MYSELF AND MY ART

THOUGHTS AND INSIGHTS

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A Thesis

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by

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To Barbara, without whom none of this would have been possible.
INTRODUCTION...AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

This short, autobiographical statement is designed to acquaint the reader with my background and give some insight into the person that I am today and the reasons I do some of the things that I do. I've titled this thesis, "Myself and My Art" as the two seem to be inter-connected, never to be parted, and so seemed appropriate. My research here has been more about me than about any external concerns, and so I will be attempting to express those feelings I have developed about art over the years, in this writing, and the succeeding pages. This introduction, then, is a way of clarifying some of my positions, desires, and directions, and is not designed to be an extensive dissertation, merely a little soul map to prepare the way for those who have decided to peruse these pages. To you, (undoubtedly a questing graduate student) I dedicate this introduction.

As a toddler, I had strange tastes in toys. I was, and am, fascinated with shiny, smooth pieces of metal, and consequently, with tools. One of my favorite toys was a wood chisel with a sharp blade, and an amber plastic handle which I carried around with me. I also had a pet hatchet, and a beautiful old brass plumber's blowtorch. My father was a mechanic, and a handy guy, so there were always tools around, and I was never restricted
from playing with them. From these beginnings, I developed an interest in fine machines, the products of our industrial age, large and small, the basic fascination I have indulged in many ways, for all of my life. Some of the more important stages in my mechanical inclinations were electric trains, which occupied my time until I was five or six, firearms, of which I was issued my first toy ones early on. Guns were my first real, long term, mechanical obsession; I was locked into them from my early life until I was twenty. What I didn't possess, I desired, and what I did possess, I shot off regularly. I was then and still am, although not actively, intrigued by the actions and reactions of firearms. Also relating to my interest in projectile weapons, is/ was an expanding collection of knives, tools which have more practical application than guns. I dropped interest in the firearms, strangely enough, while I was in the Army. While serving my rich uncle, I developed a yen for Japanese cameras, and my interest in photography is still undiminished, merely postponed until I can develop it further. Cameras are machines which I equate with guns, but which are much more useful. The similarities in construction are minor, both are the end products of a technical culture, and there are some superficial physical details which are similar. The real similarity comes in the description of the processes involved. To load, aim, shoot, gunstock, are all terms which are shared by marksmen and photographers, and I think that the conceptualization of each process is not too different. Anyway I've digressed, my point is that some of the qualities of both which attract me are the sophisticated mechanical attributes inherent in each. The hardware of any field and its use is one of the things in this life which gives me pleasure.

As a child, my professional aspirations were hardly the cowboy-fireman stereotype, they were more scholarly, and were prompted by a fascination with dinosaurs and more broadly, with the past. That there had been creatures this large, at large in prehistory really rang my chimes, and I was soon reading everything I could get my hands on concerning this subject. Somewhere along the line, I was told that those who studied such things were archeologists, (not true) and at the ripe old age of six, decided that my life's work would be this. Later I learned that it was paleontology that held my interest. After I discovered that paleontology was literally the study of old rocks, I lost interest and switched to archeology once again. My interests eventually
broadened to include history in general. It would probably seem natural that
with all the talk about these 'ologies, I would eventually become involved in
the sciences, which I did. All of the processes involved in physics and chem-
istry were very intriguing, and, while I didn't have the math necessary to
appreciate, or continue, the study of those sciences, I did like to dabble in
the materials. In high school I befriended the science teacher who loaned me
his master key, and I would let myself into the lab and poke around in the
closets and cabinets, assemble materials, and do experiments, creating several
varieties of stinks, smokes, and explosives. I was always trying to make nitro-
glycerine which scared the hell out of me; I would pour it down the sink
before the reaction could complete itself.

Other directions which I began to develop as a child were in art and music.
From my earliest recollections (aside from hatchets) I can remember drawing,
and making things, and tinkering with odds and ends. This would be my pri-
mary, initial involvement with art processes. This early interest developed
into what has proved to be my most steady endeavor, and has been a thread
of continuity in my life. In school, as soon as the opportunity presented itself,
I enrolled in every art class it was possible for me to take, and always was
present in extra, summer art programs. This academic enrollment continued
through high school. When I first entered college, I was not in Art, due to
some unfortunate experiences with my high school art instructor. For the
next four years, in and out of college, the army, and other situations I arted
on my own, in various capacities, I was company artist, doing murals, posters,
in the Army, and also working on my own when I became a civilian.

When I was in the second and third grades I was given violin lessons which
began my next most important involvement with the visual arts, music and
theater. As a teenager I began playing the guitar for what must have been
largely social reasons, but my abilities with this instrument transcended this
entertainment process, (which is always part of the make-up of any musician's
talents, the ability to play tunes which will entertain) and I began to use the
guitar in a personal way to explore pure sensation and inner expression.
I must say here that music for me is less of a technical exercise; I don't
really have the skills necessary to do all those things which professional
musicians do with ease, read music, write music etc. Instead of approaching
music from this direction, I looked at chords and notes as mechanical patterns which could be assembled into harmonious or discordant arrangements. I see this process as being one which was sculptural in a way, and one which had little to do with those patterns of sound which are usually heard in entertainment, and one that was and is extremely personal.

As I said above, I was introduced to music and theater at the same time, mainly because to play music, you usually end up playing or performing solo or in concert, and this is one form of theater. I began performing as a nervous, scritchy violinist, went to rock-n-roll in high school, and it was here that I also picked up the rudiments of what are back stage skills, as I fooled around with the hardware of the music business. Aside from some playing, I didn't do much theatrically until after I got out of the army, and found myself in upstate New York, as part of an experimental theater group. I met my wife-to-be there; She was doing kinetic lights as background for the performance; indeed, her work transcended ordinary stage lighting and became part of the performance. After the theater folded, we continued to work together, doing all the necessary survival things, and eventually evolving our own particular form of multi-media show.

Somewhere in the middle of this, I re-enrolled in college, and found that I had considerable mobility in that environment, and I thoroughly enjoyed this period as an undergraduate. I started out in theater where I produced shows, and worked with photography and film. Film was my main interest at the time but, because of logistic factors, I began to express myself with clay. Clay was a necessity of the moment, the department's facilities were concentrated in ceramics, both in hardware and in instruction. There was no money or equipment for film, and there was for clay, so, considering myself to be able to work with any material, I shifted my interest to clay. I enjoyed working with the material, making and selling pottery, and developing a personal mode of expression based on California funk, and pop art. It is important to understand my introduction to clay not as a seeker after the spiritual qualities of the medium, but as an individual in search of a readily available material. Most of the people whom I have known in clay began their work through some desire to get closer to the material and its possibilities because of the intrinsic attractions of the material. Most of these individuals started
as potters or rather desiring to be potters, and then moved on to other forms of expression when possible. I began by wanting to throw ray-gun barrels for ceramic ray guns which emitted an electronic sound. It may be germane to the understanding of my actions and directions at Ohio State to see what I feel are fundamental differences in motivation between most ceramic people and myself.

Shortly before I graduated from the undergraduate program I was involved in, I decided to apply to graduate school for several reasons. One, I didn't want to break my stride, or slow my momentum from undergraduate school, two, I was looking for the opportunity to work in a space and gain further insight into what I was about, three, I wanted to be able to have a dialogue with persons who I could consider my peers in the arts, four, I wanted a degree which would allow me to teach at the University level, and five, it was time to move on. To a greater extent these things have been fulfilled by my graduate experience. I've gone through some extreme changes since I've been here, all of which have given me a much surer viewpoint of myself.
ARTIST......I ART, THEREFORE I ART

Any discussion of what an artist or art may be must be similar to the eternal chicken/egg controversy, that is, if an artists art is a direct reflection of some inner, subjective manner of self-expression, then which comes first, the artist or the art? The heading of this section sums this up for me, I art, therefore I art, the term art being used in the context of the archaic form meaning 'to be' as in "Thou Art" and also in the nominative sense of some product or ability produced by, or inherent in, an artist; the two meanings are interchangeable. I exist, therefore I create art, or, I create art, therefore I exist. The quintessence of my personal definition of art and artist is as essential to the artist and his/her pursuits as eating or breathing. The artist pursues his/her inner self, attempting to express those motivations of the soul which give rise to the subjective feelings that define his/her existence. Anything less is not art. Art is anything produced in these pursuits if the artist is true to him/herself in the process. Art could be defined as anything made or conceived by an artist, or anything or situation which can be recognized by an artist as having aesthetic properties. Artists make art, and art is made by artists.
Whether one is an artist, and whether that person will be involved in the art-making process is dependent on the state of mind of the individual, and the sense of identity as an artist that the person carries with him/her which can be based on a decision on the part of the individual to recognize him/herself as an artist. An artist makes a decision that what he/she will create will aspire to be art. We all have the potential of being artists on this level, and everything which we encounter at this point can assume the nature of art. In this respect, it is possible for any individual to claim identity as an artist without any training or any history of having made art. This situation would be dependent upon the establishment of identity removed from previous non-art associations, and would not be dependent on any past activities; rather, the individual's identity would be entirely dependent upon his/her actions in the present and future, and this would be sufficient, if the person had enough chutzpah to make this new identity acceptable by manifesting enough creative energy to produce work or ideas in sufficient quantities to allow the rest of the art community to notice his/her abilities. After a time, this artist of the now, whom I have been describing, would gradually lose identity based on his/her immediate work, as this work became known to the community through exposure and existence in time. Our hypothetical artist would become dependent upon the work and activities of the past to establish references to his/her identity as an artist.

In the succeeding paragraphs, I have given the subjective definition of art/artist which is the premise upon which I have established my own identity as artist, a premise strengthened by other imperatives the nature of which can be found in the auto-biographical section in this thesis.

In order to clarify my position as an artist to myself and others, and to prevent my commission of a crime of aesthetic redundancy by slapping art labels on all acts and objects, I've had to extend my definitions to allow for more objective evaluations of definitions of art/artist. In this, I am opening myself to the world of my peers, and any other definition of myself as an artist may become dependent upon outside opinions. For example, in this academic situation it would not be so easy for the aspiring artist to be accepted into the art community. Introduction and admittance here is based on past references and work, and acceptance is predicated on performances of the past and future performance is often determined by the images that others insist on projecting onto the individual. Consequently the individual may modify his/her behavior in an attempt to gain acceptance. I feel that this is similar to my own experience.
I may not agree with this selection process in the core of my being, but I believe that this comparison of past performance with present work, and even further, the comparison of my work with historical events, trends, and the work of my peers, is evidence of the objective viewpoint which must enter into the choices made by the artist. Based on this objective view, my extended definition of an artist is that an artist is a creative person, i.e., one who sees in materials or ideas, or both, new patterns or possibilities of unique developments of existing patterns, and is able to manipulate material, object, or idea physically with hands or other extenstions of the body, or mentally with processes within the mind, in order to create something, some emotion, or some idea, which is an original statement synthesized from the artist's available store of mental, physical, and aesthetic resources. The creation process could include the bringing into personal or public awareness, properties of any object, function, or processes, which, when recognized by the artist, are given the qualities of art by interpretation through that individual's aesthetic selection.

(I would like to clarify my use of artist as a general term. The time when an individual can or should be defined in terms of the media in which he/she works seems to have passed, and it seems to me that, in this present period of art development, the word ARTIST has assumed an apppellative function, and has become descriptive in terms of general professional aspirations, or tendencies. ARTIST can also describe an individual who excels at any craft or profession, and who also transcends these traditional categories.)

There are several methodologies of working creatively which an artist may utilize to attain his/her ends. One of these, which I have employed regularly in the past, but which I have reservations about now, entails a process beginning with a specific idea, and, before actualizing that idea, figuring which steps would be necessary to complete that idea, and then proceeding to execute the piece. The aesthetic difficulties which can be encountered in this method can be illustrated by a metaphor. Imagine a trip from Columbus to Cincinnati by car. There are several direct routes, each of which are open to little variation, and each of which can be plotted on a map before beginning to drive. If the trip is often repeated, then you will see the same sights, and have similar experiences, and undoubtedly will arrive in Cincinnati without incident. If you vary the pattern of travel with spur of the moment directional decisions, you are more likely to have an enriching experience (no guarantee but possible.) The problem in an unvarying route in travel or art, is that it is very easy to be lulled into a sense of security by this point A to point B method of working, and to
have one's creative impulse restricted or locked into a pattern which is dictated by the process or the materials, or the previously formulated construction plan. If the artist begins to fall into patterns of this type, then his/her work may begin to lose spontaneity and freshness, and will become too automatic, perhaps craft rather than art, relegating the artist's role to that of a worker producing goods, not art. In this case, the conception of the idea is the art, and the artist can best serve his/her interests by designing the piece, then having it constructed by others, leaving the artist free to work with new ideas.

Recently, I have begun working in a different way, allowing the process, the ideas, and the materials to be constantly open to change by extirpating the planning stage or at least reducing it to a minimum. This process is fraught with indecision about my directions and poses real questions of what I and my work are about. This new way of seeing myself and my art is very exciting, and in approaching this way of working, I have come to a very vertiginous place in relationship to the making of my work. This scary place, where I am not quite sure of my next step is essential to the creative process. The thrill of being confronted with a new aesthetic problem is the galvanization necessary for truly creative thought. To preserve this feeling, I have refrained from working out the details of each piece in advance, and indeed do not know what the next work in a series will be, and, aside from my selection of materials, have tried to work as spontaneously as possible. In my recent work, I feel opened up to new ranges of possibilities, and as a result have been able to function more efficiently, creatively. Being more receptive to new ideas or directions as I work, has resulted in what seems to be a smoother flow of aesthetic energy which occurs moment to moment rather than prior to the composition of the piece. This is not to say that I always find the art process completely easy, there are still decisions to be made in this process which come with relative degrees of difficulty. Each step, with accompanying decisions, is prompted by some intuitive solution which comes, unsolicited, into my consciousness from an inner source. This source could be similar to Jung's collective unconscious, or some deep layer of conscious awareness, or unawareness, which is pooled in common with mankind in its entirety, and which is usually covered over, diffused, or buried deeply by the enormous masses of conflicting thought which are generated by our daily confrontations with all of the tension-producing decisions, both aesthetic and mundane which we encounter in any daily process. The creative moment usually occurs when this cover is lifted as I
cease to wrestle physically and mentally with my work to the point where I cannot continue without some new input. Following feelings of desperation and/or frustration, when I reach the point where I literally or figuratively quit working, the solution occurs, either dredged from the aforementioned subconscious pool or is presented to me by another person, also tapped into (of course) this universal mind. This is the moment that my mind empties itself of the details which have been blocking the flow of solutions, and the direction comes. Subsequently, I apply the solution, and through whatever necessary experimentation, complete that stage of the work. The essential point is that in any art endeavor...

"There are several stages of creative thought, first, a preparatory stage in which the problem is worked over, then a period of incubation without conscious concentration on the problem, and the intuitive illumination which later justified by logic, occurs." [1]

There is an additional point to be elaborated upon, how to produce this spontaneity-provoking state of calm from which the answers to these questions arise. This creativity seems to be dependent upon the letting go, or on the operation of the non-mind of the Zen people, and can be prompted by meditation or in the case of the artist's work, this calm state of empty mind can be incidental to the working process; the work itself becomes the focus of attention which allows the mind to clear itself, making way for true creative thought. This period of work and the subsequent enlightenment can be either the result of a relatively long period of reflection on the problem, or as must occur with the action painter, can be relatively instantaneous, spur of the moment work-question-answer processes. The duration of these meditative selection processes can be determined by the material selected and used, or by the manner of working, as when I work with small elements which predicate an intricate assembly process, or when I approach a space to install a laser piece. And so to a certain extent the factors inherent in the processes of these materials influence the rapidity of the selection process.

In order to further my definition of ARTIST, I would like to draw some parallels between science and art, artist and scientist. That there is some connection or similarity between the two has been illustrated by the programs sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and various science museums around the country, which bring the artist and the scientist together in work and exhibition. Artists and creative scientists are problem solvers, both establish some method of inquiry to solve a given problem. The scientist has the scientific method; he forms a hypothesis about some phenomenon, perhaps he receives a frant to further his research, and through experimentation, may evolve a theory concerning that phenomenon. If his theory is supported by enough of his colleagues who by similar experiments obtain the same results, it may become accepted as fact, and will be taught to students in schools...

An artist envisions a piece, or an idea, and after, perhaps, receiving funding to acquire whatever is necessary, works the problem through whatever materials are appropriate to the expression of that idea, and produces a statement, either singular or serial, which is an attempt to concretize his ideal vision. If his expression of this vision is strong enough, and a sufficient number of artists begin to explore the vision further, and if critics write powerful statements about this artist's work, it may eventually become a movement which graduate students might study in colleges.

The end product of both disciplines are often similar in that both may seem to be strictly art or science for their own sake, and may seem to have no practical application. Conversely, the products of both may be extremely practical and have application or function in daily life.

Now that I've pretty well explained the functions of the artist, just for the fun of it, let's ask ourselves, "What is Art"? Should be simple to answer, right? I personally don't think so, and, with the numerous individual definitions which are placed on the term by all of us who are artists, I find the answer to be secondary to the asking, and important primarily to the individual artist. I could start by reiterating one of my definitions which I used at the beginning of this chapter, that art is anything made or recognized as art by an artist. I could include a more formal, specific definition from Mr. Webster's famous book which is:
"ART-base-to join or fit together. 1) human ability to make things; creativeness. 2) skill. 3) any specific skill, and its application. 4) creative work generally, or its principles; making or doing things which have form or beauty: Art includes painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, drama, the dance, etc. see also Fine arts. 5) any branch of this, especially painting or drawing, or work in any other graphic, or plastic medium. 6) products of creative work, i.e. paintings, statues, etc. 7) any craft or trade, etc. or its principles. 8) artful behavior, cunning. 10) a trick, wile. SYN.-Art, the word of widest application in this group, denotes in its broadest sense, merely the ability to make something, or to execute a plan; skill implies expertness or great proficiency at doing something; artifice usually stresses mechanical proficiency in executing a plan but implies a relative lack of ingenuity or inventiveness; craft is distinguished from art in its application to a lesser skill involving little or no creative thought." [2]

I think that in the broadest sense, and keeping within the context of the visual arts, the above definition has some valid applications. As can be seen from this definition, the historical dependence of art on the acts of an artisan can readily be seen. This is important when approaching that simple statement that art is anything made by an artist. The above definition could be used to refute some modern movements when we see that, historically, all art of any kind was dependent upon the production techniques of the individual "maestro" who rated the appellation only after years of recognized establishment of that perfection. However, with the advent of modern industrial techniques, we no longer require the old skills to produce perfect images or products, in reaction to machine perfection and mass production, contemporary artists in the twentieth century rejected the traditional values, and initiated a search for aesthetic identity unlike any other previous movement in that there was no paradigm from which to form models of aesthetic behavior. This search has been a liberating experience for artists, and from it have been formed the trends and movements of recent times, themselves having become the modern standard. Art can now be defined only by the limitations of the individual artist, and so art is anything which can be expressed creatively from the inner interests, motivations, and visions of the individual, independent of any outside influence. One might even say that art is the sound of one hand clapping.

I believe that there are three factors which influence an individual's creative development from childhood to adult. These three determining elements may be present singularly or in concert in any given personality which manifests creative potential. These three determinants are:

1) Some natural spark or innate motivation to create which exists independently of the others, is seemingly irrational, difficult to define, is mystical in nature, and exists beyond the practical considerations of everyday life. The Greeks and other early civilizations believed that there were supernatural beings—goddesses, called muses, who provided the inspiration to artists for their work. While our present knowledge has been expanded to include developments in genetics and psychology, studies of which would seem to explain some of the old superstitions, there still is, in my observation, some as yet unexplained reason why some individuals continue to pursue their creative visions in the face of adversity, and why, that brothers from the same family with equal opportunities, may approach their talents differently, one being more inclined to express those talents than the other.

2) Genetic determinants, or those characteristics which are inherited by the individual from his/her parents which might endow the person with those basic abilities necessary to produce an artist.

3) Psychological environment, or the atmosphere at home and at school in which a person is raised, including the attitudes of the parents toward the education of the child, the educational opportunities, material and tool availability, and most important, the encouragement of the individual to express talent through any or all of the above.
WHAT I'M DOING TODAY

"I was doing the kind of sculpture that I felt came to a point of conclusion. I didn't think of any possible way of transcending it or developing its existence, except by beginning to go outside of the bounds of the loft area into the use of the earth."[1]

"The work is not put in a place, the work is that place."[2]

Prior to my entrance into the Ohio State Art Department, I had been marginally interested in the structure and functions of Stonehenge, an arrangement of megaliths erected on the Salisbury plain in Britain. As a result of this interest, I read a book written by Gerald Hawkins, titled Stonehenge Decoded, which was the first popularized publication on the subject of ancient astronomical structures and their functions. The premise was that Stonehenge, and other similar structures, was designed and used as an observatory and computer by new-stone-age men. I was intrigued with Hawkins' theories, for the curiosity that such monuments provoke, and their beauty as archaic architecture. I renewed my interest in Hawkins' theories and his book toward the end

[2] Ibid., pg 171
of the second quarter here at OSU. This was a direct result of work I was
doing for a class in conceptual art in which we were to deal with the idea of
time in some way. My basic idea was to produce a card file which would
illustrate the flow of my ideas over a period of time. The file eventually de-
developed some ideas which were basically sculptural, and which dealt with space
time in a manner which had similarities to those stone monuments of Ancient
Britain.

This work, which I exhibited in the gallery in Hopkins Hall, was illustrated
by a series of maps on which I had plotted certain significant points, and
on which I had done some minimal drawing. The first map, one of Ohio, had
a large circle drawn within the borders of the state who's center was the
temporal center of the state (as determined by latitude and longitude). These
markers were to be aligned with the rising sun above the horizon, on the day
that they were erected. The second map was of Franklin county, with markers
which would describe the cardinal directions on the circumference of a simi-
larly constructed circle. The third and fourth maps were of the campus, and
of Hopkins Hall, respectively, with the gallery defined by markers at its North
and South ends, and outlined on the floorplan. [3]

The overall effect of this series was similar to that of Chinese Boxes, which
nest within one another. As the areas illustrated by the maps diminished, they
had the effect of enhancing the viewer's awareness of his/her position and size
in relation to the geographical systems and boundaries, and the relation of those
boundries to each other. This was the most commonly voiced interpretation of
the piece, but it was not these spatial relationships that the piece ultimately
depended upon. The space enclosed by the maps and the space on the maps
which was defined within the circles existed in terms of their internal geometries,
the relation of each to the rest of the earth's surface, but they also activated
and defined a space external to these functions, one which covered the 9.3x10^7
mile distance to the sun. In addition to spatial definition, the maps and markers
existed as physical illustrations of time. The ring of twenty-four markers was
significant in terms of their position in relation to the sun, and their number.
They were also time-dependent upon the geographic coordinates of latitude and
longitude, functions of time-space.

The spatial relations and the implications of these relationships were very important to me in this piece; through them I began to have some idea of what was important to me sculpturally. Most artists subscribe to the idea that if bigger is not better, it is at least more impressive. While I feel that size does not necessarily make a work good, I had the desire to extend my boundaries beyond what I had considered to be table top art, which I had been making to this point. I realized that to make a really large piece, it was not necessary to work with large masses of material, smaller elements could be used to extend space if the elements had some direct or indirect relationship with each other, or with some other existing geographic or astronomic feature. I could drive a stake into the ground, align it with some distant object and give specific spatial references to the space between that object, and the stake. If two stakes were used, then not only was there an extended definition of space, by also an enclosed or internal area, which was smaller, but which reflected the larger area. These functions of external extended space, and of internal, enclosed space appeared in most of these archaic forms which I had begun to study. As a result of these thoughts and discoveries, I began to broaden my researches in the study of ancient architecture.

The second phase of my work came in the production of an unconventional ceramic sculpture based visually on one of the stone grids found in Brittany, Le Menec. The elements of the piece were extrusions in lengths which varied from four feet to eighteen inches. I initially began working with the forms in an attempt to break out of a pattern of working I had fallen into and I wanted to work with some elements in which random qualities or possibilities were inherent in the physical nature of the materials. That these were separate, block-like elements was important in discovering this manner of working. After a time I realized that the long and short physicality of the objects reminded me of the Morse code I had learned as a Boy Scout. I used the code as a framework which I structured my piece around; and the letters which I used the extrusions to create were N-O-R-T-H, and I aligned the elements with magnetic North. The title was Neo-Neolithic Boy Scout Alignments for obvious reasons.\[^4\] The characteristics of the piece which appealed to me were its linear qualities, the internal and external spatial definitions, and the lexical symbology present through the use of linear writing. Concurrently, I was also working.

\[^4\] See figure 5. pg. 31
with clay pigeons (see that section) in a similar, linear fashion.

After the pigeons were well under way, I applied for a Ford grant in the fall. The project I wanted funding for was to be a large extrusion, constructed out of doors on the slope of a hill and fired in place in a modular tube kiln.[5] I didn't get the money, but I gained some insight into the works I was proposing, and into some of the qualities of the ancient structures which were attractive to me. In this piece I was interested in the simple linear nature of the extrusion, the contrast between fired clay and scorched earth, and to a certain extent, the process. The linear nature of the extrusion was of paramount importance, and the linear qualities manifested in the archaic structures even more apparent. I became interested in the basic nature of line, and thought of some works which would emphasize linear qualities by reducing the concept of line to simple, minimal terms. In an effort to extend my definitions of line, I looked up the word in Mr. Webster's book, and found various things which I had already thought of; that a line is the shortest distance between two points; a line is a path traced by a moving point which has no width, only length; a line is an arc from a great circle whose circumference is so large that the arc is perceived as a plane surface (planet surface); a line is a formation of objects; and I also found that a line can be speech in a play, or portion of poetry, i.e., saying or reading one's lines. This last was very interesting as it made sense in terms of the Morse lines which I had been developing, and the redundancy of linear forms which had linear-verbal meaning was appealing to me. I thought of some other verbal symbolism which I had studied at one time, the I Ching, The Chinese Book of Changes, which is based on sixty-four linear figures, or hexagrams, each of which has a symbolic meaning. The symbology of the Ching also includes some which specifically refer to seasonal changes, and to the times of the equinoxes, the solstices, or the movements of the sun. Both the Morse system, and the Ching seemed to offer a way of synthesizing verbal patterns into linear statements which would be tied in with celestial events. I produced some models of linear excavations which were composed of purely directional lines aligned with some external event, and also of verbal comments on what the lines were about. These took form in positive-negative relationships between the excavated areas of earth. [6]

[5] See figures 6-7, pg 32-33
[6] " " 8-10, pp. 34-36
[I extended my work with line to some other media (see the section on lasers),
and line at this time became the primeval act of creation setting man and ar-
tist apart as pattern makers, and the use of the line, the first mark became
the act of Genisis, the creation of form out of chaos.]

Someone mentioned that there was a meridian marker on campus and that I
should see it. It is between the library and University Hall, and is a small
rectilinear block of marble with two bronze plates fixed to it, one giving the
history of the marker and one giving the geographic co-ordinates which po-
sition the marker in space and time in relation to the other points on the sur-
face of the earth. That point is 759.716 feet above sea level, and is located
at 40°00'00" latitude, and 83°00'54" longitude. As can be seen, this marker
is located on one of the more significant intersections of these lines, an in-
tersection which is almost perfect. It struck me that here was one intersection
of a network of lines which extended around the globe (and so was an open
spatial reference) and which directly affected the structure of our daily lives.
It seemed important to make some sort of a statement concerning this system
and the best way to do this would involve drawing attention to the system by
defining the lines which made up the grid. The materials I used for this pur-
pose complimented the surface which they were grounded on. For the sections
of earth which the lines covered, I used white clay, and where the lines ran
over pavement, I used yellow highway reflective tape, the type used to form
temporary ediving lines on new asphalt.[7] The piece didn't last very long
as the lines were obliterated by rain, but it was there long enough to provoke
some real interest in the block and the grid that it marked.

Through all of these stages of work, I had been doing constant reading in
texts which were written about earth and stone structures from the past.
I did this for two reasons, one, because I was interested in the information,
and two, because I felt that if I could establish a firm base of knowledge
about these works, it would be much easier for me to work in my own way,
with materials that I choose, if I had this bedrock information available. I
believe that I have been successful in this, as the ideas which I have been
developing have come much more easily.

My recent directions have been influenced by the gift of about 1000 lbs. of
ceramic tile, and the work of Charles Simonds, Harvy Fite, and the stone

[7] See figure 11, pg. 37
constructions of several ancient peoples. All of these works are characterized by the small (with respect to the total structure) units from which they are built. From these tiles I began building structures with similar technique, according to my own ideas. The structures take the form of large scale models of what could be giant, almost geological forms which have been designed with some unknown function in mind.[8] The ramps and planes of the pieces are suggestive of the ramps used in the observatories built in Jaipur and Benares, India in the Eighteenth century. The basic structure is similar to the linear flow of sedimentary rock layers in eroded cliffsides. It is this type of form which will be the culmination of my work, i.e., my thesis show, here at OSU.

My projections for this exhibition begin first with feelings about the gallery space. I personally feel that this particular space is extremely distracting and does not easily compliment a show which is made up of discrete works. I see environmental installations which deal with the space as a whole being much more effective, and those shows, or portions of shows, which have been about this kind of sensibility, have been the strongest. I approach the gallery then as a space to be dealt with and not necessarily filled with sculpture, an opportunity to further some of my expectations of my work in an environment free from the clutter of my studio. I do have some idea of what I will be doing in the space and have this in the form of a model of tiles.[9] The final construction will be done of the same materials plus some additional elements which are now available.

[8] See figure 12, pg. 38
[9] " 13, 39
CLAY PIGEONS

After I had read several books on the Neolithic stone and earthworks I had been so interested in, I had a desire to produce some work of similar scope, with attributes which resembled those which I perceived to be the important visual and conceptual qualities apparent in these ancient structures. These characteristics are: large geometrical layouts, sometimes constructed of elements which are smaller in relation to the overall size of complete work, and which can be interpreted as being aligned with significant geographic, or astronomical phenomena. I really needed to get outside and build something. The solution to this desire suggested itself in this way. I had been thinking about working with clay pigeons in some of my other figurative pieces, incorporating them as visual puns about guns, hunting, or violence. I scrapped these designs when I realized that the clay pigeon was the ideal marker from which to construct large figures quickly and cheaply. I also felt that by using these small, specific objects with the various connotations which go with them as clay pigeons in large, linear forms, which of themselves have nothing to do with those connotations, and by titling them according to those connotations, I would produce a humorous tension through the title of the piece. The titles

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of two of these works suggested themselves at once, "Clay Pigeons Flying North", and "Clay Pigeons Flying South" [1], two separate pieces which I did at the appropriate time of the year. The first, Executed in June in South Louisiana, was the "North" piece, which was arranged in a "V" shape, 120° in angle, the vertex of which was aligned with magnetic North. The other piece, "South", was done at Ohio University in the fall and was similar to the previous piece except that the axis of the work was aligned with South. Both were quite large, being 400' and 200' respectively, and both were constructed of 101 clay skeet targets.

I conceived three other clay pigeon pieces in the three months between the North and South pieces. The first of these was entitled a "Clay Pigeon Egg" [2]. Obviously, if there are going to be any CP's to fly North or South, there will have to be eggs laid. The arrangement was formed as an oblate eliptoid having a long axis of 85' and a width of 75'. The circumference of the figure was constructed of the arcs of circles whose radii were determined by the placement of two right triangles with adjacent sides. With the exception of the dimensions, this piece was based on an existing architectural form from the neolithic period, a series of postholes in England with the common name of "Woodhenge".

At this time I had several boxes of clay pigeons in stock for use anytime I had need, and so when a third piece suggested itself, I was ready. I came to the conclusion that it would be entertaining to perch CP's on the hydraulic door closers which are on all of the doors in Hopkins Hall, a la the old-bucket-full-of-water-which-when-perched-on-the-edge-of-the-door-spills-on-the-person-who-enters-trick. This developed into the third piece in the series that relates the habits of pigeons through a punny title and the action of formation of clay pigeon arrangement. The title, in this case was "Pigeon Poop"[3]. Of course, when a person entered through the door, a clay pigeon would fall and break noisily at his/her side. The piece fulfilled two functions, one as a pun on the excretory habits of real pigeons, and two, as an afternoon alarm clock to wake up and otherwise startle into awareness the inhabitants of the Art Department who would encounter the piece.

[1] See figures 14, 15, pp. 40, 41
[2] " " 16, 17, pp. 42, 43
[3] " " 18, 19, pp. 44, 45

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The fourth CP piece was done in the fall, and was titled "Pigeon Pie" [4] and was inspired by the main course dish of the same name which was served at one of Berry Mathews' ubiquitous dinner parties. The installation consisted of a pie-shaped negative and positive excavation which was constructed on the south oval of OSU near the student services building. I dug a volume of soil from the earth creating a hole which was 6'x3'x2' in dimension and which was pie or wedge shaped. I then tamped the earth into a wooden form of the same dimensions. When the sod which had been removed at the beginning of the excavation was replaced on top of the tamped earth and the form removed, the general visual suggestion was that the earth had been removed in one piece. (This initial statement in earth proved to be the most important part of the work, transcending the originally intended pun on clay pigeons.) I then inscribed a twelve foot diameter circle around the wedge shaped hole and marked it with clay pigeons. Within a day some ill-meaning jerk had stolen all of the CP's leaving, of course, the dirt pile and the hole. This vandalism was fortunate; as I said above, this positive-negative relationship proved to be most important, and I realized, as soon as I saw the piece without the clay pigeons, that they had been a distraction from what was the fundamental aesthetic issue and had done nothing more than disturb the viewer with unimportant questions. The basic question which was asked many times by passers by was, "How did you get that dirt out of the hole in one piece?" This illusion of mechanical or magical capability became an important issue, one which went far beyond the clay pigeon fun I had been having. This piece I saw as the final CP work I would do; the whole series of CP pieces being, in effect, the work in its entirety. This last piece was really a transitional work which I tried to force into the mold of the previous pieces. Its import as a clay pigeon pun was mainly that it rounded out the series. Its importance was that it was interpreted positively in spite of the clay pigeons. These excavations illustrated a very basic visual and sculptural-conceptual relationship, that of positive and negative space. I began to formulate some ideas for other positive-negative excavations, producing models in cardboard in the ensuing quarter. As I worked with these models, I began to develop a synthesis of those things which I had learned as a result of actualizing "Pigeon Pie" and the linear earth statements which I had been desirous of producing all along. In this respect, my stated purpose of working with clay pigeons in an effort to de-
velop and understand the necessities of working with the earth, outdoors, was successful. I also began to work the symbology of the assorted linear lexicons into these statements. These cardboard models [5] illustrate some of the ideas which I manifested.

LASERS

Lasers are among the finest tools of technology available to the artist today. Briefly, laser light is a highly directional, intense beam of light which derives these qualities from the beam's coherency, meaning that the light emitted from the instrument is of one color or frequency. This coherency is not found in ordinary light sources, as ordinary light is made up of many frequencies or colors, which are produced in random patterns. Today, the laser finds its most common applications in the fields of medicine, surveying, holography, and communications. Aside from primarily commercial, non-art orientations, the aforementioned qualities of the laser offer the artist an opportunity to work with linear developments unlike those possible in any other medium and to deal with colors unlike any found in nature, or produced by other means.

As a potential instrument of sculpture, the laser beam defines and divides space. As a graphic instrument, the laser can be used to trace patterns of light on surfaces, and can be fired into the lens of a camera to trace color and pattern directly to photographic film.[1] As a linear form which most aptly objectifies those definitions of the line which I mentioned previously, the laser provides a perfect example. The beam describes a perfect line, straight and

[1] See figure 23, pg. 49
pure. I am most interested in exploring these applications but there is an additional process which has just begun to open up as a result of further research, and that is holography, or three dimensional images recorded on a two dimensional medium. The intrinsic qualities of laser light make this possible: its coherency allows a laser beam to transmit the details of any object it strikes and is reflected from, to another surface, in this case a photographic plate. I have also observed that the beam transmits disturbances and impurities in the air to the opposing surface.

My interest in laser light has its beginnings in my adolescence when lasers were first developed and introduced. I was going to build one because of my curiosity, and went so far as to locate all the materials, and memorize the circuitry. Unfortunately, the price (approximately $300) was prohibitive. At the present time, my interest in the device is primarily in the development of linear and sculptural forms. When the beam is bounded within a confined, architectural space, I perceive the line of light to define and carve the space into a series of irregular polygons consisting primarily of triangles, and also various configurations of quadrilateral figures which I see as subtly sculptural. My experiments, so far as I have been able to conduct them, have involved the use of laser space in this way. [2] These experiments are limited by the availability of the equipment and in finding space to use it. In my initial attempts to use these instruments, I borrowed four of them from the physics department and obtained the use of a fair sized, uncluttered space for some hours. In this period of time, I arranged them into spontaneously devised patterns of parallel and intersecting lines which ran the length and breadth of the room.[3] The climax of this night occurred when I fired the lasers out of a third storey window of the building, projecting the beam patterns onto the ground approximately 300 yards away. [4] The resultant beam spots were ellipsoidal because of the anamorphic distortion produced by the angle of the beams, and about 12"x18" in size. The more or less invisible beams which produced the spots formed a canted pyramid shape in the air. [5] This part of the night's experimentation was the most important for several

[2] See figure 24, pg. 50
[3] "  " 25, pg. 51
[4] "  " 26-27, pp. 52,53
[5] "  " 28, pg. 54
reasons, but mainly because it gave other people the opportunity to interact with the beams. They were first impressed with the qualities of the spots of light, and when they were informed that the beams were produced by lasers, were doubly impressed.

That night's experimentation resulted in a more formal piece which I installed in the lobby of Hopkins Hall. [6] The piece was simple; I mounted one laser on the wall at the South end of the lobby and reflected the beam around the corners of the space with the use of front surface mirrors. The beam ended its path on a wall on a card which allowed the beam (then about two inches wide) to be seen by passersby. The effects were similar to those I described in the previous paragraphs: the beam divided the space into a series of polygons, and there was very positive audience response. Despite the minimal nature of the piece, most people who passed through the beam's path became aware of the presence of the laser at one point along the route through the hall. Unfortunately, the nature of this type of installation makes it relatively un-photographable, which makes documentation nearly impossible. The beam itself is not visible to the camera in a well lit room and the hardware necessary for such a piece is very minimal. The subtle nature of this type of piece is very attractive to me. The difference between the real-time presence of the piece, which is powerful, and the minimal nature of the documentation is a real contradiction, one that is extremely interesting to me.

In the future I plan to incorporate the lasers with some of the architectural constructions which I have been working on. By combining this modern tool with archaic forms, I hope to produce a tension which will give a science fiction feeling to the forms.
