

*The Electric Garden*  
*An Inner Landscape Book*

y

*Sonia Landy*

Come enter Sonia Sheridan's  
Electric Garden.

Travel by flying carpet, peanut shell boat,  
railroad or wings, and you will be surrounded  
by wonders of numbers, fragments of  
childhood poems and re-framed dimensions of  
time/space, as you follow Sonia's path of  
exploration.

Everything has multiple meanings in this world.  
The universal intertwines with the deeply  
personal and they dance on a moebius strip  
of light/dark, whimsy/fear, life/death, childlike  
visions and profound concerns.

Whether you are casually strolling through  
the garden or taking time to study each  
drawing's layers of symbols and meanings,  
your perceptions of our everyday world may  
well be altered.

Welcome to the journey!

Cover image from *Finger Aura* (Kirlian photo  
duplicated in Photoshop) by Sonia Sheridan

Back flap photo *Sonia Sheridan* by Gregory  
Gundlach, #6 of eleven from a 3-D sequence

*The Electric Garden*  
*An Inner Landscape Book*

1974-1998



*Sonia Landy Sheridan*

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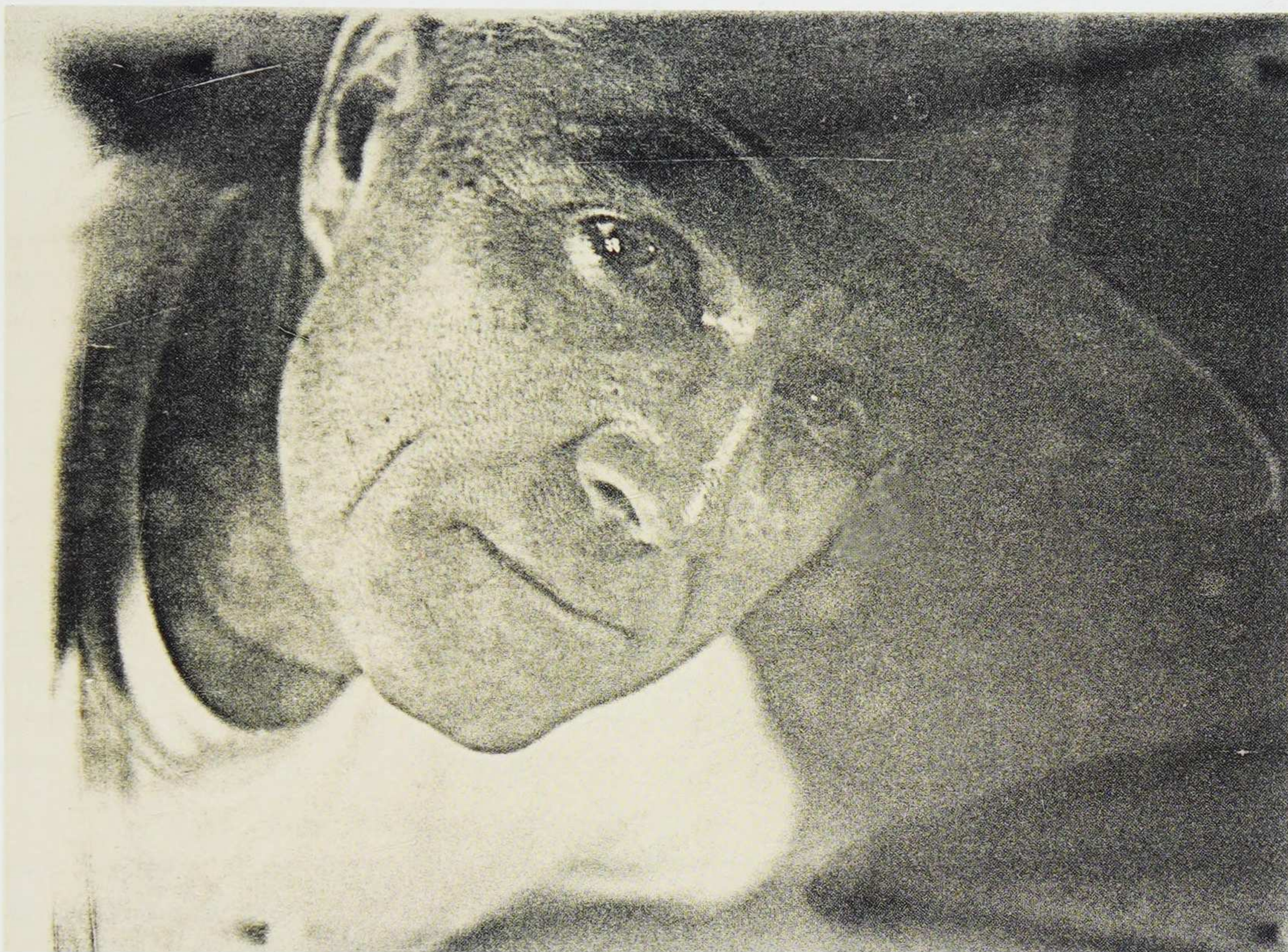
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Cover image from *Finger Aura* (Kirlian photo duplicated in Photoshop) by Sonia Sheridan

Back flap photo *Sonia Sheridan* by Gregory Gundlach, #6 of eleven from a 3-D sequence

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Dedicated to **Jim Sheridan**



*Jim in our Wisconsin Summer Little Horsehead Cabin*      Haloid Xerox 1974      Hood Museum of Art

This book is dedicated to my patient husband of 68 years, during which time he responded to my frequent requests, "Jim do you have a minute?" Sometimes the request was to sit for a pencil drawing, sometimes for a woodcut of his face, sometimes for a portrait on a 3M VQC black and white copier, sometimes for a 3M Color-in-Color copier test, sometimes to pose for an EASEL computer image of a body part. In this Kirlian experiment I asked him to use his finger to create an aura. He was, as usual, successful.



## Introduction

In the mid-1970s the Edmund Scientific Company came out with a kit for making Kirlian photographs. It was my experimental and unwise use of one of these kits that led me to make the following pages.

The kit contained a transformer and instructions for using Polaroid film to image auras. With the Polaroid film placed on the transformer, ready for exposure, I tried, without success, to image my finger's aura. I then asked my husband, Jim, if he would place his finger on the film. Although he was reluctant, he did place his finger on the film. When I had squeegeed the Polaroid developer over the exposed film and turned on the light I saw a perfect aura of his finger. Certainly, I thought, if Jim had an aura, I must also have one. I set up another film and this time began to concentrate my thoughts on my finger. Lo-and-behold there was a perfect aura.

In my excitement I began to draw with my finger on the film. The results were encouraging and as my excitement mounted I reached out, in the pitch dark room, for what I thought was a piece of paper. A darkroom with a red light would have enabled me to see that it was not paper that I had picked up, but a piece of Intermediate intended as an imaging surface for 3M's color machine – Color-in-Color. The Intermediate has a Mylar base coated, on one side, with zinc oxide and on the other side it is coated with dye. There is also a magnetic registration strip at the base of each dye sheet.

I proceeded to cut out a silhouette of my body to be used as a stencil. Then with my finger, substituting for a brush, I tried to shade around the contour of the body shape that was placed on the Polaroid film.

The transformer gave a loud pop and shorted out. I turned on the light and saw that it was not paper that I had been using. It was the 3M Color-in-Color Intermediate.

Very quickly I began to feel strange and ill at ease. My first thought was to go to bed, since it was already quite late. Instead I sat down, took up my pen and created the first eleven of the ensuing pages.

As soon as these were completed, I once again considered going to bed. Instead I started another series of nine pages. These last pages show how frightened I had become, and unaware of the meaning of the odd drawings and writings. For weeks after that experience I suffered from chest pains and for many months feared that I was having a heart attack.

Years later I read Aldous Huxley's essay *Doors of Perception* about perceptions altered through chemical use. That prompted me to assemble these pages as my own experience with altered perceptions through electrical exposure.



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The Electric Garden



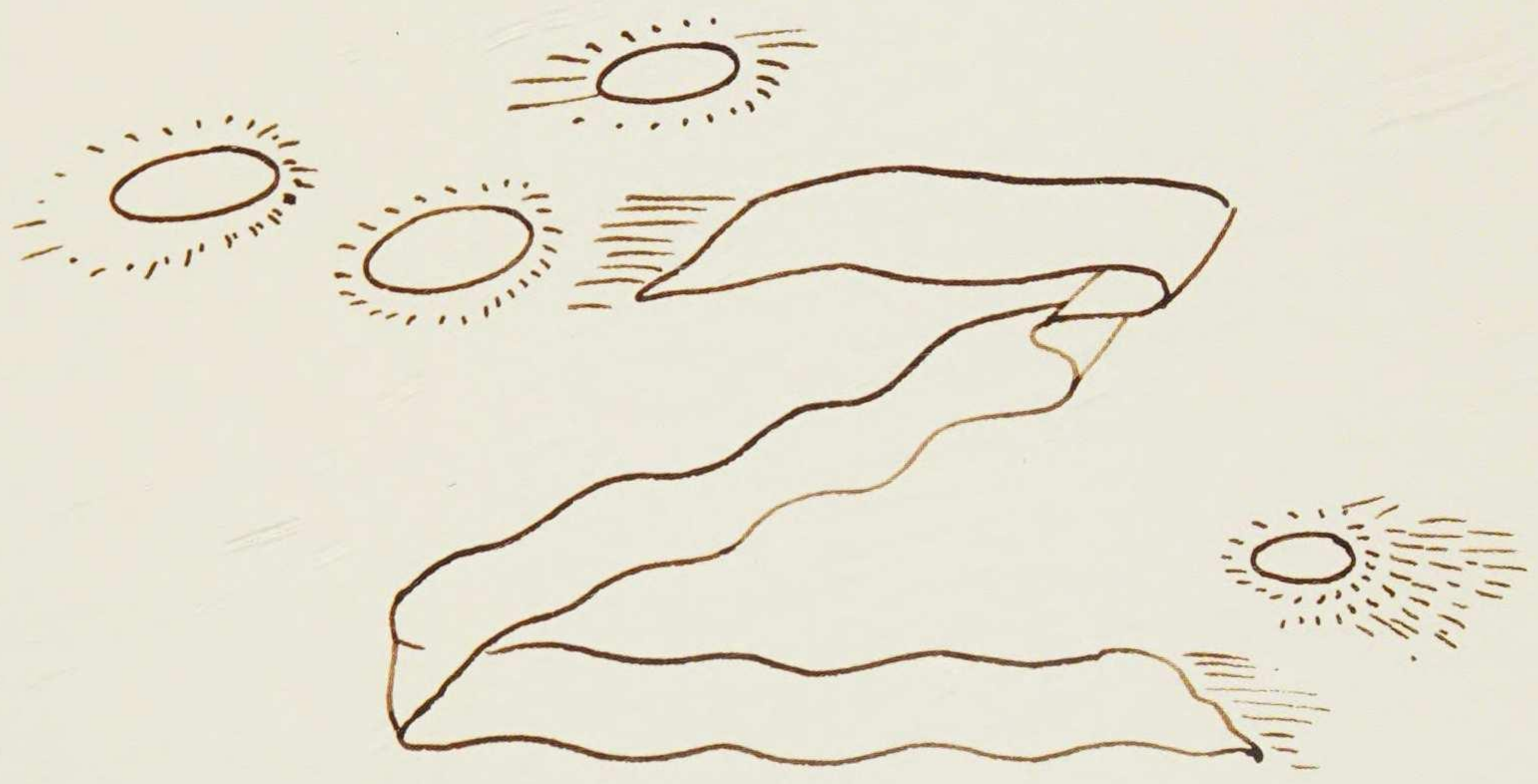
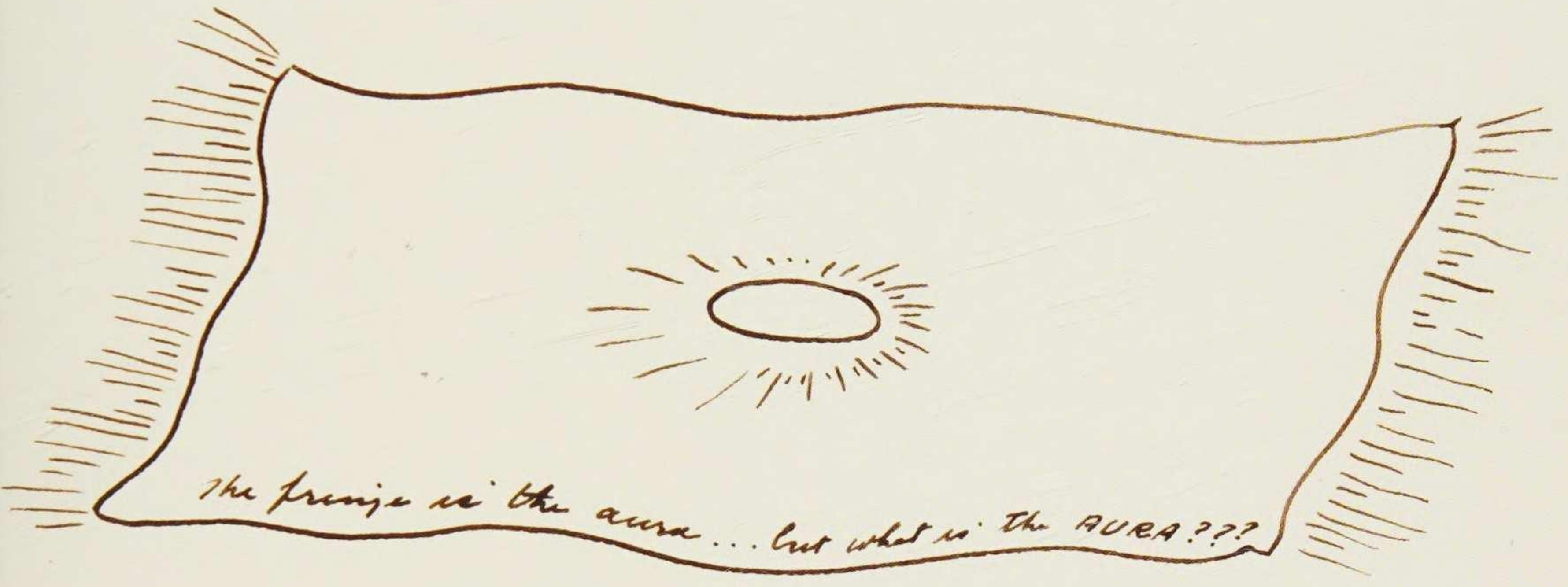
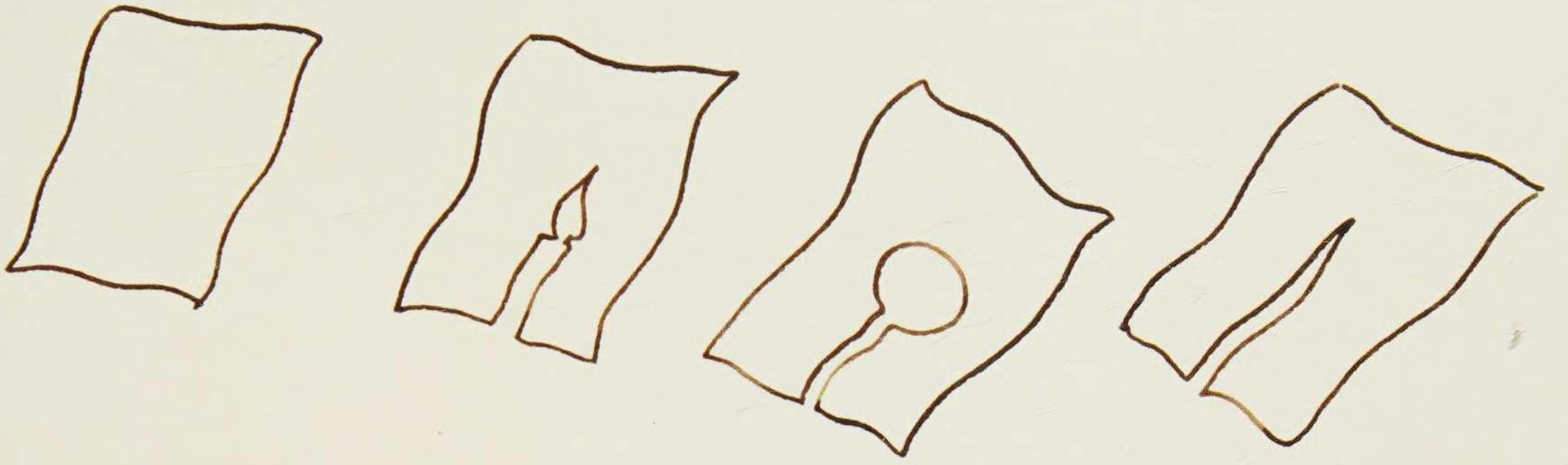
Sonya Landy  
An inner landscape book  
April 23, 1974.....

To be typed on 3M yony machine in numbers









Time wafers in the electric garden on 4.23.74



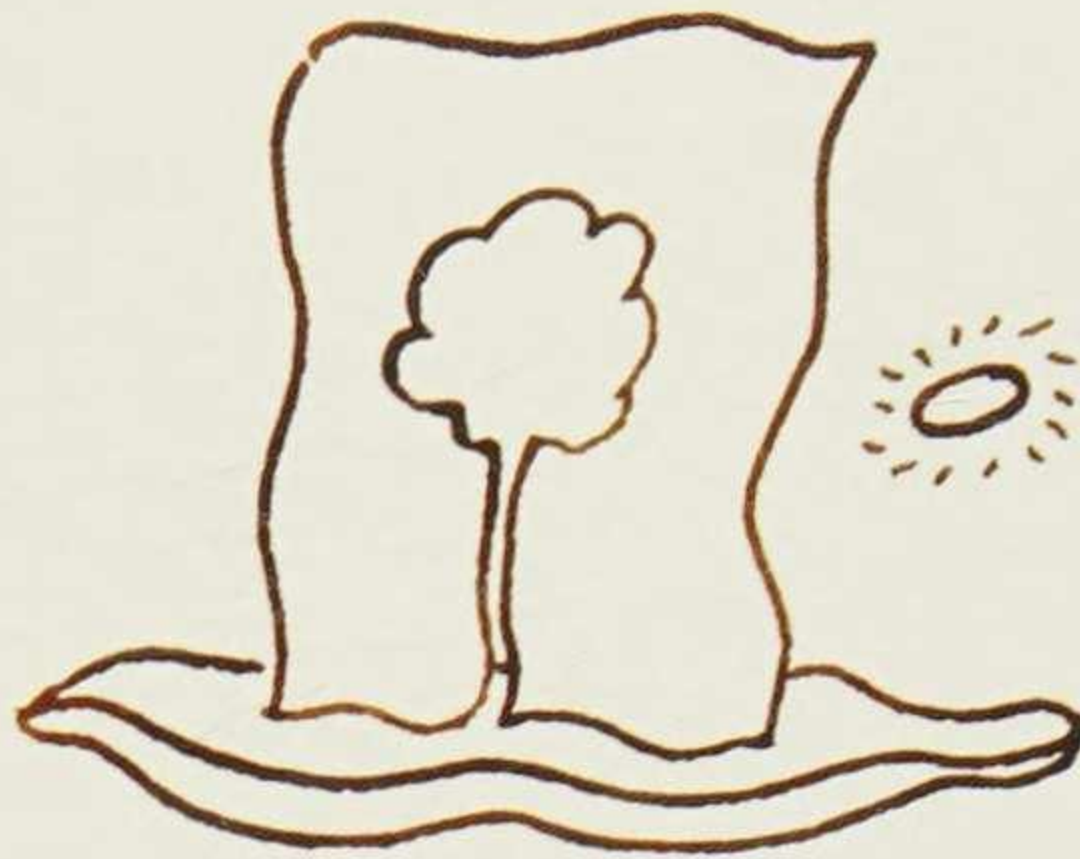
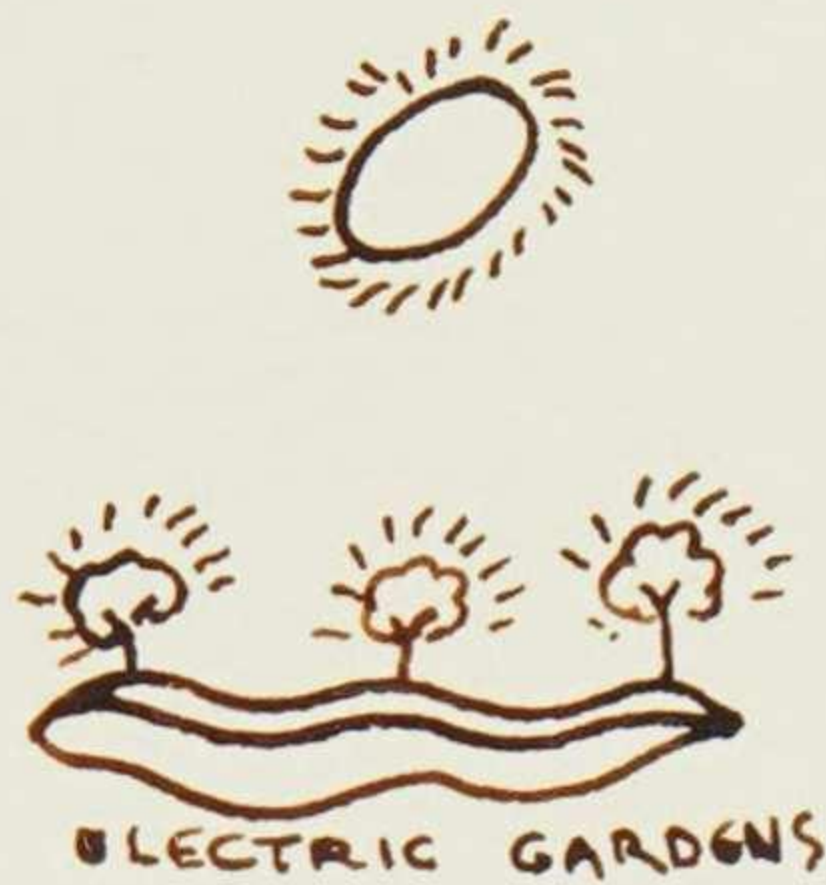
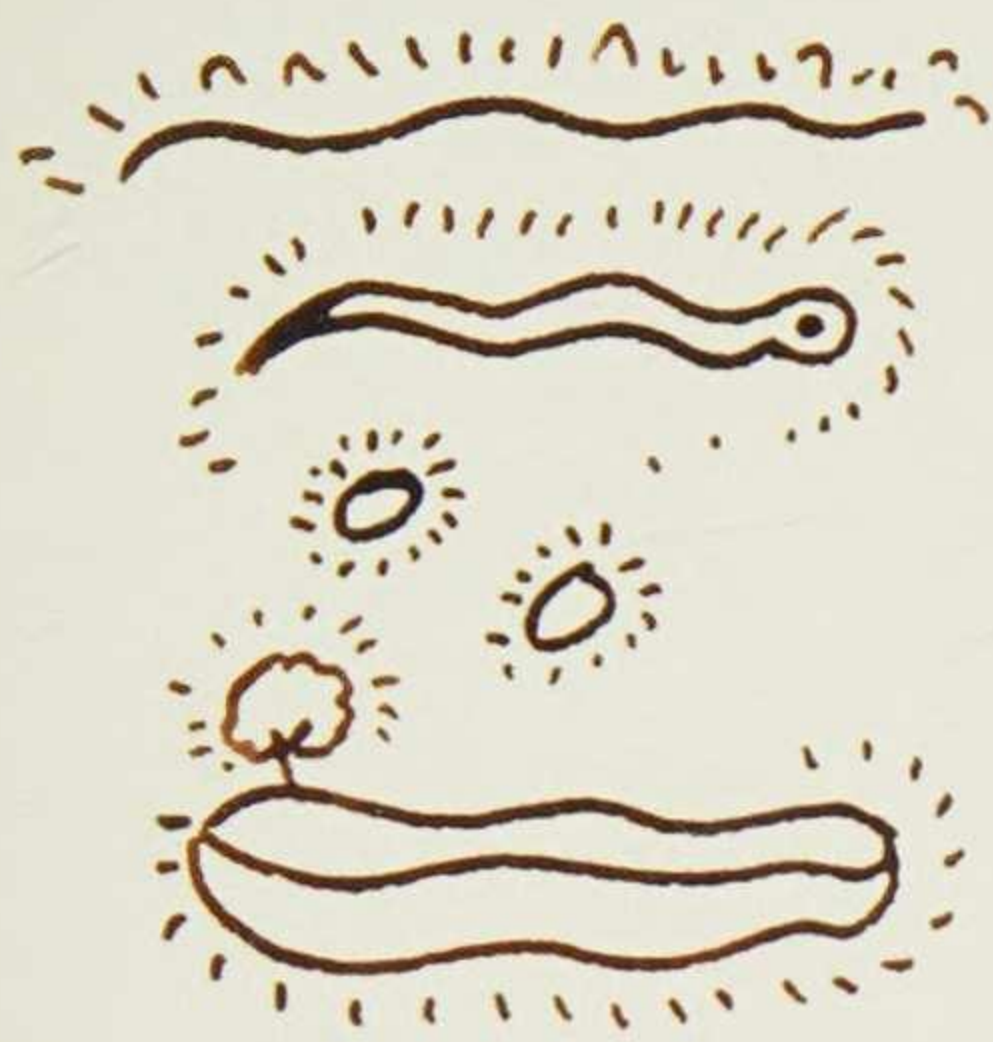


Electric cells wear through mist auras

The electric garden glows, grows

many, many, quite contrary, how does your garden grow? with electric bulbs and electric bells glowing in a row





The pen-candle glows in the garden of aurora  
finger, finger burning bright in the garden of  
the night is the tiger whose fearsome eye was  
fashioned by sheer energy.

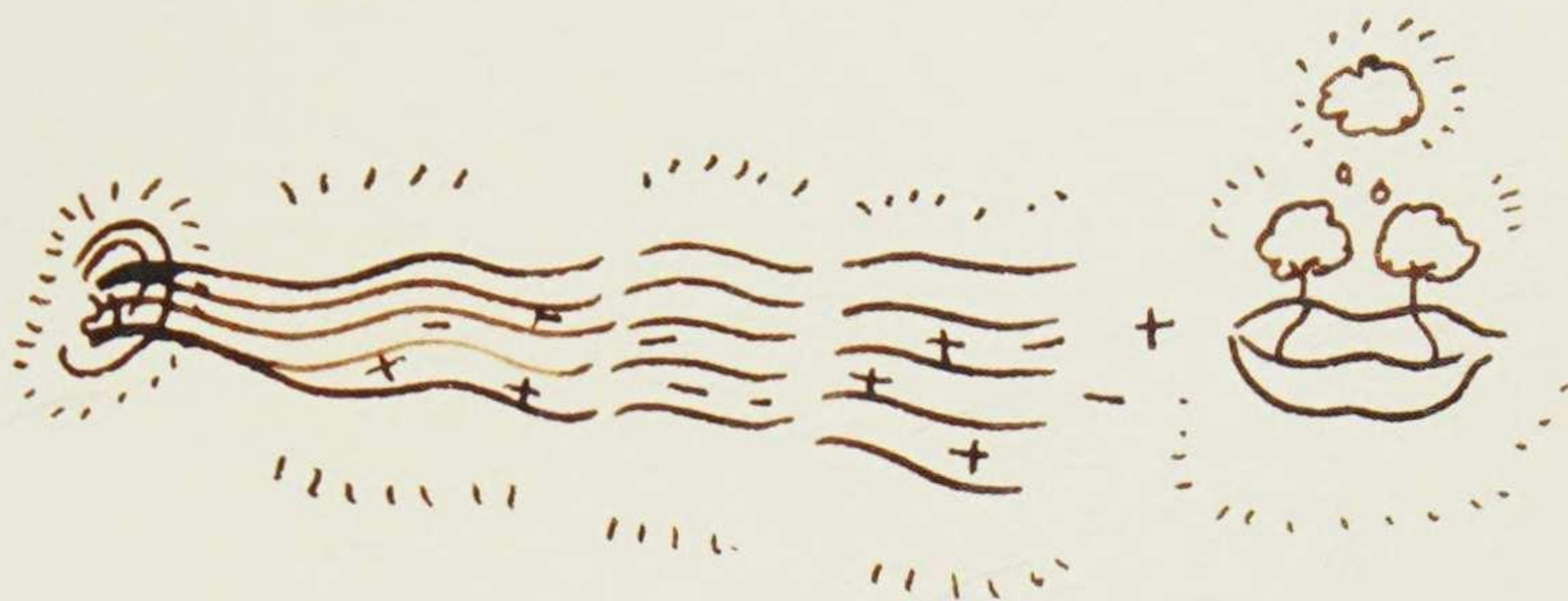
Little Orphan Annie you grow in my electric  
garden with your aura orbs... Little Orphan  
Annie came to our house to play, to sweep  
the kitchen floor and shoo the flies away



This April 23, 1974 in Ill. noise



SWEET AURA  
ERA  
EAR  
HEAR



The eye is the static aura

I  
EYE  
EYE  
A YE  
AEE  
AH  
JA  
YA  
WO  
JE  
ICH



SING A SONG OF WHEELS, A CLOUD FULL OF SKY... FOUR  
AND NINETY Y'S FLOATING THROUGH THE... WHY??? OH,  
WHY... COME TOGETHER.....



The eye in the sky



from the electric garden this April 23, 1974.....





energy transferred to the  $\gamma$  in the electric garden



7  
4

David Lyle your aura is around  
all numbers. If I photograph a number  
will your image be there?

1	9	8	4
(A)	(I)	H	(D)
.	.	.	.
8	1	9	4
H	A	(I)	(D)
.	.	.	.
(D)	(A)	(I)	(D)
4	1	9	4
.	.	.	.
D	E	A	D
4	5	1	4
.	.	.	.
(L)	1	(V)	E
12	9	22	5
.	.	.	.
(E)	(V)	1	(L)
5	22	9	12



H  
IS OVER

INFINITY IS  
TWO ATTACHED  
AURAS - MOBIUS  
AURAS



The moving  
finger having  
write .....

THE Y IS LEFT



25  
You  
HOW DID  
THAT HAPPEN  
DAVID LYLE?

WAVES ... NUMBERS ... DON'T COUNT .. YOUR OUT  
COME TOGETHER ... WEAVERS OF THE  
WORLD YOUNITE

4.23.74



9  
1

SONY A  
 (19) 15 (14) (25) 1  
 LAND Y  
 12 1 14 (4) (25)  
 1 9 2 5  
 4 . 10

SONY A LANDY  
 SONYA LANDY  
 ~~~~~

The original name was on the path



4 . 10 . 1 . 9 . 2 . 5  
 14 15 24 26 (31)

1984  
 31  
 1953

2025  
 31  
 1994  
 1925  
 (69) ???

4.23.74





play a Xerox degeneration on a player piano... weave it on a jacquard loom.

NOTION is all... the rhythm of the motion = quality or nature of the beat



$\frac{\text{random}}{\text{regular}} = \text{balance} = \text{survival}$

$$\frac{R}{R} = B = S$$

Random x ~~124~~ <sup>thematic</sup> regular = RR = railroad



EG... THAT IS "ELECTRIC GARDEN"

THE ELECTRIC GARDEN WAS SENSED BY P.K. NOT GUM BUT PAUL KLEE = KEY IN FRENCH



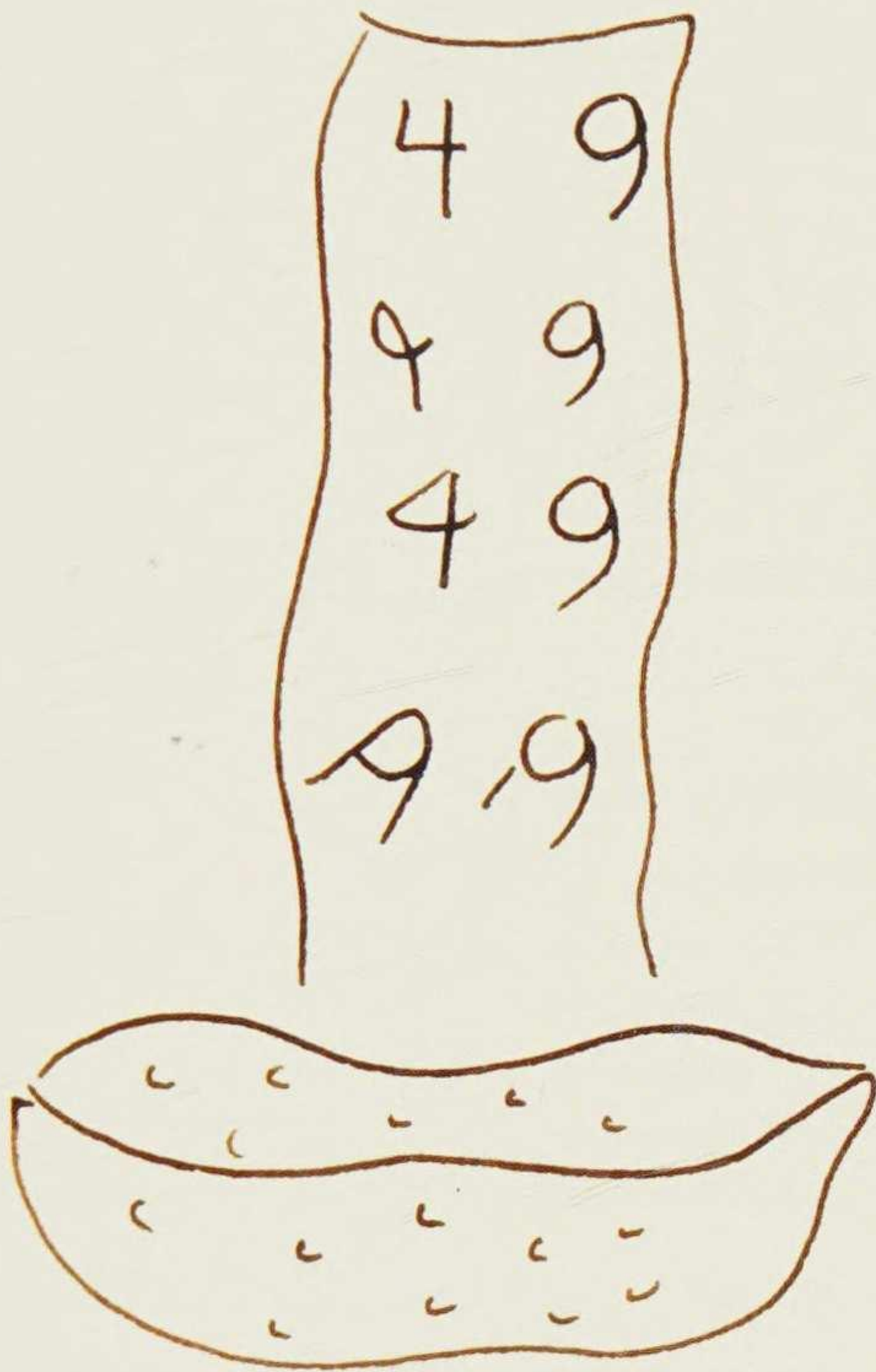
NETTING Sonya Landy The spider is a solid area



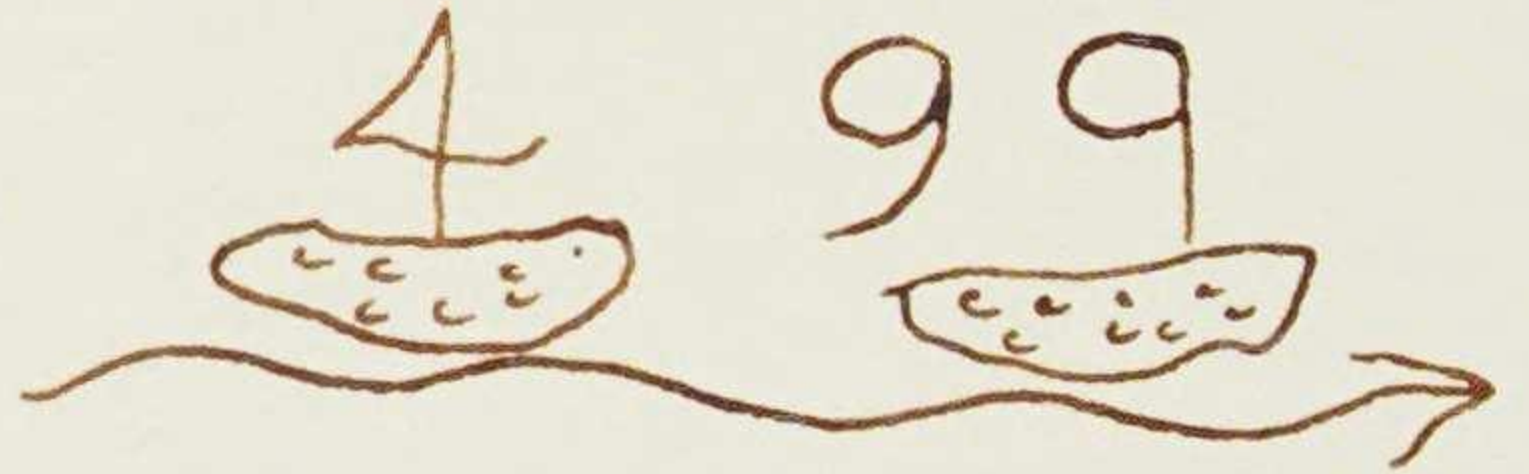
P.K. AND THE NUMERICAL RHYTHM OF IT ALL.....



4.23.74





The owl and the pussycat went to sea  
in a beautiful pearnet shell boat.



grabs from the  time plane before is  
flee by  ..... SONG A LANDY



7

9 99

7 99

When the 7 is closed death comes

∫ ∫ maybe not ???



SHIP = LIFE MOTION

198916

1984 = SHIP = LIFE MOTION

1984

$\frac{6}{5} \frac{1}{5}$

$\frac{1984}{1925}$   
59

IN TEN YEARS = MAGIC

4 . 23 . 1974

4 .  $\frac{10}{13}$  . 19  $\frac{25}{49}$

13

49

ALCHEMY

1123.8.5.13(25)



25 = 7 = MAGIC  
SONYA LANDY = MAGIC

AURA



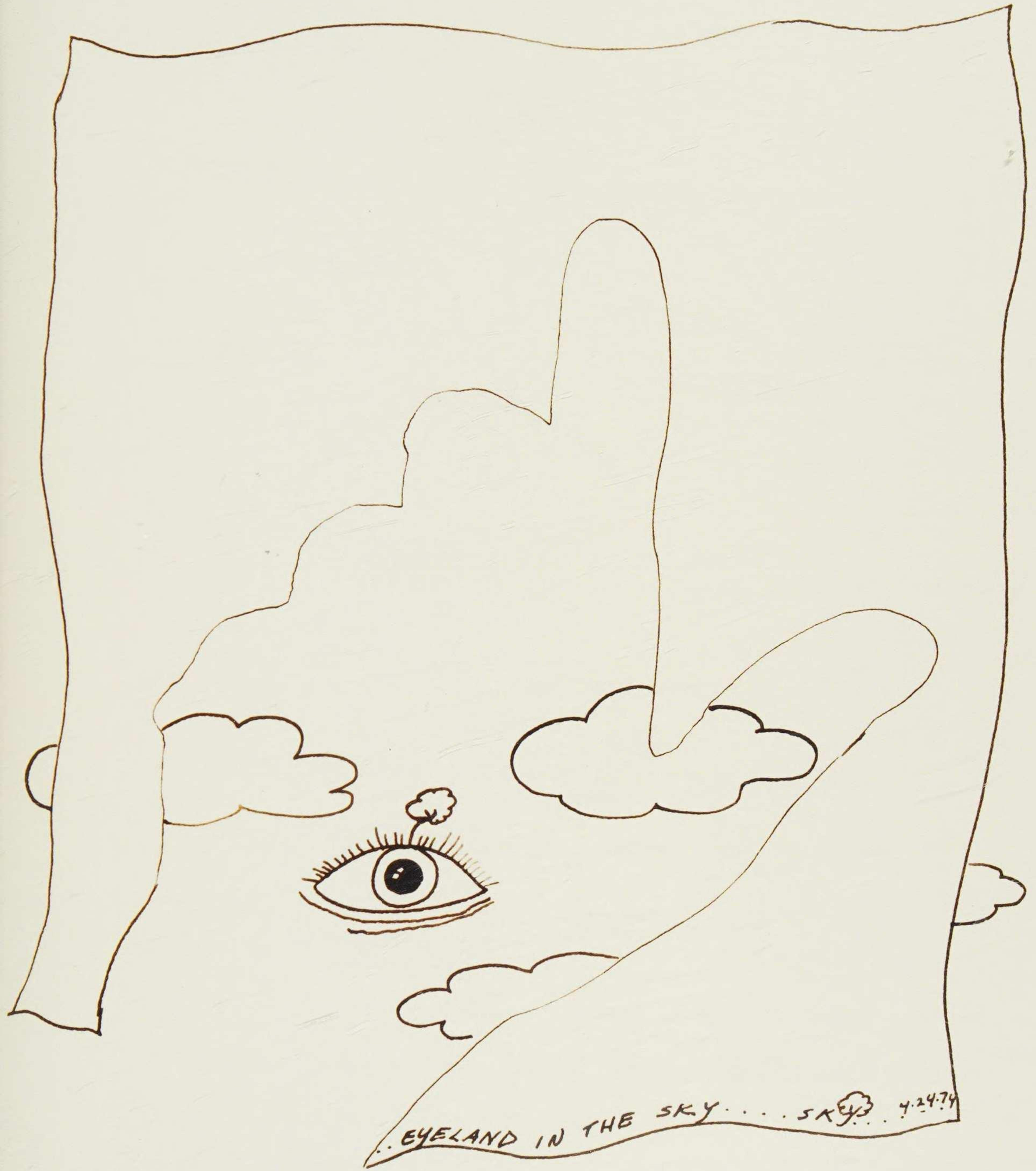
7.23.74





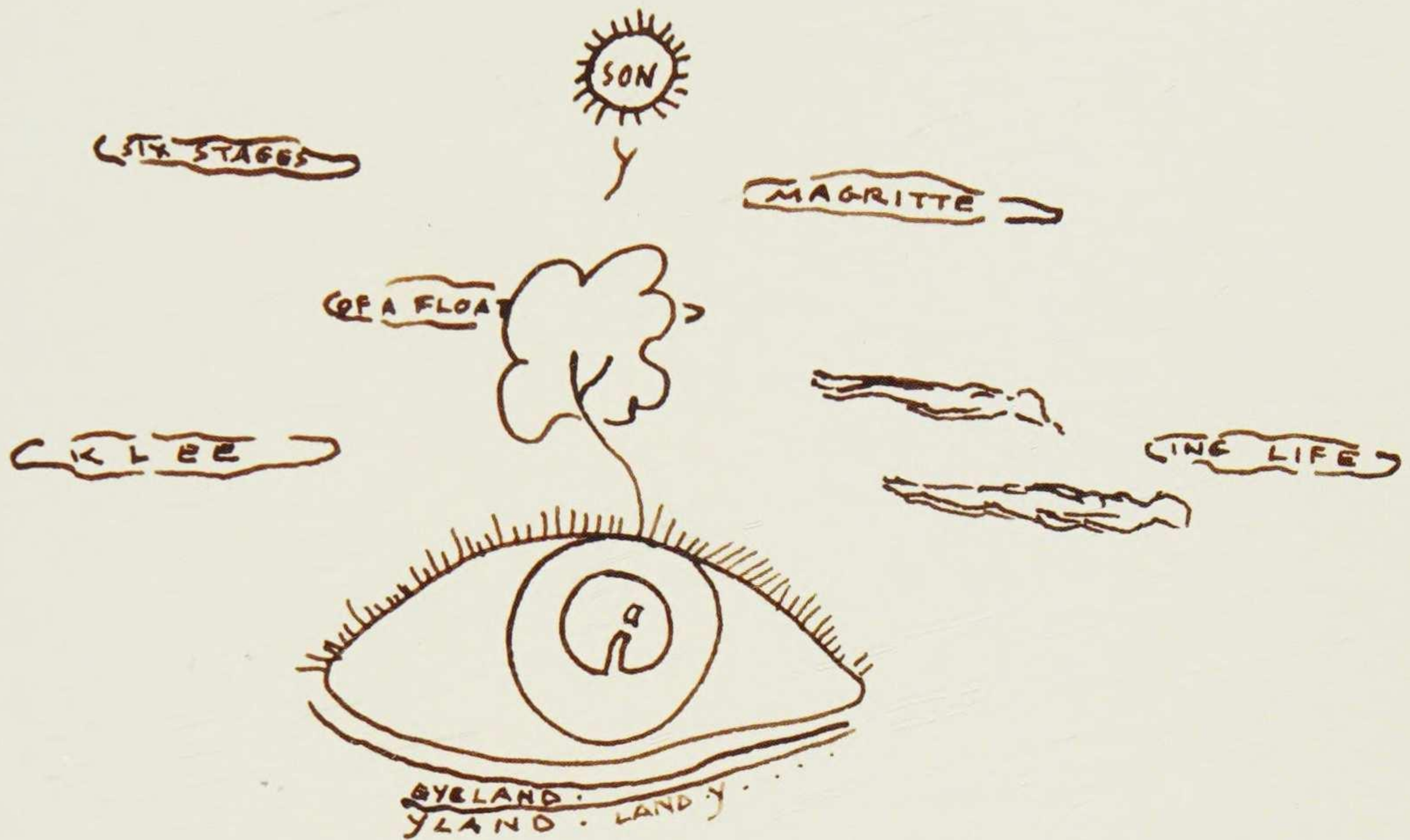
*The Electric Garden*  
Sonya Landy  
SHERIDAN  
YONY







...EYELAND IN THE SKY... SKY... 4.24.74

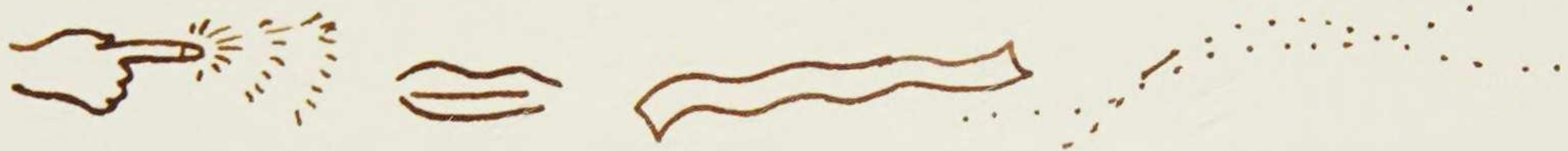



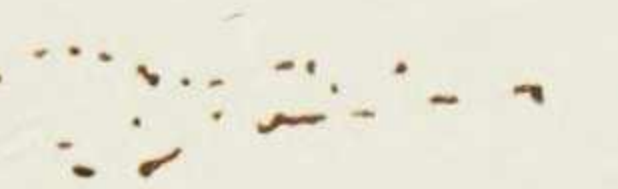

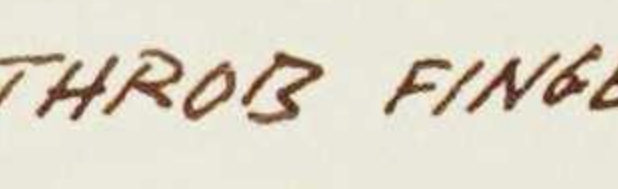




37 STEPS  THE RED CURTAIN 

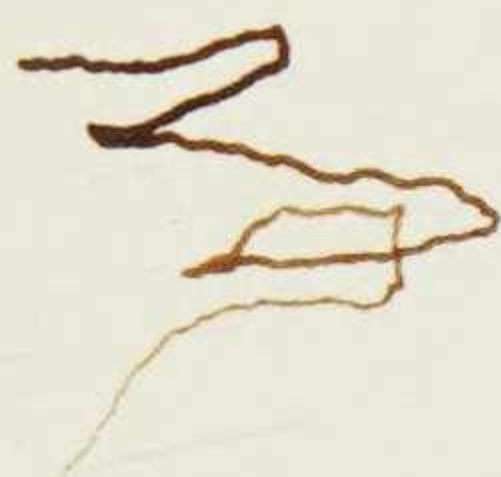
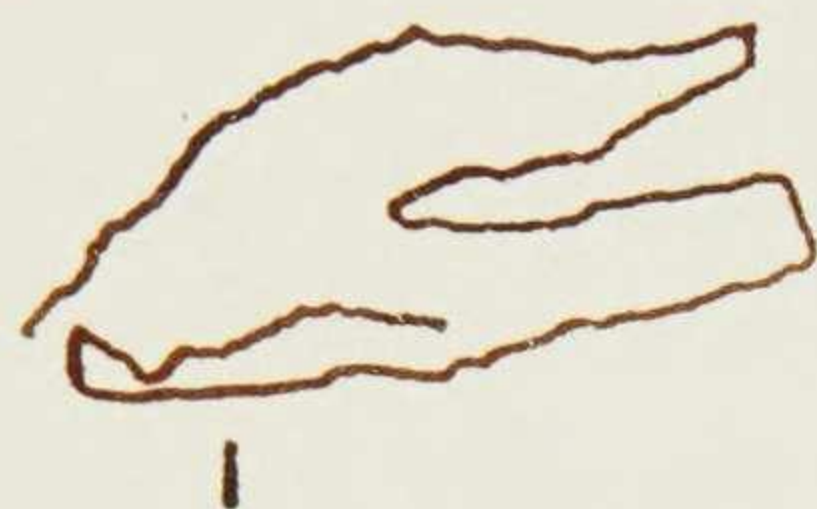
ISLAND,  LAND, ILAND  800,000,000

4/11/1984 DAVID LYLE SEND ME A SIGN!







I AM MY OWN POLYGRAPH · HAND WRITE · MIND REST  
 LEFT FINGER HEAL · WRITE FINGER RIGHT ·

THE SHADOW PEN WRITES BENEATH THE PEN

2 = INFINITY  $\infty$   
 + -

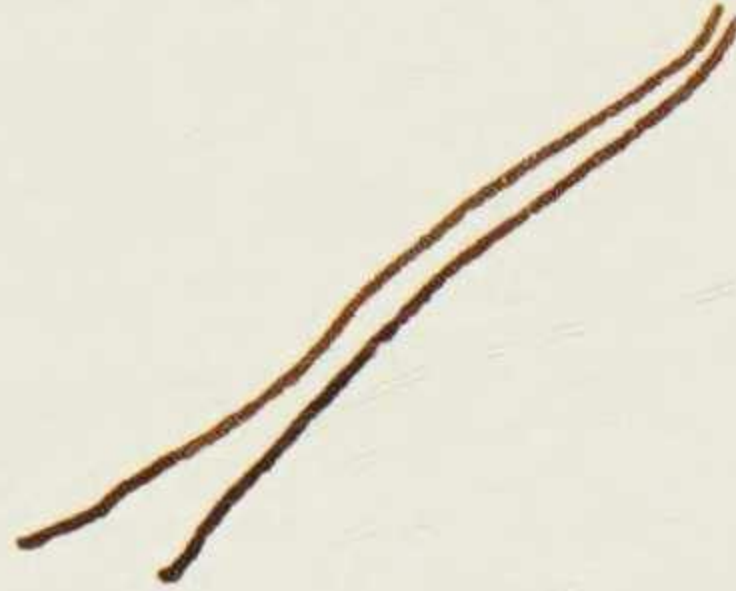
+++ = 0 OR 3    ++1 = 2 OR 2+1  
 OR 3

4·24·74





THE KEY IS LOCKED IN THE WAY  
THE WAY IS NOT IN THE LOCK  
BUT IN THE PATH



PATH LEAD ON TO WHERE  
THE OTHER SIDE CALLS I  
ANSWER WHAT IS THERE?

WHAT UNKNOWN ENERGY  
MOVES THE WRITING FINGER  
FROM WHAT UNFOUND  
BANK O' MY HEART  
I HEAR YOU CALLING



1:00 AM

ARF, ARF

1:00 AM THE MAGIC

ORPHAN ANNIE ORBS HOUR

1:00 AM

SILENCE ... THE "L"

BUZZING IN THE EARS

OR IN THE AIR?

NO CONTROL = FRIGHT

= LIGHT

= FEAR

= HEAR

LOST MIND

FOUND FINGER

ENERGY AMUK

RACE AROUND

I CANNOT STAND THE

TERRIBLE PRESSURE

OF NOTHING

MIND TAKE THE HAND

FINGER RESPOND POND & DUCK

QUACK, QUACK GOES


NO CONTROL OF TOP MIND-HEAD



READ TO FALL ASLEEP  
NO NEED FOR HOT MILK

THIS IS LÖÖSE  
THIS IS MAD  
THIS IS FLOATING  
IS THIS BAD?  
FLIGHT OF MIND  
SPIRIT HAUNT ME  
COME CARESS THE  
MACHINE MAN MIND  
LOOSE AND LOVELY  
COVER ORE ME  
MORE ME  
FOR ME  
CAREFREE  
NOT FREE  
SLEEP COMES  
OVER ME  
SLEEP

---

4 A BOAT IS A  
TIME MACHINE  
A TIME SYMBOL  
WINKEN AND BLINKEN  
AND NOB SAILED  
OFF IN A TIME PLANE  
TO AN  LAND IN THE SKY

4.24.74 . 1:10 AM



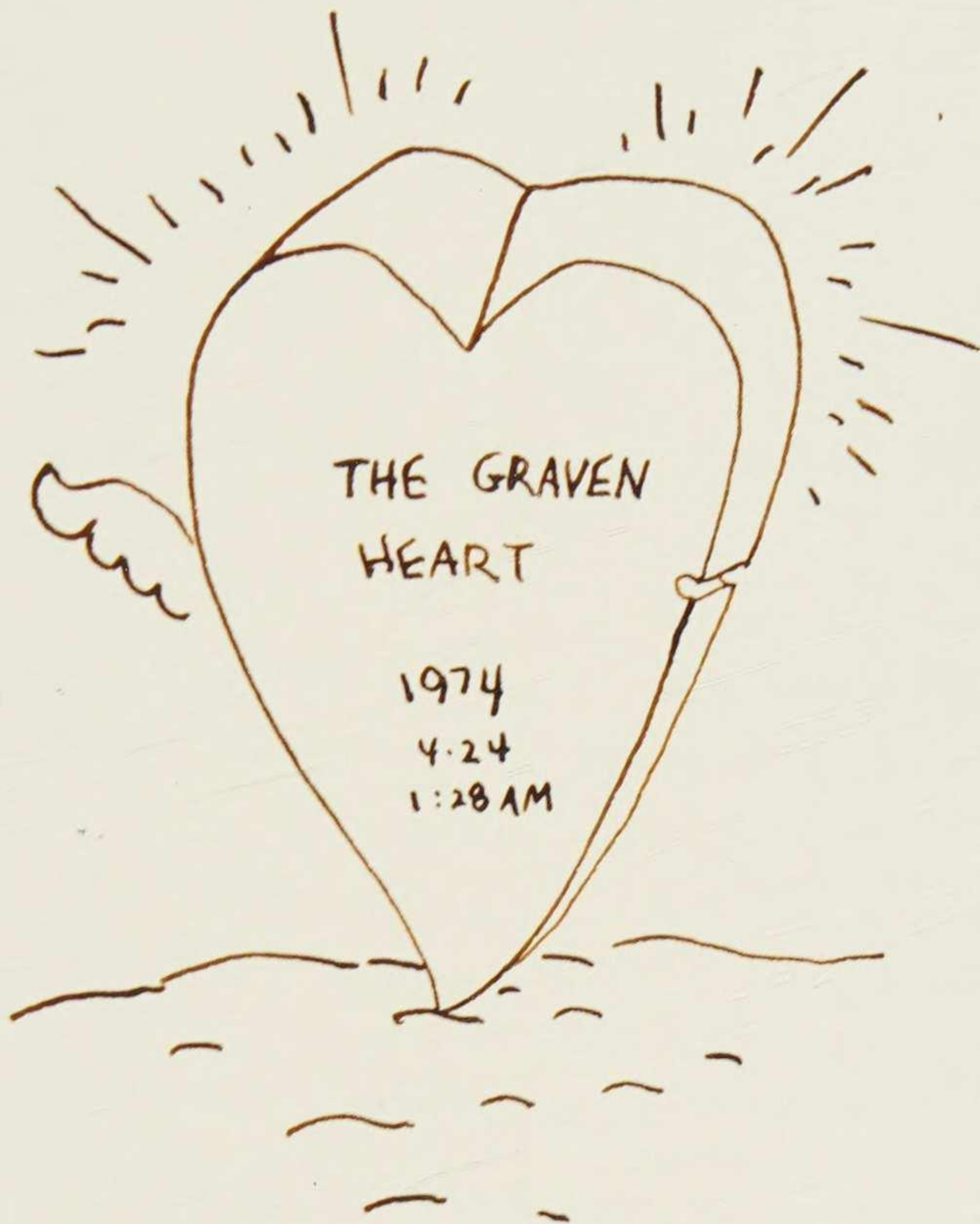


IMAGES, WORDS WHEN WILL YOU REVEAL  
YOUR MEANING?

THE BLUE AURA, ERA, ORA... BLUE

4.24.74





I AM FRIGHTENED AND WILL  
 NOT CEASE AND DESIST - EXIST


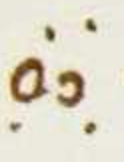
I AM PANICKED - ALCHEMICAL  
 NIGHT FRIGHT - OH FOR THE

4      E.      S.      P.  
 eye      Sonia      Panic

THIS WAS NOW... IT WAS... THE  
 MOVING FINGER ERRS



NIGHT CREATURES . . . AURA ZAPS  
NIGHT FEATURES . . . ERAS TRAPS

FLY WINGS  . . . . .  
FLY SINGS  . . . . . ZAP ME AN ANGEL  
STING ME A SUCK

SPECKLED INK  
DON'T DRINK

SINK , TINK  
TINK DRINK

OH MY GOD  
WHAT HAVE I DONE  
SAID WAS MEANT  
BUT DONE WAS DONE

TO OWN ENOUGH IS  
ENOUGH TO OWN  
UP . . . UP . . . AND AWAY



4-24-74 1:40 AM



## Some notes regarding *The Electric Garden* and the Gardener

The Gardener is an artist, first and foremost. Like the Pompidou Center, her inside shows on the outside. She has a yearning intelligence and an intense drive to integrate divergent systems of feeling, thought and action into an inclusive framework. To this end, she continuously reconstitutes a complex set of perceived dynamic relationships into a unified conceptual and experiential whole producing a very big picture view of life framed in an organic, evolving human context. Using herself as a sensor, and employing multi-modal notational processes, the artist engages a dynamic outer world, but also chats amongst her selves and interrogates her inner voices seeking unseen connections, hypothesizing potential relationships, acknowledging unexplainable yet real experiences, and seeing the present in the past. In addition, the artist extends her senses whenever possible using emerging communications and productions systems; but always in collaboration with her old friends the hand and heart. The artist is not a painter, printmaker, photographer or technician. Rather, she is a thinker who grows thoughts, often embodied in a private language, but rooted in extensive education and experience. She records her thoughts using unfettered notational processes that include handmade images, words, codes, maps, experimental notes, scans, recordings, and even electric shocks; any process in any media that leaves an honest trace of the experience. The artist is a living creative system for whom seeking, connecting and becoming provides the essential experience of being alive.

Much as people have tried, this vital aliveness cannot be bottled. But, the recorded thoughts and experiences can be preserved and shared, as in this *The Electric Garden*, an Inner Landscape Book. However, this particular work holds a unique place in the Gardener's extensive body of work since it records a process of dis-integration rather than integration. Consequently, the reader may find it fruitful to view *The Electric Garden* as a set of cloud chamber images. Scientific cloud chamber images attempt to reveal hidden processes and structures by recording the component traces left by the forceful destruction of dynamic unified physical entities. Artistic cloud chamber images similarly reveal processes and structures underlying a set of dynamic unified conceptions fragmented by some forceful event. The destroyed unities here are not charged particles, but rather the charged ideas, experiences and histories that inhabit the artist's inner landscape.

In this book, a Kirlian shock fragments the inner landscape, the artist's smoothly functioning associative topology, and disrupts the network of living connections that she constantly cultivates and tends. But even while spinning from this jolt in a super saturated physical and psychological state, the artist steadfastly records her attempt to use the shock's energy to rebuild the self and the garden. Disciplined recording of self-awareness, dynamic concept mapping and un-mapping, multi-modal free-association and punning, transcoding and cyphering, automatic drawing, growth and transformation metaphors, flow and time slicing, and Y-ing; the Gardener's root thought processes and concerns are revealed with unusual clarity in these cloud chamber images, in the *Electric Garden*.



Sonia Landy Sheridan is a visual artist and professor Emerita of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where, after ten years of teaching the fine arts, she founded the program Generative Systems in 1970.

With the cooperation of scientists, industry, artists and a unique body of graduate students, Sheridan was able to explore the implications of the communications revolution for the arts.

As artist-in-residence at 3M's Color Research and Central Research Labs, she was able to take back to her students up-to-date industrial experiences.

Sheridan shaped her art and teaching on the premise that art, science and technology function as intertwining systems of thought.



Sheridan's work is in permanent collections such as the Art Institute of Chicago, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Canada, the Fundacion Telefonica in Madrid, the Museum of Science & Industry in Chicago, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography.

The body of her work is held in two major collections. Over 600 works, in 31 mediums and media, as well as her notebooks, are in the Sonia Landy Sheridan Collection at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College. The complete record of her Generative Systems program, as well as hundreds of original prints, videos, sound tapes, photographs, and early computer graphics Dysan discs are in the Daniel Langlois Foundation in Montreal, Canada.

Other Generative Systems books include:

*Art at the Dawning of the Electronic Era*  
*The Art of Sonia Landy Sheridan*

A GENERATIVE SYSTEMS BOOK

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