

IDENTIFICATION: A WAY IN

by

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(ABSTRACT)

This thesis consists of a personal exploration of the concepts of "identification" and "alienation" as they relate to one's relationship to the physical world. "Identification" as defined by Christian Norberg-Schultz refers to the quality of the relationship between human beings and their environments. (p.21) "Alienation" on the other hand refers to a manner of existence where identification does not take place, and implies an unnatural separation between one's psychic and physical experiences (p.168)

The argument is made that the experiences inherent in identification are fundamental to the quality of life and that the increasing sense of alienation within "modern society" has left many people feeling lost. This suggests that it is becoming increasingly more important that we find a means to redefine the concept of identification so that it has the capacity to meet our need today.

The second half of the thesis is devoted to a series of design explorations. In creating the sculptures and landscapes illustrated I sought an increased conscious understanding of my processes of identification. It is my hope that the documentation of my experiences will serve as a tools for the reader, not to predict what their experiences would or should be, but rather as a guide to a better understanding of the possibilities that can exist within the relationship between all human beings and their environments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you Mom for your constant love, support, encouragement and patience. I could not have persisted in my search for a level of quality in my work without you. You are a source of pride and inspiration for me every day. I love you.

In memory of my father. As I have struggled to understand what your life meant and why you were taken from those who love you so soon, I have found a strength within me that I never thought I was capable of. Your love of knowledge has become my passion now - and in that you go on.

A special thank you to Kim, Dane, Rob, Garnett, Valerie, Denyse, Steve and Chaya, who have struggled through these years with me and in

spite of me. The friendship, support and an occasional shoulder to cry were invaluable.

And finally to Paul, Dean, Patrick and Dave for all of your help, support and encouragement. I set out to prove to you all that I have a brain, and amazingly ended up proving it to myself. Thanks to each of you for your role in helping me to discover this.

And in the end all there is, is an affinity for rock-n-roll.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis begins with a discussion of the relationships which can exist between people and their physical environments. It is founded in the assumption that these relationships consist of fundamental human experiences, the quality of which directly effect the quality of life. It is the conscious pursuit of these experiences, I propose, which help us to see our world in significant and meaningful ways. These experiences require that we participate in some way with the physical world we live in. These actions need not be profound, most often they are simple. What is important is that there is a connection between our "psychic" and "physical" surroundings, and that this connection be personal. I do not propose that it is possible to predict an exact reaction to a specific environmental situation, but rather that we need to pay attention to the fact that there is a reaction at all.

There are three major goals for this thesis. The first is to look more closely at the importance of the experiences which constitute the relationships between people and their environments through a review of some of the recent literature on the topic; the second is to examine the role of these relationships within "modern" society; and finally we will explore the concepts of "identification" and "materiality" as ways of getting in touch with these experiences on a personal level.

IDENTIFICATION

"Identification" is a personal concept. It can be seen in the moment of realization when we recognize something as having a meaningful role in our life experiences. We relate to particular people; we surround ourselves with particular kind of things; we respond to a particular life philosophy; we choose an occupation which we feel will give us personal satisfaction. These decisions give our lives direction and in turn give us an identity which we present to the world.

In his book Genius Loci: Toward a Phenomenology of Architecture, (1979) Christian Norberg-Schultz speaks of "identification" specifically in regard to our relationships to our physical surroundings.

"...identification means to become "friends" with a particular environment. Nordic man has to be friends with fog, ice and cold winds; he has to enjoy the creaking sound of snow under the feet when he walks around, he has to experience the poetical value of being immersed in fog....The Arab, instead, had to be a friend of the infinitely extended, sandy desert and the burning sun. This does not mean that his settlements should not protect him against the natural "forces"; a desert settlement in fact primarily aims at the exclusion of sand and sun and therefore complements the natural situation. But it implies that the environment is experienced as meaningful. (Norberg-Schultz p.21)

Specific environmental circumstances are hereby understood by virtue of the meaningful acts working within an individuals experiences and perceptions. The significance of these relationships is perhaps easier to see in regard to the extreme conditions the Nordic or Arabic people face. We, in the "modern world" are not so dependent upon the environment; neither because of climactic conditions or for our livelihood. It is for these reasons, I believe, that it has become increasingly difficult to recognize the importance of our relationships with the places that we occupy. Our homes, our work spaces, our public places no longer hold to them the kinds of meanings which can teach us something about ourselves.

The identity which we can relate to within a particular environment is its "Genius Loci" or "Spirit of Place".(Norberg-Schultz p.5) This is, an idea born out of ancient Rome where it was believed that:

"...every independent being has its *genius*, its guardian spirit. This spirit gives life to people and places, accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character or essence." (Norberg-Schultz p. 18)

Based on this belief, the choices we make for our lives (our friends, our likes and dislikes, our occupation, etc.) are less conscious acts which we determine for ourselves, but rather discoveries we come upon. Our identity is not something we carve out for ourselves but is a system of revelations revealed to us by virtue of our relations to the world.

The result of this phenomenon is what Norberg-Schultz calls "alienation".(p.168) This is specifically a loss of the ability to relate to and interact with the "things " which constitute our environments.

"Lost is the settlement as a place in nature, lost are the urban foci as places for common living, lost is also the relationship to earth and sky. Most modern buildings exist in a "nowhere"; they are not related to a landscape and not to a coherent, urban whole, but live their abstract life in a kind of mathematical-technological space which hardly distinguishes between up and down....In general, all *qualities* are lost, and we may indeed talk about an "environmental crisis". (p. 190)

These relationships, if we allow them to exist, can have profound effects upon the way we see our "selves". It is, in my opinion, imperative that we relearn and redefine our understanding of "identification" so as to see again the importance of these experiences in our development as people. The alternative, a world divorced from meaning and personal significance, is very frightening.

Whereas Christian Norberg-Schultz discusses the existence of the phenomenon of "identification", Christopher Alexander in his book Timeless Way of Building (1979) attempts to express an understanding of the process of identification itself. He does this, not by giving us specific instructions but by asking us to take a careful look at ourselves and at the qualities or characteristics of our world which appeal to us the most.

At the root or foundation of Alexander's theory is "The Quality Without a Name" (p.19) Describing this Quality is a difficult task. It has been expressed in Timeless Way of Building in a metaphysical perspective which can be difficult to accept at face value.

"There is a central quality which is the root criterion of life and spirit in a man, a town, a building, or a wilderness. This quality is objective and precise, but it cannot be named." (p.18)

"The search which we make for this quality in our own lives is the central search of any person, and the crux of any individual person's story. It is the search for those moments and situations which we are most alive." (p.41)

In my opinion, The Quality Without a Name is an experience - it is an act. It does not exist in that which is being perceived. Nor does it exist in the perceiver. But, only in the small space where the two can interact. It is only through these kinds of interactions that "identification" itself can be achieved. Just as the Nordic man had to do something to make his environment meaningful, we must participate with our environments as a partner. When our world lacks this quality it leaves us feeling incomplete. It effects the manner in which we see the world and also how we see ourselves in that world. It is, according to Alexander, the quality of life itself.

"And the connection between the two - between this quality in our own lives, and the same quality in our surroundings - is not just an analogy, or similarity. The fact is that each one creates the other.

Places which have this quality, invite this quality to come to life in us. And when we have this quality in us, we tend to make it come to life in towns and buildings which we have to build. It is a self-supporting, self-maintaining, generating quality. It is the quality of life. And we must seek it, for our own sakes, in our surroundings, simply in order that we can ourselves become alive." (p.53-54)

There is no one who can teach us exactly what The Quality Without a Name is all about. We therefore have no other recourse than to teach ourselves.

IDENTIFICATION AND "MODERN SOCIETY"

'Identification' is an issue of the quality of the relationship between people and their environments. Everyone relates to the physical world on some level. The crucial point of identification lies in the extent to which we as individuals allow this relationship to interact with our own sense of 'self'. In order for this to happen the process of identification must be a conscious act. Certainly there are unconscious processes working within these relationships. But in order to understand and accept the benefits which can be achieved through identification we must struggle to understand the connection between our 'selves' and our world.

"A human being "...gradually develops a conscious or unconscious understanding that there exists an *Ubereinstimmung*, a correspondence, between his own psychic states and the "forces" of nature. Only thus he may obtain a personal "friendship" with things, and experience the environment as meaningful." (Norberg-Schultz, p. 168)

I believe that this is a frightening concept to most people. We have been moving away from the notion of personal responsibility and involvement having become a world of mass production. The effects of this shift have pervaded virtually all aspects of modern culture. Modern art in large has been moving away from the notion of personal involvement in search of a "universal vision". As Marshall Berman has told us in his book All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience Of Modernity, (1982), there is a dominant theme which proposes that modern art has been:

"...the quest for the pure, self referential art object. And that was all it was and the proper relationship between modern art and modern social life was no relationship at all." (p.30)

Initially this concept was seen as liberating for many artists but in the end the repercussions made living with these art objects increasingly dissatisfying.

"...very few artists or writers have stayed with this modernism for very long: an art without personal feeling or social relationships is bound to seem arid and lifeless after a little while. The freedom it confers is the freedom of a beautifully formed, perfectly sealed tomb." (Berman, p.30)

The emphasis having been placed on a cognitive perception of the world - learning based on ideas, rather than an experiential perception - learning by doing, has made much of modern art elitist as opposed to universal. Those who did not understand the intellectual precepts on which the works were based were unable to see how modern art had anything to say to them.

"Jackson Pollack imagined his drip paintings as forests in which spectators might lose (and, of course, find) themselves; but we have mostly lost the art of putting ourselves in the picture, of recognizing ourselves as participants in the art and thought of our time." (Berman, p.24)

When the concept of a "universal vision" of the world was transferred to environmental design, we subsequently lost the ability to "put ourselves in the picture:" our own world. We were made to believe that there was no intimate connection between our experiences of life and the places we exist in. It is as if this separation has been accepted as one of the fates of modern society. And so, we shop at the mall and cover our homes with vinyl siding and install no-maintenance landscapes and thank God we live in a modern world with modern conveniences. But we don't participate. We don't see ourselves as a part of the nature which defines the world we live in. The world is "out there" and we are "in here". Removed. Separate. Hermetically sealed.

And so we find ourselves back at the beginning, needing to understand what these relationships are all about. We are increasingly becoming alienated from the world we occupy and, in my opinion, the only way to turn this trend around is through the personal act of identification.

IDENTIFICATION AS A WAY IN

I have adopted Christian Norberg-Schultz's term "identification" in trying to understand the importance of my relationships to the objects and places I design. I cannot predict anyone else's experiences of my work, but it is my hope that learning to internalize these ideas will enable me to project these experiences back out into the world and into my ability to design.

Martin Buber, in his book I And Thou (1958) explained the psychological change which can take place if we can conceive of the world as a "Thou" rather than as an "It".

I CONSIDER A TREE.

I can look on it as a picture: stiff column in a shock of light, or splash of green shot with the delicate blue and silver of the background.

I can perceive it as movement: flowing veins on clinging, pressing pith, suck of the roots, breathing of the leaves, ceaseless commerce with earth and air - and the obscure growth itself.

I can classify it in a species and study it as a type in its structure and mode of life.

I can subdue its actual presence and form so sternly that I recognize it only as an expression of law - of the laws in accordance with which a constant opposition of forces is continually adjusted, or of those in accordance with which the component substances mingle and separate.

I can dissipate it and perpetuate it in number, in pure numerical relation.

In all this the tree remains my object, occupies space and time, and has its nature and constitution.

It can, however, also come about, if I have both will and grace, that in considering the tree I become bound in relation to it. The tree is now no longer *It*. I have been seized by the power of exclusiveness.

To effect this it is not necessary for me to give up any of the ways in which I consider the tree. There is nothing from which I would have to turn my eyes away in order to see, and no knowledge that I

would have to forget. Rather is everything, picture and movement, species and type, law and number, indivisibly united in this event.

Everything belonging to the tree is in this: its form and structure, its colours and chemical composition its intercourse with the elements and with the stars all present in a single whole.

The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no value depending on my mood; but it is bodied over against me and has to do with me, as I with it - only in a different way.

Let no attempt be made to sap the strength from the meaning of the relation: relation is mutual.

The tree will have a consciousness, then, similar to our own? Of that I have no experience. But do you wish, through seeming to succeed in it with yourself, once again to disintegrate that which cannot be disintegrated? I encounter no soul or dryad of the tree, but the tree itself." (Buber, p.7-8)

If I can accept my world as a "Thou", and subsequently can live in relation to it, rather than in domination over it, I cannot help but allow it to become an effective part of my life and my experiences. The experience of this phenomena was the intention of the design aspect of this thesis.

The following is a portrayal of my attempt to understand the processes of identification as it can function within the act of design. There are four design projects. The first two are sculptural and attempt to understand the relationship between two separate materials within one sculptural object: the first consists of wood and stone, the second of metal and stone. The second two projects are landscapes: the first an exploration of the material grass, the second is a garden constructed entirely of stone. The emphasis on materials is used here as a tool. It was a helpful tool for me to explore my relationship with these particular objects and places, but it is not the only way to reach for these experiences. It is simply the avenue I choose to follow.

MATERIALITY

The spirit of a material is its essence. It is perhaps the same thing as personality, although that doesn't seem to cover it really. It is about honesty. It is a truth. It is not a fact. The discoveries I made regarding these materials became "truths" for me but I cannot predict anyone else's experiences within the same processes. If I could do this, make predictions, I would be talking about facts; realities that would be consistent all the time. In speaking of "truth", I must only speak of my understanding of these realities.

It is easy to believe that the evaluation of anything is contrived only of its physical characteristics - of what you can see. But an understanding of the "Spirit" - of the personal meanings of anything, is an equally important task. It is however much more difficult.

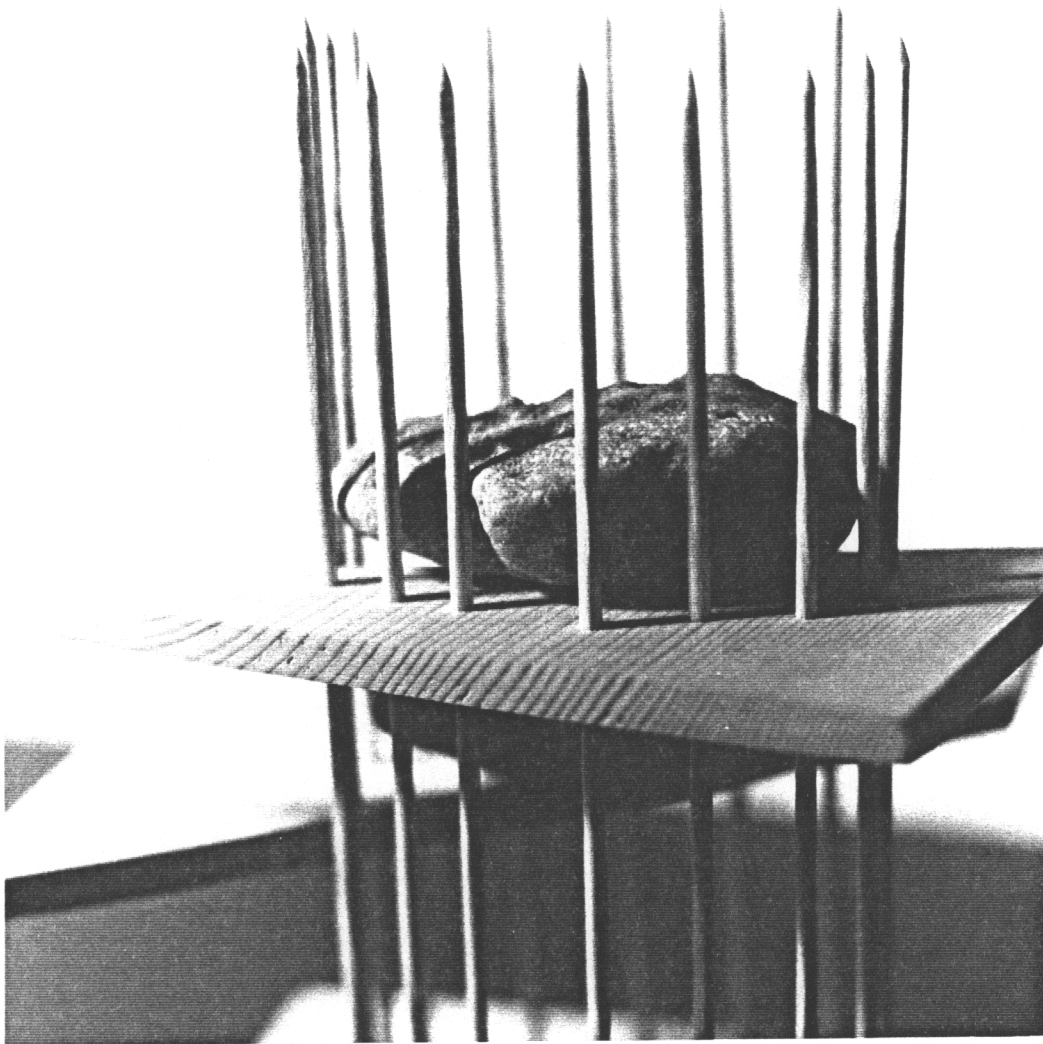
This is because in order to evaluate the meaning of anything, you must be able to include an evaluation of yourself. To understand a material from this perspective you must get involved. You must search the material for its spirit and understand how it relates to you.

CEDAR AND THE PETOSKY STONE

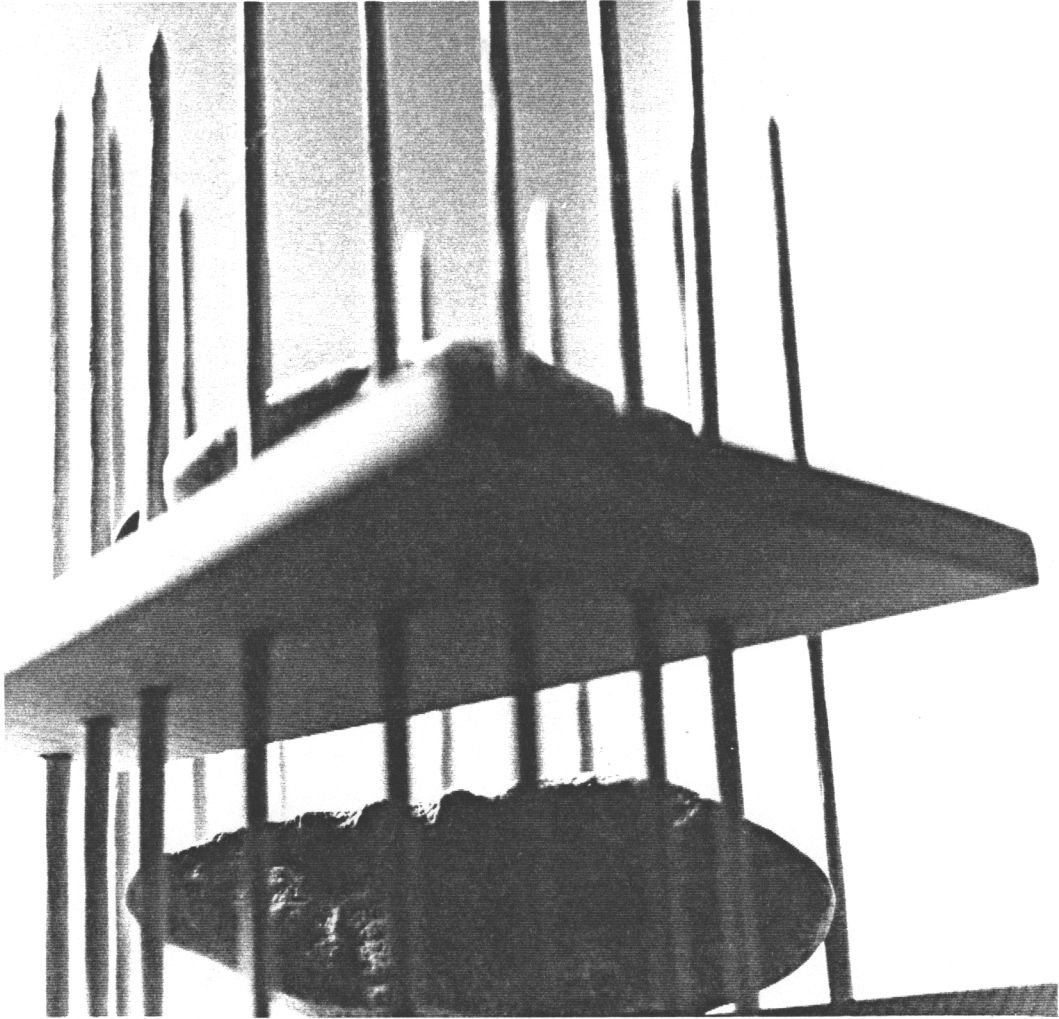
The cedar board is 3 feet long and 1/4 of an inch thick.

Before I even got started I knew that it would have a distinctive smell and color.

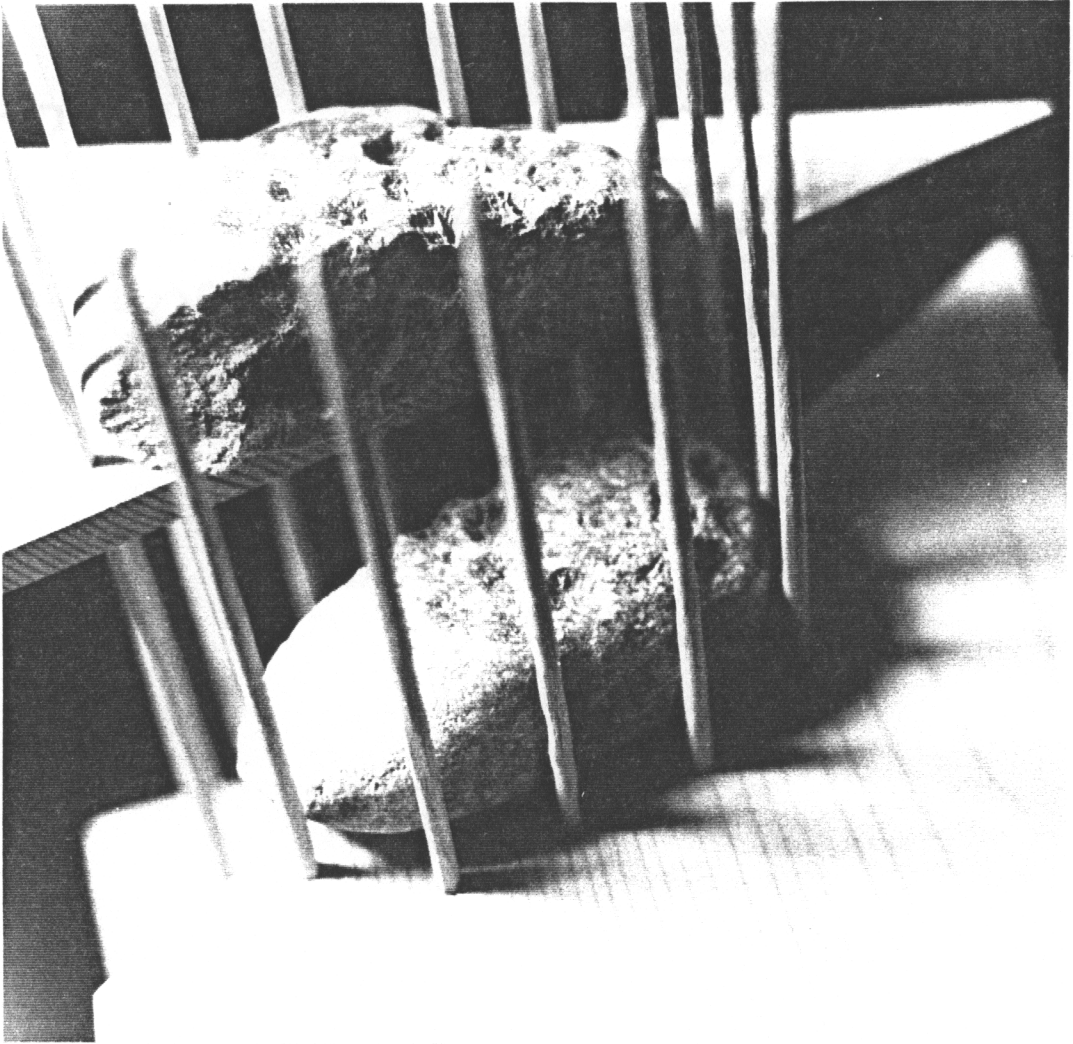
With further exploration I could feel the softness of the wood itself. I explored the look and feel of the rough surface texture and found that it was peelable, like the husks off an ear of corn, as if trying to reveal something special inside.



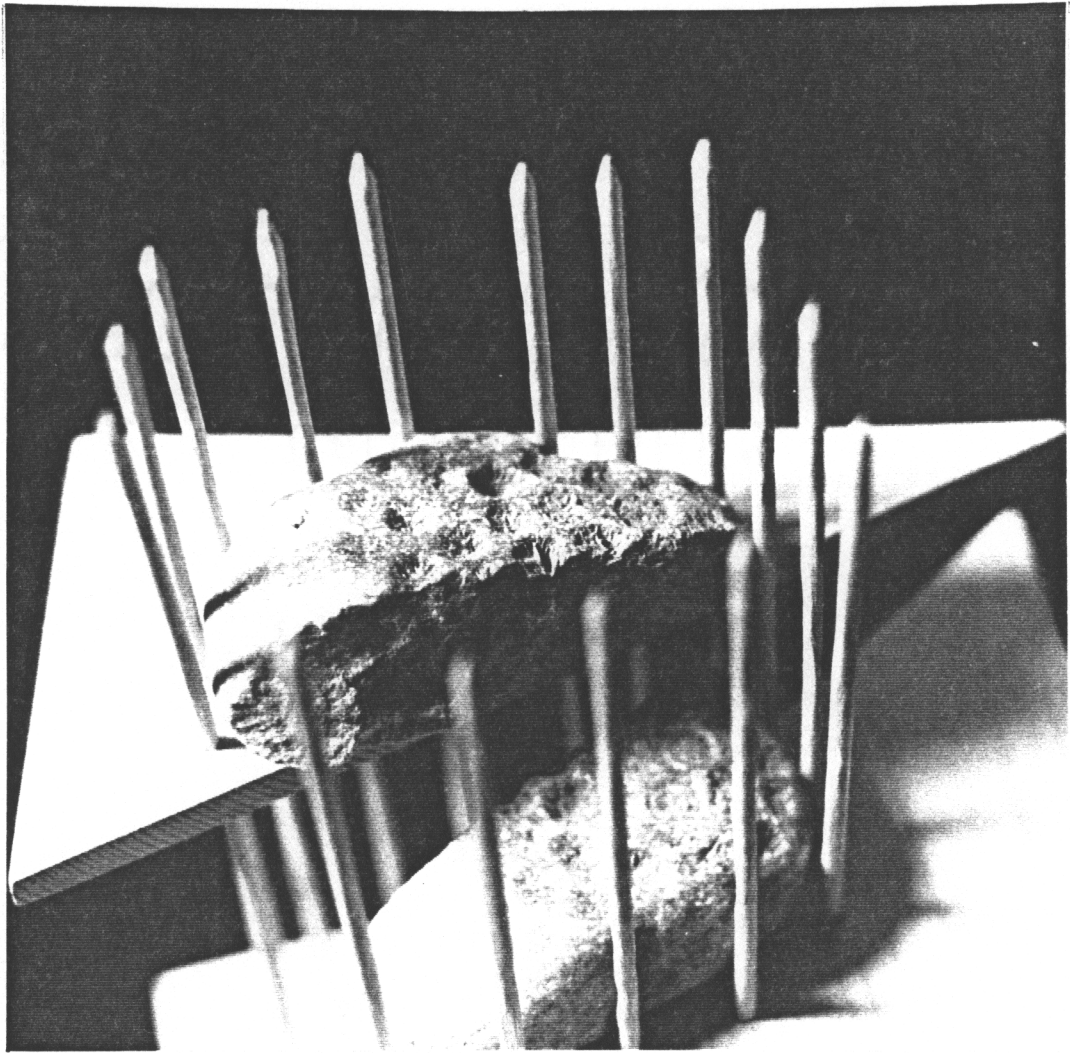
The experience of sanding my cedar board became like polishing a fine metal. Its surface quickly became precious to me. It was difficult to believe such a perfect surface existed beneath the previously splintering exterior. The rough surface texture literally disintegrated, revealing a soft delicate new layer. Its color and softness became needy; I was needed to maintain this new character. I was amazed at the responsibility I began to feel for this material and subsequently for the developing form. I knew how easily this new surface could be marred, so I protected it - wrapping it in a soft cloth and storing it away from potential knocks and bumps. Part of my reaction was a result of thinking of the work I had done, but more importantly, I had grown attached to my boards and wanted to shelter them from harm.



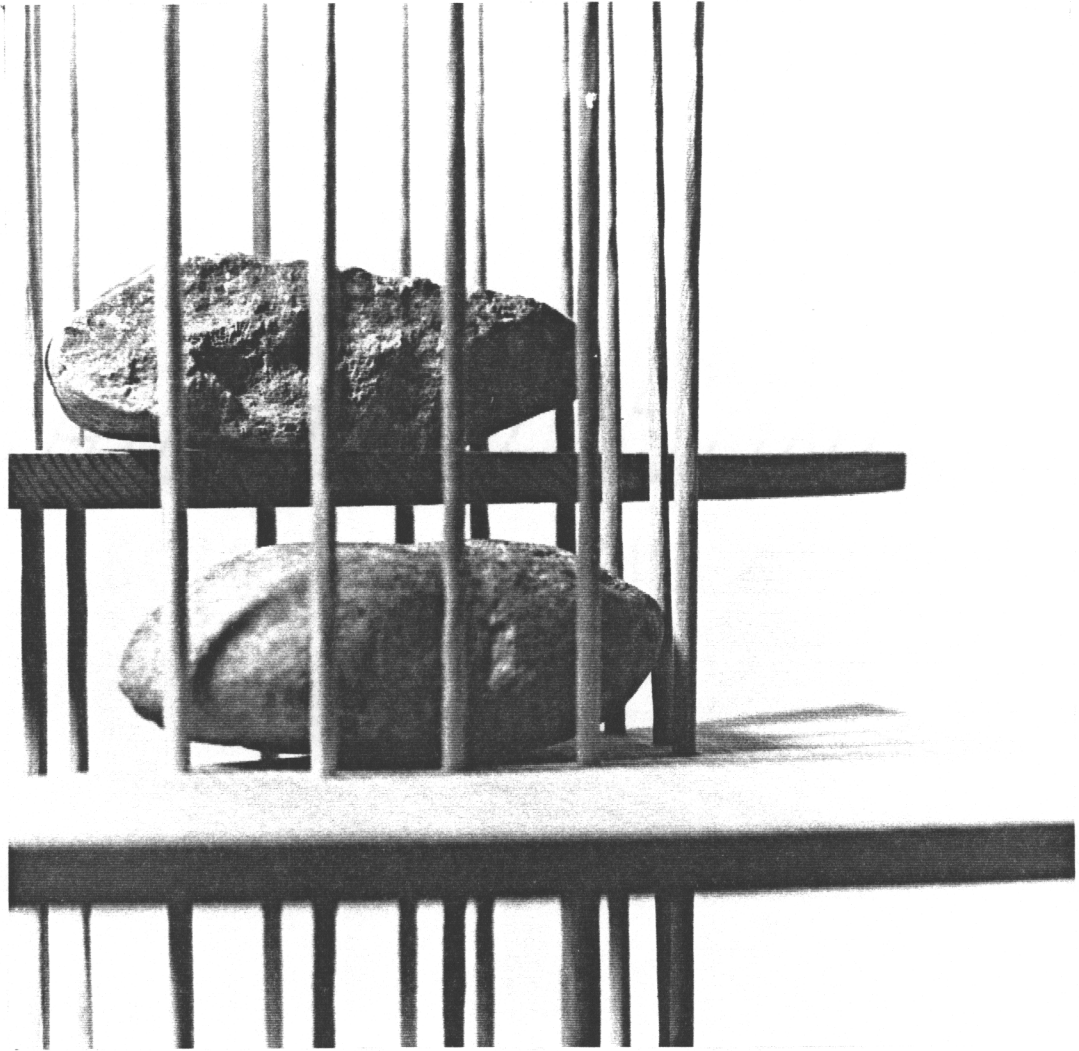
The petosky stone is a soft steel grey with white speckles. It has a delicate quality primarily because of the crystal like circular patterning which covers most of its surface area. This appearance of seeming frailty is a difficult characteristic to associate with rock as a material. There does not seem to be any order to the circles. They are not one particular size or shape. This might have made them look like impressions - like someone or something came along and pounded the shapes on the rocks surface. Instead the look grown from the inside out. Looking into the center of each circle, the flaking crystals make me think that the rock is actually hollow and that the internal material has been pushed out to the surface through these small holes. On the front of the stone, in the area where there are no circles the stone has a smooth almost soft quality. On the back, there is the same sort of circular patterning except that here there is no relief. The pattern is more like a decoration - like they were painted there.



Within its center, the petosky stone looks like it has been impressed with cheese cloth; as if it had been constructed by human hands rather than created by a natural process. The cheese cloth creates a kind of rolling free form grid which sparkles in the light. This stone has a surface - there is a difference between the materials character on the outside and on the inside. The outside does not tell you very much at all about what you will see on the inside. The idea of a stone having a surface seems strange. I guess I always assumed that any particular kind of rock would have a consistent character through and through. It is like this stone has a shell, like an egg, serving as a protective coating. But the stone is broken in two, the shell is cracked open, and it seems vulnerable.

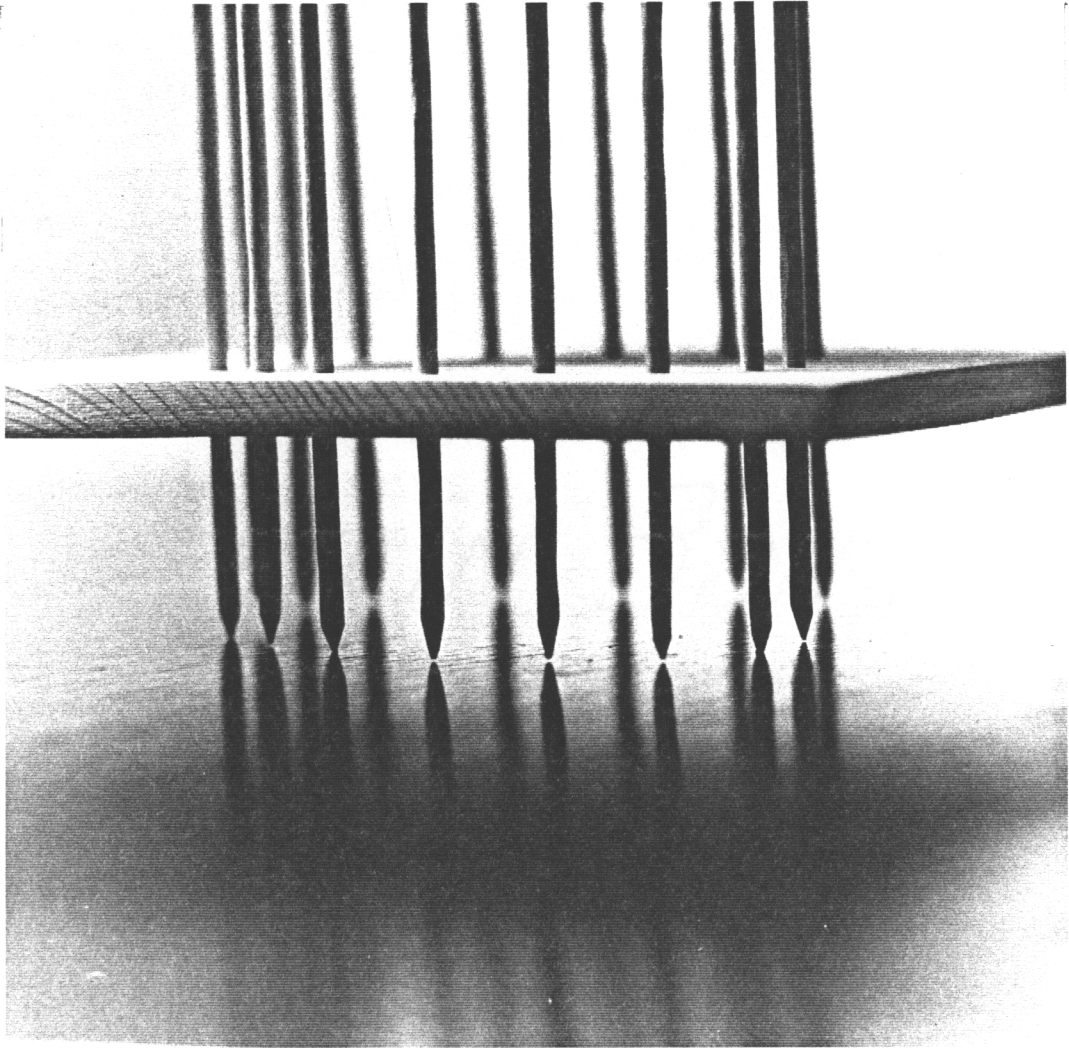


At the beginning of all this, when I was first looking at the petosky stone and the cedar board, I picked out specific physical characteristics which appealed to me. I discovered things about them that I liked and then I interpreted these features in order to have them make sense to me - to give them meaning. Everything that I took from the materials was factual data. But to say "the stone is grey with white circles, it weighs a specific number of ounces and has a smooth surface", although accurate, is not satisfactory. It in no way incorporates my experience. The discoveries which followed were my own inventions. That does not mean that I had complete control over the situation. I could not haphazardly make a decision about what these relationships were going to be. An understanding of the characteristics of the wood and stone narrowed the field of possibilities - at least in terms of what was "right".



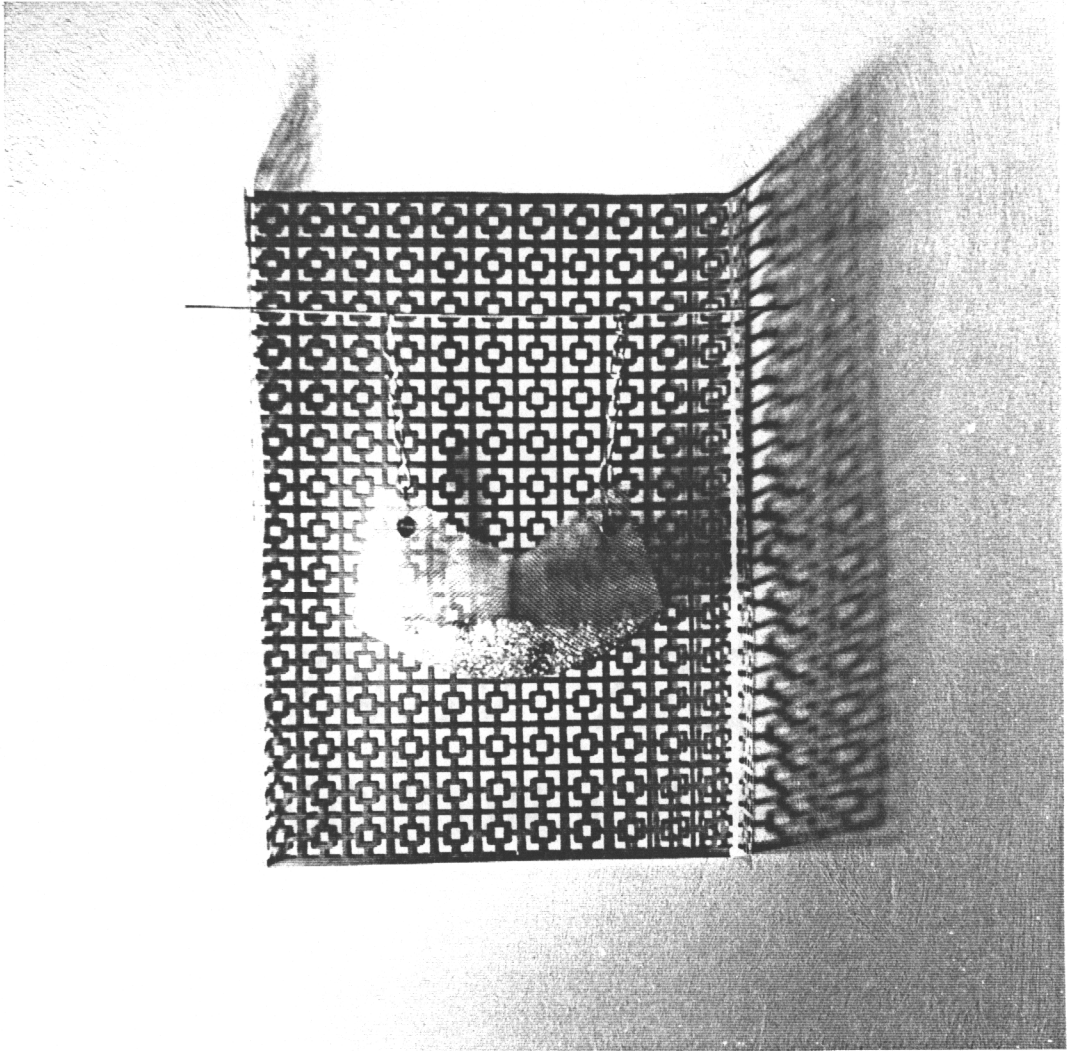
Thinking of the surface of the petosky stone as being like the shell of an egg and the cedar as husks of corn helped me to integrate the materials into my life simply because eggs and corn already have meaning for me. For a material to express its nature it needs to have the opportunity to find its way into the experiences of our lives and discover its place of meaning there.

Sculptures which I created out of wood before I had taken the time to work with the materials were not fulfilling. Some of the forms themselves were pleasing to me but they were not working well with the petosky stone or expressing anything much about wood for that matter. But with the new knowledge I was able to begin working with the materials rather than trying to over power them. The form of the final sculpture then came relatively easily.

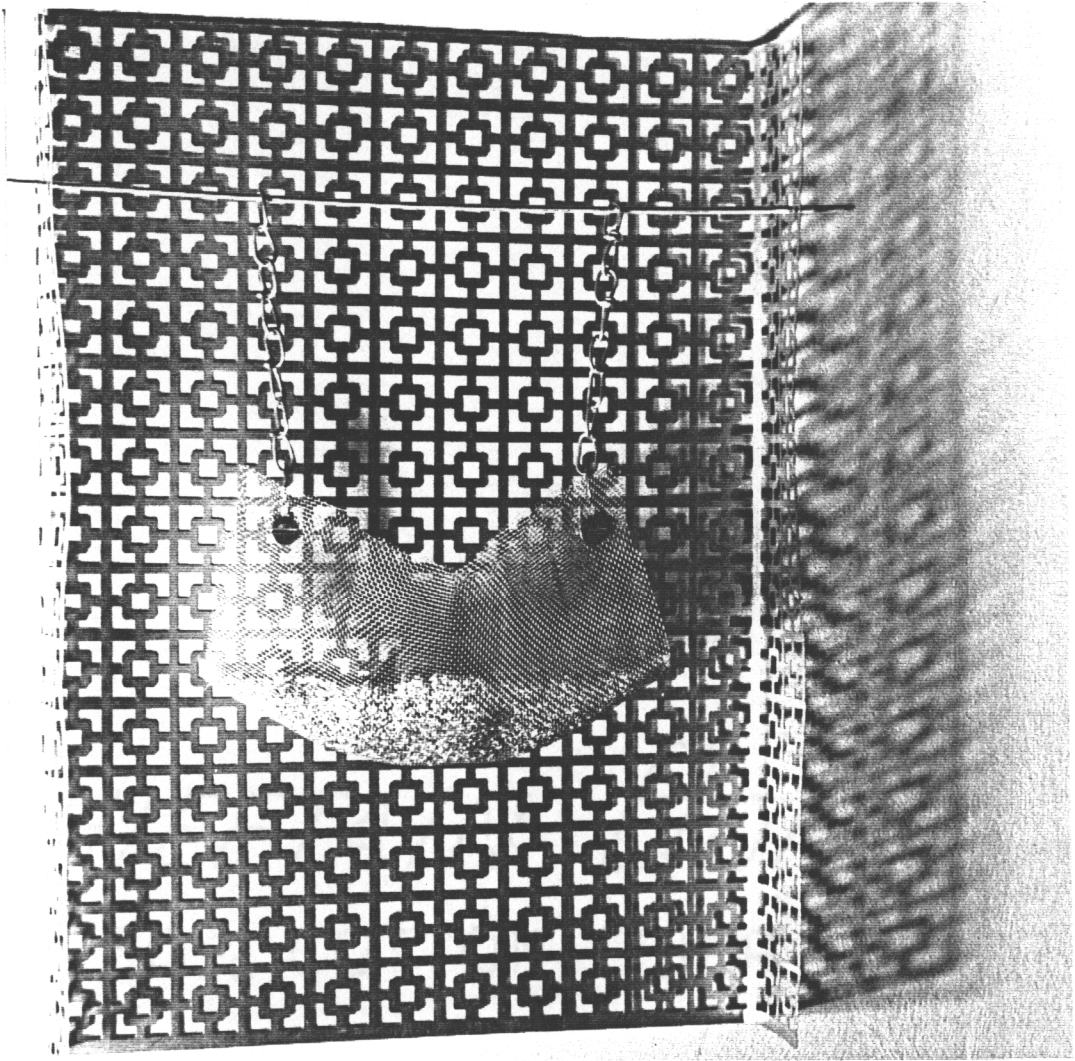


METAL AND STONE

I knew that this sculpture was going to consist of one rock and metal. That was where I started. Metal was a difficult material for me to think about. I hadn't worked with it before and I had to work to break down my pre-conceptions that it was going to be a physically difficult task. So I started at a place I knew I would feel comfortable. I sat in front of the TV with a sheet of aluminum foil and spent hours rolling little balls. They sat on the coffee table in a mound. I liked the way they caught the light. They weren't smooth - they were each rough and irregular but they were shiny and giving off shadows. The mound as a whole had a wonderful texture. Textures, and combinations of textures became the definitive quality of metal that I began to work with.



An important part of understanding the spirit of metal became understanding the spirit of hardware stores. What a difference there is between the big super market hardware stores with their rows and rows of neatly stacked merchandise, and the small town old stores with wooden floors and bins and bins of "stuff" everywhere. Even though you can find most of the same "things" at both places, the objects in the smaller stores seemed less standardized. I was more comfortable picking things up - putting them together with some other "thing" from the other side of the store to see how they looked together. I even carried them outside to see them in the sunlight. No one minded.



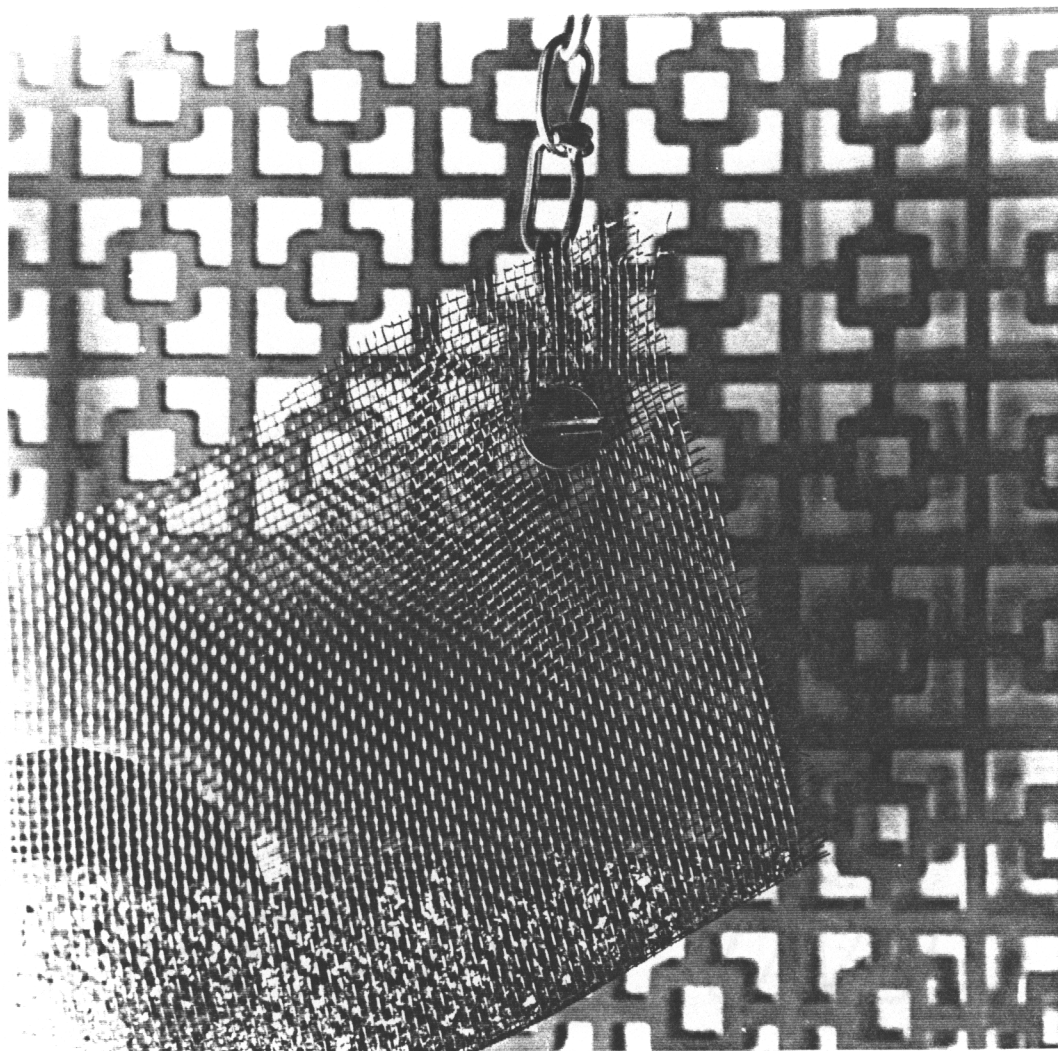
I didn't and don't know what most of these things are made to do. It doesn't matter though. They all became special to me for reasons other than their intended function. I was judging them based on a completely different set of criteria. How does it catch the light? Does it feel smooth and cool against my skin? If I close my eyes and run my fingers over the surface can I "read" its texture? What happens if I sand it? Can I cut it into small pieces? Will it bend? Can I pound it with a hammer and create my own texture? Each object was an individual - with no purpose except to give off its own "special" qualities. My job was to discover these qualities. To see what this object could become, not just what it is.

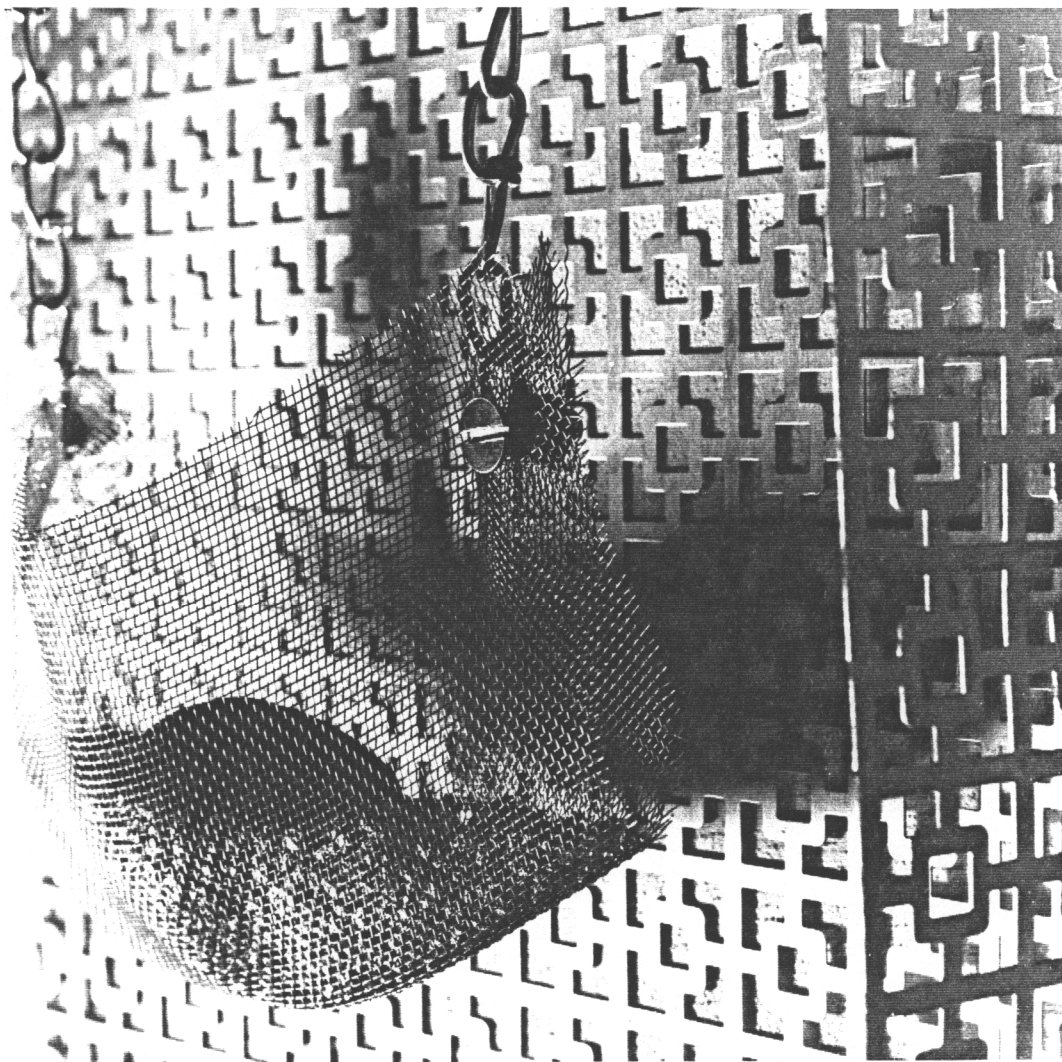
The rock is small about the size of an egg.

It has an irregular shape.

It is a deep charcoal grey with tiny specks of white.

It has a white stripe, the consistency of which is strangely familiar - cotton candy maybe?



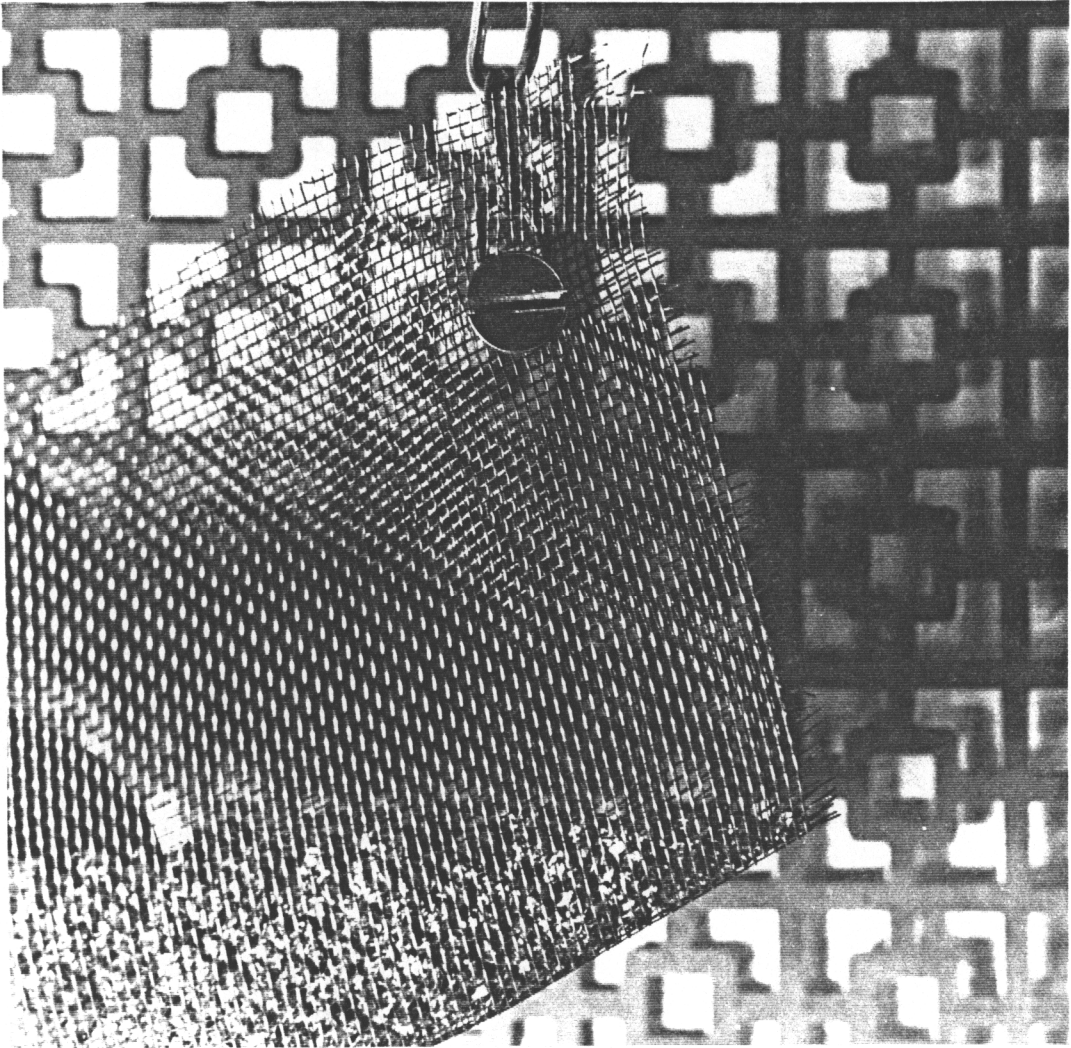


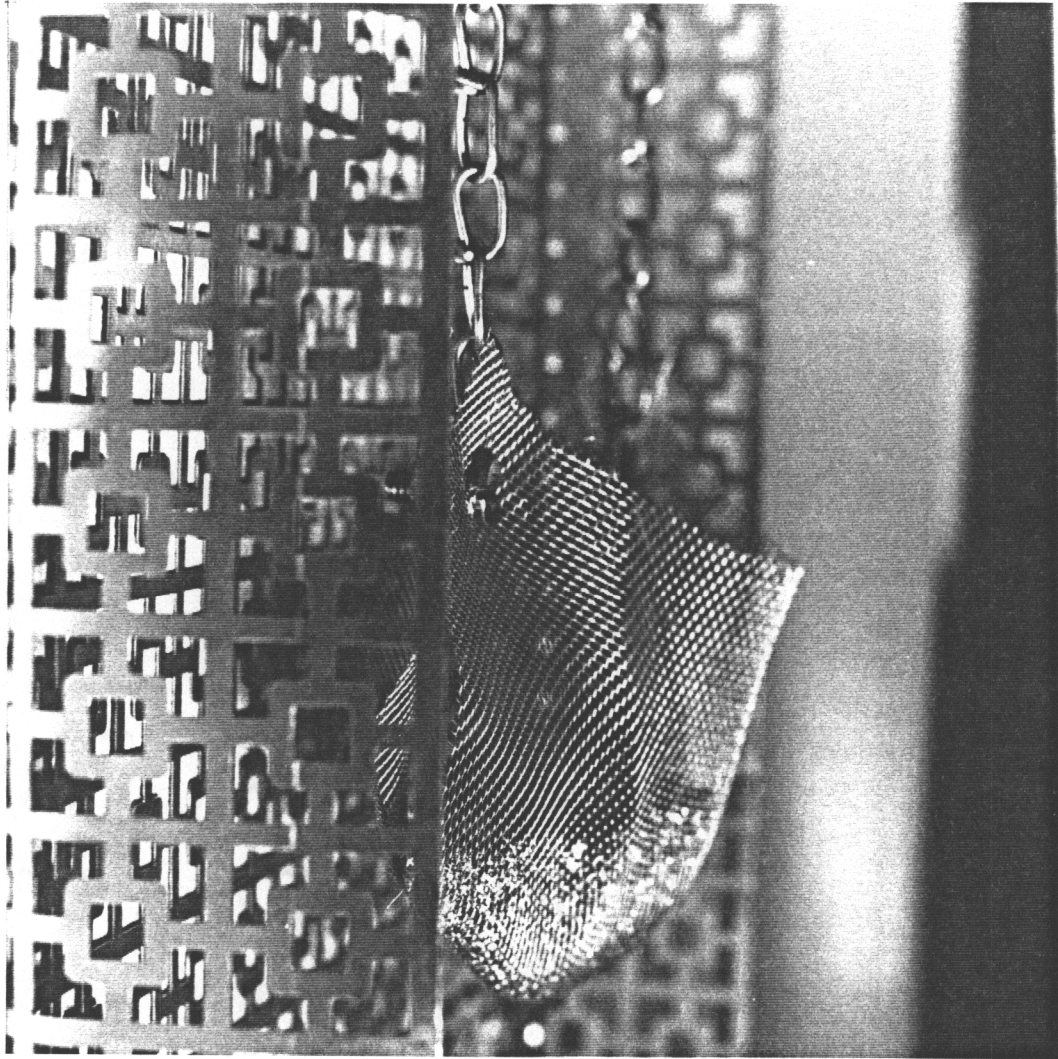
There are indentations covering the surface which look like fossil markings. This seems strange to me since the rock is so smooth. I imagine it on a beach somewhere having been washed over by the waves for hundreds of years.

This rock has a history.

I like the way it fits in my hand.

And the mound of aluminum foil became a shining nest for the precious egg. A resting place of honor, enclosed in its wire nest (cage?). Protected (safe?). You see - not it - but through to it. You have to want to see it - to share its special qualities. If you don't work at it you will only see that which encloses it.





THE MATERIALITY OF GRASS

Have you ever watched the wind blow the blades of grass. When the grass is tall enough you can trace the wind's patterns. You can see how the wind works the grass to making it move - making it dance. The salt marshes of Connecticut are romantic places. Their texture is powerful - like a tapestry. The workings of the water and the wind weave a picture for you to see. But it is not a picture. To call it that takes something away. You must keep moving to really see the salt marsh. You must see how the sun and shadows change with every step you take. The more you move the more you see. These changes - the moments when something shifts and you suddenly see the landscape in a way you hadn't before, that is what it is about.

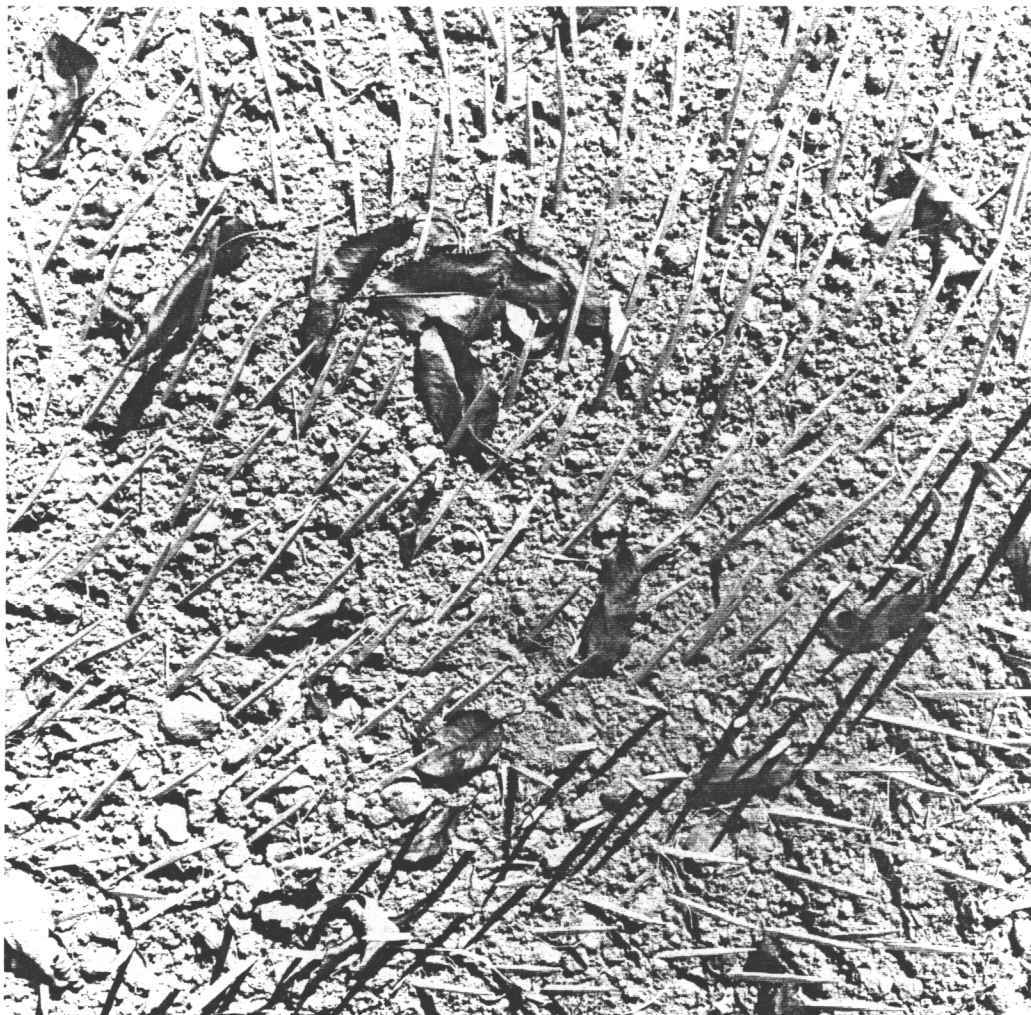




These images - with me since childhood are the inspiration for this project. The assignment was to express, in a 10' X 10' plot of land the materiality of grass.

Starting with my memories of grass, rather than the immediacy of my plot of land, seemed natural. I searched for a way to express the emotional character of those moments. I felt that the strongest elements within the salt marsh existed within the moments of change. Watching the waters rise and fall with the tide, watching the effects of the seasons, watching the winds. All of this created patterns. The patterns were created by the natural laws which rule the salt marsh but could appear almost haphazard. It was a game to trace the designs - almost like watching the clouds above and letting your imagination run wild. Images just appear and you let them develop and recede in a way that is comfortable and simple.





Discovering the toothpicks was really just chance. They went into the ground slowly and grew with my imagination. The shapes, the direction of the "growth", the patterns that developed occurred because they felt right. Certain areas were designed based on the way the sun was shining on a particular day. Others developed as reactions to what had gone in the day before. There was never an overall plan. Letting it develop this way seemed natural. If I had tried to force the toothpicks to do something in particular I don't think my experience of the moments would have been nearly as powerful. As it was the patterns came to me like dreams.

The process of identification with this project, as with the next one, was not object oriented but, rather, was experiential. I can't say that I search the thousands of toothpicks individually to find their "spirit". It was larger than that. The things that I identified with took place in time and space. There is nothing instantaneous about my experiences with the toothpicks - or with grass. It took place

rather over the course of hours and days and weeks and is still happening now.



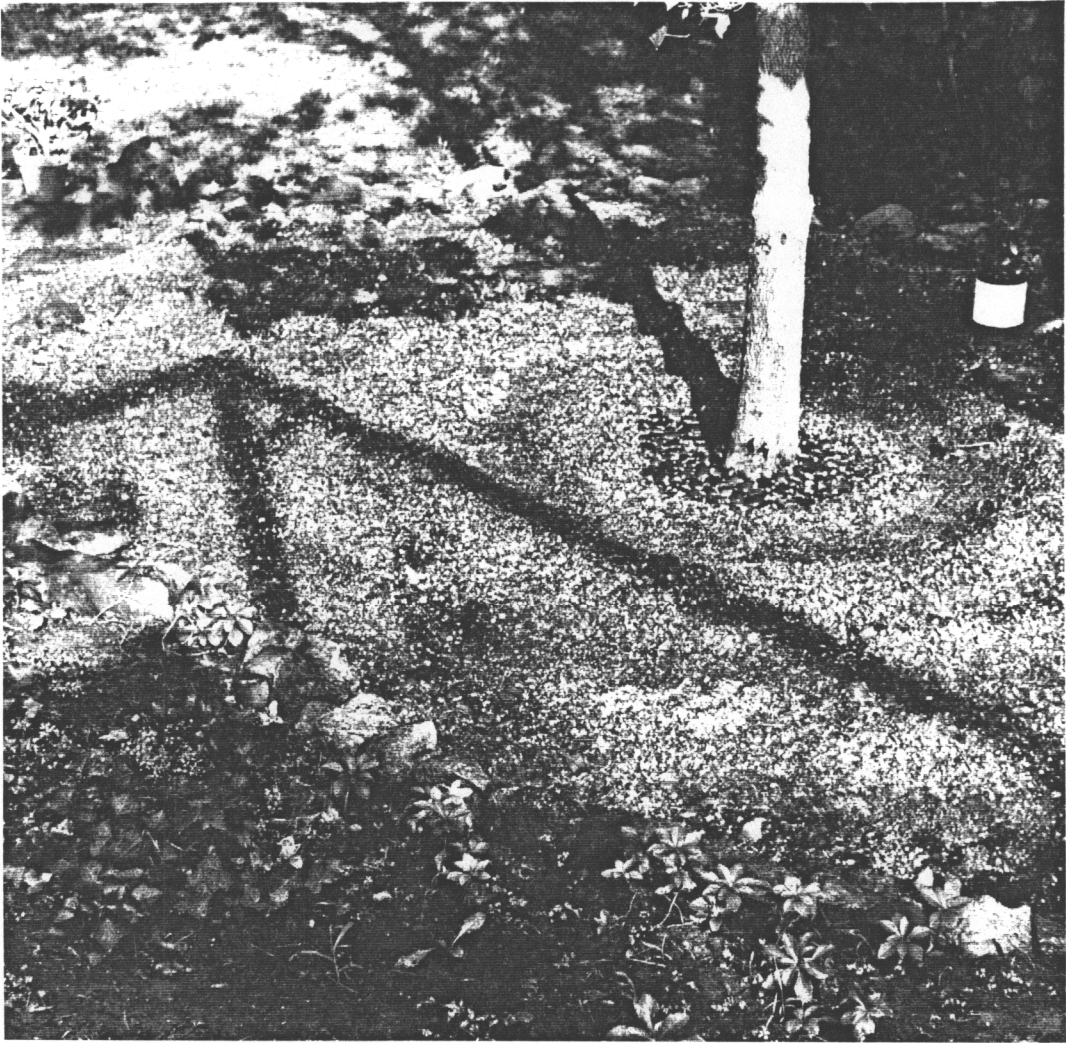


A GARDEN OF ROCKS

A porch off the master bedroom is filled with potted plants and artifacts from distant travels. Bells from Arcosanti ring with the wind. It is a private space. It looks out over the lower lawn where there is a gravel island.

The shape of this island is organic and was decided upon many years ago. The outside edge is defined by rocks brought from the surrounding woods. In places, it is built up so as to work as a small retaining wall. At other places the rocks lay on the ground at grade. There is a large Dogwood tree located within the space not quite at the center of anything but definitely a focal point.





On the bank facing the house, pachysandra has been planted.

There is a slate walkway separating the bank from the house.

The rest of the area is grassy lawn surrounded by woods.

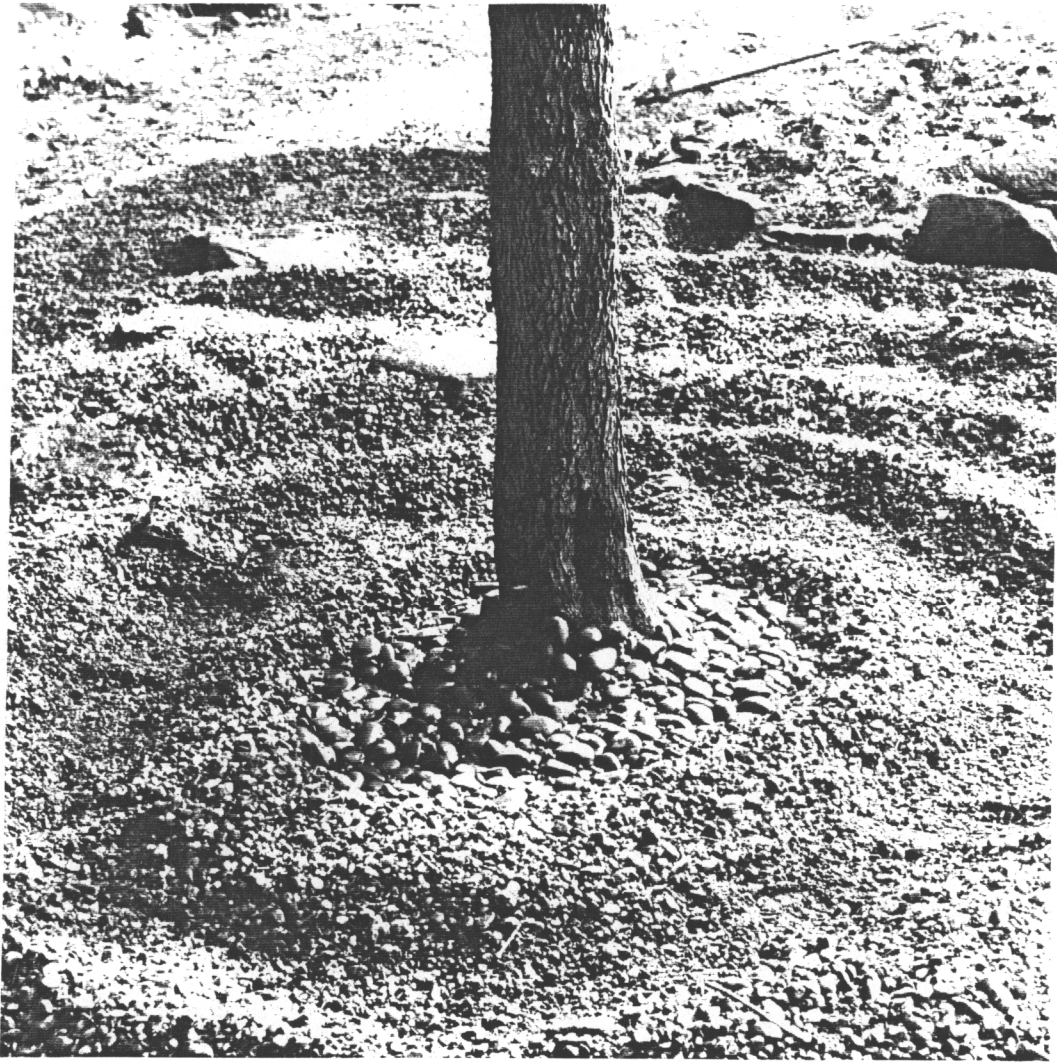
It was here that I built a garden of rocks.

I did not begin the actual building with any pre-planned design in mind. Instead I gave myself the freedom to design within the acts of construction. With this freedom every moment took on a great significance.

I did spend some time thinking about the kinds of features I wanted the garden to consist of. I wanted there to be a 'platform' area where potted plants could be displayed. I also wanted there to be a walkway which would move people through the space. Entering and leaving the garden was to be a conscious act. The only other thing that I knew was that I wanted the garden to express a sense of tranquility regardless of whether it was being viewed from the bedroom porch or being experienced from within.



The shape of the island itself was already defined and I did not want to change that. Its presence was strongly felt - if only because it has been there for 27 years. With this in mind I began to collect large rocks from the surrounding woods. Working only with what instinctively felt right I laid out the area that would serve as the platform. The defining curve is soft and gentle in response to the existing curves which define the outer edge. Searching the woods for rocks was time consuming. There had to be enough large rocks to give the space presence and enough smaller rocks to create the delicate quality I was looking for. Each rock was placed and then turned until it was in the correct position. Often I had to remove dirt from below the rocks so that it would be lying low enough and would be relatively flat. I used gravel to fill in the areas between each rock so that it had a feeling of being a continuous space. The larger rocks which were intended to make a platform suddenly could be seen as a stage. This is now a stage for plants and flowers to act upon.

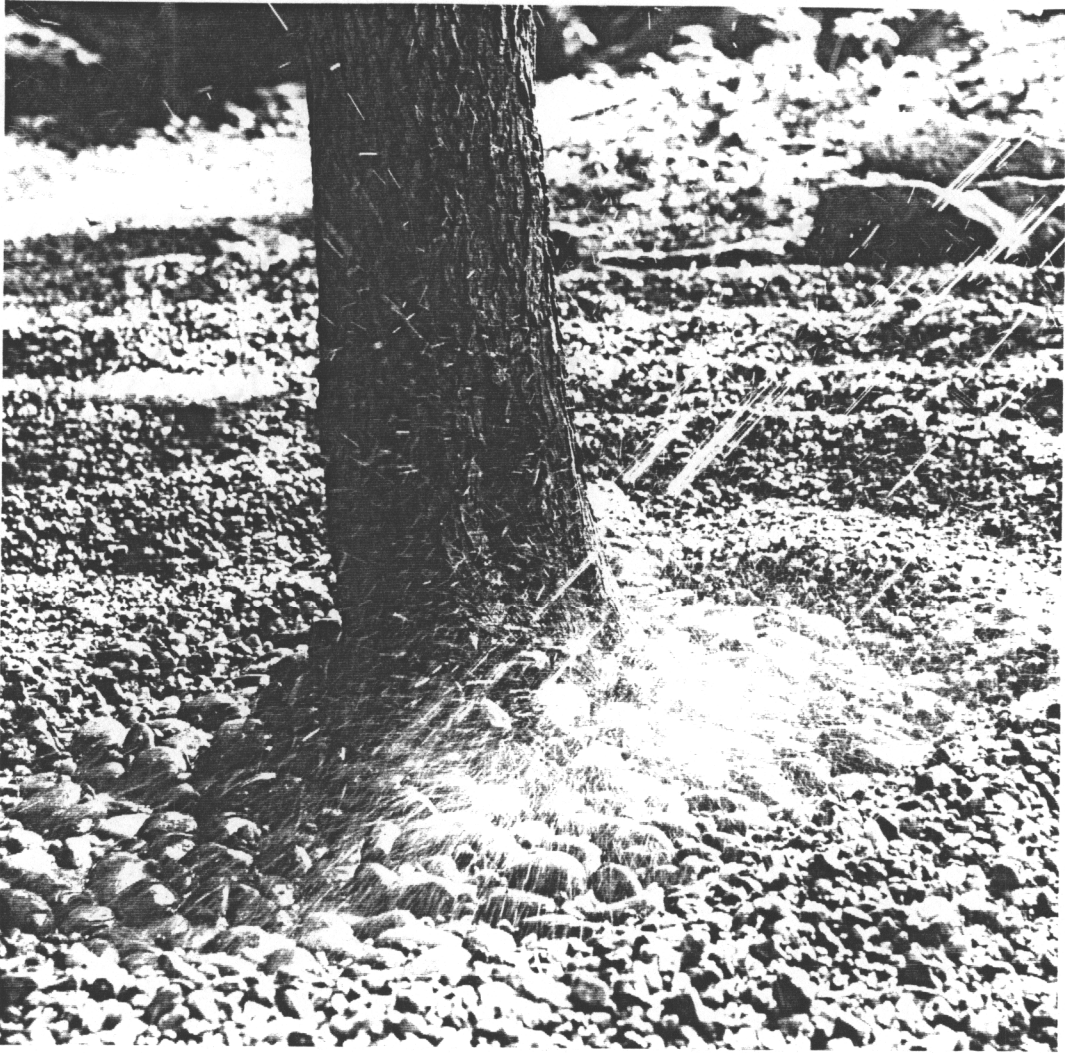


When this area was completed I began to place the black river stones around the base of the Dogwood tree. Each stone was so beautiful and smooth, fitting them together was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Finding the correct configuration was never a question - it was more like an assumption. Each stone being a discovery - its relationship to the stones next to it another discovery - and the overall pattern yet another discovery. In the end the circular space which emerged took on a fluid quality in contrast to the large heavy rocks from the woods. Placing the river stones along with the small pebbles became like placing drops of water. Each remaining separate at some level but creating a whole.

The gravel inbetween became the waves, the ridges and valleys, the light and shadow, which separated the water from the stage, broken up by a curving line of stepping stones - a bridge between the two.



The experience of building this garden, from the very beginning, took on the meditative quality which I had hoped to see visualized in the garden itself. The placement of each new rock was a discovery. Both in terms of the space I was creating and for myself personally. I think if I had spent too much time planning what this space should be that I could have been overwhelmed by the size of the project. But because I allowed everything to emerge slowly the entire process was quiet and peaceful.



CONCLUSION

So, what does all of this mean for me as a landscape architect and as an artist? What is the significance of these issues beyond my own experiences? Can it be considered a useful exploration in terms of my profession? It is far easier to take this personal approach when, in the end, you are only having to contend with yourself. All of the rules seem to change when we begin to think about designing an environment for someone else?

There are several issues I would like to bring up in this regard. These points attempt to go beyond questions of design (how does it look), and instead focus on how we think and feel about the environments being created. This is not to deny the importance of aesthetics but rather to try and expand upon the issues we should consider within questions of aesthetics.

It is essential that the designer and the client care about the environment that is being created. It is from this initial feeling that

identification is born. This does not necessarily imply high maintenance. Some people will learn to identify with a place by caring for it, while others by caring about it. "How" the client is within the environment is, therefore, the most important question we can ask.

Designing within an environment is different from any other art form because it is impossible for the product to ever be stagnant. Even beyond the life and death of the plant materials we might use in our work, all physical environments, due to the fact that they exist within time and space are alive. It is easy to forget this fact when we are sitting behind a drafting table, because watching the changes in life requires time and patients. Further more, the life of any environment we design cannot truly begin until the moment that we, the designers, leave and the users take over. An understanding of the life of a place requires a certain amount of intimacy which can only be achieved over time and through experience. A picnic in the back yard, the daily walk down a particular street to get to work,

the awe of the pristine beauty of newly fallen snow. And of course the negative as well. The effects of a bad storm, the sight of empty business lots on Main Street, or the uncomfortable feeling of walking in a run down part of town. These kinds of events as well as the subsequent memories of them, allow people and environments to come together in meaningful ways. We cannot predict how people will be in any one environment but through the emotional attachment that grows by caring we can encourage participation.

I took great pain in evaluating my processes of identification as they pertain to my work. I do not believe that this kind of scrutiny is necessary for identification to exist. As I said at the beginning, often the acts which give birth to identification are simple ones. It is not the job of the designer to push the client into a level of involvement beyond their own interest. But I do think it is our job to teach people how to care. To teach them how to open their eyes and see all that surround them.

To try and put into words all that I have learned in doing this thesis would be an impossible task. The effects it has had upon my life, both intellectually and emotionally, have been profound. It has been said to me that what I have accomplished here will be most meaningful only to myself. Perhaps this is true. The words and images I have used to express my thoughts and feelings are relatively simple while the ideas behind them run very deep. I am certain that I am leaving this project behind me a better thinker and a better designer, and probably most important of all with an understanding that I am to be forever both a teacher and a student of the potential meanings of places.

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