

# **An Investigation of the Sculpture/Language Homology**

*by*

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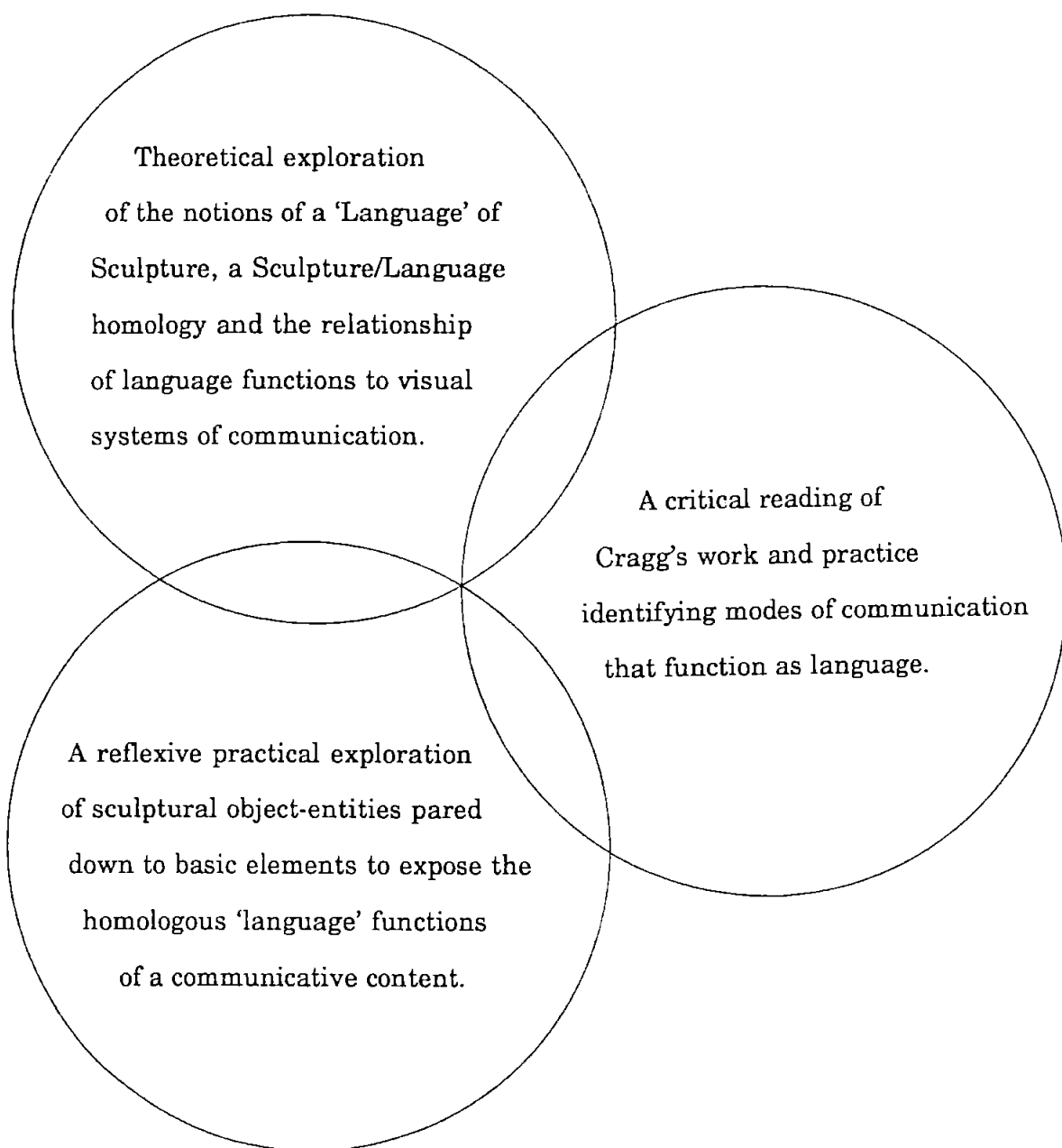
**An Investigation of the Sculpture/Language Homology**

**Abstract**

This research is concerned with the implications of reading sculpture as a mode of communication that is indicative of an art/language homology. An investigation of the inter-relationship of the functions of 'Language' and 'Conventions of Visual Communication' is viewed against contemporary redefinitions of the role of sculpture, its character of presentation and mode of engagement with respondents.

Theoretical investigation examines models of communication and identifies corresponding systems in an art that is exemplified by the sculpture of Tony Cragg. Cragg's significantly organised collections of commonplace objects, presenting the visual assertiveness of the 'ready-made' prompt a reconsideration of the object as a semantic commodity that embodies narrative. The artifact itself is viewed as a visual reference that induces a sequence of complex associations. A reading of the sculpture's multi-layered mimetic, metaphorical and metonymic indices implies the acceptance of paradigmatic conventions of signification within a communication system frequently described as a 'language of sculpture'. The connotative and denotative nature of a materialised, but idealised, presentation of object imagery suggests that Cragg's sculpture is the vehicle of a dialectic process. It is the art of the 'bricoleur' that embodies a readily accessible lexical and semantic content constructed from the readily available signifiers 'to hand'.

The exploratory and reflective investigations of the integral studio projects are concerned with the communication values of contiguous object-entities, in a visual process that links associations in the manner of rhetorical tropes. In a polysemic interaction of visual identities this semantic transposition of a sculptural aesthetic aims to expose relationships connecting expressive material form, image semiosis and object/word associations. The sculptural processes of making-to-reading reveal a systematic structuring of meaning, as the mechanisms of perception are directed by the conceptual modelling of cognitive thought patterns.



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## **Author's Declaration**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

## **Research Practice**

### **Relevant conferences attended:**

'Sculpture in Education, Research Strategies', Manchester Metropolitan University, September 1992.

'Values in Art', Tate Gallery, March 1993.

'The Raw and the Cooked', Oxford Brookes University and MOMA Oxford, February 1994. 'Matrix 3D: Sculpture, Method, Research', Central St Martins College of Art, September 1995.

### **Exhibitions of Sculpture:**

Stone Gardens sited sculpture exhibition, summer 1992, Chagford Devon.  
(Panel selection).

Royal West of England Academy '1st Open Sculpture Exhibition', October 1993  
(selection panel led by Bryan Neale).

'Quay Works, Visual Arts in Exeter', invitation exhibition, summer 1994.

'Matrix 3D: Sculpture, Method, Research', conference exhibition, Central St Martin's College of Art, September 1995 (curated by Ingrid Swenson and Joanna Greenhill).

Royal West of England '2nd Open Sculpture Exhibition', September 1996  
(selection panel led by Michael Kenny).

### **Exhibitions curated:**

Stone Gardens sited sculpture exhibition, co-curator, summer 1992.

'Ha-Ha, Contemporary British Art in an 18th Century Park', co-curated with Iwona Blazwick in collaboration with The National Trust, summer 1993.

### **Conference papers and publications:**

'Research Through Practice' workshop paper presented at 'Matrix 3D: Sculpture, Method, Research' conference, Central St Martins College of Art, September 1995.

'Research Through Practice' workshop paper published in the report of the same conference: Evans S, Greenhill J, Swenson I (Eds), Matrix 3D, Sculpture, Method, Research, Lethaby Press, 1997, p 145-150.

'Diverse Cultures' published in Blazwick I and Pay P, Ha-Ha, Contemporary British Art in an 18th Century Park, University of Plymouth, 1993.

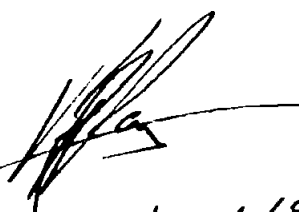
### **External Contacts:**

The sculptor Tony Cragg, whose art is the subject of a critical analysis in Section Three, was interviewed at his Wuppertal studio, the Dusseldorf Academie and the Henry Moore Studio, Halifax.

Iwona Blazwick (then Exhibitions Director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London) was an important collaborator in the early stages of this research and in the curatorial partnership that produced the exhibition 'Ha-Ha, Contemporary British Art in an Eighteenth Century Park', with The National Trust in Devon. The exhibition project was supported by Häagen-Dazs, the Henry Moore Foundation, the Henry Moore Trust, the Foundation for Sports and the Arts, South West Arts, BSIS (ABSA award). Lucy McMenemy (Independent Curator) has collaborated in the planning of a second exhibition project to site a diverse range of sculptural responses through the centre of Exeter in collaboration with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter. Correspondence and an interview with Michael Phillipson was relevant to considerations of the Art/Language homology discussed in Section Two.

Signed

Date

  
14 April 1998

## Introduction

This investigation has grown out of a desire to elaborate on the meaning of the often encountered phrase a 'language of sculpture'. William Tucker's 1975 book of that title presents a reading of sculpture in which the allusion to 'language' is mostly metaphorical. In general use there is a sense that a 'language' of sculpture refers to style, the use of distinctive materials, or to the way that a narrative content is presented by the work. This research looks beyond such ideas of expressive variety and seeks to interpret sculpture as a vehicle of communication in a demonstration of a sculpture/language homology.

In an early scientific classification Aristotle<sup>1</sup> made a distinction between homology (the resemblance of structures which indicate closeness of relationship) and analogy (functional resemblances, like that between bees' wings and birds' wings, which are otherwise very distantly related). Sculpture and language are evidently very different manifestations of communication. However, implicit within the concept of a 'language of sculpture' is the inference of analogous and homologous similarities. 'Similarity' indicates a passive classification of appearance and function. In this study the relationship is found to be interactive and inextricably interwoven within the processes of cognition.

Creative practitioners frequently claim that the art of sculpture is the vehicle of an autonomous form of expression. Sculpture 'speaks' for itself. The essential quality and purpose of such art cannot be replaced by words without a transposition of the distinctive nature of the visual presentation and the

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<sup>1</sup> Formulated between BC 335-23, Aristotle's *analytics* differentiate between the essential qualities of a thing (the features that determine an account of its properties) and thingness (the classification of that thing's relationship to those similarly defined). Aristotle, *Historia Animalium*, Book I section I, trans. 1910 D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, Clarendon Press, 1910, 486a 15&20, 486b 20, 516b 29. Discussion of Analogy/Homology, Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalium*, I Chapter 4&5, trans. D M Balme, Clarendon Press, 1972, Foot note on p 120. This distinction is concerned with metaphysics and epistemological theory that foreshadows the analytic philosophy of Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein and the Logical Positivism of the Vienna Circle. See Henderich T, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p 54, 28-9. Aristotle's theory of universals is also relevant in a discussion of the conceptual functions of language. Proper names refer to identifiable things or material entities whilst adjectives are predicated of the subjects to which they refer. See Russell B, *History of Western Philosophy*, Routledge, 1995, p 176.

expressive substance of the work. On the other hand, it can also be argued that cognition occurs within, and through, language and that the 'language' of art can only function as a meaningful communication within the conceptualisation of cognitive language.

Sculpture, as an expressive medium, and language, both convey meaning by the communication of ideas, through an appropriate vehicle that requires active interpretation. These two forms of communication require human involvement and both are concerned with interactive performance. Something is conceived, realised and presented. To be 'readable' and intelligible both modes of communication represent the intention of the communicator to be encountered in a potentially meaningful dialogue by the respondent.

There are complex relationships connecting the spoken word and written forms of language, signs, symbols and gestures. Language defines its own lexicon and is accepted as a systematic convention. To some extent the grammatical structure of a verbal language must be learnt but it is also evident that language has an inherent potential for access and infinite expansion. Conversely, it appears that sculpture is not systematic, lexiconographical, or syntactical, but an organised complex of semiotic referents. An interpretation of its recognisable physical appearance allows meaning to be formed via associated concepts that identify and build on known experiences. The palpability of sculpture is the accretion of nameable parts and a 'reading' of the work suggests an identification of known 'haptic' experiences meaningfully reassembled within linguistic thought structures.

On a rudimentary level, the morphology of sculpture might be compared with certain expressive and functional mechanisms of language, and analogies can be sought that formally affiliate the two modes of communication. Beyond such resemblances, this study will trace homologous correspondences linking metaphorical language systems with identified developments in contemporary sculpture that espouse paradigmatic, thought-modelling constructs.

## Exploratory method

This investigation is not a critical survey of language studies, nor is it a constructed comparison linking literature and sculpture.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this polylogue, the wealth of theory consulted has inevitably brought together multifaceted and frequently contradictory material in an exploration that covers more than one discipline. An investigatory synthesis of relevant subject areas recognises that, as few research models exist to be tested, new conceptual parameters need to be substantiated alongside established criteria. The unique quality of this research, the 'contribution to knowledge', is not only in the explication of diverse theories, but involves the development of investigatory methods founded in, and focussed upon a reflexive practical enquiry.

## Visual research

Central to this research project has been the development of practical investigative methods: the production and exhibition of my own sculpture as an exploratory research process and curatorial analysis through exhibition as a forum for critical evaluation. The practical investigation through exploratory projects has extended and materially activated theoretical concepts. The nature of the sculpture/language homology is explored through, and measured against, a response to the visual quality of artifacts and the dialectical processes of association and interpretation.

An exhibition of sculpture produced as the main body of primary material for this research will be presented for examination concurrently with the submission of theoretical considerations and documentation of curatorial projects. The practical method exposes diverse modes of presenting the meaningful function of object imagery, and intrinsic material qualities. Objects

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<sup>2</sup> Erudite comparisons of literature and modern painting are available for reference. Meyers J, *Painting and the Novel*, Manchester University Press, 1975 and Steiner W, *The Colors of Rhetoric*, University of Chicago Press, 1982 are worthy examples. There exists few references to sculptural 'language' and this study necessarily takes up the discussion after Tucker W, *The Language of Sculpture*, Thames & Hudson, 1974 and with much adaption of language, semiotic and aesthetic theory.



as commodity values and as sculptural units are reconsidered as polysemic data. Individually, these objects present a sculptural aesthetic evoking meaning through metaphorical association. Grouped together these objects evoke semantic affiliations that function like concepts in a communication. A coherent communication of purpose is sought in the formal arrangements and disposition of selected contiguous objects that prompts the identification of possible interpretations. Hence it is suggested that the communicative content of the work relies both on a perceptual awareness of the physical arrangement and cognition, as visual-to-conceptual associations are interpreted and transposed as thought models.

The production of sculpture is one reflective research method that responds to theoretical investigations. Another has been the conception, realisation and critical analysis of curated exhibitions, where the selection and display of works by major artists has redefined the nature of contemporary practice through a response to contextual issues. This curatorial affirmation of a communication in which sculpture is seen to advance the presentation of meaningful content was the rationale of the exhibition and formed the basis of an illustrated catalogue with essays exposing contemporary modes of practice.

## **Theoretical Research**

Language, in the context of this thesis, is discussed in the broadest sense of a communication that encompasses the essential functions of a performance for interaction. Paralinguistics, the performance component of expressive language, is considered to be an important link with proxemics: the creative-manipulation of physical space. A cognitive experience through language, as proposed by Sapir, Langer and Wittgenstein, is used to study the metaphorical nature of a discursive communication. The metaphorical function of language is explored further in the context of the totemic values of metaphor, metonymy<sup>3</sup> and synecdoche, through considerations of the metaphorical/paradigmatic and

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<sup>3</sup> A definition of these figures of speech as applied to the expressive qualities of sculpture is presented in the next section.

metonymic/syntagmatic dyads propounded by Barthes and Jakobson.

Iconic and semiotic classifications of the functions of communication by Peirce and Morris are compared with the Barthes/Jakobson categorisation of commodity identities in an hierarchical model of analogy and homology. The potential for a narrative content of sculpture to function like the tropes in language is further developed through reference to Germano Celant's semantic potency of Arte Povera involving *bricolage*. Levi-Strauss' concept of meaningful fragments assembled in a process called *bricolage*<sup>4</sup> provides a vital link in relating semantic entities, semiosis and sculptural communication processes. The model offered by *bricolage* indicates potential analogies for a reading of Cragg's sculpture and the metaphorical conventions of language systems.

The art of Tony Cragg amply demonstrates a visual synthesis of these features. His work is an ideated materialism that presents objects as commodities and as deferred cultural packages engaged with language. Cragg's improvisation with the means available defines the actual product as one of potentially several possible relationships made up of ready-formed semantic elements. In this respect it is suggested that Tony Cragg's art is an exemplary vehicle of a dialectic process that indicates linguistic implications identified in an evolving system of communication. Concepts and issues exposed in the critical analysis of Cragg's innovative development of a sculptural communication are addressed in the text and reviewed in the author's own exploratory and reflexive sculpture practice.

At the heart of this correlation cum. interaction linking sculpture and language is the dialectical mediation of a metaphorical transference of meaning and the cognitive functions of connotative and denotative communication.

## Presentation of the Research

To utilise the mass of material consulted, the form of this investigation follows a

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<sup>4</sup> Bricolage is an art that 'collages' ideas and anthropological concepts, utilising readily available artifacts and readable fragments to form linguistic thought packages. Lévi-Strauss C, *The Savage Mind*, trans. and published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962, p 17-18

pattern of progressive and reflective exploration:

In **Section One**, an historical and locational context is established that focuses upon an evolution of communication, as certain contemporary British sculpture progressively affiliates with linguistic theory.

In this context, **Section Two** is concerned with defining an art/language homology, identifying both the dichotomy and correspondences linking contemporary sculpture with language models. Cognition, object identity, semiosis and metaphorical configurations are discussed as the fundamental bridging referents of linguistic comparison.

**Section Three** reviews linguistic mechanisms of access in a reading of Tony Cragg's practice, to identify the homologous nature of 'a language of sculpture'. The first part is an analysis of his pluralist models that reflect the complex relations of a natural, material world. Secondly, his sculpture is seen to address notions of language, thought and metaphorical associations implicit in his presentation of objects and materials.

In **Section Four** a critical presentation of the studio projects reflects upon the concepts being explored. The sculptural rationale relates to, and reviews, through visual methods, the content of Sections Two and Three. Certain works represent responses to key issues identified in an analysis of Cragg's examples. Others are realised through the substance of the physical and conceptual processes of working with sculptural object-entities to identify a relationship with language models.

**Section Five** is a conclusion that identifies the status of a correspondence linking linguistic functions with the modes of sculptural communicating.

## Section One

### Historical and Locational Context — An Evolving Art Language

This section describes the context of radical developments in the presentation of sculpture since 1960 with a particular focus on the evolution of a sculptural language in the 1970s and '80s.

In 1960 Caro had recently returned from America, influenced by Noland and Greenberg, with a transatlantic vision of changing aesthetics.

There's a fine-art quality about European art, even when it's made from junk. America made me see that there are no barriers and no regulations . . . There's tremendous freedom in knowing that your only limitations in a sculpture or painting are whether it carries its intentions or not, not whether it's Art.<sup>1</sup>

European art was challenged by American values (Greenberg's Formalism, hard-edged trends in painting, followed by Minimalism, Conceptualism, and Land Art). Caro's new work presented a radical departure from contemporary abstract art and the resulting innovative, steel constructions of the 1960s acted as a catalyst, heightening awareness of a renewed creative purpose. It was this turning to American painterly influences, away from European traditions that would epitomise Caro's pedagogy emanating from the St Martin's School of Art and his profound influence on those sculptors associated as 'The New Generation'.<sup>2</sup> Open constructions of disparate, discrete parts were displayed on the ground; sited to the ground. The museum materials, bronze and stone, were less in evidence, as was surface modelling and the traditional exuberance of crafted form. Full-blooded colour announced the bright, industrial materials of commercial manufacturing that became the vehicle for a radical re-appraisal of 3-dimensional presentation. Formative work of that period was described by

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<sup>1</sup> Alloway L, interview with Anthony Caro, *Gazette*, 1961

<sup>2</sup> 'New Generation' was the generic title of a series of Whitechapel exhibitions. The first in 1964 showed paintings and a year later focused upon nine British sculptors. A catalogue preface by gallery director Bryan Robertson laments that 'no tradition exists in England for sculpture... the supreme reason has been the climate. The quality of English light... does not encourage... sculptural sensibility'. Robertson B, *The New Generation*, Whitechapel Gallery, 1965, p 7

William Tucker as rooted in: 'not a sculpture tradition, the precedents are probably in painting and poetry'.<sup>3</sup>

Greenberg observed that Caro's sculpture was not assembled as a composition of significant, individual shapes but presented as a complexity that was 'far from the structural logic of ordinary ponderable things'.<sup>4</sup> Fried drew attention to the significance of 'syntax',<sup>5</sup> the nature of the relationship between discrete parts, in an analogy to the grammatical functions in language, as he reviewed the visual and structural quality of Caro's work. Tucker identified the function of sculptural communication as extending our perception beyond its physical condition.

Materials and structure, volume and space, the unity and proportions of sculpture, do not speak for themselves but articulate a complex and profound sense of our own being in the world . . . A sense of gravity is the factor which mediates our visual perception of sculpture with our conceptual knowledge of its 'real' form. The life of sculpture has in fact always subsisted in this gap between the known and the perceived.<sup>6</sup>

Tucker's definition involving gravity and light<sup>7</sup> and the then current, tenet of *The Language of Sculpture*, 1974, preceded a new attitude to sculpture pre-eminently concerned with the realisation of ideas and exploration of issues within a material and spatial context. The energies of the 'New Generation' group were certainly significant but short-lived as the orthodoxy of Formalism itself was questioned by a St Martin's sub-culture who learned 'not a dogma, but a discipline of doubt and inquiry'.<sup>8</sup> It was in the spirit of a succession of avant-garde developments that Caro, King and the 'New Generation' sculptors, nurtured the iconoclast generation that included Bainbridge, Deacon, Dibbets, Flanagan, Fulton, Gilbert & George, Long and McLean.

Paradoxically it was from such a Formalist educational legacy that these artists emerged to question not so much the physicality of sculpture but more

<sup>3</sup> Tucker W, *First 2*, magazine published by St Martin's Advanced Sculpture Course, 1961

<sup>4</sup> Greenberg C, 'Anthony Caro', *Studio International*, 174, 892, September 1967, p 116

<sup>5</sup> Fried M, *Caro*, Whitechapel exhibition catalogue, 1963

<sup>6</sup> Tucker W, 'Gravity', *The Language of Sculpture*, Thames and Hudson, 1974, p 145

<sup>7</sup> William Tucker defines sculpture's existence as 'subject to gravity and revealed by light', in *The Condition of Sculpture*, Hayward catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975, p 7

<sup>8</sup> Lynton N, 'Lastest Developments in British Sculpture' in *Art and Literature*, no 2, Summer 1964, p 196

the value of concentrating on a tangible representation of the diverse experiences of making. A direct result of the new inflexive commitment to a sculptural communication was the need to expose systems of signification analogous to the discursive functions of language. The ontological abstract identity of Formalism represented a radical departure from the art of representation, genre and allegory and was, in turn, to be superseded by a sculpture of non-descriptive but referential materialisation.

A Promethean passion for plastics and technology led many artists to an interest in the new processes and materials of industry. Art objects were produced out of acrylics, aluminium, fibreglass, and steel; made to appear light and dynamic, in keeping with industrial progress. By the end of the '60s, industrial mysticism was undergoing a full crisis in which art, now so evidently implicated in a commercial material culture, possibly functioned as an intellectual palliative to the destructive forces of industry. There seemed to be regret for having questioned the sufficiency of the natural world prompting attempts to demonstrate that the only possible moral solution lay in a re-evaluation of solipsistic attitudes and human intervention in the environment. Clearly sculpture was reestablishing boundaries by replacing the emphasis on the artificial with a concern for the communicative purpose of art. Transformed 'from a static, idealised medium to a temporal and material one',<sup>9</sup> sculpture came to focus on the semantic potential of a reflexive visual rhetoric.

The increasing use of everyday objects and materials — plywood, bricks, felt, ropes, standard sizes of timber, steel and other metals in sheet and rolled form — provided a minimal 'art' content that invited invention. A refusal to 'transform' the commonplace, coupled with a rejection of subject depiction

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<sup>9</sup> Krauss R, *Passages in Sculpture*, Thames & Hudson, 1977, p 282

allowed the notion of the Duchampian 'Ready Made'<sup>10</sup> to gain a renewed currency. Reference to Duchamp provided the catalyst for fresh insights as the 'Ready Made', the *an-artistic*,<sup>11</sup> re-presents the polysemic cross-roads of visual reality and conceptual realisation. Barry Flanagan, in particular, seemed to advance the transition with a poetic vision of the use of ordinary materials, found objects and natural elements. Richard Long further extended the parameters of a meaningful practice to espouse a contextualisation that framed his conceptual processes. McLean included himself in the images of a performance of visual punning with cultural symbols, whilst Gilbert & George became both the object and subject of a sculptural narrative.

Art education in Britain had gained status in the sixties and work was made that belonged primarily to an intellectualising art school ethos. Whilst exhibiting skills and a wide range of techniques, the art emanating from this college system was concerned with complex ideas and increasingly allowed much opportunity for intense discussions which tended to lead away from material realization. Art Theory and Art Language became compelling by-products of the increased wordiness of the art process.<sup>12</sup>

The influence of Joseph Beuys<sup>13</sup> also became apparent and, for those more in tune with Continental developments, Pistoletto, Merz, Anselmo and others had a profound effect. Similarly the work of Judd, Morris, Flavin, André and Serra offered a distinctly American influence. Subsuming Minimalism and Land Art,

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<sup>10</sup> 1966 saw the 'Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp' retrospective at the Tate. Duchamp's 'ready-made' is a criticism of a 'retinal' and 'manual art'. Separated from its functional context the 'ready-made' confronts its own non-significance, its anonymity, it is the gratuitous gesture of the artist, the plastic equivalent of the pun. See Paz O, Marcel Duchamp or the Castle of Purity, Cape Gollard Press, 1970, p 12-13. A year later Michael Fried published 'Art and Objecthood' in Artforum, June 1967, in which a sense of anti-retinalism is replaced by the illusion of modality, as elements bestow significance on one another precisely by virtue of their juxtaposition. Fried refers to Greenberg's view of Caro's sculpture as a syntax of parts that allays objecthood by imitating the efficacy of gesture, suggesting a knowledge of somatic response, a fountainhead of antiliteralist sensibility, the antithesis of a 'theatrical' empathy with the piece in question.

<sup>11</sup> An invention of Octavio Paz, who claimed that the 'Ready Made' is an 'active criticism: a contemptuous dismissal of the work of art seated on its pedestal of adjectives'. Paz O, Marcel Duchamp or the Castle of Purity, Cape Gollard Press, 1970, p 12-13

<sup>12</sup> see Aiken J, 'Knowing Your Place', in Threshold, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo/British Council, No 9, January, 1993, p 150-1

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Beuys, the veteran of the Fluxus movement was little known outside of Continental Europe until 1968 when he was included in Documenta 4. He was internationally recognised by 1969. [see 'The German Contribution', Studio, July/Aug 1968]

the landscape site away from gallery spaces influenced a distinctive form of British art characterised by discrete intervention in the environment and the experimental use of diverse media.

The political and social climate of the '70s tended to shift power away from the art schools, as young artists sought venues to develop their work in the rapidly expanding exhibition opportunities to be found, particularly in Holland and Germany. Many artists were beginning to make work which did not seem to belong within the increasingly localized British art world, but in a wider, more international context.

Influential coverage of the contemporary arts in *Art International* and, from 1967, *Flash Art*, brought a cosmopolitan awareness of progressive attitudes concerned with aesthetic innovation. Fresh, experimental use of image resources were seen in Szeemann's 1969 ICA exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*, that included work by Burgin, Flanagan, McLean, Kounellis, Merz and Pistoletto, and exposed practices defined by Celant as *Arte Povera*.<sup>14</sup>

Cragg's semantically active, sculpture practice grew out of this climate of a radically renewed reading of objects and inherent material qualities. The work that he exhibited for his postgraduate degree show at the RCA consisted of large primary volumes, cubes and rectangles made up of junk materials found in skips. Ordered by geometric form the complexity of the clustered fragments continued the processes generated by Long, but Cragg's work, whilst acknowledging conceptualism, is essentially object-orientated. Object-entities, materials and processes are factors central to the purpose of his art, for the art is rich in associations and references to the commodity values of the visual world.

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<sup>14</sup> Germano Celant coined the term 'Arte Povera' in 1967 to describe working processes represented by Andre, Beuys, Haake, Kosuth, Serra and the Italian variant represented by Anselmo, Fabro, Kounellis, Merz, Paolini, Penone, Pistoletto and Zorio. Defined by Celant as 'an interpretation of reality... a clarification and a criticism of the methods of communication' [see Celant, below]. Arte Povera occupied the middle ground between the two extremes of Minimal and Conceptual Art with artists typically using 'unworthy' materials like: coal, sand, earth, wood, stone, twigs, felt, rubber, rope and newspapers. The first AP show in the UK entitled 'When Attitudes Become Form' started in Berne in March 1969 and was brought to the ICA by Charles Harrison in September of that year. Celant G, *Arte Povera, Conceptual, Actual or Impossible Art?*, Studio Vista, 1969 and Szeemann H, *When Attitudes Become Form*, ICA, 1969



Inventive use of common-place objects and a redefinition of sculpture heralded a post-modernist 'New Sculpture' <sup>15</sup> fraternity associated with the Lisson Gallery. Allington, Cragg, Deacon, Kapoor, Mach, Opie, Wentworth and Woodrow re-presented a 'lexiconography' of image fragments that invoked a reading out of the art and into the dialectics of an active mode of interpretive communication.

This generation of British sculptors, who emerged in the late '70s, had gained a sophisticated understanding of the formal language of sculpture, but employed it to discern a broader content in an art that espoused the processes of conceptual interpretation. This evolving practice, with affiliations to linguistic theory, largely undermines a phenomenological position by arguing that language is inherently metaphysical. There is a preference for metaphor over symbol and for a literary and poetic discursive content, presented as entwined visual and verbal allusions where meaning may be suggested, but polemically not determined. The work is seen as an open narrative that can be read in many different ways for the taut interplay between image, material and title forms a poetic knot of concepts and images in whose complex matrix a wealth of allusion to meaning can be discovered.

The artistic purpose of this period is characterised by a curiosity to examine unusual and irreverent possibilities and react positively to cultural and perceptual phenomena. Widely different philosophical, practical and conceptual processes are exhibited but generally the work appears innocent, but knowing, with a lightness of touch. Clear rationales, accessible ritual and innovation demonstrate a lateral, clever thinking that purports a cogency of expression.

An engagement with the meaningful capacity of objects and the implicit heritage of commodities is closely aligned with a means of production associated

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<sup>15</sup> The 'New British Sculpture' was a sobriquet loosely linking artists whose work had been selected for the ICA's 'Objects and Sculpture' and 'British Art Shows' of the early '80s. Many of the sculptors are associated with the St Martins School of Art, others the Royal College of Art. Like their background educations, working practices are diverse and it is only possible to identify a few shared concerns in their work. See Hicks A, 'New British Sculptors' in *New British Art in the Saatchi Collection*, Thames & Hudson, 1989, p 16. Nicholas Logsdail of the Lisson Gallery was also effective in promoting the innovative group of sculptors called the Lisson School, a misleading title as their work was so individual and disparate. See Vaizey M, *British Contemporary Art*, Contemporary Arts Society, 1991, p 130.

with Arte Povera. Using a number of primitive technical processes; gathering, stacking, piling-up, the work obviously demonstrates a desire to rise above materialism. The sophistication comes from careful positioning. The relevance comes from the ability of the works to extend beyond the ordinariness of the material and to engage the viewer in a debate about the bigger issues, like urban waste, ecology and the environment. Individual concerns were expressed in distinctly individual ways. The most noticeable tendencies being towards an artistic self-reliance, established through minimal intervention, a non-reliance on specialist skills, innovative use of materials and a willingness to use what is cheap, and readily available.

Like Duchamp's *Bottle Rack* the 'New Sculpture' functions through incongruity. Objects placed in an art context are detached from their origins making the work virtually unrecognisable except as sculpture, where the syntax of abstract allusions evokes dichotomous interrelationships; appearance/idea, physicality/concept and the tangible/known. An implicitly metaphorical process imbued the resulting form with allusions and meaning beyond a literal and physical appearance.

This new energy was clearly displayed in the 1981 exhibition *Objects and Sculpture*, jointly mounted by the ICA in London and the Arnolfini in Bristol. Cragg, Woodrow, Kapoor, Vilmouth, Allington, Gormley, and Deacon amongst others exhibited new work that had an immediate impact and heralded distinctly new methods of presentation. It is significant that the fundamental changes in the realisation of sculpture, at the time, required a new language of analysis. This is testified by the difficulties then experienced by both the artists formulating a new kind of content and critics engaging the most appropriate language concepts.<sup>16</sup> Whilst sculpture had previously embodied the notion of

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<sup>16</sup> A hesitant critique by John Roberts draws upon the criteria of the 1970s process-based practices to explain the 'New Sculpture' of the '80s: '...an excellent overview of the New Object tendency, advancing as it does a real optimism for the future of object-based work outside of the constructed/welded mainstream... is drawing attention to the production of the found object itself as in ways of transforming it into something imaginative.' A year later ecological values and a social critique provided a revamped interpretation of the work. Roberts J, 'Objects and Sculpture', *Artscribe* 30, Aug 1981, p 50-1 discussed by Cooke L, in 'Between Image and Object; the New British Sculpture' in Neth T, *A Quite Revolution in Sculpture Since 1965*, Thames & Hudson, 1987, p 50

subject and represented itself as the history of its own creation, the metaphorical 'New Sculpture' relied more upon the differentiation of metaphorical configurations to create a cognitive language beyond the material entity.

Thus the development of British sculpture since the '60s, is here postulated as an evolution in aesthetic communication strategies and affiliated linguistic theory. In the next section the language interface is explored as an homologous intercourse.

## Section Two

In this section the cognition of object entities is compared with constructions of meaning. A reading of sculpture as a vehicle of expression is thereby evaluated as a discursive communication paradigm that corresponds to certain functions of language.

2.1 presents the essence of the sculpture/language homology. 2.2 traces the dichotomy and correspondence linking art and language to demonstrate the articulation of a sculpture/language homology.

### 2.1 The Sculpture/Language Homology

In the sense that William Tucker wrote about a 'language of sculpture',<sup>1</sup> sculpture is accepted as communicating<sup>2</sup> a readable content through the display of paradigmatic structures. Form evokes metaphor in making meaningful connections out of the work. Tucker refers to language metaphorically,<sup>3</sup> but the analogy is understood to indicate the potential of sculpture to convey, represent and reflect ideas, realised as concepts through the materialisation of contiguous entities.

... Sculpture is the language of the physical: and as with any living language, new thought finds form by stretching the medium itself, not by learning an alien language, or by attempting to invent a wholly new one.<sup>4</sup>

It is suggested that the communicative rationale of certain contemporary sculpture and language does allow for a meaningful comparison. In the most mechanical analysis however, it is not obvious how the overtly formulated discipline of a grammatical communication could equate with formal elements identifiable in the sculpture. Nor is it immediately evident that the art object is actually comprehended in the way that meaning is conveyed through language.

<sup>1</sup> The guiding spirit for this research originated in reflections upon the premiss, but not the detailed content, of Tucker W, Language of Sculpture, Thames & Hudson, 1974

<sup>2</sup> Warren Weaver defines communication in its broadest sense as 'all of the procedures by which one mind may affect another and as such includes language and the arts as coercive, and inherently concerned with action.' Shannon C & Weaver W, Mathematical Theory of Communication, University of Illinois Press, 1949

<sup>3</sup> Gombrich maintains that the phrase 'language of art' is more than a loose metaphor for 'to describe the visible world in images we need a developed system of schemata'. Gombrich E, Art and Illusion, Phaidon, 1968, p 76

<sup>4</sup> Tucker W, The Condition of Sculpture, Hayward Catalogue, Arts Council, 1975, p 7

Tucker's formalist<sup>5</sup> morphology of sculpture is characterised by the physical structures of form, mass, volume, silhouette, void, balance and orientation. The haptic<sup>6</sup> comprehension of material qualities, density, visual weight, and the physical presence of sculpture is affected by identity, image allusion, scale and context. The fullest 'reading' of the work is also influenced by the language constructs of a title, documentary description, critiques and discussion. The sensual elements, the 'observable' substance of a sculptural physiognomy, constitute an aesthetic appearance, whilst a semiosis of object entities allows for metaphorical and iconic frameworks of meaning.<sup>7</sup>

In this thesis sculpture is presented as the tangible experiences of a physicality that forms not only the substance of the art but a vehicle, a lexiconographical mode of association. Visual qualities evoke a vocabulary of conceived entities, object-word equivalents that do not of themselves constitute a language as such, but enables a process of cognition and the possibility of a communicable content. It is not the analogy of inter-related (linguistic) elements that is foremost in this study but the metaphorical function of the sculpture. Sculpture as a complex of signs, represents the concept of idea, the realisation and transfer of *a priori* thought models through a paralinguistic, material and proximic performance.

A metamorphosis in the appearance of contemporary sculpture and its content has demonstrated a radical evolution of communication strategies. A shift from the formal manifestation of an aesthetically charged monumentality

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<sup>5</sup> Analysis of the physical, structural form of sculpture is more specifically developed by Tucker W in 'The Object' and 'Gravity', Studio International, from October, 1972, and The Condition of Sculpture, Hayward, 1975

<sup>6</sup> Somatic factors influence an apprehension of tactile impressions. The term 'haptic' (haptikos 'to lay hold of') refers to inward experiences of one's own body as a physical sensation comparable with an appreciation of external form. In this theory there is implied an antithetical comparison between the expectation of a physiological experience and that perceived as a visual impression, a dichotomy effecting the intellectual and the sensibility. Read H, Art of Sculpture, Faber and Faber, 1961, p 30-31

<sup>7</sup> The Language of Sculpture opens with references to the poet Rilke's monograph on Rodin (p 9). Tucker's concept of 'aesthetic purpose' explores a 19th century legacy of painterly choice between colour and line or realism (p 17) and a sculptural concern for naturalism (p 27). In Chapter 2, 'Brancusi, the elements of sculpture', the linguistic connotation is implied by reference to 'rhetoric' (p 41). Language in this context is discussed as articulation of form, symmetry, poise and penetration of space, structural factors, internal organisation and the spectator's own identification of body responses. See Tucker W, The Language of Sculpture, Thames & Hudson, 1974, p 30

of the 1960s has been superseded by a rhetorical visual performance referencing commodity values. By denying a narrow objectivism sculpture has extended the limits of a phenomenological definition to reveal endless multiple meanings, ambiguity and homonyms. The substance and the strategies of sculptural communication became increasingly sophisticated in the 1970s and '80s requiring an ever widening appreciation of discursive dialectics. Such a shift in a metaphorical and semantic purpose inevitably caused the means to be redefined as an array of 'languages' of re-presentation, of coded entities and representations of deferred references.

It is suggested in this study that the objects of sculpture are now highly reflexive precisely as 'languages'; as conceptual explorations of meaning, whilst sculpture as 'language' preserves a sense of difference in respect to the specifics of its own practices and physical appearance. Sculpture's modes of presentation inevitably focus upon, but are not defined by, the form-content dichotomy and epiphenomena of sensation which in the reading process are displaced by an associated range of conceptual figurations. In this form it is proposed that sculpture's affinity with the processes of perception, conceptualisation, denotation and cognition puts itself into a corresponding relationship with the constructions of language.

## 2.2 Dichotomy and Correspondence of a Sculpture/Language Interface

Structuralists responding to Barthes's early semiological programme entered into a controversial discussion that addressed the question 'Is Art Language?'<sup>8</sup> Most scholars answered in the negative to the question thus posed, but the underlying problem: How is a structure of art comparable with language?<sup>9</sup> was accepted as worth debating.

Among the critics of an art/language homology, Mikel Dufrenne<sup>10</sup>, writing in

<sup>8</sup> Dufrenne M, 'L'art est-il langage?' in *Revue d'Esthétique*, 19, 1966, p 1-43, discussed in Noth W, *Handbook of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 458

<sup>9</sup> Paris, 1975, discussed in Noth W, *Handbook of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 458

<sup>10</sup> Mikel Louis Dufrenne, b. 1910 Clermont (Oise), professor\* faculté des lettres de Paris 1952, de Poitiers 1955, de Paris-Nanterre 1964-75. Co-authored publications with the phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur. *Who's who in France*, Lafitte, Paris, 1979, p 540

1966, formulated two major objections, structural and aesthetic.<sup>11</sup> The structural argument is that art, unlike language, is not a system concerned with the linking of the two articulations of speech and written communication.<sup>12</sup> A corollary of this argument is that art does not write its own grammar, it invents it and betrays it in its invention.

Language is . . . a determined activity that 'speaks its own laws'.<sup>13</sup>

The aesthetic argument says that art does not have the function to signify but to show; the semantic function of art 'is not a criterion of its aesthetic quality'.<sup>14</sup>

The denial, above, of an homologous correspondence reveals an historical stance in linguistic philosophy but it will also be noted in Sections 1 and 3 that a recent evolution of sculpture has seen language constructs assimilated into three-dimensional communication strategies. The framework of Dufrenne's denial however, presents a useful definition. Therefore, in this section a counter-argument will form the basis of an exposition of the correspondences linking contemporary sculpture's mode of communication with paradigmatic functions of language.

Although it is not possible to get outside of language, in the context of art 'language' metaphors of text and textuality become pertinent, for the modern tradition is intrinsically concerned with a multi-faceted interpretation of art. Engagement with contemporary praxis concerns our reading of what we bring to and desire from sculpture's own 'language'. In this respect accompanying texts are treated as major allies and provide a vital stage in a public appreciation of the work as it is assimilated into a collective consciousness. Text informs and creates a context for the work, but the work is also 'read' and we can not escape from the underlying theory embodied within the sculpted 'text' itself.

Duchamp provides for the absolute inter-twining of art with language not

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<sup>11</sup> Dufrenne M, 1966, discussed in Noth W, *Handbook of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 458

<sup>12</sup> Noth W, *Handbook of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 458-9

<sup>13</sup> Kristeva J, *Language, the Unknown*, Columbia University Press, 1989, p 4

<sup>14</sup> Dufrenne M, *L'art est-il langage?* 1966, in *Revue d'Esthétique*, 19, p 20, discussed in Noth W, *Handbook of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 458

only as an essential relationship of practice and theory, but also as the very substance of artistic practice itself. Theorising for Duchamp, in the context of art, was always absolutely contextual, as it is bound up with the creation of particular works. The theory of the work can never be external to the work and the creative act is not performed by the artist alone.

The performance and conceptual functions of these modes of discourse indicate that many mechanical definitions of language are too narrow. Michael Phillipson, writing in 1985, maintains that:

The sensation whose significance is rendered in the work of art cannot be divorced from language for it only comes to be in the activity of creatively rendering it, that it is constituted as a particular sensation in the creative act, and is, from the beginning, a sign. It is a sign in a rather special sense (as opposed to a structuralist or semiotic conception of the sign) for it does not point away from itself to a referent or signifier. It seems to be a sign first of all of itself. Art as such is defined as a reflexive sign, a sign that displays itself in its own specificity, and is rendered in the context of language.<sup>15</sup>

Thus it is proposed that an inter-twining of art with language reveals the work of art as programmed not towards some pre-meaningful realm of the respondent's sensations, but rather to a dialogue about the sculptor's and respondent's being-in-the-world.<sup>16</sup> Sculpture preserves the paradox in which art is a mode of communication constituted through a diversity of 'languages' with the viewer's response indicating a sense of our being-in-language; finding cognition through language before experience. A reading of the sculpture is to engage with *a priori* concepts but sculpture's signs are absolutely concrete, implicit to the sculpture and essentially untranslatable. Sculpture is an object, not a datum, but an individual thing and a symbol for the concept of its own expression.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Phillipson M, Language, Painting and Modernity, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 80

<sup>16</sup> The reference to 'being' follows Heidegger's proposition that a 'sense of being' implies a concern with ontology. See Dreyfus H L, Being-in-the-World, a commentary on Heidegger's 'Being and Time', Division I, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1991

<sup>17</sup> Nelson Goodman contends [Languages of Art, p 22] that the fact of picturing does not prove the existence of the pictured object, but the fact that the object does, could, does not, or could not exist is crucial to the reception of the work of art and to the discovery of the properties of the different arts. Similarly Jakobson claims that poetry can 'be grammatical, ungrammatical, antigrammatical, but never agrammatical', Jakobson R, 'Poetry of Grammar and the Grammar of Poetry', Lingua 21, 1968, p 606. 'Art can be documentary, realistic, surreal, abstract, and the like, but never removed out of empirical reality'. Steiner W, 'Thoughts That Fit Like Air', in Colors of Rhetoric, University of Chicago Press, 1982, p 8



## How is a structure of art (sculpture) comparable with language?

Sculpture and language, including the integral functions of paralanguage<sup>18</sup>, covers all manner of indicative behaviour which are essentially the externalisations of thought.<sup>19</sup> Language is a sophisticated form of a discursive symbolism that includes sculptural forms as significance is attributed to a meaningful presentation of concrete entities. Selected contemporary sculpture (detailed analysis in Sections 1 & 3) and language, are both activated in the realisation, comprehension and expression of conceptual frameworks. Primarily "a structured actualisation of the tendency to see reality symbolically",<sup>20</sup> language in general is concerned with conception, and conception is the ordering of perception . . . Hence 'its forms predetermine certain modes of observation and interpretation.'<sup>21</sup> Since our recognition of form and image is formed of perception that is modified by experience this suggests that much of our thinking and comprehension is facilitated by language:<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Paralanguage in this context refers to extensions of verbal language and includes the performances that enhance meaning transfer through interlocution. This classification is an important factor in comparing art with language and is not limited in definition to sign languages like the American and British systems of sign language (which are believed to be independent languages *pe se*), but refers to the vital role of a material and spatial 'performance' activating paradigmatic communication.

<sup>19</sup> 'Language is the material of thought.' Kristeva J, *Language, the Unknown*, Columbia University Press, 1989, p 7

<sup>20</sup> Sapir, 'Language' p 159, Macmillan, discussed in Langer S, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, 1960, p 110

<sup>21</sup> Sapir, 'Language' p 157, Macmillan, discussed in Langer S, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, 1960, p 126

<sup>22</sup> People often feel the need to speak thoughts aloud, to aid concentration, to allow thought to be more 'tangible'. A first draft on paper is often necessary to see whether what is written corresponds to what was in mind. 'We only know just what we meant to say after we have said it'. [Joubert J, 1754-1824].

There are several theories about the relationship of language and thought: that language and thought are definable entities, engaging one with the other; conversely, that language and thought are identical, that it is not possible to engage in any rational thinking without using language. The popular view tends to favour the idea that people have thoughts and then put these thoughts into words. The view is well represented in the field of child language acquisition, where children are seen to develop a range of cognitive abilities which precede the learning of language.

The second possibility is also widely supported, the way people use language dictates the lines along which they can think: 'He gave men speech, and speech created thought'. [Shelley P B, *Prometheus Unbound*]. This view is also represented in the language acquisition field, in the argument that the child's earliest encounters with language are the main influence on the way concepts are learned. The identity view, (eg, that thought is no more than an internalised vocalisation) is no longer common. There are too many exceptions for a strong position to be maintained: we need only think of the various kinds of mental operations that can be performed without language, such as recalling a sequence of movements in a game or sport, or visualising the route from home to work. It is also widely recognised that pictures and models can be more helpful in problem solving than purely verbal representations of a problem. Crystall D, *Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 14

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organised in our minds — and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organise it into concepts, and ascribe significance as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organise it in this way — an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory; we can not talk at all except by subscribing to the organisational and classification of data which the agreement decrees.<sup>23</sup>

Every language has a vocabulary and syntax. Some words are equivalent to whole combinations of other words, allowing for a lexical definition of the meaning of all words whilst synonyms allow for substitution and translation.<sup>24</sup>

The discursive property of language is concerned with the formulation and expression of connotative concepts and *a priori* thought structures. In this respect language can be compared with, or measured against, the indicative 'projection' of hieroglyphs, sign language and telegraphic codes. However, language is not our only articulate product as there are modes of symbolic communication not fitting the grammatical scheme of verbal expression. Cognitive experience is a process of formulation through an apperception of sensations and in our world of things the conceptualisation of facts relies upon the codification of a logical language to form the essential 'categories of understanding'.<sup>25</sup>

The expressive function of language is not necessarily evident in our emotional response to a beautiful artwork or an unpleasant experience. Neither do people engaged in creative practice find it necessary to think out their

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<sup>23</sup> Whorf B, discussed in Crystall D, *Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 14

<sup>24</sup> Whorf B considered examples of awareness of specific concepts from several languages. Whereas some communities had just one word for a particular idea, situation or thing, others would have a considerable language structure with which to cover a greater awareness of the same situation. Translation and explanation is possible, however, although one language may take many words to say what another language says in a single word, circumlocution can convey the fullest meaning. Similarly if a language lacks a word for a specific concept, it does not follow that its speaker cannot grasp that concept. Whorf B, discussed in Crystall D, *Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 15

<sup>25</sup> A Kantian idiom discussed in Langer S, 'Discursive and Presentational Forms', in *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, Mass. 1960, p 89

activity in words<sup>26</sup>, but 'even mute discourse (mute thought) uses the network of language in its labyrinth and can not do without it'.<sup>27</sup>

Uttered, written, or gestural materiality . . . produces and expresses (that is communicates) what is known and thought . . . language is the only manner of being in thought, its reality, and its accomplishment.<sup>28</sup>

'Thought' appears as only one of the many things transmitted by language. An emphasis upon 'non-cognitive' aspects of language is characteristic of a strong tendency to restore words to their proper and natural setting in human activity:

Words are part of action and they are equivalents to actions . . . language . . . [is] the very stuff of which 'ideas' are made.<sup>29</sup>

The synchronic study of a language attempts to view the system as a functional whole, existing as a 'state' at a particular moment in time, whereas the diachronic study of language traces historic evolution through various stages and sees language as a continually evolving medium.<sup>30</sup> The language model serves as a heuristic instrument and by applying such useful guidelines, a non-verbal language sign system<sup>31</sup>, like sculpture, can be analysed according to the principles derived from linguistics and semiotics.

Contemporary developments see sculpture manifested as an ideated materialism, its objects presented as commodity referents engaged with language in a picto-ideogrammatic system of signs. The signs are arbitrary<sup>32</sup> for

<sup>26</sup> Crystall D, *Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 14

<sup>27</sup> Kristeva J, *Language, the Unknown*, Columbia University Press, 1989, p 6

<sup>28</sup> Kristeva J, *Language, the Unknown*, Columbia University Press, 1989, p 6

<sup>29</sup> Malinowski B, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, Allen & Unwin, 1935 vol 2, p 9

<sup>30</sup> Saussure illustrated this point using an analogy with a game of chess: if we walk into a room while a chess game is being played, it is possible to assess the state of the game by studying the position of the pieces on the board. Cullen J, in Saussure F, *Course in General Linguistics*, Fontana, 1974, p XX

<sup>31</sup> 'A semiotic system consists of sign vehicles, of intelligent things signified by them called denotata, and of the relationship between the two. It has a small closed set of sign vehicles, but these do not directly signify meaning. Instead combinations of them form another set of signs, large, non denumerable, open, full of meaning — the sentences of a language, the content of art'. Thompson M, 'From things to ideas' in *Rubbish Theory*, Oxford University Press, 1979, p 60-61

What differentiates signs from gestures, that are not signs, is syntax. Gestures have no syntactic structure, each one means what it means by virtue of being what it is. Signs, however, in sign language, mean what they mean by virtue of relation to other signs used with them as much as by being signs. Signals, signs, icons and symbols are referential devices that as semantic units convey packages of meaning but are not alone organically integrated systems in the sense of a self defining language.

<sup>32</sup> Saussure F de and early Barthes R.

they are neither transparent equivalents of the real world nor do they simply equate to an underlying material reality. Signs are representational since they engender meaning within a communication system through the relationship of images (signifiers) and concepts (signifieds).<sup>33</sup>

Signs resemble images in being concrete entities but they resemble concepts in their powers of reference. Neither concepts nor signs relate exclusively to themselves; either may be substituted for something else. Concepts, however, have an unlimited capacity in this respect, while signs have not.<sup>34</sup>

Thus a sign does not simply 'reflect' reality, it formulates a 'concept' (the signified), which is itself complexly articulated by a particular image (signifier). The sculptural image or object is the manifestation of a complex of signs, the referents to associated things: labels, particular qualities and ideas, and signifying symbols which suggest an organised pattern of thought. Analogies linking the signs of sculpture with the phonemes and graphemes of speech and text might loosely trace an interlinguistic connection but these links provide little insight into a correspondence with language mechanisms. More significantly, a refutation of Dufrenne's position<sup>35</sup> here finds the articulating image of sculpture relevant in a discussion of the manifest duality of verbal

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<sup>33</sup> Hence, Saussure's bilateral sign model comprises three terms, the sign, and its constituents signifier and signified. The distinctive feature of its duality is the exclusion of the referential object. The sign designates the whole which has the signified and signifier as its two parts.

$$\begin{array}{lcl} & & \text{signified (concept)} \\ \text{Sign} & = & \\ & & \text{signifier (sound-image)} \end{array}$$

The meaning of the individual sign lies in its difference from other signs of the language system and, as stated above, linguistic identity is relatively independent of a subject's material condition. A useful example [from Hall S et al (Eds), *Culture, Media, Language*, Routledge, 1992, p 196] cites the 'Geneva to Paris express', which as a linguistic sign does not refer to one locomotive or collection of carriages but to any train that fulfils the function of this express. Hence the sign does not signify a purely material entity but is based on certain conditions that are distinct from the actual train. Although we mean that the 8.25 service is the same train each day, the locomotive, coaches and personnel may be different. The 8.25 is defined by its relationship (or difference) to other trains. Its identity is independent of its physical manifestation but this entity is not abstract, however, and can not be conceived separately from the material realisation. Hence the linguistic sign does not refer to material alone but concerns the concept of entity.

<sup>34</sup> '...there is an intermediary between images and concepts, namely signs. In the union thus brought about, images and concepts play the part of the signifying and signified respectively.' Lévi-Strauss C, *The Savage Mind*, trans. and published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962, p 18

<sup>35</sup> 'Unlike language, art (sculpture in this debate) is said not to be a system concerned with the linking of the two articulations, like speech and written communication'. Dufrenne M, p 18 of this section.



language. The debate about a primacy of speech over writing<sup>36</sup> is not central to this investigation, but the manifestations of these linguistic forms of thought is relevant to a consideration of sculpture's communicative appearance.

Space in text (punctuation)<sup>37</sup> and space in sculpture demonstrates a level of paralinguistic performance as active voids register as an expressive non-material. The spatial disturbance of text is accentuated with graphic punctuation markers and as with music notation signals a complex scoring of rhythms and inflections of sound equivalents. In this respect the spatial identity of contemporary sculpture is presented as the matrices of formal compositions, the voids, silhouettes and pierced forms, that are bound referentially to both the realisation of image and, in turn, the signalling of a construction of a 'text' or meaningful content. The perception of text (including the music score), speech, or the music, are linear activities involving a marked progression in time. Sculpture's appearance likewise directs an exploration in a measured time, exposing in image and object identities another form of conceptual 'language', that itself denotes the presence of cognitive narration. Spacing emphasises material's presence being tied to the organisation of language, and suggests that art shares some commonality with the paradigm of writing. Such a view of a layered identity of writing would also include the pictographic, the hierographic, and the ideographic, for if writing is 'image' then the exterior figuration is always

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<sup>36</sup> Saussure proposed that language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first. Derrida's critique of Saussure's principle of the arbitrary nature of the sign argues that the 'logocentric' tradition in Western metaphysics presupposes the *a priori* fixed meaning of concepts. In this tradition language is intrinsically related to the self-consciousness of rationality. Derrida views this entire rational discourse as being founded on the concept of language as speech emanating from conscious, rational minds. Whereas his own model is founded on a reformulation of the object of linguistics. Derrida contends that this model contradicts the notion of the arbitrary nature of the sign since the relations between phonemes and graphemes must themselves be arbitrary. In his discussion of the character of writing and phonetic communication he proposes that no writing can be the simple exteriority of interiority; the representation of speech. A pure phonetic writing he maintained does not exist because no practice of writing can remain faithful to the phonetic principle. Derrida, 1877, discussed in Phillipson M, Painting, Language and Modernity, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 39

<sup>37</sup> Speech reproduced in phonetic writing is further distorted by spacing in a graphic structure but spacing in writing, the gaps between letters and words, the punctuation, are symbols of space that do not mirror the temporal gaps between the sounds of speech. Derrida notes that writing can never be an 'image' or 'representation' of the spoken language because the phoneme is 'the unimaginable' itself and the grapheme, the mark in a system of phonetic writing, can have no iconic relation to its phoneme. Phillipson M, Painting, Language and Modernity, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 108

present within the *a priori* transcendental inner meaning and vice versa.<sup>38</sup>

Derrida replaced the *a priori* fixed signifieds of Saussure's theory, which writing represents, by the concept of *différance*.<sup>39</sup> In Saussure's theory, meaning functions between the signs in the language chain. Derrida transforms and extends this principle. Meaning is no longer a function of the difference between fixed signifieds and it is never fixed outside of any textual location or spoken utterance. It is always in relation to other textual locations in which the signifier has appeared on other occasions, for every articulation of a signifier bears within it the *trace* of its previous articulation. There is no fixed transcendental signified, since the meaning of concepts is constantly referred, via the network of traces, to their articulation in other discourses. Fixed meaning is constantly deferred.<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, sculpture as a metaphorical system of signs, transforms objects into another significance. The 'language' of sculpture makes reference back to all possibilities of communication in sculpture, like a sort of writing-in-general which for Derrida represents all those activities in which language is a common metaphor. If art is in language then art itself may be the bridge across the void between linear writing and language.<sup>41</sup>

If art is metaphorised as text then the text within the artwork is a rhetorical and cultural phenomenon, theory *in concreto*, obscured by the aesthetic illusion but physically referential. The sculpture is 'thus in need of . . . completion, . . . the work is laid open for inspection, allowing us to see the precise relationship between its material form and its content, both overt and hidden.'<sup>42</sup> Special concepts and methods are used to search for meaning, by 'decoding', 'deconstructing' and 'demystifying', we lay bare the sculptor's materialised

<sup>38</sup> Derrida J, *Of Grammatology*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1974, p 35

<sup>39</sup> *Différance* invokes the double meaning in French from *différence*: the differing and deferring of meaning. Derrida discussed in Harland R, 'Derrida and language as Writing', *Superstructuralism*, Routledge, 1987, p 138

<sup>40</sup> see Weedon C, Tolson A & Mort F, 'Theories of Language & Subjectivity' in *Culture, Media, Language*, Routledge 1992, p 199

<sup>41</sup> Phillipson M, *Painting, Language and Modernity*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 106

<sup>42</sup> Heywood I, 'Primitive Practices: Against Visual Theory', in *Artists from Europe*, Leeds European Fine Art Symposium, Leeds Metropolitan University, 1994, p 99

intention. Only then can we decide what the object 'says'.

Artists confront and theorise issues, to constantly re-invent the critical-theoretical context of making art. The art of sculpture, the possibility of 'language' presented as sculpture, is a practical theorising, an engagement of, and within, language. Theorising leads up to the moment of actual practice. The act of making things is not for the actual objects independent of the artist, but for the relationships between phenomena that activates their space (what Stokes calls 'affinities' between objects<sup>43</sup>) and the relationship between these object connections and the artist.

The act of making celebrates sculpture not as a physical object but as a material entity. Each work forms itself into a relation with every other work, and with tradition itself, whilst questioning the very terms through which sculpture can present itself in the specificity of its context.

Every intelligent (artist) carries the whole culture of modern (art) in his head . . . everything (made) is both an homage and critique . . .<sup>44</sup>

The interactive stance of sculpture represented by the object and the respondent's proxemic space constitutes a somatic dialogue. The collaborative audience is active in a process of semantic emergence as special forms mark the difference between the work itself and other objects in a process of encoding and decoding. The sculpture as 'text' can function as a re-reading of modern practice, as an alternative reconstruction of critical and historical interpretations. Such 'discourses of justification'<sup>45</sup> have the function of authorising aesthetic judgements that constitute practice, but belong to a facet of practice separate from critical discourse. The expression of idea in art, 'the inner sound of things',<sup>46</sup> is divorced from materialism. The experience of responding to our haptic conditioning is, by definition, active, participatory and qualified by recollected experience.

The experience of 'language' within practice is both reflexive and rhetorical.

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<sup>43</sup> Stokes A, *The Writings of Adrian Stokes*, Vol II, Thames & Hudson, 1978 p 259

<sup>44</sup> Motherwell R, *Robert Motherwell*, Royal Academy of Art, 1978, p 7

<sup>45</sup> de Duve T, 1983, 'Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow & Blue?', *Artforum*, September, p 30

<sup>46</sup> Kandinski W & Marc F discussed in Phillipson M, *Painting, Language and Modernity*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985, p 61

Much contemporary art has become essentially a practical theorising and engagement with language, as modern practice is centred upon the artist's exploration of the re-presentation of 'experience'. Even though particular works exist only in their absolute concreteness and specificity, the very reflexivity of modern practice is concerned with a sense of inter-textualised exploration of the theoretical discourses of the sign, its texts and metaphorical shift to conceptualisation.

A deconstruction of the work has to distance itself from a technically rationalised or purified language and semiology, for sculpture is the intrinsic exploration of its own limits.<sup>47</sup> The sculpture represents the desire for a manifestation of a sculptural 'language' engaged in a practical, materialised search for itself.

If the poetic functions of art and literature are essentially associated with the view of the object relation then the reference to textuality is polyfunctional.<sup>48</sup> When its primary function is connotative and appellative, or when it instructs or questions, the 'text' (the meaningful content of sculpture) is predominantly *indexical*.<sup>49</sup> Indexicality is characteristic of realism because of the reference to persons, objects, and events in a (more or less) precise temporal, spatial, and contextual setting. From the point of view of its interpretant however, the text is incomplete when it has a predominantly expressive function, or when its structure is open to many interpretations. Sculpture as the sign of possibility, and not of factuality, is characteristic of a poetic content that is the essence of

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<sup>47</sup> Hartman discussed in Phillipson M, Painting, Language and Modernity, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 102

<sup>48</sup> Textual iconicity can have the form of an image, a diagram, or a metaphor. Visual poetry, depicting its objects in the form of its typography, and onomatopoeic poems are also examples of texts functioning as images. Peirce C S, Collected Papers 1931-58, vol 1, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 3

<sup>49</sup> Peirce defined the *index* in opposition to symbols and icons. The index is physically connected with its object, it focusses the interpreter's attention on the object, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with its connection to the object, except remarking it, after it is established. Peirce provided examples of this class of indices: a weathercock, a yardstick, a photograph, a rap at the door, a pointing finger, an appellative cry, and includes the field of linguistic deixis, including proper names and possessive, relative and personal pronouns. Peirce C S, Collected Papers 1931-58, vols 2 and 8, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, paras 254 and 341 respectively. Further reference to Peirce's and Morris' principal classes of signs is provided in the appendix.



fiction and imagination.<sup>50</sup> Descriptive texts, whether fictional or nonfictional, have the character of being informational, but nonassertive.<sup>51</sup>

For any system of signs to be intelligible an appropriate involvement of a respondent is essential for:

something is a sign only because it is interpreted as a sign of something by some interpreter . . . Semiotic(s), then, is not concerned with the study of a particular kind of object, but with ordinary objects in so far as they participate in semiosis.<sup>52</sup>

For Charles William Morris semiotics is a general theory of signs whether applicable to animals or men, linguistic or nonlinguistic systems. Semiosis, after Peirce, was defined by Morris as 'a sign process, that is, a process in which something is a sign to some organism'.<sup>53</sup> Whilst interpolating semiotic classifications by Peirce and Morris, it is important to recognise that paradigmatic relations in text and language system are relations of possible substitution in opposition to syntagmatic relations, which are relations of possible combinations of signs.<sup>54</sup> (See Appendix — Contextual Semiotic Details, for a definitive reference to the semiotics of Peirce and Morris)

Mental associations tell us that certain paradigmatic groups relate through conventional (contextual) affinity in an ordering of concepts, that is particularly relevant to the objectivity of sculpture. Barthes presents a Structuralist theory that employs a relationship between these metaphoric (paradigmatic) and

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<sup>50</sup> The *rheme* as a sign of qualitative possibility. Peirce C S, Collected Papers 1931-58, vol 2, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 250

<sup>51</sup> A *dicent* is defined by Peirce as a sign of actual existence. It is either true or false but does not directly furnish a reason for being so. Peirce C S, Collected Papers 1931-58, vol 2, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 251

<sup>52</sup> Morris C W, Foundations of the Theory of Signs, 1938 p 4.

<sup>53</sup> Drawing upon the semiotics of Peirce, Charles William Morris, whose influence on the development of semiotics was decisive in the 1930s and 40s, was also concerned with Mead's social behaviourism, American pragmatism, empiricism and Logical Positivism. Both broader and narrower than definitions outlined by Peirce, Morris propounded a theory of signs not rooted in a science of man but encompassing a study of signs of any kind, including language and signs processed by animals. Posner R, 'Charles Morris and the behavioural foundations of semiotics' in Kramen M, et al (Eds), Classics of Semiotics, Plenum, 1981, p 23-57

<sup>54</sup> A striking characteristic of language emphasised by Saussure finds units defined in relational terms, vis the syntagmatic (conventional relations with other items in a linguistic sequence) and the associative paradigm (contrasts with items which might replace in a sequence). Thus the phoneme is defined both by its difference to other phonemes and the ways in which it can combine with other phonemes to form words. The same is also true at a higher level, for to define a unit is to specify how it is related to other units which contrast with it and could replace it in sequences or with which it can combine to form sequences. See Cullen J, in Saussure F, Course in General Linguistics, Fontana, 1974, p XX

metonymic (syntagmatic) uses of non verbal signs.

	System (part of speech, noun, verb etc)	Syntagm (sentence structure)
Furniture	Set of stylistic varieties of a single piece of furniture (ie a bed)	Juxtaposition of the different pieces of furniture in the same space. Bed with wardrobe with table.
Architecture	Variations in style of a single elements in a building, various types of roof, balcony, hall etc.	Sequence of the details at the level of the whole building.
Food	Set of foodstuff which have affinities. Types of entree type of sweet.	Real sequence of dishes — the menu.

\* A restaurant menu actualises both planes: the horizontal reading of the entries, for instance, corresponds to the system, the vertical reading of the menu corresponds to the syntagm.

**The metaphoric (paradigmatic) and metonymic (syntactic) dyad<sup>55</sup>**

Systems are considered by Barthes to represent two different senses of meaning, viz language and component parts of speech — the sets of objects which correspond to the words which in verbal language function as nouns, verbs, adjectives etc. The assemblage of non-verbal signs is the schema termed syntagm and corresponds to a sentence in a verbal language or the contiguous elements of semantically active sculpture.

Whereas Barthes sets system and syntagm in opposition, corresponding contrasts proposed by Lévi-Strauss are metaphor and metonym<sup>56</sup>, or paradigmatic series and syntagmatic chain. Jakobson purports that metaphor (system, paradigm) relies upon the recognition of similarity and metonymy

<sup>55</sup> Barthes R, 'Elements of Semiology', 1967, Cape, p 63 discussed in Leach, Lévi-Strauss, Fontana, 1970, p 47

<sup>56</sup> The 'Crown stands for Sovereignty' being an example where the crown being uniquely associated with a particular syntagmatic chain of items, the uniform and the power of the office, the king, a signifier of a determined relationship with authority. Leach E, Lévi-Strauss, Fontana, 1970, p 48

(syntagm) on the recognition of contiguity.<sup>57</sup> A meaningful comparison between language and sculpture is very relevant here and must necessarily be concerned with metaphorical substitution of image for object and the metonymic or synecdochic<sup>58</sup> ordering of contiguous modes of creative expression. All sculptural artifacts are metaphorical by definition as apparent symbolism is recreated (translated) as concept. Metonymic symbolism relies upon syntagm being formed by the elements of the 'system' (language, code) and is recognisable as the whole by recognition of a part.

In the Jakobson-Lévi-Strauss metaphoric/metonymic distinction these two dimensions: the metaphoric/paradigmatic/harmonic/similarity axis, and the metonymic/syntagmatic/melodic/contiguous axis correspond to a Structuralist's definition of a perceived/conceived recognition of physical phenomena.<sup>59</sup>

Following Jakobson & Halle,<sup>60</sup> metonymy is the trope referring to the combination and association of signs in a chain of signifiers; concerned with the temporal/narrative/syntactic dimensions of writing and reading and is contrasted with metaphor, whose synchronic function is that of the substitution of one sign for another.

There is, in the perception of sculpture, a creative tension between the metaphoric appearance and the metonymic symbolism of sculpture, that brings the metonymy into view as intrinsic to the conceptualisation and realisation of the idea in art. Furthermore the spatial and material presentational functions of the sculptural gesture, the abbreviated material equivalent of the paralinguistic 'dash', is the synecdoche that indicates the possibility of a performing reference.

<sup>57</sup> Jakobson R & Halle M, *Fundamentals of Language*, Humanities Press New Jersey, 1971, p 81

<sup>58</sup> A synecdoche is a figure of speech in which some part stands for the whole or conversely the whole emphasises the particular. The sighting of *ten sails* refers to *ten sailing ships*. The *Australians* won, refers to a win by the Australian cricket *team*. As a visual device the synecdoche might be an *arrow* diagramme, a gestural pointing device. Furthermore, a pyramid is both an upwards pointing device, signifying a pharaoh's transcendental progress, and the basal extending into the ground and the recipient tomb of the preserved body.

<sup>59</sup> It is interesting that in an earlier style of anthropological analysis [Frazer J, *The Golden Bough, a Study in Comparative Religion*, vol I, London, 1898, p 12], refers to magical beliefs depending on two types of mental association: homeopathic magic depends on a law of similarity, and contagious magic which relies on contact. Frazer's homeopathic/contagious dichotomy is practically identical [according to Leach, *Lévi-Strauss*, 1970, p 49] to the Jakobson—Lévi-Strauss metaphoric/metonymic distinction.

<sup>60</sup> Jakobson R & Halle M, *Fundamentals of Language*, New Jersey Humanities Press, 1971

It is here that we see the primacy of the sculptural idea being found in a purely sculptural 'language'. Sculpture writes into being visual metaphors beyond sight, to constitute a visible relationship as the content of the art returns to the idea. Art's metaphors must have a temporal dimension and if sculpture is to exemplify creation, its metaphors must make reference to process.

Ontologically, we cannot avoid a sense of the contrasted relation between metaphor and metonymy that defines the fundamental telos of the work of art, corresponding closely to the model proposed by Jakobson & Halle cited above and others in textual analysis.

Phillipson suggests that there is a:

relation between the artist, the work and respondent, that places the metaphor of the work of art in relation or tension with the metonymic processes through which the metaphor's sense is itself constituted . . . Metonymy is the work of combination whose outcome is a series of metaphors.<sup>61</sup>

Yet the metaphoric moment in which the work is somehow 'summed up' can only be arrived at through the metonymic movements revealed through an extended reading of the art, and this tension is one of the basic constituents of the work's concrete life. The unity sought would be within the work as metaphor, while its achievement arises through the process of combination (metonymy). This unity is always ultimately the unity of a process not a thing, the process of genesis itself — the ontological function. The process is the function of the work of art to metaphorise and evoke; it is itself firstly an idea.

In the physical world an object is experienced in relationship with other objects and the environment. It is that contiguity and not an intrinsic association per se, which is the parallel of Saussure's (and later Frege's) denial that any noun in language has a direct reference to a tangible reality. *Le parole* relates to the unique perception of the image in art, but the conception of the art is akin to *langue*, it is the medium of language. The physical properties of sculpture triggers a dialectic. Hence the shape and structure of a sculpture can be so arranged as to invite an imaginary extension into meaningful recollections of experience brought together as concepts.

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<sup>61</sup> Phillipson M, Painting, Language and Modernity, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 91

The mutual dependance of part on whole and whole on part is characteristic of language and sculpture. It is what makes language learnable and by knowing only a finite vocabulary an unlimited access is possible. Language is therefore 'creative', enabling unlimited thought.<sup>62</sup> The Fregean idea, 'that it is only in the context of the whole sentence that a word has a definite meaning and that the meaning of any sentence must be derivable from the meanings of its parts', indicates that the meaning does not belong to the word in isolation, but consists in the potentiality to contribute to a completed, synergetic 'thought'.<sup>63</sup> It is because sentences can express thoughts that the words which compose them have meaning. The meaning of the whole must be wholly determined by the various potentialities belonging to its parts.

This desire for 'language' embodies the physical properties of sculpture, so arranged to present the possibilities of association for the engagement with the respondent's construction of a meaningful content. But the abstract expression of idea in sculpture is beyond the material disposition and there is no question of the primacy of form, because form is dependent on inner necessity which may lead to either 'real' or 'abstract' forms. Form is, therefore, an indifferent matter in principle because it is always only the vehicle for, and the product of, a sculpture's rationale.

The experience of responding to sculpture is active and participatory. Sculpture is the creative vehicle that can be described as the signal for a material performance, an ideated realisation of a vehicular presence that stimulates imaginative response. To be interlocutory there is the sense that all discourse must be of an organic kind; that it can not be imposed from outside and can only be liberated from an inner experience. The hypothesis is that such a liberation comes from the individual artist's metaphysical condition in which matter emerges to show itself to be identified with all the interactive, internal and external characteristics of the work.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Scruton R, *Short History of Modern Philosophy*, Ark, 1981, p 249-50

<sup>63</sup> Scruton R, *Short History of Modern Philosophy*, Ark, 1981, p 249-50

<sup>64</sup> Celant G, 'La materia e la sua ombra', *Tony Cragg*, Charta, 1994, p 16

The 'seeing-in',<sup>65</sup> appropriate to sculpture permits simultaneous attention to what is represented (the subject of the sculpture) and to the medium's sustaining features of this perception. This perceptual/conceptual duality enables or amplifies a viewer's recognition and subsequent heightened experience of the subject. One may see in the sculpture a particular quality of the subject depicted.<sup>66</sup>

The sensitive spectator identifies with a residual condition just outside of the skin of the sculpture, considered as a three-dimensional occupancy of real space. According to Wollheim<sup>67</sup> 'seeing-in' requires a necessary exercise of somatic imagination and appears to be essential to a proper visual appreciation of sculpture. Even what seems to be the most seemingly immediate experience, is not a direct reflection of the outside world, but a contact made with what has already been inscribed, unconsciously, in the memory. Hence perception is forever divided from the presence of 'the things themselves'.

The so-called 'thing itself' is always already a representamen shielded from the simplicity of intuitive evidence.<sup>68</sup>

To view sculpture's relation to the world is to reveal an engagement with its 'language'. The practice of art confronts the respondent with the radical question of interpretation, for art is the absolute concrete practice of deconstruction and reconstruction:

The creative act is not performed by the artist alone . . . the spectator brings it into contact with the external world by deciphering and

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<sup>65</sup> 'Seeing-in' is a concept adapted from Wollheim R, *Art and its Objects*, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p 210-3

<sup>66</sup> The seeing-in appropriate to sculpture does not require localisation: for example, a viewer may see an attribute like dignity in the statue without there being any answer to the question of exactly whereabouts in the statue this quality is to be found. Another mark of representational seeing is that the object of seeing-in can be given not only by name or description but also by a sentential clause. Wollheim R, *Art and its Objects*, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p 210-3

<sup>67</sup> Wollheim suggests that the perception of theatre is relevant to an understanding of how we appropriately perceive sculpture. [Wollheim R, *Thread of Life*, Harvard University Press, 1984, p 62-83, also Wollheim R, *Painting as an Art*, Princetown University Press, 1987, p 103-30] What seems to be most relevant in the account of theatre is that the 'empathic audience' is engaged in the three essential features of imagining a point of view (adopting the protagonist's perspective), plenitude (imagining the protagonist's experiencings), and cogency (finding oneself in the cognitive and affective states in which the mental states one imagines the protagonist to have, would leave one). Vance deduces that Wollheim refers to the involvement of an unrepresented internal spectator. [Vance R, 'Sculpture' in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol 35 no 3, July 1995, p 224]

<sup>68</sup> Derrida's interpretation of Peirce. Derrida J, *Writing and Difference*, p 224, discussed in Harland R, *Superstructuralism*, Routledge, p 144

interpretation and thus adds a contribution to the creative act.<sup>69</sup>

In the viewer's response to the intention represented by the work there is a need for active collaboration, to re-construct the work of art by being drawn into a re-enactment of this deconstructing.

The sculpture transmits a wild state<sup>70</sup> of inert matter, into significance. To fully appreciate is to imagine re-enacting for ourselves the decisions which led to the specific products and as an analogy with writing refers to the differing-deferring of the idea conceived originally in language itself.<sup>71</sup>

**Signifying and semantic functions as a 'criterion of aesthetic quality'.<sup>72</sup>**

Each work seeks to constitute itself as a metaphor for the coming-to-be of relation, of signifier and significance. There exists the impossibility of any absolute reproduction of an expression, except through the metaphors that constitute expression. The form does not serve as a direct object, but an element of the language which relies upon human expression, as it is directed from person to person. Hence the work is constituted by organic forms which are in themselves only elements in a language of difference, through the metaphors that concretely constitute expression between human beings.

This desire for a completed expression of intention which constitutes the work, is another name for the movements of differing and deferring in which the origin of significance is itself re-presented. The work is both the gap and a leap, it is the vital link in a chain of communication which is paradoxically incomplete, because the work of art itself is the penultimate link which provides for completion by the respondent. The move from intention to realisation writes into being a work whose significance lies precisely in its constitution, its bringing forth of significance, and recalls the originating of significance itself.

Denotation has been defined by Barthes as a product of the connotative

<sup>69</sup> Sanouillet M & Paterson E, 'The Creative Act' of 1957, in The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp, Thames and Hudson, 1975, p 140

<sup>70</sup> Levi-Strauss' raw state: à l'état brut, referred to in The Raw and the Cooked: New Work in Clay in Britain, Museum of Modern Art catalogue, Oxford, 1993

<sup>71</sup> Differance in Derrida [Speech and Phenomena, Evanston Northwestern University Press, 1973] discussed in Phillipson M, Painting, Language and Modernity, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 110

<sup>72</sup> Dufrenne M, p 4 of this section.

process:

Denotation is not the first meaning . . . it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations (that one which seems both to establish and to close the reading), the superior myth by which the text pretends to return to the nature of language.<sup>73</sup>

In sculpture the object as metaphor is the experience of relationship. The work is the inchoate knowledge of relationship. Identification, that is the object metaphor, points to the artist's experience of the world reflected within himself, whilst the work constitutes the meaning of experience. Each work of art signifies itself as a unique representation of the relationship between an intended meaning (or expression) and representation of itself, as the untranslatable referent trigger.

Paradoxically it is the essence of a sought after, metaphorical unity, that can only be approached in sculpture through the play of concrete differences of shape, surface and relationship. Hence the semantic function of sculpture is considered to be a criterion of its aesthetic quality:

Every text or speech is a display, a re-presentation of origin. There can be no 'presencing' of origin, only re-presentations.<sup>74</sup>

The coming to 'presence' of the communicative concept, the coming-to-be of meaning in the re-presentation of phenomena is fundamentally reliant upon metaphor. Metaphorisation brings some 'thing' from one realm to another, holding the two together in its creative transferring, whilst holding them apart through its deferring work: 'We might say that Language 'languages' through metaphor.'<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, a shift from 'presence' towards metaphor enables us to move from the origination of meaning, towards meaningful presentation. The deferral of 'presence' through a relay of metaphors raises issues of relation so crucial for the work of art. The works of art, as the exploration of relation through their equivocation of our empirical assertions about the presence and *a priori* concept

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<sup>73</sup> Hjelmslev's concept of connotation is key to Barthes' semiotic analysis of cultural images. In a simplified version of the glossematic sign model Barthes defined denotation in the context of a connotative process. Barthes R, *S/Z*, Hill and Wang, 1974, p 8

<sup>74</sup> Derrida discussed in Phillipson M, *Painting, Language and Modernity*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 108

<sup>75</sup> Phillipson M, *Painting, Language and Modernity*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 111



of things, open us to the metaphoricity of 'being'.

The sculpture is never fully present and is always deferred through metaphors, that is through the activation of concepts within language, out of the palpable actuality of presented material. This presence in the art and indeed communication through language is not captured in the work itself, but rather by a display of the creator's metaphoric relationship to the work. As phenomena, sculptures are not things but works of art that are represented, textualised in specific metaphors through which the respondent evolves a relationship with the trace.

Trace is nothing real, not a mark, sign or index. It is the movement of *différance* itself. The trace is where relationship is formed and out of which, the oppositions emerging in the transformation of presence are derived.<sup>76</sup>

The association between art, writing and language includes within the art work an image or representation of an image, which like a universal writing 'appears from the moment the threshold of pure pictography is crossed'.<sup>77</sup>

Sculpture is capable of reproducing all sensible being, it is a sort of universal pictographic writing, yet sculpture is always created in the acknowledgment of the impossibility of absolute representation. It is and is not, the thing that it represents and owes its metaphoric life to its 'abstract' conceptualisation of thought models. Art is the exemplar and the explorer of that nagging doubt about the impossibility of a 'transcendental signifier' for:

The referent, the signified, of every act of meaning, be it speech, writing, [sculpture], gesturing or whatever, is always itself another signifier.<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, if writing affects speech, and writing is to speech what a signifier is to a signified, then it follows that the signifier is a constitutive

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<sup>76</sup> The science of the operation of trace is what Derrida institutes as *Grammatology* — the science of writing before speech. In *grammatology*, the question is not how writing as text might be the concretisation of language but rather: "How language is a possibility founded on the general possibility of writing." Derrida 1977, discussed in Phillipson M, *Painting, Language and Modernity*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 52

<sup>77</sup> Derrida J, *Of Grammatology*, 1977, p 283, discussed in Phillipson M, *Painting, Language and Modernity*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 115

<sup>78</sup> Derrida, 1981, p 28 discussed in Phillipson M, *Painting, Language and Modernity*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985

function of the signified.<sup>79</sup>

Any sense of cognition encountered on a metonymic dimension through specific associations, encourages a reflexive interpretation, for a reading is required to confront interpretation as a product of the respondent's own methods of theorising. Language and sculpture are treated as reciprocal metaphors as the respondent searches for exemplification of ideas — concrete markers. The sculpture, itself, is unique and constitutes itself as its specific 'language' mode. It is also a condition of that 'language' that it is infinitely translatable.

The artist is a profound dialectician who develops through endotopic and exotopic relationships, a sense of phenomenon rather than appearance or semblance. A sense of totality enters into the artist's conception of the natural object and a more physical awareness of the object is born. A visible penetration and intuitive inferences leads to a synthesis of outward sight and inward vision. The sculpture is a metaphor for the resonances of this relationship. Although art is palpable and claims the signification of a material state there is also a sense of anti-retinalism as we find that the sculpture is a sign, a sign utterly dependant upon the work of the reader. There is a displacement of artistic intention that allows the reader to create dialectic possibilities. Hence, it is not the empiricist's insistence on the primacy of sensation over language, but rather through metaphorising the sculpture as 'language', there is a mediation of the relations between the sculpture, language, with the 'sign'.

The normative organisation of this material condition becomes intelligible as semantic references reveal themselves within a meaningful relationship. It is only paradigmatically that the metaphorical functions of sculpture achieves a significant order of communication comparable with the cognitive and discursive functions of language.

This section opened with an historical denial of a correspondence linking sculpture and language, being defined as exclusive and dissimilar entities with

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<sup>79</sup> see Weedon C, Tolson A & Mort F, 'Theories of Language & Subjectivity' in Hall S et al (Eds) Culture, Media, Language, Routledge 1992, p 198

differing functions and expressive presentations. A limited, structuralist analysis of verbal language was compared with the then current appreciation of the art.

In this section a reading of the communicative qualities of contemporary sculpture is proposed to be inextricably interwoven with and indeed can only function through, the cognitive and discursive functions of language. The next section demonstrates that the dialectic processes, rhetorical purpose and indeed the very telos of sculpture has evolved from a representational form of expression, to a formal aesthetic abstraction and on to a conceptual ideation; engaging levels of critical translation and conceptual cognition. The intellectual processes of metaphorising ideas are reviewed next in a reading of Tony Cragg's work and the studio project. These will establish that the conceptual functions of contemporary sculpture, justifies, and operates, in a meaningful comparison with language.

### Section Three

#### Cragg's Sculpture — an Exemplar of the Art/Language Homology

This section identifies and analyses the linguistic mechanisms of access in a reading of Tony Cragg's practice to identify the homologous nature of a 'language' of sculpture.

Tony Cragg's creative output from 1969 to the present is remarkably prodigious and innovatory. The extraordinary range of his sculpture demonstrates a radical evolution of complex communication strategies that present content through an inventive use of diverse imagery. During the 1970s 'ready formed' entities and significant materials were assembled as Cragg adjoined associative fragments in a process of constructing meaning that superseded Duchamp's concept of the semantically charged *objet trouvé* with a dialectical practice of *bricolage*. In the 1980s and '90s his work focused upon a materialisation of ideas presented as evocative objects and specific material associations. The alchemic and semantic qualities inherent in the physicality of the later sculpture provoke further reference to scientific cum. industrial strategies and commodity values, all in a form of discursive communication that is essentially sculptural.

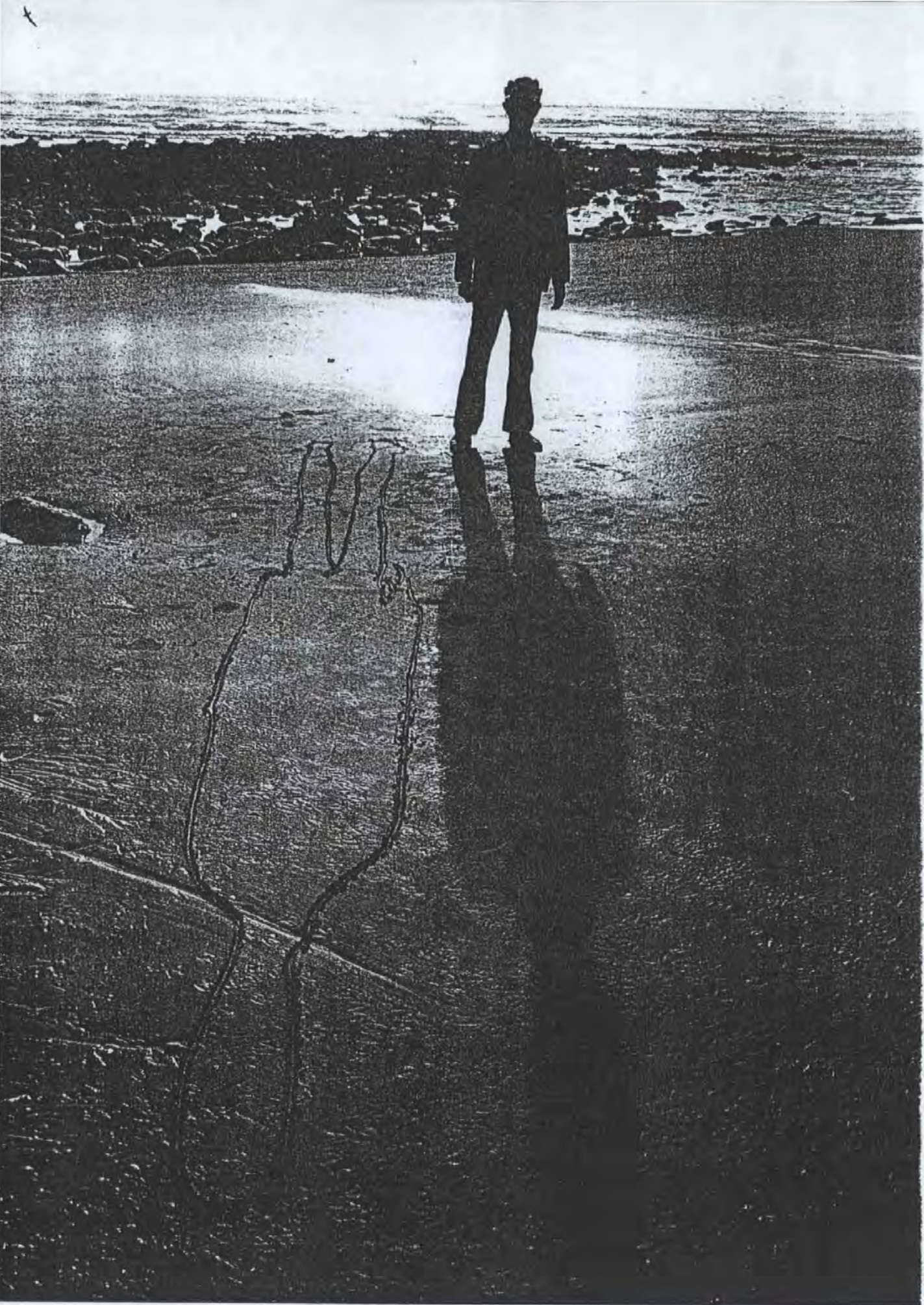
This thesis proposes that such a diversity of working procedures in which Cragg makes reference to social, anthropological and ecological matters, is indicative of a reflexive system of semantic communication. Linguistic reference is relevant as Cragg's art is a 'readable', rhetorical system primarily concerned with perception, conception, cognition and our metaphysical responses to his modes of sculptural communication:

There's an incredibly sensitive language available for dealing with the world, one that is centred in vision. In its most elementary form, vision is just a survival mechanism. We need to read people and animals very clearly; the other thing we need to read very carefully is landscape. That's why we have apparently inexhaustible funds of responses to the human figure and to the landscape . . . My interest in the physical world, in this object world, is survivalistic at one level, but it will also lead me to dreams, to fantasy, and to speculation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cragg T, interviewed by Lynne Cooke, *Tony Cragg*, Hayward, Arts Council, 1987, p 11





1 Tony Cragg, *Untitled* 1971, photograph

In responding to the physical world through his artifacts Cragg indicates the potential for a wider, contextual dialogue between the artist and a material communication. A search for the narrative in the sculpture starts in a reading of the complex, visual referents emanating from the fundamental sources that motivate his distinctive practice:

The whole activity is governed by three thematic areas of which the most important one is that of my relationship to the natural world. Given that the natural world is still the ultimate scale against which my aesthetic appreciation of the world at large or, rather, not just my aesthetic appreciation but my whole understanding, is determined, the organic world is the base. Nature is the measure and thus, in a sense, the background, but I also want to have a relationship with the objects and materials that are around me. And this, which includes the ever-growing, non-visual information world as well, is the second area. The third constitutes itself out of the first two. It has to do with the way in which functionalism shapes the man-made world.<sup>2</sup>

This classification forms a useful basis for the identification of working paradigms and the following analysis will focus upon key works to evaluate:

(3.1) Pluralist modes of communication exposing the artist's relationship to the natural world; (3.2) The metaphorical identity of objects and materials.

Both categories are complementary and cross-reference a practice that draws from the physicality of the objective world in a mental process of shaping awareness. Cragg's concerns about functionalism and the visual politics of commodification reveal the artist to be the medium for the interpretation of ideas that are formed by, transposed, and communicated as a rich, visual 'language' of objective materialism.

### 3.1 Pluralist Models of the Natural, Material World

An early work, *Untitled* 1971 [Illustration 1], is a photograph of Cragg standing on a beach against the sun so that a shadow of his figure is projected on to the sand. Alongside this shadow is an outline, drawn into the sand, that suggests a silhouette of another shadow cast by his figure.

This work is of emblematic value because photography is a technological document which is determined by human interpretation. The photograph

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<sup>2</sup> Cragg T, interviewed by Lynne Cooke, *Tony Cragg*, Hayward, Arts Council, 1987, p 11



automatically records all things exposed to the camera, yet this configuration of the artist, the shadow, and the drawing of the silhouette, is itself a solipsistic reference to a pluralist medium. The shadow and the drawing are dual emanations from the image of the artist reunited in the homogeneity of the photographic material. In the photograph, Cragg's shadow is linked to the individuality of his image, but it also makes reference to a superficial disruption of the environment and the photographic realisation of that image.

The photograph is the threshold, framing responses to this visual situation. It presents an inflexive content that suggests the possibility of a reading beyond visual appearance, in a process that asserts the metaphorical nature of representation. By uniting the image and the visual presentations of matter, Cragg amplifies the significance of the tension between the real and the represented. The photographic image exposes the duality of that which exists and that which is made, the consciously experienced and the subconsciously known:

Cragg turns to art to understand the internal plurality of reality, be it in objects or the images of events. He orients himself to determine an optical language that comprehends the multitude of visual situations which emanate from the analysis of phenomena that are charged with that energy connected with the existence of things.<sup>3</sup>

There is a sense of a manifestation of the Platonic shadow,<sup>4</sup> of a concept of reality beyond that which is seen, of a disbelief in finite entities, that transcends the physicality initially perceived as the substance of this art. The photograph establishes one level of access to the environmental performance. It provides a partial view of its meaningful purpose but this image is only the initial clue to readings of the polysemic nature of the materials presented. The image of Cragg's figure and his shadow are extensions of the image-making metaphor, inviting a metonymic continuation of the narrative. The play of light, the position of the figure and the cast shadow, all refer to the relationship of physical proximity. The line scratched into the sand is both gestural and iconic. It makes

<sup>3</sup> Celant G, 'La Materia e la sua ombra', *Tony Cragg*, Charta, Milan, 1994, p 14

<sup>4</sup> Plato envisages a limiting situation in which a view of the shadow of things unseen is the only contact with reality. See references to the Cave and Shadows in the Dialogues of Plato, *The Republic*, book 7, trans. Jowett, Sphere Books, 1970

reference to the image as a drawing, a synecdochic device that allows the notion of a silhouette to suggest another shadow. The fiction of that shadowy association is ultimately a *presentamen*<sup>5</sup>, it is a function of the cognitive language of the discovered, yet already known, realisation of the image content. In this respect the photograph is picto-ideographical and a picture 'language' that uses imagery and the gestures of object proximity in place of words. It is a discursive symbolism.<sup>6</sup>

The photograph presents a view of a specific place, the artist's stance and allusive drawing, but Cragg's art is only partly represented in this image. The rendering of a complex of signs is incomplete for it is like the vocable that requires a reading and a response to be interlocutory. The expressive content of this art in which metaphors and symbols are the articulation of concepts, is primarily presented as a reading of signals.<sup>7</sup> Signals indicate the objects and situation, here the act of photography and the actuality of Cragg's pose with the shadow and silhouette. Interpretation enables a conception of the ideas that it presents, but as with any engagement with language, the viewer's response is qualified by the existing knowledge that enables associative connections to be made, that activates cognizance of the art content.

In this piece the reading of the context, the casting of shadow and the nature of drawing, is part of a continuity that engages the viewer's imagination in a creative discourse about the ideographical vehicle and the access to *a priori* thought models. A reading of the photographic surface implies that an hypostatizing process conceives of image and that the logical interpretation of recognisable signifiers is, of itself, a manifestation of an initial phase of syntactical cognition. Subsequent phases involve an empathy with the

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<sup>5</sup> Signs are not a class of objects. They exist only in the mind of the interpreter as a sign. Thus the sign has a cognitive effect on its interpreter. The *representamen* is the perceptible object, functioning as a sign. Labelled by other semioticians as: a symbol (Ogden & Richards), a sign vehicle (Morris), a signifier (Saussure), an expression (Hjelmslev), it conveys into the mind something separate from its own material nature. Peirce C, Collected Papers 1931-58, Harvard University Press, vol 2 para 231

<sup>6</sup> See Langer S, Philosophy in a New Key, Harvard University Press, 1960, p 97

<sup>7</sup> The term 'signal' is preferred to 'sign' after Morris C, 'Signs, Language and Behaviour' (1946), Writings on the General Theory of Signs, Mouton The Hague, p 77-398, leaving 'sign' to cover both 'signal' and 'symbol'.





2 Tony Cragg, *Houses in Fjord* 1985, stone installed near Oslo

processes of Cragg's presentation being recognised as related to paralinguistic presentation of image and ultimately with the denotative functions of knowledge revealed by language itself.

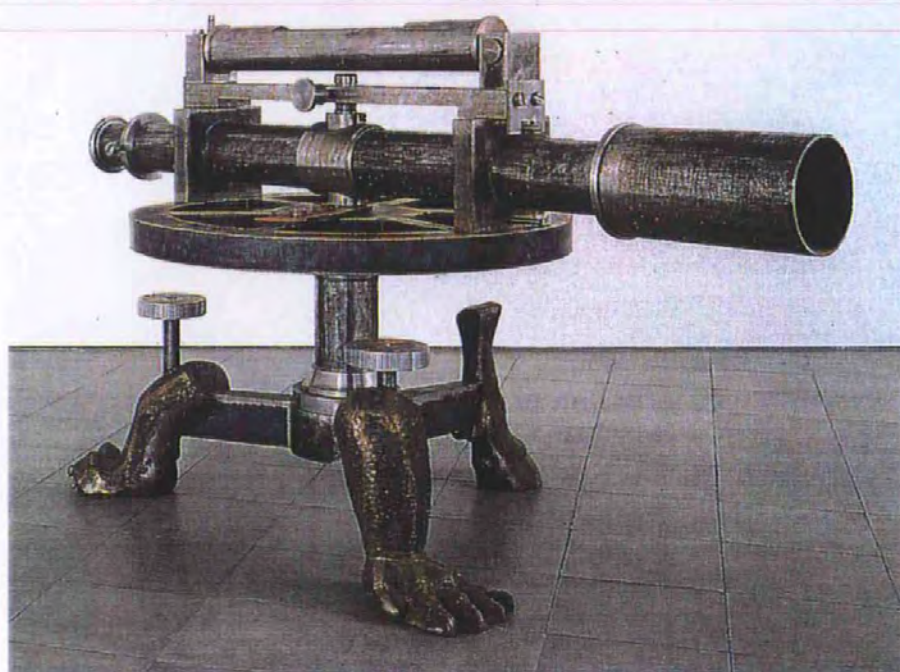
Sculpturally more physical but paradoxically less visual is *Houses in Fjord*, 1985 [Illustration 2], in which cut stone slabs are installed near Oslo. Precise, iconic shapes are reminiscent of 'Monopoly' property counters and Richard Wentworth's emblematic allusions to 'home'.<sup>8</sup> Partly submerged, off shore, these stylised symbols of a precarious lifestyle appear to risk obliteration. A different reading might reflect upon primeval life originating from the oceans; the shore symbolising an evolutionary interface. The inverted, wedge-shaped blocks might equally refer to fossilised ships, the great bulk transporters laid-up in the sheltered Fjords awaiting favourable economic trading times.

This piece epitomises the confluence of the metaphorical functions of representation and the distinctive art of Cragg's sculptural performance. The physicality of the sculpture is, in itself, a poetic material reference to the factual conditions of its manufacture and installatory environment. It is a symbol that suggests an engagement with the imagination for there is something about the appearance of the piece that anticipates recognition as sculpture. In this context of an art object the emergence of the nascent idea is revealed in a metonymic process of connecting signifiers with thought models. To interpret the sculptural work is to engage with the many levels of metaphorically transposed symbolism and to identify the intrinsic connotations that become the vehicle of communicated meaning. The dialectic set up between the materialised performance of the sculpture and its anti-retinal chain of meaning

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<sup>8</sup> A reading of Cragg's image motifs frequently appear to refer to, or assimilate, a symbolic lexiconography shared with contemporaries. The 'home' symbol regularly occurs in Wentworth's sculptures eg. *Cave* 1986, *House and Home* 1986 and *Range* 1991. Furthermore, the recurring form of Wentworth's 'house' is occasionally inverted or tilted to 'sink' into a surface. Children encipher minimal house forms, Wentworth's 'ready made' of the imagination' similarly refer to a subconscious concept of the residual cave-like function of the abode. See Warner M, *Richard Wentworth*, Thames & Hudson, 1991, p 9. Cragg denies a connection with Wentworth's use of the symbol but makes reference to Joel Shapiro's *Untitled* 1974 and Hubert Kiecol's house like image as examples of a previous use of the motif. Cragg's linguistic pre-occupation of this image presented in another work entitled *Tun* 1989, refers to the German word for shelter rather than house, *Interview with Tony Cragg at Dean Clough, December, 1996*, p 101





3 Tony Cragg, *Terris Novalis* 1992, steel

is Cragg's construction of meaning. Wittgenstein's analogy of the game of chess and the contextual signification of a word reminds us that a realisation of meaning only occurs within the logical matrix of defined possibilities.<sup>9</sup>

Not . . . that the art object is the symbol of the art idea. It is its embodiment. The relation of idea to object is directly equivalent to the relation of colour, or material, or scale to object . . . the idea achieves or fails to achieve credence and significance from their relation.<sup>10</sup>

*Houses in Fjord* retains the essence of something that is to be rediscovered in the artistic matter that conveys the relationship of the idea and its representation. A sort of parallel identification is created by transposing visual appearance as Cragg develops a rhetorical phenomenon that advances our cognition of the physical world. The processes of knowing, naming and conceptualisation out of this emblematic 'image', acknowledges fundamental relationships that link components of the sculpture with response, recognition and the ordering of mental constructs.<sup>11</sup> Since the very act of making sculpture is a process of intellectualisation, Cragg's use of indigenous materials in the realisation of specific iconic forms implies a 'reduction' of nature to the configuration of reference markers in the anticipation of linking experience with knowledge:

There is a need to know both objectively and subjectively more about the subtle, fragile relationship between us, objects, images and essential natural processes. It is very important to have first order experiences — seeing, touching, smelling, hearing — with objects and images and to let that experience register.<sup>12</sup>

A further interpretation of the dynamic nature of the artist's symbolic search is seen in *Terris Novalis* 1992 [Illustration 3], in which heavy machinery heralds an expanding awareness that reaches out to a knowledge of the universe from the centre of the sculpture. This sculpture equivocally presents a

<sup>9</sup> The meaning of any word in language is determined by grammatical rules. Using a sentence is analogous to making a move in chess where the significance lies not in a particular move but its circumstance within the overall concept of the game of chess. Such a move is comparable to making an utterance in language. See Fann K, *Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1969, p 73

<sup>10</sup> Craig-Martin M, 1970 'Tate Gallery Report, Acquisitions 1968-70', in Gresty H, *1965-1972 - When Attitudes Became Form*, Kettles Yard, Cambridge, 1984, p 37

<sup>11</sup> see Gresty H, *1965-1972 - When Attitudes Became Form*, Kettles Yard, Cambridge, 1984, p 37-8

<sup>12</sup> Tony Cragg: *Documenta 7*, Catalogue, Kassel, 1982

juxtaposition of recognisable elements and refers to meanings beyond the evocative, multi-layered relationships of fantastic objects. The equipment of science, a telescope or theodolite, is mechanically calibrated for definitive measurement, yet the supports are formed of the legs of gigantic beasts. The claws, hooved leg, reptilian limb and the inverted primate's 'hand' are all visual gestures pointing to a Darwinian reconstruction of evolution and the cultivation of knowledge.

The role of this enlarged reproduction of scientific instruments is concerned with denotation, with naming, fixating, of perceiving objects being transported to the experience of metaphoricalisation of abstract concepts. As with science there is a fundamental concern with hypostatization and with the systematic ordering of rational entities but in this visual sequence of the evolutionary process the formative role of language is yet to be revealed:

The principal function of language is generally said to be communication . . . it is best to admit that language is primarily a vocal actualisation of the tendency to see reality symbolically.<sup>13</sup>

Language is conceptual, and conception is the frameworking of perception, but as a symbolic system it does not substitute for direct experience, it completely interpenetrates with it. 'Language is heuristic . . . in that its forms predetermine for us certain modes of observation and interpretation . . .'<sup>14</sup> There is a close correspondence between words, concepts and things or situations. 'Without words our imagination cannot retain distinct objects and their relation'.<sup>15</sup> It is as though the primary world of reality is first mastered as a terminological expression of structured thought patterns:

The transformation of experience into concepts, not the elaboration of signals and symptoms, is the motive of language.<sup>16</sup>

The vision and the liberation of a poetic and ironic language that begins as *Terris Novalis* is formed of a consciousness, in which that language is neither

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<sup>13</sup> Sapir, discussed in Langer S, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, 1960, p 109

<sup>14</sup> Sapir, Article 'Language' p 157 Macmillan Co, discussed in Langer S, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, 1960, p 126

<sup>15</sup> Langer S, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, 1960, p 126

<sup>16</sup> Langer S, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, 1960, p 126

represented entirely as subject or object, nor where an interpretive process itself manifestly determines the constructions of the ideas. The gestures and the energy which characterise this sculpture revises the concept of an artform that refers to a primitive and archetypal subsumption of the physical, recognisable data. The multi-layered interdependence of such information remains, almost as if matter and the object of its presenting were accepted as pure discourse.

The claws, hoof, hand and telescope together articulates, in the manner of scientific classification, the extent to which traces or elements left by nature can be tied to the common experience of discovery and gathering.<sup>17</sup> It is this focus on the dialectic of the scientific concept and the natural model that informs all of his subsequent work:

There are three parameters, three identifiable spaces, three ways of finding a material, an object or image I want to use, three ways of starting, or finishing a work. While I am working, I feel that the work relates either to the materials I use or, to the objects or, image it represents.<sup>18</sup>

In these works the viewer is always conscious of a linguistic physicality that Cragg calls 'materialism':

Materialism is like a dirty word because it is associated with money, with working inside one or another of the commercial systems. But in fact materialisation also means something else. Just as there is a written literary language so there is also a visual material language, and this language is as sensitive as, if not more sensitive than, the spoken word.<sup>19</sup>

The sculptures present a reflexive performance with materialness, the gathering of matter. Physical qualities portray the origins of the materials used and their intrinsic performance in the hands of the sculptor releases a chain of associations that refers indirectly to environmental resources, ecological politics and commodity consumption:

Only in the area of natural philosophy and art is there the possibility of a productivity leading to a reflection and expression that confer a different level of responsibility on the making of objects, away from the demands of functionalism.

In relatively recent times, artists have liberated an immense vocabulary of materials, objects, environments, concepts, and activities from the non-

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<sup>17</sup> Cragg talks about these works as scientific tools that are applied to the concept of improving nature, *Interview with Tony Cragg at Dean Clough, December 1996*, p 101

<sup>18</sup> Tony Cragg interviewed by Demosthène Davvetas in *Tony Cragg, ARC, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris*, 1985 p 32

<sup>19</sup> 'Tony Cragg interviewed by Lynne Cooke', *Tony Cragg*, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1987, p 16

art world, for use as parts of a rich language capable of expressing the most complicated ideas and emotions. The nomination of banal objects and actions as carriers of important information — the recognition that every object is accompanied by a world of associations and references — has been of great significance. Without this, a soup can remains a soup can, a fluorescent light bulb just a light bulb, and a chair with fat on it remains just that. But with this recognition, we find objects offering up meanings and emotions relating to their literal form, their metaphysics, their poetry, and their emergence from the natural world, or from their origins in nature.<sup>20</sup>

In Cragg's work a sculptural 'language' exists in the resonance between ideas, the dialogue of a material performance, the referencing of image symbolism and the semantics of related object values. The 'materialism' of presentation embodies an integral physical condition that marks a coming together in the matching of prescribed sense data and implied associations. These focus upon the fundamental matter itself being restructured by a definitive purpose. In this respect the material substance is active, its presence affects the representation and thereby the purpose of the presentation. The coming together of disparate objects and fragments activates a lexiconographical and semantic encapsulation for Cragg's work is concerned with awareness in an art experience that is like that of the child's who:

is going to have to learn and to consider what possibilities it has for change as opposed to changing what it has around it, to consider the qualities and the properties internal to itself, thereby changing the demands and the expectations it will place on its exterior circumstances.<sup>21</sup>

### **3.2 Language, Thought and Matter**

#### **— the Metaphorical Condition of Objects and Matter**

Cragg's dialectical approach favours the disorganisation of an autonomous vision as he exploits the heterogeneous, the marginal, the insignificant, and the disorganised, to create a complex rather than a singular composition. His imaginative use of divers objects and material qualities embraces a significant

<sup>20</sup> 'Tony Cragg' 1987, *Artforum*, March 1988 p 120-2

<sup>21</sup> Saltz J, *Tony Cragg: 51st Carnegie International 1991*, Carnegie Museum of Art catalogue, Pittsburgh, 1991

practice classified by Lévi-Strauss as *bricolage*.<sup>22</sup>

Bricolage 'collages' ideas and identities, utilising readily available artifacts and readable fragments, to espouse linguistic thought packages. It is an anonymous art devoid of technical or craft handwriting for the bricoleur is a cunningly direct communicator who shops for ingredients that are already charged with content and speaking. Lévi-Strauss contends<sup>23</sup> that bricolage always refers to some exceptional action that demands attention and in that sense the bricoleur is the jack-of-all-trades who responds to extraneous events, to the effect of external causes, with an heightened awareness of the situation. Furthermore, the bricoleur's purpose is analogous to an innate capacity for speculation that mirrors *a priori* scientific method, that is, the evaluation of a knowledge of causes and effects obtained by deduction without resort to sensory experience. Bricolage is, in fact, the opposite approach to the traditional strategies of empirical crafting of objects in a laborious reactive dialogue with the manipulated material.

The model offered by bricolage also indicates potential analogies that cross-reference a reading of the sculpture, paralinguistics and the conceptual conventions of language systems. It is proposed that the communicative purpose of bricolage classifies Cragg's semantic and dialectic practice. The term bricolage has been frequently applied to his use of plastic fragments but in this study a wider application encapsulates the use of all meaningful identities, including evocative material qualities and recognisable objects. Cragg's improvisation with a seemingly arbitrary, heterogeneous means available, defines the actual product as one of potentially several possible relationships made up of ready-formed polysemic elements:

The bricoleur does not subordinate each task to the availability of raw

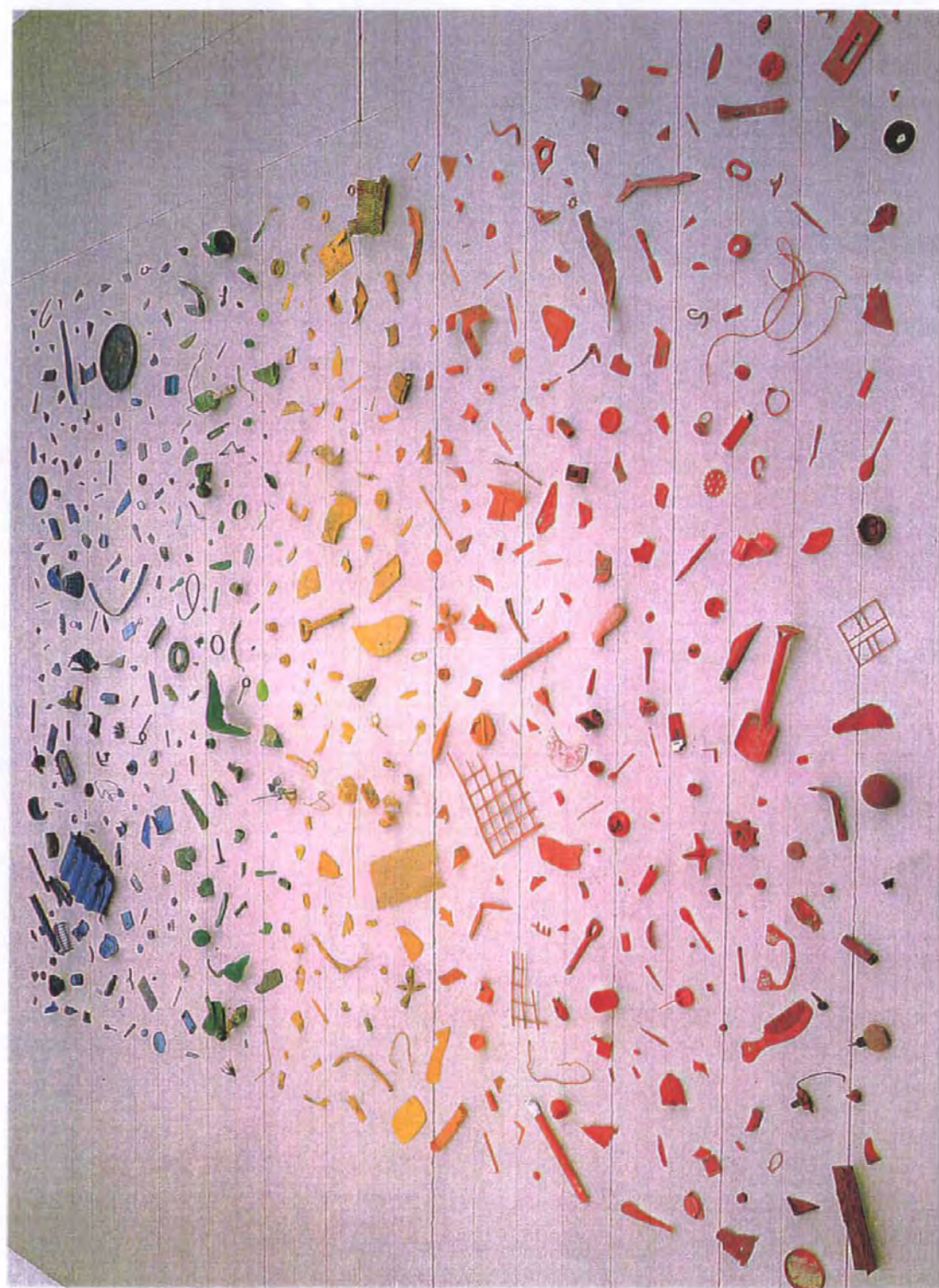
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<sup>22</sup> Lévi-Strauss C, *The Savage Mind*, trans. and published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962, p 16-7. To what extent social anthropological theory can be demonstrated to have influenced trends in recent sculpture deserves consideration — there is a possibility that external forces stimulated both Lévi-Strauss' thoughts and the evolution of a sculptural praxis through common experiences fundamentally linked in language.

Jakobson in correspondence with Trubetzkoy in 1929 suggested that the evolution of language is purposeful and characterises all social and cultural systems of change. Shapiro M, *Sense of Change: Language as History*, Indiana University Press, 1991, p 1

<sup>23</sup> Lévi-Strauss C, *The Savage Mind*, trans. and published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962, p 16-7





4 Tony Cragg, *New Stones, Newton's Tones* 1979, plastic fragments

materials . . . which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relationship to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions . . . The means available represent actual and possible relationships; they are 'operators' but they can be used for any operations of the same type.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the works typical of the 1970s, are assembled from collections of brightly coloured, collections of plastic fragments forming a pattern on the floor or wall. These works are only significant as art through an involvement with cognitive concepts and in the ritual of arrangement. As a communication the relevance is to be found in the epistemological construct of referencing the identities of objects and their cultural sources. The assemblages of worthless industrial detritus are inherently rich in historical referents to the conceptual modelling of science, as it superseded alchemy with the resultant evolution of consumer materials.<sup>25</sup> The individual components appear to be arbitrary and have identities as signs only in the context of plastic production and as a surrogate material that often mimics traditional commodities.<sup>26</sup>

The plastic scraps of converted natural resources come already coloured from an advanced industrial process and represent both a scientific pre-eminence and the ephemera of a consumer proliferation. Arranged in the minimal format of broad bands of ordered colour, as in *New Stones, Newton's Tones*, 1979 [Illustration 4], these shards provide an emblematic reference to the visual spectrum and a metaphorical allusion to Newton's experiments with the refraction of light. Newton's advancement of *a priori* thought constructs advanced objective enquiry and the development of a paradigmatic 'language' of science so necessary to the understanding of material phenomena and industrial progress.

Cragg's material classification is the artist's creative response to the dichotomy of artificial and natural entities. The title, like the form, refers to

<sup>24</sup> Lévi-Strauss C, *The Savage Mind*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962, p 17-8

<sup>25</sup> Cragg refers to three phases of development in the history of plastics production, *A Conversation with Tony Cragg at the Henry Moore Studio, Halifax, December 1996*, p 101

<sup>26</sup> A commodity 'language' of plastics is presented in Barthes R, 'Plastics' in *Mythologies*, Paladin, 1973, p 104-6

Richard Long but now the stones are the new, metaphorical material without precedent. The environmental overlay that contextualises Long's use of stones has been replaced by a provocatively rebarbative selection of matter. The explication is particularly striking in its presentation as a succinct expression. The assertion of the material's original identity creates a heightened tension that exposes the functions of a minimal imagery, the appearance of a sculptural communication and the referential subject content. The Aristotelian classification of analogous and homologous comparisons is reflected here in Cragg's identification of the manmade and natural world of things, alongside his concern for discovering a clearer interpretation of our environment and human activities.<sup>27</sup>

To re-affirm the vitality of an alchemical entity, Cragg further explored the associative potential of presenting the material qualities to be considered separately from the object and its visual appearance, as in *Aeroplane*, 1979 and *Redskin*, 1979. In these 'sculpture pictures' assembled from industrial rubbish, the plastic debris that he collects from the beaches consist of numerous iconographical and coloured images. The plastic parts are the products of an artificial, manufactured formulation used right up to the point of being discarded. There are fragments of tooth brushes, toy soldiers, tins, dolls, model cars, plates and bottles cast in the industrial colours of red, yellow and green.

In Cragg's recycling process these found objects acquire a new value as they are transposed into signs to present an entirely new imagery of figures and pictorial allusions. The polymorphous appearance of myriad plastic remnants builds a mirror reflection of the play of representation and the presence of object entities. One thinks of the virtual and real experience evoked, as 'language' identifies the objects of sculpture to enable perception. The collections of fragments contain figure-like totems, bottles identified in the plastic debris as erect anthropological symbols of a pervasive industrial proliferation. In the works *Aeroplane* and *Redskin* there are two toys that are central points of the

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<sup>27</sup> Cragg T, 'The Writings of Tony Cragg' in Tony Cragg, winner of the 1988 Turner Prize, Tate Gallery, 1989, p 11-19

compositions. The cognitive processes of translation and interpretation starts within a recognition of these objects and, inspired by the very nature of the material, mental configurations are created metonymically out of their concealed, interior identities.

The artist is the mediator of this physical world, the container and the vehicle of 'pictorial' images. In *Self Portrait with Sack*, 1982, Cragg portrays himself as an arrangement of industrial shards, creating a close connection between his own existence and the world of objects and building materials. His silhouette is projected onto the wall as a primeval rain of revived fragmented icons, to form an image that evokes the coming together of the artist and his creative disposition. One is reflected in the other. This form of his portrait stands with a sack, the symbolic container of all image-making artifacts. The sculptural concept of the autobiographical image is a striking echo of Plato's surrogate shadows of reality.<sup>28</sup> In this piece the metonymic shadows are not only the perceptual image but the historical evolutionary print of a pervasive material presence.

The complex conceptual union between the human figure and industrial product in the sculpture further reflects upon the alchemist's search for an understanding of the riddle of life. The sculptor is an esoteric creature who enlightens himself with his visual enquiries that scrutinise the knowledge found between object and subject:

The artist is a specialist in a field that he defines for himself. This field is a mixture of objectivity, irrationality and subjectivity. By inventing a denser, more complex vocabulary, the artist contributes to an understanding of the world. Torn between himself and his images, he knows the value of an intellect which can reflect upon its own existence.<sup>29</sup>

In *Green, Yellow, Orange and Blue Bottles*, 1982, the subject is the dissolution of the object and its shadow. In this installation the bottles as containers of liquid show a twisting movement from the outside to the inside, from the inside to the outside. Furthermore the bottles stand as the symbol for what is secret

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<sup>28</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, book 7, trans. Jowett, Sphere Books, 1970

<sup>29</sup> Tony Cragg interviewed by Demosthène Davvetas, p 27-30 *Tony Cragg*, catalogue, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1985

and unknown (Joseph Beuys often used them in this meaning); they stress the fragility and separation from the world, from which the contents must be protected.

The bottle for Cragg is the allegorical place of the imagination . . . the bottle is the image of art . . .<sup>30</sup>

Carrying its own revelations and reorganised internal capacity to contain knowledge in Cragg's work, the bottle finds a representation in the world of artifacts and espouses a rich source of metaphorical figuration. The body of the sculptural assemblage is characterised by a sense of a dialogue between interior and exterior in which the bottle becomes the metaphor for the transition and projection to the conscious from general consciousness. An integration of diverse and contrasted elements which permits the metamorphosis of an object, from a state of ontological completeness to the metaphorical form, allows the identity of the subject and its presence to appear as complementary entities. A transition from the immaterial presence of the 'shadow', the construction of experience, to a new, physical classification is achieved as the composition of arbitrary fragments of specific materials, represents a visual and cognitive search for the source of meaning. Such a transition originates from a visual fusion of the natural appearance and the artistic construction called representation. The divided and partially amorphous units of reference that recall visual information are united with the actual material condition of the piece itself, in the fabrication of the pictorial image.

The integration of identity is an important feature of expressive language and in the identifiable material fragments the artist discovers the necessary visual narration required for an imaginative recognition of knowledge and view of his creative situation. The 'objectness' of this art is more than the form of the physical presentation. The image, the experience of the perceived in art is substituted by an discursive engagement with concepts. Through the sense of a communicating language the syntactic interplay of the constitutional elements

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<sup>30</sup> Celant G, 'La Materia e la sua ombra', Tony Cragg, Charta Milan, 1994, p 20



of the composition are also essentially connotative.<sup>31</sup>

Since all objects made of plastic are intrinsically connected through the process of manufacture and in a sense are made equal, the material and its sources fit perfectly into Cragg's summarising process. The creative shift from the singular and unrepeatable, and therefore irreplaceable, quality of a stone, a piece of wood, and whatever else exists in nature, to something as easily replaceable as a bottle or toy, comb or a fork, a glass or a plate (all made of moulded plastic), signifies that this reconstruction of nature is merely a recipient of images. We see a rendering of universal imagery that can be duplicated in plastic, being defined by Cragg as the convergence of a finite natural universe in competition with a technological material pantheism. The content of his work and the concept of communicating sculptural ideas is not limited to global resources:

... artificial products are everlasting and indestructible. They don't disappear, because their models or moulds remain and it is always possible to regenerate them ... the 'unique' object does not exist; rather, these are objects possessing the status of an ideal within the world of ideas. No matter how these products are consumed and destroyed they remain with us — not because they do not physically disappear, change or disintegrate, but because replacement means that for each one there exists potentially a hundred, a thousand, a million copies. Their 'destruction' is theoretical, utopian. Even when thrown away, broken up, shattered, and dispersed, they are reincarnated: recycled as scrap, they find new functions and lives.<sup>32</sup>

These references to a universal currency of technological consumerism, once removed from the general circulation, can again become signs for the totemic figure of plastic and of industry. They are, according to Cragg, indestructible icons that are part of our storehouses of memories. In Cragg's compositions it is the very nature of the industrial model that dictates the form of the sculptural image, for the image is not unique; its variety is potentially infinite, as are the fragments within the accumulations. The origins of these configurations affirm

<sup>31</sup> The original symbolic value of words is probably purely connotative. Susanne Langer cites the examples of ritual and song, where certain strings of syllables, like the physical processes of a ritual, embodies a concept. 'Allelujah' has meaning in the context of the Easter service, but it is not the name of anything, nor is it a syntactical part of speech and cannot fairly be called language; for although it is connotative, it has no denotation. Langer S, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, 1960, p 133

<sup>32</sup> Celant, 'Tony Cragg and Industrial Platonism', *Artforum*, November, 1981, p 40-46

that the previously unimagined lies not in the art, but in industry, its technologies and the formation of the artificially meaningful imagery itself. Cragg's is a polymorphous investigation, whereby the object assumes the role of subject, in which the subject becomes the model and object of identification:

The problem with dealing with the artificially man-made world is that the reason for most objects being there — whether chairs, or doors, or cars, or houses — is to do with function. I mean we make things primarily because they have function. The rules or laws that govern that functional world are not too complicated but beyond the practical everyday questions there are the more complicated ones, like functions of power. I think that objects have the capability to carry valuable information for us, to be important to us, but the fact is that most objects are made in ways which are irresponsible and manipulative. Irresponsible because people — the makers of this or that — don't really consider in any metaphysical way the meanings of the objects that they're making: and manipulative because things are made for a variety of commercial and power based reasons.<sup>33</sup>

With minimal manipulation of resources a completeness is created in which the divers identities are no longer dispersed as in *Stack* 1976, where the mode of presentation appears as a non-object. Its physical form becomes an image to be comprehended in the imagination where the wholeness of a conceived objectness somehow animates the quality of its fragmented material condition. The tangibility of form seems to stand in for the *a priori* concept of the idea and the viewer observes a material appearance enhanced by a conceptualised overprint of ideal form.

In these sculptures built from such accumulations, Cragg dwells on the material essence of things to regenerate the fullness of matter in the context of its own origins. The demiurge of origination for Cragg is not separate from the reality of the present but releases the dormant potential of the found objects. Significant sculptural form, archetypal form, is already inherently present at any level of observation and only has to be found in the thought models of the familiar to be encountered in the world of things. Comprehension of the physical world occurs through the conceptualisation of a spatial matrix realised as a signifiable 'reality'.

There emerges a language-like paradigm of differentiation which applies to

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<sup>33</sup> Tony Cragg interviewed by Lynne Cooke, *Tony Cragg*, Hayward, Arts Council, 1987, p 11

the coordination of the object-like entities, the metaphorical functions of depiction and entropic status of change in an historical continuum. In the work *4 Plates, 1976*, a sequence of four plates are presented in states of wholeness and disintegration, expanding into the spaces occupied by the fragments of the shattered plates. The arrangement of the fragmented plates is the sculpture but so also is the sequence from a static, complete entity to an enhanced, entropic state, and vice versa. The visual appearance of the work represents a plurality of concepts not least of which is a model of the universe itself and the chaotic composition of matter and movement, of ideas and reference matrices.

An understanding of the natural order of transposed identities is reflected in the dialectic configurations of Cragg's sculpture. In comparison with the deliberately artificial, geometric arrangement of natural materials imposed upon nature by Long, Cragg's compositions, like the circle and the square, are more than abstract images. They are motifs that have been found in, distilled and deducted from his knowledge of matter, of natural resources and inchoate fabrication processes. The immense variety of the visual references means that no one image is unique and the knowledge of any particular experience can be presented in many ways. For Cragg:

the abstract classification of the immense plurality of forms and definition of material appearances of things allows for a specific language of personal experience in which the artist's basic matter assumes a multi-dimensionality which contains neither completely regular forms, nor universal symbols. It is important to decipher an experience which can clarify reality just because it is not built upon abstract classifications and ideologies and which can only be described with great difficulty. That can only be pointed out with words and concepts and therefore becomes an individual meditation about the state of existence of beings and matter.<sup>34</sup>

Early works were built from the dislocation and recomposition of industrial waste materials, but in the 1980s a transition led to a more compact accumulation of content that is strengthened by the choice of a single, material identity, fused to create new forms and images. If previously the principle of chaos, random selection and self-reflection dominated the new working procedures displayed a certain control of totality. Through the progressive

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<sup>34</sup> Celant G, 'La Materia e la sua ombra', *Tony Cragg*, Charta, Milan, 1994, p 12



growth of an image the sculptor appears to become conscious of the artifact which is not casually found but purposefully created. The transition from the accidental functioning of found objects now favours sculpture being responsible for its own existence and ultimate appearance. A material presence becomes thick and heavy, it is created from the fusion of bronze, iron, steel, ceramics, or glass and acquires the look of a moulded object. Coming after a preoccupation with the non-value of rubbish, this phase of Cragg's work accepts the uniqueness of a moment in the culture of 'plastic' art.

In this later phase, the physical artifact again allows the alchemic process to become symbolically the means by which the sense of new images can be formed; but now in concordance with a technical industrialisation. Without fragmentation the inherent strength of matter is revealed and forms a solid, heavy individuality. The plasticity of sculpture with its evident signs of an history of manufacture, emphasises a concealed but refound energy. The matrix of symbols at the surface of these works represents the interface between the visible appearance and invisible wellhead of content. When this substance is matt and blind like plaster or stone, then the dialogue between the antinomic opposing realities, the inside and the outside, the conscious and the unconscious, the revealed and the obscure is emphasised. But the dialogue is active in an experience of the work in which a response discovers conceptual frameworks forming cognition.

Even though the heteronomy of Cragg's work always displays a casual appearance, an aesthetic solidarity emerges within which all the references coexist. In a surprisingly harmonious integration of contrasts and opposites, Cragg offers a series of connections through playful elements that constitute a richly visual sculpture. To engage with this art the observer must empathise with the object and project a consciousness into the material substance of the work to identify with the intention of the artist. In this way the physical condition of sculpture tends to overcome the image of a lifeless material. The material used is already charged with narrative, a story steeped in the history of



5 Tony Cragg, *Angels and other Antibodies* 1992, wood and hooks

its composite materials and construction. By displaying the formative processes of the materials used, the work is animated with a vitalising visual energy. Such an energy of visual connections transforms the boundaries of surfaces and forms in a work like *Angels and Other Antibodies*, 1992 [Illustration 5] in which the external skin of the objects is like a graffiti of hooks and points.

The challenging appearance of the work is arresting, as the unfamiliar preordains an inventive order of appreciation. The art 'speaks' for itself as images and metaphors. Alongside an involvement with the evocative appearance of the readable parts, the sensory data is referred to thought and reflection about meaning. This extension of a primary awareness only happens through exposure to the substance of the objects and disassociation from their original functional purpose. In a critique of Cragg's work Celant writes of 'Materia',<sup>35</sup> of matter that has a life of its own. It has its own function, it acts as a vehicle and by encapsulating identity through association the material has an ability to evoke meaning.

The intensity of individual forms develop a certain power of extension from within themselves, connected with the sources of the materials.<sup>36</sup>

Celant suggests that meaning is inherent in matter, the alchemical properties of a metaphysical consciousness in matter which is liberated, but not induced by the artist. It is almost as if a material identity is alchemically the ontological power of the art. Furthermore, Celant suggests that the artists and the sculptural matter have a resonance with a meaningful context.

The artist is in correspondence with the creative matter as it presents itself to the eye whilst being conscious of a bond of common elemental qualities existing in both the matter as well as in the artist.<sup>37</sup>

But it is our experience that informs a reading. If art is a language, that language functions within the respondent's consciousness. A relationship of the sculpture's signifying parts and the cognizance of communicated meaning must be sought through the imagination. There is a presupposition that from many

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<sup>35</sup> Celant G, 'La Materia e la sua ombra', *Tony Cragg*, Charta, Milan, 1994, p 14

<sup>36</sup> Celant G, 'La Materia e la sua ombra', *Tony Cragg*, Charta, Milan, 1994, p 14

<sup>37</sup> Celant G, 'La Materia e la sua ombra', *Tony Cragg*, Charta, Milan, 1994, p 14

random possibilities the interpretation is more chaotic than we think, but one should recognise that human minds at work always build systems to impose cognitive frameworks upon reality. Meaning is built upon this play of the mind and as a valid building system sculpture must be recognised as existing for its own translatable purpose.

There is a relationship between conscience and thought that allows for the experience of sculpture to be through an interaction with the human mind. Cragg's sculpture relies on language to be comprehended from its being into its function, from its space, its whole, the material that forms it, to a reading of signification. Such a translation is a significant interaction. There is a marked reorientation of creative thinking, as everyday objects are themselves presented as metaphors in works that explore notions of representation and signification. Within the concept of this sculpture is an intrinsic poetic emanation that allows the objects to represent concepts not only within a 'language' of presentation, but also about the world in which we comprehend the function of that 'language'. The subject of this dialogue between the material and the metaphysical is often encapsulated in the wording of the title, which is itself an indication of sculpture's contextual connotation, and is influential in the viewer's response. Inevitably a reading, a searching creative response, becomes an etymological discovery of significant experiences of the familiar and ordinary, transposed by way of new cryptic conjunctions that extend meanings metonymically.

The metaphor is fundamentally concerned with the emergence of signification, and of meaning itself. But the interpretation of a work of art is bound up with its resistance to our looking and inevitably throws our looking back upon itself.<sup>38</sup> Cragg's metaphorical *trompe-l'oeil* piece, *Large Window* 1981, illustrates the function of tropes in his 'language' of make believe. Formica panels arranged on the gallery wall are over-painted with a grid-like pattern in the same white as the wall itself. This grid evokes the image of a window and the

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<sup>38</sup> Phillipson M, *Painting, Language and Modernity*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 127

unpainted, coloured formica becomes in the imagination a bright, optimistic view out of the exhibition environment through the wall. Here the metaphor is the process of substitution according to likeness, but metonymy refers to the process by which a quality or part of a phenomenon stands for the naming of the whole. It is suggested that the metaphor as substitution is preserved, but metonymy is developed, not as a subsidiary of the metaphor but as a contrasting polar alternative to the metaphor.

The content is conveyed in an interchange between perception and allusion, and by metaphorical modes of substitution through identified similarity, and metonymic combining through association of quality. The configurations represent a material engagement with poetry. But poetry is not made of a particular language. What gives meaning to poems is the way in which the words are held together in particular circumstances. Cragg's sculpture communicates as picto-ideograms that are readily converted out of the concrete form of the performing art material and linked to signifying concepts. These works act as indices of a material system of differentiated language-pictures:<sup>39</sup>

Language, signs, and pictures are not just aspects of our experience of the world. They are intimately related to how and what we experience, and what we understand by that experience . . . Names, pictures and signs would be impossible without each other.<sup>40</sup>

Cragg's sculptures as a communication are constituted as an organisation of contiguous visual referents, translated into concepts that constitute a process of 'linguaging' sculpture. An excellent example of 'language' 'linguaging' another language is to be found in the practice and products resulting from the artist's residency in the specialist European Ceramics Work Centre, at 's-Hertogenbosch, Eindhoven in 1993.<sup>41</sup> During the residency, Cragg's art, with his very distinctive methods of organising signification and semantic presentation revealed an assimilation and critique of the very attributes defining the essential practice of clay working. Whilst resident at Eindhoven his output

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of pictograms, logograms and word signs see Kristeva J, Language-the Unknown, Columbia University Press, NY, 1989, p 28

<sup>40</sup> Craig-Martin M, 'Taking Things as Pictures', Artscribe, 14 Oct. 1978, p 14-15

<sup>41</sup> Toubes X, 'I am English' in Tony Cragg: In Camera, Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, 1993, p 7-14

could be described as using one personal creative/investigative 'language' to critique the host 'language' of a specific craft process.

Cragg's mode of communication functions independently of verbal language, yet the formulations of speech and his building process appear to be parallel, interrelated functions.<sup>42</sup> His work is not linear, but spatial and multi-layered, with each component registering a metaphorical chain of signification that enacts its relationship to the logical aggregate of the whole. The concrete physicality of composition presents the possibility of an interlocutory engagement with the syntactical process that is, in itself, both conceptual and hermeneutic. The sculpture, like writing, is an act of prioritising differentiation and of participating with conceived models of reality. Cragg's presentation of a real object or combination of objects removed from practical utility, articulates the artist's intention as a system of differentiation that become signs for the subject of the communication. In an art where object has become synonymous with image, the connotations derived from ordering a visual lexicon suggests the art 'is defined as a reflexive sign . . . that displays itself in its own specificity, and is rendered in the context of language.'<sup>43</sup>

I feel that all the materials and techniques that have been discovered so far form an alphabet that one can use to form words, to form a new language, a new visual language which can be used to describe the complex world we exist in. And, in describing and making things more understandable we will arrive at new knowledge.

Why is it so important to find a new language? Because the spoken language we use daily seems to be . . . reduced to a banal utilitarianism . . . one cannot leave the creation of language to utilitarian purposes . . . the word poetry . . . the cutting edge of language was originally a Greek word which simply meant 'to create' and was not exclusive to the written or spoken word . . . philosophy, 'the love of knowledge' has been for too long defined by language. The idea being of course that what one thinks, one speaks and vice versa. This gives the spoken word an extremely dominant role in describing thought and knowledge. The problem I have with that is, that when I dream, I don't dream in words. I dream in images and colours, in events and for that there is a fantastic language available. A language which forms itself and expresses itself at the same highly sensitive level at which we can perceive.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cragg talks about the etymology of old names as if he is tracing the construction of a sculpture. A Conversation with Tony Cragg at the Henry Moore Studio, Halifax, December 1996, p 101

<sup>43</sup> Phillipson M, Language, Painting and Modernity, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p 80

<sup>44</sup> Cragg T, in Toubes X, 'I am English' in Tony Cragg: In Camera, Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, 1993, p 13-14



## Section Four

### Practical Investigations

This research comprises the integrated methods of theoretical studies, a critical analysis of relevant language models exposed in a reading of Cragg's practice and a practical investigation of specific correspondences identified in sections two and three. The practical projects have taken two forms: a reflexive investigation through the making of sculpture and curatorial engagements with contemporary modes of practice.

In this section, 4.1 is a critical presentation of the studio work, 4.2 describes the related curatorial projects, 4.3 is an interpretation of the practical investigation, and in 4.4 a correspondence with language is identified in a 'reading' of the sculpture.

#### 4.1 Critical Presentation of the Studio Projects

Alongside the exploration of related theoretical material the initial task of establishing a pattern of practical strategies concentrated upon the identifying analytical models relevant to an investigation of a sculpture 'language'.

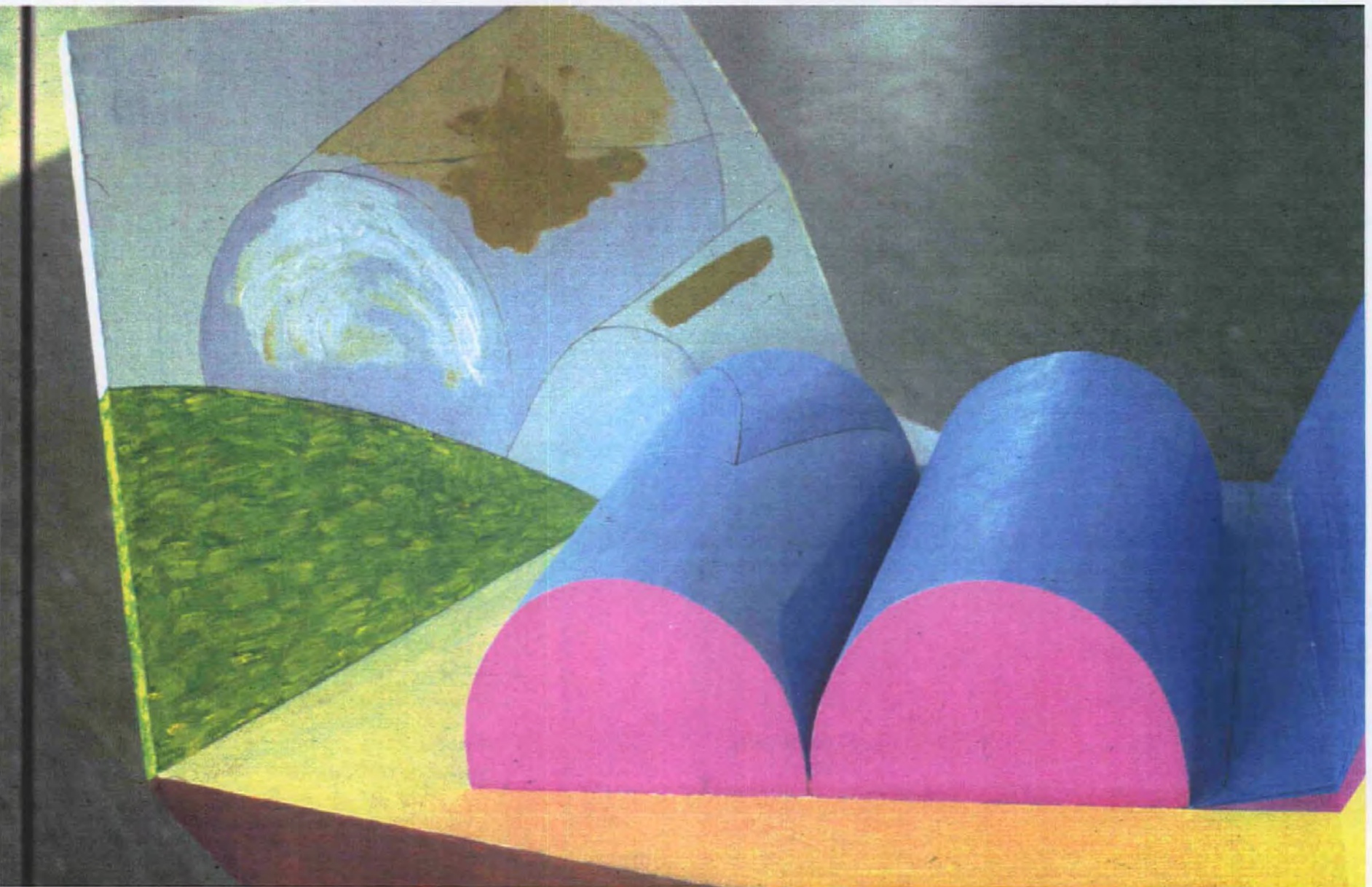
Consequently the practical inquiry has developed as an interactive research discipline influenced by, and applied in consideration of, theoretical propositions. It has evolved as a distillation of linguistic correspondences and is manifested as semantic identities, the 'objects of sculpture'. These configurations of a reflexive and searching material content have been conceived as *pure* research, realised through the making of sculpture, but independent of a need to define sculpture *per se*.

In the following appraisal the practical research is presented both chronologically, to illustrate a progressive engagement with linguistic principles and discussed as six thematic groups that represent the exploration of specific linguistic correspondences. It is an interesting feature of practice led research that the practical work is presented as a continuum of evolving and intuitive



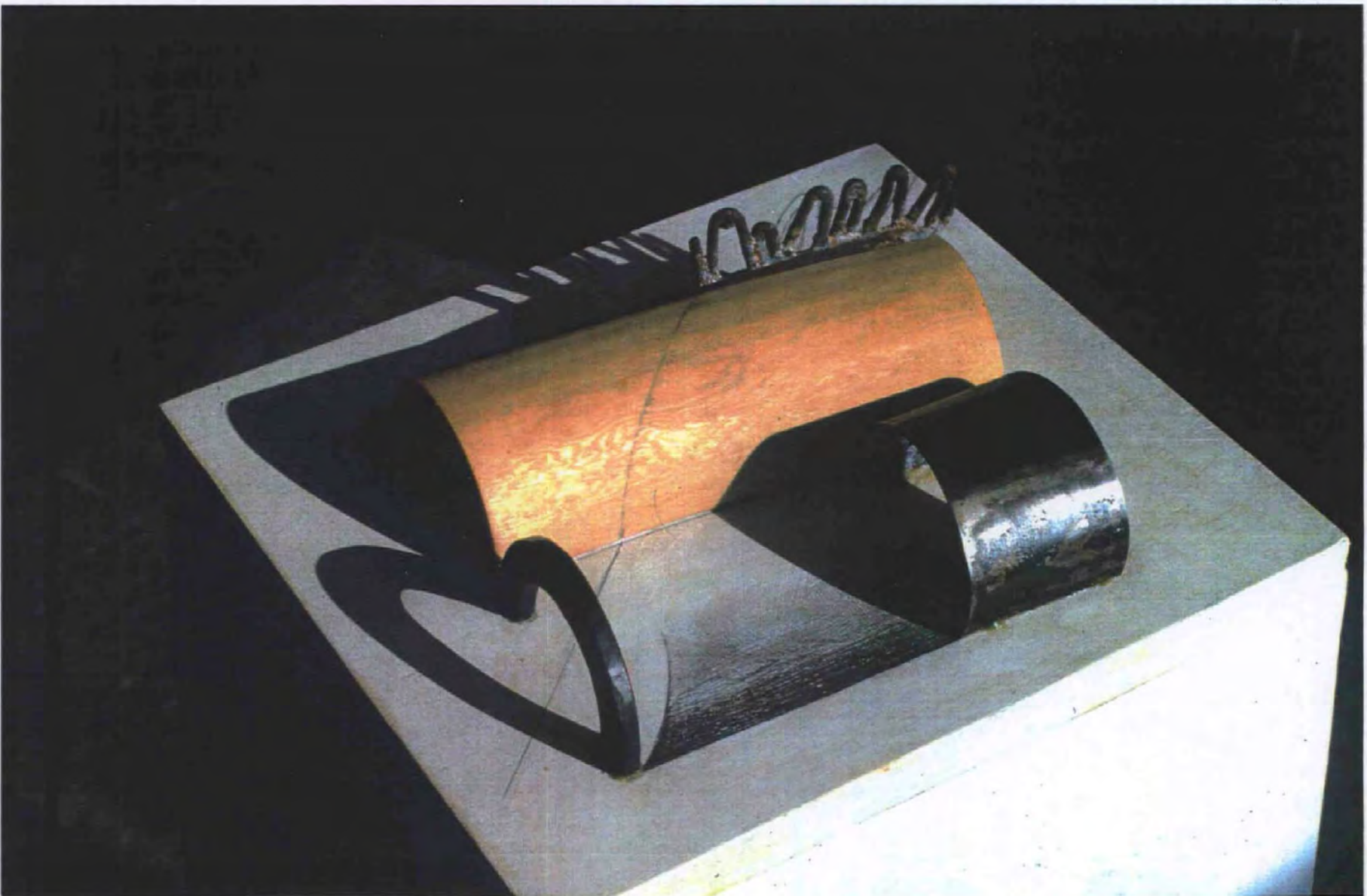
6 *Environment* November 1991, wood & paint, ht. 48cm





7 *Anamorphic Landscape* December 1991, wood & paint, ht. 50cm





8 *Silhouette and Shadow* January 1992, wood, steel, 26 x 23cm

developments addressing various stages of inquiry, whilst the text exists as the finalised statements of the culminating objective purpose.

### **Group 1 — Alignments and Environmental Gestures**

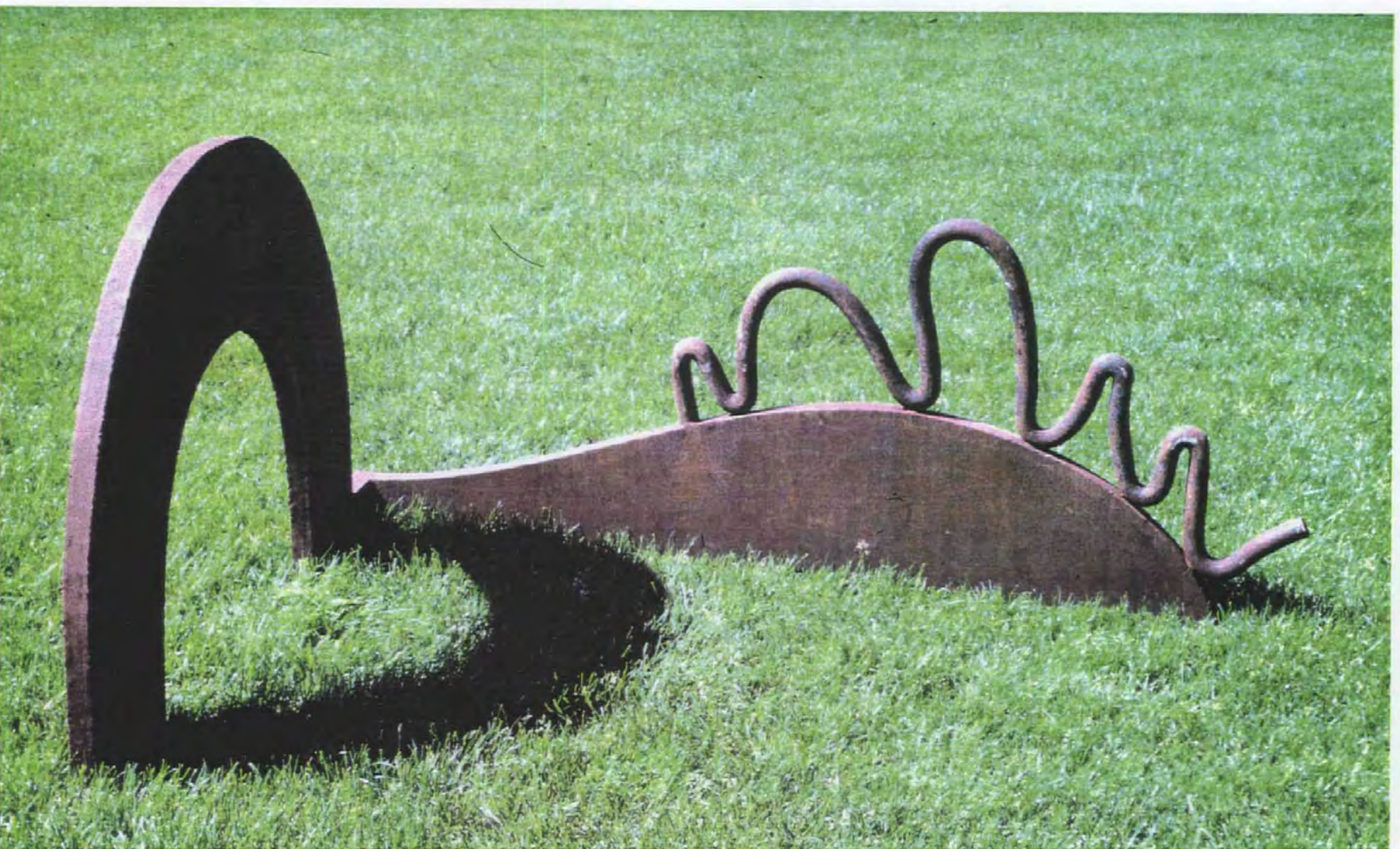
The sculpture produced at the commencement of this inquiry inevitably portrayed an on-going, personal studio practice that can be regarded as a prelude to the establishment of a reflexive output, increasingly concerned with language paradigms.

Previously, anamorphic arrangements of sculptural elements, contrasted with painterly illusions, required active participation as the viewer's physical positioning aligned drawing with solid form, image with the surrounding spaces, as in *Environment* November 1991 and *Anamorphic Landscape* December 1991 [Illustrations 6, 7]. A more compact maquette, *Silhouette and Shadow* January 1992 [Illustration 8] echoed the semicylindrical and semicircular frames of previous works in a version that used split logs and metal arches. A silhouette was 'cast' as a shadow and repeated (to be aligned) in an anamorphic pencil drawing of the scene. Material qualities presented a sense of a communicative engagement with craft process, whilst the visual play of an interactive drawing disrupted solid form. In turn the generation of calligraphic gesture is reflected in the resulting shapeliness of the work.

The subsequent, but still relatively early sculptures, were fabricated in abstract configurations and conceived as interactions with specific exhibition sites. Formal elements, established through drawing in the spring of 1992, introduced gestural qualities that were transposed in the physical processes of manipulating form and space in forged and welded steel.

Shapes that were made to resonate with, and reflect, the surrounding environment, emphasised and channelled a directed viewpoint. Arc-like gestures form sweeping movements that physically trace idealised references to the undulations of landscape, whilst half-circles and semicylindrical forms are reminiscent of rolling hills, Nissen huts and silage clamps.





9 *Over and Beyond June 1992*, forged and welded steel, ht. 68cm

The rolled curves, fabricated in thin, steel sections reiterate shapes planned on paper, whilst the calligraphy of a scribbled pencil line was transformed into forged curvilinear choreographical motifs, as in *Over and Beyond*, June 1992, [Illustration 9]. The spontaneous gesture so naturally achieved in drawing was represented, forged in heavy steel sections, in a laborious physical performance with material processes that literally grapples with a tangible structuring of expression.

Changes to the sited environment were anticipated and 'written' into the design of these works. The height of grass in a landscape setting progressively obscured portions of the work during the course of a summer exhibition to effect a sense of transition from the unified whole to isolated 'islands'.

This steel piece, which looks dated and stylistically prescriptive now, represents an initial engagement with particular conventions of communication realised in traditional craft techniques. It was produced at a time when the theoretical studies traced Caro's development of a sculptural identity. My 'abstract' responses to site and place tended to favour an aesthetic cum. formalist sculptural genre<sup>1</sup>, that inevitably limited the scope for a wider exploration of sculptural communication.

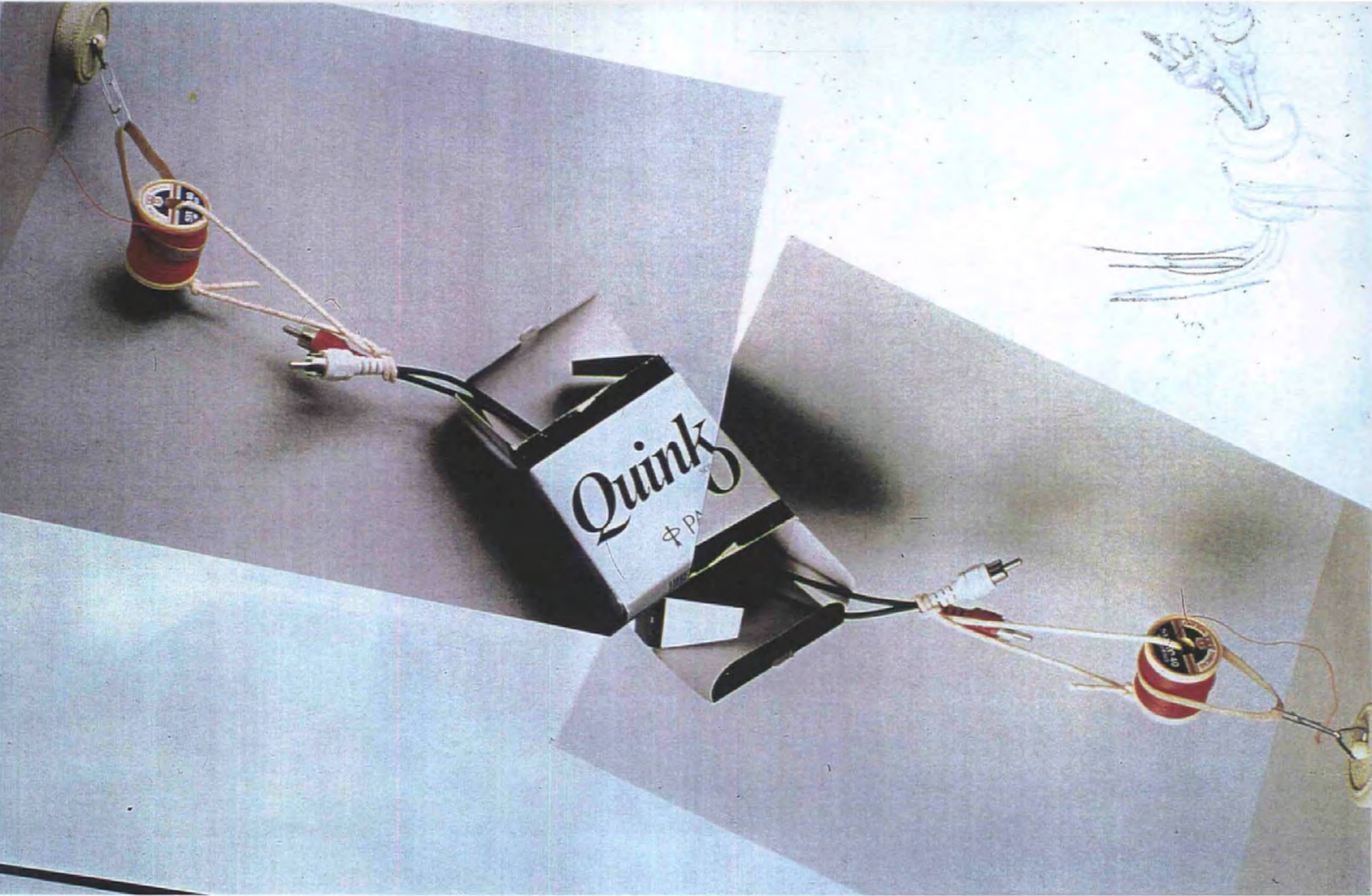
The subsequent, intuitive progression to metaphorically configured work was challenged by theoretical perceptions and in retrospect, is seen as a crucial revision of an aesthetic-discursive debate which has underpinned the practical output of this research since. A 'language of sculpture' had been described, albeit metaphorically, by Tucker, Greenberg and Fried.<sup>2</sup> A fresh exploration of the sculpture/language homology necessitated a postmodern and more direct

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<sup>1</sup> The development of my personal practice had been heavily influenced by conventions of abstract art and particularly the example of Robert Adams for whom I was assistant in the early '70s. Material performance and spatial concerns were paramount in an art form that exemplified a sense of a poetic cum experiential aesthetic.

<sup>2</sup> Two opening quotations 'Poetry is the subject of the poem' and 'Sculpture was a separate thing... it had to be given its own certain place, in which no arbitrariness had placed it, and it must be intercalated in the silent continuance of space and its great laws' set the tenet in Tucker W, *The Language of Sculpture*, Thames & Hudson, 1974, in which 'language' is a broad reference to a reading of sculpture as an autonomous mode of communication. Greenberg had previously traced more mechanical analogies with language when he wrote, 'the weight of his [Caro's] art lies preponderantly in what Michael Fried calls its 'syntax', in the relations of its discrete parts' and later in the same essay he refers to a 'vocabulary of forms'. Greenberg C, 'Anthony Caro', *Studio International*, 174 892 September 1967, p 116-7.





10 *Delineation* October-November 1993, photo montage, ht. 28cm

engagement with the cognitive functions of language; with the processes of presenting conceptual models as discursive communication. Henceforth the subsequent works needed to focus more specifically on the reading of objects, the linguistic identification of recognisable collections of things, the coming together of scraps of information and the construction of a meaningful content.

## **Group 2 — Images Connecting Names and Functions**

In a radically revised approach, collections of seemingly random, but recognisable, image-charged things were assembled very deliberately in the manner of making sculpture. Domestic bits and pieces were threaded together on my writing table. Hung from the 'walls' of a cardboard 'environment' the various objects were adjoined by thread, paper clips and a rubber band. Photographic studies of these arrangements and the subsequent montage works, *Delineation* October/November 1993 [Illustration 10] invoked a sense of juxtaposition, suspension, tension and equilibrium.

The new physical relationships linking the nameable objects appeared to conjure up the notion of connected ideas:

A collection of facts arranged in the order of their appearance . . . is . . . an explanatory enterprise, one that induces understanding, and it must thus display not only the facts but also connections between them.<sup>3</sup>

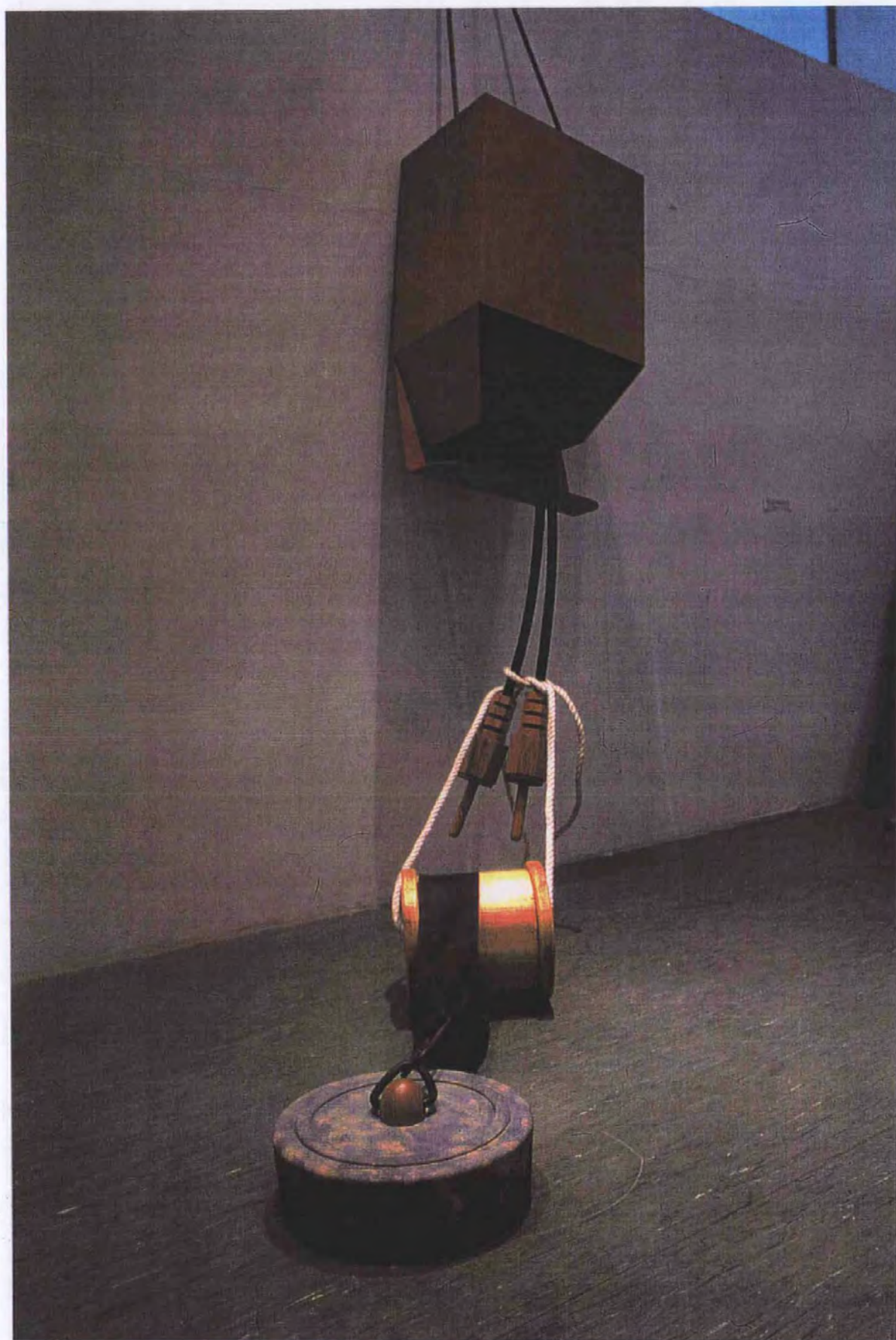
Viewed literally the anchor point in this work is both presented *and* represented by an image of a (wash basin) plug. Another type of plug, the hi-fi jackplug, became the linking device in the stream of objects that flow from a Quink ink box. A cotton reel acts as a winding device connected by a paper clip and rubber band to the anchoring plug.

Set into this specific arrangement, the objects simultaneously appear to be both purposefully employed in forming the sculpture, and yet, as recognisable individual items divorced from function, remain as discrete identities. Aesthetic appearance is emphatically subordinated in a sculptural (re-making) process of adjoining units of nameable identities. The rationale for the arrangement is the

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<sup>3</sup> This reference is adapted from Kuhn's explanation of the interpretation of factual data. Kuhn T, *The Essential Tension. Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*, University of Chicago Press, 1977, p 15





11 *Visual Connection* July 1994, wood, steel, rubber, cord, pipe, box ht. 1.2m



activation of a sculptural integrity, in which it is suggested that the identities of objects are reassembled as the ordering of alternative communication strategies.

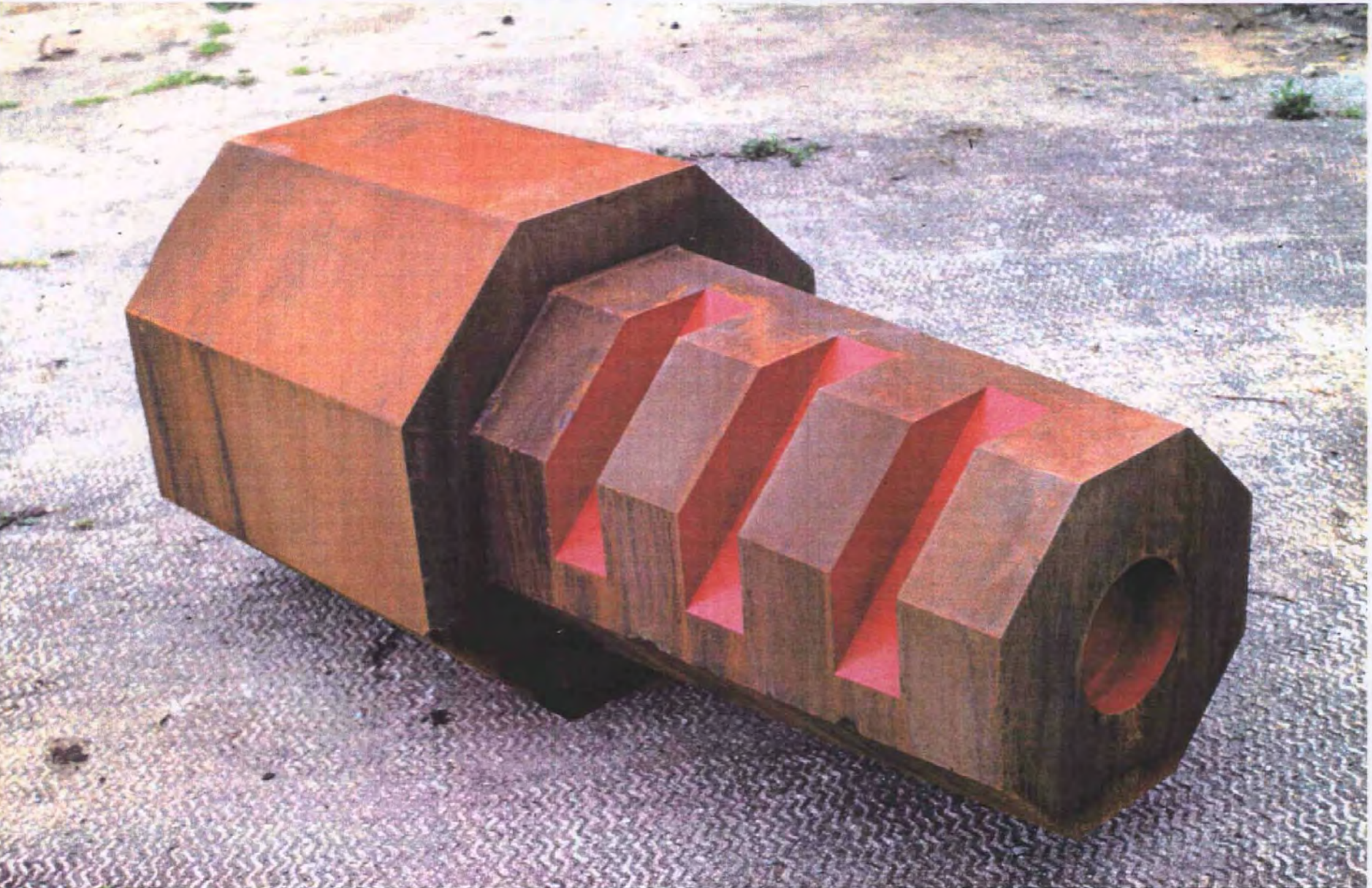
The objects used are familiar and their characteristics are those of the arbitrary things 'to hand' <sup>4</sup>, things that are already charged with an inherent history of their own. There is also some sense of irony as the names of the parts align, in a kind of visual 'onomatopoeia', with the physical functions of the sculptural realisation. It is a sense of semantic provenance that is celebrated in sculpture's methods of constructing communication in this group, like a phrase in a foreign language for which only an uncertain translation can be offered. They are like artifacts from an unfamiliar board game <sup>5</sup> whose integrity is not in doubt, but whose use-value has slipped out of currency.

In a large installation piece made from the photo-studies, *Visual Connection* July 1994 [Illustration 11], the flow of objects continues to present an ironical sense/non-sense evaluation of purpose. Through a shift of emphasis in the sculpture-making process of a material replication, the cotton reel image now refers only partially to its original function and, as a cylindrical metaphor released from the vernacular condition, connects with a string of associative values. Grossly transformed as a linking piece in the object narrative, it becomes a preposition, liberated as an object image from its defining function to

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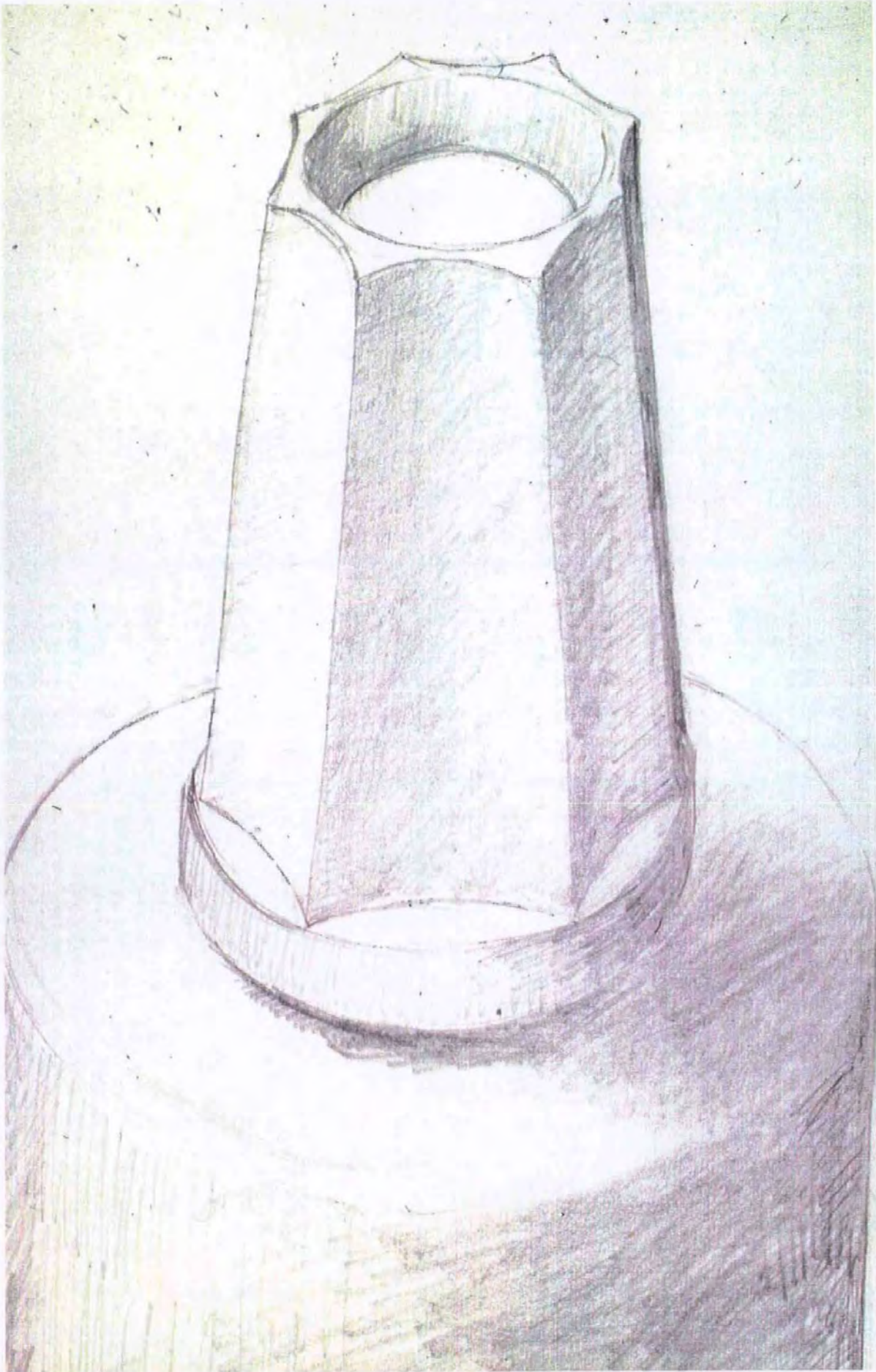
<sup>4</sup> 'To hand' refers to a concept defining *Bricolage*, in which the sculpture is not fashioned from chosen ingredients but connects the identifiable qualities of anything available. Chave A, 'Minimalism & the Rhetoric of Power', *Arts Magazine* vol 64, p 44-63, Jan 1990. The task of the *Bricoleur* is not subordinated to the availability of raw materials and tools for these practical things are finite and present a set of actual or possible relationships not necessarily relevant to the project. Lévi-Strauss C, *The Savage Mind*, trans. and published by Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1962, p 17-18. Heidegger differentiates between *Zuhandenheit*, readiness-to-hand or availability and *Vorhandenheit*, presence-at-hand or occurrence. Dreyfus H, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time. Division 1*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1995, p 40 & 63. Essentially this demarcation is analogous with thing and commodity. In common with Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty a useful illustration cites the blind man's cane. The cane is in one respect handled and acknowledged as an object but, used as a guiding tool, it becomes a sensory extension of the body. Heidegger M, *Being and Time*, Harper & Row, 1962, p 98.

<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein considering the functions of language alludes to the perception of a game in progress where a knowledge of the rules allows for a construction of meaning. 'What is a word really?' is analogous to 'What is a piece in chess?' Wittgenstein L, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G Anscombe, Blackwell, 1953, p 108. But in the example above the reason for the game eludes us as it did in the game metaphor of imaginary travel in Calvino I, *Invisible Cities*, Pan, 1974 p 104 as ignorance of the rules and lack of pieces leaves only the meaning of the squares on the board to be considered.



12 *Tech* August 1994, welded steel, length 1.8m





13 *Tech. Drawing* December 1993, drawing, ht. 28cm

suggest the possibility of connecting with all other cylindrical sections: sections of classical columns, wheels, spools, drums etc. The wires of the jack plug are rendered at the new scale by alkathene water pipes to become conduits of a different nature. The Quink ink box is likewise precisely enlarged, but formally replicated in steel without the identifying graphic packaging referents as the image eschews literal description, yet retains a semantic function.

Through this artifice, the interrelationship of juxtaposed associative qualities replaces the non-sensical sequence of the original physical identities. The sculptural elements now form an object imagery that presents semantic fragments to emphasise a process of making sculpture concerned with conventions of communication. In a reading of this assembly, the tangible body of the sculpture is perceived as the aesthetic construction of a connotative art form. As a sculptural communication the imagery signals a discursive process in which the perceived is to be compared with that to be conceived.

To extend this exploration the jackplug motif has been greatly enlarged, simplified and presented as a massive construction in rusted steel, *Tech* August 1994 [Illustration 12]. Stripped of recognisable detail this monumental mass is free from the primary constraints of identification. Perhaps it is a huge machine casing, a technical structure, an industrial component of unknown origins. Evocative indentations in the form are stained red imparting a glowing appearance to the internal mass of the object, making it reminiscent of a mould cooling as it emerges from the foundry process. The allusion to the emergence from a foundry is, in itself, reminiscent of Cragg's cast bottle motif, *Three Cast Bottles*, 1988, in which the artist is the source of creative ideas, in a coming-into-being, as material assumes identity and form finds meaning.

It is also interesting to compare the appearance of the previous work, *Tech*, with a drawing of a similar, but vertical shape — the lid of a 'Tipp-Ex' bottle [Illustration 13]. Non-specific to function the shared powerful geometric qualities superficially appear to link the two. There is a sense of similar scale and style of industrial culture. The homologous resemblance is fascinating for it





14 *Post February 1995*, wood, steel and plastic, ht. 1.8m

signals some similarity of purpose, ergonomically designed as ubiquitous consumer products that relate only in their being handled efficiently.

The material entity presented as the aesthetic quality of these transposed objects, is firstly the generic connotation of a sculptural convention. A subsequent reading amplifies the sense of an organised realisation of denotation as the tangible and visually identifiable content assumes a discursive, communication of meaning.

The occurrence of meaning is further explored in another variation of image replication in which the debt to Cragg's rhetorical organisation of studio materials, *Stack* 1975, and Wentworth's *Balcone* 1991<sup>6</sup>, is apparent. Resting against a wall, *Post* February 1995 [Illustration 14], presents a collection of fencing stakes, accumulated lengths of different materials and some pencil-like images, evidently fashioned from second-hand timber joists. The proximity of the fencing posts and other materials present divergent references that contrast appearance and purpose. The wooden stakes being nameable denote a normative appearance that indicates function. The diverse lengths of steel, timber and plastic have generic names and are read as non-specific signifiers, apparently detached in a process of constructing meaning. This collection might be found in any workshop and as such is perceived as phenomena, whereas the allusions to pencil shapes suggests additional significance beyond the recognised appearance. The addition of the pencil image introduces a metaphor that invites interpretation of a readable content, as a convention of communication is constructed out of this inclusion.

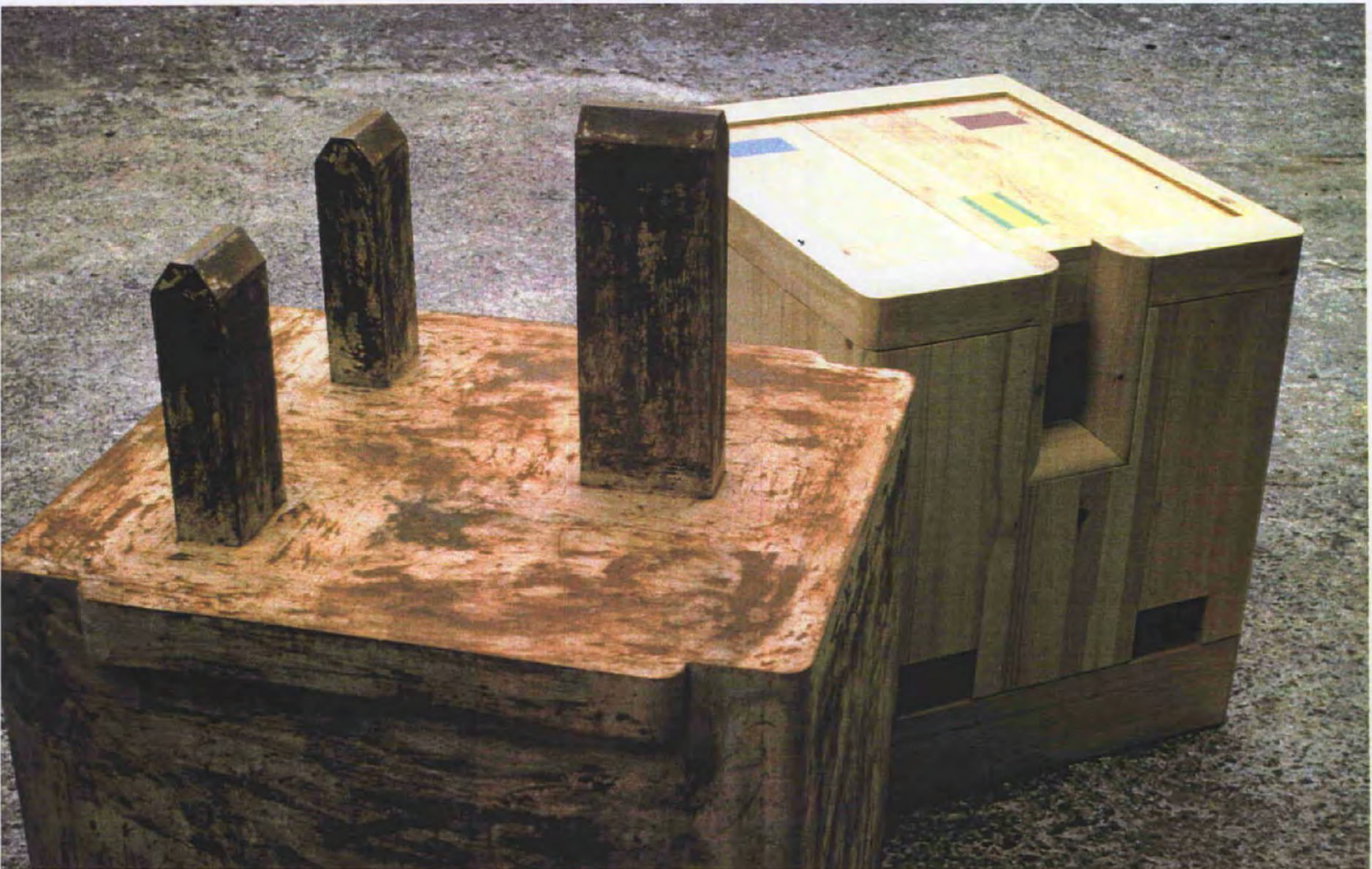
The adaption of recognisable images in a sculptural building process motivated this series of works, but the question remains as to what extent the original cluster of 'real' objects has been superseded semantically to further this study? There is still a noticeable tendency to make art and a growing need to focus more precisely on the readable image as communication. Hence the

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<sup>6</sup> Wentworth's bi-valent practice of presenting evocative work with complementary rhetorical, ironic and even paradoxical titles has provided an influential example and basis for critical analysis since seeing his Serpentine show in 1993. Warner M, Richard Wentworth, Thames & Hudson, 1993



15 *Sign Signified* September 1995, wood and steel, ht. 1.12m



following group of works is concerned even more specifically with objects recognised by their appearance as commodities.

### Group 3 — Adaption

Another series of sculptures allude to the visual qualities and attendant commodity values of electrical plug adaptors. In *Sign-Signified* September 1995 [Illustration 15] the images of plug adaptors are disengaged from normative appearance in the use of contrasted and functionally estranged materials that deny mimetic representation. The recognisable visual elements have been greatly enlarged and are shared between two constructions.

One part of the diptych is fabricated from thin sections of welded steel plate and sports the three pins motif, which is emblematic of a visual language that identifies electrical commodities in the UK. This piece also retains the exterior flanges that would allow for positive handling of a functional connector. Yet the uninsulated quality of the uniform material case, the steel shell of this piece, is potentially threatening in the context of an electrical conduit. It presents the associative qualities of a descriptive piece, but in a logical reading is found to be non-mimetic.

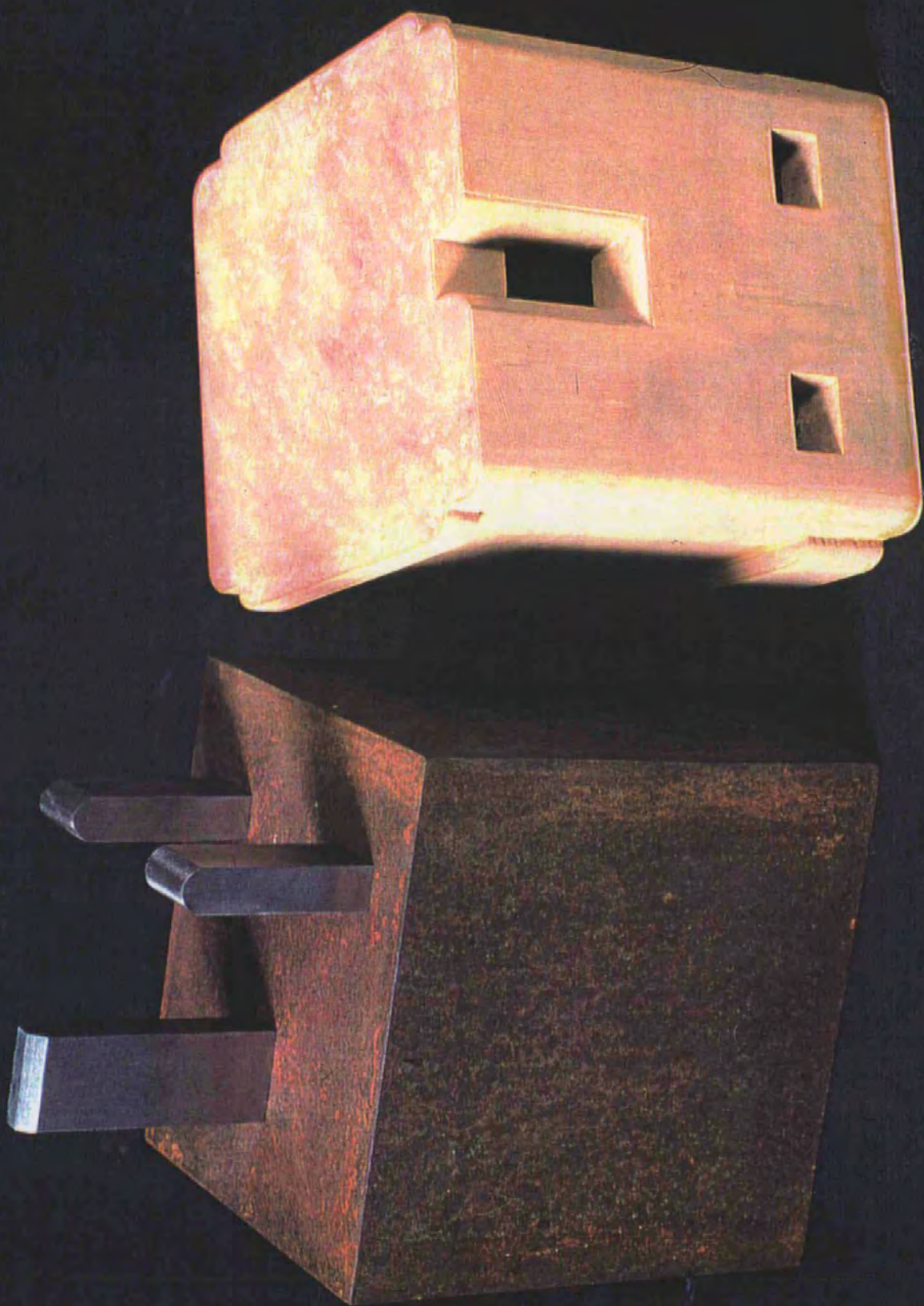
A partner unit is characterised by the three ports, colour referents to the electrician's code of wiring junctions and the sectional seams that constitute a plug's composite containment of technical functions. The exterior, stripped of connotational mouldings, is presented as a hollow shell of pine boarding, abutted in the fashion of domestic dado cladding. The scale of this work, produced at standard table height, ergonomically relates to furniture and hints at domestic spaces. Barthes dyadic categorisation of metaphoric and metonymic functions of commodity values,<sup>7</sup> was in mind as these were conceived.

This composite piece and the related series of works relies upon complementary, but contrasted, dualities. Connecting pins extend from one, socket holes characterise the other. A structured hollowness in one suggests the

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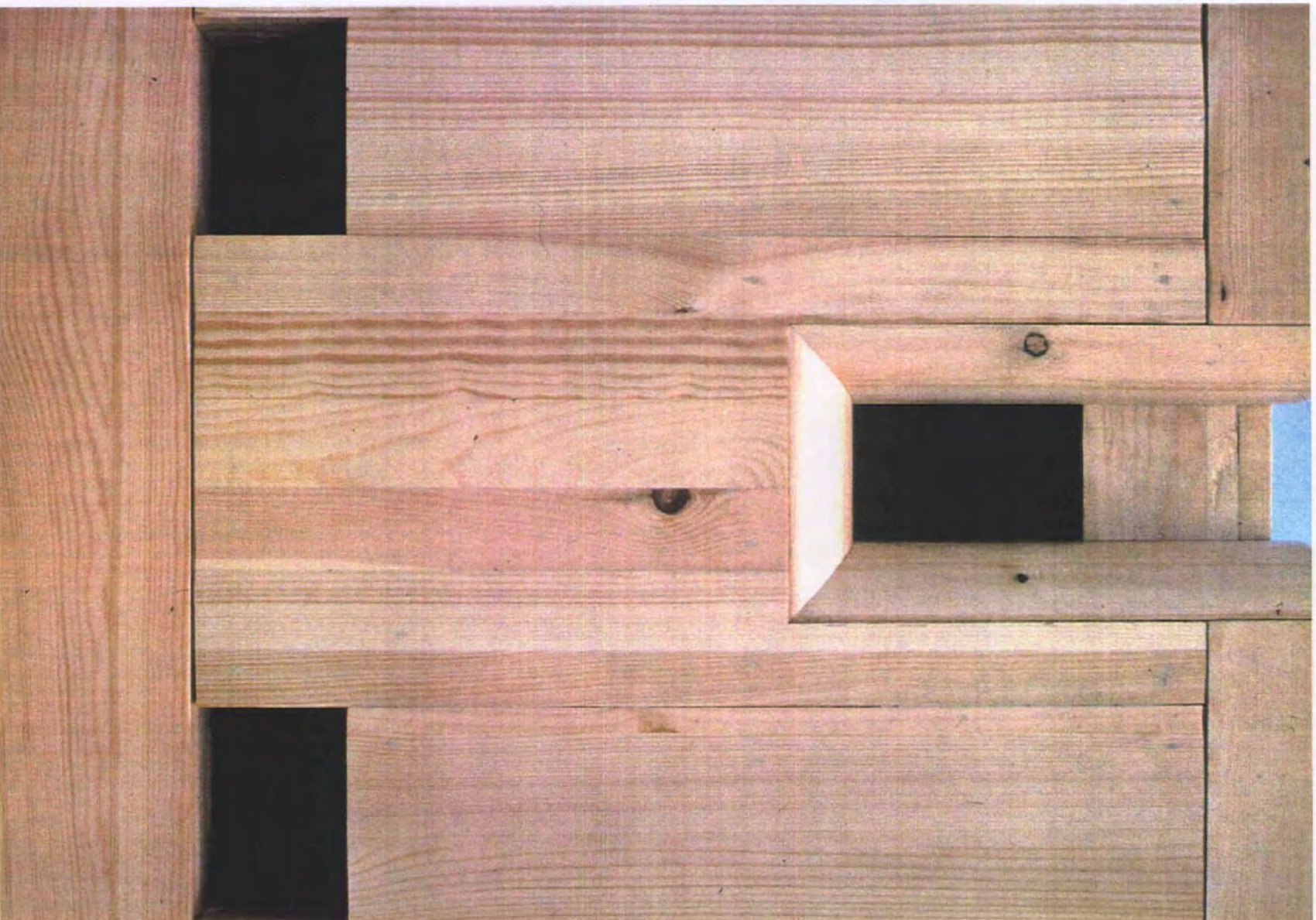
<sup>7</sup> Barthes R, The metaphoric (paradigmatic) and metonymic (syntactic) dyad relating functions of language with commodities, *Sculpture/Language Homology* Section, p 29.





16 *Images and Ideals* September 1996, wood and steel, ht. 22cm





17 *Sign Signified* detail, September 1995, wood, ht. 74cm

containment of information, whilst a mass of material shapeliness forms the generative semantic content of the other. The common-place object is recognised and acknowledged but, reworked as interdependent sculptural parts, its significance is to be sought in the summing processes of visual connections, as a reading constructs a sense of cognitive unity.

A smaller version of the connector plug duo, *Images and Ideals*, September 1996 [Illustration 16] is handleable in scale and is constructed with an haptic emphasis on physical tangibility. The steel unit is constructed of massively thick sections to characterise a ponderous quality. The partner piece in wood is pleasantly light with its grip mouldings made to be handled. The block-like steel image, with an even patina of rust, appears to be fossilised, immutable and foreign. Conversely, the wooden rendition is light, precisely crafted and frail. It has been painted with a dusty white covering to unify the object and then the surface has been rubbed back to expose the real substance of its construction and material quality.

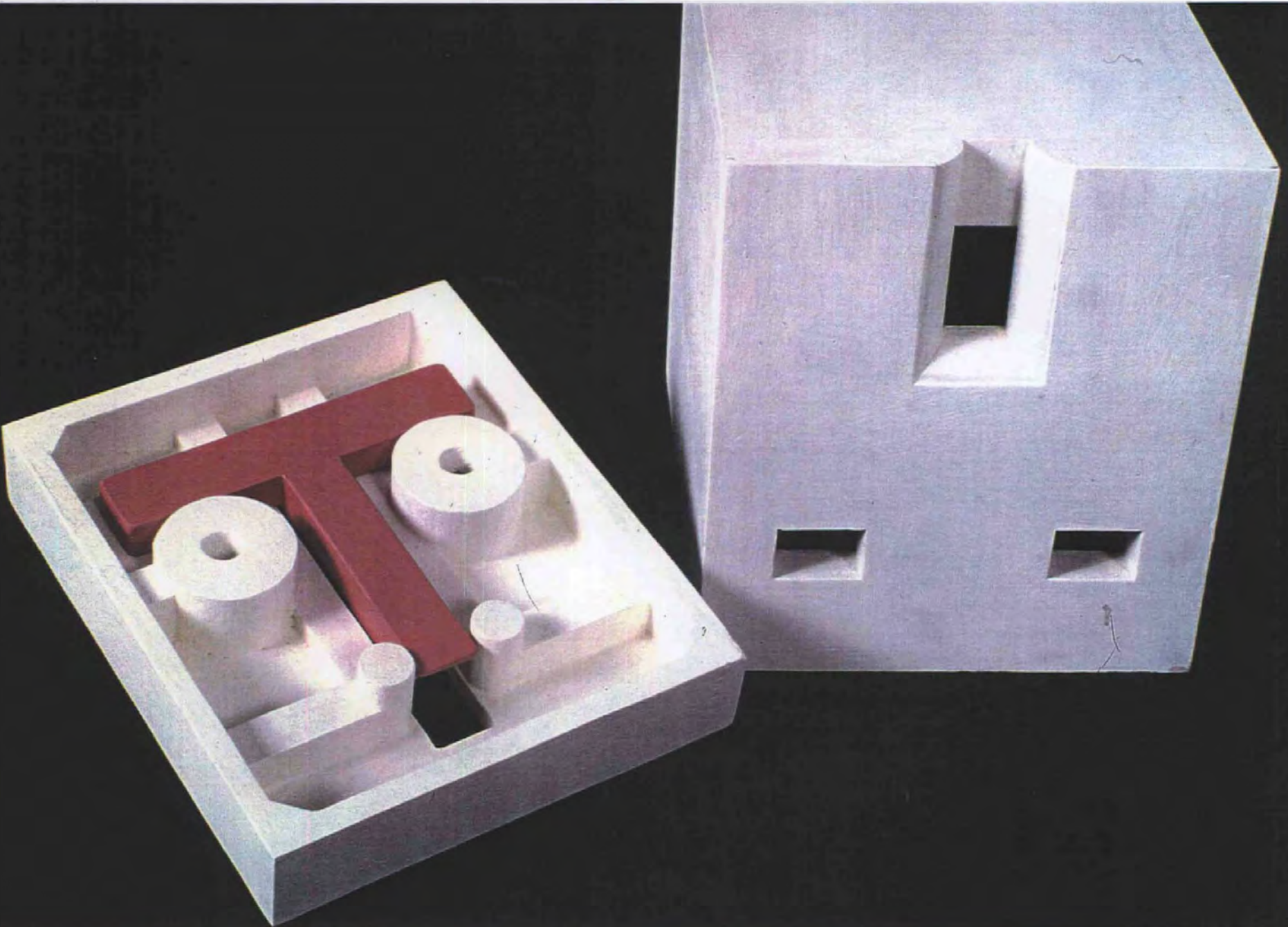
Image is thereby divorced from the recognisable utilitarian purpose of the common object in a process of metamorphosis, as a sculptural identity becomes the metonymic extension of a visual commodification. The sculpture is a configuration of associated references that indicates an extension of metaphorical expression. An ordering of the metaphorical qualities of these works projects the image as a reference to potential meaning in a process that defines the object as both expressive sculpture and a revision of commodity values.

Produced at the time of studying Wittgenstein's word-picture theories, these sculptures took on a stark architectural appearance that has a remarkable resonance with Claus Oldenburg's drawing of a plug/house<sup>8</sup> and Wittgenstein's own collaborative architectural project in Vienna [Illustration 17]. Wittgenstein's project, in the genre of Adolf Loos' 'objective' space planning, exhibits the specific qualities of an appliance for living that visually portrays the

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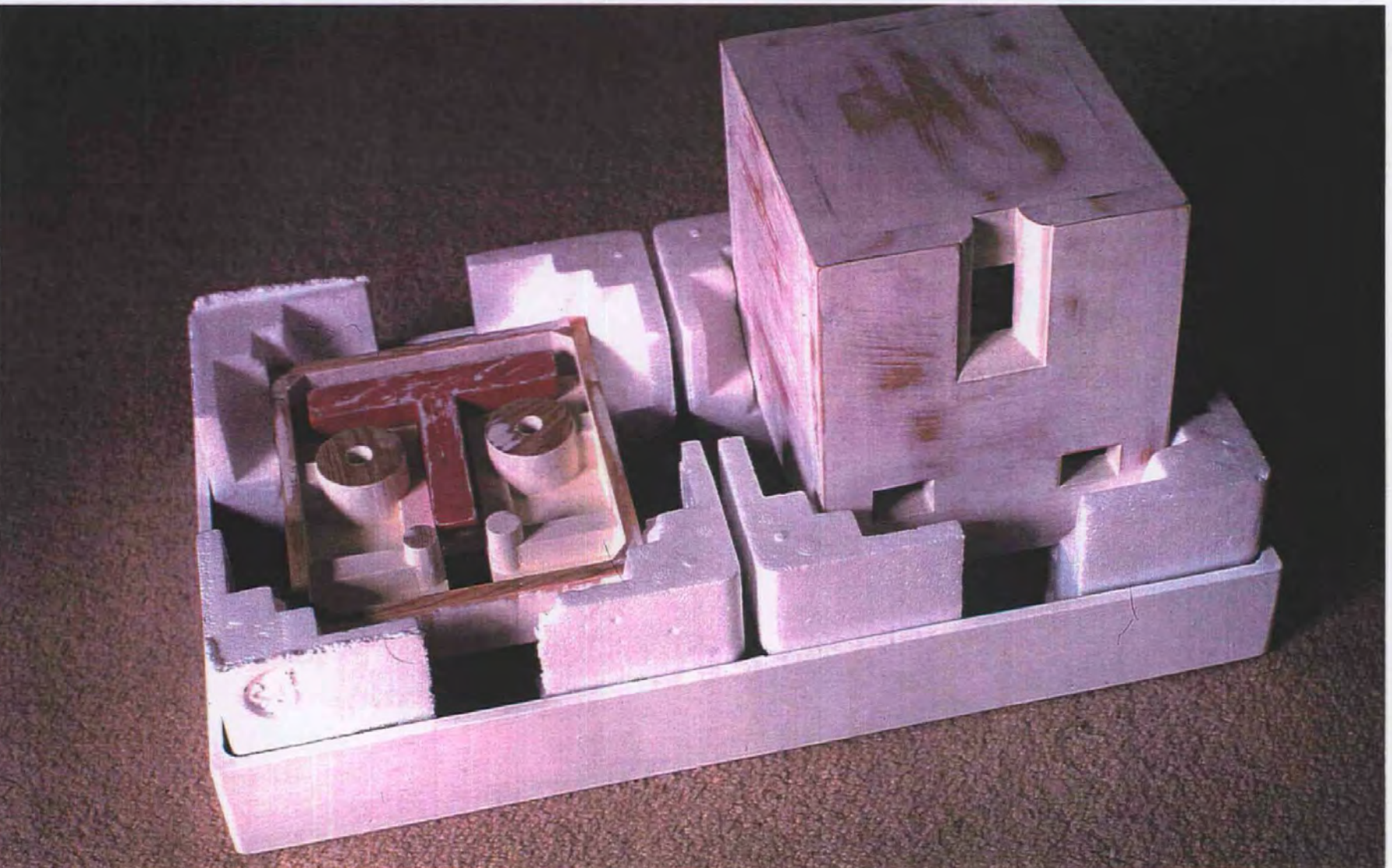
<sup>8</sup> This drawing shows the house as a plug standing on the electrical contact pins as columns. *Claus Oldenburg an Anthology*, Hayward gallery, London, 1996





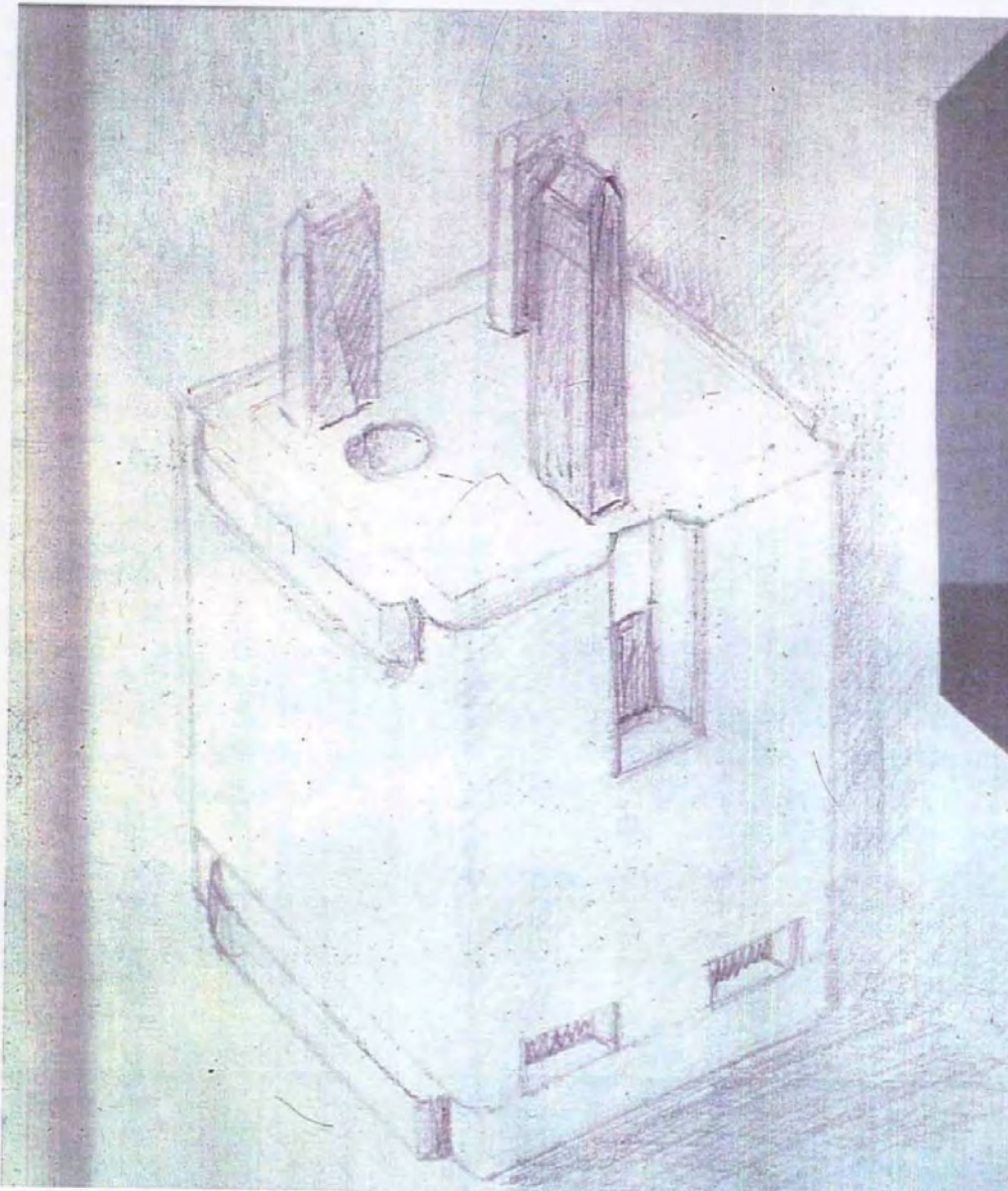
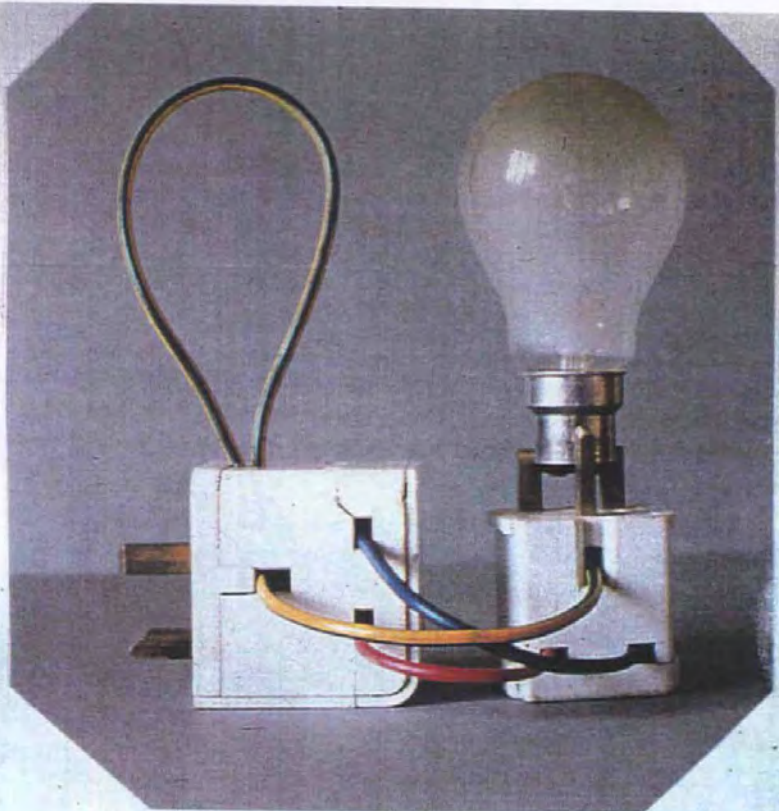
18 *Electric House* March 1996, wood, ht. 18cm





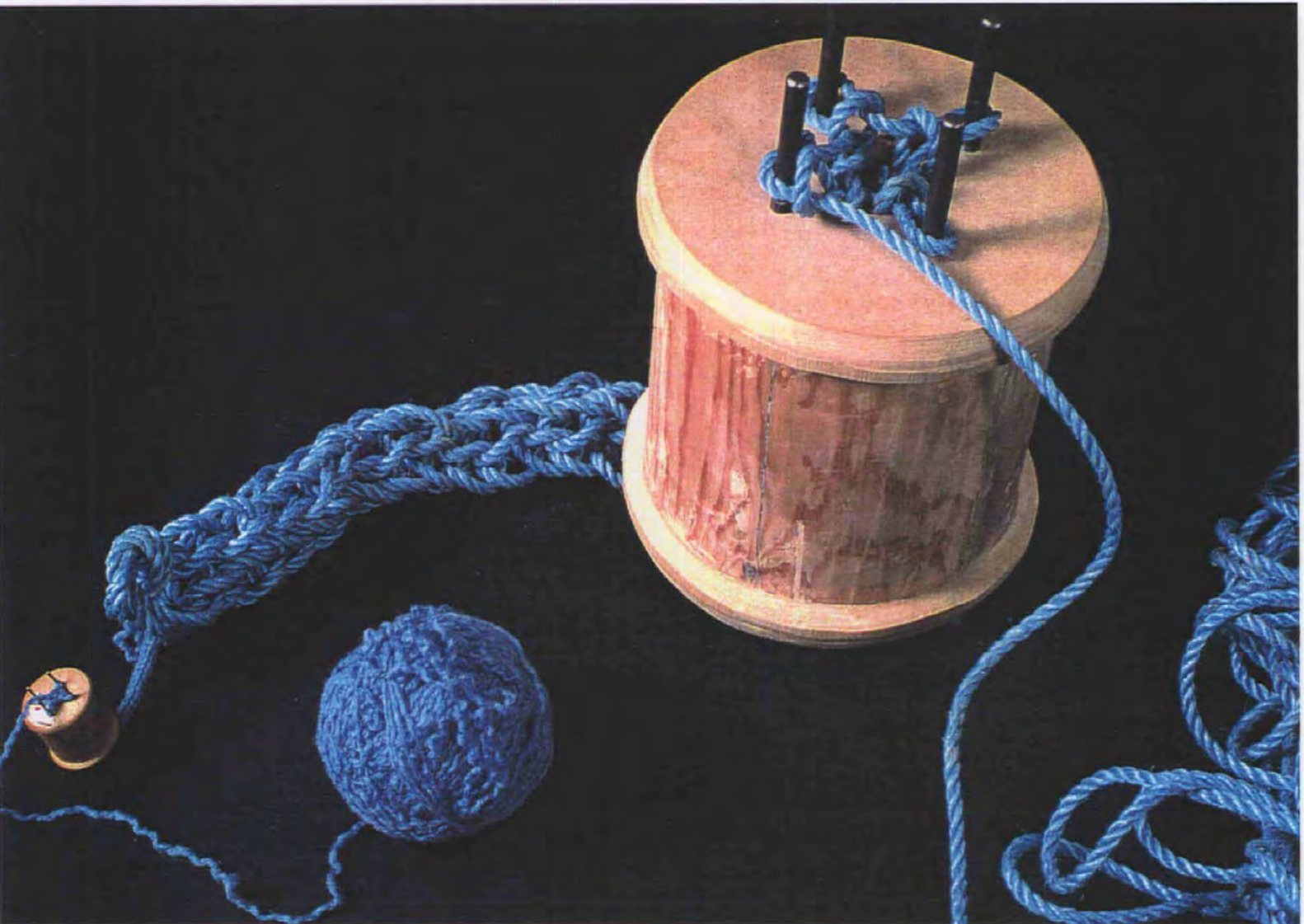
19 *Electric House* September 1997, wood and polystyrene, ht. 24cm





20 Sketchbook page, ht. 16cm

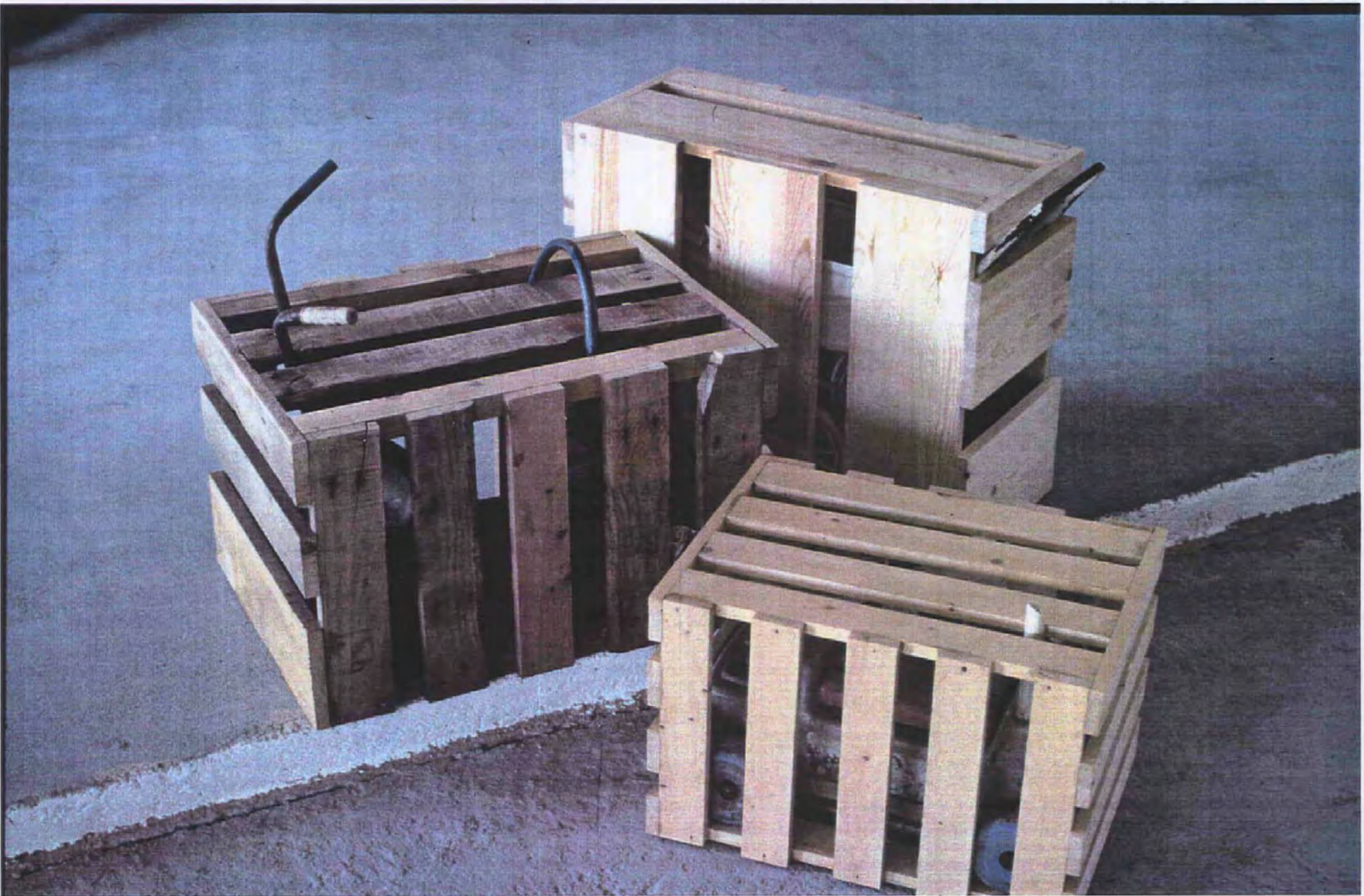




21 *Mother of Necessity* March 1996, wood, steel, cord and wool, ht. 34cm



22 *Event* March 1993, Toys and wooden crates, ht. 55cm





designer's intellectual clarity and intended definition of purpose.<sup>9</sup>

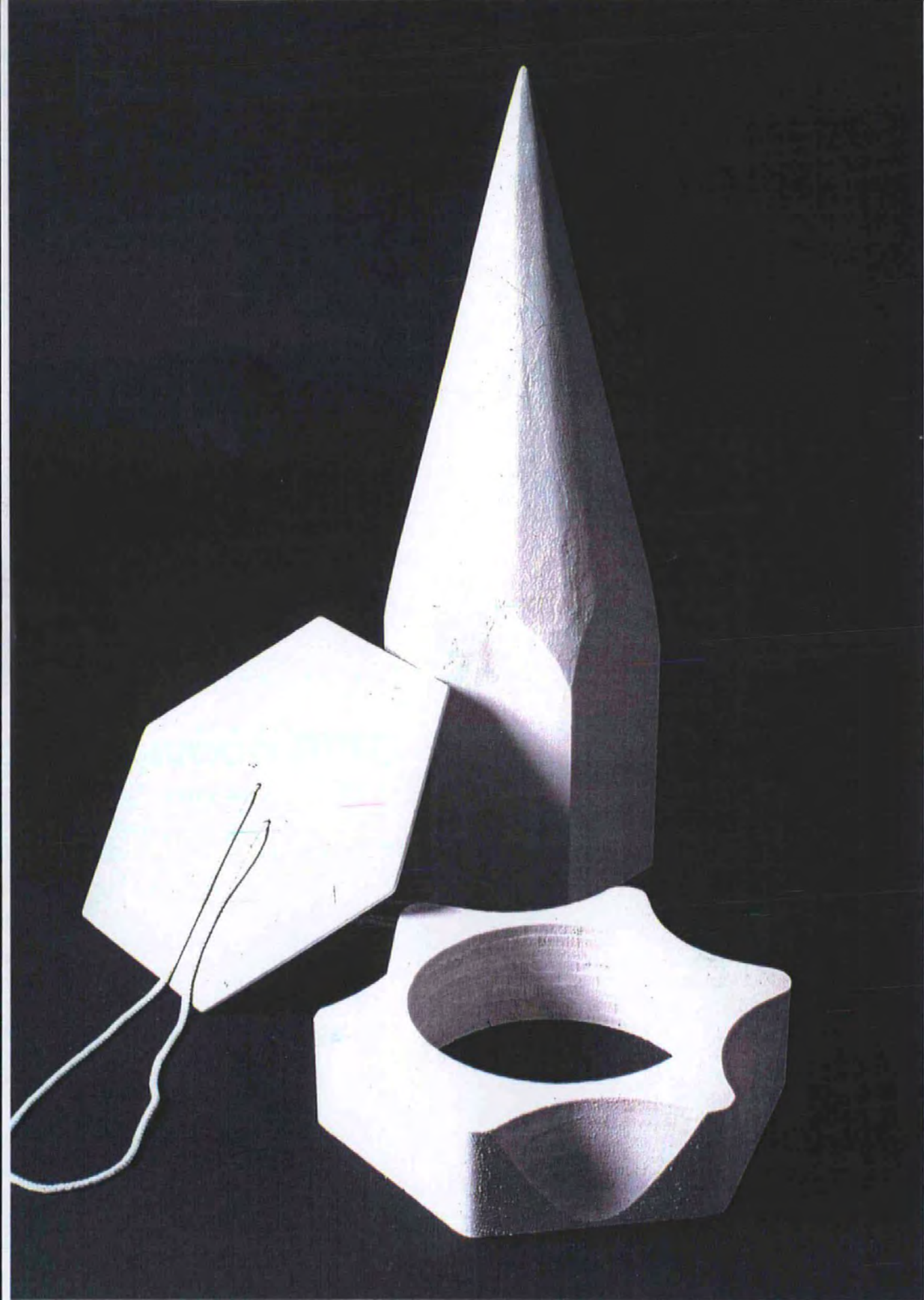
The two versions of *Electric House*, March 1996 and September 1997 [Illustrations 18, 19] shows an evolution of a reference to the recognisable details of the appliance, portrayed as a building, as a power house, and a package for consumption. In the sketchbook page [Illustration 20], an Oldenburg-like adaptor socket is also a monumental building that architecturally appears to reflect the period style and culture of the plugs manufacture. On the page beside this dated power station is an ideal model of a generating set in which the ironic visual reference to appropriate (nameable) parts has a suitable semiotic presence suggesting authentication in language.

The sculpture making process has evidently been influenced by the related theoretical studies, as the rationale for a transfiguration of subject content is found to be dominated by the appearance of objects. This tendency is very noticeable in the punning piece, *Mother of Necessity* March 1996 [Illustration 21] in which the Chinese knitting device is obviously the emblem of a creative process, but here creating itself. The narrative is familiar. One thinks of a graphical puzzle by Escher or a story by Borges.<sup>10</sup> The symbolic identity is universal and only requires a visual gesture to become the meaningful substance of the piece.

Familiarity with the meaningful content of a visual narrative is also invoked by *Event* March 1993 [Illustration 22]. A group of geometric crates conceived earlier in the programme have been modified to expand upon a visual interplay of encapsulating evocative bygone to indicate a fixing of memories. Evidently well used child's play vehicles have been containerised and allow some visual access, but no opportunity for reuse. A nostalgic sense of times remembered is almost tangible, whilst the strength of the crates has fixed the passage of time

<sup>9</sup> In essays entitled 'Aesthetics as Clarification' and 'Architecture and Philosophy' Wijdeveld traces parallel attitudes linking the Kundmannngasse House designs with Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Wittgenstein's clarity of philosophical thinking is illustrated by Occam's Razor, 'simplicity is the hallmark of truth' cited in Tractatus, 5.4541. Wijdeveld P, *Ludwig Wittgenstein Architect*, Thames & Hudson, 1994, p 186-196

<sup>10</sup> Many of Escher's illusory devices have an historical pedigree. Van De Passe produced a drawing of a hand that is drawing itself in his drawing book title page of 1643, Gombrich E, *Art and Illusion*, Phaidon Press, 1962, p 145. There is also the story of an ascetic who dreams himself in Borges L, 'The Circular Ruins', *Fictions*, Jupiter, 1962, p 52-8



23 *All Colours Make White* September 1997, wood, board and cord, ht. 80cm

at the moment of entrapment. The objects are not quite removed from continuous life however, as very precise constructions have allowed handlebars and other evocative details to protrude. The crates are not uniform but carefully proportioned in respect of the objects contained. Such is the delicacy of the enwrapment that the objects appear to occupy their spaces, ideas engender concepts.

A perceptual acknowledgement of the object's appearance is immediate and a sense of the sculptural expression generally precedes consideration of the organised content. But what if the choice of objects depicted is somehow independent of a recognisable functional character? What then would constitute the initial stages of a sculptural communication? To address these points subsequent works were conceived so that the expressive vehicle initiated a clearer evaluation of the primacy of a sculptural intention.

#### **Group 4 — Appearance, Form and Meaning**

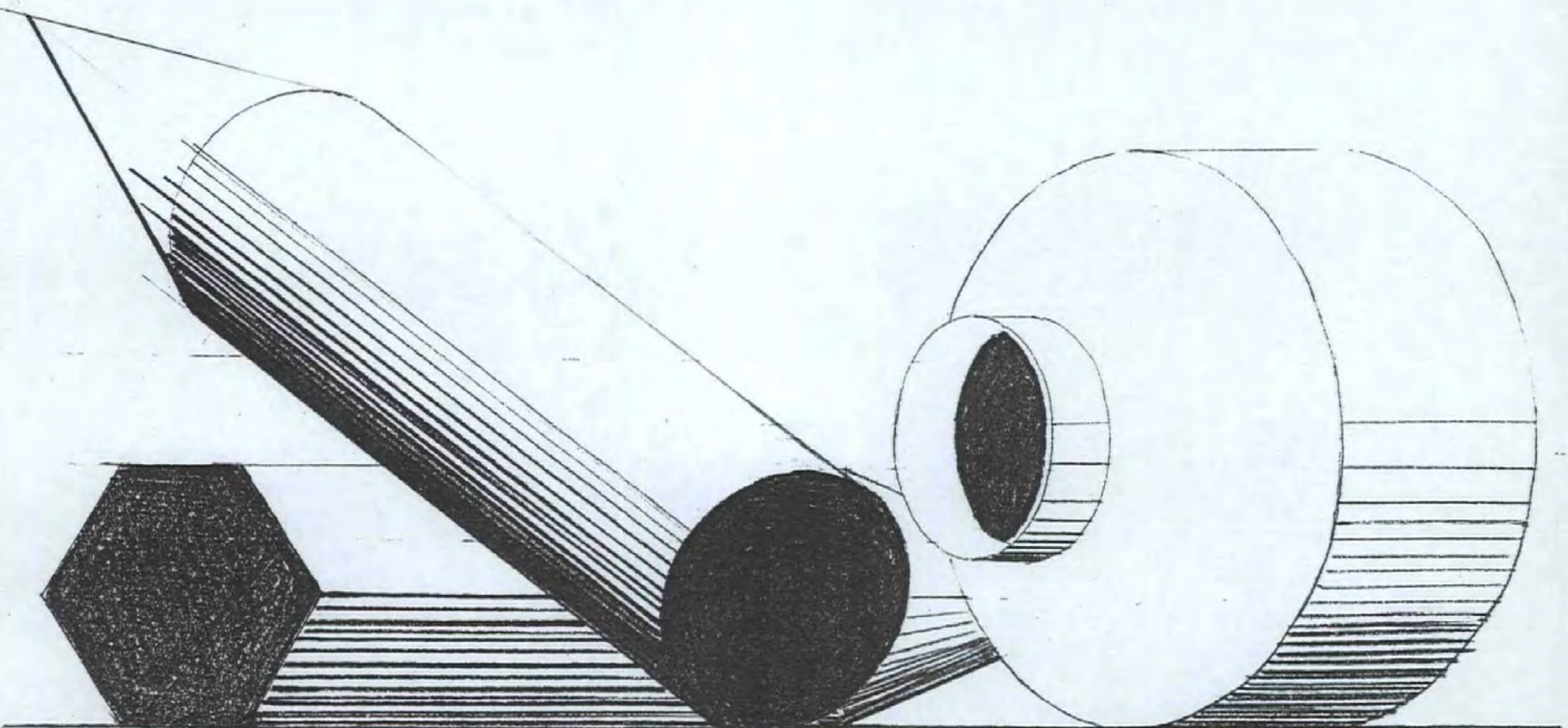
In a reversal of Wittgenstein's supremacy of a scheme of spatial proportion governing the architectural plan,<sup>11</sup> the 'identity' of a sculptural purpose was communicated as the plan of its own sculptural appearance. The only purpose for bringing diverse prismatic elements together is to satisfy a classification of similar base-plan shapes. The sculptural appearance of the partially recognisable objects becomes a secondary, if not ambiguous or possibly misleading, function of the intended communicative organisation.

In a tripartite juxtaposition of hexagonal images, *All Colours Make White* September 1997 [Illustration 23], the contrasted scales of three objects and their diverse appearances have been standardised to emphasise a compositional coherence and to subordinate literal description. In this way the homogeneous, material appearances supersedes the functional purpose of each object, which is

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<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein had met and was influenced by Adolf Loos before working on the Vienna house. Loos represented the 'objective' school of design, whose concepts favoured a system of spatial organisation that supplanted adherence to the traditional ground plan. For Wittgenstein, the thinker, 'functionalism' was concerned with the elimination of any architectural attribute that was not necessary. Simplicity became a moral and aesthetic tool. The Vienna house was conceived as a spatial organisation of balanced proportions, not as a ground plan of designated areas. Wijdeveld P, 'Ludwig Wittgenstein and Adolf Loos' in *Ludwig Wittgenstein Architect*, Thames & Hudson, 1994, p 30-37





24 *Regular Prisms* drawing, 40 x 18cm

seen as purely connotative in the context of a collection of hexagons.

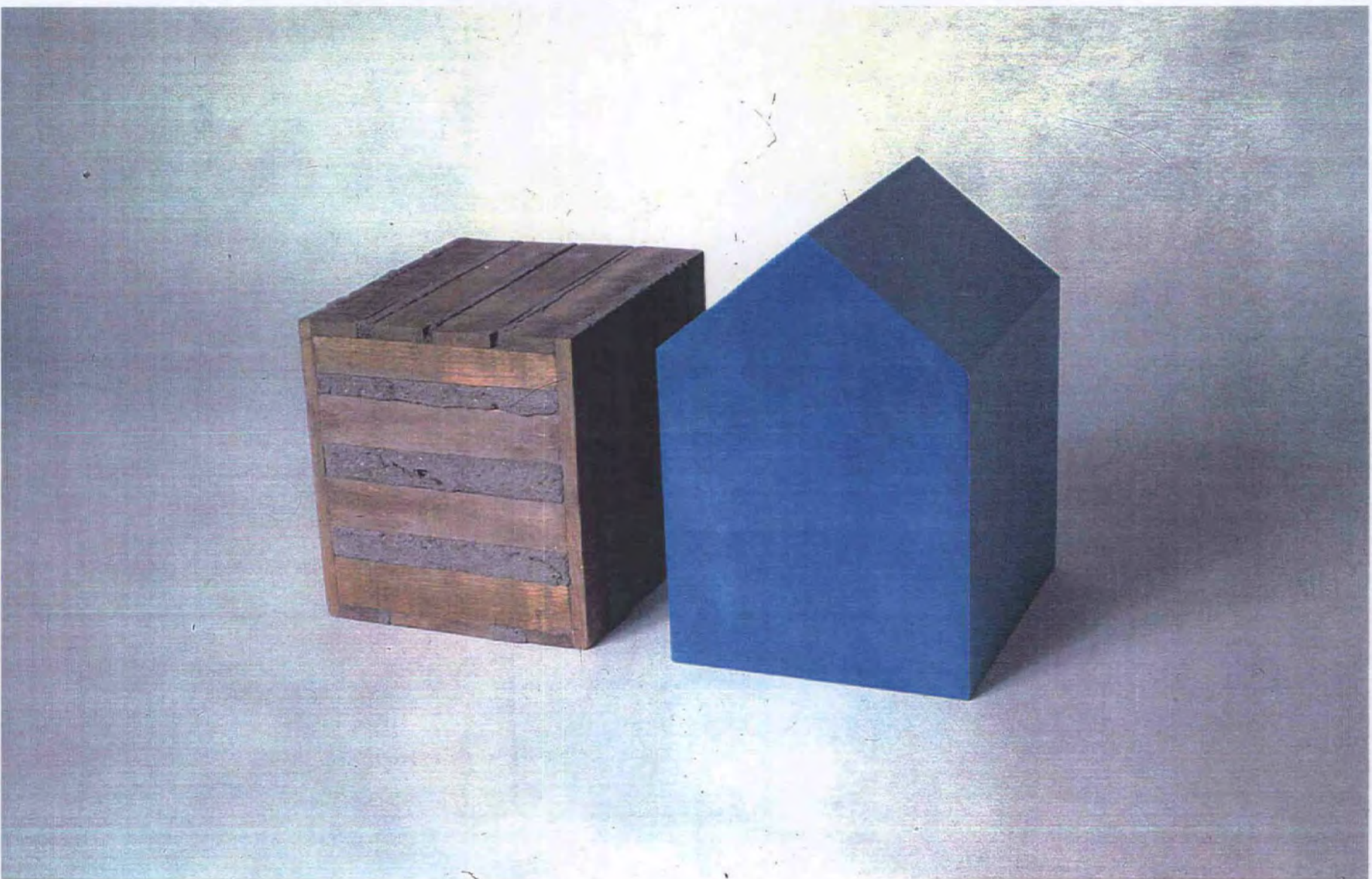
The objects are readable only as general referents to indistinct objects. A pencil-like shape ambivalently suggests the monumentality of a church steeple, whilst the enlarged machine component is only partially reminiscent of a plastic screw fitting, or the coronet pattern of a droplet disintegrating as it enters the surface of a liquid from a great height. A shaped board has the gross appearance of a spinning-disc toy, a device that might be used in a science lesson to demonstrate that spectral colours can be merged to produce the appearance of white.

White is the 'illusory' medium of this group, it is the surface and the prominent appearance of the sculpture. All three object facets of the sculpture are fashioned in painted wood, the substance of the unassociated, the illusory medium of the theatre stage set. The ghostly presence of this superficial homogeneity, coupled with the geometric interplay of hexagons and circles raises a strong sense of gestalten in this collection.

Yet in the presentation of such a group there still comes into play a sense of performing-into-meaning, as the steeple points upwards, the disc spirals into space and the circular boss grips the firm ground, securely and precisely. Apparently the purpose of these objects as descriptors remains ambivalent and unresolved, as the observer's innate desire to make sense of signifiers. The significance of arrangement, in this piece, and the disparate nature of the objects so assembled, can only emphasise a coming together in the connotative sense of the underlying sign-to-signifying functions of sculptural expression.

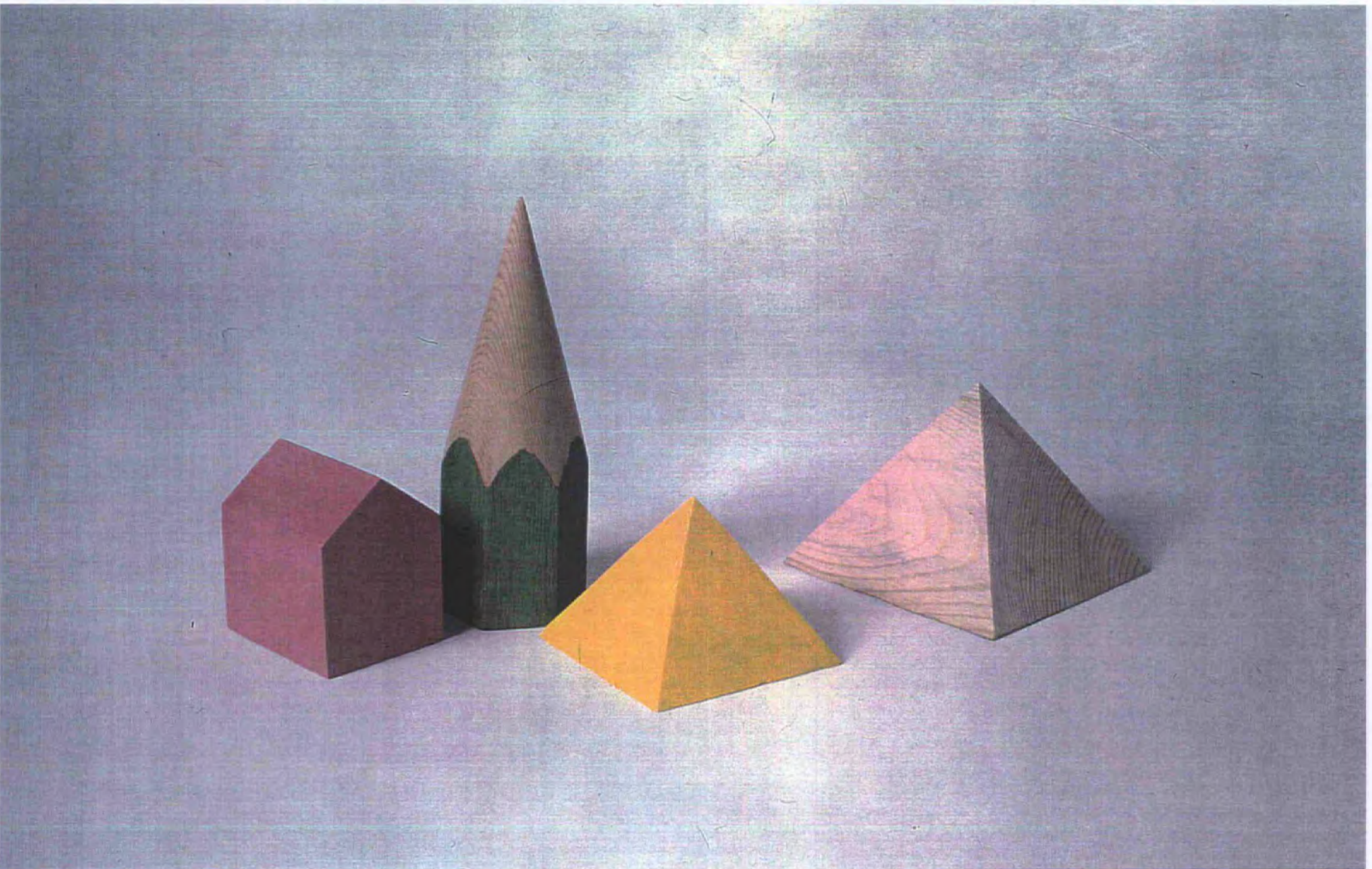
So it is in the drawing, *Regular Prisms* May 1997 [Illustration 24], in which an hexagon section and circles are the generating motifs in the depiction of weighty prisms, monumental pencil shapes, with a can. In the manner of an engineer's elevation the visual referents appear to be analytical and denotational. The drawing is a stylised indication of illusory solid constructions, but the delineation of geometric references are both the expressive substance of the drawing and purely conceptual referents to mathematical figures. The





25 *Little Boxes* October 1997, wood and concrete, ht. 24cm





26 *Cube Root* November 1997, wood, ht. 16cm



drawing is presented as a reference to the conceptual knowledge of ideal figures. There is also a separate experience of an allusion to a spatial composition and the presentation of forms, that are generated by the same polysemic geometric figures. Hence it is claimed that, in this drawing and the previous sculpture, the communicative content is the multiple representations of illusory images, fundamental components 'known' as conceptual linguistic identifiers and the visual quality of the work that constitutes an evocative art 'language'.

### **Group 5 — Metaphors and meaning**

In combining the groups of objects described previously a process of activating a controlled mechanism of communication was deemed more important than the realisation of a conventional sculptural aesthetic. In the next set of works conceptual analysis is the only factor that determines the nature of the product. In an attempt to form a 'language' of objects that themselves can form a definition of a meaningful objecthood, the practical research addresses the need to identify visual 'language' reflexively by describing itself in material form.

The bland geometry of the cuboid forms, discussed above, can trigger a conversion from the abstract to the potency of imagery that invokes identification, as in *Little Boxes* October 1997 [Illustration 25]. The form becomes a shapely idea that can be seen as an epithet, an indexical sign of deferred meaningfulness, or the embodiment of the familiar through the grammatical<sup>12</sup> media of description and imitation. Objects become metaphorical and, as with the tropes of language, either stand in for a concept, or can evoke a pattern of concepts that imply accepted constructs of extended meaning; as with a familiar phrase that hardly needs to be presented in full to be understood.

A triadic group, *Cube Route* November 1997 [Illustration 26], demonstrates this embodiment of meaningfulness in three categories of metaphorical

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<sup>12</sup> Grammar is really the theory of syntactic structures rather than word strings, since it accounts for grammatical relations between sentences and must postulate real, though hidden, levels of syntactic representation. See 'Grammar' in Honderich T, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p 324

presentation. Three objects are presented as distinctive geometric solids fashioned in the non-associational medium of painted wood. An interpretation of each object respectively indicates the description of a pencil; an emblematic 'house' motif<sup>13</sup>; and determinative<sup>14</sup> of a pyramid. The pencil image functions as a descriptive trigger for the apperception (identification by association with existing ideas) of the actual item. The 'house' is an emblem and does not rely upon imical reference but engages an idiomatic, picto-grammatical and metonymic sign process that directs a rhetorical conception of 'Monopoly' property, homeliness and urban culture. The pyramid represents both the mathematical classification of geometric configurations and the precisely shaped prompt significant of ancient Egypt.<sup>15</sup> The pyramid is a classifying concept and a metaphor. As a visual device, it is also a synecdoche. The spreading to base and the upward pointing figuration is read, in the context of Egyptian archaeology, as both the architectonic repository of the soul and simultaneously the symbol of a transcendence to immortality.

This group of objects represents a significant departure from the previous sculpture making process. As a conceptual device, it is least concerned with the installatory presentation of an art form, even though the 3D character of the material solids is essentially sculptural. The shapeliness of the imagery is not the concrete exterior of the aesthetic sculptural appearance in this case, but a 'diagrammatic' convention, a concept of geometric constructs that stand in for words.<sup>16</sup> The sculptural objects form a concrete typography and intrinsic to this

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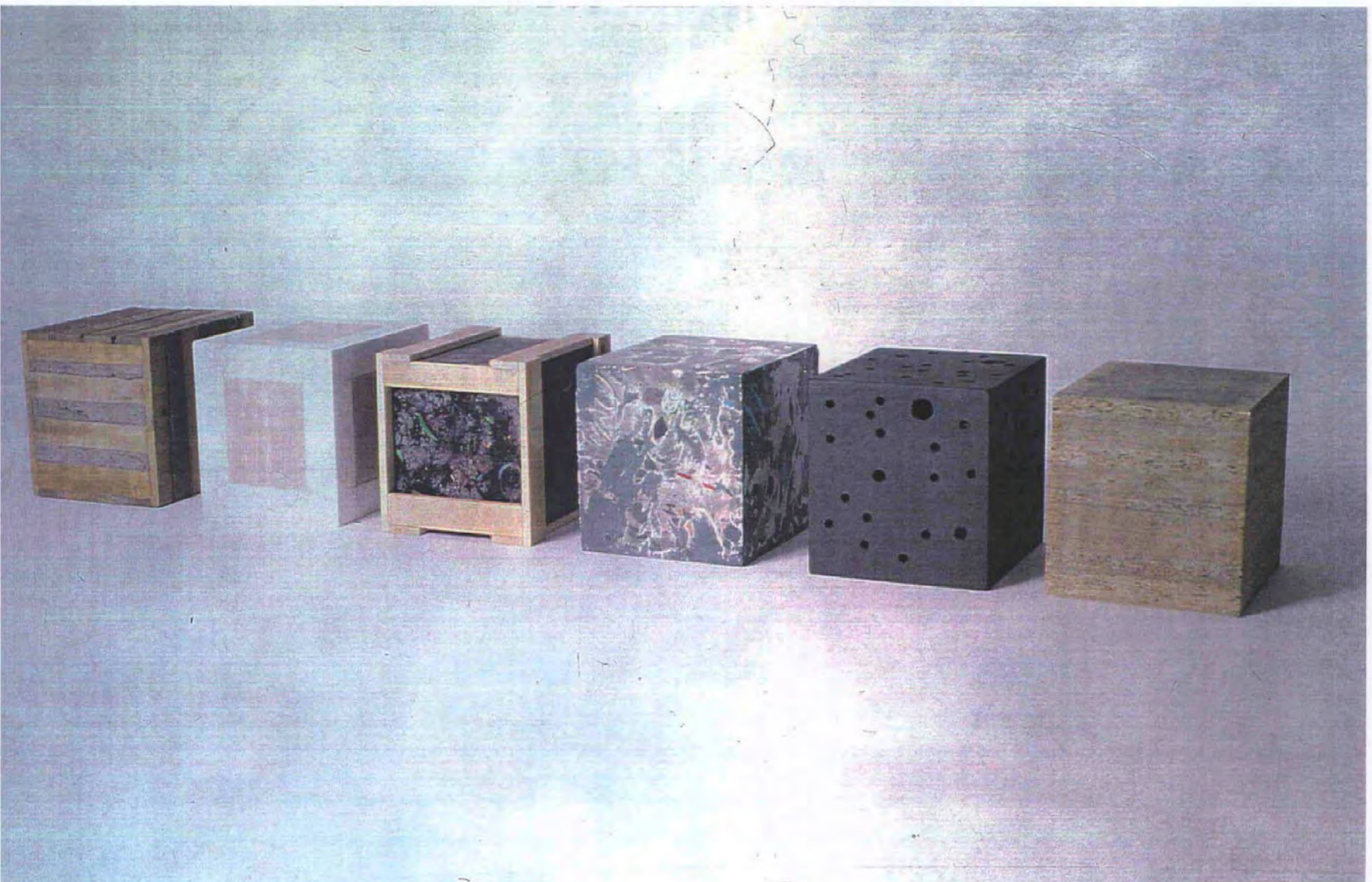
<sup>13</sup> See analysis of Cragg's *Houses in a Fjord*, Section Three, p 43

<sup>14</sup> In the classification of the function of signs the *determinative* invokes a designation without referring to a precise notion. It is *indexical*.

<sup>15</sup> In the process of a linguistic naming-into-being the identity, or conceptual presence of the Pyramids is probably more prevalent than the abstract geometric figure, yet one is the generic identity of the other.

<sup>16</sup> Reference to the early Latin grammarian Varro and the dyadic language/cognition theories of the Analogists and Anomalists is relevant. An analogical view maintains that reality is reflected in the grammatical structuring of language. The contrary view is that language is not 'conventional' but 'natural', anomalic rather than analogical.

Furthermore, Varro's etymology connected words and things. The origin of primitive words, the basic, indispensable elements of language, corresponded to Pythagorus' four philosophical categories: body, place, time, and action. Hence language was systemised according to the coordinates of a system of ideas. Language was seen as a philosophical, conceptual systematization of signifieds. Kristeva J, *Language the Unknown*, Columbia University Press, 1989, p 118-9



27 *Doing Words* autumn 1997, wood, concrete, ht. 18cm





28 *Doing Words*, detail, autumn 1997, ht. 18cm



material arrangement is an organisational grammar ordering the formulation of significance. This rudimentary sculpture is the concrete embodiment of visual thought modelling. It is the visual equivalent of a dictionary entry in which words present the meaning of a word, phrase or concept. It is also the refutation of a reference quoted in the opening discussion of an Art/Language Homology.

Art does not have the function to signify but to show; the semantic function of art 'is not a criterion of its aesthetic quality.'<sup>17</sup>

This ideographic demonstration exposes the raw issues central to this investigation of a sculpture/language homology, which is here being fully integrated within the material conventions of a sculpture 'language' itself.

### **Group 6 — Sequences, phrases and concepts**

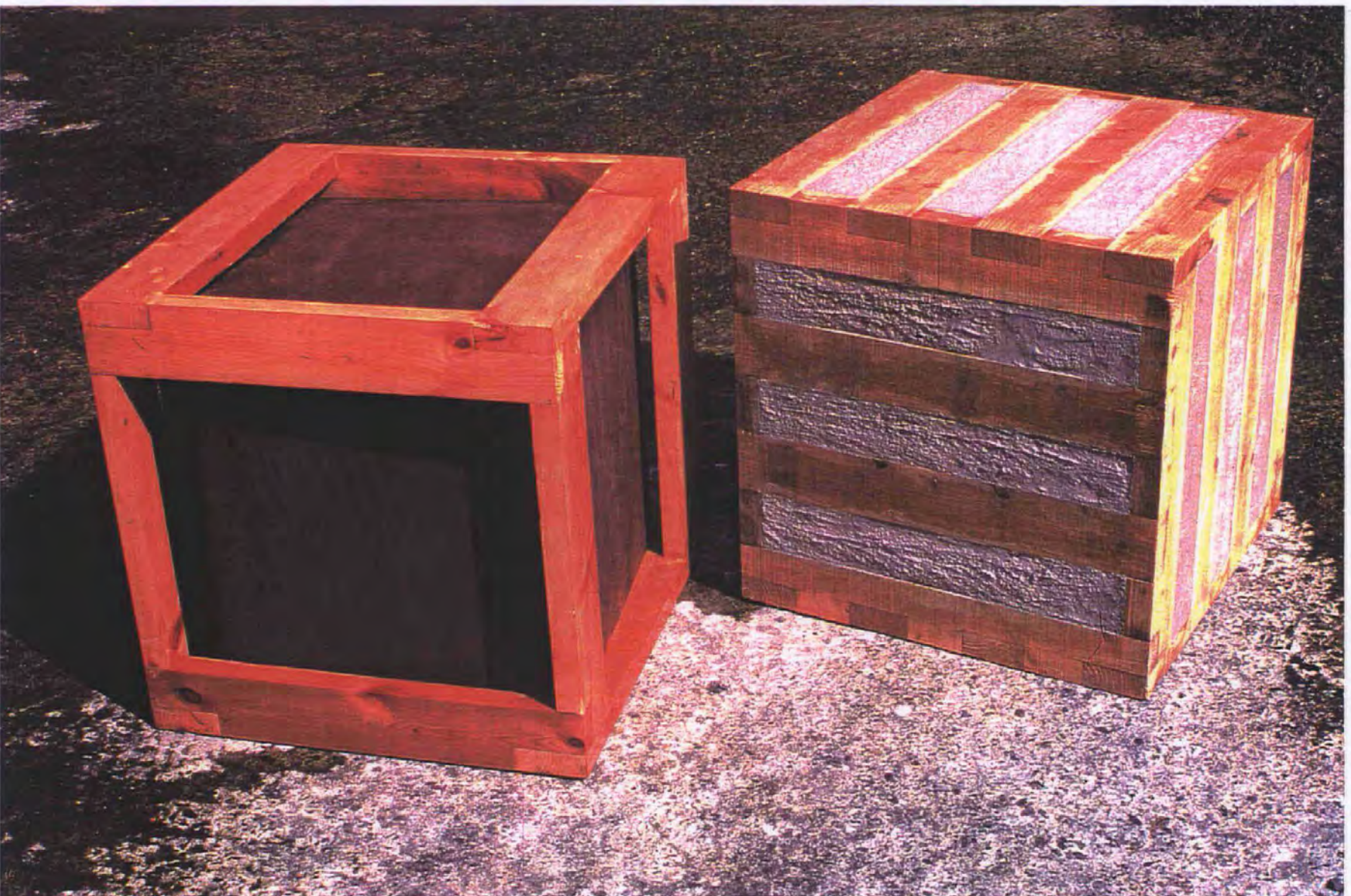
This aesthetic/discursive content dichotomy is further explored in *Doing Words* autumn 1997 [Illustration 27, 28] in which diverse material qualities are contrasted with the formal appearance of serried ranks of uniformly proportioned, cuboid objects.

The units are made in various ways, cast in composite materials, constructed of board, or laminated. The internal material composition appears to lend a prominent tactile quality to some, whilst others are perceived as geometric, abstract entities. The simple geometric forms are intentionally devoid of reference to familiar objects. They are not recognisable through association and are therefore unambiguous of possible connections. A tangible presence is defined by the arrangement and relationship of the uniform exterior dimensions and a sense of diverse material appearances.

Various constructional processes are evident. The outward appearances of these units alternates between a simplification of objects to unitary forms and the enrichment of the image content in a sequential arrangement. Grouped together the positioning suggests a series governed by the sequence of consideration. In one direction a stripping away of imagery reveals a material plenitude, whilst read in a different order considerations of structural

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<sup>17</sup> Dufrenne M, 'L'art est-il langage?', *Revue d'Esthétique*, 1966, p 20



29 *Synonyms* March 1998, wood, steel and concrete, 60cm cube

organisation prevail.

The individual units in this set of images are interchangeable or can be isolated in subgroups. Identity appears to be reliant upon context and the relative position of each object affects the consequential interpretation. This is the game of *Consequences* or the polysemic signs in Calvino's travellers' stories,<sup>18</sup> as the units of potential meaning are like pictograms or ideograms grouped to form the equivalent of linguistic phrases. Calvino:

in trying to line up tarots at random . . . realised the tarots were a machine for constructing stories . . . conjuring up all the stories that could be contained in a tarot deck . . . constructing a kind of crossword puzzle made of tarots instead of letters, of pictographic stories instead of words. The patterns became so complicated (they took on a third dimension, becoming cubes, polyhedrons). [He] felt that the game had a meaning only if governed by ironclad rules, an established framework of construction.<sup>19</sup>

In a scrutiny of the sculpture one finds a fullness of material qualities and a volumetric physicality constrained by tangible and conceptual frameworks, as if the *idea* is filling with an encyclopaedic mass of concretised referents to signification. This work appears to be idiomatic, yet there is a purposeful non-familiarity intended that encourages the viewer to reflect upon relationships of subject to object, object to object, material encapsulated as form and the assembly of the mental constructs of rational interpretation.

There is a sense of wanting to handle and to move the pieces, but the cuboid objects exhibited on the ground hint at, though are too large to fit comfortably with an allusion to board games. Moreover the material diversity suggests the sequential variation of a sampler, or an haptic lexicon in the conformation of Braille. The diverse blocks are markers coordinating a spatial matrix, each describing an evolutionary performance into the solid state.

Of an intentionally different scale, a pair of rugged cubes, *Synonyms March* 1998 [Illustration 29], appear to be equally enigmatic, but exhibit a strong sense of duality and sequential evolution. Apparently massive and very heavy, the cubes must be mechanically lifted, yet their dimensions are still reminiscent of portable packing cases and tea chests. The skeletal bones of a defining

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<sup>18</sup> Calvino I, *Castle of Crossed Destinies*, Secker & Warburg, 1977

<sup>19</sup> Author's note, Calvino I, *Castle of Crossed Destinies*, Secker & Warburg, 1977, p 126-7



volumetric density retains some reference to the previous conceptualisation of geometric configurations, but now the matter of sculptural generation swells out of the interior voids, or is discovered as the nascent art in a void.<sup>20</sup>

As attention passes from one cube to the other, a duality appears to animate a sense of dialogue. There is also a sense of the containment of an inner energy, of a massive material swelling to the surface boundaries like the incoming tide filling all spaces and then retracting to an interior volume that is precise and dense, like the formation of an igneous rock crystal. These pieces are markers, not of a spatial matrix, but of a series of changes in time to be interpreted as constructed meaning.

### **Future Projects**

The progressive simplification of these latter sculptures and the emerging importance of geometric properties indicates the possibility of further thresholds in a conceptualisation of language as an ideal form of sculpture.

The figurative concepts of geometry are ideal objects. The sense of a geometric configuration can be indicated by an object or diagram but the actual concept of the geometric figure is an ideological conceptualisation defining a perfect shapeliness.

The later sculptures, described above, were conceived as reinterpretations of organised, semantic constructions and polysemic symbol sequences. The symbolic presentations of diverse forms have referred to metaphorical identities and to the linguistic functions of those metaphors. Progressively the work has begun to annexe the idiographic concepts of geometry. It is anticipated that future works will proceed to align both of these systems of conceptual constructs of form linked by the 'language' of mathematical identity. The cube, pyramid and semicylinder have appeared throughout this project and have

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<sup>20</sup> In this reading of sculpture forming a significant material presence I am mindful of Germano Celant's claims for an ontological power of matter revealed in his poetic analysis of Cragg's work. 'Art relates to its raw materials and develops parallel to the movements [endeavours] of the artists with which it enters into a reciprocal dialogue'. Translated from Celant C, Tony Cragg, Charta, 1992, p 10



represented various types of metaphorical signification. In this investigation of identity, such geometric configurations have been, until now, a descriptive embodiment of object appearance. In future works the geometric form must be confronted as an element of pure conceptual language.

## 4.2 Curatorial Projects

Initial considerations shaping this research programme raised questions about the location of the content of the investigations. Was the notion of an homologous 'language' an inherent function of all sculpture? Was 'language' an evolving function of contemporary sculpture? Is it that contemporary sculpture has evolved as a communicating medium through 'linguistic' determination?

The chosen period of contextualisation, that of the past thirty years, is represented by the example of Tony Cragg's evolving practice which appropriately connects with so many formative influences and issues relevant to this study. Whilst Cragg's practice is a model exemplar, it is recognised that his work was not realised specifically as a demonstration of this thesis and that comparative paradigms must be brought into the analysis. An involvement with a range of contemporary communication conventions was sought therefore, through collaborations that would allow for critical dialogues with the subjects of these studies.

To create a meaningful interface that exposes a diversity of communication strategies, two experimental, curatorial projects have been conceived in which artists were invited to develop contextual modes of contemporary practice. Both projects have been initiated in collaboration with independent curators and the artists themselves, to effect a dialogue that identifies rationales used in the shaping discursive communication processes. The complementary functions of the curator and artist bring intuitive ideas into visual form and enables a structured interpretation that subsequently directs a viewer's conceptualising responses. Strategic narratives are built into the context of a curatorial scheme to focus on the prominence of a readable content as a discursive rhetoric.





30 Cornelia Parker, *Ha-Ha* June 1993, salad bed, 3.5 x 1.6m





31 Yong Phaophanit, *Litterae lucernes* June 1993, neon tube, 50cm wide

One exhibition project was realised in 1993, the next currently awaits confirmation of funding and if successful will be realised as this research project is concluded.

### **'Ha-Ha, Contemporary Art in an Eighteenth Century Park'**

The first curatorial project produced an exhibition of sited work by fourteen artists.<sup>21</sup> Staged during 1993 in the National Trust's Killerton Park and Spacex Gallery, Exeter, the curatorial contextualisation of this exhibition was conceived as a responsive reading of an historical and cultural place, whilst simultaneously introducing a didactic review of prominent contemporary practices.

The curatorial subject, the site itself, presented a variety of cultural markers, architectural features, museum collections, landscaped environs and arboreal acquisitions. The invited artists, selected for the diversity and innovation of their practices, responded to the signs of a cultural heritage with a reflexive narrative that portrayed current mores.<sup>22</sup> Entitled 'Ha-Ha' the show exposed a social and cultural divide that was symbolically represented by the metaphor of an hidden ditch. A floral ideogram in that trench, a salad parterre by Cornelia Parker [Illustration 30], was emblematic of scissors that cut along an imaginary divide betwixt tenanted farmland and the manicured terrace lawns. But this gesture also refers to the imaginary divide separating the cognoscenti from those members of the viewing public less certain of access to contemporary visual 'text'.<sup>23</sup>

Another artist directly addressed the appearance of language by siting textual sculpture in a garden that sported specimens of eastern origin. Vong Phaophanit's illumination piece [Illustration 31] presented an unfamiliar language in Sanskrit characters formed of shaped neon tubes, the visual idiom

<sup>21</sup> Peter Appleton, Audio Arts, Grenville Davey, Anya Galliccio, Antony Gormley, Abigail Lane, Cornelia Parker, Vong Phaophanit, Peter Randall-Page, Colin Rose, Louise Short, Georgina Starr, Sarah Staton and Craig Wood. Blazwick I & Pay P, Ha-Ha, Contemporary British Art in an 18th Century Park, University of Plymouth in collaboration with the National Trust, 1993

<sup>22</sup> Four of these artists, Davey, Phaophanit, Gormley and Parker, were represented at the Turner Prize, one was a previous winner, three featured subsequently, one successfully.

<sup>23</sup> A full analysis of this exhibition is to be found in the Appendix Section and catalogue, Blazwick I & Pay P, 'Ha-Ha' in Ha-Ha, Contemporary Art in an Eighteenth Century Park, University of Plymouth, 1993



of high street shop displays. This emphasis upon anthropological diversity evoked a linguistic multi-layering of significance, as his autobiographical referents represented a culture and its language isolated from their ethnic origins.

The language of the project reflected different readings of reality, categorised by the comparison of the conventionally ordered and natural diversity. Interpretations of the wealth of cultural markers inevitably reflected on an hierarchy of awareness, comprehension and understanding.

### **'Detour'**

A second exhibition project has been prepared and, subject to availability of suitable funding, is intended to coincide with the conclusion of these studies. The context is to be the centre of Exeter, where a curatorial interaction with divers sites will set contemporary practices against the role that time plays in the characterisation of place. The semantic dyad contrasting *site* and *place*<sup>24</sup> is central to a dialogue concerned with mapping the social constructs that shape alternative readings of a municipal environment. Invited artists<sup>25</sup> will engage with the City's public spaces, drawing out and creating meanings 'inherent' to each location through the exploration of fictional and actual references in a presentation of the diversity of contemporary praxis: these includes video, digital, performance and textual works.

To read this curatorial context is to focus on fragments, clues, flecks in a rich mosaic of a compound accretion. In Exeter's Royal Albert Memorial Museum a wall display presents a vivid sense of archaeological layering. At the top a large, realistic photographic panel shows the legs and shoes of contemporary shoppers in the City's street. Beneath street level are the layers of paving, modelled with real samples of relevant materials, concrete, rubble, earth. The various debris of different historical periods are recognisable by the artifacts embedded in a stratified subterranean continuum.

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<sup>24</sup> Newling J, Certainty and Uncertainty (Place and Site), unpublished text, Dublin, November 1995

<sup>25</sup> Juan Cruz, Elizabeth LeMoine, Lone twin, Rachel Lowe, Mariele Neudecker, John Newling and Jem Southam.

Discovered views enhance or obscure a knowledge of the place. In this exhibition the realisation of identities will be partly conceived and mostly framed in an imaginative interpretation of our sense of being in time.

### **4.3 Interpretation of the Practical Investigations**

Practice in the context of this research is concerned with exploration, evaluation and speculation. Deductive inferences are explored through the reflexive processes of working with materially transformed, visual identities in a comparison with language paradigms. The practical investigation is speculative as it assimilates the communication models discussed in a theoretical analysis.

It is not claimed that the sculpture illustrates theoretical concepts, rather it has been made to extend research pathways and provide models for analysis through its own conventions of constructing meaning. To attempt to make sculpture as a demonstration of theory would be to deny the creative nature of the art. It has always been very evident in the studio project that the sculpture making is an intuitive process, wholly concerned with a material realisation of practical connections. The work has produced insights that have illuminated theoretical discussions. An overtly denotative quality of some practical projects has raised concerns about the identity of the practical products. Studio investigations have on occasions tended to function too closely to an overly prescriptive method. Such an over-controlled rationale has raised a question about the aesthetic quality of the work. Is the practical demonstration/investigation of a research project concerned with a language homology a suitable approach for sculpture making? Is the product actually sculpture? Conversely, is the quality of the sculpture an indication of good research?

The answer lies in the clarity of the communication as the visual qualities represent the intentions of the sculptural activity. A visual demonstration purely of specific theory risks subjugating the quality of sculpture and its 'language' to being a mere illustration of the text. It is of paramount importance

that an identified 'language' of sculpture is seen to function convincingly *as* sculpture.

The relationship of practice with theory must be complementary as the art is produced to address the most germane correspondences for analysis and to provide specific reference material for further reflection in the evaluation of theoretical propositions. The experimental combination of visual details exposes to scrutiny the readable nature of the sculptural image and can suggest a comparison with the structures of language. Like the referential quality of word patterns, object images are perceived as having specific, implied and associative functions that replace a reading of sense data with a sense of an intelligible content.

Furthermore, the composition of assembled visual information forms a syntactical hierarchy that enables multiple representational qualities to act as a chain of signifiers. The 'language' of sculpture is identified as the significant organisation of these visual qualities and the ensuing conceptual construction that forms a discursive mode of communication. Sculptures made to expose the communicating 'sense' of conceptually formulated object identities are read according to the progressive functions of hypostatization, identification and cognition modelling. The conceptualisation of 'ideas' implicit in the working of these thought models emanate from the material performances that realises both a denotative and connotative, concretisation of communication.

Certain semiotic and metaphorical functions of language have been identified<sup>26</sup> as particularly relevant to the notion of a correspondence with the expressive conventions of sculpture. The most relevant homologies have been traced in the metaphorical, metonymic and synecdochic functions of ordering; the equivalent of the linguistic tropes of associative meaning that corresponds to the practical application of *Bricolage*. This hierarchy of transferred semantic values is seen to be closely related to concepts explored in Peircean semiotics and annexes the commodity concepts of Barthes' System/Syntagm dyads.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Section Two, p 29-30

<sup>27</sup> Section Two, p 29

Progressively stripped of presentational dressings the practical investigation has explored these divers theoretical frameworks in a studio process in which the work has been pared down to its barest communicable essentials.

The absolute impossibility of sculpture being other than sculpture is recognised. Nevertheless, the works in the context of this investigation are constructed to be 'read' as 'linguistic' interpretations of language constructs. The sculpture is produced as a reflexive, practical theorising, to reflect its own mode of communication within language. In an analysis of the practical work it will be argued that the construction of the sculptural communication and the conceptual functions of language are homologous and that 'for every process there is a corresponding system by which the process can be analysed'.<sup>28</sup>

In this studio project, sculpture has been appraised as both a physical presentation of the vehicle of communication and representation of the interpretive processes of an expressive communication. To perceive a sculptural object is to interpret its appearance in a given context, but seeing is an ideal as seeing gives the impression of perception. Perception is, of itself, illusory in as much as it is only the first stage in the cognition of data. The expectation that the physical appearance of an object is meaningful, anticipates a construction of extended identification through an interpretative reading. Cognition, the formulation of conceptual constructs out of this confrontation with impression, is an interpretation of the tangibility of sculpture, its identity, form, physical organisation and material quality. The perception of sculpture is thus an engagement with a rationality, in activating recognition and the ordering of discursive figurations that draw upon models of existing thought.

This sculpture is connotative as it presents itself as art, but its objects are denotative, and as a visual system it alludes to the engagement with specific

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<sup>28</sup> Hjelmslev and the linguistic conception of the Copenhagen School discussed in Kristeva J, *Language The Unknown*, Columbia University Press, 1989, p 232



modes of communication.<sup>29</sup> To be communicative the sculpture is readable as a systematic formalisation of associations, as visual and semantic elements allow for meaning. The objects themselves are no more a language than is the typography of word patterns, but beyond the physical sculpture engagement with the conceptual constructs of rational interpretation forms the substance of communication.

In these studio studies, object elements are presented as associative units and on one level the 'language' of the sculpture is the play of evocative entities. Changes of scale, materials and context affect an interaction between appearance and associated concepts to challenge the identification of both, the things portrayed and the sculpture's conceptual intention.

This potential for a redirection of meaning allows for, and directs, semantic association in a reading of the sculpture, whilst retaining the signifier's absolute autonomy as the vehicle of communication. The 'one thingness' of unitary form resists being acknowledged as other than its own physical identity, for Gestalt in this context is the 'constant known shape'.<sup>30</sup> Hence there are evidently two axis of communication functioning, as the physically-evocative combination of material forms and the linking of idea fragments cross-reference and coordinate an extension of perceptual experience.

The communicative properties of these products are peculiarly situated in a linguistic classification however, for they are not analogous with the semiotics of pictographical conventions, nor ideographic and certainly no syllabic equivalents present themselves for transliteration. Yet the sculpture incorporates, and functions as, a referential system. It is the embodiment of visual referents, a

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<sup>29</sup> In a distinction introduced by J S Mill, in *A System of Logic*, London, 1843, general attributes are connotative and refer to meaning whilst denotation refers to identifiable things, including proper names, and lack a sense of meaning. Connotators according to Hjelmslev are semiotic units of style, ie a regional language — semantic additions to a primary semantic form. Thus connotation is a semiotic whose expressive mode includes identifiable denotative elements. Thus 'it seems appropriate to view connotators as content for which the denotative semiotics are expression'. Hjelmslev L, (1943) *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1961, p 119

A development of Hjelmslev's connotation theory taken into a glossematic aesthetics of literature defines the work of art as an aesthetic expression plane connotating an aesthetic content. Hjelmslev L, (1943) *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1961, p 119

<sup>30</sup> Reference to Judd and Morris discussed in Fried M, 'Art and Objecthood' (1967) reprinted in Harrison C and Wood P (Eds) *Art in Theory*, Blackwell, 1992, p 822-34

lexiconography of imagery 'recognised' by the viewer, whilst retaining a sense that the ordering of signs firstly heralds the connotative disposition of a communicating medium. The associative imagery of this configured work is itself already identified, labelled, named and classified in language, as object referents are classified as sculpture's readable parts. 'The name means an object. The object is its meaning.'<sup>31</sup>

Although the 'simplicity' of this word/object correspondence was reviewed by Wittgenstein in a later discussion of 'word games',<sup>32</sup> the model is usefully applied to the cognitive building blocks of these sculptures. The readable elements are both the morphology of the physical sculpture and the semantic detail of an expressive vehicle, that in combining its parts, attaches a construction of meaning.

There is little that relates one idea image with another outside of the translation of a literal narrative. All visual and haptic readings are therefore firstly and ultimately only communicated in the systematic purpose of the phatic and discursive modes of a sculptural presentation itself:

Once emblem is set aside, the sculpture is a kit of parts for us to make what we will. We are faced with Borges' *Labyrinths*.<sup>33</sup>

One vindication of the claim to an art/language homology appears in the very essence of the process of making. The production of these examples of a thinking model are always intrinsically a function of the sculpture practice:

What expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language.<sup>34</sup>

What *can* be shown, cannot be said.<sup>35</sup>

Like the 'impossibility of being outside of language'<sup>36</sup> any rational activity,

<sup>31</sup> Wittgenstein L, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (Pears & McGuinness trans.) Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995, 3.203

<sup>32</sup> Fann K, 'Meaning' in *Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy*, Blackwell, 1969, p 63-66

<sup>33</sup> Thompson J, 'Signs of Language' in *The British Art Show. Old Allegiances and New Directions 1979-1984*, Arts Council, 1984, p 96. Particularly apt connections are to be found in Borges JL, 'The Circular Ruins' and 'The Library of Babel' in *Fictions*, (published in 1970 as 'Labyrinths'), Jupiter, 1965, p 52-58, 72-80

<sup>34</sup> Wittgenstein L, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (Pears & McGuinness trans.) Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995, 4.121

<sup>35</sup> Wittgenstein L, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (Pears & McGuinness trans.) Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995, 4.1212

<sup>36</sup> Reference to the linguistic theories of Hjelmslev discussed in Kristeva J, *Language The Unknown*, Columbia University Press, 1989, p 232-3

however mechanically contrived as a visual, material experiment becomes the 'language' form of the contents of its 'text'. It is not possible to make sculptural decisions outside of the 'nature' of that art, but it is possible to use that art to reflect upon other communicating disciplines.

Fundamental to this connotative spirit of language is the sense that metaphorical transcendence represents the possibility of any combination for any communication. The guided perception and organised (rhetorical) acknowledgement of these fragments of meaning have been, it is argued, crucial first stages in defining the studio work as an autonomous *pure* medium of expression. Furthermore, the construction of a cognitive process is the teleological premise that is here presented as essentially linguistic. How then does the semiotic fragment lead the viewer from the visual encounter into a conceptual process that corresponds with the discursive processes of language?

In Calvino's novel *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*,<sup>37</sup> travellers without speech use an interwoven matrix of tarot pictures to signal only the possibility of communicating narrative. The sequences of pictures are pictograms that can suggest sequential developments in time. Images common to overlapping narrative sequences appear to indicate that there is a sense of hypostatization, as connotation indicates that absolute meaning is only determined in the context of formulated significance. Visual connections are constructed and charged with the evocative demonstration of a multi-layered presentation of potential meaning. Meaning is *suggested*, for this is not the overt signage of dedicated symbols. The referents can only indicate the possibility of further constructions or patterns to be found in speculation and intuitive deduction. This 'sign language' does not refer to the alphabet or syllables of a spoken language. It is ideographic in that it suggests the gathering of common experience, or universal, evocative referents. The make-believe is in the interpretation of this pictorial text sequence, in a rational patterning akin to the semantic DIY of *bricolage*.

My sculptural involvement with this summative process presents

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<sup>37</sup> Calvino I, *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, Secker & Warburg, 1977

commonplace objects as both intrinsic commodity values (the hierarchical cultural status of objects for engagement) and the multi-valent symbols of deferred associations. Individual sculptural objects are recognised in the processes of naming the designation of functional purpose. Hence in a process of identification these objects assimilate the annexation of synonymous and metaphorical figurations to extend the visual appreciation of the work as a whole, in an imaginary but systemised construction of meaning.<sup>38</sup>

What corresponds to a determinate logical combination of signs is a determinate logical combination of their meanings. It is only to the uncombined signs that *absolutely any* combination corresponds.<sup>39</sup>

The meaning is in the arrangement of metaphorical referents and, as a cognitive system, the sculpture is indicative of Wittgenstein's language games,<sup>40</sup> with the implication that there is an homologous correspondence linking the material fact with an intellectual acknowledgement.<sup>41</sup>

A descriptive/referencing value of my sculpture is fictional and deferred to the metaphorical processes of association and conceptualisation. The sculpture is defined as artifice, it is not the actual state of its appearance. It is metaphorical and the sculptural ordering of metaphor invokes the totemic hierarchy of metonymy. Metonymy engages a chain of signifiers and asserts a syntagmatic system of conceptual constructions. Hence it is argued that

<sup>38</sup> The interchangeable sequences of a journey and the progress of a song are described by Chatwin. The aboriginal 'acquires ritual knowledge' as a 'dreaming-track' is negotiated/travelled, connecting regions and different cultures by the song sequence. Chatwin B, The Songlines, Picador, 1987, p 64-5

<sup>39</sup> Wittgenstein L, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, (Pears & McGuinness trans.) Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995, 4.466

<sup>40</sup> 'And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres' Wittgenstein L, The Brown and Blue Books, Blackwell, 1958, p 87

<sup>41</sup> For Wittgenstein *a priori* activity is the fundamental state of experiencing the world, whilst logic and aesthetics are reflected in mechanical function which was for him "the paradigm of a logically organised and consistently interlocking... rightness of such thought." Paul Engelmann quoted in Wijdeveld P, Ludwig Wittgenstein Architect, Thames & Hudson, 1994, p 186

The criterion thus sought is Occam's Razor, *simplex sigillum veri* (simplicity is the hallmark of truth) which according to Wittgenstein is the very principle of logic as applied in his theory of architecture (Wittgenstein L, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Pears & McGuinness (trans), Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, 5.4541) and exposed as a principle of logical *showing* in the Kundmannngasse House. Anyone who creates new objects, composes new configurations of facts. The conception of logic in combination with the accomplishment of perfect expression by absolute intuition in an object of art would be the *showing* of the logical form of the object (see Wijdeveld P, 'Aesthetics as Clarification' in Ludwig Wittgenstein Architect, Thames & Hudson, 1994, p 186/9).



beyond the syntax of the sculpture's tangible and material performance, there is a figured grammar of metaphorical connections that orders an extended signification. There is, furthermore, an axiomatic correspondence linking the metaphoric/metonymic dichotomy with the duality of perception and conception, and homologously with the mechanisms of denotation and connotation.

A propositional sign, applied and thought out, is a thought. The totality of propositions is language. A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it.<sup>42</sup>

In searching for an intermediary mode of rationalisation, a 'language' system that apperceives thingness and ultimately engages with cognition, the sculpture, as with language, is concerned with the mind's ability to process information. It is suggested that the sculpture/language homology is demonstrated in these works as the tension between the hierarchic functions of metaphor and metonymy, previously identified in a reading of Cragg's work and the system/syntagma classification of the sculpture's objects.

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<sup>42</sup> Wittgenstein L, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (Pears & McGuinness trans.) Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995, 3.5, 4.001, 4.01.

## Conclusion

Language is not a tool, it is a model.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis has been constructed on the premise that cognitive thought patterns are formulated and revealed within the model of language. Sensory predication is akin to the cognizance of the words and phrases that, used to evoke language concretizes an ideal object. Within this notion of a language-in-general, language is both separate from, and essential to the paraphernalia of communication. Without language these externalisations of intention and the internalisation of thought and knowledge would not have a meaningful form. Thought and communication makes use of language and presupposes language, for there is a certain in-itselfness about language. Without verbal and non-verbal forms of expression, language would be without manifestation.

Heidegger puts language at the threshold of consciousness:

Language makes manifest . . . It does not produce . . . discoveredness. Rather, discoveredness and its enactment of being — understanding as well as interpretation — being grounded in the basic make-up of being-in, are conditions of possibility for something to be manifested. As conditions of being, they enter into the definition of the essence of language, since they are conditions of possibility for such manifestation.<sup>2</sup>

Central to this debate is the proposition that the physical appearance of sculpture is both the manifestation and the vehicle of its mode of communication. To engage with the signifying content of a sculptural communication system is to seek an ideal in the divers, conceptual processes of ordering thought to formulate meaning. Furthermore, it is proposed that the ideal of the sculptural communication is synonymous with the ideal object of language, the (pre-)sense of meaning that can be read from off the surface of the work; providing that the viewer re-inacts the artist's operation of ideation. The sculpture is complete, or realised, when the real object and the ideal object coincide.<sup>3</sup> In the process of making, in the dialogue with materials and dialectical conceptualisation of form, the artist moves towards an ideal that is not known

<sup>1</sup> Dufrenne M, *Language and Philosophy*, trans. H Veatch, Greenwood Press, 1968, p 22

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger M, *History of the Concept of Time*, Indiana University Press, 1985, p 262

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from a discussion about the the painter's practice as it relates to language, Dufrenne M, *Language and Philosophy*, trans. H Veatch, Greenwood Press, 1968, p 86

or realised in advance. For the viewer, there is a similarly imaginative experience of discovery in confronting the work, and for both the artists and the viewer the ideal object is the goal of the respective creative endeavours.

The intelligible content of the sculpture is to be found in the poetic arrangement of its material referents that are to be discovered, as indices of potential sensory data. Hypostatization, apperception and perception relates to an eidectic<sup>4</sup> proto-knowledge, as conception orders the potential structures of cognition. The implied layering of these concepts: apperception, perception, eidos and conception, is in itself an indication of the complex telos of sculpture. Appreciation of the sculpture involves an interaction between visual, haptic<sup>5</sup>, conceptual and psychological levels of awareness, comprehension and experiential knowledge. Parts are named, verbal 'tags' enable comprehension and the assembled signs evoke an awareness of symbols that metaphorically form associations and thought patterns in the construction of narrative and meaning. All constitute a creative, expressive and cognitive understanding that inextricably interweaves the functions of sculpture with, and within, the formation of language. That haptic awareness leads to a conceptually constructed appreciation, is implicit in the fullest appreciation of sculptural significance and the ordering of cognitive thought in language. In doing so the process of ordering perceptual data is compared with the already known models of thought that have been constructed of previous experiences. This mental evaluation of messages involves existing language models and a recall of all relevant informative modes of communication, to affect the fullest comprehension of meaning.

Language, in this thesis, refers to the broadest sense of an ideological modelling system concerned with activating communication and includes the signifying presentation of sculpture. There is similarly a temptation to broaden

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<sup>4</sup> Eidectic, a form of clear mental image.

<sup>5</sup> It is necessary to reiterate that the perception of sculpture is not a wholly visual experience. It is very rarely that a viewer will physically handle the work but will travel around the piece to gather appropriate multiple impressions and with a wealth of visualisations will refer to haptic cognisance and constructions of reality. See Read H, *Art of Sculpture*, Faber and Faber, p 30-1 and *Education Through Art*, Faber and Faber, 1943, p 90

a view of sculpture's discursive properties beyond the meaningful content of the actual work, to include any encounter with materials, objects and ultimately all physical stimuli that activate and inform the senses. To argue for such an expanded field would be to address communication theory en masse as behavioural and psychological responses to the world of things. Such a generalisation would be misleading however, for sculpture presents a distinctly focussed and essentially creative, performing, engagement with this world of things. Sculpture, as a metaphysical experience of a discursive communication, is set apart therefore, from the signification of general objects.

The crux of this thesis is the specialised interest in the status of sculpture's 'language'. A 'language' of sculpture has been identified here as a distinct mode of communication peculiar to sculpture, but that is seen to have certain analogous qualities and homologous correspondences with language. This thesis initially acknowledged Aristotle's semantic classification in which similarity is ordered according to the differentiation of analogy and homology. It is proposed that the complexities of sculpture and language can be categorised precisely in this way. The communicative intentions of sculpture and language present certain similarities that have been seen to function analogously and as a correspondence, the interrelated but discrete forms of both communications are homologous. Such distinctions are not exclusive but are differentiated within these composite systems, for both communications are interrelated and both are connotative and denotative. Connotative because both communications must reveal themselves as systems that present the language's identification for use. Denotative because direct interpretation is necessarily informative of a cognitive condition, since both modes of communication are fundamentally concerned with the realisation of a meaningful content. Connotation implies its potential whilst denotation marks the site of language:

Denotation is the essence of language, because it frees the symbol from its original instinctive utterance and marks its deliberate use, outside of the total situation that gave it birth.<sup>6</sup>

The markers that direct the creative and interpretive passage from the

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<sup>6</sup> Langer S, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University. Press, 1960, p 133





32 *Sign Signified* in the studio context, December 1997

visually encountered to the cognitive structures of communication, have been shown to be analogous to the tropes of a semantic formulation of thought. The object-entities, commodity and material qualities are the 'language' components of the sculpture that stand in for the metaphors and metonymys of language. An appreciation of the connotative quality of sculpture acknowledges sculpture's poetic relation to, and the ordering of, the world of things, whilst the denotative signs of sculpture's object-entities places the art in an homologous relationship with the semiosis of language.

The segregation of sculpture from the generality of visual occurrence is in respect of its communicative intention and precise engagement with the constructions of communicated thought. In this thesis, a view of sculpture appears to be inextricably linked with the analogous and homologous interfunctions of language. The rules of this engagement, the grammar of the language and the structural presentation of sculpture are timeless,<sup>7</sup> whilst the thought, utterance or signal, and an encounter with a sculptural work are historical events. A contemporary realisation of that event is therefore also a confrontation with the spatio-temporal and anthropological concepts, as the formation of the idea is fundamental to the ontology of communicative thought: 'To master a language is to move within a certain universe of meaning.'<sup>8</sup>

In a comparison of the meaningful concepts of language and the poetic material presentations of sculpture, there is discovered three levels of expressive meaning, as language obtains its 'ideal objectivity'. There is a level of world ideal objectivity, when a concept can be commonly recognised to be a familiar thing. There is the level of universal sense, in which a concept is recognisable but free from association with any one particular signifier. Thirdly, a level of absolute ideal objectivity defines the ideal object itself, as a free ideality that is infinitely open for it is a product of language in general.

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<sup>7</sup> 'As soon as language is considered as a system, an ideal object, it is, a timeless object'. Like the game of chess it is non-temporal (Husserl's omnitemporal) the rules are valid for all times and places, but the move is an event in history. Hence 'an individual word is not explained by its history or etymology but by its place and function within the system'. Dufrenne M, *Language and Philosophy*, trans. H Veatch, Greenwood Press, 1968, p 28-9

<sup>8</sup> Dufrenne M, *Language and Philosophy*, trans. H Veatch, Greenwood Press, 1968, p 35

The ideal being sought in these inquiries is very clearly noticeable by the use of geometric imagery in the studio project. The diagram, or the construct that refers to geometry is not the actual concept. The concept of the geometric figure lies beyond language for it can only be *described* by language or the sculptural representation.

In these studies, analysis of relevant theory has been measured against a reading of Cragg's example and further extended in an inflexive studio project. Several hypotheses have emerged from the different considerations:

1) Sculpture is a mode of communication that, like language, functions as a system of signs. Object imagery often functions iconically whilst the material composition and appearance of the work is indexical.

2) Presentational semiotics and the metaphorical generation of narrative can be identified in the different conditions of arranged objects. Sculpture and language are both presented as systems of identifiable units ordered by syntactical conventions. The classification of associative constructs is a function of the conceptualisation of meaningful content.

3) Like language, sculpture as a mode of communication is active only in the conceptualising processes of cognition.

4) Sculpture is unique as a form of expression; as a system of communication it is essentially untranslatable. Nevertheless, certain cognitive functions of sculpture are reliant on linguistic classification models. In this respect it can be argued that some conceptual functions of sculpture *are within language*, or that *they are homologous with linguistic processes*.

5) The meaningful identity of the sculpture object itself and the concept of 'readable' imagery is presented as cognitive 'language' referents.

Many of the deductions above are commonly accepted as axiomatic conventions governing creative practice. They are not presented here as innovatory precepts, but as recognised crossroads at which a wealth of detail, distilled in these studies, has aimed to enlighten the art/language homology debate.

Dufrenne's caveat of 1966 proposed a functional divide that fundamentally separated art (normally taken to mean painting) as he knew it and erudite definitions of language then being currently analysed in a structuralist debate. However, in the autumn of 1959 Dufrenne delivered a series of public lectures at Indiana University, that were published in 1963.<sup>9</sup> This very readable and well structured view of the functions of language includes some discussion of the communicational purposes of art. Writing about the creative process Dufrenne reasons that:

The same dialectic is operative between the idea and the spoken word as between the project and the work. . . The intention that is supposed to mean or signify something, as Husserl said, is empty until filled with speech [manifest as language]. Moreover, this intention is known only when it is realised. . . intelligence commands speech. But it does not command it from above, in the manner in which art uses its tools. For thought does not even know or recognise itself outside of language that both fixes and arouses it. Like the stroke of the painter, thought is a mixture of spontaneity and reflection: it precedes itself in the words that it finds; it is itself reflected in these words. . . In this sense philosophy is always philology.<sup>10</sup>

In this limited sense it is possible to comprehend Dufrenne's denial of an art/language homology, as he sees creative acts being a remote function of thought to be filled and fulfilled by speech. But such a mechanism is too simplistic. The sculptures analysed in the rhetorical, discursive and even interlocutorial examples of Cragg's modes of communication clearly indicate a richer engagement with language, with cognizance engaged with 'languages' — with the means of communication available to the sculptor. This thesis has presented the hierarchical ordering of the signifying metaphors of sculpture as being a semantic interpretation of objects, so forming an experience of that work. Cragg claims that his visual practice is an application of the most sensitive means of enquiry, applied to discover first order experiences of our material, cultural, philological and philosophical world. That enquiry is not a surrogate form of speech, for it originates and is wholly formed of the creative mechanisms of its own systems being discovered in the practice of that

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<sup>9</sup> Dufrenne M, *Language and Philosophy*, trans. H Veatch, Greenwood Press, 1968 (originally published in 1963 by Indiana University Press, Bloomington)

<sup>10</sup> Dufrenne M, *Language and Philosophy*, trans. H Veatch, Greenwood Press, 1968, p 86



sculpture. The sculpture is autonomous, independent and untranslatable. Sculpture has many communicative properties that are analogous with the appearance of language. Many functions communicating the meaningful content described in this thesis, correspond, act in a parallel fashion, or actually share common attributes with homologous functions of language. The example of geometric concepts exposed in the practical project demonstrates a multiple realisation of meaningful identities, formal structures, that are simultaneously tangible shapes and conceptual entities emanating from the constructs of language. Or more precisely from the interlinking, corresponding or homologous language(s?) of verbal communication, object idealisation and art.

As this enquiry proceeded, the homology has at times been difficult to define amongst the many similarities that are generally classed as communication functions. The ever immediate recall to speech, the instinctive use of language and the daily familiarity with common visual objects conspires to blur analytical distinctions. Had this research been attempted fifty years ago, analytical models applied to the art would have dealt with formal, crafted, poetic, allegorical and descriptive correspondences with language. The period discussed here, particularly in the context of a British evolution of sculpture practice since 1960, has seen a move to pluralism, as sculptors have affiliated language theory in a process of bringing sculptural communication to the fore:

The ideal object is the absolute model for any object.  
Language is thoroughly made up of objectivities.<sup>11</sup>

In total accord with Cragg's ideal of a sculptural language used as a tool to advance human understanding:

Mankind is first conscious of itself (Husserl says) 'as an immediate and mediate linguistic community.'<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Derrida's adaption of Husserl in Derrida J, Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction, trans. J Leavey, Nicolas Hays, 1978, p 66-7

<sup>12</sup> Derrida J, Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction, trans. J Leavey, Nicolas Hays, 1978, p 14

## Appendix — Contextual Semiotic Detail

At the centre of Peirce's theory of signs is the axiom that cognition and thought are both essentially semiotic:

A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates is called the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea.<sup>1</sup>

Thought is like a sign as it refers to other thoughts and to the objective world. 'All which is reflected upon has a past'<sup>2</sup> whilst cognition has a present, past and a future dimension:

A man denotes whatever is the object of his attention at the moment; he connotes whatever he knows or feels of this object, and is the incarnation of this form or intelligible species; his interpretant is the future memory of this cognition<sup>3</sup>

Signs are not objects for they exist only in the mind of the interpreter. The sign has a cognitive function to be interpreted in respect of its presentation. Peirce defines the *representamen* as the perceptible object that functions as a sign.<sup>4</sup> Labelled by other semioticians as: a symbol (Ogden & Richards), a sign vehicle (Morris), a signifier (Saussure), an expression (Hjelmslev), it conveys meaning via conceptual associations that are extensions of its own material nature. The *object* represented by the sign can be a material identity with which we have a 'perceptual acquaintance', a mental or imaginary entity:<sup>5</sup>

The sign can only represent the object and tell about it. It cannot furnish acquaintance with or recognition of that object . . . It presupposes an acquaintance in order to convey some information concerning it.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peirce C S, *Collected Papers 1931-58*, vol 2, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 228 [Noth p 42]

<sup>2</sup> Peirce proposed that the sign participates in the three categories: called *representamen*, which stands in a triadic relation to its *object*, 'as to be capable of determining the *interpretant*'. This triadic 'action of the sign' is a process in which the sign has a cognitive effect on its interpreter, as semiosis, consisting of a 'triple connection of a sign, thing signified, cognition produced in the mind'. Peirce C S, *Collected Papers 1931-58*, vol 5, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 253

<sup>3</sup> Peirce C S, *Collected Papers 1931-58*, vol 7, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 591

<sup>4</sup> Peirce C S, *Collected Papers 1931-58*, vol 2, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 230

<sup>5</sup> Noth W, *Handbook of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 42-3

<sup>6</sup> Peirce C S, *Collected Papers 1931-58*, vol 2, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 231

Pierce's classification of the relationship between the representatmen and object defines a division of signs: *icon*, *index*, and *symbol*.

*Icons* are signs not only of visual communication, but exist in almost all forms of semiosis, including language. Peirce's icon is a sign which signifies entirely by its own quality, and represents 'something which is what it is without reference to anything else'.<sup>7</sup> In the contemplation of art Peirce imagines losing a sense of the distinction between the real and the representation. It is then that we are contemplating an icon. Since pure icons are signs by themselves and do not depend on an object, 'a pure icon conveys no factual information, for it affords no assurance that there is any such thing in nature'.<sup>8</sup>

Peirce defined the *index* as physically connected with its object, focussing the interpreter's attention on the object. The interpreting mind acknowledges its connection to the object. Examples include: a weathercock, a yardstick, a photograph, a rap at the door, a pointing finger, an appellative cry, and in the field of linguistics, proper names, possessive, relative and personal pronouns.

In contrast to Peirce, Morris defines a spatio-temporal quality of identifiers that signify 'locations in space and time and direct behaviour toward a certain region of the environment'.<sup>9</sup>

Language signs do not have a static structure but form a dynamic event, and that language cannot be adequately studied from the perspective of system, but only from the perspective of process.<sup>10</sup>

The *symbol* according to Peirce, is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes in an association of general ideas'.<sup>11</sup>

Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from icons, or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of icons and symbols... In use and in experience, its meaning grows.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Peirce C S, Collected Papers 1931-58, vol 4, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 242

<sup>8</sup> Peirce C S, Collected Papers 1931-58, vol 4, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 447

<sup>9</sup> Morris C W, 'Signs, Language and Behaviour' (1946) in Writings on the General Theory of Signs, Mouton, 1971, p 154, 362

<sup>10</sup> Köller W, [Der sprach theoretische Wert des semiotischen Zeichenmodells, 1977, p 73], discussed in Noth W, Handbook of Semiotics, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 46

<sup>11</sup> Peirce C S, Collected Papers 1931-58, vol 2, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 449

<sup>12</sup> Peirce C S, Collected Papers 1931-58, vol 2, Ed. Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Harvard University Press, para 302

Peirce interprets the poetic functions of art and literature as essentially concerned with object relationships. In this respect the textual sign is polyfunctional. The text is a symbol insofar as it consists of arbitrary signs. It is predominantly indexical when its primary function is connotative (appellative), as in commands, instructions and questions. Indexicality is characteristic of realism in making reference to persons, objects, and events in a temporal, spatial, and social setting.

Textual iconicity can have the form of an image, a diagram, or a metaphor. Visual poetry, depicting its objects in the form of its typography, and onomatopoeic poems are examples of texts functioning as images.

From the point of view of its interpretant, the text is incomplete when it has a predominantly expressive function, or when its structure is open to many interpretations. Text as the sign of possibility, and not of factuality, is characteristic of literary and poetic textuality.

Descriptive texts, whether fictional or nonfictional, have the character of what Peirce calls informational, but nonassertive. A pragmatic point of view deduces that texts can further be characterised as having different interpretants according to their effects on their interpreters.<sup>13</sup>

A 'science of signs', as Morris defined semiotics, refers to a broad application encompassing a study of signs of any kind, including language and sign processing by animals, or more generally organisms.<sup>14</sup> Semiosis, after Peirce, was defined by Morris as 'a sign process in which something is a sign to some organism'.<sup>15</sup> Whilst Morris agreed with Peirce in that:

something is a sign only because it is interpreted as a sign of something by some interpreter . . . Semiotic(s), then, is not concerned with the study of a particular kind of object, but with ordinary objects in so far as they participate in semiosis.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Kirstein B, 'Peircean Semiotic Concepts Applied to Stylistic Analysis', *Kodikas/Code* 45, p 9-20

<sup>14</sup> Drawing upon the semiotics of Peirce, Charles William Morris, whose influence on the development of semiotics was decisive in the 1930s and 40s, was also concerned with Mead's social behaviourism, American pragmatism, empiricism and Logical Positivism. Posner R, 'Charles Morris and the behavioural foundations of semiotics', in Kramen M, et al (Eds), *Classics of Semiotics*, Plenum, 1981, p 23-57

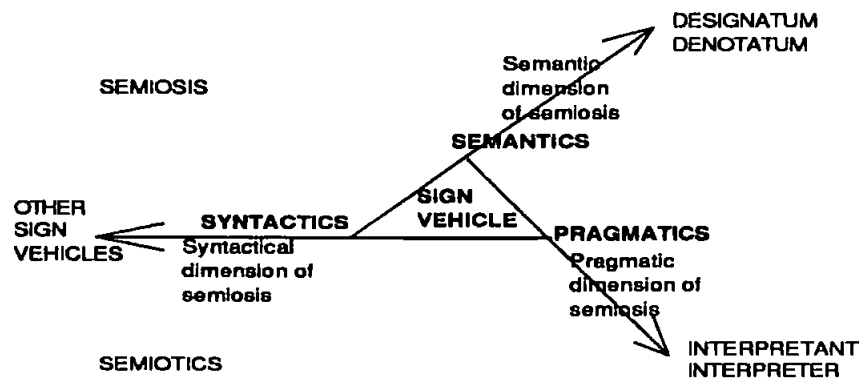
<sup>15</sup> Morris C W, 'Signs, Language and Behaviour' (1946) in *Writings on the General Theory of Signs*, Mouton, 1971, p 366

<sup>16</sup> Morris C W, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938), Chicago University Press, 1970, p 4



Morris contends that semiotics is a general theory of signs, whether applicable to animals or men, linguistic or nonlinguistic, personal or social. Three main factors are involved: that which acts as a sign, that which the sign refers to, and the effect on some interpreter, realising that the thing in question is a sign to them. These components are called, respectively, the sign vehicle, the designatum, and the interpretant. Morris derived dyadic relationships from these three correlates: syntactics refers to the relationship between a given sign vehicle and other sign vehicles, semantics refers to the relationship between sign vehicles and designata, and pragmatics refers to the relationship between sign vehicles and their interpreters.<sup>17</sup>

These correlates and related dyadic functions are arranged diagrammatically<sup>18</sup> by Morris thus:



An historical precursor of Morris's triadic scheme of semiotics relates Peirce's triadic interpretation of the three language arts, grammar, dialectics/logic and rhetoric. These divisions are in turn the precursors of syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

It is interesting to note in the context of Dufrenne's refutation of an art/language homology (Section Two of this thesis, p 18) that a linguistic criticism of Morris's three-way model of semiotics identifies a lack of provision for the disciplines of phonology and graphemics. Furthermore, there is a

<sup>17</sup> Morris C W, discussed in Noth W, *Handbook of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 49-50

<sup>18</sup> Morris C W, 'Esthetics and the theory of signs' (1939) in *Writings on the General Theory of Signs*, Mouton, 1971, p 417

question about whether Morris's framework includes the two basic types of relations in language: while syntagmatic relations equate with Morris's dimension of syntactics, the paradigmatic dimension (the language system) is less evident. The model can be maintained only if syntactics is defined more broadly than the syntax in linguistics, the rules combining words into sentences.<sup>19</sup> But as seen above, Morris's syntactics cover more than language signs and includes 'fields of perceptual signs, aesthetic signs, the practical use of signs, and general linguistics':<sup>20</sup>

It is important to recognise that paradigmatic relations in text and language system are relations of possible substitution in opposition to syntagmatic relations, which are relations of possible combinations of signs. If syntactics is extended to comprise the study of paradigmatic relations, syntactics is defined in a much broader sense than as the study of sign combinations only.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Noth W, Handbook of Semiotics, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 51

<sup>20</sup> Morris C W, Foundations of the Theory of Signs (1938), Chicago University Press, 1970 p 16

<sup>21</sup> Noth W, Handbook of Semiotics, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 51-2, 2.3.2

**A conversation with Tony Cragg at the Henry Moore Studio, Halifax,  
19th December 1996**

**Peter Pay:** I would like to ask you about the titles of your sculptures. How do they prompt a reading of the works?

**Tony Cragg:** A lot happens before I give a work a title so I think that it would change the balance of importance of things to say that the title is overly important to me. First of all a work in progress decides what a work looks like. There is a lot of thinking about it. Sometimes in the process of making a work you have to call it something. Give me that red thing? So is 'that red thing' already a title? Sometimes there are words that act like a title as a way of knowing what we are talking about in terms transporting it, addressing it. In this case they are not superficial but a byproduct of the thing's existence. When you have been working for a long time and the process is really absorbing there's not really much thought about what a thing's going to be called. So the thing is made before it has a title. That's it, it's finished.

Now the problem for me is that it's going to be called something and maybe the answer is a different one now. It's unsatisfactory these days to leave things as untitled. I think that untitled is noncommittal.

Titling is an extra effort. I think that I look at it as a separate game, a new way of looking at the work. The title comes after the work is finished and with my work some of the titles have come up a year or two later. A lot of the work doesn't get named for a couple of years. Also, to show you how unsteady it is, there are also many works with the same title. The works called *Formifera*, there's probably ten of them at least. When I know which one it is then I have to think of the place that it's exhibited in, but that doesn't alter the title. The title becomes a generic description for groups of works.

There are instances where I keep changing the name, backwards and forwards, or the work is given a different name. There was a work recently called *Jelly Fish*. I thought that it was the right title but somehow everybody thought that it was silly, an absurd name for sculpture. Then it was called *Nautilus* but that's like an atomic sculpture or something. It went back to *Jelly Fish*.

That's a realistic description of how I do the titling. One must admit that the titling does have an effect and I think that it's an important area of creativity eventually to arrive at an adequate title for the work.

**PP:** Thinking back to *New Stones*, *Newton's Tones*, a lot's been made of Newton being the father of modern science and the reference in the sculpture to industrial processes. Did the format also refer to the work of Richard Long?

**TC:** Yes, absolutely, it was referential to an artist's work that I very much admired. There's no doubt about that. But it's also objectively seen as a truth. It was the idea that this little layer, this very thin little layer of material that archaeologically has been defined as an industrial revolution of plastic in the last forty years. We don't realise it but there's even been three successive generations of plastic production while its been going since the '50s.

**PP:** So when you made this work did you pursue archeological interests?

**TC:** Yes, even since I was a child I have collected stones and fossils and that's still something that goes on.

I always say that sculpture is the sculpture making. *New Stones* is making the sculptures. It took several weeks to get the materials together. When it was made it was exhibited as *Untitled* in the first exhibition. I would never have called it *New Stones* if I had not been interested in fossils and certain aspects of archeology and anthropological subjects. On the other hand the title should resolve itself. Sometimes I have to strain myself to find a satisfactory title but there is something obvious about a title most of the time.

**PP:** *Terris Novalis* is an interesting name.

**TC:** As a title?

**PP:** Yes as a title and then one tries to interpret all those legs, feet and claws.

**TC:** *Terris Novalis* interested me because there are old maps and you just see everything is badly drawn and shows an archaic understanding of how Europe and America would look like. There's always the big unknown; it is always called Terra Novalis.

**PP:** In this work do the claws, the hands and the legs, refer to a Darwinian evolutionary process?



**TC:** Well they do and they don't. What I thought was wonderful about the instruments, about the level and the theodolite is that they have this fantastic circular way of measuring the world around them. They are based on certain radial measuring systems. They have for me a sort of Cartesian quality. In a sense they look like a mechanical world but at the same time one can look at this mechanical world in terms of Cartesian physics but one can also look at it as the birth of the industrial revolution. It also has to do with measuring, with accumulating and making the space into a rational entity. So these are two tools, the leveller and the theodolite which were actually used 180 years ago, are the model that I used.

They were practically used in looking at the landscape, the relatively natural landscape, and rationalising it with the idea of making it into something useful. Just about any landscape — look at the rain forest today. The day when men arrive with their theodolites that's when the rain forest is in trouble. But that was going on even 100 to 150 years ago in this area, in the north of England, when the Industrial Revolution was getting under way.

At the same time I try to find a reason for the feet. I feel that this sort of drive for new territories is not just a land lust — it's about knowledge, it's also to do with other people, it's to do with a lust driven animalistic impulse which has a survival instinct in nature as its base route. It's a bit like looking for a partner, in a sense it's a bit like the lustful first appraisal of a prospective partner. If this was the territory one would be interested in looking and searching for the apparent aesthetic appraisal of a landscape to see if this is somewhere that would facilitate our survival for a while. Or this person would help to facilitate the propagation of one's pool of genes successfully. It is sort of animalistic, not very intelligent, seductive and sort of driven by the object of desire.

**PP:** When it comes to recording your ideas Tony, the writings of Lynne Cooke in the Hayward Catalogue of 1987 and Germano Celant's essay in the 1994 catalogue are very different to the content of your own published writings.

**TC:** That's maybe. I am not sure that I read theirs.

**PP:** I am very interested in the function of the stories that you tell about your

sculptures. I also wonder if you recognise the stories that are written by the critics. Perhaps these stories provide a way into the work?

TC: Oh, that's really true. It's shameful to say that I don't read a lot of critical essays. I did read Lynne Cooke's essay a long time ago at the time of the Hayward show but I've forgotten in essence what she wrote about.

PP: She was talking about your thought packages and referring to scientific models like entropy. That came from you?

TC: That's true, it was based on a lot of long interviews that we did together. The idea of the thinking model is something I believe in but it's someone else's term. In our conversation that's what I referred to. Yes, Lynne and I had a very direct expansive conversation in a series of discussions.

PP: Celant talks of Platonic shadows and the concept of a material entity.

TC: Yes, his is very different. I have not read much. I am not sure that I understand some of it. Germano has his own interpretation of everybody's work. I think that's the way it should be. It's not like the sculptures are messages. Sculptures are entities. They are out there. They are there because they don't exist in the natural world. They are there because they don't necessarily belong to a normal utilitarian production.

It is not a desire of mine to control how people respond to the sculpture. I have to make them see how I respond to it so why should I respond to it in the same way as every other person responds to it. The main thing is that I put the sculptures out there and they offer themselves for consideration or not. That's what I think sculpture is essentially all about.

PP: Thinking of *Tun*, I am intrigued by the identity of the house motif or Monopoly piece. Richard Wentworth has used that device for several years.<sup>1</sup>

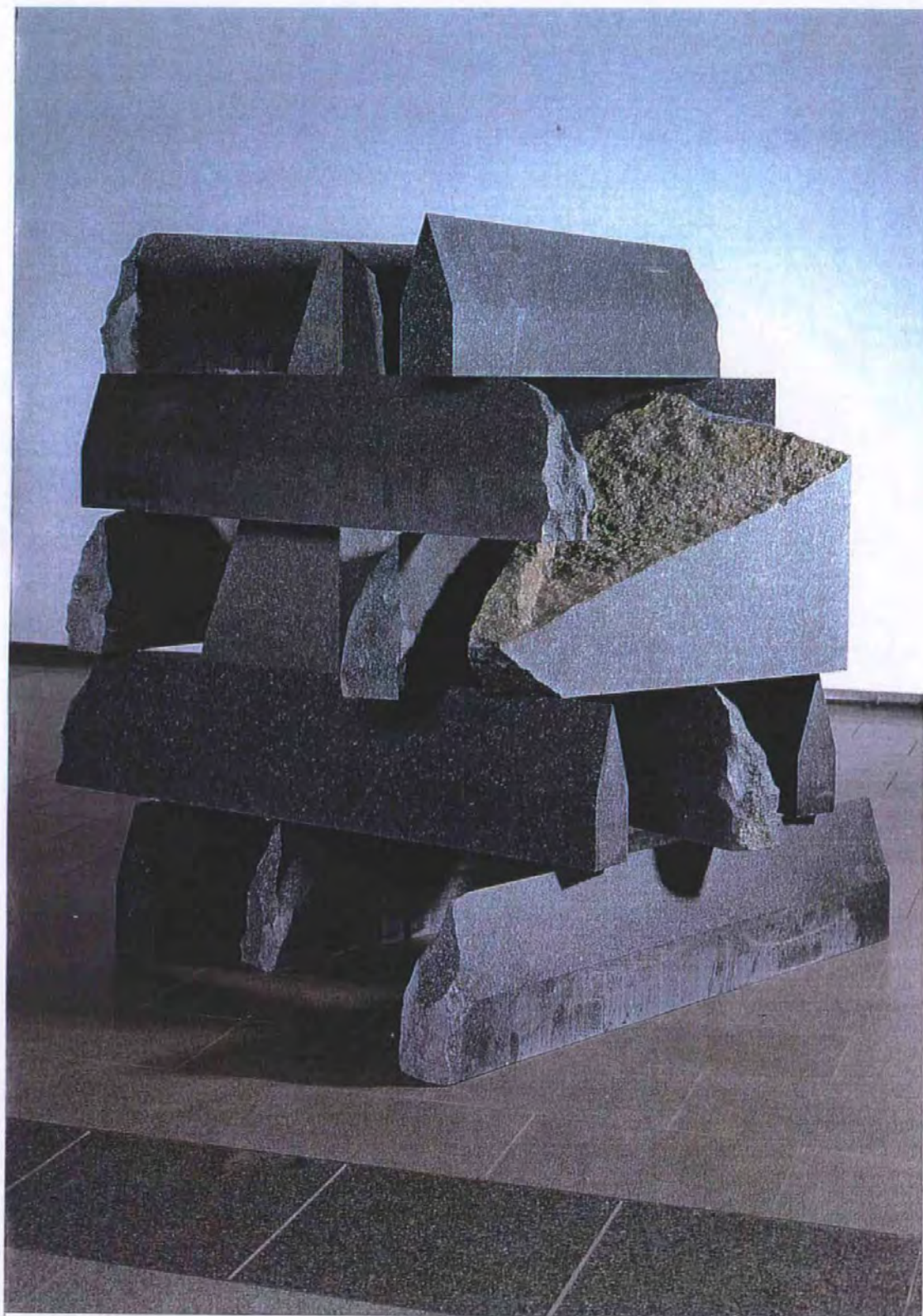
TC: I didn't know that. There are other artists like Shapiro<sup>2</sup> and Hubert Kiecol.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Cave 1986, House and Home 1986, Small Farm 1988, Animal vegetable 1989, Mercator 1990, Mould 1991* to name a few. Warner M, Richard Wentworth, Thames & Hudson, 1993

<sup>2</sup> Joel Shapiro, b 1941, American minimalist sculptor. His early works depicted house-like slabs of material displayed on shelves. Lucie-Smith E, Sculpture Since 1945, Phaidon, 1987, p 149-50

<sup>3</sup> The Hamburg artist Hubert Kiecol, b. 1950, is well known within Germany for his miniature concrete architectural units of houses and stairways. 'Reducing the sculptural statement to a minimum, they represent a countertendency to the hypertropic forms in many... environmental installations.' Artforum v26, December 1987, p 131



33 Tony Cragg, *Tun* 1989, stone

**PP:** Do you feel that this image is universal and iconic, a shared image forming a dialogue with peoples work?

**TC:** No, I knew about Shapiro's work and Kiecol. I thought that Kiecol's work work was something different. I've not seen Wentworth's work.

I can only say why I did it. It's nothing unusual to use the form of the house. There are a couple of million of them about so I think that it is fair enough to use it as a motif for a sculpture. I don't think that there is any great thing there. What it does do, it has some nice functions. This small block changes the Monopoly board into a city. This little wedge is a very easy symbol for a dwelling. There's also something I like about it, for in an essential way, it's a sort of cutting edge. Cutting. It's protecting itself. It's like in a way the environment is trying to get at us and we are walking round and we are actually waiting to be hit by something. This is the first roof over your head made by upraised arms — it looks like an attempt to find shelter.

**PP:** So that's why you stack them up in some of the work.

**TC:** Oh, I did not think so much about that. I thought that was a more exciting image of the city. It is a sort of accumulation, a kind of man-made organism, the idea of the city. We see it well when we fly over the cities and they are like a mucus growth or something. It's blue like mould on bread or something. I am trying to find ways, which aren't so flat, of describing a big city... that's why it's called *Tun* 1989 [Illustration 33]. It's an old German word. British people don't know where the word 'town' comes from. In German there's a word 'zaun', it means 'fence'. So it's an area contained by a fence. In Dutch and in old German the 'z' becomes substituted for a 't' so 'zaun' becomes 'tun' and our English use of the word 'town' comes from 'fence'. We are unaware of that generally in our use of that word. So in the first instance I build like that. I stack it up and that's why I had that title.

**PP:** And you have put these 'houses' in the fjord near Oslo.

**TC:** Yes right in the fjord — drifting away. We are slowly being taken away by the ice melts.



## Appendix — The Curatorial Projects

A range of contemporary communication conventions has been explored and presented as two curatorial projects in which invited artists developed contextual processes of communication through diverse modes of contemporary practice. Both projects have been initiated as collaborations with independent curators and the products of the dialogue has identified the fundamental role of shaping discursive communication through the curatorial processes. The complementary roles of the curator and artist bring together intuitive interpretations to be developed as strategic narratives.

The first exhibition project was realised in 1993, the second currently awaits funding and if successful will be realised as this research project is concluded.

### **'Ha-Ha, Contemporary Art in an Eighteenth Century Park'**

An exhibition of sited work by fourteen artists<sup>1</sup> was staged<sup>2</sup> during 1993 in the National Trust's Killerton Park and Spacex Gallery, Exeter. This exhibition, catalogue and attendant education programme was conceived as a contemporary response to the perceived values of an historical context. The project aimed to expose a critical reading of the curatorial contextualisation and demonstrate prominent contemporary practices.

The site itself presented a variety of cultural markers, architectural features, museum collections, landscaped environs and arboreal acquisitions. Invited artists, representing diverse and innovatory practices, responded to the signs of cultural heritage with a reflexive narrative that portrayed current mores.<sup>3</sup> Entitled 'Ha-Ha' the show exposed a social and cultural divide that was symbolically represented by the metaphor of a hidden ditch. A floral ideogram in that trench, a salad parterre by Cornelia Parker, was emblematic of scissors that cut along an imaginary divide betwixt tenanted farmland and the

<sup>1</sup> Peter Appleton, Audio Arts, Grenville Davey, Anya Galliccio, Antony Gormley, Abigail Lane, Cornelia Parker, Vong Phaophanit, Peter Randall-Page, Colin Rose, Louise Short, Georgina Starr, Sarah Staton and Craig Wood. Blazwick I & Pay P, Ha-Ha, Contemporary British Art in an 18th Century Park, University of Plymouth in collaboration with the National Trust, 1993

<sup>2</sup> Sponsorship for the project was provided by Häagen-Dazs, Foundation for Sports and the Arts, Henry Moore Foundation, University of Plymouth, The National Trust, South West Arts and BSIS. The project won an ABSA business sponsorship award.

<sup>3</sup> Four of these artists, Davey, Phaophanit, Gormley and Parker, were represented at the Turner Prize, one was a previous winner, three featured subsequently, one successfully.

manicured terrace lawns. But this gesture also refers to the imaginary divide separating the cognoscenti from those members of the viewing public less certain of access to contemporary visual 'text'. Another artist Vong Phaophanit also set up a discord with the 'natural' artificiality of the garden stocked with selected imports. Sited in the bamboo grove and on a brick red wall his pictographic, Sanskrit characters spelled out an incomprehensible message in the neon dialect of the high street shopping mall.

Anthony Gormley sited a cast of himself at the apex of a living, prepared oak trunk. Commanding an imposing position the figure on this column is reminiscent of Nelson's memorial, and here stands overlooking grounds that were developed in that era. Yet the figure is contemporary and anonymous, imposingly phallic and wantonly destructive in its subjugation of the 'natural' plinth; a prepared mature living oak tree. Georgina Starr also chose to subjugate references to the rural idyll as her *Acousti-guide* taped message assumed the character of a guided tour, accompanied by suitably opulent baroque music. Yet the itinerary was not quite as expected for the narrative also included descriptions of strangers encountered in the grounds, conversations in the café and gossip from the village. The visitor's experience was vicarious for it represented the journey of the vulnerable young artist herself, set into the real drama of her own expressive *modus operandi*.

Drama for Abigail Lane grew out of the disappointment of discovering that the costume collection was not, at that time, showing the anticipated bridal tableau. The ensuing *who dunnit* involving the viewing public was solved by the artist turned sleuth and apparently publicised in the local newspaper. The bride's mortal remains, fashioned in an hyper-real language by technicians at Madame Tussauds, was itself a prompt for reflection on the believable images of the media, our suspension of disbelief and the underlying knowledge that all visual situations are ultimately degrees of deception. In contrast, the visual quality of Craig Wood's intervention within the Ice House was achieved by the sensitive addition of a material enhancement to an existing atmosphere. Water packaged in sealed plastic bags, each shaped to fit exactly onto a brick of the

patterned floor, covered the surface with the translucent evocation of ice. The sense of presence was purely visual, yet very tangible as the temperature of this storage well noticeably became distinctly frigid.

In the catalogue that accompanied this exhibition the crossover narratives are unravelled as synchronic and diachronic signifying systems. An imaginative exposition of the place concludes that the perception of distinct period styles determines cultural values and social organisation.<sup>4</sup> The place and the trappings of conservation can be read as a comment on museology, for the site is the syntactical organisation of a heritage narrative. It was this narrative that became the semantic backdrop for the polemic interaction of a contemporary presentation. Site specificity and diverse conceptual strategies of communication were displayed in the different scales of intervention and material manipulation.<sup>5</sup>

### 'Detour'

A second exhibition project has been prepared, and subject to availability of suitable funding, is intended to coincide with the conclusion of these studies. The context is to be the centre of Exeter where a curatorial interaction with diverse sites will set contemporary practices against the role that time plays in the characterisation of place. The semantic dyad contrasting *site* and *place*<sup>6</sup> is central to a dialogue concerned with mapping the social constructs that shape alternative readings of a municipal environment. Invited artists will engage with the City's public spaces, drawing out and creating meanings 'inherent' to each location, through the exploration of fictional and actual references in a presentation of the diversity of contemporary praxis. These include video, digital, performance and textual works.

Juan Cruz will present the viewer with the hardware of fiction, as imaginative excursions into narrative are set to the gallery space, itself the ultimate place of fiction. Through subtle intervention, Elizabeth LeMoine

<sup>4</sup> Blaswick I, 'Ha-Ha' in Ha-Ha. Contemporary Art in an Eighteenth Century Park, University of Plymouth, 1993, p 1-2

<sup>5</sup> Pay P, 'Diverse Cultures' in Ha-Ha. Contemporary Art in an Eighteenth Century Park, University of Plymouth, 1993, p 3-6

<sup>6</sup> Newling J, Certainty and Uncertainty (Place and Site), unpublished text, Dublin, November 1995

engages with existing narratives and introduces an element of doubt to otherwise established histories. In a Super 8 projection, Rachel Lowe attempts to draw a landscape on the interior of the passenger window of a moving car. As the on-coming view rushes towards and then past her, the impossibility of the task leads, ultimately, to incomprehension. Mariele Neudecker's sculptures invite the viewer to study various illusory micro-worlds. The best known of her works is the landscapes after the paintings of Casper David Friedrich in which a scene is recreated with wax, salt, water and dyes in a glass tank, exploring the imaginative will for fantasy and the work of construction necessary to build it. John Newling's work demonstrates a primary concern with contemporary culture and the transformed being emblematic of cultural change. In a 'map' work *Lost 1991*, Newling 'draws' with paracetamol to imply a need for healing the urban body politic, but the action of the drug does not relieve the causes only the symptoms. Jem Southam measures the degrees of 'natural' and human interactions upon a given land form, whilst questioning the function of the still image as a vehicle of narration. Lone Twin, on the other hand, brings together 'performance writing' with 'visual performance' in any environment. A recent work involved the artist/climbers scaling the stairs of the ICA, 60 times in the course of an evening, 'camping' occasionally to hang a text work, and the emotional return home to an interactive web-site and life preserve.

The reading of this context is to focus on fragments, clues, flecks in a rich mosaic of a compound accretion. In Exeter's Royal Albert Memorial Museum a wall display presents a vivid sense of archaeological layering. At the top, a large realistic photographic panel shows the legs and shoes of shoppers in the City's street. Beneath street level are the layers of paving, modelled with real samples of relevant materials, concrete, rubble, earth. The various debris of different historical periods are recognisable by the artifacts embedded in a stratified subterranean continuum.

Discovered views enhance or obscure a knowledge of the place. In this exhibition the realisation of identities will be partly conceived and mostly framed in an imaginative interpretation of our sense of being in time.



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