with a fireplace located along one wall. Soot encrusted the walls and the faint smell of burnt wood still eerily permeated the air.

As we toured the site, the plantation's manager proudly informed us that a group of university archeologists had recently conducted an important dig around the grounds. I imagined that the faculty and students probably sifted through the recent residue from the past 140 years, only to discover precious few artifacts from the days of enslavement. "Who lived here, surely there must be local families who grew up around or near here?" we inquired. "Nope," he said, "local folks don't want talk — especially to us white folks." Tongues tied, perhaps memories too fresh, Evergreen plantation for these black folks was not a place of joyous remembrance to be lovingly restored. Unlike the grand plantation house, these shacks were not precious monuments to that "peculiar" institution slavery, whose strangeness masked a racial hatred and a legacy of

brutal exploitation. On the contrary, for those of African descent, the name "Evergreen" did not recall a beautiful mansion sited atop high ground, but a gaping wound cleaving the local landscape. For them, Evergreen Plantation symbolized a painful past that was healed only through a collective forgetting.

Artful Architecture of Everyday Life

"If we were a people much given to revealing secrets," Maya Angelou pens in *I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings*, "we might raise monuments and sacrifice memories of our poets, but slavery cured us of that weakness. It may be enough, however, to have it said that we survive in exact relationship to the dedication of our poets (include preachers, musicians and blues singers)." [2]

I have always been drawn to Angelou's passage because in it she warns us of, as well as divines, the promise of black cultural life. She cautions us to beware of erecting monuments to great individuals or hastily building museums to hoard artifacts and venerate divisive beliefs of human progress. These sorts of institutions, she intuits, will distance blacks from the richness of everyday life that enriches our neighborhoods and fills our homes. Instead she reminds us to vivify life by remembering the past through the vitality of the present. And celebrate life through the creation of meaningful things–the lyrical words of the preacher and the hypnotic cadence of the blues.

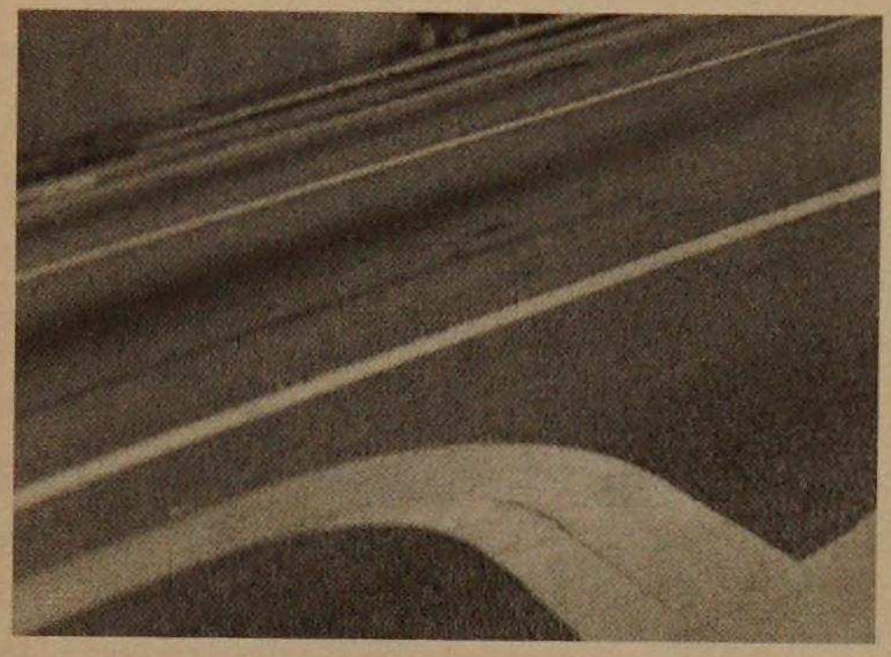
To Angelou's list of creating meaningful things, I would add the making of art and architecture. PRH and the work of artists and architects who create a culturally charged sphere within eight shotgun houses in the third ward (Figure 5). These eight houses are cannot be reduced to solely art nor can they be characterized solely by their architecture. Project Row House brings together the activities of daily life with social activism, with public memory, with the making of imagined worlds.

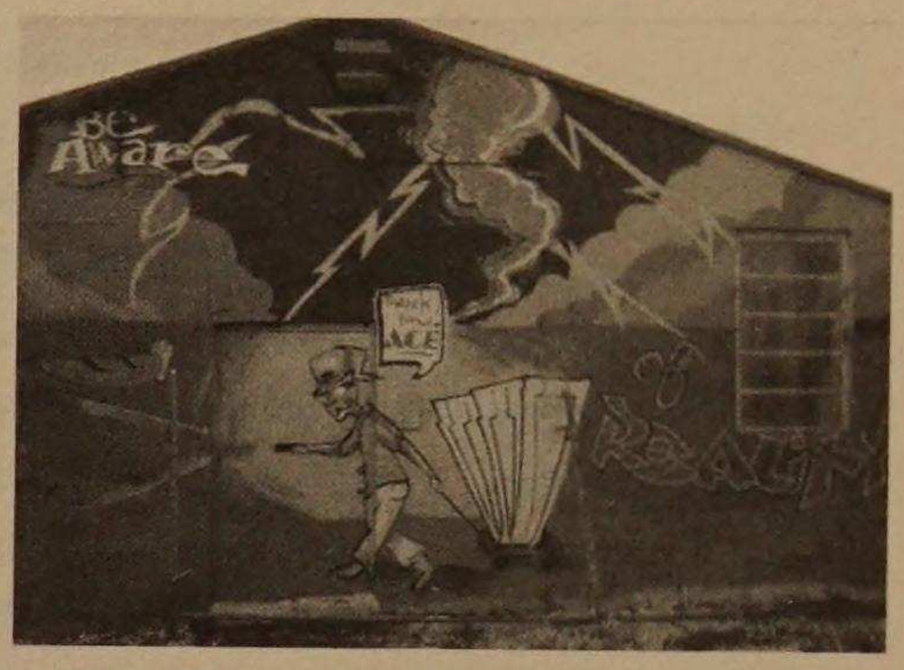
Acknowledgements
I'd like to thank David Brown and William Williams for the gracious opportunity to reflect upon these memories. And would like to extend my appreciation to my colleagues and friends who through their brilliant installations in the shotgun houses inspired these thoughts.

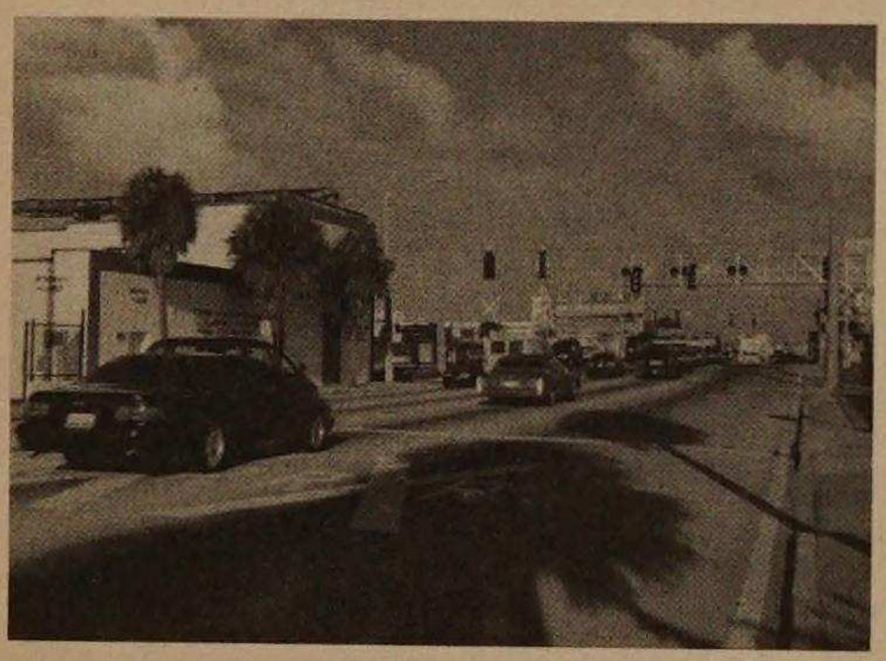
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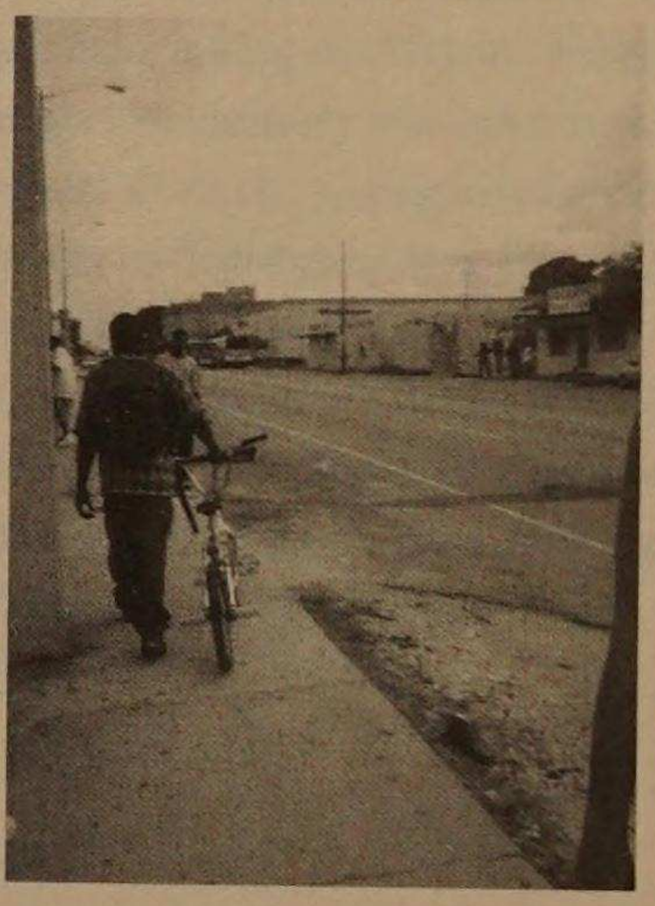
1. Remarks made at the "Framing Public Memory" conference at Syracuse University September 2001. Casey has also written an extensive volume on the topic of memory entitled *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*. Other significant works on the subject of memory include Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* and Maurice Halbwachs' *Collective Memory*. For further reading on African Americans and collective memory see Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally's insightful collection of essays in *History and Memory in African American Culture*.

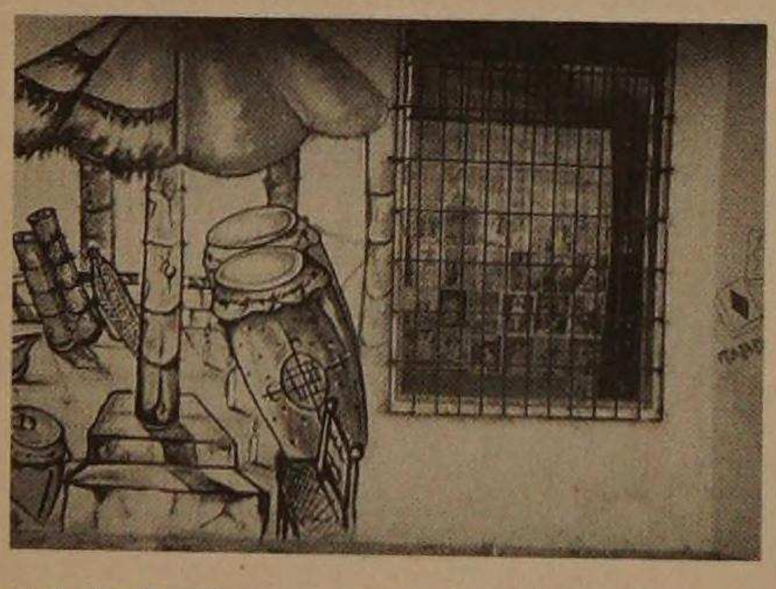
2. Maya Angelou, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." *The Anatomy of Memory*. Ed. James McConkey. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1996, 264.



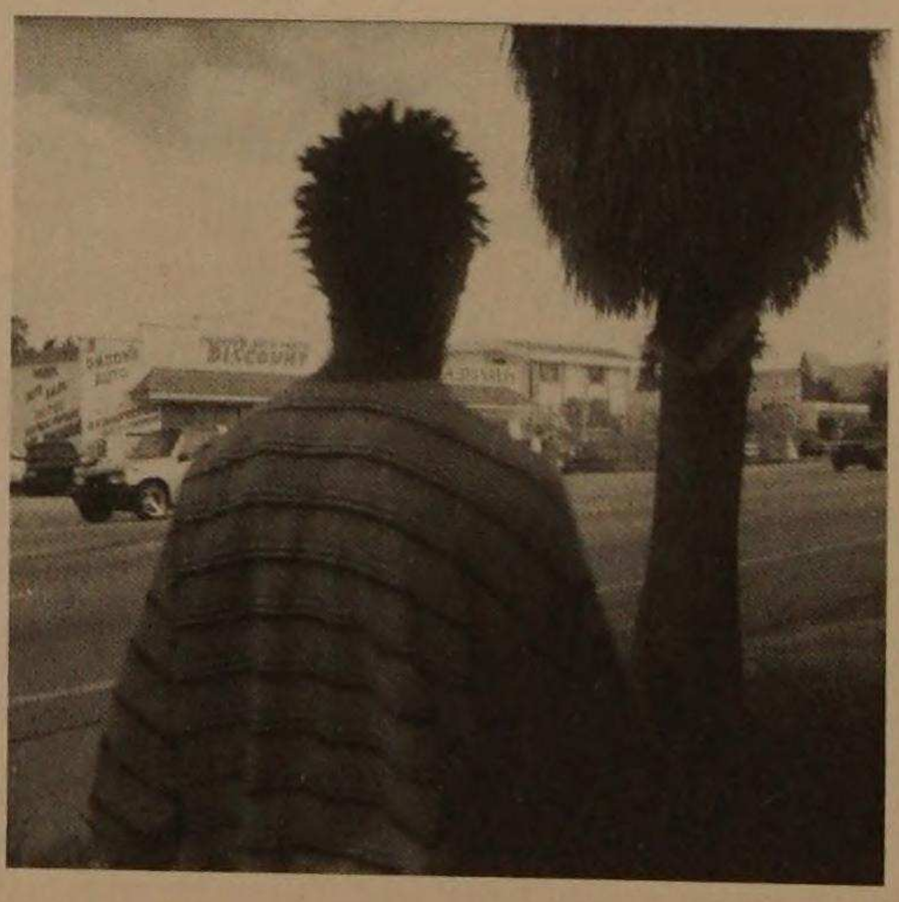








Little Haiti, Miami, photographs by author



Scattered Houses: A Competition for Small Houses

Nathaniel Quincy Belcher

It may be difficult, even impossible to claim and own the essential qualities of spatial production that the black community has produced in the urban fabric of our country. The question of whether the collection of building types identified with the community historically has been procreating has never been settled. Yet we know that our community is rich with tradition, and for that reason we feel a sense of ownership. The ownership comes in several forms: ownership of a location, like Harlem, or ownership of a building type, such as the "shotgun" house or row house.

The fabric of the American town comprises many building types. These buildings may be iconic and distinguished by their significant size, cultural purpose, or location. Many of these buildings are also distinguished by the degree to which they disappear or fade into an urban white noise devoid of iconic recognition. Such buildings visually recede and repeat, as if temporary or secondary to the larger urban context. Yet these humble buildings are essential to the spatial characteristic of our neighborhoods. Like a patch on a quilt, the row house occupies a space and fills the fabric of a local community, by providing the very cohesion upon which the urbanity of a town or neighborhood depends. Row houses are characterized by repetitive formal gestures that become pervasive and communicate a notation of restrained place and humble character in symbiosis with their inhabitants. As the township finds itself burgeoning into a city, or a neighborhood feels the pressures of the city it occupies, the interdependence of the city and its humblest of dwellings becomes clear, greeted with both fascination and disdain.

Emerging from a legacy of slave quarters, shantytowns, sharecropper settlements, and in-law units, the row house and "shotgun" are but a few of the small houses that typify the formal urbanity of segregated neighborhoods in our cities, villages, and small townships. Today these buildings stand as a testament to the notion of a sanctuary for everyone. Communicating the common idea that everyone has a purposeful space, they are the very basis upon which these communities were formed. Small repetitive gables, common walls, tight spaces, and overused service amenities that would not be acceptable today often characterized these houses. Yet within the sanctuary of these collections of houses was found a freedom to speak, live, love, and grow scarcely available to those marginalized by society. By providing a safe place for the black community, these buildings today often stand as symbols of the urban black vernacular.

This spatial production in the urban black vernacular has been under assault for some time from both blind hubris and cynical urban planning strat-

egies. Public housing often replaced these small buildings with large building "projects" that rarely consulted or observed the elements of living formed in the clusters of small houses. To be fair, living conditions were often deplorable in the surviving original clusters of row houses and dilapidated "shotguns". Often residents left willingly for massive housing projects that seemed to offer progressive change. The row house seemed to represent a painful past, while the "modern" projects represented fresh aspirations. Yet these older buildings provide a sense of sanctuary and community that many in our urbanity still sorely need and desire.

Fortunately, some of these delicate places survived and now remind us of when we lived with a different set of riches and oppressions. The noises, smells, stifling heat, and overheard conversations speak of the house's limitations, yet the memory of a homeplace is also rich with sharing, rejoicing, and the creation of an informal brotherhood and sisterhood. These places may have organically produced a notion of interdependence and co-operation that allowed a community to survive. My task here is to present a project that attempts to value the humble places I have described and to nurture a surviving homeplace. Grounding the project is the premise that although we may have taken these places for granted in the past, many still survive essentially intact. And although we may have failed as well to invest in the ideas of urban living and community that these places have created, we can still understand and apply those ideas.

Little Haiti Housing Association -Scattered Site Housing Project

This project is an exercise in reinvesting in the small house and therefore preserving its originating contexts. In the Little Haiti neighborhood of Miami City, the small house is a curious problem. (Meaning not the second home or the vacation home, but the small house used by families for whom space is a premium.) Just as was often the case in the communities that formed row houses, conditions of poverty, de facto segregation, immigration, class, and race have put many large families in small houses, living in neighborhood solidarity yet in urban isolation. Within the thriving community of Little Haiti, with first and second-generation migrants at its core, lies an eternal drive for renewal, energy for rebuilding, and endless hope. For this reason the investigation of a small house in South Florida contains a possible strategy for the resurrection of a neighborhood. Ultimately the goal is to preserve and foster the ability of a living city to correct itself.

The Little Haiti Housing Association's scattered site housing launched an architectural design competition for the design of affordable infill single-unit new construction in the Little Haiti Neighborhood of Miami City. An exhibition, *Scattered Houses* (2001) was mounted of the prizewinners and honorable mentions at the Museum of Contemporary Art of North Miami.

This project was spearheaded by the Little Haiti Housing Association (LHHA) — a not-for-profit community development corporation, in collaboration with the Florida International University School of Architecture. The City of Miami, AIA Miami, The Bienal Miami Beach, Design + Architecture Week, The Museum of Contemporary Art of North Miami, and several civic-minded individuals/institutions also provided support. The exhibition and competition were part of the ongoing Scattered Site Housing Project, which asserts the urban renewal philosophy that well-designed, affordable housing must be part of a holistic strategy for community development. It also asserts that the community needs and can support the development of isolated infill single-unit family housing. The competition had three primary goals:

— To initiate then develop a well-designed scattered site house prototype exclusively for home ownership in the Little Haiti neighborhood of Miami City.
— To increase the percentage of home ownership for working families in the Little Haiti neighborhood by placing them in comprehensively modernized contemporary homes.
— To execute research-based design solutions that meet the economic, cultural, creative, and regulatory needs of the Little Haiti community and of scattered housing community-wide.

Given the numerous vacant lots in the City of Miami, specifically in the neighborhood of Little Haiti, the Council of the City of Miami agreed to release twenty-three vacant lots to the Little Haiti Housing Association for the purpose of scattered site development. This resulted in the creation of an economic development entity to help move people from rental to home ownership and to restore property tax revenue. Early discussions regarding how this project could uniquely serve the needs of the community eventually led to the idea of an architectural competition.

The general aim of the *Scattered Houses* competition was to illustrate and eventually execute options and solutions for well-designed, buildable, cost-effi-

cient houses. Participation was limited to licensed architects, who were asked to engage the environmental, climatic, cultural, and technical issues specific to South Florida and the neighborhood of Little Haiti. While the competition sponsors gave each architect maximum creative freedom within the established program, the architects understood that the winner of the competition had to meet strict guidelines regarding costs and the specifics of the sites. So the architects had to create a prototype that enjoyed at once the cost efficiencies of mass production and the subtleties of custom site designs.

Programmatically, the scenario was for a three- or four-bedroom house with thematic and design variation. The designs submitted also needed to address a wide range of construction options, regulatory variances and living styles, and each design had to cost no more than $80,000 (or $65.00 per square foot vertical cost.) Since the architects were asked to submit proposals for scattered sites that varied in size and proportion, the architect was given the option to submit either an adaptable prototype or a site-specific design based on a specific lot size and block location. In either case, the architect needed to address issues of clustering and repetition.

A jury of financial, design, construction, and community peer representatives selected the first, second, and third place winners, as well as the honorable mentions of the competition. Design excellence, aesthetic sensibility, practicality, and project maintenance were of utmost importance to this group. There were cash awards for the second and third place winners as well as a commission given to the winner.

The competition was advertised through *Competitions* magazine and several websites as well as by word of mouth. In the end there were seventy registrants and thirty-six to forty submissions, including several international participants.

While the architectural competition is a known tradition in current practice, the uniqueness of this competition emerges from a greater understanding of the specific place of Little Haiti. Little Haiti has existed as an officially recognized neighborhood in the City of Miami only since the middle 1980s. Prior to that point, the area comprised several districts such as Lemon City, Buena Vista, Edison, and Little River. These communities had varying histories. Lemon City was a bayside port community established by the British for exporting of lemons over a century ago. More recently, Edison was a name created by development interests some fifty years ago as they built and sold modest two-bedroom bungalows for retirees and young families in segregated Dade County. Little Haiti also includes fragments of old towns, long dissolved subdi-

visions, and developer plats loosely associated by proximity. At the time of its naming, Little Haiti was defined by geographic and transportation barriers, specifically by the interstate highways on its south and west sides, a railroad on its east side, and the Little River on its north side.

Largely platted at the beginning of the last century, the land was parsed and sold in large pieces that were, in turn, platted into smaller lots with relatively dramatic erratic varying lot sizes and proportions. These separate plat areas were established independently of one another with little regard for general alignment and the larger urban plat grid. To look at an aerial photograph of the area is to see the street grid of the city as somewhat present but constantly shifting and marginalized. It was not until the 1950s that the notion of strict formal planning and zoning came to Miami. This occurred long after much of this area had been constructed and platted. Since many of the lots were subdivided haphazardly, many of the properties are now of sizes and proportions not allowed by the zoning codes of the City of Miami. For example, the Miami City Zoning Code uniformly requires a minimal street frontage of fifty feet as well as a minimal lot depth of a hundred feet. Coupled with a minimum lot size and setbacks, many of the lots are not developable without significant zoning variances. The odd sizes also mean that standardized house layouts often do not fit within the site constraints, meaning that many of the properties call for essentially custom design tract houses, an impractical restriction. So the neighborhood is assembled like a quilt with varying plot patterns and lot sizes.

However, this neighborhood, despite its problems, continues to be vibrant, thoroughly inter-connected, and relatively stable. At the time of the writing of the zoning codes in the 1950s, little thought was given to the impact of zoning on the fabric of an already established neighborhood. With the subsequent intrusion of an interstate highway, suburban flight, housing desegregation, and a continual pattern of neglect / dis-investment by the City of Miami, the neighborhood of Little Haiti finds itself today with nearly four hundred vacant residential lots. Compounding all this was the city's strategy of demolishing and leveling abandoned houses, lest they become a haven for drug traffic and other vices. Ironically, these strategies proved to be both the folly and savior of the neighborhood, which has developed an urban fabric with scattered holes rather that large, vast, open, undeveloped land. Because of the nature of multiple land ownership, the prospect of large-scale housing or neighborhood development is impractical, which has forced the local developers to rely on small-scale scattered lot development. Rather than create one visible large project, they must

try to re-stitch and mend the neighborhood, developing properties at various disassociated points that stabilize and reconnect the neighborhood.

The Little Haiti neighborhood has a thriving population. But in the past twenty years the community has experienced enormous tension in the wake of demographic changes. Much of the tension and restructuring of the community occurred in the 1970s and 1980s as emerging populations gained a significant presence. In the older community known as Little River/ Edison was seen a form of stagnation and suburban flight. While the immigrant community grew, today the Little Haiti community is intent on succeeding and making sure that they and their children have opportunities to become an integral part of the larger city. In working with a thriving community one is continually aware that when its members want something, they find a way to get it. However, the challenges of balancing the market conditions in the community with housing remain enormous. A project dealing with twenty-three lots, when there are nearly four hundred vacant properties in the neighborhood, is a drop in the bucket. This leaves substantial opportunities.

A strength of the Little Haiti neighborhood is that it has inadvertently nurtured a full range of society. Its residents come from both the white-collar and the blue-collar sectors of the larger community, making it diverse in many ways. The trick in the short term may be to encourage those of the community who do well to remain, rather than to fly to the more stratified or upscale neighborhoods encouraged in many newer developments. Within this diversity, mentoring and role models encourage the continual cultural development of the civic and spatial neighborhood.

Through a strategy of scattered development, the rebuilding process reverses the earlier process of deterioration in one-by-one stepped actions. In this way the neighborhood is re-grown, through an operation of planning, urban design and architecture that will maintain the richest qualities of this precious part of Miami.

Little Haiti has a fascinating history, is well located, has intact streetscapes, and has every good reason to recover. It is a neighborhood where the houses open to the street and to one another, and where the schools, corner stores, and open spaces are close enough to encourage pedestrian activities. The preservation and exploitation of these rich aspects should both encourage a diversity of residents to stay and attract newcomers that wish to contribute to this urban fabric. The architecture of small houses is a crucial part of that fabric.

The collection of honorable mentions may provide the most adventurous group of submissions. As the jurors understood, the criteria for the honorable mentions were more easily connected to simple notions of design and commentary. Several of the honorable mentions were chosen for their elegance and intelligence, even though their cost and techniques of construction were unbelievable given the broader context. But it is the finalists that offer the most to the pedagogy of the competition, because each one proposes a buildable scheme with an acknowledgement of the cultural context.

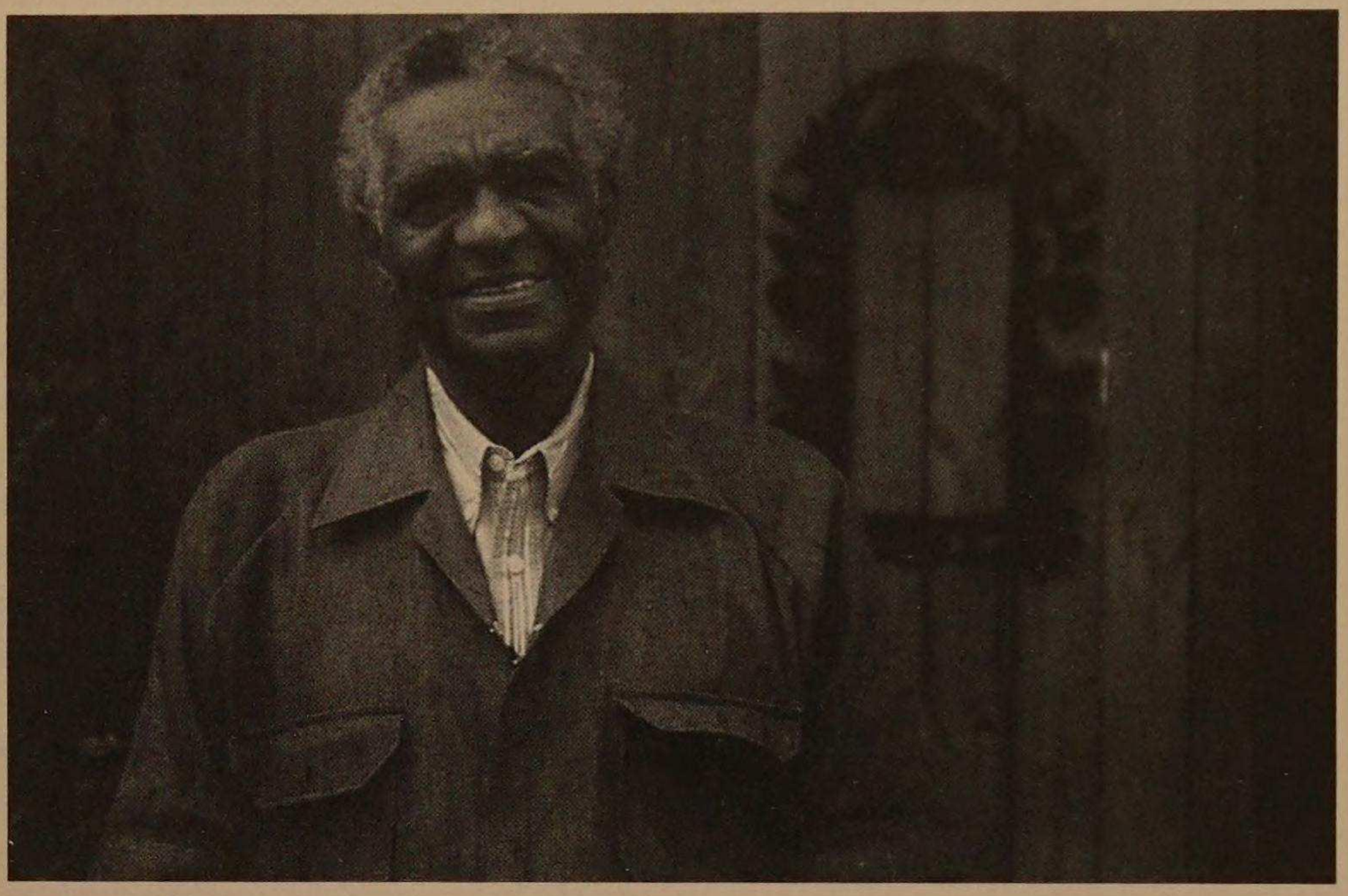
A third prize was awarded to Miami architect John Orgren for a scheme reminiscent of mid-century Miami Modernism. Here the use of simple abstract planes with transparent corners and bold color reduced anonymity, according to the jurors, and communicated a sense of individuality in a small structure. Orgren also proposed a second single-story scheme organized around a private courtyard. The culture projection is of Miami's biggest boom era, when sleek Deco mansions were stripped and strong concrete building were built to receive the strong sun and stormy winds.

The second prize was awarded to the Guatemalan team of Pablo Godoy Barrios and Maria Fernandez Sanchez Herrerra. Their scheme, rendered in a traditional Haitian-French Colonial style, introduced a tall vent chimney as a central element, adding stature and scale to the structure. It is the most straight forward proposition of an architecture that recalls the images of their "cultural heritage." The buildings are both naïve and slightly patriarchal.

The first place winners, Ruben N. Santos and Ramon I. Santos, who practice in San Francisco, California and Alexandria, Virginia respectively, proposed a low-scaled building with a private internal courtyard contiguous with the unit's bedrooms, and fenestration details designed to enhance ventilation. The permeated entry's greatest asset is its contribution to the neighborhood's continuity through a traditional house form, while at the same time reinventing this building type for a new client group. A material palate of wood siding, and standing seam metal roof will face significant redesign because of concerns of hurricanes. Nevertheless, it is these buildings that most directly embrace and challenge the architectural language of the row house or the "shotgun" house. For in this neighborhood there are still occasional buildings which resemble those celebrated by Project Row Houses. Indeed, many criticized its selection for its formal reference to the former "shacks," as some have called them. As the process is proceeding the buildings have muscled a bit more respect and the architects will see their buildings executed.

And so this narrative explains the conditions and factors that comprise the context for 23 small houses to dot that fabric in the Little Haiti Neighborhood of Miami City. These houses are born of a very real and lived condition, much like the "shotguns", row houses that characterize the subtext of this publication and the intervening exhibition. And while it is hard to fabricate a true type it may be that these houses, as a collective start to be identified with a people and a place, as we have, implies a relationship for the row houses. Architectural typologies evolve in strange ways and the knowledge and preconception of an architectural competition results in an affectation of sorts: an affectation assimilated by the designers in their attempt to understand this particular social and physical infrastructure. An architectural competition, with all of its perceived vanities, may seem a cynical way to address the problems identified but it would be a shirk of responsibility to turn away.

Yet the prospect of a building acting like a small patch in a tattered neighborhood seems an irresistible problem to tackle. Architects are problem solvers and passionate advocates for our environment, and from conception to production, these humble buildings are products of that sensitivity and common agenda.



John Biggers at home, 1997, photograph by Nancy Walkup

Remembering John Biggers

Alvia Wardlaw

transcribed from the *Shotguns 2001* symposium

First trip to Africa.

It was groundbreaking journey for the artist and it was a groundbreaking event for this community. When Rick talked about the concept of doing yet another memorial, something lasting, for Dr. Biggers, I was really intrigued, and in fact this discussion actually began while JB was still alive. The idea was to do a center or something for him that reflected his values on those things that he held important. And that is what I would like to talk about today.

I didn't bring slides. And initially I was a little concerned about that, but I think in the absence of images I can talk about John and talk about what the shotgun house meant to him, what certain things meant to him, why he stayed in Houston and why he focused upon something as simple as the shotgun house. And I think there are two things — one is the sense of heritage that the shotgun symbolized for this artist, who was born in a shotgun in Gastonia, North Carolina, a very small community, very much like Third Ward, in which people were neighbors, people sat on the front porch and talked to one another. All of the children and families had little gardens for themselves in between, in front and in back of these shotguns, John included. He said he used to grow popcorn to feed the rabbits. So his memory is steeped in his earliest days — the baby of seven children living in a shotgun house. The son of Paul and Gloria Biggers. Gloria washed clothes for white families in Gastonia. Paul was a teacher, a preacher, a shoemaker, a man of many talents. There was very strong moral structure within their household. Each child had their own responsibility, which relays to us who are used to these immense spaces how such order, integrity and continuity can be propelled from such a small space. And I think that is what John Biggers was trying to say to us — that there is no need to build in incredible, large and often vacuous spaces when something as simple as a shotgun can be incredibly enriching. He never let go of it.

He was an artist who continued to paint what he wanted to paint throughout his lifetime. He moved through a period of abstraction that was affecting a number of other artists and he continued to paint his community and draw those shotgun houses. If you look at the sketch of the second mural that he did when he was here in Houston, it's at the YWCA, behind these figures of great black women, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, there's a shotgun community. He always shows them connected. The only painting that he did of one shotgun was his first painting when he was at Hampton University. I think through his lifetime he kept going back to that form over and over and over again for different reasons. At first it was a monument to black women — that

first shotgun you see a black woman standing on the porch in her apron. Later, in his work of the mid seventies you see the entire community of shotguns and he is doing two things in these works. He's looking at the abstraction of the rooftops which become connected and remind him of ancient kuba cloth, the textiles he saw when he was at Hampton, and also a sense of connection between the community.

John Biggers, as we all know, was a great student of African culture. Every day that you visited him he was reading a new book on Africa — history, art, music, sculpture, textile, portraiture, philosophy, mathematics, physics, agriculture, architecture, city planning, over and over and over again. These are the things that anchored him, that interested him, that he would include in his work. The first shotgun that John Biggers painted here in Houston, [which] is now in the Smithsonian, the national museum of American art, was a picture of a shotgun burning on Alabama between Ennis and Delano. John was on his way to work and drove down Alabama and here was this shotgun burning through the roof and the family was out standing in front. And that was his first painting here. And after that painting he returned to Alabama repeatedly and did drawings of the shotguns and [had his] students go out into the area immediately around Texas Southern University and draw shotgun houses. At first families protested. That was a daily routine. That was what he did. That was how he drew. That's how he learned perspective and math and structure. I think it was that order. It was that implicit order in these structures and the symbolism of community and continuity that impressed John Thomas Biggers. He took those shotguns all the way back to Egypt. Just as he examined the temple of Luxor, he also examined the structure of the shotgun house — how they were all connected vertically, horizontally, spatially. He never tired of this. It was like Monet painting haystacks. There was never a moment when he was through with this. The last mural that he did, *Nubia*, still had references in it to African architecture.

I guess I should say in looking at this idea of incorporating the knowledge and purpose and meaning of John Biggers' life into a memorial, or a monument you should take into consideration several things. One is the notion of scale. It is a very human scale, so whatever it is that's created should have this sense of human scale to it. The initial very brief conversations that Rick and John had about this structure dealt with indoor-outdoor. Just as he loved books and research, he loved gardens. His wife, Hazel, still has an immense garden in the backyard. Project Row Houses is a synthesis in many ways; what you are seeing

today really represents what John Biggers was showing us in his art. It's about continuity, it's about community and moving out of your space, out of your private home, and into a common ground. Which can be a performing area, it can be a garden. In his own garden he planted some seeds from Africa, some from Gastonia, Papaya trees. He loved nature. He wanted to be many things, but one of his great loves was biology, nature. The four seasons, the way in which man relates to animals, which was something that he found in his travels to West Africa and then to East Africa, this incredible sense of connection to the earth that people of African descent express. The symbolism of the animals that you see in African hieroglyphs, all of that fascinated him. The sense of crossing generations that you see in PRH was also a major symbol of John's work — the mother and the child, the child growing up and having another child, that web of life. There's a young lady here today whose parents, I think, lived in one of the original houses here. And finally the idea of multiplicity and originality. The sense that all these houses, yes, are very similar, yet at the same time they each have their own character. There is some kind of distinction that the family that dwelled in the structure has given that shotgun house — be it a rose bush that they planted in the front, a flag that they fly, Christmas lights that they keep up 365 days of the year, the way in which they paint a stump. All of these little permutations, visual permutations of the space making it your own , and then at the same time keeping that connection. I think that is really what he was after.

John Biggers was born in a shotgun house in Gastonia, North Carolina. There's a beautiful film that you should all get at some point. That filmmaker's from Virginia and there's footage of him sitting on the front steps, and he talks about wanting to turn his house into a museum. Where it's not so much his art but all of the implements of that time period — the irons that his mother used, the books that were read, the furniture, all of that became the part of the texture of his dwelling, and he simply wanted to share that with children. The next generation, for him, was very, very important. And I think that's what he would tell us — that we have to think about the children and you have to understand how tradition has moved through these very simple structures, and they have come to symbolize so much within the African-American community.

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AFTERWORD
AREA DENIAL TECHNOLOGIES

Christopher Hight

The trajectory of a shotgun blast, like the geometric economy of the shotgun house, is a quintessential profile of modernity. Not the white-walled modernism familiar to architects, but modernity's deterritorializations and reterritorializations of the social and political spaces from which it at once emanated and precipitated. The shot explodes from a fragile casing packed with pellets that spread in hundreds of trajectories, each particle rapidly losing speed and force as the blast blossoms. Hitler's blitzkrieg traced this multiplicitous trajectory on a continental scale; the MIRV-equipped nuclear submarine operates as a transcontinental threat through the same blooming diagram of force. And today the shotgun diagram is repeated by the Metal Storm™ "area-denial-technology" favored by both Bush administrations and now marketed as an "urban warfare weapon" in the "war on terror":

> *Each Area Denial Pod has 65 barrels. These barrels each contain 6 anti-personnel grenades, and each of these has 4 heavy mortar rounds. Others contain some surprises... Electronic sensors on the pods and in the clearing define the target area... The target is destroyed — quickly, accurately and precisely.*

As precisely as if it had been programmed to print.[1]

Third Ward, Houston, photograph ©Lewis Watts

Bioterrorism and dirty bombs are similarly, if oxymoronically, described as precise area denial weapons; like the shotgun pellet, their agents of death are clutched within a compact container until deployed as a flowering rain of micro projectiles. These may be the result of electronic-typographic technologies and have been "been programmed to print" upon their victims, but they are not like Kafka's machine of disciplinary inscription tailored to each victim's body and inscribed on fleshy surfaces. Instead any purported "accuracy" refers to a statistical precision: a scatter plot, a perfect bell curve governed by the law of averages in a Deleuzian society of control, where the trajectory of power does not emanate out of a central point but operates via the distributed sites of multiple consuming subjects and converges upon an emergent authority. And instead of lead shot, these area denial weapons disperse radioactive particles and molecules that do not impact the body so much as are enfolded by it. In an age of post-Fordism, Homeland Defense, and the Human Genome Project, the frontier is now a molecularized informatic horizon manifest by every body, each domicile, and each security control access and TravelStar traffic camera.[2] The target is not the body so much as the territoriality of the humanist subject. The shotgun scatter, once a tactical device exercised on one body and a general paradigm for the extension of power,

has been inverted as a diagram of endocolonial control.

The projects and texts featured in *Row* were envisioned within a city whose development patterns feature a similar endocolonial diagram. As with the geostrategic imagination, the expansive suburban horizon is involuting as its dispersed suburbanites converge back onto the city center: after decades of population loss to its suburbs Houston's growth is now concentrated "within the Loop." Houston's central business district, like that of many new cities in the American South, is ringed by a series of "wards," historically home to varied ethic communities. The "predators of space" (as I have called them elsewhere) regard this domain as ripe for colonization by Starbucks urbanism.[3] As in many other American cities, the areas once abandoned by "white flight" and devastated by liberal urban renewal plans — often the very same sites that were icons of the failure of modernist social housing — have now become the foci of an imploding suburban expanse.

As developers return to these inner city neighborhoods, they deploy "area denial" devices of their own. In less booming times, they buy the land and let the built fabric decay, catalyzing social fragmentation until the same developers can leverage redevelopment funds and tax breaks on the back of fears about "public safety." In Alan Greenspan's era, they are free to fire a blunderbuss, moving quickly to buy as much land as possible while simultaneously replatting property into smaller lots and accumulating these atomized parcels into contiguous areas. Each new lot is occupied by a "patio home" or "loft-style" townhouse, clustered in sets around a secure central courtyard. Each of these micro-enclaves operates as an urban area denial pod. They too "contain some surprises." As developers purchase lots, land values increase until it becomes uneconomical to acquire more land. Those who have refused to sell are left stranded in odd lacuna. Yet because of the very development they resisted, land values continue to rise, increasing property taxes (which Texas relies upon since it lacks a state income tax) and forcing the refusniks out of their islands. Just as quickly as their original community was dissolved, the former residents are dispersed, becoming politically and economically invisible, written off as collateral damage in the "rejuvenations" that New Urbanists are so quick to celebrate. From the air, the leftover lots and buildings uncannily resemble the remnants of a close-range shotgun blast — the tattered tissue of humanist space.

Project Row Houses, the geographic and institutional site of the projects presented in this volume, is now "embedded" within such an urban endocolonial skirmish as developers train their

sights on its Third Ward location. So far the community has been galvanized to action and resistance. Project Row Houses has itself drawn up a master plan that depends on deed restrictions to control development. Nevertheless, the question remains whether resistance is enough or even responsible. Just as individuals who resist selling out come to occupy barricaded lacuna, the danger with deed-restricted planning is that entire districts of the city may be "preserved" because of historical significance only to become mere representations of culture rather than vibrant urban ecologies. What is required is not preservation but the projection of alternative tactics and instruments.

The essays and projects in *Row* might be understood as excursions into this projective territory. Moreover, this volume is just one manifestation of the Rice School of Architecture's research into this contested terrain. David Brown's graduate studios at Rice have challenged the choice between the free market and preservationism by altering the strategies of development and the architect's persona. William Williams complements traditional commissions with gallery work that allows more focus than the vicissitudes of normative professional practice.

Their activities are complimented by the School's ongoing involvement with Project Row Houses. The Rice Building Workshop led by Danny Samuels and Nonya Grenader has constructed for the foundation a revised version of the shotgun house that has won professional accolades. Students designed and built the structure, gaining experience with construction and budgetary issues as well as the architect's role within communities. Samuels and Grenader recently secured a large grant to expand their hands-on engagement with Project Row Houses and the Ward. Meanwhile, Rice's Jessica Young and recent alumnus Philip Lee are working with Project Row Houses to develop a landscape-based strategy for its dispersed urban condition. Entitled *Wet-Net*, their proposal approaches the area's open spaces as a semi-fluid organization of formal and programmatic interfaces between the local community and institutions by facilitating outdoor planned events and casual use in spite of Houston's extreme climate conditions. Their preliminary results offer a tantalizing glimpse of alternatives to master planning and deed restrictions.

Through all these projects, the Rice School of Architecture has engaged the forces of urban endocolonization directly — not by manning the barricades but by offering projective, pragmatic, yet visionary alternatives within the strictest conditions of possibility. Working in the face of area denial devices that concentrate power and wealth by eradicating once shared space, these

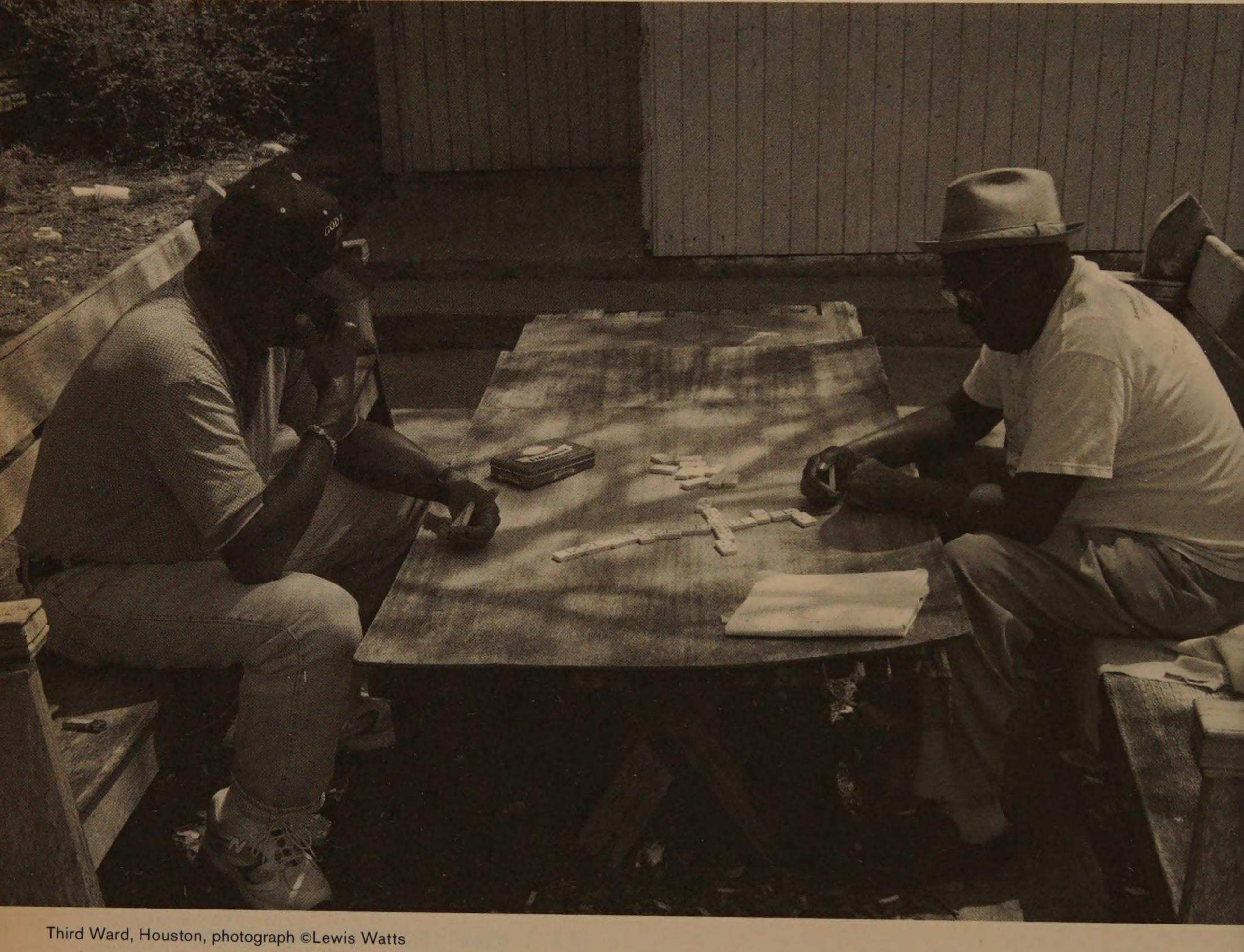
projects operate upon existing conditions to forge new territorialities of the multitude.

Such is now the task of Architecture At Rice, of which *Row* is the fortieth volume. Architecture At Rice is one of the oldest architectural academic imprints, and its publications have always been based on the events and activities of the School. Earlier manifestations spoke to assorted faculty concerns and then contemporary fascinations. Beginning in the mid nineties, under the editorial guidance of Dean Lars Lerup, the series began to disseminate the School's renewed focus on urban research. *Row* is the last volume initiated under Lerup's editorship, a position now handed on to me. Architecture At Rice will continue to address the pressing issues of the built environment. At the same time, we will concentrate on reconfiguring these problems through a trans-disciplinary approach that foregrounds how today's environment is also built out of information infrastructures and software in addition to more familiar "hardware." In this joint endeavor, I hope Architecture At Rice will not only disseminate our collective endeavors but also serve as a laboratory for reconfiguring architectural knowledge, competencies, and objects of practice. Rice University pays a great deal of homage to the slogan of "going beyond the hedges" that encircle our ivory tower. *Row* reminds us of that this projection of our gaze is as quaint as it is problematic (however well intentioned). The issue is not to expand our horizons, but to reconfigure the institutional limits of identity (who we are), of practice (what we do), and of modality (how we do it), both in terms of the academy and in terms of the architectural discipline. Only through such destratification can alternate trajectories emerge.

— Houston, July 2004

NOTES

1. Transcript of marketing video for Metal Storm Inc 2002. Emphasis added.
2. As Eyal Weisman has argued in regards to Ariel Sharon's settlements and strategies on the West Bank, architecture and urbanism can themselves constitute such area denial weapons. Eyal Weisman and R. Segal, eds., *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture* (London: Verso, 2003).
3. Christopher Hight, "Subjects, Boundaries, Negotiations," in *Negotiate My Boundary!* (London: Architectural Association, 2002).



Third Ward, Houston, photograph ©Lewis Watts

CONTRIBUTORS

AR+D unigroup Shawn L. Rickenbacker was born in the Bronx, New York. He received his Bachelor of Architecture from Syracuse University and Master of Architecture from the University of Virginia. From 1999 – 2001 he was Director of AR+D (architecture, research + development) unigroup, which included associate member Kevin Wasniewski, and members Tim Dorgiewicz and Shezronne Zaccardi. Mr. Rickenbacker's and AR+D's works have received numerous awards and have been published and exhibited internationally. Since 1998 he has served as a professor of Architecture and visiting critic and has lectured throughout the US and abroad. Currently Mr. Rickenbacker is the creative director and partner of Creative Front design agency NYC, which provides architectural and product design services, he also continues to serve as visiting professor at various institutions.

Craig Barton is an associate professor of urban design and the Director of the Urban Studies Program at the University of Virginia. Prior to this appointment Mr. Barton was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. He is the editor of *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, an anthology of essays exploring aspects of identity and spatial representation in African-American culture. The volume was published by Princeton Architectural Press in March of 2001, and was funded by grants from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and the George Gund Foundation. Through his practice, research, and teaching Mr. Barton investigates issues of cultural and historical preservation and their interpretation through architectural and urban design. Much of his practice focuses on assisting African-American communities to preserve and interpret their significant cultural resources and to utilize them to stimulate community development. He is a founding principal in the architectural firm RBGC Associates, located in Charlottesville, Virginia. The firm has recently completed a master plan for the town of Bayview, a historic African-American community on Virginia's Eastern Shore, and the design of a museum and visitors' center for the National Voting Rights Museum in Selma, Alabama.

Nathaniel Quincy Belcher is a recipient of grants from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Graham Foundation, and other notable foundations and research entities. He was educated at Virginia Tech and Harvard University and holds both bachelors and masters degrees in architecture. His work has been exhibited and published on many publications including *Sites of Memory* from Princeton Architectural Press and *HarlemWorlds: Metropolis as metaphor* exhibition/publication through the Studio Museum in New York City. He has worked to establish the Jazz Architectural Works Shop, an independent, research based program dedicated to the development of critical theoretical ideas and the production/ documentation of objects/environments which recognize marginalized influences on architecture and its related disciplines. He has a special interest in influences of modernism on "developing contexts" and visa versa. He is a licensed architect and a licensed interior designer. He maintains his office in Miami, Florida; where he has begun a community development projects involving landscape and housing issues in the Little Haiti neighborhood of Miami City. He is currently an Associate Professor and the Assistant Dean for academic programs at the Florida International University School of Architecture.

David Brown is an associate professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Architecture, and has previously taught at Florida A&M University and Rice University. He is author of a book, tentatively titled *Noise Orders* and forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press, that explores design implications of structures that facilitate improvisation in jazz. His current research and teaching focuses on ways in which the concerns of existing organizations over various scales of metropolitan development can provide parameters for alternative modes of urban design and planning that emphasize active relations amongst disparate and non-ideal sites to negotiate an area's transformation in time.

Felecia Davis is an Assistant Professor at the College of Art, Architectue and Planning in the Department of Architecture at Cornell University and a partner and co-founder of Colab Architecture, which has placed as finalists both in the California Central Valley History Musuem Competition in Fresno California and the Queens Musuem of Art Competition in New York. Much of Davis' speculative work focuses on the intersections of built form and cultural practice and the transformative potential for the discipline of architecture from these intersections. Her work on walking and cities titled "Walking Tours: Urban Riffs" has been exhibited in the "harlemworld: Metropolis as Metaphor" show at the Studio Museum in Harlem. She has been interested in the understanding of place at many scales as a dynamic system and teaches a community design course that works in collaboration with not-for-profit organizations and local community groups to develop a variety of projects.

Stephen Fox is a fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas.

Paul Hester enjoys photography as an obsession and as a profession. His interest in taking pictures began with his family Kodak Pony IV Camera. He attended Rice to study architecture, but in the process of editing the 1970

Campanile decided he would rather spend his time taking pictures. After a year of photographing in Europe on a Thomas J. Watson Traveling Fellowship, he attended the Rhode Island School of Design.

He has received several grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, exhibited his work in a one-person show at The Menil Collection, and his photographs have been published in several books and magazines, including the *Rice University Guide to Campus Architecture*; *Philip Johnson & Texas*, published by the University of Texas Press; as well as GA, Architectural Record, Residential Architect, Western Interiors, Domus, Metropolis.

His diverse teaching experiences range from the High School for Performing & Visual Arts, Houston; to public housing residents, Hope, Arkansas, to the Department of Visual Arts, Riced University. He was the founding president of the Houston Center for Photography, and continues to give lectures and workshops on the practice of architectural photography.

His photographs are in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Ft. Worth; Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris; Congregation Emanu El, Houston; Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library; the National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Market Square Park, Houston.

Christopher Hight is an assistant professor at the Rice School of Architecture, where he is pursuing design research on emerging electronic and material urbanisms. Currently the editor of the Architecture at Rice publication series, he has a Masters degree from the Architectural Association and a Ph.D. from the London Consortium under a Fulbright Scholarship. He has previously taught at the Architectural Association Design Research Laboratory and worked for the Renzo Piano Building Workshop. He is currently writing a book on cybernetics and post-World War Two architectural design.

Walter Hood is a Professor and former Chair of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at the University of California, Berkeley, and principal of Hood Design in Oakland, California. Hood has worked in a variety of settings including community design, urban landscape design, art and research. He was a fellow at the American Academy in Rome in Landscape Architecture, 1997. He has exhibited and lectured on his professional projects and theoretical works nationally and abroad. His work was featured in "Open, New Designs for Public Space", The Van Alen Institute, 2003-04. Other guest venues include Spoleto, Charleston 2004, the Monongehela Conference, Pittsburgh PA, 2004, Cornerstone Garden Festival, Sonoma CA, 2004 and the Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial, 2000. His firm is currently designing a six mile Waterfront Trail in Oakland CA and is designing the gardens and landscape for the New De Young Museum, San Francisco with Swiss architects Herzog and de Meuron scheduled for completion in 2005.

Walter Hood's published monographs: *Urban Diaries* and *Blues & Jazz Landscape Improvisations* illuminate his unique approach to the design of urban landscapes. These works won an ASLA Research award in 1996. His essay "Macon Memories" is featured in *Sites of Memory*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2001. Hood participated in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's "Revelatory Landscapes" exhibition 2000-2001. He is currently researching and writing a book entitled *Urban Landscapes: American Landscape Typologies*, to be published soon. His area of teaching, the American Urban Landscape, is intertwined with his design work creating a didactic approach to the design of urban landscapes.

bell hooks is a feminist, social thinker, cultural critic and teacher. The author of more than twenty books on issues of race, gender, class, and culture, her recent publications include *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, published by Routledge, and *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*, published by Washington Square Press. Among her current writing projects is a book about space.

Rick Lowe is the Founding Director of Project Row Houses, an award winning community arts project in Houston's Third Ward that engages the rich cultural heritage of this African-American neighborhood and mitigates many of the area's economic challenges. In recognition and support of his work at Project Row Houses, Lowe has been the recipient of awards, such as the Heinz Award and the American Architecture Foundation's Keystone Award, and fellowships. He was a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Design School, 2001-02. While Project Row Houses has been his principal focus since its inception in 1993, Lowe continues to engage in other art related national and international exhibitions, programs, and activities including a collaboration with Suzanne Lacy and Mary Jane Jacob for the Spoleto Festival, and, along with Jessica Cusick as arts planners, work with Rem Koolhaas for the new Seattle Public Library.

SUMO Yolande Daniels and Sunil Bald have worked together as SUMO since 1995. Both Daniels and Bald teach architecture in New York and publish and exhibit work individually and as SUMO. The studio produces a variety of cross-disciplinary works in the arts

and architecture. SUMO's production encompasses a range of interests in the material and the theoretical positioning and identification of architecture and related objects in social and cultural contexts.

Recent projects include: "black city," in Harlem World at the Studio Museum in New York, 2003-4; the School of Business Management at JOSAI University, Sakado, Japan, 2003-present; "Zero," in "Off the Record", at the Skylight Gallery, New York, 2003; "INFO: info, two information buildings" at JOSAI International University, Chiba, Japan, 2000-present; "Looking Both Ways" exhibition design at the Museum for African Art, New York, 2003; "Urban Life" exhibition design for the Architectural League at the Urban Center, New York, 2003; "Material Differences" exhibition design at the Museum for African Art, New York, 2003; the Museum for African Art temporary museum facility, Long Island City, NY, 2002; and "NewNewYork2" exhibition design for the Architectural League at the Urban Center, New York, 2001.

Claire Tancons was born in Guadeloupe, French West Indies. After graduating from the École du Louvre, Paris, and the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, she attended the Curatorial Program of the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program, New York. She has worked at the Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, where she co-curated "Play's the Thing: Critical and Transgressive Practices in Contemporary Art", the International Center for Photography, New York, providing research assistance for "Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self" (2004), and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis providing curatorial assistance for a number of exhibitions including the 2004 exhibits "How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age" and "The Square Circle: Boxing in Contemporary Art". Parallel to her curatorial activities, Ms. Tancons has been involved in the production of Coco Fusco's "The Incredible Disappearing Woman" (2001) and "Dolores from 10 to 12" (2001) and has appeared in Lorna Simpson's "31" (2001) and "Blue to Black" (2004). Ms. Tancons also frequently contributes articles and reviews to *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* and essays to exhibition catalogues. Recently she organized "The Score," a new performance and exhibition by Robin Rhode for Artists Space. Ms. Tancons is currently the Curator-in-Residence at Contemporary Caribbean Arts (CCA7), Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, overlooking the artists residencies and programming and organizing exhibitions.

thumb is a New York based office that approaches design as an aesthetic practice that embraces cultural concerns. Founded by Luke Bulman and Kimberly Shoemake, thumb's methods of research, form-making, and production reflect their particular blending of the spatial and temporal disciplines, mainly architecture and graphic design.
www.thumbprojects.com

Sheryl Tucker de Vazquez is a registered architect and an Assistant Professor of Architecture at Tulane University, where she teaches design and theory. Prior to moving to New Orleans, while teaching at the University of Houston, she participated in the development of Project Row Houses with Rick Lowe and Deborah Grotfeldt, and has published several essays on the project. In addition, she received a grant from the Design Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts to produce design and construction documents to adapt the corner two-story building on the Project Row House site as a gallery/gathering space. This proposal received a Design Award from the American Collegiate Schools of Architecture. Her competition entries have been exhibited in Los Angeles and New York. Most recently she has received a grant from the Graham Foundation to research the topic "Magical Realism" in the work of Luis Barragan. She is currently at work on two houses in the rural landscapes of Mississippi and Alabama.

WPa (Williams+Pizzini architects) was formed by partners William Daryl Williams and Archie Pizzini in Houston, Texas in 1998. WPa specializes in building inner city communities through design. WPa's projects include the renovation of the historic El Dorado Ballroom, formerly a center of the Houston Blues scene, and the Flip Flop House a competition-winning, affordable housing design.

Prior to joining WPa, Mr. Williams previously worked for Haywood Jordan McCowan in San Antonio, and WMWMS in Oakland where he worked with over five hundred volunteers to convert a warehouse into a church and school. Mr. Williams has taught at the University of Houston, UCLA, UC Berkeley, Rice University, and is currently an associate professor at University of Virginia. Mr. Williams also worked in the City of Houston's Building Services department and coordinates the Civic Art program. Mr. Williams received his bachelor of architecture from the University of Houston, and his Masters from Harvard's Graduate School of Design.

Archie Pizzini is an architect and artist living in Houston, Texas. He was born and educated in Houston and has a BA in Fine Arts and Architecture from Rice University, a BFA in Painting also from Rice University, and a Master of Architecture from the University of Houston. His professional history includes several years as an abstract painter, a stint as a decorative artist/ craftsman, over a decade of experience

in large architecture firms ranging from heavy industrial projects to corporate interiors. He currently pursues parallel careers in fine art (photography and environments/ installations) and architecture.

Alvia J. Wardlaw is a leading expert on African-American art and history. She is Assistant Professor of Art History at Texas Southern University, adjunct curator of African-American Art at the Dallas Museum of Art and guest curator/ research fellow at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She also served as the curator of the Barbara Jordan Archives and the Gallery of Traditional African Art at Texas Southern University. She was Associate Curator of "Primitive Art and Education" at the History of Fine Arts and served on the Advisory Board of the National Black Arts Festival. Exhibitions to her credit include "Haiti and Belize: Photographs of Earlie Hudnell," at Texas Southwestern University and Benteler-Morgan Galleries; "Black Art: Ancestral Legacy: The African Impulse in African American Art," at the Dallas Museum of Art; "John Biggers: Bridges," at the California Museum of African-American Life and Culture; "Homecoming: African-American Family History in Georgia," for the African-American Family History Association; "Ceremonies and Visions: The Art of John Biggers," at Laguna Gloria Art Museum; "Roy DeCarava: Photographs," at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts; and "Photographs from the Wellesley College Connections," at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Among Wardlaw's honors and awards are the Margaret Kawkins National Arts Award; Best Exhibition of 1990 for "Black Art; Ancestral Legacy," by D Magazine; Fulbright Fellow, West Africa; Compton Danforth Fellow; Ford Foundation Fellow, New York University; Award of Merit, University of Texas at Austin; and recognition by the American Association for State and Local History for the exhibition "Homecoming: African-American Family History in Georgia." She was the curator of the critically acclaimed exhibtion "The Quilts of Gees Bend"

Lewis Watts is a San Francisco Bay Area based photographer. He is a professor of Art at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His photographic work addresses the "cultural landscape" and the connection between the rural south and urban north and west and the evidence in the environment that reflects the great African American migration. His photographs have been exhibited at the Oakland Museum of California, the Smithsonian Institution, The Studio Museum in Harlem, the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase NY, Hampshire College, Amherst Mass. and Robert B. Menschel Photography Gallery, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY among others places. He has curated a number of exhibits including "Harlem of the West: The Fillmore Jazz Archives" an exhibit of found photographs from the 40s, 50s and 60s in San Francisco to be published by Chronicle Books in 2005.
http://arts.ucsc.edu:16080/faculty/lewis

LaVerne Wells-Bowie's passion for the built environment unfolded through a career in fine arts. This transition, from textile design to architecture, was also shaped by familial Sea Island roots and multi-dimensional experiences which emulated from a plethora of 'foreign' environments. How cultural life ways are intrinsically woven by people and the spaces they create, occupy and celebrate has heavily informed her research interests. Archetypes commonly found in African inspired communities of the black Atlantic are especially present in her writing and creative work.

Professor Wells-Bowie is presently on the faculty of the School of Architecture at Florida A&M University. She is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley and California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC). Grants and awards have included a National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts awards, a Fulbright Fellowship and several teaching distinctions. The Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture honored her as a distinquished faculty, citing teaching and research that has exposed students to the architectural richness of a variety of cultures. She has held the position of Mickel Endowed Chair in the School of Architecture at Clemson University.

As well as co-managing the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Memorial Competition for the memorial to be located on the Washington, DC Mall, she served as a member of the prestigious international Design Competition Jury. Professor Wells-Bowie is presently completing a book on the contributions of black builders and craftsmen to the historic fabric of Charleston, South Carolina.

Mabel O. Wilson is an associate professor of architectural design at California College of Arts and Crafts and partner in the design collaborative KW:a. Her architectural designs have been shown at a number of international and national venues including the Wexner Center for the Arts, The National Design Triennial at the Cooper Hewitt, and a solo show at the Storefront for Art and Architecture. *Assemblage*, *ANY Magazine*, and *Harvard Design Magazine* have featured her articles. Her scholarly essays have appeared in books on critical geography and architecture. She is also a doctoral candidate in American Studies at New York University.

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We would like to acknowledge the contributions of many Rice School of Architecture students including Scott Allen, David DaPonte, Dustin Eshenroder, Joshua Jones, Mike Martinez, Nik Nikolov, Gage Reese, and Jessica Young in various aspects of developing the symposium and constructing the installations.

We wish to extend our thanks to all of the participants and collaborators who have contributed to the content, development, and design of this publication, including Polly Koch and Rina V. Williams for their copy-editing efforts.

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Above My Head, page 46; and *Shotguns*, 1987, pages 16, 95, 129, 152; ©Estate of John Biggers; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY

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Row

trajectories through the shotgun house

Architecture at Rice 40
David Brown and William Williams, Editors

The copious presence of the shotgun house in Third, Fourth, and Fifth Wards, historically African-American neighborhoods directly adjacent to downtown Houston, has provided a basis for work that re-evaluates this house form. In a series of paintings in the 1980s, Houston artist John Biggers identified the shotgun house as a community enabler. Project Row Houses demonstrates this capability through its community revitalization effort, which consists of artist's installations, child after-school care and its Young Mothers Residential Program, all in a cluster of twenty-two row houses.

The 15th round of installations in the eight Artist's Houses at Project Row Houses offered a unique opportunity for further study of the shotgun house. The architects and designers invited to develop installations could explore its ability to enable community as well as other characteristics and qualities by working directly within a shotgun house variation. *Row* documents the installations and the presentations from a symposium that preceded their opening. The collected work, which builds on the work of Biggers and Project Row Houses, assesses the historical and cultural significance of the shotgun house, and its material, organizational, and spatial properties, while revealing that the shotgun house has continued relevance as an informant of contemporary architecture and urbanism.

Participants
AR+D unigroup, Craig Barton, Nathaniel Belcher, David Brown, Felecia Davis, Stephen Fox, Christopher Hight, Walter Hood, bell hooks, SUMO, Sheryl Tucker de Vasquez, Alvia Wardlaw, LaVerne Wells-Bowie, Mabel Wilson, WPa (Williams+Pizzini architects)

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a thumb project