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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND THE LAND THROUGH THE PROCESS OF WALKING

by

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INTRODUCTION

"The question of all questions for mankind - the problem which underlies all others and which is more deeply interesting than any other- is the ascertainment of the place which man occupies in nature, and of his relations to the universe of things." [1]

Walking is man's oldest and most natural activity. One of our basic instincts is that of walking. As a baby learns to crawl and progresses to its first unsteady steps without being taught, so it is with all walking creatures of the earth. The wildebeest calf of the South African plains must learn to walk within minutes of birth to have any chance of escape from predators such as lions, leopards and hyenas. The walking instinct is crucial to survival :

"Our nature lies in movement,
Complete calm is death" [2]

Walking has always played an important part in my life. It was as a child that I first experienced the thrill of walking in the Wicklow mountains, climbing to high places and looking back over a landscape that stretched for miles to the horizon. Walking in a natural environment is a source of peace and contentment for many people. The experience of oneness with nature and the development of a personal relationship with the land can be beneficial to all from a physical, spiritual and emotional point of view.

By reference to 'primitive' Aboriginal culture in comparison with today's "modern" society, I hope to discuss the relationship between man and the land through the process of walking, a relationship which has deteriorated, if not been completely forgotten, through the course of evolution and the resulting

technological developments of mankind. These continually endeavour to widen the gap between man and nature. Man is part of nature and can only survive in harmony with his surroundings. I believe that the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of humankind is dependent on a basic understanding of our natural environment and how we relate to it.

The consequences of man's detachment from nature have resulted in disregard for nature, as we can now see through escalating world-wide pollution from industrial, chemical, technological and other unnatural sources. The survival of the planet Earth is not dependent on the end products of these pollution sources, but, in today's 'developed' society, money has the upper hand. The materialist values of modern society are a far cry from the holistic values of 'primitive' cultures and societies.

"Materialism. Utter the word with horror, stressing each syllable." [3]

As a result of this materialism, man has lost touch with nature, forgotten that sense of oneness with the land. I also hope to discuss Land Art and whether it creates awareness of the land, particularly through walking. Richard Long, Hamish Fulton and Andy Goldsworthy are three well-known land artists in Britain who walk and make use of natural materials in their art. They participate in nature, thereby learning more about themselves and the land.

Michael Heizer and Robert Smithson, two well-known American Land Artists, also work with the landscape, although in what may be seen as a destructive fashion. With reference to these artists, I will be asking the question : does Land Art create awareness of our natural environment; does it rekindle remembrance of our relationship with the land in times past; or is it merely a further exploitation of the earth?

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CHAPTER ONE

Humankind has evolved to walk. Scientific evolutionary theory places the evolution of humans in the last four million years. All evolutionary steps forward took place gradually, resulting in humankind's branching off from the evolving primate species, and branching again and again until mankind became what it is today. This gradual evolution involved an increasingly efficient development of locomotion; hence man has evolved from crawling in the dirt to walking tall, from an ape on all fours to the bipedalism of man today.

According to John E. Pfeiffer, the first hominids, i.e., the first members of the human family, certainly differed from any existing ape.[1] The primate predecessors of man used their feet not only as supports, but also as grasping devices, for example, while eating fruit from the ends of branches. They assumed a bent-forward posture and were capable of two-footed walking, although not for long, and they usually moved along on their hands as well as their feet. This was the beginning of the process which eventually resulted in the human stride.

Many theories have been offered to explain why a two-footed gait should have developed in the first place, since an upright posture has several important disadvantages. Animals balancing on two feet are easier to knock over, more conspicuous and less agile when dodging the enemy. Despite these disadvantages, it seems that bipedalism probably evolved as a way of carrying food more efficiently.

Jane Goodall, of the Gombe Stream Research Centre on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in Africa, has spent at least ten years observing chimpanzees in the forests of Northwest Tanzania. She has recorded the apes " loading their

arms with choice wild fruits, then walking erect for several yards to a spot of shade before sitting down to eat."[2]

Another possibility is that bipedalism evolved perhaps as a more efficient form of locomotion, although it may have been less efficient in terms of speed. Walking on two feet happens to be a comfortable and convenient way of covering large areas once it has been developed. It would appear then that walking facilitated hunting and gathering, which became the basis of nomadic cultures. The first men, by all traditional accounts, were wanderers, hunter gatherers, primitive people who lived in perfect harmony with nature, perambulating each year the wide range of their native landscapes at a time when

"all that life requires was provided, unasked and in abundance" [3]

The Aborigines, hunter gatherers of central Australia, have had a close relationship with the land for at least forty thousand years, and going walkabout is an integral part of their culture. Aborigines, like all primitive peoples, have not been concerned with dominating their surroundings, but are more in tune with nature, sharing in their land. Primitive man, unlike many animals, was not equipped by nature with the instinct to build houses.

"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head" [4]

There are still people content to live accordingly, although in this age of modern cities and civilisation they are few and far between. The Aborigines are living proof that such cultures can still survive in today's material world. They are in tune with the land, one with the Earth spirit, believing themselves to be a part of the earth, not its master :

"Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all." [5]

In Central Australia, as in other parts of that continent, the links between Aboriginal people and the landscape are fundamental and profound. The beliefs of the Aborigines are based on the inseparability of territory, people and mythical ancestors. Myth is an expression of unobservable realities in terms of observable phenomena; in the case of the Aborigines, the features of their landscape. Many Aboriginal myths are accounts of their ancestors' travels from site to site (walkabout), broken most frequently by incidents of hunting and gathering food, fighting enemies and engaging in ceremonies with other characters of the Dreamtime.

In Aboriginal myth, the Dreamtime is central. Heroes come to a flat featureless world and transform themselves into natural features such as trees and rocks, which have sacred meanings associated with a particular heroic figure, thus creating the landscape. The Dreamtime can be thought of as the beginning of the world, just as the myth of the genesis of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden portrays the beginning of the world.

Physical features of the environment, e.g. rocks and trees being personified through the Dreamtime, are to them living evidence of the Dreamtime heroes. The mythical landscape is superimposed over the physical landscape and they coincide at geo-physical features which are sacred places. Every feature of the landscape is known and has meaning, so that the Aborigines can perceive differences which outsiders cannot see. As one example, every individual feature of Ayers Rock, or "Uluru" as the Aborigines call it, is linked to a significant myth and the ancestors who created it. Every tree, hole and fissure has meaning. Thus, what may to an outsider be nothing but land, is a rich landscape of symbols, totems, dreamings and sacred places.

Aboriginal relationship with the land is more one of identification than ownership. The land is sacred, therefore they respect it and do not disturb it

unnecessarily. The son of Arnhem Land artist Mungurrawuy, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, has written :

"When I was sixteen years old, my father taught me to sing some of the songs that talk about the land ..... One day I went fishing with Dad. As I was walking along behind him I was dragging my spear on the beach which was leaving a long line behind me. He told me to stop doing that. He continued telling me that if I made a mark, or dig with no reason at all, I've been hurting the bones of the traditional people of that land.
We must only dig and make marks on the ground when we perform or gather food." [6]

Any feature of the landscape may manifest the sacred; therefore the Aborigines have great respect for their land. Of course, people of all countries have sacred places and most have then erected buildings , monuments or temples to stress the sacredness of the site, but what has particularly caught my interest concerning the Aborigines is the way in which they stress the sacredness of their sites by returning to these places on walkabouts, and, through ritual and mythological explanation, they re-enact the journeys of their ancestors in remembrance of the Dreamtime. They leave the land as it was created in the beginning, their symbols are non-material and as natural as nature intended.

"Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set." [7]

"To wound the Earth is to wound yourself, and if others wound the Earth, they are wounding you. The land should be left untouched: as it was in the Dreamtime when the ancestors sang the world into existence." [8]

Bruce Chatwin's novel, The Songlines 1987, is an account of his own venture into the desolate land of outback .Australia, to learn the meaning of the Aboriginals' ancient "Dreaming Tracks" or "Songlines". The Aboriginal tradition of walkabout involves making a ritual journey along one's ancestral dreaming

tracks or songlines, as they are sometimes referred to; hence the title of Bruce Chatwin's novel. Each totemic ancestor, while travelling through the country, was thought to have scattered a trail of words and musical notes along the line of his footprints, and these "Dreaming Tracks" remained over the land as 'ways of communication ' between various tribes. In the Dreamtime, the heroic ancestors sang the world into existence and every feature, rock and tree had its own song. Aboriginals could not accept that the country existed until they could see and sing it. So traditionally the man who goes walkabout sings the Ancestors' songs along the Dreaming Track without changing a word or note, thus effectively recreating the creation and paying tribute to the sacred sites of his ancestors.

I think that the Songlines is an important novel in that it gives more of an insight into the Aboriginal experience than so many other factual, documentary-type books which also attempt to enlighten, albeit not as successfully. The Songlines is a witty and honest account of Bruce Chatwin's experiences in outback Australia and to read the book is to be a part of his quest. One can almost imagine standing alongside the Aborigines in the vast plains of spinifex grass and mulga trees, low sand dunes and quartzite hills, and, as one reads further into the novel, it is possible to get an honest grasp of the aboriginal way of life and to see the landscape with the same respect and awe. It is an eye-opening concept of total respect and oneness with the land which materialist western societies would do well to heed. The notion of walkabout is made more approachable and understandable to our 'superior' cultures. Chatwin's encounters with the Aboriginals are recorded in a light-hearted, conversational format which effectively involves the reader. I believe that experiencing situations is the most effective means by which people can learn, and since the Songlines is one man's experience shared with us, rather than recounted to us, it is a more valid approach to learning about aboriginal culture, and in my view instils recognition of man's own inner desire to be at one with the land.

It is evident that the Aborigines, and indeed all the Aboriginal cultures of the world that have existed without writing and printing, drew their inner strength from oral traditions which relied on personal communication of an inward knowledge and sense of understanding. This knowledge possessed within is the source of personal identity with the land, rather than a relationship towards the land, which is still experienced by an ever increasing number of non-western clan societies, such as the Australian Aboriginals.

Western culture pursues a capitalist approach to knowledge so that knowledge can be obtained for a price. This inevitably results in Western detachment from any personal identity with responsibility for the land, unlike the Aborigines who insist upon levels of secrecy. Their vast inner knowledge is not for sale, their beliefs are kept intact, and this makes for a more holistic relationship with the land, which is much more significant than so-called 'ownership' of the land in Western terminology.

The history of the British colonisation of Western Australia involved the early suppression of Aboriginal populations and the utilisation of convict labour after 1829. Conflict between Aboriginal groups and early settlers continued for over a century in the history of Western Australia. German involvement in Australia also brought about initiatives within church organisations in Germany, to bring the 'benefits' of a European vision of the world to the distant indigenous peoples of Australia, thus securing their souls for that state of grace conferred through Christianity. But when two different cultures collide, they influence and change each other to some degree, and for 'primitive' cultures the result can be destructive. According to Bernice Murphy, this European perception represented a retinal approach, a completely different way of "seeing" from "other" cultures, and directed such force and power behind its instrumented ordering that it was impossible for alternative Aboriginal cultures to resist such erasing glances on their more fugitive and less visible systems of knowledge [9].

The negative, deculturing effects of missionary activity on Aboriginal populations are now well recognised and although they have come into disrepute among the radical Aborigines of today, the German Lutheran missions

established in South Australia were destined to play an important role in preserving vital cultural records of Aboriginal communities. This came about through the more subtle quality of educational background that the more highly educated German missionaries brought with them to Australia. It was in this same general region of South Australia that Nikolaus Lang arrived in 1979, on a prelude visit to his three year stay less than a decade later. Lang, a German artist with a background in woodcarving, developed an interest in anthropology in the late 1950s in his native Oberammergaü in Bavaria. He began to study Aboriginal culture while in London in the 1960s, which he continued until his first visit to Australia in 1979.

Lang's work is deeply concerned with human societies, particularly those in transition or with disrupted social functioning. This is revealed in Lang's selection of the interpenetrating histories of both Aboriginal and European cultures in Australia. In his exhibition Nunga and Goonya 1991, which means "blackfellow and whiteperson", Lang explores the alienation of the Aborigines. Through an examination of their environment and culture, he reveals aspects of the conflict between the Aborigines and the white settlers who disregarded their existence and all but destroyed their culture. His work, shown for the first time in Ireland in 1991, combines rubbings of stone and bark, animal skins and natural pigments from the earth in visually exciting images.
Lang explores the relationship between the two conflicting civilisations while celebrating the flora and fauna of the land that links them. His installations are mostly comprised of found evidence of human activities which he collected on his long walks through the Australian bush, and examined as to their meanings. One of his installations that most appealed to me was his Colour Field - Ochre and Sand, which consists of a Southern Australian palette of sand and ochre samples. It covers an area of 5 x 6 metres and is divided into three fields of equal size. (Fig 1). The raw ochres with their corresponding pulverised pigments are displayed in the middle, and the sand samples are distributed equally on either side in conical heaps. The vast array of colour jumps out and immediately draws the viewers attention. It is incredible to feel the warmth and vibrant colours from these small heaps of sand and ochre, which reflect many different aspects and qualities derived from the land. This in itself is something

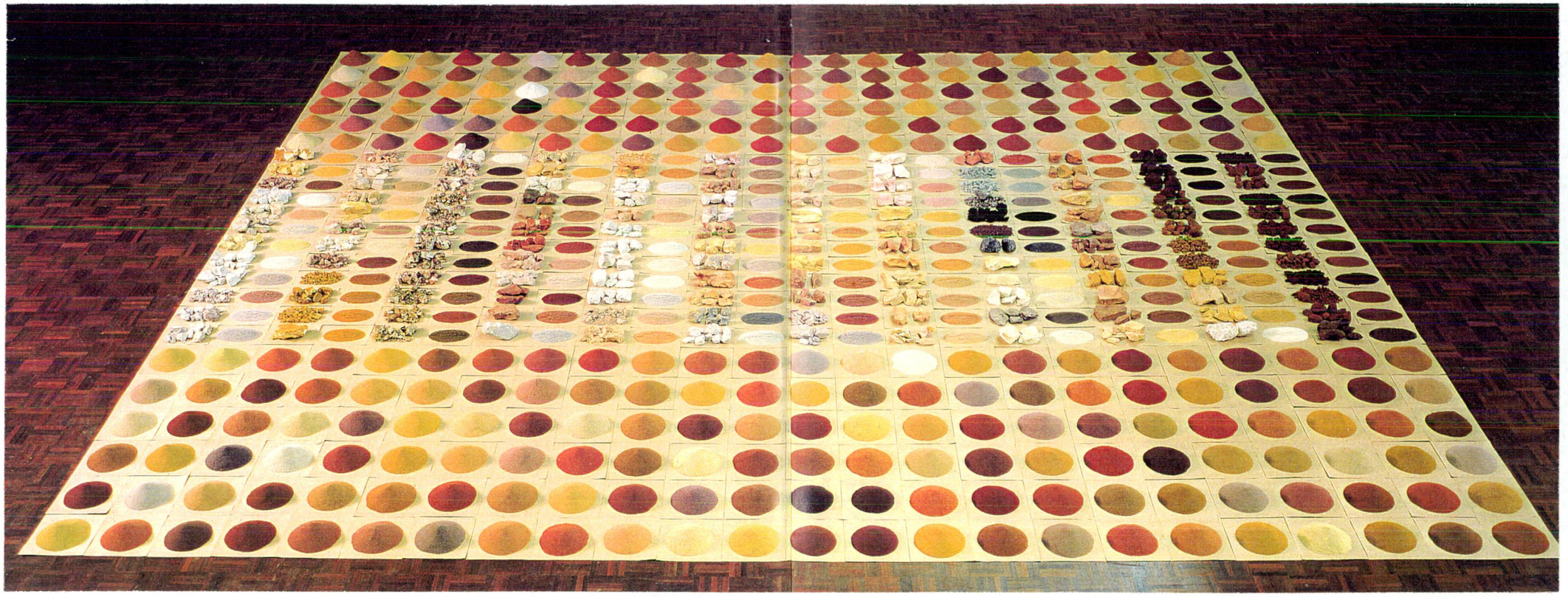

FIG.1 NIKOLAUS LANG - COLOUR FIELD - OCHRE AND SAND 1991

to be marvelled at, reminding one of the variety of nature. The colours symbolise the land, while at the same time restate its being reinterpreted in the possession of the artist. There is a balance between nature and culture in this piece. In the past, Australian tribal groups used to travel on foot from far away, for many miles and days, to fetch ochre at certain places, which served throughout the year for painting the face and body. The red ochre symbolised the blood of Dreamtime heroes as well as reincarnation and life. Lang also walked many hundreds of miles reflecting on the land and gathering fragments and images that for him best express human social and cultural interaction with the land. In the Flinders Ranges, Lang re-enacted this Aboriginal custom of walking for many miles to gather ochre. He has taken the vital necessity of colour for the Aborigines to heart and raises it to a level of reflection and aesthetic consideration. He makes visible the essence of Aboriginal Australia. Like Bruce Chatwin, Lang is rekindling recognition of other cultures and their importance in order for us to understand our own relationship to the land. Through his walks and works, Lang mourns for lost cultures but at the same time commemorates them with vivid insight, discouraging disregard for the existence and 'primitive' beliefs of cultures and civilisations of which we know and understand so little.

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CHAPTER TWO

Ancient nomadic cultures have been rendered almost obsolete in today's material world. Not only are they in danger of disappearing but are considered by an increasingly bureaucratic and capitalist modern society to represent an inferior way of living. Yet these ancient cultures have survived in harmony with the land for many centuries, while modern materialist societies struggle to combat the pollutant results of 'advanced' technological living standards. The evidence of Newgrange in the Boyne valley, Co. Meath, and many other megalithic sites world-wide, shows the existence 4,000 years ago of advanced scientific knowledge combined with a natural, unobtrusive technology, suggesting that the present world civilisation is not the first or most intelligent, merely the most materialistically developed and directed. The results of this materialism, which are seriously disrupting the natural patterns of the earth, are now becoming more evident.

Technology and society have changed more in the twentieth century than in any previous century; and whether or not this change has been of benefit to the earth remains to be seen. The industrial revolution changed the western world from a basically rural and agricultural society to a fundamentally urban and industrial society. The industrial revolution began in Great Britain during the 1700s, so that by the mid 1800s industrialisation had become widespread in western Europe as well as in the north-eastern United States. Before this, manufacturing would have been done by hand according to traditional methods,

thereby instilling a sense of purpose and satisfaction in even the most menial of labours. Eventually power-driven machines replaced the need for manual labour, effectively rendering traditional methods useless. With the onset of industrialisation, many ancient traditions and cultures were forced to make way for modern methods and were then slowly forgotten.

While industrialisation and technology have brought many material benefits, they have also created a large number of problems that continue to escalate. For instance, most industrial countries face problems of air and water pollution. A side effect of many industrial processes, environmental pollution, is one of the most serious problems facing humanity today. The development of crowded industrial cities in the 19th century made pollution a huge problem, with people and factories concentrating huge amounts of pollution into small areas. This development trend has continued so much that the earth is now on the verge of breaking point in terms of supporting its human inhabitants. Rapid advances in technology, agriculture, industry and transportation have been made since the end of World War II, but most, despite the apparent improvement in our living standards, were developed without consideration of the disastrous effects they would have on the environment.

In today's material society, our desire for convenience is the main cause of pollution. Many synthetic materials that pollute the environment have been developed to save people time, work or money. Through industrialisation, people have either forgotten traditional activities which involved physical labour and inevitable identity with the land, or have grown more materialistic in their outlook, banishing a natural way of life for a more economically profitable lifestyle. One obvious consequence of this detachment from a natural life is world-wide pollution, which, with effort, could be partially eliminated, but just as prevention of pollution is often considered too expensive, it is more often considered too inconvenient. It is a sad state of affairs that we, as a whole, do not appear to accept responsibility for our actions; this further creates problems for the environment :

"No man is an island,
entire of itself;

Every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main" [1]

Public concern over environmental pollution became especially widespread in the late 1960s, with increased reports of dramatic environmental tragedies, which pointed out the seriousness of pollution problems. These included oil spills that ruined beaches and killed wildlife, thick blankets of air pollution that lasted for days over cities, and waterways that had become almost extinct from pollution. A highlight of the anti-pollution movement took place on April 22nd, 1970. On that day, called 'Earth Day', more than 20 million people throughout the United States participated in anti-pollution demonstrations and other activities, thereby attracting world-wide attention to the plight of our environment. Since then, anti-pollution movements, such as Greenpeace, have continued to grow. But so has the total world-wide population.

Population increase has arisen as a result of industrialisation; both contribute heavily to the pollution of the earth. The global population has risen from an estimated 100 million at the time of Christ to 1.6 billion in 1900; but since 1900 the population has exploded to over a massive 6 billion. Industrial output has risen by a factor of 20, using up in the process 20% of the earth's stock of non-renewable resources. In 1990, 80% of these resources remained. According to current research [2] the fertility of the land is already severely affected by pollution and land erosion, and if this continues on its escalating trend, food production could begin to fall after 2015. If current population growth trends continue, then the population world-wide could increase by 50% between 1990 and 2020 and industrial output by 85%. Thus, what was a 110 year supply of non-renewable resources in 1990, would have sunk to a 30-year supply in 2020. After 2020, population and industrial output would sink rapidly, owing to food shortages, dislocation, health and ecological problems. If environmental destruction in the name of technological progress is allowed to continue, then the above scenario is a realistic implication for the population c.

"Man, false man, smiling destructive man." [3]

"This planet earth was brought into its corruption by humankind, therefore it is important that humankind eliminates it.". [4]

Transportation is big business for millions of people, even though exhaust from engine-powered vehicles causes a large percentage of all air pollution. While transport has made the farthest reaches of the earth accessible to all, at the same time it has meant less interaction with the land while travelling. People driving vehicles, instead of walking, are depriving themselves of fresh air, physical exercise, mental stimulation and purposeful bonding with the land. While transportation is undoubtedly a necessity in our modern world, it effectively cuts us off from an everyday appreciation of our natural surroundings, by isolating us from physical contact with the land.

There is now a massive amount of physical movement around the planet of people and things, and through modern methods of transportation this contributes a great deal to the destruction of our environment. Many people welcomed the development of the automobile in the late 1890s. They believed that automobiles would be quieter and less offensive to the nostrils than horses. But as more automobiles came into use, the noise of roaring traffic proved much more annoying than the clatter of hooves, and exhaust fumes likewise proved far worse than the smell of horse manure, and much more damaging to health. In addition, automobiles create traffic jams which make travel more time consuming and stressful than travel on horseback. Motor vehicle pollution releases hundreds of millions of tonnes of gas and particles into the atmosphere each year. This main contribution to the Greenhouse Effect causes rapidly changing weather and climate patterns with ecologically disastrous results such as droughts , floods and destructive storms in unexpected locations world-wide. And this is only one side-effect of exhaust pollution. It is to be hoped that in the future transport will take a form that will not congest, pollute or destroy, for travel to different places and experiences will always be necessary for the enlightenment of humankind. The disruption of the natural earth cycle should be avoided if at all possible. The restoration of balance in physical and psychological health is of utmost importance in this age of gross imbalance and stress. Amid the physical density and daily complexity of life, peace and

understanding of ourselves through nature seems far away and difficult to maintain contact with; yet the physical body has certain things that must be kept in balance to ensure an ongoing healing of the body, mind, soul and consequently the land. The stress which exists in the world today is the result of a fear of failure, disease, death, war, calamity and economic disruption. The pressure that these fears put on humanity inevitably results in dis-ease. The cure lies in the re-establishment of equilibrium of body, mind and soul.

In this age of stress related illness, the importance of walking and exercise is paramount. Stress relief of the mind is necessary in order for the body to heal itself, thereby creating an hospitable environment for the soul. The spirit cannot soar if the feet are heavy; walking is good for the body, mind and soul.

If our ancestors thrived on walking and its spiritually uplifting benefits, then why shouldn't we? It is up to ourselves to attain a balance with the landscape. Communion with nature is a big business nowadays, with an increasing amount of outdoor specialist shops promoting the outdoor life with a large range of equipment for the intrepid explorer. This reflects an interest in walking among a growing number of people who have been able to appreciate the fulfilling experiences of walking in remote and peaceful places. Speaking from personal experience, walking in the wild depths of the countryside far from civilisation is a humbling and addictive pastime. Thousands of people in Ireland, and indeed world-wide, still appreciate the beneficial and happy advantages of navigating difficult terrain on foot.

This passion for walking in the landscape is an Irish heritage. An Oíge was started in 1931 by a group of people who were keen walkers and lovers of the countryside, some of whom had discovered youth hostels in Germany, and decided to set up hostel accommodation in Ireland to help all, but especially young people, to a love and appreciation of the countryside. For the great majority of people in Ireland, the youth hostel movement was a new idea but its success has grown and An Oíge now boasts 41 hostels nationwide[5] .This is proof, if proof were needed, that getting away from urban, industrialised lifestyles to the simple pleasures of walking and communing with nature is by no

means a dying trend. Generally, the people who use hostels respect other people and the environment, love the countryside and enjoy walking in the landscape. If more people could have the opportunity of finding another, more rewarding way of living in a country setting, I have no doubt that they would be hooked on a simpler, healthier and more spiritually beneficial way of life in relation to the land. It would appear that although most of Western society has forgotten any fundamental relationship with the land, there are still those, like the nomadic Aboriginals of Australia, who wish to maintain a close union with nature through walking and participating in the land, thereby keeping the body, mind and soul in balance. Dawson Stellfox, an Irish born mountaineer and President of The Mountaineering Council of Ireland, is well known for climbing many mountains around the world such as Mount Everest, Kilimanjaro and K2. Stellfox represents an extreme example of man's passionate addiction to the landscape; in conquering these heights, he relearns an inner awareness of himself and of the inhospitable but breathtaking land he traverses:

"The altimeter is reading 8,848 metres and I'm sitting on the summit of the world" [6].

In an article entitled Walking - the Oldest and Now the Newest Approach[7], recent surveys showed that walking is the preferred form of activity for most people in this country, according to Cospóir, The National Sports Council.

Evidently people realise the importance of physical exercise in their daily lives. As the physical body ages, if it does not continue in movement and exercise, then it becomes limited in its movement. That also begins to affect the mind, for the mind then becomes limited in its expansion. All things are interconnected and if through materialism we lose contact with physical mobility, then portions of the body will become locked, which in turn will lock portions of the mind, preventing development and elevation of the mind and awareness of the soul. It is through lack of inner awareness that the destruction of our natural environment occurs, which in turn gives less incentive to walk in that environment, which results in less people realising that oneness with nature which is so vital to our survival. Destruction then seems to be part of a vicious circle.

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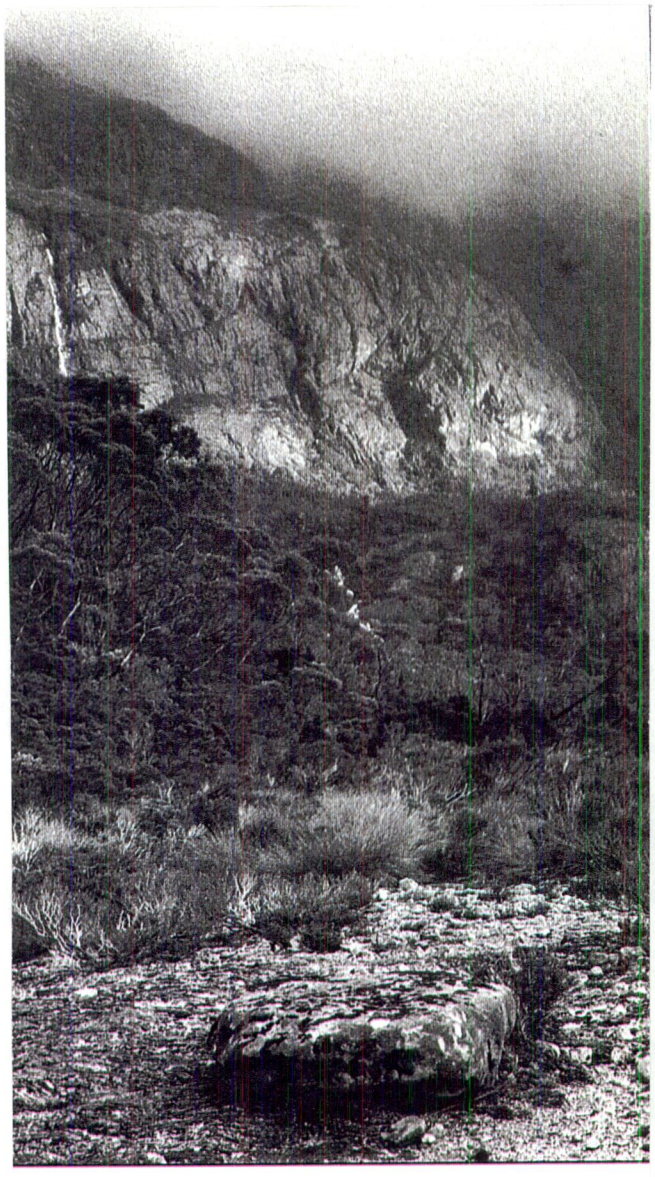
CHAPTER THREE

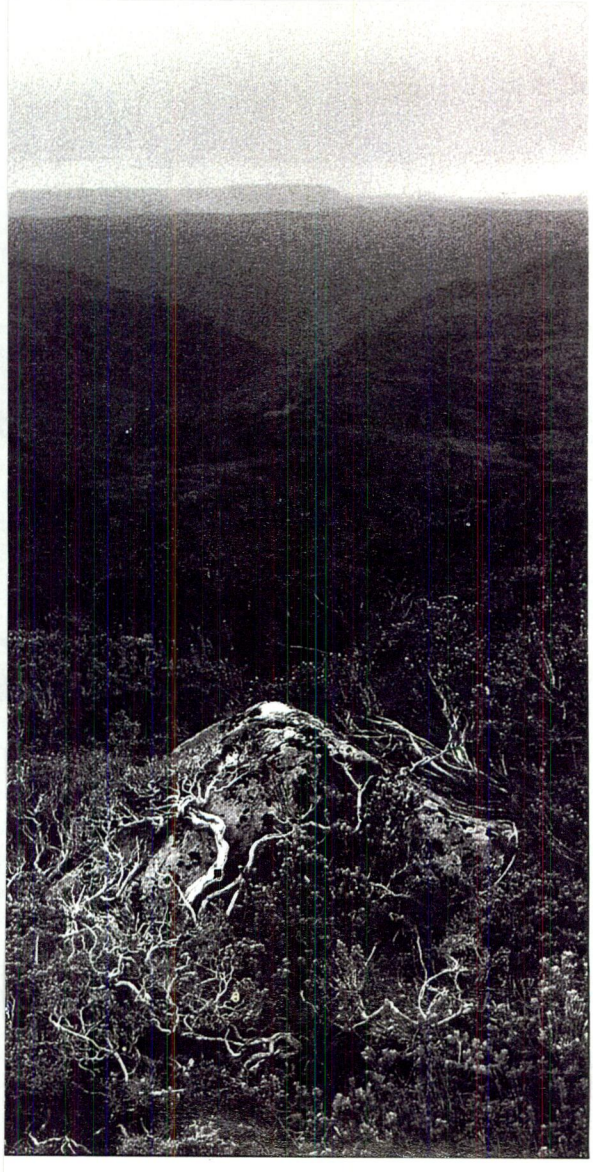
A growing concern for nature has appeared world-wide. Now at the end of the twentieth century, society faces crucial decisions about its way of life. Art has always reflected the questioning of a society by itself. In this age of imbalance, it is necessary to achieve a balance, an awareness of man's integral relationship with the land. In this chapter I will discuss Land Art in relation to restoring balance between man and the land, particularly through walking.

The landscape has proved a most enduring form of artistic inspiration through the ages. In the 1960s a handful of artists chose to work in the landscape itself. Rather than representing the land in paint on canvas, they chose to work with landscape materials, their art not simply of the landscape but in it. What concerns me the most is whether Land Art creates awareness of our relationship to the natural environment or is it just further exploitation of the land?

Over the past two decades Hamish Fulton has produced a body of work representing his experience of the landscape. The subject of Fulton's art is a fully realised nature and his relationship to it. He does not wish to change nature but places himself in a situation of being open to being changed by nature. The recurrent theme of Fulton's work is the walk. He walks in the wildernesses of the world to bear witness to the continued existence of such places, comparable to the Aborigines' walkabout in paying homage to the land. His walking provides a reminder of what the urban-industrial world has deprived itself of. The object of his walking is to relax into an alert harmony with the natural world as he moves about its landscape. With a deep respect for the land, he aims to leave only footprints. He represents these walks through the combined mediums of words and photographs, summarising his experiences of a particular walk with precise and economic images, as can be seen in (Fig.2).



RAIN LEECHES MUD



LOOKING BACK FROM THE SEVENTH DAY

TWO CROWS

FIG.2 HAMISH FULTON - ELEVEN DAY WALK IN TASMANIA MARCH- APRIL 1979

This seemingly obscure representation of an 11 day walk in Tasmania in March/April 1979 is surprisingly simple, and in that simplicity represents nature. Nature is to be accepted and respected as it is, not to be analysed and made into something more or less than it is. For Fulton, walking represents our nomadic and perhaps most basic tendencies towards nature. His art celebrates the purity of the nomad, moving across the land with no desire to take possession of it. Fulton admires those whose benign knowledge of nature enables them to survive without threat to any natural thing. The detachment from nature which epitomises the 'advanced' societies of East and West leaves us vulnerable when deprived of our urban, industrial way of life, naked in the very wildernesses that were home to our ancestors. Through Fulton's work, we are reminded of our alienation from the ultimate ground of our existence, the Earth.

Richard Long is another, perhaps better known artist who also creates art out of walking. In his work, Long sees man through nature and reminds us of his presence in the landscape through his absence. Richard Long was interested in creating a form of landscape sculpture that did not depict the landscape, but actually engaged it as a part of his art. A number of Long's early works were carried out while at St.Martin's School of Art in London from 1966. A Line made by Walking (Fig.3) was made by the artist walking back and forth on a grassy area until the grass had been worn to create a straight line. He then recorded it by photographing the result. Since then, Long has continued to make work involving walking presented in the form of photographs, maps, texts and a variety of materials found in nature .

"Everyone's life is a map and everyone makes maps. Artists are map makers of consciousness and of the spiritual world as well as measurers and describers of the natural world" [1]

The line and circle have become synonymous with Long, his subtle marks left along various walks world-wide. Unlike Fulton, he does leave a reminder of his presence, although it is by no means a permanent infringement on nature, being created from whatever stones or materials come to hand. His sculptures

FIG.3 RICHARD LONG - A LINE MADE BY WALKING ENGLAND 1967

are created by simply rearranging things he finds, as is evident in (Fig.4) and (Fig.5)

To walk a line is the easiest thing a human being can do to put his mark on a place. The idea of the path or way has meaning in all cultures, from the most material to the most spiritual. A path is a simple expression of the energy of man, a simultaneous image of the walking body that created it, just as Long leaves his line as a mark of his walking body that created it. Through walking and experiencing, his sculptures are created in the likeness of nature, from its materials, thus evoking a sense of freedom and space, a sense of familiarity and knowing with the landscape, reminding us of the many wonders of nature, but also reminding us of the forgotten wonders within ourselves, since we are a part of nature. Long uses nature with respect and freedom, making work for the land, not against it.

"Nature has more effect on me than I on It" [2]

But does he make art in order to walk or does he walk in order to make art? He considers the journeys themselves to be works of art. David Lee argues that ''Long and Fulton are no more artists because they like walking in remote places than the rest of us" [3]

In my view, the difference between "artists" and "non-artists" is that artists have attempted to express themselves and discover their inner awareness of themselves through creating their work. We, as human beings, are works of art in our potential capabilities, but through materialism we have lost that inner sense of expression that artists endeavour to re-acquaint themselves with. As a part of nature, we are all potential artists in the sense of expression.

Andy Goldsworthy is another well-known artist who works with the land and its abundant store of natural materials. His work leaves a trail that marks his progress through life

"My work is a growing body of feeling towards an understanding of the earth" [4]

FIG.4 RICHARD LONG - A LINE IN IRELAND IRELAND 1974

FIG.5 RICHARD LONG - A LINE IN AUSTRALIA AUSTRALIA 1977

His works differ from those of Long in that they are explorations of the limits of expression within found materials and are more fragile and less permanent than Long's lines and circles (Fig.6). For Goldsworthy, walking is not necessarily an emphasising element in his work, although his places of creating are found by walking and discovering. Goldsworthy is interested in growth and process, his own growth alongside that of nature. When working, he usually remains in one particular chosen area and spends time familiarising himself with the surrounding materials, be they leaves, stones, ice or snow. Travel is not essential to his art, for when travelling he regrets the loss of a sense of change.

He only see differences, not changes. For him, change is best experienced by staying in one place. So, unlike Fulton and Long, he is compelled to stay and observe changes in one area at a time, such as seasonal differences, weather-patterns, light and temperature of night and day. Whatever situation he finds himself in, he makes full use of the working conditions, thereby rediscovering nature and learning about himself and his potential through nature, much as a child seeks to learn while at play in a field or forest.

"My intention is not to improve on nature, but to know it - not as a spectator - but as a participant. I do not wish to mimic nature, but to draw on the energy that drives it so that it drives my work also. My art is unmistakably the work of a person - I would not want it otherwise - it celebrates my human nature and a need to be physically and spiritually bound to the Earth".[5]

Goldsworthy stops at a place or picks up a material because he feels there is something to be discovered. As a child might explore a forest floor and create an innocent jumble of natural objects which s/he has collected, so Goldsworthy is in effect retracing his steps back to the uncorrupted inquisitiveness of childhood and rediscovering a basic relationship with the land which adulthood attempts to dismiss. Perhaps if we could somehow touch our inner selves by experiencing the land through creative processes as Fulton, Long and Goldsworthy undoubtedly do, we could be more aware of our natural surroundings and how we relate to them.

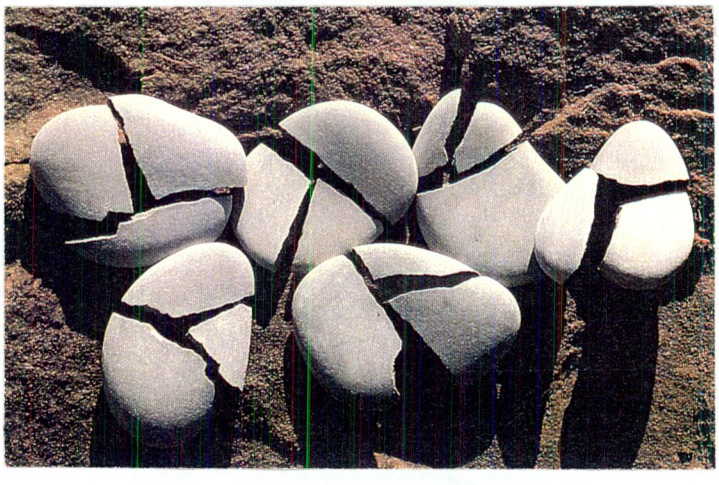


FIG.6 ANDY GOLDSWORTHY - HERON FEATHERS 1982, STACKED STICKS 1980, BROKEN PEBBLES 1980

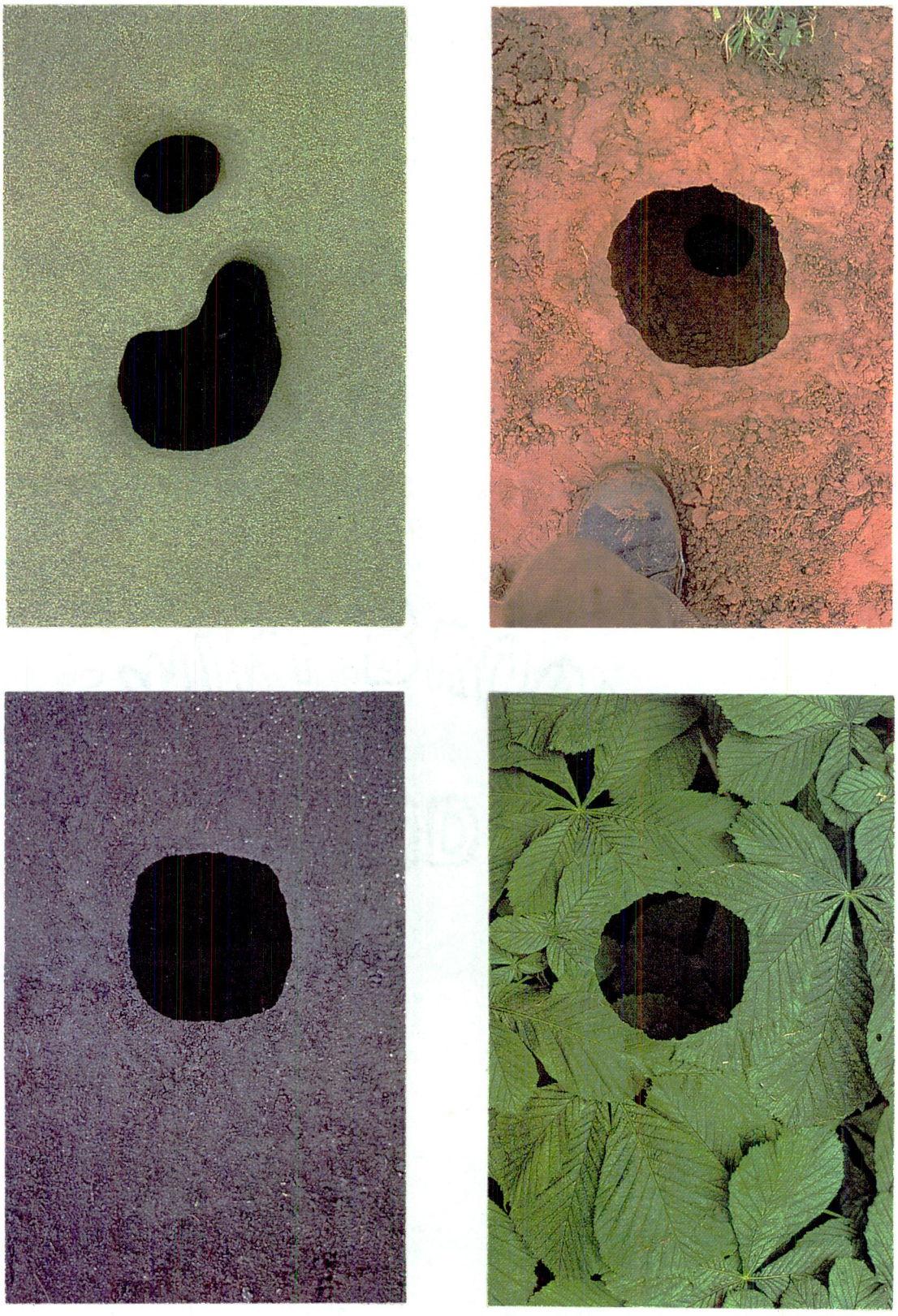


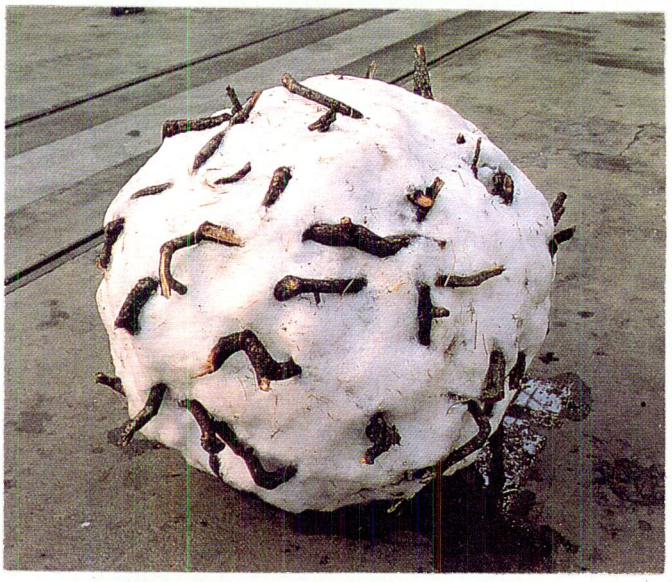
Fig.7 ANDY GOLDSWORTHY - HOLES - SAND 1977, EARTH 1980, PEAT 1980, HORSE CHESTNUT LEAVES 1986.

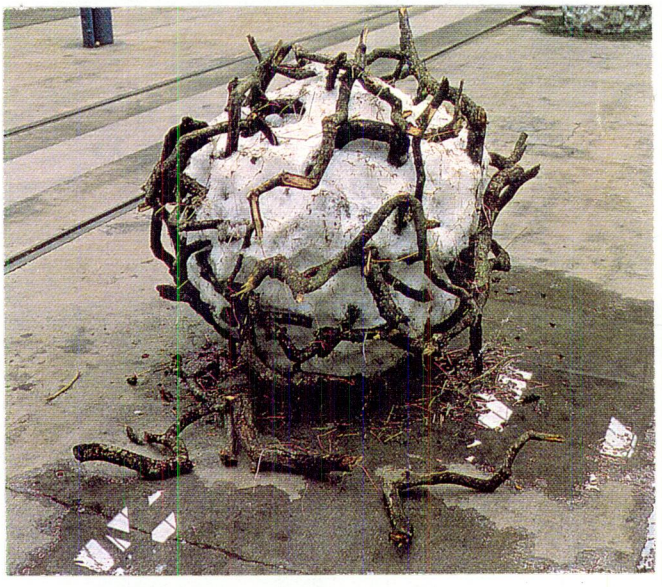
Traditionally, the artist has always been the mediator between man and his surroundings. Fulton, Long and Goldsworthy record their works by photography and also create indoor installations which afford an interesting perspective of their work to the viewer. For Goldsworthy, photography is his way of talking, writing and thinking, collecting visual images and expanding ideas, thus making him aware of connections and developments that might not otherwise have been apparent. It is also a way of conveying his ideas to the viewer, sharing a beautiful moment of a fragile construction with those who may not have thought about such simple possibilities with leaves and sticks as being beautiful as in (Fig.7) and (Fig.8). Goldsworthy also prefers gallery installations to public dialogue, which let the works speak for themselves, encouraging individual opinion from viewers, making them think more about their relationship with these natural works. With his installation pieces, as with his outdoor work, most of his art is temporary or constantly changing, such as his snow balls containing sticks, stones and grass, etc., which through the melting process leave behind a jumbled pile of debris in a puddle of water. (Fig.9) His interest in change and process becomes evident. One is almost afraid to leave in case of missing the subtle changes.

Long's work, however, in the case of gallery installations is more permanent in the sense that the deliberately placed stones, pieces of wood etc., will remain so unless or until they are moved by hand. In gallery spaces, however, Long's lines appear to be fragments of an ongoing line because of the absence of the horizon. (Fig.10) They are cut off abruptly by the walls of the gallery; there is nowhere for them to go. These static but naturally unintruding works are fragments of his walks His sculptures hardly disturb the space they inhabit, just as his Line made by walking hardly disturbed the grass. (Fig.3)

Undoubtedly the work becomes something totally different when transferred from its natural environment to an indoor gallery space. Its potential is somehow restricted, as is the inner development of mankind when he moves indoors, shutting himself away from nature. But perhaps viewing a piece that so

FIG.8 ANDY GOLDSWORTHY - JAPANESE MAPLE JAPAN 1987





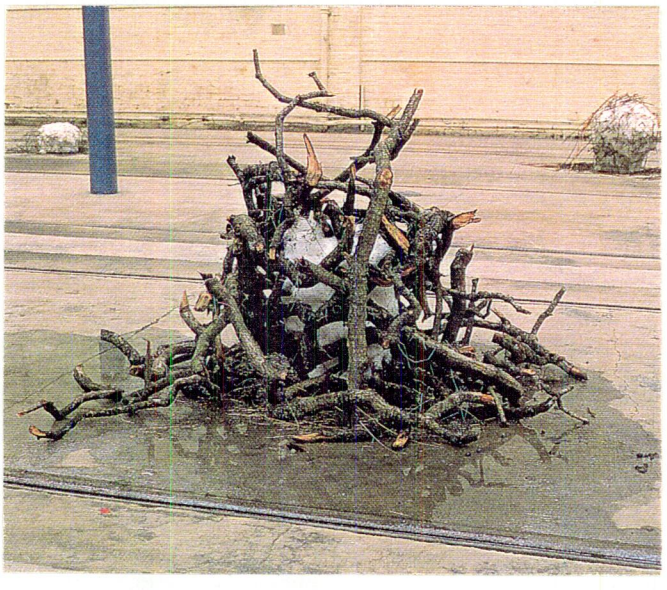


FIG.9 ANDY GOLDSWORTHY - SNOWBALLS , STICKS , GLASGOW 1989

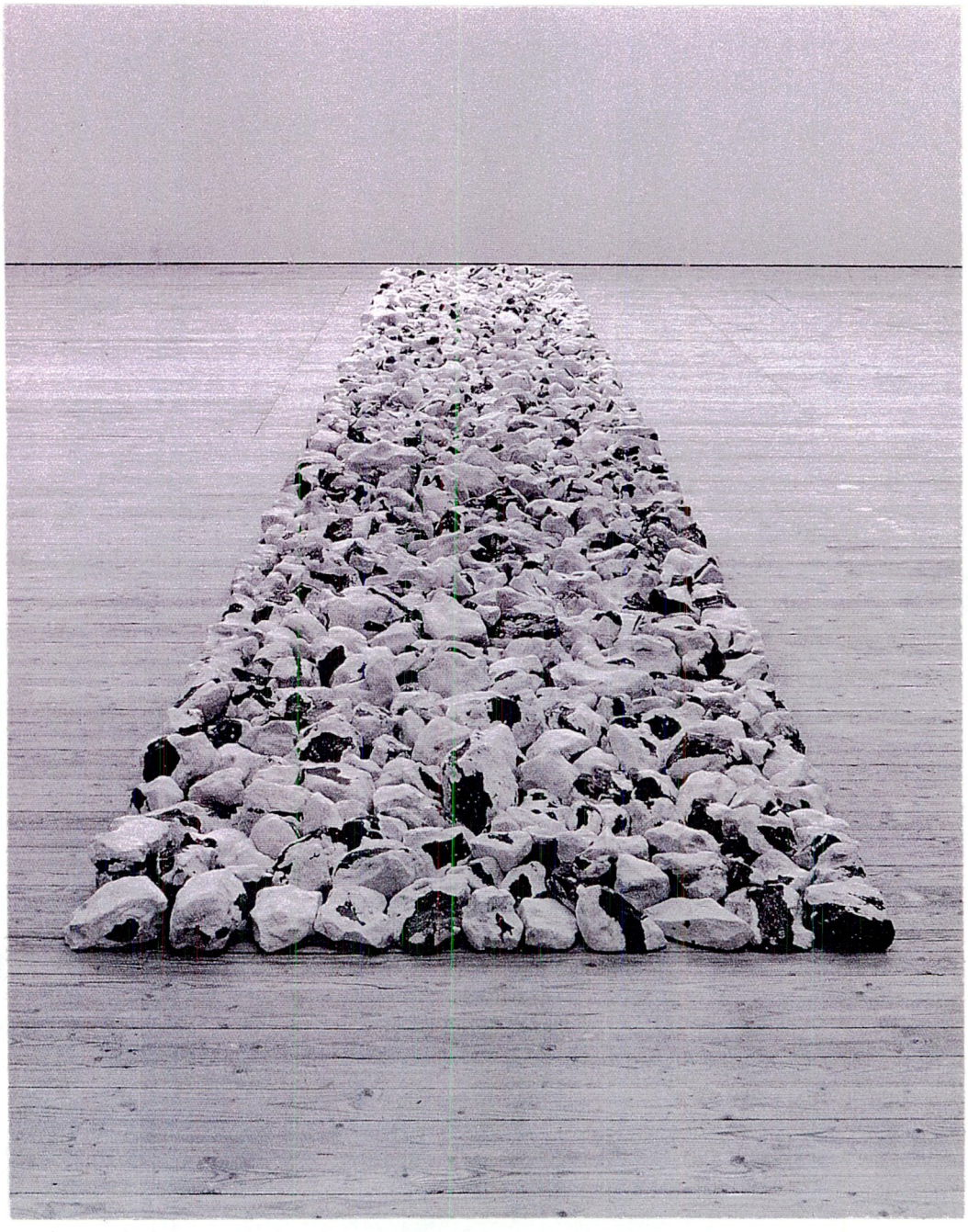


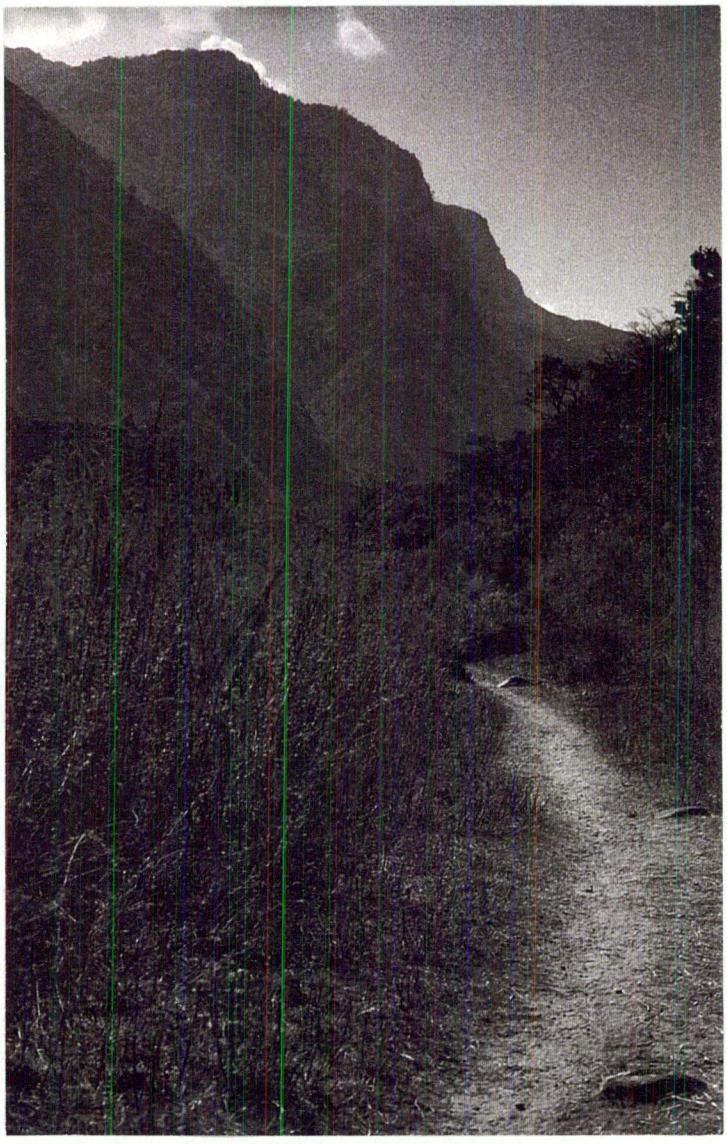
FIG.10 RICHARD LONG - MAGPIE LINE FLINT INSTALLATION, MALMÖ 1985

obviously belongs in the landscape in an indoor setting might set the viewer to thinking about his relationship to nature outdoors. An enclosed and restrictive indoor setting curtails a true sense of freedom and development, both of the sculpture and of the viewer.

For Long, a walk is the means of discovering places in which to make sculpture in 'remote' areas, places of great power and contemplation. By removing his sculptures indoors, that sense of power is stifled, yet the sculptures are made more noticeable which inevitably increases awareness of the outdoors in those with an indoor inclination.

Hamish Fulton, while not concerned with sculpture, as in the case of Long and Goldsworthy, does record his art walks with photographs and represents his feelings experienced on these walks with simple arrangements of words. (Fig.11) These combination images of text and photographs do not offer a solid tactile representation of the landscape nor of its continuing change and process, but rather the artwalk is frozen into a single frame of memory. Each of his photographs, including text and brief details of the experience, invite us to view and elaborate in our own minds the beneficial experiences of this walk. The representational image's ultimate effect is to point through the gallery walls, transporting us through memory to our own individual experience of oneness with nature.

It would appear that Fulton, Long and Goldsworthy belong to the increasing number of artists pursuing the idea of co-operation with the environment ,which is necessary because of the threat of its destruction. It has been noted, however, that Richard Long has quarried forty tons of stone to provide him with materials for a show in the Hayward Gallery, London in 1991, which reflects a contradictory disrespect of nature in practice, although in theory his art is 'green'. Perhaps found objects and materials would have conveyed a more natural approach, as in the work of Andy Goldsworthy. This leads to the question ; does Land Art have to be heavy-handed to be effective, or can the artist subtly redirect nature and allow it to make its own statement? Subtle redirection is foremost with Fulton and Goldsworthy, but with Long, although his



ELEVEN PACES FROM THE FIRST ROCK TO THE SECOND ROCK

FIG.11 HAMISH FULTON - A TWENTY DAY WALKING JOURNEY NEPAL 1983

work conveys a sense of communion with the land, his work seems to be environmentally aggressive and destructive in terms of gallery installations.

So far, I have discussed some land artists who attempt to create awareness of nature through their art, but what about those who deliberately disrupt natural processes to create large-scale permanent works on the landscape? Michael Heizer and Robert Smithson, two well-known American land artists, tend to opt for remote sites in the west of the U.S., isolated stretches of arid, empty, semi-desert land, previously unmarked by man, in which to leave their permanent works (scars).

Heizer's best known and largest work is his "Double Negative' (1969-1971), a deep unnatural double cut in the edge of a mesa near the town of Overton, Nevada. (Fig. 12) Using heavy machinery, he displaced 240,000 tonnes of rhyolite and sandstone to create a negative structure. It could be argued that this and other large scale earthworks are not large enough to have any significant impact on the ecology, but one critic has written of Heizer's work -

"It proceeds to mar the very land, which is what we have just learned to stop doing." [6]

Referring to Heizer's work several years later, another critic said that "Earth art, with very few exceptions, not only doesn't improve on its natural environment, it destroys it." [7]

Since the industrial revolution, the natural landscape has undergone destruction of huge proportions and the last thing our environment needs is destruction in the name of artistic progress. But an artist has written -

"Nature exists to be raped" [8]

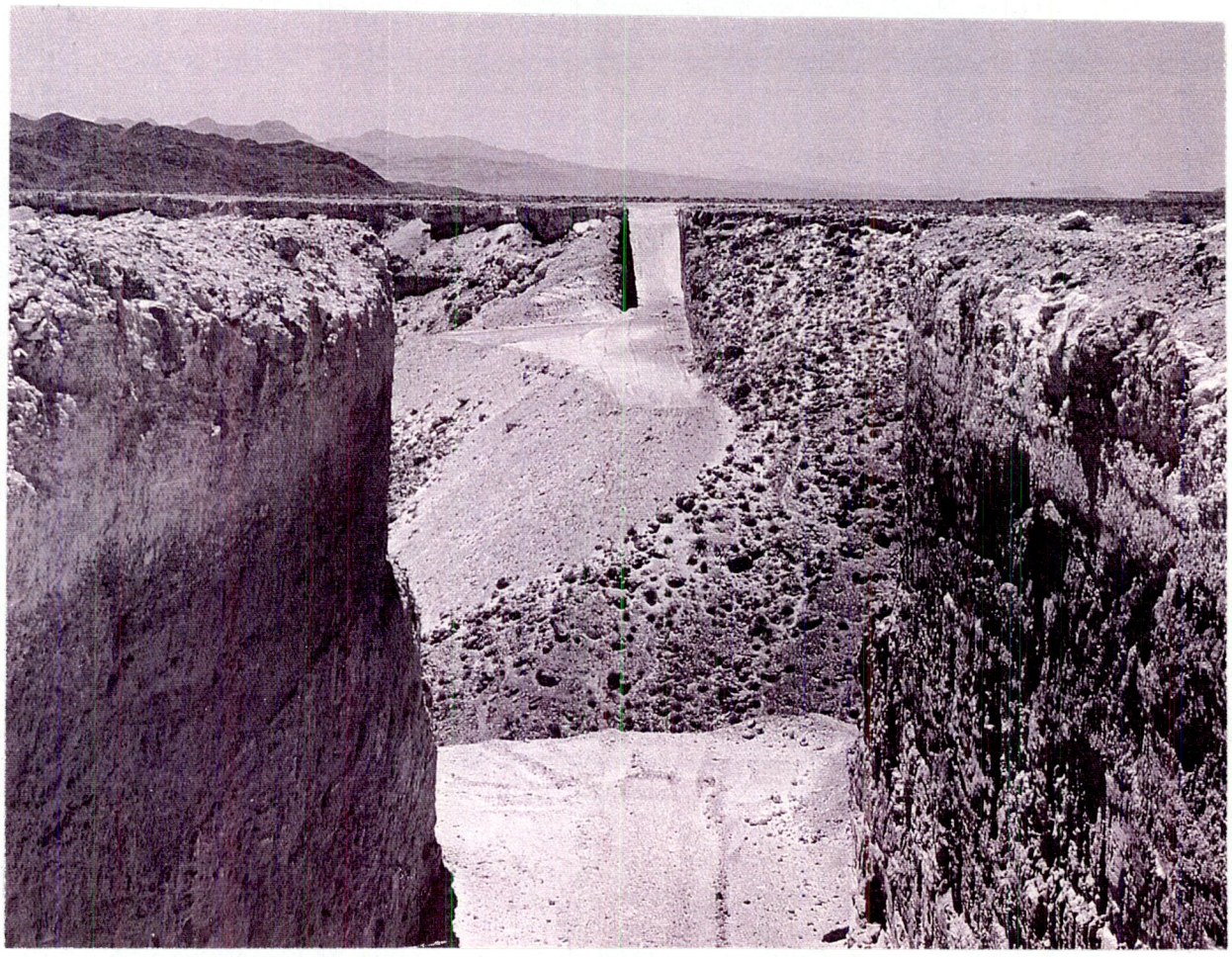


FIG.12 MICHAEL HEIZER - DOUBLE NEGATIVE NEVADA 1969 - 1971

Picasso's metaphor of rape, of bulldozed landscapes penetrated for the purpose of incising a visual statement , is one way of looking at the work of Michael Heizer, although with land art there is a diverse range of attitudes towards nature. Robert Smithson also views "the disruption of the earth's crust" as "compelling".[9]

Smithson's joy in the disruption of the earth's crust nearly equals Picasso's pleasure in making nature submit. It would not be surprising if he were to be accused of raping the earth. But through congress with nature, he believed he was asserting his own naturalness. Both Smithson and Heizer have on occasion made their art on disused pieces of land, thus effectively "recycling" the land.

"Across the country there are many mining areas, disused quarries and polluted lakes and rivers. One practical solution for the utilisation of such devastated places would be land and water recycling in terms of earth art."[10]

This may seem like a fair point in getting away with destruction, and Smithson proposed post-industrial earthworks that took into consideration the havoc wreaked on the land by industry, but he was so distanced from the world that he was merely fascinated by the look and scale of waste and pollution and the opportunity to work with it.

Smithson's best known work, Spiral Jetty (Fig.13) in the Great Salt Lake, Utah, is in part about entropy, the force of degeneration and decay. He seeks to recycle a landscape site that reveals a "succession of man-made systems mired in abandoned hopes".[11] But with the bulldozers and digging equipment involved in the creation of such a large-scale work, the actual construction takes on the look of destruction familiar to everyday modern society. At least

FIG.13 ROBERT SMITHSON - SPIRAL JETTY GREAT SALT LAKE, UTAH, 1970.

Smithson uses the surrounding natural materials, which in some part at least gives a more natural and ecologically sound air to his earthworks.

However, Heizer's work which is intended to be permanent, such as his steel trenches encased in the Nevada desert floor (Fig,14), and, better known, his Complex One/ City (Fig.15) both employ man-made, non-biodegradable materials, giving an intrusive and dominating air over the otherwise natural landscape. In this age of landscape conservation, Heizer's and Smithson's works do not serve to help the earth's cause. Only the sheer scale of their sculpture is impressive in itself and in order to appreciate this, the viewer is compelled to walk around, in, through or on them to experience the essence of what they communicate. Even more validly, the large scale works afford the viewer a number of different perspectives on the surrounding landscape and thereby encourage a re-thinking towards their relationship with the land. Photographs in galleries cannot do these works justice as they need to be experienced firsthand either through air transportation or by walking thus bringing into view the varied surface features and perspectives.
In this respect, such land art prompts stimulation of the individual into reassessing their relationship with the land and perhaps by walking in the vicinity of these earthworks we can learn to relate to our surroundings more than the works themselves do.

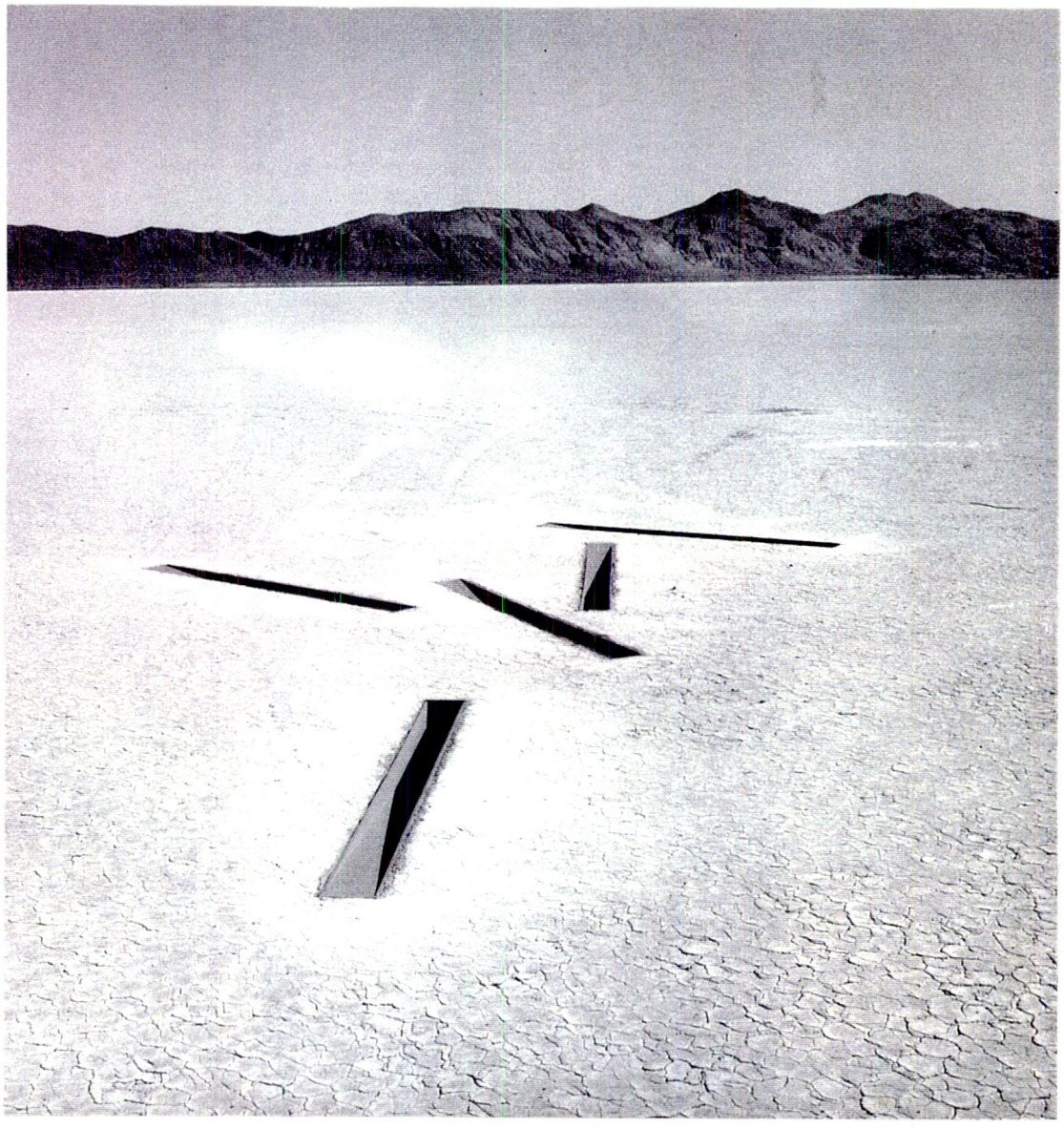


FIG.14 MICHAEL HEIZER - DISSIPATE BLACK ROCK DESERT, NEVADA 1968

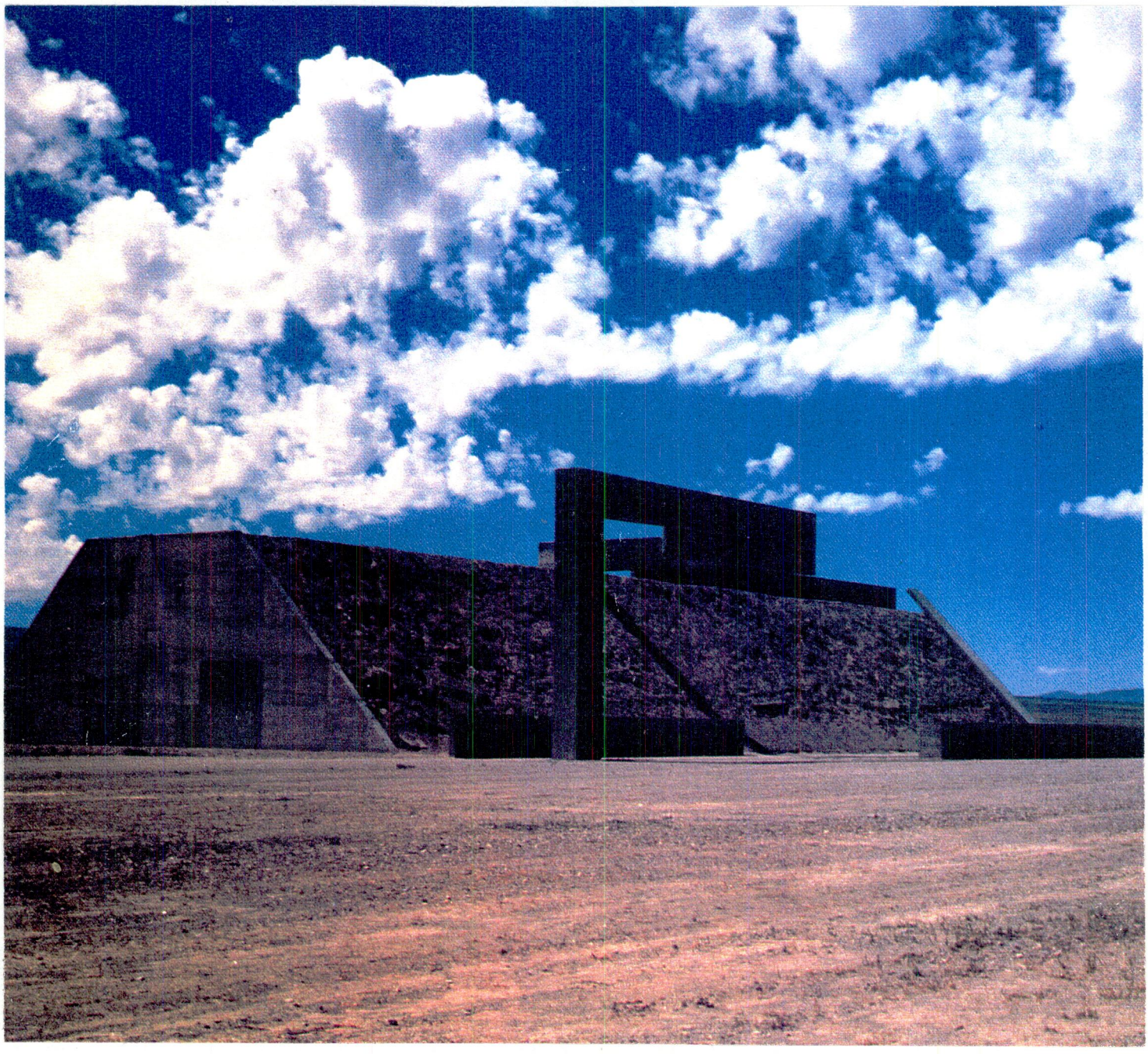


FIG.15 MICHAEL HEIZER - COMPLEX ONE/CITY 1972 - 1976

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CONCLUSION

In today's society, the world is based on external appearances. Through materialistic values we have lost our ancient inner relationship with a higher order of creation than is evident in our physical world; we have come to believe that the material world is the only reality. It is important for the survival of all that we begin to remember our fundamental spiritual connection with the earth and the universe as it was with our ancient ancestors at a time when tradition was all-important, but which only still remains in the few surviving nomadic cultures of the world such as the Aborigines. It is important for us to achieve a relationship of identification with the land, to respect the land and leave it undisturbed. It is time to restore the natural harmony and balance within ourselves and the earth. Man's most natural and humble means of achieving this balance of body, mind and soul is simply to walk the land.

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