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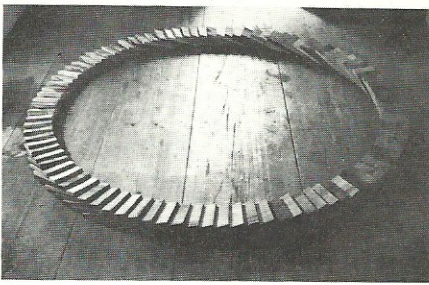
SKULPTUR / SCULPTURE

Material und Abstraktion
2x5 Positionen

Material and Abstraction
2x5 Points of View

Matériaux et abstraction
2x5 positions

Douglas Beer
Tom Butter
Andreas Gehr
Robin Hill
Carmen Perrin
Vaclav Pozarek
Martin Puryear
Jürg Stäubli
Robert Therrien
Steve Wood



Circle, 1976

Derivations of Form

Beat Wismer

To illustrate the ideas that gave impetus to our project, let me describe my first encounter with Vaclav Pozarek's artistic production. I first came across the artist's name on an invitation to an opening at Rolf Preisig's gallery in Basel – exactly ten years ago. Throughout the seventies, Preisig devoted himself to Minimal and Conceptual Art with single-minded commitment. I remember well his excellent exhibitions on Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and Robert Ryman, on Daniel Buren, Hanne Darboven and Richard Long, on Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner, Stanley Brouwn and others. At the above-mentioned exhibition, Pozarek showed two works, one of which, entitled *Circle* (1976), was reproduced on the invitation. It consisted of many identical boards laid out on the floor in an overlapping circle. The sculpture was simple (and easy to describe) but it raised several questions, since it had neither beginning nor end and was almost paradoxically dynamic. For instance, what direction was it going in? The boards were all arranged in the same way, yet no matter where the visitor was standing, they moved from left to right in the closer, front half of the circle, and from right to left in the farther half. A simple phenomenon of perception, no doubt, but proof that even then Pozarek was not merely concerned with making a purely formal statement.

Preisig's exhibition made a profound and lasting impression on me; the invitation is one of the few that has traveled with me on every move over the past decade. However, Pozarek's visibility was very low in the years following the Preisig exhibition. Then came the opulent, loud-mouthed art of the early eighties that virtually drowned out the ascetics – and the Preisig Gallery unfortunately folded. While the fireworks of wild painting fizzled as fast as they had exploded, Pozarek pursued his own artistic conceptions unperturbed.

A similar story could be told about Andreas Gehr whose installation of twelve immense iron tables at the Kunstmuseum Luzern in 1975 was undoubtedly one of the most impressive artistic events of that period. Gehr moved to Toronto in 1983.

Vaclav Pozarek (b. 1940) and Andreas Gehr (b. 1942) are the oldest among the Swiss artists in our exhibition. Their work and Jürg Stäuble's (b. 1948) was a direct consequence of the extraordinarily radical challenge of Minimal Art in the sixties. In contrast, Minimal Art must have seemed almost historical and classical by the time Carmen Perrin (b. 1953) and Douglas Beer (b. 1955), both from the French-speaking region of Switzerland, had reached art school. Common to all five artists is their interest in exploring the pure and empty form of radically reduced ABC art, i. e., pure, sculpted form unadulterated by subject matter.

Vaclav Pozarek

It is appropriate to start with Vaclav Pozarek since his work of the mid-seventies was perhaps the purest exponent of the principles that gave Minimal Art its name. He attended the State University of the Fine Arts in Hamburg from 1969–1971 and spent the subsequent two years studying with Anthony Caro at St. Martin's School of Art in London. *Circle* clearly reflects the influence of these years: in its totality, it is pure, elementary form that can be taken in at a glance and conveys a sense of the absolute despite the meagerness of construction; in detail, it shows a vast array of boards lined up without the least artistic verve or visible emotion – an accumulation of building blocks and manual skill. In addition, the title quite adequately describes the work – sculpture and title are congruent, the latter does nothing to further our understanding of the former. «What you see is what you see.» We seem to be faced with a literal interpretation of Frank Stella's formalist postulate. And yet – as indicated above – even this early work exacts a reading that goes beyond purely formalist issues.

In his contribution to our catalogue, Steven Madoff recounts a conversation he had with Steve Wood. I had a similar discussion about the approach to Minimalist history in Wood's New York studio this past spring. It is of interest here because we touched on aspects that bear significantly not only on Pozarek's current production but on the other artists' contributions as well. Our conversation centered on a sculpture of 1967 by Robert Morris in the Panza collection. Four identical, fiberglass elements, about four feet tall and thirteen feet long, form a square frame – like a basin – around an empty interior. The elements are rounded in front and flat in back. On approaching the work, I assume that the square in the middle is empty, but cannot resist leaning over the bulging exterior

to make sure: the center really is empty. The assumption, based on the appearance of the external frame, is confirmed; but curiosity, which was stronger than the supposition, is not satisfied.

It is of no little importance that post-Minimalist art needs the collaboration of a curious beholder. A case in point is Pozarek's sculpture *Simplex*, executed especially for our exhibition. (I have seen only the model.) It consists of three, open box-like shapes made of the same elements, almost equal in size, but far from identical. To rectify the tempting but erroneous assumption that the three, open, wooden cubes, reminiscent perhaps of constructivist architecture, are the same, the viewer will have to walk back and forth comparing them to discover their variations. He will have to move around the work, which herewith obeys a basic postulate of sculpture: the movement of the viewer. The two-part work, *Synchronized Twins* (1986/87), is even more extreme in this respect. Only one part of it is shown in the catalogue, since the work cannot be reproduced as a whole. Two identical sculptures are mounted back to back on either side of a wall between two rooms.

In somewhat facile terms, one might say that the Minimalist conception confirmed the viewer's assumptions, made by extrapolating from individual components, but it did not satisfy his curiosity. However, Pozarek (and other artists as well) rewards the viewer's curiosity and does not substantiate his assumptions.

Jürg Stäuble

The cone-shaped object constructed by Jürg Stäuble for our exhibition immediately piques one's curiosity. Its silence as it lies on the floor with slightly raised edges seems a bit strange. The viewer will have to circumvent it with care. He may even find himself chuckling when he realizes how simple the assumptions are that underlie what initially appeared to be an almost inexplicable shape.

Stäuble starts with a clear-cut conceptual given: two overlapping cones. One asymmetrical cone lies flat on the floor, its elliptical base facing upwards. A second symmetrical one is constructed on top of the ellipsis so that its tip is pointing upwards. The result: two very different cone-shaped solids with a common elliptical base.

This discrepancy between an unambiguous, rational point of departure and a seemingly irrational result intrigues Stäuble and turns his sculpture into something Susan Sontag would call an interesting object which nullifies polarities like beautiful/ugly, true/false, useful/useless, and good taste/bad taste.

Even in his very early work, when he was still painting, Jürg Stäuble explored similar ideas. He assailed purely rational systems like perspective until their rationality gave way, producing works whose ambivalence between surface and volume left viewers in suspense.

For some ten years now Stäuble has been practicing an art that no longer calls for a primarily intellectual response; he once integrated mirrors into his installations to confront viewers of his work with their own (mirror) image, forcing them to react on an emotional level as well. Since then he has sought to convey an emotional intensity from which the viewer cannot escape despite the show of coolness his objects assume. Stäuble's metal ellipses, shown at the Kunstmuseum Luzern in 1986, are a case in point. (A picture of the exhibition is reproduced in this catalogue.) The sides of an incision, made to the exact center of the ellipse, are overlapped so that the surface becomes gently conical in shape. Stäuble then subjected the edges of this perfect and elementary geometrical shape to the violent treatment of a pointed hammer. The resulting wounded and – were one to touch them – wounding edges stand in violent contrast to the gentleness of the breast-shaped whole. The injury inflicted by the aggressive attack of the hammer exerts an empathetic impact that cannot be ignored.

It is to Jürg Stäuble's credit that insight into the making of his pieces and their underlying assumptions does not diminish their emotional impact. Even when I think of its construction, the large sculpture in the alcove of the Baroque room in Graz still reminds me of a stranded flounder gasping for air in absurd surroundings.

Andreas Gehr

Among the artists on view here, Gehr is the only one whose work also involves explicit figuration, or rather, the only one who takes the liberty of formulating his sculptural statements in figurative terms. He is also the only one who dares give an abstract sculpture such a semiotically loaded title as *Dead* – even if it is an exception in his work. These two observations suffice to suggest caution in restricting the study of Gehr's work to formalist criteria.

Gehr's abstract works could easily be described were it not for the material he has begun to favor and that basically eludes verbal description: glass. There is, of course, something rather audacious and extremely radical about making a structurally simple sculpture out of standardized, longish blocks of glass with a square base. The validity of the constitutive characteristics of sculpture per se – its physical three-dimensionality and consequent displacement

of space – is at stake here, not in actual fact but rather on the level of appearance. Perception depends on the viewer's angle of vision. At times he is confronted with a solid mass whose surfaces mirror the surroundings. One step further and the solidity of the glass blocks fades, leaving only the edges as clues to a reading of the sculpture, which has now become as immaterial and weightless in space as a linear drawing, similar to Fred Sandback's thread sculptures. And if we take still another step, the linear structure may elude simple interpretation again through manifold and multiple refractions. From one standpoint, the appearance of the sculpture and our knowledge of its construction do not coincide, but then from another, they do.

The subject matter of modern sculpture is sculpture itself: the relation between support and load, inside and outside, open form and closed form. Historical Minimal Art entails the purest formulation of this issue, devoid of all extraneous information. Andreas Gehr goes a step further; he enriches and complicates this elementary demonstration with great formal audacity, revealing the existential dimensions of his work that address content. A vast gulf between being and appearance may open up only to close again at the next step. He uses glass, that fragile substance, as a strong support for pieces of metal as it were. Although the works are solid, the outside penetrates them and passes through them. And then there is their haptic quality, also considered a constitutive property of sculpture: anyone bold enough to touch these strong and yet fragile structures runs the risk of destroying them and injuring himself in the process.

Carmen Perrin

Fragility is also a characteristic of Carmen Perrin's work. In her case, however, the risk lies less in the choice of material than in her exploitation of the tension of matter to generate a sculptural situation, i. e., a situation in the literal sense of the world, which includes the dimension of time. Perrin's works cannot be taken in at one glance. They reveal their charms only to those who are willing to spend time with them, to walk around them, and to study them from different angles. They do not feature one single or even one right point of view. In consequence, the vital moment is not the moment of recognition but that exciting moment when the artist has finished working on a sculpture, when she has tuned it down to the last detail, specifically, when she has tightened her troublesome, lethargic materials into a sculptural event. I am speaking, for instance, of the moment when eleven identical wooden slats, overlapping at one end and fanned out at the other, are braced by a rubber band attached to the three far corners so that the fan-like configuration arches into

a spherical triangle. Stretched taut above the concave surface, the all-embracing rubber band describes a perfect isosceles triangle.

This work – untitled, like all of Perrin's sculptures – exemplifies another important situational (or more aptly, momentary) feature of her art: its provisional character. The rubber band can be removed, the slats can be laid on top of each other, the sculpture can be put away. Gone is the tension, the concentration of the balancing act – until the work is reassembled elsewhere. No wonder that Perrin's sculpture has been called nomadic. There is indeed something of the action artist in her as she turns the spaces occupied by her sculptural events into specific sites. Carmen Perrin's pieces are marked by great openness, which is perhaps the most general statement that can be made about her. The openness of her art is two-fold. It offers the potential of open-ended approach. I can explore her pieces from any and every angle, including mental ones. They plot extremely broad fields of association by stating nothing that can be grasped in words. As already mentioned, there is never a title. The works do not propel my thoughts or emotions in a given direction but neither do they admit of no reaction at all. I am compelled to respond – with my own ideas and associations.

Openness also refers to the formal structure of the pieces. Carmen Perrin places open configurations in space – space not only flows around them, it also occupies them, just as they, in turn, occupy space. Her works always allow themselves to be permeated by space; their displacement of space is often only potential. This important aspect is certainly comparable to the moment described above, in which a daring balancing act establishes a precarious equilibrium. The work is propelled to the point where it may still lay claim to its existence as a sculpture in space despite that fact that it allows as much space as possible to flow through it unobstructed. Nor is the flow of space forced to follow a predetermined path, to take a detour; it is only jarred – like the flow of my ideas.

Douglas Beer

When I look back on my first encounter with Beer's sculptures about five years ago, the first word that comes to mind is «perfection». This young artist's radiantly perfect objects demonstrated the basic constants of sculpture, such as support and load, and testified to his preoccupation with the everlasting issues of figurative sculpture. No matter how abstract, Beer's works always seemed to be searching for new solutions to the relation between weight-bearing leg and free leg. The ambivalence underlying his objects was unmistakable: a firm stance below was answered by the burden of a free-floating ele-

ment above. It was disturbing to find that the firmly rooted, supporting element radiated the same perfection as the suspended element, which one tended to associate with birds on the wing or aerodynamics. The smoothness of both the supporting and often smartly wedge-shaped suspended elements contrasted greatly with the joint that held them together. Without evoking a concrete organ, Beer frequently lent it an outspokenly organic appearance.

This organic form was important as the link between two inorganic elements. The extent of its importance becomes apparent on seeing Beer's further development. It is a development of reduction. Among the artists presented here, Beer seems to be the least ruffled by the possibility of being accused of formalism. He has given up the spectacularity of his balancing acts whereas the element of contrast, an integral part of his early works, has become radicalized, that is, explicitly thematic in color, form, and choice of material. The theme of his work today is the relationship between perpendicularity and incline, angle and curve, smoothness and roughness, raw material and painted surface or colored substance. The appearance of the recent works is less spectacular, more unassuming; the demonstration of their theme is toned down but no less radical. Douglas Beer forces contrasts into the still perfect appearance of a self-contained exterior, where they act from within. The cool form assumed by the sculptures paradoxically heightens the audacity of their presence.

Vaclav Pozarek lived in Czechoslovakia until 1968, where he studied at the Film Academy in Prague for a few semesters. Douglas Beer was born in Algeria. Carmen Perrin, born in Bolivia, now works primarily out of Marseilles. Andreas Gehr moved to Toronto from Switzerland five years ago. These external facts alone are enough to subvert any thought of suggesting a thesis like "The Swissness of Swiss Art". Moreover, visits to American studios showed that artists there are working the same problems, problems concerning the basics of sculpture, its form and its materials. National differences faded to irrelevance. If at all, a difference might be observed in the attitude toward purity of form devoid of content as practiced by historical Minimal Art. The following hypothesis would, of course, have to be substantiated by comparing originals with each other: since the rise of Minimal Art some twenty years ago, the Old World has not quite managed to shake off a certain scepticism towards pure form and a fear of being accused of formalism. Who knows.

(Translation Catherine Schelbert)

Sans titre. 1988

Holz, Pavatex, Acryl/wood, pavatex, acryl/bois, pavatex,
acryl

58×83 cm

Photo: Georg Rehsteiner, Vufflens-le-Château

Brunex oben. 1986

Pavatex, Sperrholz, Polyester/pavatex, plywood,

polyester/pavatex, contre-plaqué, polyestre

200×200 cm

Photo : Georg Rehsteiner, Vufflens-le-Château

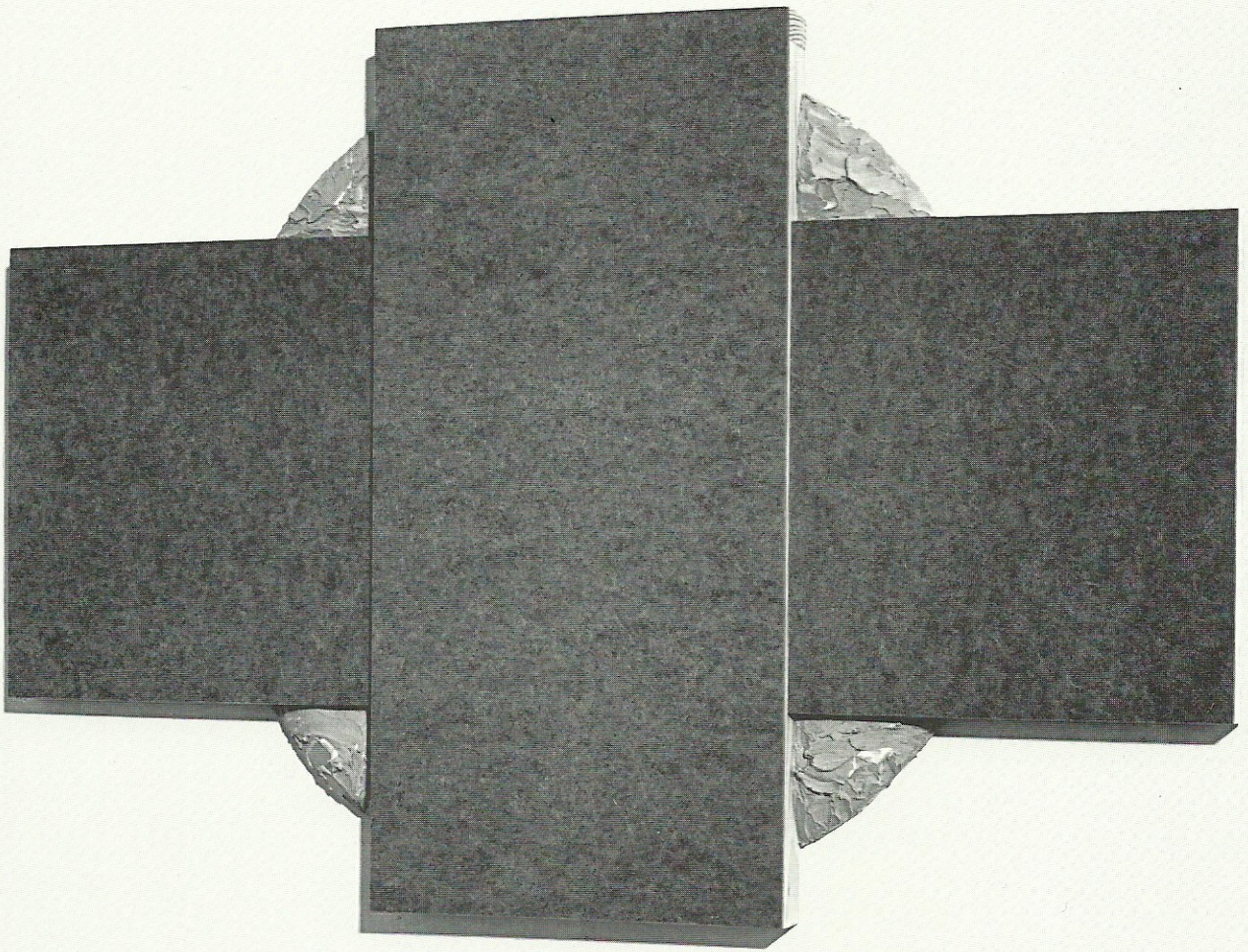
Sans titre. 1986

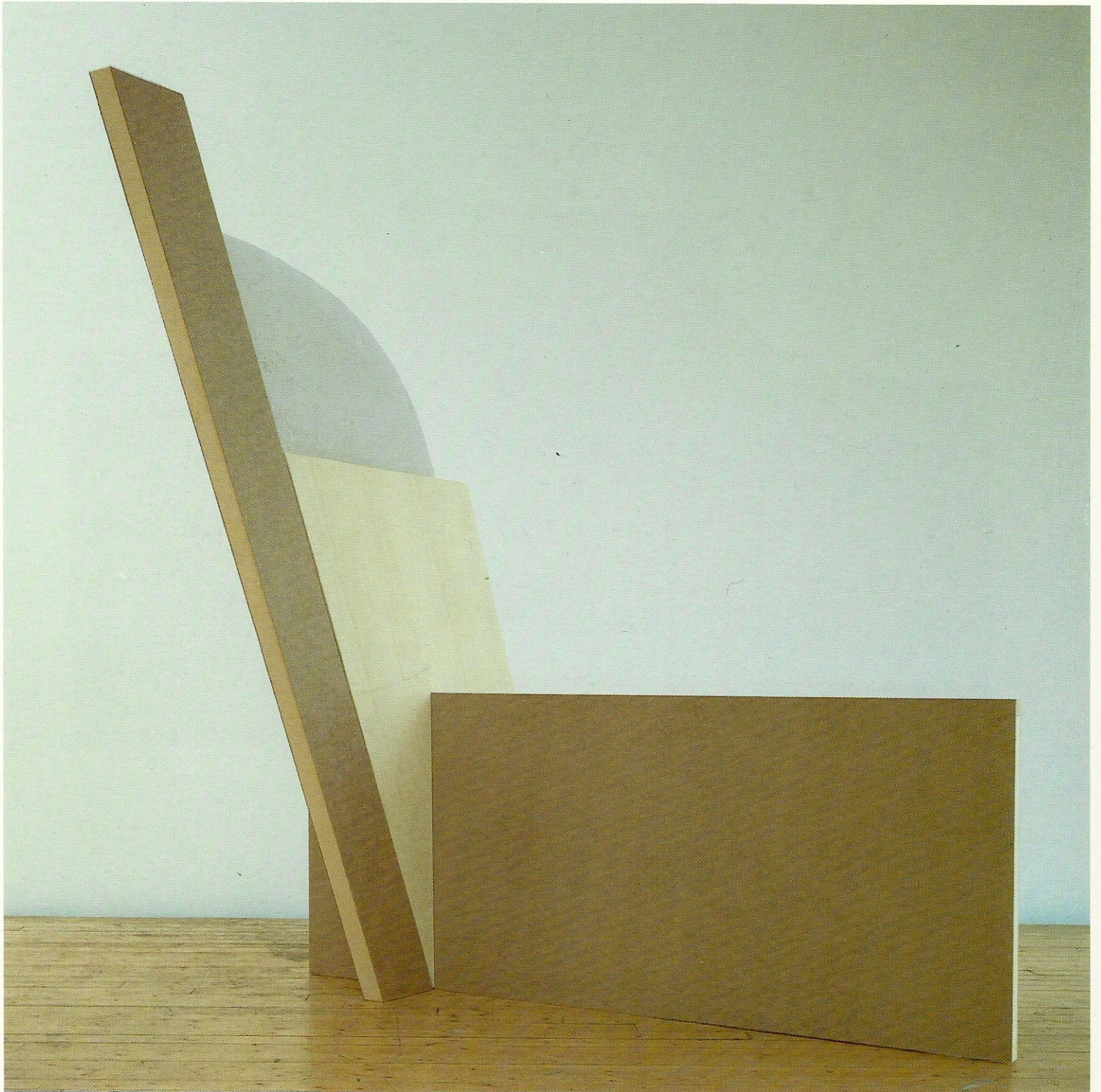
Holz, Pavatex, Polyester/wood, pavatex, polyester/bois,

pavatex, polyestre

400 cm

Photo: Georg Rehsteiner, Vufflens-le-Château







Tom Butter

Hand. 1986

Fiberglas, Harz, Holz/fiberglass, resin, wood/fibre de
verre, résine, bois

262×76×109 cm

Courtesy: Curt Marcus Gallery, New York

Von links nach rechts/left to right/de gauche à droite:

Foil. 1987

Fiberglas, Ahorn, Metallstab/fiberglass, maple, metal
lath/fibre de verre, érable, métal

185×58×109 cm

Press. 1987

Fiberglas, Metallstab/fiberglass, metal lath/fibre de verre,
métal

216×119×48 cm

Reel. 1987

Fiberglas, Metallstab/fiberglass, metal lath/verre de fibre,
métal

127×58×224 cm

Courtesy: Curt Marcus Gallery, New York

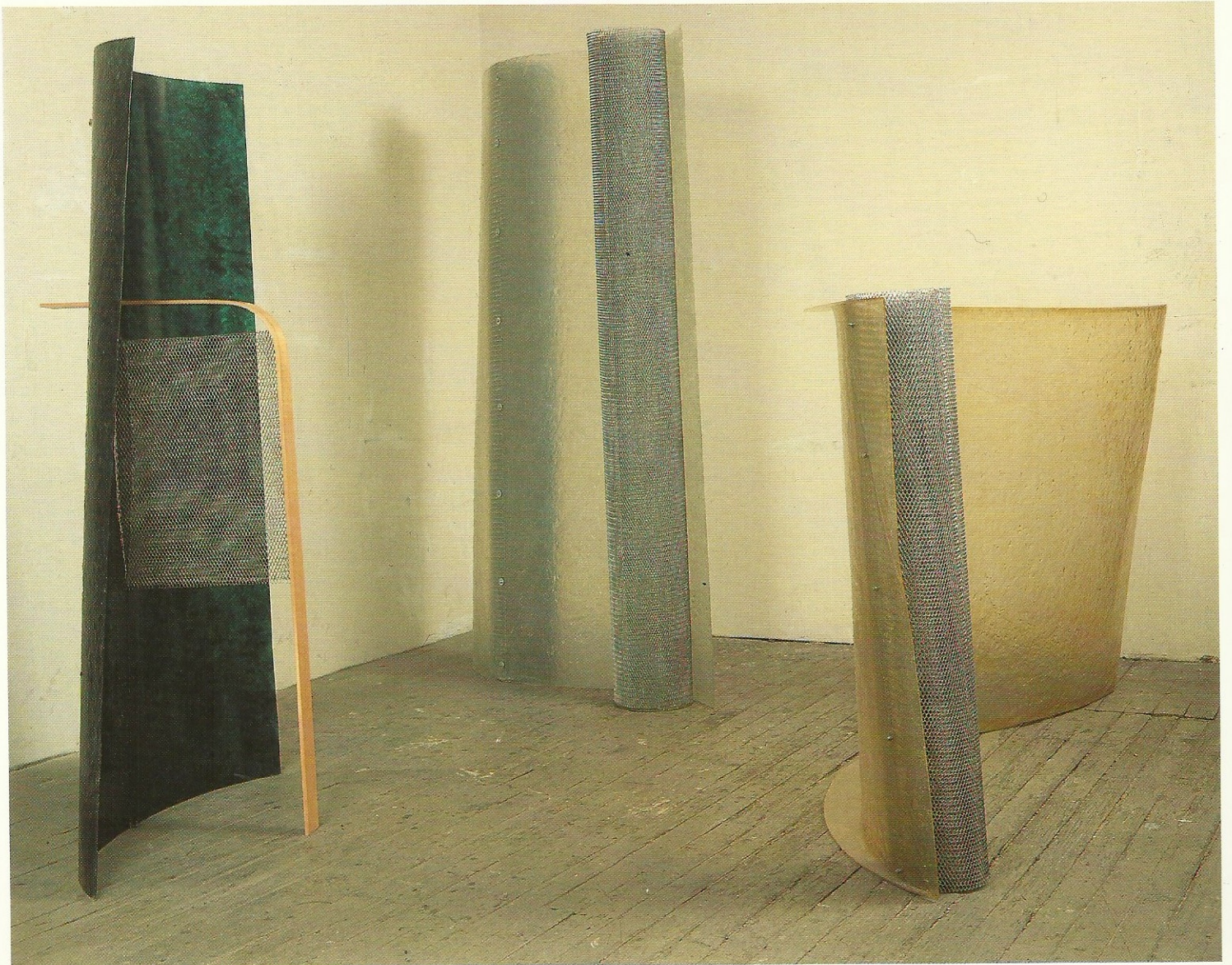
Section. 1987

Fiberglas, Pappel, Draht/fiberglass, poplar, wire lath/fibre
de verre, peuplier, fil de fer

236×117×43 cm

Courtesy: Curt Marcus Gallery, New York





Catalogue of the exhibition:

«Skulptur. Material+Abstraktion: 2x5 Positionen»

Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau

«Sculpture. Matériaux+Abstraction: 2x5 Positions»

Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne

«Sculpture. Material+Abstraktion: 2x5 Points of View»

City Gallery, New York

To Monique, Micheline and Roger

Project coordination: BLACK CAT productions, Geneva (CH)

Commissioners of the exhibiton: Corinne Diserens, Beat Wismer

Commissioner for Aarau: Beat Wismer

Commissioner for Lausanne: Erika Billeter

Commissioner for New York: Elyse Reissman

Organisation: Corinne Diserens, Beat Wismer

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Geneva (CH)



Ohne Titel. 1986

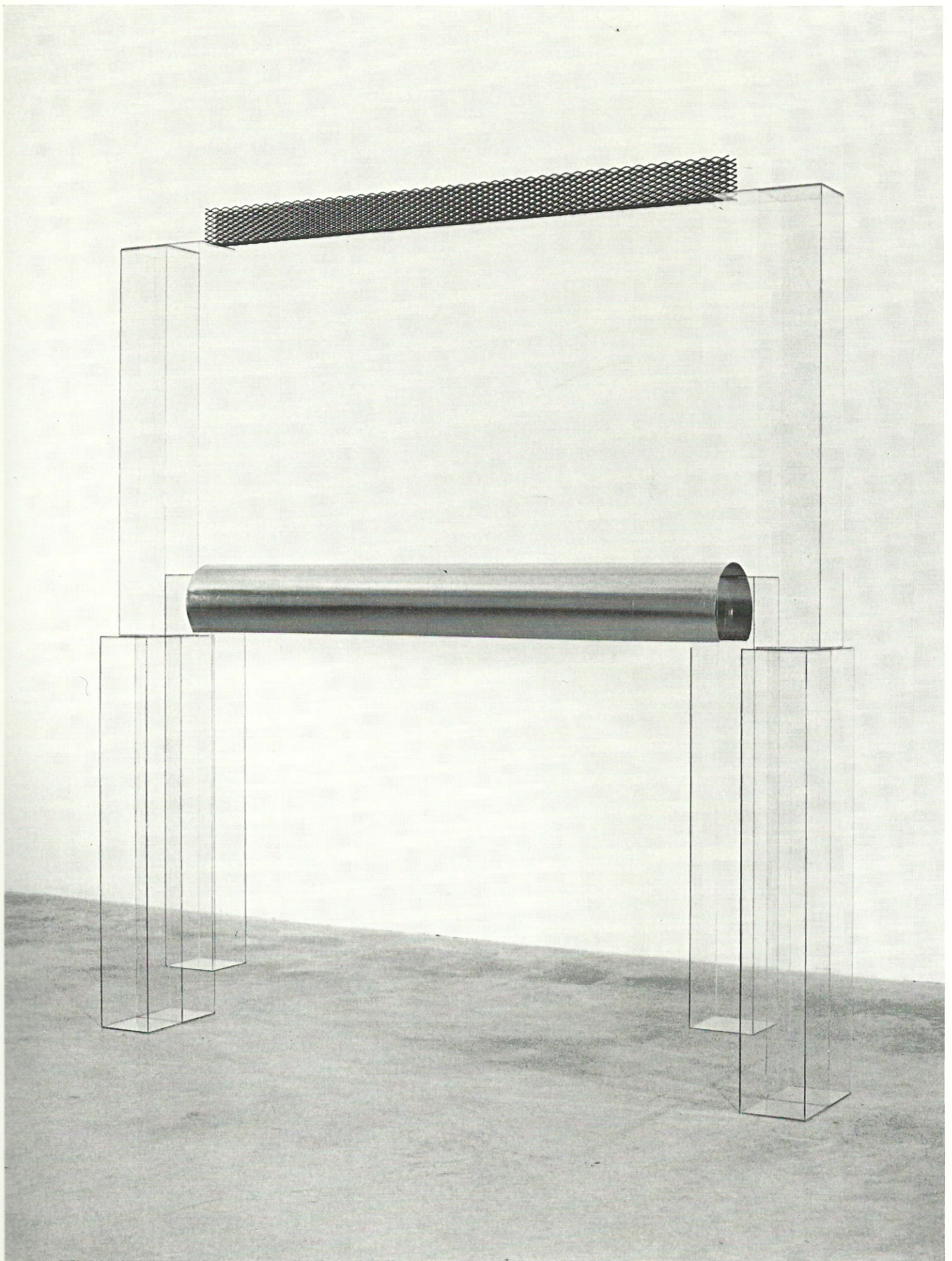
galvanisiertes Blech, Streckmetall/galvanised sheet
metal, expanded metal/tôle galvanisée, métal étiré
216×194×30 cm

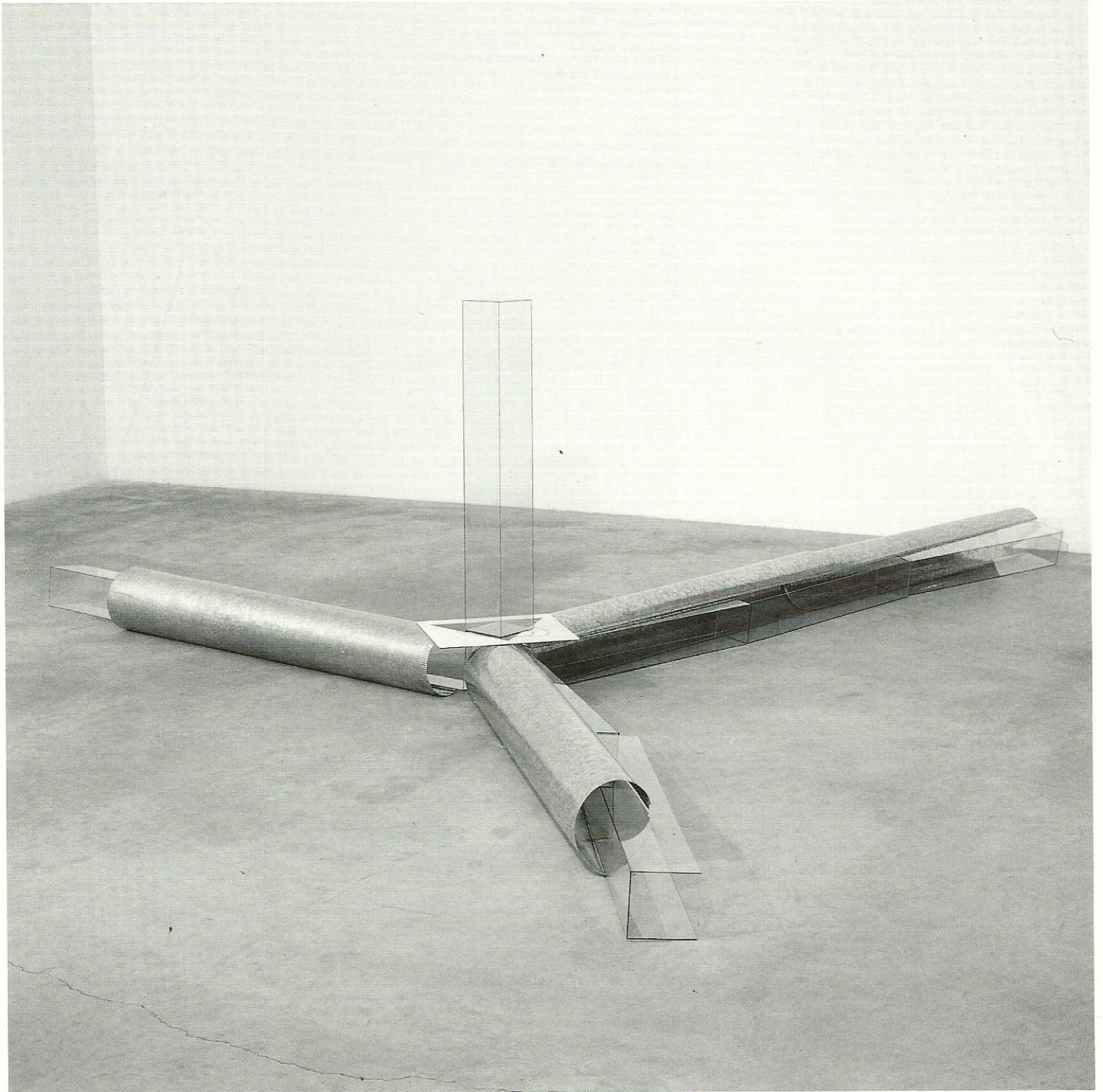
Ohne Titel. 1986

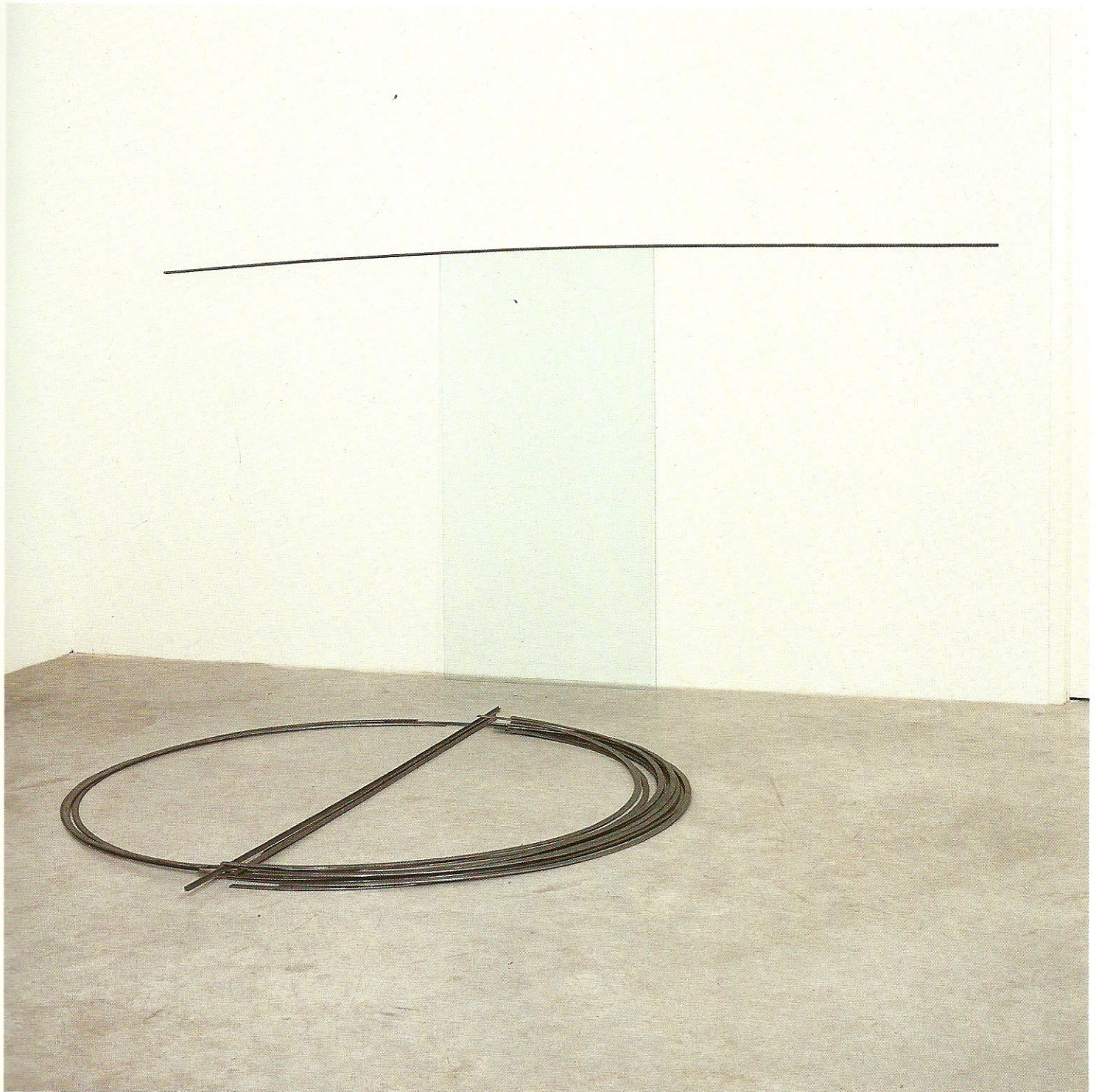
Glas, galvanisiertes Blech, Acryl/glass, galvanised
sheet metal, acryl/verre, tôle galvanisée, acryl
125×380×480 cm

Dead. 1986

Glas, Stahl/glass, steel/verre, acier
170×200×360 cm







Down Down Down. 1985

Paraffin, Wellkarton/paraffin wax, corrugated cardboard/

paraffine, carton ondulé

96,5×46×46 cm

Courtesy: Lang & O'Hara Gallery, New York

Partner. 1988

Wachs über diversen Materialien/wax over mixed media/

cire sur mixed media

152×91,5×93 cm

Courtesy: Lang & O'Hara Gallery, New York

Wing Tip. 1986

Beton, Metall, Holz, Wachs/concrete, metal, wood, wax/

béton, métal, bois, cire

160×68,5×91,5 cm

Courtesy: Lang & O'Hara Gallery, New York







Sans titre. 1987

Holz, Metall, Kautschuk/wood, metal, caoutchouc/bois,
métal, caoutchouc

80×100×150 cm

Collection Perret, Genève

Sans titre. 1988

Kautschuk, Stein, Metall, Holz/caoutchouc, stone, metal,
wood/caoutchouc, pierre, métal, bois

120×120×75 cm

Courtesy: Andata/Ritorno, Genève

Sans titre. 1986

Fiberglas, Holz, Kautschuk/fiberglass, wood, caout-
chouc/ fibre de verre, bois, caoutchouc

75×75×100 cm

Collection Laurent, Genève

Text deutsch

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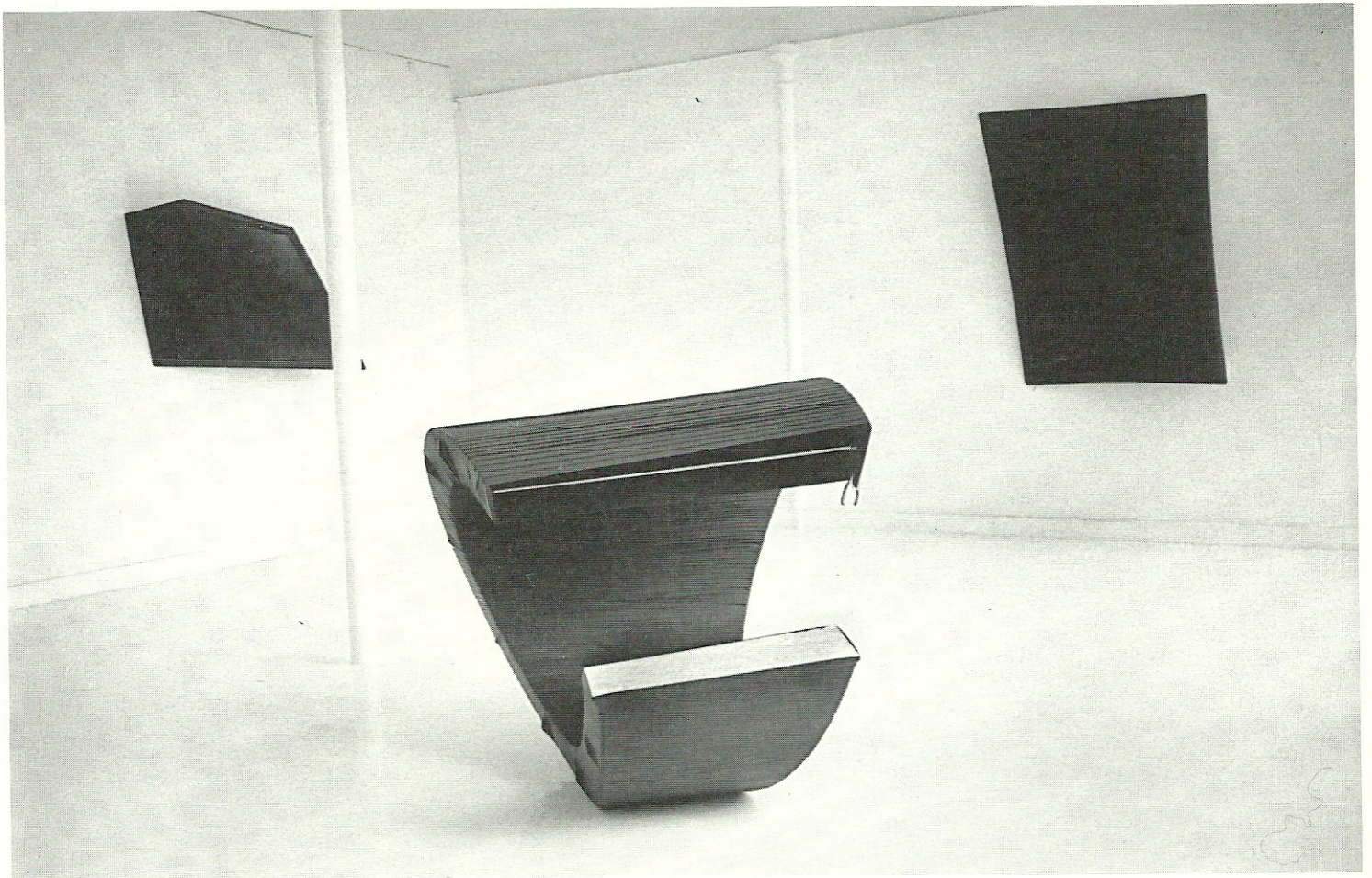
Texte français

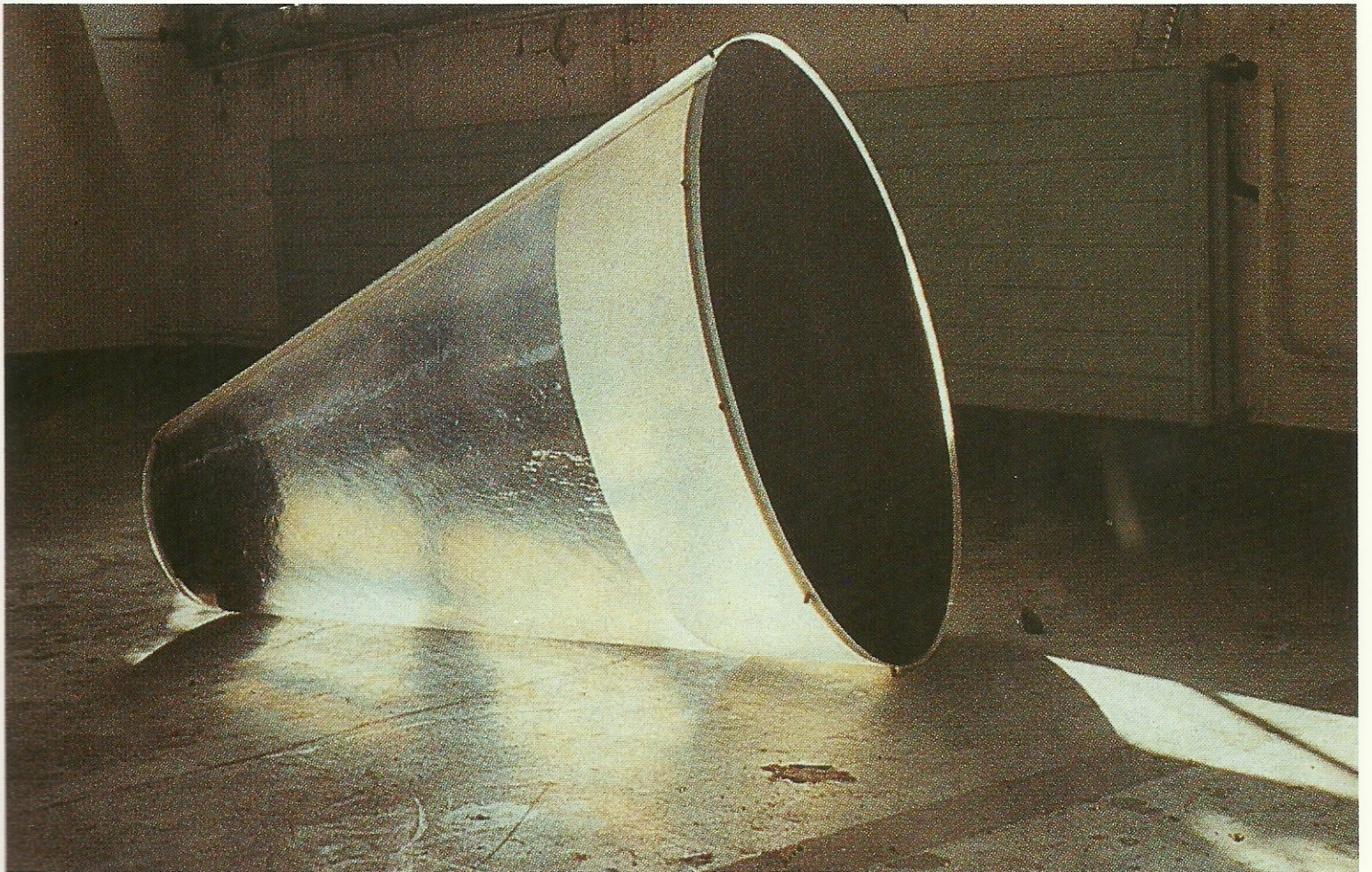
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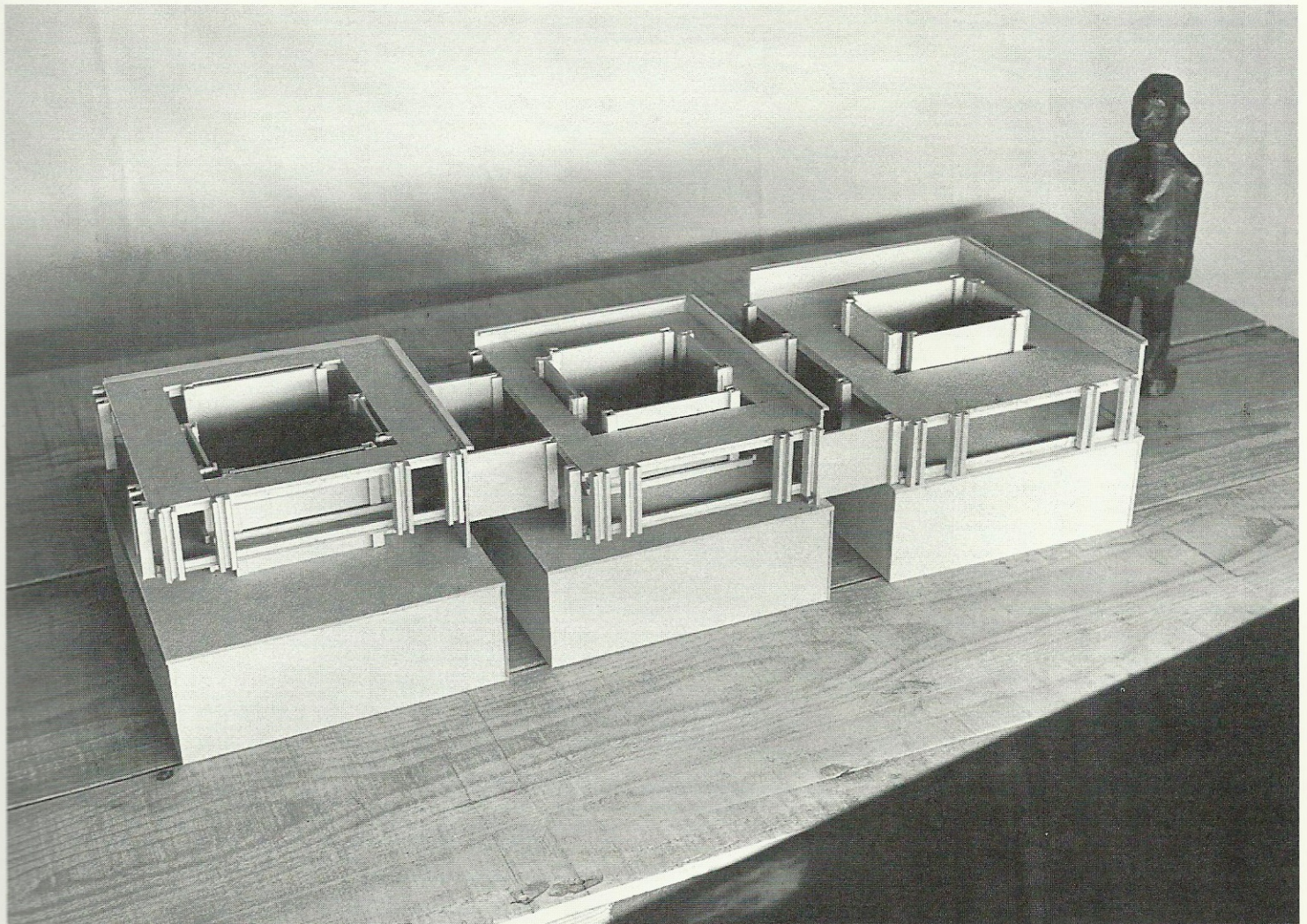


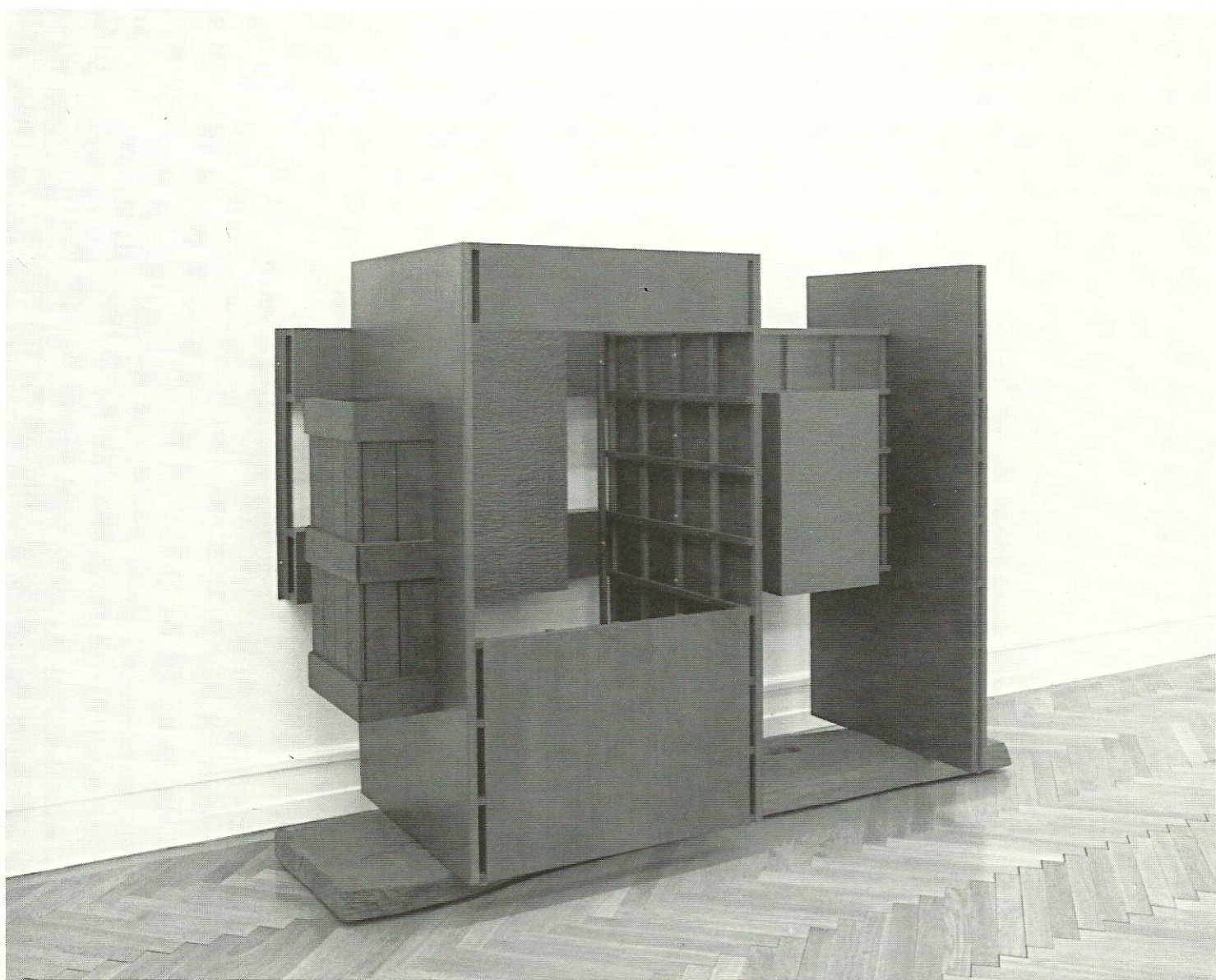
Simplex (Modell). 1988
going in, going on, going strong
Holz/wood/bois
290×120×120 cm

Twins. 1986/87
Installation: Kunsthalle Bern 1988
Holz/wood/bois
250×100×180 cm
Foto: Jürg Bernhardt, Bern

Winter
Installation: Kunsthalle Bern 1988
Eisenblech, Aluminium, Eisenguss/sheet-iron,
aluminium, iron casting/tôle de fer,
aluminium, fonte de fer
240×450×200 cm

200







The Spell. 1985

Pinie, Zeder, Stahl/pine, cedar, steel/pin, cèdre, acier

142×213×165 cm

Courtesy: Donald Young Gallery, Chicago

Photo: A. Sikora

Old Mole. 1985

Rote Zeder/Red cedar/cèdre rouge

155×155×81 cm

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Photo Courtesy: Donald Young Gallery, Chicago

Timber's Turn. 1987

Honduras Mahagoni, Rote Zeder, Douglas-Tanne/

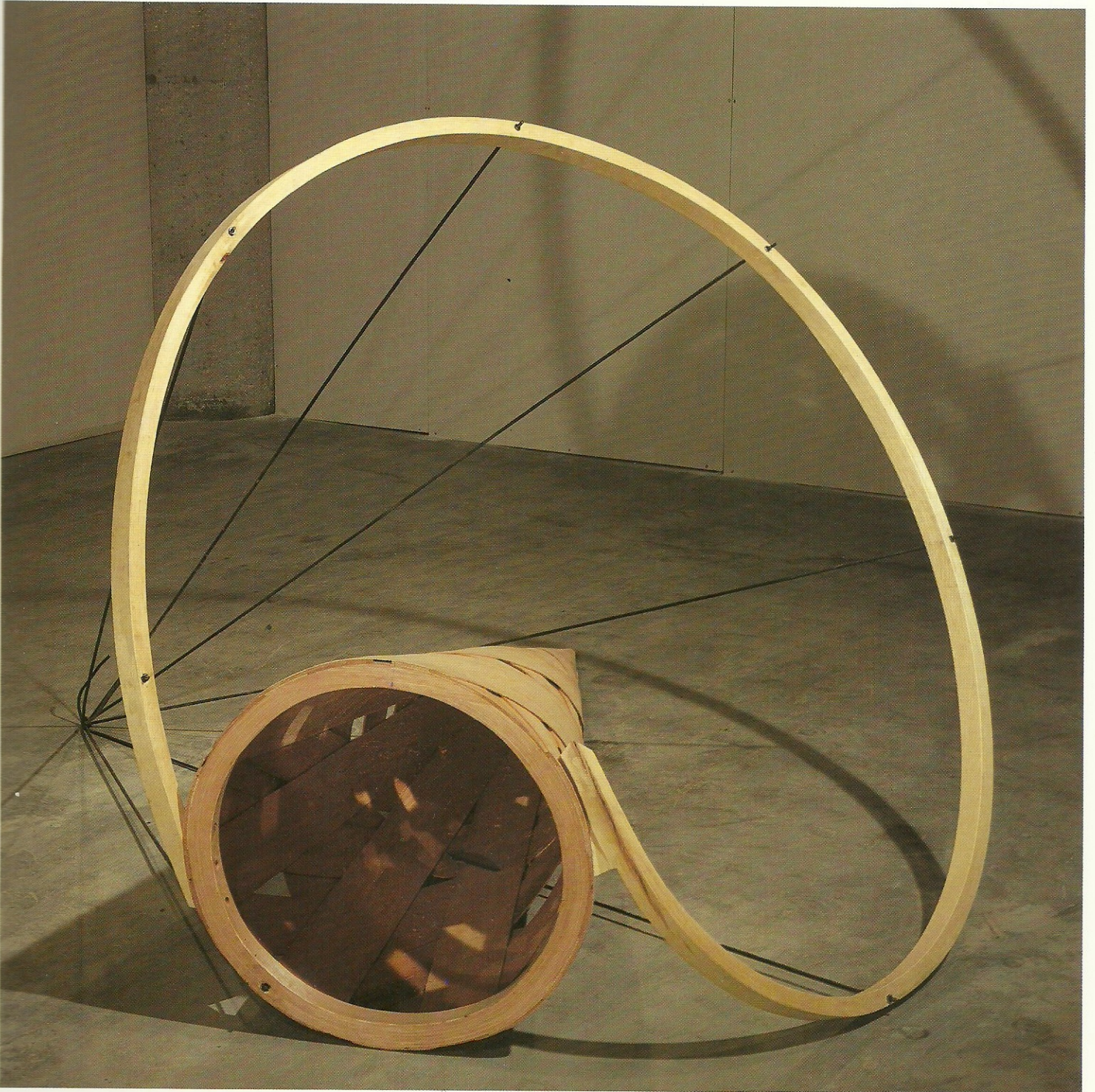
Honduras mahogany, red cedar, Douglas fir/acajou de

Honduras, cèdre rouge, sapin Douglas

220×155×122 cm

Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC

Photo Courtesy: Donald Young Gallery, Chicago





General and absolute as it is, the concept, SCULPTURE, succinct heading of the present exhibition, clearly embraces certain things and excludes others. The work of the participating artists is concentrated on the essence of sculpture – on its fundamentals, its constitutive properties. This includes an in-depth confrontation with pure form; it automatically excludes any indication of narration or content. The target is the exploration of pure form, *a priori* without content; it is not a demonstration of absolutes. The artists, born between 1940 and 1955, belong to the generation that succeeded the exponents of historical Minimal Art and they are to be viewed as the successors of this period.

Five artists from the United States, where Minimal Art was born in the sixties; five artists from Switzerland, where exhibitions of Minimal Art soon met with great interest. The work of these artists and their approach to sculpture is abstract and belongs to the constructive mainstream of art, although the United States and Switzerland naturally have their own brands of constructivism.

This exhibition was initiated by Swiss-born Corinne Diserens, who lives and works in New York. The convergence of works by these ten artists in particular promises to be an exciting event. The American artists suggested by Corinne Diserens are virtually new to Europe, and the Swiss artists are virtually new to the United States.

For viewers on both sides of the Atlantic, the exhibition with its similarities and differences will offer many surprises. We hope the event will receive the attention it deserves, we welcome the artists from America to Switzerland, and we are confident that the Swiss artists will enjoy a positive response in the United States. All of us, artists as well as curators, wish to express our warm gratitude to Corinne Diserens for her unflagging commitment. Together, we extend our thanks to all those whose support has made this exhibition possible.

Beat Wismer
Aargauer Kunsthaus
Aarau

Dr. Erika Billeter
Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts
Lausanne

City Gallery is the official gallery of the City of New York and is administered by the Department of Cultural Affairs. Exhibits are designed to encourage public awareness of the City's diverse artistic community.

I am pleased to present in collaboration with the Swiss Institute 'SCULPTURE – Material + Abstraction = 2x5 Points of View'. The exhibit and its accompanying catalogue have been superbly organized by Corinne Diserens in conjunction with the Aargauer Kunsthaus.

The presentation of such an exhibition requires the combined efforts of many dedicated people. I would like to thank the participating artists and the many galleries and collectors who have generously agreed to loan their works. I am especially grateful to Commissioner Mary Schmidt Campbell for her enthusiastic support of the exhibition and to Mayor Edward I. Koch for establishing a municipal gallery where New York City's arts organizations can present their work.

Elyse Reissman
Director

When American and Swiss sculptors join in mounting an exhibition, you have what is frequently, but inaccurately called a cultural exchange. The Arts Council of Switzerland – Pro Helvetia – Schweizer Kulturstiftung – Fondation suisse pour la culture, is a federal organization entrusted with 'fostering the cultural exchange with other countries.' The execution of this task is not under the jurisdiction of the federal administration but of a board of directors appointed by the Federal Council. The Board is autonomous and its decisions are based on professional rather than political criteria. Pro Helvetia organizes or supports exhibitions of work by Swiss artists abroad, and, on occasion, their participation in international events.

Corinne Diserens' thoughtfully composed blend of American and Swiss views on current sculptural issues can undoubtedly be considered a stroke of good fortune. Fruitful encounters and dialogues have already taken place and will hopefully continue while the exhibition is in progress.

In addition to its activities abroad, Pro Helvetia fosters domestic cultural exchange as well. The coexistence of several cultures and languages within such a small geographical area as Switzerland cannot be underestimated.

It is a source of great satisfaction to see how effortlessly this sculpture exhibition has bridged the Atlantic, which is often easier than bridging the distance from one remote corner of Switzerland to another. Corinne Diserens has succeeded in uniting artists on both sides of the Saane River, the German-French linguistic border in Switzerland, and confronting them with American colleagues. The exhibition will be on view on both sides of the Saane – in German-speaking Aarau and French-speaking Lausanne.

The Arts Council expresses its warm gratitude to all those who participated in the realization of this project. We hope that the contributing artists will meet with a receptive audience.

Christoph Eggenberger
Pro Helvetia



Raumansicht Ausstellung CH 86/Installation at the
exhibition CH 86/Installation à l'exposition CH 86
Kunstmuseum Luzern 1986

2 Ovale (Eisenblech/sheet iron/tôle de fer). 1985

2 Schlaufen (Karton, Graphit/cardboard, graphite/carton,
graphite). 1986

Photo: Emanuel Ammon, Luzern

Kegelobjekt. 1988

Holz, Spachtelmasse, Asphaltlack/wood, mastic,
asphalt/bois, mastic, asphalte

ca. 310×90×55 cm

Photo: Beat Brogle, Basel

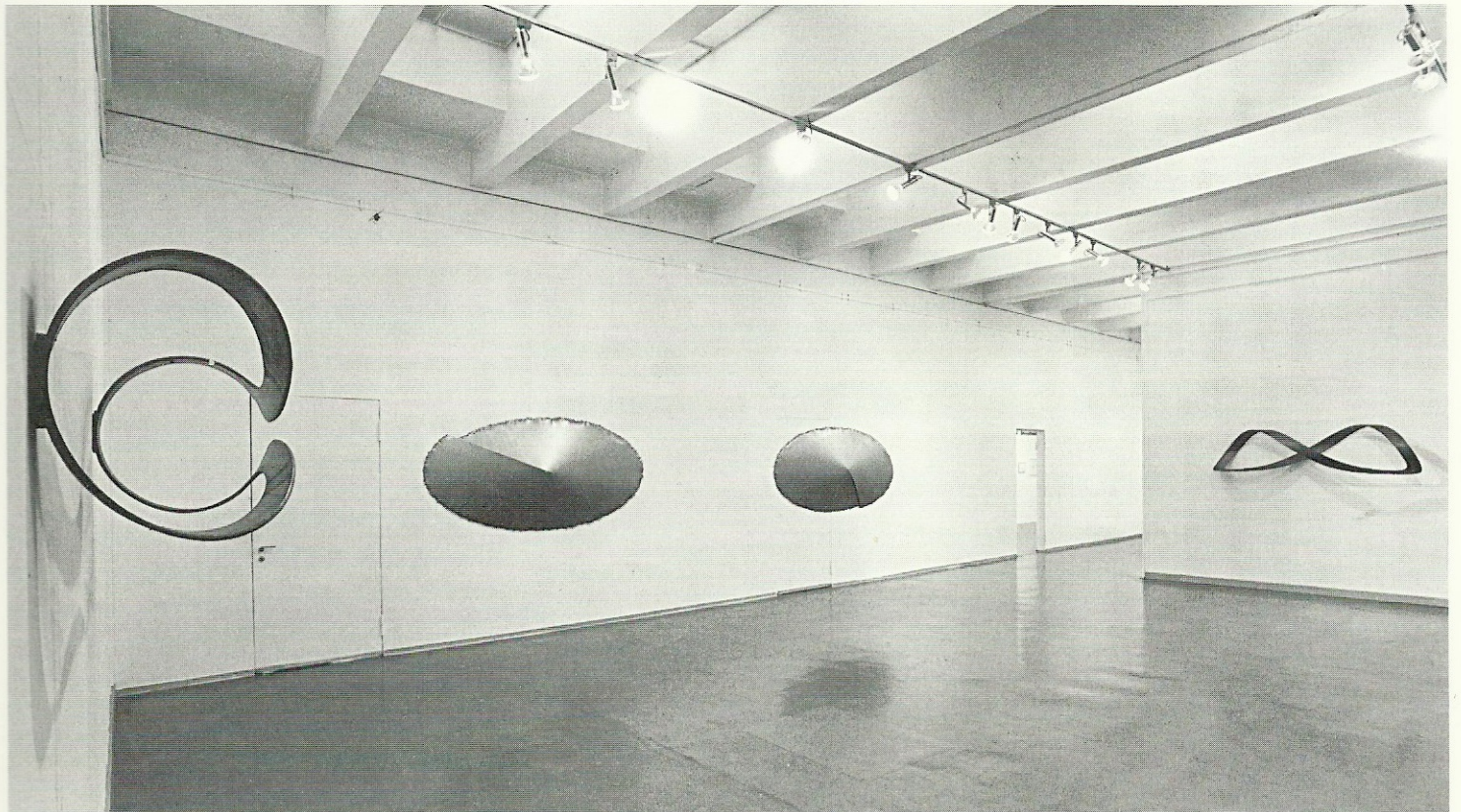
Grazer Objekt. 1987

Installation: Neue Galerie, Graz 1987

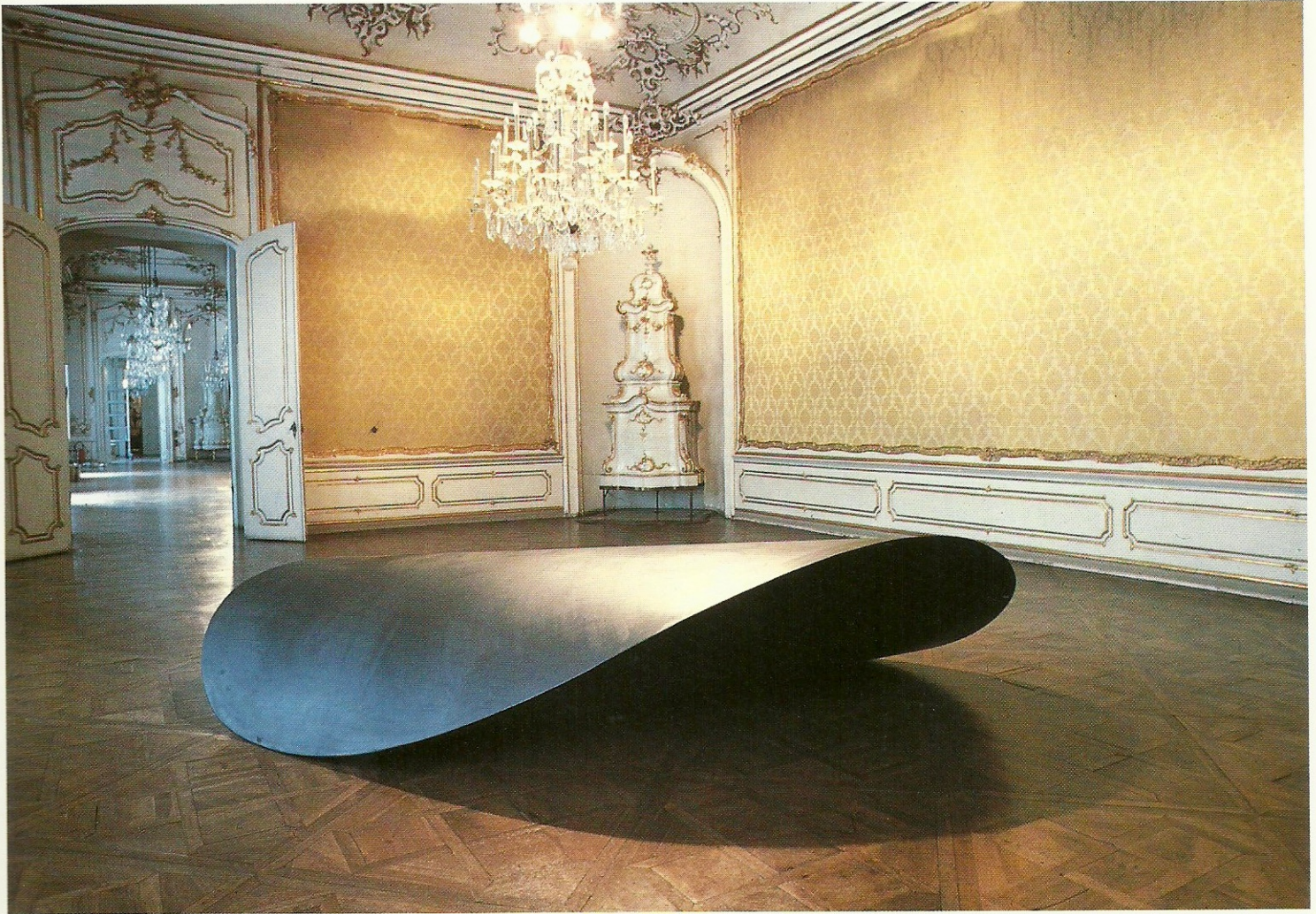
Sperrholz, Graphit/plywood, graphite/contre-plaqué,
graphite

ca. 320×210×70 cm

Photo: Jürg Stäuble



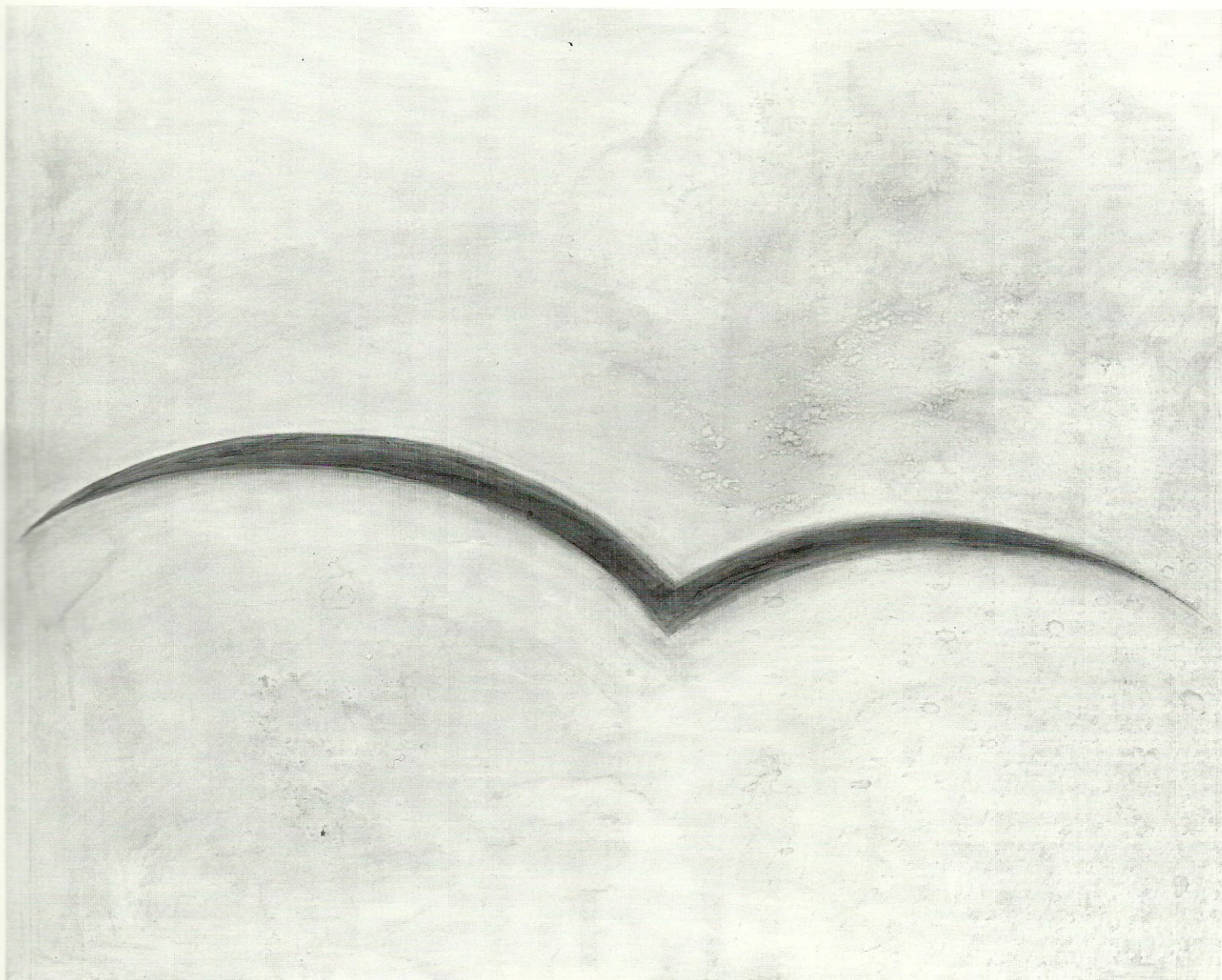




No title. 1987
Tempera auf Leinwand/tempera on canvas board/
détrampe sur toile
53,4×64,2 cm
Courtesy: Dudley Del Baso, New York
Photo: Douglas M. Parker, Los Angeles

No title. 1983
Lacke und Wachs auf Holz/laquers and wax on wood/
laques et cire sur bois
244×86×11 cm
Private Collection
Courtesy: Dudley Del Baso, New York

No title. 1986
Bronze und diverse Materialien/bronze and mixed media/
bronze et mixed media
229×75×75 cm
Private Collection Switzerland
Courtesy: Dudley Del Baso, New York
Photo: Douglas M. Parker, Los Angeles







Three Rectangles. 1986/87

Holz, Fiberglas, Metall, Pulver, Epoxyharz/wood,
fiberglass, metal, powders, epoxy/bois, fibre de verre,
métal, poudres, epoxy
211×62×38 cm

Ellipse / Arc. 1987

Holz, Fiberglas, Metall, Pulver, Epoxyharz/wood, fiber-
glass, metal, powders, epoxy/bois, fibre de verre, métal,
poudres, epoxy
203×60×25 cm

Dissected Cone. 1987

Holz, Fiberglas, Metall, Pulver, Epoxyharz/wood, fiber-
glass, metal, powders, epoxy/bois, fibre de verre, métal,
poudres, epoxy
185×25×20 cm

«First, when I work, it's only the abstract qualities I'm working with, which is the material, the form it's going to take, the size, the scale, the positioning, where it comes from – the ceiling or the floor. However, I don't value the totality of the image on these abstract or esthetic points. For me it's a total image that has to do with me and life. It can't be divorced because I don't believe art can be based on an idea of composition or form...»

Eva Hesse. 1970.

Introduction

Corinne Diserens

The 1960's, characterized by constant and radical change, provided the stage for the theoretical premises of Minimalism. Considered the ideological pivot of American, and to a certain extent, European sculpture, Minimalism brought about a significant rupture in 20th century artistic production and had an incalculable influence on the subsequent development of sculpture.

Concentrating on a radically reductive form of abstraction and an intensification of perception, the minimalist theory dissolved the figurative or representative frame which had been the core of sculptural form, and rejected all organic and eccentric structure. Form was reduced to a pure geometry, underlining pure surfaces, exempt of any trace of the artist's hand or of personal expression, and denying all identity other than those of the materials. Revealing a sharp sense of precision, economy, and proportion, and a strong spatial imagination, minimal art often created situations rather than simple objects.

The natural order having been replaced by modern industrial culture; personal expression, all too fragile, was no longer well adapted to describe this displacement from nature to urban culture. If the original and liberating elements of Minimalism – primary forms, honesty of materials, assimilation of technology and of environment – are always the preoccupation of numerous contemporary artists, the reductive aspects of the minimalist aesthetic have led to a creative impasse.

While New York generated Minimalism, an aesthetic identity defined as «arte povera» developed in 1965–1966 in Italy and Europe. «Both movements have developed an urban aesthetic, emphasizing city life and exalting its artificiality and complexity... Here (New York), order is visible, regulated, space is totally culturalized and technologized... Minimal art

operates on the notion of limit and topology, the concept of center, and equilibrium... what it recognizes is pure, uncontaminated space (the white box), obtained between a contaminated and a natural territory. This space produces and conceives forms, colors, and lines. «Outside» of this space there is only nature» (1). «Arte povera» created an alternative to the modular and standardized working methods connected to order and technology, and questioned the American media.

«The only hope for salvation lay in rejecting puritanism and homogenization, in contaminating them and ripping them open with soft and acid matter, with animals and fire, with primitive craft techniques like axe-blows, with rags and earth, stones and chemicals. The important thing was to corrode, cut open and fragment – to decompose the imposed cultural regime. I spoke of deculture in my essay. Then, in 1966, Stella and Judd spoke out against us in *Artnews*, accusing European art of complexity and decorativism, and of being confused and baroque with respect to the symmetry, simplicity, and essentiality of painting and sculpture in New York» (2). Born in a period of huge utopias, «arte povera» always kept to a creative plan of action that was neither rigid or dictatorial, but based on the reflection and the osmosis of exterior agents, and therefore dialectically interactive with the contradictions that appeared. It is a confused and intermingled world considered here, constituted of memories, of archeological layers, and of technology, leading to the experience of disorder and unexpected combinations.

The generation which set off the artists presented in this show has also rejected the minimalist methods of impersonal work, going beyond its extreme conceptual emphasis, while at the same time exploiting the formal and dramatic qualities espoused by the minimalist theory. Utilizing a diversity of materials and techniques, it has invented forms which are not universal or explicitly abstract, but which reveal a highly personal iconicity. The implicit aspects of nature contrast with the hard industrial elements, underlining the spiritual qualities associated with nature.

The works in this show put in question the limits of Minimalism even as they recycle certain of its formal strategies – physical clarity, geometric form, ties with the architectonics of space; they reconsidered a physical world, organic and human in a more instinctive and visceral manner. Their pluralism transcends the traditional non-organic minimalist materials (bronze, steel, concrete) by incorporating soft and fragile materials (fiberglass, wax, wood, rubber, animal skin, glass, resin, rope, plaster, paper, pigment) whose or-

ganic and malleable qualities are manipulated by the artist. The work rejects authority by admitting its vulnerability and by revealing a sort of material and structural uncertainty.

«The strongest for me embodies contradiction, which allows for emotional tension and the ability to contain opposed ideas» Martin Puryear.

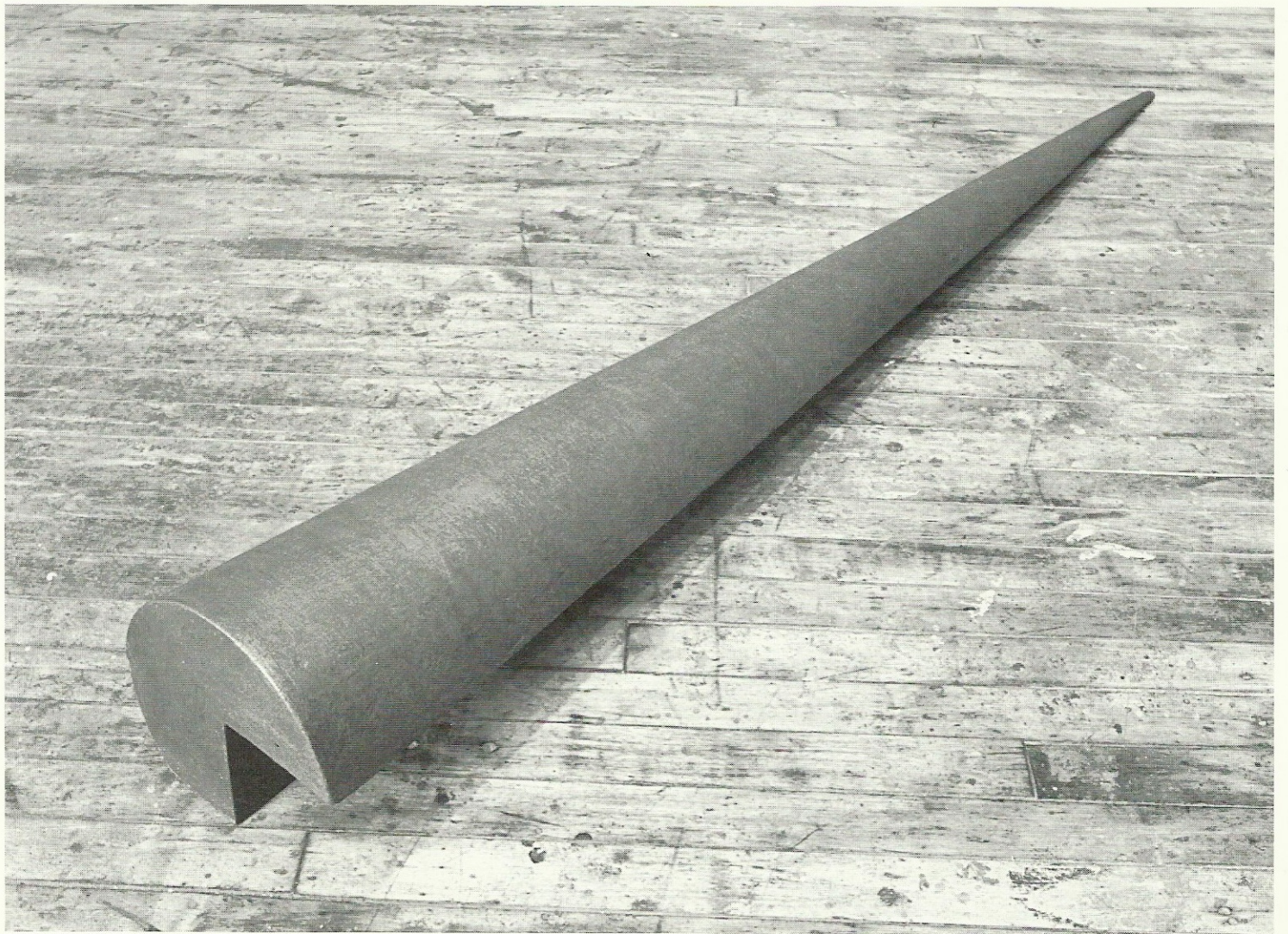
Duality is ceaselessly presented in this sculpture, revealing a perpetual dialogue between interior and exterior, pure geometry and organic irregularity, representation and abstraction, the natural and the artificial, rigidity and suppleness, nature and culture, object and image, painting and sculpture. Ideas, material, and techniques interact until they form a synthesis through color, texture, and form.

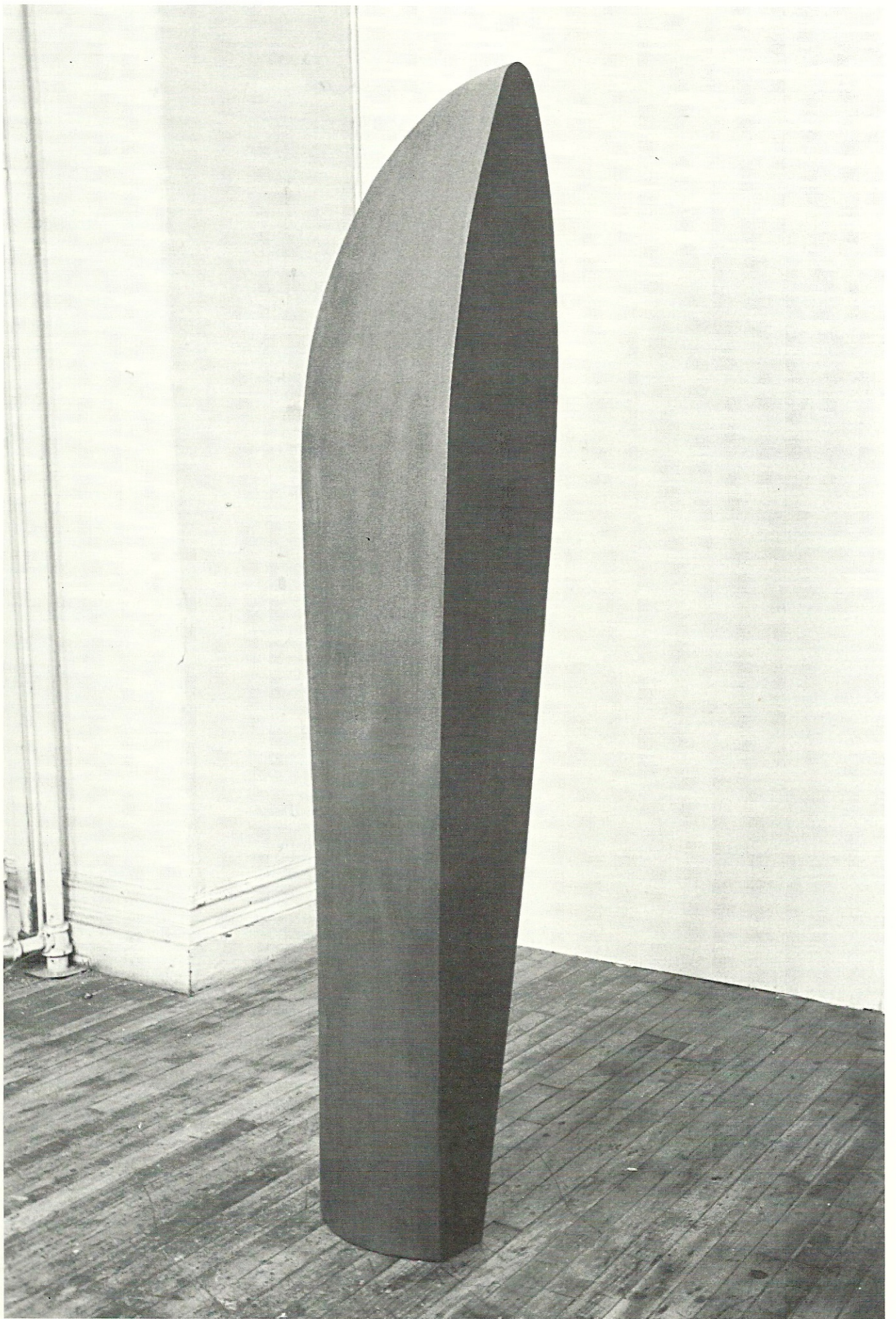
It was during the Neo-expressionist upsurge that this whole generation of sculptors, in their thirties or forties, utilized their relative anonymity to formulate a new aesthetic and to establish new priorities. Without completely and radically rejecting the tradition, they have selected earlier elements of artistic production, modifying them and exploring alternatives to formalism. However, with the reappearance of the object as a fundamental sculptural mode (in opposition to environmental sculpture and to large site-specific installations), the sculptors must confront the same dilemma as the abstract painters: how abstract form can express and beget emotional meaning.

(1) *The Knot Arte Povera at P. S. 1.*, Germano Celant, New York 1985

(2) *Arte Povera*, Germano Celant, Milano 1985







Douglas Beer

*1955 in/à Alger
lebt in/lives in/vit à Genève und/and/et New York

Einzelstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1980 Galerie Gaitan, Genève / 1984 Galerie Rivolta, Lausanne / Galerie Corinne Hummel, Basel / 1985 Galerie Andata/Ritorno, Genève / Mönchehaus, Goslar (D) / 1988 Galerie Rivolta, Lausanne

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
Collectives
1982 Fondation Gulbenkian, Lissabon (P) / «Prospekt 82», Rägeboge Zentrum, Luzern / Filiale Basel / 1983 «Jeunes Vaudois», Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne / 1984 «Künstler aus Genf», Kunstmuseum Luzern / «Jeunes Vaudois», Helmhaus, Zürich / «Artistes Genevois», Musée Rath, Genève / «L'Œil Bref», Cabinet des Estampes, Genève / Kulturhaus «Palazzo», Liestal / 1985 Shedhalle, Zürich / «L'Œil Bref», Cabinet des Estampes, Genève / 1986 «Konfrontation», Tübingen (D) / «Junge Schweizer Kunst», Kassel (D) / «Repères», Brig / Maison des Expositions de Genas, Genas-Lyon (F) / Centre d'Art Contemporain, Genève / 1988 Galerie Bob Gysin, Dübendorf-Zürich / Galerie «Ruine», Genève / Kulturhaus «Palazzo», Liestal / Centre d'Art Contemporain, Genève / Galerie Andata/Ritorno, Genève

Tom Butter

*1952 in/à Long Island NY
lebt in/lives in/vit à New York

Einzelstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1983 Grace Borgenicht Gallery / Lawrence Oliver Gallery / 1984 Grace Borgenicht Gallery, N.Y.C. / Lawrence Oliver Gallery / 1985 Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Morris Gallery / Lawrence Oliver Gallery / 1986 Curt Marcus Gallery, N.Y.C. / Lawrence Oliver Gallery, Philadelphia, Pa / 1987 John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, Ca / Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, NY / 1988 Pence Gallery, Santa Monica, Ca

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1980 Art for the Eighties, Galerie Durban, Caracas, Venezuela / 1981 Butter/Burlin, Grace Borgenicht Gallery / 1982 American Abstraction Now, IQA, Virginia Museum, Richmond, Va / Critical Perspectives, P.S. 1; Long Island City, NY / New York, New York, The New Museum, N. Y. C. Energie New York, ELAC, Lyons, France / 1983 Language, Drama, Source and Vision, The New Museum, N.Y.C. / 1984 Twentieth Century Sculpture: Selections From the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, N. Y. / A Growing American Treasure: Recent Acquisitions and Highlights from the Permanent Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia / 1985 New York Art Now: Correspondences, Laforet Museum, Tokyo, Japan / Affiliations: Recent Sculpture and its Antecedents, Whitney Museum Stamford, Ct / 1986 Sculpture on the Wall, The Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Ct / 1987 Perspectives from Pennsylvania, Carnegie Mellon University, Art Gallery, Pa

Andreas Gehr

*1942 in/à Appenzell
lebt in/lives in/vit à Toronto

Einzelstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1972 Kunstmuseum Luzern, separate show in the «Kabinett» for the «Christmas Exhibition» / 1973 Galerie Schill, Luzern / Moos Stahl Inc. windows, Lucerne / 1975 Kunstmuseum Luzern, «Sonderausstellung A.G.» / 1978 Galerie Elisabeth Kaufmann, Basel / 1979 Kunstmuseum Lucerne, «Sonderausstellung A.G.» / 1980 Internationale Hallen für neue Kunst (ink), Zurich / 1984 Ydessa Gallery, Toronto / 1985–86 The Toronto Sculpture Garden, Toronto / 1986 The Ydessa

Gallery, Toronto (Spring) / The Ydessa Gallery, Toronto (Autumn) / 1987 Oboro Gallery, Montreal / 1988 Katharinen, St. Gallen

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1974 «Rapport der Innerschweiz», Helmhaus, Zürich / 1975 «9^e Biennale de Paris», Paris / 1976 «Objekte und Zeichnungen», Historisches Museum, St. Gallen / 1977 «Eine gelbe und eine violette Frau», Kornschütte, Luzern / 1978 «My favorites of Swiss art», Galerie Elisabeth Kaufmann, Basel / 1979 «30 junge Schweizer Plastiker», Seedamm-Kulturzentrum, Pfäffikon / «Lisbon International Show», Casa dell'arte, Lugano / «Flight», travelling exhibition, United States / 1980 Kunsthaus Zürich / Kunstmuseum Lausanne / Preisträger, Seedamm-Kulturzentrum, Pfäffikon / 1982 Galerie Arlecchino, Luzern / Kunsthaus Zürich / Kunstmuseum Lausanne / 1984 «Luzerner Künstler in Genf», Musée Rath, Genève / «On Earth and in Heaven», Walter Phillips, Gallery, The Banff Centre, Banff / «The New City of Sculpture», A.R.C., Toronto / «Something to do with Space», The Art Gallery at Harbourfront, Toronto / 1985 «Community Sculpture», The Gallery Library, Cambridge, Ontario

Robin Hill

*1955 in/à Houston TX
lebt in/lives in/vit à Brooklyn NY

Einzelstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1983 A Place Apart, Brooklyn, New York / 1984 Small Walls, New York / 1987 Lang & O'Hara Gallery, New York

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1985 «Selections», organized by Kay Larson, Artists Space, New York / 1986 «Robin Hill/Sculpture, Hannah Villiger/ Photographs, Zabriskie Gallery, New York / «Transformations», curated by Stephen Werfall, Richard Green Gallery, New York / 1987 «Part to Part», Hill Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan / 1988 «Trilogy», Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, New York / «Paintings & Sculptures by Candidates for Art Awards», American Academy & Institute of Arts and Letters, New York

Carmen Perrin

*1953 in/à La Paz, Bolivien
lebt in/lives in/vit à Genève und/and/et Marseille

Einzelstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1981 Genève, Galerie Dioptré, Voir du pays / 1983 Genève, Galerie Andata/Ritorno, La maison est au fond du jardin / 1984 Lausanne, Galerie Pallud 1, Encore plus loin / Genève, Palais de l'Athénée / 1986 Genève, Halle Sud / Genève, Galerie Andata/Ritorno / Nevers, Centre d'Art contemporain / Zürich, Galerie Bob Gysin / 1987 Sion, Musée Cantonal / Fribourg, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire / 1989 Barcelona Fondation Miró

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1980 Genève, Galerie Dioptré, Grandeur Nature / 1982 Genève, Halle de l'Île, Jeunes artistes contemporains de Genève / Genève, Centre d'Art contemporain, Dioptré forever / Luzern, Rägeboge Zentrum, Prospekt 82 / Paris, Musée d'Art moderne, XII^e biennale des Jeunes / 1983 Genève, Librairie Comestibles, Impressions genevoises / Montreux, Bourse fédérale des Beaux-Arts / Paris, Galerie J&P Donguy, K6 / 1984 Grenoble, Maison de la Culture, Juxtapositions 2/1984 / Paris, Fondation nationale des arts graphiques et plastiques, Qu'est ce qu'un FRAC? 100 œuvres de 75 artistes acquises en Rhônes Alpes / Genève, Salle Simon I Patino, Actualité de la sculpture / 1985 Zürich, Shedhalle Rote Fabrik, Genfer Künstler / Genève, Parc Lullin, Promenades / Lugano, Bourse Fédérale / Liestal, Kulturhaus Palazzo / 1986 La Paz, Fundación Cultural Emusa / Liestal, Kulturhaus Palazzo, Aufgemöbeltes / Tübingen, Présence de la Suisse romande / Marseille, Musée Cantini / Rotterdam,

Perfo 4D / 1987 Hamburg, Kunstverein / Kampragel Hallen / 1988 Zürich, (D. Beer, C. Perrin, M. Grillet), Galerie Bob Gysin / Liestal, (D. Beer, C. Perrin, M. Grillet), Kulturhaus Palazzo / Genève, (D. Beer, C. Perrin, M. Grillet), Galerie Andata/Ritorno

Vaclav Pozarek

*1940 in/à České Budějovice/Budweis CSSR
lebt in/lives in/vit à Bern

Einzelausstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1978 Galerie Rolf Preisig, Basel / 1979 Galerie Arno Kohnen, Düsseldorf / 1981 Galerie Lydia Megert, Bern / 1982 Galerie Arno Kohnen, Düsseldorf / 1985 Galerie Arno Kohnen, Düsseldorf / 1986 Galerie Lydia Megert, Bern / 1987 Kunsthalle Winterthur (mit H. Brand) / 1988 Kunsthalle Bern (mit Franz West) / Galerie Hufkeus-Noirhome, Brüssel

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1979 Kunsthalle Bern / 1980 Modern Art Museum, Lissabon / 1981 De Vleeshal, Middelburg, Niederlande / 1981 Fri-Art, Fribourg / 1981 Kunstmuseum Bern / 1983 Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen / 1984 Skulpturen Tage, Wiesbaden / 1985 Magirus 117, Ulm / 1985 «Im toten Winkel», Kunsthalle Hamburg

Martin Puryear

*1941 in/à Washington DC
lebt in/lives in/vit à Chicago IL

Einzelausstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1968 Grona Palletten Gallery, Stockholm / 1972 Fisk University Gallery, Nashville, TN / Henri Gallery, Washington, DC / 1973 Henri Gallery, Washington, DC / 1977 The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC / 1978 Protetch-McIntosh Gallery, Washington, DC / 1980 Young Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL / Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL / Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE, I-80 Series: Martin Puryear / 1982 McIntosh-Drysdale Gallery, Washington, DC / Young Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL / 1983 Donald Young Gallery, Chicago, IL / 1985 Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA / Donald Young Gallery, Chicago, IL / University Art Museum, Matrix Program, Berkeley, CA / 1987 «Public an Personal», Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL / «Martin Puryear: Sculpture and Works on Paper», Carnegie Mellon University Art Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA / Donald Young Gallery, Chicago, IL / «Stereotypes and Decoys», David McKee Gallery, New York, NY / 1988 «Martin Puryear: New Wall Sculpture», McIntosh-Drysdale Gallery, Washington, DC

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1979 «Art and Architecture, Space and Structure», Protetch-McIntosh Gallery, Washington, DC / 1981–82 «The New Spiritualism: Transcendent Images in Painting and Sculpture», travelling exhibition, Oscarsson Jood Gallery, New York / 1982 «Form an Function: Proposals for Public Art in Philadelphia», Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Pittsburgh, PA / «American Abstraction Now», The Virginia Museum of Art, Richmond, VA / 1982–84 «Afro-American Abstraction», Art Museum Association travelling exhibition, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles, CA / 1984 «Collaborating: The Power of the Artist and Architect Co-Designing Parks, Plazas, Public Places from New York to Seattle», McIntosh-Drysdale Gallery, Houston, TX / «Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and Modern», Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY / 1985 «Choosing: An Exhibit of Changing Perspectives in Modern Art and Art Criticism by Black Americans, 1925–1985», travelling exhibition, Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago / 1986 «After Nature», Germans Van Eck Gallery, New York / «Natural Forms and Forces: Abstract Images in American Sculpture», Hayden Gallery, Boston, MA

Jürg Stäubli

*1948 in/à Wohlen AG
lebt in/lives in/vit à Basel

Einzelausstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1974 A space, Toronto / 1976 Stampa, Basel / 1978 Galerie Lydia Megert, Bern / 1979 Galerie Wittenbrink, Regensburg / 1980 Stampa, Basel / 1983 Filiale, Basel / 1984 Galerie Andata/Ritorno, Genf / 1985 Peter Noser Galerie, Zürich / 1987/1988 Kulturgüterschutzraum, Schloss Lenzburg / 1988 Galerie Lenzburg, Lenzburg

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1980 Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria BC, Kanada / 4.1., Kunsthau Aarau / 1981 Aspekte der jungen Schweizer Kunst, Städtische Galerie, Regensburg / 1982 Kunsthalle Basel / Filiale II, Basel / 1983 Projekt 18, BRD, DK, USA, Charlottenborg, Kopenhagen / Szene Schweiz, Haus Neuland, Bielefeld / 1984 Das subjektive Museum, Basel / 1985 zusehen, Kunst aus Basel, Lothringerstrasse München / 1986 CH 86, Kunstmuseum Luzern / 1987 Trigon Biennale, Neue Galerie Graz

Robert Therrien

*1947 in/à Chicago IL
lebt in/lives in/vit à Los Angeles

Einzelausstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1975 Ruth S. Schaffner Gallery, Los Angeles / 1977 Ruth S. Schaffner Gallery, Los Angeles / 1978 Holly Solomon Gallery, New York / Ruth S. Schaffner Annex, Los Angeles / 1979 Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art / 1981 Ruth S. Schaffner Gallery, Santa Barbara / 1982 Flow Ace Gallery, Los Angeles / 1984 Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles / Hoshour Gallery, Albuquerque, New Mexico / 1985 Flow Ace Gallery, Los Angeles / 1986 Leo Castelli Gallery, New York / 1986–87 Leo Castelli Gallery, New York / 1987 Hoshour Gallery, Albuquerque, New Mexico / Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf / 1988 Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1974 «Young California», Ruth S. Schaffner Gallery, Los Angeles / 1975 «Nine Artists», Occidental College, Los Angeles / 1977 «Visual Incantations», L.A.C.E. Gallery, Los Angeles / «Four Californians», La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, California / 1980 «Sculpture in California 1975–80», San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego / «La Va, Therrien», Otis/Parsons, Los Angeles / 1982 «Quiet Commitment», University of Southern California, Los Angeles / 1984 «Awards in the Visual Arts 3», San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas; Loch Haven Art Center, Florida, Cranbrook Academy, Michigan / «Four Sculptors», Flow Ace Gallery, Los Angeles / Venice Biennale, «Aperto '84», Venice, Italy / 1985 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York / 1986 «Ill Works», Hoshour Gallery, Albuquerque, New Mexico / «After Nature», Germans van Eck Gallery, New York / «Drawings by Sculptors», Nora Haime Gallery, New York / 1987 New York by Koshuth, Oldenburg, Serra, Stella, Therrien, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York / A Collecting Partnership: «Highlights of California Art since 1945», Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, CA / «small scale sculpture LARGE SCALE SCULPTURE», The Atlanta College of Art, Atlanta, Georgia / «Abstract Expressions Recent Sculpture», Lannan Museum, Lake Worth, Florida

Steve Wood

*1948 in/à Houston TX
lebt in/lives in/vit à New York

Einzelausstellungen / Solo Exhibitions / Expositions
personnelles
1979 Williams College Museum, Williamstown, MA / 1980 List Art Centre, Brown University, Providence, RI / 1981 Main Gallery, University of California, Irvine, CA / Alternative Site Program, Dayton, OH / Helen Shlein Gallery, Boston, MA / 1985 Baskerville & Watson Gallery, New York, NY / 1986 California State University, Long Beach, CA, «Centric 17» / 1987 University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut

Gruppenausstellungen / Group Exhibitions / Expositions
collectives
1983 «Six Sculptors», Bette Stoler Gallery, New York, NY / «New Sculpture: Icon & Environment», Independent Curators Incorporated, New York, NY / 1984 «Fifty Drawings/ Fifty Artists», Barbara Toll Gallery, New York, NY / «Sculpture Ideas», Nax Hutchinson Gallery, New York, NY / «Objects», Bette Stoler Gallery, New York, NY / 1985 «Affiliations» Whitney Museum of American Art at Fairfield County, Stamford, CT / «Notions of Surrealism», Vanderwoude-Tannenbaum Gallery, New York, NY / 1986 «The Sculptural Membrane», The Sculpture Center, New York, NY / «Boston Collects», Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA / «10 From New York & Washington», Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover MA / «After Nature», Germans Van Eck Gallery, New York, NY

Diese Ausstellung ist das Ergebnis gemeinschaftlicher Anstrengungen vieler Einzelpersonen, und ich möchte allen sehr herzlich dafür danken. «Sculpture» wäre ohne ihre Hilfe nicht zustande gekommen.

Bei den zehn beteiligten Künstlern möchte ich mich bedanken für die Energie und Hingabe, die sie diesem Vorhaben geschenkt haben, und dafür, dass sie uns ihre Werke zur Verfügung stellen. Herrn Beat Wismer, dem Konservator des Aargauer Kunsthauses, danke ich für seine wertvolle Mitarbeit und die unermüdliche Unterstützung, die er dieser Ausstellung zukommen liess.

Folgende Personen haben unschätzbare Mitarbeit geleistet und uns grosszügig Leihgaben überlassen: Dudley del Baso, New York; Donald Young und Barbara Mirecki von der Donald Young Gallery, Chicaco; Renee Conforte von der David McKee Gallery, New York; Curt Marcus und Gordon Veneklasen von der Curt Marcus Gallery, New York; Lang & O'Hara Gallery, New York; Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf; Thomas Ammann, Zürich; Joseph Farine von der Galerie Andata/Ritorno, Genf; und The Ydessa Gallery, Toronto.

Ich bin auch Erika Billeter, Konservatorin des Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne, sehr zu Dank verpflichtet, ebenso Elyse Reissman, Direktorin der City Gallery in New York, und Margrit Kaeser, Präsidentin des Schweizer Instituts in New York, die das Projekt mit ihrem persönlichen Einsatz von Anfang an unterstützt haben, und auch Dr. Christoph Eggenberger, Pro Helvetia, Zürich, für die besondere Aufmerksamkeit, die er dieser Ausstellung gewidmet hat. In meinen aufrichtigen Dank möchte ich die Koordinatorin Elizabeth Shriver für ihre Hilfe und beständige Freundschaft einschliessen; Lars Müller für seinen Enthusiasmus und für die Konzeption des Katalogs; Steven H. Madoff für seine Mitarbeit am Katalog; Elisabeth Brockmann, Françoise Senger, Catherine Schelbert, Patricia Nussbaum, Leonard Schwartz und Christiane Schwarm für die Übersetzungen, und Jane E. McNichol.

Schliesslich danke ich herzlich den Institutionen und Firmen, die beigetragen haben, eine Ausstellung wie diese zu ermöglichen. Mein Dank richtet sich auch an Robert H. Jaques und Anton Schumacher. Mein ganz persönlicher Dank geht an Roger Diserens, Donald Moss und Jim Hinchee.

Corinne Diserens.

This exhibition is the result of the coordinated efforts of many people, and I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to each individual as «Sculpture» would have been impossible without their assistance.

I am enormously grateful to the ten artists, who agreed to participate and have given so much time and energy to the project; and Beat Wismer, Director of the Aargauer Kunsthaus, for his constant collaboration and support.

I would like to thank for their invaluable assistance and generous loans: Dudley Del Baso, New York; Donald Young and Barbara Mirecki of the Donald Young Gallery, Chicago; Renee Conforte of the David McKee Gallery, New York; Curt Marcus and Gordon Veneklasen of the Curt Marcus Gallery, New York; Lang & O'Hara Gallery, New York; Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf; Thomas Ammann, Zürich; Joseph Farine of the Andata/Ritorno Gallery, Genève; and The Ydessa Gallery, Toronto.

I am very grateful to Erika Billeter, Director of the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Elyse Reissman, Director of the City Gallery, New York, Margrit Kaeser, President of the Swiss Institute, New York, who have welcomed and personally supported the project since its inception; and Dr. Christoph Eggenberger, Pro Helvetia, Zürich, for the special attention given to this exhibition.

Special thanks go to Elizabeth Shriver, registrar and coordinator, for her unflinching assistance and friendship; Lars Müller for his good natured commitment and his handsome design; Steven H. Madoff for his contribution to the catalogue; Elisabeth Brockmann, Françoise Senger, Catherine Schelbert, Patricia Nussbaum, Leonard Schwartz and Christiane Schwarm for the translations; and Jane E. McNichol.

Finally, I am particularly indebted to the sponsoring institutions and companies who have provided the opportunity for exhibitions like this one to come to fruition. Many thanks go to Robert H. Jaques and Anton Schumacher. A personal note of thanks to Roger Diserens, Donald Moss, and Jim Hinchee.

Corinne Diserens.

Cette exposition est le résultat d'efforts coordonnés de nombreuses personnes et je désire remercier vivement chacune d'elles, «Sculpture» ayant été impossible sans leur aide.

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Corinne Diserens.

This morning I was standing in Steve Wood's studio, a squarish high-ceilinged room on lower Broadway, walking around the sculpture he calls *Three Rectangles*. I believe you have it in front of you now. The light sinks into its dulled gray surface, which appears to be at once metal and soft cloth – the effect he achieves using resin and pigment and wax. It stood there, stark and very erect, the approximate height of a person, seeming quite apart from its surroundings. And I remarked that the sculpture's matte face made its volume disappear so that the eye was drawn to the form itself.

What is essential form?

Steven Henry Madoff

Yes, Wood replied. That was true. But the pleasure of the piece was the shifting form; that each side, when you came around to it, was suddenly unlike the last. You assume, he went on, that the piece is whole and simple and the same, that it's very much in the tradition of Minimalism, but then you get your surprise.

Everyone, of course, gets the same surprise, discovering each twist of geometry in *Three Rectangles*. Yet specially for those who have learned by rote the maxims of Donald Judd and Robert Morris, early spokesmen for Minimalism, this playful leave from the absolute repetitions of Minimalist form is an added pleasure. Anyway, at the base of it remains a kind of profound comfort that sheer geometric forms seem to offer, and I commented that the very simple joy of looking at basic shapes is a very odd thing indeed.

Still, that small divergence from his fathers in the arts is the kind of nuance, as you probably know, that critics grab onto gratefully. And it provoked a question about Wood's attitude toward form; for that matter, a question concerning all of the sculptors I'd be writing about in this catalogue, who've been working in the afterglow of Minimalism – there is so obviously a change.

The largeness of the question put me in mind of a story that digresses from the sculpture for a little while, the story of form, or at least one story of form. This is an approximate telling, with great sweeping strokes. Yet if so primal a thing exists as our solace in basic forms, then surely there must be some very broad and basic tendency that draws people toward them.

After all, what is essential form? To Plato it was an ideal and ineffable being inside of existence. It was the constructive essence by which all visible matter

came into comprehension. Geometric form was a divine map of the principle of reason – each man had within him, like Plato's slave boy finding the measure of squares and triangles in the dirt, a fundamental logic inherited from the past that could draw out the geometric building blocks, which lie at the base of rational life. Geometric forms were the ideal property of the interior realm of mind. And being interior, they were protected from all the elements of change – weather, politics, morality. Their mysterious passage through the genetic chain from generation to generation of *homo sapiens*, the rational man, announced eternal constancy.

The antique universe was thus conceived. Think of Boethius' harmony of the spheres, of Lucretius' *clinamen* paradigm in which matter was created by the collision of falling atoms, spherical and durable, the atom itself remaining an inviolable form. Think of that heroic manifestation of geometry, the pyramids, standing as great usurpers of space, intransigent beyond the fragile envelope of human life.

Geometric form was the irreducible value. Out of it arose, by not a very great leap of logic, the stability of civilization. And around it whirled the tumult of open spaces so vulnerable to the chaos of change. Let us consider one of those spaces, the space of social being. While the outwardness of human life was viewed in all its movements of strife, of rise and decline, of growth and decay, for the epochs that stretched from Egyptian and classical times through the 19th century, symbols of essential form lent to existence an aesthetic sign of the idealized order potential within each man and his society.

The slave boy in Plato's *Meno* was part of a society, purportedly an ignorant element kept in bondage, but within him lay the paradigm of truth, the mental template of pure forms so easily drawn out of him. During the Renaissance, Leon Battista Alberti's theories of proportion and perspective proposed a means of representation that really elaborated the lesson of the slave, projecting onto the world the same principle of universal form. He prescribed that all artists learn geometry, and he called a painting «a cross-section of a visual pyramid», a space filled with circles, triangles, squares, rectangles and volumes systematically enlarged and reduced in account with an invariable mathematical order.

But then we encounter the next part of our story. Geometric forms continued to represent a love of the rational, notably in the reasonable (and seasonable) topiary gardens of 17th century Versailles, in which nature was harnessed to the constancy of cubes and spheres, cones and verdant pyramids. Yet a change emerged. The symbolic regularity described by geo-

metric forms was generalized so that a principle of formalism was created. The recognition of a body of shared forms, be they elements of pictorial or sculptural or musical composition, would be at the heart of aesthetic creation and judgment.

This was the case of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. He proposed that formalism was practiced through the faculty of «taste», and he reasoned that taste was only valid if all men shared an identical basis for its practice. The only aspect of experience that held this promise was not the sensations evoked by representations but the recognition of their community of forms. True enough, the philosopher argued, taste is subjective by nature, but at the base of its autonomy is the universal necessity of shared forms. Kant claimed that this very autonomy freed aesthetic judgment from moral constraint. And yet his formalism's dependence on sameness and reproducibility is extraordinarily potent. Other kinds of formalism ensued, and each was no less dependent on this primal need to find a shape or group of shapes by which the world could be seen and even by which human actions could be judged.

We can go far afield. Consider, for example, the Marquis de Sade's *The One Hundred Twenty Days of Sodom*. In it he reduced the play of sexual desire and performance to an infinitely gauged yet essentially predictable machine – a machine not of reproduction but of reproducibility, of endlessly repeatable forms. Or go farther still and consider the complex machinations of labor and capital that Marx elaborated in the middle of the 19th century. They were no less an act of formalist creation, a rigorous ordering of every human paroxysm of want and accumulation. Labor-value, exchange-value, surplus-value, goods and commodities, money turned over as capital, every definition described men's actions as forms drawn out with their own hands that could be predicted to repeat over and over within equally predictable cycles of circumstance. Both sex and capitalism were *rendered*, conceived as absolute representations that were in essence formalist abstractions projected into the social space of man. In our own century, though, we needn't go that far afield to see the symbolic power of geometric forms and the social ideals of formalism come together. Kasimir Malevich, who saw the square as an ideal form of pure feeling, wrote in one of the more self-congratulatory statements about an art movement, «Now that art, thanks to Suprematism, has come into its own – that is, attained pure, unapplied form – and has recognized the infallibility of non-objective feeling, it is attempting to set up a genuine world order, a new philosophy of life.»

The Russian Constructivists went further, as long as

they were allowed to by the State, demanding that geometric forms be the very models of life. The czar is vanquished! Long live the essential forms of geometry, which would leap from the canvas into three dimensions as architecture and design for the people. The Constructivist S. Tretjakov was clear about that new conjunction between form and a kind of regulatory formalism: «The pleasure of transforming the raw material into a particular, socially useful form, connected to the skill and the intensive search for the suitable form – those are the things the slogan «art for all» should mean.»

Essential forms still evoked an extraordinarily comforting pleasure; a passion for order. And modernism (in the arts of De Stijl and Neo-Plasticism, Ad Reinhardt's pictures and Josef Albers', the strict formalism that Clement Greenberg argued heatedly for, the early paintings of Frank Stella and the sculpture of the Minimalists) seemed to repeat the age-old attraction to universal forms. But there is one particular distinction that must be made, and it almost gets me back to Steve Wood's studio, in case you were wondering. By the time we reach Reinhardt's work, forms and formalism have swung again toward Kant's original position that artistic creation ought to be utterly free of external constraint – or better, the object's enactment of the principle of form is meant to be the very crucible of purity; from it pours the ideal order against which turbulent society must be judged.

Consider the fact that every one of the impulses I've talked about reveals itself as a kind of divine map, a marvelous template, a metaphoric or actual vessel for rational life, an abstract and absolute representation of social forms, a mute sign of fixed and eternal truth. Minimalism was no different. It stands as a radical example of totally idealized formalism. Think about its sheer presentation of indivisible forms. Its aggressive emphasis on materials even denied that its unitary shapes had a transcendent quality. The material had its own truth. It wasn't symbolic at all. It was *there*, present, and its unadorned reductive surface brought the form into focus as an obdurate, specific material thing lying or leaning or standing in front of you – often in identical or elaborated series. This being the case, inspiration, irregularity, and uniqueness were all out of the question. Even time was out, in the experiential sense of the viewer seeing the signs of the object's coming into being. You see, the essential Minimalist object shows no passage of the hand over the surface, as if no time has passed in the creation of the thing itself.

To some this idealization of a purely rationalized, atemporal, and, by extension, depoliticized art was valuable. It was certainly a break from the mythic *Sturm und Drang* of Abstract Expressionism. But to

others it became a sign of inhuman (or perhaps all too human) narrowness. Anyway, by the time we return to Steve Wood's high-ceilinged room, the story has taken its latest turn. In the most general way, the orderly, rationalized systems of our technological world have become too efficient. The very density of information to which we're exposed and the unrelenting quickness of its transmission has taken its toll.

Surely one manifestation is found in the art world itself, where aesthetic movements (Pattern & Decoration, Graffiti, Neo-Expressionism, Neo-Surrealism, Neo-Geo) have bloomed and perished in recent years with the unnatural frequency of crocuses caught in an eternally false spring. And consequently a fundamental wariness about things pure and absolute has grown up. Categories are likely to be broken down, twisted. There is a gingerly handling of given forms, an idea of acceptable differences in place of the absolute, an interest in multiple and hybrid forms instead of the reduced.

And so, back upstairs, Steve Wood's *Three Rectangles* tells us that essential form still exists, of course. No need to sound apocalyptic. No need to deny the transcendent in favor of pure material form either. Both modes of cognition, of lived experience and universal principle, flicker there, over the surface of the object. And naturally, thinking of the multiple in place of the singular, *one* rectangle, with its sole measure of right angles and distance between points, is not enough. One side bends outward, forming a curved volume. The sculpture offers differences, testing our contentment with a sure thing, turning Minimalism's undifferentiated unity inside out, separating its parts as we turn around it.

Double Junction, another of the works that you have before you, appears as a less physical lesson, a more optical one. Its dark gray board floats on the wall – or does it seem to sink into the white field for you? There is a shadow at the edge, a pale gray outline that draws attention to the irregularity of the rectangle. In fact, this object has six angles cut into its shallow sides. Bending outward at its center, a slight intimation of the human form presses against geometric confines. Yet perhaps one shouldn't project too much, create fictions of a world of puppet forms. It's enough to say that by inflecting the first take, the habitual tendency of the eye to read a perfect rectangle, Wood's work offers up the subtlety of difference, the double junction of the double – take essential to this new art redressing Minimalism.

Robert Therrien's sculptures, even when they're in the round, give you a more iconic view of the same scene, definitely. I mean that they always seem to

flatten out as pictures; you walk away from his objects and their shapely afterimages are there in your mind. This is because his own double junction accommodates the world more than Wood's does, because Therrien always includes recognizable objects – snowmen, water pitchers, top hats, flagpoles – as a part of the geometric shapes that are piled or cut off or added onto in his work. It's as if he took the Constructivists to heart and saw that geometry was in the world that we inhabit daily. It's part of our lives.

But not emphatically. There is no obvious social program here, no formalism bent upon the imperious rightness of its scheme. That may be why he doesn't title any of his pieces. The objects need to exist on the threshold of sense, between form and identity. And the form itself, of course, is impure as well. Nothing here allows singularity. This refigured cone, with its peak tugged down at a rakish angle, is architectural, a Constructivist tower gone slightly soft at the top, or comically human with a dunce cap askew, or simply a looming volume of coated bronze. Its surface is reduced, like the good Minimalist object, yet its obvious eccentricity denies the principle of a universal template. Unless, of course, the template has grown imponderably large to accept every mutation available to contemporary life.

Even the elegant box hung up, which is uncharacteristic in its unyielding abstractness, relieves its austerity with those peculiar little balls affixed like so much fringe – a Dadaist, inexplicable, and weirdly surprising element. They propose the issue of scale: diminutive spheres and relatively colossal square. They suggest a concentrated density against an airy hollowness. They oppose number to oneness. Whimsically, they seem to carry the colossus or they function as pins that close the object's lid. Evidently at a distance from the wall, they identify the object as a sculptural relief, denying it the planar flatness of a Minimalist painting, which you might mistake it for if you were standing right in front of it.

Each correction, each adjustment of your expectations and perceptions is a jolting and wry conjunction, like lemon and salt mixed, that corrodes the unalloyed, metaphysical substance of essential sameness.

Belief exists, of course, that at the root of things there are still incorruptible distinctions – distinctions that art as the embodiment of the principles of form can still maintain. I think of a poem by Czeslaw Milosz called «One More Day», whose conclusion reads: «And when people cease to believe that there is good and evil / Only beauty will call to them and save them / So that they still know how to say: this is true and that is false.» And yet I can't say the same, thinking about

the story thus far. I'm not sure how we can tell beauty in the way the poem suggests, because the centuries of philosophical argument that support Milosz's hopeful phrases are ultimately the centuries of that untrammelled and perfect geometry: simple and definite and unchangeable.

And that is not the way here. Martin Puryear is very much an artist of changes, enacting our extravagant moment, projecting into the tumultuous space of social existence (for both galleries and museums are as much marketplaces as they are sacred places) a display of ambiguities rather than models of the absolute. His rawhide cone is the antithesis of the untouched, timeless, prefabricated purity that Minimalism advertised. The work of Eva Hesse is the more apparent source. She preferred unstable materials and wobbly shapes to the hard and structurally clean objects of her compatriots. Puryear's cone has kind of improvisational feeling, though it's show of craftsmanship also makes it seem more determined. It has some of the oddity of Therrien's more reduced cone, but it's full of pathos: its animal being and its humanly willed shape are purposefully at odds.

Nature, aged and weathered, is sewn into the shape of man's order – and it finds its own shape under that piercing pressure. It deflates the eternal form, even the notion of the eternal itself. It reflects the actuality of life, that ideal abstractions are tempered, altered, reformed by the wearing passage of things. Puryear can talk about truth, their obdurate being, is manipulated to reflect the eccentricity and tumult of forms as they're translated down to the world. True and false burr into the same hide, into the same forms, commingling, mutating themselves and their hosts.

We have gone a step from Wood's multiform attitude, which still holds onto pure shapes, and Therrien's kind of twisted geometric abstraction that makes room for recognizable objects. No, I'm not saying that this is some sort of evolutionary scheme, in which Puryear's art is more developed. But he does give us a different take on the testament of essential forms and the legacy of Minimalism's extreme material formalism.

Think of Puryear's untitled piece, practically floating along the floor of the gallery. It's hard not to see the swan's neck bending. If you stand slightly to the left, that looping curve delves behind the body into the illusion of a deep and perfectly smooth surface. The forms are abstract too, a cut-off elliptical volume and a similar shape in negative space outlined by that great curving element. But the forms hardly resemble anything we might imagine Plato's slave boy would think up. In place of the universal, here is the

specific covered in tar. In every way, the more you think about it, the work is impure. Material, abstract, vaguely recognizable as a figure... it's a prodigious mutant spinning off sources and counter-sources.

The sculpture is built on the idea of internal juxtaposition, juxtaposition of form and identity made even more noticeable than in Therrien's work because Puryear uses such striking, sensual, and often eccentric materials. The notion of this juxtaposition borrows something from the modernist practice of collage. The collaged work collects and redistributes images, shapes, textures, and scale. No single element stands above the others; no actual center really exists. Meaning becomes an affair of contingencies, totally dependent on the play of juxtaposition. And this is the effect of Puryear's piece. It's got collage beneath the skin, throwing meanings against one another, tossing aside any hierarchy of recognitions, holding up an equivalence of intentions for everyone to see. It seems centerless.

«Centerless» is another way, I suppose, of saying that the true and the false have lost their inviolable definition. Not implacable any longer, they too enter the collage paradigm. And another word comes to mind as well, thinking about a world in which things flow in and out of each other with unrelenting speed, dissolving and re-forming. The word is «transparency». Perhaps the word occurs to you too as you stand in front of Tom Butter's work.

Butter's malleable fiberglass is certainly that. Our sight passes through it. It seems at once solid and fluid. And its plainness easily adapts to accommodate other materials. It welcomes collage, and in doing so, its centerlessness, its mutability and transparency also offer the possibility of the unchanging and absolute – as if the pure dense substance of essential form was dissolved and thinned so that it became a ghostly trace, yet still visible, in every creation.

Reel has that quality. It has no distinctive center. It's a wall of sorts. In a way it's a Richard Serra passed through Eva Hesse: architectural, partitioning space, a reference to order and enclosure and rational division, yet irregular at the time, a whimsical parody of the systematic. Unlike Butter's earlier pieces, which were shining vessels, hollowed-out vase- or column-shaped sculptures, *Reel* is unwound. Your eye can't follow down inside it. You walk around it. And when you do, you see light *in* the fiberglass and *through* it. The shape, which is already a limp and gracefully warped rectangle, dissolves. The room enters the piece. Images attach to it; it becomes a screen. The stillness of the object is literally invaded by movement. There you have instability again. And as the

images shift and collect, the formal abstract qualities of the sculpture are juxtaposed to the presentation of the passing recognizable shapes caught in its surface.

This is collage; and the roll of wire on the left is the coup de grâce, delivering asymmetries in volume and substance: bulk against thinness, opacity against luminosity, weight against weightlessness. Thus differences accumulate. And yet it's true enough that what you see is essentially a rectangle joined to a cylinder – simple geometric forms.

Like the rest of these artists, Butter can't forget the projection of a primal template. The metaphor of transparency implies a passage *through* but not a total disconnection from a fundamental, though perhaps vestigial, order. And *Hand*, another work here, is only a more baroque example of the same belief. Its elements twist and overlap, retaining geometry while creating a loose drawing with materials. Wood and fiberglass are interposed; reflective light vies with green translucence; circles, arcs, and rectangles are sheered and shaped, rakishly altering their universal forms and fortifying our perceptions of difference.

What remains so troubling about this practice of difference, of course, is the very fact that it rightfully exists, that it reflects our world. If we cannot say that «this is true and that is false», then we are admitting that society is too much with us, that human inwardness itself, the realm of ideal prototypes and essential forms, is too much put upon and the comeliness of past belief has worn away. No more obvious proof of this could be found than the sculpture I'm talking about. Isn't it all really formalist work? When you look at it, you mostly see abstractions, concerns with material and shape and structure – nothing overtly political. And yet, if what I say has any validity, the world has eaten into that formalism, a parasite burrowing into the skin of the ideal.

To go to the extreme of skepticism, the argument can be made that no truly internal world of order exists or has ever existed. Every model, from Plato's on, was shaped externally by the power of the ruling class, which distributed and regulated knowledge for its own benefit. Every sort of formalism either enters the social realm, the realm of the political, by will or is annexed from it, but none wholly espaces its orbit. The slave boy couldn't discover the measures of squares and triangles in his head without the influence of the one who pulls them out of him, shaping them as they come.

Maybe what we've traded nowadays is the fiction of absolutes, over which people have warred and died,

for a world in which belief has become unmoored, and therefore difference is as much cynicism as it is a bounty of openness and possibility. For all the savagery that absolutes have caused, often in the name of enlightenment, at least there was something to bow down before, the narrowness gleaming with an intensity of light we so rarely see. Of course, seen in almost every way that hardly seems a preferable choice. Yet today the savagery goes on while absolutes seem like nothing more than papier mâché; so few believe that the arguments are sacrosanct, and everything is shaded with ambiguities at once facile and bracingly real.

In any case, this speculation and so many more are raised by current society and art, the first reflected in the second. And I thought it might strike a hopeful note to end with a visit to another studio, Robin Hill's. As evening settled we drove to an outskirt of Brooklyn. Through an open garage area filled with trucks, we entered her building and climbed the stairs. Here was a large room with rough white walls. Tools, wood boards and cutouts, maquettes, and some finished works in wax filled the room. A table was in the corner, and she pulled an extra stool down from the wall so that we both could sit. Her new piece *Partner* was in the middle of the room. Its wax smelled vaguely of a honeycomb and there was something else recognizable about it. The peculiar form, utterly symmetrical, was reminiscent of an erect figure clothed in a dress – a headless, abstracted woman.

Hill denied the resemblance, although she didn't say it was impossible. She spoke about a cache of photographs she found in Kansas City 12 years ago, pictures taken by a young woman in the 1930s. Those images had subtly influenced her work; she couldn't say precisely how. We looked at a few of them published in a magazine, and the intimacy of the subjects – high school friends, family portraits, and self-portraits – somehow focused the gaze of the camera so that each detail of an arm folded against a bodice or the cut and pattern of a dress was intensified, blocked out and shaped in the spare black and white photographs. Staring at her sculpture, she said that she saw undulations creating a shape. Light seemed to emanate from the wax, softening its contours. When you walk around behind *Partner*, you see there's an open-ended cone, a sort of funnel, built into it that lies at an angle off the main cavity. There's very much of a feeling of an inside and an outside; the internal geometry invisible from without, while the rounded volumes that form the front of the piece have some semblance of distended rectangles or triangles wrapping around the sides, chopped off at the top.

We looked around the room at the other pieces lying there. They were less complex than *Partner*, which is most recent and possibly the direction she's heading toward. The ones you see now, *Lean To (Mary Lou)* and *Down Down Down*, have fewer elements and are far more unitary. Yet they aren't exactly Minimalist – the surfaces show too much of the hand for that. *Down Down Down* is a cylinder laterally striped by its supporting cardboard structure with a cone inside it that's far more visible and central to the work than in *Partner*. And *Lean To* narrows towards its top, a single form with a ridged front that makes it look like another series of triangles with their longest points neatly removed.

Her work, though it's open rather than sealed, and curved rather than sharp-edged, shares with Wood's sculptures a love of geometric forms changing as you survey the object, playing out one form against another while constantly referring back to basic shapes. Differences, you might say, are still mindful of the absolute; there is only a gentle pulling at the universal. Was this the primal template in its first cast of wax, still expanding, contracting, and bending until it found its essential forms? Too poetic, no doubt. Yet the more extreme practice of collage is nowhere to be seen here. Form and identity are closely linked in the abstraction of her pieces, and I remarked how each of them is so resolutely anchored in pure geometry. Yes, Hill replied, there's an incredible orderliness to the work that she can't escape.

Yet it seemed in that moment, and in this one, that hers is not an escape from order but a return. Here again is the pleasure in the geometric, the building blocks of reason. Essential form leaves its trace everywhere in her art. And in the time that you take to look at this work, there is perhaps a small respite from uncertainty, a flight from it, and a homing toward the absolute touched by personal expression. It's a complex ambition, and each of the artists in the exhibition have fought with it. What has happened to essential form? Where has it gone and why? Those are the questions they ask. And here are their answers.