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Three environmental structures were designed and positioned on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro for the purpose of encouraging viewer participation in controlled spatial conditions:

1. large scale canvas "walk-thru" installed in the outer gallery
2. metal pipe and rope "series" erected approximately a city block away from the gallery
3. hanging bell-shaped form, constructed of metal and rope, in the sculpture court.

Thirty-five millimeter slides of these constructions have been placed on file with The Walter Clinton Jackson Library of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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THREE SPATIAL CONDITIONS

by

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A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
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Approved by

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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of  
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CATALOGUE

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	SIZE
1	Canvas Walk-thru	12'6" x 11' x 19'
2	Metal Pipe and Rope Series	6'6" x 4'3" x 24'
3	Circular Metal and Rope Hanging Form	27' Diameter x 27'

The purpose of this thesis is to enable the viewer to participate in spatial conditions and to indicate space time.

The influence of Will Insley during the fall of 1968, followed by a study of the writings of Mondrian, helped to clarify an earlier interest in environmental relationships and awareness of movement through space. Mr. Insley's reiteration of the nature and effect of scale and space enabled this student to gain use of these two elements, and to move, independently, into an understanding of space time.

As space may be enclosed, segmented, compressed, and extended, so may time be "staked out," directed, speeded-up, and dissipated. Space and time were found to be interdependent and interchangeable. (Height and width could be reduced to space and/or time.) When space was compressed it seemed to become active, and to move vertically. As one moved in space one seemed to move in time; as one moved in time (physically or mentally) one seemed to be "thrown out" into space. Space and time united in a four-dimensional reality: space time.

In order to effect the viewer's participation, all faculties would be solicited; mental, as well as visual and physical participation would be sought; if necessary, curiosity would be piqued to provoke response to and participation in the spatial conditions of the environment.

## I. CANVAS WALK-THRU

Three pairs of canvas "walls," stretched from the ceiling to the floor, lead the viewer through three shapes of space and into a "dead-end." Outside light filtering through the canvas renders an "interior light," an "other world" aura. The viewer may escape through the triangular space between the last slanted wall and the adjacent perpendicular wall.

This idea was the culmination of daily travel along a road through a forest of trees. Three phases or shapes became manifest:

First, on approaching the corridor of space the "floor" appeared narrow; the sides seemed to swing out to a wide "ceiling."

Second, on entering the corridor, the sides straightened, became parallel, as did the "floor" and "ceiling," enclosing a vertical rectangle of space.

Third, on leaving the corridor and looking beyond the occupied space, the "ceiling" seemed to draw in, become narrow; the sides appeared to "flip" out to a wide "floor," easing the compression and somehow allowing space to escape.

Because the "subject" was the viewer experiencing spatial conditions, the "walk-thru" was conceived, from the beginning, in human scale and three-dimensional design. The selection of canvas as a material was automatic, but probably was based on its traditional use as an artist's material, and on an understanding of the construction



and manipulation of woven fabrics.

Although a "weaving" movement may be experienced by viewing this piece from either side, the viewer must actually, physically walk through the controlled spaces to participate in the movement through space and in time. Walking through the canvas environment, he becomes "the subject" as he travels through the changing shapes of space.

## II. METAL PIPE AND ROPE SERIES

The viewer is invited to walk the distance of a city block, through the building that houses the gallery and outdoors to a flat, open area and a row of four metal pipe frames (6'6" x 4'3") evenly spaced and draped with rope.

The high voltage towers, equidistantly "pointing up" the countryside, were the stimulus of this idea. Daily annotation of those striding forms clarified the four-dimensionality of the present environment; space was no longer the dominant dimension, but became a co-dimension with time. Movement through space (visual and/or physical) became movement through time; repeated movement through equal segments of space time became extension of space time.

As the viewer was to be invited not only to view, but to participate in the extension of space time in this series, the space between each frame was crucial. The logical 6' space did not work, was too short an interval (in time and space); and, only by trying a longer distance that "looked right to the eye" was the 8' space found. The intervals could be rectangles of static space, or fields of activity: viewers walking or running between their boundaries. Although the drooping character of rope suggests walking, the option was left to the viewer.

The rope "barriers" divide space and time, but their division is not absolute, is transparent and yielding. As the continuous strands

of rope are held in place with weights, segmenting space, so time may be measured, "stopped off"; and, as the loops may be straightened out into one long rope, so may time seem to be elongated.

Unlike the canvas "walk-thru" in which the viewer is led through controlled conditions, the series offers the viewer an option to: view, walk around and view, pull aside the rope barriers and walk under each frame, kick away the weights and push through the loops of rope to walk on to the next frame, or leave at any point. The range of response is left to the viewer.

Whatever options the viewer takes, the frames stand: open, permeable, equidistant, defining space, measuring time, repeating equal units of space and time, extending space time, having no designated entrance or exit.

### III. HANGING BELL-SHAPED FORM

Finally, the viewer is expected to walk back to the gallery and out to the sculpture court, to investigate an open circular structure of white cotton rope suspended from a metal ring above the patio. The "beginning" ends of the rope, approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ' apart, encircle the perimeter of the brick patio and provide easy entrance into the actual form and a closer look at the pulling together and knotting of the ropes that enclose a succession of cylindrical spaces.

From the beginning this form was conceived mentally; it had no discernible progenitor in recall (unless it was the viewing of water tanks in the skyline). The actual space in the sculpture court evoked the attitude, shape, and construction of this piece.

Compression of a space within an open space as the logical opposite of the extension of space time was the beginning of this idea. It developed through a series of models (three-dimensional sketches), starting with a simple canvas bell to be hung from the balcony railing and to occupy the space between two concrete supports. It was to hang  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ' off the pavement and enclose the viewer from the torso up in a dome of faintly filtered light. Study of the finished model yielded the realization that the bell would become part of the environment, and would offer only a short period of visual participation.

Once the decision to dominate the total court environment was reached, size became essential and shape automatic; the round brick patio dictated a spherical form. The second model (1" = 2') was

developed in lightweight fabric (to be nylon or silk) attached loosely to four metal rings, 1", 3", 18", and 6" in a compressed cloud-like effect, hanging from a taut cable. This form would hang approximately 4' from the ground so that the viewer would be partially enclosed by its weighted hem and could scan the succession of metal rings moving up and out into space. At this stage, the enclosing and compression of time as well as space became evident; vertical space time was validated in the mind of this student. As important as his physical and visual exploration, became the viewer's mental exploration. As he could not participate by physically ascending the series of rings, the idea of "sucking" him, visually and mentally, up into space (much like a Correggio ceiling fresco) became essential.

The concept of compression on the outside producing a "sucking" vacuum on the inside and the enticement of the viewer's visual and mental responses resulted in several more models. All of these used series of rings the same size as those of the second model, which were coefficients of 6' (man); the rings were exposed and held together or draped with bunches of rope, which closed the top space but left the bottom circumference open for the viewer's entrance. The openness of these skeletal constructions made visual and mental participation possible from various positions; the inside construction could be followed from outside, while the actual view inside was different and had an inclusive, vacuous quality. In all these "sketches" the dome-effect was retained.

Excessive weight of the rings (in full scale), lack of access to the court area for heavy equipment (trucks, cranes or other

mechanical lifts), and inordinate financial costs called for a reduced use of weight and a more feasible means of construction. These restrictions forced reexamination of the statement and refinement of expression.

Another survey of the court area reinforced the essentiality of a round form; the surrounding architecture upheld the idea of compression. Viewing the space from the balcony introduced the possibility of "sucking in" the viewers on the balcony and those looking out the higher windows facing the court; therefore, the "dome" should be opened and compression could take place in the center of the form, with more compact compression on the ground level.

In a final scale model, a single metal ring, slightly larger in circumference than the brick patio was positioned the same number of feet from the ground as it was in diameter. The succession of "rings" was made by tying together (in square knots) ropes hanging from the metal circle; for the second circle, groups of three ropes were knotted together; for the third, groups of six, (to be) 8' from the ground, barely clearing the cinder-block wall that intrudes halfway into the diameter of the patio circle. The ends were draped over the knots to hang in a "curtain," enclosing the compressing a cylindrical space while at the same time allowing the viewer to enter.

In the full scale structure the ropes were threaded through 42 eyes, equidistantly attached to a 27' ring. An electric hoist pulled the ring in place and held it suspended over the patio, acting also as the cable. The ropes were tied in the same numbers and succession as planned in the scale model. Three-eighth inch cotton rope was used with

the knowledge that moisture would cause it to swell to  $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter, and that it would retain its "whiteness," complementary to the white concrete of the sculpture court.

The "bell" had changed into a "funnel" (to the viewer's eye); however, the funnel was the bell, inverted and opened at the top. Retained throughout was the idea of enticing the viewer into a compression of space time within a greater space time.

Space and time, time and measurement

Space and time and the viewer

Space time.



## APPENDIX

Page 8, Hanging Bell-shaped Form: because of unanticipated stresses on the cable, lifting the metal ring with the electric hoist proved unsafe to viewers and the surrounding architecture; therefore, the original idea of positioning the ring on metal poles was reclaimed. Four cables clamped to the ring and pulled over pulleys, bolted 3" from the top of four 21' poles, lifted the ring in place. The ends of the cables were wrapped around metal cleats (welded to the poles) in "8's" as the ring was raised.