

**Carl Andre
Sculptures, Politics, 1959-1976**

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**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of PhD
The University of Leeds
School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies**

September 2005

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Acknowledgements

It has been a real pleasure to work on this material, and I am pleased to acknowledge those who have made these past four years so eventful.

Of the study centres I have consulted, I would like to thank in particular the staff at the Archives of American Art, The Museum of Modern Art, The Jewish Museum and the volunteers at the Quincy Historical Society. The team at the Brotherton Library Document Supply Desk here at Leeds has also been more than helpful in securing texts. I am also grateful to Paula Cooper Gallery and Galerie Konrad Fischer for allowing me to consult their archives.

This work has relied heavily on the scholarship of those who have catalogued and archived Andre's oeuvre. The books prepared by Rita Entezari, Eva Meyer-Hermann and Angela Westwater have been open on my desk almost continuously. In the last three months, these have been joined by James Meyer's edited collection of Andre's writings, *Cuts*, and I am especially grateful to him for generously sharing its contents with me prior to its publication.

My research has also benefited from a number of people in New York. In particular, I would like to thank Lawrence Weiner, who laid out for me on the floor of his studio Andre's *Blue Lock Trial*. Hans Haacke helped with my research into the Art Workers' Coalition and told me much more than I could have gleaned from the microfilm in the Bobst Library. Mel Bochner, Rosemarie Castoro, Willoughby Sharp and Phyllis Tuchman also kindly offered their perspectives on the years 1969 and 1970 in ways I remember finding particularly helpful.

I should like to thank Gordon Bensley, Julia Bryan-Wilson, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, Charles Ginnever, Brigitte Kölle, Alex Potts and Dominic Rahtz, who have also shared with me their knowledge of Andre's works. In London, Paula Feldman and Karsten Schubert have goaded me into thinking much harder about Andre's critical reception. Their encouragement was the catalyst for at least one of the chapters here.

Throughout at Leeds, I have profited greatly from the supervision of Fred Orton. His rigour and approach to art history remains a benchmark for me. The high level of conversation within the School and amongst our postgraduate community has also shaped my work from start to finish. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Rowan Bailey, Nicholas Chare, Joanne Crawford, Gail Day, Barbara Engh, Peter Kilroy, Katrin Kivimaa, Josine Opmeer, Griselda Pollock, Phillipa Plock, Will Rea, Annette Seidel-Aparci, Marcel Swiboda, Dominic Williams and Ika Willis for their feedback and discussion.

My family and close friends have devoted much time towards helping prepare this manuscript, and for that I am very grateful. But most of all, I want to thank Sarah Sheena for her conversation and companionship. She has seen this project develop from the very beginning and we have travelled together to see much of the art discussed here. For this, I feel very blessed.

Funding for my doctoral research was provided by the Arts and Humanities Research Board.

Abstract

This work is premised on the assumption that the excuses for not engaging properly with Carl Andre's corpus will not stand forever, and that his art is capable of sustaining considerably more attention than it has been afforded to date. Focusing predominantly on a select number of works from 1959 (when Andre moved to New York City) to 1976 (the year of the media orchestrated uproar over the Tate Gallery's purchase of *Equivalent VIII*) this dissertation assesses the singular nature of his brand of late modernism. Much to the chagrin of many, few US artists of the 1960s aligned themselves so intimately with a Marxist cause or thought so carefully about art's commodity status. This project takes these facts seriously and attempts to approach the art accordingly. The works discussed include *America Drill* (1963), the *Equivalents* (1966), *Lever* (1966), *Gold Field* (1966), *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle* (1967), *Joint* (1968), *Quincy Book* (1973), *Twelfth Copper Corner* (1975) and *Manet* (1980).

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SCULPTURES, POLITICS
1959-1976**

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Preface

Carl Andre: Sculptures, Politics, 1959-1976

A few years back, an editor of an art journal much respected in the 1960s confessed he had always been ‘completely at odds’ with Carl Andre. ‘I liked his work and I liked everything he ever said and wrote about his art’, he admitted. ‘To this day, when I teach Caravaggio, I use a quotation of Andre’s that I flash as a slide: “I find in my work a quality of serenity that I find absolutely impossible in my life.” Everything he wrote about art was golden.’ Yet what he found contemptible about the sculptor was ‘what he said and wrote about politics. And what he did politically.’¹

Indeed, in recent times it has not been hard to dismiss Andre’s politics as extreme and contradictory. For that particular editor, art seemed to be best appreciated as a form of escape from the circumstances of one’s life – a way of attaining a sense of order and clarity that everyday existence is unable to deliver. It is a powerful modernist belief, and one to which Andre has subscribed. Nonetheless, to categorise Andre’s *politics* as belonging to the turbulence of the world from which he drifts free when he makes art strikes me as profoundly mistaken.

This dissertation is an attempt to suggest why. It takes as its focus the first third of Andre’s career and turns to those years in which it was well acknowledged that Andre ‘stood’ for a set of values. ‘Carl Andre’s art is an art of protest’, wrote one critic in the 1970s. ‘It grew in America alongside the civil unrest that culminated in the campaign for the withdrawal of the United States army from Vietnam.’² Avant-garde art feeds off such mythologies of radicalism, and Andre has been no exception. In fact, almost from the moment he started exhibiting his work publicly, he clearly defined his work as Marxist and openly aligned himself with a Marxist cause. How that ideology comes to manifest itself

¹ Philip Leider, cited in Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974* (New York: Soho, 2000), p. 303.

² Lynda Morris, ‘Andre’s Aesthetics’, *The Listener*, vol. 99, no. 2554 (6 April 1978), p. 446.

in actual practice is not obvious, and sometimes even highly counterintuitive. But the account I want to offer is guided by the premise that the real contribution Andre makes to our understanding of late modernist art is lost if we choose to remain in ignorance of his political convictions.

Consequently, I devote a considerable amount of space to discussing Andre's statements in interviews and in his writings. I should stress, however, it is not my aim to merely emphasise the number of times he references Marx, or to make much of the fact that once he scripted a mock proposal for a monument to Che Guevara, or took out advertising space in 1975 to congratulate the people of Vietnam on their victory.³ Such details are too glamorous. Certainly, I think it is significant to know that Andre most likely read the *Grundrisse* in the early 1970s and opposed the War in Vietnam from the very start. But it is perhaps more important to come to an understanding that the intensity of his resistance towards a culture that turns colonial warfare into daily TV entertainment is also the impetus for his antagonism towards his art being seen as a mere part of the culture at large. 'The same fat surplus which burns in Vietnam feeds us', he asserted in 1967. 'Art is what we do. Culture is what is done to us.'⁴ At times, the displays of politically inspired righteousness may have appeared almost febrile; yet all the same, Andre's sculpture has to be understood in terms of its exertion to withdraw and to detach itself from the surrounding image world.

In some senses, the emphasis over the years on the extent to which Andre's art might be described as 'minimalist' has resulted in underemphasizing how the works still can be identified with an earlier form of modernism – one still informed by the terms used by Clement Greenberg in 'Avant-garde and kitsch'. Without the 'moral aid' of radical political attitudes, Greenberg writes, artists never would have had 'the courage to assert themselves as aggressively as

³ Carl Andre, 'Dream of the Monument for Che Guevara', *Paletten* 3 (1968), cover image, reprinted in Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, ed. by James Meyer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), p. 51. Carl Andre, 'Congratulations to the people of Viet-Nam', with Rudolph Baranik, C. B. Helman, Lucy Lippard, Irving Petlin, Jack Sonenberg, May Stevens and Angela Westwater, *Art-rite*, no. 9 (Spring 1975).

⁴ Carl Andre, in Barbara Rose and Irving Sandler, 'Sensibility of the Sixties', *Art in America*, vol. 9, no. 1 (January-February 1967), pp. 44-57, p. 49.

they did against the prevailing standards of society.’⁵ In his famous account, the advance of the avant-garde is described as relentlessly driven by the impulse to entrench art on firm standards. But because the culture at large offers only false promises and easy escapes, the artist can only sustain the high level of their practice by turning their back on society. Assured values are no longer to be found in the ‘subject matter of common experience’, but rather in the medium of the artist’s own craft.⁶ Thus, the impetus towards non-representational art can be read as a medal of dissent: in the absence of true social values, the avant-garde artist has had to forge some of their own.⁷

I do not want to infer that such terms can be mapped point by point onto Andre’s art, although they do serve nonetheless as a reference point for my account here. Andre’s minimalism does owe a great deal to that older generation of American artists whom Greenberg himself had championed. The difference between the abstraction of one of Jackson Pollock’s paintings from the 1940s and Andre’s floor-based sculptures from the 1960s might appear very pronounced; yet Andre did think seriously about such works, and fashioned a position towards them. ‘We have a style of painting now’, Andre confided to a friend in 1962, ‘of which Jackson Pollock is still the exemplar, in which the edge of the painting is used like a political boundary.’⁸ The contained, all-at-once intensity of the canvas was understood by him to be a means of seizing hold of a segment of the world and claiming responsibility for it: ‘this much I painted, the rest is yours.’⁹ Much later, in 1970, he told an interviewer with some pride that once David Smith had disclosed to him that he considered himself redder than Mao.¹⁰ In that same interview, Andre also referenced Ad Reinhardt, whose Left politics, along with his dogmatic assertions of the importance of keeping art distinct from other

⁵ Clement Greenberg, ‘Avant-Garde and Kitsch’, in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 5.

⁶ Clement Greenberg, ‘Avant-Garde and Kitsch’, p. 6.

⁷ For an extensive historical analysis of Greenberg’s essay, see T. J. Clark, ‘Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art’, in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, 2nd edn, ed. by Francis Frascina (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁸ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, ed. by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1980), p. 44.

⁹ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, p. 44.

¹⁰ See Jeanne Siegel, ‘Carl Andre: Artworker’, *Studio International*, vol. 180, no. 927 (November 1970), pp. 175-179, p. 175.

forms of social action, strikes me as offering a further crucial role-model for Andre.¹¹

The task then, is to hold in balance Andre's political convictions in relation his investment in art's autonomy. Certainly, it should be emphasised that his political opinions have never led him to entertain illusions about the efficacy of art to inaugurate real social change. His more Maoist claims were often intended to make just this point. In 1975, he announced to an audience that the truly powerful media in our culture are television and advertising, and that if it were the intention to seize political power, then such media deserve to be controlled, either with money or 'at the point of a gun.'¹² A few years later, he topped this with the claim that that there could be no hope for a socialist America 'until we create a Marxist television.'¹³ Such suggestions are an acknowledgement, I think, just how politically inconsequential and thoroughly marginalized the fine arts remain in our culture. Only very infrequently did he betray that awareness.

Whereas a considerable number of New York artists from the late 1960s channelled their repulsion towards the belligerency of the Johnson and Nixon regimes into agitprop, Andre insisted on keeping his art as uncommunicative and as free from a legibly political subject matter as possible. He continued to neatly arrange works for the insides of whitewashed galleries – in places deliberately and wilfully quarantined from the 'real world'. In fact, when asked how he saw the relation between politics and art in 1970, his response was to suggest gnominically that 'art' is to 'politics' what 'farming' is to 'fighting'. Possibly with his eyes on the example of the Viet Kong, his reasoning was that farming is necessary for sustaining life in just the same way as fighting is sometimes

¹¹ Jeanne Siegel, 'Carl Andre: Artworker', *Studio International*, p. 179. For Reinhardt's position on art, see his *Art-as-Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, ed. by Barbara Rose (New York: Viking Press, 1975). See also Michael Corris, 'The Difficult Freedom of Ad Reinhardt', in *Art Has No History!: The Making and Unmaking of Modern Art*, ed. by John Roberts (London and New York: Verso, 1994).

¹² Carl Andre, in 'Nancy Spero', *Art-rite*, no. 9 (Spring 1975), p. 18. Andre was speaking at the panel discussion, 'Perimeters of Protest' at Artists Space, at Wooster Street in New York on 18 February 1975.

¹³ Carl Andre, 'Radical Art: Theory and Practice', *Proceedings of the Caucus for Marxism and Art at the College Art Association Convention*, no. 3 (January 1978), p. 1.

necessary to protect it. Yet no one but a fool would want to make machine guns from potatoes.¹⁴ The analogy is strained, but the point is clear.

However, Andre's stance does still seem to pull in two directions. On the one hand, he consistently displayed a strong commitment to social reality, or what we might call his realism about the nature of political power, refusing always to accept easy illusions about the logic of the system in which he found himself implicated. But this aspiration to disenchant always seemed to stop just short of completely doing away with the category 'art' altogether; in fact, 'art' seems to carry an almost mystical valency. Moreover, in his sculptures, these two commitments often weigh up against one another with ferocious implications. In fact, the most significant moments in Andre's career are perhaps those in which these conflicting allegiances become impossible for viewers to ignore.

One such occasion comes in 1976. By the mid 1970s, Andre's reputation had developed to the extent that his sculptures were starting to enter many of the larger, national art collections in Europe and elsewhere. When that happened in Britain, his art caught the attention of the popular media. Consequently, his work was exposed to audiences who had little knowledge or appreciation of contemporary art. I begin my account here – with a discussion of the reaction to the purchase of *Equivalent VIII* by the Tate – because the public response threw the underlying issues raised by the art into much sharper relief than they had been for several years. For the curators who had secured the purchase of Andre's sculpture for the Tate Gallery, the work was primarily an exemplary early piece by an artist who had contributed to shaping the development of recent art. To an uninitiated public, however, Andre's work was nothing but bricks: not art but mere bricks.

Indeed, Andre's sculptures are composed of simple arrangements of identical particles of material, which often appear to be requisitioned from the realms of construction and manufacturing. However, once these units are arranged in the gallery, they are intended to be seen not just as mere materials,

¹⁴ Carl Andre, in 'The Artist and Politics: A Symposium', *Artforum*, vol. 9, no. 3 (September 1970), pp. 35-49, p. 35.

but as 'art'. The scenario is so simple it is easy to overlook: it plays off that clichéd conundrum of not knowing whether or not the fire hydrant in the corner of the gallery is part of the display. Although Andre would come to distinguish his sculptures from any identification with the Duchampian ready-made (and for reasons I will discuss), it was still the doubt and the scepticism he instilled in his audiences that deserves our focus. On that age-old modernist question, 'is this art?', viewers simply are obliged to suspend their disbelief. Not all have.

If Andre obliged viewers to identify his mass-produced, machine-manufactured modules as 'unique' sculptures, then in equal measure he *also* required that they see these materials literally, without illusions. The bricks, for instance, are not representative or symbolic of anything other than what they simply are: bricks. I suggest in my account that this commitment to attending to objects directly, and without pretensions to see them as surrogates for other values, can be related back to his understanding of Marx. Nonetheless, viewers are still invited to regard the works in two ways at once – as requisitioned materials *and* as art. In fact, it might well be suggested that the very category 'art' is one of the last illusions from which Andre refused to withdraw his conviction.

As it happens, though, Andre continued to recycle quite a few social givens. But often they seem only to be deployed strategically, with the intention of blocking and shutting down other more powerful kinds of mystique and illusion. For Andre, though, the main breeder of mystification was clear: it was the commodity form. I argue here that the artist's works should be read as closely engaged with the way social values are magically accorded to material artefacts in a capitalist economy. By simply taking units of material out of circulation and placing them inside the art gallery, his sculptures trouble the ease and naturalness with which values are ascribed to objects. It is the persistence of the category 'art', moreover, that enables this to happen.

As with all artists, then, Andre operates within the law of the market; his works have always been sold by private galleries for profit. But at certain moments in his career, he does not merely treat the economic conditions of art as

contingent or external to art proper, but they become the unavoidable subject of the work itself.¹⁵ He accomplishes this in various ways, often using strategies of his own devising. But essentially the economic vector is always potentially emphasised whenever audiences become uncertain about the artistic merit of the works to which he has invited them to devote their attention. 'How is it possible,' demand incredulous viewers, 'that these materials can assume such fine prices simply by being called 'art''?' As I argue in my first chapter, the implications of this incredulity are not without political ramifications.

However, scepticism on the part of viewers can never be sustained consistently, and, with time, it gave way to knowing familiarity. Essentially, this is the reason why my account concentrates on the years up to the mid 1970s. By 1978, for instance, Andre's art enjoyed the attention of a major retrospective that travelled to no less than nine museums across the United States and Canada. There were also major public exhibitions in the Netherlands and in London.¹⁶ The work did not change, but the terms did. It assumed an institutionalised status that rendered its capacity to provoke much less overt.

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The chapters that make up the body of this dissertation each engage with particular attributes of Andre's practice and explore them in turn. Certainly, at times these might seem to open my account onto other concerns than those mentioned here. If the reader wishes to take it that way, then so be it. Broadening the references we might bring to an understanding of his oeuvre is, in my mind, much required and long overdue. However, I hope that ultimately these added

¹⁵ See Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1997), p. 350.

¹⁶ Andre's solo exhibition, 'Sculpture: 1959-1977' opened at the Laguna Gloria Art Museum in Austin, Texas, on 7 January 1977 (till 22 February). It then travelled to Cincinnati, Buffalo, Chicago, La Jolla, Calgary, Berkeley, Dallas, Montreal and reached Boston in 1980. One of the best reviews of this retrospective is Kenneth Baker's, and his description of Andre's art has closely informed my own. See his 'Andre in Retrospect', *Art in America*, vol. 68, no. 4 (April 1980), pp. 88-94. Andre's exhibition in the Netherlands was curated by Rudi Fuchs at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum and was dedicated to his works in wood. In London, his retrospective was held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, under the auspices of Nicholas Serota.

details only strengthen my presentation of Andre as an artist who is deeply concerned with the question of reordering the logic of the commodity economy.

In the first part, I engage with Andre's investment in memorialisation. In Chapter 2, I discuss how his investment in his home city of Quincy, Massachusetts, comes to be eulogized by his career as a sculptor. In the following chapters, I then focus on works of art in which he made Quincy itself the subject of his art. It is easy to dismiss some of these works as tangential to the primary trajectory of his practice; but I feel they warrant our attention not merely for the insight they offer into the very particular cultural background that informs the art, but because they also point to the degree to which Andre's sculpture is invested in the task of commemoration. From start to finish, I want to suggest, Andre's is a funerary art – an art devoted to storing up and holding onto things as a gesture of compensation for that which has been irretrievably lost. The material substantiality of his work I take to be a form of restitution for that which is no longer bodily present. 'Petrification' thus becomes the operative word.

However, I also stress that these exertions towards the retrieval of the past never entertain the illusion of offering up anything other than mere shards and fragments. This is the subject of Chapter 3, a study of Andre's small collection of photographs, *Quincy Book*, and Chapter 4, which offers a brief history of the role memorialisation plays in the civic memory of the city of Quincy itself. 'Fragments' are also the focus of my description of his long early poem, *America Drill*, which is the subject of Chapter 5. The shift from discussing Andre's sculptures to his poetry invariably requires a different kind of critical vocabulary, although Andre's emphasis on memorialisation, loss and attempted recovery might be said to be themes that emerge in equal measure in many of his sculptures.

My focus on these subjects serves as the basis for a more formal discussion of the appearance of Andre's works in the second part of the dissertation. 'Placing' and 'arranging' are here the key terms, for Andre's sculptures are always mere alignments of separate particles: the chosen units are not glued or fixed together in any way. In Chapter 6, I focus on the implications

of such a sculpture, which is described succinctly by one critic as ‘arrangements of identical units that exist as an art object only when assembled as such in the proper context.’¹⁷ On the one hand, viewers are made aware that the modules can always be dismantled and stacked away, and that the dimensions of the work are merely an aggregation of separable units. In that sense, nothing might seem more perfunctory and provisional. Yet, on the other hand, Andre arranges them into simple configurations that, for the duration of their display, are never variable or alterable. These contingencies of the arrangements are made to register, phenomenally, as not only ‘inevitable’ but also as laden with a sense of ‘presence’. Turning to early reviews of Andre’s exhibitions, I explore how the ‘presence’ that critics ascribe to his sculptures might be best understood.

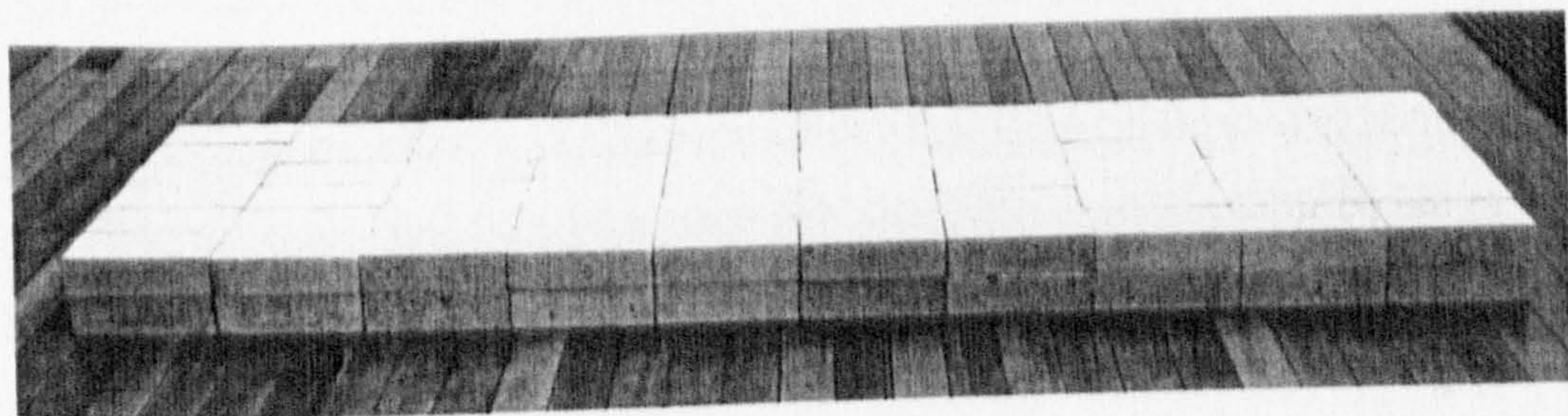
In Chapter 7, I offer a description of Andre’s *Lever*, the sculpture that was first displayed at the Jewish Museum in 1966, and which comprised of a single row of 137 firebricks. I emphasise how the work’s title, along with its careful positioning within the galleries, served to provoke a sense of the work’s visual ‘forcefulness’, which was made all the more powerful because it remained latent and not manifest. In Chapter 8, I extend my account to a more general consideration of the extent to which Andre’s sculptures are always spatially oriented towards the work’s immediate physical surroundings. Famously, this is defined by the artist in terms of ‘place’ – a word that was taken up by many of his contemporaries. I base my account on Andre’s *Joint*, a long row of hay bales that the artist positioned across the open ground of Windham College Campus, Vermont, in 1968. I argue that Andre’s notion of place should be understood in phenomenological terms: as a perception on the part of a peripatetic viewer that the sculpture and the context into which it had been inserted are mutually defining. For Andre, place also appears to have been a term that has a close relationship to the idea of defining limits and boundaries, and in this chapter I explore how the process of determining set parameters for his work could also include economic and social factors. Andre’s art always focuses attention, in other words, on its enviroing context. I suggest we understand his work in these

¹⁷ Barbara Rose, ‘Problems of Criticism VI: The Politics of Art, Part III’, *Artforum*, vol. 7, no. 9 (May 1969), pp. 46-51, p. 46.

terms – a practice that seems intent on providing ‘concrete analyses of concrete situations’.¹⁸

I conclude my dissertation by returning to 1976, and offer an account of one such ‘situation’. It concerns the circumstances surrounding Andre’s conflict with the Whitney Museum of American Art in the spring of that year. The controversy occurred almost exactly at the same time as the uproar in Britain over the Tate’s purchase of *Equivalent VIII*, although it should be added that it was a controversy of a considerably different order. The cause of Andre’s antagonism was what he saw to be the failure of the Whitney to install his work appropriately. In his eyes, the sculptures in question were *mis*-placed. Indeed, his subsequent, carefully choreographed withdrawal from the exhibition might be read as symbolic of his practice in general. The event focused attention on the extent to which taking things out of circulation and presenting them in another context is for Andre a sculptural activity that is inseparable from his commitment to the political.

¹⁸ Carl Andre, in ‘The Artist and Politics: A Symposium’, p. 35 and Jeanne Siegel, ‘Carl Andre: Artworker’, p. 179. The phrase ‘concrete analysis of concrete situations’ is a quotation from Jean-Luc Godard’s 1969 film, *Pravda*.



Equivalent VIII, 1966, remade 1969

Chapter 1

1976:
Pouring ink on Andre's bricks

He crated them up as they were, drew up assembly instructions, and shipped the lot to the grateful Tate.

Daily Mirror, 16 February 1976¹

The outburst of indignation that occurred in Britain in February 1976, when the media discovered that the Tate Gallery had purchased Carl Andre's arrangement of 120 sand-lime bricks is a phenomenon that has been so successfully mythologised and become so much a part of British popular folklore regarding modern art in general, that it is tempting to turn away from the whole affair and dismiss it out of hand. Certainly, that was Andre's own inclination, since in his opinion the controversy had never had much to do with his art at all.² To a degree, he was right. It had been provoked and perpetuated by agendas that could not have been more localised and specific to the country at the time. The work itself, which dates from 1966 and is known as *Equivalent VIII*, was purchased by the Tate in 1972, along with two further sculptures, *Last Ladder* and *144 Magnesium Square*, and all had already been on display to the public more than once without attracting any particular attention. In fact, the only reason they were noticed by the press in early 1976 was because the works were listed and illustrated in the Gallery's *Biannual Report of Acquisitions*, published the previous year.³ And had the art collector and critic, Douglas Cooper, not conducted a campaign to undermine the cultural authority of the Tate, pedantically querying the validity of many of the Gallery's new acquisitions, then it is unlikely that the Tate's *Report* would ever have attracted the attention of

¹ Philip Mellor, 'What a load of Rubbish: How the Tate dropped 120 bricks', *Daily Mirror*, 16 February 1976, p. 1

² See Peter Fuller, 'Carl Andre on His Sculpture', *Art Monthly*, no. 16, May 1978, republished in Peter Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), p. 110.

³ *The Tate Gallery Biannual Report and Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions, 1972-1974* (Tate Gallery, 1975). The entries for the three Carl Andre acquisition are on pp. 73-75.

other journalists, and perhaps Andre's sculpture would never have been singled out for derision in the way that it was.⁴

All the same, downplaying the whole tale as one that had its origins in Cooper's personal quarrel with the Tate does nothing to explain why the general public did take the question of this particular sculpture so much to heart. The well-thumbed clippings files in the Tate Gallery's library attest to the obsession clearly enough: the news of the purchase must have generated about seven to eight hundred articles in the national and local papers, not to mention a hefty quantity of radio and television coverage. Never before, one might say, had such a discrete number of bricks caused so much ink to flow.

Bile poured forth in other ways as well. It was only a question of days before one indignant amateur painter decided to take matters into his own hands by spraying the bricks with blue dye – an act of vandalism that led to the work being withdrawn for display for the next fifteen months.⁵ The sculpture was relegated immediately to the Conservation Department and was no longer on display, but this did little to stem the immediate indignation of the British public, who continued to fill the letter columns of the daily papers with a relentlessly contemptuous stream of invective. In fact, the extent of the exposé almost became a story in its own right, with newspapers and art journals across Europe and the United States proliferating yet further commentaries and discussion on the sheer scale of the outrage. And, for at least the next two years or so, the whole 'Tate Bricks' affair continued to rumble on and on.

⁴ Douglas Cooper's response to the Tate Gallery's *Biennial Report* was published in *Books & Bookmen*, vol. 1 (January 1976). A copy of this article is included in Press Cuttings relating to Carl Andre in the Hyman Kreitman Research Centre, Tate Britain, London.

⁵ See Nicholas Comfort, 'Blue Dye Blacks out the Tate's Bricks', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 February 1976 and Ronald Ricketts, 'Splash! Those Arty Bricks get the Blues', *Daily Mirror*, 24 February 1976.

The newly-restored *Equivalent VIII* was re-displayed by the Tate in May 1977, in an exhibit that ensured that it was seen within an appropriately 'serious' (i.e. art historical) context. It was displayed alongside Andre's two other Tate Gallery acquisitions, and all three sculptures shared space with works by Frank Stella, Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Agnes Martin and Sol LeWitt. For a review of the installation, see William Packer, 'Tate Gallery: Carl Andre's Bricks', *Financial Times*, 3 May 1977, p. 3. The much respected Carl Andre exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery the following year, (which ran from 17 March to 23 April) was motivated by a similar intention of introducing and justifying Andre's entire corpus to the British public.

For sure, the indignation displayed by the public towards the sculpture was just as predictable as it has been in many of the other outrages and scandals that have punctuated the history of modern art's reception. A similar phenomenon had occurred in Australia just three years earlier, when the National Gallery purchased Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*, and it was to be repeated all over again when the National Museum of Canada would acquire Barnett Newman's *Voices of Fire* in 1990.⁶ In each instance, it could be said that a tax-paying public was objecting to the authority of a cultural elite to purchase works on behalf of the state for what appeared to be unwarranted sums of money, when the artistic value of their acquisitions was taken by the public at large to be utterly and entirely minimal. In this sense, it was the question of *who* was legitimately allowed to determine art's value that seemed to be at the root of these outrages. Certainly, if you listen to Richard Morphet from the Tate patiently explaining in the autumn of 1976 that the reason the Gallery had purchased the sculpture for the nation was because 'Andre's standing in the informed sector of the art world had been very high',⁷ then you might be inclined to agree with one art historian who has written recently that the Tate Bricks scandal 'primarily served to bolster the power and authority of professional members of the artworld.'⁸

Of course, all this talk of 'professional members' and 'elitist cultural authority' is the base-note refrain to all art controversies. It could also be said, though, that such mutterings of dissatisfaction are not just a phenomenon of the more famous and notorious outrages. They are more or less there to be heard in the background of almost all discourses and debates within contemporary art: modern art's equivalent to radio static. In the case of the uproar over Andre's sculpture, it simply reached the point where the interference became so deafening that it was impossible to hear anything else above it. Indeed, it is very tempting to treat these complaints in these terms – as a mere distortion of genuine artistic and aesthetic issues – and try to tune them out altogether. But this inclination is, I think, one that

⁶ For an account and discussion of the scandal surrounding the acquisition of *Voices of Fire* by the National Museum of Canada, see *Voices of Fire: Art, Rage, Power and the State*, ed. by Bruce Barber, Serge Guilbaut and John O'Brian (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

⁷ Richard Morphet, 'Carl Andre's Bricks', *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 118, no. 884 (November 1976), pp. 762-767, p. 764.

⁸ Neil Mulholland, *The Cultural Devolution: Art in Britain in the Late Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Basingstoke, 2003), p. 3.

deserves to be challenged, if only because it easily leads to the assumption that high art should be exempted entirely from a consideration of the ways in which it is socially constituted and disseminated. In fact, one might suggest that to adopt this position is to assume naïvely that art and aesthetics can be discussed as though they were a mere series of intellectual debates that have taken place in a complete social vacuum.

In this sense at least, 'art controversies' do have the uncomfortable but salutary role of reminding those who are professionally trained to cast judgement on art that their various adjudications and their practices of cultural legitimation invariably are not universally accepted. However, to state this is merely to return the topic back once again to some of the most deep-seated and pressing questions about art's status in the contemporary world. You merely have to turn to the very first page of Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* to read his famous assertion that the only thing that is self-evident about art nowadays is that 'nothing concerning art is self-evident anymore'.⁹ Jean-François Lyotard puts the predicament in a complementary way, when he remarks that it is an inescapable feature of artistic modernism that the social community no longer recognises itself in art-objects; instead they are either ignored or rejected as incomprehensible.¹⁰

In that case, we need to explore further the matter of this so-called public 'rejection'. In various passages in *Aesthetic Theory*, for instance, Adorno argues that the ridiculousness and incomprehensibility of modernist art is recognised best by 'philistines'¹¹, a generic term that he reserves for those individuals in society who display a complete indifference, or hatred even, towards 'aesthetic comportment'.¹² In his commentary on Adorno, Frederic Jameson also takes up this point and suggests that for Adorno, it was not that philistines simply do not understand art, but that they understand it far too well. What they object to is that the promise of pleasure, that art should supposedly always offer, simply does not exist in modernist artworks in a

⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Athlone, 1997), p. 1.

¹⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde' in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), p. 101.

¹¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 119.

¹² Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 241.

form which is available for immediate consumption.¹³ In Adorno's modernist aesthetics, the most socially responsible art is that which keeps the idea of true and full social happiness alive by profoundly denying its present existence.¹⁴ Thus, in a counter-intuitive move, Adorno accords the figure of the philistine 'an ignominious measure of justification,' for he sees their refusal of modern art as a gesture which has a social import that cannot be overlooked.¹⁵ And it is perhaps for this simple reason, then, that the more uninformed and 'populist' reactions to Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* ought to be cause for serious consideration. The forcefulness of the repudiation of his work throws into sharp relief the extent to which the sculpture dissents from popular expectations about what an artwork should accomplish. But more importantly, by not fulfilling these expectations, it also could be said to raise almost by default the question as to how Andre's practice *does* aspire to an alternative and distinct notion of pleasure and happiness. In short – to use Adorno's vocabulary – it points to the extent to which his art embodies an ideal of utopian fulfilment.

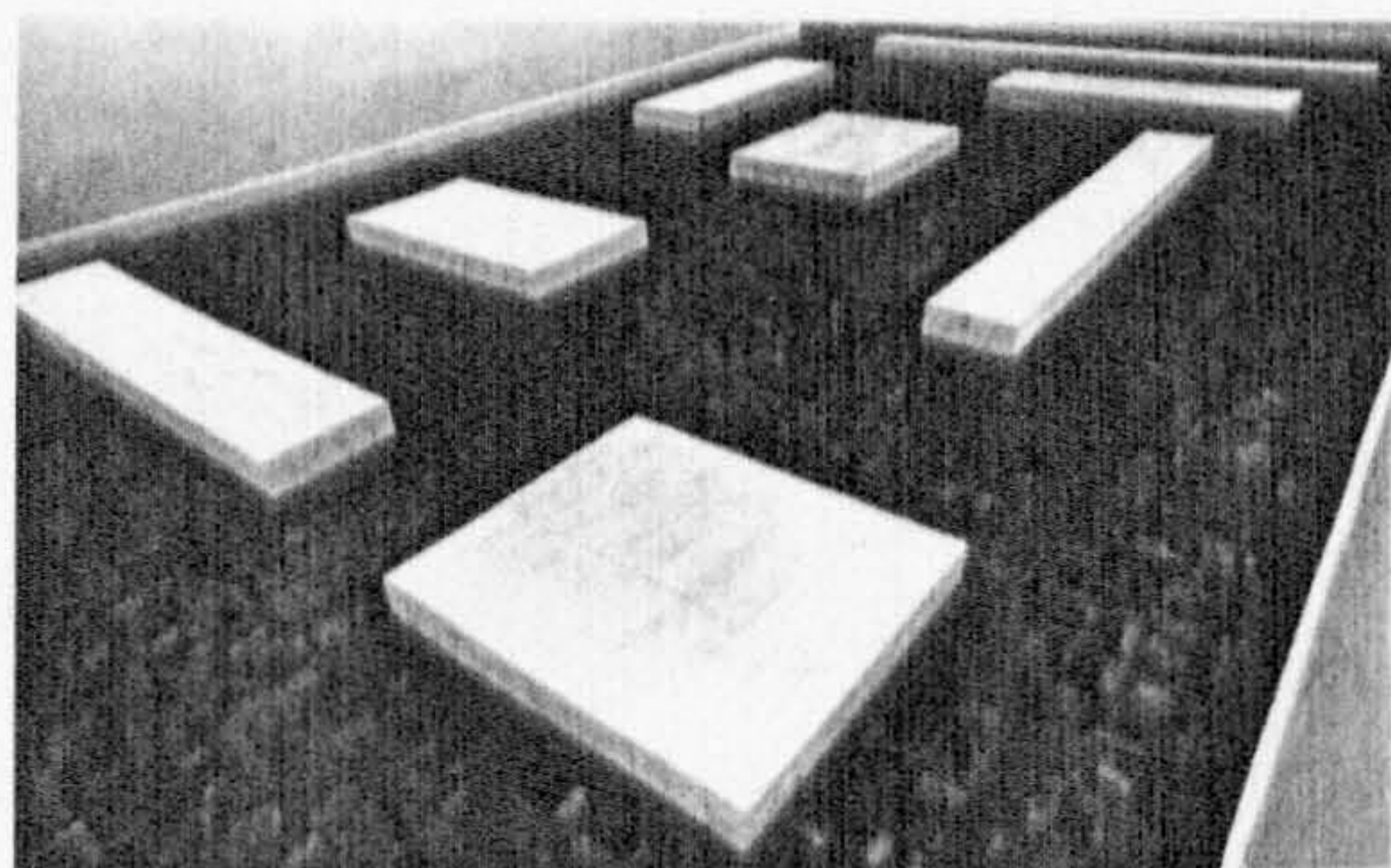
To turn to these questions is also, then, to inaugurate a discussion of the ways in which Andre's art does identify quite self-consciously with an artistic vanguard. Indeed, this was a subject especially visible at the very beginning of his career, in the days before his sculptures acquired credibility in the eyes of the artworld, or possessed a ready and reliable market value. Andre's correspondence with John Myers, the director of the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, which was the first gallery to represent him, displays all the artist's ambivalences clearly enough. The tensions were never personal, but they did seem to come to a head just before he left them in

¹³ See Frederic Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic* (London, New York: Verso, 1990), pp. 152 and 147. For an alternative discussion of the cultural category of the philistine, and one that dissents from Jameson's gloss on Adorno's account, see Dave Beech and John Roberts, 'Spectres of the Aesthetic' and 'Tolerating Impurities: An Ontology, Genealogy and Defence of Philistinism', in *The Philistine Controversy* (London: Verso, 2002). By focusing their attention on this figure which they regard as a haunting, persistent presence in aesthetic discourse, they hope to return recent academic interest in the aesthetic to what they regard as a more Marxist preoccupation, one that concerns conflicting class interests and allegiances. Their main point appears to be that all processes of aesthetic legitimation, however philosophical or academic, are never cut off or aloof from the very real dynamics of class bias and other forms of cultural exclusion. For them, they write, 'the concept of the philistine is peculiarly well-placed, as the definitional other of art and aesthetics, to bring to bear on art and aesthetics the cost of their exclusions, blindnesses and anxieties. [...] The philistine refuses to take a disinterested stance towards a culture which stands as a judge over the philistine's pleasure without the philistine's consent.' (p. 45).

¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 153.

¹⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 119.

January 1967.¹⁶ On the one hand, Andre seems thoroughly committed to making art in order to yield a surplus value for both the gallery and for himself, yet in no way was the work intended to be easily saleable either. 'MY WORK IS NOT SALEABLE IN THE EXTREME', he pronounced defensively in one letter, shortly after he had received a statement indicating that he was now over \$575 in debt to the gallery:¹⁷ 'IT IS MEANT TO BE DIFFICULT AND CHALLENGING TO MYSELF AND OTHERS'.¹⁸ Here, 'difficult' and 'challenging' means, more or less, being unsaleable. And, at that stage, they were not especially easy to sell. Financially, neither Myers nor Andre seem to have benefited especially well from their partnership. At his solo exhibition in April 1966 none of his eight brick sculptures had been purchased, and only one of the six small magnet sculptures in the adjacent room left the gallery as sold.



Equivalent I-VIII, installation at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, April 1966



John Myers, c.1966

¹⁶ Andre was represented by the de Nagy Gallery from the early spring of 1965, following the 'Shape and Structure: 1965' group exhibition in which he participated in January 1965. He remained with them until February 1967, when he left to join the Virginia Dwan Gallery.

¹⁷ Statement to Carl Andre from Tibor de Nagy Gallery, January 25 1967, Artists' Files, Tibor de Nagy Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.

¹⁸ Carl Andre, Letter to Tibor de Nagy and John Myers, 26 January 1967, Artists' Files, Tibor de Nagy Gallery Papers.

FEB 3 1967 - DEAR TIBOR DE NAGY - YOUR LETTER WAS VERY KIND -
 MINE WAS NOT MEANT TO BE RESENTFUL - PERHAPS MY UNCERTAIN
 SITUATION CAN BE MISTAKEN FOR HOSTILITY - THE GALLERY WAS
 QUITE BOLD IN SHOWING ME - NO OTHER GALLERY WAS BRAVE
 ENOUGH AT THE TIME - I AM GRATEFUL FOR THAT BOLDNESS - YOU
 HAVE BEEN GRACIOUS ENOUGH TO ADMIT THAT THE TIBOR DE
 NAGY GALLERY HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ATTENTION PAID TO
 MY WORK BY THE ADVANCED CRITICS AND PUBLIC - OUR ASSOCI-
 ATION HAS BEEN MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS - EXACTLY HOW THE
 BALANCE CAN BE STRUCK IS BEYOND ME - AN ACCOUNTANT WOULD
 USE ONE METHOD - AN ART HISTORIAN ANOTHER - JOHN CANADAY
 WOULD INSIST WE WERE ALL WASTING MY TIME AND YOURS - LET
 ME REPEAT THAT MY OWN MOOD IS ONE OF CONFUSION NOT ONE
 OF ANIMOSITY - THE WEALTHY GALLERIES ARE NOT INTERESTED
 IN MY WORK AND NEVER HAVE BEEN - ONE GREAT ASSET THEY
 COMMAND IS THE ART INFRASTRUCTURE - THE CURATORS GRANTORS
 PATRONS TRUSTEES EDITORS ETC - THE RECENT NATIONAL GRANTS
 PASSED ME BY - THE WHITNEY ANNUAL HAS ONE VOID BELONGING
 TO ME - THE HONORARIA ARE PASSED OUT TO THOSE WHO NEED
 NEVER CASH THE CHECKS - I SUPPOSE HERE I DO DRIFT INTO AN
 IRONIC ENVY - I WOULD LIKE SOME OF THE GRAVY ALTHOUGH I
 THINK THE COOKS ARE A MENACE TO PUBLIC HEALTH -
 HOW WHAT
 IS TO BE DONE - I HOPE WHEN THE PARKS DEPARTMENT RETURNS
 THE COPY OF THE PHILIP JOHNSON PROPOSAL YOU WILL RIP
 IT UP - I SUBMITTED IT AS A PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL NOTE
 AND SKETCH TO MR JOHNSON - THE GALLERY GOT A COPY FOR
 RECORD ONLY - ANY CIRCULATION OF THE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN AN
 EMBARRASSMENT TO ME -
 MY EXPENSES ARE VERY SMALL AND CAN
 BE REDUCED TO ALMOST NOTHING AS I HAVE LEARNED IN THE
 PAST - GALLERIES ARE VERY EXPENSIVE TO OPERATE - MY CHARGE
 AGAINST MY WORK IS CORRESPONDINGLY LOW - YOUR CHARGE ON
 MY WORK IS THUS HIGH - IF A GALLERY ADVANCED ME 10000
 DOLLARS I WOULD GET NO RETURN FROM THE SALE OF WORK - IF
 A GALLERY ADVANCED ME 600 DOLLARS I WOULD GET NO RETURN
 CERTAINLY THE FIRST CONDITION IS MORE DESIRABLE THAN
 THE SECOND -
 THESE IRONIES OR CONTRADICTIONS ARE NOT THE
 FAULT OF YOU OR JOHN MYERS BUT ARE THE FAULT OF US ALL -
 IF MY WORK HAS ANY PURPOSE AT ALL IT IS THE PURGATION
 OF IRONY FROM SCULPTURE - WE LIVE IN A TIME WHEN IRONY IS
 CHERISHED DEFENDED CREATED - WE KILL FOR PEACE - BE WELL @

Letter to Tibor de Nagy, 3 February 1967¹⁹

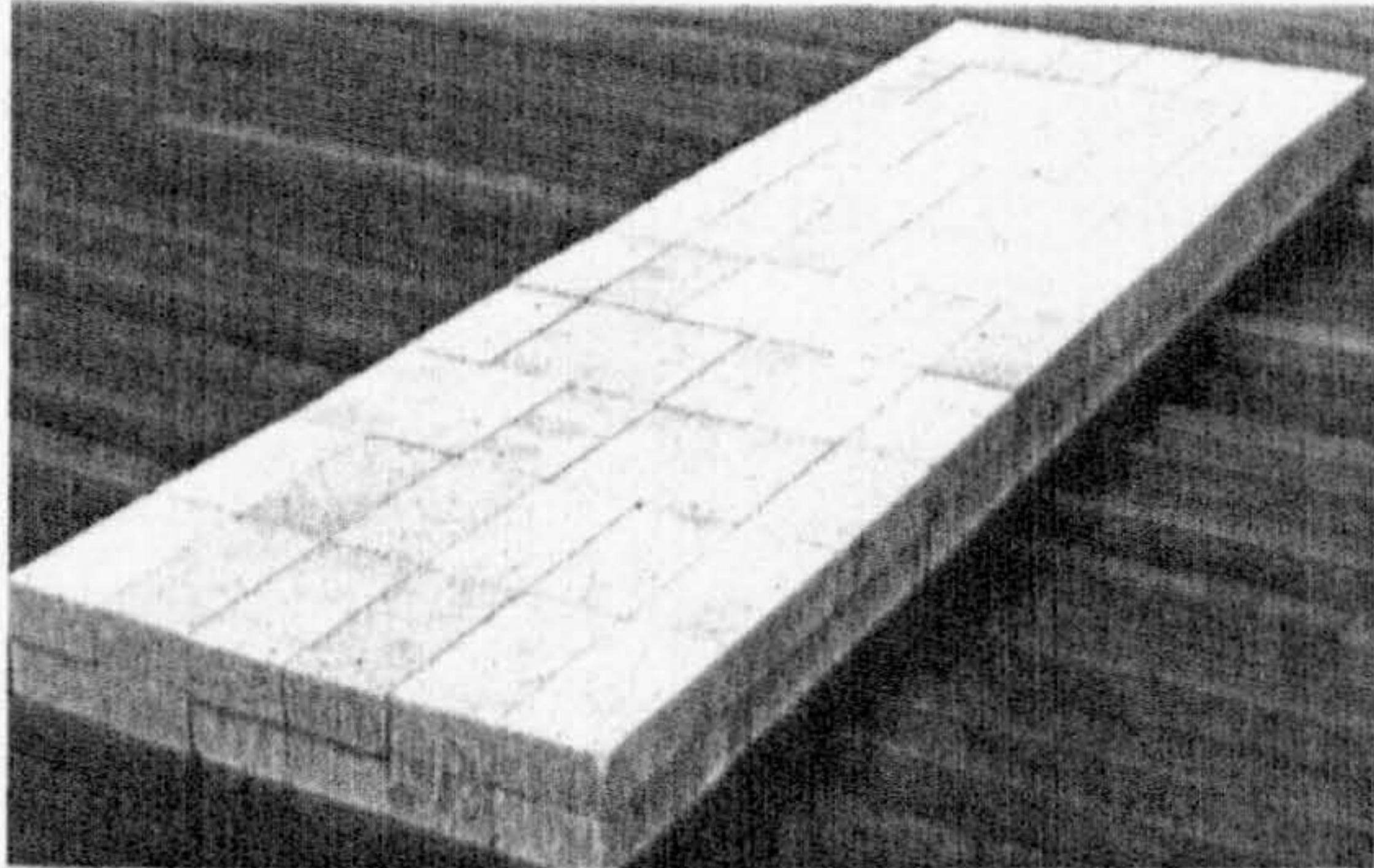
In fact, Myers only parted with a mere handful of relatively small works during the entire two years the Gallery was representing him. At the time of his first one-person exhibition with the Gallery back in 1965, Andre had pronounced with Duchampian aplomb that he was offering works anyone could make, but nobody seemed able to buy.²⁰ What was for sale, in other words, was not his unique talent, but purely the novelty of his elementary arrangements. But it would take some considerable art-critical persuasion before collectors would be willing to write out cheques for materials they could easily purchase and then build for themselves.

Yet before purchasers and critics would slowly convince themselves that Andre was not merely an ingenious trickster, Andre himself was never for a moment prepared to compromise his art by making sculptures that would prove more ingratiating to the tastes of the de Nagy Gallery's regular customers, or, for that

¹⁹ Artists' Files, Tibor de Nagy Gallery Papers.

²⁰ Carl Andre, in Barbara Rose, 'ABC Art', *Art in America*, vol. 53, no. 5 (September 1965), pp. 57-69, p. 67.

matter, for Myers. Without dismissing his accomplishments, it seems fair to say that Myers essentially had always been committed to an art that was in his words ‘mysterious’ or ‘enchanted’: ultimately it was this kind of work that his gallery preferred most of all to promote.²¹ Andre, on the other hand, was very clear that his sculptures simply did not fulfil such expectations: ‘I HAVE COME TO FEEL’, he wrote to Myers and Tibor Nagy, ‘THAT YOUR HEART BELONGS TO POETRY AND A KIND OF POETIC ART WHICH IS ALIEN TO MY OWN. THE IMAGE OF THE GALLERY WHICH REFLECTS YOUR TASTE AND STYLE HAS NO FACET THAT I COULD CALL REFLECTIVE OF MY OWN’.²² But it is not just a matter of defining a difference in style that is at stake here: all this demarcation and distancing has just as much to do with what we might loosely call ‘class affiliations’. For Andre, it is a way of articulating that his sculpture is simply not intended to be a beguiling artefact. Certainly, they *can* be purchased, yet they are intended always to dissent from yielding themselves entirely to the expectations of purchasers. They disappoint. They aim to remain aloof and withdrawn, in which aloofness stands for a certain ‘unavailability’.



Equivalent VIII, 1966, remade 1969

These terms will need to be clarified and expanded, but for the time being I simply want to emphasise that irrespective of whether or not Andre’s sculptures are sold as commodities, they are intended to possess a value that remains distinct from

²¹ See John Bernard Myers, *Tracking the Marvellous: A Life in the New York Art World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983). Myers had started out as an organiser of a professional marionette theatre for children, along with Tibor Nagy, who was Hungarian by birth. Their first performance was a Pueblo Indian fairy story ‘inspired by Max Ernst’s enchanting collection of Kachina Dolls.’ (p. 98).

²² Carl Andre, Letter to John Myers, undated, possibly 25 January 1967, Artists’ Files, Tibor de Nagy Gallery Papers.

commodity exchange.²³ However, it is precisely this question of the resistance of Andre's sculptures to easy consumption and assimilation that many of his defendants, writing from and within the terms of the artworld, often seem to want to diffuse as quickly as possible. The more his work is legitimated as canonical, and the more closely the affinities and links get drawn between his works and the likes of those by Bernini, Rodin and Brancusi and other 'monumental' figures in the history of European art, then the harder it becomes to suggest that Andre's work could ever be read as politically challenging.²⁴ The episode of the 'Tate Bricks Scandal', on the other hand, does at least serve to bring these questions back out into the open with an unprecedented ferocity.

*

We do not know much about art, perhaps, but we know what we do not like. We do not like £30 piles of bricks which cost £4,000 or even £2,000, or even £60, taking into account labour, postage and packing across the Atlantic.
Cambridge Evening News, 18 February 1976²⁵

... market men watched London Brick with more than usual interest, but the price shaded to 59 ½ p on the absence of orders from the Tate Gallery.
Daily Telegraph, 18 February 1976²⁶

What was it, then, about Andre's sculpture that so incensed the British public? Ostensibly, the cause of the popular contempt for *Equivalent VIII* was simple. It

²³ For an elucidating paragraph on the extent to which it is its 'unavailability' that makes it possible to claim that modernist art has a political import, see Jacques Rancière, 'The Sublime from Lyotard to Schiller: Two readings of Kant and their political significance', *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 126 (July-August 2004), pp. 8-15, p. 11. In part, Rancière is deriving his terms here from Jean-Francois Lyotard, who suggests in one of his lectures that avant-garde art is 'not a genre defined in terms of an end (the pleasure of the addressee), and still less is it a game whose rules have to be discovered'; instead it 'accomplishes an ontological task' – one which it never entirely completes. See Lyotard's 'Newman: The Instant' in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 88.

²⁴ Kenneth Baker raises this question succinctly in his 1980 review of Andre's large touring retrospective. 'Carl Andre has had more than a decade of international recognition for his work', he writes. 'Knowing that, and knowing the nature of his artistic enterprise, can we any longer distinguish the credibility of his work as sculpture from that of the authorities which have certified it as art?' See his 'Andre in Retrospect', pp. 88-94. See also Lynda Morris' review of Carl Andre's exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1978, who makes a similar point. See 'Andre's Aesthetics', p. 446.

²⁵ Citation from the *Cambridge Evening News*, 18 February 1976, cited in Carl Andre, 'The Bricks Abstract: A Compilation by Carl Andre', *Art Monthly*, no. 1 (October 1976), p. 24.

²⁶ 'White Paper on Public Spending', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 February 1976.

hinged almost entirely on the fact that this rectangular arrangement of bricks simply displayed no evidence of artistic work. To journalists and members of the public who had been brought up to believe that all art should be a manifestation of a profound and unique artistic talent, there was nothing about *Equivalent VIII* that distinguished it from any generic stack of bricks you might find at a building site. Morphet was entirely correct, of course, when he explained that Andre's firebricks were not just 'any old bricks', and that the artist had chosen a specific type with very distinctive qualities and characteristics.²⁷ All the same, such claims were entirely beside the point for those who remained adamant that bricks could never be art because the artist had simply not 'done' anything to them. There was a sense of fraudulence here: if Andre's bricks could be art, then this seemed to imply that any bricklayer might be an artist. Not very surprisingly, the cartoonists and the tabloid column-writers found plenty to be sardonic about here.



Advertisement campaign for Whitbread's Heineken,
February 1976

More to the point, however, if *anybody* could have put together Andre's stack of bricks, then this begged the question as to what exactly was so precious about Andre's 'masterpiece' – as it was sarcastically dubbed. Just what was inimically 'original' about it in any valid artistic sense? The fact that the version purchased by the Tate in 1972 was not even the 'original', but a 1969 reconstruction, seemed to most journalists to be further evidence that Andre was just taking the Tate for a ride.²⁸

²⁷ Richard Morphet, 'Carl Andre's Bricks', p. 764. I discuss some of these qualities in Chapter 7 on *Lever* (1966).

²⁸ The *Equivalent VIII* that the Tate purchased in 1972 was made from bricks that had been purchased in 1969. Andre originally had produced eight *Equivalents* for his installation at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York in April 1966, and since none had sold, nearly all the sand

Overall, it was not especially difficult for newspaper to make the sculpture stare out from the heavily cropped, context-less illustrations as an utterly inscrutable 'thing' – debased rubbish, in so many words.²⁹ The front cover of the 16 February *Daily Mirror* took this to an extreme, printing an image of *Equivalent VIII* three times – the right way up, on its side and upside down, as if they were pretending to wring some kind of visual meaning from it by whatever means possible.³⁰

Daily Mirror

EUROPE'S BIGGEST DAILY SALE
Monday, February 16, 1976 No. 22,810

Inside your marvellous Mirror

TOP OF THE TOTS

Page 3



SEW UP A BARGAIN OFFER

Centre Pages

Three women shot dead in Ulster

By JOE GORDON

FLY WEVER
INGOLA'S
HOST
TOWN

ON
URRAY
AVES
IN
INDIA

CRITIC
WAS
IN
THE
LAND
OF
THE
PHAROS

THE
WARRIORS
ARE
ON
THE
MOVE
TO
THE
WEST

BATTLE
IS
ON
THE
MARCH
TO
THE
WEST

THE
WARRIORS
ARE
ON
THE
MOVE
TO
THE
WEST



Whichever way you look at Britain's latest work of art..

By PHILIP MELLOR

WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH

A TOP art gallery was under fire last night for spending taxpayers' cash on... a pile of bricks.

Sizarre

Price

How the Tate dropped 120 bricks

THE
WARRIORS
ARE
ON
THE
MOVE
TO
THE
WEST

Daily Mirror, 16 February 1976

Of course, it should also be made clear that the artistic merit of the work would never have mattered one iota, had it not been for the amount of 'tax-payers' money' that the Tate was believed to have paid for the sculpture. And because no sum

lime bricks were returned to the factory. Journalists acquired these facts from the description of T1534 in The Tate Gallery's *Biennial Report*, pp. 73-74. (T1534 is the Tate's acquisition number for *Equivalent VIII*.) Information about the status of the bricks had originally been derived from Carl Andre himself, who had discussed the work with Ronald Alley, Richard Morphet, Simon Wilson, Penelope Marcus and Angela Westwater at the time of its purchase. A recording and transcript of this conversation, which took place on 12 May 1972 at the Tate, is housed in the Tate Gallery Archives.

²⁹ This aspect of the popular response in Britain to *Equivalent VIII* has been emphasised by James Meyer, in *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 192.

³⁰ Philip Mellor, 'What a Load of Rubbish: How the Tate dropped 120 bricks', *Daily Mirror*, 16 February 1976, p. 1.

was ever divulged by the Gallery's Trustees, a whole series of ever inflating overestimations filled the newspaper columns: from £400, to £500, to £2,000, to £3,000, to £4,000,³¹ to \$6,000 and even, most wildly of all, \$12,000.³² Either way, it was the mismatch between the work's artistic merit and the price paid for it that provoked the indignation. Because the press was only interested in the mysterious monetary value that these bricks had accumulated, the work itself was destined to appear utterly disappointing and despoiled in comparison. In a way, it is a little like the old tale Freud recounts – of the gold that the devil has given to his paramours turning to excrement after his departure.³³ It was not bricks in and of themselves which were debased, but the idea that they could be presented as art and sold for so much money that seemed so obscene. In fact, the cuttings are littered with ironic references about what such bricks *ought* to have cost, had they been acquired from a more seemingly 'respectable' and down-to-earth domestic outlet. £40 to £60 per thousand seem to be about the going rate in Britain at that time.³⁴ But then again, even across the articles, price divergences start to appear, and sooner or later the story seems to be fuelled mostly by a desire to know the correct and true cost of things *per se*.



Equivalent VIII

³¹ See 'They just looked like bricks...', *The Star*, Sheffield, 18 February 1976.

³² See Pat Gilmour, 'Trivialisation of Art by the Press', *Arts Review* 1977, pp. 49-51, p. 49. Neil Mulholland points out that many of the early newspaper articles equated the Tate's silence on the question of the work's price to the way the sculpture, seen in isolation, simply did not appear to supply its viewers with an single meaning or justification. Headlines included, for instance: 'Gallery Stonewalls Bricks Buy', 'The Tate's Brick Wall of Silence', and so on. See Neil Mulholland, *The Cultural Devolution*, p. 6 and p. 157, n. 7.

³³ Sigmund Freud, 'Character and Anal Eroticism', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 Vols, trans. and ed by James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), IX, p. 174. Cited in Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 29.

³⁴ Philip Mellor, 'What a Load of Rubbish: How the Tate dropped 120 bricks', p. 1.

In fact, 'the cost of things' was something of a preoccupation in Britain in February 1976. Arguably, the national economy was in its worst state since the War. Just a few days after the first outbursts of the controversy, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Dennis Healey, set out his plans for an unprecedented three billion pound reduction in public spending. Previous, less drastic cuts in government funding simply had been cancelled out by the burden of meeting interest repayments on the National Debt.³⁵ The Government's measures incensed Labour back benchers, who regarded the reductions as a more or less direct implementation of Conservative Party policies, which they were. In no time at all, public discussion became dominated by concerns that pensioners would no longer be able to pay their heating bills, and so on and so forth. Economically, these were chilling times. Thus, how efficiently state funds were being spent was a question that seemed to matter as never before.³⁶ And the *Sunday Times* article which took up the question of the Tate's 'annual grant of £500,000' – the same article that first drew attention to Andre's '120 bricks from a brickyard' – was motivated almost entirely by just this.³⁷ The headline was 'The Tate Drops a Costly Brick', and its author, Colin Simpson, wanted to make the Tate's acquisition policy read like a chapter in Left-leaning, state-sanctioned fiscal irresponsibility.³⁸

But the question of the purchase of Carl Andre's bricks provoked monetary unease in other senses as well, for it fed almost directly into concerns about rising everyday costs.³⁹ In the first half of the 1970s the annual rate of inflation had

³⁵ 'Public Spending to Rise in next four Years', *The Times*, 1 February, 1976, p. 1.

³⁶ For a typical example of the way these debates were articulated in the 1970s, see *Big Government in Hard Times*, ed. by Christopher Hood and Maurice Wright (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981).

³⁷ Colin Simpson, 'The Tate Drops a Costly Brick', *The Sunday Times*, 15 February 1976, p. 53.

³⁸ Neil Mulholland points out that because it was a recipient of public funding, and since it sanctioned 'useless' activities, The Tate Gallery became an easy target for critics inspired by the new monetarist economics that were emanating from Conservative Party think-tanks. Moreover, that the public artworld was also a 'quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation' made it all the easier to scapegoat. See *The Cultural Devolution*, pp. 8-10.

³⁹ Here is just one example of what I mean – a few lines from the *Sidcup Times* from 26 February 1976, under the headline 'A Fare Raising Question': "Commuters at Sidcup Station on Monday morning condemned the 17 ½ per cent rail-fares increase as "sheer blackmail ... rotten ... ghastly ... shocking". Mrs R. G. South of The Grove, North Cray, calls the increases "ghastly ... sheer blackmail." But she says, there is no other way of getting to work. [...] She says the Government should spend more on the railways instead of on buying "piles of bricks" (a reference to the piece of "art" recently bought for the Tate Gallery.)'

accelerated violently.⁴⁰ Although the retail price index had peaked at 24% in the previous year, in February 1976 the rising cost of domestic commodities was still in the news practically on a daily basis. For most of that year, inflation levels were still running at around the 17% mark. Indeed, in the articles that took up the 'Bricks story' from where Simpson's article left off, journalists often made it seem as though their real horror at Andre's sculpture was provoked by the very thought that bricks, that most generically graspable and utilitarian of all objects, might now be worth hundreds of pounds each.

That the media did not display much interest in the other works that Simpson singled out for ridicule (which were by Barry Flanagan, Claes Oldenburg, Victor Burgin and Gilbert and George) is no doubt because these objects were all, by comparison, far from being so immediately and self-evidently recognisable as a plain commodity. No doubt they felt positively 'arty' by comparison. But the seeming banality of bricks, on the other hand, appeared to have provoked in the public imaginary a whole series of uneasy fears and uncertainties about rising prices and the daily drastic reduction of the consumer's purchasing power. As the editors of *The Wall Street Journal* put it a couple of weeks later, they could offer the perplexed British public no easy answer to that old question as to what art was, although they could for sure 'see why Britons would be very sensitive over questions of value in this inflationary age.'⁴¹ Maybe they were right. In fact, perhaps it was *Punch* that addressed this the most succinctly, when, in a moment of facetious ingenuity, it offered a dystopian depiction of the 1976 'Ordeal Home Exhibition'. Here, visitors would be able to peruse an array of banal domestic commodities laid out by the Tate, in which all items would be priced with true avant-garde abandon:

No expense has been spared on this important statement of socio-aesthetic parameters as applied to the domestic environment. Top class sculptors provide the quintessential image of structural symmetry in a plank, whilst the central fluidity of space for living is starkly shown in a puddle of sloppy plaster. Expected to draw even bigger crowds is a bin-lid whose exact surface area is πr^2 and an impression of Rheims cathedral done entirely in self-

⁴⁰ See Prest and Coppock's *The UK Economy: A Manual of Applied Economics*, 11th Edn., ed. by M. J. Artis (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), pp. 50-51.

⁴¹ Editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, 10 March, 1976.

tapping no. 12 galvanized Posidriv screws. Some exhibits for sale at prices from 3p to \$220,000.⁴²

In these topsy-turvy times, the machinations of economics were thought best captured by the uncertain and seemingly inscrutable values of 'way out' art.

In the lineaments of this moment, then, coursed through as it is by fiscal disquiet and various protestations about the necessity for frugality in times of economic uncertainty, Andre's investment in a utilitarian, non-art commodity begins to look peculiarly resistant. With the utilitarians pulling at the purse-strings, and in a climate in which art feels like one expenditure too far, *Equivalent VIII* does almost start to seem like a resiliently oppositional object. Or, to put it another way, in a culture that fetishises prices, the work certainly does appear as a peculiar kind of counter-investment. But what kind of counter-investment? And what could it be said to amount to?

*

the aesthetic dimension can serve as a [...] gauge for a free society.
Herbert Marcuse, 1969⁴³

Much of this dissertation is concerned with exploring the nature of this counter-investment, although I must add that it proceeds in full consciousness that any especially quick or forthright claim about the radical nature of Andre's art practice is likely to be greeted with considerable coolness in current times. For at the moment, the general consensus amongst most art historians and critics who share an affiliation with the Left is that Andre's relation to the commercial art marketplace is in general far too comfortable for his sculptures to be considered radical.

However, it needs to be stressed that Andre's art has not always been greeted with such indifference. Almost from the moment when he first became a participant in debates about contemporary art in the mid-1960s, he was known and respected by fellow artists, critics and curators alike as an outspoken Marxist critic. For about the

⁴² 'The Ordeal Home Exhibition: Stand 69 Tate Gallery Stand' *Punch*, 3 March 1976.

⁴³ Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* [1969] (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 35.

first six or seven years of his artistic career no one questioned his word that, at least formally, his work was deeply informed by his politics. Amongst the New York communities of artists with whom he had socialised in the mid to late 1960s, he had been one of the very few who were actually familiar with Marx's writings:⁴⁴ 'Carl Andre, our resident Marxist', was how Lucy Lippard would later define him.⁴⁵ 'My work is atheistic, materialistic and communistic', Andre himself had claimed in 1966, in what is perhaps one of his most famous statements about his practice. 'It's atheistic because it's without transcendent form, without spiritual or intellectual quality. Materialistic because it's made out of its own materials without pretension to other materials. And communistic because the form is equally accessible to all men.'⁴⁶

Certainly, by the late 1960s a number of socially-engaged critics were writing about Andre's sculptures in terms that were deeply informed by Andre's own.⁴⁷ Take, for instance, Charles Harrison, writing in London in 1969, who goes out of his way to claim that Andre's sculptures bear objectively on the current cultural situation:

In a culture where materials are assessed according to their scarcity in relation to their usefulness for economic, military or propaganda purposes, Carl Andre's series of sculptures involving different metals in identical configurations acts powerfully to redress the balance. [...] Such art acts essentially by isolating. The artist focuses our attention upon the material in a context which will enable us to see it as he has seen it: not in its familiar role or function, but as the potential embodiment of a changed attitude to life.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Conversation with Hans Haacke, 20 July 2003, New York City.

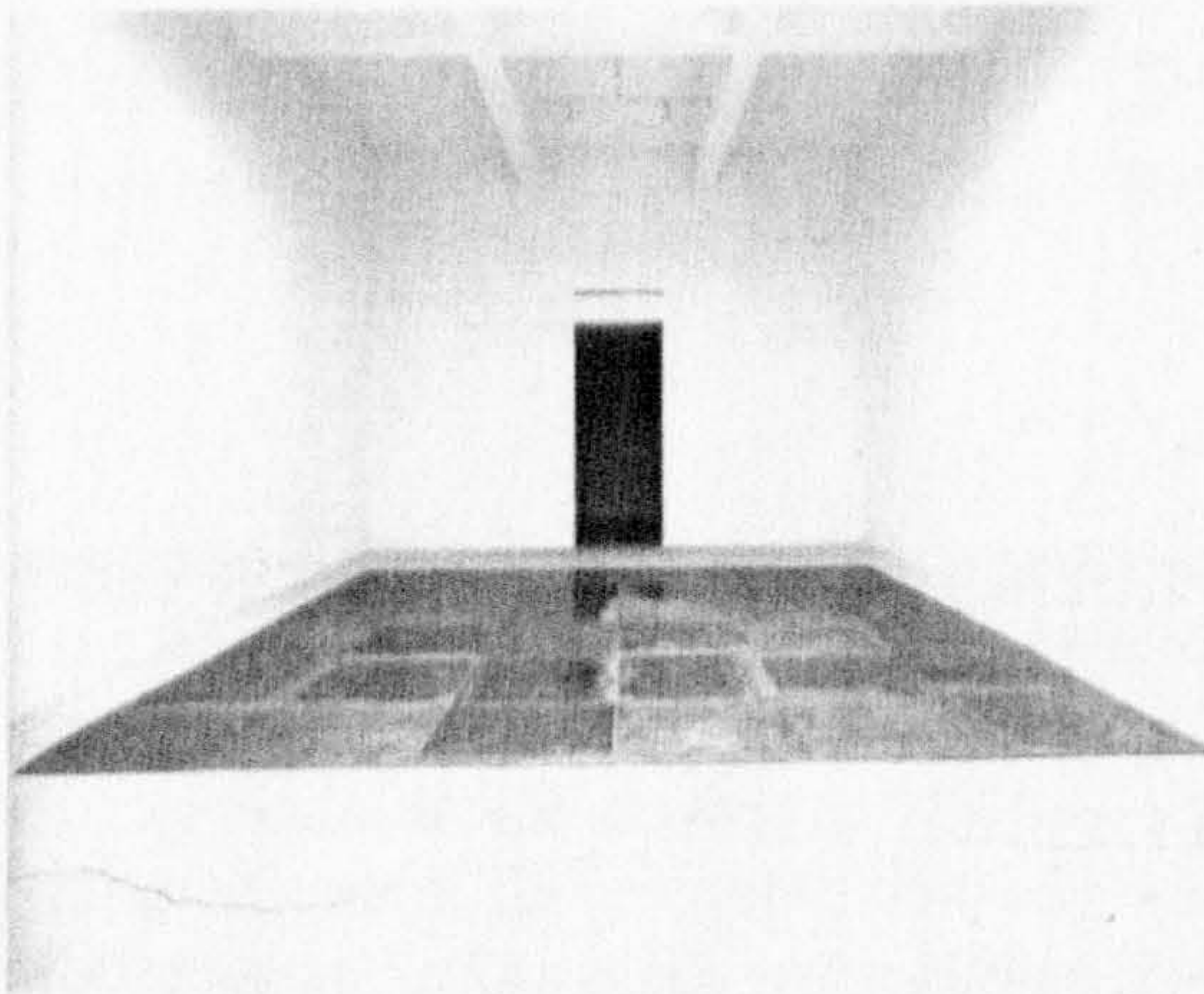
⁴⁵ Lucy Lippard, 'Biting the Hand: Artists and Museums in New York since 1969', in *Alternative Art New York 1965-1985*, ed. by Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 79-120, p. 84.

⁴⁶ Carl Andre in David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 2 (October 1966), pp. 14-17, p. 17.

⁴⁷ I am thinking, for instance, of writers such as Enno Develing, Head Curator of the Haags Gemeentemuseum. See in particular his 'Carl Andre: Art as a Social Fact', *Artscanada*, vol. 27, no. 150-151 (December 1970 - January 1971), pp. 47-49.

⁴⁸ Charles Harrison, 'Against Precedents', *Studio International*, vol. 178, no. 914 (September 1969), pp. 90-93, p. 91. Harrison's text is a discussion of the exhibition 'When Attitudes become form', which was held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in between 28 September 1969 and 27 October, and which he had helped curate. The exhibition had transferred from Bern and Krefeld, where it had been organised by Harold Szeeman. In both locations, Andre was represented with a floor sculpture, which in the exhibition catalogue is listed as *6 x 6 Steel Piece*. The sculpture had also been included in *Documenta 4* in Kassel the previous year.

For Harrison, the work is seen to be endowed with political import because its status as art distinguishes it profoundly from the utilitarianism of objects made specifically for consumption. As such – as an autonomous artwork – it holds up an image of that which has yet to be accomplished in the political sphere. In fact we might say that Harrison reads the materiality of the work as constituting a kind of ideological purgation, such that, in its refined and raw state, the material is left to point, talisman-like, towards the possibility of a new social beginning. ‘Andre displays the raw materials,’ Barbara Rose would later claim, ‘with which we could transform the world, if we cared to build a new order’.⁴⁹ Of course, Rose was perfectly willing to accept displays of idealism in art, so long as they did not amount to wholesale interference with the smooth efficacy of the art world and of her place in it. But for about one or maybe two years, this is just what it did.



6 x 6 den Haag Steel Lock, 1968

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⁴⁹ Barbara Rose, ‘A Retrospective Note’, in *Carl Andre Sculpture 1959-1977*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed by David Bourdon, Laguna Gloria Art Museum, Austin, Texas, 1978, p. 11.

To gain credibility with the establishment, these groups needed a famous artist as spokesman. Fortunately they had Carl Andre, a sculptor who could have been the darling of the vernissage set, but preferred to cover himself with as much hair as possible and go about dressed in Maoist coveralls – the only proper costume for preaching the cultural revolution.

Barbara Rose, 1970⁵⁰



Carl Andre (far left) at the New York Art Strike sit-in, on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum, 22 May 1970

At least until the mid 1970s, such politicised, modernist readings of Andre's practice were given increased authority thanks to Andre's prominent public persona within the Art Workers' Coalition, with which he had been closely involved from February 1969 onwards. The AWC (as it was known) was a loose group of 'architects, choreographers, filmmakers, museum workers, painters, photographers, printers, sculptors, critics, [and] taxidermists etc.' who had come together in the early spring of 1969.⁵¹ As a coalition, their political agendas were varied and diverse, although their perspective was undoubtedly formed from the general and widespread dissent and opposition to the US-led war in Southeast Asia.⁵² Certainly, the student movement also served as an

⁵⁰ Barbara Rose, 'Out of the Studios, On to the Barricades', *New York Magazine*, Summer 1970, pp. 54-57, p. 55.

⁵¹ Flyer, distributed at an Art Workers' Coalition Demonstration on 30 March 1969, in the Museum of Modern Art Sculpture Garden. The flyer is reproduced in Art Workers Coalition, *Documents I* (January-April 1969), p. 37. For an account of this demonstration, see Therese Schwarz, 'The Politicization of the Avant-Garde, III', *Art in America*, vol. 61, no. 2 (March-April 1973), pp. 67-71, pp. 70-71.

⁵² The AWC was not the first artist-led initiative to protest openly against the war in Vietnam. The five hundred artists who put their name beneath a statement calling for artists to speak out against the war, printed in the *New York Times* in June 1965, deserve credit for that. But the Art

important catalyst.⁵³ But their immediate objective was to establish a greater democracy within the art world – in terms of its display, its distribution, and in the dissemination of material resources. Artists, of whatever race or gender were to band together and collectively fight for due recognition for artists.⁵⁴



Anti-war, AWC-initiated demonstration at the Museum of Modern Art, in front of Picasso's *Guernica*, 1970



AWC protest against the Museum of Modern Art in the Museum's Sculpture Garden, 26 May 1969

In the short term, their activities focused around a campaign of lobbying and picketing the major public New York museums – most notably the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney, the Metropolitan and the Guggenheim. The origins

Workers' Coalition remains foundational for any history of artist-initiated, anti-war agitation in era of Johnson and Nixon. For one of the best historical accounts of this kind, see Theresa Schwarz's four articles, 'The Politicization of the Avant-Garde', published in *Art in America*, between 1971 and 1974. Part I is in vol. 59, no. 6 (November-December 1971), pp. 96-105; Part II: vol. 60, no. 2 (March-April 1972), pp. 70-79; Part III: vol. 61, no. 2 (March-April 1973), pp. 69-71 and Part IV: vol. 61, no. 1 (January-February 1974), pp. 80-84. See also Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999).

⁵³ Carl Andre once said, for instance: 'I think in a sense the students have done a great deal to help the artists clarify their own political position. I think it was the students first, concretely, who used, as Godard says in his movie, PRAVDA, 'concrete analysis for concrete situations.' Students saw that they were being exploited by people who were not responsible to them whatsoever and then they decided to do something about it.' See Jeanne Siegel, 'Carl Andre: Artworker', *Studio International*, p.179.

⁵⁴ It should be said, however, that for each member of the AWC, there seems to be at least one other who disagreed with their position. For a start, there were those who probably were never inclined towards their politics, such as Philip Leider, editor of *Artforum*. See his statement in Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum, 1962-1974* (New York: Soho, 2000), p. 303. But Barnett Newman, for instance, saw them as a group of self-motivated, career-driven artists whose only concern was to coerce the Museum of Modern Art into purchasing their work. See his letter to the AWC from 11 June 1969, in the Art Workers' Coalition Subject File, at the Archives of The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Lawrence Weiner later claimed he collaborated with the AWC only 'because I was lining up against the war in Vietnam, and they were lining up against the war in Vietnam.' But he felt that they mostly wanted 'middle-class things', such as acquiring more exhibition space from the government. He was more interested in more immediate issues such as setting up healthcare provision for artists. See his interview with Carles Guerra [1995] in *Having Been Said: Writings and Interviews of Lawrence Weiner 1968-2003*, ed. by Gerti Fietzek and Gregor Stemmrich (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004), pp. 334-335.

of the AWC direct-action campaigns are often dated back to 3 January 1969, when the artist Takis, dismayed that he was currently being represented in the 'Machine Exhibition' at the Museum of Modern Art by a small work which in his mind was nine years out of date, that he and his group of supporters marched into the Museum and took the unprecedented step of 'liberating' it.⁵⁵ However, just as important as this seemingly inaugural act were the angry protests by African American artists who were contemptuous of the way their community had been reduced to a white American *son-et-lumière* fairytale by the Metropolitan Museum's latest exhibition, 'Harlem on My Mind', which opened a few days later.⁵⁶

In the months that followed, it became more than self-evident to many practising artists that, with figures such as the Republican Governor of New York, Nelson A. Rockefeller, sitting on Museums' Boards of Trustees,⁵⁷ institutions such as MOMA and the Metropolitan simply were not apolitical, and that art was being used by them to cultivate an aura of acceptability and

⁵⁵ The full title of the exhibition was 'The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age', which ran from 25 November 1968 to 9 February 1969. Takis was represented with his *Tele-Sculpture* from 1960, an electromagnet that made two suspended corks pendulate backwards and forwards. It should be pointed out, however, that Takis' action in removing the work from display was essentially non-political, although the gesture itself was read by many as politicised. The typed leaflet that was distributed to gallery-onlookers and the Museum authorities on 3 January, initialled by both Takis and Willoughby Sharp, records their opposition only to specific museum practices. See Subject file 'Art Workers' Coalition', Museum of Modern Art Archives. For media coverage of the event, see 'Sculptor Takes Work Out of Modern Museum Show', *New York Times*, 4 January 1969, p. 24; John Perreault, 'Whose Art?', *Village Voice*, 9 January 1969, pp. 16-17 and Alex Gross 'artists attack moma', *East Village Other*, 24 January 1969, p. 9.

⁵⁶ The exhibition was intended by the Metropolitan to set impressive new standards in multi-media presentation: see, for instance Peter Helman, 'Harlem on Their Minds', *New York Magazine*, 20 January 1969, pp. 33-34. See also *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 27, no 5 (January 1969), which contains a number of articles and interviews about African American artists and Harlem more generally. However, media reactions were certainly not all positive, even from more conservative critics. John Canaday's review is called 'Getting Harlem off My Mind', *New York Times*, 12 January 1969, p. B25. For commentary on the various reactions to the show, see Grace Gleuck, 'Adam C., Mother Brown, Malcolm X', *New York Times*, 12 January 1969, p. B26; 'Paintings Defaced At Metropolitan; One a Rembrandt', *New York Times*, 17 January 1969, p. 1; Hilton Kramer, 'Politicizing the Metropolitan Museum', *New York Times*, 26 January 1969, p. B31 and Charles Wright, 'Harlem at the Met: For Lap Dogs Only', *Village Voice*, 30 January 1969, p. 17. See also *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America*, ed. by Allon Schoener (New York: The New Press, 1995).

⁵⁷ Nelson A. Rockefeller was Governor of New York from 1959 to 1973, and Chairman of the Board of the Museum of Modern Art from 1932, a position he held until 1975. His brother, David, became a trustee in 1948; David Rockefeller Jr. remains to this day the principle benefactor of MOMA.

neutrality for political and ideological agendas which could not have been more distanced from those of the artists themselves.⁵⁸



**AWC picketing the Gala Opening of the exhibition
'Twentieth Century Art from the Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller Collection'
at the Museum of Modern Art, 26 May 1969**

One of the hundreds of flyers and posters that the AWC distributed between 1969 and 1971 announced that:

Art Workers' Coalition is here to save artists the embarrassment of being identified with:

- 1) The political ambitions of Nelson A. Rockefeller.
- 2) The Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, who assume – to the detriment of the intellect, energies, and intentions of artists – that they establish cultural values.⁵⁹

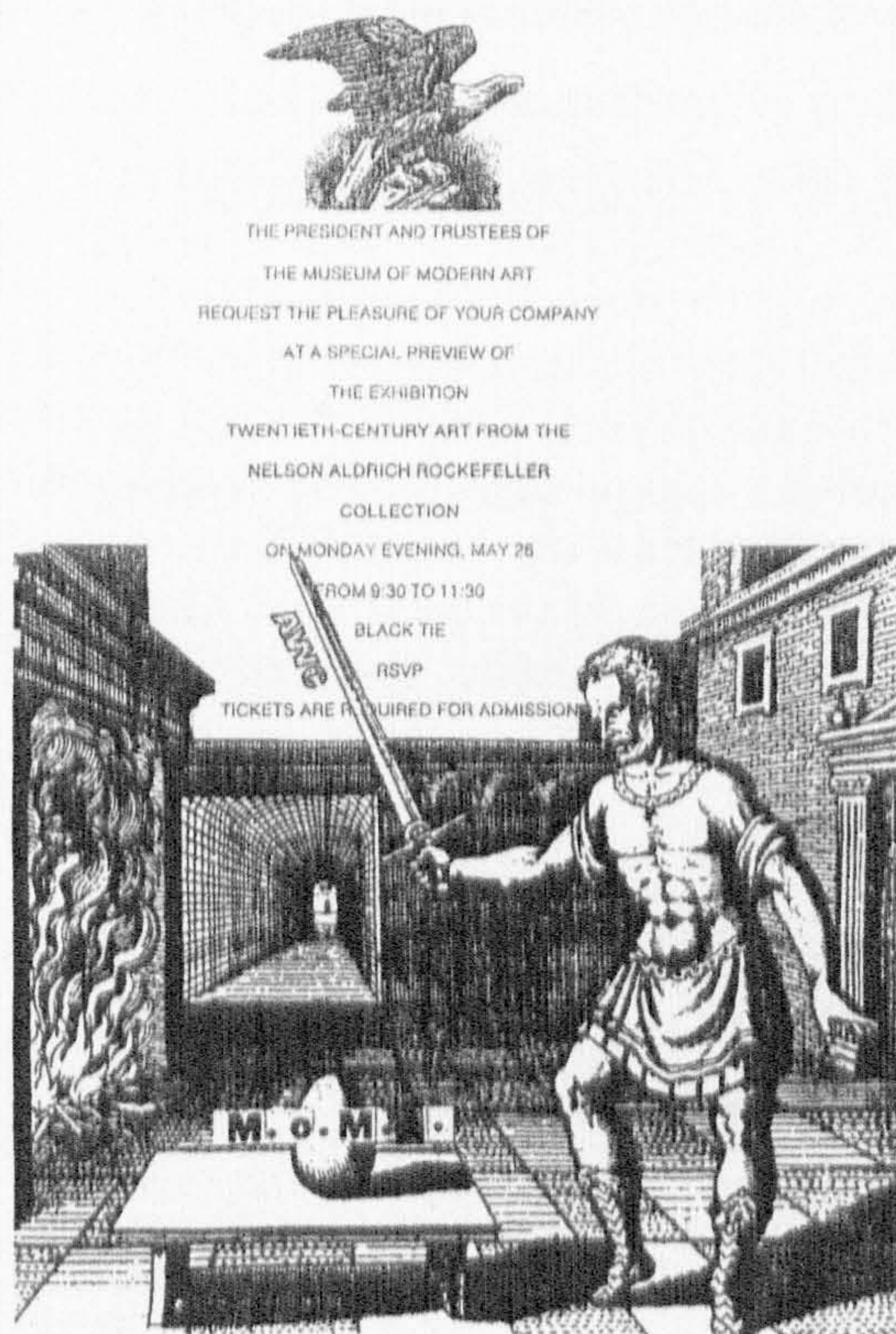
If this was not clearly spelled out enough, another leaflet produced for the same demonstration makes the same point visually. It shows MOMA as a Hermetic vase, about to be sliced open by the fiery sword of the Art Worker's Coalition.⁶⁰ In this *détournement*, art itself is presented as the mercurial philosopher's stone – as though

⁵⁸ It should be added here that this awareness – circa 1969 – of the sheer extent of the complicity between museums and the political ruling classes could be seen as the inauguration of the kind of institutional critiques that practically dominated advanced art discourses for the next quarter century. See, for instance, Douglas Crimp and Louise Lawler, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1993) – in particular p. 13. I also want to mention Gene Swenson here, a critic who later became a central figure of the Art Workers' Coalition, and who perhaps deserves to be seen as one of the first of his generation to alert artists and other critics to the sheer extent of the cooptation of the US art scene. See in particular his 'The Corporate Structure of the American Art World', *New York Free Press*, 25 April, 1968, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Flyer, promoting a demonstration at the Opening of the Exhibition 'Twentieth Century Art from the Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller Collection' at the Museum of Modern Art, 26 May 1969, AWC Subject File, Archives of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The exhibition ran until 1 September 1969.

⁶⁰ The image itself is from one of Michael Meier's illustrations to his 1618 volume on alchemical practices. See John Read, *Through Alchemy to Chemistry: A Process of Ideas & Personalities* (London: G. Bell, 1957), fig. 4 and pp. 36-37.

its revolutionary potential will burst forth only when it has been liberated and set free from its institutionalised shell.



WE INVITE YOU TO THE END OF A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.
— Art Workers' Coalition

AWC flyer, May 1969

For many artists, this political aspiration to liberate art from repressive, institutional confines was interpreted in a profoundly antinomian direction: what was required, it was assumed, was nothing short of a re-evaluation of the very forms that art should assume. For instance, the critic Gregory Battcock wrote in an article in the summer of 1969, that, bearing in mind the current political situation, artists should work to ensure that their art was oriented and structured 'in such a way that it cannot be exploited by the system nor lend itself to its repressive mechanizations.'⁶¹ An impossible task, you might think, but this soon became a credible objective for many artists. The logic of the anti-institutionalism of this moment was incorporated into their own practices, so that many artists turned to projects that were intended to be

⁶¹ Gregory Battcock, 'Marcuse and Anti-Art', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 43, no. 8 (Summer 1969), pp. 17-19, p. 18.

profoundly problematic for institutions to display, or even to market.⁶² For a while, art's very object-status was thrown into question. Art that was comprised of ideas, or mere actions, or holes in the desert, or even the artfully careless distribution of worthless or ephemeral materials, was understood, at least by more idealist commentators, as a means of evading all institutional capture altogether. Thus, one critic wrote of Bill Bollinger's *Dust Concept Installation* that,

All of a sudden prominent Minimalists have become conservatives; entrepreneurs of the new establishment, but establishment nonetheless. The art of the object is a merchandisable commodity. [...] The objectless artists are not burdened with such problems. How do you merchandise dust? Apparently, the profit motive is woefully missing. Alas capitalism! Alas, establishment! 'Dust thou art and unto dust shall thou return.' Radical abstraction is against the very fiber of our acquisitive society.⁶³

Such opinions certainly did not work to the advantage of Andre's artistic reputation, who has always remained entirely and unrepentantly committed to the production of merchandisable commodities. As a result, he spent much of the 1970s on the defensive, railing with ever increasing belligerency against the lunacy of the assumption that so-called 'conceptual' art defied the acquisitive proclivities of the bourgeois collector.

Within the debates that the AWC inaugurated, Andre tended to be the artist who stood up for the sheer *facticity* of art itself: in his eyes it was this that mattered, and it was this that needed to be sustained and nourished, irrespective of the medium or form deployed. 'The Art Workers Coalition has nothing to do with what your art is like', he explained in 1970, 'but has a great deal to do with keeping the springs and origins of art, which I think are essentially the same for everybody, open and as fertile and as productive as possible.'⁶⁴ Just as the New Left philosopher Herbert Marcuse had expounded in countless pamphlets and lectures throughout the late 1960s, Andre also regarded art as having the potential to affirm a radical and revolutionary ideal of

⁶² For a discussion of this aspiration, see, for instance, Maurice Berger's discussion of Robert Morris' practice in *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), pp. 74-75.

⁶³ Ursula Meyer, 'De-Objectification of the Object', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 43, no. 8 (Summer 1969), pp. 20-22, p. 21.

⁶⁴ Carl Andre in Jeanne Siegel, 'Carl Andre: Artworker', p. 175.

freedom, one that the rest of society should learn to emulate.⁶⁵ However, these ideals were not easily sustained in practice. In many respects, they were best envisaged only negatively, in terms of their present absence. 'We have failed to convince Artworkers', Andre announced to assembled members of the AWC in October 1969,

that it is futile to recapitulate in the art world the enormities and injustices of the American economic system... We have failed to convince Artworkers that the profession of art is not a career but a constant witness to the value of all life. We have failed to convince Artworkers that the essence of art is inspiration and not petty ambition. We have failed to convince Artworkers that a myth of quality is no substitute for the fact of art. [...]⁶⁶

Yet however rousing or electrifying such oratory might be, this language was simply too idealistic and far-reaching to survive credibly after 1971, when the early energy and vehemence of the activities of the AWC began to lose the impetus it had attained in its first year. There are a number of reasons for this, and not all deserve to be seen as causes of regret. For a start, a number of the smaller-scale demands the AWC had made to museums and institutions were realised,⁶⁷ and these successes impelled certain segments of the Coalition to dedicate their energies to less militant forms of collaborative political activity. Moreover, like many coalitions, its original political fervour quickly became re-channelled into separate and distinct political groups. The most notable included the Women Artists in Revolution, the New York Art Strike, the Black and Puerto Rican Coalition, and Artists Meeting for Cultural Change. But there were considerably more than this. In short, the more universalising and universalistic

⁶⁵ Herbert Marcuse's rhetoric does emerge as a continuous refrain within this cultural-political moment of widespread dissent and insubordination within the art world. However, there is little evidence to suggest that Andre ever read Marcuse's writings. That said, the mere fact that Marcuse was a passionate defender of the radical aesthetic potential of art means that his position does resonate in various ways with many of the more visionary claims that Andre made in defence of art and artists. For Marcuse's understanding of contemporary art practice, see in particular, *An Essay on Liberation*, pp. 31-54, 'Art as a Form of Reality' in *On the Future of Art*, ed. by Edward S. Fry (New York: Viking, 1970), pp. 123-134 and *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 79-128.

⁶⁶ Carl Andre, speech to the Art Workers' Coalition, 20 October 1969. Cited in Lucy Lippard, 'The Art Workers' Coalition: not a history', *Studio International*, vol. 180, no. 927 (November 1970), pp. 171-174, p. 174.

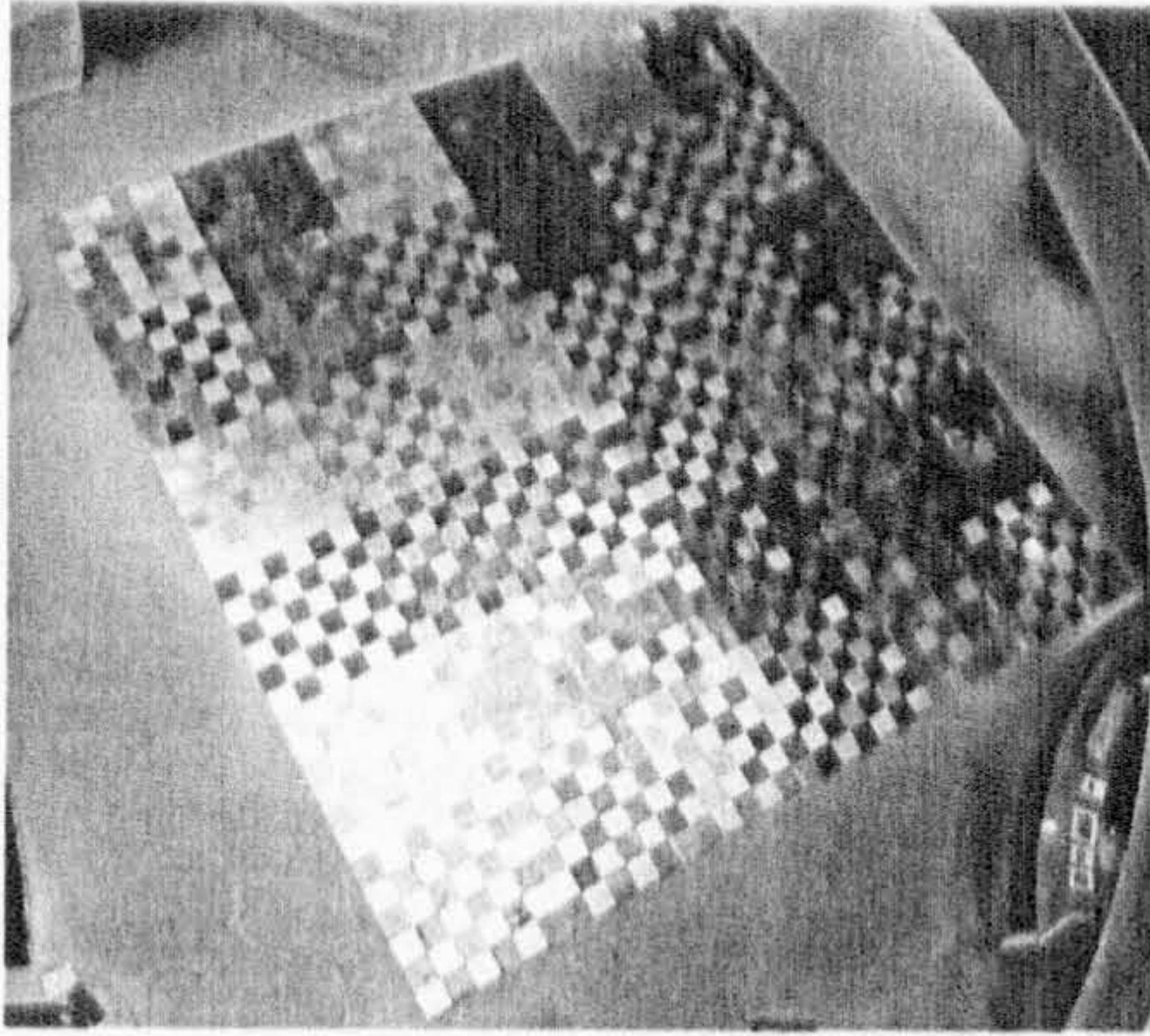
⁶⁷ In February 1969, the AWC saw the Museum of Modern Art realise their demand for a weekly free admission day. See Alex Gross, 'Peoples Day at the Modern', *East Village Other*, 11 February 1970, vol. 5, no. 10, p. 16. Also, by the early summer of 1971, an Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement had been drafted and introduced into the art market by Seth Siegelaub and Bob Projansky. It was widely used, and was intended to allow artists to partake in the appreciating value of their works and to provide them with increased moral rights over the destiny of their art. This too had always been central to the demands of the AWC. A copy of the Agreement was published in *Element: The Newspaper of Art & Politics*, vol. 2, no. 5 (June-July 1971).

rhetoric of 1969 was replaced by other tactical and realisable forms of critique: the focus turned to providing particularised socio-political critiques of artworld institutions. In fact, the real enduring legacy of the consciousness-raising activities of the Coalition was perhaps this: a sober acknowledgement of the sheer extent of artists' social cooptation.

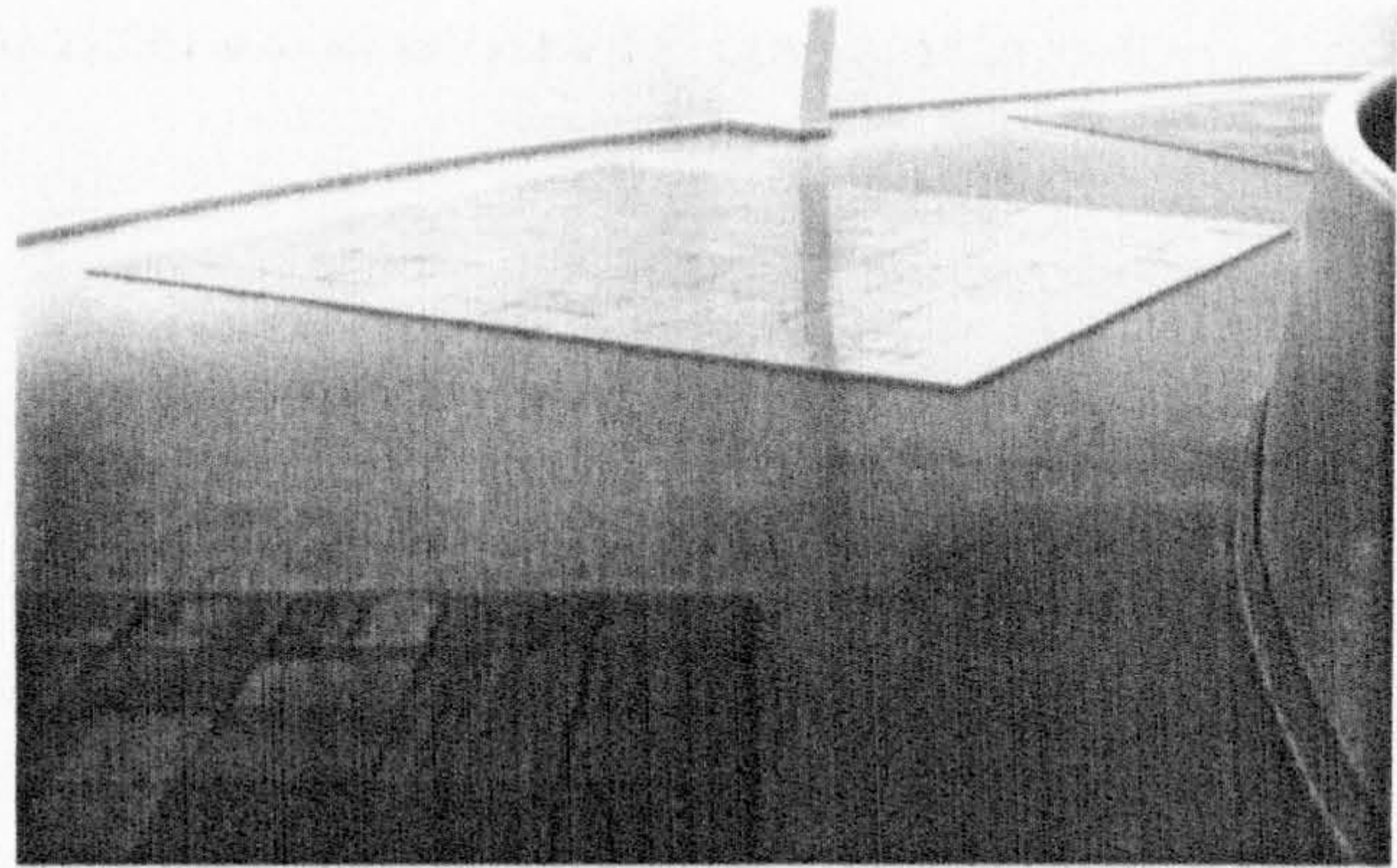
Admittedly, Andre himself had also been an important participant in turning the artworld's attention in this direction. 'I wouldn't put the artist in front of the works of art to explain them but to explain his position in the society,' he suggested in an interview published in November 1970. 'What I'm thinking of is not so much integrating the artwork itself into the sensibility of the people, but integrating artists in the sociology'.⁶⁸ However, by calling for the need for a critical examination of the social conditions which impinge on artists, Andre invariably invited an ever-increased scrutiny of the precise extent of his *own* integration and institutionalisation. For there was no doubt about it: by the early 1970s, he was one of the most successful and well-represented New York artists of his generation. His numerous complaints about the way art was consistently compromised by its institutionalisation began to sit uncomfortably with what many saw as the real facts of his own artistic success. At any rate, sceptics had little difficulty in inferring that Andre's egalitarian propositions might be not much more than self-promotion. For his defendants, however, this seemed like an extraordinary virtue on Andre's part. 'Ad Reinhardt and Carl Andre, two artists who have had the courage to expose publicly the contradictions inherent in their own situation, have come in for far more mud-slinging than their weaker colleagues', wrote Lippard in 1970, for instance.⁶⁹ Yet with time, and as Andre's institutional reputation became ever further entrenched, the defences of his practice became less frequent and more equivocal.

⁶⁸ Jeanne Siegel, 'Carl Andre: artworker', p. 177.

⁶⁹ Lucy Lippard, 'The Art Workers' Coalition: Not a History', p. 174.



37 Pieces of Work (1970)
installation at The Guggenheim
Museum, New York, 1970



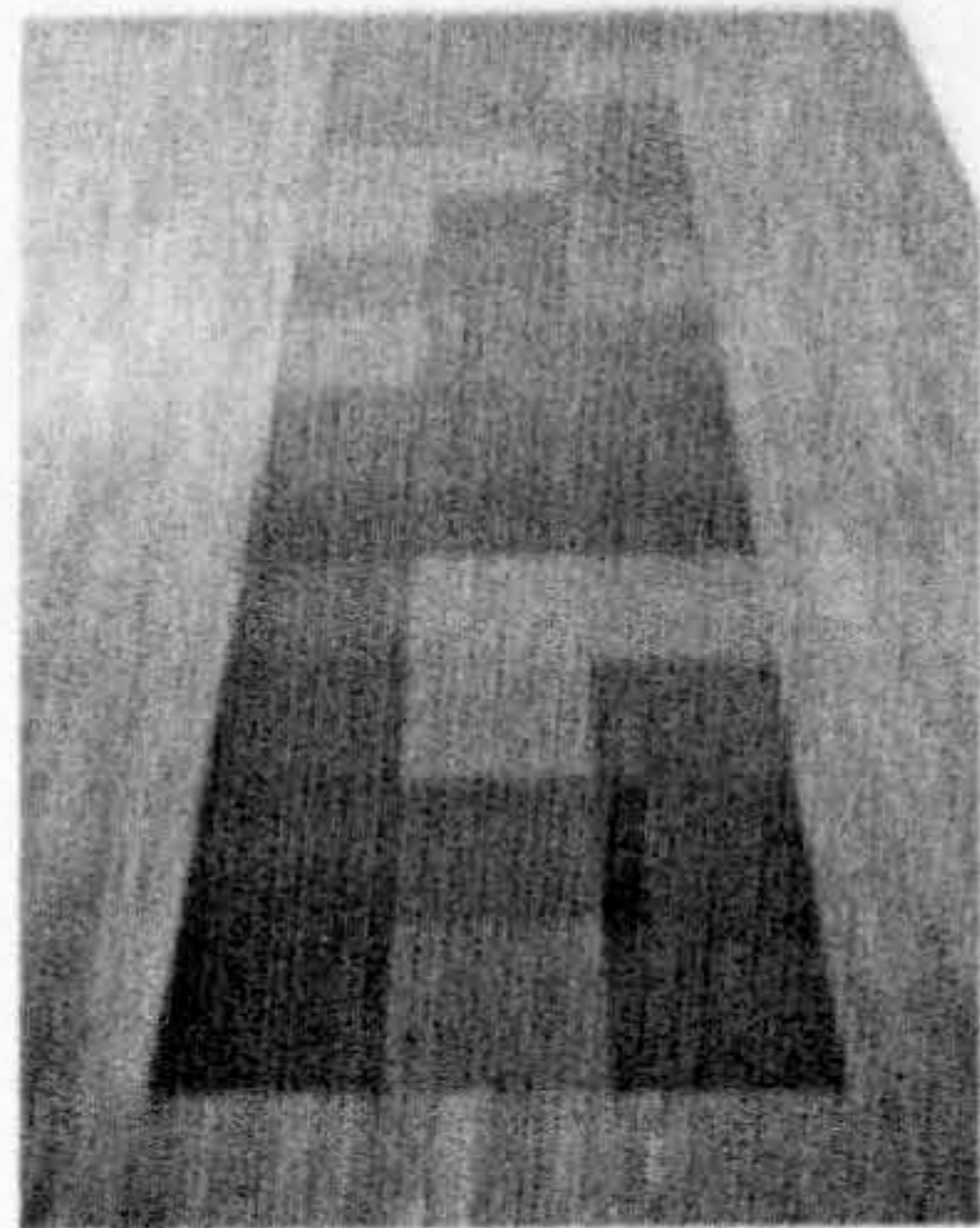
144 Aluminium Square (1967), installation at The
Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1970

Consider, for example, Mel Ramsden's review of a panel discussion on politics and art from 1975. Ramsden recounts how a member of the audience at this event had asked Andre, who was a participant, why he was insistent on protesting the way art was institutionalised, when he still persisted in marketing his work so conventionally via commercial galleries. Andre's answer was perfectly fair, thought Ramsden, but all the same it did not impress him that much either: 'He said one can't proceed to live today as if the revolution had already occurred.' Nonetheless, Ramsden adds, 'one can still do a bit where one can and so one can further ask (and this is important) *is Carl Andre doing his bit, is he doing enough?*'⁷⁰

In the years that followed, and especially in the wake of the Tate Bricks controversy, this was a question that was posed with increasing regularity amongst critics on both side of the Atlantic. By then, many who were much less sympathetic to Andre than Ramsden were just itching to point out that his professed politics must surely be belied by the realities of his artistic practice. *Was Andre doing enough?* It was Jeff Perrone who phrased the matter the most bluntly in an article published in *Artforum* in 1976. He argued that Andre's Marxism simply was at odds with 'the market value and consumption of his work', since, in his eyes, Marxism was 'anti-thetical to the idea of the privileged fetish-item.' He even went as far as to suggest (with no little malevolence) that the 'British working-class taxpayer' who poured ink

⁷⁰ Mel Ramsden, 'Perimeters of Protest', *The Fox*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1975), pp. 133-135, p. 135. Emphasis in the original.

on Andre's bricks 'was on to something', because '[p]recious objects are precious objects.'⁷¹



Thirty-ninth Copper Cardinal, 1975

It was an opinion that was not without its sympathisers in Britain also. In an article by Rosetta Brooks which appeared in *Studio International* in March 1976, she proclaimed that Andre's professions of Marxism and his other various statements about art simply were no longer radical at all. On the contrary, Brooks wrote, what was radical was the task of 'exposing the naked economic injustice in Andre's ability to sell [units of raw material], produced by the appropriation of other men's labour, for a profit margin which verges on the ludicrous.'⁷² Another prominent Left-leaning 'social critic' who gave voice to this position was Peter Fuller.⁷³ Fuller, who later was to espouse an anti-modernist Right-wing traditionalism, liked to explain how when he had visited Andre's New York gallery in 1978, he had overheard the gallery-owner on the telephone ordering metal plates from a factory for around \$8 each, which, once Andre had arranged into his latest sculpture, had been priced at \$22,000. For him, these 'magical values' were the most striking element to the work.⁷⁴ Such complaints are still regularly voiced to this day. In fact, Mulholland, whom I quoted at the start of this chapter, approvingly cites from Rosetta Brooks' 1976 essay verbatim, adding that

⁷¹ Jeff Perrone, 'Carl Andre: Art versus talk', *Artforum*, vol. 14, no. 9 (May 1976), pp. 32-33.

⁷² Rosetta Brooks, 'Please, No Slogans', *Studio International*, vol. 191, no. 980 (March-April 1976), pp. 155-161, p. 156.

⁷³ The term 'social critic' was Fuller's.

⁷⁴ Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', in *Beyond the Crisis in Art*, p. 123. Fuller wrote again about his overheard telephone conversation in Andre's New York gallery in *The Sunday Telegraph*, 2 April 1989, p. 19.

whatever Andre might ever want to claim to the contrary, this was an art that was 'entirely reliant upon mystification'.⁷⁵

*

We have always had the choice of either lying through or living through our contradictions. Now through the genius of the bourgeoisie we have the chance to market them.

Carl Andre, 1976⁷⁶

All we can do is keep on working, seeking not the acclaim of an invisible posterity, but the qualities of the materials under our own hands.

Carl Andre, 1962⁷⁷

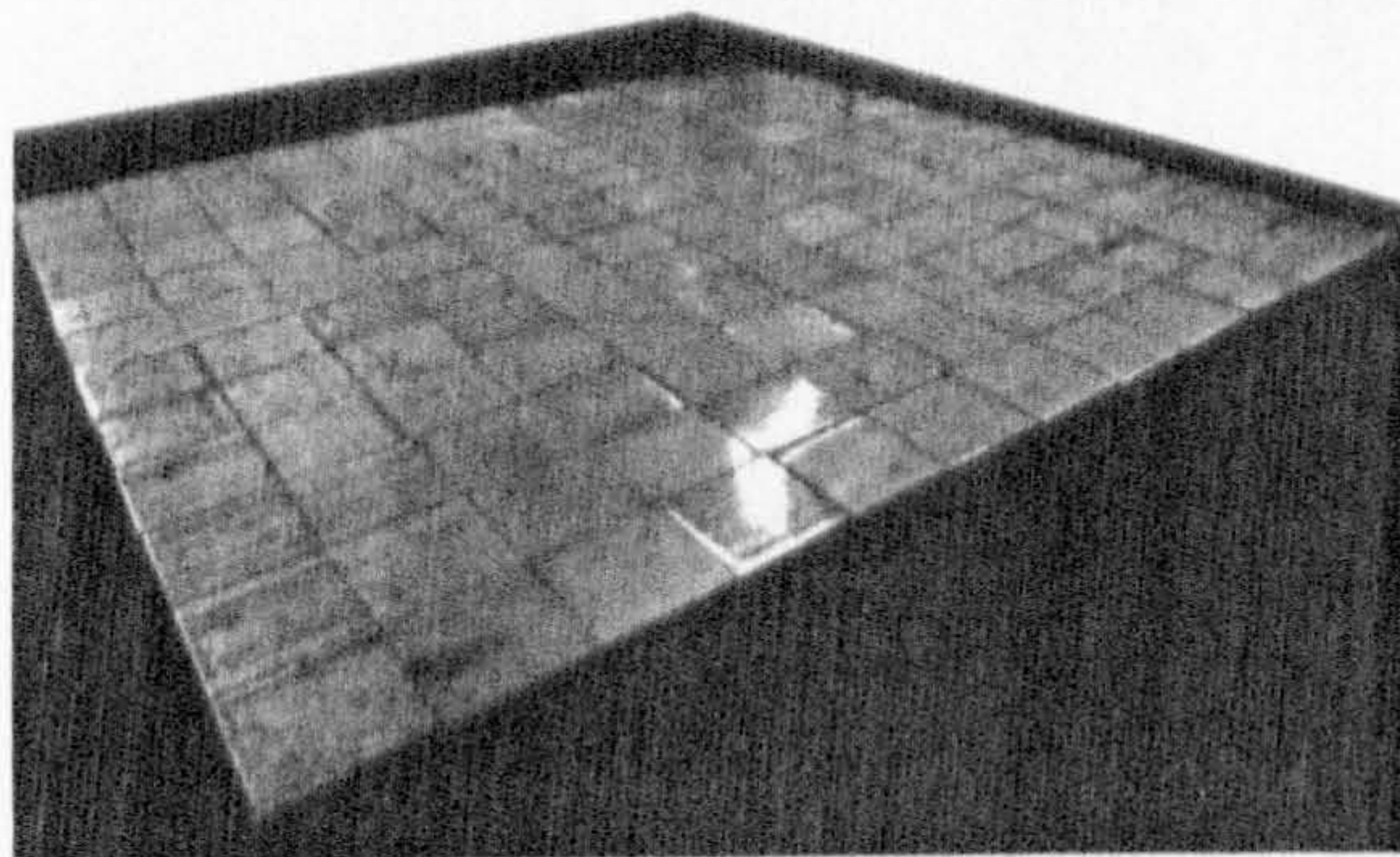
Verdicts such as those articulated by Brooks and Mulholland are all too often allowed to have the final word on Andre's art, and perhaps further writing on his sculptural practice ought to redress these challenges specifically. One way of doing so might be to turn these complaints around and suggest that that the very fact that Andre's art *has* served to focus attention on art's status as an object of monetary exchange is entirely to its credit, and need not necessarily be taken as its weakness or its downfall. More to the point, what exactly does it mean to claim that Andre's art is 'reliant upon mystification'? For the mysteries of which Fuller and Mulholland speak are not so much Andre's specifically, but arguably are the metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties of any commercial market. In this sense, to speak of Andre's bricks or plates of metal as themselves culpable for the machinations of such an economy is in some senses very surprising, for they are no more responsible for their monetary value than any other object that happens to become a commodity. 'You cannot blame the bricks for my art' was how Andre himself put it.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Neil Mulholland, *The Cultural Devolution*, p. 8. Emphasis in the original.

⁷⁶ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Commodity and Contradiction, or, Contradiction as Commodity', *October* 2 (Summer 1976), pp. 100-104, p. 104.

⁷⁷ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ Carl Andre, in Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 129.



144 Zinc Square, 1967

It is perhaps Dan Graham who formulated the best retort to these kinds of challenges to Andre's practice. Graham started out as a gallery-owner, but soon gave it up for cultural criticism and conceptual art; he knew well enough, in other words, how difficult it was to extract exchange value from his friends' artistic productions. Throughout 1967 and 1968, he had engaged in a written exchange with Andre, which led to a much-admired article on his work for *Arts Magazine*.⁷⁹ Less well-known, however, is his short text in the Italian art journal, *Metro*.⁸⁰ The journal had asked a number of American artists whether 'the present language of artistic research in the United States' could 'be said to contest the system'.⁸¹ Graham replied with two concise and carefully-worded paragraphs, the first of which reads:

It is assumed that the artist becomes an inevitable participant in the Establishment with the establishment of a market value for his art work. Similarly, critical interest accrues from this investiture or from the projection of a future value. 'Formal' value and commodity value are equally derived from the language of business intercourse: the artist makes art the way the business-man remakes Nature. Art terms are synonymous with mercantile measures of value. The artist functions as the catalyst in the transformation of raw material (the coalescence of his ideas and the medium in which he is working) into a formal good

⁷⁹ Dan Graham, 'Carl Andre', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 42, no. 3 (December 1967-January 1968), pp. 34-35. Graham's unpublished exchange with Andre is referenced by Enno Develing in his article 'Sculpture as Place', *Art and Artists*, vol. 5, no. 8 (November 1970), pp. 18-21, p. 21, and in Nicholas Serota, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-1978*, Exhibition Catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1978, unpaginated. However, according to James Meyer, the exchange is now believed to be lost. Graham also wrote a poem inspired by Carl Andre's first exhibition at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in April 1965, entitled 'Foams', which was first published in *Extensions*, no. 2 (1969), pp. 34-35, and is republished in *Dan Graham: Works 1965-2000* (Düsseldorf: Richter, 2001), p. 108.

⁸⁰ Dan Graham, 'Can the present language of artistic research in the United States be said to contest the system?', *Metro 14* (June 1968), pp. 51-52, p. 51.

⁸¹ Robert Smithson's famous essay on 'The Establishment' was also written as a reply to *Metro*'s question. See pp. 47-48.

(goods), the result of his labors being worthwhile (for time is money) and serving to fulfill a need or purpose. The highest value, in Michael Fried's words, is that the art product possesses 'quality'.⁸²

The emphasis that Graham places here on regarding formal and economic values as entirely synonymous with each other is highly significant, since it is an assumption that is similarly articulated by Andre. Let me give an example. In 1971, Andre was invited to travel to California to judge an exhibition of students' sculptures at the San Francisco College of Art. Yet when he got there and saw the work laid out before him and his fellow juror for adjudication, he announced that he was simply not prepared to single out a few select artworks over and above all the others.⁸³ Instead, he entreated that all of them be displayed in their collective entirety. The request was, for all practical purposes, honoured.⁸⁴ His justification for this refusal to judge was published as a terse statement in the catalogue, in which he claimed that the word 'quality' is only ascribed to certain works of art by galleries and museums in order to preserve a commodity market for artworks. Whenever you hear the word 'quality' being spoken, he writes, 'understand that the word 'commodity' is meant'.⁸⁵ For Andre and for Graham, then, formal quality and market value go hand and hand.

The question that Graham now raises in his text, however, is how artists have disrupted this equation. He begins by saying that one way in which this has been accomplished in the past is through recourse to 'a paradoxical dematerialization process', in which the artist 'would sell his spiritual goods in order to survive the material pressures of life.'⁸⁶ Perhaps Graham has a figure like Yves Klein in mind, the French Rosicrucian-inspired artist who, in 1958, opened an exhibition of bare

⁸² Dan Graham, 'Can the Present Language?', p. 51.

⁸³ The exhibition was the San Francisco Art Institute Centennial Exhibition, January 15 - February 28, 1971, held at the San Francisco Museum of Art. Andre's fellow juror of the sculpture exhibits was Maurice Tuchman, Curator at Los Angeles County Museum of Art. For an account of Andre's justification, see Philip Linhares' introduction in the exhibition catalogue, *San Francisco Art Institute Centennial Exhibition*, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1971, unpaginated. Andre was not the first to refuse as an artist to put himself in the position of an adjudicator over the creative productions of others. See for instance David Smith's letter to the Fine Arts Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Institute, 26 October 1961, in *David Smith*, ed. by Garnett McCoy (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 209.

⁸⁴ Linhares explains in the exhibition catalogue that owing to space restrictions not all the work could be exhibited, so they displayed 111 sculptures which were singled out by Maurice Tuchman. However, all sculpture entrants were listed alphabetically in the exhibition catalogue.

⁸⁵ Carl Andre, 'A Juror's Statement', *San Francisco Art Institute Centennial Exhibition*, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1971, unpaginated.

⁸⁶ Carl Andre, 'A Juror's Statement', p. 51

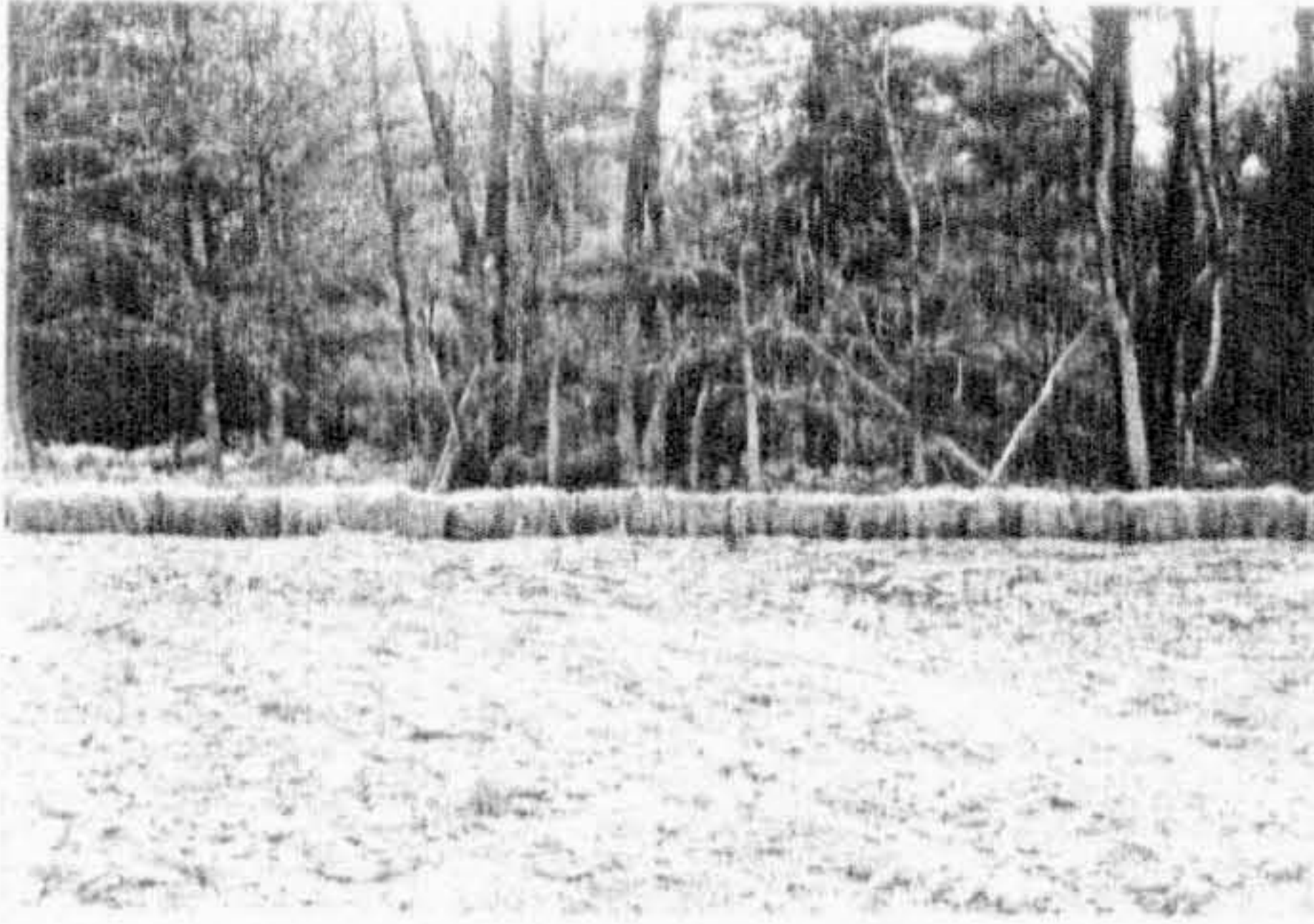
white walls on his thirtieth birthday, magisterially pronouncing the gallery to be invested with his 'invisible pictorial sensibility'.⁸⁷ Famously, Klein also had an elaborate strategy for allowing these zones for spiritual preciousness to be purchased and become a collector's private property – one that entailed collectors handing over little ingots of gold in return for Klein's exquisitely printed certificates of ownership. But Klein went even further, for he also concocted a quasi-legalistic, quasi-mystical ceremony, so that if a buyer desired to 'integrate' themselves fully with the artwork, then they would be required to burn their certificate, whilst Klein himself would disperse half of the gold in gold leaves into either a river or an ocean, in the company of four witnesses.⁸⁸ This was the 'rite of relinquishment': the collector who owns fully and absolutely Klein's immaterial, pictorial sensibility is also the collector who has no tangible proof for his purchase.



**Yves Klein (left) performing
'The Rite of Relinquishment', 1958**

⁸⁷ See Thomas McEvelley, 'Yves Klein: Conquistador of the Void', in *Yves Klein 1928-1962: A Retrospective* (New York: Arts, 1982), pp. 48-49, and Nan Rosenthal 'Assisted Levitation: The Art of Yves Klein' in the same publication, pp. 118-119. In his essay, Rosenthal somewhat hedges his bets: on the one hand the exhibition at Iris Clert in Paris in April 1958 might be regarded 'as one of the most explicit hoaxes of twentieth-century art,' yet on the other hand, he writes, 'it could be seen as a demonstration that 'sensibility' (spirit, aesthetic quality) ought not to be for sale.' (p. 119).

⁸⁸ Nan Rosenthal, 'Assisted Levitation: The Art of Yves Klein', p. 120.



Joint, Windham College, Vermont, 1968

However, Graham also points to a second and more recent means by which artists have destabilized the equation between art's formal and monetary value – one that is as materially constituted as Klein's subversion is premised on immateriality and alchemical whimsy:⁸⁹

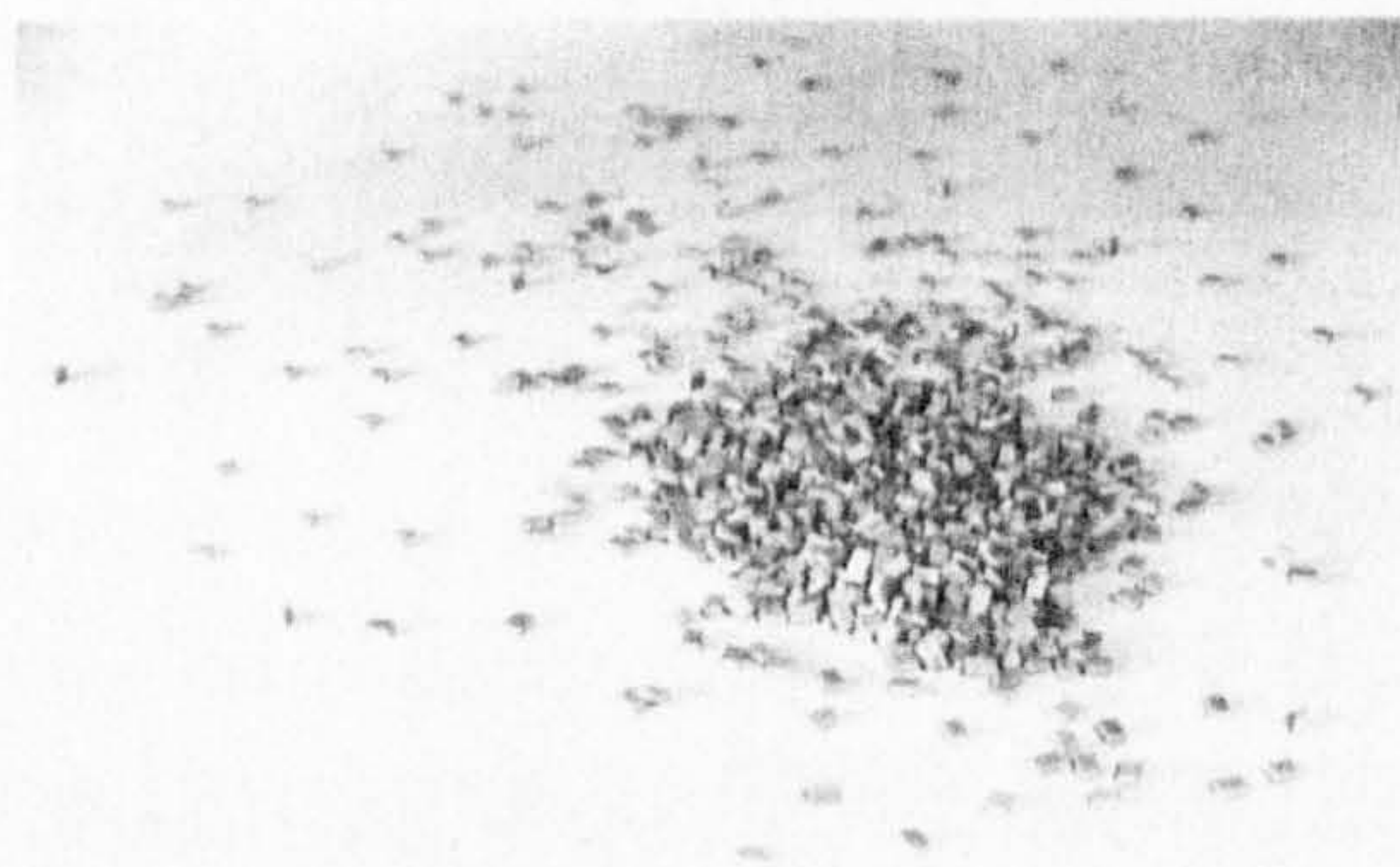
Much recent American art, a salient example is the sculpture of Carl Andre, is materially based. Andre translates material base into base measure of values, literally inverting normative value terms for material ones. Bricks, bales of hay, slabs of slate, aluminum or zinc are worth exactly what their market value (defined by scarcity of supply and demand) brings. Their sale as art adds commission price to gallery and artist (also determined by market laws). The commodity is produce, not produced by the artist's handiwork. It possesses actual, physically definable qualities as opposed to abstract, imagined or critically defined qualities.⁹⁰

In these terms, then, Andre's practice could not be more removed from that of an artist such as Yves Klein, in that he makes no appeals to extrasensory forces, alchemical transmutations or auric libations. Moreover, Graham makes it clear that it is simply not possible for a viewer to envisage an artistic 'sensitivity' or, for that matter, any empirical experiences being expressed or articulated in Andre's discrete presentations of raw materials. Instead, the values that these objects bear are determined simply and exclusively by the qualities of the materials themselves: the colour and dimensions of the bricks, the bulkiness of the hay bales, the tactility of the slate, the shine of light off aluminium's scratched surfaces, and so on and so forth. In this sense, Andre is fulfilling *almost to the letter* Clement Greenberg's assertion that the role of the avant-garde artist was, in effect, to imitate God, and to do so by

⁸⁹ In many respects, the tradition of aligning artistic production with alchemical practices is still very much alive: see, for instance, James Elkins, *What Painting Is: How to Think about Oil Painting, Using the Language of Alchemy* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999).

⁹⁰ Dan Graham, 'Can the present language?', p. 51.

creating 'something valid solely on its own terms [...] something, given, *increate*, independent of meanings, similars or originals.'⁹¹



Spill (Scatter Piece) with canvas bag, 1966

However, as Graham's statement implies, the 'validity' of Andre's sculptures has nothing to do with the artist 'Carl Andre' as such – they are simply latent to the materials themselves.⁹² Since Andre had not interfered or altered in any way the rawness of the materials from which his art was composed, it is Graham's suggestion that his sculptures essentially exempt themselves from conventional critical evaluations – premised as they are on notions of artistic quality. And because formal, artistic value (or 'quality') is said to be tantamount to ascribing commodity values to works, then the 'value' Andre's sculptures fetch on the open market remains entirely irrelevant to their material *base* value, which stays untouched. Hay-bales will always remain hay-bales irrespective of what they cost. In fact, in his first article on Andre's art, Graham claims that his works 'are unpossessible by the viewer in the monetary sense,' if by 'possession' we mean 'the sense of an artist being possessed by a vision or of satisfying personal inner needs of the viewer.'⁹³ It is in these terms, I think, that the potential political import of Andre's artistic practice deserves to be located.

These are subtle arguments. They *are* subtle because we can only understand Andre's sculptures as constituting a point of resistance to commodity values when we approach them from within the context of art – and as works of art – where 'art' is somehow assumed to be a value that is distinctive and salutary in its own right and on

⁹¹ Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-garde and Kitsch', p. 6.

⁹² In due course, Dan Graham came to question Minimal art for just this reason. See his *Endmoments* (Dan Graham, 1969).

⁹³ Dan Graham, 'Carl Andre', p. 34.

its own terms, in a way that exceeds other kinds of quotidian and monetary preoccupations. It derives from the *frisson*, then, of seeing and encountering the non-artistic and 'raw' qualities of Andre's choice of materials within the context of high art. In this sense, their capacity to be seen as resistant and critical art objects is reliant on the viewer identifying them as somehow part art, part non-art.

*

Gold circulates because it has value, whereas paper has value because it circulates.

Karl Marx, 1859⁹⁴

Andre's first blow to the profit motive consisted of taking the money a collector had paid for a commission, buying an ingot of gold with it and giving the gold back to the collector.

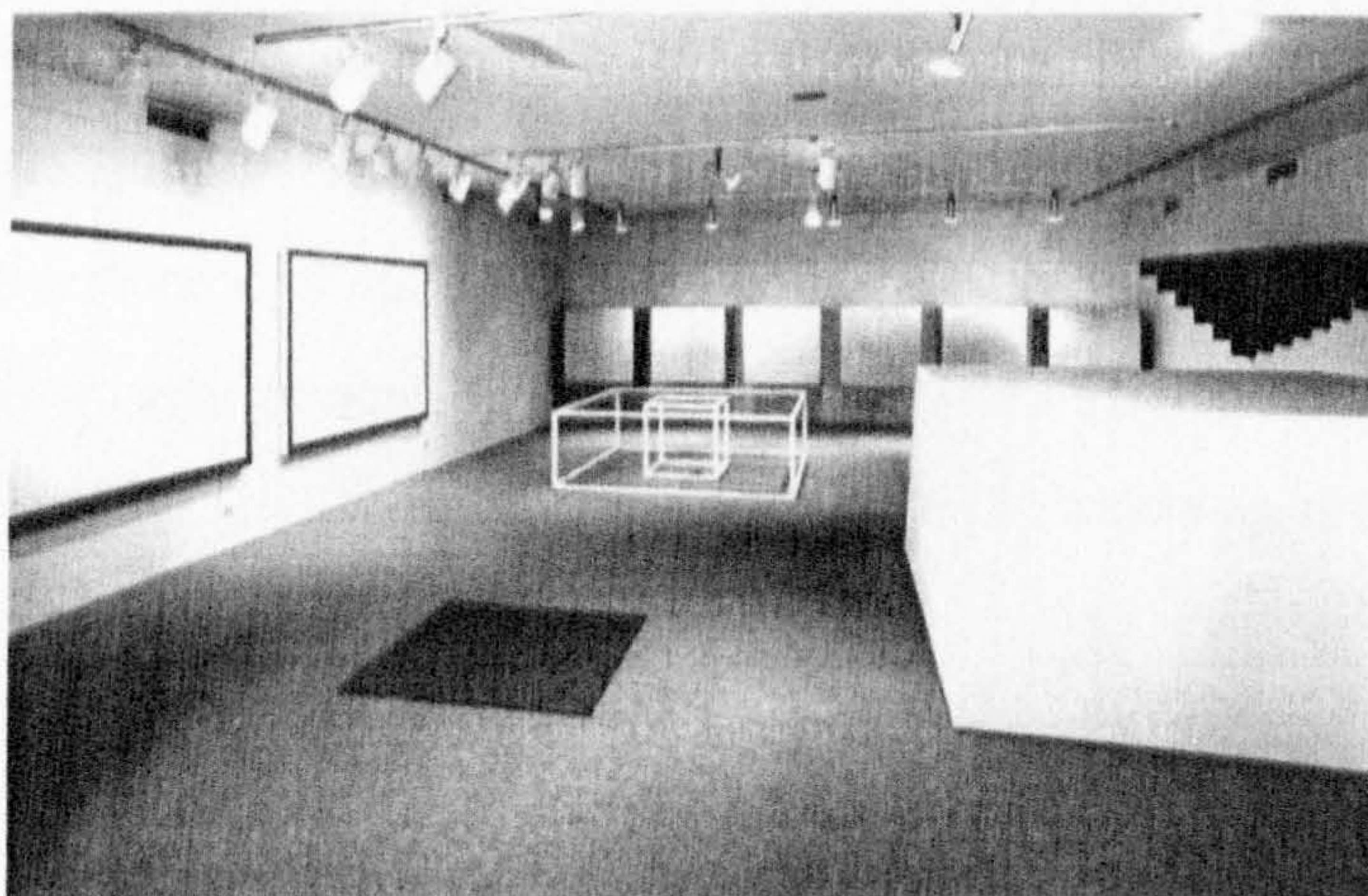
Barbara Rose, 1970⁹⁵

There is one very early work that highlights this question of 'values' particularly clearly. It is a sculpture that bears an especially complicated relation to money. The work is made from a single, square slab of eighteen-carat gold, two inches by two inches wide and an eighth of an inch thick. A work small enough, in other words, to sit in the palm of your hand or lie flat on a tabletop. It is a thing only slightly bigger than a piece of jewellery – although its raw, ingot-like form precludes it obviously from being used for this function. As a sculpture, then, this is a strangely-scaled work indeed.

The piece is known as *Gold Field*, a title that associates it with *Field*, the sculpture which had represented Andre at a group-show at the Dwan Gallery in New York in October 1966.

⁹⁴ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), p. 121.

⁹⁵ Barbara Rose, 'Out of the Studios, On to the Barricades', p. 55.



Field, installation at '10', Dwan Gallery, New York, October 1966

Field is made from 645 tiny rectangular ceramic magnets, bound together by nothing other than their own magnetic force, which lay directly on the gallery's carpeted floor like a gridded, grey mat.⁹⁶ It had been purchased by Mrs. Vera List, who seems to have celebrated the acquisition by promptly asking Andre to make her another one. List had provided him with \$300 in advance – at Andre's request – in order that he might purchase the materials that he would be requiring for the work.⁹⁷ However, Andre did not labour extensively over these materials: he merely made a journey to a custom jewellery maker in the Bowery, and asked for a pound of gold to be made into a flat square.⁹⁸ From a letter in the Tibor de Nagy Files in the Archives of American Art, we even know the supplier: it was Handy & Harman of Mount Vernon, New York, 'Fabricators of Precious Metals, Special Metals and Alloys and Refiners of

⁹⁶ For a description of this work and a review of the exhibition in which it was first displayed, see Annette Michelson's 'Ten By Ten: 'Concrete Reasonableness'', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 5 (January 1967), pp. 30-31, p. 31.

⁹⁷ The calculations concerning the pricing of Andre's *Gold Field* are to be found on a handwritten, undated note, in Carl Andre's file in the Tibor de Nagy papers. Andre's correspondence with Tibor Nagy and John Bernard Myers at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery is dominated by Andre's protestations that he simply did not have the resources to buy materials with which to make sculptures. In a letter from 20 September 1966, for instance, Andre asks Myers that he would prefer it if they took 'a straight 50% commission with expenses incidental to sales assumed by the gallery', rather than the 40% cut with expenses having to be shouldered by Andre himself – which is the arrangement they themselves were offering. Andre ends the letter by playing the impoverished artist card (which is not to say that it was not true): 'Right now I have no money for sculpture, photographs, advertising, a beer at the corner, subway rides, or anything else.' Needless to say, Myers was duly impressed and promised Andre not only a new show in the spring but also offered to purchase the materials – which, as it turned out, happened to be a thousand sand lime bricks. See Carl Andre, Letter to John Myers, 20 September 1965, Tibor de Nagy Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.

⁹⁸ Carl Andre, interview with Julia Bryan-Wilson, 11 February 2004, cited in Julia Bryan-Wilson, 'Art/Work: Minimalism, Conceptualism, and Artistic Labor in the Vietnam War Era, 1965-1975', PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2004, p. 93. According to Bryan-Wilson, *Gold Field* is currently owned privately by List's heir, Joshua Mack.

Silver, Gold, and Platinum'.⁹⁹ Seen in the context of this purchase, the single piece of gold that constituted *Gold Field* was nothing more and nothing less than the quantity of gold that could be purchased with \$300 in the U.S. in 1966.¹⁰⁰ The dimensions of the work are determined by this fact alone: the small size of the sculpture is simply a reflection on the scarcity of gold as a commodity.

But gold is no ordinary material: it is not quite of the same order as other goods, such as bricks or steel plates. It is, in the words of Marx, 'the god of commodities'.¹⁰¹ This is because, above all other resources, gold is arbitrarily singled out and ascribed a social validity as the single measure by which all other marketable and manufactured objects are to be evaluated, so that the exchange value of all commodities is estimated in terms of their imaginary equivalence to a piece of gold. Of course, as a commodity in its own right, gold prices go up and down as well, but what is never allowed to change, and is set by society at large, is a system of weights and measures for determining quantities of gold. And because one ounce of pure gold can never be twisted and turned so that it becomes ten ounces, gold allows a ratio of values to be fixed as an unwavering standard.¹⁰²

We might suggest – at least provisionally – that Andre's motivation for turning Vera List's money into a slab of un-minted gold is an appeal to just this. Just the same kind of unchanging and constant standard, in fact, that David Ricardo, the nineteenth-century London stockbroker, saw in this yellow metal. For Ricardo, gold was an entity 'invariable in value', and in his mind a modern monetary economy, premised as it is on unfixed and relational values, desperately needed some kind of an invariable standard. Without it, he argued, how else could you know that your money was worth anything at all? Without all the paper money that was issued by banks being backed up by real gold in the vaults, he wrote, our notes 'would be exposed to all the fluctuations to which the ignorance or the interests of the issuers might subject

⁹⁹ Letter from Handy & Harman to Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 11 November 1966, Tibor de Nagy Papers.

¹⁰⁰ For the benefit of the auditors (if not for the art historians), we should be precise. A secretarial jotting at the bottom of the Handy & Harman letter mentioned above suggests that the gold came to \$285.92. The hand-written note mentioned above also confirms this sum.

¹⁰¹ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to a Critique*, p. 125.

¹⁰² See Karl Marx, *A Contribution to a Critique*, p. 108.

it.¹⁰³ In other words, paper money should always be capable of being converted to designated and fixed quantities of gold at the holder's request.¹⁰⁴ And this was the means by which paper money retained its security and validity within the United States between the 1830s up until August 1971. In 1971, the gold standard was finally and unceremoniously jettisoned by President Nixon – a means of retaining at least some semblance of value to the dollar, whose real economic worth had been impressively depleted by the exponential costs of fighting for a lost cause in the jungles of South-east Asia.¹⁰⁵

So, in this sense, *Gold Field* could be taken to be Vera List's original investment, merely returned to her in its weight in gold. More specifically, Andre has translated Mrs. List's money into the material that backs up the cheque issued to the bank – replacing the sign for the thing itself, returning a mere paper signifier of value to the absolute and royal embodiment of raw material value, in and of itself.

However, there is a considerable irony in this gesture. For although Andre's intention might be seen to be motivated by the desire to ground value outside the realm of commodified exchange values and, in a way, to *demonetarise* money, he achieves this by mimicking – or even aping – the most fundamental tenets of nineteenth-century bourgeois economics. It is as though Andre is turning the terms of a bourgeois economy back on itself – against itself. In fact, his artistic practice could be said to turn again and again on such part collusions. At one level, his art stakes everything on the authority of origins and beginnings and commencements, as though each work is a new inauguration, and as if each sculpture holds up the promise of *turning over a new leaf, wiping the slate clean* – or whatever other well-worn metaphor you might prefer. At another level, the self-evident material validities to

¹⁰³ David Ricardo, *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, 11 vols, ed. by Piero Sraffa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), IV, p. 58. Cited in John Kenneth Galbraith, *Money: Whence it Came, Where it Went* (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 46. Hannah Arendt points to the irony of the early-nineteenth century investment in gold in the West, for in a society in which all values are otherwise regarded as relative and functional, gold seemed to be a way of holding onto and retaining some kind of metaphysical ideal of absolute value. See *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest, 1968), p. 188.

¹⁰⁴ For the historical background to Ricardo's economic writings, see Maria Cristina Marcuzzo and Annalisa Rosselli, *Ricardo and the Gold Standard: The Foundations of the International Monetary Order*, trans. Joan Hall (London: Macmillan, 1991).

¹⁰⁵ See Kenneth Galbraith's chapter, 'Where it Went', in *Money: Whence it Came, Where it Went*, especially pp. 307-310.

which his artworks attest are themselves only a more profoundly grounded set of socially-sanctioned givens.

I do not want to make it seem as though my reading of Andre's practice will be derived entirely from a single small work such as *Gold Field* – a work which, in all respects, might be thought to be rather an exceptional and atypical sculpture in Andre's oeuvre. However, I do want to suggest that the work follows an equivalent logic to the majority of Andre's subsequent sculptures. By presenting a small square sheet of gold as a work of art, Andre is returning attention to a raw material, as a material in its own right. It is a work about gold's physical qualities – its weight, its reddish yellow colour, its softness and seeming warmth to the touch, and so on. And, inasmuch as this is the focus of his art irrespective of the material to which Andre turns, we might suggest that in this work gold is made into a metal *just* like any other raw material. As such, the sculpture could be seen to be a normalisation of gold – a way of refusing to set it above other materials as a distinctive standard of values – a means of disencumbering it of its monarchical authority over other commodities.¹⁰⁶

Yet this is not quite the end of the story, for the relation between *Gold Field* and money is more symbiotic than that. In a way, it might be more accurate to suggest that if Andre makes gold into a substance like any other raw material, then perhaps he also allows all raw materials to become a little like gold. Moreover, the work does have a certain air of parsimony to it – of a kind that really does feel exemplary of his art as a whole. My reasoning for suggesting this is due to Andre's investment in the *raw* nature of materials. Whatever the material constitution of the resource – whether they be bricks, or sheets of metal, or blocks of wood – they are materials that have been worked and manipulated by machines so as to have been given a rudimentary, regular form. They are 'raw' not because they are unrefined, but because they are commodities that are capable of sustaining further transformative processes. They are substances that can become socially useful, but in their present form, they are merely functional in a latent sense. In other words, these materials are presented as though in another context they might have a very distinct social purpose and a sense of practical

¹⁰⁶ See Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 30-31. Goux's gloss on Marx's *Contribution to a Critique* has served as an important reference point for in the writing of this chapter.

utility, which, by designating them as works of art, is left unfulfilled. In this sense, the materials that make up Andre's sculptures have the appearance of being commodities that simply have been removed from circulation; they are units of material that have been held back and preserved from being used up. We might say that just as an archive stores documents for the sake of the future, so Andre's art reserves raw materials from further social metabolism.

I pursue this theme further in my reading of *Lever* in Chapter 7. But for the time being, I simply want to stress that gold does not quite work in these terms. This is because gold is the general equivalent of all commodities, and because of this, its finished form is much less relevant to its social utility than it is for any other commodity. Whereas other materials are manufactured for their functionality and their use-value, and for which they are used up and consumed, the use value of gold can be realised *in its raw state*. Its use value simply is its exchange value: it has inordinate social value because, by convention, it can be exchanged for all things. In fact, we might say that gold is exchange value in the guise of a petrified material, metallic substance. It is, as Marx says, 'wealth in preserved form,' because, unlike other materials, its value is imperishable and fixed.¹⁰⁷ It is, he suggests, re-writing Matthew 6, 'the eternal treasure which can be touched neither by moths nor by rust, and which is wholly celestial and wholly mundane.'¹⁰⁸ For this reason, then, gold lends itself 'naturally' to being withdrawn from circulation and being hoarded privately – revered not merely for what it is, but also for all the wealth for which it stands. All Andre's art might be said to be caught within just such terms, in spite of the extent to which it also aims to depart from this logic. In some senses, it is about removing materials from circulation, and cherishing their qualities in their raw state:

The fact that the pieces I do are unjoined – not in any special relationship to one another – leaves the potential free... It seems that if my work has any subject matter at all, it is the immense potentiality of the things around us.¹⁰⁹

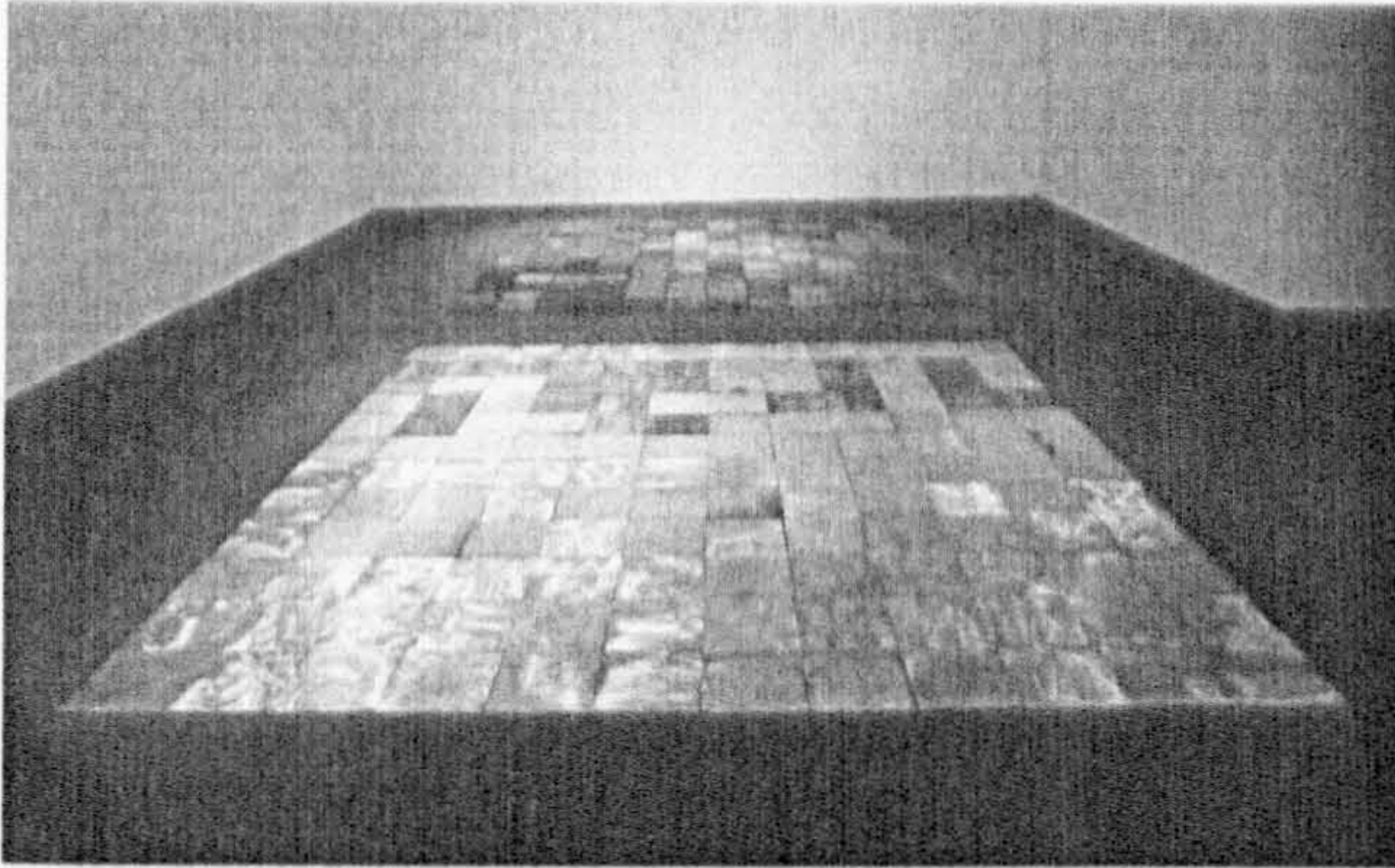
Just as gold ingots are given shapes and dimensions which enable them to be easily aggregated and transported, yet remain mostly withdrawn from everyday circulation,

¹⁰⁷ Karl Marx, *Contribution to a Critique*, p. 127.

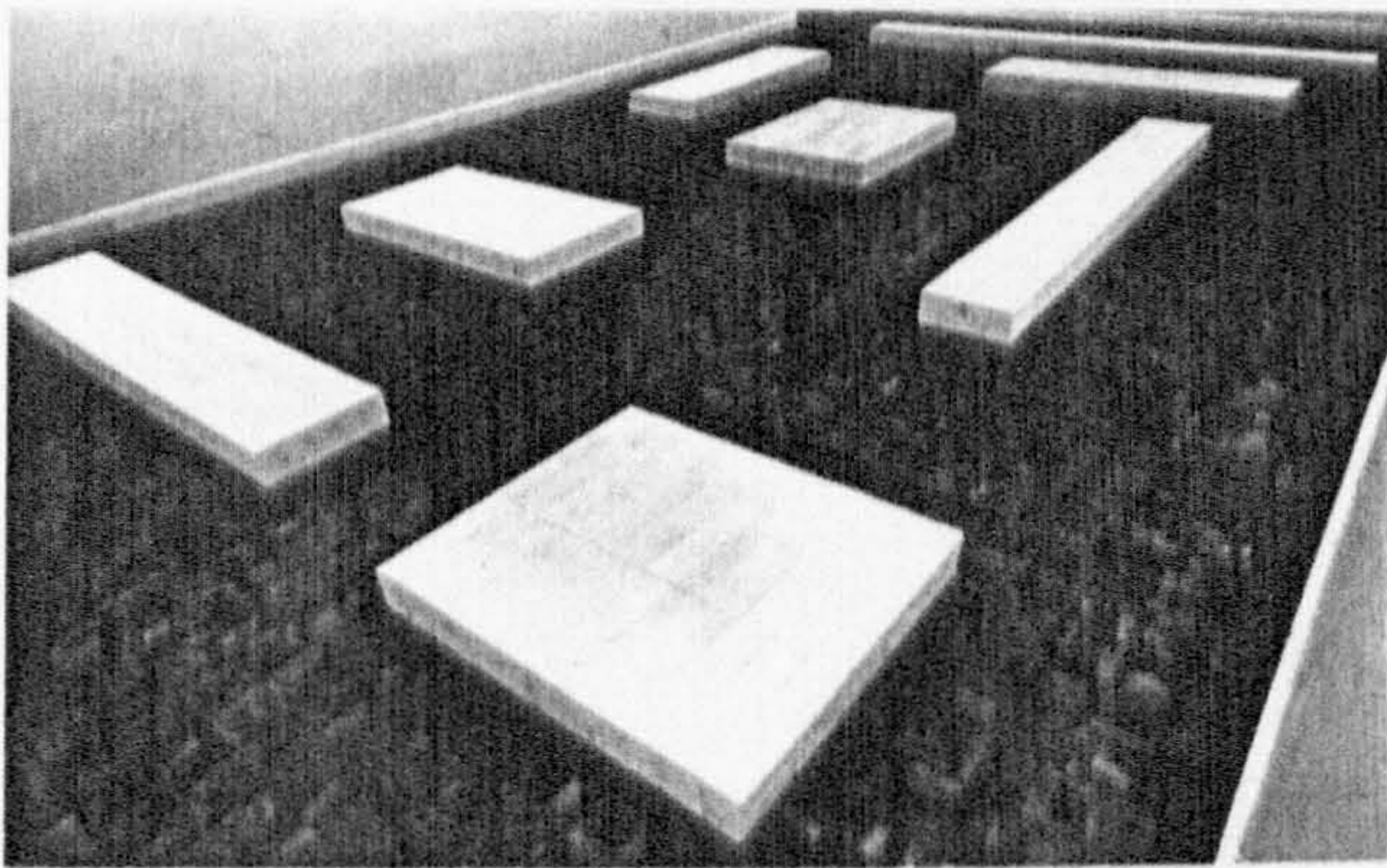
¹⁰⁸ Karl Marx, *Contribution to a Critique*, p. 129.

¹⁰⁹ Carl Andre, in an interview with Sandy Ballatore, 'Carl Andre on Work and Politics', *Artweek*, vol. 7, no. 24 (3 July 1976), pp. 1 and 20, p. 1.

so Andre develops an art that entails removing other ingot-like units – bricks, plates, blocks, counters, rods – and in turn these materials are presented in discrete hoard-like arrangements, as though they are already a new form of gold.



144 Magnesium Square and 144 Lead Square,
installation at Dwan Gallery, 1969



Equivalentes I-VIII, installation at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 1966

In the chapters that follow, I explore Andre's art as a practice that is significantly and uniquely concerned with questions of exchange and transformation, petrification and potentiality. It is a practice that, in many respects, in its efforts to strike out at signifiatory practices and to negate them by turning sculpture to a raw or 'pure' materiality, ends up turning again and again on these issues. In fact, Andre's practice might be said to waver relentlessly between throwing things into circulation and withdrawing them from circulation, between the task of making equivalences and the refusal of all such substitutions and exchanges.

PART I



RETRIEVING AND RETURNING

Chapter 2
Betrayal:
Crafting a Quincy Biography

[Q.] *Is the artist a craftsman?*

[A.] *Some artists are – I am not. Some artists reflect obsolete modes of production – I may reflect the obsolescence of production as a mode of dividing people into classes.*

Carl Andre, 1974¹

'The great new art movement known as low sculpture spread to Britain's more discerning building sites yesterday', announced one of the British tabloids in February 1976.² This 'new art movement' was – of course – *Equivalent VIII*, and the spreading of this new phenomenon was nothing more than four bricklayers from Edmonton kneeling for the cameras beside their newly constructed 'low' brick sculptures.



Daily Mail, 17 February 1976

¹ Andrea Gould, 'Dialogues with Carl Andre', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 48, no. 8 (May 1974), pp. 27-28, p. 28.

² Donald Walker, 'Artycrafty', *Daily Mirror*, 17 February 1976, pp. 2-3.

It would be ludicrous to imply such articles were anything other than an outright attempt to debunk Andre's art: this two page spread in the *Daily Mail* was, after all, intended to be 'a brickbat from the boys on the building site'. But something else might also be said to be at stake here. And perhaps we might explore this by reflecting further on the motivation that lies behind Andre's decision to seemingly limit the skill entailed in his practice to such a level that any tradesman might validly feel that their productions require just as much, if not more, technical facility. For it could be suggested that the logic behind this impulse is not intended to offend or insult, but in some degree might be said even to be socially enabling.

However nebulous the term, 'enabling' is, I think, the right word, for Andre's sculpture does disrupt the logic that insists on partitioning off those who are assigned the privilege of being creative from those who are only entitled to 'produce'. Jacques Rancière writes that the discourse of art can recompose 'the relationship between doing, making, being, seeing and saying.'³ Here, we might say, Andre's sculpture challenges the very idea that 'art' is precious, difficult and exceptional, whilst 'work' is ordinary. It implies, making art can *also* be an everyday simple activity, and in suggesting this, it serves to slice through the divisions that apportion different domains of activity to distinct individuals: those who are entitled to think, and those who are not. And thanks to this, it might be said to contribute to the inclusion of traditional working-class trades within a conversation about high art. Were it not for Andre's sculpture, then bricklayers and brick manufacturers across Britain would never have engaged the interest of the public in the way that they did in the spring 1976. Nor, more importantly, would they have had the occasion to voice so openly a pride in the nature of their craft and, moreover, publicly express their opinions about the aesthetic appeal of the manifestations of their labour. However ironic the various gestures and however predictable the humour, there is nonetheless something enabling in this realignment of interest in everyday work that Andre's sculpture facilitated in Britain in the late 1970s. Furthermore, it reminds us that there always had been a certain egalitarian ideal at stake in Andre's practice, an ideal that is perhaps best

³ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 45.

theorised in his 1966 claim that his art is communistic 'because the forms are freely available to all men'.⁴ Perhaps here in the popular responses to the 'Tate Bricks' controversy, we catch a fugitive glimpse of this logic manifesting itself.

However, whether the authoritative accounts of Andre's art that were produced during the latter half of the 1970s ever succeeded in placing sufficient emphasis on these implications is questionable. In many respects, the matter was thoroughly evaded. In fact, incorporated into this two page spread in the *Daily Mirror* is a smaller column which might be thought to undermine many of the implications that, albeit inadvertently, the main article raises. To the left of the page is an article submitted by a journalist in New York who had managed to extract a few quotes from the artist himself. It cites Andre claiming that his art was never intended to be a joke or a gesture; instead, *Equivalent VIII* is pronounced by him to be 'my best and straightest experience of sculpture.'⁵ This is understandable enough. But in order to validate his use of bricks in particular, Andre appeals directly to the authenticity of his own life experience: 'My grandfather was a bricklayer,' he adds, 'and in my childhood I learned a lot about the craft'.⁶

No doubt this humble statement was Andre's way of articulating his class solidarity with those who work as professional builders. It was a means of saying, in other words, that he knows what he is talking about. But the implications of this recourse to his own biography are considerable, and deserve to be thought through in some detail. The allure of biographical explanations is always galvanizing, and in Andre's instance it might be said to be especially so, since to speak of his early childhood experiences restores personal, metonymic associations to a series of otherwise impersonal forms. Here, the reference to his grandfather allows *Equivalent VIII* to become considerably more straightforward to understand; in fact, it might be said to provide an audience with something *to*

⁴ Carl Andre, cited in David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 17. In 1963, Andre articulated a similar aspiration with regards the poetry he was currently composing: 'What I want to illuminate in my poetry are not those things which only I can see, but those things which any man can see.' See Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, p. 79.

⁵ Mark Dowdney, 'Grandad was a bricklayer too', *Daily Mirror*, 17 February 1976, p. 3.

⁶ Carl Andre, cited in Mark Dowdney, 'Grandad was a bricklayer too', p. 3.

understand. It gives the work a subject matter and a rationale, which up to now seemed desperately lacking. From now on, the sculpture could be explained with the claim that the artist resorts to bricks because these are objects with which he has been intimately familiar since the days of his childhood. In other words, bricks now become 'an expression' of a certain aspect of his biographical background.⁷

*

It hardly needs to be pointed out, then, that such biographical readings brush away many of the more challenging issues raised by the nature of Andre's art. Thus, as a means of exposing some of these concerns, I explore here to how the question of 'craft' and the question of 'biography' intersect with one another in the discourses that surround Andre's sculptures. For although these two subjects have been evoked in close conjunction with one another, they are not necessarily as compatible as they are often made to appear. In fact, the 'craftlessness' of Andre's sculptures might be said to stand in serious contradiction to the way 'craft' is often alluded to in relation to his family background. And in turn, these tensions pose some serious questions about the role biography can play in interpretations and explications of his practice.

Contrary to some of the dominant art historical accounts, it is not my intention to relegate biography entirely from a discussion of his art. In fact, far from it, for it is only by engaging closely with the place and circumstances of his upbringing that we can gain a better purchase on his sculpture. The question, rather, is more the terms in which it is evoked.

⁷ In the last two decades – it should be added – the widely held belief that artworks 'express' the self of the maker has been thoroughly challenged. See in particular, *Hal Foster*, 'The Expressive Fallacy', *Art in America*, vol. 71, no. 1 (January 1983), pp. 80-83 and 137, *Art & Language*, 'Abstract Expression', reprinted in *Modernism, Criticism, Realism*, ed. by Charles Harrison and Fred Orton (London: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 191-204, and J. R. R. Christie and Fred Orton, 'Writing a Text on the Life', *Art History*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1988), pp. 545-64; reprinted in Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 295-314. This latter text has played an important role in informing the perspective I adopt in this chapter.

First, though, some clarity is required as to what exactly is meant when the words 'craft' and 'facility' are used in relation to the arts. In most walks of life, the matter is clear enough: skills are acquired through training and practice. Possession of a skill entails a familiarisation with specialised knowledges, be they of particular tools, materials or situations, and it is verifiable by assessing the competence with which the bearer fulfils a designated procedure. (Discourse relating to skills tends to be goal-oriented and functionalist through and through.) In fine art, on the other hand, a display of merely technical competence in the production of a particular effect is usually considered by those who judge art to be wholly inadequate. In the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant precisely stipulates that art can only possess stature and quality when it produces something for which there is no determinate antecedent.⁸ In fact, as John Barrell points out in his study of aesthetics in the eighteenth century, art that was deemed simply to follow the rules was regularly considered merely 'servile' or 'mechanical'. Such art was deemed to lack a 'soul', presumably because machines are thought not to possess such attributes.⁹ And in many respects, this discourse has continued to set the terms for much art criticism in the twentieth century. Indeed, perhaps this tenet has never been adhered to more keenly than within critical readings of abstract, modernist art, where results and effects are often achieved using skills that an artist has honed in such a way so as to appear absent of skill altogether.¹⁰ Think,

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1987), section 46, p. 175, but see also pp. 174-189. For further discussion of these sections, see J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), pp. 90-93.

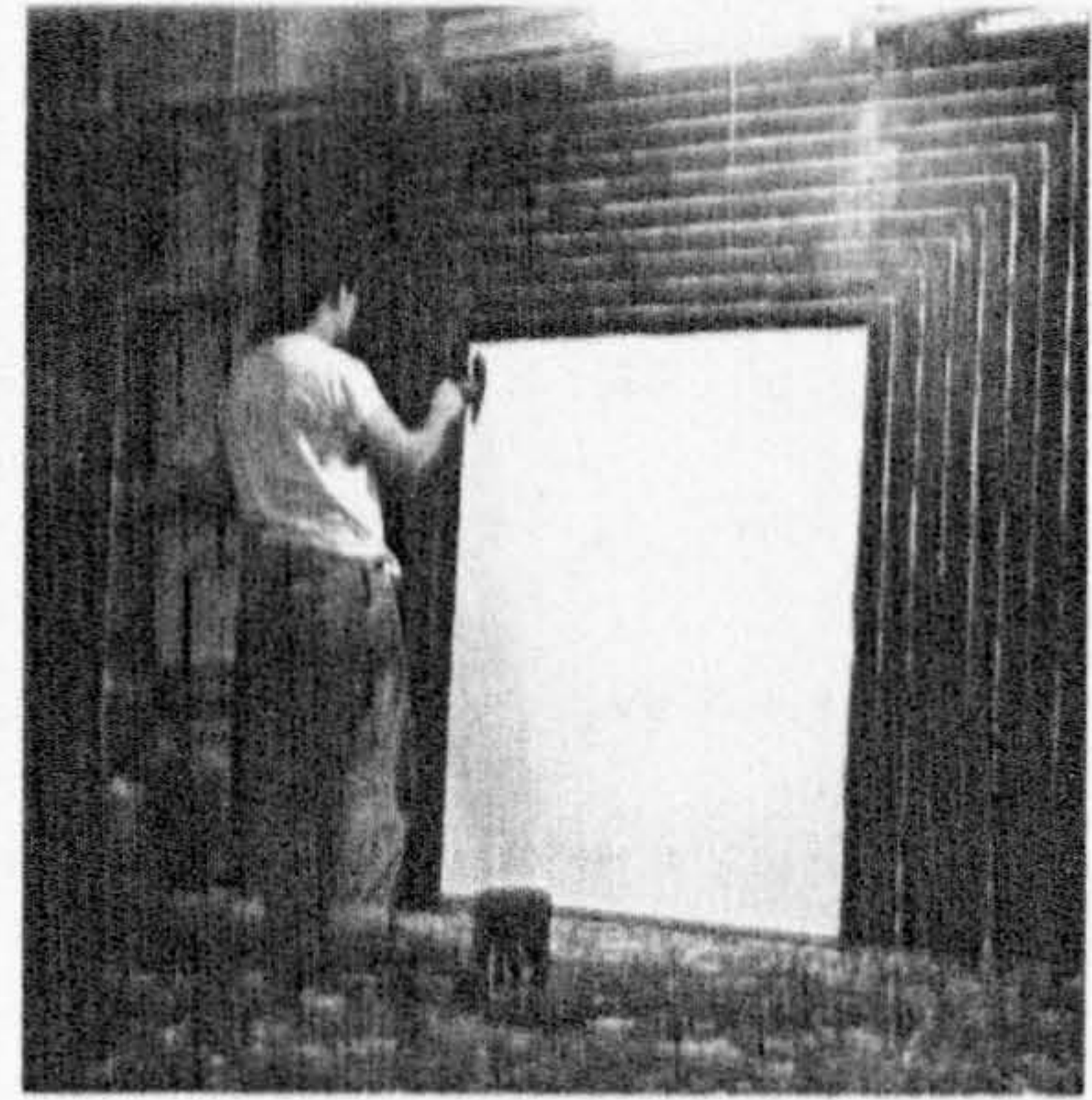
⁹ John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 14-18.

¹⁰ There is a tendency amongst some art historians to apply the sociological term 'deskilling' to the level of skill manifested in an art practice, as does, for instance, T. J. Clark in his account of Jackson Pollock's paintings in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 324. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh provides a gloss on the significance of the word in Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), p. 531. This strikes me as a useful term, and informs my account here. Buchloh describes it succinctly as the 'persistent effort to eliminate artisanal competence and other forms of manual virtuosity from the horizon of both artistic production and aesthetic evaluation.' But we should be aware also that such claims of 'deskilling' are always relative rather than fixed: a 'deskilled' art practice is always seemingly 'un'-skilled only when compared to previous artist traditions and cultural expectations. In other words, there is no determinate scale of artistic competences, against which works can be measured and that stands for all time. For it is often the case in modernist art that the seeming absence of skill requires just as much facility to 'pull off' as it does to fulfil standard painterly expectations. Jackson Pollock's technique of distributing paint without applying a brush to the canvas' surface might be a case in point.

for instance, of Clement Greenberg's wariness towards Willem de Kooning's painterly 'facility', and the way he felt inclined to warn the artist of the need to discern between when he is being 'truly spontaneous' and 'when he is working only mechanically.'¹¹



Willem de Kooning
Gansevoort Street, 1949-1951



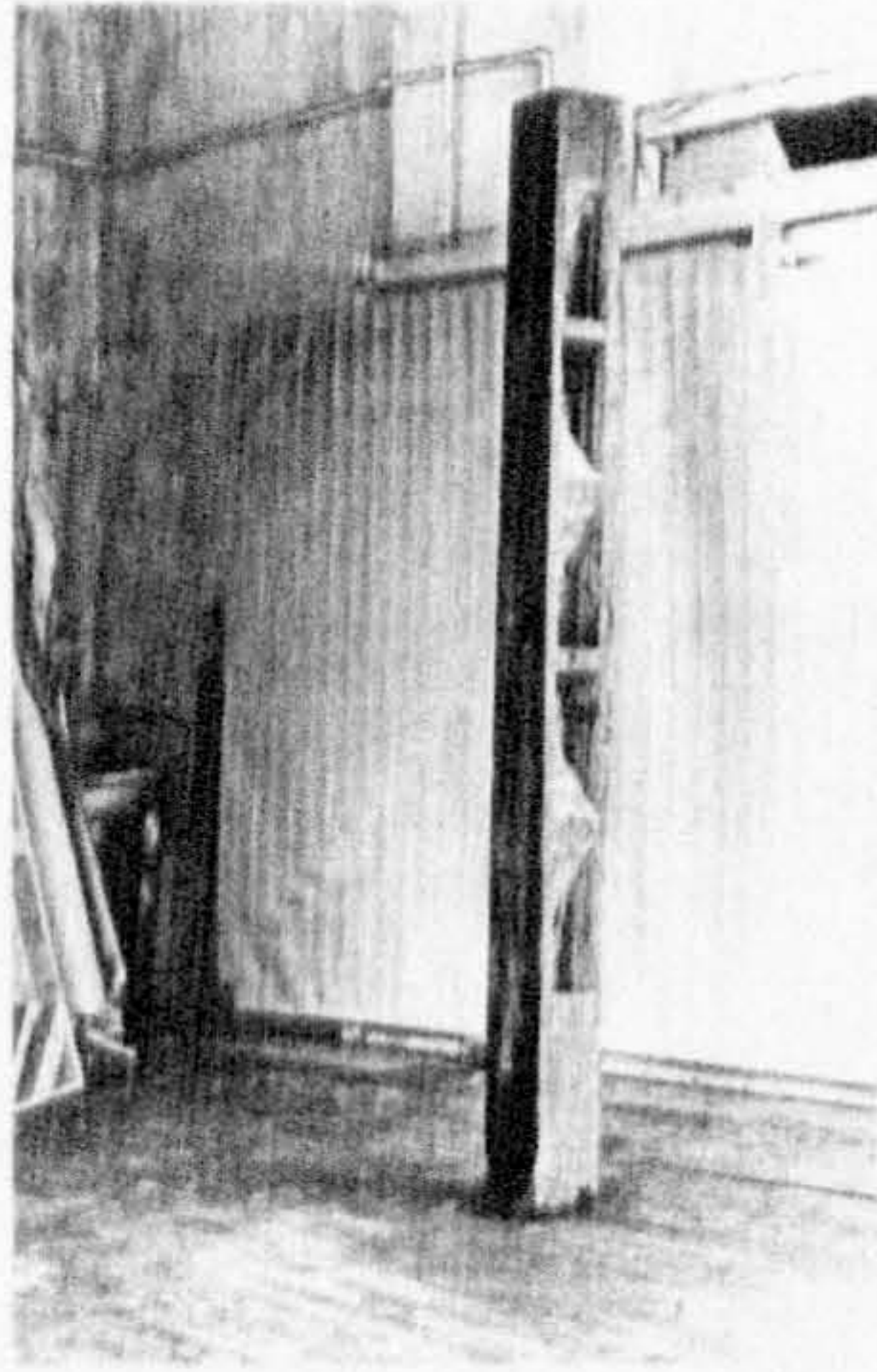
Frank Stella at work on
Getty Tomb, 1959

Andre, however, might be said to have advanced an art practice that is premised on the claim that the 'mechanical' in art is equally valid. Likewise, we might extend these terms to Andre's close friend, Frank Stella, whose black-stripe canvases Andre had watched being painted in his narrow studio at 366 West Broadway in the late 1950s. What fascinated Andre was the way Stella attended to the surface of the canvas with a thoroughly workmanlike proceduralism, applying exactly the same amount of mechanical competence and expertise as might be required of a professional house painter. As Stella once explained in an interview:

I just thought about the housepainter thing – what is that? That's another way of painting; it's essentially [...] a way of thinking about other kinds of art, about other kinds of painting. But it's still *painting* – putting material on a surface. And when you put it on the wall and use a certain kind of tool, you have a certain deadpan way of painting. It seems to me it was economical. It was also direct, which was something that I liked. It

¹¹ Clement Greenberg, 'Review of an Exhibition of Willem de Kooning' [1948], in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. by John O'Brian, 4 vols (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), II, pp. 229-230.

was also pedestrian, which personally appealed to me. I opted to push through, to try for something like a housepainter's technique.¹²



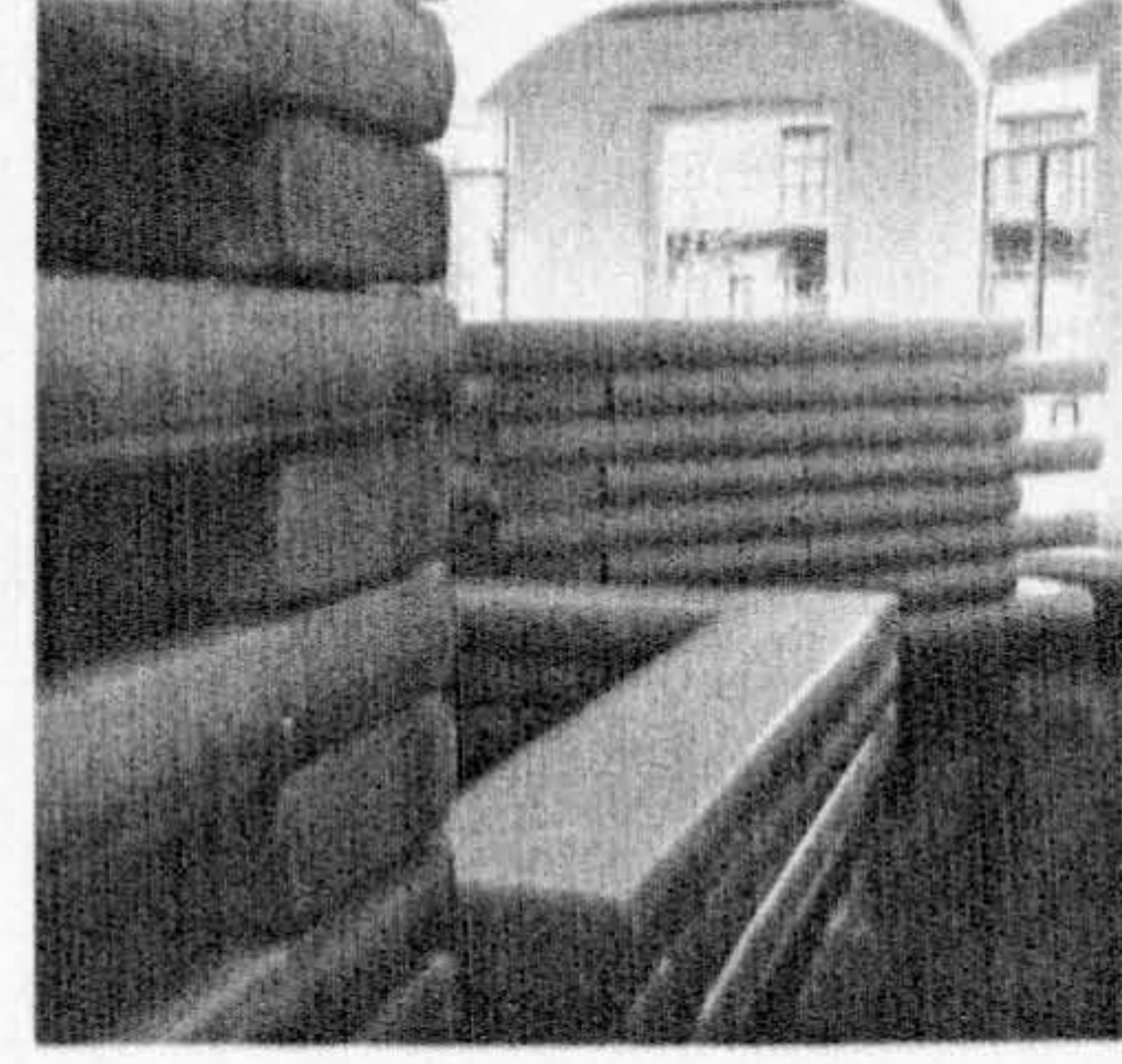
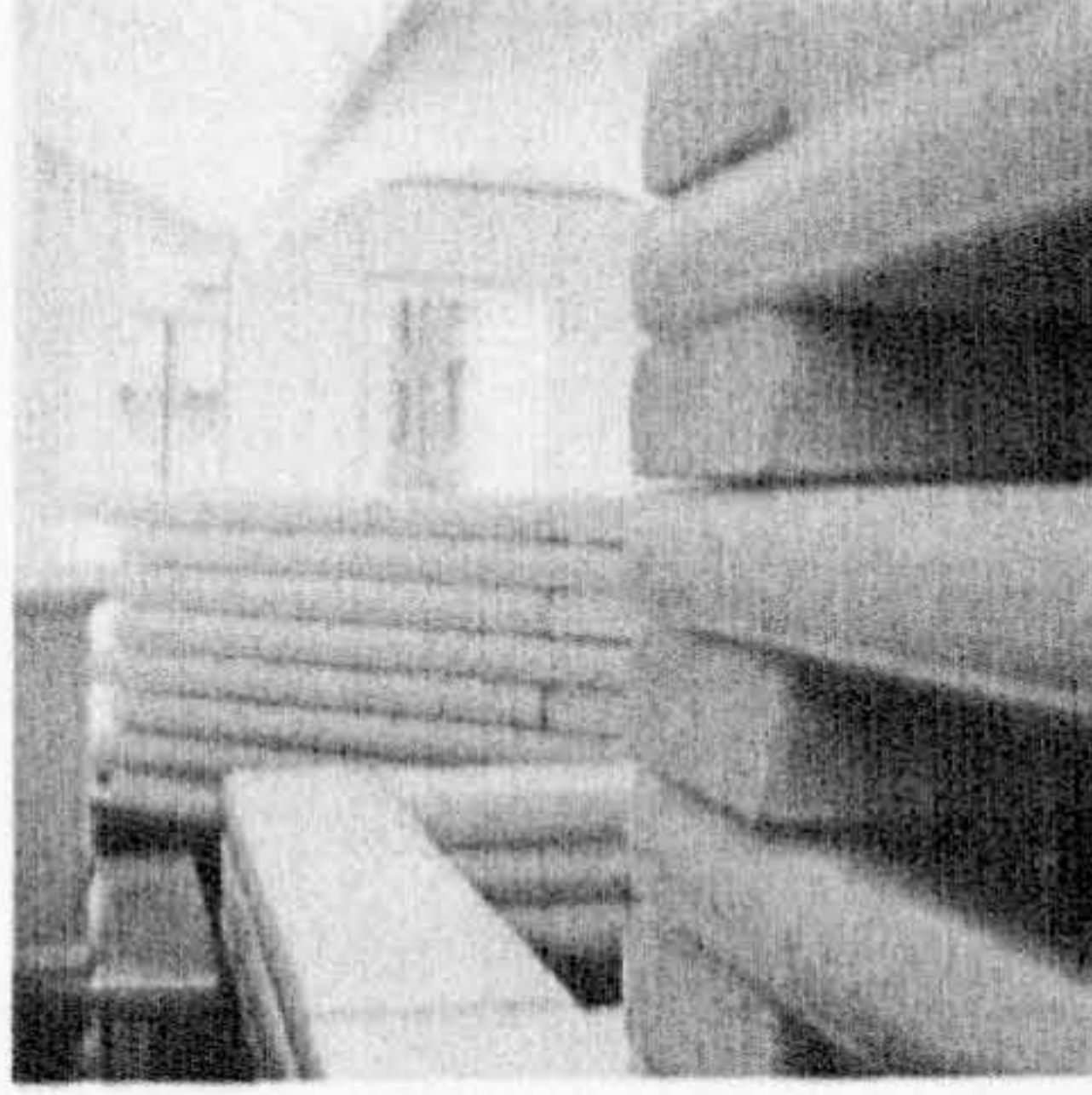
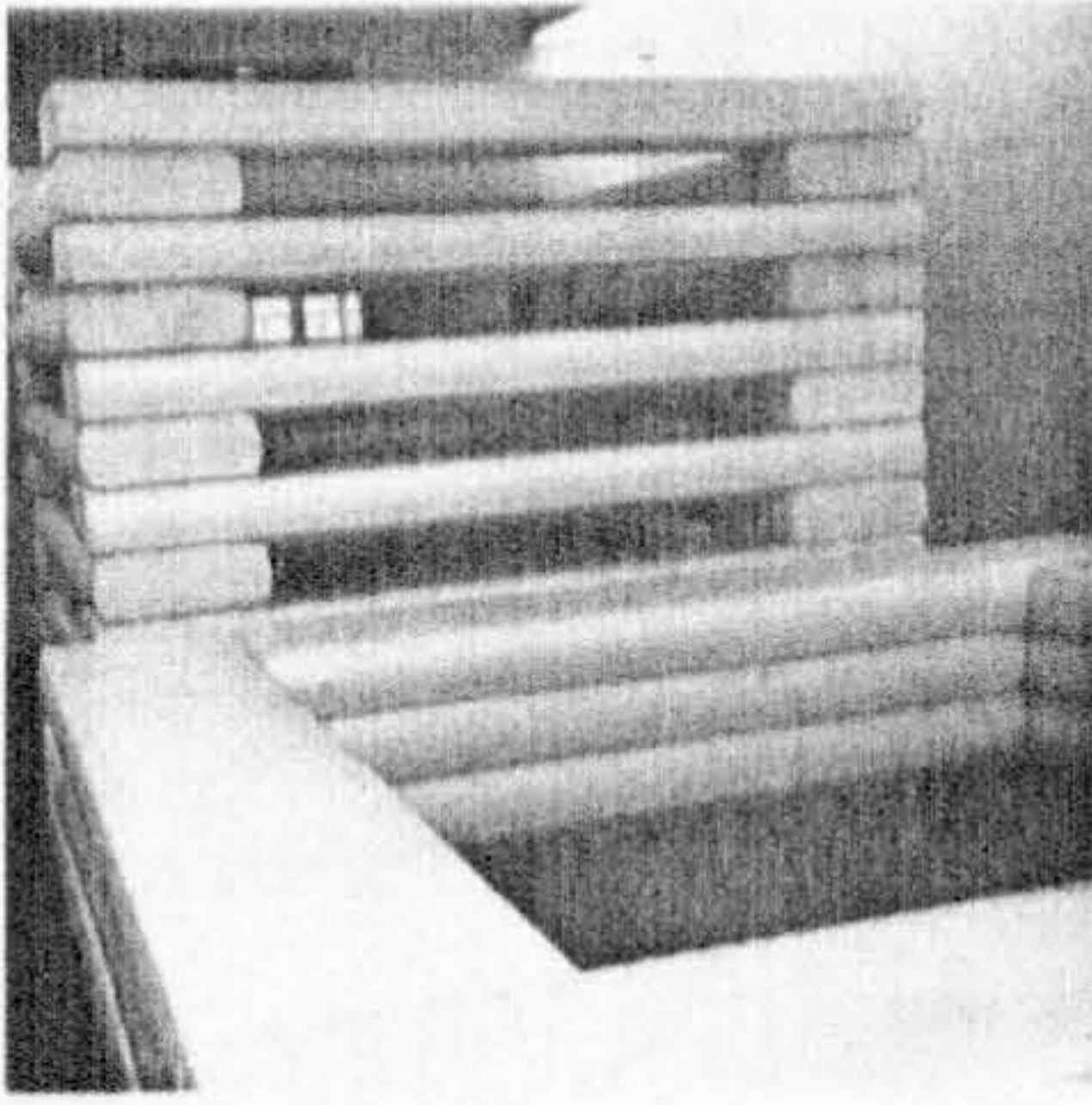
Last Ladder, in Stella's studio, c.1959-1960

At that time, Andre was also producing his own sculptures in Stella's studio, mostly from large timber beams whose edges and surfaces he had carved and sawn into simple, repetitive shapes. In an episode Andre has always enjoyed recounting, it was only when Stella ran his palm down the back of one of his sculptures, incisively pronouncing that the surface that Andre had not bothered to touch was *also* 'sculpture' that Andre came to appreciate that there might be no real need whatsoever to interfere with the untouched block. Already its form could be deemed sculptural, he realised.¹³ Indeed, Andre always accredited this

¹² Frank Stella, in discussion with Philip Leider during the symposium, 'The Current Moment in Art', 16 April 1966, broadcast in August 1966 over KPFA Radio, Berkeley, CA. Cited in Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 127.

¹³ The account of Andre's self-proclaimed revelation whilst working on *Last Ladder* has been repeated on countless occasions. This is how Andre related it to Paul Cummings in 1972: 'I was carving it in Stella's studio on West Broadway. He was admiring its face – it was carved only on one face, the other three faces were not carved. He looked at it approvingly, then walked around it and ran his hand down the back untouched side of the timber, which was about six feet tall, and said, 'That's sculpture too.' And it was the side I hadn't cut. I was very much annoyed with that statement at the time and put it in the back of my mind and forgot about it. But my gradual development was to go away from cutting into the material – to use the material itself.' See Paul Cummings, *Artists in Their Own Words* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1979), p. 190, and Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, pp. 267-269. For further renditions of this same narrative, see Dodie Gust, 'Andre: Artist of Transportation', *The Aspen Times*, 18 July, 1968, p. 3B, David Bourdon, 'A Redefinition of Sculpture', in *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-1977*, Exhibition Catalogue, Laguna Gloria Art Museum, Austin, TX, 1978, p. 19 and Eva-Meyer Hermann, 'Places and Possibilities', in *Carl Andre Sculptor 1996: Krefeld at Home, Wolfsburg at Large*, Exhibition Catalogue, Haus Lange and Haus Esters, Krefeld and Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 1996, p. 32. Dominic Rahtz discusses *Last Ladder* extensively in 'Literality and Absence of Self in the Work of Carl Andre', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2004), pp. 61-78.

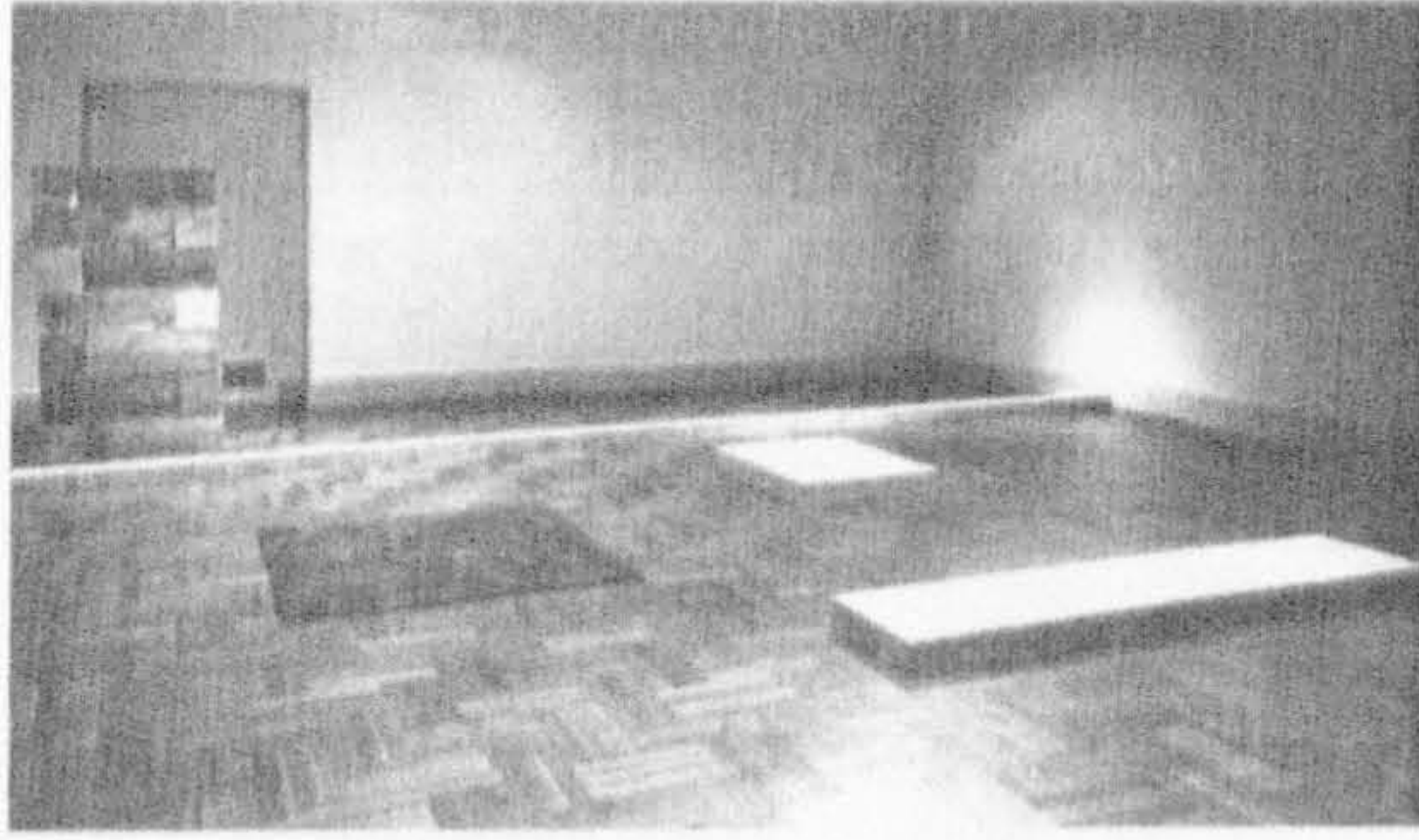
insight for leading him to develop a practice that eventually involved merely arranging pre-formed units into simple, geometric formations, without the use of any fixing or bonding materials.



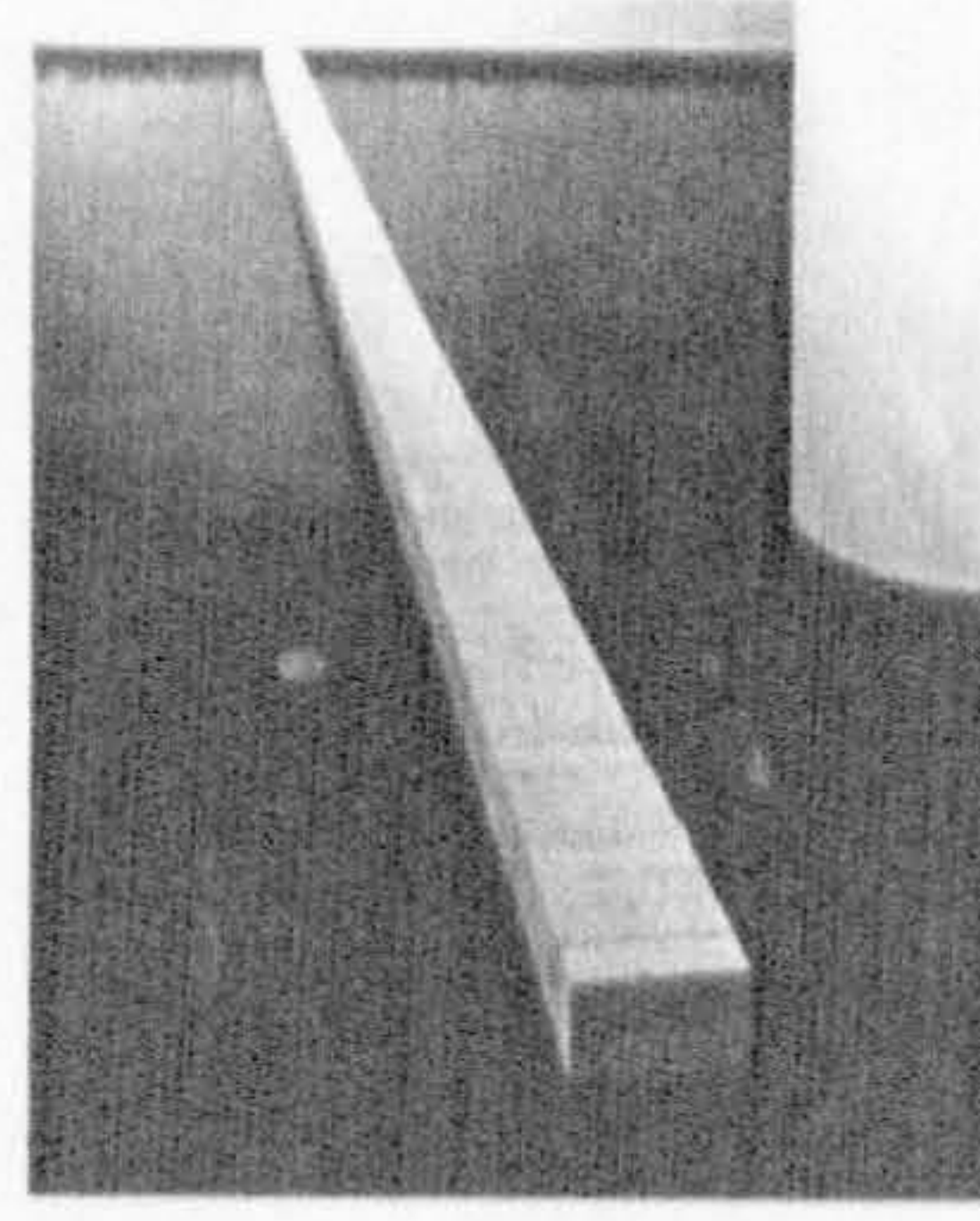
Compound (in foreground) *Coin* (closest to window) *Crib* (in foreground)
installation at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, April 1965

If Stella looks to house painting as a prototype for his art practice at this moment, then, in his turn, Andre resorts to the rudiments of construction as a means for making sculpture. In his exhibition at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in the spring of 1965, the three separate works he produced from identical Styrofoam beams owe their differing proportions to the three structuring techniques each embodies.¹⁴ Within a year, however, even an overt display of these knowledges fell away, for once Andre started to align identical blocks of material into seemingly self-evident arrangements running along the ground, there was no such need for evidencing structural concerns. Indeed, we might suggest that the craft skills required are, in purely practical terms, practically non-existent; they are, to put it mildly, vastly simpler to acquire than the variety of artisanal and construction knowledges required of a builder.

¹⁴ In *Compound*, the work with the lowest elevation (and the one installed between *Crib* and *Coin* at Tibor de Nagy's) all the four beams on each layer are at right angles to each other, forming four walls, with the headers and stretchers alternating from one layer to the next. In *Crib*, the tallest of the three works, each layer consists of two blocks, forming opposite sides of the square, producing a structure that can be looked through. *Coin* (which was installed closest to the windows in the de Nagy installation) differs from the other two in that it consists of only two walls, forming a right-angled salient, although in its structure it is the same as *Compound*. The two walls interlock at their corner, which means that every second unit overhangs at the outer end. The term 'coin' derives from the French word for corner. For fuller descriptions of these works, see Eva Meyer-Herman, *Carl Andre Sculptor 1996*, pp. 112-117.



Installation of Andre's sculptures
at St Louis Art Gallery, 1971



Lever, 1966, installation in 'Primary Structures' at the Jewish Museum, New York, April 1966

That Andre so enthusiastically embraced what appeared such a mechanical rule-following proceduralism has been understood by most art historians to imply that his work simply bears no reference to life experience at all. Machine-like regularity is equated directly, in other words, with the inanimate and the inert. There is nothing especially surprising about this, for in making this association, they are only pursuing the implications of the claims Andre first made about Frank Stella's paintings. In 1959, Stella had been included in the 'Sixteen Americans' exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, and, rather than writing a personal statement about his work, he had invited his then unknown friend to pen a few lines on his behalf.¹⁵ Andre's words soon assumed a near manifesto status:

Preface to Stripe Painting

Art excludes the unnecessary. Frank Stella has found it necessary to paint stripes. There is nothing else in his painting. Frank Stella is not interested in expression or sensitivity. He is interested in the necessities of painting. Symbols are counters passed among people. Frank Stella's painting is not symbolic. His stripes are the paths of brush on canvas. These paths lead only into painting.¹⁶

¹⁵ The exhibition 'Sixteen Americans', curated by Dorothy Miller, ran from 16 December 1959 - 14 February 1960. The show was one of the series that Miller organised at the Museum of Modern Art specifically intended to allow new US artists to 'speak for themselves'. The first 'such exhibition, entitled 'Americans', had been in 1942. Following that came 'American Realists and Magic Realists' (1943), 'Fourteen Americans' (1946), 'Fifteen Americans' (1952) and 'Twelve Americans' (1956). The final exhibition curated according to this formula was in 1963.

¹⁶ Carl Andre, 'Preface to Stripe Painting', in *Sixteen Americans, with Statements by the Artists and Others*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. by Dorothy C. Miller, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1959, p. 76.

An art that is defined exclusively as brush strokes on canvas is essentially categorised here as exempting itself from any association with expression and sensibility. For most art historians, this has been read as a renunciation of lived experience – including, we might add, biographical experience.

Take, for instance, Rosalind E. Krauss' references to Andre's sculpture *Lever* in *Passages in Modern Sculpture*.¹⁷ *Lever* consists of a single line of refractory firebricks, purchased straight from a Brooklyn factory, and which Andre arranged across the floor at the 1966 'Primary Structures' Exhibition in New York.¹⁸ For Krauss, the most significant implication of such sculpture was that it so forcefully resisted the ideal that art needed to be crafted or manipulated by the artist himself. And because the bricks had not been fabricated by Andre, she argued that they could not be seen in any way to allude to 'an inner life of form'.¹⁹ The phrase 'inner life of form' might be seen here as a reference to a sculptor such as Henry Moore, who had stated specifically that what he wanted his sculpture to possess 'is a force, is a strength, is a life, a vitality from inside it, so that you have a sense that the form is pressing from the inside trying to burst or trying to give off the strength from inside itself, rather than having something which is just shaped from outside and stopped.'²⁰



Henry Moore, *Internal and External Forms*, 1953-54

¹⁷ Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1977).

¹⁸ The exhibition 'Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors' ran from 27 April - 12 June 1966 at the Jewish Museum, New York.

¹⁹ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, p. 250.

²⁰ Henry Moore in *Five British Sculptors: Work and Talk*, ed. by Warren Forman (New York: Grossman, 1964). Reprinted in *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, ed. by Philip James (New York: da Capo, 1992), p. 62.

Nothing, on the other hand, might seem more lifelessly shaped from the outside than a brick: 'the fire-bricks remain obdurately external,' Krauss writes, 'objects of use rather than vehicles of expression.'²¹ She also emphasises the extent to which works such as Andre's evade even a residual notion of artistic composition. Because Andre's *Lever* is made simply by placing one identical unit next to another continuously, it appears to be, she suggests, just 'one thing after another' – as the artist and critic, Donald Judd, said famously of the stripes in Frank Stella's paintings.²² Moreover, 'one thing after another' is for Krauss analogous to 'days simply following each other without anything having given them a form or a direction, without their being inhabited, or lived, or meant.'²³ In other words, because Andre's materials are not crafted or individually worked by him, Krauss was not able to entertain even the possibility that his sculptures might pertain to lived experience at all.

More recently, similar conclusions have been reiterated by Dominic Rahtz. In his article on Andre, he emphasises that modes of interpretation that privilege the artistic self are frustrated by the artist's deployment of an 'apparently unthinking and mechanical procedure.'²⁴ The conventional signifiers of an artistic self, he writes, which are often manifested through the imaginative transformation of materials, are suspended – essentially left in a form that makes their import uncertain. However, for him, these claims were certainly not undecidable once references are made to Andre's personal biography and to the circumstances of his upbringing.²⁵ In fact, for Rahtz, such willingness on Andre's part to explain his sculptures through recourse to his biographical experiences is tantamount to a counterstatement, since it effectively reposit the artist's self as the privileged term. Accordingly, then, Andre's significance as an artist is exclusively premised on the critical implications of his 'literalism', and for

²¹ Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, p. 250.

²² Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects', *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965), p. 82. Reprinted in Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: College of Art and Design, 1975), p. 184.

²³ Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, pp. 245-249.

²⁴ Dominic Rahtz, 'Literality and Absence of Self in the Work of Carl Andre', *Oxford Art Journal* vol. 27, no. 1 (2004), pp. 61-78, p. 69.

²⁵ Dominic Rahtz, 'Literality and Absence of Self in the Work of Carl Andre', p. 61.

Rahtz, literalism is utterly incompatible with biography. It simply 'cannot be seen in terms of a sensibility or a self', he writes.²⁶

However, in recent years such a wholesale dismissal of the relevancy of artists' biography has also been fundamentally questioned, in particular from feminist quarters. For instance, in an article entitled 'Minimalism and Biography', Anna Chave accuses critics such as Krauss of lauding male Minimal artists for their capacity to produce works that efface any consoling trace of the biographical subject, whilst also allowing these claims to adorn the status of a named persona.²⁷ For her, this is fundamentally duplicitous, for it effectively 'protects' male artists from a valid or serious discussion of the ways in which their personal biographies have informed their art.²⁸ Moreover, to be able to transcend one's biography is a masculinist prerogative, she argues, and a privilege rarely accorded to the women artists who worked alongside their male counterparts.²⁹ Furthermore, by emphasising the extent to which artists such as Andre have consistently ventured autobiographical asides, Chave also points out that 'Minimalism' and 'biography' are, at least from the artists' perspectives, never quite the incommensurable terms that they have often been made to become – at least, that is, within accounts of the kind offered by Krauss and Rahtz.³⁰

Chave's protestations against dismissing the relevancy of the circumstances of an artist's life are best taken by us as a welcome opportunity to think more seriously about the reasons for Andre's various allusions to his personal upbringing.³¹ We do need to come to a greater understanding as to why

²⁶ Dominic Rahtz, 'Literality and Absence of Self in the Work of Carl Andre', p. 61.

²⁷ Anna C. Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', *Art Bulletin*, (March 2000), vol. 82, no. 1 (March 2000), pp. 149-163.

²⁸ Anna C. Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', p. 158.

²⁹ Anna C. Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', pp. 158-59.

³⁰ Anna C. Chave, 'Minimalism and Biography', p. 149.

³¹ That is not to say, however, that I find the kind of biographical essentialism Chave espouses especially compelling. Often she gives the impression that there are 'lives' that do exist behind artworks and that can be recovered without remainder. However, this ignores Roland Barthes' fundamental point that the act of reading itself produces an author-figure and that the author or artist is incapable of being approached other than through the textual sources they leave behind. See Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image Music Text*, ed. by and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 145. Consequently, as J. R. R. Christie and Fred Orton have added, the identity of an artist remains inseparable from the various discourse in which they are

Andre himself legitimated the use of his biography, and how, in the late 1970s, the recourse to the biographical was considerably misinterpreted.

In fact, Andre might be said to have turned to biography as a means of explaining his practice in two ways. Firstly, he made his early upbringing a valid point of reference by adhering vehemently to the conviction that all sculpture is an attempt to recapture the vividness of one's earliest impressions – a claim he has often attributed to Henry Moore.³² The earliest 'sculptural' impressions Moore chose to emphasise were very specific: they were of a shaped rock at Alwoodley Crag, just north of Leeds, and the slag heaps of the Yorkshire mining villages, 'which for me as a boy, as a young child, were like mountains.'³³

For Andre, who was brought up just south of Boston in Quincy, his chosen memories also reflect with telegraphic succinctness the social and geographical make-up of the place of his birth. For him, these were the vast granite quarries up in the hills behind the city and the 'rusting acres of steel plates' that lay beside the shipyards 'under the rain and sun'.³⁴ In his extensive interview with Paul Cummings from 1972, he explains that,

there were just acres and acres of these steel plates [...], they were just stored there until they were used, until they were bent or formed into whatever shape for the hull and deck plates. You can still see it now if you go by there, full of these enormous heavy red sheets or blue sheets or the color of the steel depending on how long it's been out in the rain or what formula the steel is.³⁵

scripted, be it art historical, journalistic, legalistic, historical or even 'biographical'. See 'Writing a Text on the Life', p. 307. Contrary to what Chave implies in 'Minimalism and Biography', Barthes writings need not be taken to imply that so-called 'post-structuralism' is single-handedly responsible for the wholesale dismissal of the validity of biography. For Andre's own views on these matters, see Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, 'Eight Statements (on Matisse)', *Art in America*, vol. 63, no. 4 (July-August 1975), pp. 65-75, pp. 70-71.

³² See, for instance, David Sylvester, *Interviews with American Artists* (London: Pimlico, 2002), p. 282, 'An Interview with Carl Andre' in Peter Fuller, *Beyond The Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1980), pp. 133-134, and 'An Interview with Tim Marlow', *Tate Magazine* (Summer 1996), pp. 36-41, p. 36.

³³ Henry Moore in *Five British Sculptors: Work and Talk*, ed. by Warren Forma (New York: Grossman, 1964); reprinted in *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, ed. by Philip James (New York: da Capo, 1992), p. 53.

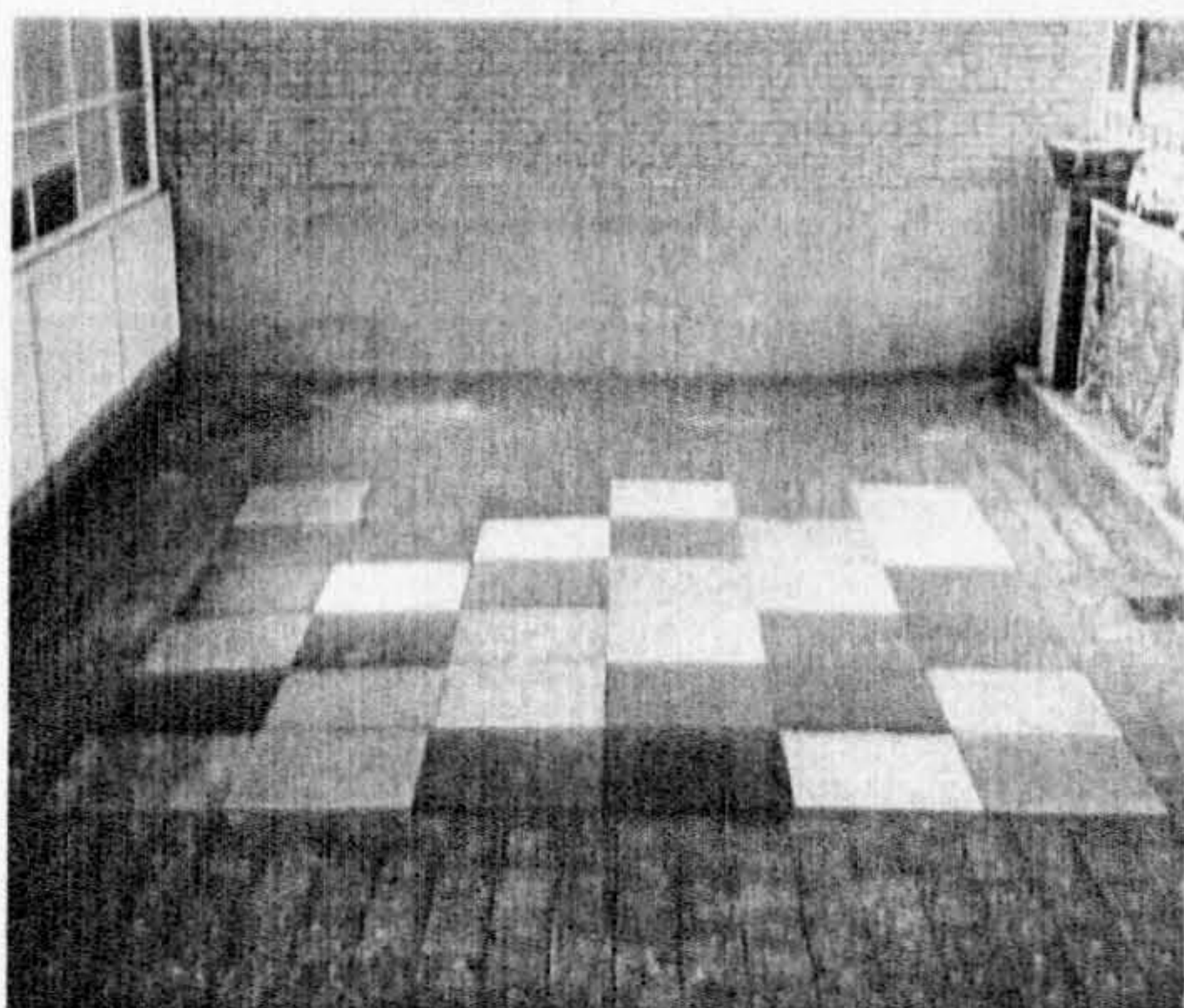
³⁴ Carl Andre, Taped Interview, 1970, in *Cuts: Texts, 1959-2004*, p. 217.

³⁵ Carl Andre, Interview with Paul Cummings, in *Cuts*, p. 81.



The Quincy Yard, ca. 1953

After Pearl Harbor, the workforce employed in the shipyards of the Bethlehem Steel Company at Quincy expanded to 32,000, and for long after the War's end, the yards occupied around 155 acres of city land.³⁶ Shipbuilding has dominated the city for much of the twentieth century, and no doubt, it dominated Andre's childhood as well. But what matters more is the extent to which Andre's childhood memories serve to orient the ways his mature sculptures are understood. 'As a very young child my first recollections are of materials which I use today, steel plates and, on occasion, stone', Andre explained in 1970. 'Those recollections did have a great deal of influence on my own style.'³⁷ Indeed, causes and influences are always best identified retrospectively, and over the years Andre has been very successful in fashioning and selecting a biographical context that fits his mature sculptural practice like a glove.

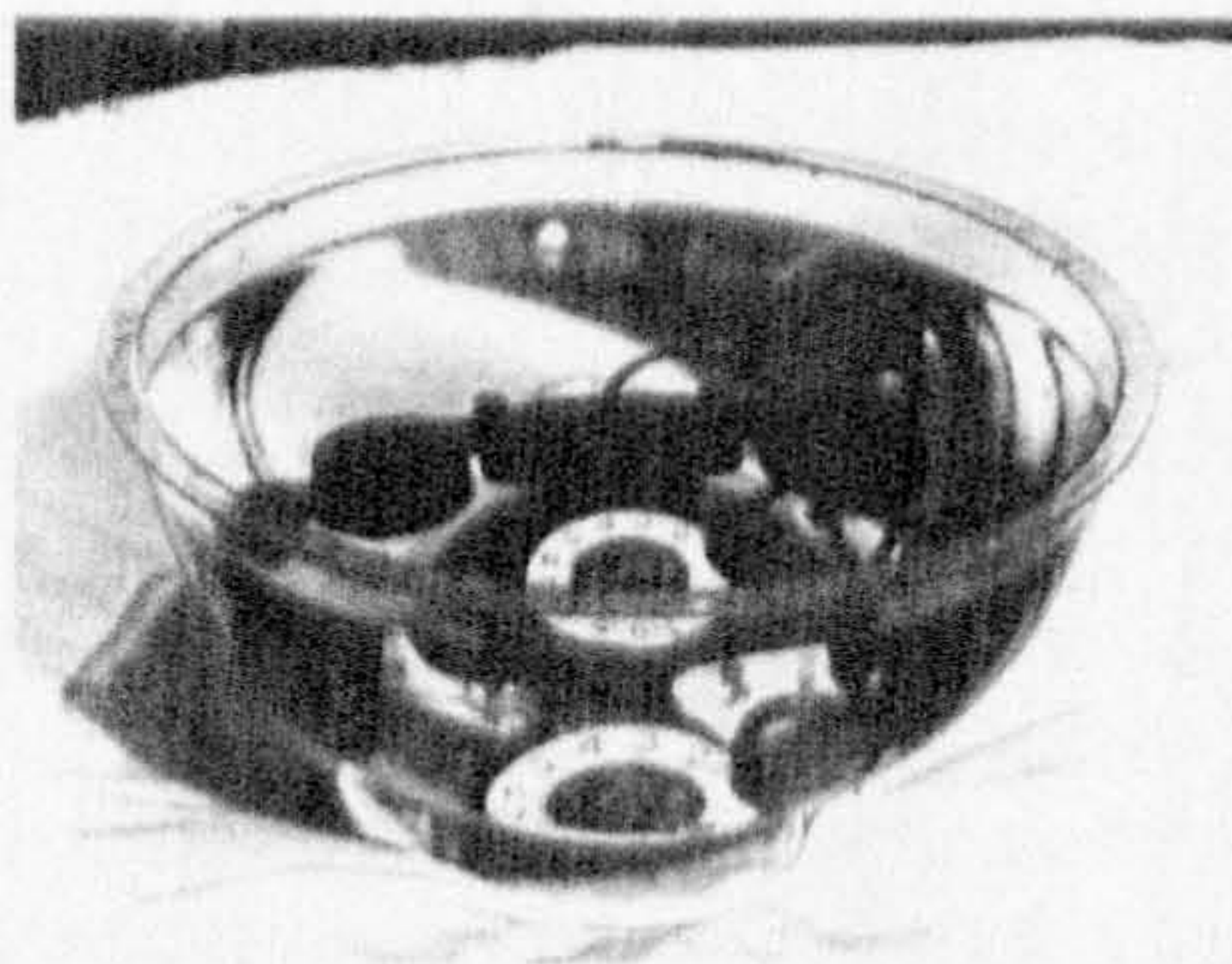


Weathering piece, 1970

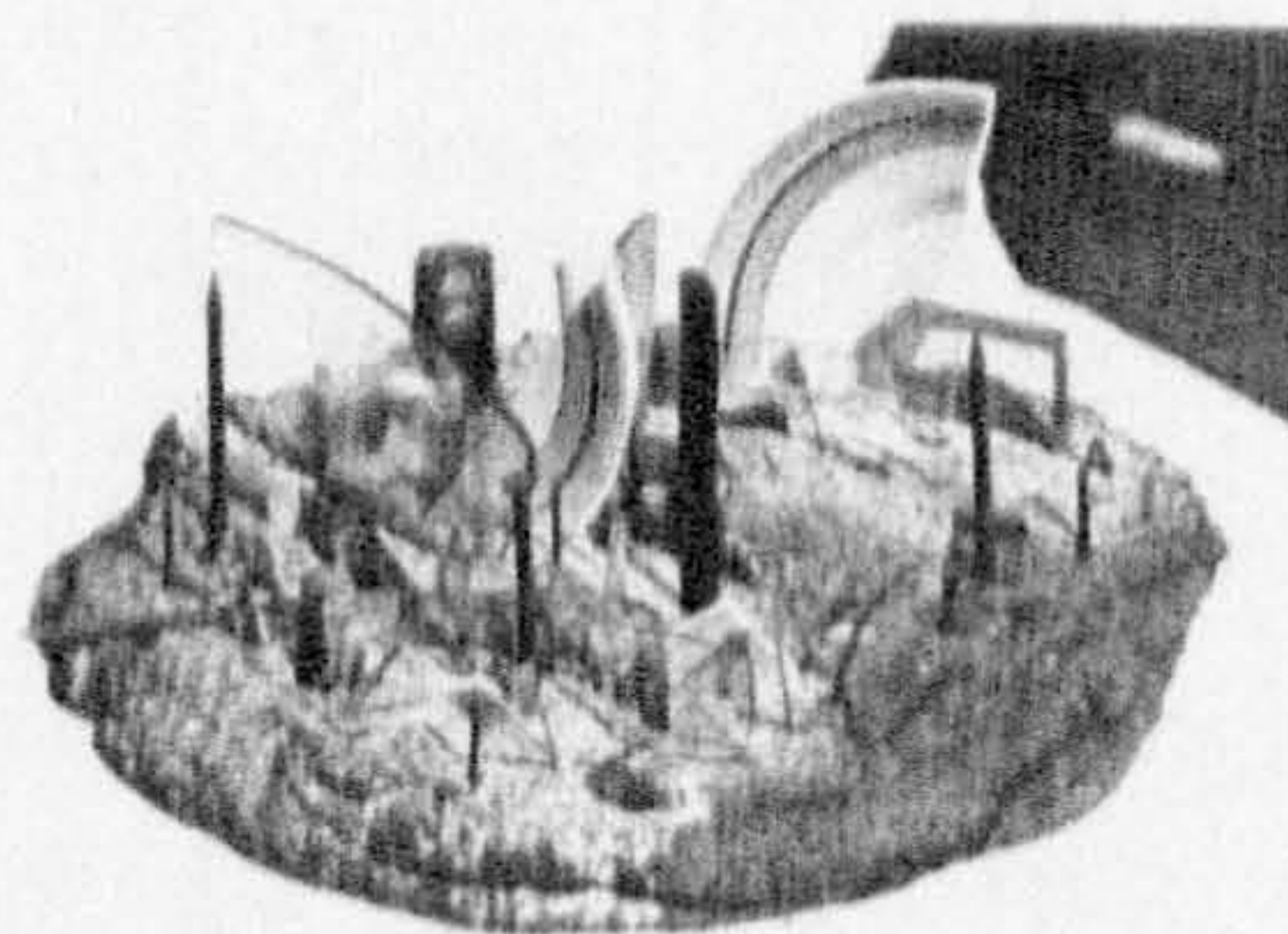
³⁶ See William Churchill Edwards, *Historic Quincy Massachusetts* (City of Quincy, 1957), pp. 220-244.

³⁷ Paul Cummings, 'Taped Interview with Carl Andre' [1970], Smithsonian version, p. 8.

As Donald Kuspit once pointed out with regards Andre's sculpture, validating one's childhood impressions to this extent has always been a staple self-justification for modernist artists. It is, after all, a kind of latter-day primitivism, premised as it is on a notion of inexperience and childlike wonder in the face of the world's freshness.³⁸ For Andre to draw attention to his childhood is perhaps in his mind a means of emphasising and accentuating that his work has no real intellectual 'contents'. However, as a claim in its own right, we also need to be aware that it not only has the potential to distance Andre's oeuvre entirely from a history of modern, abstract art, but it also accords an inevitability and a homogeneity to Andre's artistic development that can be considerably simplifying. It seems intended to imply that he was born into this world with his mature signature style always already in place. It evades altogether the fact that between 1959 and 1964, he experimented widely with a diverse variety of artistic forms.³⁹ In one interview in the late 1960s, for instance, he revealed that he once entertained the possibility of constructing enlarged versions of simple archaic forms 'like gallows and chariots' in a fashion similar to some of Robert Morris' works, but it was Frank Stella who dissuaded him.⁴⁰ Indeed, details such as these undermine any assumption that the passage from the vividness of Andre's childhood impressions to his mature style was as unidirectional as he might often want to imply.



A Marat, 1959



Untitled (pizza), 1961-1962

³⁸ Donald Kuspit, 'Carl Andre', *Artforum*, vol. 22, no. 6 (February 1984), p. 79.

³⁹ Mel Ramsden in 1975 felt that the distinct impression Andre likes to give 'that he was born laying little zinc squares "naturally" – so to speak – on art-gallery floors' was the result of 'an awful neglect of materialism'. See Mel Ramsden, 'Perimeters of Protest', *The Fox*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1975), pp. 133-135.

⁴⁰ Carl Andre, Interview with Patricia Norvell, 5 June 1969. Reprinted in *Cuts: Texts: 1959-2004*, p. 153.

The second reason why Andre justified referencing the details of his biography is perhaps equally simple. It rests on the fact that he never seems to have wanted to entertain the notion that artworks come into the world of their own accord. Contradicting what he sees as Peter Fuller's formalism, he protests that it is not artworks that make artworks, but individuals with particular experiences and life histories.⁴¹ For him, no doubt, this is the first fundamental tenet of a historical materialist account of art production. In his words, a work of art is 'a product of its society', and is so 'because its author, the artist, is a product of his or her society.'⁴²

However, by the late 1970s, Andre's insistence that all art be understood as historically specific to the conditions of its moment of production was an emphasis easily misinterpreted. It was greeted by certain critics as a green light to launch into biographically deterministic accounts: 'Andre, like any artist, has been influenced to some extent by everything that has entered into his experience', announced David Bourdon, essentially paraphrasing Andre's himself. But he then goes on to imply that the fact that Andre was brought up in Quincy meant that it was inevitable that certain geographical characteristics of the place will be manifestly present in his art.⁴³

The same might be said of Nicholas Serota's catalogue essay for Andre's Whitechapel Art Gallery exhibition in London, and for Phyllis Tuchman's *Artforum* article, both of which were published in Spring 1978.⁴⁴ Perhaps it is pure coincidence, but it is nonetheless striking that both Tuchman and Serota choose to begin their essays with a reference to what the artist called his 'Three Vector Diagram'. For Andre this was a means of explaining how the work of any artist can only come into being if there is a convergence of three factors. These were: the objective qualities and constraints of the deployed material, the

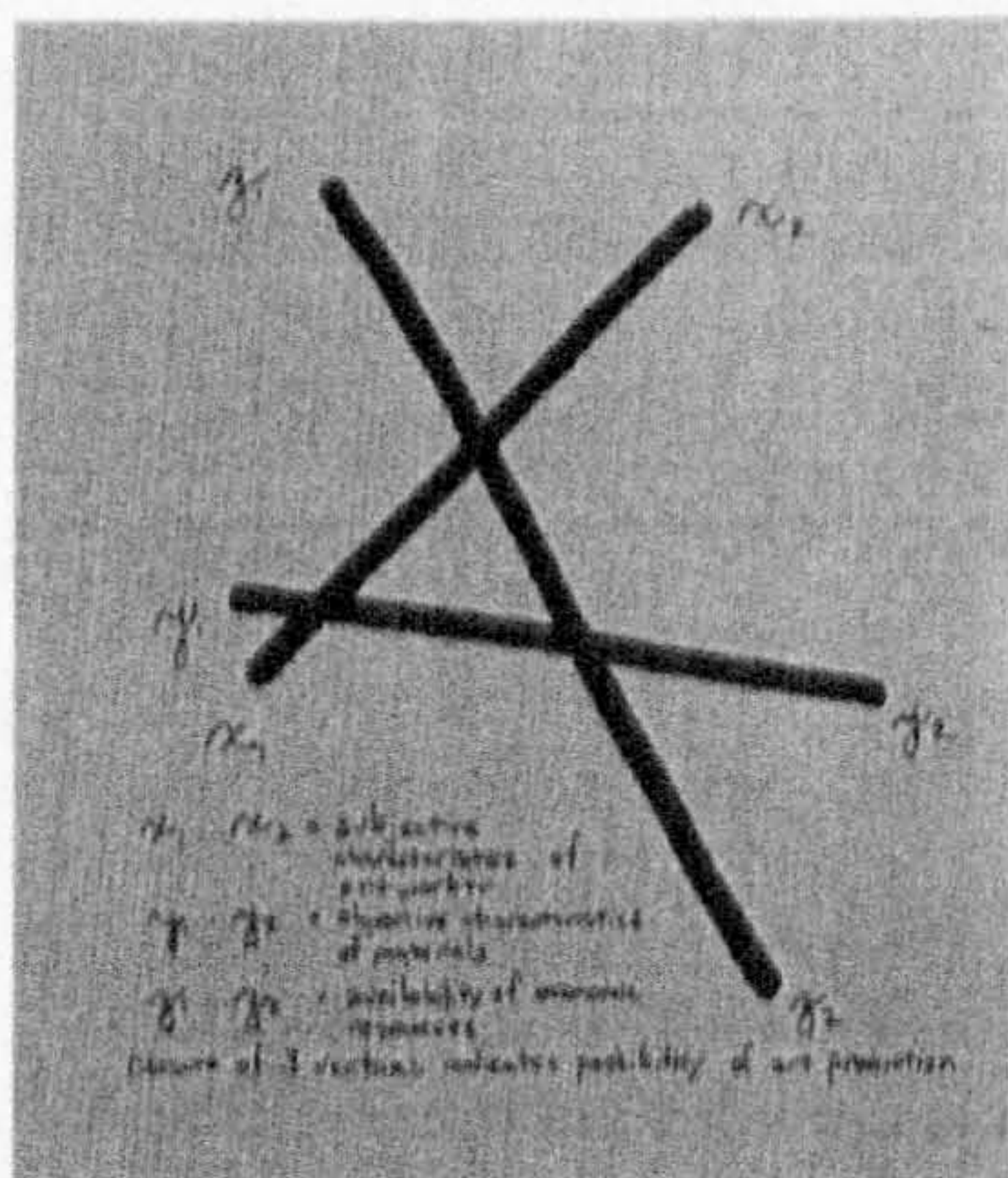
⁴¹ See Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 112.

⁴² Chantal Pontbriand, 'Carl André: 14 written answers to questions', *Parachute 17* (Winter 1979), pp. 67-68, p.68.

⁴³ David Bourdon, 'A Redefinition of Sculpture', p. 17.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Serota, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-1978*, Exhibition Catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1978 and Phyllis Tuchman, 'Background of a Minimalist: Carl Andre', *Artforum*, vol. 16, no. 4 (March 1978), pp. 29-33.

economic resources available for producing the work, and thirdly, the subjective factors, the factors that comprise the empirical details of the artist's life: 'one's personal history, one's talents, one's skills, the accidents of one's life – genetic and environmental influences – the whole thing that composes the individual human being'.⁴⁵ For Andre, it should be emphasised, all three of the elements in this tripartite schema were equally weighted and mutually informing. And again, it should be stressed that the diagram had always been a means of providing a schematic rationale for outlining his understanding of 'the relationship between the artist's position in society and the work of art'.⁴⁶ But whilst Serota takes these categories as the structuring categories for his essay, attending to each vector in turn, he seems to end up all the same placing most of his emphasis on Andre's 'Experience and Temperament'.⁴⁷



Three Vector Diagram

Phyllis Tuchman, however, does not make any such gestures towards the graph's informing logic. Instead, she conveniently brushes aside the relevancy of the diagram's objective and economic vectors altogether, and focuses exclusively on the subjective, biographical vector.⁴⁸ In fact, Tuchman's article might be said to pursue the logic of biographical causality to such an extent that the reader is left with the impression that everything Andre has ever accomplished in his life deserves to be accredited solely to his childhood upbringing.⁴⁹ Throughout her

⁴⁵ Carl Andre, in Jeanne Siegel, 'Carl Andre: Artworker', p. 177.

⁴⁶ Jeanne Siegel, 'Carl Andre: Artworker', p. 177.

⁴⁷ Nicholas Serota, 'Carl Andre', unpaginated.

⁴⁸ Phyllis Tuchman, 'Background of a Minimalist: Carl Andre', p. 30.

⁴⁹ Indeed, Griselda Pollock's claim that traditional biographical discourse in art history serves to remove art from historical analysis by representing it solely as the 'expression of the creative

article, Tuchman establishes a whole series of tenuous visual analogies between various aspects of Quincy and Andre's current practice. She starts by listing out the city's distinguishing features, from its granite quarries to Alexander Parris' First Unitarian Church, with all the enthusiasm of a tour-guide. H. H. Richardson's Crane Memorial Library, for instance, is described as 'a bold, forthright celebration of materials and geometric shapes,' with 'a façade that interacts wonderfully with changing light and weather conditions' – to which she appends: 'as Andre's sculpture does'. Indeed, you only have to read another sentence or two before her real ideals manifest themselves fully: 'While the library' she writes 'is representative of a particular building style, its quality has permitted it to transcend time and remain authentically original, something which Andre's art aspires to accomplish.'⁵⁰ Nowhere is there any evidence in her article that 'authenticity' and 'originality' are concepts that Andre's art might be said to fundamentally disturb.

In turn – and like Tuchman – Nicholas Serota places considerable emphasis on Andre's next of kin: 'Andre remains', he writes, 'close to his family and holds them in affection' – a fact that is made to matter because it serves to emphasise that the relation between his upbringing and his art is direct and immediate.⁵¹ Serota also tells us that Andre's father, who worked as a marine draughtsman at the Bethlehem Steel Ship Building Company, is an eminently 'practical man', and is said to have an extensive workshop in the basement of the house 'which he built himself.'⁵²

Tuchman also stresses that it is thanks to the artist's family that Andre has 'always been versed in how structures get built'. She too lists out the professions of his family members, adding that 'his grandfather, a contractor, owned a small construction company which put up filling stations, houses, and such' and that his 'grandmother's two brothers were blacksmiths.'⁵³ Likewise,

personality of the artist', is a criticism that might be validly applied here. See her 'Artists Mythologies and Media Genius, Madness and Art History', *Screen*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1980), pp. 57-96, pp. 58-59.

⁵⁰ Phyllis Tuchman, 'Background of a Minimalist: Carl Andre', p. 30.

⁵¹ Nicholas Serota, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-78*, unpaginated.

⁵² Nicholas Serota, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-78*, unpaginated.

⁵³ Phyllis Tuchman, 'Background of a Minimalist: Carl Andre', p. 31.

David Bourdon also feels obliged to state that the men in the family tended 'to be in the building and metalworking trades.'⁵⁴ Carl Andre 'is a descendant of a family of craftsmen' pronounces Paul Cummings in his turn, an assertion that seems intent on implying that Andre's art is in some way a testament to a long family tradition.⁵⁵



Stone Field Sculpture, Hartford, 1977 (detail)

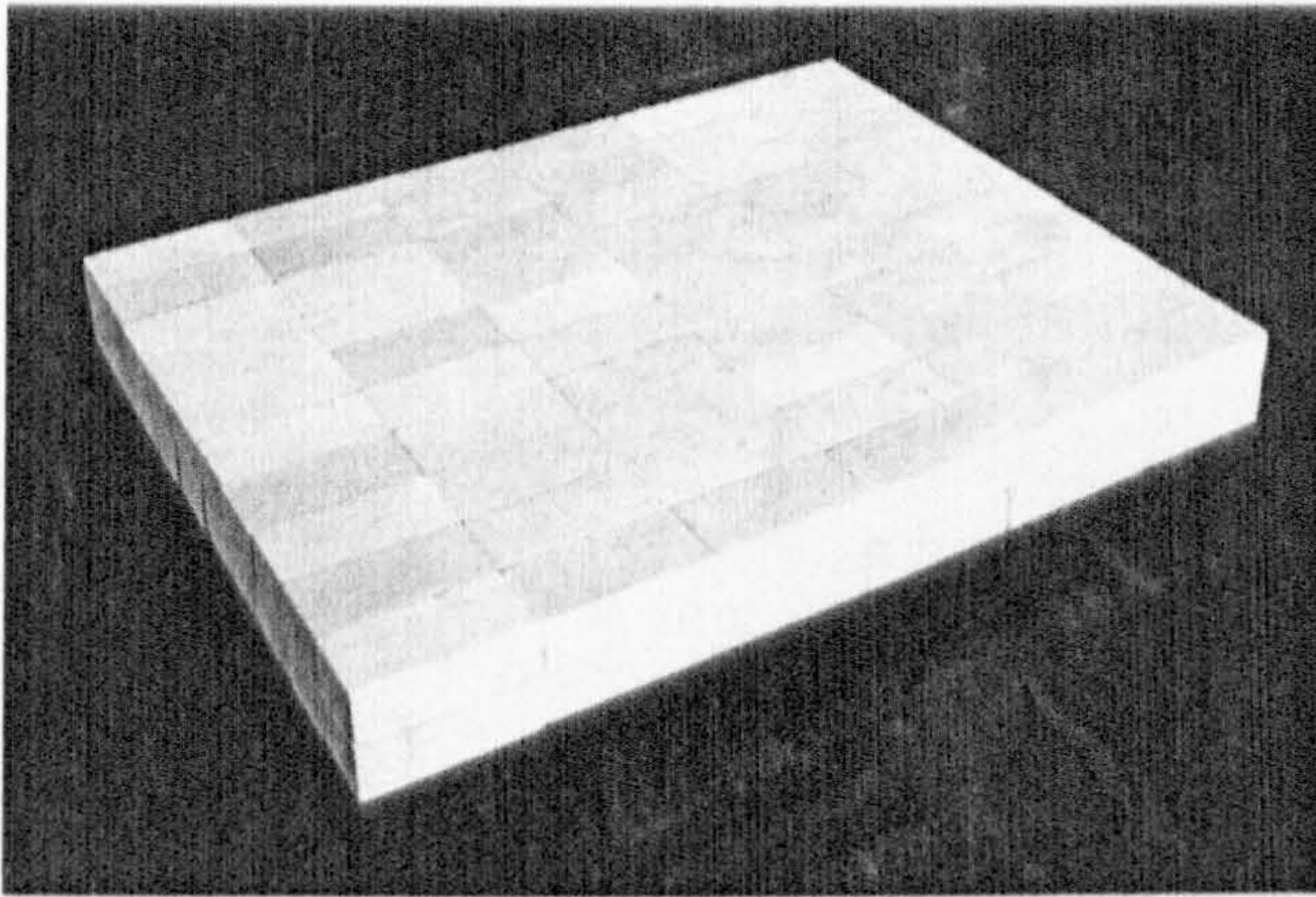
It is hardly necessary to spell out that these biographical accounts aim to impose a notion of artisanal 'craft' on Andre's sculptural practice. Yet whether his mature sculptures can be dressed up with an ideal of artisanal craft in this fashion is thoroughly questionable. In fact, even on his own terms, Andre seemed extremely aware that his work was a fundamental evasion of all forms of individual, manual skill. He tells Peter Fuller in 1978, for example, of a man who came up to him whilst he had been constructing *Stone Field Sculpture* in Hartford just the year previously, and who had protested that the thirty-six glacial boulders that Andre and his rigging team were busy positioning into a simple formation on a grubby strip of grass in the city centre was certainly not art because the arrangement displayed 'no craft'.⁵⁶ When he inquired, Andre learned that the man who had approached him was a propeller-maker. In conversation with Fuller, Andre suggests that possibly this resident of Hartford had simply displaced his frustration at technological advancement onto Andre's refusal to

⁵⁴ David Bourdon, 'A Redefinition of Sculpture', p. 18.

⁵⁵ Paul Cummings, 'Carl Andre', *Artists in Their Own Words* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1979), p. 173.

⁵⁶ 'An Interview with Carl Andre', in Peter Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art*, pp. 121-122.

compensate in his art for the general deskilling of labour in society at large. After all, in an age in which only a few luxury commodities are handmade, art is often envisaged as one of the few remaining practices where personal touch and the uniqueness of a commodity are presumed still to be highly valued. Andre, on the other hand, was well aware that his work simply ‘reflects the conditions of industrial production’ and that when he pulled his machine-made units from off the pallet and put them on the floor he was not practising any kind of craft at all.⁵⁷

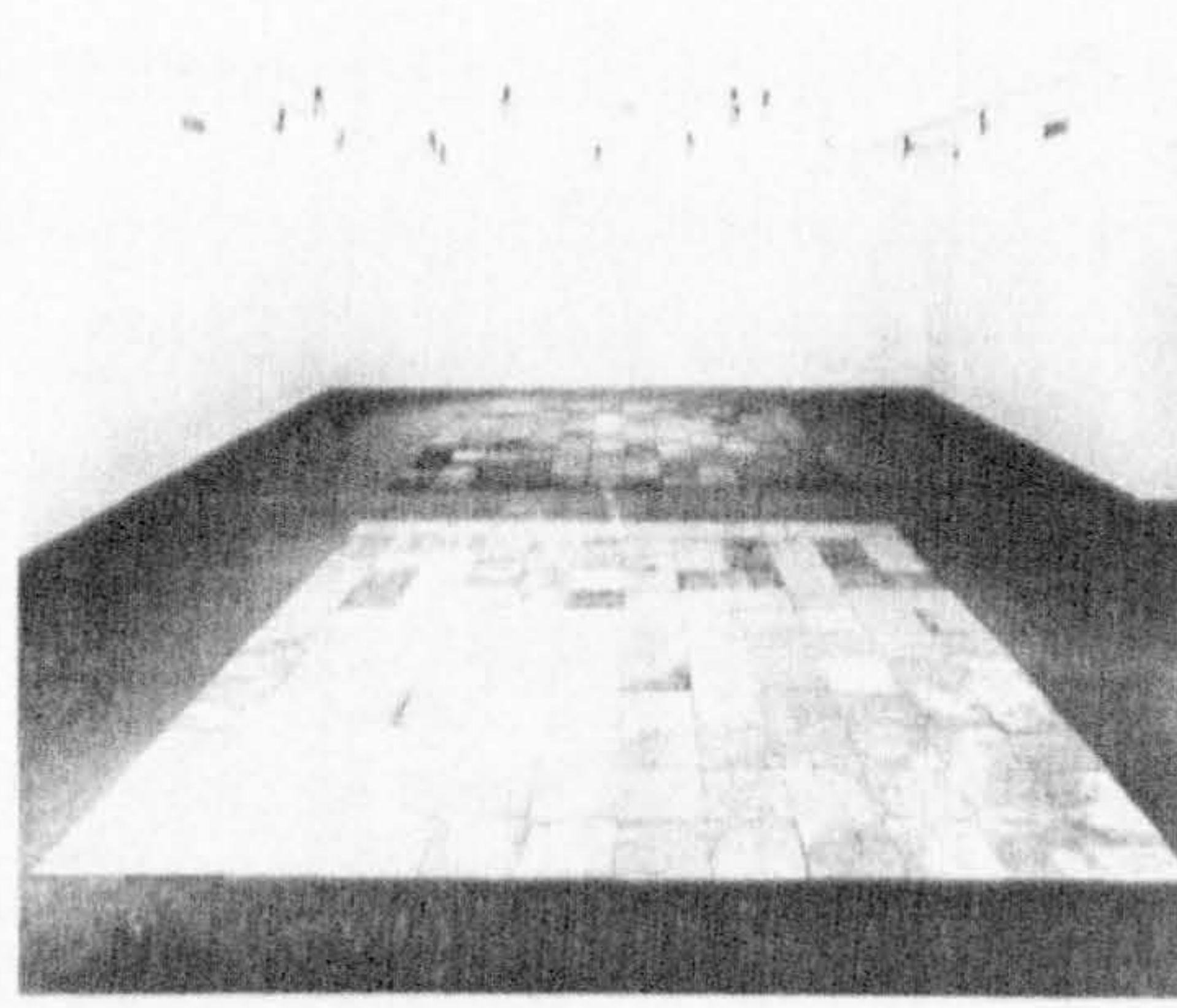


Equivalent VII, 1966

Therefore, his art could only be regarded as a continuation of the ‘craftsmanship’ that his family members practised in the most complicated of ways. And while Tuchman claims that, thanks to what is known of the professions of Andre’s family, Andre’s *Equivalent* Series and his *Lever* of 1966 are certainly not a betrayal of his family heritage, one might want, on the other hand, to assume quite the opposite.⁵⁸ In fact, *were* one to continue to speak of Andre’s sculptural practice in terms of his investment in his patrimony, then we may have to entertain the thought that whereas his practice might aim to be faithful to his heritage, then the act of discussing that patrimony as successfully transmitted by his art may actually be a betrayal of some very important aspects of the work itself.

⁵⁷ ‘An Interview with Carl Andre’, in Peter Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art*, pp. 122.

⁵⁸ Phyllis Tuchman, ‘Background of a Minimalist: Carl Andre’, p. 31.



Carl Andre installing *144 Lead Square* (behind *144 Magnesium Square*, 1969 in right hand photo) for his solo exhibition at Virginia Dwan Gallery, 1969

Indeed, the sole aspect of Andre's practice that could be regarded as in any way related to an ideal of craft is the fact that he has always insisted on constructing and handling the materials from which his sculptures are composed in person. This should never be overlooked, for, in many respects, it is the defining feature of his practice. The very fact that his works are consistently made from separate, identical units means that the sculptures can be assembled manually in the gallery; indeed, this element is always retained by him as an underlying principle. More importantly, his units are almost always small enough to be lifted and installed with ease: 'I am drawn just to what I can handle myself', he once said.⁵⁹

There would be no point for me to do sculptures if I could not come to the gallery and put the plates down. It seems such a simple, perhaps even foolish pleasure, but it is why I do my work. If I were to go blind, I could still put the plates down. But if I were kept away from the material – that would be painful.⁶⁰

In fact, once the sculptures are composed, they are perhaps best seen as only the memory of the feel and handling of materials that went into their arrangement. Yes, Andre's sculptures are maybe best understood in these terms: as a monument to the ideal of craftsmanship; a memorial to the thought of constructing things by hand. Never, though, can they be seen as the embodiment of any especially living tradition.

⁵⁹ Carl Andre, in Ana-Maria Torres, 'Interview with Carl Andre', *New York Arts Magazine*, vol. 5, no. 11 (November 2000), pp. 1-4. Reprinted in *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 246.

⁶⁰ Carl Andre, in Elizabeth Lebovici and Thierry Chabanne, 'Un entretien avec Carl Andre', Paris, July-November 1976. Reprinted in Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 198.

Chapter 3

Lost Property: Between Sculpture and Photography

LOST-PROPERTY OFFICE

Articles lost. – *What makes the very first glimpse of a village, a town, in the landscape so incomparable and irretrievable is the rigorous connection between foreground and distance. Habit has not yet done its work. As soon as we begin to find our bearings, the landscape vanishes at a stroke like the façade of a house as we enter it. It has not yet gained preponderance through a constant exploration that has become habit. Once we begin to find our way about, that earliest picture can never be restored.*

Articles found. – *The blue distance that never gives way to foreground or dissolves at our approach, which is not revealed spread-eagle and long-winded when reached but only looms more compact and threatening, is the painted distance of a backdrop. It is what gives stage sets their incomparable atmosphere.*

Walter Benjamin, 'One-Way Street', 1925-26¹

Nowhere in Carl Andre's oeuvre does the nature of memorialisation seem more pressing a preoccupation than in his *Quincy Book*. This is a slim collection of photographs he published in 1973, on the occasion of two exhibitions in his home state of Massachusetts.² It might seem surprising to lay so much stress on this volume of photos, since Andre's relation to the medium of photography is often understood to be fraught and ambivalent. 'I hate photography; I hate photographs; I hate to take photographs; I hate to be photographed; I hate my works to be photographed' – is how he summarised his relation to celluloid in 1972.³ Nonetheless, it is arguable that Andre has not produced anything before or

¹ Walter Benjamin, 'One-Way Street', *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London and New York: Verso, 1979), p. 78.

² Carl Andre (with Gordon Bensley), *Quincy Book*, Addison Gallery of American Art, 1973. The two exhibitions were 'Carl Andre 'Six Alloy Plains', (March 16 - April 8, 1973), at the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy, Andover, and Carl Andre 'Seven Books': *Passport, Shape and Structure, A Theory of Poetry, One Hundred Sonnets, America Drill, Three Operas, Lyrics and Odes*' (March 16 - April 14, 1973), at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. *Quincy Book* is not an exhibition catalogue in any conventional sense. It is perhaps best described as a freestanding artist publication – cheap and ephemeral, of the kind that many artists had been producing since the 1960s. A useful survey of such books is offered in *Art-Rite 14* (Winter 1976-1977), pp. 15-30. There is an entry on *Quincy Book* on p. 28.

³ Carl Andre, in Paul Cummings, 'Taped Interview', Smithsonian version, pp. 34-35. Also cited in Andre, *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 180.

since that is more urgent in its commitment to show and convey the significance of Quincy for him in relation to his sculptural practice, and it seems highly significant that the medium in which he chose to accomplish this was the photograph. Moreover, since Andre has always emphasised his indebtedness to his home city, *Quincy Book* might appear all the more remarkable, if only because it is hard to look at this volume and not be struck immediately by the profound sense of loss that seems to permeate these pages. *Quincy Book* has, one might say, a certain ‘incomparable atmosphere’.



Quincy Book, images 4 and 5

In fact, on the basis of Andre’s pictures, Quincy hardly resembles a city in any conventional sense at all. It is more a book of views of the spaces on its periphery: the park and the cemetery and the beach, interspersed with depictions of places whose character has been inexorably changed by industrial activity. The photographs were all taken in winter, and everything depicted – whether far away or close up – is shrugging off a thin layer of thawing winter snow. Certainly, the wintriness of the conditions does little to detract from a general impression of the bleakness of the depicted scenes.



Quincy Book, images 18 and 19

An absence of any individuals serves also to emphasise the extent to which almost all of these landscapes bear the markings of human activity and presence: from piles of sawed logs by the roadside, to graffiti on the blasted rocks in the quarries, from paths and prints in the snow, to shards of discarded scrap metal poking out from the snowy ground in the woods.

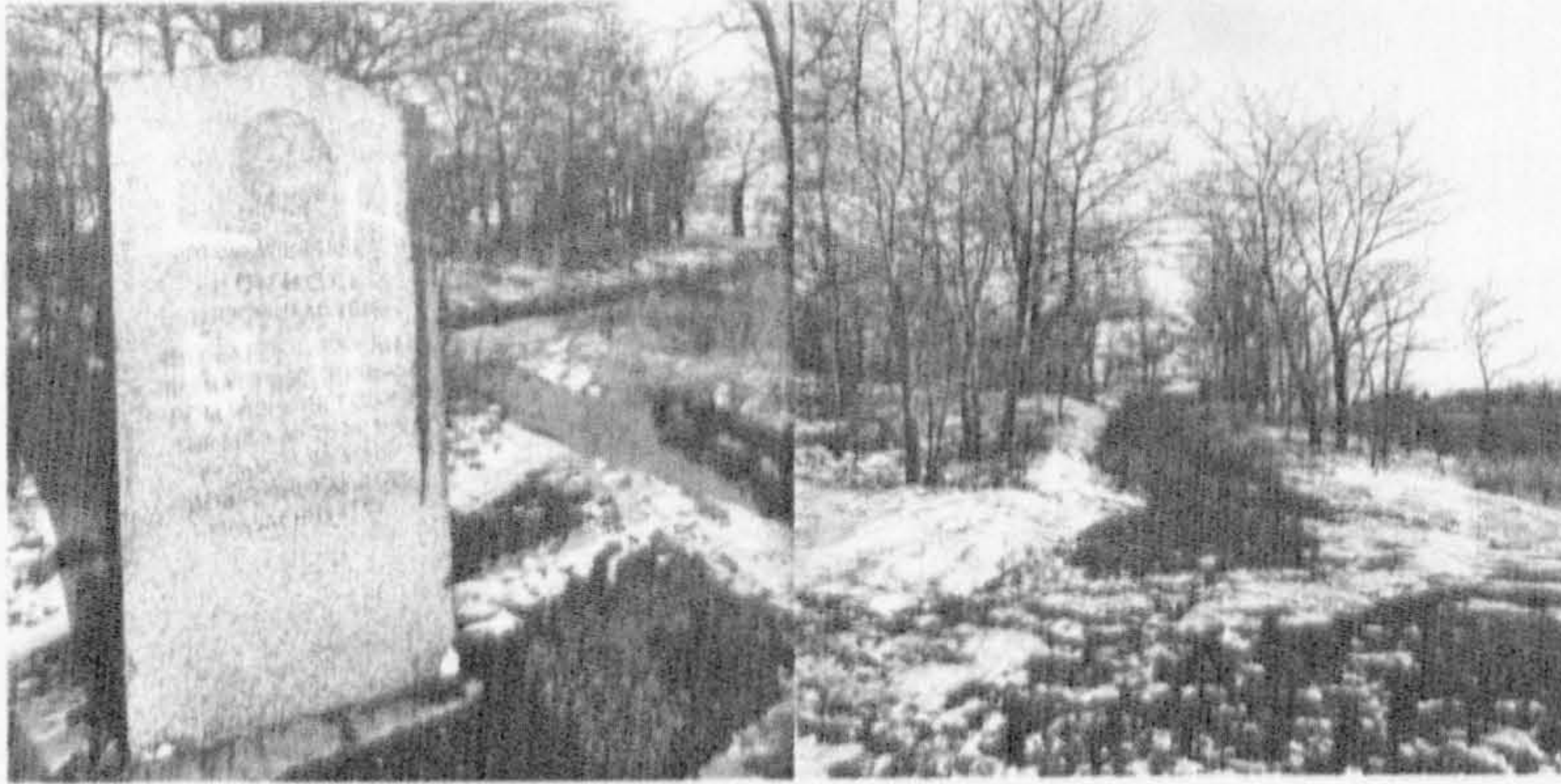


Quincy Book, images 2 and 3

In many photos, these details – often quite small – assume a considerable importance; because we approach this book in the knowledge of Carl Andre's other artistic activities (it was, after all, first produced as a publication for an exhibition of six of his metal floor sculptures at the Addison Gallery of American Art)⁴ we are invariably predisposed to view the objects and indexical traces as pertaining in some very significant way to what we know of Andre's sculptural preoccupations. We should remember too that at certain exhibitions over the years these pictures have been framed as individual prints in conjunction with his

⁴ The works displayed were: *Aluminium-Copper Plain*, *Copper-Steel Plain*, *Steel-Magnesium Plain*, *Magnesium-Lead Plain*, *Lead-Zinc Plain*, and *Zinc-Aluminium Plain*, all from 1969.

sculptures.⁵ These are images, then, that might be considered to provide a particular biographical backdrop for his sculptural practice – a way of staging the fact that his sculptures stand in an explicit relation to a definitive place, and are intimately linked to the artist's life experience.



Quincy Book, images 44 and 45

Yet all the same, what of the fact that the pictures themselves render Quincy such a desolate and abandoned place? Donald Kuspit once described these pictures as having a certain 'graveyard look', which strikes me as a good way of putting it.⁶ It is as if the very aspiration on Andre's part to demonstrate and convey the sources of his sculptural sensibility results in the congealing of his origins in this place into a series of petrified and fragmented panoramas. It is a curious tension; on the one hand a trenchant investment in Quincy but, on the other hand, since the investment seems to be equally in memorialisation, Quincy itself emerges saturated in a sense of loss. This, essentially, is the tension I pursue in this chapter.

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⁵ For instance, at an exhibition at the Clocktower at the Institute of Art and Urban Resources in New York City in the winter of 1983, Andre installed a large work from blocks of Quincy granite, whilst framed photographs from the *Quincy Book* hung on the walls in close proximity. The exhibition, entitled 'A Memorial to After Ages', ran from 17 November - 18 December. The sculpture's specifications are not given in the 1987 catalogue of works, but the exhibition is described by John Russell in *The New York Times*, 2 December 1983, p. C18, and Donald Kuspit in *Artforum*, vol. 22, no. 6 (February 1984), p. 79. Over the years, images from the *Quincy Book* have also been on display in conjunction with a number of his exhibitions in public galleries.

⁶ Donald Kuspit, 'Carl Andre', *Artforum*, p. 79.

Perhaps our first reference point should not be the *Quincy Book*, however, but a series of black-and-white images that appeared under Andre's name in the previous year. These had been published by Grégoire Müller and Gianfranco Gorgoni, in a volume boldly entitled *The New Avantgarde: Issues for the Art of the Seventies*.⁷ It contains entries on twelve artists, including Joseph Beuys, Dan Flavin, Mario Merz, Robert Morris and Richard Serra.⁸ Each artist is represented conventionally enough, first with a portrait photograph, then with a series of images that show them either installing, producing or performing their work. It is a book of artists 'at work', often making the most unspectacular of activities – such as driving a forklift truck or installing fluorescent tubes – look like they are the most heroic events imaginable.



Gianfranco Gorgoni, Dan Flavin (left) and Robert Morris (right) from *The New Avantgarde*

As Mary Kelly might say, we are presented here with an array of artistic practices that first acquired their avant-garde status by disrupting the traditional signifiers of creative, artistic labour, yet this disruption has been all but cancelled

⁷ Grégoire Müller, *The New Avantgarde: Issues of the Art of the Seventies* (London: Pall Mall, 1972). The images were all taken by Gianfranco Gorgoni, who worked with a considerable number of artists during this period. His most canonical documentary images are perhaps the aerial photographs of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* and his depiction of a gas-masked Richard Serra slinging molten lead across Leo Castelli's warehouse. This latter photo appeared on the front cover of the American edition of this publication (New York, Washington and London: Praeger, 1972). That the photograph is so famous is thanks in part to Rosalind Krauss' rapt description of the image in her essay in *Richard Serra / Sculpture, Exhibition Catalogue*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1986, pp. 15-39, pp. 15-16.

⁸ The full list (which is all male) includes Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Robert Morris, Robert Smithson, Richard Serra, Keith Sonnier, Bruce Nauman, Joseph Beuys, Mario Merz, Walter de Maria and Michael Heizer.

out by the relentless attention that has been lavished on the heroic figure of the artist.⁹

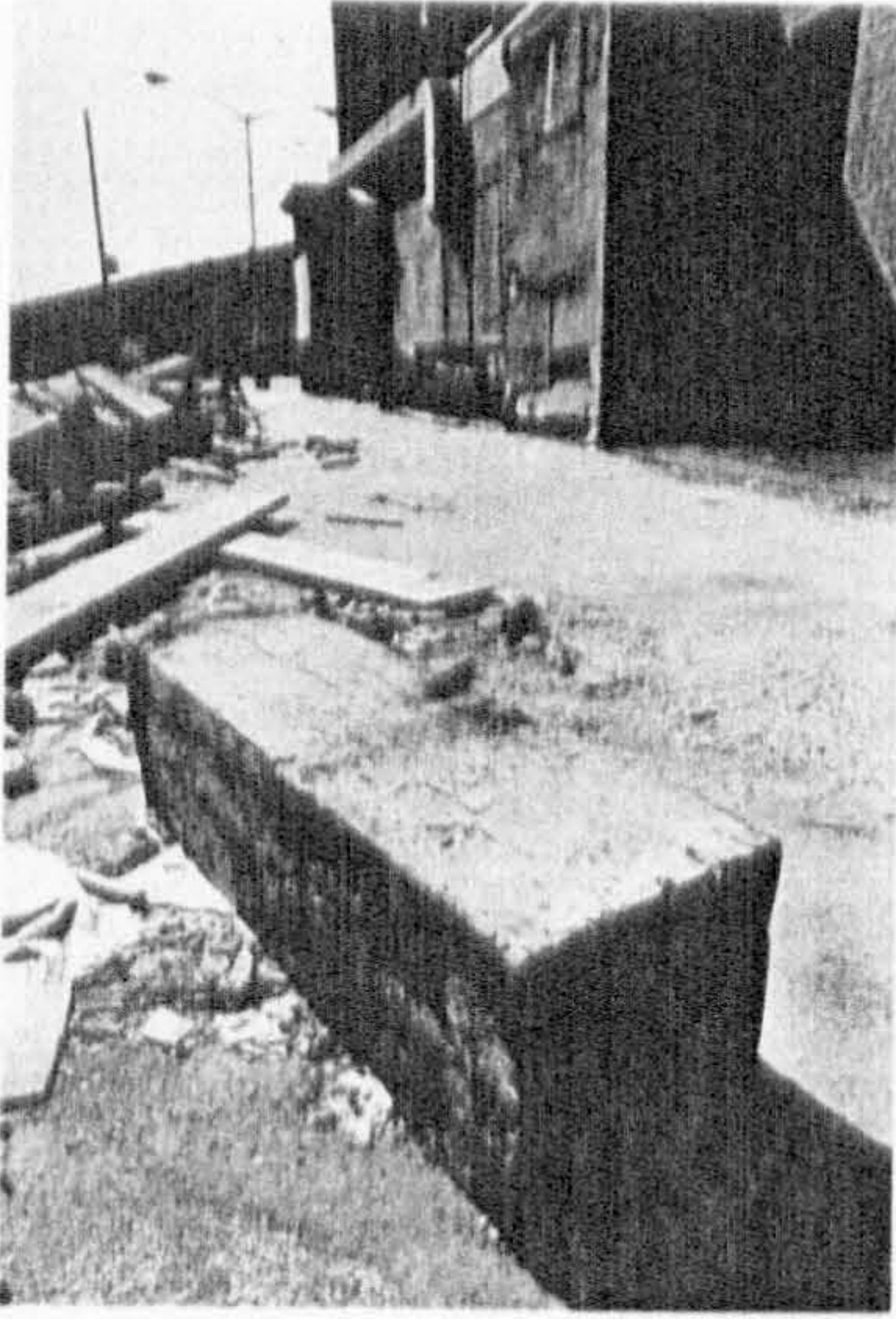
Even here, the pages devoted to Carl Andre seem to stand apart from this logic, for Andre himself has almost entirely succeeded in sidestepping the glamorising gaze of Gorgoni's camera.¹⁰ Instead, he appears to have convinced the photographer to train his camera lens in quite a different direction, for Andre is represented in this volume by five large photographs of seemingly abandoned building materials, lying in one of the more industrial districts of New York.



Gianfranco Gorgoni, from *The New Avantgarde*

⁹ See Mary Kelly, 'Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism', *Screen International*, vol. 22, no. 3, (1981), pp. 41-62. Simplifying considerably, Kelly's point is that the logic of the art market is such that it invariably requires that the authorial status for art objects be preserved, irrespective of the intention of the work in question. So, in the absence of the conventional signs of authorship in minimalist and post-minimalist art, the market simply compensated with an increased documentation of artists installing their work. (See pp. 50-51.) In my mind this remains a pertinent critique of much art at this historical juncture, especially when reflecting on the kind of images that were proliferated in the wake of so-called 'process art' and 'anti-form'.

¹⁰ Almost but not entirely succeeded, for also included in *The New Avantgarde* is Gorgoni's famous close-up portrait of Andre on p. 61. The picture is famous because it is one of the most well-circulated and well-known images of Andre. Ever since about 1968/69, Andre has always been extremely camera-shy and, for a long time, this was one of the few images of him that was widely known to New York artworld circles. A propos this image, Gorgoni later wrote: 'Andre was against having his portrait taken, but after we had known each other for a little while, and I had made many photographs of his pieces, I ran into him on the street one day when I had my camera. 'Don't worry,' I told him. 'We won't take a big picture, just a little one, like an identification picture.' He said OK, but after just two shots he said no, no, no, and held up his hands. He wanted his work to represent him, not a picture of his face. But I had two shots, and one of them was pretty good.' See Gianfranco Gorgoni, *Beyond the Canvas* (New York: Rizzoli 1985), p. 12.



Gianfranco Gorgoni, from *The New Avantgarde*

The pictures show beams and logs, metal plates and cobblestones sitting stacked and piled beside empty stretches of street, materials which do have a certain similarity to the resources he has used on occasion for his sculptural practice.



Lament for the Children, Queens, 1976

The images in *The New Avantgarde* are supplemented by terse, programmatic statements by Müller, such as ‘Simple addition or randomness’ or ‘André has refused to give art a special status of existence.’¹¹ Out of context, they sound like pat truisms. But this last claim – that André does not give art a special status of existence – is certainly provocative as a commentary on these pictures. It is a statement that perhaps wants to imply that there is a noble egalitarianism about pulling art down off its pedestal to the level of the everyday, taking it out of the galleries and back into the streets, as though delivering it

¹¹ A note at the front of *The New Avantgarde*, on p. 32, explains that the captions were chosen from Müller’s short texts on each of the twelve artists, which come prior to Gorgoni’s series of photographs.

again to the places that first inspired it. It seems like an aspiration to make art more down to earth and sociable. But these photographs show all too well that it is much simpler merely to make life look like art than to conjure art into life. If entire new segments of the world can be claimed for art, it implies that every cityscape is already littered with potential minimal sculptures. But the photographs themselves seem to attest to another truth: that the inevitable upshot of making the streets into a stage for sculpture is that, in the process, the world also gets emptied of life. To me, it seems these photos ‘pump the aura out of reality like water from a sinking ship’ as Walter Benjamin said of some somewhat more famous photographs from an earlier era.¹²



Eugene Atget, *la rue de Nevers*, 1924

It is certainly appealing to regard *Quincy Book* as accomplishing something similar to what Andre inaugurated in *The New Avantgarde*, albeit more on his own terms, and for Quincy and not New York. Indeed, some of the photos in *Quincy Book* can *almost* be read as representations of readymade Carl Andre sculptures, lying abandoned around the outskirts of the city and simply waiting to be spotted by the camera’s glass eye. Turn to the back of the book, for instance, and consider the view of the rectangular stone blocks seemingly protruding out of the horizon line and hurtling towards the foreground over what seems to be a dirty strip of snow-strewn ground.

¹² Walter Benjamin, ‘A Small History of Photography’, in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (Verso: London and New York, 1979), p. 250.



Quincy Book, image 43



35 Timber Line, installation at
Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 1968

The sight of this low-lying form might put us in mind immediately of some of Andre's long, attenuated sculptures, such as *35 Timber Line*, or *Joint*.

Nonetheless, there are also good reasons to be doubtful as to whether *Quincy Book* really can be approached as a book of photographs of objects that resemble some of Andre's sculptural works – if only because the volume is also full of images that do not bear the slightest visual correlation to his art in any sense at all. This is also a volume about *Quincy* in a much more general way, and many of the images appear inextricably bound up with Andre's very particular and personal relation to this place. Let this be a proviso. Any account we aim to provide for this book needs to attend to these aspects as well.

However, the very fact that we even have to ask what exactly we are looking at in these *Quincy Book* photographs is perhaps the most significant distinction between Gorgoni's five images and the ones here. For these pictures are entirely lacking in captions or textual explanations – or anything for that matter that indicates how they should be read or viewed. In short, there is a deafening absence of any mediating commentary from start to finish. Apart from a flimsy, semi-transparent typed insert that bears only the most necessary facts about the book's production details, there is nothing to this volume other than its forty-eight photos, printed on twelve sheets of photographic paper, folded, and bound with two staples.

Without textual explanations, *Quincy Book* becomes much less of a transparent document than it otherwise might be. Moreover, the lack of textual

additions in *Quincy Book* does draw attention to Andre's use of the photograph as a medium in itself: a way of self-consciously emphasising that this is a selection of photographs in booklet form *and nothing else*. Each image is printed on a separate page and fills the entire sheet, which means that as you turn the leaves you are made extremely aware that the spine and edges of the book are also the frames of the photographs. The images are also square, which provides the book as a whole with a distinctively symmetrical format. It seems that any description of *Quincy Book* will have to hold onto these attributes and be able to account for these details. In fact, it will have to keep a grasp of the two distinct media – sculpture and photography – and ask how they are made to speak to one another in Andre's hands. For perhaps it could be said that *Quincy Book* implies, or at least intimates, that there is for him a conversation – at some deep, residual level – between his sculptural practice and photography.

However, to claim that there exists for Andre a relationship between these two media does seem to fly in the face of his own frequent assertions that the two media do not 'speak' to one another in any way whatsoever, and that sculpture and photography are diametrically opposed to one another. Take, as a typical display of his disdain towards photography his 1968 interview with Willoughby Sharp, which appeared in the first edition of *Avalanche*.¹³ At one point, Sharp dutifully and academically asks Andre how he sees the relationship between 'the photograph and the work of art.' In response, Andre retorts crisply that he thinks the photo is 'a lie' – the vehemence perhaps a reaction to the fact that Sharp himself was such an inveterate enthusiast for capturing art-world activities in the feedback-loops of 'new media'. Andre continues by saying that all our exposure to art is nowadays utterly and miserably mediated by magazines and slides, and this exposure is pure 'anti-art' because 'art is a direct experience with something'. Photography, on the other hand, is 'just a rumour, a kind of pornography of art.'¹⁴

¹³ Willoughby Sharp, 'An interview with Carl Andre' *Avalanche*, no. 1 (Fall 1970), pp. 18-27, p. 24. On Andre's relation to photography more generally, see Alex Potts', 'The Minimalist Object and the Photographic Image', in [ed] Geraldine A. Johnson, *Sculpture and Photography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 181-198.

¹⁴ Willoughby Sharp, 'An interview with Carl Andre', p. 24.



Willoughby Sharp (left), filming the exhibition 'Earth Art', at Cornell University, January 1969

It is perhaps far too easy, however, to imply merely on the basis of what he has claimed in interviews that Andre really believes that *all* photography necessarily panders to a degraded sensibility, whilst object-based art exudes a splendid and noble tactility – one that offers a direct, unmediated encounter with an entity that is physically present. As Alex Potts has noted, such assertions on Andre's part are considerably simplifying, for they belie the subtlety and complexity of his own sculptures, many of which simply do not proffer a sense of an immediate physical presence in the way that Andre's dichotomy implies.¹⁵

Moreover, as soon as we consider the ways in which Andre himself has made recourse to photography – as for instance in *Quincy Book* – then it seems immediately apparent that his resistance is not quite as unequivocal as he might have wanted to imply.¹⁶ In many respects, this fact alone is enough to make me

¹⁵ In his article, 'The Minimalist Object and the Photographic Image', Potts suggests that this absolute dichotomy Andre insists on establishing between sculpture and photography tacitly ascribes an unproblematic material 'presence' to his sculptures, which the actual works – particularly the metal floorplates – often seem to undermine. (p. 195). Potts argues that the complexity of the experience of encountering Andre's works hinges on just this: that although they register as obdurately material things, their flatness and horizontality at the same time appears to belie this impression.

¹⁶ Later in 1973 Andre made a second book of photographs in the same dimensions and format as his *Quincy Book*, that documents his large sculptural installation at the Portland Center for the Visual Arts, entitled *144 Blocks & Stones*. (The exhibition had been on display from 11 February to 11 March 1973.) The volume of images was published several months later and was dedicated to the artist, Robert Smithson, who had died in a plane accident on 20 July 1973. As installed in Portland, the work itself had consisted of 144 stones, taken from a local riverbed. Each stone was mounted on an identical concrete block, and the blocks were spaced at equal distances across the floor of gallery in a large grid formation. In Andre's photographic representation of the work,

think that his objection towards photographs may be directed more at the way images tend to be read as identical to the things they represent – and that, thanks to his love of powerful metaphors, this point became considerably simplified. In this sense, then, we might want to consider Andre's photos in *The New Avantgarde* as an attempt to satisfy an art-market demand for visual images, but doing so by providing depictions that evade being read as identical or equivalent in any simple way to Andre's sculptures themselves. They are photographs, in other words, that block being viewed as transparent documents vis-à-vis his actual sculptures.¹⁷

Emphasising so earnestly that the photograph is not the same as the object it represents might appear a rather banal point, but it is one on which Andre staked much. It is a tenet he developed during the course of his written dialogues with the photographer and filmmaker, Hollis Frampton, in the early 1960s.¹⁸ Frampton and Andre had known each other from their school days, and in 1962, once Andre had moved into a one-room apartment in Brooklyn with his wife, Rosemarie Castoro, Frampton would visit them at regular intervals.¹⁹ For over a year, Frampton and Andre would spend occasional evenings engaging in a written conversation, each taking turns at a typewriter. The dialogues that have survived and which have been published often read like snippets of much larger conversations; it may also be the case that those that are in print have been considerably edited.²⁰ Nevertheless, what remains provides an illuminating glimpse into their thinking. Both defend their own interests – sculpture and photography respectively – with ritualised and animated fervour, although it is

each block and stone has been photographed separately from above. With the exception of the first two and the last two pages, there are four such photographs on each page, and, as in *Quincy Book*, the photos bleed right to the edges of the pages.

¹⁷ James Meyer points out that many of Andre's sculptures were especially difficult to photograph, as they did not possess a clear and distinct form that was especially photogenic. See in particular his discussion of Andre's *Coin*, *Crib* and *Compound* in *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, p. 132.

¹⁸ Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, ed. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1980).

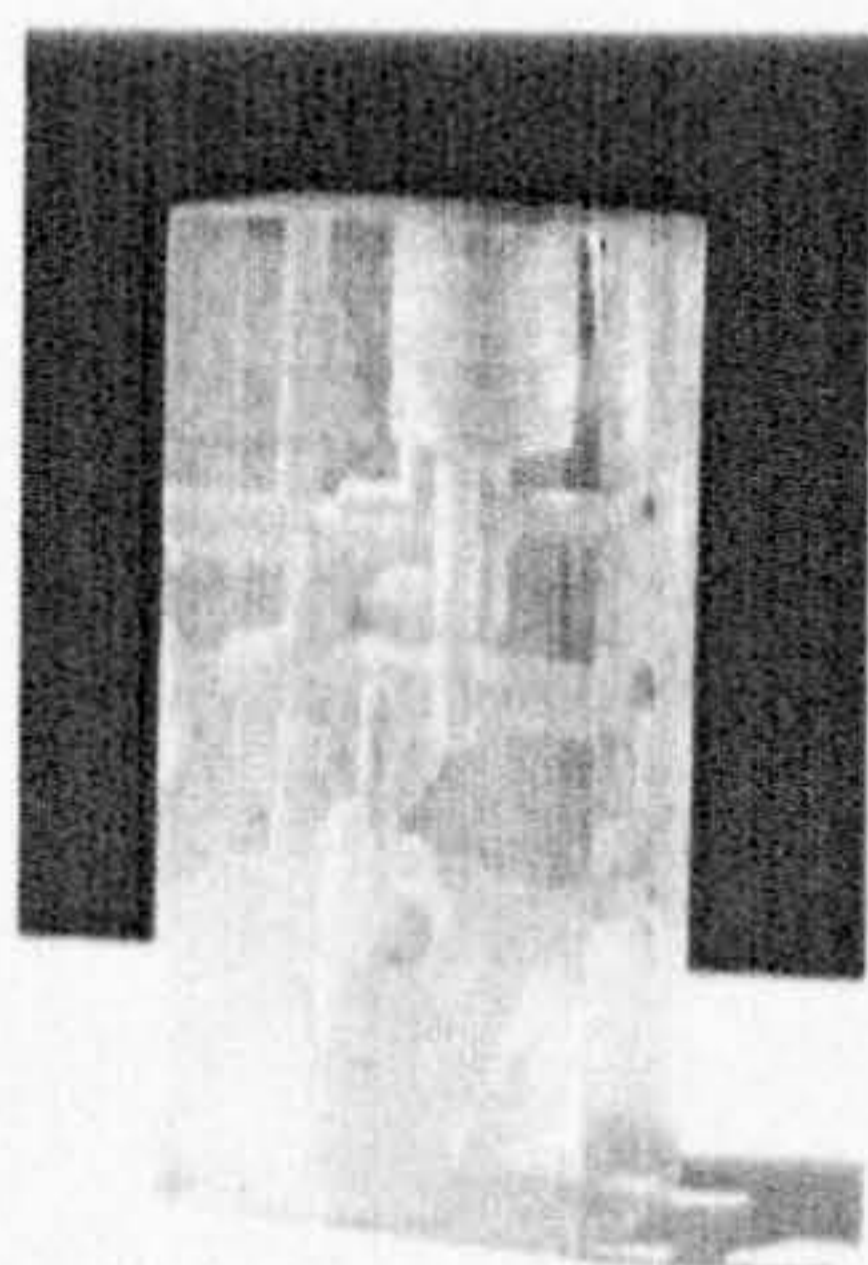
¹⁹ Benjamin Buchloh, 'Editor's Note', in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962: 1963*, p. vii.

²⁰ Reno Odlin, who became a close friend of Carl Andre in 1963, implies as much in his review of *Twelve Dialogues*. See his 'Rite of Passage: Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton', *Parnassus*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Fall/ Winter 1981), pp. 206-216, p. 207. On Odlin's friendship with Andre, see James Meyer's introductory essay to Carl Andre's collected writings, 'Carl Andre: Writer', in *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, pp. 5-6.

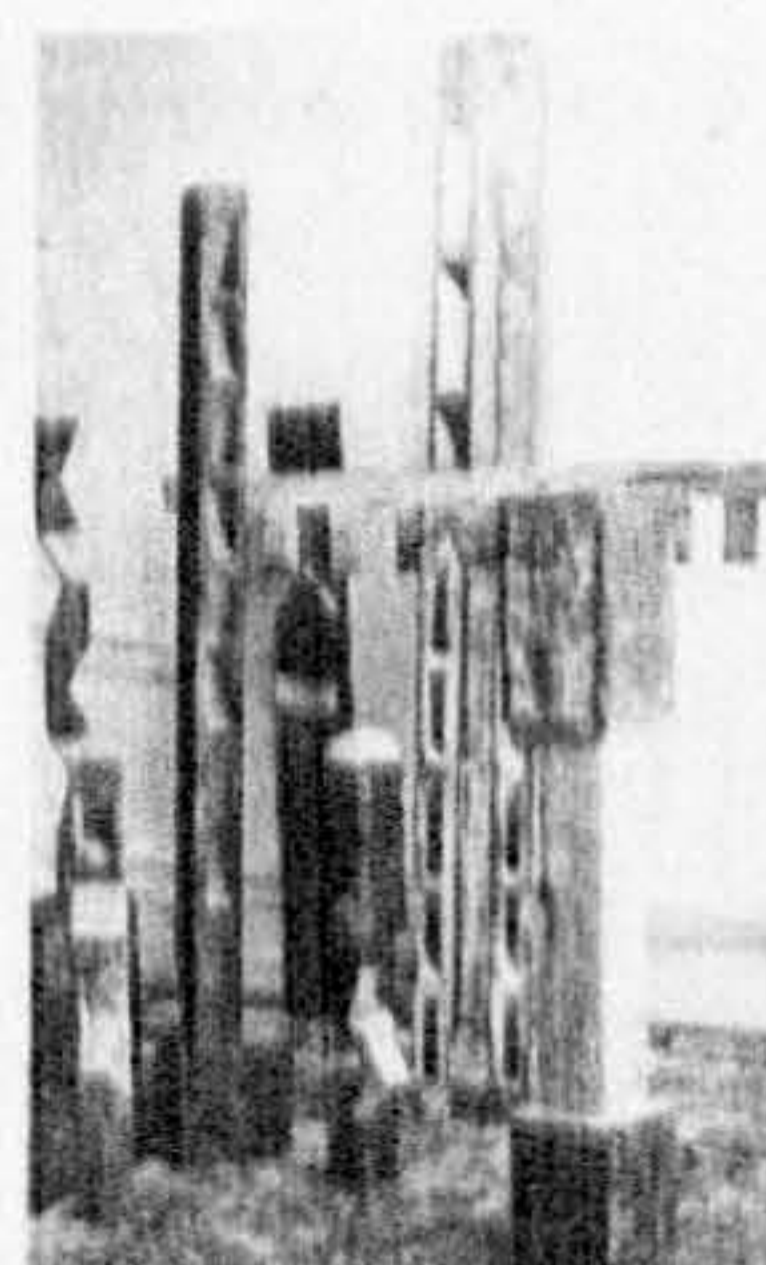
noteworthy that Andre's respect for Frampton's preoccupation with the medium of photography does expand considerably during the course of the dialogues.²¹ However, it is also noticeable that his appreciation develops only once he can grasp the medium in terms that he can relate to his own ways of thinking about sculpture.

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In short, Andre approaches photography in terms of a 'cut'. In fact, questioning of the nature of cutting appears to have dominated his interests in sculpture for roughly the previous three years. Some of his sculptures from the late 1950s consist of blocks sporting various bored holes or sliced notches; the 'subject' of these works, one might say, is just as much the tools and devices that he has deployed to cut into the body of the material as the actual finished form itself.



Untitled (Negative Sculpture), 1958



Sculptures in wood, 1959

Admittedly, such works become less frequent following his subsequently well-publicised realisation in Frank Stella's studio in 1959 that it might be possible to construct sculptures from pre-formed units and blocks, rather than merely carve into them. Yet, even though Andre came to predicate his mature sculptural practice on *not* cutting into materials, somewhat counter-intuitively he still persisted in rationalising and defining his sculpture in terms of the cut. In his first

²¹ In the first printed dialogue, which is dated 12 October 1962, Andre is not exactly complimentary about the artistic merits of photography: 'No one is ready to admit that photography is finished in the way culture has managed pretty much to finish painting by paying 2 some odd million for a middling Rembrandt.' See Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962: 1963*, p.15. Contrast this to Andre's respectful words that conclude their dialogue several months later, on 24 February 1963, p. 74.

public statement about his practice in 1965, for example, he writes that rather than slicing into the material, 'I use the material as a cut in space.'²²

For this reason alone, Andre's occasional references to the word 'cut' and 'cutting' in his dialogues with Frampton acquire a particular significance, and perhaps no more so than when he relates it to photography via a passing reference to the nineteenth-century German mathematician, Richard Dedekind. That Andre was interested and familiar with such areas of knowledge is revealing in the first place, attesting as it does to the diversity of his autodidactic reading habits. But Dedekind was no doubt of interest to Andre because he is famous for defining irrational numbers in terms of cuts. In fact, this insight alone is credited by mathematicians as having revolutionised the way in which differential and integral calculus can be conceptualised.²³ This is how Andre describes 'Dedekind's Cut' to Frampton:

A number is represented as the partition of a line segment. N can then be considered to be the highest value to the left of the cut or the lowest value to the right of it. An irrational number may even be assigned to the cut itself which is empty, in the sense that the cut a pair of scissors makes across a piece of paper is empty, but present and evident. By extension one might say that any single perception is a cut across the spectrum of stimuli available to us.²⁴

Dedekind's Cut offered Andre a metaphor for envisioning perception, which in turn would lead him to contrast the way the human eye 'cuts across' the visual spectrum to the way in which the camera makes its cut. He extends these thoughts in a subsequent exchange. On this occasion, Frampton is defending the need for a photographer to possess what is tantamount to a good photographic 'sensitivity':

²² Carl Andre, cited in Barbara Rose, 'ABC Art', *Art in America*, vol. 53, no. 5 (September 1965), pp. 57-69, p. 67.

²³ See J. J. O'Connor and E. F. Robertson, 'Julius Wilhelm Richard Dedekind' (September 1998), <http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Mathematicians/Dedekind.html>, Walter Rudin, *Principles of Mathematical Analysis*, 2nd Edn (Tokyo: McGraw-Hill Kogakusha, 1964), p. 9 and Richard Courant and Herbert Roberts, *What is Mathematics?: An Elementary Approach to Ideas and Methods* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 71-72.

²⁴ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, p. 55. Melissa Ragona has explored in depth how Andre's reference to the Dedekind Cut was taken up specifically by Frampton in his later filmic work. See her 'Hidden Noise: Strategies of Sound Montage in the Films of Hollis Frampton', *October* 109 (Summer 2004), pp. 96-118, p. 101.

Frampton: [...] No painter or sculptor would wait hours or even days to see the results of stroke or cut. The photographic process is a recapitulation of a process in the mind of the photographer, which must have been carried through to an end before the shutter is released. We say among ourselves of a photograph that it is 'well seen'.

The eye is certainly an instrument for testing the finished photograph, but it is made by mind and hand ... exactly as the ear composes no music. A gray scale from black to white contains all the elements of a photograph in exactly the way that a chromatic scale from C to C contains all the elements of a musical composition.

To which Andre responds:

Andre: Yes, to see is difficult enough. [...] We all have to learn to see at all, and to see well is very difficult. But we must presume that the photographer who wishes to practice an art has learned to see and continues to learn to see as long as he has sight. Photography certainly is not good seeing. Common sight is the cut our eyes make. The photographer makes a different but related cut with his camera. These distinctions may seem academic, but the very failure of the plastic intelligence begins in the confusion between the visibility of things and our ability to see them.²⁵

In other words, 'plastic intelligence' itself depends on not confusing the facticity that things *can* be seen with an actual individual's capacity to see them. 'The photographer does not see only,' Andre continues, still correcting Frampton. Instead 'he makes a cut with an optical instrument of the visible world he is able to see. [...] But he still is required to make this cut of a cut visible by processing and printing.'²⁶ For Andre, what separates the camera's lens from seeing with the naked eye is the difference between two kinds of cut. And because of this, photography is never a surrogate for a real thing in the world, but brings something new into existence. As he writes shortly afterwards, 'A black and white photograph is not a black and white cut of a black and white world.'²⁷

So, let us move on ten years to *Quincy Book*, and see how Andre's conception of photography is brought to execution. But execution might strike us as not quite the right word, since these photographs were never actually taken by Andre himself. Instead, they are the work of one of his old art teachers from

²⁵ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962: 1963*, p. 70.

²⁶ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962: 1963*, p. 70.

²⁷ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962: 1963*, p. 72.

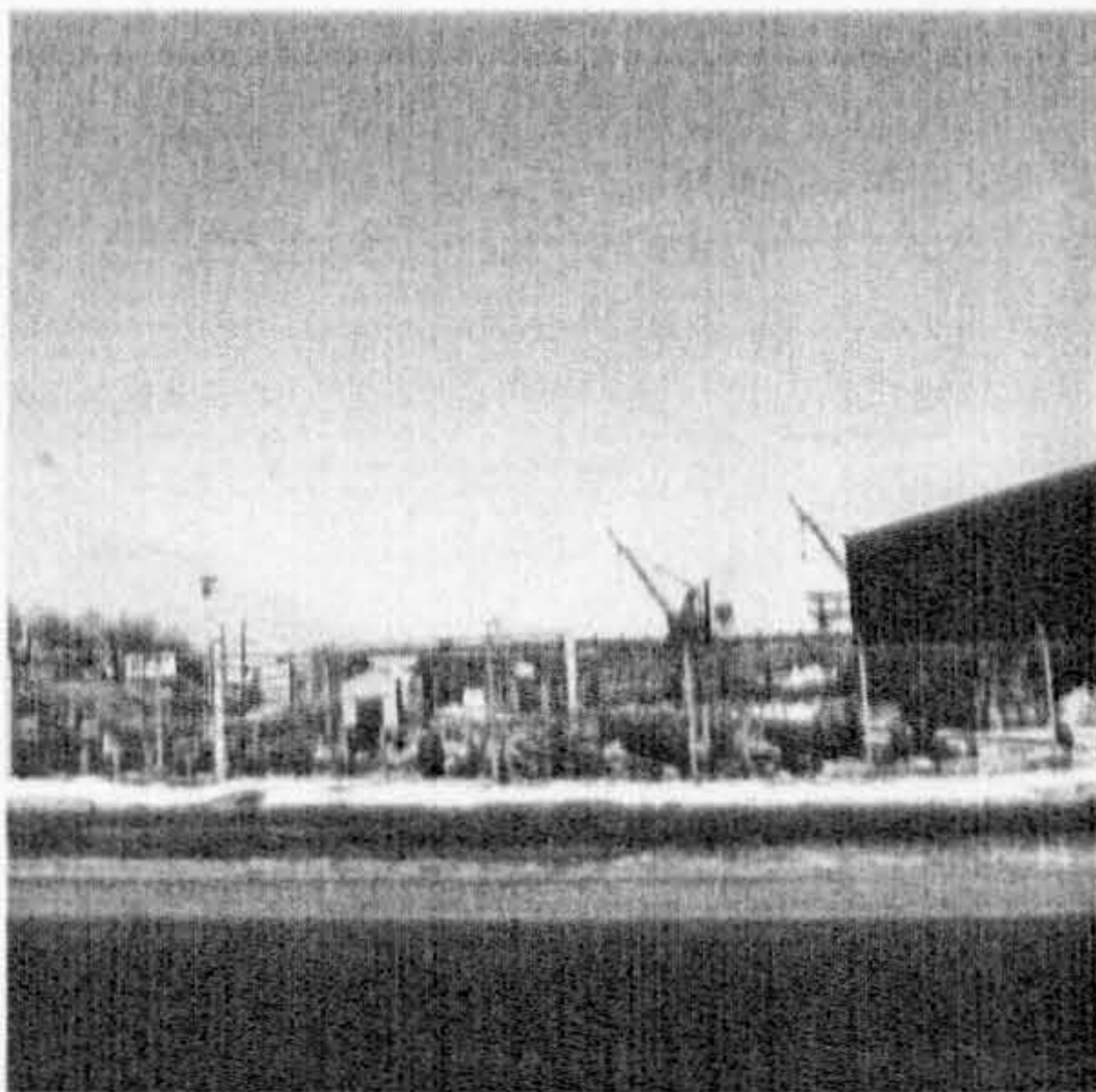
Phillips Academy, Gordon (Diz) Bensley. Andre had attended the prestigious school between 1951 and 1953 on a scholarship programme. In many respects, as the publication was conceived to accompany an exhibition at the Addison Gallery (the museum affiliated to Phillips Academy) and since Bensley was still teaching at the school, it made perfect sense for Andre to turn to him for assistance. Moreover, Bensley was a specialist in photography and had the photographic skills Andre simply did not possess. Bensley himself, however, had very little input in the project: according to him he was simply Andre's assistant for the day. He drove Andre to Quincy, and Andre directed him to the places he wanted to have documented. Bensley was *solely* responsible for operating the camera, but Andre instructed him precisely on where he should point and exactly what he should include within the frame, occasionally even looking through the viewfinder himself.²⁸ The whole exercise took about two hours.

Bensley used a medium-range camera – a Hasselblad – which produces a two and a quarter inch square negative, which he then developed for Andre into eight by eight inch prints – the same size as *Quincy Book* itself. Andre asked Bensley to make as few modifications as possible during the developing stages, since for him the aim was not to attain a certain style or to achieve an idealised image; the aim was simply to record the places. Moreover, the images were not to be cropped: it was the cut of the camera's field of view that would determine what was recorded in the image.

Certainly, the photos that make up *Quincy Book* do evidence these stylistic restrictions. As a body of images, the photographs hardly display much compositional consistency, at least of the kind that tends to be admired by connoisseurs of high art photography. Flicking through these images, it is sometimes hard to know what the subjects of the photographs are at all. Take one, for instance, which comes about two thirds of the way through. The foreground consists of a bland strip of asphalt, on the right is a flat silhouette of a building, the middle-ground is a strip of details crammed behind a fence, whilst the rest of the image is sky. Here, you can imagine the fence and the road

²⁸ Gordon Bensley, telephone conversation, 13 July 2005.

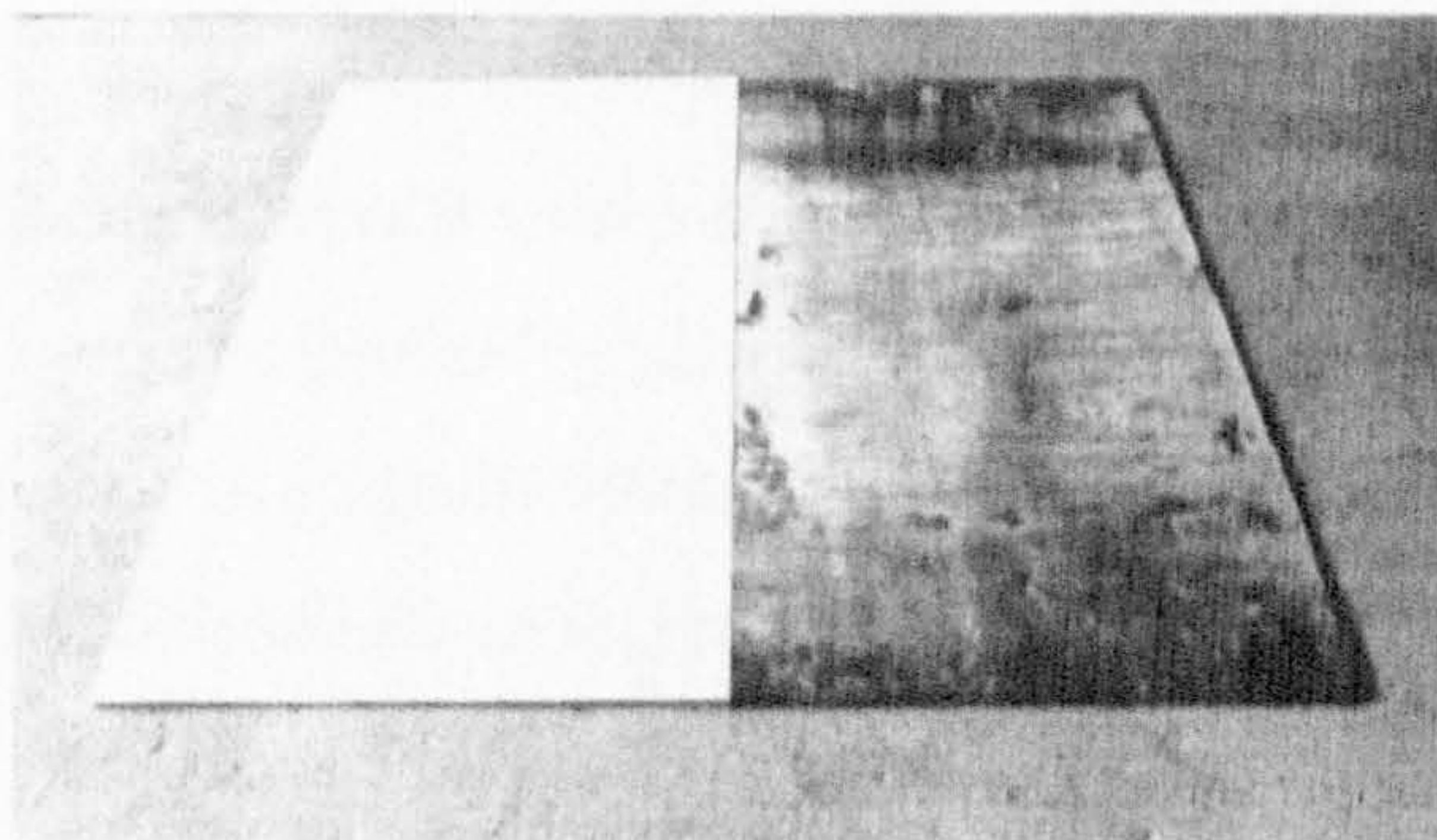
extending almost indefinitely beyond the frame, in a way that makes the parameters of the photograph feel especially arbitrary. Stanley Cavell writes in his book on photography that the fact a camera is essentially ‘an opening in a box’ is perhaps ‘the best emblem of the fact that a camera holding onto an object is holding the rest of the world away.’²⁹ And since the majority of the images in *Quincy Book* lack any internal frames that detract the eye from the blunt edges of the photograph, it is made especially clear to a reader that the remaining world has been cut out, sliced off, discarded. In fact, we might suggest that the photographs in this volume are *only* united by the fact that each individual image is simply a cut from a larger visual continuum.



Quincy Book, image 22

We might say, then, that if we are to make sense of *Quincy Book* as a volume of photographs in its own right, then it will also be the way the images are spliced together that deserves our attention. We will need to consider how each picture is conjoined to its partner on the facing page, tightly fitting against one another in a way reminiscent of how Andre arranges contiguous units in his sculptures.

²⁹ Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (New York: Viking, 1971), p. 24. Rosalind Krauss has explored Cavell's thoughts on cropping extensively. See her essay on Stieglitz's photographs in Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), p. 147. Krauss' discussion of Stieglitz is developed much more fully in her essay 'Stieglitz/ Equivalents', *October* 11 (Winter 1979), pp. 129-140.

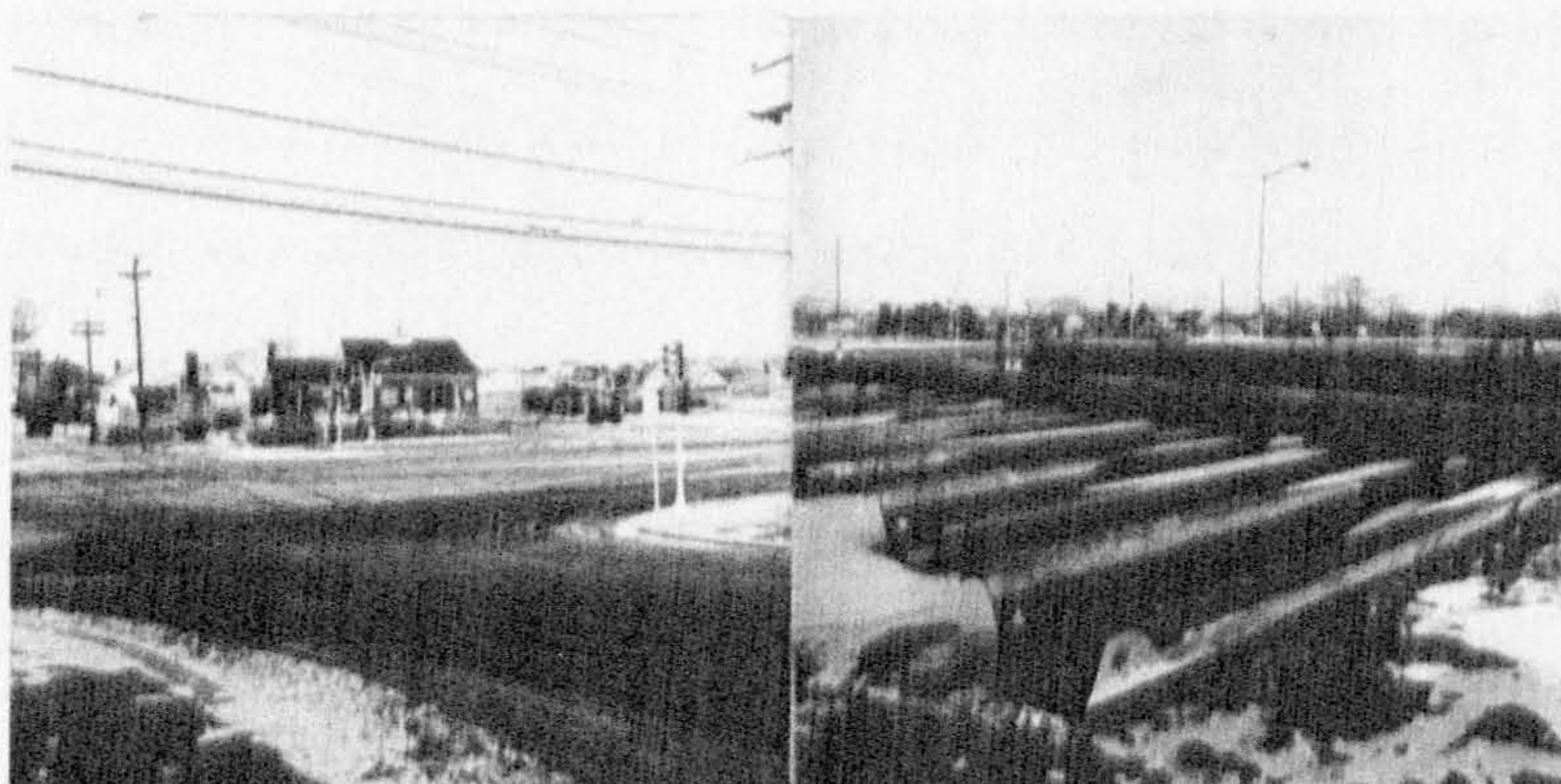


Aluminium-Steel Diapole (E/W), 1973

And perhaps we need to look for the formal comparisons and visual rhymes which these pairings sometimes reveal. For instance, here in image 20 we look between two obelisks; now, across the page, we see through the aperture of a chain-link fence. Here telegraph cables diagonally traverse the sky; now G-Shaped girders are angled over the earth. Considerable attention has been devoted to the way these images have been arranged into their particular and highly sequential order.



Quincy Book, images 20 and 21



Quincy Book, images 38 and 39

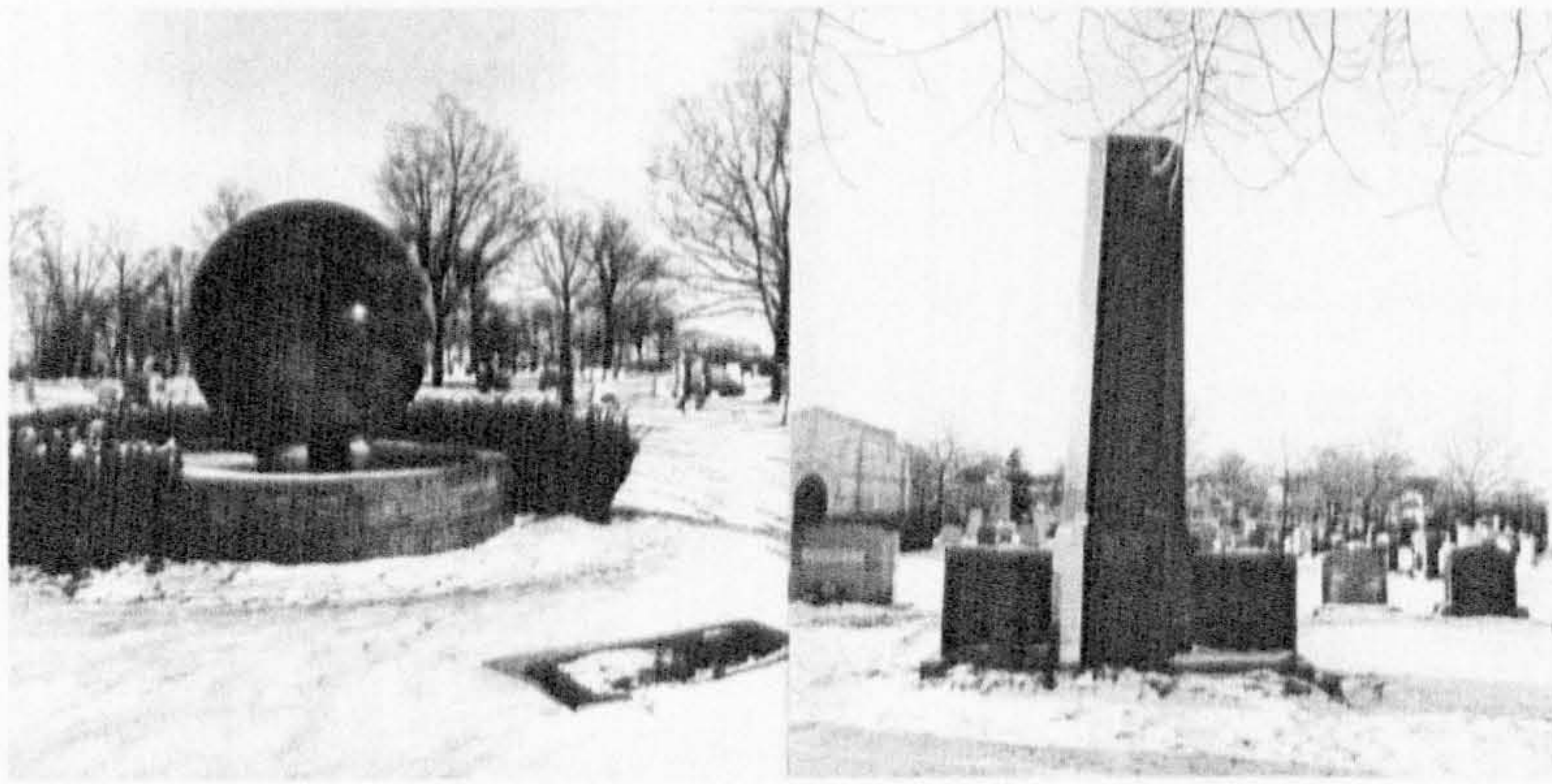
This is especially apparent in the shots of the abandoned, flooded quarries in the hills behind Quincy that fill the book's front section. We see them from varying angles, so that there is something very filmic about the way the photos pan out and close in. The entire series of images sutures the viewer into a fractured, shattered landscape of rocks and ice. But it is a landscape that is only revealed to us in equally fragmented, snap-shot glimpses. It is almost as though in these photos there is a certain correlation between the nature of these images as fragmentary glimpses and the actual subject matter that the pictures themselves reveal.



Quincy Book, images 8 and 9

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However, what should be said of the large quantity of monuments that fill these pages? For it is hard to overlook the fact that dispersed through *Quincy Book* are also practically a dozen images of various kinds of inscribed stone memorials. At one level, their presence could be regarded as merely registering the fact that Quincy is a place world-renowned for its rich supplies of granite, the abundance of this raw material resulting in a sizeable stone-carving industry and a city that is nowadays peppered with finely wrought and overly polished memorials. But might it not also be the case that there is a certain kind of formal connection to be made between these memorials and the nature of the photograph itself?



Quincy Book, images 28 and 29

Indeed, Andre's compulsion to record these inscribed stones – from more than one angle in some instances – might also put us in mind of the ways that photography itself functions as a memorialising, preserving medium. Consider, for instance, those first few pages in Andre Bazin's book on cinema, in which he aligns the celluloid image with other, much more established mnemonic arts. The photograph, he writes, is an 'embalmer of time'.³⁰

Certainly, it has been acknowledged that *Quincy Book* is a volume that does open up onto questions of memory and memorialisation, although somewhat inadequately. In the exhibition catalogue for Andre's exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1978, for instance, Nicholas Serota describes the publication as 'a volume of childhood memories conveyed through photographs' – a phrase that implies that there is an important relation here between the medium and mnemonic.³¹ Yet how memories are actually transmitted through photos is not something that Serota is at all willing to discuss. Instead he merely details what the images are of: 'quarries, heaps of granite blocks, monuments, headstones, piles of lumber and rusting steel plates waiting for use in the shipyard'.³² However, this list is telling, for in *Quincy Book* there are simply no pictures of rusting steel plates. Certainly, there are several photos of stacked steel bars, but these are bars, not plates and in these scenes there is not a shipyard in sight.

³⁰ Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 14. See also Linda Haverty Rugg, *Picturing Ourselves: Photography & Autobiography* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 25-27.

³¹ Nicholas Serota, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-78*, unpaginated.

³² Nicholas Serota, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-78*, unpaginated.



Quincy Book, image 39



Quincy Book, image 40

It seems more likely that Serota is only repeating Andre's own personal account of his memories of Quincy and not describing the book's pictures at all; it is as though he wants to read the volume as a much more transparent and self-evident representation of the artist's boyhood 'impressions' than it perhaps is.

However, Serota's possible misreading does at least allow us an occasion to think further and with more care about the subtle differences and tensions between memorials, memory and photography in relation to *Quincy Book*. For, as Roland Barthes has written, the photograph is *never* 'in essence' a memory; in fact it actually 'blocks memory'.³³ Barthes, along with many other theorists of the photographic image, emphasises that a photo offers a means merely of capturing and archiving a fleeting instant, a single impression, and petrifying that moment forever. A touch of the finger is all it takes, writes Benjamin, to fix an event for a seemingly unlimited amount of time.³⁴ Both for Benjamin and Barthes, there was an inherent violence in the chemical and mechanical operation

³³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Obscura: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 91.

³⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 171. As Eduardo Cadaver has written in his influential essay on the theme of the photographic in Walter Benjamin's writings, it is only in death that the power of the photo is properly revealed, since it is only once the subject of the image has deceased that the full force of the photographic likeness is brought home properly to viewers, as the photograph continues to evoke what simply can no longer be there. 'Since this possibility is exposed at death', Cadaver continues, 'we can assume it exists before death. In photographing someone, we know that the photograph will survive him – it begins, even during his life, to circulate without him, figuring and anticipating his death each time it is looked at.' See Eduardo Cadaver, 'Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History', *Diacritics*, vol. 22, no. 3-4 (1992), pp. 84-114, p. 92. This claim is also fundamental to Barthes' account of the photographic image in *Camera Obscura*, a point emphasised by Elissa Marder, *Dead Time: Temporal Disorders in The Wake of Modernity (Baudelaire and Flaubert)*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 85-87.

that results in an image, 'not because it shows violent things,' suggests Barthes, 'but because on each occasion *it fills the sight by force*, and because in it nothing can be refused or transformed.'³⁵ As Barthes so eloquently describes, the photograph drags the viewer back to the ephemeral circumstances of the moment when the image was taken: the exorbitant level of detail that celluloid involuntarily records precludes the possibility of recollecting the past more freely and organically. As such, he suggests, the past jumps out at us from the photographic image as unsublimated and forever unforeclosed.³⁶

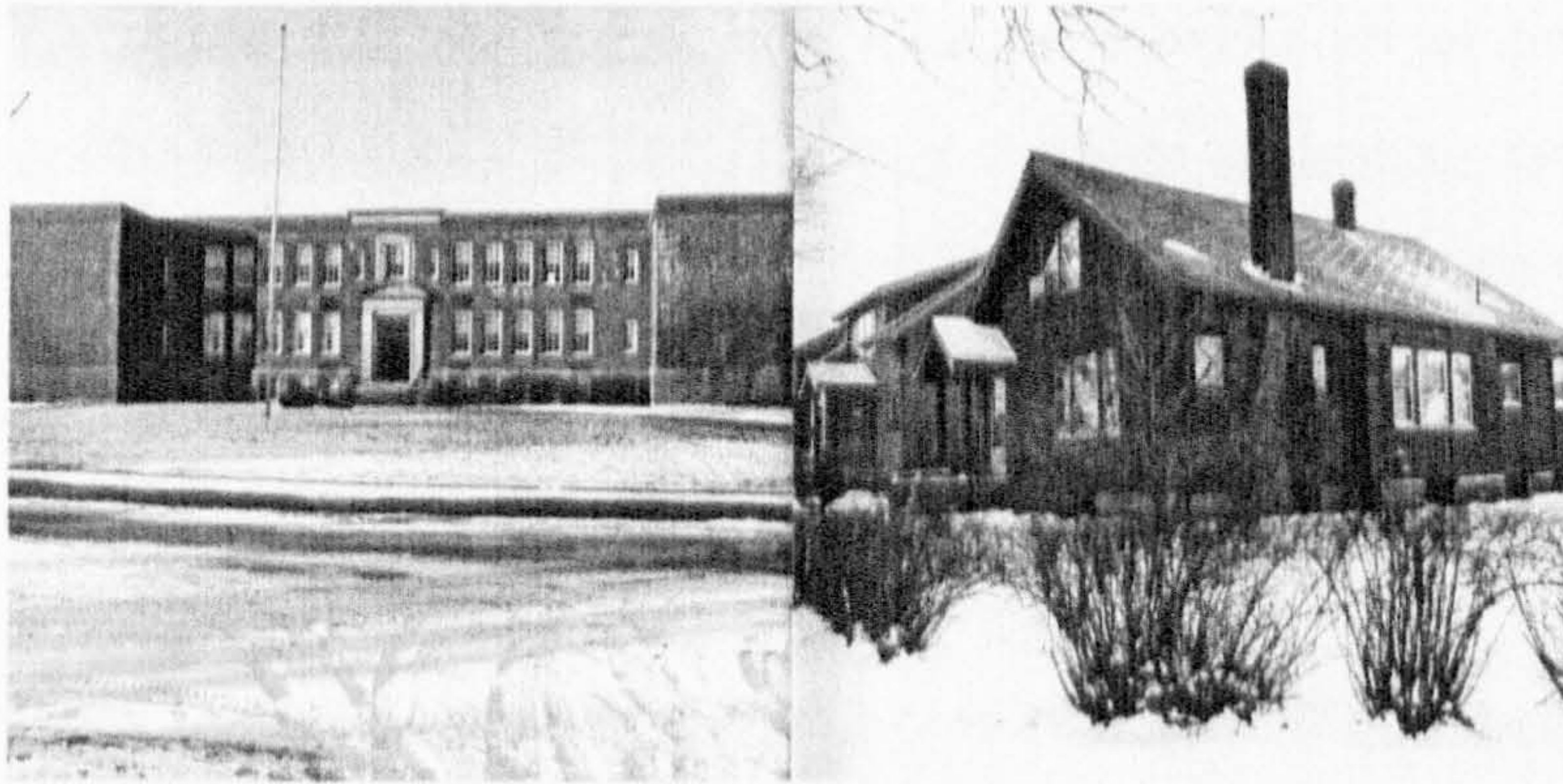
In his recent book on aesthetics and loss, Greg Horowitz explores this aspect of the photograph further, offering a comparison of the way the photographic image archives the ephemeral instant to the means by which loss is commemorated by a stone memorial.³⁷ His point is that an inscription on an upright stone makes no attempt to bring back an impression of the past 'as it really was'. The stone which marks the place where someone lies or where something significant occurred evidences that it can never simply make the past present again. Yet the very fact that a memorial has been erected in the first place is testament to the subjectivity and urgency of the desire on the part of those who commissioned it for some more permanent entity to mark the importance of this loss. In other words, a stone monument always memorialises the past as lost and irretrievable. The snapshot photograph, on the other hand, is by its very nature incapable of registering this kind of subjective deprivation: 'the photograph', writes Horowitz, 'enables the look of the past to be present without remainder, with no trace of failure, and so leaves no residue of loss in the present'.³⁸

³⁵ Roland Barthes, *Camera Obscura*, p. 91. For a productive discussion of the relation between photography and contingency, see Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), in particular pp. 10-13.

³⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Obscura*, p. 91.

³⁷ Greg Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life* (Stanford, CA: California University Press, 2001), pp. 140-148. The context of Horowitz's analysis is a discussion of Gerhard Richter's extensive cycle of paintings, *October 18, 1977* (1988).

³⁸ Greg Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life*, p. 144.



Quincy Book, images 36 and 37

Horowitz's claim might also be productively applied to the *Quincy Book*, enabling us to think further about the particular atmosphere of lifelessness and abandonment that haunts its pages. It also points to the extent to which the photographs differ here from the way photographic images are normally circulated and looked at in our culture. For this publication simply does not document episodes from Andre's childhood as might a typical snap-shot album, in spite of the fact that it has often been interpreted in this way.³⁹ Only a very select number of these photographs are easily transformed into unproblematic records from Andre's past, for all of the images document places as they appeared in the winter of 1973, twenty to thirty years after he had moved away from Quincy for good. To turn to the pictures in *Quincy Book* as visual documents from Andre's upbringing is to presuppose, then, that the scenes depicted look exactly the same as they did when Andre was growing up. But this is only true for certain images in the book, such as the pictures of monuments and some of the more established buildings. Other parts of Quincy – especially the areas of industrial activity – were changed out of all recognition between the

³⁹ For example, in David Bourdon's catalogue essay, 'Carl Andre: A Redefinition of Sculpture' from 1978, there are four images from the *Quincy Book*, excerpted in order to provide illustrative evidence of Andre's Quincy. Bourdon has ascribed them captions, informing us that they represent the 'family grave', 'Andre's boyhood home', and so on: see pp. 16-17. No reference is made to the fact that these images were only taken five years earlier. Likewise, James Meyer has also illustrated Andre's collected writings with four pictures from the Quincy Book: see Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, pp. 78, 82, 218 and 219. Unlike Bourdon, Meyer does at least acknowledge the date when these pictures were taken, along with their original source. Yet like Bourdon, his primary intent is the same: these images are there to be regarded primarily as transparent documents onto Andre's origins. Whilst on this matter, it is also worth noting that Meyer and Bourdon do not always respect the way the prints have been cropped in the *Quincy Book*. This is particularly pronounced in Meyer's case, as when, for example, the photo of the artist's family home (which is reproduced on p. 78 of *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*) is presented in landscape format.

1940s and the 1970s, and the photos in *Quincy Book* make no effort to evade this fact. For instance, several of the quarries were still active when Andre was growing up, but by the 1960s all had closed. So, for these very uncomplicated reasons, we can never say that we are shown in these pictures Andre's actual childhood impressions made visually present for us before our eyes. Instead, we see views of places that no doubt still have strong memories and a strong significance for him, but, crucially, the very fact that these photos were all taken on the occasion of a *returning* to the haunts of Andre's upbringing means that the camera is arriving on the scene long after his impressions and experiences were fashioned from these places. Therefore, we might say that what is actually being recorded is the *subjective desire* to document the memory, and certainly what is not being displayed here are images that can serve as visual substitutes for the childhood impressions and experiences themselves.



Quincy Book, image 1

It is thanks to the very nature of *Quincy Book*, then, that the photographs might be said to assume a certain natural affinity with the status of monuments. For, like stone memorials, Andre's pictures share an awareness of the past's irretrievability: the sheer extent of the gap between the present and the past. This brings me round, finally, to the cover image: for here the frame of the photograph is quite literally filled with an inscribed slab of dark, polished granite. It is almost as though the camera is deliberately facing up to the stone in order to purchase from it some of its qualities – to acquire from it something of the resoluteness with which the granite performs its memorialising responsibility. No photograph in the entire collection, we might say, seems more heavily invested in 'showing' where Andre's origins and identity lie. For this stone is the Andre family grave in

the Mount Wallaston Cemetery, close to the area of the city where the artist grew up. It is the resting place of his grandparents, and, since the mid 1980s, of his parents as well.

But there is something further at stake in this image, for by photographing the Andre nomenclature and then reproducing it on the front cover, Andre is also inscribing his own name as the author of the book. If nothing else, it is a reminder that photographs can always circulate and signify independently of their original context. As such, this photograph allows the inscription to refer both to the artist's departed family members and back to Andre himself. Yet by making the family gravestone speak in this way and by appropriating the inscription to his own ends, he is also courting the possibility that the headstone will be read as his own grave. Is this an acknowledgement that depicting his own life and expressing his own self by means of the photograph is also to catch a glimpse of his own demise? Or, is it that Andre's very aspiration to convey and demonstrate what for him is most inimically sculptural about Quincy leads invariably to the loss *even of his own self?*



Quincy Book, image 31

Chapter 4

Memorials: Driven into the Past

The quarries themselves fascinated me very much too. There was, when I was a young child, the deepest hardrock quarry in the world in Quincy. Swingle's Quarry was something like 756 feet deep, and it was in two parts. There was a shallower part and then a deeper part, and there was a quite rickety steel bridge that went from one part to the other. So you could go up there and walk across the bridge, and it was quite a sensational thing to walk over this enormous abyss. And they kept on working that quarry because it seemed that the deeper they went for the granite the darker and finer it became, and the darker and finer grain it was, the more highly it was valued for building purposes and for funeral monuments.

Carl Andre, 1972¹

Quincy Mass once great center of granite quarrying & funerary manufacture → all my works are a drunken canoe being ceaselessly driven into the past.

Carl Andre, 1965²



Quincy Book, image 31



Quincy Book, image 32

There is one particular image in Andre's *Quincy Book* that displays the close relation between monuments and loss especially clearly, and does so in a way that might be said to illustrate further the extent to which Andre's practice is steeped in the specific cultural history of Quincy. This is the photo of the

¹ Carl Andre, 'Taped Interview with Carl Andre', Smithsonian version, in *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 220.

² Carl Andre, Letter to Reno Odlin, 4 February 1965, in *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 241.

monument to the cedar tree, which appears in *Quincy Book* in two successive images. The first time it is presented close up, so that its inscription is clearly visible, and over the page we are shown it from further away – a dark silhouette in its wooded surroundings. In Quincy, it stands in amongst the trees on the slope of Maypole Hill, a few dozen yards from a quiet residential road, and it is from this street, Samoset Avenue, that the second photo has been taken. In fact, were it not in such a solitary location, it might easily be mistaken for a gravestone.



Quincy Seal, designed 1888



The first Quincy Seal, designed 1882

Perhaps the most significant inscription on this granite slab is the seal of the city, an engraved version of which is illustrated above, to the left. The seal itself contains four dates, which mark the four stages of Quincy's civic identity and chart the city's development from a small European trading post that originated in 1625, to a place called Braintree by 1640, to its separation from Braintree and the acquisition of its current name in 1792, and finally its incorporation of full city status at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1888. These dates are positioned around the periphery of a stylised topographical motif: a lone tree standing on the side of a bare, whale-backed hill. Behind the hill, in the background, are two schooners out at sea.

The origins of the Quincy seal date back no further than the end of the nineteenth century. It had been designed by a committee, one that had been appointed and convened in 1882 exclusively for this purpose. The topographical motif had been appropriated from a small etching by George W. Beale, made fifty years earlier, and which had been illustrated in the Reverend Dr. William P.

Lunt's *Two Discourses on Occasion of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Gathering of the First Congregational Church, Quincy*.³



George W. Beale, Jr., *View of Mount Wallaston*, ca. 1832

In 1888, when Quincy became a city, the design had been sharpened up slightly and the new historic date was proudly incorporated. Of course, no seal is complete without its motto, and Quincy's is emblazoned prominently across the sky on a free-floating banner. It is the Latin word, *MANET*, which in translation means 'it remains'. And in case there is any uncertainty about what it is that does remain, the city seal is usually accompanied by a little explanatory maxim. When William Churchill Edwards includes it in his *Historic Quincy*, for instance, he peppers with speech marks, as though it possesses all the venerable authority of an ancient saying:

'The hill remains, connecting the present with the past,'
'The city remains, continuous in its history and development,
'The free spirit of it remains,
*'The fame of it remains, and will remain forever.'*⁴

However, despite all these repetitious assertions of continuity and persistence, the explanatory text inscribed on this marker stone has quite a different story to tell: 'HERE STOOD THE CEDAR', we read, 'INCORPORATED IN THE SEAL OF THE CITY OF QUINCY AND BLOWN DOWN IN THE GALE OF NOVEMBER 1898.' The tree, it transpires, was

³ See Charles Francis Adams' introductory historical essay to the Prince edition of *Thomas Morton's New English Canaan* (Boston: John Wilson & Son, 1883), p. 14, n. 1. The suggestion to make use of the etching of Mount Wallaston with its lonely cedar was originally suggested by the committee member George W. Morton. See William Churchill Edwards, *Historic Quincy Massachusetts*, 2nd Edn. (City of Quincy, 1957), pp. 113-115.

⁴ William Churchill Edwards, *Historic Quincy*, p. 115.

already dead when the seal was designed. In fact, it had died nearly a half-century earlier, but had remained standing until its roots finally gave way in the Great Portland Storm of 1898. Nonetheless, when Charles Francis Adams the Younger – the descendant of second President John Adams and sixth President John ‘Quincy’ Adams – paid a visit to the dead cedar in 1882, he was able to report that it still had a girth of sixty-six inches, despite the fact that its bark had long since rotted away.⁵ Adams had good reason to be satisfied by the sturdy dimensions of the dead cedar. Not only was he an avid arborist – he had only recently overseen the planting of 5000 trees on his nearby seventeen-acre residency – but he was also Chairman of the Committee for the design of the Quincy seal.⁶ Adams was sure this great tree must have been standing when Captain Wallaston, one of the first Europeans to establish a settlement here, had arrived at this very place in 1625. Moreover, in his opinion, this landscape and scenery had remained essentially agrarian and unchanged until only extremely recently.⁷ It was, then, a profoundly *historical* landscape.



Francis Millet,
Charles Francis Adams Jr., 1876



The Adams residency on President's Hill

Charles Francis Adams, it should be noted, was not a person who was inclined to watch change occurring to Quincy with an air of calm disinterestedness. When industrial activity did begin to creep ever closer to his property, as it did in the 1870s and 1880s, he displayed considerable resentment

⁵ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *New English Canaan*, p. 14.

⁶ See Edward Chase Kirkland, *Charles Francis Adams, Jr. 1835-1935. The Patrician at Bay* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 132.

⁷ See Adams, *New English Canaan*, p. 14.

and not a little impotent rage. Ironically, however, he was not a complete stranger to the forces of modernity. In fact, far from it, for in his professional life, he had unfalteringly embraced the socio-economic imperatives of the age, serving as Chairman of the Pacific Railroad Company for six years and accumulating for himself an impressive cache of property: of farms, factories and mines across the States.⁸ But for his home life in Quincy, he aspired to something quite different. In many respects, he impeccably resembles that nineteenth-century persona which Walter Benjamin contemptuously calls an 'etui-man' – that figure who cushions himself in his soft, domestic interiors from the destructive logic of his own socio-economic ventures.⁹

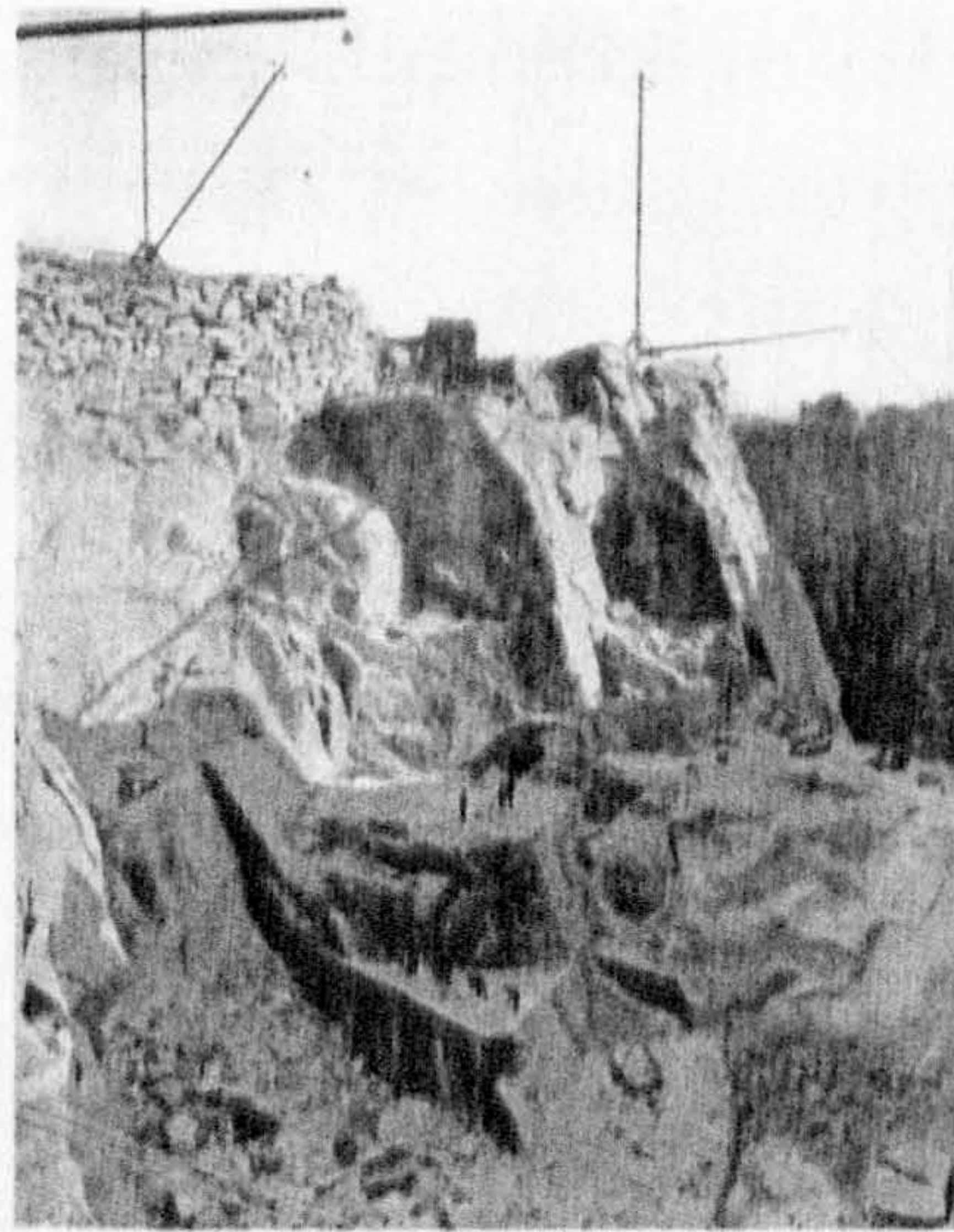
Indeed, Adams' autobiographical and historical writings are full of nostalgic rage at the demise of the old Quincy in which his family had performed such a prominent role.¹⁰ Adams' ancestors had been residents of the town since the Revolution, and although he had been active in inaugurating considerable improvements over the past decade, he remained essentially committed to preserving the town as that which, in his eyes, it always had been: a distinct and small community of artisans and farmers. However, by the 1880s, at least thirty granite quarries had been established in the Quincy hills, and the rapid rise in mining and other industries had resulted in a considerable population expansion. Adams displays little admiration for the 'transient stone-cutters' – the 'men of foreign blood' who were apparently crowding out the 'the Native New

⁸ Adams presided over the Pacific Railroad from 1884, until his acrimonious departure in 1890 – see Edward Chase Kirkland, *Charles Francis Adams*, pp. 81-129. On the extent of his land-owning proclivities, see pp. 65-80.

⁹ Walter Benjamin writes in his essay 'The Destructive Character', in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London and New York: Verso, 1979), that: 'The etui-man looks for comfort, and the case is its quintessence. The inside of the case is the velvet-lined track that he has imprinted on the world. The destructive character obliterates even the traces of destruction.' (p. 158). For an extensive discussion of this essay, see Irving Wolhfarth, 'No-man's-land: On Walter Benjamin's "Destructive Character"', in *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000). See in particular, pp. 169-170.

¹⁰ The prolific nature of Charles Francis Adams' writings can be gauged by the regularity of his contributions to the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, although he is perhaps best recognised for his *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History* [1892], 2 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965). The third episode, 'A Study of Church and Town Government', is a history of local government in Quincy. For the extent of his political conservatism, see in particular Chapters XIX, 'The Era of Change' and XXI, 'The Alien Infusion', II, pp. 922-932 and pp. 944-960.

Englander'.¹¹ In fact, in the early 1890s he finally moved out for good, disgusted that the hills behind his residence were now thoroughly 'gutted' for their stone and, as he writes, had been 'converted into an abomination of desolation.'¹² As for Quincy itself: in his eyes it had 'been metamorphosed into a most commonplace suburban municipality'.¹³ In short, all that had been distinguishing about the town, all its traditions and stable values, had, for him, been gradually stripped away.¹⁴



Granite Railway Company Quarry,
ca. 1926



If Adams' traditionalism was in any way representative of the general opinions of the Seal Committee, then we might take this as an indication, at the very least, of some of the assumptions that would play into the seal's final design. We might infer that the motif of the tree on this hill became a means of indicating a profound point of connection with Quincy's history. And maybe it was just this that needed in their minds to be emphasised in the 1880s, because it was just at this moment when Quincy appeared to be on the verge of becoming unrecognisable. More generally, it was the allure of origins and the desire to stress a monolithic continuity between that first English settlement and their current age that perhaps motivated the committee members to transmit the past

¹¹ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History*, II, p. 930 and p. 953.

¹² Charles Francis Adams, *An Autobiography* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), pp. 6-7.

¹³ Charles Francis Adams, *An Autobiography*, p. 177.

¹⁴ Charles Francis Adams, *An Autobiography*, p. 8.

in this way – all sealed up within a spherical, topographical portal. In this sense, the aspirations behind the seal's design are perhaps best understood as a desire to wed Quincy's identity exclusively to its capacity to transmit its own past.

Perhaps an equivalent ambition can be seen as well in the choice of the city's motto. 'Manet': the monosyllabic adamance of the word alone makes it sound as though it is just as much an imperative as a fact, as if Quincy *must* persist at all costs. In turn, the memorial stone could be seen as embodying just this sense of obligation. Time may roll on, but at least this solitary slab of granite beneath the trees would withstand and resist the change that was felt to be occurring all around.

Indeed, 'Manet' no doubt was considered an eminently apt epithet for Quincy. After all, there is no escaping the fact that the hills behind the city *are* made of riebeckite-aegirite granite. It is one of the hardest rocks in the whole Republic, and although there are deposits scattered across the States, nowhere is it so easily accessible for quarrying, or is it present in such fine quality as here in the Blue Hills of Norfolk County. 'Whatever form Quincy granite is made to assume,' writes George Whitney in 1826, 'whether taken rough from its bed, or nicely hammered into regular blocks, and made the outer wall of a dwelling, or formed into noble pillars, or made to stand, (as it has been,) for monuments to the memory of the dead, it is in every way attractive. Some of the quarries seem to be inexhaustible, and promise to endure as long as man endures through all time.'¹⁵

In fact, Quincy granite does often seem to have evoked in the minds of its advocates a sense of an immense temporal persistence; it was almost as though the urgency with which it was mined was inspired primarily by the very thought that what had been uncovered here in Quincy was a material that was beyond even the very possibility of decay – as if granite were a means of putting pay to time itself. On occasions, this attribute led its proponents to some overtly theological musings. When, for instance, the late President John Adams chose to

¹⁵ George Whitney, *Some Account of the Early History and Present State of the Town of Quincy in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1827), p. 48.

endow Quincy with a temple 'for the public worship of God', he expressly stipulated that it be built in stone 'taken from the granite quarries'.



First Parish Church, Quincy, designed by Alexander Parris, dedicated 1828

At the ceremony to mark the laying of the Temple's foundations in 1827, the Chairman of the Building Committee, the Honorary Thomas Greenleaf, took up this point and expounded the material's significance to all those assembled:

When ages after ages shall have passed away, when all, who are now living on earth, and successive generations for centuries to come, shall have finished their probation and gone to the unseen and eternal world, these walls of granite, we are about to erect, will stand, we trust, amidst the revolutions of time, a monument of the interest we felt for the worship of God, and for the accommodation of our successors on the stage of life, till the stones themselves, of which it is constructed, shall be crumbled into dust.¹⁶

Yet despite all his claims about the permanence of granite being a testament to the spiritual needs of subsequent generations, Greenleaf's desire to entertain the thought of this building's ruination before it is even erected speaks of a certain ambivalence on his part about this material. It implies that granite can only stand as a metonym for a higher, more immaterial sense of eternity, which for him is considerably more permanent than any earthly building material. For Greenleaf, no substance from this world could ever pass into this 'unseen and eternal' afterlife. Therefore, reminding his audience that this stone will one day have to crumble and decay is a means of stressing its profoundly material nature; and

¹⁶ Thomas Greenleaf's speech is included in an appendix to Whitney's *History of the Town of Quincy*, pp. 63-64.

that it is *exclusively* God – ‘*Him* who sitteth on the throne for ever and ever’ – who remains truly eternal.

In this sense, granite’s extraordinary earthly permanence sits slightly uncomfortably within a New England theological imaginary, unswervingly committed as it is to the spiritual pursuit of the immortal. However, to turn to this Chairman of the Building Committee as evidence of a manifestly unwavering conviction in the timelessly eternal might also be slightly misleading. For it could also be suggested that Greenleaf’s capacity – at least in his rhetoric – to sustain an image of the utterly immortal is perhaps not quite as forthright and self-certain as it appears at first sight. If you read his speech in its entirety, then it is hard not to notice that the very idea of the eternal – as that which exists entirely *outside* time – is all but displaced by his persistent preoccupation with a notion of the gradual and incremental improvement of society. On the one hand he wishes to claim that this new granite temple will enable a relentless year-on-year advancement in the moral worthiness of all society: ‘Our hearts rejoice in the contemplation of the increasing virtue and wisdom of the world’. But on the other hand, he compensates for the fact that his own generation will never come to see this day by imploring his listeners to become more pious in turn:

that *we* may so finish *our* course on earth, as to enter on our immortal destiny with qualifications for ceaseless progress, that, however improved our descendants may be, when these walls shall sink beneath the desolations of time, *we* may have reached a measure of improvement in that better world above, beyond what they shall have attained under all advantages with which they may be favoured.

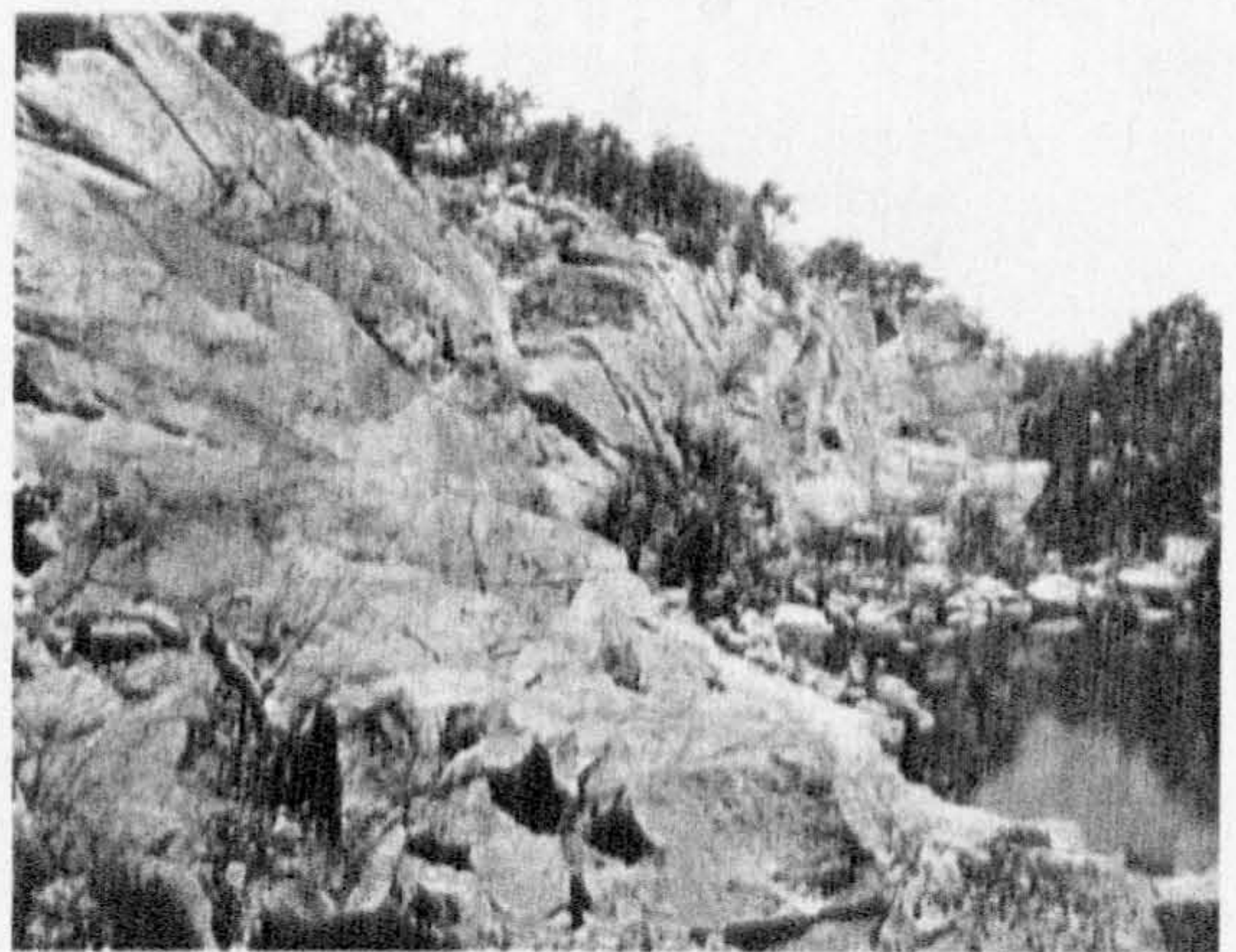
Both life *and* afterlife, it seems, are conceived by this nineteenth-century gentleman in terms of a ceaseless movement – as a matter of gradual year-on-year improvement. In this sense, we might propose that despite the overtly religious tenor to his words, there is maybe something quite secular that is directing the score here, and that it is perhaps the very idea of a scientific and technological advancement on this earth that is serving as a model and providing a form for his image of spiritual progress in life after death. In fact, we might read this as evidence of a certain loosening of an absolute conviction in the timelessly eternal, of the kind that the sociologist Max Weber identifies, when he

suggests that faith in the eternal is being displaced gradually in the west by a faith in the incessant and incremental accretion of finite knowledge.¹⁷

Indeed, it might be said that it is this more secular and disenchanting understanding of time that seems to be remembered by the Quincy motto – ‘it remains’. And in many respects, it was the more retrospective task of remaining and remembering that first became the primary appeal of granite. In fact, perhaps it could be argued that this was its real allure all along, for essentially it was the demand for high-quality stone for Solomon Willard’s proposed monument at Bunker Hill in Boston that led to the opening up of large-scale quarrying in Quincy. Transporting the three thousand tonnes of dressed stone that the 221-foot obelisk would require was, of itself, an epic accomplishment. In 1826, and at a cost of fifty thousand dollars, a path for a railway was cleared. Cuttings were dug and iron tracks laid on granite sleepers all the way from the West Quincy quarry to a specially built wharf on the Neponset River. From there, the vast blocks were carried by boat up the coast to Boston – a distance in total of just over twelve miles.

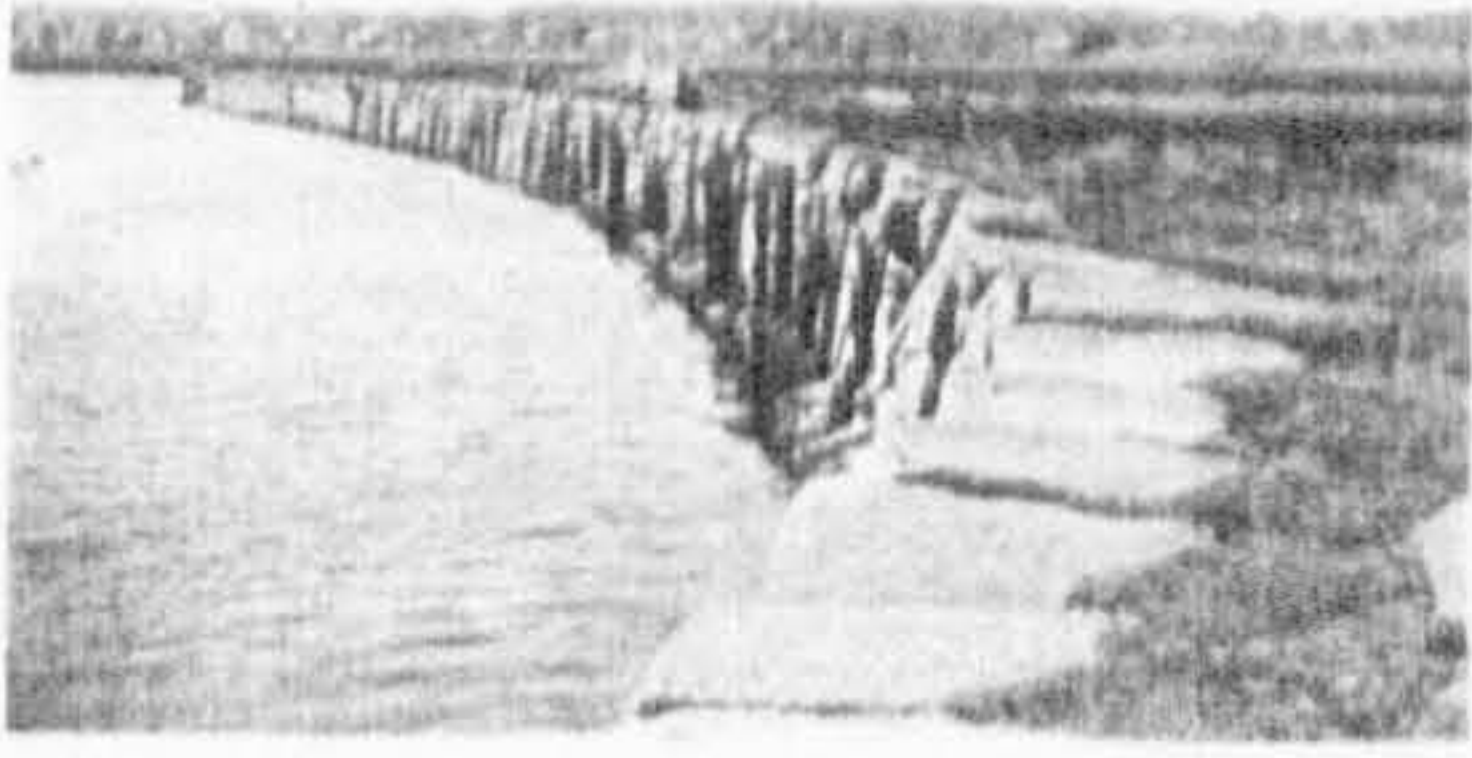


**Bunker Hill Monument,
Charlestown**



Old Bunker Hill Quarry

¹⁷ See Max Weber’s ‘Science as a Vocation’ in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), pp. 139-141.



The old Granite Rail Wharf on the Neponset River



Section of a map from 1830 showing the Quarry Railway from Bunker Hill Quarry to the Neponset River

In the *Quincy Book*, Andre includes a photograph of the now overgrown Granite Rail Incline, which was added in 1830 to winch the stones down from the newly opened Pine Hill Quarry.¹⁸ The two obelisks on either side of its track might

¹⁸ My information on the Granite Railway is derived from an anonymous publication from the Granite Railway Company, entitled *The First Railroad in America: A History of the Origin and Development of the Granite Railway at Quincy, MA*, (Granite Railway Company, 1926), and Robert E. Scholes, *The Granite Railway and its Associated Enterprises* (Unpublished Manuscript, Braintree, MA.: 1963), Thomas Crane Public Library, Quincy.

look somewhat portentous, but they are there to commemorate that this is, after all, the Nation's very first chartered commercial railway.



**The Granite Rail Incline
ca 1920**



Quincy Book, image 20

Indeed, it might be said that in Quincy, the business of memorialising and the business of modernisation have advanced practically arm in arm. The city presides over a long tradition of industrial innovation and progress thanks primarily to its enormous investment in granite extraction and in the industry of memorial-making. In fact, it might be said that it has been its exertion to memorialise that has led to its transformation, almost as though the city has proceeded into the future with its eyes firmly transfixed on the past. And it is this symbiosis between traditionalism and transformation that is perfectly encapsulated in the city's motto, for, on the one hand it was granite that contributed to the city's modernisation and, on the other hand, it is precisely this material's characteristics that are called on to accentuate Quincy's unaltered, historical identity. In other words, that which leads to Quincy's change is also that which is invoked in order to express its enduring stability.

It might be suggested, though, that transmitting the living continuity of one's history through recourse to the characteristics of a dead, inert rock is an exchange that comes at a considerable price. In many respects, the historical marker stone that Andre reproduces in his *Quincy Book* is nothing but a

testament to this. For what is it other than a gravestone to Quincy's lost origins? It is its fidelity to the absent place where the tree once stood that brings to consciousness so forcibly the fact that there once was something here that has now vanished. Once there was a cedar at this place; now that place is filled with a stylised picture of the tree and a short text on a rock. In fact, if it is going to be insisted that the monument connects the past with the present, then it does so only by bringing the past back as an overwhelming absence. As such, the inscription MANET in the city's seal acquires a certain irony when written on this particular stone, for what actually remains at this spot is only itself – the granite stone.



Quincy Book, image 32

Of course, it should not be forgotten that the marker was erected only to locate and memorialise the tree and the hill because both are represented in the city's seal. It has been positioned at this spot just off Samoset Road in order to hold onto the seal's referent at all costs: it is there to show that the topographical image represented in the seal is merely a picturesque generic image, but does actually refer to the very particular place that it does. Therefore, we might say that this stone is intended to serve primarily as a form of validation, in the same way as the gold ingot does for the bank notes that circulate in its place.

However, it has to be said that the very desire to build such a monument could also be seen as a refusal to accept that a seal is merely a privileged form of signage. Its authority is never exclusively anchored to the location to which it

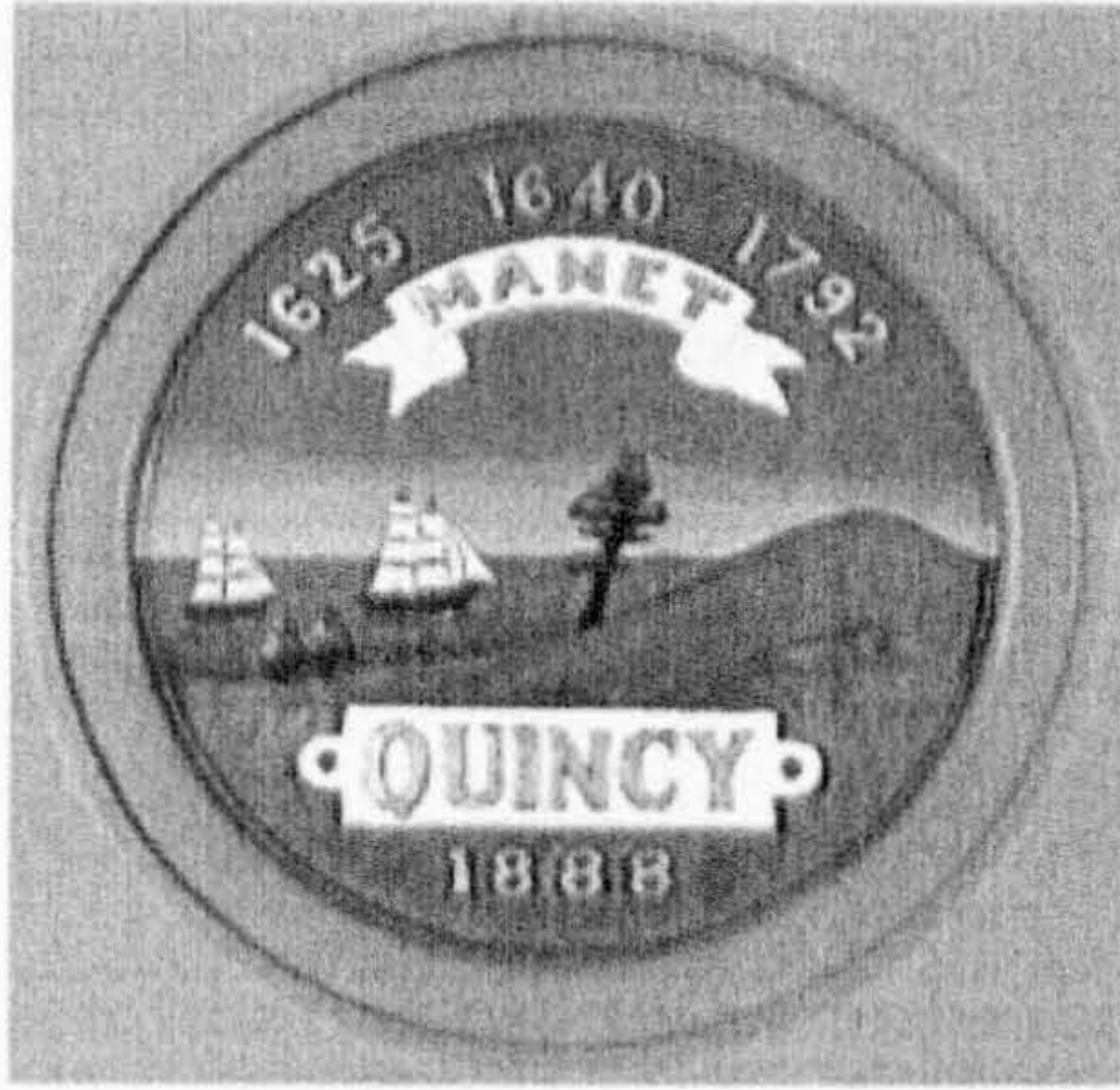
might happen to refer, but is held in its capacity to be repeatedly and consistently deployed in differing and varying contexts. Indeed, the very fact that the seal is able to still carry meaning in the absence of the landscape that gave it its defining features should serve as evidence, at the very least, that its authority is wholly located in the realm of representation. This solitary monument, on the other hand, seems to display a considerable discomfort about this feature of signification.

It is perhaps for this reason that the marker stone could be thought so revealing of Andre's own sculptural practice. For essentially, if the monument was erected to validate the official signature of the city, then its ideological and civic function is to render the quality of 'remaining' into something visible and absolute. After all, it is the seal with its motto that authorises an attribute of the raw material – granite – to be stamped and inscribed across all forms of the city's official discourse, so that the ideal of granite's permanence and authority can be apportioned to it. Indeed, the seal is still used in this way to this day: it is there on Quincy's official website, and for many years it has presided over the Chambers of the City Council in the form of a large, imposing roundel.¹⁹



The City Council of 1956-57

¹⁹ See www.scstest.com/quincy/cityseal.asp.



The Quincy Seal from Quincy's official website (August 2005)



Quincy Book, Image 31

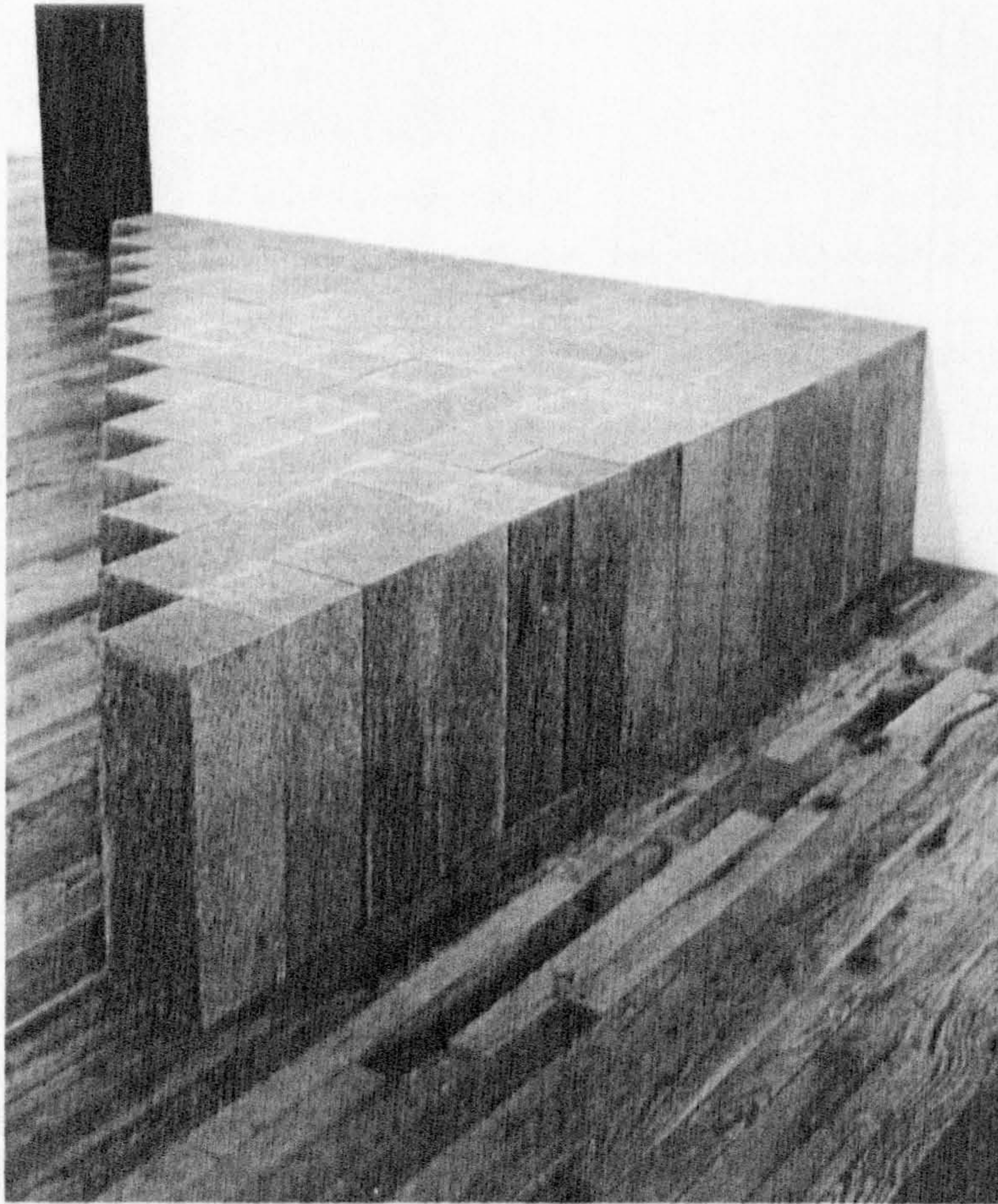
This particular monument, then, assumes a considerably ideologically charged role, for it is required to mediate between the physical material, granite, and all civic discourse. If we recall the Quincy maxim, the city's fame is predicated on the fact that the city endures: its fame and its longevity are synonymous. And that the city remains is predicated of the persistent presence of this hill. But what is more, since the tree no longer stands, all emphasis has to be placed on this remaining hill. However, granite is always the substance that underwrites this economy of exchanges, substitutions and investments. So much so, in fact, that we might say that in Quincy, geology becomes the city's preferred historical metaphor. In this sense, the memorial itself might be said to return this abstract quality – 'remaining' – back to the raw material from which the quality derives.

And perhaps Andre could be said to have accomplished a similar returning of quality to material when he made a work from ninety-one small Quincy granite blocks in 1980 for a New York gallery.²⁰ Each block was just eighteen inches high and six inches thick, easily lifted with a pair of gloved hands and capable of being gently transported into its chosen arrangement – a triangular formation with one edge flush against the wall. The work juts out sharply into the room, and the zigzag hypotenuse with its sharp angles makes it clearer than it already is that this sculpture is constituted from separate segments merely placed adjacent to one another. This work is not a solid entity, nor is it

²⁰ Paula Cooper Gallery, 26 March - 19 April 1980. For two reviews of this exhibition that make reference to this work, see John Russell, 'Carl Andre' *New York Times*, 4 April 1980, p. C17 and John Ashbery, 'Major Andre', *New York Magazine*, 14 April 1980, pp. 97-98.

marking a particular location. It has to be reconstituted on every occasion that it is displayed: it is both a restitution and a fragmented remainder.

The sculpture is titled *Manet*.



Manet, 1980

Chapter 5

**'Realized and Unrealized':
America Drill**

While the French word, and its derivative in English, citation is linked to judgement, and to court appearance, the words quote [and] quotation are related to the concept of convention of number and measure (the Latin quota 'how many,' 'as many'). Apparently, to quote, then, originally meant to divide into chapters and verses [...]. Numbering the verses of a poem is the same gesture as separating one discourse from another – it involves the establishment of practical boundaries and provisional entities.

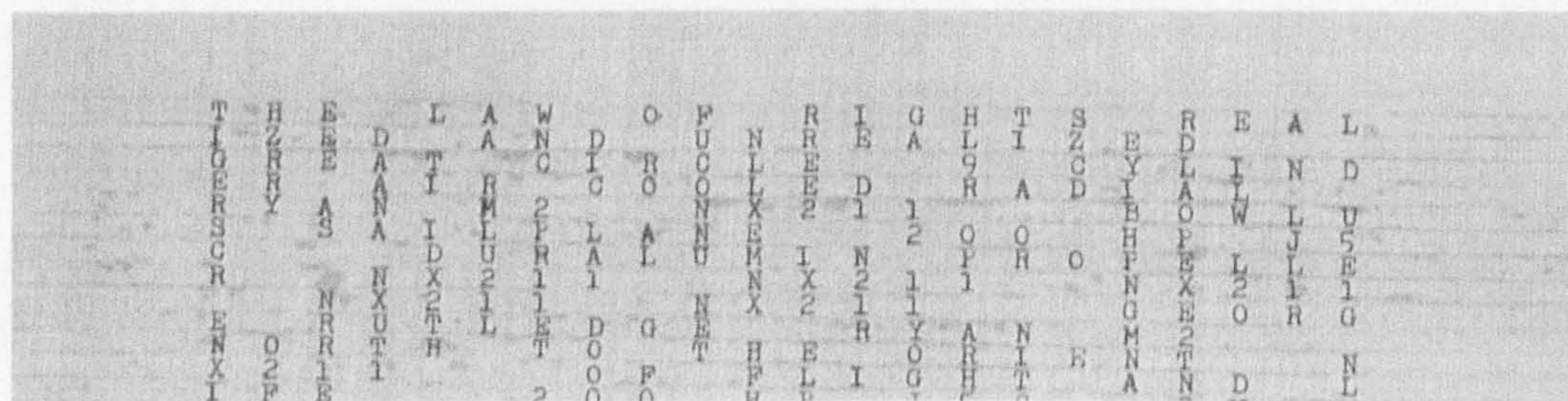
Claudette Sartillot, 1993¹

The word 'restitution' is generally conceived as the restoration of a state that had been deemed lost: it is a returning, a giving-back. It also has the legal association of recompense for injuries or loss; *restitutio in integrum* is the term that defines the restoration of an injured party to the circumstances that would have prevailed had no injury been sustained. In the previous chapters in this section, I have been arguing that such efforts at restoration might be said to provide the impetus for much of Carl Andre's practice, and especially so when he returned to his Quincy upbringing as a subject for his art. Reading 'Quincy' in relation to his work, I suggest, allows us to explore his considerable investment in the question of memorialisation and the transmission of the past. In emphasising the term restitution here I want to stress also that this art is powerfully oriented by a sense of loss or depletion. But, in Andre's practice, the motor that drives the need for recompense in the face of this loss results only in an art composed of particles and fragments. Consequently, it is difficult to say that a full and integral restoration is ever properly accomplished. In his various works, the joints are too loose and the disconnections simply too evident for the reader or viewer to be left with any reassuring sense that the restoration is anything other than partial and utterly provisional. But in many respects, this is what gives his work its

¹ Claudette Sartillot, *Citation and Modernity: Derrida, Joyce and Brecht* (Norman, OK and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), pp. 22-23.

import, for it is only because the restitution is fragmentary that it accords such a powerful and forceful form to the very *work* – the exertions – of restoration.

Indeed, these efforts towards restitution can often appear excessive and utterly relentless – as in *America Drill*, a long poem which dates from the years before Andre had succeeded in finding either a gallery or even a forum for displaying his sculptures publicly.² Lacking resources to make much sculpture at that time, he turned his attention more towards his poetry, with which, it seems, he had always been engaged. But the poetry he developed in the early years of the 1960s is so un-lyrical and works so effectively against the general standards of sense-making, that only a mere handful of his poems have been discussed in much detail.³ *America Drill*, for instance, seems to have been almost entirely overlooked. But in a sense, this is not entirely surprising, for it is comprised solely of quotations arranged according to a pre-ordained number system, and runs to forty-three pages in length. At first sight, there is something deeply bewildering about the way these ticker-tape ribbons of print bearing their curious half-sentences and phrases have been meticulously pasted into their appropriate place on the page. In some respects, it might be said it is a poem that puts the nature of ‘reading’ itself into question.



America Drill, page 1, opening lines

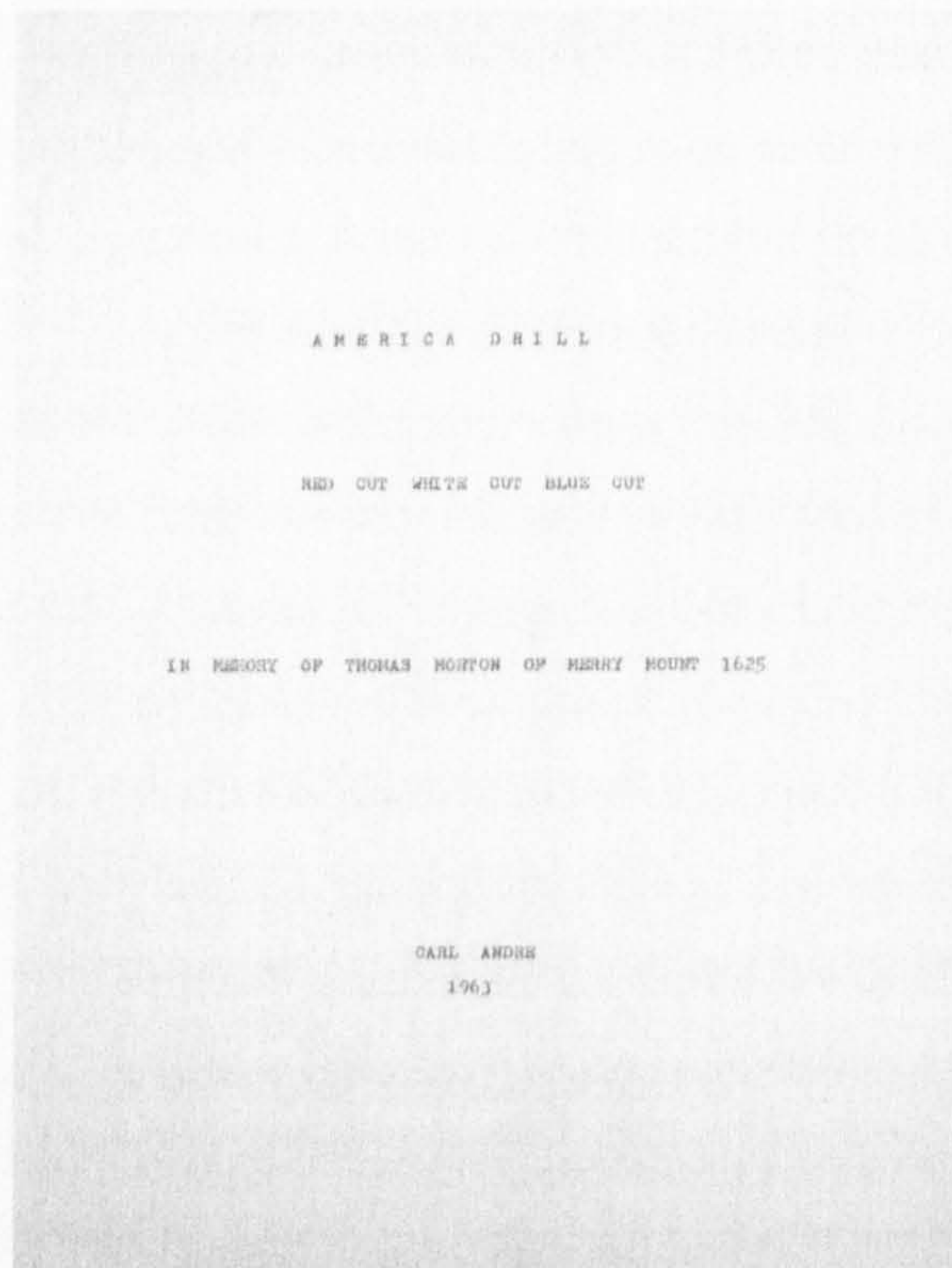
² Carl Andre, *America Drill* [1963]. The poem was first published as a bound, Xerox facsimile as part of *Seven Facsimile Books of Poetry*, ed. by Seth Siegelaub, 1969. *America Drill* has recently been republished in a colour facsimile edition (Les Maitres de Forme Contemporains/ Michèle Didier and Paula Cooper Gallery, 2003).

³ Most references to Andre's corpus of poems by art critics are motivated by a concern with identifying associations between his poems and his sculptures. Although I discuss some of their shared characteristics in the following chapter, I do not draw out the connections between the two genres here – at least explicitly. To date, I am not aware of any extensive commentary on the overt historical and political subject matter in the poems.

'The law of rights realized and unrealized' are the poem's opening words; indeed, justice and legitimacy recur as running themes throughout the sources of the poem. The texts range from books on Charles A. Lindbergh, to a history textbook on John Brown, to a nineteenth-century account of the indigenous Wampanoags from Massachusetts, and Emerson's diaries. But in many respects, they are so reflective of Andre's personal interests that ultimately the quotations from them are only coherently held together in *America Drill* by the strict, regimenting system that organises and arranges the whole. And perhaps at some level this is part of the purpose of the system; it becomes a means of assimilating eclectic material into one all-containing totality. Andre's mathematical schema might be said to work like a giant sorting machine, plucking out quotations, breaking them down into barely recognisable units and then mindlessly, mechanically drilling them into long, repetitive strings. Not without reason did Robert Smithson call his poems 'rigorous incantatory arrangements'.⁴ Here, everything fed into this system seems capable of being reduced to an equivalence and rendered endlessly exchangeable. Yet Andre's means of cutting his sources down and reassembling them into a homogenised, shredded assemblage does deserve to be taken as a form of restitution. It is – even according to his own terms – a means of giving a voice to some of the injustices that have been exacted in the name of 'America'. That the voices only drone and hum like machines seems part of the point. However, in order to better grasp what is at stake here, at least some familiarisation with *America Drill's* numerous subjects and references is required. It is my aim to suggest that if disconnection and fragmentation emerges as the eventual subject of this poem, then *America Drill* also implies that this is a direct consequence of the history it has to narrate.

*

⁴ Robert Smithson, 'A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art' [1968], in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. by Jack Flam (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 79-80.



America Drill, frontispiece, page a

First, let me assemble a few thoughts on *America Drill*'s title, which is printed on a separate frontispiece, above the words 'Red Cut White Cut Blue Cut'. A 'drill' might connote military training, or a tool for boring into a solid material, and both of these definitions have metaphorical associations that are eminently applicable here.⁵ Moreover, the term 'drilling' is also used in the context of railroad freight transportation, and since Andre was working as a freight brakeman on the Pennsylvania Railroad in New Jersey whilst composing the poem, this could also be a potentially relevant reference point.⁶ Also, in an

⁵ For example, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *12 Dialogues: 1962-1963*, Andre mentions to Hollis Frampton that he has been 'drilling into the burden' of one of his source texts. See p. 78.

⁶ Andre had worked on the Pennsylvania Railroad in New Jersey between March 1960 until March 1964, when, according to his own account, he had been involved in a major train wreck involving twenty heavily-laden cars (see Andrea Gould, 'Dialogues with Carl Andre', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 48, no. 8 (May 1974), pp. 27-28, p. 27). It seems likely that he had taken up this line of work partially due to the influence to his close school-friend, Michael Chapman, who was already working on the railroads. (See Nicholas Serota, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-1978*, Exhibition Catalogue, 1978, unpaginated.) In his written dialogue with Hollis Frampton from March 1963, he is more exact about the location of where he worked, referencing the Greenville Yard. This is near Jersey City and remains one of the major yards of the area, providing a connection to New England and Long Island via the Cross Harbor car floats. (See Carl Andre, *12 Dialogues: 1962-63*, p. 77.) Hollis Frampton also talks of him 'bringing home fabricated scrap iron bits picked up along the tracks: a hook, a spring, bearing balls', which he turned in small, provisional sculptures. (See Hollis Frampton, 'Letter to Enno Develing', in *Carl Andre* [1969], Exhibition Catalogue, 1975, p. 10.) Also, in a short paragraph Andre wrote on Lee Lozano in

interview in 1972, he specifically used the word 'drilling' as a metaphor to describe his artistic practice. His job had entailed, he explained, 'shunting cars around to sidings of industries and making up trains and, as trains would come in, breaking them down, classifying them: the operation of making up and breaking down. Drilling, its called. Drilling strings of cars.' This was very much like his work, he suggested, 'taking identical units, or close to identical units, and shifting them around.'⁷

Also significant, perhaps, is the fact that the task of breaking down a string of cars from a train is called 'cutting'. One of the jobs of a freight brakeman is to use a hand-operated 'cut lever' to lift the couple pin and release the knuckle in order to separate the cars. Furthermore, a 'cut' is also the name given to a series of cars that have been coupled together. So in the language used on the railroad, the word can refer both to a string of joined cars on a track *and* to the act of separating them.⁸ In which case, a 'cut' of cars is a term that carries with it an awareness that it is always only a provisional sequence of separate units that are capable of being dissociated at any time. This also provides some insight into why the three sections that comprise this poem might be called 'Cuts'. But these cuts do not follow after each other – dividing the work into, for instance, three 'chapters'. Instead, like railroad tracks they run parallel to one another through the length of the poem. And since they are named after the colours of the Stars and Stripes, we might suggest that the poem implies that it is 'America' that is being drilled, as though the nation were a series of sortable commodities, or a certain allocated tonnage of boxed freight in the shunting yard.

*

1983, he mentions that she became the recipient of his 'massive, brass Pennsylvania Railroad switch key [...] the sign of my authority over those rights of way.' (See Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 134.)

⁷ Carl Andre, 'Taped Interview with Carl Andre', 1972, in Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 222.

⁸ There are a number of on-line lexicons of North American railroad terms, but the one I found the most comprehensive is from the website of the Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen. See www.brs72.org/BRS72.org/BRS-RRTALK.html.

Union is what it wanted. And it has never felt that union has been achieved. Hence its terror of dissent, which does not threaten its power but its integrity. So it is killing itself and killing another country in order not to admit its helplessness in the face of suffering, in order not to acknowledge its separateness.

Stanley Cavell, 1969⁹

We might also acquire an insight into the poem's relation to 'America' by considering the work's dedication, which reads:

IN MEMORY OF THOMAS MORTON OF MERRY MOUNT 1625

Andre's willingness to accredit Morton certainly goes against the grain of most evocations of his name within the US literary tradition. The narrative of Morton's life has prompted, as one critic put it, only 'a body of literature rich in false-priests, Machiavellis and anti-heroes.'¹⁰ Meanwhile, historians have been equally unsympathetic: 'a worthless rake'¹¹, 'a born Bohemian and reckless libertine, without either morals or religion',¹² 'a vagabond, whose presence it was impossible to endure'¹³, are some of the epithets that have been accorded to him. However, Morton's name is indelibly associated with the Mount Wallaston region of Quincy where Andre grew up, and his reference to him undoubtedly has much to do with this local connection.¹⁴

⁹ Stanley Cavell, 'The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of King Lear', in *Must We Mean What We Say?* [1969] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 345.

¹⁰ Robert J. Gangewere, 'Thomas Morton: Character and Symbol in a Minor American Epic', in *Discoveries and Considerations: Essays on Early American Literature and Aesthetics*, ed. by Calvin Israel (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1976), pp. 189-203, p. 189.

¹¹ James Truslow Adams, 'Thomas Morton', in *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. by Dumas Malone, 20 vols (New York: Charles Scribner, 1934), XIII, p. 267.

¹² Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History*, 3 vols (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), I, p. 170.

¹³ John Gorham Palfrey, *History of New England*, 4 vols (New York: A.M.S., 1966), I, p. 233. Cited in John P. McWilliams, 'Fictions of Merry Mount', *American Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Spring 1977), pp. 3-30, p. 13.

¹⁴ Carl Andre has made allusions to Thomas Morton on a number of occasions in poems and sculptures. In the spring of 1980, when his large, travelling retrospective ('Carl Andre Sculpture 1959-1977') made its way to Boston, Andre added a work to the display entitled *Merrymount*, an allusion to the old name of the hillock where Morton established his settlement, and the name of the part of Quincy where he was brought up. In the February of that same year, Andre displayed two further works at the Lopoukhine Nayduch Gallery in Boston that make reference to this same location: *Mount Wallaston* and *Maypole Hill*. Maypole Hill is the current name of the hillock: the maypole is a reference to Morton's settlement. Again, at an exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York in April 1992, Andre produced another work called *Merrymount*. During November and December 1983, Andre exhibited a large sculpture in Quincy Granite at the Institute of Art

In Quincy itself, however, there is very little that ensures Thomas Morton remains 'in memory', despite the fact he was the first English settler to establish a successful base on this section of coastline. In the city's authorised histories, it is the sea-captain of the boat on which Morton sailed, and who is known only as 'Wallaston', who is accorded that privilege. Yet Wallaston's plantation, which was established in 1625, proved to be a failure, and after enduring one gruelling Massachusetts winter he decided to sail south to Virginia, taking most of his indentured men with him. Morton, who had been part of that enterprise, opted to remain behind, and it was thanks to him that the settlement eventually became sustainable. However, as one historian recently pointed out, there are currently only two public memorials to Morton in Quincy: a street-sign listing his offences, and the minimal reference on the memorial stone at the base of Maypole Hill.¹⁵ That stone is, of course, the granite slab commemorating the place where the cedar tree once stood. Tacked on beneath that inscription is the phrase, 'Nearby was the site of the Maypole erected by Thomas Morton May 1627'. The 'nearby' is symptomatic, seemingly, of the reticence of Quincy's official historians to recall his history with much willingness or precision. No doubt, Andre thought otherwise, and we should speculate as to what might be at stake in his own memorialisation of Morton.

Ostensibly, the cause of Thomas Morton's notoriety is thanks to the nature of the settlement he established at Quincy and the company he is believed to have kept. In 1626 or 1627, at a place close to this hillock, he and some of the remaining indentured men from Wallaston's ship built themselves a small trading-post, which Morton called 'Ma-re Mount'. The name was intended to be a Latinate pun, carrying all manner of Elizabethan sexual innuendos, although

and Urban Resources at the Clocktower in New York, which he named *A Memorial to After Ages*. This phrase derives from a citation from Morton's book, *The New English Canaan*, which was published in 1637. For the source, see Jack Dempsey, ed., *New English Canaan by Thomas Morton of 'Merrymount': Text and Notes* (Scituate, MA: Digital Scanning, 2000), p. 134. In 1976, Andre had also published a poem with that same title. See his 'From Commentaries: 'The Hanging of John Brown', 'Duty of Water: Ashile Gorky', 'A Memorial to After Ages', *Big Deal*, no. 4 (Fall 1976), pp. 124-137.

¹⁵ Jack Dempsey, ed., *New English Canaan*, p. xxvii.

with time, it became known simply as 'Merry Mount'.¹⁶ There, in 1627 he erected an eighty-foot maypole and inaugurated a series of traditional English May Day festivities, which included drinking, dancing and close fraternisation with the indigenous, Algonquian-speaking natives.

However, Ma-re Mount soon attracted the disapproval of the Pilgrim Fathers, who were encamped several miles to the south at Plymouth. Famously, William Bradford later described their revelries at Ma-re Mount as 'the beasly practiecies of the madd Bacchinalians' and of Morton as 'lord of misrule', maintaining '(as it were) a schoole of Athisme.'¹⁷ Within a year, they had succeeded in arresting and imprisoning him, and in the summer of 1628 he was summarily shipped back across the Atlantic. But once in England, Morton was immediately released, for under British jurisdiction he had committed no crime, and in the New World there was no legitimately independent authority. So, he returned to 'New England' in the following year, convinced the law of the Crown was on his side. In his absence, however, the Puritans, who were now under the orders of the recently arrived Captain John Endicott, had felled his maypole. Despite this setback Morton soon took up residence again at his old camp. It is assumed he carried on as before, until late in 1629, when he was recaptured. After a mock trial, he found himself incarcerated in Boston for the winter, and once more sent back to England in the spring. This time, though, he nearly starved to death during the long journey. However, he survived, and not unsurprisingly became one of the most prominent and effective opponents of the Massachusetts Puritan settlers during the 1630s.¹⁸

Although the Puritan perspective on Morton continued to be the one that historians preferred to adopt long into the twentieth century, over time there have

¹⁶ See Jack Dempsey, ed., *New English Canaan*, p. 134 n. 446. Historians and writers have tended not to be consistent in their spelling of Merry Mount, sometimes hyphenating it, and sometimes writing it as one word.

¹⁷ William Bradford, *History of the Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, 2 vols (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1912), II, p. 48 (spelling as in the original).

¹⁸ For histories of Thomas Morton, see Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), I, pp. 331-34, 362-63, 406-09, Donald F. Connors, *Thomas Morton* (New York: Twayne, 1969) and Jack Dempsey, *Thomas Morton of Merry Mount: The Life and Renaissance of a New England Poet* (Scituate, MA: Digital Scanning, 2000).

been occasional attempts to defend this figure. Some writers have turned to him as a means of establishing a counter-history to the dominant account which accredits the Pilgrim Fathers as the nation's true spiritual founders. His resistance to the Puritans has often been seen as a humane riposte to their cheerless and venomous brand of asceticism. Sometimes, he has been depicted as a figure somehow 'in touch' with the grandeur of an un-European wilderness and its peoples, in a way the Pilgrim Fathers simply were not. (Frequently, it should be added, interracial sex plays a considerable role in the discussions.)¹⁹ These, at any rate, are the somewhat simplistic terms that have set the parameters of his reinstatement.²⁰

It may well be the case that Morton appealed to Andre for these reasons. The date that Andre accords him in *America Drill's* dedication – 1625 – records the moment Morton is believed to have first reached Massachusetts on Captain Wallaston's ship. A date intended to imply, maybe, that his arrival on these shores heralds the possibility of a different kind of 'America', one that might not have led so inexorably to the Salem witch hunts, or Prohibition.

But there is a further point that deserves to be emphasised here. It concerns the way in which renditions of Morton's life often focus attention on the very question of the legitimacy of the United States itself. And to consider this, we need to ask why it is that Morton is so easy to villainize. After all, for every literary or historical allusion to Morton – from Nathaniel Hawthorne to Robert Lowell – there seem to be at least two more that feel obliged to vindicate his destruction at the hands of the Puritans.²¹ In fact, Hawthorne's famous version of the tale from the 1930s is a case in point. Endicott is described as 'the

¹⁹ 'As Morton laid his hands, roughly perhaps but lovingly, upon the flesh of his Indian consorts, so the Puritans laid theirs with malice, with envy', writes Dr. William Carlos Williams, for instance, in his 1925 discussion of Morton from *In the American Grain* (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1966), p. 80. William's chapter is written specifically in opposition to the moralistic judgementalism of Charles Francis Adams Jr., who was especially concerned as to whether or not Morton respected the dignity on the Algonquian women. See in particular his long introduction 'Thomas Morton of Merry-Mount', in his edited edition of the *New English Canaan of Thomas Morton* (Boston: Prince Society, 1883), pp. 1-98.

²⁰ See, for instance, Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1963).

²¹ See Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The May-Pole of Merry Mount' [1836, 37], in *Tales and Sketches* (New York: Library of America, 1981), and Robert Lowell, *Endicott and the Red Cross*, in *The Old Glory* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964).

severest Puritan of all who laid the rock-foundation of New England'. His short story revolves around how he 'rescues' two young revellers from the jaded pleasure-seekers who have congregated at Merry Mount.²² The tale ends with him and his men leading the pair away, and – we are led to presume – in due course they too will be transformed into those pious Pilgrim planters who helped establish 'New England's foundations'. Morton, on the other hand, is generally understood as a figure who laid no societal foundations of any kind, and who was concerned solely with personal self-interest. Most likely this was far from the case. But history has preferred to remember him simply as a libertine – or an antinomian.²³ In contrast, and despite the overwhelming evidence of their cruelty and vindictiveness, the Puritans are regularly esteemed by historians in the United States because they were seen as willing to postpone their personal interests for those of the corporate good.²⁴ And within a certain dominant tradition, Morton's life history often becomes an occasion for vindicating the necessity of a collective – mostly understood as a fledgling version of the 'American' state – to thoroughly punish those who refuse to play along.²⁵ Recounting the history of the destruction of Thomas Morton's Merry Mount might then be said to become at some level an opportunity for a collective to legitimate the use of violence in order to protect its founding ideologies. In fact, in Robert Lowell's 1964 play, *Endicott and the Red Cross*, which was based on

²² Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The May-Pole of Merry Mount', p. 370. For a further discussion of this tale, see Michael J. Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 251-82.

²³ Sacvan Bercovitch argues that what he calls the American Puritan tradition has mostly wanted to distance itself from the antinomian impulse within Lutheran Protestantism, since it refuses to conjoin its concern with personal salvation to that of the corporate body. Bercovitch does not equate Morton with the antinomians directly, although he does point out that Morton's invectives against Puritan theocracy bear a considerable similarity to the antinomian arguments of Roger Williams. Were we to convert these terms to the profane realm (in many respects pursuing the same logic as Bercovitch himself), then we might suggest that, at least from the dominant historical perspective, Morton's economic and personal self-interest displays an equivalently 'reprehensible' disinterest in the welfare of the collective whole. See Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 110.

²⁴ Max Weber points out that the early history of the North American colonies is dominated by the sharp contrast between adventurers who wanted to set up small fiefdoms with indentured servants and live as feudal lords, and the specifically middle-class outlook of the Puritans. The former, he identifies as representatives of "merrie old England", and he compares their outlook from that of the Puritans, whose worldly restraint he identifies as advancing the development of 'a rational bourgeois economic life'. See *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Unwin, 1970), p. 173.

²⁵ See, for example, Perry Miller's passing reference to Morton in his *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts: 1630-1650* [1933] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 212-213.

Morton's altercation with the Puritans, Endicott comes to resemble a Cold War politician, a Robert MacNamara figure, who finds himself forced to mete out punishment because he knows in the long run it is the 'right' course of action. But he wishes passionately that right now he could just walk away and leave their encampment alone.²⁶ As it is, he has the Indians shot and Merry Mount razed to the ground.²⁷

With this in mind, we might suggest that by dedicating *America Drill* to 'Thomas Morton of Merry Mount', Andre evokes a figure who thoroughly lost out at the hands of the Puritans. And, more importantly, he is also a stock figure who falls foul of those dominant fictions for which 'America' supposedly stands. That should serve as a certain indication of *America Drill's* libertarian sympathies, and it assists in focusing attention on the extent to which the poem is concerned with giving a voice to those who have found themselves at the mercy of state-legitimated violence. This, at any rate, is what I aim to draw out here.

*

[...] the document was always treated as the language of a voice since reduced to silence – its fragile, but possibly decipherable trace.

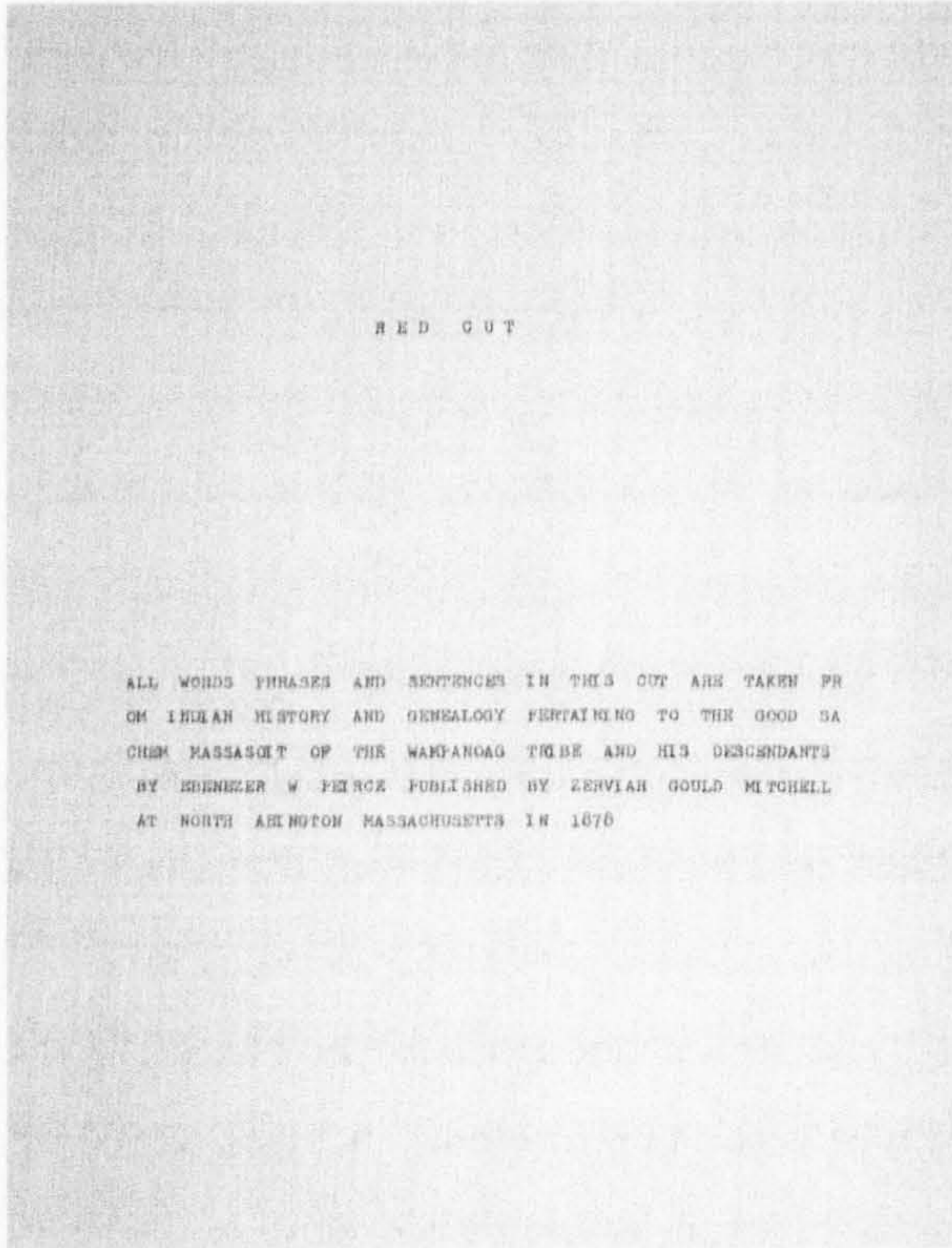
Michel Foucault, 1969²⁸

In order to gain a purchase on the poem's organisational structure, *America Drill* should perhaps be read in close conjunction with Andre's own exegeses. Of course, this is not to suggest that the poem can *only* be appreciated once we know how the system operates in all its detailed particularity. Certainly, I suspect few would deny that these repetitive and stuttering strings of words – these dispersed gobbets of unattributed speech – assume a particular rhythm and become uncannily moving.

²⁶ With regards to a more general consideration of the way in which a state monopolises its use of legitimate violence, see Max Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 78.

²⁷ Robert Lowell, *Endicott and the Red Cross*, p. 57.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 7.



America Drill, page b

But for an account of how Andre eventually arrived at *America Drill*'s singular form, we should first turn to one of his regular conversations conducted over the keys of his typewriter with Hollis Frampton.²⁹ In a dialogue from 3 March 1963, Andre tells Frampton that for about six years (he is now twenty-seven) he has been in the possession of a book called *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*, by E. W. Peirce.³⁰ It was originally acquired, he explains, by his friend Michael Chapman at one of Columbia University's remainder book sales. Both of them had been intrigued by it because it related to the area around southeast Massachusetts where they had grown up. In particular, Andre had been engrossed by the extensive account that it contained of King Philip's War, the name that history has accorded the series of skirmishes that the indigenous Wampanoags, Pocumtucks, Nipmucks and Narragansetts waged between 1675

²⁹ Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, 'On Certain Poems and Consecutive Matters', in *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, pp. 75-80.

³⁰ E. W. Peirce, *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy: Pertaining to the Good Sachem Massasoit of the Wampanoag Tribe and his Descendants* (Boston: Zerviah Gould Mitchell, 1978).

and 1677 against the English colonists.³¹ For Andre, it might seem, this war was not only of interest to him as local history, but because it somehow served as a means of addressing the questionable legitimacy of the United States itself. 'The belligerents in King Philip's War were fighting for their lives and for the lands which my people came to live upon', he tells Frampton. However, Andre does not elaborate much more than this at this stage. Instead he merely goes on to explain how, over the intervening years, he has used this book as a source from which to compose poems.³²

Indian History, Biography and Genealogy is relatively small and compact, bound in shiny black moleskin with gold lettering on the spine. It was published privately by Zerviah Gould Mitchell in 1878, who was herself a Wampanoag. She claimed to be directly descended from the Sachem Massasoit who had ruled in the Mount Hope region of New England when the Pilgrim Fathers had landed on the Atlantic seaboard in 1620. Her motivation for turning to publishing were both general and specific:

My object in bringing this work before the public is not only to show that I am a lineal descendant in the seventh generation, from the great and good Massasoit, whom both the red and white man now venerate and honour, but also to make record of the wrongs which during all these generations have been endured by my race.³³

More urgently, however, she wanted to make record of her rights to the logging profits that a certain Josiah Winslow was deriving from a tract of land that had originally belonged to the Wampanoag people. Winslow had believed there to be no known descendants who might still require remuneration, and it was Zerviah Gould Mitchell's express intention to make her identity very much a living presence, wryly pronouncing that 'when it was thought by him that all the

³¹ One of the clearest narratives of the war is still to be found in Douglas Edward Leach's *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* (New York: Macmillan, 1958). Leach's account should be read however in conjunction with Jill Leport's thoughtful socio-historical discussion of the war and its enduring legacy on identity politics in the U.S. See Jill Leport, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

³² Carl Andre, *Twelve Dialogues. 1962-1963*, pp. 76-77.

³³ Zerviah Gould Mitchell, 'Preface', in E. W. Peirce, *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*, p. iii.

Indians were dead, one was dug right up out of the grave.’³⁴ Her case had failed in the Massachusetts courts, and now aged seventy-one, she instead confided her status and reputation in the hands of the local, professional genealogist, Ebenezer W. Peirce.



Ebenezer W. Peirce

Peirce produced for Mitchell a dense and unwieldy tome, which intersperses large wedges of unprocessed documentary material with long, personal lectures. Andre describes it as an ‘eccentric treasure’.³⁵ The book is subdivided into three cumbersome chapters, followed by the extensive genealogical section and eleven appendices. The chapters describe the three leaders of the Wampanoags who are known to western historians – Massasoit, Wamsutta and Metacom, or King Philip. Peirce also provides an account of the tribe’s fate from around the time of the arrival of the English in 1620 to the death of Metacom in August 1676, following his ultimately unsuccessful but nonetheless devastating uprising against the English settlers. He constructs his narrative from a series of long quotations from well-known sources, such as Bradford’s *History of the Plymouth Plantation*, *Mourt’s Relation*, and from Winslow’s ‘Good News from New England’.³⁶ The majority of the book – the long third chapter – is devoted to a convoluted account of King Philip’s War

³⁴ For an account of Zerviah Gould Mitchell and her daughters, see Jill Leport’s *The Name of War*, pp. 231-234.

³⁵ Carl Andre, ‘On Certain Poems’, *Twelve Dialogues*, p. 76.

³⁶ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*; *Mourt’s Relation: The Pilgrim Fathers: Or, the Journal of the Pilgrims of Plymouth, New England, in 1620* (Glasgow, London: W. Collins, 1849); Edward Winslow, ‘Good News from New England’ in *Histories and Writings: Library of American Puritan Writings; Vol. IX* (New York: AMS Press, 1986).

itself. Peirce clasps at details, drawn mostly from Benjamin Church's 1716 history, so that the overall sense is of a bewildering and bloody list of guerrilla scourges and English counter-attacks.³⁷

Certainly, Andre's interest in this history is not entirely removed from the New England tradition of voicing well-intentioned regret at the fate of the indigenous peoples. 'We in Massachusetts see the Indians only as a picturesque antiquity. Massachusetts, Shawmut, Samoset, Squantum, Nantasket, Narragansett, Assabet, Musketaquid. But where are the men?', railed Emerson in 1845.³⁸ More recently, however, this elegiac tone has come in for considerable criticism, presupposing as it does that the Indians' fate was simply incompatible with white man's civilization, and as though their 'vanishing' was simply inexorable. Brian W. Dippie has argued that the fatalism of this sentimental myth simply fails to acknowledge, amongst other things, indigenous Indians who are alive in the present – as was, for instance, Zerviah Gould Mitchell in the 1870s.³⁹ E. W. Peirce's volume certainly participates in such prejudice,⁴⁰ and for all his exertions to distance himself from Peirce, it might be suggested that Andre offers little that is considerably different from this either. In *America Drill*, for instance, Andre's final quotation pertaining to this source is 'whose bones for several years unburied bleached in the sun and were washed by the storms till whitening the localities of their former habitations'. It is a passage taken from the very start of Peirce's *Indian History*, and refers to the disastrous plague that struck the

³⁷ Benjamin Church, *The History of King Philip's War* [1716] (Boston: J. K. Wiggin, 1865).

³⁸ *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, 10 vols (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1909-14), VII, p. 23. Cited in Brian B. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1982), p. 32.

³⁹ Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, pp. 343-353. Howard Caygill makes a similar but more wide-reaching point when he argues that the general assumption that indigenous 'traditions' are destroyed by colonial discourses is little more than a new form of intellectual colonial administration. See Howard Caygill, 'The Present of Tradition', *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology*, vol. 26, no. 3 (October 1995), pp. 293-299, p. 296.

⁴⁰ The epigraph to Peirce's *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy* is a citation from the final scene of John Augustus Stone's nineteenth-century melodrama about the demise of the Wampanoags during King Philip's War, which bears many similarities to James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. It is called *Metamora, or The Last of the Wampanoags* and ends with the words: 'That king hath gone to his lowly grave/ [...] His people have passed away.' We might suggest that by voicing this mourning of the Wampanoag extinction, Peirce blatantly contravenes the very purpose of the book's genealogy, which was intended to demonstrate the Massasoit's continual survival. For an account of the play's remarkable popularity in the US during the 1830s and 1840s, see Jill Leport, *The Name of War*, pp. 192-197.

north-eastern Indian tribes several years prior to the English arrival in 1620. Historians estimate that nine-tenths of the population of the north-eastern seaboard died.⁴¹ But it could be argued that by terminating with this reference, *America Drill* presents just another version of the claim that the fate of the Wampanoags was complete extinction. Indeed, an earlier version of Andre's poem was called *Ode on the Disappearance of Indian Names*.

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In poetry, the politics lies first in the order of the words and the quality of the names. Yes, calling things by their right names.

Carl Andre, 1964⁴²

In a letter addressed to his friend Reno Odlin from 1964, Andre had written that his first attempt to exploit the lyric potential of *Indian History* was motivated by an aspiration to rescue 'the real urgency and the real suffering' of the Indians from the greasiness of Peirce's prose.⁴³ In this preliminary effort, he explains, he had collated about seven pages of selections from quotations of the indigenous Indians' direct speech.⁴⁴ And, in order to hold together 'these chants, cries, and laments,' he did nothing more than insert ampersands between the passages.⁴⁵ In a sense, we should perhaps see this as a process of extraction, a way of cutting out of all the nineteenth-century moralising in favour of the hard evidence of 'direct testimony'.⁴⁶ Ignored, for example, are passages such as this:

And now was enacted a scene thoroughly brutal in every feature of its character, and so disgraceful to the participants, that could I as a faithful historian do justice to the truth by altogether omitting each and every of its disgusting details I would most gladly do so, if it shames me to reflect that I am of the same blood and race with the Englishmen who could permit such an audacious outrage against the most ordinary claims of humanity and common decency, to say nothing of suggesting and putting

⁴¹ See Jack Dempsey, *Thomas Morton of Merrymount*, p. 139.

⁴² Carl Andre, Letter to Reno Odlin, January 5, 1964, in *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 192. In an interview from 1970, Andre ascribes this epigraph to Confucius. See Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', *Artforum*, vol. 8, no. 10 (June 1970), pp. 55-61, p. 60.

⁴³ Carl Andre, Apology for 'Ode on the Disappearance of Indian Names', in *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 201.

⁴⁴ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-63*, p. 77.

⁴⁵ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-63*, p. 201.

⁴⁶ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-63*, p. 199.

on foot the commission of the heinous offence. And even worse than all, after more than forty years of calm reflection had allowed the exercise of sober second thoughts, that he [Church] should boast of the commission of the crime as something to be proud of, and for which he expected to receive the praises of others, shows such an utter want of all the higher qualities, the refined and refining sentiments that distinguish me from brutes, the image of God from that of beasts and creeping things, that I have no words sufficiently to express my detestation of the act, or the contempt that I feel for the man whose heart was base enough to order its commission and even to boast of what ought ever after to have caused him to hide his face in shame and spend the remainder of his life in a repentance that needs not to be repented of.⁴⁷

Also omitted by Andre are any acknowledgement of the historical documents embedded in Peirce's book and from which he has mostly acquired his chosen quotations. There is no concern, for instance, with how the discourse of history itself has come to constitute their authenticity, prioritised them, ensured their preservation and allowed for their continual dissemination.⁴⁸ This is worth mentioning, simply because the very fact these chants and cries have been transmitted to us is thanks to the colonists who transcribed them. The Indians themselves did not record the events of King Philip's War.⁴⁹ In other words, Andre is only capable of approaching these historical protagonists and attempting to accord their voices with a sense of verisimilitude via the written documents of their antagonists. History simply has provided no other means.⁵⁰

Moreover, as a further observation, we might also suggest that Andre's aspiration to isolate and then decontextualise particles of source documents from Peirce's text relies on the notion that somehow the very sound of the words alone are capable of possessing a meaning that might be recovered. It almost implies

⁴⁷ E. W. Peirce, *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*, p. 159.

⁴⁸ These, at any rate, are kind of concerns that often appear to preoccupy modern historians. I am thinking, for instance, of the kind of distinction that Michel Foucault offers in his introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Writing in the late 1960s, he suggests that the traditional historical concern with interpreting documents as 'inert objects' that shed light on the events to which they refer has given way to a new concern with the document as an entity in its own right. In the past, he explains, 'history deciphered the traces left by men,' whilst now it 'deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities.' See pp. 7-8.

⁴⁹ See Jill Leport, *The Name of War*, p. 46.

⁵⁰ This historical predicament is insightfully discussed in Michel Foucault's meditation, 'The Life of Infamous Men', trans. Paul Foss and Meaghan Morris in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy* (Sydney: Feral, 1979).

that the signs themselves contain a privileged connection to their historical referent. And, in a sense, it could be argued that wanting to approximate these 'chants, cries and laments' from written texts to speech is not entirely dissimilar in its concern from the way in which the Puritans themselves attended to language. For example, Ann Kibbey argues in her discussion of Puritan rhetoric that the New England Protestants believed passionately 'that written texts were in some way fundamentally dependent for their intelligibility on their incorporation into speech' because 'sound – however transitory and precarious – was essential.'⁵¹ She goes on to suggest that early preachers were relentlessly preoccupied with the wording and phraseology of biblical phrases because they were adamant that the acoustic resonance of words themselves possessed a privileged relation to spiritual truth.⁵² In other words, they believed there was an intrinsic meaning to be discovered in the relation between the audible figures and their referent. However, Kibbey also points out that although it might be assumed this would invariably lead to a concern with the way language relates to a material world exterior to itself, this is not entirely the case. In fact, by believing that signifiers contain their referents, Puritan rhetoricians were all the more inclined to assume that the interplay and juxtaposition of words alone could disclose knowledge – and, more to the point, accomplish this in the absence of any further explication or supplementary contextualisation.⁵³

In turn, we might infer that a similar relation to written language impels Andre's reiteration *and* his decontextualisation of the direct speech of the indigenous Indians. His transcriptions might be seen to imply that these words convey the pure sense of the matter *in and of themselves* – as though the words and phrases have an underlying significance that only needs to be properly fathomed.⁵⁴ Of course I am trading in generalisations here, but I say it merely to

⁵¹ Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 8.

⁵² Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism*, pp. 18-19.

⁵³ Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism*, p. 21.

⁵⁴ This, in many respects, might be thought true of Andre's poetry in general. In a 1968 interview, Andre once said that he had always attempted to treat words as equivalent and independent elements as much as possible, adding that he also believed with Benjamin Lee Whorf that 'the crypto-structures of language carry as much of the message as the semantic.' See Willoughby Sharp, 'Carl Andre', *Avalanche*, no. 1 (1970), p. 8. Andre's reference to Whorf is illuminating, for Wharf was an early proponent of a cultural linguistic relativism, upholding that

point out that, although Andre's aspiration to recover the voices and cries of the indigenous Indians may be very different in aspiration and intent from those of the colonists, his means for accomplishing this are not easily distinguished from their own.

We should also bear this in mind when Andre mines *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy* for a second time. He soon reached the conclusion that even his list of cries and exclamations culled from Peirce's text was 'too unwieldy' for his purposes.⁵⁵ This verdict might strike us as curious. It implies he was in search of linguistic units that were compact enough and sufficiently self-contained for him to shunt around with ease, and which were not reliant on the context of Peirce's text in any form. 'My first insight into my own intentions came one night when I was working as a stooge, or independent brakeman on the Westbound Hump of the Greenville Yards', explained Andre to Frampton. 'At three o'clock in the dark morning, I quite suddenly realized that the only dissociation complete enough for my purposes was the reduction of Peirce's text into its smallest constituent elements: the isolation of each word.'⁵⁶ However, we might also suggest that the only reason Andre is able to assume that isolated words still have any association with Indian history at all, is because of a strong conviction that words alone, despite being quarantined from their source, are *still* capable of carrying a meaning.

Ostensibly, distilling poetry down to just individual words is by no means a position that is entirely unique to Andre. In some respects, it could be seen as an eminently modernist one. For instance, we might look to William Carlos Williams, who also chose to espouse the poetic potential of the single word –

all languages segment and categorise experiences in differing ways. He was especially interested in categorising a language's 'crypto-categories', which he understood as those structures that easily escape notice, 'and yet may have profound influence on linguistic behaviour.' See his 'Grammatical Categories', in *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. by John B. Carroll (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 92. We might speculate that Andre perhaps found in Whorf a confirmation for his style of concrete poetry, because he understood him as implying that words in their isolation were rich in significance, as embedded in them were various deep and hidden strata of socially specific information.

⁵⁵ Carl Andre, 'Apology for 'Ode on the Disappearance of Indian Names' [1963], in *Cuts: Texts, 1959-2004*, p. 201.

⁵⁶ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-63*, p. 77.

isolated, complete and freed from all grammar. Like Andre, Williams was concerned with 'that essence which is hidden in the very words which are going in at our ears and from which we must recover underlying meaning as realistically as we recover metal out of ore.'⁵⁷ In a discussion of the poems of Marianne Moore, he writes that in her poems, 'a word is a word when it is separated out by science, treated with acid to remove the smudges, washed, dried and placed right side up on a clean surface.' Once it has been isolated in this way, Williams explains, it 'may be used not to smear it again with thinking (the attachments of thought) but in such a way that it will remain scrupulously itself, clean perfect, unnicked beside other words in parade.'⁵⁸ In turn, Andre seems to have reached a similar position through a close consideration of the writings of Gertrude Stein. He credits her with 'returning literature to a size compatible to the capacity of the human mouth.' Her monosyllables and indicative sentences, he continues, 'are impressive, at least one at a time. And surely the great natural poem about anything is its name.'⁵⁹

The properties of the proper name became for Andre something of a defining tenet. During the winter of 1959 and 1960, it resulted in a poem called *The Long History*.⁶⁰ It consisted of all the proper nouns in Peirce's volume, listed out in alphabetical order, and is, we might suggest, an attempt to further distil the subject from its source, seemingly relieving the words themselves from their attachment to Peirce's nineteenth-century thoughts and musings. Certainly, we might think that in depriving the words of their context, they lose almost all of their capacity to refer, and the words become as neutral as they are on the pages of the dictionary. As Roland Barthes once wrote regarding modernist poetics, such isolated words hold forth 'only a whole array of reflexes from all sources which are associated with it.'⁶¹ But here, it is almost as though in freeing up the words in this way, Andre intends attention to return to words' non-semantic

⁵⁷ William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 362.

⁵⁸ William Carlos Williams, 'Marianne Moore' [1925], in *Imaginations* (London: McGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1970), pp. 308-318, p. 316.

⁵⁹ Carl Andre, *Twelve Dialogues*, p. 38.

⁶⁰ Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, p. 77.

⁶¹ Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 40.

properties – how they sound when spoken by the throat, lips and tongue – and that *within* these properties there is still some residual nugget of significance that might be recuperated.

More to the point here, however, is that Andre's investment in the capacity of words to signify on their own and in their isolation is so pronounced, that the actual poetic ordering of words becomes insignificant to him. Concinnity, in other words, is not his concern. Certainly, it is this that markedly distinguishes him from Williams' modernist poetics. For sure, Williams, writing on the prose of Gertrude Stein, had admired her feeling for 'words themselves':

a curious immediate quality quite apart from their meaning, much as in music different notes are dropped, so to speak, into a repeated chord one at a time, one after another – for itself alone.⁶²

But ultimately the question that fundamentally concerned him was how to build up a poem from strings of isolated words once poetic language had been broken down to this primary level. How is it possible to construct a poem from such units, he wondered, without merely reproducing the non-poetic, or resorting to the prosaic?

Andre, on the other hand, chose very deliberately to confine himself *exclusively* to the prosaic. 'My lyric gift was never very much', he confessed to Odlin.⁶³ Even if it was, he would restrain himself to acrostics. But perhaps we should say 'indexes', because this essentially is what a list of proper names drawn from a volume and arranged alphabetically is. That said, although it may resemble an index – or something on the way to being an index – such a list will never be able to function as one so long as it remains bereft of its accompanying text. The index's sole purpose is referential: it is to convey the reader to a particular passage within the body of writing. This it accomplishes by mapping the page numbers where the reference occurs against the indexed term. And thanks to the quantity of page numbers beside each word, we can also immediately tell what the most frequently used words in the book are. But in

⁶² William Carlos Williams, 'Gertrude Stein', in *Imaginations*, p. 345.

⁶³ Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 201.

Andre's long list of proper nouns, that would never be possible, for each word would simply be recorded once. Besides, no index – however extensive – is as pedestrian as a mere listing of each and every term contained in the volume to which it refers.

Presuming that Andre wanted to confine himself to a poetry of just 'the name', that is, a poetry bereft of sentences and grammar, then we might say what he required was a system that enabled him to sustain a sense of emphasis and stress: something that the seemingly endless list-like nature of *The Long History* simply lacked. Andre's first attempt to accomplish this was to reduce significantly the parameters of the poem by restricting himself only to the most canonical and significant words. The result was *The Short History*.⁶⁴ But another way in which a list – any list – can register that some words are more important than others is by repeating them. In fact, even a cursory glance at the pages of *America Drill* reveals that the same words and phrases recur over and over again, and the system that Andre would eventually come to develop might be said to have been intended to determine the extent of that repetition and variation. His intention – if we might call it that – was to fix on a system that ensured that the most significant or dominant words from the source text would be repeated more than words less frequently mentioned.

*

The serial artist does not attempt to produce a beautiful or mysterious object but functions merely as a clerk cataloguing the results of the premise.

Sol LeWitt, 1966⁶⁵

In order to produce a system that allows for an appropriate regulation of repetitions, Andre moved away from traditional 'literary' territory altogether. Instead, he resorted to counting and to algebra, mapping his specifically-chosen

⁶⁴ See Carl Andre, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, p. 78.

⁶⁵ Sol LeWitt, 'Serial Project No. 1 (ABCD)', *Aspen Magazine*, sect. 17, nos. 15-16 (1966). Reprinted in *Sol LeWitt: Critical Texts*, ed. by Adachiara Zevi (Rome, Libri di AEIOU, 1995), p. 75.

words from *Indian History* against particular prime numbers. A prime is an integer that cannot be divided evenly by any other except itself and one. Scattered along the number continuum between 1 and 100 there are twenty-six of them: 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31, 37, 41, 43, 47, 53, 59, 61, 67, 71, 73, 79, 83, 89 and 97. The remaining numbers are the composites, since they are composed of potentially many more multiples. For instance, 60, an integer especially rich in factors, can be constituted by multiplying 2 by 30, 3 by 20, 4 by 15, 5 by 12 and 6 by 10. Yet for 61, there are no such factors. And, although we are just at the most elementary level of arithmetic, primes have consistently fascinated mathematicians because their occurrence amongst composite numbers, if not exactly irregular, is nonetheless very difficult to describe.⁶⁶ For Andre's purposes, this means that if you ascribe a word to a prime number, then it would be possible to produce a poem that counted up the number continuum using only these 'prime words'. Moreover, these select words would recur at seemingly uneven albeit controlled intervals. It 'possesses its own reverberations', as Andre explained to Frampton.⁶⁷

This, essentially, is the rationale for Andre's next poem, *King Philip's War Primer*. It is composed of 26 key words from *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*, which stand for the 26 primes between 1 and 100. The poem is 100 lines long, representing the number continuum up to 100. The word 'and' is assigned to 1, 'Philip' to 2, 'red' to 3, 'white' to 5, 'English' to 7, and so on. The fourth line reads 'and Philip Philip', which equates to $1 \times 2 \times 2$, and the sixth line 'and Philip red', stands for $1 \times 2 \times 3$. Reproduced over the page is the poem in tabular form, indicating the words' equation to numbers. Andre's choice of key words are mapped against the smaller primes, so they recur with much more regularity than words that are ascribed to the higher primes. In fact, primes in the second half of *King Philip's War Primer* are repeated only once.

⁶⁶ See Martin Gardner, 'The Remarkable Lore of Prime Numbers', *Scientific American*, vol. 210, no. 3 (March 1964), pp. 120-130, p. 120.

⁶⁷ Carl Andre, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, p. 78.

King Phillip's War Primer
Tabulated to indicate how its contents represent prime integers⁶⁸

	Mapped words (<i>King Philip's War Primer</i>)	Prime factors
1	And and	1 x 1
2	And Philip	1 x 2
3	And red	1 x 3
4	And Philip Philip	1 x 2 x 2
5	And white	1 x 5
6	and Philip red	1 x 2 x 3
7	and English	1 x 7
8	and Philip Philip Philip	1 x 2 x 2 x 2
9	and red red	1 x 3 x 3
10	and Philip white	1 x 2 x 5
11	and land	1 x 11
12	and Philip Philip red	1 x 2 x 2 x 3
13	and arm	1 x 13
14	and Philip English	1 x 2 x 7
15	and red white	1 x 3 x 5
16	and Philip Philip Philip Philip	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2
17	and Massasiot	1 x 17
18	and Philip red red	1 x 2 x 3 x 3
19	and child	1 x 19
20	and Philip Philip white	1 x 2 x 2 x 5
21	and red English	1 x 3 x 7
22	and Philip land	1 x 2 x 11
23	and Wamsutta	1 x 23

⁶⁸ For a facsimile of Andre's poem, see Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues 1962-1963*, pp. 81-84.

24	and Philip Philip Philip red	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 3
25	and white white	1 x 5 x 5
26	and Philip arm	1 x 2 x 13
27	and red red red	1 x 3 x 3 x 3
28	and Philip Philip English	1 x 2 x 2 x 7
29	and grievance	1 x 29
30	and Philip red white	1 x 2 x 3 x 5
31	and Weetamo	1 x 31
32	and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2
33	and red land	1 x 3 x 11
34	and Philip Massasoit	1 x 2 x 17
35	and white English	1 x 5 x 7
36	and Philip Philip red red	1 x 2 x 2 x 3 x 3
37	and dance	1 x 37
38	and Philip child	1 x 2 x 19
39	and red arm	1 x 3 x 13
40	and Philip Philip Philip white	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 5
41	and widow	1 x 41
42	and Philip red English	1 x 2 x 3 x 7
43	and pistol	1 x 43
44	and Philip Philip land	1 x 2 x 2 x 11
45	and red red white	1 x 3 x 3 x 5
46	and Philip Wamsutta	1 x 2 x 23
47	and fire	1 x 47
48	and Philip Philip Philip Philip red	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 3
49	and English English	1 x 7 x 7
50	and Philip white white	1 x 2 x 5 x 5

51	and red Massasoit	1 x 3 x 17
52	And Philip Philip Arm	1 x 2 x 2 x 13
53	And Sassamon	1 x 53
54	And Philip red red red	1 x 2 x 3 x 3 x 3
55	and white land	1 x 5 x 11
56	and Philip Philip Philip English	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 7
57	and red child	1 x 3 x 19
58	and Philip grievance	1 x 2 x 29
59	and Swansea	1 x 59
60	and Philip Philip red white	1 x 2 x 2 x 3 x 5
61	and drown	1 x 61
62	and Philip Weetamo	1 x 2 x 31
63	and red red English	1 x 3 x 3 x 7
64	and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2
65	and white arm	1 x 5 x 13
66	and Philip red land	1 x 2 x 3 x 11
67	and Rehobeth	1 x 67
68	and Philip Philip Massasoit	1 x 2 x 2 x 17
69	and red Wamsutta	1 x 3 x 23
70	and Philip white English	1 x 2 x 5 x 7
71	and Annawon	1 x 71
72	and Philip Philip Philip red red	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 3 x 3
73	and Alderman	1 x 73
74	and Philip dance	1 x 2 x 37
75	and red white white	1 x 3 x 5 x 5
76	and Philip Philip child	1 x 2 x 2 x 19
77	and English land	1 x 7 x 11

78	and Philip red arm	1 x 2 x 3 x 13
79	and Montaup	1 x 79
80	and Philip Philip Philip Philip white	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 5
81	and red red red red	1 x 3 x 3 x 3 x 3
82	and Philip widow	1 x 2 x 41
83	and Church	1 x 83
84	and Philip Philip red English	1 x 2 x 2 x 3 x 7
85	And white Massasoit	1 x 3 x 17
86	and Philip pistol	1 x 2 x 43
87	and red grievance	1 x 3 x 49
88	and Philip Philip Philip land	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 11
89	and ambush	1 x 89
90	and Philip red red white	1 x 2 x 3 x 3 x 5
91	and English arm	1 x 7 x 13
92	and Philip Philip Wamsutta	1 x 2 x 2 x 23
93	and red Weetamo	1 x 3 x 31
94	and Philip fire	1 x 2 x 47
95	and white child	1 x 5 x 19
96	and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip red	1 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 3
97	and murder	1 x 97
98	and Philip English English	1 x 2 x 7 x 7
99	and red red land	1 x 3 x 3 x 11
100	and Philip Philip white white	1 x 2 x 2 x 5 x 5

The principle of mapping words against numbers had been inspired, Andre explicitly states, by his understanding of Kurt Gödel's famous mathematical proof from 1931.⁶⁹ It is possible that Andre had encountered Gödel in the pages of *Scientific American*, of which, by all accounts, he was an avid reader. Certainly, Gödel is prominently discussed in at least a couple of articles during the latter half of the fifties and the early sixties.⁷⁰ According to Reno Odlin, Andre had also read a book on Gödel by Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman, which had been published in 1958 and reissued in 1960.⁷¹ The text remains to this day a classic in mathematical explication.⁷² Step by step Nagel and Newman show how Gödel's reasoning led him to his monumental conclusion that, contrary to the efforts of previous mathematicians, mathematics was never capable of reaching any absolute verification of its own consistency. Gödel's proof is premised on disclosing a paradox: that no deductive system based on axioms would ever be entirely capable of covering all of the theorems of mathematics, *unless* it discredited itself at some point by relying on a falsehood. In other words, for every deductive system, there would always be an element that would be true only if it *was not* provable in that system. Thus, no system can ever be said to be complete, for invariably it misses a relevant truth. Indeed, that the whole edifice of the proof – with all its respective preliminary theories, tabulations and deductions – existed *only* to demonstrate that the absolute consistency of mathematics could never be proven seems to have held out a considerable appeal for Andre.⁷³

In a way, then, the onus of Gödel's proof merely corroborates what is undoubtedly already clear: that the system Andre had adopted to determine the contents of his poem is itself lacking in a deep inner significance. But what

⁶⁹ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-63*, p. 79. In passing, it might also be pointed out that a similar kind of cryptography might have been practised by Marcel Duchamp, in which numbers were mapped against letters in order to come up with inscriptions for his readymades. For a discussion of Duchamp's cryptography, see Molly Nesbit, *Their Common Sense* (London: Black Dog, 2000), pp. 195-200.

⁷⁰ See in particular, W. V. Quine, 'Paradox', *Scientific American*, vol. 206, no. 4 (April 1962), pp. 84-96.

⁷¹ Reno Odlin, 'Rite of Passage', *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1981), pp. 206-216, p. 212. Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman, *Gödel's Proof* [1958] (London: Routledge, 1989).

⁷² A further discussion of Gödel's Proof intended for a broad readership is Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (London: Penguin, 1999).

⁷³ See Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-63*, p. 79.

enabled him to reference Gödel as a source of inspiration in the first place was that Andre had derived from his proof the principle of mapping. This is the idea that a serial ordering system can be imposed on material of quite a different nature, so that once that material had been ascribed a sign, each mapped element is made equivalent to a sign that represents the place it occupies in an abstract series. Ultimately, then, mapping is a means of formalisation; it is a way of draining expressions of all meaning. And the purpose of this formalisation is to construct a system of annotations that conceals nothing and is completely transparent. 'It reveals structure and function in naked clarity', write Nagel and Newman, 'as does a Cut-away working model of a machine.'⁷⁴ It also enables mapped terms to be taken apart so as to reveal their inner workings, showing clearly all the components from which are composed. So, for instance, once we know the terms, a string of words like 'and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip', can easily be 'decoded' to yield the number 32. Yet whereas for the purpose of the mathematical mapping system it is irrelevant what words or signs are plugged into the structure, for Andre, it could not matter more.

Andre's choices as regards *King Philip's War Primer* are perhaps explicable enough, if albeit somewhat banal. Philip is the key protagonist, so he is mapped against 2, and thus ensuring that his name will be repeated the most number of times. Likewise: 'I assigned "red" to three because it was the color of half the belligerents and the color of all their wounds,' Andre explained.⁷⁵ Presumably 'white' is mapped against 5 since it stands metonymically for the racial identity of the other half of the belligerents.⁷⁶ In fact, the words he chooses are mostly all either nouns or adjectives, which allows him to couple them together without too much focus being accorded to the question of grammatical declension. Also, those words that are not proper names – such as, for instance,

⁷⁴ Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman, *Gödel's Proof*, p. 27.

⁷⁵ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-63*, p. 78.

⁷⁶ Andre's speedy recourse to skin colour jars considerably with current racial politics. Moreover, with regards to *King Philip's War* itself, Jill Lepore has argued that the distinctions between indigenous Algonquians and the English was never quite as clear cut as the colonialists often desired. This was mainly because by the 1670s a considerable proportion of the indigenous peoples were living amongst the English and had adopted European clothing. She also points out that since the Mohequans, Pequots and Christian Indians fought alongside the English, *King Philip's War* might also be regarded as a civil war between conflicting indigenous populations. See p. xv.

'white', 'land', 'arm' and 'fire' – can carry a broad set of associations and meanings, which, in due course, Andre would exploit to the full.

King Philip's War Primer deserves to be taken as the matrix for the Red Cut of *America Drill*: essentially this part of the larger poem is the *Primer* extrapolated.⁷⁷ For Andre's next move was to ascribe a phrase or a sentence from Peirce's text to each line of the *Primer*. It is important to register here that in introducing larger quotations, Andre is stepping back from composing exclusively with single words – an indication, perhaps, that the development of his 'system' for producing poems is not entirely driven by an inextricably reductive logic. Moreover, if producing poems according to the mapping of words against numbers might be thought to preclude the possibility that the patter of terms it drills out would yield any overarching 'meaning' or 'intention', then Andre himself would now appear to be working against this assumption. Theodor Adorno once suggested that the composer who uses the twelve-tone system can often resemble a gambler, in that 'he waits and sees what number appears and is happy if it offers musical meaning.'⁷⁸ And perhaps the same might be said of Andre here. Often the phrases that he accords to each line of the *Primer* are premised on a possible implied meaning or a 'resonance' that he has derived from the string of words. Sometimes, his choices are relatively self-evident. For instance, for line 2 – 'and Philip' – Andre picks a sentence from the start of *Indian History's* chapter on King Philip: 'the name of Massasoit's second son was Pometacom, but this was subjected to the following variations: Pumatacom, Pometacome, and Pometacom.'⁷⁹ However, for line 64 – 'and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip' – Andre opts for the sentence: 'King Philip, mounted on a black horse, led his warriors in person, and he never stopped to take down bars or open gates, but rode over fences to whatever part of the battlefield his presence was most required.'⁸⁰ Here, the repetitions of Philip's name metaphorically connotes the leader's seemingly unstoppable mobility. In other words, Andre's system develops to allow for considerably more creativity

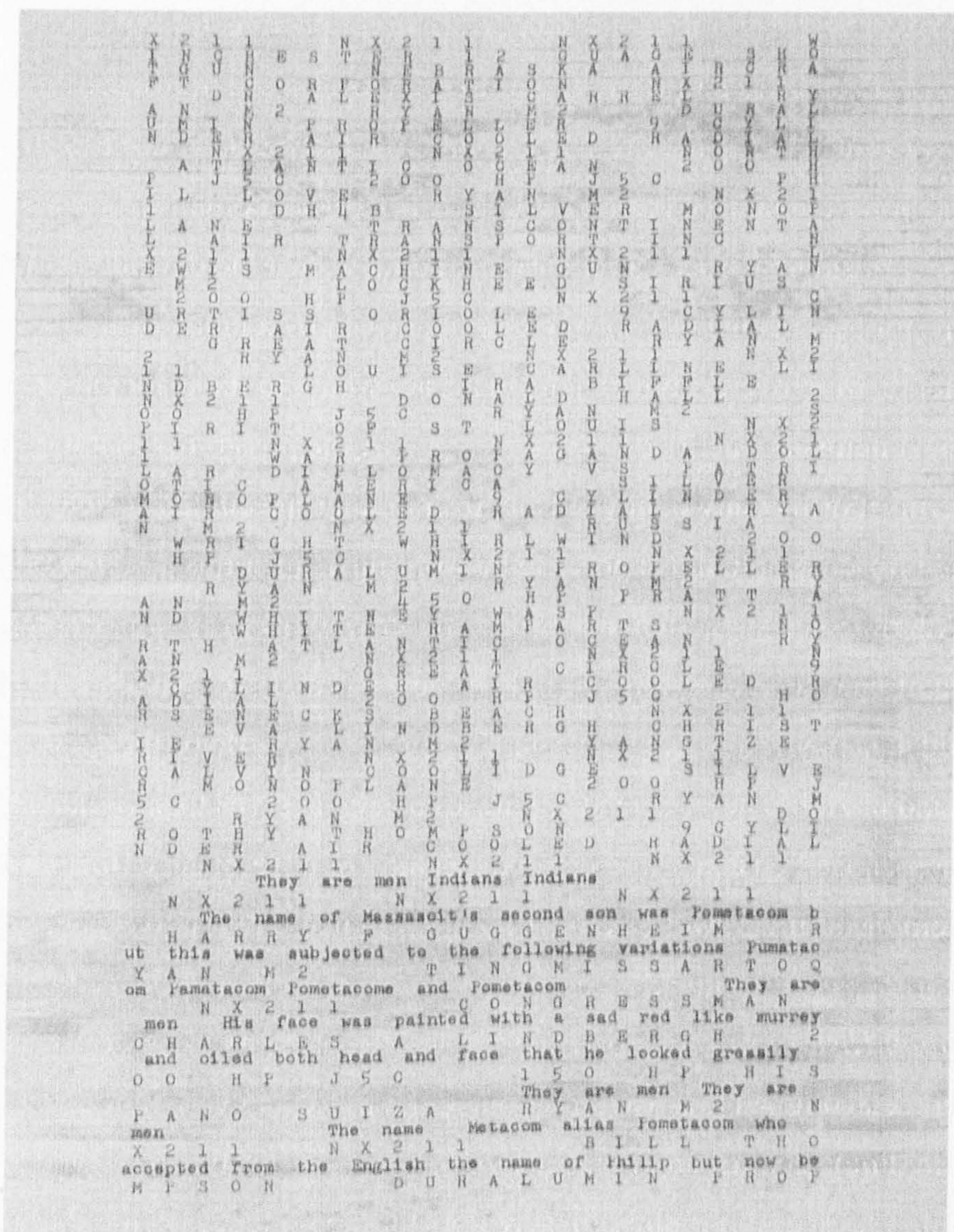
⁷⁷ Although it is not entirely clear from Andre's various explications, it appears that the Red Cut of *America Drill* was at one stage a self-contained poem called *Ode on the Disappearance of Indian Names*. See *Cuts: Texts*, pp. 119-203.

⁷⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 66.

⁷⁹ E. W. Peirce, *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*, p. 51.

⁸⁰ E. W. Peirce, *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*, p. 138.

and personal input than might at first be expected, and it is the way in which he streams his own interests and agendas into the machine-like flow of the whole that constitutes the most significant aspect to *America Drill*.



America Drill, page 3

However, in order to crank this prime number system into motion again, Andre then ascribed each of these 100 phrases to primes. Of course, that vastly expanded the poem's dimensions, for it meant that the final sentence ended up representing the number 547 – the 100th prime. The resulting Cut is thus a counting out of all of the factors upwards until that number. Andre soon found – not unsurprisingly – that it would be simply too unwieldy to repeat every phrase in its entirety every time it is required as a factor for a composite number. So, for

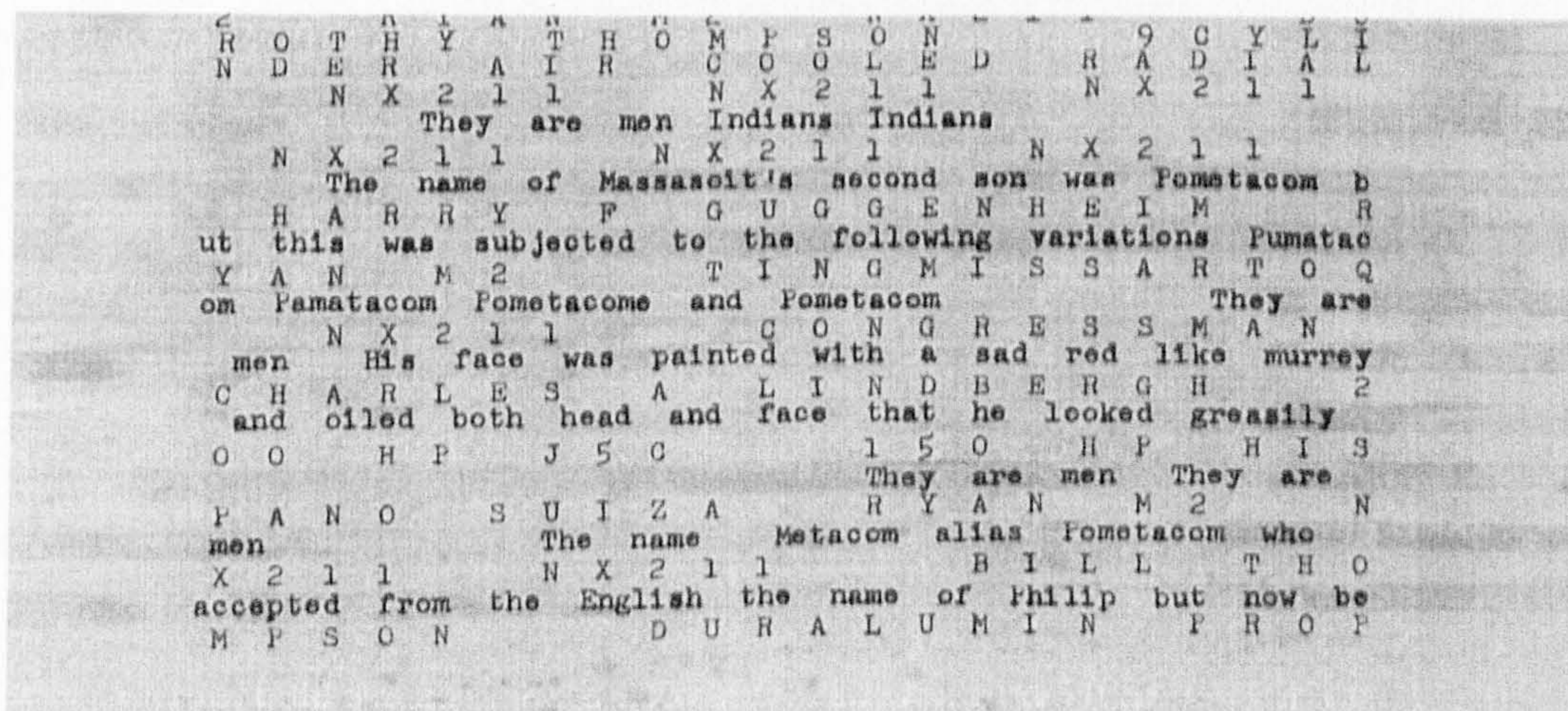
convenience, he abbreviated the phrases. The first time the prime phrase occurs, it is repeated in full, and from then on it is shortened synecdochally to just a couple of words. Thus, the bulk of the poem is composed of quotations of quotations, acting like echoes of the phrases that have preceded it. And as a reader, you are left to wade through line after line of fragmentary shards, before reaching – often with considerable relief – a passage that possesses a new detail, some new facts.

The seemingly erratic breaks between the words are also part of Andre's well-regimented prime number system, for the occurrence of the factor 2 is represented with 16 spaces. And because the poem is composed using a typewriter, Andre is able to maintain the consistency of these gaps throughout. All that he has to do is press the carriage key the correct number of times. That means, for instance, that the integer 8 is represented by three units of 16 spaces (2 x 2 x 2), which is equivalent to almost three-quarters of a line. Meanwhile, the spaces between words are also rigorously kept to 2 spaces, which is just about distinguishable for a reader from the 3 spaces that indicate the separation of factors.

With these details in place, we are now in a position to turn directly to Red Cut. This Cut is phased in on *America Drill's* third page, the first words reading: 'They - - are - - men - - Indians - - Indians'. Incidentally, this phrase is derived from Richard Gardiner's account of the very first encounter between the Plymouth Colony and the Wampanoags. It took place on 8 December 1620:

Vpon a sudden we heard a great and strange cry which we knew to be the same voices though they varied their notes, one of our company being abroad came running and cryed, *They are men, Indians, Indians*; and withal their arrows came flying amongst vs, our men ran out with all speed to recover their armes [...]⁸¹

⁸¹ E. W. Peirce, *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*, p. 4 (spelling as in original).



America Drill, page 3, detail

In *America Drill's* prime number system, however, this exclamatory warning will stand in for the number 3. (In this poem, Andre discards figuring the integers 1 and 2.) Next comes the number 4, composed as it is of the factors 2 and 2, and which is represented here by two large spaces that roll over onto the following line. 5 – a prime number – is represented with the phrase ‘The - - name - - of - - Massasoit’s - - second - - son - - was - - Pometacon - - b/ut - - this - - was - - subjected - - to - - the - - following - - variations - - Pumatac/om - - Pamatacom - - Pometacome - - and - - Pometacon’. (Needless to say, Andre also dispenses with the use of commas and full points in his source text.) The number 6 is represented with one large space, standing for the factor 2, followed by the fragment, ‘They - - are - - men’, which represent the first half of Gardener’s exclamation and the shortened signifier for the factor 3. Next, because 7 is a prime number, we get a new sentence: ‘His - - face - - was - - painted - - with - - a - - sad - - red - - like - - murrey - - and - - oiled - - both - - head - - and - - face - - that - - he - - looked - - greasily’. In turn, when factors of 7 recur, they are shortened to just ‘sad - - red’.

No rule proves itself more repressive than the self-determined one.
Theodor W. Adorno, 1948⁸²

By now, the logic of the system should be slightly clearer. It continues steadily in this fashion, augmenting gradually, accumulating new factors, introducing new terms, and only eventually reaching the integer 547 forty pages later. The progression is worth spelling out in detail, if only to give some indication of the labour-intensive planning and extraordinary meticulousness that must have been required for the Cut to be typed out as it is. It entails a certain passionless concentration and patience, which, we can only assume, was personally satisfying for Andre. 'I began Red Cut', he explained in a retrospective note from the early 1970s, 'out of a sentimental sympathy for the fate of the Amerindian but the method of composition supported a poem much longer and much better than could have been sustained by my internal weeping.'⁸³ Andre was always very aware, I suspect, that the method had a certain interest because it was so fundamentally detached and aloof from the emotively charged nature of the historical material. It is not an especially subtle position, but there again, perhaps that was the point. In some ways, it is because the formalisation procedure has the appearance of being so insensitive and mechanistic that the subject matter is deemed capable of being accorded the urgency and immediacy that it demands.

In fact, Red Cut originally appears to have stood alone as a work in its own right, and became *Ode on the Disappearance of Indian Names*. It is a title that almost implies that reading through the poem would enable the names to be heard once more, yet only to listen to them vanishing into a swamp of typewriter text. In other words, we might suggest that the violence of the relentless regurgitation of these historical facts and names is a means of acknowledging and reiterating the violence of the history itself.

Eventually, though, Red Cut came to be amalgamated with the two other Cuts that now comprise *America Drill*. At some level, this only begs the question

⁸² Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* (London: Sheen & Ward, 1973), p. 68.

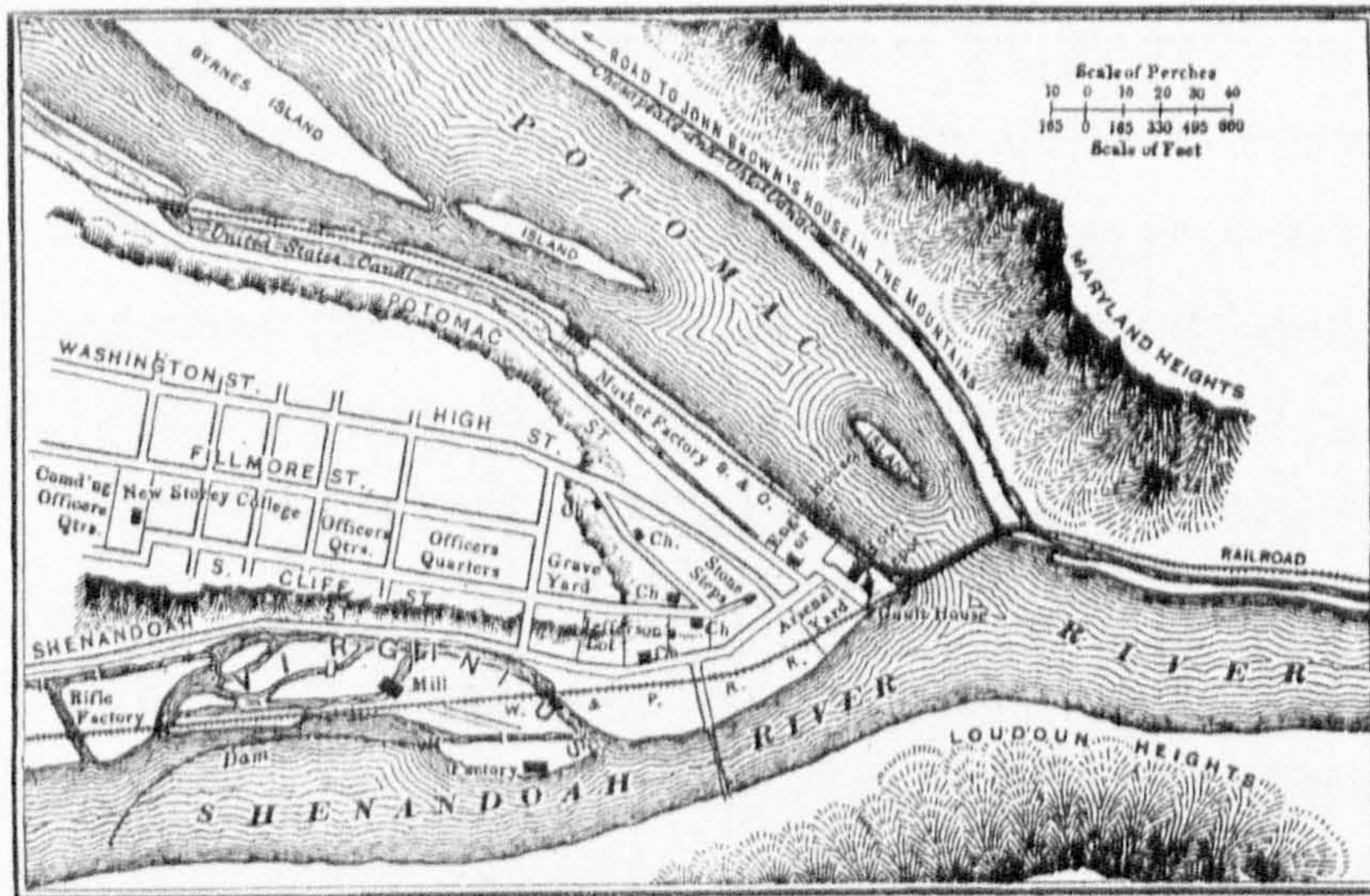
⁸³ Carl Andre, untitled note, dated 21 August 1973, in Carl Andre, *America Drill*, 2003, p. f.

as to how the three sections of the poem relate to one another, and how the work hangs together as a whole. Yet, in many respects, this is far from immediately apparent. For a start, it is hard to ascertain even how to read the work in its entirety. Ought each Cut to be read separately? In which case, readers have to learn to distinguish their vocabularies from one another and to train their eyes to read only every third line. Alternatively, should the poem be read aloud by three people, each reading the Cuts simultaneously as though *America Drill* were a form of musical score? Certainly, some of Andre's written compositions have required such oral performances, which have been fashioned in such a way as to allow readers to become conscious of their own words counterpointing against the flow of words emanating from the other voices.⁸⁴ However, although *America Drill* could no doubt be performed in this way, it is the shared means by which the sources are ordered that ultimately might be said to fashion the three Cuts into any formal resemblance.

It is possible to establish some tentative associations between some of the source texts that comprise the other two Cuts. But the connections are not exactly self-evident. Indeed, even before we consider Blue Cut, White Cut is itself constituted from several, entirely anomalous sources. First, there are a series of passages from the young Ralph Waldo Emerson's diaries, mostly relating to either his erotically-charged fascination with a fellow Harvard Student, Martin Gay, or from two fantastical short stories – one about a giant who lived in a mountain cave, the other about a journey to a tribe of Pacific Islanders.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ See Carl Andre, 'Letter to Reno Odlin, April 22, 1964, in *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 206.

⁸⁵ In fact, although Andre derives passages from Emerson's journals from the years 1820-24 (In May 1822, Emerson was 19 years old), they are occasionally supplemented with citations from his 1838-41 journals. These later references mostly refer to his thoughts on poetry, politics and art. Indeed, that Andre sympathised with some of Emerson's opinions is evidenced by the fact that he cites an Emersonian *bon mot* to Hollis Frampton during the course of one of their written dialogues. 'Emerson writes in his *Journal*', recounts Andre, 'that all men try their hands at poetry, but few know which their poems are. The poets are not those who write poems, but those who know which of the things they write are poems.' See Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, p. 40. In *America Drill*, this aphorism represents the 45th prime. Martin Gay, who is the subject of many of the citations derived from the Emerson's early journals, entered Harvard in 1819. In his senior year, Gay and a further thirty-four of his classmates were dismissed for engaging in 'a combination to resist the Authority of the College'. In later life he became a prominent Boston physician and physicist. See Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by William H. Gilman, George P. Clark, Alfred R. Ferguson, Merrell R. Davis (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1960),



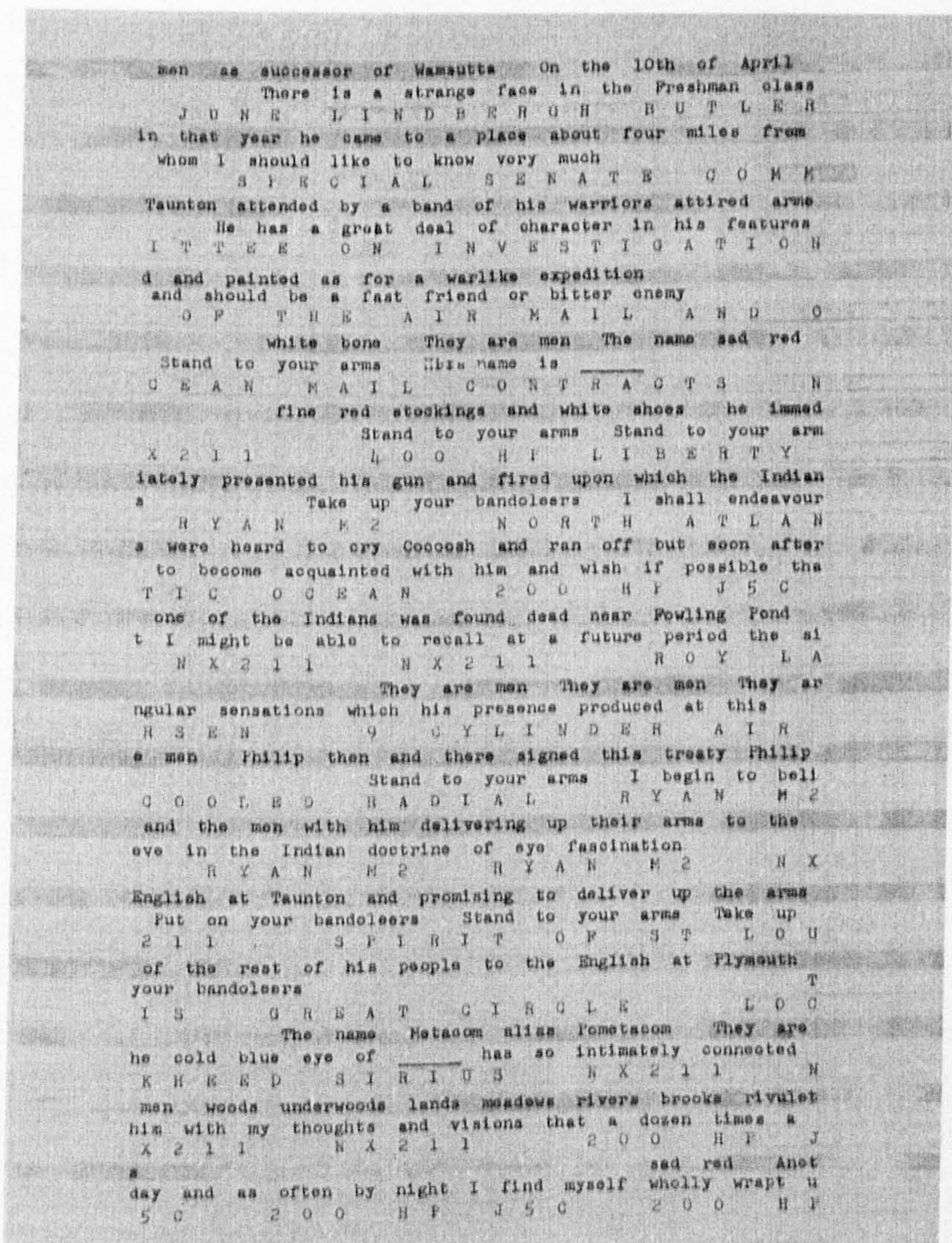
Map of Harper's Ferry, from the *Century Magazine*, July 1883, and reproduced in Edward Stone's *Incident at Harper's Ferry*, 1956

However, after the first 48 primes, the source switches and the remaining quotations are derived from a high school history textbook, published in 1956. The book itself – called *Incident At Harper's Ferry* – consists entirely of source documents pertaining to John Brown's famous raid on the Harper's Ferry Arsenal in October 1859. Andre works his way through this reader relatively methodically, removing salient phrases in order to narrate his own heavily truncated version of Brown's life.⁸⁶ In many respects, deriving his quotes from a volume that includes 'topics for full-length essays and library research' might be thought to indicate how unconcerned he was by this stage with the nature of the history book itself: what mattered was merely the primacy of the first-hand documentary report. Indeed, we might also conclude that Andre's sympathy for John Brown's armed crusade to rid the southern states of slavery is of a similar order to his empathy for the suffering of the indigenous Massachusetts tribes two centuries earlier. Both were insurrections against the injustices of an illegitimate system, both led to considerable suffering and loss of life and both were disastrously unsuccessful. Yet how Andre's selections from Emerson relate to

I, p. 12. The editors also point out that although Emerson had first included Martin Gay's name, he subsequently blacked it out – hence the occasional lines in the text.

⁸⁶ *Incident at Harper's Ferry*, ed. by Edward Stone (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1956). When Andre first arrived in New York in around March 1957, his first job was as an assistant editor at Prentice Hall, and it is possible that he came across this publication through his work there. See Carl Andre, 'Interview with Paul Cummings' [1972], in *Cuts: Texts: 1959-2004*, p. 103.

Brown's raid, or, for that matter, to any other section of the poem, is open to personal conjecture. Certainly, we know historically that Emerson later became a forceful advocate of emancipation, and was a passionate supporter of John Brown.⁸⁷ But there are few such means of deriving such connections from within the poem itself.

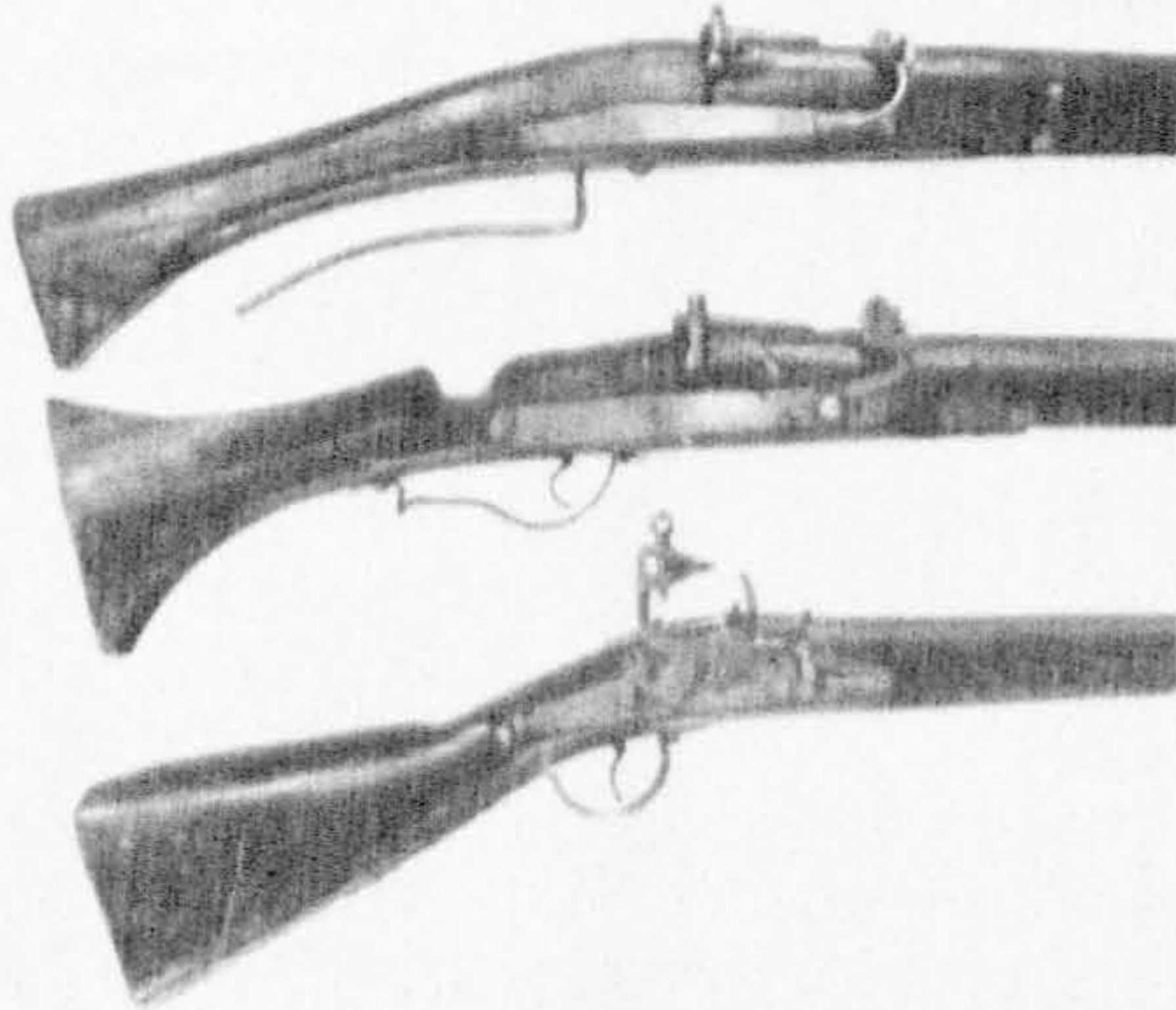


America Drill, page 7

However, there is more to White Cut than this, for the passages from Emerson and *An Incident at Harpers Ferry* are interspersed with a series of drill commands relating to the priming, loading, firing and dismantling of a musket. These Andre had derived again from Peirce: from one single, but extremely

⁸⁷ A section from one of Emerson's rallying speeches for John Brown is included in Stone's reader. See *Incident at Harper's Ferry*, p. 186. For the complete speech, see Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'John Brown: Boston Speech', in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911, XI, pp. 267-273.

voluminous footnote.⁸⁸ Peirce claims he has located this list of commands in a book called *Elton's Tactics: The Compleat Body of the Art Military*. This was a publication that had been reissued a few years prior to the outbreak of King Philip's War. Peirce had included it in order to offer a insight into the nature of seventeenth-century firearms, but it is highly likely that by the 1670s, weapons were more sophisticated than the procedures for the kind of matchlock musket offered here.⁸⁹ Certainly these muskets, which the English brought with them to the New World when they first arrived at the start of the seventeenth century, were so cumbersome and difficult to fire that all soldiers were required to perform this type of complicated drill. It was necessary simply in order to avoid endangering themselves and causing chaos.⁹⁰



Matchlock muskets, c. 1600-20

⁸⁸ E. W. Peirce, *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*, pp. 77-79.

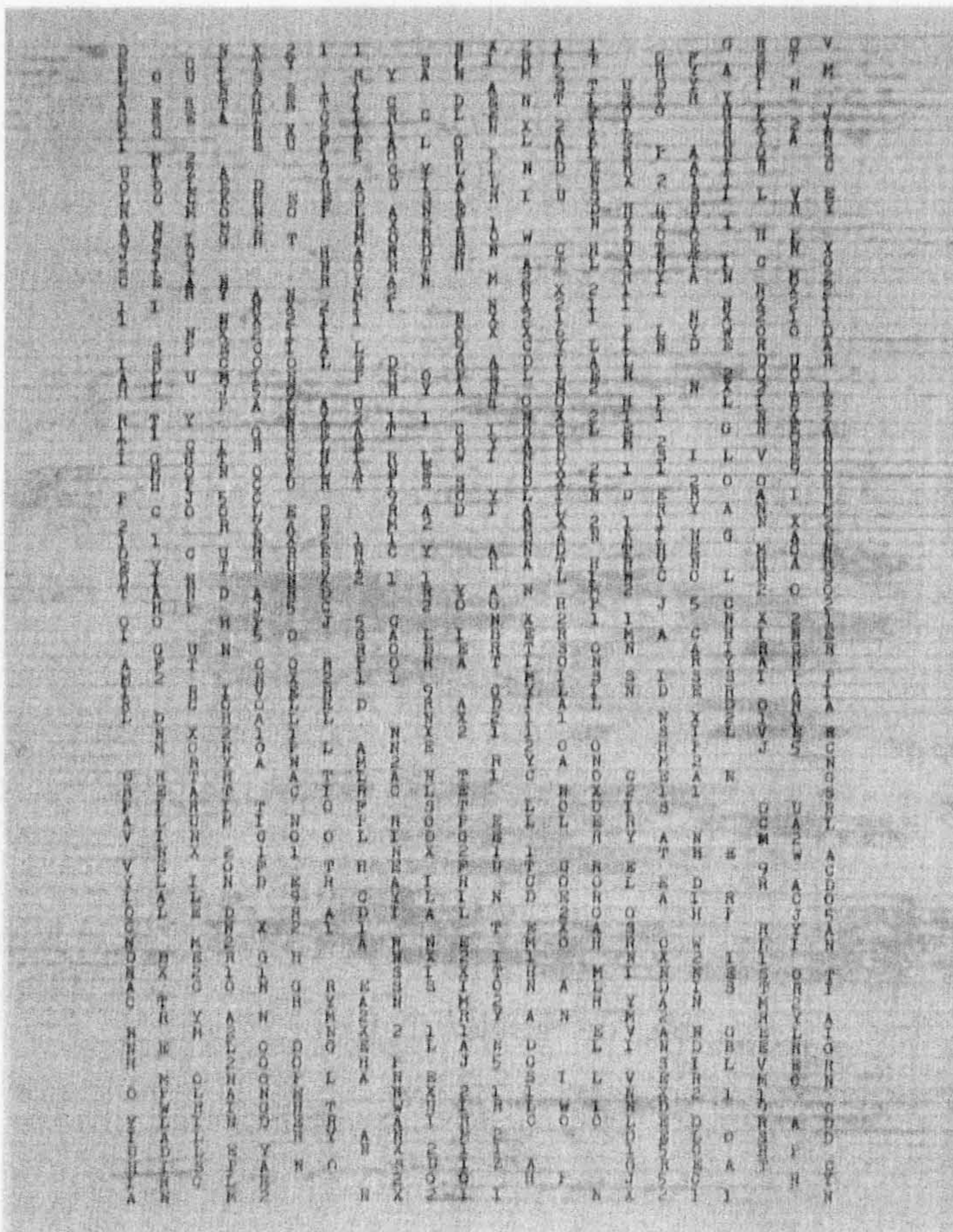
⁸⁹ By the 1660s, snaphances and flintlock muskets were considerably more popular. Unlike matchlocks, which could only be fired by releasing a lit piece of cord or twine onto a flash-pan charged with powder, later muskets generated a spark by a flint striking a revolving serrated wheel. These were considerably more reliable. See Howard L. Blackmore, *British Military Firearms: 1650-1850* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1961), p. 19. On the use of flintlocks and snaphances in the Colonies, see Harold L. Peterson, *Arms and Armor in Colonial America* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania, 1956), pp. 31-35.

⁹⁰ See Howard L. Blackmore, *British Military Firearms: 1650-1850*, p. 18. A good description of how these arms function is provided in J. F. Hayward, *European Firearms* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1969), p. 23. Peterson discusses how dangerous a lit match could be in the presence of powder, and also how impossible they were to use on windy or rainy days. He references an incident in 1609, for example, when Henry Hudson's men were cut up in a fight with indigenous Indians when the rain put their matches out. (See *Arms and Armor in Colonial America*, pp. 14-21.) Referenced in Elton's commands are a number of required additional accoutrements for the firing of the matchlock. These include a ramrod, a forked rest to hold the weapon steady whilst firing, and a bandoleer. The bandoleer was a leather strap from which were suspended around a dozen cylinders, containing the necessary materials for discharging the weapon. Usually these were made from wood, but metals were also occasionally used. The bandoleer was also worn in conjunction with a priming flask and a bullet pouch. For a description of the use of bandoleers, see pp. 61-63 in Peterson's volume.

It seems that in White Cut, whenever a factor is required for representing a composite number, Andre ascribes to it a command from *Elton's Tactics*. This means that those sentences and phrases deriving from Emerson or from sources relating to John Brown's raid only appear in this Cut once. For instance, the number 3 is represented with the phrase, 'There is a strange face in the Freshman class whom I should like to know very much'. But when the factor of 3 recurs, it is figured not with a truncated version of this phrase as in Red Cut, but with the instruction: 'Stand to your arms' – the first command on Elton's list. The result is that the Cut is practically filled from start to finish with these relentless, terse instructions: 'Put on your bandoleers', 'Take up your match', 'Take up your rest', 'Poise your musket', and so on. But if their ordinary purpose had been to enable soldiers to perform a series of complex actions in a correct and regimented order, then mapped against prime numbers, such as they are in *America Drill*, these commands end up in an entirely different sequence and thus lose their purpose altogether. Moreover, Andre does not seem to be entirely consistent in mapping them from *Elton's Tactics* against the order of the prime phrases. Again, it is hard to fathom his reasoning here. But it does seem that once the references shift from Emerson's journals to Edward Stone's *Incident at Harper's Ferry*, then Andre has arranged for the commands from *Elton's Tactics* that recur the most regularly to be the ones that relate to the dismantling of the musket, as opposed to its preparation for firing. Thus, phrases such as 'Lay down your bandoleers', 'Lay down your musket' and 'Lay down your rest', start to predominate. Invariably, this creates a sense of climax around the middle of the Cut. The injunctions to disarm and put *down* clearly form a dramatic contrast to the sentences pertaining to Brown's raid, which mostly concern the taking *up* of weapons and bloody military combat. Perhaps this is evidence that the prime number system in the White Cut has been rendered slightly more pliable, so as to enable Andre to direct its outcomes and effects more obviously, and to provide a certain narrative flow for the whole.

However, it is the final Cut – the Blue Cut – that perhaps provides us with an opportunity to make some provisional comments about *America Drill* in all its segmented unity. For a start, it is this Cut that looks the most regimented and machine-like on the page, for it is typed entirely in an upper-case, triple-

spaced script. Moreover, the sources that comprise Blue Cut also possess a clear relation to technology and to the machine, in a way that is attuned, in some senses, to the systematic logic that arranges the words in this fashion on the page. In Red Cut, there is a distinctive charge about the way the method for arranging the quotations appears so alien to the nature of the material over which it presides. But here in Blue Cut, this seems to be far from the case, for the subject matter almost appears to aspire naturally towards this form. The result, however, is a Cut that is practically impossible to read, resembling as it does some kind of digitalised code. In fact, on the first two pages of the poem, which are made up entirely of this Cut, the lines are so carefully justified and the spacing between the words so considerable that at first glance it is hard to know whether to read up and down, or across the page. The words seem to be collapsing into single letters before the reader has a chance even to read them.



America Drill, page 2

This grid-like presentation could only have been produced, of course, on a mechanical typewriter. Once, Andre confessed that he had never been able to type with more than one finger, 'but that made each operation of typing a very machine-like act'.⁹¹ Indeed, typewriters have often been described as occupying a position somewhere between a tool and a machine. Friedrich Kittler once suggested that a technology whose basic action consists of strikes and triggers 'proceeds in automated and discrete steps', as does ammunition transport in a revolver, or celluloid in a film projector.⁹² His reference to loading weapons might recall Peirce's citations from *Elton's Tactics* in *White Cut*. But here, in *Blue Cut*, the strikes and triggers entailed in the mechanism of transcription itself almost entirely consume the subject matter itself.

The sources for *Blue Cut* are two books relating to Charles A. Lindbergh, whose reputation rests on accomplishing the first solo crossing of the Atlantic by plane, and whose flight from New York to Paris in May 1927 rocketed him to immediate international fame. The texts are his autobiography, "*We*", which he had written very rapidly just two months after he had accomplished the journey.⁹³ By the end of the summer of 1927, just short of two hundred thousand copies had been sold.⁹⁴ The second publication is an extensive biography of Lindbergh by Kenneth S. Davis, which attempts to fathom the aviator's singular personality.⁹⁵ 'No man', he writes in one chapter, 'prized Reason more nor Feeling less. Indeed, his emotional make-up so far differed from most men's that what moved them to tears often left him untouched; he was, therefore, given credit for amazing displays of self-control on occasions when he merely responded in ways most natural to him.'⁹⁶ In fact, Davis often depicts Lindbergh as a figure more at home with machines than with human beings – an individual who thrived on the clear, simplistic empiricism of processes of testing, checking

⁹¹ Carl Andre, 'An Interview with Lynda Morris', 1975, in *Cuts: Texts, 1959-2004*, p. 212.

⁹² Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 191.

⁹³ Charles A. Lindbergh, "*We*" (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1927).

⁹⁴ See Kenneth S. Davis, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), p. 235.

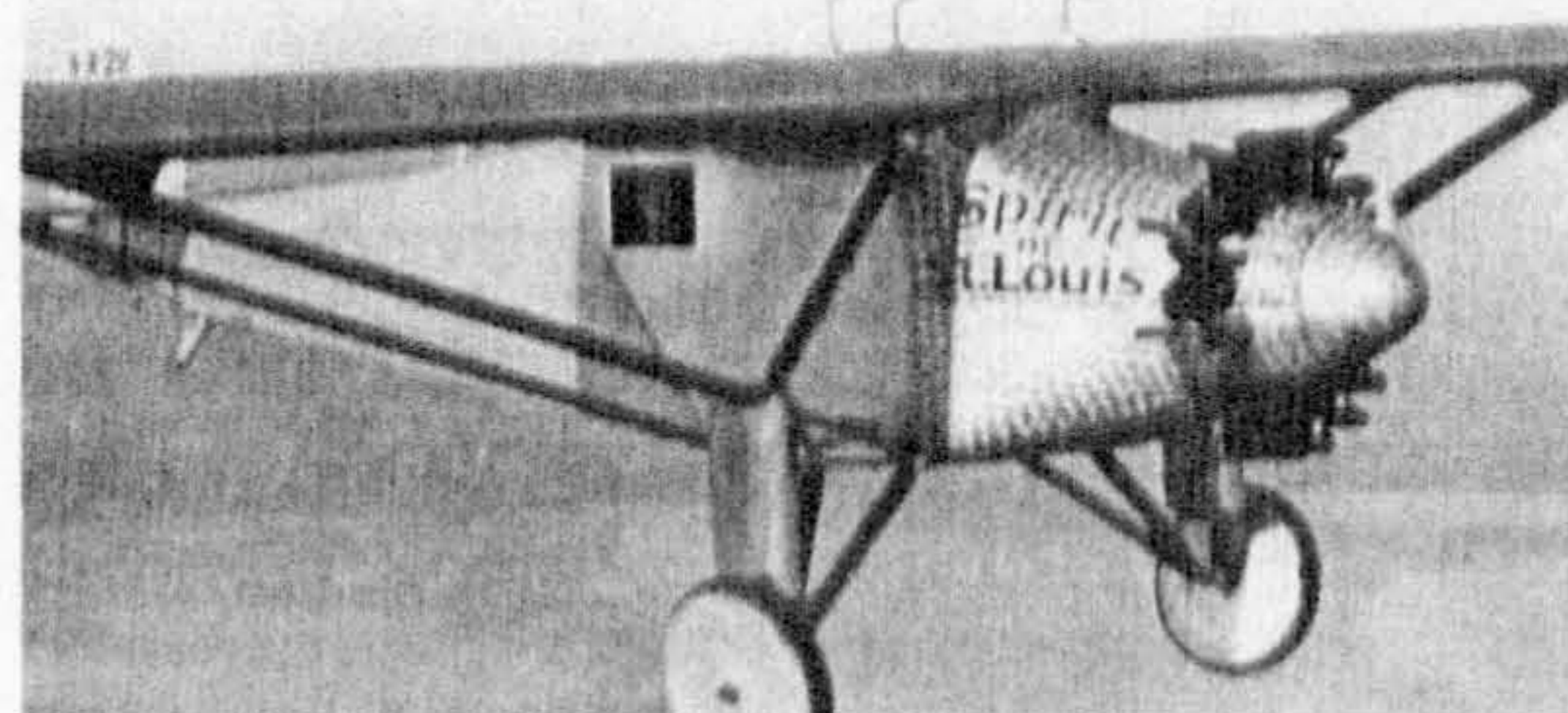
⁹⁵ Kenneth S. Davis, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream*.

⁹⁶ Kenneth S. Davis, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream*, p. 245.

and measuring, and who in turn would be driven to distraction by the relentless interference of the media and of a clearly infatuated public.



Charles A. Lindbergh in 1927



Lindbergh's 'Spirit of St. Louis'

Davis' bibliography suffers from many of the limitations of its genre, but his reading of Lindbergh's life is far from thoughtless. We might also insinuate that it is a reading that was not also without its influence on Andre's understanding of the aviator. Indeed, Andre himself once described the subject of the Cut as 'the triumph of technique over sensibility'.⁹⁷ And, perhaps as a means of evidencing this, the quotations that comprise *Blue Cut* are considerably terser than those in the other Cuts. Practically all are proper names – of places, individuals, engine types and publication titles. It is as though Andre is intent on mimicking the logic of Lindbergh's own preference for hard facts and boiled-down truths. Unlike *White Cut*, this section of *America Drill* makes no concession to any semblance of narrative form. And since there is no shortening or substitution when factors are required for figuring composite numbers, it is also the most unrelentingly repetitive. Like the drone of an engine, it serves as a slow, underlying refrain for the whole poem. Moreover, as Andre explained to Odlin, the means for selecting words here was also extremely regimented, for they were mapped between ever enlarging chronological limits.⁹⁸ They commence with the year of Lindbergh's transatlantic flight – 1927 – and expand outwards incrementally: 1925-1928, 1924-1929, 1923-1930, and so on, until they reach out to the early years of the century and to just after the Second World War – the date when Davis' narrative more or less comes to a close. In addition to

⁹⁷ Carl Andre, *America Drill*, p. f.

⁹⁸ See Carl Andre, *Cuts: Texts, 1959-2004*, p. 209.

this, and in contrast to the other sections of *America Drill*, Blue Cut progresses not up the number continuum, but downwards – from the hundredth prime to the number 3. Considering the extra quantity of supplementary drafting and planning this must have required, this Cut is perhaps seen as something of a virtuoso rendition of his own prime number method.

*

But right at the heart of capitalist modernity, we would argue, has been a process of endless enclosure. The great work of the past half-millennium was the cutting off of the world's natural and human resources from common use. Land, water, the fruits of the forest, the spaces of custom and communal negotiation, the mineral substrate, the life of rivers and oceans, the very airwaves – capitalism has depended, and still depends, on more and more of these shared properties being shared no longer, whatever the violence or absurdity involved in converting the stuff of humanity into this or that item for sale.

Retort, 2005⁹⁹

Andre once suggested that the subject of each of the Cuts pertained to three racial tragedies: the tragedy of treating territory as property, the tragedy of treating persons as property, and the tragedy of everything becoming property.¹⁰⁰ Certainly, it is possible to understand the historical moments cited by the sources in these terms – from the Wampanoags finding themselves obliged to relinquish their land to the newly arrived and ever-acquisitive English, to John Brown's vanguard aspirations to terminate slavery, and to seeing Lindbergh as a figure swallowed up by the atavistic pressures and predatory forces of his age. In fact, we might suggest Lindbergh's sympathy towards the German fascist regime of the 1930s is merely the logical progression of his love of clear mechanistic solutions – extrapolated from the realm of the technical and applied instrumentally to the social.

I suspect the details of Lindbergh's fascination with German National Socialism mattered considerably to Andre, who only adds elliptically to this

⁹⁹ Retort, *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (Verso: London and New York, 2005), pp. 193-194.

¹⁰⁰ Carl Andre, untitled note dated 21 August 1973 and reprinted in *America Drill* (2003 facsimile edition) p. f.

1973 note that most people are in agreement that Lindbergh's father 'was unowned' by the eventual political orientation of his son.¹⁰¹ Lindbergh Senior had been elected to Congress in the 1906 election, and subsequently carved out a reputation for himself as a staunch defender of democratic values and social justice.¹⁰² Surely it is not a coincidence that it is the title of the first political magazine established by Lindbergh Senior which opens the poem. *The Law of Rights Realized and Unrealized* was founded in 1905, and was intended to be the official organ of a small land-owning venture for Minnesota farmers, initiated with the aim of protecting farmers' profits from distant, East Coast creditors. The venture failed. But as Davis points out, the endeavour was evidence of Lindbergh's passionate conviction that agriculture is the primary cause of the world's energy. Inspired by Marx, he understood human labour to be the source of all economic value, whereas property interests and those who control the flow of credit are allowed to reap the financial rewards.¹⁰³ In fact, Lindbergh's sympathy towards workers and producers, and his resolute conviction that their labour be properly remunerated, are sentiments not entirely dissimilar to those later expressed by Andre himself.

However, I am wary of implying there might be a key that unlocks the meaning of *America Drill* in its entirety. Nor would any historically-based explanation be capable of explaining why Andre simply found it necessary to curtail reference to each of the subjects referenced in the poem to just handfuls of quotations. Or, for that matter, why he felt inclined to cut and drill these word-fragments across the length of forty-three pages. But there again, if it is the nature of property to requisite, isolate and segment that which was once common and shared, then we might suggest Andre's method of appropriating and fragmenting historical sources is uncommonly fitting. We might argue that the extent to which the poem's system is driven by an objectifying logic that drains texts of their singularity to such a degree that they can be rendered equivalent and made relentlessly exchangeable is also a quality shared by an economy sustained by a logic of ownership and accumulation. The poem articulates, then,

¹⁰¹ Carl Andre, untitled note, 21 August 1973, *America Drill*, p. f.

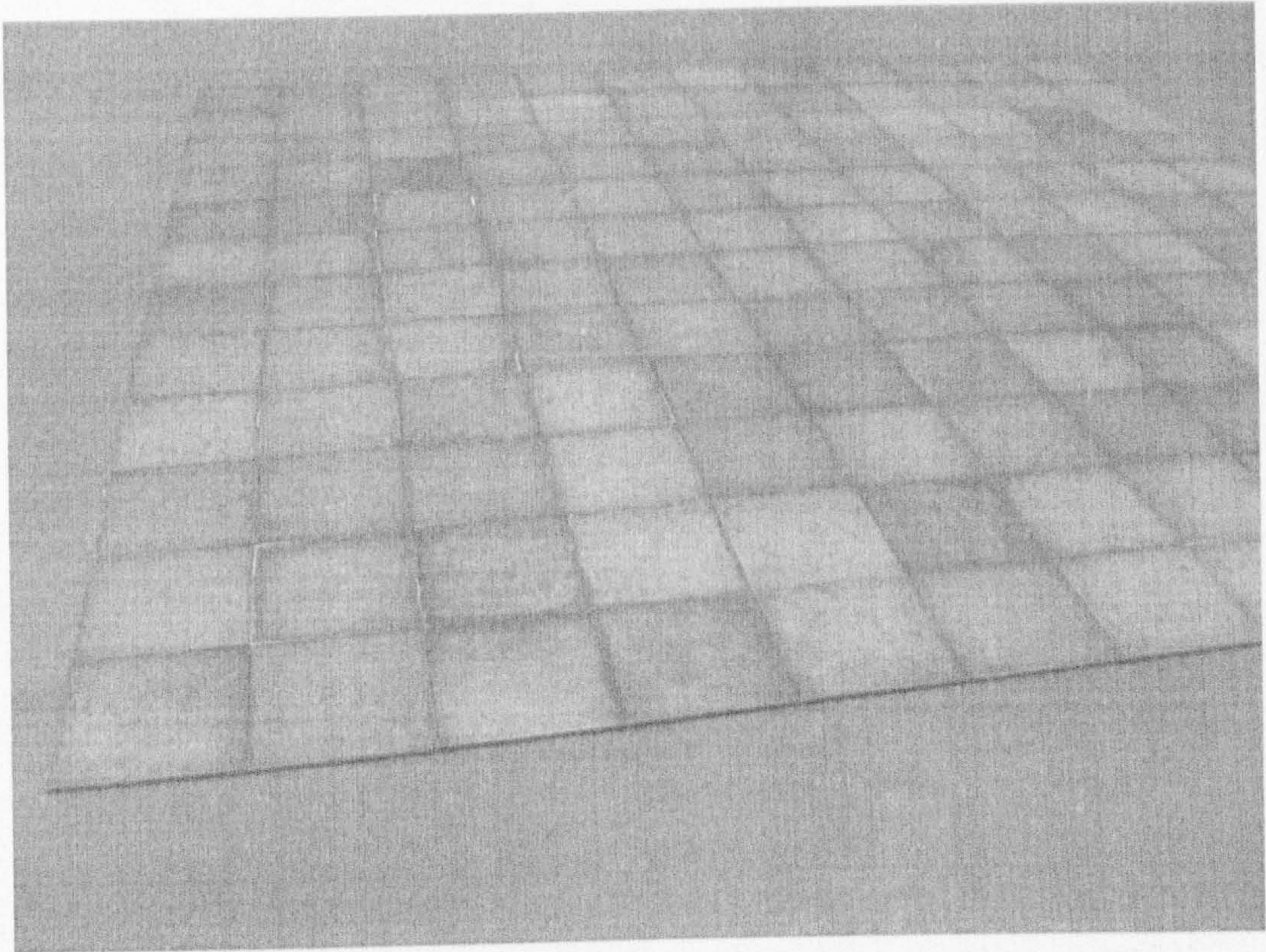
¹⁰² For a useful introduction to C. A. Lindbergh's politics, see Bruce L. Larson, *Lindbergh of Minnesota: A Political Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

¹⁰³ See Kenneth S. Davis, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream*, pp. 38-41.

the impossibility of expressing the 'tragedy' of property in a form that is not entirely exempt from that same logic. The implication being, perhaps, that the conditions of 'knowing' and 'conveying' in the present block the very aspiration to envisage circumstances otherwise. *America Drill* may well have been inspired by sincere regret for the injustices of the past, yet the self-imposed repressions of its own system requires that this remains forever inconclusive and arbitrarily curtailed.

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PART II



PLACEMENTS AND POSITIONS

Chapter 6

**Particles:
From quantity to ontology**

Andre represented an early form of the belief that if you got a whole lot of identical objects (let's say squares) and put one here and here and here and here, then that was a work of art, that was gripping and compelling. Carl was a very early advocate – even in his poems – of that type of thing.

Michael Fried, 1987¹

The majority of Andre's poems did not circulate much further than amongst his close friends until at least the end of the 1960s. By then, of course, he had acquired a significant reputation as an artist, which meant that they entered critical discourse as appendages to a body of sculptural work that was already considerably more familiar. It would be ungenerous to speculate whether the poetry would even have become known had Andre not become a major artist. However, it was undoubtedly the interest provoked by the sculptures that led to their publication, and the institutions that assumed responsibility for their dissemination were almost always the same as those that promoted and displayed his sculptures. The early work was published en masse in 1969 as a series of a limited edition bound Xerox facsimiles by the Dwan Gallery, where Andre had exhibited since 1967.² The context and the nature of the presentation invariably forced on them the status of an artist's publication, and no doubt they were collected accordingly.³ This was only accentuated later, when in the years that

¹ Michael Fried, in 'Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop', in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture: Number One*, ed. by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), p. 79.

² Carl Andre, *Seven Facsimile Notebooks of Poetry* [1960-69], ed. by Seth Siegelaub and the Dwan Gallery, 1969. The notebooks included *Passport* (1960), *Shape and Structure* (1960-65), *A Theory of Poetry* (1960-65), *One Hundred Sonnets* (1963), *America Drill* (1963-1968), *Three Operas* (1964) and *Lyrics and Odes* (1969).

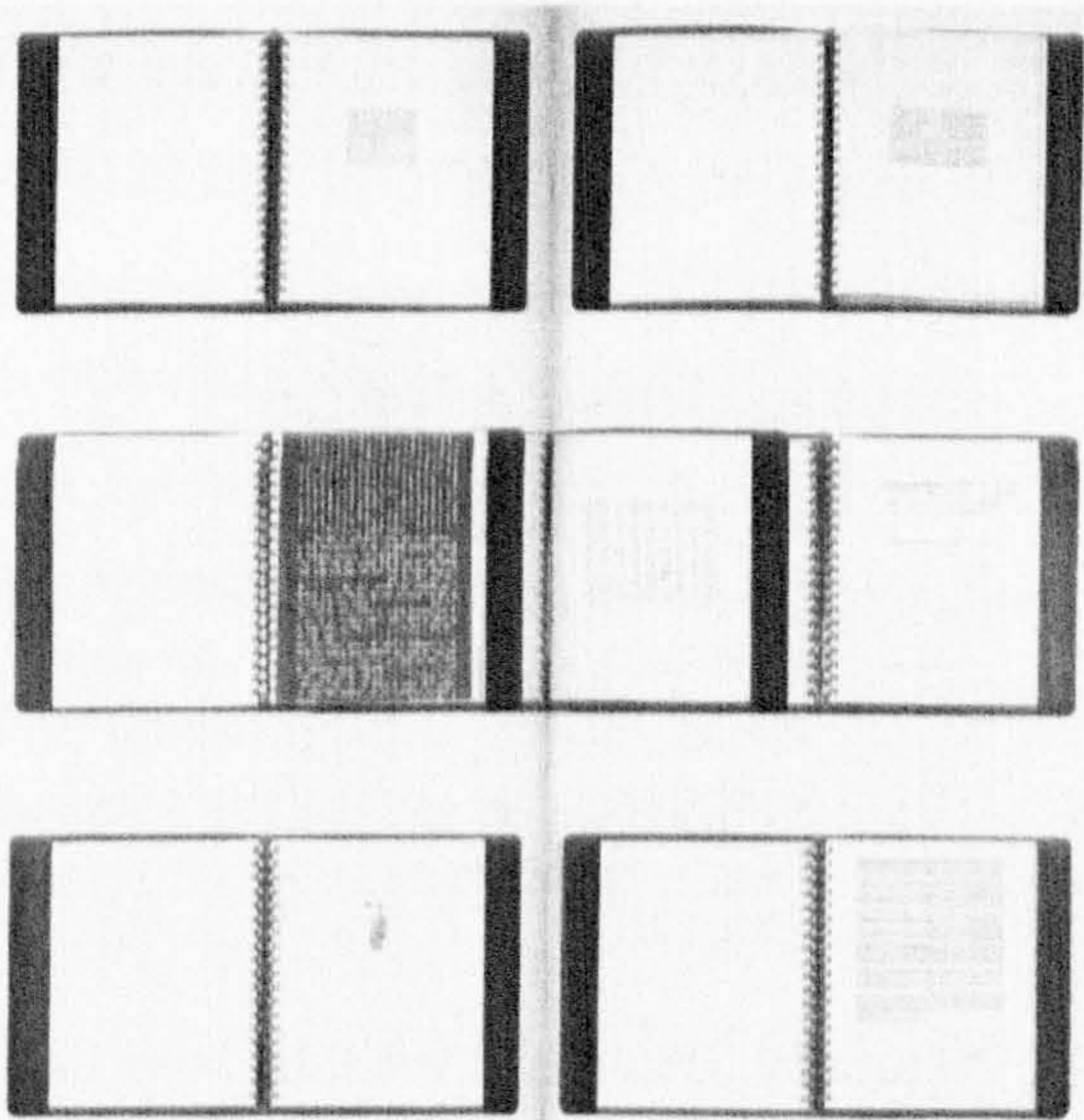
³ In some respects, it was Conceptual art that created an appropriately sympathetic climate for text-based artistic productions in manuscript and paper form. The Xerox machine was still a new technology in 1969, and it had been embraced enthusiastically by many artists who wished to produce small publications cheaply. It is no coincidence either, that the editor of Andre's poems was Seth Siegelaub, a figure who was intimately associated with the promotion and exhibition of Conceptual art. See 'On Exhibitions and the World at Large: Seth Siegelaub in Conversation with Charles Harrison', *Studio International*, vol. 178, no. 917 (December 1969), pp. 202-203. For a further history of his relation to Conceptual Art, see Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2003).

followed, the original manuscripts of individual poems were exhibited on gallery walls or in glass vitrines – only further confusing and curtailing the standard protocols for poetry's cultural distribution.⁴

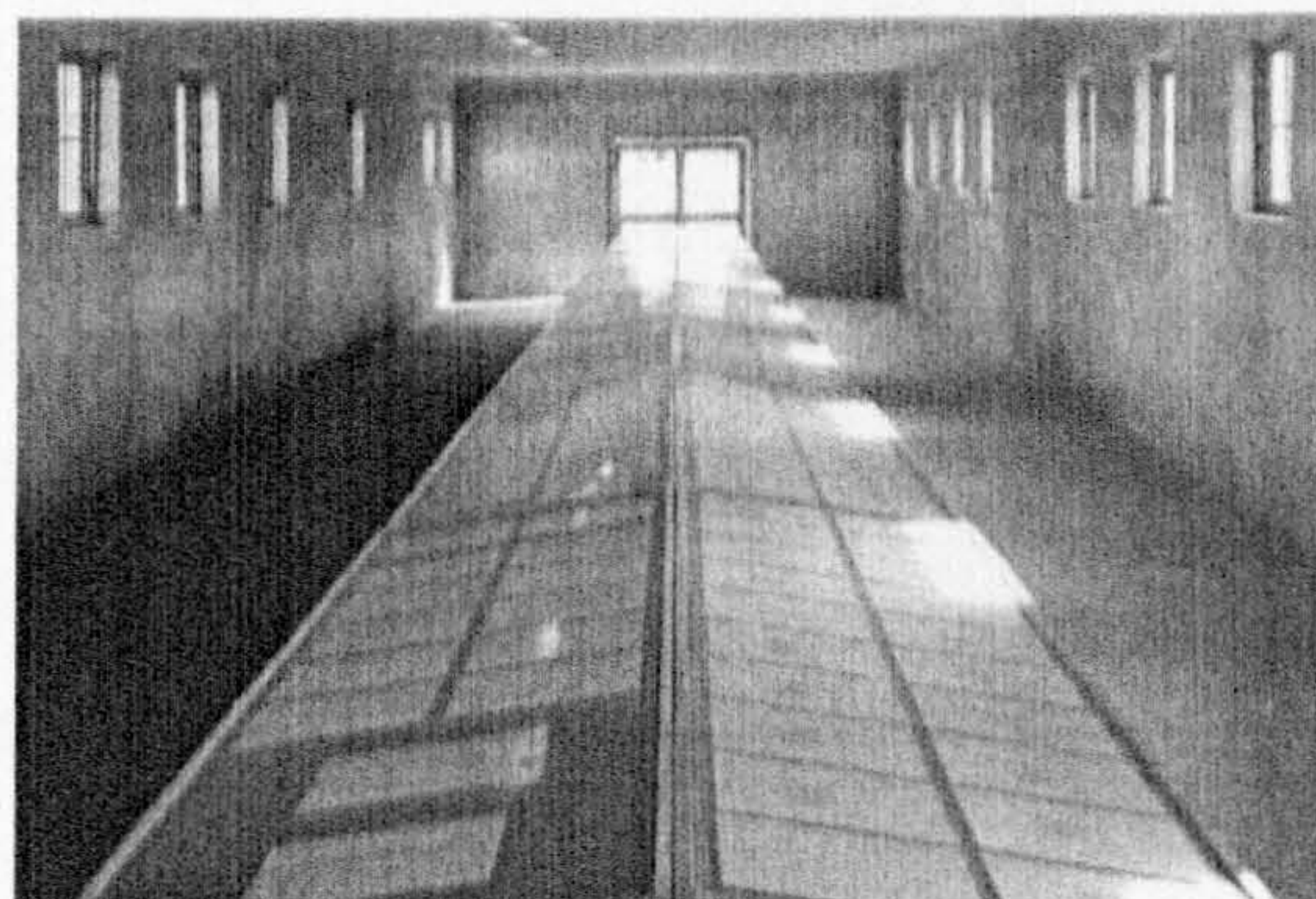
ESSAY ON SCULPTURE FOR ECGOOSSEN 1964

arc	plane
arch	hull
aisle	oar
bridge	lens
bench	plank
ball	square
bin	range
beam	line
booth	peg
flange	mast
cairn	ridge
bell	stance
cam	scale
cone	pole
chair	pit
groove	pyre
chord	spike
crux	stroke
ceg	spine
dike	rack
crypt	rib
ground	rail
depth	spire
disk	throat
cup	spool
dome	roof
ditch	rim
height	room
field	stair
door	throne
hub	stake
edge	hill
floor	rod
length	slab
frame	stile
gate	trench
keg	stool
grid	slot
joint	sun
source	tomb
mound	truss
hill	trough
leg	waist
hole	wall
notch	urn
sphere	

Essay on Sculpture, 1964



Seven Facsimile Notebooks of Poetry, 1960-69



**Installation of poetry, 1958-72,
at the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas**

⁴ It is possible that the first manuscript of one of Andre's poems to be offered for sale was the single-page poem, *Names: An Opera for Three Voices* (1967). This was displayed at Andre's second exhibition at Dwan in her newly opened New York gallery, which ran from 3 December to 3 January 1968. In later years, Andre has had exhibitions in which only his poetry was displayed. See, for instance, Roberta Smith, 'Carl Andre, 'Words in the Form of Poems'', John Weber Gallery', *Artforum*, vol. 13 (April 1975), pp. 73-74, Fenella Crichton, 'Carl Andre at Lisson', *Art International*, vol. 19, no. 7 (September 1975), p. 51 and Barry Schwabsky, 'Carl Andre, Paula Cooper Gallery', *Artforum*, vol. 32, no. 5 (January 1994), p. 89.

The poems' indebtedness to the typewriter is perhaps responsible for many of these decisions. Thanks to their distinctive visual appearance, they simply do not lend themselves to being reproduced other than as facsimiles. But more to the point, few would deny that these poems have a profoundly concrete character that calls out for comparison with his sculptures.⁵ Therefore, it is hardly surprising that critics have been so concerned to identify shared features. In fact, Carl Andre himself has been more than helpful in facilitating such efforts. In 1972 he responded to an interviewer who had asked him how his poems and sculptures relate:

[...] in a sense my efforts in poetry have been to try and use words as bricks, you might say, as separate and not in the structure of grammatical form, but without grammar and in a more absolute sense. In that sense of isolation that is like the sculpture. [...] I treat the words as particles. They retain their meaning, but retain their meaning as atoms, as particles.⁶

Naturally, this is not the only way that we might identify associations between the two bodies of work, which, as we have seen, can be considerably more varied and complicated than the terms offered here. Most critics, however, have followed Andre's cue and further expanded on the implications of these claims – often with much insight.⁷ But here I want to move in an altogether opposing direction, taking up Andre's own terms for discussing his poems and in turn asking how they might inform our understanding of the sculptures themselves. I want to consider the implications of his claim that in both poems and sculpture, it is his objective to wrench significance away from the overall unity and return it to the single element: the 'particle'. This chapter will focus, then, on providing a vocabulary for thinking further about the implications of the fact that Andre's sculptures are made from separable units.

⁵ One of the first overt references to Andre's poems was in David Bourdon's article, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre: A Sculptor Laid Low by the Brancusi Syndrome', in *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 2 (October 1966), pp. 15-17, p. 17. Bourdon alludes to the visual nature of the poetry with a quotation from Charles Boultenhouse: 'By making us "look" at what we "read", the shaped poem reminds us that the poem as such is an object among other objects in the world.' See p. 108. However, John Chandler was the first to describe them in any serious detail. See his 'The Last Word in Graphic Art', *Art International*, vol. 12, no. 9 (November 1968), pp. 26-27.

⁶ 'Carl Andre interviewed by Achille Bonito Oliva', *Domus*, no. 515 (October 1972), pp. 51-52, p. 52.

⁷ The most productive and careful of these readings are those of Dominic Rahtz, 'Literality and Absence of Self in the Work of Carl Andre', especially pp. 69-73, and James Meyer's introduction, 'Carl Andre, Writer', in *Cuts: Texts, 1959-2004*, pp. 12-16.

*

I will reveal those atoms from which nature creates all things and increases and feeds them and into which, when they perish, nature again resolves them. To these in my discourse I commonly give such names as the 'raw material', or 'generative bodies', or 'seeds' of things. Or I may call them 'primary particles', because they come first and everything else is composed of them.

Lucretius⁸

From the Epicureans to modern particle physics, particles have been understood simply as a minimal unit of magnitude. It was Lucretius who first pronounced that the substance of the universe was constituted from atoms, and the varied list of terms he uses in the citation above should serve as an indication that a particle need not necessarily indicate any specific dimension, substance or even a form: it is simply the smallest conceivable unit. Or, more precisely, it is merely the point at which further inquiry into even smaller units is no longer attempted. For once a quantity is designated 'a particle', it implies that no capacity exists to detect whether or not it has an internal structure. In fact, if it is revealed that substances possess inner components, then it is simply no longer possible to call them particles.⁹

Thus, when Andre uses the term, we might say it is a way of indicating that the shape, quality and form of his selected units – be they words, bricks, metal plates, or blocks – are treated as unquestioningly absolute and fixed. It is the point at which no further cuts or subdivisions are made. From these particles, the sculpture is then aggregated:

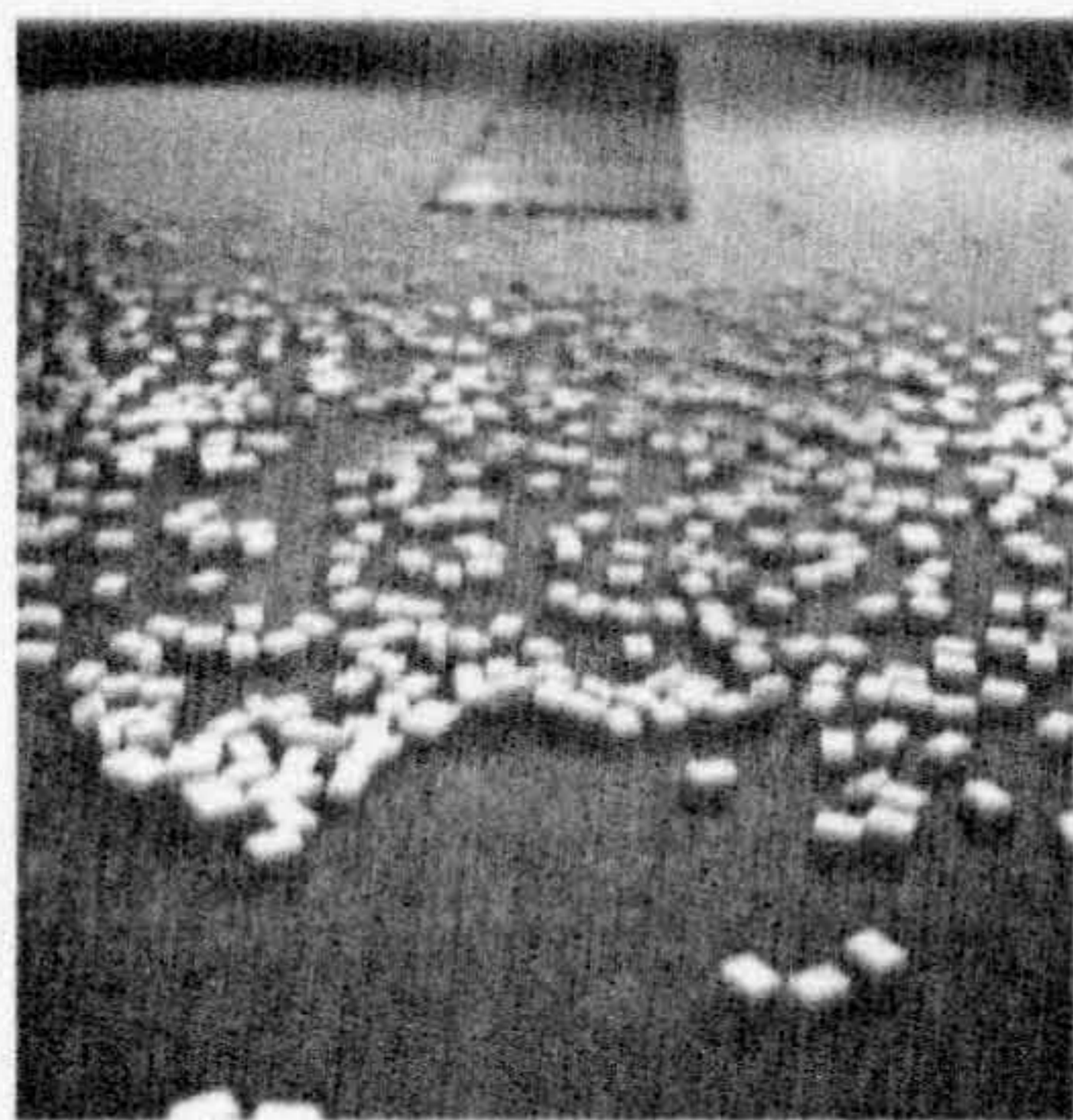
Well, my general rule is to find a particle (this is one of the most difficult things, to find or make a particle), and from that selection or discovery of a single particle, create a set of them in which the rules for joining the particles together is the characteristic of the single particle.¹⁰

⁸ Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. R. E. Latham (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 11.

⁹ See, for instance, P. W. Bridgeman, *The Way Things Are* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 195.

¹⁰ Carl Andre, in 'Time: A Panel Discussion', ed. by Lucy Lippard, *Art International*, vol. 13, no. 9 (November 1969), pp. 20-23 and p. 39, p. 23. See also Andre's interview with Phyllis Tuchman, *Artforum*, vol. 8, no. 10 (June 1970), pp. 55-61, pp. 55-57.

The very word 'rule' might be thought to attest to the instrumentalist terms with which Andre conceives his practice: first, he locates an inert and manipulable unit and then he subjects it to a simple operation, so that the finished work is merely the evidence of the rule-determining action. But although his statement is couched in this language, it is not quite that clear-cut, for what he wishes to suggest is that the particles *themselves* propose the best means for their combination. The rules, in other words, are generated out of the materials, or, to put it differently, they at least remain 'true' to the character and nature of the individual particle. By suggesting this, we might think that Andre's account of his practice is intended to notably downplay the significance of the appearance of the overall configuration. It implies that any set of units he arranges should be viewed as nothing more and nothing less than an arrangement of parts – a composite. Accordingly, this might recall one of his oft-cited slogans from the mid sixties: 'things in their elements and not in their relations.'¹¹ It is an aphorism intended to remind us that his is a practice predicated on a refusal to use fixatives or joints to hold the particles together. Everything remains separable. Indeed, over the years Andre has been more than keen to emphasise the discreteness of the parts over the continuity of the whole, frequently even refusing to describe his sculptures as plastic, because 'plastic' implies 'flowing of form'. Instead, his works are 'clastics': "'clastic' means broken or pre-existing parts which can be put together or taken apart without joining or cementing".¹²

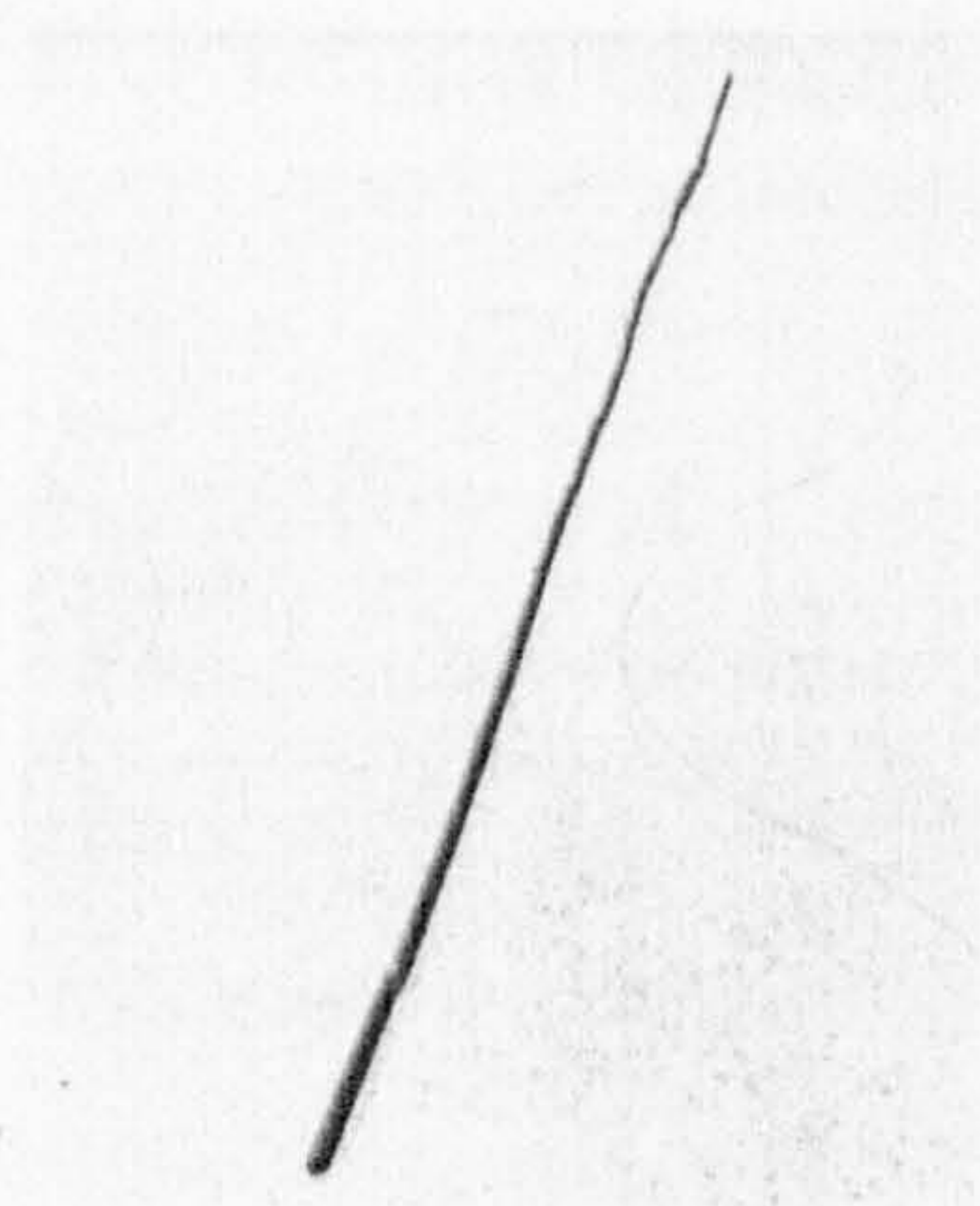


***Spill (Scatter Piece)* 1966, installation
at the Dwan Gallery, New York, 1966-67**

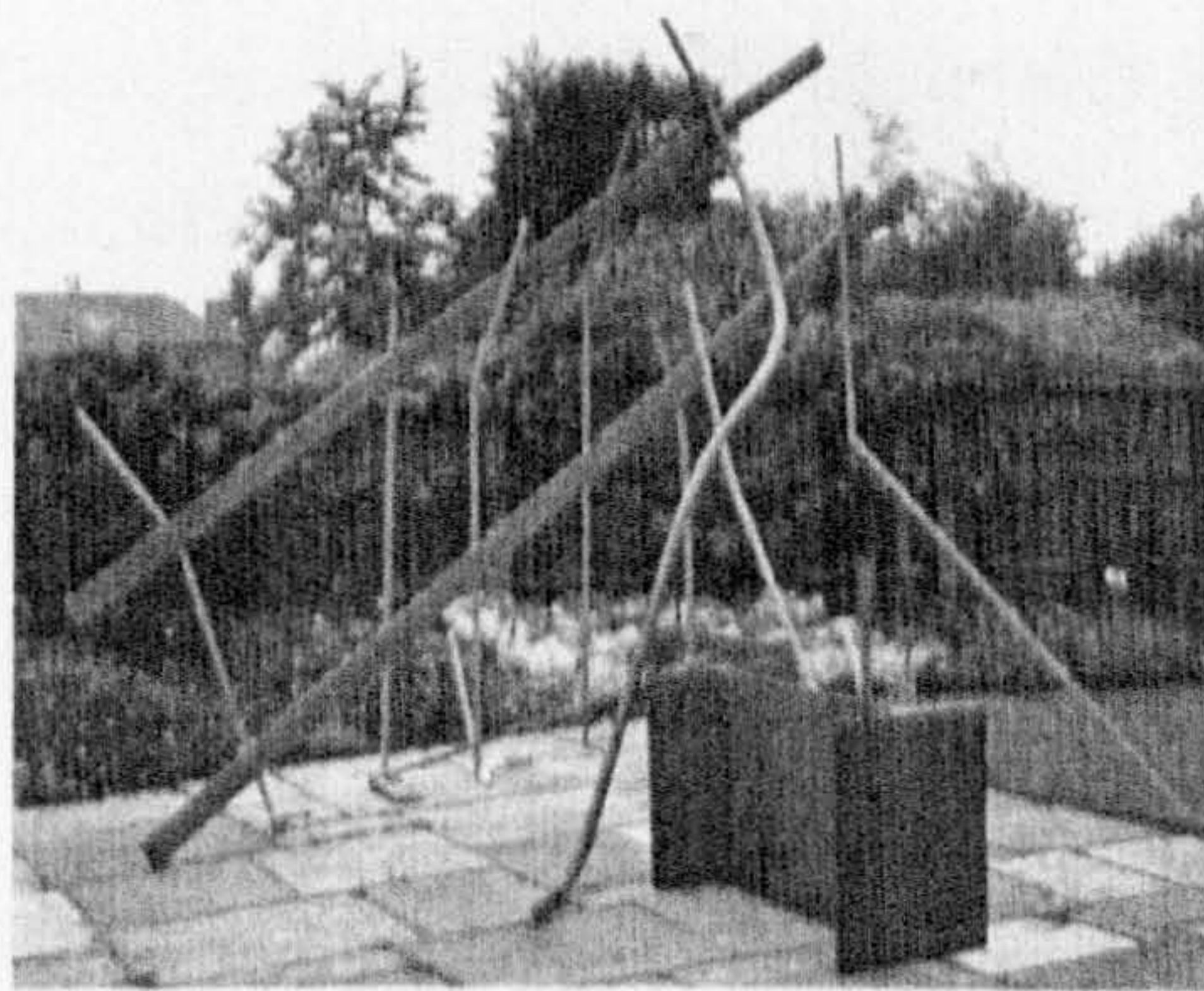
¹¹ Carl Andre, in Dan Graham 'Carl Andre', p. 35. See also Lucy R. Lippard, '10 Structurists in 20 Paragraphs', in *Minimal Art*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. by Enno Develing, Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1968, p. 26.

¹² Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', *Artforum*, vol. 8, no. 6 (June 1970), pp. 55-61, p. 57.

From these terms, we might infer that no element of Andre's sculptures amounts to anything greater or more significant than the mere total of its aggregated parts. Of course, when compared to many other art practices – particularly other modernist ones – this might strike us as very surprising. Contrast, for instance, the way in which the critic Michael Fried describes the welded sculptures of Anthony Caro. For Fried, the 'juxtaposition' of the various components was what mattered most of all: it was here where the visual import of his sculptures was to be located. The 'I-Beams, girders, cylinders, lengths of piping, sheet metal and grill' all subtly inflect one another, forming what Fried called 'its syntax'. And for him this was far more significant than the identity of each item.¹³ In Andre, however, the intention seems to be to claim precisely the opposite. Here, the whole is squarely the sum of the qualities of its independent components. In fact, it seems there is a positive attempt on Andre's part to thoroughly undermine the very possibility of enabling a viewer to make any of the kind of qualitatively based inferences that Fried ascribes to Caro's work.



17 Steel Rod Run, 1969



Anthony Caro, Month of May, 1963

All the same, however, the overall physical formation of Andre's aggregated units should not be understood as dispensable altogether. Andre's works are not like shop window displays, in which items can be taken away one

¹³ Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 10 (June 1967), pp. 12-23, p. 20, reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. For a further discussion of Fried's reading of Anthony Caro's sculptures, see Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, pp. 181-185.

by one. Nor, for that matter are they like Felix Gonzalez-Torres' 'giveaway' works, in which viewers are encouraged to help themselves to sheets of paper from large stacks, or pieces of candy from piles in the corner.¹⁴ In fact, nothing could be more opposed to the nature of Andre's sculptures – at least according to the terms as he defines them. For he has always claimed the particles alone do not make the work: it is the number of units *and* their arrangement that constitute the sculpture.¹⁵

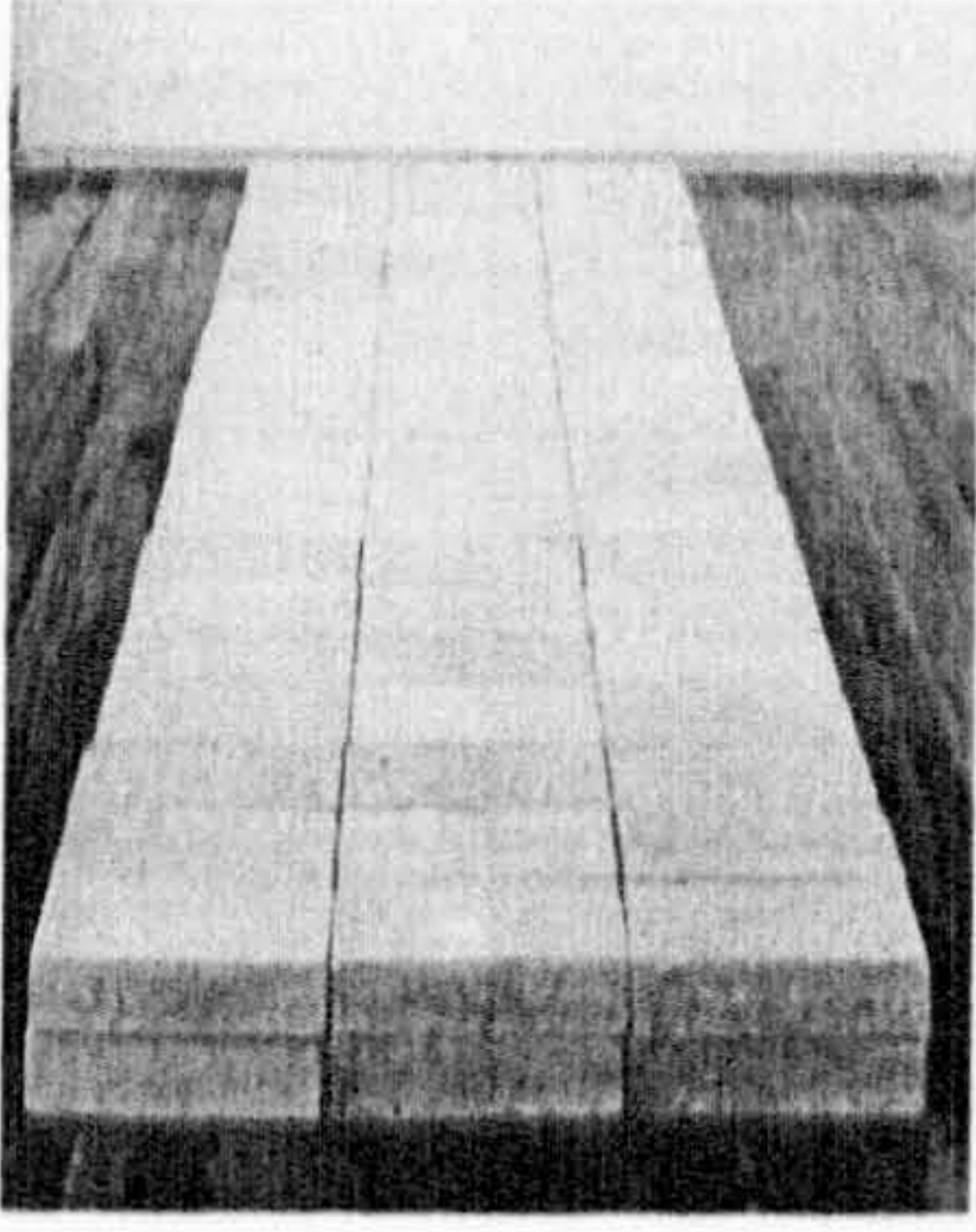


Felix Gonzales-Torres, *Untitled (Veteran's Day Sale)*
1989, exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum,
New York, 1995

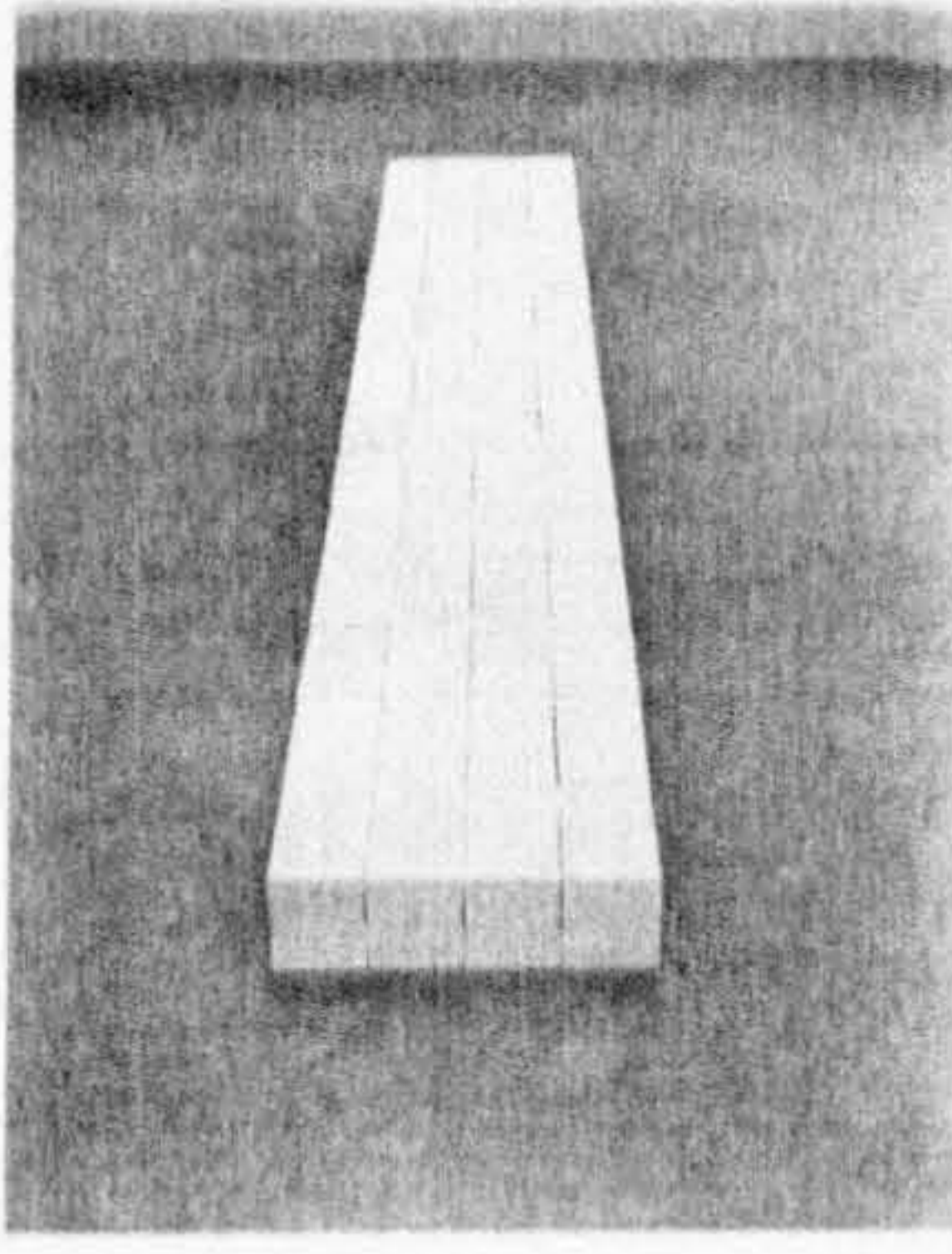
In one sense, this might strike us as wholly contradictory. It implies that the overall formation is deliberately self-evident and is intended to register with viewers as lacking any deep significance. But, at the same time, it is wholly necessary for the very identity of the sculptures. It implies, in other words, that the sculptures must remain in their fixed arrangement whenever they are displayed, or else they cease to be Andre's sculptures. Consequently, the dimensions and the design of his works acquire a peculiarly emphasised and ambivalent status – one that is both crucial and seemingly meaningless. It is this tension I wish to explore here.

¹⁴ See Miwon Kwon, 'Exchange Rate: On Obligation and Reciprocity in Some Art of the 1960s and After', in *Work Ethic*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. by Helen Molesworth, Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland, pp. 92-97.

¹⁵ Daniel Buren makes this point in relation to Andre's *35 Timber Line* from 1968. See his 'Interview with Yves Aupetitallot', in *Wide White Space: Hinter dem Museum 1966-1976*, Exhibition Catalogue, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, 1995, pp. 87-88.



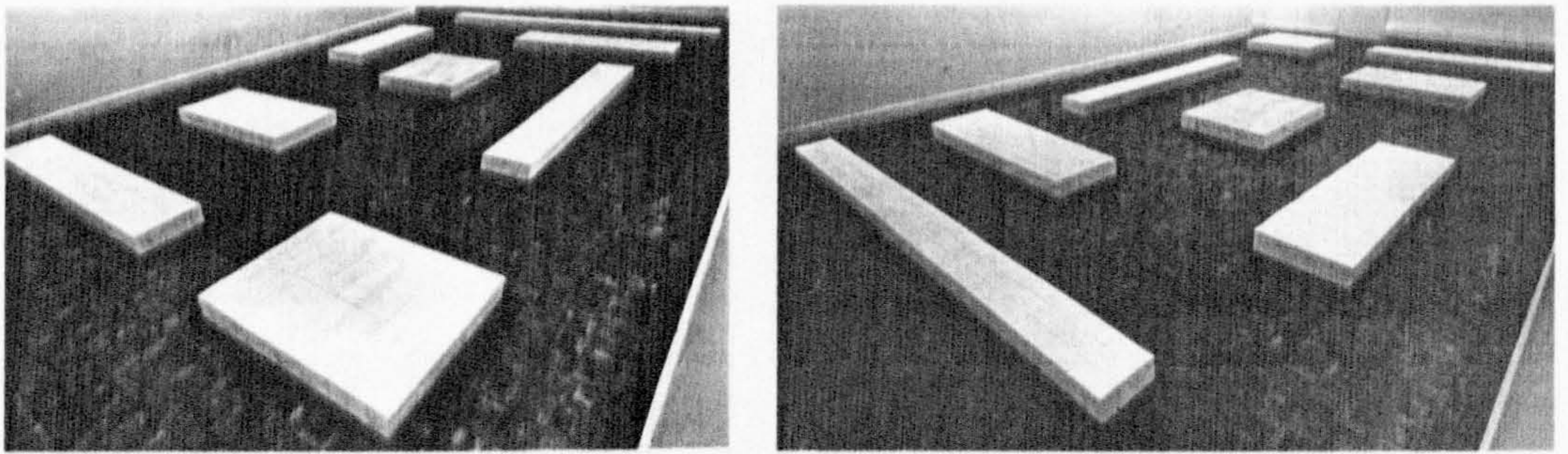
Equivalent I
1966, 1969



Equivalent III
1966, 1969

We might infer, however, that these ambivalences are all in some way related to the status of the pre-existing number-based programs that Andre chooses to deploy. For, just as in *America Drill*, where the work's overall formation is determined by an arithmetic progression that is essentially lacking any overarching significance, permutational systems are also much evidence in his three-dimensional works. The *Equivalents* from 1966 are the most obvious example. Here all eight sculptures contain the same number of units – two layers of 60 – yet each are arranged into different possible permutations: 3 wide by 20 long, 20 wide by 3 long, 4 wide by 15 long, 15 wide by 4 long, 5 wide by 12 long, 12 wide by 5 long, 6 wide by 10 long and 10 wide by 6 long. If, however, one of the sculptures were to lose a row of bricks, then for Andre the work would be as good as destroyed, for it would no longer relate either to his original conception, or to the others in the numerical set. It would cease to be 'an equivalent'. However, this only puts an added emphasis on the arbitrariness of Andre's use of his number system. We might want to ask, for instance, why factors of 60 were chosen in the first place, or, for that matter, why certain possible permutations were left out by Andre from his series.¹⁶ There seems to be no justification for these decisions within the terms of the numerical system itself. Consequently, the coherency of the organising concept begins to look increasingly like the result of a series of capricious decisions on Andre's part, one that has been elevated to the status of a fixed and invariable rule and is now wholly incapable of demonstrating its own validity or self-evidence.

¹⁶ See David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 17.



Equivalent Series, installation at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, April 1966

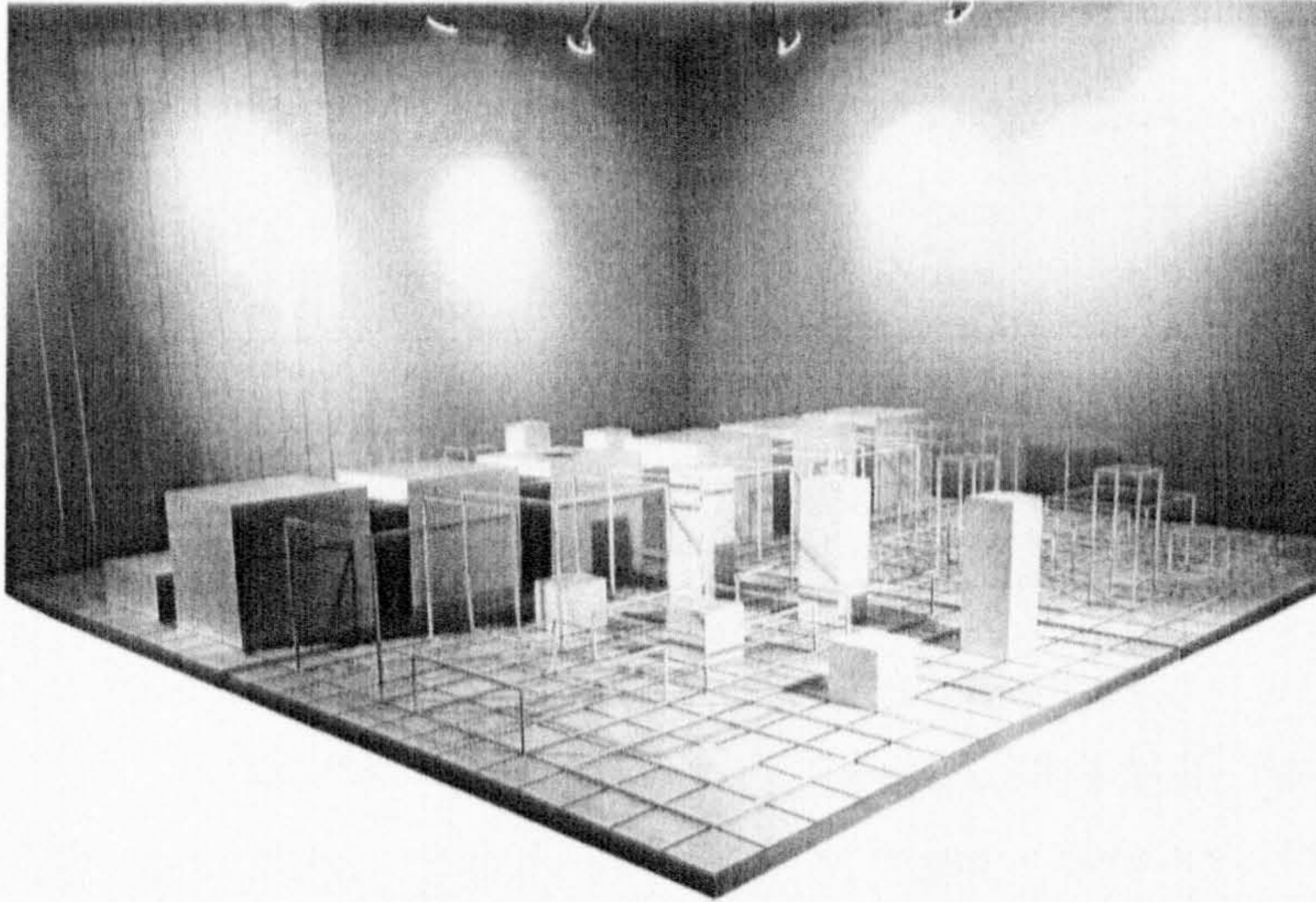
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However, from Andre's very earliest exhibitions, however, reviewers have felt obliged to stress that his sculptures were not oriented solely by the abstract, a priori decisions that determined their formations. In fact, it soon became clear that the works were not mere Platonic forms, whose purpose was to redirect attention to the determining principle. Seeing an Andre sculpture was 'always quite a different thing from experiencing a concept,' was how one critic phrased it.¹⁷ Moreover, it was also evident that certain works or groups of works were carefully sited in relation to their surrounding architecture, which accorded them a very distinct spatial quality. This becomes immediately apparent if we contrast his sculptures to those of Sol LeWitt from around the same time. LeWitt's works in about 1966 tend to be visual presentations of simple structural permutations, such as his *Serial Project #1 (ABCD)*. The work might offer a gallery visitor much that is of visual interest, but spatially, it is quite different from Andre's sculpture, for it sits on a slightly raised grid. This functions in the same way as a pedestal does for earlier three-dimensional art, containing the work and maintaining a spatial separateness between the beholder and the sculpture. The work can only be observed from outside, looking inwards.¹⁸ Andre's *Equivalents* at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, on the other hand, did invite viewers to walk amongst the 'islands' of bricks and to become aware of the

¹⁷ Kurt von Meier, 'Los Angeles', *Art International*, vol. 11, no. 4 (April 1967), pp. 51-55, p. 51. John Chandler also makes it clear that his sculpture 'has to be sensed. There is as little correspondence between conceiving a work of art and perceiving a work of art as there is between imagining something and seeing it. [...] To be told that someone has a plan for a piece using 16 x 1 squares of copper in an 8 x 2 placement is not to have experienced a work of art, and another piece using the same elements in a 4 x 4 arrangement would be a very different experience if experienced.' See John Chandler, 'The Last Word in Graphic Art', p. 26.

¹⁸ For LeWitt's description of his work, see 'Serial Project No. 1 (ABCD)', pp. 75-76.

spatial intervals between the sculptures. Consequently, the surrounding environment, in particular the floor and the gallery walls, takes on a much more pronounced significance for the viewer than it does for Sol LeWitt.



Sol LeWitt, *Serial Project #1 (ABCD)*, 1966,
installation at the Dwan Gallery, New York, April 1966

One of the first to grapple with some of these aspects of Andre's practice was Mel Bochner. In his 1967 article, 'Serial Art Systems: Solipsism', he described Andre, Dan Flavin and Sol LeWitt as each advancing an art that possessed 'a heightened artificiality due to the clearly visible and simply ordered structure they use.'¹⁹ Yet, despite his rationalist tone, Bochner was willing to concede that 'artificiality' could be an effect that is very difficult to articulate rationally.²⁰ Apprehending displays of logical 'order' might not necessarily lead

¹⁹ Mel Bochner, 'Serial Art Systems: Solipsism', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 41, no. 8 (Summer 1967), pp. 39-43, p. 40.

²⁰ It is interesting to compare the more measured and careful tone of this article to the bombast of his review of 'Primary Structures', published just a year earlier. That essay ended with an impressive string of claims. The 'New Art' of Andre, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and Robert Smithson, he wrote 'deals with the surface of matter and avoids its "heart". It is unlikelike, not spontaneous, exclusive. It does not move. This is not an "art-style." It will not "wither" with the passing season and go away. It is not engineering. It is not appliances. It is not faceless and impersonal. It will not become academic. It offers no outline or formula. It denies everything it asserts. The implications are astounding. Art no longer need pretend to be about Life. Inhibitions, dogmas and anxieties of nineteenth-century romance disappear. Art is, after all, Nothing.' See Mel Bochner, 'Primary Structures', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 40, no. 8 (June 1966), pp. 32-35, p. 34. For a more cynical reading, which seems practically to be a direct response to these sentences, see Brian O'Doherty, 'A Platonic Academy – Minus Plato: The Future of New York', *Art and Artists* (September 1966), reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*.

to a sense of self-assurance and inner conviction, in other words. As if to emphasise this tension, he begins his account of Andre's works in a dispassionate and suitably rationalist spirit, listing off their general characteristics as though they are items on a surveyor's checklist. We learn, for instance, the sculptures have 'density, rigidity, opacity, uniformity of composition, and roughly geometric shape.'²¹ It is also clear, he then explains, that the recent work has to lie directly on the ground because Andre has ordained in advance that in his units should be held together only by their own weight. Furthermore, their low height is 'probably due somewhat to the instability of unadhered stacks.'²² Every artistic decision, it seems, is capable of being explained away in banal and wholly practical terms, as if Andre simply imposes the rules and then he carries them through. Or, to paraphrase Sol LeWitt, the artist is merely the clerk of his own premise.²³

But then Bochner abruptly switches register. Visually, he writes, the lowness of his new works means that they exist 'below the observer's eye-level'. This forces viewers to look down on them from above, and the resulting effect is of the works 'impinging very slightly' into their space. The use of the word 'impinging' need not necessarily imply anything particularly threatening, yet the thought of something encroaching at foot level is at least capable of connoting something destabilizing.²⁴ Certainly, the four accompanying reproductions of sections of Andre's installation at the Los Angeles Dwan Gallery from earlier in that year only compound that impression. The work was an inverse version of his *Equivalent* series, so that here the forms of these sculptures were left as holes in an artificial floor comprising of loose concrete capstones.²⁵ One of the photos in Bochner's article even includes a pair of visitor's legs walking around the empty troughs, as if to indicate how, in practical terms, viewers would have to negotiate this uneven terrain. For Bochner, it was precisely this kind of physical attention

²¹ Mel Bochner, 'Serial Art Systems: Solipsism', p. 40.

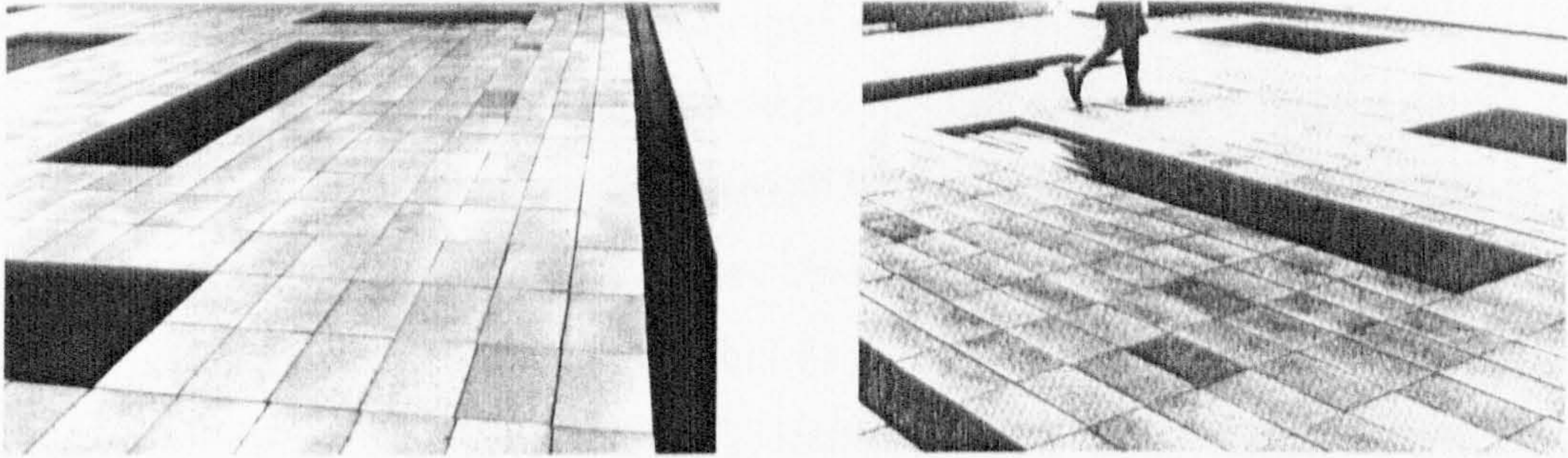
²² Mel Bochner, 'Serial Art Systems: Solipsism', p. 40.

²³ Sol LeWitt, 'Serial Project No. 1 (ABCD)', *Aspen Magazine*, reprinted in *Sol LeWitt: Critical Texts*, p. 75.

²⁴ Alex Potts also discusses Bochner's account in *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, pp. 312-313. Potts points out that the lowness of many of Andre's sculptures forces the viewer to engage with the work 'at a kinaesthetic as well as a purely visual level', suggesting that these works impact as things 'one half feels and half sees'. See p. 313.

²⁵ The exhibition at the Los Angeles Virginia Dwan Gallery ran from 8 March - 1 April 1967.

that Andre's works required that made them 'essentially unavoidable' and at the same time 'in a multiple sense *present*.'²⁶



Cuts, 1967, installation at the Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, March 1967 (details)

What exactly did Bochner mean by 'presence?' Alex Potts has suggested that a sculptural sense of 'presence' is perhaps best described as both a very real and an entirely imaginary quality: 'the "thereness" of a sculpture', he writes, 'is both very literal and totally elusive – there it is, so much is perfectly obvious, yet what is there?'²⁷ This question might have seemed uncannily pressing in relation to the negative spaces in Andre's Los Angeles installation. One critic, for instance, noted how these shallow spaces somehow felt curiously and inexplicably un-enterable.²⁸ Potts points out that this kind of tension between the 'presence' attributed to a work – in contrast to what it actually is – besets the modern condition of sculpture much more generally.²⁹ Yet in Andre's case, he argues, it almost becomes a defining feature. Most art, he suggests, enables

²⁶ Mel Bochner, 'Serial Art Systems: Solipsism', p. 40.

²⁷ Alex Potts, 'Paradoxes of the Sculptural', p. 57.

²⁸ Jane Livingstone, 'Carl Andre', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 9 (May 1967), pp. 62-63, p. 62.

²⁹ In his article, 'Dolls and Things', Potts explores this tension in much more detail. He speculates that we might read in the near-hyperbolic critical responses of Baudelaire and Rilke towards sculpture's obdurate thingliness some of the tensions that beset all objects that are potentially susceptible to commodification and reification. Potts explores the ways in which Rilke attempts to accord the sculptures of Rodin with a sense of auratic presence, yet he is only able to accomplish this by displacing a literal apprehension of the works as solid objects standing in our immediate physical environment. He can only attend to the sculptures' materiality, in other words, by imagining its dissolution. For Potts, Rilke's fantasy of an unmediated communion between viewer and object is an especially modern one, for it articulates an aspiration to abolish 'the structural alienation between subject and object in modern culture'. Sculpture's inherent materiality, on the other hand always threatens to expose this fantasy as unattainable, for it offers no such reassuring sense of identification with the world of objects. See Alex Potts, 'Dolls and Things: The reification and disintegration of sculpture in Rodin and Rilke', in *Sight & insight: essays on art and culture in honour of E. H. Gombrich at 85*, ed. by John Onians (London: Phaidon, 1994).

viewers to point to specific formal qualities, such as subtlety of composition or legible gestures of expression, which stabilise the illusion that there is a convergence between the material form of the work and the feelings it evokes.³⁰ However, a distinctive feature of Andre's sculpture is 'that it is designed to repel such mediation, while at the same time making the viewer acutely aware of the duality of its presence as fact and fantasy, as a thing out there and a stirring of thought and feeling.'³¹

The observation that artworks which approach the appearance of simple objects might have a surprising affective 'presence' had also been the topic of Michael Fried's famous essay 'Art and Objecthood'. Fried's article was directed mostly against Donald Judd, Robert Morris and Tony Smith, yet he certainly had Andre in mind as well.³² For him, however, the kind of presence their works possessed was a mere art-affect, one that resulted purely from the fact that they were presented in a gallery situation as art.³³ Such works, he inferred, simply lacked any inner, intrinsic value that enabled them to exist independently of the beholder who confers them with their artistic authority. Consequently, they are especially needy in their demand for persistent attention. In one oft-cited passage, he wrote:

Someone has merely to enter the room in which a literalist work has been placed to *become* that beholder [...] – almost as though the work in question has been *waiting for* him. And inasmuch as literalist work *depends on* the beholder, is *incomplete* without him, it *has* been. And once he is in the room the work refuses, obstinately, to let him alone – which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him, distancing him, isolating him.³⁴

³⁰ Robert Smithson makes this same point in his essay 'A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art'. He contrasts Lucy Lippard's description of Andre's works as 'rebelliously romantic' with Andre's own assertion that his works have no mental or secondary qualities, and that they are 'solidly "material"'. He points out that what is 'materialist' for one can easily become 'romantic' for another. But Smithson suggests both views are the same thing: 'Both views refer to private states of consciousness that are interchangeable.' See *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, p. 84.

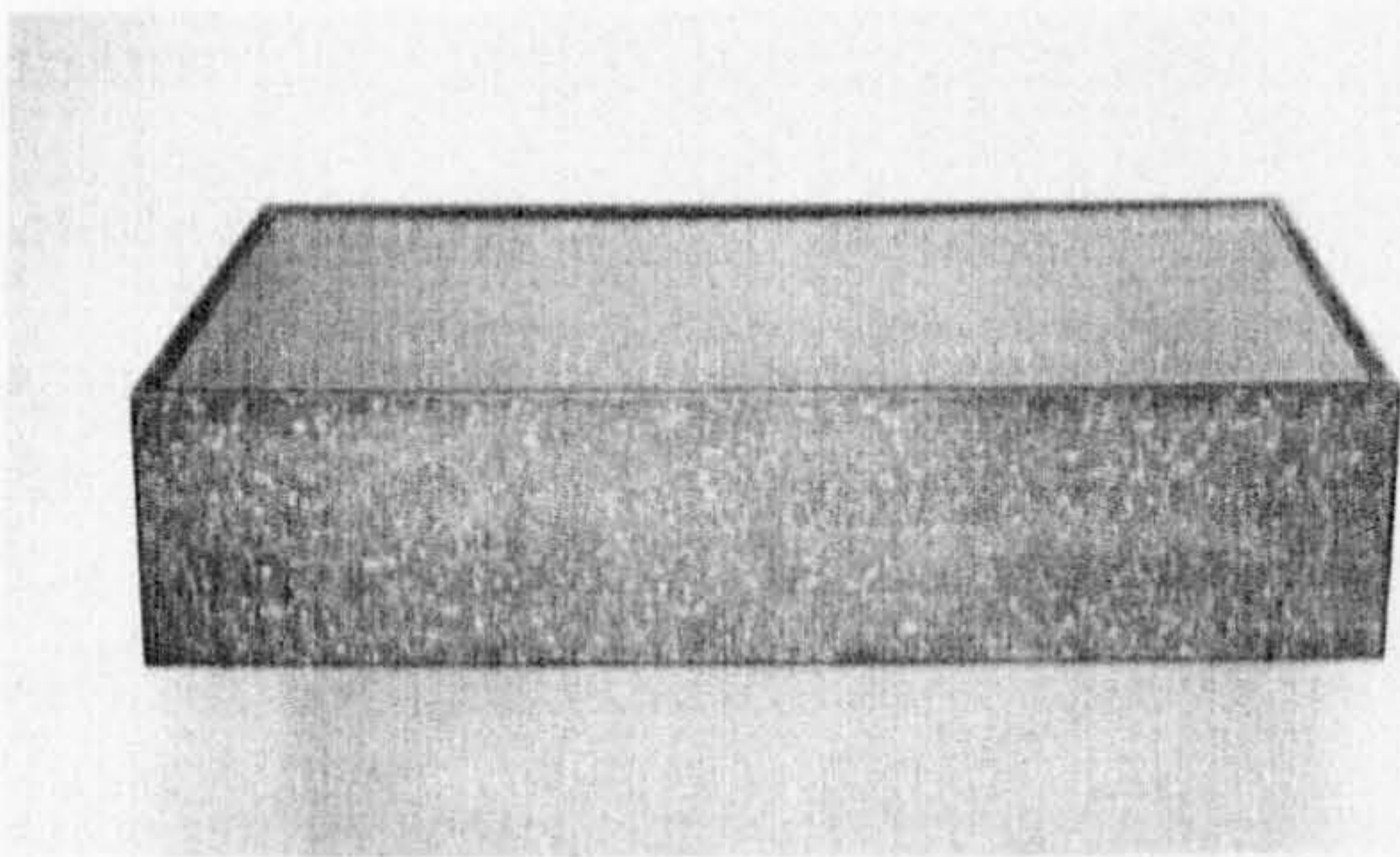
³¹ Alex Potts, 'Paradoxes of the Sculptural', p. 61.

³² Andre is named, along with Ronald Bladen, Robert Grosvenor, John McCracken and Sol LeWitt, on p. 19 of 'Art and Objecthood'.

³³ Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', p. 16.

³⁴ Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', p. 21.

Fried's willingness to see the works of Judd, Morris, Smith and Andre as possessing some kind of animate spirit might strike us as highly exaggerated. But in his mind, the very word 'presence' suggested this: presence is after all a quality usually ascribed to people, not things.³⁵ Moreover, for him the works' insistent emptiness amounted to a kind of horrifying anthropomorphism. He points out that although the artists themselves wanted to extract from their work any human association, the objects they constructed do still possess a residual anthropomorphism, simply *because* they are presented as art. They force themselves on a viewer as a physical presence, yet refuse to mirror back any consoling image of 'the human'. Or, to put it differently, the art objects make a claim on viewers' interest, but fail to offer any recognisably human dimension in relation to that experience. Indeed, as Fried later phrased it, for him such work put the body 'endlessly on stage, hollowed it out, deadened its expressiveness, denied its finitude and in a sense its humanness'.³⁶



Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1965

In fact, Fried made clear in the final pages of 'Art and Objecthood' that it was Anthony Caro's work that offered for him everything that the forms of a Morris or a Judd did not. Like certain poetry and music, he wrote, Caro's sculptures 'are possessed by the knowledge of the human body, and how, in innumerable ways and moods, it makes meaning.'³⁷ Such works imaged for him a world that was considerably less literal and obdurate than daily life – offering a

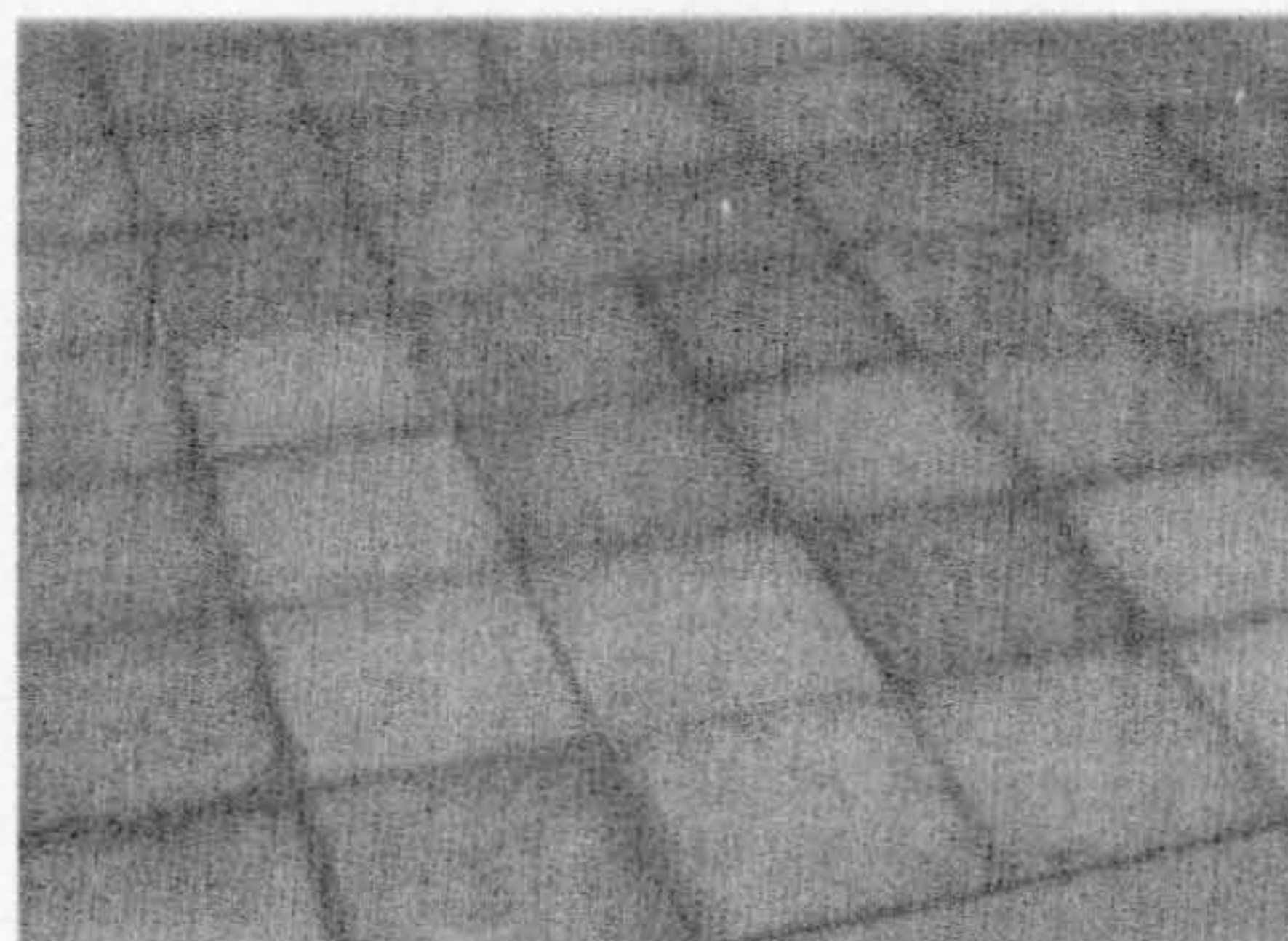
³⁵ Fried corroborates this by citing Tony Smith's statement that 'I didn't think of them [i.e. his sculptures] as sculptures but as presences of a sort.' See 'Art and Objecthood', p. 19.

³⁶ Michael Fried, 'An Introduction to my Art Criticism', in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 42.

³⁷ Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', p. 20.

privileged glimpse of a realm more closely contoured for habitation by humans.³⁸

It would be too easy at this point to suggest that it is the exclusive intent of Andre sculptures to disenchant the humanist ideals of the likes of Michael Fried, and to do so with a resolute and blank display of objects that refute identification as warm and resonant things.³⁹ Certainly, this is often how his work is presented. Most recently, James Meyer has suggest that even forty years after minimalism's emergence, 'the antihumanist thrust of his work remains alien to those who remain attached to an anthropocentric notion of art, who cannot accept the premise of an art that exists in the room *with us* but does not exist *for us*.'⁴⁰ This may well be partly the case. However to over-emphasise the anti-humanist impulse in Andre's work strikes me as slightly misleading. Certainly, Andre's works have *almost* no anthropomorphic overtones, and it is all too clear that they lack many of the consoling signs we tend to associate with either human form or personal touch. As critics have often noted, if freestanding sculpture is associated primarily with representations of the upright human figure, then nothing, surely, could be more anti-figural than the planar extension of flat metal plates, symmetrically positioned across the floor.⁴¹



144 Magnesium Square, 1969, detail

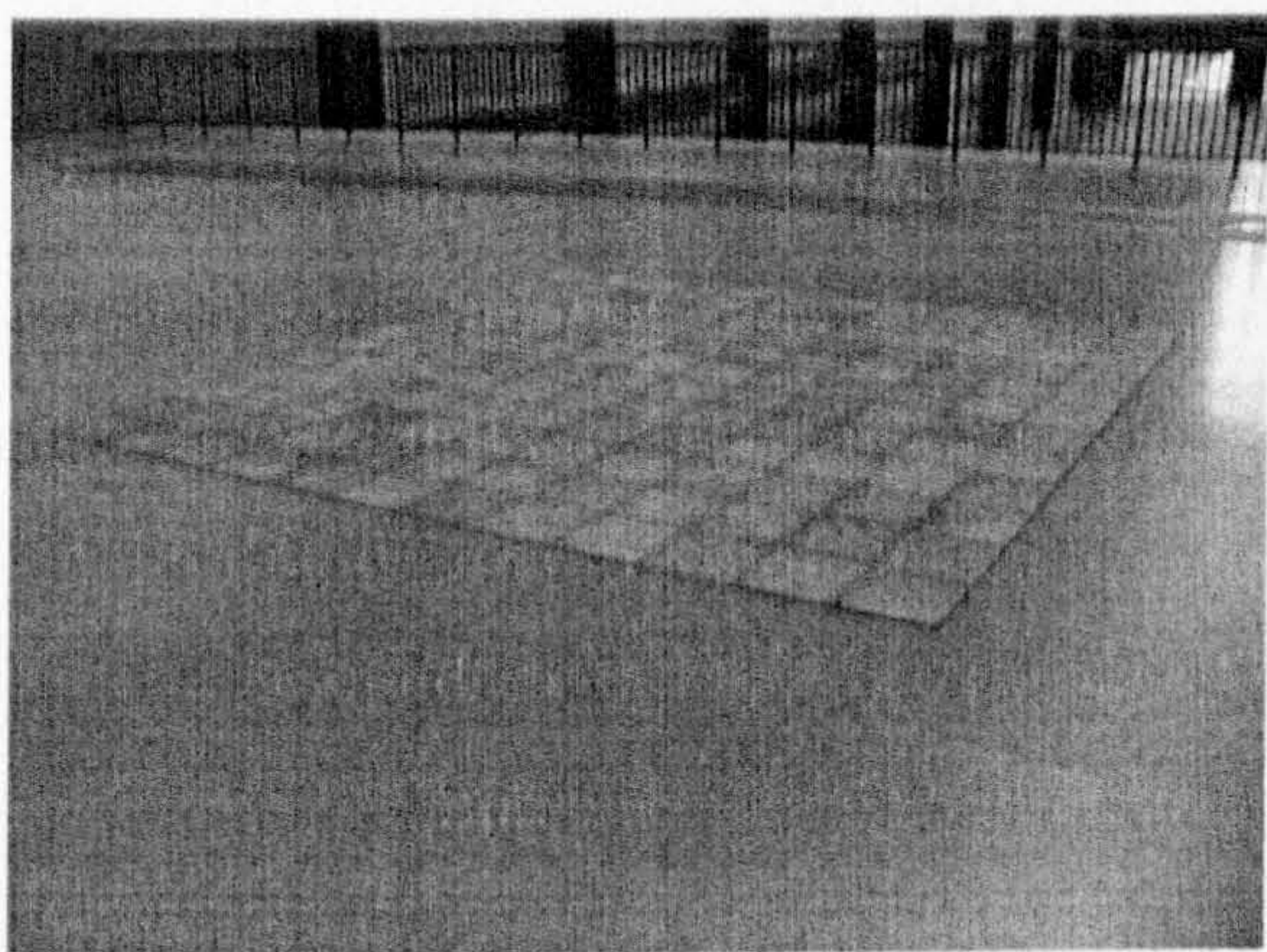
³⁸ For a reading of Michael Fried which explores the question of the anthropomorphic in relation to modernity more generally, see J. M. Bernstein, 'Aporia of the Sensible: Art, objecthood and anthropomorphism', in *Interpreting Visual Culture: Explorations in the Hermeneutics of the Visual*, ed. by Ian Heywood and Barry Sandywell (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

³⁹ See Alex Potts, 'Dolls and Things', p. 374.

⁴⁰ James Meyer, 'Carl Andre: Writer', in *Cuts: Texts, 1959-2004*, p. 17.

⁴¹ This, at any rate, is how the low-lying horizontality of much of Andre's sculpture has often been discussed. For instance, Lucy Lippard writes of his work 'rejecting the pedestal and felling the traditionally anthropomorphic stance of heroic vertical sculpture by identifying with roads and journeys.' See Lucy R. Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (New York: New Press, 1983), p. 30. She makes a similar claim on p. 123.

Nonetheless, we would be mistaken not to see Andre's sculptural practice as motivated by an intention to recover at least some residual element of the humanly sensible from the raw materiality of the particles he deploys. Of course, in relation to previous art, the level of 'human interest' in these forms is reduced to a mere residue, or a strained whisper. Certainly, we might think of it as 'assiduous renunciation', as David Bourdon put it in 1966.⁴² But I suspect Andre himself preferred always to see his work as starting out from nothing – from an empty ground – and then working upwards from this. How much is needed, Andre seems intent on asking, before we are able to devote attention to an object and find in it a human significance? The answer, needless to say, is perhaps not much.

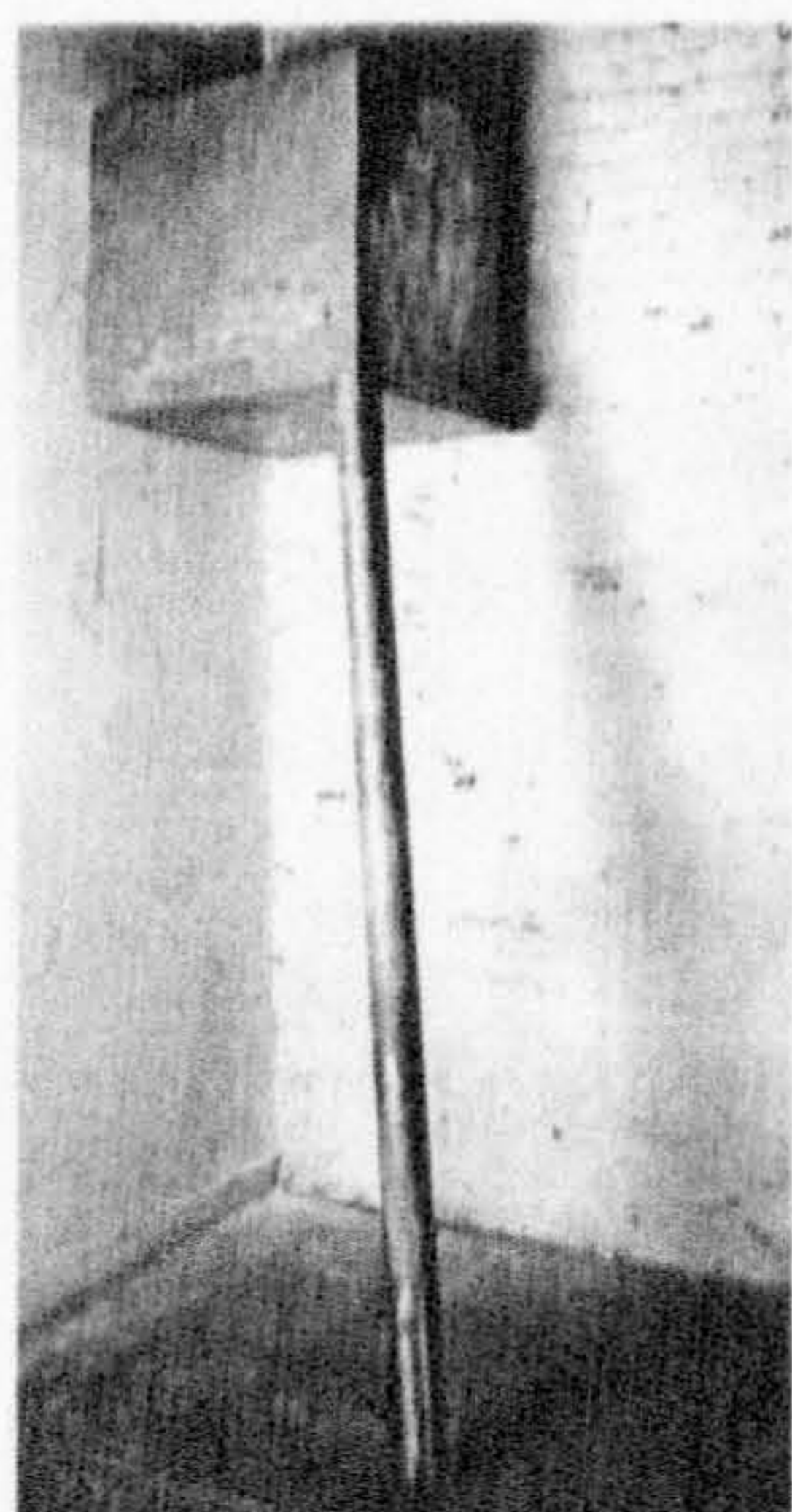


144 Magnesium Square, installation at
Tate Modern, 2003

Essentially, Andre's sculptures strike me as best described as an attempt to identify an element of human *meaningfulness* in forms and arrangements that might otherwise appear wholly *meaningless*. Again, I think our attention should turn to the significance of the role played by the particle. Take, for instance, a work such as *144 Magnesium Square*. Each plate is twelve inches by twelve inches, and three-eighths of an inch thick. Whether or not Andre had the supplier cut them to order, they have been sized nonetheless for ease of handling. Moreover, by choosing to work with particles of this size, Andre is able to set down and position each plate independently, without the use of any further tools

⁴² David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 15.

or machinery to intervene between him and the particle. Indeed, what might be more humanising in its intent than this? 'I can only relate myself in a human way to a thing', writes the young Marx, 'when the thing is related in a human way to man.'⁴³ Andre's art might be seen, then, as a means of demonstrating that these raw materials are in the first place made to serve human needs. This is hardly an art that relishes in the sublime heaviness of raw substances, as does, for example, the sculpture of Richard Serra. Especially in his prop works, Serra seems set on balancing units so that they form arrangements that register as thoroughly precarious. In contrast, Andre's use of materials could not appear more pliant: 'My work is entirely about units that I can handle without risk,' he once said. It is about 'zero threat.'⁴⁴



Richard Serra,
Corner Prop, 1969

However, to turn to the matter of human dimensions – even at this nominal level – is to raise the subject of scale. The issue is a complicated one, and not entirely easy to determine. Clement Greenberg once dismissed Andre as someone who simply lacks 'a sense of proportion', and, although we might not think this verdict is entirely right, it is as equally hard to assert he is categorically wrong.⁴⁵ At any rate, claims that Andre's works do possess an inherent sense of proportion are difficult to verify. Thanks to his 'theory of masonry' – that small

⁴³ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, trans. T. B. Bottomore, in *Marx's Concept of Man*, ed. by Erich Fromm (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1961), p. 132.

⁴⁴ Carl Andre, in Paul Cummings, *Artists in their Own Words*, p. 186.

⁴⁵ Clement Greenberg, 'An Interview with James Faure Walker', *Artscribe* 10 (January 1978), pp. 15-21, p. 16.

things, in other words, can be aggregated to construct very large things – it is all too easy to conclude that *potentially* the size of his sculptures can become vastly disproportionate to the dimensions of its individual units.⁴⁶ We might infer then that the scale of his works is wholly equivalent to their size: determined merely by preordained numerical systems, or by other practical contingencies. A sense of a human scale, we might think, is retained only at the level of the module, whilst the proportions of the whole simply do not figure in the equation.

Nonetheless, Andre's sculptures are scaled in a more evident sense than this. There is a line in one of W. H. Auden's poems in which he writes of the allure of 'short distances and definite places', and just such an affinity strikes me as equally apparent in Andre's sculptures.⁴⁷ Andre once spoke of the fact that it is in our inherent nature to measure off all things against the dimensions of our own body, reminding his interviewer of the Protagorean claim that man is, after all, the measure of all things.⁴⁸ Thierry de Duve, on the other hand, has suggested that it might be more accurate to say that Andre's use of standard modules turns *things* into the measure of man, 'with man defining himself by the artefacts that his industry has made.'⁴⁹ But, in many respects, it is hard to distinguish the one from the other; with Andre, both 'man' and 'product' seem to be rendered mutually defining. Certainly, machine-made modules are set out on the ground in a way that enables them to be sized-up and surveyed. And it seems to me that the intent is almost one of demonstrating physically what the number and the dimensions of the units amount to, so that viewers can attest for themselves how they add up to a definitive set of proportions. What those proportions are seems less important than the fact that they now become palpable and recognisable. It allows them to be accorded significance, or a certain familiarity: to be seen for what they are.⁵⁰ Here it is: 12 by 12 gives a square of

⁴⁶ See Carl Andre, in Paul Cummings, *Artists in their Own Words*, p. 186 and Jean Siegel, 'Carl Andre: Artworker', p. 178.

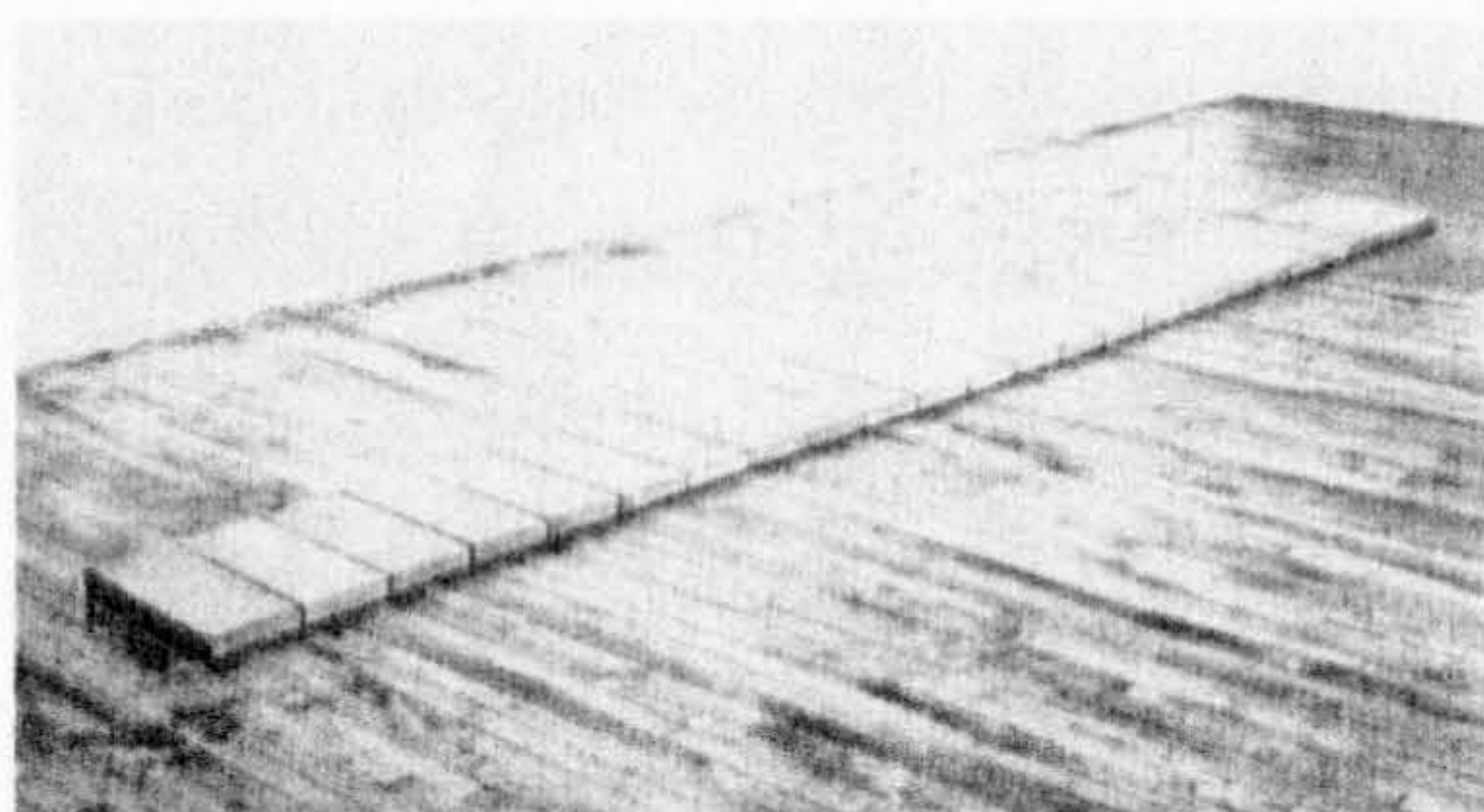
⁴⁷ 'In Praise of Limestone', in *W. H. Auden* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), p. 129.

⁴⁸ Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 57.

⁴⁹ Thierry de Duve, 'Ex Situ', *Art and Design* vol. 8, no. 5-6 (May-June 1993), pp. 24-30, p. 29.

⁵⁰ It is perhaps worthwhile saying a few words here about the difference between size and scale. In an essay on the dimensions of Jackson Pollock's paintings, T. J. Clark suggests that size is a literal matter – it entails grasping how big or small a certain object really is, in relation to the grasper's physical dimensions. Scale, on the other hand, is always relational and metaphorical, and accepts size as a mere effect of representation. 'The size of a map', he writes, 'is a literal

144 magnesium plates. Now we are counting off one side, now the next, now we are walking over its surface in search of the centre (and so on).



Walking Beam, 1966

Of course, often the dimensions of any particular sculpture can *appear* thoroughly arbitrary. For instance, at the same time as the *Equivalent Series* was displayed at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in April 1966, Andre installed a work in a large group exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Boston. The sculpture was called *Walking Beam*.⁵¹ It was a row of concrete capstones arranged across the floor from one side of the gallery to the other – so that both ends touched the walls. The span of the room was 16 feet, and because each capstone was eight inches wide, Andre required 24 to complete the work. But when the sculpture was exhibited subsequently, no alteration was made to its original length. That number of units remains invariably and permanently fixed, so that the ends of *Walking Beam* need not necessarily abut the walls. The sculpture, we might say, became a gauge for the dimensions of its originary location: an indication, perhaps that the contingent dimensions of an exhibiting space were a means for Andre to determine the composition of his sculpture, in precisely the same way as, at other times, he had resorted to number-based

matter; the scale of a map is its literal size put in relation to some other signified size, literal or imaginary'. Clark argues that modern art has often been intent on laying hold of the true size of things – and it is this suggestion that informs my account here. Andre, I think, wants to make the size of things 'real' and definitive. See T. J. Clark, 'Pollock's Smallness', in *Jackson Pollock: New Approaches*, ed. by Kirk Varnedoe and Pepe Karmell, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999. See in particular pp. 15-17.

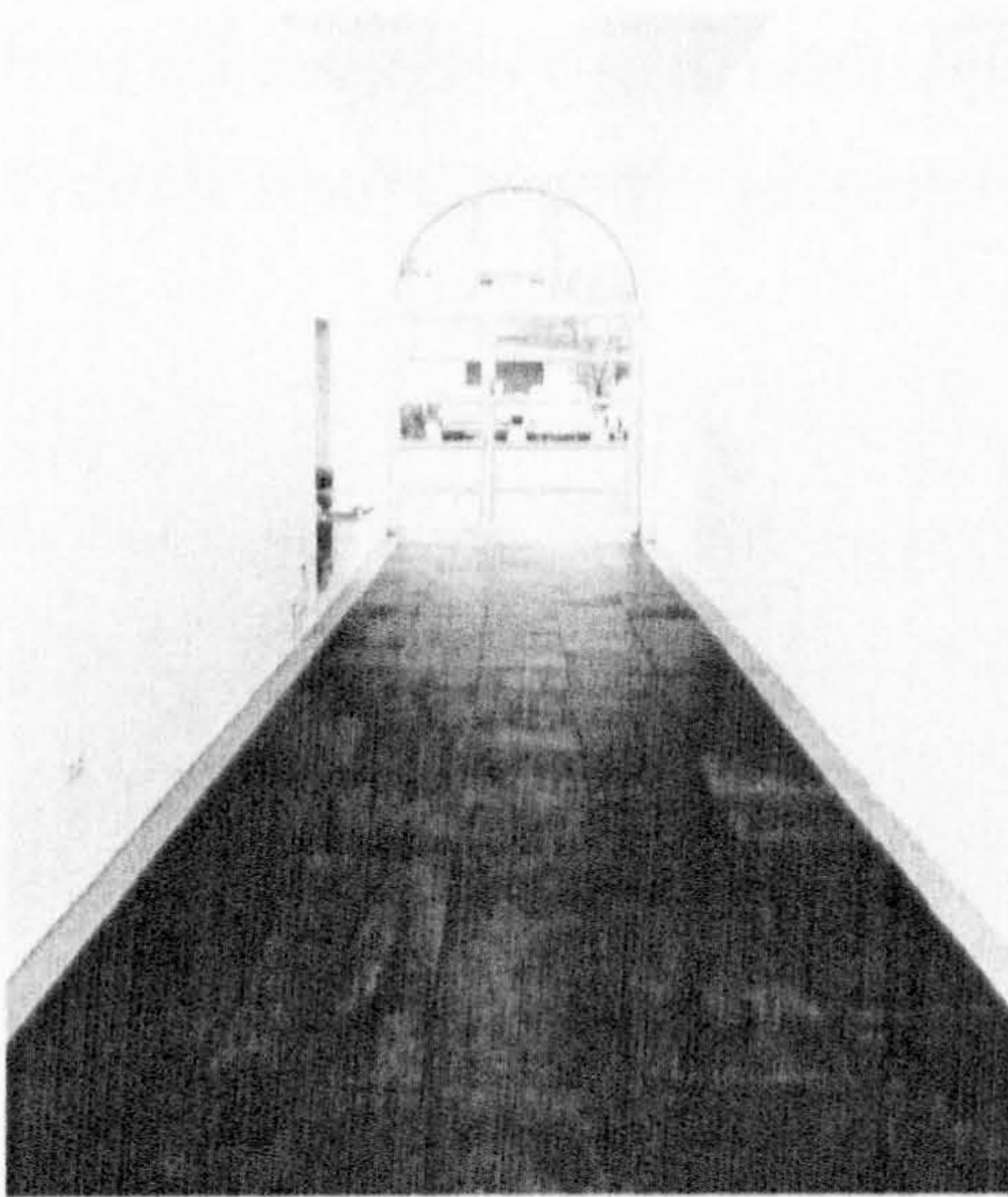
⁵¹ The exhibition was called 'Multiplicity', which ran at the Boston Institute of Contemporary Arts from 16 April to 5 June 1966. The exhibition catalogue shows no installation photograph of the work, only Andre's sketch for the design. Drawn on orthographic isometric graph paper, it shows a row of blocks running diagonally across the page. Above the row the following words are written in block print: 'Walking Beam / Wall to Wall / Concrete Block Units / 4" x 8" x 16" Nominal'. Andre has named and dated the design in the same print on the bottom left. See *Multiplicity*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. by Molly Rannells, ICA, Boston, 1966, unpaginated.

programmes. But it is also a way of taking a precise span and making it matter: a way of forcing attention on 'a' length, inviting the viewer to pace it out and measure it off.

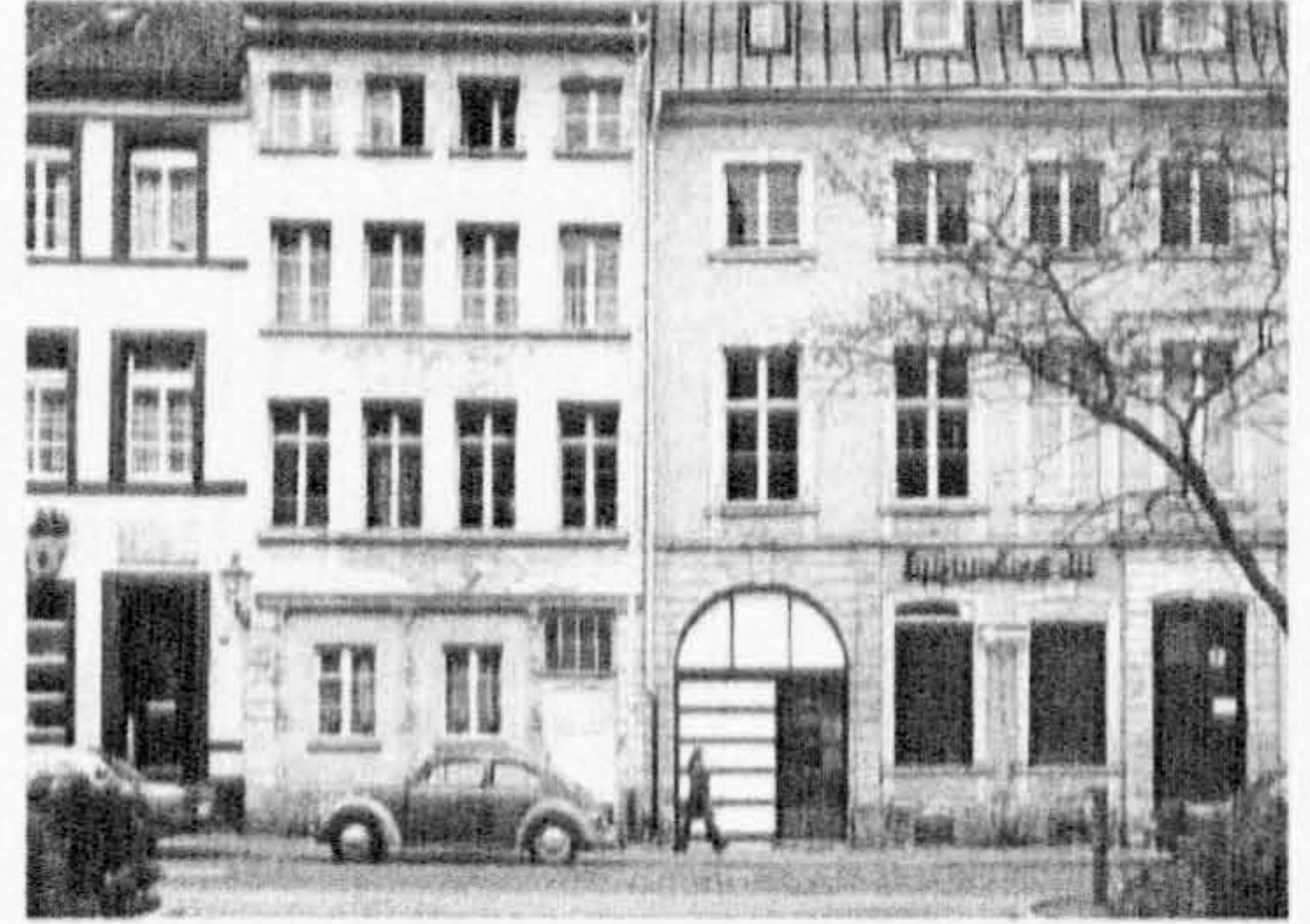
It might be said that a significant part of Andre's practice entails endowing an otherwise arbitrary or contingent factor with a sense of its inimical particularity. One way of illustrating this might be to consider Andre's first exhibition in Europe at Galerie Konrad Fischer in 1967 – which was also (it should be added) the first exhibition *for* Konrad Fischer. Fischer, who started out as an artist, had at that point never been to the United States, and was almost unknown outside his home city of Düsseldorf. Nonetheless, it was his intention to establish a gallery for contemporary international art inside Germany.⁵² He had few funds with which to acquire a large exhibition space, so his gallery was a converted passageway between properties on a quiet street running close to the city's art museum. The passage was glassed off at either end, the interior painted white, and strip lighting was installed down the centre of its arched roof. The result was a long, elongated room just under three metres wide and ten metres long. For this awkward space, Andre produced an exhibition that consisted of just one work that comprised of one hundred steel plates. Each plate was half a centimetre thick and its sides half a metre in length.⁵³ He laid them down across the floor in rows of five, leaving only a thin border between the plates and the walls. The thin margins around the edges acted almost like quotation marks: a way of indicating that the dimensions of the work are 'taken' from those of the gallery, and that the sculpture is oriented almost exclusively to this specific architectural space.

⁵² Fischer did not visit the States until April 1968. See George Jappe, 'An interview with Konrad Fischer', *Studio International*, vol. 181 (February 1971), pp. 68-71, p. 68. For a further discussion of Fischer and his gallery, see Helga Meister, 'Transportierte Idee', *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, 22 May 1969 and Hans Strelow, 'Konrad Fischer: "Ich erkenne was gut ist"', *Rheinsche Post*, 19 July 1969. See also the catalogue, *Ausstellung bei Konrad Fischer: Düsseldorf Oktober 1967 - Oktober 1992*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. by Dorothee Fischer, Galerie Konrad Fischer, 1992, which contains a listing of every exhibition at the gallery up to October 1992. It also includes a short text by Carl Andre, 'Footnote to a 25 Year Old Gallery' on p. 3. On the more general reception of US art in Germany during the 1960s, see Wibke von Bonin, *Arts Magazine*, vol. 44, no. 5 (March 1970), pp. 52-55.

⁵³ It should be pointed out that Andre has mostly used metric modules when working in mainland Europe. Not all US artists did. In contrast, Mel Bochner's exhibition 'Measurement: Rooms' at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich in May 1969 was resolutely 'imperial' in its deployment of feet and inches.



***5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle*, 1967
installation at Galerie Konrad Fischer**



**Galerie Konrad Fischer
at Neubrücke 12, Düsseldorf**

The name of the work was *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle* – an indication, however, that there were not one but two determining factors governing the sculpture's dimensions. One was, we might say, as abstract as the other was concrete. The 'Altstadt', of course, is an acknowledgement of the particularity of its Düsseldorf location – a recognition that Andre's hot rolled steel plates cover twenty-five square metres of ground in the old part of the city. Yet *5 x 20* not only refers to the number and arrangement of these metal plates, but also to this sculpture's relation to a larger series of works. For it is often forgotten that in addition to this sculpture Andre also produced a series of further sculptures from identical steel units. And, like his *Equivalent* series shown at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery the previous year, this set of works shared the same number of particles, yet were arranged into different possible configurations. In total, there were five sculptures representing the factors for the integer 100: 1 by 100, 2 by 50, 4 by 25, 5 by 20, and 10 by 10. This last formation is a square with sides five metres wide, the first a single line of plates 50 metres long. Yet until they were purchased, it seems they were not even constructed.

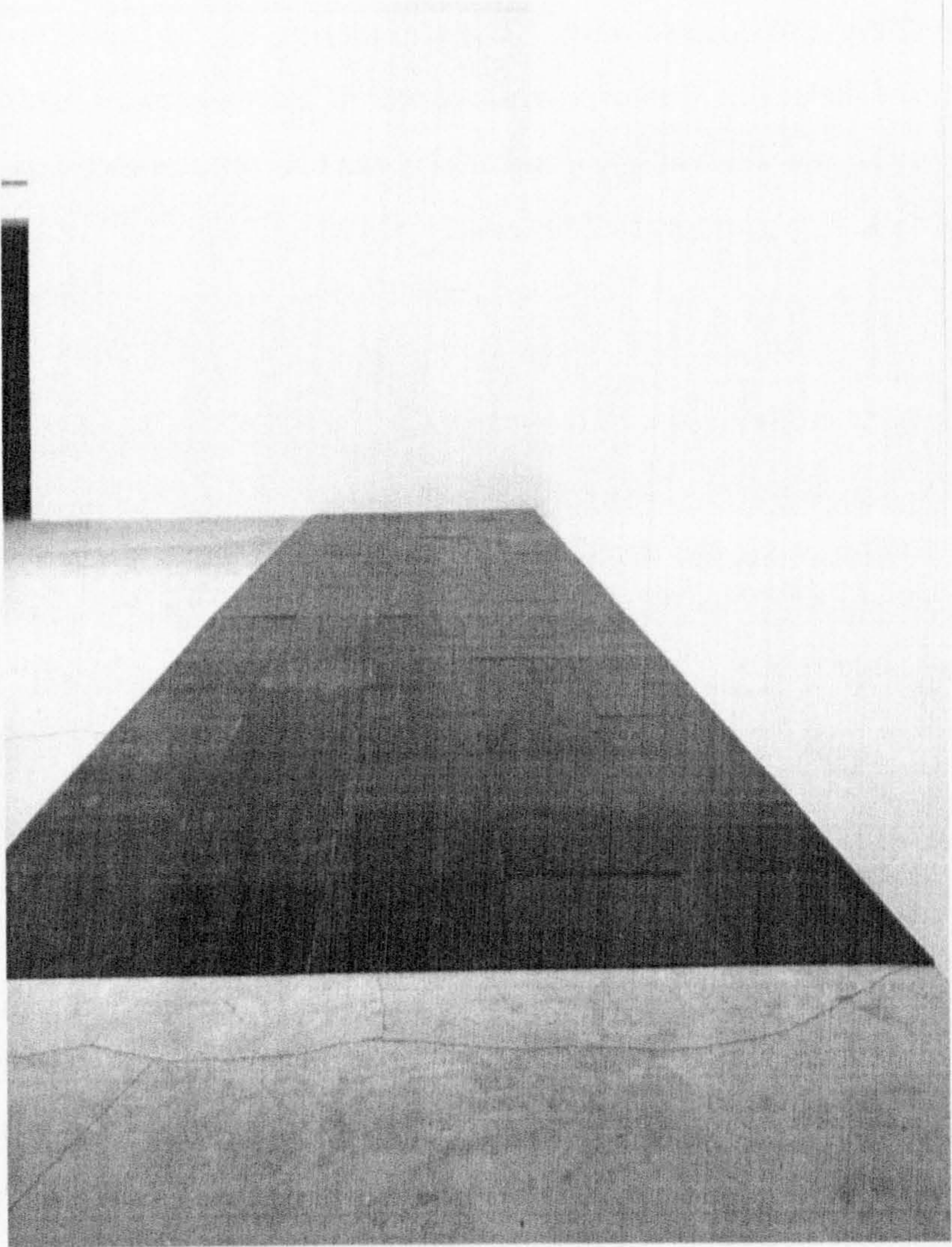
There is, we might say, something of the logic of the checkerboard about this series of works. At one level, *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle* appears to be a celebration of the elementary arithmetical pleasure that only one of those five configurations slots within the walls of the gallery. There is a certain neatness or

serendipity to it. As for the other sculptures, these merely remained as annotations on a neat drawing, which were pinned to the side of the alcove wall by the gallery's fold-down desk.⁵⁴ These numerical niceties were far from the thoughts of the critics, however, most of whom had never seen Andre's sculptures before. Instead, they had merely the title of the exhibition to guide them, which was 'Ontologische Plastik' – Ontological Sculpture. 'A peaceful and monumental structure', reported Hans Strelow for the *Rheinische Post*.⁵⁵ Others were less convinced. 'He might have kept his feet more on the ground with the title, though', wrote Georg Jappe for the *F.A.Z.* 'In these rationalist 'primary structures', it is undeniable that there is a mystical claim to contemplation and to the transformation of space.'⁵⁶ The ascription of a quality of mysteriousness to this arrangement of metal plates might be unqualified, but the suggestion that the work transforms space certainly seems right. The work is perhaps best seen as an attempt to wrest some kind of spatial significance from the abstractions of the rationalised and the industrial module. Or, we might say, the work's effectiveness is in bringing two demarcations into conjunction – a permutation from an entirely abstract series and the peculiar dimensions of these four walls – and from these two contingencies generating a certain ontological significance. In fact, we might describe the work as an attempt to recover 'contingency' as such from being wholly arbitrary and meaningless. It offers a minimal, provisional permanence.

⁵⁴ I am indebted to Brigitte Kölle for pointing this out to me.

⁵⁵ Hans Strelow, 'Hundert Stahlplatten gleich eine Plastik', *Rheinische Post*, 20 October 1967.

⁵⁶ Georg Jappe, 'Bodenplatten und Neon', *Frankfurter Allgemeiner Zeitung*, 20 November 1967, p. 15.



5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle, 1967

Chapter 7

Matter:
Potential Unfulfilled

It is a potentiality that is not simply the potential to do this or that thing but potential to not-do, potential not to pass into actuality.

Giorgio Agamben, 1999¹

It seems to me that if my work has any subject matter at all, it is the immense potentiality of the things around us.

Carl Andre, 1976²

Perhaps wisely, Andre never again yoked the word 'ontology' to his work as he did at Konrad Fischer's in 1967. But a preoccupation with primary entities nonetheless continued to feature as a prominent characteristic of the way he defined his art. The following year in the Städtisches Museum in Mönchengladbach, Andre laid identical metal plates across the floors of each of the four galleries – all six units square – and added to the vestibule two further squares in the same configuration, joined on one side to form a work of seventy-two units. Then, on the front page of the accompanying publication, he included the aphorism:

A MAN CLIMBS A MOUNTAIN BECAUSE IT IS THERE
A MAN MAKES A WORK OF ART BECAUSE IT IS NOT THERE³

'IT IS ALL ABOUT MATTER EXISTING', Andre explained in the text that followed. 'I DO IT BECAUSE I WANT TO SEE IT IN THE WORLD'.⁴ Earlier that year, Robert Smithson had described Andre as an artist concerned primarily

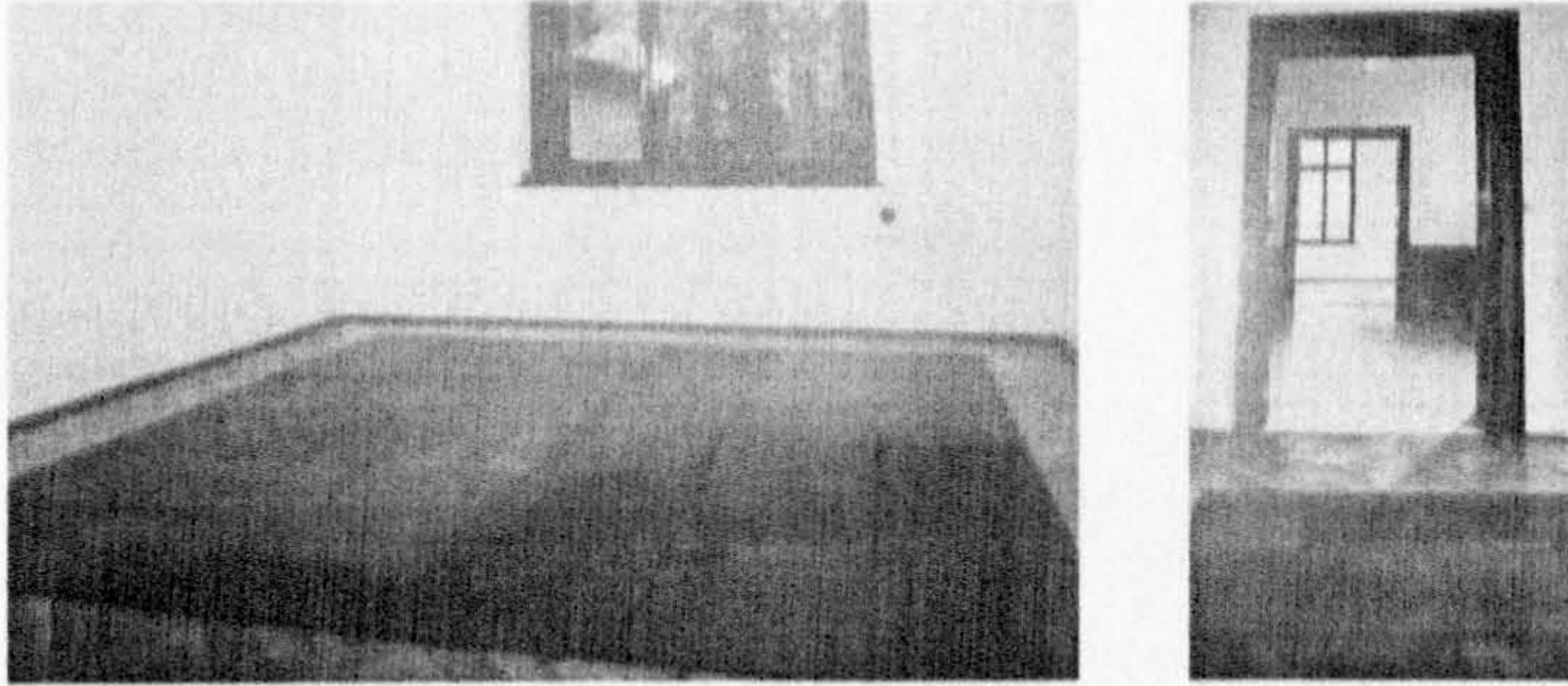
¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 179-180.

² Carl Andre in Sandy Ballatore, 'Carl Andre on Work and Politics', p. 1.

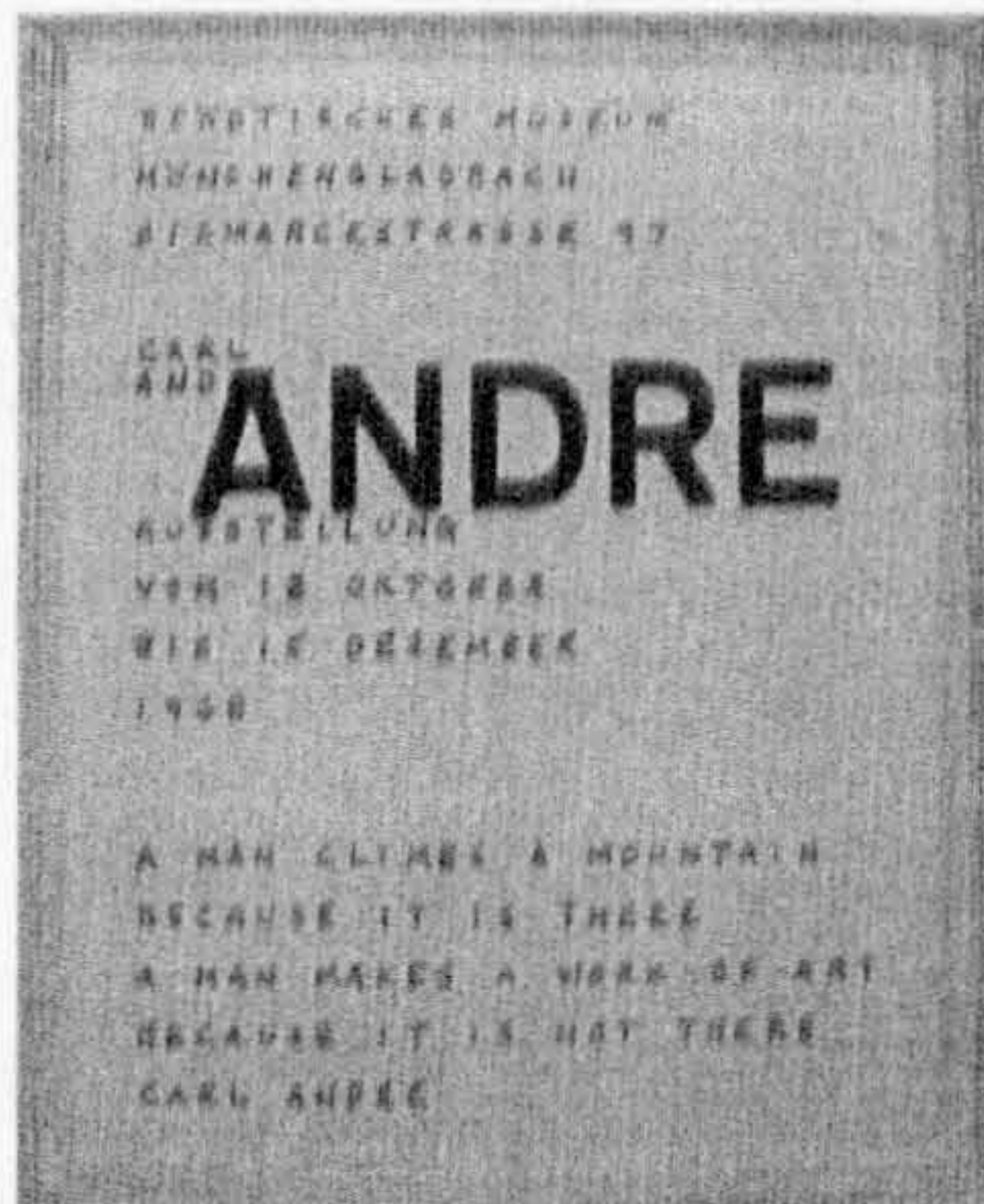
³ *Carl Andre, Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. by Johannes Cladders, Städtisches Museum, Abteiberg Mönchengladbach, 1968, unpaginated. The catalogue takes the form of a limited edition multiple: a pocketbook-sized box with a glassine lid. Inside are a few folded pages of script in capital letters, comprising his self-interview 'Artist Interviews Himself', along with a length of linen. Publications of this nature accompanied all exhibitions at the Städtisches Museum, and were the inspiration of the Director, Johannes Cladders. Andre's exhibition at Mönchengladbach was his first in a public museum. It ran from 18 October to 15 December 1968.

⁴ Carl Andre, 'Artist Interviews Himself', *Carl Andre*, unpaginated. Andre also makes this claim emphatically at a symposium at Bradford Junior College. See *Having Been Said: Writings and Interviews of Lawrence Weiner 1968-2003*, pp. 13-15, p. 15.

‘with the *elemental* in things’, and, in the light of pronouncements such as these, we might be inclined to concur.⁵ Here, a series of symmetrical arrangements of half metre square plates from the local Mannesmann-Meer steelworks become an occasion for demonstrating a primeval and profoundly self-evident truth.⁶ Matter exists.



Mönchengladbach Squares, 1968, installation at the Städtisches Museum, Abteiberg Mönchengladbach, 1968



Carl Andre, exhibition publication, Städtisches Museum, 1968

Such assertions on Andre’s part are always in danger of sounding portentous. In fact, the reaction of some of his contemporaries in the United States against the impression of definitiveness and indisputability that his art appeared to embody was considerable.⁷ Yet, in many respects, Andre’s

⁵ Robert Smithson, ‘A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Proposals’, *Artforum*, vol. 7, no. 1 (September 1968), pp. 44-50, p. 45. Reprinted in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, p. 102.

⁶ This aspect of the work was also the subject of Hans Strelow’s review of the exhibition. See his ‘Appell an die Sinne: Ausstellung Carl Andre in Mönchengladbach’, *Rheinische Post*, 24 October 1968. Andre acknowledges the ‘Firma Mannesmann-Meer Aktiengesellschaft Mönchengladbach’ on the final page of his catalogue text.

⁷ In particular, we might list (amongst others) Robert Smithson, Mel Bochner and Dan Graham. In fact, much of Smithson’s art can be productively read as a categorical rejection of the sense of presence and seeming self-evidence that many of Andre’s sculptures often *appear* to convey. In

existentialist inclinations are easier to undermine than it is for their motivation to be grasped. It seems to me that his emphasis on matter and materialism might be better understood if we identify it as having its roots in a Marxist-humanist tradition. There seems little purpose in pinning him too tightly to formulated doctrines or to specific sources (although it strikes me that publications such as Erich Fromm's *Marx's Concept of Man* might set the right kind of emphasis).⁸ Furthermore, Andre's ontological aspiration to 'bring things into the world' should also perhaps be seen as allied to a certain strand of modernism that invokes an ideal of manufacturing. Jacques Rancière has suggested that the tradition of artists identifying themselves as 'producers', which stretches back into nineteenth-century France and culminates in the avant-gardes of post-revolutionary Russia, is intended to unite 'terms that are traditionally opposed: the activity of manufacturing and visibility.' Manufacturing is usually associated with lowly, uncreative work, undertaken purely for sustenance. But when artists lay an emphasis on 'production', both activities come to imply an 'act of bringing to light.'⁹

It strikes me these are helpful terms for considering Andre's exhibition at Mönchengladbach. Indeed, the short text Andre wrote for the accompanying publication stressed the industrial nature of Quincy, referencing his identification with the ship building yards and granite quarries.¹⁰ As for the works themselves, we might suggest that since Andre had performed nothing to the steel other than merely arrange it on the floors of the museum, his focus on 'existence' at this most general level does allow for a certain realigning of attention on the plates as products of industrial manufacture. Both art and industry cause new 'things' to come into being.

an oft-cited interview, he specifically distinguishes himself from Andre by suggesting that his works are things, not presences. See 'Interview with Robert Smithson' [1970], ed. by Paul Toner and Robert Smithson, in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, p. 240.

⁸ Erich Fromm's widely read *Marx's Concept of Man* was first published in 1961. It contained the first complete translation of Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* to appear in the United States.

⁹ See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 44. Andre's interest in the Russian avant-garde in particular has often been stressed by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Hal Foster. See, most recently, Foster's emphasis on the influence of Camilla Gray's *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863-1922* on Flavin, Andre and LeWitt in *Art Since 1900*, pp. 470-474. The influence of Russian art is also stressed by Barbara Rose in her 'A Retrospective Note' in *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-1977*, pp. 9-11.

¹⁰ Carl Andre, 'Artist Interviews Himself', unpaginated.



Alexandr Rodchenko in working overalls, 1922

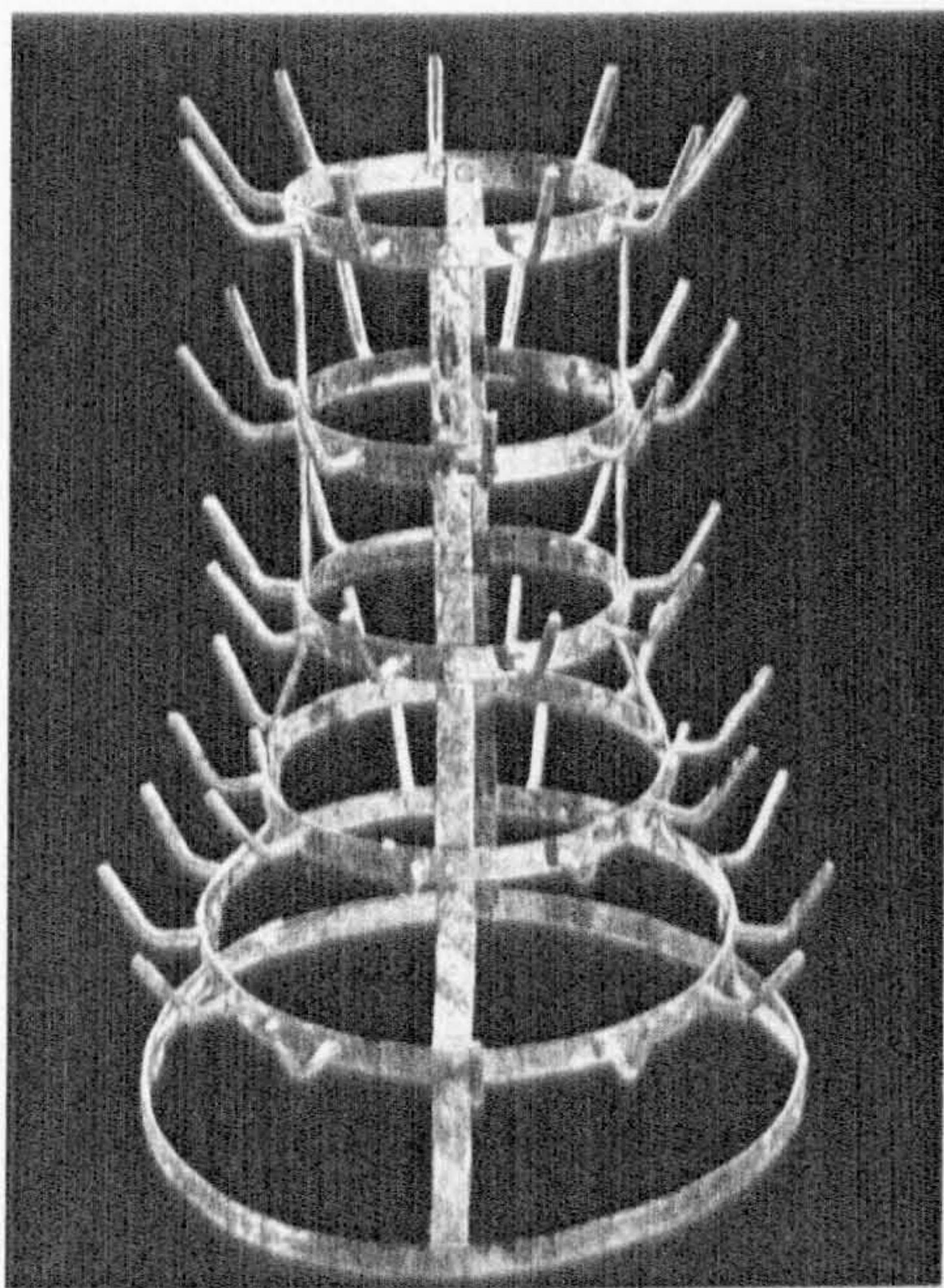
However, if there is a tradition of modernist artists closely identifying with production and manufacture, then it should be also added that Andre does put it under considerable pressure. Indeed, the urgency with which he often came to insist on his affiliation with industry and production is perhaps so emphatic precisely because he himself actually appears to make nothing. It might easily be suggested, for instance, that rather than bringing something new into the world, he merely appropriates industrial materials for his own artistic purposes. But, in a counterintuitive move, this is an insinuation he has always ferociously resisted.

Mostly, it has been the example of Marcel Duchamp who has enabled Andre to insist doggedly that his art has nothing to do with mere appropriation. Especially during the 1970s, Andre could not have been more forthright in his efforts to distinguish his sculptures from any association with the Duchampian readymade.¹¹ For him, the art content in his sculpture lies in the fact that he combines separate particles into arrangements *that had never existed before*, whereas in his view Duchamp's multiples simply brought no new forms into the world.¹² How 'ready-made' Duchamp's sculptures actually were is a matter of

¹¹ It is interesting to note how many times Duchamp's name crops up in Andre and Frampton's written dialogues, and how different Andre's position is towards the artist, in contrast to his later pronouncements. On two occasions, for instance, Andre approvingly cites Duchamp's aphoristic definition of art as anything 'made by man'. In fact, in one dialogue he describes Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* as 'one of the great sculptures of our time.' See Carl Andre in Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *Twelve Dialogues: 1962-1963*, pp. 17, 23 and 27.

¹² Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', in Peter Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art*, p. 127.

some conjecture.¹³ But according to Andre's reasoning, what distinguishes his works from the found object is that although his products might be industrially produced raw materials, the resulting sculptures bear no correspondence to any of society's finished commodities. We might suggest his sculptures evoke all the connotations of serial, industrialised production, but carefully sidestep any associations that might make it look like a finished product. 'The materials I use have been processed by manufacture but have not been given the final shape of their destiny in the manufacturing culture.'¹⁴ 'I believe in using the materials of society in a form that society does not use them', he explained.¹⁵ The plates, the tiles, the bricks or the blocks: all are positioned into configurations that exist in this way only as artworks. In contrast, Duchamp's multiples are 'simply' the transferral of an object from a non-art space into the museum.¹⁶



Marcel Duchamp, *Porte-Bouteilles*, 1914

¹³ See, for instance, Thierry de Duve's account of how Duchamp's *Fountain* of 1917 came to be 'a work of art' in his essay 'Given the Richard Mutt Case', in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. by Thierry de Duve (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1992). See also Dawn Ades, Neil Cox and David Hopkins' useful overview of the ready-mades in *Marcel Duchamp*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), pp. 146-171.

¹⁴ Sandy Ballatore, 'Carl Andre on Work and Politics', *Artweek*, vol. 7, no. 24 (3 July 1976), pp. 1 and 20, p. 1.

¹⁵ 'Carl Andre interviewed by Achille Bonito Oliva', p. 51.

¹⁶ See Andre's interview with Chantal Pontbriand: 'Fourteen Written Answers to Questions', *Parachute* (Winter 1979), pp. 67-68, p. 67.

In fact, Duchamp almost becomes for Andre a means with which to define his class-affiliations in shorthand. For him, the readymade art object is nothing less than 'a fossilization of bourgeois class values'.¹⁷ 'The bread on the tables of the bourgeoisie is the prototype of all ready-mades', he writes in one statement. 'It is thought to have been rescued from the state of nature by capitalist cunning and dedicated to capitalist consumption by divine right.'¹⁸ As such, ready-mades sever art from any understanding that value derives solely from labour, as opposed to mere appropriation. Thus, for Andre, it is a vindication of mere exchange value in contrast to use value, haemorrhaging art of any affiliation with the ideal of bringing new things into the world. 'ART THRIVES ON PRODUCTION' he pronounces in a catalogue in 1977, whereas 'ART DIES OF CONSUMPTION'.¹⁹ He, needless to say, would premise his practice on sustaining and nurturing a dream of human productivity.²⁰

*

It is on these terms I want to offer a reading of Andre's *Lever*: a sculpture in which notions of efficiency and production come especially to the fore. The work was his contribution to 'Primary Structures' in April 1966.²¹ Thanks to the high-profile nature of the Jewish Museum's exhibition, it rapidly became one of his most influential sculptures, markedly contributing to his reputation as an

¹⁷ Carl Andre, statement, dated 28 February 1973, in *Deurle 11-7-73*, Exhibition Catalogue, 1973, unpaginated. See also his letter to *Studio International*, vol. 181, no. 980 (March-April 1976), p. 311.

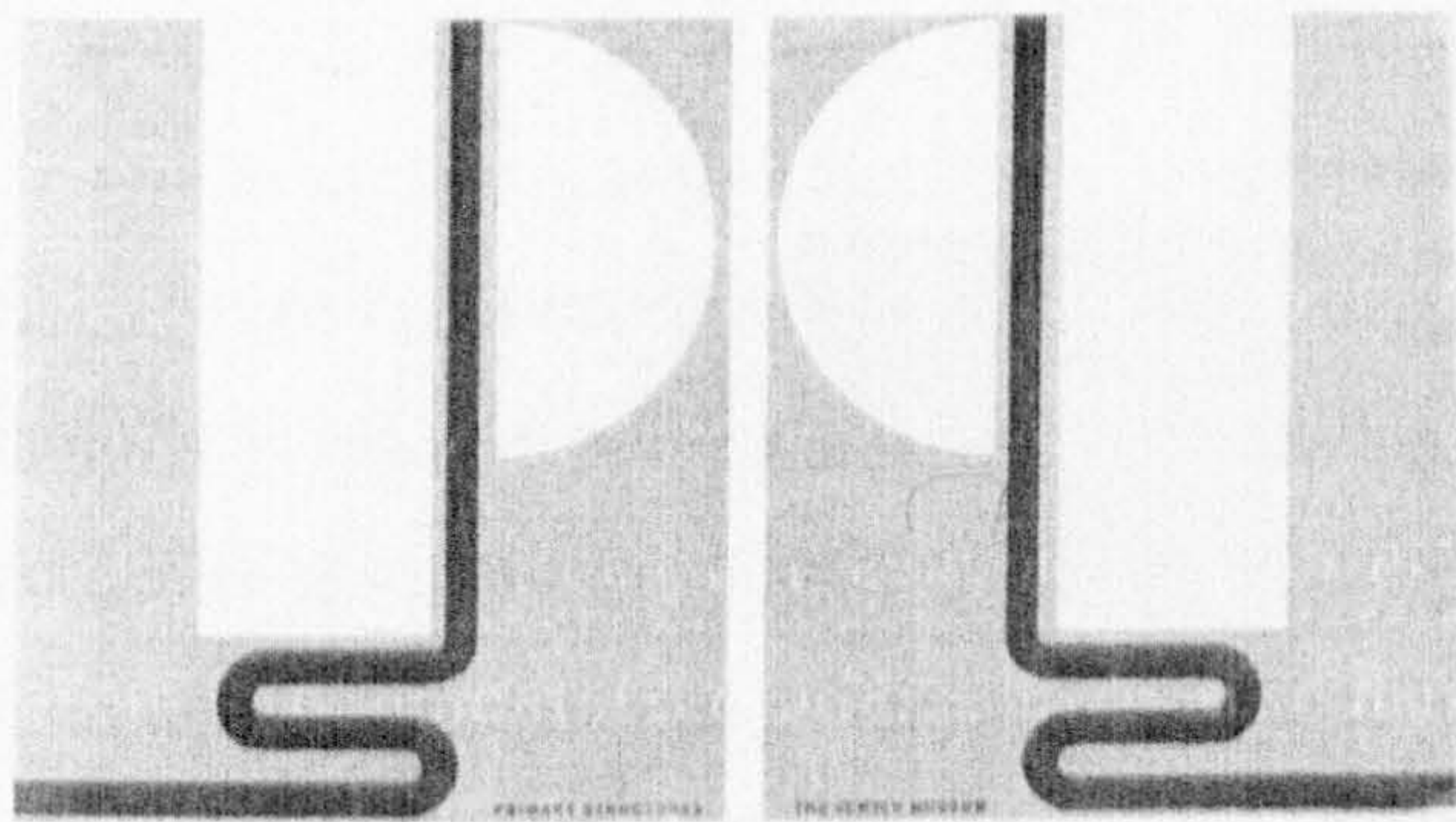
¹⁸ Carl Andre, statement given at the Oberlin symposium, 'The Role of the Artist in Today's Society' (29 April 1973), in *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1973), p. 1, reprinted in *Cuts: Texts 1959-2004*, p. 92.

¹⁹ See his text, for example, 'About Working at P. S. 1', in *Rooms: P.S. 1*, Exhibition Catalogue, Queens, New York, 1976.

²⁰ The tradition of artists distinguishing themselves from bourgeois trade on the grounds that buying and selling causes nothing new to come into existence is a firmly entrenched theme in modernist mythologies. Consider, for instance, the scene in Honoré de Balzac's short story *The Unknown Masterpiece*, in which Frenhofer suddenly realises the failure of his masterpiece, ten years in the making. 'I am an imbecile then,' he exclaims. 'Just a rich man who makes no more than what he buys ... I've created nothing!' See *The Unknown Masterpiece and Gambara*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: New York Review, 2001), p. 43.

²¹ 'Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors' was curated by Kynaston McShine, and ran from 27 April to 12 June 1966. In total, it featured forty-two artists.

artist.²² Two months later it was prominently illustrated in Mel Bochner's review in *Arts Magazine*, and it became the principle subject of David Bourdon's *Artforum* article in October – the first in-depth account devoted exclusively to the artist.²³ One of 'the most drastic works' in the exhibition was how he described it.²⁴ The sculpture, which is now housed at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, comprises of 137 firebricks, laid out consecutively in a straight row, with one side abutting a gallery wall and extending across the floor into the room.²⁵ From end to end, *Lever* is twenty-nine feet in length and just four and a half inches high. In colour, the bricks are straw coloured – slightly yellower than the crisp whiteness of the sand lime bricks Andre had used for his *Equivalents* at the Tibor de Nagy gallery just a month earlier. But as installed on the dark linoleum tiles of the floor of the Jewish Museum's Albert A. List building, it cut a crisp swathe through the other exhibits.



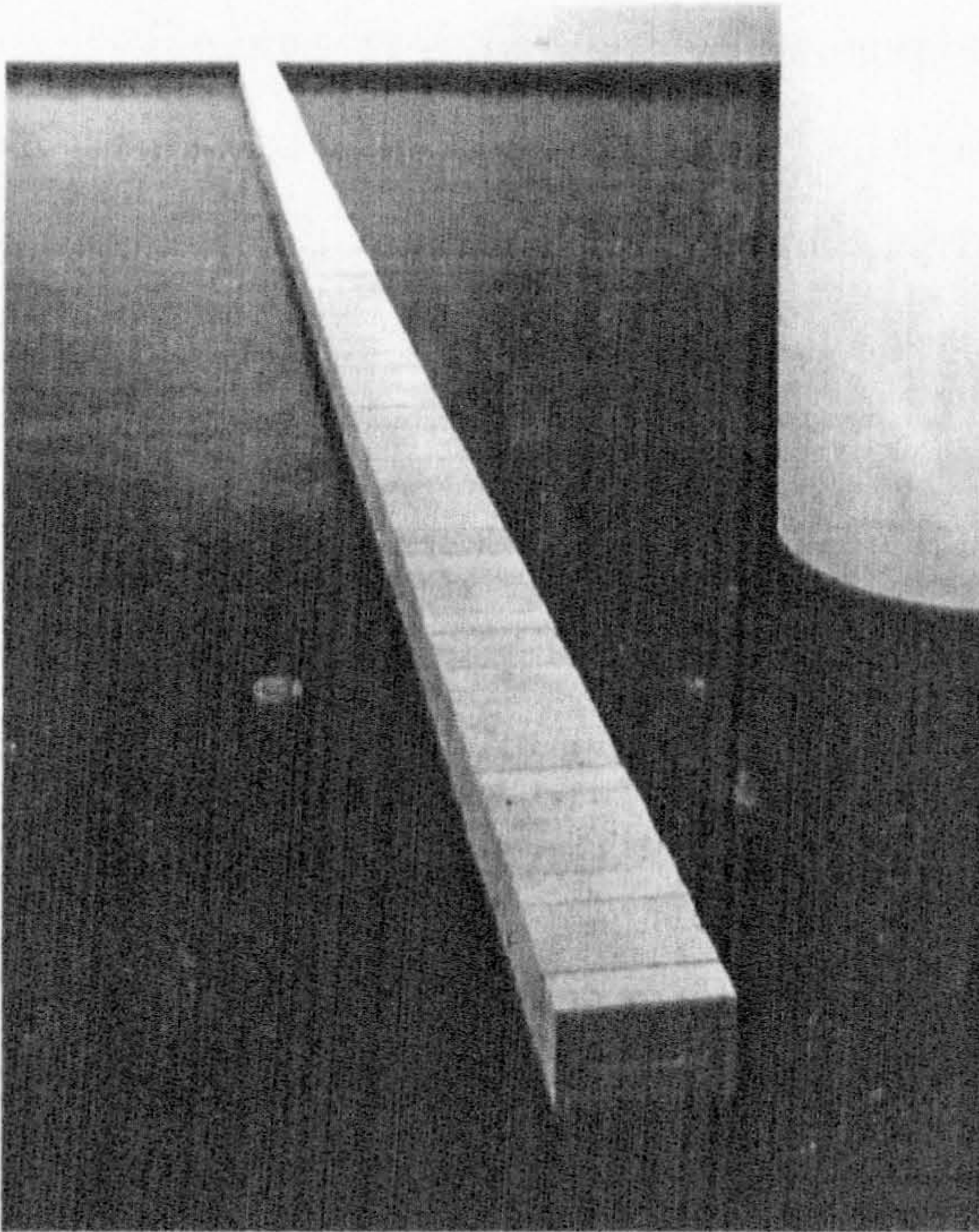
Cover of 'Primary Structures' exhibition catalogue, 1966

²² On the media attention that 'Primary Structures' received, see Corinne Robins 'Object, Structure or Sculpture: Where Are We?', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 40, no. 9 (September-October 1966), pp. 33-37, pp. 33-34 and James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, p. 13.

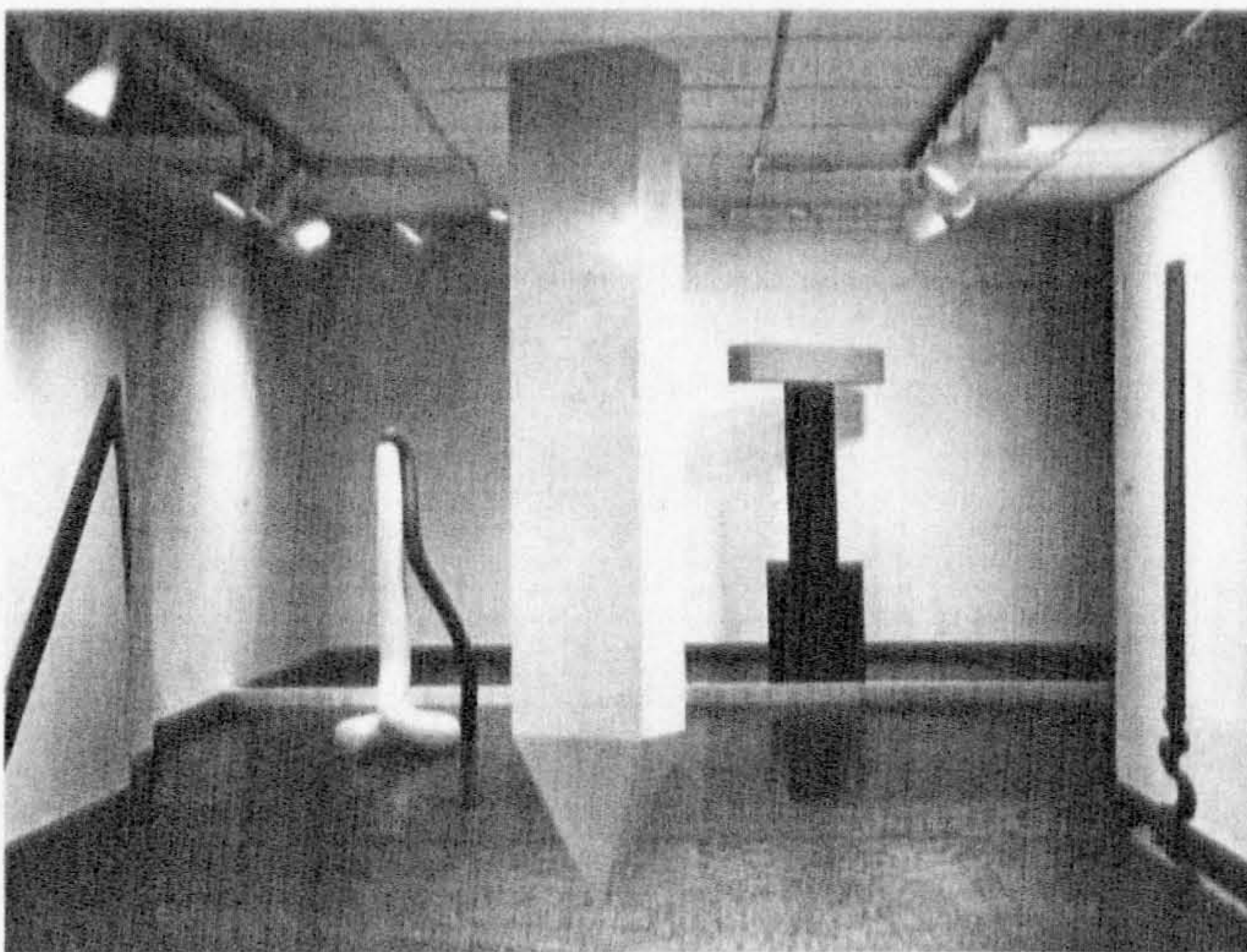
²³ Mel Bochner, 'Primary Structures', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 40, no. 8 (June 1966), pp. 32-35, p. 33 and David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre: A Sculptor laid low by the Brancusi Syndrome', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 2 (October 1966), pp. 14-17.

²⁴ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 15.

²⁵ Bourdon puts the length of the work at 139 bricks, and consistently lists the length of the work as 34 ½ feet, both in his 1966 *Artforum* article and in his catalogue essay 'A Redefinition of Sculpture', in *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-1977*, p. 27. The caption to *Lever's* illustration in Bourdon's 1966 article lists the work as 360" by 4" by 4", and in McShine's essay for the exhibition catalogue, he too lists the work as thirty feet in length. None of these figures is correct. According to the National Gallery of Canada, each brick is 4 ½ by 8 7/8 by 2 ½ inches, and aggregated they form a line of around 348 ½ inches, although the length varies slightly depending on how tightly they are packed. The 1975 catalogue of Andre's works inaccurately lists the length of the longest side (see p. 23). These distinctions matter, since over the years art historians have tended to repeat one another's mistakes. Perhaps the most impressive 'extension' was made by Rosalind Krauss. In *Art Since 1900*, she lists *Lever's* length as 'a four-hundred-foot row'. See p. 494.



Lever, installation in 'Primary Structures' at the Jewish Museum, New York, 1966



Lever, installation at 'Primary Structures' and viewed along the connecting passageway between Galleries 1 and 2, with Gerald Laing, *Identity* in foreground, Isaac Witkin, *Nagas* (to left) and Lyman Kipp's *Andy's Carte Blanche* (to right)

As Bourdon explained in his article, *Lever* was designed for a specific area, in a way that made it visible from two separate vantage points.²⁶ In itself, this might not sound too remarkable. But arguably, what was unprecedented was

²⁶ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 15.

the fact that its lateral spread meant that as it was approached by viewers from the exhibition's entrance, it simply was not visible in its entirety. Visitors would have approached it from the large main gallery on the ground floor, and, as they reached the far side of the room, only two thirds of it would have been perceptible at the end of a short connecting passageway. From here, the terminal point was nowhere to be seen.²⁷ This could not have distinguished it more from the other sculptures in its immediate proximity. The pink and purple fibreglass assemblage by Isaac Witkin and the hollow-looking monolith by Lyman Kipp are both as phallically upright, freestanding and self-contained as Andre's is horizontally prostrate. Moreover, these two sculptures seem subsumed by the intention of creating a dramatic silhouette, which is cast in sharp relief onto its surrounding environment. *Lever*, on the other hand, does not entirely blend into its architectural surrounds, but the way it conjugates a net of mediations between itself and its location is markedly different.

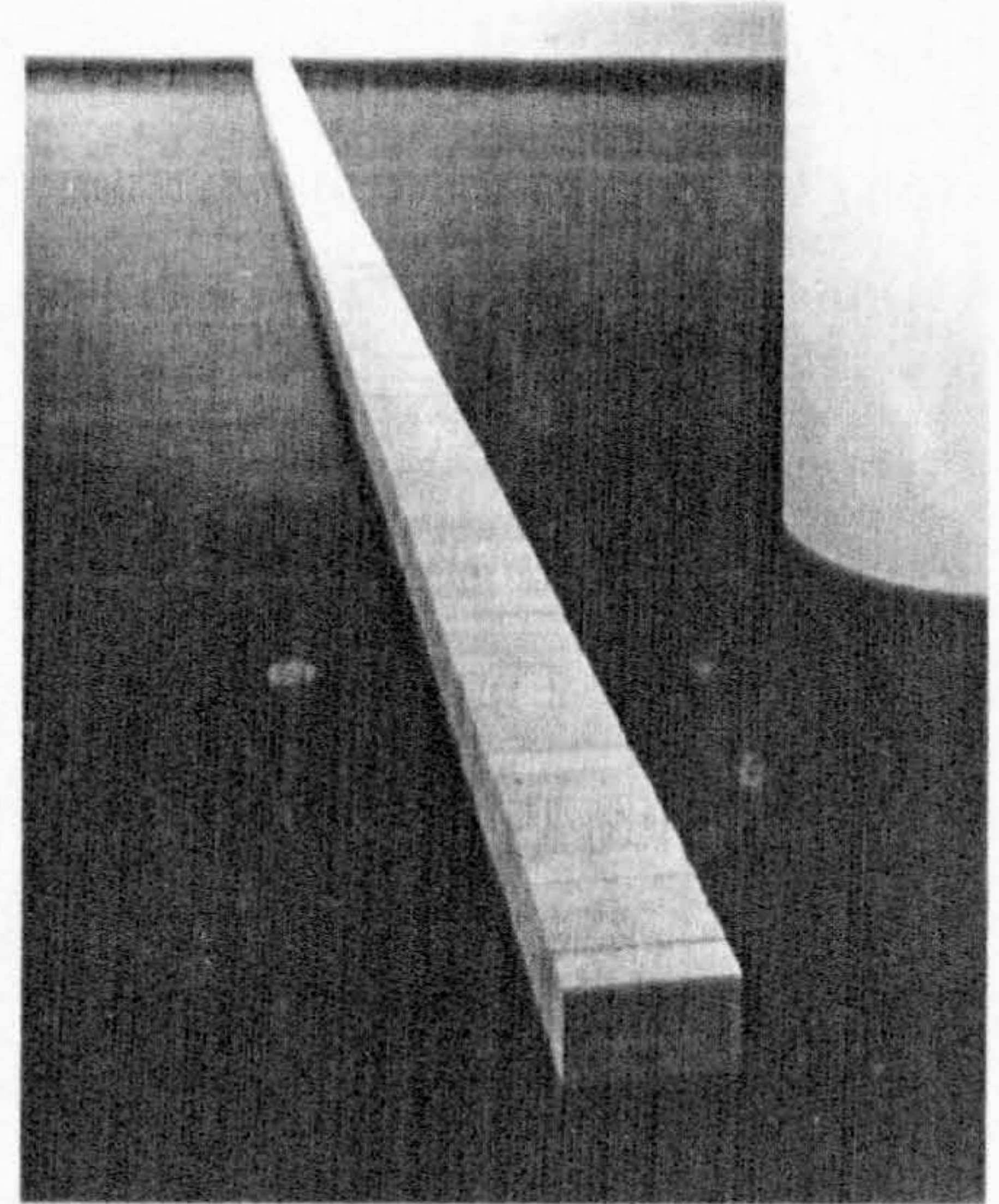
In fact, it is tempting even to conjecture that some unaccustomed viewers might have hardly recognised it for a work at all. From this angle, it could easily have been taken for a floor division of some kind. But the lighting would have given the game away soon enough. From the installation photographs, we can see the ceiling's appendages clearly: it is sprouting what Brian O'Doherty once ironically called that 'intensely cultivated garden of features', so ubiquitous of 1960s modernist gallery 'lids'.²⁸ We can also see how one spot-lamp has been especially positioned to illuminate the wall from which Andre's bricks almost theatrically appear to protrude. Yet to discover how long this row was, viewers had to turn the corner into Gallery 2. Here, the row of bricks continued past a supporting column and came to an abrupt halt just a few paces short of the doorway. In fact, it is only from this spot where *Lever* was visible in its entirety.

²⁷ For a helpful description of the layout of 'Primary Structures', see James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, pp. 13-21.

²⁸ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, expanded edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), p. 66.



Lever, installation in 'Primary Structures'
and viewed from Gallery 2



What might strike a casual viewer as a work indifferent to its final appearance becomes less so, however, when we take into consideration the simple fact that there are six different ways of arranging bricks into a line. Andre has chosen to have the longest face flush against the adjacent brick and the longest side flat against the ground, forming a header-course. The effect of this arrangement is that it categorically asserts its alignment with the wall: looked at end on, the bricks feel as though they are stacked out from the wall just as much as they register as laid out on the ground. As installed at the Jewish Museum, the relation between the bricks and the wall might have been further accentuated by the fact that the height of the prominent black moulding which runs around all the galleries seems to match the height of the bricks. The detail might not seem especially significant, but it is an indication of the extent to which the work is attuned to the circumstances of its particular placement.



Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1966, and *Untitled*, 1966
installation at 'Primary Structures'

That *Lever* is aligned in this way also invariably raises genre-related questions. To push a three-dimensional object up against the wall, as Donald Judd had done in Gallery 5 upstairs at 'Primary Structures', serves to stress a sculpture's frontality. In fact, Judd's two untitled works might be read as an exercise in identifying the perceptual differences between four galvanized iron boxes placed on the ground, and an equivalent arrangement attached a few feet up the wall. Off the ground, we invariably see the units as protruding outwards, as though it is their frontal plane where our visual attention should rest. Consequently, the installation does make a nodding gesture towards a two-dimensional picture surface. Especially when viewed from the side, we are inclined to see the four boxes as having their origins in painting, from which they seem to have evolved into their present physical substantiality. Thanks to its connection to the wall, then, Andre's *Lever* also establishes a certain relation to painting. But it remains much less reverential of the frontal plane than Judd's wall units, almost making a joke of its disproportionate extension into the space of the gallery. Certainly, this aspect of the sculpture did not go unnoticed by Dan Graham, who wrote that *Lever* 'turned inside out conventional pictorial linear perspective'. Instead of a picture's usual projective illusionism of depth, 'the row of bricks here projected outwards [...] into real space.'²⁹ Its tacit gesture in the direction of painting, in other words, serves to emphasise further a sense of *Lever's* concrete substantiality and presence.

That one end is locked against the wall and the other simply tails off in such proximity to a doorway undoubtedly also gives the row a certain forceful directionality. Invariably this makes *Lever* feel as if it is driving out from the wall and is heading in the general direction of the exit. This is especially important for its visual impact. It establishes a certain rhythm of ceaseless extension and projection that makes the work's cessation feel almost incomplete, or irrelevant. As though the sculpture is on its way somewhere, but has yet to reach its destination.

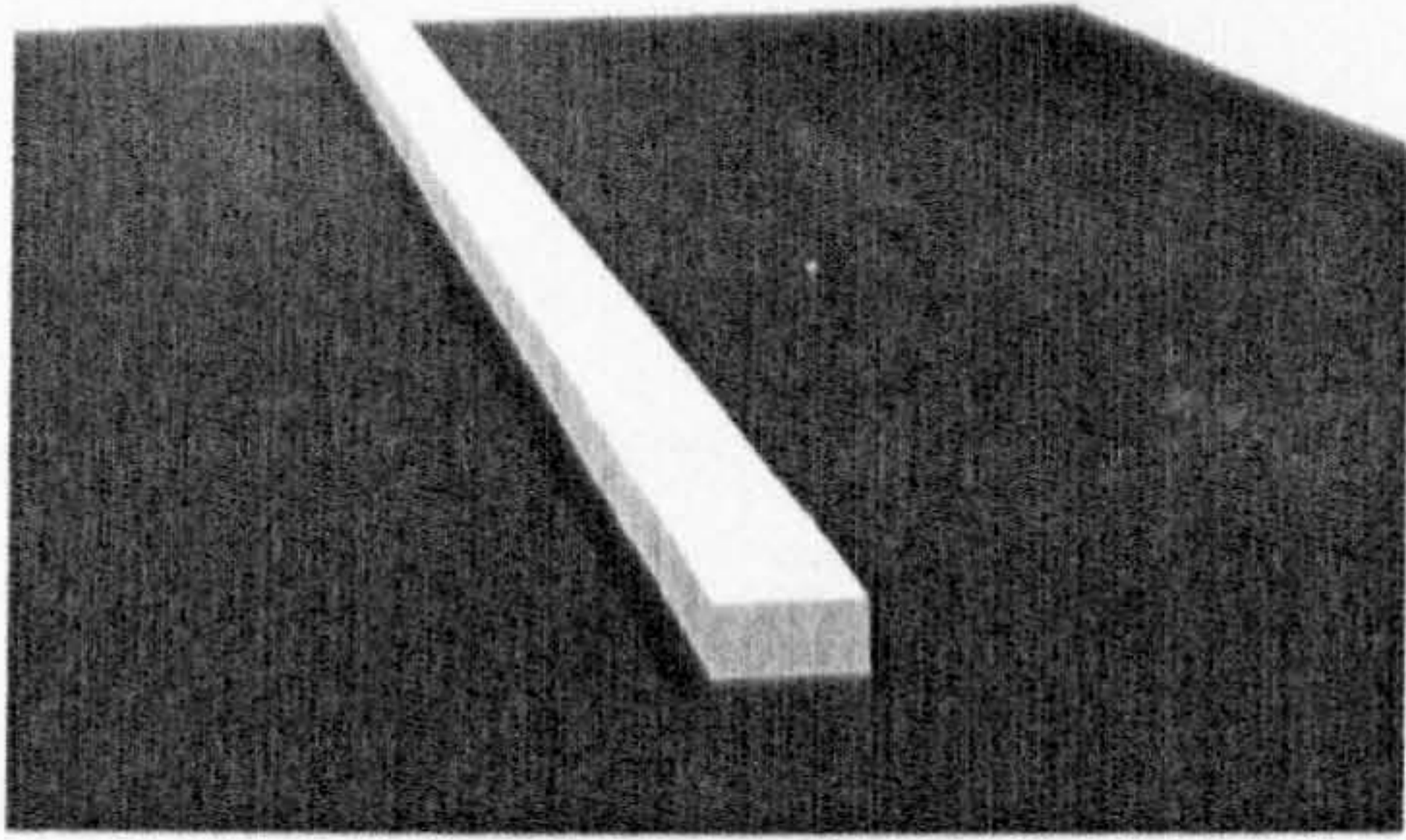
²⁹ Dan Graham, 'Carl Andre', *Arts Magazine*, p. 34.



Lyman Kipp, *Andy's Carte Blanche*, 1965,
installed at 'Primary Structures', Gallery 2,
with the tip end of *Lever* visible on the far right

Furthermore, as Bourdon also points out, *Lever* is a work overtly self-conscious of its own horizontality. The title, he reports, is a play on both the French infinitive 'to raise' and the English word for the tool that facilitates lifting. It also seems Andre had told John Myers that the title referred to the word 'levee', which Myers took to mean a holding back, presumably of a river flow.³⁰ In which case, we might suggest that the title of the work is intentionally equivocal, toying with conflicting forces and constraints: with the capacity to rise up, and yet also evoking a sense of curtailment or restraint. Seen through these associations, *Lever* almost becomes endowed with a sense of pent-up forcefulness. Of course, in reality we know full well that there is no rigidity along its length, so its use as a levering instrument is wholly metaphorical: it is, after all, merely 137 separate bricks arranged in a line. But because the title points towards the possibility of an upward directionality, the work's actual horizontality registers as even more accentuated.

³⁰ John Myers, Letter to Dan Graham, 1 April 1966, Tibor de Nagy Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art.



Lever, installation at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Lever implies, therefore, a sense of directionality along both the horizontal and the vertical axis. Visually, it gives the impression that it is extending outwards from the wall, whilst the title metaphorically toys with the possibility of upward lift. Indeed a sense of non-actualised potentiality might also be a good way of describing the materiality of the bricks themselves. Andre once explained that he came on the idea of using the bricks for his *Equivalents* exhibition when he once found one lying in the street. In particular, he was attracted by its whiteness.³¹ But whereas the bricks in the *Equivalents* were originally made from sand-lime, a kind of synthetic limestone, those that comprise *Lever* are firebricks. They are considerably more expensive and manufactured from a particular type of clay, for they are designed specifically for refractory purposes. Thus, for whatever reason Andre selected them, we should remember that they owe their characteristics to their capacity to fulfil a very precise function: they are a means to a distinct end. Their texture, their mass, their resistance to intense heat, their tendency not to spall under wide temperature variation – all of these qualities have been developed so as to maximise their efficiency in fulfilling an allotted function in a larger industrial process.

However, by purchasing these firebricks with the specific intention of making a work of art from them, Andre failed to capitalise on these qualities. The

³¹ See Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 129.

bricks are left in their unused pristine condition. In many respects, this pertains to practically all of Andre's sculptures. He once proudly told a story of his father travelling down to New York in the 1960s to see an exhibition of his metal floorplates, and pronouncing that never in all his life had he seen so much magnesium at once.³² No doubt, the response is one Andre thought perfectly valid, since it points to the way that the sculptures seem intent on leaving us conjecturing what else might be accomplished from these resources. In fact, if we continue to think of *Lever* in this way, then it is almost as though an aura of purposiveness descends on this discrete line of bricks; purposiveness itself becomes transformed into an end-purpose. 'We don't even realize the potentialities, and the innocence of matter', Andre once suggested.³³ 'Matter', in the most general sense, is thus presented as having been destined for human use, but its actual destiny remains undecided: forever withheld, to be grasped only in the abstract and always deferred to a future time. In fact, we would do well perhaps to understand the significance of the specifically raw nature of Andre's materials in just these terms. Their blank surfaces and their general solidity are occasions to imagine the possibility of further labour being invested in them. 'Labour is the living fire that shapes the pattern', writes Marx in the *Grundrisse*, 'it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, their transformation by living time.'³⁴ Andre encourages us to envisage this living fire, but only because the bricks themselves could not have been withdrawn further from any such consuming heat. As it is, they remain inert and unused.

It should also be noted, however, that *Lever's* potency and sense of directionality was articulated by Andre in gendered terms. In his article, Bourdon enthusiastically reports Andre's now notorious claim that most sculpture 'is priapic with the male organ in the air.' In *his* work, however, 'Priapus is down on the floor. The engaged position is to run along the earth.'³⁵ Perhaps Andre had half an eye on Witkin's whimsically phallic sculpture as he said this to Bourdon. But his point seems clear enough: his sculpture is not to be seen as a

³² Carl Andre, in 'Upholding the Bricks', ed. by Ramond Baxter and Mark James Productions, London, Channel 4, 2 April 1991.

³³ Sandy Ballatore, 'Carl Andre on Work and Politics', p. 1.

³⁴ Karl Marx, *Marx's Grundrisse*, trans. David McLellan (London: MacMillan, 1971), p. 106.

³⁵ Carl Andre, in David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 15.

manifestation of emasculation, but is endowed with what Alex Potts has called ‘an oddly stabilised phallic presence.’³⁶ It insinuates a sense of a certain reserved potency, or a notion of contained power – all the more forceful because it remains latent and restrained, as opposed to manifested.

Bourdon, however, seemed especially keen to make the image thoroughly literal. In his article, he immediately pointed to Andre’s original proposal for *Lever*, which was reproduced in the exhibition catalogue in lieu of a reproduction.³⁷ Indeed, at this stage, it does seem Andre had planned for the work to continue into the adjacent gallery. So, plugging the sexual connotations for all they were worth, Bourdon read the row of bricks as ‘coursing through the doorway like a 34 ½-foot erection.’³⁸ However, that seems to miss the point entirely, for in built form, the length of *Lever* falls resolutely short of the doorway. In other words, if Andre saw in his sculpture a masculinist notion of ‘potency’, then *Lever* certainly does not evoke that manifestly. More to the point, we might suggest Andre’s notion of the work’s forcefulness is *wholly* reliant on the fact it is not realised physically.

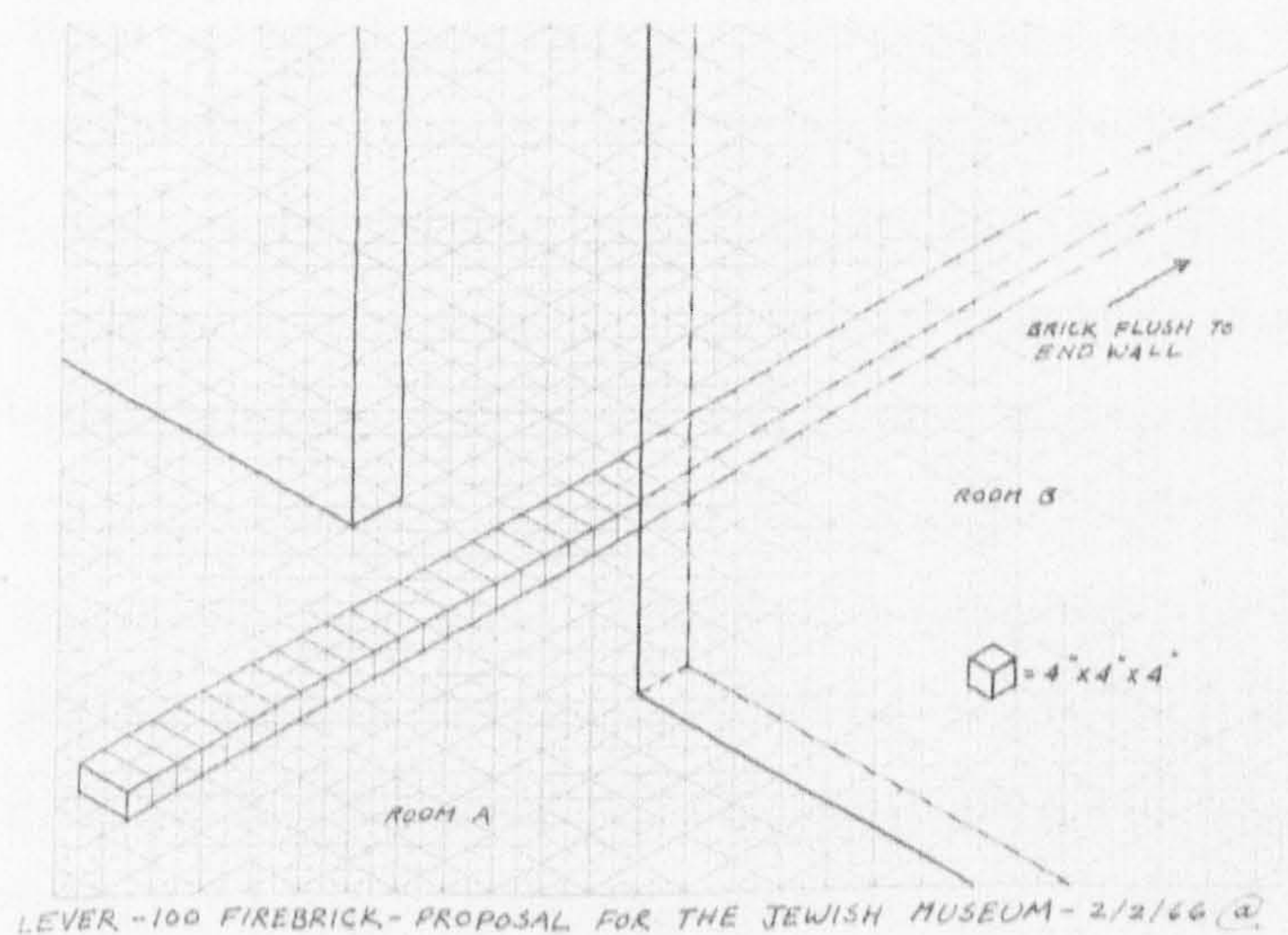


Diagram for *Lever*, reproduced in the ‘Primary Structures’ exhibition catalogue

³⁶ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, p. 333.

³⁷ See *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. by Kynaston McShine, The Jewish Museum, New York, 1966 (unpaginated).

³⁸ David Bourdon, ‘The Razed Sites of Carl Andre’, p. 15.

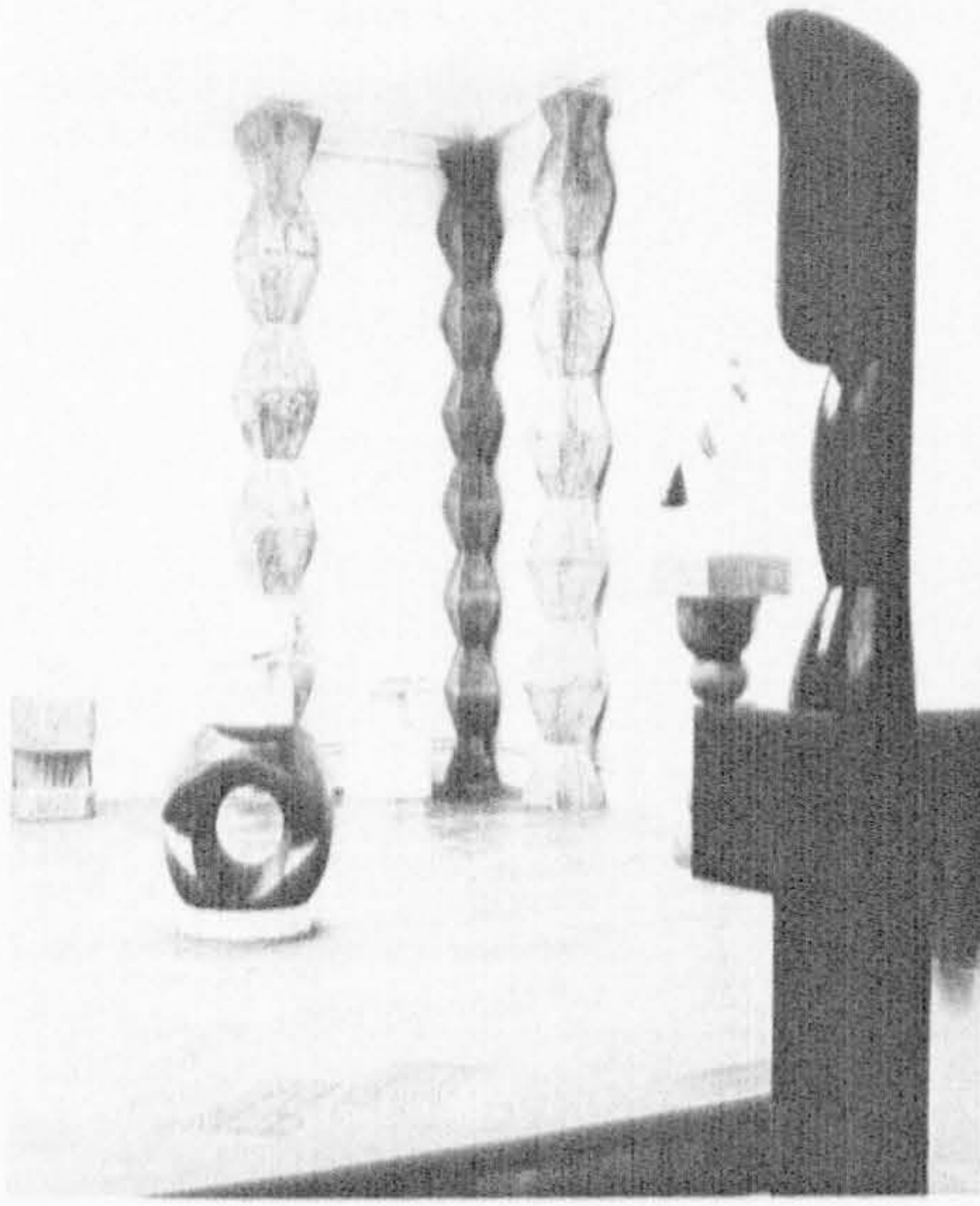
In fact, Bourdon was not the only one to want to entertain the possibility of *Lever's* extension beyond its actual twenty-nine feet. Certainly at the time, the repetition of any single module in an artwork was understood by critics as necessarily implying endless continuation. In many respects, *Lever* appears to be just the kind of art object that Michael Fried had in mind in his attack on literalist sculpture. Towards the end of 'Art and Objecthood', he pronounced that 'being able to go on and on, even having to go on and on [...] seems to be the experience that most deeply excites literalist sensibility.'³⁹ He identified minimal art with wanting to produce a unitary, 'specific object' with precise, coherent, and verifiable edges, but believed that minimalism's deployment of discrete modules to accomplish this – placing 'one thing after another' – displaced this objective. He naturally read the repetition of identical parts (such as firebricks) as creating the impression that the units in question could be multiplied ad infinitum. For Fried, minimalist objects were doomed to always appear incomplete. For him, it was just an endless progression, pure temporal or spatial extension, with no end term or limit. There was no *terminus ad quem* to such works: no definitive perspective or end-point from which aesthetic judgement could operate.

Likewise, Bourdon himself had implied in his article that repetition invariably meant the possibility of a potentially endless extension. For him, the assumption had been planted by Andre's various allusions to the sculptures of Constantin Brancusi, in particular to his *Colonne sans fin* – or *Endless Column*, as it is often translated. Brancusi produced a number of these works throughout his life, culminating in the monumental rendering at Târgu-Jiu in Romania.⁴⁰ They tended to consist of thick beams that were notched on all four sides at equidistant intervals, forming a pattern that consisted of a simple repetition of a rhomboid form. The number of units could vary considerably and was not especially significant. In fact, it is clearly visible from the installation photograph of Brancusi's exhibition at the Brummer Gallery in New York in 1933, that the

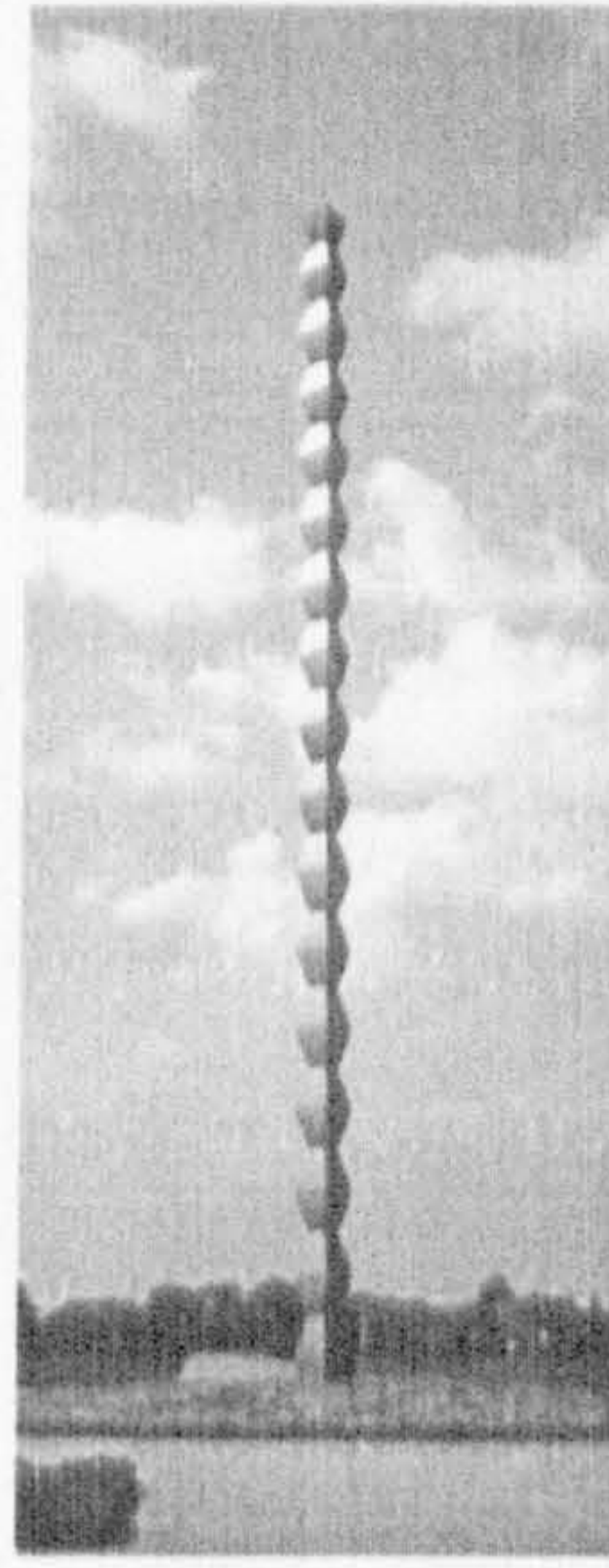
³⁹ Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', p. 22.

⁴⁰ For a useful account of the various versions of this sculpture, see Francis Naumann, 'From Origin to Influence: Brancusi's Column without End', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 59, no. 9 (May 1985), pp. 112-118. According to Naumann, it is at Brancusi's exhibition at the Brummer Gallery in New York in 1926 that the name *Endless Column* is ascribed to the earliest 1918 version of this form.

length of the three columns has been determined by the height of the gallery's ceiling.



Constantin Brancusi, *Endless Column*, installation at the Brummer Gallery, New York, 1933-34



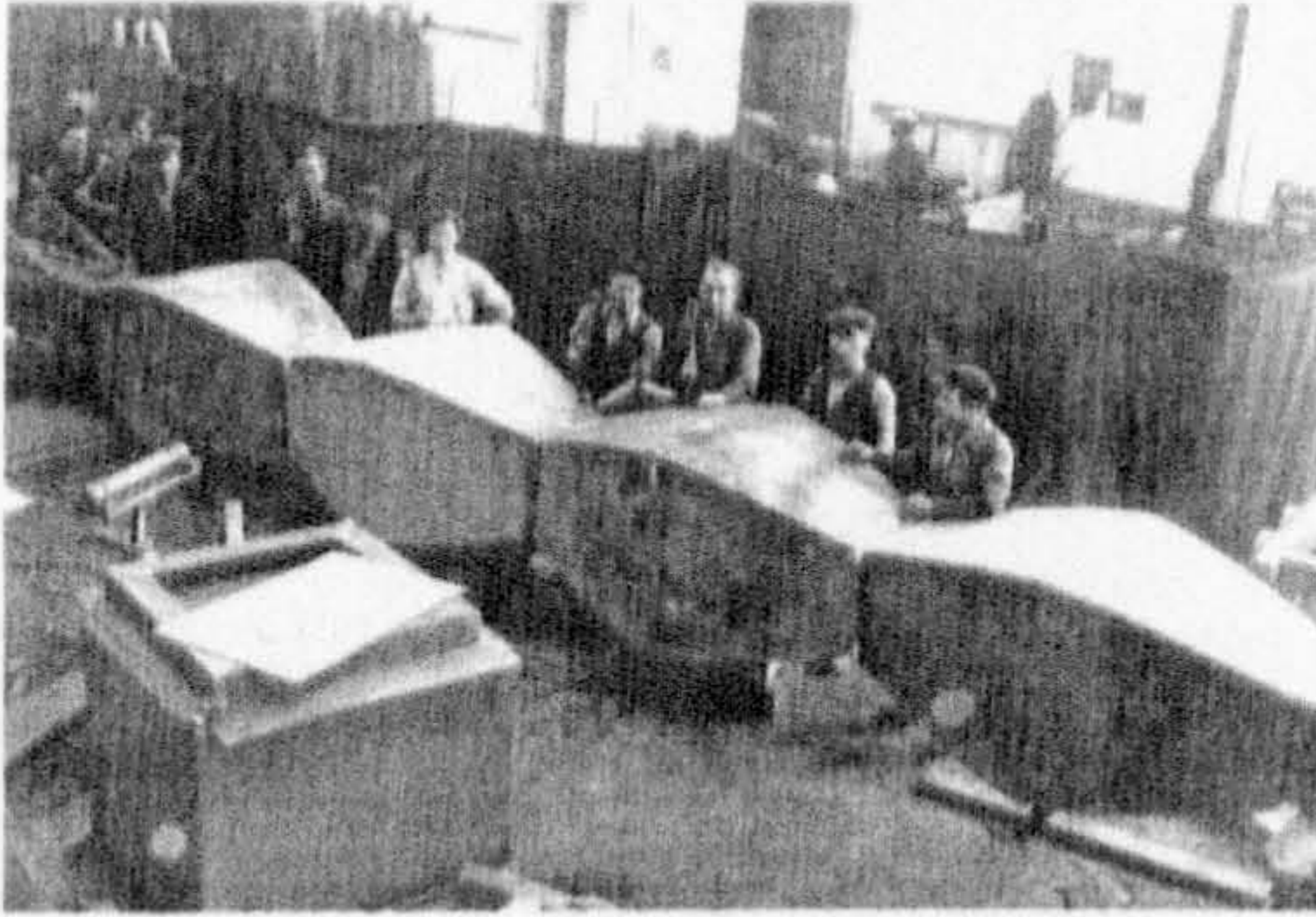
Constantin Brancusi, *Endless Column* at Târgu-Jiu, Romania, 1937

In Bourdon's article, Brancusi serves not only as a means of situating *Lever* art-historically, but also of stressing the continuity of Andre's practice.⁴¹ Just as Andre had started out, Bourdon explains, by cutting into blocks of wood in ways that seem to be formal paraphrases of the abstract geometric shape of Brancusi's *Endless Column*, so too is *Lever* related to the work of this earlier sculptor. 'All I'm doing', he quotes Andre as stating, 'is putting Brancusi's *Endless Column* on the ground instead of in the air.'⁴² Indeed, if we consider how Brancusi's work was interpreted in the US at the time, then it soon becomes clear that the column was regarded as a work of potentially infinite dimensions: a column whose elevation really could potentially continue ad infinitum. For instance, the art historian Sidney Geist, writing in 1967, suggested that once

⁴¹ On the relationship between Carl Andre's sculptures and Constantin Brancusi's work, see Sylvie Coëllier, 'Brancusi/ Carl Andre: Une Question d'espace', in *Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art moderne*, Centre Georges Pompidou, vol. 47 (Spring 1994), pp. 79-96. On the more general impact of Brancusi's work on the development of American sculpture, see Athena T. Spear, 'Brancusi and Contemporary Sculpture', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 46, no. 2 (November 1971), pp. 28-31 and F. Teja-Bach, 'Brancusi et la Sculpture Americaine des Années 60', in *Paris - New York*, Exhibition Catalogue, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1977, pp. 637-639.

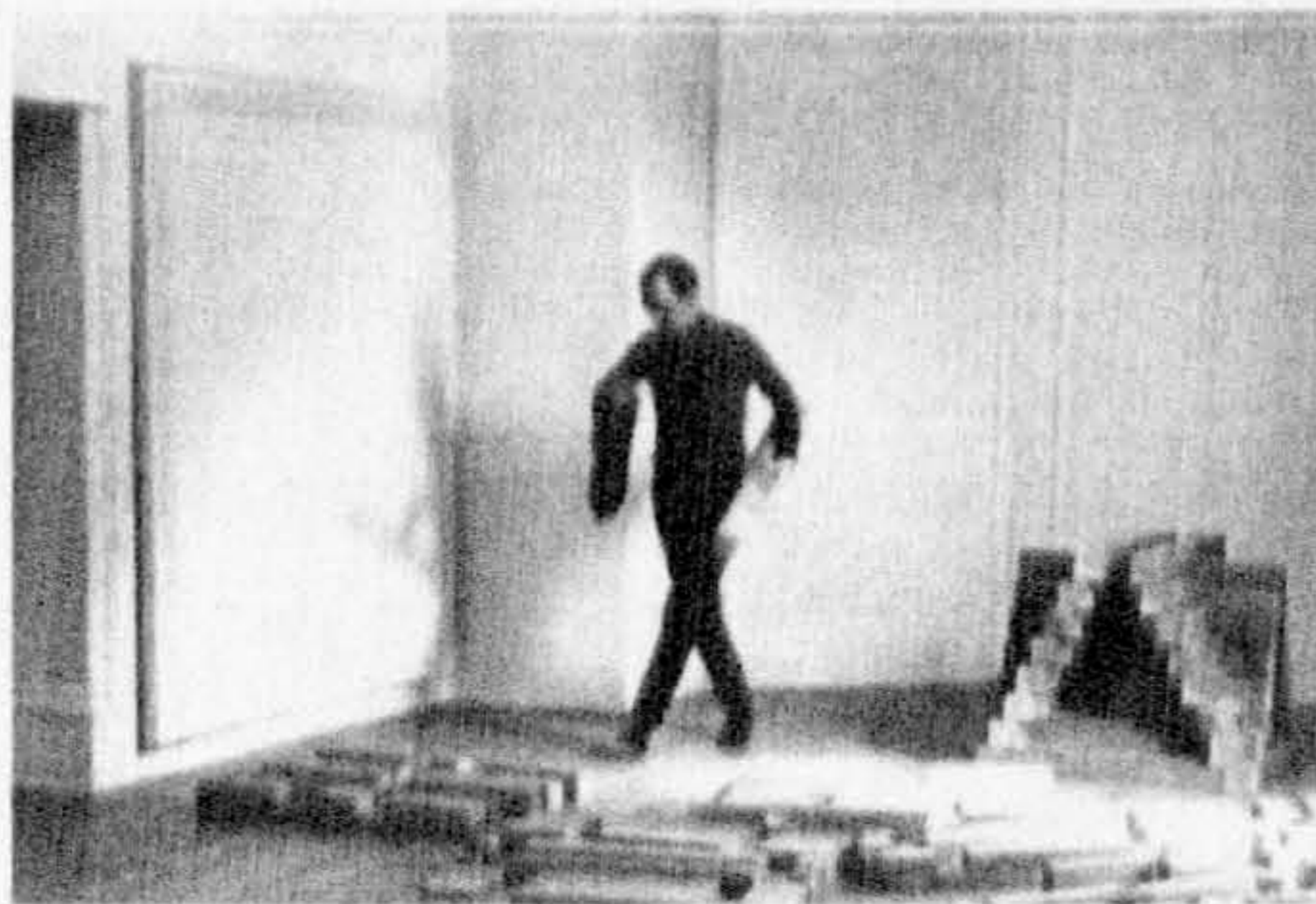
⁴² David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 15.

Brancusi had fixed the ratio of the dimensions of the rhomboids, then modules could be added or subtracted simply at will. For Geist, who perhaps has his eye on recent developments in contemporary art, this was undoubtedly a regression – simply too formulaic a solution to the sculptural question of proportion. It smacked for him of technical prescription.⁴³



Producing *Endless Column*, for Târgu-Jiu in the Petrosani Studios, 1930s

It is this reading of *Endless Column* that Bourdon presented when he compared Brancusi's work to that of Andre. His tacit assumption was that this too was an art engaged with the possibility of potentially endless repetition. For instance, he writes that Andre had made a number of pyramidal forms of mortised wood – to which he adds that like the *Endless Column* they 'could be staked base-to-base to infinity.'⁴⁴ There is no evidence, however, that Andre had any such intention. But it is characteristic in that even the most limited repetition of a geometrical form implies automatically for Bourdon the possibility of aggregation ad infinitum.



Carl Andre installing his 1964 Reconstruction of *Cedar Piece*, 1959

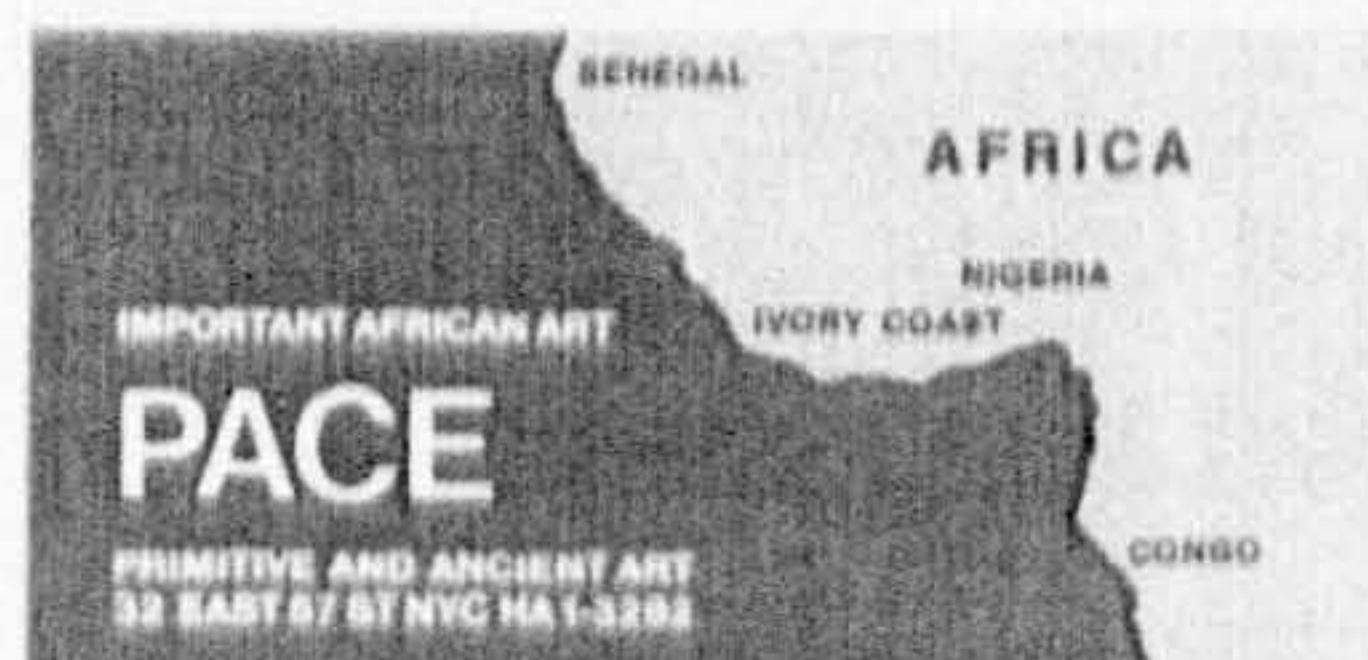
⁴³ Sidney Geist, 'Brancusi', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 7 (March 1967), pp. 19-26, p. 24.

⁴⁴ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 15.

In fact, the possibility of endless continuation was never a position Andre openly embraced. Perhaps the clearest evidence of Andre's position on the matter came in 1976, when he responded to a brief and passing description of *Lever* in the March issue of *Artforum* by Nancy Foote. In her article, which concerned three of Andre's contemporaries, Foote had made the comment that Andre's interests were in 'the process of continuation: 'the infinite extension possible if whatever situation he sets up were to be continued or enlarged proportionately.' She then claimed that *Lever's* straight sectional construction 'could consist of either more or fewer bricks.'⁴⁵ The assumption may have sounded fair to anyone not especially familiar with Andre's work, but in the next edition of the journal, the artist reminded readers that Foote's interpretation of *Lever* was, in his mind, wholly inaccurate. The rebuttal came in the form of a hand-written announcement in capital letters:⁴⁶



PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT ALL REFERENCES TO ME & MY WORK IN "THREE SCULPTORS" BY NANCY FOOTE (ARTFORUM FEB 76) ARE IN MY OPINION FALSE & MISLEADING - @ CARL ANDRE PO BOX 1001 NY NY 10003



Andre's announcement on the advertisement pages of *Artforum*, April 1976, p. 80

Readers, however, had to wait for the following edition of *Artforum* for the fuller explanation:

I have never been concerned with 'the process of continuation' or 'infinite extension' - my works have always been rather peculiar in

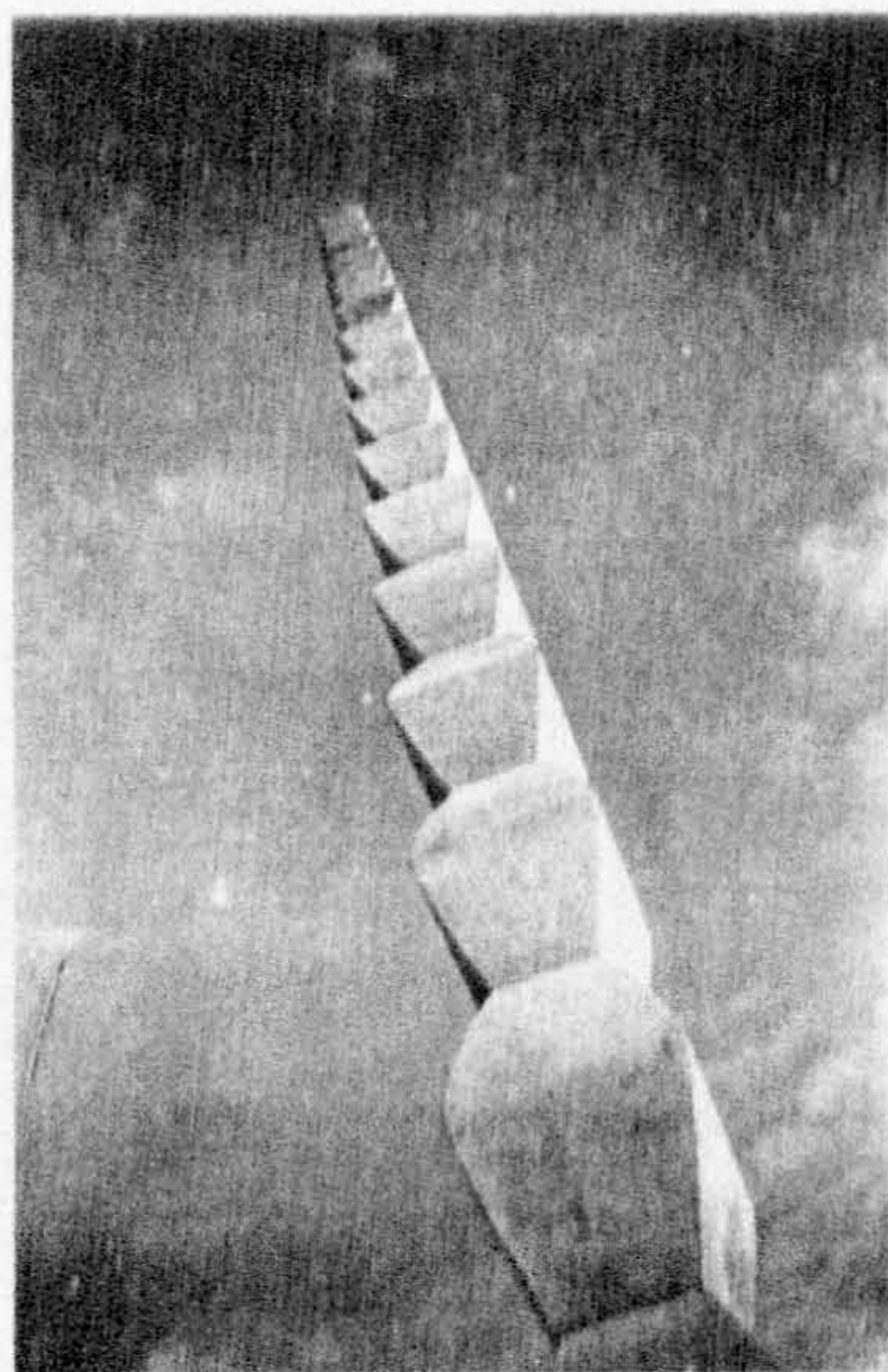
⁴⁵ Nancy Foote, 'Three Sculptors: Mark di Suvero, Richard Nonas, Charles Ginnever', *Artforum*, vol. 14, no. 6 (March 1976), pp. 46-51, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Carl Andre, Announcement, *Artforum*, vol. 14, no. 8 (April 1976), p. 80.

mostly being fixed in configuration by their cardinality – *Lever* could not ‘consist of more or fewer bricks’ as Foote falsely asserts because the cardinality of *Lever* (137) determines its shape just as much as do the size and shape of its constituent units.⁴⁷

As in his *Equivalent Series*, the number of units is integral to the actual artwork, so from his perspective the presumption that more particles could be added or subtracted simply fails to acknowledge what the sculpture actually is.

It does appear, however, that the number of units was set by Andre at a relatively late stage. Certainly, in the drawing dated from 2 February 1966, it does specify only 100 firebricks. By the beginning of April, however, Andre had certainly made it clear to John Myers that the number of bricks would be prime, for Myers wrote a letter to Dan Graham explaining that the work would contain 151 bricks.⁴⁸ No doubt, the fact that the line ended up being twenty-nine feet long had a considerable amount to do with practical factors. But much more to the point is that a number has a conceptual significance, capturing, as Nicholas Serota once put it, ‘the isolation of a prime number composed of only itself and one.’⁴⁹



Constantin Brancusi, *Endless Column*, Târgu-Jiu, 1937

⁴⁷ Carl Andre, ‘Letter’, *Artforum*, vol. 14, no. 9 (May 1976), p. 9.

⁴⁸ Letter from John Myers to Dan Graham, 1 April 1966, Carl Andre Artists File, Tibor de Nagy Gallery Papers.

⁴⁹ Nicholas Serota, *Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-1978*, unpaginated.

However, this only raises the question as to how it was possible for Andre to establish an affinity between the authoritatively finite length of *Lever* and the presumed endlessness of a Brancusi *Endless Column*. Certainly, the equivalence is nowhere to be seen if we understand Brancusi's work to be an endless aggregation of a module – that much is undoubtedly clear. Yet Andre appears to have always wanted to understand the infinitude of the form in a different way. In his interview with Phyllis Tuchman in 1970, he describes these columns by explaining that they,

reach up and drive down into the earth with a kind of verticality which is not terminal. Before, that verticality was always terminal: the top of the head and the bottom of the feet were the limits of the sculpture. Brancusi's sculpture continued beyond its vertical limit and beyond its earthbound limit, it drove into the earth.⁵⁰

In some senses his reading is not unlike Ezra Pound's suggestion that Brancusi's ovoid shapes make 'an approach to the infinite *by form*.'⁵¹ Andre seems to be suggesting not that a limitless number of modules could be added to the column, but that the form of the sculpture not only contains its volume but also embraces limitless space. The distinction is crucial, and in many respects corresponds to what Brancusi himself had said a number of years before:

Even the pyramids end somewhere in a point. [...] My columns need not end anywhere and can go on and on. [...] I think a true form ought to suggest infinity. The surfaces ought to look as though they went on forever, as though they proceeded out from the mass into some perfect and complete existence.⁵²

The form of *Endless Column* is capable of *implying* infinity, we might suggest, because the work does not conclude in an apex or a pinnacle. It simply lacks a terminal feature. The final module is bisected at its widest perimeter, leaving the eye not ascending to a vertex, but moving back down its tapering sides to the rhomboid beneath. The column's saw-tooth edges then encourages the eye to

⁵⁰ Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 61.

⁵¹ Ezra Pound, 'Brancusi', *The Little Review*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1921), reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber), 1954, p. 444.

⁵² Constantin Brancusi, in James Thrall Soby, 'Constantin Brancusi', *Saturday Review*, 3 December 1955, pp. 50-51, cited in Anna C. Chave, *Constantin Brancusi: Shifting the Bases of Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 269.

course up and down its length in such a way that a viewer is not forced to confront the fact that the column does not have an end feature.

In a similar sense, the 137th brick of *Lever*'s row is afforded no more significance than are any of the others. Visually, the conclusion to the row resembles a seemingly arbitrary curtailment: it is merely the point at which it happens to terminate. To consider the dimensions of *Lever* as infinitely variable, however, would detract entirely from its actual physical identity and its placement within the room. It would also be to fail to appreciate that there is no possibility of extending *Lever*, but only of knowing that the place of the line is not an indeterminate and infinite beyond, but an end in itself. The potential for the length to be extended is always present, just as the potential use-value of the manufactured bricks is always held in reserve. In both instances, it is the *notion* of possibility that becomes the source of the sculpture's forcefulness.

Chapter 8

Place:
The Passage Between Cause and Effect

Andre's evolutionary view of art was summed up years ago by Mondrian who said: 'true art like true life takes a single road.' 'Actually,' says Andre, 'my ideal piece of sculpture is a road.' He thinks of roads that are leisurely walked upon or looked at, not as the shortest distance between two points quickly traversed by automobile (he does not drive). In the future, his ideal sculpture will not necessarily remain on ground level. He likes digging very much and awaits commissions to create 'negative sculptures,' earth cavities that probably will resemble the troglodytic homes in the Chinese loess belt.

David Bourdon, 1966¹

No doubt the allusion to the plains of China in the last line of Bourdon's article on Andre was intended to sound appropriately obscure. The commissions to dig earth cavities never actually materialised, but this matters less than the general note it strikes.² For it is more than clear from these sentences that Andre's conception of sculpture is markedly distinct from most other versions of object-based art practice being explored around this moment. Even Bourdon's title – 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre' – suggested something of this. It implies Andre was not just making objects, but causing 'sites'. The reference to razing might be thought to have too much of a whiff of militancy to it, but it does emphasise well the levelled nature of Andre's sculpture. It points to the paradoxical nature of the idea of constructing works that rise little higher than a half inch from the plane of the ground. Indeed, it also alludes to what soon would become the defining feature of Andre's practice: his alignment of sculpture with 'place'.

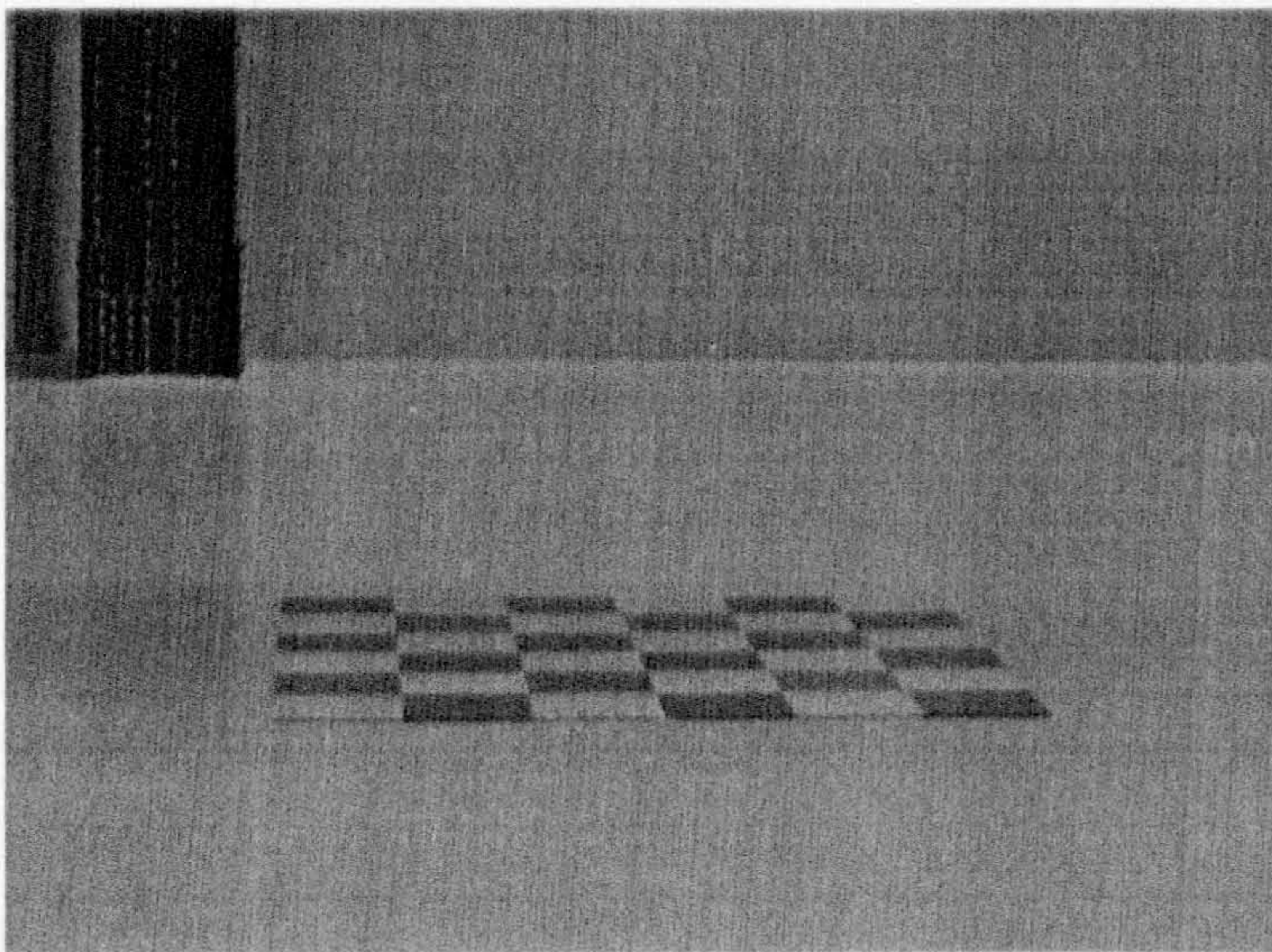
Earlier in the article, Bourdon credits Andre with advancing what he calls 'the art of zoning'.³ But before describing what this entails, he also explains how Andre's understanding of place is preceded by two further concepts: 'form' and

¹ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 17.

² There had been a proposal that Andre produced for Philip Johnson that the de Nagy Gallery circulated to the Parks Department – it seems without his permission. See Letter from Carl Andre to Tibor de Nagy, 3 February 1967, Artists' File, Tibor de Nagy Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art.

³ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 15.

'structure'. This, we might suggest, was Andre's way of making his artistic development sound logical and coherent – a means of demonstrating that his present style had not been dreamt up overnight.⁴ So, Bourdon first explains that Andre had set out 'as a wood-carving disciple of Brancusi', sawing and carving into large blocks of timber. The concern here was with sculptural form. Then, once Andre set aside cutting into materials and started aggregating identical standardized units, the focus changed to 'structure'. This stage lasted up to his Styrofoam sculptures at Tibor de Nagy's in 1965. But, although these three works 'appeared radically simple at the time', Bourdon goes on to suggest they were, in relation to what followed, 'needlessly complex'.⁵ This is because after *Coin*, *Crib* and *Compound*, Andre resorts simply to the mere placement of the units, exemplified by works such as *Lever*. The only reason the *Equivalents* were two layers high, we are told, was to provide the bricks with sufficient ballast to prevent them drifting apart.⁶ Essentially, therefore, sculpture 'as place' is a reference to the fact that once form and structure are discarded as extraneous to sculpture, then place is all that remains.⁷



***Steel Zinc Plain*, 1969, installation at Tate Modern, London, 2003**

⁴ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 15.

⁵ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 17.

⁶ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 17.

⁷ See Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, p. 322. In the May 1969 issue of *Arts Magazine*, Andre composed a two-page spread of seven illustrations of his works under the heading, 'FORM → STRUCTURE → PLACE'. Each photograph was prominently dated so that the move from each stage to the next could be clearly verified. See vol. 43, no. 7, pp. 24-25.

Yet in these terms, this almost sounds too much like a pseudo-Greenbergian account of a medium entrenching itself 'more firmly in its area of competence'. It makes it sound as if place should be understood as a distillation of the uniquely and irreducibly sculptural.⁸ But it is widely acknowledged that this rejection of form and structure on Andre's part also greatly contributed to an extension of sculpture's traditional domains, leading eventually to what Rosalind Krauss would later call 'sculpture's expanded field'.⁹ In fact, the attention on the term might be said to mark a significant deflection of attention away from a self-enclosed sculptural form towards a more haptic acknowledgement of the surrounding environment. For not only does a sculpture of placed elements necessarily imply works that are radically horizontal – expanding laterally as opposed to vertically – but it also interpolates a very different kind of viewer.

In an article in 1968, Lawrence Alloway clearly articulated the kind of participatory engagement that Andre's works required. Let me cite the passage in full:

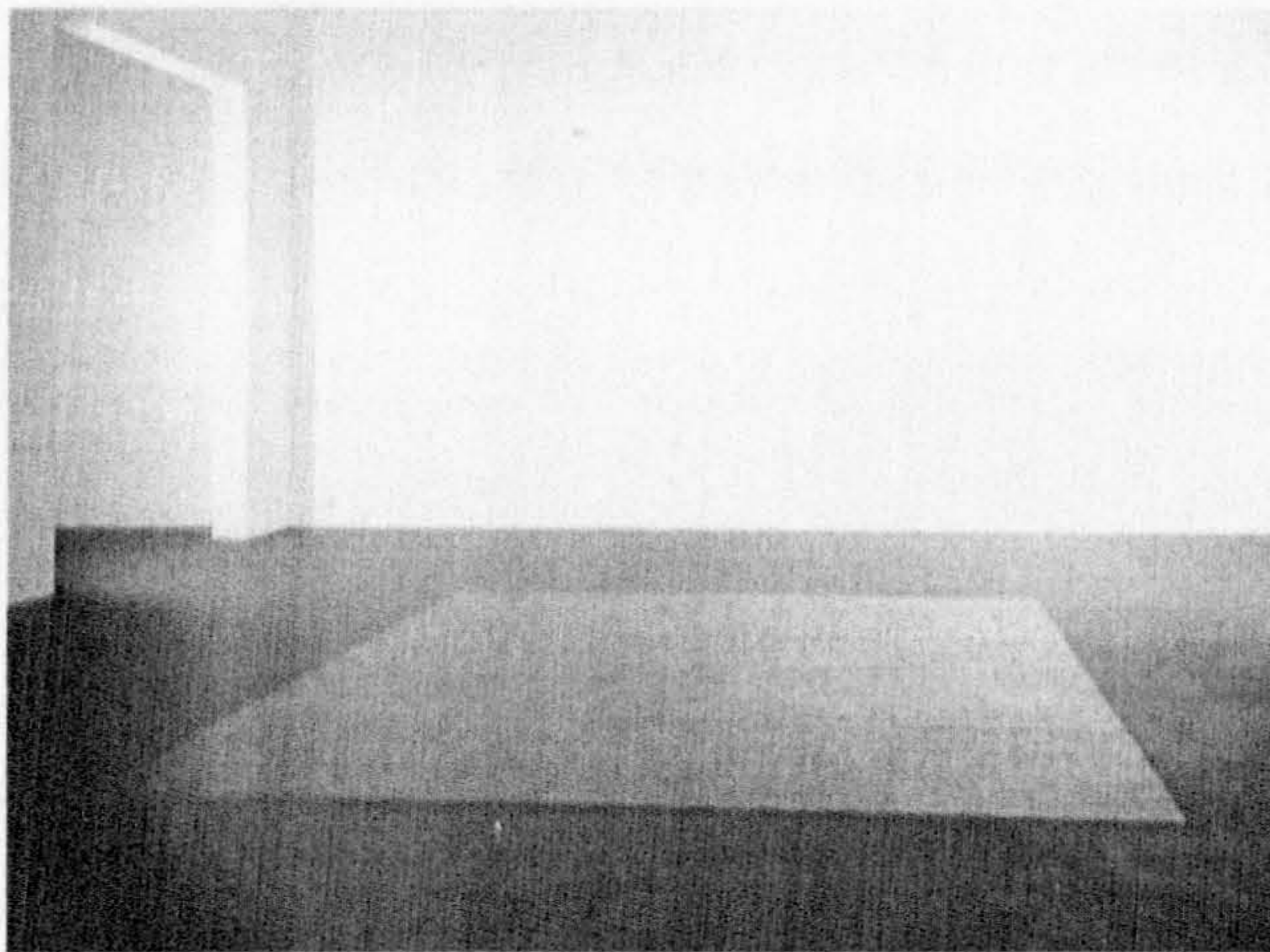
Andre's definition (quoted in an article by David Bourdon) of 'sculpture as place' leads to a physical contact of a kind specifically unlike traditional sculpture. His floors of metal plates of a modular sameness are meant to be walked on, or boarded if the spectator is prepared to take the step. In fact, the reluctance one has about walking over art is revealed by the hesitation of spectators around his areas. What he does, in effect, is to take possession of the space about his piece (like a sculptural equivalent of Air Rights). To move into the zone is different from standing outside looking at it, and the difference is a movement of participation. By violating our expectations concerning the position and level of art, and by being in Andre's case, mysteriously unemphatic, ground-plane sculpture brings into the spectator's conscious attention his physical location and his doubt (should I step on it? Is this the sculpture?)¹⁰

⁸ Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' [1960], in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, IV, pp. 85 and 86.

⁹ See Suzaan Boettger in *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002). Boettger also points out how Andre's concern with place led to a land-based art practice. See in particular, p. 77. Rosalind Krauss' essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' was published in *October* 8 (Spring 1979), and reprinted in her *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

¹⁰ Lawrence Alloway, 'Interfaces and Options: Participatory Art in Milwaukee and Chicago', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 43, no. 1 (September-October 1968), pp. 25-29, p. 28.

Alloway's discussion of the way viewer expectations are disrupted by the sculptures' extreme horizontality might also remind us of Robert Morris' much cited statement from the previous year: that the art object was now 'but one of the terms in the newer esthetic'.¹¹ In the past, Morris had written, the textures and internal relationships within sculpture had served 'to eliminate the viewer', because spectators find themselves drawn into the details of the work, thus detracting attention from the actual space in which the object exists. But in the new sculpture, he continues, the internal relationships are minimised and become 'a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision.' For Morris, this art induces viewers to become conscious that they are sharing the same space with the object. It also makes them increasingly aware of the ambient surroundings.¹² In other words, by placing an art object in a designated environment, it activates an awareness of the space surrounding it.



144 *Tin Square*, 1975

Andre's focus on sculpture as place should also be understood as a means of defining a centrifugalization of viewers' perception. As Alloway writes, the lateral nature of much of his work – especially his metal plate sculptures – demarcate a zone that can be walked on, but the terrain is not physically containing or enveloping. It has distinct boundaries, yet because these are at the level of viewers' feet, the sculpture registers as wholly continuous with the plain of ground. As Andre comments, 'you can stand in the middle of it and you can

¹¹ Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture Part 2', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 4 (December 1966), pp. 20-23, p. 21.

¹² Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture Part 2', p. 21.

look straight out and you can't see that piece of sculpture at all'.¹³ The parameters of his sculptures are clear, but they function more as thresholds that articulate the movements of the viewer rather than barriers that confine and restrict.

To define the distinct spatial qualities of his levelled sculptures, Andre often aligned his work not so much with self-contained objects, but associated them with the process of moving across horizontal expanses. Occasionally, he referenced his experiences of riding cars through the mesh of intersecting railroad tracks in the yards of New Jersey, or he spoke of sculpture being like a road. But perhaps most famously is the passage in Bourdon's article in which he reports that Andre came to the decision that his sculptures should be 'as level as water' whilst canoeing on a lake in New Hampshire.¹⁴

This was not the first time that an experience of moving through a landscape had been contrasted to the object-based artwork. In 1949, Barnett Newman had visited the Miamisburg Mound in Ohio, and had written that here, at this place, there are 'no subjects – nothing that can be shown in a museum or in a photograph'. Instead, the impression of being there was for him like being 'inside a picture rather than outside contemplating any specific nature.'¹⁵ We might suggest likewise of the experience of entering and moving through 'the razed sites' effected by Andre's sculptures.

In fact, in a similar vein to Newman, Andre's notion of place often seems to gravitate naturally towards the rural and the pre-industrial. Just consider, for instance, how Bourdon feels obliged to qualify Andre's claim that his ideal piece of sculpture is a road.¹⁶ The road Andre appears to be thinking of is far closer to a footpath or a rural track than, for instance, the sublime breadth of the New Jersey Turnpike as described by the sculptor Tony Smith just two months later.¹⁷

¹³ Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 57.

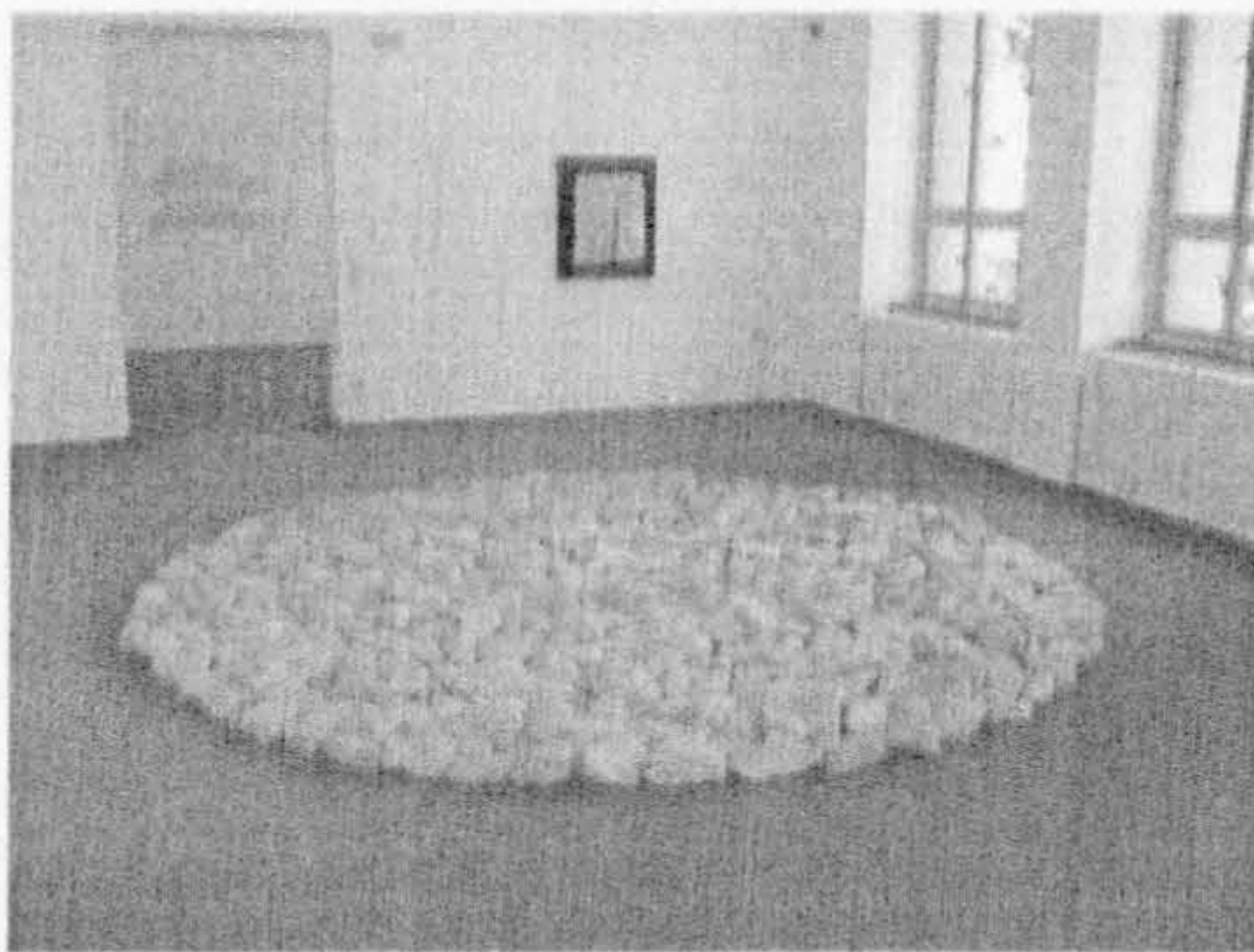
¹⁴ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 17.

¹⁵ Barnett Newman, 'Ohio' [1949], in *Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. by John P. O'Neill (New York: Knopf, 1990), pp. 174-175.

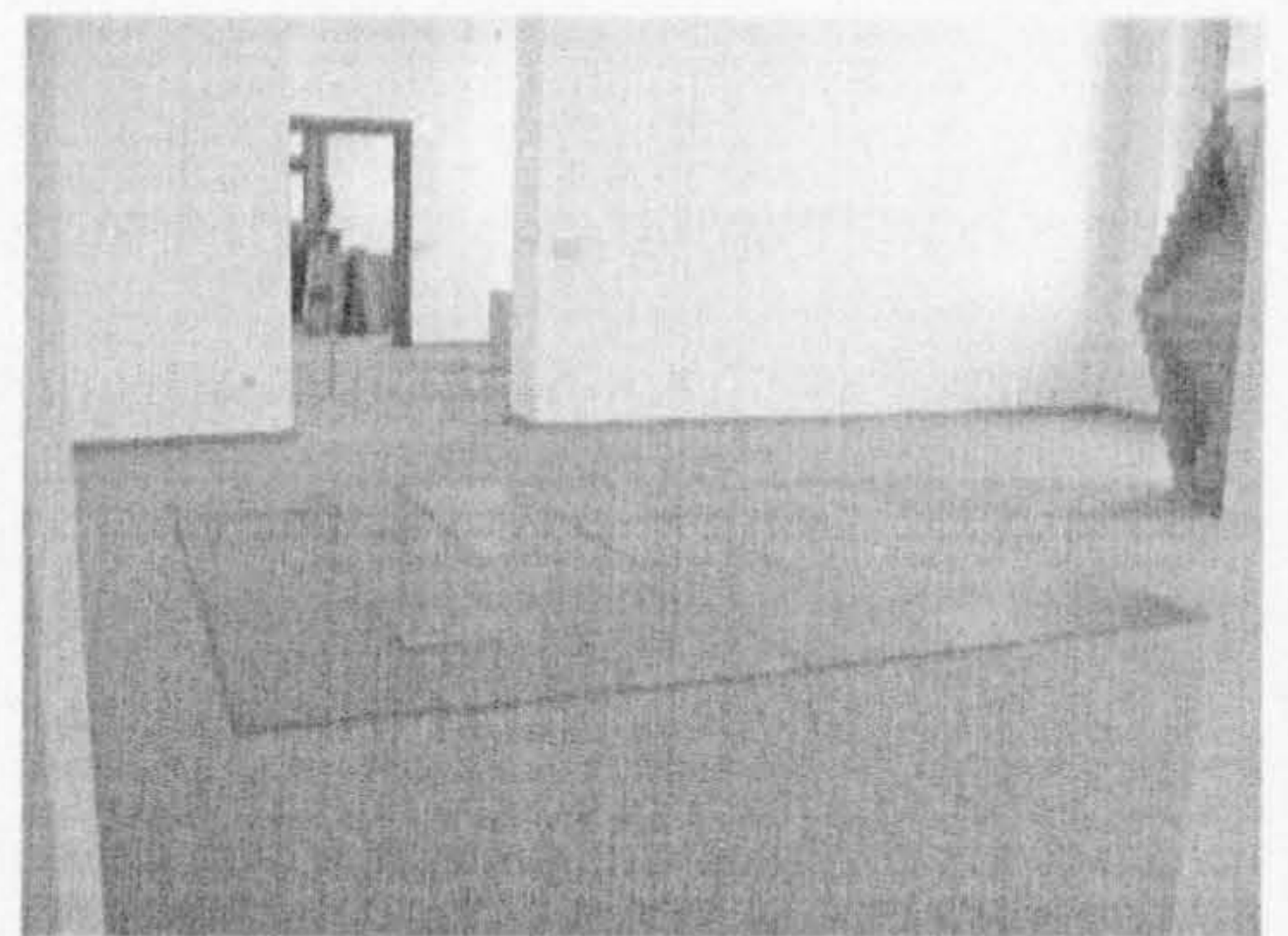
¹⁶ David Bourdon, 'The Razed Sites of Carl Andre', p. 17.

¹⁷ See Samuel Wagstaff, 'Talking to Tony Smith', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 4 (December 1966), pp. 15-19, p. 19.

Whereas Andre has in mind a peripatetic viewer, Smith envisages mere glimpses onto ‘stacks, towers, fumes and colored lights’ through the window of a speeding car.¹⁸ In fact, when Andre spoke again of his trinomial definition of ‘form’, ‘structure’ and ‘place’ in 1970, he suggests quite explicitly that place was for him ‘a neolithic property’, exemplified by ‘the countryside of southern England, Indian mounds, and things like that’.¹⁹ Andre is alluding to the same kind of qualities in these locations that Richard Long had also admired and made the subject of his art. For both artists, what seems to have appealed to them was the thought of civilisations gradually modifying and working a landscape, so that the terrain becomes seemingly choreographed and attuned to the scale of the human, who passes through it on foot.²⁰ Place is – the philosophers all agree – a profoundly anthropocentric concept.²¹



Richard Long, *White Stone Circle*, 1977



36 *Copper Square*, 1968

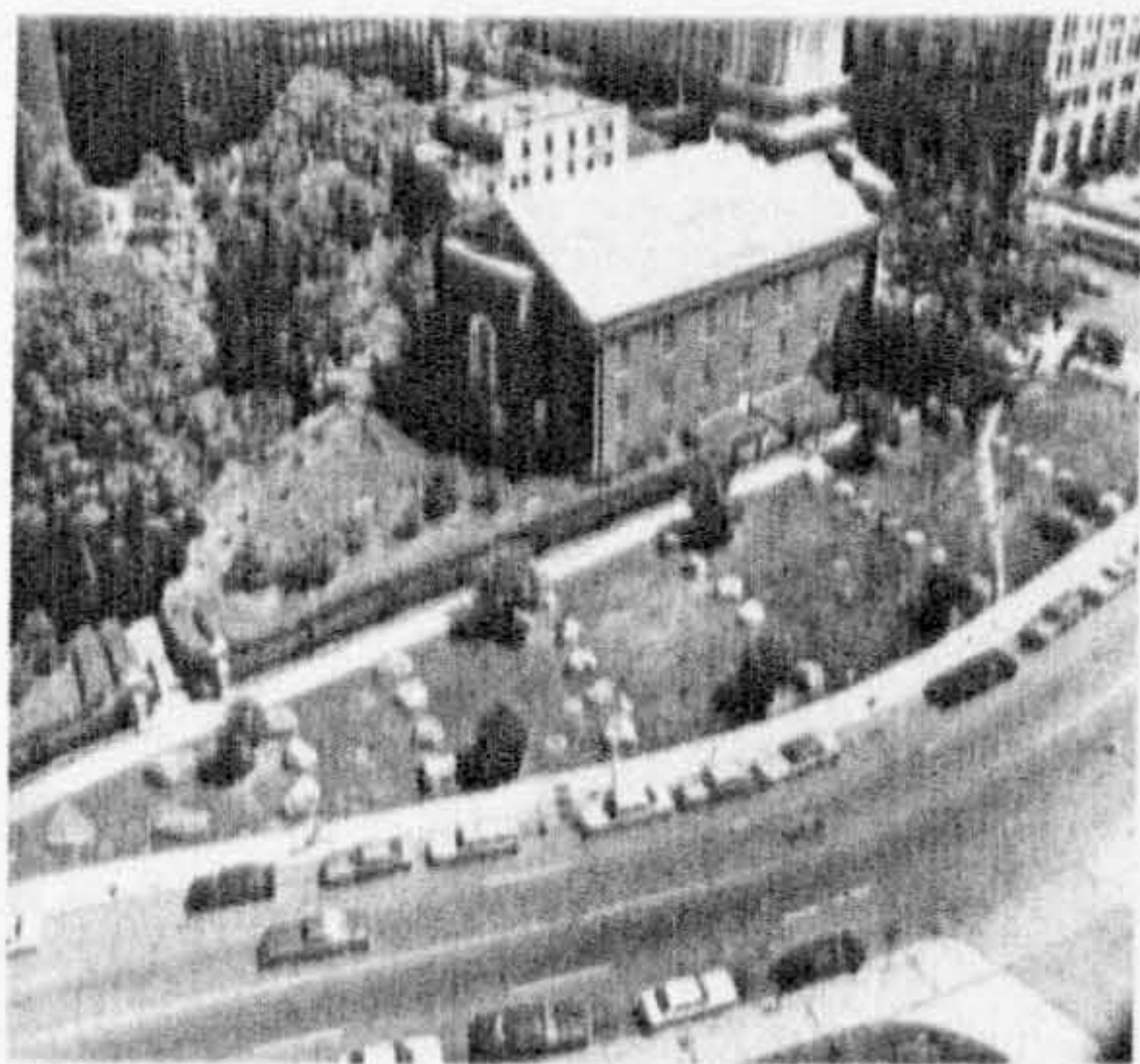
¹⁸ Smith’s account of his drive is repeated verbatim by Michael Fried, who emphasised in particular the sculptor’s sense that there was no possibility of framing such an experience as art. For Fried’s discussion, see ‘Art and Objecthood’, p. 19. For a consideration of the way in which Fried reads and misreads Smith, see Anne Wagner’s introduction ‘Reading Minimal Art’, in Gregory Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, 2nd Edn (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 16-17.

¹⁹ Phyllis Tuchman, ‘An Interview with Carl Andre’, p. 55.

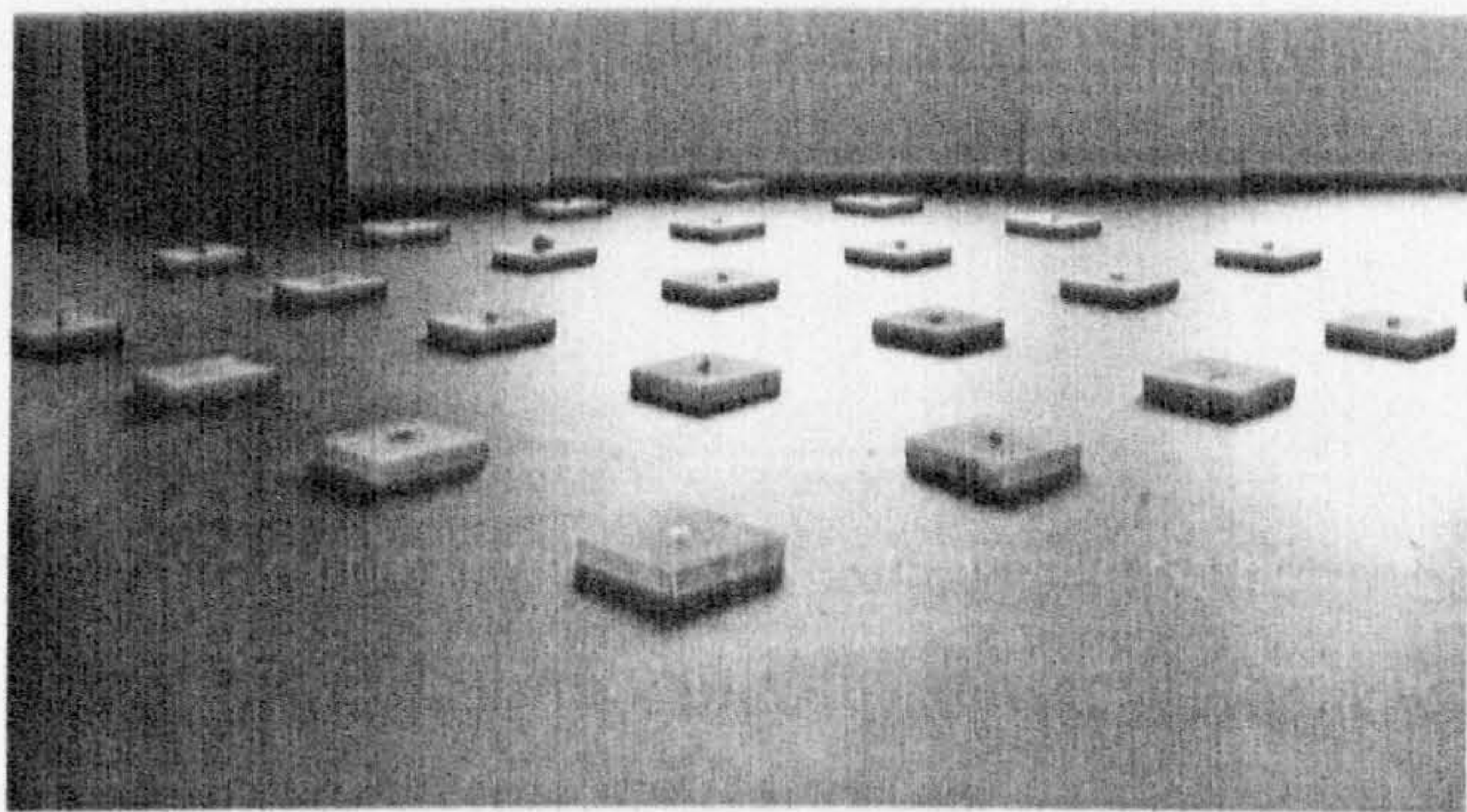
²⁰ On the occasion of an exhibition curated at the White Museum at Cornell University in 1969, Long explained to an audience at the accompanying symposium that ‘most of England has had its shape changed – practically the whole place, because it has been ploughed over for centuries – rounded off.’ See ‘Symposium’, in *Earth Art*, exhibition catalogue, ed. by Willoughby Sharp, Andrew Dixon White Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, unpaginated.

²¹ Edward Casey explicitly argues this point in *Getting Back into Place: Towards a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993). He claims that a sense of plenitude that comes from place is predicated on the capacity of human beings to roam away from their home territory and become placeless. See pp. xii-xiii. See also Martin Heidegger’s much-cited essay from 1954, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Collins, 1975), in particular, pp. 147 and 159.

However, there is a considerable tension between the primarily agrarian associations invoked by the word 'place' and the overtly industrial connotations of the materials themselves. The tension is best explored, I feel, through reference to Richard Long's indoor sculptures, for like Andre, his works can also be brought into the gallery by hand and laid down particle by particle. However, his materials (which in the past have included sticks, leaves, mud and stones) are all saturated with cultured notions of 'the natural' and 'nature'.²² Whilst Andre has spoken with pleasure that he is the first to handle units that have otherwise been produced and transported only by machines, Long has expressed his satisfaction with the thought that the materials he gathers from nature have sometimes never before come into physical contact with humans.²³ In fact, in contrast to Andre's sculptures, these works seem to attest to an engagement with the world that is essentially and wholly non-industrial. It is almost as though he is fixed on airbrushing out as many references to modern urban life from his art as is possible. Yet only on very rare occasions has Andre resorted to materials whose forms and dimensions have been shaped and fashioned organically.²⁴ At all other times, the machine-fashioned qualities of his sculptures are resolutely explicit.



Stone Field Sculpture,
Hartford, 1977



25 Blocks and Stones, 1973

²² See Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, p. 325.

²³ See Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 122 and see 'An Interview with Richard Long by Richard Cork', broadcast on BBC Radio 3, 28 October 1988, in *Richard Long: Walking in Circles*, Exhibition Catalogue, Hayward Gallery, London, 1991, p. 252.

²⁴ The implications of Andre's use of natural forms in the 1970s raises a number of questions, some of which are explored in a review of Andre's large installation at the Portland Center of the Visual Arts in early 1973. See Jan van der Marck, 'Carl Andre', *Art in America*, vol. 61, no. 3 (May-June 1973), pp. 111-113.

However, it could be suggested that the arrangements into which Andre aligns his mostly raw, machine-manufactured modules serves as a means of naturalising their associations. By equating a notion of 'place' with non-industrial landscapes, it *might* be argued that Andre allows the qualities that our culture tends to associate with the physical attractiveness of cultivated, rural places to be accorded to these raw, mass produced units. One small episode perhaps helps clarify what is at stake. When Long travelled to New York for the first time in February 1969, he paid a visit to Andre and Rosemarie Castoro. He brought with him a small work he installed in their presence: a set of sticks, laid end to end to form a circle on the floor.²⁵ And, for a group exhibition in May 1969, Andre made a curiously comparable sculpture.²⁶ It is a thin line, around six feet in length, made from eighteen equally short pieces of bent lead rod, loosely laid end to end. The sticks, we might say, have been exchanged for lengths of discarded metal; segments of tree branches have been replaced with the discarded shards of machine production. Once the exhibition was over, Andre sent the work by mail to Long, and gave the sculpture the title *Portrait of Richard Long*. It was his return gift. Similar eviscerated sculptures made from lengths of metal, mostly from scavenged sources, soon began to feature regularly in Andre's oeuvre. In April 1971, he lined the floor of the Dwan Gallery with such works, or 'runs' as called them. To one enquiring journalist, he explained that 'the materials aren't found, but they're certainly scavenged – bits of wire or metal that have been thrown away, or worn by use or time. They are humanised.'²⁷ In fact, we might suggest that all of Andre's sculptures are motivated by this impulse to draw out the explicitly 'human' in his materials. We might infer, then, that his accentuation of the qualities of place as an attribute of landscapes fashioned by agrarian, predominantly non-industrial intervention serves for him as one further way of accomplishing this.

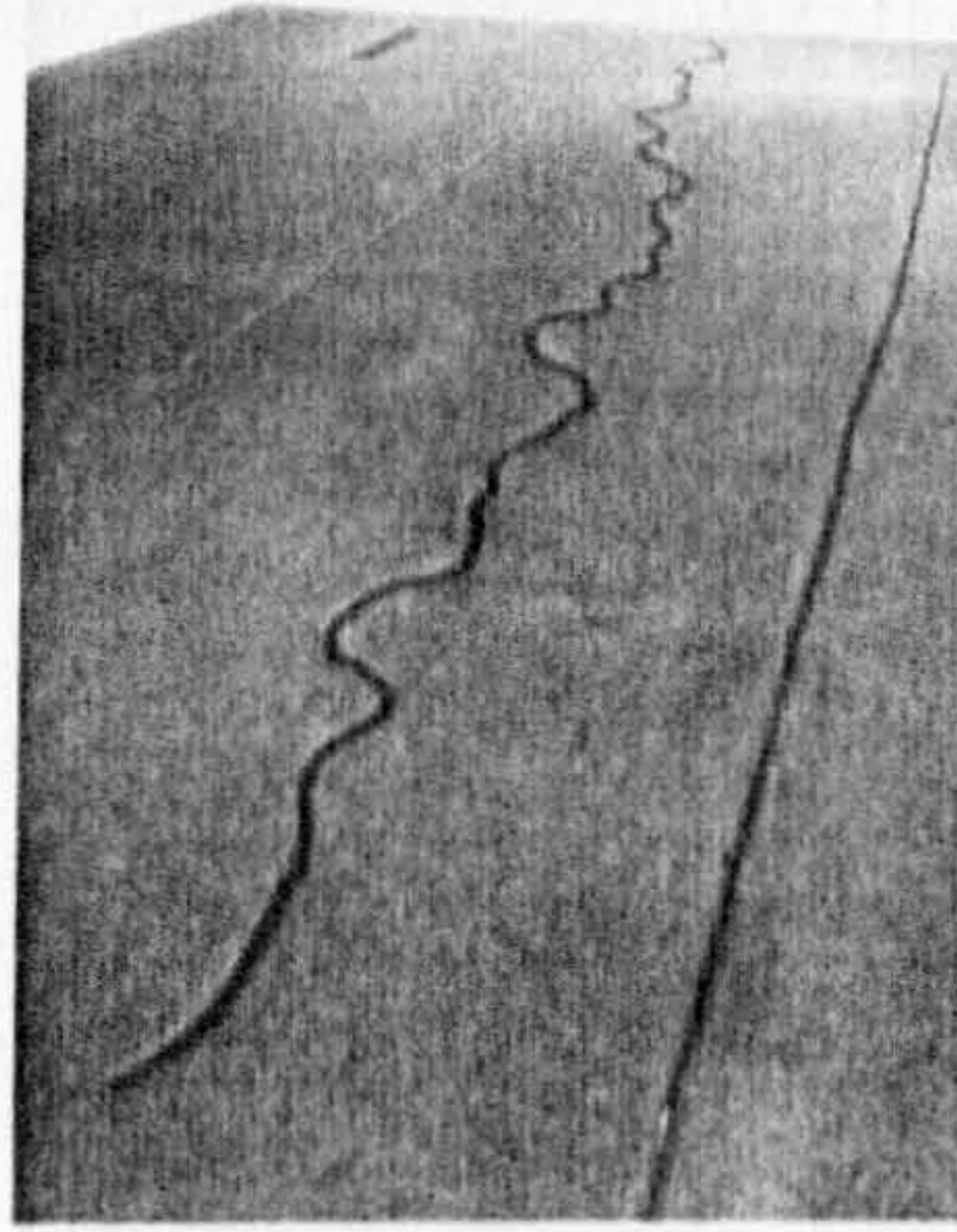
²⁵ Long and Andre had met in 1968 at Konrad Fischer's in Düsseldorf, and remained close. In fact, according to Long, it was in response to Andre's encouragement that he came to the US in 1969. Long described this circle of sticks to me in a letter (19 January 2004).

²⁶ Andre produced his sculpture for the exhibition 'Number 7' at the Paula Cooper Gallery, from 18 May to 15 June 1969, curated by Lucy Lippard. The exhibition is described in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* [1993] (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 100-101).

²⁷ Carl Andre, cited in Douglas Davis, 'Art by the Foot', *Newsweek*, 3 May 1971, pp. 84-85.



Portrait of Richard Long,
1968



Runs, installation at Dwan
Gallery, New York, April 1971

However, I do not want to imply that the phrase 'sculpture as place' can be defined exclusively as an unimposing insertion of materials into a surrounding space. Andre's notion of place should be understood primarily not so much as a quality that characterises the appearance of his sculptures, but is also for him a means of theorising the phenomenological *relation* between the works and their environment. One way of pointing in this direction might be to turn to a short text by Richard Serra from 1970. The article is mostly concerned with explaining how Serra's sculptures relate to some of the recent debates in three-dimensional art. But towards the beginning, he makes a significant point about Andre's sculptures.²⁸ For him, much recent horizontal art was simply in danger of reiterating conventional pictorial concerns. The current trend of spreading materials laterally over the floor is perhaps not as radical as the artists themselves imagine, he implies, for the installation can still be understood as a figurative arrangement against an isolating and neutral ground.²⁹ However, he believed Andre had come to terms with this problem by revealing 'the fact of the operative rationale that allows the work to find its place.'³⁰ As such, the sculpture is perceived by viewers to be the result of a *process*, and not merely a pictorial arrangement. This is important, for it serves as a reminder that Andre's

²⁸ Richard Serra, 'Play it Again, Sam', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 44, no. 4 (February 1970), reprinted in Richard Serra, *Writings Interviews* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 7.

²⁹ Serra's argument is informed by Allan Kaprow's critique of the anti-form sculptures of Robert Morris. See Kaprow's essay 'The Shape of the Art Environment' [1968] in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 90-92.

³⁰ Richard Serra, 'Play it Again, Sam', p. 7.

emphasis on place is also a means of stressing the facticity of its 'placement'. It is just as much this as any of the associations the noun itself might connote.

To explore the process-based aspect to place, I want to turn to the occasion when Andre first visited Windham College in April 1968. As is widely acknowledged by art historians, the exhibition and the accompanying symposium in which he participated were both closely oriented to an exploration of sculpture's relation to the term 'place'. Arguably, it also resulted in Andre's most comprehensive sculptural statement on the subject. Andre, along with Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner, had been invited to the college by Charles Ginnever who taught sculpture in the Art Department.³¹ During the 1960s, Ginnever had developed a distinctive style of freestanding sculpture, which comprised mostly of juxtapositions of steel plates in which single acute angles were often the only element in contact with the ground. Since he preferred to site these sculptures in outdoor, landscape settings – often to dramatic effect – he was interested to know what these three artists would accomplish once the assurances of the enclosed gallery setting were not available to them. But the suggestion for them to produce works outside for the campus grounds was also motivated by practicalities, for Windham College simply did not have an art gallery. Moreover, since the Department did not have much in the way of funds, Ginnever suggested that the works should be not only temporary, but also made from cheap and ready-to-hand resources.³² In fact, he could offer them only fifty dollars for materials.³³

Windham College, which occupied a 250-acre purpose-built campus in rural southeast Vermont, was a good four and a half hour drive from New York City. The installation photographs show some of the buildings – the work of the architect Lawrence Durrell Stone – surrounded by swathes of ragged grass and

³¹ The exhibition 'Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner' ran from 30 April to 31 May 1968. The three had already exhibited together earlier that year at the Laura Knott Gallery at Bradford Junior College in Massachusetts (from 4 February to 2 March 1968). There, Andre had displayed his *144 Zinc Square*, produced for his exhibition at the Dwan Gallery in the previous December, and Weiner and Barry had showed paintings. According to Suzanne Boettger, they had been invited by Douglas Huebler, who taught there. See her *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties*, p. 81.

³² See Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, pp. 16-17.

³³ See Charles Ginnever, letter to Suzanne Boettger, 4 August 1994, in Suzanne Boettger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties*, p. 82.

bare trees. In fact, the college had only occupied the site for a few years, and some sections of the campus were still under construction.³⁴ Certainly, each of the artists engaged with the question of how to accentuate and respond to the particularities of the site and the terrain, yet none of them could be said to have ‘beautified’ or adorned the campus grounds in any conventional understanding of the term. Nor could it be conceded that they transformed a barren tract of land into a site resonant with any particular ‘sense of place’. In fact, if anything, ‘place’, as exemplified by these three artists, attests more to the way they were forced to adapt radically to the contingencies of the situation. Robert Barry, for instance, had planned to use the piece of land between two blocks, but on arrival, he discovered the area was full of parked bulldozers. So he purchased a bundle of nylon cord and strung it between the Library and the Students’ Union building, twenty-five feet above the ground. ‘The material was chosen about half an hour before we bought it’, he confessed.³⁵



Robert Barry, untitled nylon cord sculpture, Windham College, April 1968



Lawrence Weiner, *Staples, Stakes, Twine, Turf*, Windham College, April 1968

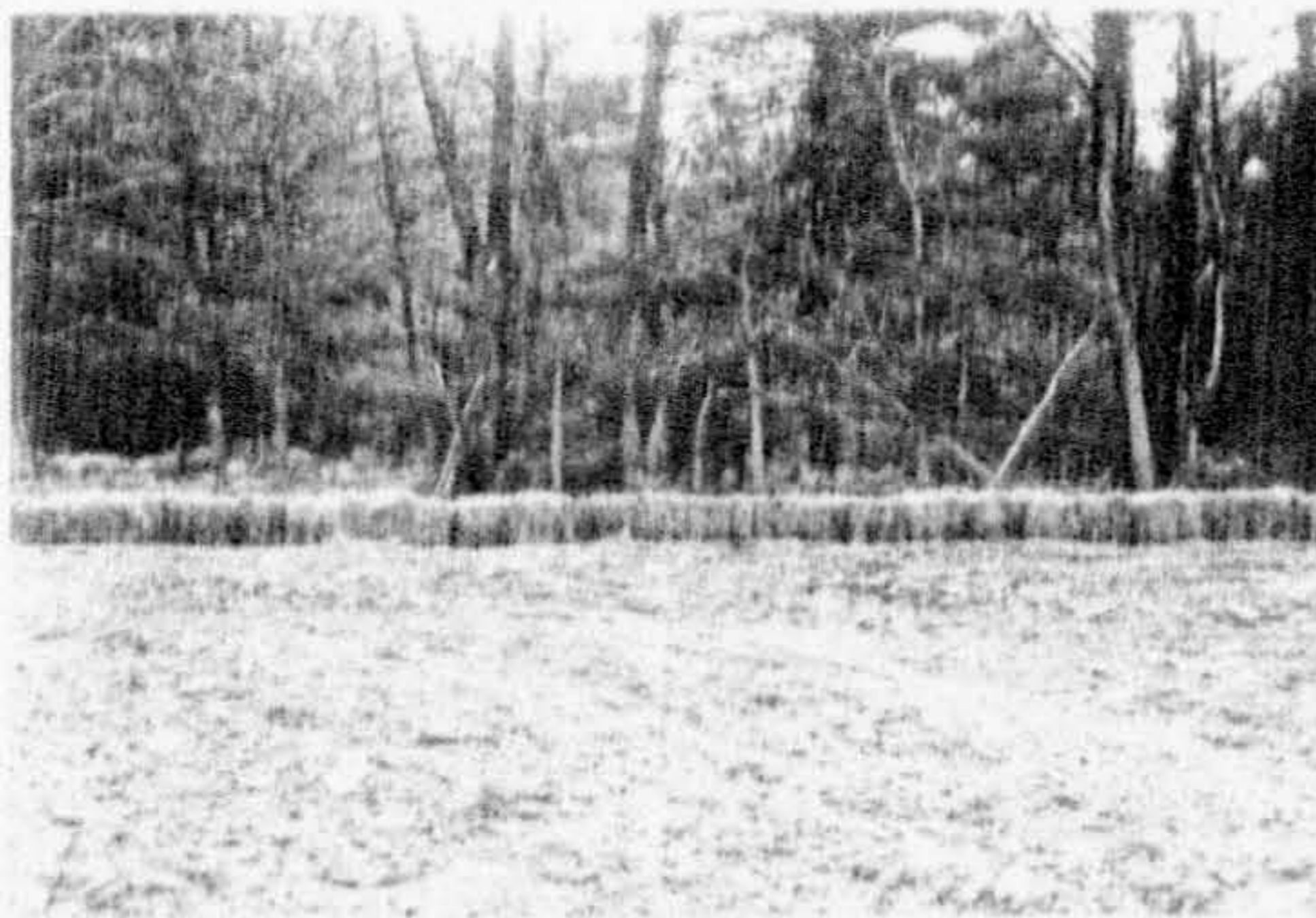
In turn, Weiner chose a piece of grass that appears to have been used mostly as an impromptu sports field between two student dormitories. There, with the assistance of some of the students, he hammered staples and stakes into the turf at regular intervals and connected them with surveyor’s string, forming a large grid of ten-foot squares. Weiner described it as evoking the circumscribed

³⁴ Windham College closed in 1978, remained unused for several years, and since 1985 has been the home of Landmark College.

³⁵ Robert Barry, in ‘Symposium at Windham College’, in *Having Been Said: Writings and Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968-2003*, p. 20.

outline of the foundations of a new building.³⁶ But when some of the students later removed part of the stakes so that they could continue to use the grass for touch football, Weiner decided it hardly warranted repairing.³⁷

As for Andre: he ordered as many hay-bales from a local farm as his fifty dollars would permit, and arranged them into a single row, around 274 feet in length. For him, bales were sufficiently solid and rectilinear to serve as appropriate equivalents to the other particles that he had used up that point. The line started just inside a scruffy spinney of woods below the dormitories and travelled across open, unmade ground towards the main campus thoroughfare. According to Ginnever, the work stayed in place throughout the year. By the following summer it had decomposed into 'a green linear mount'.³⁸



Joint, Windham College, April 1968



**Windham College Symposium, 30 April 1968
(from left to right) Robert Barry, Dan Graham,
Lawrence Weiner Carl Andre**

The exhibition itself had been partly co-ordinated by the freelance curator, Seth Siegelaub, and, in order to ensure the event received the attention of the New York artworld, Siegelaub organised an accompanying 'symposium'.³⁹ On the face of it, it was not a grand affair: the audience were mostly students and teachers, and the whole event seems to have lasted formally for only around half an hour. But thanks to an audio recording and Siegelaub's subsequent efforts at promotion, the visit to Windham was impressively documented. Soon afterwards,

³⁶ For a further description of these works, see Suzaan Boetgger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties*, pp. 82-83.

³⁷ See 'Early Work: Interview by Lynn Gumpert', in Lawrence Weiner, *Having Been Said: Writings and Interviews of Lawrence Weiner*, p. 122.

³⁸ Letter from Charles Ginnever, 16 January 2003.

³⁹ See Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, pp. 16-17.

a number of transcripts of the symposium were in circulation, and Siegelaub's photograph of Andre's hay-bales found its way almost immediately into the pages of *Artforum*.⁴⁰

The symposium itself was moderated – at Siegelaub's request – by Dan Graham, who inaugurated the proceeding with a few words about the etymology of place. The word derived from the Greek word “plateia”, meaning flat or broad’, he explained. His definition was an acknowledgement perhaps that all of the three works openly embraced the horizontal plane. But he also laid considerable prominence not only on the fact that the works were all conceived for their location, but that the exhibition ‘involves “placing” as a verb as well as a noun.’⁴¹

He then invited the artists to discuss the significance of the word in relation to their works. Robert Barry explained he wanted ‘to use the land, drive something into the land, circle it in some way, emphasise it, create something in proportion to the buildings around it, to the piece of land itself.’⁴² Weiner suggested also that he wished to heighten a perceptual awareness of the surroundings, pointing to the way that quite particular aspects of neighbouring building became far more accentuated than before. ‘It's a matter of what you can displace with what you do in this place’, he commented.⁴³

Like Weiner and Barry, Andre also spoke about the way the work shuttled the focus of the viewer from the sculpture to its location and from location to sculpture. Yet place and environment ought not to be confused, he warned:

⁴⁰ Enno Develing, for instance, who curated and organised Andre's solo exhibition at the Haags Gemeentemuseum the following year, seems to have consulted a copy and cites from it in his catalogue essay (*Carl Andre*, 1969, p. 41). A section of the transcript is included in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*, pp. 46-48 and the recording itself is included amongst the Lucy Lippard Papers at the Archives of American Art. The most unedited transcription in print is to be found in *Having Been Said: Writings and Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968-2003*, pp. 16-20, and it is this and the taped recording itself that I have consulted here. A prominent reproduction of Andre's work is included in Robert Morris' article, ‘Anti-form’, *Artforum*, vol. 6, no. 8 (April 1968), pp. 33-35, p. 33.

⁴¹ Dan Graham, ‘Symposium at Windham College’, p. 16.

⁴² Robert Barry, ‘Symposium at Windham College’, p. 18.

⁴³ Lawrence Weiner, ‘Symposium at Windham College’, p. 17.

I think it is futile for an artist to try to create an environment, because you have an environment around you all the time. An astronaut who slips out of his capsule in space has lost his environment: any living organism has an environment. A place is an area within an environment which has been altered in such a way as to make the general environment more conspicuous. Everything is in an environment but a place is related particularly to both the general qualities of the environment and the particular qualities of the work.⁴⁴

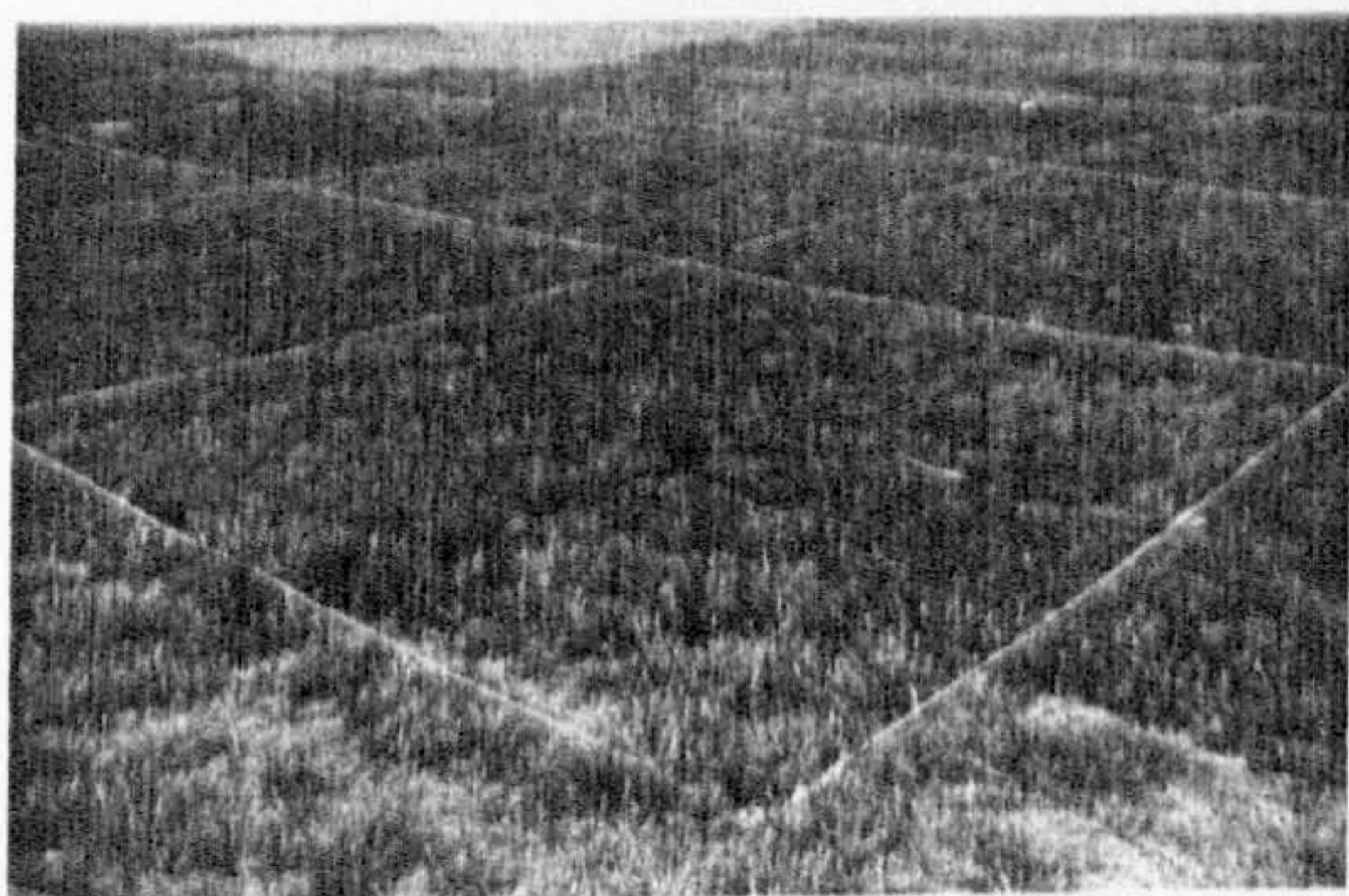
Andre's definition is significant because he makes it clear that there are three terms at stake in his account of place. Firstly, there is the environment, which is posited as a precondition of life itself, and serves as the horizon within which all artworks are an insertion. For him, this disqualifies the need to create all-encompassing installations that simulate a total environment. In fact, we might read this as an unrepentant defence of his resolutely object-based sculptural practice. Secondly, there is the artwork itself, with its own particular qualities and material characteristics that distinguish it from its surrounding environment. And place emerges as the third term: the alteration to the area that makes the environing context more distinct and 'conspicuous'. Place, in other words, is a combination of the qualities of both artwork and environment. This is important, for it implies that to focus on an artwork from the perspective of place is to recognise how the work and its context are co-determining.

It should be noted however, that Andre's account is not a proto-definition of what would later come to be known as site-specific art. The concept can be traced back to Robert Barry, who emphasised in an interview the following year that his installed wire sculptures, similar to the kind he produced for Windham, could not be moved without being destroyed. Therefore, the site and the work were inseparable.⁴⁵ Certainly, Weiner and Andre did not intend their works to be reconstructed in a new location either, and like Barry, their sculptures were also structurally dependent on their location for their appearance. In fact, the title of Weiner's work was later set as *Staples, Stakes, Twine and Turf* – an acknowledgement that the grass and the very ground itself was a fundamental

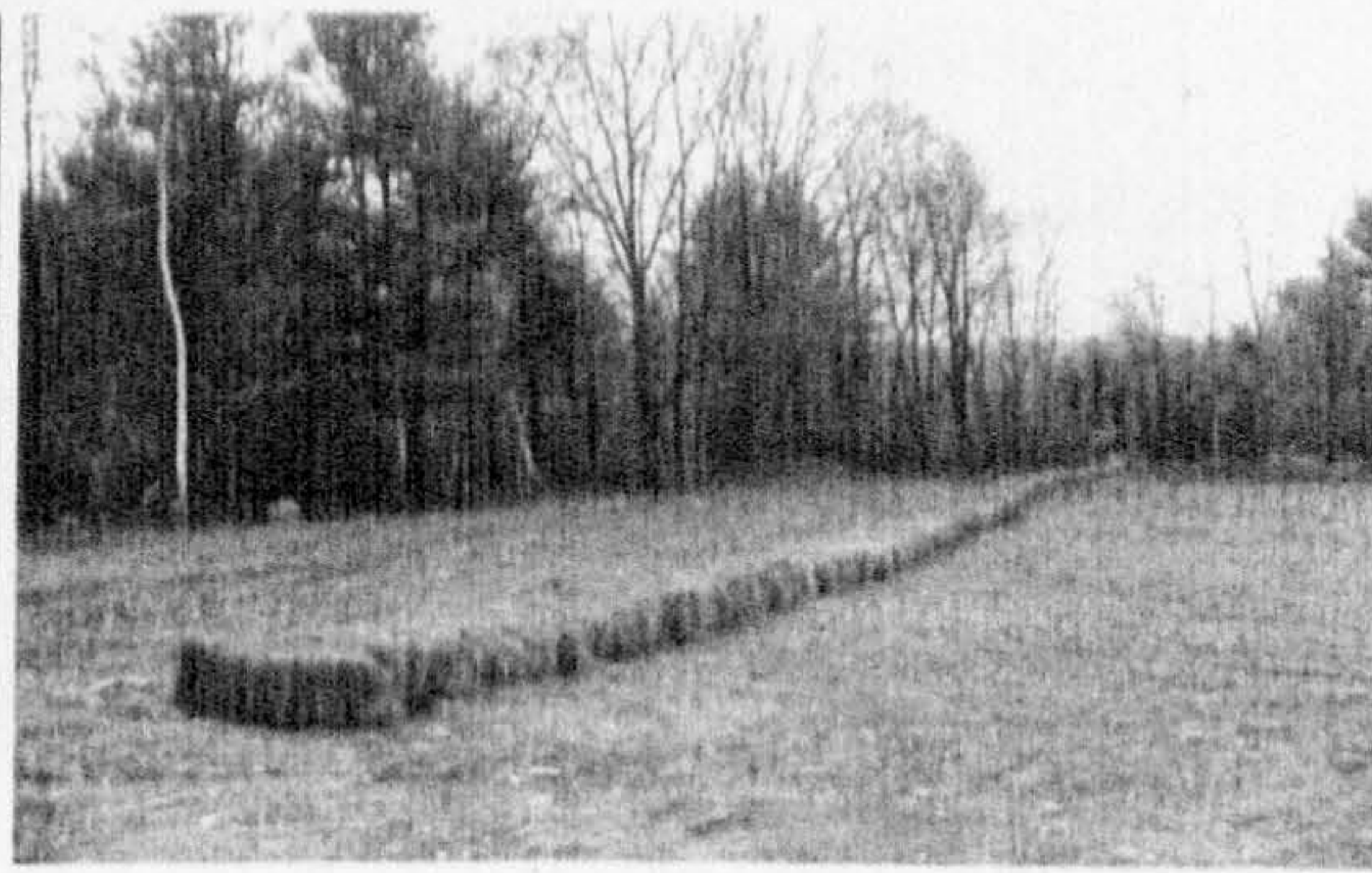
⁴⁴ Carl Andre, transcription of a tape recording of the Windham College Symposium, 30 April 1968, Lucy Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art.

⁴⁵ Robert Barry, in Arthur R. Rose, 'Four Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, Weiner', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 43 (February 1969), pp. 22-23, p. 22.

component of the work. But neither Andre nor Weiner has ever laid any weight on pronouncing his work inseparable and unmovable from the site for which it was conceived – at least in the way the word ‘site-specific’ subsequently came to imply.⁴⁶ In fact, Barry’s definition of his string works is primarily a structural one: without the distinct distances and elevations between the points from which the string is attached, the work would have no defining form. Yet for Andre, ‘place’ was not an attribute or a definition of an art object in entirely the same way that the term ‘site-specific’ was. The word posits the emphasis more on the act of perception: place only exists in the presence of the viewer, and requires a viewer. In this sense, it is not *necessarily* defined by the structural inseparability of the artwork from its location.



Lawrence Weiner, *Staples, Stakes, Twine, Turf* (detail)



Joint

To see Andre’s row of hay-bales from the perspective of place, then, would be to recognise how the slightly uneven contours of the ground (for instance) were reflected in the length of the work. In an interview later that same

⁴⁶ The role the word ‘site-specificity’ has played in subsequent art discourse is well discussed by Miwon Kwon in *One Place after Another: Site-Specific art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2002). Site-specificity is perhaps most intimately associated with Richard Serra, however, who deployed the word to justify the retention of *Tilted Arc* in Federal Plaza in New York, against the aspiration of the government institutions whose offices bordered the site. Douglas Crimp offered a coherent account of Serra’s practice in these terms in an essay in 1986, when the storm over the status of *Tilted Arc* was at its greatest. In fact, in his essay he overtly distinguishes Serra’s site-specific art from Andre’s sculptures. He acknowledged these works are aligned to their environment, but the characteristics of the location are treated too abstractly and generally for Crimp. See ‘Serra’s Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity’ in *Richard Serra: Sculpture*, p. 43. Subsequently a number of commentators have preferred to see Andre’s sculptures as place-related rather than place-specific. See for instance, Michael Newman, ‘Recovering Andre: Remarks Arising from the Symposium’, in *Carl Andre and the Sculptural Imagination*, p. 5. In my account here, I want to suggest that place cannot be understood exclusively in these terms.

year, he explicitly stated that one of the advantages of working with separate units was that they naturally follow the lie of the land.⁴⁷ To a certain extent, the sculpture is rendered compliant, articulated by the physical variables of its environment. Yet this alone does not define the extent to which the work conjugated 'place'. Place is more the process on the part of the viewer of attending to the sculpture and its surroundings as mutually defining. Visitors to the hay-bales might have recognised, for instance, how the work realigned slightly the spatial orientation of that corner of the campus. Rising just a foot from the ground and being three feet wide, the line could easily have been stepped over. In fact, it was less likely to have registered as a barrier than as a slightly elevated path, running across the bare, muddy earth into the woods.

The name of the work was *Joint*: a title that no doubt came laden with colloquial associations for the students.⁴⁸ But the title also referenced the fact that the work formed a line that drew together and connected the trees with the open ground – a point he emphasised at the symposium.⁴⁹ It encouraged walkers to pace out its length. 'Most of my works', he suggested in 1970, 'have been ones that are in a way causeways – that cause you to make your way along them or around them or to move the spectator over them.'⁵⁰ In fact, the hay-bales seem to be there in order to allow a consideration of the shift in viewpoint as a visitor walks from one side to the other. If walked on, they physically come between the viewer and land, mediating and facilitating an impression of the physical surroundings.

Within these terms, we might compare *Joint* to Richard Serra's large expansive outdoor work, *Shift*. Serra installed the sculpture across a very slight depression in fields in Ontario, Canada, between 1970 and 1972. He described

⁴⁷ Carl Andre, *Avalanche*, no. 1 (Fall 1970), pp. 18-27, p. 23. According to Willoughby Sharp, the interview took place in December 1968. See p. 18.

⁴⁸ In a conversation in December 2004, Carl Andre told me that the place in the woods where the bales ended was strewn with bottles and cigarette butts, suggesting it had been used as a spot for 'hanging out' and drinking; hence the name *Joint*. In the recording, the clearly audible laughter of the symposium audience when Andre announces the title also implies that they equated it with the popular term for marijuana. See 'Windham College Symposium', Audio Recording, Lucy Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art.

⁴⁹ Carl Andre, 'Windham College Symposium', Audio Recording.

⁵⁰ Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 57.

the work as establishing a measure: between the viewer and itself, and the viewer and the land.⁵¹ Like *Joint*, it too forms a long line, provoking visitors to walk along its length. It consists of six long rectangular slabs, placed into the sloping ground so that their lower ends protrude five feet from the ground whilst the other end is flush with the hillside. 'These steps relate to a continually shifting horizon', explained Serra, 'elevating, lowering, extending, foreshortening, contracting, compressing, and turning.'⁵² Rosalind Krauss has pointed out how these verbs in Serra's description strongly suggest that the work is not merely conceived as an isolatable object that is distinct from the viewing subject. Instead, the sculpture itself carves out and determines for the roaming viewer what she calls 'a place'.⁵³ We might say the same of Andre's sculpture, for Krauss' account captures well the phenomenological dimension of Andre's understanding of the term.



Richard Serra, *Shift*, 1970-72, King City, Ontario (details)

However, the distinctions between *Shift* and *Joint* are highlighted by contrasting their titles. The word '*Shift*', we might suggest, emphasises the extent to which the work marks gradations of elevation, or the absence of any fixed centre or clear focal point. On the other hand, the title '*Joint*' focused attention more on the sculpture's extremities, pointing to the way the sculpture formed a connecting path between two otherwise separate locations. As for the parameters of Serra's sculpture: these were set by the artist and Joan Jonas walking parallel to one another so that they could just keep themselves in sight, and it was this spot that then became the boundaries of the work.⁵⁴ But the length of Andre's

⁵¹ Richard Serra, 'Shift', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 47, no. 6 (April 1973), reprinted in Richard Serra, *Writings Interviews*, p. 12.

⁵² Richard Serra, 'Shift', p. 13.

⁵³ Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Richard Serra Sculpture', in *Richard Serra Sculpture*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ Richard Serra, 'Shift', p. 12.

Joint was not related to visual sightlines at all. In fact, as Andre revealed in the symposium, the length was determined by factors pertaining primarily to the material availability of resources. *Joint* is 183 bales and 274 feet long, yet originally, he explains, the hay was intended to come out from the wood and go up the gently rising ground until it reached another clump of trees right in the middle of the campus. However, as it was, he did not have enough bales to join the two groups of trees. A third of them had been delivered already broken up and were simply unusable for his purposes – ‘so we didn’t get all the way there.’⁵⁵ Yet no effort was made to locate more bales; instead, the limitation was respected and the artwork became a measure of what had been possible within the particular circumstances. For Andre, respecting these budgetary restrictions was a matter of principle. ‘This may sound crass,’ he suggested to his audience at the symposium, ‘but I think it is rather materialistic in the Marxian sense that you can’t do something that does not exist for you.’ Moreover, if you do not have control of the means of production, he advised, ‘you can’t produce anything, so you have to find the means of production that you can control.’⁵⁶

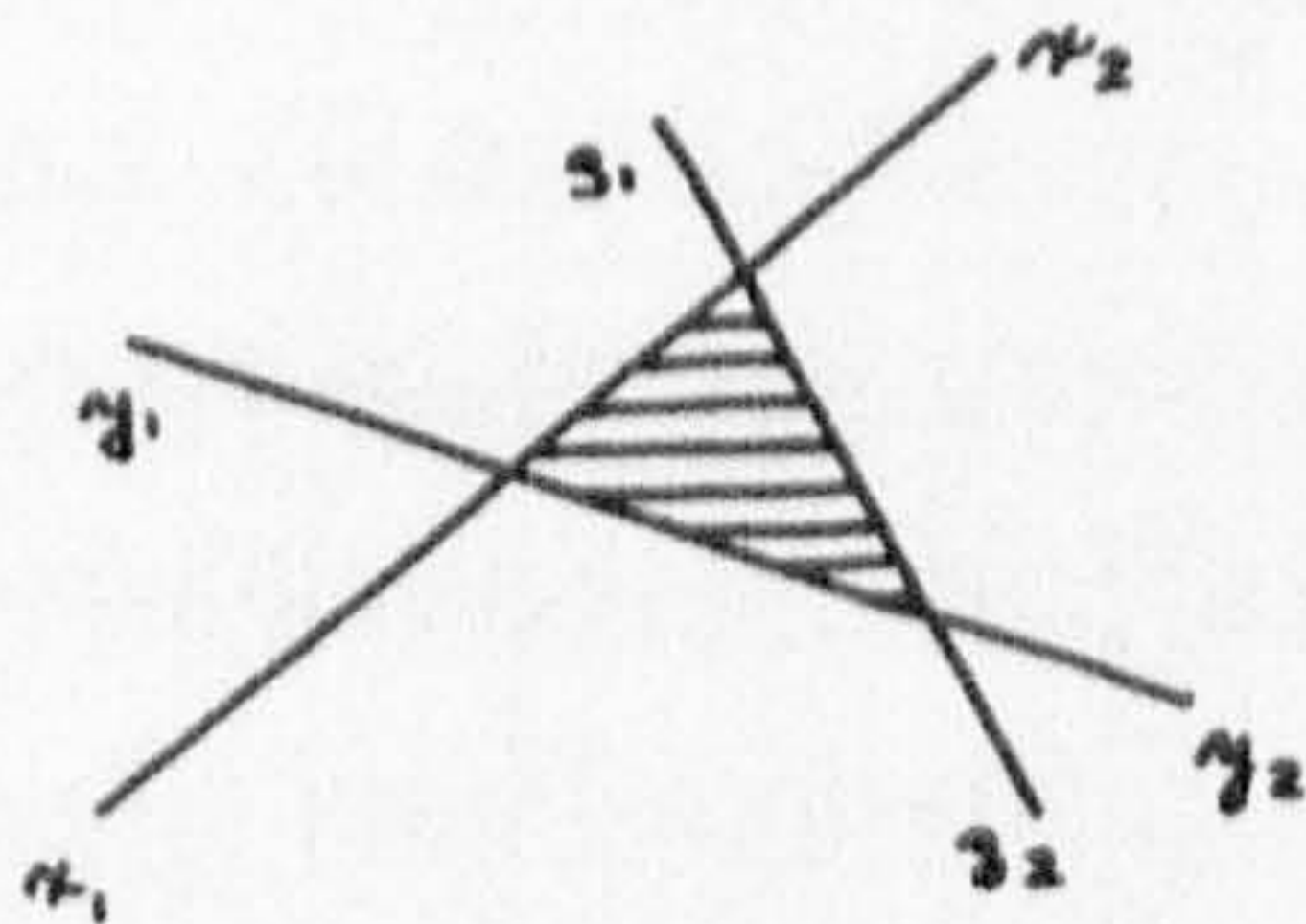
In fact, reflecting on what was realisable within the available circumstances and resources became a major concern for Andre. By July 1968, he began formulating the matter in the following way:

I work with limits. I find limits the most interesting thing of all in making sculpture. I have an imaginary graph, or map upon which there are three vectors or three lines of force which create a point where the three converge. The first vector is my subjective condition, myself, my own history, needs, talents. The second [...] vector is the physical objective condition wherein I work, the kind of location where the sculpture will be and whether it is inside or outside. The economic condition is the third vector, the economics of travelling to the site and the materials [...] On this imaginary map the vectors don’t often intersect: they are usually going in opposite directions. Only rarely it comes into being.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Carl Andre, in ‘Windham College Symposium’, p. 18.

⁵⁶ Carl Andre, in ‘Windham College Symposium’, p. 19.

⁵⁷ Carl Andre, in Dodie Gust, ‘Andre: Artist of Transportation’, *The Aspen Times*, 18 July 1968, p. 3B.

THREE VECTOR MODEL *

v_1, \dots, v_2 = OBJECTIVE VECTOR
 (PROPERTIES OF MATTER)
 u_1, \dots, u_2 = SUBJECTIVE VECTOR
 (CAPABILITIES OF ARTIST)
 s_1, \dots, s_2 = ECONOMIC VECTOR
 (RESOURCES AVAILABLE)
 * CLOSURE INDICATES POSSIBILITY OF ART
 12-8-70 @

Three Vector Model, 1970

Later – from about 1970 onwards – he began to present this schema in the form of a diagram, often including it in group-exhibition catalogues instead of reproductions of his work, which, at the time of printing no doubt remained unbuilt. It was a way of indicating, it seems, that the sculpture had been conceived specifically for the event, and at short notice. But what is striking about the drawing is the way that it presents intentions, causes and effects in such a markedly spatial fashion. The shaded area between the three converging vectors demarcates a clear triangular zone, which is easy to associate with the footprints of many of Andre's sculptures. Moreover, it points attention to the extent to which material and economic limitations give the sculpture its form, so that the artist's personal inclinations become only one of the contributing factors. Consequently, the sculpture as built comes to be presented as the result of a series of possibilities, options and compromises: it becomes a measure of the control the artist had felt he had been able to wield over the resources available.

It seems to me that Andre's emphasis on place is not entirely distinct from his 'Three Vector Diagram'. In fact, we might suggest that to see *Joint* from the perspective of place entails not merely acknowledging a mutually defining relation between artwork and environment, but also includes an awareness of how the work is codetermined by subjective, objective and economic vectors. If we see the work's length and material as determined by those factors that lay

beyond the artist's control, then we might suggest that the sculpture is the locus of a series of mediations between that which causes and that which is effected.

The extent to which Andre's diagram makes an opposition between artistic freedom and practical necessities practically indistinguishable is closest perhaps to the Marxist phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For the French philosopher, causations and effects were never distinct realms. Instead he preferred to speak of 'situations' that provoke us to act. The facts of a situation themselves do not have the physical capacity to force an action, he emphasised, but they do provide us with the motivations to 'take up' that situation.⁵⁸ 'We choose our world and the world chooses us' was his aphorism for capturing this symbiosis between options and circumstances.⁵⁹ A similar sense of reciprocity also seems to inform Andre's account of his sculptures.

Just as the term 'situation' becomes for Merleau-Ponty a medium, or a generative ground, which contains and articulates *both* causes and effects, so too does the word 'place' serve as a means for Andre to acknowledge the generalities and particularities of the work and its surroundings.



Log Piece, Aspen, 1968

Spending the summer of 1968 in Aspen, Andre spoke of his wish to purchase an acre of land, and move around the stones with a pick and shovel, until he 'learned something.' 'I want to work with the material that's on the land,

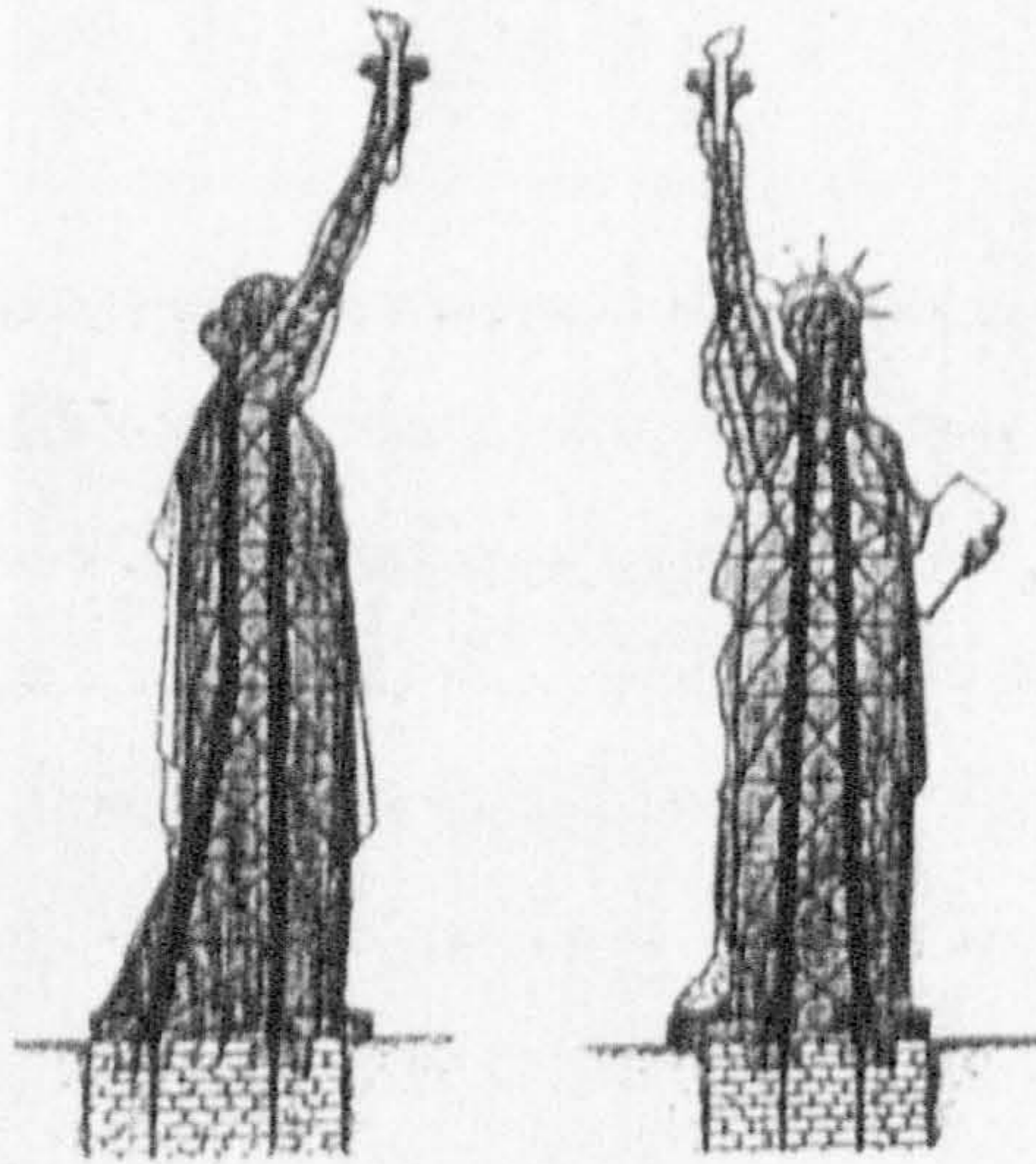
⁵⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (Routledge: London and New York, 2002), p. 527. See also pp. 301-302.

⁵⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 527.

make a work of art out of the acre.'⁶⁰ As with his aspiration to dig earth cavities Bourdon had described two years previously, he never did carry out such a project. But it attests all the same to his emphasis on the necessity to engage *physically* and *practically* with the materials and resources existing in the world. It attests to a commitment towards engagement. Once, Andre was asked whether he thought the concrete limits of a work of art and its placement had a political import for him. Art is a set containing itself and everything else, was his reply. 'Art is political in the same sense that agriculture is political. No reading of *Das Kapital* will make wheat grow in barren sand.'⁶¹

⁶⁰ Dodie Gust, 'Andre: Artist of Transportation', p. 3B.

⁶¹ Carl Andre, in 'Eight Statements (On Matisse)', *Art in America*, vol. 63, no. 4 (July-August 1975), pp. 67-75, p. 71.



New York, Statua della Libertà - Ottomare metallica. 61

Chapter 9
1976:
Copper Pieties

*The copper embodiment of the pieties
Seems hard, but hard like a revolutionary
With indignation, constant as she is.*

*From here you can glimpse her downstream, her far charm,
Liberty, tiny woman in the mist
– You cannot see the torch – raising her arm
Lorn, bold, as if saluting with her fist.*

*Barrow Street Pier, New York
May 1973*

Thom Gunn, 1976¹

The Bicentenary of 1976 was not the celebration of grand possibilities that had been anticipated a decade previously. The scene of US officials scrambling onto helicopters during the panicked evacuation of Saigon just a year earlier was still fresh in the public's memory. Back in the mid 1960s Lyndon Johnson had proudly inaugurated an 'American Revolution Planning Committee' to organise a vast international exposition at Philadelphia, and a Bicentenary that would be remembered for generations. But the plans had been quietly axed by Nixon. Instead, the officially organized events of 1976 were to be much more low-key. There was neither the mood nor the funding for grand Federal initiatives.

But where national investment fell short, the tab was picked up willingly by corporate America. The shops spewed forth patriotic merchandise, and the media celebrated the orgy of bicentenary consumerism as a welcome boost to the ailing economy.² In New York, there was a display of tall ships from the nations of the world, which was watched by crowds lining the shorelines of Lower Manhattan – and by President Ford, who surveyed the spectacle from the decks of an aircraft carrier

¹ Thom Gunn, 'Iron Landscapes (and the Statue of Liberty)', from *Jack Straw's Castle* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), p. 15.

² Christopher Capozzola claims that 250 companies contributed \$38.9 million in support of official programs. See "'It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country": Celebrating the Bicentennial in the Age of Limits', in *America in the Seventies*, ed. by Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), p. 33.

moored offshore. In fact, it has been suggested it was for good reason he did not venture into the streets of Manhattan. His refusal only a year earlier to alleviate the fiscal cuts that all but bankrupted the city had done little to bolster his esteem in the eyes of New Yorkers.³

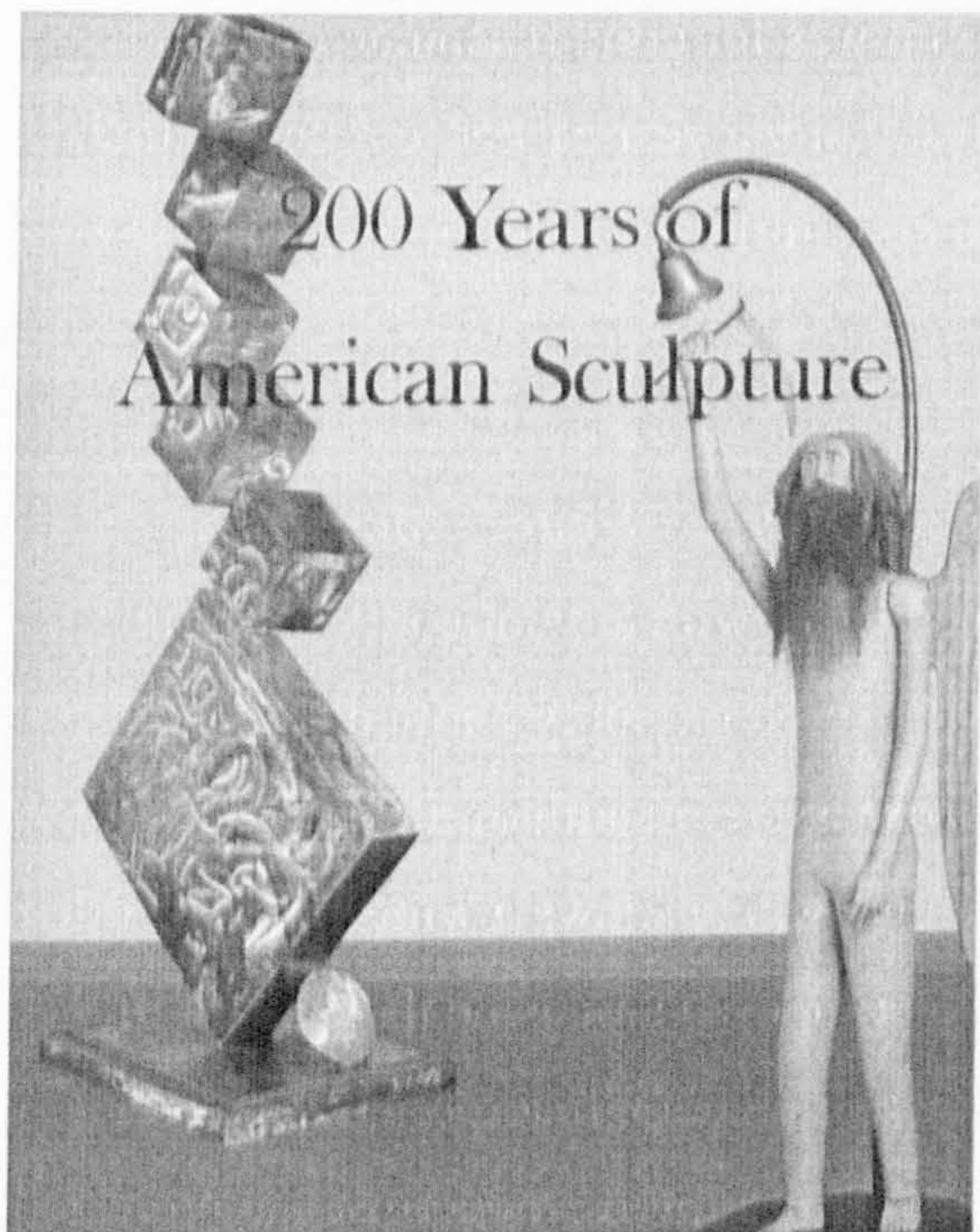
Of New York's major public art galleries, only the Whitney Museum of American Art chose to commemorate the bicentenary with anything attempting a vestige of monumentality. It opted to install an exhibition nobly entitled 'Two Hundred Years of American Sculpture'.⁴ The excessive breadth of the show is indicated by the cover of the exhibition catalogue, which shows a winged and bearded Father Time from the Museum of Folk Art superimposed alongside the David Smith's angular *Cubi I*.⁵ The juxtaposition does neither any favours. Incorporating aboriginal art, folk art, nationalist statuary, nineteenth-century sculpture, modernist sculpture and contemporary art, the exhibition was intended to be the most comprehensive attempt to date to survey the sculpture that had been produced within the nation's borders. In fact, the catalogue contains no less than seven specially commissioned essays. The final contribution is by Marcia Tucker, who brings the historical survey into the present with a summation of the preoccupations of the most recent three-dimensional art. She combines quotations from Christian Norbert-Schulz, Gaston Bachelard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Piaget and Carl Andre to conjure up a heady image of contemporary sculpture as primarily concerned with 'places', 'paths' and 'domains'.⁶ In fact, Andre performs a relatively important role in her narrative. His *Twelfth Copper Corner* had been produced specifically for the exhibition, and a full-page photograph of this sculpture serves as the essay's frontispiece.

³ Christopher Capozzola, "'It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country": Celebrating the Bicentennial in the Age of Limits', p. 40.

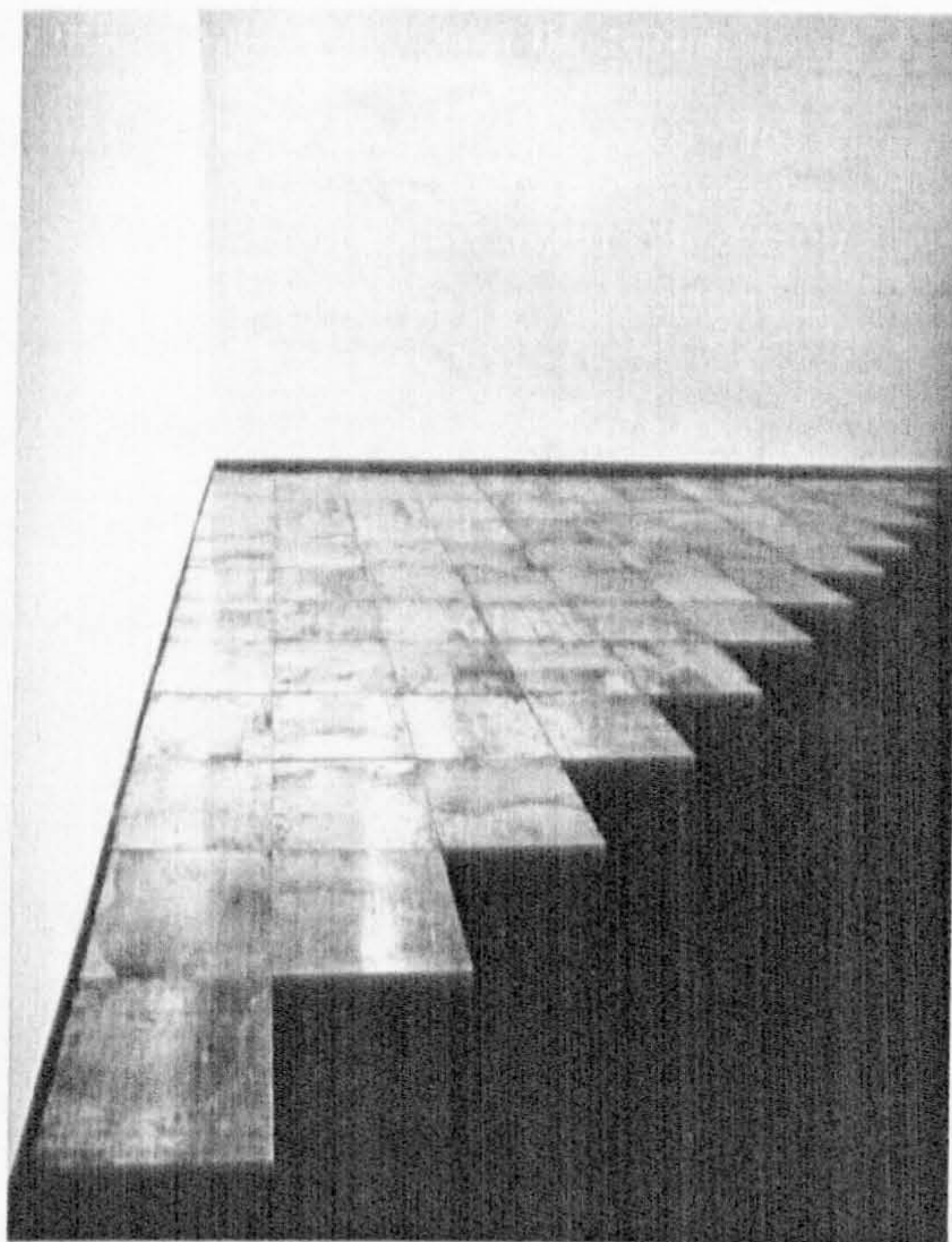
⁴ '200 Years of American Sculpture', Whitney Museum of American Art, 16 March - 26 September 1976.

⁵ *200 Years of American Sculpture*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. by Tom Armstrong, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1976.

⁶ Marcia Tucker, 'Shared Space: Contemporary Sculpture and the Environment', in *200 Years of American Sculpture*. See in particular p. 232.



200 Years of American Sculpture,
exhibition catalogue



Twelfth Copper Corner, 1975, installation at
The Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York

As with many of Andre's sculptures from the 1970s, *Twelfth Copper Corner* is a floor-based arrangement of metal plates that takes its orientation from the walls of the gallery.⁷ For around the previous two to three years, Andre had been using similar sized copper sheets to compose works that mostly tended to follow ongoing numerical series. A work with an equivalent formation but with fewer units had been included, for instance, in his exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern in April 1975,⁸ whilst the plates for his *Twelfth Copper Corner* had been shipped over from Italy, where he had also recently exhibited similar floor-based copper sculptures.⁹ In this work, the fifty centimetre square plates are arranged in a triangular format so that the two right angles sit flush against the base of the walls, whilst the hypotenuse forms a zigzag outline that runs out across the gallery. In the installation photograph, *Twelfth Copper Corner* seems to hover mirage-like above the Whitney's dark carpet, whilst the plates' highly reflective surfaces are refracting light up the empty expanse of the walls. In many ways, it is an awkward and unstable work. Any consoling impression of the

⁷ For a consideration of the implications of Andre's use of the wall in the arrangement of his sculptures in the 1970s, see Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe's review of Andre's exhibition at John Weber Gallery in *Artforum*, vol. 12, no. 10 (June 1974), p. 68.

⁸ Carl Andre, Kunsthalle Bern, 23 April - 8 June 1976.

⁹ See Carl Andre in Sandy Ballatore, 'Carl Andre on Work and Politics', p. 20. Andre exhibited six sculptures at Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone in Rome, from 20 September - 18 October 1976.

copper's physical substantiality seems undermined not only by its shimmering surface but also by its arrangement. The plates feel reliant both on the ground plane and on the blankness of the walls for their orientation, and consequently do not seem to offer a confirming sense of either. In fact, it is maybe only the work's sizeable dimensions which serve to offset an impression of the sculpture's complete weightlessness.

Twelfth Copper Corner had been installed for this photograph many months before the exhibition opened, and Andre had especially singled out this corner on the northwest side of the museum because the space was appropriately neutral and the floor sufficiently flat for the full effectiveness of the copper's lustrous surface to become fully apparent. Only then could it be said to establish the equivocal interplay between itself and its environment of the kind he wanted.

But behind the institutional walls of the Whitney, not all was well. A major row was raging. When Andre paid a visit to the museum in March to see the work two days before the opening of '200 Years of American Sculpture', he was astounded to find that *Twelfth Copper Corner* had been installed not where he had arranged for it to be, months earlier, but in an opposing corner, against walls that were cluttered by one of the gallery's distinctively angular windows and a fire escape. Here, the glowing red sign above the exit cast a distracting reflection onto its surface.¹⁰ In fact, Andre deemed the space to be wholly inappropriate and immediately demanded that the work be moved. Failing that, he asked to withdraw it altogether – which is what the museum eventually did.

However, rather than speak with Andre in person, the Whitney curators merely arranged for another of his sculptures they had recently purchased, *29th Copper Cardinal*, to replace it. By 1976, Andre was a major name, and since he figured centrally in the catalogue, no doubt the Whitney felt that at least one representative work by him was necessary. For them, *29th Copper Cardinal* would do fine. It was less sizeable, although considerably longer, and it consisted of the same dimensions of copper plates as those used in *Twelfth Copper Corner*. In this sculpture, the twenty-nine units are oriented in a single line fourteen and a half meters in length.

¹⁰ See Rosalind Krauss, 'Las Vegas Comes to the Whitney', *Partisan Review*, vol. 43, no. 3 (1976), pp. 467-471, p. 468.

But again, however, Andre found their presentation wholly unacceptable, for in order to counteract the unevenness of the floor's surface, the curators had installed it on a rubber mat. For him of course, this contravened the entire principle that his materials be placed directly on the ground, and once more Andre insisted on his sculpture's removal from the exhibition. Yet as the Whitney had already purchased this piece, the request was not granted. It was, after all, now their property. Consequently, he took the draconian measure of writing to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and asking to buy the work back.¹¹ The sums were not paltry either: the work was reported to have been purchased for twenty-three thousand dollars, and unnervingly Andre offered for it twenty-six.¹² But the Whitney never even responded to his request. In fact, he was unable to do anything except make a public declaration that, in his eyes, the sculpture was no longer a work of his. And to prove this, he remade *29th Copper Cardinal* according to precisely the same dimensions and materials, and claimed *this* now to be the true work. He then declared the one owned by the Whitney to be a 'corpse', and wrote to the museum again, offering them now merely the scrap metal price for the copper.¹³ Then, in a Courbet-like gesture, he arranged a counter-exhibition, displaying the newly requisitioned *29th Copper Cardinal* as 'liberated from property bondage' and *Twelfth Copper Corner* as 'rescued from mutilation'.¹⁴

The space in which Andre chose to stage this restitution was hardly an elegant one. It was a vacant storage lot on West Broadway, south of Broome. According to David Bourdon, who faithfully recounted the whole saga from Andre's perspective for the *Village Voice*, the walls were a 'bilious green' and the strip lighting was far from sympathetic.¹⁵ The installation photograph shows the six metres of plates of the straight sides of *Twelfth Copper Corner* crammed in at the far end of a long, elongated room, with *29th Copper Cardinal* occupying the remainder of the floor-space. The walls are not exactly empty of cluttering details either. In fact, there seems to be a doorway in the middle of one, just as there had been in the 'mutilating'

¹¹ Carl Andre, in Sandy Ballatore, 'Carl Andre on Work and Politics', p. 20.

¹² David Bourdon, 'Carl Andre Protests Museological Mutilation', *Village Voice*, 31 May 1976, p. 117.

¹³ Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge: MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 27.

¹⁴ See the exhibition announcement card for 'Two Works' (reproduced below). The exhibition was organised by Rosemarie Castoro, and ran from 1 May - 1 July 1976. See Carl Andre in Sandy Ballatore, 'Carl Andre on Work and Politics', p. 20.

¹⁵ David Bourdon, 'Carl Andre Protests Museological 'Mutilation'', p. 117. See also Thomas B. Hess' review, 'Carl Andre has the Floor', *New York Magazine*, 6 June 1976, p. 70

installation at the Whitney. But this was not an exhibition intended to demonstrate what the ideal viewing conditions for his sculptures should resemble. Here, the 1 May opening date and the handwritten announcement card made the point clearly enough. Andre's stance was to be seen as a matter of an artist's right to determine the way his work was displayed, and, if necessary, to expropriate it.

FREE THEORY: A WORK OF ART IS A WEAPON OF THE VISION OF THE ARTIST WHO CREATED IT.

SLAVE THEORY: A WORK OF ART IS A TOOL OF THE VISIONS OF BUYERS & SELLERS.

FREE PRACTISE: WORKS OF ART INSTALLED TO REVEAL THEIR USE AS IMPLEMENTS OF SEPARATE & DISTINCT VISIONS OF ARTISTS.

SLAVE PRACTISE: WORKS OF ART INSTALLED AS TROPHIES OF ACQUISITION ENSLAVED TO A VISION OF SALES.

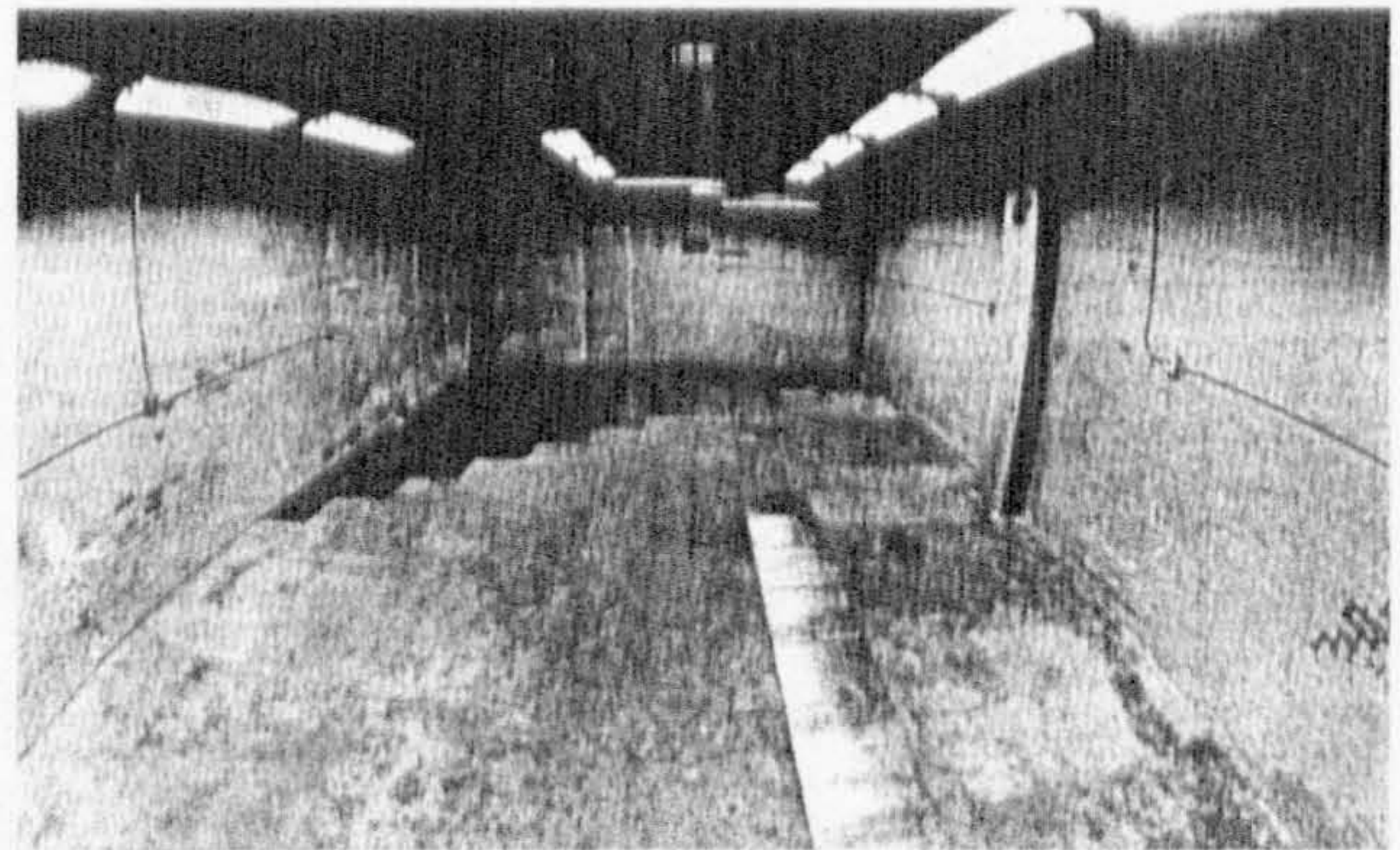
TWELFTH COPPER CORNER

RESCUED FROM MUTILATION AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

29TH COPPER CARDINAL

LIBERATED FROM PROPERTY BONDAGE AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART'S "200 YEARS OF AMERICAN SCULPTURE"

CARL ANDRE - TWO WORKS
355 WEST BROADWAY (SO. OF BROOME)
OPENING MAY DAY 1MAY76-1JUL76
212-675-8894 © carl andre



Exhibition announcement card for 'Two Works', May 1976

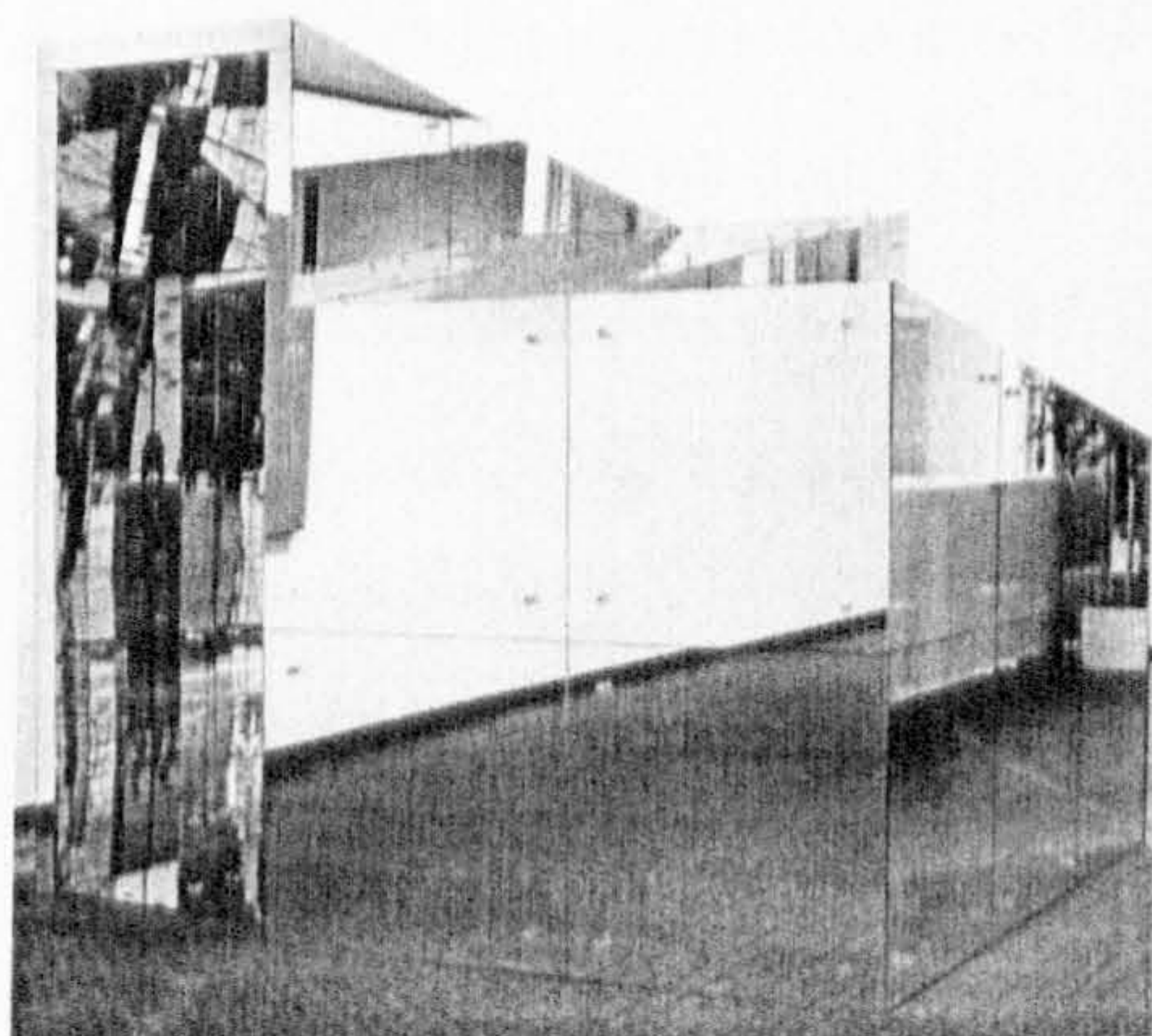
Twelfth Copper Corner and 29th Copper Cardinal, installation at 355 West Broadway, May 1976

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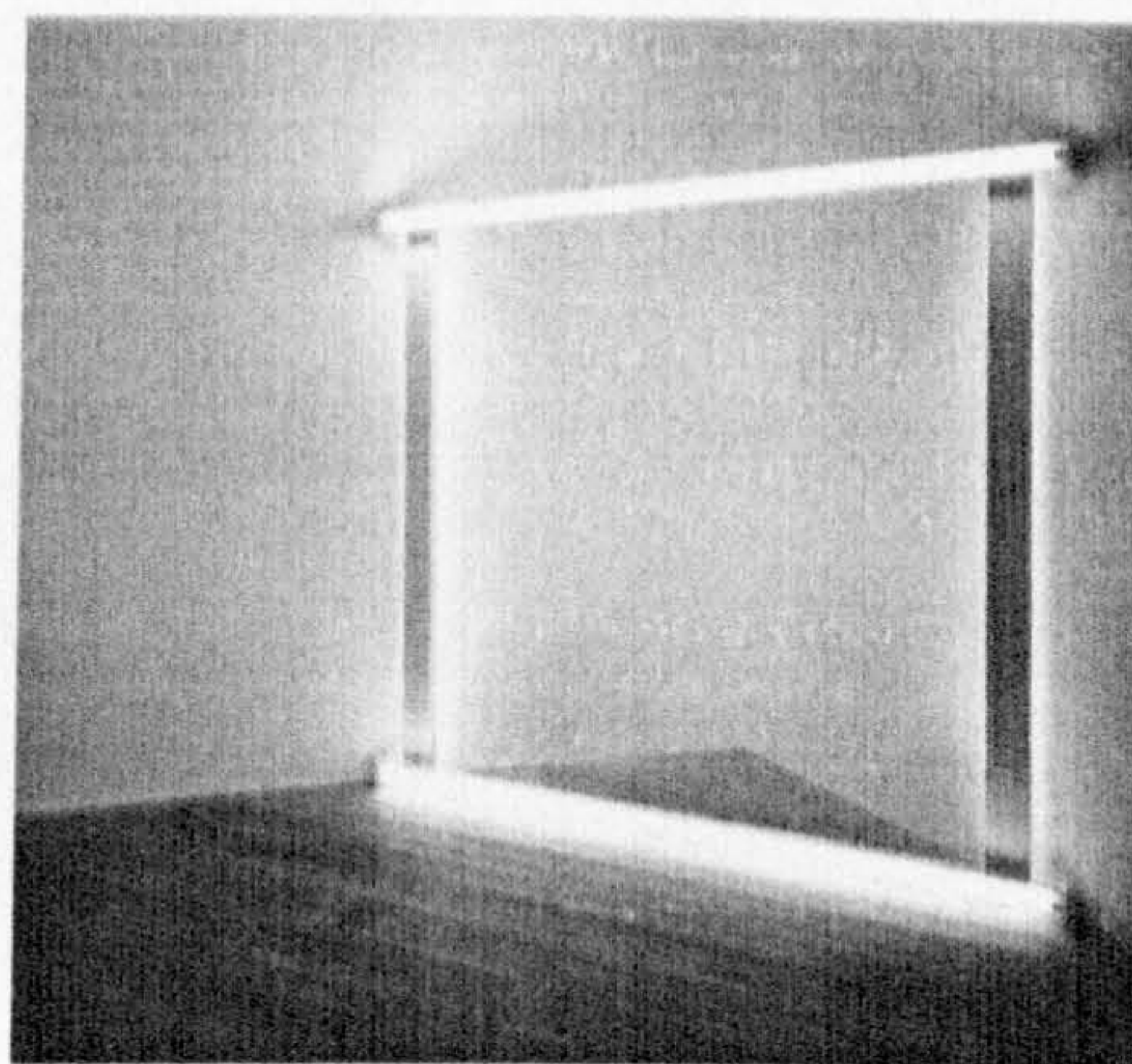
As it happens, Andre was not the only sculptor to have been outraged by the insensitive installation of his work in '200 Years of American Sculpture'.¹⁶ The previous day Dan Flavin had paid a visit to the Whitney to see his work, and his reaction had been essentially the same. He too had contributed a piece that required a corner installation. *Untitled: (to the "innovator" of Wheeling Peachblow)* is six fluorescent tubes attached to an eight-foot square frame, which, once installed, bathes the surrounding walls, floor and ceiling in a lush yellow and pink light. But although his work was not yet in place, he immediately realised that the impact of his sculpture

¹⁶ Robert Morris also withdrew his sculpture from the exhibition. According to the *New York Times*, Morris had originally proposed for an 800-pound work to be suspended from the ceiling, but the Whitney architects had advised against it. Instead, the Whitney installed one of his felt sculptures, but Morris complained that the work had been torn. See '2 Sculptors Seek to Withdraw Work from Whitney Show', *New York Times*, 31 March 1976, p. 43. See also Carl R. Baldwin, 'Whitney Flap: More on Artists' "Moral Rights"', *Art in America*, vol. 64, no. 5 (September-October 1976), pp. 10-11.

would be caricatured by a large installation by Lucas Samaras in its immediate proximity, which was entirely covered in mirrors. Flavin thought he saw what the designers of the exhibition were up to: they wanted to produce from Samaras' work and his sculpture a synthesis of their own making, namely 'a little miniature of the Las Vegas Strip.'¹⁷



Lucas Samaras, *Corridor*, 1968



Dan Flavin, *Untitled: (to the "innovator" of Wheeling Peachblow)*

Rosalind Krauss, who had happened to overhear Flavin's protestations, later wrote in *Partisan Review* that Flavin's verdict was probably about right. As she explained, the directors of the Whitney had commissioned the Philadelphia-based architects Venturi and Rausch to install '200 Years of American Sculpture' – a team who had established their reputation with the publication several years earlier of a volume entitled *Learning from Las Vegas*.¹⁸ It was they who had been given free reign to arrange the exhibits according to their own tastes, and in Krauss' opinion, 'the lessons of Las Vegas were everywhere'.¹⁹ Quoting from Venturi's writings, she draws out the parallels between his celebration of the intentionally disorienting casino architecture of Las Vegas and the way he had arranged the exhibition in the Whitney Museum galleries. 'Works of art were reduced to 'univalent signs that flash at one another', she reports. 'The lighting, the placement, the mutual interference, all became part of an atmosphere of distraction, a décor through which one moved as if in a

¹⁷ Dan Flavin, cited in Rosalind Krauss, 'Las Vegas comes to the Whitney', p. 467.

¹⁸ Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1972).

¹⁹ Rosalind Krauss, 'Las Vegas comes to the Whitney', p. 467.

trance.’²⁰ In fact, for her the entire installation had been premised on nothing more substantial than Venturi’s unbridled enthusiasm for the fetishism of the commercial logo.²¹



Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas, tourist brochure, 1968, reproduced in *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972

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The Whitney's exhibition '200 Years of American Sculpture' serves as an occasion for us to reflect again on the extent to which Andre dissented from an image world saturated with the aura of consumer goods. In a written statement published in the art journal *October*, he wrote:

It is the sorrow and pity of America that historical consciousness either died here or was left off the cargo manifest of the bottoms that breasted this New Found Land. Perhaps that is why Liberty stands with her back to us holding up her futile light against the oilspilled seas of oblivion. Without a sense of history we cannot begin to imagine who we are.²²

Since these words were written in May, the spectacle of the Bicentenary celebrations might be taken to be perhaps the immediate catalyst for this impatience and resentment. His argument is that a culture premised on a commodity economy drains away the possibility of there being any real historical memory. Historians of capitalism have also emphasised this point: that because commodities acquire their

²⁰ Rosalind Krauss, 'Las Vegas Comes to the Whitney', p. 470.

²¹ Rosalind Krauss, 'Las Vegas Comes to the Whitney', pp. 468 and 470.

²² Carl Andre in Carl Andre and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Commodity and Contradiction, or, Contradiction as Commodity', *October 2* (Summer 1976), pp. 100-104, p. 104.

value without any reference to the process by which they came into existence, it is invariable they breed a culture of forgetting.²³ For Andre, to advance a real historical consciousness would be to foment a consciousness of class. As it is, however, instead 'of revolution emerging in the culture of history, we have spectacle mired in the narcotizing ooze of publicity.'²⁴

Andre's stance towards the Whitney may have been hyperbolic, yet the extremism is perhaps best understood as a display of frustration at the ineffectuality of artists to influence even the way their own art is understood. Even at the level of their own creations, forgetting becomes the order of the day. Indeed, ultimately, the position of the artist in society was no different from that of a factory worker in Detroit, Andre suggested to Bourdon. 'The assembly-line worker has no equity in any part of his production. Once he receives his wage packet at the end of the week, he's completely severed from his production. He can't say what's done with it, and he gets no profit or benefit from it. In a similar way, the artist, by receiving money, is severed from any connection to the true vision or destiny of his work.'²⁵ As in Marx, Andre singles out the intervention of exchange-value as the cause of the severance of the worker from their product. In his *October* text, the terms are even stronger. The living fire of the worker's labour, he writes, is stolen by Promethean capital, pocketed by the capitalist who walks away in 'full ownership of all that has been produced materially'.²⁶ Andre's vehement assertion of his rights as an artist-worker to present

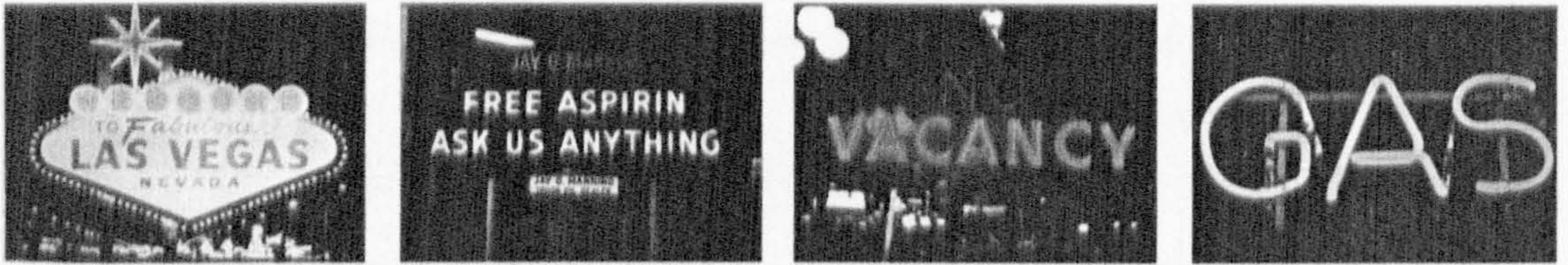
²³ See Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 12-13. Terdiman takes his terms in his account from Lukàcs theorisation of reification.

²⁴ Carl Andre in Carl Andre and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Commodity and Contradiction, or, Contradiction as Commodity', p. 104

²⁵ Carl Andre, in David Bourdon, 'Carl Andre Protests Museological Mutilation', p. 117.

²⁶ Carl Andre, in Carl Andre and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Commodity and Contradiction, or, Contradiction as Commodity', p. 103. Andre's account here is closely informed by Marx's description of 'The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power'. The point is that the contract between those who sell their labour as a thing, as a commodity, and those who own the means of production has only the semblance of egalitarianism. But in essence, the position of the two parties to the contract could not be more unequal: 'He, who before was the money owner, now strides in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his labourer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business, the other, timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but – a hiding.' See Karl Marx, *Capital*, 3 vols, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), I, p. 155. However, it should be noted that although Andre's account draws its strength from this description, the situation does not exactly fit the artist, who never works for an hourly wage or sells their labour. This is an important distinction, and one that Jacques Rancière has wanted to stress. See his *The Philosopher and His Poor* [1983], trans. John Drury, Corinne Oster and Andrew Parker (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004),

his art on his own terms should be understood as his compromised means of redressing this sense of alienation.



1960s Las Vegas neon signs, reproduced in *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972

Of course, Andre's insistence on his moral authority to determine the way in which his art is displayed always has to remain a compromised position. Moreover, Andre's belligerency towards the Whitney Museum might be said to be a reaction to his awareness of a much deeper and irresolvable contradiction. In order to survive practically as an artist, he has to market his works as commodities, yet in terms of their physical nature, the sculptures are intended to thoroughly reorder and resist the logic of the commodity form.

Indeed, the mark of that refusal is Andre's exertion to produce an art that is not identifiable with sign systems *per se*:

You may say you wish to stop the traffic on a road. You can put up a 'STOP' sign, or a red light, or you can put a landmine there. I think the first form is a sign, but the second is not. It is a phenomenon. Works of art are fundamentally in the class of landmines rather than signs.²⁷

There is no symbolic content to my work. It is not like a chemical formula but like a chemical reaction. A good work of art, once it is offered in display and shown to other people, is a social fact.²⁸

As Andre made perfectly clear to Peter Fuller in 1978, he was well aware that it is impossible to make works of art that have no measure of signification whatsoever.²⁹ Invariably they connote. But when he exclaimed to Jeanne Siegel in 1970 that matter

pp. 105-124. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe also points this out in his exchange with Andre in *October 2*. 'No one buys an artist's labour', he writes, 'they buy instead an object which provides provocation or satisfaction of a kind they choose to subsidize and encourage.' But to this suggestion, Andre adds a quote from Robert Barry: 'The collector buys this object, but he pays for the next one.' See Carl Andre and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Commodity and Contradiction, or, Contradiction as Commodity', p. 100.

²⁷ Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 128.

²⁸ Dodie Gust, 'Andre: Artist of Transportation', p. 3B.

²⁹ Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 128.

as matter 'rather than matter as symbol' is a consciously Marxist position, he did so out of an awareness that it is capital that forces artefacts to be seen not for what they are, but as symbolically equivalent to other things.³⁰ Not one of our senses, writes Fredrick Jameson in a gloss on the first chapters of Marx's *Capital*, informs us that a coat resembles twenty yards of linen. But when both become commodities, then this is precisely the equivalence that can be made. It is money, the universal symbolic form, that enables the unlike to be deemed the same.³¹ For Marx, ascribing exchange values to entities renders their sensuous qualities irrelevant; things become esteemed not for what they are but for what they 'stand for'. Thus, in his famous example, a dealer in minerals sees only the commercial value, rather than the 'beauty or their particular characteristics'. He has, Marx writes, 'no mineralogical sense'.³² In his art, Andre always seems to have wanted to return viewers' attention to the physical and 'mineralogical' properties of his sculpture for just this reason: 'I want wood as wood and steel as steel, aluminum as aluminum, a bale of hay as a bale of hay.'³³

However, there is a considerable irony in claiming that Andre's sculptures stand for what they are, and that they amount to a wholesale refusal to exist in place of another value or thing. This is for the simple reason that the materials to which he turns for his sculptures are always themselves mass-produced commodities. The very reason he is able to remake *29th Copper Cardinal* for his own exhibition on West Broadway so effortlessly is because the copper plates were so readily replaceable. There was never anything unique about the materials or the arrangement in the first place. The only thing that preserved its singularity was the fact it was contractually exchanged with the Whitney not as a designate quantity of raw material, but as a work of art. Its uniqueness is legitimated solely by the authority of the artist's word. Indeed, when he publicly performed his withdrawal of his authorship of the sculpture owned by the Whitney by replacing it with a precise replica, he was only essentially perpetuating the logic on which his practice is founded. His mature art is predicated, we might say, on presenting materials within the context of art that are replaceable with identical materials from outside the realm of art. Back in February, the British

³⁰ Jeanne Siegel, 'Carl Andre: Artworker', p. 178.

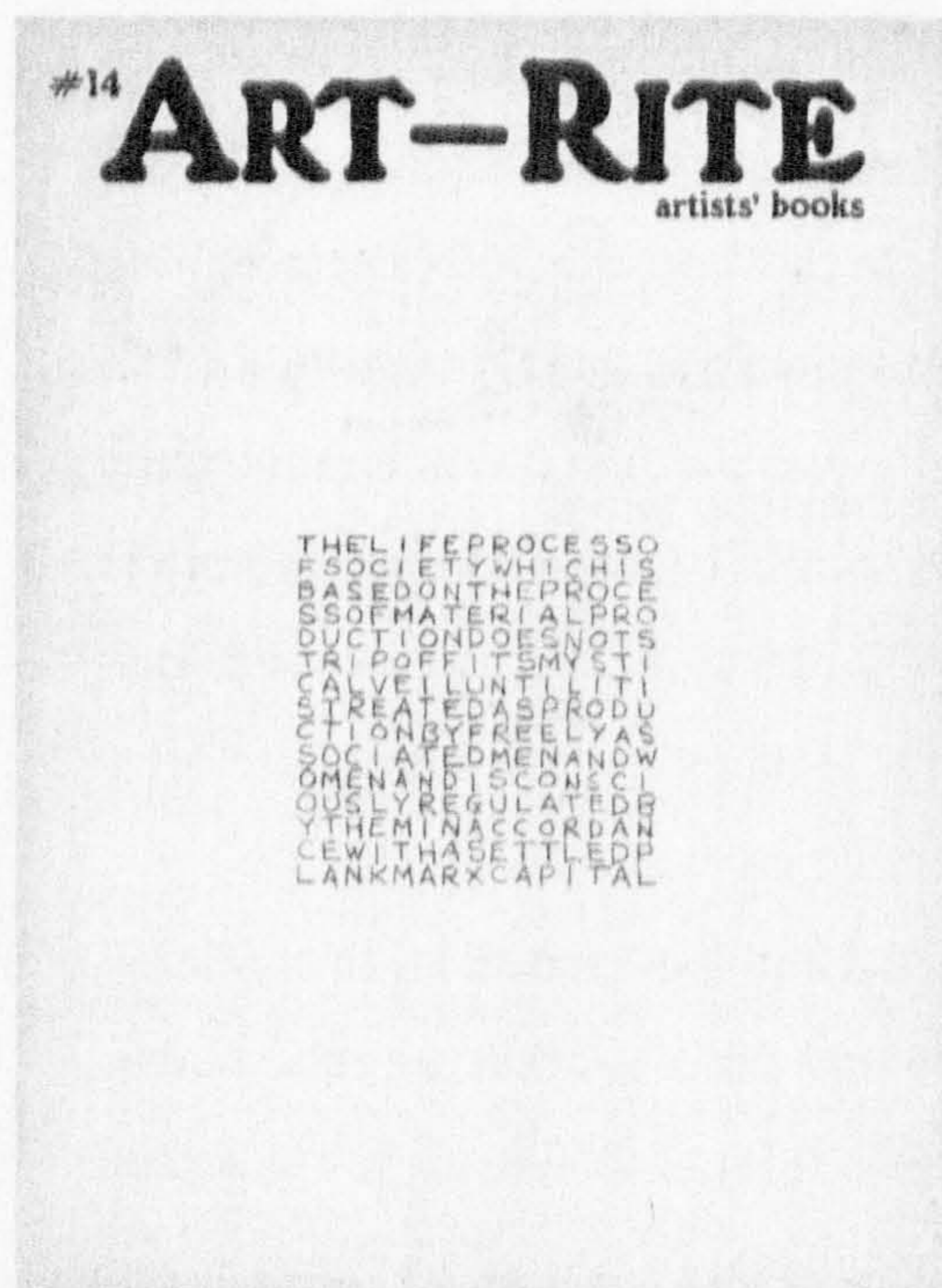
³¹ Fredrick Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic*, pp. 148-149.

³² Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, p. 134.

³³ Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', p. 57.

public had been provoked by *Equivalent VIII* to equate the sand-lime bricks from which it was composed with all the other kind of bricks with which they were familiar. In New York, that sense of equivalence was forced just one step further. In fact, had a gallery-goer been prepared to make the journey across Manhattan, they could have seen the two identical lengths of copper plates in one afternoon. Yet, from Andre's perspective, only one was a work of his. In all his art, and by fiat if necessary, that which appears to be physically equivalent to other things is to be treated as though it were a unique and irreplaceable object. The insertion of physically equivalent forms into the realm of art becomes a means, then, of blocking and curtailing a more general sense of the equivalence of all things.

Andre's exertion to reorder the logic of the commodity exchange might be regarded as a utopian gesture: an attempt to impose an ideal in his art that in society has not been forthcoming. Indeed, the December 1976 issue of the small New York-based magazine *Art-Rite* carried on its cover a text-based work by Andre, which seems to imply as much.³⁴ It is a quotation from the section on the fetishism of commodities in Marx's *Capital*.



Cover of *Art-Rite*, December 1976

³⁴ Carl Andre, Cover, *Art-Rite* 14 (Winter 1976-77).

At first glance, it seems to resemble only a solid square of jumbled letters in the centre of the page. But once we have established the direction in which to read, the sense begins to become accessible. Nonetheless, the effect of reducing the ease of reading reveals and returns the reader to the elements of the alphabet within the words themselves. The act of reading for the sense of the sentence is also tempered, we might suggest, by our awareness that the fifteen lines are each fifteen letters long, resulting in an organisation where particle and whole relate to one another with a certain algebraic clarity. No letter can be added or subtracted without destroying the coherence of the whole.

We might infer from this that Marx's sentence has been arranged to inhabit the new distributive order to which it refers. As we read, we are forced to concentrate on how words themselves are produced – in a way that sets up analogies with the material production of which the text speaks. Andre has chosen to quote from one of those few moments in *Capital* where Marx turns his attention from his critique of the categories of bourgeois economy, and intimates how a society might be structured under a different order.³⁵ In a communistic society, he is implying, a planned economy would require the direct a priori allocation of labour and resources through deliberate decisions conducted in the collective interest.³⁶ Here, we are given an indication that perhaps Andre's investment in a clear and rigidly formal structure is an attempt to establish a correlative to the ideal of the distribution of goods within an egalitarian society. He gives form, within the parameters of his art, to a principle that society itself has been unable to deliver. The inalterable order, the uniformity, the symmetry: these serve as compensations for the inequality and chronic imbalance that characterise life in 'the world of commodities'.³⁷

However, it strikes me as deeply significant here that Andre's idealising gesture begins to look much more like an act of forcing and freezing, rather than a

³⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital*, p. 51. The key phrase in the original is "...sobald sie als Produkt frei vergesellschafteter Menschen unter deren Bewusstsein planmässiger Kontrolle steht."

³⁶ See Ernest Mandel, 'In Defence of Socialist Planning', *New Left Review*, no. 159, (September - October 1986), pp. 5-38, p. 7 and Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 192.

³⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital*, p. 43.

form of emancipation.³⁸ Andre's rudimentary technique of breaking his materials down and piecing them back together does not entirely instil confidence or a sense of assurance. In fact, it is almost as though the very exertion to refashion a system of equivalence and relation ends up only reiterating the flattening, the levelling out of values that accompanies all rationalisation and commodification.

If there is any reason needed for continuing to attend to Andre's art, then I think it should be for this. He gives us a perspective on the logic of commodity exchange, and offers us a glimpse of its atavistic emptiness. 'The Seventies lie under the crossroads', he writes of 1976, 'like a vampire waiting for us in our innocence to pluck the stake from out of its heart and return the silver bullet to the masked man.'³⁹ The Sixties have passed; but the Seventies ... the Seventies are with us still.

³⁸ The words 'forcing' and 'freezing' are T. J. Clark's. See his 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review* 2 (March-April 2000), pp. 85-96, p. 91.

³⁹ Carl Andre in Carl Andre and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Commodity and Contradiction, or, Contradiction as Commodity', p. 104.

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