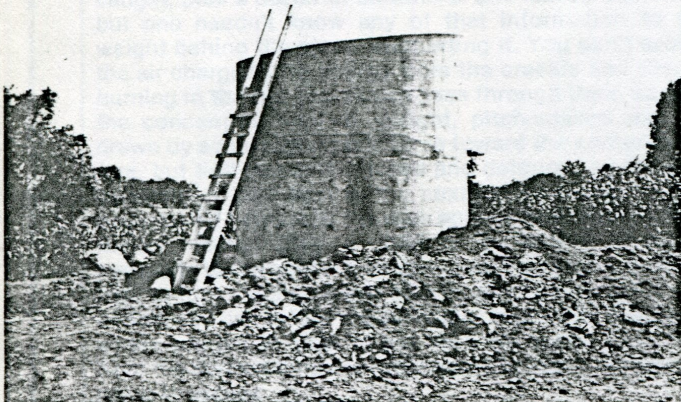


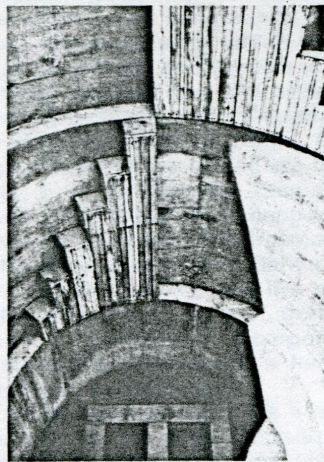
SIX WOMEN AT WORK IN THE LANDSCAPE

APRIL KINGSLEY

Six women artists—Cecile Abish, Alice Aycock, Nancy Holt, Mary Miss, Mary Shaffer, and Michelle Stuart—work with the landscape to create private places made for interiorizing values and universal experiences.



▲ Alice Aycock, Circular Building with Narrow Ledges for Walking, 1976. Silver Springs, Pennsylvania, reinforced concrete, overall height 17', 13' above grade, 4' below. Courtesy John Weber Gallery.



Alice Aycock, Circular Building with Narrow Ledges for Walking (detail), 1976.

The pioneering days of making artworks in the landscape are over. The scouts who survived are back, and the settling-in phase has begun. Just as women shouldered half of the backbreaking workload of civilizing the wilderness in those early days of our country, so do they now share equally with male artists in this new wave of creative, intellectual domination over nature. In fact, women seem to be making most of the truly innovative moves in this art form at the moment. The six women in this survey—Cecile Abish, Alice Aycock, Nancy Holt, Mary Miss, Mary Shaffer, and Michelle Stuart—are only a sample taken from a much larger population of women working in similarly diverse modes within this genre, which doesn't include large sculptures meant to be situated out-of-doors though not site dependent. The work ranges from pure documentation of no longer existing pieces through various degrees of ephemerality to the purest, most permanent, monumental statements yet made in the art form. The locations of these pieces range from urban waste spaces to the farthest reaches of the desert.

The initial, or scouting, phase of outdoor art making was cartographical and gestural. Lines were drawn through ice, hay,

and grassy field. Stones were aligned in geometrical configurations or earth was pushed around to accomplish the same kind of hand-made mark on nature. Holes were dug and piles were made. This second phase, the settling or colonizing one, is constructive in essence. Alien materials are brought to a site and something is built with them that is more or less meant to endure through time. Once you adjust for such factors as the location and its concomitant difficulties, funding, availability of materials, systems of documentation, and everything else that affects how a given site-dependent artwork is received by the viewer, there remain definite differences of intent and content between the male and the female artists creating them. Boldly stated, and of course not without exceptions, this difference is that male "earthworks" are public objects that externalize the values of society in the traditional ways art has always done, whereas the women's works are private places made for interiorizing values and universal experiences.

Women seem to want to build the kinds of places they'd like to be in themselves, and to build them with their own hands whenever possible. They exhibit no split between marking and making. The underlying obsessions which fuel their artworks seem to be both deeper and more directly expressed than they tend to be in men's "earthworks." Women tap the unconscious in their audience because their works are self-referential. One senses a rapport with their site and their materials, rather than a victory over them. Finally, whereas most of the well known "earthworks" by men spring from a minimalist aesthetic, those by the women do not. If anything, they lean toward an Expressionist or Surrealist aesthetic instead, for some part of the work's content at least. Rarely do they pit the man-made against nature in a simplistic way. Their relationship to their site is so complex that the irrationality of nature, the irrationality of humankind, and the rationality of the architectonic are often joined at one and the same time. Their sites aren't neutral, nor are their works about materials, scale, or internal structure per se in the old minimalist, tautological manner. Their works are multi-temporal as well as multi-referential to an unprecedented degree.

Alice Aycock's work presents the clearest model for these concepts. It is highly formalized yet wholly participatory; it's clean and fully exposed yet rife with implications. Experiencing one of her sculptures, one relives childhood scares and wonders. Her interior works are like rough stage sets in which to act out a private theater of the absurd with their blind, narrowing passageways, stairs to the ceiling, and high, slender perches over empty space. Outdoors she digs into the earth making fire pits, walled trenches, wells, buried chambers and tunnels. She has constructed many major works out of doors. Three of them, located on her family's land in Pennsylvania, were built between 1972 and 1974—a low, stone-sided, sod-roofed building sited and structured to give the impression as you enter it (on hands and knees) that you're crawling into the side of a hill; a walled trench around a platform of walled earth, containing a central pit, which you must leap across a too-wide space to reach; and a 32-foot-diameter timber maze of concentric dodecagonal rings 6 feet in height.

All of these pieces involve making hard decisions concerning one's safety, but the series of choices created by the maze's 19 entrance points and 17 barriers results in a total loss of orientation. So youthful fears—of getting lost, of crawling headfirst into a space too narrow to turn around in, of failing to leap a chasm successfully—are all incorporated in these pieces. The structures themselves recall ancient Egyptian mastabas, Minoan labyrinthine palaces, and primitive plains dwellings, but the purposes or uses have been changed. Aycock taps into modern people's collective unconscious by predetermining their physical interaction with the piece.

Alice Aycock is a compulsively hard worker. For each project she draws up detailed plans with the accuracy of an architect which contain information so complete that any construction worker could execute the piece. She either builds the structures herself (or in one case with her mother) or she supervises their construction closely. She's already built more major pieces than most artists do in a lifetime, all in the past five years since she matured as an artist. She documents them exhaustively, and supports potential readings of their content with a stagger-

ing number of references which only Duchamp would have fully appreciated. As an example, she cited the following specific sources for her *Wooden Posts Surrounded by Fire Pits* which she executed on the grounds of the Nassau County Museum last fall: a Haitian voodoo ceremony, a Tunuquanan Indian village surrounded by a circular palisade of wooden posts, a drawing of a 16th-century Indian dance in Virginia, Zulu soldiers in military formation and their circular distribution of homes and corrals, the Mayan labyrinth at Oxkintok, Yucatan, the Court of a Thousand Columns at Chichen Itza, an Egyptian hypostyle hall, and the Hall of Mysteries at Eleusius.

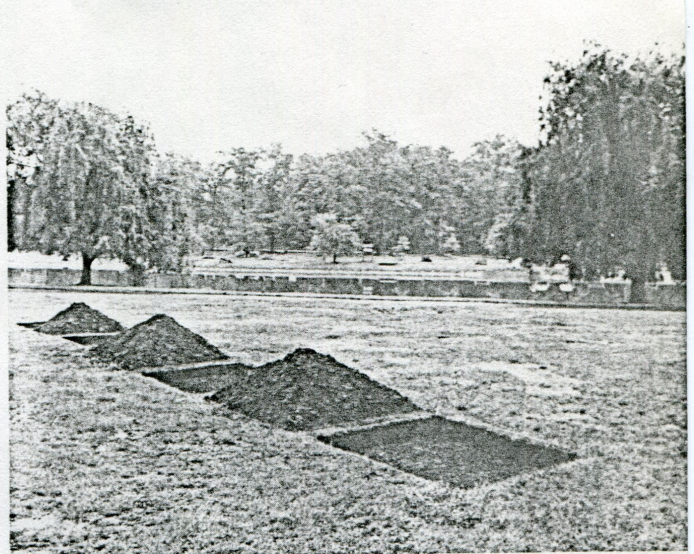
In addition, she fleshed out her associations with this configuration with stories from Turkish military history about heads being displayed on posts, about vampires, witches, Liliith, Aztec sacrifices, her own travels in the Yucatan, and childhood memories of lighting fires in secret to cook crayfish she'd caught, plus a dozen or so others. She leaves one little to add, but one needn't know any of that information to sense its weight behind the piece, supporting it. You can't avoid feeling the air charged with energy from the crackle and scent of logs burning in the fire pits as you pass through them up to and into the concentric rings of upright, pitch-soaked logs. You are drawn by some ineluctable force toward the center of the structure, but find yourself blocked and detoured by the increasing proximity of one post to the next as the center nears and by unexpected barriers in the walk spaces between the rings. Confusion results. Only a child or an animal could possibly penetrate to the center's hollow core. You squeeze between the logs as far as you can, and then suddenly you realize you aren't certain you can locate the particular space you navigated to get where you are in order to get back out again. Then the smoke from the surrounding fire pits begins to seem ominous and you panic to escape.

In addition to these pieces, Aycock has constructed a concrete block, earth-covered chamber on the grounds of Williams College; a very complex, large-scale work which she calls a *Simple Network of Underground Wells and Tunnels* in Far Hills, New Jersey; a *Heavy Roofed Building* (the roof being 9'-thick cement block) at the Otis Art Institute; and a *Circular Building with Narrow Edges for Walking* in Pennsylvania. She says, "Because the archeological sites I have visited are like empty theaters for past events, I try to fabricate dramas for my buildings, to fill them with events that never happened." She gets the scenarios for those dramas from her dreams and from dreamlike passages in the writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Borges, H. Rider Haggard, Edgar Allan Poe, and in a host of ancient myths and fables. No other artist I know of, even her one-time teacher Robert Morris, so consciously incorporates literary, historical, and psychological references in her work as obsessively and consistently as Aycock does.

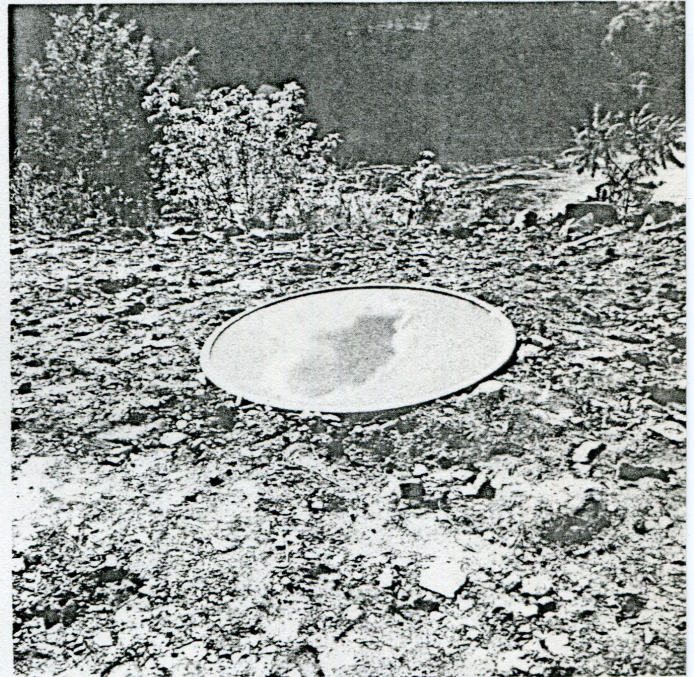
But hers is no cool, intellectual approach. It's a real, gutsy confrontation with materials, with her fears and fantasies, and with our instincts through the medium of sculpted architecture that has the primitive quality of "architecture without architects" the world over. Aycock's secret places are only open to the brave. Conquering one's fear is to undergo initiation in order to get into the "fort" or clubhouse your friends had when you were young. It is also to exorcise Aycock's devils for her. I sometimes think that she uses these pieces as trial run-throughs in a secret plot to control the world. Her *Asphalt Flat/Cloud Formation* project, as an example, "caused" heavy rains to flow unexpectedly where the project was to have been executed and where a model for it was built. One envisions a 40 days and 40 nights flood if the project is ever actualized. Other projects, such as an *Inverted Pyramid*, an underground cul-de-sac, or a landscape architecture with obstructed sightlines, only hint at the Kafkaesque nightmare we'd be living in if she were a city planner of the future.

If one were to mistake subtlety for simplicity and to fail to seek beyond the obvious, then the criteria set up before mightn't seem to hold true for the work of Cecile Abish. It seems so unassuming. She disturbs the terrain only slightly, taking possession of it only temporarily, always careful to make the pieces self-maintaining or concerned that they self-destruct with no ecologically harmful residue. Years of planning large-scale public sculptures conditioned this cautiousness in her;

Cecile Abish, 4 into 3, 1974. Van Saun Park, excavations 7", heaps 30".



Nancy Holt, Hydra's Head (detail), 1974. Artpark, Lewiston, New York, earth area 26' x 62', water volume 1340 gallons.



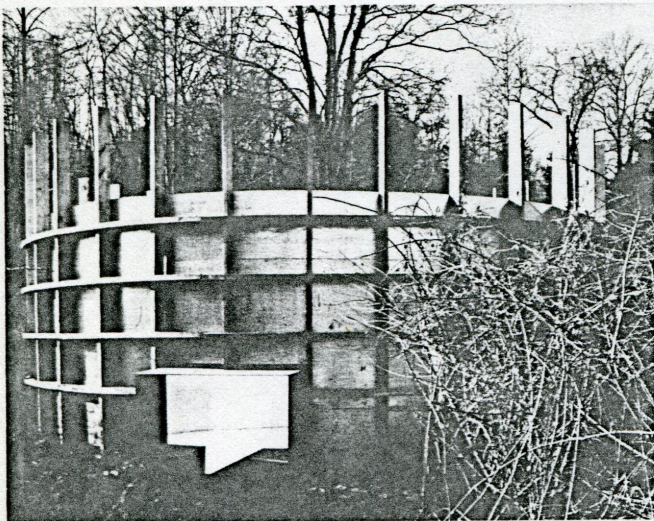
years of working in a minimal-modular style contributed to her unswerving faith in the efficacy of geometry. She is an idealist dreaming of utopias where her ideas can unfold themselves in all their multiple manifestations. Each of her pieces is only one of many possible ones, just as her boxed monuments of the late Sixties were small-scale models for a whole range of configurations.

All of Abish's work is opened up to its environment. Her early wall constructions had rectilinear apertures which brought the wall into the work, and her modular sculptures were partially comprised of open frame units that were meant to let air permeate the upright planes and grasses grow up through the base planes. When she works indoors, lately with marbles scattered on the floor, the negative spaces left in the field once a plane of plywood has been lifted into an upright position, or floated on the sea of marbles, let the floor into the work. One especially magical piece was a round grass-covered mound enclosed by a white fence of square modular tubing. In *Field Day* she "planted" branches in a grid between the perimeters of a paper rectangle to make a perfectly permeable, biodegradable sculpture. One piece she did in 1974 in Van Saun Park called

Nancy Holt, Views through a Sand Dune, 1972. Cement asbestos pipe, 5½' long, 8" diam. Narragansett Beach, Rhode Island.



Mary Miss, Sunken Pool, 1974. Greenwich, Connecticut, wood, steel, water, 20' diam., 10' high outside, 13' high inside.



Into 3 actually perforated the ground plane. She dug four square holes 7 inches deep through the sod which "shrunk" mysteriously into three pyramids of dirt 30 inches high. She often does similar sleight-of-hand tricks with her indoor marble pieces, playing with our expectations of logic given the geometry of the configurations. The effect is subtly unsettling.

Her largest outdoor piece to date is *Field Quartering*, constructed on the grounds of the Lakeview Center for the Arts and Sciences in Peoria, Illinois. It incorporates positive and negative space: the ground plane on two levels and the space above and below ground; circles, squares and triangles; sod, chalk, steel, and grease; transience and her concern for protecting the piece during its lifetime—all of her main ideas. Breaking the circle up into segments, as she does here, and pulling it out into a wavy line is maplike and diagrammatic. It points to the essentially conceptual nature of her enterprise as a whole. As one's eyes fan out along the vertical poles dripping with reddish grease slowly melting in the sun, there comes an awareness of the unfolding rhythms of parallel units, of the way earth joins sky, of the perfect tendency of a circle to close on itself and of geometrical shapes to interlock and break apart in endless, repetitive alternation.

functions with an extremely minimal proportion of culture to nature in the ratio of her endeavor. Her approach was formulated in the modular, mock-up days of the late '60s when necessity was the mother of invention and few pieces were ever carried out to full size, but her willingness to open up to the elements and to chance, to throw her work on the mercy of the court with only a few shreds of evidence to make a case for it, is a much riskier undertaking than is normal for that way of thinking. The position of her art is vulnerable and dependent to an extraordinary degree. She trusts her audience to read between the lines and thereby to connect the dots she draws in space. In this way she strains the powers of culture to control nature.

For Nancy Holt "seeing is knowing." She doesn't use her pieces as visionary models or as places of reexperience, but as instruments to create something new out of the known and the unknown, somewhat the way a piece of glass can be used to focus the sun's energy and create fire. Indoors she uses mirrors to reflect circular and elliptical lighted shapes onto white gallery walls, or through them, if perforated, or through "locator" pipes. Out of doors the sea and sky reflect each other, or she creates that impression through the use of cylindrical pipes embedded in the earth and holding water in a pool as she did in *Hydra's Head* at Artpark in 1974. There she also reflected the stars in her pools by sizing them according to the magnitudes of the stars in the constellation Hydra. Viewing the piece entailed connecting the stillness of the pooled water with the rough white water of the Niagara rushing through the gorge below.

What she does, like placing a 5½-foot-long pipe through a spit of sand dune on Narragansett Beach, seems simple enough, but she manages to get a host of reflections bouncing back and forth in what you see through it and what you see in your mind as a result of seeing through it. From a distance it looks like a reducing mirror, then a telescopic view, then a view through the eye of a camera. Earth equals sky and you're not certain they haven't reversed positions. Roundness and circularity seem omnipresent. Besides, how did the piece get there? The process of coming to know one of her works repeats the process she went through to create it. First the search for the site which is time-consuming, then finding an appropriate physical/art response to the site, which also involves a long, slow, get acquainted period. During these meditative times, a host of ideas about the work and its implications form in her mind as well as yours. Then too there are the numerous complications, alterations, and difficulties that happen during the actual construction of the piece. These provide the artist and the perceiver (projecting) with additional material to consider—"Americanism," the vast and timeless desert, Indian literature, astronomy and musing under a blanket of stars, American ingenuity and know-how, patterns of physical labor, the availability and behavior of materials, potential UFO surveillance, and/or the problems faced by the pioneers who settled this country.

Viewing the objects Nancy Holt creates without immersing oneself in this kind of speculation can be a less than satisfying experience. She has so successfully made works about seeing, for seeing through, that they usurp the functions of camera and eye which normally focus on the art object. It's a paradoxical phenomenon. Her work probably has this quality of being like a disembodied eye because she comes out of photography and film-making. Her film *Pine Barrens* is a perfect expression of her position. The eye of the camera is always on the move; the images it records are continually in a state of transition. It is a cool, detached machine. The portrait of the New Jersey landscape known as Pine Barrens is "painted" so precisely that all the brushwork is invisible. Removing the artist completely in this manner has the reverse effect of causing you to be quite aware of the film's structure. She is currently at work on a videotape of a friend of hers who is dying of leukemia in which she's using three cameras, two stationary and one on the move. She will thus be able to focus on him from an infinite number of points of view as he discusses his immanent death from the countless angles of his wide-ranging mind.

Multiple-focus viewpoint is basic to Holt's aesthetic. Like a philosopher, she wants to indicate all the possibilities of a given situation. When she uses "Locators" to focus on small

Clocktower or her *Missoula Ranch* piece in Montana in 1972, what is seen takes on a false importance as the "object" within a frame dissipates immediately when the viewer removes his or her eye from the end of the pipe. And, of course, with no one to look through the pipes, here as in all her pieces, the piece ceases to exist. Her objects are transparent in a way that parallels performance, concept, and discussion art.

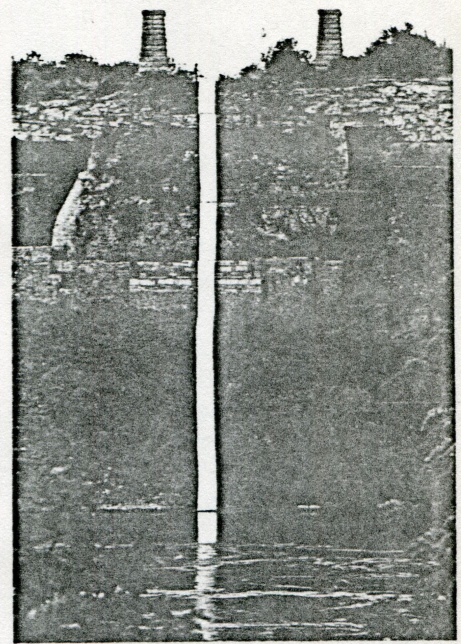
Coming unknowingly upon her *Sun Tunnels* of 1976 in the arid Utah desert, a stranger to art would probably think they'd been leftovers or rejects from some previous irrigation project. This uninitiated person would probably, though, end up using them as art by default if nothing else. They may be cool in the daytime and warm at night, but their perforations and unclosed ends make them imperfect shelters. They can't go anywhere or do anything, so your average ingenious American would probably end up watching the circles of light move around the interiors and spilling outside, framing the sky and surrounding countryside through the various holes, observing the shadows cast inside and out by sun and moon, and connecting earth-bound geometry with celestial events. The naive and the initiated, in other words, would use the work alike, as art. In this, and in her absolute refusal to include "normal" art references in her work, Holt is radically non-elitist and democratic. This underground current found in many of these women's outdoor work erupts completely through the surface in hers.

The scale of Holt's effort in *Sun Tunnels* is probably greater than any other out-of-doors sculpture endeavor thus far. It is absolutely public, yet it is a work that provides a locus for meditation on the most private level, which is unusual in her work. Mary Miss always seems to generate the sense of an interior space, on the other hand, even though she doesn't roof-over or completely enclose her structures. The illusion of insiderness is created in part by her habit of exteriorizing the expected interior structure of a given object. She usually works in wood—boards, 2x4's, lattice, fencing, etc.—occasionally with sheet metal, and rarely with other semi-structural materials such as chicken wire and cardboard. Wooden structures are commonly rigid right angles faced with some material or other so that the wood construction is hidden inside shell or facing walls, not expressed outwardly. Mary Miss not only shows the wood structure but turns it inside out.

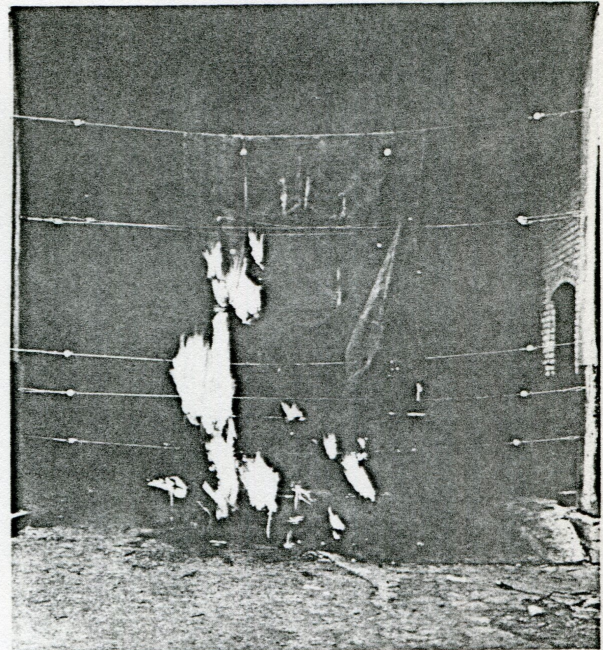
Sunken Pool, executed on the grounds of the Greenwich County Day School in 1974, has a smooth sheet-steel interior supported by a latticed brace of 2-by-4-inch beams on the outside of its 20-foot circumference. She has here, as she frequently does, extended the verticals of the supporting members far beyond the confines of the material it embraces. The result is a look of incompleteness that implies potential extension. Once having stepped down into the water inside the steel cylinder which extends down 3 feet below ground, through one of the T-shaped entrances on axis in its walls, one finds oneself "outside" while actually inside. Space is contained while paradoxically intangible. There is a sensation of floating free in empty, unbounded space despite the absoluteness of the enclosure.

Needless to say, the courage it takes to step down into the dark water, unsure of the bottom, and to move into the "tank" is great. Also similar in some respects to the experience of an Alice Aycock work are the protected fort-clubhouse-secret hiding place-initiation ceremony site intimations given off by the structure. Like an Abish in some respects is the openness to the ground, its potential for being swallowed up by surrounding growth. But its sound is unique. It's the sound of one hand clapping or a tree falling in a forest with no one to hear it fall. Mary Miss has a curious quality of absence, of negation in her style. Her formal vocabulary—O's, X's, V's, and H's—belongs to tic-tac-toe, a pointless game. She builds barriers to your passage, floorless buildings and serried ranks of rings or notches that telescope your lines of sight in reverse until the sighted space disappears into the earth like the setting sun it imitates. She marks time and measures distance with these objects, but they lead nowhere. Like the indoor wall or floor pieces she makes that seem all inside out, or the pool where you feel outside when you're inside, you feel the work is disappearing before your eyes or that, while experiencing it, you are passing through a mirror into another reality, like a character in "Children of Paradise."

Michelle Stuart, *Niagara Gorge Path Relocated*, 1975. Artpark, Lewiston, New York, 420 x 5'.



Mary Shaffer, *Fire Laundry*, 1974-75. Providence, Rhode Island. ▼



Miss' persistent use of untreated wood or metal in their natural state encourages the visual disappearance of the works as handmade objects. Despite her good craftsmanship and her love of materials, she denies you the possibility of being seduced by their surface appearances. (All of her outdoor pieces have succumbed to the elements or have been destroyed, except the wood-lattice in an open air pit piece she did at Oberlin which has been remade in metal.) Her attitude is reticent and respectful toward her materials, in the manner of Japanese temple architecture and symbolic garden landscaping.

Many of her concerns came together in a big piece she executed in Artpark last summer. Three concentric steel-walled, stone chip-topped rings or wells sinking to a depth of 10 feet at the center invited the viewer to move into the earth step by step. To reemerge from it was to reexperience man's movement from darkness to light, from the blocked horizon of a child through the various levels of increased consciousness to the 360° full-sweep omniscience of the erect biped. V-shaped grooves moved out on the axes of the four directions of the compass to provide sightlines for the telescope you became while inside the piece. When the piece is viewed from the air, it turns into a

target within the crosshairs of a sighting device. As a result, your position when within the work takes on an aspect of vulnerability and some menacing overtones. This effect is not rare in her work. One new project is for a huge underground cloister with implications of, but no access to, indefinite extension on all sides beneath the ground. The disturbing impression would be that the earth may in fact be honeycombed with underground architecture (like the underground dwellings in the loess belt in China) that has only accidentally been uncovered in this one spot.

Michelle Stuart has a project in the planning stages for concentric rings (or arcs) of muslin-backed paper to be placed on the levels of a huge quarry in upstate New York and held down with piles of rocks from the quarry which will delineate the topography of the site. This will be the first such configuration for her as she tends to work with falls or horizontally aligned series where the paper is like white water for the rocks strewn on it or pulverized into its surface. Her *Niagara Gorge Path Relocated* in Artpark during the summer of 1975 had red Queenstone shale, the rock native to that area, rubbed on, giving the paper a pale reddish-brown coloration. The "fall" went 420 feet down the side of the palisade of the Niagara River at the spot where water had once fallen. Her research into the area (its history, sociology, economics, changing topography, etc.) is all part of the documentation of the piece extra to the photographs. Needless to say, the actual muslin-backed paper drawing is gone.

Stuart's *Rock Books* have a diaristic, even secretive and fetishistic quality which seems quite private in comparison with her large-scale drawings on the land. Made of handmade paper which she had imbued with the earth pigments and minerals of the places or experiences they "record," the books vary greatly in coloration and texture. Some open, but most are to be grasped as a whole experiential package unopened. Tied firmly with horsehair-like string, they remind one of Indian artifacts, and seem as though they might hide powerful charms and incantations within their pages. They are mute evidence of some events or emotions which we will never come to know. The books, like the big pieces, function as specimens taken back to civilization by explorers at the completion of a trek into the wilderness.

Although Stuart always keeps accurate records of her travels and the sources of her materials and is careful to document each subsequent use of them in her drawings or books, the geological function once served by the materials is completely subverted by the artist when she moves them into their new art context. Thus it really becomes superfluous to know what variety of feldspar she used to get that particular shade of brown. Likewise, one needn't know what is history and what is fiction in her book *The Fall*, which repeatedly pairs stereopticon views of great falls in the Northwest with passages from a prose-poem, pseudo-diary, speculative essay she has written which ranges from the evocative wordiness of Gabriel Garcia Marquez to the sparingness of haiku or science-ese. She has created in this book a mythological America that would have felt like home to 19th-century transcendental poets and Utopian planners.

One of Stuart's pieces that is specifically visionary in a way that makes it seem like a physical manifestation of the imagery in her book *The Fall* is her project for a *Breezypoint Bunker*. It involves creating a whole hill with a constantly running spring at the top and a built-in sprinkler system to water the flowers which would cover it. A waterfall would flow from top to bottom over a "path" of stones and rocks indigenous, like the flowers, to the area. She says, "The spring and waterfall and path from earth to sky symbolize how as a community we can work together with the nature around us to create joyous and serenely pleasurable environments and oases out of dank, dark and ominous structures and change our history from negative forces to positive life- and light-producing ones."

All of Stuart's drawings in crushed mineral pigments on muslin-backed rag paper have the look of serenity, but they have underlying implications of violence which are antithetical to this aspect of their content. In them the pulverized rocks which have been ripped from nature are smashed into "culture" and destroyed in the process. All art materials have, of course, been removed from their natural functions and killed in the process

of being torn from the earth. This violence is magnified by Stuart's particular method of using her materials; concomitantly, I expect the sheer pleasure to be derived from this kind of "elemental experience of human strength," as Hannah Arendt describes it, must be greatly increased for Stuart as well, especially since the violent effort is coordinated and rhythmically ordered. The resultant works engender a sensuality that is physical and real to the viewer.

The feeling of elation one feels in this kind of exertion where you can measure yourself against the forces of nature is also available through the use of cunning and ingenuity. Both figure in the work of Mary Shaffer. In her *Fire Walls* and *Fire Laundry* pieces she worked with high-voltage electricity in complex wiring configurations which she has had to learn how to install and handle herself, overcoming enormous fears of it in the process. She has to push the heating elements above their legal limits in phased increments in order to get the inflammable material she "hangs" on the electrical lines to flame. It took 30 minutes for the green material to burn in droplets setting itself on fire one part at a time in the *Fire Laundry* she installed in a Roman courtyard in 1974. Gallery GAP which sponsored the event advised her to do it at noon (siesta time) in August (vacation time) and if she were caught to speak English and not to mention their name. The terrors, the stealth, the subversiveness of this kind of art activity has parallels with the work of Rafael Ferrer and Gordon Matta-Clark, but the introverted, self-exploratory nature of it is shared by many of these women. When she reinstalled the piece at O. K. Harris in 1975 she didn't pull the switch, but she still managed to convey the emotional tenor of the situation.

Shaffer is fascinated with the power small gestures can have—a flip of the switch, the gentle pull of a window shade that produces a resounding wham on release, the way steadily applied heat can turn unburnable matter into liquid fire or glass into molten ice. She loves to compress things so that they will later snap, split, or burst open or that change with time like glass that is always moving. She has long been involved with dance movement as a discontinuous phenomenon with built-in stresses and tensions. Many of her glass pieces have built-in explosion factors since glass is an unstable material and will shatter in combination with unchanging materials like metal when compressed together.

Cement, which also continues to change composition and to harden as it ages, is another of her favorite materials. She once put five standard sidewalk units unexpectedly in the middle of an open field with a white wooden signpost at one end which read "keep off the sidewalk." The humor of this was given a disturbing twist by the unevenness of the sidewalk plane which gave it an unstable look. The sign then became a potential warning and she successfully subverted her viewers' expectations.

Shaffer's work shares an autobiographically exposed situation with the rest of the work under discussion here, but it has a special neo-surreality and an informality which is unique. She works out her fears of overwhelming and destructive forces by harnessing them and using them to make art. She must pitch herself wholly into the fray in order to accomplish this take-over. Burning laundry in curtain-like configurations out of doors subverts the normal inside/outside relationship, and, of course, says a lot about women's roles and one's expectations for art. The strange things she does with glass—dripping it over metal armatures, compressing it or stretching it out in space, pushing it into splintering or shattering and being a menace—are akin to her surreal indoor "environments" in that they recreate her recurrent dreams and nightmares. They represent her fears and her victories over those fears for our participation and appreciation.

One sees private sides revealed in the public works these women have made or propose to make. They tap our unconsciousnesses by fueling their art with their own. We relive our own experiences through their recreation of situations which were full of implications for themselves and which bear collectively on us. They give us places and set apart times for us to think about ourselves and our relationship to the world. The work ranges from violence to serenity, from universalizing conceptualism to the most intimate self-revelation. However long they actually last, the pieces done by these women certainly shall endure as meaningful, intensely human statements.