



PROJECT:  
*LAND KILNS*

John Roloff



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John Roloff

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FractalTerror Press, Oakland, CA  
Anglim Gilbert Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2019  
v 1.2



*sea-bed strata raised and folded,  
granite far below.  
warm quiet centuries of rain  
(make dark red tropic soils)...*

Gary Snyder, *What Happened Here Before*  
Turtle Island, 1974



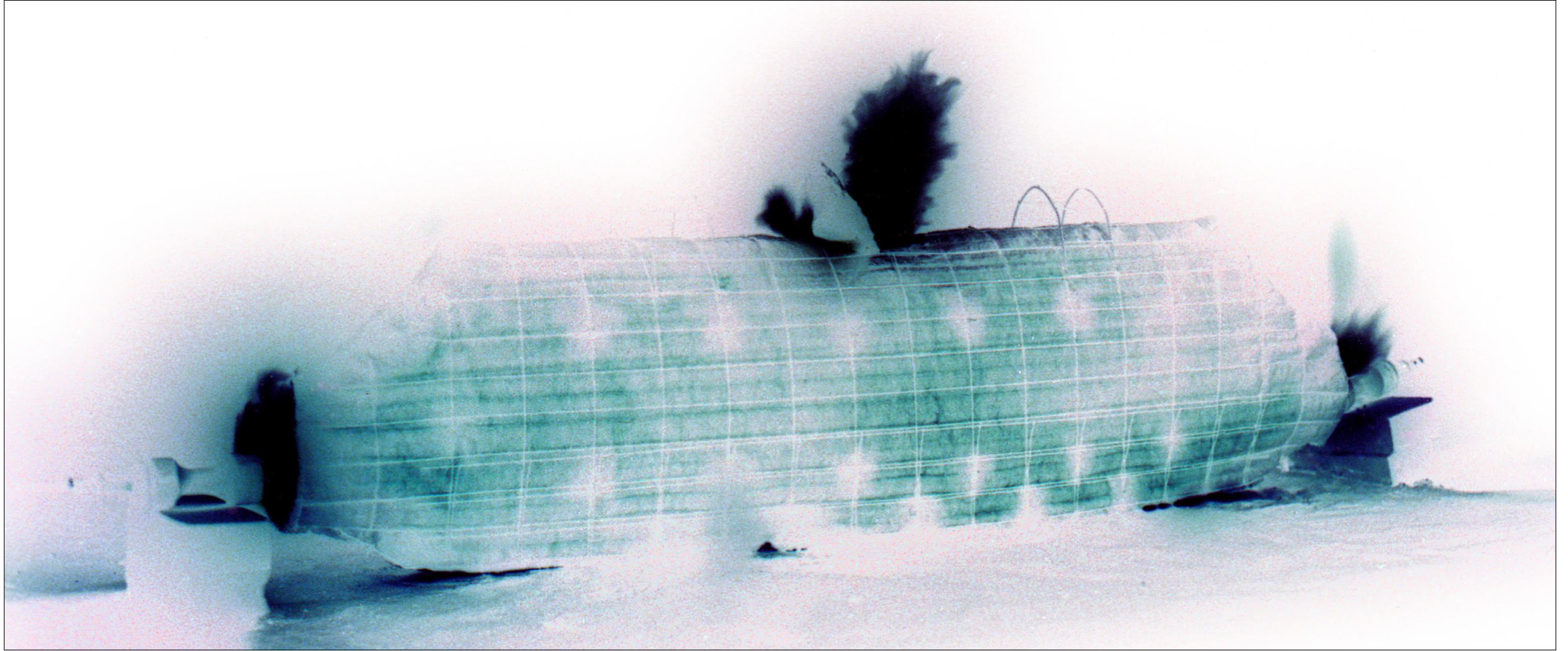


Fig. 1. Beach Kiln (Monitor), Ocean Beach, San Francisco, CA 1979.



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## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS BY OR ABOUT JOHN ROLOFF

*John Roloff: Matrix/Berkeley 110*

*Devonian Shale: Aquifer I*

*Organic Logic/New Observations*  
(with Mark Bartlett)

*The Sea Within the Land/Laramide*

*51 Million BTU's*

*The Rising Sea: Images and Constructions from South Florida*  
*and Other Selected Works*

*John Roloff: Displacements*

Project: *Oculus*

Project: *Land Kilns*

Project: *Metafossil*

*San Francisco Wharf Complex*

*Venice Substructure Complex*

*Photo Works 1981-2019*

*Ceramics Now: John Roloff*

*Selected Ceramic Ships/Tableaux*

*Lahontan Group*

*Rapson Group/Site Index*

*The Sea Within the Land*  
*Sentient Terrains*

IN PROGRESS

*Demarcations (Working Title)*

*Synthetic Ecologies*

*Ancient Sunlight / Ceramic Dialogs*

Project: *Land Kilns*, is a treatise on the realized and proposed environmental kilns from 1979 to 1992 (*Land Kilns*). Project documentation, formative, conceptual and generative studies, site research, as well as essays, exhibitions, installations and selected work inspired by the kiln projects form the essence of this document. The kiln or furnace as an alchemical instrument in and of the landscape, exploring salient and poetic questions/themes related to ceramics, geology, global metabolism, systemic thought/material practice and environmental art, is a basic premise of the work presented in Project: *Land Kilns*.

Project: *Land Kilns* is the third in a series of "Project" documents developed by in consort with Anglim Gilbert Gallery and FractalTerror Press using contributions from selected projects of my work to reveal and elucidate embedded themes. This series also provides a forum to reflect, examine and evolve the philosophical, conceptual and interdisciplinary dimensions of this work. Each "Project" compendium becomes a meta-work of expanded relationship and synthesis within areas of my oeuvre that engage alternative narratives and ecologies. The first two volumes in this series, Project: *Oculus* and Project: *Metafossil* were completed as prototypes in 2009 and 2013 respectively. The fourth volume, *Synthetic Ecologies*, is in the planning stages.

The first section of this volume, "Primal States," looks at the historical foundation and inspiration for the work in Project: *Land Kilns*, including early experiences in the landscape of the Pacific Northwest through discoveries during college and teaching years. The second and third major sections, "Land Kilns I / 1979-1987" and "Land Kilns II - 51 Million BTU's," charts the ideas, design and firing of each of the *Land Kiln* projects from 1979 through 1992. "Land Kilns I / 1979-1987" covers the first 11 projects and variations. "Land Kilns II / 51 Million BTU's," examines four *Land Kilns*, three as part of the series, *51 Million BTU's* and a fourth, related work, *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*. These last four works are linked by narratives related to regional and global geochemical history and metabolic functions of the fossil fuels animating the works. A following section, "Land Kilns III/Concepts and Proposals," give exemplary notes, studies and proposals for many unrealized Project: *Land Kilns* works. A final section, "Ancient Sunlight," examines the conceptual premises and works in various media derived from and extending the primary themes of Project: *Land Kilns*.

The painting, *Cotopaxi*, by Fredrick Edwin Church, on page 2-3 (*Fig. 2*), has been shown in numerous lectures as an archetypal image informing my work. The dramatic, simultaneous, depiction of interacting natural and geologic forces in an expansive landscape has a strong fundamental and conceptual relationship to Project: *Land Kilns*, as an extension of ceramic thought and practice as functions of the processes and properties of land and sea. Major sections of my work, including objects, these and other environmental projects, architectural interventions and installations, can be traced back to the formal study and experience of geology as a college student and travels across remote areas of the North American landscape. The concepts, themes, studies and realized works may also be considered a form of "Expanded Ceramics," examined in the epilog of this document and elucidated from a range of entry points other previous treatises such as those mentioned above as well as: *Land/Sea: Laramide*, *Venice Substructure Complex*, future volumes: *Rapson Group/Site Index* and *Shear Zones: Displacements & Permutations* (working title).

The artist, Anglim Gilbert Gallery and FractalTerror Press, wish to thank those who have contributed to this volume in many different ways: directly, historically, covertly, emotionally and inspirationally. Those contributors include but are not by any means limited to: Bob Arneson, William T. Wiley, Heather McGill, Lucian Pompili, Layton Mortensen, Arthur Shade, Louis Marak, Jim Crawford, Chris and Dawn Unterseher, Walter McNamara, Richard Shaw, Bob Rasmussen, Ron Nagle, Jim Melchert, Pewabic Pottery, Graham Marks, Bill Kremer, Bob Shay, Walter Hall, John Pohanka, John Rohlfing, D. B. and Jim Finnigan, Mark Bartlett, Scott Chamberlain, Ted Vogel, Wayne Higby, Josh Greene, Robert and Paula Winokur, Kevin Mul-lavey, Nan Hill, Connie Lewallen, Dennis Oppenheim, Charles Ray, Carol Schemmerling, Helene Fried, Ann Wettrich, Neil Forrest, Michael Swaine, Tanya Zimbardo, all the students, construction crews and staff of the supporting organizations who assisted in the projects, National Endowment for the Arts, local and institutional granting programs, among many others.

The geologists and oceanographers: Eldridge M. Moores, Bruce C. Heezen, Marie Tharp, Robert Dietz, H. H. Hess, H. W. Menard, John Wakabayashi, and their many colleagues, also need to be mentioned for the scientific/poetic inspiration their work has given me.

John Roloff, 2019





Fig. 2. *Cotopaxi*, Fredrick Edwin Church, oil on canvas, 1892, collection: Detroit Institute of the Arts, public domain.





Fig. 3. Rogers Park, Forest Grove, OR.



PRIMAL STATES: Notes

Playing under giant conifer trees in Rogers Park in the Pacific Northwest as a youth / sleeping to the drone above the trans-axle of the family car on long, night drives along the Columbia River gorge to family in eastern Oregon through the basalt flows of the Columbia Plateau and across the river from the muscular geomorphology of the Washington shore / Mt. Hood on the horizon at the end of street / the “golden blanket” of morning sun and dove calls at the grandparent’s farm in eastern Oregon / cross country trips on Union Pacific Railroad from Oregon to Kansas / Natural History Museum in San Diego, CA, aquarium in Seaside, OR / a drowned forest of stumps in a sea of mud on the floor of the Big Bear Reservoir seen as a Boy Scout at Camp Winton on the adjacent Big Bear Lake / swimming underwater in Great Valley and Sierra lakes / Gary Snyder’s idea of the wilderness as an analog to the unconscious / car travels in the eroded and exposed terrains of the North American west as a child in the 1950’s, as a student in the 1960’s and later 1970’s and 1980’s: Craters of the Moon, Idaho, SW Oregon desert, hearing the Warner lakes near Hart Mountain Antelope Reserve “talking”.., immersed in the roaring silence, Pyramid Lake, NV, Death Valley, Mono Lake / collegiate studies in geology, late 1960’s, the revelation of sea floor spreading/plate tectonics / fire as an essential force are referred in the notebooks of the late 1960’s to the mid-1980’s / landscape paintings of the 19th and earlier centuries / Albert Bierstadt, Crocker Museum, Sacramento / graduate school at CSUH: the sound of firing of the ceramics kilns, reminiscent of an engine room of a star ship... / dreams: of full-size forests on the sea floor, like those in the redwood forest behind CSU Humboldt, sunlight drifting down the ‘ocean depths,’ a herd of buffalo charging up river, surfing beside Drake’s, *Golden Hind* / treks across Kilauea Crater, lava forests, the black sand beaches of the Big Island..



Fig. 4. Wallula Gap, Columbia River, widened by the glacial waters of the Missoula Floods of the late Pleistocene, revealing exposures of the Grande Ronde, Wanapum and Saddle Mountains basalts.



approaching the primal state

Things that are omnivorous and haunting  
have always appealed to me. Usually not in  
an obvious way more like a shadow or something  
far away or deep in time. They seem to strike  
a chord or evoke an emotion that seems meaningful  
(Primal) ~~things~~

Haunted by our own lives <sup>unknown</sup>  
I consider my life haunted by its <sup>origins</sup>  
at its most evocative  
things that speak of deep time

Rocks, minerals  
time and emotion, materials are related  
to emotion by their history when they come  
from, the transformations they have undergone  
are undignified, are emotional ~~being~~  
out in a form of conjuring, they way the  
alchemists saw philosophy in the periodic  
chart.

Because of awareness, nature does not show  
enough  
to feel more than see relationships

↳ tapping

Imagery provides metaphor that conjures feelings  
that haunts  
evocative, all's as to look at nature  
intended  
objectivity

Fig. 5. Loose notebook page, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., pencil on paper, circa 1970.

For Cinner 5th

an essentially concerned  
with the wilderness in order  
the unconscious, the metaphor of  
the play of light on and beneath  
water the sense of time apart  
from everyday life paleogic  
time, a certain stillness  
a certain luminosity  
decay as metaphor of time  
and literal and retroactive

or manifest  
as pieces of water  
& visual forms of  
nature and the  
metaphysical implications

↳ literally its architecture and its  
metaphor

analogy: wilderness, unconscious and the unknown  
and a visual, romantic sense  
things that exist between the lines

voyage through the unconscious

The wilderness or metaphor of the unconscious  
in which time has a certain sense and a  
certain barely audible volume. The stretch of  
a paleogic landscape (now beneath the sea?)  
uncontrollable events. The voyage through this

The wilderness as a metaphor for the unconscious  
seems to be an underlying theme <sup>the voyage</sup>  
through this wilderness, a <sup>certain sense</sup> <sup>of time</sup>, distance  
and stillness (becalmed) are important aspects of this  
theme. Certain painters of the <sup>19th</sup> century  
~~may have known a similar place.~~  
+ feel a kinship with certain  
landscape painters of the <sup>18th</sup> century, <sup>perhaps obscure</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>perhaps</sup> <sup>of the</sup>  
<sup>18th</sup> & <sup>19th</sup> century, and respect these  
ideas.

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Fig. 6. Notebook 1, pg. 227, 10 5/8 in. x 8 1/4 in., pencil on paper, circa 1970.

## PROJECT: *LAND KILNS* - Inspiration/History

The major works of Project: *Land Kilns*, done from 1979 to 1992, and many subsequent projects derived from them, were inspired by concepts from science, landscape and art as well as an experimental attitude towards materials and processes. The raw and eroded landscape of western North America, through which I have traveled extensively since a young age, gave me a glimpse into the primal side of nature.

Entering college with the idea of becoming an oceanographer, I first majored in geology at UC Davis in the late 1960's, adding a major in art half-way through. In art classes it was natural for me to recognize many materials of both sculpture and ceramics such as: dolomite, feldspar, kaolin, plaster (anhydrous gypsum), etc., in geologic terms, as products of deposition, metamorphism and extrusion at the scale and time frame of the evolution of the landscape. In geologic time the land and sea are mutable, interdependent and may be construed as forms of each other. The processes of erosion and deposition are cyclical inversions of each other, a continuum of land and sea interaction through which new land is being formed as we read: depositional systems within oceans, rivers and lakes around us are fed by the denudation or alteration of landscape where clays, silts and sands are suspended, transported, sorted and deposited only to become new landforms for future change. In this fundamental way, land/seascapes are constructed of previous land/seascapes each carrying the blueprint of their ancestor.

Over time the narrative of geologic material and site relationships was informative at many levels. From the earliest "Wave" ceramic works of the late 1960's, the projects of the *Land Kilns* until the early 1990's, to site-specific installations such as: *Sea Within the Land/Laramide*, Denver Art Museum, 2011, geologic structures, images and metaphors and literary (Borges, Calvino, Hesse, etc) inspired me to work with ceramics and ceramic processes with a broad definition of the medium understood through geologic time, scale and process in concert with the traditions of ceramics and conceptual/environmental art. This relationship of scale and context to art practice was further informed by a strong interest in the work of 19th century landscape artists such as: Turner, Church, Heade and Bierstadt. As a geology student in Eldridge Moore's Tectonics class at UC Davis, we investigated the displacement mechanisms of sea-floor spreading in the form of transform faults as articulated by the geologists J. Tuzo Wilson (1965), Sykes (1967) and others. A "shear zone," in geologic terms, is a zone of strong deformation that occurs as a brittle to ductile discontinuity, fault or fold in the earth's crust and upper mantle. This mechanism becomes an apt metaphor for the displacement and alteration of ideas and materials of an experimental artistic process that was reinforced by the questioning and open attitude of instructors like Bob Arneson and William T. Wiley with whom I studied as an art student contemporaneous with my geologic studies. This attitude beginning in the late 1960's continues to the present in objects, installations, site investigations and environmental projects. This exploratory approach was further inspired by the extensive range of transformations of the earth's sea/landscape in geologic time. The permutations and extrapolations of viewing ceramics through a geologic lens became my fundamental modus operandi.

In graduate school at Humboldt State University in the early 1970's I was especially intrigued by the nighttime firing of an older salt kiln by another student. Flames were pouring out of numerous spaces that had opened up between the bricks and around the loosely stacked door – I realized from that experience that the firing itself was the essential thing and that the objects inside were primarily "residue" of that event, more or less of interest but not at the heart of the matter. It took another 6-7 years of experimentation and conceptual exploration to figure out how to engage this idea fully in the form of the *Land Kilns*.

Teaching at the University of Kentucky (UK) in the mid-1970's I focused on the residue aspect of the firing – an analog to fossilization, the kiln burning out organic material, straw, twigs, pinecones, etc., as an accelerated fossilization process. Related conceptually with the ship works of the time the narratives of the firing represented a voyage into the unknown ("like Antarctica," was the phrase I used at the time), the zone of 2000+ degrees F, the ships were extensions of myself into that space that could not be directly experienced. I set up numerous experimental structures referencing geologic processes designed to collapse or drastically alter during the firing: clays bloating near their fusing point, migration of soluble salts and colorants by evaporation, burning out of organic structural materials, etc. This was also inspired by the emphasis on chance learned from Japanese ceramics and the Shinto-inspired attention to nature and process in their work - wood fired kilns, objects being fired multiple times. Also inspirational during this time was a dialog with the New York conceptual artist, Dennis Oppenheim. He was a visiting lecturer at

UK, where we had numerous conversations about earthworks, process, conceptual strategies, etc., which began a long friendship until his death a few years ago.

Now teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute and Mills College, I was invited in 1979 to University of Notre Dame to work for a week in their large field-house, here I completed the first experimental kiln work, *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*. The kiln's form was a 20 ft. long boat hull made of stacked bricks about 6 rows high with a suspended high-temperature insulating, ceramic-fiber, blanket top with the native earth as the floor. I was interested in seeing how the native earth would react to ceramic temperatures (an analog to contact metamorphism found in lava flows). To emphasize not knowing the "cone" (or specific temperature) that the kiln reached, I inserted one burner at one end of the kiln and 'walked away,' to let things happen and challenge the tradition of specific temperatures and control of conventional ceramics – I wanted the transformations to be of a different order, more like nature. A parallel and formative work, *Encased Piece*, 1979, also questioned the order and form of material change.

In 1980 I took a trip to the big island of Hawaii intentionally to see the active volcanoes and lava flows, specifically Kilauea Crater, staying at the Sheridan Volcano House on the crater's edge. I walked across the cooled, fractured lava surface of the crater towards Halema'uma'u, a smaller, steaming, active crater inset into Kilauea's surface. The surface of Kilauea's lava could be likened to a giant ice-flow, large blocks squeezed up by compressive forces as the lava cooled. Active, sulfurous vents and splatter cones dotted the surface, the huge cooled lava falls on the Kilauea cliffs from nearby Kilauea Iki crater. Halema'uma'u's lava pool had a cooled skin floating on top with molten lava visible in the cracks between fragments. The extensive flows of lava in both a'a and pahoehoe textures, cascading down the flanks

of the calderas, the Punalu'u black sand beaches and the lava tree mold forest of the Nanawale Forest Reserve, all provided a rich vocabulary of lava structures and processes. The lava tree molds caused by hot lava flowing around living trees, being chilled and solidified around the trunk by the wet wood. In this process the tree was burnt out leaving an interior mold-like void. This forest of tree molds was seen as a landscape scale version of the fossil analog explored the ceramic ship works in Kentucky. Tufa structures visited numerous times



Fig. 7. Lava tree mold forest, Nanawale Forest Reserve Big Island, Hawaii, research trip, 1980.

in the 1960's-80's at Pyramid and Mono Lake have intense textured surfaces formed by the deposition of calcareous material around organic structures underwater. Also visited in Hawaii and NE California were networks of lava tubes, cave-like networks that could be explored for miles underground.

From these experiences and subsequent project site research, themes of organic/inorganic interrelationships and transformation were explored conceptually and materially in the *Land Kilns*. The organic/geologic origin of fossil fuels used in the firings, the flow of liquid lava in a volcanic eruption or at a spreading center of an oceanic ridge, and metamorphic alteration of minerals beneath the earth's surface combined with the project site's history and attributes became generative ideas for the projects. A history of experimental ceramic works exploring land and seascape imagery, an understanding of the landscape in geologic terms, coupled with ideas of site-specific and site-generated land and conceptual art of the 1970's became manifest in this series of environmental projects using the kiln as a primary apparatus for exploration. These kilns were seen as semi-controlled instruments, like giant test-tubes or retorts, performing experimental transformations of natural materials in the landscape, encouraging the entrained forces and materials to speak in their own voice.





Fig. 8. *Shrouded Wave* (also known as *Wake of a Dead Wave*), detail, 18 in. sq., unfired clay, stains, provenance unknown, circa 1968.



Fig 9. *Fish Head*, detail, 18 in. sq., fired clay, stains, sedimentary deposited surface, private collection, circa 1973.



Fig. 10. Pyramid Lake, western Nevada. Living remnant of ice age Lake Lahontan. Visited numerous times 1960's to the present.



All things / qualities etc  
 are fragments of the sun. Embers  
~~Burn~~ Burning fragments (one way)  
 Frozen Fragments  
 Frozen salt  
 Burning Embers of am carbon  
 The relationship of the landscape to the  
 Sun:  
 The sun is inside all the parts  
 Determines the day - and night.  
 (outside all the parts)  
 Reason for the whole.

Sunspot Kiln - look @ drawing by  
 Astronomer.

The sun in legend - origins  
 Incas  
 Egyptians  
 (Amen)  
 Aztecs?  
 Mayans.

Miniature Sun probe - looks @ the inside  
 of things.

Reason for transformation.

GIANT SQUID CAPTURING PROSTLINE WITH  
 THE SUN.

Fig. 11. Unbound notebook page, 11 in. x 8.5 in., ink on lined paper, circa 1970.

[EAR RINGS]!  
 Steel plant photo (in the rain)  
 Cut out <sup>border</sup> masks to project image through  
 (drawing - print - scribing ship)  
 There may come a time of all fire or  
 no fire. All are all chemists performing  
 experiment with our existence through the transformation  
 of these materials  
 Kiln, furnace burnings are expressions of a material  
 and energy and time and <sup>(energy)</sup> waste most importantly of  
 time ~~when~~ an irreversibility of these moments <sup>and completely distinct</sup> when  
~~the~~ of life and death of organisms as will never know  
 yet merge with intimacy in our life as present and  
 future chemists factor in a cycle that is spiraling  
 outward with greater and greater spacing of the rings  
 toward oblivion  
 Pien is a negative petrification, a fossil or impression  
 not only of form but of energy expressed and released  
 when the earth becomes the sky, chains of carbon  
 become dioxide of carbon from plant to sky  
 subducting goal. fire structure  
image for wall

Fig. 12. Unbound notebook page, 11 in. x 8.5 in., ink on lined paper, circa 1970.





Fig. 13. Ship No. 70, 50 in., fired clay, iron oxide, private collection, 1980.



Fig. 14. Ship No. 40 (Husk Boat), 50 in., porcelain bisque, collection, Henry Gallery, UW, Seattle, WA, 1975.



Fig. 15. Ubehebe Crater, Death Valley National Park, CA. A volcanic crater at the northern tip of the Cottonwood Mountains, estimates range from 800 to 7,000 years in age. This Death Valley and Ubehebe Crater were visited numerous times 1970's to the present.



also 19 cent landscape painter  
 the wilderness as a metaphor of  
 the unconscious (a main theme, an  
 attitude, a way of thinking) The idea  
 of a voyage through life the ship as  
 metaphor, Primal feeling, (pyramidal  
 lake, Walker lakes in Oregon <sup>like same</sup> <sup>haastua</sup> at the time  
 I saw the water seem to be speaking,  
 a place so silent there is noise (a  
 rushing noise in <sup>the</sup> <sup>water</sup> <sup>below</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>bottom</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>raft</sup> <sup>moving</sup> <sup>with</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>raft</sup> <sup>below</sup>  
 moving. <sup>the</sup> <sup>raft</sup> <sup>below</sup>  
 had equal <sup>raft</sup> <sup>below</sup>  
 of skeletons settling <sup>to</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>floor</sup> (Gary  
 Snyder) tsunami, sashimi, ritual (Haiku  
 Darwin) Processes of fossilization and  
 sedimentation (sedimentary structures) trans-  
 formation in a <sup>fatal</sup> <sup>crat</sup> firing like 10 million years  
 of turning a leaf to stone. The "off view"  
 glance of De Kooning shaman <sup>(white horse in ~~the~~ ~~crushed~~)</sup> statement also  
 another Grassie <sup>house</sup> <sup>head</sup> on the beach filled  
 with eels. Boer steel and paint on canvas  
 (a flick if thought about right (all night)  
 a photograph like an impression or record  
 of events like sediment (ripples marks as  
 photography) a drawing of a book of rice  
 paper.

Fig. 16. Taped in note, notebook 1, pg. 247, 10.7 in. x 7.5 in., pencil on paper, circa 1970.

sloped undulating clay sugar  
 layers of resin/ice or black chunks  
 built up  
 long troughs lined with plastic or clay  
 in textured stuff spilled down floating <sup>stacks</sup> <sup>hulls</sup>  
 Dyke erosion

Fire ships - <sup>re</sup> <sup>built</sup> ships made  
 especially to burn and set other  
 ships on fire -

series of pieces related to fire ships  
 setting land sup on fire  
 fire and ice  
 sea of fire <sup>psychonavalis of fire</sup>  
 obvious metaphor of film/fire  
<sup>economic journey</sup>  
 burning ships in mass of icebergs  
 enclosed in a resin iceberg

Fig. 17. Notebook 2, pg. 66, 13.7 in. x 10.7 in., pencil on paper, circa 1978.



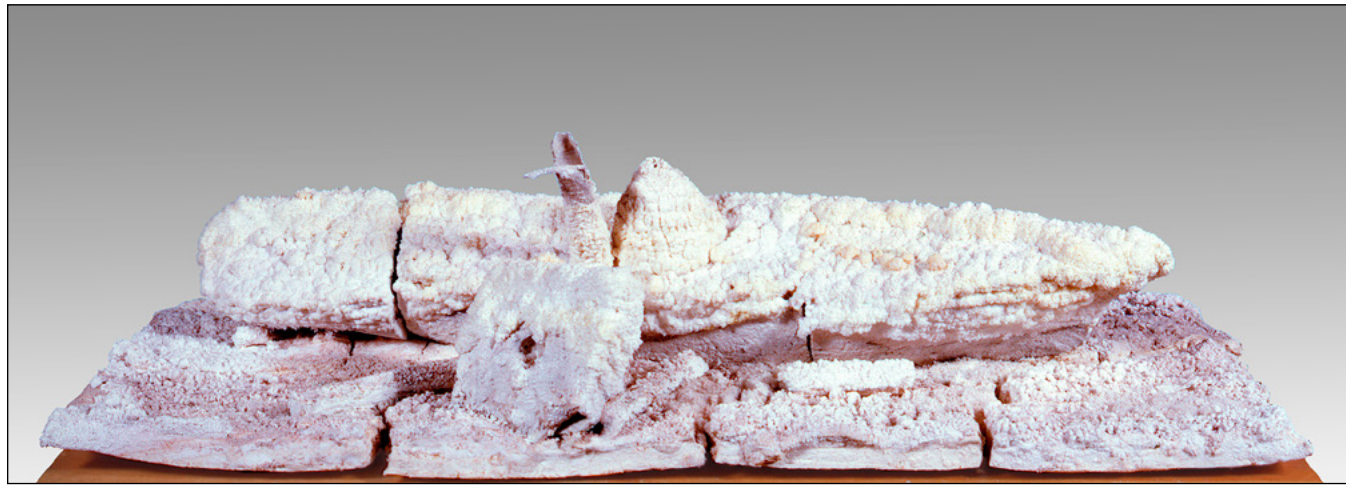


Fig. 18. *Evaporite Ship* (also known as *Soda Ship*), 30 in. long, evaporated soluble salt surface, circa 1973.



Fig. 19. Wall, left to right (detail): *Landscape Projection: Pacific Ocean (Laramide Orogeny)* I, 12 ft. x 8 ft., inkjet print on vinyl, ultrawhite paint, halogen light. *Landscape Projection: Marine Sediments (Laramide Orogeny)* I, 12 ft. x 8 ft., inkjet print on vinyl, ultrawhite paint, halogen light. Platform: left to right: *Seascape Structure: Marine Depositional Basin*, 66 in. x 44 in., wood, steel, sediment residue / *Landscape Structure: Marine Sediments*, 60 in x 40 in., rammed, chronologically sequential Cretaceous Western Interior Seaway sediments, steel, amendments.



Fig. 20. Mono Lake, Mono county, NV. A saline/soda lake within the Great Basin, on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada's and Northern Paiute country. This lake was visited numerous times from the 1960's, to the present.



instead of doing pieces that have  
a certain look tie the material more closely  
with image - wood/sisal/nylon/combustible  
materials for the fire ships -  
for other version of fire ships (volcanic) a  
real closeness to the lava qualities also  
aspect of Time-Volcanic - has been on  
fire but made it through a clear connection  
of having used the film in how piece looks

Large lava boat piece where "firing is  
postponed" until such date that energy  
can do it. entering into geologic time  
where piece encased in concrete will  
enter into cycle greater possibly than  
human surge. piece steps out of present  
energy cycle on human/hydrocarbon  
level -

statement for catalogue about energy  
cycles is relative to present natural gas,  
oil cycle and other cycles in geologic  
question of wood firing, other methods  
maybe something besides concrete that bungs  
it clear

or white lampblack in  
concrete

## Untitled (Encased Piece)

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
San Francisco, CA, 1979.

Baxter Art Gallery, California Institute of Technology,  
Pasadena, CA, 1980.

Fig. 21. Notebook 2, pg 68, 13.7 in. x 10.7 in., pencil on paper, circa 1978.



*Untitled (Encased Piece)*

*Northern California Clay Routes, Sculpture Now*  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1979.

*Untitled (Encased Piece)* was constructed for the exhibition "Northern California Clay Routes, Sculpture Now," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1979. This work, along with *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, 1979, represent initial larger-scale manifestations of the kiln and the process of firing as objects and forces in their own right. In *Untitled (Encased Piece)* palm fronds covered with clay are encased with cement colored black by carbon powder. The black cement metaphorically "fires" the encased clay and palm fronds by rendering them hard and immobile. The cement having been "fired" through its production as an industrial material and the black pigment representing the carbon transformation of fire. *Untitled (Encased Piece)*'s image as a ship/landscape transformed by 'firing' is scaled up and reminiscent of ceramic ships of the same time period that also explore organic, geologic and transformative imagery and processes.

"...John Roloff's hull is of the land. Maybe we see the massive ceramic and cement structure as a sunken ship, resting on the bottom and merging with the earth from which it was constructed. Or perhaps we see it as a desolate island world, a charred atoll, cut adrift from the human continental linkage, alone against the sea. In either case *Untitled (Encased Piece)* is set apart, self contained, and though not on a determined course, is like a train that bridges the landscape from depot to depot."

Smith, Michael, H., catalog essay selection, *Trains and Boats and Planes*, Baxter Art Gallery, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA, December 13, 1979 through January 20, 1980. After SFMOMA, the work was shown a second time in *Trains and Boats and Planes*, and left to decay in southern California after the exhibition.



Fig. 22. *Untitled (Encased Piece)*, palm fronds, un-fired clay, carbon, cement, 14 ft. l., "Northern California Clay Routes, Sculpture Now," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1979.



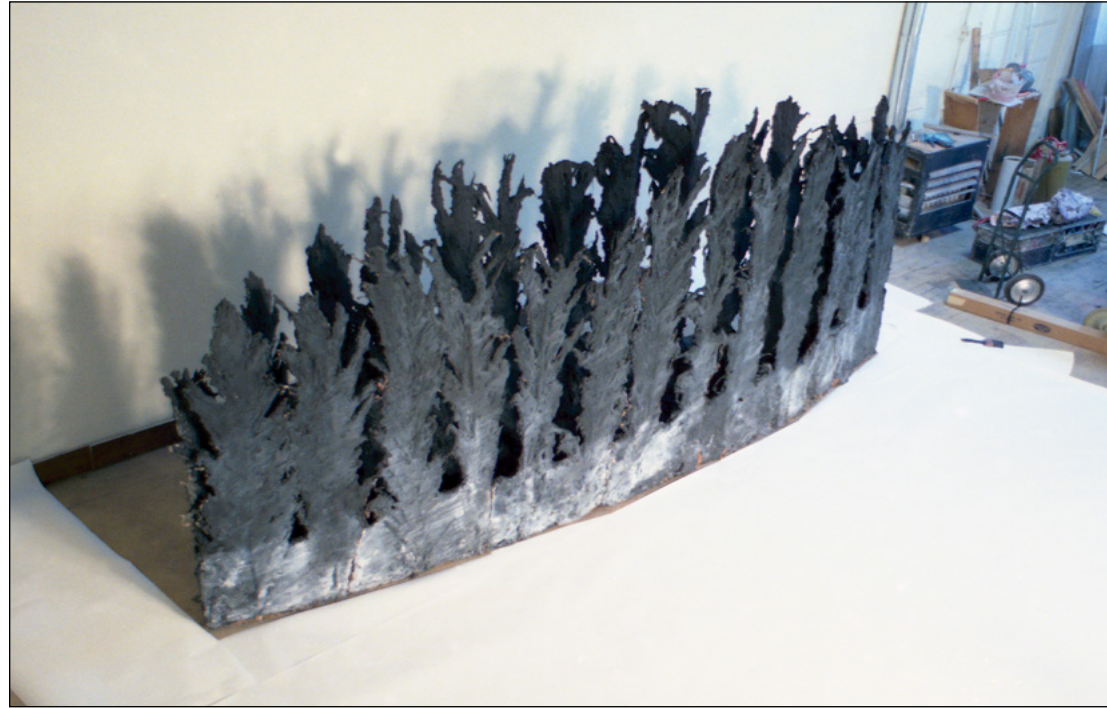


Fig. 23. Untitled (Encased Piece), studio, San Francisco, CA 1979.



Fig. 24. Untitled (Encased Piece), in progress, studio, San Francisco, CA 1979.

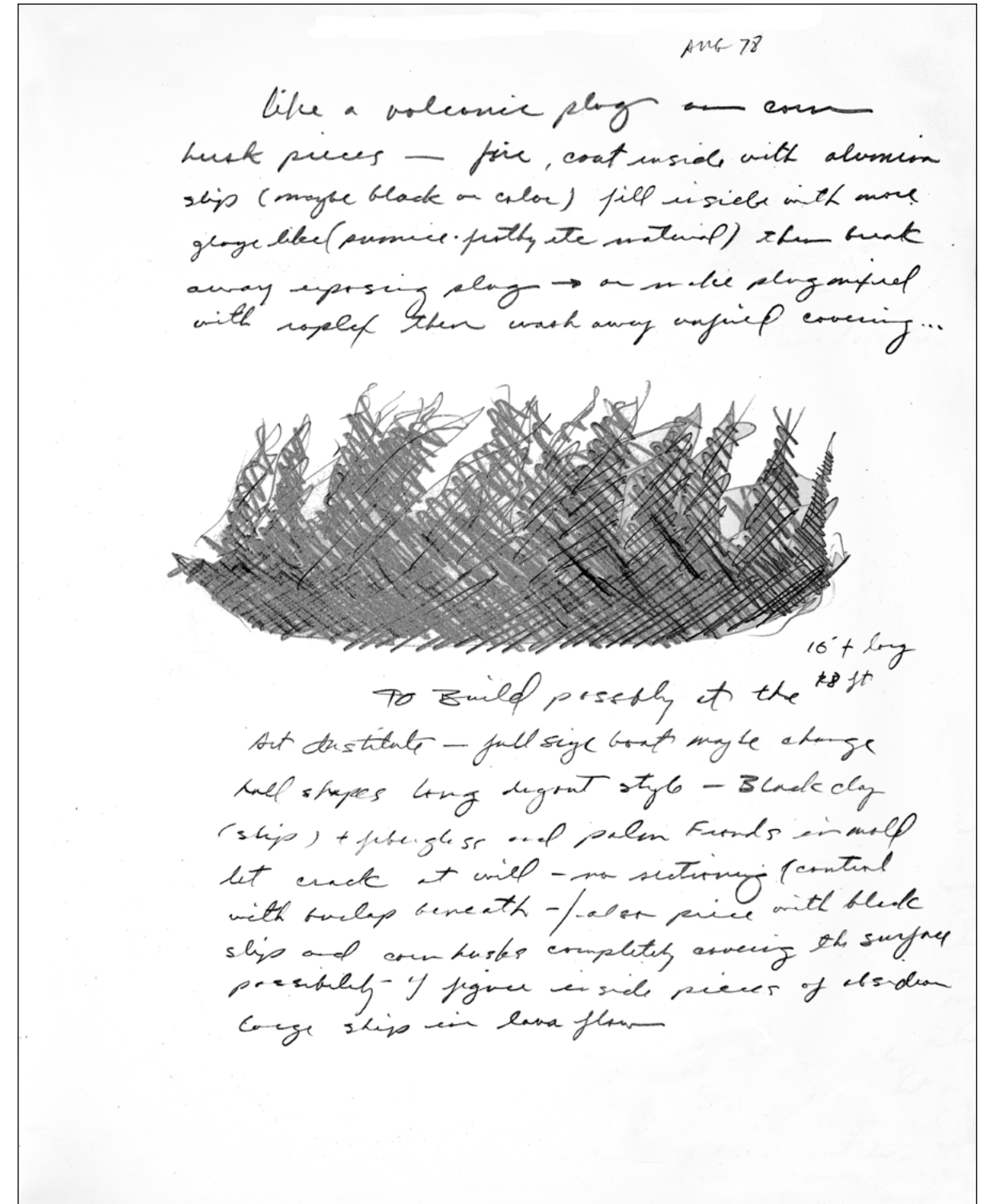


Fig. 25. Notebook 2, pg. 36, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., 1978.



Some thoughts about the large piece for the S F Museum show:  
probably titled "Encased Piece" or "Untitled"/piece finished  
as I would normally would in the unfired state/encased in cement  
as a way of 'firing' or preserving/figuratively or literally  
removed from tht part of the process/energy consciousness?/  
burial or removal of past aesthetic/substitution of just  
another aesthetic?/reference to ceramic material/cement is  
~~firable~~ fireable (anything is fireable) /decomposes(cement)/  
set-up for 'firing' outside of normal time sequence (my life  
time)?/set-up for geologic time?/ cement doesn't last all  
that long  
"Encased Piece"/Island/Hull/Forest/Valley (volcanic)

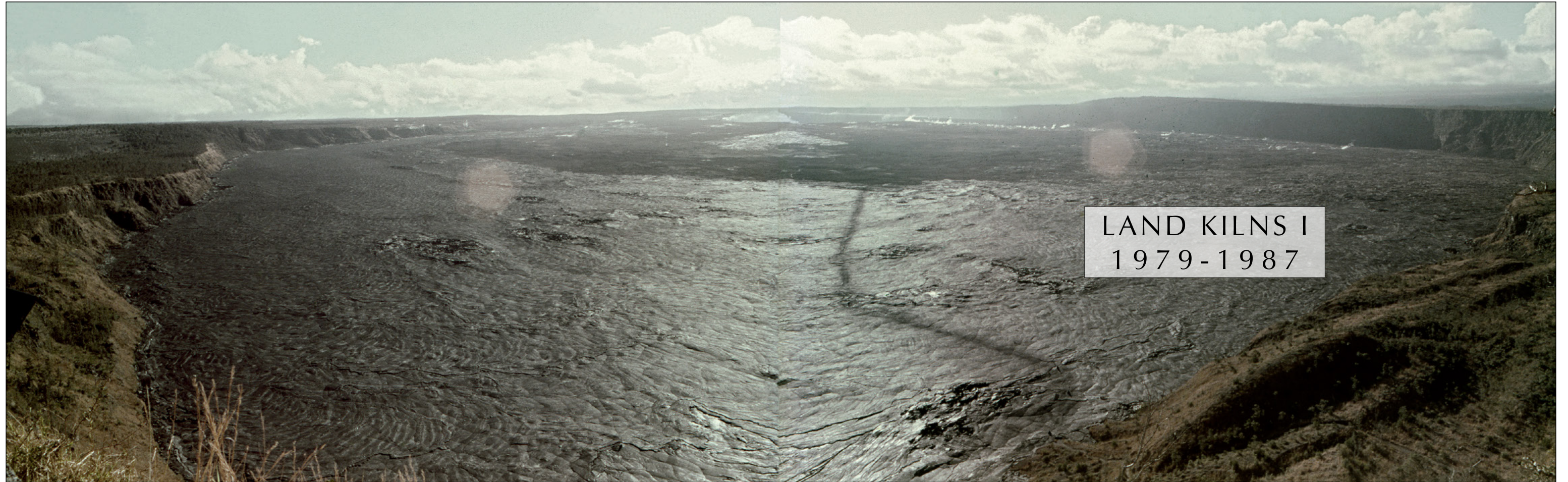
Linda - Here is some more  
stuff. Is there going to be a specific  
~~the~~ "Artist's statement section"? If so  
here is this and another attempt at  
a statement included. I'm not completely  
comfortable with either but will have to  
do also the page xeroxed out of the  
Sof Robner book would be as good a  
statement as these for me.

Fig. 26. Correspondence, pencil and type on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa. 1978.



Fig. 27. Untitled (Encased Piece), final resting place, LA, CA, circa 1979.





*Fig. 28.* Kilauea Crater, Big Island, Hawaii, visited 1980's.



## Kiln Projects

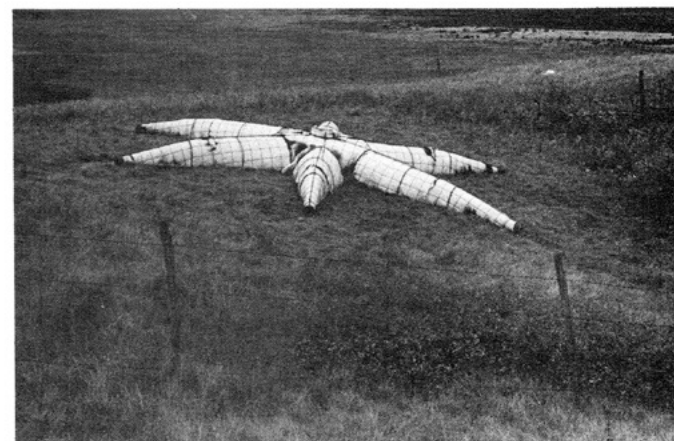
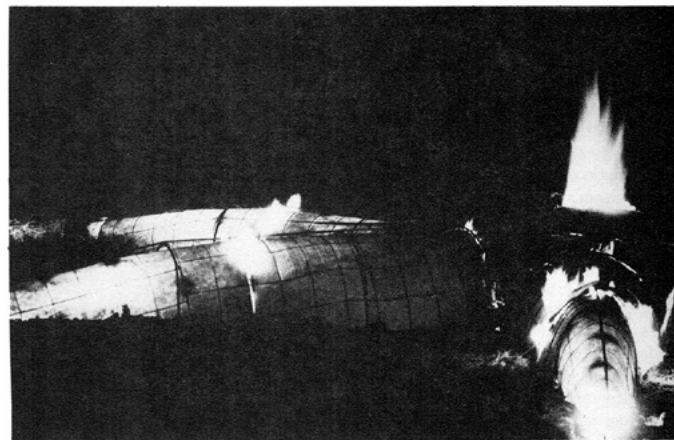
by John Roloff

Since 1979 a series of experimental kiln projects have been completed in various sites in both America and Canada. These projects attempt to present the kiln, an instrument of change, as having its own quality as an associative object or force, as well as an investigative tool for exploring the process of change and products generated by that process.

The kilns are constructed as specific images out of a high temperature insulating blanket made of clay fibers suspended inside a metal armature. Heat is produced from propane-powered burners that generate temperatures of over 2000°F. The firings occur at night when the kiln can become a glowing effigy as light from the heat inside is transmitted through its surface.

Most of the kilns are bottomless, beneath which a surface is often prepared with glaze materials that melt to form other imagery of fused materials revealed when the kiln is removed either at the peak of the firing (as in *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*) to show the molten state, or upon cooling (as in *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*) to show a solid, glass-like state. This image is related to the kiln itself by form alone but also through the materials being subjected to the dynamics of heat movement and intensity, causing chance mutations, flows, and blendings. In the *Wave Kilns #1 and #2*, the kiln bottom is sealed so that the glowing image, a "mold of heat," is the result. In *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, a central "throat" or opening in the bottom of the fused "Orchid" serves as part of the image as well as part of a draft system for the burners connected underground to a remote flue.

The kilns are designed from a knowledge of principles about heat flow, from conceptual ideas, and



John Roloff: *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, 1980, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, borax, and propane, 20' diameter, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada. Kiln (top) and detail of night firing (bottom).

from an intuitive point of view. The kiln's operation and results are only partially predictable and are allowed a "mind of their own." When successful, a firing can approach an irrational point, the verge of losing control, and a metaphor is suggested of the unconscious in a primitive or vul-

nerable state where time becomes emotion, chemistry spirit, and matter theater.

John Roloff is an Instructor of Ceramics and Sculpture at the San Francisco Art Institute.

### Land Kilns I / 1979-1987

The projects included in "Land Kilns I, 1979-1987," are the formative works of Project: *Land Kilns*. They focus on developing a visual, poetic and conceptual language relating ceramic processes, landscape, the kiln as transformative agent and geologic/site-generated content. This vocabulary echo's volcanic and metamorphic processes of transformation as well as larger cycles of material and geochemical change in the landscape. Processes such as contact metamorphism, where a heat source (plutonic intrusion, lava flow, etc) comes into contact with the surrounding native rock and creates an altered zone of materials, metamorphic facies change in mineralogy, color and texture are inspirational. Cycles of landscapes generated from earlier landscapes in geologic time: lava upwelling at mid-oceanic ridges driving sea-floor spreading, subsequent subduction, metamorphism, igneous intrusion, denudation the deposition of strata in fluvial, lacustrine and marine depositional environments are analogous to a range of ceramic processes. In exploring these transformations the ship image, derived from numerous ceramic works continued it role as a metaphor of geologic and other natural processes, now at the scale of landscape in the *Land Kilns*. The ship was instrumental in works such as: *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, 1979, *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*, 1980, *Beach Kiln (Land Monitor)*, 1980 *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, 1984 and *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1984. Formal, material and conceptual strategies as shown in *Wave Kilns I-III*, 1982, *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, 1980, *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, 1982, *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1984 and *Lahontan Group I-III*, 1985-87, extend the vocabulary of the geologic and ceramic kiln language into climatic, site, biologic and experimental vocabularies. The illumination of the ceramic fiber blanket by the heat of the firing, during the night-firing event, created an effigy of the kiln form as a dynamic spectacle of the transformation occurring within the structure.

Research investigating geologic narratives, indigenous materiality and unseen characteristics of a project site, played a critical role in the generation of the concept and imagery of each firing. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder* and *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, were developed by exploring the geologic history of the site. In these works, the Quaternary volcanics and ice sheets of northern New Mexico and central Canada, conjured experimental strategies and metaphorical, mythological images and narratives. The starfish image of *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch* suggested a mythic role of a giant starfish inhabiting the Pleistocene, Laurentide ice fields. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid* and *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, engaged notions of organic/inorganic relationships and initial concepts of the biologic origins of the kiln's fuel, its paleo-history and biogenesis. The ship form as in *Wave Ship (of Fire)* and others, also drawing from ceramic ship and monitor works, was prominent structurally and metaphorically in this group. *Lahontan Group I-III* coalesced concepts of the earlier works with the intention of exploring the kiln as an evolving apparatus engaging with sea/land issues from multiple entry points and extending the kiln's test-tube like environment to large vitrine ship forms.

In the following essay, *John Roloff: Landscape Furnace Projects 1980-1992*, Connie Lewallen describes the *Land Kilns* and their relationship to the process and earthworks projects done by artists of the 1960's and 1970's.

Fig. 29. Kiln Projects, Artery Magazine, February/March, 1983, pg. 6.



John Roloff: *Landscape Furnace Projects, 1980-1992*

Constance Lewallen, Curator,  
University Museum, University of California, Berkeley  
1996

Time present and time past

Art both perhaps present in time future

And time future contained in time past

T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets, "Burn Norton"* (1935)

Between 1980 and 1992 John Roloff created an extraordinary series of works in which he took sculpture materials and processes that involved fire, fusion and an interdisciplinary synthesis out of the studio and into the landscape on a scale never before attempted. Roloff incorporated into his enterprise ideas and influences from many disciplines and time periods including geology, nineteenth-century American landscape painting and philosophy, twentieth-century science and late 1960' process, earth and performance art. Time, in fact, is perhaps the most potent and poetic aspect of this era of Roloff's landscape works.

Geologic Time

Roloff's furnace/performance works recreate processes that go back to the very formation of the earth. Geology and nature, particularly the sea, have fascinated Roloff since his childhood near the Oregon coast. In fact his first ambition was to be a marine geologist, until he realized as a student at the University of California, Davis that it was not the science but the "imagery of the sea and the processes of life, death, evolution and transformation that occur at its depths" that attracted him and finally led him to take art classes. In Davis's art department he studied with the funk artists Robert Arneson and William T. Wiley. They emphasized an open, exploratory and idiosyncratic attitude about art and its practice. During these studies Roloff a critical associations between art and science, he recognized that certain sculptural processes and materials were replicating geologic processes such as sedimentation, erosion, evaporation and volcanic action.

Often Roloff refers to geology in choosing the forms for his landscape/furnace works. Many of the earliest site works were begun with extensive research into the geologic history of the landscape where the piece was to be built. The flues of *Humboldt Ship*, 1989, resemble Jurassic trees in reference to the fuel used by the furnace's activation, and are meant to evoke "the original nature of the material in plant form in an ancient forest before it fell into the swamp and became transformed into fuel;" its hollowed-out hull suggests a sinking ship, representing "descent and geologic deposition of sedimentary materials like pre-metamorphic silts, a source of rock of the refractory concrete" used in the construction of the sculpture. *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, 1992, one of Roloff's more complex works of this series, comprised of two elements: "Furnace Element" and "Greenhouse Element," directly references geologic as well as metabolic/energy cycles of respiration, photosynthesis, the deposition of materials later to become fossil fuels and their subsequent ignition in activating the sculpture.

History - Nineteenth-Century Art and Philosophy

Besides geology, art and philosophy of the previous century have played important parts in Roloff's artistic development. Roloff admires nineteenth-century American landscape painters, like Martin Johnson Heade and Frederick Church, who painted scenes of their native East Coast but also traveled widely to find more exotic subjects. The orchid of Roloff's *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, 1982, and *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, 1989, was inspired by works of Heade depicting the lush flora of South America and with its elegant reference to the primal systems of life and death found in the jungle.

Other nineteenth-century painters like Winslow Homer and Albert Pinkham Ryder portrayed the sea to evoke the awesome forces of nature, or metaphorically, humanity's lonely and difficult journey, a small boat on a vast ocean. Boats, submarines, waves, starfish and other images related to the sea have haunted Roloff. They appear in his tabletop ship sculpture of the 1970's to several later landscape works: *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, 1980; *Wave Kilns I, II III*, 1981-2; *Humboldt Ship*, 1989; *Wave Ship (of Fire)/Ice Ship (of Glass)*, 1984; *Collision/Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1984; *Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan*, 1985; and in other large-scale, non-furnace sculptures such as *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, 1987 and *Metafossil/Metabolism and Mortality (Pinus: ponderosa, radiata, balfouriana)*, 1992.

In Emersonian transcendental philosophy, natural phenomena are viewed as symbolic of one's inner life. Roloff manifests a similar belief. For example, *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, 1989, an elaborate fire/event tableau, composed of two spherical elements located around a small lake. One, the "Virgin Bathysphere," referred to Ralph Waldo Emerson's expression in *Nature* of unity with the universe: "I became a transparent eyeball. I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God." What could be a more spectacular physical analog to Emerson's ocular simile than Roloff's circular ceramic fiber furnace made translucent by the fire that circulated within it? The other orb in *Oculus...*, the "Ancient Bathysphere," was made of earth materials that ossified during its activation by fire and referred to William Beebe's deep-sea diving bathysphere designed to explore the depths of the ocean. Roloff's idea in *Oculus...*, by depicting the two devices as symbolically seeking their origin or "life-blood" in a sub-sea-floor oil reservoir, was to establish an "emotive relationship to the organic fuels from the depths of the earth."

Duration

Roloff's landscape process works have several lives. Initially they are monumental sculptures in the landscape--flora or fauna, ships or waves--constructed of steel frames suspending ceramic fiber blankets or steel-reinforced cast refractory cement. When the furnaces are ignited, especially as they continue into the night, they are most alive. Over a period of several hours they glow in the night sky as flames leap from their flues, while their very materials--fuel, cement, silicates and carbonates return to earlier, unrefined states permanently transformed by the intense over 2000-degree heat.

As works which focus on process rather than final product, Roloff's furnace/performance pieces relate to the process-oriented sculptural movements that came into international currency during the late sixties when Roloff was still a student. American artists like Eva Hesse, Barry LeVa, Richard Serra along with their counterparts in Europe like the Arte Povera group in Italy (Jannis Kounellis, Guiseppe Penone, Gilberto Zorio, et al), redefined sculpture, deeming any material appropriate of making art--polyurethane, felt, dirt, lead castings, plant matter, fire--and caring little for their commercial viability. At the same time American earth artists were turning their backs on studio-or factory-made sculpture and venturing into the wide open spaces of the western United States to make their mark. It is noteworthy that several of the pioneering earth artists--Michael Heizer, Walter DeMaria and Dennis Oppenheim--grew up near San Francisco. Roloff's work is never as casual as that of the process artists, and strictly speaking is both too romantic and referential to be part of the earth art movement. But these developments suggested new cross-disciplinary and material possibilities which Roloff absorbed and combined with his innate fascination with natural science and his training in different forms of sculptural practice.

But Roloff was perhaps the most sympathetic with the work and writings of Robert Smithson with whom he felt a special affinity because of their common background in geology. The study of geology informed Smithson's thinking about art and offered an avenue by which he could extend it into the real



world. Smithson found beauty and fascination in the post-industrial, entropic landscape; Roloff explored correspondences between sculptural and geologic processes and adapted those principles to large-scale, outdoor site works. Also important to Roloff were his long and fruitful discussions with Dennis Oppenheim in the seventies when Roloff was teaching at the University of Kentucky and Oppenheim was a visiting artist. Oppenheim had made a number of pieces such as *Branded Mountain* and *Directed Seeding--Canceled Crop*, both 1969, in which, through burning and crop harvesting respectively, he stamped an image onto the landscape. Roloff's procedures were much more complex and the results more long-lasting, but in his furnace works he also would impose a pictorial image on the land.

#### Real Time: Performance/Event/Action

The activation by fire of one of Roloff's structures takes the better part of the day and late into the night. The visual intensity of these ritualistic events stays in the mind, an indelible, luminous memory. The emergence of art performance as a genre was one outcome of the explosive changes that took place in the art world during the late sixties and seventies. Roloff prefers the word "event" to "performance" to describe these works. Roloff's events have something in common with the actions (the term Beuys preferred to "performance"). Beuys' shamanistic, solo performances and installations often included an alchemical element, a transmutation, albeit symbolic, of one substance to another (Beuys who like Roloff had a background in science, felt modern science had become too positivistic). Roloff likewise was alert to the emotional and spiritual aspects of his events which are always to some degree unpredictable and in that sense irrational. He has referred to the experience of the fire's activation of *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, 1980, as "a conjuring," where the image of the starfish had become "alive" in some sense by the filling and animation of the structure by fire. Roloff likens this uncontrolled and alchemical part of the process to the "unconscious in a primitive or vulnerable state where time becomes emotion, chemistry spirit and matter theater."

#### Past and Future Time: Memory and Entropy

The final temporal association of Roloff's landscape/furnace works is reached in the aftermath of their activation by fire. In direct linkage to observations and research by Roloff into geologic processes where rock is made or transformed by volcanic and similar activities, earth materials in the performance works were melted and fused with each other and the ground into new formulations and structures. These ghostly traces from the earlier works such as *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*, and *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, both 1980, have entered into an entropic phase, to deteriorate and disappear over time. Later pieces, such as *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, 1988 and *Humboldt Ship*, 1989, which Roloff built with steel-reinforced refractory cement, have a more permanent after-life because of their greater structural and material--partially lava-like--integrity. In two cases, *Collision/Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1984 and *Talking Tree*, 1987, a later extension to *Ancient Shoreline: Island for Lake Lahontan*, 1985, Roloff added a botanical element to the project. This addition subjects, fossilized remains in the case of *Collision...* and the concept in the case of *Ancient Shoreline...* (the furnace/event element is no longer extant), the works to further, if more gentle transformation. In *Collision/Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1984, for example, he intersected the fused earthen hull with a steel trellis planted with ivy that eventually overtook it. In either case, Roloff has little control over his furnace works after the activation stage. In the end, it is the passage of time and natural or human forces that determine their future.

#### Conclusion

Roloff's landscape/furnace/event works engage the basic elements of fire, water, air and the earth and in so doing connected with the ages, with history and myth. For all the research, scientific and engineering know how Roloff brings to their construction and activation, he conceives of these works intuitively and poetically. Consequently, their effect on the viewer is more visceral and evocative than intellectual. In each successive piece, Roloff asked different questions and created new challenges. Roloff now views the kiln series as complete, but does not cut-off the possibility of its evolving.

These projects were never Roloff's sole occupation; he has made many other site installations and more recently a series of wall and leaning objects that combine photography and organic processes. Roloff's work has always resisted definition within a movement or style. He goes where his curiosity leads,

circling back to earlier concerns, crossing disciplines, exploring tangents, trying new materials. Like the furnace works themselves, and perhaps if any comparison is possible, most like the diverse explorations of the artists of the Arte Povera movement, Roloff's trajectory is unpredictable.

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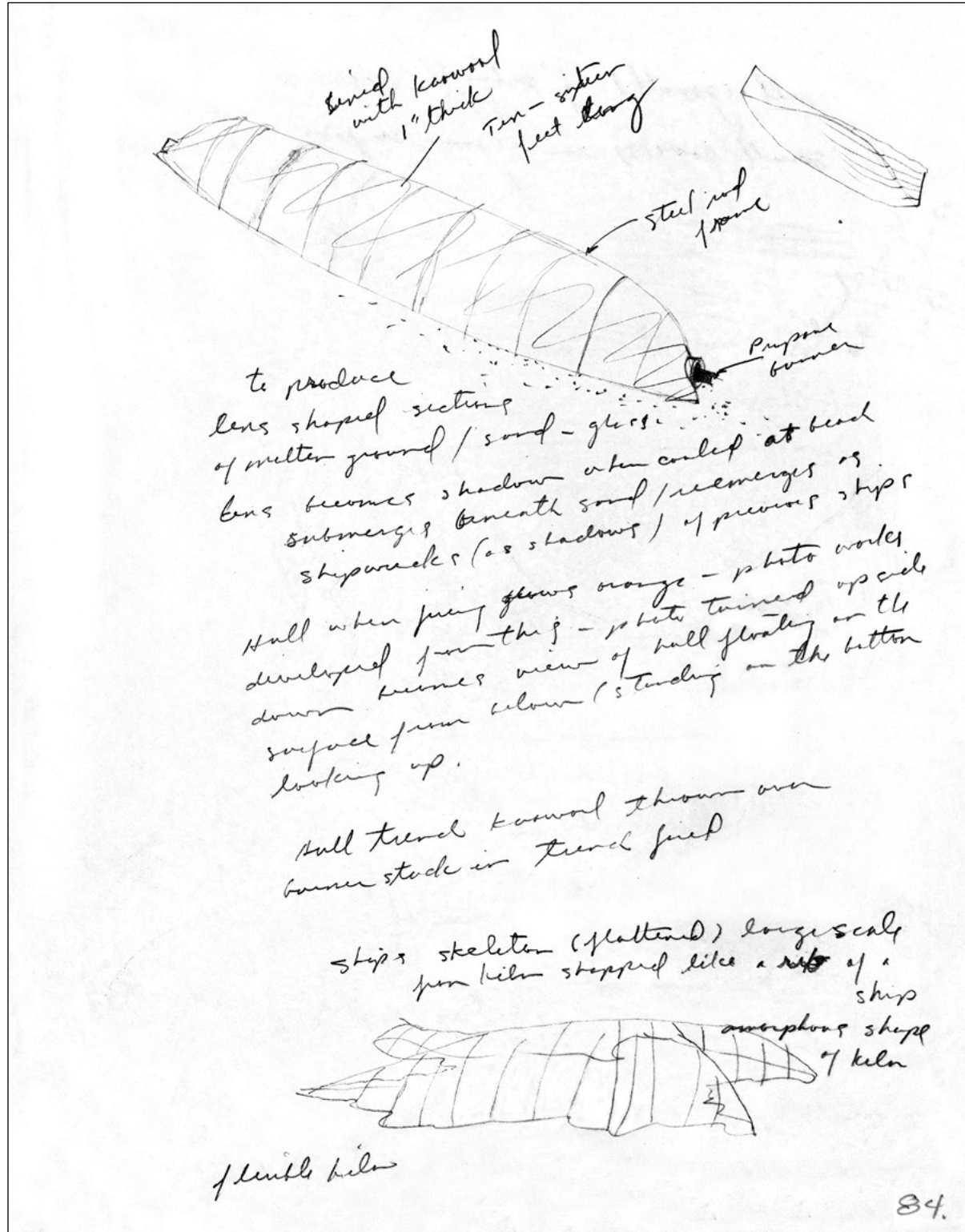


Fig. 30. Notebook 2 pg. 84, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1979.

## Fired and Glazed Earth Project

University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN  
Summer, 1979



### *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*

University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, 1979

*Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, is the first larger environmental performance/ kiln work after a series of smaller experimental kilns and firing projects. This work has two stages, the first of purely firing the existing earth in-situ. The second stage, a second firing of the layered placement of all powdered glaze materials available at the Notre Dame ceramic facility which were fused in-situ. In both cases the burner was placed in one end of the kiln, and left to reach a unknown temperature, the purpose being to let the kiln dynamics and natural forces (to the extent possible) determine the state of fusion of the materials, not a pre-determined formula or goal. The burner was left on until it appeared the kiln would no longer rise in temperature. Much of this attitude came from working with traditional kilns and organizing structures inside that might collapse or become radically altered beyond my control - to allow the kiln and enclosed elements to "speak."

Adapted from an email interview with Zach Tate, Research Associate, University of Notre Dame, February 9, 2017:

ZT - Was the fired earth piece and on-site kiln that you did at ND your first, or at least your first major attempt? Was it pre-planned ahead of time? What was your aim with the work originally? Why at Notre Dame?

JR - I believe it was the first, there was a second, smaller kiln piece soon after done at the beach here in CA using only Kaowool (a brand name for ceramic fiber blanket, and the name I usually called it, although Fiberfax was another brand at the time), and no bricks as at Notre Dame. A few things about that time: I had left teaching at the University of Kentucky (I was there from '74-78 and had moved to San Francisco, to teach at the San Francisco Art Institute, where I am. At Kentucky, artist's like Dennis Oppenheim, who had also become a friend, had visited, so I think there was a direct connection to earth work and conceptual artists as well as geology (from my undergrad days, paralleling studies in art), as inspiration. I was doing larger studio works related to the landscape and had developed a fairly experimental approach to ceramic processes and materials especially while in Kentucky. As for the work at Notre Dame being pre-planned, I think I wanted to work experimentally and the situation at ND with the large Field House and access to outdoor space, catalyzed a lot of things I was thinking about and gave me a place to experiment.

For the piece itself, I was primarily interested in seeing what the ground looked like fired, which in geologic terms might be an example of contact metamorphism, where lava came into contact with existing soil or other geology. It was important for me to transcend some of the basic ceramic ideas such as temperature or cone that something would be fired to, as I had not real idea for the ground materials. I distinctly recall setting the burner in place in one end of the kiln, turning it on full blast (no-preheat) setting up a brick in it's path to re-ignite the flame once it got hot enough. I watched the kiln for several hours to see that some color had been established then left the area to let the flame and ground material interact. Later



Fig. 31. *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, pre firing, stacked brick, Kaowool ceramic fiber blanket, electrical conduit, forced air burner, natural gas, earth, Notre Dame University, South Bend, IN, 1979.

than night, seeing the Kaowool had become illuminated and not much chance that the kiln would become hotter, it was shut off. The next day, the top was removed and the bottom of the kiln/ground examined and documented for the degree of transformation from the process. The next step was to gather materials from the glaze room to sprinkle dry on the fired surface. I recall trying to use all the materials in the glaze room in equal amounts, mixed dry in a bucket, so as not to create a "glaze" per say, but to see the materials somewhat objectively and geologically similar to the ground that was fired. The firing process was repeated to subject the materials to an 'unknown' temperature (actually the dynamic of the heat source, shape and structure of the kiln - burner in one end, draft out the other - length of firing and insulating capacity of the kiln, became the parameters for the temperature). The form of the kiln as a ship image was important as well, relating to the many ceramic ship pieces done during that time period. The ship form was and still is a metaphor for transformation, transport of materials (as in plate tectonics, lava flow, etc) and long-term view of the land and sea as being synonymous to each other in geologic time.

ZT - Looking back I cannot find any other records of these site specific kilns being used for Earth Art. Do you know of any others?

JR - I don't think there were any other environmental kiln works done at that time or for long after? Some years later, I heard of a Japanese artist building large clay structures, somewhat architectural, and firing them with sawdust, straw or similar, but I don't recall that name at this point. My interest in this process had roots in my early days as a student in both geology and art, recognizing the materials in the glaze room at UC Davis where I did undergraduate work in the 1960's, as a function of geology and landscape - powdered feldspar in the glaze lab was for me a processed part of a mountain or a primary constituent in granite, etc.



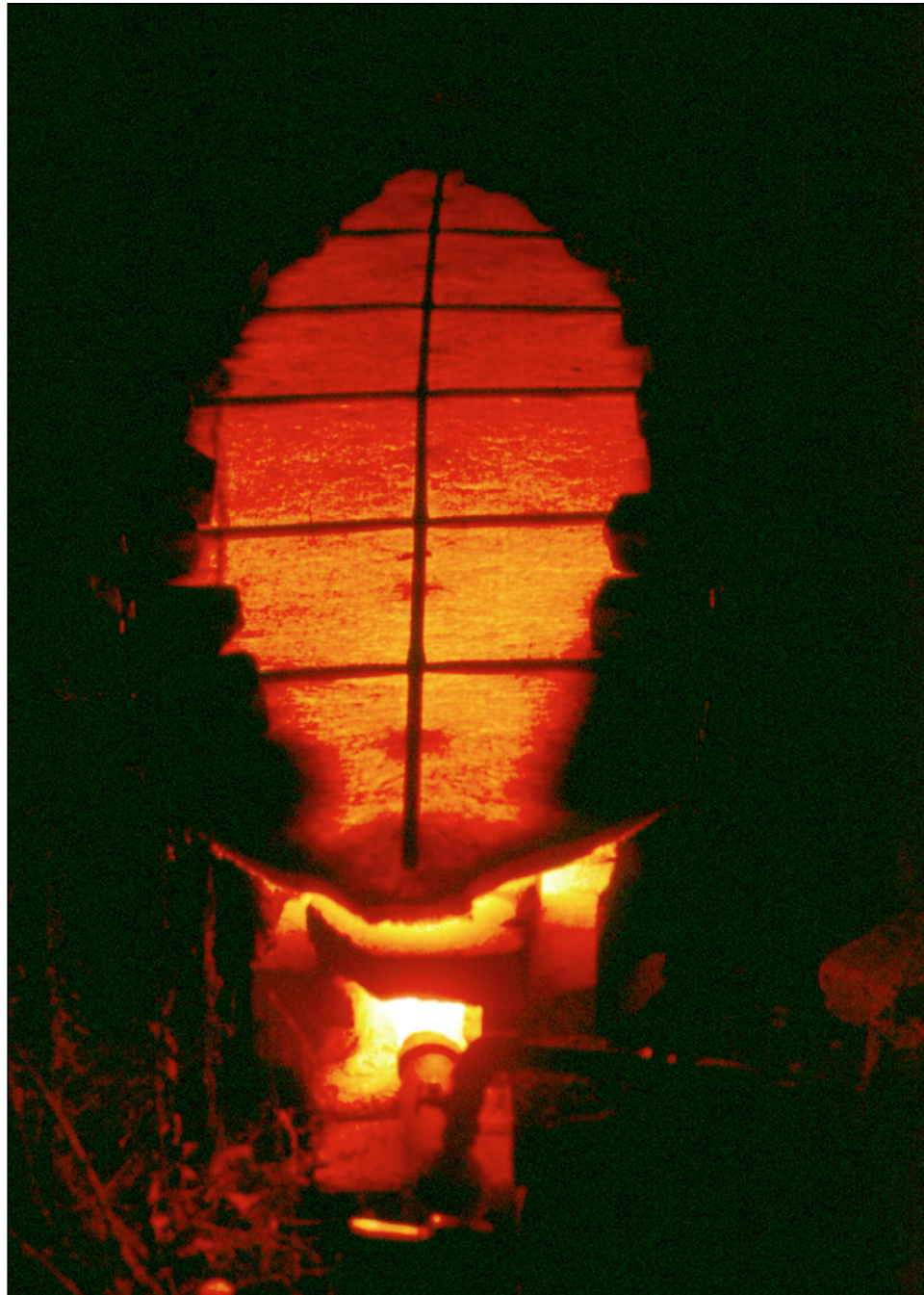


Fig. 32. *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, night firing, Notre Dame University, South Bend, IN, 1979.



Fig. 33. *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, post firing /fired earth, Notre Dame University, South Bend, IN, 1979.





Fig. 34. *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, post firing II/glazed earth, Notre Dame University, South Bend, IN, 1979.

## *Beach Kiln (Monitor)*

Ocean Beach, San Francisco, CA, 1980



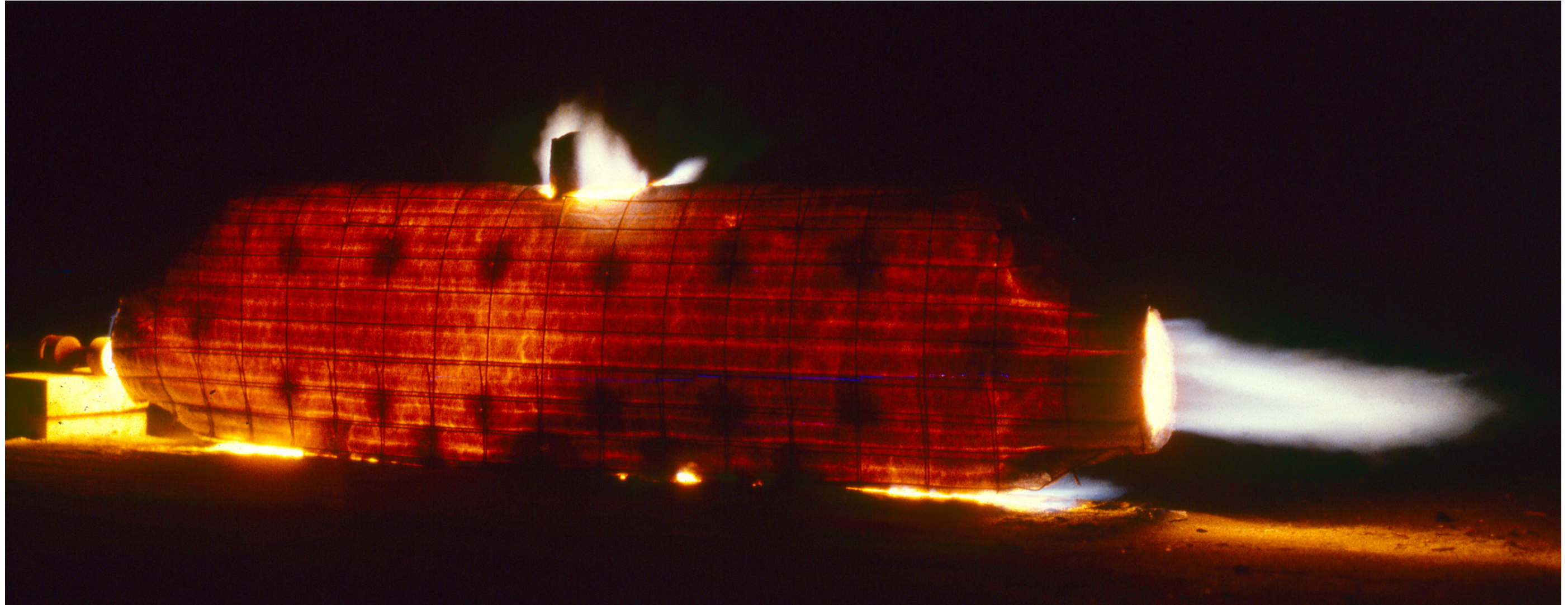


Fig. 35. *Beach Kiln (Monitor)*, 5 ft. long, night firing, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, clay, propane, rock, sand, Ocean Beach, San Francisco, CA 1979.

*Beach Kiln (Monitor)*

Ocean Beach, San Francisco, CA 1979

*Beach Kiln (Monitor)*, is an experimental working scale model to explore the use of ceramic fiber blanket as the full structure and illumination of the kiln firing, as well as the Civil War ironclad, "monitor," ship form representing material and landscape transformation, as represented in other studio-based ceramic ships. Several variations were tried with the kiln having one horizontal burner and the main flue opposite (Fig. 31), others with two horizontal burners and the flu at top center, as well as other rock, altered sand configurations. Like the final stage of *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, 1979, the sand of *Beach Kiln (Monitor)*'s site, Ocean Beach, was mixed with glaze flux to fuse the interior ship into glass. Various rocks, including Franciscan Complex graywacke sandstone and obsidian gathered from a volcanic site on the east side of Sierra Nevada mountains were placed centrally to represent the turret of the monitor.

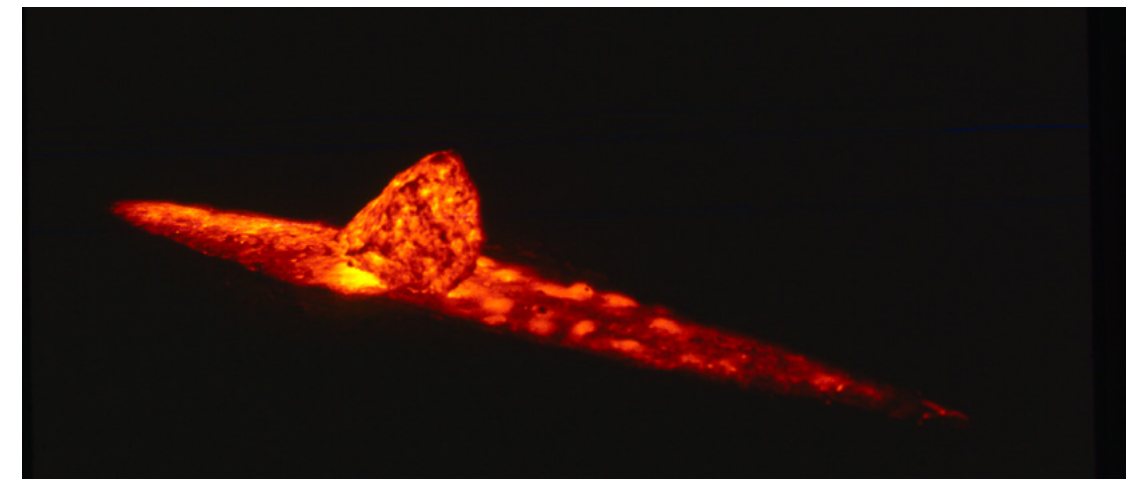
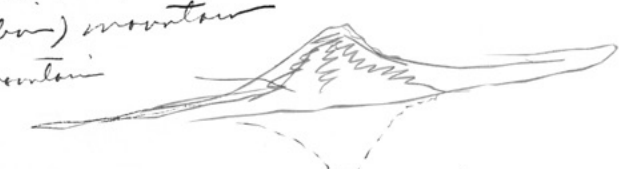


Fig. 36. *Beach Kiln (Monitor)/Kiln Removed/Molten State*, 48 in. long, night firing, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, clay, propane, rock, sand, Ocean Beach, San Francisco, CA 1979.



For beach day things  
 Super red film where piece is moved to make traces  
 on the film

large mound film on top  
 bring quantities of materials (try red dichromate glazes?)  
 so cooling is same color as heat  
 dig hole see how far heat penetrates:  
 bring old pieces? to penetrate the ground?  
 partially buried objects pieces etc  
 wind tunnel / sit up layers of material to form a hill  
 inside kiln  
 plug up kiln and make small holes  
 bring broken glass  
 bring? to alter the film / glaze inside of kiln?  
 Fill with sand  
 glass (obsidian) mountain  
 rest of the mountain



Canada -  
 Manta kiln firing by itself (mountain) in  
 the southern Saskatchewan wilderness.  
 only documentation is my description of the whole  
 process on film under a remnant of the ice age  
 before people were used to outdoors.  
 The idea of the project is systems (non-systematic /  
 frequently possibly an antithesis to scientific  
 method instead of beginning with a hypothesis - in  
 search of a hypothesis or more accurate resolution of  
 the hypothesis (investigative scientific method)

deals with  
 formlessness of that  
 place and loneliness  
 of deep sea creature  
 giant squid  
 more oppo.

Fig. 37. Notebook 2 pg. 121, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1979.

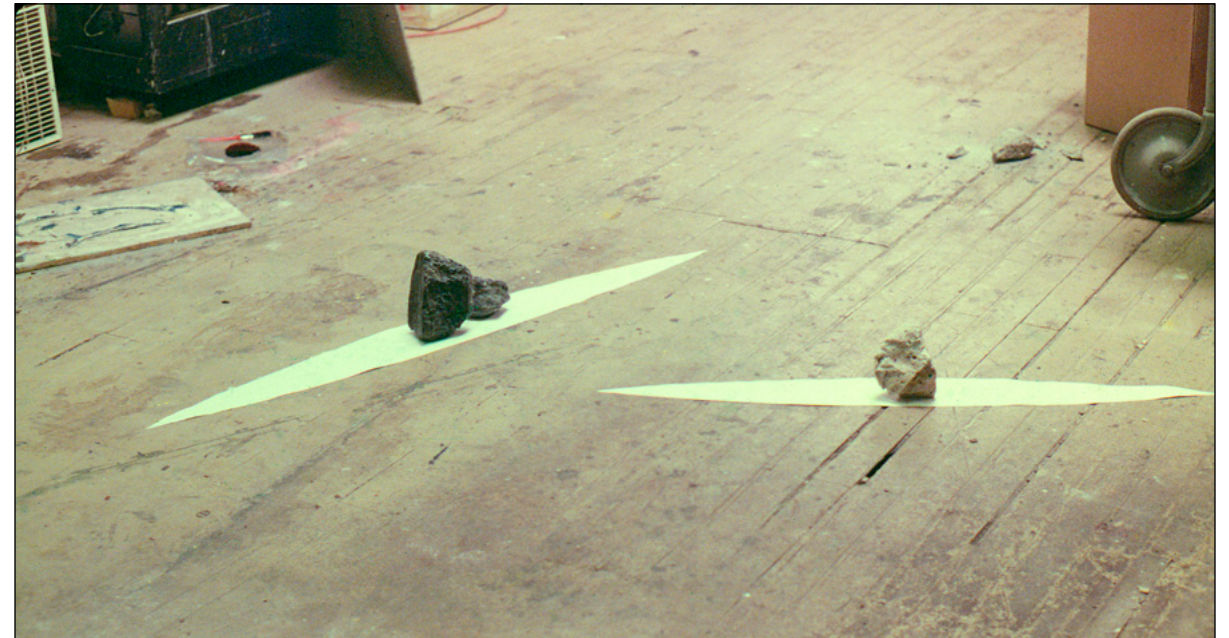
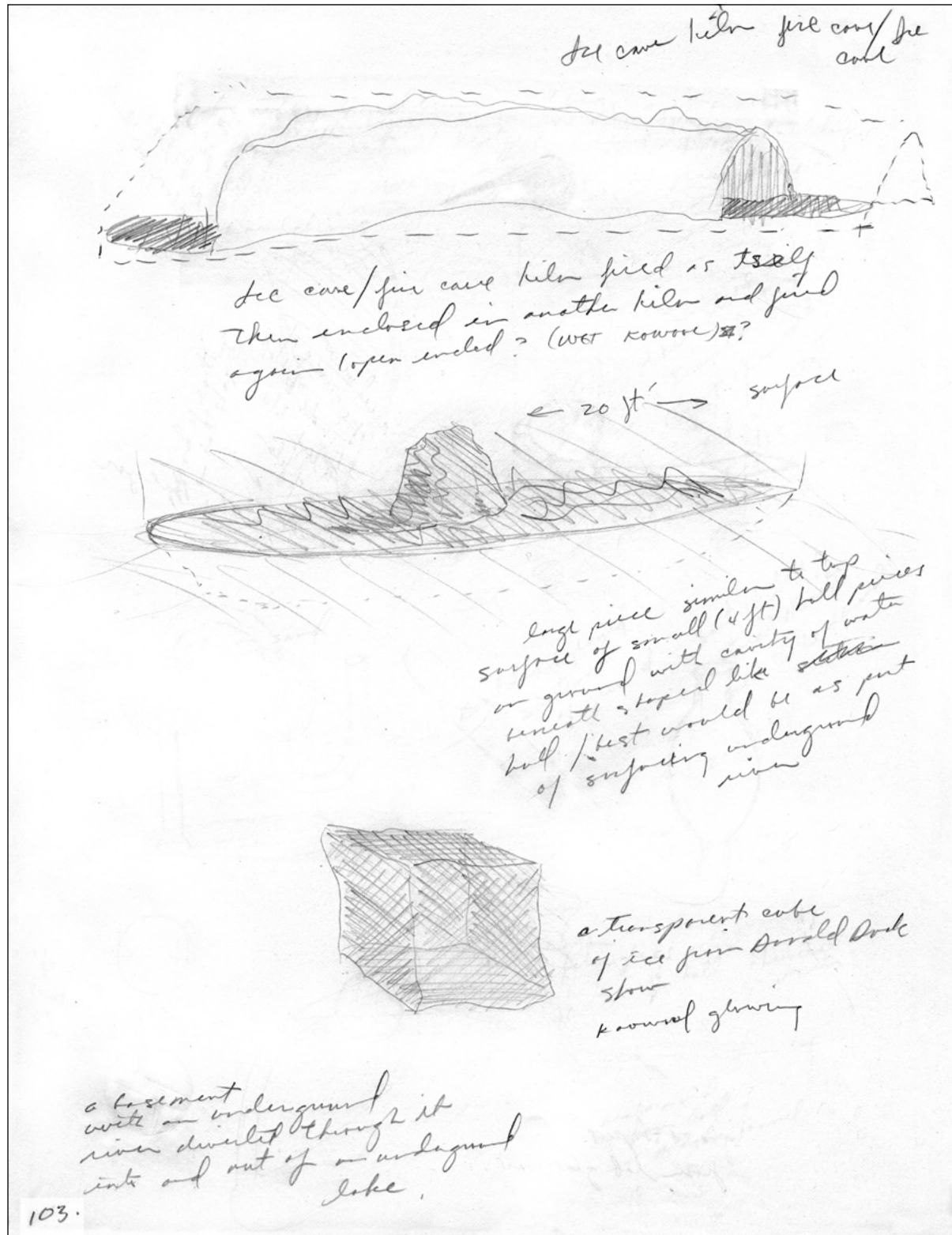


Fig. 38. Studies: Beach Kiln (Monitor), paper, rock, 36-48 in., studio floor, San Francisco, CA, 1979.



Fig. 39. Land Monitor, 30 ft., steel, cement, iron oxide, San Francisco Bay, 1981.





## Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder

'JA' Volcano, Albuquerque, NM, 1980

Fig. 40. Notebook 2 pg. 113, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1979.



### Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder

'JA' volcano, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM, 1980.

*Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder* is the third environmental performance/ kiln work after *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, and *Beach Kiln (Monitor)*, both 1979. The project was done as a workshop with students from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM in the Pleistocene volcanic field south of Albuquerque, near the 'JA' volcano. The steel and ceramic fiber blanket kiln was removed at the peak of the firing to expose the mafic (high iron/magnesium – low silica) basalt boulder, from the adjacent volcano, fired to a near-molten temperature, in an attempt for the viewer to physically re-experience the boulder's birth/origin by returning it to a molten state. The cooled, altered, boulder and fused volcanic sand remained after the firing as a "land monitor," of similar proportions to the monitor ships (ironclads) of the American Civil War.

*Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder* is part of a series of works relating to the monitor as exemplified by the ironclad Civil War *Monitor* and related vessels researched at the National Archives and US Naval Historical Center in Washington, DC in the late 1970's. In addition to the 'Fired Volcanic Boulder' piece the series took the form of a 30 ft. steel, cement, silica and iron oxide sculpture, *Land Monitor*, 1981, a series of models of similar 'land monitor' forms situated in the landscape and photographs of Civil War and related ships included in the *Orders of Entropy*, series, 2005.

Historically, The monitor represented a historical and radical transition in material, form and concept about a ship. The use of iron as a building material took the ship from the organic wooden realm into the inorganic, in the form of iron ore, industrially (volcanic analog) transformed and into a metallic state. The whole life of an iron ship if viewed in a larger process of extraction, distillation, construction, oxidation (in the form of rust) and recombination, a condition of entropy and an analog with metabolism (anabolic and catabolic) become apparent. The characteristically low freeboard and waterline has allusions to land and sea scape through it's extreme horizontality.

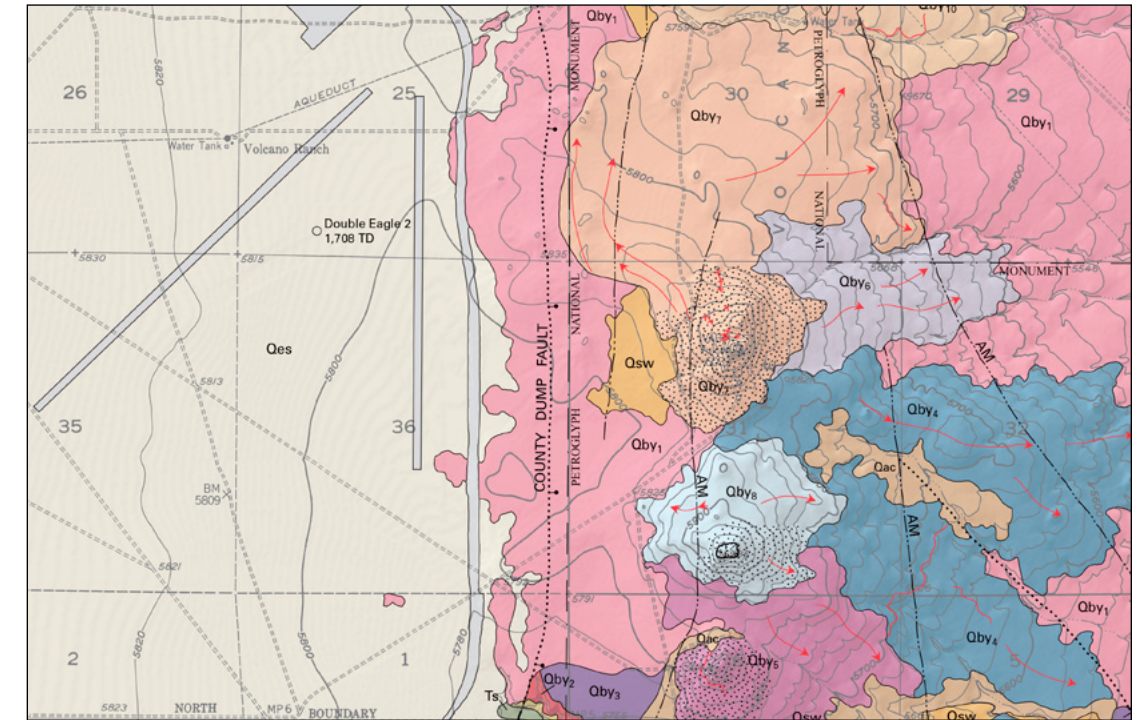


Fig. 41. 'JA' volcano, adapted from, Thompson, R.A., Shroba, R.R., Menges, Christopher, Schmidt, D.L., Personius, S.F., and Brandt, T.R. 2009, Geologic map of The Volcanos quadrangle, Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties, New Mexico: U.S. Geologic Survey Scientific Investigations Report 3038, 1 sheet, scale 1:24,000.



Fig. 42. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder* (cooled/fused state), 'JA' volcano, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM.





Fig. 43. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*. pre-firing installation views, with University of New Mexico art students, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM.



Fig. 44. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*. pre-firing installation views, with University of New Mexico art students, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM.



Fig. 45. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*. pre-firing installation, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM.





Fig. 46. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*. night firing (detail), with University of New Mexico art students, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM.





Fig. 47. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*, fire state/kiln in place, 30 ft., steel, refractory blanket, propane, basalt, borax/sand, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM, 1980.



Fig. 48. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*, kiln being removed to reveal volcanic boulder in molten state, Pleistocene volcanic field, south of Albuquerque, NM.



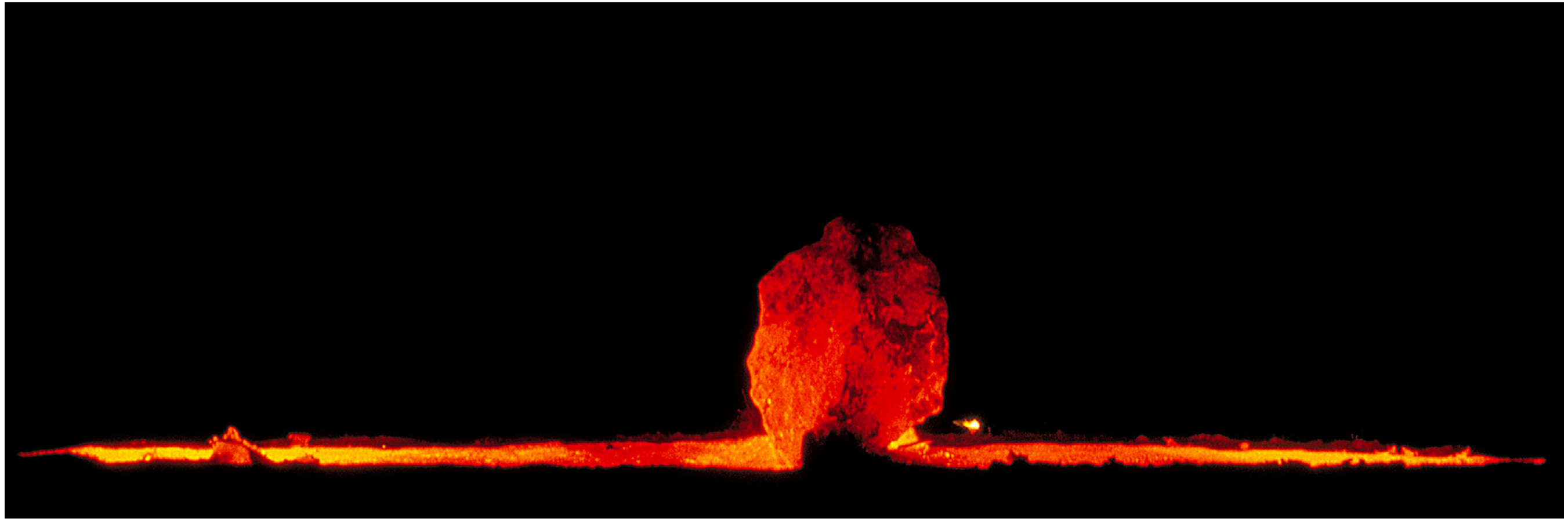


Fig. 49. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*, molten state/kiln removed, 30 ft., basalt, molten borax/sand mixture, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM, 1980.



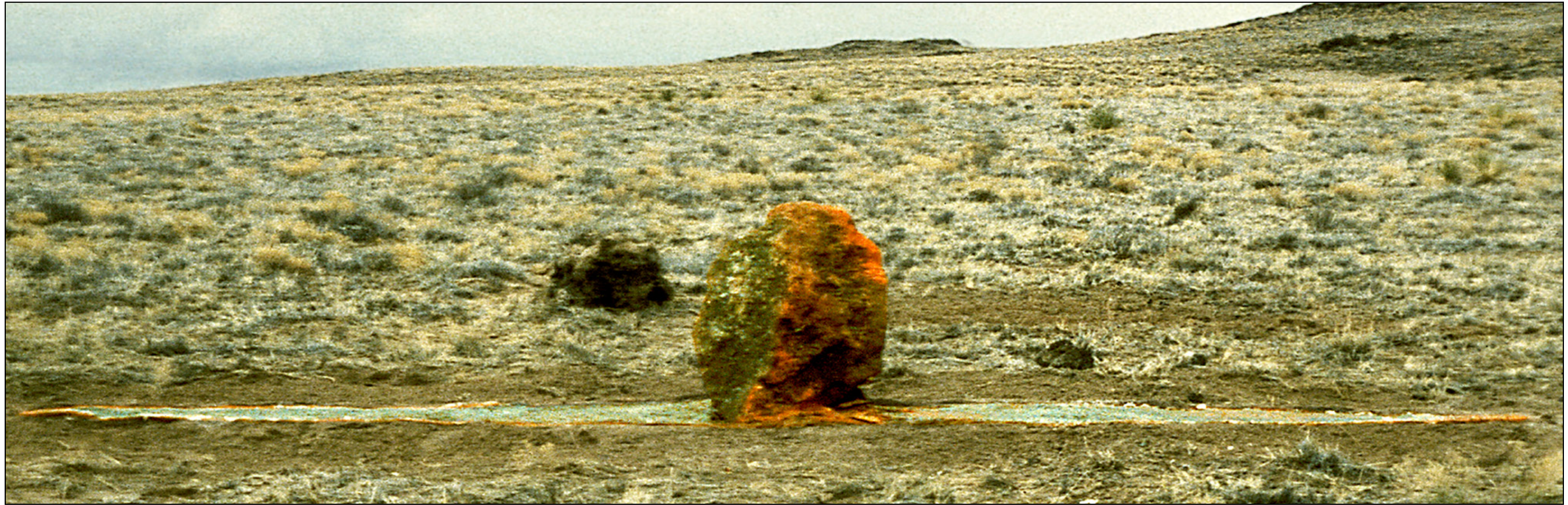


Fig. 50. Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder, cooled state/kiln removed, 30 ft., basalt, molten borax/sand mixture, Pleistocene volcanic field, Albuquerque, NM, 1980.

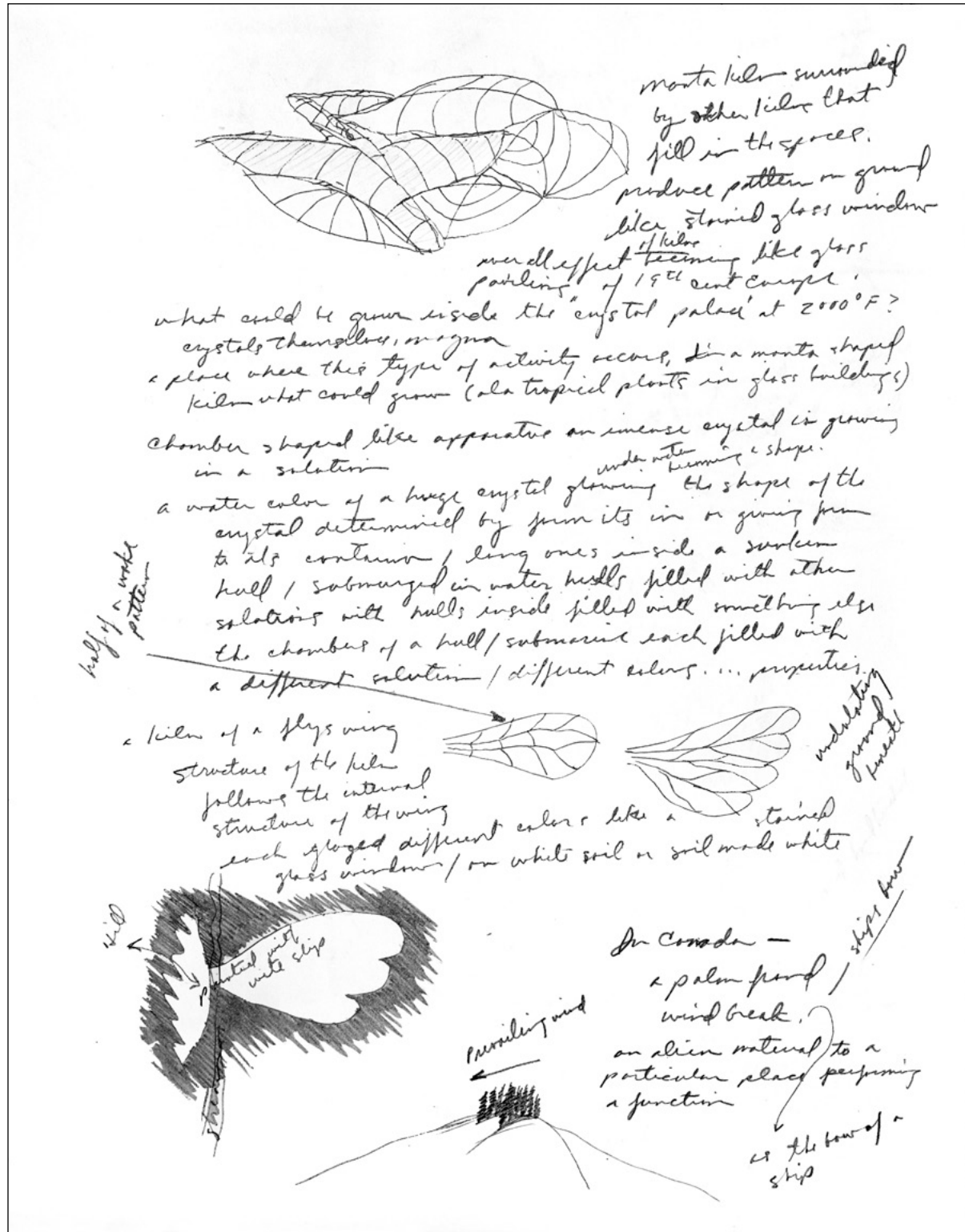


Fig. 51. Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder, cooled/fused state, kiln removed (boulder detail).



Fig. 52. Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder, cooled/fused state, kiln removed (boulder detail).





## Prairie Starfish / Glacial Epoch

Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980

Fig. 53. Notebook 2 pg. 119, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.





Fig. 54. Qu'Appelle River Valley, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, post-firing, kiln removed, in-situ, 1980.



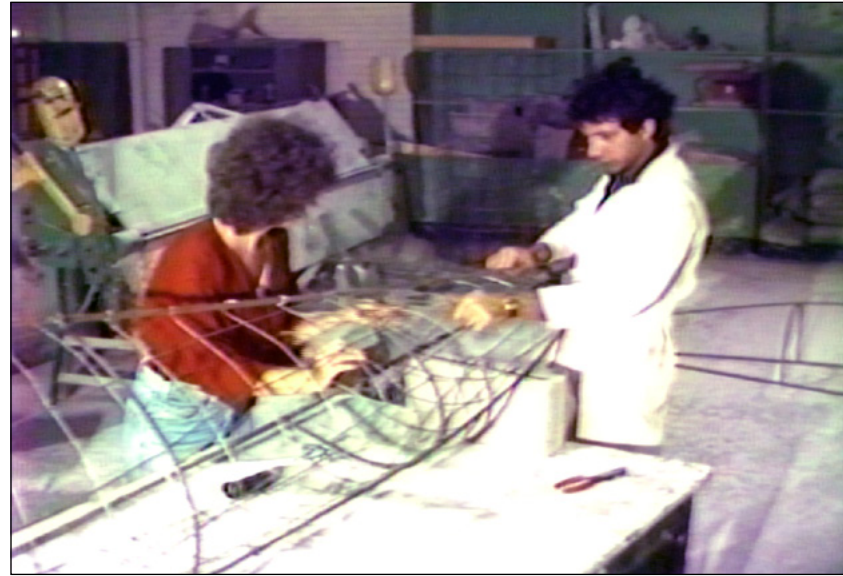


Fig. 55-57. Construction, installation and post-fire dismantling of the kiln. Video stills from John Roloff, *A Project for Regina, an Outdoor Firing*, produced by the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, September, 1980.



Fig. 58-60. Post-fire dismantling of the kiln. Video stills from John Roloff, *A Project for Regina, an Outdoor Firing*, produced by the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, September, 1980.





Fig. 61. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, firing, 20 ft. dia., steel, ceramic fiber blanket, propane, borax, kaolin, colorants, earth, Qu'Appelle River Valley, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980.





Fig. 62. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, post-firing, 20 ft. dia., steel, ceramic fiber blanket, fused earth, Qu'Appelle River Valley, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980.



Fig. 63. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, post-firing, kiln removed, 20 ft. dia., fused earth, Qu'Appelle River Valley, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980.

### *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*

Qu'Appelle River Valley, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada 1980.

*Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch* was developed in response to an invitation by the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, and faculty, Ric Gomez and Franklin Heisler, University of Regina, Regina Saskatchewan in 1980 to produce a kiln-based site work. The project involved geologic and research of the central Canadian plains, that focused on the Pleistocene, paleo-climate/paleo-geography of that area. Numerous episodes of Ice Age glaciation with episodic advancement and retreat of ice sheets often over a mile in thickness, characterized this time period and terrain, the starfish imagery, referring to this "sea" of ice and mythical inhabitants of that impossible sea. Following this research, during a site visit outside Craven, the image of a large starfish grasping a hillside occurred to my mind's eye. I intuitively knew this was the form the kiln would take. The research and this project became a precursor to the *Lahontan Group I-III*, 1985-87, with its focus on the Pleistocene climate of the northern Great Basin of what is now Nevada, eastern California and south-eastern Oregon. The project was accomplished with the help of University of Regina students and resides on a graciously donated site on Joan McNeil's property, Craven, Saskatchewan, Qu'Appelle River Valley.

This work also echoed sculptures of the *Exile Series* and related tableau sculptures of the 1970's that employed out-of-scale bio/zoogenic imagery to consider issues of geologic time, geologic processes and the language of mythology. Sited on glacially-deposited loess sediment of the Qu'Appelle River Valley, the alluvium beneath the kiln was treated with the flux borax, green colorant and a dusting of kaolin to fuse in the firing creating a 3-4 in. thick glass starfish image with floating islands of dryer material mimicking exposures of native rock outcrops encrusted with lichen. The engagement of the fire with the starfish-shaped kiln during the firing had the effect of a 'conjuring,' the fire becoming a primal vitalization of the form, playing with the border between myth and inorganic life.

A twenty one minute video, *John Roloff, A Project for Regina, an Outdoor Firing*, was produced by the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, September, 1980, documenting the building, firing and aftermath of the project.





Fig. 64. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, post-firing, detail, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, fused earth, Qu'Appelle River Valley, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980.

## *Wave Kilns*

Mills College, Oakland, CA, 1982  
Theo Portnoy Gallery, New York, NY, 1982  
San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, 1982



*Wave Kilns I-III*

Mills College, Oakland, CA, 1982  
Theo Portnoy Gallery, New York, NY, 1982  
San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, 1982

*Wave Kilns I-II* were fired at Mills College as part of an on-going series of experimental projects began in the late 1970's, to examine the idea of a kiln as an agent of transformation, to challenge conceptual and material relationships of the kiln to ceramics, sculpture and environmental art and to consider the elemental/poetic potentials of the kiln in its primal function to form and mold heat. *Wave Kilns I-III* produce no ceramic product in the normal sense, they are filled with only fire, creating effigies of luminous waves in mid-crash. The firings of *Wave Kilns I-II* were documented to produce mural-sized photographic images of the material/image transformation used in the exhibitions: *John Roloff*, Theo Portnoy Gallery, NY, NY, 1981 and *Kiln Projects: Works in Progress*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, 1982. The wave images were exhibited with the 40 ft., *Wave Kiln III*, which has never been fired.

The images elude to the firing of the larger wave, extending its potential life into a conceptual dimension, of unlimited scale. *Wave Kilns I-III* extend traditional sculptural concepts of casting and molds, by the filling of a shaped kiln/mold of a material, water, engaged in another transitory process, with another transitory material/process, fire.

At the time of firing of *Wave Kiln's I-II*, at Mills College in 1982, several other, related kiln works were produced using the kiln structures: *Wave Kilns I-II (Synthetic Landscape)*, and materials in *Study: Dendritic Kiln (Steam)*. These projects are kiln, process, material, landscape experiments further exploring the kiln as a conceptual and metaphorical instrument.

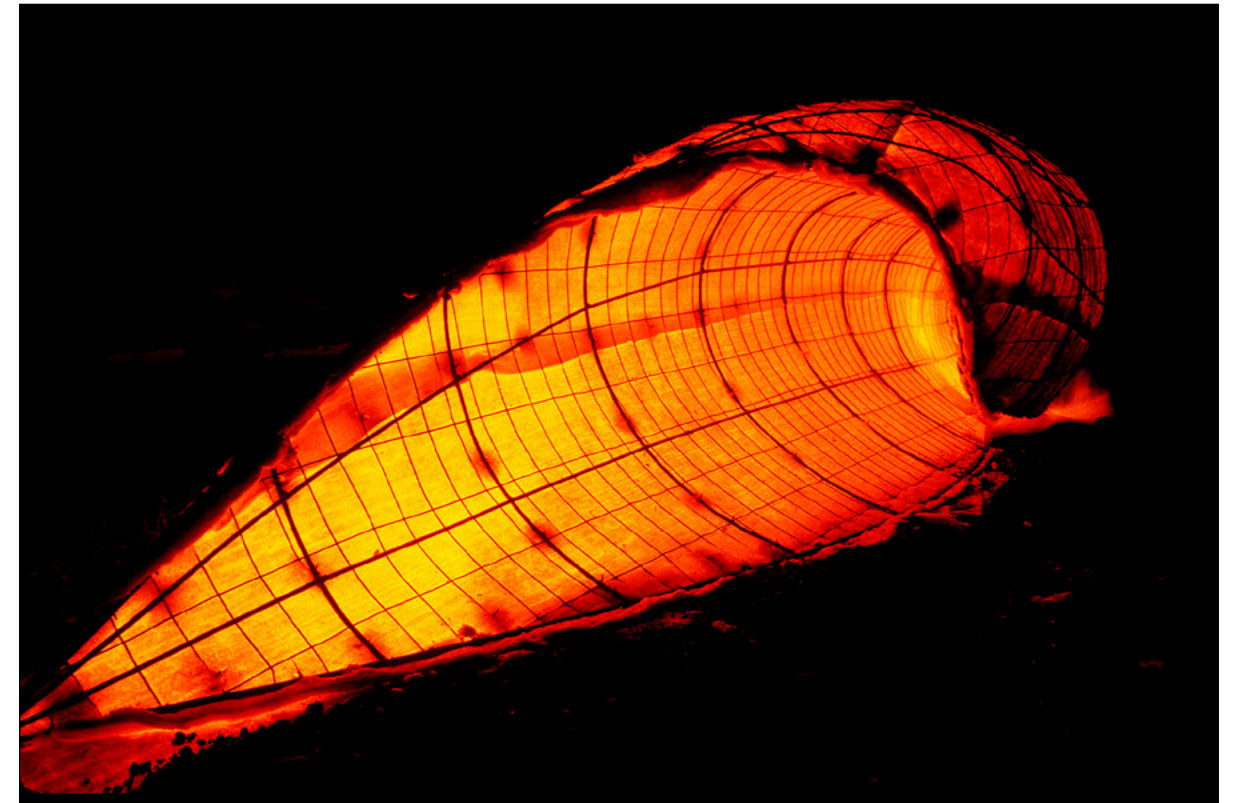


Fig. 65. *Wave Kiln I* (fire state), 8 ft. long, ceramic fiber blanket, steel, propane, brick, Mills College, 1981.

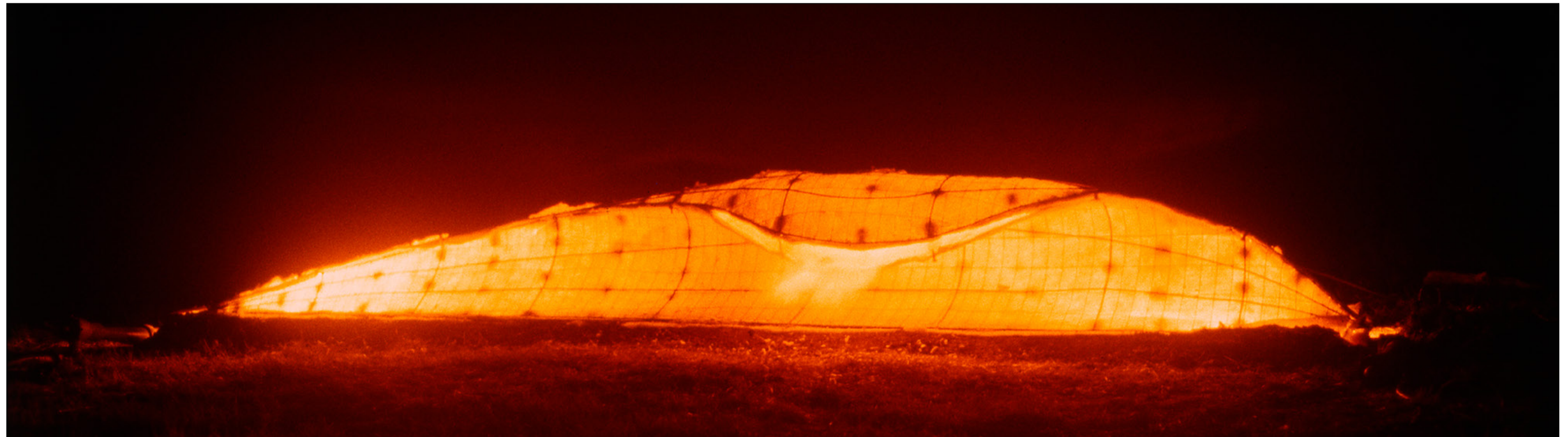


Fig. 66. *Wave Kiln II* (fire state), 12 ft.. long, ceramic fiber blanket, steel, propane, brick, Mills College, 1981.



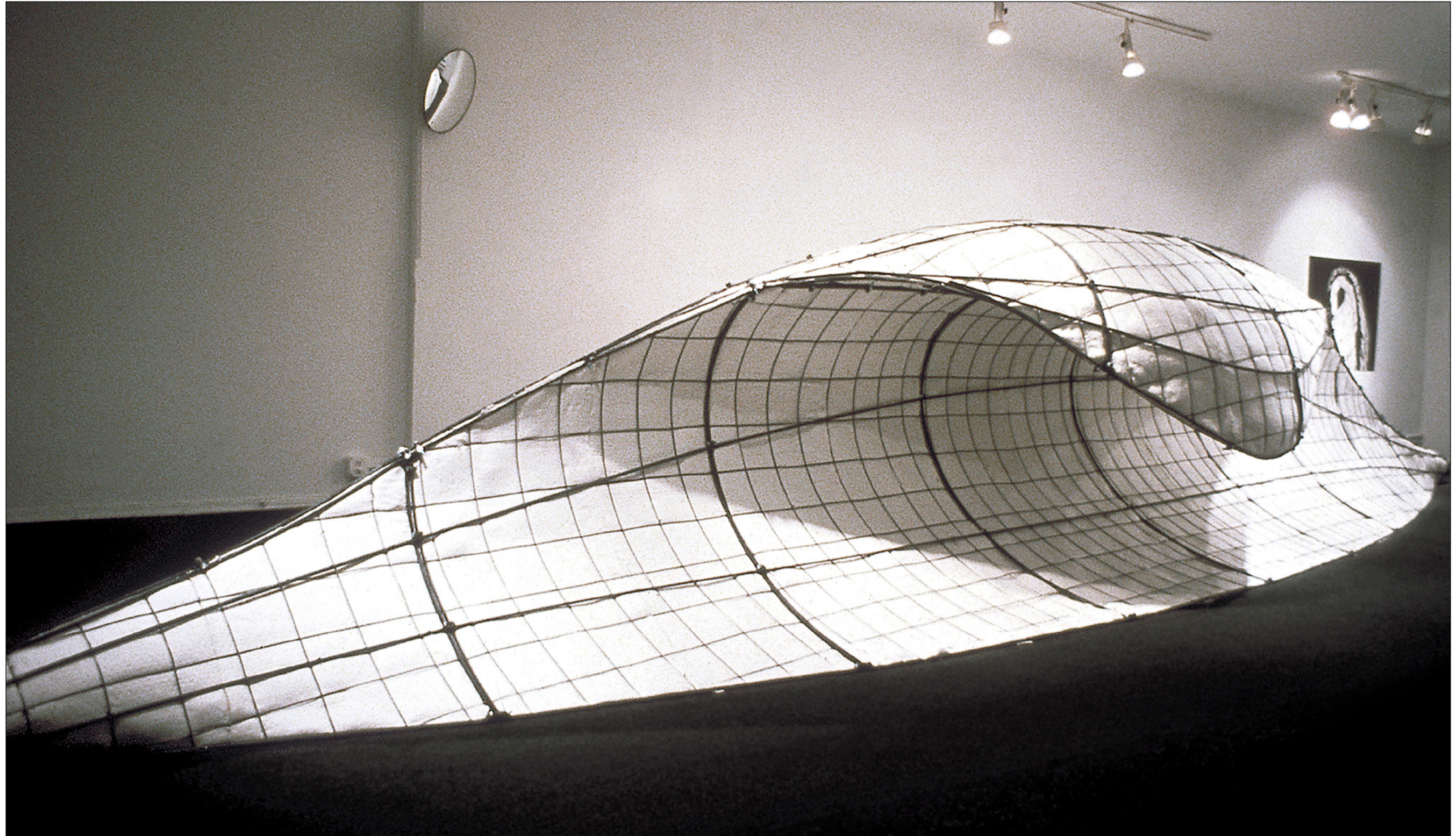


Fig. 67. Wave Kiln III (foreground) / Wave Kiln I (photo, back wall), solo exhibition, Theo Portnoy Gallery, New York, NY., 1981.



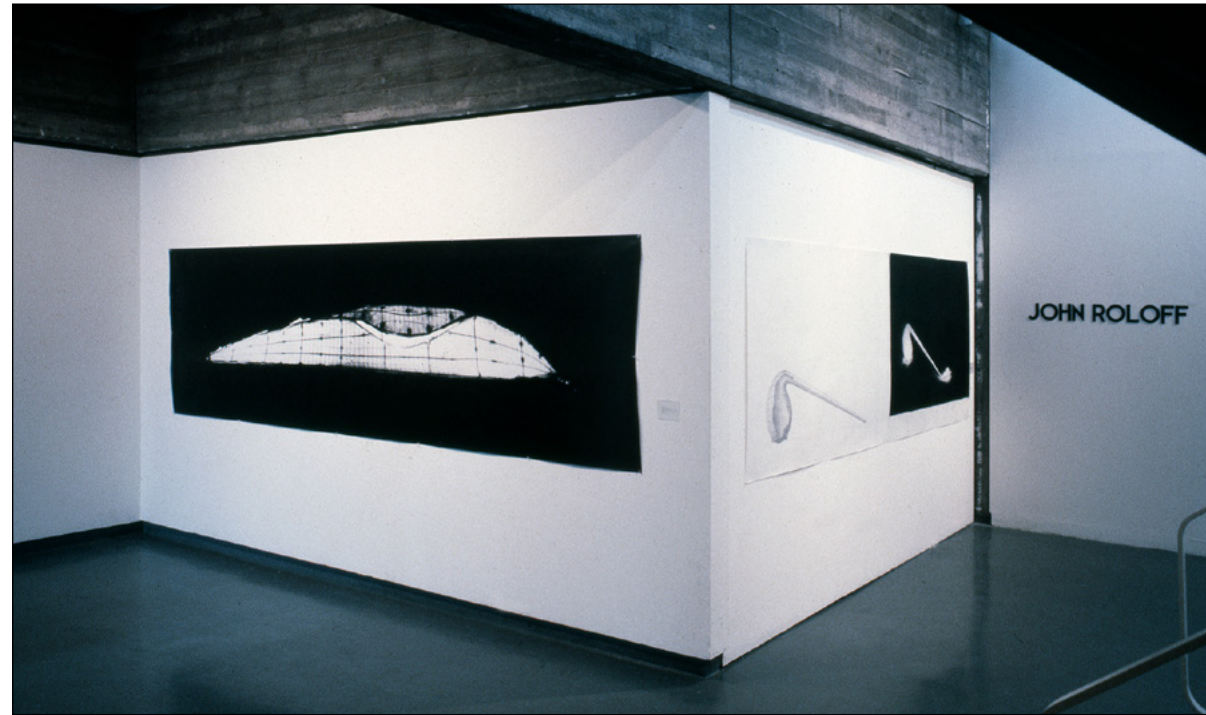


Fig. 68. Left: *Wave Kiln II*, b&w photo, 40 in. x 144 in., right: *Retort Kiln*, pencil, pastel on paper, 48 in. x 120 in., *Kiln Projects: Works in Progress*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA. 1982.

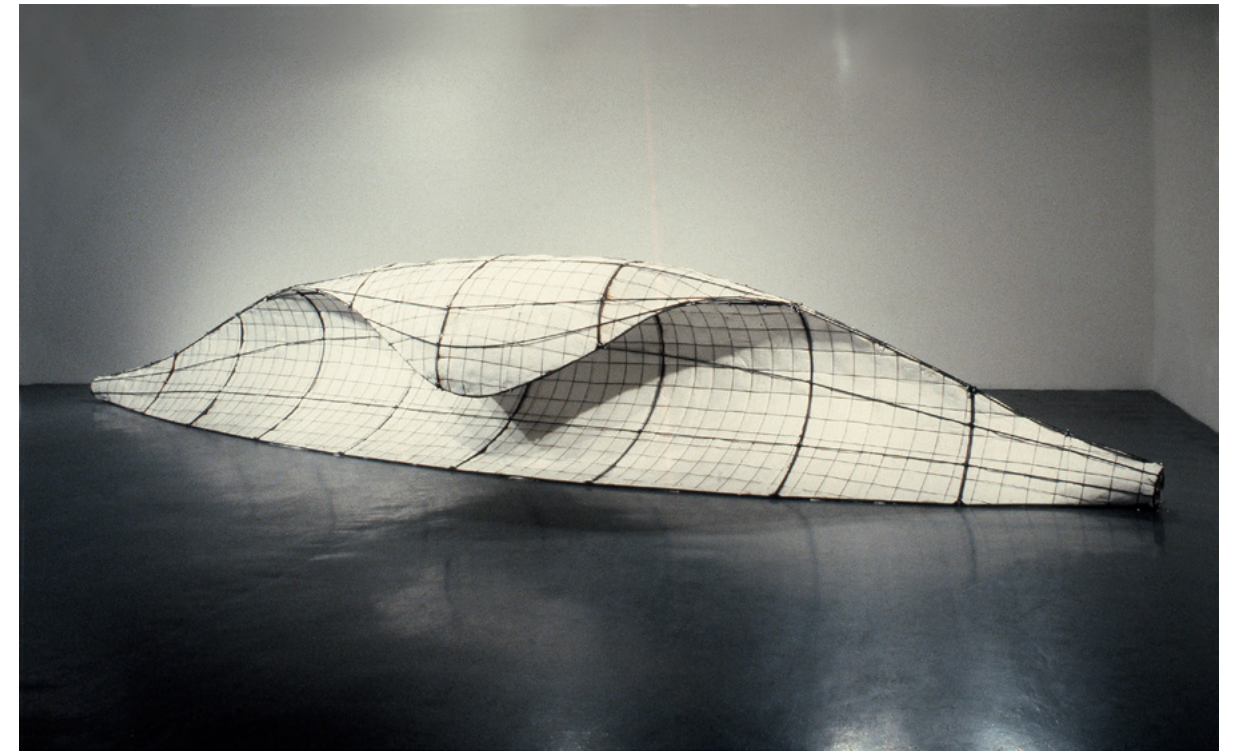


Fig. 70. *Wave Kiln III*, installation, 40 ft. long, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, *Kiln Projects: Works in Progress*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA. 1982.



Fig. 69. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, b&w mural photo documentation, *Kiln Projects: Works in Progress*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA. 1982.



Fig. 71. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*, b&w mural photo documentation, *Kiln Projects: Works in Progress*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA. 1982.





Fig. 72. Wave Kiln I (post fire state), 26 ft. long, ceramic fiber blanket, steel, propane, brick, Mills College, 1981.



Fig. 73. Wave Kiln II (post fire state), 24 ft. long, ceramic fiber blanket, steel, propane, brick, Mills College, 1981.





Fig. 74. Wave Kiln I (post fire state), 26 ft. long, ceramic fiber blanket, steel, propane, brick, Mills College, 1981.



Fig. 75. Wave Kiln I (post fire state/kiln removed), 26 ft. long, steel, propane, brick, Mills College, 1981.



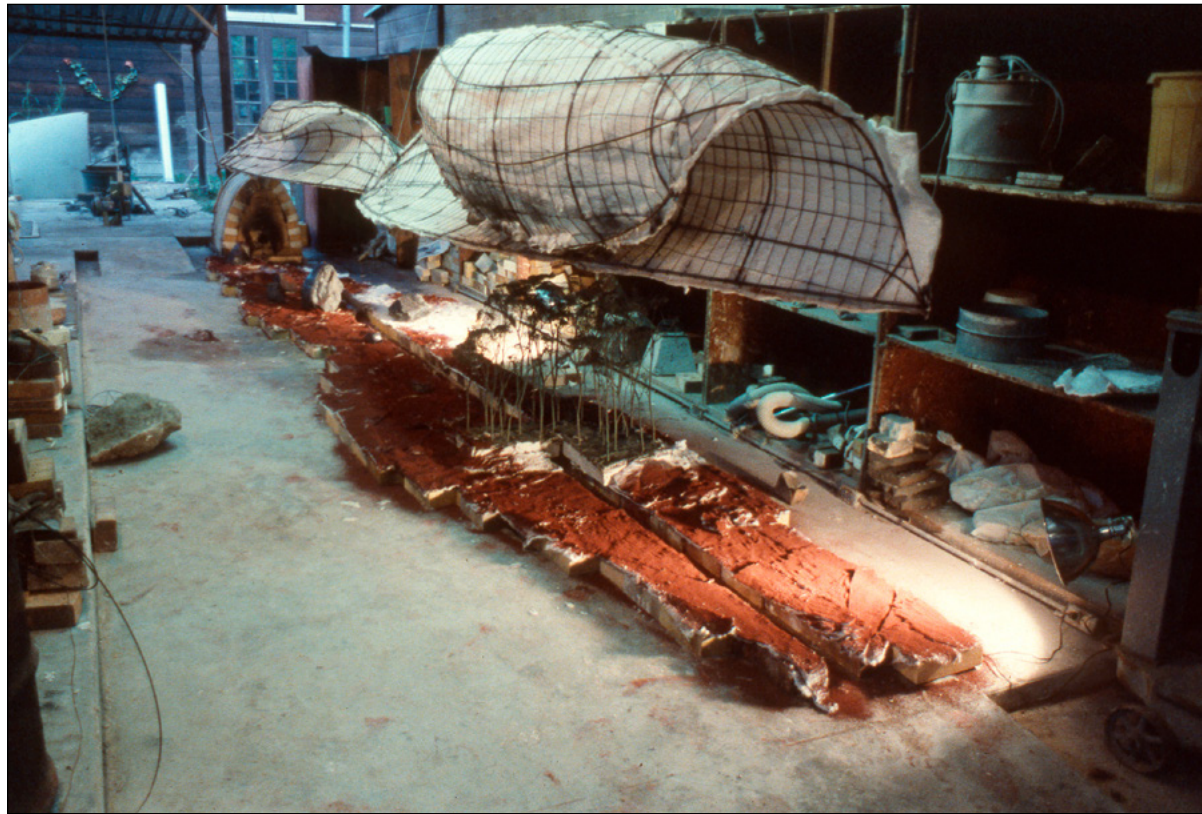


Fig. 76-77. Wave Kilns I-II (Synthetic Landscape), 25 ft. long, fire brick, iron oxide, clay, wood, rock, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, lights, Mills College, Oakland, CA, 1981.



Fig. 78. Wave Kilns I-II (Synthetic Landscape), 25 ft. long, fire brick, iron oxide, clay, wood, rock, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, lights, Mills College, Oakland, CA, 1981.





Fig. 79. Study: *Dendritic Kiln (Steam)*, 8 ft.. long, water-soaked ceramic fiber blanket, propane, gravel, Mills College, Oakland, CA, 1981.

## *Mountain Kiln / Black Orchid*

*The Embarcadero Field Project, Temporary Installations by Five Artists.*  
12th International Sculpture Conference,  
Oakland, CA, 1982





Fig. 80. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, kiln tableau/site installation, pre-firing state, 60 ft. long, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, sheet metal, propane tanks, sand, self-glazing clay, ISC Conference, Oakland, CA waterfront, 1982.





Fig. 81. Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid, detail, concept study, pencil on vellum, 12 in. x 18 in., 1982.

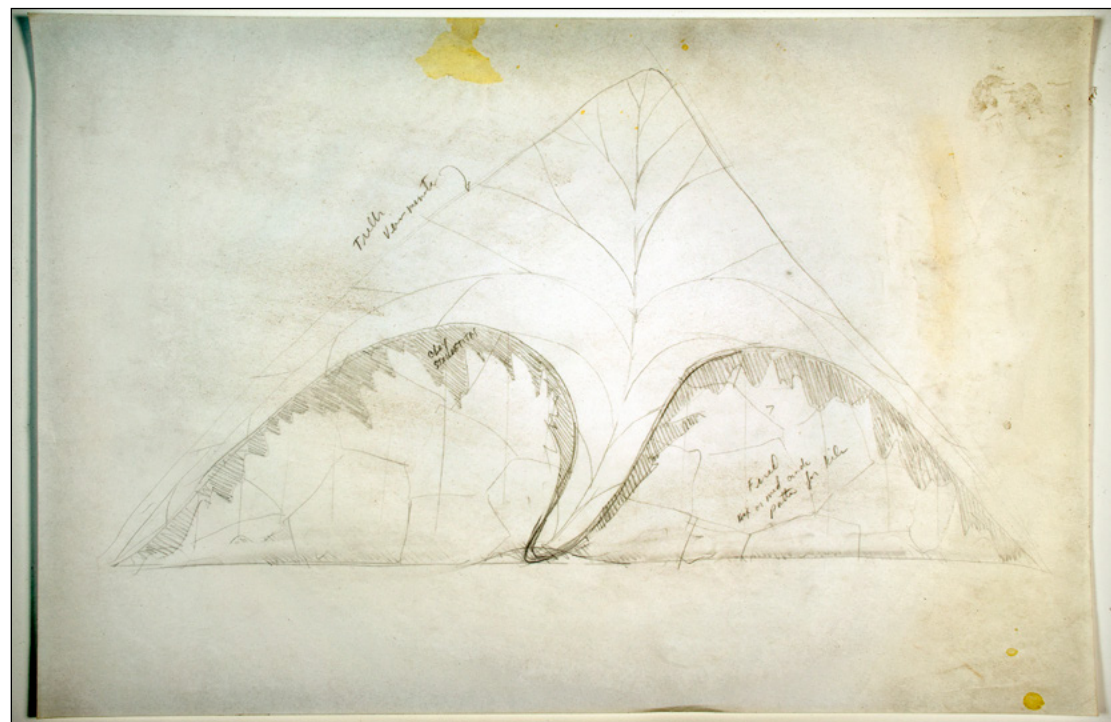


Fig. 82. Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid, concept study, pencil on vellum, 12 in. x 18 in., 1982.

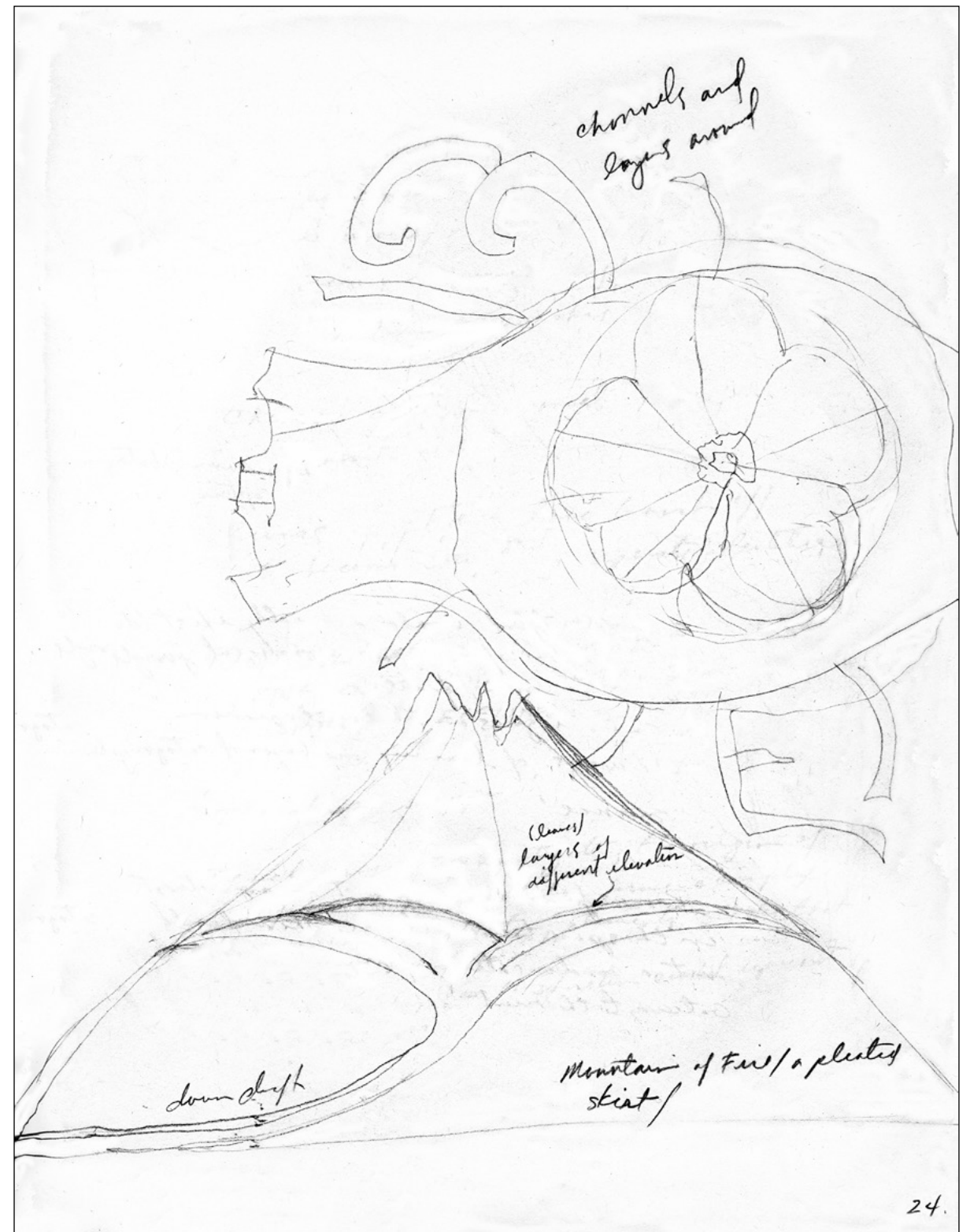


Fig. 83. Notebook 3, pg. 24, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1982.



## Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid

*The Embarcadero Field Project: Temporary Installations by Five Artists*  
12th International Sculpture Center Conference  
Estuary shore, Jack London Square, Oakland, CA, 1982

*Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid* is a site-fired, kiln tableau, commissioned for the ISC Conference, Oakland, CA, 1982. As a critical early Project: *Land Kiln* work, *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, explores a poetic and structural relationship between the instrument of change (kiln) and what is changed (interior work). The *Mountain Kiln* structure was developed from the form of the interior, *Black Orchid*. The orchid form is the floor of the kiln with the 'throat' of the orchid connecting underground to a remote flue of galvanized metal forming a down-draft kiln structure. Heat from propane powered burners at the tips of each orchid petal enters the kiln and is drawn through the interior mountain kiln space out through the throat and flue, fusing the self-glazing clay mixture coating the petals into a obsidian-like glass surface.

Several similar ideas about flora, geology and process were imagined during the conceptualization of *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*. These include: an imaginary concept of volcanic magma upwelling through the throat of a volcano propagating over it's surface layering petal-like lava flows over it's flanks, as well as a specific flower noted in a rough draft for the article, *Kiln Projects*, (see fig. 207), here partly paraphrased:

The images for *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid* were suggested by a giant flower in the jungles of Sumatra known as *Arnolds Rafflesia*, a parasitic, fleshy and odorous organism. That it should become a more elegant, larger flower made of lava-like materials produced by the heat of a mountain atop of seemed natural and evocative... ..as in the case of MK/BO where knowledge of certain giant flowers in the jungles of Sumatra suggested a dialog of images and materials and attitudes.

After *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, 1980, this work is the second *Land Kiln* to investigate poetic ideas relating organic and geologic processes both as kilns and as non-fired environmental projects. In addition to many smaller-scale ship and tableau works, larger studies and projects such as *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, and *Site Variations/Continental Shelf/Fired Projects (Purissima Sea)*, both 1984, as well as recent projects such as: *San Francisco Wharf Complex: Coral Orchid/Seamount*, 2012, are examples of this organic/inorganic exploration. Recent works of ceramics, installations and mixed media site works such as: *Magma Chambers (Corvus/Orchidaceae/Kolumbo)*, 2016, that reference "obsidian orchids" as being the metaphorical heart of a volcano or magmatic plume, can be traced back to *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*.

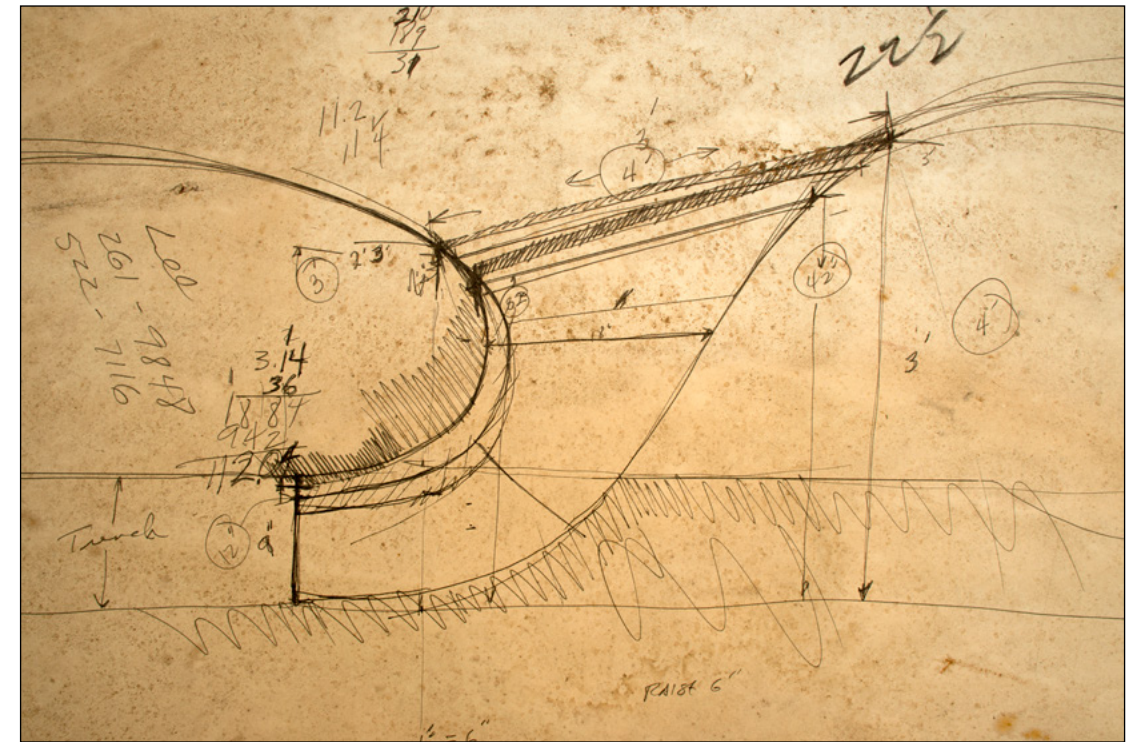


Fig. 84. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, drawing section/study for orchid 'throat,' ink on paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., 1982.

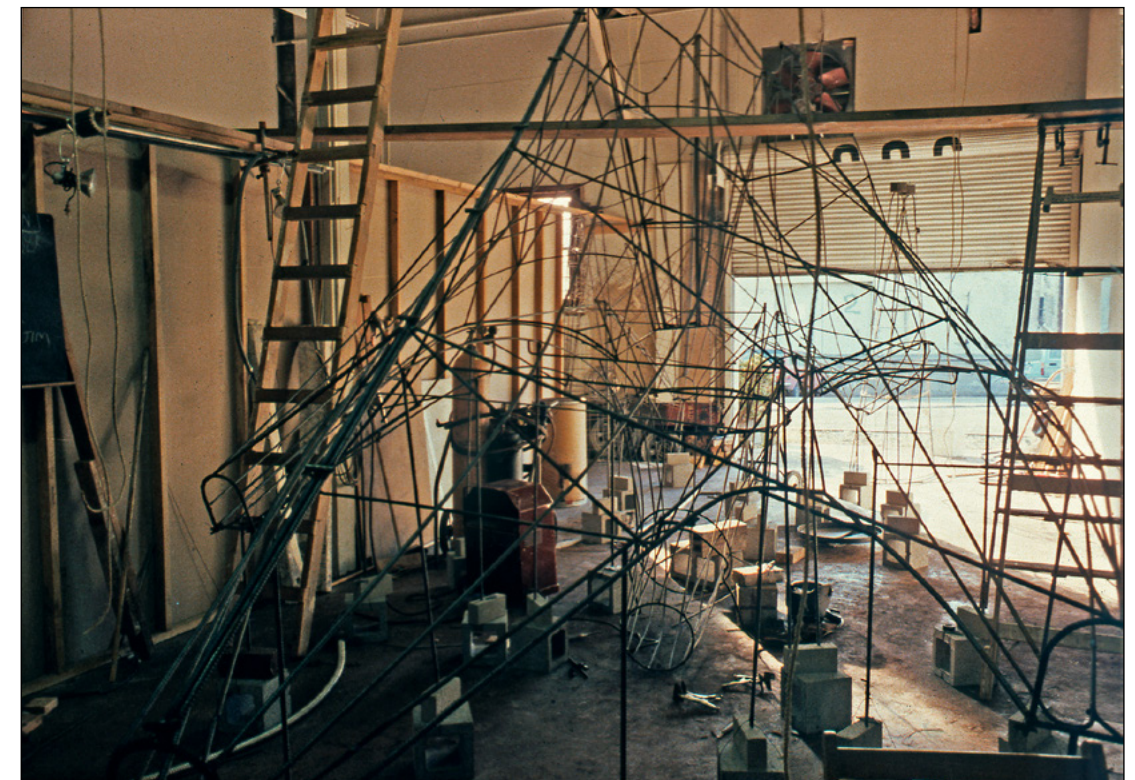


Fig. 85. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, studio, Oakland, CA, fabrication of kiln and orchid floor armature.





Fig. 86. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, installation of metal armature for the kiln's orchid floor, the central orchid's 'throat' connected underground to a sheet metal flue off-camera to left of image and armature where sand will be brought up to the orchid's petal surface.



Fig. 87. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, installation, kiln partially in-place.



Fig. 88. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, installation, troweling of fusible orchid material on 'petals.'





Fig. 89. Night firing, Oakland, CA waterfront, 1982.





Fig. 90. Kiln removed, exposing the fused "Black Orchid" kiln floor, 30 ft., fused earth/glaze materials, steel, sand.



Fig. 91. Kiln removed, supporting sand excavated from beneath fused "Black Orchid" kiln floor.





Fig. 92. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, kiln tableau/site installation, post-firing state, showing separate elements of the work.

*Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*

Falkirk Community Center  
San Rafael, CA, 1984





Fig. 93. Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship, Lava Ship: 30 ft., steel, fired clay, transected by Trellis Ship: 40' ft., steel, Clematis montana vines, wave form and path landscaping, Falkirk, San Rafael, CA 1984.

*Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship*

Falkirk, San Rafael, CA, 1984.

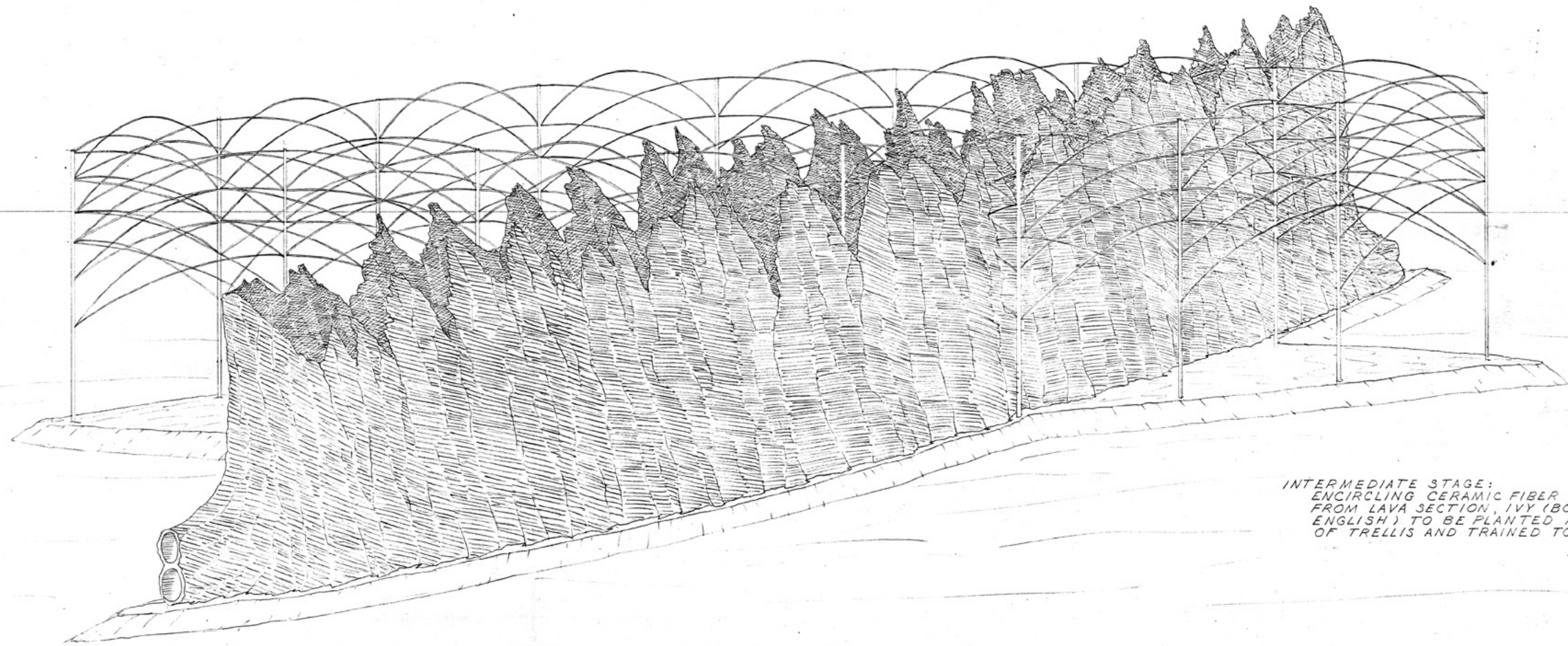
The 30 ft. long *Lava Ship* element was built of seven tons of clay, mineral and organic mixture, applied over a steel armature and fired on site using 12 burners whose heat was distributed through the structure by an internal downdraft system connected beneath the ground to 4 external 25 ft. high flues, developed by an aerospace engineer. The 40 ft. steel *Trellis Ship* element, planted with *Clematis montana* and earthen wave-like landscaping was added after the firing. Of significant interest in this work was the collision or engagement of two dynamics, the intensity and rapid catalysis of fire and the lingering envelopment of botanical growth, as well as the botanical origin of the fossil fuels supplying the fuel for the kiln firing. The selection of the white flowered *Clematis* vine was both to bring a ghost-like quality to the work as well as

its relatively aggressive growth ultimately encompassing both structures. Following *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, 1982, this is the second kiln/furnace work to engage botanical concepts and a precursor to later projects investigating botanical structures, metaphors and the botanic origin of fossil fuels, as in: *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, 1988, *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, 1989; *Humboldt Ship*, 1989; *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, 1992 and the video work: *51 Million BTU's.*, as well as installations using living plant material in works such as *Holocene Terrace*, 1999; *Original Depositional Environment*, 2001; *Holocene Passage*, 2002 and *Seventh Climate (Paradise Reconsidered)*, 2006. Carol Schemmerling, was the project's consulting horticulturist who assisted in the selection and planting of the *Clematis montana* for *Trellis Ship*.



COLLISION / TRELLIS SHIP (FOR IVY) / LAVA SHIP

PRELIMINARY DRAWING FOR FALKIRK SCALE APPROX: 1" = 3/4' OAL 30' JOHN ROLOFF 1983 ©



INTERMEDIATE STAGE:  
ENCIRCLING CERAMIC FIBER KILN REMOVED  
FROM LAVA SECTION, IVY (BOSTON OR  
ENGLISH) TO BE PLANTED ALONG BASE  
OF TRELLIS AND TRAINED TO GROW UPWARD.

Fig. 94. Collision: Trellis Ship (for Ivy) / Lava Ship, preliminary drawing for Falkirk, concept drawing, 30 in. x 60 in., pencil on vellum, 1983.



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE / FALKIRK SITE

John Roloff, Artist

November 15, 1983

The objective of this proposal is a piece of sited sculpture located on a lot at Falkirk House, San Rafael, Ca.

A principal ambition of the piece will be to integrate two basic elements, an initially dynamic and active element represented by a site constructed and fired kiln with clay and glaze component (remaining after the kiln is removed) and a more passive and evolving element represented by a trellis designed to structure the growth of living plants (most probably ivy) within its framework. The intention is for the two main elements to be physically, psychologically, and formally intertwined and related. Concern will be given to site location and relationships, the event aspect of the actual firing of the kiln and the evolutionary phase of the plant element as it grows and asserts itself.

This piece represents an evolution of past work involving the investigation of image and process (particularly the ceramic process) on a fairly large scale in a given situation. It is expected that the botanical element will give a new physical and temporal dimension to the work, provide room for additional metaphorical possibilities as well as supplying an effective element for integrating the piece into the site at Falkirk.

*Enclosed are drawings representing two ideas for the Falkirk site. As the project*

*A letter of support will be coming directly from Falkirk*

Fig. 95. Statement of intent for *Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship*, submitted to DB Finnigan, Director, Falkirk, who was instrumental in the support and evolution of this project, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., pencil and type on paper, 1983.

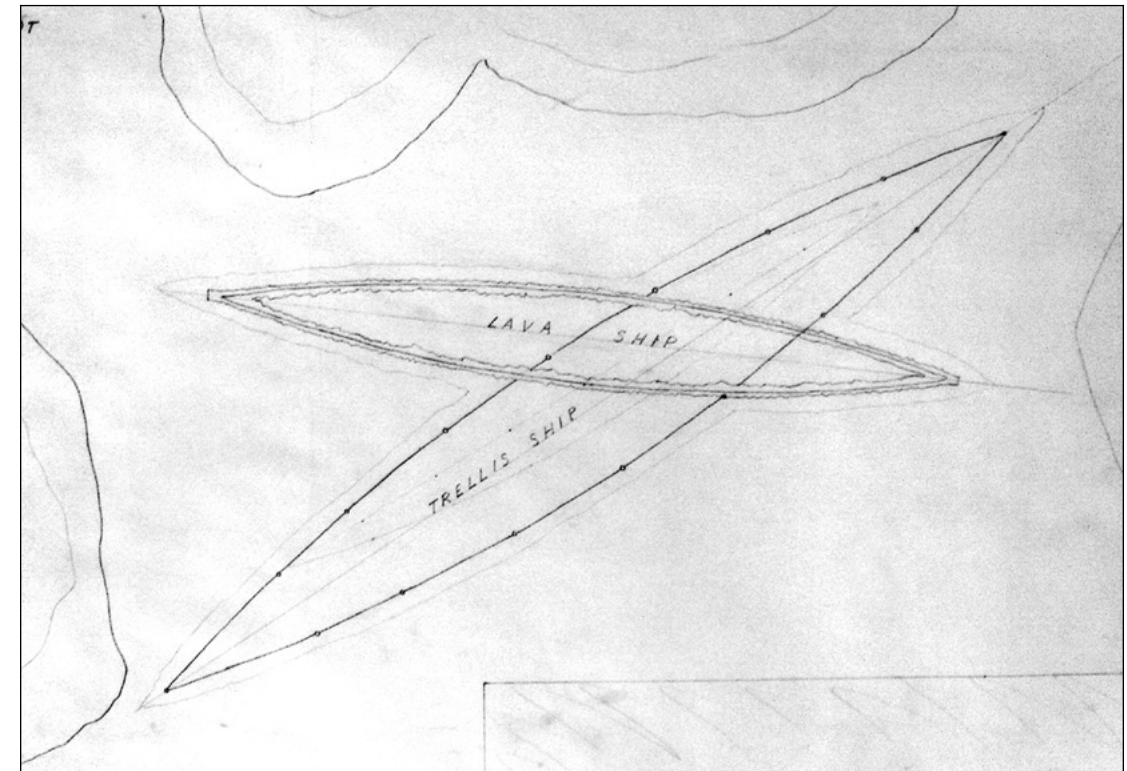


Fig. 96. Study: *Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship*, preliminary study in plan view of the scale and angle of transection of the *Trellis Ship* and *Lava Ship*, circa 1983.





Fig. 97. *Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship*, studio view of the construction of *Lava Ship's* armature and surrounding kiln structure, Oakland, CA, 1984.





Fig. 98. Site installation of *Lava Ship's* internal steel pipe armature.



Fig. 100. *Lava Ship*, construction of mold element for placement of clay around the ship's steel armature.



Fig. 99. Steel pipe and mesh armature with underground sheet metal flues for *Lava Ship*.



Fig. 101. *Lava Ship*: placement of over 7 tons of a special clay mixture with organic inclusions intended to be fired out leaving fossil-like structures in the final form.



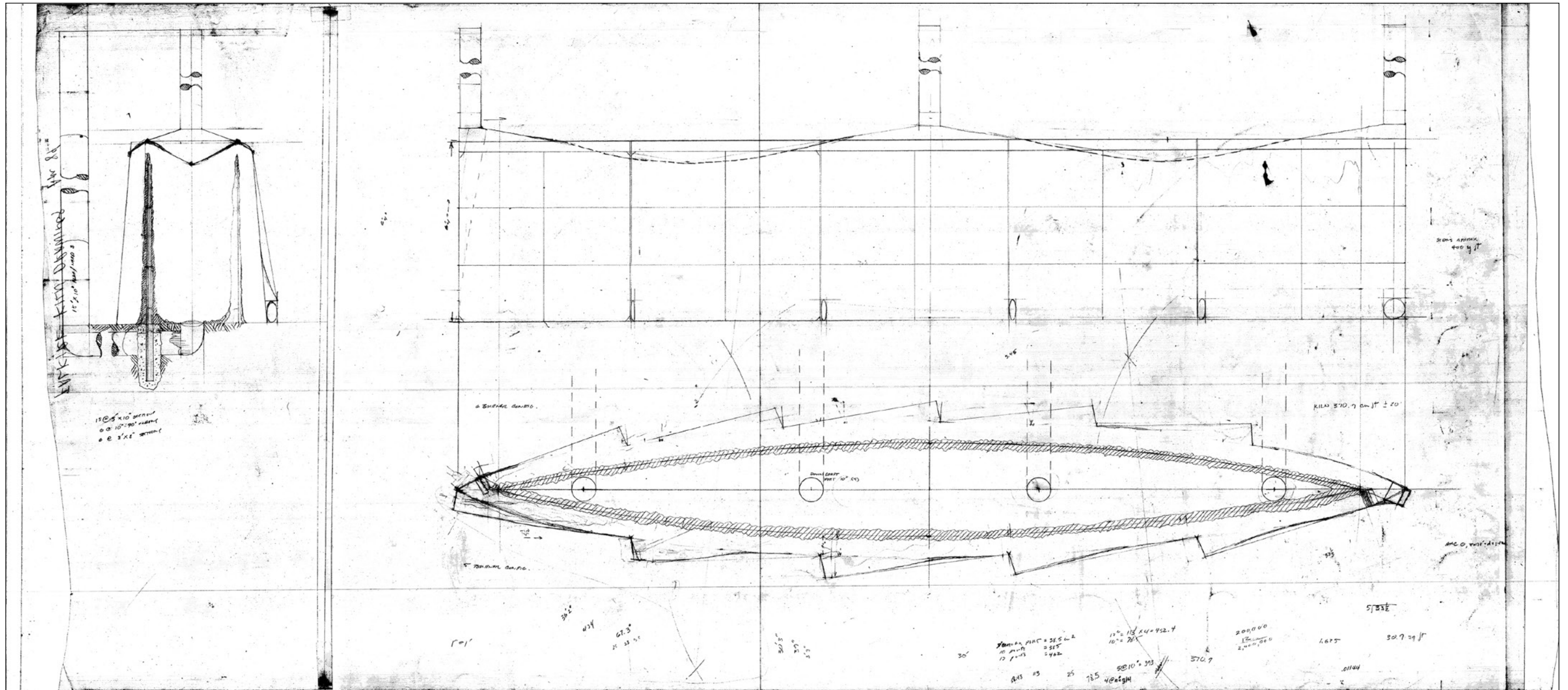


Fig. 102. Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship, 36 in., x 72 in., pencil on vellum, preliminary scale construction drawing of the plan, elevation and section for Lava Ship, circa 1984. Flues along the top of the kiln shown here were not included in the final work after consultation with the engineer who designed the burner/flue system.



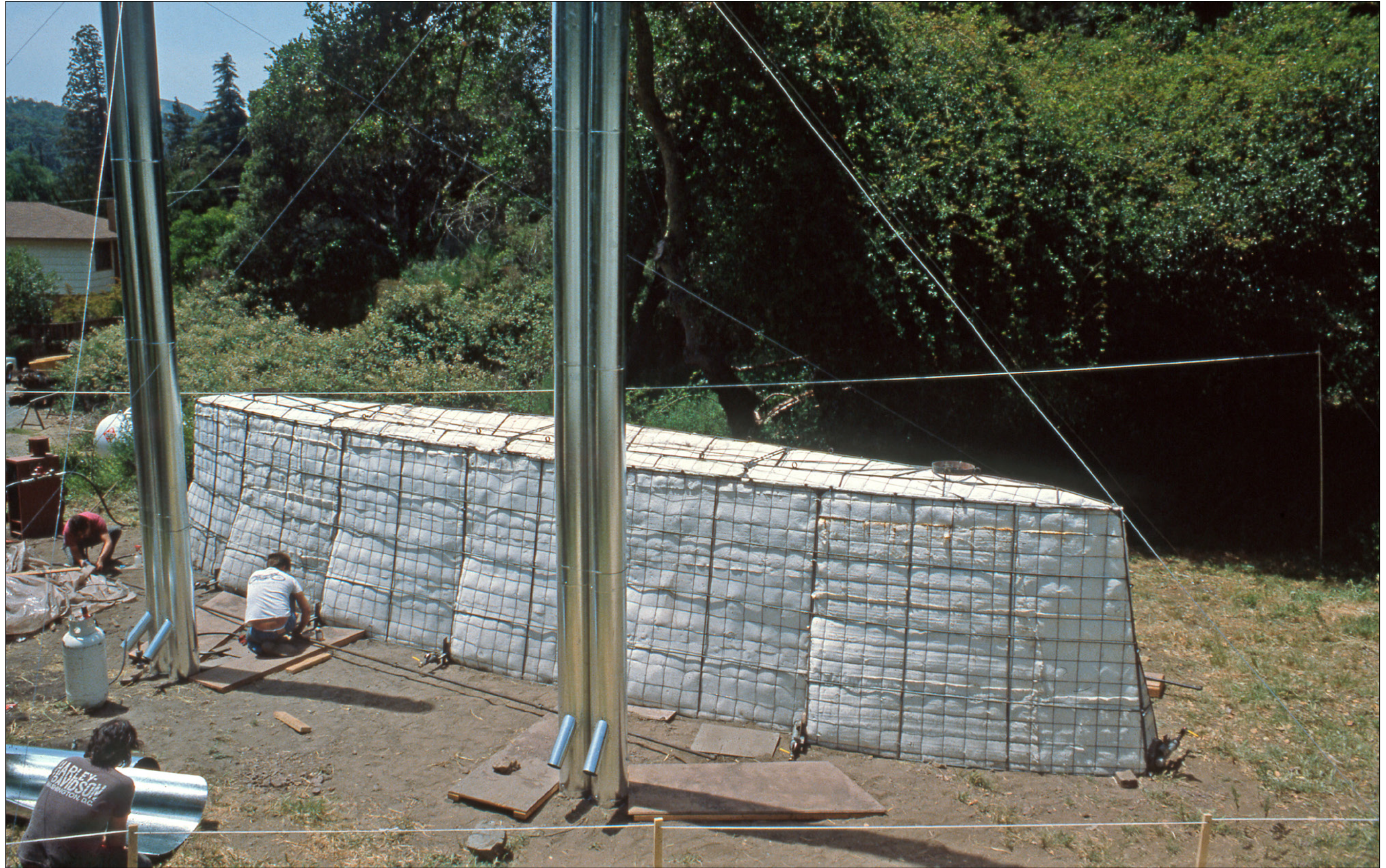


Fig. 103. Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship (pre-fire state), Lava Ship with kiln enclosure and flue system. Flues: 25 ft. high x 12 in. dia., galvanized steel; kiln: 34 ft. long, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, propane; interior clay ship: 30 ft. long, steel, 7 tons of clay with organic inclusions.





Fig. 104. Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship (Fire State).





Fig. 105. Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship (post firing/Fused State), dismantling of kiln.



Fig. 106. Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship (post firing/Fused State), detail of fired Lava Ship exterior.



Fig. 107. Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship (post firing/Fused State), detail of interior of Lava Ship and internal, floor, flue openings.





Fig. 108. Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship, Elevated view of ground wave and path landscaping, *Clematis montana* vine on Trellis Ship in the later stages of growth, circa late-1980's.





John Roloff, *Collision/Trellis Ship/Lava Ship*, 1985, installation view.

## San Rafael

### JOHN ROLOFF, Falkirk Community Cultural Center:

The long process of generating John Roloff's large-scale outdoor sculpture has substantially stabilized, though it will never be finished, since it incorporates the slow crawl of flowering vines over the latticework of one of its two "ships." But it is more complete than in May last year, when, during a public gathering at sunset on a bare slope in the grounds of the Victorian mansion that houses this Marin County arts center, Roloff dramatically catalyzed the second, ceramic ship through his characteristic procedure of a lengthy and nocturnal firing in a correspondingly shaped on-site kiln. The completed piece, *Collision/Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, sites the clay and the lattice forms in an X shape whose elliptical shafts, up to 40 feet long, Roloff likens in the work's title to overturned hulls.

The Bay Area artist's reference to the work's two long lozenges as ships seems to connect with his concurrent tabletop ceramics—forms like ancient vessels, with encrusted surfaces, as if they had been retrieved after centuries at the bottom of the sea. Calling the Falkirk pieces "ships" may also relate to the site's proximity to the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean, but it is too literal an identity for these abstract forms, which display archaisms of other sorts. A more fascinating and timely element is the synthesis (more than "collision") between the technology employed in Roloff's temporary kiln—a metal armature and ceramic-fiber blanket, heated to 2000°F by propane-powered burners—and the primitivist aspect of a nocturnal gathering around the glowing structure, to observe if not join in the teamwork activity of the firing. This communal, ritualistic component both symbolically evoked the traditionally transformative power of fire and more pragmatically encouraged local affilia-

tion with the work, which is "public" most obviously in site and funding.

But Roloff's elaborate process piece is also successful on an immediate level for those who did not participate in its ceremonial genesis. The X formed by the two ellipses, in contrasting but natural materials—the roughly clumped and furrowed deep brown or black clay intersecting with the vines supported by the steel trellises—presents a striking textural juxtaposition, suggesting a coalesced free flow of "lava" opposing a mechanically defined structure, albeit one now being irregularly covered by growth and returning to a more primal state.

—SUZAAN BOETTGER

ARTFORUM  
Summer, 1985  
Reviews, pg. 114

## Wave Ship (of Fire)

Owen Park, Detroit, MI, 1984

Fig. 109. Suzaan Boettger, *San Rafael*, John Roloff, *Falkirk Cultural Center*, Artforum, Summer, 1985, Reviews, pg. 114.





Fig. 110. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, (fire state), 32' long, steel, glass, taconite, ceramic fiber blanket, propane, Owen Park, Detroit, MI, 1984.

*Wave Ship (of Fire)*

Owen Park, Detroit, MI 1984

*Wave Ship (of Fire)*, shortened from its original title of, *Wave Ship (of Fire)/Ice Ship (of Glass)*, was installed and performed at Owen Park on the shore of the Detroit River in 1984. The interior structure, *Ice Ship (of Glass)*, altered during the firing performance of the work, was a stratigraphic structure of recycled plate glass with a taconite ore core. The taconite ore is an processed iron ore gathered from Detroit auto industry sources. The taconite/glass structure was fused into a molten, ship/wave-form by the firing.

The combined form of a wave and a ship, explored in several ceramic ships of this and later time periods is an ongoing theme in newer ceramic ships and environmental works. *Wave Ship (of Fire)* was the first Land Kiln to use an integrated set of matched burners with a specific surface area of ceramic fiber blanket as a formula to emphasize the effigy-like character of the firing. This project was sponsored by Pewabic Pottery and constructed with the help of students from several colleges in the Detroit area.





Fig. 111. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, installation, glass ship element, Owen Park, Detroit, MI 1984.



Fig. 113. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, installation, glass ship element, detail, Owen Park, Detroit, MI, 1984.



Fig. 112. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, installation, glass ship element, Owen Park, Detroit, MI, 1984.



Fig. 114. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, (pre-fire state), 32' long, steel, glass, ceramic fiber blanket, propane, Detroit, MI, 1984.





Fig. 115. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, fire state, 32' long, steel, glass, sand, rubble, ceramic fiber blanket, propane, Detroit, MI, 1984.



Fig. 116. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, post fire state/burners removed, 32' long, steel, glass, sand, rubble, ceramic fiber blanket, propane, Detroit, MI, 1984.



Fig. 117. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, fused state/kiln removed, 32' long, steel, glass, sand, rubble, Detroit, MI, 1984.





Fig. 118. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, kiln removed, fused state, 32' long, steel, glass, taconite, sand, Detroit, MI, 1984.

### *Lahontan Group I-III*

*Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)*, Reno, NV, 1985

*Talking Tree / Glacial Epoch*, Reno, NV, 1987

*Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, UC Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA, 1987

& Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1989

*Vanishing Ship (Third State)*, 1990, Djerassi Foundation, Woodside, CA, 1990



#### LAHONTAN GROUP I-III

*Lahontan Group I-III*, 1985-87, is comprised of three related projects, the *Land Kiln: Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)* and *Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch*, both commissioned by the University of Nevada, Reno in 1985 and 1987 respectively, and *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, commissioned by the UC Berkeley Art Museum in 1987 for their MATRIX exhibition series, curated by Constance Lewallen. The *Lahontan Group III* ship was permanently installed at the Djerassi Foundation, Woodside, CA in 1989, with the title, *Vanishing Ship (Third State)*.

Inspired by the disappearance of Lake Lahontan and as an elegy for the Ice Ages, *The Lahontan Group I-III*, was initiated by a commission of the kiln project, *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)/Lahontan Group I*, in 1985, which fired to nearly 2000 degrees F., its fired product, the 20 ft. diameter, *Black Coral Starfish Element*, composed of black clay slip dipped sage and veins of turquoise Egyptian paste.

*Talking Tree (Glacial Epoch) / Lahontan Group II*, engages a rebuild version of the “fish head” component of *Ancient Shoreline*., in a symbolic conversation between the Pleistocene (ice age) represented by the artificial snow encrusted fish head, and the Anthropocene/Holocene (contemporary) climate represented by white alder trees, entangling and elevating the metal structure as it grows. *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, contains misting water and sediment from Pyramid Lake, in a sealed greenhouse, test tube-like environment, installed near a source of sunlight, encouraging chemical and biological interactions within.

Ancient Lake Lahontan was an enormous endorheic lake that existed during the Pleistocene, ice ages, covering much of northwestern Nevada, extending into northeastern California and southern Oregon. At its peak approximately 12,700 years ago (“Sehoo Highstand”), the lake had a surface area of about 8,500 square miles (20,700 km), with its largest component centered at the location of the present Carson Sink. The depth of the lake was approximately 800 feet (240 m) at present day Pyramid Lake, and 500 feet (150 m) at the Black Rock Desert. Pyramid Lake and Walker Lake are among the last living, post-Pleistocene

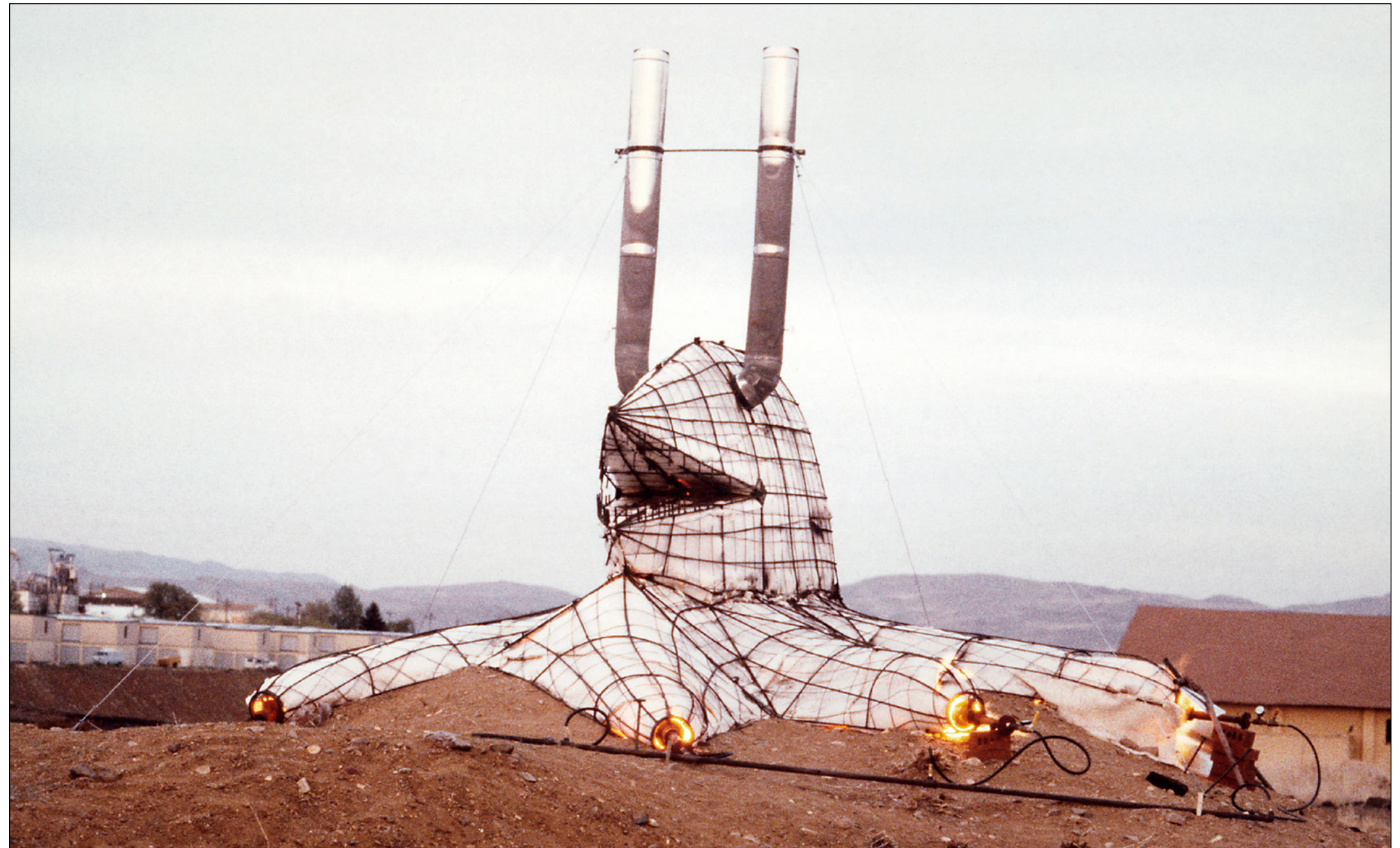


Fig 119. *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group I*, early fire state, Reno, NV, 1985.

(Anthropocene/Holocene), remnants of Lake Lahontan. The Paiute name for Pyramid Lake is Cui-Ui Pan-unadu, meaning fish in standing water.

The fish and starfish-like imagery for *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)* and *Talking Tree (Glacial Epoch)* are related to the Nevada state fossil, the Ichthyosaur, an immense fish-like creature of the Mesozoic Era and Native American stories of large creatures living in lakes of that region, in particular, Lake Tahoe, the natural, primary, source of water for contemporary Pyramid Lake connected to Lake Tahoe by the Truckee River, which is also the ultimate source of the water included within *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group III*. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, 1980, also inspired *Black Coral Starfish Element*.



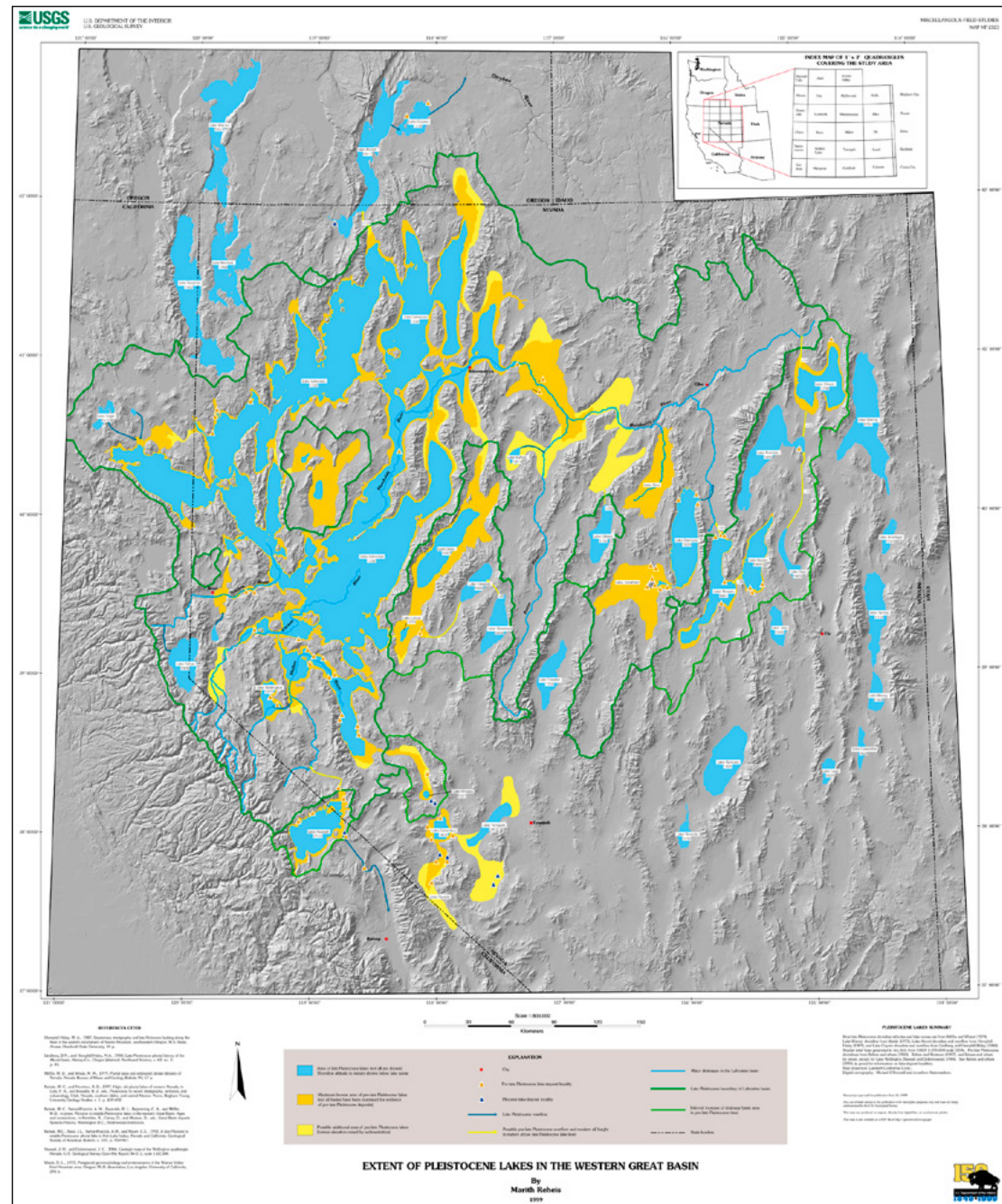


Fig 120. Extent of Pleistocene Lakes in the Western Great Basin, US Department of the Interior map, 1999. Lake Lahontan is shown as the largest blue area in the northwestern area of what is now Nevada and parts of north eastern California.

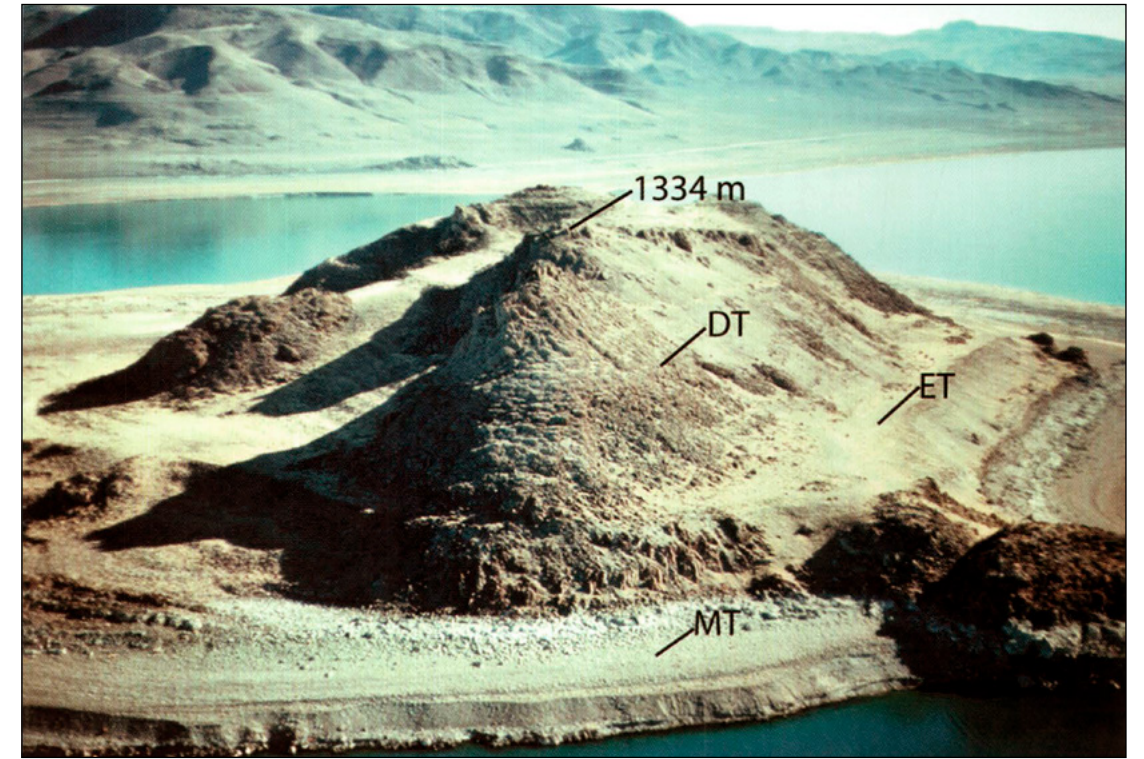


Fig 121. Lake Lahontan Pleistocene water levels noted as horizontal shoreline markings, on Anaho Island, Pyramid Lake. The top of the island, at 1,334 m is 3m below the "Sehoo Highstand," approximately 12,700 years ago.



Fig 122. North shore of Pyramid Lake, largest living remnant of Pleistocene Lake Lahontan.



BRINT FIBER GLASS, FOUL FOSSIL?

RENO

RESEARCH WASHO MYTHS.

MOUND TERRACE/HOLDS - ANGLED "FLIN" TERRACE.

MOUND WITH CENTRAL DOWN DRAFT HOLE

MOUND WITH 4 "LOGS OF CLAY (IN HOLDS)

BRICK STEPS

ALTAR CURVINE

BURNERS INTO HOLDS OF MOUND.

FISH HEAD KILN (DOWN & UP DRAFT)

~~MOUND~~ KILN STRUCTURE AS ~~TRILLIS~~ TRILLIS (SECOND MOUND)

TWO SMALLER RELATED KILN FISH/PREY.

WATER CONTAINERS

BRICK WALL

FOSSIL PART / LOCAL STRAW ETC TREE-FIBERGLASS <sup>CLAY</sup>

COLORED GLAZE / WHITE SLIP

MINE TAILINGS

ADDITIONAL TREE (TRILLIS) <sup>UPHOLD ON LOGS</sup> OTHER MOUNDS.

SHELLS? MADE OF CLAY? WAMPUM NECKLACE

KESTON KILN?

STRUCTURE THAT COLLAPSES

LAKE OF GLAZE THEN EXCAVATED.

WATER LINE <sup>STEEL</sup> GLAZE THEN EXCAVATED

SPACE BETWEEN MOUNDS.

CRYSTAL KILN FORM.

VEINS OVER MOUNDS)

RENO

WHITE FOSSIL WAVE  
WAVE EXCAVATED/BUILT ON HILL

ARC ACROSS SEVERAL MOUNDS

UNDERGROUND FIRE REAL & SYMBOLIC.

REAL SIMPLE DELICATE TRILLIS (WAVE OR?)

JADE FOUNDATION / PERIPHERAL KILN <sup>CAUTION AROUND</sup> HOLLOW.

MICA

OUTLINE OF MIMIC MOUNTAINS

GHOST KILN RISING (ALSO SHIP)

PERSON CUT BY PIECES

TARQUIST - E PASTE VEINS - CONCENTRIC (AS WATER)

FOSSIL MOUNDS OF MIMIC LAKE SPINELS

FISH HEAD / VOLCANO / ARC WITH STEEL TREES.

FISH HEAD IMAGE MADE OF LOCAL BUSH / SLIP PAINTED <sup>NYTON / BROWN</sup>

WATER LEVEL INDICATION - LAKE CAUTION

Fig. 123. Loose notebook page, ink on paper, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1985.

Fig. 124. Loose notebook page, ink on paper, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1985.



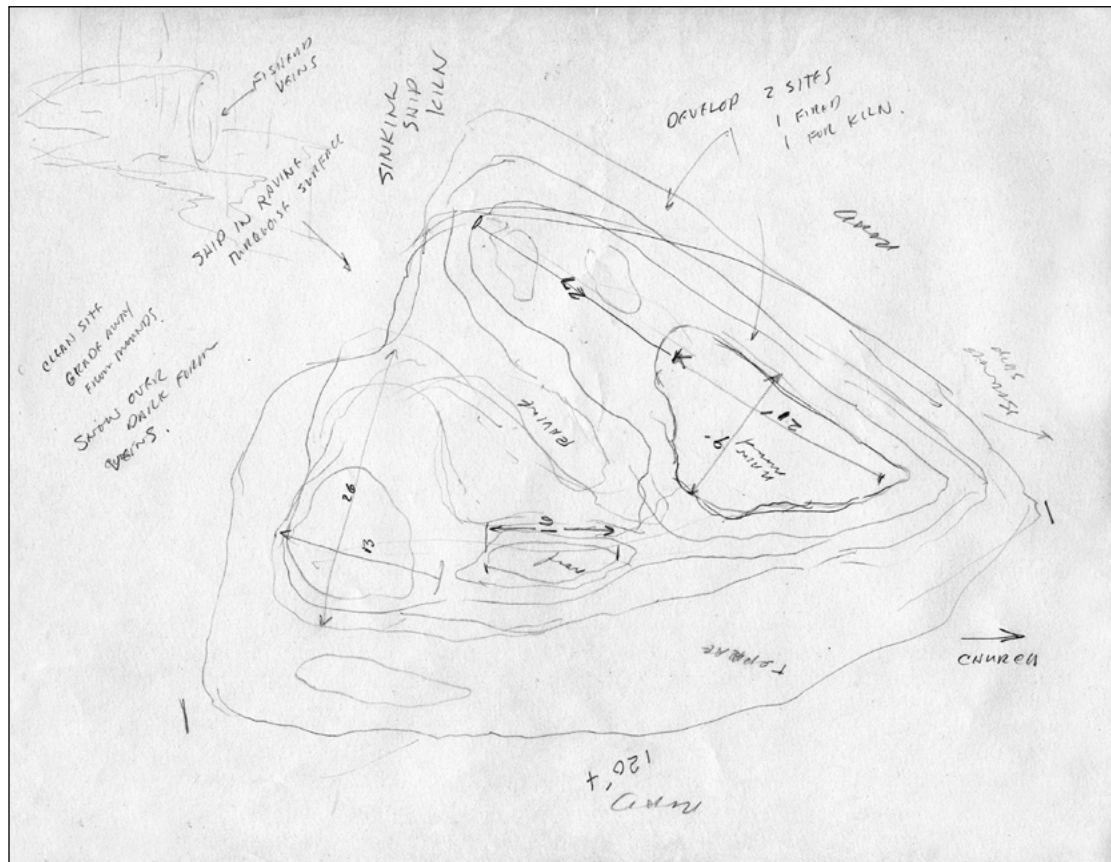


Fig. 125. Site study/sketch, pencil on paper, 8 1/2 in. x 11 in., circa 1985.

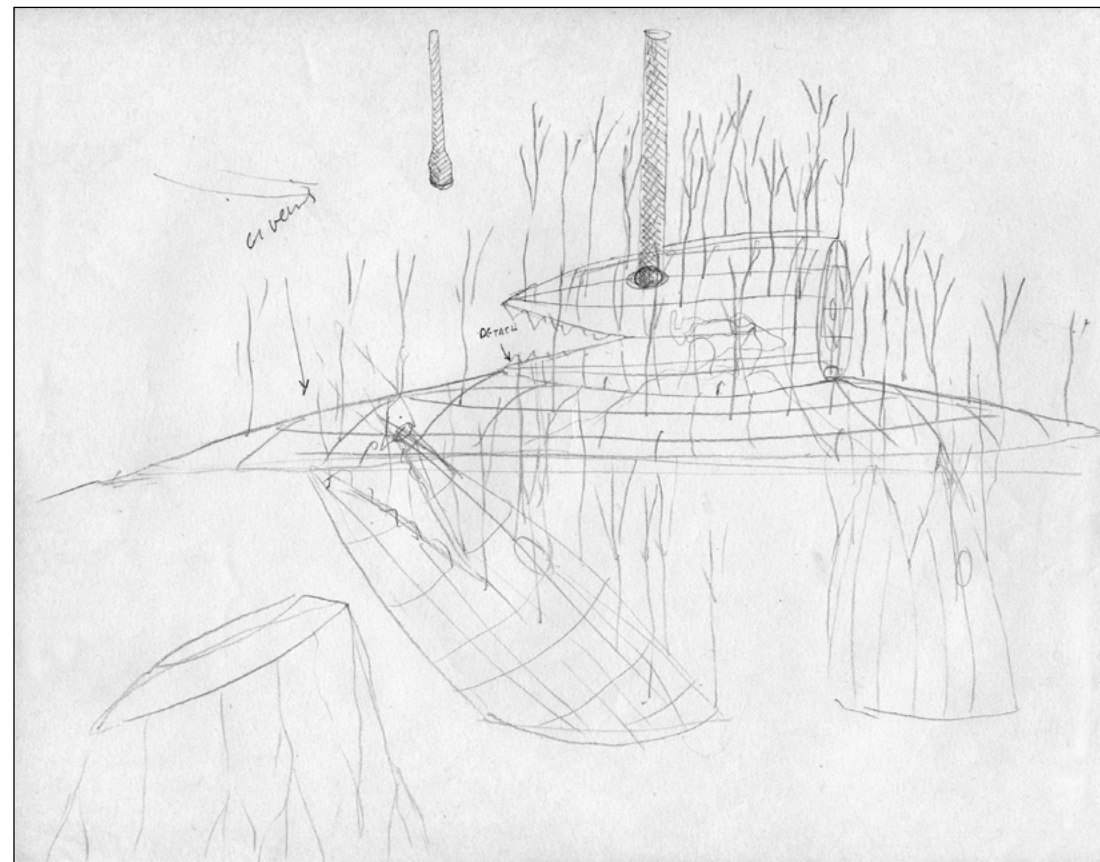


Fig. 127. Concept sketch, pencil on paper, 8 1/2 in. x 11 in., circa 1985.

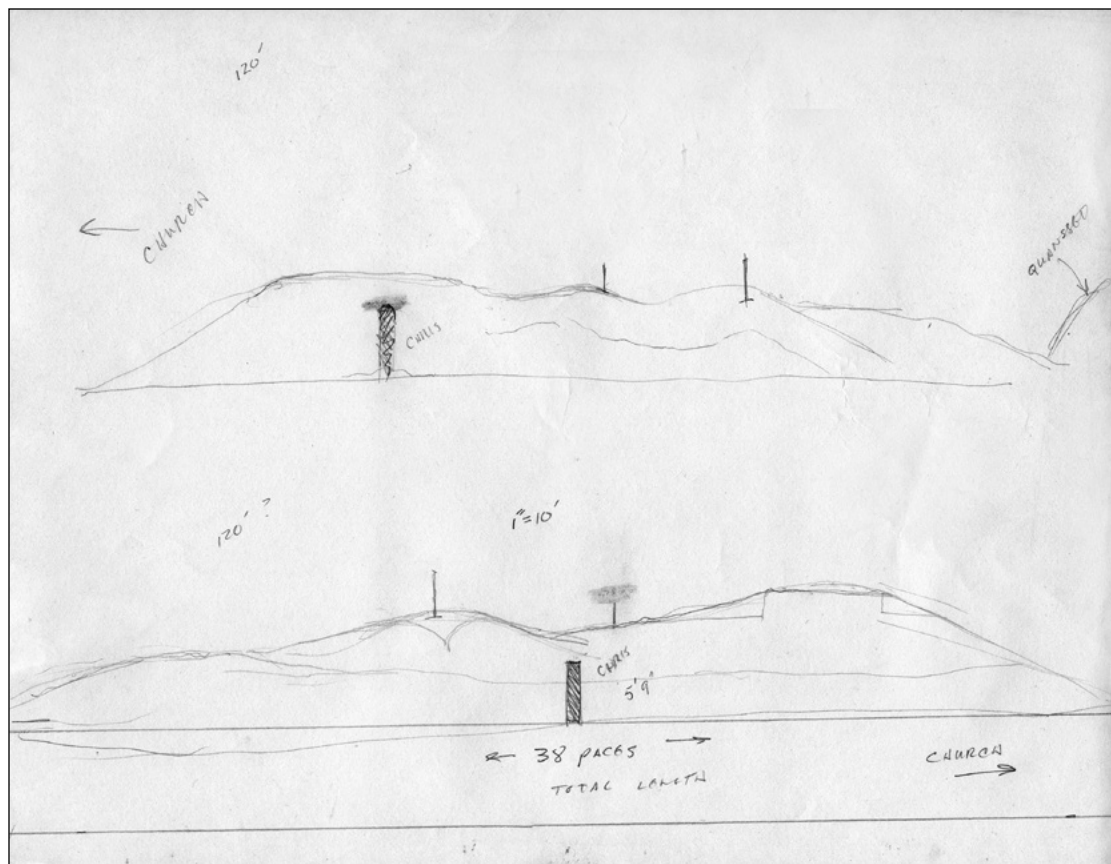


Fig. 126. Site study/sketch, pencil on paper, 8 1/2 in. x 11 in., circa 1985.

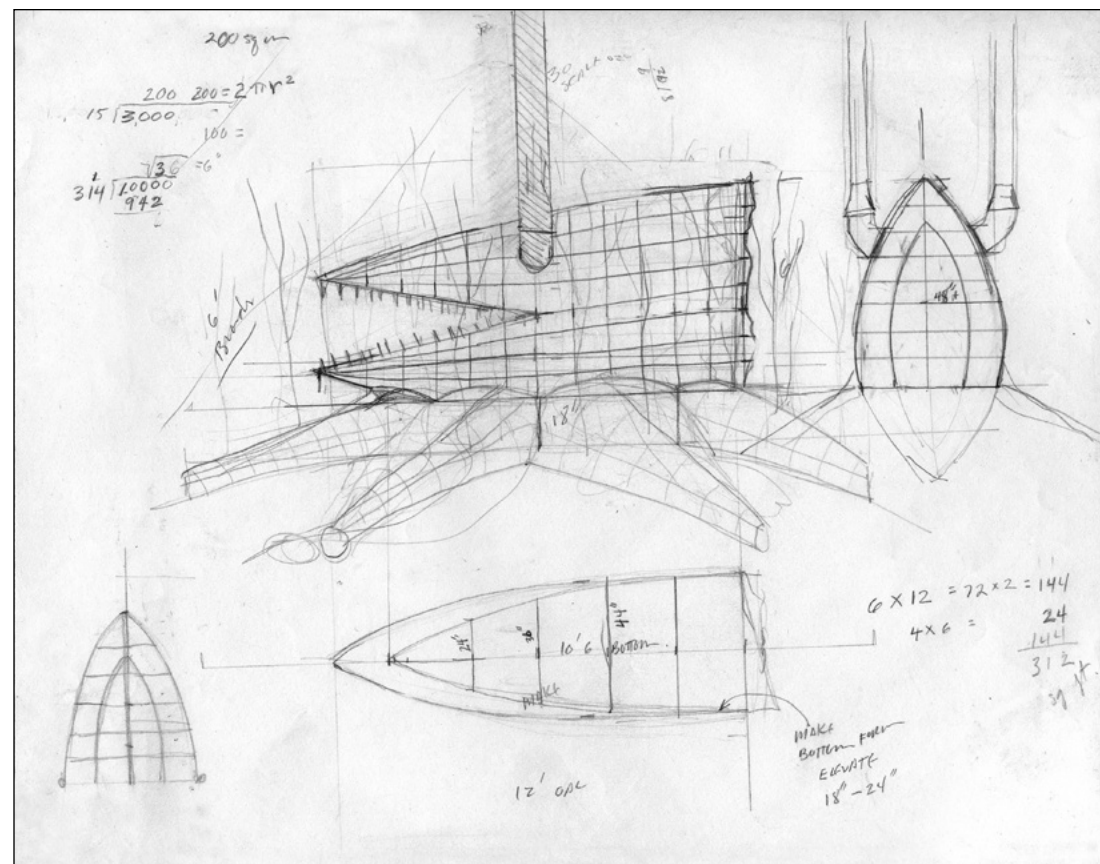


Fig. 128. Concept sketch, pencil on paper, 8 1/2 in. x 11 in., circa 1985.





Fig 129. Black Coral Starfish element, installation of black clay slip coated sage brush comprising the body of the starfish.



Fig 130. Black Coral Starfish element, detail, black clay slip coated sage brush and turquoise Egyptian paste linear elements.



Fig 131. Fabrication of kiln components, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, sculpture shop, University of Nevada, Reno. Flue/fish eye ports for exhaust stacks added after this image was taken.



# Arts

## Fusing earth and art

By Sandra Macias/Gazette-Journal

A starfish-shaped bug on a dirt mound in an eastern corner of the University of Nevada-Reno. Its blackish orange rays and its body of glazed sagelin and weeds looks weathered and hoary.

Actually, though, it's recently born. The starfish — which may not be a starfish at all, depending on the beholder — is a ceramic art piece molded and fired into the Nevada earth. It is part of an environmental sculpture, the creation of John Roloff, a Bay Area artist.

Roloff has been doing these earth works for about six years. This is the first piece he's done in Nevada and the second time he's used the starfish shape. (The other one is in Saskatchewan, Canada.)

How Roloff gets this fusion of earth and ceramic takes some doing. He calls what he does land kiln projects — to explain that is a little like trying to explain the Creation.

Perhaps the best thing to do it is take you to a quonset hut on UNR's campus. That's where Roloff was a week ago working on his kiln sculpture.

At that point the kiln was only a steel frame — yet it was shaping up into a piece of art in itself. The structure's bottom half was in the starfish form and the top half looked like jaws. With the help of a university art student, Roloff was busy welding toothy rods to the snarling head.

Once the metal frame was complete, the next step was to wrap it from the interior (the contrast of light material to dark metal making the frame visible) with an inflammable fiber blanket which looks like foam rubber padding. Once wrapped, the structure became a

kiln, ready to create another piece of art, somewhat like a cookie-cutter makes a cookie.

Most of Roloff's pieces deal with water imagery. His Nevada project is no exception. The kiln sculpture relates to watery things; the mound he chose to use it on was altered "to suggest a shoreline of the past."

Before placing the kiln on the mound, one more step was left. Roloff spread clay and other ceramic materials in a starfish pattern. Then the kiln was placed over it and heated by placing propane gas jets at the end of the starfish's rays. The heat rushed through the arms, swirled into the cavity of the kiln and out through two vents in the fish head.

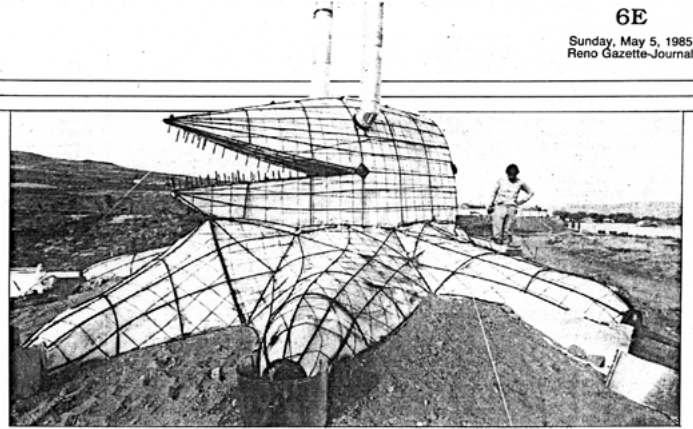
Roaring like a mighty furnace, the kiln began its work, fusing earth and ceramic substance together. The whole process took about four hours.

Roloff was surprised with what he got once the kiln was removed. "I expected more orange," he said, pointing to the starfish's brownish-black rays. But he's not disappointed. "The whole process involves a dialogue with the kiln and that gets into an unpredictable realm. It (the starfish) may not look pretty, but I'm more interested in this dialogue and the natural process."

The starfish is only one part of a total environmental piece, an art piece that is far from finished. "I don't know if it will ever be finished in the sense I have in mind," Roloff said, surveying the site with an eye that saw more than the average guy.

What the average guy would see is a starfish on one mound and the fish head, removed from the kiln sculpture frame, sitting on another mound nearby.

The site, however, isn't protected, thus making it vulnerable to the ele-



6E

Sunday, May 5, 1985  
Reno Gazette-Journal

KILN: The huge creature above is artist John Roloff's combination kiln-work, which is prepared to fire a ceramic piece underneath in the shape of a starfish. Three of the starfish-shaped logs can be seen protruding into the foreground. At right, Roloff contemplates the structure.



Besides land kiln projects, Roloff does large ceramic pieces. An exhibit of some of his ceramic works and photographs of some of his land kiln projects are on display through May 18 in the Sheppard Gallery in the Church Fine Arts Building on UNR's campus.

Roloff, born in Portland, Ore., thinks of himself as a Californian since he's lived in that state most of his life, and has exhibited all over the United States. His ceramic pieces, some as "small" as 16 feet, also are in private and permanent collections.

The 37-year-old who teaches at Mills College and the San Francisco Art Institute has some other projects on the front burner. He is one of a team of 26 artists who will work on "a large scale thing at Candlestick Park," an area of land designated as a park around Candlestick Stadium. He also will begin work soon on a art piece for a train station in Sacramento.

The Nevada environmental piece and Roloff's exhibition was made possible through a \$3,600 grant, partially funded by the Nevada State Council on the Arts, the Dean of Arts and Science Office, and UNR's art department.

... if you can think of time in that way."

Roloff, who has received prestigious grants to do his artwork, speaks on the same plane as poets and philosophers. Like many artists, his visions were in another dimension.

Fig 132. Macias, Sandra, *Fusing Earth and Art*, Reno Gazette-Journal, Section 6E, May 5, 1985.



Fig 133. *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group I., fire state*, Reno, NV, 1985.





Fig 134. Black Coral Starfish element, fused state/kiln removed, fired black clay slip coated sage brush, fused sand and turquoise Egyptian paste linear elements.



Fig 135. Fish head kiln element frame (view I), ceramic fiber blanket removed, organic soil clumps floor, dusting of plaster snow as preliminary study for the *Talking Tree* element constructed in 1987 as Phase II of the *Lahontan Group*. Fish head element was rebuilt and dusted with white cement "snow" and installed on another site of the University of Nevada Reno campus for *Lahontan Group II - Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan/Talking Tree*.



Fig 136. Fish head kiln element frame (view II), ceramic fiber blanket removed, organic soil clumps floor, dusting of plaster snow as preliminary study for the *Talking Tree* element constructed in 1987 as Phase II of the *Lahontan Group*.



**JOHN ROLOFF at**  
University of Nevada, Reno

John Roloff's siteworks are informed by his interest in the history and mythology of a given region, his early training in geology, and mainly by his concern for our relation or connection with nature. For the latter he draws on sources as diverse as the paintings of the Luminists, the writings of Transcendentalists and the oral histories of Native Americans, interpreting nature as spiritual force.

By incorporating romantic myth and indigenous folklore in addition to material found on the land, his work relates both psychically and physically to the region. Yet his themes are often beyond the realm of our immediate experience, alluding to a prehistoric, prehuman era to which our only access is geological data and fossilized remains.

During Roloff's research in Nevada he became interested in the ancient Ice Age lake called Lahontan, which covered a large area of the state. Pyramid Lake, now an Indian reservation, and Walker Lake are the only remnants of Lake Lahontan. Two projects by Roloff on the UNR campus are thematically related, and both are based on that prehistoric site.

*Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan: Firing for Black Coral Star Fish Element*, a sitework from 1985, is now extinct. While siteworks are often temporary, either reclaimed by the elements or actually removed, this piece disappeared when the ground was leveled by bulldozers for a baseball diamond. Only the documentation remains. It shows a starfish shape which was formed directly on the ground with piles of sagebrush dipped in slip. Veins of Egyptian paste were drawn into the image and a kiln, 14' high and 20' in diameter was constructed for the firing. The night firing

was a spectacular event, underlining the transformation of materials under intense heat. This dialogue between process and product is always a major part of such firings, giving them the quality of ritual events.

In June of 1987 Roloff erected another sculpture, this time on a permanent location. He views this piece as a formalization of the earlier work, resembling it to a great extent in form, if not material or process. Its title is *Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan: Talking Tree*.

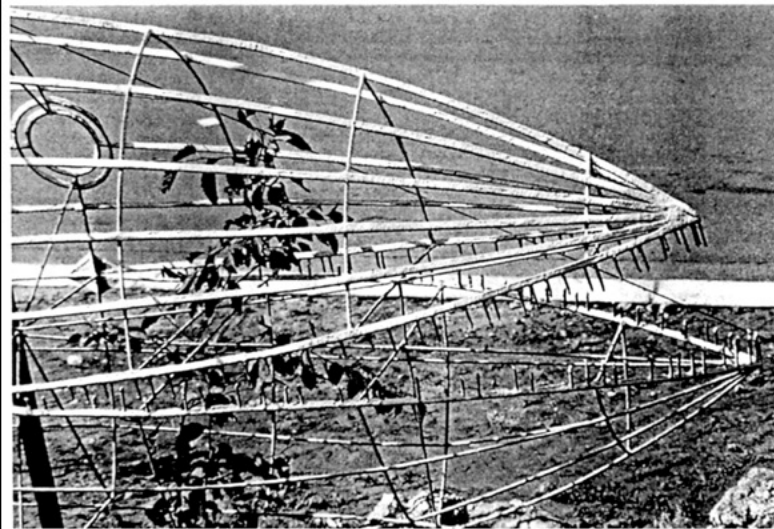
Unlike its predecessor, where the outer form served as crucible for the enclosed materials, this work consists of a steel structure to be acted on by growing trees planted in the interior. The intense dynamic of the firing has been replaced with the more gentle dynamic of trees and plants in interaction with the structure.

Laden with implied contrasts and extremes, references to geologic time and human time, to past and future, change and stasis, high-tech and nature, recur throughout Roloff's work. This piece is a hollow, porous structure, 6½' high, 12½' long, and 45" wide, which will fill as the trees grow. Cold-rolled steel rods were welded to form the skeletal head of an imaginary amphibious Ice Age creature, suggesting a Pleistocene fossil as a symbolic voyager through time beyond reckoning. After first painting the steel gray, a white surface was built up by alternating applications of sprayed-on acrylic mortar mix and sifted-on cement and plaster of paris. The white finish simulates the snow and ice of winter—a permanent winter which will appear in tension with the actually changing seasons.

Presently the sculpture is resting on the ground with three white alders planted inside. As the trees mature, their branches and trunks will pierce and lift the sculpture vertically along a guiding steel pole. Indigenous ground cover has been planted to ultimately complete the image of a shoreline. These plants were chosen on the basis of their local origin, their size, color, and ability to resemble a shoreline with its mineral deposits where land and water meet. The shoreline also functions as a geological definition of time.

In *Talking Tree* Roloff has incorporated two of his most prevalent images: creatures from the sea, along with boat forms and fragments. His themes extol the primal forces of nature and their power of transformation. He refers to a distant past, superimposing varying units of time and pointing to an all-encompassing relativism. The oneness of life and death is taken for granted—death is not the Other here, but is contained within Rilkean notions of a "great cycle" or "eternal stream."

—Ingrid Evans



John Roloff, *Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan: Talking Tree* (detail), 6½' x 12½' x 45" steel, concrete, plaster, native plants and rocks.

Fig 137. Evans, Ingrid, John Roloff at University, Nevada, Reno, Artspace, Southwestern Contemporary Arts Quarterly, Vol II, No. 4, Fall 1987, photo, John Roloff.



Fig 138. *Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan/Talking Tree (Glacial Epoch) / Lahontan Group II*, 12 ft., steel, white cement, alder trees, tufa from Pyramid Lake, landscaping, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, NV 1987.



ANCIENT SHORELINE / ISLAND FOR LAKE LAHONTAN

PROPOSAL FOR "TALKING TREE / GLACIAL EPOCH" ELEMENT

RENO, NEVADA

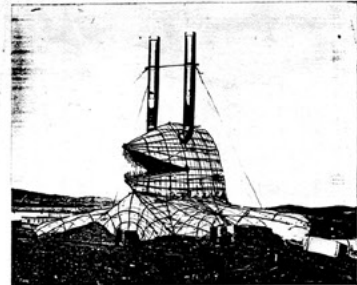
1985-87

© JOHN ROLOFF

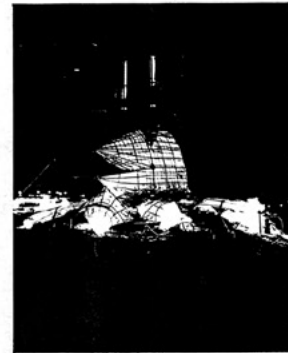
AN EXTENSION OF A PROJECT BEGUN IN 1982 WITH THE SITE FINDING OF THE "BLACK CORAL STARFISH" ELEMENT. THE CLIENT CONSIDERS CERTAIN MYTHOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL AND SPECULATIVE IDEAS ABOUT THE ANCIENT "ICE AGE" LAKE LAHONTAN THAT COVERED A LARGE AREA OF WHAT IS NOW NORTHERN NEVADA.

THE PROJECT CONSISTS OF A STEEL STRUCTURE SIMILAR TO ORIGINAL PLAN FOR THE "BLACK CORAL STARFISH" ELEMENT OF THE "ICE AGE" ELEMENT. WITH "TALKING TREE" CONCEPTS PLANTED WITHIN WITH ONE OR MORE ADDITIONAL COPPOWOOD TREES TO BE ALLOWED TO GROW IN THE AREA. BEFORE OR AFTER THE STRUCTURE IS PLACED FOR A MINIMUM OF 50 YEARS. A STREAMSIDE LIFE IS DESIRED.

SCALE OF DRAWINGS  
IN FEET



KILN AT SITE



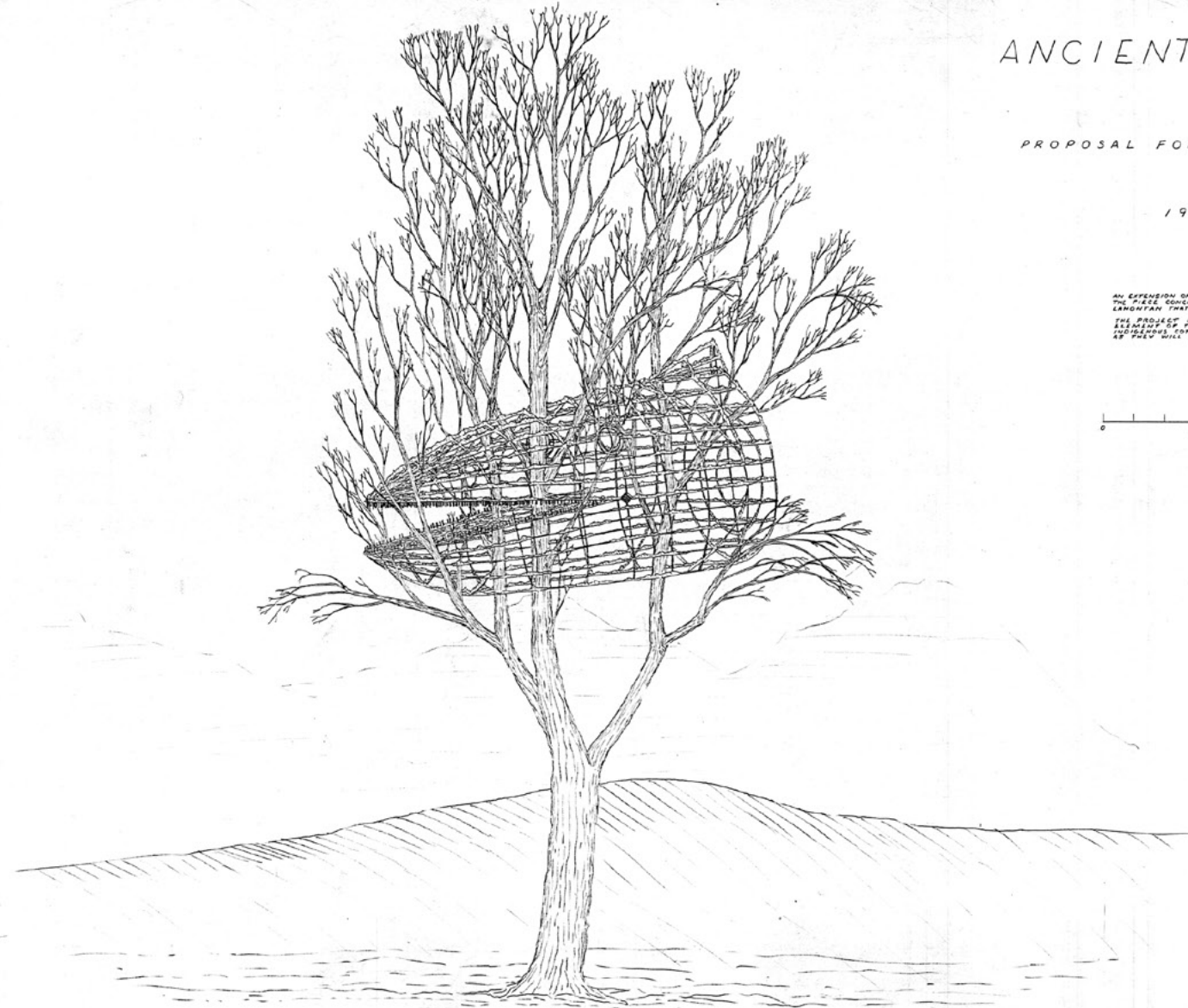
NIGHT FIRING



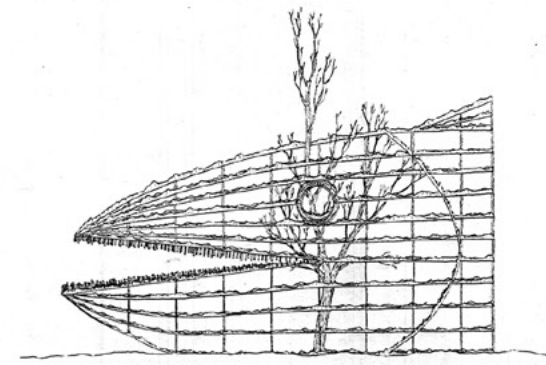
KILN REMOVED

FIRE-RESISTANT BLACK GLAZED SLIP OVER UNDERGLAZE DECORATION THROUGHOUT  
EXPOSED SURFACE, DARK GLAZED MATERIALS. 20" DIAMETER ON A 4' X 6' X 10' CEMENT MOUND.

BLACK CORAL STARFISH  
ELEMENT



POSSIBLE FUTURE CONFIGURATION



INITIAL CONFIGURATION

Fig 139. Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan): Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch, 36 in x 81 in. pencil on vellum, b&w photo collage, 1985. Collection, UC Berkeley Art Museum.





Fig 140. *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group III*, 12 ft., steel, glass, water and sediment from Pyramid Lake, NV. Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, 1989.



Fig. 141. *Vanishing Ship (Third State)*, steel, glass, concrete, stream water, Djerassi Foundation, Woodside, CA, final site of the *Lahontan Group III* ship, 1989.

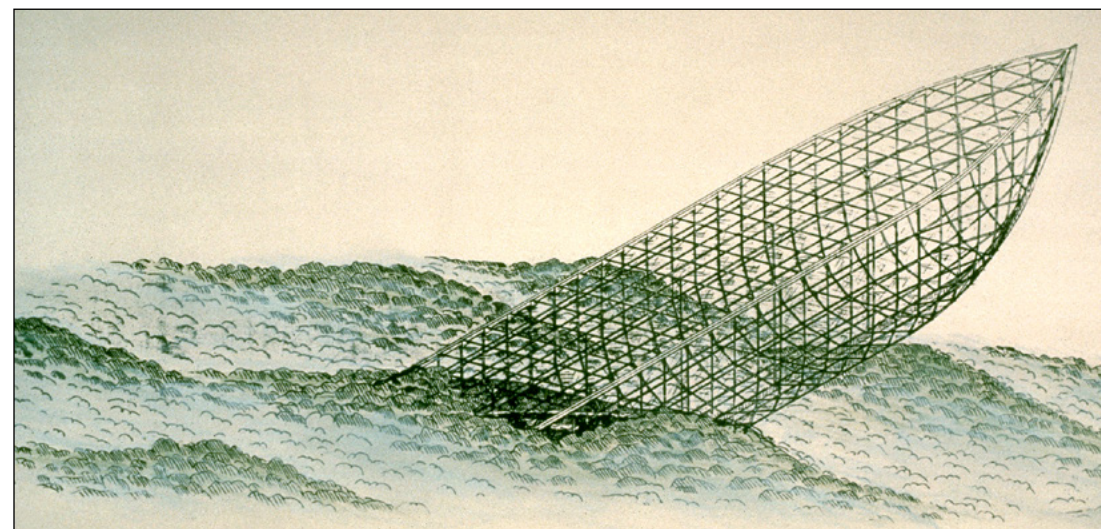


Fig. 142. *Sinking Ship/Greenhouse (Alien Flora/Ancient Sea)*, detail, 36 in. x 96 in., colored pencil and pastel on brown-line print, 1984. A version of the original drawing and inspiration for *Lahontan Group III*, *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, original pencil on vellum drawing, collection, UC Berkeley Art Museum, 1987.



## Inveterate innovator brings antiquity to art

By Ingrid Evans

John Roloff's designed-for-the-site installation on the University of Nevada-Reno campus, "Ancient Shoreline/Lake Lahontan/Talking Tree" ends a project begun in Reno in 1985. At that time the "Firing for Black Coral Starfish Element" incorporated the building of a kiln 20 feet in diameter and 14 feet high, a starfish shape of sagebrush piled directly on the ground, and a night firing, in itself a spectacular event. Inexplicably, no trace remains of that sculpture, demolished to make room for a baseball diamond. Only the documentation remains.

This June, Roloff installed another sculpture, this time on a permanent location. His "Talking Tree" is formally and thematically related to the preceding work, but differs from it in terms of material and process. Unlike its predecessor, where the outer form served as crucible for the enclosed clay, the major component of this piece is a steel structure to be acted on by growing trees planted in its interior.

Roloff is an inveterate innovator who left the ceramics studio with its refined materials

### Review

in favor of the more experimental approach outdoors.

On the land, available materials in their raw state present greater challenges and rewards. With this move the scale of his work increased considerably, while the visual vocabulary essentially remained the same. His images are drawn from the sea, from nature, and from geologic references, often to a prehistoric time.

The title "Ancient Shoreline . . ." gives some clues to the viewer. The work is laden with implied contrasts and extremes, not always immediately accessible. References to geologic time and human time, to past and future, change and stasis, high-tech and nature, recur throughout. Here Roloff became interested in ancient Lake Lahontan, and he incorporated that prehistoric time and place in this sculpture.

A white image is shown — permanent winter — in tension with the actually changing seasons. Cold-rolled steel rods are welded to

form the skeletal head of an imaginary amphibian ice-age creature, suggesting a Pleistocene fossil as symbolic voyager through a time beyond our reckoning. This image recalls at once Roloff's earlier ichthyoid ceramic sculpture as well the rich body of myth surrounding Pyramid Lake.

Presently this piece rests on the ground with three white alders planted inside. As these trees mature, their branches and trunks will pierce and lift the sculpture vertically along a guiding steel pole. Indigenous ground cover has been planted to ultimately complete the image of a shoreline. These plants were chosen on the basis of their local origin, size, color, and ability to resemble a shoreline with its mineral deposits where land and water meet.

Roloff is at once curious and fatalistic about the ultimate state of his site work. With careful planning and tight technical control he takes the work to the point at which it is left to change, to nature, and to the vagaries of the seasons. While there is much faith in the benefit of accident, his work is executed

See ROLOFF, page 8E

### Roloff

From page 5E

with extreme care so that an educated guess can be made as to its future. The ultimate condition of the piece is contingent upon the survival of the trees and their interaction with the metal frame-

work as planned, and also on the expected growth of the ground cover to complete this open-ended installation.

Roloff's work is largely based on his interest in the history and mythology of a given region, and on our relationship or connection with nature. Despite its stark appearance, this sculpture is ultimately romantic. It conveys the artist's view of nature as an ongoing physical and spiritual source. His themes extol the primal forces

of nature and their power of transformation.

Ingrid Evans, born in Berlin, is an artist living in Reno who works for a newspaper syndicate.

*Coral Orchid*

Studio, Oakland, CA 1983

Fig. 143. Evans, Ingrid, *Inveterate innovator brings antiquity to art*, Reno Gazette-Journal, Arts, July 2, 1987, pg. 5E, 8E.





Fig 144. *Coral Orchid*, fire state, 9 ft. w., steel, refractory cement, ceramic fiber blanket, propane, Oakland, CA studio, 1983.



Fig 145. *Coral Orchid*, fused state, group exhibition, Mills College, Oakland, CA, 1983.

*Coral Orchid*

Firing: Studio, Oakland, CA 1983

Initial study into the use of refractory cement for furnace works, shown as a fire-altered structure in several exhibitions. A prototype, study for the much larger, *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, 1988. The orchid image in this and other forms of abstraction appeared in several of the ceramic ships of this time period. The orchid refers to both its appearance in romantic landscape painting by artists such as Martin Johnson Heade, the paleo-botanical origin of fossil fuel and perceptions of the organic nature analogous to many geologic processes, as discussed in the *Ancient Sunlight* section this document.

Collection of the University of Nevada, Reno.





Fig 146. *Coral Orchid*, in-progress fabrication, 9 ft.. w., steel, refractory cement, ceramic fiber blanket, propane, Oakland, CA studio, 1983.

#### Experimental Kiln Workshop

Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1990

Invited by Graham Marks, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Ceramic Artist in Residence, to conduct a multi-day workshop with graduate students experimenting with alternative kiln structures and materials (*Fig. 147-149*). We explored using refractory cement to create a kiln as a mold and burning out of organic material to create interior form. Similar workshops, building smaller-scale experimental kilns were also done at the University of Miami, 1987 and California State University, San Diego, circa 1988.





Fig 147. Kiln studies in progress, kiln workshop, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1990.



Fig 148. Kiln studies in progress, kiln workshop, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1990.



Fig 149. Kiln studies in progress, kiln workshop, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1990.





Fig 150. Fresh lava flow across highway, Big Island, HI, 1980.







## Public firing of giant ceramic orchid concludes University of Hartford workshop by renown artist

Susan Corica  
HERALD REPORTER

John Roloff's giant ceramic orchid will be transformed into a glowing "ghost image" for five hours when it is publically fired tomorrow at the University of Hartford.

Walter Hall, associate professor of ceramics, said the Oakland, Calif., artist will conclude his two-week ceramics workshop at the university by turning the piece into a spectacular, 2,000-degree "performance sculpture" from 6 to 11 p.m.

Hall said Roloff "thinks in geologic terms" but more from an aesthetic than a scientific sense. He likens ceramics — subjecting earthen materials to high temperatures — to an accelerated geologic formation.

Roloff, who has received three awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Guggenheim fellowship, is known for his "Night Ship/Frozen Sea" series and his larger sculptural installations. The latter include large "land kilns" fired at remote desert or prairie sites.

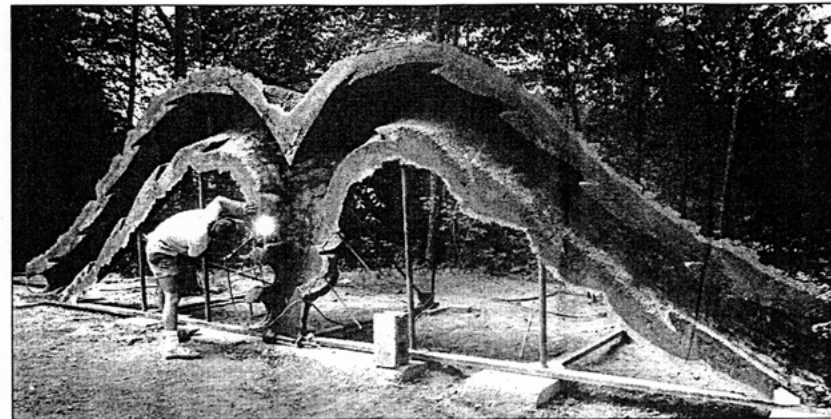
In Reno, Nevada, on the sight of an ancient dead lake, he built a kiln in the shape of a fishhead on top of a starfish.

In New Mexico he was fascinated by a large boulder so he built a kiln all around it. "It was designed so that at the maximum temperature the two ends of the kiln could be pulled away so the boulder glowed red hot. In a color photo it's very beautiful. He's looking at a boulder and imagining how it's formed," said Hall.

The unusual kilns are constructed with a special fiber blanket called Kaowool that can be contoured to any shape, said Hall. Roloff uses a relatively thin layer of the white, insulating material so it glows a bright red-orange.

After the "performance" of the firing, past land kilns left only a glassy, colored pattern on the landscape. Drawings and photos of these works are on display in the university's Joseloff Gallery.

Tomorrow's firing will leave the new piece standing behind the university's ceramic building. Hall explained that when the building, by Korean architect Tai Soo Kim, was completed two years ago the staff



HERALD PHOTO—ALAN CHANIEWSKI

### PREPARING CERAMIC SCULPTURE

John Roloff, renowned sculptor, concludes his workshop at the University of Hartford Art School tomorrow with the outdoor firing of this large

ceramic sculpture. Roloff is shown welding rods in preparation for this event.

decided to sponsor a major ceramic project to go with it.

"I had met John Roloff 10 years ago in San Francisco and followed his career over the years. We wanted to bring in someone who the students wouldn't have had contact with and who would do something they hadn't been exposed to," he said.

Roloff came in April to walk around the campus and find a setting that appealed to him for the shape he has been working with since 1983. It's a variation of a smaller piece entitled "Coral Orchid/Section (Heart of

Fire)," according to Hall. Roloff said the shape fit with the grove-like setting by the ceramics building and will be visible from down the slope behind it.

"When successful," said Roloff, "a firing can approach an irrational point, the verge of losing control, and a metaphor is suggested of the unconscious in a primitive or vulnerable state where time becomes emotion, chemistry spirit and matter theater."

However, Hall added, at this point Roloff is not even certain what he

will call the finished piece since the shape also recalls a seagull.

Workshop participants are helping build the piece. Made of refractory cement which will be wrapped in the fiber blanket and supported by steel rods, it is 32 feet long and eight feet high. Five natural gas burners will be attached along with two 20 foot chimney pipes. "It will be a standard down draft kiln," said Hall.

The heat of the firing will be so intense, that the kiln won't be taken apart until perhaps 12 hours after it's over, Hall said.

The Herald, New Britain, Connecticut, July 14, 1988

## Untitled (Earth Orchid)

Hartford School of Art, Hartford, CT, 1988

Fig 152. Corica, Susan, Public firing of giant ceramic orchid concludes University of Hartford workshop by renown artist, The Herald, New Britain, CT, July 14, 1988.





Fig. 153. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, mold core with rebar/pre-refractory cement placement/horizontal position, 32 ft. l., steel, clay, wood, concrete, 1988.





Fig. 154. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, cast structure tilted to vertical position, 32 ft.. l., steel, wood, clay, refractory cement, concrete, 1988.



Fig. 155. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, pre-firing/back view, 25 ft.. h. (with flues) x 32 ft.. l., steel, refractory cement, concrete, 1988.

*Untitled (Earth Orchid)*

Hartford Art School, University of Hartford, Hartford, CT, 1988

*Untitled (Earth Orchid)* is the first of three performance/site works in the series: *51 Million BTU's*. The three works of this series investigate the relationship of the kiln, it's burning of fossil fuels and the fuels ancient botanical origin and geologic transformation.

*Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, the first of three works in the project "51 Million BTU's," begins the examination of form and image in conceptually evaluating and emotionally engaging relationships between the origin of fossil fuels and the transformative energy released by their ignition. This work specifically examines botanical structure in the dynamic form of a furnace. Natural gas is transformed by ignition into radiant energy within the central core of this section of a "orchid" form and the effect of the draft from the two 20 foot metal flues pulling the released energy laterally through the "petals" to their furthest extremities. With the release of visual radiant energy and CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere from this image a process like the reverse of photosynthesis is achieved. The final state of the work as a residue of this activity completes the geologic reference to ancient environments by the lava-like alteration of the interior that records the ignition event similar to the way that a rock records its origin and development.





Fig. 156. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, fire state, 25 ft. high. (flues) x 32 ft. long., steel, refractory cement, natural gas, ceramic fiber blanket, concrete, 1988.





Fig. 157. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, post fire/fused state, 25 ft.. h. (with flues) x 32 ft.. l., steel, refractory cement, concrete, 1988.



Art

# FIRES UP

U of H campus

Sculptor's 7½-ton glowing kiln will create a piece tonight that is sure to be other-worldly

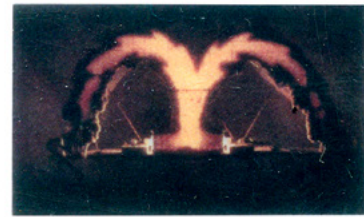
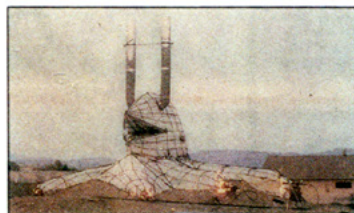


Richard Mei / The Hartford Courant

■ Sculptor John Roloff at work on the kiln he is building on the U of H campus.

■ John Roloff's "Black Coral Starfish Element" is shown at right before its firing in Reno, Nev., in 1985. At far right is the aftermath.

Photos of artworks courtesy of the University of Hartford



■ "Coral Orchid," a 1983 John Roloff work, is similar in theme but much smaller than a mammoth piece he will fire tonight at the University of Hartford.

By OWEN McNALLY  
Courant Staff Writer

**W**hen John Roloff ignites his natural-gas-fueled, 7½-ton orchid-shaped kiln tonight on the University of Hartford campus, the internationally acclaimed ceramist and sculptor hopes to tap the primal forces of creativity with his mix of fire and art.

The climax of Roloff's nocturnal ritual will occur when the 32-foot-long kiln becomes so heated by the flames of 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit that it will emit what the artist calls "a ghostly glow."

"We're transforming the sculpture by putting it into the world of 2,000 degrees — a world that we really have no physical experience with. We think we can control that world with levers and gauges, but we can't because it has an energy all its own," Roloff said last week as he labored at the monumental kiln site with a dozen or so graduate and undergraduate students at the U of H's Hartford Art School.

"The firing process is a way to half-control and half-unleash the energy of that unknown world, and then to see and hope for some sort of poetic transformation in the work itself," Roloff says. "Firing the work is a way for me to add another stanza to the work."

"Along with everyone else, I'll just be waiting to see how it turns out — to see how the transformational power of fire has worked," he says.

The public is invited to the free communal event — which might best be described as the birth of a sculpture by fire.

The kiln will be fired from 6 to 11 tonight. As a precautionary measure, spectators will be allowed only in a cordoned-off area at a safe distance. The kiln will be fueled by a natural-gas line from the art school. The firing is scheduled to go forward rain or shine.

It will take two or three hours for the kiln to get hot enough to emit a powerful glow, says Walter Hall, an associate professor of ceramics at the Art School. Hall is the coordinator of the two-week workshop session that brought Roloff from his studio in Oakland, Calif., to the West Hartford campus to create one of his unique "landscape kilns."

"As darkness falls," Hall says, "the fire should be hot and bright enough so you can see the ghostly image — a trademark of Roloff's earlier celebrated sculptures shaped like ships, starfish, a mountain or fish head."

Basically, Roloff's stylized orchid, with its winglike spread, combines sculpture and spectacle — even a hint of a 1960s happening set in a pastoral grove.

It's also a ceramic high-tech event featuring two flues at either end of the orchid and five burners installed at its stem.

But best of all — at least visually and emotionally — there are the primal, high-drama

See Sculptor, Page D5



## Sculptor heats kiln to 2,000 degrees to achieve strange effects

THE HARTFORD COURANT Friday, July 15, 1988 D5

Continued from Page D1

elements of darkness, fire and the mysterious glow emanating from the massive piece made of refractory concrete supported internally by a cage-like web of steel rods. The piece itself will be covered with a ceramic fiber blanket that holds in the heat while transmitting the light.

Situated at the rear of the Hartford Art School's new ceramics building, the wooded grove site for the giant flaming flower plays off of the work's primal themes.

Even with Roloff and his student crew busily welding and hammering away under the relentless summer sun last week, the kiln's pastoral site looked like a patch of enchanted forest right out of a Nathaniel Hawthorne story steeped in supernaturalism and New England lore.

Roloff's radical approach to ceramics and sculpture has earned him much praise and several prestigious awards, including three grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and one Guggenheim fellowship. But his unusual approach has also confused some people because of those same, oft-praised innovative qualities, Hall acknowledges.

**Ceramic process reversed**

Roloff seems to have turned the ceramic process inside out, in a sense, because his focus is on the kiln — rather than a pot or figurine baked inside, as in a more traditional approach to ceramics. The kiln itself becomes the work of art, like a giant fired pot.

The special refractory concrete that forms its skin is similar to the outside of a pot created in the usual ceramic process, Hall explains.

"The firing itself is one of the work's artistic high points — an exciting performance element that creates the ghost image," Hall says. Roloff, a youthful-looking 40-year-



A sculpture titled "Mountain Kiln Black Orchid" by John Roloff heats up after it is fired at night in Oakland, Calif., in 1987.

old with a roguish mustache and easy-going presence, likes to use metaphoric language to describe his work, its purposes and what he hopes it will become during the firing process.

**A geologist at first**

As a child growing up in Portland, Ore., Roloff was interested in science, particularly in geology. Art had little role in the young, budding geologist's life.

When he enrolled at the University of California at Davis, he initially majored in marine geology — the study of the ocean floor. But then he began to become increasingly interested in the figurative use of clay in ceramics rather than the strictly scientific study of clay in geology. "Metaphors became more important than exact formulas."

Nonetheless, the scientific element still pervades his art, which is represented in the collections of the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian, the Oakland Museum, the University Art Museum at Berkeley, Calif., the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the New-

port Harbor Art Museum.

"I really think of the kiln firing as an experiment, a kind of inquiry. You do the firing at night because that's when you can see the work come alive."

And there's the excitement of the day after when you remove the fiber blanket and see the result of the experiment and learn how that un-

known force has transformed the material," he says.

Roloff used a similar process for his much heralded ceramic ship series, which culminated in his "Night Ship/Proven Sea" group.

Using the ship as a metaphor for traveling back into geologic time, he gave his kiln sculptures a geologically aged, cracked and even ice-encrusted, ghostly look through repeated firings.

**Even residue used**

In some works — but not in his as-yet-unnamed piece at U of H — Roloff creates special geological effects and patterns from the residue of kiln firings. Often concerned with playing off the landscape and its geological history, he likes to leave behind residue patterns that look as if they were actually part of the land itself.

After the flues, burners and the ceramic blanket are removed, the sculpture will remain in place at U of H for six months to a year or more, Hall says.

Roloff's kiln sculptures are semi-permanent and not for the ages — a factor that he says doesn't bother him a bit. They're preserved primarily by photographs, a number of which have been exhibited at the Art School's Joseloff Gallery during Roloff's stay on campus. While at U of H, he has been living in an unoccupied dormitory by night and work-

ing with his workshop students by day on the mammoth project.

The work began with his schematic sketch of the orchid. This was duplicated in its actual size on a 32-by-6-foot platform. Clay then was piled three feet high on the board around the sketch's contours. Using a masonry trowel and other tools, Roloff modeled the rough mass of clay into the stylized orchid shape he wanted.

This was encased with steel rods — a kind of cage surrounding but separate from the clay shape. The rods themselves were encased with approximately 4 inches of refractory concrete. Then the whole work was tilted up vertically and secured in place and the 5 tons or so of clay dug out by hand. Flues and burners were installed, and the piece was draped in the ceramic blanket.

The next step occurs tonight when the fire transforms the work into the unknown. Roloff hopes the piece's rite of passage through the fiery twilight zone will bring back interesting results for him and his young students to ponder Saturday morning when the fired kiln has cooled into the finished product.

John Roloff's sculpture kiln will be fired tonight from 6 to 11 behind the Hartford Art School's new ceramics building on the University of Hartford campus, 200 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford. For more information, call 543-4383.

Fig. 158 A/B. McNally, Waren, Fires Up, The Hartford Courant, July 15, 1988, pg. D1, D5.



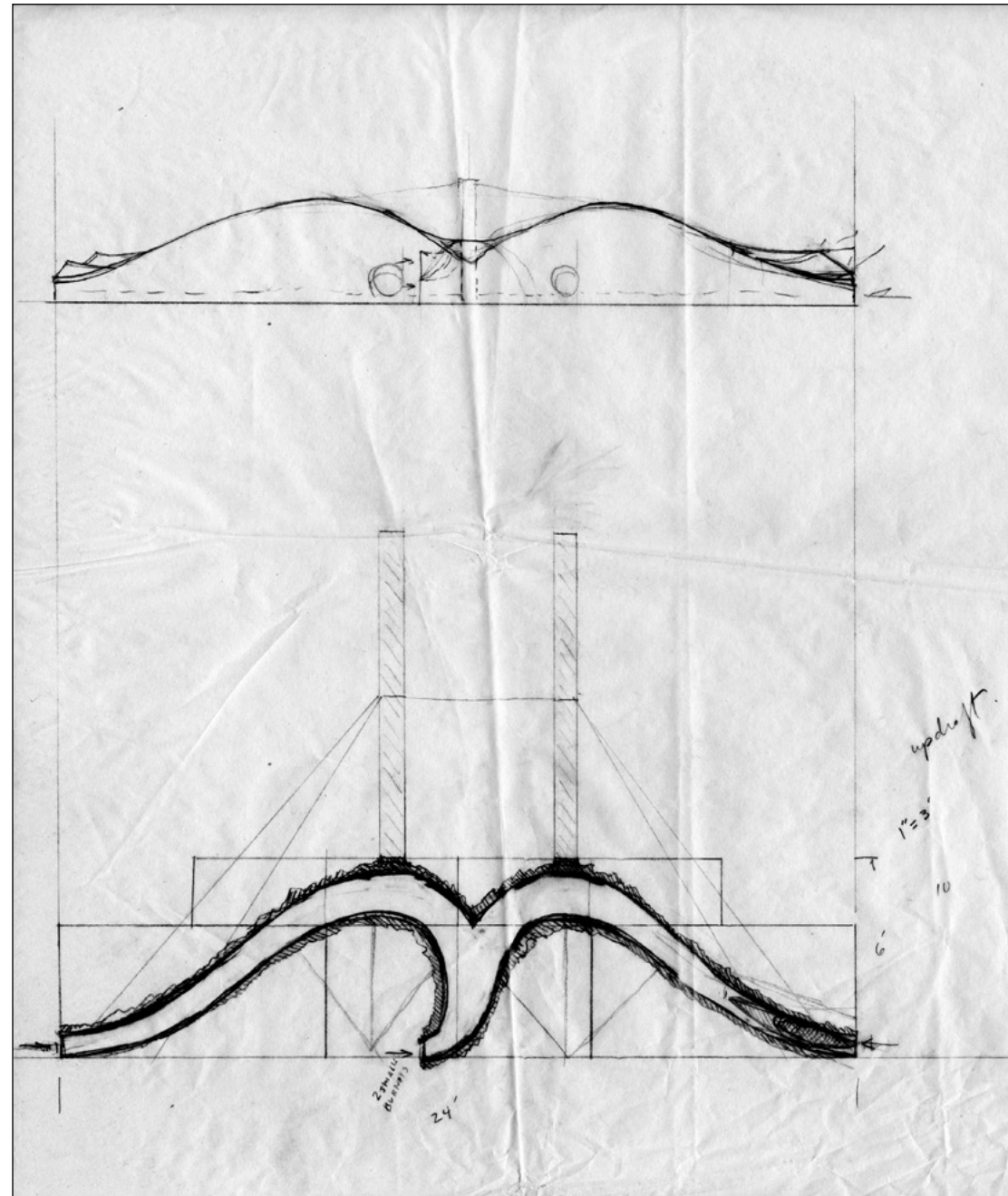


Fig. 159. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, preliminary study with top-mounted flues, 17 in. x 11 in., pencil on vellum, 1988.

*Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*

Arvada Art Center, Arvada, CO, 1989



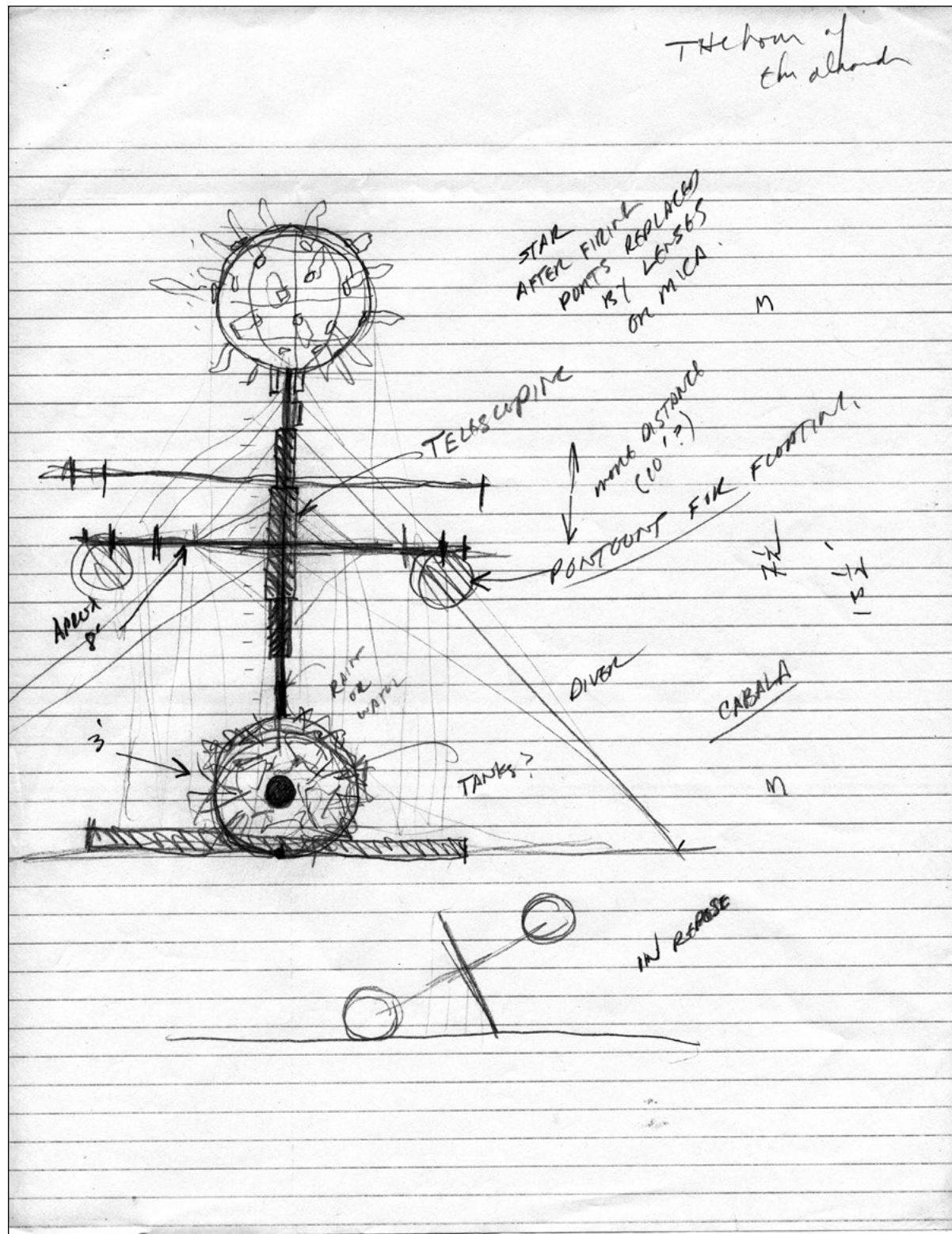


Fig. 160. Study: Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field, pen on lined paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., 1989.



Fig. 161. Study: Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field, pencil, pen and collage on b/w photo, 40 in x 44 in., 1989.

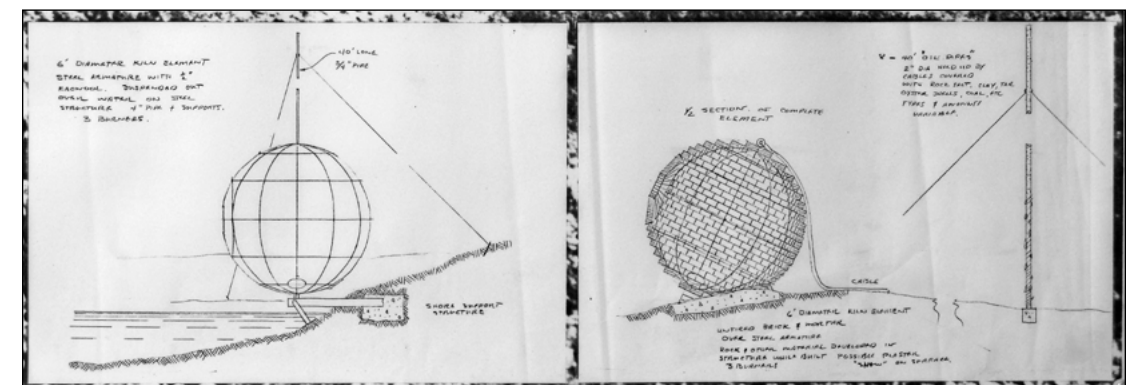


Fig. 162. Detail, Study: Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field, pencil, pen and collage on b/w photo, 40 in x 44 in., 1989.





Fig. 163. *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, preparation of "oil-drill-rig poles," 40 ft. long, steel, salt, tar, shells, 1989.



Fig. 164. *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, installation of "oil-drill-rig poles," 40 ft. long, steel, salt, tar, shells, 1989.



Fig. 165. *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, "Ancient Bathysphere," pre-firing 6 ft. dia., unfired brick, steel, propane, 1989.



*Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*

Arvada Art Center, Arvada, CO, 1989

A fundamental basis of this project is an on-going involvement in the use of fire and its relationship to imagery, expressed in the form of specially configured kiln or furnace structures, and how the ideas those images represent can be explored and activated. The images found in this project, an environmental tableau staged as a sub-sea floor crude oil reservoir and two eyeball-like bathysphere kilns are elements in a story played out in a pyro-psychic event one evening in Arvada, Colorado. The event is an attempt for the "characters" to address their own existential nature and, in turn, reflect on the human/nature condition.

The development of a deep sea oil reservoir as the scene of activity in this work comes from a concern with the source of heat (propane) used to fire the bathysphere images and its origin in the earth as a hydrocarbon-rich fossil fuel. This fuel is carbon and hydrogen fused together by ancient chemical bonds (from an ancient sun and distilled deep and long in the earth) that are broken and reformed into new compounds while energy is being released in the process of combustion. This process gives these events a life they could not have in any other way: an intense, luminous, trance-like transfiguration (a return to the ancient climate?) during the evening of the firing that has been described elsewhere:

"...a firing can approach an irrational point, the verge of losing control, a metaphor is suggested of the unconscious in a primitive or vulnerable state where time becomes emotion, chemistry spirit and matter theater (Roloff, J., Artery Magazine, Feb-Mar., 1983)."

The concern with the fuel, explored in conjunction with the image of the eye or "Oculus," goes back

to a recent work, *Oculus: Emerson/Beebe (Seas of Salt, Chains of Carbon)*. In this piece, two six-foot in diameter, spherical greenhouse "eyes" of steel and glass were thought of as devices to symbolically probe and reveal the ancient, marine environment in which the oil originated. The eyeball image came initially from a quote by R. W. Emerson in his essay *Nature*:

"Standing on the bare ground, - my head bathed by the blythe air, and uplifted into infinite space, - all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God."

In this earlier "Oculus" piece, Emerson's eyeball, and its role as a definitive symbol of 19th century transcendentalism, seemed an ideal device to use in this initial investigation of the fossil fuel question. This image also corresponded to another interest: that of the bathysphere, William Beebe's pioneering deep-sea diving, eye-like sphere used to probe the depths of the sea. The bathysphere descending into the abyss or (metaphorically) the unconscious, provided the psychological and mortal counterpoint of this inquiry and the other 'eye' of a natural, symmetrical system.

For the project *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, seeking a more intense, emotive relationship to the organic fuels from the depths of the earth, a narrative adventure of two mythic bathyspheres of fire – one more solid, "ancient," petrified, made of earth materials, abandoned, a relic of a past expedition and another alive, "virgin," ethereal, 'suspended' from above, searching the scene, engaged in a current expedition in a quest for its origins and its older, sunken counterpart – were imagined for the site in Colorado.



Fig. 166. *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, night firing, Arvada, CO, 1989.





Fig. 167. Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field, "Virgin Bathysphere," early stage of night firing, Arvada, CA, 1989.



Fig. 168. Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field, "Ancient Bathysphere," night firing, Arvada, CA, 1989.





Fig. 169. *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, "Virgin Bathysphere." fire state, 6 ft.. diameter, steel, refractory blanket, lava, propane, 1989.

The scene: a small lake in the midst of a gently undulating terrain, the two bathyspheres near the water's edge (the "virgin" element suspended out over the water), surrounded by an array of seven, forty-foot tall 'oil drill-rig' poles coated with tar on their lower half and encrusted with salt, sea shells and earth on their upper half, penetrating the ground surface and randomly placed as if from an abandoned oil field. The tar/shell line of the poles delineating the ceiling of an over-head rock dome beneath the sea floor (conceivably filled with crude oil) and the stage where the event takes place.

The night firing of the two bathyspheres serves to activate the images, ossify the abandoned 'ancient' sphere and illuminate the sub-abyssal scene. With the firing, and the two expeditions condensed into one even, the kiln/bathyspheres have returned to the source of their own life-blood.

The day following the firing found the 'ancient' bathysphere entropically fused, fissured and partially collapsed; the 'virgin' (no longer) bathysphere has its insulating blanket removed and its heat weathered from lava, heat-sink bottom molten, remaining skeleton-like at the shore of the lake.

In considering this return to origins, one might think back in time to the photosynthesis of the Paleozoic sunlight that captured the carbon in the tree leaf or floating algae mass that was to become the hydrocarbons and distilled sun fragments in the oil-reservoirs of the world. Going even further back, one may speculate on the earth itself somehow condensing from solar gasses into a prototype of its present solid/liquid/gas form. And in this environment, how a lineage of chemical/metaphorical reactions (also of solar fragments), began and passed up through the Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic to the present, where the builders of the bathyspheres (all of solar fragments), are transforming (through ignition) a material that is little different (as solar fragments) from that material in and of their own veins.

This text is included in the catalogue, *51 Million BTU's* and is derived from an essay by the artist and an interview with Nan Hill, PhD candidate, History of Art Department, U. C. Berkeley, circa 1988.

John Roloff, 1988-89





Fig. 170. *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, post-fire site view of "Virgin Bathysphere" (refractory blanket removed), 1 of 7 oil-rig-drill poles and "Ancient Bathysphere," Arvada, CO, 1989.



## John Roloff

The psychological resonance in Oakland-based artist John Roloff's sculptures and plans for site-specific sculptural events has to do in part with his exploitation of the power of fire, but it is history, as a nearly eternal tale of transformation by oxidation (in combustion, decomposition, and carbon fixation), which he elucidates via examples in human as well as geological time. In one branch of his work, large, hollow, refractory cement sculptures are fired at night outdoors using propane gas. This results in artifacts analogous to those made by naturally occurring events, specifically in that they are transformed at a molecular level by a force (inconceivably hot fire) that is literally fundamental to existence as we know it.

If the titanic aspect of his work initially seems somewhat Wagnerian, it may be because Roloff tangentially shares certain mythological referents with the composer of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. He does not however, share Wagner's accession to the mythological constant in which all things are framed in human terms. Instead of anthropomorphizing nature, Roloff allows it some distance from human importance, placing human industry, life, and death in the same category as the evolution and extinction of species of flora or bodies of water and land.

Several big, mixed-media-on-photograph depictions of projects for as-yet-unrealized firings, a triptych of oxidized images of sailing ships, and two sculpture installations comprise Roloff's exhibition at Paule Anglim. Among the two-dimensional works are images of burial and (implied) emergence: *Study mit Max Taut: Wissinger Tomb Furnace Underground/Ochard* shows a subterranean vault with flues extending above the ground into a cluster of trees. *Study mit Grünewald: Falling Knight Furnace/Forest* depicts a similar construction; however, an enormous figure lies suspended by flues and gas lines face down in the sepulchral space, its skin alight with the glow of fire coursing through its body. *Knight* confronts the subject of death and interment by violating a canon of adjectives commonly associated with the cessation of life. The "cold earth" is here blazing hot; the "suffocating darkness," replaced by a raging yellow glow, is hardly quiescent. One can imagine the roar of combustion as a kind of incubation or as an indicator of metamorphosis, but not as an absolute ending.

A triptych, *Study: Orchid Eclipse*, is similarly life-affirming, to the extent that "life" can be characterized as a succession of formal

transfigurations, of geologic processes inseparable from organic ones: in a swamp, Roloff imagines, is a small island from whose center rises an orb flanked by pinnate petals suspended in the act of opening. This orb—evidently derived from the bathysphere, or "oculus" employed elsewhere in his work—is tinted yellow to indicate the glow of combustion, as gas lines would apparently be run to its interior, the "orchid", to be baked from within.

Roloff's events and artifacts are made whole and connected to mortal concerns in the act of witnessing—hence the bathysphere/eyeball associations to be drawn from *Abyss #2 (plain)*, an orb embedded with tufts of pine needles and blackened with carbon, suspended on a blackened cord a few inches above a blackened substrate inside a vitrine. Time is incorporated into some pieces, which are designed to change as they age. *Metafossil (metabolism and mortality) Pinus: ponderosa, balfouriana, radiata*, for instance, is a triad of sculptures comprising needles and cones from three species of pine tree embedded in sooty refractory cement molded into shapes of ships' prows. These are poised in such a way as to suggest the works are sinking into the floor.

But they don't immediately or irrevocably read as ships—they also look distinctly like strata being forced up out of surrounding rock, or like enormous webworm pupae. As the works endure the forces of light, air, and presumably erosion, the organic bits will break down, leaving a "metafossil" for a remainder; here, decomposition substitutes for ignition, both processes involving oxidation.

Roloff once studied to be a marine biologist before becoming a ceramicist, so it may not be surprising that in reasserting art's capacity to inspire awe, he draws its power to do so most heavily from scientific rather than traditional mythological sources. In the new "mythology" his work proposes, discovery subverts dogma and poetry replaces faith. Instead of dully resigning his imagination to the assumption that understanding of natural phenomena depletes the world of magic, Roloff stages demonstrations in which the inverse is shown to be true, leaving behind events and objects whose associative qualities span or leap, magically suspended, between the need to know and the need to believe. (Paule Anglim, *San Francisco, January 7-February 1*)

Jennifer R. Crohn



John Roloff, *Oculus: dead sea/oil field*, 1989, *Virgin Bathysphere, nightfiring*. Courtesy Gallery Paule Anglim.

## Humboldt Ship

CSU Humboldt, Arcata, CA, 1989



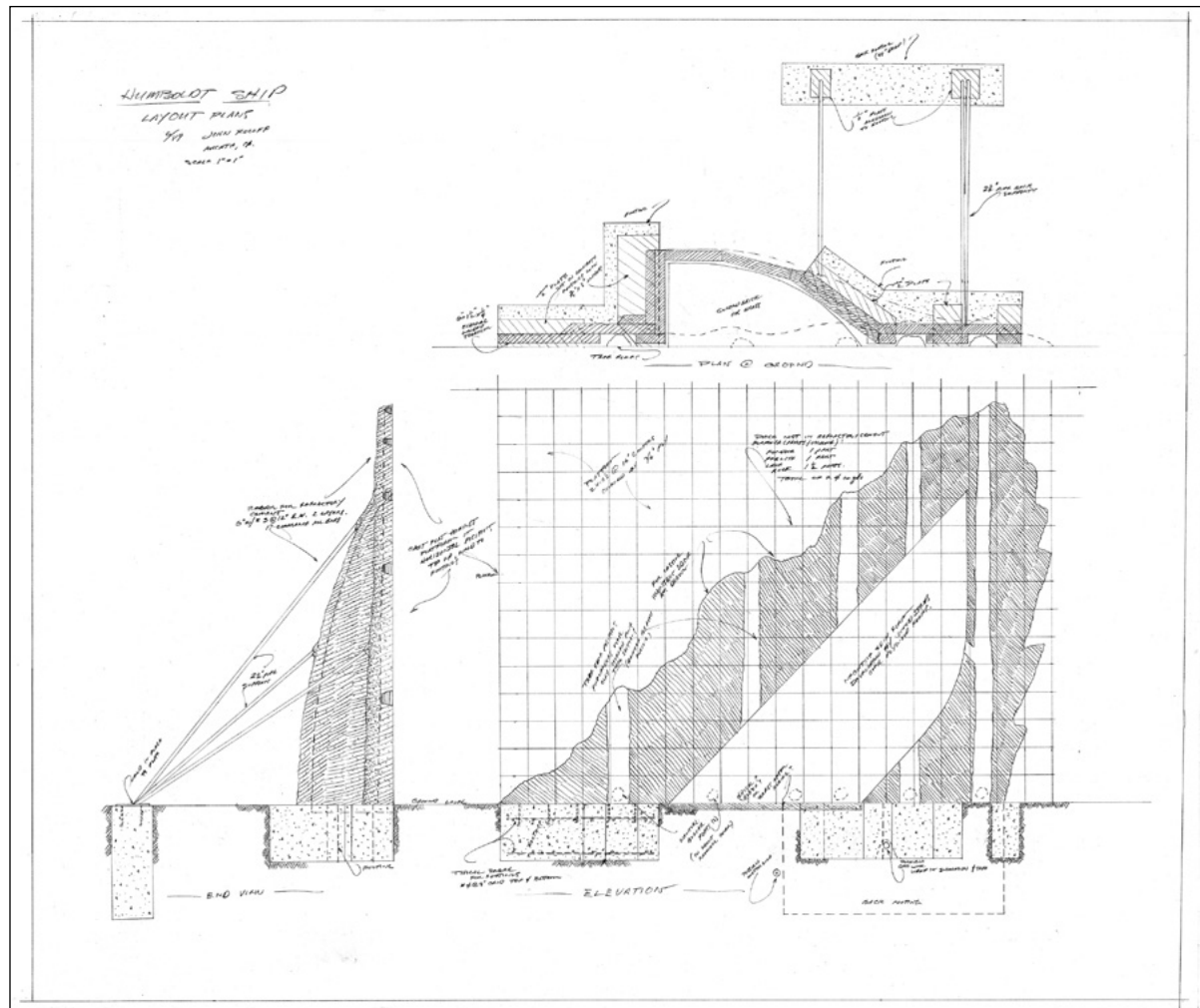


Fig. 172. Humboldt Ship/Layout Plans, 36 in. x 42 1/2 in., pencil on vellum, 1989.



Fig. 173. Humboldt Ship, 15 ft. h., post-firing, altered refractory cement, steel, concrete footings, Arcata, CA, 1989.

### Humboldt Ship

California State University Humboldt, Arcata, CA, 1989

This work is part of a series of environmental kiln/furnace works done from 1980 to 1992. The third of three site/performance works with the name "51 Million BTU's." The "sinking ship" image represents the settling and deposition of botanic materials as part of the process of their geologic transformation into fossil fuels, the kiln's internal "flues," as part of the overall casting of the internal structure of the work, in addition to the ship element, are negative castings from contemporary trees altered by the addition of a coating of a clay and pine needle texture to resemble Mesozoic cycads (see Fig. 175). The project was sponsored by California State University Summer Arts '89.





Fig. 174. Humboldt Ship, construction of core element on horizontal platform, 15 ft. x 22 ft.. wood.



Fig. 176. Humboldt Ship, construction of core element on horizontal platform, 15 ft. x 22 ft.. wood, sawn pine logs, clay, pine needles, steel support tubes, rebar.



Fig. 175. Humboldt Ship, construction of core element on horizontal platform, 15 ft. x 22 ft.. wood, sawn pine logs, clay, pine needles.



Fig. 177. Humboldt Ship, casting of core element on horizontal platform, 15 ft. x 22 ft.. wood, sawn pine logs, clay, pine needles, steel support tubes, rebar, cast refractory cement, concrete footings.





Fig. 178. *Humboldt Ship*, vertical placement of platform, core and cast elements, 15 ft. x 22 ft.. wood, sawn pine logs, clay, pine needles, steel support tubes, rebar, cast refractory cement, concrete footings.



Fig. 180. *Humboldt Ship*, core elements stripped from casting / steel ceramic fiber support system in place, 15 ft. x 22 ft.. steel, cast refractory cement.



Fig. 179. *Humboldt Ship*, platform removed / vertical core elements and casting visible, 15 ft. x 22 ft.. wood, sawn pine logs, clay, pine needles, cast refractory cement.

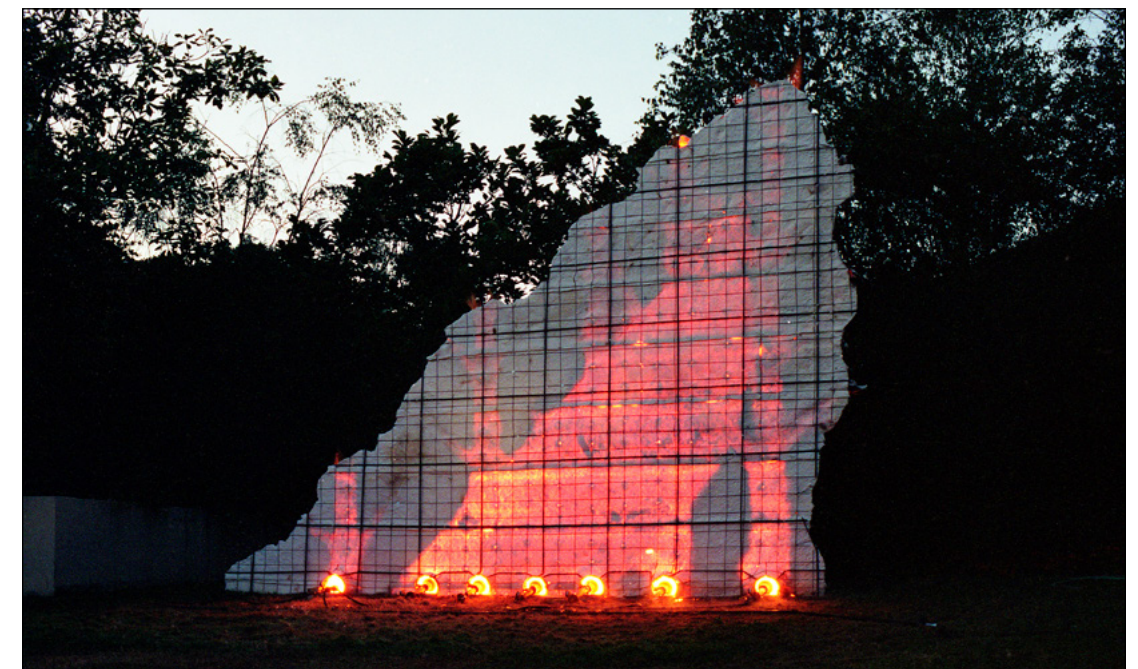


Fig. 181. *Humboldt Ship*, mid-firing, 15 ft. x 22 ft.. steel, cast refractory cement, ceramic fiber blanket, propane.





Fig. 182. *Humboldt Ship*, peak of firing, 15 ft. x 22 ft., steel, cast refractory cement, ceramic fiber blanket, propane.



# John Roloff makes lasting impression at HSU

## Sculptor creates night theater; fire breathes life into sculpture

By Tony Forder  
Of The Union

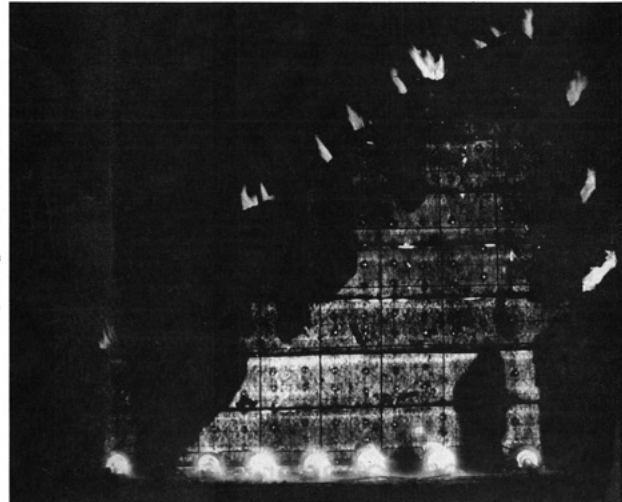
Sculptor John Roloff's appearance on the Humboldt State campus this summer was somewhat cyclical in nature — he earned a master of arts degree here in 1973. His latest sculpture, entitled "Humboldt Ship," and fired in public last week, also deals with cycles, or cycles within cycles. "It is based on the concept of fossil fuel," Roloff said. "The surface is reminiscent of ancient trees. It also becomes a reference to organic material which was live at one time, but later became the fossil fuel which also activates this sculpture." By "activating," Roloff is referring to his unique method of firing sculptures on site. When Roloff is done building his sculpture — with cast concrete in this case — he has a "sculpture with no soul."



"Heat is the guts of what we do. I want people to make connections with what things are made out of and where they came from."  
— John Roloff

Last Monday night, about 100 spectators watched propane-powered burners ignite the soul of Roloff's latest sculpture over a period of several hours. The concrete sculpture, encased in a ceramic fiber blanket, reached temperatures of 2,000° F as its image glowed like a ghostly effigy in the night. "The kiln is part of the process; the kiln becomes the piece," Roloff said. "The firing is really the soul of the sculpture. It creates an image which goes beyond me as an artist. I just become another spectator." Roloff has completed about a dozen outdoor kiln sculptures in such widespread places as Vermont, Colorado, California and Saskatchewan, Canada over the past 10 years. "Humboldt Ship" was the culmination of a CSU Summer Arts workshop which was completed last week. Roloff says that each kiln sculpture is an unknown because the final result is hidden until the ceramic fiber blanket which covers the sculpture during firing is removed. The wooden "dummies,"

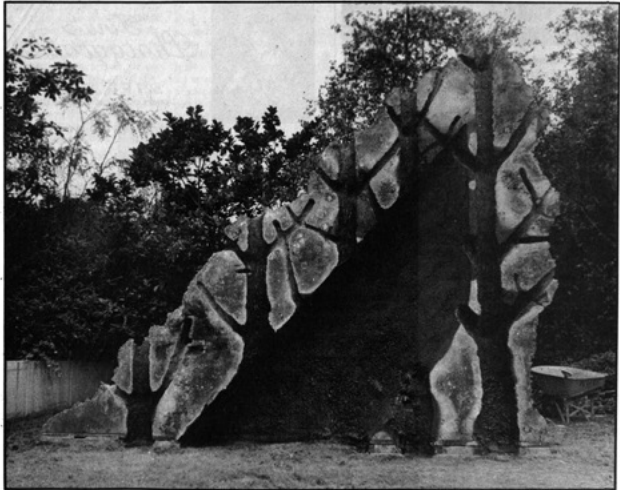
destined to become empty space — the image — encased in concrete in the finished piece, were surrounded by steel rebar to hold the concrete. Step II of the process, the casting of the shapes in refractory (heat-resistant) concrete, had to be done twice. On the first attempt, the mixture set up too quickly. "I'd never mixed that much (of the material) at once," Roloff said. "This is much more of a structure than I've ever done; it's by far the most vertical." Step III involved lifting the sculpture which had been poured horizontally into vertical position. Step IV meant digging out the organic material to leave the empty or image space. Roloff already envisions the next step project, including the installation of four-inch thick supports to make sure the 15-foot high sculpture doesn't go anywhere. "There's certain safety features you have to incorporate with such a public sculpture," Roloff said. "That's the trouble with public versus experimental art. I think the experimental is more important, but the two can work together. If the sculpture is out in a field somewhere, and it falls over, then that change becomes part of it." Roloff said some landscaping is planned to surround the piece in back and maybe some vines to grow over it. Roloff already envisions the next step



The roar of the furnace, the unleashing of elemental force, a poetic metaphor, perhaps. Seven burners at the base transform John Roloff's sculpture — "Humboldt Ship" — into a glowing kiln of 2,000-plus degree temperatures. Roloff, famous for his outdoor firings, lit up the night sky with this one last Monday on the Humboldt State University campus as part of the CSU Summer Arts program.

"I think it's fantastic. I'm glad we did it. The campus needs more public sculpture — we don't really have a whole lot."  
— Mort Scott

"It was a lot of work for three weeks. We had a lot of help, but it was a lot of inexperienced help," said HSU sculpture instructor Mort Scott. "I think if it had gone longer than three weeks we would have quit." Scott did most of the welding on the his outdoor kiln firings should take. He says he wants to work with a biochemist to determine exactly how much carbon dioxide is used in one of his firings. He would then restore the balance by planting a specific number of trees, probably in the shape of a ship. "Humboldt Ship" is located on Laurel Drive at the top of B Street between the Theater Arts and Home Economics buildings. Materials or labor for the sculpture were donated by Dutra Trucking, Piersons, Sequoia Gas and Hensels Materials.



The finished work is here to stay. The "Humboldt Ship" is a striking landmark for anyone approaching HSU on B Street. It is anchored on the lawn below the art quad.



Above, Mort Scott welds rebar during the initial stages of sculpture construction.



Below, the negative space of the sculpture can be seen glowing through its ceramic blanket.

Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>  
Tyler School of Art, Elkins Park, PA, 1992

Fig. 183. Forder, Tony, John Roloff Makes Lasting Impression at HSU, The Union, Section B, Arcata, CA, Jan. 27. 1989.



## *Metabolism And Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*

Tyler School of Art  
Elkins Park, PA 1992

In *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, the oculus image has transformed into molecular status, outward vision is now subsumed by an inward looking devotion to geo-chemical/thermodynamic processes and history.

Sited along what was the drip line and furthest lateral extent of a large, now dead beech tree on the Tyler campus are the project's two principal elements: the *Furnace* and the *Greenhouse*. These two instruments symbolically represent the beech tree's past life and current death systems on a macro-molecular level and as an elemental protagonist in the larger narrative of the work. *Furnace* and *Greenhouse* were envisioned as ions of an oxygen molecule (O<sub>2</sub>) separated by the primal and arboreal forces of entropy and dissolution but are still united and activated by similar thermal processes: the *Furnace* by ignition of fossil fuels developed by the photosynthesis of sunlight in ancient forests and their subsequent geologic distillation, and the *Greenhouse* by the collection and entrainment of contemporary solar energy. The solar heat within the *Greenhouse* is measured differentially from the outside atmosphere by its internal thermometers (a span of as much as 50° F. between the inner and outer environments has been noted).

A second series of kiln concepts, utilizing the starfish image and geologic characteristics of the Tyler site were also being studied for this project. *Model: Black Starfish Kiln*, *Model: Black Starfish Kiln/Grove* and *Study: Iapetus Starfish (Taconic Facies)*, all circa 1991 (Fig. 261), use a mythic inhabitant of the site, the starfish, as a reference to the site's geologic history. This is similar to the image of the starfish's role in a previous kiln project, *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980. Major aspects of the geology of the Tyler site were deposited and deformed during the Paleozoic, Taconic Orogeny and the closing of the proto-Atlantic, Iapetus Sea where this animal lived in an early form. The starfish's transformation as a kiln project becomes a representative of that time and origin of the site as part of the North American continent and player in a global narrative of geologic change.

John Roloff 1992 (revised, 2018)

*"Instead of anthropomorphizing nature, Roloff allows it some distance from human importance, placing human industry, life, and death in the same category as the evolution and extinction of species of flora or bodies of water and land."*

--Crohn, Jennifer R., ARTS MAGAZINE, April, 1992, pg. 79.



Fig. 184. Tyler Project: *Metabolism And Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, post-firing / cooled, fused / solar activated state, left background: *Greenhouse*, center/foreground: *Furnace*, right: beech tree remnant, Tyler School of Art, Elkins Park, PA, 1992.



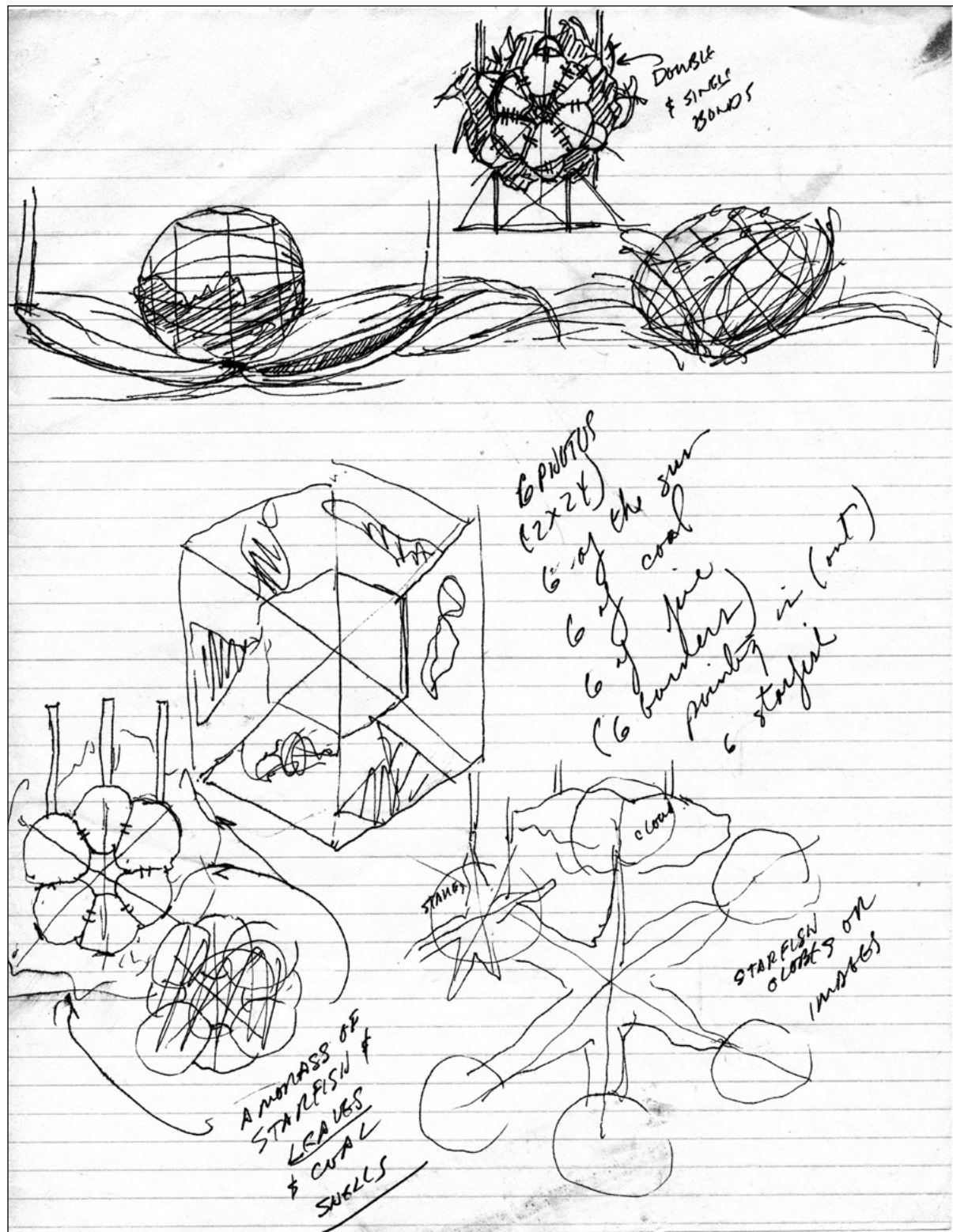


Fig. 185. Notebook page, pen on lined paper, 11 in. x 8.5 in., 1992.

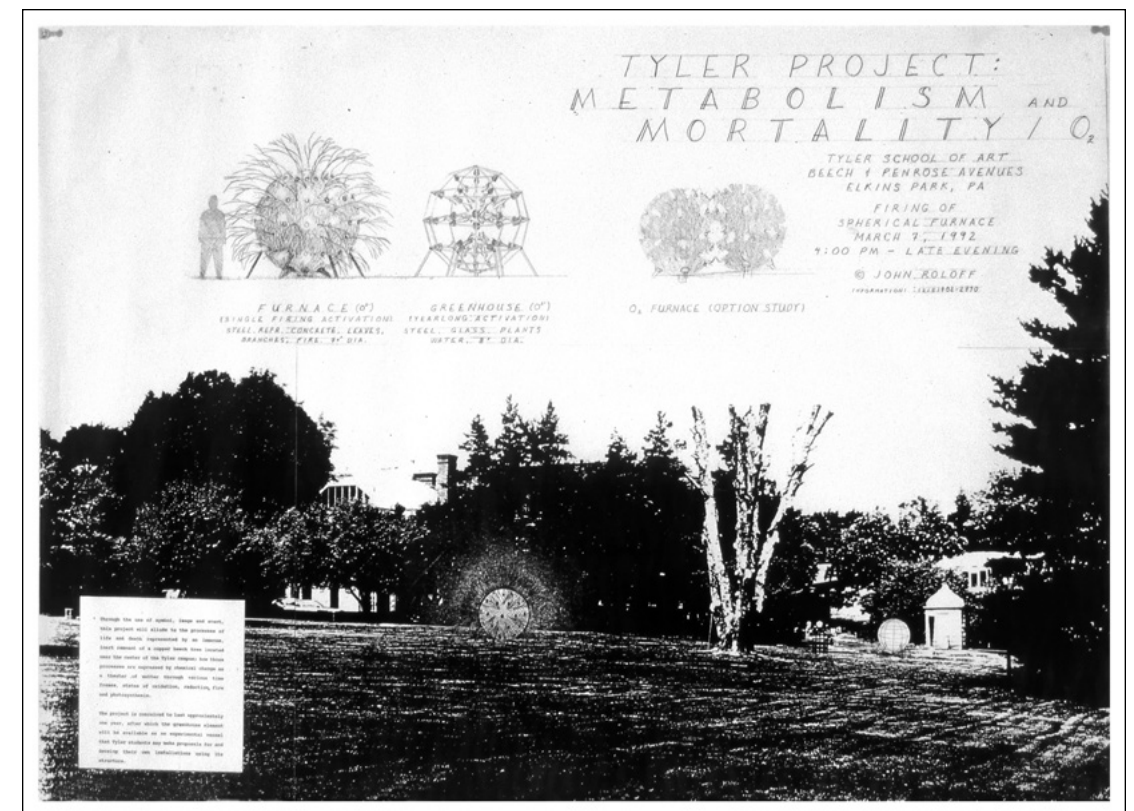


Fig. 186. Study: Tyler Project: Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>, pencil, gouache and collage on industrial print, 40 in. x 48 in., 1992.



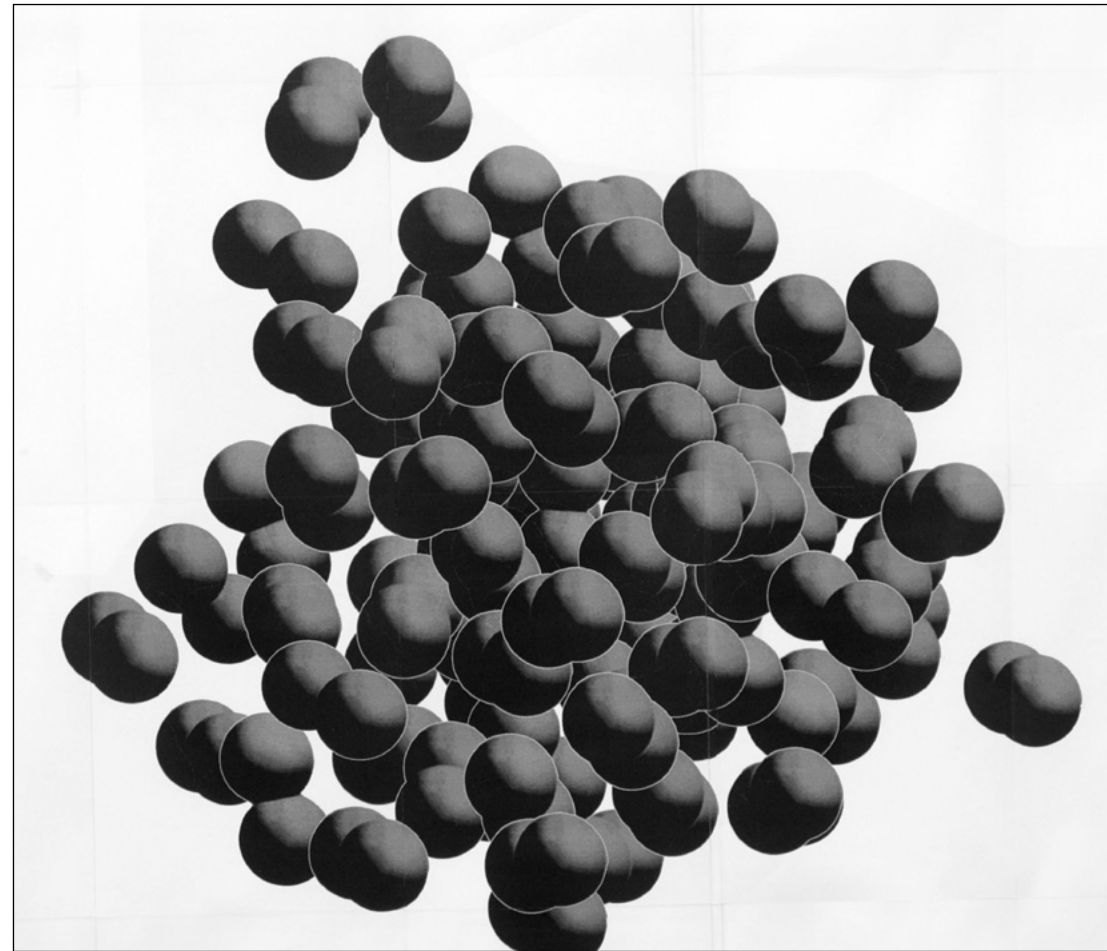


Fig. 187. Study: Dark Oxygen, computer print on bond, 30 in. x 34 in., circa 1990.

an organism observed in different states  
state space - model for the set of idealized  
spaces. (manifold)  
relationships between actual states and

This project represents a symbolic  
model for processes inherent in the  
tree summit or several levels. The  
first level is of molecular change.  
This is compounded  
by the psychological component of the firm.

Ultimately the various layers of the  
model began to relate the process of  
the tree to the systemic region of  
the human body. Receptor  
is a common element to  
aerobic

phase portrait:  
symbolic dynamic system

Fig. 188. Notebook page, pen on lined paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1992.



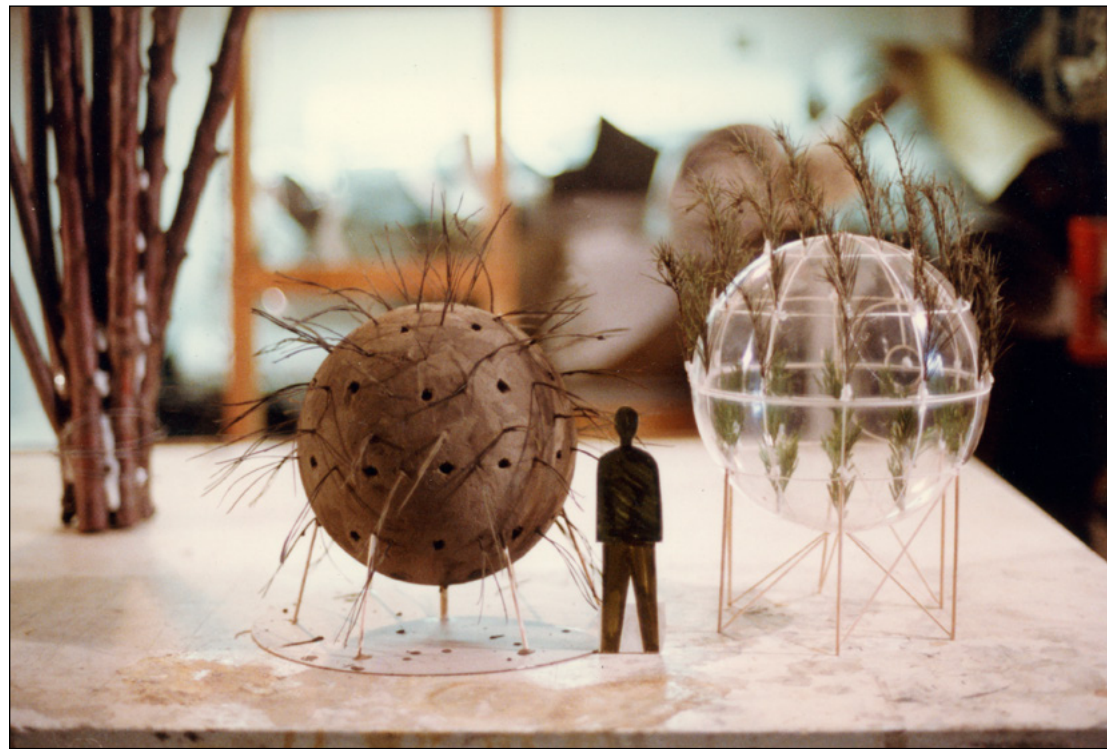


Fig. 189. Conceptual Models: Tyler Project: Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>, styrofoam, wood, plastic, refractory cement, 1992.



Fig. 191. Conceptual Models: Tyler Project: Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>, styrofoam, wood, glass, refractory cement, 1992.



Fig. 190. Conceptual Models: Tyler Project: Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>, styrofoam, wood, plastic, refractory cement, 1992.



Fig. 192. Tyler Project: Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>, models, blueprints, video, *From Plastic Form to Printer's Plate: 16 Contemporary Sculptor/Printmakers*, exhibition, 1995.





Fig. 193. Fabrication of *Greenhouse*, Tyler School of Art Sculpture shop, 8 ft.. dia., steel, wood.



Fig. 194. Fabrication of *Furnace*, sphere, 6 ft.. dia., steel, galvanized mesh.



Fig. 195. Installation on site of *Furnace*, pre-placement of refractory cement, sphere, 6 ft.. dia., steel, galvanized mesh, wood, pvc.





Fig. 196. Tyler Project: *Metabolism And Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, night firing/fossil fuel activation, left/background: Greenhouse, center/foreground: Furnace, right: beech tree remnant, Tyler School of Art, Elkins Park, PA, 1992.





Fig. 197. Furnace, video still, detail of burners, early in the firing.



Fig. 198. Furnace, video still, detail of refractory cement coated branches and flame ports, early in the firing.



Fig. 199. Greenhouse, video still, interior view of glass dish with burning oil with Furnace, mid-fire state, visible in the background.



Fig. 200. Greenhouse, video still, interior view of glass dish with burning oil.





Fig. 201. Greenhouse, sphere 8 ft.. dia., steel, rubber, glass, caulking, thermometers. Glass dish with burning oil replaced by interior and exterior thermometers after the firing.



Fig. 202. Greenhouse, interior detail, thermometers contrast interior and exterior temperatures, sphere 8 ft.. dia., steel, rubber, glass, caulking, thermometers.



Fig. 203. Furnace, post-firing state, sphere 6 ft.. dia., steel, refractory coated wooden branches, cast refractory cement.





Fig. 204. Tyler Project: *Metabolism And Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, post-firing / cooled, fused / solar activated state, left: *Greenhouse*, center: beech tree remnant, right: *Furnace*, Tyler School of Art, Elkins Park, PA, 1992.



## An Interview with John Roloff

NCECA NEWS / Vol 4, No. 13, 1990

by Anita Powell

Anita Powell, MFA Southern Illinois University - Carbondale, is a ceramic artist and, at the time of this writing, Assistant Professor of Art at Broward Community College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

AP: What are the most important ideas or concepts that you hope to instill in your students?

JR: An attitude, more than anything. I'm actually almost interested in non-technique; in other words, not how to build stuff but how to understand. I think it's because my interest is in the material, in terms of what it represents, not what it can do. I end up teaching them how to do stuff, but through all of that there is an attitude that develops. I guess the best way to do things is by example. To me, the whole concept of the way people understand ceramics is so channeled -- for instance, when you go into the glaze room all of the materials that are in there, the fine powders, only exist there because industry has a use for them. The structure of the university system doesn't have enough money or power or whatever to really actually do anything on that level. For instance, you couldn't just call somebody and say, "We need some feldspar, so would you please grind up twelve fifty-pound bags." And they say, "Yes, it'll be \$10,000 for the first bag." Basically, we're on the tail end of this whole other structure. And I think that is one of the things that tells us what to do. So, for example, I show my students slides of marble quarries, and we talk in terms of this being the source of calcium carbonate -- to make whiting. I encourage them to start thinking in another scale and to have an awareness of why things are done the way they are. I think in any medium there is a definition that goes along with it. When you say the word "sculpture," in everyone's mind this image comes into their head about what a sculpture is. And, whether it's good or bad, it is limiting. This image tells you it's okay to do "this," and then you have to learn that maybe it's okay to do something else as well. So, unfortunately, you start with the definition instead of openness and understanding of definitions so that you can place yourself within them. This way, the definition in the medium is at your service;

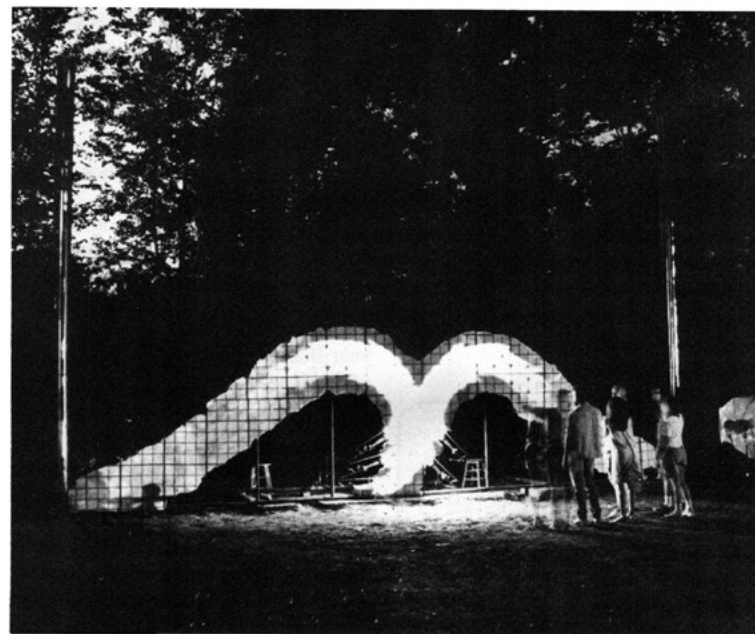
Page 2

you're not in the service of the medium. To focus primarily on the medium is to reinforce the wrong side of the thing.

AP: How can art affect social change? What direction do you feel is most effective to pursue if this were one's goal?

JR: You have to understand what you mean by social change and on what level that change happens. Because for me, the thing that I'm most interested in is psychology, in the sense of what my pieces are about, trying to understand that there's a connection that exists between the unconscious part of people and the way that nature works. And I think that too often the connection is made in a more literal way. I think that deeper change occurs when things happen on an emotive level because of that relationship between the unconscious and understanding where we are, where we live. I think that's more in the role of mythology, the way that myths might affect social change rather than newspapers, although newspapers can become a format of mythology.

AP: So media artists like Jenny Holtzer and Barbara Kruger are more closely connected to the newspaper approach as



John Roloff: *Untitled (Earth Orchid) (Night Firing)*—Refractory cement, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, natural gas. Hartford School of Art, University of Hartford, Hartford, Connecticut, 1988. Photo: Bob Calafiore

opposed to the emotive.

JR: I think that change occurs on different levels, and they are just working on different levels. I'm concerned with a more emotional relationship of things, and it's a viewpoint that has a different lineage than, say, Barbara Kruger's lineage. In other words, my stuff would come more from mythology through poetry, like Mallarme and the symbolist poets like Rilke through people who deal with that part. It is like saying the unsayable where they're saying the sayable, in a sense. So it's just a different strata that I'm more interested in and in tune with. Although the show at the Dia Foundation of Jenny Holtzer's really hit both levels; it was a very strong show. I really appreciate and like their work.

AP: From some of the things you talked about earlier, it seems that you are concerned with what words do and don't represent simultaneously.

JR: Words can become definitions. I'm interested in the liberation of people through the understanding of those defini-

Continued on p. 3

## Interview with John Roloff

Continued from p.2

tions. It's like when you say the word "installation" and these people start saying, "Oh, I'm an installation artist." It becomes this word, and the word becomes generic and then you find out you're trying to satisfy a generic quality rather than some deeper quality. It's a continuing problem. I think that much of the ceramic world has that problem.

AP: More so than in other areas?

JR: I think the artists that people ought to look at are the Arte Povera artists, in that it's not just one material, it's a sensibility that allows stuff to happen. Guiseppe Penone and Mario Merz have all done ceramics, it's part of an idea cycle. For instance, Jannis Kounellis just did a big project that had the whole center of a room filled with these beautiful big old urns, and around the sides are some steel plate pieces that he does. It's an encompassing idea rather than a specific thing. How can anyone see that and say, "I don't like throwing"? It would be absurd, because those are beautiful things, but the context is where the idea is. It gives it a kind of recognition as a pot; it provides the potness with a context that it didn't have before. You see it in a different way or understand it in a new way, maybe as a pot rather than in such a tight circle. I think of most ceramic objects as having skins. The skin of the object, all the decoration, all the stuff that's on the outside, holds the interior inside of it. It is what it is on the shelf or the mantle or wherever, but it has no contextual relationship at all. It is just all developed within its own self, and that's fine if that's your intention. But I think that things become problematic when there is no concept of intention, when there's not a wide enough spectrum of what an object is in the world or how it operates

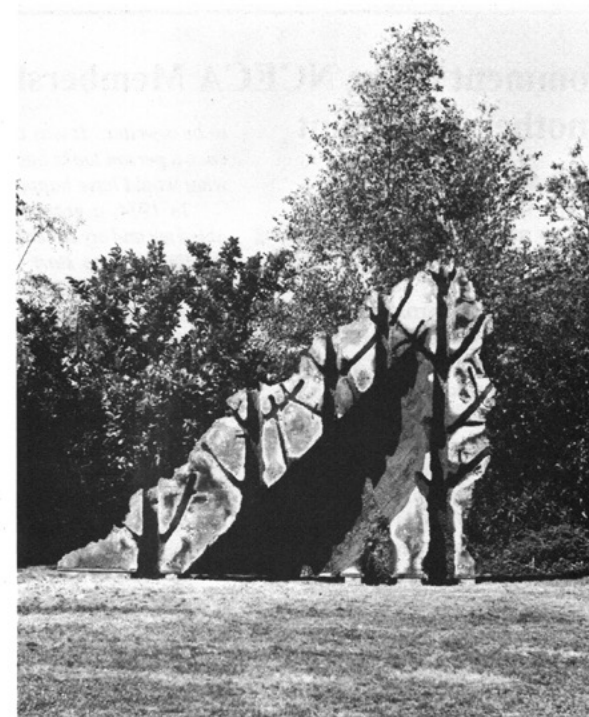
Continued on page 4

## Roloff Interview

(continued from page 3)

as an object. And again that's fine, but it's just one kind of approach -- one that I have difficulty understanding. I have absolutely nothing against tradition -- all I'm interested in is that what people do is in the service of the person rather than the

person being in the service of this other thing. I'm interested in the idea of the artist as an explorer. And there are all kinds of artists. I'm not saying that I think anyone should be any of those things.



John Roloff: *Humboldt Ship*. Refractory cement, steel. Humboldt State University, Arcata, California, 1987. Photo: J. Roloff.

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LAND KILNS III  
CONCEPTS/PROPOSALS

*Fig. 206.* Lava splatter feature, Kilauea Crater, Hawaii, research trip 1980.



John Roloff

Sept. 10, 1982

Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid is the fifth in a series of experimental kiln projects done since 1979. These projects attempt to present the kiln, an instrument of change, as having its own quality as an associative object or force, as well as an investigative tool for exploring various metaphorical and physical aspects of the process of change and products generated by that process.

The kilns are constructed as specific images out of high temperature insulating blanket made of clay fibers suspended inside a metal armature. Heat is produced from propane powered burners that generate temperatures of over 2000°F. The firings occur at night where the kiln can become a glowing effigy as light from the heat inside is transmitted through its surface.

Most of the kilns are bottomless, beneath which a surface is often prepared with glaze materials that melt to form other imagery of fused materials revealed when the kiln is removed either at the peak of the firing to show the molten state or upon cooling to show a solid and glass-like state. This image is related to the kiln itself by form alone but also through the materials being subjected to the dynamics of heat movement and intensity causing chance mutations, flows and blendings. In other cases the kiln bottom is sealed so that the glowing image, 'a mold of heat,' is the result. In Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid a central 'throat' or opening in the bottom of the fused Orchid serves as part of the image as well as part of a draft system for the burners connected under ground to a remote metal flue.

The kilns are designed partially from a knowledge of principals about heat flow, and partially from conceptual ideas, ~~but~~ <sup>AND PARTIALLY</sup> ~~part of design is~~ from a intuitive point of view, forms and images that are attractive because they feel ~~or look right~~. The kiln's operation and results are only partially predictable and are allowed a 'mind of their own'. When successful a firing can approach an irrational point, the verge of losing control, a metaphore is suggested of the unconscious in a primitive or vulnerable state where time becomes emotion, chemistry spirit, and matter theater.

CONCEPTUAL OR DRAMATIC.  
~~NARRATIVE OR DRAMATIC~~

THE IMAGES ~~OF~~ <sup>FOR</sup> ~~THE MOUNTAIN/BLACK ORCHID~~ <sup>WERE SUGGESTED</sup>  
BY THE ~~NOTION~~ <sup>OF</sup> A GIANT'S FLOWER IN THE JUNGLES  
OF SUMATRA KNOWN AS ARNOLD'S RAFFLESIA; A PARASITIC, FLESHY  
AND ODOROUS ORGANISM. THAT IT SHOULD BECOME A MORE ELEGANT, LARGER  
FLOWER MADE OF LAVA LIKE MATERIALS PRODUCED BY THE HEAT  
OF A MOUNTAIN TOP OF IT SEEMED NATURAL AND EVOCATIVE.

KNOWLEDGE OF

AS IN THE CASE OF MK/50 WORK CERTAIN GIANT FLOWERS  
IN THE JUNGLES OF SUMATRA SUGGESTED A DIALOGUE OF IMAGES  
AND MATERIALS AND METHODS.

LITERARY,

The section, *Land Kilns III - Concepts/Proposals*, is comprised of selected documents, notebook pages and drawings of studies, concepts and proposals for theoretical and actual kiln projects. The first section of writings, sketches and notations, show a range of conceptual thinking about kilns as well as the larger context and role the kiln and related process works play in the development of the oeuvre from the late 1970's to early 1990's. Studies relating to landscape sites such as the ideas sketched for a cliff near Alfred, NY, 1982, lead to more specific proposals and projects for numerous sites such as: Djerassi Foundation, San Francisco Bay, Falkirk, Candlestick Park and the Chicago Navy Pier. Documents and drawings similar to these are included with realized projects in the sections: *Land Kilns I* and *Land Kilns II*. Other proposals and studies of this section emphasize metabolic and historical concepts such as *Study: Orchid Eclipse (Spherical Furnace with Slowly Closing Refractory Petals)*, 1990, and *Study mit Max Taut: Wissinger Tomb Furnace (Underground)/Orchard*, 1990. Following these and related works are a set of documents, research and studies for *Wrangellia I* and *II*, 1999, proposals for the University of Washington campus and/or related sites in Seattle and northwestern Washington. *Wrangellia I* and *II* are exemplary of many recent projects that have utilized expansive geologic and site research for development of concepts and imagery. This in-depth site research approach began in earnest with *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder, Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, both 1980, and *Lahontan Group I-III*, 1985-87, projects shown in the *Land Kiln I* section of this document.

Fig. 207. Draft and notes, *Kiln Projects*, Artery Magazine, February/March, 1983, pg. 6, type and pencil on paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1992.



"creation myth" / explanation of a particular place (such as Death Valley) - some place I have a sense for (Mono Lake) or that epitomizes my concerns. The geologic history of a place is only an explanation based on empirical data many other explanations possible from other ways of viewing - intuitive etc. (a particular lava flow, a long narrow valley (ships shape))

The storm (what's happening in the atmosphere) right in the piece.

working with shades of grey - black - white (Steichen) tinting overall with light dye (trans) as red so values are still there.

- a very slow cooling object/situation  
a mass (ships?) heated to a high temp  
packed in dense insulation cooling for years ... crystals in the glaze like granite slow cooling - large crystals.  
set up a situation for this like a lens capsule (buried deep in the earth?)

Kiln from a diatomic material which gives off heat. ~~made~~ (check out Uranium Oxide)

24.

Fig. 208. Notebook 2 pg. 24, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.

dearing  
Black orchid / the volcano  
insides

~~From~~

This book represents a documentation of projects completed using the ~~idea~~ that investigates <sup>the structure</sup> ~~stable~~ possibilities of a kiln as an evocative image in its own right and furthering the relationships of materials, processes and situations involving <sup>to</sup> higher temperatures (above 1000 <sup>-3000</sup> F) ranges. The ~~kiln project~~ ~~isn't~~ ~~plant~~ ~~transparent~~ qualities kiln isn't a form or mold for heat, is a tool to ~~the~~ material and is potentially evocative of ~~transparency~~ ~~representations~~ of ~~forms~~ of ~~interrelationships~~ of process and images. The firing is a gloss at night to achieve a highlight and ~~isn't~~ as the material used for their construction ~~is~~ emits the visible ~~and~~ energy of the ~~from~~ heat inside as well as at the same time insulating the thermal aspects and allowing the temperature to rise. The heat is a transparent element both in firing as well as ~~visually~~ ~~with~~ ~~the~~ and as an evocative element for the kiln itself. (mosaic) ~~is~~

but is a transparency

Fig. 209. First page of kiln book study, pen on paper, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1985.



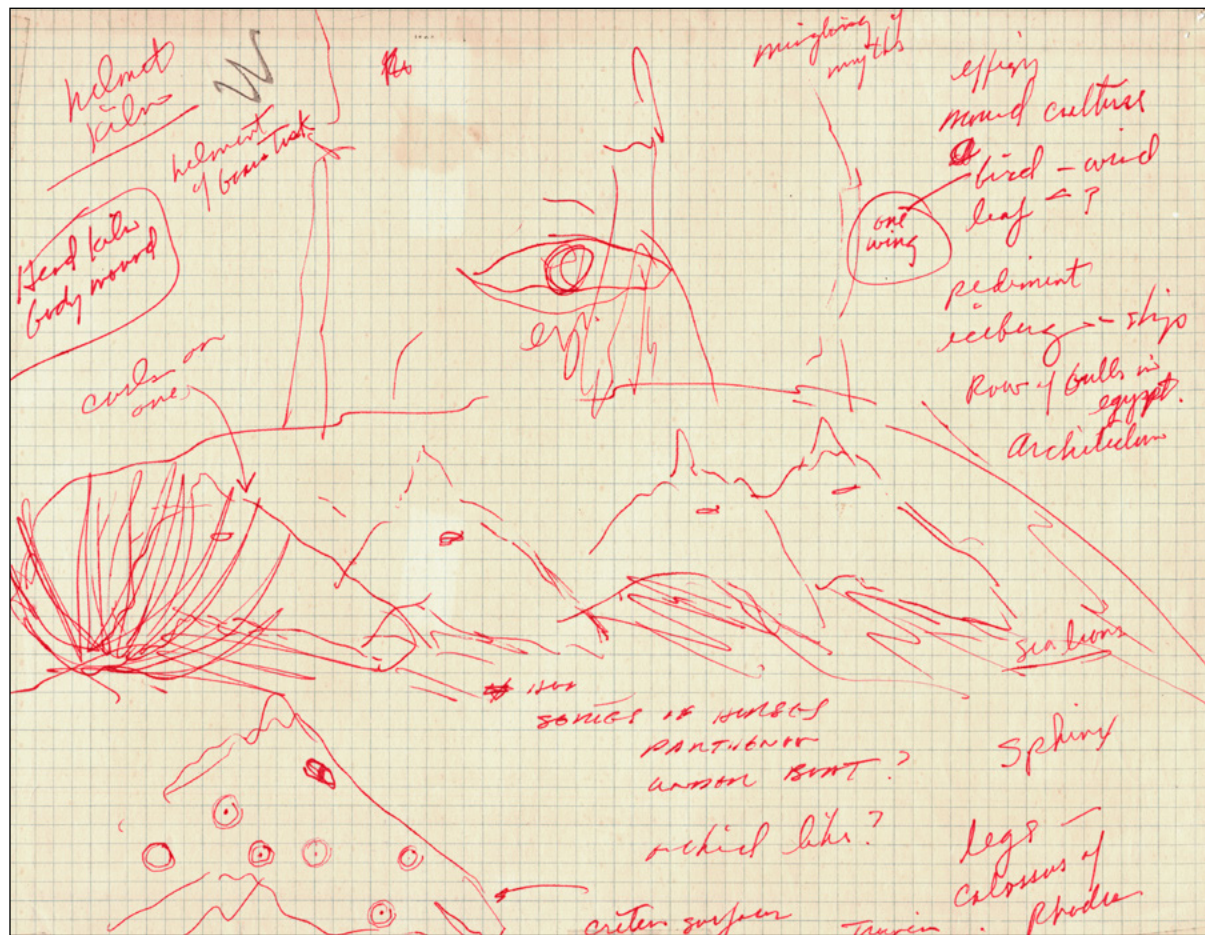


Fig. 210. Loose notebook page, pen on graph paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1980.

These pieces represent a kind of poetry  
for me

The helms are about the life of an  
object in its primal unformed state where  
its <sup>very</sup> nature is its form, material is implied  
and directed, conjoined by the form of the  
mold of heat. The actual space where things  
occur charged with potential (kinetic, potential)  
the object  $\frac{1}{2}$  question  $\frac{1}{2}$  answer.  
rather of question to answer:

Fig. 211. Loose notebook page (fragment), pen on lined paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1980.



"built to burn"  
 consumes itself - where  
 residue of firing remains in the pipe

actual fire ship similar  
 to one in book - maybe take  
 a rowboat and build passage  
 in it for incendiary materials (maybe?)  
 also make out of bricks like kiln  
 made in Indiana (Water Dome)

"skilled application of engineering and  
 chemistry to make sure that the ship rapidly  
 took fire and continued blazing with fierce  
 intensity."

old decrepit ship reworked.  
 ventilation ports under chimneys  
 seized parts  
 stripped of all value.  
 camouflaged to look real / just  
 another ship fake cannons etc.  
 boating the decks with pitch & oil  
 grappling apparatus to hook onto  
 other ships (humans?)  
 creating a draft / design for max effect inferno  
 maybe ship could be used to fire something  
 troughs of gunpowder etc.  
 rudder wedged  
 another vessel that joins ship would  
 engage - potential battle

Fig. 212. Notebook 2 pg. 67, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.

(hard hit)  
 would be like  
 a dive with  
 lines (gus) and  
 air to keep buoyancy  
 lower this  
 piece down & deep well  
 while it maps temp  
 white dwarf " probe star  
 star  
 sphere 2-3 ft  
 in dia made  
 of 3000+° fiber  
 blanket  
 about 2" thick  
 PROPOSE SURVEY  
 heats interior  
 to white heat  
 maybe sphere spun  
 on stem the rolling  
 around.  
 still the residue of the experience / or real  
 progress from the ceramic object.  
 could be enclosed in a kamour room  
 with mica/quartz windows  
 suspend  
 kiln  
 with kilns dig a pit in shape  
 of kiln / fire bottom / raise kiln /  
 move material on top / refill / repeat  
 process until surface continues building  
 up to form a block / layers  
 deep focus earthquakes usually  
 cause tidal waves  
 activity hundreds of miles  
 beneath the surface.  
 contained  
 so as to  
 roll down  
 a ball like  
 a earth bomb  
 meter

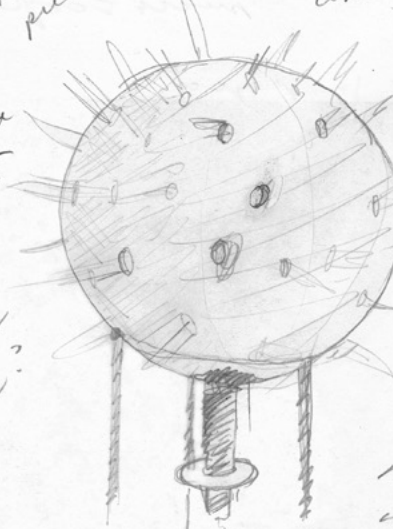


Fig. 213. Notebook 2, pg. 83, pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.



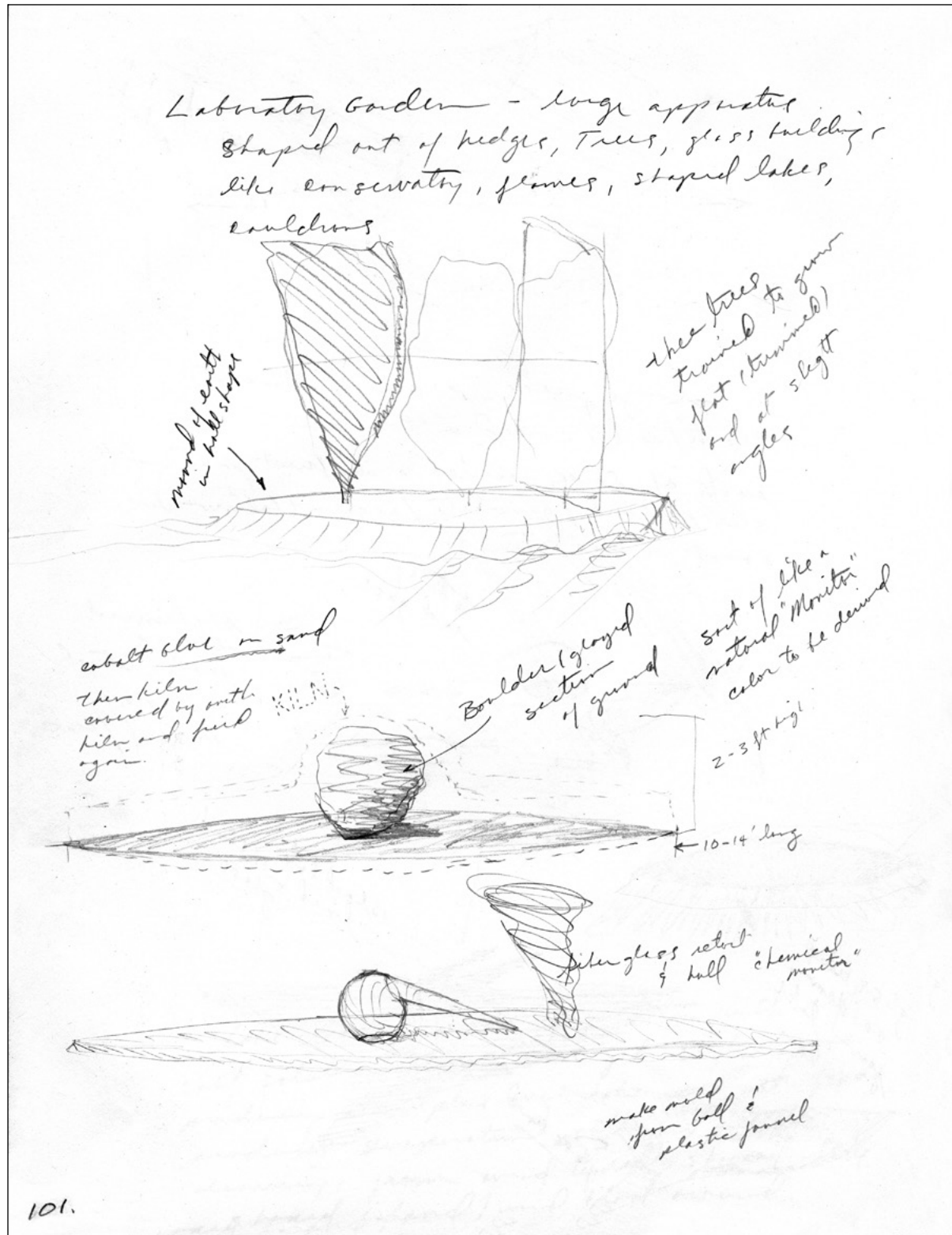


Fig. 214. Notebook 2, pg. 101 (111), pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.

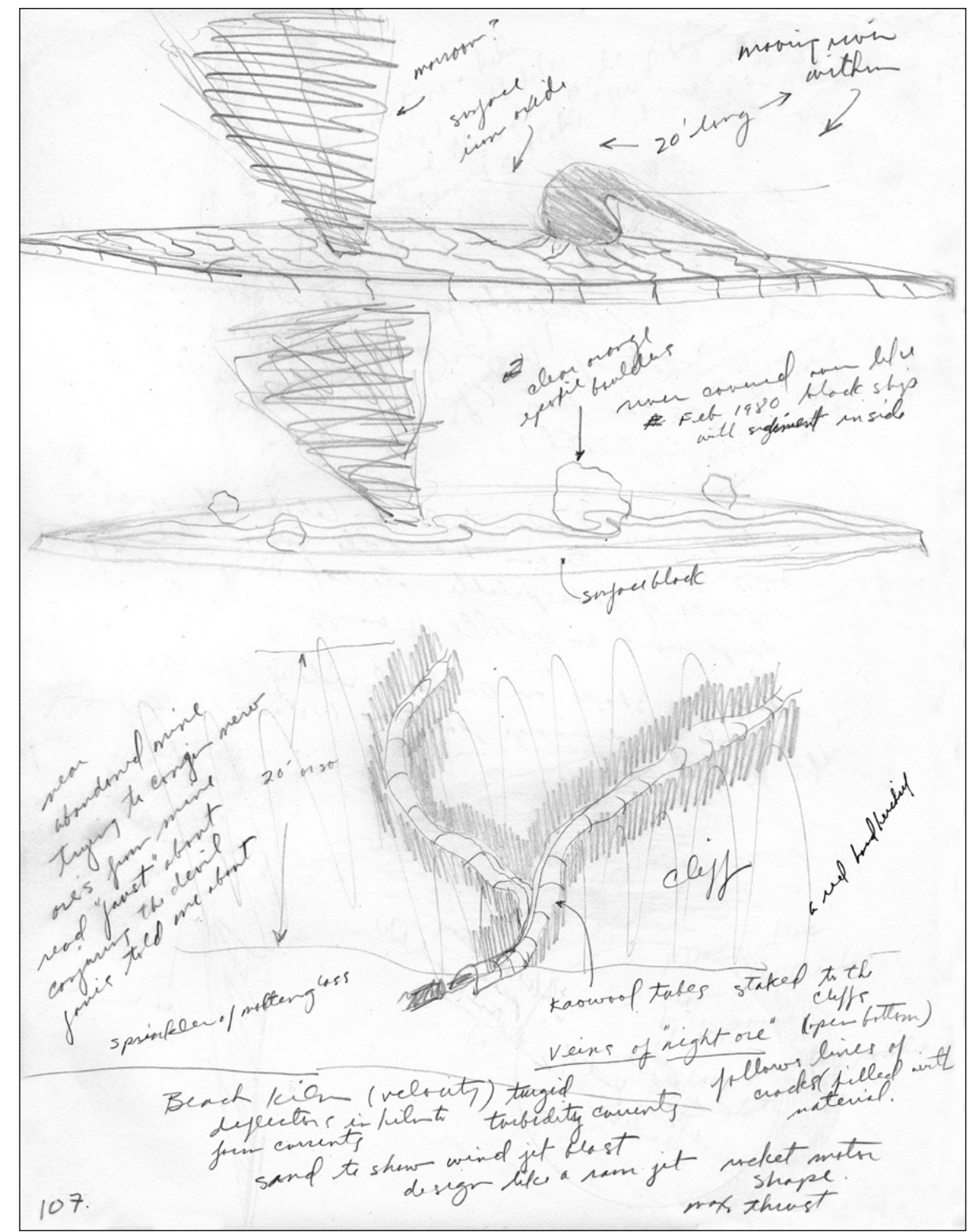


Fig. 215. Notebook 2, pg. 107 (117), pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.



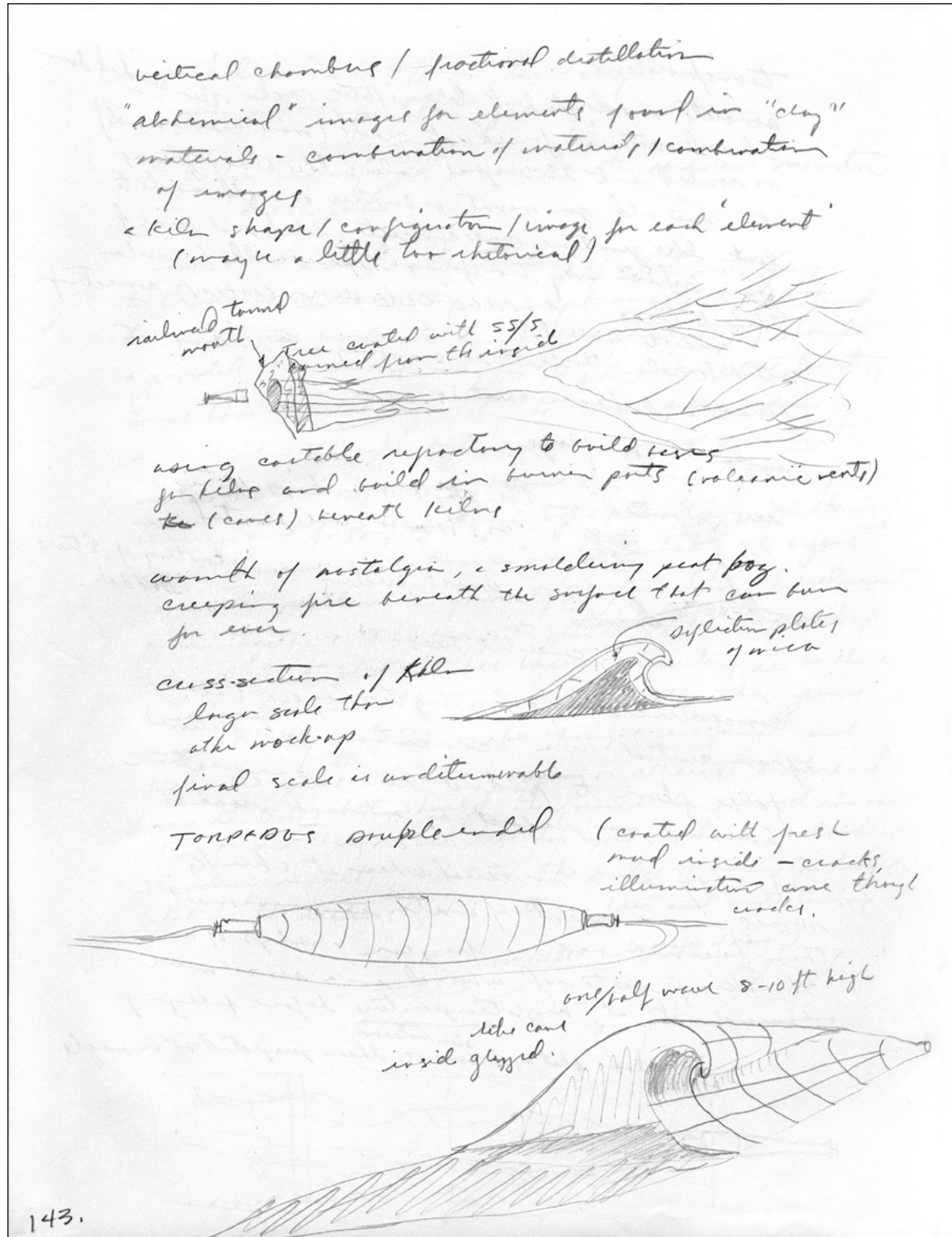


Fig. 216. Notebook 2, pg. 143 (153), pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.

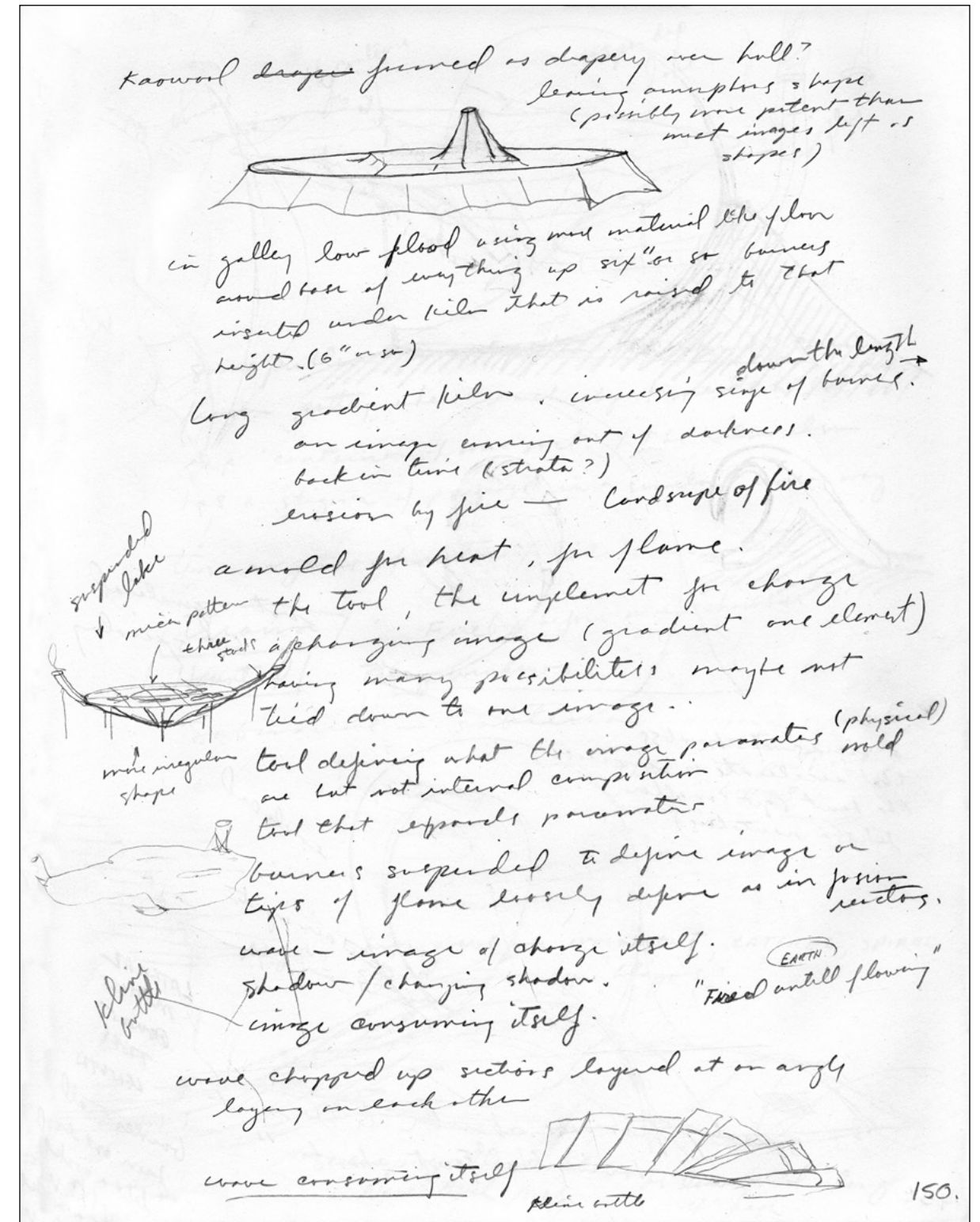


Fig. 217. Notebook 2, pg. 150 (160), pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.



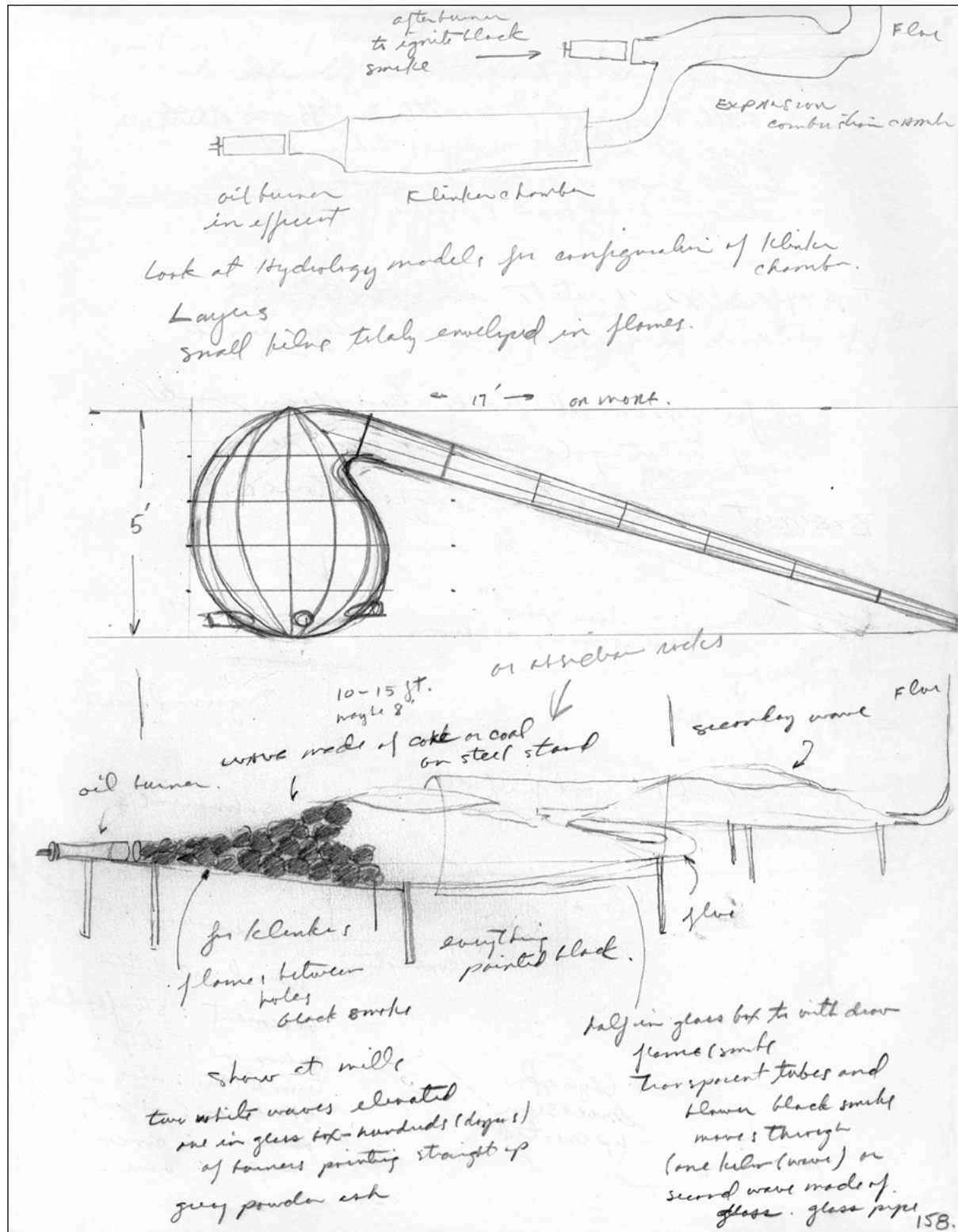


Fig. 218. Notebook 2, pg. 158 (168), pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.

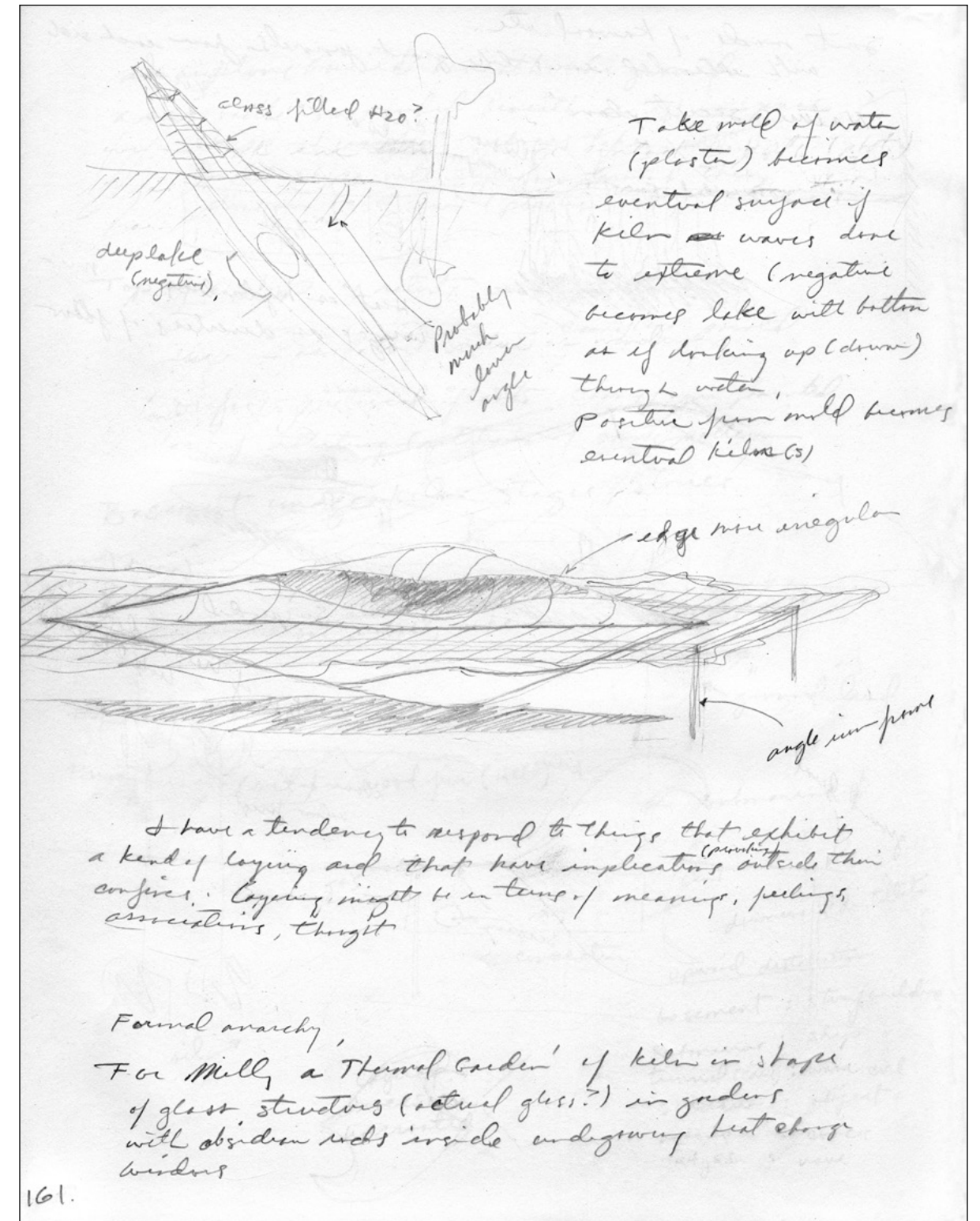


Fig. 219. Notebook 2, pg. 161 (171), pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.



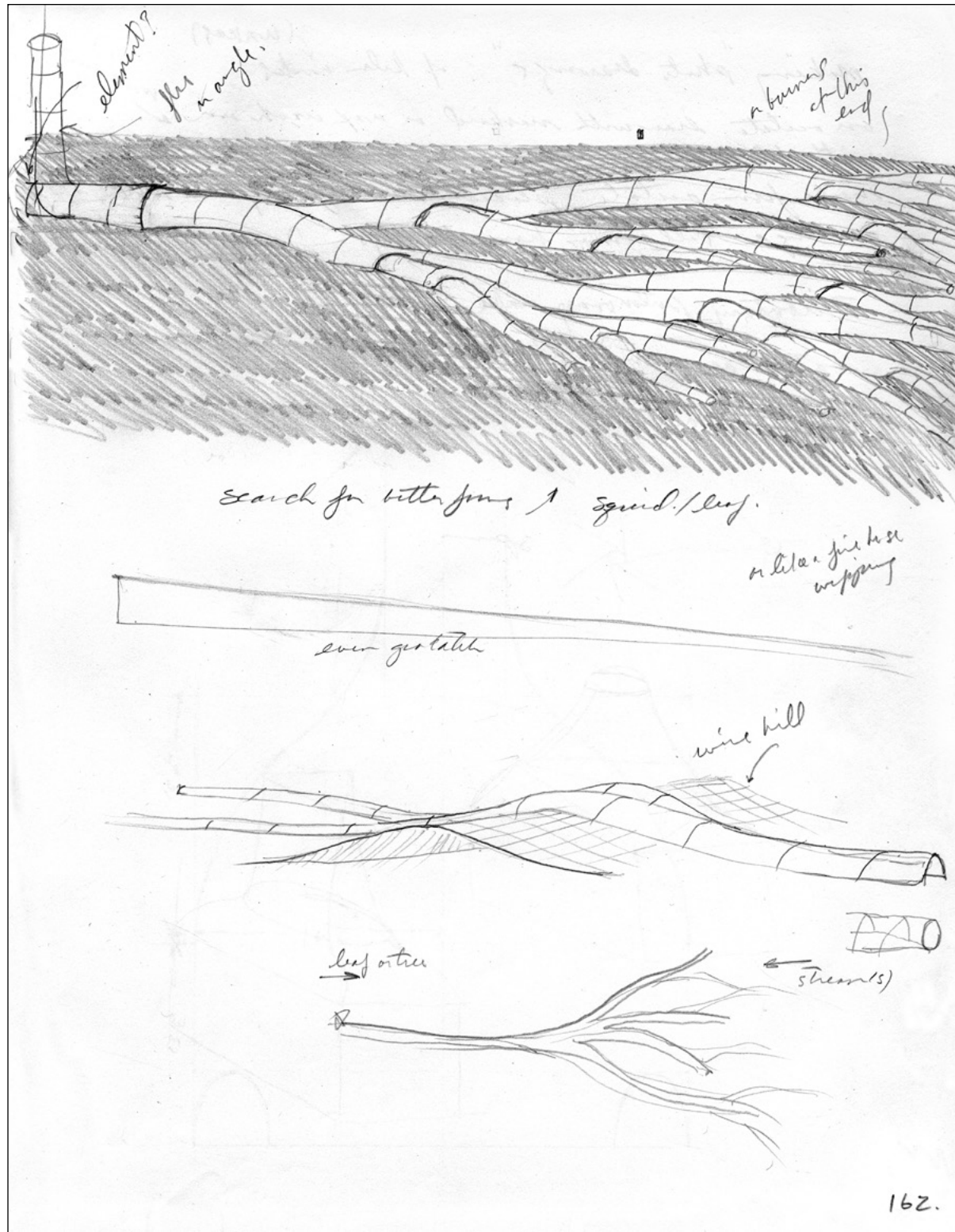


Fig. 220. Notebook 2 pg. 162 (172), pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.

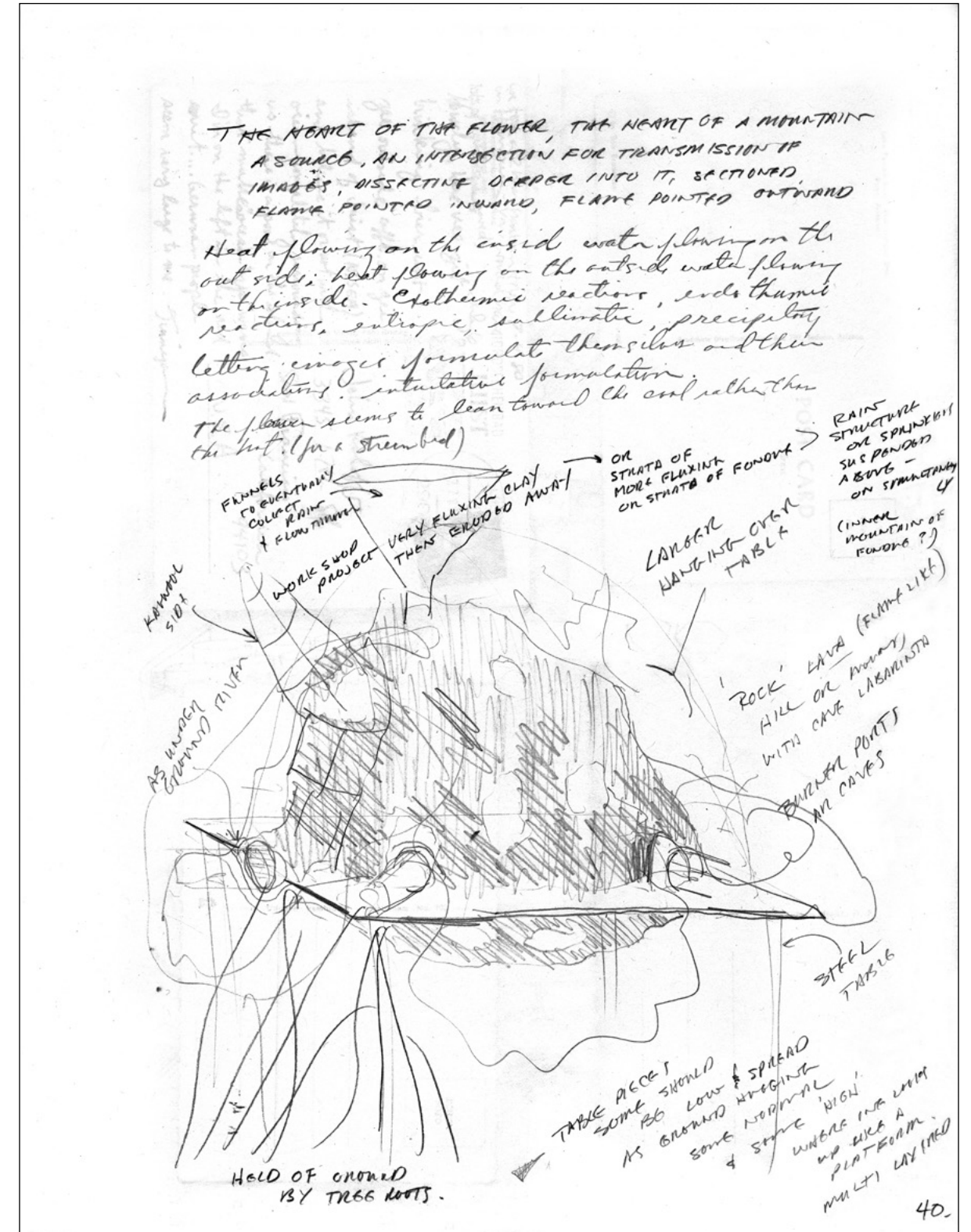


Fig. 221. Notebook 3, pg. 40 (32), pencil on paper, 10 5/8 in. x 13 5/8 in., circa 1980.





Fig. 222. Potential kiln sites, Alfred, NY, Devonian shale formation and related terrain, site visits conducted with Alfred University Ceramics Faculty, black and white proof sheet, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1982. Sediment from these cliffs was used to produce the work, *Devonian Shale: Aquifer I*, 2000, as a visiting artist at Alfred, invited by faculty, Walter McConnell and is in the collection of the Alfred University Schein-Joseph International Museum of Ceramic Art, Center for Ceramic Education.

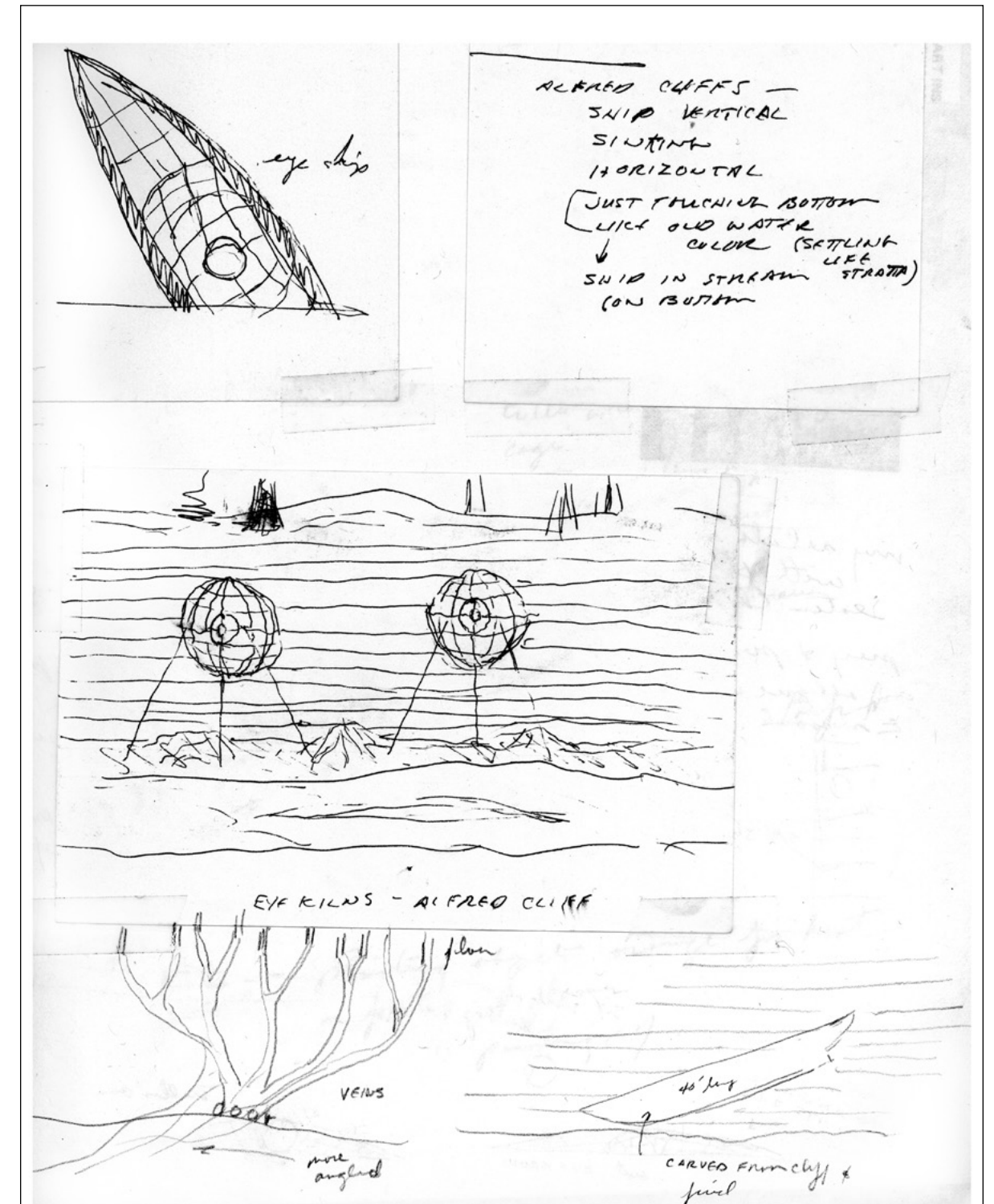


Fig. 223. Lose notebook page, pencil on paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., studies for possible kiln projects, Alfred, NY, circa 1982.



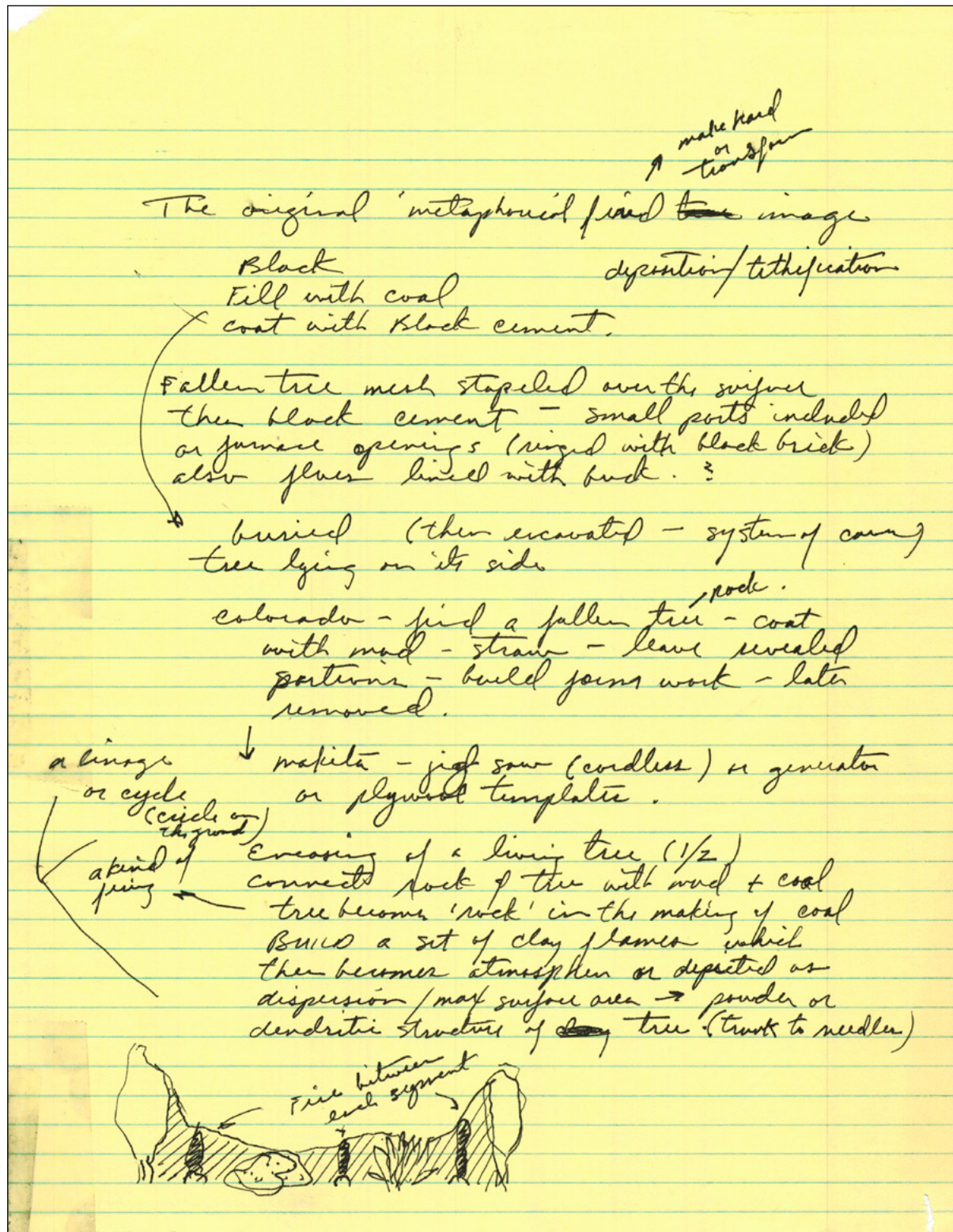


Fig. 224. Loose notebook page, pen on lined paper, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1987.

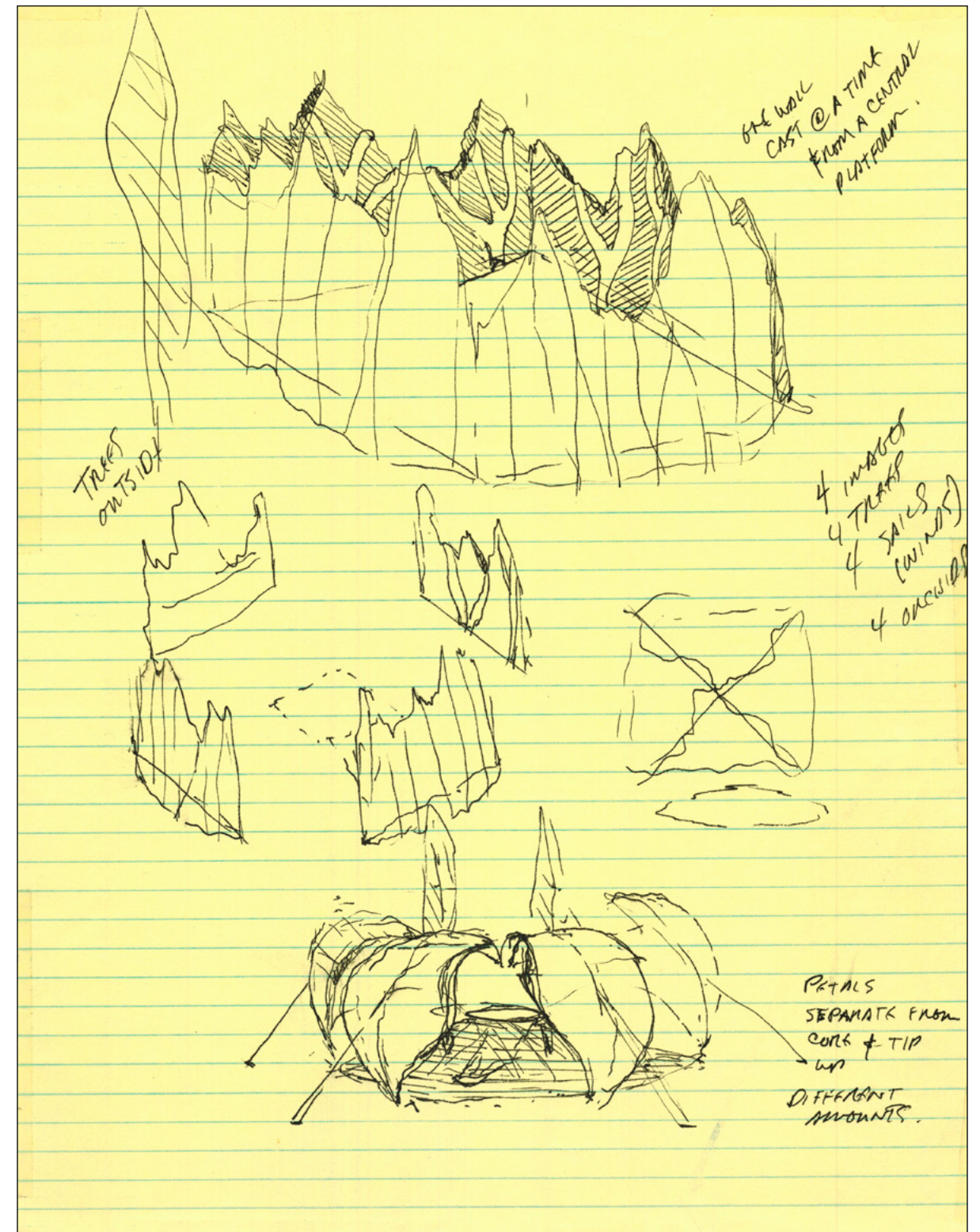


Fig. 225. Loose notebook page, pen on lined paper, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1987.





Fig. 226. Loose notebook page, pen on lined paper, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1987.

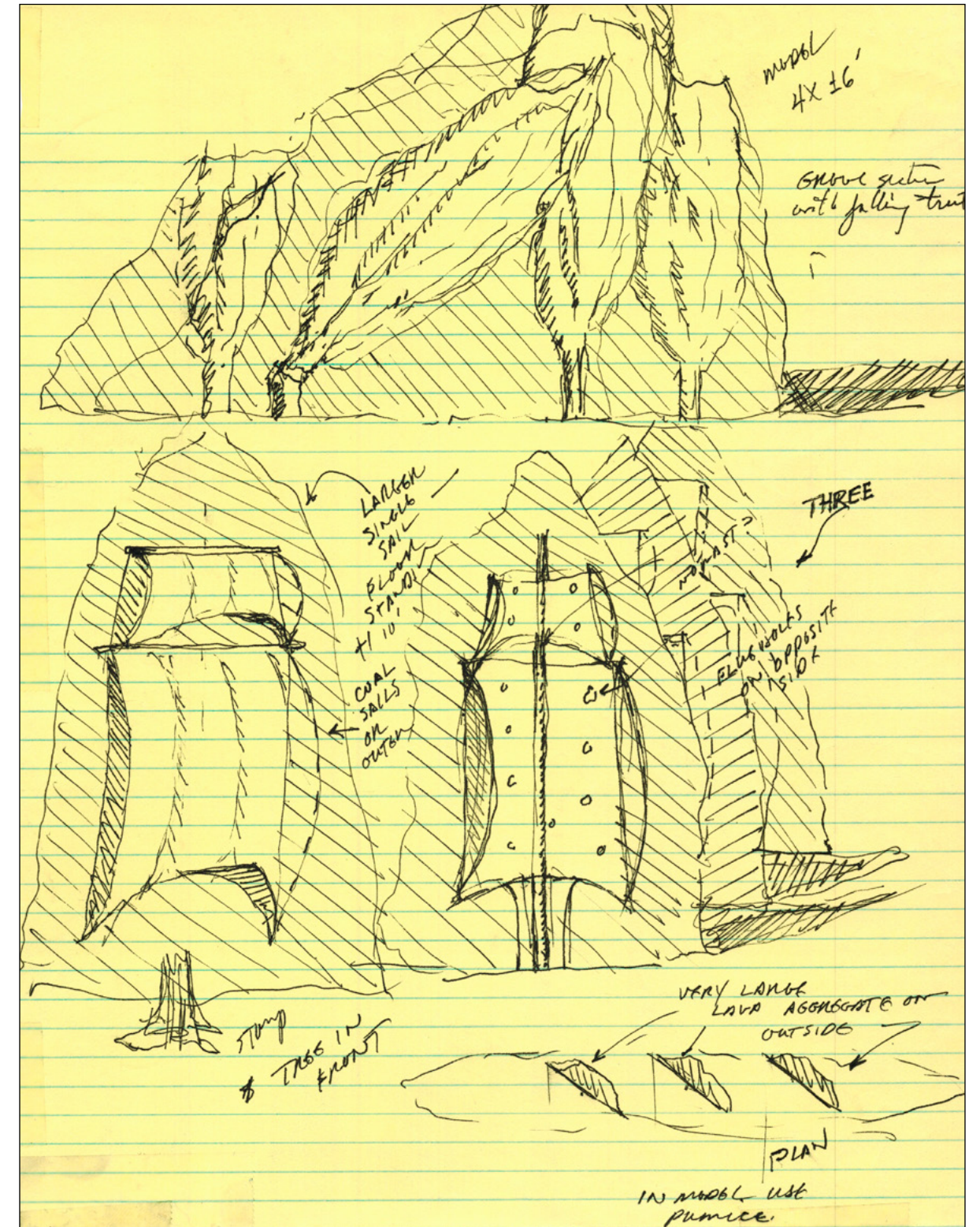


Fig. 227. Loose notebook page, pen on lined paper, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1987.



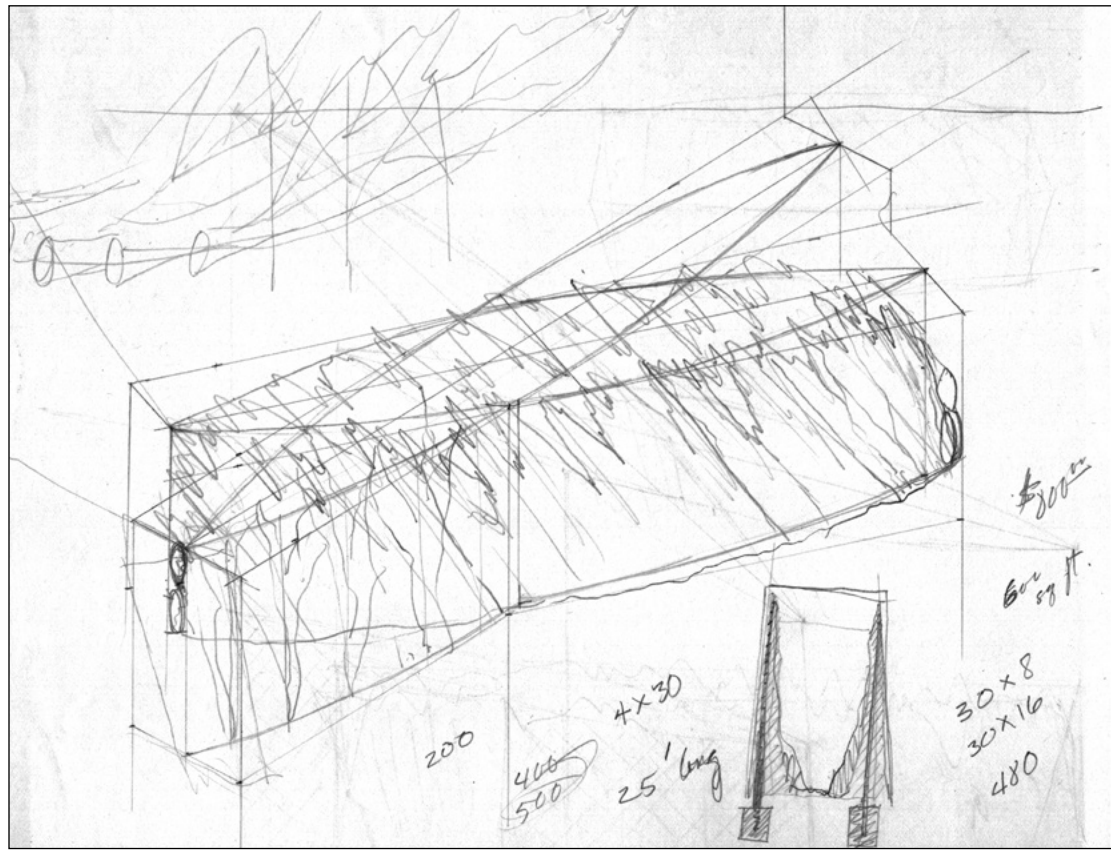


Fig. 228. Conceptual sketch for Falkirk project, 8 1/2 in x 11 in., pencil on paper, circa 1983.

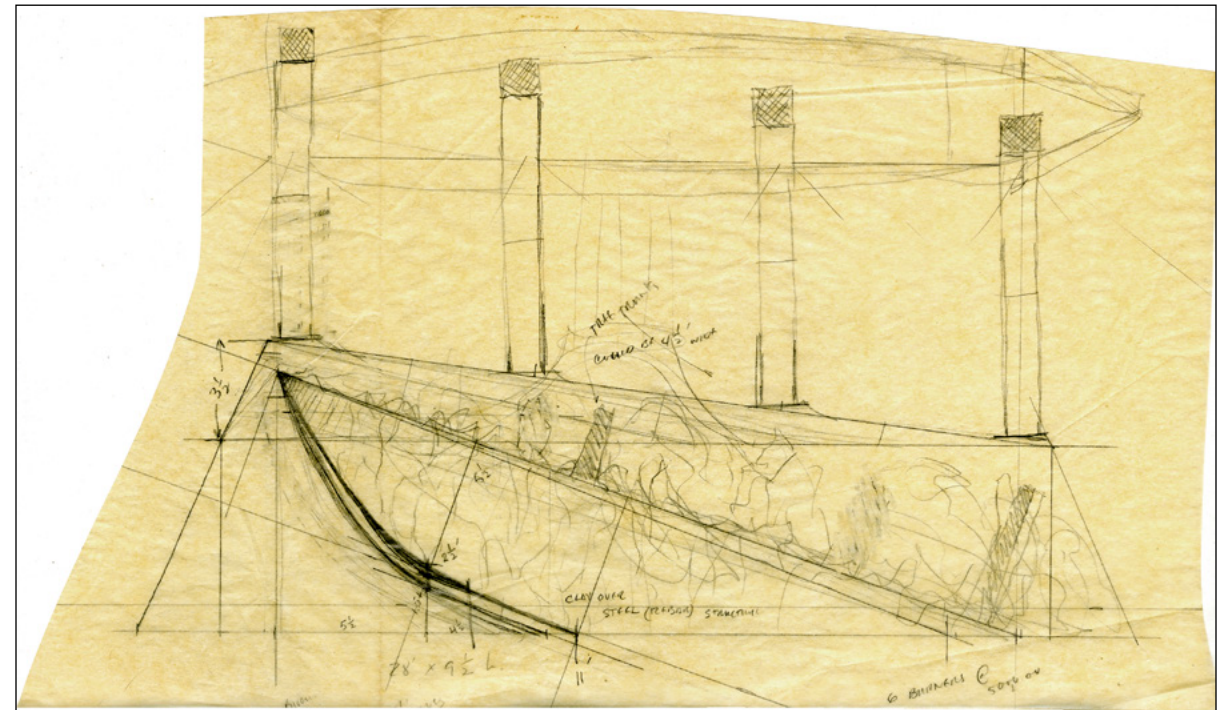


Fig. 230. Kiln study for sinking ship, pencil on drafting tissue, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1987.

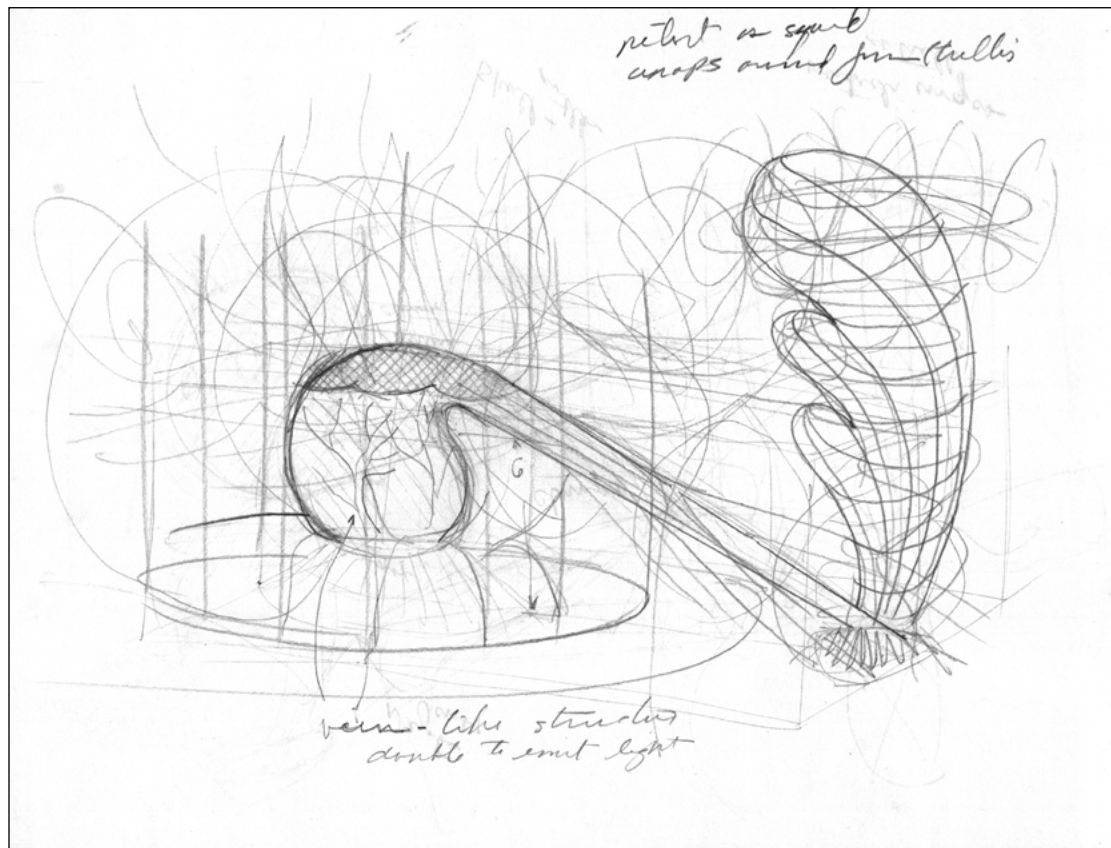


Fig. 229. Conceptual sketch for Falkirk project, 8 1/2 in x 11 in., pencil on paper, circa 1983.

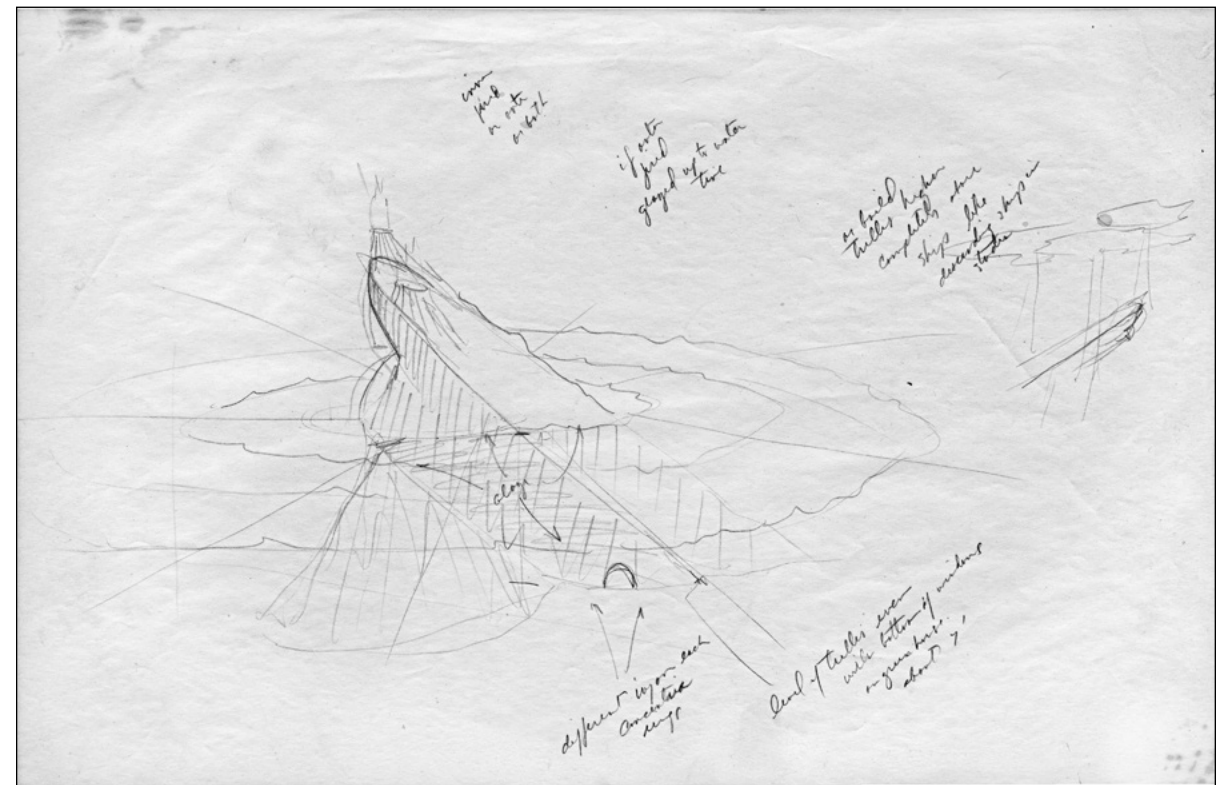


Fig. 231. Loose notebook page, pen on lined paper, 11 in. x 8 1/2 in., circa 1987.



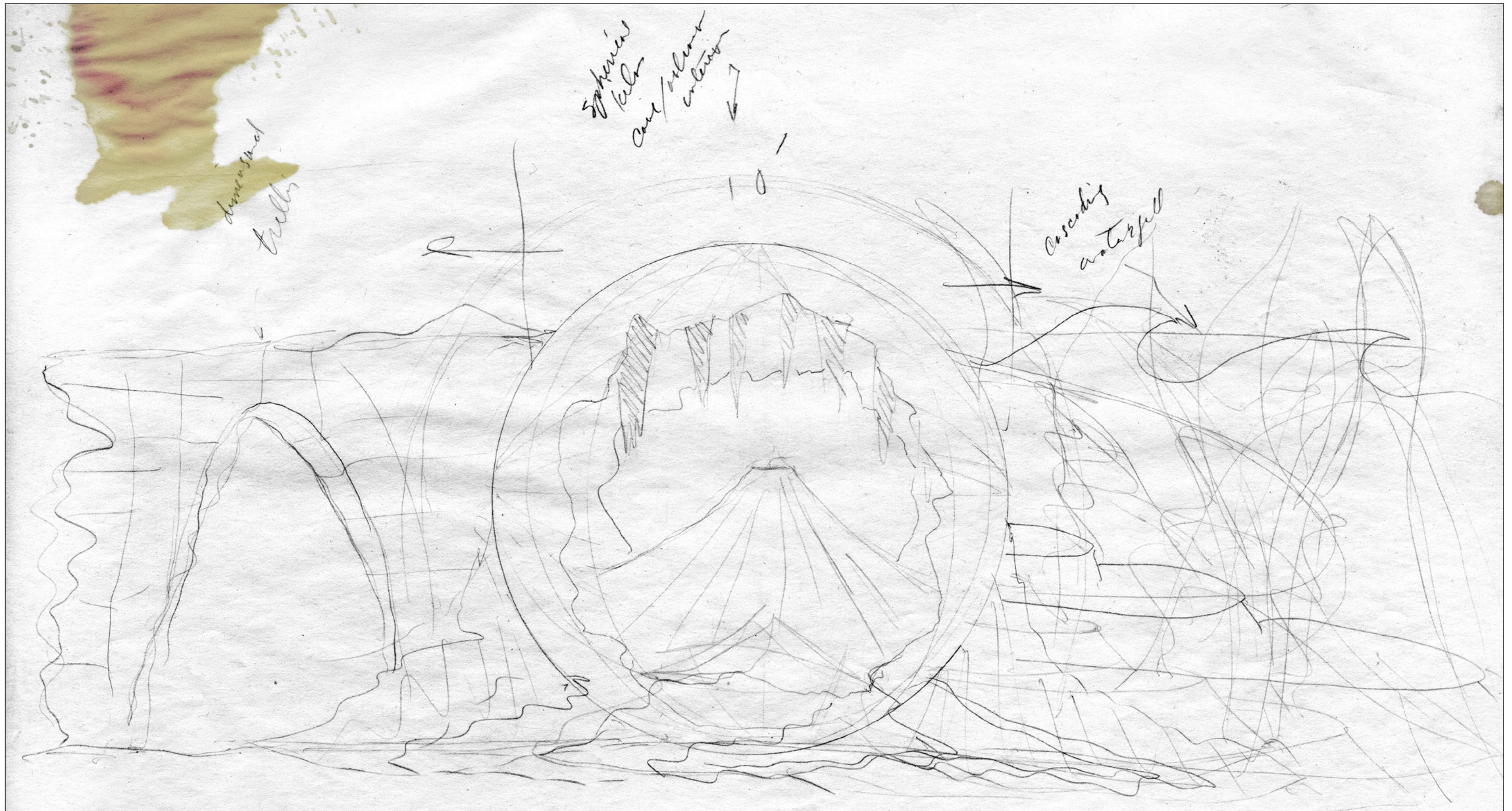


Fig. 232. Study: Trellis/Volcano Kiln/Waterfall, study for large scale work based on landscape illustration from geography books, pencil and stain on vellum, 12 in. x 18 in., circa 1984.





Fig. 233. Tributary Kiln/Vein of Fire/River of Glass (view of proposed hillside firing), pencil and pastel on paper, 36 in. x 72 in., 1981-86, private collection.



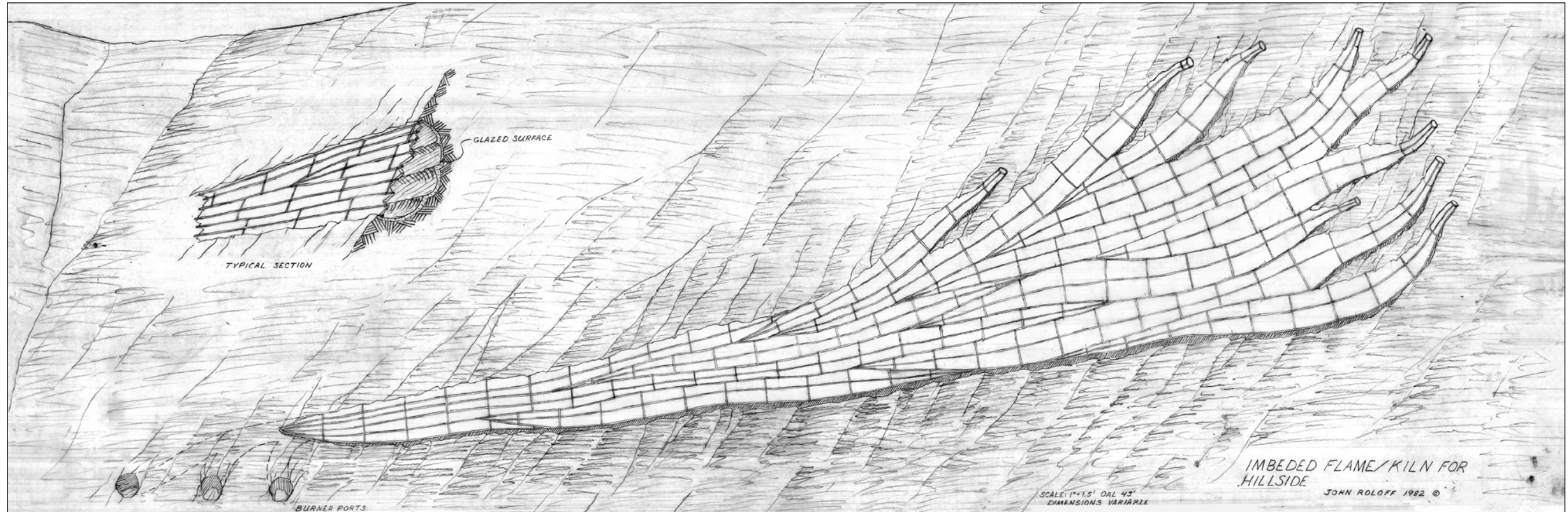


Fig. 234. Imbedded Flame/Kiln for Hillside, concept for Alfred, NY, pencil on vellum, 12 in. x 30 in., 1982

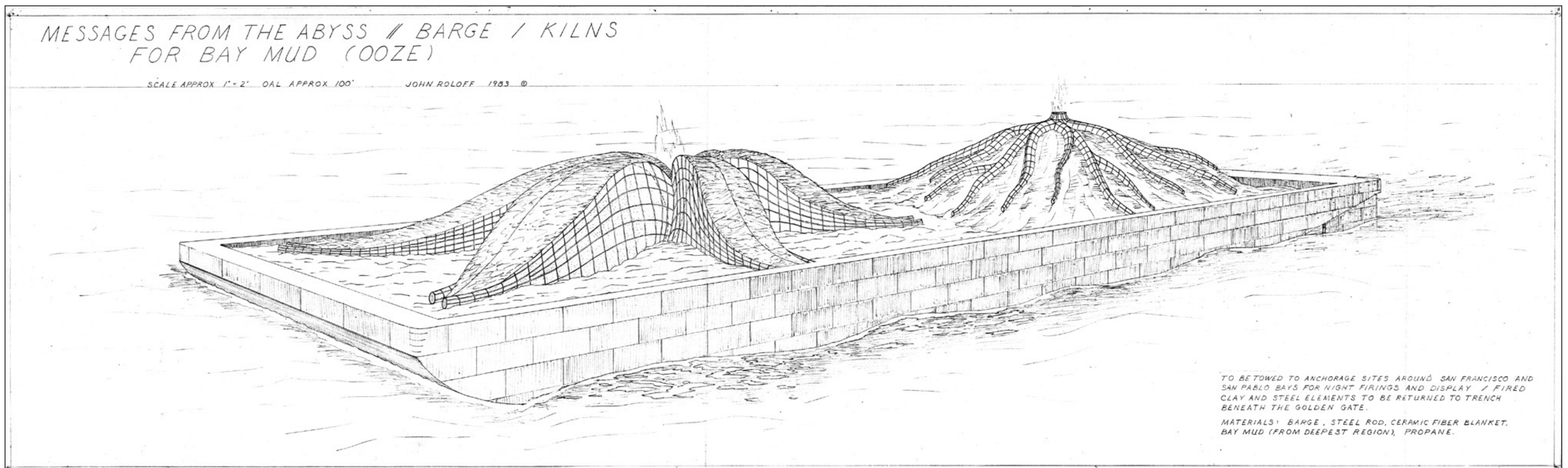


Fig. 235. Messages from the Abyss//Barge/Kilns for Bay Mud (Ooze), pencil on vellum, 24 in x 48 in., 1983.



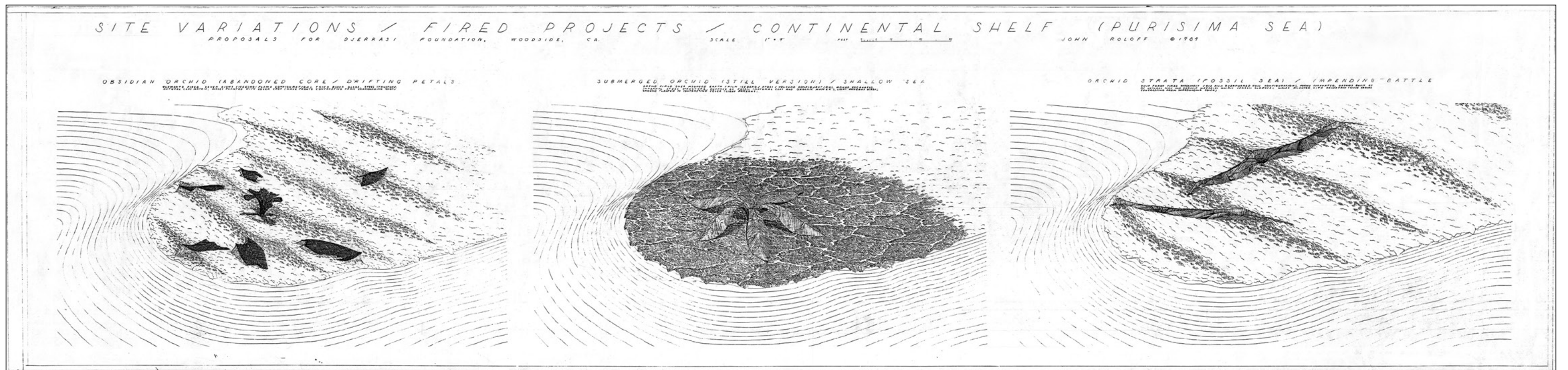


Fig. 236. Site Variations/Continental Shelf/Fired Projects (Purisima Sea), conceptual studies for kiln projects, Djerassi Foundation, Woodside, CA, pencil on vellum, 30 in. x 128 in., 1984.

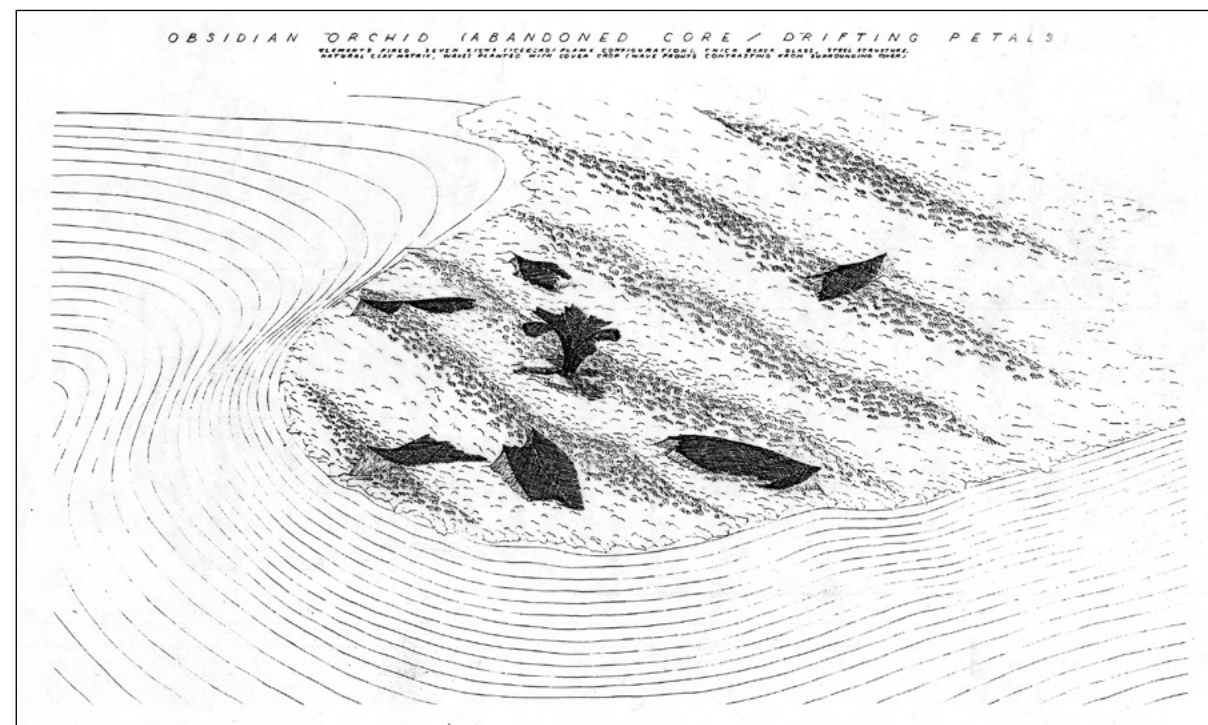


Fig. 237. Obsidian Orchid (Abandoned Core/Drifting Petals), detail: Site Variations/Continental Shelf/Fired Projects (Purisima Sea), conceptual studies for kiln projects, Djerassi Foundation, Woodside, CA, pencil on vellum, 30 in. x 128 in., 1984.

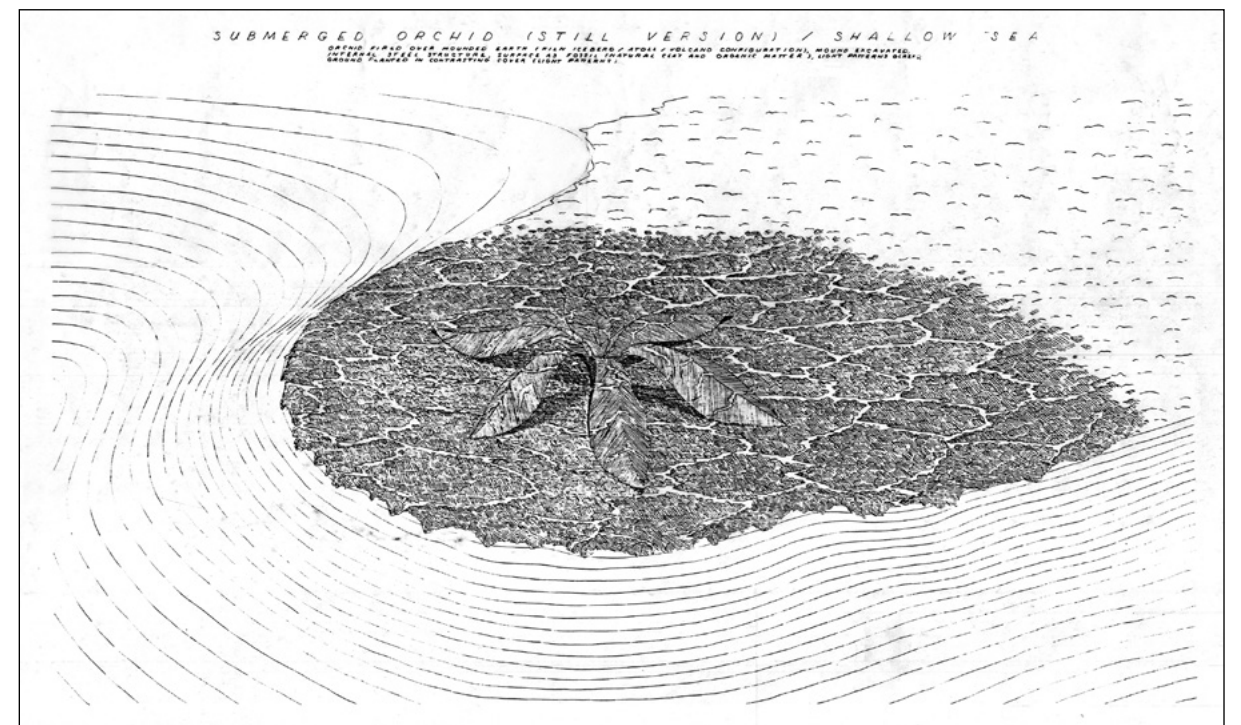


Fig. 238. Submerged Orchid (Still Version)/Shallow Sea, detail: Site Variations/Continental Shelf/Fired Projects (Purisima Sea), conceptual studies for kiln projects, Djerassi Foundation, Woodside, CA, pencil on vellum, 30 in. x 128 in., 1984.



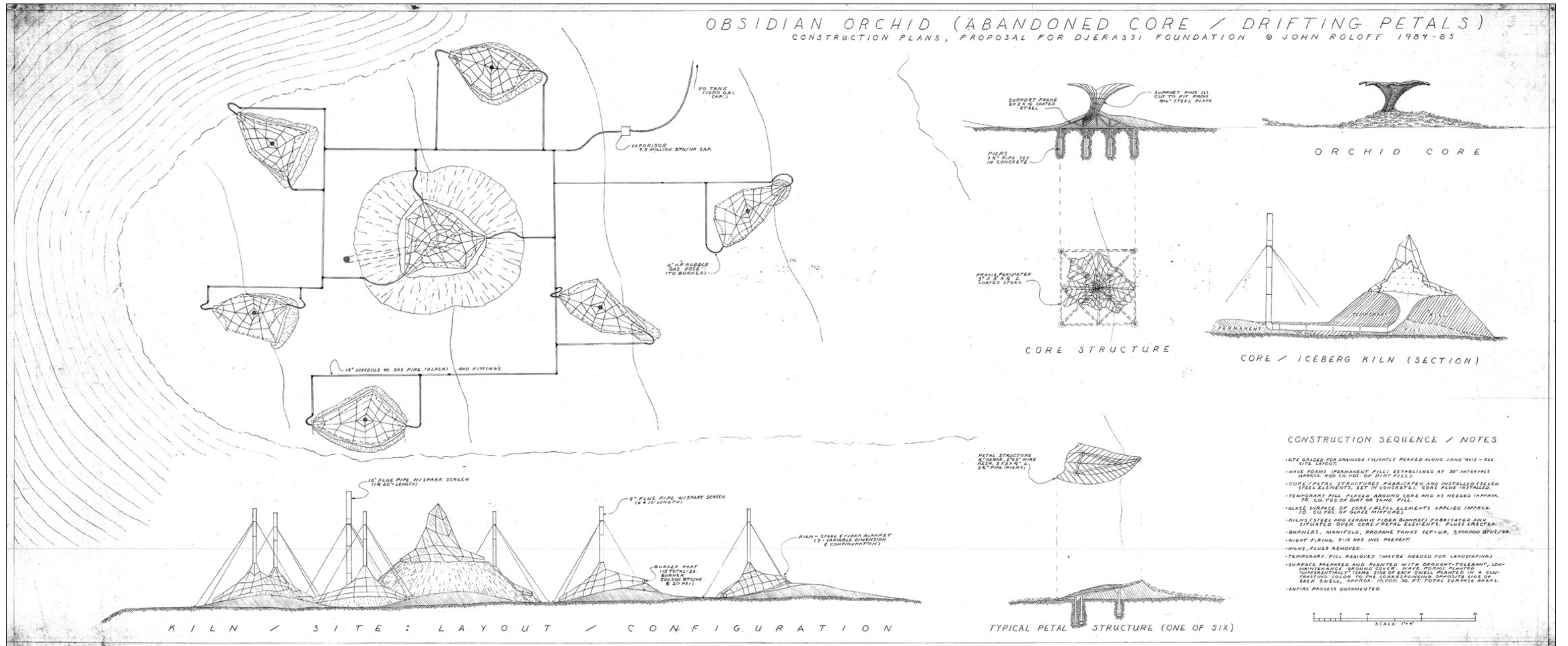


Fig. 239. Obsidian Orchid (Abandoned Core/Drifting Petals, construction plans, proposal for Djerassi Foundation, pencil on vellum, 30 in. x 60 in., 1984-85.



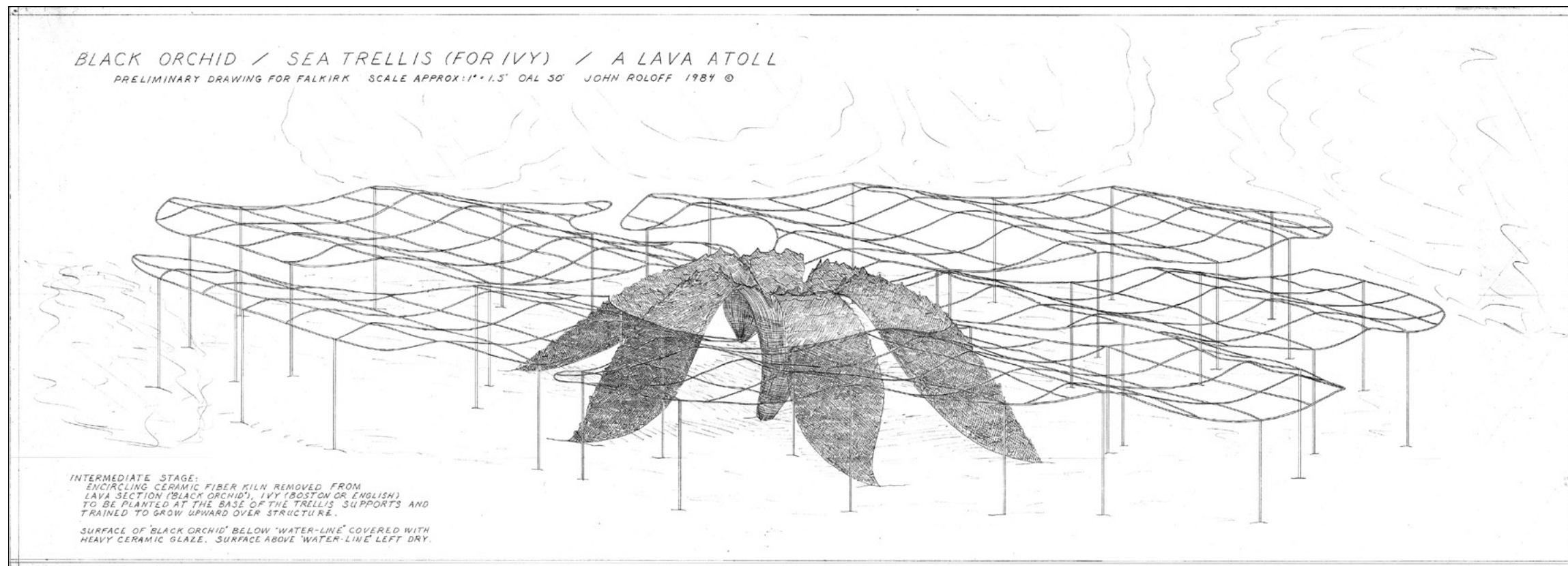


Fig. 240. Black Orchid/Sea Trellis (for Ivy)/A Lava Atoll, preliminary drawing for Falkirk, pencil on vellum, 24 in. h. x 67 1/8 in. w., 1984

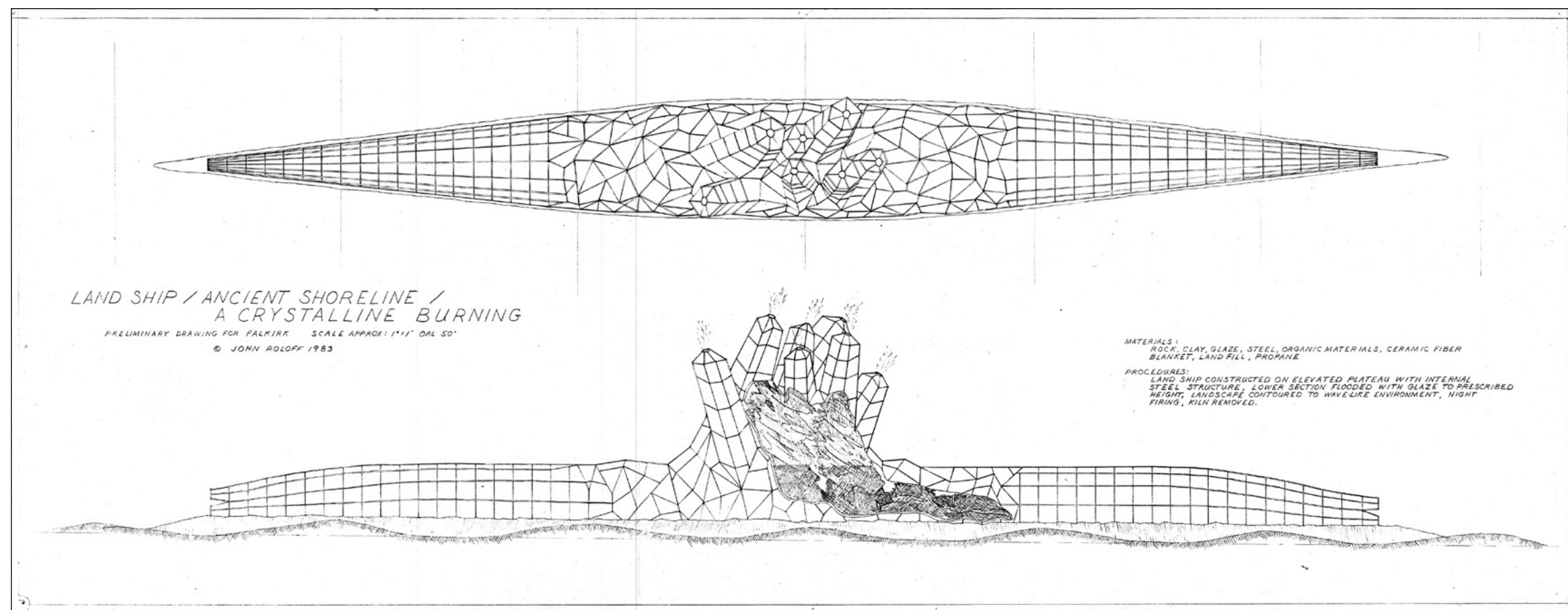


Fig. 241. Land Ship/Ancient Shoreline/A Crystalline Burning, preliminary drawing for Falkirk, pencil on vellum, 24 in. x 72 in., 1983.



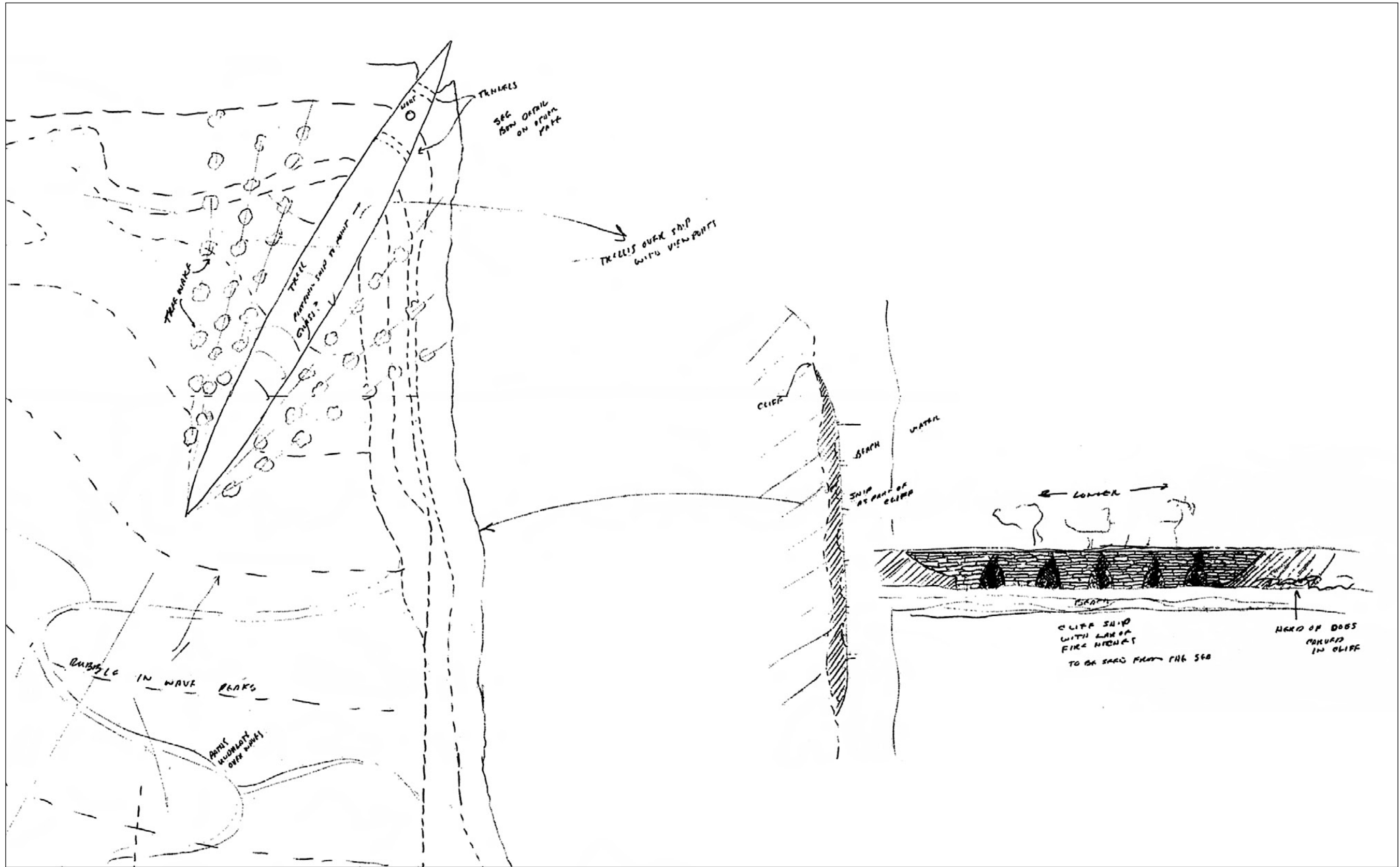


Fig. 242. *Untitled Candlestick Concepts*, proposal for Candlestick Park shoreline, San Francisco Bay. Concept includes a stacked concrete ship with active fire elements, reminiscent of lime kilns that fired marine originated limestone of the Permanente Terrane in the local Santa Cruz Mountains. Pencil on vellum, 30 in. x 36 in., circa 1984-85.



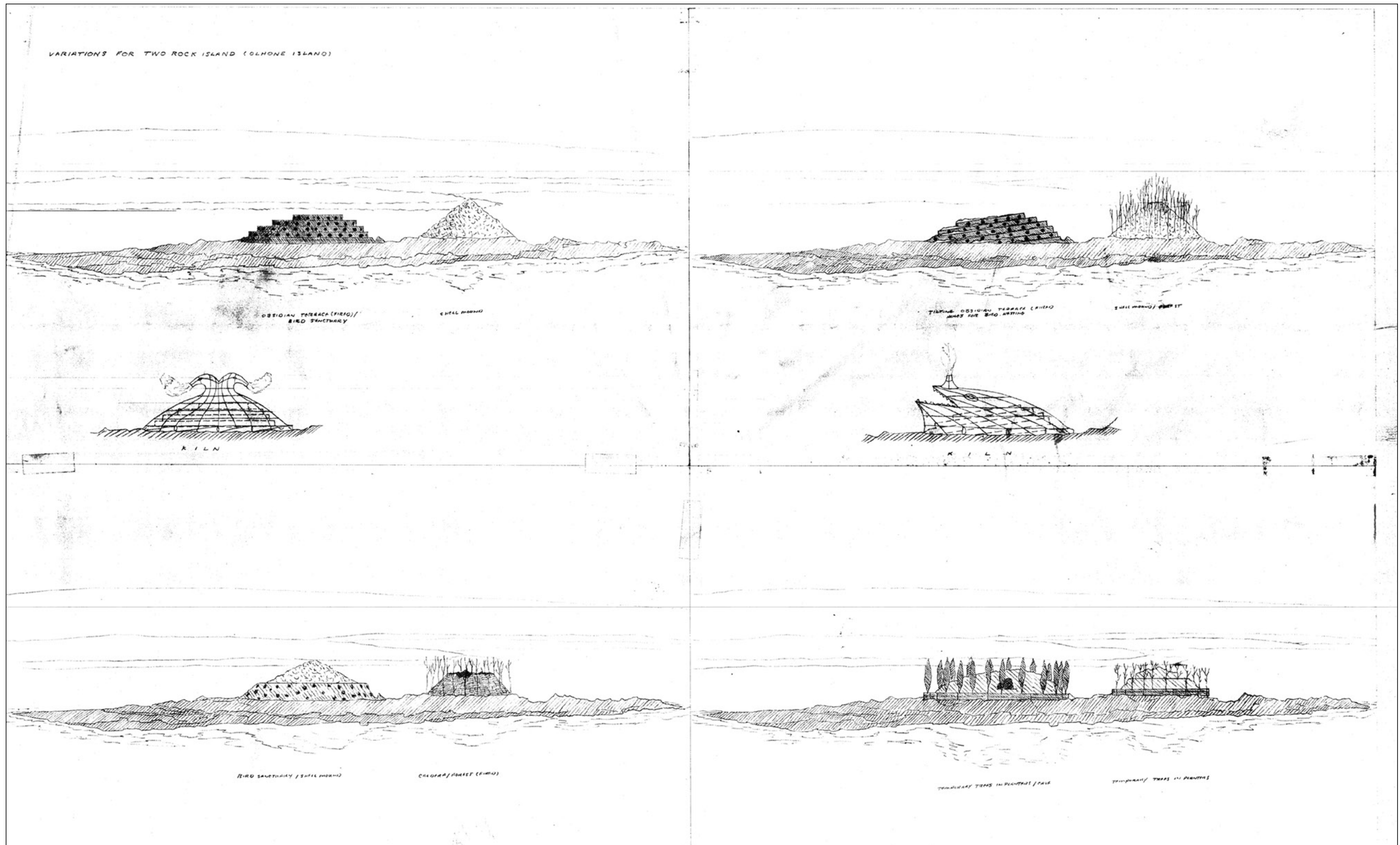


Fig. 243. Variations for Two Rock Island (Ohlone Island), proposal for Double Rock, Candlestick Park, San Francisco Bay, that included several kiln elements. Pencil on vellum 24 in. x 36 in., circa 1984-85.





Fig. 244. Obsidian Terrace (Seabird Caves)/Shell Mound (White Forest), proposal for Double Rock, Candlestick Park, San Francisco Bay, pencil, ink and acrylic on b&w photo, 40 in. x 72 in., circa 1984-85.



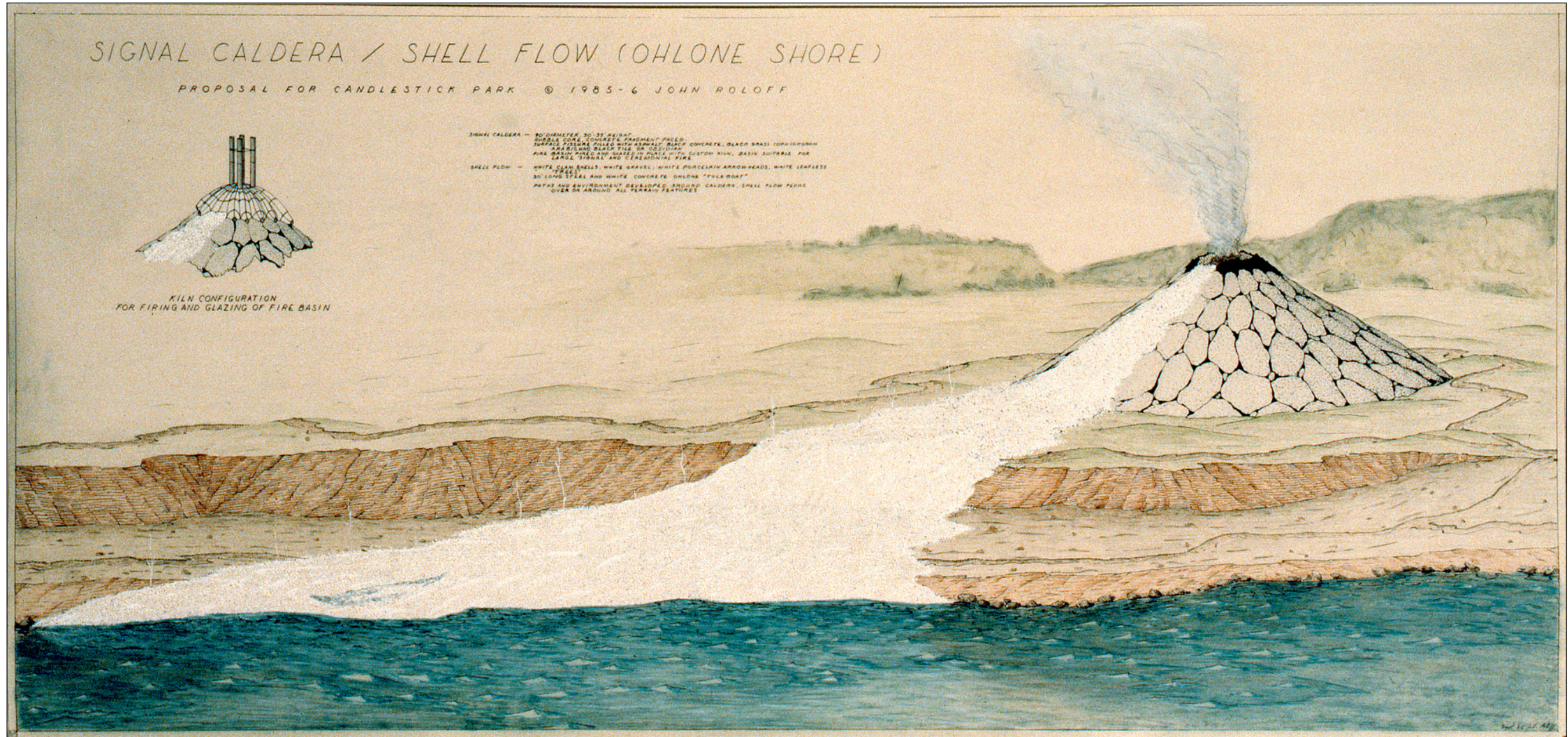


Fig. 245. Signal Caldera/Shell Flow (Ohlone Shore), proposal for Candlestick Park, San Francisco Bay, pencil, gauche and watercolor on brown diazo print, 40 in. x 72 in., 1985-86, private collection.



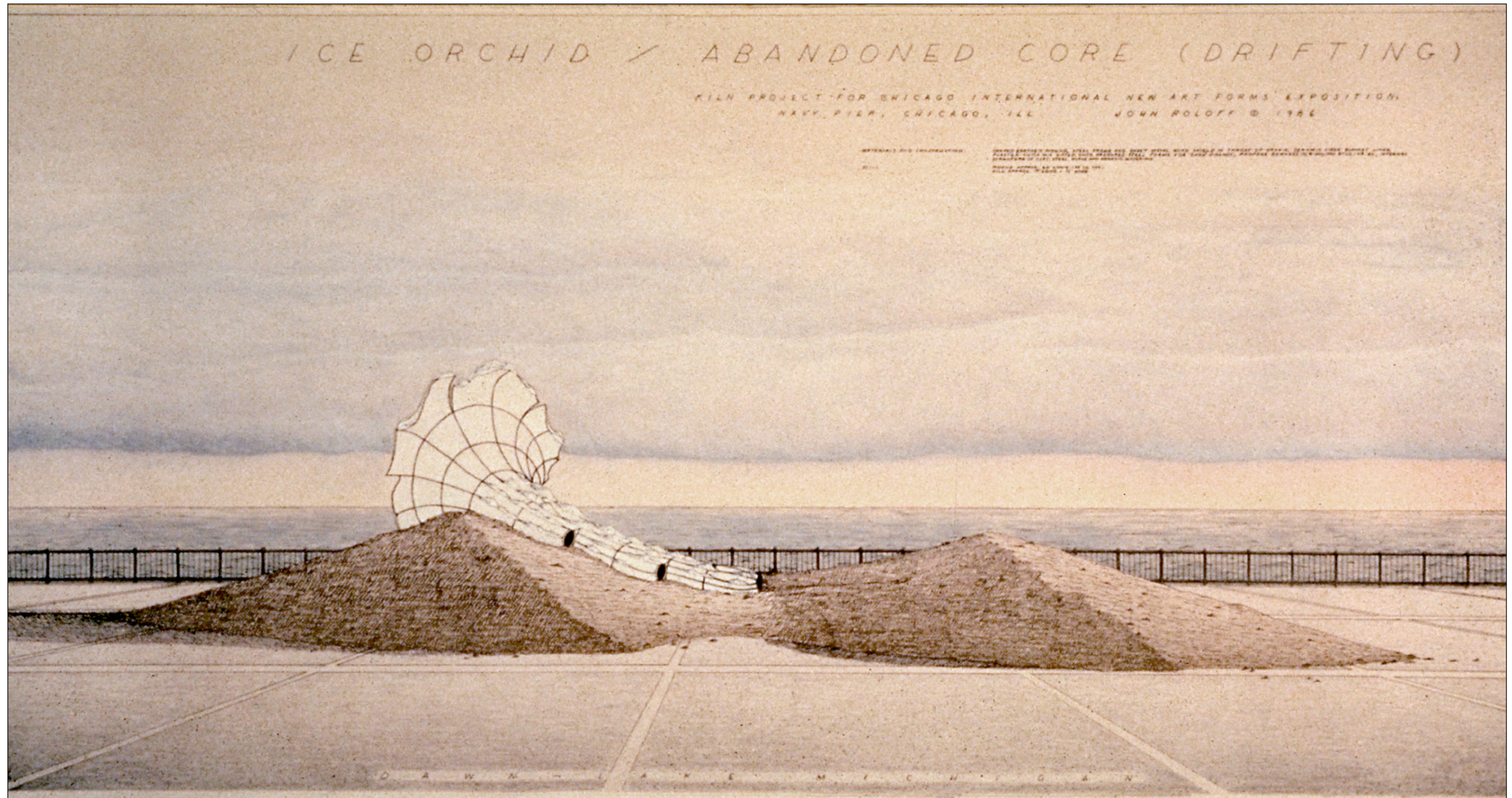


Fig. 246. *Ice Orchid/Abandoned Core (Drifting)*, (*Dawn - Lake Michigan*), kiln project for the Chicago International New Art Forms Exposition, Navy Pier, Chicago, IL, pencil, gauche and watercolor on brown diazo print 40 in. x 72 in., 1985-86, private collection.





Fig. 247. *Twin Retort Kiln, detail, site study, Arvada, CO, oil, pencil on diazo print, 36 in. x 40 in., circa 1988.*

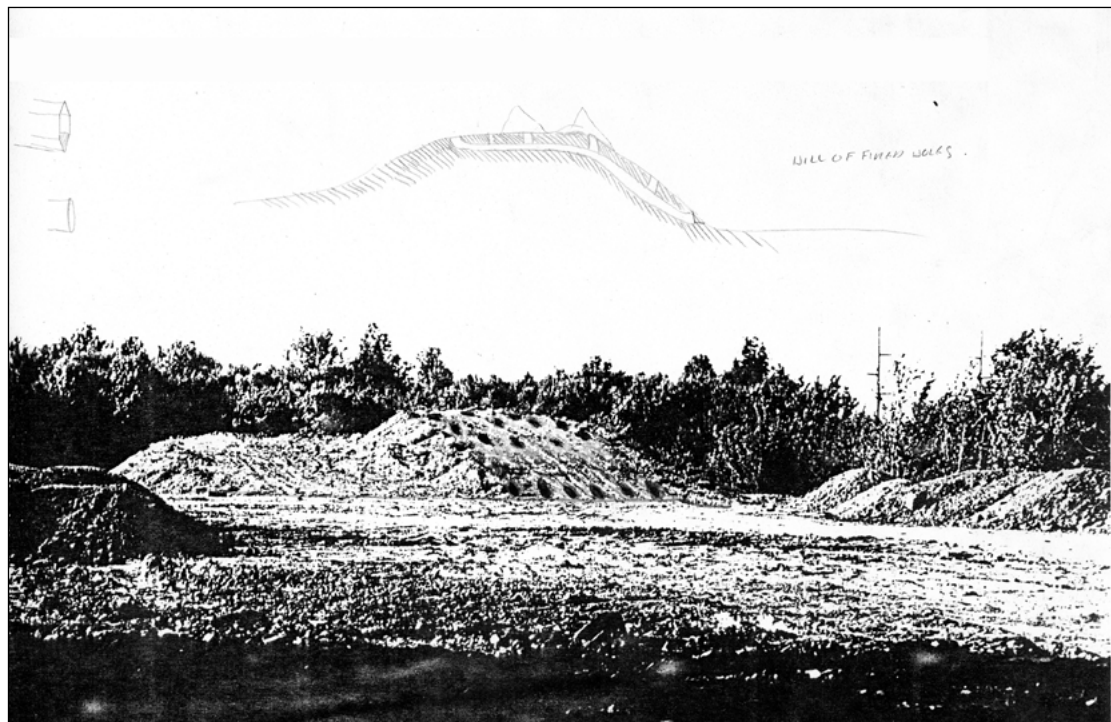


Fig. 248. *Hill of Fired Holes, detail, study (site unknown) oil, pencil on diazo print, 36 in. x 40 in., circa 1988.*



Fig. 249. *Preliminary Kiln Studies, top: Hartford, CT, bottom: Arcata, CA, oil, pencil on b&w photo, 40 in. x 36 in., each, John Roloff, Kiln Projects, solo exhibition, Hartford School of Art, Hartford, CT, 1988.*



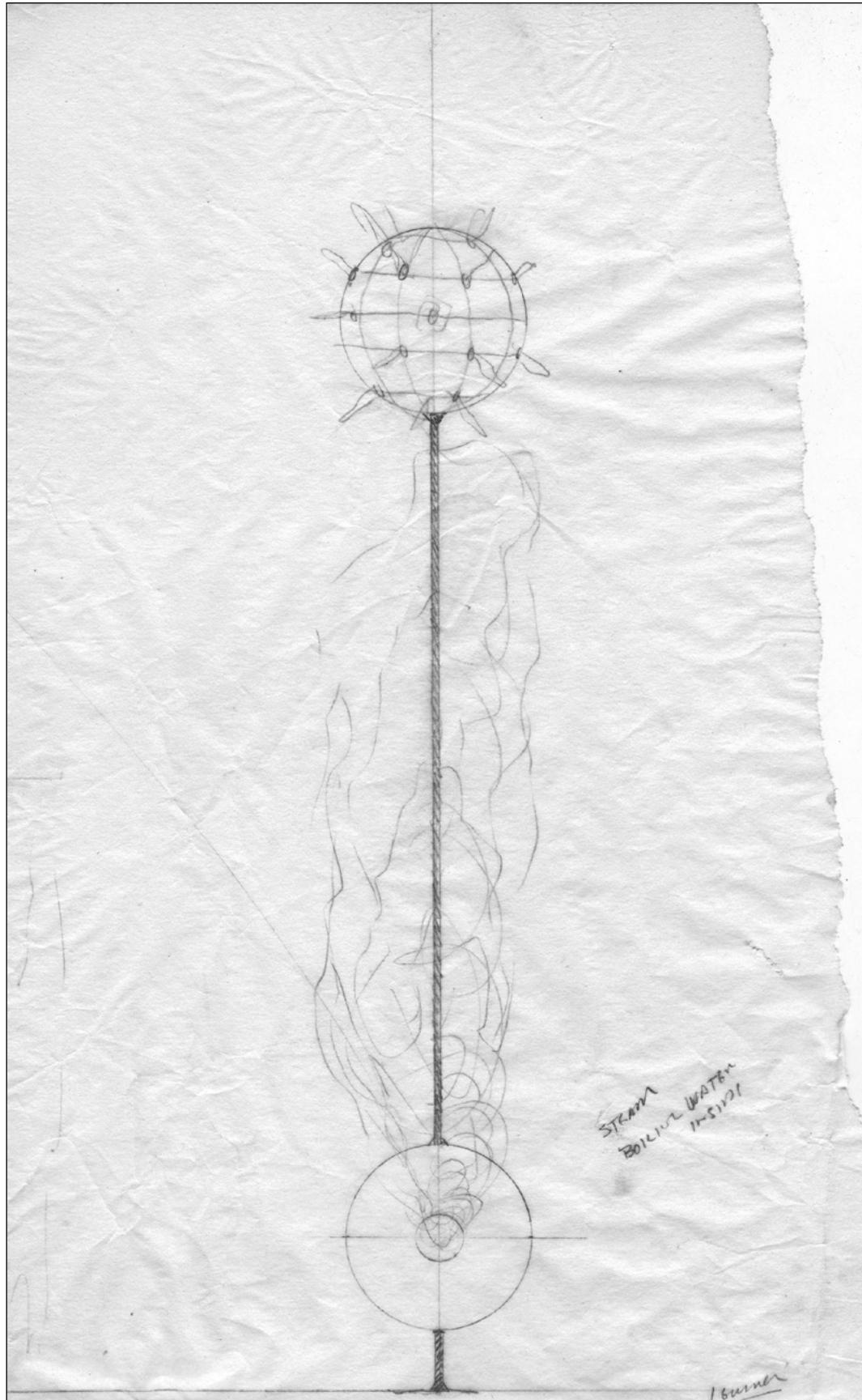


Fig. 250. Oculus Kiln/Mast Study I, detail, pencil, on vellum, 14 in, x 9 in, circa 1988.

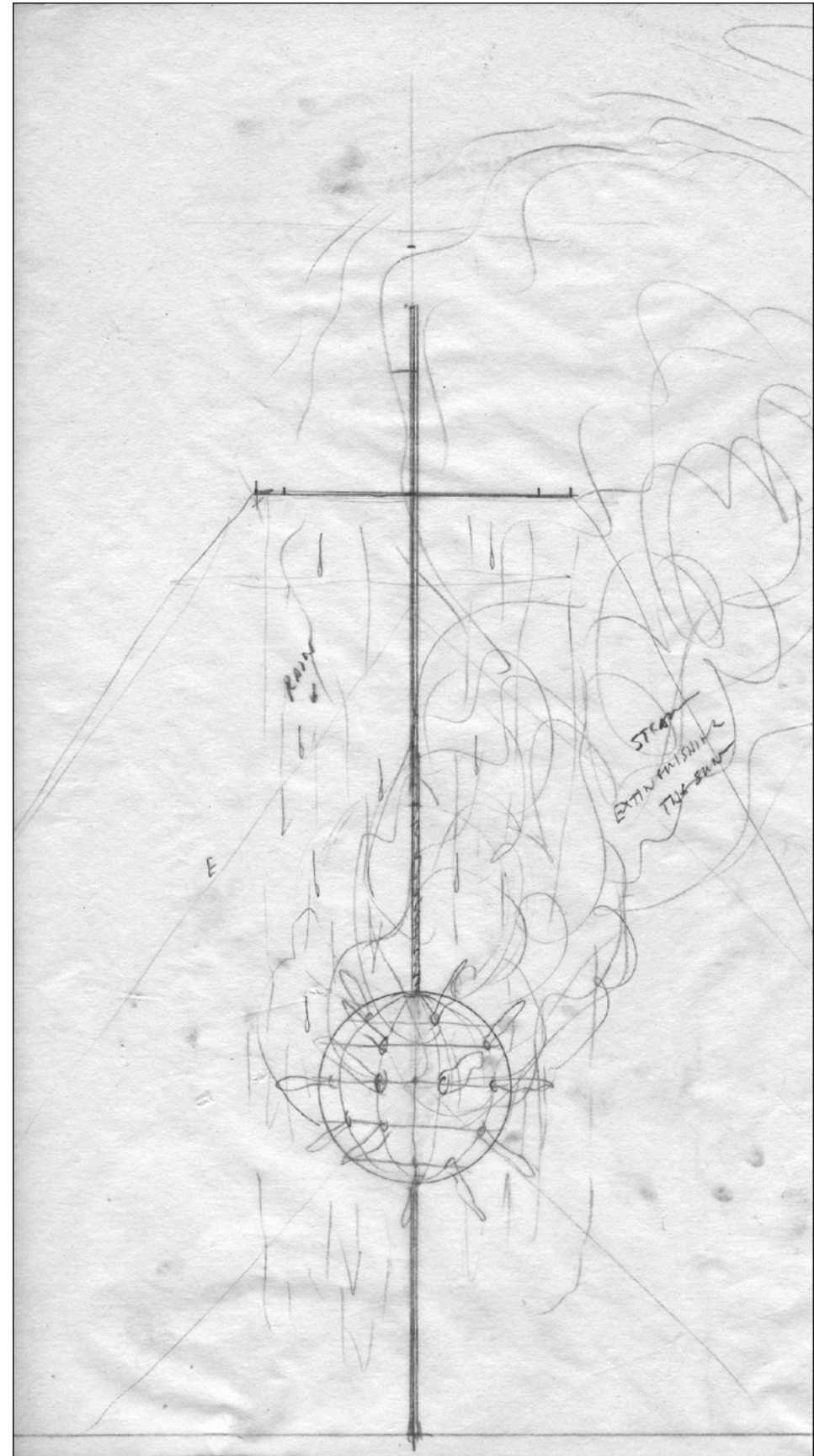


Fig. 251. Oculus Kiln/Mast Study II, detail, pencil, on vellum, 14 in, x 9 in, circa 1988.



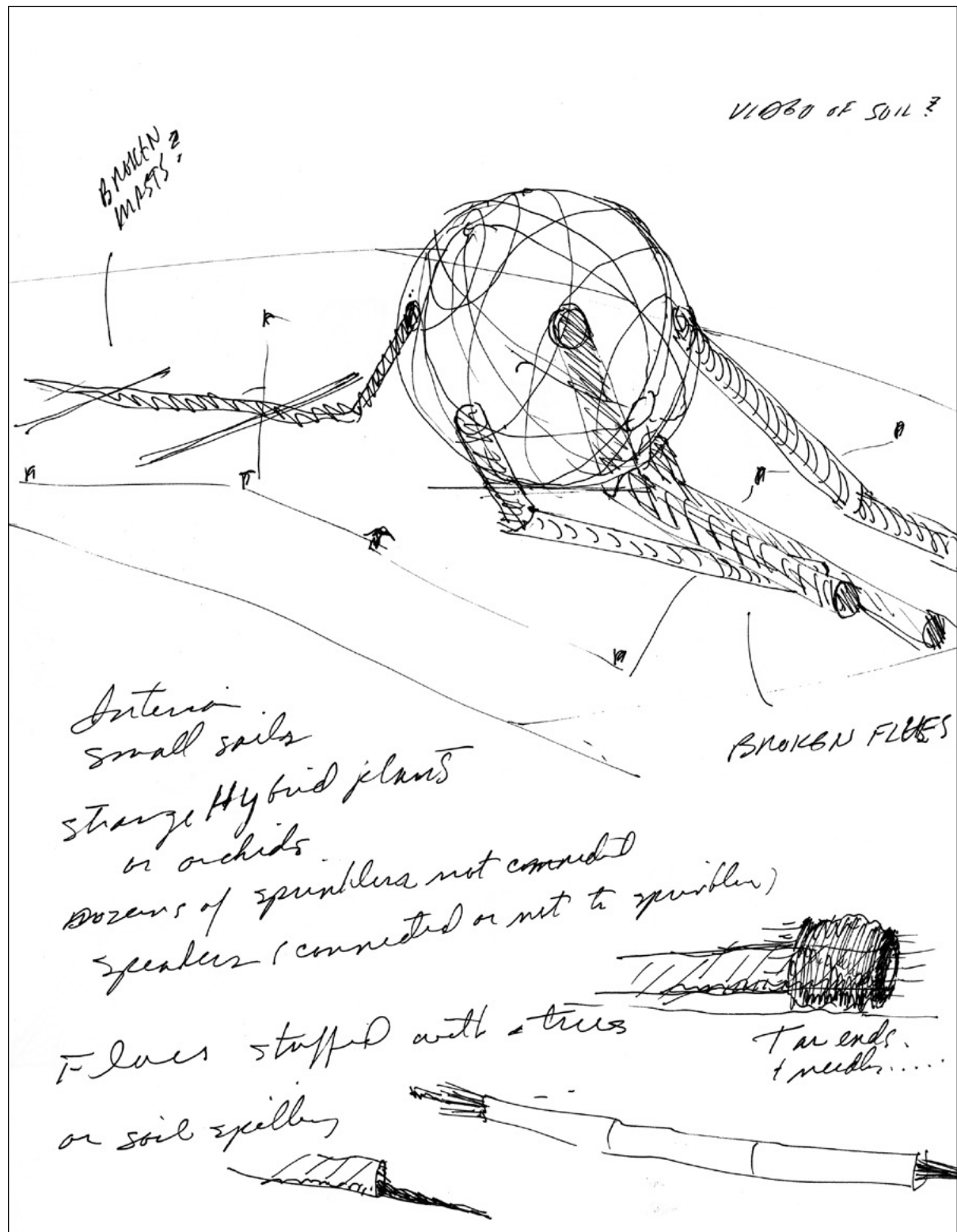


Fig. 252. Oculus Kiln/Mast Study I, detail, pencil, on vellum, 14 in, x 9 in, circa 1988.

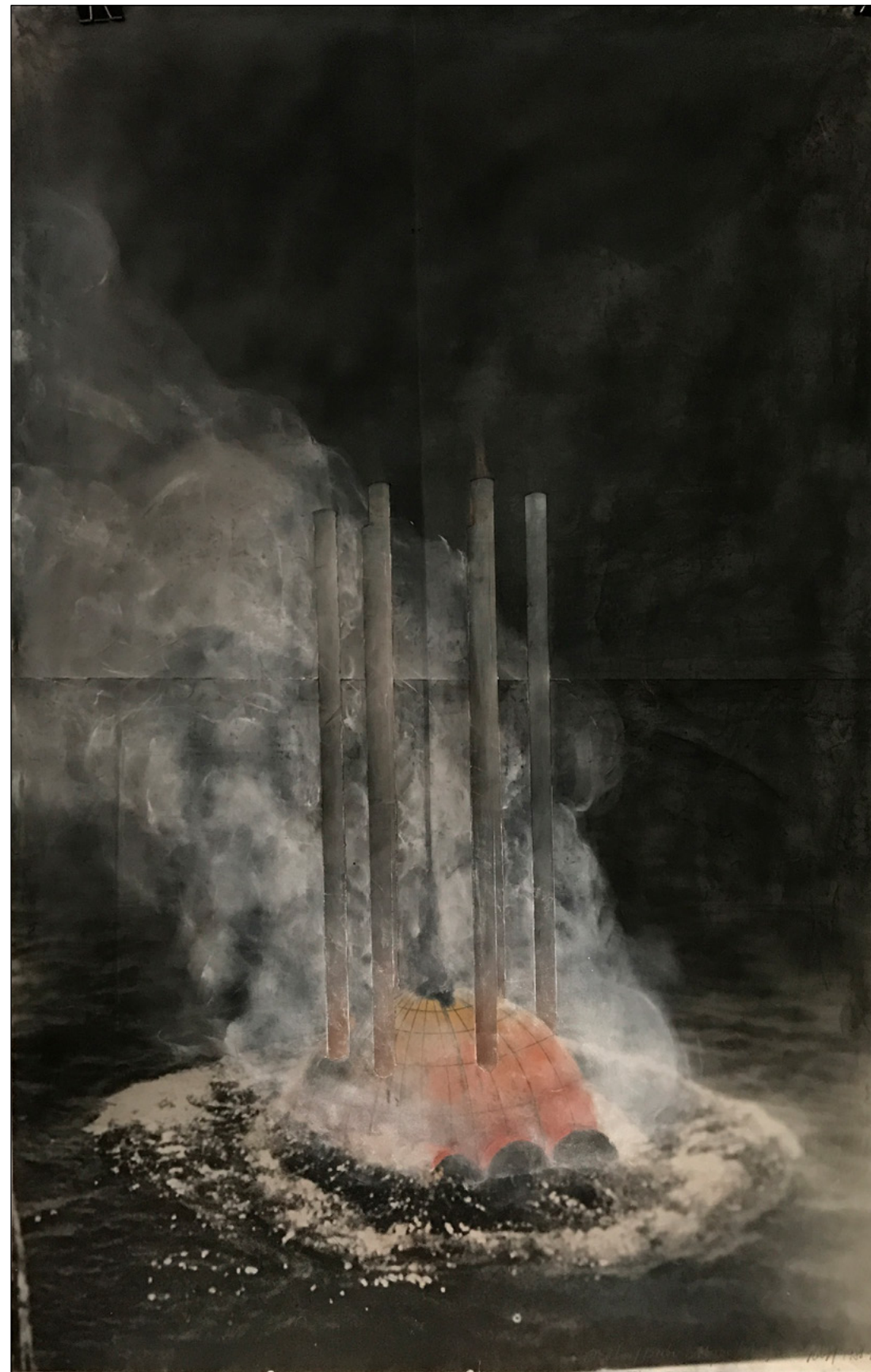


Fig. 253. Oculus/Beebe (Abyss Kiln), pencil, acrylic paint, pastel on b&w photo, 80 in, x 40 in, 1988-2018.



Study: *Orchid Eclipse (Spherical Furnace with Slowly Closing Refractory Petals)*

Kiln/furnace proposal: pastel, refractory cement on B&W photo, 1990

Like *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, *Orchid Eclipse..*, 1990, extrapolates the ocular form and references found in *Project: Oculus* into other realms, while still examining foundational issues of ecology, ontology and transcendence. *Orchid Eclipse..*, suggests a distended model for photosynthesis, here a spherical 'solar' furnace is slowly closed in upon and 'eclipsed' by mechanically operated refractory petals surrounding the structure. In a perverse adaptation of the Buddhist instruction and koan to "kill the Buddha," to gain enlightenment, symbolic, refractory petals attempt to extinguish the parent fires of their atmospheric and chemical origin by suffocating and denying oxygen to the flame.



Fig. 254. Study: *Orchid Eclipse (Spherical Furnace with Slowly Closing Refractory Petals)*, 84" x 117", collage, refractory cement, pastel on B&W photograph, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, 1992.



*Study mit Grünwald: Falling Knight Furnace/Forest*

Performative kiln/furnace proposal: pencil and pastel on b&w photo collage, 1990

*Study mit Grünwald: Falling Knight Furnace/Forest*, 1990, is one of several conceptual proposals for environmental kiln/furnace art works related to my Germanic heritage. This work is a study for a kiln/furnace project based on an image of a falling knight in the right, middle-ground of the resurrection panel of the Isenheim Altarpiece, 1512-1516, by the painter Matthias Grünwald. The background is an image of a forest collaged into the scene. The falling knight image was also used in *Metabolism Study (Falling Knight)*, 1995, one of a series of "Photo Process Works," relating the chemical and visual transformation, caused by the insertion of orange slices against the photo's emulsion, of the image to fire and metabolism.

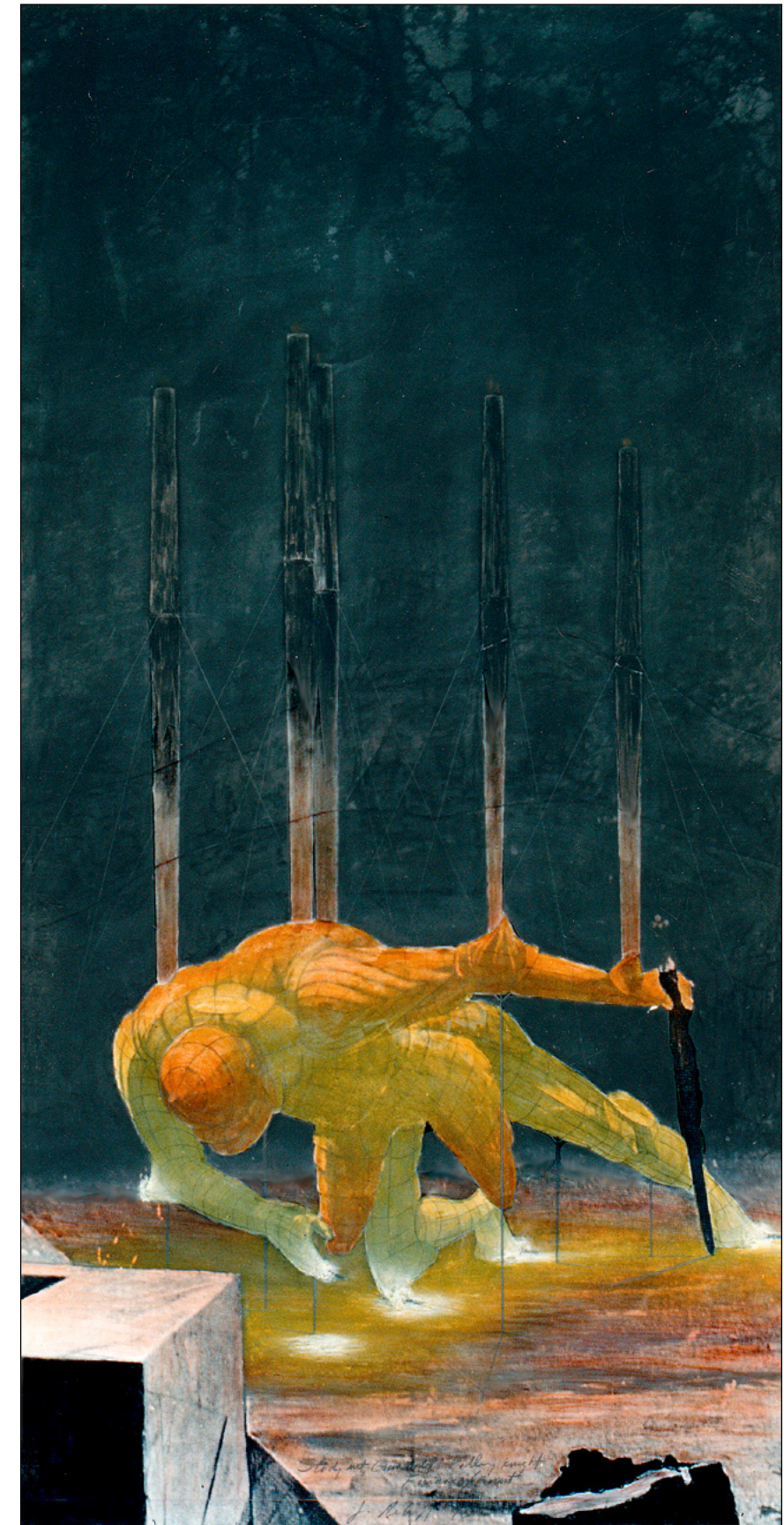


Fig. 255. *Study mit Grünwald: Falling Knight Furnace/Forest*, proposal for a kiln project, 64 in. x 32 in., pastel, gauche and pencil on b&w photo collage, 1990.



*Study mit Max Taut: Wissinger Tomb Furnace (Underground)/Orchard,*

Performative kiln/furnace proposals: pencil and pastel on b&w photo collage, 1990

*Study mit Max Taut: Wissinger Tomb Furnace (Underground)/Orchard*, 1990, is a second conceptual proposal for environmental kiln/furnace art works related to my Germanic heritage. This work explores spiritual issues and personal history, in particular family history as the great-grandson of German immigrant farmers who settled in the Pacific Northwest. The image of the Wissinger tomb comes from the crypt of a German family in a graveyard in Stahndsdorf, Germany, visited in 1992 with friends, Alf Löhr and Betty Beaumont. This tomb, a complex crystalline structure that emphasizes spiritual values of inorganic form, was designed by Max Taut, a noted German Expressionist architect of the 1920's. The flues of the tomb transformed into an underground furnace in the proposal, extend upward, hypothetically through a fruit orchard, symbolic of the crops grown by my family in both Europe and North America.



Fig. 256. Wissinger family tomb by Max Taut, Südwestkirchhof Stahndsdorf, Stahndsdorf, Germany, visited in 1992.



Fig. 257. *Study mit Max Taut: Wissinger Family Tomb Furnace (Underground)/Orchard*, proposal for a kiln project, 64 in. x 32 in., pastel, gauche, acrylic and pencil on b&w photo collage, 1990.





Fig. 258. Model: *Black Starfish Kiln*, study for a kiln project originally considered for Tyler School of Art 1992, 64 in. x 32 in., steel, refractory cement, carbon, pine needles, 1990.



Fig. 259. Oakland, CA studio, with in-progress, *Abyss, No. 2 (Plain)*, b&w photos and Model: *Black Starfish Kiln/Grove*, 1990.

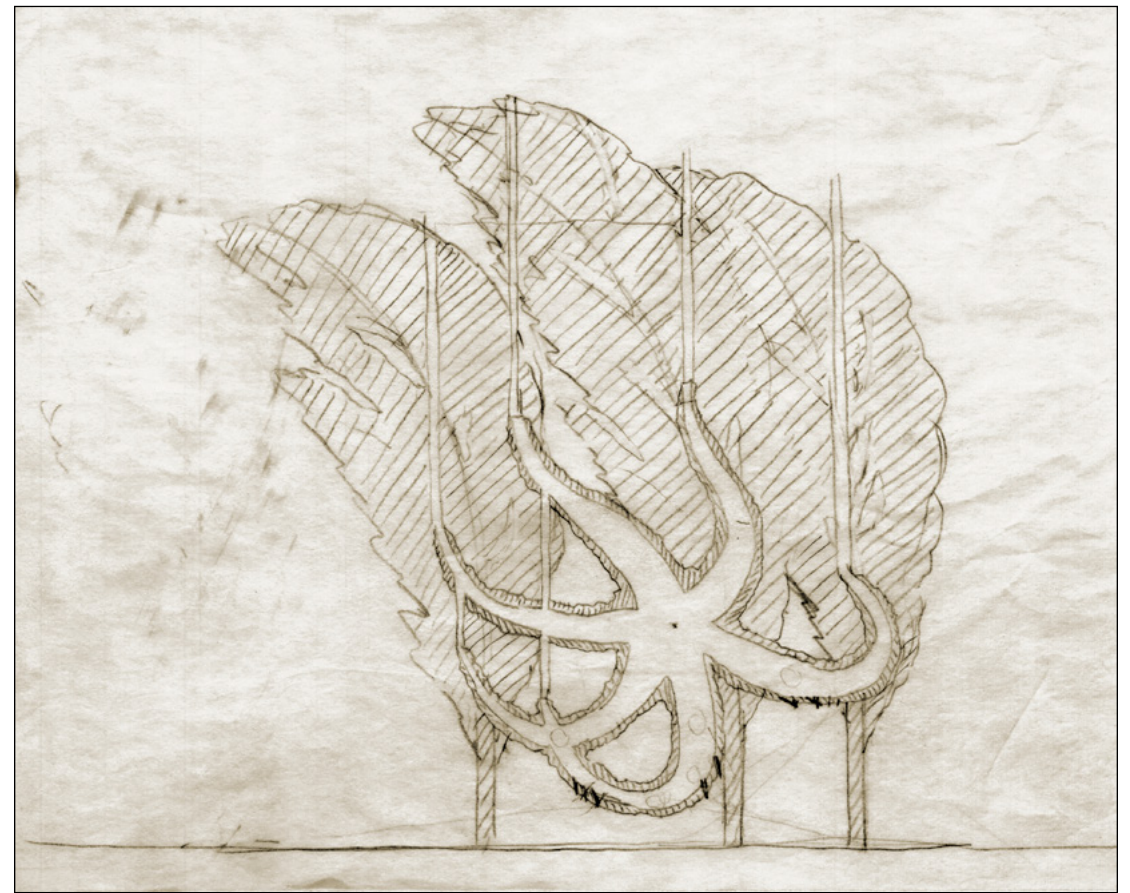


Fig. 260. Study: *Black Starfish Kiln/Grove*, study for a kiln project originally considered for Tyler School of Art 1992, 64 in. x 32 in., pencil on tracing paper, 1990.



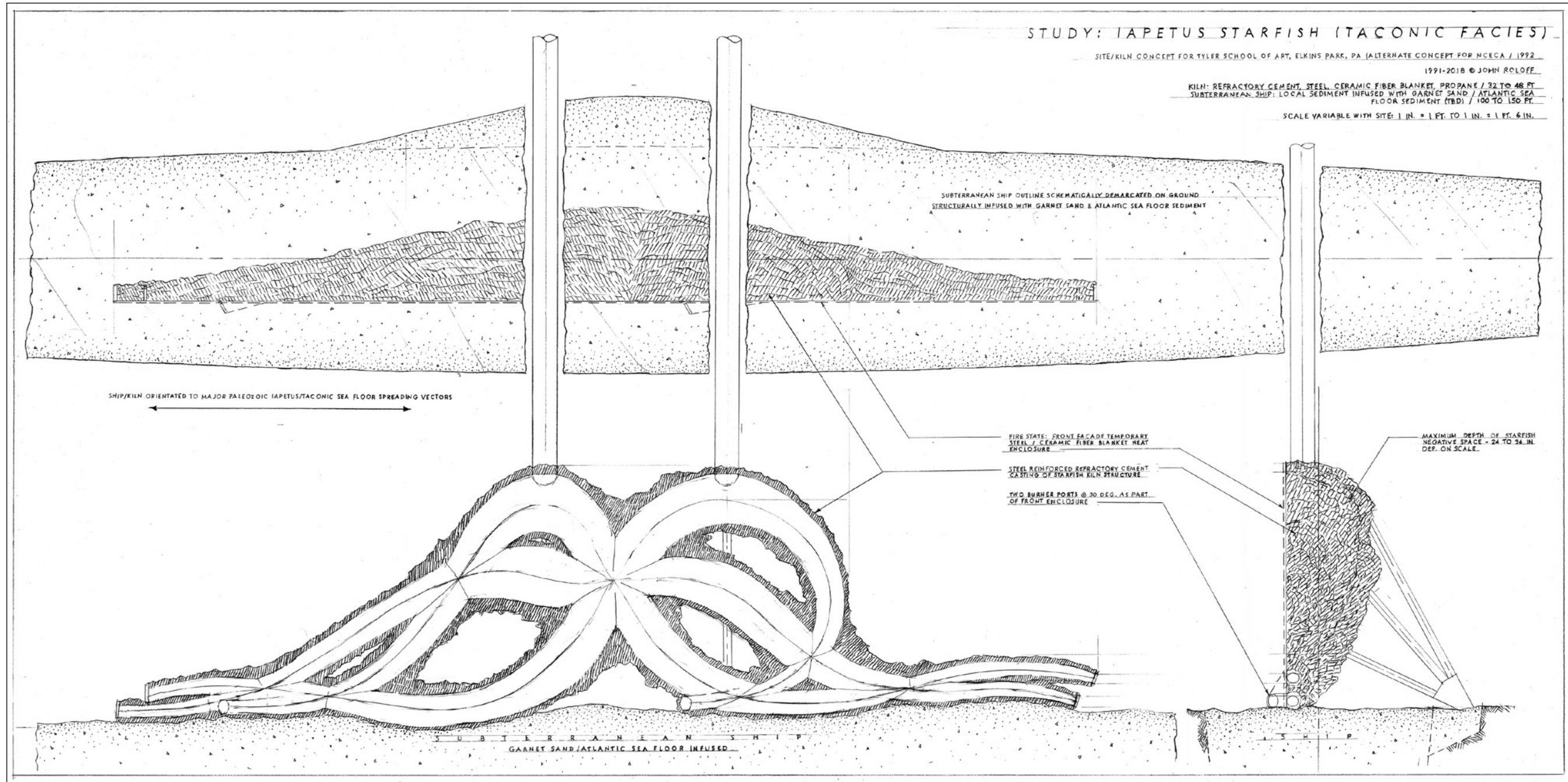


Fig. 261. Study: Iapetus Starfish (Taconic Facies), part of the starfish kiln concepts originally considered for Tyler School of Art 1992. Refers to aspects of the Tyler site geology deposited and deformed during the Taconic Orogeny and closing of the proto-Atlantic, Iapetus Sea. 24 in. x 48 in., pencil on drafting film, circa 1991-2018.



Issues around "Primal" - From the K. cliff  
Farnow works:

Catabolic / anabolic: existential ecology

schizoanalysis of ecological thinking  
as a subtext: see as gasolins...

original acceptance or recognition of  
profusion of 'madness, morbidity, ematopic  
states into ecological order; not  
the "madness" of human greed or  
anthropomorphism as a counterpoint to  
a smoothly running ecological machine -  
system - CATASTROPHIC / DYNAMIC SYSTEM

HURRICANE / ORIGIN: DISORDER  
(THE BISHOP)

current  
model:  
"neuronic"

Sent of like "Anti-Oedipus," Melville & Gontarski:

The schizotypic, catatonic, autistic (human psychiatric  
analogy that of natural states as valid or  
ordered states, as elements of "the Ecology" -  
becomes "existential" in our understanding of  
nature: Turbulence, overflow of energy basins of chaos they  
this dynamic pushing against formal aesthetic  
also represented by architecture: analogs to an  
interpretation of the Baroque - organic systems pushing  
against formal systems & asymmetry, geologic, as recombinant  
Molecular system: perceptual systems: linear algebraic  
system: formal systems - curious as a subtext of Versailles  
contradiction in the sense of 'greed' as automatic power  
DYNAMIC (DIFFERENTIAL) EQ. 2:

Fig. 262. Loose notebook page, pen on paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1999.

UW campus -

F. Geologic ~~Engineering~~ Bldg.

1. Field Stone, space between stones
  2. Cast iron Rock, field
  3. Cast iron climax Doug Fir, architectural filigree
  4. Field statue, fused knight. Leibniz
  5. Casting taken from Water's Rock.
  6. Architectural spaces, rooms different field
  4. Loop pipe, loop orchard + fire element.
  - 8 - response to the neo-gothic architecture
    - knight - cast (relating to furnace or rock)
    - meteorite - made of fossils
    - cast iron bricks or stone elements.
- Statues - Leibniz, Court (entropy / thermodynamics)  
Andreas Thales (? Fire) Knights with detailed armour  
Schelte 1764 Seattle (chief) - costumes cast, wigs  
Kargatida - supporting a plane  
Euclid - Reiman French Camping -  
the landscape tents

standing on  
Doug Fir stump  
element involved

Fig. 263. Loose notebook page, conceptual study for Wrangellia I & II, pen on paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1999.



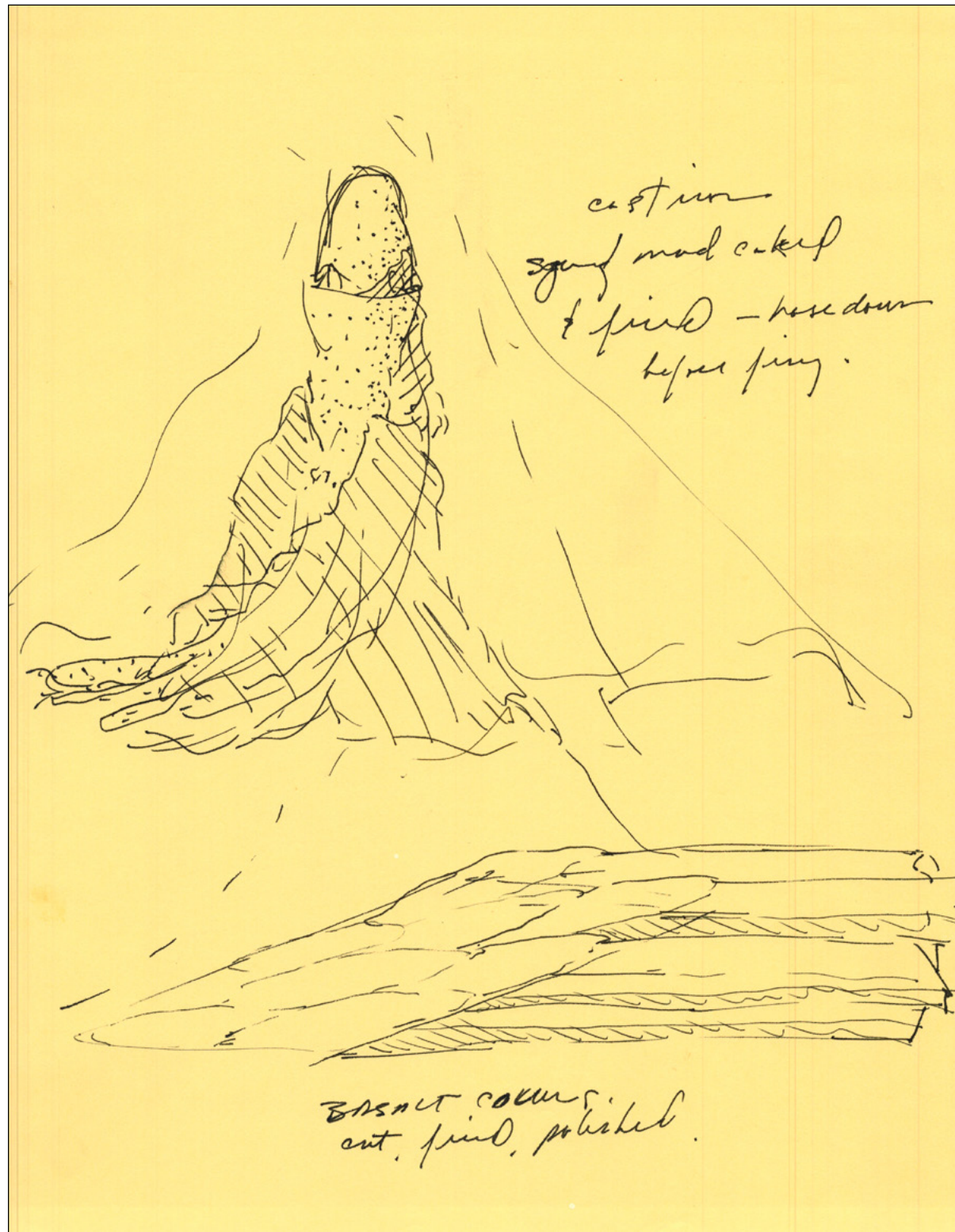


Fig. 264. Loose notebook page, conceptual study for *Wrangellia I & II*, pen on paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1999.

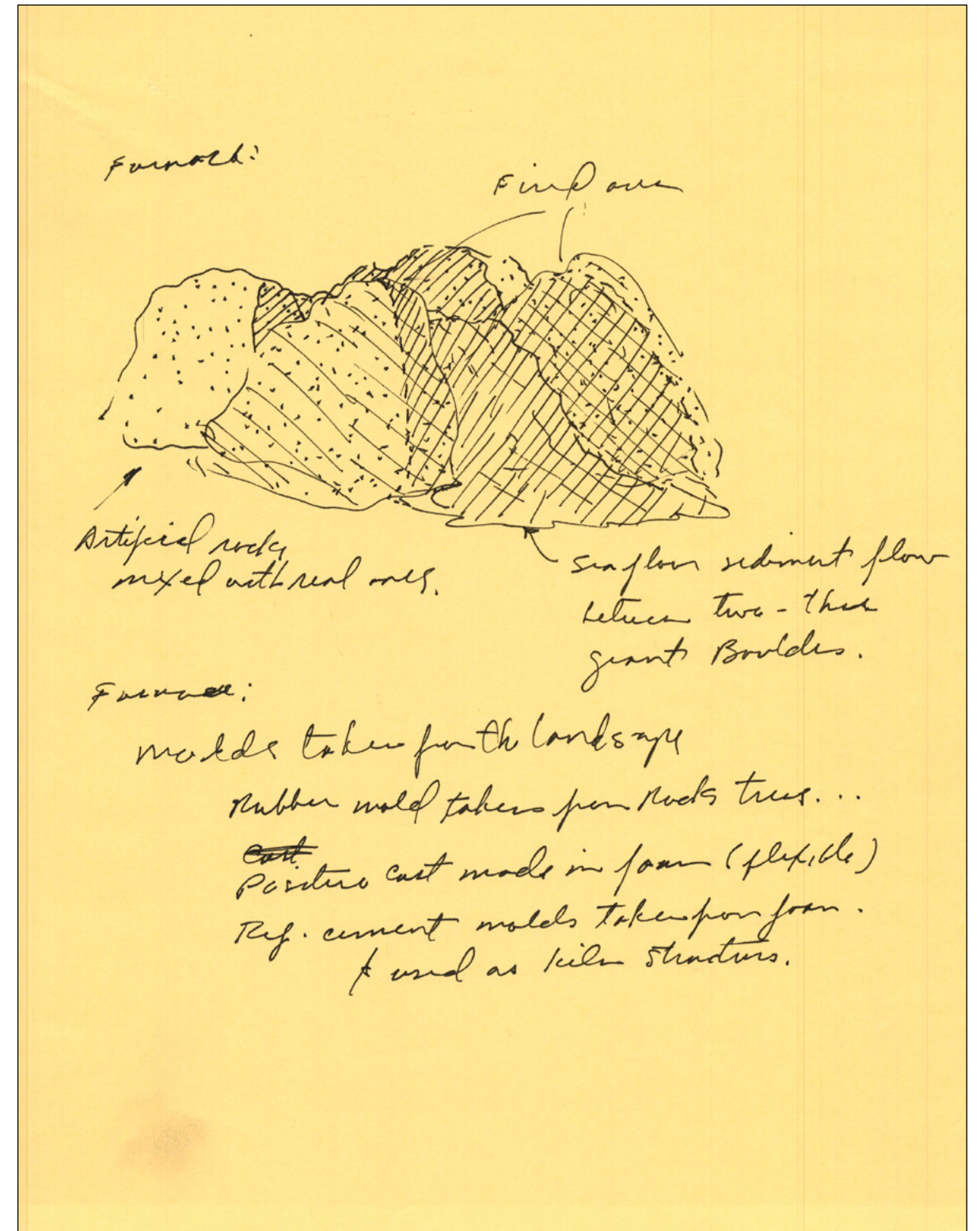


Fig. 265. Loose notebook page, conceptual study for *Wrangellia I & II*, pen on paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1999.



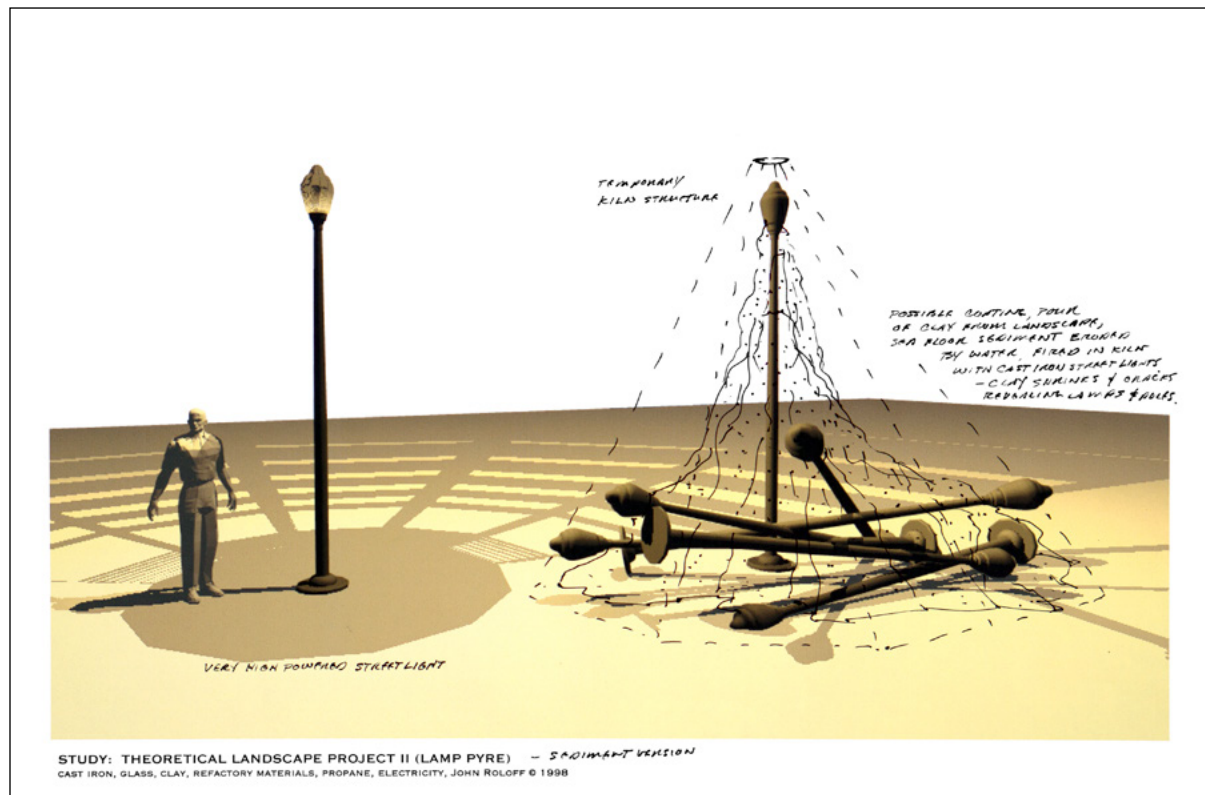


Fig. 266. Conceptual study, *Wrangellia I & II*, digital print, pen on paper, 11 in. x 17 in., circa 2000.

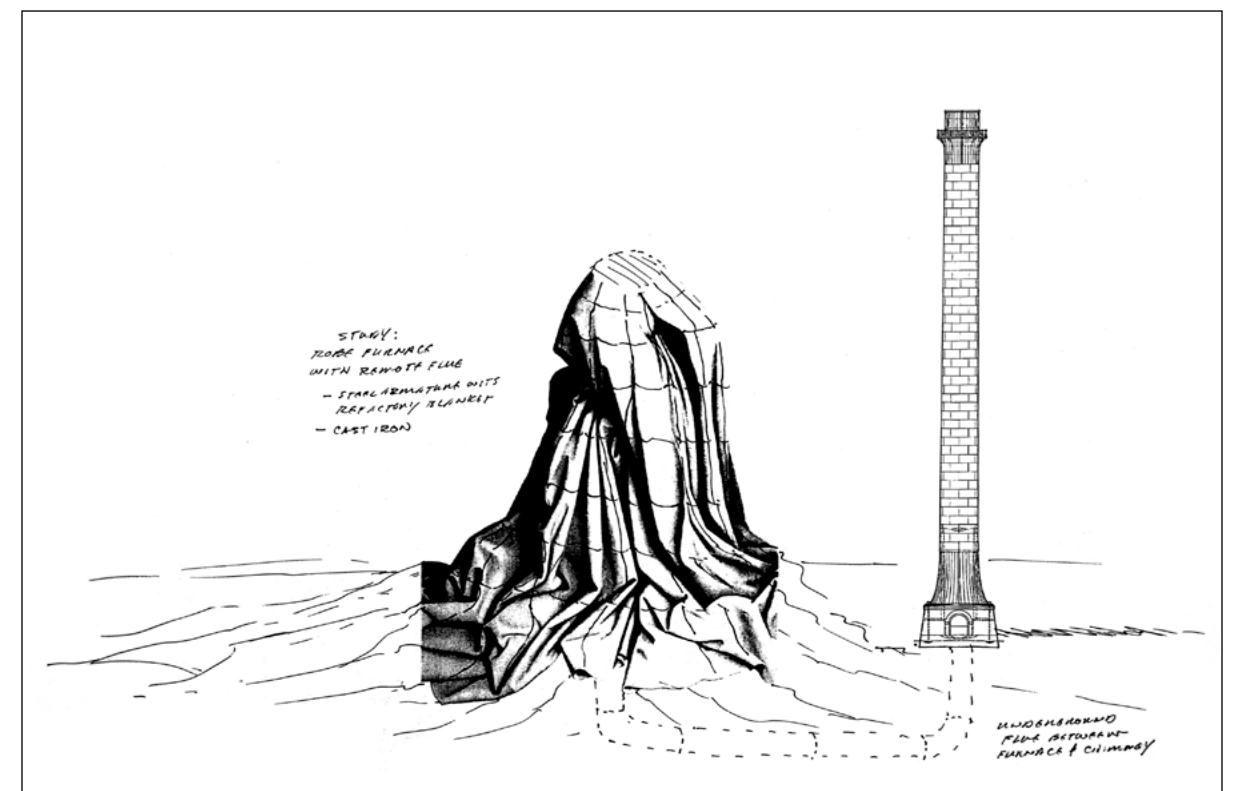


Fig. 268. Conceptual study, *Wrangellia I & II*, digital print, pen on paper, 11 in. x 17 in., circa 2000.

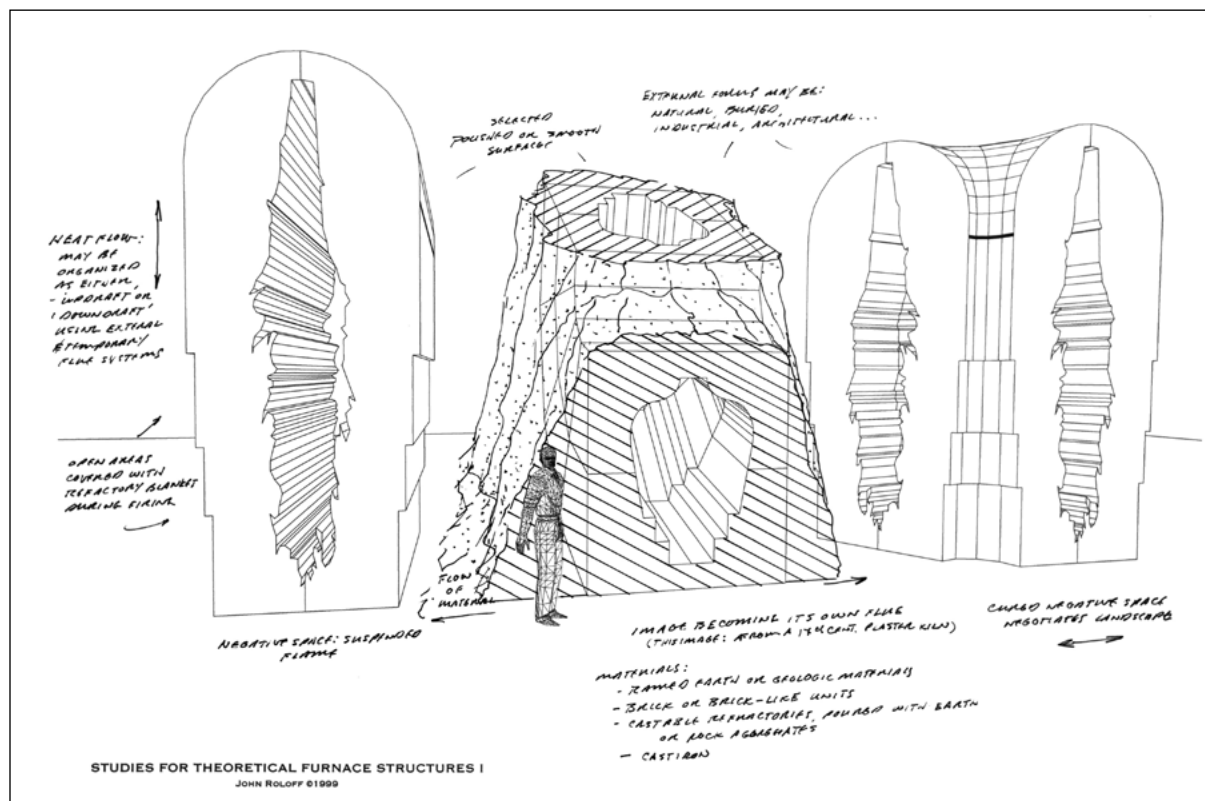


Fig. 267. Conceptual study, *Wrangellia I & II*, digital print, pen on paper, 11 in. x 17 in., circa 2000.

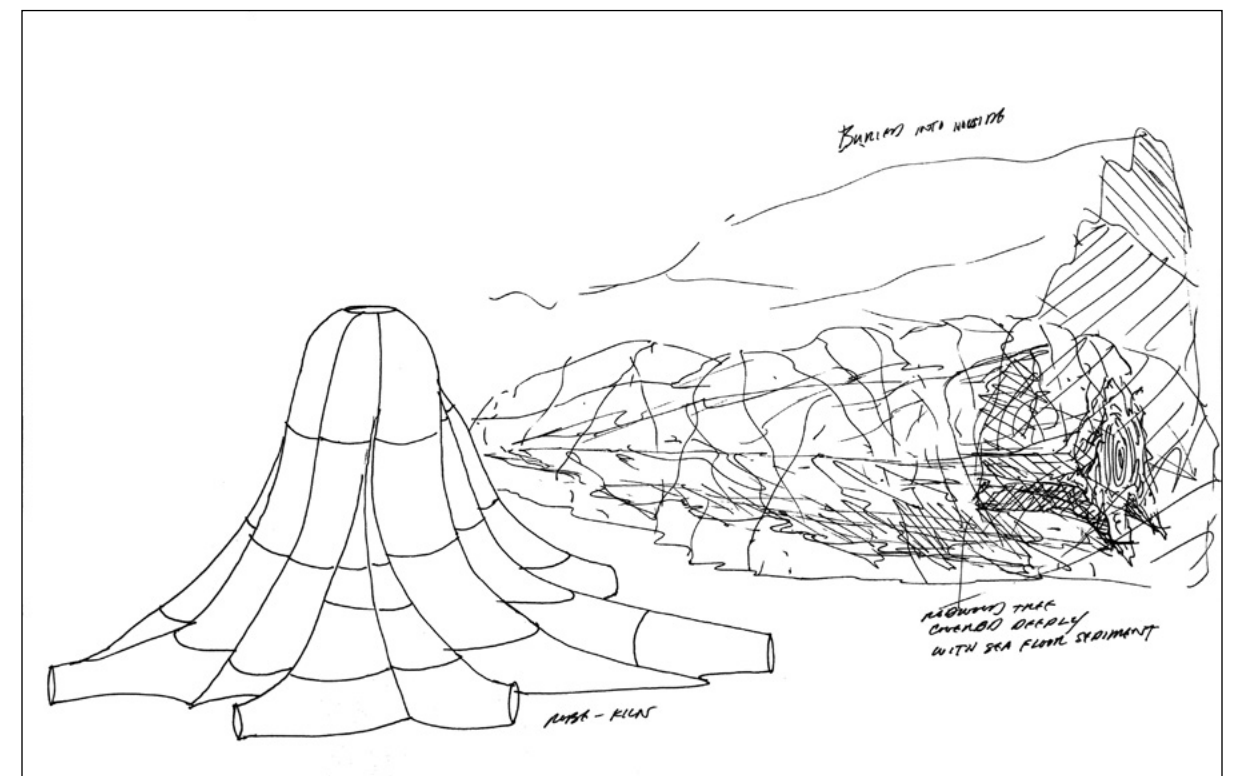
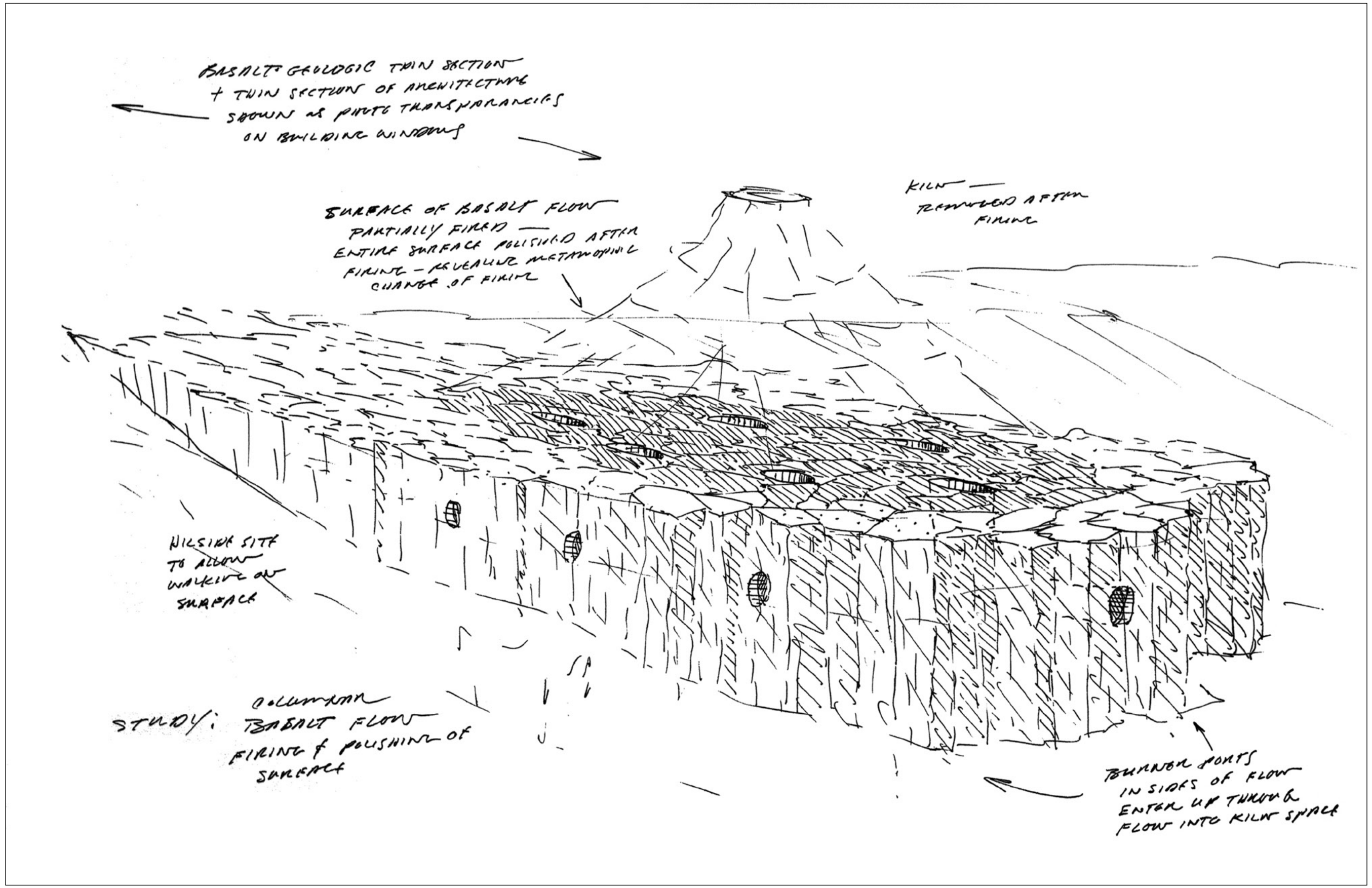


Fig. 269. Conceptual study, *Wrangellia I & II*, digital print, pen on paper, 11 in. x 17 in., circa 2000.





BASALT GEOLOGIC THIN SECTION  
+ THIN SECTION OF ARCHITECTURE  
SHOWN AS PHOTO TRANSPARENTS  
ON BUILDING WINDOWS

SURFACE OF BASALT FLOW  
PARTIALLY FIRED -  
ENTIRE SURFACE POLISHED AFTER  
FIRING - REVEALING METAMORPHIC  
CHANGE OF FINE

KILN -  
TRIMMED AFTER  
FIRING

NICKER SITE  
TO ALLOW  
WALKING ON  
SURFACE

STUDY: COLUMNAR  
BASALT FLOW  
FIRING & PUSHING OF  
SURFACE

BURNER PORTS  
IN SIDES OF FLOW  
ENTER UP THROUGH &  
FLOW INTO KILN SPACE

Fig. 270. Conceptual study, Wrangellia I & II, digital print, pen on paper, 11 in. x 17 in., circa 2000.



Ecologic thin section of  
 A Fired material  
 Unfired material  
 Stone of a building on campus  
 B. Thin sections are made into  
 large photo transparencies scaled  
 to fit prominent windows of  
 the building (may be used  
 in the greenhouse)

ALTERNATE:  
 Castings taken from rock  
 formations as kiln -  
 rock (negative) space  
 as fire

plateau of columnar  
 Basalt - top  
 surface fired.

KILN OF STEEL (FRAME)  
 WITH CERAMIC FIBER  
 BLANKET SUSPENDED (MINDED)  
 INSIDE - CONSTRUCTED OVER  
 INTERIOR SPACE & SEDIMENT  
 FLOWS

POLISHED SECTIONS  
 OF BOTH BOULDERS  
 & LAYERS OF SEDIMENT  
 (CAST AGAINST GLASS)

STUDY: FIRING OF THE SPACE BETWEEN  
 A GROUP OF IGNEOUS BOULDERS  
 ± 40' long ALONG '99  
 KILN REMOVED AFTER FIRING,  
 (GREEN HOUSE (CONSTANT RAIN) ISUILT OVER  
 1/2 OF STRUCTURE.

FLOW OF SEA FLOOR SEDIMENT

≈ 6 H.

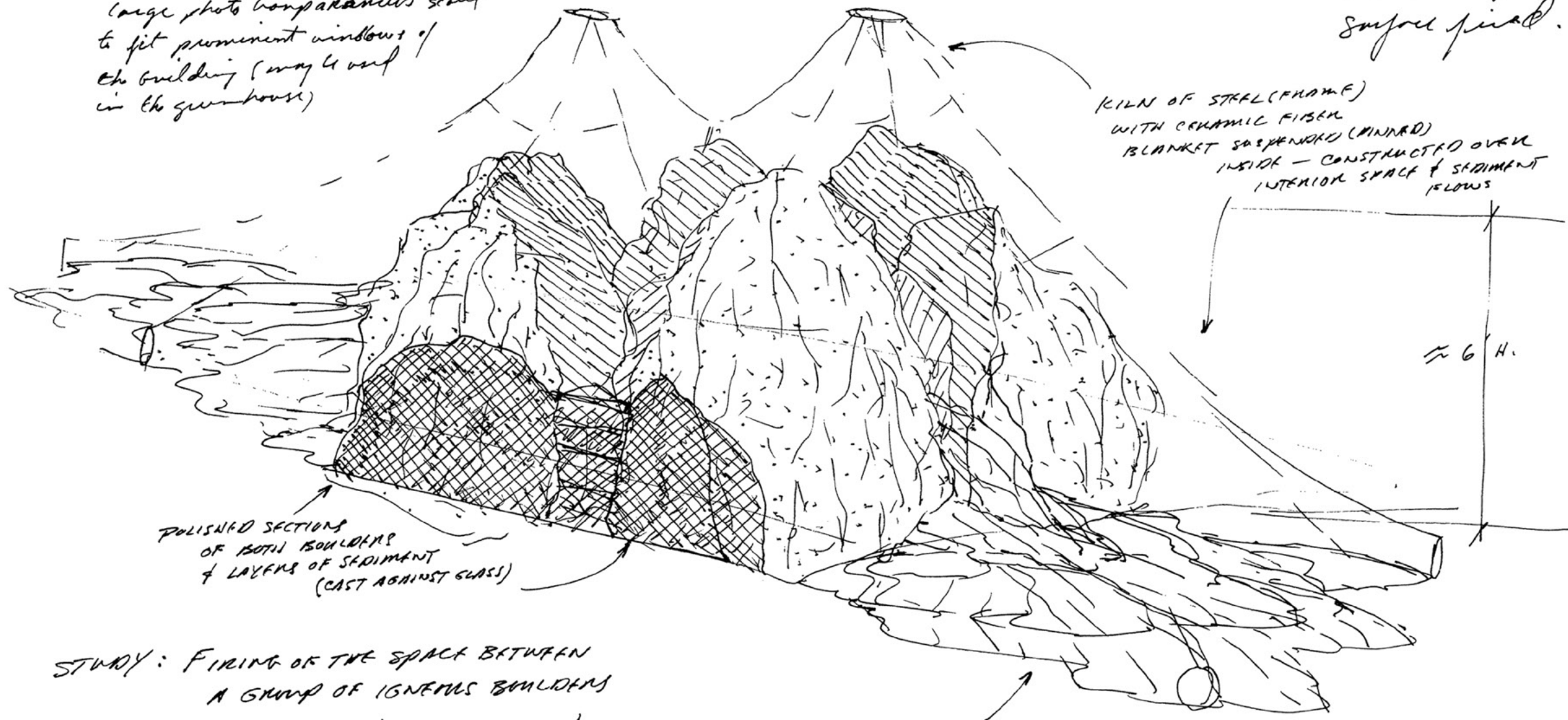


Fig. 271. Conceptual study, Wrangellia I & II, digital print, pen on paper, 11 in. x 17 in., circa 2000.



## Wrangellia I & II

Text as shown on the proposals, Fig. 272 and 273.

These drawings were commissioned by the University of Washington (Henry Gallery) in 2000, to study a possible kiln project on the UW campus. They are part of the university's permanent collection and are installed for public viewing on campus.

Wrangellia terrane: part of an even larger group of exotic terranes - the Wrangellia composite terrane - that has been accreted to Alaska and the North American Continent during the past few hundred million years. On the basis of geophysical and fossil evidence, rocks of the Wrangellia terrane were formed in a tropical environment thousands of miles south of its present position.  
<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/geology/parks/wrst/>

SELECTED TEXT PANELS: WRANGELLIA I - left to right.

Yellow tinted areas are fired areas/heat zones or flues. Kiln/furnaces components are shown by yellow tint and structural lines; they are made of a steel framework and high-temperature insulating blanket or refractory cement. Insulating blanket kiln/furnaces are removed after the firing. Firing is done by propane.

Two-row rock grouping from different geologic terranes with seafloor sediment from the Juan de Fuca plate of the Pacific Coast of Washington. Outside facing surfaces of base rocks are cut and polished. Kiln/furnace's form reminiscent of Cascade Mountains. Unpolished portions of rocks and the space between them is fired, altering rocks and fusing the seafloor sediment.

Partial List of Terranes of Washington State and British Columbia:

Wrangellia  
Alexander Terrane  
Turtleback Terrane  
Deadman Bay Terrane  
Garrison Terrane  
Decatur Terrane  
Haro Terrane  
Methow Terrane (North and South subterrane)  
Chilliwack Terrane  
Vedder Terrane  
Easton Terrane  
Hozameen Terrane  
Quesnellia Terrane  
Cache Creek Terrane  
Olympic Terrane  
Okanogan Subcontinent  
North Cascade Micro-continent  
Insular Superterrane  
Intermontane Superterrane

Intrinsic or inert fire: basalt columns cut and polished, cast iron streetlight poles and lamps. Elements are not site-fired (prefired during their original formation), may be distributed differently than shown.

Cast iron "meteor" with fossil surface in seafloor sediment impact crater. Interior of crater and meteor fired, kiln removed at the peak of the firing revealing red-hot meteor and sediment.

Two rocks from different geologic terranes with Mt. St. Helens volcanic ash. Space between the rocks fired altering the rocks and fusing the volcanic ash.

SELECTED TEXT PANELS: WRANGELLIA II - left to right.

Standing cast iron octopus with rocks from Wrangellia and Alexander Terranes and seafloor sediment. Outside facing surfaces of base rocks are cut and polished.. All elements fired to high temperature except for polished areas, rocks are altered by heat, cast iron is allowed to rust over time.

Cast iron standing octopus with structure developed from windows of UW's Gothic church. Cast Iron, cast refractory cement. Octopus is allowed to rust over time, interior of structure altered by heat.

Horizontal cast iron octopus as an intrusion into a stratigraphic sequence (sill). Sedimentary rocks (ophiolitic/turbidite sandstone) or similar rocks. Octopus is allowed to rust over time, interior of structure altered by heat.

Drifting (cast iron) octopus with coating of seafloor sediment from the Juan de Fuca Plate. 3 cast iron flues connected underground to kiln/furnace forming a downdraft system for firing.

Construction sequence:  
Cast iron elements are installed with underground flue connections.

Seafloor sediment thickly placed over entire octopus.

Sediment partially eroded from octopus by natural rain or high pressure hose revealing 40 - 60% of octopus.

Kiln/furnace placed around octopus/sediment assemblage and fired.

Kiln/furnace removed. Octopus will rust which further alters fired sediment by leaching and staining; flues and underground system left standing, allowed to rust.







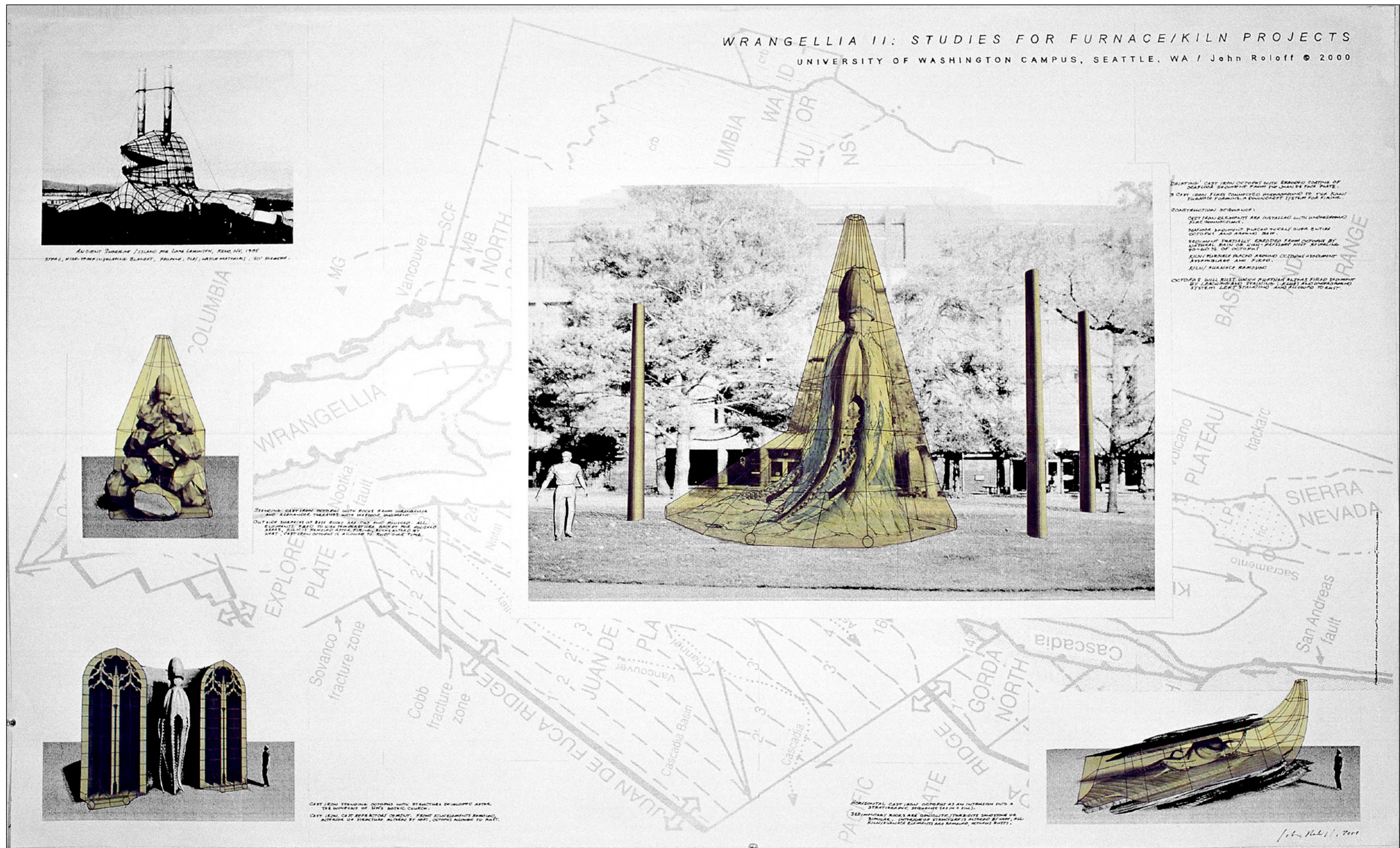


Fig. 273. Wrangellia II: Studies for Furnace/Kiln Project, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, watercolor, ink, digital print on drafting film, 36 in x 48 in., 2000.





Fig. 274. Derelict fuel bunker, estuary, Oakland, CA, circa 1985.





Fig. 275. *Séance (Entropic) I*, detail, full size 40 in. h. x 72 in. w., b&w photograph, orange slices, acrylic, metal frame, silicone, 1995.

### *Ancient Sunlight:*

*Ancient Sunlight* incorporates a set of works that engage a syntax of materials and processes to expand, alchemical, ecological and metabolic concepts of the kiln works. These conversations occur between organic and inorganic, environmental and human systems, geologic and Anthropocene time-frames. Projects such as: the video installation and concepts of *51 Million BTU's/ Metabolism Study/C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>, e<sup>-</sup>, NaCl*, 1990-2008, the proposals and environmental studies, *Study: In-Situ Vitrification Project - High Temperature Remediation of Contaminated Soil*, 1984, and, *If the Sea were Gasoline - It Would Still be Nature*, 2006-08, as well as in the installations, *Rotting Flame I & II*, 1995-2010, *Pitzer Project: A Prototype System for the Production and Redistribution of Ancient Sunlight*, 1996, the photo-process, photographic, other proposals and works, presented herein, are examples of ancient sunlight conceptually and materially studied, proposed or made manifest in various forms.

The video works: *51 Million BTU's/ Metabolism Study/C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>, e<sup>-</sup>, NaCl*, 1991-1993, and the installation, *Pitzer Project: A Prototype System for the Production and Redistribution of Ancient Sunlight* and its larger form, *Orchards of the Sun*, both 1996, specifically extend the concepts of the kiln series, *51 Million BTU's* and *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, by examining the production and redistribution of ancient (Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic) sunlight who's energy was used in the form of fossil fuels in the Anthropocene and the life-blood of the kilns. Remaining works presented in the context of *Ancient Sunlight*, consider and extend animate and material qualities of the kilns as metabolic and alchemical agents through different lenses of form and process.

*Ancient Sunlight* may also be understood as a catalyst to reveal alternate, "organic," interpretations of "inorganic" substances, sites and conditions. This revelation is implicit and intuited in the conceptualization of the kiln projects as a function of a systemic, poetic, world view of materiality and natural process. The geologic condition of terrestrial, abyssal, mantle and magmatic fluidity over large orders of time and magnitude in the forms of metamorphic facies, perturbations, dynamic phase space and material change suggest this para-organic interpretation. Serpentinization, skarn deposits, carbonate deposition, magmatic plumes driving plate tectonics and continental accretion are recognizable suggestions of an organic influence and metaphor within a range of inorganic schemata. The botanic aspect of *Ancient Sunlight* gives a more literal notion of this interpretation as implemented in the kiln projects: *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, 1982, *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1984, *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, 1988, *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, 1989, and *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, 1992. In *Deluge (Radiant Sleep/Helium Ash)*, 1994, the image of the slowed down firing sequence of the "Virgin" oculus kiln superimposed with neurotransmitter chemicals suggests a parallel process of *Land Kiln* firings to metabolic systems of the human body. Analogs are proposed to the transformation of food into vision, the ability to see light if not consciousness itself. Iterations such as those found in *Ancient Sunlight* become conceptual and meta-systemic components of the legacy of Project: *Land Kilns*.





Fig. 276. *51 Million BTU's*, 3 channel video installation, color, sound, 00:26:00, "American Ceramics," Priamàr Fortress, Palazzo della Sibilla, Savona, Italy, 1992.

### *Ancient Sunlight: Video Works*

The initial video work examining the kiln projects is a 3 channel video installation and documentation, *51 Million BTU's* of the firing of the kilns in the series of the same name. Each video channel is edited to sync the same stages of the firing of each of the kiln projects in this series: *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, (1988), *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, (1989) and *Humboldt Ship*, (1989).

In an experimental, prototype version of *51 Million BTU's / Metabolism Study / C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>, e<sup>-</sup>, NaCl*, 1991-1993, a single three-tube video projector was used to project an interwoven sequence of the furnace firings onto a rock salt screen. The salt crystal screen references the generally marine environment in which botanic materials were deposited in geologic time to produce contemporary fossil fuels. The intent of the projection is to symbolically "return the fuel to the sun," by creating a dissolution of the images into pure radiance and a conceptual form of ancient sunlight traced back to the electrical current powering the projector. The salt crystals act as prisms to diffract the projected video image breaking down its visual structure. In this version, the projected images underwent a moderate degree of transformation towards sunlight, still retaining some of their form.

Further versions of the project, *Phase II/Scenario A-C - 51 Million BTU's / Metabolism Study / C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>, e<sup>-</sup>, NaCl*, fig. 275-276, propose using three, 3-tube video projectors (or more current technology) projecting onto a heavily rock salt encrusted screen to completely transform the projected image into an intense undifferentiated light reminiscent of sunlight. A conceptual Anthropocene energy cycle is completed by powering the video projector through solar panels using contemporary sunlight. Simultaneous sound and image of non-diffracted video would be seen on adjacent monitors so the viewer can see the degree of transformation taking place.





Fig. 277. 51 Million BTU's / Metabolism Study /  $C_3H_8$ , e-, NaCl, single channel video projection, salt crystal screen, color, sound, 00:47:00, 6 ft. x 8 ft., "Constructions Of Meaning," Illinois State University, Normal, IL, 1990.

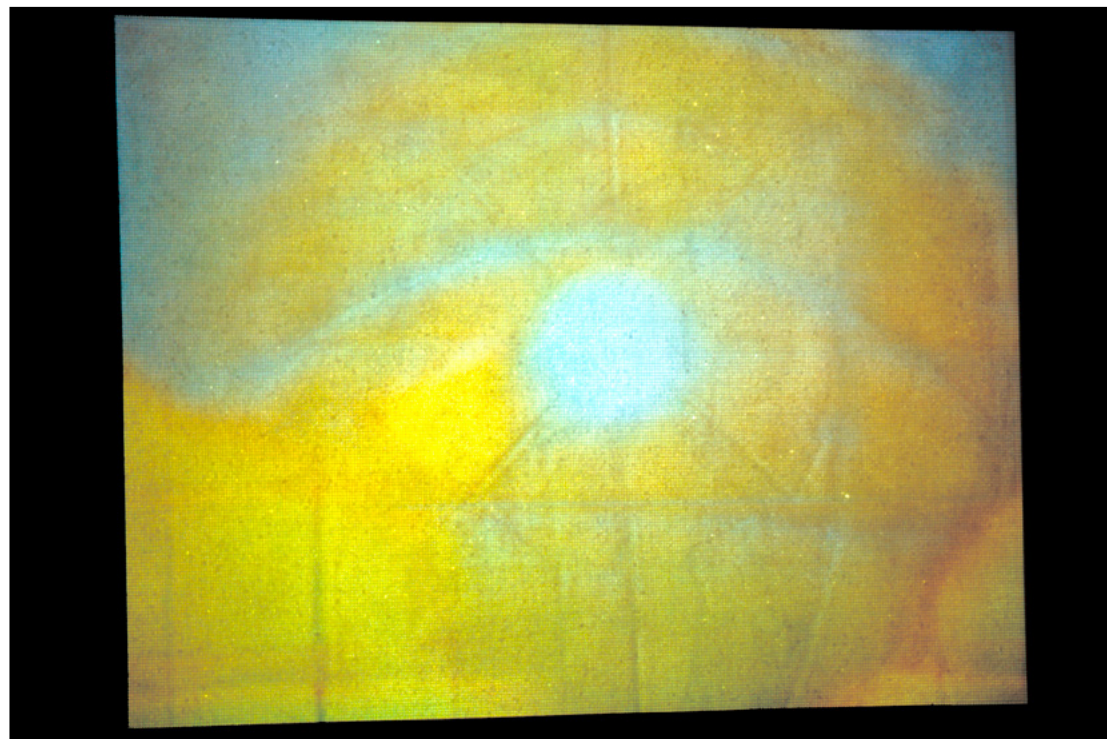


Fig. 278. 51 Million BTU's / Metabolism Study /  $C_3H_8$ , e-, NaCl, single channel video projection, salt crystal screen, color, sound, 00:47:00, 6 ft. x 8 ft., "Constructions Of Meaning," Illinois State University, Normal, IL, 1990.

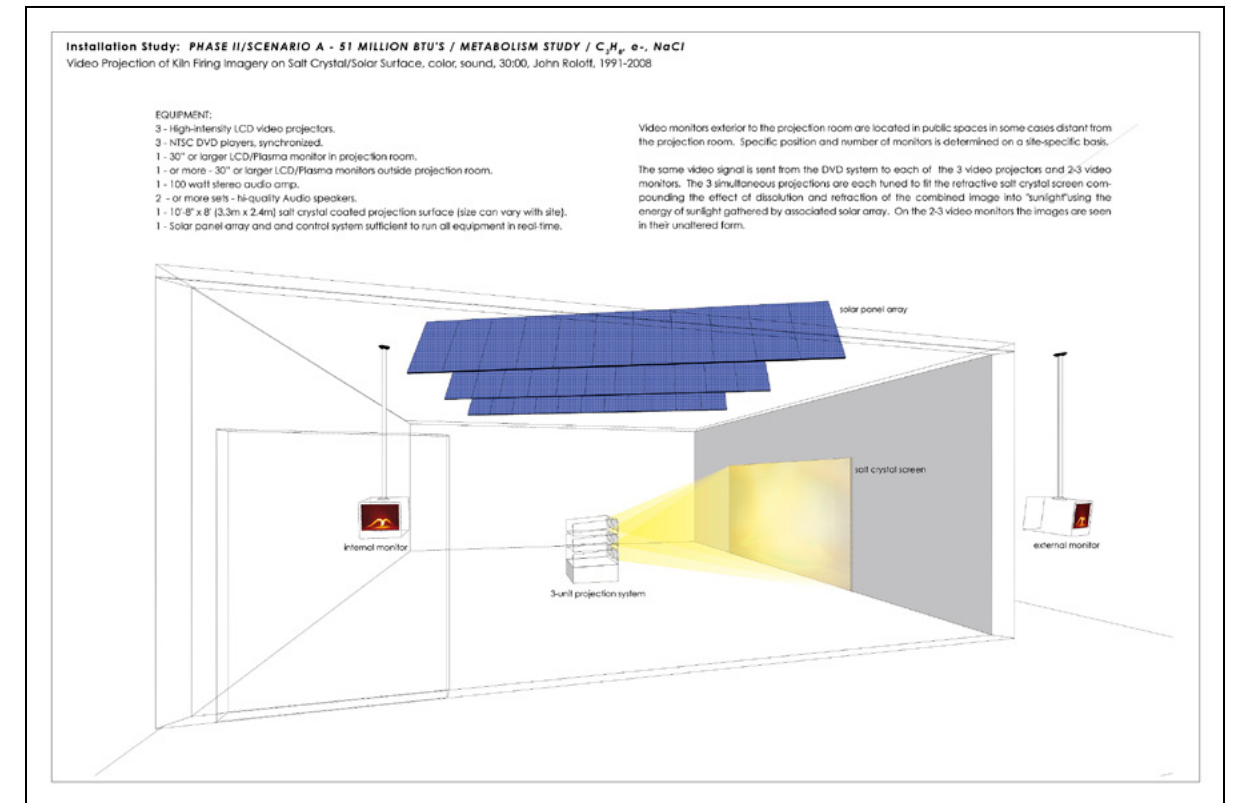


Fig. 279. Phase II/Scenario A - 51 Million BTU's / Metabolism Study /  $C_3H_8$ , e-, NaCl, installation study for solar powered, multi-channel video, salt crystal screen, monitors, color, sound, 00:30:00, dimensions variable, 1991-2008.

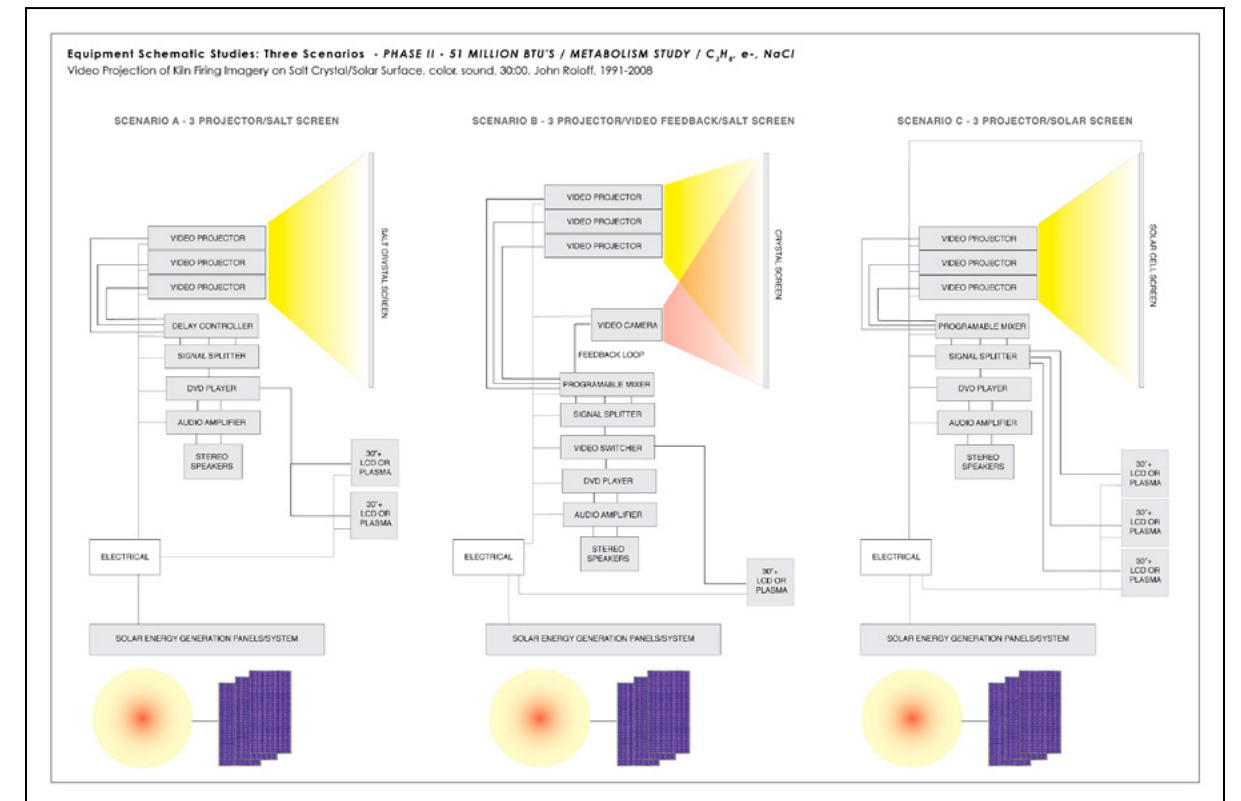


Fig. 280. Phase II/Scenario A-C - 51 Million BTU's / Metabolism Study /  $C_3H_8$ , e-, NaCl, schematic studies for solar powered, multi-channel video, salt crystal screen, monitors, color, sound, 00:30:00, dimensions variable, 1991-2008.





Fig. 281. *Deluge (Radiant Sleep/Helium Ash)*, single channel video, color, sound, 00:20:00, installed with *Rotting Flame*, see Fig. 304. "Color in the Shadows, Bay Area Cyber Art," CCAC, Oakland, CA, 1994.

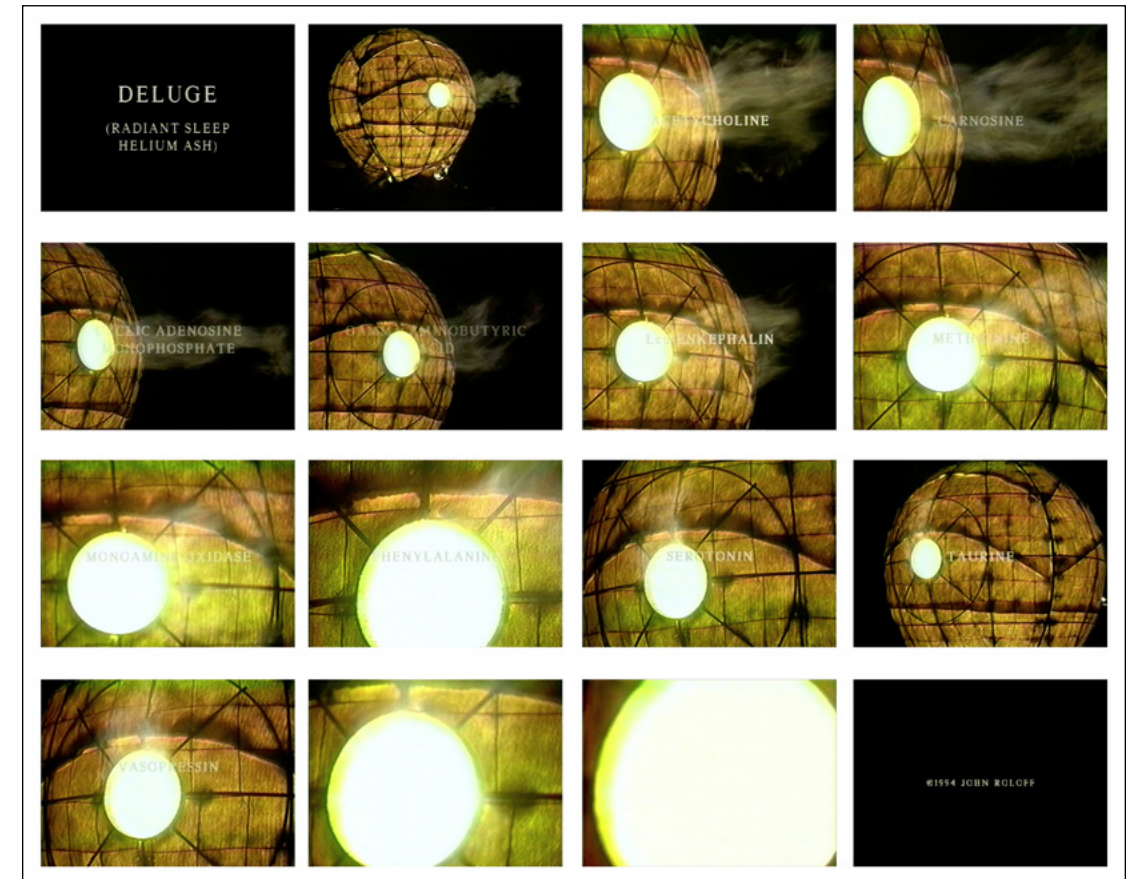


Fig. 282. *Deluge (Radiant Sleep/Helium Ash)*, video stills, single channel video, color, sound, 00:20:00, 1994.

### *Deluge (Radiant Sleep/Helium Ash)*

The structure of the video piece *Deluge (Radiant Sleep/Helium Ash)*, 1994, is an alphabetical listing of the names of neural chemicals that sequentially appear and then dissolve into the exhaust flame from the site-performance work, *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*, 1988. The video image of the firing used for *Deluge...* has been slowed down to 1/10th the speed of the original tape. The dissolution of scientific terms describing enzymes, amino acids and psycho-active brain chemicals into the elemental fire emerging from an abstract oculus is an enlargement of rational, linear descriptions of consciousness onto a primal landscape where "time becomes emotion, chemistry spirit and matter theater"<sup>1</sup> The video was shown in conjunction with *Rotting Flame*, 1994, in "Color in the Shadows: Bay Area Cyber Art, curated by Mark Bartlett, 1994.

As part of a larger conceptual structure, *Synthetic Ecologies* (developed further as a "Project" treatise of the same title, under development) statement about flux, transformation and poetics, *Deluge (Radiant Sleep/Helium Ash)* is in the tradition of Heraclitus and his famous river, the 'Natural Philosophy' of Goethe and the systems of Serres and Deleuze, among many others.

<sup>1</sup>Roloff, John *\_Artery Magazine\_*, Feb-Mar 1983,



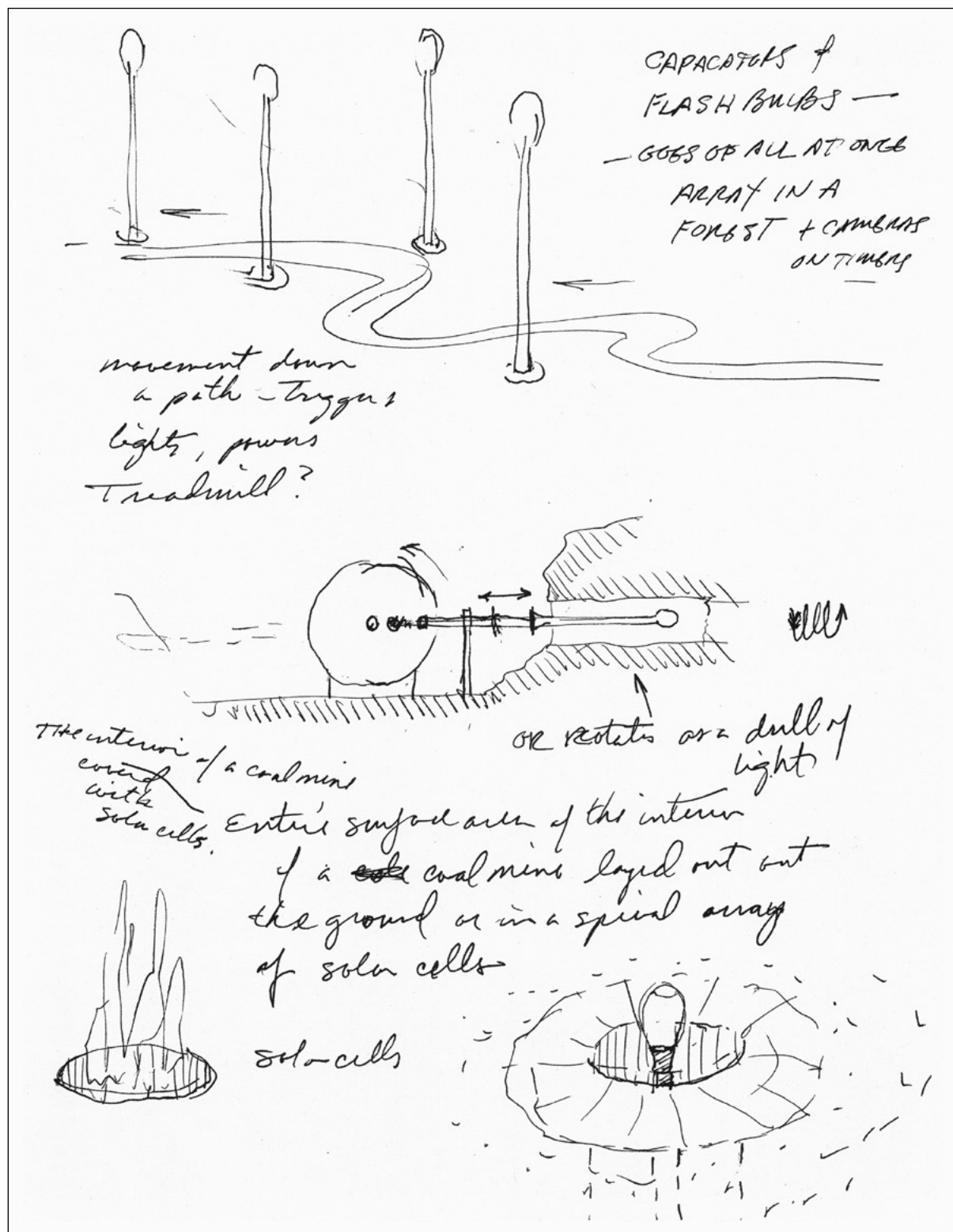


Fig. 283. Loose notebook page, conceptual study for lamp post works, pen on paper, 8.5 in. x 11 in., circa 1996.

### Ancient Sunlight: Concepts, Proposals and Projects

Concepts of transformation derived from *Ancient Sunlight* include proposals such as: *Study: In-Situ Vitri- fication Project - High Temperature Remediation of Contaminated Soil*, 1984, *Orchard of the Sun V*, 1989, *Vanishing Ship: The Orchard of Tears*, 1990, as well as *If the Sea Were Gasoline - It Would Still be Nature*, 2006-8. These ideas range between a response to a specific site or opportunity to examining large-scale issues related to geo-chemistry and global metabolism. *Pitzer Project: A Prototype System for the Production and Redistribution of Ancient Sunlight*, 1996, a completed project, and related proposals or studies such as *Orchards of the Sun*, 1996, are examples of a wide range of energy and metabolism concepts explored as extensions of the kiln works and ecological issues in the 1990's. The street lamp used in these projects was explored in numerous drawings for installations and became an icon of this series. Photographic works, in addition to documentation and conceptual images from the early 1980's (fig. 61-65) include *Draped Flames*, 1995 and *Draped Images V*, 1998, are part of a much larger body of architectural-scale photographs and photographic installations from the mid-1990's to the present, that will be examined in *Photo Works 1981-2019, Synthetic Ecologies*, a volume related to the 'Project' series, such as *Project: Land Kilns*. In these photographs, like the street lamp, the flame and it's co-conspirator, the flower, often in the form of an orchid - as in the kiln works, *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid* and *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*. The installation of *Rotting Flame, I and II*, 1994-2009, and a series of related photo-pro- cess works, such as: *Metabolism Study: Falling Knight*, 1995, employing whole or sliced oranges to affect the photographic image as analogs to the firing process and transformation in general. Mark Bartlett's illuminating essay *xroloffx@knight.com*, 1996, examines the photo-process works, the kiln projects in the context of contemporary art and psychoanalytic theory. *If the Sea Were Gasoline - It Would Still be Nature* with it's global examination of the geo-chemistry available for gasoline seas and questioning of values of ma- teriality in Anthropocene times, is an appropriate representative of the *Felsic/Mafic/Carbonate Facies* group of environmental studies. The genesis of this series of investigations can be traced to the research and site perceptions of the kiln works and *Ancient Sunlight* in particular.



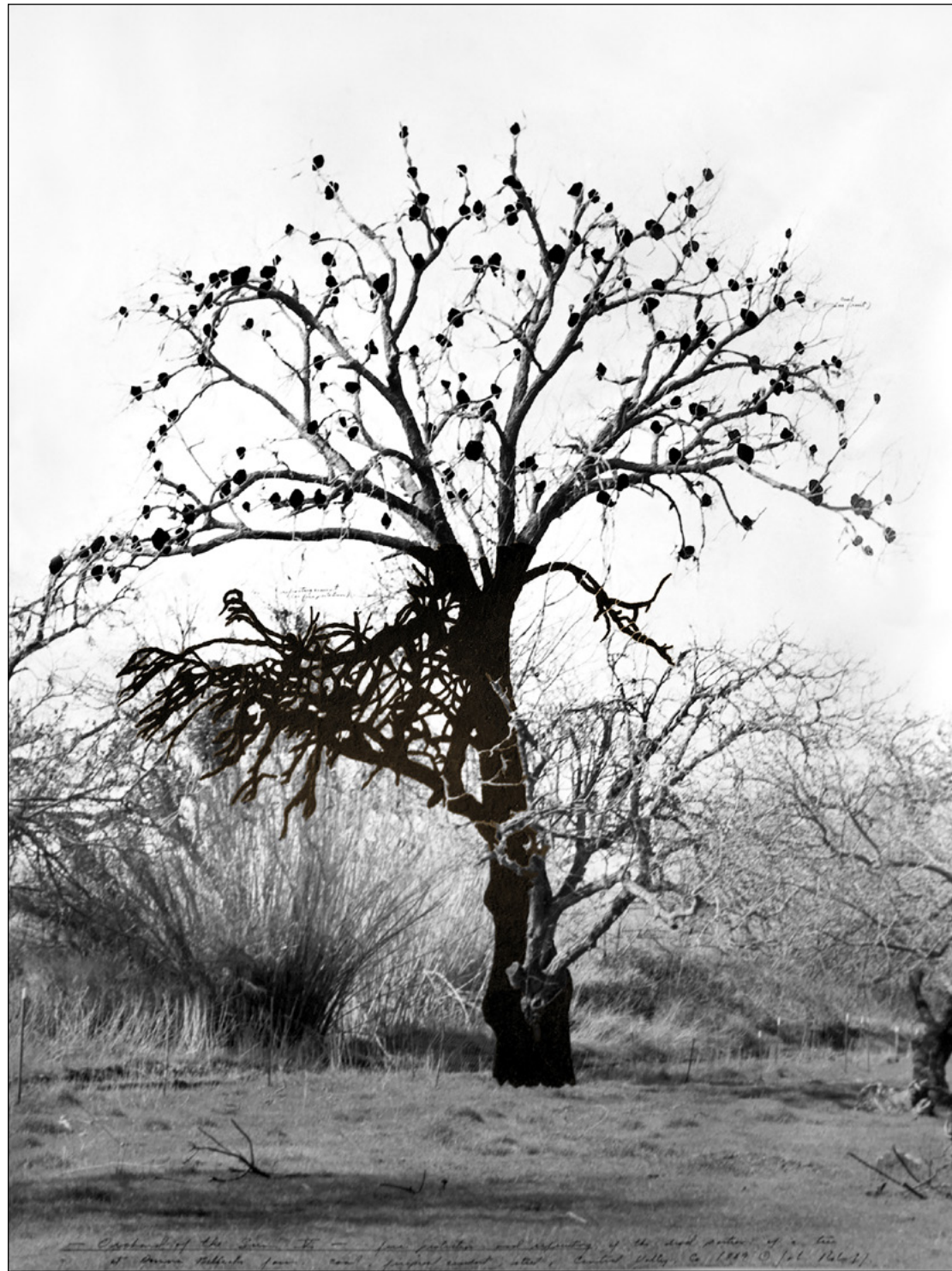


Fig. 284. *Orchard of the Sun V*, conceptual proposal, b&w photograph, ink, acrylic paint, 40 in. x 30 in. Concept to re-fruit with coal and insulation with refractory cement the dead portion of a tree at Donna Billick's farm, Central Valley, CA, 1989. Collection: Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Legion of Honor, San Francisco, CA.

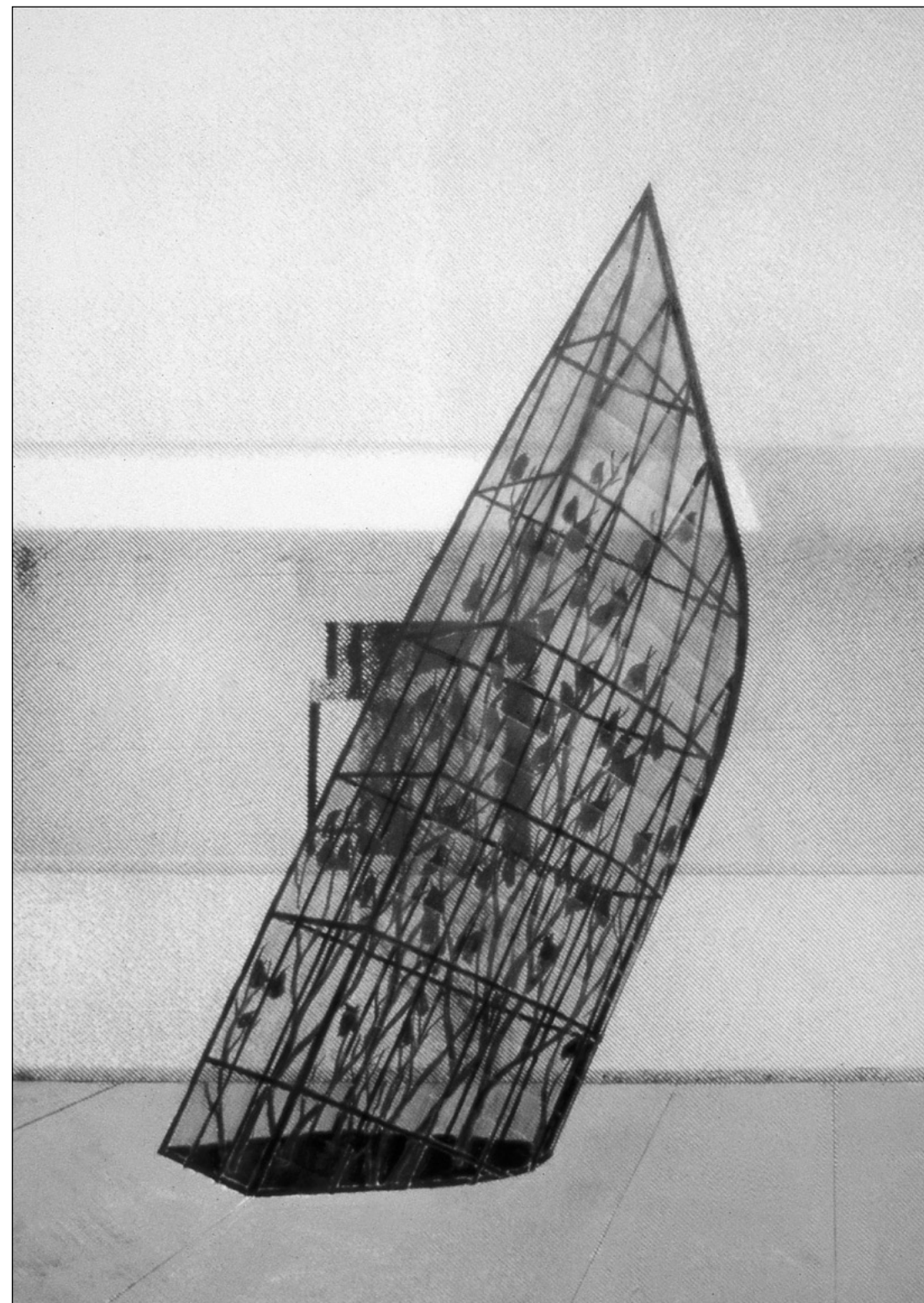


Fig. 285. *Vanishing Ship: The Orchard of Tears*, detail, 32.5 in. x 42 in., pencil, acrylic on paper. A proposal for a ship installation of steel, gray glass and branches laden with coal in a moist environment, proposed for the Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME, 1990.



*Study: In-Situ Vitrification Project - High Temperature Remediation of Contaminated Soil*

Gas Works Park, Seattle, WA, 1984

*Study: In-Situ Vitrification Project - High Temperature Remediation of Contaminated Soil*, is an artwork proposal for the hi-temperature remediation of contaminated soil at Gas Works Park, Seattle, WA. Proposed is to work with engineers to perform a series of "choreographies" with the fusion process and the fused materials created by the process of "in-situ vitrification." Selected areas of contaminated soil at Gas Works Park would be fused in the earth using the in-situ vitrification process developed by Battelle - Pacific Northwest Laboratories in Richland WA, in the early 1970's for the remediation of contaminated soil and nuclear waste materials.

The heating of the soil is accomplished electrically powered joule-heating-electrodes inserted directly in the contaminated soil powered by hi-tension electrical lines resulting in temperatures as high as 1700° C, analogous to the *Land Kilns*, using a different form of activation. The final product is a dense, glass-like material in blocks weighing over 20,000 lbs. (9100 kg.) in which the contaminants are broken down, encapsulated and rendered inert. The "choreography" of this process could include: Scale, layout and timing of the fusion sites and operations; whole and partial excavation of fused blocks with access to special fusion areas; removal and display of the blocks in proximate and remote sites; a parade of blocks/equipment through the city of Seattle on trucks or heavy equipment.

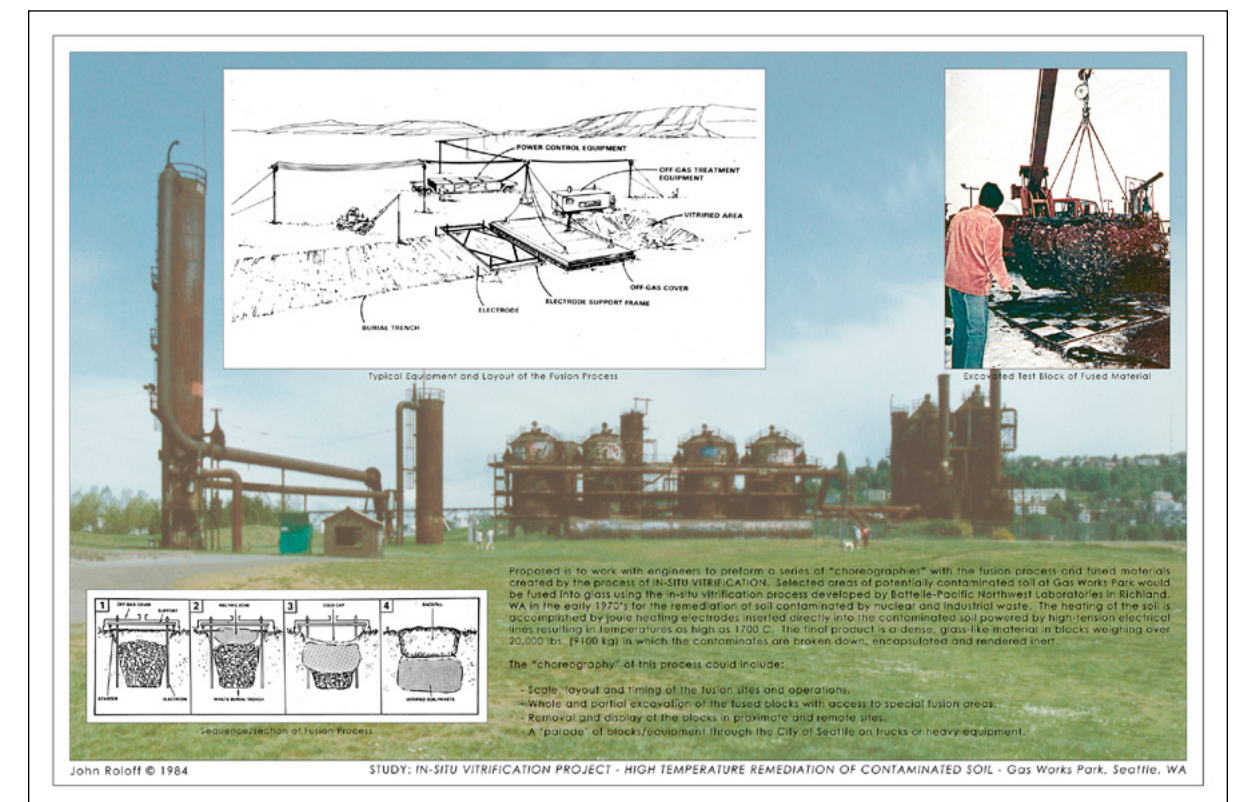


Fig. 286. *Study: In-Situ Vitrification Project - High Temperature Remediation of Contaminated Soil*, project proposal, size variable, Gas Works Park, Seattle, WA, 1984. Images courtesy of Craig Timmerman, Research Engineer, Battelle, Pacific Northwest Laboratories.



*Pitzer Project: A Prototype System for the Production and Redistribution of Ancient Sunlight*

Pitzer College, Claremont Colleges Claremont, CA / 1996

*Pitzer Project: A Prototype System for the Production and Redistribution of Ancient Sunlight*, was conceptualized for the Los Angeles area, "the City of Light." The project is comprised of two interconnected sculptural elements. The first is an enclosed, gasoline-powered electrical generator with computer controlled on/off-timing cycles. The exhaust gas of the generator is vented through a 14-ft. high aluminum stack. A length of 2-in. electrical conduit to the second element, a 14-ft. high commercial-duty streetlight, connects the generator and flue. The electrical system was installed by professional electricians and is grounded by a copper rod driven into the soil below. The entire system is mounted on and unified by a low concrete foundation. The length of the on/off cycles of the light is experimental, aspiring for a balance of anticipation, contemplation and surprise for the viewer. A randomized cycle of illumination 2 to 8 minutes long, occurring 2 or 3 times over a 24 hour period alternating with long intervals of dormancy is a typical timing sequence.

*Pitzer Project* was developed as a prototype and sub-unit for a proposed larger work, *Orchards of the Sun*. The intention of both of these projects is to investigate the production and redistribution of ancient (Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic) sunlight as it relates to the origin and properties of fossil fuels. This is being explored by the separation and display of elements of the carbon/fossil fuel/light cycle into its industrial and natural elements. Eventual components of the complete version of *Orchards of the Sun* could include representatives of the complete cycle: ponds of blue green algae, coniferous groves, greenhouses, oil wells and pumps, cracking towers, etc. This project may be thought of as a time machine, summoning and revealing a form of the sunlight that fell on ancient forests or mats of algae floating on ancient seas which transformed atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> through photosynthesis into energy laden organic materials, deposited and transformed geologically into what are now called fossil fuels. The ignition and transformation into electricity of these fuels in the generator of *Pitzer Project* releases the ancient sun's energy in the form of light in the streetlight. This process may also be seen as a possible analog to the metabolic systems of the human body with transformation of food into vision, the ability to see light.

The aesthetic of *Pitzer Project* is industrial. The elements of the project were selected or fabricated primarily from the commercial/electrical and city-planning industries. This feature emphasizes the production and commercial aspects of the process of transformation of fossil fuels into light that occurs continuously around the world. It also alludes to the scale of this production on a worldwide basis and the amount of materials actually used in this process. In a way of speaking there already exist tremendous "orchards of the sun;" e.g., the city of Chicago has over 175,000 streetlights powered by a range of fossil-derived-fuels that operate every night (source: the internet), not to mention the vast arrays of light production surrounding *Pitzer Project's* site in Southern California.

The primary intention of *Pitzer Project* as an artwork is not critique but objective revelation. Through formal, performative and referential means it presents a tangible facet of the consciousness persisting from the industrial revolution that pervades our current world, one that is deeply intertwined with our often subjective view of nature. The industrial transformation of fuel into light as demonstrated in *Pitzer Project* presents this relationship in an essential, structural form including an element of the primeval as the system (behaving as an 'organism') may activate itself unexpectedly at any time day or night.

*Orchards of the Sun*, 1996, a proposed, expanded form of *Pitzer Project*, includes representatives of the complete carbon cycle bridging geologic and contemporary times: ponds of blue green algae, coniferous groves, greenhouses, oil wells and pumps, cracking towers and human management. This project utilizes contemporary sunlight to create a modern analog of the environmental system of ancient sunlight engaging forests or mats of algae floating on ancient seas, transforming atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> through photosynthesis into energy laden organic materials, subsequently deposited and transformed geologically into the raw materials from which fossils are now extracted and refined.

John Roloff, 1997



Fig. 287. *Pitzer Project: a Prototype System for the Production and Distribution of Ancient Sunlight*, 4 ft. h. x 17 ft., gasoline generator/flue with computerized timer, electrical conduit, commercial light pole, concrete foundation, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA, 1996 (no longer extant).



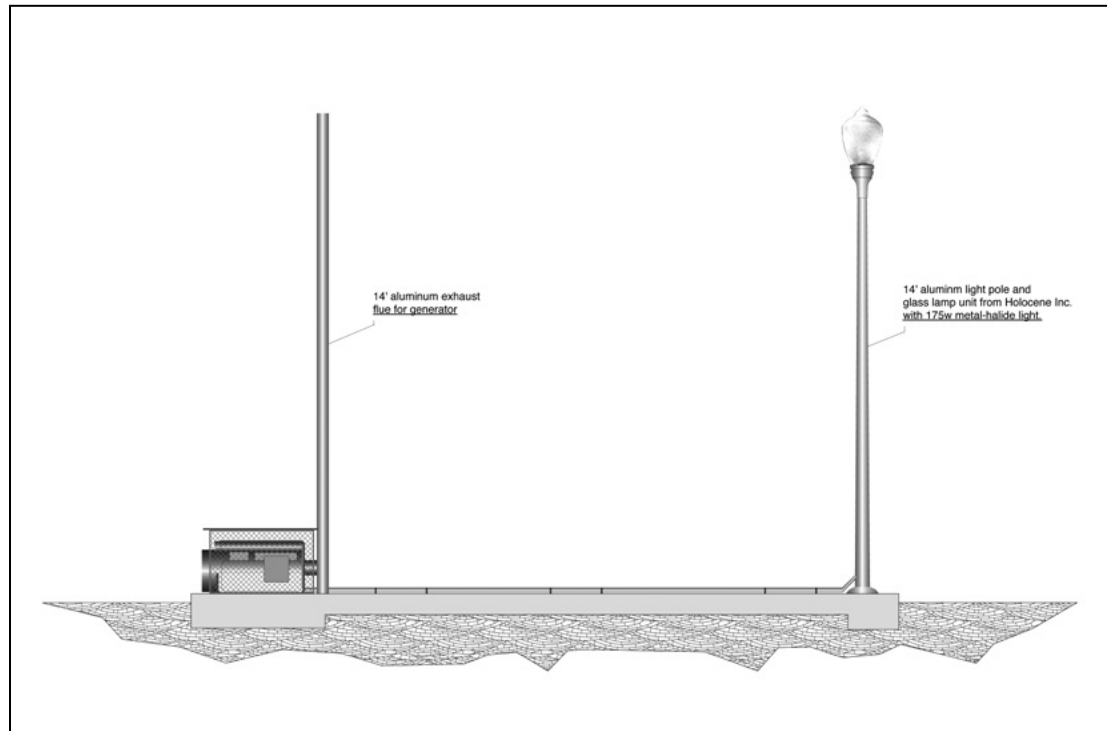


Fig. 288. Study: Pitzer Project: a Prototype System for the Production and Distribution of Ancient Sunlight, ink-jet print on paper, 24 in x 36 in., study for project installation, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA, 1996.

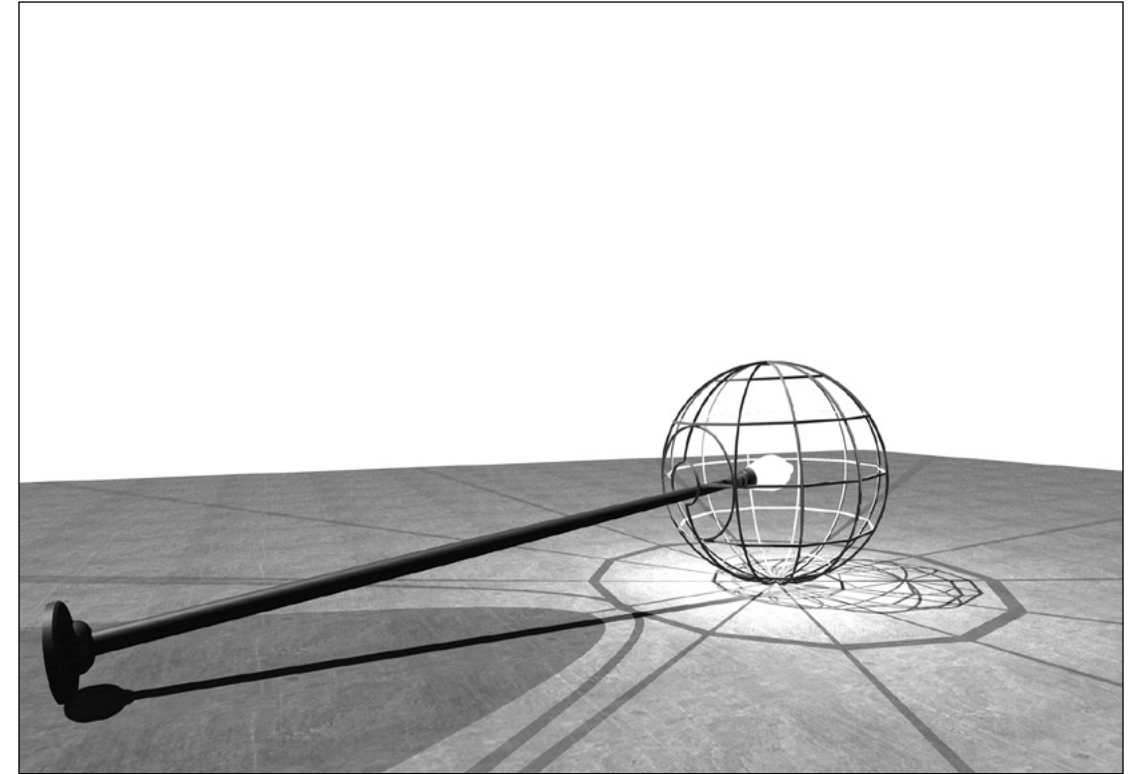


Fig. 290. Study: Streetlight/Oculus, concept drawing, 11 in. x 17 in., 1995.

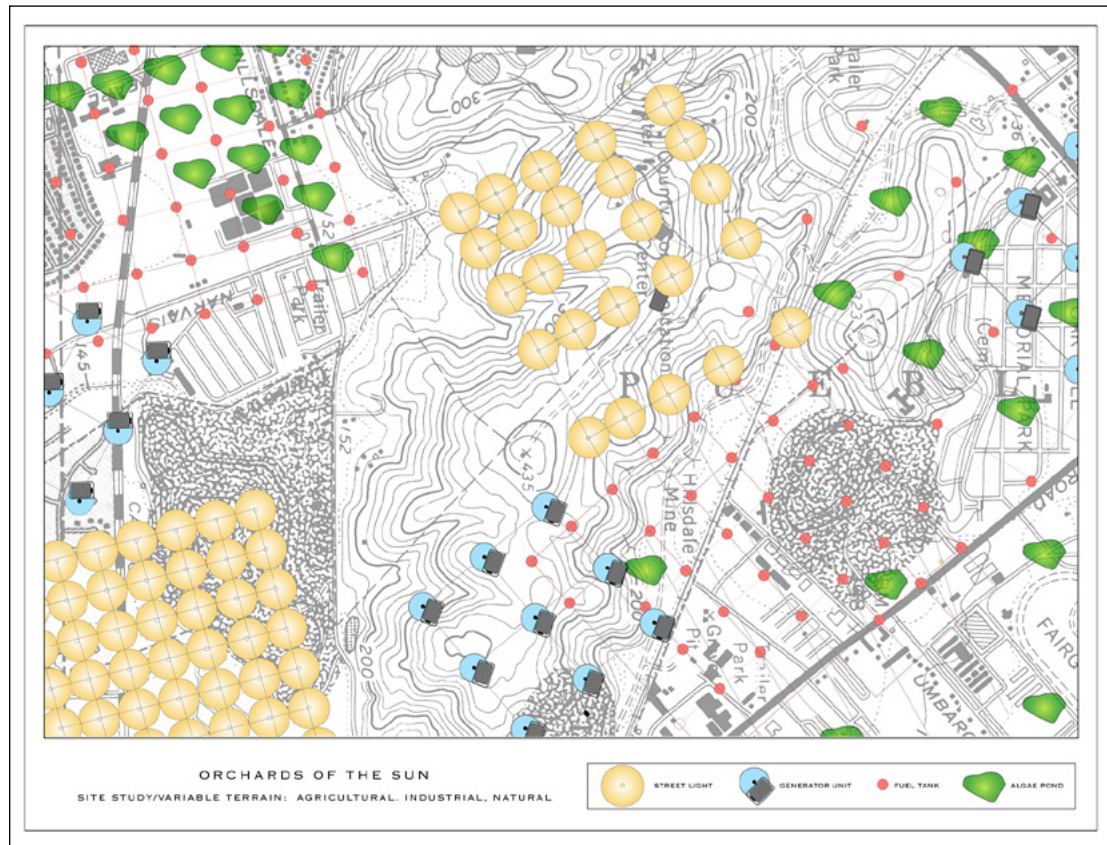


Fig. 289. Orchards of the Sun, conceptual site study for an expanded version of 'Pitzer Project..' for variable terrain: agricultural, industrial, natural, ink-jet print on paper, 24 in. x 36 in., 1996.

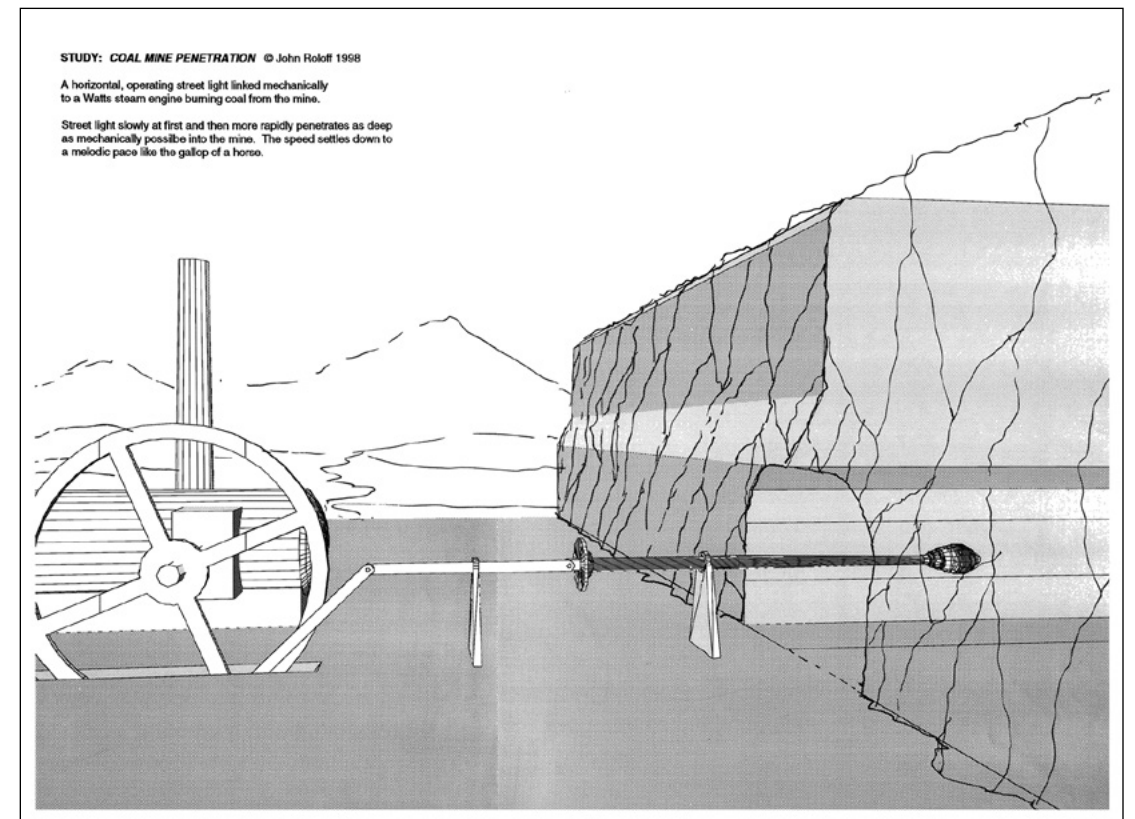


Fig. 291. Study: Coal Mine Penetration, concept drawing, 8.5 in. x 11 in., 1994.





Fig. 292. *Draped Flames I & II*, front installation view, 8 ft. h., b&w photo, angled walls, solo exhibition, Manchester Craftsman's Guild, Pittsburgh, PA, 1996.



Fig. 293. *Draped Flames I & II*, rear installation view, 8 ft. h., b&w photo, angled walls, solo exhibition, Manchester Craftsman's Guild, Pittsburgh, PA, 1996.



Fig. 294. *Draped Images V*, installation view, aluminum tubes, b&w photographs, 78 in. h., 16 in w., ea., solo exhibition: "The Rising Sea: Images and Constructions from South Florida and Other Selected Works," Museum of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth, FL. 1998.



### *Rotting Flame I*

#### Installations:

"Color in the Shadows, Bay Area Cyber Art," CCAC, Oakland, CA, 1994, curated by Mark Bartlett, 1994.

"Agricola: Four Works 1994-97," solo exhibition, Hartnell College, Salinas, CA. 1998.

"The Rising Sea: Images and Constructions from South Florida and Other Selected Works," Museum of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth, FL. 1998.

*Rotting Flame I*, first shown in, "Color in the Shadows, Bay Area Cyber Art," along with the video, *Deluge (Radiant Sleep/Helium Ash)*, 1994, is comprised of a branching steel armature in the shape of a large flame with over 400 ripe oranges impaled on spikes projecting from the structure. The structure is suspended out from a wall held in space by fine metal cables, the oranges are allowed to decay naturally given the conditions of the surrounding atmosphere.

### *Rotting Flame II*

#### Installation:

"Adventures of the Fire," The 5th World Ceramic Biennale Korea, Icheon World Ceramic Center, Icheon, Korea, curated by Jeonghee Choi, 2009.

*Rotting Flame II* was constructed in Korea from images of *Rotting Flame I*, it was the only non-ceramic work in the "Adventures of the Fire" exhibition.

*Rotting Flame I & II* are instruments of chemical transformation and time. The processes of fire and decay are essentially two forms of oxidation/reduction, fire is relatively fast and decay is much slower. In this sense *Rotting Flame I & II* are the image of fire animated within the time frame of the decay of oranges. The orange color of the citrus also parallels the orange incandescence of unburnt carbon particles of a reducing flame. Directly related to the kiln projects shown in this volume, where fire was an agent of change compressing geologic time, *Rotting Flame I & II* expand the time of ignition into a register of biologic time. The orange/flame works engage metaphorically with metabolic and entropic change associated with landscape, photosynthesis and other bio/geochemical cycles as well as human metabolism, agriculture and energy systems. Many of these concepts were further explored in a subsequent body of process/photo works such as *Robes I & II*, 1995, *Séance (Entropic) I & II*, 1995 and *Thyroid Portraits/Knights (1-6)*, as well as in the sculptures, *Surrogate System*, 1995 and *Novum Organum II (Two Suns)*, 1998.

John Roloff, 1994/1999/2009/2015



Fig. 295. *Rotting Flame I*, installation view, 400+ oranges on steel armature, 6 ft. h . x 12 ft.. l., "Color in the Shadows, Bay Area Cyber Art," CCAC, Oakland, CA, 1994.



Fig. 296. *Rotting Flame II*, installation view, 300+ oranges on steel armature, 4 ft.. h . x 11 ft.. l., "Adventures of the Fire," The 5th World Ceramic Biennale Korea, Icheon World Ceramic Center, Icheon, Korea 2009.



*Photo / Process Works*

The photo/process series is a group of related photographic works done from 1995 to 1996. Physically, these works are photographic images with thinly sliced sections of orange placed on selected areas of the pictures. This arrangement is permanently sealed and kept under compression by the glazing and frame of the work. The orange slices are allowed to interact over time with the surface chemistry of the photograph consuming and altering portions of the image.

The interaction of orange slices with these images investigate a complex array of symbols representing change including: metabolism as an energy system and as aesthetic or psychological ferment; the historic transformation and catalysis of the west by medieval Asiatic invaders, conquerors from the land where the orange originated; corrosion and entropy as represented as a form of the sublime, anthropomorphized and expressed through images of warfare and spirituality.

The photo/orange slice works are preceded by *Rotting Flame*, 1994, a work that examined decay as a form of fire. These photo process works are theoretically related to a series of landscape furnace/kiln sculptures of the 1980's and early 1990's such as *Wave Ship (of Fire)*, 1994, *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, 1989 and *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, 1992. Through the use of fire as a process of nature, generated and contained by industrial technology, these pieces activated images associated with landscape, seascape, metabolic cycles, photosynthesis and fossil fuels in geologic and contemporary time. The sealed photo/orange slice pieces may be seen as an interiorization and exploration of systemic/psychic sites in human time paralleling the earlier environmental sculptures.

John Roloff 1995 (revised, 1999)



Fig. 297. *Metabolism Study: Falling Knight*, 78 in. x 78 in., b&w photograph, orange slices, tempered glass, metal frame, silicone, 1995. Solo exhibition, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, 1996.





Fig. 298. *Robes I & II*, 93 in. x 93 in. each, b&w photograph, orange slices, tempered glass, metal frame, silicone, 1995.  
Image: solo exhibition: *The Sea Within the Land*, Anglim Gilbert Gallery, San Francisco, CA, 2019.





Fig. 299. Left: *Thyroid Portrait/Knights VI*, 32 in. X 32 in., each, b&w photograph, orange slices, acrylic sheet, metal frame, silicone, intermediate stage of orange reaction with image, right: *Studies: Pituitary Portrait/Knights I-VI*, (studies for 60 in. x 40 in process works), 8 in. x 12 in., each, pastel on digital print. Installation: "Photoscene Cologne," EAC--Versuchsreihe, Cologne, Germany 1996.



Fig. 300. *Thyroid Portrait/Knights I-VI*, 32 in. X 32 in., each, b&w photograph, orange slices, acrylic sheet, metal frame, silicone, early stages of orange reaction with image. 1995.



Fig. 301. *Séance (Entropic) I & II*, 40 in. h. x 72 in. w., each, b&w photograph, orange slices, acrylic, metal frame, silicone, 1995. Image: solo exhibition, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, 1996.





Fig. 302. *Surrogate System*, 72 in. x 40 in. x 24 in., steel, glass, oranges, silver paint, circa 1996.

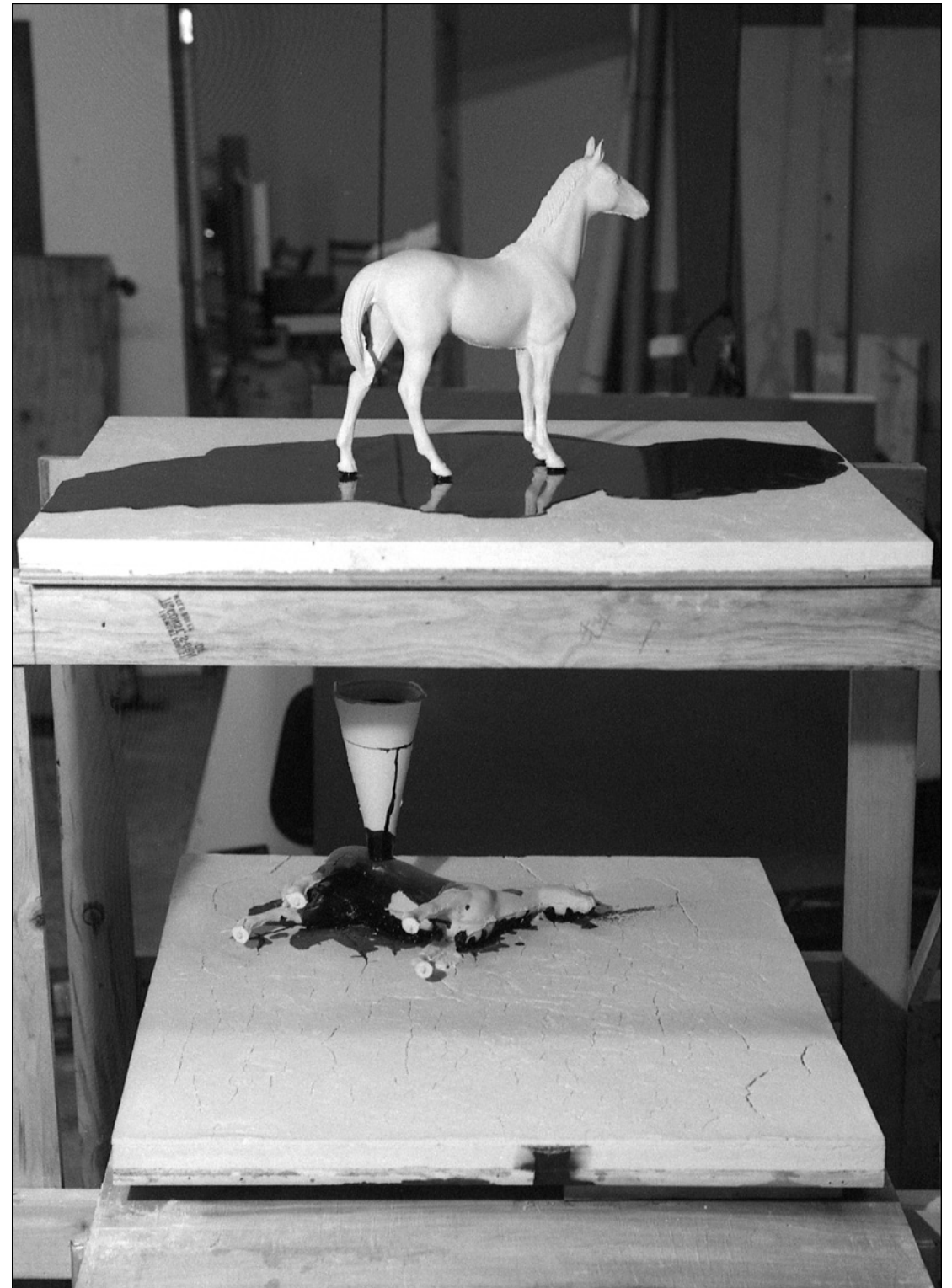


Fig. 303. *Metabolism Study: Mammal I & II*, 14 in. x 30 in x 24 in., fired clay, tar, plaster, wood, circa 1997.







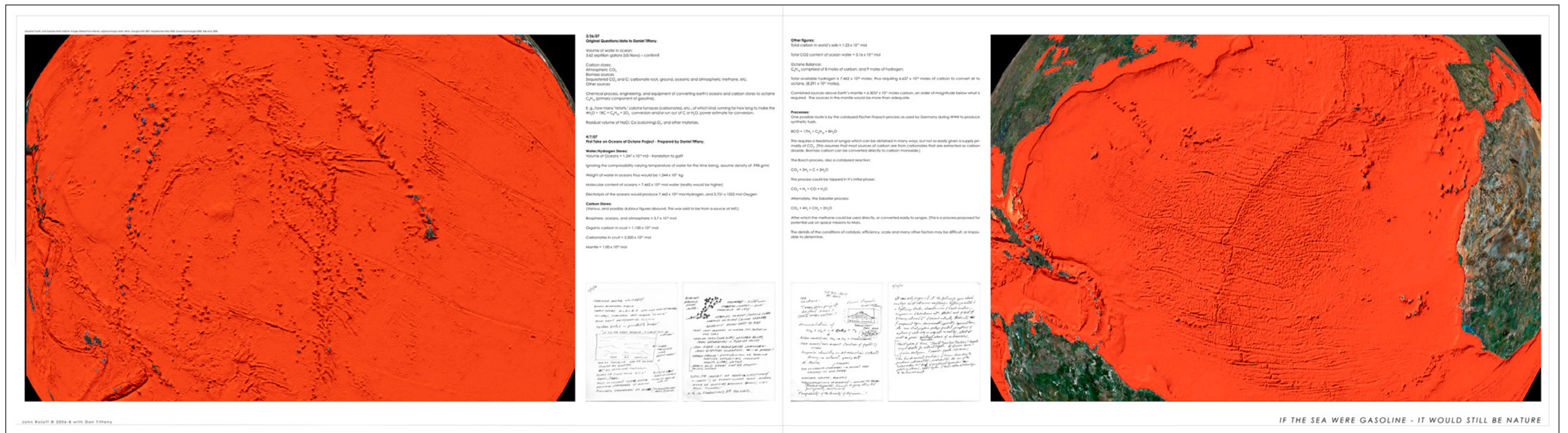


Fig. 305. *If the Sea Were Gasoline - It Would Still be Nature*, inkjet print, 40 in x 144 in (two panels), 2006-8.

*If the Sea Were Gasoline - It Would Still be Nature / Felsic/Mafic/Carbonate Facies*

*If the Sea Were Gasoline - It Would Still be Nature* is part of the *Felsic/Mafic/Carbonate Facies* group. The study represents, at a global scale the materials and amounts needed to turn the oceans into gasoline. The geochemistry of this scenario was developed through a series of conversations with Dan Tiffany, who was a chemical engineer before becoming an artist. Dan researched and calculated the amount of raw materials available on the globe to transform  $1.347 \times 10^{18}$  cubic meters of ocean water using an estimated  $6.3037 \times 10^{21}$  moles of available carbon and  $7.465 \times 10^{22}$  moles of hydrogen as more than enough chemistry to change the oceans from  $H_2O$  to  $C_8H_{18}$ . The catalyzed Fischer-Tropsch process used to produce artificial gasoline in Germany during WWII or an alternative Sabatier process were considered as possible methods to this end.

The *Felsic/Mafic/Carbonate Facies* group is a constantly evolving, assemblage of conceptual studies and transformations for new projects as well as meditations on existing works. This series is characterized by strategies employing inversions, intrusions, displacements, assemblages and extended analogies/metaphors, often in geologic parlance, of existing, often predictable, ecological beliefs and systems in order to disrupt, re-cast and extrapolate their epistemological, ontological and associative potential. A prime emphasis in this and related studies is the identification of the Anthropocene, the current geologic time period of human agency and natural force, as ultimately indistinguishable from any other natural phenomena. As an example, architecture and the built environment is seen in this context as a phenomenological, geomorphic and lithologic variant of geologic structures and processes.



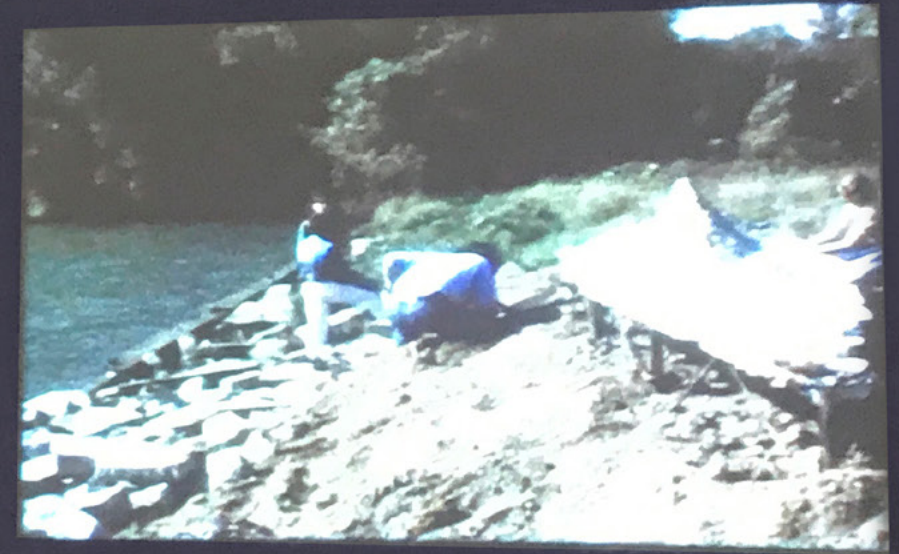
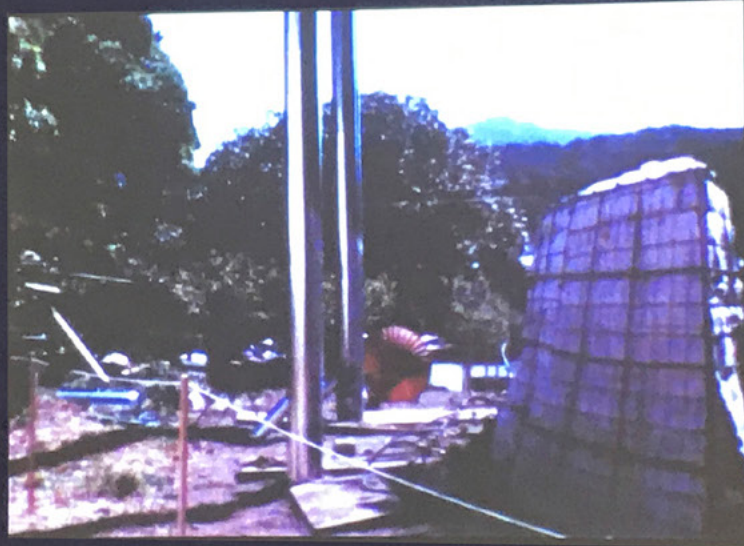
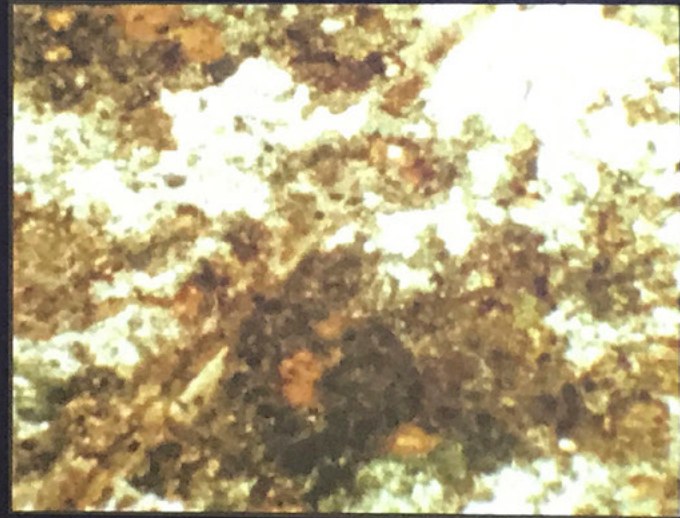


Fig. 306. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, 1980, *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1984, *Wave Ship (Of Fire)*, 1984, three channel video projection. Solo exhibition: *The Sea Within the Land*, Anglim Gilbert Gallery, San Francisco, CA, 2019.



## Tour + Program Tickets



### Organic Logic Artist Talk, #1

BUY TICKETS

Thursday February, 16 7:00 PM

Join us for a discussion about contemporary art practice. Organic Logic: Jim Melchert, John Roloff, Stephanie Syjuco. Doors at 7 p.m., talk begins 7:30.

APRIL TOUR TICKETS

APRIL PROGRAM TICKETS

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Fig. 307. Organic Logic Talk #1, announcement, 500 Capp Street Foundation, 2017.

EPILOGUE: EXPANDED CERAMICS



*Organic Logic*\* is the name of an issue of *New Observations*, co-developed and edited by John Roloff and Mark Bartlett in 2000. On Thursday, February 16, 2017, the first of three panels at 500 Capp Street Foundation, San Francisco, CA, based on the *Organic Logic* issue of *New Observations*, was held with Jim Melchert, myself and Stephanie Syjuco as panelists. The panel was introduced and given context within the framework of *Organic Logic* and “expanded ceramics” by Tanya Zimbardo, Assistant curator of Media Art, SFMOMA who also curated the inaugural exhibition for the Foundation’s Garage space, *Organic Logic: Howard Fried, John Roloff and Mark Thompson*, February 4 - March 8, 2017, and organized the concurrent panels. She was invited by 500 Capp Street Foundation to create a special project, for their program, she chose *Organic Logic* after being shown an issue by Howard Fried. For this panel, in-turn: Jim Melchert presented the work, *Changes*, a performance on video tape, Amsterdam, 1972 (a detail of the performance is shown in Fig. 309), I presented the kiln project, *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*, 1980 and Stephanie Syjuco presented recent ceramic-based works using digital technology such as the in-progress: *Empire/Other*, a collaboration with FLACC Workplace for Visual Artists, Genk, Belgium. Jim Melchert, past professor, UC Berkeley, is considered as a critical figure in ceramics and conceptual art movements, especially in the Bay Area, of the 1960’s-present, Stephanie Syjuco is currently an Assistant Professor of Art at UC Berkeley teaching in the ceramic program and was an undergraduate student of mine at the San Francisco Art Institute in the 1990’s. We are all friends and colleagues.

*Expanded Ceramics* is a term referring to an expansive definition of ceramics, this may take many forms and include extensive cross-disciplinary research and additional media such as video, installation and environmental work. As mentioned in the Introduction of this volume, essentially my entire oeuvre, including work done in ceramics, environmental and kiln projects, architectural interventions and installations, may be seen as forms of *Expanded Ceramics*. The constant reference to geology as a generative and inspirational force in all of my work informs the fields of inquiry and practice to include ever-evolving knowledge systems and visual terrains. The image of the installation of *Sediment Brick/UW*, 2017, shown in Fig. 311, is an example of an ongoing consideration of the potential, questioning and evolving context that ceramics holds for me, initiated by the research and work of Project: *Land Kilns*. Works, such as *Protogaea Civica II (Franciscan Formation/San Francisco, CA)*, 2005, (Fig. 333 - end plate) operate in a conceptual and site-related context of *Expanded Ceramics*. This work, part of a series, *Geology Flags*, is a system of flags using geologic mapping graphics, that symbolically demarcate geologic structures and materials of the sites they are flown over. This installation, the second in the series, displays 24 flags on 19 existing poles at the San Francisco Civic Center Plaza as part of the 2005 exhibition, *High Five*, presented in conjunction with the opening of the new DeYoung Art Museum in Golden Gate Park. The flags specifically identify the Civic Center’s site in relationship to the Franciscan Formation, the bedrock beneath the larger Bay Area, east of the San Andreas Fault. The Civic Center, in geologic terms, rests unconformably (a time gap in deposition) on part of the Franciscan called the Alcatraz Terrane, near its western edge and adjacent to the Hunters Point Shear Zone, both indicated by the flags on the site.

\*Extract from the introduction of *Organic Logic*, “Roloff/Bartlett: Organic Logic/Aesthetic Empiricism,” *New Observations*, No. 127, Fall/Winter, 2000, pg 2-3

The phrase *Organic Logic* was first coined in 1996 as the title for a lecture I gave at the performance space, Moltkerei Werkstatt in Cologne, Germany. The lecture was initially to be on my own work but was expanded to include the work of two artists, Mark Thompson and Howard Fried from Northern California who’s work I have long had a deep respect for. The concept of *Organic Logic* as expressed in the lecture refers to an organic or systemic approach intrinsic to the art making practice of certain artists in Northern California and the San Francisco Bay Area in particular. This approach embraces complex, systemic, intuitive and process oriented aesthetics and methodologies.



Fig. 308. *Organic Logic* Talk #1, panel discussion, Jim Melchert, John Roloff, Stephanie Syjuco, 500 Capp Street Foundation, February 16, 2017.

I have also theorized the aesthetics of *Organic Logic* as a function of the geology and landscape of the San Francisco Bay Area. This landscape was formed in geologic time by the accretion of alien terranes onto the North American proto-continent subsequently altered by intense seismic and magmatic activity characteristic of a plate margin subduction zone. In sectional view the Bay Area’s landscape is a series of intensely folded and altered seafloor fragments.

In 1998 Mark Bartlett and I submitted a proposal to *New Observations* to further investigate the idea of *Organic Logic* as an issue of this magazine. I felt Mark was the perfect person with which to explore this idea. His deep grounding in philosophy with an interest in Nietzsche, Deleuze, Foucault and other post-structuralists as well as in the history and philosophy of science was an ideal complement to my abilities and interests as well as a kindred spirit in the pursuit of *Organic Logic*.



In January of 2017 I was invited to the University of Washington to execute a project, *Expanded Ceramics/Earth Reversal/Peat Extraction*. *UW Sediment Brick* is one of several produced from sediment of the UW Ceramics Department landscape unearthed by the project. The bricks were co-produced on site and fired by Michael Swaine, (Future Farmers and University of Washington art faculty) during and after the project.

The installation of *UW Sediment Brick*, shown in *Fig. 309*, is one of several bricks partially buried in front of a row of trees on the street facing the Furthermore Gallery, OCAC/PNCA Studios, Bison Building, Portland, OR. The placement of the bricks were intended as a homage to Joseph Beuys, and as a finishing touch to the exhibition, *Diderot/Forrest/Roloff* in the Furthermore Gallery. The bricks were used as counterweights to anchor elements of the *Diderot* installation, a collaboration with Neil Forrest and myself, installed for the March, 2017 NCECA Conference in Portland. Complementing the bricks as counterweights, video of the agricultural inspired earth excavation and brick production sequence in *Expanded Ceramics/Earth Reversal/Peat Extraction*, was screened as part of the installation of *Diderot/Forrest/Roloff*.



*Fig. 309. UW Sediment Brick, OCAC/PNCA Studios, Bison Building, Portland, OR, 2017*



The works in Project: *Land Kilns* ranged from a solo artist installation as in *Fired and Glazed Earth Piece*, 1979, to commissions with a paid and volunteer crew as in works like *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*, 1985, and *Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*, 1992 to institutional/college workshops with student and volunteer assistance such as *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, 1980 and *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*, 1988. For some of the projects, there exist records of the many or all participants, for some, very little records exist. Later projects, and especially those with a planned video, have the best listings of those assisting. The lists and images presented are drawn from existing records as well as more recent research. Sadly, many of those who helped may go un-named at this point, hopefully more names will appear and be listed in a future version of this volume. The projects could not have been done without a great deal of help, for which I am extraordinarily grateful. I am also very grateful to those, such as: Lou Marak, Walter McNamara, D. B. Finnigan, Walter Hall and Bob Winoker, as well as other faculty, administrators, curators and artists, for inviting me, organizing the projects and applying for grants to make the projects possible. Granting institutions such as the NEA, NCECA, private trusts and numerous ceramic department budgets as well as donations and help from school physical plants, private and public businesses, were instrumental if not critical to the realization of Project: *Land Kilns*.

## PARTICIPANTS



## CREDITS / 51 MILLION BTU VIDEOS

### **Untitled (Earth Orchid)**

Hartford School of Art, University of Hartford, Hartford, CT  
July 2 – July 15, 1988  
Designer/Artist – John Roloff

Steel, refractory concrete, ceramic fiber blanket, natural gas / 20 ft. x 34 ft. x 4 ft.

Project Curator and Coordinator – Walter Hall, John Roloff  
Technical Assistants – Tom Roth, Tom Bradley  
Special Assistance – John Pohanka

David Adams  
Kat Begley  
Robin Blayer  
Deb Burton  
Bob Calafiore  
Mark Curren  
Suzy Driscoll  
Lucia Gulino  
Ann-Marie Hannawcker  
David Holtzman  
Alexis Marinucci  
Liz Menz  
Peggy Michel  
Nicole Poole  
Sally Roberts  
Donna Sullivan  
Kevin Thomas  
Kevin Tulimieri

Advertising Design – Maura Pullen  
Assist VP for Operations – Frank Kuszpa  
Project Manager – Norman Young  
Manager of Grounds – Don Komp  
Plumbers – Marty Cunningham, Jim Moynihan  
Special Thanks – Grounds Crew, Plant Operations; Connecticut Natural Gas  
Photo – Bob Calafiore, David Stansbury  
Videography – John Pohanka, Local television  
Video Producers – Peter Forde, John Roloff  
Titles – CAV Media Corp.  
Post Production – Video City Productions

### **Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field**

Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities, Arvada, CO  
June 1 – June 14, 1989  
Designer/Artist – John Roloff

Steel, ceramic fiber blanket, brick, lava, tar, salt, propane

Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities, Arvada, CO  
University of CO, Boulder,  
Dept of Fine Arts  
Undergrad Research Opportunity Program  
Council on Teaching  
College of Arts and Sciences

Robinson Brick CO  
Uni-West, United Western Supply  
Maddox Propane  
Project Curator and Coordinator – Ted Vogel  
Technical Assistant – Richard Usery  
Special Assistance – Scott Chamberlain

Marion Crist  
Debora Dell  
Stacey Grandbois  
Allison Holmes  
Heide Krauth  
Eric Manabat  
Andy Martin  
Michael Reiger  
Mark Sims  
Judy Strahota  
Tony Their  
Vivi

Special Thanks – Maintenance, City of Arvada  
Photography – Michael Reiger, Mark Sims  
Videography – Eric Manabat  
Video Producers – Peter Forde, John Roloff  
Titles – CAV Media Corp.  
Post Production – Video City Productions

### **Humboldt Ship**

Humboldt State University, Summer Arts '89, Arcata, CA  
July 19- Aug 1, 1989  
Designer/Artist – John Roloff

Steel, refractory concrete, ceramic fiber blanket, propane / 15 ft. x 20 ft. x 4 ft.

Sponsors – Summer Arts '89, Humboldt State University, Ceramics Dept, Art Dept.  
Project Coordinators – Lou Marak, Jim Crawford  
Technical Assistant – Mort Scott  
Special Construction – Mike Pearce  
Engineering Consultant – John Laws / Structural Design Engineers, San Francisco, CA

Tim Baum  
Mark Cambell  
Brook Cottman  
Sue Coulter  
Kit Davenport  
Barry Frantz  
David Hyry  
David Jordan  
Estelle Levy  
Ann Mendershausen  
David Minard  
Susan Neel  
Ted Oken  
Dominick Palestino  
Sarva Posey  
Carla Potter  
Larry Ross

Special Thanks – Humboldt State University Physical Plant  
Doug Attig  
John Davies  
Bruce Hawkins  
Wayne Hawkins  
Summer Arts '89 Staff  
Dutra Trucking Co.  
Hensell Materials  
Piersons Building Supply  
Sequoia Gas Co.

Videography – Allerice Video, Video crew/Summer Arts '89  
Video Producers – Peter Forde, John Roloff  
Titles – CAV Media Corp.  
Post Production – Video City Productions



Neil Harshfield Reloff Project. Volunteers.

Barbara Botting = Anything but welding / Foreman? ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 Cheryl Kennedy 218 N. Epston Rd. E 29. Glenside Pa 19038 ~~Cheryl Kennedy~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 Ernest Paterno anything / ~~Ernest Paterno~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 Lee Bradley 2 or 3 times per week & video ~~Lee Bradley~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 \*ANDREW WOLFF -10-15 HRS/WK ~~ANDREW WOLFF~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 \*JACQUE JROLF 130 West 4th St, Norristown ~~JACQUE JROLF~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 Spring 21.  
 \*Mike Marthaller - Grad Tech. shipping - can weld etc. ~~Mike Marthaller~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 \*BRIAN GROW - Whatever it takes / if it takes 6 hrs a day then I'm yours. ~~BRIAN GROW~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 \*Karen Rowe - Can weld, cut, etc... - wish I could earn it - so we'll see! ~~Karen Rowe~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 Kira Wermuth with Jan. after that - Will help with any odds - will help pay or ends - can't weld but other way. ~~Kira Wermuth~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 Dalissa McEwen - part-time student, will do anything could organize, foreman type job 6 hrs./day if paid. ~~Dalissa McEwen~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 7201 Keystone St. Loft 216 Phila., Pa. 19135 ~~Dalissa McEwen~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 \*JAIMIE WATSON - NOT A STUDENT - HAVE A BIG TRUCK + A STRONG BACK, AND ALL THE SKILLS YOU MAY NEED I.E. ALL PHASES OF METAL WORK ETC. ~~JAIMIE WATSON~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 \*MICHAEL GROTHUSON - NOT A STUDENT. CAN WELD AND DO EVERYTHING JAIME CAN, MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE MY STUDIO. ~~MICHAEL GROTHUSON~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 \*GEN McGarry 222 Garden Ave. HORSNOM PA Have all the time in the world - multiple skills - less welding. ~~GEN McGarry~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 \*STEVEN STORMER - welding / Foreman ~~STEVEN STORMER~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~  
 had experience with Public Art project. with films. ~~STEVEN STORMER~~ ~~Barbara Botting~~

Industrial Supplies 748 6290  
Weber.

Fig. 310. Tyler Project: Metabolism And Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>. Crew sign-up sheet, lined paper (phone numbers removed), 1992.

JIMMY CLARK  
 KEVIN MULLAVEY  
 CLAY STUDIO  
 (215) 925-3453  
 KEVIN, HOME 925-1216

TYLER  
 782-2700  
 DON (GARDNER)  
 DCSMETT  
 2776/7-5044  
 ACCT. GEN MGR.

STEVE STORMER  
 1205 N 4th STR  
 PHIL 19122

KATHRYN NARROW  
 BOB WINKLER  
 HUSB 435 NORRISTOWN RD  
 SCHOOL HORSNOM, PA 19044

CLAY STUDIO  
 139 N. SECOND STR  
 PHIL, PA 19106

BARRY MATHEWS  
 JIM WEAVER - CLAY STUDIO - PR.  
 JACK/RANA THOMPSON

\*NICK KRIPLE  
 KEVIN KAUFENBURGER  
 (ANSWER MACHINE)

ALAN GREENBERG  
 8313 CROWLADER AVE.  
 EUKINS PARK, PA 19117

TYLER  
 782-2700  
 JUDE TALLICHET .166 SCHUBSO  
 WINIFRED LUTZ 1 1/4"  
 AMY HAUFF

DOVER N. GENERAL NJ. 2500  
 WILFRED LUTZ 510 619 946 9753  
 673431

ASSIST DEAN →  
 KARL BANGEROZ  
 (NE GLASS CO. MITCHELL FINKESTEIN)  
 \*BARBARA BOTTING  
 \*JILL BALS (EAS)!  
 \*JACKIE SANDRO -  
 \*BARRY MATHEWS.  
 \*NICK  
 \*KEVIN  
 \*MICHAEL MARTHALLER  
 ENGINEERING

ART COLLECTION  
 BARNES FOUNDATION  
 MARLTON, PA

Fig. 311. Tyler Project: Metabolism And Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>. Crew notes, manila folder (phone numbers removed), 1992.



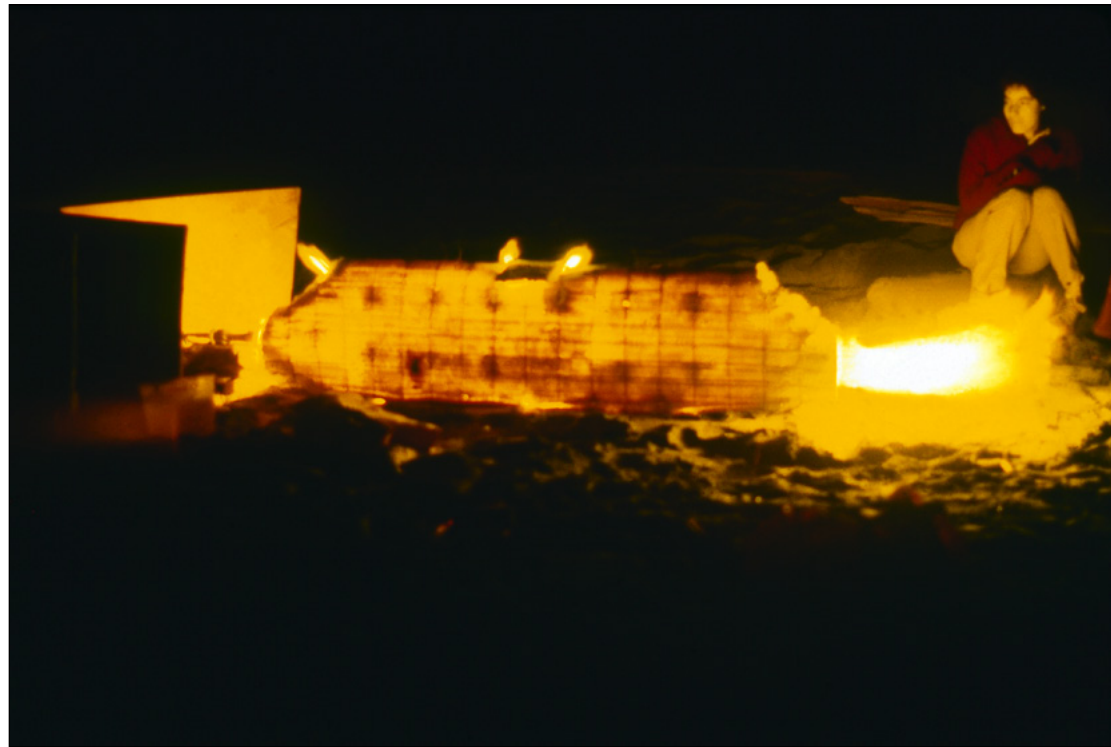


Fig. 312. *Beach Kiln (Monitor)*. Right: unnamed student monitoring the kiln.



Fig. 314. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*. University of Regina Sculpture Studio, left to right, students: Pam Bjorneson, Joan McNeil, Luc Beuparlant and faculty, Ric Gomez inspecting the kiln frame during early stages of its fabrication.



Fig. 313. *Land Monitor/Fired Volcanic Boulder*. University of New Mexico art students and faculty working in 'JA' volcano Pleistocene volcanic field, south of Albuquerque, NM, assembling kiln components on site.



Fig. 315. *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*. University of Regina faculty, Ric Gomez and Franklin Heisler, on Joan McNeil's property, the site of the kiln installation.





Fig. 316. *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*. Crew members hooking up the propane tanks and installing the burner system.



Fig. 317. *Wave Ship (of Fire)*. Crew members from some of the 5 local institutions (colleges and Pewabic Pottery) who assisted with the project, inspecting the glass ship element, post firing, kiln removed.



Fig. 318. *Collision: Lava Ship / Trellis Ship*. Group portrait of project crew members and artist including: Lee Smith, James Finnigan, Heather McGill and others.





Fig 319. *Ancient Shoreline: Island for Lake Lahontan*. Ground and material preparation for *Black Coral Starfish* element by Walter McNamara, Gallery Director, UNR students and artist.



Fig 320. *Ancient Shoreline: Island for Lake Lahontan*. Placement of slip coated sagebrush for *Black Coral Starfish* element by Walter McNamara, Gallery Director, UNR students and artist.



Fig. 321. *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*. Deborah Dell, Scott Chamberlain (rowing) and Eric Manabat (video camera) on the Arvada Center lake.



Fig. 322. *Oculus: Dead Sea/Oil Field*. Fabrication of *Ancient Bathysphere* kiln element of un-fired bricks by project crew.





Fig. 323. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*. Group portrait of kiln crew, faculty and artist., see page 348 for complete list of crew.



Fig. 324. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*. Part of kiln crew preparing materials during the fabrication phase of the project. John Pohanka standing center with light blue t-shirt.



Fig. 325. *Untitled (Earth Orchid)*. Hartford, CT towns-people, waiting for the kiln firing event.





Fig. 326. *Humboldt Ship*, . Jim Crawford, Art Department Faculty, at work digging trench for cement kiln foundation.



Fig. 328. *Tyler Project: Metabolism And Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*. Video still, ignition by artist and crew of *Furnace* burners.



Fig. 327. *Humboldt Ship*. Faculty, Lou Marak, making a point in a meeting in the Ceramic Shop about the kiln and other workshops. Left to right: Mort Scott, unidentified students, Michael Lucero (red vest), unidentified student, faculty Lou Marak and Jim Crawford.



Fig. 329. *Tyler Project: Metabolism And Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>*. Video still, monitoring by artist and crew of *Furnace* burners.



# John Roloff at Pewabic

*Wave Ship (of fire)/Ice Ship  
(of glass)* October 1984,  
30' long. Owen Park, Detroit.

Funded by Pewabic Pottery  
and the National Endowment  
for the Arts.

Pewabic Pottery  
10125 East Jefferson  
Detroit, MI. 48214  
(313) 822-0954

John Roloff represented by:  
Fuller Goldeen Gallery  
228 Grant Avenue  
San Francisco, CA. 94108  
(415) 982-6177

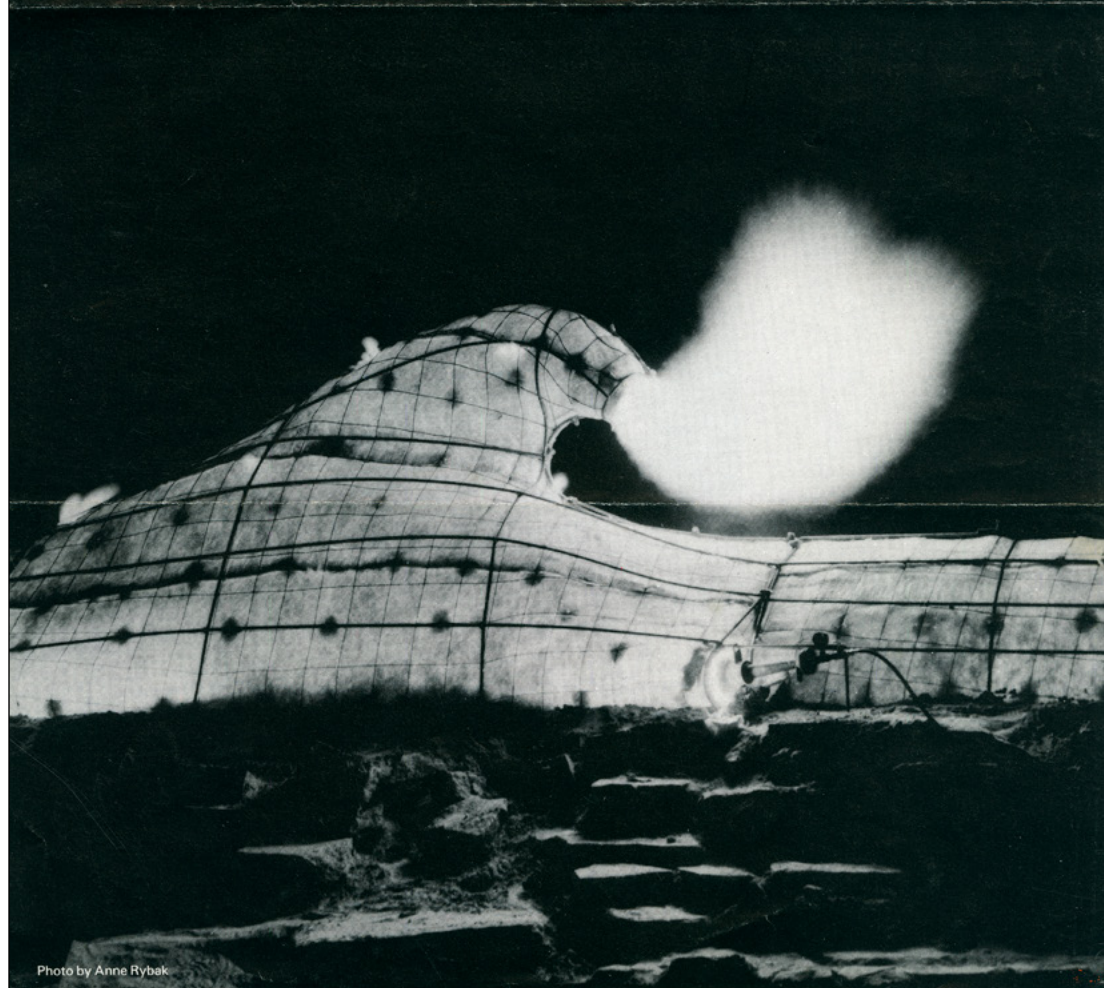


Photo by Anne Rybak

Fig. 330. *Wave Ship (of Fire)/Ice Ship (of Glass)*, magazine ad, circa 1984.

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1999 *The Rising Sea..* / Solo Exhibition / Museum of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth, FL / single channel video, sound / 00:18:26:59 / <https://vimeo.com/150135808>

1996 *Pitzer Project: a Prototype System for the Production and Distribution of Ancient Sunlight* / single channel video, color, sound / <https://vimeo.com/139406136>

1994 *Gradient* / single channel video, color, sound / 00:06:00 / <https://vimeo.com/195562248>.

1994 *Deluge (Radiant Sleep/Helium Ash)* / single channel video, color, sound / 00:20:00 / <https://vimeo.com/139406135>

1992 *Tyler Project: Metabolism and Mortality/O<sub>2</sub>* / single channel video, color, sound / 00:14:30.

1991 *51 Million BTU's/Metabolism Study/C3H8, e-, NaCl* / single channel video projection, salt crystal screen installation, color, sound / 00:47:00 / v. II, 00:23:30.

1990 *51 Million BTU's* / 3 channel video installation, color, sound / 00:26:00.



**JOHN ROLOFF**

**Night Firing of Black Coral Starfish Element  
For  
“Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan”  
University of Nevada-Reno 1985**

John Roloff is represented by: Fuller Golden Gallery  
228 Grant Street  
San Francisco, CA 94108  
(415) 982-6177

Sponsored by: Sheppard Fine Arts Gallery  
University of Nevada-Reno  
Reno, Nevada 89557  
(702) 784-6682  
Walter McNamara, Curator

Photo by Elke Morris

Funded in part by the Nevada State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal Agency.

Fig. 331. *Night Firing of Black Coral Starfish Element for Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan*, magazine ad, circa 1985.

## Illustrations: Sources/Credits

- Fig. 2. *Cotopaxi*, Fredrick Edwin Church, oil on canvas, 1892, collection: Detroit Institute of the Arts, public domain.
- Fig. 27. Michael Smith, Curator, Baxter Art Gallery, CIT, Pasadena, CA
- Fig. 41. Thompson, R.A., Shroba, R.R., Menges, Christopher, Schmidt, D.L., Personius, S.F., and Brandt, T.R. 2009, *Geologic map of The Volcanos quadrangle, Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties, New Mexico*: U.S. Geologic Survey Scientific Investigations Report 3038, 1 sheet, scale 1:24,000.
- Fig. 55-60. Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
- Fig. 80. Lee Fatheree Photography
- Fig. 88. Muffy Kibby Photography
- Fig. 89. Lee Fatheree Photography
- Fig. 93. Ann Rybak, Photography
- Fig. 113. Lee Fatheree Photography
- Fig. 120. Marith Riheis, USGS/US Department of the Interior.
- Fig. 121. Benson, L.V., *The Tufas of Pyramid Lake, Nevada*: U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1267, 2004.
- Fig. 129. Elke Morris Photography
- Fig. 132. Sandra Macias and James Kenney, *Reno Gazette-Journal*.
- Fig. 133. Elke Morris Photography
- Fig. 137. Ingrid Evans, *Artspace Southwestern Contemporary Arts Quarterly*.
- Fig. 152. Susan Corcia Alan Chaniewiski, *The Herald*.
- Fig. 158 A/B. Richard Me, University of Hartford, Lee Fatheree, *Hartford Current*.
- Fig. 163-164. Scott Chamberlain
- Fig. 166. Michael Reiger, Mark Sims Photography
- Fig. 171. Jennifer R. Crohn, *Arts Magazine*
- Fig. 183. Tony Forder and Paul DeMark, *Arcata Union*.
- Fig. 197-200. NCECA Video.
- Fig. 205 A/B. NCECA News
- Fig. 277-278. Michael Sarver, Illinois State University Art Dept.
- Fig. 286. Craig Timmerman, Research Engineer, Battelle, Pacific Northwest Laboratories.
- Fig. 307. 500 Capp Street Foundation.
- Fig. 308. 500 Capp Street Foundation.
- Fig. 328. Lee Fatheree Photography
- Fig. 319-320. Elke Morris Photography
- Fig. 323. Bob Calafiore, David Stansbury, Photography
- Fig. 328-329. NCECA Video.
- Fig. 330. Ann Rybak Photography
- Fig. 331. Elke Morris Photography

All other images are by the artist.





Fig. 332. *Land Kiln* exterior video projection / opening night / solo exhibition *The Rising Sea, Images and Constructions from South Florida and Other Selected Works* Museum of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth, Florida, 1998.

John Roloff is a visual artist who works conceptually with site, process and natural systems. He is known for his experimental approach to his work, including: outdoor kiln/furnace projects done from the late 1970's to the early 1990's, other large-scale environmental projects, gallery installations and objects, investigating geologic and natural phenomena. Based on an extensive background and ongoing research in the earth sciences, his work since the late 1960's engages poetic and site-specific relationships between material, concept and performance in the domains of geology, ecology, architecture, ceramics, industry and mining, metabolic systems and history. The ship is a central image of his work, metaphorically evoking psychological and transformative processes of the sea and land in geologic and Anthropocentric time. He studied at UC Davis in the late 1960's with Professor Eldridge Moores and others in geology during the formative days of plate tectonics and art with Bob Arneson and William T. Wiley. He studied with Louis Marak and others at CSU Humboldt, earning a masters degree in 1973. In addition to numerous environmental, site-specific installations in the US, Canada and Europe, his work has been included in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, UC Berkeley Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Smithsonian Institution, *Photoscene Cologne* and the Venice Architectural and Art Biennales, *The Snow Show* in Kemi, Finland and *Artlantic: wonder*, Atlantic City, NJ. Public art works that explore geologic and related concepts can be found at: Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco, CA, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, I-5 Colonnade Park, Seattle, WA and Stanford University, Stanford, CA. He has received 3 visual arts fellowships from the NEA, a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship, a California Arts Council grant for visual artists and a Bernard Osher Fellowship at the Exploratorium in San Francisco, CA. He is represented by Anglim Gilbert Gallery in San Francisco and is Professor Emeritus, Sculpture/Ceramics Program, San Francisco Art Institute. More information is available at [www.johnrolloff.com](http://www.johnrolloff.com).





Fig. 333. *Protogaea Civica II* (Franciscan Formation/San Francisco, CA), detail, Alcatraz Terrane/meta-graywacke, 2005.





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