

CANAL
NO
B354
A4
1993

START VIEWING



60. *Simulated Photo of the Moon's "Sea of Tranquility"
Filled with Water and the N.E. Thing Company's Sign
Placed Beside It, August 1969 (detail)*

*This exhibition
is dedicated to the memory
of Alvin Balkind
(1921–1992)*

Works by Iain and Ingrid Baxter

1965-1971



Curated by Nancy Shaw and William Wood

UBC Fine Arts Gallery

February 19 to March 27, 1993

Canal
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UBC FINE ARTS GALLERY

Director Scott Watson
Program Coordinator Mary Williams
Exhibition Curators Nancy Shaw and William Wood
Installation Phillip McCrum, Randal Rodgers, Owen Sopotiuik

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UBC Fine Arts Gallery
1956 Main Mall
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V6T 1Z1
Tel. (604) 822-2759
Fax (604) 822-6689

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You are now in the middle of a N.E. Thing Co. landscape

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INTRODUCTION

Scott Watson

The activities of the N.E.Thing Co. (Iain and Ingrid Baxter) and the history of the Fine Arts Gallery are intertwined. Their 1966 installation, *Bagged Place*, is now emblematic of the energy of the Gallery in the late sixties when, under Alvin Balkind, it became a vital centre for what was new, experimental and challenging. Alvin died while this catalogue was in preparation, on the winter solstice, 1992.

As will be plain from his contribution to the catalogue, Alvin cast a suspicious eye on what we, perhaps uncritically, call a new criticality. For Alvin, art had a clearly defined role: to stimulate through celebration and transgression. He was contemptuous of moral arbitration, conformism, academic thinking and academic language. He lived in the present tense, always curious about how others made their way through the confusions of our time. Alvin and his life-mate Abe Rogatnick were cosmopolitans in a small town. They used their worldliness to encourage and nourish Vancouver artists. There may have been many times when they must have wondered how they ended up here. The city owes them a great deal. As a friend and advisor, Alvin will be sorely missed. He set the standard the Gallery aspires to maintain. This exhibition is dedicated to his memory.

The Gallery has recently mounted two exhibitions that, in one form or another, revisit the much-mythified period that the present exhibition covers. *Return to Brutopia*, a survey of Eric Metcalfe's work—Alvin had given Eric his first Vancouver show in 1968—set out to look at the ideas of an important figure whose artistic practise was established in this period. An exhibition from

the archives of Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, *The Hand of the Spirit*, looked at the extent of correspondence art through the eyes of Image Bank. All these artists had been inspired by the example of Iain and Ingrid Baxter's N.E.Thing Co.—one of the most productive and influential collaborations in the history of Canadian art—and the subject of this present exhibition curated by Nancy Shaw and William Wood.

If there is an agenda below the surface in these revisionist histories, it comes from contemporary concerns. Each project has been approached in order to include questions broader than the examination of aesthetic positions and the analysis of specific works of art. We have been interested in the relationship to society that anchors art-making in history. This includes strategies for defining identity, sometimes against the grain. As the problems of social life and individual identity are not so much different now than they were then, we are interested in what remains instructive about the art of the period for the present generation.

The period does seem young. The utopianism of artists was based on a belief that art and progressive social change went hand in hand. This aspect of modernism lasted well into the postmodern period—a period that could be said to have commenced in Vancouver with the flourishing of the scene the Baxters inaugurated.

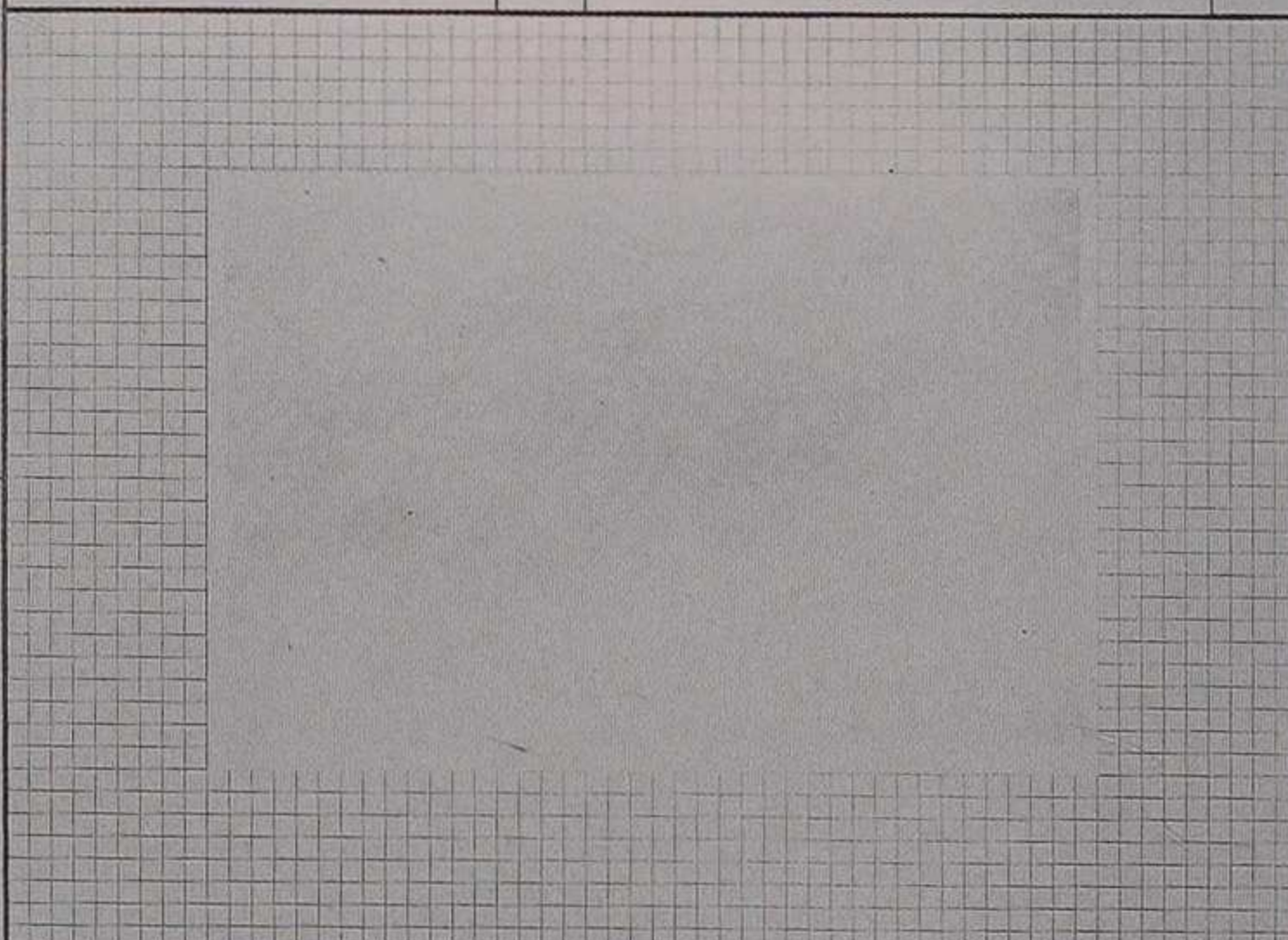

We are interested in trying to define things; but we are more interested in dialectical inquiry than formulating an alternate canon of postsixties Canadian art. We hope to foster debate and serious interest in a period that remains largely unexamined by historiographic method. The

Gallery also continues to argue through these and other projects that much contemporary art can be seen as epistemological. This art performs research into and produces knowledge about the contemporary condition. This might seem like a self-evident claim, but it is one that has little currency outside the art world. The years of claiming that art was good for people (the fifties), or that it challenged the status quo and provided models for new thinking across the whole field of technological change (the sixties), or that it contributed to the formation of Canadian identity (the seventies), or that it constituted a productive economic sphere (the eighties) have not prevented the retrenchment of arts funding and, what may be worse, the politicization of the arts by right-wing groups fundamentally hostile to contemporary art (the nineties).

Increasingly trivialized in the mass media, artists working today continue to offer proposals and alternatives to established regimes of perception and we continue to think their activity is of urgent value.

The Gallery thanks Iain Baxter and Ingrid (Baxter) Ovesen for their work on this project and for agreeing to submit themselves to revision. Nancy Shaw and William Wood, as curators, have

made a valuable contribution to our understanding of the N.E. Thing Co. and its time. We would like to thank the many people who contributed to the exhibition, especially Susan Hobbs, Philip Monk, Brian MacNevin, and all the people who wrote statements for the catalogue: Alvin Balkind, Germano Celant, Greg Curnoe, Paul Grescoe, Lucy R. Lippard, Joan Lowndes, David P. Silcox, Pierre Théberge and Charlotte Townsend-Gault. David P. Silcox and Linda Intaschi and Ian and Charlotte Townsend-Gault lent works to the exhibition. Many people working with institutions and galleries helped us to borrow work in the collections they administer: Amy Algard, Grant Arnold and Gary Dufour of the Vancouver Art Gallery; Dennis Cardiff and William Kirby of the Canada Council Art Bank; Marie Lugli, Diana Nemiroff and Dr. Shirley Thomson of the National Gallery of Canada; Connie Fabro, Nick Sheady, Lawrence Lipkin, Vivian Slee and Antonio Homen of the Sonnabend Gallery; Amy Maggiacomo and Roger Bywater of Art Metropole; Leslie Kanerva of the UBC Alma Mater Society. We are especially grateful to Carmen Colangelo, Rocco Lamanna and the Estate of Carmen Lamanna. □

INFORMATION		N.E. THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada tel: (604) 925-2662 Telex 04-507802 Cable Anything Vancouver B.C.	
Project	SNOW, 1968, Vancouver, B.C. Canada. Collection, National Gallery of Canada.	Number	1
			
Description		Photograph of snow reproduced to exact size (31 x 21) from where taken. The photo is exhibited on the floor with bullet proof glass over it. This allows people to walk over it as if it snow. The photo displayed here is only a reduced copy of the original, which is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.	
			

15. Snow, 1968

INFORMATION

N. E. THING CO. LTD.

1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada tel. (604) 929-3662 Telex 04-507802 Cable Anything Vancouver B.C.

Project	PAST PROJECTS.	SONNABEND	Number
10.71	COMMUNICATIONS DEPT. PHOTOGRAPHY DEPT. PROJECT DEPT. THING DEPT.&ACT-ART DEPTS.	OCT.16 -30/71 420 West Broadway New York, N.Y. (212)966-6160 10am - 6pm Tues-Sat.	10.1-8

History

The N. E. THING CO. was founded in Vancouver, B.C., in 1966 as the N. E. BAXTER THING CO. and since late 1967 has operated under its present name. Its main office is located 1419 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver, B.C. The N. E. THING CO. includes eleven departments: Research, Thing, Accounting, ACT, ART, Photography, Printing, COP, Movie, Project, and Consulting.

N. E. Thing Co.

Glossary

- SI - Sensitivity Information
A term developed by NETCO to denote all forms of cultural activities, i.e. dance, music, theatre, film, fine art, poetry, novels, etc. It is based on the theory that there are all types of INFORMATION around in the world. INFORMATION is usually, or tends to be, confronted with and dealt with in either a practical or sensitive manner. Thus INFORMATION which is handled in this pure or sensitive way culminates in SI (Sensitivity Information) in general context, and eventually leaves its mark on our life as culture. The divisions within SI are based on the dominant characteristic of that particular area of information, for example: Vision - VSI - Visual Sensitivity Information (painting, sculpture, architecture, books, etc.)
- SSI - Sound Sensitivity Information (music, poetry [read], singing, oratory, etc.)
- MSI - Moving Sensitivity Information (movies, dance, mountain climbing, track, etc.)
- ESI - Experiential Sensitivity Information (theatre, etc.)
- It should be recognized that there are categories where certain types of sensitivity information are combined with others to provide their form, but for the most part the categories above have been established because the "arts" tend to have a particular emphasis on one kind of information characteristic.
 - We find that by setting up a new set of definitions like this that people are better able to see the cross-relationship between the "arts" and in so doing can become much more involved and supportive of the new types of "arts activity" — Sensitivity information — SI — that are going on.
 - The idea of comprehending "all arts as information handled sensitively" breaks the historical chains that keep them apart from each other and grossly misunderstood.
- VSI - Visual Sensitivity Information
A term developed and used by the N. E. Thing Co. to denote more appropriately the meaning of the traditional words "art" and "fine art" or "visual art". Refers to the handling of visual information in a sensitive manner. Also refers to the "artist" as a VISUAL INFORMER, as someone who knows how to handle visual information sensitively.



COMPANIES ACT
No. 84030.
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that "N. E. Thing Co. Ltd." was incorporated under the Companies Act on the 16th day of January, 1969.
The Company is authorized to issue ten thousand shares without nominal or par value.
The address of its registered office is 1419 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver, British Columbia.
The objects for which the Company is established are:—
(i) To produce sensitivity information;
(ii) To provide a consultation and evaluation service with respect to things;
(iii) To produce, manufacture, import, export, buy, sell, and otherwise deal in things of all kinds.
A. H. HALL,
ja30-9057 Registrar of Companies.
From The British Columbia Gazette,
January 30, 1969

Description

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN

Vancouver Board of Trade, 1970-71
Radio Commercials, 1970
Intentional Non-Inclusion, 1970
Intentional Inclusion, 1970
North American Time-Zone Photo-VSI
Simultaneity, October 18, 1970
Button -VSI 67-70

Nothing Project, 1969
Press Release, 1969
Video-VSI, - Visual Cliches 1970
- Buyer-Supplier Night, 1970
VSI Formula # 3, 360degrees, 1968
Other projects.



arts canada

formerly Canadian Art
June/July 1967



N. E. Thing Co., Vancouver:
Bagged Canada Coasts

big bag-splitting double
Dominion day issue no. 109/110
West-coast/East-coast art

\$1.50

Cover of *artscanada*, June/July 1967, with *Bagged Canada Coasts*, 1967 (present whereabouts unknown)

CAPITAL AND SUBSIDIARY

The N.E.Thing Co. and the Revision of Conceptual Art

William Wood

As Siegelaub has stated:

"I am very interested in conveying the idea that the artist can live where he wants to—not necessarily in New York or London or Paris as he had to in the past—but anywhere and still make important art"

Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," 1969

What conceptual art did, I think, was give young artists a way out of a romantic concept of the artist into an undefined, and maybe even undefinable, concept of the artist which was open to respond to things that were happening in the real world. And, to take it one step further, it also began to obliterate the idea that modern culture was rooted in the capital cities of the Western world and that it was possible by means of media to break down the idea that important art happened in capital cities and that subsidiary art happened in subsidiary cities.

Jeff Wall, 1990

Using similar language, these quotations¹ highlight a significant aspect of conceptual art: its practical capacity to be eccentric to the major centres of the art world of the sixties and seventies. Indeed, a quick glance at Lucy Lippard's *Six Years* compendium of activities and exhibitions related to the "dematerialization of the art object" yields examples of artistic phenomena spread across Europe and North America and extending into Argentina, Australia and the Arctic Circle.² The inclusion of such evidence in the record of conceptual art is not just incidental, but indicates the germinal criticality of the movement, for alongside its aesthetic politics contesting high-modernist practice can also be read a resistance to the centripetal pull of artists and the art world into the "capital cities" of cultural and political power. To the extent to which Kosuth and Wall delineate this tendency, their statements remind us that conceptual art had a territorial agenda which accompanied its better-remembered iconoclastic disposition.

Even so, these announcements have their distinct contexts. Kosuth was writing from New York in 1969 and the "Art After Philosophy" essays were published in the London-based journal *Studio International*. Writing as a leading practitioner of conceptualism during the initial wave of critical and curatorial attention, Kosuth's quotation stems from his then-New York dealer, Seth Siegelaub, to form the closing comment of a survey of artists influencing and practicing conceptual art in the late sixties. Twenty-one years later, Wall, speaking in Vancouver, was describing what that example had meant for him as a practitioner removed from the "capital cities." The

forum he was speaking in can be tied to the overall revision of conceptual art which has taken place in the last decade. Scheduled during, but thousands of miles away from, the first major retrospective survey of conceptual art, "L'Art conceptuel: une perspective," at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, the forum was also concurrent with "Jeff Wall 1990," a Vancouver Art Gallery retrospective of Wall's conceptual art influenced production.³

The Vancouver discussion included Terry Atkinson and Lawrence Weiner, two stalwart veterans of conceptual art, both a part of the Paris exhibition and both brought to Vancouver for the forum and for projects devoted to their current art practice.⁴ The subject the panel addressed was symptomatic of the gap between conceptual art and the present, for the forum promised to link conceptualism to questions of postmodernism—a linkage which proved difficult for the panel to maintain because their relation to conceptual art lead them to consider their practice as reactive to, yet formed upon, modernism. This meant that the panel discounted many ideas and conditions understood as postmodern, seeing them as either latent or already taken up by modernist and conceptualist practice. On the whole, the discussion tended to nostalgically describe conceptualism as a general and counter-cultural "moment," a time of portable art works and ephemeral experimentation that later influenced a critical art of permanent, canonical status.⁵

These quotes then bracket the period when conceptual art ascended to become a modern art "style" and descended to a near-forgotten moment of contemporary practice only to return as the subject of retrospective interest. Given the speakers, their statements are marked by the relations between centre and periphery which they call into play. Siegelau's project was to be the carrier of the movement from the periphery to the centre (in New York), while Wall's comment was made in a forum possible because of revived, centrist museological and commercial interests in conceptual art. Much as Siegelau's statement

stands as an example of how the word regarding the decentralized field of conceptual art had to be spread through the sort of channelling he personified,⁶ the circumstances of Wall's utterance show how that decentering has been revised so that, for example, he can work from the geographical periphery and be given laurels at the centre, or Weiner can remain in New York and still "light out to the Territory" for the occasional commissioned visit.

Of course, the notion that since the "break" in Western culture in the late sixties things have returned to business as usual is as timeworn as it is a given that art production and consumption, art criticism and art history can become so imbricated in existing cultural conditions as to forget historical specifics. Still, there remains a thorny question: Did conceptual art represent a suspension of the rule of the centre? It is this question I wish to speak of, and to do so I want to raise a name whose conspicuous absence from the revision of conceptual art suggests both the eccentric nature of the conceptual project and the territorial forgetfulness of its revisers. The name, not represented in Paris, nor mentioned during the forum, is the N.E. Thing Company, Limited (NETCO), the venture of Iain and Ingrid Baxter, based in North Vancouver, British Columbia, from 1966 to 1978.

To relieve the silence surrounding this name, some small mentions of NETCO could be listed. In the same article quoted above, Kosuth wrote of how "The Canadian Iain Baxter has been doing a sort of 'conceptual' work since 1967,"⁷ while Siegelau, in a second edition addendum to the catalogue of "L'Art conceptuel: une perspective," mentioned NETCO as one of those "missing in action" omitted from the exhibit and its accompanying essays.⁸ During the period of the high visibility of conceptual art, NETCO participated in several Siegelau ventures, including a sponsoring and participating role in a May 1969, Siegelau-arranged exhibition that brought the work of Atkinson (with Michael Baldwin), along

with Kosuth, Weiner and others to the Simon Fraser University campus in Burnaby, B.C.⁹ Simultaneously, NETCO was a fixture in publications and exhibitions curated by Lucy Lippard in her capacity as a critical champion of conceptual art (including the Vancouver exhibition "955,000").¹⁰ The ability of NETCO to gain this attention from central figures was part of its considerable use of attention-getting promotional vehicles, yet it remains remarkable that they were able to draw upon such resources while positioned in B.C. And, although other factors played a role, NETCO was instrumental in putting Vancouver on the map as a place where innovative, maybe even important art was being, and could be made.

NETCO was registered as a company in 1969, its address given as the Baxter family home in North Vancouver. Its provincial incorporation lists the expressed objects:

- i* To produce sensitivity information:
- ii* To provide a consultation and evaluation service with respect to things:
- iii* To produce, manufacture, import, export, buy, sell, and otherwise deal in things of all kinds.¹¹

The facetious tone of the notice and its attempt to put "anything" (N.E. Thing) within its purview stresses several aspects of significance to the project. One is the ironic inhabitation of bureaucratic and commercial institutions which NETCO maintained as part of its move to network within and beyond the conventions of the art world (and its bureaucratic and commercial institutions).¹² The extent of this inhabitation is quite impressive: from inclusion in major international exhibitions of conceptual art to participation in data processing conventions and membership in the Vancouver Board of Trade; from representation by the Carmen Lamanna Gallery of Toronto and the Sonnabend Gallery of New York to the running of a photography lab and a restaurant in Vancouver; from solo exhi-

bitions at the Kunsthalle Basel and the National Gallery of Canada to sponsorships of a champion Pee-Wee hockey team and a synchronized swimming performance. Each of these projects came under the Company's activities and each intimated that the business and the art were not merely coincidental to artistic continuance but intrinsic to NETCO and its objectives.

The second aspect follows from the first, for, although vague enough to include the many types of activities, projects and services undertaken, the formal placement and wording of NETCO's notice is a pastiche of the objectifying, product-oriented procedures of formalist art. Recall the type of dicta put out by Clement Greenberg in "Modernist Painting"—such as the statement that modernist art "converts all theoretical possibilities into empirical ones, and in doing so tests, inadvertently, all theories about art for their relevance to the actual practice and experience of art."¹³ In the late sixties, throughout the art world, such ideas were being tested themselves, and the NETCO notice participates in that testing by deliberately avoiding being in any way inadvertent. It is an overt proposal aiming to convert "theoretical possibilities into empirical ones" by expanding and coordinating activities that overlap between theory and practice. By substituting the term "sensitivity information" for the limited formalist idea of "all arts as information handled sensitively"—as NETCO announced in 1966¹⁴—NETCO stated that it is what one is sensitive to that makes the information worth considering, not the technical apparatus brought to render it sensitively. The pastiche designates a practice around and about the experience of art spread across disciplines (perhaps related to neo-dada "art-into-life" undertakings), as well as being an enabling strategy for NETCO to encounter the "real world" of things, structures and institutions which effected both the art and life of those making up NETCO and its audiences.

These notions of designated inhabitation and "sensitivity information" could be placed in

proximity to similar projects of sensitivity used by other artists (Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin's *Air Show* [1966/67], Hans Haacke's *Condensation Cube* [1963-65], Dennis Oppenheim's *Time Line* [1966]). As well, they could be assessed as part of the contemporaneous use of a corporate "front" for art work (Art & Language's collaboration [1969-], Gilbert and George's "Art For All" [1970-], Les Levine's "Museum of Mott Art" [1967-69], Claes Oldenberg's "The Store" [1961], *et al.*). However, it seems important to note that these notions of "sensitivity information" and incorporation were structural features of the entire NETCO output and not phases to be abandoned for novel products or ventures in other media. Many NETCO projects were formatted on standard-sized "Information" forms, graphically outlining the proposals, materials or documentation which resulted from the endeavor. These served as wall-sized documentation of specific projects, as well as a means to standardize and systematize the entire venture, suggesting interrelations, common strategies and techniques or simply similar commodity forms for NETCO products.

Though multiple objects (buttons, clothing, prints) and unique sculptural works also proceeded from NETCO, the "Information" forms assembled for *The N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. Book* in 1978 serve as the corporate archive and conceptual history of the company.¹⁵ NETCO's "sensitivity information" category could encompass material produced through drawing and text, photography (in all its forms), performance, earthwork, ice, food, excrement, dollar bills, or electronic signal, and each were listed and accounted for by their placement within the confines of the "Information" form. The forms record deals, proposals (realized, unrealized and unrealizable), works sold and unsold, events and utterances, reviews and facsimiles, all accommodated as the residue of an ongoing concern, all given the imprimatur of the corporate seal. While the attempt of artists and groups to mimic and instate bureaucratic

procedures and systems is not unique to NETCO, the level of consistency and the resultant primacy of the corporate body as a mobile, entrepreneurial shell—extensive yet lambent—places NETCO as a highly reflexive and sophisticated art enterprise.

The third aspect I glean from the notice may not appear reflexive in comparison, yet it represented an element crucial to NETCO's formulation of conceptualism and its place within conceptual art. This is the address which appeared as the corporate headquarters and which appeared on every "Information" form issued from NETCO: 1419 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver, B.C. While one strain of conceptual art stresses location and studio or practical designation (as in Richard Long's work [1966-], On Karawa's *I Got Up* series [1969-1979], Gilbert and George's famous Fournier Street address [1970-], or Douglas Huebler's *Variable Pieces* and *Duration Pieces* [1968-1973]), the NETCO address designates the suburban family dwelling and the single-family unit as the locus of cultural production. Here inhabitation is stressed by recognizing the legal relationship of the Baxters as a couple (married . . . with children), but it also locates the NETCO collaboration within a set of relations both socially and geographically specific. Though the idea of a suburban couple making advanced art work (even if the male figurehead was already recognized as an artist) removed NETCO from the trappings of a male-dominated avantgardist bohemia, it also gave their work an entry into different fields for investigation.

For the 1966 *Bagged Place*, the UBC Fine Arts Gallery was the site of an installation of rental furnishings and domestic objects, every one of which—from appliances to utensils, rugs to foodstuffs, toilets to turds—was encased in plastic. Besides taking sanction from the idea of a "plastic" suburban lifestyle, *Bagged Place* also replaced Pop Art's iconography with actual objects of domestic usage, stressing both the antiseptic character of consumer society and, reflective of NETCO's corporatization of the family unit,

placing the invading presence of the corporate commodity in both the domestic and the aesthetic sphere. For the 1969 work, *Building Structure*, at the Carmen Lamanna Gallery, the commercial space of art world dealing was “domesticated” by NETCO’s construction of standard house wood-framing throughout the gallery—blurring the distinctions between commerce and the everyday, corporate standardization and the corporate family.

In another set of works the family context disabled the leisure/work dichotomy of middle-class life, making leisure activities (sports and recreation, family vacations) into the material for corporate investigation of environmental and aesthetic projects. There are studies of ski turns as gestural marks in snow (*One Mile Ski Track* [1968]), Smithson-like mirror displacement works enacted and photographed on the family property (*Single Light Cast* [1968], *VSI Formula #5*), there are the many roadside photographs of “things” in the landscape, such as the *Portfolio of Piles* (1968) and the transparency light-boxes of 1968. This aspect of NETCO made the family unit akin to the corporate working group as well as presenting everyday activities as participants in aesthetic protocols—encouraging the productivity of leisure as both a site of personal agency and an extension of corporatization. The ambivalent attitude of NETCO towards this agent-and-patient role does not rob it of the potential to suggest critique; in some ways, by stressing their inhabitation of the corporate world, the Baxters represent the family as both the victim of consumer capitalism and the site for resisting its allocation of conformist roles—a condition recognized in their occasional reference to the Riverside Drive home as “the Seymour Plant.”

Finally, though not exhaustive of this specificity, the geographical locale of the home, on the suburban fringe of a “subsidiary” city at the edge of North America, placed NETCO decidedly beyond the pale of the centralized, cosmopolitan art world of the time. This geographical identi-

fication with the eccentric is not just a token in NETCO gaming, but should be seen as fundamental to the entire enterprise. Several projects are apposite here. Two NETCO divisions were the ART and ACT Departments, which, from 1967 to 1969, almost arbitrarily designated “Aesthetically Rejected Things” and “Aesthetically Claimed Things.” This project involved issuing certificates claiming or rejecting items and phenomena according to an erratic and whimsical set of “visual sensitivity information” (VSI) criteria. Once again, although the designation of phenomena as “art” or “not-art” is not unique to NETCO (see Robert Rauchenberg’s *Portrait of Iris Cert* [1961] or Robert Morris’ *Statement of Esthetic Withdrawal* [1963]), certificates were issued for a wide range of items which suggest a certain approach. Of those certified: a clear-cut forest near Hope, B.C. (claimed); Robert Smithson’s “Non-sites” (rejected); a vintage photograph of an Oregon railroad trestle (claimed); Robert Morris’ felt pile in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada (claimed); a cement retaining wall along the Park and Tillford Distillery in North Vancouver (claimed); *Marcel Duchamp’s Total Art Production Except His Total Readymade Production* (claimed and rejected—the only instance of dual designation); a series of *Artforum* covers (rejected); Robert Murray’s sculpture *Track* (rejected). Though not forming a consistent pattern, the ART and ACT works tend to “reject” the work of artists at the centre, meanwhile they “claim” local and landscape phenomena peculiar to (usually Northwestern) North America. Even the Morris is claimed, I surmise, for its position in Canada’s “capital” city, thus claiming the acquisition of the centre by the periphery in order to mock the neo-colonial taste of the National Gallery.

When we add that the designated art works are typically represented by reproductions from other sources—along with the “rejected” designation of the *Artforum* covers—while the “claimed” landscape works use NETCO-issue photographs, we can view the project as partially motivated and

sustained by the perceived distance of NETCO from the centre of art world designation. The periphery parodies the centre's claim of authority by ironically assuming that power for itself.¹⁶ As well, the works can be held to be a substantive attempt to recognize and celebrate the local landscape as the product of a recognizable culture of colonization and industrial development, and as a phenomenon distinctively different from the "sensitivity information" produced as art by the centres of artistic culture and power. One aspect of the ARTs and ACTs makes this quite clear, for many "claimed" phenomena "found" in the landscape are functional industrial objects and architecture—snow tunnels for protecting trains, storage tanks, wheat pool elevators, directional arrows, electrical towers—that resemble the rationalized, nonfunctional forms of minimalist sculpture. The notions are double, I believe, suggesting both that the environment is filled with sites for aesthetic browsing and that the gallery work is an effete supplement to the world outside—playing on the semantic difference between the "active" landscape and the static, "artful" object in the gallery.

The second tendency of geographical specificity overlaps with the claiming of local landscape, for it concerns the entire entrepreneurial and environmental character of NETCO. The project of incorporation and inhabitation emphasized the need to find structures for legitimating a conceptual art practice (or an art practice *tout court*) in a locale not simply eccentric but seemingly supplemental and hostile to the modernist project.¹⁷ NETCO adopted a contemporary, McLuhanist agenda to this problem, accentuating how communications systems permit broad access and broadcast possibilities for the margin to speak to the centre. NETCO projected and enacted a set of works which dealt with the landscape and geography in direct dialogue with the geographical politics of Canada in the sixties and seventies. *Trans-Canada VSI* (a.k.a. *5,000 Mile Movie* [1967]) proposed a film of

every mile of the Trans-Canada Highway to represent the nation at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan, thus emphasizing the literal span of the country by representing one of its major communications/transportation conduits. At a time of growing interest in the North as a new frontier, NETCO produced a series of works in the Arctic that played upon notions of territorial and conceptual sovereignty. In such works as *Territorial Claim* (1969) and *Sixteen Compass Points Inside the Arctic Circle* (1969), the emphasis was on mimicking exploration and surveying procedures, using the body as an instrument for staking out territory. With the *Telexed Triangle* (1969), NETCO used electronic connections, spanning the country by transmitting documentation from Inuvik to Vancouver and Halifax.¹⁸ As well, a series of telex and telecopier works from 1968-70 projected an electronic occupation of space across Canada and intruding into the USA.¹⁹ In one case, *North American Telexed Triangle* (1969), through data transmission, a triangle of information emanated from Vancouver in order to project an electronic occupation of space from Portland, Oregon, to Dallas, Texas, to Boston, Massachusetts, thus constructing an international, ethereal reconfiguration of political boundaries.

History, as well, is taken into consideration in the presentation of some works: *A Suite of Canadian Landscapes* (1969) is composed of a set of Canadian bank notes, each framed and matted so that the back side of the bills are shown with their denominations out of frame. Each note, prior to reengraving in the seventies and eighties, featured a landscape, and these landscape "pictures" are imaged in the *Suite*, each paid for and yet lacking in monetary value now that they have been framed. In addition, on each matte, is handwritten the following text: "A/P 1969 LANDSCAPE I. + I. Baxter." This is the only work of NETCO which claimed the individual signatures of the Baxters and the "A[rtists]/P[roof]" is the only occasion when they professed the title of artist. Now this work is a joke on editioning

and framing, signing and claiming to represent, yet the use of the landscape motif on the notes also rings changes on the national history of territorial occupation and ecological damage. The bills show untouched spaces of nature or comfortable harmonies between human presence (in the form of roads and rail lines—not figures) and natural beauty. The irony is that this type of land is not what makes money, for capital requires extraction and wastage of the landscape in order to produce goods out of the pleasant scenes shown.

The Canadian dependence on natural resources—encapsulated so acutely in the clear-cut forests of B.C.—is, one might say, fetishized, disavowed in the bank notes, consoling the carrier of the bill that there is still some exploitable land out there, or, worse, sustaining the illusion that Canadians have not totally dominated and capitalized upon the environment. In either case, the disavowal promotes further desolation of the landscape, whether through the investment of the note or through the leisure activities which the citizen takes part of in that area of the landscape set aside and “protected” through government mandate.²⁰ The signatures and the claim of “A[rtists]/P[roof]” could be seen as double in other ways as well: an acknowledgement by NETCO of their personal complicity as citizens; and an elegiac assertion of the utopian hopes embedded in the landscape, even if it is despoiled in practice and degraded in representation.

The *Suite* parlays an intricate argument around absence and presence. The absence of the human subject in the images, the presence of the agent in the signature: presence of landscape as representation, absence of landscape as capital; capital itself absented through judicious framing, capital present in the use of bank notes as material. The initial subsumption of NETCO beneath the signatures of its corporate representatives indicates how the corporation as fictional person (invisible citizen) is practically part and parcel of the colonialist and capitalist

domination of a *specific landscape which has figures in it*. Money remains the best “picture” of the landscape because its liquidity and circulation describes the processes of disavowal and domination which underpin aesthetic, economic and social hegemony. The particular bills in the *Suite* have been withdrawn from that nexus only to illustrate how thoroughly pervasive and substantive are its effects. The point is that “I.+ I. Baxter” present their signature as the trace of the colonial other resisting—but using—the instruments of capital in order to represent the difficulties of their contestation.

These NETCO landscape works inhabit spaces of decolonial decentring based in querying nationalisms and altered ideas of territoriality. Yet their facticity lies in their projection—from the periphery of Western artistic culture—of notions of motility and deterritorial occupation of corporate and governmental mandates. Such assumptions about territory—by their very assertion—critique the priority of the centre by recognizing and claiming attention and legitimation from geographical complicity with capital and imperial power. From a NETCO point of view, the family, the art world, the nation state and geopolitical and corporate agendas were all within and yet distinct from its anarchistic mandate and its network of accessibility. In addition to that, I want to stress the way that NETCO entered and acted upon conventional ideas of work and leisure, family and corporation, extraterritoriality and nationalist boundaries—all under the banner of expanded notions of aesthetic activity. On this view, NETCO does not represent a triumph of the margin over the centre, nor is it a mimicked conforming to conceptual propriety at the margins, but provides an example of a project which exists precisely on the lines of communication which define centre and margin in social, national and aesthetic space. NETCO’s project did not suspend the centre but, instead, it represented the very tense relations which define positions around the appropriation of space and practices.

To account for why NETCO has been “disappeared” from the revision of conceptual art is, in some ways, a relatively simple matter. The termination of Company work with the dissolution of the Baxter marriage in 1978 put the NETCO name out of circulation—although several shows in Toronto have intermittently brought it back.²¹ As well, the art world, acting on what Victor Burgin deemed “the almost universal tendency . . . to ‘lose’ an entire decade—the 1970s—as a period when ‘nothing happened,’”²² has also contributed its neglecting force to render NETCO invisible. It is also noteworthy that the revival leading to exhibitions like “L’Art conceptuel: une perspective” came at the close of the eighties, culminating the decade’s furious speculation on the art market by canonizing some of the least commodifiable art ever made.

Also important was the relatively short-lived interest in conceptualism as a form of art. Almost all critics agree that the “moment” of conceptual art falls in the period 1966-1972 and that the aesthetic, social and political circumstances of the mid-seventies were inimical to the esoteric, aestheticized questioning of the movement. The book that remains the most complete documentation of conceptualism, Lippard’s *Six Years*, was published in 1973, and NETCO is only one of hundreds of producers chronicled who are ignored by the revision. Lippard’s book can be faulted for its catholic inclusiveness (and its sometimes naïve assumption of political effectiveness), but its full title displayed a contemporary awareness that “so-called conceptual or information or idea art” comingled with “such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art.”²³ In other words, conceptual art emerged out of a number of tendencies and practices and out of a decentred concept of aesthetic geography. That vagueness and sense of a suspended centre was eminently represented by NETCO and their work almost fulfilled Wall’s “concept of the artist open to respond to things that were happening in the real world.” In the meantime, revision has explicitly suppressed the decentring process.

Yet it is also possible to ask if there was ever any consensus in conceptualism at all. While Siegelau churns out lists of the MiA—concatenating the movement with the social protests and counter-cultural atmosphere of the time—self-privileging art-historical positioning has dominated the accounts of conceptual art. As early as 1975, Joseph Kosuth was discussing the “failure” of conceptual art and dividing it up between “Theoretical Conceptual Art” and “Stylistic Conceptual Art.” His denigrating distinction of “Stylistic Conceptual Art” as “a formalistic hypostatization of cultural sleepwalking, as dependent on and expressive of the institutions of the prevailing dominating socio-political-economic ideology as . . . the traditional modes of art-making”²⁴ speaks the once-hip, New York Marxist-Maoist attitude of the mid-seventies, and certainly has pertinence to NETCO. “Dependent on and expressive of the institutions” is an insinuating way to locate the “sort of ‘conceptual’ work” of the Company as complicit and reactionary, but it almost goes without saying that Kosuth is the one whose “Theoretical Conceptual Art” is the museological epitome of conceptual art and whose prodigious output for commercial galleries fueled conceptualism’s revision. NETCO never presented itself as somehow “outside” its condition and may be said to have acquiesced without claims of radicality. Such is an ambiguous claim to make, but it does not fall into the trap of having to sidestep previous positions in order to remain viable.²⁵

Even earlier, however, in 1970, Kosuth’s then-Art & Language associate Terry Atkinson wrote that “most of [the] work classed with the conceptual tag—thinkworks, earthworks, waterworks, skyworks, etc., etc., is founded upon abortive and sloppy thinking.”²⁶ He used this determination to promote Art & Language’s exclusive textuality and philosophical density as the purest strain of conceptual art.²⁷ In many ways, along with artists like Dan Graham, Burgin, or the post-1975 Art & Language, Kosuth and Atkinson represent an upscale, academic strand of

art-making which concentrates on the intellectual references of the artist as much as it does on the "rematerialization" of the art object in the inflationary seventies and eighties. Within this horizon, the revision of conceptual art has been based on what Charles Harrison has stated to be "a view . . . so as to narrow and to focus the field of reference of the label."²⁸ In his historicizing, Harrison encourages this "narrowing" to the point where only his favourites and collaborators, Art & Language, appear to have produced conceptual art "worthy of the name." This bombastic move privileges a lineage strictly understood as a textual production proceeding from a close reading of New York-based formalist art and criticism. The end of this, in Art & Language's conceptualist phase, was "The Suppression of the Beholder," an antidote to the formalism of Greenberg and Michael Fried, "with the intention not so much of frustrating the beholder's activity as displacing it with intellectual speculation and preempting it with irony."²⁹ Such a view is short-sighted enough to nominate Art & Language as the long-suffering believers in *their* conceptual art's integrity: what it disavows is the fact that it excludes all other possible players.

Benjamin Buchloh has produced a similarly rigid, exclusionary account, coming up with a conceptual art moving lockstep "From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," drawing energies from Marcel Duchamp, Sol LeWitt and Robert Morris and reaching apotheosis in the work of Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and Lawrence Weiner.³⁰ Unlike the "speculation" of Art & Language, however, these artists are cited by Buchloh for their critical intervention in the museum structure, for they "analyze and expose the social institutions from which the laws of positivist instrumentality and the logic of administration emanate in the first place."³¹ While Harrison and Buchloh do not agree on much else, they do come together on revising conceptual art in a manner that reinstates the centre of aesthetic and critical authority as the engine behind—and

most important focus—for conceptual art. For these writers, participation in conceptual art was determined by an artist's awareness of what was going down in New York and in finding the proper response to it in an overarching literacy or in a penetrating critique of minute shifts in aesthetic canons.

NETCO would be automatically excluded from the prerogative Buchloh traces towards an impacted institutional critique. They are equally separate from the position Art & Language, Atkinson and Kosuth trace to an acuity on their own behalf. When NETCO encountered formalist or minimal works, it was to "bag" them in plastic, make them inflatable "toys" (*Bagged Rothko* and *Pneumatic Judd* [both 1965]³²), or to "claim" functional equivalents to their forms in the industrial, urban and recreational landscape. Such works are not protocol-determining meditations on the nature of the art object or its institutional surroundings. Instead, they play quite directly to notions of both a demonstrable object and an uncomplex, effective spectator. But, barely disturbing the situation, NETCO interrogated the constitution of gallery-celebrated and -presented art as important by making it look ridiculous, consumable, transformable and—most of all—dependent upon being claimed by the art world in order to assert its aesthetic privilege.

As part of this counter-assertion, in 1971, NETCO held an exhibition at the Sonnabend Gallery, giving it the ambivalent title "Art Is All Over." In addition to exhibiting their photographed "claims" along with telecopier works sent from Vancouver, the Baxters satirized the texts of "Theoretical Conceptual Art" by showing the documents related to their membership in the Vancouver Board of Trade. The message may be a form of institutional critique in that the exhibition acknowledged the growth of the power of ideas and information-processing as part of the corporate and the art worlds, but it also represented the territory and inhabitation of communications networks from the position of those who trade and communicate across distance

and within a world of moving products and cash transactions. The work, *sent to* New York, gave notice of the demise of the centralist priority of working so difficultly through its disenfranchisement when other things needed attending to. What NETCO inflated, it could as easily puncture.

More to the point is to recall that this interrogation of centrist prerogative was articulated from a place ignored by the centre while that centre went about its precedent-setting artistic self-fashioning. The issue, as always with NETCO, is one of the lines of power established through the privileging of place on the basis of capital and political power. NETCO did not choose to become complicit in its opposition to the administrative apparatus through formal or textual desecration of spaces and categories. They took a heading on a point where it might be possible to amass some sort of power in order to redistribute power through a rethinking of how art relates and constitutes place as a material and a condition. Hence the critical significance of their suburban locale and the inseparable elements of family life and art work to their production, for these are nodes of placement in a practical field minor in relation to the aesthetic protocols of central authority. What NETCO did, in sometimes rather insidious and always humourous ways, was to adopt appropriative techniques in order to decentre and reconfigure the power relations of the art world (and several of those other worlds beyond).

My interest in raising these questions—questions about the distribution of aesthetic priority and political and social geography—is to add to the revision of conceptual art by placing NETCO's conceptual practice in the way of revisionism's progress towards authority. In sum, the capital NETCO drew upon was that of place, while its subsidiary status as the ephemeral, peripheral cousin of conceptual art is a rewriting of history in a colonialist mode. We need to revise not just the objects and statements of conceptual art, but to recall the positions involved in conceptualist practice. This is the position I assign to NETCO:

not derivative but distributive, not subsidiary but on-line.

The exhibition, "You Are Now In the Middle of a N.E. Thing Co. Landscape," is less an attempt to replace NETCO in the conceptual art canon than it is an address towards recovering the positions and attitudes articulated in the landscape work produced by the Baxters. As curators, Nancy Shaw and I expressly "narrowed" our focus to environmental and long-distance work in order to clarify those positions and, in turn, we had to leave out a great deal of Company work relating to language, the body, art-teaching and inhabitation of the corporate world. However, with a nod towards the "moment" of conceptualism, we chose to exhibit NETCO work from the period 1965 to 1971, hoping to display some aspects of how NETCO came to be associated with and inhabited that period as part of the push and pull between centre and periphery.

As the variety of work presented shows, this vacillating play of forces also has a curatorial impact. We have amassed a selection of works in plastic, drawing, photography and text, each of which is redolent of places, processes and discourses that concern the eccentric position of NETCO. Though our thinking has been heavily influenced by recent discussions of landscape as a genre and concepts for rethinking geography and representation, we felt a need to return to the period and examine its history—a task, with regard to Vancouver, treated by Nancy in her catalogue essay. With regard to that history, during our research, people kept asking us "What do the Baxters think of all this?" The sense was that we were imposing a revision and a unwelcome framework upon NETCO, and, after receiving enthusiastic confirmation from Iain and Ingrid that we were indeed adequately framing some of NETCO's positions, we decided to seek out other opinions to be printed alongside ours in this catalogue. We are very happy to be able to provide both period documents and contemporary appraisals as context for a discussion of

how NETCO operated and how they can be regarded today. The results at times challenge our recovery attempts (and especially our language) but the responses we received and the documents we here reprint constitute an energetic and pertinent testimony to the scope of NETCO's influence and importance. As one sign of that influence, I want to dedicate this essay to the memory of Carmen Lamanna (1927-1991), who always raised NETCO whenever Vancouver was mentioned between us, who always encouraged me to study and write about conceptual art and art in Canada. □



Carmen Lamanna inspecting the blueprints for *Building Structure*, Toronto, 1969

NOTES

- ¹ Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy II: Recent Art and Conceptual Art," *Studio International* 178: 916 (November 1969), 161; Jeff Wall, in Judith Mastai, ed., *An Evening Forum with Terry Atkinson, Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace and Lawrence Weiner, February, 1990* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1992), 12. This essay is based on research conducted during the summer of 1991 under the direction of John O'Brian of the UBC Department of Fine Arts; I thank him for his helpful comments on the original paper. John also provided an opportunity to present the research to his seminar on post-coloniality at UBC, and ensuing discussions with fellow students and faculty aided me in preparing this essay. I presented a shorter version, under a slightly different title, at the Eleventh Annual UBC Fine Arts Department Graduate Art History Symposium in March 1992 and that text was subsequently published in *Parachute* 67 (Summer 1992), 12-16.
- ² Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years . . .* (New York: Praeger, 1973). The bulk of the entries in the book deal with Europe and North America, but selected references outside that network include: The Rosario Group in Rosario, Argentina, active in 1968 (pages, 43, 49, 59); the 1971 Buenos Aires, Argentina, exhibition, "2,972,453" (pages 203-204); Mike Parr's work in Sydney, Australia, 1971 (page 211-212). The Arctic Circle project brought Lippard, William Kirby, NETCO and Lawrence Weiner to Inuvik, Northwest Territories, Canada, in September 1969 (pages 115-116), and is discussed in Lippard's article "Art Within the Arctic Circle," in *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: Dutton, 1971), 277-291.
- ³ See *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective* (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1989) and *Jeff Wall 1990* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1990).
- ⁴ See *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective*, pages 100-111 for Atkinson's involvement as part of Art & Language, and pages 229-233 for Weiner's work represented in the exhibition. Atkinson came to Vancouver for an exhibition of his works *Tourism I and II*, at the Contemporary Art Gallery (February 16 to March 17, 1990)—see the catalogue, *Terry Atkinson / Don Gill* (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 1990). Weiner was undertaking research for a subsequently

realized commission from the Vancouver Art Gallery, *Placed Upon the Horizon (Casting Shadows)* (1990), permanently installed on the pediment of the VAG's administrative wing.

- ⁵ See *An Evening Forum with Terry Atkinson, Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace and Lawrence Weiner, February, 1990*, pages 29–44.
- ⁶ For Siegelau's idea of himself as a carrier, see the collated interviews: "Some Remarks on So-Called 'Conceptual Art': Extracts from Unpublished Interviews with Robert Horvitz (1987) and Claude Gintz (1989)," *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective*, 91–94.
- ⁷ Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy II: Recent Art and Conceptual Art," 161. Kosuth's identification of NETCO with Iain Baxter alone illustrates a problem in naming and assessing the collaboration prior to 1968. This involves other names for Baxter collaborations (such as IT [1966] and the N.E. Baxter Thing Co. [1966]), and to Iain Baxter's career as a solo artist up to 1966. For some of the details, see Marie Fleming's discussion in *Baxter²: Any Choice Works 1965–70* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982), especially in the early portions of her essay. For a discussion that emphasizes the collaboration as a whole, and that describes something of the gender stereotyping attributing priority to Iain over Ingrid Baxter, see: Nancy Shaw, "Expanded Consciousness and Company Types: Collaboration since Intermedia and the N.E. Thing Company," *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*, Stan Douglas, ed. (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991), 85–103.
- ⁸ Seth Siegelau, "Addendum," *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective* (Second Edition), 258 (reprinted in *October* 57 [Summer 1991], 157).
- ⁹ For the SFU exhibition, see the listing in Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years*, 98–100.
- ¹⁰ See the various entries for NETCO in Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years*, and Lippard's articles, "Iain Baxter: New Spaces," *artscanada* XXVI, 128/129 (June 1969), 3–7, and "Art Within the Arctic Circle," in *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*. See also the 955,000 card catalogue (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1970), and its account of how the Vancouver exhibition is related to the Seattle Art Museum's 1969 exhibition (also put together by Lippard with card catalogue), 557,087, and the 1971 Buenos Aires (unofficial) exhibition (with pirated card catalogue), 2,972,453. For some coverage and explanation, see, *Six Years*, pages 110–113, 143, and 203–204.
- ¹¹ "Companies Act," *The British Columbia Gazette*, January 30, 1969, no. 84030.
- ¹² Much of the following characterization of NETCO, and especially the idea of inhabitation, is indebted to the work done by Nancy Shaw in, "Expanded Consciousness and Company Types: Collaboration since Intermedia and the N.E. Thing Company," *Vancouver Anthology*.
- ¹³ Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," as reprinted in Frances Frascina and Charles Harrison, eds., *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (London: Harper and Row, 1982), 9. Originally published in *Arts Yearbook* (1961).
- ¹⁴ See "N.E. Thing Company Glossary, 1966," reprinted in *Baxter²: Any Choice Works 1965–70*, 97.
- ¹⁵ *The N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. Book* (Vancouver and Basel: NETCO and the Kunsthalle Basel, 1978).
- ¹⁶ The culmination of this process came when NETCO "made" the cover of *Art in America* in May/June 1969. Using a sheet of 35mm colour slides of ACTs, NETCO played with their cover status by representing their own "acts" of "claiming"—the periphery playing possum (or chameleon) with the central authority of the art press. The cover was later made into the 1970 lithograph, *P+L+P+L=VSI* (Photograph + Lithograph + Photograph + Lithograph = Visual Sensitivity Information), celebrating both the process of gaining fame and the process of making the object produced. To further complicate matters, each copy of the lithograph came with *P+L+P+L+P=VSI*, a 35mm colour slide of the entire edition lying crumpled on the floor. Each of the editioned prints bear marks of the crumpling that treated the "fine art" print as a piece of paper for the circular file of the waste can. I thank Iain Baxter for explaining this process in a conversation in May 1992.
- ¹⁷ In terms of B.C., the work of the "Design for Living" group to apply modernist design principles to an "untouched" context, or the fraught relation of local landscape painting to various centrist expressionist protocols is germane. For a discussion of the "Design

for Living" exhibition and its group's aims, see Scott Watson, "Art in the Fifties: Design, Leisure and Painting in the Age of Anxiety," *Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931-1983* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983), 77-81. For an innovative discussion of British Columbian painting and its discontents, see Robert Linsley, "Painting and the Social History of B.C.," *Vancouver Anthology*, 225-246.

¹⁸ See the documentation in *Trans-VSI Connection NSCAD-NETCO Sept. 15-Oct 5, 1969* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1970), and the account of the trip to the Arctic by Lucy Lippard, "Art Within the Arctic Circle," in *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*, 277-291. The *Trans-VSI Connection NSCAD-NETCO* catalogue documents a three-week exchange between NETCO and students at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design wherein the Baxters telexed and telecopied instructions for works to be executed, involving their own remote participation, producing a show without having set foot in Halifax or NSCAD.

¹⁹ The telecopier was a bulky precursor of the facsimile machine.

²⁰ I refer again to Robert Linsley, "Painting and the Social History of B.C.," in *Vancouver Anthology*; and to another essay, Jeff Wall, "Into the Forest: Two Sketches for Studies of Rodney Graham's Work," *Rodney Graham* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1988), 9-37.

²¹ The 1981 Art Gallery of Ontario retrospective, *Baxter²: Any Choice Works* and the 1992 Art Metropole show, *Media Works* are examples. Iain Baxter continues to produce work under his own name and, for a 1990 exhibition of transparency light-boxes at the Carmen Lamanna Gallery, presented work produced during the NETCO collaboration as individual work.

²² Victor Burgin, "The Absence of Presence: Conceptualism and Postmodernism," in *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (London: Macmillan), 1986, 29.

²³ The full citation is *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1971: a cross-reference book of information on some esthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focused on so-called conceptual or*

information or idea art with mentions of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art, occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with occasional political overtones), edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard.

²⁴ Joseph Kosuth, "1975," in Gabriele Guercio, ed., *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings 1966-1990* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 130. First published in *The Fox* I:2 (1975).

²⁵ For Kosuth's latest revision, see Joseph Kosuth, "Writing and the Play of Art," *Kunst und Museen-journaal* 3:4 (1992), 30-36.

²⁶ Terry Atkinson, "From an Art & Language Point of View," *Art-Language* I:2 (February 1970), 36.

²⁷ To be fair to Atkinson, he has recently published an account of his disillusion with Art & Language and what he calls "official conceptualism." See his *The Indexing, The World War I Moves and the Ruins of Conceptualism* (Belfast and Manchester: Circa Publications and Cornerhouse Gallery, 1992).

²⁸ Charles Harrison, "Conceptual Art and the Suppression of the Beholder," in his *Essays on Art & Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 29.

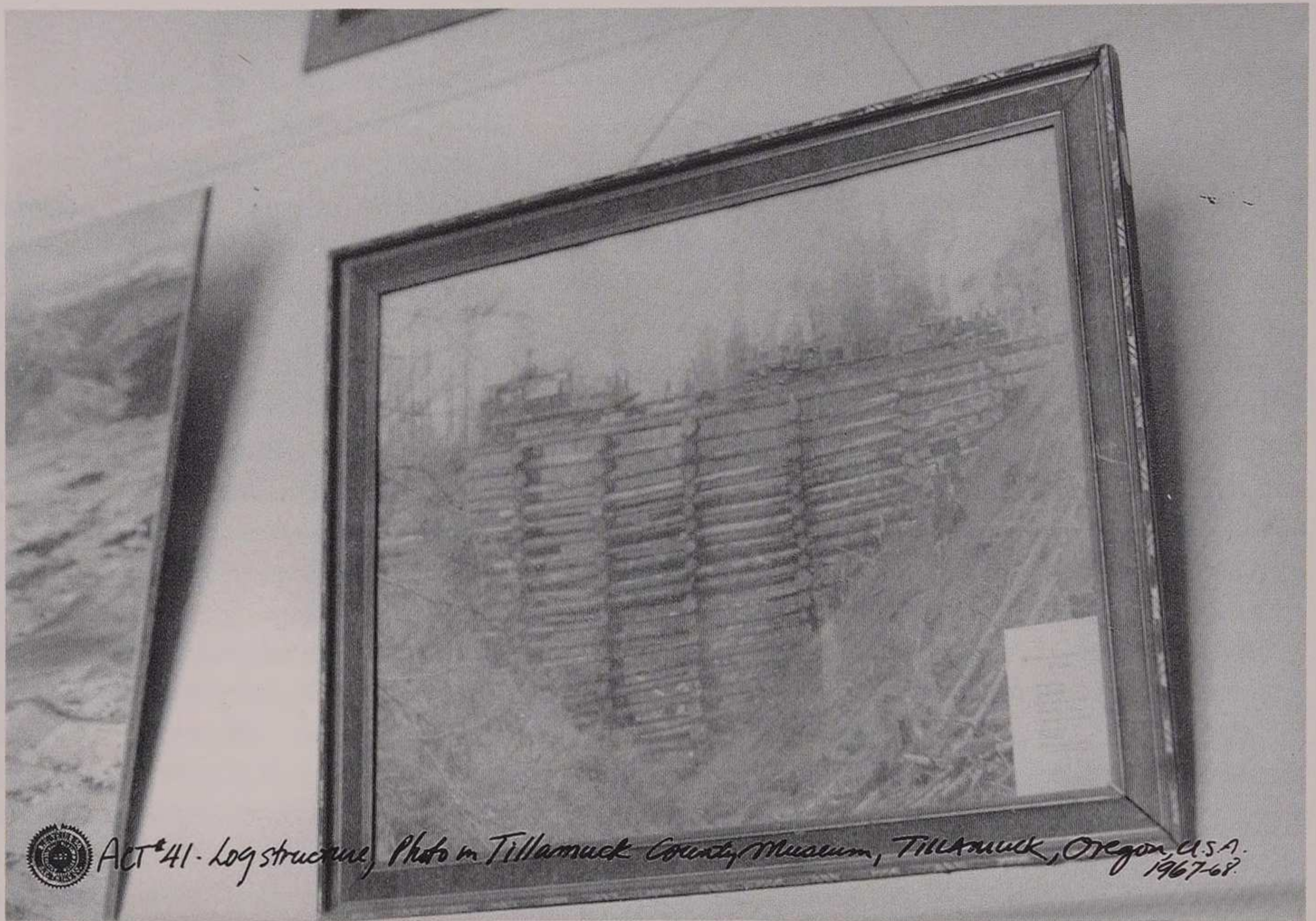
²⁹ Harrison, 1991, 56.

³⁰ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 105-143. This is a revised version of the text commissioned for *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective*, 41-50. In the early version, the essay took the subtitle as title.

³¹ Buchloh, *October* 55, 143.

³² Chronologically prior to the formation of NETCO, the *Bagged Rothko* and *Pneumatic Judd* works were produced by N.E. Baxter Thing Co., according to Marie Fleming in *Baxter²: Any Choice Works 1965-70*, 107.


28. ACT #41
 Log Structure,
 Photo in Tillamuck
 County Museum,
 Tillamuck Oregon,
 1967-68



 ACT #41 - Log structure, Photo in Tillamuck County Museum, Tillamuck, Oregon, U.S.A. 1967-68

31. ACT #58
 Get It at Woodward's
 Garage, Free Parking
 and Two Arrows,
 Woodward's
 Shopping Centre,
 Cambie and Cordova
 Corner, 1967



 ACT #58 - "GET IT AT WOODWARD'S GARAGE, FREE PARKING AND TWO ARROWS WOODWARD'S SHOPPING CENTRE, CAMBIE & CORDOVA CORNER, VANCOUVER, B.C. CANADA. 1967"

SITING THE BANAL

The Expanded Landscapes of the N.E.Thing Co.

Nancy Shaw

The concept of everydayness does not therefore designate a system, but rather a denominator common to existing systems including judicial, contractual, pedagogical, fiscal, and police systems. Banality? Why should the study of the banal itself be banal? Are not the surreal, the extraordinary, the surprising, even the magical, also part of the real? Why wouldn't the concept of everydayness reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Henri Lefebvre

By making life more interesting for others, we may indirectly help to alleviate the human condition. We up your aesthetic quality of life, we up your creativity. We celebrate the ordinary.

N.E. Thing Company

"To change life-style," "to change society," these phrases mean nothing if there is no production of an appropriated space.

Henri Lefebvre

Throughout their collaboration (1966-1978), Iain and Ingrid Baxter utilized the N.E. Thing Company—their incorporated business and artistic moniker—as a vehicle through which to investigate artistic, domestic and corporate systems in relation to their everyday life. Like typical West Coast and Canadian artists, the Baxters made landscapes, though theirs were expanded to include the sites of work and leisure, and urban and suburban spaces. They were uninterested in painting pictures of Canadian wilderness as a hostile, unexplored territory full of myth, mystery or awe-striking grandeur—all that is other to the obvious and banal spaces of the everyday. Instead the Company's landscapes investigated how information technologies, corporate relations and institutions such as the art world and the nuclear family interact to redefine "landscape" as a product of human interest, an element of subjectivity and charted its relationship to forms of identity and national positioning. NETCO's reversals, reflections, inflatables, mappings, punnings, and measurements, disrupted unidimensional, unidirectional hegemonic annexations of space. The Company actively appropriated and transformed these spaces to allow for creative possibilities and critical potential. At the same time as the Baxters' landscapes attempt to map out a coherent picture of fragmented realms, in a move that is characteristic of the contradictions explored in their work, these landscapes stake out a social topography in the emerging, geo-politically peripheral city of Vancouver in the late sixties.

Although the Baxters were contemporaries of the Situationists (who were among the first to

incorporate Henri Lefebvre's analysis of everyday life into their practice), it is necessary to distinguish NETCO from its French counterparts. Lefebvre and the Situationists saw everyday life as a site of revolutionary potential to be liberated through aggressive reversals and combative tactics of negation—a space from which to undermine the corporate state through dialectical analysis of and critical intervention in consumer society that revealed the stakes capital has in maintaining a separation between the realms of work and leisure, the political and the everyday.¹ Although the Baxters attempted to integrate the spheres of work and leisure, they aimed to open potential spaces of creativity within existing economic and political constraints by breaking down habitually assumed modes of perception in order to up the quality of life—a life that took account of family, business, and art activities. The Baxters proposed an agency that was expansive, inclusive and celebratory in place of the Situationist's disruptive and radically motivated interventions. They playfully questioned their roles as entrepreneurs, artists, educators, parents and spouses, collapsing and infecting systemic boundaries in order to reinvestigate the elusive and taken-for-granted.

The Baxters were ambivalent about their roles as artists—they viewed art as only one of several means through which to explore their ecological and educational interests. By investigating these interests within systems of meaning, they hoped to set an example for others by creating an integrated life for themselves. Not surprisingly, the Baxters did not enter the art world through the standard art college route. The two met at Washington State University in Pullman. Ingrid studied music, recreation and education while Iain studied biology and zoology and enjoyed wildlife illustration. After Iain obtained a MFA, he began investigating contemporary materials and methods of object-making, expanding upon modernist conventions.² His bagged and vacuum-formed landscapes were significant early work which employed up-to-date industrial techniques such as heat sealing and moulding: the idea of

bagging played on consumer packaging as well as hunting procedures. The landscapes were stylized and toylike, captured and preserved in the most modern of materials—plastic. Mixing and matching the materials and motifs of consumer culture, this work enlisted Pop Art strategies and highlighted links between fine art, consumer durables, industrial processes and advertising techniques.

While incorporating Pop Art procedures, NETCO produced landscapes that provided innovative images of a West Coast lifestyle mimicking notions of leisure and industry promoted by the likes of *Beautiful British Columbia*—a government-sponsored magazine fashioned after *National Geographic* which painted a picture of B.C. and Vancouver as a natural resource and recreational wonderland. In the late sixties Vancouver was changing from a frontier town and colonial outpost—appropriately known as Terminal City—to a growing metropolis reflective of B.C.'s booming resource-based economy. It acquired a dual identity represented on the one hand by young executives and on the other by disaffected groups. A new breed of upwardly mobile executives emerged to promote and support the development of primary industry and urban growth. In some senses, the maverick traders, the penny stocks and fly-by-night operations of the Vancouver Stock Exchange exemplified the city as a corporate frontier. The scenery and leisure activities afforded by Vancouver's natural splendour was an added bonus for such up-and-coming executives who could boat, ski and golf year round. As well as a port city and the western periphery, Vancouver attracted a conglomeration of misfits looking for a better life, among them hippies and American draft dodgers. Although outdoor recreation took precedence over the arts, alternative sensibilities in one way or another challenged prevailing, parochial and colonial, and genteel modernist traditions.

The Baxters were not a typical family—they actively participated in Vancouver's flourishing interdisciplinary, counter-cultural and avant garde

art scene in the late sixties. Perhaps their domestic, artistic and company headquarters in the wooded suburbs of North Vancouver, just past the Second Narrows Bridge—a location midway between the more affluent suburbs of the North Shore and the reprieve for transient and counter-cultural elements, the Dollarton Mud Flats and Deep Cove—literally locates the Baxters' position. Their home, starting as a small cottage, eventually resembled a hybrid version of West Coast architecture. The typical homes used post and beam construction based on modernist architectural principles where clean, functional spaces mixed with commanding views to create a safe and clean environment with an abundance of fresh air and recreation—a well-deserved tonic after the malaise and confusion of the modern work-a-day world.³ The Baxters disrupted this suburban pastoral by using the family abode as company headquarters and artistic playground for the business of living and working rather than contemplative escape and repose. Their dwelling was in a state of constant transformation, whether in the form of ongoing additions to the house or in its use as living space, studio and office. The Baxters treated their home, which they called the Seymour (see more)⁴ Plant, as a sculptural assemblage; adding elements of industrial, recreational and commercial architecture—a corrugated tin roof used on barns, large wooden floor planks from a warehouse, a section of a supermarket awning over the deck doors, and a prefab, built-in, vacuum-formed pool in the front yard.⁵ The spectacular view enjoyed by more affluent neighbouring suburbs was replaced with the Baxters' working vista—a large back yard—framed with trees and edged by the Seymour River. They hosted parties and studio visits: many local and international artists, curators, funding officials and critics attended for fun and the often heated debate that took place at social gatherings on a regular basis. Regardless of the Baxters' investments in the ideals of corporate, family and suburban life, they transformed the rigid boundaries of this life to accommodate artistic

possibilities. And, unlike most nuclear families, they paid attention to the link between making a living, art-making and the domestic and social base that is integral to such production.

As well as facilitating this interface between the art world and the suburbs, they further traversed conventional boundaries by making art in their yard and using their yard as aesthetic landscape. Much of their yard work involved puns on and experiments with conventions of image-making and measurement. For example, *Single Light Cast* (1968) and *Double Light Cast* (1968) were about light and angles of reflection. In each work mirrors were placed in the river and photos were taken at different angles and distances: the intent was to provide a comparison of how mirrors and water interact to create an image of light, and to show how this light is recorded by the camera. *Reflected Landscape* (1968) also employed a mirror-piece in water, but this time the mirror reflected the tree tops and sky, providing a picture within a picture: this included what would otherwise be outside the photographic frame while, at the same time, deferring and deflecting perspectival recession to frustrate easy visual movement through the pictured landscape. In *VSI Formula #5* (1969) algebraic formulas determine the location and angles of mirrors placed in grass, trees and the river to reflect water, sky, land and the house. The equations mimic systematic codification; however the formulations are arbitrary and unresolved. The attempt to represent the unrepresentable in *Approx. 2,500,000 Gallons of Water* (1967) was another form of measurement. The object of this experiment was to record the movement of water through time and space without photographing the same section of water twice. Photographs were taken from one position at twenty-second intervals—the time it took of a piece of wood to travel in the water through the picture frame. An engineer's calculations then determined the volume and speed of the water as it was recorded by a 35mm camera. Mounted in a grid, the resulting frames gave a sense of the water's movement using the illusion of cinematic sequence.⁶

Beyond the family property, their explorations extended through the urban and suburban landscape on Sunday drives with kids, dog and whoever else was available. Favourite destinations included flea markets, second-hand hand stores and dumps; the members of the Company collected used and castaway objects to be employed in a variety of artistic and domestic purposes, as well as objects to be claimed and enjoyed. On many of these excursions, rather than going to typical sightseeing and leisure destinations such as shopping malls, amusement parks, scenic viewpoints, or affluent neighbourhoods, they visited unlikely places such as the industrial waterfront. Their tours resembled a suburban version of a Situationist *derive*, bringing attention to the hidden and productive spaces of capital in the city—usually the places avoided during family leisure time. These spaces were documented in the *Portfolio of Piles* (1968) when the Company went around the city photographing found piles of sulfur, lumber etc. In an exhibition of *Piles* at UBC (1968), the Baxters also displayed piles of things such as hair, eggshells and tin cans.⁸ The *Piles* punned on formalist aesthetics concerned with abstract notions about structure and composition which were considered to be the essence of high modernist aesthetics. NETCO's *Piles* were of found things that were necessary to the business of living—the primary resources necessary to facilitate, or the by-products of production, accumulation, use and exchange. Their *Piles* displace the rarified and isolated realm of aesthetic contemplation with the detritus of everyday life.

The Sunday drive as a form of touring the city was continued in method and production values in the ACTs (Aesthetically Claimed Things)⁹ because the pictures resembled family snapshots often taken from the vantage point of a car window. The ACTs were a series of black and white photographs stamped with the Company seal and assigned numbers and titles denoting location and significance, recording, among other things, innovative and intriguing forms through-

out the city. Their claims acted as reminders that art was already all around in the built environment—it wasn't exclusively for galleries and museums. The Baxters' personal taste revolved around modern, especially minimal forms: in functional structures such as the guard railings leading to a family bungalow in *ACT #128: Entrance Railings, North Vancouver, 1968* and as emblemata and entrance decoration in *ACT #25 Three Orange Columns, Fairfield and Hartford Place, Seymour Heights, North Vancouver, 1968* illustrating three posts marking the opening boundaries of a developer's suburban venture. *ACT #40: MacMillan Bloedel, Building, Corner of Thurlow and Georgia, 1968* documents Arthur Erkison's concrete modernist headquarters built for the local forestry moguls, providing a unique example of West Coast corporate architecture. Unlike the typical glass curtain wall of most modern office buildings, the mass brutalist structure was made of concrete which Erikson considered a modern equivalent to marble—because of its strength and durability and ability to change in tone according to the weather and time. This minimal and commanding form at once blended in with, while dominating, the earthy splendour of Vancouver. In order to foreground the banal, functional aesthetics found in the architecture of urban infrastructure the Company claimed a retaining wall in *ACT #55 Cement Barrier, Seymour Parkway, North Vancouver, 1968*. In *ACT #30 Cement Transitional Wall Along Park and Tillford Co. Main Street, North Vancouver, 1968*, the object of interest was the wall marking the boundary between the public space of a major thoroughfare and the corporate space of the Park and Tillford gardens and distillery. The Baxters were also fascinated by signs, especially those that everyone immediately recognizes, such as company logos claimed in *ACT #36: Safeway Store Ltd. Symbol, North America, 1968* and directional signs claimed in *ACT #130: Big Arrow, Park Royal Shopping Mall, 1968* and *ACT #58: Get It at Woodward's Garage, Free Parking and Two Arrows Woodward's Shopping Centre, Cambie and Cordova, 1967*. Even though they were claimed for other

intentions, the ACTs discussed in this section leave a record of several civic landmarks that were built by local family businesses to announce their economic strength and business savvy. Today, the Baxters' ACTs have become quirky historical records because these businesses have fallen on hard economic times, leaving the landmarks as testaments to former power.¹⁰

Although NETCO production values varied, new imaging technologies enhanced the Company's depiction of the urban landscape. For one body of work NETCO made back-lit Cibachrome images, then a new, high-resolution photographic material:¹¹ presented as a transparency and illuminated by fluorescent lighting, these images greatly enhanced specular illusion, providing an improved form of billboard advertising. The use of this new technology was suited to the urban environment built in part to facilitate the smooth and unfettered flow of capital accumulation through financial, administrative, transport and information networks, always subordinating history and difference to abstract and generalized space.¹²

The N.E. Thing Company filled its Cibachrome signs with images of habitation and detritus; with the nonproductive spaces that bear the traces of an everyday space that is dynamic and heterogeneous. Their Cibachromes featured such things as the underside of a bridge (*Connection* [1968]) and a gravel pit (*Final* [1968])¹³. A hillside of detached homes titled *Ruins* (1968) juxtaposes notions of suburban living space with remains of obliterated civilizations and history. In another move, the Baxters appropriated leisure industry landscapes as mementos of family outings. In *Shift* (1968) they took a picture of an image of a sunset used, on a B.C. Ferry, to promote the splendour of the province's landscape. Reflected in the Baxters' picture is the inside of the ferry. *Landscape* (1968) features one of the drive-in menus, complete with a panoramic landscape, that families enjoyed while eating at White Spot Restaurants. The White Spot was of course the perfect place to end up on a Sunday drive.

As an extension of their city tours, the Baxters took auto-vacations through Canada and the United States, making work on the way to exhibitions in other cities. Their most ambitious travelling project was the unrealized *5,000 Mile Movie* (1967) conceived to capture Canada, coast to coast via the Trans-Canada Highway. Due to the scale and expense of the project, only a four-mile section was completed. But in the style of actual movie producers, the Company always promoted and attempted to raise funds for the project.¹⁴ While the *5,000 Mile Movie* posed as a documentary record of the Baxters' trip across Canada, it made an analogy between the position of film viewers and car riders as detached spectators who experience space in linear progression and in predominantly visual terms.¹⁵

While attempting to represent the extent of the country in as literal a fashion as possible, the work's course—the Trans-Canada Highway—would have documented one of Canada's mythic transportation networks, perhaps second only to the railroad in the effect it had for the modernization and industrialization of Canada. The Trans-Canada is one in a network of highways that proliferated throughout North America, especially after WW II, to facilitate economic development by serving as conduits moving primary resources to manufacturing centres in Central Canada and the United States. For the tourist industry, scenic routes were built for vacationers. In B.C., highway construction was carried out in maniacal proportions under the then Social Credit government's Minister of Highways, Flying Phil Galardi. As well as constituting a means of modernization through which to exploit and harness B.C.'s landscape for industry and tourism, highway building was in part a political payoff—linking Vancouver to inland cities in the Caribou and Okanagan, the bastions of Social Credit support.

Depending on the purpose, highways either subordinate or construct experiences of landscape; calibrating devices include signage, lookouts, historical sites, campgrounds, service stations, rest

stops, motels, etc.¹⁶ In *1/4 Mile Landscape* (1968), made for an exhibition in Newport Beach, California, the Baxters called attention to highway landscape by placing three roadside signs—*You Will Soon Pass By a 1/4 Mile N.E. Thing Company Landscape, Start Viewing* and *Stop Viewing*—across claimed territory. Another version of the piece was made for Prince Edward Island (1969) where the company received inquiries from interested real estate buyers.¹⁷ The *1/4 Mile Landscape* appropriated the highway vista as corporate and aesthetic property while bringing attention to the construction of landscape as object of aesthetic enjoyment by a transient car viewer.

On another family trip, received patterns of directionality were reversed when the Baxters travelled from North Vancouver to the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa (1969) to set up shop for an exhibition. They annexed the first floor of the gallery for Company headquarters, displayed and demonstrated their company wares, and offered their services as visual consultants. The set-up was so convincing that one passer-by stopped to ask the rental cost of such a prime location. There to open the NGC's first environment was Ron Basford, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who praised the company for its innovative and industrious artistry.¹⁸ The presence of the exhibition, while announcing the N.E. Thing Company to the nation's capital, ironically commented on cultural policy. Federal cultural policy had always been indirectly concerned with national identity, especially with the formation of the Canada Council in 1957 established to foster and support the arts. However, by the late sixties, culture had become more politically instrumental and policy was initiated for the central administration and dissemination of official culture to be developed by national institutions in Ontario and Quebec and deployed through touring and regional development programs.¹⁹ NETCO reversed the trend by literally transporting its cultural production to Ottawa, ingratiating and impressing itself upon centrally placed administrative officials

and systems with its self-starting attitudes and inventive merchandise.

In similar fashion, a transformative dynamic was unleashed in other Company environments such as the post and lintel structure built at the Carmen Lamanna Gallery in 1969. The common housing construction structure infused the commercial gallery with a domestic and minimalist aesthetic involved in the production of standardized, mass-produced objects, spaces and environments. Moreover, the Company's first environment, *Bagged Place*, built in the UBC Fine Arts Gallery in 1966, inhabited the gallery space with the makings of a four-room apartment with everything covered in plastic. In these and many other environments, the Baxters infused art spaces with domestic and corporate structures, naturalizing their hybrid inhabitation while questioning what had been previously naturalized.

To compliment their travel activities, the Baxters planned, and in a few instances executed, environmental earthworks mimicking industrial installations. In a sense, by placing vacation and industrial activities in complementary positions, the Company accentuated the links between labour and leisure obscured in official propaganda. The B.C. government aggressively promoted its industrial resource base while presenting the province as an edenic, exotic and fantastically varied vacation wonderland—a get-away for the agents of resource exploitation. Official promotion always obscured the fact that the so-called modernization of B.C.'s landscape through tourism and industrialization shaped frontiers for money making. The N.E. Thing Company imitated official promotion, but the playful and benevolent gestures were concerned with ecological and artistic dynamics rather than with the extraction of surplus value. The company proposed to make *White Vinyl Snow Cap for a Mountain Top* (1966), a plastic snow cap design for a barren mountain peak. For *Chrome Poles Move* (1966/68) plans were made to place chrome poles in the Athabasca Glacier to mark the ice's natural movement, leaving the poles to drop a sculptural

record of the glacier's recession. NETCO's hydro projects consisted of releasing objects and dyes in water to observe the force and energy of water movements. For the Nevada desert, the Baxters wanted to stage a snow storm whereby snow configurations would be retained after the thaw by inset cooling coils.²⁰ Furthermore, they photographically documented examples of industrial architecture in ACTs such as *ACT #7: Snowshed Tunnels 30 Miles East of Salmon Arm, 1967* and *ACT #10: Power Poles and Clearing, Trail B.C., 1968*. These ACTs were framed to reflect the minimal structures of industrial architecture and production—function and structures taken up by minimalist aesthetics—that are coterminous with instrumental and standardizing tendencies of industrial production processes.

In addition to proposing environmental works and claiming industrial architecture for the aesthetic record and vacation memories, NETCO incorporated concepts of the North and snow as spatial motifs associated with myths about Canadian landscape. For the Baxters, snow doubled as a blank page or canvas to be shaped and moulded. Iain made snow drawings while skiing, using his body as drawing implement and snow as support. Drawings such as *One Mile Ski Track* (1968) and *Converging Drawing* (1968) were carried out on Mount Seymour, the neighbourhood ski slope. In *Snow* (1968), the substance was brought to the gallery by placing a photograph of it on the floor covered with bullet-proof glass for patrons to walk over. And, in *P-Line Straight* (1968), drawings were made by peeing in the snow, evoking infinite jokes about the staking out of artistic and spatial territory and, by extension, the forging of industrial frontiers. These drawings were small, personal gestures that on an everyday scale made fun of the grandeur and more instrumental process involved in shaping the land for exploits of tourism and industry.

To further its investigation of Northern motifs, the Company travelled with Lucy Lippard and Lawrence Weiner to Inuvik, N.W.T to make works for a show organized by Bill Kirby at the

Edmonton Art Gallery.²¹ The Baxters explored mythic notions of the Arctic as a barren, unexplored wilderness, unpopulated, open and infinite, subject to the extremes of daylight and dark night. While carrying out Company work, NETCO implicitly acknowledged—through the making of maps and the claiming of landscapes—that conceptions of the North as an unpopulated wilderness overshadows and inadvertently legitimizes exploitation of the North as one of the last industrial frontiers.²²

As a means of recording their explorations while making artistic and personal, everyday alternatives to the rationalized grid of land surveys and maps, the Baxters undertook mapping projects on their expeditions in and around Inuvik. Most maps are made to identify geographical terrain and settlements and to facilitate travel by presenting an abstract, instrumental image of the land with knowledge necessary for extraction, production, distribution and accumulation. Although the Baxters mimicked the conventions of mapmaking, their maps were composed of gestures that made navigational marks on the landscape, documenting space they actually traversed, and through performances, exploring concepts of directionality. In *Black Arctic Circle* (1968), NETCO planned to transpose mapping notations onto the landscape. For the piece, a low-flying jet would release black dye at one-minute intervals—laying down the Arctic Circle as it appears on maps. By transcribing systems of mapping onto the actual landscape, the Company enacted a reversal, revealing the arbitrary and calculated nature of cartography while claiming the landscape as a work of Company art.

As urban and corporate explorers, the Baxters set out on many sightseeing expeditions. In *Circular Walk Inside the Arctic Circle Around Inuvik, NWT* (1969) the Company presidents wore pedometers to scientifically mark the seven km or 10,314 steps travelled around the circumference of Inuvik. They documented *16 Compass Points Inside the Arctic Circle* (1969), and *Lucy Lippard Walking Toward True North* (1969) through a quarter mile of

tundra. In these and other pieces they literally performed, in banal acts, the abstract and totalizing concepts of directionality. *Territorial Claim* (1969) inside the Arctic Circle was dedicated to Farelly Mowat and his book about the North, *Never Cry Wolf*—a Canadian classic. The narrative explores the existential and physical machinations and rites of passage involved in eking out boundaries that differentiate between the self and extremes of nature. As an extension of *P-Line Straight*—from North Vancouver to the Arctic—Iain made his personal artistic mark by pissing in the snow. He planned to make this decisive gesture time and time again in other significant locales thereby “marking his personal life-time in territorial space.”²³ Pissing was considered a transgressive act, illegitimate artistic medium and polluting gesture. When the piss work is considered in relation to plans for ecological pieces, such as the dye drops and “earthworks,” it becomes clear that the Baxters were interested in an ecology of space, time and viewing processes rather than with environmentalist concerns for preserving nature as a wilderness free of unfriendly human presence. The Company’s plans for sculptures and markings assumed free range in annexing landscape and if the projects were realized they might have met the same fate as Robert Smithson’s proposed *Glass Island* in 1970 on one of the Gulf Islands which was cancelled because environmentalists felt that the project would cause permanent and irreparable damage.

The Arctic work, as well as other landscape pieces, were accompanied by standard road and geographical maps that the Baxters marked with instructions and drawings. In doing so they transformed official maps from representations of regulated and unidimensional space into dynamic and contingent space. By inflecting mapmaking practices with their actual experience of and activities in Inuvik, the Baxters transformed abstract and instrumentalizing concepts into the realm of the everyday, disrupting the objectivity of the rationalized grid that presupposes

a homogeneous subject, and a static space that ignores time and history.

Reflected Arctic Landscape (1969) was another joke on transparency and objectivity in picture making. Masquerading as a typical picture postcard, the piece set out to capture an Arctic sunset by taking a photograph of it as it was reflected in a mirror placed on the ground. The resulting image was presented as a back-lit transparency—illuminating a constructed image, reflecting and refracting the sun, demonstrating the difficulty for and limitations of photography in simultaneously capturing the sunset and landscape due to intense and extreme lighting conditions. *Reflected Arctic Landscape* was eventually published in Peter Mellon’s coffee table book, *Master Works of Canadian Art*. While presenting itself as a typical Canadian landscape recording the grandeur, extremes and impossibility of this landscape, they foregrounded technical finesse and pictorial construction humourously noting the artifice involved in making such pictures.

As tourists, cartographers and artistic investigators, the Baxters carried out Company activities by dispatching NETCO communications such as the *Telexed Triangle* (1969): the transmission spanned from Inuvik to Halifax to Vancouver, using a geometrical form to illustrate spatial concepts constructed by electronic communication. This challenged existent perceptions of time and space by conflating the two to create a sense of simultaneity and the projection of geographical homogeneity. Telexes were also sent to classes at Nova Scotia School of Art and Design instructing students to make art.²⁴ In this and other work, the Baxters were influenced by Marshall McLuhan. According to McLuhan, artists were early warning systems who perceived shifts in sensory perception effected by technological change. In what McLuhan called the Global Village, a shift was taking place from print technology that favoured visual and linear perception, to electronic and communications



Iain and Ingrid Baxter at NSCAD, Halifax, 1969

media that employed all the senses and favoured simultaneity. In the Company's interpretation of McLuhan, communications media were used to an advantage by sending telex and telecopier messages from geographic, political and economic peripheries, creating what Ingrid called an aesthetic of distance²⁵—a means through which the Company could traverse time and space, inserting its presence in territories that it would otherwise be excluded from. As with McLuhan, the Baxters saw themselves as probes—eclectic and eccentric—asking the types of questions that would lead to the collapse of established and official boundaries, setting the groundwork for, and encouraging and advising others to continue with, systematic and scientific studies. Furthermore, communication works were also a cheap, easy, quick and portable means of artistic demonstration which allowed for an infiltration of national and international corporate and artistic systems that traverse geo-political boundaries.

The Baxters' hybrid sensibilities were evident in

their landscape investigations: those investigations encompassed anything, including nature, mapping, environmental and communication systems, the body, the suburban and urban. Their work resided within the gaps and boundaries of established systems that foregrounded the banal and taken-for-granted. The Company poked gentle fun at existing boundaries in order to improve the quality of life for themselves and others while inadvertently leaving a partial social document of their hybrid and polymorphic milieu. Through wit and play they appropriated established and rigidified conceptions of landscape to reread it as constellations of collapsing and interacting territories, calling attention to the hidden interdependence of corporate, artistic and domestic spheres. The agency required to redefine these boundaries was transformative, hinting at possibilities for other kinds of intervention. □

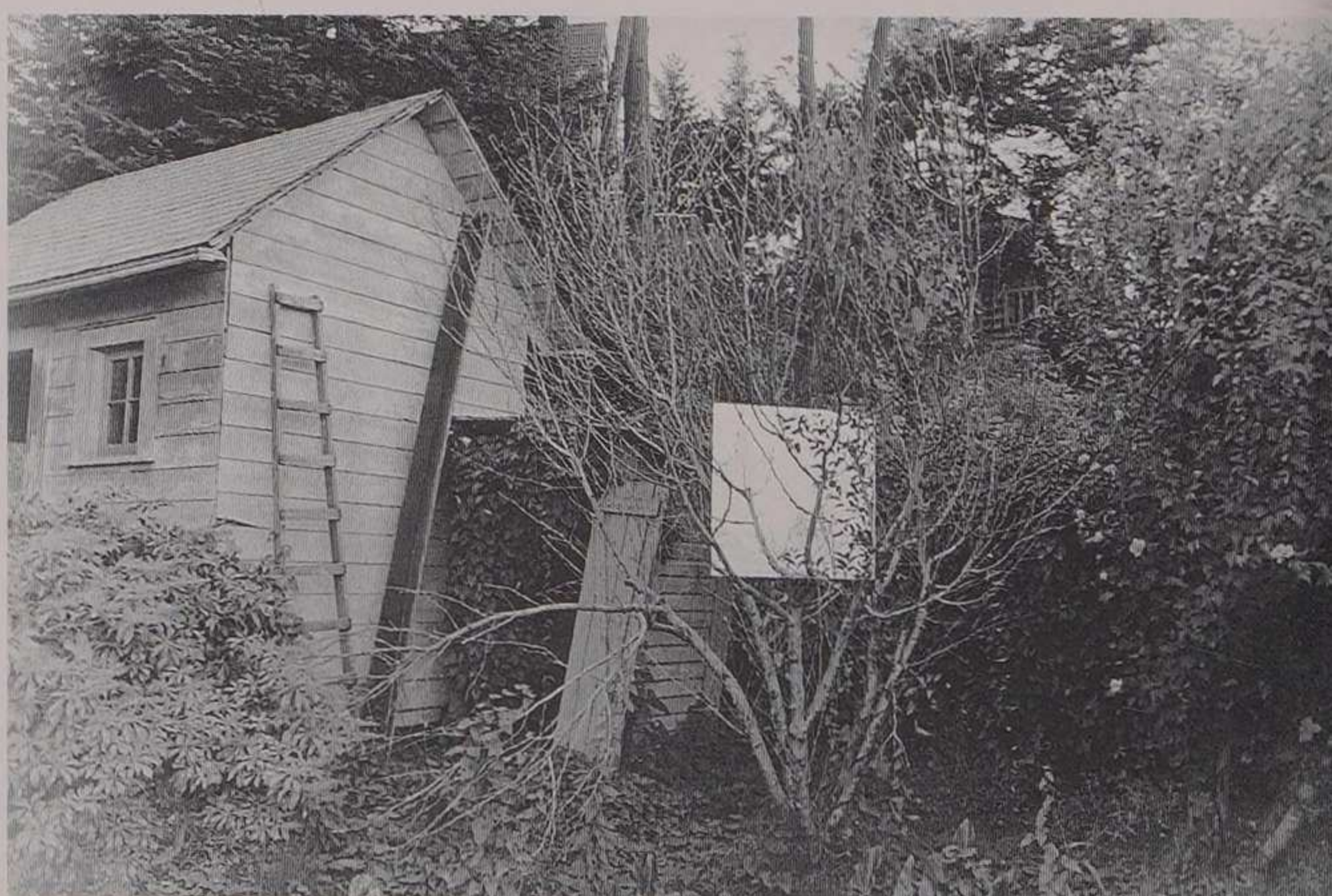
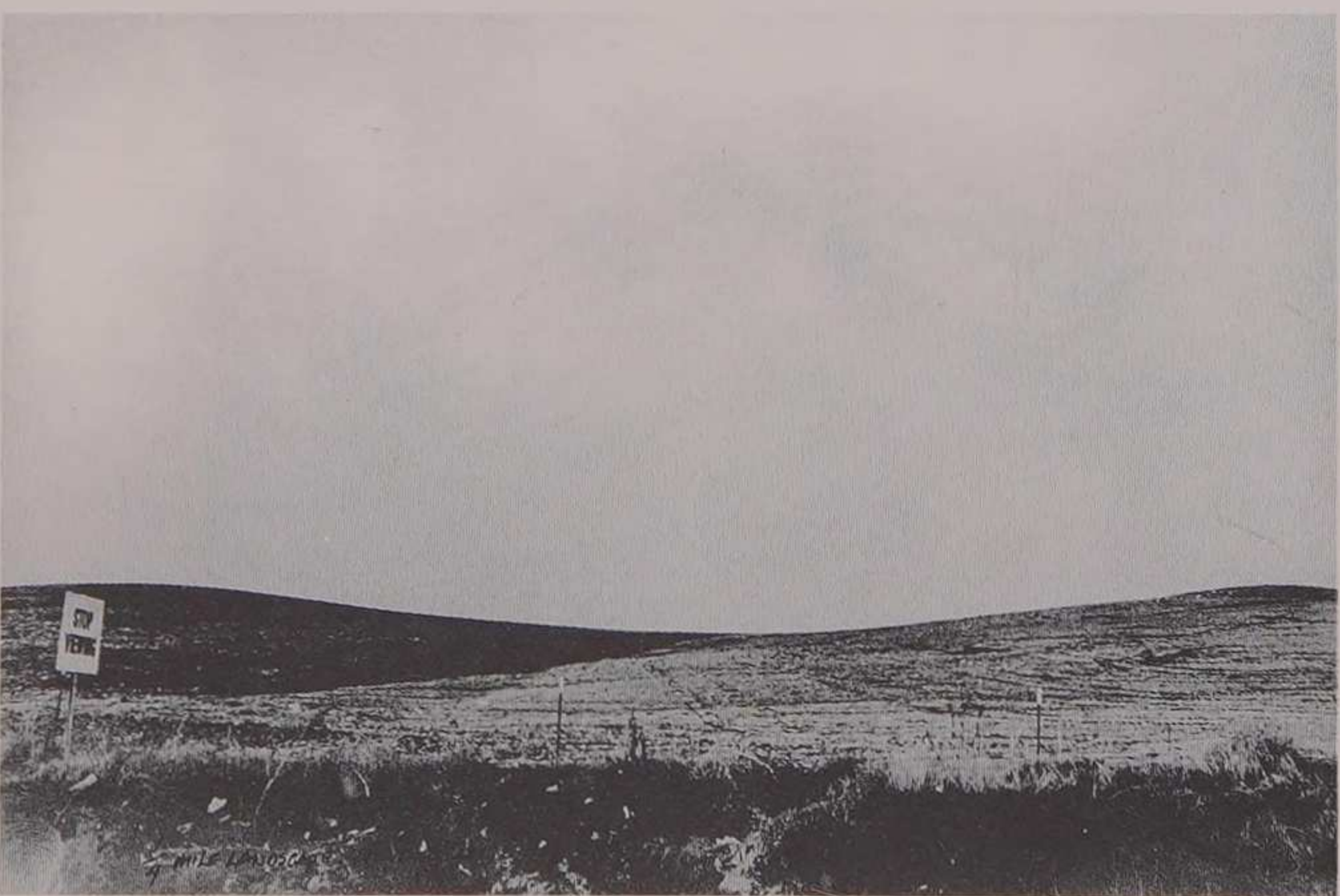
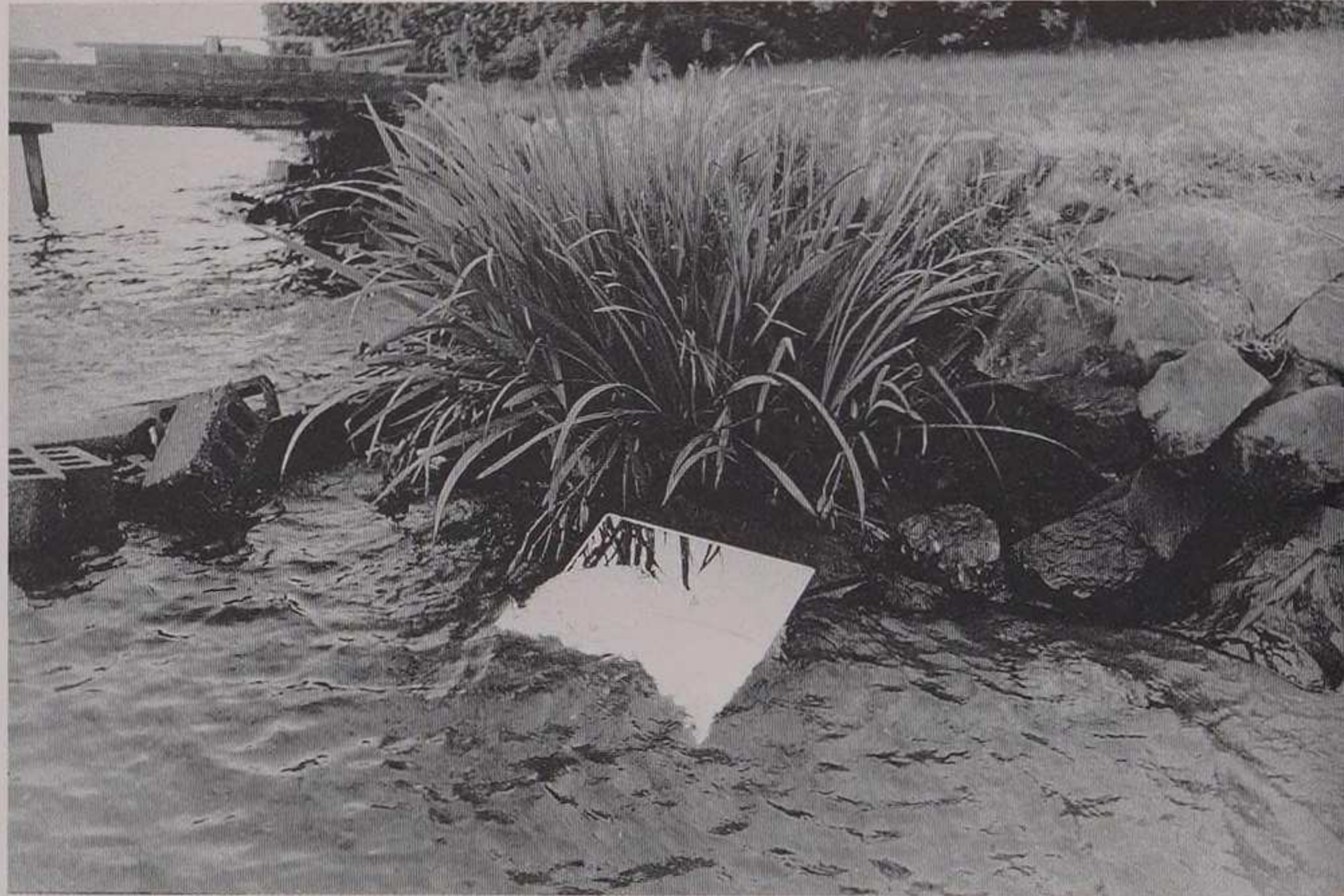
NOTES

- ¹ For a discussion of everyday life see Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1984) and Guy Debord, "Perspectives for Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life," *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb, (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981):68-75.
- ² Marie Fleming, *Baxter²: Any Choice Works* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982):10-11
- ³ Scott Watson, "Art in the Fifties: Design, Leisure and Painting in the Age of Anxiety" *Vancouver Art and Artists 1931-83* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983): 77 for an analysis of modernist artists, architects and patrons who were committed to such utopian ideals of suburban living in the 1950s.
- ⁴ Marie Fleming, 29.
- ⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all information is from conversations with Ingrid and Iain Baxter in 1992.
- ⁶ See Marie Fleming, 48 for a more thorough description of the yard and mirror works.
- ⁷ *Portfolio of Piles* was presented as a series of black and white postcardlike images. At the UBC Fine Arts Gallery, exhibition visitors were given a map and were expected to travel around the city to view the Company's found piles.
- ⁸ NETCO also made ARTs (Aesthetically Rejected Things) and proposed to make ANTs (Aesthetically Neutral Things)
- ⁹ For example, the Woodward's, one of Vancouver's important entrepreneurial families, started a dry goods store at the turn of the century which eventually developed into a chain of B.C.-based department stores. Significantly, the Woodward's were involved in building Oakridge Centre (one of the first shopping malls built in Canada) and Park Royal in West Vancouver, which at the time of its opening was the largest covered shopping malls in North America. Over the past few years the local tycoons have fallen into economic difficulties. Park and Tillford is now a shopping mall and multimillion dollar movie production studio. Woodward's Food Floor was sold to Safeway and the company is trying to avoid bankruptcy by vacating its downtown store pictured in *ACT #58*. MacMillian Bloedel sold its building and the company is currently owned by Cominco, a division of Canadian Pacific Investments.
- ¹⁰ One of NETCO's commercial ventures was a Cibachrome lab opened in 1974, the first west of Toronto.
- ¹¹ Henri Lefebvre, "Space, Product and Use Value" *Critical Sociology: European Perspectives*. ed J.W. Freiberg (New York, 1979): 289-90.
- ¹² The photographs were taken in 1968 and shown at Carmen Lamanna Gallery in 1969.
- ¹³ NETCO first proposed the movie for an exhibit at the Osaka Expo '70. In 1973, they attempted to get funding from the provincial government who would then give the movie as a gift commemorative of B.C.'s centennial to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. An American cigarette company offered to sponsor the movie; however the corporation stipulated that it had to be shot documenting a trip that took place along the American-Canadian border which, of course, would ruin the whole idea of the trip. The movie is still a possibility and may one day be completed with video.
- ¹⁴ Alexander Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Toronto, Between the Lines, 1991): 34.
- ¹⁵ Alexander Wilson, p.19-51 for a discussion of highway landscape.
- ¹⁶ The most recent *1/4 Mile Landscape* is located on Chancellor Boulevard for the duration of this exhibition.
- ¹⁷ Marie Fleming, p.82.
- ¹⁸ For an analysis of the centralization of Canadian culture see Dot Tuer, "The Art of Nation Building: Constructing a 'Cultural Identity' for Post War Canada," *Parallelogramme* (March, 1992): 24-37 and David Howard, "Progress In the Age of Rigormortis" (unpublished MA Thesis, UBC, 1986).
- ¹⁹ For a more complete listing of the Baxters' unrealized projects see Lucy Lippard, "Iain Baxter: New Spaces," *artscanada* (#32-33, June 1969), 7 and *Report on the Activities of the N.E. Thing Company Limited at the National Gallery of Canada 4 June-6 July 1969* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969), unpaginated.
- ²⁰ Lucy R. Lippard, "Art Within the Arctic Circle," *The Hudson Review*, Feb, 1970: 666-674.
- ²¹ Alexander Wilson, p.282-289, for a discussion of competing ideological conceptions of Northern landscape.

- ²² *The N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. Book* (Vancouver and Basel: NETCO and the Kunsthalle Basel, 1978) unpaginated.
- ²³ *Trans-VSI Connection NSCAD-NETCO* Sept. 15-Oct 5, 1969 (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1970).
- ²⁴ Anne Rosenberg, "N.E. Thing Company Section: Interview," *The Capilano Review*, number 8/9, Fall 1976/Spring 1976: 178.

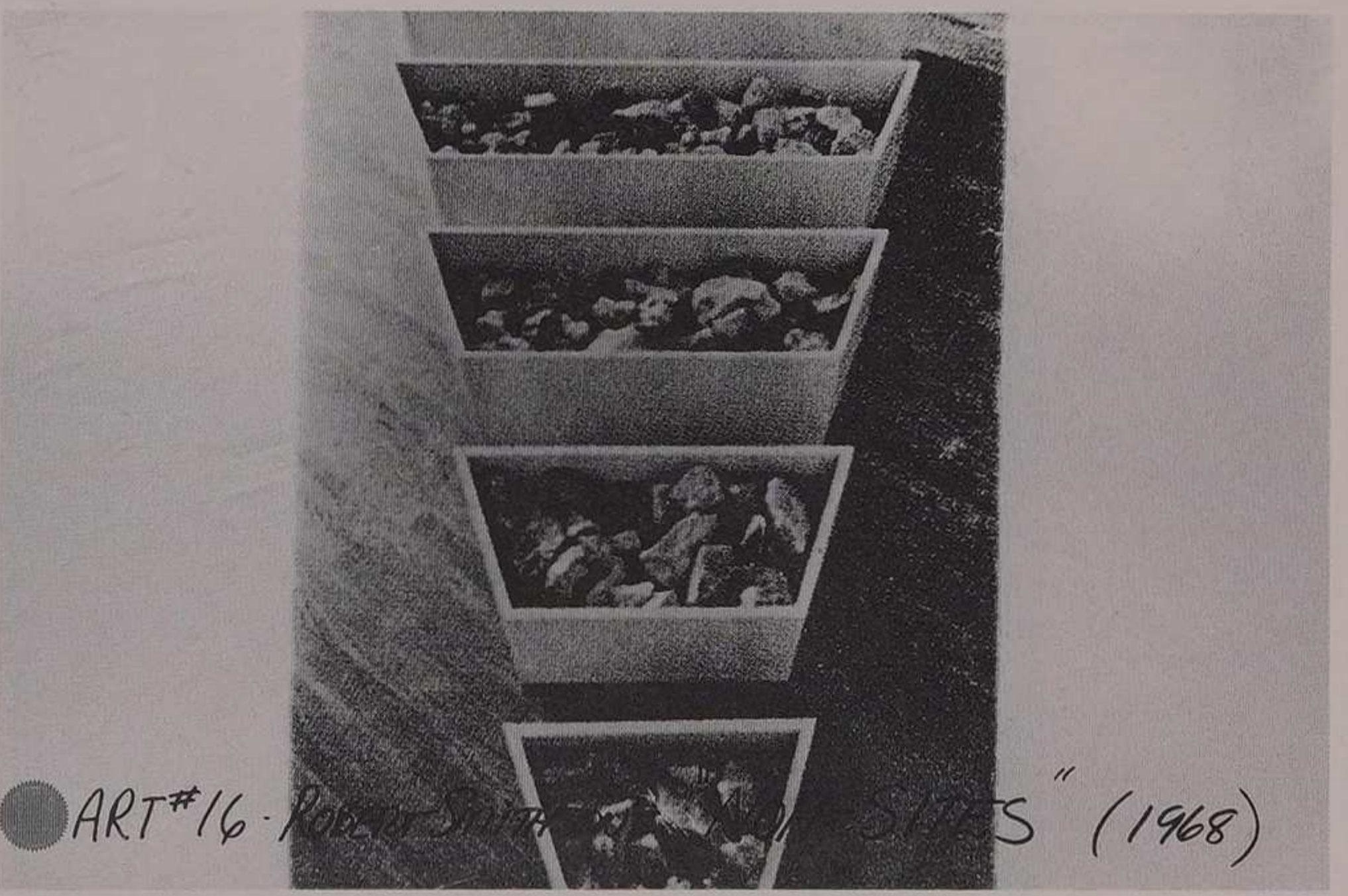
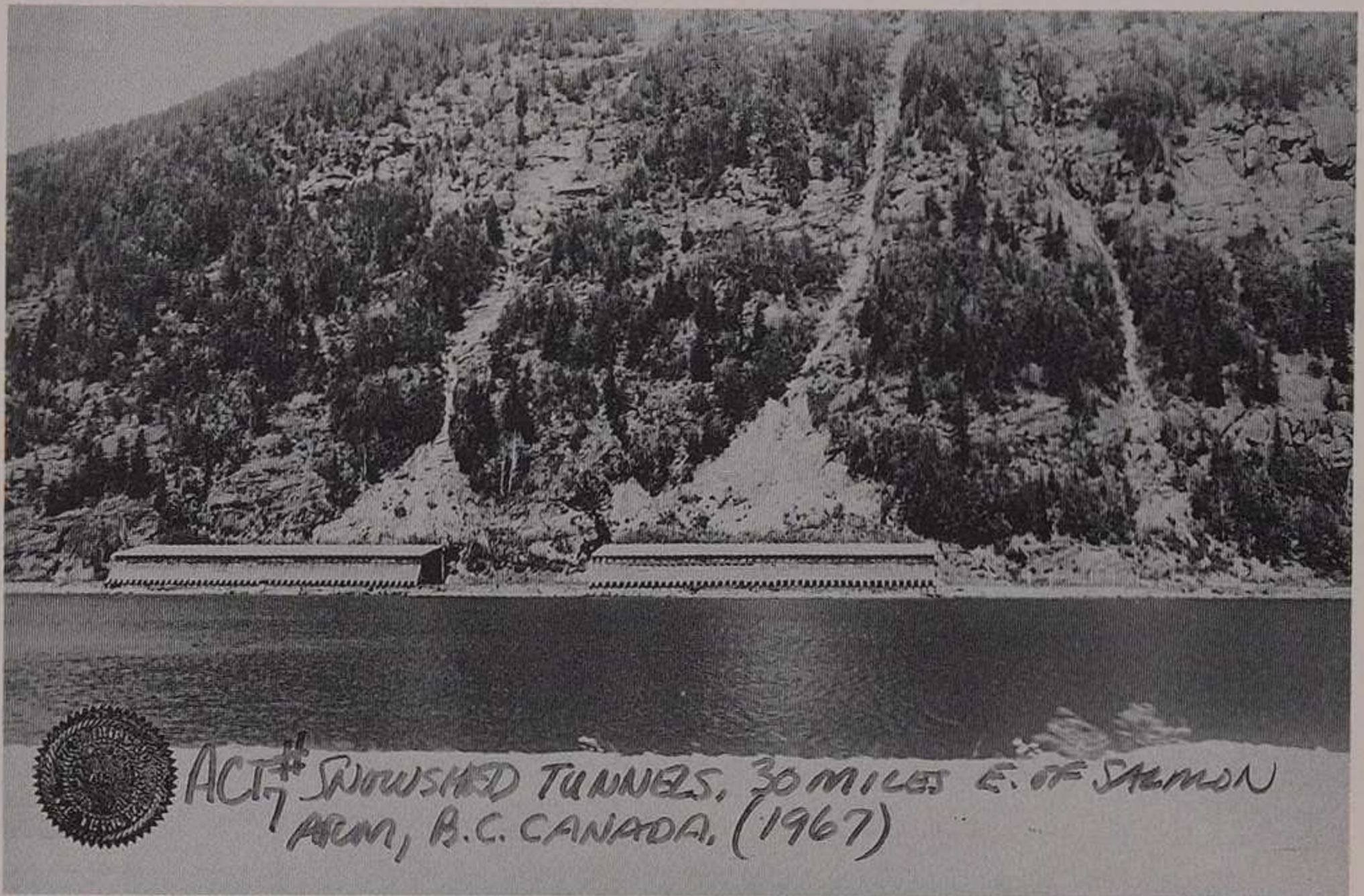
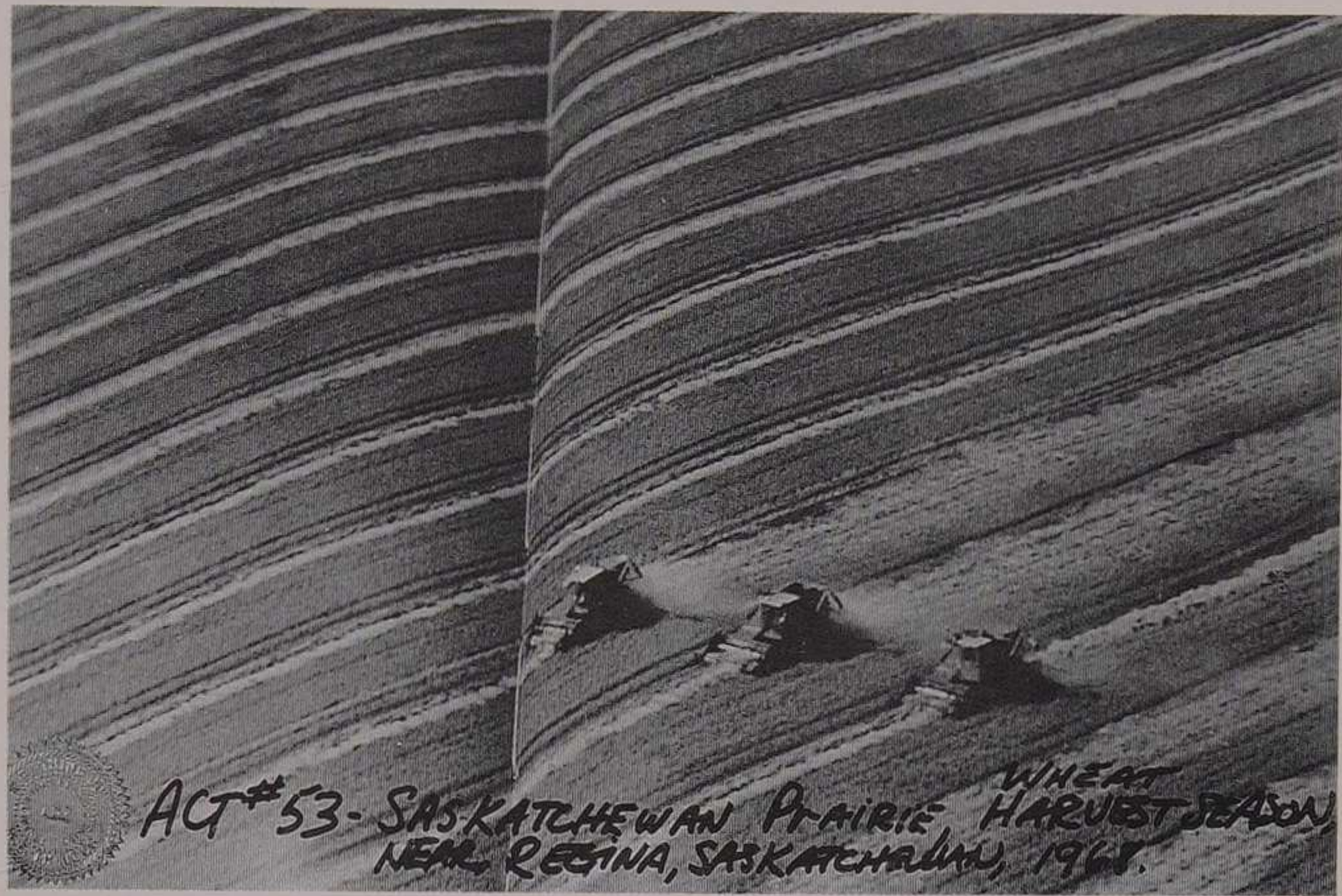


24. ACT #25 Three Orange Columns, Fairfield & Hartford Place, Seymour Heights, North Vancouver, B.C. Canada, 1967-68.



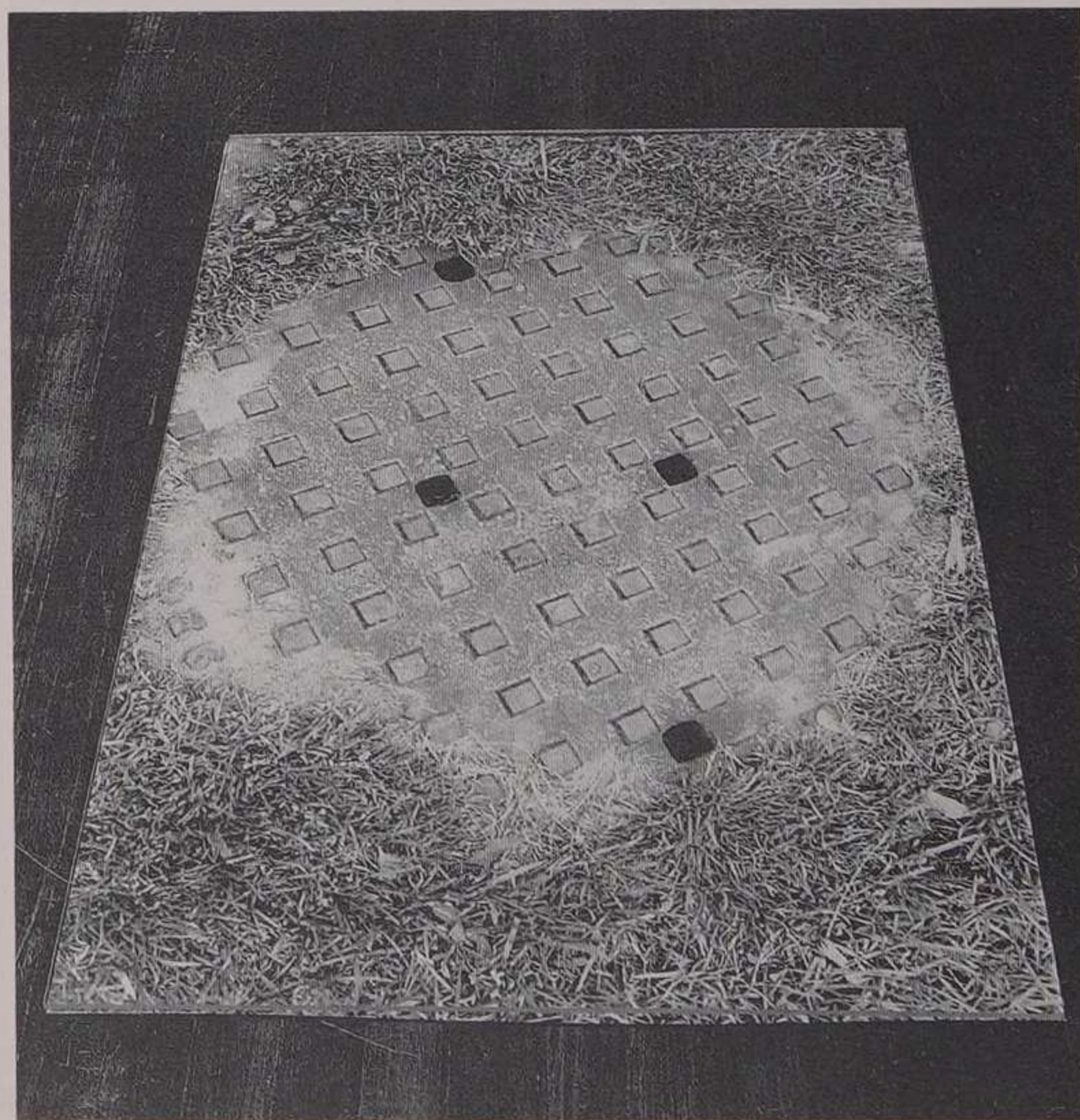
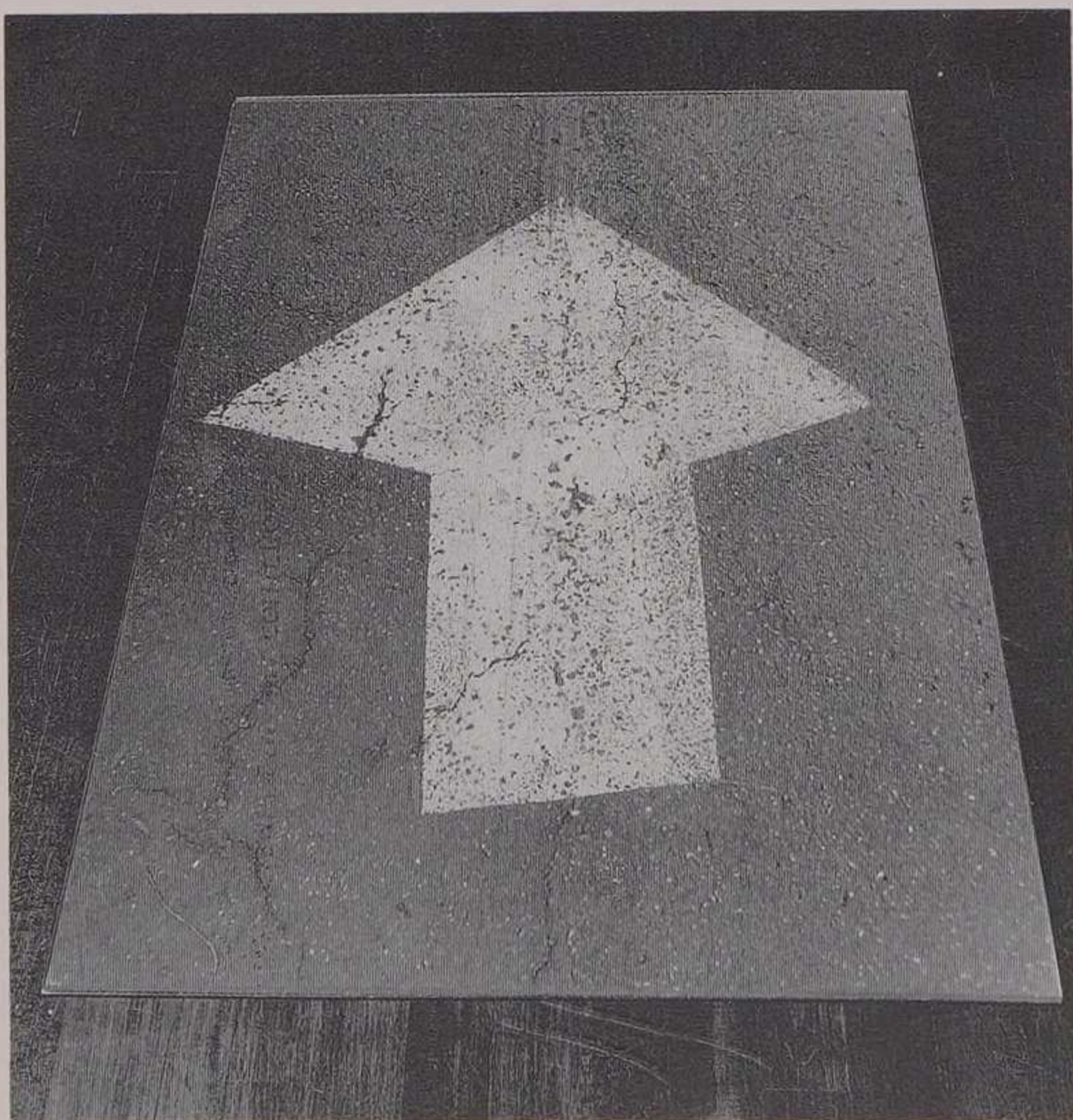
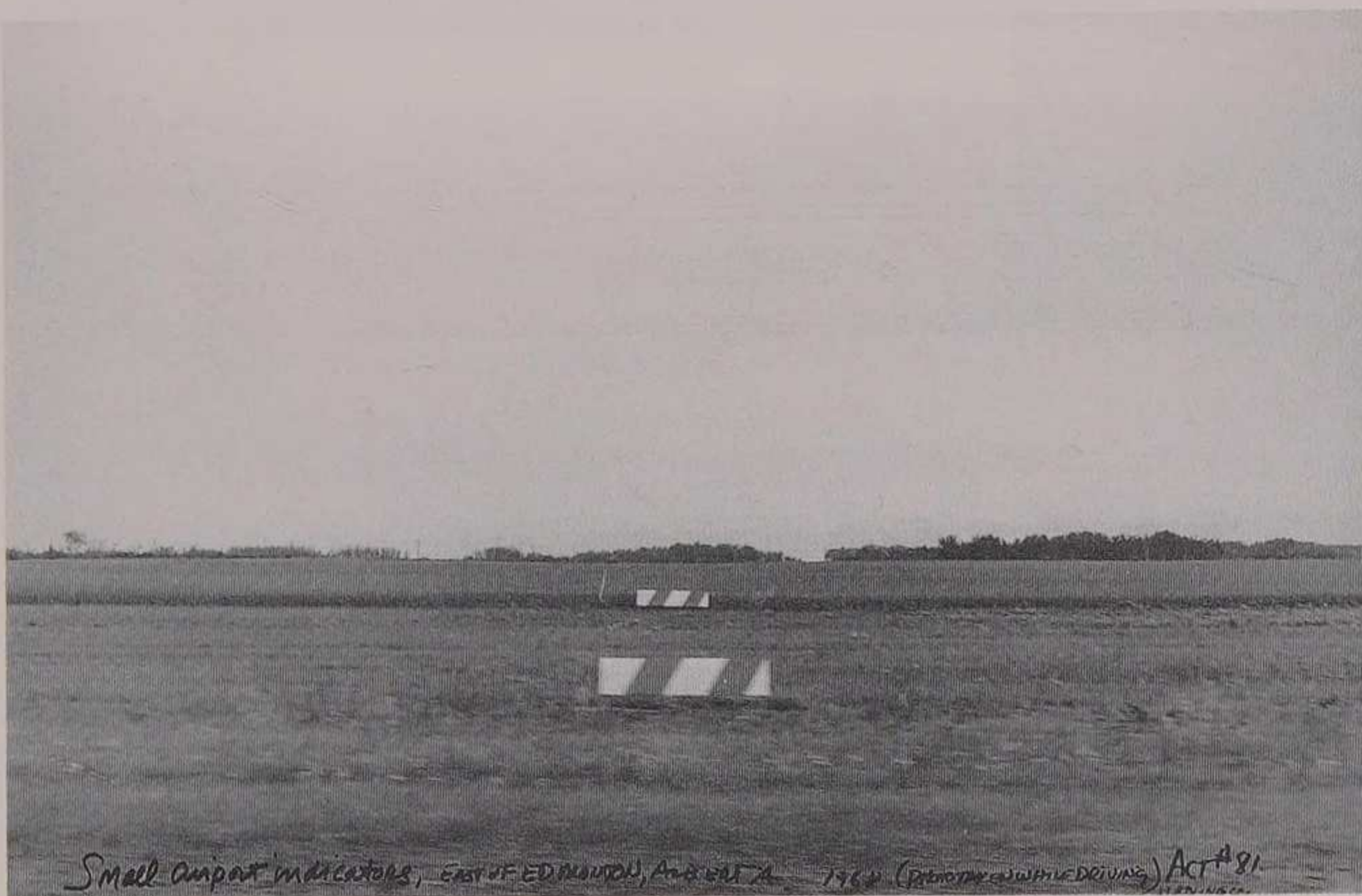
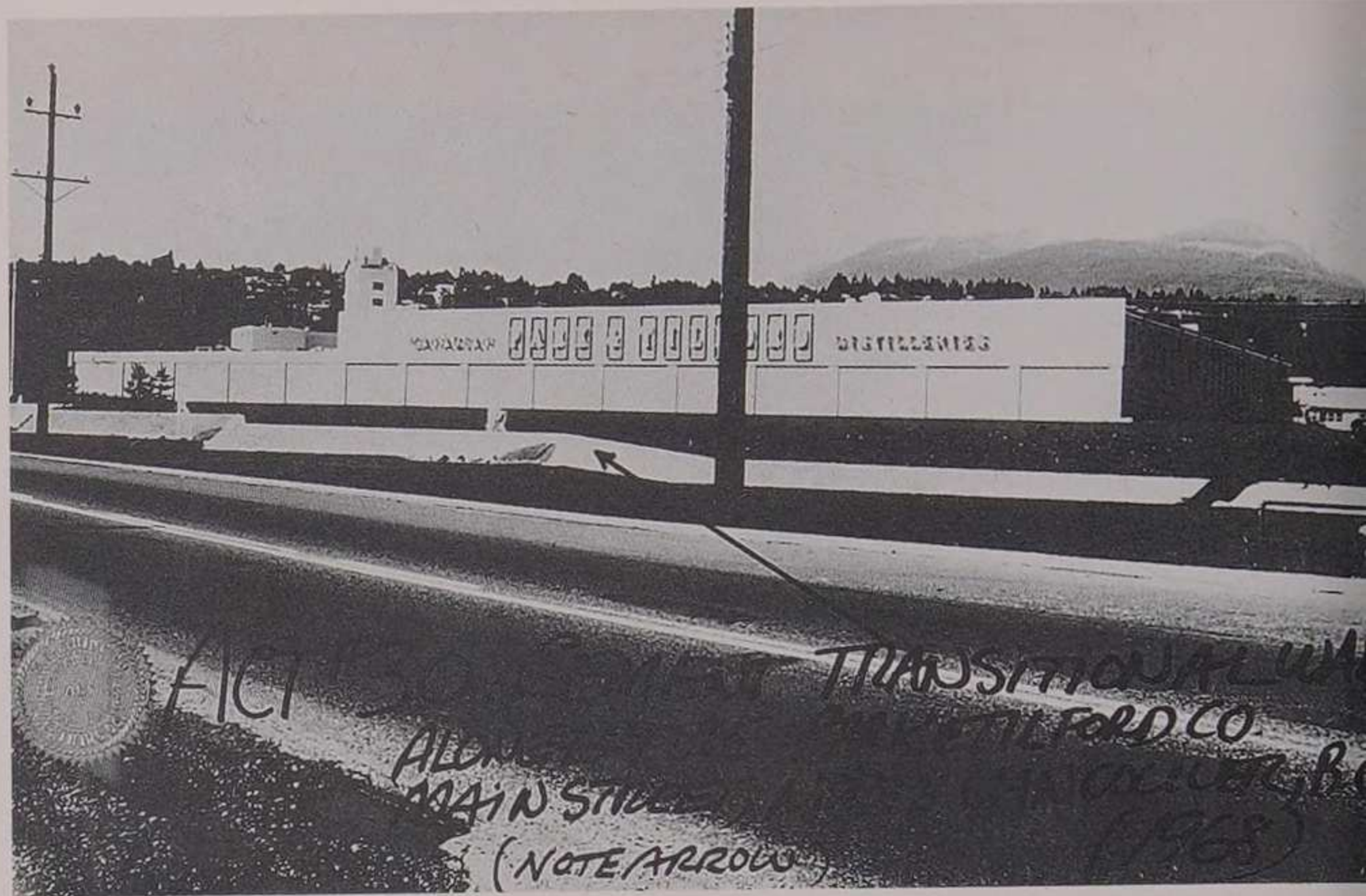
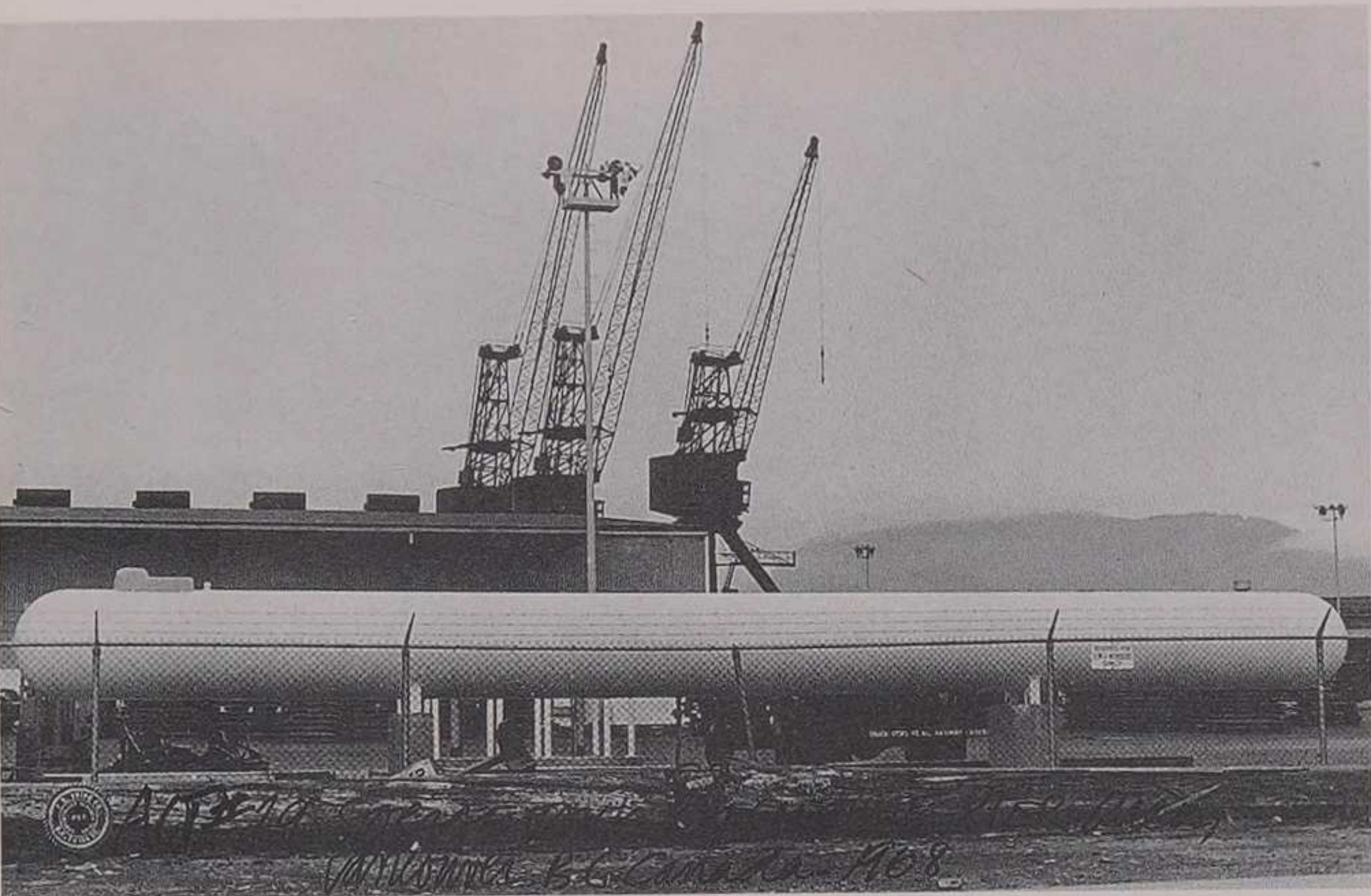
1/4 Mile Landscape, 1968 (Art Gallery of Ontario, not in exhibition)

62. Panels from: VSI Formula #5, 1969



29. ACT #50 Saskatchewan Wheat Pool . . . 1968 (top)
 20. ACT #13 Fallen Logs . . . 1968 (middle)
 35. ACT #128 Entrance Railings, N. Vancouver, 1968 (bottom)

30. ACT #53 Saskatchewan Prairie . . . 1968 (top)
 18. ACT #7 Snowshed Tunnels . . . 1967 (middle)
 21. ART #16 Robert Smithson's 'Non-Sites' . . . 1968-69 (bottom)



25. ACT #29 Storage Tank . . . 1968 (top)
 32. ACT #81 Small Airport Indicators . . . 1968 (middle)
 14. Arrow, 1968 (bottom)

26. ACT #30 Cement Transitional Wall . . . 1968 (top)
 33. ACT #102 Back of Outdoor Movie . . . 1968 (middle)
 13. Manhole Cover, 1968 (bottom)

INFORMATION		N.E.THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada tel. (604) 929-3662 Telex 04-507802 Cable Anything Vancouver B.C.	
		Project 1968	BLACK ARCTIC CIRCLE PROJECT, 1968, Number 1

A LOW FLYING JET PLANE IS TO BE EQUIPPED WITH A DYE DISPENSING DEVICE WHICH WILL LET OUT A CONSTANT STREAM OF HIGHLY CONCENTRATED BLACK DYE. THE DISPENSING DEVICE WILL BE TIMED TO SHUT OFF AND TURN ON IN ONE MINUTE INTERVALS THUS LAYING DOWN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE AS IT APPEARS ON MAPS. PLANE WILL LEAVE ALASKA AT 1000 FT. AND FLY WESTWARD UNTIL THEY ARE BACK AT ALASKA. THIS WILL BE DONE DURING WINTER SO THE LINE WILL APPEAR ON THE SNOW.

NORTH AMERICA WINTER TEMPERATURES
LEGEND
BELOW 0°
VERY COLD 0° - 10°
COLD 10° - 20°
MILD 20° - 30°
WARM OVER 30°
OCEAN CURRENTS
MAY 1 20 30 40 50 60

Description

INFORMATION		N.E.THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada tel. (604) 929-3662 Telex 04-507802 Cable Anything Vancouver B.C.	
		Project 1969	TRANS V.S.T. - 1969, North Amer. Les., Number 1

NS CAN ART HFX
SPU LIR VCR
SEPT 26 1969

THIS TRANSIST WILL BE 13 BEING. HAS BEEN SENT TO SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY BURNABY BC TELIX NO 037 4 4545, SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY BURNABY BC TELIX NO 0450267 AND NOVA SCOTIA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, HALIFAX, N.S. - TELIX NO 014 4 20167 ON SEPT 26 1969 ACTIVATED AND TERMINATED AT INUVIK, NWT. IMPORTANT TO SEND ON AND COMPLETE TRIANGLE IMMEDIATELY. N.E. THING CO PROJECT DEPT (ARCTIC-VSI) INUVIK, NWT.

THE WORLD
PAL CITY
MAY 1969

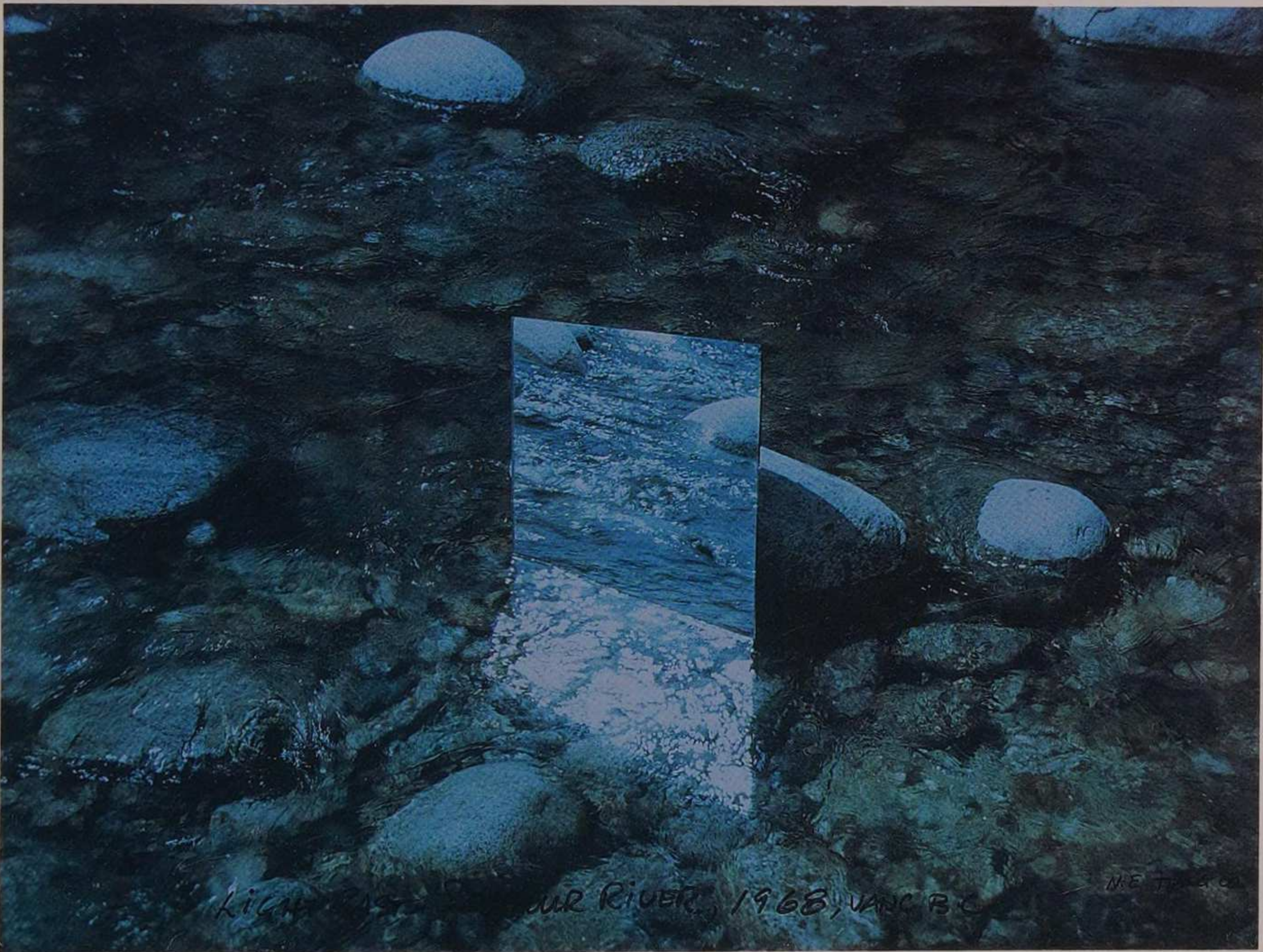
Description



- 7. Black Arctic Circle Project, 1968 (above left)
- 58. Telexed Triangle, 1969 (above right)
- 17. One Mile Ski Line Track, 1968 (left)



51. P-Line
Straight, 1968



50. Single Light Cast,
Seymour River, 1968

Some Thoughts re: Communications and Concepts

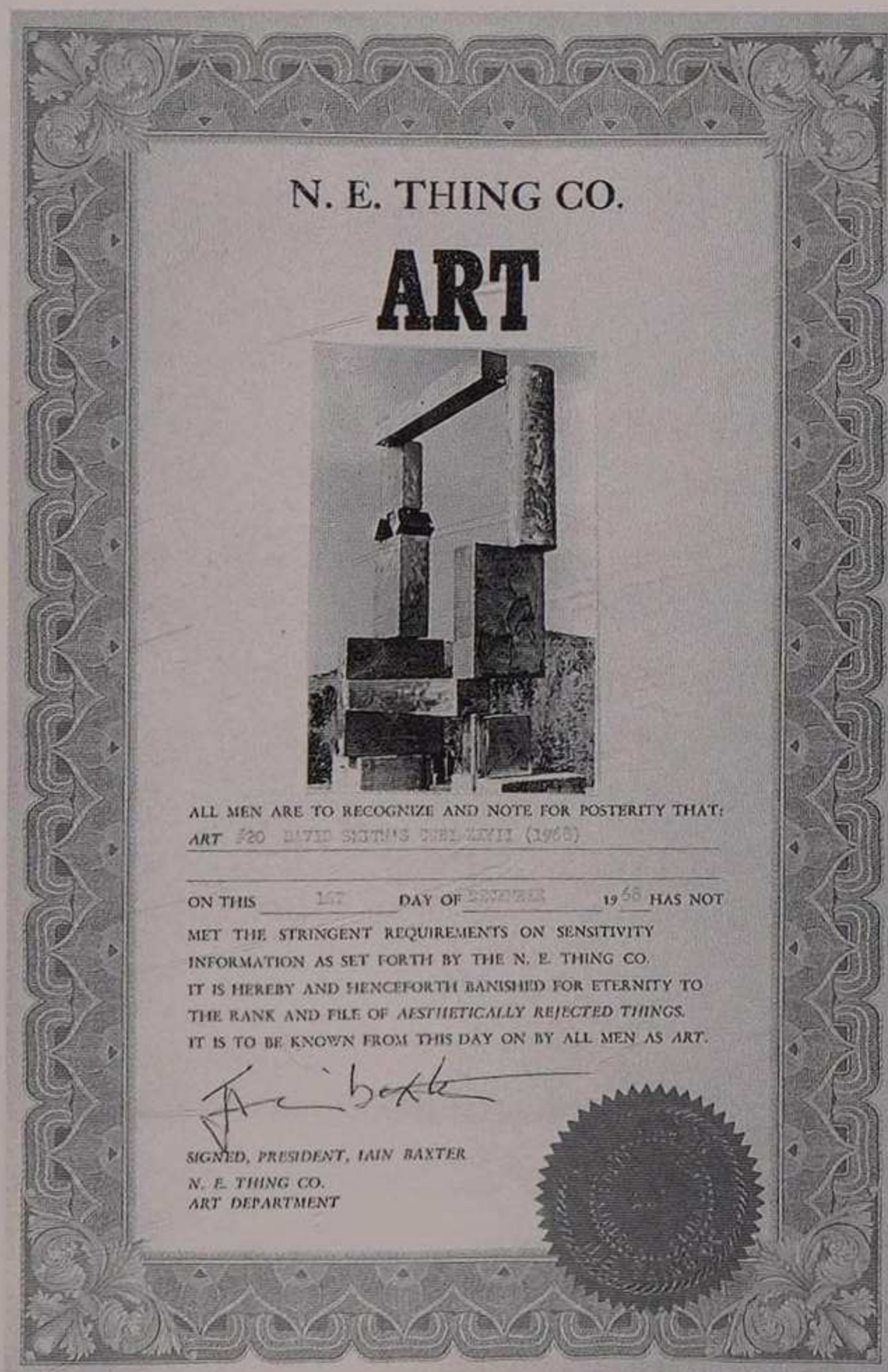
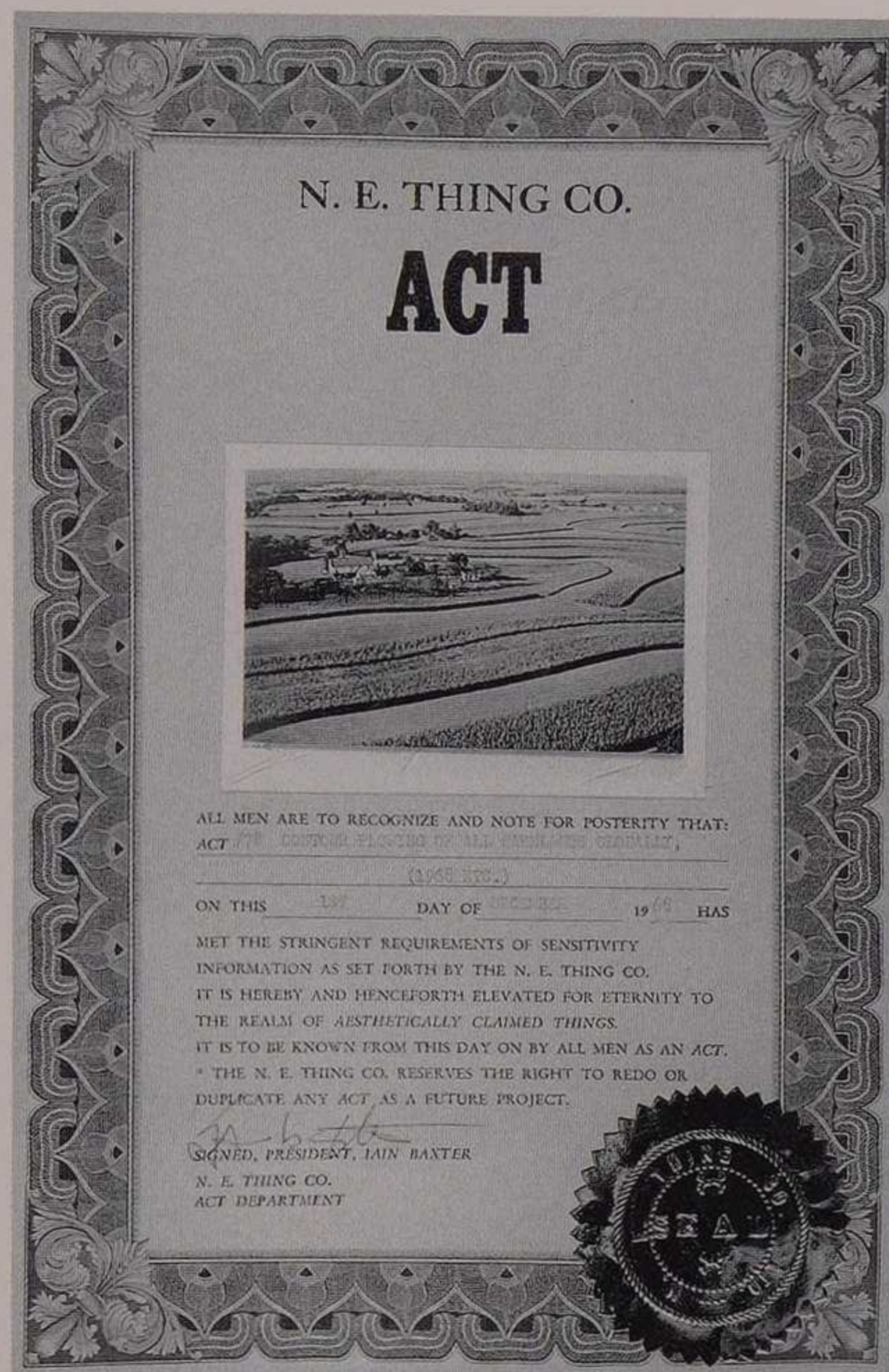
N.E.Thing Co.

Very few (Artists) or *Visual Informers* (as NETCO prefers to call them) qualify when it comes to the means by how their concepts are disseminated. We feel this is germinal to the concept's impact, observability and realization. To fail to be concerned with communication of one's ideas (or VSI) is to have not completed the work—or to have only partially communicated it (say strictly in proper professional journals). The nature of today's VSI is global and immediate and open to all, thus it is the challenge of the artists to seek other means and professional art magazines to change their medium to allow for more sensitive broadcasting. Possibly Art Mags should sponsor TV programs of one to four hours a week or one in a week and cut the journal down to three to four issues. Micro-films of all material would be available in all major libraries, for those who want to dig—but the bulk of the info would then really be getting out there. Or there could be a collection centre set up in North America or one on each coast, which would collect any and all ideas sent in, record the date and data, thus all artists in North America, could be listened to and appreciated. These computer centres would make print-outs available upon requests or on a weekly or monthly basis. Another feature might be the publishing of a magazine similar to *Popular Mechanics* or *Popular Science*, which could be called *Popular Arts* or *Popular SI* or . . . you name it . . . This would simply record and put forth all new things that are going on. It would be an information flow. This could be done along with the computer print-out material too. Serious criticism journals could still exist and in a context like this they would have a much more reliable and reflective quality because the total scene would be gathered in and presented constantly as

near as possible to how it is really happening. That New York has to plug-out to plug-in or become unplugged applies here.

There are very few artists and critics concerned with this info-flow and mass communications, primarily: Huebler, N.E. Thing Co., Kosuth, Kattenbach, Siegelaub, Lippard, etc., and a few we have no doubt forgotten or don't know—*need* the print-out. With these people, communications and info-flow are the medium of their work and the message. This coming-to-know come-unications, the N.E. Thing Co. predicts, will be the most important tool (electricity) since artists first used the phenomenon of photography to alter their point of view of reality. It is interesting to note the camera is now being reintroduced as the artist's main working surface (paper, canvas). From altering perception to recording it. Wire-photos and telecopiers and telex and phone, and radio, and TV are all electric power tools for recording information—sensitizing it with ideas—and sending it on, or out into display patterns globally. It is for these reasons the N.E. Thing Co. predicts that the new galleries of the future will not be what we know them now—but will be *Television Stations* and *Radio Stations* and *Communications Companies*.

The N.E. Thing Co., as we mentioned in our telex, was conceived as an operating structure in 1965–66 as a conceptual and business base so that it could operate both inside the art community and outside it. As you will note above, a lot of what we have noticed over the years are the life-support systems of the business community. They have perfected these structures (which slowly the artist is becoming aware of) but also one must remember what businesses do with these structures. Namely, business is interested in pushing information around so that the keenest of its character, the practicality of its energy, results in profit and goods flow. This is what we call Practical Information. This is where the artist enters and with his sense of play and pureness of vision is able to take all this practical information and handle it sensitively and end up with *Sensitivity Information* (regardless of his sense form). 1969–70 □



Position Statement

N.E.Thing Co.

The role of an "ARTIST" in society today is constructed by a series of negative structures, i.e. financial, political and especially the connotations of the word *ARTIST* itself, which propels his position to the fringes of the sources of power and its servants, the media.

An artist in this marketplace environment relies ultimately on the charity of those who, for whatever psych-socio reasons, wish to "support" the arts. It is essential to free the artist from these constraints, and allow the cultural knowledge he possesses to fuse with that of business, politics and education. Rejecting impotence and violence, it seems essential to develop a financial base, therefore the N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. is transitioning itself into a business organization operating within the current framework—to generate funds by legitimate, highly imaginative and profitable business activity, in areas like food, clothing, shelter, leisure and consultation, so as to support and accomplish the projects and concepts it wishes to conceive.

The object is not personal profit, but to develop a structure and method whereby products, functions and power can change directly the value systems of society. 1971 □

ACT and ART certificates, 1968

Letter to N.E. Thing Co.

Greg Curnoe

June 17 and 19, 1969

The idea of turning yourself into a business is interesting. The idea of practicing capitalism on aesthetic grounds is also interesting but a contradiction. What will happen if N.E. Thing Co. employees unionize, will they need to? Do you foresee a profit sharing plan? Have you ever fired anyone? Have you ever ordered an employee to do something against his (or her) will? Do you see yourself in competition with other producers (Levine, Warhol, etc.)? Does communism or nationalisation threaten you? It is my impression that the N.E. Thing Co. is a power trip. Capitalism has traditionally involved one or a small group of people controlling the lives of many other people (what about the delegation of authority?). The virtue of the N.E. Thing Co. is that it makes quite clear the fact that many artists practice social ideas that are identical to those of successful business men. I admire your extensions of other artists' work because you are doing openly what many others do deviously. The same with the whole company idea. At the same time the company idea reinforces and endorses the things in our society which I cannot endorse—telling people what to do, competition, fame, etc., and try not to practice. How do the radical students at Simon Fraser react to the N.E. Thing Co.? I felt that the conference at the National Gallery became a university seminar on art. It's too bad there weren't more nonuniversity people present like Gerry Gilbert or Vic Coleman or David McFadden or Mike Snow or Jack Chambers. It would have

been interesting to have heard George Woodcock's views. Have you ever spoken to him about companies? I thought the ideas expressed about China by the Americans indicated the state of the mass media there in the U.S.A.

I think I am an anarchist—consequently I am very interested in the idea of businesses or companies set up along Anarcho Syndicalist lines (which was done successfully in Catalonia during the Civil War). I am also interested in the mass media being used the same way, and I believe that is happening in Canada to some extent. Everyone with a phone and a radio has access to many CBC and other open-line programmes, FM for instance.

I am against the setting up of hierarchies. Our Nihilist Spasm Band is a sometime working example of the kind of political setup I aspire to. No bosses. □

Greg Curnoe wrote to the Baxters following a conference on NETCO at the National Gallery of Canada, June 9, 1969. Other participants included: Anne Brodsky, editor of artscanada; critics John Chandler and Lucy R. Lippard, and dealer Seth Siegelau, all from New York; David P. Silcox of the Canada Council; Dennis Reid, Brydon Smith, Mary Taylor and Pierre Théberge of the National Gallery curatorial staff; Don Theal of McGill University; and Mark Whitney, a NETCO employee. Curnoe, the celebrated London, Ontario artist, gave permission for the publication of this letter shortly before his untimely death on November 14, 1992.

Art in America

MAY/JUNE 1969



N. E. THING CO.

26/50

P+L+P+L+P-VSI
VSI FORMULA No. 10

From Vancouver: Scene and Unscene

Dramatis Personae (In order of their appearance)

<i>Interlocutor</i>	Alvin Balkind
<i>Wallace</i>	Ian Wallace, artist and instructor at University of B.C.
<i>Emery</i>	Anthony Emery, director, Vancouver Art Gallery
<i>Breeze</i>	Claude Breeze, artist
<i>Morris</i>	Michael Morris, artist
<i>Fisher</i>	Brian Fisher, artist
<i>Lowndes</i>	Joan Lowndes, art critic for morning newspaper
<i>Wong</i>	Bau-Xi (or Paul Wong) Wong, artist and dealer, director of Bau-Xi Gallery
<i>Rosenberg</i>	Ann Rosenberg, writer, lecturer, former art critic for evening newspaper
<i>Mr. Pres.</i>	Iain Baxter, president, N.E. Thing Co.
<i>Shadbolt</i>	Doris Shadbolt, senior curator, Vancouver Art Gallery
<i>Simmins</i>	Richard Simmins, art critic for Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, former director, Vancouver Art Gallery
<i>Christmas</i>	Douglas Christmas, dealer, director of Douglas Gallery, Vancouver, and Ace Gallery, Los Angeles

SCENE I

Interlocutor Is there an art scene in Vancouver?

Wallace What is a scene? The art world, the magazines, are constantly looking for scenes. What I sense is the *myth* of the Vancouver scene.

Emery Something has emerged here in terms of the number of artists of talent, of organizations like the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Fine Arts Gallery at the University of B.C., Simon Fraser University, the Douglas Gallery, the Bau-Xi Gallery—all of which tends to make a scene. Then we have the recent advent of Intermedia. The excitement of New York is on a grand galactic scale. Ours is a much more local kind of thing; yet we do exist on the fringes of the global village—suburbanites—whereas once we were a distant outpost of a vanished empire.

Breeze Painters painting, fine—there are enough of them. But to describe it as a scene, I don't like it. Let's forget the word *scene*; it's overdone.

Morris If you mean are there serious people working here, then I suppose there is a scene. If you think these people think of themselves as a scene, that is all wrong. It's just the place where we work. It isn't a question of scenes, but of personal friends—here and in other cities—who have concern similar in a degree to one's own.

Fisher There isn't a scene in the sense of any group loyalty, or any sort of consistent similarity in intentions or ways of working amongst a group of people here.

Lowndes Definitely a scene, and a very lively one for a city of under a million, but small of course in the eyes of the world. Relativity is the key here.

Wong Yes. It's coming. It's there; but not real grown yet.

Rosenberg There is a scene; but like home brew, it has been forced through the fermentation stage and encouraged to settle too quickly.

Mr. Pres. Yes, there are a lot of interesting scenes around here. Vancouver is known for its beauty; and a lot of people come here to see the scenes. We have a large fishing industry, and an awful lot of salmon derbies have been developing lately.

SCENE II

Interlocutor Has the scene been under- or overrated?

Emery It depends on who's doing the rating. I feel that we get specially treated by visiting bigwigs from the outside, not because they want to be patronizing so much as they definitely unconsciously *don't* want to be patronizing.

Mr. Pres. It's something the tourist will have to decide for himself when he arrives.

SCENE III

Interlocutor Who are the significant artists in Vancouver?

Rosenberg Significant by "international standards"? Only a few, like Baxter, Morris, Lee-Nova, Fisher and Breeze. Artists who state something valid about what it is like to live in or near Vancouver: Jack Wise and Toni Onley. If you mean the measure in which an artist's personality reflects the combustible mixture of extraordinary perceptual and intellectual acuteness and the ability to translate his conceptions into concrete visual images and performances, then only one artist, Iain Baxter, embodies this combination to a remarkable degree.

Morris I think the most important artist is Iain Baxter. He is one of those artists who are idea men, and he's able to work in a conceptual way that generates a lot of

interest, excitement. He's also an amazing, talented, brilliant man.

Wallace Baxter is the artist who is able to successfully integrate a regional and an international sensibility. He takes his aesthetic and broadens it. He draws from other artists; he's in constant communication. It is this exchange of information that is the international arena now. One steals what one may and makes it his own; and Baxter's able to do this best. A feedback, that's just what it is.

Shadbolt Iain Baxter, certainly. Michael Morris, Bodo Pfeifer, Gary Lee-Nova, Claude Breeze, Brian Fisher. These are certainly the first ones who come to mind.

Breeze Gary Lee-Nova and Brian Fisher are the two top artists. I would say underneath them and coming up, are Joan Balzar and Audrey Doray. We all know Baxter, Pfeifer, Morris, and all *that*; but personally I don't like them as much as the painters I've mentioned.

Lowndes I would like to add to the list Richard Turner, Glenn Lewis, Gathie Falk, Gordon Smith, Jack Shadbolt and Paul Wong.

Simmins And I would add Sherry Grauer.

Christmas Michael Morris and Iain Baxter are the main spark plugs.

Mr. Pres. Significant artists? One who comes to mind is the man who paints the backgrounds at the White Spot Drive-In. He paints a lot of scenery around here, and does a very good job of it. I'm not sure of his name, but I've always noticed it every time I go there to eat. There are a lot of modern artists around too. □

This is an excerpt from Peter Selz with Alvin Balkind, "Vancouver: Scene and Unscene: A Conceit in Eight Scenes and an Epilogue," published in Art in America LVII (January 1970), 123-126.

"Easel" Is a Telex

Joan Lowndes

Three years ago Iain Baxter startled the Vancouver art audience by exhibiting vinyl bags filled with water.

Now he has moved into conceptualism, riding the communications network for play, poetry and G.N.G.—Gross National Good.

He has installed in his home at 1419 Riverside Dr. in North Vancouver, not only a telecopier but a telex. He is concerned at the degree to which we are U.S. dominated and believes that communications represent a field in which we can win international prominence.

Perhaps two quotations from McLuhan: Hot and Cool can help to shed light on what he is doing. The first is by Tom Wolfe: "But . . . McLuhan will remain a major figure in the social sciences if for no other reason than that he has opened up the whole subject of the way the new technologies are changing people's thinking, reactions, life styles, everything."

And from the same book. McLuhan on McLuhan: "Throughout my work, however, I am saying that awareness is being pushed more and more out into the environment. Art becomes environment."

So we have Iain Baxter working not at an easel in a studio, but sitting in front of his telex in an incredibly cluttered little room that is the head office of the N.E. Thing Co. And he is using this machine as a whole new art form, as intellectual play and potential for group play, not to place orders or transact business but for Trans-SI, Transmitted Sensitivity Information.

One kind of SI he wants to transmit is concrete poetry. "There are a number of possibilities, like you could have a one sentence poem that could be sent to each country in the world because you can send it wherever you want.

"The fact is that the only places at the moment that do have telexes are companies or organizations, but it doesn't matter to me whether it's a person or a company that receives it. If it's a person then you're phoned like for a telegram, right?"

"But you could send a concrete poem to a company and say: 'Please put this on your bulletin board'—so your poem is being read by five hundred employees who go by."

The beauty of the telex to Baxter is that it needs no receiver.

"It's an open channel. No one can stop the telex from working because it's a twenty-four-hour-a-day communication hookup. As soon as you dial the number you're really into that office and then, depending on the personality of the people and their attitudes and so on, well it's up to them what happens."

Poems can penetrate offices: art can infiltrate business. But what if whoever tends the telex just tears the paper off and throws it into the waste paper basket? It's the chance you take for working on a gigantic environmental scale and it doesn't bother Baxter a bit.

The information has been completed in terms of its own essence. Moreover he has a record of it from the telex itself—"It's like instant history"—and he may also record it on microfilm.

Telex gives you a free day before you go on the meter and Baxter used it to announce his presence on this particular network to all the major corporations in North America that he could think of including, Texaco, BA, Gulf, Standard Oil, ITT, RCA Communications, Kaiser, Pepsi-Cola, Newsweek, Time, Bell Telephone, CP and CIL.

He also contacted sixty major museum curators, critics and artists involved in conceptualism.

Baxter is genuinely intrigued by the telex which he believes he is one of the first artists on this continent to use conceptually. He is not interested, like Hans Haacke, in "information that flows out like the daily news that you can tack on the wall. That to me is very obvious. I'd like to find out what the machine can do, what are the



Iain Baxter using telecopier at Xerox of Canada, Vancouver office, 1969

processes inside it that can provide new ways of looking at our total environment.

"You can go to St. John's, Newfoundland, and come back in seconds," he exulted. "Also the machine will advance paper and it has a key to do that. So that's interesting as far as I'm concerned because I can advance it thirty feet. I can advance to a certain linear distance.

"Like you can also contact a station that's five thousand miles away. So that gets you working on the idea of why not contact it 10 times in a row, which would then amount to say 10 times 5,000 which would be 50,000 miles—which is exciting in terms of an idea of contact and location."

Baxter is also experimenting with composing music on the telex. To be with him for a short time is like quaffing a draught of optimism. He says: "A lot of artists have antagonistic feelings about big organizations. I as a person tend to believe in joining and changing."

So one can imagine the telex at General Motors sounding a sprightly prelude of bell ringing,

followed by the N.E. Thing Co. logo ("the world's only telexable logo"), then the admonition: "DON'T LOOK AT THIS UNLESS YOU ARE READY FOR ANYTHING," followed by an invitation to consult the N.E. Thing Co. on "IMAGINATION . . . THE G.N.G. . . . GROSS NATIONAL GOOD . . . IDEAS . . . ANYTHING," at their offices in Vancouver or Ottawa.

And it might just catch the fancy of some company president. After all, who would have thought that executives would be taking weekend seminars from McLuhan? □

Joan Lowndes wrote art criticism for both the Vancouver Province and the Vancouver Sun during the sixties and seventies. "Easel' Is a Telex" was first published in the Sun, January 9, 1970.

From Untitled

Germano Celant

The spiral has snapped and gone off on its own. Radicalization of the relationship between art and life has halted and is in process of abolishing the negative pole—art—just when the structures of utility (markets, banks, big stores, economic trusts), posturing as progressive activists, are trying desperately to keep the artist on the leash and turn the inutilizable catharsis of art-in-life into yet another consumer product. Straining to substitute one product for another, they have replaced the theme of the mass media, the consumer society, the existential gesture, gestalt, language and visuality with that of life, nature, the spontaneous, the nomadic event, improvisation the body, death, concept and imagination.

If, in fact, we analyze the present state of *arte povera* and conceptual art, and also of theatre on the streets, the guerilla-warfare theatre, cinema reportage, uncritical criticism, imaginary architecture, spontaneous politics and all the counter-cultural attitudes that aim at turning work into life or action, we observe that one episode (artistic, political, architectural, theatrical, cinematographic, philosophical, critical, etc.) has taken over from another, but the utilization has remained the same. The attempt to destroy, annul or dissolve the myth of culture as art, theatre, architecture, cinema, philosophy, science, law or history into everyday utility, has failed.

The structures of privilege have thus kept going, nomadism and politics have been turned into forms and images, art and the entire cultural or counter-cultural scene continue to serve contemplation and are exhausted in work dedicated exclusively to abstract knowledge that can never be translated into either action or stasis, intervention or immobilism, revolution or Nirvana, never become a physical method.

This attitude, typical of the climate of the years between 1966 and 1970, although it may appear to derive its activities from concepts and ideas, turns them into images and symbols, which are always individual and particular. Despite the attempt to express mental and physical facts objectively, ambiguous and equivocal terminology reduces them to metaphor, thus aiding and abetting the culture-consumption structures without modifying their utility. This sort of consumption, by exploiting the visual and objectual qualities of its products, encourages the myth of art and the heroic view of culture, thus perpetuating myth and heroism as the continuing appropriation of art and intellectual activity on the part of the Establishment and small- or large-scale consumer and market concerns. This leads to parallel expansion of the economic and political power of both art and culture, of the Establishment and of the structures that control and exalt them.

Yet reality and life, which have primary goods of their own, need not myths or heroes but either the instruments of activity or an absolute stasis in order to become functional and established as procedures or rites. Either activism or total immobilism might thus achieve an objective transformation based not on secondary goods such as culture (art, cinema, theatre, philosophy, criticism, architecture and politics, etc.) but on the primary goods which are utility, consumption, exchange, mediation and services.

Instead of this, art, theatre, cinema, philosophy, criticism, architecture and politics continue to create myths and heroes for imitation, thus ensuring that the materials and outcome of culture and counter culture do not become changes, contractions, utilizations and definitions of primary goods, but simply remain merchandise

and power. The myth goes on creating super-things, though reality and life require not super-things, but obvious, banal, untitled things.

For this reason, radicalization of the attitude to art and cultural activity of all kinds has become absolute and gone off on its own. This seems to be demonstrated by the work of whole classes of intellectuals who are busy shifting action from a metaphorical-contemplative state to a condition of utility or annulment of utility in which every kind of work becomes a utensil or else is dissolved in the everyday reality of primary goods, exploding, modifying or defining, annulling or revolutionizing them.

Thus the Weathermen Underground, the OHO Group, the N.E. Thing Co., Siegelau, Godard, Long and Flanagan, Schechner, Information Documentation Archives, the underground press, Archizoom, the Descriptive Improvisation Group, Living Theatre and other intellectuals are changing direction in their work in order to get off the seesaw of inversions and substitutions of theme. They have gone over from a productive status which can be identified only with the finished product or object, to a status through which work is understood as definition, revolution, introduction or alteration of utility and utility itself. They act on the customs that permeate daily life and constitute primary goods, without adding superthings and no longer admitting any distinction between the artistic and cultural sphere and the extracultural and extra-artistic. Their work becomes actual, no longer having an aesthetic-formal dimension, but a practical-concrete one, fused with the reality of utilization, functionality and the services. They thus disappear into the shadows to work no longer on themes, which become systematically transformed into aesthetic forms or entities, symbols of power and exchange groups, functions or services (such as banks, markets, universities, big stores, museums, parties, institutes, theatres and producers), but instead, to stir up and revolutionize the systems and standard of utility and of culture and counter culture. This means

blowing up the joints and structures of service and power, utilizing the same instruments of service and utility, countering the utility groups and bodies by altering their methods and procedures. They thus shift from work that is haphazard, vague and confused to needful and continuous work that is in a position to confront the procedures, regulations, rites, utilities and primary systems that surround and mould them.

It is these utility groups, bodies and structures that constitute the real obstacle to creating tangible utility attitudes. Thus work as utilization tends to derange, upset, deteriorate, transgress, counteract, aggrandize and bankrupt obvious and banal uses through use of them that is obvious and banal, but adulterated or differently styled.

That is the reason why all these intellectuals have gone beyond bounds in working on art, theatre, cinema, politics, information, criticism, architecture, to try to turn work into utility or the revolution of utility so that it may be committed totally (in space, time and utility) to the existing utility structures (TV, information services, banks, stores, airports, services, laws, newspapers, society, etc.).

In this sense, work has not been translated afresh into objects and products, symbols of redemption and liberation from the "ills" of the world and society, but turned into negative opposition to present-day utilization of work which, as produce or objects in the hands of the utilization structures has remained mythical and metaphorical, existing according to the rules of representation. Work is thus translated into visual ideas or facts that, for the benefit of bourgeois aesthetics, can be assessed as to quantity and location and, on the contrary, as utilization or nonutilization, annuls and destroys the realm of art and culture with all its appendices.

If, in fact, we go into the merits of the work done by all these intellectuals, we observe that it does not acquire or no longer preserves any typical or specifically linguistic characteristics. It is no longer just art, theatre, cinema, information, architecture or politics, but action and practical



Ingrid Baxter speaking with Germano Celant during the International Association of Art Critics Conference, Vancouver, 1969

method, indefinable and untitled, relative to the world and no longer just to culture. This is proven by the disappearance of the individual as hero to be replaced by a set of initials, a public or private body or a structure that can easily be integrated at an explosive and modifying level with the other sets of initials (IBM, DATAMATION, A.B. Dick Company, KYBE, RCA, TAB, TV, PHI, BNL, etc.) which are the bricks and mortar of primary goods and therefore culture. Like the N.E. Thing Co., founded in Vancouver by Iain Baxter in 1966 with its business address in Canada and consisting of eleven research departments: research, things, accounts, ACT, ART, photography, COP, films, projects and consultations. These departments carry out different functions within the company environment, which sees itself not so much as a producer of art works as an alternative instrument for the utilization of cultural knowledge. The N.E. Thing Co. does not produce objects or products for a specific circulation, but was founded as a consultant company for visual communications, sensorial information, imagination, ICOM, ideas and all kinds of qualitative and quantitative innovation. Aesthetic work has become utiliza-

tion, function and services. It has gone so far into the shadows that it has become confused with all the other information and consultation services. Iain Baxter, President, General Manager, Employee, etc. now goes to all the big business exhibitions and trade fairs, with the American Telephone Punch Company, Boeing Computer Services Division, UNIVAC, Xerox Corporation, Data Processing and Tube Company. N.E. Thing Co. competes with the rest, Baxter has annulled himself as an artist, but acts as an intellectual on the utilization and information systems, using instruments such as telex, computers, TV, Xerox, not technically or artistically, but for operations designed to change their use or revolutionize their functions. □

This is an excerpt from "Untitled," first published in both Italian and English in Domus #496 (March 1971), pages 44–50. Germano Celant wrote about and curated numerous exhibitions of conceptual art and arte povera during the sixties and seventies, and is now Adjunct Curator of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

INFORMATION

N.E.THING CO. LTD.

1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada tel. (604) 929-3662 Telex 04-507802 Cable Anything Vancouver B.C.

Project	PROJECT DEPARTMENT	Number
9.69.5	TERRITORIAL CLAIM - URINATION 1969	5.1



Description

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN

N. E. THING COMPANY LIMITED
TEL: 929-3662

This Territorial Claim was produced by Iain Baxter, Co- Pres. N.E.THING CO. LTD. at Inuvik, N.W.T. Canada, inside the Arctic circle. One of a series of territorial claims being done on a global scale. Sept. 1969.

Top photo shows: President urinating.

Lower photo is urination mark on ice inside Arctic Circle at Inuvik, North West Territories, Canada.



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LAYOUT SHEET INFORMATION DEPARTMENT N.E.THING CO. LTD.

On the Exhibition

Alvin Balkind

A densely written letter arrived in the mail inviting me to contribute a few paragraphs on the N.E. Thing Company for the catalogue of the current exhibition, and to comment on my “curatorial programme” during the sixties at the Fine Arts Gallery.

Words like “generic representation,” “reconceptualize,” “nexus,” and the phrase, “space of privileged viewing” (which I take to mean “art gallery”) flew up off the pages; and I asked myself, could this be about the Baxters I used to know? Could this weighty, euphemistic academicism have anything at all to do with NETCO, that band of impish, wicked, Rabelaisian creatures who made us all burst into laughter back in the sixties? Now, even then we knew, as Alexander Herzen noted, that laughter is no laughing matter. We knew that underneath it all were some probing reflexions upon social mores, consumerism, *et al.*, which gave those works an extra edge. This reassured us that the apparently heedless pleasure we derived from them, like a sweetened bitter pill, made us all the better for it. But at least it was pleasure, it was laughter. Talk about endangered species.

NETCO didn't hate plastic-wrapped supermarket food or landscape detritus, or for that matter, corporations. They weren't into diatribes. In fact, they were half in love with what they poked fun at and had an amused, sophisticated detachment from it all. Like diplomats, they had no visible and cumbersome principles, only interests.

Now, as for the question of how N.E. Thing Co. fitted in with my “curatorial programme” in the sixties, I can only say that I had no curatorial programme, nor did I want one. There was no goal, no aim to defeat an enemy (except *épater l'académie*). What went on there was an eclectic and pluralistic eruption of one event after

another, responding more to an innate sense of hellbent adventure, to some vague feeling of responsibility to art, to diversity, and to a passionately held commitment to contemporaneity as expressed in visual form. And certainly, the Gallery (that “space of privileged viewing” [*sic*]) now and then forayed into historical art when the opportunity presented itself.

So it was a foregone conclusion that, when N.E. Thing came along, it would be love at first sight. Of course we were aware that this was “a city bound by conservative, colonial and parochial ideas about art.” But this only made us all the more determined to go on with it. And we did. □

Alvin Balkind was Director of the UBC Fine Arts Gallery from 1962 to 1973. He later held curatorial and administrative posts at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Banff Centre.



Ingrid Baxter carrying inflatable Trudeau, 1969

"Steady Now, Is This Art?"

Paul Grescoe

Such was the headline on the magazine article that introduced the N.E. Thing Co. to a mass audience across Canada, and its quizzical tone reflected not only the skepticism of the magazine's editor (who went on to become the influential editor of *The Toronto Star* and a vice-president of the CBC) but also the popular suspicion of any challenging art—a feeling still obtained in the late sixties despite a decade of overturned carts.

The same magazine in later years did publish my chronicles of the Baxters' Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition that collected people whose last names were common words and lined them up for photographs that formed complete sentences; and Iain's antic *Instant America* odyssey through thirty-one states in forty days, taking Polaroids of roadside kitsch and culture reflected in a rearview mirror. Yet always the articles were published with the nervousness that somehow these so-called artists were putting something over on us, but it's okay, readers, we're in on the joke.

My own little joke was in manipulating the commercial media to run articles on art that they normally wouldn't have touched with a ten-foot paintbrush. As a magazine writer, I saw the Baxters as serious artists who had introduced their own form of Dadaism to the Canadian scene, transcending, with visual puns and creative redefinitions, those boundaries that kept most people from considering conceptual art. As Iain said in his "Message from the President" that opened the mock annual report I wrote for the N.E. Thing Co.'s family business twenty-four years ago, "Art doesn't seem to be an important commodity in a sod-busting society."

What Iain and Ingrid were conspiring to do then (and I as a collaborator was trying to promulgate) was to create a subversive propaganda campaign that pointed out the existence of art in the everyday, that said we simply need to have our attention directed to the aesthetics around us—and that used the accessible satire of a corporate structure to celebrate art as an important commodity. □

Paul Grescoe worked with the Baxters on Vancouver Magazine in the seventies. He is a writer of fiction and nonfiction and a corporate communications consultant based in Vancouver.



Iain Baxter on Burnaby Mountain, January 1, 1968, burying inflatable object as *Centennial Dispersion and Proliferation*.

INFORMATION

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Project

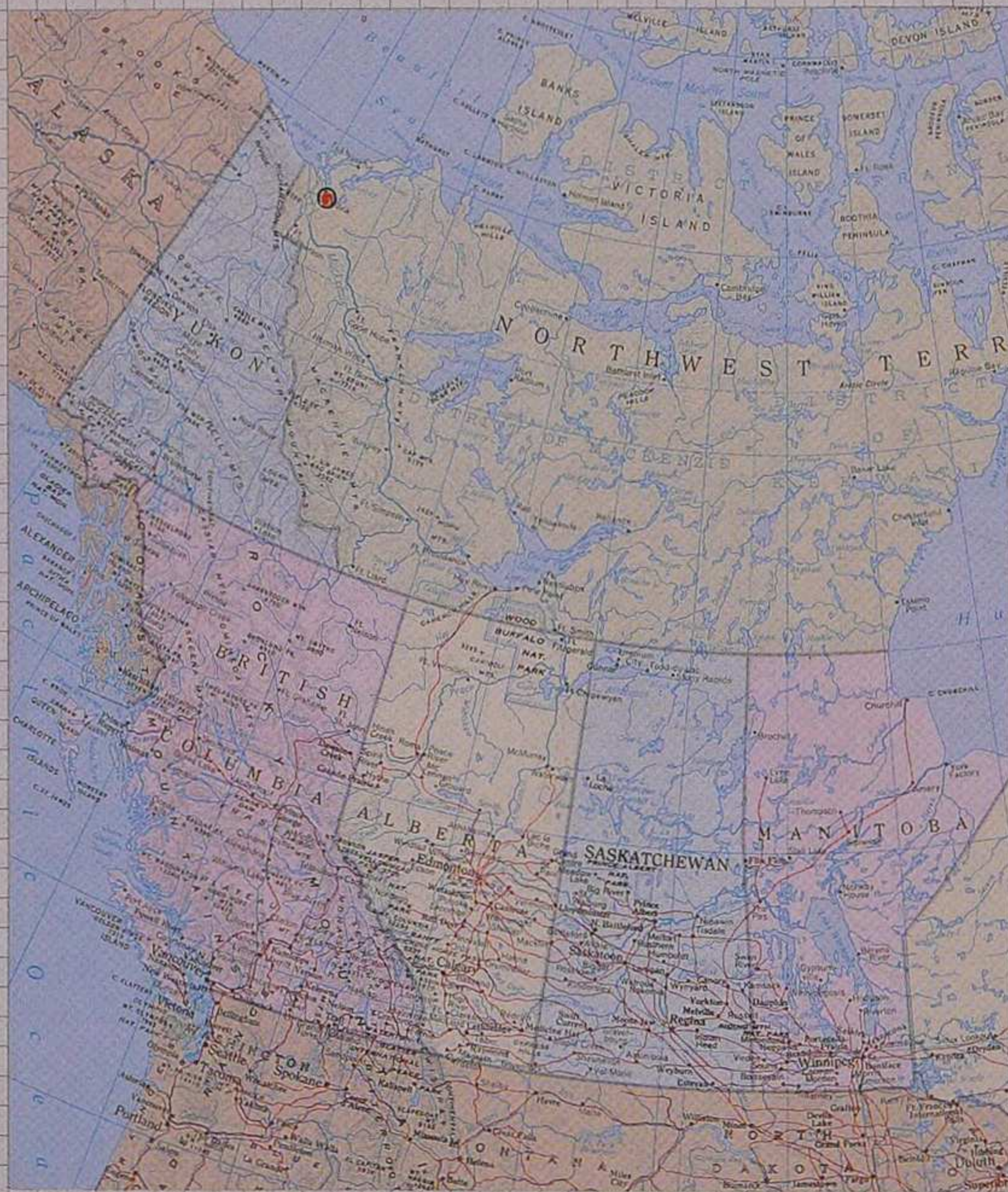
PROJECT DEPARTMENT

Number

9.69.6

16 COMPASS POINTS IN ARCTIC CIRCLE
1969

6.1



ESE

Description

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN

N. E. THING COMPANY LIMITED

SPAZENHARD ©

This compass project was carried out in Inuvik, NWT, Canada, in Sept. 1969.



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LAYOUT SHEET INFORMATION DEPARTMENT N.E.THING CO. LTD.

55. Sixteen Compass Points Within the Arctic Circle, 1969 (above and opposite)

INFORMATION

N.E. THING CO. LTD.
Project: **PROJECT RESEARCH**
16 SURFACE POINTS IN ARCTIC CIRCLE
1969



Description
This compass photo was carried out in Toronto, Ont. Canada, in Sept. 1969.



INFORMATION

N.E. THING CO. LTD.
Project: **PROJECT RESEARCH**
16 SURFACE POINTS IN ARCTIC CIRCLE
1969

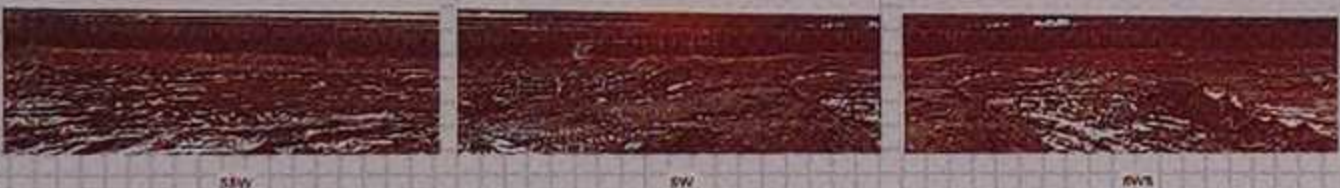


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N.E. THING CO. LTD.
Project: **PROJECT RESEARCH**
16 SURFACE POINTS IN ARCTIC CIRCLE
1969

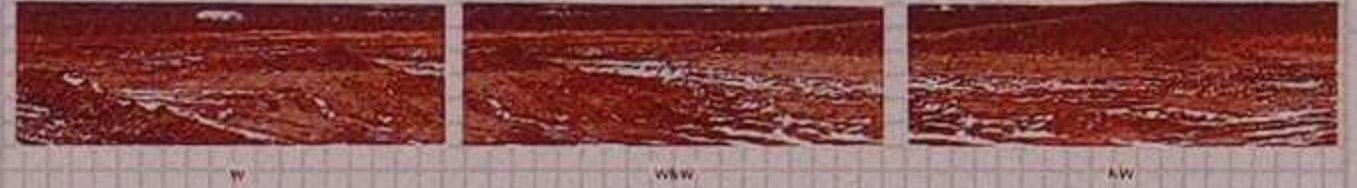


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N.E. THING CO. LTD.
Project: **PROJECT RESEARCH**
16 SURFACE POINTS IN ARCTIC CIRCLE
1969



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16 SURFACE POINTS IN ARCTIC CIRCLE
1969



Description



You Are Now in the Middle of a Revisionist History of the N.E.Thing Co.

Lucy R. Lippard

There are several reasons for NETCO's exclusion from the (new) official history of conceptual art. One is that the people writing that history were not around (or not participants) in the heady days of flashing ideas and wide-open horizons—1966-70; many of them have had to fall back on their academic pillows rather than plunging into any real sense of what was happening. Another is that there was always something endearingly clunky and unsophisticated about NETCO's work, even—I hasten to add—when precisely those characteristics permitted it to evade the traps of cynicism and oversophistication that the art world lays for its wayward offspring. Speaking of which, there was also the family aspect, which gave NETCO a fiftyish cast incomprehensible to some urban rebels. Not to mention the corporate aspect which, for all my enthusiasm for the Baxters' work, always gave me pause because it was ultimately not a critical stance. Humorous, yes. Ironic and corrective, no.

Location in Vancouver, on the other hand, was not a disadvantage, since it provided the conceptual core of NETCO's trajectory impetus into the larger world. The best conceptual art was governed by and responsive to its context. NETCO flourished as a bridge from its own insistent provincialism to the lands of city-slickness. Its context was the energy waves between artists all over the world (among whom I would count Seth Siegelaub) who understood how to ride them without the usual expensive surfboards. There was a lot to freedom on the margins, something that has recently been discovered by other voluntarily and involuntarily decentralized groups. And one of the goals of conceptual art was to break down

the barriers of walls, distance, nomenclature, that bolstered the powers that were (and be).

In this day of domestic facsimiles and computer bulletin boards (and more, much more), young artists may look at NETCO's 1970 Transmission of Visual Sensitivity Information with something of a so-what. But at the time, it represented a welcome subversion of art's business by business' arts. (Although Audre Lorde's much-quoted statement is borne out: The master's house was not dismantled by the master's tools.) NETCO's jovial embrace of capitalism was (slyly) naïve, enthusiastic, apolitical. The Baxters *liked* corporate structures. Their use of TV and radio spots to advertise their art predicted the media focus of the 1980s. In the later 1970s, they operated successful businesses—photographic and culinary—that tipped away from even the NETCO definition of "art."

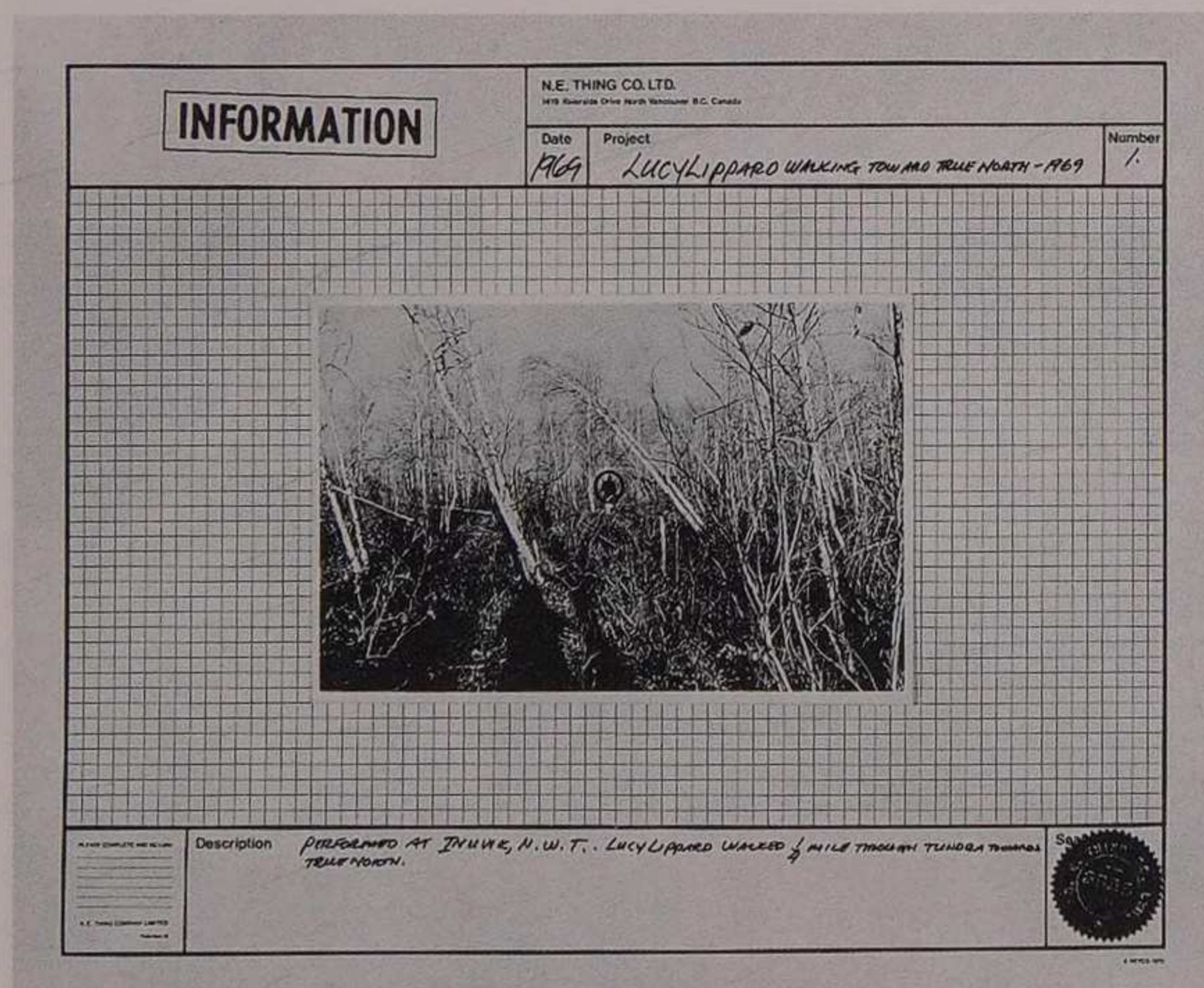
Puns—visual and verbal—were NETCO's best tools. Their motto "Art Is All Over" still had two sharp points. In a grand and very North American gesture, the Baxters aesthetically claimed or rejected everything, from landscapes as far as the viewer could see to objects and images made anywhere and everywhere. Their "celebration of the ordinary" was heir to the long line of found objects, readymades, assemblages strewn along the path of higher art in the twentieth century. Much has been made recently of a Duchampian influence which was, in fact, for most conceptual artists nothing more than a distant and rarely consulted Duchampian example. (Warhol is probably more to the point.) Certainly there is a Dada element in NETCO, but here too it is a matter of lineage rather than emulation. The idea

of Dada made all things possible and NETCO is one of many very different fish within that sea of possibilities. But where the intention of most European and many North American artists was to make the ordinary extraordinary, NETCO did its best to keep the ordinary ordinary, to let it lie, documented but not altered in their role of "Visual Informers," they were tourist guides rather than didacts. They pointed *out*: Hey! Look at that! Life was divided into those Things claimed and those things rejected. (The fact that the first were called ACTs and the second ARTs was not insignificant.)

In retrospect, my favourite piece is the photographic *Portfolio of Piles*. It is a compendium of the Baxters' preoccupations, their peculiar blend of local and global, matter and anti-matter, ecology and electronics, permitting them to comment on art (Smithson's sites/nonsites, Morris' perhaps unfeeling felts), the environment and ecology (it was from Iain that I first heard the term), popular culture (thanks to its "natural" sources, *Piles* was devoid of the sexist imagery all too often endorsed by NETCO) industry, fashion, you name it. The notion of the pile—a casual, borderline-ugly form shaped by blunt gravity rather than by the delicate hand of the artist—was in itself part of the Zeitgeist, inherited from

minimalism, the stylized classicism of arte povera, and especially the roving, indiscriminating lens of Ed Ruscha, which were conceptual art's formal roots. *Piles* both extended and poked fun at its elders. It reflected the anarchic stylelessness as style that was a NETCO trademark, so to speak. At the same time, it worked as an educational device (Ingrid's focus) in that it did what Ad Reinhardt said art should do: teach people how to see.

In the sixties, some conceptual artists and critics (I, for one) talked a lot about the possibilities of nonobject art reaching into nonart situations—called Life. There were a lot of tantalizing tentatives but few consistent achievements along these lines. (It was happening in less imaginative ways in the community arts, but it was not until the late seventies that the two would really meet and occasionally cohabit.) Networking, opening channels through which art ideas could flow into formerly arid fields was NETCO's forte, even when the results ultimately reinforced the status quo. Because the Baxters were so uncritical, so good natured, so cheerfully of their time and place, unseparated from everyday life (one of their projects was a Pee-Wee hockey team that won its league championship), NETCO occupies a unique place in the contested history of conceptual art that was never written and is now being rewritten. □



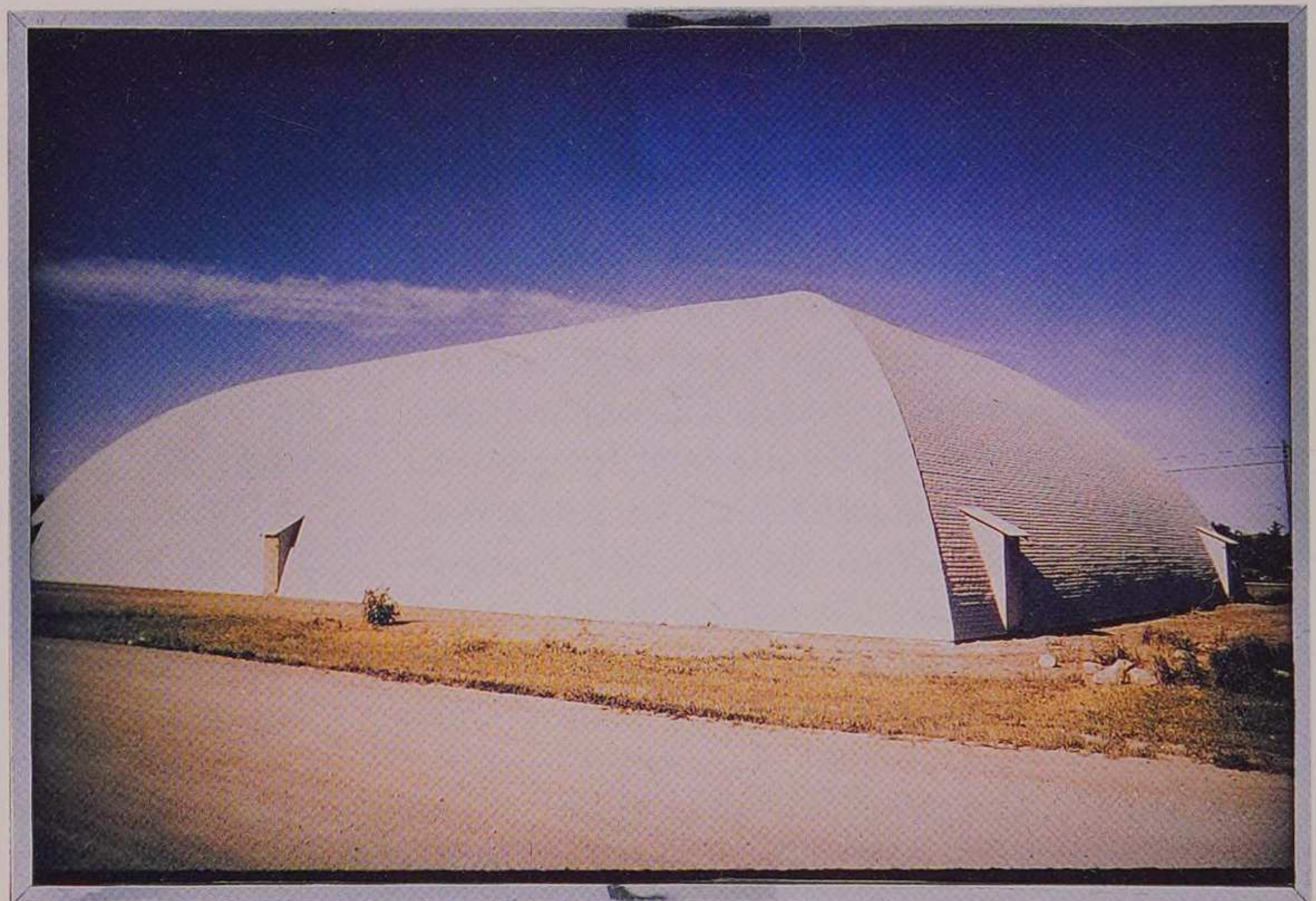
Lucy R. Lippard has published fifteen books on art and has curated many exhibitions of contemporary art over the past three decades. As an avid supporter of conceptual art, she curated several exhibitions with NETCO participation and also travelled to the Arctic with the Baxters in 1969.

57. *Lucy Lippard Walking Toward True North, 1969*

44. *Landscape*, 1968



37. *Community Hall 20 Miles East of Regina*, 1968



63. *Reflected Arctic Landscape*, 1969



Remembering the N.E. Thing Company

David P. Silcox

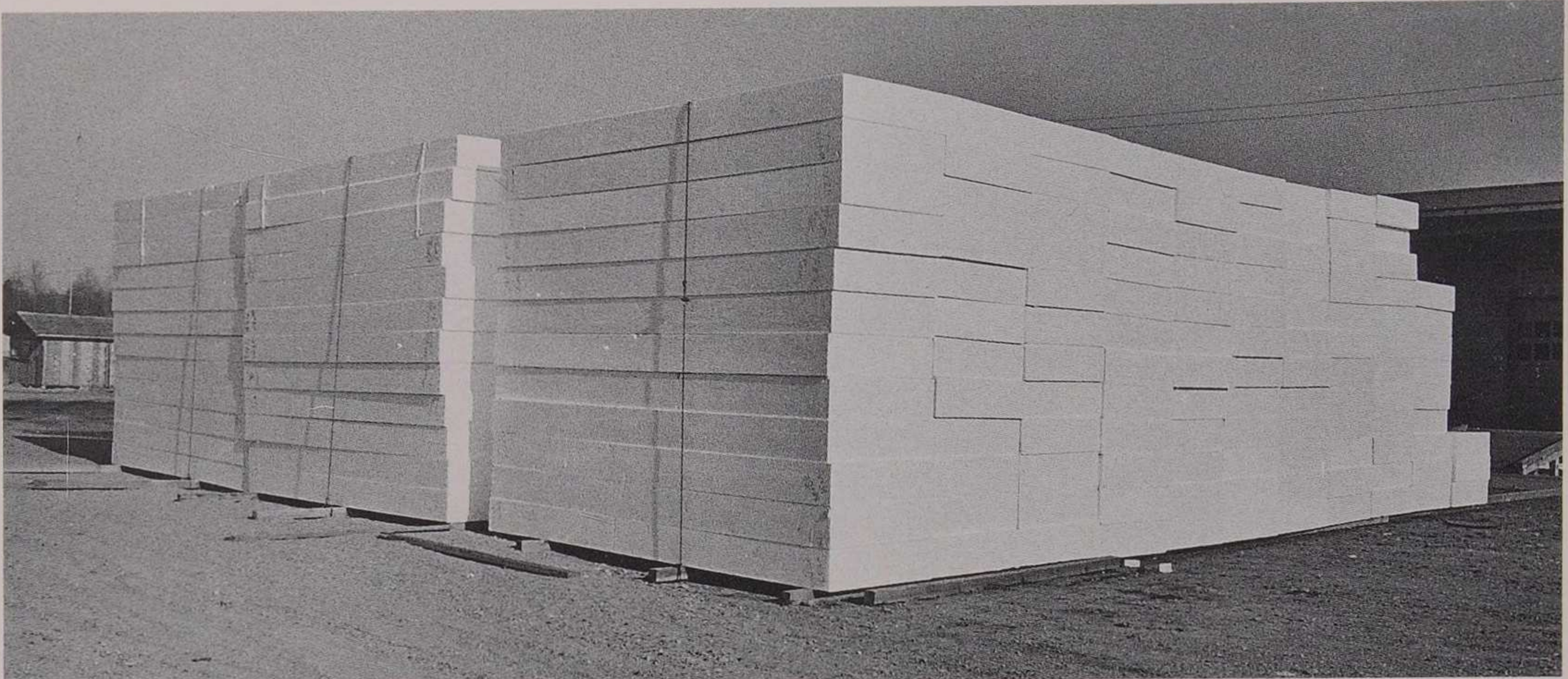
In the early winter of 1966, I blew into Vancouver as the Canada Council's first arts officer, an "Artofficial" as Iain Baxter soon dubbed me. In tow, I had the Council's first-ever arts jury of Elizabeth Kilbourn, Ron Bloore and Albert Dumouchel. Since our primary interest was the visual arts, we made straight for Iain Baxter's *Bagged Place* in the Fine Arts Gallery at UBC, at Alvin Balkind's urgent request. Somewhere I still have photos of ourselves cavorting there: Albert and Betsy posing in bed like sarcophagi, covered with plastic; Ron, similarly bedecked, reading a book at the dining room table; me, in the bathroom, plastic wrapped and pretending to pee.

The artistic fecundity of Vancouver at that time seemed as limitless as the sea that surrounded it. Then, and for the ensuing few years, Vancouver had an intense sense of discovery and a gracious sense of magnanimity. Above the good-natured rivalry that everyone, Baxter included, took part in, was a sense that everyone was big enough to wish everyone else well, and to be thankful for each successful artistic achievement. People applauded Bill Reid's carving and jewelry, Glenn Topping's kayaks, paintings by Claude Breeze, Brian Fisher, Michael Morris and Gary Lee-Nova, Gathie Falk's ceramics, Evelyn Roth's knitted videotape couture, Al Neil's performances, and Bill Bissett's publications. The door was open to strangers, and different generations were easy with each other. This was a stimulating context for Baxter's work and, while he was not really a joiner or part of a specific faction, being somewhat too selfish, in a cheerful way, for that (rather like Toni Onley), the amount of indirect support in the air cannot be overestimated.

Enthusiasm of senior artists like Gordon Smith, Jack Shadbolt and Bert Binning and curators such as Doris Shadbolt and Alvin Balkind was responsible for much of Vancouver's ambience. They had an eye for talent and nurtured it. Arthur Erickson's Simon Fraser University made you think that Canada could do anything. And when visitors such as critics Lucy Lippard (New York) or David Thompson (London), or artists like Ralph Ortiz (New York), or Harold Cohen (London) or Ed Keinholz (Los Angeles), or curators like Ricky DeMarco (Edinburgh), all of whom I arranged Council travel grants to Vancouver for, joined in the general euphoria, you had a pretty positive atmosphere in which to work. Thinking became a matter of being always on the edge, sharp, aware of what was going on elsewhere, but sensitive to what Vancouver and its milieu needed. You felt "This is right for here and now."

Baxter's centrality in all this (and he was central: in spirit as well as being the only Canadian ever on the cover of *Art in America*) hinged on his constant preoccupation with two things: what art was and how it affected society. His formative years had lead him along an improbable path. He had started off in science, studied nonverbal education and psychology, and had already spent a year in Japan. He had illustrated a book on wildlife, almost like an anatomical or botanical illustrator. He loved Giorgio Morandi, a painter Toni Onley had brought to his attention. All these things, ingested with the critical intuition of someone who was particularly curious and questioning, made Baxter, by 1966, a strange and potent force. His energy and ambitious drive carried all this with a lightness and ease that was impressive. His wife Elaine (she later used the name Ingrid) encouraged, shared and contributed to the vitality that wrapped itself around everything that was done then.

Defining what art was also helped to define what we did at the Canada Council. Basically, it tested our idea that support, financial and moral, should be there for any idea that seemed reasonable to the liberal mind and somehow connected with



52. From *Portfolio of Piles*, 1968

the artist's own requirements. Could we help an artist with an urgent need? We could, and a cheque arrived in Vancouver within twenty-four hours of the request. Would we give money to drop a sculpture by helicopter into the wilderness where it might pose an enigma ages hence? We would (but we didn't). We didn't help to paint the Arctic Circle red either, nor to put a plastic nurse's cap on Mount Edith Cavell, though Baxter thought of these and many more.

Baxter stretched the idea of what art was, pushing it inexorably into areas which affected how we saw things, and how we as a society, did things: hence his forays into the restaurant business and the cibachrome laboratory; hence a game of Monopoly with real money; hence, too, the creation of the N.E. Thing Company (it was at first N.E. Baxter Thing) and the bizarre creation of a business office inside an exhibition space at the National Gallery where I met a stranger who, not knowing I knew Iain, claimed from the president's chair that he was Iain Baxter.

Baxter's work, wonky as it seemed to many then, was also in touch with his family and with his environment. He seemed to sense the things that ordinary folk saw and he helped them to realize that what they saw could be art if they looked at it that way, with the innocence and intensity of love and understanding. In truth, he never really wandered far from traditional forms like the still life or the landscape or the portrait. But for each

of these he created a contemporary approach which both echoed tradition and seemed incredibly avant garde. The high aesthetics of art were put to the service of lowly things: plastic pots, flowers, home hardware tools, furniture, food, appliances, etc. Baxter out-Duchamped Duchamp with many of his common-place borrowing or appropriations (ACTs and ARTs). His ideas are still being mined by others a quarter of a century later, while he has gone on exploring and developing, charting new areas of concern for today.

People say to me that what Baxter was doing five years ago was pretty good, but that they don't like what he has done recently. They've been saying it for twenty-five years now. The reason Baxter stays ahead is because he stays alive. He provokes himself before he goads others. And he prods others because his job as an artist is to get people to question themselves. It's only the way most people can tell that they're alive. □

Since his time with the Canada Council, David P. Silcox has taught at York University and held administrative posts in the federal Department of Communications and the Ontario Ministry of Culture. He is currently a fellow of Massey College, University of Toronto, working on a catalogue raisonnée of David Milne.

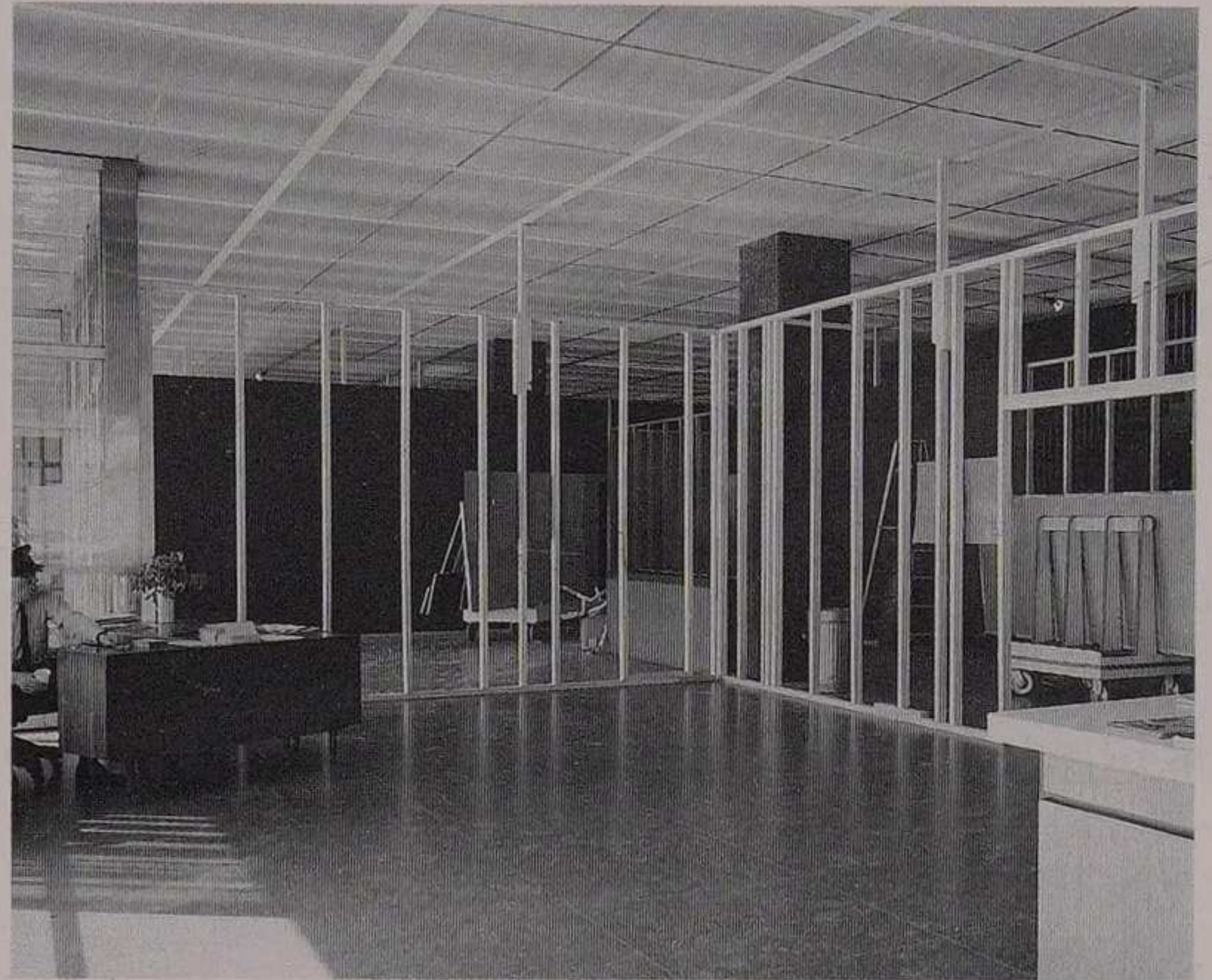
N.E. Thing Company in Ottawa

Pierre Théberge

It is not possible to say that the N.E. Thing Co.'s presence on the ground floor of the Lorne Building in Ottawa from (June 4 to July 9, 1969), which then housed the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, was in any way a traditional exhibition.

Given the occasion of presenting itself and its activities, the N.E. Thing Co. (basically Iain and Ingrid Baxter's invention) chose to transform the ground floor of the building into its headquarters. The space was divided into reception areas, offices, and display areas in such a way that it could not be seen as anything but the headquarters of some kind of large corporation: the receptionist, the potted plants, the divisions indicator panel, the walnut paneling, the rows of desks, chairs and typewriters were a convincing representation of what a corporate headquarters was expected to look like at that time, the late sixties. Even the "products" of the N.E. Thing Co., like for example the inflatable clouds, plus the vacuum-formed still lifes and landscapes, as well as the inflatable wearables, were presented as artlessly and as commercially as possible in a room where floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows made everything and anything quite visible from the street.

The president was on duty daily to receive visitors and potential business associates. Several activities were organized, like the display of some of the National Gallery's bright red packing crates in a room as "ACT" works or the building of a corner of a two-by-four house frame by two of the Gallery's most skillful carpenters on the stage of the auditorium. The frame was then displayed in one of the exhibition areas. That event had as much to do with pantomime and music (nails



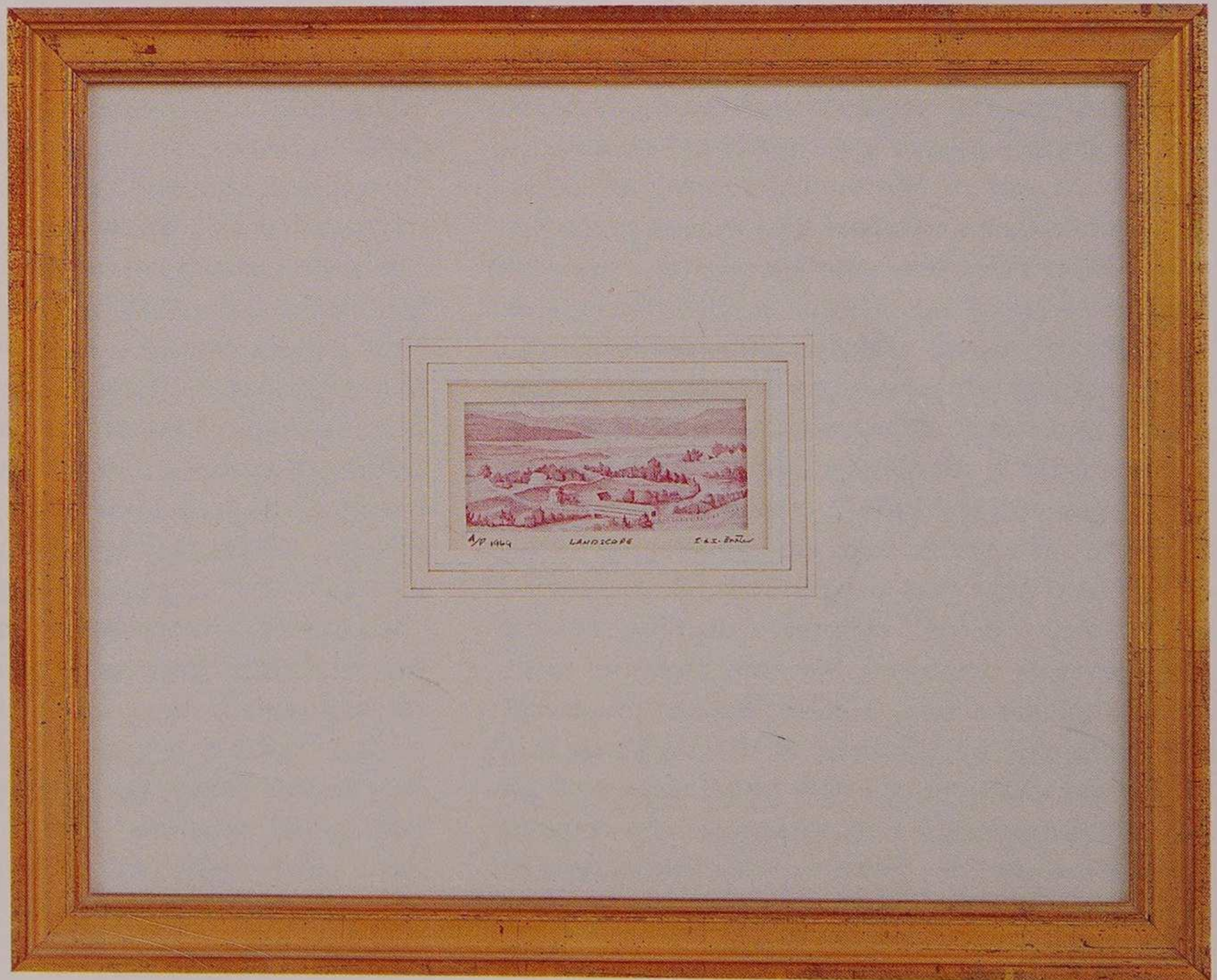
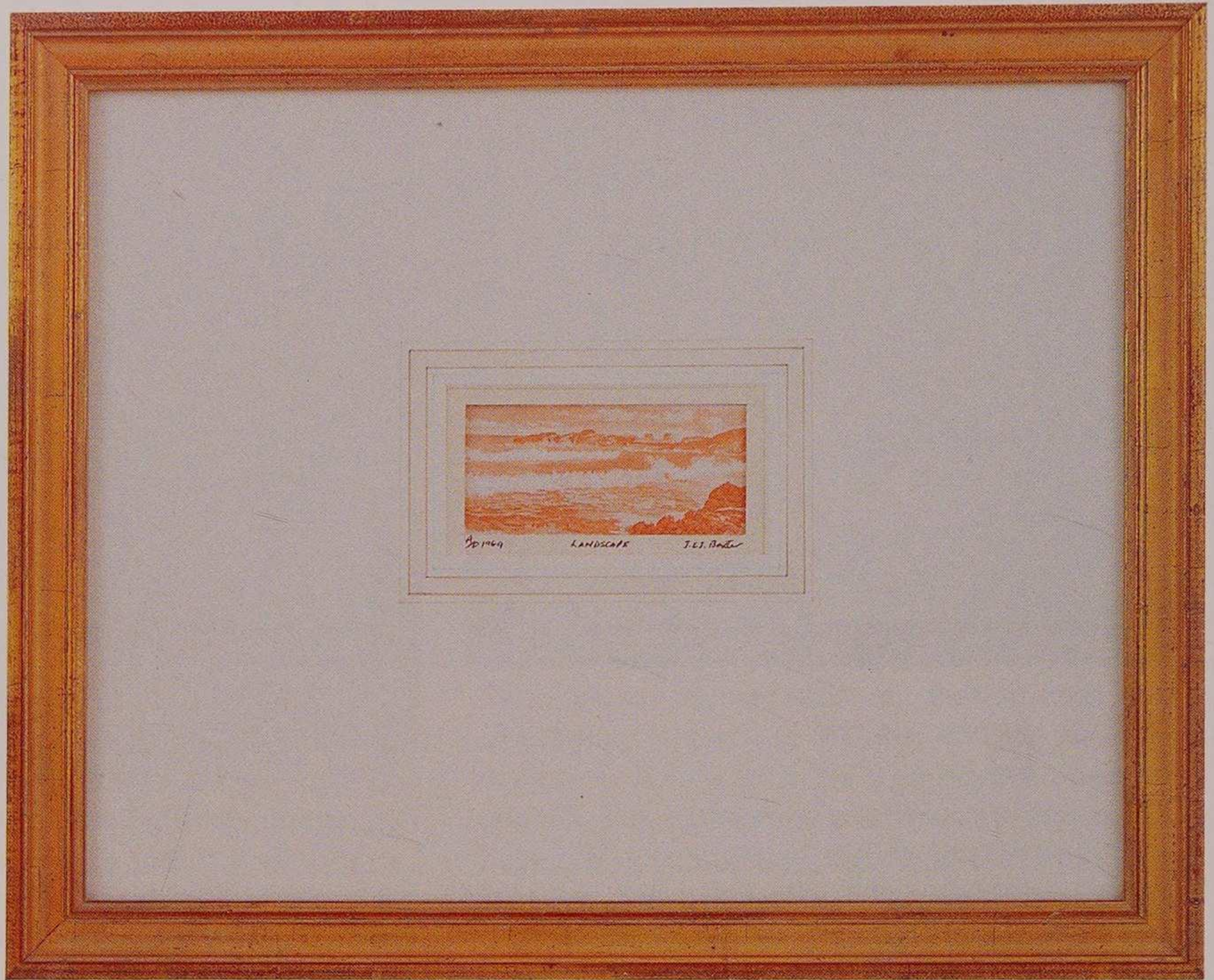
Corporate headquarters at the National Gallery, 1969

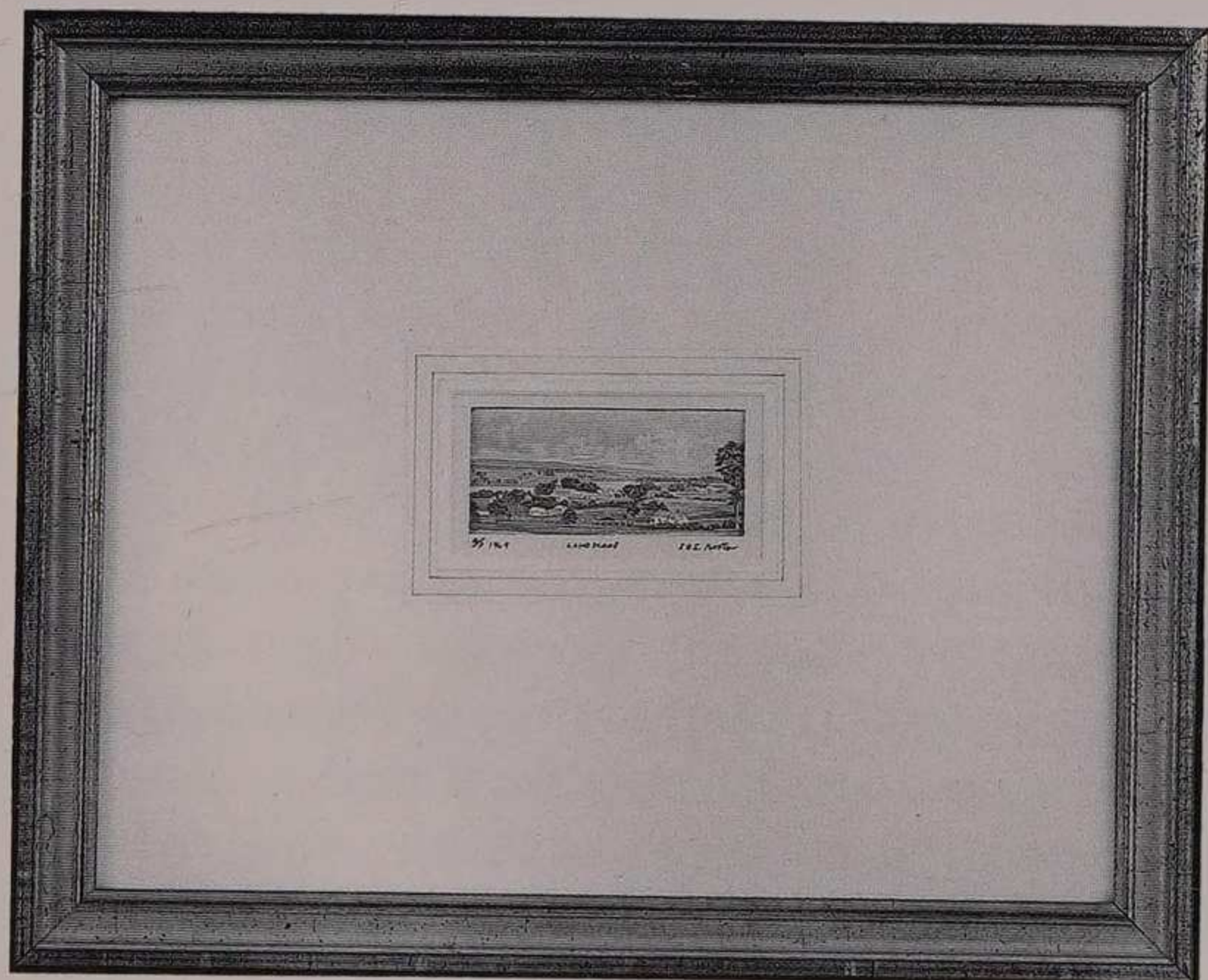
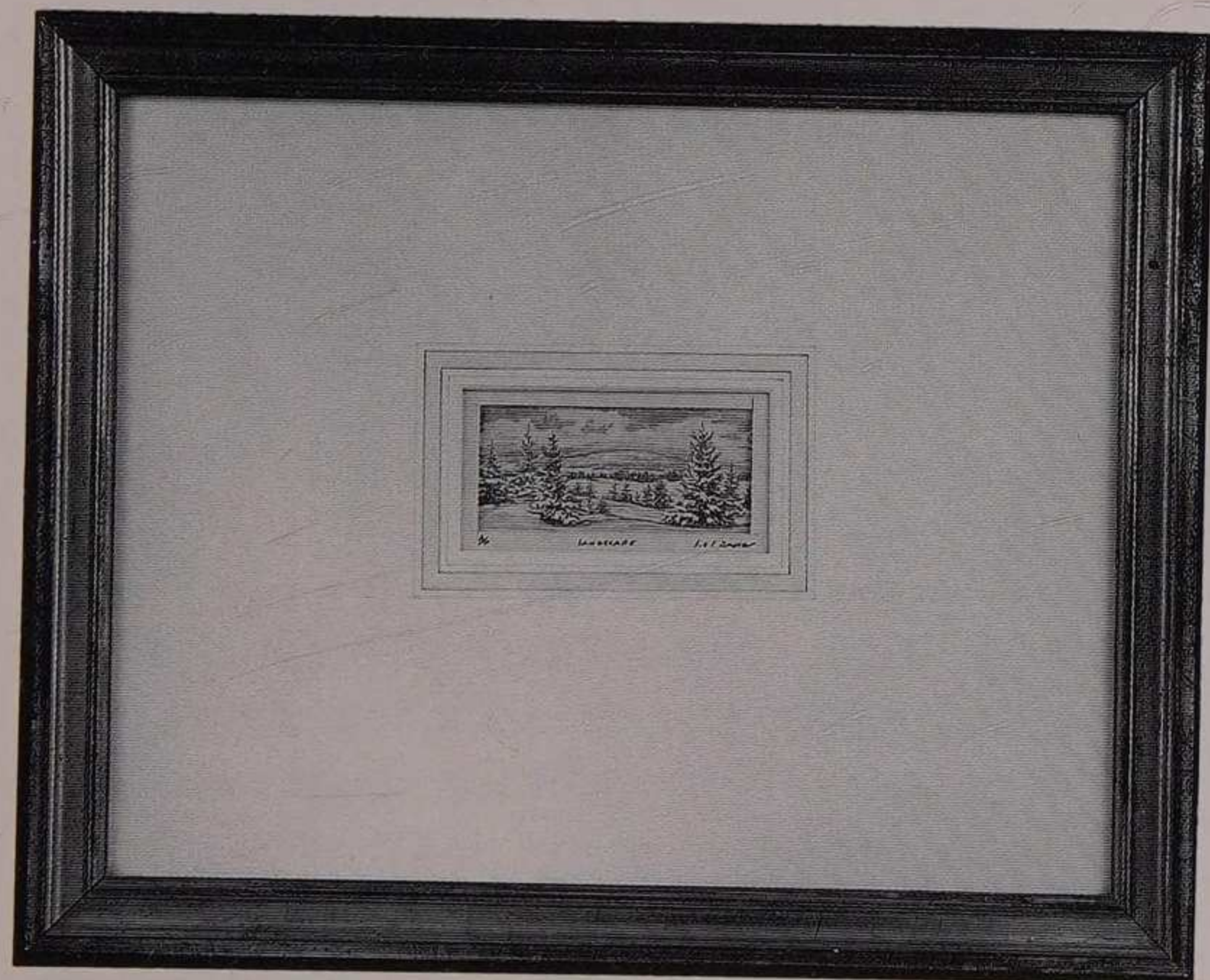
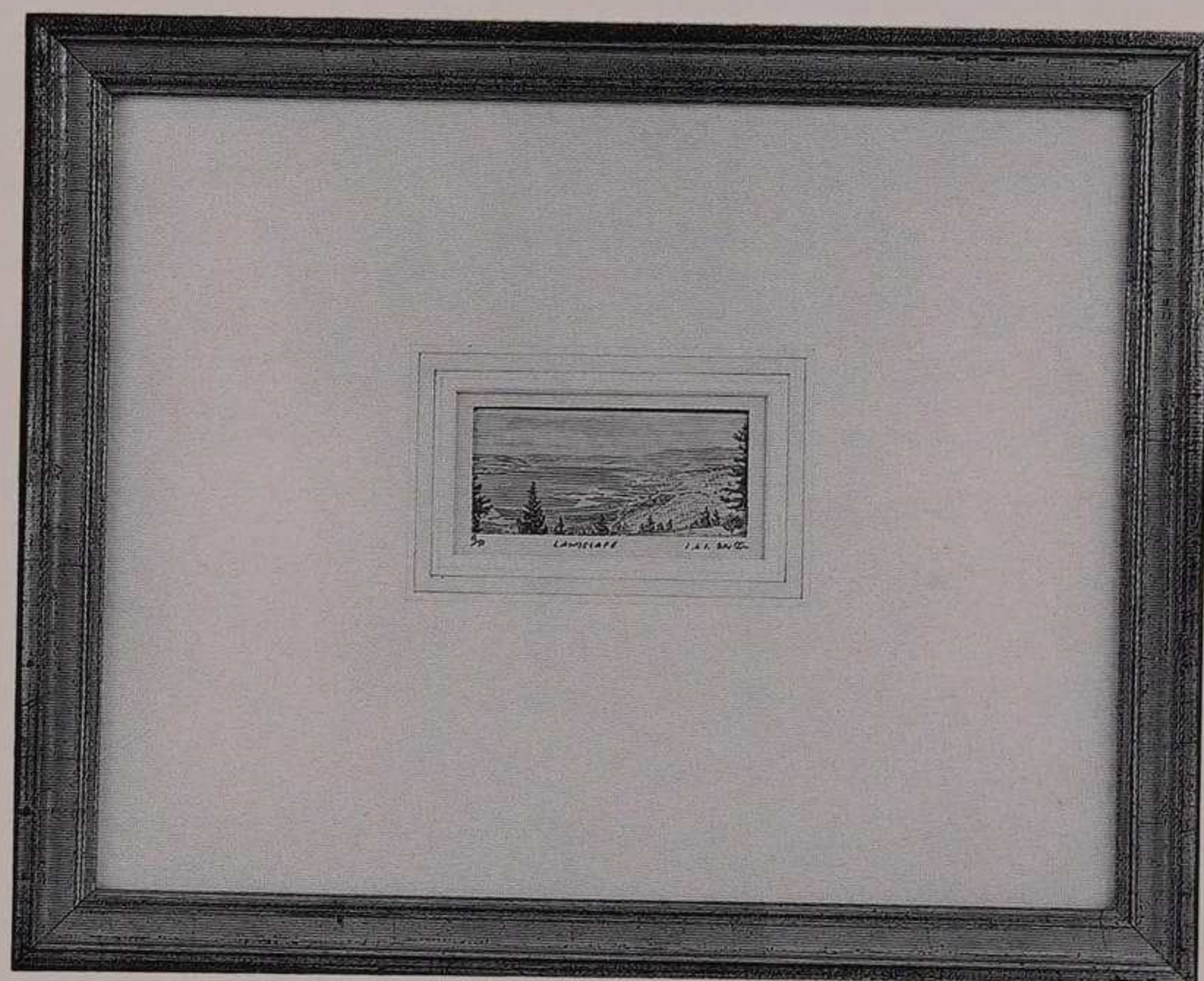
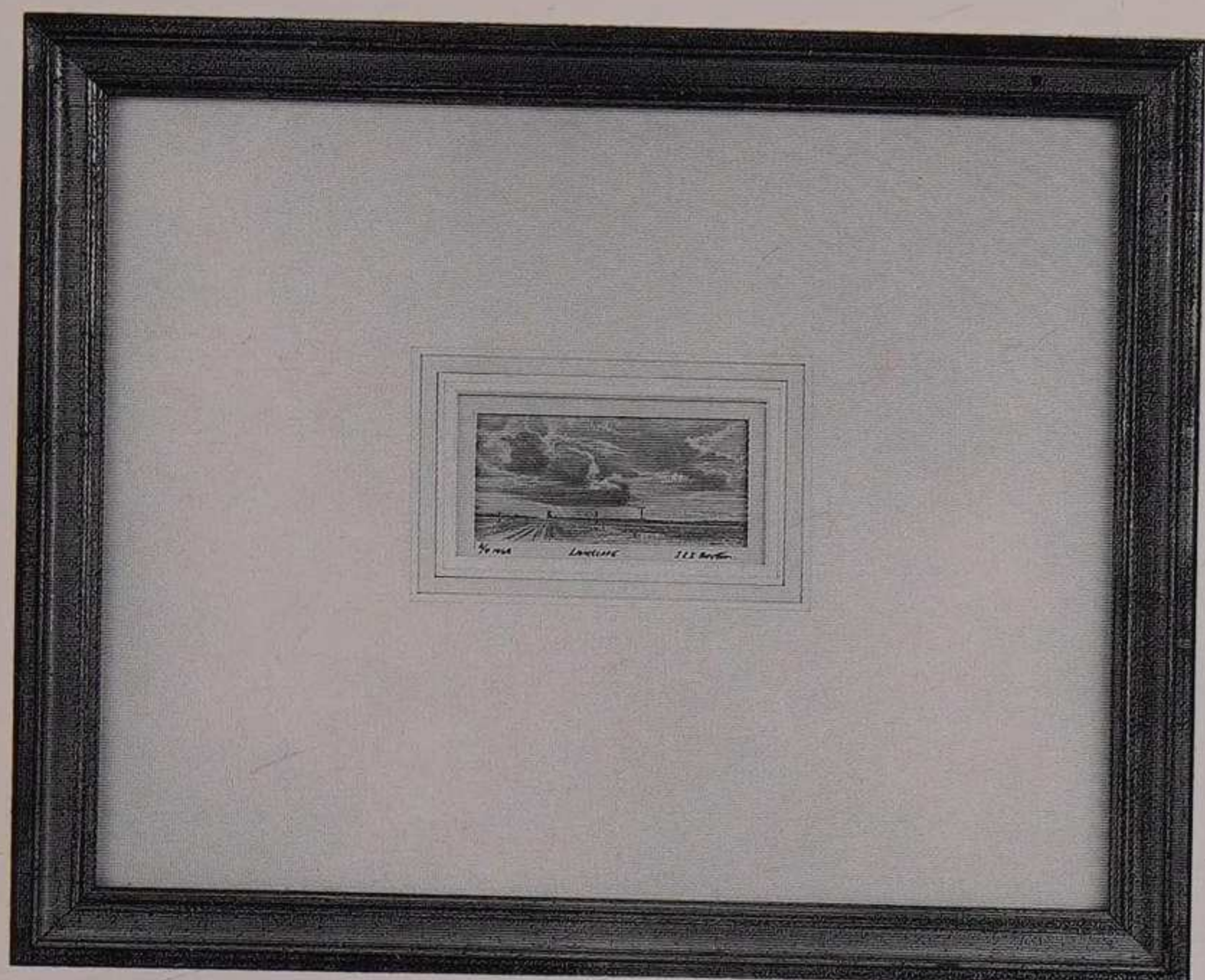
being hammered, saws being used) as with carpentry. These two "events" eloquently demonstrated the N.E. Thing Co.'s habitual practice of displacing things and events from one context into another—most often with great humour and lively intelligence.

The month-long installation of the N.E. Thing Co.'s headquarters in Ottawa had come about rather spontaneously during conversations which I had with the Baxters, then living in West Vancouver, about the possibility of their doing an exhibition at the Gallery. I had not thought very clearly about what it should be, but since they had already organized *Bagged Place* and *Piles* at UBC, it seemed logical to think they would organize another "environment." The idea of actually installing the corporate headquarters was quite a surprise. It also surprised and mostly amused the visitors to the National Gallery.

For myself, I remember the preparation time and the exhibition itself as a wonderfully happy and exciting period. □

As Assistant Curator of Canadian Art at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Pierre Théberge coordinated the NETCO exhibition discussed above. He is currently Director of the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts.





61. Suite of Canadian Landscapes, 1969 (above and opposite)

The Unobviousness of the Obvious

Charlotte Townsend-Gault

Don't be afraid of looking at the obvious because it usually isn't. This could have been one of the subtexts of N.E. Thing Company strategies, and specifically of the departments that dealt with landscape. The inclusiveness, and the randomness, of "anything" were ways of scrutinizing the obvious and the visual conventions that make it so. The obviousness, even naïveté, of the strategy, is only apparent.

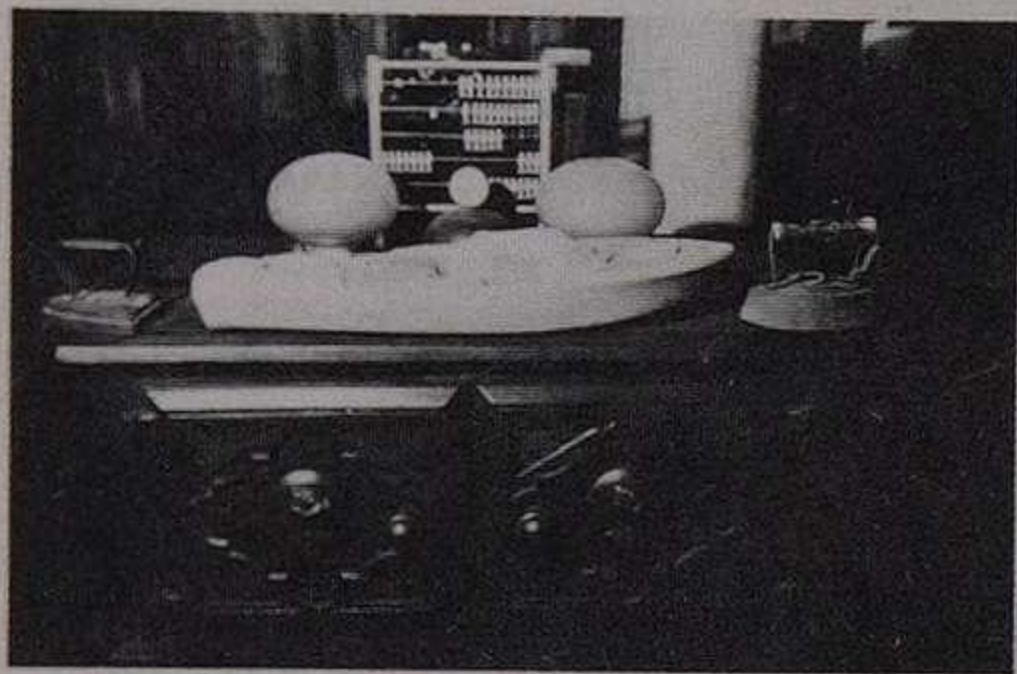
The method, as I remember it around 1968-69, was amazement at the observable world. The Company roamed around Vancouver in their International truck, accompanied by the omnipresent children, dog, *Yellow Pages* and camera, in a state of cheerful "high nervousness" (a phrase of Ian Wallace's) to scrutinize the docks, the dumps, the leavings in empty spaces, the second-hand shops along East Hastings. The Company eye was determined to probe and transform the insignificant and the meretricious not by theorising it, not by composing it, not by nominating it as kitsch, but by reevaluating it—in the self-evident faith that this could be done just by doing it. Leading an unscheduled, straight bohemian life, the Company could be found frequenting "family" restaurants to eat a lot of "family" food, to assess the art on the walls and the view from the washroom window; wondering at the devices and gizmos with which things are made and information shaped; tracking them down, learning to use them; scanning art and many other magazines; keeping up a tireless flow of amazement and ideas and schemes, only a fraction of which would be carried out but which could be extended by phone calls to friends and connections all over the continent, mostly cast as

questions: wouldn't it be great if . . . ? and, given the inclusiveness of "anything," the unanswerable, why not?

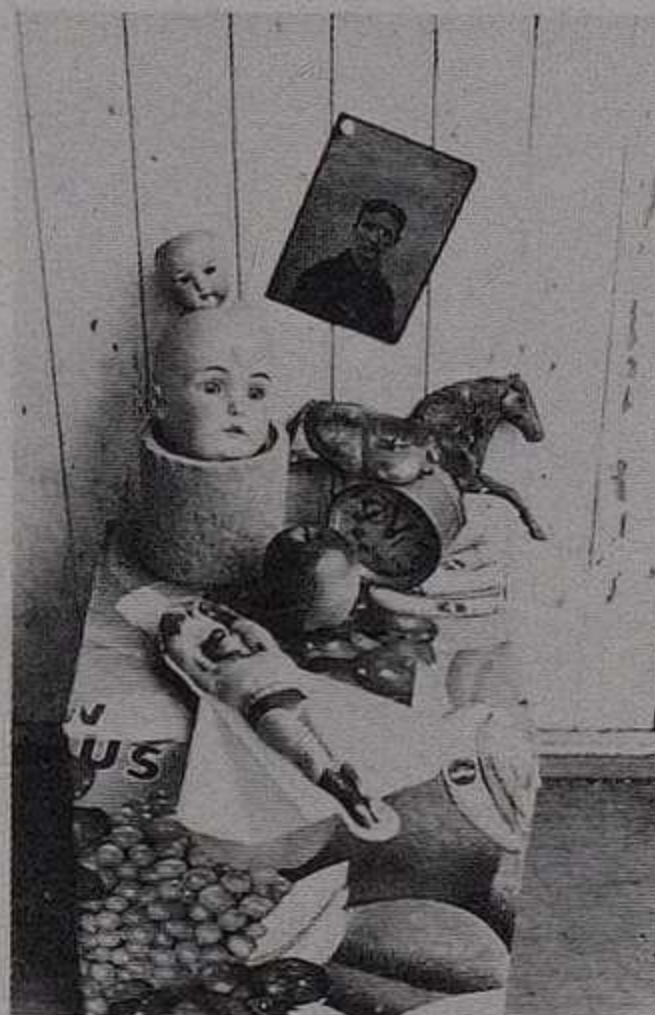
The Company's enthusiasm for the ordinary, for artless art wherever it was found in its extending field, persisted as an essentially visual strategy. It combined pragmatism and didacticism, Marshall McLuhan, Ed Ruscha and Dan Graham, with a touch that was both extravagant and sparing, the latter perhaps learned in Japan. There was an improving, populist intent, some envy of the communications strategies of the business world, and exasperation at the co-opting, and limiting, of visual sensitivity by the art world. It should have lead to the longest landscape, the most inclusive road movie ever—*5,000 Mile Movie*.

A generous sharing with those colleagues or students who found at least some of the Company's ideas infectious contributed to their infiltration into the subsequent discourse. For example, the Company's conjunction of acts of aesthetic approval with acts of photography provided a foundation for a Vancouver-based critical enquiry into the infinite readability of the uncomposed shot, into its framing and into the relationship between the photograph and modernist painting. Ways of framing that manipulate and appropriate frames from other discourses in the search to look "otherwise" at representations are explored by Ian Wallace, Bill Jones and Roy Arden, amongst the many artists in Vancouver whose work responds in some way to the N.E. Thing Co. The Company's playful didacticism concurrently appears in Greg Curnoe's work from the late sixties and the Joyce Weiland of *True Patriot Love*. The camera as a means to measure and comprehend great distance was extended in the work of Bill Vazan and the Roy Kiyooka of *transcanada letters*. An (apparently) simple, and repetitive, procedure that reveals the unobviousness of the obvious and stands a pragmatic approach to objects on its head can be traced in the *Thick Paintings (to be continued . . .)* of Eric Cameron. The spectatorship of the quotidian—albeit with readings incorporated—is elaborated

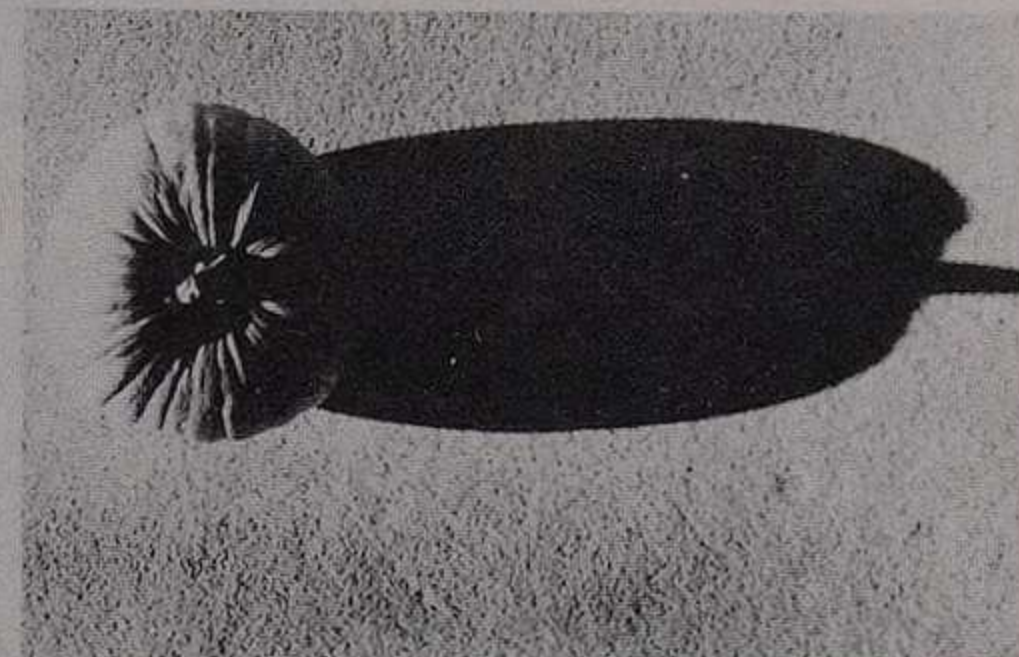
N.E.THING CO. LTD. Photography and Communications Departments. North American Time Zone Photo-V.S.I. Simultaneity. October 18, 1970 3. STILL-LIFE.



8.30 a.m. P.D.T.

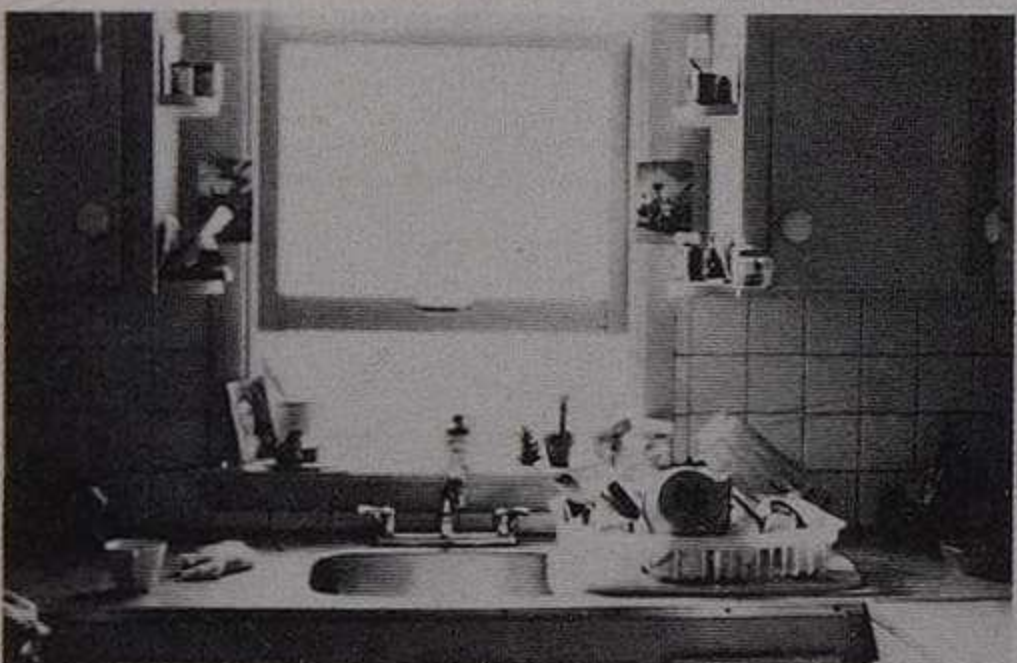


9.30 a.m. M.D.T.



10.30 a.m. C.D.T.

11.30 a.m. E.D.T.



12.30 p.m. A.D.T.



1.00 p.m. Nfld.D.T.



72. North American Time Zone Photo-VSI Simultaneity October 19, 1970

in photo works by Stan Denniston, Susan McEachern and Stan Douglas.

These works, and these enquiries, apparently unrelated, can be seen as carrying on the investigation into the obviousness of it all to which the N.E. Thing Company gave massive

encouragement some twenty-five years ago. □

Charlotte Townsend-Gault is a writer on art and anthropology. During the sixties and seventies, she discussed NETCO in articles for *artscanada*, *Studio International* and the *Vancouver Sun*.

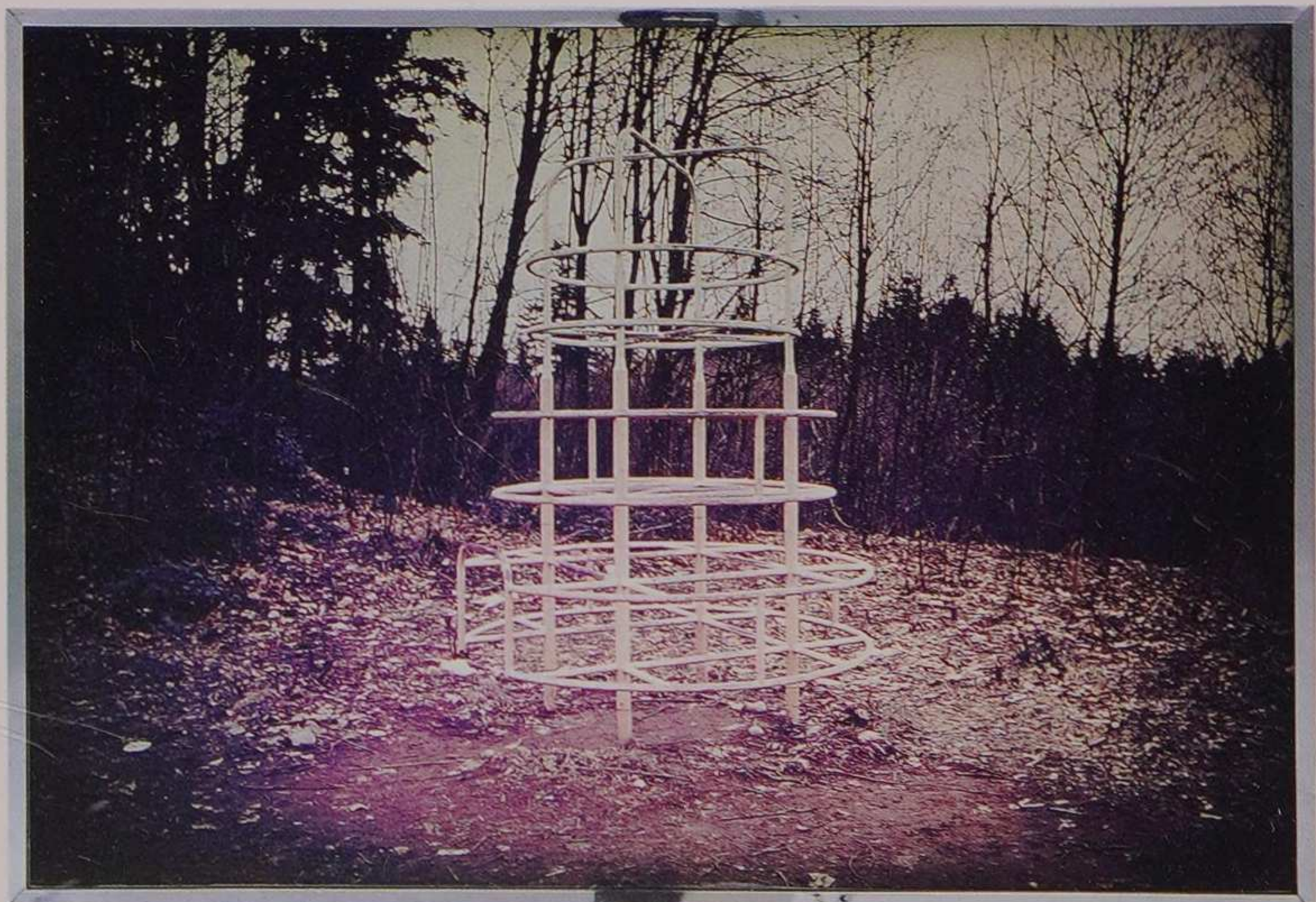
1. *Landscape with Mountains
and Sea*, 1965

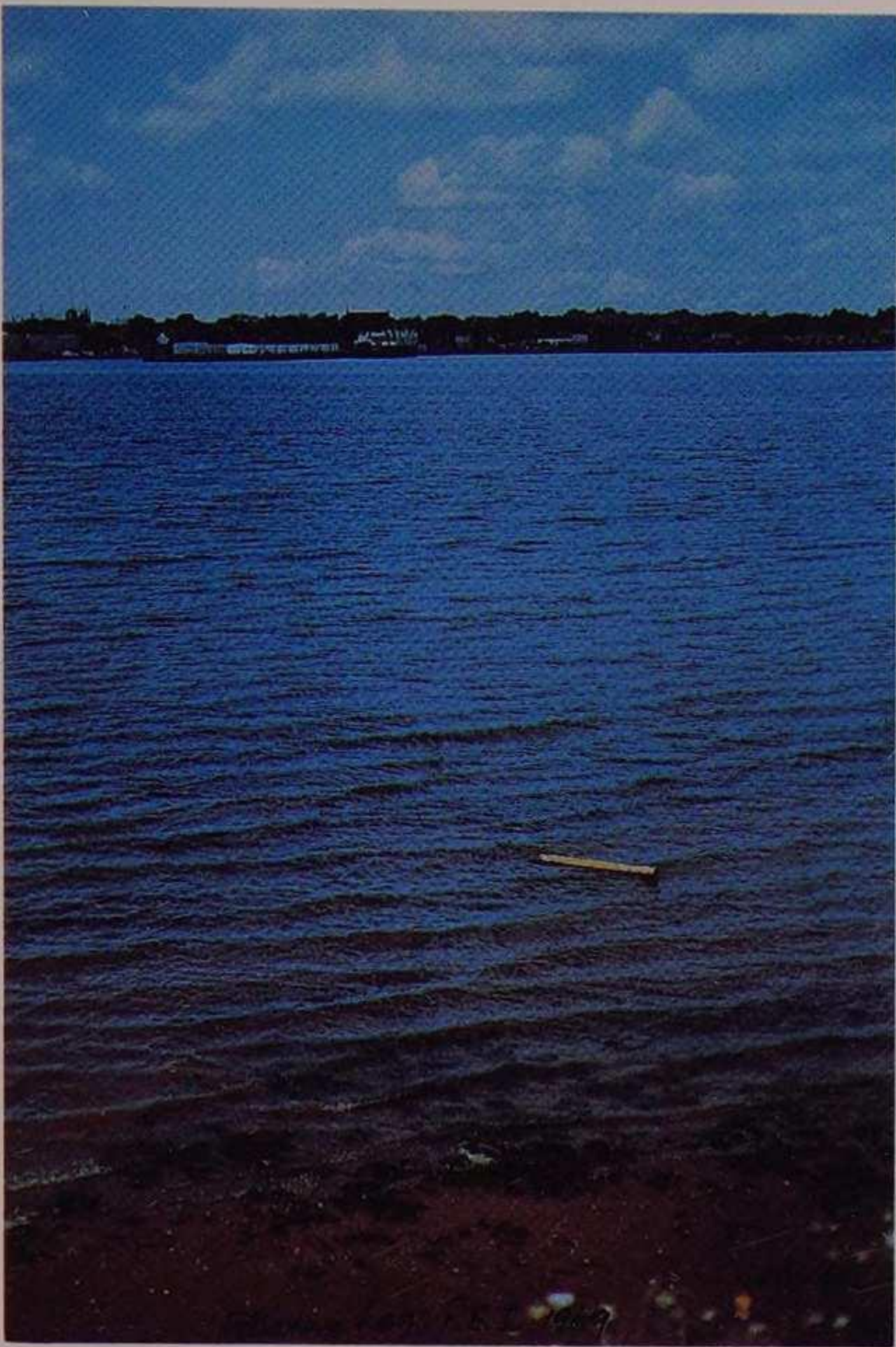


38. *Still Life with 6 Trucks*,
Highway 1 Saskatchewan, 1968

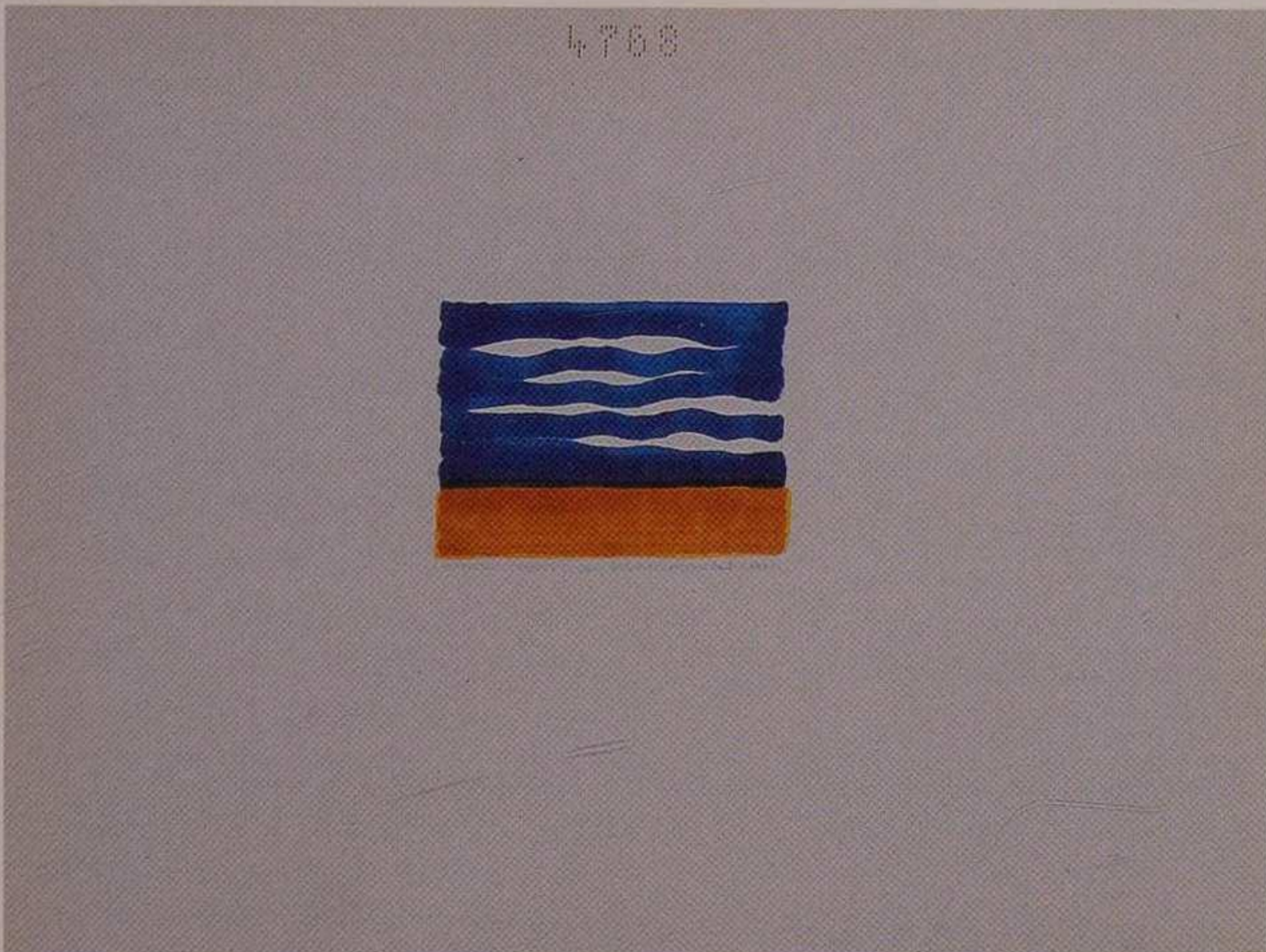


39. *Still Life with Jungle Gym*,
Maplewood School, 1968

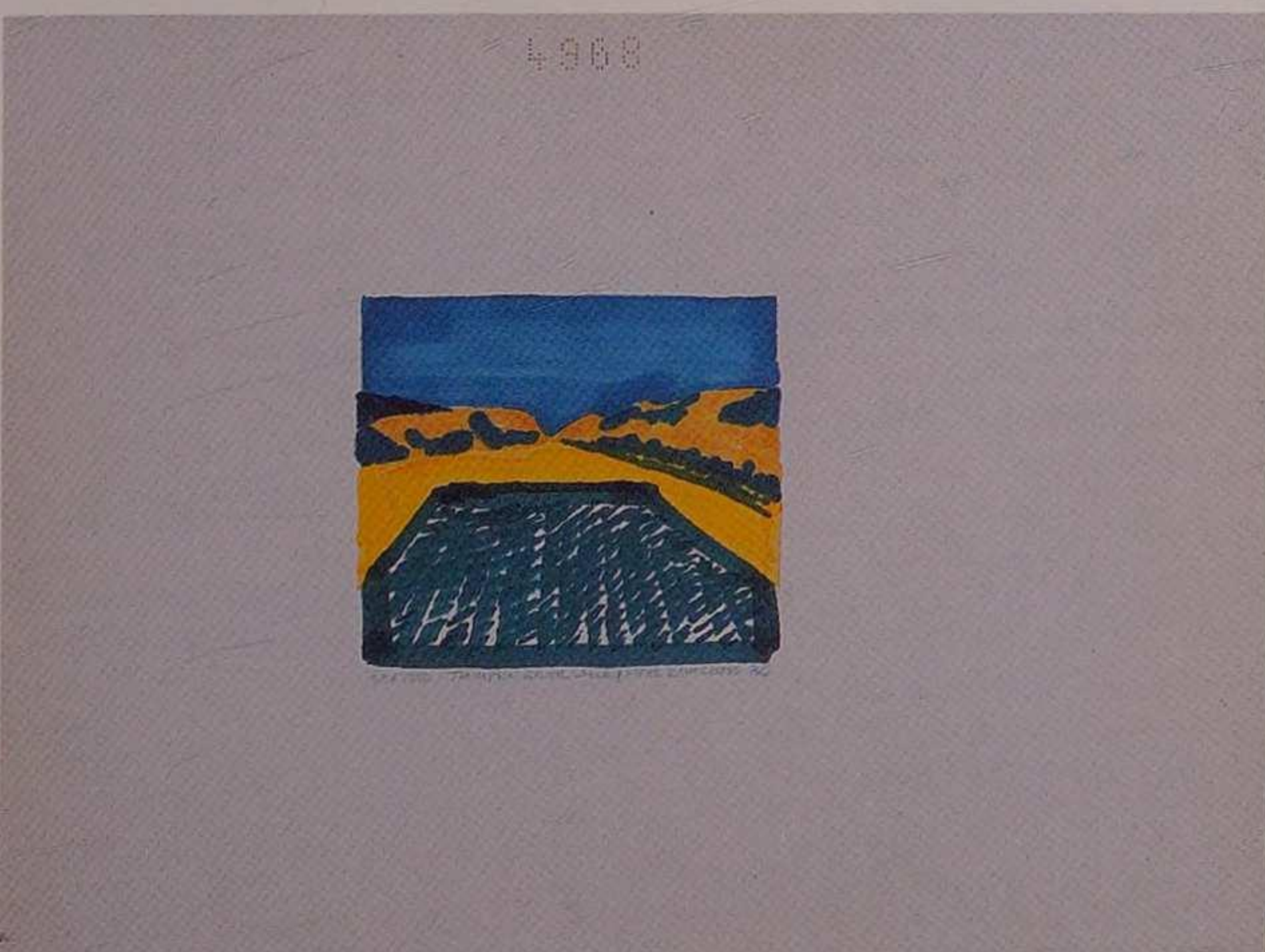




64. *Floating Log*, 1969



10. *Wheatfield*,
Saskatchewan, Can., 1968



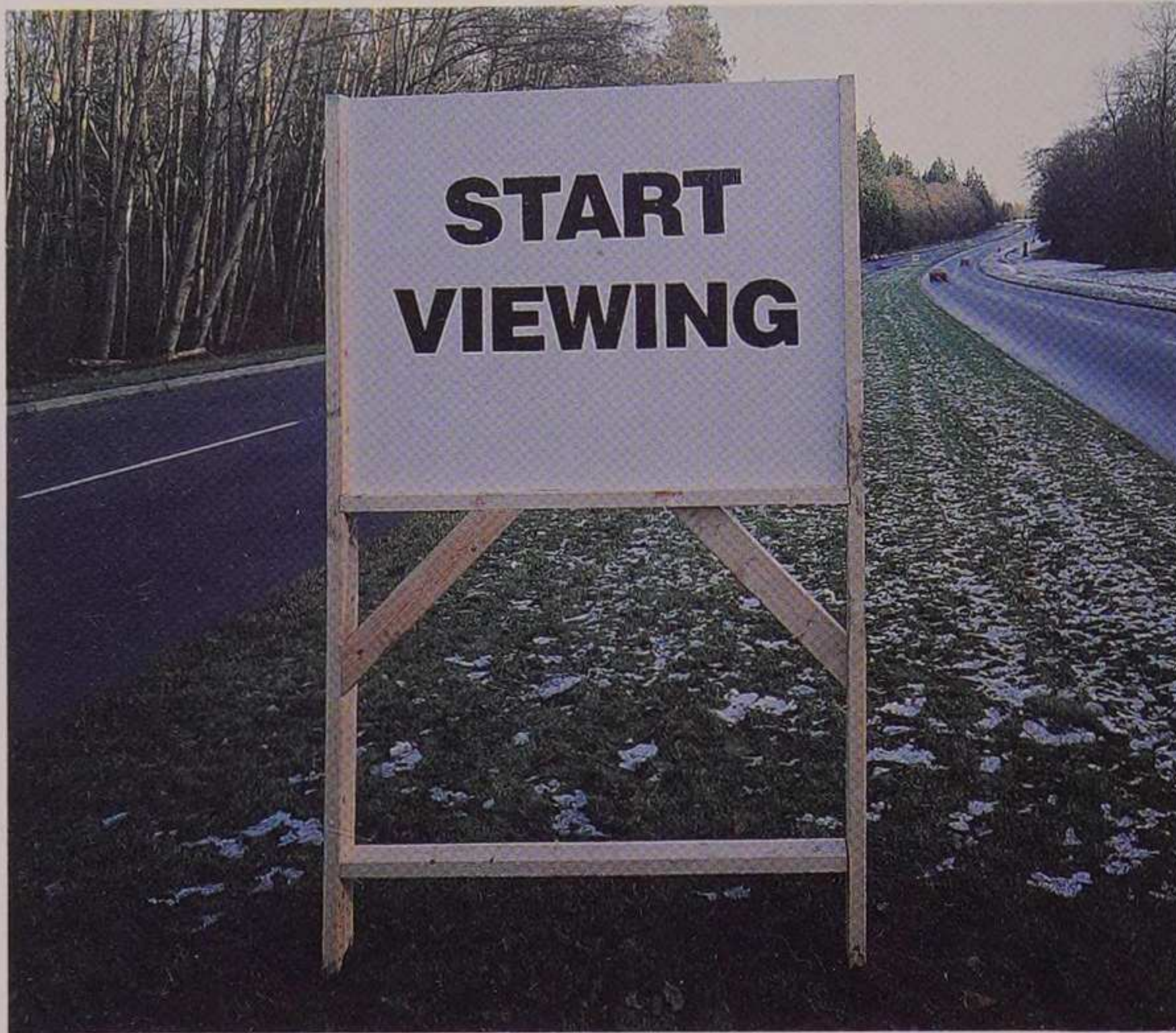
11. *Thompson River Valley*,
near Kamloops, B.C., 1968

Exhibition List

Unless otherwise indicated, all works are in the collection of the N.E. Thing Company. Works marked with * are by Iain Baxter. For a bibliography and exhibition record please see Marie Fleming, *Baxter²: Any Choice Works* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982).

- 1* *Landscape with Mountains and Sea*, 1965. Acrylic paint on vacuum-formed plastic, 101 x 156 cm.
- 2* *Bagged Landscape*, 1965-69. Vinyl, water, air, 201 x 135. UBC Alma Mater Society.
- 3* *Bagged Landscape*, 1966. Vinyl, plastic boat; 71.1 x 61 cm. Vancouver Art Gallery.
- 4 *5,000 Mile Movie*, 1967. Typescript on offset lithography, 45.6 x 60.9 cm.
- 5 *Approx. 2,500,000 Gallons of Water*, 1967. C-prints; 89.9 x 106.7 cm. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du conseil des Arts du Canada.
- 6 *180 Degree Vertical Landscape*, 1967. Map, felt pen, ink, pencil on paper, 143 x 87.5 cm; slide projection.
- 7 *Black Arctic Circle Project*, 1968. Map, and felt pen on offset lithography, 45.6 x 60.9 cm.
- 8 *Ottawa Snow, March 13, 1968, 1968*. Silver print and felt pen on offset lithography, 45.6 x 60.9 cm.
- 9* *Hedley Valley, British Columbia, Can.*, 1968. Felt pen on paper, 22.7 x 29.7 cm. Ian and Charlotte Townsend-Gault
- 10* *Wheatfield, Saskatchewan, Can.*, 1968. Felt pen on paper, 22.7 x 29.7 cm.
- 11* *Thompson River Valley, near Kamloops, B.C.*, 1968. Felt pen on paper, 22.7 x 29.7 cm. Ian and Charlotte Townsend-Gault
- 12* *Off Queen Charlotte Island*, 1968. Felt pen on paper, 22.7 x 29.7 cm. Vancouver Art Gallery.
- 13 *Manhole Cover*, 1968. Tinted silver print, plexiglass, 66 x 101.6 cm. Estate of Carmen Lamanna.
- 14 *Arrow*, 1968. Tinted silver print, plexiglass, 66 x 101.6 cm.
- 15 *Snow*, 1968. Silver print, bullet-proof glass, 91.4 x 61 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- 16 *Six Reflective Surfaces Frozen*, 1968. Mirrors, water, freezer.
- 17 *One Mile Ski Line Track*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 68 x 98 cm.
- 18 *ACT #7 Snowshed Tunnels 30 Miles E. of Salmon Arm, B.C.*, 1967. Felt pen on silver print, 32.5 x 49 cm.
- 19 *ACT #11 Ellsworth Kelly's Painting Blue and White Toronto*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 33 x 49.5 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 20 *ACT #13 Fallen Logs, 30 Miles East of Hope B.C.*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 70.5 x 100.2 cm.
- 21 *ART #16 Robert Smithson's 'Non-Sites' (1968)*, 1968-69. Felt pen on silver print, 70.5 x 100.3 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- 22 *ART #19 Marcel Duchamp's Total Art Production Except His Total Readymade Production*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 70.5 x 100.3 cm.
- 23 *ACT #24 Tree-Climbing Logs at PNE Loggers' Annual Competition*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 33 x 49.5 cm. Vancouver Art Gallery.
- 24 *ACT #25 Three Orange Columns, Fairfield & Hartford Place, Seymour Heights, North Vancouver, B.C. Canada*, 1967-68. Felt pen on silver print, 70.5 x 100.3 cm.
- 25 *ACT #29 Storage Tank, Ballantyne Pier Area, Vancouver, B.C. Canada*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 70.5 x 100.3 cm.
- 26 *ACT #30 Cement Transitional Wall Along Park and Tillford Co. Main Street North Vancouver*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 33 x 49.5 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 27 *ACT #40 MacMillan Bloedel Building, Corner of Thurlow and Georgia*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 101 x 70.5 cm.
- 28 *ACT #41 Log Structure, Photo in Tillamuck County Museum, Tillamuck Oregon*, 1967-68. Felt pen on silver print, 70 x 99 cm.
- 29 *ACT #50 Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Building, Lower Rd N. Vancouver*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 69.9 x 101.1 cm.
- 30 *ACT #53 Saskatchewan Prairie, Wheat Harvest Season, Near Regina Saskatchewan*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 33 x 49.5 cm. Ian and Charlotte Townsend-Gault.
- 31 *ACT #58 Get It at Woodward's Garage, Free Parking and Two Arrows Woodward's Shopping Centre, Cambie and Cordova Corner*, 1967. Felt pen on silver print, 33 x 49.5 cm.
- 32 *ACT #81 Small Airport Indicators East of Edmonton, Alta*, 1968 (photo taken while driving). Felt pen on silver print, 70 cm x 99 cm.
- 33 *ACT #102 Back of Outdoor Movie "Drive In" Screen, 60 Miles East of Toronto on Highway 401*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 33 x 49.5 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 34 *ACT #107 Triangular-Shaped (VSI), Telecasted View of Moon's Surface from Inside Apollo 8 Spacecraft*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 70.5 x 100.3 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- 35 *ACT #128 Entrance Railings, N. Vancouver*, 1968. Felt pen on silver print, 65.5 x 101 cm.
- 36 *ACT #201 The World's and Moon's Longest Telephone Call. Content Ignored. Photo Taken at the Time of Call From TV in Prince Edward Island*, 1969. Felt pen on silver print, 63.2 x 96 cm.
- 37 *Community Hall 20 Miles East of Regina*, 1968. Cibachrome transparency, light box, 34.7 x 50.2 x 13.1 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 38 *Still Life with 6 Trucks, Highway 1 Saskatchewan*, 1968. Cibachrome transparency, light box, 34.7 x 50.2 x 13.1 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 39 *Still Life with Jungle Gym, Maplewood School*, 1968. Cibachrome transparency, light box, 34.7 x 50.2 x 13.1 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.

- 40 *Final*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm. Estate of Carmen Lamanna.
- 41 *Line*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm. Estate of Carmen Lamanna.
- 42 *Ruins*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm.
- 43 *Connection*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm. Estate of Carmen Lamanna.
- 44 *Landscape*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm. Estate of Carmen Lamanna.
- 45 *Shift*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm.
- 46 *Sunset*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm.
- 47 *Eye*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm.
- 48 *Airplane Wing*, 1968 (reassembled 1990). Cibachrome transparency, light box, 40.6 x 50.8 x 12.7 cm.
- 49 *1/4 Mile Landscape*, 1968 (remounted 1992). Signs (by Phillip McCrum), surrounding territory (courtesy Pacific Spirit Park).
- 50 *Single Light Cast, Seymour River*, 1968 (assembled 1981). Drawing 26.3 x 37.3 cm, Cibachrome 46 x 61.7 cm, map 60 x 86 cm.
- 51 *P-Line Straight*, 1968 (assembled 1981). Cibachrome, map, 136 x 99.4 cm. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du conseil des Arts du Canada.
- 52 *Portfolio of Piles*, 1968. Offset lithography, 16.5 x 24 cm.
- 53 *National Gallery of Canada Exhibition*, 1969. Offset lithography, 61 x 73.9 cm; silver prints on offset lithography, 45.5 x 60.9 cm.
- 54 *Territorial Claim*, 1969. C-prints on paper with offset lithography and typescript, 44 x 44 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 55 *Sixteen Compass Points Within the Arctic Circle*, 1969. Map with c-prints on paper, offset lithography and typescript; 6 panels: 44 x 44 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 56 *Circular Walk Inside Arctic Circle, Inuvik, N.W.T.*, 1969. Silver prints and felt pen on offset lithography, 44 x 44 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 57 *Lucy Lippard Walking Toward True North*, 1969. Silver print and felt pen on offset lithography, 45.6 x 60.9 cm.
- 58 *Telexed Triangle*, 1969. Telex, felt pen on map, on offset lithography, 45.6 x 60.9 cm.
- 59 *Telex Projects*, 1969. Typescript and telex on offset lithography, 45.6 x 60.9 cm.
- 60 *Simulated Photo of the Moon's "Sea of Tranquility" Filled with Water and the N.E. Thing Company's Sign Placed Beside It, August 1969*. Felt pen on silver print, 62 x 88 cm.
- 61 *Suite of Canadian Landscapes*, 1969. Engraved bank notes mounted and framed; frames: 27.9 x 35.6 cm. David P. Silcox and Linda Intaschi.
- 62 *VSI Formula #5*, 1969. Silver prints, 12 prints: 39.4 x 50.5 cm.
- 63 *Reflected Arctic Landscape*, 1969 (assembled 1981). Map, crayon and pencil on paper, 64.8 x 85.1 cm; Cibachrome transparency, wooden box, 57.2 x 94.7 cm. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank / Collection de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du conseil des Arts du Canada.
- 64 *Floating Log*, 1969 (assembled 1981). Drawing, 30.2 x 45.5 cm; Cibachrome, 59.5 x 44 cm; map 55.5 x 75.5 cm.
- 65 *Fill in a Hole*, 1968-70. 2 sheets (a) typescript and stamp pad on paper, 28.0 x 21.6 cm; (b) telecopier print, 27.9 x 21.6 cm.
- 66 *This Statement will be is being has been sent by Telecopier*, 1968-70. 2 sheets (a) typescript and stamp pad on paper, 27.9 x 21.6 cm; (b) telecopier print, 27.9 x 21.6 cm.
- 67 *Telexed Self-Portrait from Memory*, 1969. Telex and stamp pad on paper, 24.5 x 21.6 cm.
- 68 *Trans-VSI Number 14: A Word is Worth 1/1000th of a Picture*, 1969-70. Telex on paper, 18.4 x 21.3 cm.
- 69 *Trans-VSI Number 16: Start Viewing Stop Viewing*, 1969-70. Telex on paper, 22.2 x 21.6 cm.
- 70 *Send a Lie Receive the Truth*, 1970. 2 sheets (a) stamp pad and felt pen on paper, 27.9 x 21.6 cm; (b) telecopier print, 28.1 x 21.6 cm.
- 71 *Trans-VSI Number 12: Sky*, 1969-70. Telex on paper, 28.6 x 21.3 cm.
- 72 *North American Time Zone Photo-VSI - Simultaneity October 19, 1970*. Offset lithography; 18 panels: 44.5 x 44.5 cm. Sonnabend Gallery
- 73 *P+L+P+L=VSI*, 1970. Colour lithography, 61 X 48.3 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.
- 74 *P+L+P+L+P=VSI*, 1970. 35mm slide in plastic sleeve on offset lithography, 21.6 x 27.9 cm. Art Metropole.
- 75 *Art Is All Over*, 1971. Offset lithography, 44 x 44 cm. Sonnabend Gallery.



49. *1/4 Mile Landscape*, 1968 (remounted 1992)

**STOP
VIEWING**



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