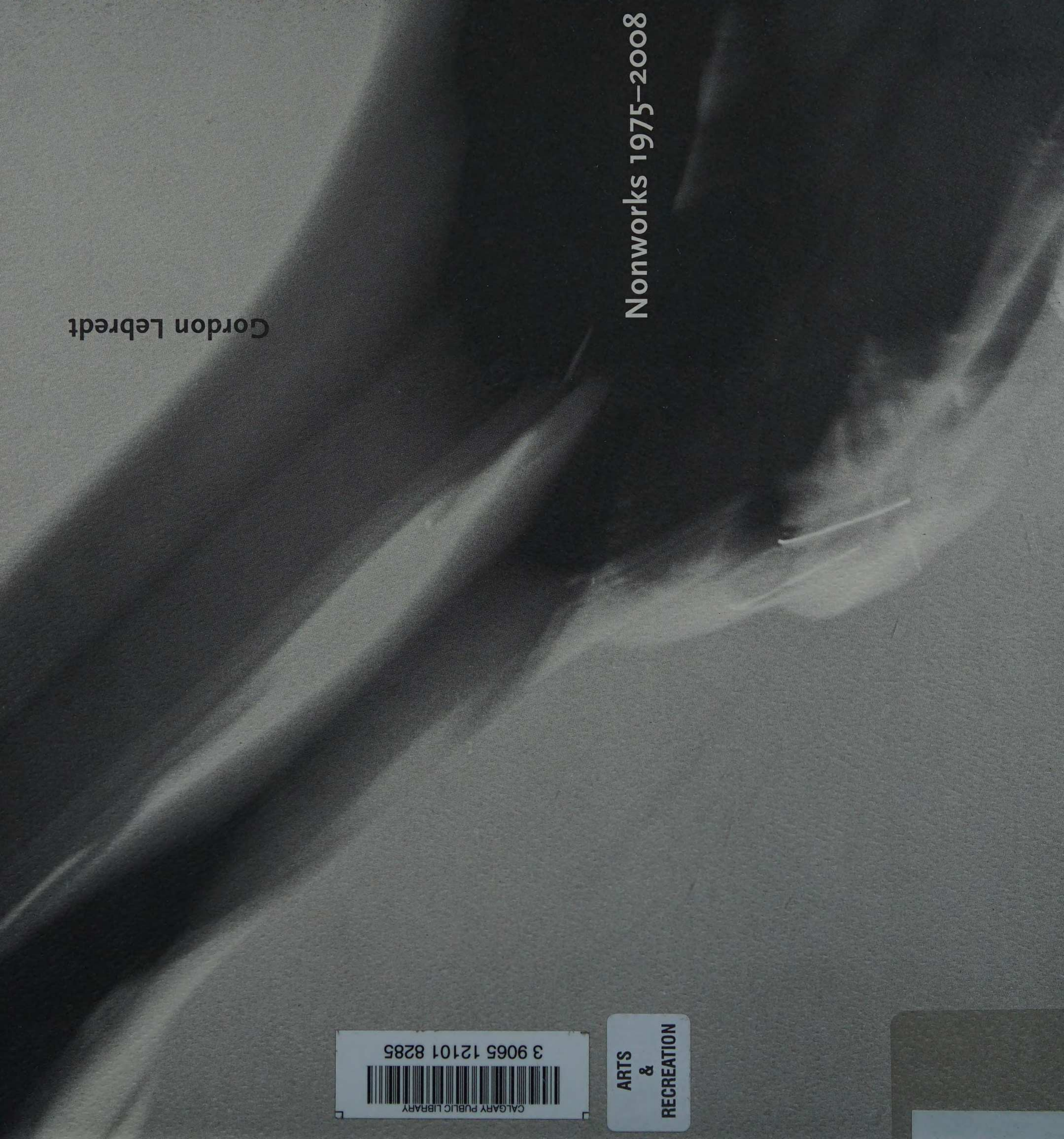
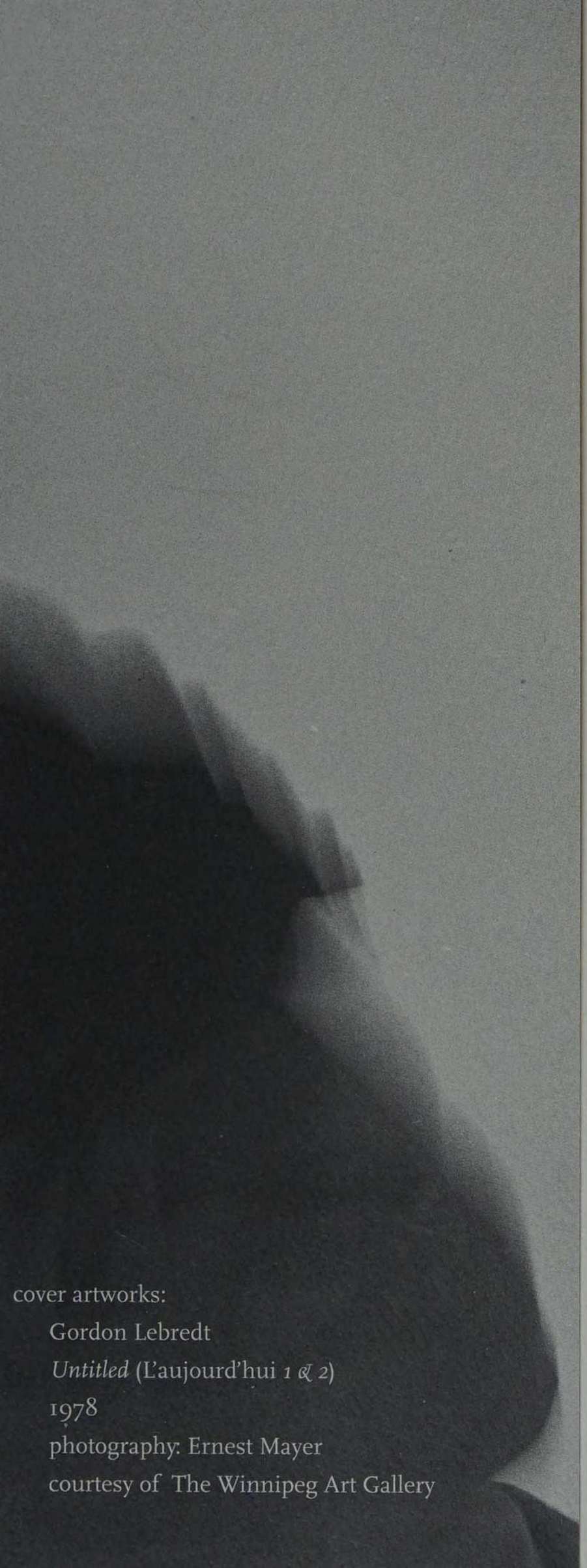


3 9065 12101 8285
CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY
ARTS & RECREATION



cover artworks:
Gordon Lebredt
Untitled (L'aujourd'hui *1 & 2*)
1978
photography: Ernest Mayer
courtesy of The Winnipeg Art Gallery

CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY

JUL - 2012

Gordon Lebredt

Nonworks 1975–2008

Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art + Plug In Editions

Published by
Plug In Editions, Winnipeg
and
Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto

Copyright © 2011 by Gordon Lebredt & Lin Gibson
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in
any form without prior written permission from the copyright holders.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Lebredt, Gordon
Gordon Lebredt: Nonworks 1975-2008 / Gordon Lebredt ... [et al.] ;
editor, Lin Gibson.

Co-published by: Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art.
ISBN: 978-0-921381-35-8

1. Lebredt, Gordon. 2. Conceptual art—Canada.
I. Gibson, Lin II. Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art (Toronto ON)
III. Title.

N6549.L427A4 2011 709.2 C2011-900052-0

Editor: Lin Gibson
Graphic Design: Gordon Lebredt
Printed in Canada by Coach House Press
Distributed by Art Metropole

PLUG IN EDITIONS

www.ccca.ca

Prologue

Since our first encounter with Gordon Lebredt's work we've been repeatedly struck by its conceptual rigour, obstinate materiality, sublime negativity, oblique sense of humour and experimental attitude towards conventions of exhibition, consumption and signification. As we studied his long record of exhibited and published work, we became aware of a parallel history of unrealized proposals: a sprawling, hypothetical topology of surfaces, abutments, expanses and disjunctions in which words, materials and images struggle to find and mark their place.

This book constitutes a major retrospective of a body of work that exists only as possibility. In their state of irresolution, the *nonworks* represent a kind of anti-image of the practicable – a history that has not yet taken place. Our hope, in initiating and assisting in the publication of this book, is that some of these works will be "realized," but we also simply wish to support Gordon's position of art-making as a matter invested with intellectual and ethical urgency – a pursuit that is neither straightforward nor easy and which stubbornly follows its own skewed trajectories and proceeds with no expectation of reception or return.

David Court + Josh Thorpe
New York & Toronto, 2010

Writings

Figure: On the Artist Gordon Lebredt

The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an event; hence also, they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realization (mise en oeuvre) *always begins too soon.*

—Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge[1]

You think I have been wandering from the point? Avoiding your question? I admit I am not answering it directly. And people may think: he's just wasting time, ours as well as his. Or he's playing for time, putting off his answer. And that would not be entirely false.

—Jacques Derrida, Deconstruction: A Reader[2]

At first sight – nothing.

Perhaps we've come at a bad time, timed our arrival all wrong.

Or, then again, as chance would have it, it could be that we're just in time: in time or in step with what, at any moment, is about to make its appearance.

As luck would have it, we've arrived before time, in time, it turns out, to see it come about or come around.

—Gordon Lebredt, Visitations: image, figure and the other side of the phenomenon[3]

Perhaps we've come at a bad time, timed our arrival all wrong. There's an appeal in Lebredt's use of the plural "we" in recording his visit to an exhibition. Is that "we" a subtle avoidance of the more restrictive – and misconstrued – "I", a plea for a necessary commonality of experience? Or, an easy explanation, he came with a friend? Perhaps, though, given Lebredt's nuanced alertness, this "we" could be read as an elision, a recognition of identity as multivalent. And this might suggest something even more likely, that this "we" is an oblique reference to another order, the order of language itself: Derrida's *différance* – where difference is always deferred, where – lacking a present tense – no "I" can properly exist.

If I too have timed my arrival all wrong – in coming to a consideration of Lebredt's work – I can find no

better entry than a text that Gordon wrote on his "visitation" to a project of my own in 1995 for the space at 137 Tecumseth Street, the Susan Hobbs Gallery in Toronto, and from which the quote above is drawn. As I re-read his writing – the tense here is neither present nor past, and Lebredt's work is all about *writability* – I find another inflection to his use of the personal plural: that I as reader, as the artist whose work is being discussed, as his post facto collaborator, am drawn into that discussion as a participant to the point where intention gives way to reception, invention to re-invention. Simply put, I *arrive again* at this work, *137 Tecumseth*, not once but *again* and *again* as "we," Gordon and I, consider and discuss the time of arrival. And this arrival becomes the rolling out of time as words exploring other words, as words implying images encompassing and transforming yet other images, where the actual and the hypothetical become indistinguishable, become both elusive and concrete, where the appropriate tense to describe this engagement initiates an unrolling of the future anterior condition: *that which will have been written – will always already have been written.*

What, then, are we to make of *137 Tecumseth* in that time before its arrival in the space, before Lebredt's arrival in the gallery? Looking back – to 1994 – the project that came to be known as *137 Tecumseth* had a history, which is to say a text, and that history amounted to another – that of a child watching late afternoon sunlight in a semi-darkened Victorian drawing room pass slowly across the wall opposite to the large window whose shape determines the image of that light. The child would look forward to that extended moment, and over time note the changes in location and angle of the projected light. Over time, the child would reflect on the passage of that light into a history, where – over time – that passage of light would be re-enacted time and time again, and every time mark a moment whose extinguishing could only lead to its inevitable return.

So in 1994 the project was to re-enact a history for others to share, to secure that deferred moment of pleasure in a time, the time of the re-enactment – approximately 25 minutes. A simple project, really, a piece of theatre, requiring only the construction of a device – a projection system projecting only light – capable of endless replay. Time redux. Start.

But where, actually, to start? Is there a beginning, a middle and an end – a narrative? "*At first sight – nothing.*" In my notes, it is clear that a narrative was assumed, one that "began" with the first sign of light and "ended" with its disappearance into a hiatus of – well, "nothing" – a "marking time," a separation of one reiteration from another.

If this was originally the extent of the choreography, Lebredt's text anticipates a crucial inversion, where the narrative of appearance and disappearance – arrival and departure – is collapsed into a potential inscribed into that hiatus:

> Now if I haven't got my times mixed up, if I'm on the mark insofar as I'm in step with Ian's device, the mechanism by which he can make some "thing" not simply appear and disappear but, at the same time, disappear in its very appearing, I will venture to say that what he "produces" here is not theatre. Or, if we must retain such a designation (and I believe we must), it will be in order to take notice of this "is not," this nothing which exceeds its own staging.
>
> Everything – the entire operation to come – will hinge on this interval, this time in-between time(s) of what, having already come to pass, has not yet come.

I have borrowed on Lebredt's unpublished article for two specific reasons: the first and most playful perhaps is that it was indeed unpublished – a match for a catalogue of his "unrealized" nonworks from 1975 – 2008. The second is to have been able to demonstrate a key component of Lebredt's thought and the subtlety of his insistence – informed doubtless by his philosophical attachments – on the interval or "no-thing" which is also a "some-thing" that *persists in the absence* that is provoked by the projected appearance of the "thing." This catalogue, or rather ~~catalogue~~, is itself a "nothing," a collection of "non-works," yet it is also something – a trajectory of images over time that persist, have persisted, *will have* persisted – whether "published" or not – in the greater trajectory of the "we" that is constituted in the figure "Lebredt."

Ian Carr-Harris
Toronto, 2010

1. Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" In his *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 81.

2. Jacques Derrida, "The Deconstruction of Actuality: An interview with Jacques Derrida" in *Deconstruction: A Reader*, ed. Martin McQuillan (New York: Routledge, 2000), 531. Originally published in *Passages* (Paris, Gallilée, 1993).

3. Gordon Lebredt, "Visitations: image, figure and the other side of the phenomenon," an unpublished article originally submitted to *C Magazine* in 1995.

A presence that may not be affirmed, a thought that can only suggest, a place that cannot be named.

Like a shadow on a threshold, Gordon Lebredt slips into the cleft or crack in the fabric of coherence created by a paradigm's shift. It is the moment when solid becomes fluid, when the ground shifts underfoot, when everything apparently "secure" loosens – as though the Sea parts before the Exodus to reveal a different place of knowing. It matters, too, how one enters through this threshold: perhaps as a connoisseur, observant but detached; or as a sociologist projecting possibility into some indeterminate future; or then again as an artist, observant and active – active in the sense of that engagement with process in which "within and without" admit to their inherent elision in the "making" of things.

To employ a different and non-spatial narrative, paradigm shifts can also be experienced as an *Entfuerung* or abduction, where neither place nor space need shift, but only Time – the gatekeeper that, Lethe-like, robs the traveler of familiar senses – the familiarity of speech, sight, sound and touch. Once touched by the Gate, the traveler becomes a pioneer clearing the land of the past, invoking a field of transcendence to contemplate the "thing-in itself" beyond the field, *the primordial lack, its traumatic emptiness at the heart of all new forms of symbolization* – the persistence of the future's new possibilities, resisting conventions and forming (despite what appear at times formidable and disproportionate strategies of accountability) demanding moral and aesthetic dimensions. The philosopher Slavoj Žižek insists that the notion of the whole is unthinkable without the disturbing power of the sublime – the harmony of the *sensus communis* structured, that is, around the indigestible, irrational core, a sublime whose idea, according to Kant, is impossible to absorb and can never occur in reality, but which must be presupposed if reality is to cohere.[1]

What then is this phoenix that arises out of the paradigmatic collision between painting and photography – bringing into question what remains of the idiomatic characteristic of a particular language – its *métier*, its skill, its craft, its materiality? Can these values participate without belonging, can they be inserted through

strategies of resistance or, as Lebredt points out, negative presentations? What comes to mind in the traveler as meanings within language shift and images are dislocated from the representational to objects of dematerialization? And finally, their placement or non-placement: how does the anticipated future occupy or *master* space and become a *not-place* in which we can find ourselves, *if for the first time again*, so that we cannot differentiate between what we apprehend and what we are, abiding all the while by *an injunction that comes from somewhere else, of which we imagine a kind of purity, a law, a kind of virtue.*

I understand Lebredt's text *Ten Schemata in which to order a Programme* as a roadmap to an artist's journey over thirty-three years, one designed to *re-design* a footing in the community of others and of one's own making-remaking and naming. For Lebredt, apparently *similar* forms of representation, particularly painting and photography, present fundamentally different points of contact to the experience of being in the world that distinguish the producer-receiver from the receiver at large. If the phoenix is to its ashes as time is to place, Lebredt's philosophical reflections, embodied in his writing and project proposals, suggest that Time is the trans-formation of Place – its continuation in another form, which is to say that a paradigm shift (say that which holds between painting and photography), is not to be understood as a new entity, but instead a re-entry or re-formation of its antecedent.

Lebredt's writings and projects are, therefore, as antithetical to the certainty of Time as they are to Place. He himself speaks of a *Non-Place* understood as a different frame of knowing, where the paradigm shift through the operation of questions and speculations generates an *Opening* revealing always further questions and responses – his and potentially others' – that ricochet and overlap and through which life is adjusted point by point to itself. It is a making and being constructed from within, where the idea of the self is disseminated and inclusive of the other's response yet remains necessarily structurally present. The programme he defines, and I think it is important to note that it becomes defined over time by the ten schemata (it's hard not to think

of the ten commandments here) that describe the journey from the *Entfuerung* into the unknown – *the desert*, towards the *Mitsein* (to be with) reaching beyond the *Dasein* of just being.

The struggle hinges here on how to entertain this threshold, how to enter the *Opening*. What are we given that we *re-cognize* in contrast to what is given differently, making it *un-re-cognizable?* In Lebredt's review on the work of Sally Späth[2], he acknowledges the moment when just enough familiarity, in this case with painting's convention of seeing an image as *intrinsic* to the surface, becomes absorbed into an unfamiliarity with the materiality of Mylar, a reflective surface in which the image is seen as *extrinsic* to its surface. Their merging, he writes, constructs a loss of contrast between the space traditionally occupied by the painting and the space occupied by the viewer, a sliding of the surface of one into the other, destabilizing in this way the viewer's position. Similarly, the ontological "lack" of photography, not yet populated by conventions of métier and history, can be construed as a "reflective surface" binding with the ontological "presence" of painting. Where does one find oneself on the surface *created between them*, and how does one construct a *Mitsein* beyond or perhaps even *in* this surface?

Lebredt's body of work raises questions not only concerning changing notions of established conventions, for example the concept of *métier*, but of the philosophical conventions in which they are embedded – suggesting that perhaps all that is as yet *un-recog-nized* potential is itself nevertheless always already fully present. What gives Lebredt's work a powerful currency is his insistence on identifying emerging values through the *labour of the negative*, a page taken from Theodor Adorno's post-war work interrogating the increasingly mirrored surface of modernity through the lens of Marx's material values.

If Adorno's dialectical arguments are about contradicting and negating productively what we believe or think we know, seen in this light Lebredt's drawings and propositions for installations flirt with keeping the viewer restless and *alert* to his or her own assumptions. In *Corridor Block* (*face-face*) from 1978, one no sooner finds one's path for entering this turnstile than one is blocked in one's expectations, forcing a re-calibration. The illuminated display cases, significantly two, in *Two Illuminated Display Cases* from 1976, are on wheels and potentially capable of changing positions. In *Centrepiece*, from 1977, the intersection of a diachronic and synchronic architectural configuration cuts a negative cross out of a solid block.

In a more recent proposal, *False Exits* from 1989-1999 for ArtLab at the University of Western Ontario Gallery, the impenetrability of material space inhabited by language running, again significantly, along horizontally alternating layered white and gray bands requires the viewer to turn on this or her own axis. For example, to read "...IN FACT IT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE A STROKE IN ORDER TO SEE A LINE" continues on the adja-

cent wall as "BUT IS NOT THIS SPATIAL VOID A "SOMETHING" – THE FORM OF ALL EXPERIENCE..." Moreover, the continuity of the text is interrupted by doorway openings both at centre and in the corners where the walls meet, and is also interrupted by Hebraic symbols that suggest the letters for GL (Gordon's initials?) and the Zero One, the binary programming code that in the drawing appears to cut through the wall. The place of the viewer then, more so than the actual architectural site, becomes a *non-place* of reception, at one and the same time both opened up – unmarked, un-reflected – and closed off, marked and reflected, but which "in itself" remains neither.

The *Opening*, then, is not to be found; the *Opening*, the threshold, is who *we* are (the space of deferral) in search of recognition (the space between). Lebredt's work brings us closer to this understanding.

Mapping our world and ourselves in it as a multi-sensory experience is dependent on the stimulus provided beyond the spatial envelope around our body. The always-void of the *Opening* draws in propositions, offers up resistance, in a simultaneous and paradoxical embrace, while we crave stability and resist change. A paradigmatic shift affords us the stimulus to find and define ourselves and keep us moving and living, whether in excess or absorption. The projected propositions as drawings presented under the title *Gordon Lebredt: Nonworks 1975–2008* in this publication can be imagined, if not actually experienced – yet – through the presentation to the viewer of suggested objects, their circumstances and potential associations. On the page they are always in a state of waiting, waiting to be *real*-ized, waiting for an audience, waiting for an interaction, waiting for memories, waiting for conversations, waiting for feedback, waiting for the fulfillment of their predestination in a world folded always back on itself but always in the anticipated presence of someone at some point in some place but *No Place* in particular. As potential participants we not only anticipate but also, in response to these propositions, generate energy or light that helps to guide us through the maze of our desire for our *Mitsein*.

Yvonne Lammerich
Toronto, 2010

1. Slavoj Žižek, "The Sublime Object of Ideology" (1989) as quoted in Philip Shaw's *The Sublime* (London, Rutledge, 2006).

2. Gordon Lebredt, "Excorporation(s) states of preservation, points of becoming: movement and indetermination in the work of Sally Späth" (unpublished, 2003).

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird by Wallace Stevens: an Extrapolation for Gordon Lebredt

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

With what reticence do I write of him and his works, with what fugitive unclaimings do I mark (simultaneously obliterating) his trajectory! To get to be the only moving thing, you must move in your practice from alchemist to metaphysician, overwhelming (over-*realm*ing) your natural doubleness with the immovable densities of reconstituted *animus*. The only moving thing is a silence as vast and dense as a black hole.

Works of art are shells of speech (see Paul Valéry's *Words Are Shells of Speech*).[1] The blackbird's eye is made of soft smoke, compressed into a wet dot. We follow it wherever it dances. "The earth holds itself still," writes Pierre Reverdy in his poem, "Secret." "You would say somebody sighed."[2]

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

Three or more. Sometimes, a full parlement of fowles. Gordon Lebredt has been of three minds, two of them ocular (you are given, you see, you try your best), and the third, oracular – you see at first and then have no wish to see further (black boughs stretch out onto the sea, leading to the attenuation of branches and stems and twigs until wood and water are one). This constitutes the swooning of eternity.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

What do you see when you see a single work? Or, more particularly, a single work of Gordon Lebredt's? You seldom see much more than a keyhole, a conduit, a rabbit hole hanging straight down into epistemological space and getting brighter and greener at the end lying furthest from your entry point. The word "Siberia," for example, in the exhibition, *Marchland* (January 2010) at Toronto's Christopher Cutts Gallery, which, though normally scarcely a word of enticement (the ice of punishment), provided an embedded yet encircling light that led one to a strangely enhanced inseparability from oneself. In *Marchland*, each viewer was invited to transgress into his, her, own parable. The proper name "Siberia," Lebredt wrote, is "a figment of the imagination [which, when I saw the exhibition, I misread as "a filament of the imagination" – a misreading that, I think, has merit], an impossible territory, a monad of pure reflection without representation, out of which everything is drawn, yet nothing, supposedly, goes out or comes in from the outside. A land of sleepwalkers who dream so that they may, in part, prolong sleep; land of the fading subject, the subject marked for subversion."

IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

The sublime couples, the enriching triads: the Dante artist, the Virgil viewer, the Beatrice believer. The blackbird is always, of course, Gordon Lebredt, the sharp, glittering pinprick axis around which everything revolves (this is the still, hard way to create a revolution).

V

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

Innuendo absorbs all signification (some beauty!). Inflection is the piquancy – the salt – of essence. I know which I prefer. The space after the blackbird's whistling is made of stone.

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

This is merely poetry sleeping on the wing. Same with "indecipherable cause." Those are prettinesses remote from Gordon Lebredt, and thus his work – tough as bone – crosses all that, crosses as in crisscross, as in crossed out (denied). Ah Gordon Lebredt, the Bartleby of contemporary art, preferring the *not to* (the glory of beautiful unbuilt works) to the *to*.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

Gordon Lebredt among us, with built works as unfordable as clouds, and with unbuilt works as substantial as shovels.

Gordon Lebredt has contemporary art's equivalent to Gertrude Stein's wild pen. In "Lesson Nineteen" of Stein's *First Reader*, she writes: "A wild pen will do anything it just will do anything, it will go round and round, it will run away, it will give ink away, it will change its name, it will fasten a stain on a finger so strong that the stain will not go away for ever so long. A wild pen is wilder than anything, it is wilder than a cat or a cow or a bat or a tiger or an eagle or a rat, it is wilder than anything and everybody knows how wild is that."[3]

Everybody knows how wild, wilder than anything, is Gordon Lebredt.

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

Here is the agitation, the perplexity of influence: lucid, inescapable rhythms set free in time to acquire accumulations of rumination. Rem Koolhaas, back in the *Delirious New York* days, seems to have felt that "architects have a right to the unconscious."[4] That being said, and acknowledged, let it also be proposed that artists (artists who are *like* Gordon Lebredt – which takes in nobody) have a concomitant right to access what one might call Standard Consciousness (like Standard Time). Standard Consciousness transmutes "inescapable rhythms" into something closer to the pulse of the continually revelatory shopping spree. Gordon Lebredt knows that the horizon is always entirely new.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

Just don't fly out of sight, please. I cannot sit any longer at the edge of any more circles of ratiocination, resignation and resolve. I want my aesthetic food uncooked from now on – as raw as a brick or a board. Henri Michaux noted in "And More Changes Still" (in *My Properties*), "A sudden fall of earth made a beach enter into me, a pebbly beach. Then it began to ruminate inside me, and that summoned the sea, the sea."[5] The sea the sea the sea the sea.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

Flying in a green ray.

Why cry out, why sharply, at the sight of the blackbird's flight, given the inevitability of its spiraled trajectory? The sight of blackbirds flying (in a green light or otherwise) is the sight of black, inky words on white (green) pages. These inky, Stygian words – fly though they may – will never really move because they are the charcoal traces of our first and last thoughts: flimsy thoughts, tough as rock. Each blackbird is a hoarse cry, released from the confines of everything you actually meant to say. "The use of the word," writes Emmanuel Levinas, "wrenches experience out of its aesthetic self-sufficiency, the *here* where it has quietly been lying. Invoking experience turns it into a creature."[6]

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

"What is man," wrote Maurice Maeterlinck, "but a god who is afraid?"[7] And yet: Gordon Lebredt in the glass coach, but unafraid, unafraid. Unafraid throughout a whole life of transformation. Here is the artist at work, wearing a mantle thrown over his thin, ivory shoulders by Henri Michaux – maker of usable exhalations: "It's not so much trouble," writes Michaux, "to pass from a rhombohedron to a truncated pyramid, but it's a lot of trouble to pass from a truncated pyramid to a whale; you must know immediately how to dive, to breathe, and then the water is cold and then you find yourself face to face with the harpooners...."[8] So what? The soul loves deep swimming.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

You make art and everything comes up (dragon-teeth) art to match it. You unmake art, you labour (hammer and tongs) to build the unbuildable, you fold down your plans into a tent or a paper airplane, and sidestep the terrifying, founding crime. You are your mother's body when you don't make things.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

The artist looking forward and backwards. A glass of wine in the backyard, the backyard not yet built, not yet cleared of trees and sanded into the city. The artist with his Janus-mirror, his two-way looking glass, in his pivotal hand.

Gary Michael Dault
Napanee, 2010

1. Paul Valéry, as quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 49.

2. Pierre Reverdy, *Pierre Reverdy: Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1972), 9.

3. Gertrude Stein, "Lesson Nineteen" in *The First Reader and Three Plays* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), 53.

4. Quoted in Hubert Damisch, *Skyline: The Narcissistic City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 113.

5. Henri Michaux, "And More Changes Still" in *Henri Michaux: Selected Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 41.

6. Emmanuel Levinas, "The Transcendence of Words" in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 148.

7. Maurice Maeterlinck as quoted in "The Symbolist Movement in Literature" Arthur Symons, ed. Eric Warner and Graham Hough, *Strangeness and Beauty: Aesthetic Criticism 1840–1910, Volume 2: After Symons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 257. First published as *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 1899.

8. Henri Michaux, *op. cit.*, 43.

On the Impossibility of Seeing Gordon Lebredt's Work

What I admire most about Gordon Lebredt's work is the way in which it has wound its way through every conceivable aspect of the exhibition process, somehow navigating the system, the social manner whereby something is given value simply by having appeared within the exhibition context. But this has left his work with a peculiar problem: the only way to really *see* it is to see it in its entirety (since it is only then that the whole of the exhibition structure – the "framing" that situates an artwork, sells it, gives it meaning by commenting on it, places it in a specific architecture, in a specific institutional history – appears) and yet it's impossible to see the work as a whole.

Part of the problem is that Gordon has poured out such an immense variety of proposals that it's almost inconceivable they could all be realized. Some fell afoul of life's contingencies. In some cases, the gallery for which a piece was conceived either moved or its existing architecture was altered; in other cases the proposals were simply rejected. Since Gordon's work is so responsive, it has always relied on being given a specific institutional situation from which to form itself, the raw materials being the institutions themselves, the exhibition occasion itself. It's rarely possible to reformat an existing proposal for some other setting.

Gordon's practice has been to offer up each work as an intricate proposal, usually in the form of drawings accompanied by a dense and rich commentary which functions as both a description of the work to be made and a sort of apologia for its being called into existence. These proposals far surpass what is necessary to elicit the opportunity to exhibit the work: they are works unto themselves. Yet they are works that admit their insufficiency. They need to be supplemented by the exhibition of the material work, installation or situation – just as Gordon's exhibited works themselves also admit *their* insufficiency. The point is, that even if one had seen all of Gordon's exhibitions, so much would remain *un*seen since all the proposals together – whether realized or not – form a corpus that exceeds anything made visible in any, or even all, of the exhibitions.

For many years I've thought that each of Gordon's exhibitions is like glimpsing a fragment of what wants to become visible. In a paper on Ad Reinhardt, Joseph Kosuth said something that is crucial to understanding the work of an artist like Gordon: "In evaluating the work of Ad Reinhardt, all of his output must be consid-

ered, not just that aspect of his work which satisfies those conceptions of tradition maintained by official culture...."[1] In Gordon's case, his *work* is *all of his work* – everything proposed, whether realized or not: all the proposals, gathered together to visibly form the corpus that they in fact *do* form, though spread out over the years, and all of his writing, in which his characteristic generosity towards so many different artists and practices is evident. His work is all of these gathered together and it is only in this kind of gathering that it could ever, perhaps, become visible.

But this "entire work" could never be seen, even though seeing *is* crucial. In Gordon's work, "seeing" transmutes into "reading." Exhibitions are always framed by a commentary that accompanies it, Often the exhibition makes use of large texts elegantly installed on the gallery walls, texts designed to be seen as well as read. Often other elements are placed over them, obscuring or blanking out some of the words. We can *see* that we don't see, that the text doesn't deliver itself to us. Yet the presence of the texts seems to imply that seeing must be supplemented by something that isn't visual. Then there's the more-than-visual visuality of other pieces; mirrors mirroring mirrors, the dizzying reflections that endlessly proliferate what was already given in the exhibition space. How could we *see* a body of work that makes seeing an impossible task?

This brief note is not the extensive or careful study Gordon's work requires. This volume is not the thorough gathering together of his output necessary to glimpse the outlines of his undertaking. But it's a start, and it has the great virtue of putting "nonworks" on an equal footing with works that have indeed been realized. It may be impossible to see his work as a whole, but here, it is possible to glimpse what the always contingent history of his exhibitions hasn't allowed to be seen until now. As Robert Smithson once wrote, "You don't have to have existence to exist."[2]

Andy Patton
Toronto, 2010

1. Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966–1990*, ed. Gabriele Guercio (Cambridge, MA and London, England: The MIT Press, 1991), 193.

2. Robert Smithson, "Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan," *The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations*, Jack Flam, ed. Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 126.

Gordon Lebredt: Dialogue in Reticence

In spite of its seeming circuitousness, Gordon Lebredt's work is complete, perspicuous in every aspect. As the work lacks nothing, I shall speak of how it is *lived*, from a privileged place of friendship.

Meeting Gordon happened as if by chance over a decade ago, but then perhaps it was not really by chance at all. While still a student looking for direction I came across documentation of *Milieu: of the order of presentation*, a curatorial project Gordon realized at Toronto's S.L. Simpson Gallery in 1995. In *Milieu* (an original work in its own right) I saw a mysterious lucidity, the odd kind that is both elegant and resistant. Out of this initial discovery, a friendship flourished. In subsequent years, the need to understand Gordon's work deepened into an empathy with his presence and rhythm. Between Gordon the artist and Gordon the person breathes a remarkably consistent aura and intensity. Given this experience, the desire to "understand" his work has gradually dissolved through the mutual pleasure of friendship, from which I learned that Gordon is *like* his work.

Thinking back at this moment, on all the time spent with Gordon, what I have enjoyed the most, is drinking with him. Often we would just drink in his backyard. Entire afternoons, and sometimes evenings, would pass quietly, animated with only sparsely intermittent conversation. (Surely wine helps free us from the demands of words.) I don't know what he was thinking about, but I know I was not thinking at all. There are few companions with whom I could enjoy the passage of time in this way, with no obligation to fill it while fully appreciating the value of its passing in the presence of the other. For me, these moments of idle pleasure provide much food for thought and energy for life. Time spent this way is not wasted – it is granted.

During these shared moments of near silence, I would occasionally ask Gordon a question, mostly about art. (It never fails to astonish me that he has thought deeply and seriously about *everything*.) These moments led me to appreciate that Gordon's reticence, his reserve, has the quality of a clear and compressed thought. Likewise, his work demonstrates a condensed and resistant kind of beauty. Both the work and the person situate a precipitous sort of presence, at once remote, but noble and complex in all its manifested clarity. There is no contradiction here.

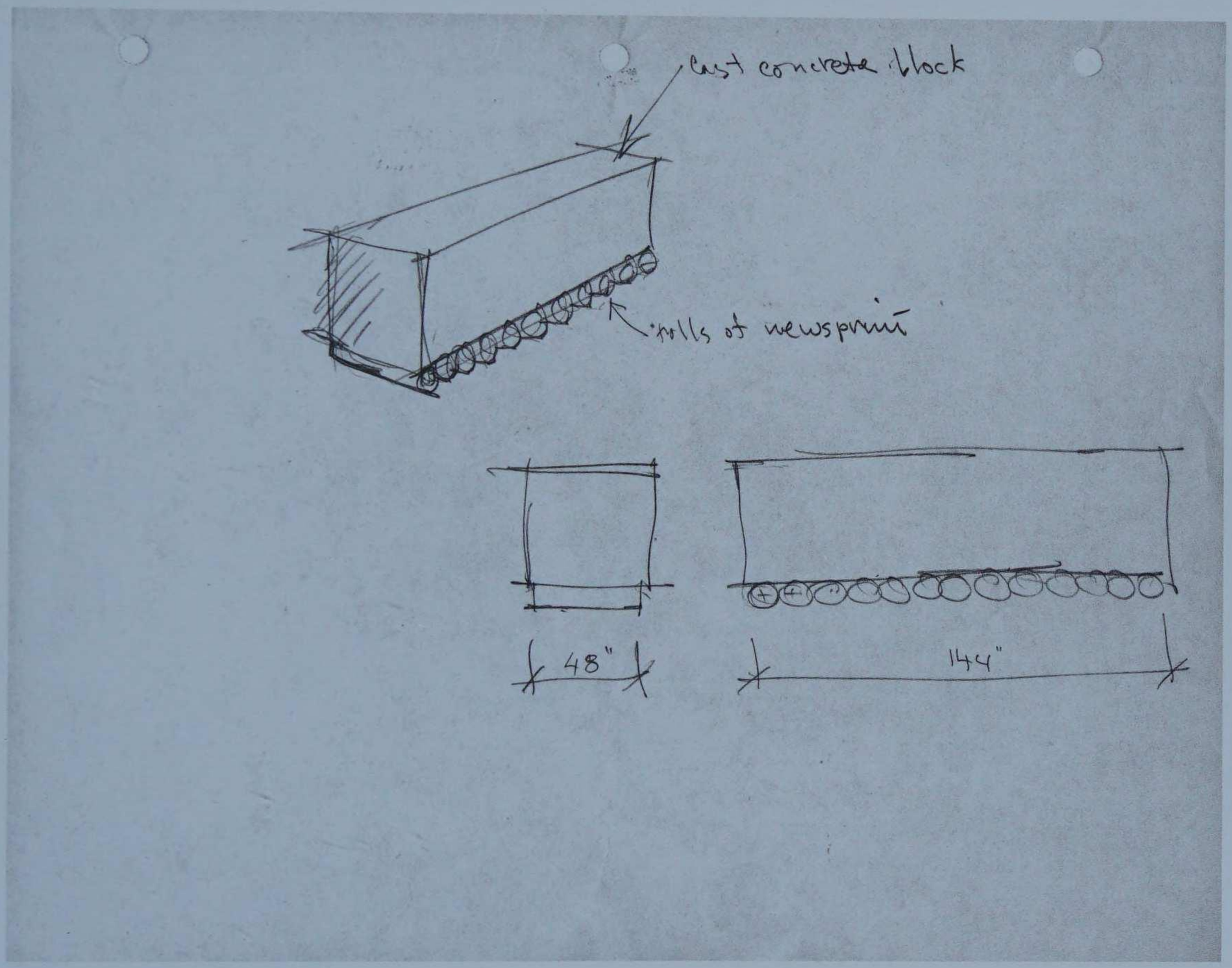
I regard every one of Gordon's works as a "nonwork" of sorts. In effect, each of his projects, while assuming a different guise and trajectory, invariably answers to the same calling – to delimit that which remains resistant to being delivered or framed by an artwork. Insofar as an artwork goes, each of Gordon's work is set up in order to short-circuit its coming-into-presence. Thus, the "work" succeeds in doubling as a proxy of sorts – a proxy of that which it cannot be. Such a "nonwork" – a work that has yet to take place – solicits this "thing" (this *less-than-something* or *almost-nothing*) – the spectre that hovers somewhere near, but never fully enters into, the orbit of phenomenality, thought, discourse and perhaps even the ideality of "art." In other words, a *nonwork* beckons that which cannot be set into "work" by an artwork.

What might be the destiny of this singular project, one that runs counter to all the conditions that are supposed to deliver art, or set "art" into work as an artwork? The stakes are high, entailing an almost suicidal feat for an artist. *Gordon Lebredt: Nonworks 1975–2008* is Gordon's persistent demonstration: such a work necessitates, at the heart of its very operation, an unremitting shuttling (between mediums, figures, proxies, etc.) in order to trace an itinerant destiny. Its negative presence is necessarily foreclosed to the reward in and of the present. Rather, such a work pledges itself to a certain calling, one that is issued from an incessant future, a future that may never arrive within *this* time, or any other. Such is its disposition: it has to be so.

I dedicate this text to Gordon Lebredt, a mentor and friend who shows me what it means to be an artist.

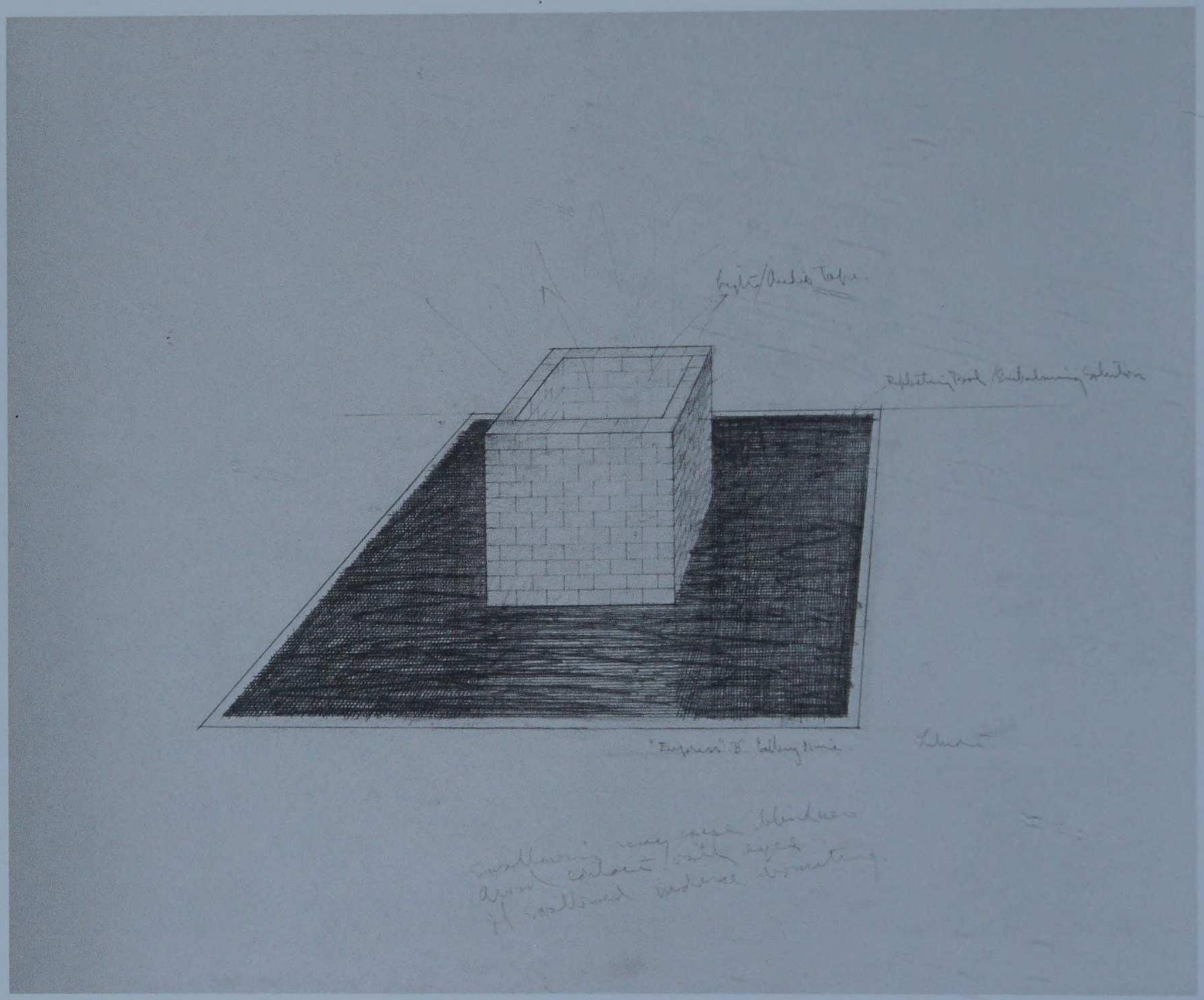
Yam Lau
Bejing, 2010

the Nonworks



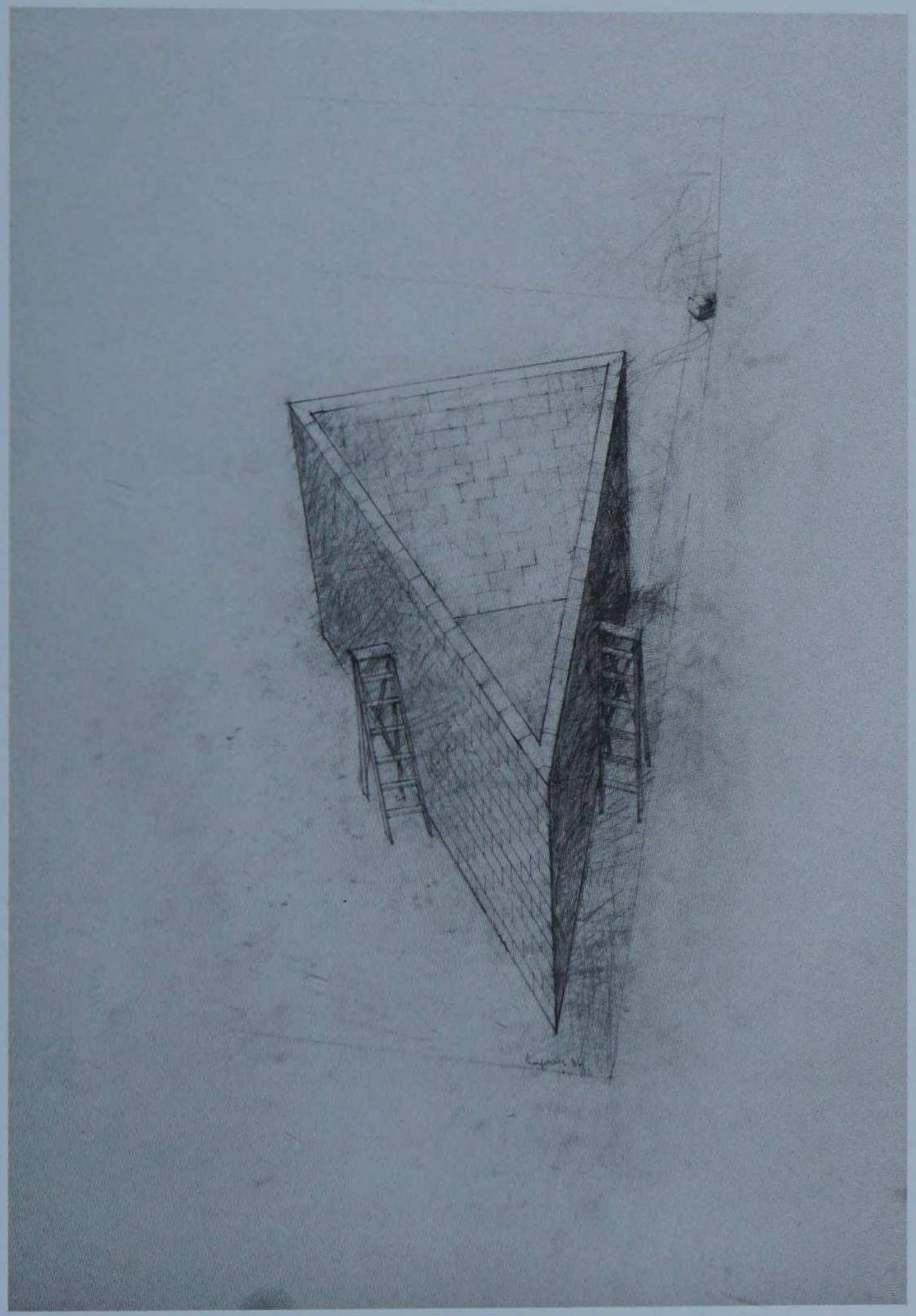
untitled

1975
graphite on paper
11 × 8.5 inches

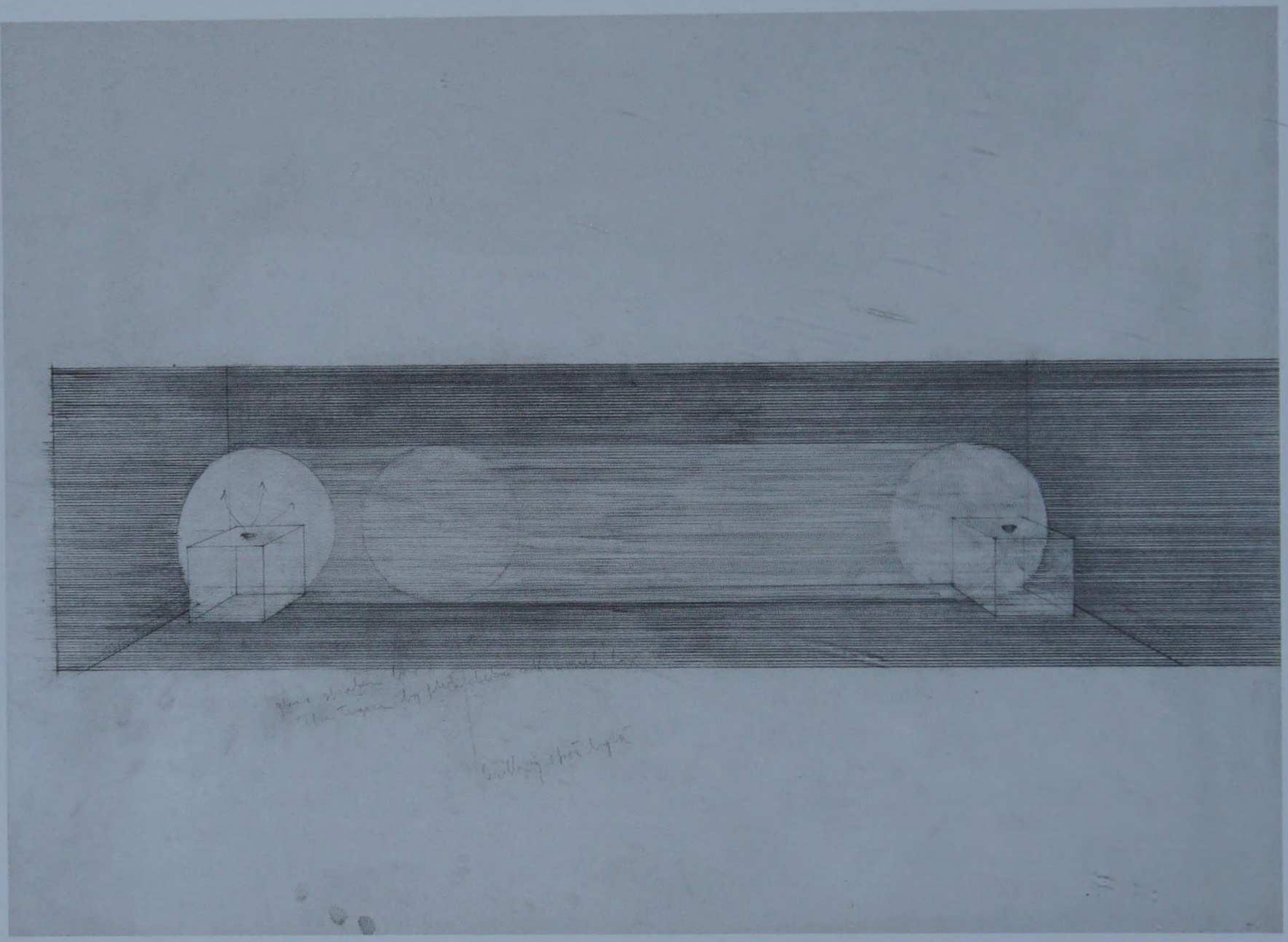


Empress

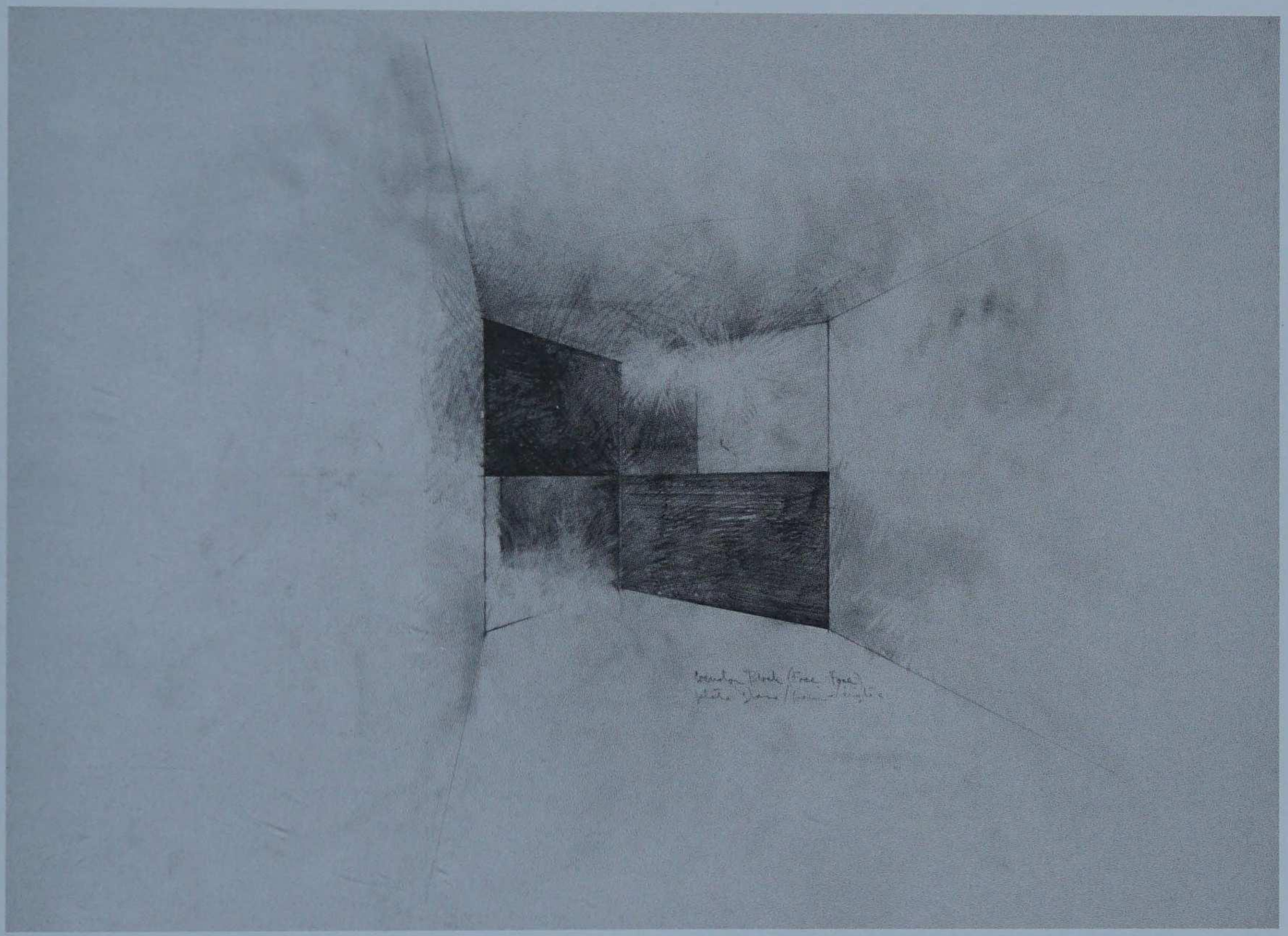
1975
graphite on paper
24 × 22 inches
proposal for The Winnipeg Art Gallery



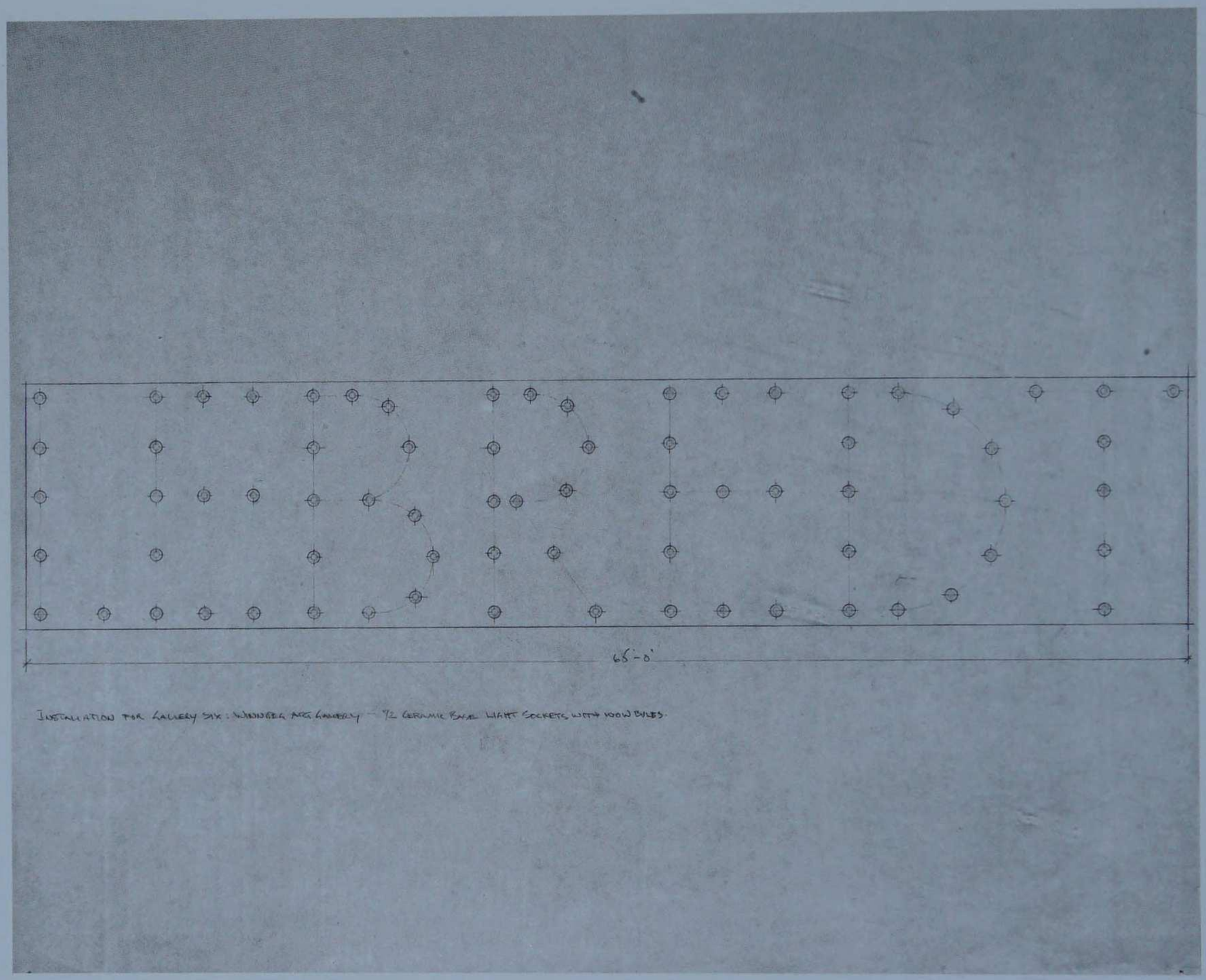
Empress
1976
graphite on paper
24 × 36 inches
unsubmitted proposal for
the Arthur Street Gallery,
Winnipeg



Search (to Wilhelm Reich)
1976
graphite on paper
29 × 23 inches

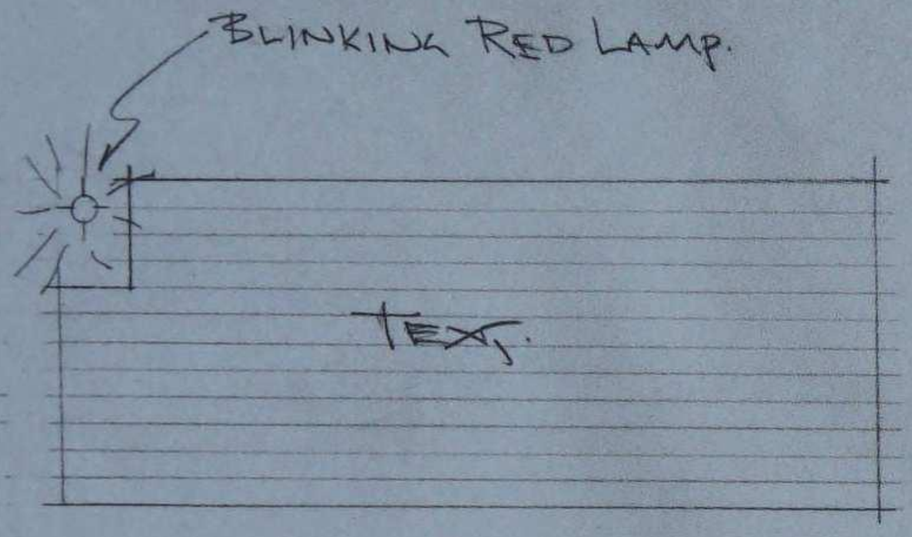


Corridor Block (face-face)
1978
graphite on paper
30 × 22 inches



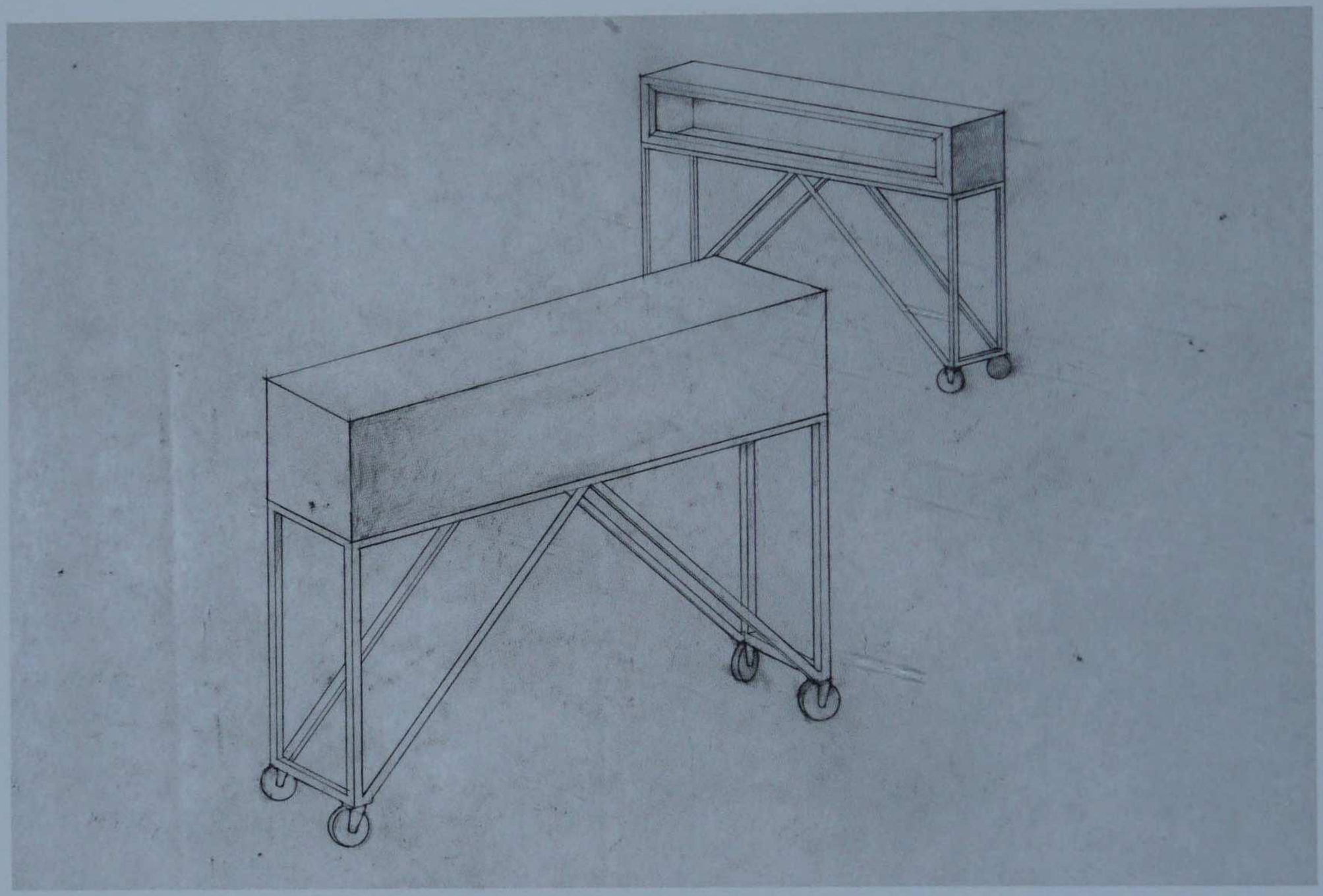
Name

1976
graphite on paper
11 × 8.5 inches
proposal for The Winnipeg Art Gallery

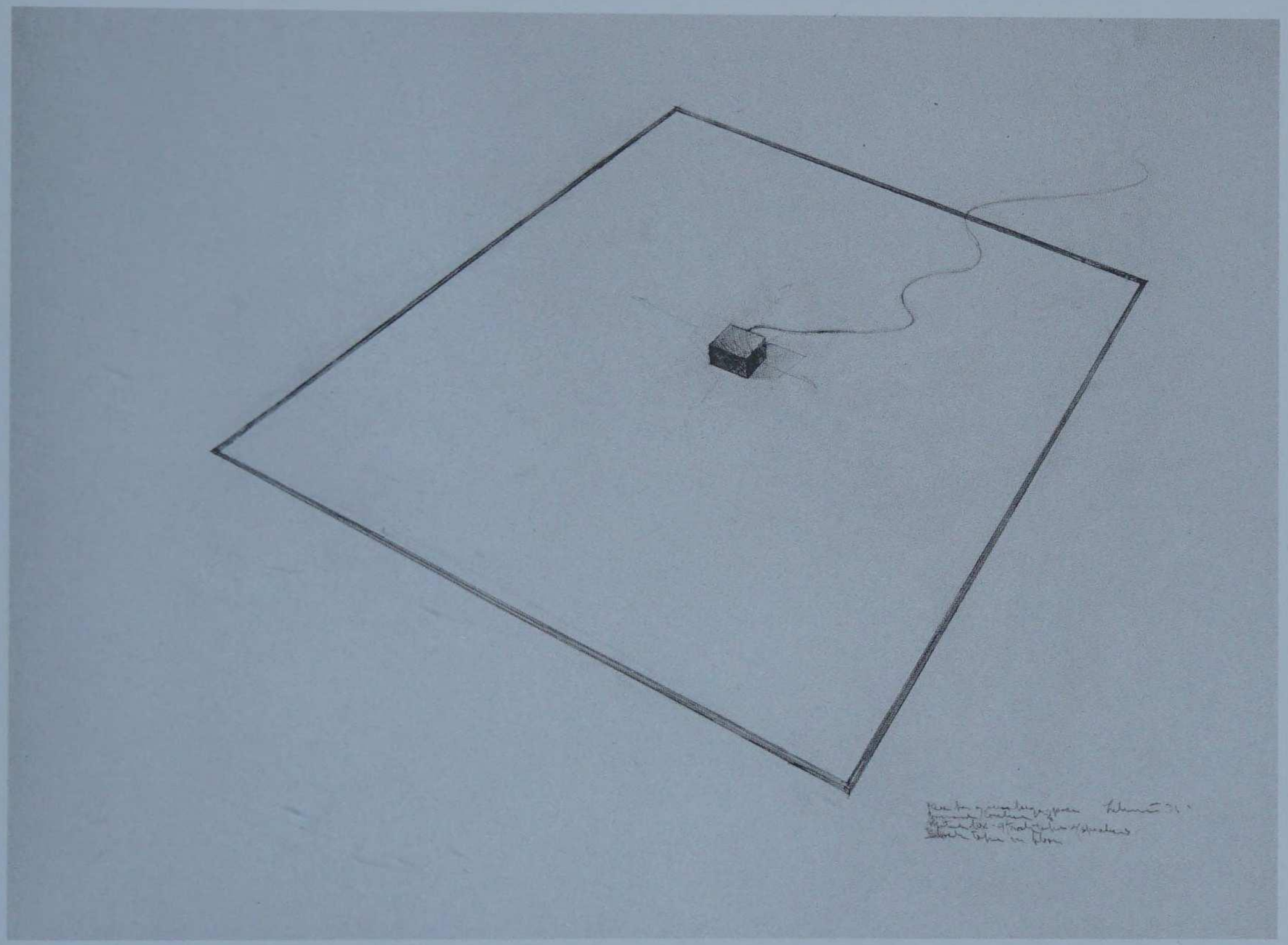


Text with Warning Light

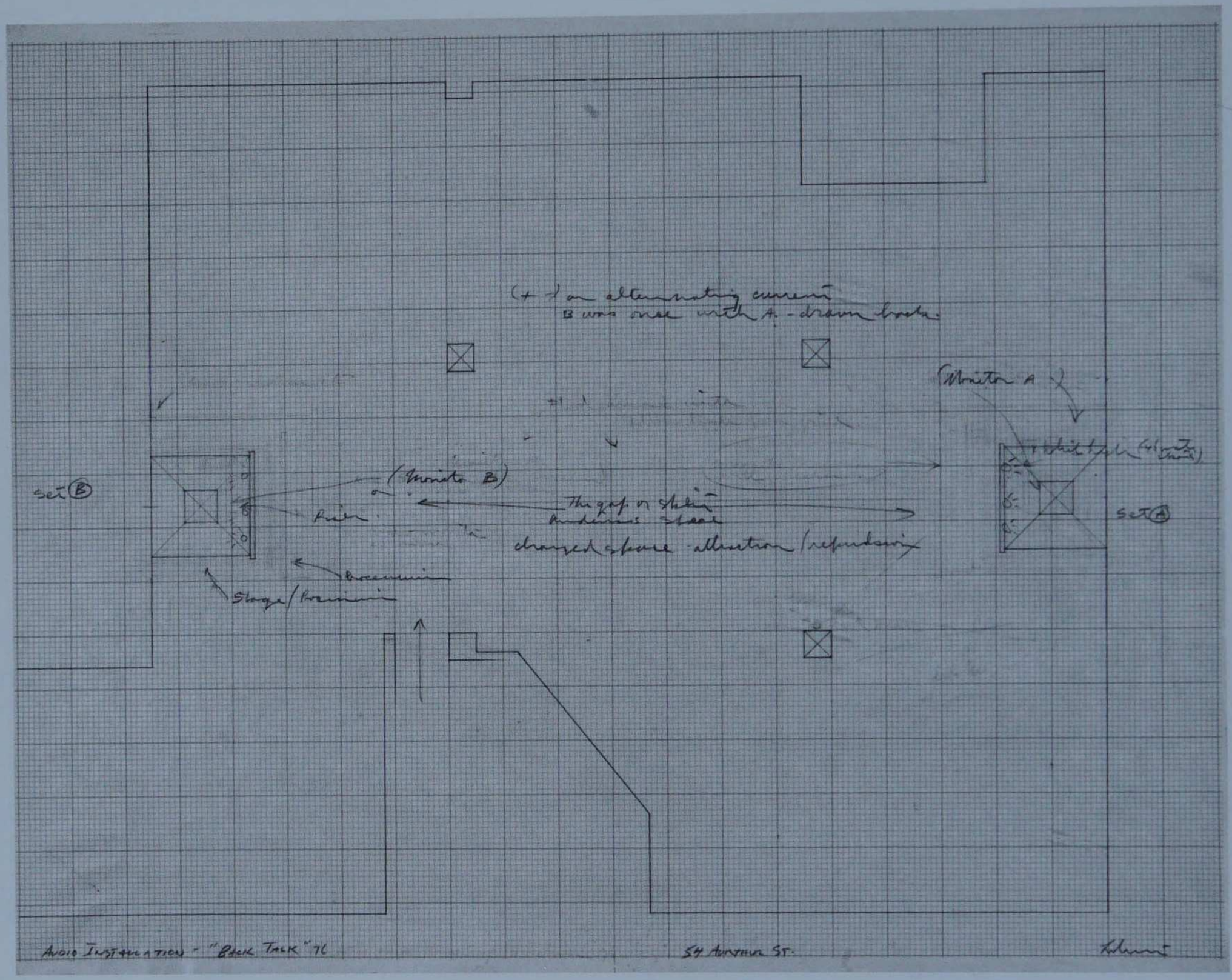
1977
graphite on paper
10.88 × 8.38 inches



Two Illuminated Display Cases
1976
graphite on paper
21.13 × 13.75 inches

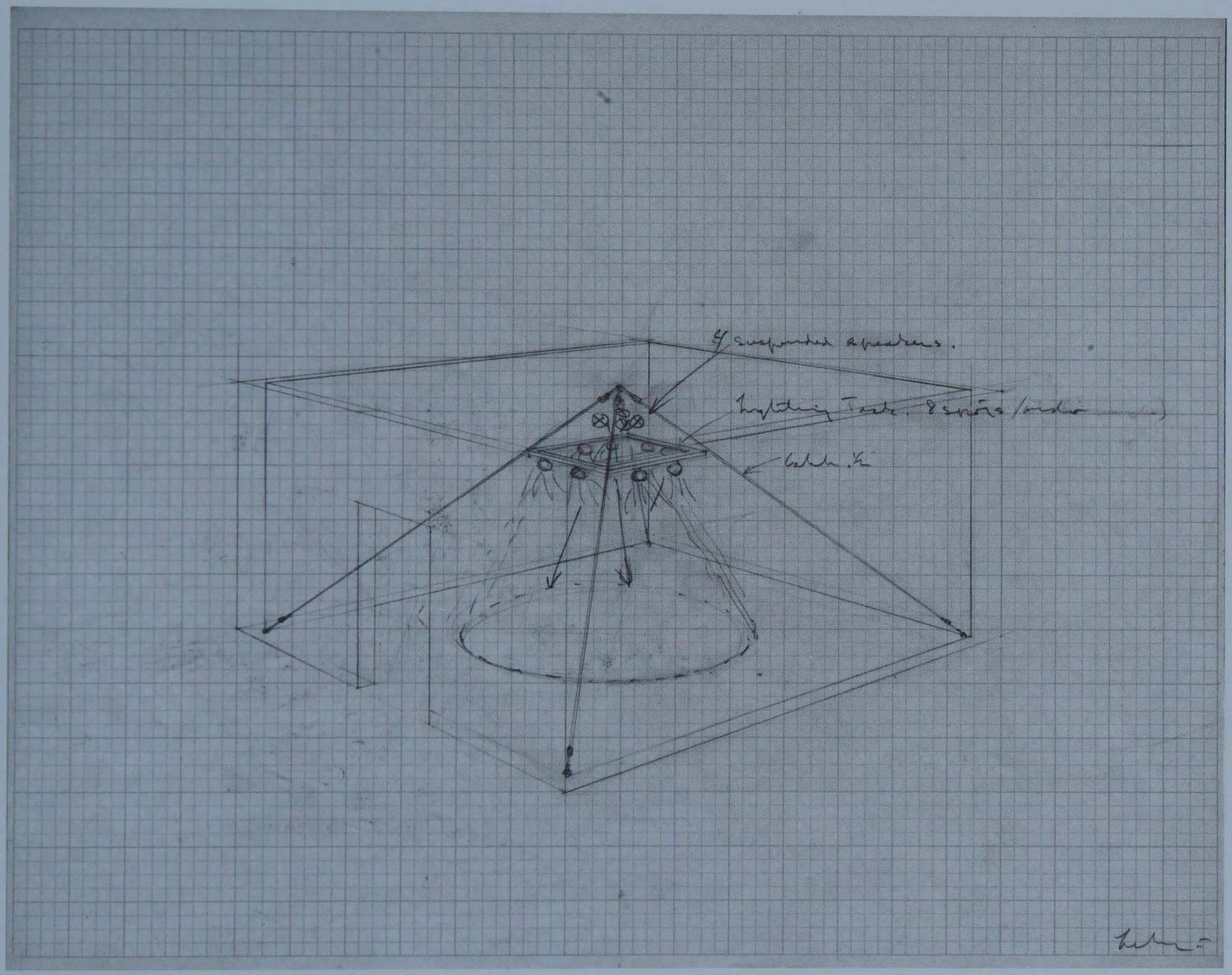


Command/Control
1976
graphite on paper
30 × 22 inches



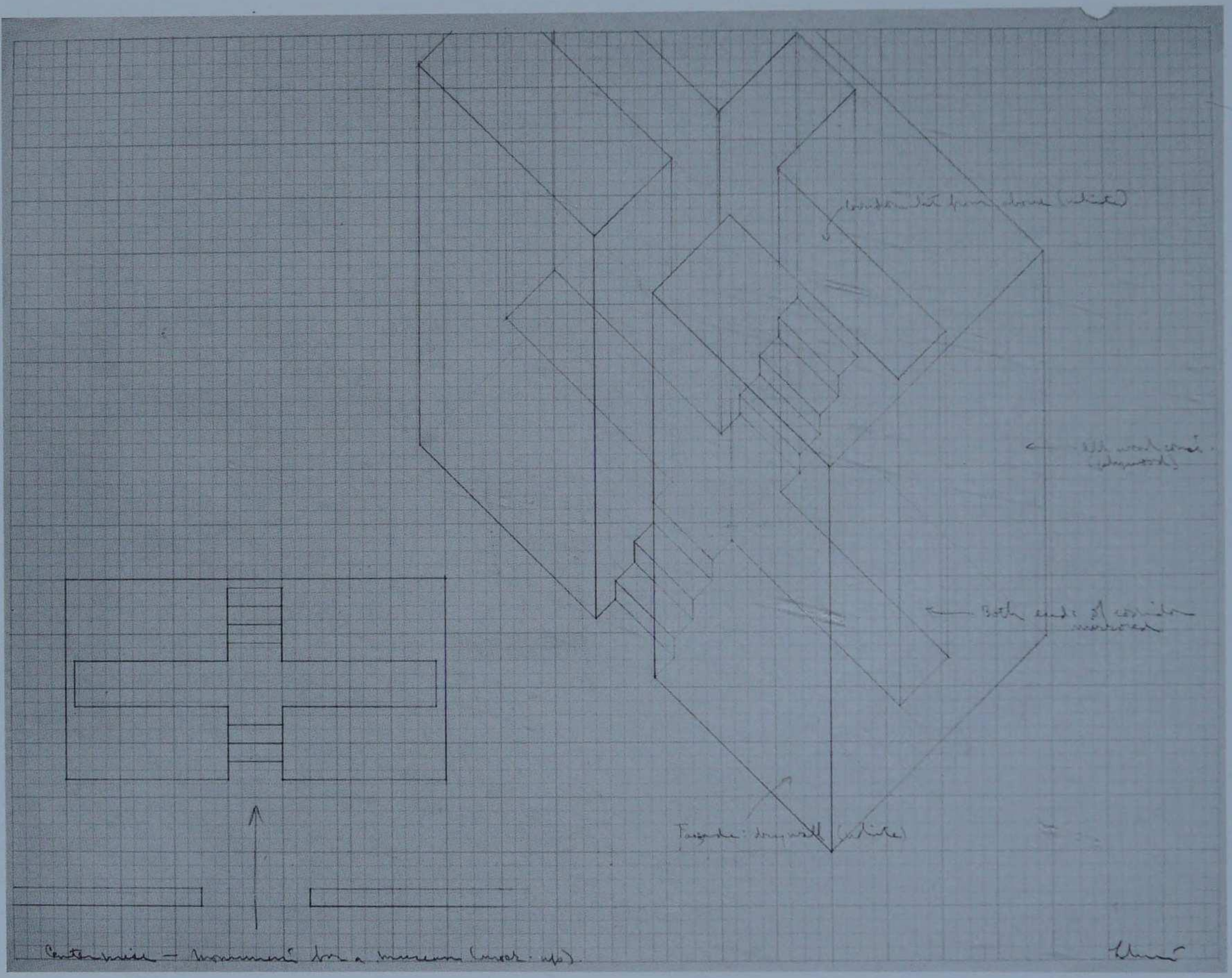
Back-Talk

1976
plan
graphite on graph paper
22.25 × 17.63 inches
proposal for the Arthur Street Gallery, Winnipeg



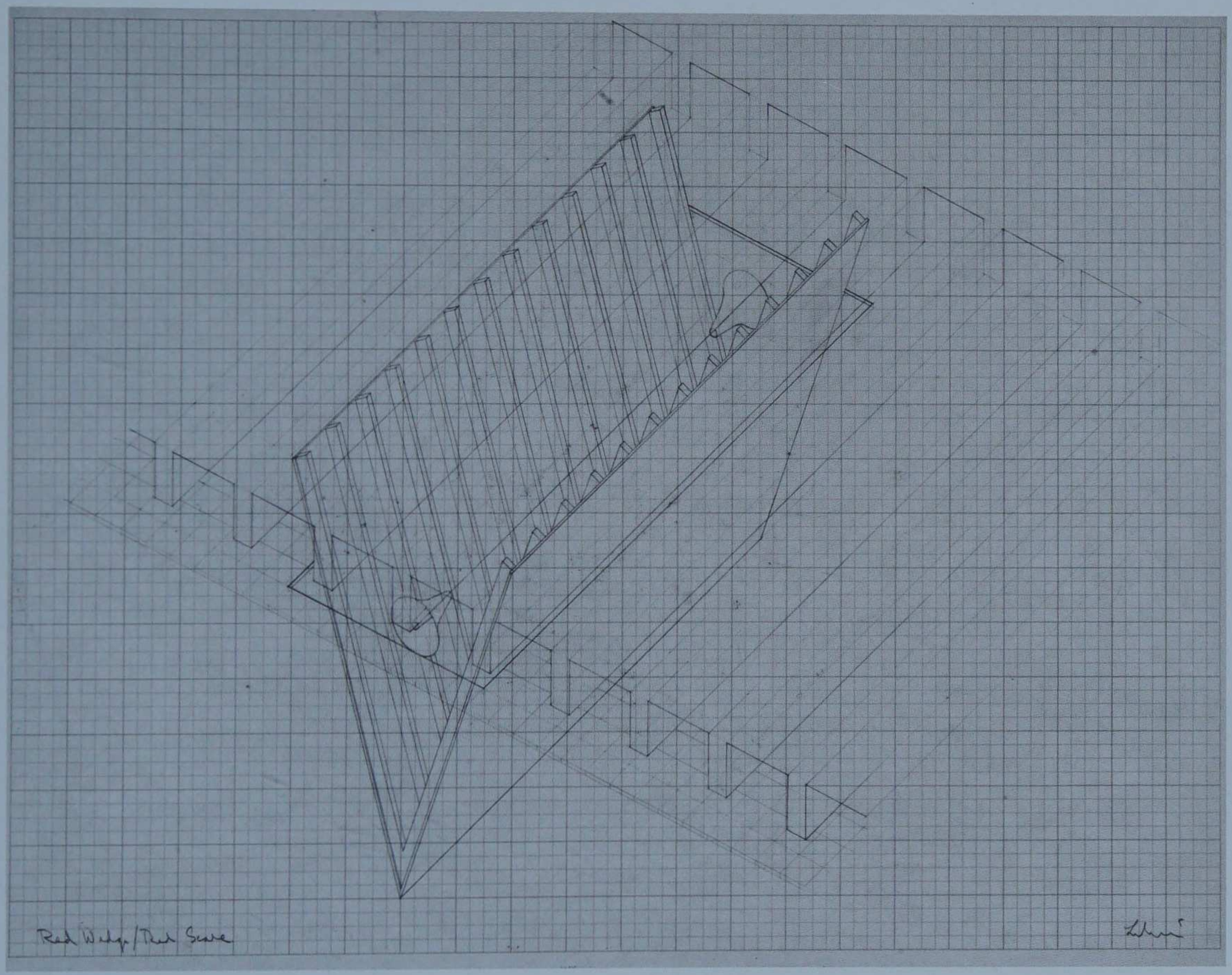
Lighted Gantry

1976
graphite on graph paper
22.25 × 17.63 inches

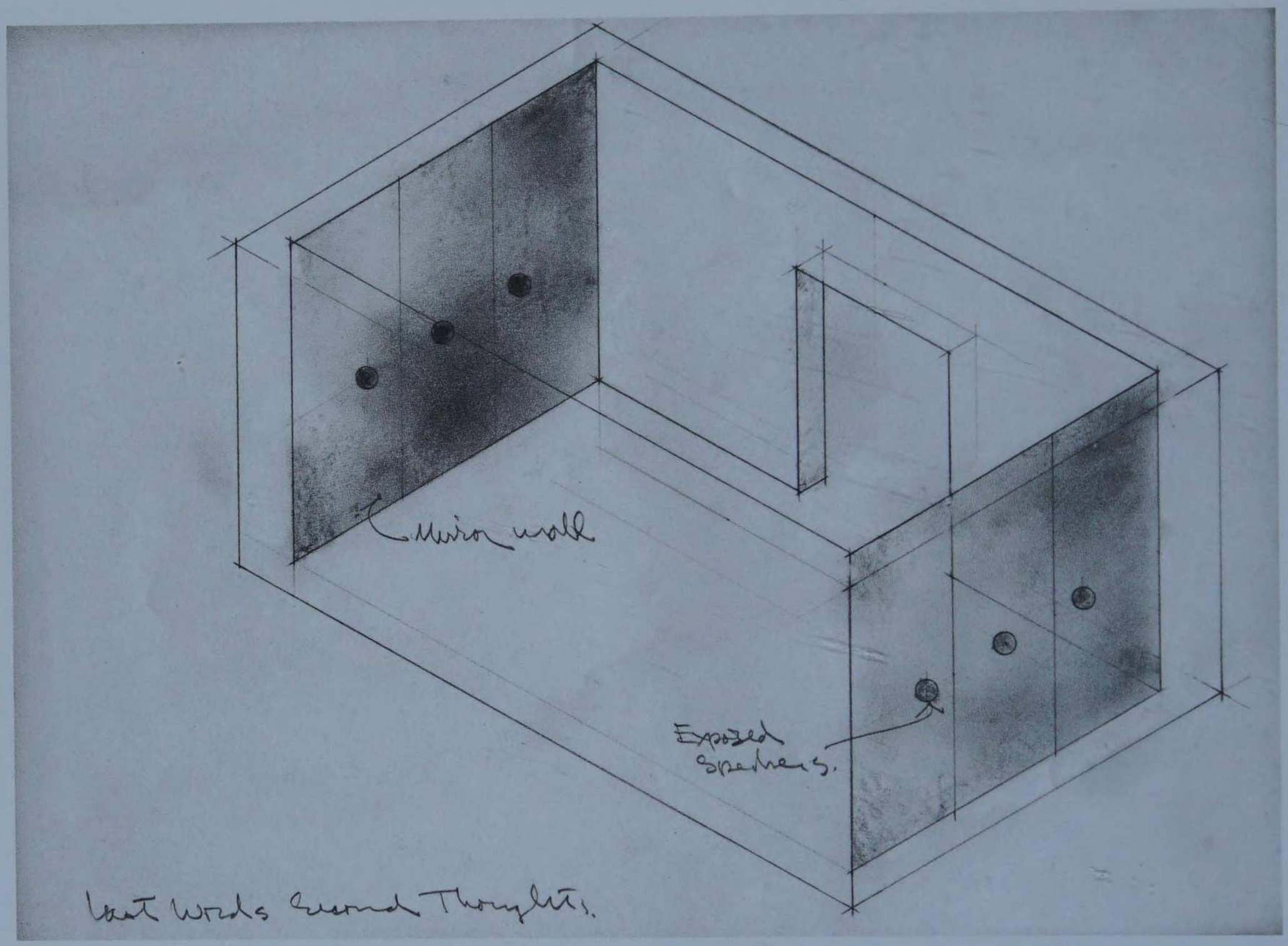


Centrepiece

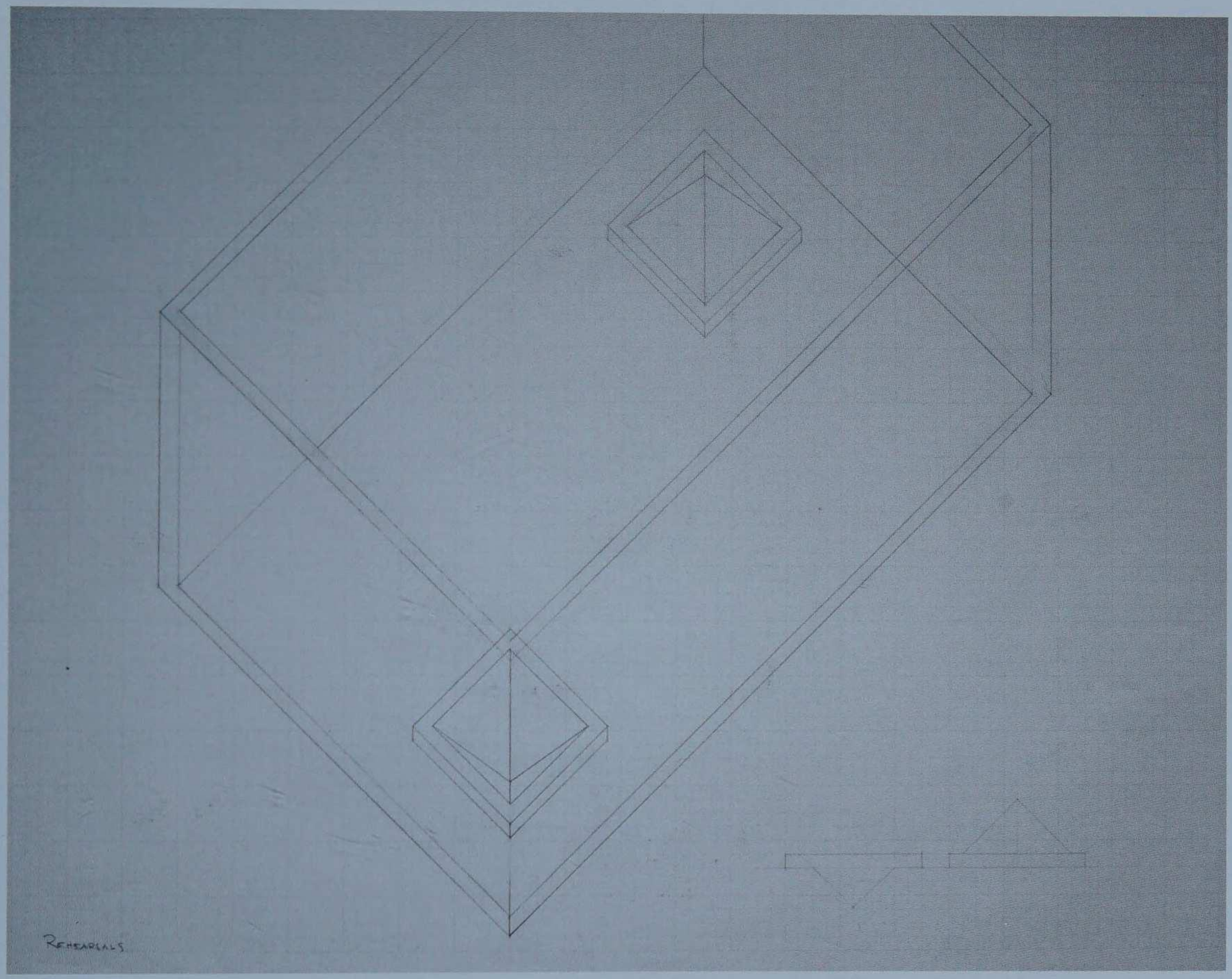
1977
axonometric + plan
graphite on graph paper
22.25 × 17.63 inches



Red Wedge/Red Scare
1978
axonometric
graphite on graph paper
22.25 × 17.63 inches
proposal for The Winnipeg Art Gallery

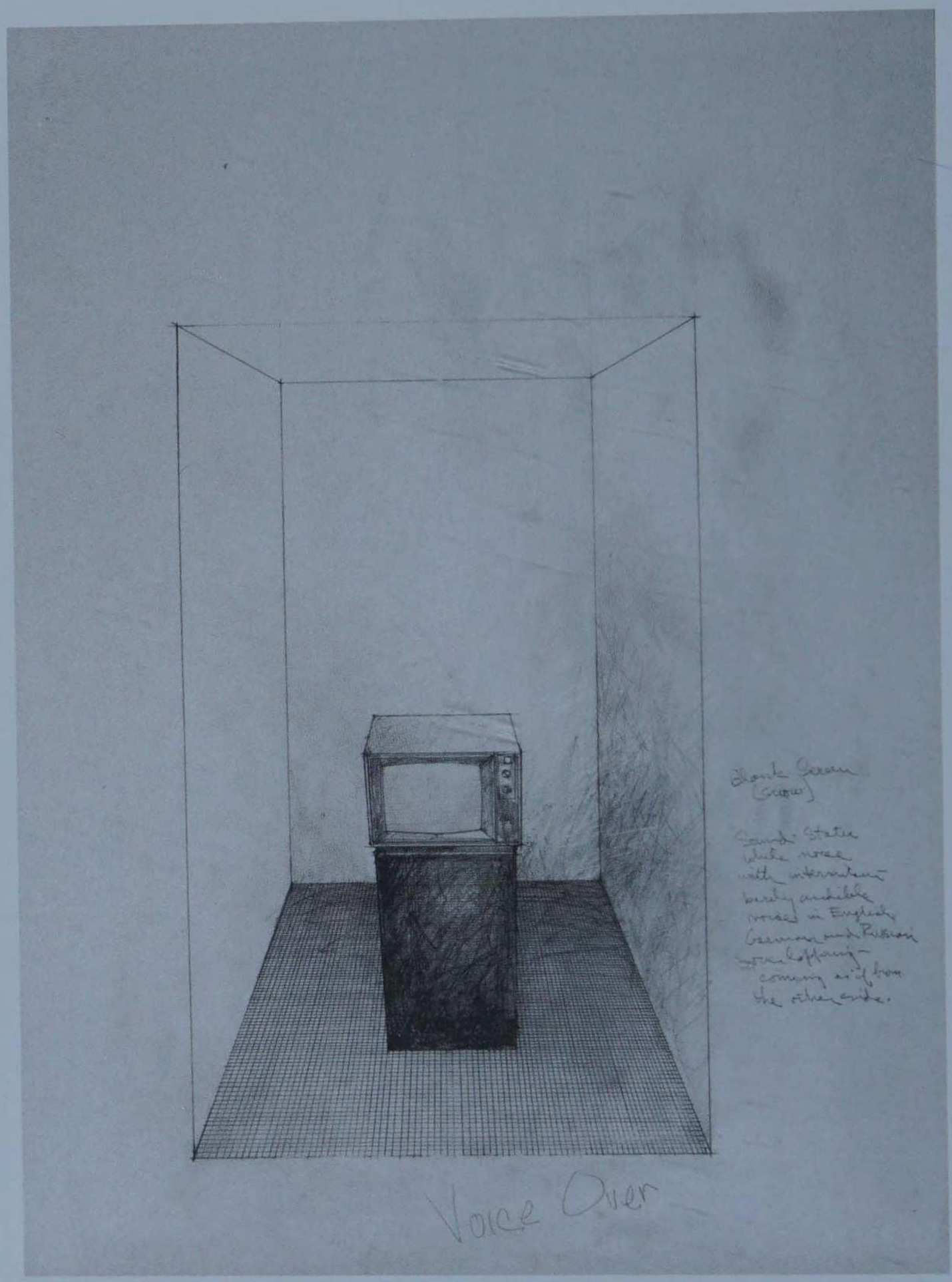


Last Words/Second Thoughts
1978
axonometric
graphite on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches

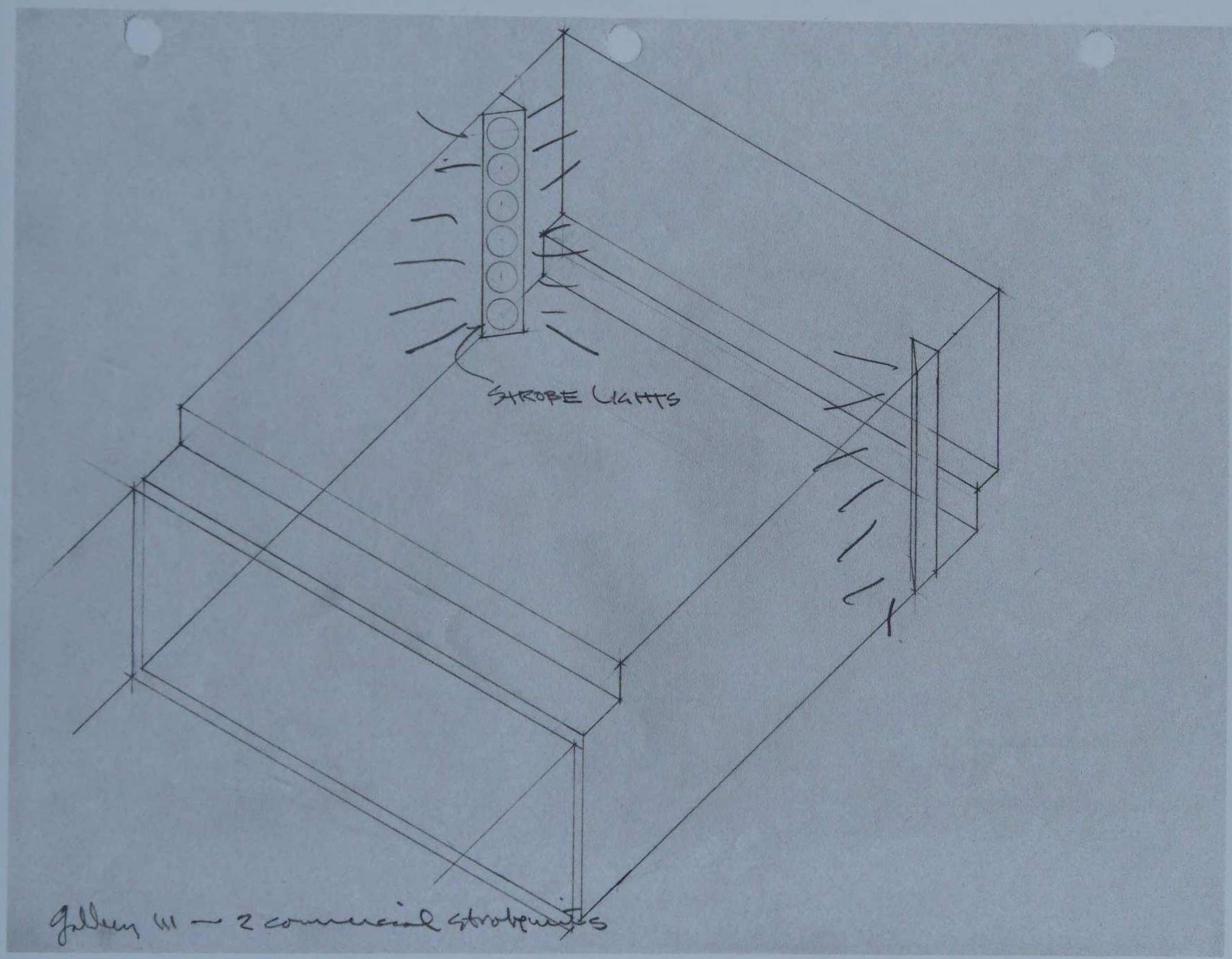


Rehearsals

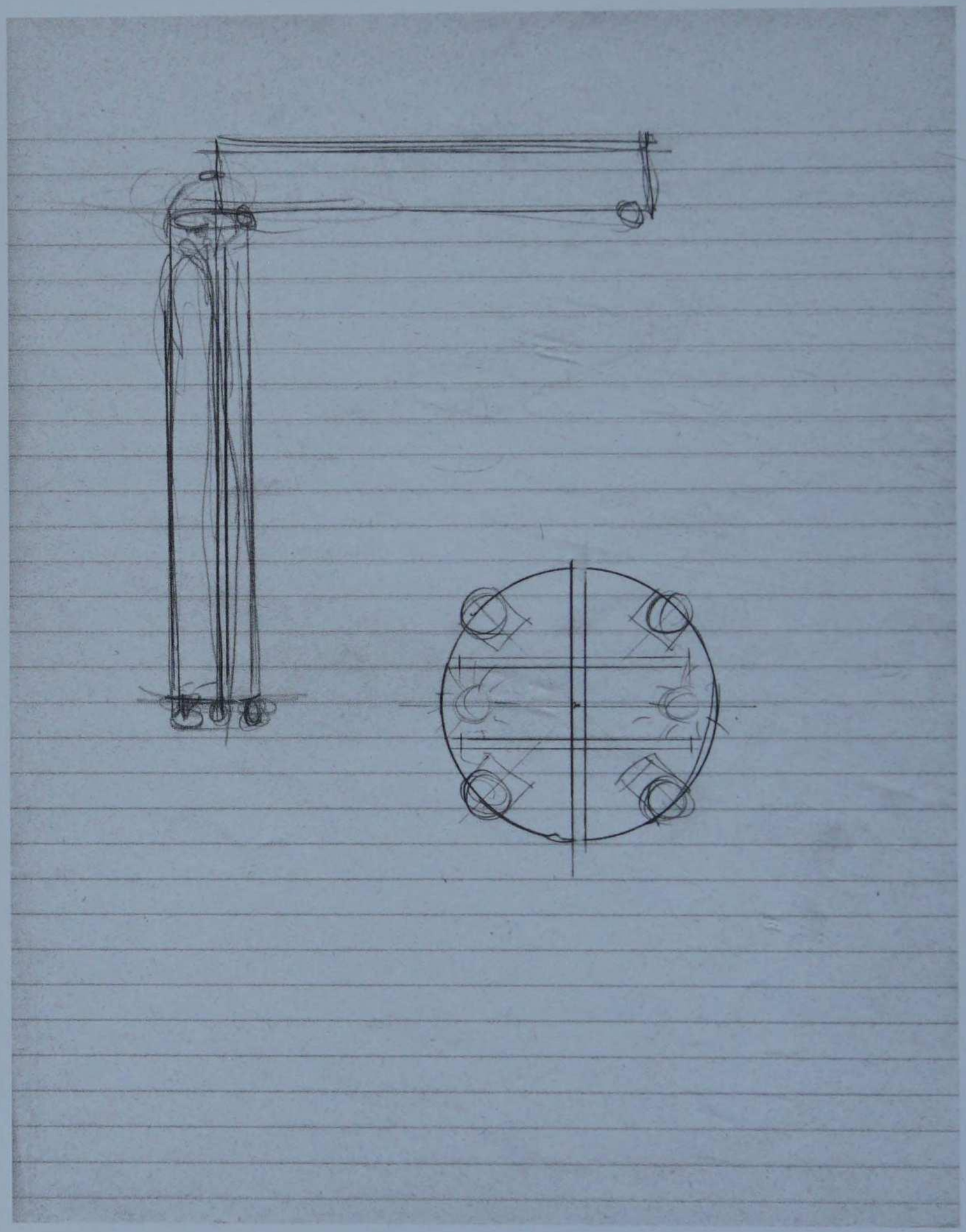
1977
axonometric
graphite on graph paper
22.25 × 17.63 inches



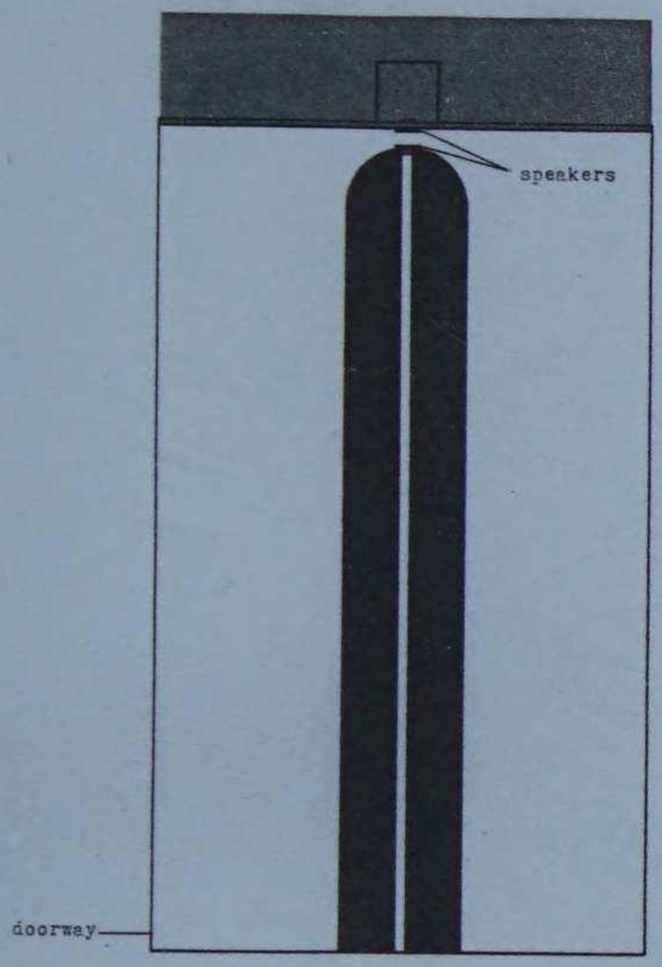
Voice Over
1977
graphite on paper
22 × 28.75 inches



Two Commercial Strobe Units
1978
axonometric
graphite on paper
11 × 8.5 inches
proposal for Gallery III, University of Manitoba



Labyrinths
of the *Zwangsneurose*
1978
graphite on lined paper
8.38 × 10.75 inches



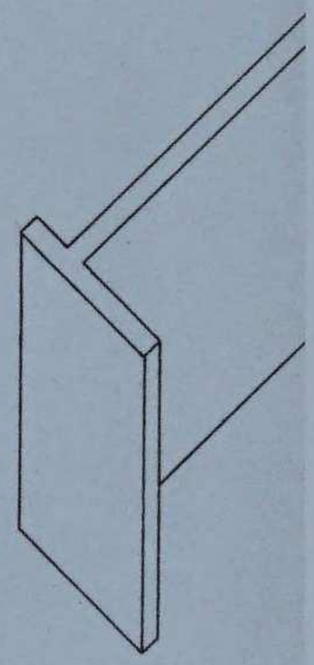
Elevation: phalus

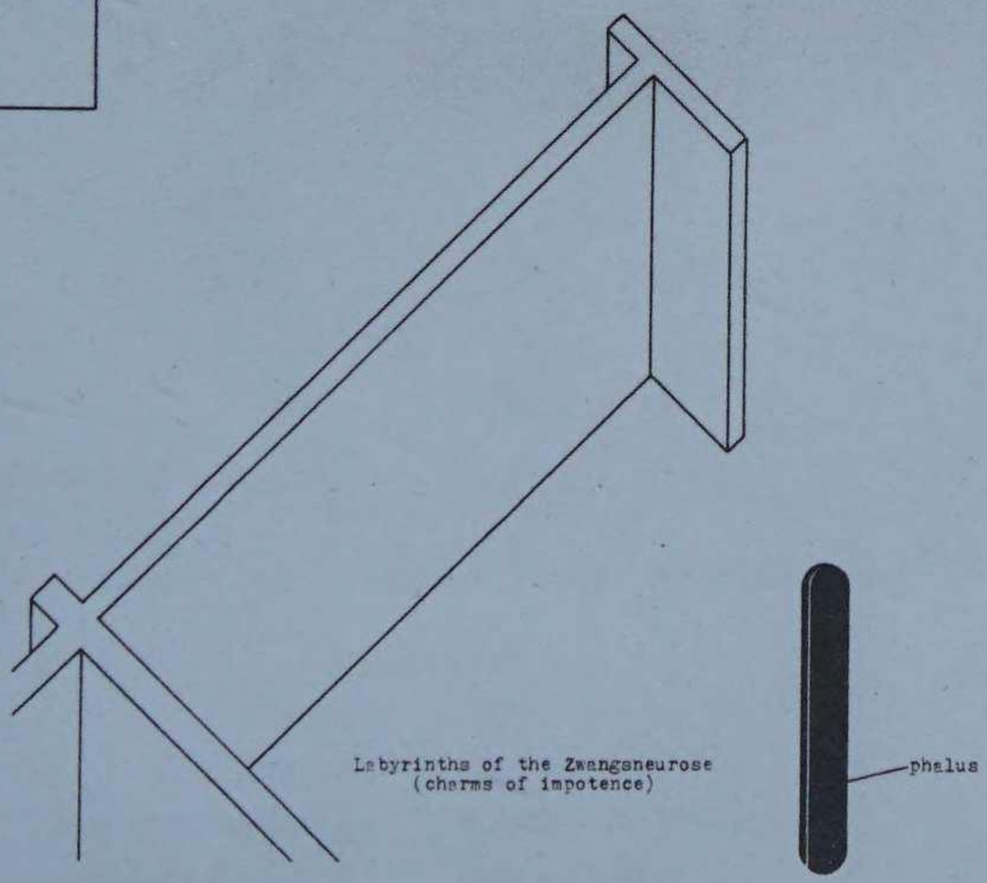
Labyrinths of the *Zwangsneurose*

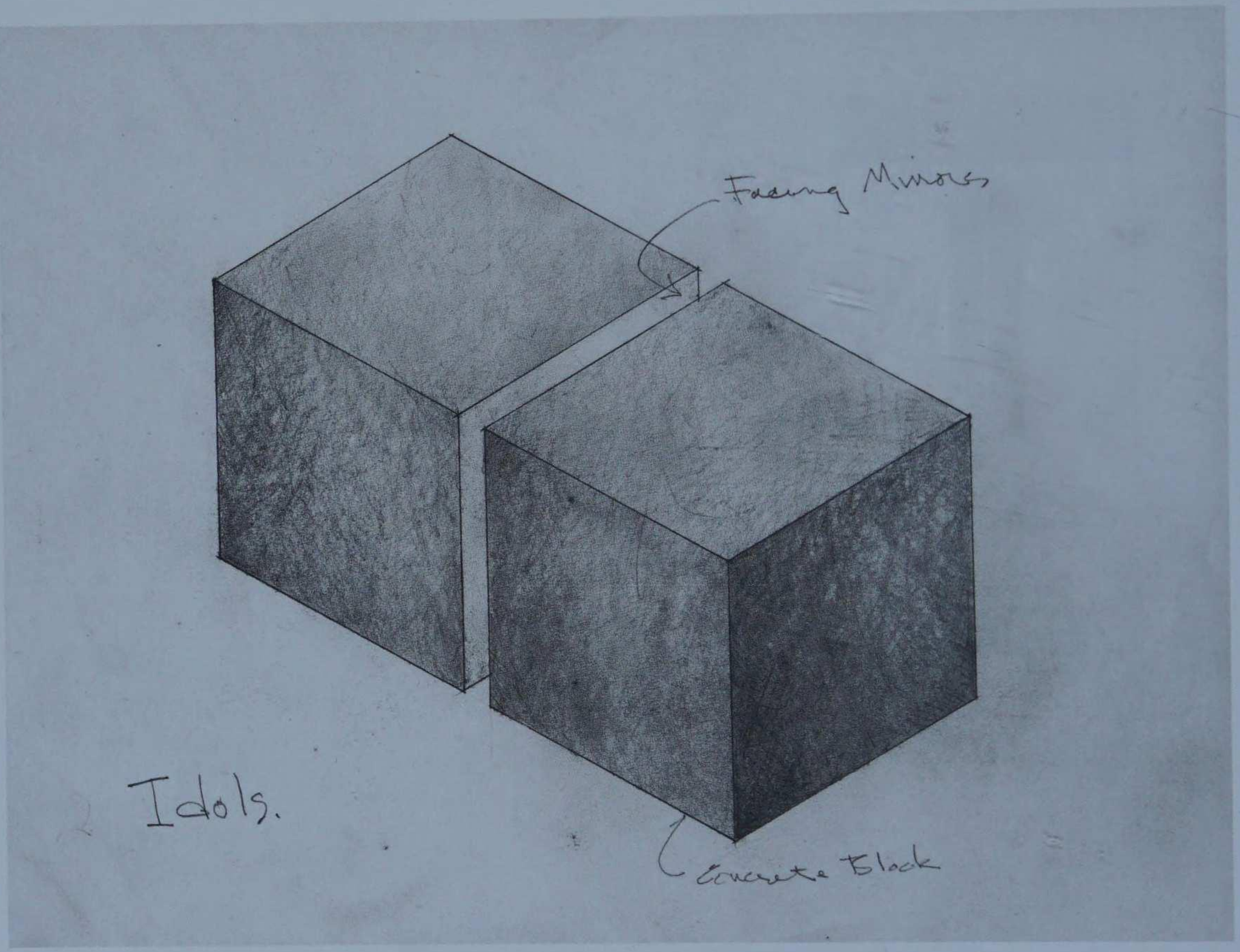
1978

details: vertical section + axonometric

photocopies

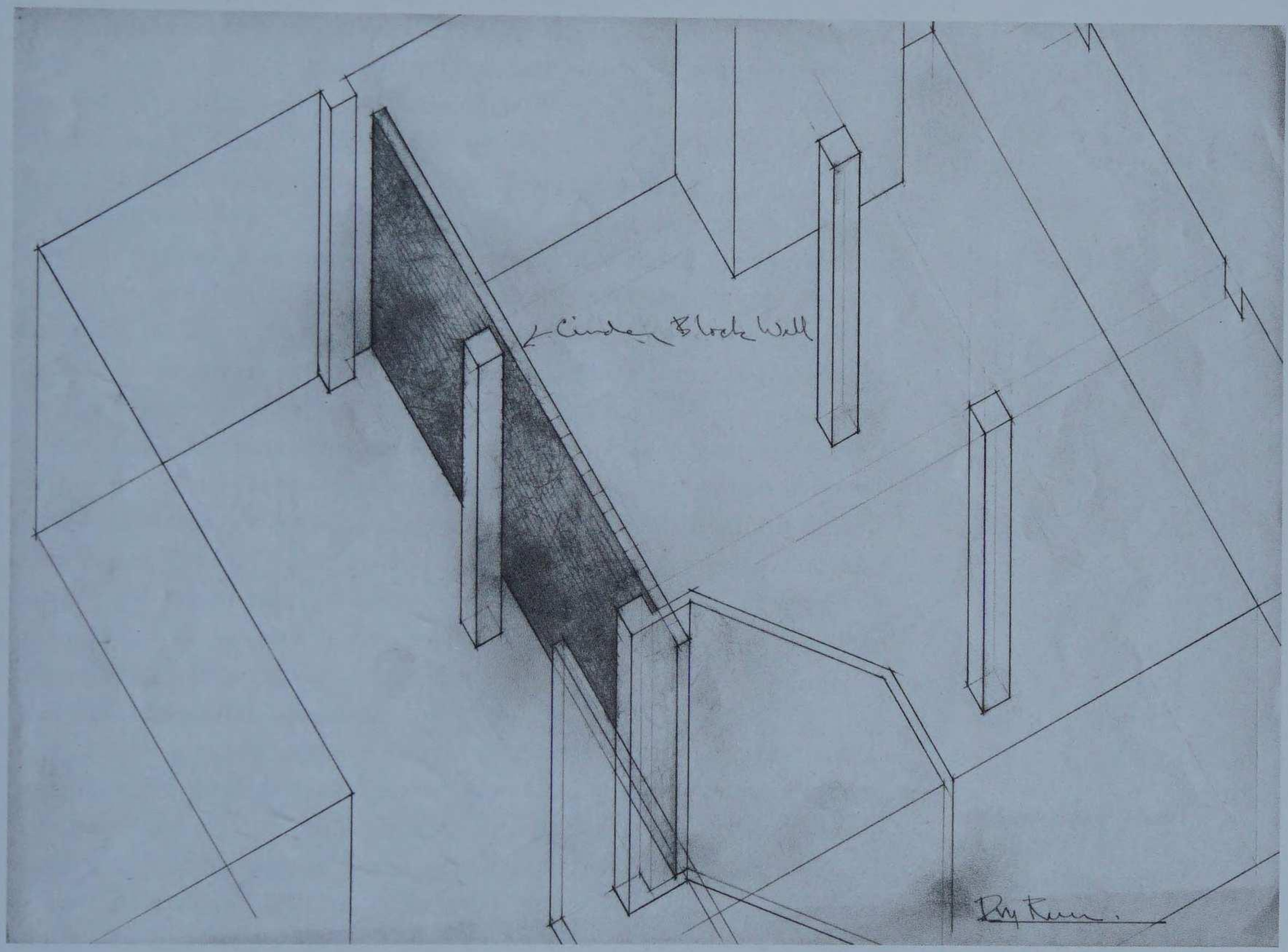






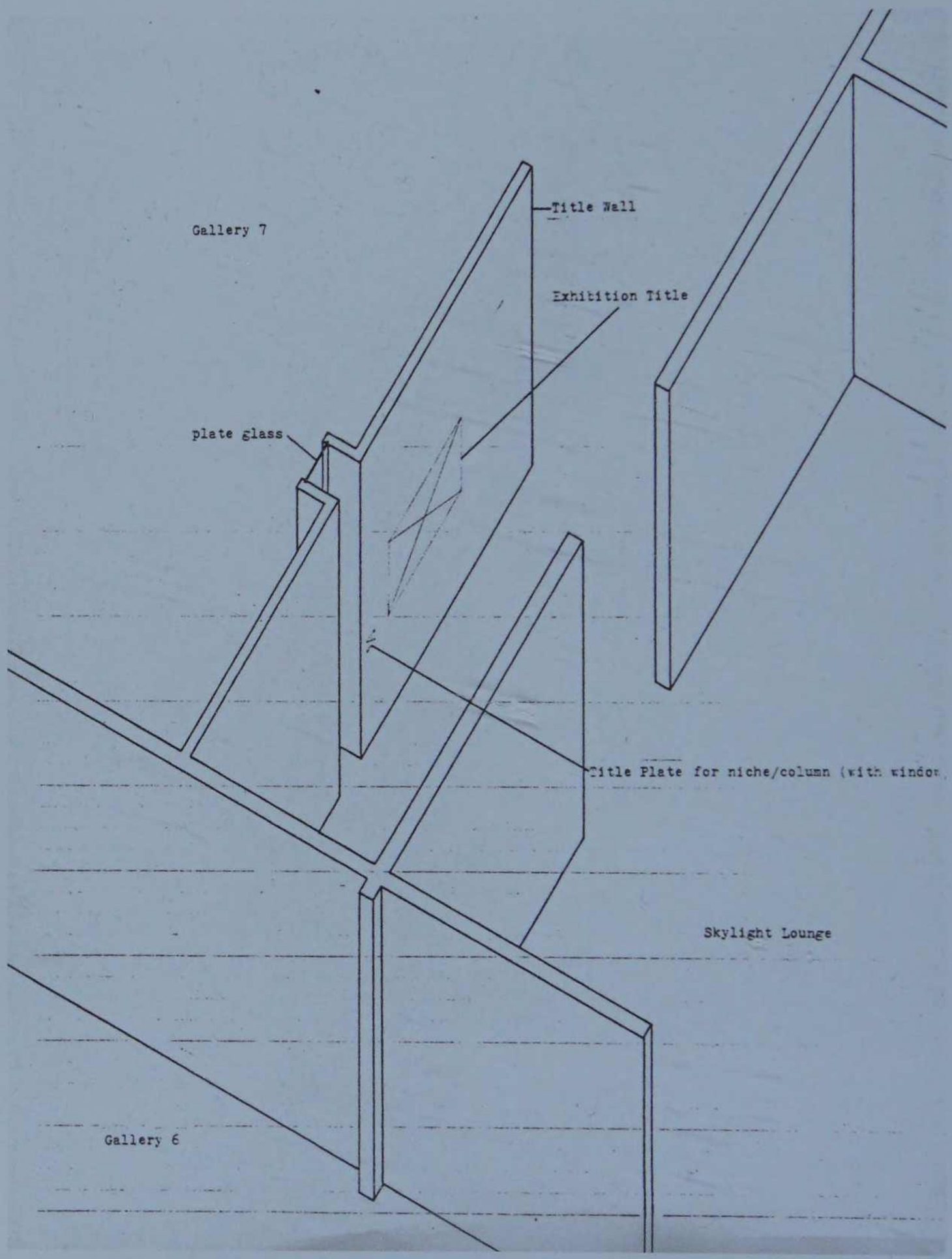
Idols

1977
axonometric
graphite on paper
11 × 8.38 inches



Dry Run

1977
axonometric
graphite on paper
11 × 8 inches
unsubmitted proposal for the Arthur Street Gallery, Winnipeg



Title Wall
1981
axonometric
photocopy
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for
The Winnipeg Art Gallery

Where does a show begin? If we are to approach an exhibition must it not have an edge or border? Must it not begin somewhere, with a legible mark of one sort or another, a notice that would telegraph our arrival? Does every event of this kind display such a marker? And if so, where are we most likely to find it? Where (and when) do we begin looking? reading?

For example: let's say that as a member of a certain museum or gallery you have just received an announcement inviting you to attend a formal opening. Could one consider this card to be the mark of a possible opening: a point of arrival, or, for that matter, a point of departure? Does the show begin with the "arrival" of the announcement, a silent "come on"? Or does it begin with the walls of a museum or gallery, at the threshold of the display space itself? Where, along the path of this projected itinerary are we to locate the limits, the beginning and the end (the beginnings, the ends) of the event in question? And, if things were not already complicated enough: are these limits, these edges, already in place in advance of our coming to them? Or do we, according to the singular predilection of our approach, initiate or sever, take up or drop, meet up with or miss things as we go: step-by-step in response or counter-response to the way we are directed?

By fits and starts?

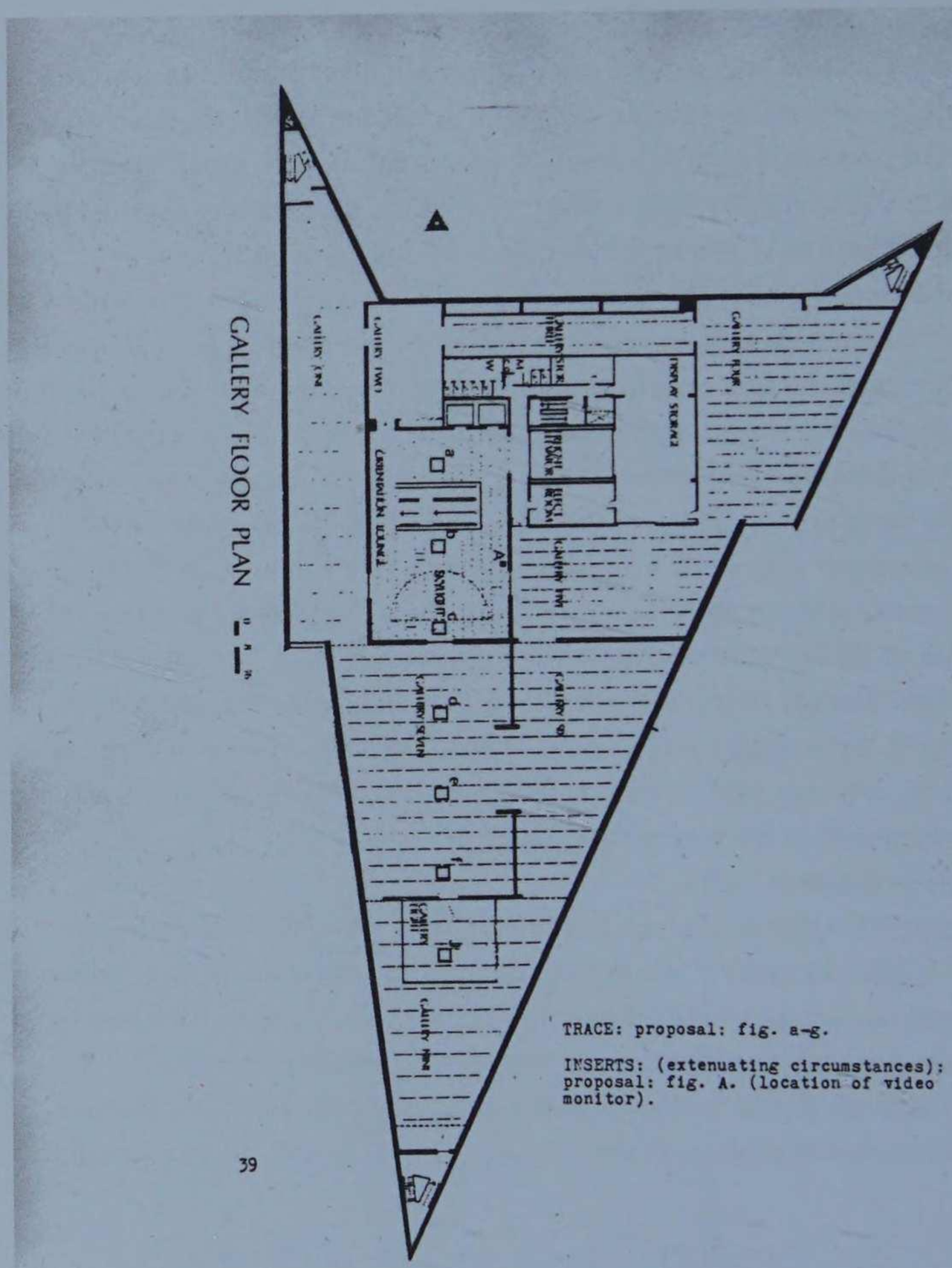
Perhaps—for one can never (but then, perhaps one should) anticipate the possibility (the necessity?) of a detour, of an extra turn here or there which may throw one off a prescribed line, the line by which one arrives, and by which one properly negotiates and completes a particular course.

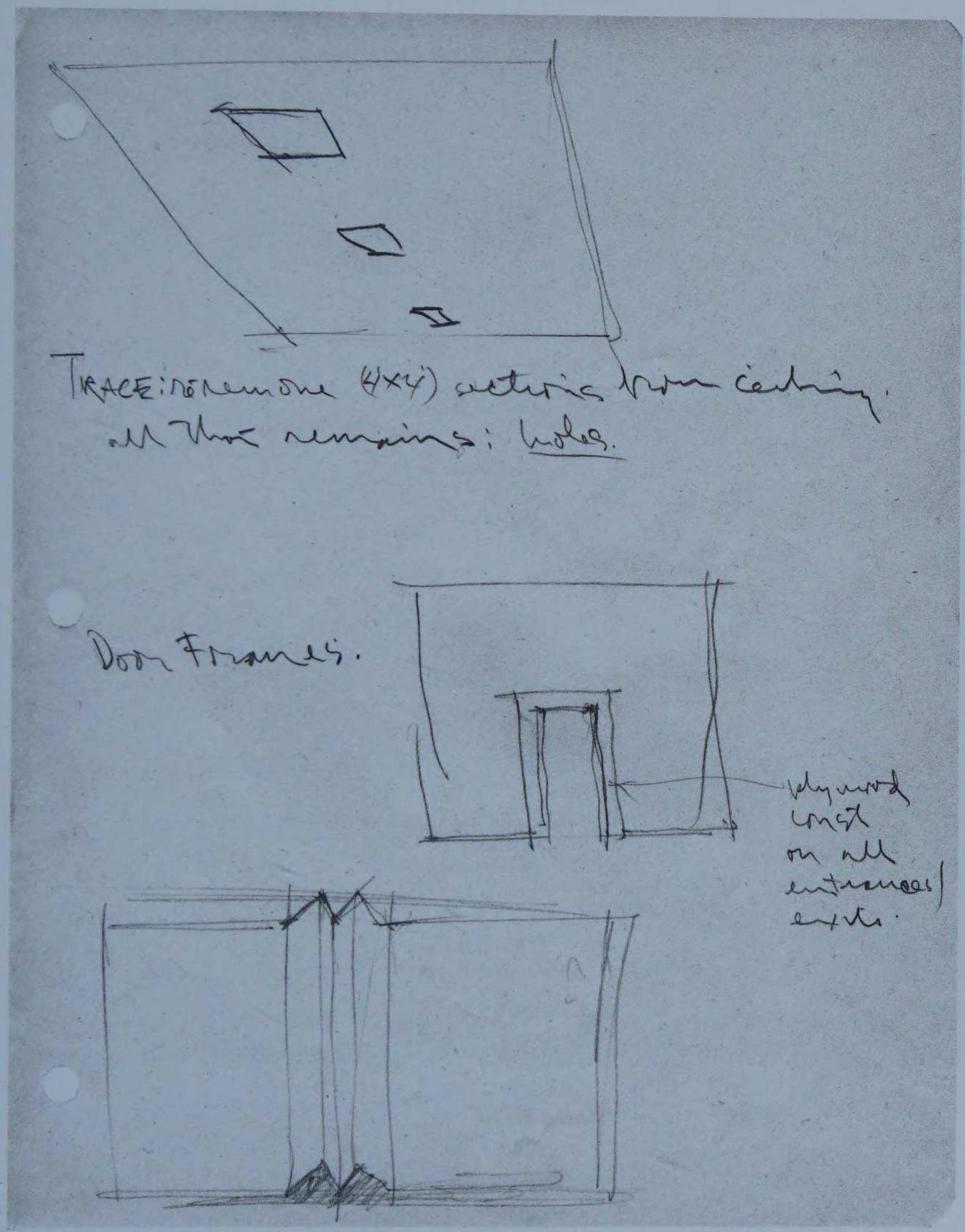
Inevitably, all of this brings us to the question of the bad turn, the off-course excursion whose elaboration must, for now, be put off to a future time.

What Exhibition? Where?
1981
artist's statement

Trace

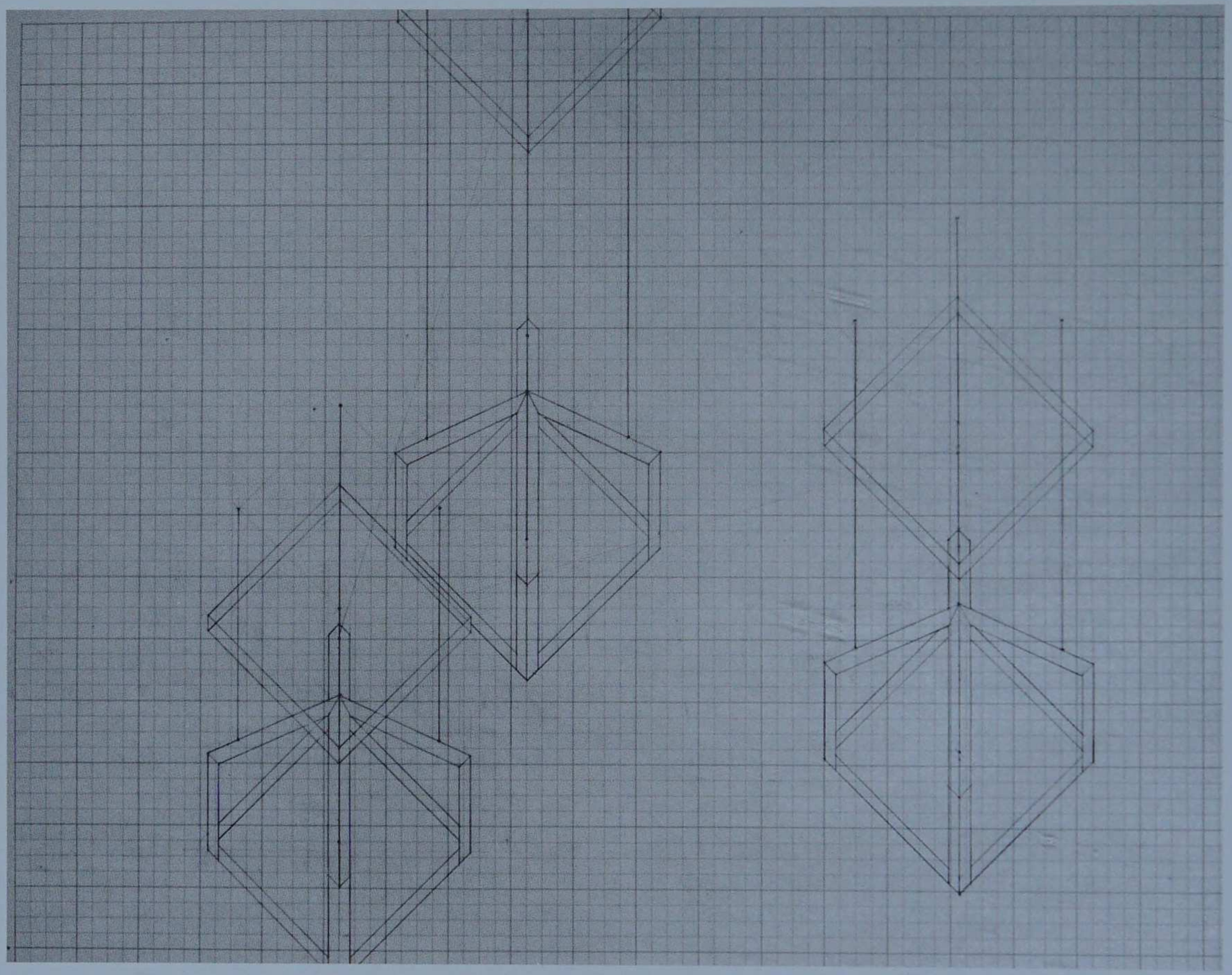
1979
plan
photocopy
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for
The Winnipeg Art Gallery





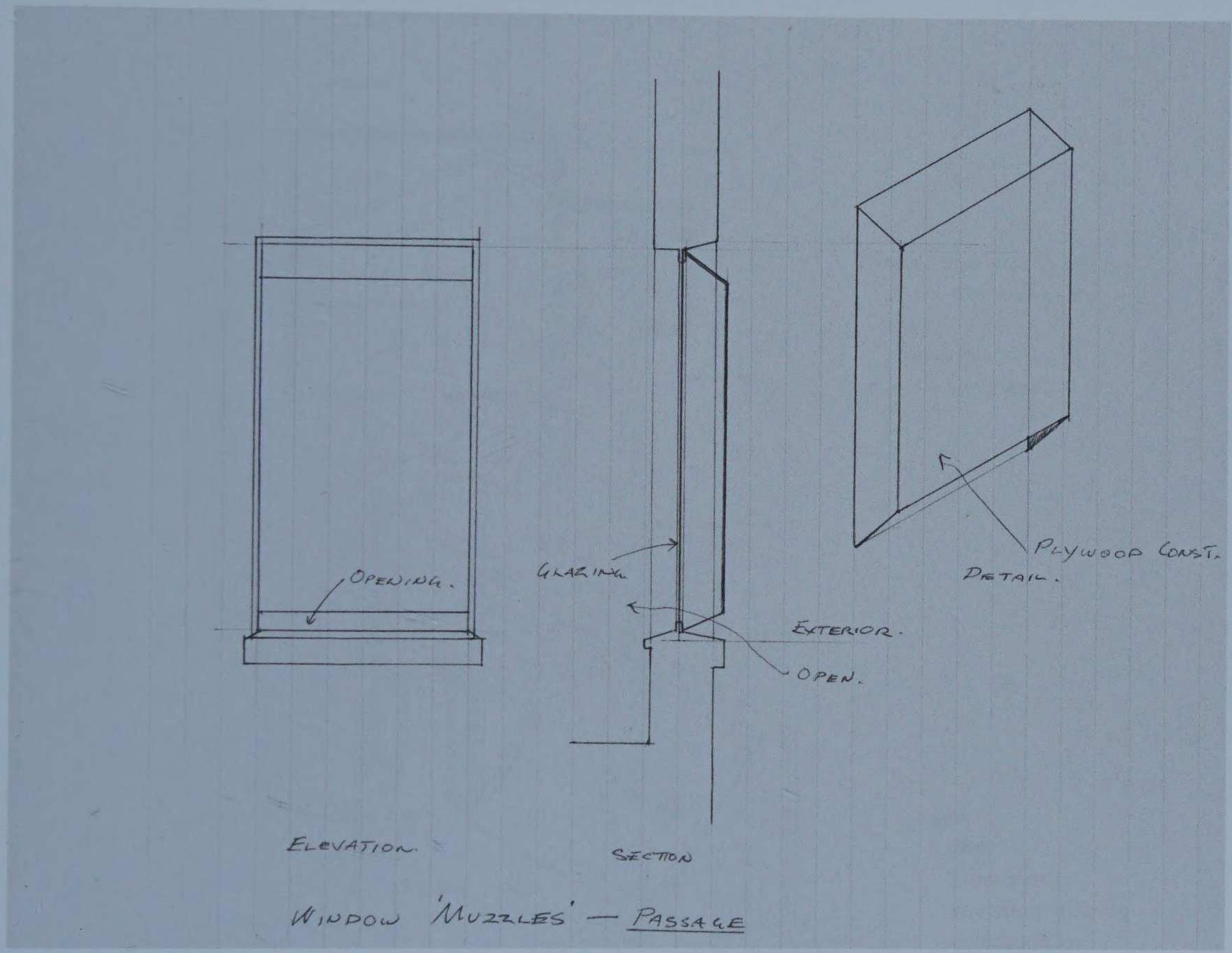
Trace

1979
graphite on paper
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for
The Winnipeg Art Gallery



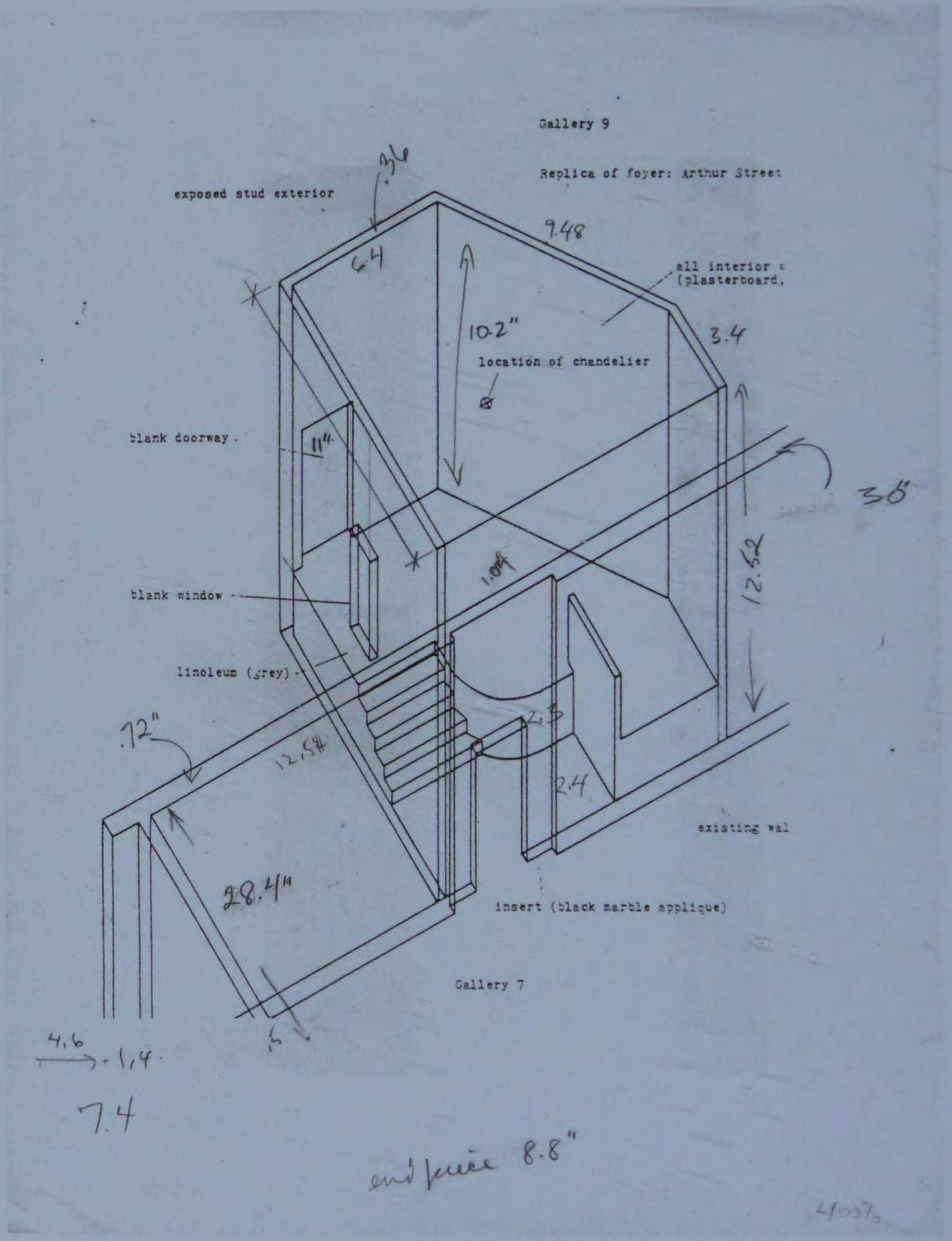
Station Points

1979
axonometric
graphite on graph paper
17.63 × 22.25 inches
proposal for The Winnipeg Art Gallery

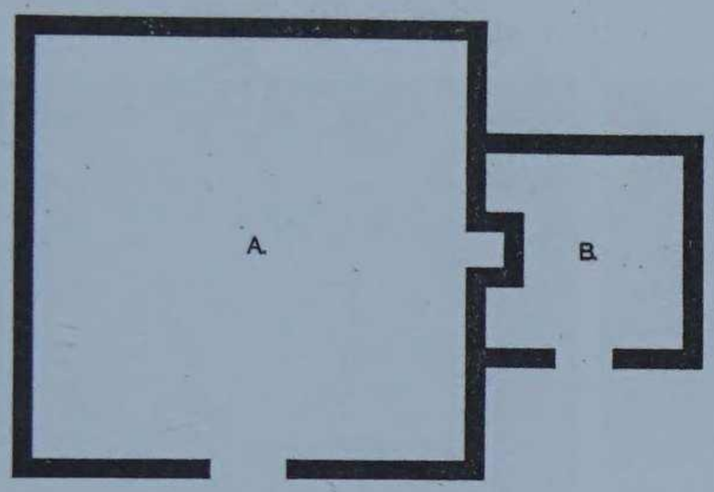


Passage

1979
ballpoint pen on lined paper
11 × 8.5 inches
proposal for the Arthur Street Gallery, Winnipeg

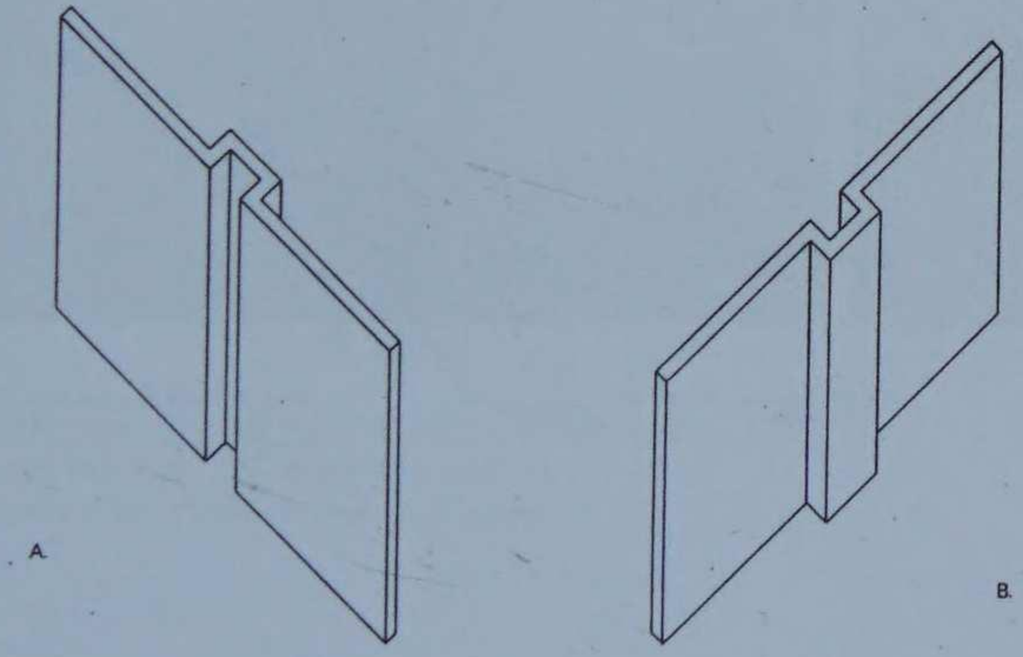


Foyer
1981
axonometric
graphite notations
on photocopy
17.63 × 22.25 inches
proposal for
The Winnipeg Art Gallery

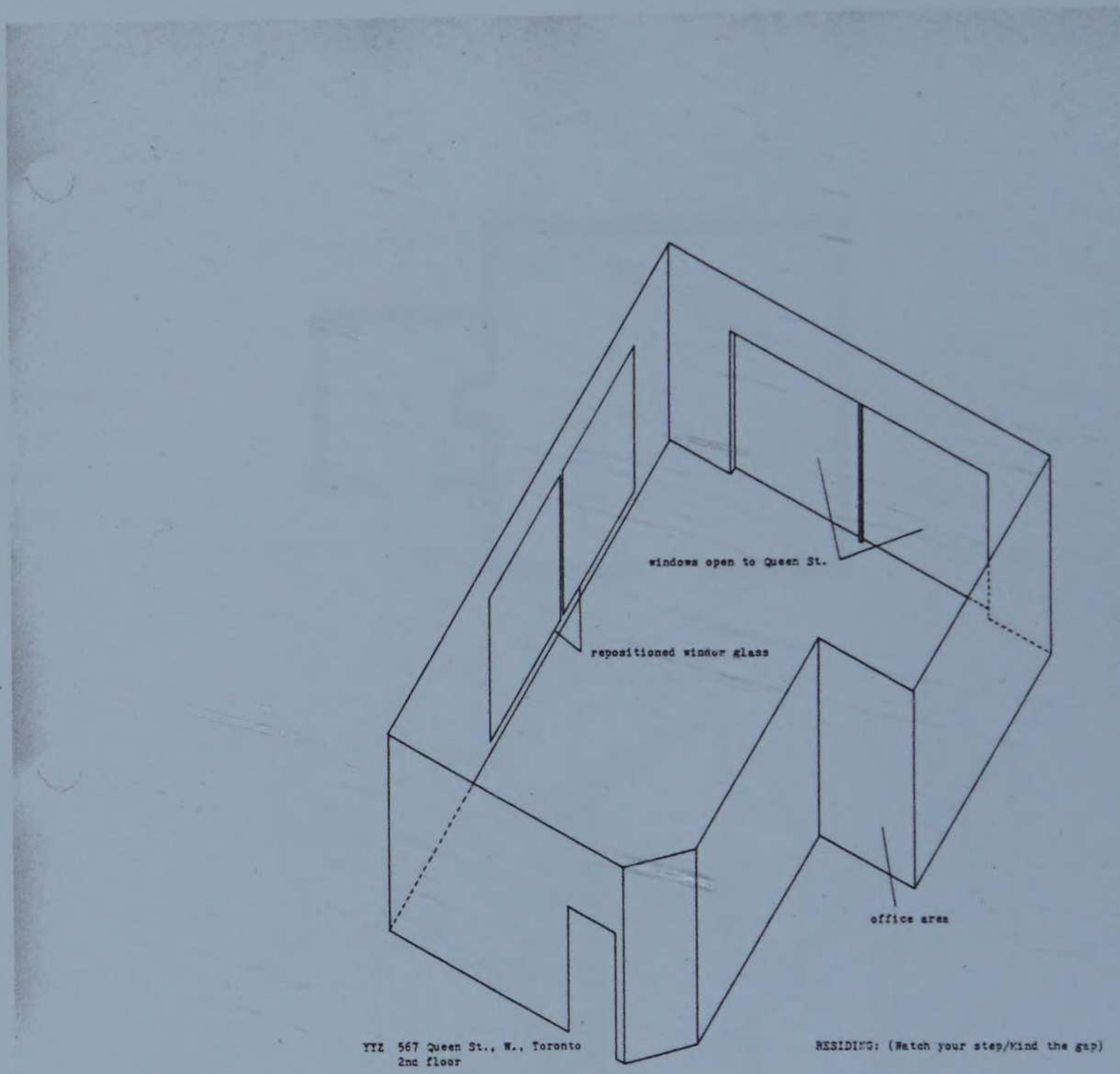


STATIONS: SIDE BY SIDE
PLAN VIEW

Station Points (side by side)
plan + axonometrics
1981
photocopy
11 × 8.5 inches



STATIONS: SIDE BY SIDE
AXONOMETRIC VIEWS OF PARTITION



Residing:
(Watch your step/Mind the gap)
1982
axonometric
photocopy
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for YYZ, Toronto

It is a remarkable fact that, however frightening they [the snakes representative of the hair on Medusa's head] may be in themselves, they nevertheless serve actually as a mitigation of the horror, for they replace the penis, the absence of which is the cause of the horror. This is a confirmation of the technical rule according to which a multiplication of penis symbols signifies castration. The sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone. Observe that we have here once again the same origin from the castration complex and the same transformation of affect! For becoming stiff means an erection. Thus in the original situation it offers consolation to the spectator: he is still in possession of a penis, and the stiffening reassures him of the fact...

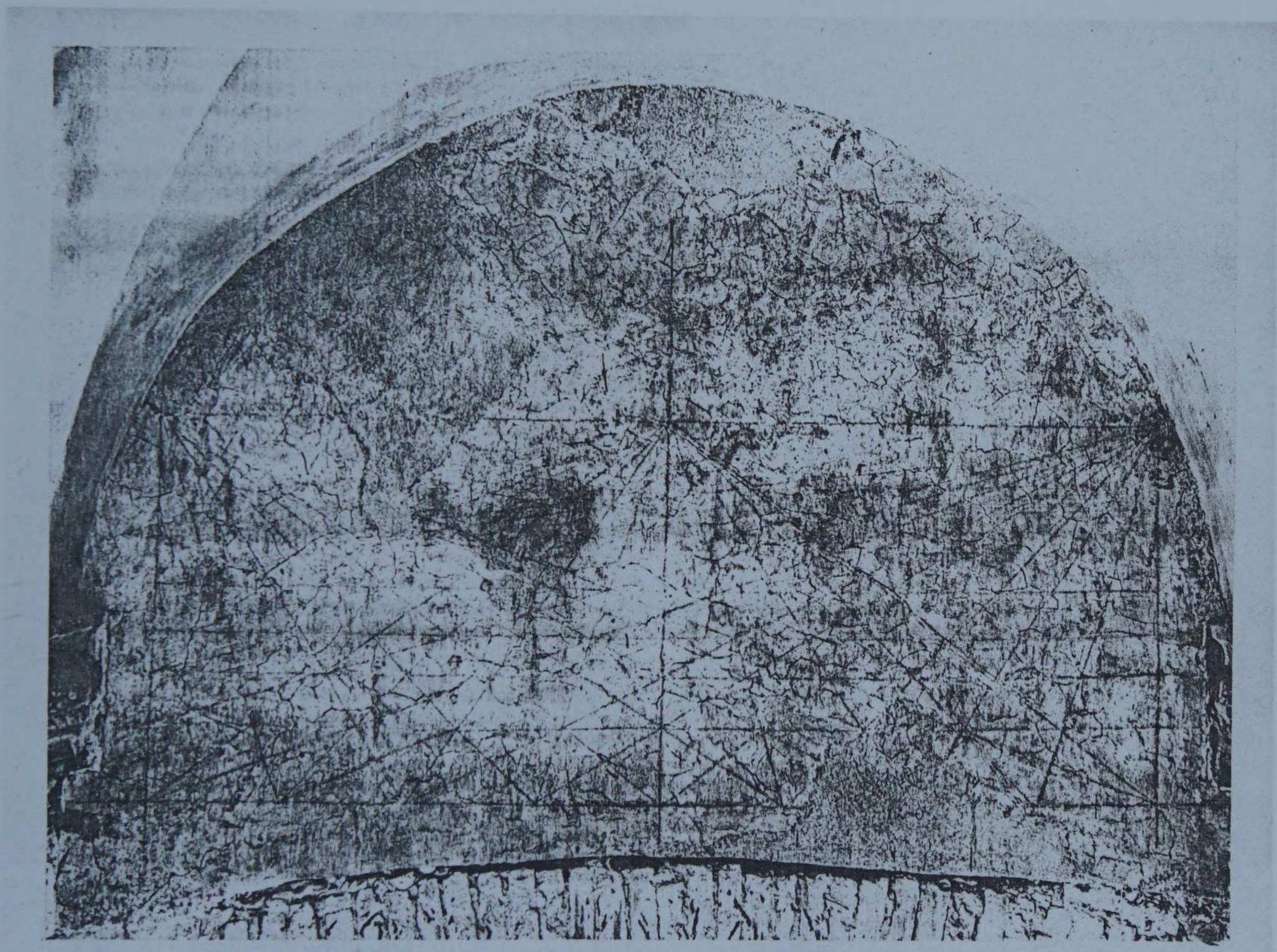
Returning to my description of fetishism, I may say that there are many and weighty additional proofs of the divided attitude of fetishists to the question of the castration of women. In very subtle instances both the disavowal and the affirmation of the castration have found their way into the construction of the fetish itself. This was so in the case of a man whose fetish was an athletic support-belt which could be worn as bathing drawers. This piece of clothing covered up the genitals entirely and concealed the distinction between them. Analysis showed that it signified that women were castrated and that they were not castrated; and it also allowed of the hypothesis that men were castrated, for all these possibilities could equally well be concealed under the belt – the earliest rudiment of which in his childhood had been the fig-leaf on a statue.

Residing: (Watch your step/Mind the gap) 1982
proposal for YYZ artist's outlet
blackboard paint on window glass

Residing: (Watch your step/Mind the gap)
1982
window elevation
photocopy
11 × 8.5 inches
proposal for YYZ, Toronto

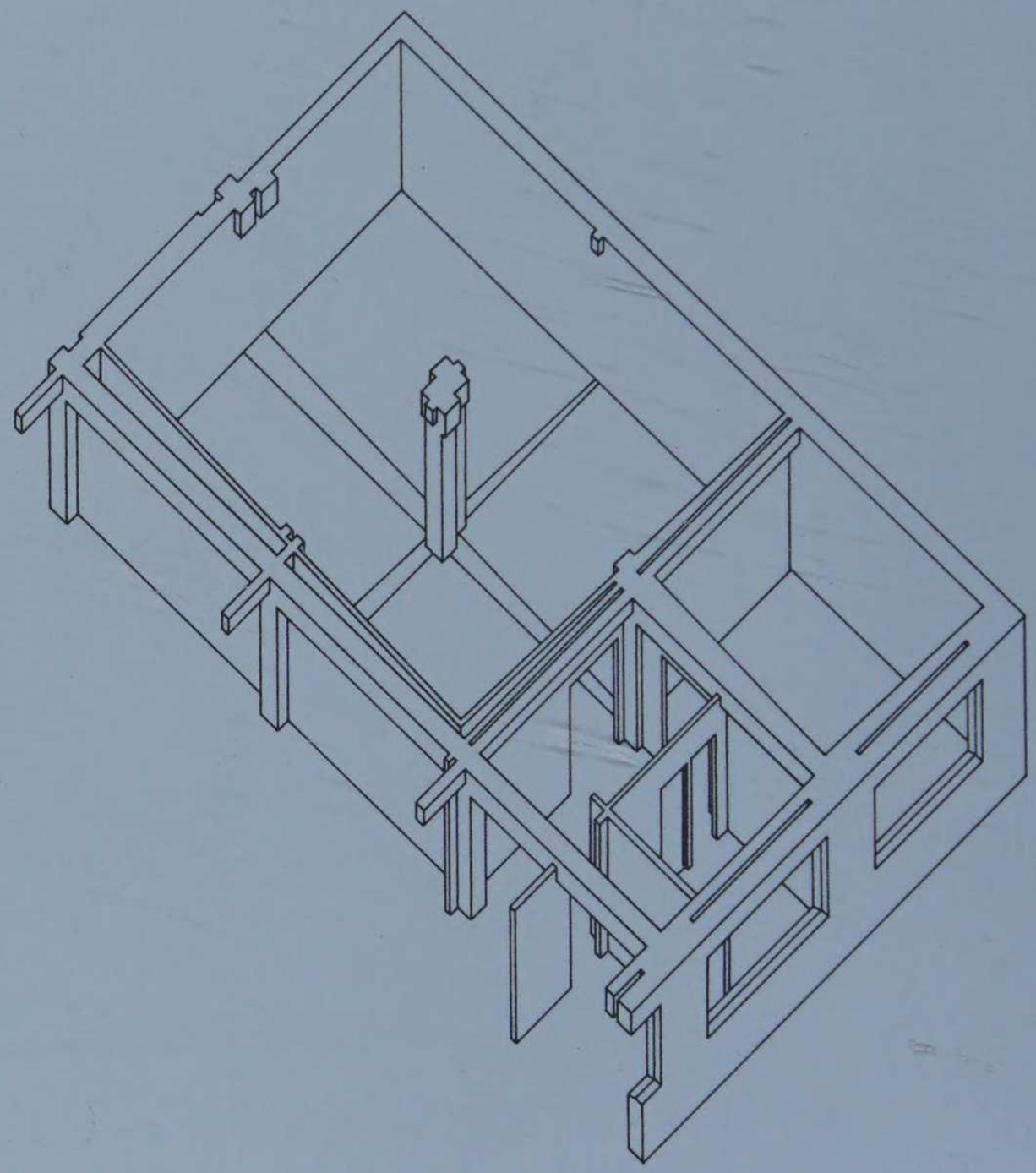


L and R: (from) Robert Smithson and (to) Paolo Uccello
1980–82
facsimile of *Enantiomorphic Chambers*
proposal for YYZ, Toronto

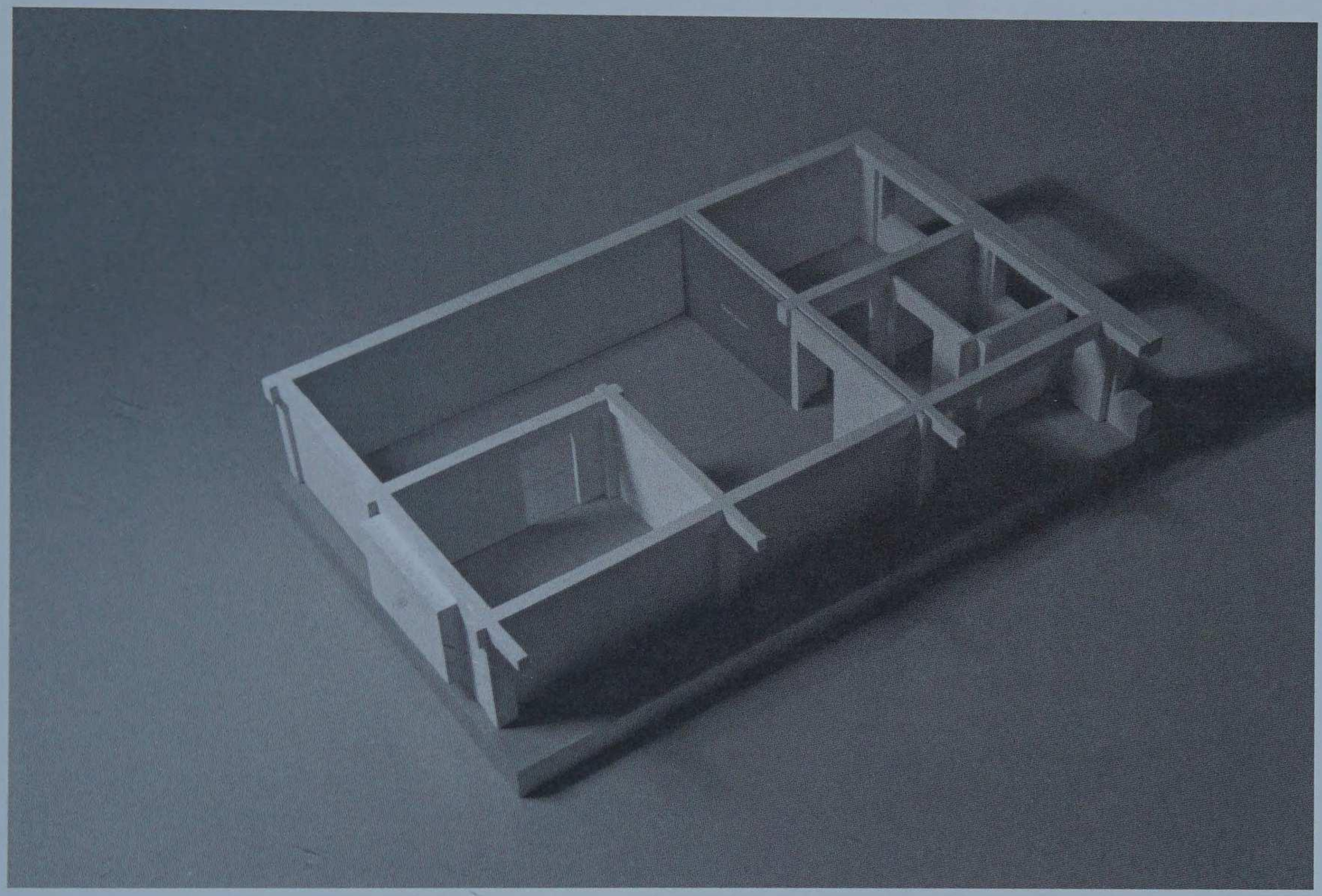


83. THE NATIVITY AND THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS. *Sinopia. Soprintendenza alle Gallerie, Florence*

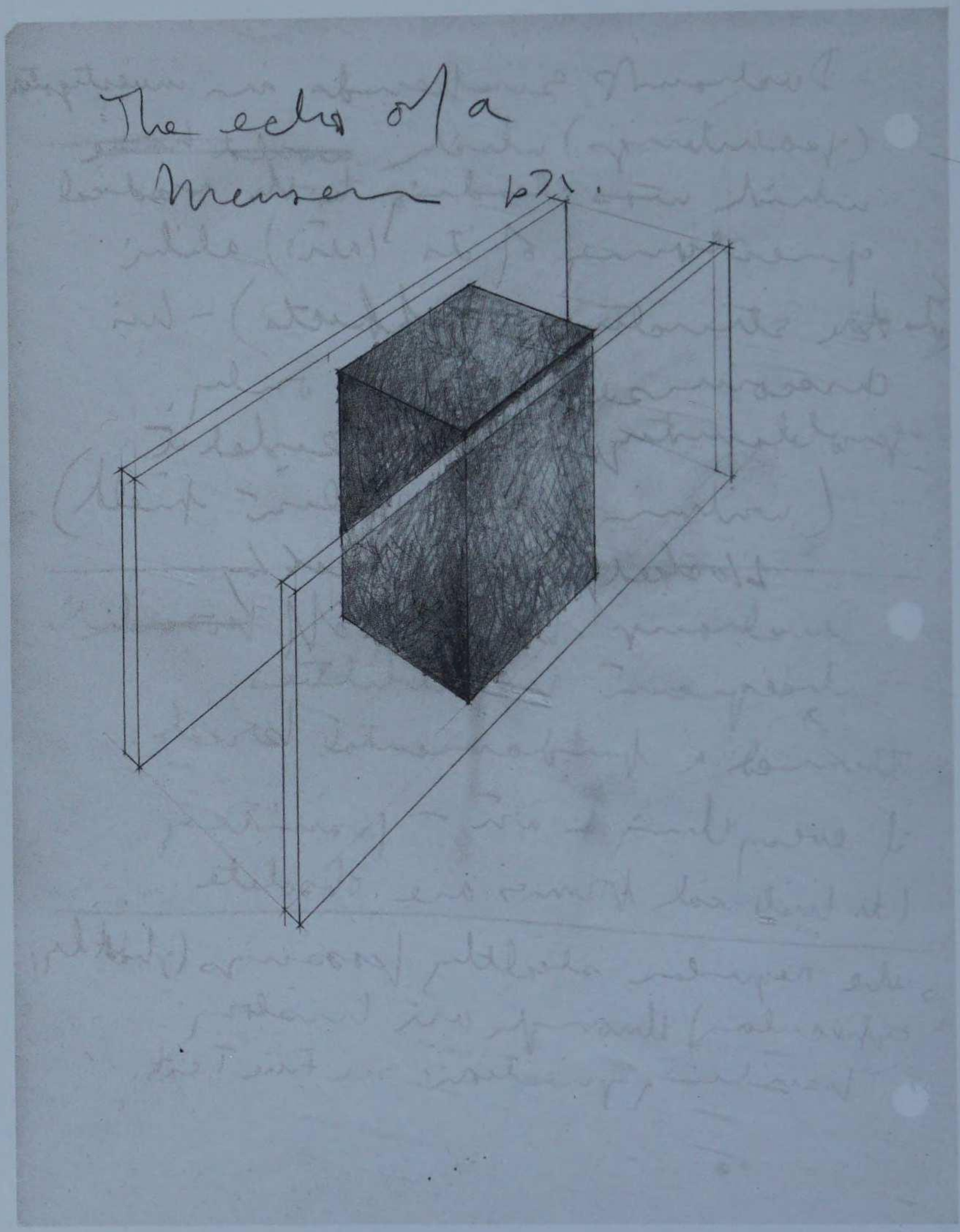
L and R: (from) Robert Smithson and (to) Paolo Uccello
1980–82
photocopy: reproduction of Uccello's *The Nativity and the Annunciation to the Shepherds*
proposal for YYZ, Toronto



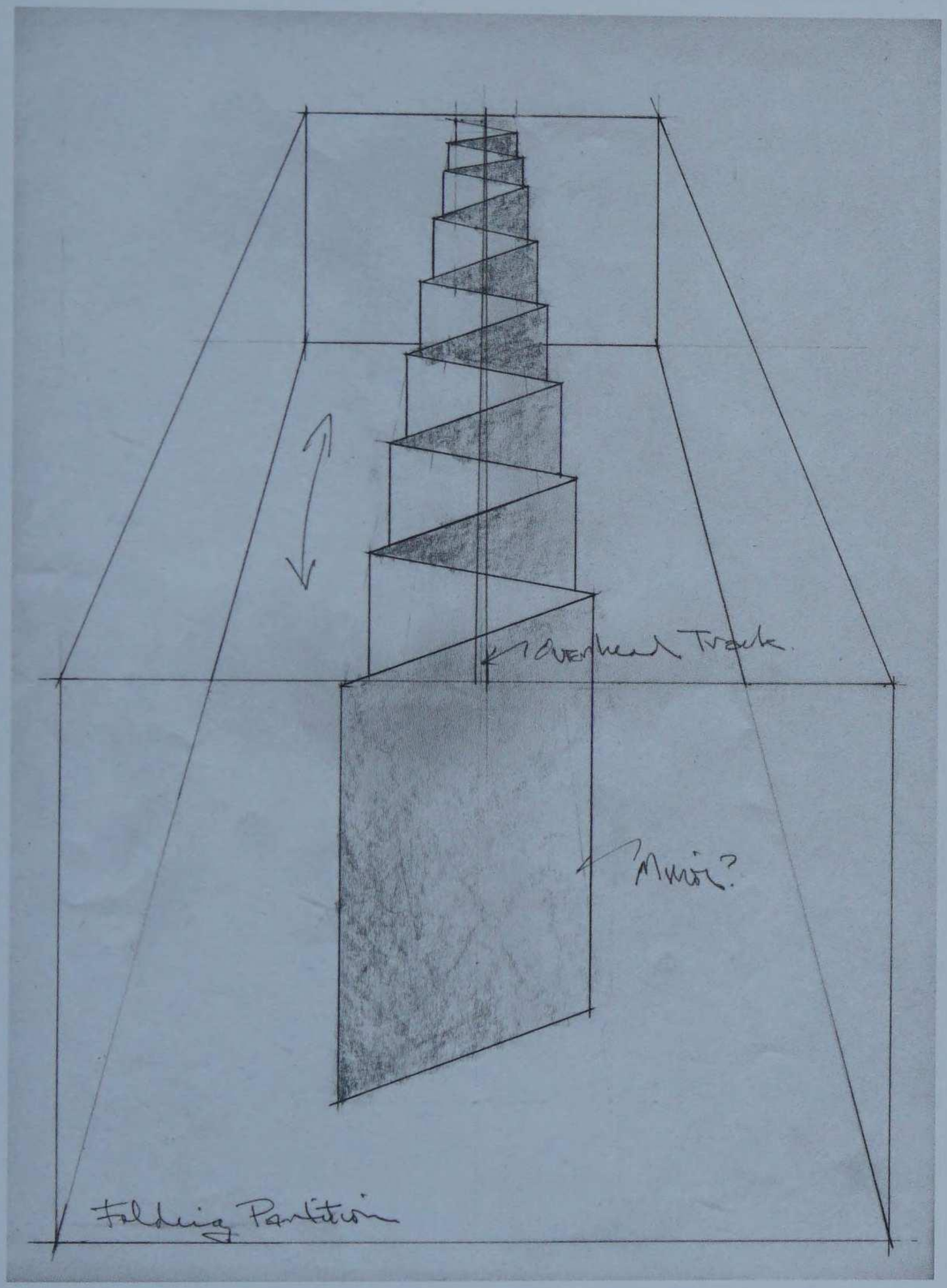
Mercer Union
with Double Column
1981
axonometric
photostat
proposal for
Mercer Union, Toronto



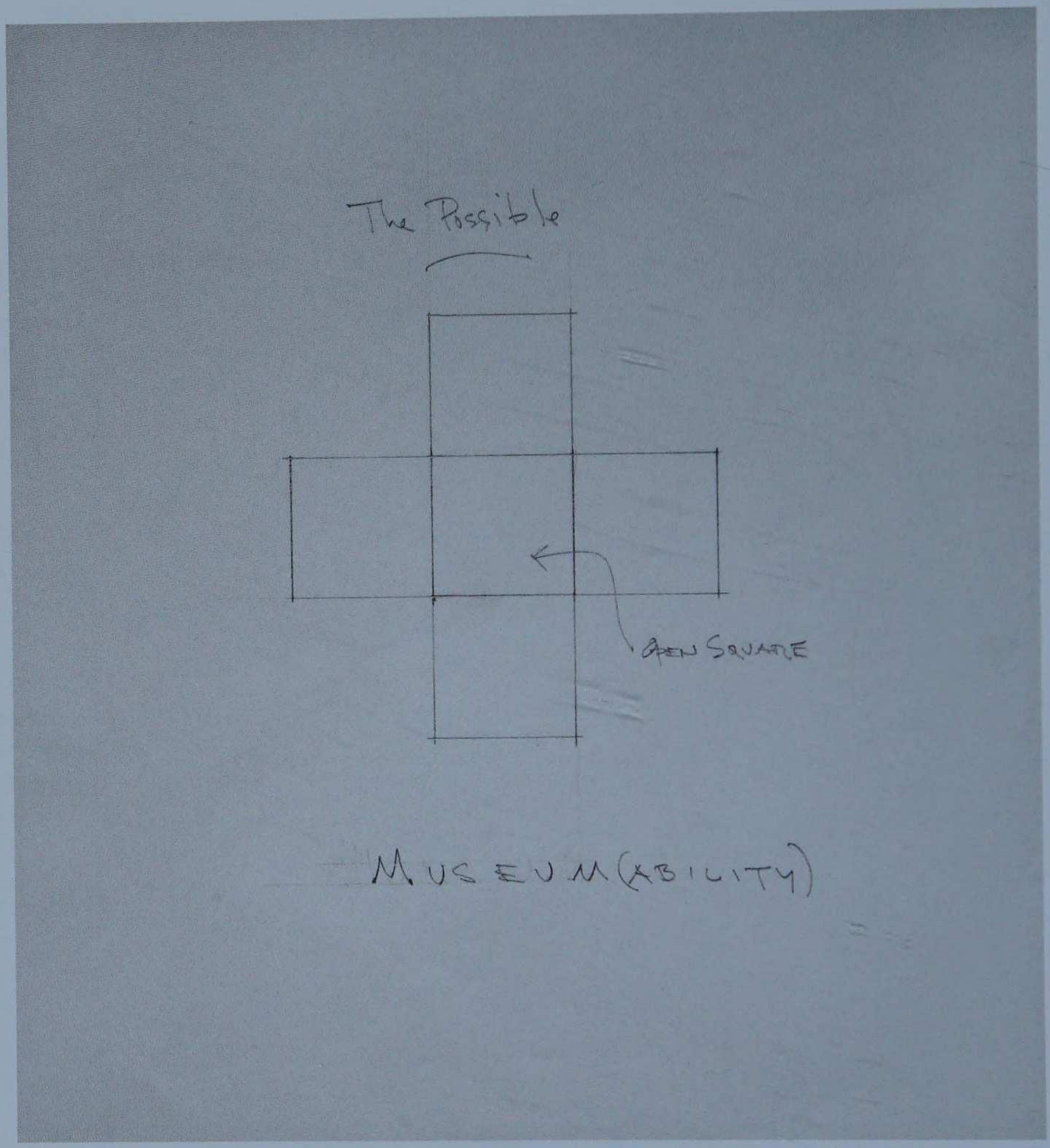
Quartus
1981
model, painted wood
dimensions of base: 19.5 × 14 inches
proposal for Mercer Union, Toronto
private collection



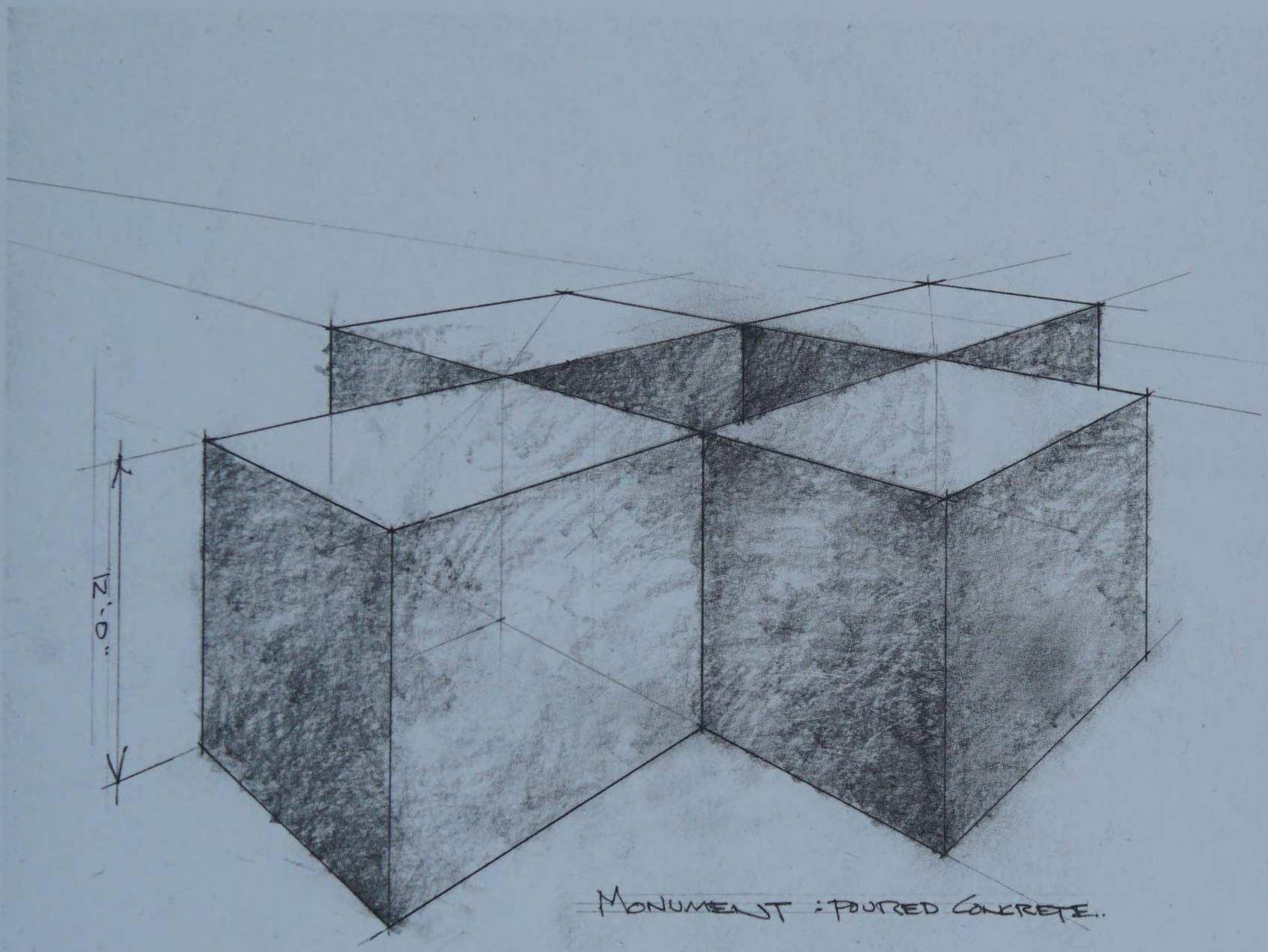
Echo of a Museum
1981
graphite on paper
8.5 × 11 inches



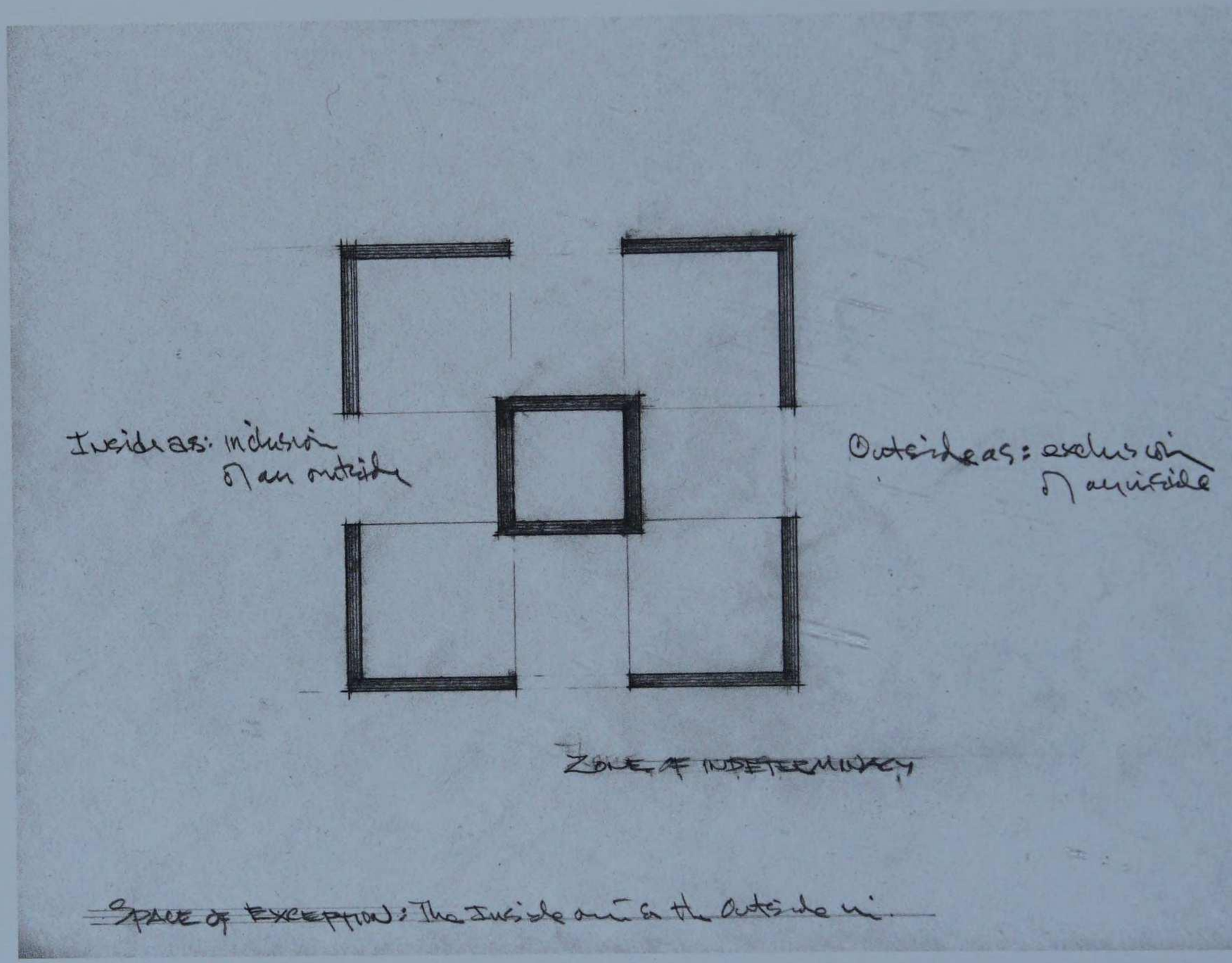
Folding Partition
1980
graphite on paper
8.5 × 11 inches



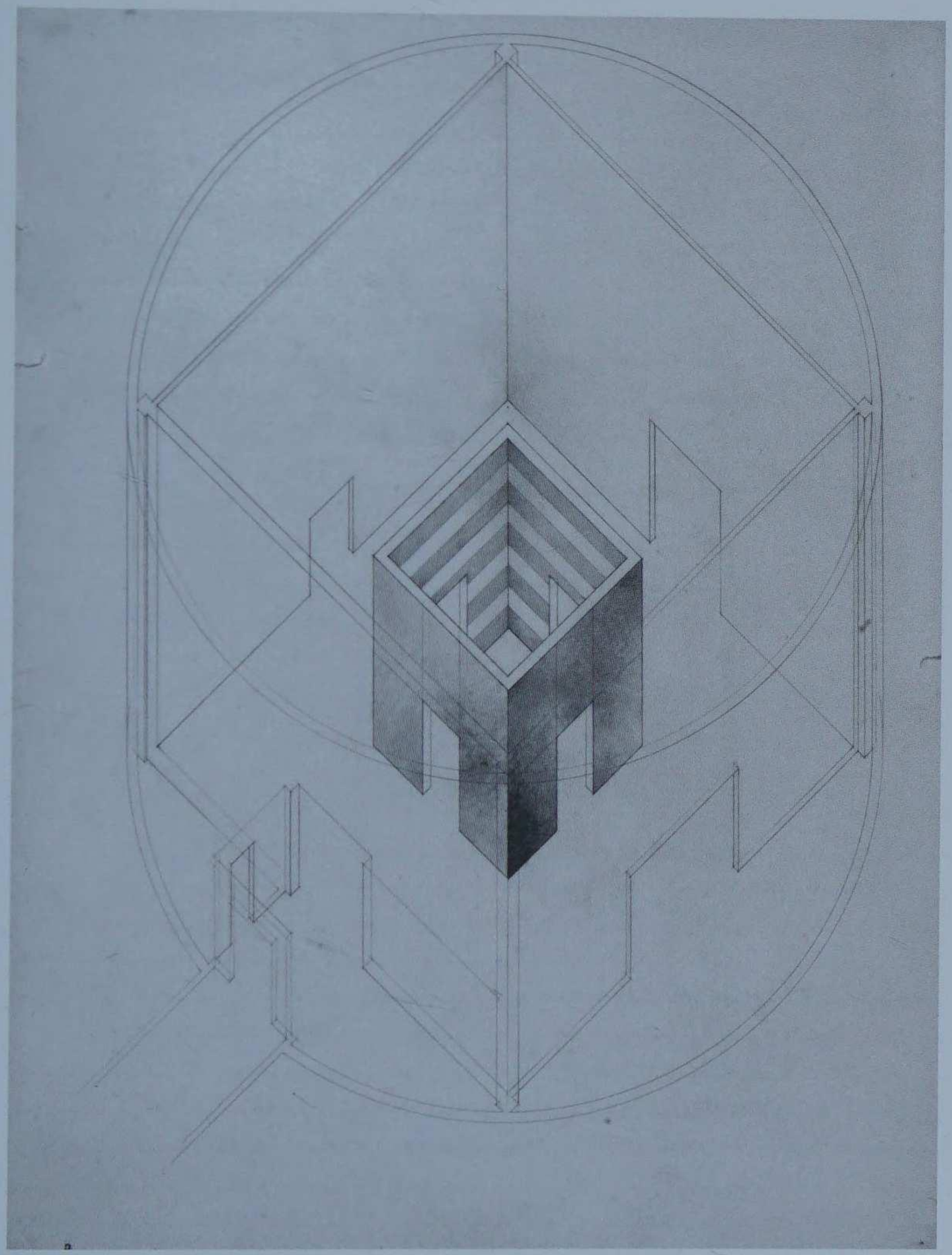
Museum(ability)
1985
graphite on paper
12 × 11 inches



Monument
1980
graphite on paper
11 × 8.5 inches



Space of Exception
1986
plan
graphite on paper
11 × 8.5 inches

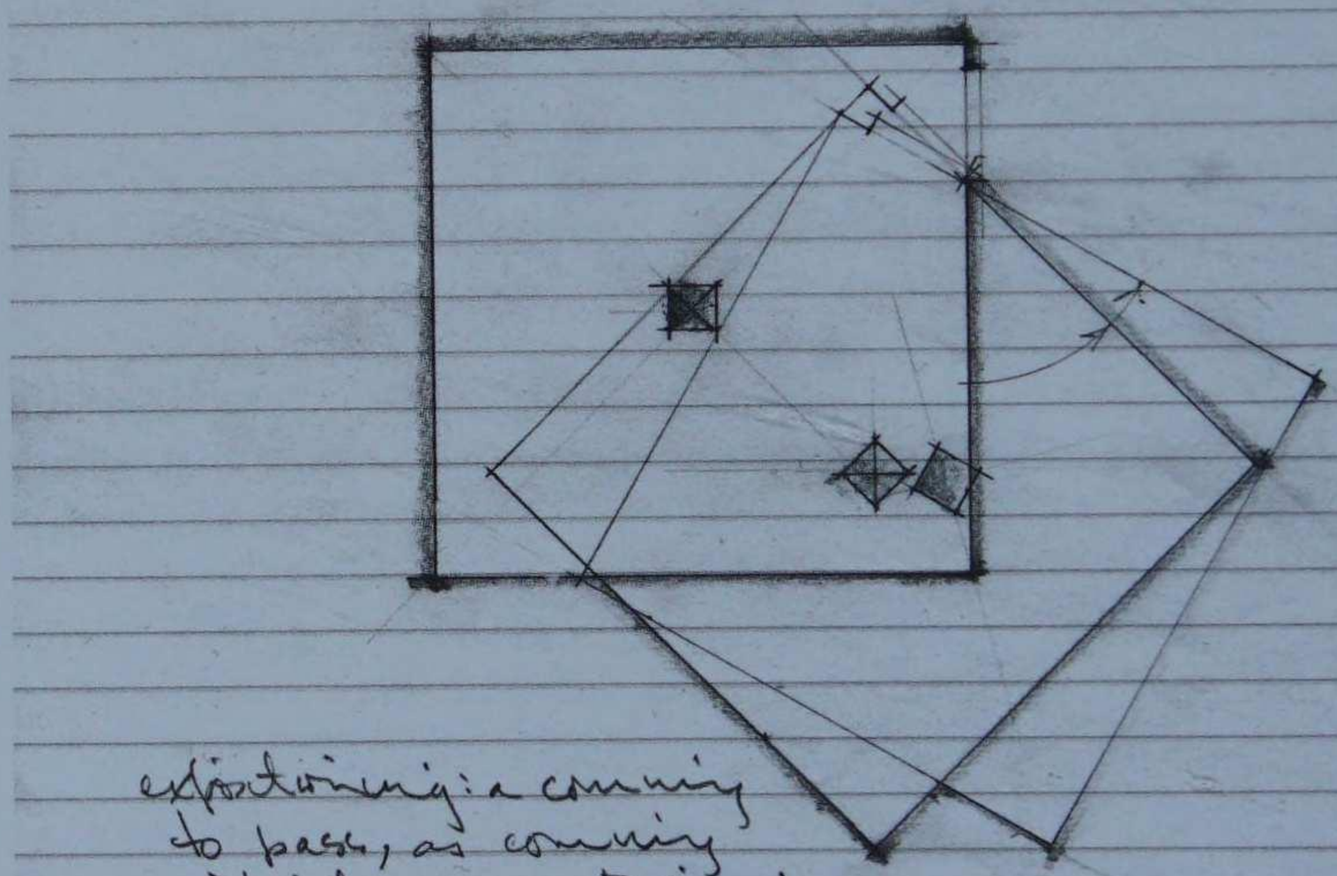


False Exits

1999
axonometric
graphite on paper
22 × 30 inches
proposal for the ArtLab,
University of Western Ontario,
London

Space corresponds or coincides with itself only in the outside which it makes of itself: existent as exiting.

the space differs from itself in order to coincide with itself. — folds with itself into itself: position as ex-position



existing: a coming to pass, as coming into its own — Ereignis
a. it spaces itself, opens itself as a continuum — a spacing or distance.

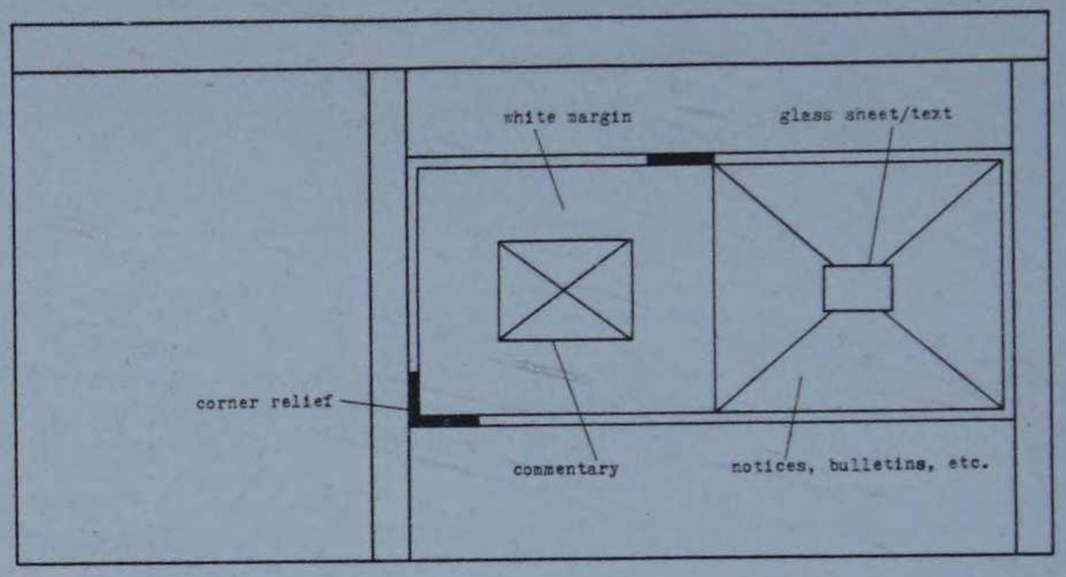
Displacement schema
1985
graphite on lined paper
8.5 × 11 inches

*Displacement proposal: repetition/rotation of the exhibition space "itself"

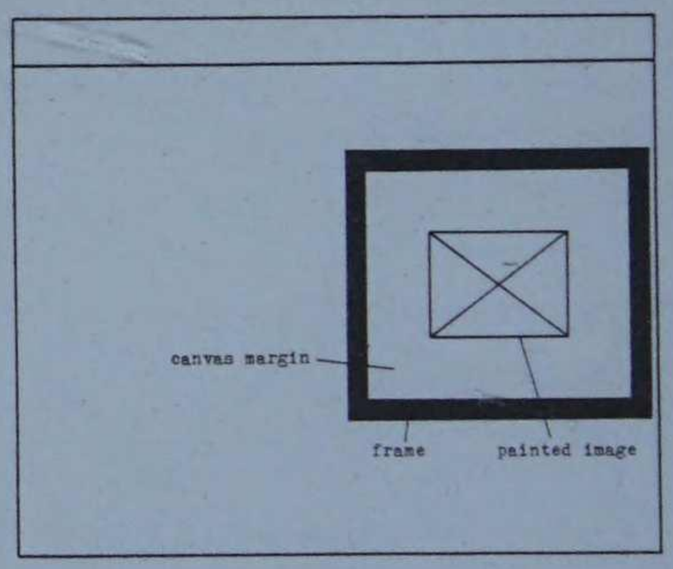
How, within the very space of display, is one to demonstrate the spatio-temporal condition as proposed by Robert Barry in his "The Space between pages 29 & 30" in 0-9 magazine, July 1969? In plan, one might rotate the entire exhibition space about a point lying somewhere along one of its peripheral walls. The angle of rotation would of course be arbitrary but, then again, it should probably amount to only a few degrees, just enough to register the displacement. Whatever the angle employed, it should not be confused with the angle say between "pages 74 and 75"--that is, between two opposing pages. In other words, the angle, the space between pages 29 and 30 does not exist; there is no repetition and that which is repeated. What we would have in this case would be an example of originary repetition, the repetition of a repetition.

Displacement proposal
1985
typewritten sheet
8.5 × 11 inches

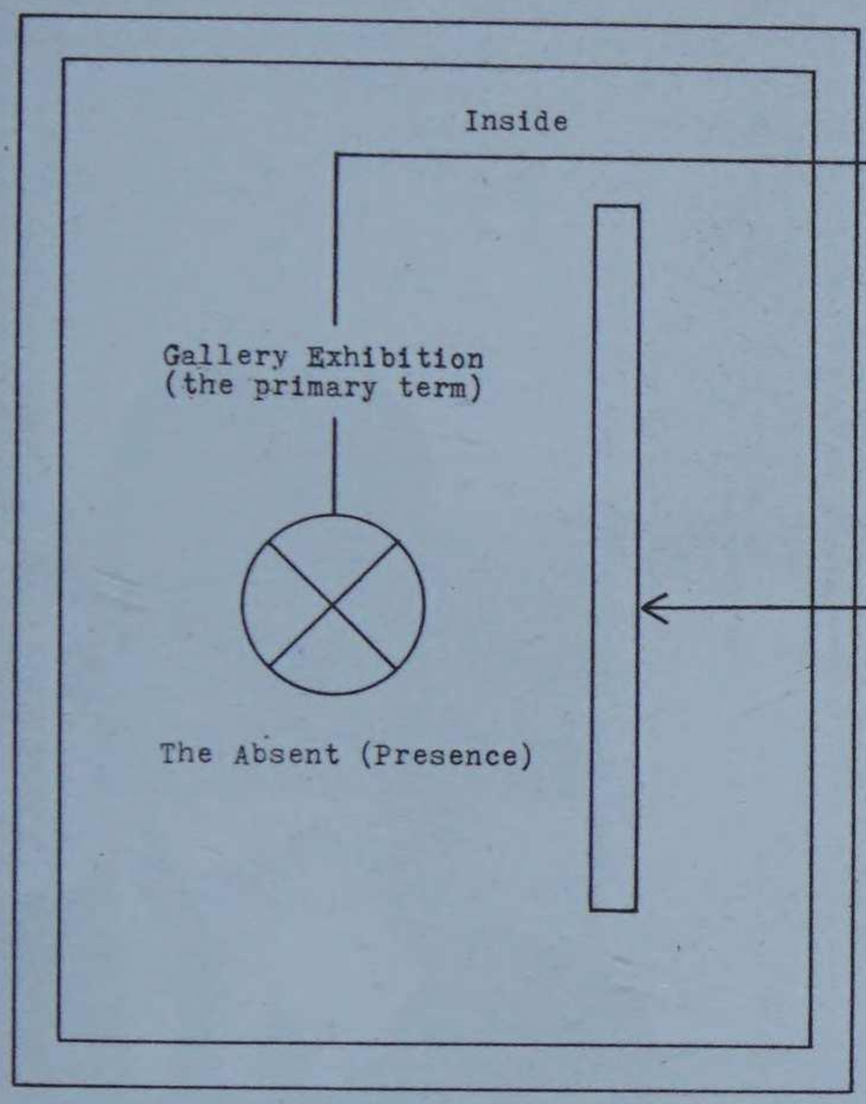
r-i-d-i-c-u-l-o-u-s inc
1982
photocopy
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for Plug In,
Winnipeg



II. The Presentation: north wall of video/film facilities



III. The Presentation: south wall of main exhibition area



Schematic: r-i-d-i-c-u-l-o-u-s Inc.: indicating an internal partition (which differentiates the exhibition space 'proper' from the auxillary and administration spaces) within the gallery complex.

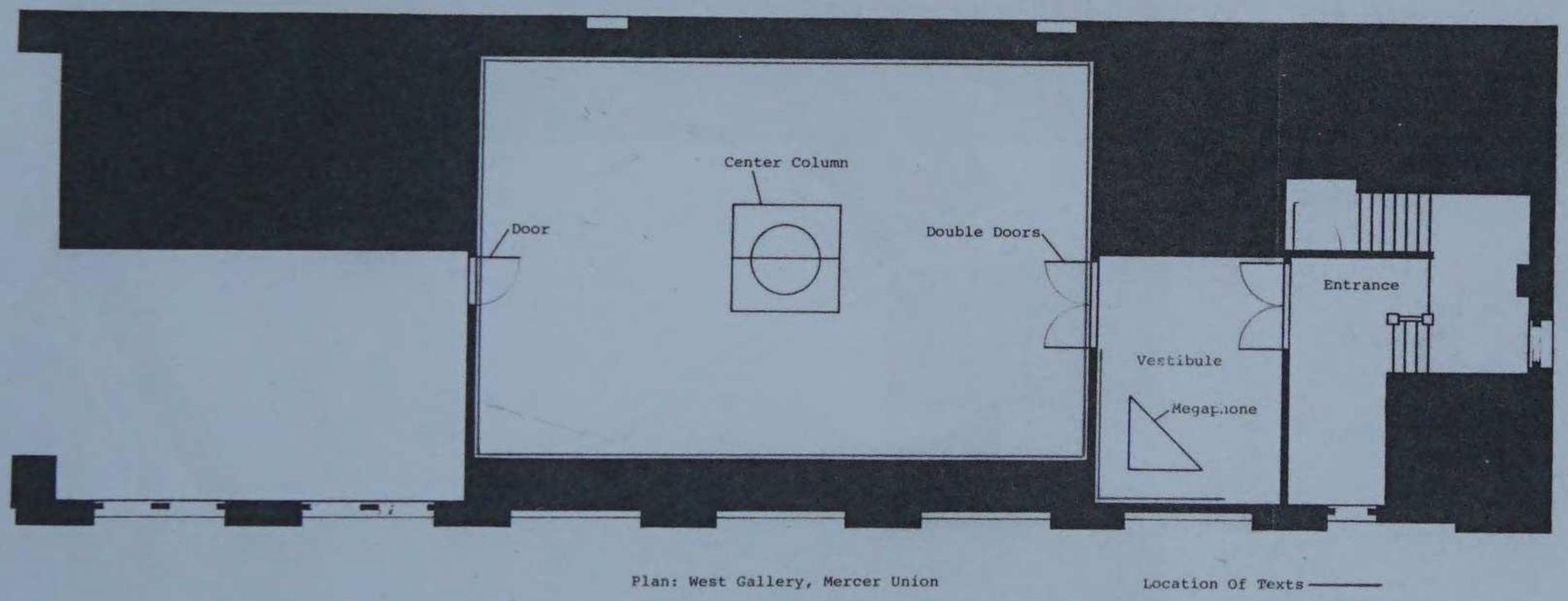
r-i-d-i-c-u-l-o-u-s inc
1982
photocopy
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for Plug In,
Winnipeg

HEGEL'S HOLIDAY

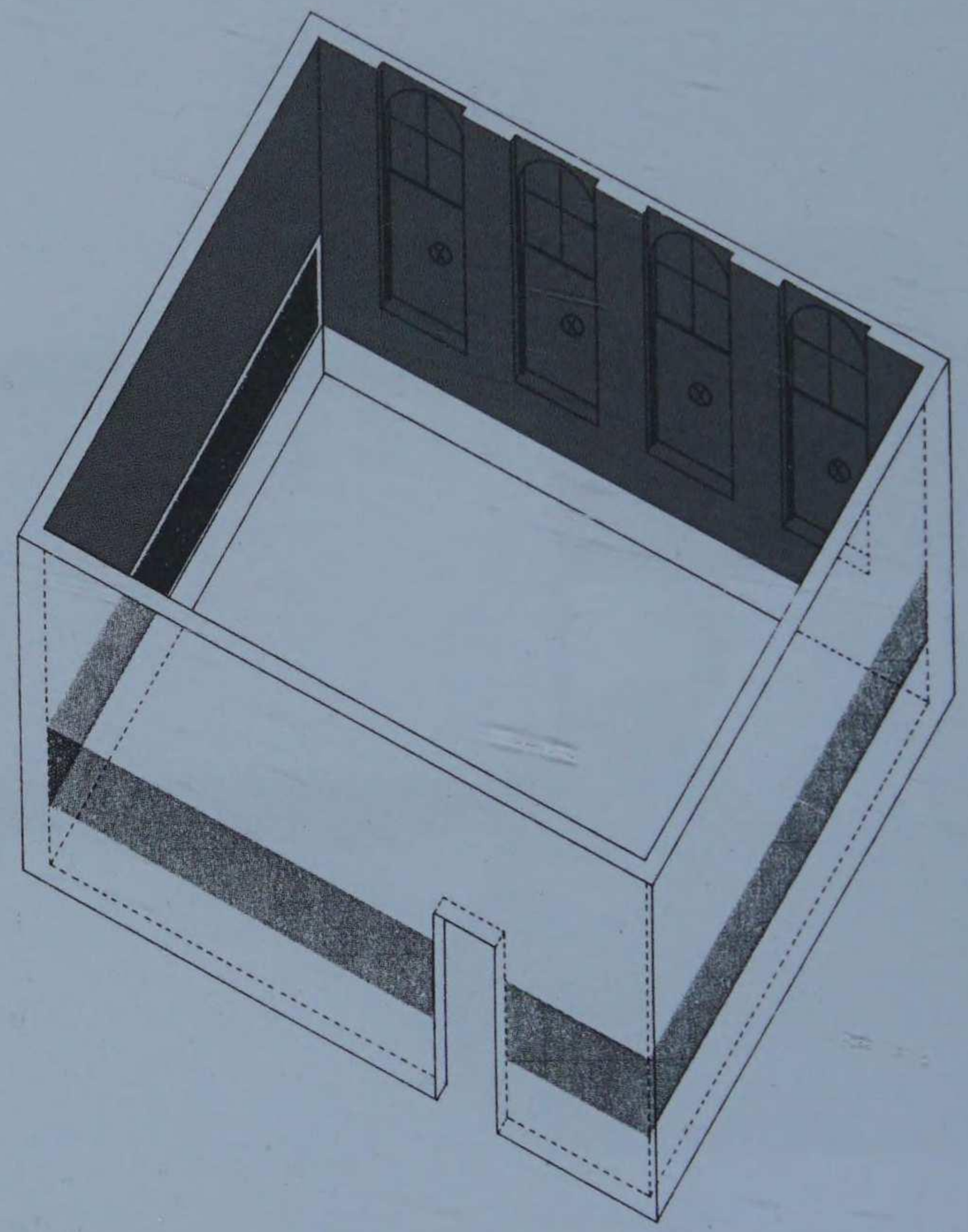
AN INSTALLATION BY GORDON LEBREDT



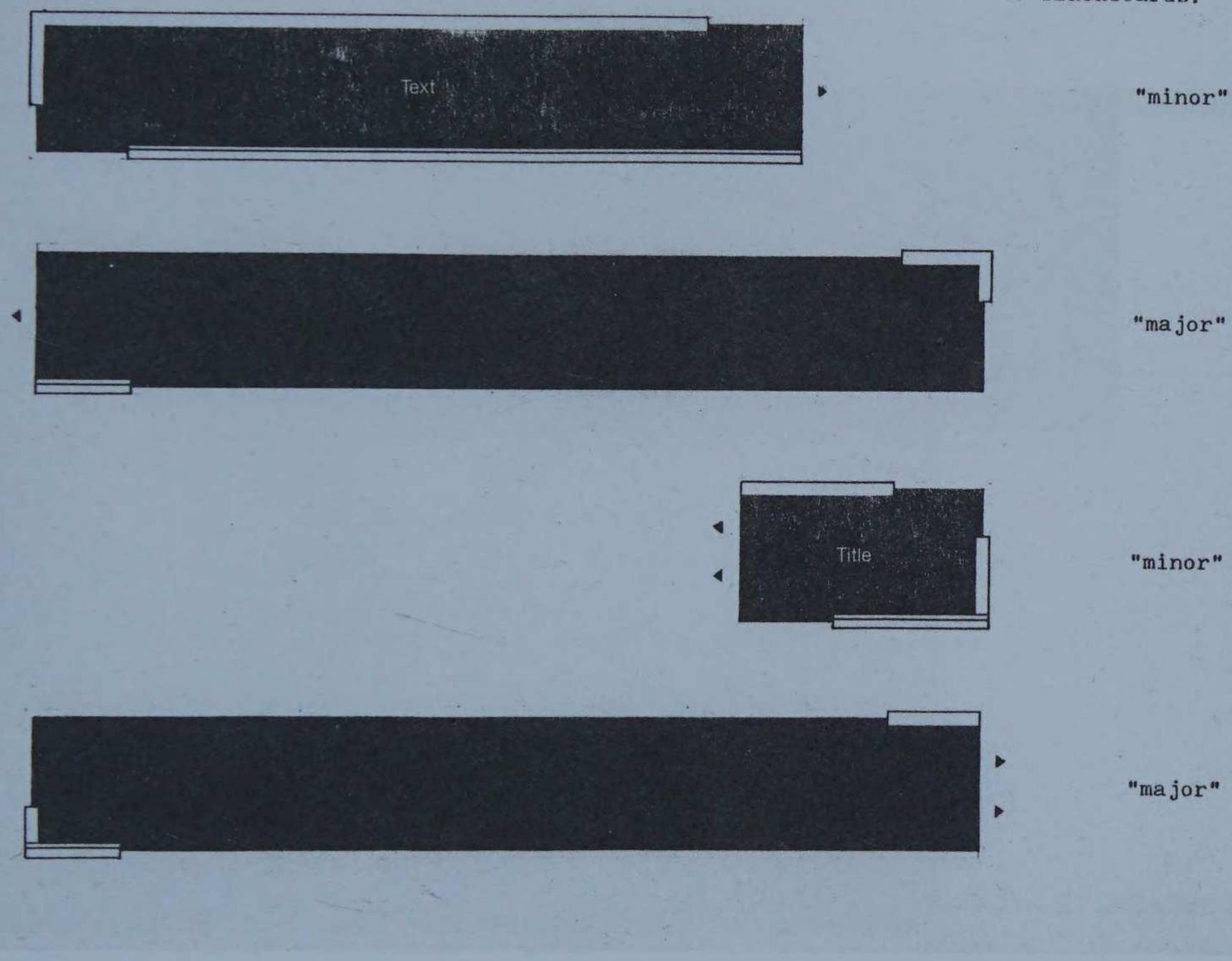
Hegel's Holiday
1984
photocopy of proposal cover
11 × 8.5 inches
proposal for Mercer Union, Toronto



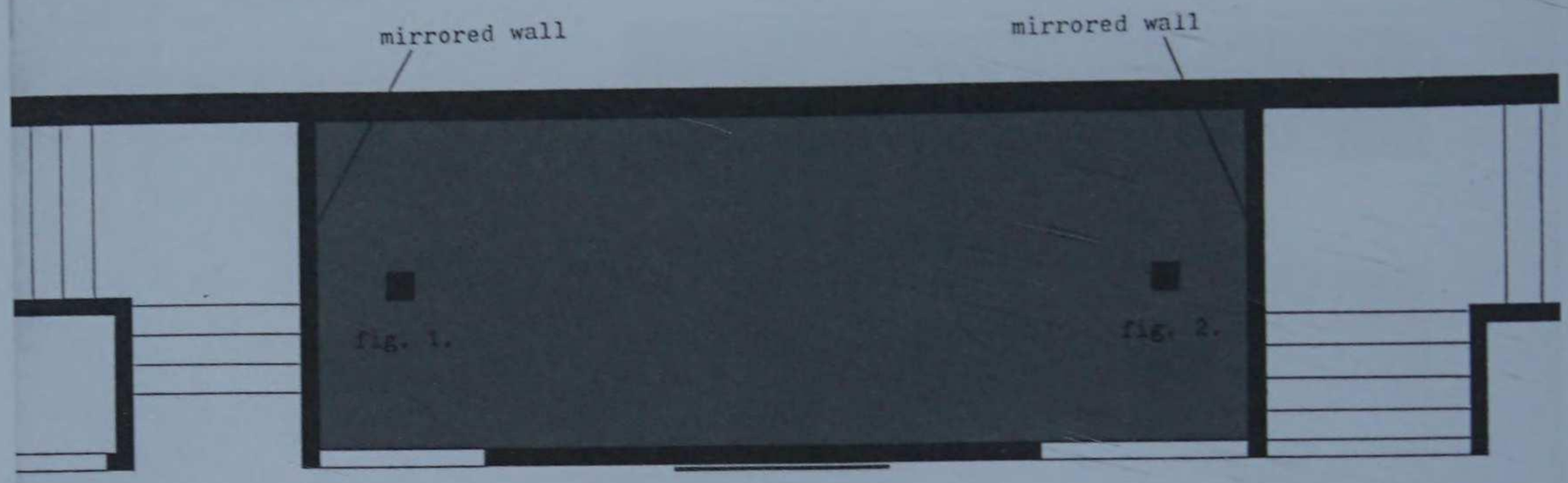
Hegel's Holiday
1984
plan
photocopy
14 × 8.5 inches
proposal for Mercer Union, Toronto



The Cold Room—"Colour me true"
1981
colour photocopy
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for Room 202
PS 1, New York

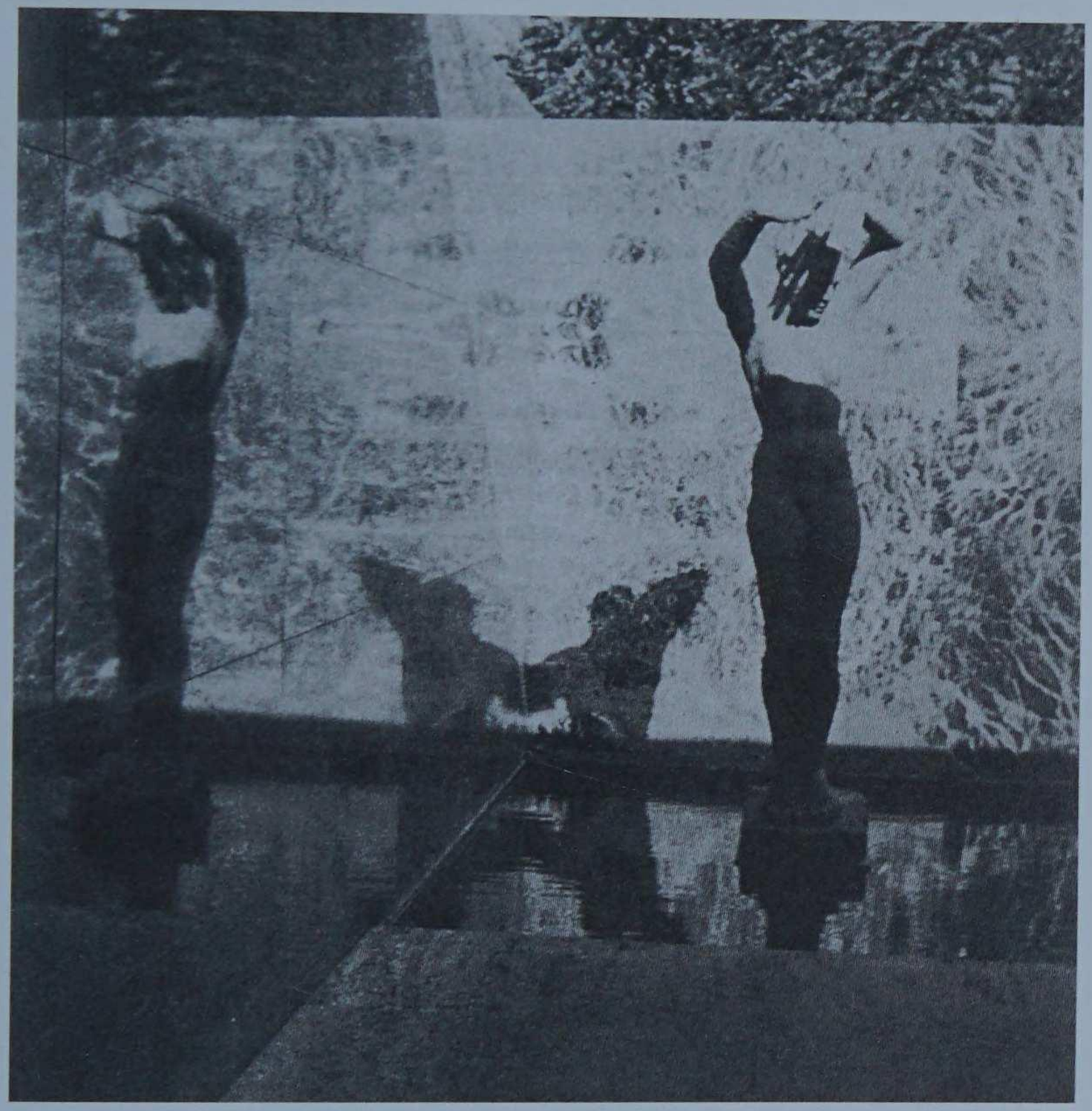


The Cold Room—"Colour me true"
1981
photocopy
11 × 8.5 inches
proposal for Room 202, PS 1, New York



The Appearance, on the eve of one revolution Open Space, 510 Fort St., Victoria, B.C.

The Appearance, on the eve of one revolution
1982
plan
colour photocopy
11 × 8.5 inches
proposal for Open Space, Victoria

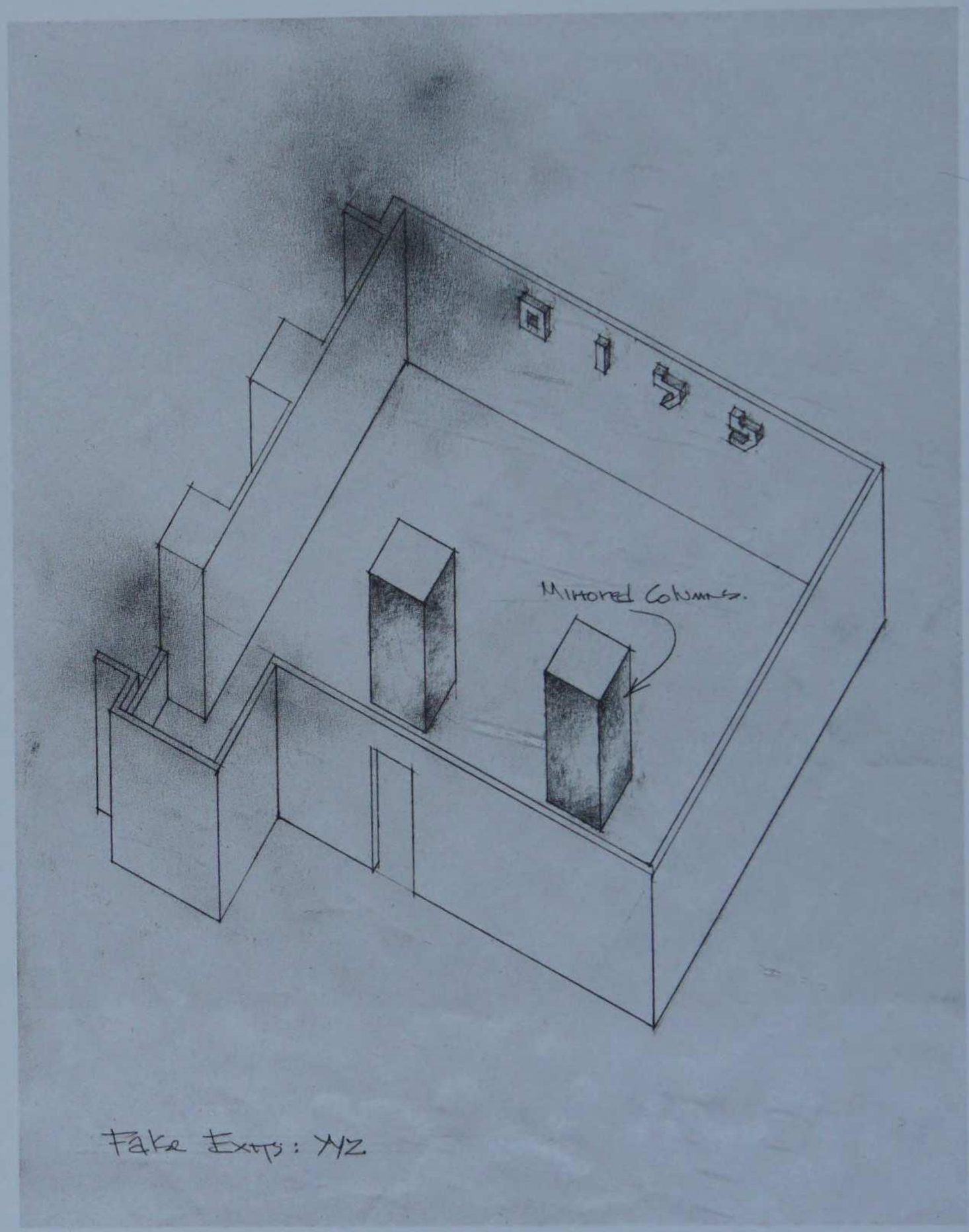


The Appearance, on the eve of one revolution

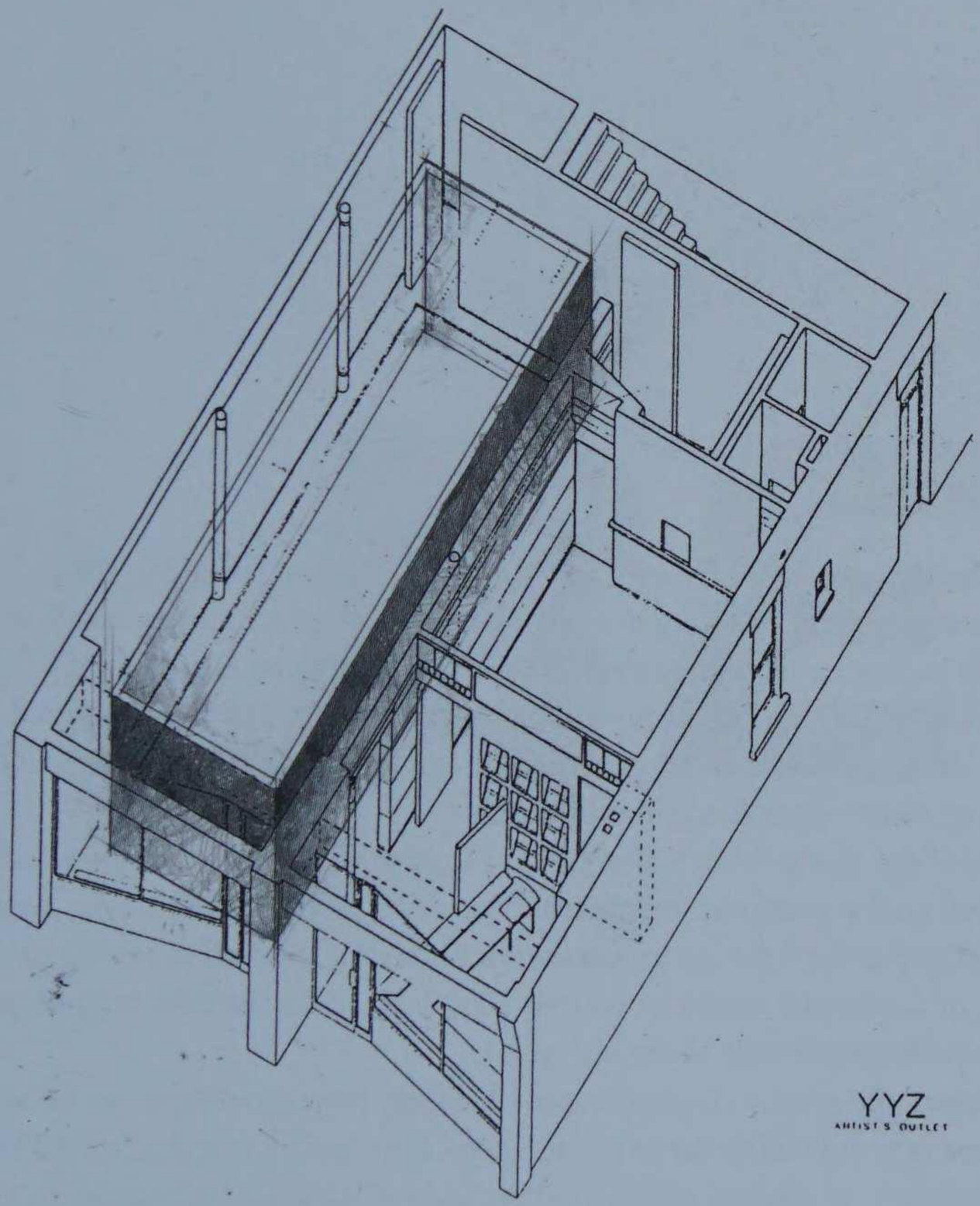
1982

source for proposed mirrored busts: Georg Kolbe, *Sunrise*, 1925

Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavillion, 1929



Retroactive Proposal for YYZ
1996–86
graphite on paper
8.5 × 11 inches



Ten points for YYZ—now
1989
graphite on photocopy
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for the exhibition
Decalog, celebrating YYZ's 10th
anniversary

103a Roncesvalles Avenue
Toronto, on m6r 1h6
June 18, 1993

Philip Monk
Curator of Contemporary Art
Art Gallery of Ontario
317 Dundas Street West
Toronto, on m5t 1g4

Dear Philip,

Re: *The Everyday Use of the Word.*

In my opinion, due to the extent of the renovations to the ago, the work *The Everyday Use of the Word* cannot be reinstalled without seriously compromising its programme, a programme which, if you recall, anticipated—still anticipates—the necessity of its having to be modified if it is once again to be exhibited.

Taking into consideration the changes to the architecture (the all new entrance lobby and the revamped Signy Eaton Gallery), I have abandoned all thoughts of simply adding to (or subtracting from) the original display components. Rather, I am suggesting much more severe modifications:

1) To restrict the work to the confines of the Signy Eaton Gallery. Here, I propose that the same plywood support/acrylic display panels be deployed on the overhead "entablature" precisely as before. This time around, however, I would extend the inscription/band around the entire surround. Such a configuration (a ring or circle opposed to the former right angle or L-schema) would be entirely acceptable since the new interior partitions now prevent one from having an unobstructed view of the surround.

2) Given the new extended configuration, the original legend would obviously pose a problem. As far as I can see, my only recourse in this instance is to substitute the original legend for another, one that would better "fit" the new situation. Thus, I feel it necessary, on several counts (not the least of which is the change in the work's status: it now being part of the contemporary Canadian collection), to make what, at first glance, is understandably a rather drastic alteration. Apart from the change in status (which should be to some degree

reflected in the legend), the issue of substitution was always a possibility since, from my point of view, the text—its meaning-to-say (whether in the context of Wittgenstein's corpus or in that of my programme, of *The Everyday Use of the Word*—does not have absolute priority (in terms of its contribution to what the work may or may not mean) over any other component, for example, a particular array of works which may be set forth below it. In other words, the so-called identity of the work never rested on a semantic evaluation, on what the legend alone might mean to say. On several counts, then, I have chosen from a number of possibilities—again, from the *Philosophical Investigations*—the following legend:

> 499. TO SAY "THIS COMBINATION OF WORDS MAKES NO SENSE" EXCLUDES IT FROM THE SPHERE OF LANGUAGE. BUT WHEN ONE DRAWS A BOUNDARY IT MAY BE FOR VARIOUS KINDS OF REASON. IF I SURROUND AN AREA WITH A FENCE OR A LINE OR OTHERWISE, THE PURPOSE MAY BE TO PREVENT SOMEONE FROM GETTING IN OR OUT; BUT IT MAY BE PART OF A GAME AND THE PLAYERS BE SUPPOSED, SAY, TO JUMP OVER THE BOUNDARY; OR IT MAY SHOW WHERE THE PROPERTY OF ONE MAN ENDS AND THAT OF ANOTHER BEGINS; AND SO ON. SO IF I DRAW A BOUNDARY LINE THAT IS NOT YET TO SAY WHAT I AM DRAWING IT FOR.

3) The title of the work will remain but with the addition of the words *Uber die Linie* which, translated, could be taken to mean about or concerning the line or mark; above or over the line or mark; across (from side to side or to the other side) the line or mark; by way of the line or mark; past or beyond the line or mark. It would thus be written: *The Everyday Use of the Word—(Uber die Linie)*.

Since the ago has, in addition to purchasing the work, already paid for any modifications, I will, of course, assume responsibility for all additional material and fabrication costs. As for the original display panels, I would like the opportunity to recycle them, to incorporate (inverting and reversing) them into the new configuration. Hence, the original legend, having been turned face downward on its support surface, would remain intact but concealed beneath its replacement.

Yours sincerely,

G. Lebredt

ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO
317 Dundas Street West Toronto Ontario Canada M5T 1G4
telephone 416-977-0414

13 June 1994

Gordon Lebredt
103A Roncesvalles Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6R 2K9

Dear Gordon,

Back in September of 1993 you sent Philip Monk a letter indicating you wished to alter the work The Everyday Use of the Word in view of the architectural changes that have taken place. As you know Philip has left the AGO and since I am not sure whether he contacted you about this I thought I'd write you this note.

Although we are not planning to install the piece in the near future I'm sure it will be re-installed at one point. There are many implications involved in what you are suggesting. I think it would be wiser to wait until a new Curator of Contemporary Art has been appointed to address these issues. In the meantime I have forwarded your proposal to the Chief Curator, Matthew Teitelbaum.

Please feel free to call me if you wish to discuss any issues pertaining to your letter.

Sincerely,

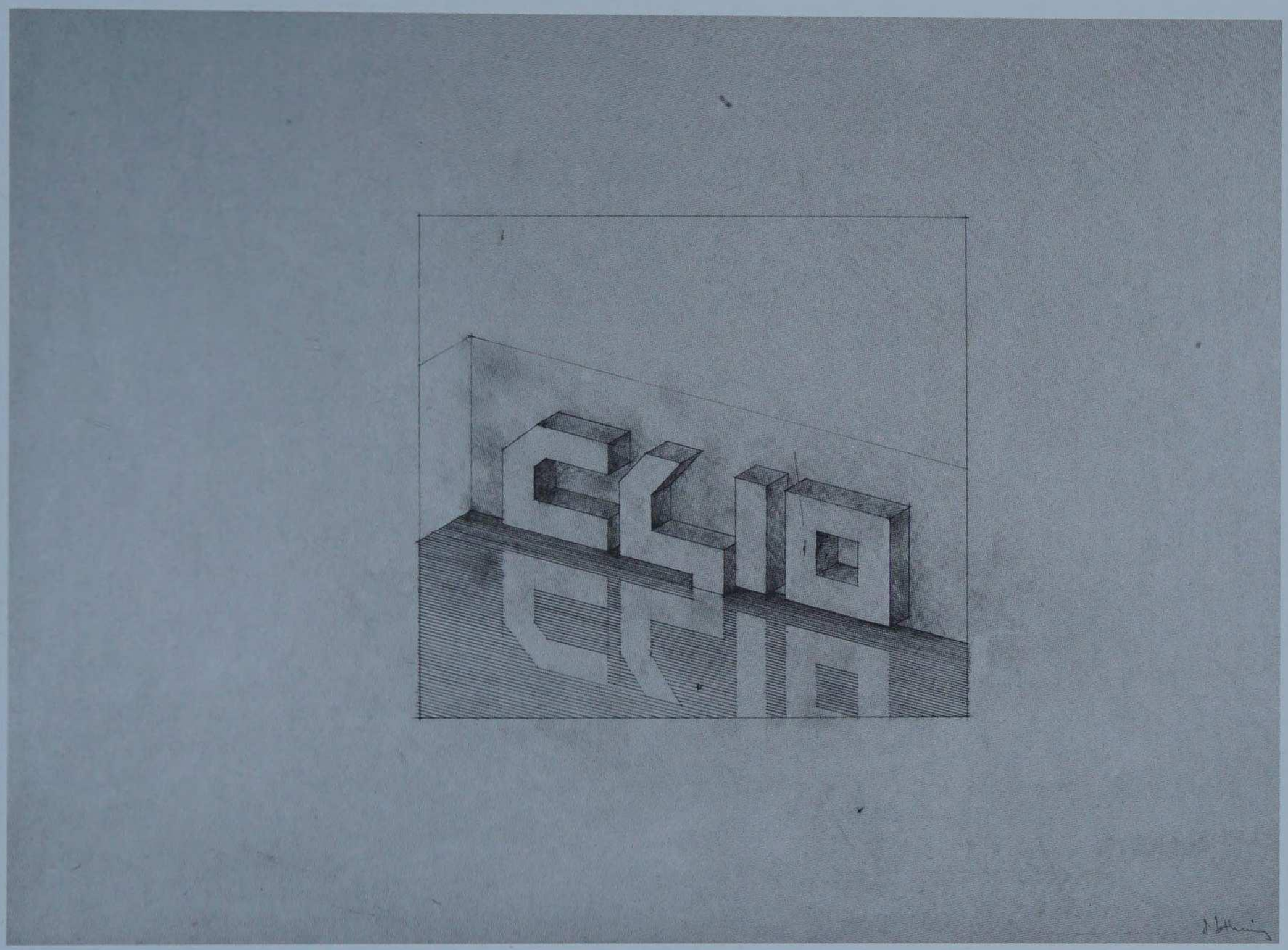
M. Thériault

Michèle Thériault
Assistant Curator
Contemporary Art

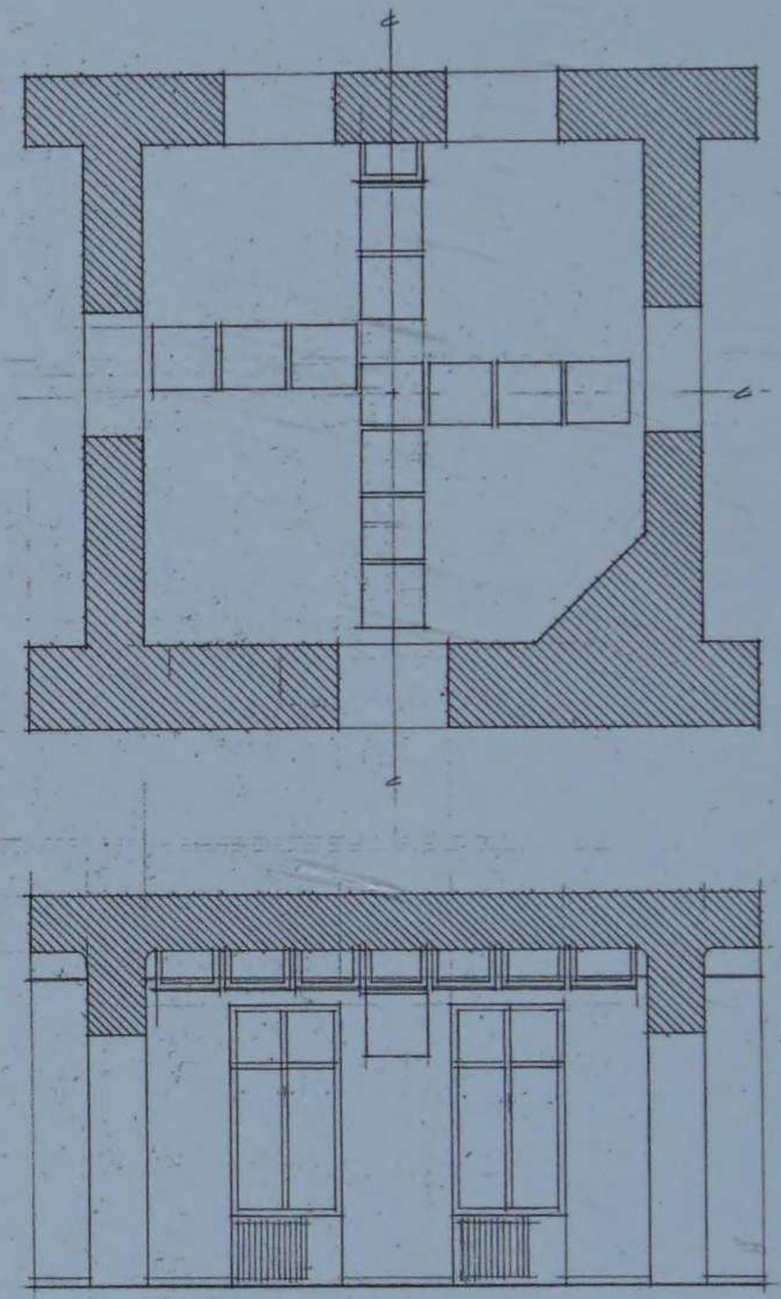
MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
317 rue Dundas ouest Toronto Ontario Canada M5T 1G4
téléphone 416-977-0414

Correspondence concerning proposed alterations to the work *The Everyday Use of the Word* (1989, collection of The Art Gallery of Ontario)

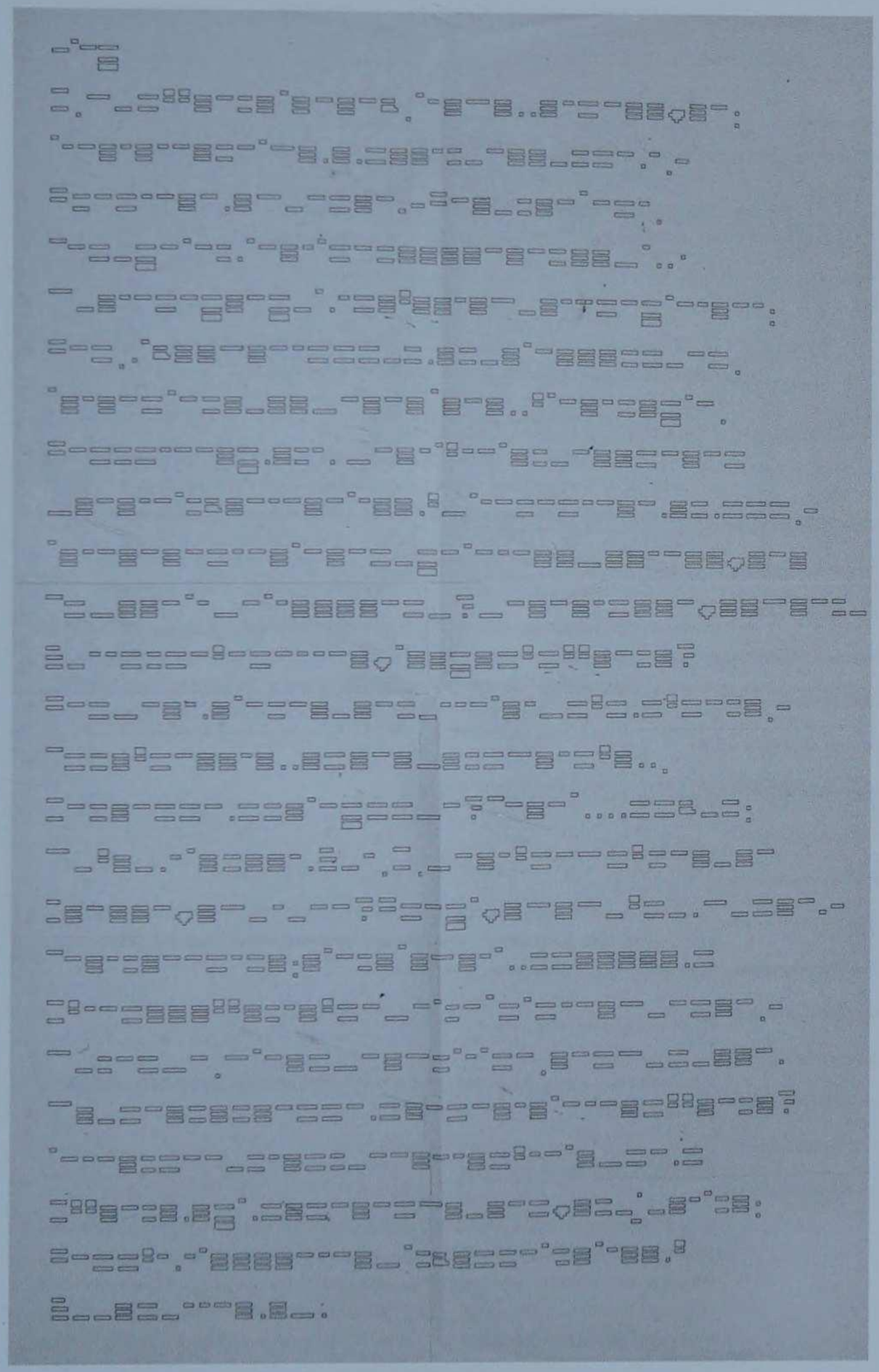
RELIABILITY



Four Letters of Relief (Nothing)
1996
graphite on paper
30 × 22 inches



Fractured Cross
1991
photocopy
11 × 14.4 inches
proposal for Zagreb, Croatia



Mirror Text

1991
laser print on paper
18 × 22 inches

(Points—in re-presentation
1996
page 2
Aporia #1, Summer, 2998
8.5 × 11 inches

Gordon Lebredt

POINTS - IN RE-PRESENTATION

JANUARY 6, 1998

(POINTS - IN RE-PRESENTATION, written five years ago as an accompanying statement for a proposed exhibition titled *A:O*, records the fictional conversation of at least two interlocutors as they attempt to negotiate the infinitely narrow spatial interval of the interminably extendable threshold of the display. Arranged for the S.L. Simpson Gallery, *A:O* was to follow my 1992 exhibition *The Future of the Word/The Legacy of Things-a geo*graphic, and was to be viewed as a further elaboration of Freud's *fort:da* motif already presented in the group exhibition *Reading: Public Signs, Private Acts* (AGYU and London Regional Art and Historical Museums) curated by Walter Klepac. The issue of residual or intermediary space - and the temporal delay that necessarily accompanies it - was first articulated in several proposals (*What Exhibition? Where?* and *Foyer*) for the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1981. Both these works, each in a much modified form, were assembled for the exhibition *From Sea to Shining Sea* at The Power Plant, Toronto, in 1985.

GL

What if, in proposing a work, I were to submit, as an opening gesture, the following statement:
"Given: an empty room."

Now let us suppose for the moment that it is to this end - i.e., to offer for presentation as a work of art nothing more or less than the presentation space itself - that I wish to appea. Such is my immediate impulse, my inclination in two acts or two steps.

Act 1, first step

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained." The phrase has just come to me. I imagine it imposing itself, proclaiming itself above my title... I think of the child, little Ernst, spool and string in hand, contemplating the exterior of his walled-in crib... "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." The phrase returns, repeats itself, over and above my title... Which is of course O:A.

—

O:A or o:a. That's all.

And what does it mean?

If you must know, it's shorthand for the expression "o-o-o-o:da" Which in turn is baby talk for - but we only have Freud's word on this - the expression "*fort:da*." Which when rendered in English, becomes "gone:there."[1]

That's *O:A* or *o:a* with a colon?

Yes, and it's the colon that I see first. Exaggerated, enlarged beyond all proper proportion, you can't miss it.

So, why the big colon?

Because I mean it to be obtrusive if only to underscore the necessity of introducing a colon (and as you know typographically the colon is the mark or index of introduction) between certain terms which would otherwise be separated by a virgule or perhaps a dash. The colon, then, not only graphically marks off a relation between two opposing terms, introduces the one to the other, but, more importantly, it silently advertises - almost



O:A

1993–96
elevation: foyer/vestibule
collage on photocopy
17 × 11 inches
proposal for the SL Simpson Gallery, Toronto

here, and contrary to what one might think, where indeed the look cannot abide

–anxiety reduces me

PARENTS AT NIGHT, HE CONSCIENTIOUSLY OBEYED ORDERS NOT TO TOUCH C

FROM HIM INTO A CORNER, UNDER THE BED, AND SO ON, SO THAT HUNTING

ONLY USE HE MADE OF HIS TOYS WAS TO PLAY 'GONE' WITH THEM. ONE DA

EXPRESSIVE 'O-O-O-O.' HE THEN PULLED THE REEL OUT OF THE COT AGAIN

0:A 1996

A PROPOSAL FOR THE SL SIMPSON GALLERY

CHILD WAS NOT AT ALL PRECOCIOUS IN HIS INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT. AT THE AGE OF ONE AND A HALF HE COULD SAY ONLY A FEW COMPREHENSIBLE WORDS; HE COULD ALSO MAKE

N THINGS OR GO INTO CERTAIN ROOMS, AND ABOVE ALL HE NE **Whereupon I take flight knowing that nothing there had really taken place.** URS. AT THE SAME TIME, HE WAS GREATLY ATTACHED TO HIS MOT

HIS TOYS AND PICKING THEM UP WAS OFTEN QUITE A BUSINESS. AS HE DID THIS HE GAVE VENT TO A LOUD, LONG-DRAWN-OUT 'O-O-O-O,' ACCOMPANIED BY AN EXPRESSION OF INTERE

ADE AN OBSERVATION WHICH CONFIRMED MY VIEW. THE CHILD HAD A WOODEN REEL WITH A PIECE OF STRING TIED AROUND IT. IT NEVER OCCURRED TO HIM TO PULL IT ALONG THE FL

E STRING AND HAILED ITS REAPPEARANCE WITH A JOYFUL '*DA*' ['THERE']. THIS, THEN, WAS THE COMPLETE GAME—DISAPPEARANCE AND RETURN. AS A RULE ONE ONLY WITNESSED ITS F

O:A
1993–96
elevations
proposal for the SL Simpson Gallery

R OF SOUNDS WHICH EXPRESSED

T ONLY FED HIM HERSELF BUT A

ION. HIS MOTHER AND THE WRIT

OPEN

An extreme instance?

FOR INSTANCE, AND PLAY AT ITS

WAS REPEATED UNTIRINGLY AS A

G INTELLIGIBLE TO THOSE AROUND HIM. HE WAS, HOWEVER, ON GOOD TERMS WITH HIS PARENTS AND THEIR ONE SERVANT-GIR

LOOKED AFTER HIM WITHOUT ANY OUTSIDE HELP. THIS GOOD LITTLE BOY, HOWEVER, HAD AN OCCASIONAL DISTURBING HABIT

E PRESENT ACCOUNT WERE AGREED IN THINKING THAT THIS WAS NOT A MERE INTERJECTION BUT REPRESENTED THE GERMAN W

OPEN

CARRIAGE. WHAT HE DID WAS TO HOLD THE REEL BY THE STRING AND VERY SKILFULLY THROW IT OVER THE EDGE OF HIS CU

Yes, but one which, in it's extremity, will bear on all our attempts to rende

ITSELF, THOUGH THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE GREATER PLEASURE WAS ATTACHED TO THE SECOND ACT.

0:A 1996

A PROPOSAL FOR THE SL SIMPSON GALLERY

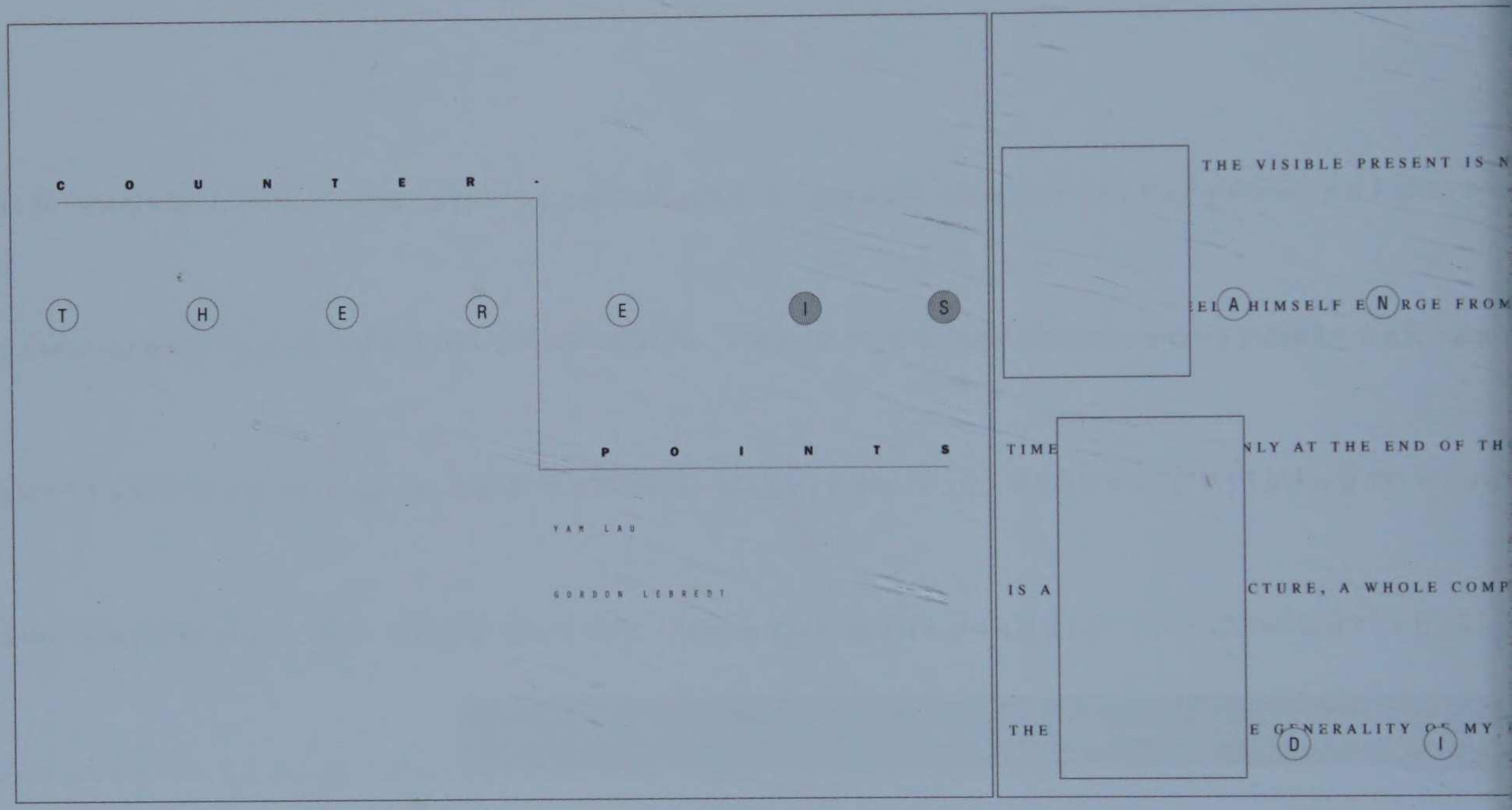
RIBUTES WERE PAID TO HIS BEING A 'GOOD BOY.' HE DID NOT DISTURB HIS

IG ANY SMALL OBJECTS HE COULD GET HOLD OF AND THROWING THEM AWAY

RT' ['GONE']. I EVENTUALLY REALIZED THAT IT WAS A GAME AND THAT THE

COT, SO THAT IT DISAPPEARED INTO IT, AT THE SAME TIME UTTERING HIS

ting.



There is an invisibility that is deferred visibility, and a visibility that is discouraging illegibility. This illegibility confirms to us that all that is visible is not, by virtue of this principle, legible, but that, on the other hand, that which is invisible remains the future stake of all legibility.

ND SPACE, NOR, OF COURSE, *OUTSIDE* OF THEM: THERE IS NOTHING BEFORE IT, AFTER IT, ABOUT IT, THAT COULD COMPETE WITH ITS VISIBILITY. AND YET IT IS NOT ALONE, IT IS NOT EVERYTHING. TO PUT IT PRECISELY, IT STOPS UP MY VIEW, THAT IS, TIME AND SPACE EXTEND BEYOND THE VISIBLE PRESENT, A

SORI(N)F COILING(V)P OR REDC(I)LING, FUN(S)AMENTALLY(I)OMOGENE(B)S WITH TH(I); HE FEEL(L)HAT HE I(I)HE SENSI(T) ITSELF C(Y)ING TO ITSEL(T)ND THAT I(H)RETURN TH(A)SENSIBLE (T)IN HIS EYES (I)IT WERE H(S) DOUBLE OR A(D)XTENSION(E) HIS OWN(F)ESH. THE(E)ACE, THE(R)AE OF THE(R)INGS ARE(E)REDS

SPATIALITY AND OF TEMPORALITY EMITTED IN THE SECRECY OF MY FLESH. AND THEIR SOLIDITY IS NOT THAT OF A PURE OBJECT WHICH THE MIND SOARS OVER; I EXPERIENCE THEIR SOLIDITY FROM WITHIN INSOFAR AS I AM AMONG THEM AND INSOFAR AS THEY COMMUNICATE THROUGH ME AS A SENTIENT THING. I

OMENA "IN TIERS," A WHOLE SERIES OF "LEVELS OF BEING," WHICH ARE DIFFERENTIATED BY THE COILING UP OF THE VISIBLE AND THE UNIVERSAL OVER A CERTAIN VISIBLE WHEREIN IT IS REDOUBLED AND INSCRIBED. FACT AND ESSENCE CAN NO LONGER BE DISTINGUISHED, NOT BECAUSE, MIXED UP IN OUR EXPE

E IDEAS ARE THEREFORE ALREADY ENCRUSTED IN ITS JOINTS. THERE IS NO EMPLACEMENT OF SPACE AND TIME THAT WOULD NOT BE A VARIANT OF THE OTHERS, AS THEY ARE OF IT; THERE IS NO INDIVIDUAL THAT WOULD NOT BE REPRESENTATIVE OF A SPECIES OR OF A FAMILY OF BEINGS, WOULD NOT HAVE, WOU

(C)(O)(U)(R)(A)(G)(I)(N)(G)(I)(L)(L)(E)(G)(I)(B)(I)(L)(I)(T)(Y).

Counter-points
1996
elevations
proposal for Latitude, Edmonton
in collaboration with Yam Lau

ent, and at the same ti(D) they are *be(V)nd* it, in (I)pth, in hiding. The visible can thus fill me and occupy me only because I who see it do not see it from the depths of nothingness, but from the midst of itself; I the seer am also visible. What makes the weight, the thickn

hreds of (D)self, of hi… …te(I)oralizat(B)…, are no(I)nger a m(L)tiplicity(I) individ(T)s synchr(Y)ically …d diachronic(A)ly distri(N)ted, but (D)elief of the (A)multaneous a(V) of the s(I)cessive, (S)patial as(I) temporal(B)ulp wher(I)he indiv(L)als ar

ing. Like the memory s… …e present, the visible counts so much for me and has an absolute prestige for me only by reason of this immense latent content of the past, the future, and the elsewhere, which it announces and which it conceals. The

experience, they in thi… …e and would subsist as limit-ideas beyond our experience, but because—Being no longer being *before me*, but surrounding me and in a sense traversing me, and my vision of Being not forming itself from elsewhere, but f

, would not be a certai… …naging the domain of space and time over which it has competency, of pronouncing, of articulating that domain, of radiating about a wholly virtual center—in short, a certain manner of being, in the active sense, a ce

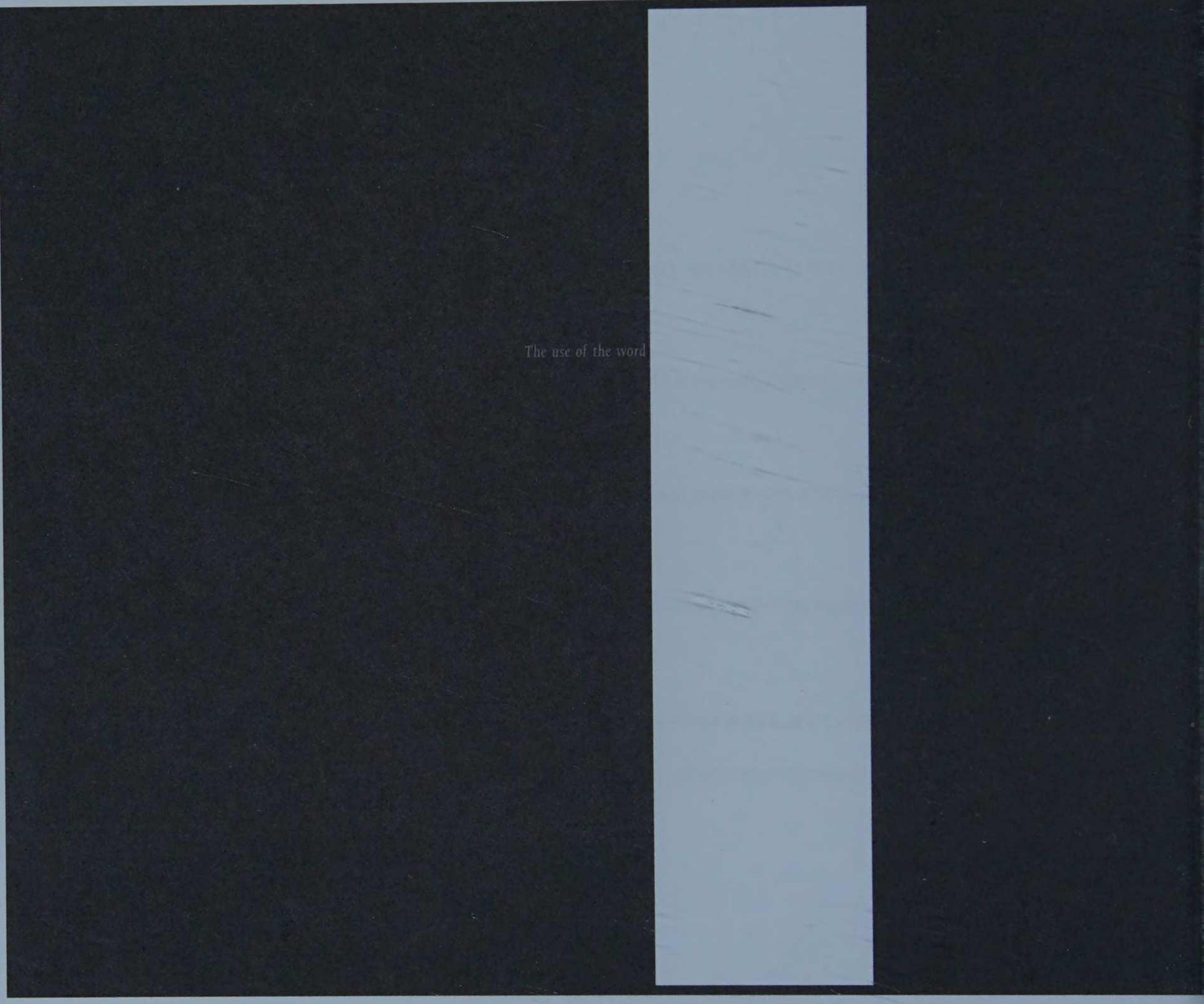
OF EACH COLOUR, OF EACH SOUND, OF EACH TACTILE TEXTURE, OF THE PRESENT, AND OF THE WORLD IS THE FACT THAT HE WHO

TFERENTIATYN. THE THINGSTHERE, THEH, NOW, THA— ARE NO TNGER IN THEMLVES, IN SRE OWN PLACE

RE NO NEED TO ADD TO THE MULTIPLICITY OF SPATIO-TEMPORAL ATOMS A TRANSVERSAL DIMENSION OF ESSENCE IS

OF BEING—THE ALLEGED FACTS, THE SPATIO-TEMPORAL INDIVIDUALS, ARE FROM THE FIRST MOUNTED ON THE 'S,

N THE SENSE THAT, SAYS HEIDEGGER, THIS WORD HAS WHEN USED AS A VERB.

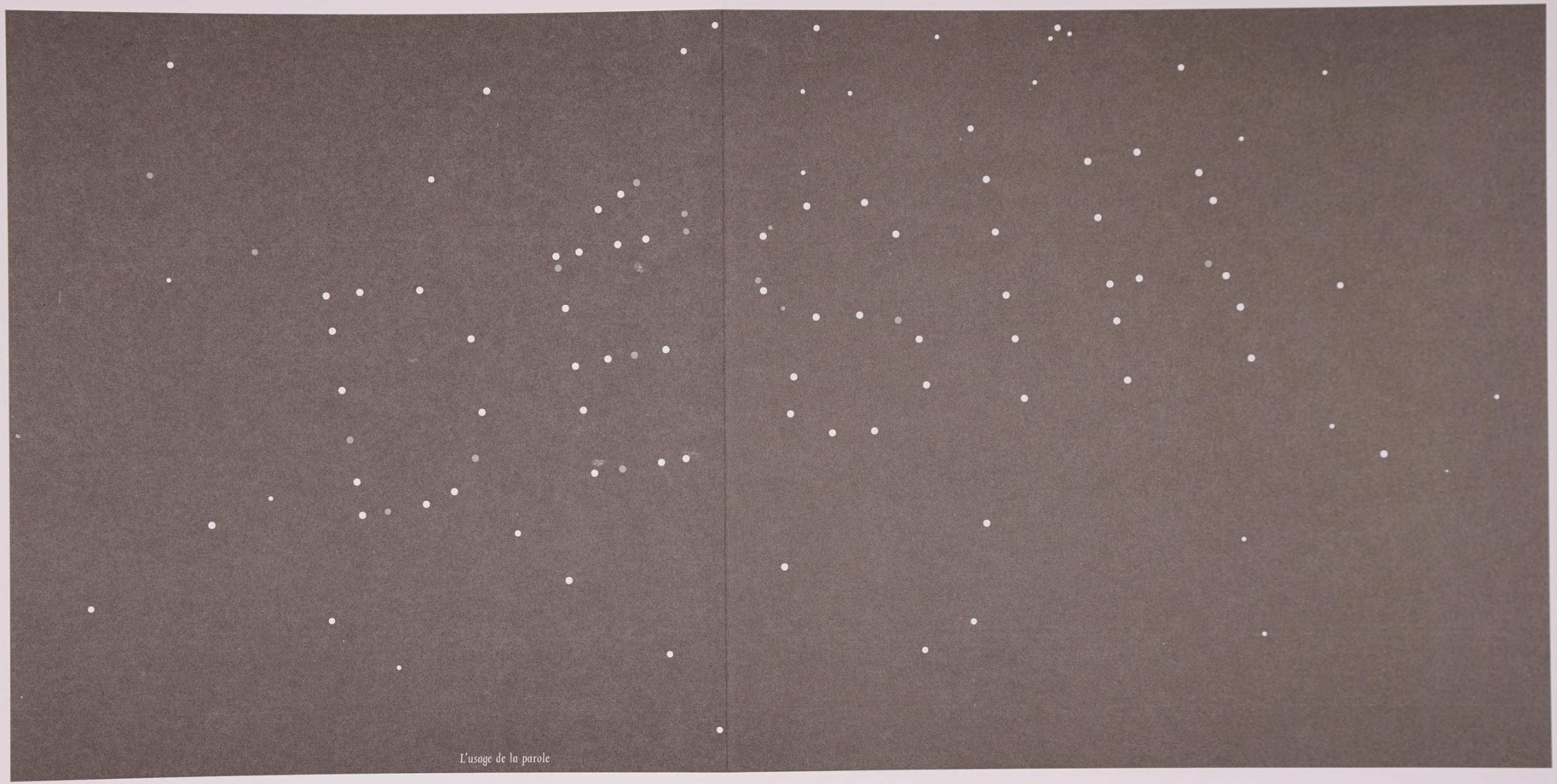


1

The Image in Itself: The Unspoken ~ North Elevation

Scale: 3/4 in = 1 ft ~ 0 in

English translation of Magritte legend: dry transfer (warm grey: Pantone 415c)



2

The Image in Itself: The Unspoken ~ West Elevation

Scale: 3/4 in = 1 ft ~ 0 in

112 points: 1/4 inch plate brass of various sizes: 1 3/4, 1 3/8 and 1 1/8 inch diameters

Magritte legend: 1/8 inch plate brass

The Image In Itself (the Unspoken)
1996
elevations
proposal for the Art Gallery of Ontario

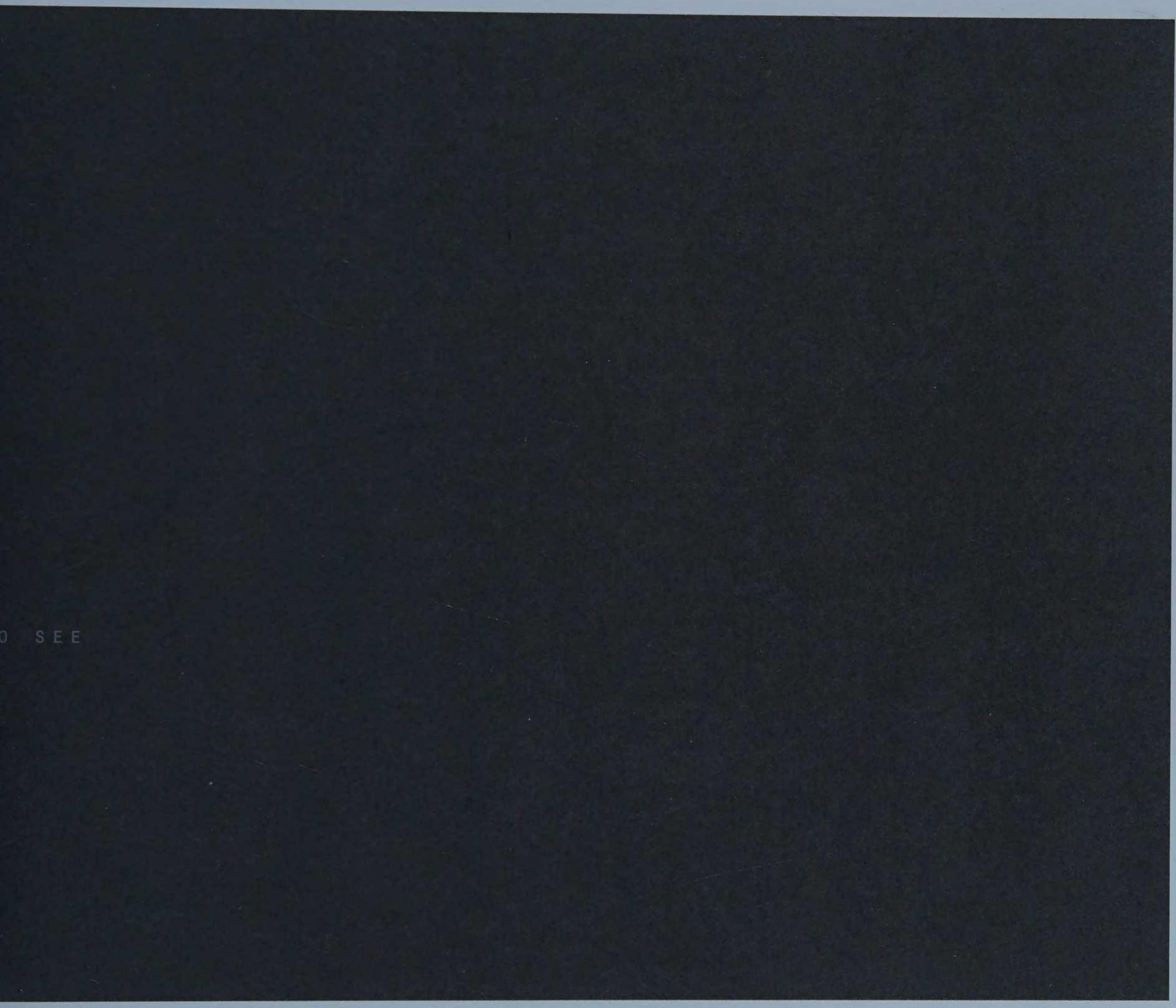


3

The Image in Itself: The Unspoken ~ East Elevation

Scale: 3/4 in = 1 ft ~ 0 in

Blanchot legend: upper section: 1/8 inch brass plate with clear acrylic insert on 4 inch standoffs, neon; lower section: 1/8 inch plate brass



The Image in Itself: The Unspoken ~ South Elevation
Scale: 3/4 in = 1 ft ~ 0 in

English translation of Blanchot legend: dry transfer (warm grey: Pantone 415c)

(…)

> It is the 'in order,' the overly certain finality of nothingness, that lets us know we cannot stop and rest with Mallarmé's 'proffer' … 'the beyond,' stopped from having anything to do with this scene at all by the verdict of that emptied word "nothing' … ——No negation, but heavy terms . . .
>
> —Maurice Blanchot, The Writing of the Disaster

Rather, they must be considered, beyond their obvious negative implications, as "heavy terms." Heavy—like tombstones: severe, opaque, mute reminders (memento mori) or remainders, blank tables or tablets which offer by proxy—since they are, themselves, under erasure—the mark of "a 'past' that has never been nor will ever be present, whose 'future' will never be produced or reproduced in the form of a presence." Traces of traces which, far from laboring to maintain or "increase the plasticity and presence" of an object, mark off—as if to say "that's enough"—their ontological, that is to say, presentational limits.

* * *

Heavy terms indeed.

I do not know if what we have projected here under the signature of Lau:Lebredt can be said to have ordered itself on the paradigm of what might be called a primal scene. We would have to say that any answer to such a question will have to wait, that everything here remains to be seen in presentation, according to the order of presentation—of course.

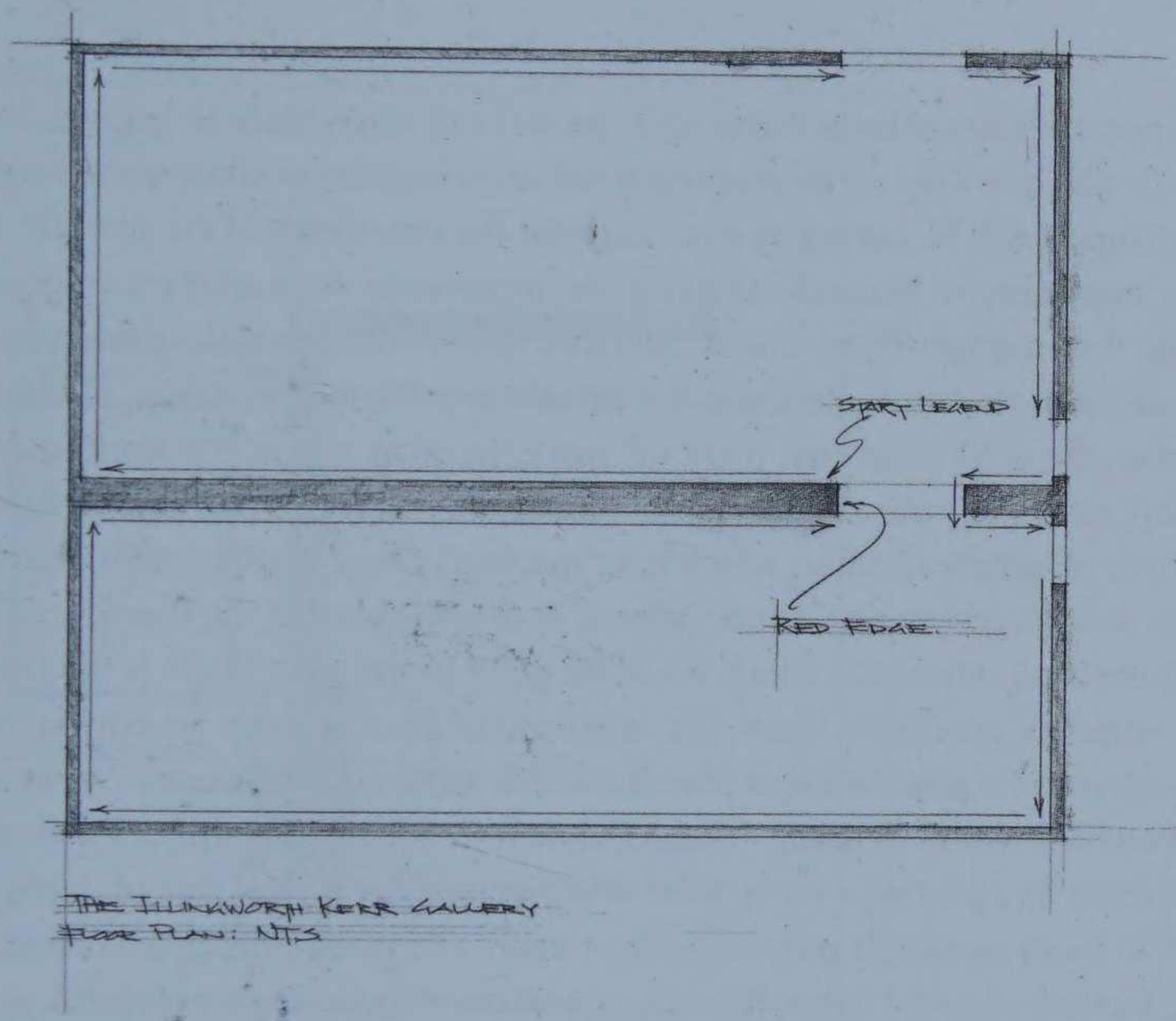
Still, there is always the question of the structure of delay (*Nachträglichkeit*), the irreducibility of the "effect of deferral" …

——A primal scene?

But enough is enough. It's time to break things off and to leave all of this in your capable hands.

Illingworth Kerr Gallery proposal

1996
excerpt from artists' statement
proposal for the Illingworth Kerr Gallery, Calgary
in collaboration with Yam Lau



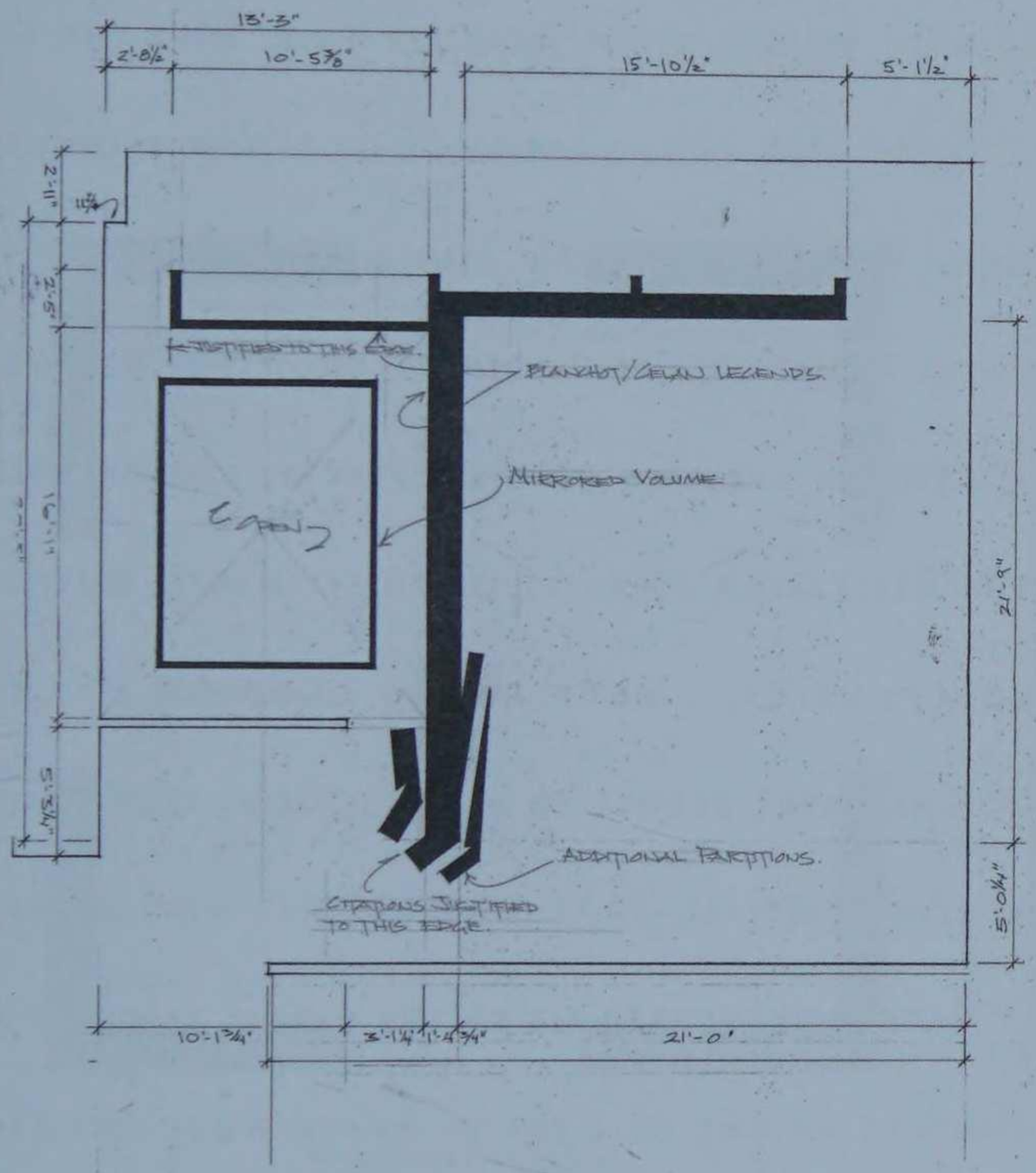
Illingworth Kerr Gallery proposal
1996
plan
graphite on paper
17 × 11 inches
proposal for the Illingworth Kerr Gallery, Calgary
in collaboration with Yam Lau

The Open

We consider The Open to be an appeal of sorts, a response to what we will call place, place in general. The word that comes to mind here is interval, which is what we believe one must open in order to allow something to take place; in order to "give" place to things, it will be necessary to arrange for the experience of the interval. In other words, the interval—openness or exteriority in general—is not given in advance. One receives or experiences "place" by receiving or embracing the interval. Thus, one is required to take the interval—understood as an activity of spacing (something) out—into the work. Before it can be said to refer to something, to solicit some thetic content of one sort or another, the work must first mark off space. In other words, the work incorporates or enfolds space. As a result of this extension, this spatial attenuation, the work necessarily makes time. Time, or rather, temporality, the movement of temporalization which is a "spacing." One could say, then, that to speak here of "time" as the interposition of a delay, a movement of deferral is to also speak of the Open.

But the Open does not exist; there is no referent to which we could point to and say, "There is the Open!" For example: the exhibition space as empty or geometric space, the extension of the Cartesian *res extensa*. No, what we are speaking of is a place, a non-place, a place without place in which anything whatsoever can be received and thus marked or reflected, but which "itself" remains unmarked or unreflected. The difficulty, then, lies in treating, in giving form to what cannot be assigned a form. (And it is precisely because of this problem—of formalization, of presentation—that one can no longer refer to or draw upon a formalism.) One has recourse only to the proxy of what resists being located, placed. Hence, it is not a question of inventing a new form, or for that matter, renaming an old one; nor is it a question of representation (but it is very much an issue of presentation, the order of presentation as milieu, the space between things). Rather, if one is to acknowledge the Open, be receptive to its effects, one is obliged to concern oneself with what, at bottom, can only be called an art of deferral.

The Open
1997
artists' statement
proposal for Mercer Union, Toronto
in collaboration with Yam Lau



The Open

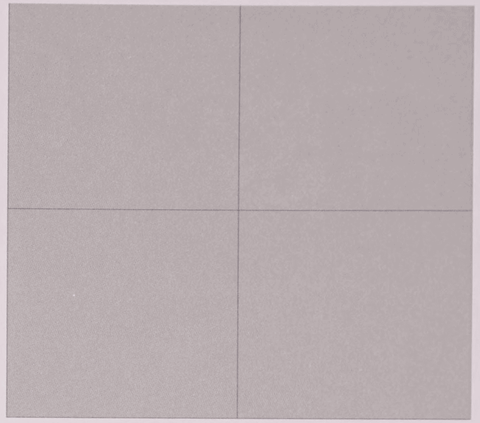
1997
plan
photocopy
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for Mercer Union
in collaboration with Yam Lau

FORGETFULNESS HAS NOT PASSED OVER THINGS, BUT I MUST SAY THIS: THAT THE BRIGHTNES
A CONSTANT AND JOYFUL "I SEE YOU," THEY SHINE IN THE INTIMACY OF A NEW BEGINNING IN W
REFLECTION, AN IMAGE WANDERING AMONG IMAGES AND DRAWN ALONG WITH THEM IN THE MONOT
UP, I HAVE FAITH IN THE BEGINNING: WHO WOULD RISE IF HE DIDN'T KNOW THE DAY WAS BEGINN
THE LIGHT COMING IN ONCE AGAIN, ALL THINGS ARE ALSO IN THEIR PLACES, UNALTERABLE, JOYFU
THEY ARE INDELIBLE, IMMOBILE IN THE GLITTERING ETERNITY OF THEIR IMAGES. BUT, SEEING TH

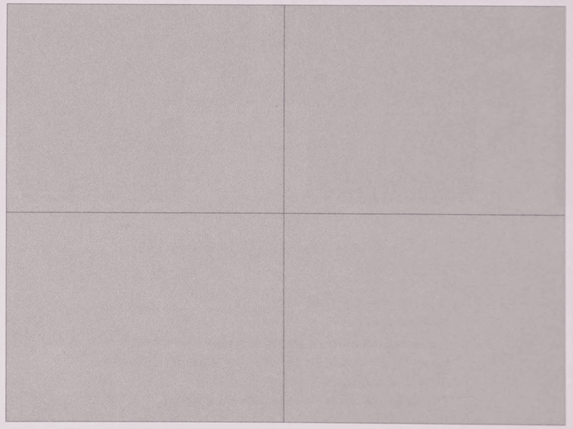
...AT THE NEAREST GATE NOTHING OPENS UP,...DEEP IN THE GLOWING / TEXT-VOID,
THIS IMPERCEPTIBLE WITHDRAWAL, INTO THE HAPPY BEAUTY OF A REFLECTION, EVEN THOUGH I AM
OF MY OWN IMAGE, BOUND TO THE FLOATING FESTIVAL OF AN INSTANT THAT NO LONGER PASSES.
THE ABYSS, AND THAT IT SHOULD ONLY HAVE SURRENDERED ME TO THE JOYFUL SPACE OF A FESTIVA
THIS INDEFATIGABLE LIGHTNESS, THE INFINITE WEIGHT OF A SKY IN WHICH WHAT ONE SEES REMAI
BEAUTIFUL SURFACE.

THE OPEN: ELEVATION OF WALL TREATMENT

THEY GLITTER, IN THIS BRIGHTNESS THAT DOESN'T DESTROY THEIR LIMITS, BUT UNITES THE UNLIMITED WITH
HING ELSE HAS A PLACE; AND AS FOR ME, THROUGH THEM I HAVE THE IMMOBILITY AND INCONSTANCY OF A
MOVEMENT THAT APPEARS TO HAVE NO CONCLUSION JUST AS IT HAD NO BEGINNING. PERHAPS, WHEN I GET
, EVEN THOUGH I AM STILL CAPABLE OF TAKING MANY STEPS, WHICH IS WHY DOORS SLAM, WINDOWS OPEN,
TELY PRESENT, WITH A PRESENCE THAT IS FIRM AND EVEN SO DEFINITE AND SO CONSTANT THAT I KNOW
, WHERE THEY ARE, SLIGHTLY DISTANCED FROM THEMSELVES WITHIN THEIR PRESENCE, AND TRANSFORMED, BY
TIMEHOLE:...THE INVISIBLE / SUMMONS THE WIND / INTO BOUNDS, / YOU READ, / THE OPEN
APABLE OF TAKING MANY STEPS, I TOO CAN DO NO MORE THAN COME AND GO IN THE TRANQUIL IMMOBILITY
EM ASTONISHING THAT I SHOULD DESCEND SO FAR FROM MYSELF, INTO A PLACE ONE COULD, I THINK, CALL
ERNAL GLITTER OF AN IMAGE, AND I WOULD BE SURPRISED BY THIS TOO, IF I HAD NOT FELT THE BURDEN OF
WHERE THE BOUNDARIES SPRAWL OUT AND THE DISTANCE SHINES NIGHT AND DAY WITH THE RADIANCE OF A



THE OPEN 1997
SIDE ELEVATION: PLATE MIRROR 9.0 x 10.0 FEET



THE OPEN 1997
SIDE ELEVATION: PLATE MIRROR 12.0 x 10.0 FEET

The Open
1997
proposal for Mercer Union
in collaboration with Yam Lau

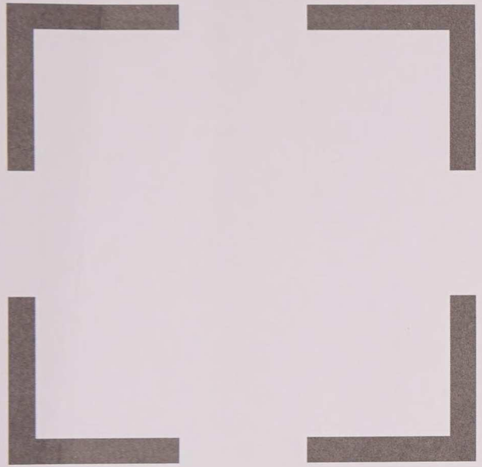


Fig 2 Plan View of Cell

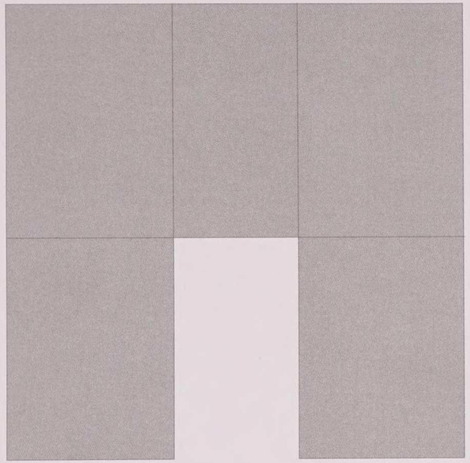
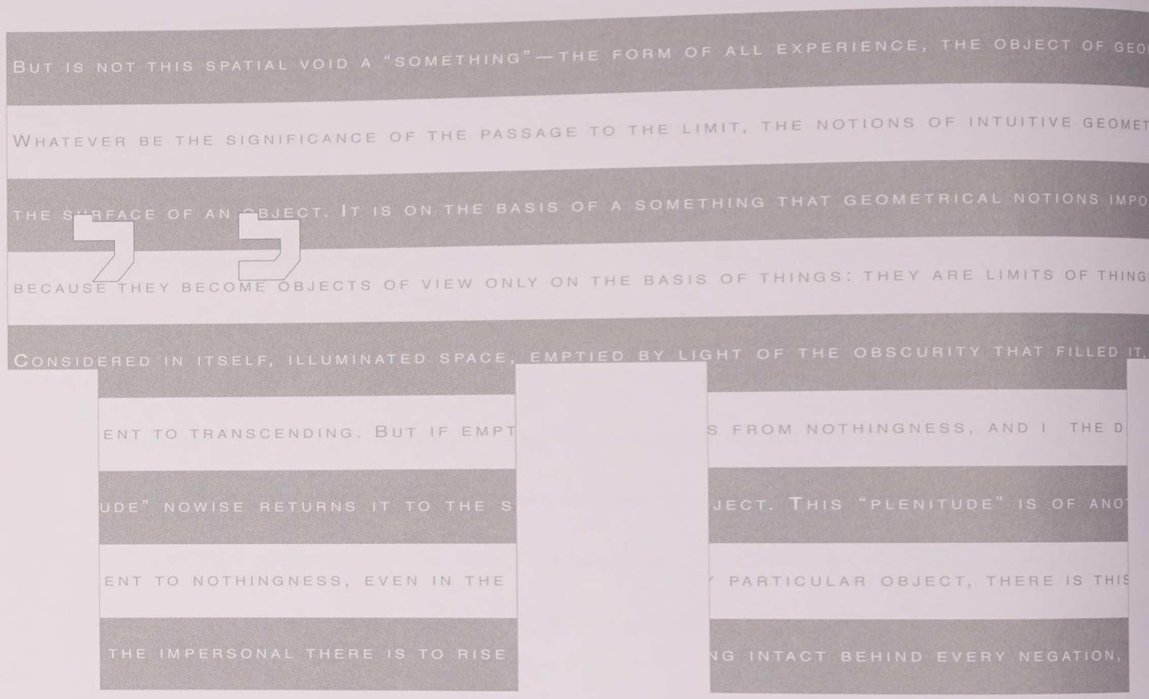


Fig 1 Exterior Elevation of Cell

False Exits 1986
Scale: 1/4 in = 1 ft
Exterior of cell and door plugs clad in plate glass mirror; interior surfaces painted in alternating flat white and warm grey (ps warm grey 1) bands.
All returns are painted flat white.
Inscription: Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*.



Interior Elevation

ING SEEN IN ITS TURN? IN FACT, IT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE A STROKE IN ORDER TO SEE A LINE.

E THEMSELVES UPON US FROM THE THINGS SEEN: THE LINE IS THE LIMIT OF A THING; THE PLANE

. THEY ARE EXPERIMENTAL "NOTIONS" NOT BECAUSE THEY WOULD BE CONTRARY TO REASON, BUT

ATED SPACE INVOLVES THE ATTENUATION OF THESE LIMITS UNTO NOTHINGNESS, THEIR VANISHING.

O BE SURE, THIS VOID IS NOT EQUIVALENT TO ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS; TO TRAVERSE IT IS NOT

DOES NOT JUSTIFY A CLAIM TO RA

HE VOID THAT LIGHT PRODUCES IN

OES NOT XIST BY VIRTUE OF A P

GREE OF NEGATION. THE SILENCE

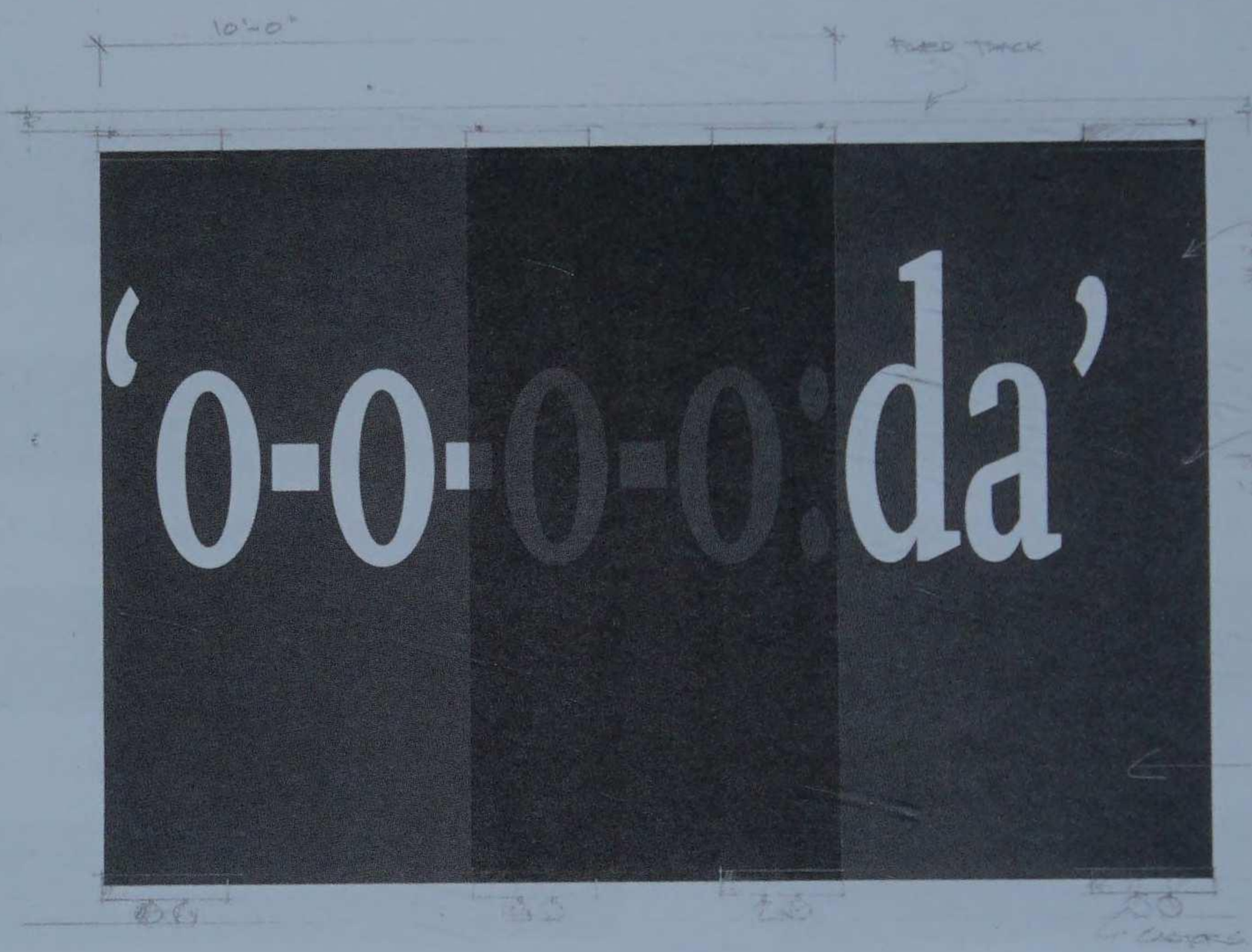
THE MOVEMENT THAT TRAVERSES IT,

M WHICH IT DRIVES OUT DARKNESS

THE NEGATION OF EVERY QUALIFIABL

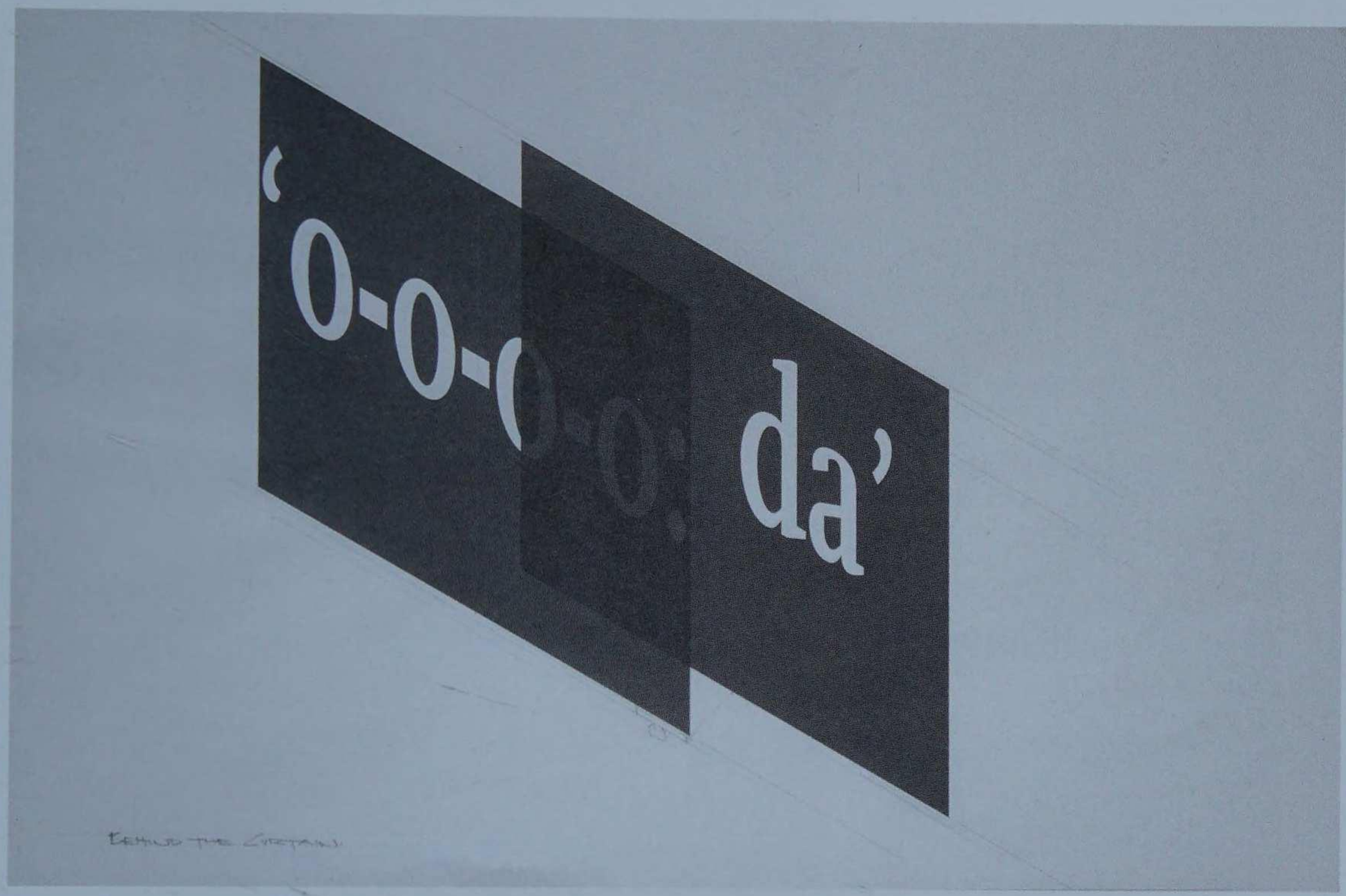
E IS TERRIFYING.

False Exits
1986–1999
proposal for ArtLab,
University of Western Ontario,
London



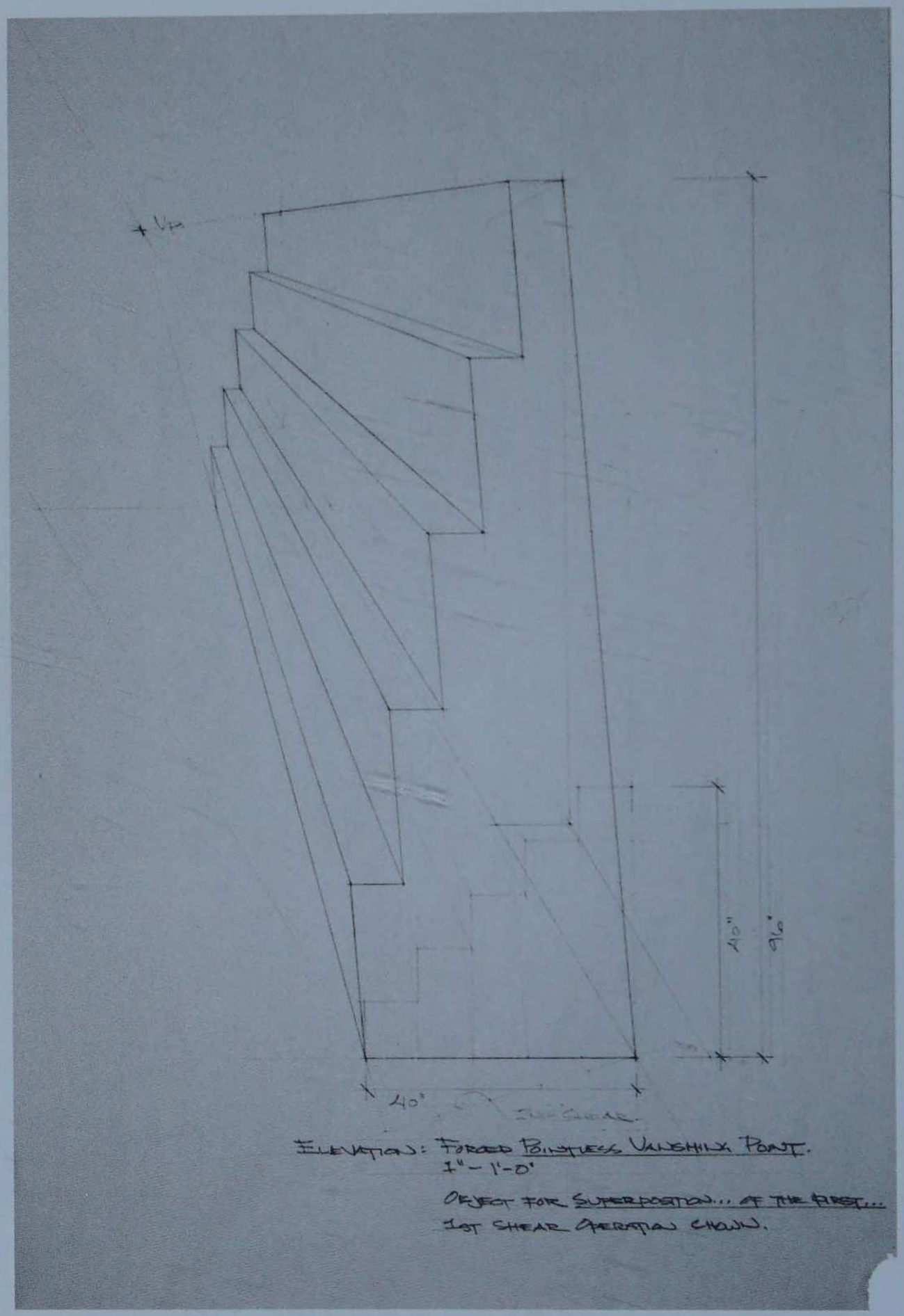
Fort:Da

1997
elevation
inkjet on paper
17 × 11 inches

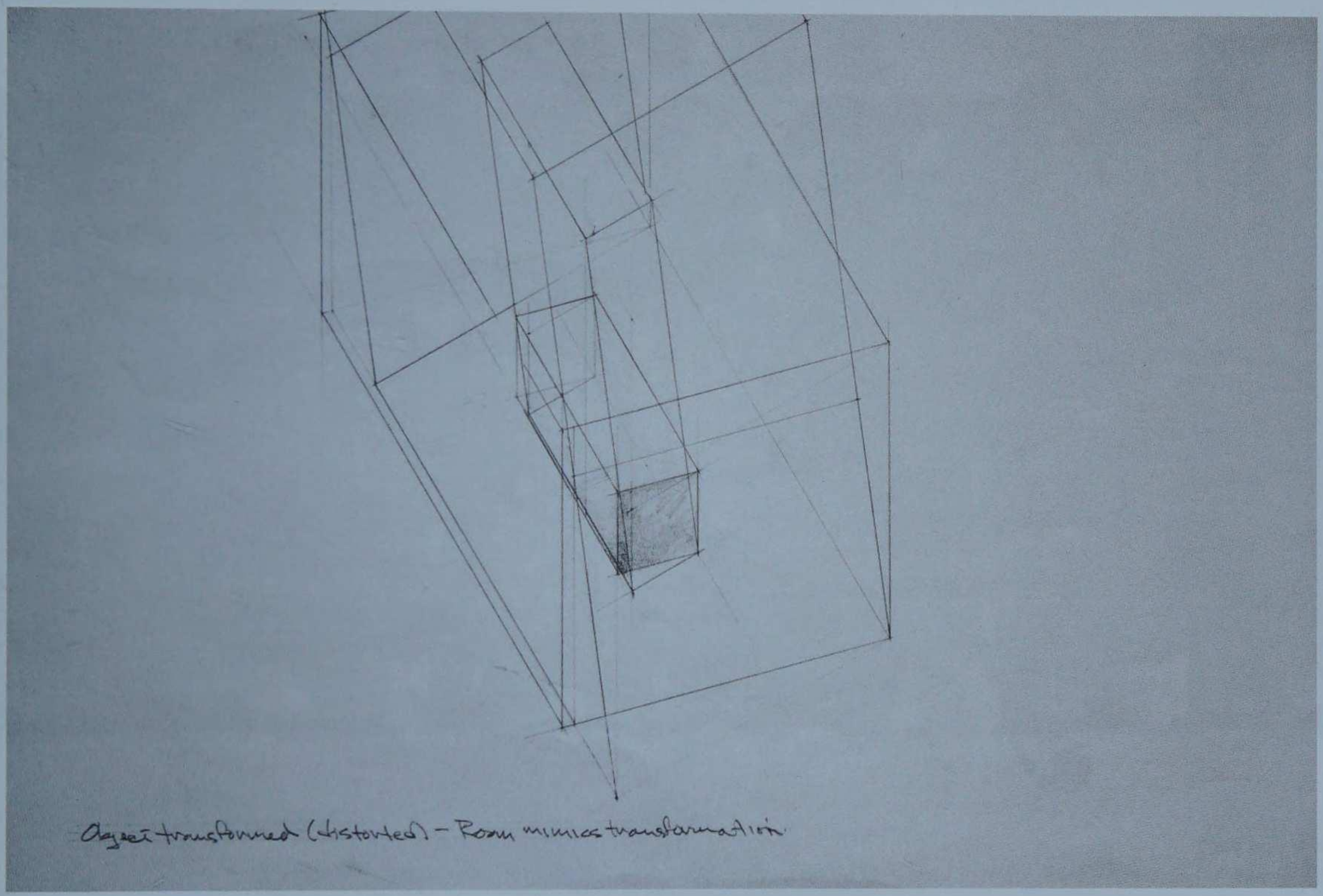


Fort:Da

1997
axonometric
inkjet on paper
17 × 11 inches

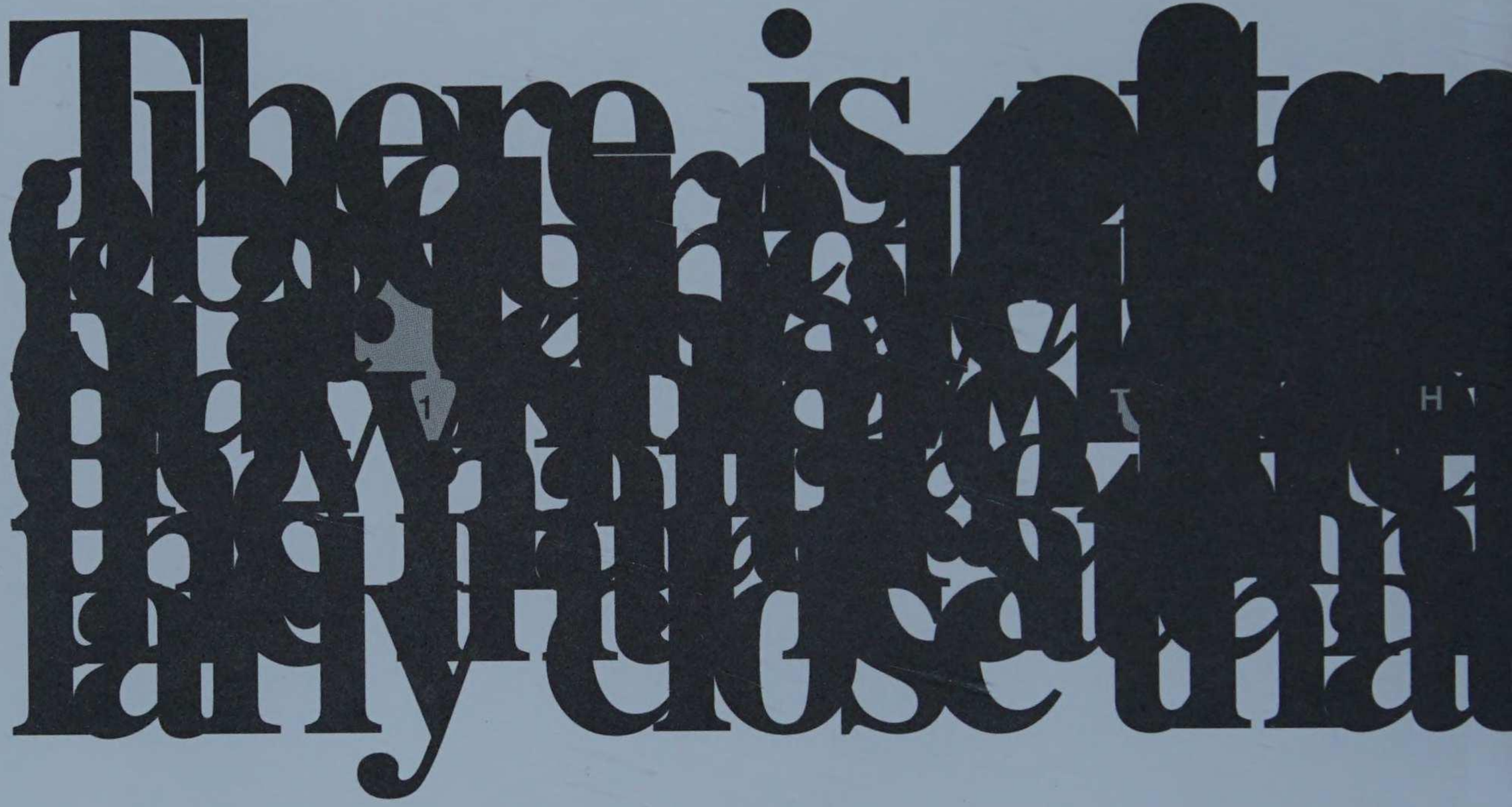


Superposition: of the first and of the last
2000
graphite on paper
11 × 17 inches



Object transformed (distorted)—Room mimics transformation

2000
graphite on paper
17 × 11 inches



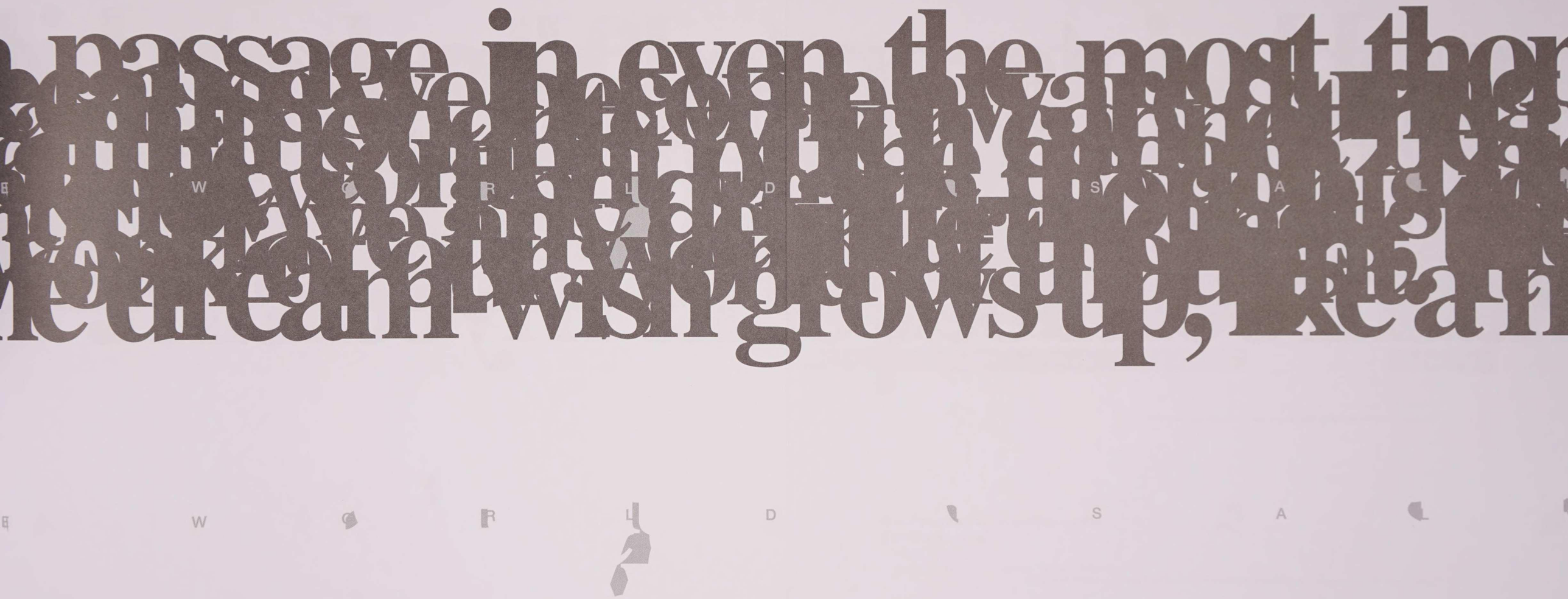
Picture This 1997
Paint on wall; Wittgenstein legend: 1/4 inch brass plate on standoffs

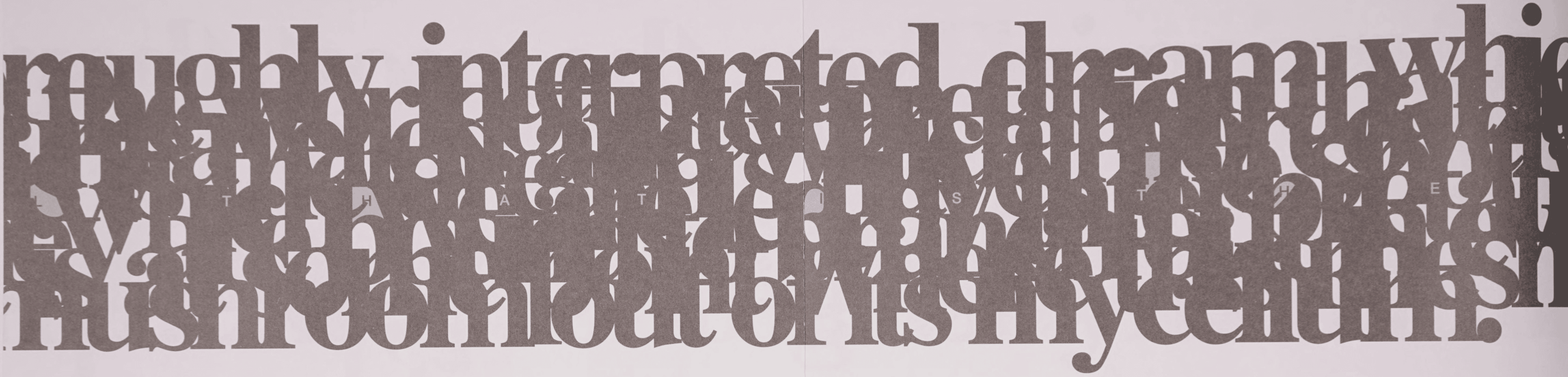
Picture This
1997



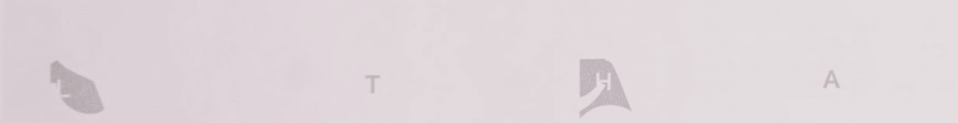


Components of Wittgenstein legend shown separated from the Freud passage: 1/4 inch brass plate


passage in even the most tho
dream wish grows up, I dream
WORLD CLASS
WORLD CLASS

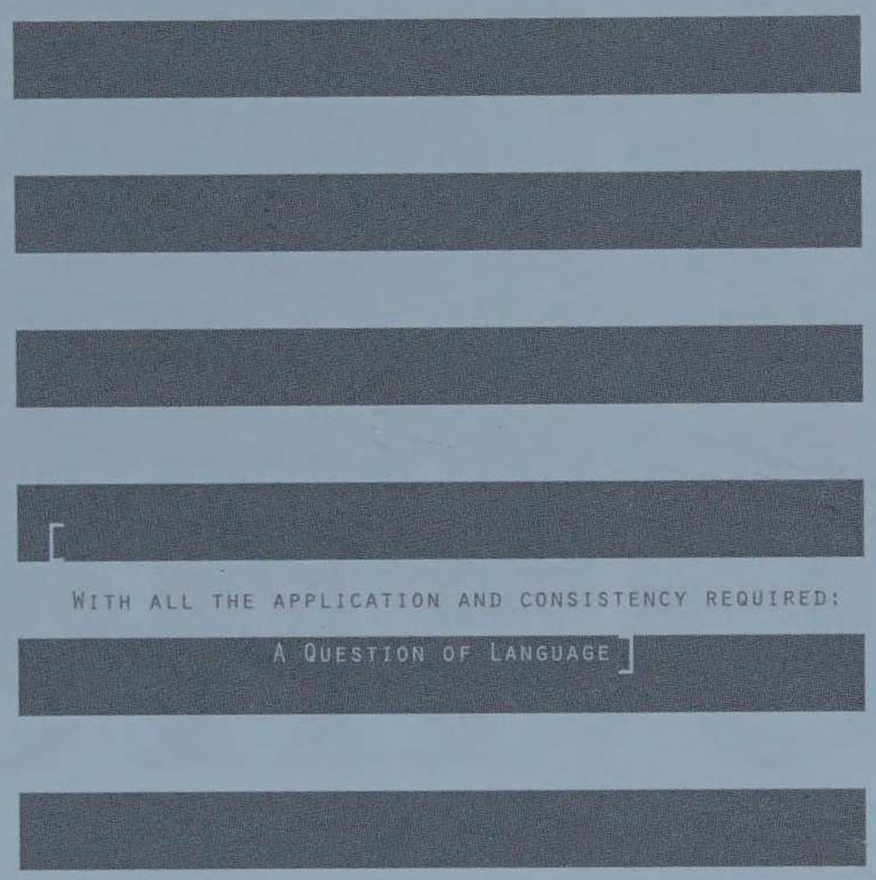


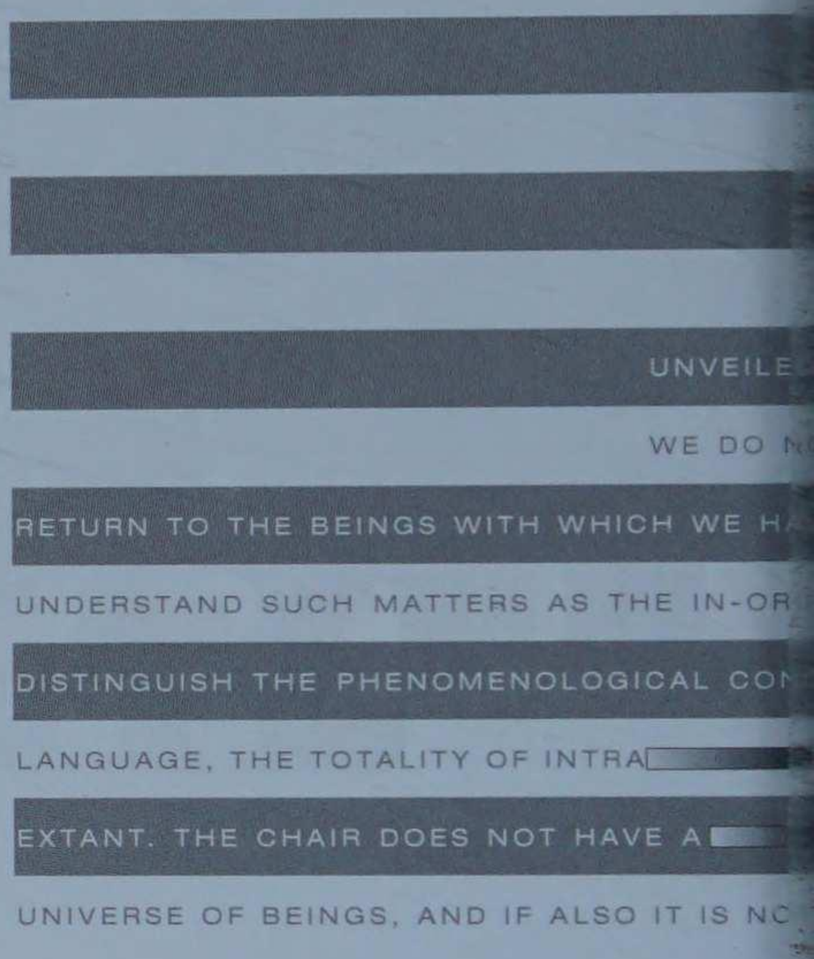
Picture This 1997
Paint on wall; Wittgenstein legend: 1/4 inch brass plate on standoffs



Components of Wittgenstein legend shown separated from the Freud passage: 1/4 inch brass plate

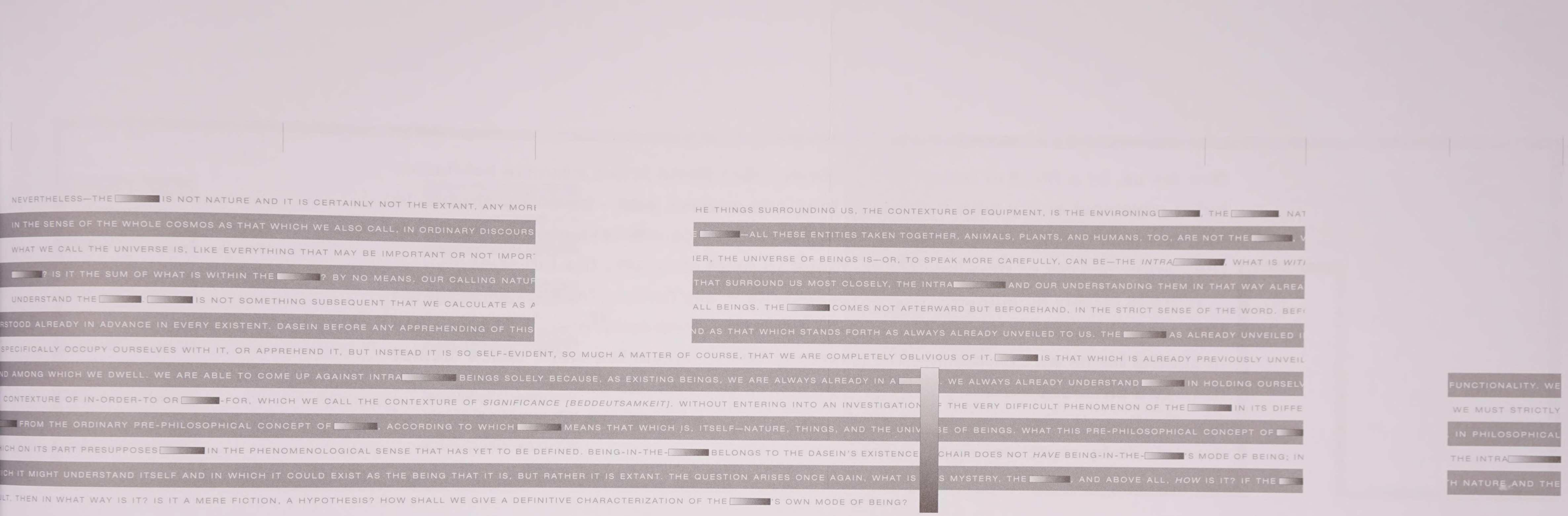
has to be left behind





E1 E2 E3

With all the application and consistency required: A Question of Language 2002
Proposal for the Eric Arthur Gallery, Faculty of Architecture and Landscape and Design, University of Toronto
Vinyl lettering, paint, mirrored panels on standoffs



E5

E6

E7

With all the application and consistency required:
A Question of Language
2002
proposal for the Eric Arthur Gallery, Toronto

E8

Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past – an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have past away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest ones...

There is clearly no point in spinning our phantasy any further, for it leads to things that are unimaginable and even absurd. If we want to represent historical sequence in spatial terms we can only do it by juxtaposition in space: the same space cannot have two different contents. Our attempt seems to be an idle game. It has only one justification. It shows us how far we are from mastering the characteristics of mental life by representing them in pictorial terms.

Elevation: Goodwater interior (north, east and south walls)

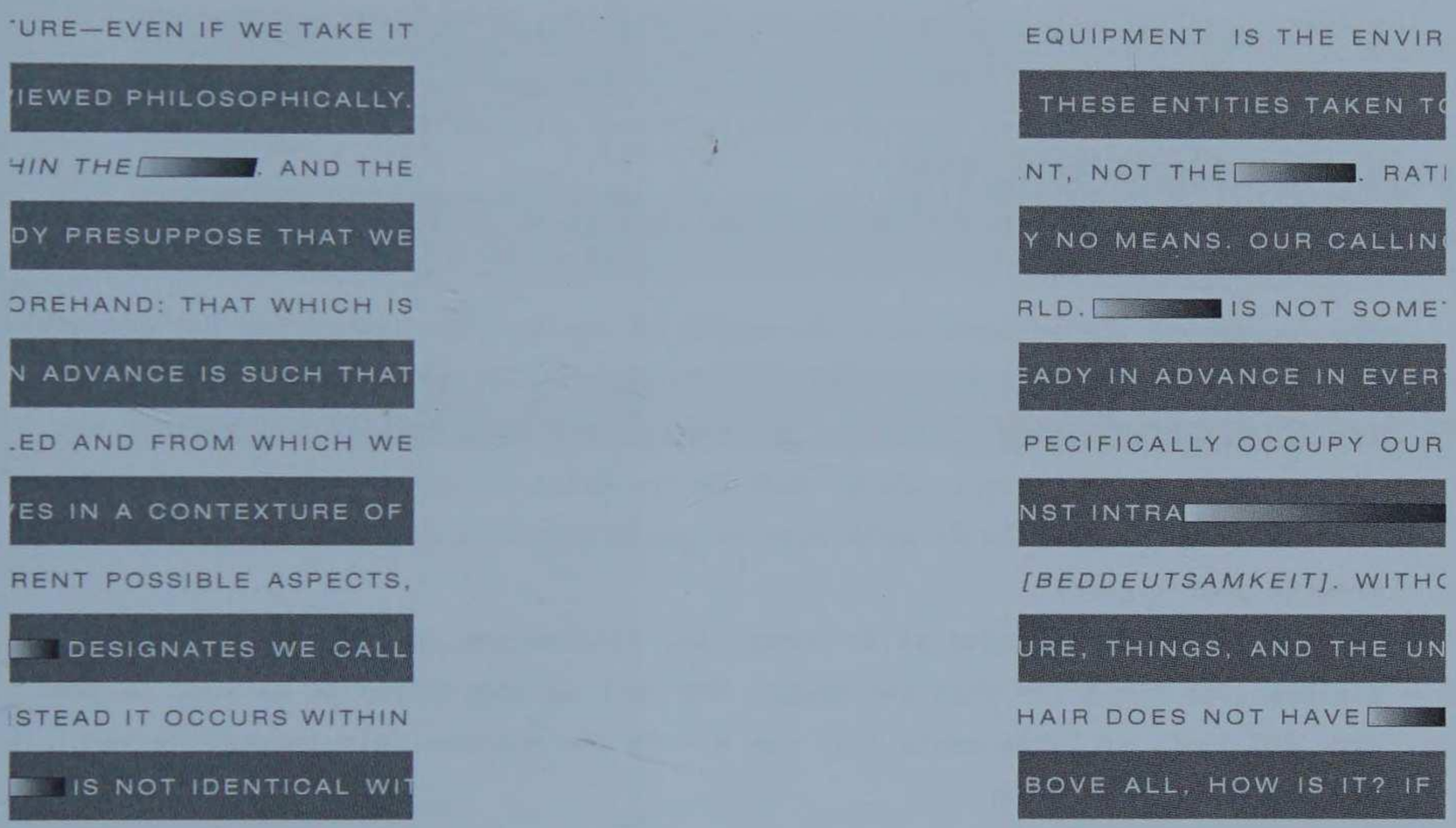
Re-Paint (with mirrors)
2003
proposal for goodwater, Toronto

Re-paint 2003
Latex paint and mirrors over existing work *Fast, Free & Easy*
by Garry Neill Kennedy, goodwater, Toronto

ıppose that Rome is not a human habitation
ong and copious past – an entity, that is to
e into existence will have past away and all
inue to exist alongside the latest ones...
ır phantasy any further, for it leads to things
If we want to represent historical sequence
taposition in space: the same space cannot
ɔt seems to be an idle game. it has only one
are from mastering the characteristics of
orial terms.

ɔr (north, east and south walls)

Re-Paint (with mirrors)
2003
proposal for goodwater, Toronto



E9

With all the application and consistency required: A Question of Language 2002
bay window displacement and supplementary projection
proposal for the Eric Arthur Gallery, Faculty of Architecture and Landscape and Design, University of Toronto
vinyl lettering, paint, mirrored panels on standoffs

Domain of the Visible

...

—A work for a two-page spread, but one that restricts its figure (the inscribed mark or impression) to the gutter. Like a tag or throw up this figure points, points to itself pointing as if to say "This is an index."

—A primal scene: of pointing, of showing.

—Or of painting: a rather straightforward gesture projected, thrown out in haste...

—And then suspended, terminated; at which point it descends, runs down: detumescence of the gesture.

—The decline of the gesture into the moment of seeing. The expression (as gesture) thus dissipates into "absolute" designation, an i-n-d-e-x-i-c-a-l-i-t-y.

—In effect the resulting impression or deposit points to itself; but does it not also gesture to the source, refer back to its point of origin? Does it not, in the end, look at you? Isn't this blot or stain indeed a reflection, a mirror that returns your regard?

—It is a reflection insofar as it faces you, singles you out, makes you into a picture. One could say that the image, the mark or impression is in you, in your eye, and that, as Lacan would say, you are in the picture only insofar as you are not – not or nothing.

—So, you could say that according to this scene of self-reference, designation opens a hole or absence in the discursive field, or rather, imposes something like an opacity or blind spot...

—Yes, a certain irreducible distance: in this instance, a vertical spacing or fold in the landscape viewed as panel or spread.

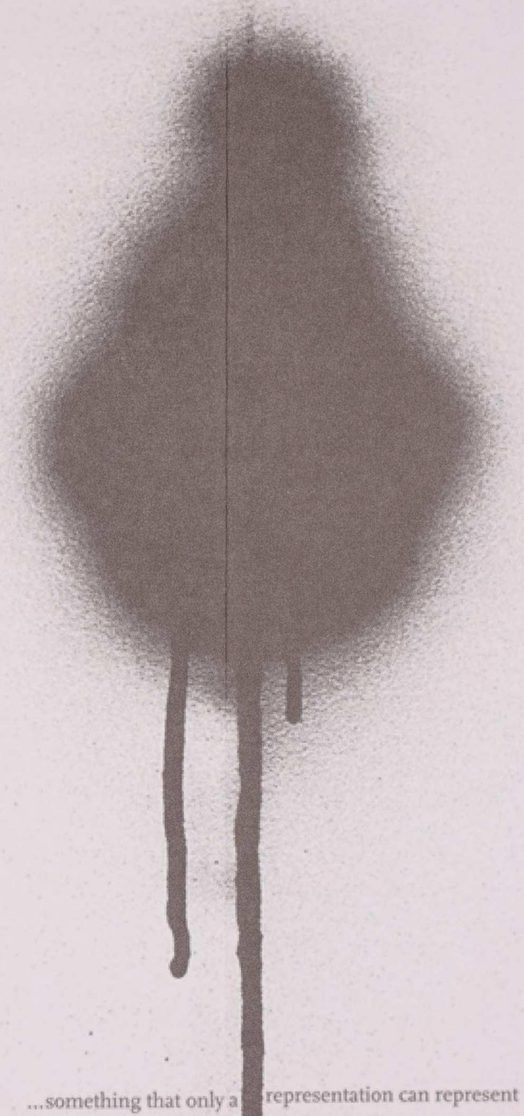
—Something representative of a primordial defacement, something which you – because of your point of view – cannot not resist soliciting from the scene, the overall picture...

—You, yourself, disrupt the scene much like the spectator of a film who, in order to get closer to the action, can't avoid placing his or her body between the projector and the screen and thus, upon interrupting the beam, obliterates the image.

—One is cast into the picture only as a negativity, a shadow.

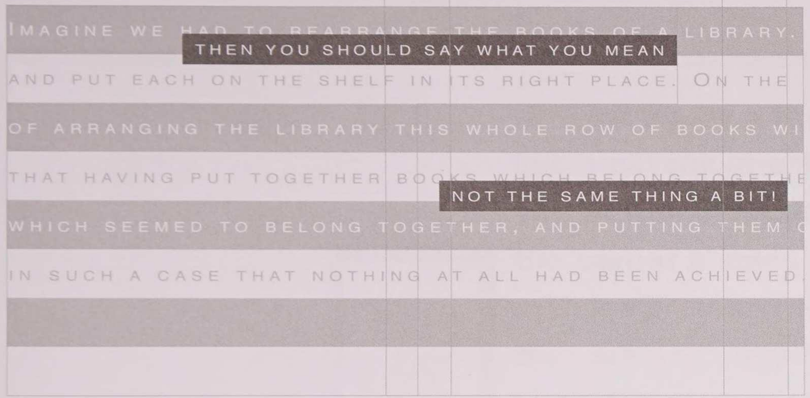
—An obfuscating effervescence that overruns the contours of any figure whatsoever – at the very point where the eye believes itself to exercise most effectively its power to discriminate. Here...

—There, where it thinks it can *see itself see itself*...

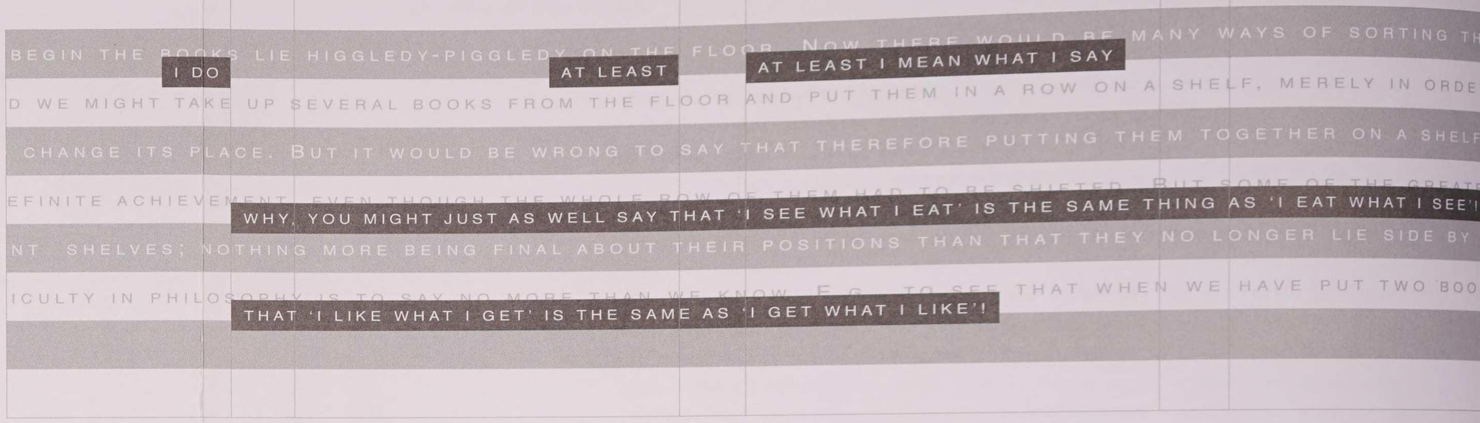


...something that only a [illegible] representation can represent

Domain of the Visible
2003
proposal for *C Magazine*



South Wall



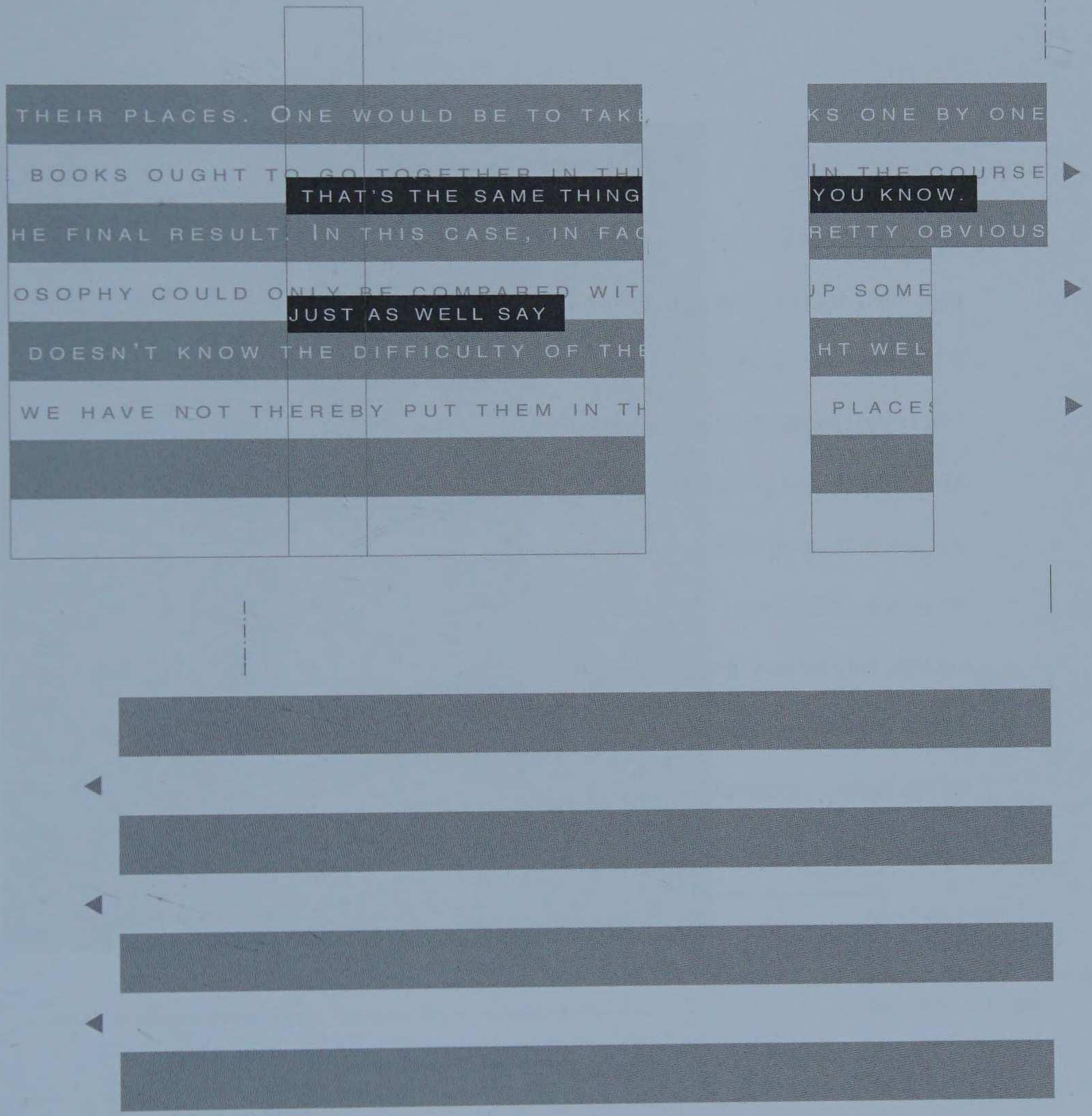
West Wall

Elevations: Plug In Art Gallery
1/4 in = 1 ft-0 in

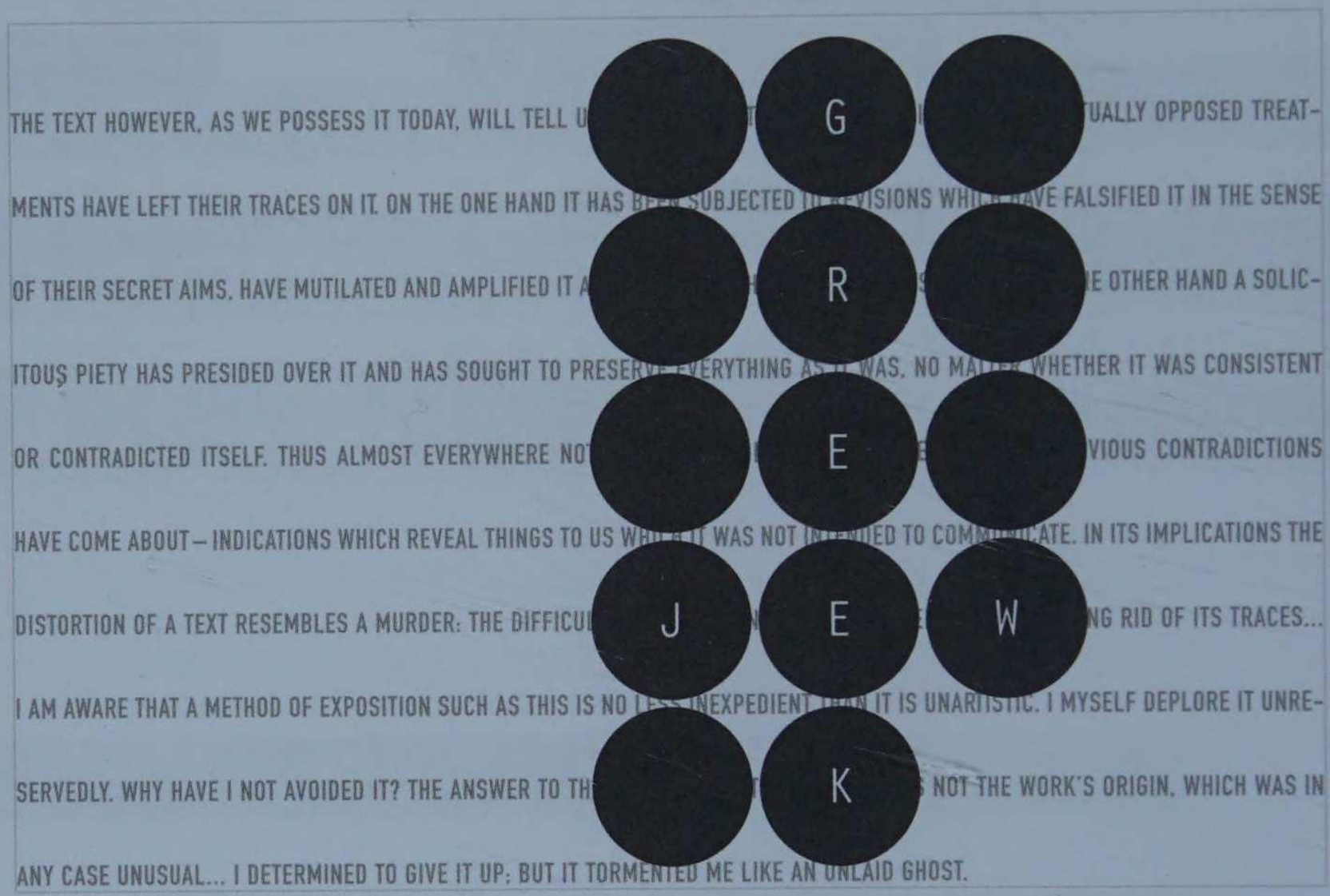
Legend

——— Line of displacement
——— Column outline
—·—·— Fold

You Might Just as Well Say
2005
proposal for Plug In ICA, Winnipeg


THEIR PLACES. ONE WOULD BE TO TAKE
BOOKS OUGHT TO GO TOGETHER IN THI
THAT'S THE SAME THING
HE FINAL RESULT. IN THIS CASE, IN FAC
OSOPHY COULD ONLY BE COMPARED WIT
JUST AS WELL SAY
DOESN'T KNOW THE DIFFICULTY OF THE
WE HAVE NOT THEREBY PUT THEM IN TH
KS ONE BY ONE
IN THE COURSE
YOU KNOW.
RETTY OBVIOUS
UP SOME
HT WEL
PLACES

North Wall



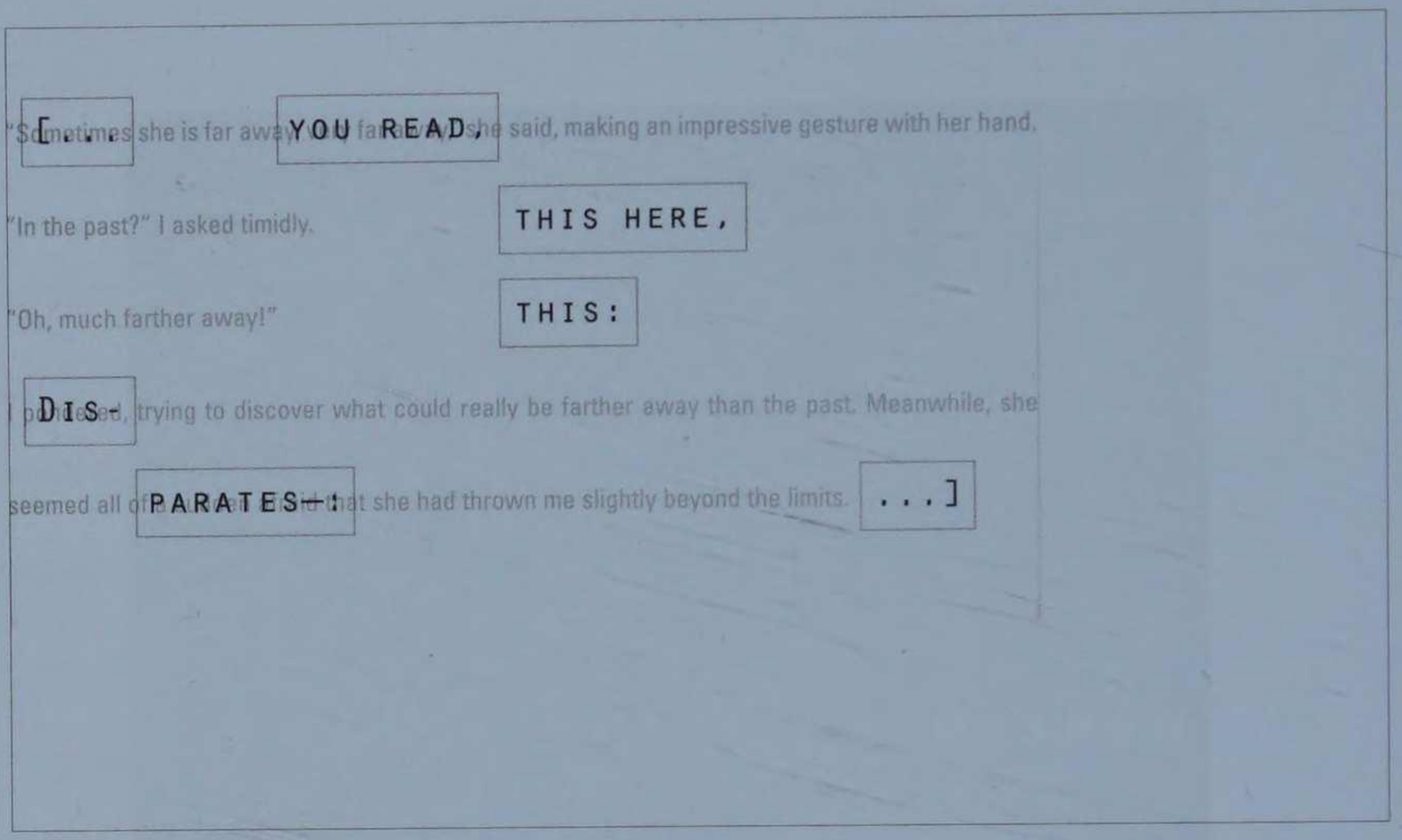
Death of the Sphinx
Engraved acrylic discs; paint on wall, neon

Death of the Sphinx
2002
inkjet on paper
proposal for goodwater, Toronto



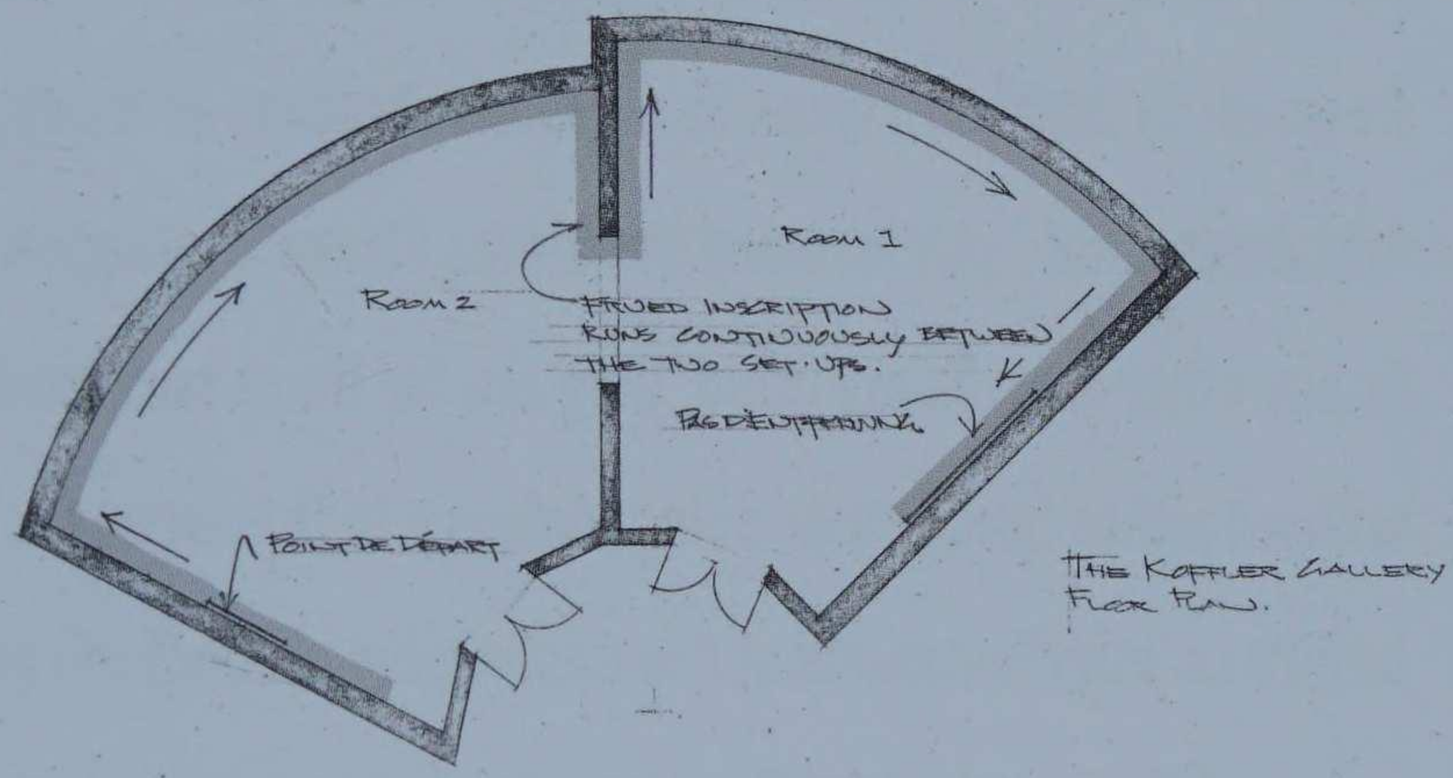
Schema for Winnipeg Centennial Library Millennnium Project: Entrance Lobby/Feature Wall
327 × 288 inches
routered aluminum panelling, acyrlic characters, fluorescent lamps

Words on the Wall
2005
inkjet on paper
8.5 × 11 inches
proposal for the Winnipeg
Centennial Library





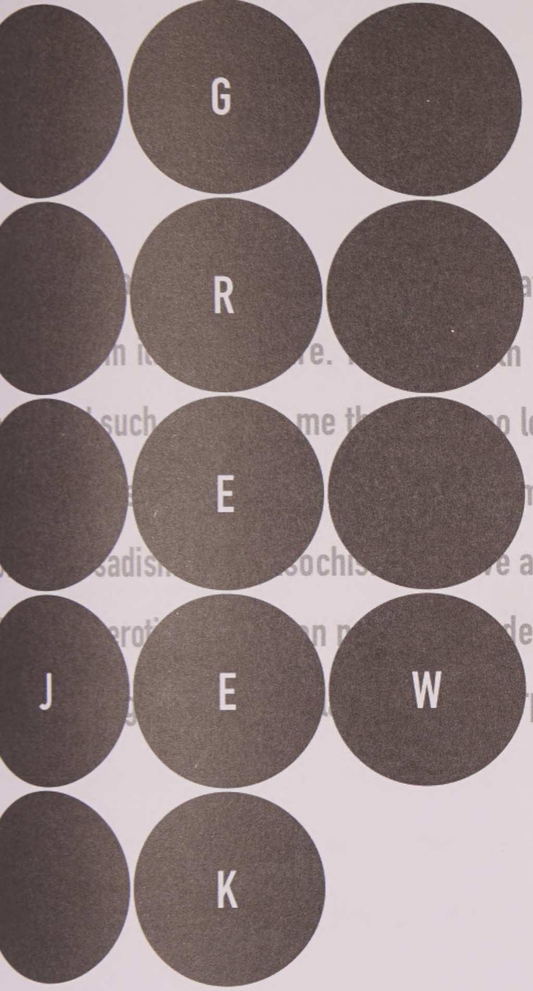
Pas d' Ent-fernung
2001
postcard
offset printing on card
8.5 × 5 inches
project for an outdoor
Parisian bookstand



THE KOFFLER GALLERY
FLOOR PLAN.

Word x Word: crossing the march (of two)

2007
plan
graphite on paper
17 × 11 inches
proposal for the Koffler Gallery, Toronto



at there is a
n it was only
o longer think
mplification,
e always seen
derstand how
pretation of life. (The desire for destruction when it is directed inwards mostly eludes our perception, of course, unless it is tinged with erotism.) I remember my own

Word x Word: crossing the march (of two)
2007
elevations
proposal for the Koffler Gallery, Toronto

that way he would be playing the same part as an agent of economic discharge as the Jew does in the w

[...

you read,

this here,

in that way he would be playing the same part as an agent of economic discharge as the Jew does in the world of the Aryan ideal. But even so, one can hol sponsible for the existence of the Devil just as well this:

for the existence of the wickedness which the Devil embodies. In view of those difficulties, each

Dis-

as will be advised, on some suitable occasion, to make a low bow to the deeply moral nature

mankind parates—: to be generally popular and much will be forgiven us for it.

Description: the gallery will remain empty save for two commercially available dummy surveillance camera domes. Each acrylic, black tinted dome will be 48 inches in diameter and 16 inches deep. This pair of black mirrors (but if the theory of inflation is correct we should speak of only one mirror here: one entering and the other—the same—exiting) will oppose one another along the west-east axis of the available display space(s) as per the enclosed drawings. Note that the disposition of the mirrors will require a 9 × 9 foot section of the wall separating the media/resource area from the gallery space proper to be removed. All debris from this cut will remain within the exhibition space; the returns or edges of the opening itself will not be finished.

In each "case" then:

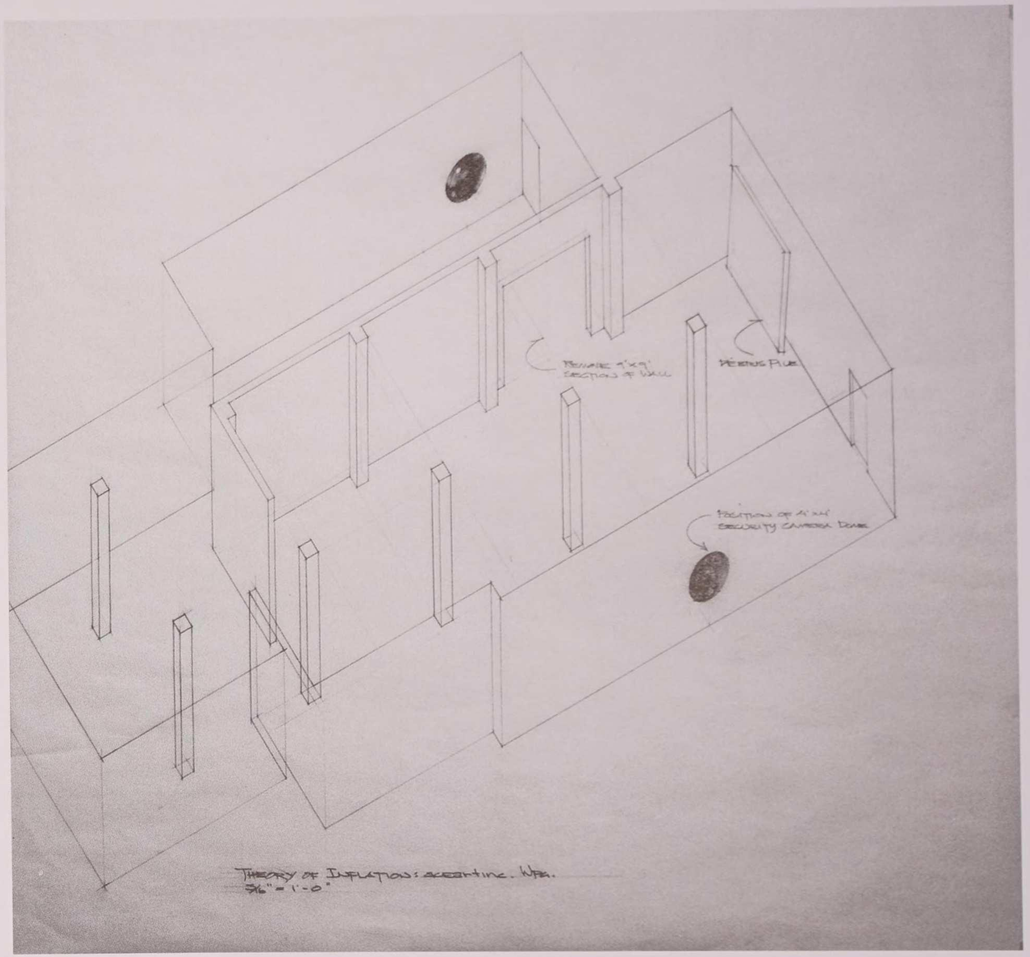
—An abyss. A black hole (for a white wall).

—*Point de caption*: the point no point of capitulation; a punctuation or anchor point, "where the signification is constituted as finished."

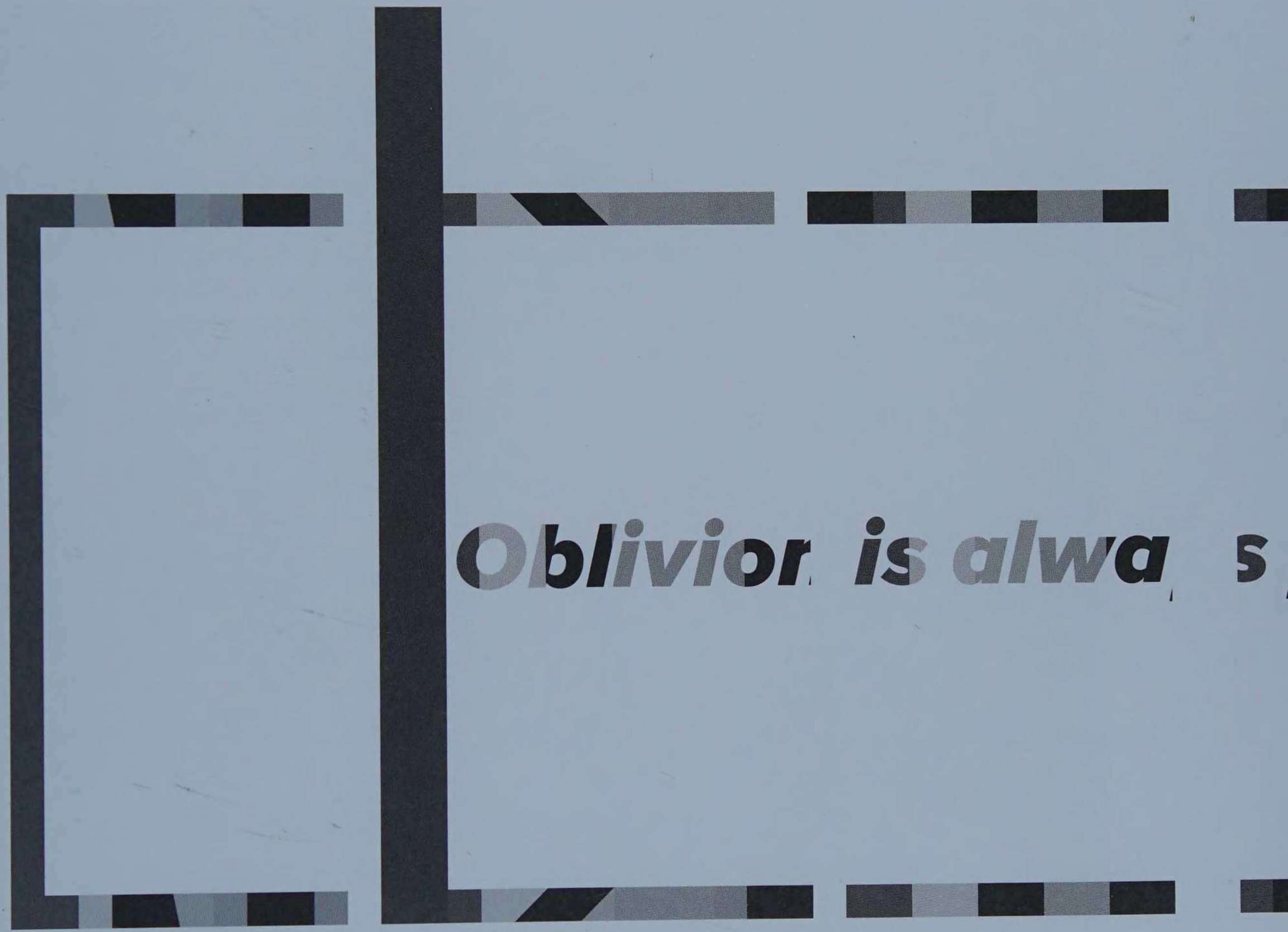
—Hence, no slogan, no logo(s) or, for that matter, no face, no "place"—even for an other.

—An image, then, to explain the concept of truth (logos), the "half-said"...or perhaps even desire (experience) which, of course, doesn't itself, speak but shows (itself)—symptomatically as it were.

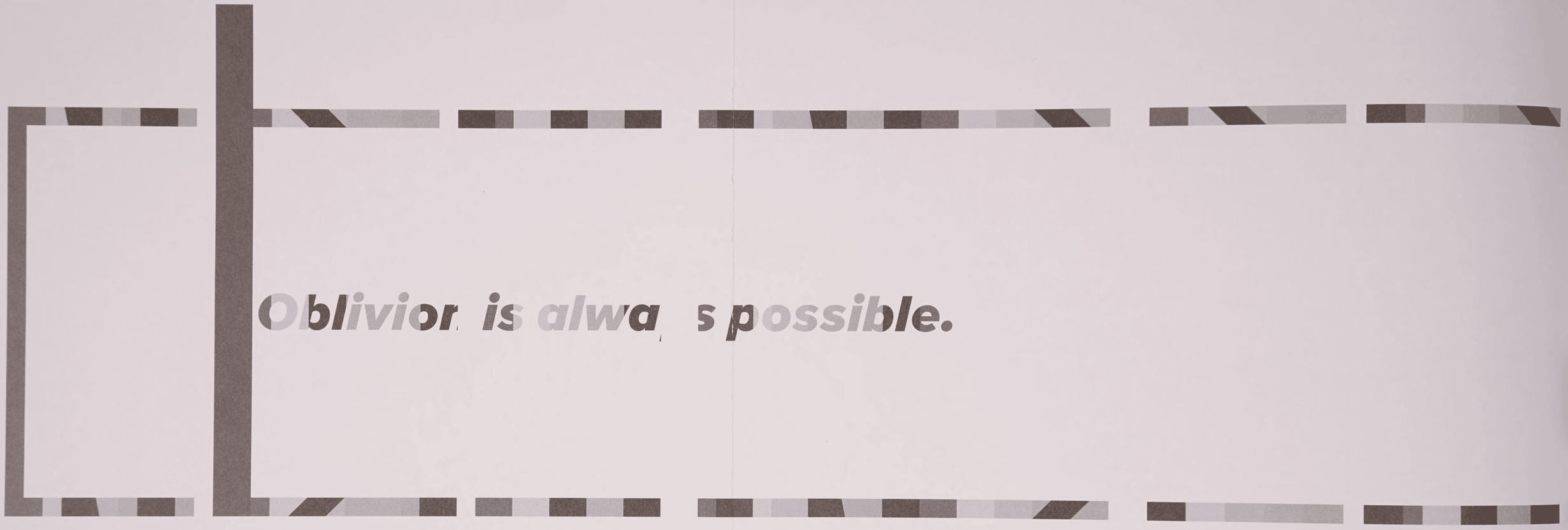
Theory of Inflation
2007
artist's statement
proposal for Mercer Union, Toronto



86 Theory of Inflation
2007
graphite on vellum
17 × 16.13 inches
proposal for Ace Art Inc., Winnipeg



Oblivion is always possible [nothing personal] 2007
Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art



Oblivion is always possible [nothing personal] 2007
Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art



Oblivion is Always Possible (*Nothing Personal*)
2007
elevations
proposal for the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto

Dear Patrick,

I am submitting for your consideration an exhibition proposal for the Architecture 2 Gallery entitled *Gloss—(present appearances)*.

Among other things, I have enclosed a self-published catalogue which offers a somewhat schematic overview of a work exhibited almost twenty years ago at Gallery 111 (*Gloss—(present appearances)*, January 18–29, 1982). Simply put, I want to re-install this early work, keeping as close as possible to the original disposition of its elements with the exception of a few alterations that I shall list below. Now what I am proposing will seem to amount to nothing more than an attempt to recover, by means of a facsimile or copy, a past work, a work that for obvious reasons no longer exists. Such an operation, however, implies that the copy will constitute a second work derived from the first, a simple translation or transcription of an original event (a past present) whose "taking place" may be verified in the pages of the catalogue now before you. On the contrary, my interest lies not so much with the recovery of a past work (a not uncommon pursuit) than with the implications of the work's spectral-like return, its unanticipated coming back. Understandably, at first glance *Gloss* might be seen as an attempt to recover—*anamesis* being the technical term for such an attempt—a "lost" time. But it's not a question of going back in order to recuperate an event; it's more the case of having the opportunity to witness—as if for the first time—what will have appeared to have come back from the future. Indeed,

should there be a return—an affliction I'm calling *Gloss*—it could very well be the event for which the procedure of recovery, of recollection (*anamnesis*) may in turn be prescribed as an antidote.

In any event, the return—*Gloss* as derivative—would come back as if for the first time. It would be as if the "first time" had never happened, had never taken place. Of course, one must acknowledge the initial event as an historical fact, but any such confirmation in no way prepares one to receive (and it follows, comprehend) the efficacy of the effects introduced by a delayed return. Given this delay, this supplement of time, how is one then to account for a commencement which has apparently passed without notice, without impression? In terms of reception? reception—or non-reception—as *resistance*?

To come back a "second" time (this time as affliction or symptom, hence as notice or warning), *Gloss* will have only to re-inscribe itself, rearrange itself on the same surface (there can be no alternative location just as there can be no second work, a facsimile or copy standing apart from an original) and according to a time or rhythm that has never been present. But one might just as well be describing *Gloss* in its "original" presentation, its "first time" showing, the one that, at the time, couldn't be received, couldn't be signed for. Each time—"first" or "last"—there is only the presentation of a presentation. In other words, what will appear to return, as if for the first time, will never have been present since the time of each appearing will have been reconstituted only through deferral—i.e., belatedly, supplementarily as an afterwards or afterwardsness (*l'après coup*).

Again: it is as if there was no first impression, no initial showing or "scene" and what we are compelled to

call a beginning is no doubt from the start already a repetition, part of an already anticipated or tele-graphed return. The so-called primary scene in effect returns—this is the gist of my proposal—to haunt the archive much like a phantom might prowl the depths of some theatrical hall. (Which would be all very well if one can still speak here of depth, the depth accorded the old stage of representation.)

The components of the exhibition will consist of the following:

1. Arcitecture 2 Gallery, The Faculty of Architecture, The University of Manitoba. No alterations will be made to the exhibition space proper. All light sources will remain unaltered with the exception of the overhead pot lights in the vestibule. The diffusers covering these units will be removed.

2. A 96 × 84 in backlit panel (vinyl covered acrylic sheet) will cover the glazing of each of the two built-in display cases located just outside the gallery proper. Each panel will carry a portion of an inscription that will address itself to the issue of the work's approach.

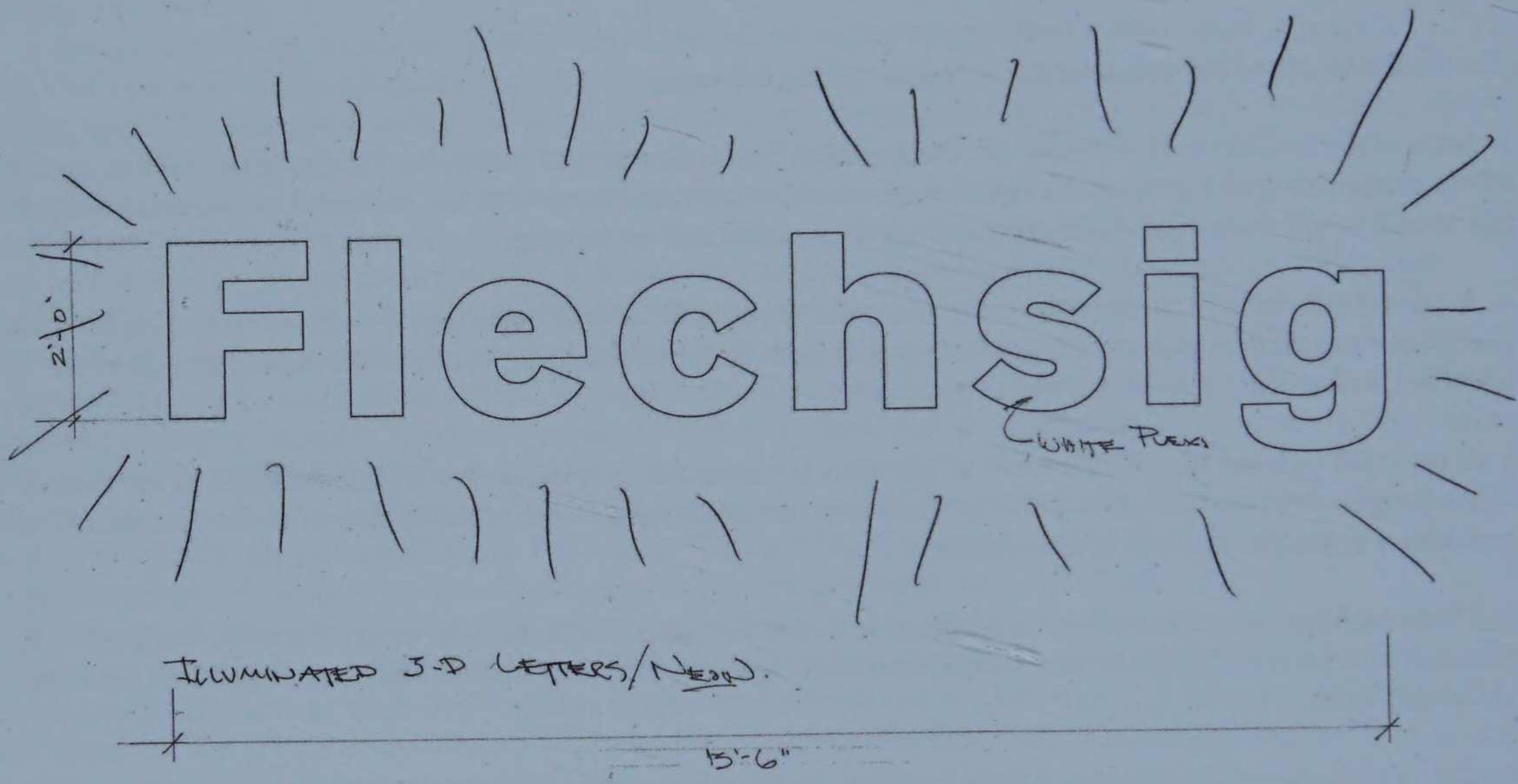
3. A 30 × 9 ft painted wood lattice will be positioned just inside and parallel to the glass façade of the display space proper. Mirrored acrylic will be laminated to the exterior face of the lattice. Access to the interior of the exhibition space proper will be prohibited.

4. The exhibition announcement. In addition to this component I will include, under the term discourse, all the discursive forms (notes, lectures. commentaries, reviews, etc.) that may, at one time or another, circulate about the work.

In this case, however, one can no longer speak of depth, the depth accorded to the old stage of representation. Rather, *Gloss* resides at the limits of such theatrics; it does not trade one theatrics—that of the classical stage—for another, for a new theatrical genre, the one which, according to Michael Fried, lies between painting and sculpture. Even if one comes to classify *Gloss* as an interruption, one must acknowledge that it, more importantly, also negotiates the median or milieu between such genres. Thus, certain ontological concordances or syntheses—protocols that determine how things are framed—are also at stake here.

To say that *Gloss* remains a missed encounter is to say that it never instituted itself as a work, that it remains, from a classical or Greek standpoint, inoperative.

Gloss—(present appearances)
2001
proposal for Architecture 2 Gallery,
Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba

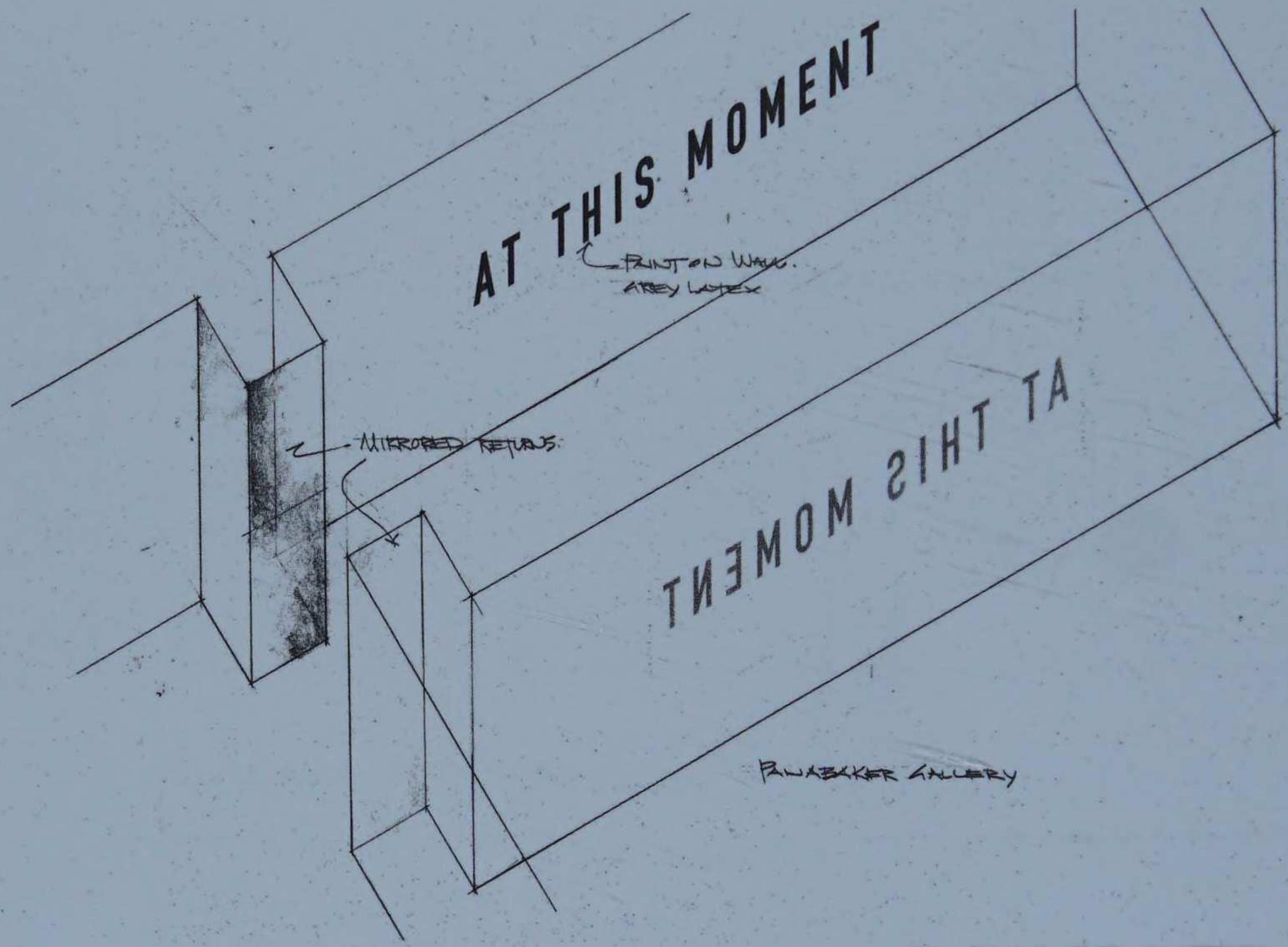


Flechsig

2005
inkjet and graphite notation on paper
17 × 11 inches

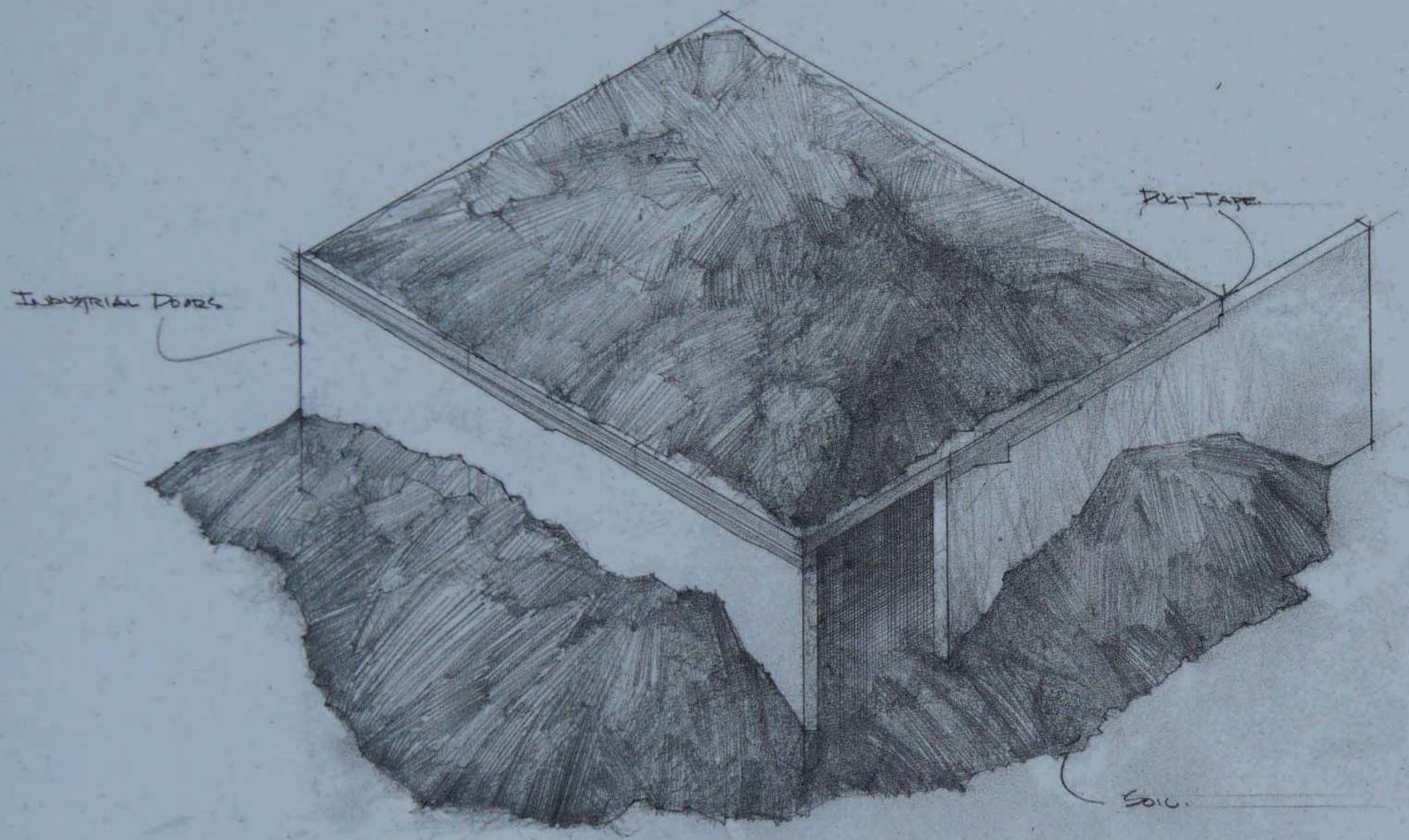


Two Tones for a Suicidal State (after LW)
2003
graphite on paper
17 × 11 inches



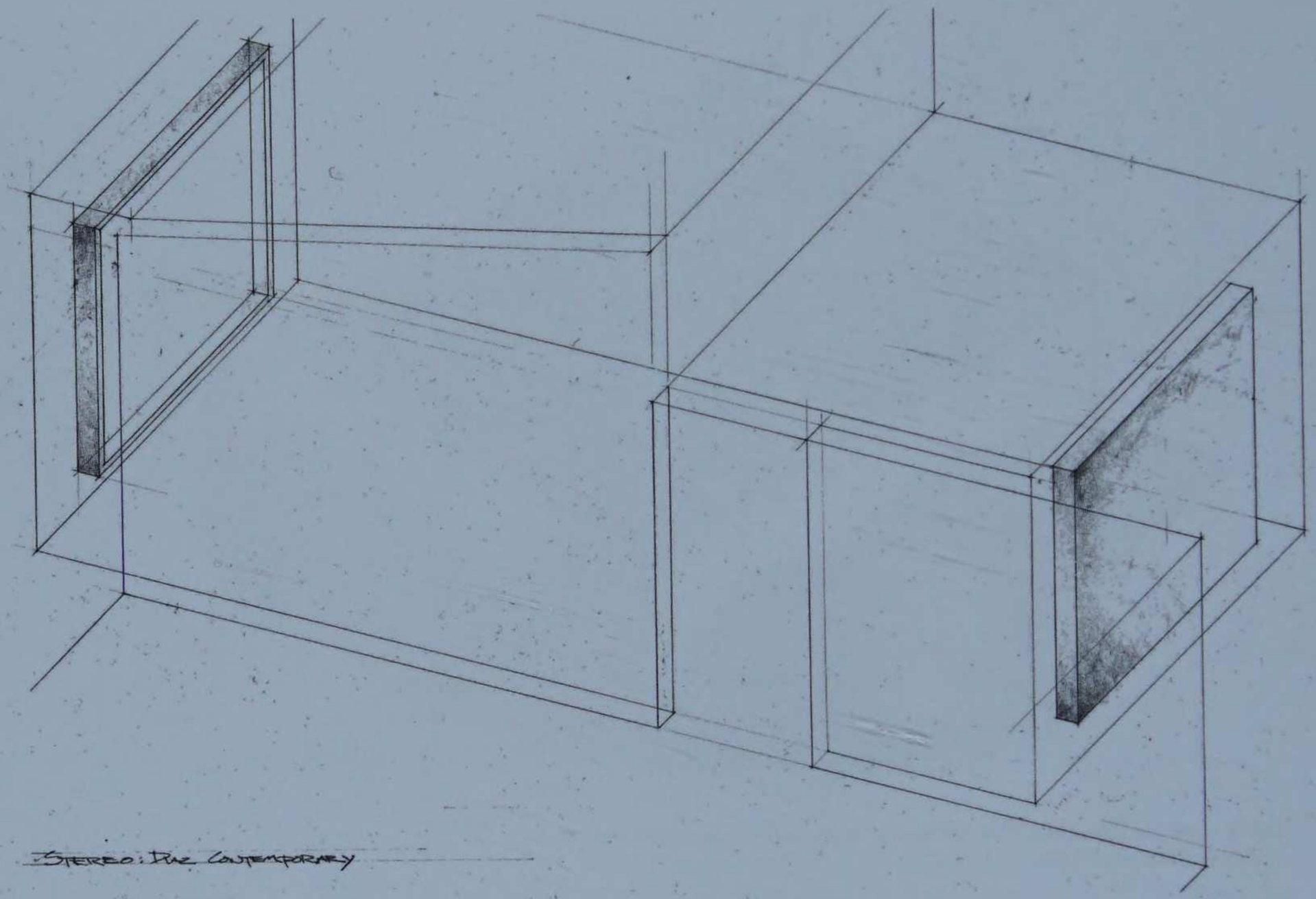
At This Moment

2004
photocopy
17 × 11 inches
proposal for McMaster University Gallery, Hamilton

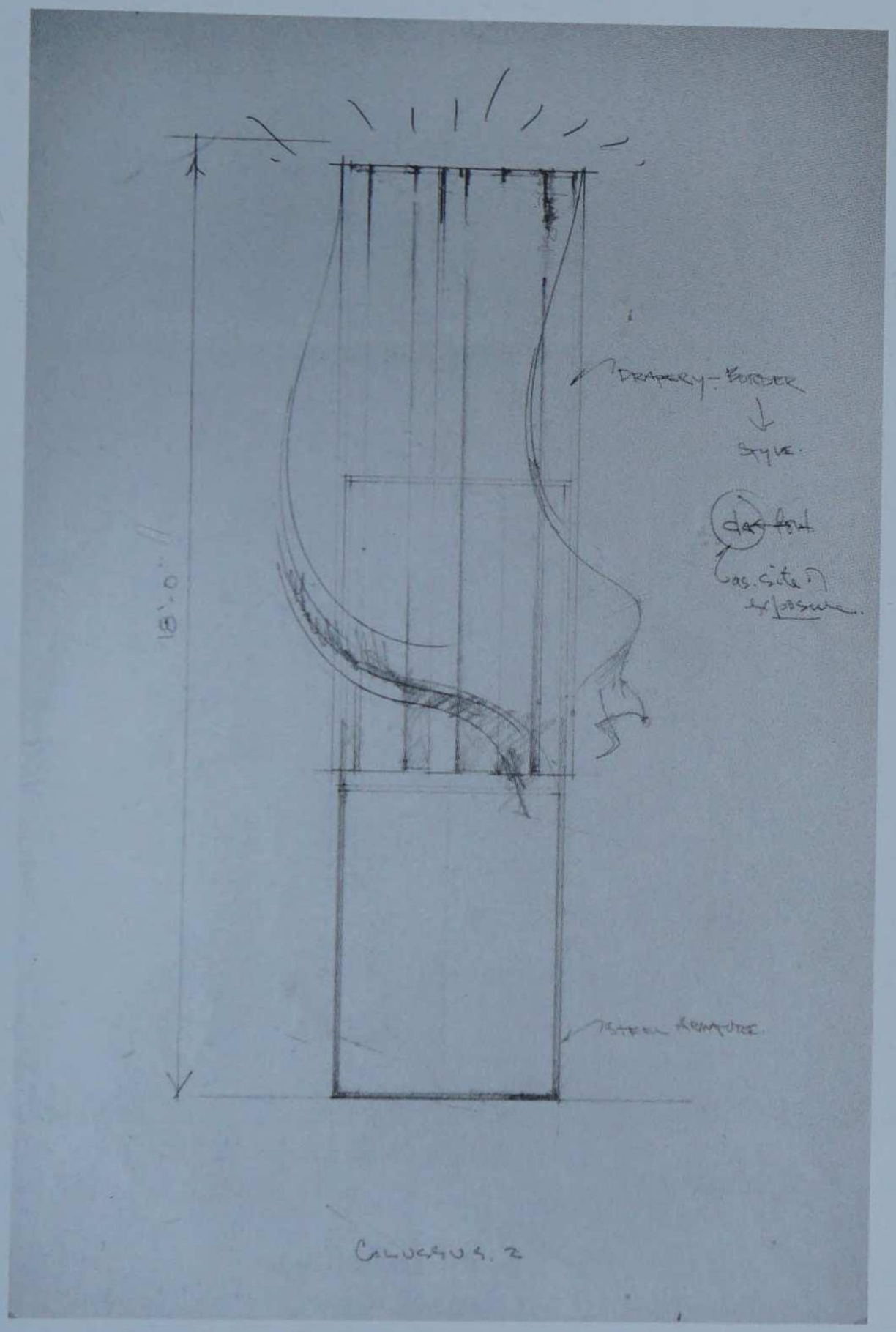


Emergency Fallout Shelter: 3 hours or less

2003
graphite on paper
17 × 11 inches
unsubmitted proposal for *Psychotopes*, YYZ, Toronto

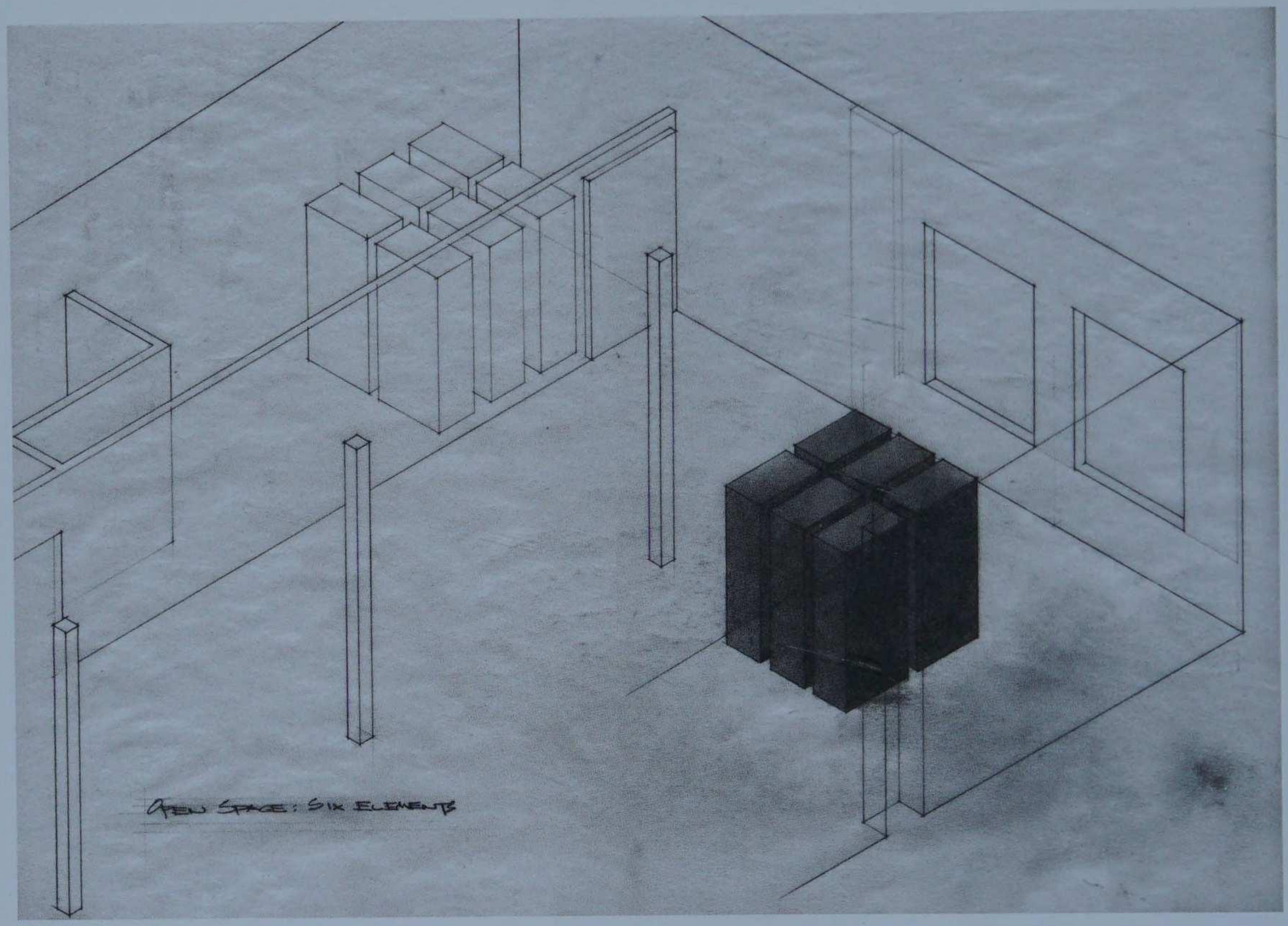


Stereo
1989–2007
graphite on paper
17 × 11 inches
proposal for Diaz Contemporary, Toronto



Colossus

2001
graphite on paper
11 × 17 inches



Six Elements: a collation
2007
graphite on vellum
22 × 18 inches
proposal for Open Space, Victoria

[text]

Title: [*Four*] *Letters of Relief*: a propsal for Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts

In the same way that the exercise on the wall [the cave walls of Altamira] consists in fixing the invisible inhabitant of the cavern, we see the link forged between the temple, as a construction around emptiness that designates the place of the Thing [the "intimate exteriority or 'extimacy'" understood as the locus or source of desire], to the figuration of emptiness on the walls of this emptiness itself – to the extent that painting progressively learns to master this emptiness, to take such a tight hold of it that painting becomes dedicated to fixing it in the form of the illusion of space.

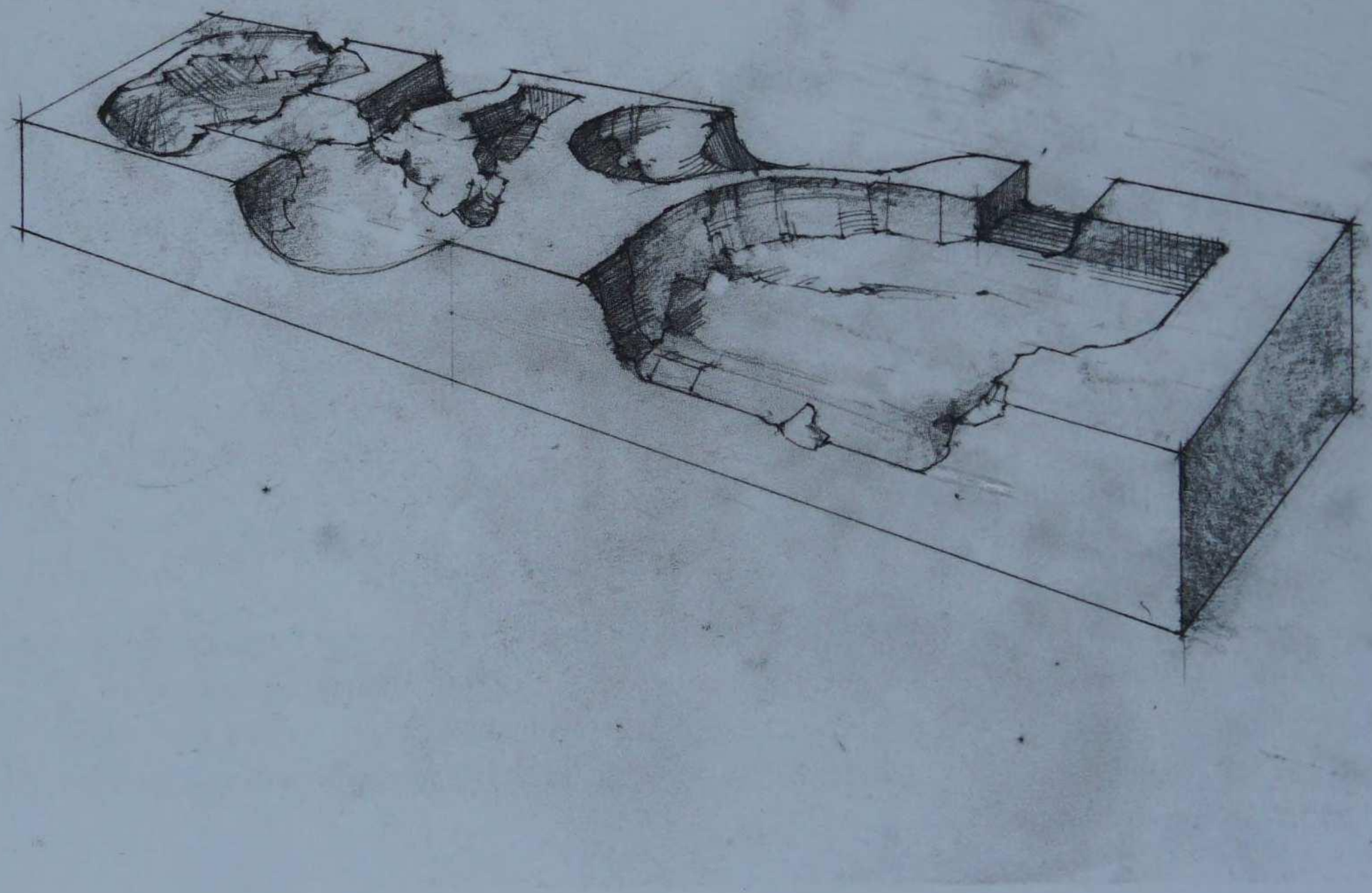
—Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (140)

Eternally plotting thus to delay the moment of the other's gratification, the text and the protagonist, if not in relation of congruency, then surely in on of profound reciprocity, keep each other 'alive' and seriously moving by one and the same shrewd method – they reinforce each other's withdrawal and energetically affirm the necessity of sustaining a mutually unfulfilled desire. In this respect, let us recall that one of the primary functions that K. pursues within the text suggests in Hebrew – Kafka studied Hebrew in preparation for his emigration to Palestine – 'nothing' ['כלום'], while in German it also means a 'yawning' or 'gaping open.'

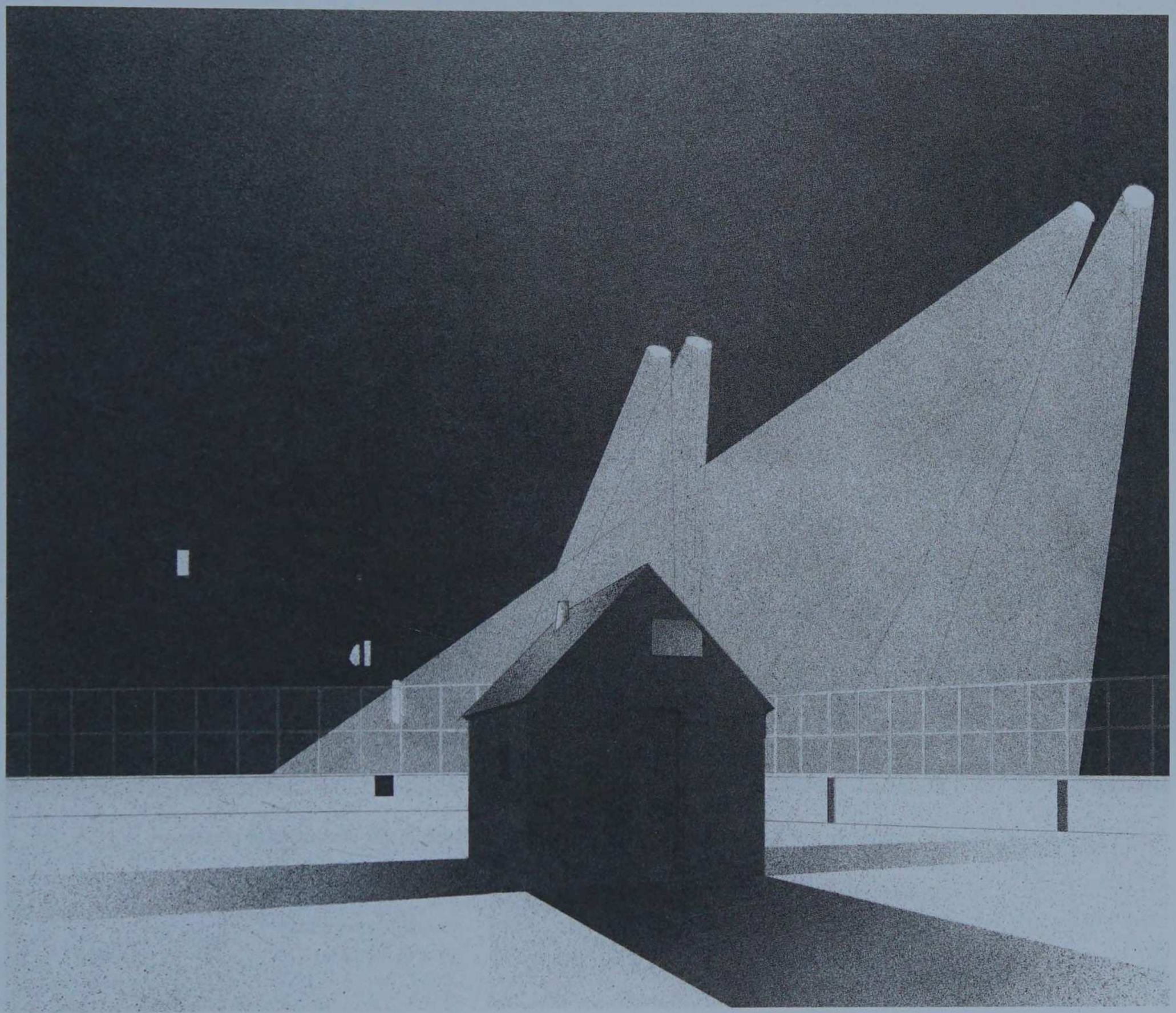
—Avital Ronell, *Finitude's Score: Essays for the End of the Millennium* (206)

Description: Four commercial illuminated sign-elements to be evenly spaced across the top of the west wall of the gallery as per elevation a. Each element will represent one of four Hebrew characters rendered in a font supplied by Gerber Scientific Products called Chaim Hebrew. Thus, reading from right to left the letters "כ" ("Chof Kefufa"), "ל" ("Lamed"), "ו" ("Vov"), and "ם" ("Mem Stumah") will spell out the word "כלום" meaning "nothing."

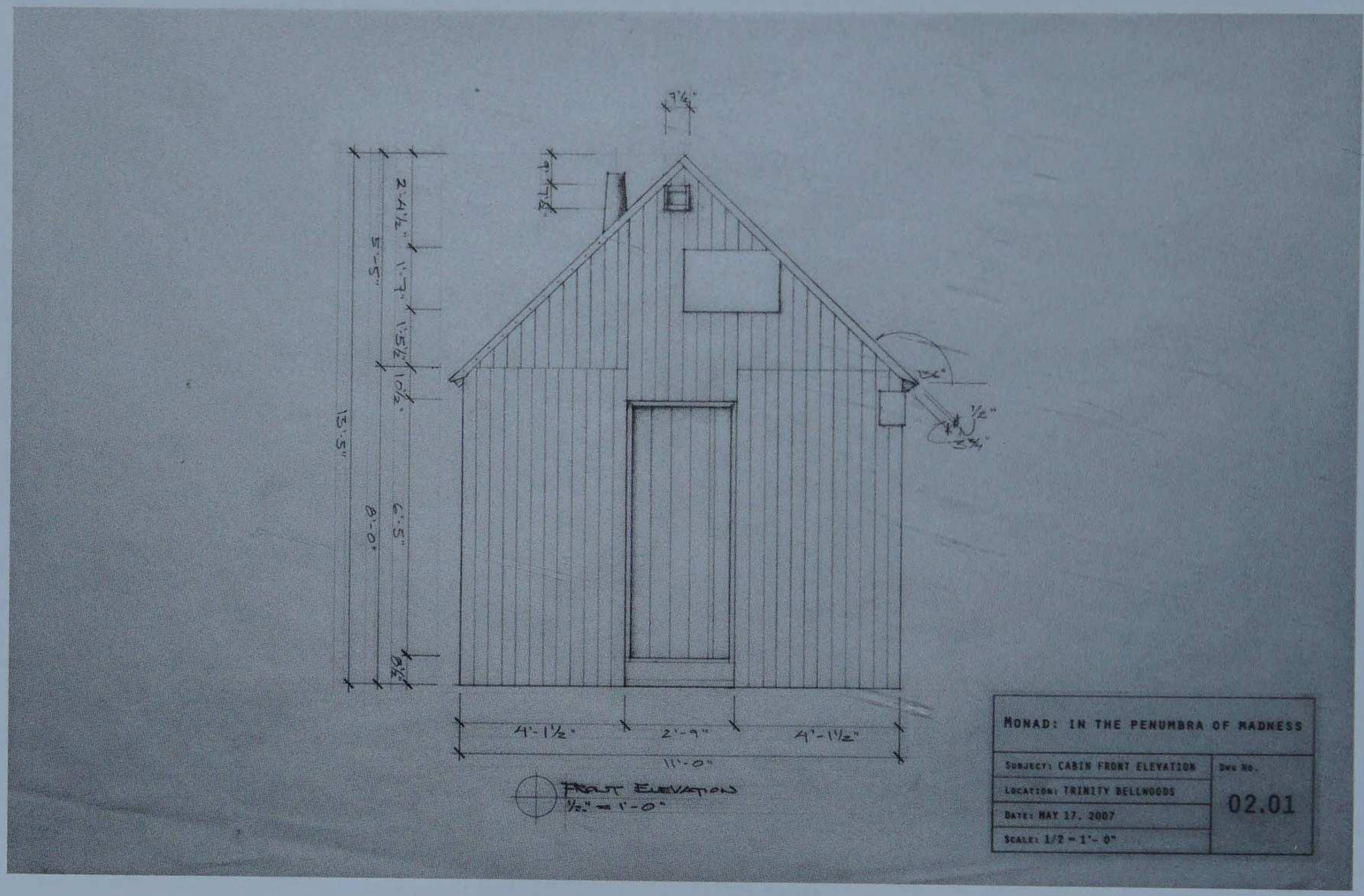
[Four] Letters of Relief
2007
proposal for Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts,
Toronto



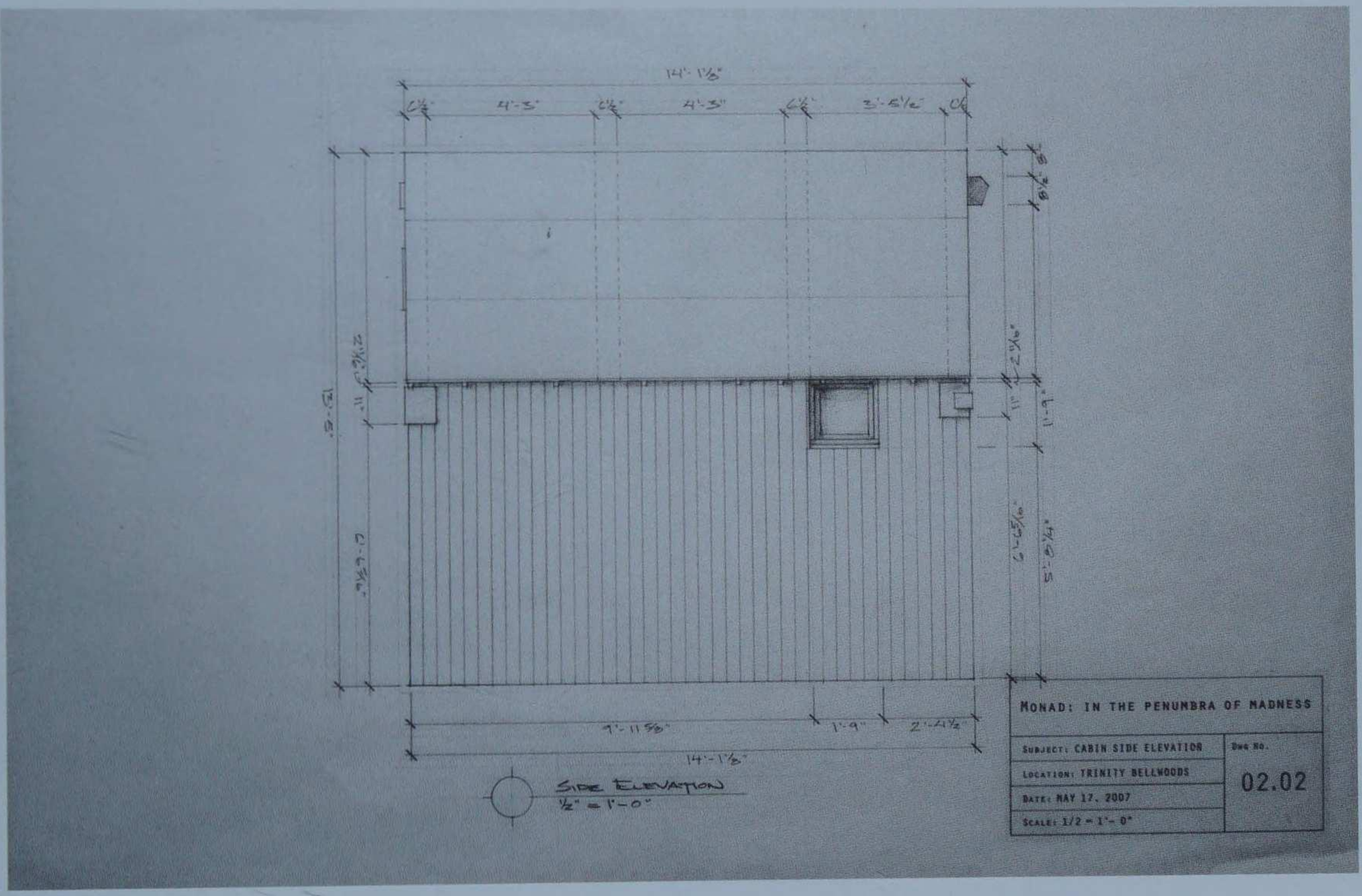
Seating Unit (after JC)
2008
graphite on paper
11 × 17 inches
proposal for *↑Art* (Gladstone Hotel, Toronto)



Monad: in the penumbra of madness
2006
spray enamel on paper
15 × 12.9 inches
proposal for *Nuit Blanche*, Toronto
private collection

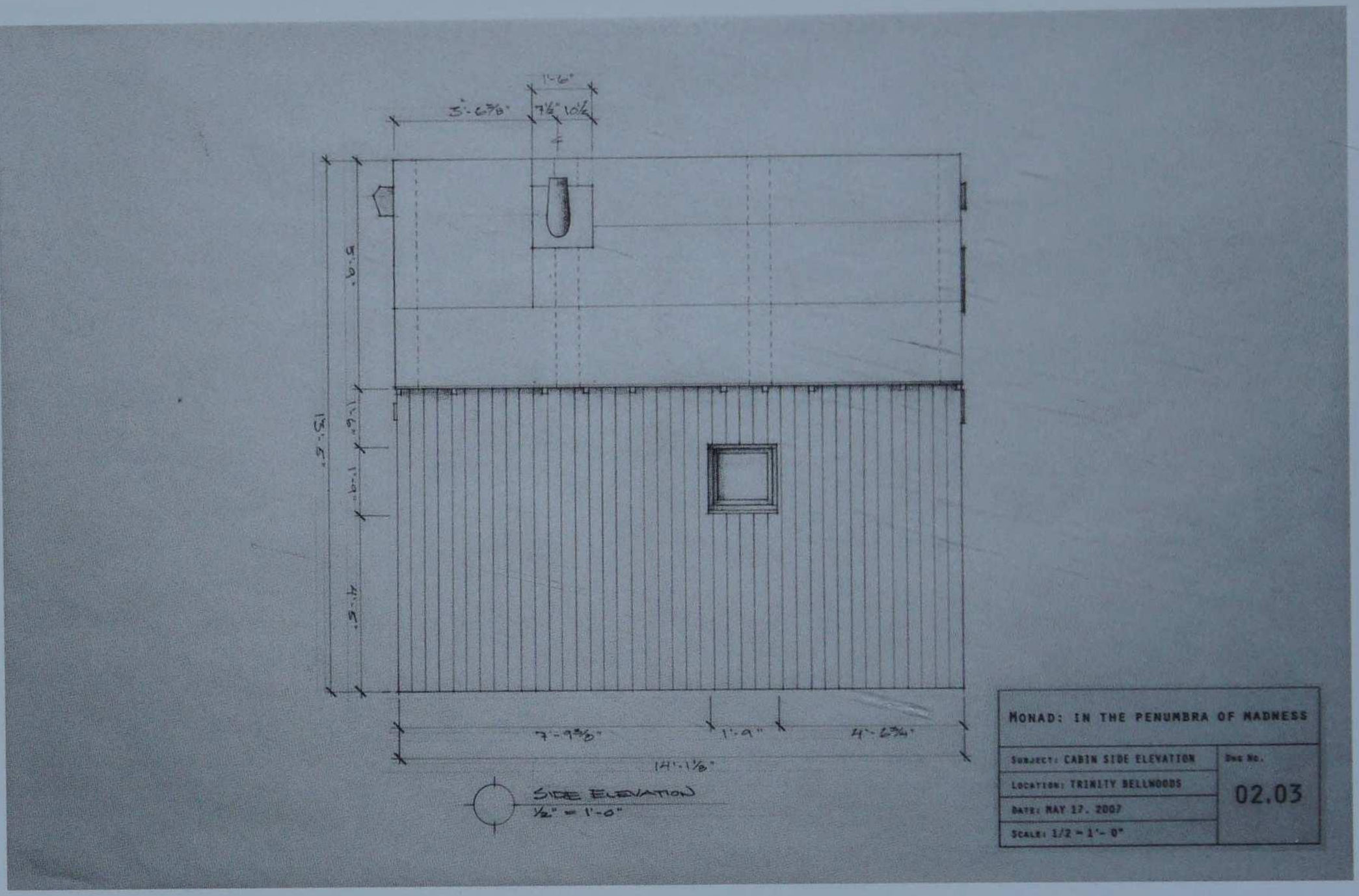


Monad: in the penumbra of madness
2006
elevation 01 of cabin
graphite on vellum
17 × 11 inches

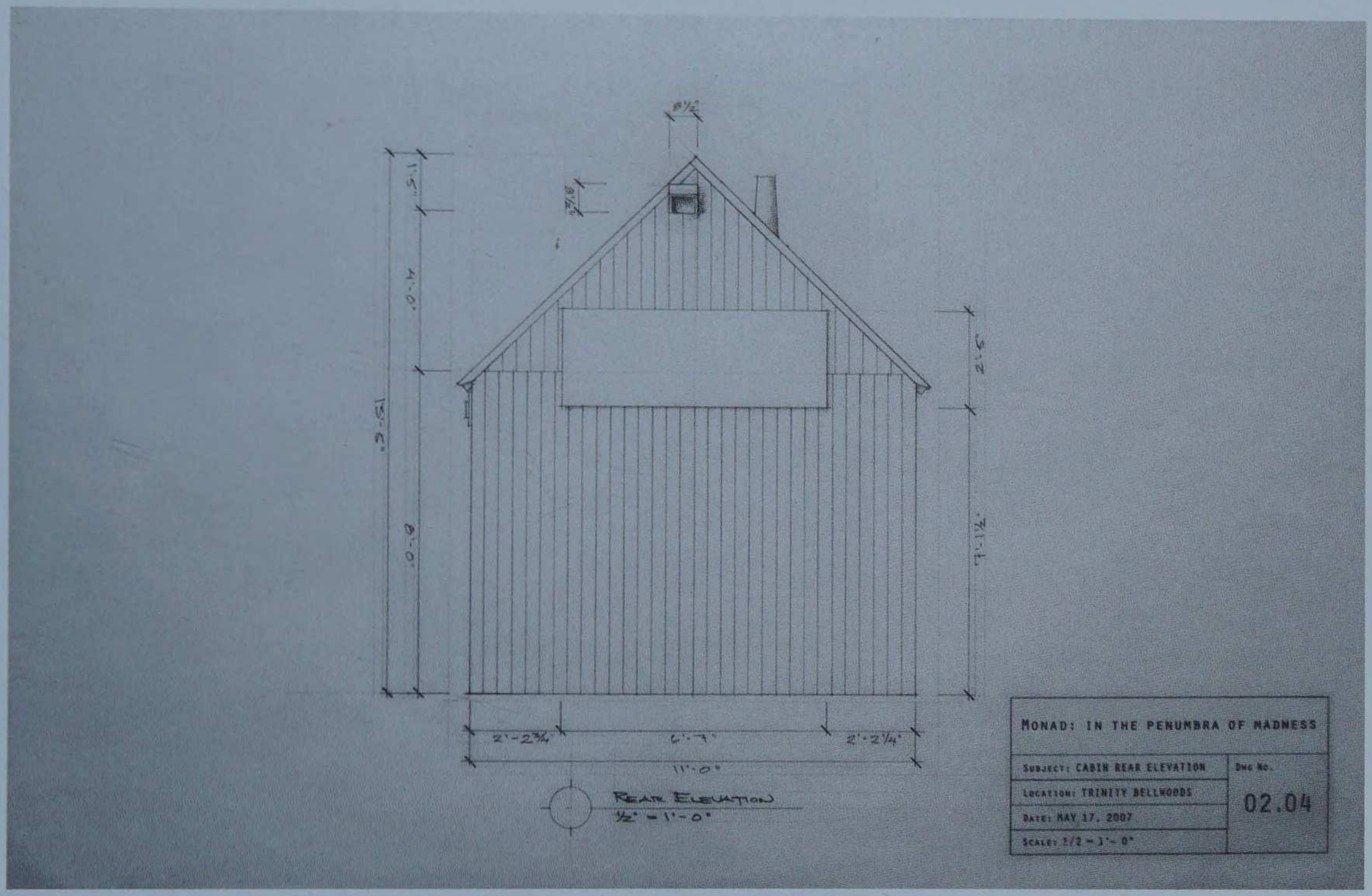


Monad: in the penumbra of madness

2006
elevation 02 of cabin
graphite on vellum
17 × 11 inches

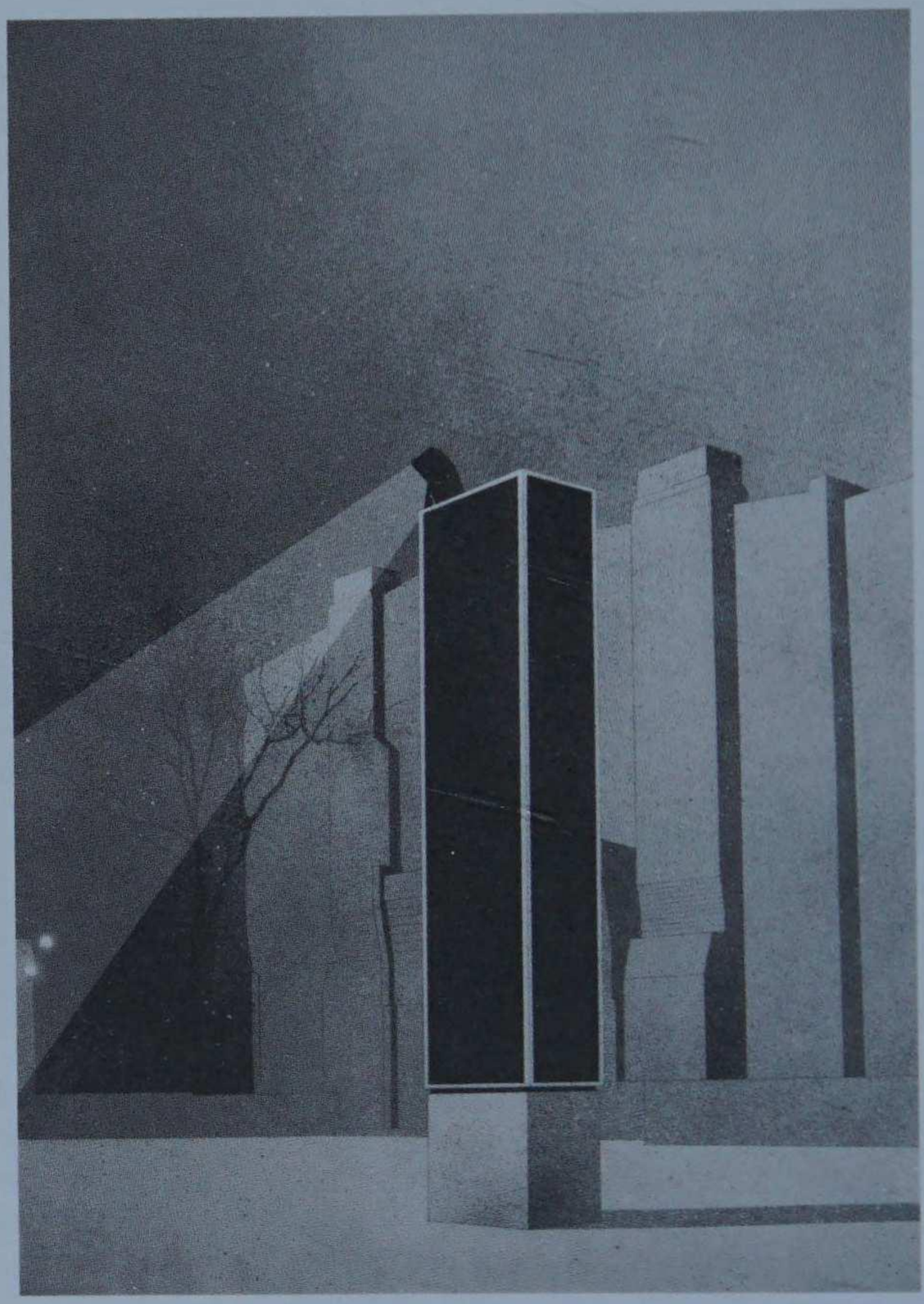


Monad: in the penumbra of madness
2006
elevation 03 of cabin
graphite on vellum
17 × 11 inches

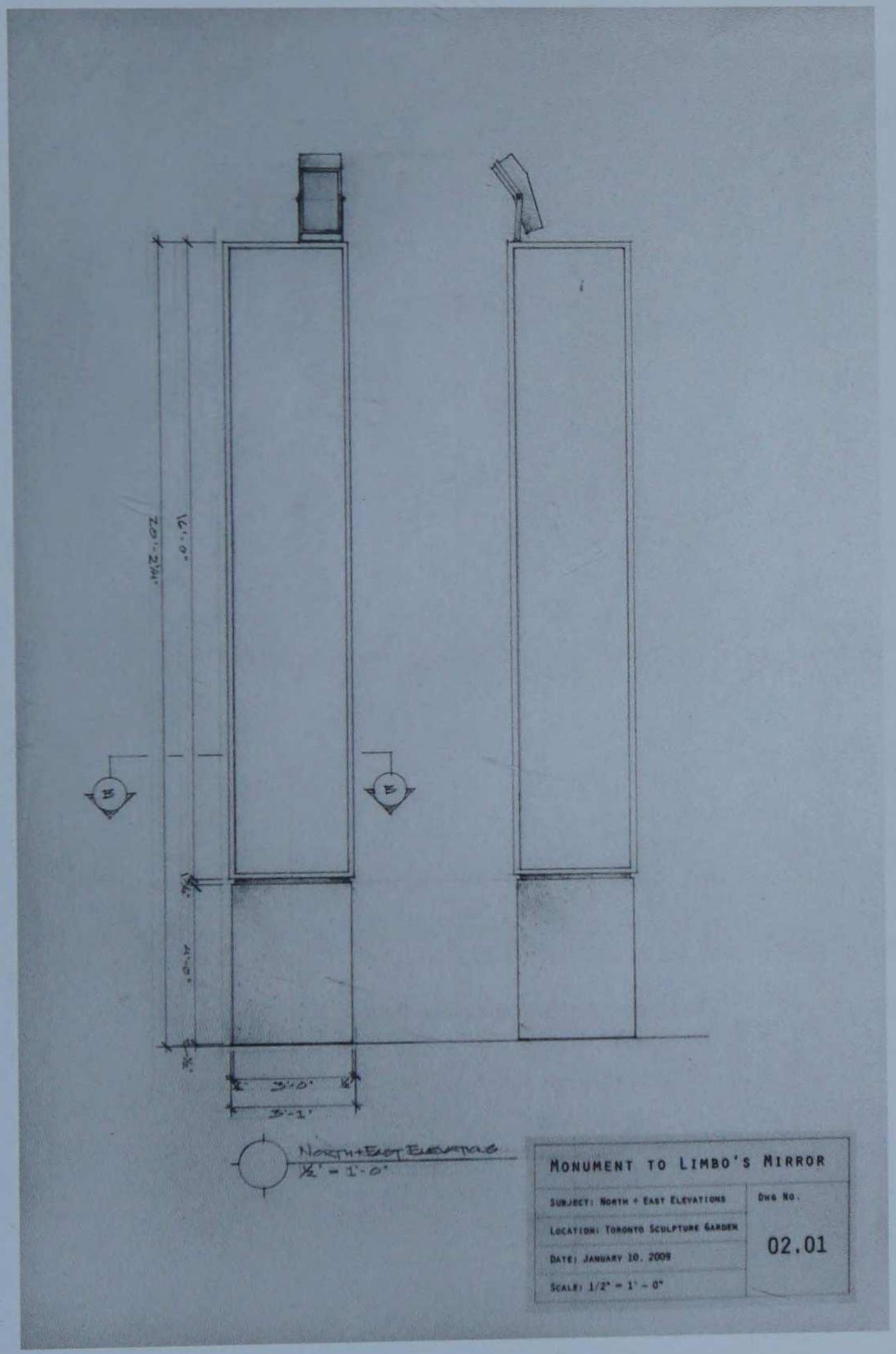


Monad: in the penumbra of madness
2006
elevation 04 of cabin
graphite on vellum
17 × 11 inches

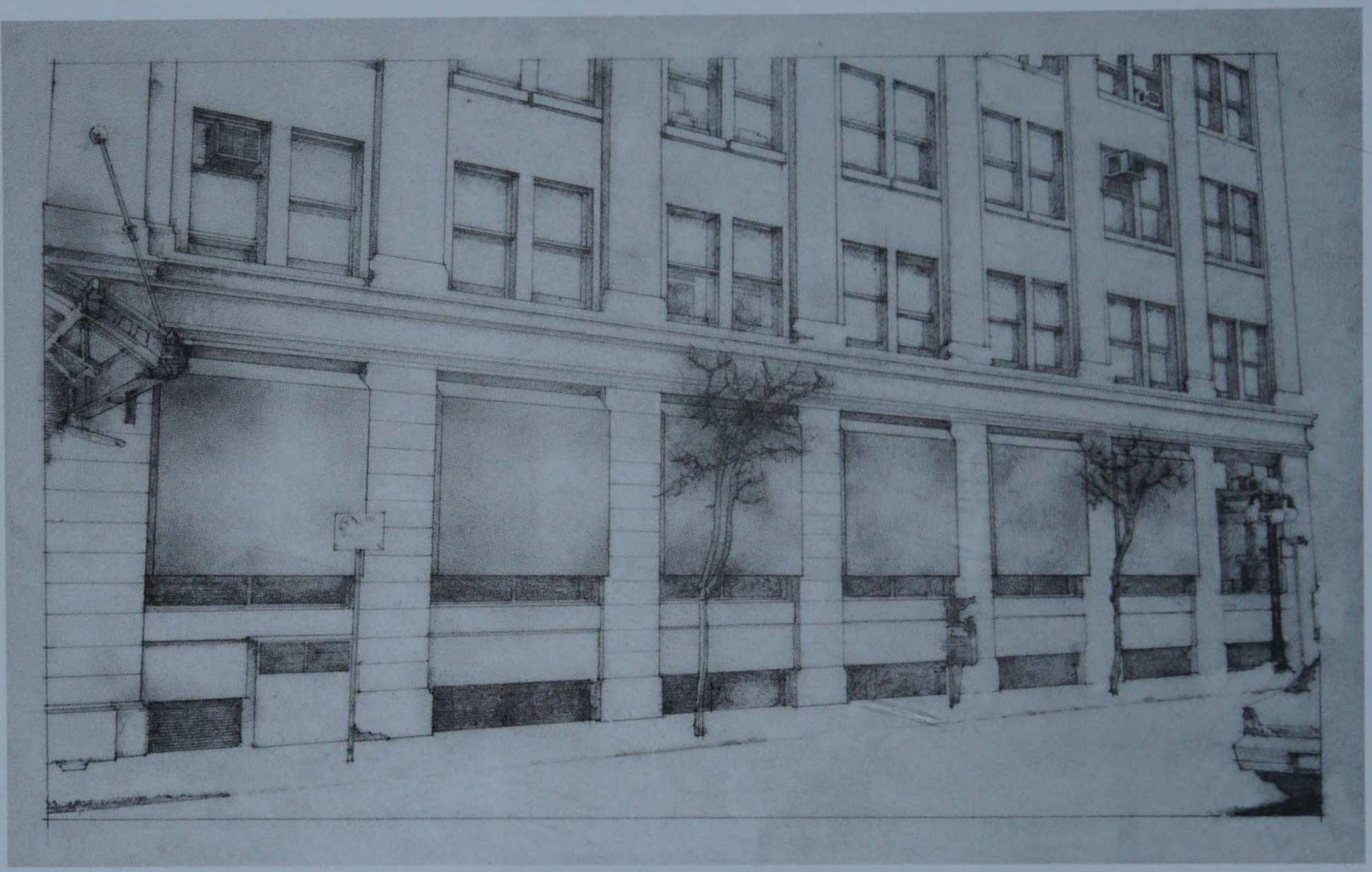
Monument to Limbo's Mirror
2006
spray enamel on paper
22 × 29 inches
proposal for the
Toronto Sculpture Garden



MONUMENT TO LIMBO'S MIRROR

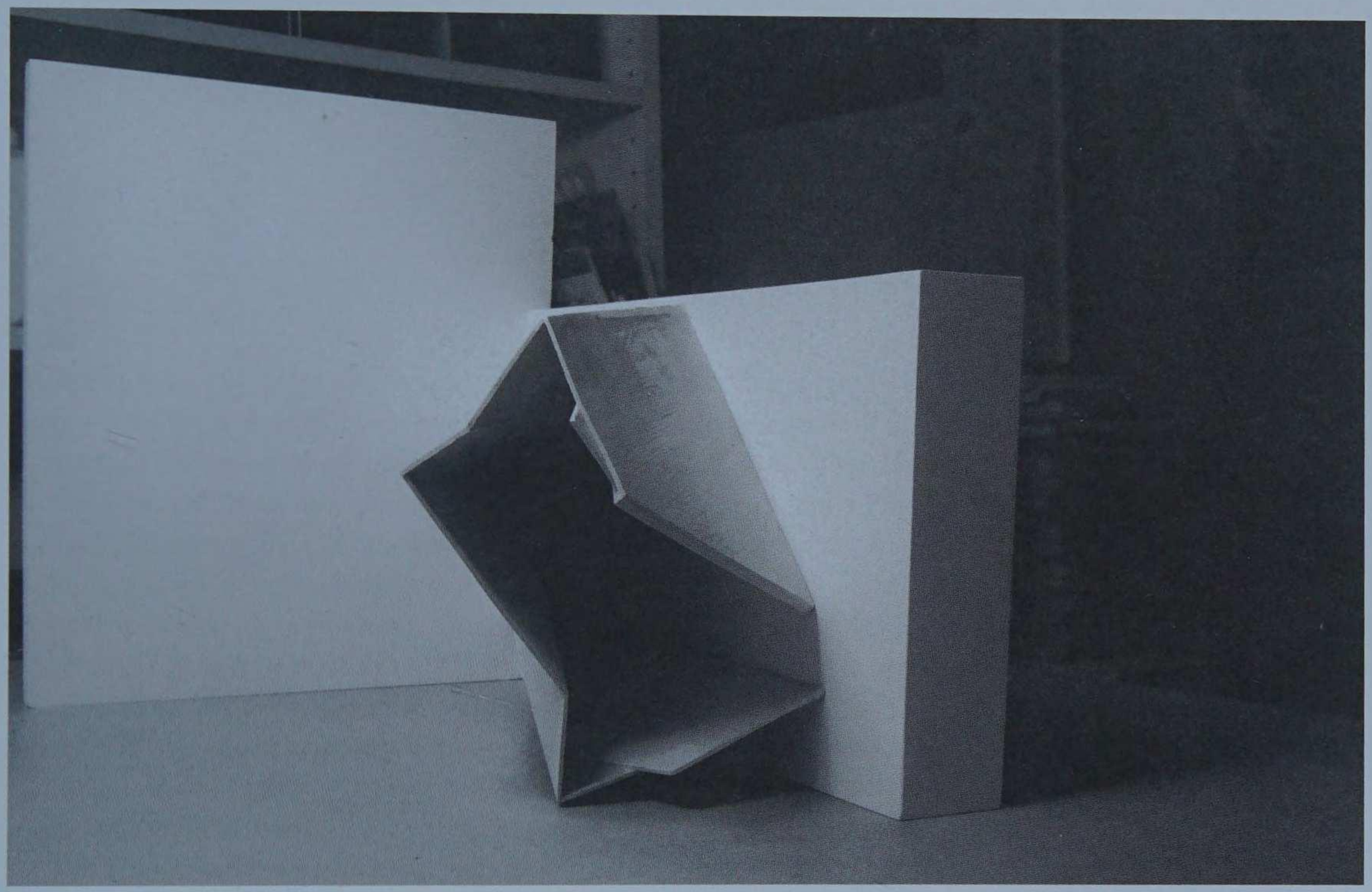


Monument to Limbo's Mirror
2006
graphite on paper
11 × 17 inches
proposal for the Toronto Sculpture Garden



Passages: six "muzzles" for Plug In ICA

2007
graphite on vellum
17 × 11 inches
proposal for Plug In ICA, Winnipeg



But where does the beginning commence?
2008
wood model
12 × 13.75 × 12 inches
proposal for Akau Gallery, Toronto

Afterword

The Artist and the Wall

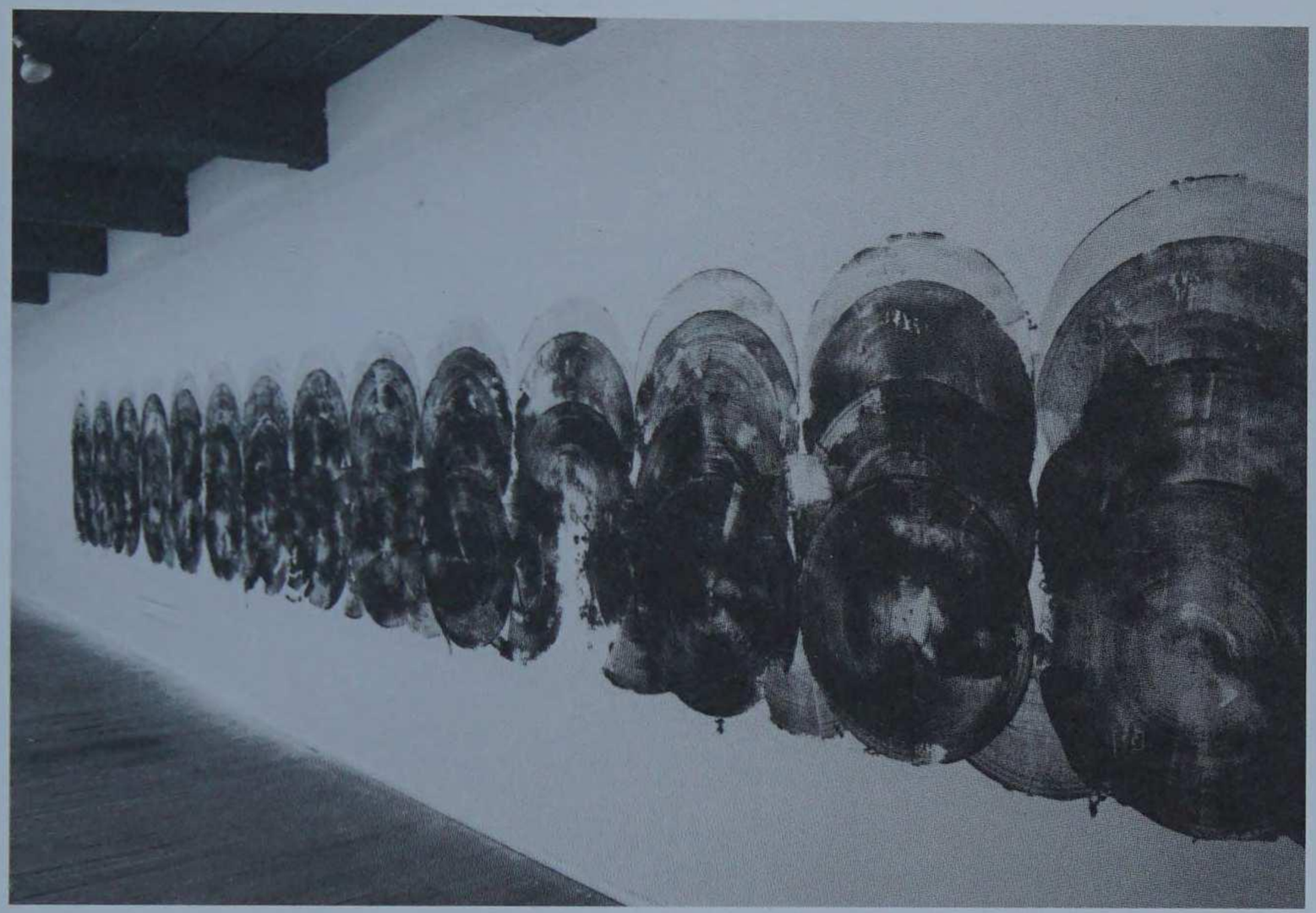
There is a building, or more precisely, a wall, in Winnipeg that might be said to conceal under its paint-laden surface a covert archive of sorts. The wall is positioned on an east-west axis (or let us imagine that we know it to be so) in a shoebox of a room in a bulldog of a building. This room, in the spring of 1976, houses Plug In Gallery which will one day, somewhere in the middle-future, become Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, the co-publisher of this very book which you, at this precise moment, hold in your hands. The bulldog building that houses the shoebox room that holds the covert archive sits square and squat on a downtown street that on this particular evening in the spring of 1976 is just barely breathing. This is not unusual.

What *is* unusual, odd really, is that the wall, on this particular evening, is waiting for the artist. The wall has an agenda, the execution of which requires, indeed *demands*, the presence of the artist. The execution of this agenda (or "programme" as Gordon might say) by the artist will involve a set of keys, a two-foot long squeegee, a nail, an assistant and vast amounts of powdered graphite and petroleum jelly. One circle at a time, the artist is about to make his mark on the wall.

The artist and the assistant will work quickly (let us celebrate the inevitability of error here) and when they finish, when the work is done, when the programme has been "completed" so to speak, the wall will hold some 30 feet of darkly beautiful overlapping circles, the identical diameters of which will have been determined by the petroleum jelly- and graphite-soaked squeegee being repeatedly rotated round and round by the artist on its nail-bound axis. From this point onward the wall will be a place where an *art*work – albeit one soon to be archived under a paint-laden surface – will live. Or perhaps not. Perhaps what the artist will leave behind will be a *non*work. Or perhaps (the squeegee, the nail, the petroleum jelly, the graphite, the artist and the assistant notwithstanding) the wall will still be nothing more – and nothing less – than "just" a wall.

No one will see these beautiful marks on the wall in the shoebox of a room except the artist, the assistant and the keepers of the keys, but this will be of no concern. The assistant will not care. The keepers of the keys will not care. The squeegee, the nail, the petroleum jelly and the powdered graphite will not care. The artist does not concern himself with such foolish things so he will care least of all. On the contrary, the artist will be happy because his programme, on this particular spring night in 1976, will have once again spun itself out, propelling itself forward, one imperfect circle at a time, into a future of endless possibility.

Lin Gibson a.k.a. "the assistant"
Toronto, 2010



Untitled Wall Drawing
1976
petroleum jelly and graphite on wall
dimensions: na
Plug In, Winnipeg

This book was made possible through the generous support of the following:

Ian Carr-Harris
Nicole Collins
David Court
Gary Michael Dault
Peter Dykhuis
Barbara Fischer
Robert Fones
Brian Groombridge
Janice Gurney
Ydessa Hendeles
Mary Jensen
Greg Keen
Garry Neill Kennedy
Bill Kirby
Arlene Kushnir
Yvonne Lammerich
Yam Lau
Andrew Lee
John Nesbitt
Alain Paiment
Andy Patton
Jan Peacock
Jennifer Rudder
Side Street Review
Scott Sorli
Josh Thorpe
Ian Wallace
Jayne Wark

A note of thanks is due David Court and Josh Thorpe for conceiving of this project and to Bill Kirby for overseeing fundraising.

ABC Art Books Canada
Distribution
ABCartbookscanada.com

With regards to reception one must be prepared to make allowances for an other time or other times, even if it entails being behind the times, being out of step with what appears, in the immediacy of its appearing, as the most timely, the most up to date. This brings us back to the affection I have for what you call the "paranormal," what "exists" as remainder alongside and in excess of the normal, the accepted or usual rule or process. I would like to think that it is this "thing which is not," the "not nothing" or "almost nothing" which conditions my response to what might be considered to "constitute" the zero-degree effects of exposition or presentation, effects whose only purpose would be to order for experience, within the confines of the archive, something like a resident exteriority. Something, at times, diabolical: on the one hand, an irreducible and indispensable condition for the establishment, the institution or installation of an archive; on the other, some "thing" which, at every turn, demonstrates an utter lack of regard for any mandate to protect or conserve.

All that remains then is the compulsion to propose var
projects, proxies or strategies in antic
an affect or, if you want, affl
undue concern for its im
(Concerning the question o
position, point of view or rega
seek an audience or constitue
enough that someone—but wh
some point respond to a work's address
something (other) of it.)

9780921381358
ISBN 092138135-2