

THE VARIABLE PLACE

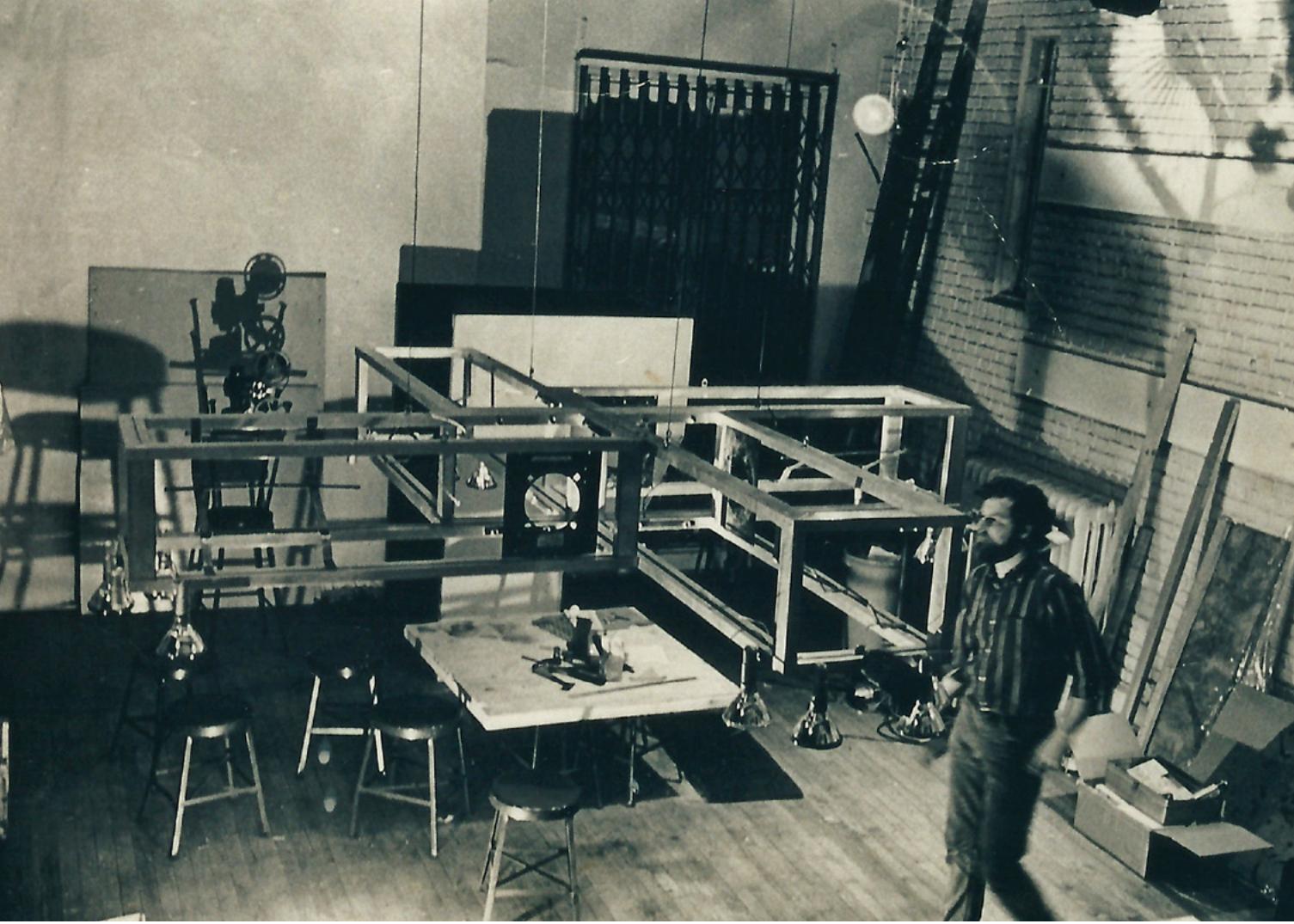


TONY MARTIN

THE VARIABLE PLACE

VIEWER ACTIVATED SCULPTURE-LIGHT COMPOSITIONS-
PAINTINGS-DRAWINGS-SCORES





Nam June Paik

on Tony Martin

I have admired Tony Martin's art and insight for the past 15 years. He is creative in the sense that he can combine the best part of artistic avantgarde and the most artistic part in the pure-scientific frontier research. He traces the thin line between these two poles long enough persistently enough , modestly enough untill he finds a logical ' line inbetween .. very few artist can do these kinds of acrobacy.

Mr Martin is also courageous. For some unknown reasons suddenly so said Art & Technology boom collapsed in the 70's. But he didnot wave.. and cintinued his lonely research for 10 more years among the ignorance of snobs and : crowds... I admire his perseverance.

Now Time is changing again.. we will see Mr Martin as one of the youngest artist in the scene... Mr. Martin is interesting for anyone, who is not a simple trend follower..and a man of integrity, who wants to see the individually creative among the campy noise of so called art world.

*Nam June Paik
09/18/88*

A very special thanks to Pauline Oliveros for her thoughtful insight into Tony's work and to Will Cameron for his introduction to Tony and enthusiasm for this project. Thank you Alexander Perrelli, Mike Wolf, Annie Brancy, Albert Herter, Maura Murnane, Sophie Mörner, and Sasha Vine for donating their time, knowledge, and expertise to this book. Thank you to our families for their support and thank you to Tony Martin and Margot Farrington for making The Variable Place possible.

This book comprises materials from Tony Martin's personal archives spanning 50 years — much of which was photographed by Alexander Perrelli of Perrelli Studios in Brooklyn, NY, in 2012.

Introduction by Pauline Oliveros

Contributing interviews by Will Cameron, Albert Herter, Nicky Mao and Camilla Padgett-Coles

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Cover: Photo-cell activated image, early 1970s

Interior cover: *The Well* under construction, Bleeker St. studio, 1968

Edited by Camilla Padgett-Coles & Nicky Mao

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Anthony (Tony) Martin: Collaborator and Friend

Pauline Oliveros
June 24 2012

Tony is a friend of more than 40 years from the San Francisco Tape Music Center days. Our collaboration has continued to this day. Tony is like a younger brother to me and I remember our earlier collaborations with great delight. We began simply and progressed to more complex inter-weavings of light and sound.

George Washington Slept Here: This was a piano assassination first performed by David Tudor using a Mattell Sonic Blaster (a toy gun that fired a blast of air with a big sound). The grand piano with lid opened by two men, then a man to hold down the sustaining pedal with David coming in from the back of the hall ready to fire the Sonic Blaster into the piano. On cue from the shot the lights go out and a slide of Uncle Sam's arm with finger pointing and the message "I want you!" shows while the piano is still reverberating. Lights back on, the man holding the sustaining pedal down leaves, the two men close the piano lid and exit. David the assassin is nowhere to be seen.

George Washington Slept Here Too: I played a luminous violin that gained its luminosity from dipping it in a bucket of light once in a while. I improvised with a sound track while Tony's imagery played over me and the white wall in back. Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven" sung by the Beatles was heard in the mix among wild electronic sounds with the violin.

Light Piece for David Tudor: A one note drone piece that David played every which way using a variety of means including a vibrator to activate the piano strings for Db layered with recorded samples looped in different timings. Tony aimed light at a prism suspended on a spring wire wound tightly. As the wire unwound during the performance beautiful rainbow lights played in the space with the sound until it wound down to no motion.

Desert Ambulance by Ramon Sender written for me to perform had Tony's projections focused through a stencil on my figure with a white accordion and white lab coat while an environment was created in back of me. This staging was so effective that I could not play the piece without it. The one time I did try performing *Desert Ambulance* without Tony's projections it was dreadful!

Desert Ambulance was performed more than 25 times during the '60s with occasional revivals in later years.

Tony and I became the default directors of SFTMC when it was moved to Mills College in Oakland. During the 1966/67 year we created *Circuitry* for percussion and light together. This was the more ambitious collaboration as we used new technology created for us by electronics engineer Carl Countryman. I designed a four channel mixer for audio and Tony designed a briefcase SCR switching box for his lights. Carl built these boxes for us. Mine was the first mixer available. Tony's box was unique for visual performances.

Circuitry was a giant feedback loop with players cued by on/off lights in a grid that were controlled by the players' actions. Audio and visuals were intricately triggered by the players. Performance actions were selected by the lights as well.

Circuitry was premiered at Mills College then at the University of Illinois Champagne/Urbana. More recently *Circuitry* was re-created for Wow & Flutter, a look back at the SFTMC, curated by Johannes Goebel in 2004 at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center in Troy NY.

Tony made a beautiful visual score to perform with my *Bye Bye Butterfly* at Wow & Flutter, and again at the Miller Theater in 2010 at Columbia University.

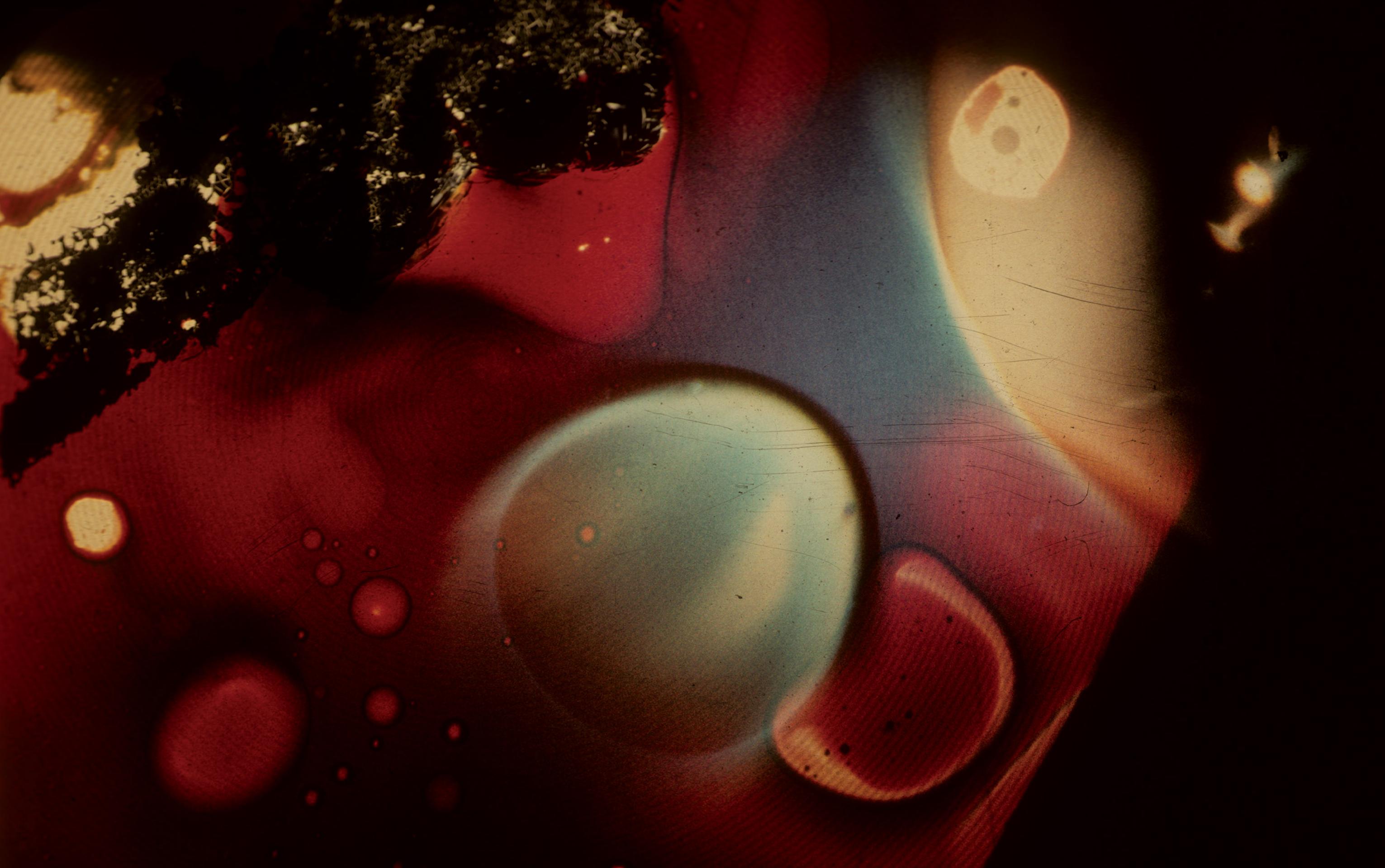
Our most recent collaboration was *Sound Light Migrations* performed at the opening of the newly renovated Littlefield Concert Hall. Our piece was first on the program at the request of the faculty. This was a nostalgic return to the place of our earlier collaboration. The technology for both of us involved computers that would have made it all too easy to perform the all analog *Circuitry*. Thus we have traveled the transition to the digital universe together.

I value the collaborations with Tony and I value his thoughtful friendship. Tony has wonderful compassion, understanding, intellect and artistic vision that he offers freely.

We continue to collaborate with ideas and concepts. What a treasure to have Tony in my life and art!









TONY MARTIN: Right now my fundamental equipment is in various groups around this room. This room I like to keep much more empty, and I [do my projections] on that wall. I'm also a painter. So for 45 to 50 years now, I've been doing both, and for me one doesn't predominate the other — they nurture each other. Sometimes I spend more of my time working outside the studio, doing performance or installation or being involved with a show, showing paintings. I come out of drawing, and I come out of music as well, because when I was 13 I was a trained classical guitarist. During college [in Ann Arbor, Michigan] my work turned visual. It was completely natural to pick up tools that would make painting in time, so that's what I've been doing ever since along with some sound-making as well. But it's not all over the place, the way I feel in myself, it's not islands. It's one contiguous process.

AB-SENS PRESS: How did you first think of making light paintings, and when did you start playing with the tools you use now?

TM: When I got to the Bay Area [in 1962], in just a matter of two months I met two "new music" people, Ramon Sender and Morton Subotnik, and we got together. They were mostly using tape machines in various configurations, and Terry Riley had just gone to Europe, but he was there, and Pauline Oliveros arrived soon after that, though she was already involved with Morton and Ramon. I took out my projectors in my loft and I started playing with some of the sounds which were just there on the Embarcadero, the sounds outside, the environmental sounds, which I just loved. I recorded the Embarcadero freeway mixed with ferryboat sounds and people, which was really a very nice combination. So I made film and used sounds like that. And there was an occasion at the San Francisco conservatory where Morton and Ramon put together an impromptu event, and I was invited to come along. I brought a film projector and some slides and a slide projector, and I started projecting around the space at the conservatory. It was a series called *Sonics*. That was really the beginning for me. I went home to my loft, set up some things, and realized that the 12" x 12" light table on my overhead projector was a focal plane, and with that I could do anything. So I started using that large focal plane in different ways with dry things and wet things. I would put drawings on it, and then introduce liquids with the drawings. I would drop powder on it, or roll marbles, and plates and things like this, so I realized that this was really a flexible tool. I ended up using three of them. One of them is liquid, one of them is dry, and one of them is for images.

AP: Do you think that's when light shows with music started to become a thing?

TM: No, that didn't happen for a few years. I was working with Ramon and Pauline and Mort on various pieces: *Desert Ambulance*, *Mandolin*, *Subotnik*. Then suddenly, we were in more of an organizational mode and called it The San Francisco Tape Music Center. So there were various events, and we knew new music and we knew Bach and we were very aware of our popular cultural surroundings. The first major putting together of [light shows] with rock, or one of the first, was the Trips Festival in 1966. So there was already a three-year stretch before that. In '62 we started doing these things, then in '65 came the Trips Festival, and then Bill Graham from Fillmore West said, "Would you come over? I just rented this space. Would you like to do something here with the Quicksilver Messenger Service and Jefferson Airplane?"

I said, "Yeah, this is perfect! You got a balcony around? You got three walls? Great. Let's do it." So I started doing projections for Bill Graham and for the Fillmore West. That was one of the first light shows for me, and for anybody.

AP: Were those first light shows purely improvised?

TM: Totally.

AP: At what point did they start to turn into compositions?

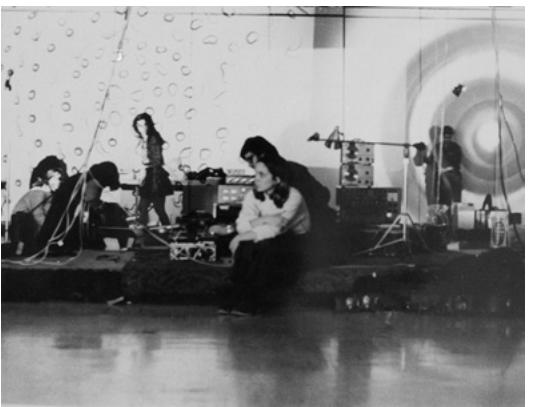
TM: [Initially] Mandolin, I had done in '63 and '64, when we took it on the road. We did a tour in '64 where I used an overhead projection and slides and film. Then the Fillmore opened up and became a mostly improvisatory venue, and I started to compose more with the Tape Music Center and I used the rock thing as an improvisation platform for me. I was much more interested in new music than I was in working with rock. I wasn't interested in sloshing the liquids. I mean, I was very good at it, because I was a musician. I had all kinds of rhythmic ability with my hands and my arms, because I had been a musician for decades. But my heart was in the new music. Though I can't really say I didn't love their music, Phil Lesh (Grateful Dead) used to show up at the Tape Center, so there really was a lot of mixing after '65.

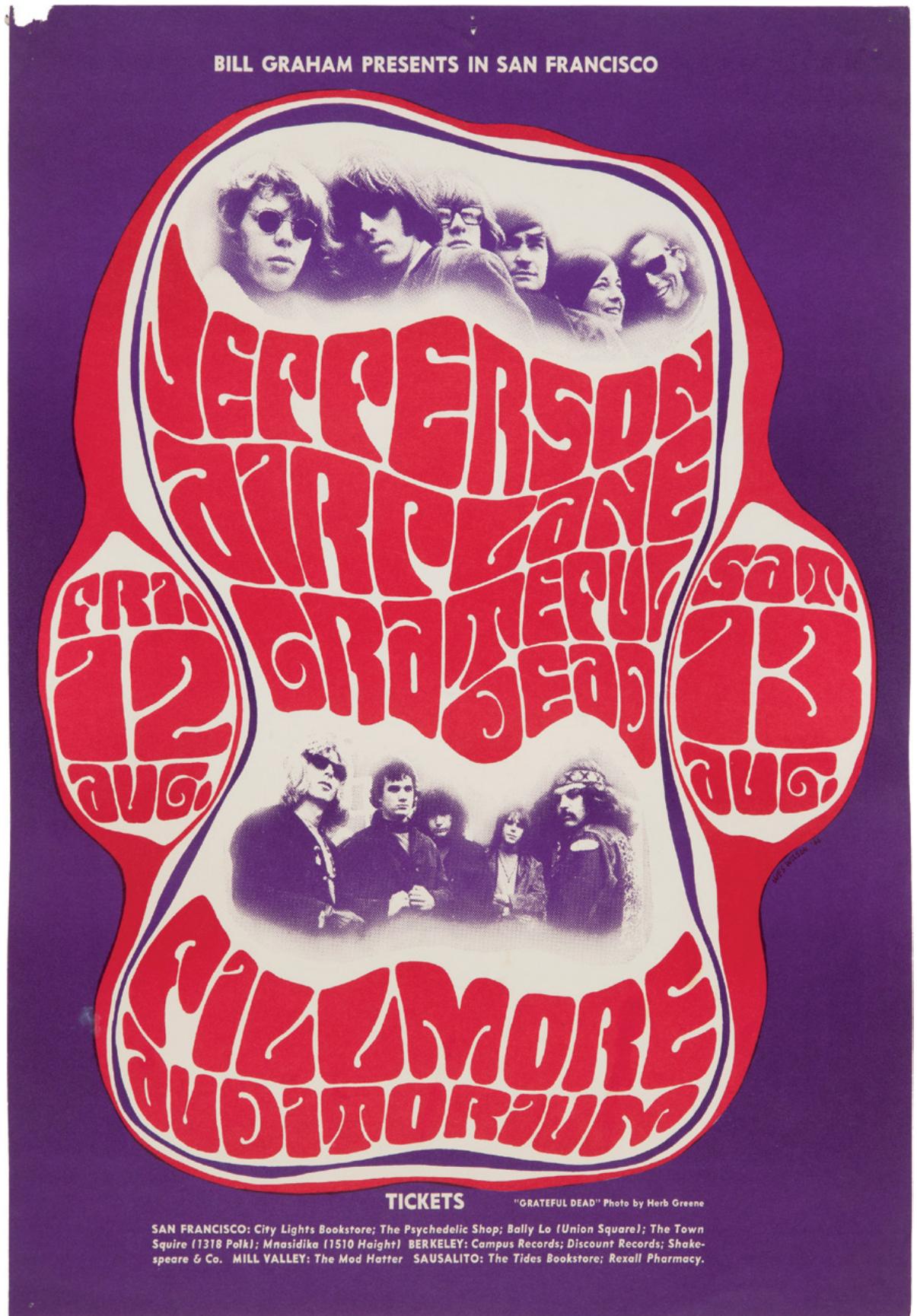
AP: Would you say that you had a deeper collaboration with the musicians in the new music scene?

TM: The level of immersion in the music I would say would be almost equal. But it's a different kind of content. Really it's a different kind of soul, I would say. I did a little bit of light with the first performance of Terry Riley's *In C*, and that was totally different from working with the Grateful Dead. So the composition for me became more and more interesting, and I started to score out film and use spontaneous instruments with the film. For instance, the film was a set thread of time, and the other projection stuff would go in and out of it, one basic configuration. I like pure light as well. You can see some lenses lying around on the floor around here in this room. I was constantly making things — light sources, lenses, anything to make a different [effect]. I was working at the Tape Center during the weekdays and then at the Fillmore on the weekends. And I had a child. I used to take him up in his little carrier on the balcony at the Fillmore. He was down there and the overheads were up here. The Who were playing up on the stage, and here was my little one and a half year old in his basket!

AP: He was experiencing it too then.

TM: I think so. It's in his blood, somewhere. At any rate, my little young family and all my projectors moved to New York in the spring of '67. So I had done a whole lot of work that we were talking about, but there was one part of it that wanted to grow. And it began with a viewer-participation piece that I did in 1962. It really was an interactive installation, non-electric, non-electronic. It was a room about 20' x 20' and viewers came in and pressed touch pianos that had different textures. They made a word wall with their own poetry. They went into the middle of a spiral maze and sat on a swing that was suspended with harp strings, so if you were heavy it sounded high





and if you were light it sounded low. I don't know if that was ever done before, ever. I didn't call them installations then. I called them "maze" or "interaction." So I came to New York and had a show at Howard Wise's gallery. And that used projection. But most importantly to me, it made the viewers a part of the piece. And I didn't control anything. The viewers determined what happened in this environmental piece. They triggered photocells that made projectors go on and off and the ceiling and all four walls were theme-oriented according to colors: red, yellow, blue, green. If you stood under a blue light you activated the blue theme on some wall. Another person stepping under a yellow light activated the yellow theme, either in combination with the blue, which made green, on that wall, or somewhere else on another wall. So it had a lot of possibilities for the environment with four walls of projections, depending on where you stood.

[Takes out a poster from The Game Room and shows a map of the installation]

AP: It looks like a map of a sensory experience.

TM: Right. As I was explaining [*points at map*], we stand where we are standing now. The electronics were actually pretty sophisticated. We were using SCRS — photocells. And they triggered the projections on the walls. That was 1968. And the year after that I made these interactive sculpture installations. This one is called *The Well*. And when you look down into it, depending on where your hands are you activate different kinds of light inside the well. And this one is a door that combines two viewers on either side of the door into a stranger, a new person. Depending on how close you are to the door, the light changes. So it's you, me, we. That was the whole premise: you — me — we. It's what we see through the door, with the other person.

AP: There's something genetic about facial recognition, right? It's not just something that you learn. In neuroscience, they say that you're particularly attuned to be able to recognize faces and facial gestures especially so you can identify your mother. In fact, the first instinctual thing to do is to distinguish your mother's face from any other face. So it's interesting to see someone's face in that way, and it must interact with those other parts of the brain that deal with these things.

TM: The emotionality is deep. And there's something about that that I really felt was important — that whatever imprint you collect as you mature is like a world that you tap, and have access to. I wanted to make pieces that made access to that, and from deep parts of yourself, not just surface stuff. And so it wasn't just fun and games. It was quite deep as an experience. And some shied away because it was too demanding. But most people didn't, most people treated it more lightly and other people got into it more deeply.

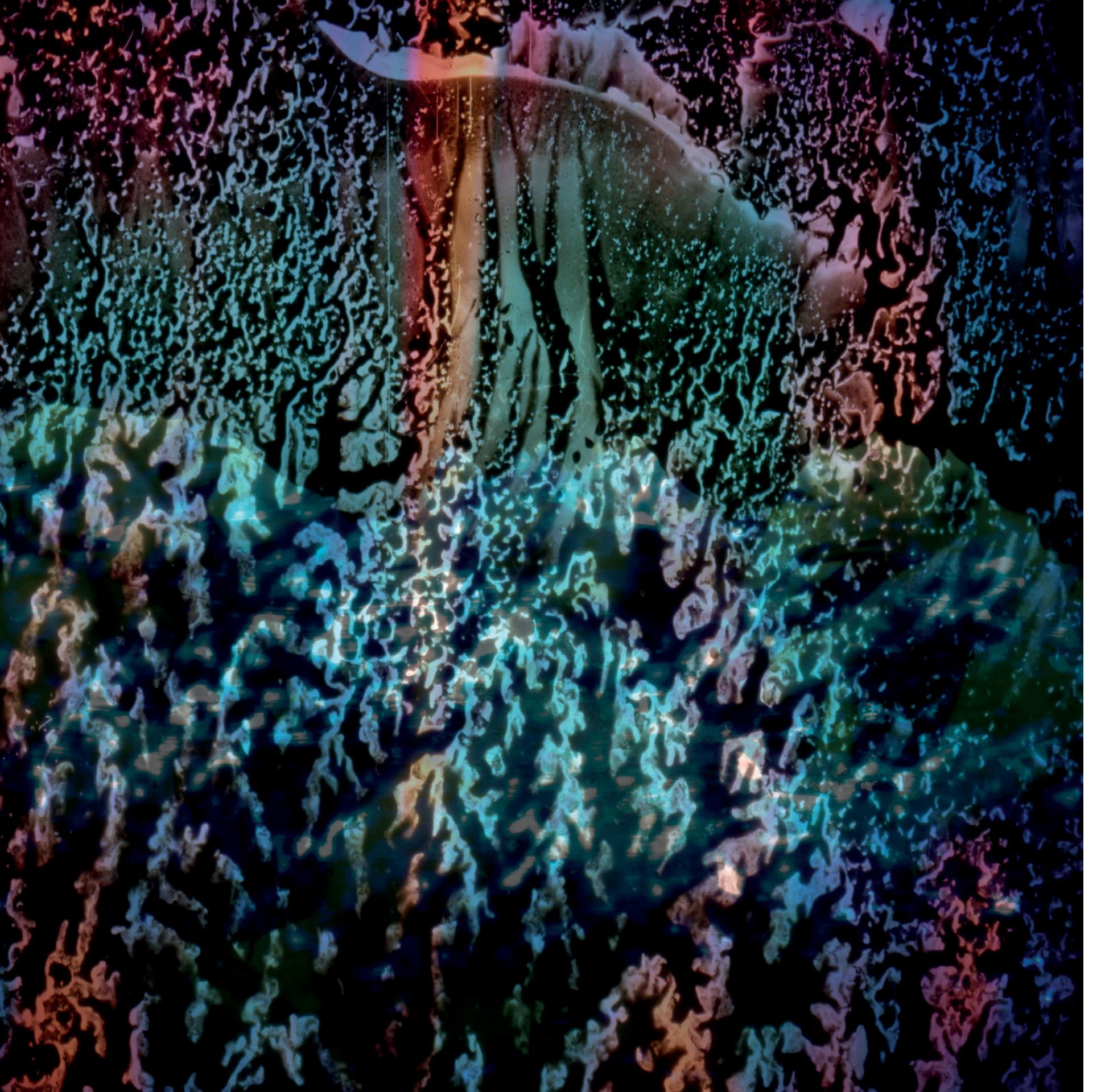


AP: What would you say your favorite, most elemental tools are, if you had to choose just five?

TM: First I would say pure light, used in specific ways. Imagine the whole spectrum of how you could use pure white light, with no color. A spot, flood the whole place, a wash, a moving line, things moving in circles. Pure light can obviously be used in an infinite number of ways. Bring sunlight into a space and make it do something. I've done that. Collect light with lenses, not just glass lenses, but reflectors. Collect it and bounce it. Collect it and project it. Anthony McCall does a kind of iconography of that. I've not been interested in that overly minimalistic approach. I like to get into that palette, I would say. That palette of pure light.

AP: Right.

TM: And then, number two, the focal plane as a painted image — that means making slides. Not just a slide projector; there are other kinds of focal planes. Next I would say the overhead projector, because you can use the whole range between the lenses, it's not just a focal plane projector. You can actually bend the light. Number four, I would say, film or video. Number five, computer-generated brushes. I wouldn't say *generated*, actually. I use it as an interface, never a generator.



AP: Pauline [Oliveros] is usually combining acoustic information. Even those synths that she had, those were acoustic things — never digital source material. Between Pauline and Morton and yourself, you guys had a lot of stuff to carry around back then!

TM: We all love the physicality as it is. We're not virtual people. We like hands-on, so does Pauline. But we're also able to use cybernetics. That *Game Room* show, somebody called that cybernetic, even though it was very physical. I think I'm really always a mixture of analog and digital. Always, at this point, if I could eliminate something I'd eliminate the digital! [Laughs]

AP: Do you feel that live visuals are widely accepted now as an art form, or do you feel that is still on the fringe of things?

TM: I would say that it's pretty widely accepted and known, and experienced by lots of people. All kinds of different people. People differ in what they do, and how they experience life in the world, they all have their entertainment places, and practically all of those now are sound and visual to some degree. But I would say something else along with that: You know, visual music, to use as a term, goes back to the turn of the 1900s. There were light organs made in 1906. There were three or four different people trying to combine sound and light in different ways. One was using radio tube technology, and bounced light off of different surfaces to join with the music. In 1918 there was a color organ made [by Mary Hallock-Greenewalt]. Then Thomas Wilfred did his pieces in the '30s, which were mostly silent, but some had sound. So it does go back further than most people realize. Then there was a huge surge in the '60s of sound and visual coming together in various ways.

AP: An opening.

TM: Yeah. But you know, there was also *Fantasia* [1940]. Oskar Fischinger, he was basically a sound and visual composer. So I think it is in everybody's core in a way, but there is something that is not, I don't think, and that is a kind of depth of experience, which can be very missing.

AP: It's interesting with the light compositions that you can take away elements too, where you've built it up, and reveal what's underneath. You don't just add layers and obscure what's there. There are so many things that are happening at the same time, unveiling and building.

TM: I've always felt that art was a kind of Phoenix process anyway. The best stuff comes out of the destruction of my intentions. Whatever was really most meaningful was at a multilevel in your spirit. Perhaps I thought I had a clear idea on making a certain kind of meaning. I was working with Pauline Oliveros on an early piece of hers called *Bye Bye Butterfly*. This was made out of oscillators, basic



oscillators that were manipulated by her in certain ways, making layers of sound and then an opera singer comes into it like *Madame Butterfly* and it becomes this combination of sound — it's wonderful. Well, I made a visual composition for that piece and I didn't really want to work with the image of a butterfly. However, as I worked on two overhead projectors with string and a marker and some blue-violet and red-violet gels — it really was subconscious and subliminal that the thing lay out and became the two big wings and the two small wings. Out of the intention to not have it, was sort of the reverse. I didn't know if the visual wanted to do that or not; I don't work directly for sound when I'm doing a visual composition with sound. I don't decorate the sound. So a lot of entropy goes on, a lot of destruction of intentions, where finally I'm just working with feelings and some kind of internal critical nature that is not words so much as working from the ingredients to try to find the amalgam.

AP: How do you feel about documenting performances? It seems like the music disappears and the paintings kind of collect.

TM: There are two issues there. One is the ephemeral form of dance and projection that really does go away. That never happens again. And what is recorded can become a piece in its own right. I think that's rare. Every time I've seen

a film of a work that uses projected light and projected images it never has the feel of the live piece. It just doesn't come up to the life exposition. I think it has to do with scale a little bit, and framing. When you are in the audience with a lot of people — what's the frame? You've got an audience and your peripheral vision, you've got the shape of the auditorium and all these things are wonderful as they combine with what's going on; theater is very much that way. Your world is an extension of that world and that makes it feel a certain kind of way. Take that and put it in a square screen and you've lost it.

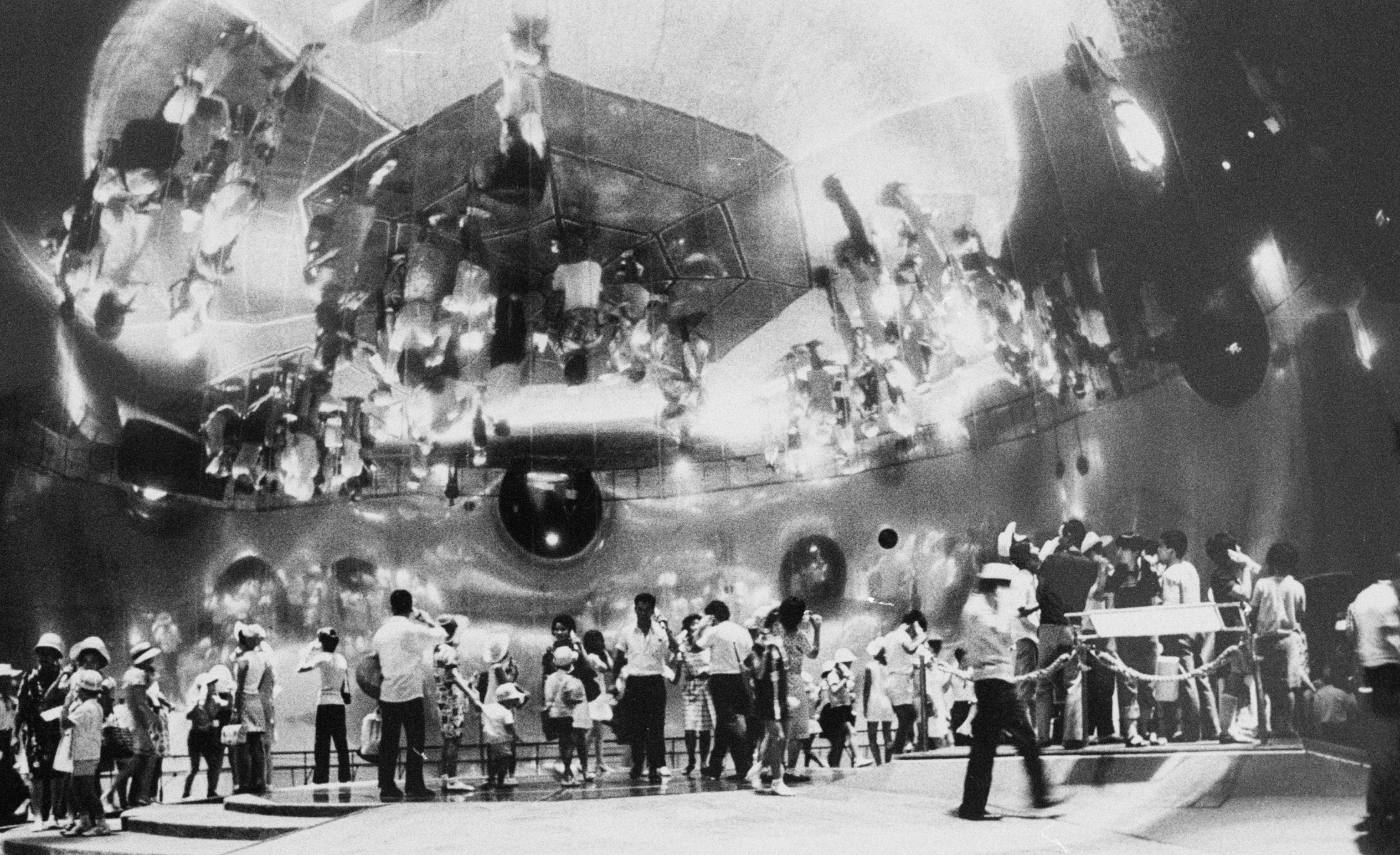
AP: You talk about the “joining place” a lot, and this idea that you're talking about right now, that these performances can only really be experienced in person because of an energy that is happening in the space between everything. What is it that makes you feel inspired to keep re-visiting something that can't really be recorded or captured?

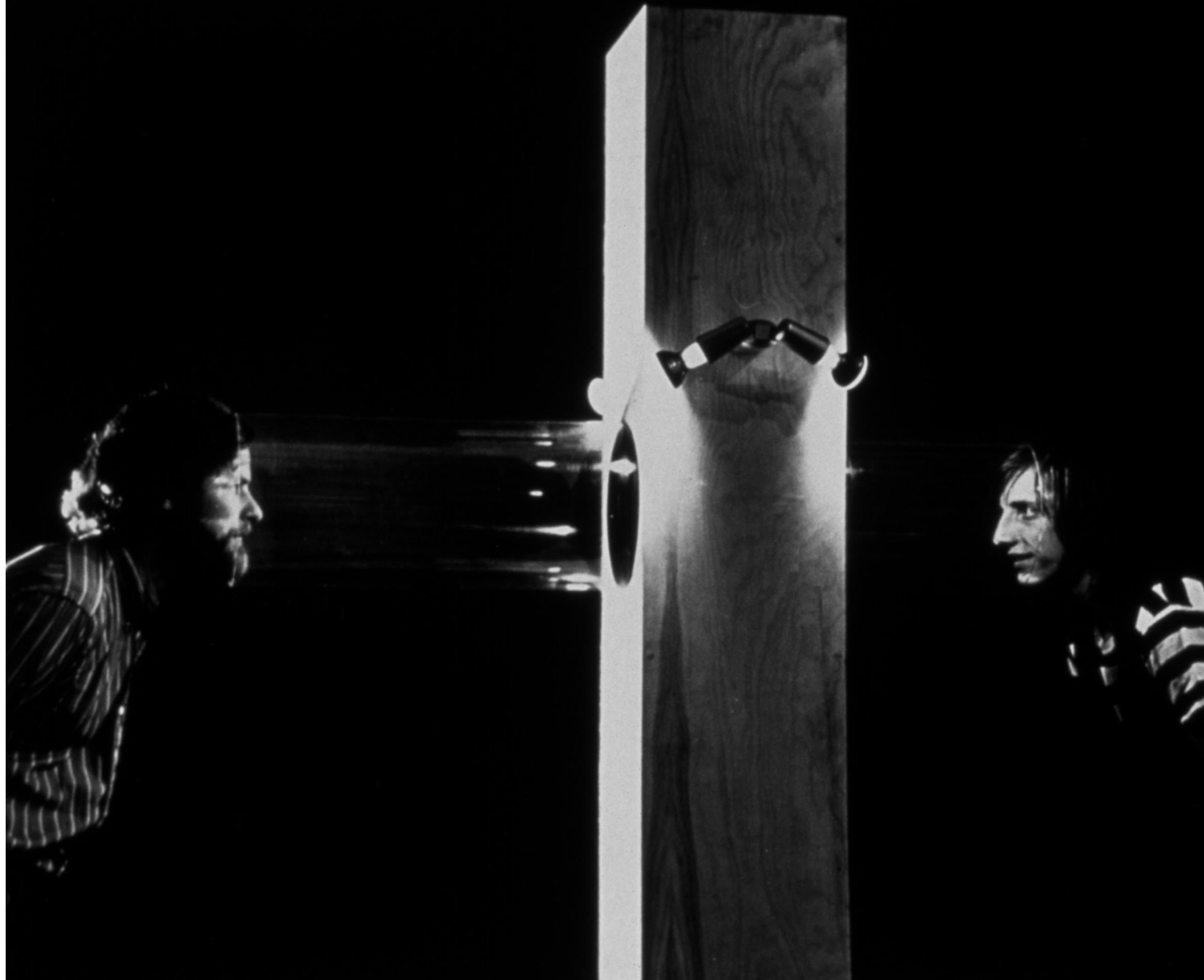
TM: The viewer participation pieces are of a certain sort. When I invite viewers to be in the piece, I'm incorporating them entirely. In other words I'm making a situation with certain kinds of equipment that uses sensors where a viewer is one of the ingredients of the piece. It's about that viewer's own feelings and own psychology and own identity. So that kind of piece relies entirely on the makeup of the view, and the choices that the viewer is going to make. I don't create the environment, I offer the ingredients and the people are the material that creates the environment. So it's not working people into my program, it's sort of me working into your program, if I can. Some of the pieces got more simple, thankfully, like a door with just one person here and one person there, and depending on how close you are to the door your image together is combined by the glass in the door. A very special glass that makes a perfect combination of both images. And the light changes on the figures so you are creating your own image combination through the door. I'm not shaping that — you are because you are choosing how to move back and forth.

AP: It seems that your idea of *You, Me, We* is the fundamental thread connecting so much of your installation work, especially the early pieces.



TM: It was about psychological aesthetics you could say. The *Game Room*, going outward from the *You, Me, We* [pieces] also has some of that idea of the you and me together in a bigger space. It was a socially oriented piece. It was about societal relationships and it stemmed back to the piece that I did with Anna Halprin where I made an environment — an interaction maze that didn't use any electricity. It was all things to touch and feel and look at and open windows and look through to other people and they would open doors and windows. Room size. And you'd make a journey in and out of this space with other people interacting through physical, visual, and sound. Word-wise, people could write words, there was a graffiti wall where





you could change other people's poems. That's where that began for me — the more social-oriented pieces.

AP: It's interesting that *The Door* makes you think of your individuality, but it's also forcing you to think of your individuality from the perspective of being outside of yourself. You are more self-conscious but in a way that's looking partially from the point of view of another person.

TM: There are certain kinds of self-identity that I don't think about. What I like to explore in these pieces are extensions of other people beside yourself, and how you can relate to other people outside of yourself but also how you are not a rigid quantity. You are a vulnerable, changeable, expandable and contractible entity. So where is your identity? I always thought that it was a kind of mistake for me to try to find my identity. That isn't the way that I was going to get it. I was going to get it by doing something or making something. So the whole issue of identity is a big issue for me but I don't think that I define it in standard ways. I'm a little wary of identity as a thing. Usually, identity is invented.

AP: Your parents were muralists for the Works Progress Administration in Knoxville, TN. This government organization created a significant amount of jobs during the Great Depression and the paintings that were created were social pieces with a message. You were an infant at that time, but do you think this had anything to do with your attitude towards what you're doing?

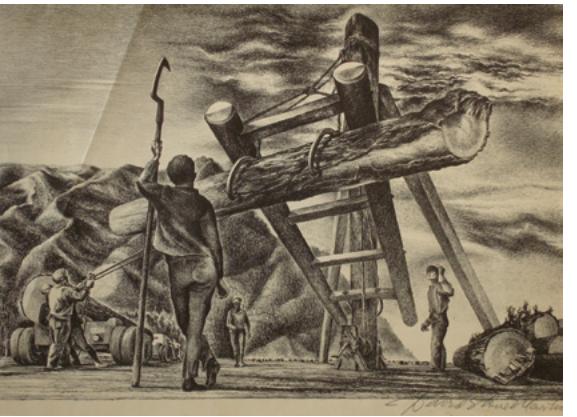
TM: It definitely did. I grew up in an environment of that social-progressive thinking. My parents and my parents' friends were all people who saw a lot of the struggle of the world and society. They saw depravation and the polarity between the rich and the poor. The way we are seeing again so much. They saw real evil, they saw fascism, and they saw the polarity of people who were subjugated, and they wanted this to improve. The migrant workers used to come to New Jersey to pick potatoes and [my mother] would sign them up for Social Security and stuff like that. They were always involved in activities that were in some way trying to benefit social interaction and to make basic equality between people. That was there in their consciousness and a lot of people of that time. It was an era where that kind of thinking was making big changes in America in good ways. When I was making my first piece it wasn't planned. I was just sort of in a daze, building these things because it felt like I had to do this. I wanted to make a piece for people where they change it — to think about an equation for people. A leveling. And so I definitely think that came out of my environment, [which is] more humanist in that way that we were talking about.

AP: That reminds me of mathematics, where every number is sort of equal to other numbers. They have the same status. Five is not necessarily superior to four. The formal aspect I think, abstraction can kind of do that.

TM: And most importantly, one is not more important than zero. One and zero are equally important.

AP: That's like set theory. They create all the numbers out of the void, then you name the void, and then you make a set out of that, and that's one. And then you have the name of the void and the set of the name of the void and that's two, and then you can build all of the numbers out of the void.

TM: That's exciting stuff. I love all that kind of stuff. As a kid I was always making funny things that were half science, half art. I made a telegraph to telegraph my brother in the other room. I wound copper wire on a spool for thread, connected to a battery to make a magnet, put a nail in it to make the top of it and made a key and sent the signal to the other room for my brother, and then made another one for him so that we could talk to each other. That was like an interactive art piece.



AP: The Basque sculptor Jorge Oteiza gave up sculpture more than 40 years before he passed away. He won a lot of acclaim in the '50s and then one day he realized that he'd taken his art as far as he could, and declared that he "finished one day with his hands full of nothing but space." There's a lot of documentation of artists and writers that feel like one day they're done, perhaps that they've completed something — Arthur Rimbaud and Marcel Duchamp are good examples. I'm wondering what's the drive, or rather your attitude or philosophy that keeps that feeling at bay? That which keeps you going with so much energy?

TM: In my twenties, after I left the Art Institute of Chicago, and music was there for me but painting and visual experiments with other media were just beginning. I met various people who became kind of an encouraging relationship on the East Coast and the West Coast. Partly because of that, and because of another huge thing that I've always felt really powerfully, that I had to give something because of how much there is. I could call it nature, but I would have to include people as well. How can so much happen without having some kind of response? How would there be a way to feed back into nature? Like plugging back in. The more of the world I saw, the more I wanted to somehow find a way to plug back in, not for self identification but for relating to it. I wanted to have some kind of clear relationship, like hugging a tree. How do you hug the universe? Being out there in California was kind of like an observation or an absorption process for me, where science and art and life were very much the same world. So, what I would see in nature would be forms of different sorts that I inquired about, and looked at, and read some about. There was a book on water and how water moves, [*Sensitive Chaos*] by [Theodor] Schwenk, and I loved that book. It was about the dynamics of water. That fed right into how I was feeling about plugging into nature and giving something back and somehow relating to it. The world is really saying a lot of things these days, and that has me going. Some of

that wants to come out through what I make, and some of it doesn't. People are like sheep and they just allow bad things to happen. So I think art can be political, I think it doesn't hurt one bit. I wish there were more direct speaking. Francisco Goya has always been one of my favorite artists, the reason being because he had the responsibility. He felt the responsibility to say these things visually. So few people take that on.

AP: Well it seems as long as you feel that you have that responsibility or that connection to the greater world and not just yourself, you're going to continue to make stuff. And I think that's what we're continuing to get at, that that's who you are, and it comes out in the work. It's not so self-possessed, as a lot of art is.

TM: Self-indulgent. There are a lot of artists out there currently painting and making other kinds of art who aren't self-oriented in that way, who don't make political art, but make wonderful human-to-human art.

AP: There can even be a strong political statement in choosing to do that, too. You often use the phrase "chaos is made of very organized stuff." I was considering this Friedrich Nietzsche quote from *Human, All Too Human*, "At the waterfall":

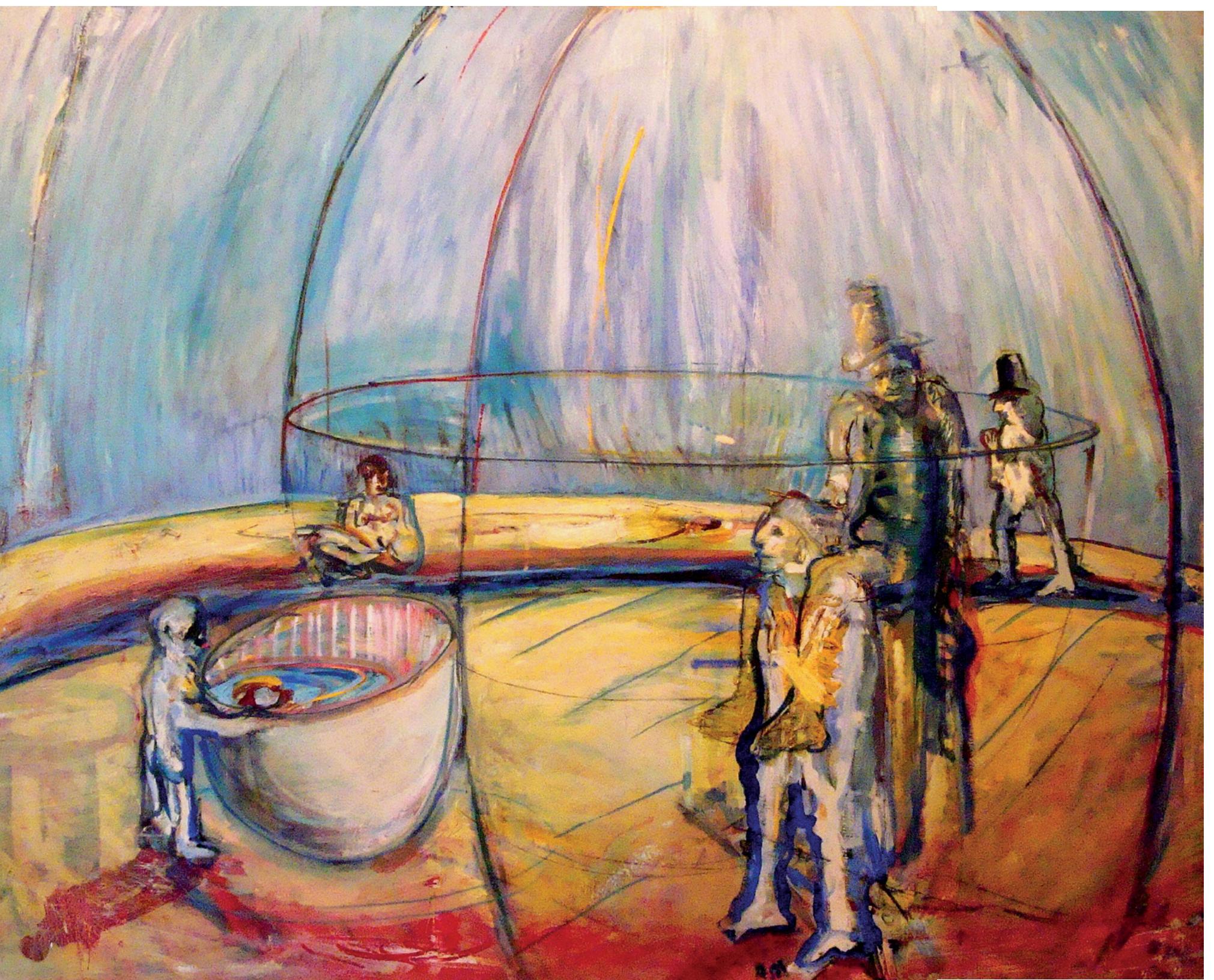
When we see a waterfall, we think we see freedom of will and choice in the innumerable turnings, windings, breakings of the waves; but everything is necessary; each movement can be calculated mathematically. Thus it is with human actions; if one were omniscient, one would be able to calculate each individual action in advance, each step in the progress of knowledge, each error, each act of malice. To be sure the acting man is caught in his illusion of volition; if the wheel for the world were to stand still for a moment and an omniscient, calculating mind were there to take advantage of this interruption, he would be able to tell into the farthest future of each being and describe every rut that wheel will roll upon. The acting man's delusion about himself, his assumption that free will exists, is also part of the calculable mechanism.

Although this passage was written historically to challenge Christian ideas of good and evil, the description of the waterfall here is also relevant to your practice. In the way that a rainbow is created from the sun coming out after the rain, there are all these factors that collide in nature to create something — similar to how you play with elements to build a visual composition.

TM: I think that's part of what every artist and scientist ends up dealing with. Measurable and not measurable actually happen at the same time.

AP: And that's what chaos is.





TM: Because things are changing too quickly, in the process, that you can't quantify it.

AP: Continuous reactions.

TM: You'd have to quantify it over time, and then what do you have? So that's where chaos is a really interesting concept. I've thought about it for my work, as well, where it really is made of organized stuff. That doesn't mean that the organized stuff is absolutely definable. Observing nature becomes a kind of internal dictionary over time. You see a lot as a child and a lot of what I've accumulated I think happened early on. I just love the shapes on the backs of turtles, or of fish, and the patterns, and the relativity of tiny and big at the same time. Big patterns that have tiny ingredients that make bigger patterns. You can see the makeup of the little, tiny configurations of a leaf, as well as the veins, and the shape of the entire leaf. If you look at it long enough, at a leaf, you'll find a lot of the ingredients of the form that are wonderful, large and small aspects of the leaf. But I wouldn't want to quantify that because the next leaf is different. That enters into the same philosophy: There is no sameness, really. The two leaves are unique. So within the same genus, there are differences. And that is what the *Game Room* is partly about, there are all these crazy individuals, and how crazy, and how wonderful, and what a dance, what a dance these differences make.

AP: It's like you were saying about identity in general. That if you define it, you limit its possibilities.

TM: There are some wonderful mathematical books on function geometry, mathematical functions that you can draw, and make shapes of their data. And these make infinitely bendable shapes. So the painting is my own expression of that. It's like a piece of paper that can curve infinitely back on itself. Not a Moebius strip, it's a different kind of warp that can go, theoretically, into infinity, so you couldn't do it with a piece of paper, you have to do it with particles. And a lot of the world is just that, for me, it's wonderfully organized and disorganized. I just wish in a way, if I have a wish, it's that people would learn more from the non-manmade world. There's so much to learn about the manmade world from the non-manmade world. I don't feel that you can know people without knowing the mother of the people, which is the universe. A lot of the corporations, they don't care about where their resources are coming from. I think there's a self-destructive quality that's bred into humanity. I don't think the natural world has created it. I think the human world has created a suicidal syndrome, which I think is really sad.

AP: We're not merging with nature properly.

TM: People are overly anthropocentric — to a point that there's a crucial issue of overpopulation. If only people would just kind of slow down the growth in every way

there'd be some chance. It's a responsibility to have less people on this planet.

AP: I think the thing about that Nietzsche quote is he's saying that if some omniscient entity could stop time, we could calculate everything. But in actuality, you never stop time. Like the Heisenberg principle: You can know a particle's location or its momentum, but not both. So you can stop everything and then it's calculable, but once it's moving, it quickly goes beyond calculation.

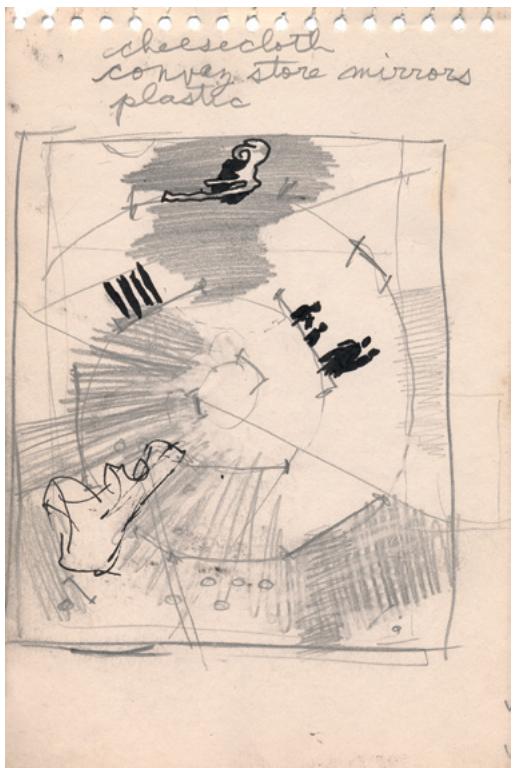
TM: I think that's the right interpretation. I was trying to get at that with the waterfall — the only way to quantify it is to think of it as being static, but as soon as it's moving, and changing, the forces are variable. You can't do it.

AP: That's the mathematical definition of chaos. It's just beyond calculation.

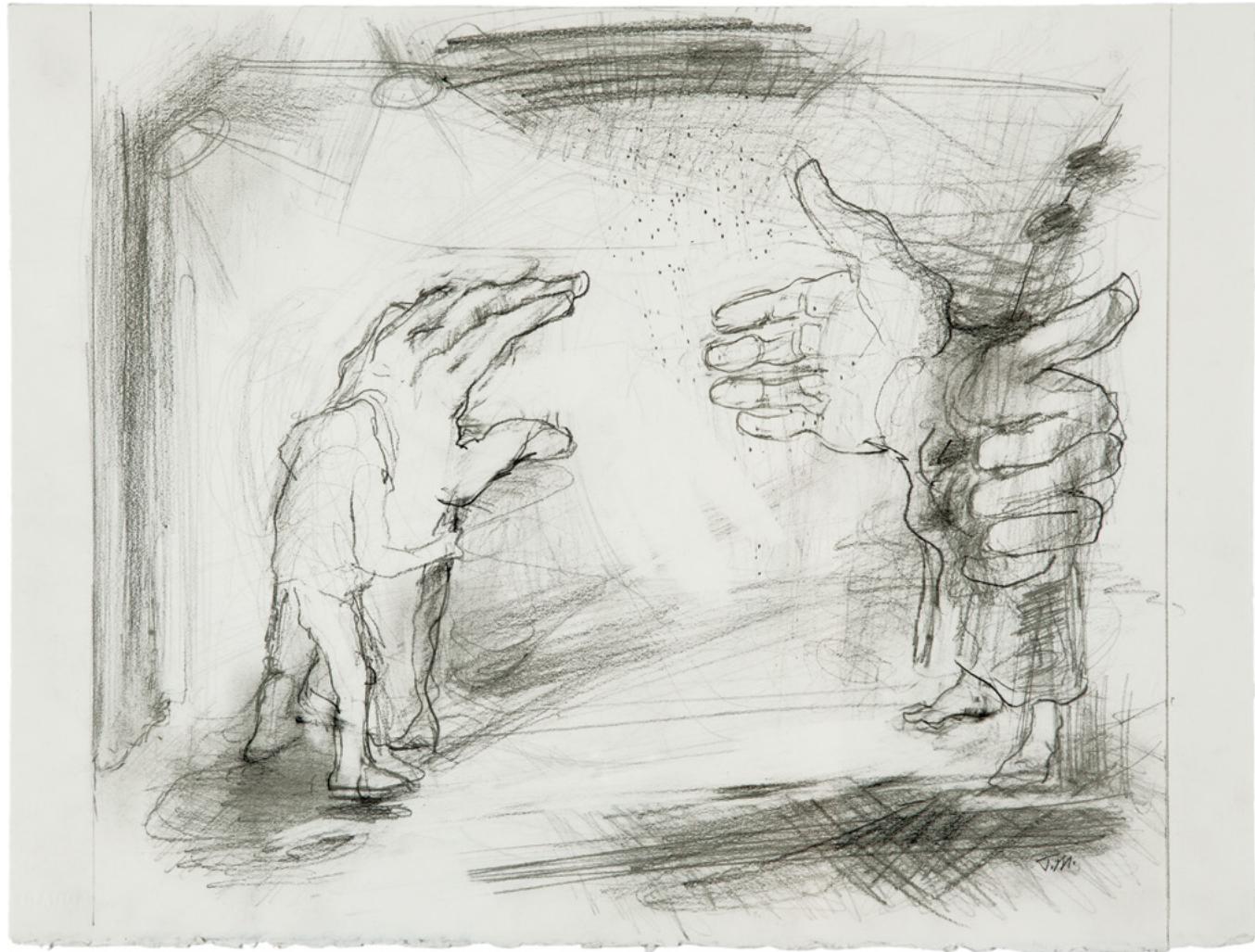
TM: Everything is in flux, but it's also a good thing that so many people have become conscious of observing. You don't want to observe things through digital processes; your eyes are not digital processes. Many people see with one eye instead of two. That's one thing you brought up with my paintings, which are always spatial. They're spatial because if I were to avoid air and volumes of space, that would be avoiding half of reality. So I could never paint a geometrically flat painting. It's just something I don't want to do. Some people do that, and they're very lovely, there are some good flat paintings out there. But it's not my world at all, because I really love the way masses and things are dependent on the things around them.

AP: Physicality...

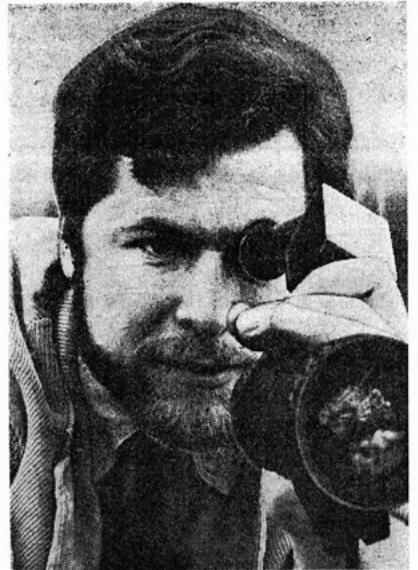
TM: My hand couldn't move unless it was in a volume of air, and what is that? It's a beautiful thing. Move around a sphere, over a form? It's always been for me a matter of the spatial and time and motion — even in painting.



This interview is a composite of several conducted by Will Cameron, Camilla Padgett-Coles, Albert Herter and Nicky Mao from the years 2010-2012. They took place in Tony's studio of 30 years in Brooklyn, New York.







ANTHONY MARTIN
A love for the baroque

PAGE 52 Thursday, Dec. 2, 1965 SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE CCCCCAA

Squiggles and Toys for an Opera

By Dean Wallace

What is it that's black and red, squiggles across the room, goes up the wall, and disappears?

The answer is neither ride nor a gag. It is part of an opera setting by Anthony Martin.

It may symbolize the transitory nature of fame and power, or perhaps the heroine's fleeting hopes. Projected on an upstage screen in the Mills College concert hall next Saturday night. December 11, it will be used in Martin's "total environment" setting for Monteverdi's "Coronation of Roppea," an opera written in 1642.

EFFECTS

Martin, an old hand at dreaming up fantastic visual effects for some of the offerings of the San Francisco Tape music center, sees nothing wrong in using the same type of light projections, films, and slides for baroque opera.

One of his favorite tricks is to place a child's toy or a cut-out figure on a transparent

horizontal plate, push it about, float it across a puddle of colored ink or dye, and project the entire animated scene through a system of mirrors onto a large screen.

"I'll use this technique and others—16 millimeter film and various kinds of slides—for the Mills College opera performance," Martin says, "but the results won't be quite as wild as some of the Tape Center experiments."

"A simple triangle, for example, will serve as a symbol for the lovers. Ottavia is symbolized by an oval. Nero, naturally, is a square—in every sense of the word."

SCREENS

And while Martin's projectors and screens produce a constantly-changing visual environment, the opera itself will be presented in its original musical style; somewhat abridged, to be sure, but following the exact scoring. Jean-Louis LeRoux will conduct a chamber orchestra and chorus, with Carole Boggard, Donna Petersen, and Edward Jameson in the lead roles.

Though an artist and filmmaker by profession, Martin's connection with music is no casual affair. He was a concert musician (classical guitar) at the age of 15, and it was not until he was 20 that he decided to make a career in the visual arts. He moved from his home near New York City to the Midwest, in order to study at the Art Institute of Chicago and later at the University of Michigan.

"One of my first loves has always been baroque music, so I jumped at the chance to do projections for 'Poppea.' My whole idea is to use the visual experience as a help toward revealing the music's meaning," he said.

After "Poppea," Martin

says he intends to investigate

the new field of "laser pro-

jection," using electronic

means to produce three-di-

mensional images in full size

and depth. The equipment is

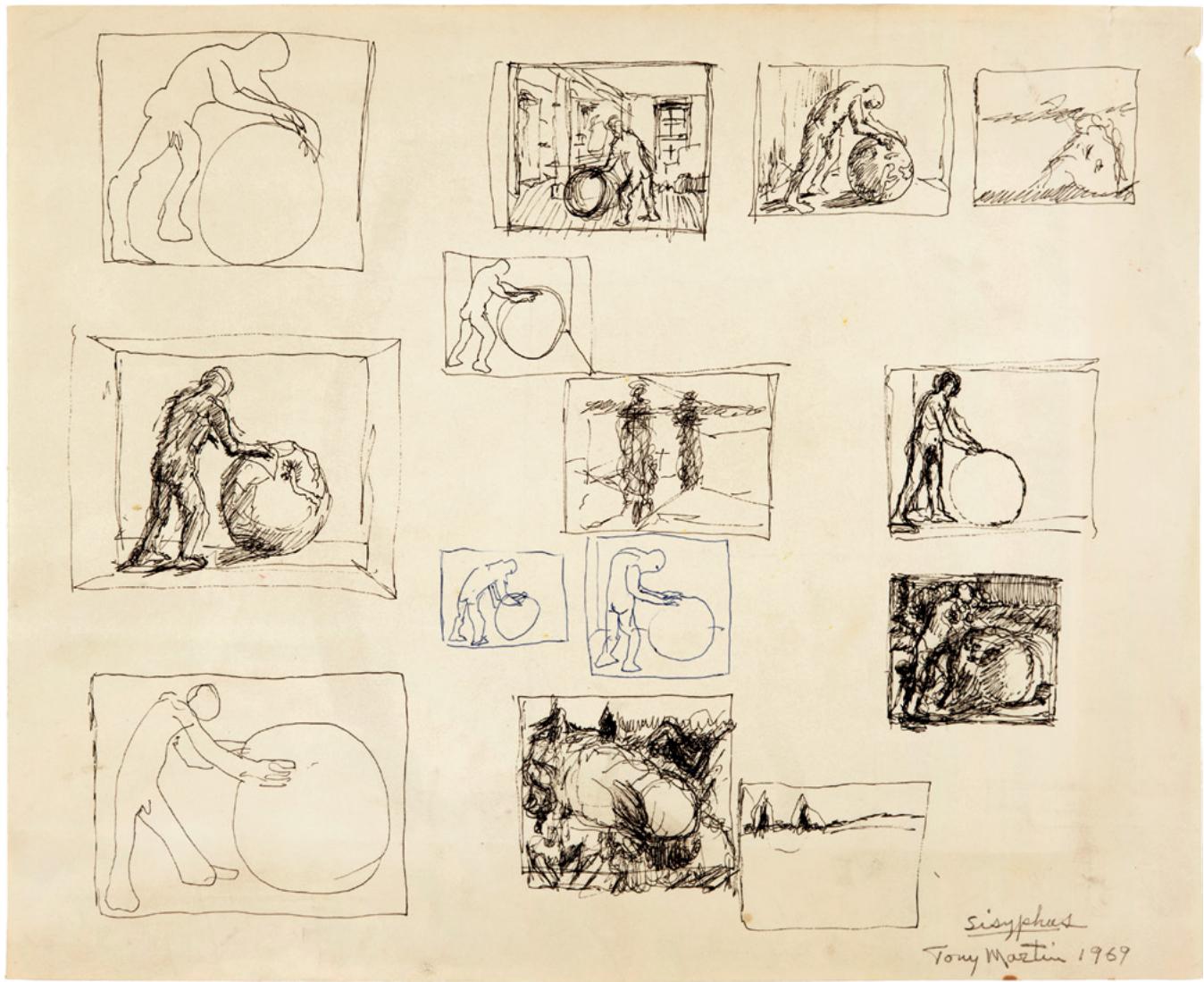
not terribly expensive, he

says, and will soon be in pro-

duction.

Think of the opera sets he can create when his black and red squiggle comes over and sits in your lap.

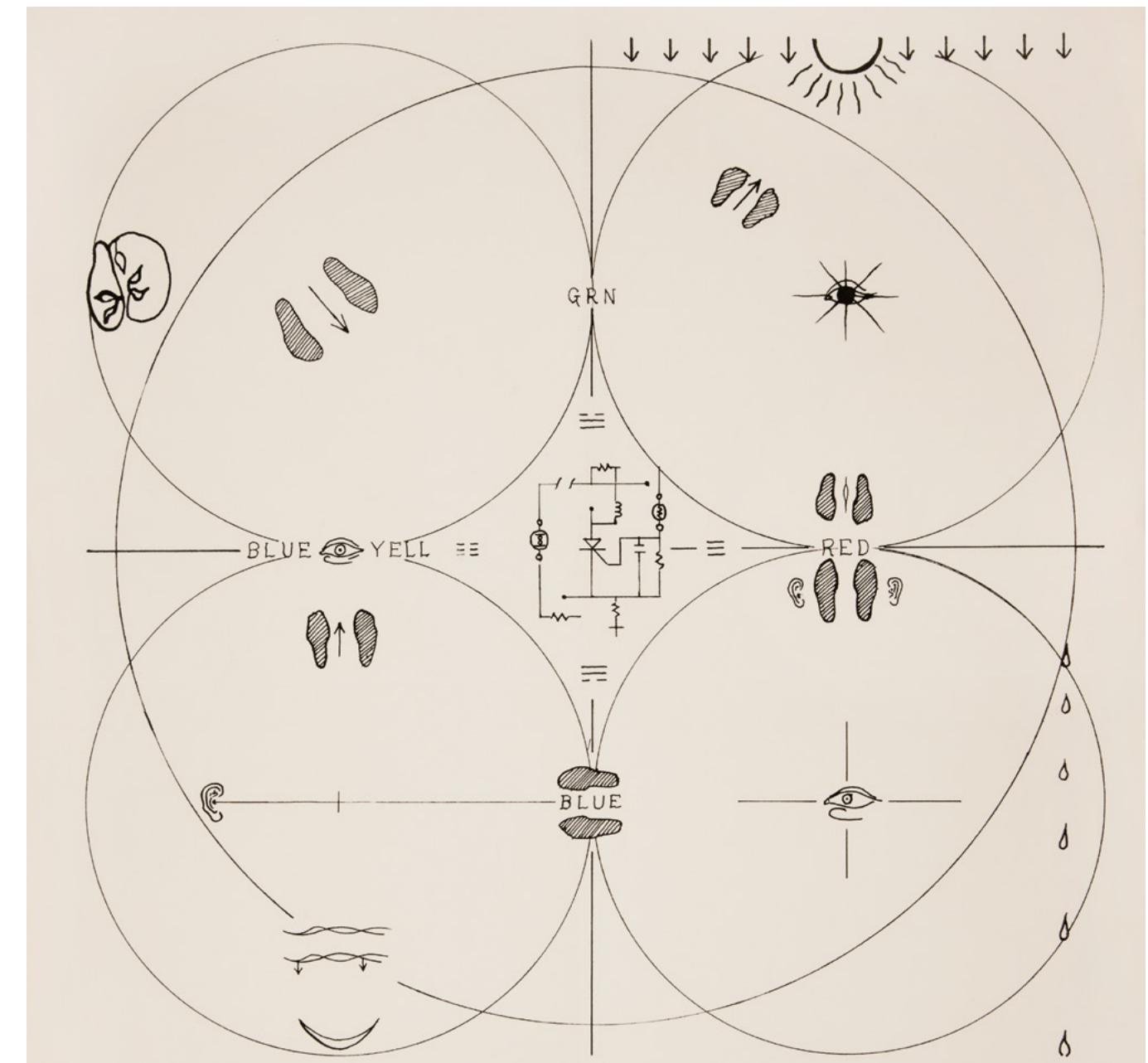




Sisyphus, drawings for painting, 1967



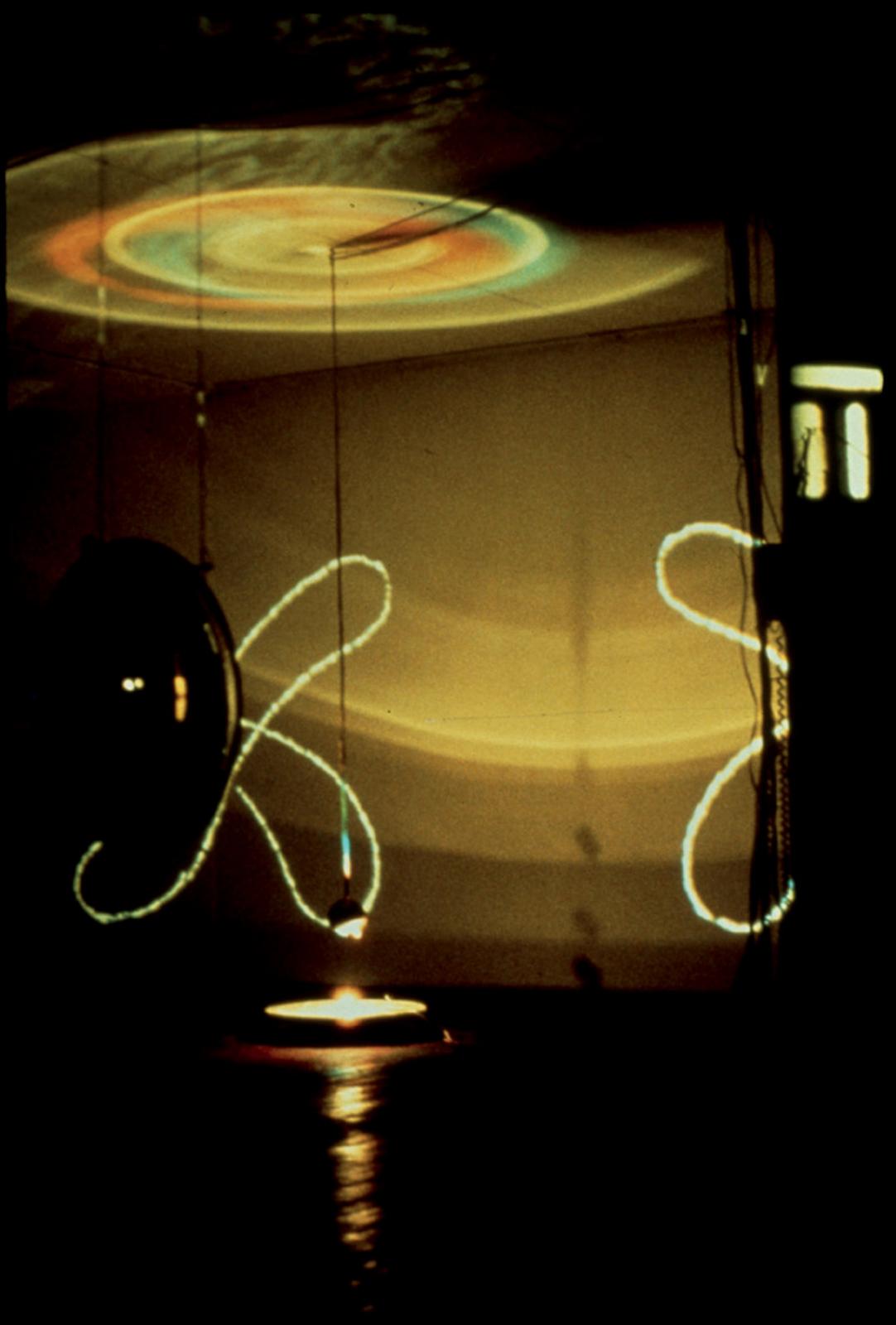
The Continuous Now, 2007

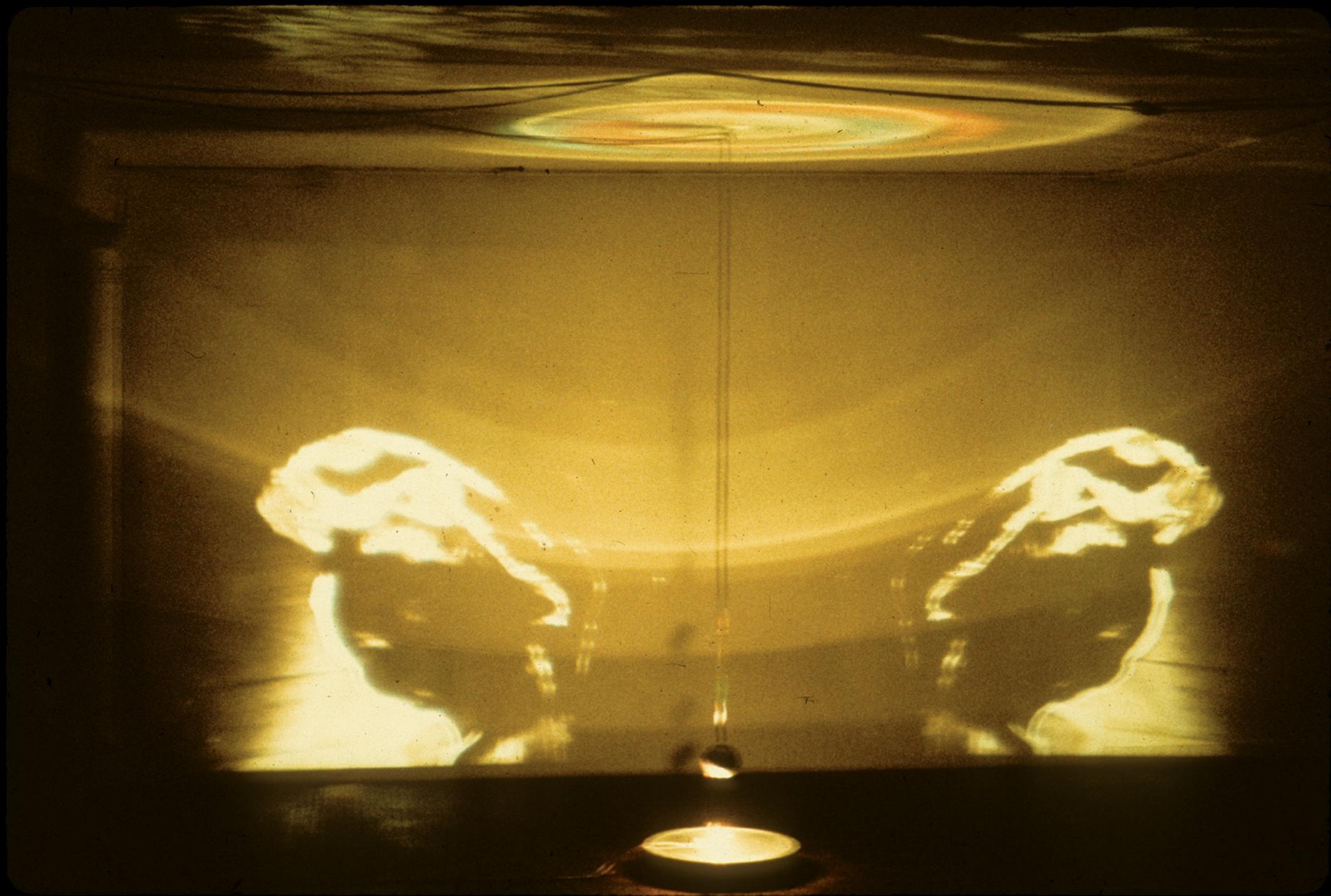


**TONY MARTIN'S GAME ROOM
and
"INVIRONMENT"**

HOWARD WISE GALLERY 50 W. 57, N.Y.C.

APRIL 6 - MAY 4, 1968





Toward Jan 2003

Notes 4/7/02

Remember, feel out, think about:

(a) Last Judgement: Michelangelo and the enormous undertaking

(b) The embodiment, mass - internal spirit and form

(c) Forms as creatures of our innards - inner resonance of cosmic or larger forces, universe

Forces as Forms, Forms as Forces, Forms as experiences

(d) The funneling to powerful simplicity

(e) The funneling bringing form, dark, light, color, closer to radiant beauty and also substance-ness beauty as it happens wondrously for us

Cezanne last watercolors

Chardin compassion universe revealed

Baroque energy Monteverdi, etc. revelational

toward Jan 2003

② 4/7/02

(f) revealing processes

apprehension - able to be felt-touched

fitting to perceptual imprint

some light, dark relationships
every body has (senses / retina)

(g) probably not dealing overtly or overtly with life-death transformation

but engaging alive, life energy and its full components joy, sorrow, encouragement and caring, discouragement & victimization

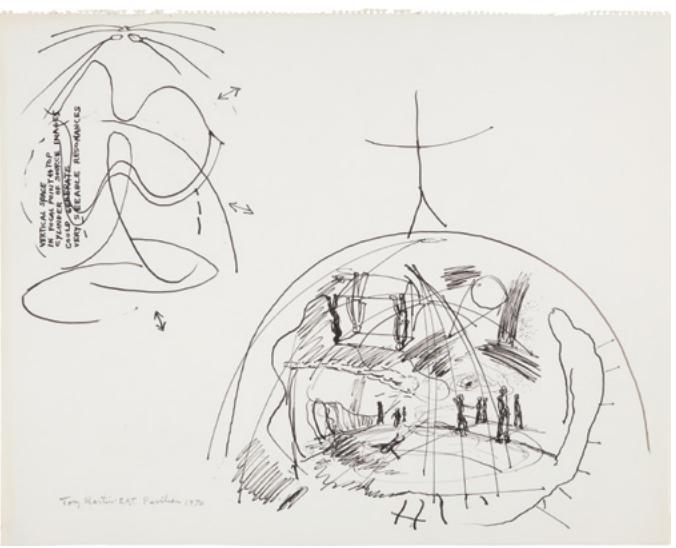
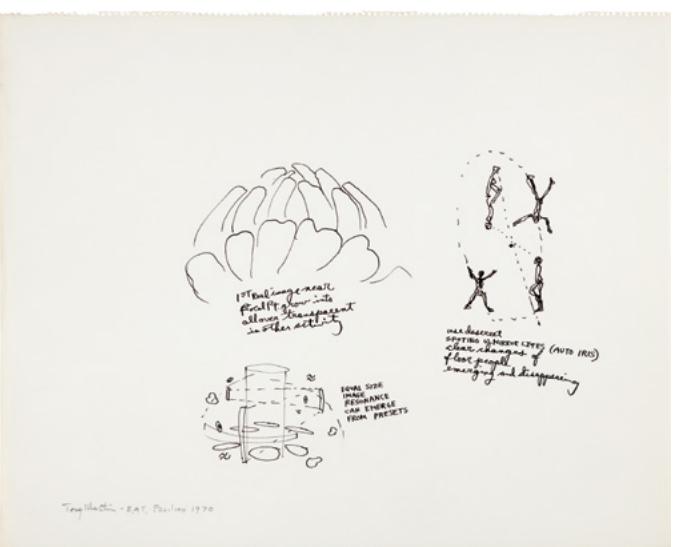
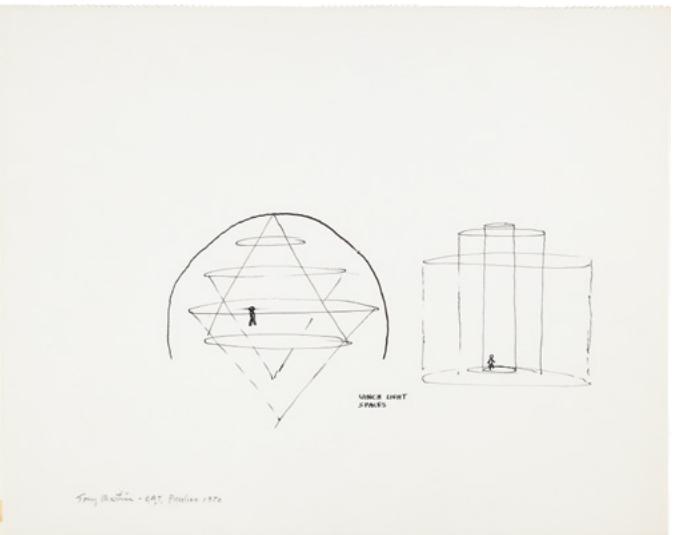
(h) Dance

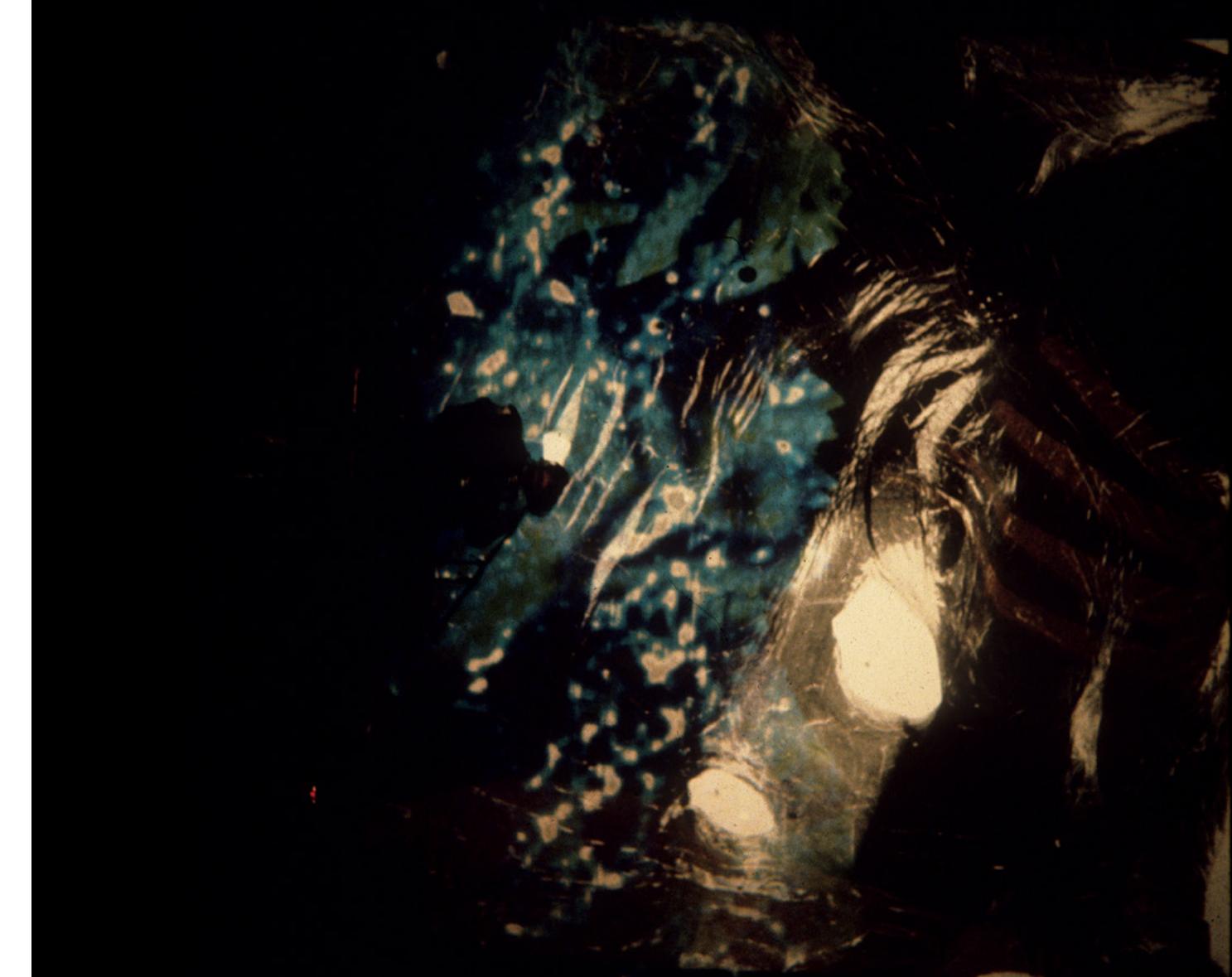
hamming it up.



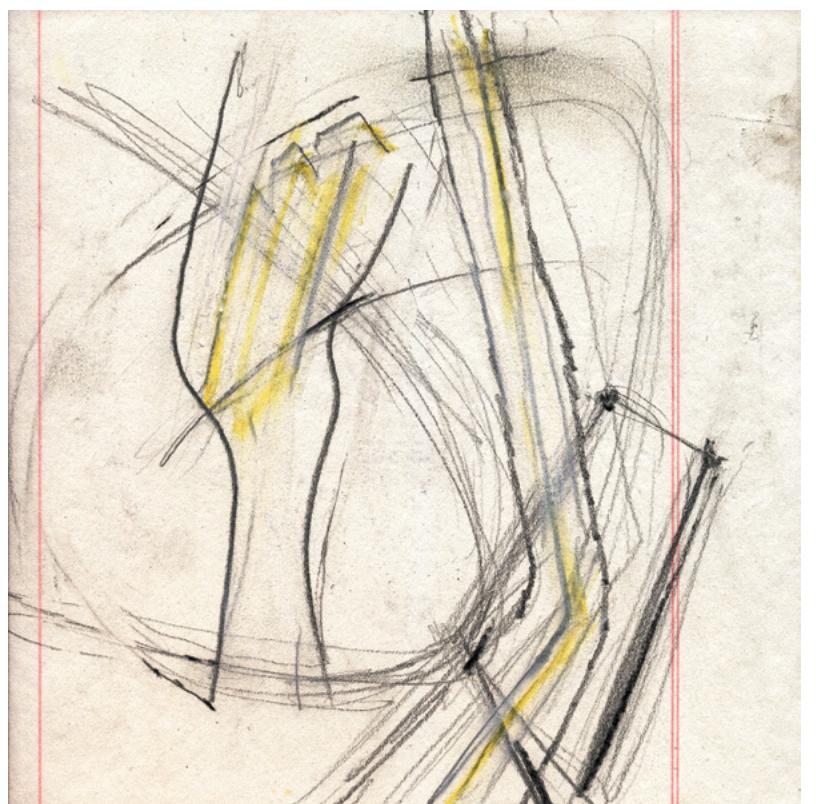
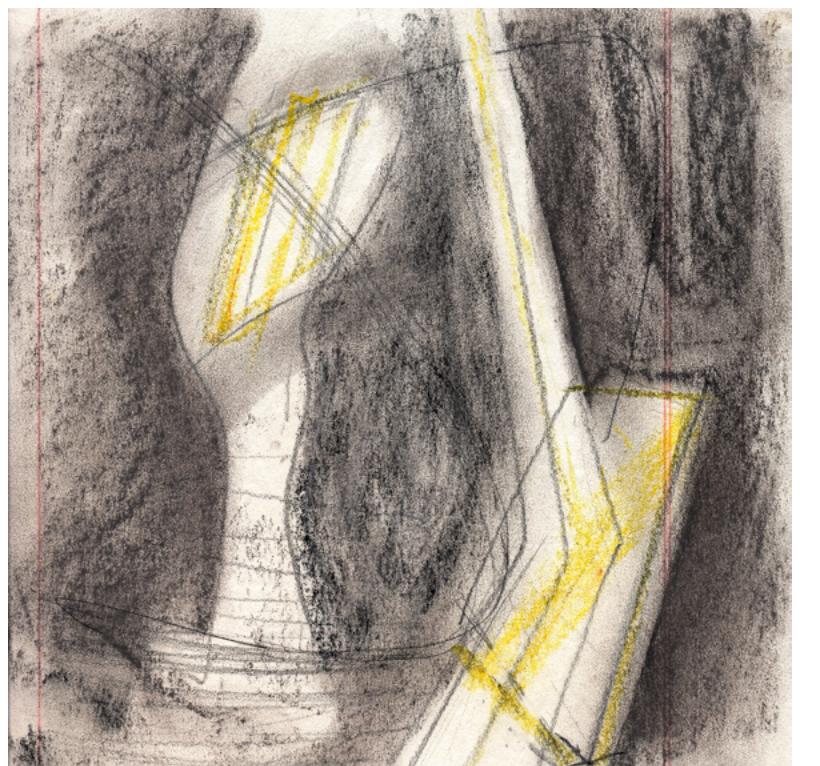
Photograph (*left to right*):
The artist, Forrest Myers
and Robert Breer at the
console, E.A.T. / Pepsi
Pavilion at Expo '70,
Osaka, Japan, 1970

Drawings for the E.A.T. /
Pepsi Pavilion, 1970

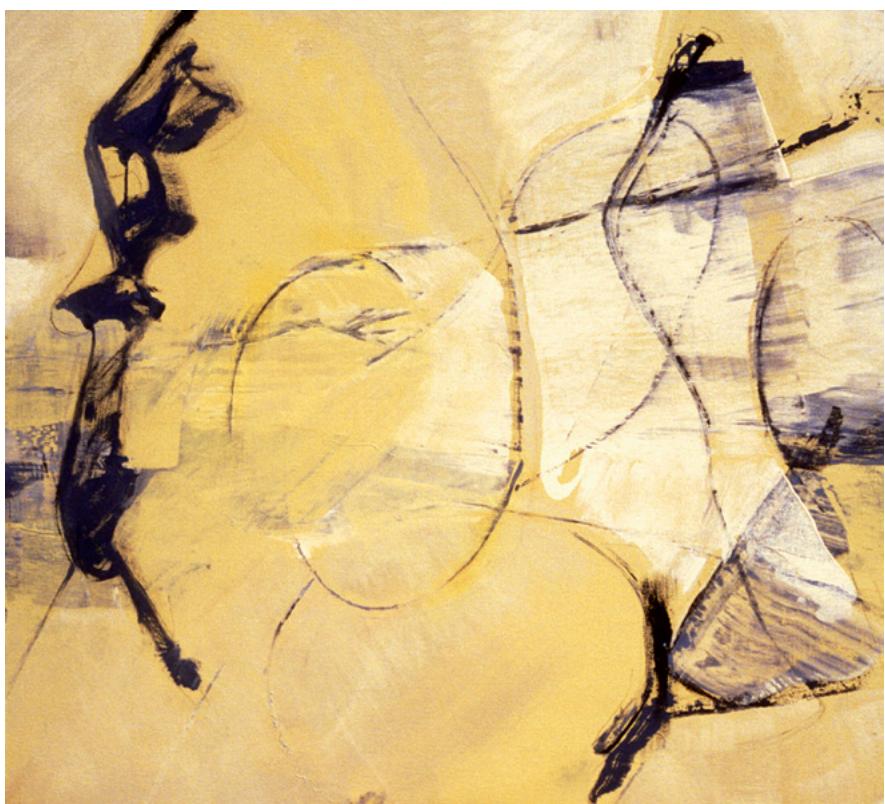
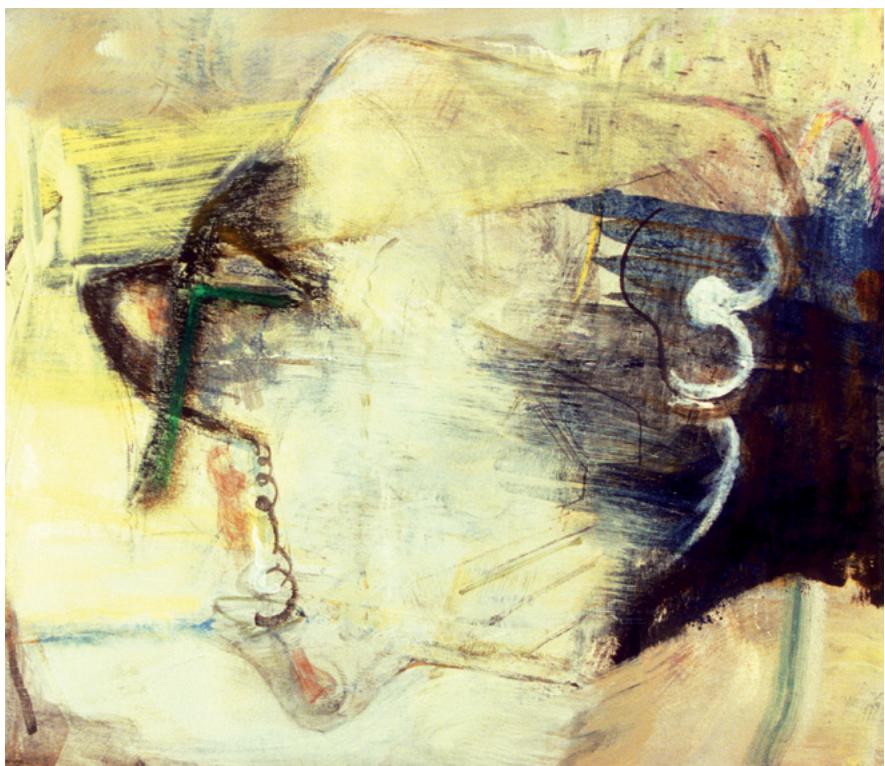




Above: Shostakovich's Room, 1961, 44" x 48" o/c Right: Multiple light projection, early 1960s



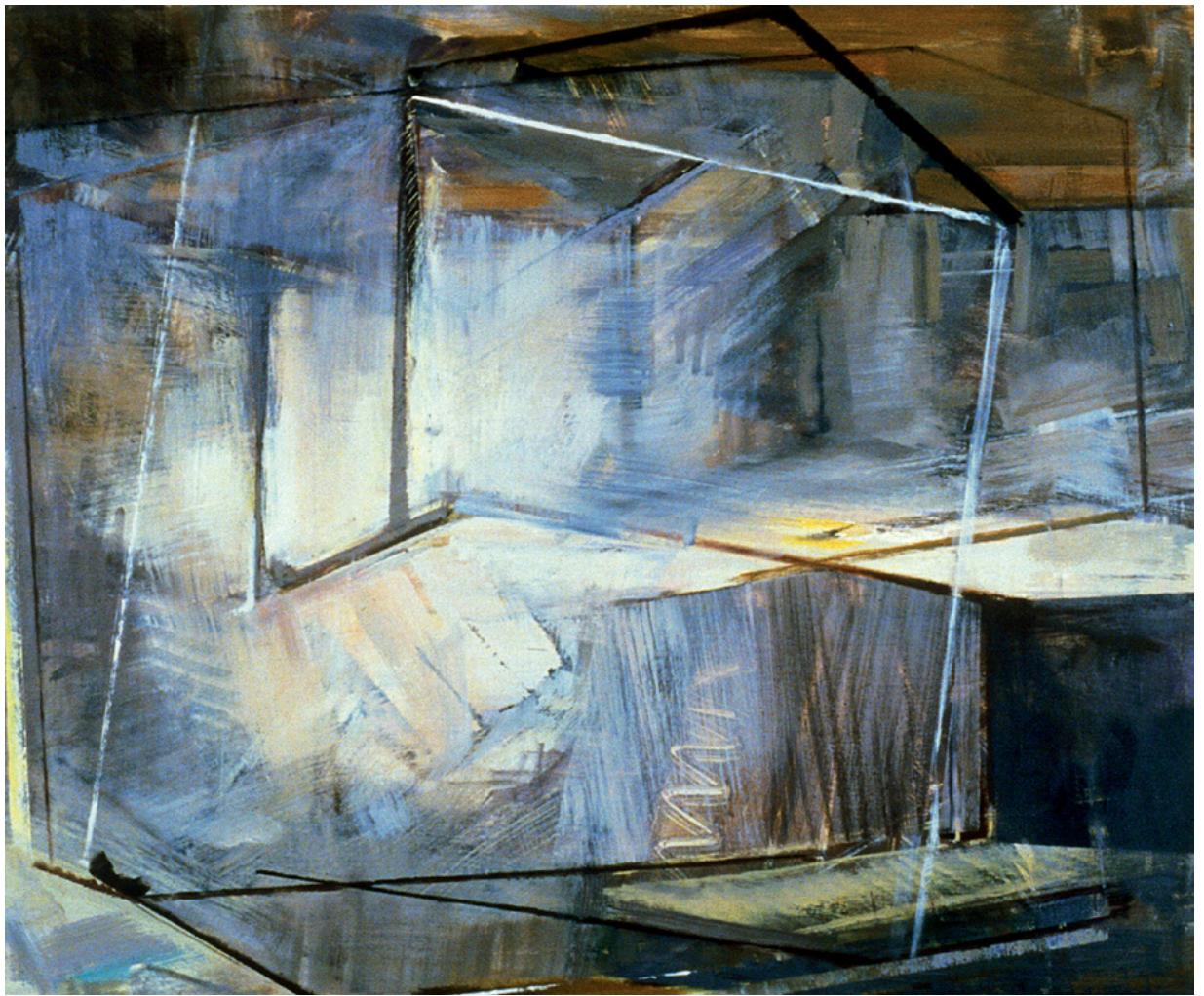
Two drawings for optical projections, 1966



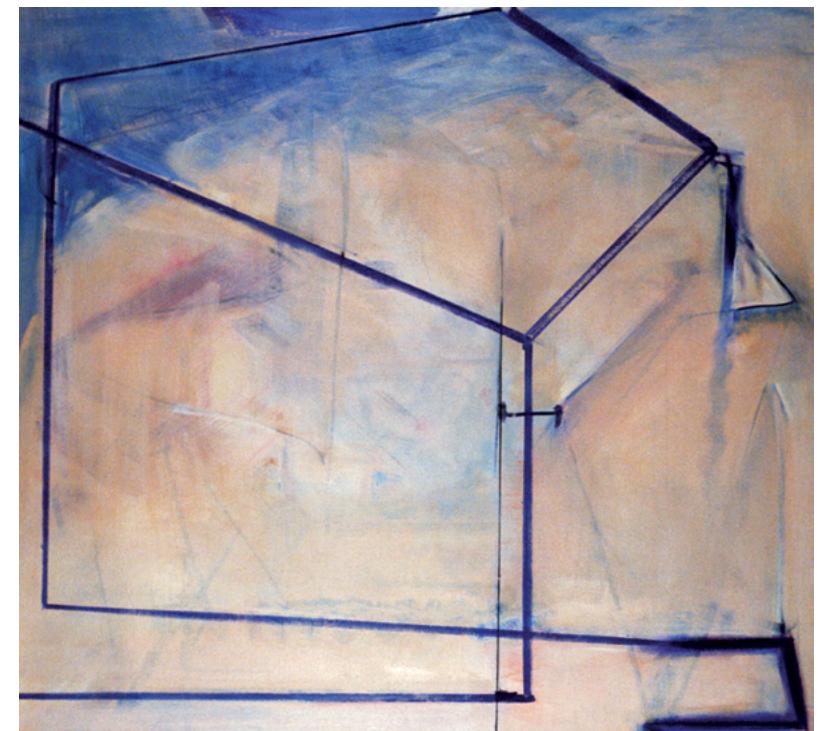
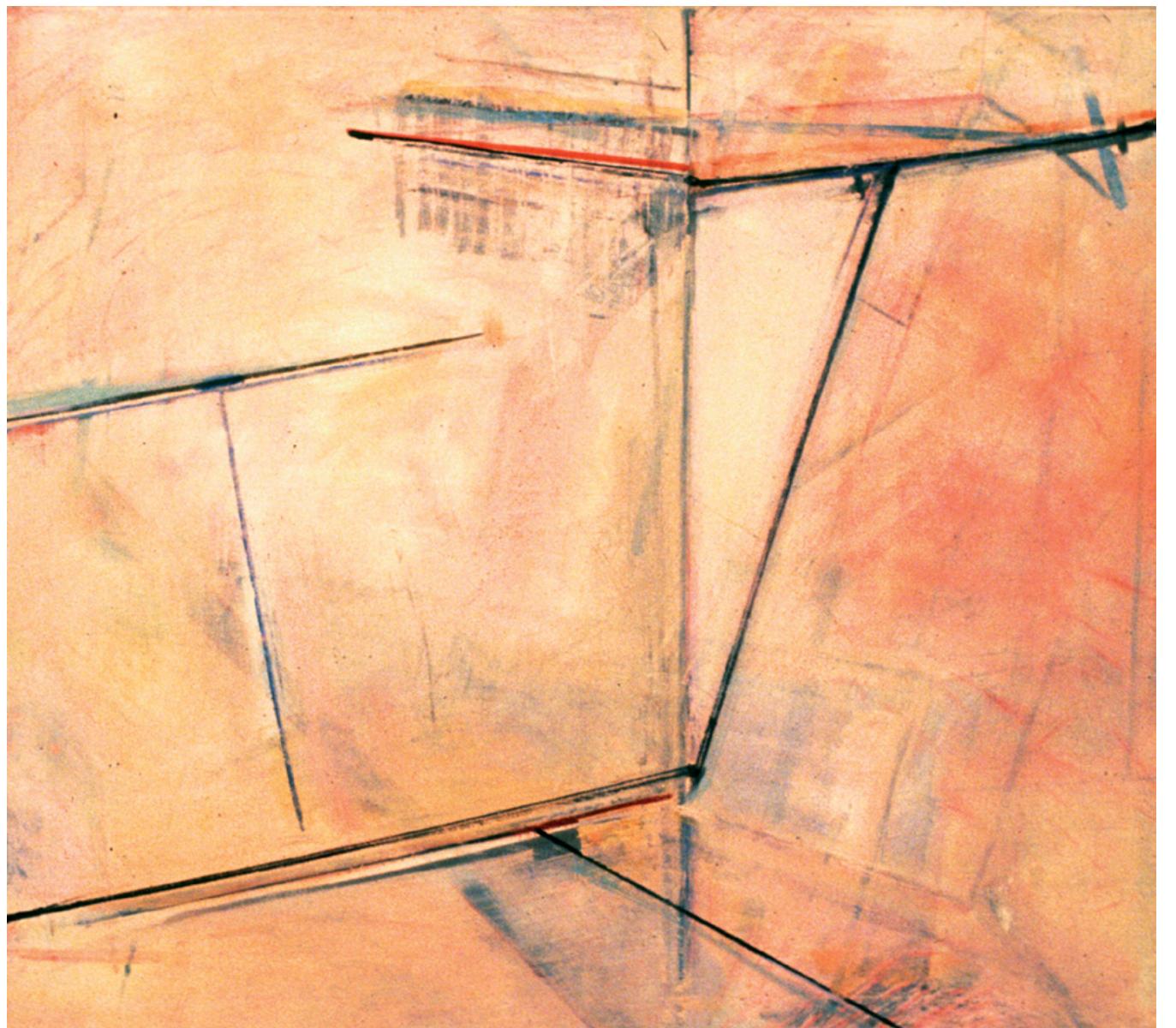
Above: *Side to Side*, 2004, 26" x 30" Below: *Sides*, 2003, 48" x 52"



Drawing, 1981



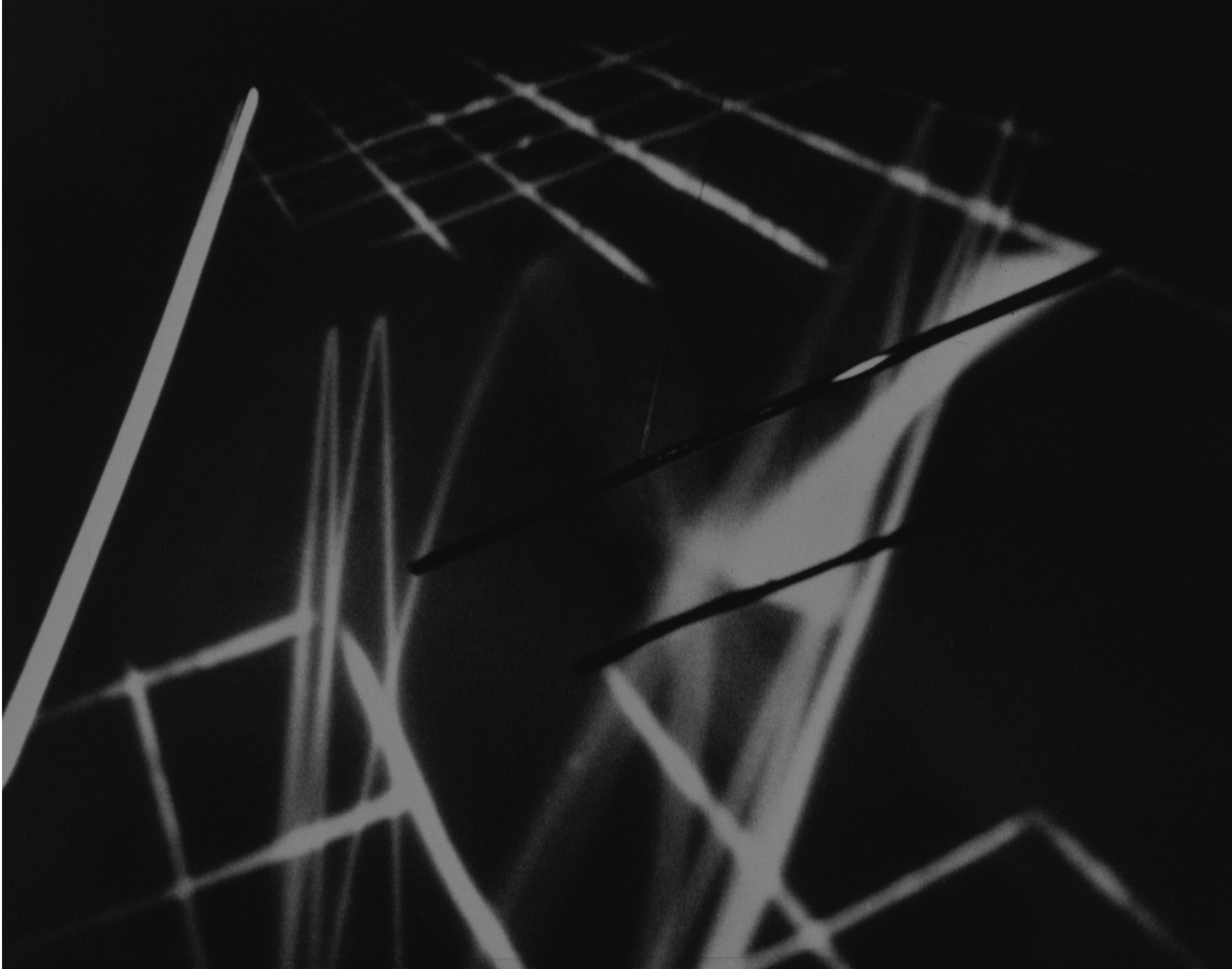
Wind Views The Dwelling, 1984, 36" x 40"

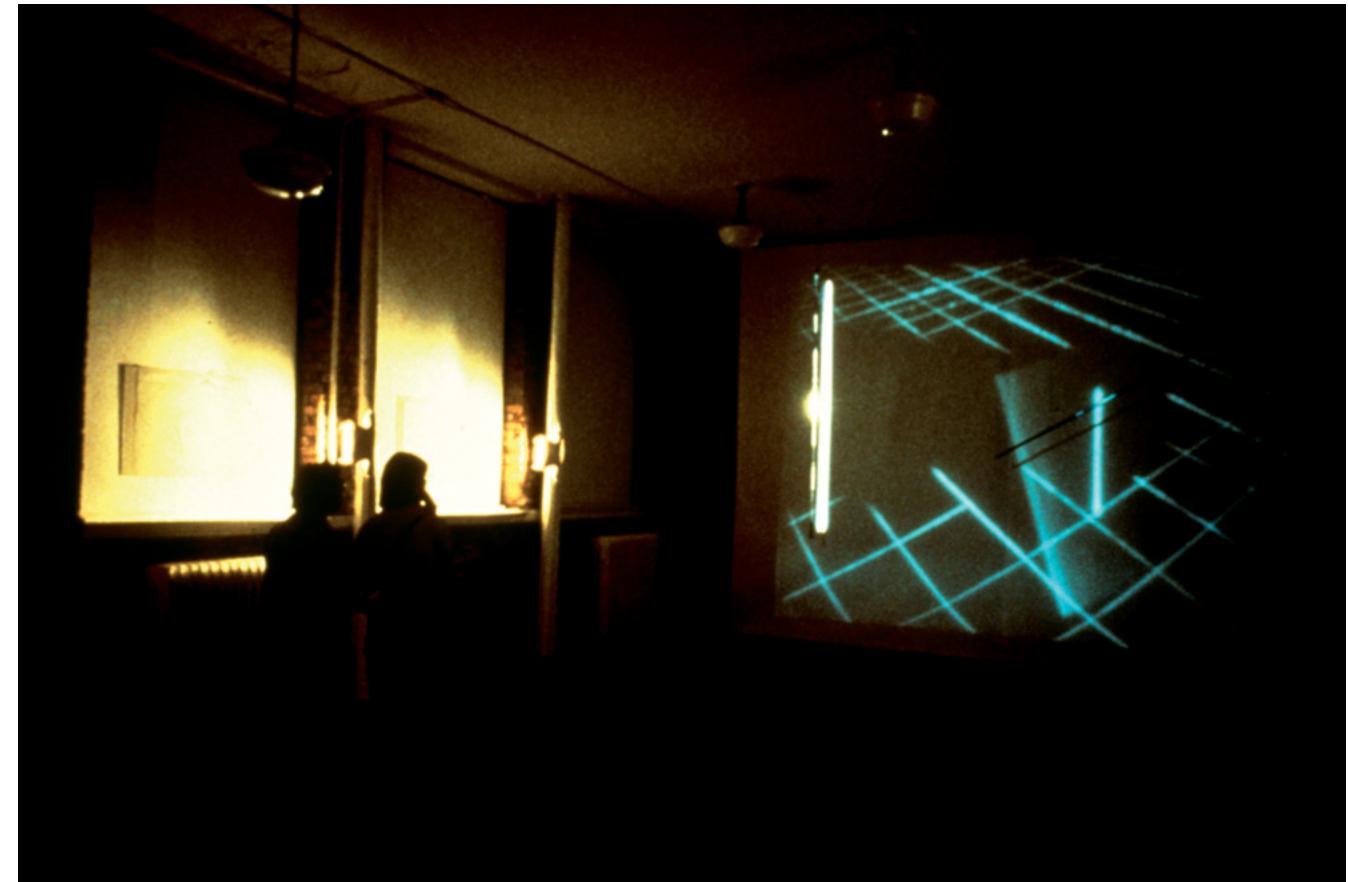
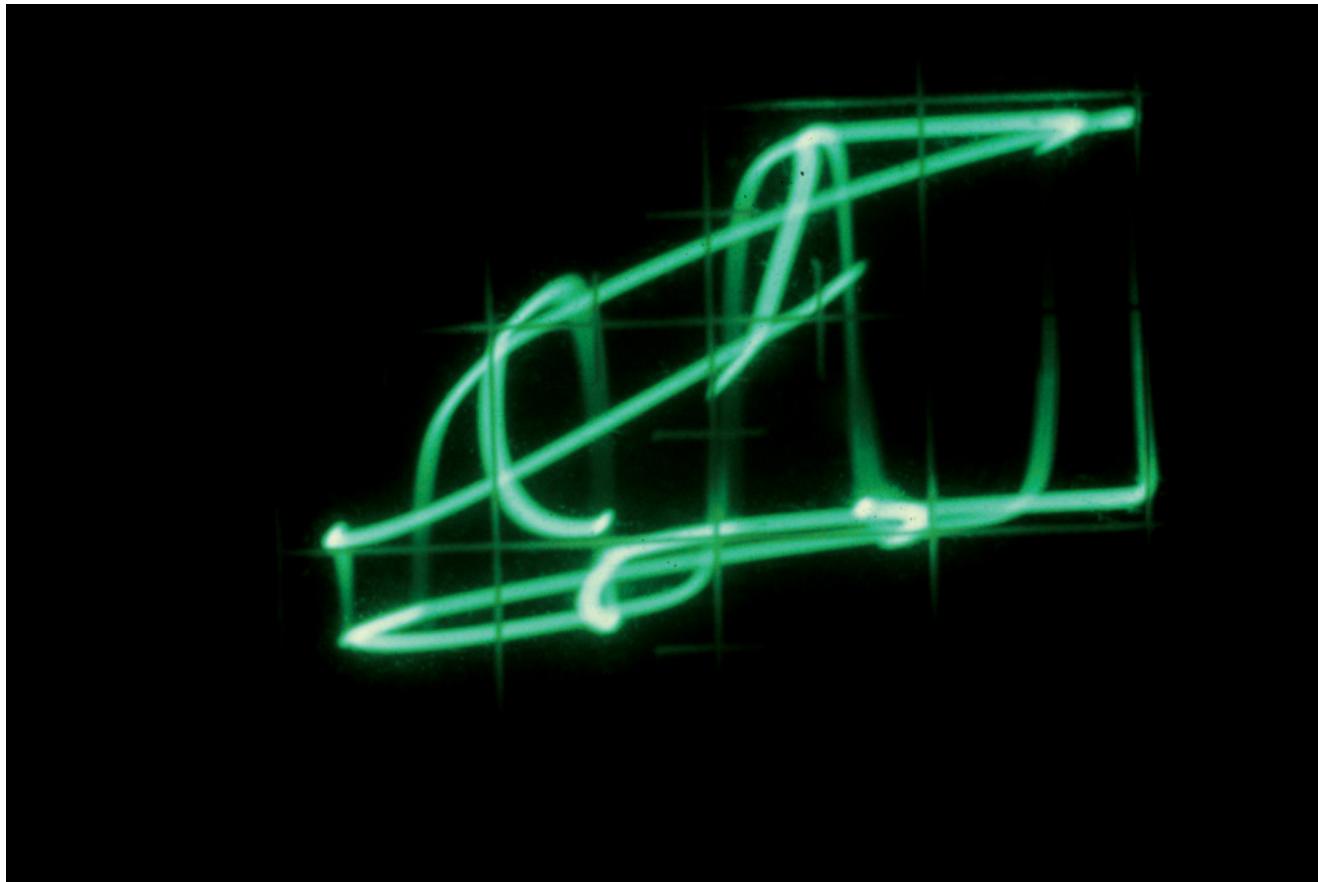


Above: *Line / Place #9*, 1977, 50" x 54" Top Right: *Line / Place # 10*, 1977, 50" x 54" Bottom Right: Drawing, 2010

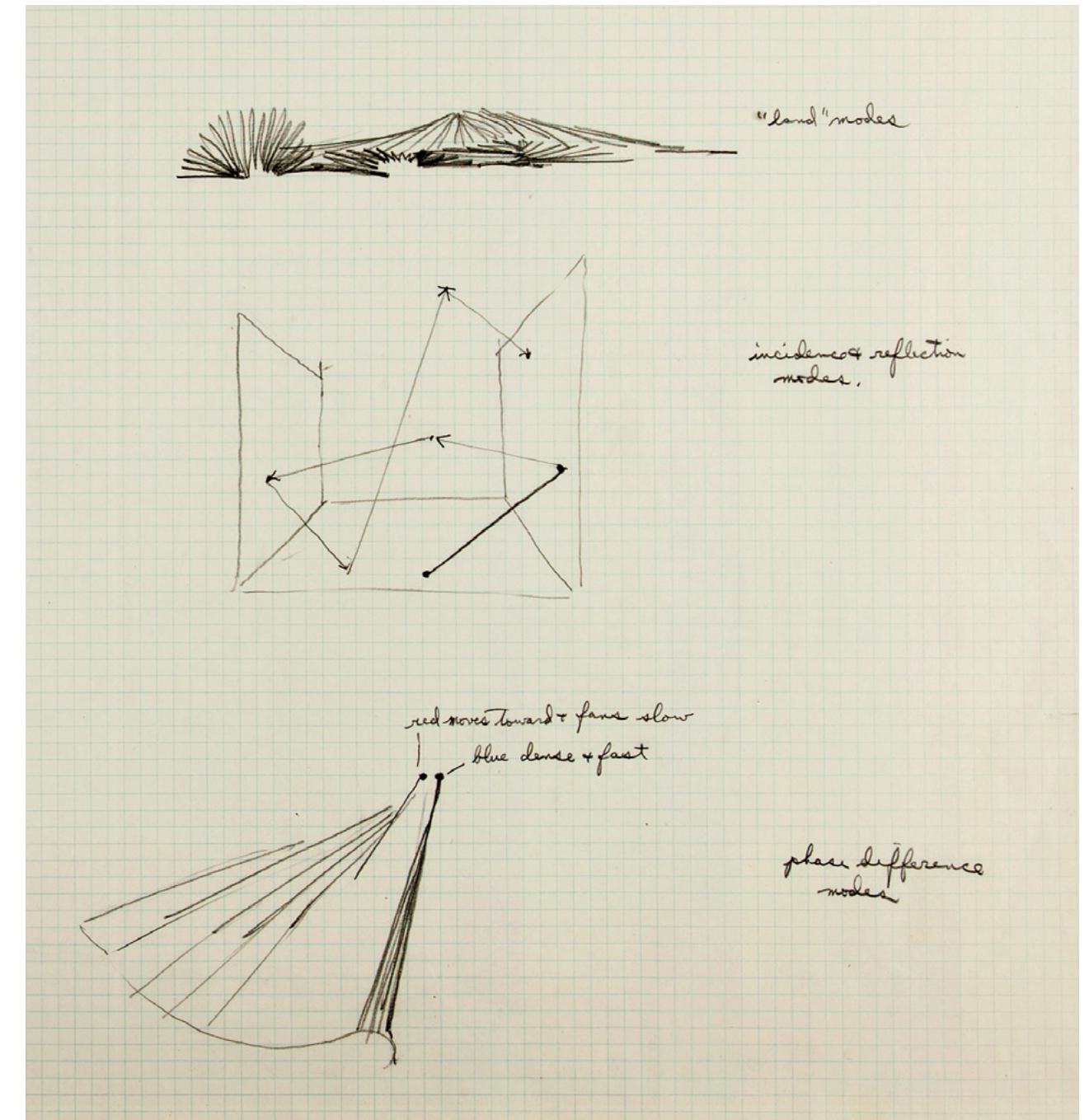
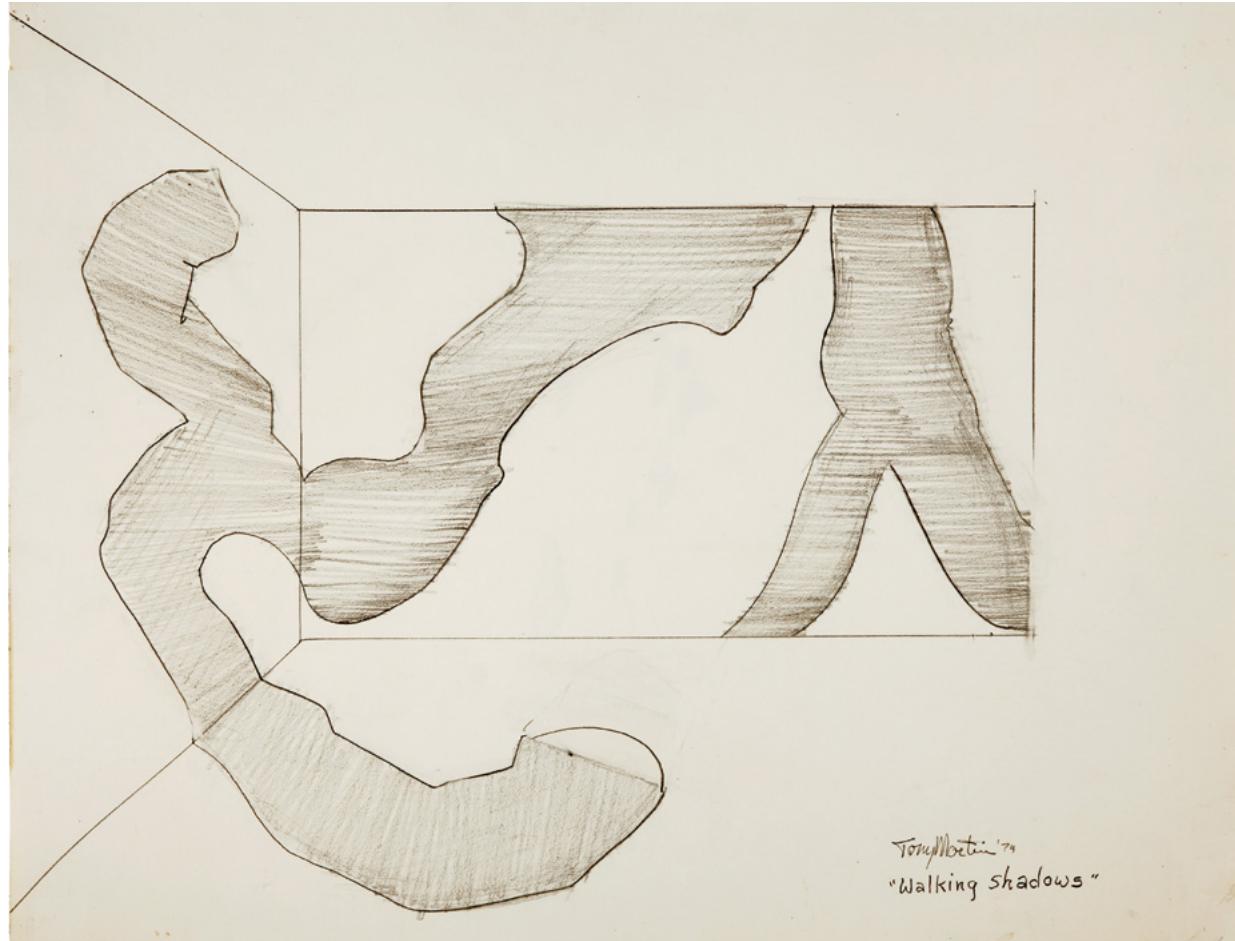


Rampworks, drawing for viewer participational sculpture, 1971



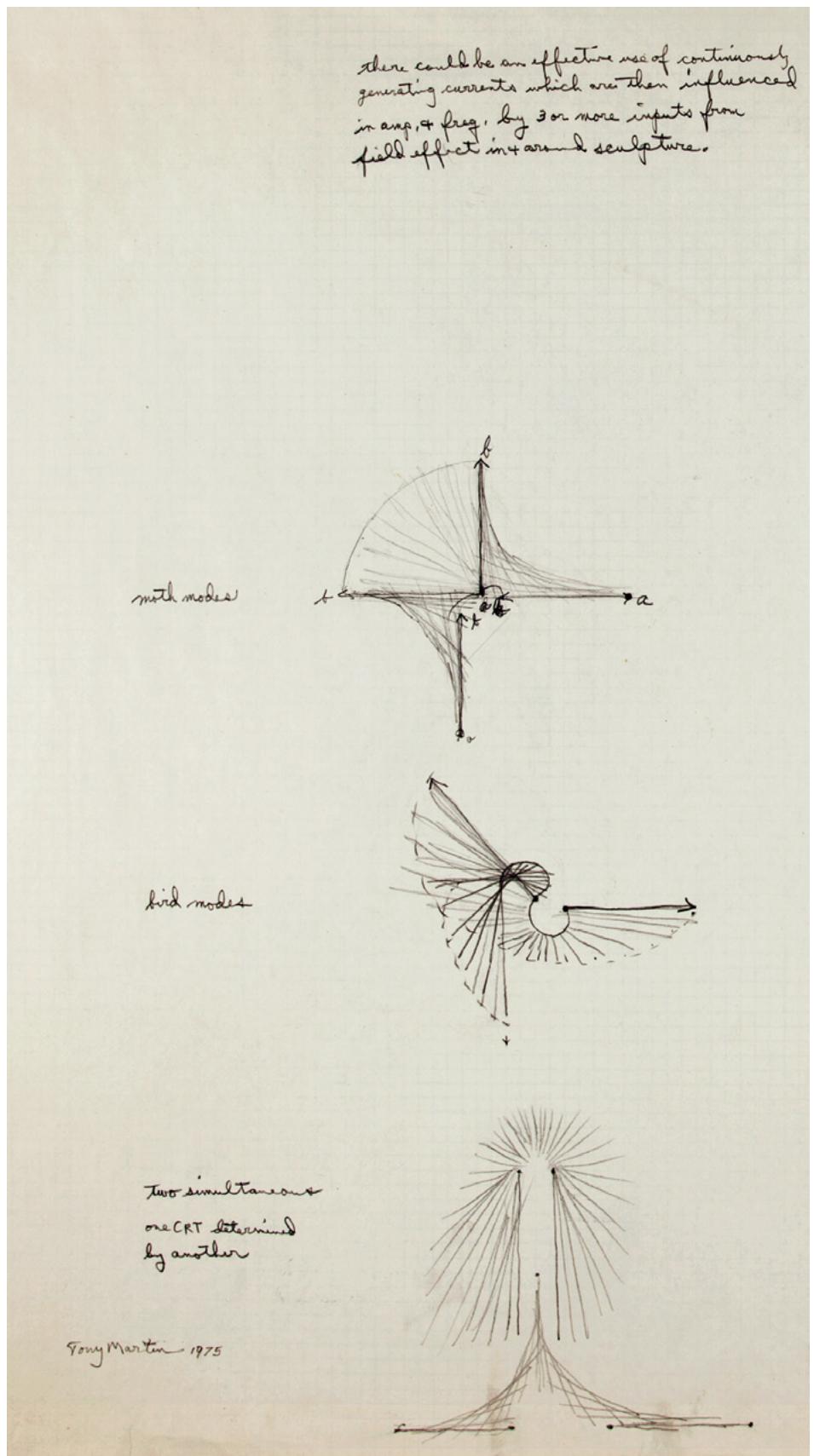


Vector Image Wall, PS 1, New York, 1980

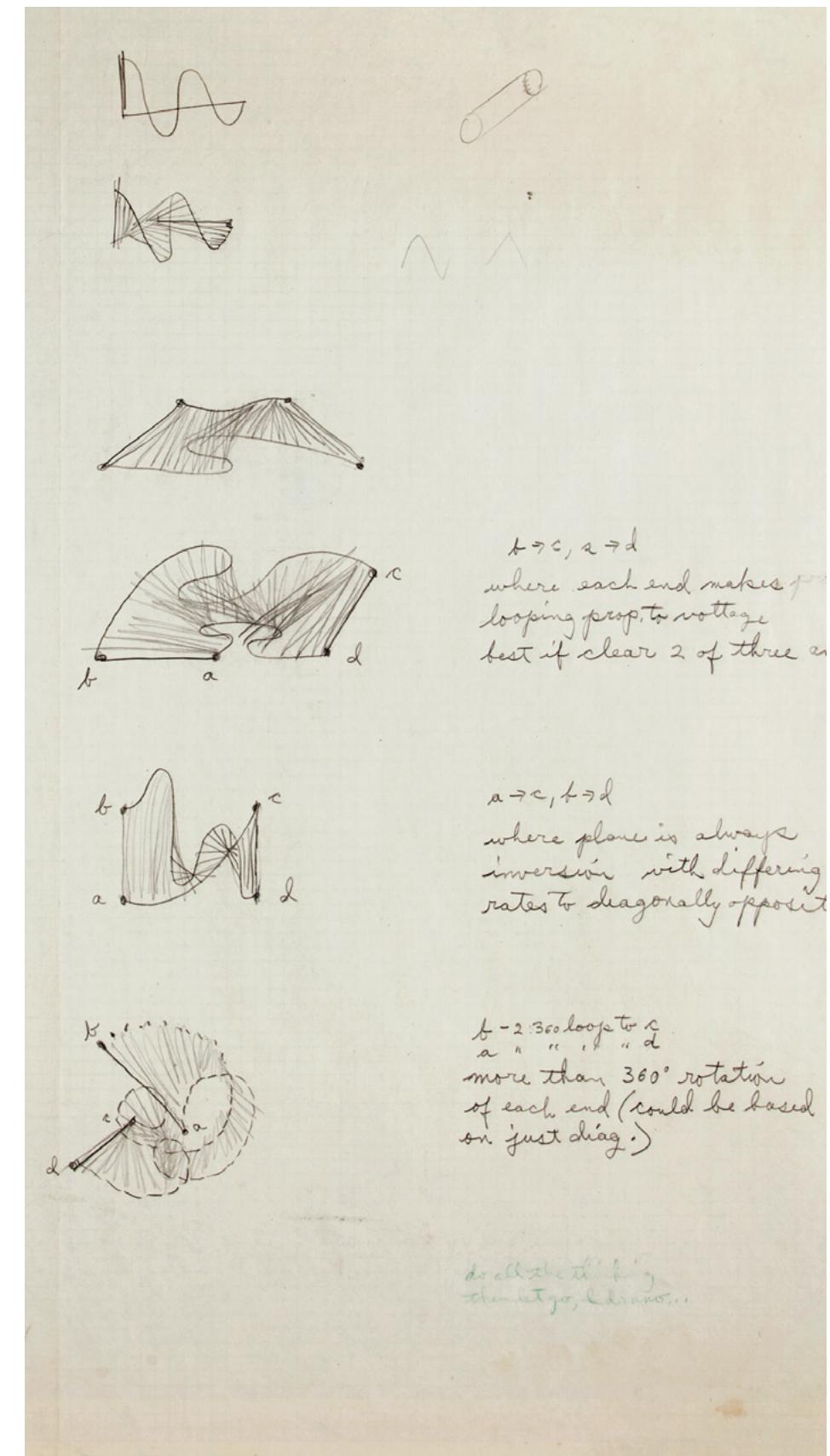


Walking Shadows, drawing, 1974

Vector drawings, early 1980s



Electronic drawings based
on vector image wall from
analog machine, 1979



Word Wall 1973 - VIEWER ACTIVATED word combination
INTO PHRASES BY THEIR POSITION IN
FRONT OF 4'X6' BLACK WALL WITH / BY
ILLUMINATION OF TRIGGERED LIGHTS

Longridge Mall - David Bourant

SHALL WE ATTEMPT MEETING FRAGILE

BORN GUESS AWAITING TO ENTER

RETURN OF WHOLE THOUGHT I AM

X GLAD MORNING YOU ARE COUPLED

CIRCLES EMERGING AROUND TRIAL OF

* THE FITTEST WITHIN IMMENSE ILLUSION

THE CENTER TO BE SENSE X BY YOURSELF

RELATIVE RADIANT BETTER QUESTION

X IN THE MANUEVER FOREVER CLOSE BY IN THIS AREA.

X IN THE DISTANCE TONIGHT WARMTH PAID

X LOVING YELL GOAL WITH NO END
X GOAL

Tony Martin 1973



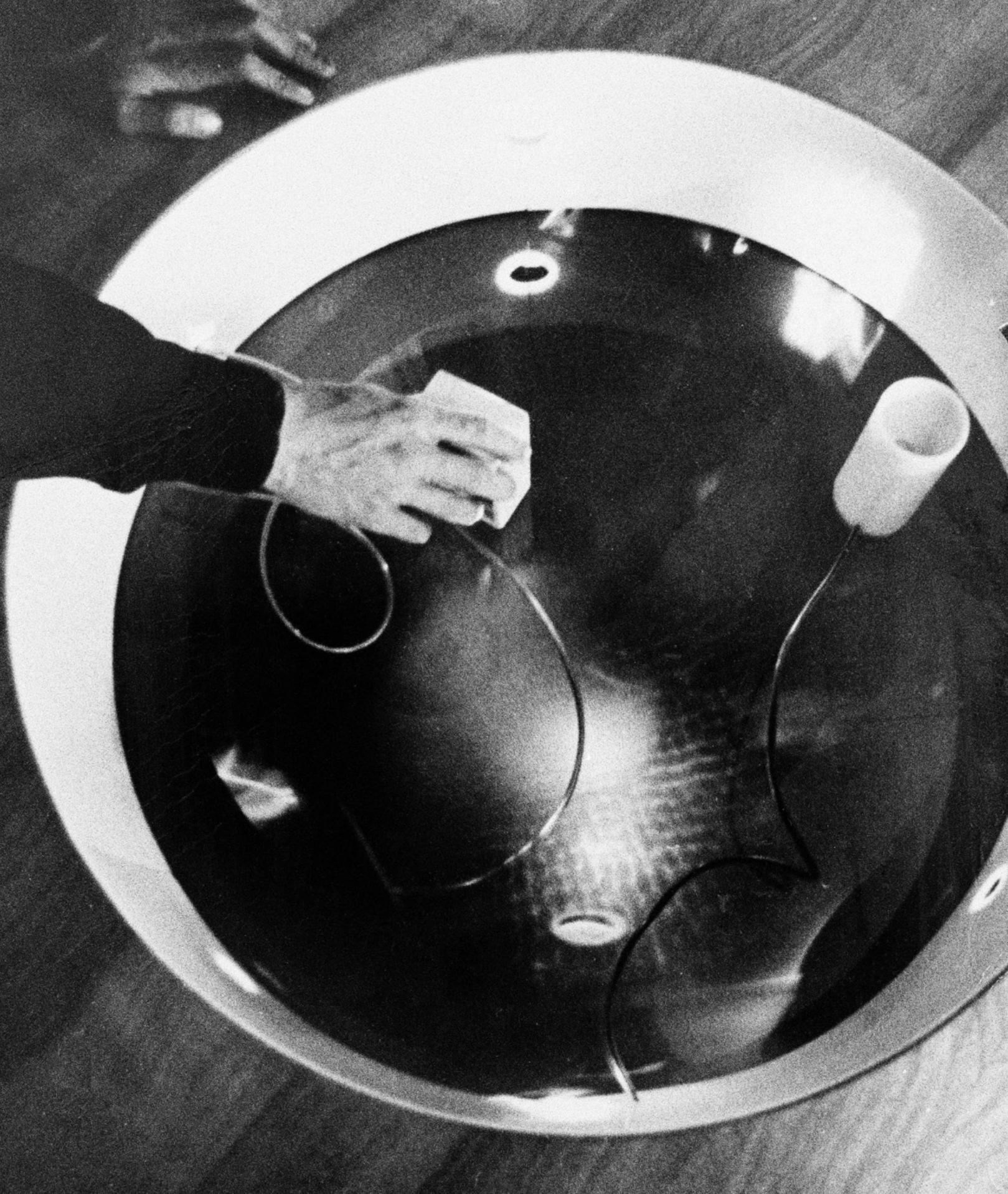
Opposite: Word Wall, sketch, 1973 Above: Word Wall, viewer activated word combinations, Long Ridge Plaza, Rochester, NY, 1973-74

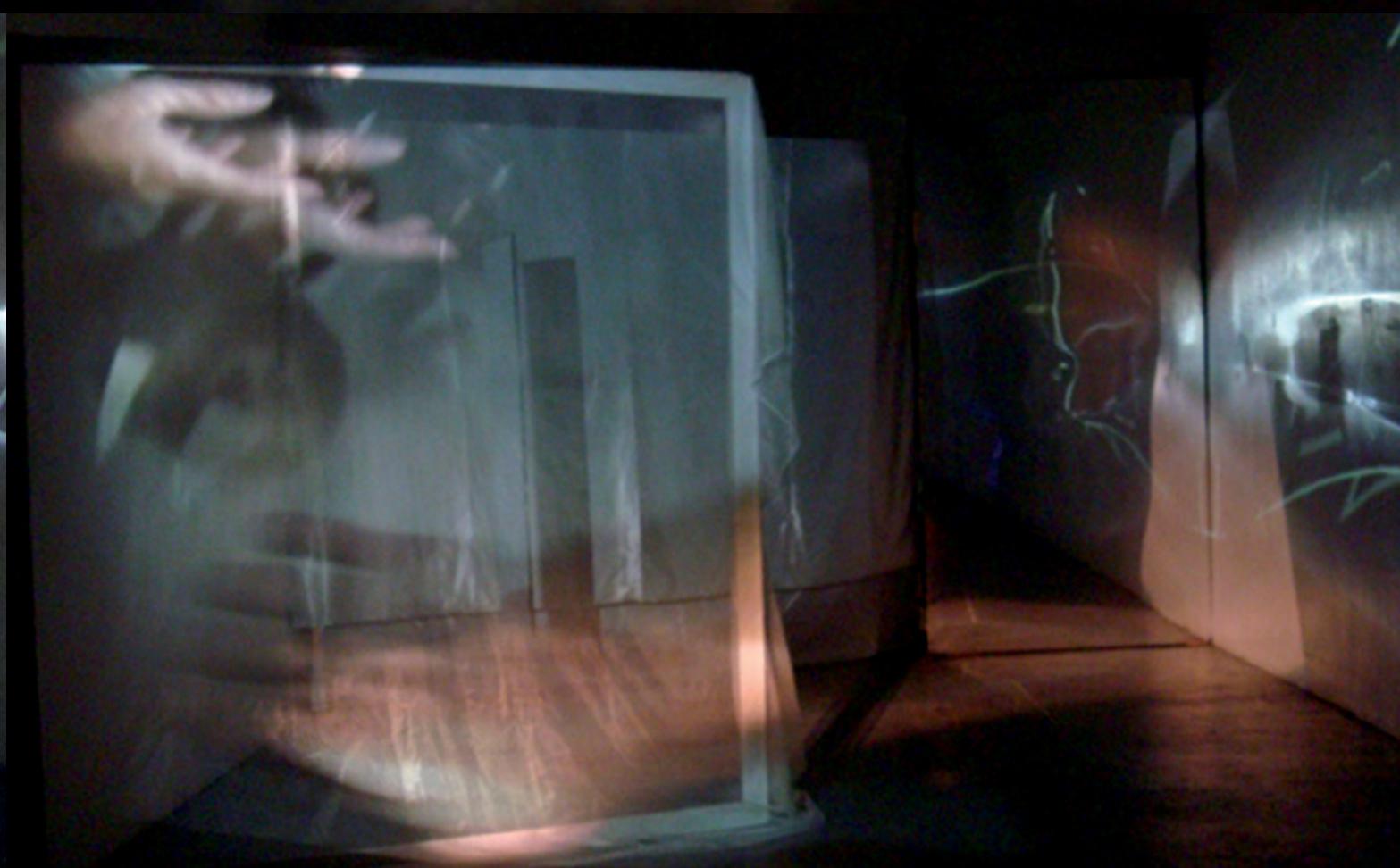
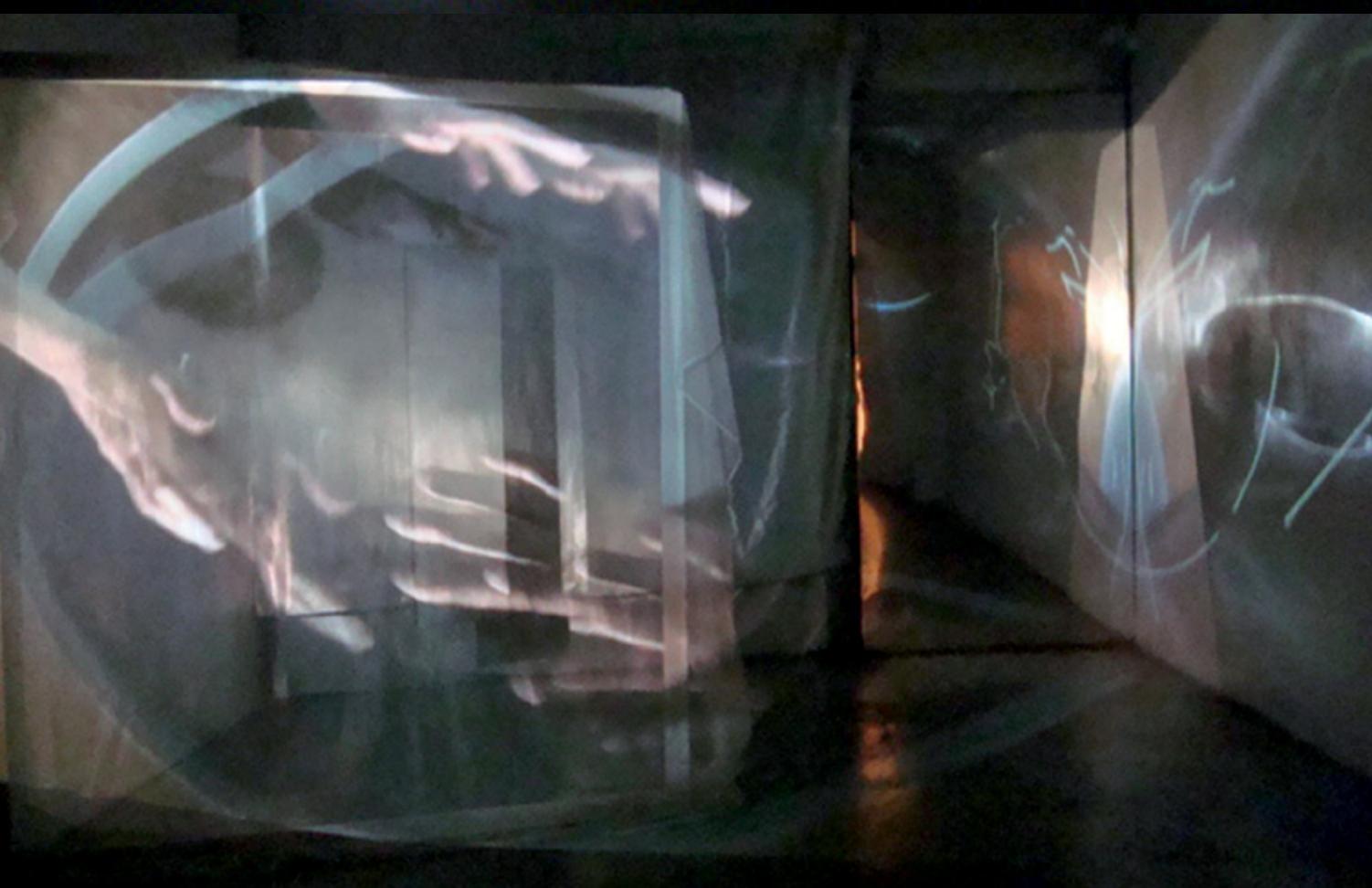
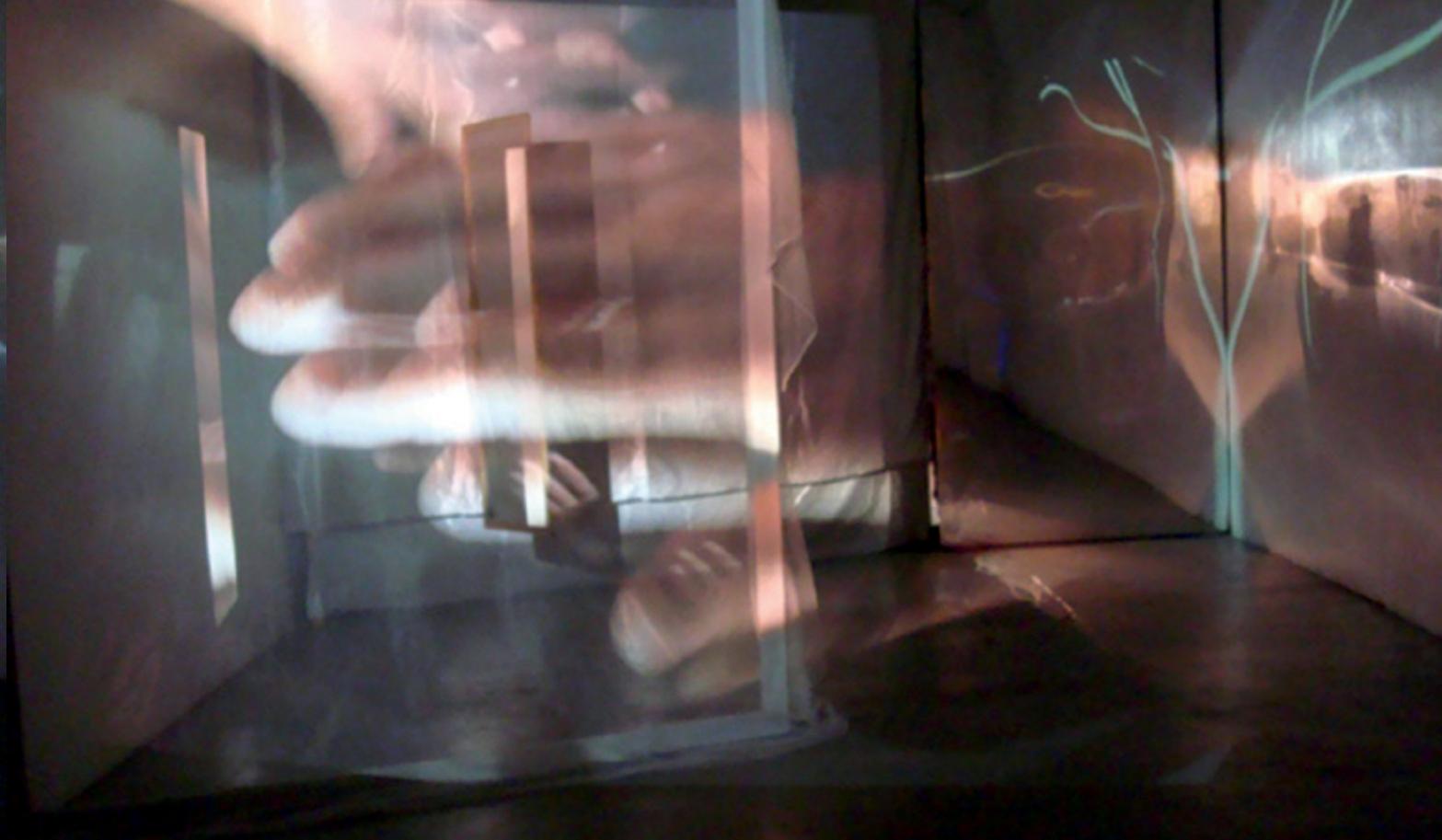
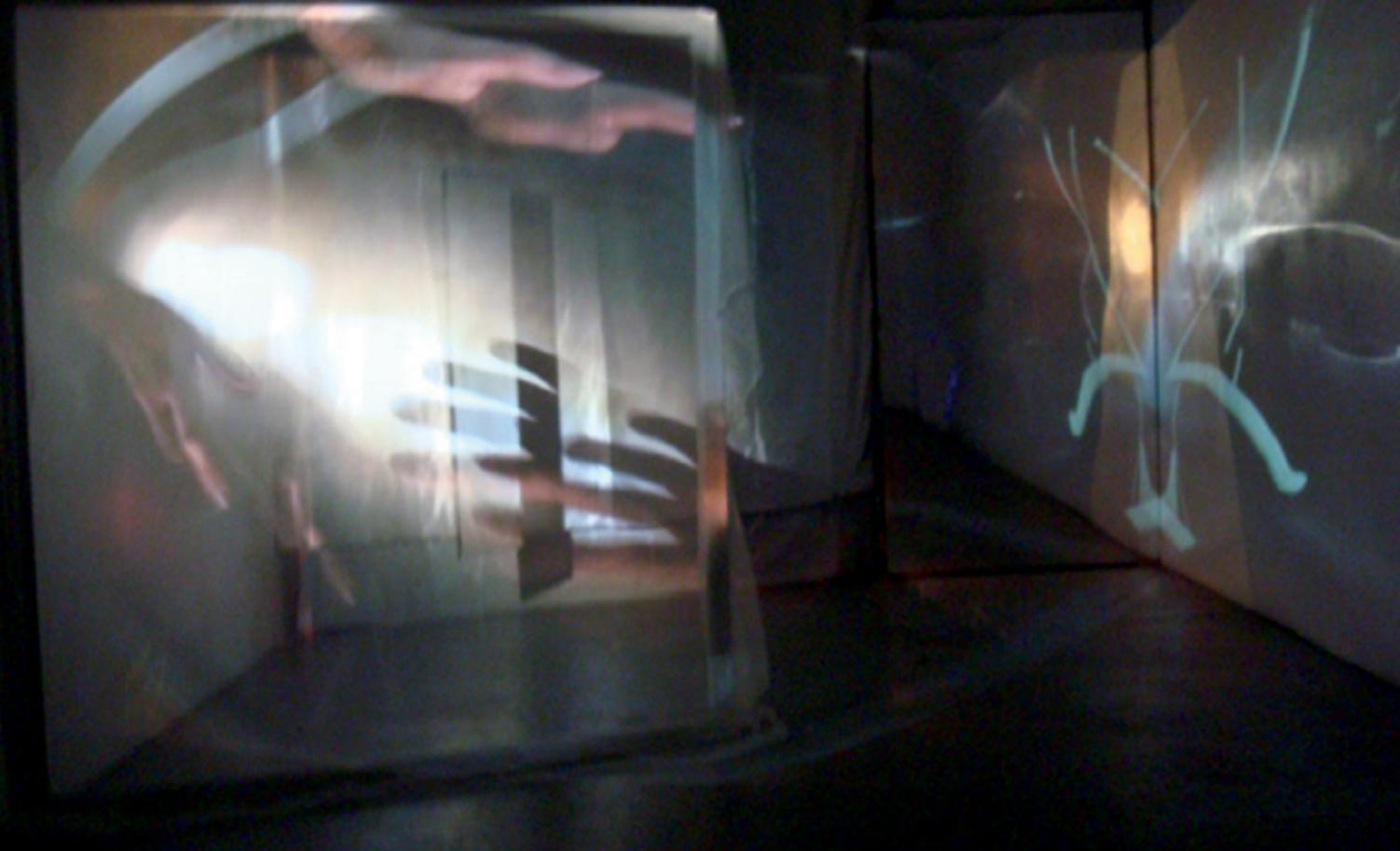


Bleecker Street Studio, 1968, the artist and
assistant William Sward with *You, Me, We*
and vibrating mercury light sculpture



Self-portrait, pencil, charcoal, collage, 2009

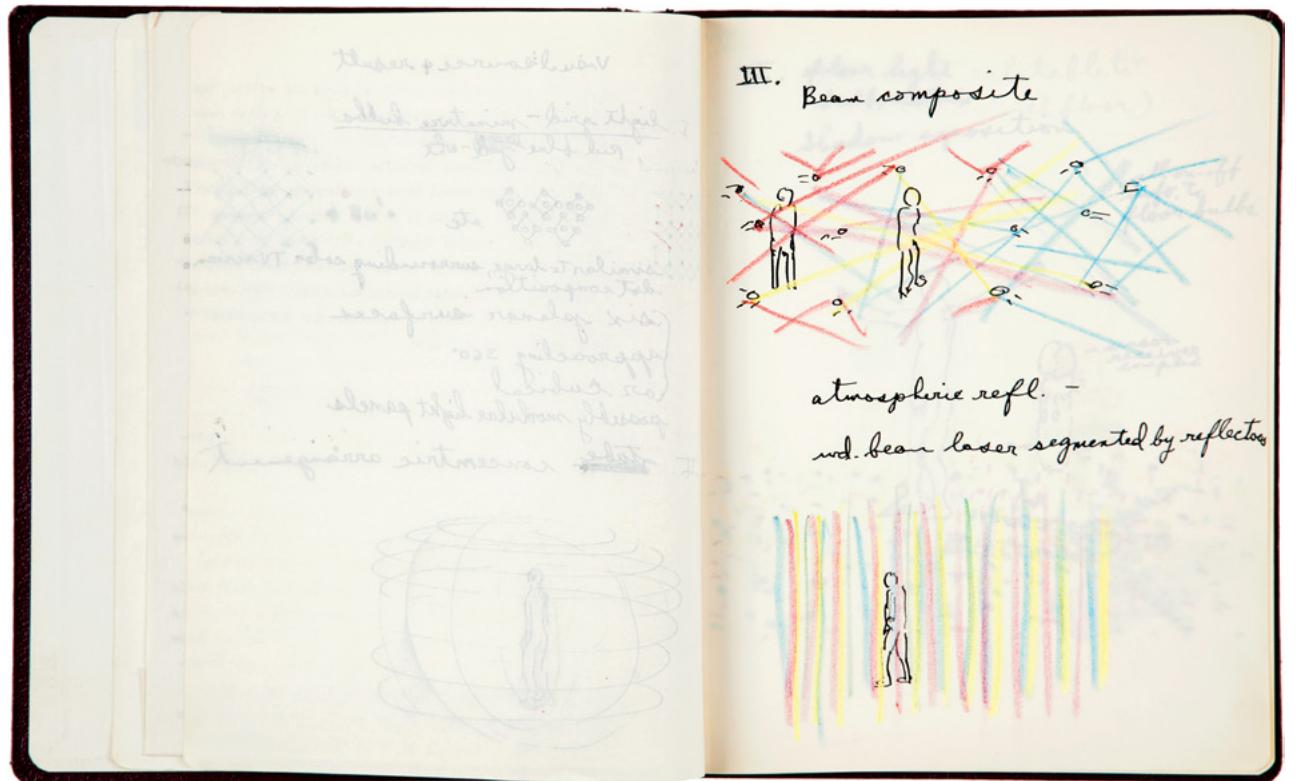






Projections switched by proximity
of viewers, Brooklyn studio, 2012





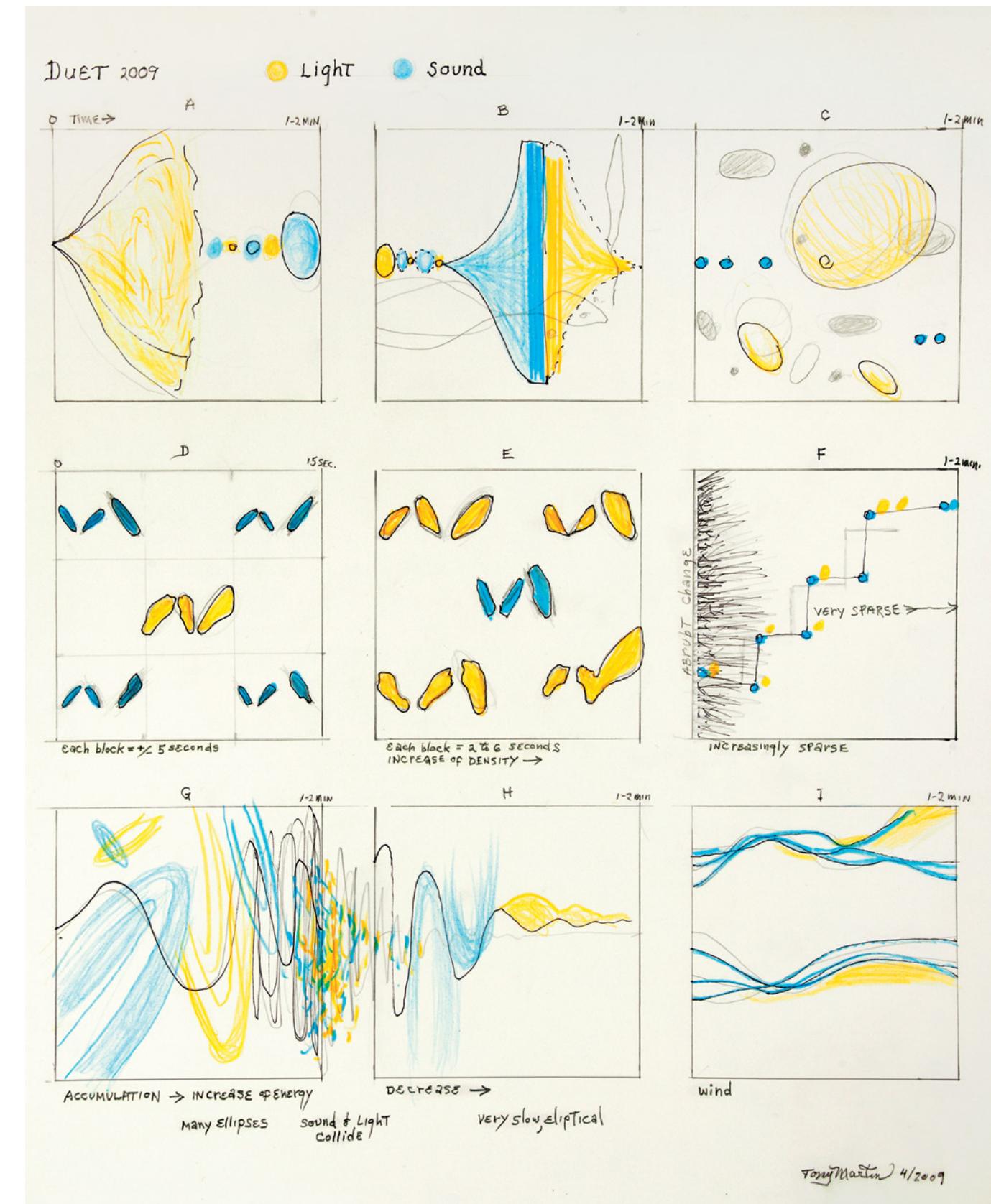
Journal drawings of electronic devices that the artist configures for viewer interaction and activation, 1968

The light is branched too,
 rear to fore, fore to rear
 and liquid shapes & clouds edges ~~edges~~.
 made by currents of spirit,
 by way of my ways with my tools
 Chaos is made of
 very organized stuff.

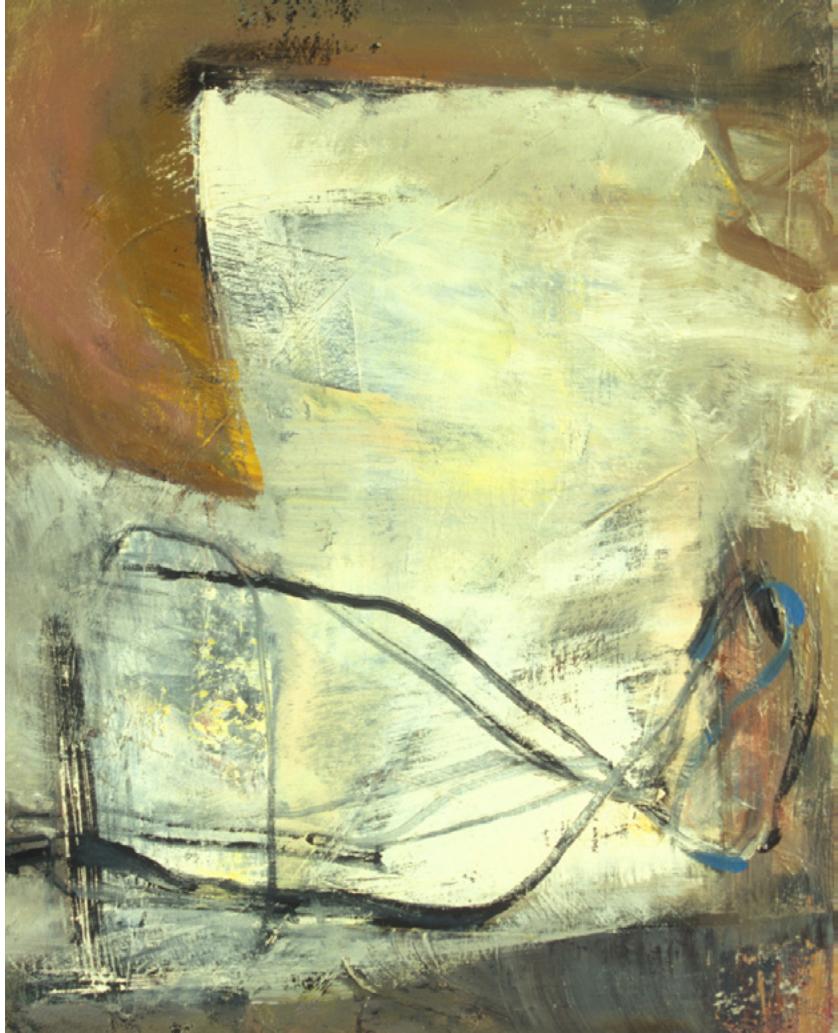
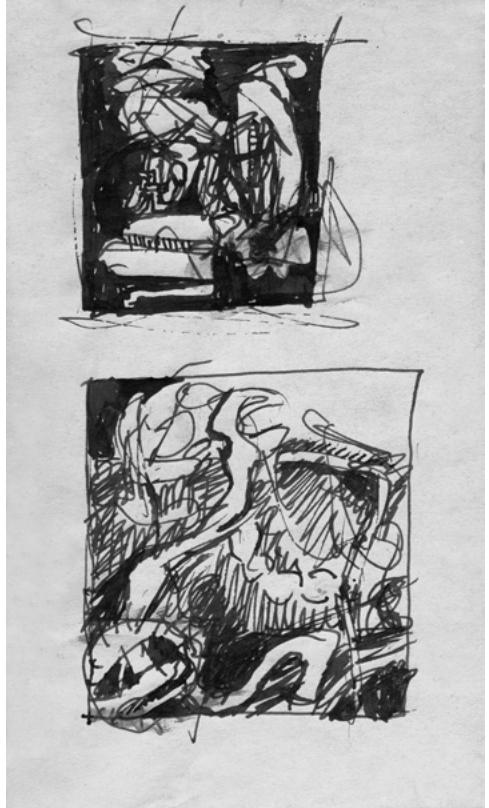
Light passing through in the midspace
 behind branchings and briars
 of now and ago and hence.

dissolution of the dark force

light poem from the bed of the sea

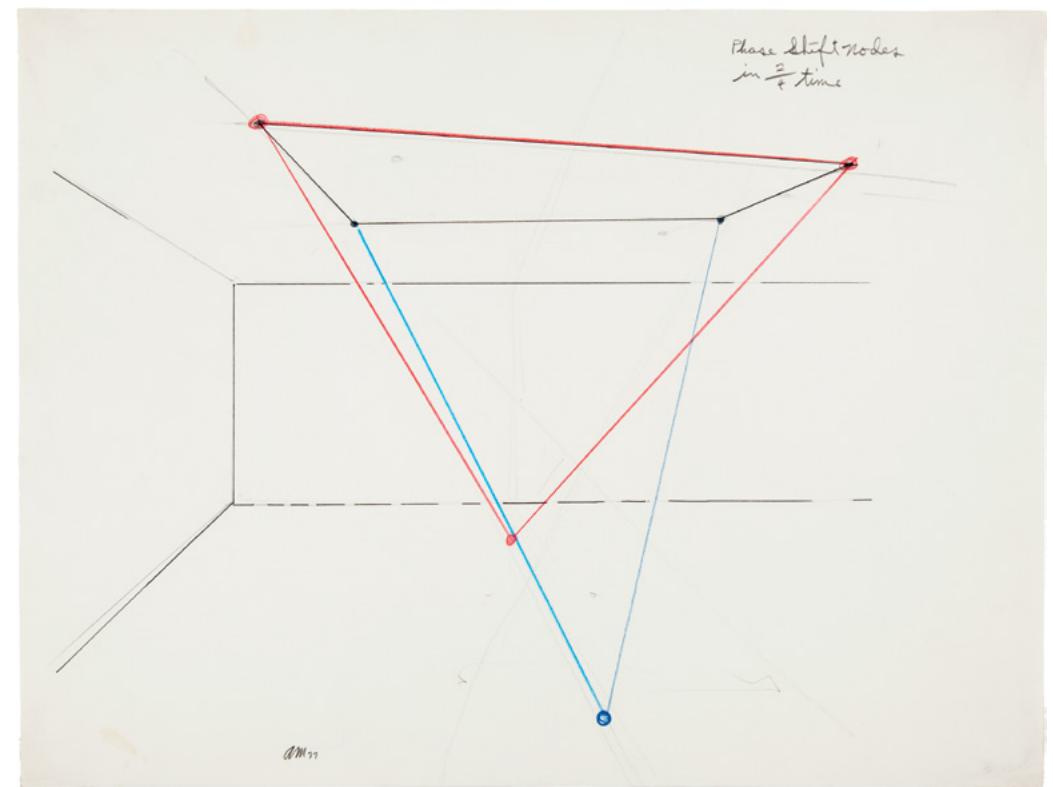


Duet, light and sound conversation where neither happen simultaneously but rather as a call and response, 2009



Above: Drawings, 1962 and *Exultation*, 1993, 40" x 36"

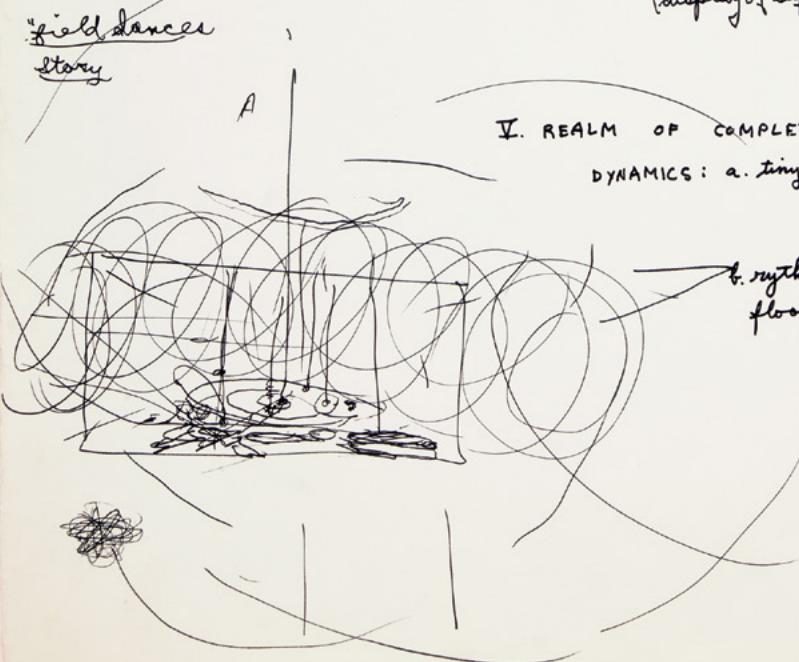
Opposite: *Gaia's Dance*, 1995, 30" x 24" and drawing for viewer participation webwork, Electronic Arts Intermix



Top: Phase Shift Nodes, 1977 **Bottom:** Phase Shift Brush, exploring electronic participational sculpture, 1977

SILENT

- I. One movement repeated or continuous
 - a. alone "the child's arms are like song patterns"
 - b. with a huge conflict with another light or action event
 - 1a. luminous sticks
 - 1b. crossfade : 2 figures
 - 1c. of many figures
- II. Responding to "outside" sources
 - a. WITH REFLECTIVES
 - b. WITHOUT REFLECTIVES
- III. GENERATING LIGHT
 - a. LUMINOUS FIGURE, luminous blob
 - b. COOKERY
 - c. CAUSE AND RESULT AUTO TRIGGERED
- IV. "READ OUT"
 - a. DISPLAY OF CONCURRENT ACTION
 - b. MEMORY LAMINATIONS
 - (display of previous sequence while new action is occurring)
- V. REALM OF COMPLETE CHANGEABILITY
 - DYNAMICS: a. tiny element (like very bright finger symbols being the only light in whole space)
 - 1a. a part of anything
 - b. rhythmic pendula and Stage Pool of floor reflectives
 - 1b. a great quantity of similar (or different) elements,
 - 2b. one thing



Opposite: Silent, ideas for viewer participation, mid 1970s Above: Duet, composition for call and response of sound and light, 2009



- (pp. 2-3) Photograph of the artist Tony Martin with light-sound SCR unit
- (pp. 4-5) *Infernal Spring of '70*, 1970, 50" x 54"
- (p. 6) Photograph above the Bleecker St. Cinema, shared studio of the artist and Len Lye, 1967
- (p. 7) Nam June Paik on Tony Martin.
- (pp. 8-9) Morton Subotnick's *Silver Apples of the Moon*, multiple light-projection by artist, 1967
- (p. 11) 3rd Row: Dinah Friedman Martin; 4th Row: Ben Martin; 5th Row (*left to right*): William Wegman, Tony Martin, Salvatore Martirano and Morton Subotnick
- (pp. 12-13) *Interior Bloom*, Mills College, Oakland, CA, 1988
- (pp. 14-15) NYU Intermedia Program, multiple projection, 1968
- (p. 16) Photograph of artist
- (p. 18) Artist at NYU Intermedia Program
- (p. 19) Fillmore Auditorium poster, projections by the artist
- (p. 20) Fillmore Auditorium poster, projections by the artist
- (p. 21) Fillmore Auditorium poster, projections by the artist
- (p. 22) *The Game Room*, Howard Wise Gallery, NY, 1968
- (p. 23) *You, Me, We*, the artist and Margot Farrington at The Katonah Museum of Art, NY, 1981
- (pp. 24-25) Still from the visual composition for *Desert Ambulance*, collaboration Ramon Sender, 1963
- (p. 26) Still from practice session for *The Boiler* performance, collaboration with Ken Brown and Michael Ballou, 2010
- (p. 27) *The Door*, Howard Wise Gallery, NY, 1969
- (pp. 28-29) Photo by Shunk-Kender, E.A.T. / Pepsi Pavilion EXPO '70, Osaka, Japan, 1970
- (pp. 30-31) Artist and William Sward, photograph of *The Column*, 1968-1969
- (p. 33) David Stone Martin, father of artist, lithograph, 1937
- (p. 34) *The Well* photograph with Tony, Ben, Jenny and Dinah Martin, and Bernarda Shahn
- (p. 35) *Artichoke Landscape*, 1969, 70" x 78"
- (pp. 36-37) *Untitled*, 1970, 70" x 78"
- (p. 38) Sketch for *Walkers, Talkers, Touchers*, commissioned by Anna Halprin, 1961-1962
- (p. 39) *Conversation*, 2011
- (pp. 40-41) Multiple projection from an installation at Kingsborough Community College, 1972
- (p. 42) San Francisco Chronicle clipping, 1965
- (pp. 42-43) Collage for SFTMC Seasonal Announcement, 1964-1965
- (p. 49) *Light Pendulum*, 1973
- (pp. 50-51) The artist's studio, LaGuardia Place, 1973
- 
- (pp. 52-53) Artist notes, 2002
- (pp. 66-67) *Vector Image Wall*, PS 1, 1980
- (pp. 80-81) Working on *The Well*, 1968-1969
- (pp. 82-83) *Rondeau*, video stills, The Clocktower Installation with Margot Farrington, New York, NY, 2011-2012
- (pp. 86-87) Morton Subotnick's *Silver Apples of the Moon*, multiple light projection by artist, 1967
- (pp. 98-99) Announcement for first exhibition of paintings at The Batman Gallery, San Francisco 1964, showing artist with sitar he built
- (p. 100) Photograph of *The Well*, Shelley Kasle and Stefan Martin